A Handbook to the Reception of Classical Mythology

Wiley Blackwell Handbooks to Classical Reception

This series offers comprehensive, thought-provoking surveys of the reception of major classical authors and themes. These Handbooks will consist of approximately 30 newly written essays by leading scholars in the field, and will map the ways in which the ancient world has been viewed and adapted up to the present day. Essays are meant to be engaging, accessible, and scholarly pieces of writing, and are designed for an audience of advanced undergraduates, graduates, and scholars.

A Handbook to the Reception of Classical Mythology

Edited by

Vanda Zajko and Helena Hoyle

WILEY Blackwell

Contents

Notes on Contributors

Rosemary Barrow is a Reader in Classical Art & Reception at the University of Roehampton. Besides articles on art history and the classical tradition, she has published two monographs on Victorian classical reception – *Lawrence Alma-Tadema* (2001) and *The Use of Classical Art & Literature by Victorian Painters* (2007) – and a co-authored book with Michael Silk and Ingo Gildenhard entitled *The Classical Tradition: Art, Literature, Thought* (2013).

John Channing Briggs is the author of *Francis Bacon and the Rhetoric of Nature*, a chapter on Bacon's science and religion in the *Cambridge Companion to Francis Bacon*, and a close reading of Lincoln's speeches (*Lincoln's Speeches Reconsidered*). Educated at Harvard and the University of Chicago, he is Professor of English and McSweeny Chair of Rhetoric and Excellence in Teaching at the University of California, Riverside.

George Burrows is Principal Lecturer for Performing Arts at the University of Portsmouth, where he also leads the Centre for Performing Arts. He is co-founder of the *Song, Stage and Screen* international musical theater conference and a founding editor of the journal, *Studies in Musical Theatre*. His research most often considers the social functions and meanings of music and musical theater in the interwar period but he has also published work on the composers Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643) and Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924). He has directed the University of Portsmouth Choirs for more than a decade and his book, *Andy Kirk and his Clouds of Joy*, is forthcoming.

James G. Clark is Professor of History at the University of Exeter. He has written widely on aspects of medieval clerical culture and has a particular interest in the reception of the Latin classics among learned clerks in the later Middle Ages. Recent publications include *Ovid in the Middle Ages* (2011).

Peter Davies is Professor of Modern German Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Publications include *Divided Loyalties: East German Writers and the*

Politics of German Division (2000); with Stephen Parker and Matthew Philpotts, *The Modern Restoration: Re-Reading German Literary History, 1930–1960* (2004); *Myth, Matriarchy and Modernity: Johann Jakob Bachofen in German Culture, 1860–1945* (2010). He has also written on topics ranging from East German literature, myth and literature, National Socialism and Holocaust writing, and Translation Studies.

Lillian Doherty is a Professor of Classics at the University of Maryland, College Park, where she has taught since 1984. Her home is in the Department of Classics but she is also a member of the affiliate faculties in Women's Studies and Comparative Literature. She specializes in archaic Greek poetry, with a special emphasis on the *Odyssey*. She is the author of *Siren Songs: Gender, Audiences, and Narrators in the Odyssey* (1995) and *Gender and the Interpretation of Classical Myth* (2001) and the editor of *Oxford Readings in Homer's Odyssey* (2008).

Robert L. Fowler was educated at Toronto and Oxford, and has been H.O. Wills Professor of Greek at the University of Bristol since 1996. He has worked on Greek epic and lyric poetry as well as Greek historiography, mythography, religion, and the history of classical scholarship. His publications include *The Nature of Early Greek Lyric* (1987), *The Cambridge Companion to Homer* (ed., 2004), and the two volumes of *Early Greek Mythography* (2000–2013), which collect and comment on the fragments of the first 29 Greek mythographers. He is a Fellow of the British Academy.

Julia Haig Gaisser is Eugenia Chase Guild Professor Emeritus in the Humanities, Professor Emeritus of Latin at Bryn Mawr College.

Greta Hawes is Early Career Fellow and Lecturer in Classics and Ancient History at Australian National University. She is author of *Rationalizing Myth in Antiquity* (2014), is currently editing a collection of essays, Myths on the Map: The Storied Landscapes of Ancient Greece.

Gregory Hays is Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Virginia. He is the translator of *Marcus Aurelius, Meditations* (2003) and author of articles on various aspects of late and medieval Latin literature. He is currently finishing a new edition and translation of Fulgentius, with commentary.

Mette Hjort is Professor of Film Studies at the Department of Media, Cognition and Communication, University of Copenhagen. She is the author of *Small Nation, Global Cinema* (2005) and *Lone Scherfig's "Italian for Beginners"* (2010) and the editor, with Ursula Lindqvist, of *A Companion to Nordic Cinema*. She serves as co-editor, with Peter Schepelern, for the Nordic Film Classics series.

Sarah Iles Johnston is Arts and Humanities Distinguished Scholar of Religion and Professor of Classics at The Ohio State University. She has published widely on ancient Greek religion and myths.

Didier Kahn is senior researcher at the CNRS (Cellf 16e-18e). He is the author of *Alchimie et paracelsisme en France à la fin de la Renaissance* (2007). In 2010 he published an extensive annotated edition of Montfaucon de Villars' *Le Comte de Gabalis, ou Entretiens sur les sciences secrètes* (1670), and in 2015 *La Messe alchimique attribuée à Melchior de Sibiu.* He has recently completed a new book: *Chimie et alchimie: le fixe et le volatil, de Paracelse à Lavoisier* (forthcoming) and is currently editing the first volume of an annotated edition of Diderot's correspondence.

Tony Keen is an Honorary Associate and Associate Lecturer for the Open University, an Adjunct Assistant Professor for the University of Notre Dame London Global Gateway, and a Visiting Lecturer for the University of Roehampton; he teaches on classical studies, myth, cinema, and SF and fantasy literature. He writes extensively on classics and SF, and was chair of the 2013 conference Swords, Sorcery, Sandals and Space: The Fantastika and the Classical World.

Kurt Lampe is Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Bristol. His publications and teaching cross the boundaries between ancient Greek and Roman and contemporary literature and philosophy. In general, he likes to use the analysis of art (literary, visual, cinematic, etc.) in order to inspire reflection on questions of contemporary importance (e.g., agency, responsibility, selfhood, and their political and sacred contexts).

Genevieve Liveley is Senior Lecturer in Classics at the University of Bristol. Her principal research interests are Augustan literature, critical theory, and the classical tradition. She is co-editor and contributor to *Elegy and Narratology: Fragments of Story* and author of *A Reader's Guide to Ovid's Metamorphoses* and *Ovid: Love Songs*.

Fiachra Mac Góráin is Lecturer in Classics at University College London. He is currently preparing a monograph entitled *Virgil's Dionysus*.

Kathryn McKinley is Associate Professor of English at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Her research interests include Chaucer, Boccaccio, the medieval reception of classical antiquity and Ovid, images and the materiality of religious cultures in later medieval England. Her publications include *Reading the Ovidian Heroine: Metamorphoses Commentaries 1100–1618* (2001); co-editor, *Ovid in the Middle Ages* (2011); an article on Chaucer's House of Fame in *Meaning in Motion: The Semantics of Movement in Medieval Art* (2011); and *Chaucer and Boccaccio: Image, Vision and the Vernacular in the House of Fame* (2016).

John Mulryan is Distinquished Board of Trustees Professor, Emeritus, at St. Bonaventure University. He has published a co-authored translation of Natale Conti's *Mythologiae* (2006), a translation of Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini* (2012), and a study of Milton and classical mythology *('Through a Glass Darkly': Milton's Reinvention of the Mythological Tradition)*, (1996). He has also published articles on classical mythology in Shakespeare and Ben Jonson.

Sheila Murnaghan is Allen Memorial Professor of Greek at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey* (2nd. edn 2011) and the co-editor of *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture* (1998) and *Nostos: Odyssean Identities in Modern Cultures* (2014). Her current projects include a forthcoming study of Classics and childhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, co-authored with Deborah H. Roberts, and an edition with commentary of Sophocles' *Ajax*.

Jeanne Nuechterlein is Senior Lecturer at the University of York, where she has taught northern Renaissance art history in the Department of History of Art and the Centre for Medieval Studies since 2000. Her research investigates various aspects of religious and secular art in Germany and the Low Countries in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and their reception in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Michael O'Neill is a Professor of English at Durham University. His recent books include *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (2012), co-edited with Anthony Howe and with the assistance of Madeleine Callaghan, and *Poetic Form: An Introduction*, co-written with Michael D. Hurley (2012). His second collection of poems *Wheel* appeared in 2008.

Joanna Paul is Lecturer in Classical Studies at the Open University. Her monograph *Film and the Classical Epic Tradition* was published in 2013.

Emily Pillinger is Lecturer at King's College London, jointly affiliated with the Department of Classics and the Liberal Arts programme. Her research to date has focused on the representation of supernatural communications in the literature of the ancient world: she has published articles on the voices of prophets, witches, and the dead. Her book *Translating Cassandra: the Poetry and Poetics of Prophecy* is forthcoming. She has also published on classical reception in music and is currently researching Greco-Roman myth in music composed after World War II.

Deborah H. Roberts is William R. Kenan Jr. Professor of Classics and Comparative Literature at Haverford College. She is the author of *Apollo and his Oracle in the Oresteia* (1984), co-editor (with Francis Dunn and Don Fowler) of *Reading the End: Closure in Greek and Latin Literature* (1997), and translator of Aeschylus' *Prometheus' Bound* (2012) and other tragedies. Her current projects concern translation and reception and include a forthcoming study, co-authored with Sheila Murnaghan, of Classics and childhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Lisa Saltzman is Professor of History of Art at Bryn Mawr College. Saltzman is the author of Anselm Kiefer and Art after Auschwitz (Cambridge University Press, 1999) and Making Memory Matter: Strategies of Remembrance in Contemporary Art (University of Chicago Press, 2006) and is the co-editor, with Eric Rosenberg, of Trauma and Visuality in Modernity (University Press of New England, 2006).

Helen Slaney holds a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship at St Hilda's College, Oxford. Her current research concerns the reception of ancient material culture in the late eighteenth century, but her background is in theatre history and she has been an associate of Oxford's Archive of Performances of Greek and Roman Drama (APGRD) since 2009. In 2013 she completed a doctoral thesis on the performance reception of Senecan tragedy, published in 2016 as *The Senecan Aesthetic: A Performance History*." Research interests also include Roman dance and its reception.

John Talbot teaches English and Classical literature at Brigham Young University. His publications on the classical tradition include chapters in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literate* and *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*. His monograph on English poets and the Alcaic metre is under contract with Bloomsbury. He is the author of two volumes of poetry, *The Well-Tempered Tantrum* and Rough Translation.

Heather Tolliday read English Language and Literature. After researching social structures with the Kleinian psychoanalyst, Elliott Jaques – who was also her PhD supervisor – she developed her psychotherapy practice, retiring in 2008. She has now retired from most of her teaching commitments but continues to write, mainly poetry.

Phiroze Vasunia is Professor of Greek at University College London. He is the author, most recently, of *The Classics and Colonial India* (2013).

Meg Harris Williams read English at Cambridge and Oxford and for many years has written about and taught the relation between psychoanalysis, aesthetics, and literature, in the United Kingdom and overseas. She has published articles in literary and psychoanalytic journals and chapters for edited collections, and is editor for the Harris Meltzer Trust. She is a visiting lecturer in psychoanalytic studies at the Tavistock Clinic and in psychoanalytic theory for the Association for Group and Individual Psychotherapy.

Ika Willis is Senior Lecturer in English Literatures at the University of Wollongong. Her interdisciplinary research centers on reception theory and temporality, and has led her to publish on texts from Virgil's *Aeneid* (*Now and Rome*, 2011) through Derrida's *The Post Card* ("Eros in the age of technical reproductibility" in *Derrida and Antiquity*, 2010) to Harry Potter fan fiction ("Keeping Promises to Queer Children" in *Fan Fiction and Fan Communities in the Age of the Internet*, 2007). She is currently writing a volume on Reception for Routledge's New Critical Idiom series.

Andreas T. Zanker is an Assistant Professor of Classics at Amherst College. He has published on the theme of the golden age in various authors. His first book, *Greek and Latin Expressions of Meaning: The Classical Origins of a Modern Metaphor*, appeared in 2016.

Introduction

Vanda Zajko

There is something faintly ridiculous about attempting to write an introduction to a volume such as this, the content of which spans so many centuries and covers such a variety of genres. It is certainly not the case that a summary of the kind that is so often attempted on these occasions will begin to do justice either to the historical detail needed adequately to contextualize all the material or to the conceptual challenges posed by its diversity. Instead, this opening narrative will engage with the overarching themes of the volume and explain their rationale; it will also point to some of the future directions of travel for studies of the reception of myth, acknowledging that now, perhaps more than ever, it is a field characterized as much by its impact on new and emergent cultural forms as on more traditional modes of artistic and literary expression.

The value of reception within classical studies is still being hotly debated, not because there is any question about its having a significant role within the discipline, but because of a lack of consensus about what that role is and what it could be in the future. Some maintain that classical studies are themselves a form of reception studies and that the reception of even the Homeric poems is indistinguishable from the texts themselves; others argue to preserve a difference between ancient texts and their receptions, while still regarding the study of the latter as a vital means of preserving the interest of the contemporary world in what otherwise might seem an irrelevant branch of learning. For some, there will always be a tension between understanding the historical context of the original audience for a work of art and recognizing its value to succeeding generations; for others, the distinction between the two can and should be blurred by focusing precisely on the way that whenever such a sense of value is articulated, the distinction between which aspects are "ancient" and which "modern" cannot be fully separated out.

There are also debates about the relation of reception to cognate fields such as intellectual history, comparative literature, and cultural studies that provoke questions about authority and expertise, as well as some resistance to what has been seen as reception studies' imperialist ambition. Whether one adopts a theoretical or a resolutely pragmatic position concerning these issues, classical reception studies today form part of the disciplinary landscape and "companion" volumes devoted to individual authors or to broad-based topics routinely include several essays about the ways ancient works have been read in various historical periods post antiquity and up to and including the present day.

When it comes to myth, a strong argument can be made that we cannot but deal with its reception because classical myth as we understand it today is classical myth as it has constituted itself through reception, through its oral, visual, and written dissemination throughout the ages. Pre-literate Greece is unavailable to us and yet many myths have their notional origin there: small sections of fragmentary texts are reconstructed from papyri or from citations in considerably later works and yet narratives now mainly lost to us may have been hugely influential in the shaping of a tradition. We sometimes refer to this tradition much too glibly as though it somehow stands outside specific textual instantiations and the very idea of a mythological tradition is arguably misleading because it suggests a freely available repository of narratives, able to be accessed and added to by successive generations engaged in a continuous practice of storytelling. In fact, the process of the transmission of myth is much more patchy and contingent than this and in some cases a story disappears completely for a time, only to be revivified by a robust and surprisingly novel version.

The study of classical myth, then, renders visible the pragmatics of reception in a particularly apparent way and this is the explicit focus of Part I of the current volume, "Mythography." Here the whole idea of mythography as a mode of reception is show-cased and the series of innovative chapters demonstrates how important the mythographical collection has been to the survival, dissemination, and popularization of classical myth from the ancient world to the present day. This is a neglected topic and all too often regarded as the arcane territory of experts, but the chapters here are organized chronologically and include information about the important compilations in each era, as well as discussing thematic concerns. The first, by Robert Fowler, on Greek Mythography overtly addresses the question of the stance of the mythographer and argues persuasively that even when this stance is one of neutrality, the very act of collating pre-existing mythological stories involves some degree of interpretation and the exercise of imagination. Here modes of interpreting myth, which will be expanded upon and probed more closely in later chapters, such as allegory and rationalization are introduced, along with issues that will similarly reoccur, such as the relationship between "the" definitive myth and the versions of that myth fought over by those seeking, in Fowler's words "to dictate the terms of the collective understanding." One of the ideas to emerge from this first chater is the continuity between methods of handling myth

in antiquity and in much later periods, including our own, even as the specific reasons for the on-going valency of myth have changed.

The next three chapters provide an invaluable overview of the reception of Greek and Roman myth in the anthologies of later antiquity up to and including the Renaissance. In the first of these Gregory Hays explores the highly influential collections of (mainly) Greek myth by the canon of Roman mythographers, lucidly discussing the uncertainty of their authorship and date and the obscurity and complexity of their manuscript traditions in a way that renders them accessible collectively to the non-specialist reader for the first time. Again the issue emerges of the continuity between ancient and modern practice, here with particular resonance for the question of the audience for these collections: "Just as many modern readers derive their knowledge of Greek myth not from Homer, Euripides, or Ovid, but from Edith Hamilton, Robert Graves, or Wikipedia, so their ancient counterparts may have found it more efficient to read Hyginus than Homer, and Pseudo-Lactantius than Ovid." James Clark's chapter describes how the Medieval church's attitude towards pagan myth was not one of straightforward rejection but rather a complex process of accommodation and appropriation accomplished largely via the educational program in cathedrals and monasteries, which "conveyed the form and matter of classical myth into the verbal and imaginative currents of the clergy from the moment their instruction began." This "arresting encounter between Christian doctrine and classical myth" is a theme that will reoccur in several later chapters. John Mulryan takes on the topic of Renaissance mythography, beginning with a chronological overview of both major and less well-known figures and building on the idea that "mythography differs from other accounts of myth in that it both complies and interprets." In this chapter, the focus is on different ways of organizing mythological content such as genealogy, iconography, etymology, and allegory, all of which are picked up and addressed in later chapters. The centrality of the concept of translation to any understanding of the transmission of classical myth is also highlighted and explored.

The final three chapters in Part I turn towards the modern world and to genres that are increasingly gaining currency as important for the study of myth. John Talbot focuses on mythological handbooks, formerly somewhat denigrated, as "significant modern instances of mythography as a mode of classical reception." A gap opens up here between the scholarly tradition of collating and interpreting myth, an activity which is grounded in (historically variable) understandings of the classical past and that seeks out classically trained readers, and the idea of myth as a narrative which can and should be read for pleasure. Working with his first case-study, Thomas Bulfinch's *The Age of Fable*, Talbot investigates what constitutes a literary treatment of myth and demonstrates how this popularization and democratization of mythography aims to "assist its readers to an appreciation of English, not classical, literature"; his second case-study, Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*, with its preponderance of eccentric pseudo-scholarly notes and preoccupation

with the "monomyth" of the White Goddess, may seem at first sight to be a very different creature altogether. However, Talbot argues convincingly that this too deserves to be regarded as an important instance of literary classical reception and, in addition, as an important influence on modernism's distinctive theorization and poetic deployment of myth.

Sheila Murnaghan and Deborah Roberts provide us with an authoritative and informative account of anthologies of myth for children, so often the medium via which readers first encounter the classical imagination. From the early nineteenth century to the present day, the authors show how earlier versions retold for children on the whole subscribed to a "fiction of myth's authentic purity," which led to radical revision, particularly in the collections intended for the youngest children. But even in the contemporary world, ideological preoccupations with, for example, polytheism or sexism, has led to certain stories being altered or excused. Ika Willis's fascinating chapter on contemporary mythography emphasizes the freedom of those who engage with mythological stories in the texts of contemporary popular and mass culture and the way in which this activity is itself regarded as a form of mythopoiesis. She celebrates these creative additions to the mythological tradition as "pleasurably anarchic / anachronistic mash-ups of classical myth and ancient history" and throws down a challenge to those students of myth who reject such deconcentualized and ahistorical treatments as simply false. What both these last two chapters demonstrate is that far from being side-shows in the history of the reception of mythography, contemporary genres that have hitherto been seen as marginal have much to offer the contemporary academy in terms of understanding the dynamics of storytelling: if we abandon the idea that historical accuracy is the only basis for judging the efficacy of a particular version of myth, we can begin to appreciate with more sensitivity its potential affective power. What is more, those versions of classical myths that eschew an over-reverential attitude towards their predecessors and acknowledge the diversity of contexts in which they will be appreciated may very well be those that end up becoming classics themselves: mythography teaches us that myth survives precisely because of bold revivifying interventions just as much as via the careful reconstructions of scholars. This is indeed the premise that underlies the organization of this volume.

The decision to dedicate a whole companion volume to the reception of classical myth forces a series of tough decisions concerning what should be included given the vast wealth of material that potentially fits the description. It also provides the opportunity to think through the ramifications of those decisions in relation to a category of discourse, myth, which is itself notoriously slippery. On the one hand, there are judgments to be made about how to represent the vast tracts of time between antiquity and the present day given that comprehensive coverage is clearly not going to be possible. On the other, there is no obvious consensus as to what counts as myth, a myth or a version of a myth even within antiquity: when we expand the historical boundaries of the enquiry, the question of what should be so categorized becomes ever more complex. It has been claimed, for example, that it

was the Greeks themselves who invented the category of myth by standing outside of it and criticizing it and it is certainly possible to trace a genealogy of criticism of the oldest Homeric stories along these lines. The debate concerning whether the resulting criticism amounted to new versions of the original myth or interpretations of it is also relevant to the evaluation of those modern versions of myth which fall within the disciplinary bounds of, say, political history, philosophy, psychology, or science.

Part II, "Approaches and Themes," focuses on this issue and on the distinction between the poetic and the theoretical aspects of myth, which has merited discussion since Plato. Each chapter takes as its starting point an interpretative strategy adopted by those who have invested in, reflected upon, and re-written myths for their own ideological agenda and attempts either to give an overview of the particular critical practice from antiquity to the present day, or to work with a specific textual example that raises paradigmatic issues. Taken together with the pieces in Part IV, "Iconic Figures and Texts," the aim is to provide readers with a range of chapters that offer both diversity and depth, a sense of chronological perspective, a sample of different genres, and a starting point for the investigation of cognate mythic texts. No attempt is made at comprehensive coverage, purely and simply because this would be impossible, and some of the more canonical material has been avoided in favor of that which is less well known and less extensively written about elsewhere. Given this high degree of selectivity, it is inevitable that those with specialist interests will feel there are significant omissions and it is certainly very easy to compile an alternative list of contributions that would fill another volume. One of this volume's strengths and not weaknesses is arguably that it has opted for a selective and imaginative strategy of inclusion.

Greta Hawes' opening chapter works with the myth of Circe to examine the dynamics of the ancient practice of allegoresis. She shows how its counter-intuitive readings and "overt embrace of non-literal meaning" do not operate in isolation but rather within a nexus of narrative assumptions and possibilities that enable both conservative and revisionist interpretations of myth. Scanning a range of texts from antiquity, Hawes demonstrates how allegorical treatments of Circe tend to flatten the Homeric character and reduce her complexity and ambivalence, but she also rejects the assumption that conventional and allegorical approaches are separate enterprises, suggesting instead that "we should consider the ways in which all reactions to myth feed into one another as organic components of the same conceptual vocabulary"; she concludes with a brief survey of feminist versions of the myth in the twentieth century, emphasizing continuities between ancient, medieval, and modern practice in terms of the interestedness of interpretations. Sarah Iles Johnston locates the origins of the comparative method in antiquity, and more specifically with Herodotus, but chooses to begin her detailed appraisal in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with accounts of the work of its major proponents in Germany and England. One of the major themes that emerges here is that the emphasis within comparative mythology has traditionally been on

similarity, on identifying and searching for explanations for repeated recognizable patterns. But Johnston ends by discussing the work of scholars from the Divinity School of Chicago, Jonathan Smith, Wendy Doniger, and Bruce Lincoln, arguing persuasively that the postulation of difference as the basis for comparison with which they have been identified has successfully revitalized the comparative method. Lillian Doherty directly addresses the question of the availability of classical myth for competing political agendas and picks up the issue of revisionism introduced by Hawes. She supplements the idea of how myth can be used for ideological subversion with her discussion of how aesthetic innovation has also been an important facet of revisionist mythmaking from Euripides, Ovid, and Petronius to James Joyce, Derek Walcott, and Margaret Atwood. Focusing on the figures of Odysseus and Penelope, she maintains that "although in a sense every version of a myth is revisionist, especially in the modern era when the ideological underpinnings of our societies are radically different from those of antiquity, there are still versions that stand out for the challenges they pose to literary traditions and social norms." Here we see again that a continuity is traced between certain mythopoietic practices in the ancient world and modern worlds and the notion that willful and subversive revisionism begins in the modern world is comprehensively debunked.

The four chapters that follow take as their focus a theme or topic that has particular resonance for political life in the contemporary world. Didier Kahn's highly original chapter on alchemy resonates both with Hawes's chapter on allegory and with the discussions in Part I of Medieval and Renaissance mythography: much of the material here will be entirely unfamiliar to the majority of students of myth, but the idea that classical myths can be dissected to reveal a hidden truth will not. Kahn makes a strong case that what we might call the alchemical tradition of interpreting classical myth should be afforded more attention than it has been afforded previously and points to the way in which it has influenced nineteenth- and twentieth-century theorists of culture, including the avant-garde theatre practitioner Antonin Artaud who appropriated the alchemical exegesis of the ancient mysteries in order to develop a radical theory of theatrical origins. This would seem to be a clear example of how the scrutiny of less familiar aspects of the reception of classical myth will open up new areas for research within unexpected domains. Phiroze Vasunia takes as his main example the work of the linguist and translator William Jones to show how, alongside nationalist treatments of myth, there existed in the eighteenth century cosmopolitan interpretations that "'made classical Greece and Rome part of a broader discussion about the gods and culture in general." Jones was particularly interested in the study of non-European cultures in the East and so he enumerated specific correspondences between Greek, Roman, Egyptian, and Indian myth, as well as debating some of the intellectual and political problems involved in comparative study. Vasunia's analysis highlights how Classical myth has historically formed part of a discourse that helped to bridge the gaps between nations and peoples and it is an important contribution to contemporary debates about mythic narrative and group identity.

The myth of the golden age is one of western culture's oldest tropes for imagining the world as otherwise and Andreas Zanker provides an overview of the characteristics of its best-known instantiations before analyzing its use in the much less familiar work of Lactantius. In the Divine Institutes, this Christian writer employs the motif of the returning golden age from Virgil's *Georgics* to attack the pagan god Jupiter for bringing to an end an earlier age of universal Christianity and thus, by means of allegory, also to attack the persecutory emperor Diocletian. Zanker identifies this complex approach to myth-making as the 'creative ventriloquism' of key pagan authors for the dual purposes of satire and proselytization. In the following chapter, Peter Davies explores another utopian myth, matriarchy, as it developed in the nineteenth century to offer an alternative to masculinist theories of the origins of culture. Tracing the popularity of this modern example of mythopoiesis up to its contemporary instantiations in the feminist spirituality movement, Davies concludes that its valency comes not so much from historical data or specialist knowledge, but more from the "dream of a life more fulfilled and authentic than is possible under current conditions." His description of "identificatory, emotionally engaged readings" of ancient material leads us to the consideration of the ways that myth has contributed to human beings' sense of their inner selves, both in terms of psychological theory and of creative process which is the focus of Part III of the volume, "Myth, Creativity, and the Mind."

Connecting with ancient stories has equipped writers and readers with many resonant ways of conceptualizing mental activity and of expressing emotion and desire. Joanna Paul in her work on the Percy Jackson series argues that it "reminds us that the gods never have gone away," prompting the consideration of how in the ancient world, too, narratives about divine beings and their interaction with humans were a means for such expression. The interrelationship between public and social struggles and personal dilemma is one dimension that myth has always dramatized and it continues to do this with great effectiveness. The inspiration for Rick Riordan's popular children's series, Paul points out, was Riordan's own son, who was diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and dyslexia. The titular hero of Riordan's series also lived with this condition, but upon discovering his divine parentage, his dyslexia was explained: Percy's brain was programmed to read ancient Greek and so, of course, reading and writing in modern English proves to be a challenge; what is more, his ADHD is a sign of superhuman capability. Myth here is not only up-dated and made meaningful to a young audience, it also provides a narrative means for rethinking the implications of a contemporary mental condition. In insisting on the continuing presence of the ancient world within the modern, Jackson (and Paul) offer a model of the reception of myth which refuses to fetishize its status as a medium of the past.

The importance of the role of myth in articulating the unconscious truths of human existence lies at the heart both of Heather Tolliday's chapter on myth and case study, and Meg Harris William's chapter on myth and self-development. Tolliday acknowledges that the facility of classical myth to make the material of

the unconscious accessible is a significant factor in its survival, emphasising the multiple ways in which mythical characters might be understood. She resists the idea that a myth and a case-study can be equated in any simplistic way, pointing instead to how reluctance to embrace the unconscious is a defining feature of clinical practice so that the work of the scholar of myth and the psychoanalyst in bringing its material to light can be "mutually beneficial." Her argument is illustrated with a variety of insights from psychoanalytic theory which in turn are illuminated and evidenced by moments from individual myths. Harris Williams similarly attributes the on-going potency of myth to its ability to enact the unconscious conflicts that underpin the processes of development and illustrates her argument with examples taken from Shakespeare, that "sublime mediator of classical myths." Both these essays by professional psychotherapists combine an attentiveness to the specific details of myths with a broader awareness of the ways in which psychoanalytic theory itself has come to operate as a significant form of modern mythopoiesis. Emily Pillinger turns to one of the foremost proponents of literary modernity, Virginia Woolf, for her discussion of the therapeutic potential of myth. She expounds the way that both for Woolf as a writer and for her fictional creations, the mythic past provides a form of sanctuary, and identification with mythical characters constitutes a form of writing therapy by means of which "trauma is transformed into art."

Part IV, "Iconic Figures and Texts," is more traditionally constituted and is made up of chapters that focus on noteworthy "versions" of individual myths, each carefully chosen to give glimpses of different historical contexts, genres, and audiences. It aims to show how the potency of a particular reception has the potential to transform the myth so that both its subsequent and previous identity is altered. Each of these chapters tells a story about the reception of a myth that is both specific to the text and in some sense exemplary; collectively they provide a picture of just how rich and all-encompassing is the reception of myth when it is considered as a discrete field of study. The first pair of chapters employ a transhistorical perspective, which demonstrates this abundance perfectly. Genevieve Liveley examines the "fragmented afterlife of antiquity's most famous poet, lover, prophet, and priest," Orpheus and draws an irresistible analogy between the form and content of the myth when she argues persuasively that "we cannot piece together an original form of the myth, intact and untouched by later receptions and mutilations: in the beginning, as in the end, Orpheus is composed of many parts." Liveley attributes a revisionist feminist perspective to the treatment of the myth by both Virgil and Ovid, reminding us of Doherty's earlier insistence on the origins of this practice in antiquity. Rosemary Barrow begins her analysis of the myth of Narcissus and Echo with the famous Dali painting *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* and proceeds to trace its diverse interpretations in visual art, poetry, feminism, and psychoanalytic theory, showing how "Echo is at first marginalized, then brought into play to take over the major role previously ascribed to Narcissus." The preference of the twentieth century for a female mythic protagonist reflects a

pattern of preference repeatedly glimpsed in this volume. Turning to the field of science fiction, a creative genre that is often associated with myth because of the shared quality of conjuring up fantastic worlds, Tony Keen investigates the claim that SF constitutes a modern form of popular myth-making, a claim promoted by some writers and contested by others. There is synergy here with Willis' chapter on contemporary practice and Keen's focus on the three figures of Prometheus, Pygmalion, and Helen provides an invaluable resource for thinking through the general proposition that "classical mythology provides a number of touchstones for themes that are central to SF" in relation to three major examples.

The remaining chapters follow a roughly chronological route from antiquity to the near-present day. Fiachra Mac Góráin takes us to Rome and Italy and presents the methodological problem of how to interpret the early presence of the god Dionysus in these geographical locations when using evidence from later and fragmentary sources. Resisting simplistic narratives of cultural appropriation, he presents a multifaceted view of the dynamic forces at play in the associations of Dionysus with the Roman deity Bacchus/Liber and with the early Christian Christ figure: although, for example, Augustus "managed to sanitize Liber for the imperial court," the more suspicious aspects of Dionysus, "drunken debauchery, theatricality, and foreignness" were liable to reemerge at any moment. Julia Gaisser raises another methodological issue in her discussion of Cupid and Psyche, when she talks about how "Apuleius' invented story passed into myth": how exactly do we discriminate myth from literature? Looking at interpretations of the story from a range of historical periods in the form of allegory, visual art, translation, and literary imitation, Gaisser demonstrates that it is not the case, as has sometimes been supposed, that only myths that have their origins deep in the remotest past have the potential to tap into and energize the collective imagination. The focus of Kathryn McKinley's chapter is one of the most commented upon texts from the late medieval period, Christine de Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies*. Eclectic in its use of pagan and Christian sources, this allegorical work is widely regarded as a "proto-feminist" intervention in debates about the nature of women sanctioned by the Church. McKinley makes clear that de Pizan, like other medieval authors, "saw myth as infinitely malleable for different narrative ends" and that this gave her the freedom to use the character of Dido post Aeneas to "reconstruct the sexual hierarchy," valorizing the married woman and the figure of the widow, in particular. De Pizan, a widow herself, engages here in the kind of identificatory reading practice identified in an earlier chapter by Davies.

In the first of three chapters centered on the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, John Channing Briggs' fascinating chapter gives an account of Francis Bacon's seminal work *Wisdom of the Ancients*, which provides a commentary on 31 ancient myths and interprets them in the light of the new model of scientific learning with which Bacon is famously associated. Briggs shows clearly how Bacon "offers his readers a glimpse not only of ancient precursors of modern scientific discoveries, but of the dawn – fragmentary, perhaps largely subconscious, yet

strangely prescient – of a new, scientific understanding of the world deep in the wisdom of the past, beneath the common understanding of what wisdom is or can be." We are reminded here, perhaps, of the rationalizing interpretations of the early mythographers excavated by Robert Fowler. Jeanne Neuechterlein analyses the famous painting *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, after Pieter Bruegel the Elder. This painting was unique for the time in its irreverent treatment of its mythological subject whose plight is reduced to an insignificant event that goes largely unnoticed in the contemporary Netherlandish landscape. Surveying a range of possible responses to the image and its classical sources, Neuechterlein concludes that "in re-telling the story for its own time, it also allows later audiences to re-tell their own viewing as they see fit." George Burrows takes on an equally innovative and influential text, *Il ritorno d'Ullise in patria* by the librettist Giacomo Badoaro and the composer Claudio Monteverdi. He demonstrates how in this version of the myth within the developing context of opera, Penelope becomes a "metaphor for the meeting of ancient and modern cultures," the tension between her use of musical speech and vocal lyric expressing the tension between a particular Venetian reception of ancient Greek tragedy and the expectations of a contemporary audience. All of these chapters are emblematic of one sort of appropriative response to myth which is boldly enabling of future receptions.

Michael O'Neill's stark pronouncement that "Romantic poetry would not exist, were it not for its turbulent love-affair with classical myth" propels us into the early nineteenth century and a discussion of Shelley's transgressive response to (among others) Aeschylus in the lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound*. Offering a finely tuned analysis of the way Shelley works with a multitudinous sense of tradition, O'Neill argues that "if *Prometheus Unbound* deploys classical myth as a spring board for a leap into Utopian futurity, it also uses such myth to enact its own sense of the nature and function of poetry." Helen Slaney explores George Bernard Shaw's use of myth in Pygmalion and highlights the way it "brings the dynamics of gender into problematic conjunction with the dynamics of artistic creation" in the context of early twentieth-century theatre. Unlike the Ovidian version where erotic desire is the driver, Shaw's transformation of his Galatea figure, Eliza, intends towards giving her a speaking voice; from Slaney's detailed reading of the play in the light of contemporary debates about language and power, the question emerges of whether Eliza is truly liberated or whether, despite her new identity, she remains "encased in myth." Turning to an iconic philosophical text, Kurt Lampe rejects the idea that Camus's treatment of the myth of Sisyphus is simply "a crude allegory of supposedly eternal truths" and offers instead a reading that contextualizes the dramatization of Sisyphus as an absurd figure within a nexus of kaleidoscopic receptions of ancient and modern poets and philosophers. These three chapters, among the most detailed and complex in the collection, demonstrate admirably how the interpretation of a specific mythic text inevitably involves the recognition and negotiation of a whole host of previous receptions.

The final two chapters focus on two commissioned works of art that utilize classical myth in defiantly non-realist modes. The first of these, Lars von Trier's film *Medea*, is far more concerned with spectacle than with plot, reversing the famous Aristotelian hierarchy, and constituting "a highly aestheticized, tableau-like treatment of the myth." Mette Hjort identifies the markers of ingenuity and provocation that render the film a highly personal accomplishment, at the same time as tracing the complicated processes of collaborative creation. Anish Kapoor's *Marsyas* transforms the figure of the satyr flayed alive by Apollo for challenging his musical ability into a huge abstract sculpture which refuses explicitly to depict a body in pain. Lisa Saltzman constructs a lineage for this work that encompasses both the British painterly tradition of the portrayal of fleshly forms and the project of artists of the New York School such as Newman and Rothko who, in the aftermath of war, struggled with the question of how ethically and aesthetically to represent human suffering. Here we see what Michael O'Neill memorably describes as "classical myth's generous invitation to invent in unforeseen ways" writ large in forms of artistic expression synonymous with the contemporary, the experimental, the challenging. There is certainly no sign, as yet, that the myths of the ancient world have lost their imaginative power and it does not seem complacent to envisage that in the future, too, these stories will continue to generate more stories, in contexts, genres, and forms of which we can currently only dream.

Part I

Mythography

1

Greek Mythography

Robert L. Fowler

Writing in the first century BCE, Parthenius of Nicaea, himself a poet, put together a collection of love-stories that he dedicated to Cornelius Gallus, commonly called the creator of the Latin love elegy. Although not all the stories in his collection are set in the so-called mythical period of Greek or Roman history, most of them are, and many of the others happen in faraway, effectively timeless places: the book is without difficulty included in any catalogue of ancient mythography. In his preface, Parthenius describes his gift in modest terms, calling it a "little note-book" that might provide Gallus with matter for his own compositions. In doing so he sets up a relationship familiar in the genre: the mythographical handbook is a work of reference, providing the raw material – the myths – for others to adorn, rework, and interpret. The author of the handbook himself has no such pretensions; he is a humble compiler, a passive recorder of myths just as he finds them.

Of course Parthenius is being disingenuous. His collection offers much to entertain the reader, who he hopes will read the book for its own sake. The tales, when not amazingly recherché (as most of them are), offer novel versions of familiar tales. One smiles at the ingenuity with which the author bolts his oddities on to the framework of mainstream mythology: the amorous mishaps occur in the interstices of Odysseus' wanderings, as it might be, or Hercules' labors. Parthenius prodigally deploys every trick of the romantic trade. He offers us callow youths and tender maids, predatory males and lustful wives. There is treachery, deceit, suicide, murder, and incest. There are gods, nymphs, pirates, shepherds, and kings. Baffling oracles are improbably fulfilled, unwise oaths go badly wrong, clever stratagems backfire. Antiquarian thirst is slaked with details of commemorative cults and festivals, and even cities may be founded as a result of these erotic

disasters. The style is simple, as is traditional in mythography, but the narration is nevertheless masterful – full of suspense and surprise.

Yet Parthenius' stated purpose in writing is not totally misleading. Collections like his *were* useful for consultation. All kinds of readers, and great writers too like Virgil or Ovid, had recourse to them. The difficulty of finding information in ancient books and libraries is hard to overstate, and précis like these would have saved a lot of time and trouble. Even before the advent of a bookish culture, mythography served as a guide for readers to the Greek mythological archive from the genre's beginnings in the late sixth century BCE. When one realizes just how much mythography there was on offer in antiquity – and one simple purpose of this chapter is to convey a sense of that amount – one appreciates that the demand being met by this supply must have been correspondingly great.

Throughout the history of mythography, however, in all its changing contexts, one motif constantly recurs, either implicitly or explicitly, and that is the stance exemplified by Parthenius' preface: that myth is something "out there" in the record awaiting the attentions of the mythographer, who is but a neutral cataloguer of the archive. In studying the reception of Greek mythology, as this volume does, one might for that reason exclude mythography, as not being sufficiently, or to any degree at all, interpretative. There are at least two responses to such a view. One is that this attitude to myth is already a kind of reception, even an interpretation, whose implications can be explored (and will be explored later in this chapter). Another is that – of course – interpretation sneaks in willy-nilly, with varying degrees of complicity on the part of the mythographer. For instance, a compiler of Amazing Tales taken from traditional mythology (a "paradoxographer" in ancient terminology, though that genre also encompassed wonders from the contemporary world) is already making a statement about what he thinks mythology is for, and, like modern tabloid writers, challenging readers to think about the boundaries of truth and fiction, and the nature of reality. When and why such books of marvels were put together becomes a question of social as well as literary history. One can also observe the ways different paradoxographers raise the pitch of astonishment by choosing ever weirder details, or how, by combining the unbelievable with the mundane, they encourage the fantasy that you might encounter the miraculous right outside your front door.

Like all ancient historians from Herodotus on, mythographers relied on their imaginations, with varying degrees of sincerity, to flesh out the skeleton of a received narrative. An interpretative stance will often be embedded in such acts. The amount of free invention is sometimes so great as to spring the boundaries of the genre and make the book look more like an ancient novel, which was avowedly fictional from start to finish (as in all generic definitions, boundaries are fuzzy at the edges). In the first century CE, for instance, someone calling himself "Dictys of Crete" wrote a "true history" of the Trojan War, writing as an eye-witness; a sensational treatment, as we can tell from the fragments (Dowden 2012). And some mythographers do overtly peddle interpretations anyway. Rationalizers such as

Palaephatus (Hawes 2011; Nünlist 2012) or Euhemerus (Winiarczyk 2002) and allegorists such as Cornutus (Nesselrath 2009) start by telling the myth, in the manner of ordinary mythography, but go on to offer their view of what the myth really means. Already Hecataeus offers rationalized versions of some myths: for instance, according to him Hercules did not descend to the Underworld to fetch Cerberus, the hound of Hades; he killed a large and pestilential serpent that dwelled in a cave thought to be the entrance to hell. Allegorical readings also originated in the classical era, for instance as a way of explaining the immoral behavior of gods in poetry: they were, properly read, symbols of emotions, ideas, or natural phenomena, and poets like Homer were actually encoding moral lessons and technical knowledge in their stories (Brisson 2004; Ford 2002, 67–89).

Thus it does not take long to discover ways in which mythography is not a neutral act. To get a better sense of the possibilities, let us survey some more examples. The selection will necessarily be severely limited, but the interested reader can find detailed accounts of the history of Greek mythography in the Further Reading at the end of this chapter.

Beginnings and Classical Mythography

Most of the issues emerge with the first mythographer, Hecataeus of Miletus, writing at the end of the sixth century BCE; so we will dwell a while on him. His work, like almost all ancient mythography, survives only in fragmentary quotations in other writers, but even from those meager remains we gain a clear sense of his colorful and pugnacious personality. He wrote two works: one containing a redaction of the genealogies of heroic Greece (the *Genealogies*), the other a work of geography-cum-ethnography, the *Periodos* or *Circuit of the World*, describing major cities and peoples in a clockwise direction around the Mediterranean, with brief information about local traditions and customs (and perhaps a map).

The first issue is one of nomenclature. If "mythography" means "writing up myths" then it is a problem to know what to do with Hecataeus and his immediate successors, who were working before myth was distinguished from history, and (therefore) mythography from historiography. For them, people like Hercules and events like the Trojan War were historical. It is only because their subject-matter was, in later terms, myth, that we call them mythographers. One may question the legitimacy of the label, and it is actually very instructive to think of these early writers as historians like Herodotus, comparing methods and aims: the "father of history" owed them a great deal (Fowler 1996). Moreover, in their day the very act of extracting the bare narratives from the poetry in which they were embedded had massive cultural implications. Although casual contexts for story-telling existed, poetry was the main purveyor of myth, and poetry involved much more than the story: song or recitative, a richly traditional style; music and dance, resplendent costumes – above all a performance, with an audience. To strip all of

these elements out and expose the naked story, to do it in prose rather verse, and in a book to be read rather than performed, more probably by an individual than by a group, was an act of great intellectual imagination and daring. The wider background is the birth of critical inquiry in sixth-century Ionia, which engendered philosophy and science as well as this scrutiny of the past. The first myth/historiographers became conscious of the enormous power of the past to shape our understanding of the present, and realized that, to study the process critically, one needs first to establish the record. Doing so in itself invited critical examination of that record.

One obvious problem was the multiplicity of versions on offer. Every poet had a different take on every point of a story, whether it was the genealogies of the characters, their motives, the settings, the sequence of events, or links to cults. Every detail, moreover, was laden with religious and cultural significance in the Greek cities. Hecataeus opens his book by saying that the stories of the Greeks were "many and foolish," but that he would "speak the truth, as it seems to me" (Jacoby 1923–, 1 fr. 1). These last five words are not apologetic (you might have a different version as it seems to you, and that would be all right); they are defiant (my version is the right one, because I am cleverer than you). Hecataeus' attitude is interesting from several points of view, but for immediate purposes the point is that this intolerance of multiplicity is highly ideological, entailing as it does the belief that there can be only one true version of a story: "the" myth, which the interpreter distills from the morass of competing narratives. Truth is monistic in this world-view, and it must be discovered not invented. The typical stance of ancient mythography is there from the start.

Even when he makes up a completely new story (as he sometimes conspicuously does), Hecataeus ostensibly does so on the basis of the evidence, assessed according to his own criteria of truth and falsehood. The new story is the one that *ought* to be out there, even if it is not actually attested; the others, he infers, are corruptions of a lost original. Similarly, when he chooses among existing variants, he acts as the final arbiter. A story is either true or false – there are no other categories – and the false ones must be suppressed and forgotten: they never were part of the record. There is an interesting implication in this move. In imposing his vision of what myth ought to be, Hecataeus effectively reverses the relationship between mythographer and myth. Far from being outside the archive looking in, he is attempting to supplant the old files with new ones. He wants his book to embody the archive from the moment of publication on, and he wants to put his successors in the position of outsiders. The attempt was of course futile; Hecataeus merely contributed yet another version to the store. Herodotus, Hecataeus' successor and rival, immediately took issue with many of his statements (Fowler 2006; West 1991). No one can still the flux, or seal the archive; no one stands outside the archive (Zajko 1998). There is no beginning: the mythographers got their myths from the poets, but the poets got them from

other poets, who got them from other poets… each with their own take on the tradition.

The mythographer's arrogation may be detected also in summaries of literary works, such as tragedies, which have come down to us from later centuries. These "hypotheses," as they are known, purport to be outlines of the plots of famous plays, composed for handy reference, but they often provide much more information than one finds in the play itself, covering prequel, sequel, and other events in between (Cameron 2004, 52–78; van Rossum-Steenbeek 1998, 1–84). It is as if this is "the" story, from which the playwright has taken his material; the mythographer has captured it, and the artist has interpreted it. Other writers, one infers, can only offer other interpretations: "the" myth remains constant. It, and therefore the mythographer, were there first, conceptually prior to everybody. The apogee of this line of reasoning is found in the epigram prefixed to the *Library* of Apollodorus, a summary of all Greek myth written perhaps in the late second century CE: it claims it is not necessary now even to *read* epic, lyric poetry, or tragedy, because you can find everything you need in this compendium.

The précis-writing industry had already begun in the fifth century BCE; there is evidence, for instance, of prose summaries of poems attributed to Eumelus of Corinth and Epimenides of Crete (Fowler 2013). Acusilaus of Argos, contemporary with Hecataeus, summarized the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, with tendentious amendments. Most mythography was, indeed, based on archaic poems, supplemented by local oral traditions. In principle there is little difference between summarizing one poem and summarizing/combining lots of poems, except that the latter operation more obviously asserts the independence of the mythographer. The most imposing of these compilations was by Pherecydes of Athens, written about 465 BCE and comprising ten books. Like other early mythographers, Pherecydes organized the vast material genealogically, following the pattern set by the Hesiodic *Catalogue*. Recounting the descent of founding figures such as Deucalion or Inachus, the mythographer pauses when he reaches a major actor (Heracles, Jason, Achilles, and so on) to tell the myths associated with them before moving on to the next descendant, either continuing in the same line, or backtracking to pick up a different line of descent from the founder. Genealogies had real sociological purchase. Aristocratic clans claimed descent from these heroes. In some parts of Greece tribal government was still the norm, and even in democratic city-states the elite clans remained powerful. Genealogies are subject to constant revision in an oral society, as contemporary conditions change (the past configuration is always inferred from the present: an ousted potentate may be "discovered" to be descended from a bastard). Altering a genealogy could have many implications, including political. Ion of Chios, for instance, amazingly said that his island's founder-figure Oinopion was not a son of Dionysus, as everybody else thought, but of the Athenian hero Theseus (Ion, eleg. fr. 29 West). Ion was a close friend of Cimon, architect of the Athenian

Empire, and this amendment trumpeted his allegiance to the project. In the small, enclosed world of classical Greece, the panhellenic genealogies were like a map, reflecting power relations, status, and cultural affinities. Kinship remained politically important in the post-classical age (Jones 1999; Patterson 2010), but comprehensive genealogy became less common as a creative way of approaching the mythological inheritance.

In addition to genealogical encyclopedias, histories of individual cities were a very common forum of mythography in the classical period. Scholars have dubbed this genre "local history" in contradistinction with the "great" "universal" history of Herodotus, Thucydides, and others. Arguments about how one genre relates to the other, chronologically and conceptually, have sometimes been unhelpful, but it seems a significant difference that myth looms much larger in the local histories than it does in Herodotus, and not simply because his subject was more recent events. Local history chronicled, among other things, the life stories of primeval heroes, the immigrations and emigrations of peoples, the deeds of the ancestors of the great clans, and the origin of civic institutions and cults. These collectively produced the city's sense of identity, and the interesting point is that ancient days were preferred to modern as a source of that identity. Recent events could indeed feature in local histories, but they occupied much the smallest portion of the book. And if they did occur (the Battle of Marathon is the prime example, trotted out repeatedly in Athenian propaganda as proof of the city's greatness, and right to rule others), the account was cast in the same register as those of the remote past; that is to say, the events were mythologized.

If one drives a hard line between "myth" and "history," or simply distinguishes them in Greek terms as events respectively before and after the return of the sons of Heracles to the Peloponnese after the Trojan War, one might not say that local history was a form of mythography, but rather that it made use of mythography for other purposes, and that only part of the book – the part before the Trojan War – was myth. Mythography can certainly be pressed into service in many contexts, and other instances will be identified later in the chapter. That would not be a correct assessment in the present case, however. Local history is a literary equivalent of a speech-act. The very doing of it validates the content. Without the book the tradition is unfocused, diffuse, at risk of evanescence, lacking celebration. Mythology and history are here combined as mythistory in the service of civic pride. The audience of such works was not only local, for an important purpose was to proclaim the city's standing in the larger world. The great cities even attracted the attention of foreign historians; the first chronicler of Athens was Hellanicus of Lesbos, writing around 400 BCE.

Needless to say, these writers often sharply disagreed with each other over the true version of myths, each seeking to dictate the terms of the collective understanding. In this perspective mythography, while giving voice to a silent or fragmented tradition in the service of others, also subjugates mythology to those purposes.

Post-classical Mythography

Ironically, Hecataeus set in motion a process that would ultimately lead to the differentiation of myth from history. For it became increasingly apparent that the stories of olden times, with all their gods and supernaturally endowed heroes, were different in kind from stories about the more recent past. Even if the latter could be contradictory or unbelievable, like myths, the difficulties seemed in principle superable, for the right kind of evidence was available to resolve them. The distinction between myth and history was clearly formulated in the fourth century BCE on the basis of work done by philosophers in the fifth century BCE (Fowler 2011). Although it is a distinction easily deconstructed – myth and history are thoroughly entangled with each other, then and now – nevertheless it was stated again and again by writers in many genres and periods, and people clearly thought they knew the difference.

Once doubts about truth were raised, they could not be banished; there is no return to Eden. The desire to believe in the myths remained strong, though, and is visible in the stratagems adopted to save them. One could claim that, read in the right way, myths really were true: this was the approach of rationalists and allegorists, mentioned earlier. Another strategy was to claim that the stories offered moral truths – uplifting examples of heroism or piety for the young to emulate. Such is the stance of Diodorus of Sicily (first century BCE) at the beginning of his universal history (his first six books treat the mythical period), and of the Augustan writer Livy in his history of Rome. Or one could note the links to contemporary religious practices, festivals, and sacrifices for which the stories provided the etiological explanation. Such matters were the stuff of local history, which was a growth industry in the Hellenistic world (Clarke 2008). We have testimonia and fragments of literally hundreds of local historians from these centuries (authors nos. 297–607 in Jacoby 1923-). This appeal to religious significance was a powerful tactic, bestowing truth on the myths by association with the gods whose existence was not doubted. Their worship, so important to human wellbeing, illustrated the living force of myth. Finally, one could note the pragmatic importance of myths for the cultivated life, as understanding literature and art was impossible without them. The point is implied by Parthenius' preface with which we began, and the use of myth as cultural capital is clear in the entire voluminous output of the Second Sophistic movement from the first century CE to the start of the third, especially the orations delivered on all manner of occasions in cities throughout the Greek world. These virtuoso orators were highly paid superstars. They certainly knew their poets, but like the poets themselves, they resorted to mythography to find their way in the enormous labyrinth of Greek mythology. So did their audiences. Mythography is well represented in the Oxyrhynchus papyri (van Rossum-Steenbeek 1998), which are random survivals from the bourgeois libraries of an unimportant provincial town.

Mythological handbooks such as the *Library* of Apollodorus serenely ignored the problem of the truth of myths, and just told the stories without apology. Because such works were made by scholars out of other books it is easy to think, and has been traditional to think, that the stories in them had become "just" myths, of only literary or intellectual interest to their authors (some "only"). Serious belief in the myths, as in the gods, had supposedly vanished. The same charge used to be laid at the door of Hellenistic poets. But what it means to believe in myth is a very complicated question, to which one can give many answers (Veyne 1988), not all of them necessarily related to veridical accuracy. To regard the attitude to myth of the Hellenistic era's greatest poet, Callimachus of Cyrene (third century BCE), as sterile and arid was always a failure of imagination on the part of modern critics. His masterpiece was the *Aetia* (Harder 2012), four books of brilliant, inventive etiological myths collected from all over the Greek world (many of them from local histories and earlier mythography, re-versifying what they had de-versified). This was a triumphant making-new, and from a mythographical point of view an electrifying take on the mythological inheritance: a discovery in it of the rare and the beautiful, the intellectually thrilling, the sublime and the comical, the ordinarily human and the transcendent. Not only for his literary technique but for his conception of mythology Callimachus exercised a profound influence on Roman poetry (Hunter 2006).

Species and sub-species of mythography multiplied in the Hellenistic period (Lightfoot 1999, 224–232; Wendel 1935, 1367–1370). There were collections of particular kinds of myths, such as love-stories, metamorphoses, or Amazing Tales (paradoxography); there were books of myths associated with natural or man-made landscapes, such as *On Rivers and Mountains* attributed wrongly to Plutarch (Delattre *et al*. 2011; Dorda *et al*. 2003) or *Myths City by City* of Neanthes of Cyzicus (Jacoby 1923-, 84 frr. 6–12), which he must have plucked from a shelf-load of local histories. Some books of myths were deliberately miscellaneous, such as Conon's *Tales* (first century BCE), unified by no obvious principle of selection (Blakely 2012; Brown 2002). Apollodorus' *Library* from the Imperial period is the only surviving example of the comprehensive manual, systematically covering all of Greek mythology, but we know of earlier ones. Greek versions of handbooks like that of Hyginus in Latin are represented in papyrus fragments; in these compilations one could find not only genealogies and myths, but catalogues of the most surprising variety: Kings of Athens; sons of Priam; children of gods; Argonauts and Calydonian Boarhunters; mothers who killed their sons, women who killed their husbands, men who killed their daughters, people who killed their relatives; mortals who were made immortal; people destroyed by their dogs; those who committed suicide, sacrilege, incest; the most beautiful, handsome, chaste; and so on. The epistemological and interpretative implications of making lists (including their close cousins, historical chronicles) would be the subject of a separate chapter. There are obvious ideological implications too when lists (of kings, for instance, or priests) are turned into public monuments; many viewers would not even be

literate enough to read the names. The monument is doing much more than conveying information. The resonance of a list, and the names within them, was well understood by the earliest Greek poets (indeed, their predecessors: the *Catalogue of the Ships* in the *Iliad* revises an earlier composition of uncertain date) as well as artists: the painter of the wonderful François Vase of the mid-sixth century BCE, a visual feast depicting seven famous stories, scrupulously labels all 130 figures (Wachter 1991).

Mythography figured in passing in many works written for other purposes. The geographer Strabo (early first century CE) and the travel writer and antiquarian Pausanias (late second century CE) frequently cite mythographers for information. Chronographers needed mythography to construct their grids (inferring from the genealogies the date of Deucalion's flood, the fall of Troy, and so on) (Higbie 2003; Mosshammer 1979). Writers on religion would have had them constantly to hand. An egregious example is Apollodorus of Athens' great work *On the Gods* (Jacoby 1923-, 244 frr. 88–153), which furnished rich material for Philodemus of Gadara (first century BCE) in his *On Piety*; the first part of this Epicurean's work, resurrected from the Herculaneum papyri, is an exposé of the ridiculous and scandalous stories of traditional mythology. Christian fathers such as Clement of Alexandria used similar sources for their denunciations of pagan myth (Cameron 2004, 48–49). Learned miscellanies typically made room for myths. The first production of this kind was Hippias of Elis' *Collection* in the late fifth century BCE (Węcowski 2012), which included antiquarian lore and doxography of sages as well as myths; the fourth-century Aristotelian *Peplos* (the "Robe," a tapestry of titbits: Rose frr. 637–644) was similar. Spectacular examples from later centuries are *The Learned Banqueters* of Athenaeus (ca. 200 CE; Olson 2006–2012) and Aelian's *Historical Miscellany* (early third century CE; Wilson 1997); in Latin there is the *Saturnalia* of Macrobius (fifth century CE; Kaster 2011).

The mythographers were especially useful to writers of commentaries on poets. Remnants of these commentaries survive in scholia, notes in the margins of medieval manuscripts of the poems. These are rich in fragments of ancient mythography, which the commentators needed to explain a mythological allusion in their texts. There were also mythographical handbooks constructed solely for the purpose of explaining references in a given poet. The existence of such a book for Homer, unimaginatively dubbed the "Mythographus Homericus" by modern scholars, had been inferred from the numerous excerpts in Homer's scholia; in the twentieth century numerous papyrus fragments of the original turned up (Montanari 1995; van Rossum-Steenbeek 1998, 85–118). There were similar books for Virgil and Ovid in Latin (Cameron 2004), and in Greek, unexpectedly, for the *Sermons* of Gregory of Nazianzus, attributed wrongly to Nonnus the Abbot – this time, a surviving text (ca. 500 CE; Nimmo-Smith 2001).

This (very partial) catalogue may give some sense of the enormous quantity of ancient mythography that once existed, and its extremely varied contexts.

Collectively and individually these works carry implications about mythology and its uses in their time and place. The industry continued unabated in the middle ages and of course continues still.

Closing Thoughts

The point made at the beginning, that mythography treats mythology as something distinct from its own activity, something "out there" to be captured and used, is amply confirmed by the material we have surveyed. But a larger question suggests itself: where or what is "the myth" that the mythographer seeks to reduce? The difficulty of locating this elusive entity lies behind the oft-repeated dictum that there is no myth, only myths: stories told in particular contexts. It is certainly true that myths do not tell themselves. Yet the mythographer must have something in mind – and so do we when we speak, as we cannot stop doing, of "the myth of X." "The" myth is the hypostasis of all the versions the mythographer has heard, and the color and flavor imparted by the contexts in which he has heard them. His unity, however arbitrarily derived, notionally underlies the inherited multiplicity. Like language, however, myth is a social phenomenon, existing both in the individual and the group. In some sense myth is indeed "out there." Any individual telling responds to a social nexus, and that is where "the myth" must be.

The process of redaction suggests that the issue is not only one of knowing but one of controlling; of stilling the flux, wringing order from disorder. The mythographer determines that this variant, not that one, is germane to "the" myth. It is obvious, however, that the end result, a bare narrative, is not really "the" myth. The question is, why does the mythographer (and why do we) think it is? The myth is much more than the narrative; it works through the associations and symbolism of its characters and motifs, and always contains a surfeit of meaning. But if we wish to recall "the" myth, in all its manifestations, the hypostasis must have narrative form. Whatever else it is, the myth has to be a story.

Why that is, is a large question far beyond the scope of this modest chapter. The role of narrative in structuring concepts of both external reality and internal self is a topic of important research in psychology, philosophy, and literary studies (a recent summation in Gallagher 2012). As creatures in space and time we find the linear progression of the narrative reassuring; it recalls our earliest ways of making sense of the world. The comfortable succession of "and then… and then," what the ancient critics called the "strung-on style" (Steinrück 2004), is at home in the mythography in all ages. Children too tell their stories so. Narratives have great explanatory power because they function below and beyond the level of argument: they simply feel right. The story encapsulates, reminds, explains, and controls. The use of mythography goes well beyond the simple sharing of information. In deciding what "the" myth is, more or less creatively, the mythographer gives a steer, and shapes the tradition; shapes, indeed, the very concept of

mythology. Not accidentally "mythography" in the twentieth century acquired the additional meaning of "the study of myths" (Doty 2000). In this perspective mythography is not only germane to the reception of mythology, it lies at its heart. To receive is to write one's own version of "the" myth.

Guide to Further Reading

The Greek fragments of early mythography are edited in Fowler (2000) with commentary in Fowler (2013); an overview in Fowler (2006). An English translation of larger fragments with brief commentary is promised. For other periods Jacoby (1923–) is the basic reference, which is being gradually updated and supplemented in *Brill's New Jacoby* (only available online as of the time of writing). For introductions and overviews of the ancient genre see Cameron (2004), Lightfoot (1999), Smith and Trzaskoma (2013), Wendel (1935). Trzaskoma *et al.* (2004) contains many mythographical texts. Clarke (2008) is a superb treatment of Hellenistic local history. Of the many annotated translations of Apollodorus, Hard (1997) may be recommended in English; the older Loeb of Sir James Frazer (1939–1946) is a classic, worth consulting not only for the information in its notes but as an example in itself of modern mythography.

References

Blakely, S. 2012. "Conon (26)." *Brill's New Jacoby*. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-jacoby/conon-26-a26 (accessed August 20, 2012).

Brisson, L. 2004. *How Philosophers Saved Myths. Allegorical Interpretation and Classical Mythology* trans. C. Tihanyi. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brown, M.K. 2002. *The Narratives of Konon*. Munich and Leipzig: Saur.

Cameron, A. 2004. *Greek Mythography in the Roman World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clarke, K. 2008. *Making Time for the Past. Local History and the Polis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Delattre, C., ed. 2011. *Pseudo-Plutarque. Nommer le monde: Origine des noms de fleuves, des montagnes, et de ce qui s'y trouve*. Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion.

Dorda, E.C., De Lazzer, A., and Pellizer, E., eds 2003. *Plutarco. Fiumi e monti*. Naples: M. D'Auria.

Doty, W. 2000. *Mythography. The Study of Myths and Rituals*, 2nd edn (1st edn 1986). Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.

Dowden, K. 2012. "Diktys of Crete (49)." *Brill's New Jacoby*. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-jacoby/diktys-of-crete-49-a49 (accessed August 20, 2012).

Ford, A. 2002. *The Origins of Criticism. Literary Culture and Poetic Theory in Classical Greece*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fowler, R.L. 1996. "Herodotos and his Contemporaries." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 116: 62–87.

Fowler, R.L. 2000. *Early Greek Mythography 1: Text and Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fowler, R.L. 2006. "Herodotus and his Prose Predecessors," in C. Dewald and J. Marincola, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Herodotus*, 29–45. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Fowler, R.L. 2011. "Mythos and Logos." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 131: 45–66.

Fowler, R.L. 2013. *Early Greek Mythography 2: Commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Frazer, J.G., ed. 1939–1946. *Apollodorus: The Library*. Loeb Classical Library 2 vols. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Gallagher, S., ed. 2012. *The Oxford Handbook of the Self*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hard, R., tr. 1997. *Apollodorus. The Library of Greek Mythology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harder, A. 2012. *Callimachus: Aetia*. 2 vols. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hawes, G. 2011. *The Rationalisation of Myth in Antiquity*. PhD Diss. Bristol.

Higbie, C. 2003. *The Lindian Temple Chronicle and the Greek Creation of their Past*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hunter, R.L. 2006. *The Shadow of Callimachus. Studies in the Reception of Hellenistic Poetry at Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jacoby, F. 1923–. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Leipzig and Leiden: Brill.

Jones, C.P. 1999. *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kaster, R.A., ed. 2011. *Macrobius: Saturnalia*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Lightfoot, J.L. 1999. *Parthenius of Nicaea. The Poetical Fragments and the Ἐρωτικὰ Παθήματα*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Montanari, F. 1995. "The Mythographus Homericus," in J.G.J. Abbenes, S.R. Slings, and I. Sluiter, eds, *Greek Literary Theory after Aristotle. A Collection of Papers in Honour of D.M. Schenkeveld*, 135–172. Amsterdam: VU University Press.

Mosshammer, A.A. 1979. *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press.

Nesselrath, H.-G., ed. 2009. *Cornutus. Die griechischen Götter*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Nimmo-Smith, J. 2001. *A Christian's Guide to Greek Culture. The Pseudo-Nonnus Commentaries on Sermons 4, 5, 39 and 43 by Gregory of Nazianzus*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Nünlist, R. 2012. "Palaiphatos (44)." *Brill's New Jacoby*. http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-jacoby/palaiphatos-44-a44 (accessed August 20, 2012).

Olson, S.D., ed. 2006–2012. *Athenaeus: The Learned Banqueters*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Patterson, L.E. 2010. *Kinship Myth in Ancient Greece*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Smith, R.S. and Trzaskoma, S. eds 2013. *Writing Greek and Roman Myth: Mythography in the Ancient World*. Leuven: Peeters.

Steinrück, M. 2004. "Der reihende Prosastil (εἰρομένη) und sein Verhältnis zur Periode." *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, 147: 109–135.

Trzaskoma, S., Smith, R.S., and Brunet, S., eds 2004. *An Anthology of Classical Myth. Primary Sources in Translation*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

van Rossum-Steenbeek, M. 1998. *Greek Readers' Digests? Studies on a Selection of Subliterary Papyri*. Leiden, New York and Cologne: Brill.

Veyne, P. 1988. *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths?*, trans. P. Wissing. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Wachter, R. 1991. "The Inscriptions on the François Vase." *Museum Helveticum*, 48: 86–113.

Węcowski, M. 2012. "Hippias of Elis (6)." *Brill's New Jacoby*. http://referenceworks. brillonline.com/entries/brill-s-new-jacoby/hippias-of-elis-6-a6 (accessed August 20, 2012).

Wendel, C. 1935. "Mythographie." *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* XVI.2: 1352–1374.

West, S. 1991. "Herodotus' Portrait of Hecataeus." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 111: 144–160.

Wilson, N.G., ed. 1997. *Aelian: Historical Miscellany*. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Winiarczyk, M. 2002. *Euhemeros von Messene. Leben, Werk und Nachwirkung*. Munich and Leipzig: Saur.

Zajko, V. 1998. "Myth as Archive." *History of the Human Sciences*, 11: 103–119.

2

Roman Mythography

Gregory Hays

Introduction

A basic canon of Roman mythography was established by the publication
of Thomas Muncker's *Mythographi Latini* in 1681. Muncker included four main
works: Hyginus's *Fabulae* and *Astronomica*, the *Narrationes* of "Lactantius Placidus,"
and the *Mitologiae* of Fulgentius.[1] Despite being lumped together as "mythogra-
phers," these texts in fact vary widely in structure, purpose, and date. They
cover a spectrum from stand-alone compendia to guides designed to facilitate the
reading of other authors. Most are interested mainly or exclusively in the stories
themselves, but at least one (Fulgentius) is also, or even primarily, interested in
the interpretation of myth. Not surprisingly, Roman mythography has close
connections with similar works in Greek. Each of the Latin examples has Greek
parallels, and several may be partly translated from Greek. This chapter will begin
by briefly surveying the individual works (plus some related material) and will
then look at their handling of a sample myth. I will conclude with some remarks
on later reception.

Surviving Texts

Of Muncker's quartet, the most wide-ranging is the handbook of *Fabulae* trans-
mitted under the name of Hyginus. In modern editions the work is divided into
277 chapters, and falls into three main parts. A prefatory section outlines divine
genealogies, rather like Hesiod's *Theogony* in outline form. The bulk of the work is
made up of discrete chapters, many of them clearly originating as plot summaries

of tragedies. Some of these chapters show signs of grouping by family relation-
ship, for example, 1–5 (the family of Athamas) or 82–88 (the house of Pelops). In
other cases, the ordering seems purely arbitrary. The concluding chapters are
mainly lists and catalogues (e.g., 247 "Characters Eaten by Dogs," 274 "Who
Invented What"). A number of such catalogues are now missing from our text,
though their headings are listed in a surviving table of contents. The date and
authorship of the collection are problematic. In its current form it has only a ten-
uous connection, if any, to the Augustan-era scholar C. Julius Hyginus. A recogniz-
able version of it seems to have been in existence by 207 CE; portions of that version
appear in a bilingual Greek/Latin schoolbook, the so-called *Hermeneumata Pseudo-
Dositheana* (Goetz 1892, 56–60). Excerpts are also found in a fourth- or fifth-century
palimpsest manuscript (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS Pal. lat.
24; see Lowe 1934, 22); like the *Hermeneumata* extracts they reflect a version of the
work that differs in some respects from the transmitted text. That the work had
Greek sources appears certain, and in fact the Latin version in the *Hermeneumata*
appears to be translated from the accompanying Greek text.

The second work attributed to Hyginus is the *Astronomica*, of uncertain date
and dedicated to an unidentified M. Fabius. The work includes sections on the
earth, a guide to identifying the constellations, and material on the planets. The
mythographic material is concentrated in the present Book 2 (the book divisions
are modern), and deals with the transformation of various mythological charac-
ters and animals into stars. A comparable Greek treatise survives in the set of
Catasterisms falsely ascribed to Eratosthenes, which is in fact one of Hyginus's
sources. There is also a close Latin parallel in the older *scholia* to Germanicus's
translation of Aratus – in reality a continuous treatise which also draws on
Pseudo-Eratosthenes.

The relationship of the two "Hyginean" works is complex. The author of the
Astronomica at one point asserts authorship of a mythographic work in more
than one book called *Genealogiae* (*Astr*. 2. 12). The extant *Fabulae* contains a fair
amount of genealogical material, and the *Hermeneumata* compiler in fact cites
his Hyginus under the title *Genealogia*. But the *Fabulae* in its present form has no
book divisions and nothing in it corresponds to the passage on the Graeae cited
in the *Astronomica*. On the other hand, there is clearly *some* relation between the
two works: the story of Icarius and Erigone (*Fab*. 130; *Astr*. 2. 4) shows links too
close to be coincidental. The simplest assumption is that the extant *Fabulae* rep-
resents an abridgement or adaptation of an original work now lost. This would
also account for the variations between the surviving text of the *Fabulae* and the
two sets of excerpts.

A third category, distinct from both general handbook (such as the *Fabulae*) and
thematic anthology (like *Astronomica* 2), is what one might call the mythological
companion or onomasticon. This is a mythographic work keyed to a specific
literary text and giving brief summaries of myths narrated or alluded to in it.
Greek examples include the fragments of the so-called "Mythographus

Homericus," the Callimachean *Diegeseis*, and the summaries of tragic plots known to modern scholars as the *Tales from Euripides*. In Latin the genre is represented by the set of Ovidian *Narrationes* first edited under the name of a non-existent "Lactantius Placidus." (This label stems from a complex series of confusions, on which see Cameron 2004, 313–316). They are transmitted in some manuscripts of the *Metamorphoses* but also circulated independently. Remnants of a similar handbook for Virgil (the "Mythographus Vergilianus") have recently been discerned lurking within the Virgilian commentator Servius – or, more accurately, in the extended version of the commentary commonly known as Servius Auctus or Servius Danielis, which may go back to the fourth-century scholar Donatus (Cameron 2004, 184–216).

Finally, we have Fulgentius's *Mitologiae*, a collection of myths and mythical interpretations in three books, with an imaginative allegorical prologue. Fulgentius wrote in North Africa, probably in the late Vandal or early Byzantine period. His opening book deals mainly with the iconography of gods and associated figures (the Fates, Cerberus, etc.), which are interpreted in symbolic terms. This portion of the work looks back to a tradition of Greek exegesis represented among extant texts by the *Epidrome* of Cornutus. The remainder of the work narrates individual stories and equips them with allegorical explications, sometimes of a moral nature but in other cases physical or rationalizing. These chapters are comparable to the treatise *On Unbelievable Tales* of Pseudo-Palaephatus and a handful of similar works in Greek.

In addition to these texts, there is a certain amount of mythographic material scattered through surviving commentaries on other Latin poets, notably that on Statius's *Thebaid* attributed (again, by confusion) to Lactantius Placidus. Twentieth-century papyrus finds, which have done much for our understanding of Greek mythography, have produced little or no new Latin material, but they do give us more insight into the Greek background from which the surviving Latin works emerged.

A Case Study: The Mythographic Midas

We can get a better sense of these texts' similarities and differences by looking at their handling of a sample myth. The story of King Midas and the Golden Touch can serve as an example. This is part of a small group of Midas stories (it would be an exaggeration to call it a "cycle") which also include Midas's capture of a Silenus and his involuntary acquisition of ass's ears as a punishment for poor musical taste.[2] The Silenus story is often amalgamated with the Golden Touch episode; both are found both with and separately from the Ass's Ears. Among literary sources the fullest extant version is found in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (11. 85–193), which includes all three in the order Silenus → Golden Touch → Ass's Ears.

We can start with Hyginus (*Fabulae* 191), who includes all three stories in a continuous (though loosely linked) sequence:

> **Rex Midas**. Midas rex Mygdonius filius Matris deae a Timolo < … > sumptus eo tempore quo Apollo cum Marsya uel Pane fistula certauit. quod cum Timolus uictoriam Apollini daret, Midas dixit Marsyae potius dandam. **2** tunc Apollo indignatus Midae dixit, *"Quale cor in iudicando habuisti, tales et auriculas habebis."* quibus auditis effecit ut asininas haberet aures. **3** eo tempore Liber pater cum exercitum in Indiam duceret, Silenus aberrauit, quem Midas hospitio liberaliter accepit atque ducem dedit, qui eum in comitatum Liberi deduceret. **4** at Midae Liber pater ob beneficium deoptandi dedit potestatem, ut quicquid uellet peteret a se. < a > quo Midas petiit ut quicquid tetigisset aurum fieret. quod cum impetrasset et in regiam uenisset, quicquid tetigerat aurum fiebat. **5** cum iam fame cruciaretur, petit a Libero ut sibi speciosum donum eriperet; quem Liber iussit in flumine Pactolo se abluere, cuius corpus aquam cum tetigisset, facta est colore aureo; quod flumen nunc Chrysorrhoas appellatur in Lydia.

> (**King Midas**. King Midas, a Mygdonian, the son of the Mother goddess, was chosen < as his fellow judge > by Timolus the time that Apollo competed on the pipes with Marsyas or with Pan. But when Timolus gave the victory to Apollo, Midas said that it should be awarded instead to Marsyas. **2** Then Apollo in anger said to Midas, *"Considering the intelligence you have shown as a judge, you shall have ears to match."* Having uttered these words, he made him have an ass's ears. **3** The time that Liber was leading his army against India, Silenus strayed away. Midas graciously offered him hospitality and gave him a guide to take him back to Liber's party. **4** But Liber gave Midas in return for his favor the opportunity of choosing, that he ask from him whatever he wished. Midas asked of him that whatever he touched should become gold. When he obtained his desire and returned to his palace, whatever he touched became gold. **5** When he was tormented by hunger he asked Liber to take the desirable gift from him. Liber instructed him to wash himself in the Pactolus. When his body touched the water it was turned a golden color. This river is now called Chrysorrhoas in Lydia.)

The opening words – *Midas rex Mygdonius filius Matris deae* – situate the main character both geographically and in genealogical terms. This is a feature found in a number of *fabulae* (e.g., 45 *Tereus Martis filius Thrax*…; 178 *Europa Argiopes et Agenoris filia Sidonia*…), and is a natural formula for a work divided into discrete chapters. The compiler also makes an effort to situate the story in relation to other events in mythological time (*eo tempore quo Apollo*…; *eo tempore Liber pater cum*…); such markers function like the *"(q.v.)"* in a modern handbook. There is at least one echo of Ovid, in the reference to the Golden touch as a *speciosum donum* (*cf. Met. 11.133 speciosoque eripe damno*). But Hyginus's version is, or at least purports to be, independent of any single instantiation of the story. Hence the nod to alternative traditions: *cum Marsya uel Pane*. Such moments of uncertainty or references to "other sources" recur throughout the collection.

From a stylistic standpoint, the chapter shows a consistent character. Sentences are relatively short and simple. Syntactic complexity rarely goes beyond a basic *cum* clause (*cum Tmolus uictoriam Apollini daret, Midas…*; *cum iam fame cruciaretur, petit…*). There are few particles of the *autem/enim* type. Rather, narrative units are crudely soldered onto what precedes with a monotonous string of relative pronouns:

> *quibus auditis effecit ut…*
> *quem Midas hospitio… accepit…*
> *<a> quo Midas petiit ut…*
> *quod cum impetrasset…*
> *quem Liber iussit…*
> *quod flumen nunc…*

As we shall see, these features are not unique to Hyginus. Rather, they are characteristic of mythographers in general, and have their counterparts in Greek mythographic texts.

With Hyginus as a benchmark, we can turn to the version of the story in the pseudo-Lactantian *Narrationes* (11.3–4):

Liber Thracia digressus cum Tmolum montem Lydiae comitatus Bacchis peteret, Silenus ei aufugit, quem Phryges captum ad Midan regem duxerunt. agnitus ab eo exceptus est, et Libero aduenienti reddidit. et ob beneficium optandi deus ueniam ei dedit: si quid uellet, a se peteret. ille, ut quaeque contigisset, aurum fieret; quod ei inutile fuit. cui deus petenti, ut restitueretur sibi, fecit. iussit enim ad flumen Pactolum peruenire; ibique se supponeret et sic rediret in pristinum statum, unde aqua aurei coloris esset. […] qui tamen fertur Midas esse Matris magnae filius. sic enim cum Hesiodo consentit Ouidius.

(When Liber, having departed from Thrace, accompanied by Bacchants, was heading for Mount Tmolus in Lydia, Silenus ran away from him, and the Phrygians brought him in bonds to King Midas. Recognized by him, he was received, and he returned him to Liber on the latter's arrival. In return for the favor, the god gave him the privilege of a choice: he was to ask from him anything he wished. The other wished that whatever he touched should become gold – which profited him nothing. When he asked to be restored to himself, the god did it. For he instructed him to make his way to the river Pactolus and there he was to submerge himself and thus return to his original state, and from then on the water would be of a golden hue. [*Here there follows the Ass's Ears story*] This Midas is said to have been the son of the Great Mother. For Ovid agrees in this with Hesiod.)

As one would expect, Pseudo-Lactantius presents the stories in the Ovidian order. And there are a few pieces of phrasing that seem to derive from the *Metamorphoses*:

> *Met.* 11. 92 *ad regem duxere Midan* → *ad Midan regem duxerunt*
> *Met.* 11. 94 *quem simul agnouit* → *agnitus*
> *Met.* 11. 100–101 *inutile … / muneris arbitrium* → *quod ei inutile fuit*

Yet the chapter omits significant aspects of the Ovidian narrative (e.g., Midas's ten-day celebration of Bacchic rites), and is curiously vague on the drawbacks of the Golden Touch itself (which Ovid describes at length). And it differs from Ovid on at least one minor detail: in Ovid, Midas takes Silenus back to Bacchus (*Met.* 11. 98–99), while in "Lactantius" he holds him for the god's arrival. Stylistically, Pseudo-Lactantius has much in common with Hyginus. We recognize the use of linking relatives: *quem Phryges captum… duxerunt*; *quod ei inutile fuit…*; *cui deus petenti, ut…* Also common to both is the use of *cum* clauses: *Liber… cum Tmolum… peteret, Silenus…* Indeed, one similarity of wording (not found in Ovid) suggests a direct relationship: *ob beneficium deoptandi dedit potestatem* (Hyg.) ~ *ob beneficium optandi deus ueniam ei dedit* (Ps.Lact.). Another feature shared with Hyginus is the citation of multiple or variant sources (*cum Hesiodo consentit Ouidius*); these are likely to reflect pillaging of earlier mythographers rather than first-hand research. Ovid does not in fact identify Midas as the son of the Mother Goddess; the closest he comes is the allusive phrase *Berecynthius heros* (11. 106). Hyginus, on the other hand, does so explicitly. Lactantius's chapter, then, is not simply a prose epitome of Ovid. It is an autonomous chunk of mythographic discourse, drawing on the same sources as Hyginus (if not Hyginus himself), but differently packaged.

Our third version of the story comes from Servius Auctus, explicating a passing reference to the streams of the Pactolus (*Aen.* 10.142):

Pactolusque inrigat auro] Pactolus et Hermus Lydiae flumina sunt, aurum sicut Tagus trahentia. || sed Pactoli fabula talis est: Mida rex cum ibi regnaret, Silenus captus ab eius sociis et uinctus est. miseratione uel prudentia eum et resolui fecit et omni adfabilitate fouit. quibus rebus ille gratiam rependens, praestitit Midae, ut quicquid tetigisset, in aurum uerteretur; sed cum ille quaecumque contigisset in aurum conuertens, fame periclitaretur, ex praecepto in Pactolum fluuium abluendi gratia se mittere iussus est. in quem se cum iecisset, ferendi auri naturam flumini dedit, ipse destitit in aurum quae contingebat mutare. || *inrigat* autem *auro* mire, cum ramenta quaedam auri inueniri dicantur.

(*… and the Pactolus irrigates it with gold*: The Pactolus and Hermus are rivers of Lydia that carry gold, like the Tagus. || But the story of the Pactolus is as follows: when king Midas reigned there, Silenus was captured by his men and tied up. Whether out of pity or prudence, he had him released and treated him with every sign of friendship. In gratitude for this, he granted to Midas that whatever he touched should be turned to gold. But when he was in danger of starvation, since he turned whatever he touched into gold, according to instructions[3] he was told to throw himself into the river Pactolus to wash away (the power). When he had thrown himself in, he

bestowed on the river the power of carrying gold, while he himself ceased to trans-
form into gold what he touched. | | "Irrigates with gold" is a remarkable expression,
whereas (*sc*. in reality) flakes of gold are said to be found in it).

I have inserted "||s" above to bring out the miscellaneous nature of the note
(which is entirely typical of both Servius and Servius Auctus). The commentator
opens with a pedestrian gloss (the identification of "Pactolus"), and closes with a
comment on Virgilian phrasing. In between is sandwiched a developed mytho-
graphic narrative (*Midas… contingebat mutare*) probably drawn from a Virgilian
equivalent to Pseudo-Lactantius. Understandably, the narrative here includes only
the Golden Touch story. Stylistically we are clearly in a mythographic environ-
ment, with short, bald sentences, linking relatives (*quibus rebus ille gratiam repen-
dens…*; *in quem se cum iecisset…*) and *cum* clauses (*Midas rex cum ibi regnaret, Silenus…*;
sed cum ille…). Yet the phrasing seems to be independent of Hyginus and Pseudo-
Lactantius, and the content too shows variations. Here it is Silenus who is respon-
sible for the ambiguous gift, not Bacchus (who is nowhere mentioned). The
narrative also fails to make clear that the golden touch was bestowed on Midas *at
his own request*. One would have thought this a vital part of the story, and its absence
may suggest that a longer version has been condensed.

What emerges from this inquiry? First, the extant works display a strong family
resemblance: mythographic texts are recognizable not only on the basis of their
content but also their style. But while these works are clearly written within the
same tradition, and two (Hyginus and Pseudo-Lactantius) may well be related, it is
probably hopeless to try to establish the exact relationship between them. One
problem is that so little remains. Another is the natural fluidity and derivative
character of such works (modern as well as ancient). It is as if we had to recon-
struct the links between a *Book of Greek Gods and Goddesses*, a web page on star
myths, and the Monarch Notes to Ovid.

More potentially fruitful is the question of audience: for whom did these com-
pilers compile? The excerpts from Hyginus in the *Hermeneumata Pseudo-Dositheana*
suggest use as a school-text, but there is little other evidence for this. Alternatively,
they may have served as a vehicle for what we would now call "cultural literacy,"
enabling their readers, like Thomas Bulfinch's "to comprehend the allusions so
frequently made by public speakers, lecturers, essayists, and poets, and those which
occur in polite conversation" (Bulfinch 1855, 5). Just as many modern readers
derive their knowledge of Greek myth not from Homer, Euripides, or Ovid, but
from Edith Hamilton, Robert Graves, or Wikipedia, so their ancient counterparts
may have found it more efficient to read Hyginus than Homer, and Pseudo-
Lactantius than Ovid.

In this connection, it is worth noting an aspect so obvious as to be overlooked:
all these authors are concerned primarily with Greek myth. To be sure, there are
exceptions: the Ovidian narrator is forced to cover some Roman stories in the close
of the *Metamorphoses*, while Fulgentius includes the Virgilian story of Hercules

and Cacus (2. 4). Hyginus includes Romulus, Remus, and Camilla in his list of mythical characters suckled by animals (*Fab*. 252), and other Roman myths crop up occasionally in passing. But these are very much the exception. And this in turn points to a larger fact about imperial Roman society, the overwhelming dominance of Greek culture. Greek myth was a universal language, at least among those with pretensions to culture. Roman mythology remained the province of antiquarians and scholars of religion.

From Narrative to Interpretation: Fulgentius

As we have seen, Hyginus, Pseudo-Lactantius and the hypothetical Mythographus Vergilianus are recognizably similar, even if they articulate their material in somewhat different ways. All share a purely narrative focus: "just the facts, ma'am." In Fulgentius, however, we find a much broader conception of mythography, as his chapter on the Golden Touch (*Mitologiae* 2.10) will show.

> **Fabula Midae regis et Pactoli fluuii**. Mida rex Apollinem petit ut quid tetigisset aurum fieret. Cumque promeruisset, munus in ultionem conuersus est, coepitque sui uoti effectu torqueri. Nam quidquid tetigerat aurum statim efficiebatur. Erat ergo necessitas aurea locuplesque penuria. Nam et cibus et potus rigens auri materia marmorabat. Itaque Apollinem petit ut male desiderata conuerteret responsoque accepto, ut tertio caput sub Pactoli fluminis undas subderet; quo facto Pactolus deinceps arenas aureas trahere dicitur.
>
> Sed euidenter poete alluserunt argutiam,[4] illa uidelicet causa, quod omnis appetitor auaritiae cum omnia pretio destinat fame moritur. Quod et Mida rex fecerat.[5] Sed collecta pecuniarum suarum summam, ut Solicrates Cizicenus in libris historiae scribit quod omni censu suo Mida rex Pactolum fluuium, qui in mari decurrere solitus erat, per innumerabiles meatus ad inrigandam prouinciam deriuauit suaque expensa auaritia fluuium fertilem reddidit. Mida enim Grece quasi *meden idon*, id est "nihil sciens." Auarus enim tantum stultus est, ut sibi prodesse non norit.

> (**The Story of King Midas and the River Pactolus**. King Midas asked of Apollo that whatever he touched should become gold. And when he obtained his desire the gift was turned into a punishment, and he began to be tortured by the fulfil-ment of his desire. For whatever he touched at once became gold. Thus there was golden poverty and wealthy penury. For both food and drink hardened into the rigid form of gold. So he asked Apollo to change his foolish wish and on receiving the response that he should put his head thrice under the waters of the river Pactolus, when he did this, the Pactolus from then on is said to have carried golden sand.
>
> But it is obvious that the poets have playfully created an elegant device, since every seeker of avarice, because he judges everything by its price, dies of hunger. Which is what King Midas would have done. But with the monies he had collected,

as Solicrates of Cizicene writes in his historical works that King Midas, using all his wealth, redirected the river Pactolus, which was accustomed to disgorge its waters in the sea, through innumerable channels in order to irrigate the region; and by spending his own fortune, he rendered the river fertile. And Midas in Greek is as it were *meden idon*, that is, "knowing nothing." For the miser is so foolish that he can do himself no good.)

We note several unique details. Here the god who grants Midas's wish is Apollo rather than Bacchus. This is perhaps a slip influenced by Apollo's central role in the Ass's Ears episode. Also unparalleled in other accounts is the triple lustration (*ut tertio caput… subderet*), though the "three times" motif is a familiar folktale formula. From a stylistic point of view, the opening of our passage is comparable to the preceding passages. The mythographic style is evident in short sentences and straightforward vocabulary (*Apollinem petit ut quidquid tetigisset aurum fieret*; *Pactolus deinceps arenas aureas trahere dicitur*). Indeed, several syntactic glitches hint at a not very punctilious cut-and-paste job.

But other features reveal that we are dealing with something more ambitious than a handbook. We note the brief eruption of more rhetorical and poetic phrasing in the narrative section: *munus in ultionem conuersus*; *necessitas aurea locuplesque penuria*; *rigens auri materia marmorabat*.[6] We also find an aspect absent from the mythographers examined above: the story is not just narrated but explained. Fulgentius in fact gives us not one but two interpretations: a historicizing interpretation attributed to "Solicrates" and a moralizing explanation (Midas as miser). Both are rooted in earlier interpretative traditions. While we know nothing of Fulgentius's purported source, Solicrates of Cyzicene, traces of a rationalizing interpretation can be found in the Greek mythographer Konon (*Fab.* 1), where the Golden Touch appears hard by a reference to Midas as a finder of buried treasure. Midas serves as an exemplum of the foolish miser as early as Aristotle (*Politics* 1. 9. 1257b16), and a similar reading is found in the twelfth-century Byzantine scholar-poet John Tzetzes (*Chiliades* 1. 115–123), who is most unlikely to have known Fulgentius's Latin version. Finally, we should note the confirmatory role played by etymologizing in the interpretation: *Mida quasi "meden idon."* Etymologizing is a constant tool in Fulgentius and other interpreters, and this is by no means the most far-fetched example.

Afterlife

Hyginus's *Fabulae* have survived by the slenderest of threads. A manuscript written ca. 900 CE in Southern Italy seems somehow to have made its way to Freising in Germany in the early sixteenth century where it was transcribed and then dismembered; only fragments now survive. But most of the texts described above enjoyed a substantial medieval reception. Hyginus's *Astronomica* was popular in

the middle ages, with over 60 extant manuscripts (Viré 1981). The Servian "Mythographus Vergilianus," "Lactantius Placidus" and Fulgentius all circulated widely. Coulson and Roy list over 50 surviving manuscripts of the Ovidian *Narrationes* (2000, 37–39); the Fulgentian *Mitologiae* were about as popular, and Servius far more so. They also enjoyed an indirect influence. All three were used, for example, by the anonymous compilers now known as the First and Second Vatican Mythographers. The First Mythographer's Midas chapter (87) is a medley of "Lactantius" and Fulgentius.

The influence of the Latin mythographers can be traced even into the modern period. The information they provided was sorted and filed by Renaissance and early modern handbook-writers, and assimilated in turn by modern reference works like Roscher's *Lexikon* (1894–1897) or Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (1872). But they also anticipate in form modern handbooks like those of Thomas Bulfinch (1855), Robert Graves (1960) and Edith Hamilton (1942) whose work is dealt with in chapters five and six of the current volume. Their lingering presence can be felt in the version of the Golden Touch in chapter 83 of Graves (1955: 281–282):

> Midas, enchanted by Silenus's fictions, entertained him for five days and nights, and then ordered a guide to escort him to Dionysus's headquarters [Hyginus:]. Dionysus, who had been anxious on Silenus's account, sent to ask how Midas wished to be rewarded. He replied without hesitation: 'Pray grant that all I touch be turned into gold.' Midas soon begged to be released from his wish, because he was fast dying of hunger and thirst; whereupon Dionysus, highly entertained, told him to visit the source of the river Pactolus, near Mount Tmolus, and there wash himself. He obeyed, and was at once freed from the golden touch, but the sands of the river Pactolus are bright with gold to this day.

The basic style and structure of the narrative should seem thoroughly familiar. Indeed, the phrase "ordered a guide to escort him to Dionysus's headquarters" looks very much like a translation of Hyginus: *ducem dedit, qui eum in comitatum Liberi deduceret*. The influence may be at more than one remove. Like the Roman mythographers, Graves drew heavily on earlier handbooks for his narratives, as well as for the imposing array of sources he cites. His own contribution was an eccentric commentary to each myth, which in the case of the Midas chapter ranges from the Bronze Age Mushki ("a people of Pontic origin") to the secret name of Dionysus ("a knot-cipher tied in [a] raw-hide thong") to speculation about "scraps of Atlantian lore" and Gaelic legends. In this sense, the total effect of the entry is closer to Fulgentius. It thus illustrates a tension that is implicit not just in the canon of Roman mythography, but in the study of myth generally, between purely narrative mythography (as in Hyginus or Pseudo-Lactantius) and the urge to explicate, to uncover "what lies beneath" these deceptively simple stories.

Notes

1   Muncker also included two shorter works by Fulgentius and a work De deorum imaginibus ('On the Images of the Gods') now recognized as medieval.

2   In addition to the Latin accounts discussed later in the chapter, important Greek texts are the scholia on Aristophanes, Plutus 287 and Konon, *Narrationes 1*. See also Drexler (1894–1897); Roller (1983).

3   I translate the redundant *ex praecepto* (understandably omitted by at least one manuscript) on the assumption that the original source had *misit* and that *mittere iussus est* is a careless variation by the excerptor.

4   I retain the transmitted text; Helm's argut<e auarit>iam is ingenious but probably unnecessary.

5   A minority reading (very likely a medieval conjecture) for *erat*; the latter is found in most manuscripts and printed by Helm.

6   The phrase *rigens auri materia* appears in identical form in the prologue to the work (Helm 1898, 5), suggesting that it may be a quotation from some work now lost.

Guide to Further Reading

The best all-around guide to this area is Cameron (2004); on the Greek background see van Rossum-Steenbeek (1998). For Hyginus, "Lactantius," and Fulgentius there is still much of value in the Latin notes of Muncker (1681), reprinted with additions by van Staveren (1742). The standard text of Hyginus's Fabulae is now Marshall (1993). For a reliable English translation see Smith and Trzaskoma (2007), with a useful introduction (xlii–lv). The only general study known to me is Breen (1991), still unpublished but available via University Microfilms International. Fletcher (2013) explores aspects of the compilation that reflect a Roman audience. The *Astronomica* is edited by Viré (1992). The English renderings in Grant (1960) and Condos (1997) are not always trustworthy. On the textual tradition of both Hyginean works see Reeve (1983). The Pseudo-Lactantian *Narrationes* are most easily accessible in Magnus (1914, 625–721); there is as yet no English rendering. On the dating and genre of the work Cameron (2004) is now fundamental. On its transmission and relationship with the manuscripts of Ovid see Otis (1936) and Tarrant (1995). For mythographic material in Servius see Cameron (2004, 184–216). The only complete text is Thilo and Hagen (1881–1902), but the relationship between the shorter and longer forms of the commentary is better represented by Rand *et al.* (1946–1965), which at present covers only Aen. 1–5. For the moment the standard text of Fulgentius is Helm (1898); the English rendering of Whitbread (1971) is not reliable. On what is known of his background see Hays (2003). His relationship to the earlier and later mythographic tradition is further explored in Hays (2013).

   In keeping with the focus of this Handbook, this chapter has concentrated on the reception of Greek myth by Roman mythographers, and has had little to

say about Roman myth and its ancient students. For those who wish to explore this area, good starting points are Bremer and Horsfall (1987) and the essays in Graf (1993).

References

Breen, A.B. 1991. "The *Fabulae Hygini* Reappraised. *A Reconsideration of the Content and Compilation of the Work.*" Dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Bremmer, J.N. and Horsfall, N. 1987. *"Roman Myth and Mythography," Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, suppl. 52. London: Institute of Classical Studies.

Bulfinch, T. 1855. *The Age of Fable: or, Beauties of Mythology*. Boston: S.W. Tilton.

Cameron, A. 2004. *Greek Mythography in the Roman World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Condos, T. 1997. *Star Myths of the Greeks and Romans. A Sourcebook*. Grand Rapids, MI: Phanes Press.

Coulson, F. and Roy, B. 2000. *Incipitarium Ovidianum. A Finding Guide for Texts in Latin Related to the Study of Ovid in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Turnhout: Brepols.

Drexler, W. 1894–1897. "Midas," in W. H. Roscher, ed., *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, 2954–2968, vol. 2.2 (Laas-Myton). Leipzig: Teubner.

Fletcher, K.F.B. 2013. "Hyginus' *Fabulae*: Toward a Roman Mythography," in S. Trzaskoma and R. Scott Smith, eds, *Writing Myth: Mythography in the ancient World*, 133–164. Leuven; Paris; Walpole, MA: Peeters.

Goetz, G. 1892. *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum*, vol. 3. Leipzig: Teubner.

Graf, F. 1993. *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Grant, M. 1960. *The Myths of Hyginus*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Publications.

Graves, R. 1955. *The Greek Myths*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books.

Graves, R. 1960. *The Greek Myths*. Rev. ed. 2 vols. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Hamilton, E. 1942. *Mythology*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Hays, G. 2003. "The Date and Identity of the Mythographer Fulgentius," *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 13: 163–252.

Hays, G. 2013. "Fulgentius the Mythographer?," in S. Trzaskoma and R. Scott Smith, eds, *Writing Myth: Mythography in the Ancient World*, 309–333. Leuven; Paris; Walpole, MA: Peeters.

Helm, R., ed. 1898. *Fabii Planciadis Fulgentii V.C. Opera*. Leipzig: Teubner.

Lowe, E.A. 1934. *Codices Latini Antiquiores. Part 1. The Vatican City*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Magnus, H., ed. 1914. *P. Ovidi Nasonis Metamorphoseon Libri XV*. Berlin: Weidmann.

Marshall, P.K., ed. 1993. *Hygini Fabulae*. Stuttgart and Leipzig: Teubner. (2nd ed. 2002.)

Muncker, T. 1681. *Mythographi Latini*. Amsterdam: Ex officina viduae Joannis à Someren.

Otis, B. 1936. "The Argumenta of the So-Called Lactantius," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 47: 131–163.

Rand, E.K. *et al.* 1946–1965. *Servianorum in Vergilii Carmina Commentariorum Editio Harvardiana*. Lancaster, Pennsylvania and Oxford: American Philological Association.

Reeve, M.D. 1983. "Hyginus," in L.D. Reynolds, ed., *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics*, 187–190. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Roller, L. 1983. "The Legend of Midas," *Classical Antiquity*, 2: 299–313.

Roscher, W.H., ed. 1894–1897. *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, vol. 2.2 (Laas-Myton). Leipzig: Teubner.

Smith, R.S. and Trzaskoma, S., trans. 2007. *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae: Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Smith, W. 1872. *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography*. London: J. Murray.

Tarrant, R. 1995. "The *Narrationes* of 'Lactantius' and the Transmission of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," in O. Pecere and M. D. Reeve, eds, *Formative Stages of Classical Traditions: Latin Texts from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, 83–115. Spoleto: Centro italiano di studi sull'Alto medioevo.

Thilo, G. and Hagen, H., ed. 1881–1902. *Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii carmina commentarii*. Leipzig: Teubner.

van Rossum-Steenbeek, M. 1998. *Greek Readers' Digests? Studies on a Selection of Subliterary Papyri*. Leiden: Brill.

van Staveren, A. 1742. *Auctores Mythographi Latini*. Leiden: apud Samuelem Luchtmans; Amsterdam: apud J. Wetstenium et G. Smith.

Viré, G. 1981. "La transmission du *de astronomia* d'Hygin jusqu'au XIIIe siècle," *Revue d'Histoire des textes*, 11: 163–177.

Viré, G., ed. 1992. *Hygini de astronomia*. Stuttgart and Leipzig: Teubner.

Whitbread, L.G. 1971. *Fulgentius the Mythographer*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Myth and the Medieval Church

James G. Clark

Medieval Europe was taught to regard the church of God as the center of the world. It was the primary tenet of a physical geography that mapped territories known and unknown concentrically from the source of Christianity (Jerusalem) and the seat of its governance (Rome). It was advanced, moreover, as a cultural value, to curb the ambitions of burgeoning national identity and to seal recurrent regional, ethnic, and racial fractures: set above the territorial and temporal bounds of both realm and people, only *ecclesia* could convey peace, purpose, and enduring identity to the peoples of the west, *lingua*, *cultus*, *patria*, *parens*.

Yet this church was not – at least, not yet – the colonizer of uncharted wastes but the conqueror of a continent that had known, and could still recall other ways of seeing the present life, the past, and possible futures. As in many experiences of conquest, the medieval church had sought to subdue, to dominate, but not to destroy. The figures and forms that the church found in its path were rarely removed entirely; more commonly they were remade, to join with raw materials (sometimes literally) from which the ecclesiastical edifice was rapidly raised. In fact, these adopted patterns of thought from pre-Christian Europe proved their value to their new possessors not only at the lower courses of the church's building but also (indeed, more especially) at its most ambitious heights, providing a blueprint for the fundamental elements of the earth, the force of the heavens, and even the nature of time itself. Contrary to the common conception of a Christian Middle Ages, the church did not conceal its debt to the mythological legacy of pagan antiquity; whether tracing the reach of its earthly *imperium* on the Hereford Map (ca. 1300) or catching a colorful intimation of the celestial source of its power in the rose window of Nôtre Dame de Paris (ca. 1175 – ca. 1200), in *mater ecclesia*,

the *devoti* would confront verbal and visual reference – and it was more often than not a reference, not merely a reflection – to myth (Harvey 1996; Kline 2001).

The pattern of adoption and adaptation was set by the founding generations of medieval churchmen. To a degree it marked a departure from the early currents of Greek and Latin Christianity, which had been sustained by a determined, anti-pagan discourse, and which had stimulated a learned enterprise, albeit short-lived, to overlay, or even replace the lively literary tradition of pagan myth. It might be said that the discomfort caused by the forms and fables of the poets diminished for those prelates, missionaries, and monks whose Christianity was lived neither amid the material culture of the old pagan empires, nor in the face of a new pagan threat. Certainly, there was a pragmatism governing the approach of those charged with propagating churches in the northern, central, and eastern regions of Europe where successive waves of migration, settlement, and conquest already had yielded a cross-current of custom and culture to be navigated with care. For these frontier pioneers, able only to catch a glimpse of the late classical *urbs* of Basil (of Caesarea, d. 379) or Benedict (of Nursia, d. 547) from a patchy textual tradition, the cultural motifs of this fast-receding world also held a different value, as an essential element of the intellectual system from which such powerful and productive spirituality had been born.

In the faltering, formative years of these churches, the accommodation of pre-existing and persisting commitment to pagan myth was an explicit aim of the pastoral mission. Remote from the pontifical see it was a far more complete accommodation surely than could have been tolerated in the oldest and more developed Christian communities. New sees, and monasteries, incorporated earlier sites of sacred significance and, at least sometimes, acknowledged places of worship (Speigel 2007). Reliefs, if not from temples then votive tablets, memorials, or tombstones from urban and villa sites, were incorporated, and it was not always only a transitional pattern: the first churches of the north were made by men familiar only with timber building; stone came only later, in some regions as late as the twelfth century, yet a pre-Christian relief may still be found set, it would appear with some deliberation, within the walls (for example at Tynemouth Priory, Northumbria: Baker and Holt 2004: 100–101; Craster (1907, 36); Kaldellis 2008). The cult of these churches was couched carefully not to efface established practices but to follow them not only in respect of their seasonal rhythm but also, even, in their customs. For the worshippers of northwest Europe, it was the traces of Norse and Saxon myth that were most tangible in the evolving calendar of observance (Blair 2006; Bradford Bedingfield 2002), but closer to the old centers of the ancient world there was an arresting encounter between Christian doctrine and classical myth. Charos and Hades remained a presence in the representation of a pious death in devotional texts and images of the Byzantine church, and the ancient rituals of the *Bacchae*, which the Christian fathers of antiquity had sought to extinguish, could still be seen in the burial ceremony of a Byzantine believer. The custom of spilling the blood of

doves at a burial was reported to Nicetas, metropolitan of Thessalonica as late as the twelfth century (Angold 1995).

What on the mission front, in the new or, after early failures, the renewed churches, and the convert community, was a conspicuous confrontation between the *vera scriptura* and myth, by contrast in the body of the church was a systematic and sustained cultural assimilation. It was founded on the recovery and reconstitution of the syllabus of the late-antique school. Although rooted in the civic culture of the old empires, it was in the rising cities at their outer fringes to the (Roman) north and northwest and the (Greek) east and Middle East, and their burgeoning churches, that the *artes liberales* were recast for the formation of the priesthood. It was a pedagogic program born less from any pontifical directive than from a powerful sense of the classical inheritance undiminished by distance from the *fontes* and reinforced by a common vision of literate, learned prelacy advanced by the most influential pioneers, Basil, Benedict, Cassiodorus (d. ca. 585), and Isidore (of Seville, d. 636). Certainly, within Rome there was a greater anxiety for the authority for a pioneer church on a perilous frontier: Pope Gregory the Great (590–604) scolded Bishop Desiderius of Cahors for the classicism of his schoolroom, "for the same lips cannot sing the praises of Love and the praises of Christ" (Brown 1994). In the new cathedrals and monasteries boys and men recruited for (active or contemplative) clerical service followed a pattern of study that would have been broadly recognizable to the Caesarean Basil or the Roman Benedict, beginning with the linguistic arts of the *trivium* and proceeding, where, and as, the schools were supplied with the appropriate authorities, with the computational disciplines of the *quadrivium*; such patterns were well established in Constantinople by the time of John the Lydian (d. ca. 565), the first *auctor* of the eastern church to reference Ovid, in Iberia in the generation that followed (when Isidore was schooled) and quite securely in France, Germany, and pockets of England by the mid-seventh century (Fisher 2011; Henderson 2007; Lapidge 2006). This evocation of the classical schoolroom endured, elaborated, foreshortened but never wholly extinguished, until a combination of Italian humanism and Reformation Biblicism forced fundamental changes from universities down to the elementary school in the sixteenth century.

The syllabus conveyed the form and matter of classical myth into the verbal and imaginative currents of the clergy from the moment their instruction began. Learning the rules of written language, of grammar, rhetoric, and meter, led the young clerk towards a pagan world. The ancient masters of grammar, now pressed into a new service repeatedly glanced and hinted at a fabulous realm: "O Musa!" cried Donatus, whose *artes major* and *minor* were the staple of the Latin schoolroom, and, when introducing prepositions, "Multa super Priami rogitans" (*Aeneid*, I.750). In the same way, the song of Homer resounded through the *Tékne grammatike* of Dionysius Thraxos, the principal primer of Greek East (Browning 1997). It is true that contemporary masters, compiling new manuals on grammar and meter on the old model, were circumspect. Bede of Monkwearmouth (d. 735)

preferred the paradigms of the Christian poets, whose flourishes of technique followed the pagan *auctores* in their style but not their substance (Lapidge 1996). Moreover there was not, by any means, a uniform transmission of, or rising profile to, any one of the pagan poets in these burgeoning clerical constituencies of North West Europe (Lapidge 2006; O'Connor 2012).

   Yet there was no narrow prescription for clerical pedagogy and as early as the seventh century there were teachers who weighed their technical worth – verbal and metrical – above any difficulties of doctrine. Bede's contemporary, Aldhelm of Malmesbury (d. 709) drew his examples from such a wealth of pagan literature that it compels a reconsideration of the works that were in circulation in early Saxon England (Orchard 1994; Lapidge 1996). The growth of schools in number and ambition generated manuals of even greater ambition: Alcuin of York (d. 804) presented his pupils with a grammar raised on the pillars (as he called them) of the pagan *auctores*, whose supports are the perquisite for the "perfecta scientia" that is the pursuit of the true clerk (de Lubac 2009). The Muses were no longer at the margins. The renewal and extension of the network of clerical schools in the century after 1050 carried this classicizing grammar to its zenith. It was expressed in the very title of the most popular manual of the high Middle Ages, the *Graecismus* of Eberhard of Béthune (d. ca. 1212), whose penultimate chapter offered not merely a glimpse of pagan gods and heroes but a direction introduction to them by name: "De nominibus musarum et gentilium."

   What was known first by allusion became a close acquaintance as the clerk was weaned from the manuals to follow a repertory of "readers," almost all of them verse texts, selected to test their technical proficiency. In Latin schoolrooms, the repertory brought together both Christian and pre-Christian authors. A selection of Christian poets, Arator, Juvencus, Proba, Prudentius, Sedulius, presented the novice reader with themes appropriate to their profession – gospel history, the struggle of the faithful – clothed in the allegorical style of their pagan precursors. There was no exact equivalent to these authors in the Eastern Church, although Photius's celebrated compendia, the *Bibliotheca* and *Lexicon*, cut from the fabric of myth to engage the interest of his pupils. For Latin clerks the pagan authors at first were a limited presence among the "readers," except perhaps in the southern centers that still bore the imprint of the old world. The range of Isidore's references in his *Etymologiae* suggests Seville had recovered (or perhaps never lost) a rich and rare selection of texts, richer perhaps than Rome itself at the end of antiquity (Lapidge 2006; Ogilvie 1978). Further north, Virgil's *Aeneid* was perhaps the first and most familiar of the pagan readers; it was a measure of its wide audience that it was also the only Roman epic to enter the Byzantine schools (Fisher 2011; Lapidge 2006). Yet by the working lifetime of Bede (d. 735), the group had grown to number also Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Statius's *Thebaid*, and, it would appear, Seneca's *Tragediae* (Brown 1994; Lapidge 2006). By contrast with this widening diet, it would appear the Greek clerk of the early Middle Ages was reared primarily on the Homeric epic, although the evidence of early manuscripts suggests that by

the tenth century it had been joined by the work of Aeschylus and Aristophanes (Browning 1997). The rapid spread of clerical schools between the tenth and the twelfth centuries raised the profile of these pagan "readers" in the schoolroom to a prominence unknown even in late antiquity. A list of books available for study at Canterbury, England's premier claustral school, at the end of the twelfth century records multiple manuscript copies of the pagan *auctores*, a quantity that far exceeds the examples known to survive in the modern era (James 1903).

In the wake of the Gregorian reform, when the authority and ambition of the clerical hierarchy were reaffirmed, such an exposure to the pagan imagination in the very seed beds of the church was profoundly unsettling. A new generation of masters inveighed against the customary diet of their charges: "it is not becoming to read what is counter to the law [of God]" declared grammarian, and first-generation Franciscan, Aléxandre de Ville Dieu, recommending Petrus Riga's *Aurora*, as an appropriate antidote to restore the well-being of the clergy. The pagan "readers" were steadily eclipsed although less as the result of outright prohibition than from a growing preoccupation with the scholastic program of the universities and its shift of emphasis from the art of language to the science of argument; the new pastoral imperatives of the institutional church also impressed on the following generation of clergy the importance of the applied language skills of the *ars dictaminis*, on which their increasingly elaborate documentary culture was founded. *Dictamen* taught the deployment of literary devices for cosmetic effect, turning clerks from textual originals to florilegial extracts, and the names and images of the pagans into playful poses intended to entertain. The pagan "readers" were never extinguished, however. The repertories remained shelved, if not always used in the largest of the established libraries and the infusion of new or improved source texts from the mid-fourteenth century inspired some, particularly those monastic and mendicant *scholae* structurally peripheral to the university mainstream, to resume the old patterns of early reading (Clark 2011).

The prominence of pagan literature in language learning led generations of clerks to assimilate its style, tone, and themes in their own compositions. In the schoolroom, the imitation of verse (especially) replete with allusions to the gods and heroes of the original was encouraged, even prescribed. With a mode of expression and imagination sharpened in this singular environment, it was natural that the mature clerk or master of these schools should display their learning by a retelling of the old pagan legends. A new seam of Latin epics reached out from clerical circles towards the growing listenership – if not readership – of royal and noble households, a journey exemplified by the Troy epics of Benoît de Sainte Maure (*fl*. 1170) and Joseph of Exeter (*fl*. 1190), a reach that in turn stimulated a parallel seam of vernacular epic, vigorous enough to see insular myths re-clothed in pseudo-classical form.

The epic form encouraged a fresh approach to the historical narratives for which the church's learned men were responsible ex officio. From the middle years of the eleventh century, monastic chroniclers turned from the bald annal to weave

accounts grander in chronological sweep and theme, a "universal" history that offered an unbroken account of remembered time from gods and legends to the global tribulations of their own day. Perhaps the archetype was provided by the *Chronographia* compiled by Sigebert, monk of Gembloux (d. 1112) but the form was widely copied and customized to suit local monastic, and, in time other corporate settings. For the professional cloisterer, schooled in the classics, inspired by scripture, and bound to a variety of administrative, legal, and seigniorial roles, the universal history was the ultimate reference work. In the outside world, the scope of this historical form carried with it a very different kind of agency, the chance to represent a monarch, a people, a city even, as woven into the very fabric of myth, legendary and yet of their own time. This potential inspired Latin and a growing variety of vernacular histories, which harnessed both classical antique and insular mythologies to the heritage of a contemporary subject. This mode of history had a wider appeal than the antiquarian apparatus of the universal historian and alongside Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Britonum* or Stephen of Rouen's *Draco Normannorum* should be counted the Middle Irish *Clann Ollaman Uaisle Emna* and Ramon Montaner's Catalan chronicle (Harvey 1980, 135; O'Connor 2012, 42).

The mythic forms learned from the "readers" were replicated also for the exposition of doctrine. Here, for as long they held their place in the repertory, the Christian poets of late antiquity acted to model the potential of the pagan form, figures, and tone to convey powerful, penetrating treatments of their own revealed truth. The early medieval masters paid them the respect of compliment and commentary – Bede paused his gospel exegesis to observe the beauty of Sedulius's *Paschale Carmen* – and were less inclined to imitate them, although Alcuin's verses *De patribus, regibus et sanctis* echo readings of Arator, Juvencus, and Sedulius (Godman 1982; Lapidge 1996). Yet in the burgeoning clerical milieus of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, just as these "truthful" *auctores* were overshadowed by the dominance of the fabulists, imitations came in abundance. These works addressed many of the same central themes of Christian teaching as their models – the incarnation, the resurrection, the whole sweep of Biblical history – but they were marked by a wide-ranging knowledge of the pagan exemplars which in some respects – the Ovidian canon, for example – reached beyond their celebrated forbears. In fact, the authentic taste of the pagan tradition projected them into the schoolroom to be placed in the repertory itself. The trio of twelfth-century comedies, *Geta* (Vitalis of Blois), *Pamphilus* (anonymous) and *Tobias* (Matthew of Vendôme), in which typical homiletics and exegesis were clothed in myth, were soon accepted as originals, their presence serving to strengthen the rising conviction that pagan myth was intended to play a role in the revelation of divine truth (Rigg 1992).

Reflection on the relationship between myth and doctrine reached beyond the *auctores* of the clerical *trivium* and magisterial efforts to copy them. It formed a major seam of advanced clerical learning in both west and east as the classical syllabus blossomed between the tenth and twelfth centuries but its roots may be

traced back not only into Christian late antiquity but to the pre-Christian philosophers that first gave expression to the concept of allegory. That it should take center stage in the centuries either side of 1100 was due not only to the dominance of pagan literature in clerical education but also the burgeoning of scriptural exegesis, which sharpened the understanding of allegory and (now) furnished readers with a hermeneutic scheme fully formed. Interest quickened surely also because of the present specter of doctrinal division, between Greek and Latin pontiffs as the period opened, then the leaders of radical monastic reform and pioneers of philosophical novelty, and, ultimately, the challenge of an "other" first beyond (Islam) and then within (heresy) the borders of Christendom. The allegorical forms fashioned by the pagan *auctores*, the nature of which generations of clerical scholarship had sought to lay bare, were recognized as an arena in which present sensitivities might safely be addressed, and, of course, where the errors of the gentiles, since each were species of a common genus, might be challenged and torn down. The earliest contributions conveyed a labored orthodoxy: the *Ecloga* of the tenth-century "pseudo" Theodolus, which represented the simple triumph of scriptural truth, found an enduring readership as a preachers' primer rather than a model of allegorical method. At the turn of the twelfth century, however, the masters of the secular schools steered towards the outer reaches of acceptable speculation: although essentially orthodox in outlook, the *Anticlaudianus* and *De planctu naturae* of Alain de Lille were touched by the scholastic novelties inviting censure from the leadership of the church (Rigg 1992).

These complex allegories were born of a transitional moment as the old *artes* of the early schools met the new philosophy of the nascent universities and as the scholastic syllabus settled, the impulse to replicate them seemed to fade. What endured was the determination to interpret allegory, reinforced by the further elaboration of exegetical method. Commentary on pagan myth was now the approved test of clerical proficiency: pioneered by the last generation of masters active in the provincial schools before the universities were formalized – Arnulf, of the school at Orléans, was the author of the first commentary on *Metamorphoses* – it was soon found at every level from school boy to regent master, and while other modes of discourse, such as Aristotelian dialectic and monastic *lectio*, set divisions among the clergy, allegorical commentary emerged as a common endeavor; even the lectors of the first, humanist schools of fourteenth-century Italy turned to Master Arnulf as they prepared their dedicated lectures on Ovid and Virgil (Black 2011; Coulson 2011).

The allegory enterprise owed much to the pastoral imperative placed on the high medieval clergy by pontifical reformers. By contrast with many of their secluded, scholarly forbears, the clerks of this era, whether secular or regular were called upon to contribute to the cure of souls and the defense of mother church. This meant, if possible, progression not only through the clerical grades, and to the priesthood, but also to the status and capacity of *magister*, and preparation for the exposition of doctrine from the pulpit. The practice of preaching redoubled

clerical interest in allegorical interpretation but also steered it increasingly towards strict moral exposition. The shift in the interpretation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in scarcely more than a century, from the Orléans commentary of ca. 1200 to the *Ovide moralisé* of ca. 1325 is indicative of a general change in hermeneutic practice (Coulson 2011). The call for clerical ministry also served to project the exposition of myth into another field of clerical discourse, the sermon, where the dramas of the pagan deities came to be regarded as an ideal framework not only for a scolding lesson in personal propriety but also an arresting reminder of the turbulent forces surrounding Mother Church. Such scope in teaching terms raised the status of the most familiar *auctores*, apparently dispensing Virgil from a direct share in the *"errores gentilium"* and crowning the ever-popular Ovid as nothing less than "a grete clerke." In an era of schism and resurgent heresy, it does appear that serving priests were disposed to see their fragments of a pagan theology also as analogues of the perverse doctrines that now threatened to capture the attention of their subjects and thus their minute exposition might also act as a mode of catechesis. In fact, over time the preachers' preoccupation with fable appears to have detached them from their listeners and as a mark of a certain schoolroom introspection it also contributed to a widening divide within the clergy, between the hierarchy inhabiting the cloisters and the academic schools and the clerical peasantry that filled (or competed to fill) the parishes, chantries, and chapels. Conjuring the world of the latter constituency in England, William Langland's *Piers Plowman* conspicuously eschewed the words and images of the pagan "taletellers" (Cole and Galloway 2014). Yet the wide reach of the commentaries and sermons conveying moral expositions of classical myth cemented such readings in the book culture of the laity. The *Ovide moralisé*, in origin a clerical manual that filleted *Metamorphoses* for its exemplary fables, became a staple of the household syllabus of the literate social elite. Its vernacular language and the illustrative schemes it accrued in manuscript copies ensured a readership that endured long after the clerical fashion had faded. Indeed, it was only displaced by the advent of accessible (printed) translations of the original classical literature itself.

The sustained exegetical interest gave rise to, and in turn was served by, wide-ranging scholarship in the matter of myth and the nature of pagan religion. It was a form of scholarly enquiry that originated in the formative era of the church, founded on two, fifth-century pioneers, Fulgentius and Lactantius Firmianus, both obscure figures but whose investigations were surely informed by the continuing struggle on the conversion frontier. It was reawakened by the reconstitution of the old curriculum of the *artes* and invigorated with pedagogic purpose. Isidore's encyclopedic summary of pagan lore, *De diis gentium*, the eleventh chapter of his *Etymologiae* was an early offering from the new schoolroom. The focus of attention was the form and capacities of the gods and, apparently in direct pace the disappearance of physical remnants of antiquity, their visual representation. The Latin manuals called collectively the "Vatican Mythographers," which emerged from an unidentified clerical context before 1215, provided the medieval clergy with

foundational authorities of their own. Yet scholarship in this vein continued, and diversified. To the same period may be dated the first genealogical trees that traced the descent of the gods, a mode of mythographic study that was followed into the fifteenth century. The keynotes of ministry and mission apparent after 1215 stimulated the deeper study of pagan religious practice: Guido da Colonna (fl. 1225) suspended his story of Troy for an exploration of the pagans' patterns of worship, their temples, their priesthood, and the powers of altars and oracles. Here, as in their sermons, the working clerks saw the fabulous beliefs of the ancients offering a point of contact with the errant souls in their care who so easily strayed from correct doctrine. The fascination for forms, descriptive and visual, fueled the bestiary genre that blazed brightly, if briefly, between the tenth and thirteenth centuries: the Anglo-Saxon *Liber monstrorum* also affirms the presence of Cerberus, Harpies, and Triton, among others, on the horizons of a seventh-century churchman (Lapidge 1996; Orchard 2003).

The recognition that myth conveyed a truth of one kind or another, to be recovered following a hermeneutic practice shaped by scriptural exegesis, encouraged another, more profound enquiry, which carried the clerk from the textual environment of the *trivium* towards the scientific realm of the *quadrivium*. This was not a result of the re-making of education and learning in the medieval church. The approach to myth as a point-of-entry for metaphysical enquiry into the nature of man, the material world, the heavens, and the whole cosmological scheme had been cultivated in pre-Christian Greek and Roman antiquity. Its centrality in scholarly cosmology had been cemented by late classical (fifth-century) *auctores* Macrobius and Martianus Capella, and Calcidius, the fourth-century translator of, and commentator on, Plato's *Timaeus*, whose textual traditions seem to have passed, unbroken into the clerical Middle Ages. The contingency of manuscript transmission played some part in their transforming influence, since the Calcidian *Timaeus* was the only portion of the Greek tradition to be known to Latin clerks before the fifteenth century, and it was complemented by the neo-Platonism of Macrobius; there was also a special resonance for a clerical cadre that set so much store by the old syllabus of the *artes*, to find in Martianus an account of the cosmos advanced as an allegory of intellect, learning, and the efficacy of the seven liberal arts.

In the early medieval schools, these authorities informed reflections that were remarkably unencumbered by the requirements of a strictly scriptural cosmology. An eighth-century manuscript from the claustral school at Fleury offers the reader a diagram of the generative forces of the heavens, among them the nimbus personified (Obrist 1997). Such distinct, classical depictions came to be clothed more completely in Christian doctrine, although the framework of pagan cosmology was readily apparent. In the surge of cosmological speculation that flowed from the Latin schools of France at the turn of the twelfth century, the Christian clothing seemed very scant indeed. In visual representations, in manuscript diagrams, painted maps, and stained glass, the insistent presence of the pagan cosmos was

stark, and, at least in the last two of these contexts, conveyed directly into the mind's eye of the unlettered layman. Here Jesus Christ was *filius Dei* and *cosmocrator*, encircled by the ancient forces of the heavens and the symbols of the zodiac, as well as the angels, apostles, and the litany of the saints (Kline 2001).

The pagan framework not only informed a conception of Christian cosmology but also an understanding, indeed, a calculation of Christian cosmology. From the era of expanding churches, orders, and schools, between 1000 and 1200, there emerged an outline of Christian history that sought to assimilate the principal reference point of pagan myth without unsettling the narrative anchor-hold of scripture. Here again, medieval clerks drew from, and renewed, an ancient methodology pioneered by Eusebius, Orosius, and Augustine. The new universal histories compiled in western and eastern cloisters secured this chronology in the European imagination, encouraging national histories also to trace their outline from the Aenean remnant; meanwhile manuals of scriptural history made it a subject of academic enquiry.

The advent of an extended Aristotelian corpus at the beginning of the thirteenth century, and the Arabic commentaries connected with it at first challenged, and then curbed, cosmological reflections of this kind. The Angelic Doctor, Dominican Thomas Aquinas condemned the *fabulae poetarum* not only, as Aléxandre de Ville Dieu had done, for the threat they posed to clerical purity but also, and more significantly, at a time when the academic community carried the hope of Mother Church, as a threat to scholarly, indeed scientific truth (Dronke 1974).

The soaring speculations of Bernardus Silvestris at the turn of the twelfth century were not matched in the later Middle Ages but if reflection on myth was edged out of the advanced studies of the clergy, it still retained a place in their imaginative world. In fact, the visual representations of a mythic cosmos were still produced, if not now accompanied by the cosmological texts of the early and high Middle Ages, or *libri monstrorum*. Sketch maps of the zodiac, the winds, and genealogical trees of the pagan gods are often found in the commonplace books of later medieval clerks. Indeed, as the matter of myth lost its prominence in the formal discourses of the clergy, as the teaching and scholarly syllabus shifted, it remained an important feature of the clerical aesthetic. At the peak of their popularity in the schoolroom, the figures of pagan myth had been depicted in the decorative schemes of many monastic and secular churches (Reilly 2013). In spite of some highly charged rhetoric from reformers, for the most part these features survived and were further elaborated, even as the Angelic Doctor and his students turned away from such dubious philosophical practice. Even before the recirculation of classical literature made such imagery modish in later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the images of myth held a place in the communal and the personal aesthetic of the clergy.

The fabric of ancient myth that passed, tattered and re-sewn into the European Middle Ages offered churchmen the touch of a cultural tradition that tantalized

not only because they believed the greater part of it lost, and they relished the perils of its arrant paganism, but also because it bore an authentic trace of the intellectual milieu in which the fathers of their faith had been formed. It was these pioneering pastors, teachers, and eremites that were to guide them in their struggle to secure and extend the church of God across the diffuse territories of the post-classical world, and to fashion further (and farther) generations of the clergy in their image required the re-animation of the arts and sciences with which they had first articulated Christian doctrine. Like the fathers before them, a syllabus in which the fables of the poets were still such a presence stimulated profound enquiries into the nature of man, his visible world and the heavens above them. The vigor of such pursuits, and the new science of the recovered Aristotle, gener-ated unease at the turn of the twelfth century, at the very moment when the advent of heresy and the advance of non-Christians threatened the unity of Christendom. Myth was not wholly removed from the school and lecture room for the lessons it offered in hermeneutics still resonated among the preachers battling heresy and (especially) basic irreligion on the parochial front-line. At any rate, by this date myth held a place beyond the tools which the *magister* passed to his *discipulus*: it was part of the aesthetic of both clergy and their churches; as such a striking reminder of that strange, powerful classical past, in fact it was an essential element of their own different identity as *literati*, distinct from *laici*, and direct heirs to the founders of the Christian empires of east and west, to the defense of which each of them was professed.

Guide to Further Reading

The early encounters of the medieval church with the myths, among other residue, of pagan antiquity are outlined in surveys such as Aitken and Fossey (2014), Blair (2006), and Caseau (2004) and focused in case-studies of material culture such as Deligiannikis (2008) and Henig (2004) and of decorative art such as Merrony (1998) and Walker (2002). The retention and reproduction of the texts that preserved these myths has been traced through manuscript witnesses across the medieval centuries in Gillespie (2005), Reynolds (1983), Reynolds and Wilson (1991), Wetherbee (2005), and Ziolkowski (2008). The place of this textual tradition in the patterns of teaching and learning propagated by the medieval church is examined in the formative centuries of the clerical school by Cameron (2004), Henderson (2007), Lapidge (1996; 2006), in the era of great expansion and elaboration in Western Europe at the turn of the ninth century by McKitterick and contributors (1994), and when the monastic and cathedral schools reached the peak of their pedagogic influence by Munck Olsen (2003), Wetherbee (1972, 2005), and Ziolkowski (2008); parallel developments in the Greek East are outlined by Browning (1997) and through the lens of a single author by Fisher (2011). The continuing presence and influence of the tradition

in the clerical syllabus between the coming of the universities and the era of European Renaissance has not been given the same attention but Gillespie (2005) offers and outline and case-studies such as Baswell (1995), Black (2011) and Clark (2011) provide points-of-entry. The effects of this sustained exposure to the language, imagery, historical and cosmological imagination of ancient mythology on the literary and learned culture of the clerical estate have drawn much of the energy of recent scholarship. Of the literary products, new works that emulated the old in theme and style, of which the new Latin epics were the high-water mark are surveyed at their beginnings by Lapidge (1996; 2006) and Shea (1973) and then in the later medieval centuries by Rigg (1992) and particular authors and texts have been studied by Parker (1995), Rigg (2001) and Tillette (1999); vernacular verse and prose in this vein is explored by Blumenfeld-Koskinski (1997) and O'Connor (2012); the shifting forms of historical writing have been outlined in Hen and Innes (2000) and captured at a pivotal moment in Foerster (2015). Of the results in respect of clerical learning, the role of allegory in the exegesis of scripture and the exposition of doctrine is outlined in Whitman (2000) and focused in an early medieval context by Janes (2000) and a late medieval context by Zeeman (2011); the textual criticism that underpinned these approaches is surveyed by Minnis *et al.* (1991); the connecting studies of the theological framework of pagan antiquity are discussed in respect of the influential late antique and early medieval authorities by Baldwin (1988) and Green (1982); the subsequent development and reception of a mythographic tradition is sketched in various works by Jane Chance and focused effectively in case-studies such as Minnis (1982). The clerical preoccupation with the "matter" of Ovid and Metamorphoses in particular has been comprehensively treated by Clark (2011) and Keith and Rupp (2007). Myth, allegory and their stimulus to speculation in metaphysics and cosmology are considered in foundational studies by Dronke (1974) and Stock (1972); their focus is the pre-university era but Simpson (1995) extends the view to the turn of the fifteenth century. The impulse to visualize these myths, stirred as much by the learned as the literary output is examined in early medieval contexts by Lapidge (1996; 2006) and in respect of aspects of later medieval decorative art in such case-studies as Long (2012).

References

Aitken, E. and Fossey, J. 2014. *The Levant: Crossroads of Late Antiquity. History, Religion, Archaeology*. Leiden: Brill

Angold, M. 1995. *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baker, N. and Holt, R. 2004. *Urban Growth and the Medieval Church*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Baldwin, B. 1988. "Fulgentius and His Sources." *Traditio*, 44: 37–57.

Baswell, C. 1995. *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the Aeneid from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Black, R. 2011. "Ovid in Medieval Italy," in F.T. Coulson, J.G. Clark, and K.L. McKinley, eds, *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 123–142. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blair, W.J. 2006. *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Blumenfeld-Koskinski, R. 1997. *Reading Myth: Classical Mythology and its Interpretation in Medieval French Literature*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bradford Bedingfield, M. 2002. *The Dramatic Liturgy of Anglo-Saxon England*. Woodbridge: Boydell.

Brown, G. 1994. "Introduction: The Carolingian Renaissance," in R. McKitterick, ed., *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, 1–51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Browning, R. 1997. "Teachers," in G. Cavallo, ed., *The Byzantines*, 95–116. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Cameron, A. 2004. "Poetry and Literary Culture in Late Antiquity," in S. Swain and M. Edwards, eds, *Approaching Late Antiquity. The Transformation from Early to Late Empire*, 327–354. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Caseau, B. 2004. "The Fate of Rural Temples in Late Antiquity and the Christianisation of the Countryside," in W. Bowden, L. Lavan, and C. Machado, eds, *Recent Research in the Late Antique Countryside*, 105–144. Leiden: Brill.

Clark, J.G. 2011. "Ovid in the Monasteries: The Evidence from Late Medieval England," in F.T. Coulson, J.G. Clark, and K.L. McKinley, eds, *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 177–196. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cole, A. and Galloway, A. 2014. "Christian Philosophy in Piers Plowman," in A. Cole and A. Galloway, eds *The Cambridge Companion to Piers Plowman*, 136–159. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Coulson, F.T. 2011. "Ovid's Metamorphoses in the School Tradition of France, 1180–1400: Texts Manuscript Traditions and Manuscript Settings," in F.T. Coulson, J.G. Clark, and K.L. McKinley, eds, *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 48–82. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Craster, H.H.E. 1907. *A History of Northumberland, Vol. 8: The Parish of Tynemouth*. Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Andrew Reid and Company.

de Lubac, H. 2009. *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*. Grand Rapids, MN: W.B. Eerdmans.

Deligiannikis, G. 2008. "Christian Attitudes Towards Pagan Statuary: The Case of Anastasios of Rhodes," *Byzantion*, 78: 142–158.

Dronke, P.E. 1974. *Fabula*. Brill: Leiden.

Fisher, E. 2011. "Ovid's Metempsychosis: The Greek East in Ovid in the Middle Ages," in F.T. Coulson, J.G. Clark and K.L. McKinley, eds, *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, 26–47. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Foerster, T. 2015. *Godfrey of Viterbo and His Readers: Imperial Tradition and Universal History in Late Medieval Europe*. Burlington VT: Ashgate.

Gillespie, V. 2005. "The Study of Classical Authors from the Twelfth Century to c. 1450," in A.J. Minnis and I. Johnson, eds, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Vol. 2. The Middle Ages*, 145–235. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Godman, P. 1982. *Alcuin. The Bishops, Kings and Saints of York*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Green, R.P.H. 1982. "The Genesis of a Medieval Text Book: The Models and Sources of the Ecloga Theoduli." *Viator*, 13: 49–106.

Harvey, L.P. 1980. "Medieval Spanish," in A.T. Hatto, ed., *Traditions of Heroic and Epic poetry*, 134–164. London: Modern Humanities Research Association.

Harvey, P.D.A. 1996. *The Hereford World Map*. London: British Library.

Henderson, J. 2007. *The Medieval World of Isidore of Seville*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hen, Y. and Innes, M., eds. 2000. *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Henig, M. 2004. "Murum civitas: The Arts of Rome in Carlisle," in M. McCarthy and D. Weston, eds, *Carlisle and Cumbria: Roman and Medieval Architecture, Art and Archaeology*, 11–28. Leeds: Maney.

James, M.R. 1903. *The Ancient Libraries of Canterbury and Dover. The Catalogues of the Libraries of Christ Church Priory and St. Augustine's Abbey at Canterbury and of St. Martin's Priory at Dover*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Janes, D. 2000. "The World and Its Past in the Early Middle Ages," in Y. Hen and M. Innes *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, 102–113. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kaldellis, A. 2008. "Lesbos in Late Antiquity: Live Evidence and New Models for Religious Change," in W.R. Caraher, L.J. Hall, and R.S. Moore, eds, *Archaeology and History in Roman, Medieval and Post-Medieval Greece. Studies on Method and Meaning in Honor of Timothy E. Gregory*, 155–168. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Keith, A. and Rupp, S. 2007. *Metamorphosis. The Changing Face of Ovid in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Kline, N.A. 2001. *Maps of Medieval Thought. The Hereford Paradigm*. Boydell: Woodbridge.

Lapidge, M. 1996. *Anglo Latin Literature, 600–899*. London: Hambledon Press.

Lapidge, M. 2006. *The Anglo-Saxon Library*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Long, J.C. 2012. "The Survival and Reception of the Classical Nude: Venus in the Middle Ages," in S.C.M. Lindquist, ed., *The Meanings of Nudity in Medieval Art*, 47–64. Farnham: Ashgate.

McKitterick, R., ed. 1994. *Carolingian Culture. Emulation and Innovation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Merrony, M.W. 1998. "The Reconciliation of Paganism and Christianity in the Early Byzantine Mosaic Pavements of Arabia and Palestine." *Liber annuus*, 48: 441–482.

Minnis, A.J. 1982. *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.

Minnis, A.J., Scott, A.B., and Wallace, D., eds. 1991. *Medieval Literary Theory & Criticism, c.1100–c.1375*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Munck Olsen, B. 2013. "Accessus to Classical Poets in the Twelfth Century," in J.F. Ruys, J.O. Ward, and M. Heyworth, eds, *The Classics in the Medieval and Renaissance Classroom. The Role of Ancient Texts in the Arts Curriculum as Revealed by Surviving Manuscripts and Early Printed Books*, 131–143. Brepols: Turnhout.

Obrist, N. 1997. "Wind Diagrams and Medieval Cosmology." *Speculum. A Journal of Mediaeval Studies*, 72, 1: 33–84

O'Connor, R., ed. 2012. *Classical Literature and Learning in Medieval Irish Narrative*. Cambridge: D.S. Brewer.

Ogilvie, R.M. 1978. *The Library of Lactantius*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Orchard, A. 1994. *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Orchard, A. 2003. *Pride and Prodigies: Studies in the Monster of the Beowulf-Manuscript.* Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Parker, H.C. 1995. "The Pagan Gods in Joseph of Exeter's De bello Troiano." *Medium Aevum*, 64, 2: 273–278.

Reilly, D.J. 2013. "Art," in M.B. Bruun, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Cistercian Order*, 125–139. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reynolds, L.D. 1983. *Texts and Transmission. A Survey of the Latin Classics.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Reynolds, L.D. and Wilson, N.G. 1991. *Scribes and Scholars. A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rigg, A.G. 1992. *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066–1422.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rigg, A.G. 2001. "Joseph of Exeter's Pagan Gods Again." *Medium Aevum*, 70, 1: 19–28.

Shea, G.W. 1973. "Myth and Religion in an Early Christian Epic." *Mediaeval Studies*, 35: 118–128.

Simpson, J. 1995. *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry. Alain of Lille's Anticlaudianus and John Gower's Confessio amantis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Spiegel, F. 2007. "The Tabernacula of Gregory the Great and the Conversion of Anglo-Saxon England." *Anglo-Saxon England*, 36: 1–13.

Stock, B. 1972. *Myth and Science in the Twelfth Century. A Study of Bernard Silvester.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Tillette, J-Y. 1999. "L'Alexandréide de Gautier de Châtillon: Enéide médiévale ou 'Virgile travesti'?" in L. Harf-Lancner, C. Kappler, and F. Suard, eds, *Alexandre le grande dans les litteratures occidentales et proche-orientales*, 275–288. Nanterre: Universite de Paris X.

Walker, A. 2002. "Myth and Magic in Early Byzantine Marriage Jewellery," in A.L. McCLanan and K.R. Encarnacion, eds, *The Material Culture of Procreation, Sex and Marriage in Pre-Modern Europe*, 59–78. New York: Palgrave.

Wetherbee, W. 1972. *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century. The Literary Influence of the School of Chartres.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Wetherbee, W. 2005. "The Study of Classical Literature from Late Antiquity to the Twelfth Century," in A.J. Minnis and I. Johnson, eds, *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Vol. 2. The Middle Ages*, 99–144. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whitman, J. 2000. *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period.* Leiden: Brill.

Zeeman, N. 2011. "Medieval Religious Allegory: French and English," in R. Copeland and P.T. Struck, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 148–161. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ziolkowski, J. 2008. "Latin Learning and Literature," in N. Morgan and R.M. Thomson, eds, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain. Vol. 2. 1100–1400*, 229–243. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4

The Renaissance Mythographers

John Mulryan

The reception of ancient Greek and Roman mythology took many forms during the Renaissance, but the Renaissance mythographers offered the most comprehensive, lucid, and appealing reformulation of the material. A mythography differs from other accounts of myth in that it both compiles and interprets classical myth. I will begin with a brief overview of the four great Italian mythographers (Giovanni Boccaccio, Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, Vincenzo Cartari, and Natale Conti), as well as lesser figures, and then move on to specific themes.

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375)

Although Boccaccio (author of the *Decameron* and one of the greatest Italian writers in the vernacular) is, strictly speaking, a medieval writer, he is treated here because his *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium* was the first comprehensive compendium of classical myth, and the model for all of the great Renaissance mythographers, to wit, Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, Vincenzo Cartari, and Natale Conti. It was composed over a period of 25 years, from Boccaccio's first meeting with Petrarch in 1350 to the year of his death. There were at least 89 partial manuscripts of the work before the first printed edition appeared in 1472 (Solomon 2011, x–xii; for the translations, see the following). The work falls within the tradition of medieval allegory (the meaning being "other" than the literal) and the encyclopedic tradition. As C.V. Osgood (1930, 12) puts it: "Boccaccio makes the first attempt on a large scale to assemble, arrange, incorporate, and explain the vast accumulation of legend, and reduce it, after the manner of his time, to convenient encyclopedic form."

Unfortunately, Boccaccio's scheme for organizing the mythological content of ancient Greek and Latin texts is fundamentally in error. He creates a genealogical tree that takes its root in the god "Demogorgon," "the first originator of all the other gods" "who I think is the father and ancestor of all the gentile gods" (1951, 12). Boccaccio has inadvertently picked up a misreading of Statius's *Thebaid* by the commentator Lactantius Placidus. Where Statius writes "et triplicis mundi summum, quem scire nefastiuim" (and the greatest Lord of the triple world, whom it is impious to know), Lactantius Placidus mistakenly asserts that Statius "dicit deum demogorgona summum: cuius nomen scire non licet" (calls the god demogorgon, the greatest god whose name one must not know) (Statius *et al.* 1490, e8). Don Cameron Allen (1970, 216) wryly refers to this newly created god as a "slip of the pen."[1]

Thus Boccaccio's approach to the classical myths is basically *genealogical*, with occasional quotations from the Latin sources, but none from the Greek since he has no knowledge of Greek. Even his so-called "translations" of Homer are cribbed from the editions and translations of Leonzio Pilato (Mulryan and Brown 2006b, 139). He paraphrases his sources, but acknowledges them only occasionally. His cribbed Latin is more medieval than neo-Latin in style and structure, and is heavy going for the apprentice reader. Since he is following a false genealogical trail, discussions of individual myths are scattered throughout the work. Venus, for example, appears in several unrelated chapters, in some-times contradictory accounts. All of these weaknesses would be addressed by later mythographers. From a reception perspective, Boccaccio sends the reader on a false trail and imposes an unworkable structure on the already disparate materials of classical myth.

Although Boccaccio's *De Genealogia Deorum* is technically a medieval rather than a Renaissance mythography, it was influential during the Renaissance. According to Thomas Hyde (1985, 737), it functioned as "a compendium of quaint allegories, a reference manual to the undermeanings that myths may have in Renaissance poetry."

Ludovicus Caelius Rhodiginus (1453–1525), Alexandro ab Alexandro (1463–1525)

While not strictly a mythography, Ludovicus Caelius Rhodiginus's *Lectionum Antiquarum* ("Ancient Readings"), a massive 30-book reference work that pro-vides a series of random observations on the classical texts that are based on Caelius's own omnivorous reading in the classics, was markedly influential and frequently cited by many of the mythographers, especially Pictor (see the following). It is in the nature of an almost formless commonplace book or encyclopedia, but the nearly comprehensive indices (1599) offer an excellent guide to the contents of the work. Giraldi also cites Caelius frequently, and these

references are picked up in Cartari's unacknowledged borrowings from Giraldi (1548) (Mulryan 1988). Alexandro's *Genialium dierum (Festival Days)* (1522), one of Cartari's favorite sources, is another classical miscellany like Caelius's treatise, from which it frequently borrows.

Georgius Pictor (1500–1569)

There is an obvious iconographical emphasis in Pictor's mythographical treatises, *Theologia mythologica* (1532), and *Apotheseos* (1558). In each entry in the *Theologia mythologica* the deity's name is provided, followed by a physical description and an interpretation that supposedly flows from the description. More than likely, Cartari knew this work. The *Apotheseos* contains illustrations, which were probably added after the date of publication. More importantly, it employs a catechetical mode, with the student Evander ("Good Man") asking the teacher Theophrastus ("Talker of Divinity") questions about the illustrations of the gods, whose responses form the commentary. Much of the commentary is borrowed from the earlier *Theologia mythologica*. The catechetical mode was also adopted by the Jesuit François Pomey (see the following).

Montifalchius; Julianus Aurelius Havrech

Where Boccaccio adopts a genealogical perspective toward the myths, and attempts to organize them around the mythical god Demogorgon, Giraldi (see the following) pursues an *etymological* method (to a greater extent than either Cartari or Conti), attempting to plumb the meaning of the gods through an analysis of the epithets associated with them. In this he was anticipated by two earlier mythographers, who had the misfortune of writing under the same title, *De Cognominibus Deorum*. Montifalchius's treatise was published in Perugia in 1522, some 22 years before Julianus Aurelius Havrech's work (1544).[2] Since little is known about Havrech's study, and Montifalchius is virtually unknown, some attempt to distinguish them is in order. It is unlikely that Havrech knew Montifalchius's treatise, as they are markedly different in their approaches to myth. While Havrech's work is subdivided into three books, Montifalchius provides an undivided text. Montifalchius supplies a series of chapters on individual gods, and several other chapters on ancient rituals and games. Havrech's treatise is the more scholarly of the two, as its sources are carefully noted and placed in dialogue with each other. Havrech cites most of the sources in Montifalchius, and many additional ones. They both write about mythography, and follow the etymological method, but Havrech provides a more structured narrative for the topic than Montifalchius, and is more precise and comprehensive in his citation of sources.

Lilio Gregorio Giraldi (1479–1552)

Lilio Gregorio Giraldi was one of the most distinguished and unfortunate humanists of the sixteenth century. He lost almost all of his library during the sack of Rome in 1527, but he still managed to produce a very respectable body of work, including a treatise on the Muses, a study of ancient burial rites, a monograph on Hercules, an imitation of Ovid's *Fasti,* histories of ancient calendrical systems and shipping routes, a history of ancient poets and a second history of contemporary poets, as well as his *Animadversions*, his history of poets and scholars that he doesn't like! (Brown and Mulryan 2000, 5).

Giraldi's most important work from our perspective is his *De Deis Gentium* (1548, 1560, 1580, 1565, 1696—*Opera Omnia*). Giraldi's approach is *etymological*, drawing on the epithets associated with the gods and expanding their meaning. Unfortunately, he almost never quotes the classical writers directly, but rather provides mountains of Latin paraphrases of both Greek and Latin texts, presumably based on the notes he took on ancient writers before he lost his library during the sack of Rome. He developed a shadowy afterlife in the work of Vincenzo Cartari, who occasionally appropriates Giraldi's text word for word, including the classical citations. Unlike the mythographical treatises of Boccaccio, Cartari, and Conti, Giraldi's *De Deis Gentium* was never translated, and remains only in the original Latin to this day.

Vincenzo Cartari (1502?–1570?)

Vincenzo Cartari's approach is *iconographical* and fits in with the title of his work, the *Imagini* ("Images"). He focuses on the physical appearances of the gods, and ignores (for the most part) interpretations that cannot be supported in this way. He is the first Italian mythographer to write in the vernacular, thus enlarging his audience to include women, who were not trained in Latin. The work was very popular, and was printed at least 28 times. Moreover, he is the only Italian mythographer to be illustrated with images of the gods; some editions have in excess of a hundred illustrations. Moreover, the reader is provided with *captioned* illustrations, making it possible to connect the illustration directly with the printed text. For example, the symbolic positioning of the Graces (two of the three face us, because we get twice back for what we give) is explained in the text and revealed in the image, as are the names of the Graces and their symbolic import (Mulryan 2012, 429-32). The Venetian illustrator Bologno Zaltieri illustrated the Venice 1571 edition with copper plates. In 1615, Fillipo Ferroverde produced a set of woodcuts to replace Zaltieri's copper plates, along with a learned commentary by Lorenzo Pignoria. His illustrations are much inferior to Zaltieri's. With Cartari, mythography grows in importance for artists as well as writers (Bull 2005, 23). This is indicated in the title page of the Padua 1608 edition, edited by Pietro Paolo Tozzi: *"Opera utilissima*

à historici, Poeti, Pittori, Scultori, & professori di belle lettere" (an extremely useful work for historians, poets, painters, sculptors, and professors of polite literature).[3]

Natale Conti

Natale Conti's thematic approach is *ethical*, and thus the least restrictive approach among the mythographers. He divides meaning into historical, moral, and "scientific." In fact the triadic approach to myth is applied in detail in the first nine books of the *Mythologiae*, and is neatly summarized in the tenth book, which is an epitome of the first nine books. However, not all myths yield fully to the triadic approach:

> It's rather amazing that some of the Greek myths include historical, physical, and ethical narratives, while others contain only the physical, and still others are concerned only with the ethical. Thus in some stories I'll discuss all three of these applications, while with some others I'll just do the physical and the ethical
>
> (Mulryan and Brown 2006a, 888).

The historical often focuses on the theory of Euhemerus, that all of the gods were originally mortal beings. Conti goes so far as to identify the burial site of the supreme god Jupiter, and to dismiss that god as an extremely flawed human being, unworthy of veneration:

> Lucian is once again our source for the claim that Jupiter died and was buried in Crete…. Epiphanius, in his *Ancoratus*, wrote that in his time Jupiter's tomb was usually pointed out on Mount Iasios of Crete. … The many crimes that he committed … certainly suggest that there was nothing divine about this man.
>
> (Mulryan and Brown 2006a, 82)

Like Cartari, Conti (in his first book) discusses the history of religions, their sacrificial practices, and the statues and paintings they inspired. He takes the high ground in his approach to myth, pointedly ignoring the fabulist tradition associated with Ovid:

> We will not bother with interpretations about men changed into trees or bodies devoid of sense or reason, unless they have some demonstrable worth. We won't provide any accounts of those stories that some have foolishly invented, nor, again, shall we try to ascribe to the ingenious work of nature any portents or prodigious monsters. We intend to gloss only those stories that raise men to the heights of celestial knowledge, that counsel proper behavior and discourage unlawful

pleasures, that reveal Nature's secrets, that ultimately teach us all we absolutely need to know to lead a decent human life, that enhance our understanding of all the great writers.

(Mulryan and Brown 2006a, 3).

Conti's structural approach consists in marking a distinct division between the narrative and the commentary in every chapter of his work, as in this formulaic phrase in his chapter on Venus: "That's just about all the ancient writers had to say about Venus; now let's try to find out what these things mean" (Mulryan and Brown 2006a, 325). The *Mythologiae* appeared in 25 Latin editions, and several editions of the French translation by J. de Montlyard, and a final revision by Jean Baudoin. Conti's very orderly, systematic approach to the myths promoted ease of reference, and is probably the reason why he is the most frequently cited of the mythographers. His footprints are everywhere in Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and his *Mythologiae* was used as a textbook in Elizabethan schools (Baldwin 1944, 1:421, 2:291, 396; Lotspeich 1965, 15).

François Pomey (1618–1673)

The Jesuit François Pomey's illustrated *Pantheum Mythicum* was first published in 1659, again in Utrecht in 1697, and reprinted six times, finally in 1741. As Samuel Pitiscus notes in his preface to the *Pantheum Mythicum*, Pomey derives his work from Boccaccio, Giraldi, and Conti, as the marginal notes attest. He does not mention Cartari, although the physical description Pomey provides for each god would suggest that he was also used. The catechetical approach (probably appropriated from Pictor's teacherly text, the *Apotheseos*) used by Pomey points to an audience of schoolboys, and the work was in fact used in Jesuit schools. Pomey's organizational scheme of subdividing the gods into celestial, sea, and underworld gods is more straightforward than any of the other manuals. In addition to carrying on the traditions of the Italian mythographers, Pomey's own work achieved great popularity when it was translated into English by "Andrew Tooke." It was also translated into French by Tenand (no first name recorded) in 1715. (See "Translations," in the following.)

The Occult Tradition

The Renaissance, as is well known, justified the study of pagan mythology on the assumption that the myths contained hidden truths that the wise ancients hid under the veil of myth, including the idea of the one true God. This constitutes a massive rereading of the classical texts, since there is little evidence that the ancient writers were intentionally obscure (Mulryan 1972, 53–72).

We will explore this issue in the mythographies, but the best expression of the tradition is found in Leone Ebreo's (b. 1460) *Dialoghi D'Amore.* Leone was a Spanish Jew, one of the intellectual elite who were cast out of Spain in the diaspora of 1492. Here Philo (Learning) instructs Sophia (Wisdom, creating the term "philosophy") on the arcane nature of truth:

> The ancient poets, implied not only one but many intentions in their poems, and these intentions are called senses. First they placed the literal sense, as a kind of exterior rind, the story of some people and their noteworthy and memorable deeds. Within this same fiction they place, like an inner rind nearer to the core, the moral sense, which is useful to the active life of human beings, in approving virtuous acts and condemning vices. Beyond this, beneath those same words they signify some true knowledge of natural, celestial, astrological, or theological things, and sometimes these two or even three scientific senses are included in the fable, like the kernels of the fruit beneath its rind. And these core senses are called allegorical.
>
> (Ebreo 2009, 106)

The mythographers also offer a key to the hidden truths of the myths, or as Boccaccio puts it in addressing King Hugo, the dedicatee of the *Genealogia*, "what meaning some illustrious men found concealed at the root of these fables" (Book 1, Preface 1, 9). Boccaccio also presents himself as an occultist working to extract the hidden essence of the myths: "to produce the exegetical element, I will begin by peeling off the hard outer shell and discovering the concealed systems beneath, but I still make no promise to do this exactly as the author intended" (Book 1, Preface, 1, 19). In terms of reception theory, Boccaccio acknowledges that the writers of the ancient classics no longer have control of their own material: "Indeed the ancients, after leaving behind names endowed with literary fame, have expired, surrendering interpretations of their work to the judgment of posterity, who have almost as many opinions as there are opinion makers" (Book I, Preface I, 19, 21). Thus Boccaccio's reception of the classical texts containing the myths constitutes an attempt to transform those same myths into a key to moral (i.e., Christian) truth. At the same time, however, all of the mythographers resolutely take Christianity off the table and focus almost exclusively on the myths themselves.

Cartari interprets the occult tradition imagistically:

> For Egypt was the location of those highly praised columns of Mercury that were crammed with occult teaching, especially on astronomical subjects. This teaching was set down in the shape of different figures of animals, plants, and other things that the Egyptians used to take the place of letters.
>
> (Mulryan 2012, 5)

Presumably, his own analyses of the texts of the ancient writers and the images provided in his text are also part of the occult tradition.

Conti espouses the elitist view of the occult:

> In fact not many years before the times of Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers, the ancients did not openly teach the principles of philosophy: instead they found a secret mythological disguise for disseminating these truths. … They wanted to stop ordinary men from gaining access to such remarkable subjects, for if the unlettered were to misunderstand them, it would be easy for them to lose their religion and all of their virtue. … We still lack an acceptable expositor … to reveal the deepest, most concealed secrets of the stories.
>
> (Mulryan and Brown 2006a, 1–2)

Unlike both Conti and Giraldi, Cartari does not focus on letters but on images, as the title of his work indicates. He notes that the Jews regarded any attempt to make an image of the one god to be an abomination, and he traces the first use of images to the Euhemeristic tradition of making mortals into gods:

> Lactantius says that the first statues were made for those kings and courageous men who had governed the subjects of their nations with justice and prudence; for they wanted the statues to show how they honored the memory of the just kings, and preserved a respectful affection for them after their deaths.
>
> (Mulryan 2012, 11)

At the same time, drawing on Alexander of Naples, Cartari ridicules the ancients for their obsession with statues:

> One can see how much pleasure the ancients took in statues from the great number that there were. Pliny writes that there were more than three thousand of them in Rhodes, nor were there any fewer in Athens, in Delphi, and in other locations in Greece. Nor were the Romans any less ambitious about this than the Greeks, for they had so many statues that it was said that Rome had another population of stone
>
> (Mulryan 2012, 14).

One example of Cartari's iconographical expertise must suffice. In his image of Venus, Cupid, Play, and the Goat, Cartari interprets the image of Venus standing on the tortoise as a symbol of female domesticity, since the tortoise is mute, is always at home, and fears the dangers of sexual intercourse and the pain of childbirth, the common lot of women (Mulryan 2012, 414–416) (Figure 4.1). The destructive power of sexuality is also imaged in the other female figure in the illustration; a Venus dressed in mourning keening over the recumbent figure of the dead Adonis. Venus also leans on the figure of a goat, a perennial symbol of lust. All of these figures constitute an ironic contrast to the figure of Play, the illusion of joy in love relationships (Fig. 4.1)

De gli Antichi. 489

*Im agini di Venere, di Cupido, del giuoco, & del Capro, qua
li significano la generatione, & l'imagine della tesudi-
ne hieroglifico che dinota il pericolo delle donne marita-
te, è parturienti & qual deue essere il loro vfficio nella
cura familiare & aleuar figliuoli, & il silentio esser ne-
cessario alle donne sopra ogni virtù.*

Rrr

Figure 4.1   Images of Venus, of Cupid, Play, and the Goat, all of which symbolize generation. And the image of the tortoise, a hieroglyphic that refers to the danger that married women experience in giving birth, and a reminder that their real responsibility is to take care of their families and bring up children. And that Silence, more than any other quality, is essential for women. *Source*: Mulryan 2012, 416.

Conti obviously addresses his remarks to the literate if not the learned, and suggests that everyone else will have to get by with images:

> It is obvious that women (as a group) and the unlettered crowd had to be taught religion, fear of the gods, respectability, and temperance; for they would neither understand the nature of the gods nor prefer integrity before theft and debauchery

if they were not made to fear the gods. This is why the ancient sages devised myth-
ical stories about the gods, and indeed built statues of mythological figures and
painted pictures of these deities that looked very much like monsters. Thus they
attributed lightning bolts to Jupiter, a trident to Neptune, arrows to Cupid, a torch to
Vulcan, and different instruments of terror to the other gods.

(Mulryan and Brown 2006a, 3–4)

Here Conti is not only discussing the classical tradition, but also interpreting its
purposes for the uneducated populace. Women would of course be illiterate by
society's own design. Thus Conti differs markedly from Cartari, who welcomed
female readers by composing in a vernacular language.

Conceptions of Myth in the Renaissance Mythographers

Boccaccio combines the idea of myth with bad theology: "This is a kind of
theology which is called mythical … it contains a significant amount of
ludicrous falsehood; it nevertheless demands much skill to elicit" (Book 1,
Preface 1, 11).

Giraldi does not discuss myth directly: instead, in his dedication to D. Hercules,
Duke of Ferrara, in the *De Deis Gentium* (1548, a2ᵛ), he dismisses Boccaccio's
Demogorgon theory with ill-concealed impatience:

Please, most learned Duke, don't be surprised that I have not begun my account of
the gods with the much touted Demogorgon, whom Boccaccio thought was the
oldest of the gods. … Boccaccio's remark that "Gorgon" represents Earth and
"Demon"' God, is his own interpretation. It's partly true, partly false, but a complete
distortion.

In the first syntagma of *De Deis Gentium,* Giraldi, in his discussion of the various
pagan gods (both Greek and Latin), takes myth to be synonymous with fable,
that is, "Myth, that is Fable" (1548, 28), and to be distinguished from physical
(e.g., scientific) and political (the activity of citizens) meanings. He also
acknowledges that myths about the gods can be allegorically interpreted:
"Porphyry notes in another place that statements about the gods ought to be
allegorically interpreted, and Eusebius Pamphilius repeats the claim" (Giraldi
1548. 19). In effect, his remarks on myth and allegory are no more than sidebars to
his focus on the etymologies of the gods.

Cartari never defines the term "myth," but it is clear from his use of the term in
relation to Saturn that it refers both to the story being told (through images and/
or words) and its hidden meaning. Thus when Saturn devours his children, "what
all this means … is that all things produced by Time are also consumed by it"
(Mulryan 2012, 31). Thus before discussing the images of Venus, Cartari pauses to

discuss the goddess in "scientific" and "ethical" terms, and to appropriate the etymological bias of Giraldi:

> Thus Venus was, according to the fables, the goddess of lust and lechery. … But then in terms of natural events, which are symbolized for us in different ways under that goddess's name, she represents that hidden strength which implants the desire to bear young in all the animals. … Therefore, the Greeks call her Aphrodite from the foam, and the word for foam is almost the same word in Greek as Aphrodite [a folk etymology].

<div align="right">(Mulryan 2012, 405–406)</div>

Conti is the only mythographer who makes a serious attempt to define myth (basically stories about the gods). He proceeds on sound historical grounds. For Conti, the *apologue* is a story with a moral, for example, Aesop's fables. The *aenus* or *aeni* is employed for simple tales *Logoi* or "words" designate tales, and *muthoi* fables, which encompass the complete plots of comedies and tragedies. Thus for Conti myth refers to stories about the gods, including all of literature, beast fables, and simple tales.

Translations

The concept of translation is crucial to an understanding of reception theory. The mythographies themselves are "translations" in two senses: translations and paraphrases of the classical texts themselves, combining into a new Latin (or Italian) synthesis of the tradition. Some of the Latin works cited are themselves interpretations of the Greek texts, particularly in the case of Conti, who not only cites the texts in their original Greek and Latin, but also supplies a Latin translation of the Greek originals. Thus in many of Conti's citations, the Greek and Latin passages are in dialogue with each other. In Cartari's case, all of the ancient writings cited, Greek or Latin, are translated into Italian and the reader then views the entire tradition from an Italian perspective. Conti transliterates individual Greek words into Latin. Giraldi prefers to paraphrase both the Greek and Latin texts instead of quoting from them, and these paraphrases constitute another form of textual transmission.

Boccaccio's mythography exists in some 49 (partial) manuscripts, and in several French and Italian translations. The first 13 books of the *Genealogia* were translated into French by Antoine Vérard in 1498 and into Italian by Giuseppe Betussi in 1548. It was not until 2011 that a complete English translation of the *Genealogia* became available (Solomon 2011). Despite the existence of the French and Italian translations, it is clear that the Latin text prevailed over all other versions, and was the one utilized by later mythographers (Giraldi, Cartari, Conti).

Cartari was translated into both Latin and French by Antoine Du Verdier (1544–1600). The French edition was re-issued by Claude Michel in 1602, 1606, and 1610,

and again by Paul Frellon in 1623 and 1624. The Latin version was reissued as the *Pantheon Antiquorum* in 1683, as the *Imagines* in 1687, and again in 1699 as the *Theatrum Ethnico idolatricum Politico-Historicum Ethnicorum Idolatrias*. Du Verdier's Latin translation (the *Imagines Deorum*) puts all the Latin passages that Cartari translated back into Latin. Some of the sexually suggestive illustrations are not reproduced, and Cartari's diatribe on women (in the chapter on Fortune), is expunged from the text. Partial translations are also available in German by Paul Hachenberg (Cartari 1692) and in English by Richard Linche (Cartari 1599) (Mulryan 1981).

It may be that the Latin version was more popular than the Italian original. This is borne out by the satirist John Marston's gibe at Cartari, where he cites the titles of Du Verdier's Latin translation (*Imagines*) rather than the original Italian (*Imagini*): "Reach me some Poets Index that will show. / *Imagines Deorum*, book of Epithetes" (Marston 1961, 72). Du Verdier conveniently restores the original Latin imbedded in Cartari's Italian paraphrases, but he does not attempt to provide the Greek. He also supplied some minimal documentation (e.g., Horace's Odes, but not always the number of the ode and never the lines being cited).

Natale Conti's *Mythologiae* was translated into French by Jean de Montlyard, in frequent editions: 1600, 1604, 1607, 1611, 1612, and 1637. His smooth Latin posed no difficulties for the scholars of his time, but the popularity of the French translation suggests that it was warmly received by non-humanist readers as well. Of course a translation is not always an accurate barometer of the original text. Montlyard omits passages from Conti that he finds difficult to translate, and he often adds, without acknowledgment, his own observations on mythology, or on other things that interest him. The translation, however, is seldom cited, although it was obviously widely read. Conti was so thoroughly indexed that even an indifferent scholar could puzzle his way through the Latin without the assistance of a translation.

The *Pantheon*, a translation of Pomey's *Pantheum Mythicum,* usually attributed to Andrew Tooke, was first published in 1694 and followed by at least 35 more editions to 1771.[4] Two editions were published in Baltimore, and may well have influenced Thomas Bulfinch's school-text, *The Age of Fable*, which is still in print since 1881, thus creating an indirect path for Pomey's entry into the American school system. "Tooke" allowed readers to assume that he was the author of the *Pantheum*, but a close examination of the two texts makes it obvious that he is translating: Here are Pomey and "Tooke" on the tasks of Mercury:

> Adesse morituris, & animas corporeis solver vinculis, solutasque ad orcum deducere, & quae jam apud Elysios campos tempus explessent, iterum in vitam revocare, reducereque in nova corpora. Quae ferè omnia his versibius Maro 6. complexus est.
>
> (Pomey 1757, 42)

He attended upon dying persons to unloose their souls from the chains of the body, and carry them to hell: he also revived, and placed in new bodies those souls which had completed their full time in the Elysian fields. Almost all of which things Virgil comprises in seven verses.

(Tooke 1701, 59)

Thus through the medium of Pomey's integration of the mythographies of Boccaccio, Giraldi, and Conti, and the plagiarized translation of "Tooke," the legacy of the Italian mythographers moved across the Atlantic into American schools, diffusing the ancient Greek and Latin texts still further from their original form, but also renewing them and reshaping them for a new audience.

Notes

1 The full argument is developed in Mulryan and Brown (2006b) and Mulryan and Brown (2006a, 142).
2 The only substantial piece of scholarship on Julien De Havrech, Enenkel's essay (2002) on Giraldi and Havrech, betrays no knowledge of Montifalchio or his relationship to Havrech.
3 For Conti's influence on visual artists in the Renaissance, see Seznec (1953, 257 ff).
4 The first edition is attributed to one J. A. B., who is identified in WorldCat as Andrew Tooke. Michael Treadwell (1985, 290) casts serious doubt on the attribution.

Guide to Further Reading

In line with the iconographical and imagistic emphasis of Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini*, several seminal works examine the interplay between art and literature in the Renaissance: Panofsky (one of the founders of icon or image studies) (1939), Wind (1967), Freedman (2003). See also Barkan (1986). The many permutations of classical mythology and its continuing influence on literature are the subject of Bush's (1963) generous survey of classical mythology in England. Barkan (1986) pursues the same subject, but with a focus on the Ovidian tradition, in both literature and art. The transformation of the allegorical tradition in the Renaissance, with a renewed emphasis on occultism, imitatio, and contextuality, is scrutinized in Steadman (1974, 1979). Steadman also evaluates the Renaissance Mythographers as potential sources for Renaissance dictionaries and other digests of classical mythology.

Two recent studies mark the renewed interest in Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini* as a major study of classical myth in the vernacular: Maffei and Arbizzoni (and 16 other contributors) (2013) and Basile and Calderoni (2015).

References

Alexandro, A. 1522. *Genialium dierum*. Rome.

Allen, D.C. 1970. *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Baldwin, T.W. 1944. *William Shaksper's Small Latine and Lesse Greeke*. 2 vols. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Barkan, L. 1986. *The Gods Made Flesh: Metamorphosis and the Pursuit of Paganism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Basile, B. and Calderoni, E. 2015. *Raccontare gli Antichi: le "Imagini" di Vincenzo Cartari*. Thesis. University of Bologna.

Boccaccio, G. 1951. *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium Libri*, ed. by V. Romano. Bari: Laterza.

Brown, S. and Mulryan, J. 2000. "'Venus' from the Thirteenth Syntagma of Lilio Gregorio Giraldi's *The Varied and Manifold History of the Pagan Gods*," *Allegorica*, 21: 5–46.

Bull, M. 2005. *The Mirror of the Gods: Classical Mythology in Renaissance Art*. Oxford: Allen Lane.

Bush, D. 1963. *Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry*, rev. edn. New York, W.W. Norton.

Cartari, V. 1599. *Fountaine of Ancient Fiction*, trans. R. Linche. London: Adam Islip.

Cartari, V. 1692. *Neu-eröffneter Götzen-Tempel*, trans. P. Hachenberg. Frankfurt: Bourgeat.

Ebreo, L. 2009. *Dialogues of Love*, tans. C.D. Bacich and R. Pescatori. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Enenkel, K. 2002. "The Making of 16th-Century Mythography: Giraldi's *Syntagma De Musis* (1507, 1511, and 1539), *De Deis Gentium Historia* (ca. 1500–1548) and Julian de Havrech's *De Cognominibus Deorum Gentilium* (1541)," *Humanistica Lovaniensia*, 5: 9–53.

Freedman, L. 2003. *The Revival of the Olympian Gods in Renaissance Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Giraldi, L.G. 1548. *De Deis Gentium*. Basel: per Ioannem Oporinum.

Hyde, T. 1985. "Boccaccio: The Genealogies of Myth." *PMLA*, 100, 5: 737–745.

Lotspeich, H.G. 1965. *Classical Mythology in the Poetry of Edmund Spenser*. New York: Gordian Press.

Maffei, S. and Arbizzoni, G., eds 2013. *Vincenzo Cartari e le direzioni del mito nel cinquecento*. Rome: Ginevra Bentivoglio editoria.

Marston, J. 1961. *The Poems of John Marston*, ed. Arnold Davenport. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Mulryan, J. 1972. "The Occult Tradition and English Renaissance Literature." *Bucknell Review*, 20: 53–72.

Mulryan, J. 1981. "Translations and Adaptations of Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini* and Natale Conti's *Mythologiae*: The Mythographic Tradition in the Renaissance," *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, 8: 272–283.

Mulryan, J. 1988. "The *Lectionum Antiquarum* of Ludovicus Caelius and the Italian Mythographers," in S.P. Revard, F. Radel, and M.A. Di Cesare, eds, *Proceedings of the Sixth International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies*, 99–105. Binghamton, NY: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies.

Mulryan, J., ed. and trans. 2012. *Vincenzo Cartari's 'Images of the Gods of the Ancients': The First Italian Mythography*. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

Mulryan, J. and Brown, S., eds and trans. 2006a. *Natale Conti's "Mythologiae."* Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

Mulryan, J. and Brown, S. 2006b. "Venus and the Classical Tradition in Boccaccio's *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium Libri* and Natale Conti's *Mythologiae," Mediaevalia*, 27, 2: 135–156.

Osgood, C.G., ed. and trans. 1930. *Boccaccio on Poetry*. New York: Liberal Arts Press.

Panofsky, E. 1939. *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*. New York: Harper & Row.

Pictor, G. 1532. *Theologia mythological*. Freiburg: Emmeus.

Pictor, G. 1558. *Apotheseos*. Basel: Nikolaus Brylinger.

Pomey, F. 1757. *Pantheum Mythicum*. Amsterdam: ex officina Schouteniana: Trajecti ad Rhenum: apud J.J. a Poolsum.

Rhodiginus, L.C. 1599. *Lectionum Antiquarum*. Frankfort: Wecheli.

Seznec, J. 1953. *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, trans. B.F. Sessions. New York: Princeton University Press.

Solomon, J., ed. and trans. 2011. *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Statius, P.P., Maturanzio, F., Calderino, D., Maffei, A., d'Aragona, F.F., Paganini, G., Urswick, C., Moore, J., George, King of Great Britain, and Placidus, L. 1490. *Thebadios liber primus*. Venice: Jacobus de Paganinis.

Steadman, J. 1974. *The Lamb and the Elephant: Ideal Imitation and the Context of Renaissance Allegory*. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library.

Steadman, J. 1979. *Nature into Myth: Medieval and Renaissance Moral Symbols*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Tooke, A. 1701. *Pantheon*. London: printed for Robert Clavel.

Treadwell, M. 1985. "Benjamin Motte, Andrew Tooke and *Gulliver's Travels."* in H.J. Real and H.J. Vienken, eds, *Proceedings of the First Münster Symposium on Jonathan Swift*, 287–304. Munich: Wilhelm Fink.

Wind, E. 1967. *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*, 2nd ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Bulfinch and Graves
Modern Mythography as Literary Reception

John Talbot

Don't even bother with Thomas Bulfinch's *The Age of Fable* and Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*. That was the advice, nearly 30 years ago in the *Yale Review*, of a classicist seeking to separate the wheat from the chaff among what by then had become a very crowded field of mythographical collections and handbooks in English. "Bullfinch" (sic), in his judgment, was contemptible for his bowdlerization and his theoretical naïveté, and because of these defects he merited "disrecommendation" (sic). As for Graves's mythography, it was no less than "pernicious," concealing wild inaccuracies beneath a specious academic tone and manner (Bers 1985, 373). Students of mythology were briskly warned to shun Bulfinch and Graves, and to repair instead to other, more dependable, authorities. But students of mythography, as opposed to mythology, should ignore that warning. Bulfinch's *The Age of Fable* (1855) and Graves's *The Greek Myths* (1959) are landmark works – not as contributions to the theoretical study of myth, but as two of the most significant modern instances of mythography as a mode of classical reception.

The Bostonian Thomas Bulfinch, scion of a distinguished New England family and son of the America's first great architect, is the author of by far the most popular and frequently reprinted collection of classical mythology in America.[1] What's more, *The Age of Fable* broke fresh ground in mythography in English – an achievement that has been obscured in part by its popular success, and in part by its low standing among academics, who tend to dismiss it for its sanitization of myth and its theoretical unsophistication.[2] It takes consulting Bulfinch's predecessors to appreciate how he broke with their example. One could open, for instance, Andrew Tooke's 1689 work *The Pantheon*, a handbook of mythology, translated from an early work in Latin by the French Jesuit Francois Pomey. Over the course of nearly two centuries since its appearance in English, *The Pantheon* enjoyed wide

circulation on both sides of the Atlantic, running to 33 printings over the course of nearly two centuries (Cleary 2007, 280), and became a fixture of the curriculum at Bulfinch's alma mater, the Boston Latin School (Holmes 1970, 354).

Tooke's *Pantheon* is typical of early modern mythographies in several respects. It is intended as a school-text and a reference book: it is rather to be consulted than read. Information is classified under categorical headings, allowing for little presentation of myths as narratives. So, for instance, the drama of Pentheus' confrontation with Dionysus and the Bacchae is reduced to a single sentence, because it is offered not for its own appeal as a narrative but instead as illustrating Tooke's point about the consequences of state suppression of Dionysiac rites (Tooke 1830, 72–73).[3] *The Pantheon* is presented as an aid to those privileged to be receiving, or to have already received, classical training: Roman authors are duly quoted in Latin, often untranslated; Greek citations are obligingly glossed – in Latin. Often Tooke foregoes to narrate a myth at all (for instance, the story of Proteus), sending the reader to the relevant classical source – in the case of Proteus, to the eighth book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* – confident that his readers have access to the relevant Greek and Latin volumes (Tooke 1830, 197). None of this means that mythographical collections prior to Bulfinch were entirely, as one of Bulfinch's contemporary admirers claimed, "great dull books" (Anon 1856, 314). John Lemprière's 1788 dictionary *Bibliotecha Classica* is crammed with suggestive detail, and famously nourished the imagination of John Keats. William King's *Historical Account of the Heathen Gods and Heroes* (1710) – another Boston Latin School text – despite its format as a reference book, has its moments of wit. The American classicist Charles Anthon's *Classical Dictionary* (1841), which appeared just 14 years before Bulfinch's own book, may be dry, but in its account of myths engages vividly with the ideas of Creuzer and other recent theorists. But the conventions they have in common – as being reference books rather than readable narratives, and as presuming a classical education and access to the ancient sources – made them almost useless to the uninitiated.

Bulfinch overturns both these conventions. In the first instance, he eschews the model of the dictionary or encyclopedia. "Such sources," he complains, "give us only the dry facts without any of the charm of the original narrative, and what is a poetical myth when stripped of its poetry? The story of Ceyx and Halcyone, which fills a chapter in our book, occupies but eight lines in the best (Smith's) Classical Dictionary" (Martin 1991, xxii).[4] Bulfinch instead presents the countless episodes of classical mythology, with their variants and overlaps, chiefly as a narrative. Classification and analysis are subordinated to the demands of narrative continuity. He seeks to present not only the facts about the myths, but to retell them with some measure of "the charm of the original narrative." He distances himself from contemporary mythographies' whiff of the classroom, which turned myth "into a form of catechism" (Martin 1991, xv), hoping instead to present myth "not as a study but as a relaxation from study" (Martin 1991, xxii). *The Age of Fable* is the first modern classical mythography intended to be read for pleasure.

Bulfinch achieves more than just greater narrative amplitude than his predecessors. He reconstructs classical mythology along a broad narrative arc, from the creation of the world to the founding of Rome. So after an expository introductory chapter featuring a very conventional catalogue of divinities and their attributes, Bulfinch launches into an extended narrative of the creation and early history of the world – a distinctly literary treatment, for in it he closely follows the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Where he can, he works his transitions to suggest narrative continuity between myths, and even groups of myths. There are artful interweavings. He arranges, for instance, that his account of Bacchus should appear a few pages after his account of Theseus – not an obvious choice, but it allows him to knit together the stories of the hero and the god through the narrative thread (so to speak) of Ariadne, who figures in both stories (Martin 1991, 137–149). Such collocation stands in contrast not only to the typical presentation of dictionaries (whose format necessarily relegates Ariadne, Bacchus, and Theseus to discrete and distant entries, and so minimizes their interrelation), but also the more discursive mythographical compendia. In Tooke, for instance, Bacchus, as a major deity, appears in an early chapter (1830, 64–76), and Theseus, as a mere mortal, in a much later one (1830, 259–263); no casual reader would perceive any link between them. To undo such severances, where possible, is part of Bulfinch's method. The phrasing of his transitions presumes of his readers that they should take in the book from beginning to end, and often invites them to associate the present topic of his narrative with earlier ones ('We have seen in the story of Theseus how Ariadne…'). In this respect *The Age of Fable* has more in common with the *Metamorphoses* or the *Morte d'Arthur* than with the mythographical collections Bulfinch would have had before him in his time.

Modest about his literary pretensions, Bulfinch would have disavowed comparison with artists of the order of Ovid or Mallory. But his book deserves a minor place in the history of English literature, both on its own merits and for its historical value, as having a relation to contemporary literary receptions of myth. *The Age of Fable* is cognate with popular works by two important Anglophone writers: an American, Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose Gothic retellings of selected Greek myths for children appeared in 1851 and 1852 as *A Wonder-Book* and *Tanglewood Tales*; and an Englishman, Charles Kingsley, who published his own narrative adaptation of myths, *The Heroes* (1856), one year after *The Age of Fable*. More broadly, Bulfinch's book is part of what critics have acknowledged as a particular interest in, and reception of, classical myth that characterized one of the more important moments in the English literary tradition: the so-called "Flowering of New England," during which, within a period of around three decades in the general environs of Boston, many of the early masterpieces of American literature were composed.[5]

The Age of Fable also overturned the second convention, by which mythographical works were chiefly aimed at readers who had, or were receiving, classical training. Bulfinch instead addresses himself precisely to those without classical

training and unlikely ever to receive it. He had in mind a new kind of readership which, since the late eighteenth century, had been growing in numbers and influence on both sides of the Atlantic: middle-class readers, the products of schools that offered no Latin or Greek, and who clamored for some access to the classical knowledge which their merely "English education," as it came to be called, had denied them (Stray 1998, 102). Reading was "no longer the sole pre-serve of a small elite" but "the preferred pastime of the new middle classes" (Hale 2006, 35). The author of a late-Victorian volume of translations of Roman satire, who hoped his work would appeal to "the English, perhaps even the classical, reader" (Evans 1901, 1), tellingly signals not only the existence but even the precedence of this new kind of reader. Publishers responded to this new market chiefly by supplying, in unprecedented quantities, inexpensive and (usu-ally) practical translations of classical literature. Through such means the classics were becoming increasingly democratized. *The Age of Fable* belongs to that wider process, but makes an original contribution in being the first work of mythog-raphy in this popularizing tradition. "Our work is not for the learned, nor for the theologian, nor for the philosopher," Bulfinch insists, but for "the English reader" (Martin 1991, xxii–xiii).

The result of these innovations is that unlike its predecessors, *The Age of Fable* is meant to assist its readers to an appreciation of English, not classical, litera-ture. The "English reader" of the nineteenth century – literate, curious, but without classical training – could scarcely be expected to read the classics, even in translation: "the field is too extensive," Bulfinch thought, and in any case a classical education was no longer practical. "To devote study to a species of learning which relates wholly to false marvels of obsolete faiths is not to be expected of the general reader in a practical age like this." What Bulfinch did think practical, though, was to offer *The Age of Fable* as an aid to understanding English literature's allusive relations to myth. Accordingly, Bulfinch concludes his retellings of myth, wherever possible, with quotations of relevant passages of English literature, as if they, and not the myths, were the point. His principle of selection is not at all that of a pure mythologist: "Having chosen mythology as connected with literature for our province," he insists, pointedly excluding wide areas of myth, "we have endeavored to omit nothing which the reader of elegant literature is likely to find occasion for" (Martin 1991, xxii). His critical opinion, when he does interpose it, focuses on English literature, not mythology. Spenser, he opines, "improves upon Ovid" (Martin 1991, 98). He is alert to the value of translation as a mode of English literature, distinguishing Pope's ren-dering of a passage of Homer as poetically superior to Cowper's version of the same passage (Martin 1991, 199). Recounting the myth of Glaucus and Scylla, he goes out of his way to give prominence to an alternate version of the myth which is not Greek at all, but the invention of Keats (Martin 1991, 55), and he takes pains to digress from his presentation of Antigone to acknowledge a contemporary critic's recent article comparing her to Shakespeare's Cordelia

(Martin 1991, 165). Itself a modest literary accomplishment, *The Age of Fable* is the first major work of mythography in English principally concerned with modern literature's reception of classical myth.

Exactly one century after the publication of *The Age of Fable*, Penguin Classics brought out a new, two-volume compendium, Robert Graves's *The Greek Myths*. It was intended as a companion to its successful line of classical translations issued in paperback to a mass market.[6] A leading poet and novelist, whose works of historical fiction (outstandingly *I Claudius*) often drew on his wide acquaintance with classical literature, Graves might have followed Bulfinch by presenting mythology chiefly as narrative. In the event, he does something like the opposite: he shifts his focus away from his retellings of the myths themselves, giving prominence instead to his critical, indeed often highly polemical, annotations. Each of Graves's 171 chapters (strictly unconnected, but arranged to suggest a rough chronology from the creation accounts to the homecoming of Odysseus) falls into three sections: the retelling of a myth, a citation of classical sources, and critical annotations. This third section is the most important: the notes are often as long as, and in many cases longer than, the myths they comment upon. They upstage the telling of the myths themselves.

In this way Graves makes *The Greek Myths* into an occasion for giving expression, in a new medium – mythography – to his cherished and eccentric theory of the White Goddess, long embodied in his own poetry,[7] and articulated in his book-length treatise *The White Goddess* (1948), "a historical grammar of poetic myth." There Graves had asserted the existence, in remote antiquity, of a matriarchal religion, based on a goddess-figure whose three aspects correspond to phases of the moon and to the stages of youth, maturity, and age. Her consorts (whether as kings, lovers, or in some other role) are always subordinate and always to die as sacrificial victims. "The language of poetic myth" which developed to honor this female deity remains, for Graves, "the language of true poetry." But that language was "tampered with in late Minoan times when invaders from Central Asia began to substitute patrilineal for matrilineal institutions and remodel or falsify the myths to justify the social changes" (Graves 1948, x). Graves has a name for this kind of tampering with of the "true form" of myth. He calls it "iconotropy," and to detect and expose classical myth's iconotropic distortions of the "true myth" of the White Goddess is Graves's obsessive burden throughout *The Greek Myths*.

Obsessive, because Graves finds in myth after myth evidence – which he sets out in the form of those extensive annotations – of "tampering" with the "true myth" of the White Goddess and her doomed consorts. So, for instance, Icarus's donning of wings to escape from Crete is, for Graves, an iconotropic distortion of an ancient matriarchal rite involving "the ritual burning of the solar king's surrogate, who had put on eagles' wings" for that occasion (Graves 1959, I. 316). The same, or a very similar, explanation is attached to dozens of mythological personages, from major figures such as Pelops and Hippolytus, to minor

characters such as Glaucus, Myrtilus. Among them is Ganymede, whose myth is "a misreading of an icon which showed the new king preparing for his sacred marriage [to the White Goddess] … yet the tradition of Ganymede's youth suggests that the king shown on the icon was the royal surrogate and interrex, ruling only for a single day" (Graves 1959, I.116). The effect of Graves's notes is often effectively to inform his readers that the myth he has just recounted is no proper myth at all, but some other, less fundamental, kind of narrative. So, the familiar story of Phaethon, as it has come down to us, is not a myth but merely "an instructive fable" whose moral is that: "fathers should not spoil their sons … (I. 157–158). This fable, however, is not quite so simple as it seems: it has a mythic importance in its reference to the annual sacrifice of a royal prince." The telling detail lies in Phaethon's identification with the sun: "The sacred king pretended to die at sunset; the boy interrex was at once invested with his titles, dignities, and sacred implements, married to the queen, and killed twenty-four hours later" (Graves 1959, I.157).

At his most extreme, Graves not only disavows the received forms of myths but reconstructs, by inference, alternative versions of myths which suit his theory of the White Goddess. So, after recounting the traditional elements of the Oedipus myth, Graves in his notes conjectures a "true" version, in which Oedipus's troubles come upon him because he overthrows the hitherto matriarchal rule at Thebes, initiated by the chthonic "Hera the Throttler," and replaces it with a patriarchal order (Graves 1959, II.15).

Critics then and now have judged these notes a brilliant performance, but inaccurate and theoretically crude.[8] Chief among Graves's hostile critics was Professor H.J. Rose of St. Andrews, whose own *Handbook of Greek Mythology* (1928) had been among the standard general handbooks of mythology. Rose's dismissal of Graves's White Goddess matriarchy, with its annual sacrificial kings and their surrogates, as "a fantastic picture of a culture such as never existed in Europe," is echoed in almost every other classicist's review, though without the petulance to which Rose must have felt entitled as the rival author of a sober and responsible mythography. And yet one (perhaps condescending) concession of Rose's – that Graves's pet theory might be "legitimate enough in a work of the imagination, but quite out of place in a handbook of mythology" (Rose 1955, 208) – anticipates a seam of criticism in which *The Greek Myths* is appreciated chiefly as a literary, rather than a scholarly, accomplishment. Dudley Fitts, classicist and poet-translator, in the year of its publication, called The Greek Myths "a kind of poetry in itself" (Fitts 1965, 16). A recent critic agrees that it is "a work of the poetic imagination … a poetic mythography" (Pharand 2007, 69). George Steiner acknowledges the book's inadequacy as a guide for the neophyte – "this should not be a man's first dictionary of mythology" – even as he commends it as a work of the imagination: "but it should certainly be his second. There may come a poet or dramatist who will make of his *Greek Myths* what the Renaissance made of its Ovid" (Steiner 1960, 360). The consensus among even

its critics is that *The Greek Myths*, if a scholarly failure, is in one way or another a contribution to literature.

There are at least two ways of putting more precisely the case that *The Greek Myths* is an important instance of literary classical reception. The first is to point to how it is linked to Anglo-American literary modernism by its debt to the theoretical movement that has come to be known, somewhat imprecisely, as the "Cambridge school."[9] The scholars in this movement tended to interpret myth in comparative and anthropological terms. They studied Greek and Roman mythology not in isolation, but in relation to many other mythological and ritual systems, and they saw myth as the survival, in verbal form, of various features of ancient social practices, most notably religious ritual. (For this reason they are sometimes referred to as the "Cambridge ritualists.") Grave's own theory of mythology, with its matriarchy and ritual sacrifices of kings, consorts and their surrogates, though highly reductive, idiosyncratic, and often fanciful, nonetheless belongs broadly to the anthropological view of myth which the Cambridge school had introduced. In his theory of iconotropy, for instance, Graves is not far from a position taken by Jane Harrison, that "ritual practice misunderstood explains the elaboration of myth" (Harrison 1922, iii).

The "anthropological turn" that the Cambridge school brought about in the study of mythology greatly influenced the literature of the twentieth century. The comparativist approach, for instance, of Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915) presents a synthesis of world religions, myths, and rituals, which is mirrored, if not consciously imitated, in such literary works as *Finnegans Wake*. One contemporary critic of Graves invoked James Joyce's (1939) masterpiece – a sprawling, syncretizing Key to All Mythologies – as an analogue to *The Greek Myths* (Macpherson 1958, 18–19). A more modest, but no less apt, analogue is the English poet Ted Hughes, whose extensive treatment of myth in his own poems and translations accords with his generally anthropological approach to myth. (His now famous decision, as a Cambridge undergraduate, to drop his English course in favor of Anthropology and Archaeology, itself neatly embodies an inclination in the larger literary culture.)[10]

A little over three decades before the publication of *The Greek Myths*, an even greater poet than Graves had written the following footnote to gloss line 218 of The Waste Land ("I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives"):

> Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a "character," is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem. The whole passage from Ovid is of great anthropological interest: [quotes Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 3.318–336].

<div align="right">(Eliot 1963, 72–73)</div>

In this erudite annotation to his own poem, T.S. Eliot anticipates the method, style and tone of the later poet-turned mythographer Robert Graves, who wrote (for instance) this gloss on the myth of the Judgment of Paris:

> These three goddesses are one goddess in triad: Athene the maiden, Aphrodite the nymph, and Hera the crone – and Aphrodite is presenting Paris with the apple, rather than receiving it from him. This apple, symbolizing her love bought at the price of his life, will be Paris' passport to the Elysian Fields, the apple orchards of the west, to which only the souls of heroes are admitted. A similar gift is frequently made in Irish and Welsh myth; as well as by the Three Hesperides, to Heracles; and by Eve, "the mother of all living," to Adam. Thus Nemesis, goddess of the sacred grove who, in late myth, became a symbol of divine vengeance on proud kings, carries an apple branch, her gift to heroes.
>
> (Graves 1959, I.21–22).

For Graves, this myth is – as the passage of Ovid had been for Eliot – "of great anthropological interest." Eliot may or may not have agreed with Graves's eccentric insistence that the conventional myth of the Judgment of Paris preserves a record of an "ancient ritual situation," as he calls it, in which the White Goddess figure presents a talismanic apple to her doomed consort. But both Eliot's and Graves's notes imply a similar relation of myth to poetry. From Eliot's post-Cambridge school perspective, Tiresias is but one manifestation of a multiple personage, just as in the poem "all the women are one woman" who are themselves conflated into the figure of Tiresias. The relation of myth to literature proposed by Bulfinch – that myths are charming fictions for poets to quote or adapt, more or less instrumentally – would be wholly inadequate to readers seeking to understand the relationship of the myths about Tiresias to Eliot's poetry. For Graves, too, a myth is no longer what it had been for Bulfinch, a tale for poets to adorn their works. Aphrodite is a conflation of the three persons who stand behind the myth: to see past the conventional Aphrodite to the universal and many-personed goddess beyond her is the basis of poetic insight. "No poet can hope to understand the nature of poetry" without this kind of vision (Graves 1948, 373).

Eliot's footnote points to a second way of registering the value of *The Greek Myths* as literary reception. It is linked to literary modernism and postmodernism in a point of style: the aesthetic of scholarly or pseudo-scholarly commentary. One of the very first reviewers of *The Greek Myths* relished the way in which the detached scholarly tone of Graves's annotations crisply holds the lid down on the seething subject matter of myth's primitive ritual origins (Weisinger 1956, 243). One could go further: such footnotes and annotations are part of a wider aesthetic. It is a characteristic that George Steiner, writing on Graves, found also in Joyce: a "genius for elaborate, immensely erudite and labored wit […] all the devices of pedantic seriousness" (Steiner 1960, 364). To which I might add the names of Borges and Nabokov (especially the Nabokov of *Pale Fire*), whose elegant

pseudepigrapha lovingly send up the fastidious academic's pedantry. Part of the aesthetic of *The Greek Myths* lies in the possibility that its displays of erudition may involve ironical play. Roguish Eliot himself disavowed his own learned footnotes to The Waste Land as "bogus scholarship" (Eliot 1957, 110), and opinion is divided on whether they are to be taken in earnest or as donnish parody. Vanda Zajko has suspected just such irony in Eliot (Zajko 2009, 113); and Steiner detects in Graves's notes to *The Greek Myths* the possibility that he is "pulling academics and pedants, leg-first, into some vastly serious hoax": "I do not suggest that Graves is not persuaded of the truth of the main ideas put forward in *The Greek Myths* […] I do suggest there is cunning laughter in the way in which he presents his learning" (Steiner 1960, 364).

Ironical or not, the erudite notes that so dominate *The Greek Myths* elegantly bring together a distinctive modernist style with the post-Cambridge school anthropological approach so central to twentieth-century literature.

An accidental symmetry of chronology – that *The Greek Myths* appeared exactly one century after *The Age of Fable* – reflects the nearly polar differences in their approaches to mythography. Bulfinch, mild, catholic, and un-theoretical, presents the myths as durable instances of literary fancy, useful chiefly as a key to allusions in English literature and, as such, a means of self-improvement or edification. Graves, on the other hand, is theoretic and polemical, seeking on every page to expose as iconotropic misreadings any account of myth failing to conform to his own totalizing theory of the White Goddess. He absorbs broadly the implications of the Cambridge school, retelling and reinterpreting the myths not as ends in themselves, still less as background material for understanding polite literature, but as more or less corrupt versions of the one true myth which is the source of all poetry.

Yet the unlikely similarities between Bulfinch and Graves are more illuminating. Both writers made mythography a force in that very modern, and still ongoing, phenomenon, the democratization of the classics. Bulfinch broke with tradition by addressing mythography to the new and growing audience of "English readers" eager to acquire culture but unlikely ever to study classics. Graves, too insisted that *The Greek Myths* was "a popular book" (O'Prey 1984, 129), meaning that it was the first to transmit to a general audience – readers of mass-market paperbacks – the major revolution in the theory of mythology of the past century (though in his own eccentric version). Both men achieved these innovations working outside the academic establishment.

Even more importantly, Bulfinch and Graves brought mythography into closer relation to modern literature than ever before. Appreciation of English, not classical, literature is the chief concern of *The Age of Fable*. By avoiding the discontinuous style of a reference book, and inclining (like Hawthorne and Kingsley) to a readable, connected narrative, Bulfinch nudged *The Age of Fable* closer to the condition of literature in its own right. *The Greek Myths* is even less ambiguously a work of literature in itself. Its stylish retellings of the myths bear

the mark of the laconic and ironical prose style of a master of historical fiction. Just as telling, though, are the scholarly (or pseudo-scholarly) notes, which echo in their themes and tone writers from Eliot and Joyce, through Graves himself, to Ted Hughes and beyond. Bulfinch and Graves are linked in having written mythographies which are not only retellings, but receptions of classical myth, enriching its living relations to modern literature.

Notes

1   *The Age of Fable* has appeared in myriad editions (including both abridged and revised forms), especially since entering the public domain. I cite here the most reliable edition, Martin (1991), which brings together *The Age of Fable* with two other works, *The Age of Chivalry* and *Legends of Charlemagne*.

2   Both characterizations are accurate. Bulfinch not only sanitizes his sources (e.g., when following Ovid, he excises the Roman poet's bawdy and minimizes its violence and grotesquerie; and he suppresses Hesiod's depiction of Prometheus as wily and cunning in favor of a noble Aeschylean or Platonic Prometheus). None of the great theorists of myth of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – Heyne, Creuzer, Müler – figure in his book (Feldman and Richardson 1972, 506), though there is evidence he could have known of contemporary myth theory (Martin 1991, xvii). Bulfinch allows himself a brief chapter acknowledging four, by his time familiar, "theories" to account for myth – "scriptural," "historical," "allegorical" and "physical" – but his treatment is perfunctory and his tone skeptical. See further Von Hendy (2002, 81).

3   The citation is from the 1830 American edition, as it is the version Bulfinch most likely knew.

4   Bulfinch refers to the leading multi-volume classical dictionary of his day, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* (1844 and 1849), edited by William Smith.

5   For Bulfinch's admiration of Hawthorne, see Cleary (2007, 271). For the relation of Hawthorne, Kingsley, and Bulfinch's mythographies, see Feldman and Richardson (1972, 505–510) and Von Hendy (2002, 68). For the special importance of myth in fermenting the New England literary renaissance, see Richardson (1978, esp. 165–194) and Martin (1991, xvii).

6   For the complicated publication history of *The Greek Myths*, including its revised and abridged editions, see Pharand (2007, 59–62).

7   For general accounts of the relation of Graves's poetry to The White Goddess, see Seymour-Smith (1995, 391–395) and Snipes (1979, 39–54).

8   For example, Bers (1985), Dimock (1955), Feldman and Richardson (1972), Macpherson (1958), Rose (1955), and Weisinger (1956).

9   To conflate the names of the "Cambridge school" scholars (Jane Harrison, A.B. Cook, W. Robertson Smith) and their forerunners (James Frazer, W. Robertson Smith) is to obscure the distinctions among their methods and conclusions. But then Graves himself lumps them together even as he acknowledges his debt (Graves 1959, 22).

10 For The White Goddess as an influence on Hughes, see Sager (2009, 2–3, 5); for accounts of Hughes's relation to the more general tradition of Cambridge school anthropologists, see Roberts (2009) and Zajko (2009).

Guide to Further Reading

By far the most useful and extensive critical treatment of Bulfinch's *The Age of Fable* is the introduction and commentary that accompanies Richard Martin's edition of Bulfinch's complete mythological works (Martin 1991). Marie Sally Cleary's critical biography of Bulfinch takes stock of how *The Age of Fable* may have been shaped by Bulfinch's family background, education, career fortunes, and by the social and historical context of his time. Jay Macpherson (1958) gives the most acute and witty analysis of *The Greek Myths*, and Michael Pharand (2007) the amplest recent survey, evaluation, and bibliography of its critical reception. Those wishing to investigate the scores of other works of modern classical mythography beyond Bulfinch and Graves can begin with the survey by John Peradotto (1973). Also recommended is A.G.G. Gibson's *Robert Graves and the Classical Tradition* (2015).

References

Anon. 1856. "Review of The Age of Fable." *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany*, January: 143–144.

Anthon, C. 1841. *Classical Dictionary*. New York: Harper & Bros.

Bers, V. 1985. "Achilles' Name among the Maidens and Deeper Questions: Looking It Up in the Classics." *Yale Review*, 74: 368–377.

Bulfinch, T. 1855. *The Age of Fable: Or, Stories of Gods and Heroes*. Boston, MA: Sanborn, Carter, and Bazin.

Cleary, M.S. 2007. *Myths for the Millions: Thomas Bulfinch, His America, and His Mythology Book*. Frankfurt: Lang.

Dimock, G.E. 1955. "Robert Graves and Greek Mythology." *The Hudson Review*, 8: 449–455.

Eliot, T.S. 1957. *On Poetry and Poets*. London: Faber and Faber.

Eliot, T.S. 1963. *Collected Poems*. New York: Harcourt.

Evans, L., trans. 1901. *The Satires of Juvenal, Perseus, Sulpicia, and Lucilius*. London: Bell & Dalby.

Feldman, B. and Richardson, R.D. 1972. *The Rise of Modern Mythology 1680–1860*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Fitts, D. 1956. "The Material of Poetry." *New York Times Book Review*. 1 January.

Gibson, A.G.G. 2015 *Robert Graves and the Classical Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Graves, R. 1948. *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*. New York: Creative Age Press.

Graves, R. 1959. *The Greek Myths*. 2 vols. New York: G. Braziller.

Hale, T. 2006. "Readers and Publishers of Translations in Britain," in P. France and K. Haynes, eds, *The Oxford History of Literary Translation in English*, vol. 4, 34–47. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harrison, J. 1922. *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hawthorne, N. 1851. *A Wonder Book*. Chicago: W.B. Conkey.

Hawthorne, N. 1852. *Tanglewood Tales*. Philadelphia, PA: McKay.

Holmes, P. 1970. *A Tercentenary History of The Boston Public Latin School, 1635–1935*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Joyce, J. 1939. *Finnegans Wake*. London: Faber & Faber.

King, W. 1710. *Historical Account of the Heathen Gods and Heroes*. London: Printed for Bernard Lintott.

Kingsley, C. 1856. *The Heroes*. London: T. Nelson.

Lemprière, J. 1788. *Bibliotecha Classica*. Reading, UK.

Macpherson, J. 1958. "Review Article: The Greek Myths." *Phoenix*, 12: 15–25.

Martin, R.P., ed. 1991. *Bulfinch's Mythology*. New York: HarperCollins.

O'Prey, P., ed. 1984. *Between Moon and Moon: Selected Letters of Robert Graves, 1946–1972*. London: Hutchinson.

Peradotto, J. 1973. *Classical Mythology: An Annotated Bibliographical Survey*. Urbana, IL: Scholars Press.

Pharand, M. 2007. "Poetic Mythography: The Genesis, Rationale, and Perception of The Greek Myths." *Gravesiana: The Journal of the Robert Graves Society*, 3: 56–73.

Richardson, R.D., Jr. 1978. *Myth and Literature in the American Renaissance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Roberts, N. 2009. "Hughes's Myth: The Classics in Gaudete and Cave Birds," in R. Rees, ed., *Ted Hughes and the Classics*, 120–133. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rose, H.J. 1928. *Handbook of Greek Mythology*. London: Methuen.

Rose, H.J. 1955. Review of Robert Graves, The Greek Myths. *Classical Review*, 5: 208–209.

Sager, K. 2009. "Ted Hughes and the Classics," in R. Rees, ed., *Ted Hughes and the Classics*, 1–24. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Seymour-Smith, M. 1995. *Robert Graves: His Life and Work*. London: Bloomsbury.

Smith, W., ed. 1849. *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*. Boston: Little and Brown.

Snipes, K. 1979. *Robert Graves*. New York: F. Ungar.

Steiner, G. 1960. "The Genius of Robert Graves." *The Kenyon Review*, 22: 340–365.

Stray, C. 1998. *Classics Transformed: Schools, University and Society in England, 1830–1960*. London: Times Newspapers Ltd.

Tooke, A. 1830. *Tooke's Pantheon of the Heathen Gods, and Illustrious Heroes*. Baltimore: E.J. Coale.

Von Hendy, A. 2002. *The Construction of Myth*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Weisinger, H. 1956. "'A Very Curious and Painstaking Person': Robert Graves as Mythographer." *Midwest Folklore*, 6: 235–244.

Zajko, V. 2009. "'Mutilated Towards Alignment?' Prometheus On His Crag and the 'Cambridge School' of Anthropology," in R. Rees, ed., *Ted Hughes and the Classics*, 100–119. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Myth Collections for Children

Sheila Murnaghan and Deborah H. Roberts

In the early nineteenth century, English-speaking children might first encounter Greek and Roman mythology in *Tooke's Pantheon of the Heathen Gods, and Illustrious Heroes, revised for a classical course of education, and adapted for the use of students of every age and of either sex* (an 1817 revision of a popular 1694 translation of a Latin original [Pomey and Tooke 1694]). This often reprinted and avowedly educational compendium offers brief epitomes of mythic characters and events in an encyclopedic format, along with quotations from ancient authors and ample digressions on alternative traditions and odd facts of lore and iconography. We could hardly find a more marked contrast than the works (two American, one British) that largely displaced Tooke and other educational handbooks and started a fresh tradition of myth collections for children: Nathaniel Hawthorne's *A Wonder-Book for Boys and Girls* (1851), its sequel *Tanglewood Tales* (1853), and Charles Kingsley's *The Heroes, or, Greek Fairy-Tales for my Children* (1855).

In his two collections, Hawthorne freely adapts ancient material (and his acknowledged modern source, Charles Anthon's *Classical Dictionary* [1841]) to realize his view of classical myths as "capable of being rendered into very capital reading for children" (Hawthorne 1996, 8). Selected myths are recast on the model of the fairy tale, by that time a popular form of children's literature, with an emphasis on enchanters, magical objects, and miraculous transformations. In *A Wonder Book*, myths are further identified with children's stories through a frame narrative in which a college student tells them to a group of younger cousins and their friends, and Hawthorne turns several myths into stories about children: Pandora and Epimetheus are young playmates in an edenic "Paradise of Children," and Pandora opens the forbidden box in childish disobedience; Proserpina (Hawthorne uses the Latin name for Persephone) appears, not as

Pluto's full-grown wife, but as a little girl whom he abducts out of a lonely wish for "a merry little maid, to run upstairs and down, and cheer up the rooms with her smile" (Hawthorne 2009, 173) – similar in the new life she brings to a dour old man to Joanna Spyri's Heidi or Francis Hodgson Burnett's Little Lord Fauntleroy. Hawthorne's light-hearted narrative includes many playful and anachronistic details: Midas has a pair of spectacles, and Quicksilver (Mercury) is "like a person much accustomed to gymnastic exercises" (Hawthorne 1996, 73, 27).

To justify his popularizing and modernizing revisions, Hawthorne appeals to myth's timelessness and malleability. His narrator identifies myth as the products of a primordial golden age, "nursery tales made for the amusement of […] the Earth, when she was a child" (Hawthorne 1996, 19–20) and thus universal: "an old Greek had no more exclusive right to them than a modern Yankee has" (Hawthorne 1996, 164–165). Inspired by a romantic vision of childhood, Hawthorne has his narrator claim that his own versions are more authentic than the "cold and heartless" treatments of the Greeks: "we must raise the intellect and fancy to the level of childhood, in order to recreate the original myth" (Hawthorne 1996, 165; 2009, 6). Though his tales contain some mild moral lessons, for example on the evils of idleness and sulking, they are primarily celebrations of childhood and of a childlike sense of wonder, in which adults stand to learn from children. One of his most striking and influential innovations is Midas's daughter Marygold, whose horrifying transformation into gold cures her father of greed.

Kingsley's *Heroes* is a more historical and didactic work, written partly in reaction to Hawthorne's versions (Colloms 1975, 205; Pope-Hennessy 1949, 149), but Kingsley too adopts the fairy tale as a model and presents myths as naturally suited to children because they derive from a child-like era. For him, however, that era is identified specifically with early Greece, which he admires as the precursor to modern Christian culture. The early Greeks were a "young and simple" people who "loved fairy tales" but their fairy tales remain unsurpassed for "making children love noble deeds" and teaching the lesson "Do right, and God will help you" (Kingsley 2009, xiv–v). To that end, he retells three tales of heroic coming-of-age, those of Theseus, Jason, and Perseus, in which the protagonists succeed with the help of divine patrons. In addition to inculcating proto-Christian values, the myths are intended as an introduction to material that his readers will later encounter at a more advanced level: the boys "will, perhaps, spend a great deal of time in reading Greek books," while the girls will read stories from Greek history in translation and will come across the influence of Greek culture throughout their daily lives (Kingsley 2009, vii).

The success of these works was followed by the publication, over the next century and a half, of hundreds of anthologies of myth for children (Brazouski and Klatt 1994), often accompanied by assertions that these wonderful stories are too good to forget, that they are immortal, have withstood "the test of time" (an often-repeated phrase) and are still fresh. Hawthorne's and Kingsley's own

books have been reprinted many times, excerpted in other collections and in single-myth volumes, and illustrated by numerous artists. They are regularly mentioned on lists of recommended reading (such as Charlotte Yonge's 1887 *What Books to Lend and What to Give*), and their choice of myths and ways of telling them serve as models for many later writers. Thus, although we find a number of variations in the presentation of myth (readers for younger children, versions whose format anticipates the later prominence of the picture book, history books that begin with a section on myth), the period from 1850 to the 1960s is dominated by story collections like Hawthorne's and Kingsley's, most of them with illustrations of selected moments (Pandora opening the box, Theseus killing the Minotaur), some offering a series of discrete tales, others a continuous sequence of related legends. In addition to stories of magical transformation and heroic coming-of-age, the most favored myths are those with young protagonists, such as Icarus and Atalanta, or an etiological element: Pandora, Persephone, Narcissus and Echo, Arachne. Anthologies often include episodes from the *Odyssey*, and there is a related tradition of children's versions of Homer that goes back to Charles Lamb's *Adventures of Ulysses* (1808) and includes re-tellings by A.J. Church (1878, 1897, 1895, 1906, 1907), Rosemary Sutcliff (1993; 1995), and many others.

The assimilation of myths to fairy tales persists throughout this period, inspired both by the fairy tale's established place in children's literature and by anthropologically inflected interpretations of classical myths in the context of world folklore; we find among Kingsley and Hawthorne's earlier successors such titles as *Old Greek Folk Stories Told Anew* (Peabody 1897), *Children of the Dawn: Old Tales of Greece* (Buckley 1908) and *The Golden Porch: A Book of Greek Fairy Tales* (Hutchinson 1909). The pioneering Scottish-born anthropologist Andrew Lang produced two versions of the Perseus myth for young readers: one in *The Blue Fairy Book* (1889), the first in Lang's popular series of color-named fairy tale collections, entitled "The Terrible Head," with the characters renamed "the boy," "the Princess," "The Fairies of the Garden," and "The Dreadful Women"; and in 1907 another in a compilation of heroic Greek legends, *Tales of Troy and Greece* (Lang 1995), in which the characters have their Greek names and settings and the stories are related to Greek history and religion. These versions correspond to two stages in Lang's model of the evolution of myth: the anonymous, generic tales of the undifferentiated peasantry, and the accounts of particular local heroes found in the more advanced cultures of civilized nations.

In such volumes as *The Adventures of Odysseus* (1918) and *The Golden Fleece and the Heroes Who Lived Before Achilles* (1921), Padraic Colum retold Greek myths, along with other European legends, in a style rooted in the storytelling of his own Irish childhood, stressing the similarity between child audiences and the popular audiences of traditional oral narratives. As they recast ancient versions that were not intended for children, and that derive from scattered and partial sources, retellers of myths for children may portray themselves as reconstructing the unrecorded

popular tales of antiquity. In the preface to *Greek Tales for Tiny Tots* (1929), John Raymond Crawford writes that:

> it was some dark-eyed Aglaia in the nursery who gave the youngsters of old Greece their first introduction to the lore of their race – and that informally, colloquially, in much her own language and manner, and with here and there a touch of her own invention. It is in some such spirit that these tales have been set down.
>
> (Crawford 1929, 5)

The close connection between popularizing and writing for children may justify the modern author's liberties with ancient material (Crawford's Persephone has "black bobbed hair," 1929, 29), while versions for popular audiences of all ages may prove especially congenial to child readers, as has been the case with Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* (1940); originally commissioned as a replacement for Bulfinch's mid-nineteenth-century compendium, *Mythology* is still widely read, but almost exclusively by young readers and middle- and high-school students, for whom it often serves as a first introduction to the Greeks.

Anthologies of the kind pioneered by Hawthorne and Kingsley continued to appear well into the middle of the twentieth century, represented, for example, by Roger Lancelyn Green's often reprinted *Old Greek Fairy Tales* (1958a) and *Tales of the Greek Heroes* (1958b). But two texts published in the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s mark what was to prove a definitive shift in the presentation of myth for children: Anne Terry White's *The Golden Treasury of Myths and Legends* (1959), illustrated by Alice and Martin Provensen, and D'Aulaire's *Book of Greek Myths* (1962), written and illustrated by another husband and wife team, Ingri and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire. Both of these books, though substantial in length and verbal content, can be characterized as picture books, not only because illustrations are found on or facing every page, but also because these illustrations constitute a second narrative that supplements, comments on, and at times overshadows the verbal narrative. The White-Provensen version reflects the well-established Golden Books tradition of showcasing distinguished and innovative illustrators, many of them refugees from Europe or, as with the Provensens, from the animation studios of Hollywood (Marcus 2007). But the D'Aulaires' volume goes even further in fulfilling mid-century adult conceptions of what suits a child audience, both in the simplicity and contemporaneity of its language and in the brighter and more playful mode of its images. Perhaps because of this, it has (especially in the United States) largely displaced its predecessors and remains widely read in spite of numerous successors; it has also had a significant and persistent influence on those successors, as Hawthorne and Kingsley did on theirs.

This is not to say that the older model has vanished; several of the best-known earlier versions continue to be reprinted, and similar anthologies still appear (among them Blaisdell 1995; Lines 1973; Reeves 1969; Russell 1989). But since the

late 1960s, the picture book has become the dominant mode. Many of these (partly in response to financial exigencies in school funding and in publishing) are single-story volumes designed for gift-giving, but we find the unmistakable influence of the D'Aulaires in the prominent and vivid illustrations of such collections as Mary Pope Osborne's *Favorite Greek Myths* (1989), Heather Amery's *Usborne Greek Myths for Young Children* (1999), Lucy Coats's *Atticus the Storyteller* (2002), and Donna Jo Napoli's *Treasury of Greek Mythology* (2011).

We also find in recent decades a turn to experimental, often playful representations of myth in a much wider range of formats: these include the jokey first-person narratives of Elizabeth Spires's *I am Arachne* (2001); cheery inventories of mythical monsters, such as Sara Fanelli's *Mythological Monsters of Ancient Greece* (2002) and John Harris's *Greece! Rome! Monsters!* (2002); Marcia Williams's cartoon versions in *Greek Myths for Young Children* (1991); and Michael Townsend's relentlessly madcap *Amazing Greek Myths of Wonder and Blunders* (2010). Alongside more sober volumes in educational series from Usborne and Dorling Kindersley, the encyclopedia is represented by the *Mythlopedia* books, including such volumes as Megan Bryant's *Oh My Gods! A Look-It-Up Guide to the Gods of Mythology* (2010), these last in their combination of the systematic and the random both a return to and a far cry from *Tooke's Pantheon*.

Advertising their book with the questions, "What would Apollo's online profile look like? What would Aphrodite say if she had her own blog?," the publishers of *Oh My Gods!* illustrate the eager embrace of new technologies and new forms of popular culture found in more recent collections. Evidently designed to counter views of classical myths as belonging to the past and linked to school and boring books, these popularizing gestures reveal a new level of anxiety about myth's ability to appeal to contemporary children. Introducing her 1987 retelling, *One-Minute Greek Myths*, the entertainer Shari Lewis even pleads with parents not to "let them know that they're getting 'classical' Greek mythology" (Lewis 1987, 6).

The characters of mythology may be identified with movie stars (*Greece! Rome! Monsters!* is described as "Starring twenty monsters and a huge supporting cast of gods, goddesses, heroes and heroines!") or sports figures (the publishers of *Oh My Gods!* promise "Greek mythology hall of famers"). Mythology is promoted as the first science fiction (Swinburne and Swinburne 1977) and assimilated to fantasy games, whether through the style of the illustrations or through the suggestion that reading myths provides a game-like experience, as in the introduction to a reprint of Lancelyn Green's *Tales of the Greek Heroes* by Rick Riordan, author of the Percy Jackson series:

> Ready to get started? Fasten your armour. Grab your shield. Make sure your sword is sharpened. Within these pages are monsters that have been waiting 3000 years to fight you. It's time you showed them who's boss.
>
> (Lancelyn Green 2009, 6)

Kingsley's conception of the mythical hero as a role model to emulate has here given way to the hero as fantasized self, and the child reader is solicited in what might be called the language of identification, in which the writer addresses children in what is conceived of as their own language. Expressions such as "Are you ready to get your myth on?" (Bryant 2010, 10), or "How's this for gross?" (Harris 2002, 6) replace the adult perspectives and (to a modern ear) condescending phrases of earlier texts: "my little hearers" (Hawthorne 2009, 101, 213), "my dear little friends" (Beckwith 1896, iv), and "my young readers" (Kupfer 1897, 166).

Characterizations of myths as thrilling, fascinating, rollicking, weird, and spooky further signal this tendency to speak directly to what are taken to be children's tastes rather than to the tastes their parents hope to see cultivated. Although they reflect changes in our ideas of what will appeal to children, these descriptions are essentially variations on Hawthorne's original vision of myth as pleasure reading. That vision has persisted alongside Kingsley's competing, but also complementary, vision of myth as educational, which has similarly evolved with the shifting place of the classics in formal education and the culture at large.

George William Cox introduces his *Tales from Greek Mythology* (1861) with the assertion that "no apology would appear to be needed for presenting to [English boys] at an early age that which they must afterwards, in any case, make acquaintance" (Cox 1861, v–vi). As the centrality of Latin and Greek in the curriculum has diminished, writers have been less likely to presuppose that myth precedes inevitable study of the ancient world (and for boys at least, its languages). Yet they have continued to emphasize the importance of myth for the understanding of later art and literature (Coolidge 1949; Hyde 1904; Kimmel 2008) or for a minimal level of "cultural literacy" (Russell 1989, 1). And from the late nineteenth century on, myth itself has been increasingly incorporated into elementary and middle-school curricula in both Britain and the United States, presented variously as a stimulus to children's imagination, as developing their ethical perceptions, and as a valuable first step towards the study of ancient history.

Some anthologies present themselves as "readers" for different levels (Beckwith 1896; Hyde 1904; Kupfer 1897; Lock 2008; Ware and Sutherland 1952); Helen Beckwith's *In Mythland*, aimed at kindergarten students, gives us myth in ultra-simple language and sentence structure ("Pandora looked at the box. How pretty it was. Flowers were carved upon it" (1896, 11). In the context of current concern about the decline of reading, exciting versions of myths are seen as appealing to children, especially boys, who are not generally drawn to books. This has particularly been the case with Riordan's Percy Jackson novels (extended re-workings of mythical motifs in a modern setting, discussed in Chapter 15 of this volume), which originated in Greek myths that Riordan first told and then wrote down for his dyslexic son. To enhance the educational potential of myth, a number of anthologies include such instructive additions as glossaries, guides to pronunciation, questions or quizzes, and informational insets. Teachers who want to use D'Aulaires in the classroom can now purchase both a teacher's guide and a

student's guide to assist them with suggestions for activities, questions, background information, and so on (and Riordan maintains a website for teachers with similar materials related to his books).

The idea that myths provide some kind of ethical education (as in Kingsley's "Do right and God will help you") shows up here and there in the explicit or implicit pointing of morals: for Beckwith, the story of Arachne shows that "We are to help people in this world. We are not to boast of our own work" (Beckwith 1896, 95). But some writers disclaim any attempt "to point a moral" (Kupfer 1897, 3), and more recent exemplars of the moralizing tradition engage in it self-consciously and to occasionally odd effect, as when we learn from the story of Oedipus and the sphinx that "Wise people say: Riddles are here to be solved, not to fear" (Weil 1969, 45). Meanwhile, Kingsley's heroic ethic seems still with us, but now appears in modified form, as in a 1968 reprint of his work, whose editors tell readers that they too can be heroes, if they have "courage and a willingness to accept the challenges of life" (Kingsley 1968, 209).

If, however, myth has become a staple of children's literature and of school curricula, classical myths as we know them were not originally intended for children and contain many elements considered unsuitable for young readers. This presents authors with a perennial challenge, which Hawthorne addresses in the preface to *Tanglewood Tales*:

> These old legends, so brimming over with everything that is most abhorrent to our Christianised moral sense – some of them so hideous, others so melancholy and miserable, amid which the Greek tragedians sought their themes […] was such material the stuff that childrens playthings should be made of?
>
> (Hawthorne 2009, 5–6)

His fictional author and internal narrator, Eustace Bright, responds that elements unsuitable for children are not intrinsic to the myths:

> The objectionable characteristics seem to be a parasitical growth […] They fall away and are thought of no more, the instant he puts his imagination in sympathy with the innocent little circle, whose wide-open eyes are fixed so eagerly upon him. Thus the stories […] transform themselves, and reassume the shapes they might be supposed to possess in the pure childhood of the world.
>
> (Hawthorne 2009, 6)

This fiction of myth's authentic purity, with its occlusion of the modern revising author, is implicitly maintained in many, if not most, versions retold for children, with troublesome matters simply left out or tacitly altered – in ways that must sometimes leave child readers bewildered. Accounts of the Minotaur generally keep his conception through Pasiphae's intercourse with a bull in the unnarrated past, while versions of the Argonaut legend may end with the winning of the

golden fleece, avoiding the troubled later history of Jason and Medea. A version of the Procne and Philomela story by Hyde omits both the rape and the retaliatory infanticide, and some accounts of the Narcissus story have him falling in love with what he believes is a nymph (Hyde 1904; Pyle 1928; Sissons 1960). Not surprisingly, the most thorough-going omissions and alterations come in versions aimed at the youngest children. In Beckwith's 1896 kindergarten reader, the half-human Minotaur is replaced by a comfortably magical dragon. In *Greek Tales for Tiny Tots* (Crawford 1929), Oedipus appears only to solve the riddle of the sphinx, Icarus is rescued by a mermaid whom he then marries, the Trojan Horse ends up in the zoo, and Apollo chases Daphne in order to tease her by pulling her ears.

At the same time, Hawthorne's reference to what is "thought of no more" signals the inevitable prior knowledge of the adult author and the adults who review these books, buy them, and read them to their children. This knowledge (and the presence of this other audience) may make itself felt in direct disavowals, oblique hints inaccessible to children, or more adult-oriented illustrations. Some more scholarly authors find it difficult to deny entirely what is in their sources. So Kingsley ends his version of the Argonaut quest by allowing that Jason eventually wronged Medea and she took "a terrible revenge […] too terrible to speak of here. But you will hear of it yourselves when you grow up, for it has been sung in noble poetry" and Lang has Medea tell Theseus of the Minotaur, "Whence this evil beast came I know, but the truth of it may not be spoken" (Kingsley 2009, 155–156; Lang 1995, 251). In other cases, the details of a myth are retained while their unmentionable significance is elided. The D'Aulaires sanitize the story that Lang's Medea cannot tell: "She admired the bull so much that she ordered Daedalus to construct a hollow wooden cow, so she could hide inside it and enjoy the beauty of the bull at close range" (D'Aulaire and D'Aulaire 1962, 149). Many authors endow Cronus with a sickle without specifying that he uses it to castrate Uranus; Aliki's version is typical: "He attacked Uranus with a sickle and banished him from the earth" (Aliki 1994, 10).

While sexual themes have been consistently taboo throughout the tradition, there is more variation in the treatment of violence. Slaughter is sometimes depicted in horrific detail. Kingsley's Theseus is attacked by a ferocious Minotaur and responds in a similar spirit: he "caught him by the horns, and forced his head back, and drove the keen sword through his throat" (Kingsley 2009, 206). Lancelyn Green's weaponless Theseus uses a boxer's fists and footwork, but ultimately breaks the monster's neck, and Eric A. Kimmel's Theseus ends up covered in the monster's "hot blood" (Kimmel 2008, 82; Lancelyn Green 1958b). In other versions, however, this battle is described only briefly, or even elided altogether, with the reader simply learning that "When morning came, the Minotaur lay dead on the ground" or watching with Ariadne as Theseus comes out of the labyrinth "with the sword red in his hand" (Coolidge 1949, 209; Forbush 1928, 235). And the most recent retellings sometimes mitigate violence by a jokey, cartoonish sense of distance, assisted or effected by illustration: in Williams's 1991 cartoon, the Minotaur is a baggy figure resembling a stuffed animal; he steps forward and waves his arms, while the word

"roar" issues from his mouth in a balloon; the gory battle that follows remains in comic mode. (This rather cuddly Minotaur belongs to a broader rehabilitation of monsters in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, fostered by the lovable "Cookie Monster" of the popular children's program "Sesame Street" and the association of monsters with pleasantly creepy Halloween costumes.)

If sexuality and violence can be obscured or mitigated in the retelling, the same can hardly be said for the pagan polytheism of Greek myth; those writers for whom this is a concern deal with it not by changing the stories but through commentary of some kind. Kingsley asserts the presence of Christian truths in pagan stories; W.H.D. Rouse warns his readers "not to confuse [the Greek gods] with your own God" (Rouse 1957, x); and Beckwith, writing for much younger children, stresses both the beauty and the limited wisdom of Greek beliefs. To her imagined readers' objection that "we know that there is just one dear Father," she replies: "Yes, and that is a more beautiful story than any the Greek boy could have told you; but some of his stories are pretty ones, and perhaps you will like to read them" (Beckwith 1896, v).

More recent writers no longer feel the need to challenge or palliate the paganism of classical myth, though they may continue the long tradition of explaining the Greek gods as an early substitute for scientific or philosophical thought. In the introduction to the Random House Book of Greek Myths (1999), Joan Vinge writes:

> In ancient Greece, just as in our world today, things happened to people that were beyond anyone's control … To make sense of those things, and to try to give meaning to their own fates, the ancient Greeks told stories.
>
> (Vinge 1999, 10)

But Vinge, writing, at the turn of the twenty-first century, is less concerned about the polytheism of Greek religion than about its sexism:

> Some experts on mythology believe that in the original version of the myths, goddesses ruled the heavens and earth. By the time the myths came to be written down, centuries later, the Greeks' view of their gods had changed. In the stories you will read here, the male gods most often are the center of attention, although you will still find many goddesses who are equally brave, wise, and clever – or foolish, vain, and jealous.
>
> (Vinge 1999, 11)

As we have suggested already, the history of myth for children is in part a story of the changing role of images. Like books for readers of all ages in the nineteenth century, the earliest collections were regularly accompanied by illustrations, usually set apart from the text on separate pages. Hawthorne's and Kingsley's versions were among a group of classic works, including the *Arabian Nights*, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, and popular novels such as *Treasure Island* and *Robinson Crusoe*, that were repeatedly

Figure 6.1 *Pandora.*

reissued with illustrations by celebrated artists. During what is often called the golden age of book illustration (roughly 1880–1920), multiple editions of their works appeared on both sides of the Atlantic, with illustrations by such artists as C.E. Brock, Walter Crane, William Russell Flint, Arthur Rackham, Howard Pyle, Maxfield Parrish, Gustav Tenggren, and Milo Winter; as a result, their words underwent a variety of visual translations in accord with those artists' agendas and intended audiences. While there are some pointedly child-directed illustrations from this period, many, like Walter Crane's depiction of the Pandora myth (Figure 6.1) for an 1892 edition of *The Wonder Book* (Hawthorne 1996), answer as much to the tastes of adults as of children. With its emphasis on pattern and decoration, this elegant composition

Figure 6.2   *Pandora*. *Source*: Reproduced with permission of Mordicai Gerstein.

reflects Crane's connections to the pre-Raphaelites and the Arts and Crafts movement and engages more with the general figure of Pandora than with Hawthorne's particular conception. Hawthorne's voluble child Pandora is disregarded in favor of a mature and mysteriously self-contained young woman.

More recent collections reflect the emerging dominance of the picture book: the images generally claim more space, share the page with the text, help to forward the narrative, and are more consistently tailored to the perceived tastes of children. Two recent examples can briefly illustrate these trends. Mordicai Gerstein's energetic rendition of Pandora opening the box, from Spires' 2001 collection *I Am Arachne* (Figure 6.2) constructs a more direct and dynamic relationship

Figure 6.3   *Pandora. Source*: Reproduced with permission of Emma Chichester Clark.

between the viewer and Pandora than Crane's polished treatment, giving the viewer both a taste of Pandora's startling experience and a lofty perspective on Pandora herself as a heedless, shallow character. In the text, Pandora is somewhat caricatured "Everyone makes mistakes, right?" (Spires 2001, 10) and so are the fantastic insects she unleashes here.

A similar touch of the cartoonish tempers a more somber version of the same episode in Geraldine McCaughrean's *Greek Myths* (1992), illustrated by Emma Chichester Clark (Figure 6.3). There the escaping evils manifest themselves as a general blight suggestive of nuclear war or environmental disaster "The sky itself turned a filthy yellow, and the sound of crying filled the town" (McCaughrean 1993, 13), conveyed visually by an image in which Pandora has fallen to her knees, her house in tatters and her garden a wasteland. It is the character of the illustration, with its simplified lines and exaggerated elements, notably Pandora's wide round eyes, that maintains the distance and softening expected in a work for children. This is typical of recent retellings, which often take on troubling aspects of myths more directly than older versions but find stylistic means, both verbal and visual, for keeping them at arm's length.

The vital place of illustrations in children's reception of mythology is attested by Louise Glück, a poet who frequently draws on classical myths, as she recalls the sources of her vocation: "My mother read to us, then taught us to read very early. Before I was three, I was well grounded in the Greek myths, and the figures of those stories, together with certain images from the illustrations, became fundamental referents" (Glück 1994, 7). Glück's phrase "fundamental referents" suggests that the versions of myths encountered in childhood can themselves become classics. What we may think of as specialized receptions of ancient material displace their sources, take on the authority of originals (fulfilling the

claim that Hawthorne made for his retellings), and develop reception histories of their own. Childhood versions are often the main inspiration for reworkings of myths by adult artists and writers, such as Glück, and thus play a powerful, often overlooked role in classical receptions for audiences of all ages.

Within the particular history of versions for children, earlier retellings serve as sources for later ones: details introduced by Hawthorne, such as King Midas' daughter Marygold, have become canonical elements in a tradition that looks back as much to his works as to the Greeks; some recent collections are essentially retellings of Hamilton or amalgamations of numerous modern versions. *Tooke's Pantheon* (now long since abandoned) is described in its revised version, in a phrase often used of the myths themselves, as having "stood the test of time" (Tooke and Pomey 1857, 1), and the editors of a later edition of a picture book first published in the 1920s likewise assimilate the immortality of myth to the immortality of a particular telling, declaring that "These versions of the ageless myths and enchantment tales are as clear and beautiful today as they were in the 1920s" (Price 1993, 7). Other noted versions may be reprinted with introductions that both praise the original and revise our perspective. Riordan tells us that he owed his own introduction to Greek mythology to Lancelyn Green's *Tales of the Heroes*, but his description of what the reader will find there remakes Lancelyn Green's poetic realm into Percy Jackson's world of swords and monsters. And Ola D'Aulaire seeks to draw "another generation of readers" to Hawthorne and his illustrator Walter Crane by imagining their influence on his parents' later collaboration (Hawthorne 1996, 7).

This tradition has engendered not only its own adaptations and revisions, but also its own internal resistance. The jacket of Townsend's *Amazing Greek Myths of Wonder and Blunders* proclaims: "Warning: these aren't your parents' Greek myths." Kate McMullan's "Myth-o-mania" books, which appeared in 2002 and 2003, convert familiar myths into up-to-date versions that respond to contemporary concerns: the Minotaur is no monster, but a gentle misfit who practices vegetarianism (McMullan 2003); Persephone uses a cell phone and checks into the Motel Styx, and she was never abducted by Pluto, who only helped her escape her overprotective mother (McMullan 2002). These revisions are presented not as primary narratives, but as corrections of false stories promulgated by a self-regarding Zeus in *The Big Fat Book of Greek Myths*. By the early twenty-first century, the children's myth collection has become so established a form that it turns to self-parody in order to provide its child audience with a fresh experience of the pleasures of classical mythology.

Guide to Further Reading

An extensive bibliography of myth collections for children, with a prefatory essay on the history of the genre, can be found in Brazouski and Klatt (1994); there is also a brief historical survey and list of other retellings in Lines (1973). On works

about mythology and collections of myth before 1860, including some handbooks for school children, see Feldman and Richardson (1972).

For a comparison of Hawthorne and Kingsley and an analysis in the context of more recent anthologies, see Roberts (2009); on Hamilton and Robert Graves, two anthologists read by (although they did not write for) children, see Murnaghan (2009), and on versions of myth for children as a form of popularization, Murnaghan (2011). Murnaghan and Roberts (forthcoming) includes chapters on the treatment of myth for children by Hawthorne, Kingsley, and their successors, as do Marciniak (2016) and Maurice (2015). Stephens and McCallum (1998) set classical myth in the larger context of the retelling of traditional stories for children and explore the ideologies and cultural metanarratives at work in different modes of interpreting, transmitting, and validating mythology.

There is a good deal of criticism on Hawthorne's myth collections, and relatively little on most of the other texts discussed here. On Hawthorne, see Baym (1973), Donovan (2002), Hoffman (1964), Laffrado (1992), McPherson (1969), and Richardson (1979). Kingsley's biographers (among them Colloms [1975] and Pope Hennessy [1949]) include brief discussions of *The Heroes*; on Kingsley's approach to myth see Alderson (1995) and Muller (1986). Lancelyn Green (1946) offers a critical biography of Andrew Lang from the perspective of a successor. For general studies of Padraic Colum, see Bowen (1970) and Sternlicht (1985).

Good starting points for the history of children's literature are Darton and Alderson (1982), Hunt (1995), Lerer (2008), and Marcus (2008); for critical and theoretical issues in children's literature, see Hunt (1999; 2005), Nodelman (1988; 2008), Rudd (2013).

References

Alderson, B. 1995. "Heroic Reading." *Children's Literature in Education*, 26: 73–82.

Aliki. 1994. *The Gods and Goddesses of Olympus*. New York: Trophy Picture Books.

Amery, H. 1999. *Usborne Greek Myths for Young Children*. London: Usborne.

Anthon, C. 1841. *A Classical Dictionary: Containing an Account of the Principal Proper Names Mentioned in Ancient Authors and Intended to Elucidate All the Important Points Connected with the Geography, History, Biography, Mythology, and Fine Arts of the Greeks and Romans: Together With an Account of Coins, Weights, and Measures, with Tabular Values of the Same*. New York: Harper and Brothers.

Baym, N. 1973. "Hawthorne's Myths for Children: The Author versus his Audience." *Studies in Short Fiction*, 10: 35–46.

Beckwith, M.H. 1896. *In Mythland*. Boston, MA: Educational Publishing Company.

Blaisdell, B. 1995. *Favorite Greek Myths*. New York: Dover Children's Thrift Classics.

Bowen, Z. 1970. *Padraic Colum: A Biographical-Critical Introduction*. Carbondale: Sothern Illinois University Press.

Brazouski, A. and Klatt, M.J. 1994. *Childrens' Books on Ancient Greek and Roman Mythology: An Annotated Bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.

Bryant, M. 2010. *Oh My Gods! A Look-It-Up Guide to the Gods of Mythology*. New York: Scholastic.

Buckley, E.F. 1908. *Children of the Dawn: Old Tales of Greece*. London: Nabu Press.

Church, A.J. 1878. *Tales from Homer*. London: Seely

Church, A.J. 1895. *The Story of the Iliad*. London: Seely

Church, A.J. 1897. *The Story of the Odyssey*. London: Seely

Church, A.J. 1906. *The Odyssey for Boys and Girls*. New York: Macmillan

Church, A.J. 1907. *The Iliad for Boys and Girls*. New York: Macmillan

Coats, L. 2002. *Atticus the Storyteller*. London: Orion.

Colloms, B. 1975. *Charles Kingsley: The Lion of Eversley*. London and New York: Constable.

Colum, P. 1918. *The Adventures of Odysseus*. New York: Macmillan.

Colum, P. 1921. *The Golden Fleece and the Heroes Who Lived Before Achilles*. New York: Macmillan.

Coolidge, O. 1949. *Greek Myths*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Cox, G.W. 1861. *Tales from Greek Mythology*. London: Longman.

Crawford, J.R. 1929. *Greek Tales for Tiny Tots*. Bloomington, IL: Public School Publishing Company.

Darton, F.J.H. and Alderson, B. 1982. *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, 3rd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. First edition published 1932.

D'Aulaire, I. and D'Aulaire, E.P. 1962. *Book of Greek Myths*. New York: Delacorte Press.

Donovan, E.B. 2002. "'Very Capital Reading for Children': Reading as Play in Hawthorne's *A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys.*" *Children's Literature*, 30: 19–41.

Fanelli, S. 2002. *Mythological Monsters of Ancient Greece*. Cambridge, MA: Walker Books.

Feldman, B. and Richardson, R. D., eds. 1972. *The Rise of Modern Mythology, 1680–1860*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Forbush, W.B. 1928. *Myths and Legends of Greece and Rome*. Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Company.

Glück, L. 1994. "Education of the Poet," in L. Glück, *Proofs & Theories: Essays on Poetry*, 3–18. Hopewell, NJ: Ecco.

Hamilton, E. 1940. *Mythology: Timeless Tales of Gods and Heroes*. Boston, MA: Mentor.

Harris, J. 2002. *Greece! Rome! Monsters!* Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum.

Hawthorne, N. 1996. *A Wonder-Book for Boys and Girls*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Reprint of 1893 U.S. edition, first published London 1892. Originally published 1851.

Hawthorne, N. 2009. *Tanglewood Tales*. Chapel Hill, NC: Yesterday's Classics. Reprint of 1909 edition. (First published 1853.)

Hoffman, D. 1964. "Myth, Romance, and the Childhood of Man," in R.H. Pearce, ed., *Hawthorne Centenary Essays*, 197–219. Columbus: Ohio University Press.

Hunt, P. 1995. *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hunt, P. 1999. *Understanding Children's Literature: Key Essays from the International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hunt, P. 2005. *Understanding Children's Literature, 2nd ed: Key Essays from the Second Edition of the International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hutchinson, W.M.L. 1909. *The Golden Porch: A Book of Greek Fairy Tales*. New York and London: Ullan.

Hyde, L.S.H. 1904. *Favorite Greek Myths*. Boston: D.C. Heath & Company.

Kimmel, E.A. 2008. *The McElderry Book of Greek Myths*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Kingsley, C. 1968. *The Heroes*. Santa Rosa, CA: Classic Press. (First published 1855.)

Kingsley, C. 2009. *The Heroes, or, Greek Fairy-Tales for my Children*. Chapel Hill, NC: Yesterday's Classics. Reprint of 1894 edition. (First published 1855.)

Kupfer, G.H. 1897. *Stories of Long Ago, in a New Dress*. Boston, MA: University of California Libraries.

Laffrado, L. 1992. *Hawthorne's Literature for Children*. Athens and London: University of Georgia Press.

Lamb, C. 1808. *Adventures of Ulysses*. London: Blackie.

Lancelyn G.R. 1946. *Andrew Lang, a Critical Biography with a Short-Title Bibliography of the Works of Andrew Lang*. Leicester: Edmund Ward.

Lancelyn Green, R. 1958a. *Old Greek Fairy Tales*. London: G. Bell & Sons.

Lancelyn Green, R. 1958b. *Tales of the Greek Heroes*. London, New York.

Lancelyn Green, R. 2009. *Tales of the Greek Heroes*. London: Puffin.

Lang, A. 1889. *The Blue Fairy Book*. London: Longmans, Green & Co.

Lang, A 1995. *Tales of Troy and Greece*. Ware, UK: Wordsworth. (First published 1907.)

Lerer, S. 2008. *Children's Literature: A Reader's History, From Aesop to Harry Potter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lewis, S. 1987. *One-Minute Greek Myths*. New York: Doubleday.

Lines, K., ed. 1973. *The Faber Book of Greek Legends*. London and Boston: Faber.

Lock, D. 2008. *Greek Myths*. London: DK Children.

Marciniak, K. 2016. *Our Mythical Childhood… The Classics and Literature for Children and Young Adults*. Leiden: Brill.

Marcus, L.S. 2007. *Golden Legacy: How Golden Books Won Children's Hearts, Changed Publishing Forever, and Became an American Icon Along the Way*. New York: Golden Books.

Marcus, L.S. 2008. *Minders of Make-Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs, and the Shaping of American Children's Literature*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Maurice, L., ed. 2015. *Eagles and Heroes: The Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children's Literature*. Leiden: Brill: Metaforms: Studies in the Reception of Classical Antiquity.

McCaughrean, G. 1992. *Greek Myths*. New York: McElderry.

McMullan, K. 2002. *Phone Home, Persephone!* New York: Myth-O-Mania.

McMullan, K. 2003. *Stop that bull, Theseus!* New York: Myth-O-Mania.

McPherson, H. 1969. *Hawthorne as Myth-Maker: A Study in Imagination*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Muller, C.H. 1986. "The Heroes: Kingsley's Moral Lessons." *Textures*, 2: 37–44.

Murnaghan, S. 2009. "Myths of the Greeks: The Origins of Mythology in the Works of Edith Hamilton and Robert Graves." *Classical Bulletin*, 84: 81–89.

Murnaghan, S. 2011. "Classics for Cool Kids: Popular and Unpopular Versions of Antiquity for Children." *Classical World*. 104: 339–353.

Murnaghan, S. and Roberts, D.H. forthcoming. *Immemorial Birthright: Classics and Childhood, 1850–1965*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Napoli, D.J. 2011. *Treasury of Greek Mythology: Classic Stories of Gods, Goddesses, Heroes, and Monsters*. Washington, DC: National Geographic.

Nodelman, P. 1988. *Words About Pictures: The Narrative Art of Children's Picture Books*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Nodelman, P. 2008. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Osborne, M.P. 1989. *Favorite Greek Myths*. New York: Scholastic.

Peabody, J.P. 1897. *Old Greek Folk Stories Told Anew*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Pomey, F. and Tooke, A., trans., 1694. *The Pantheon: Representing the Fabulous Histories of the Heathen Gods and Most Illustrious Heroes, in a Short, Plain and Familiar Method by Way of Dialogue*. London.

Pope-Hennessy, U. 1949. *Canon Charles Kingsley: A Biography*. New York: Macmillan.

Price, M.E. 1993. *A Child's Book of Myths and Enchantment Tales*. New York: Checkerboard. (First published 1924.)

Pyle, K. 1928. *Tales from Greek Mythology*. Philadelphia and London: J.B. Lippencott.

Reeves, J. 1969. *Gods and Voyagers*. London and Glasgow: Blackie & Son.

Richardson, R.D., Jr. 1979. "Myth and Fairy Tale in Hawthorne's Stories for Children." *Journal of American Culture*, 2: 341–346.

Roberts, D.H. 2009. "From Fairy Tale to Cartoon: Collections of Greek Myth for Children." *Classical Bulletin*, 84: 58–73.

Rouse, W.H.D. 1957. *Gods, Heroes and Men of Ancient Greece*, rev. edn. New York: New American Library. (First published 1934.)

Rudd, D. 2013. *Reading the Child in Children's Literature: An Heretical Approach*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Russell, W.F. 1989. *Classic Myths to Read Aloud*. New York: Broadway.

Sissons, N.A. 1960. *Myths and Legends of the Greeks*. New York: Hart.

Spires, E. 2001. *I am Arachne: Fifteen Greek and Roman Myths*. New York: Square Fish.

Stephens, J. and McCallum, R. 1998. *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children's Literature*. New York and London: Routledge.

Sternlicht, S. 1985. *Padraic Colum*. Boston: Harvard University Press.

Sutcliff, R. 1993. *Black Ships Before Troy*. London, Pymble NSW; New York: Mass Market.

Sutcliff, R. 1995. *The Wanderings of Odysseus*. London, Pymble NSW; New York: Mass Market.

Swinburne, L. and Swinburne, I. 1977. *Ancient Myths: The First Science Fiction*. Milwaukee WI: Heinemann.

Tooke, A., and Pomey, F. 1857. *Tooke's Pantheon of the Heathen Gods and Illustrious Heroes Revised for a Classical Course of Education, and Adapted for the Use of Students of Every Age and of Either Sex*. Baltimore, MD: Coale and Maxwell. (First published 1817.)

Townsend, M. 2010. *Amazing Greek Myths of Wonder and Blunders*. New York: Puffin.

Vinge, J. 1999. *The Random House Book of Greek Myths*. New York: Random House.

Ware, K. and Sutherland, L. 1952. *Greek and Roman Myths*, ed. W. Kottmeyer. St. Louis, MO: Literary Licensing.

Weil, L. 1969. *King Midas' Secret and Other Follies*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

White, A.T. 1959. *The Golden Treasure of Myths and Legends*. New York: Golden Press.

Williams, M. 1991. *Greek Myths for Young Children*. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick.

Yonge, C.M. 1887. *What Books to Lend and What to Give*. London: National Society's Depository.

Contemporary Mythography

In the Time of Ancient Gods, Warlords, and Kings

Ika Willis

Introduction

Monsters, gods, characters, and stories from classical myth are ubiquitous in the texts of contemporary popular and mass culture.[1] Sometimes their appearances in popular texts are sustained, contextualized, and historicized; more often, they are fleeting and/or juxtaposed with other elements from widely disparate historical and cultural contexts.

Pop-culture texts that treat material from classical mythology in the first, contextualized, way tend to be easier for scholars of classical reception to read. This is because the interpretative techniques of classical scholars are drawn, on one hand, from a philological and hermeneutic tradition that values direct relationships between a receiving or alluding text and its source (Hardwick 2003, 4; Hinds 1998, 19; Martindale 1993, 60), and, on the other hand, from a tradition of myth scholarship that insists on careful historical and cultural contextualization (Buxton 1994). Scholarship on the reception of classical myth in contemporary popular culture thus tends to select for analysis (in the sense of Raymond Williams's "selective tradition" [1992]) texts like Eric Shanower's graphic-novel series Age of Bronze which, as Chiara Sulprizio argues, is "extremely attentive to detail and accuracy, drawing upon an exhaustive array of both literary sources and archaeological evidence" (2011, 207).

Such texts, however, are in a minority. In the majority of cases, classical monsters, gods, and mythical stories appear in popular culture in decontextualized and ahistorical ways. This chapter will be primarily concerned with these texts. Some of them produce pleasurably anarchic/anachronistic mash-ups of classical myth and ancient history, as exemplified in the 2005 videogame Spartan: Total

Warrior, in which Archimedes (born 287 BC) provides the protagonist with a lightning gun to shoot down Sejanus (born 20 BC) as he rides the dragon Ladon (contemporary with the mythical hero Heracles and first attested in Hesiod's Theogony in the seventh or eighth century BC). Similarly, the voice-over in the opening credits of *Xena: Warrior Princess* announces at the start of every episode that the show is set not in any identifiable historical period or geographic location, but "in the time of ancient gods, warlords, and kings." Other texts simply import elements from classical myth into narrative universes otherwise unrelated to the ancient world: for example, the DC comic *Young All-Stars* (1987–1989). In this comic, Helena Kosmatos becomes the superheroine Fury in order to fight the Nazis by invoking the goddess Tisiphone and taking on her divine powers, which include super-speed, super-strength, flight, and the ability to shoot heat beams from her eyes – all of which are fairly common powers in the conventions of superhero comics but none of which are attributed to Tisiphone in ancient sources.

Texts that use classical myth in this decontextualizing, ahistorical way are harder for classical reception scholars to read. As a result, they are often simply rejected as "false" (Ghita and Andrikopoulos 2009, 119), "standardized" (Sulprizio 2011, 207), "superficial" (Goldhill 2004, 3), or "lazy" (Potter 2009, 216). To accept this valuation, however, is to overlook perhaps the most important way in which classical myth functions in contemporary mass and popular culture. This is on the level of form, rather than content.

Contemporary popular culture is characterized by what have been called "Big Dumb Narrative Objects" (Lowe 2004, n.p.), "unfolding texts" (Parkin 2009, following Tulloch and Alvarado 1984), or "vast narratives" (Harrigan and Wardrip-Fruin 2009). These are fictional universes like those of Sherlock Holmes, Doctor Who, or the Marvel Universe, in which multiply authored, serial and/or interconnecting narratives – like those of Greek mythology – play out in hundreds and thousands of individual texts across decades and across multiple media. Referring to these vast narrative objects, Nick Lowe argues that "until the 1960s, there was only really one such object in western culture: what Charles Segal famously termed the 'megatext' of Greek myth" (2004, n.p., cf Kaveney 2008, 25).

Comparisons between the storytelling and reading practices of contemporary pop-culture narratives and those of classical myth are commonly made by creators, consumers, and critics of contemporary popular culture (e.g., Cornell and Orman 2009, 35; Jenkins 2006, 121–122; Parkin 2009, 22–23; Price 2009, 240–241). Indeed, contemporary popular culture, in some ways and to some extent, understands itself as myth, and this self-understanding shapes the storytelling practices of its creators and the reading practices of its consumers in ways that traditional philological-historical criticism is not equipped to analyze. When studying the reception of classical myth in popular culture, we should take to heart Charles Martindale's often-quoted pronouncement that "research on, say, the Victorians must be acceptable to Victorianists as well as classicists" (Martindale and Thomas 2006, 9).

For us, this means that we should draw on the theories and methods of pop-culture studies in order to learn how to read those texts that seem "superficial" or "standardized" at first sight.

Echo

The first lesson to draw from pop-culture theory and criticism is to pay particular attention not only to the texts of popular culture, but also to the reading practices of their audiences (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998; Brooker and Jermyn 2003). "Echo," a piece of short fiction by Ilthit published on the website Archive Of Our Own (AO3) in 2004, both exemplifies and thematizes one form of pop-cultural mythographic reading.

AO3 is a fanfiction archive (see Lothian 2013): a place where fan writers can self-publish work set in existing fictional universes. In this archive, works – ranging in length from ten to 400,000 words and including stories, poems, podcasts, visual art, and videos – are catalogued by "fandom," that is, by the particular narrative universe in which the work is set. "Greek and Roman Mythology" is one of these fandoms: it is thus positioned as one among many megatexts or vast narrative objects currently available for appropriation by consumers of popular culture. "Echo" is catalogued under the "Greek and Roman Mythology" fandom. I quote it here in full:

> Media coverage is all about the male fans, but Gwen notices the women.
>
> She knows she's not supposed to do it. She would never do it with the younger ones. But some women have been following Galaxy Quest since its inception, for nearly twenty years, and they've built mythologies around Tawny that go far beyond what the show ever did with the character.
>
> For them, she'll repeat their dreams back at them in their bedrooms, or in hotel rooms or the stuffy backstage of a con, and leaves behind urban legends.
>
> She has one job. Sometimes it's not so bad.
>
> <div align="right">(Ilthit 2004)</div>

This very short piece requires only a passing familiarity with the myth of Echo, and no knowledge of its historical, literary, religious, or cultural context. The piece does require a great deal of contextual and formal knowledge in order for it to make its (potentially considerable) impact on the reader: this knowledge is, however, mainly pop-cultural, rather than classical.

First of all, the reader must understand the formal features of the work and the circumstances of its production. "Echo" is part of the "Femslash 100 Greek Mythology Cycle," a series of 30 short pieces titled with the names of women from Greek mythology. These pieces were written for femslash_100, an online femslash drabble-writing community. "Femslash" is a genre of fanfiction that

involves sexual and/or romantic relationships between women; drabbles are a fanfictional short-story form that must consist of exactly 100 words.

"Echo"'s central character is Gwen De Marco from the 1999 film *Galaxy Quest.* Gwen, played by Sigourney Weaver, is herself an actor famous for playing the character Lieutenant Tawny Madison, the Computer Officer in a long-running science-fiction TV show, *Galaxy Quest* (the show-within-the-movie is fictional but the name clearly references *Star Trek*). In the film, Gwen must reprise her role as Tawny for real on an alien-built replica of the show's starship. She repeatedly bemoans the fact that her job is "repeating the computer," most famously in the often-quoted line: "Look, I have one job on this lousy ship! It's stupid, but I'm gonna do it, okay?"

Ilthit's drabble requires and rewards both a knowledge of an iconic line from *Galaxy Quest* and a knowledge of the myth of Echo. It builds on an apparently superficial similarity – a woman repeating words – between *Galaxy Quest* and the Echo and Narcissus myth, and, by bringing Tawny's story together with Echo's, allows the two stories to mirror – to echo – and thus to comment on one another, performing exactly the kind of subversion-through-repetition that its narrative valorizes.

The drabble declares its transformative intent in its first line: "Media coverage is all about the male fans, but Gwen notices the women." The reference to male fans reminds the reader that, although *Galaxy Quest* appears to critique the sexism of mainstream science fiction TV by commenting on Tawny Madison's narrative marginalization, in fact the film repeats (echoes) this marginalization by showing only male fans of the show. Linking Tawny to Echo, the title and first line of the drabble link the everyday sexism of mainstream science fiction and media to the foundational sexism of the Western literary tradition. The line also immediately draws our attention to the impossibility of female/female relationships in both *Galaxy Quest* and the Echo and Narcissus myth, and rewrites both *Galaxy Quest* and the Echo myth in order to propose a female/female erotic of repetition and mirroring, which in turn is linked to a female community of storytelling.

Gwen's sexual encounters with fans "in their bedrooms, or in hotel rooms" are figured as her "repeat[ing] their dreams back at them." Here "repeating" no longer functions as the reduction of the female to the status of "copy" of a male voice as authentic point of origin, as it is in both the Echo myth, where Echo repeats Narcissus, and *Galaxy Quest*, where Tawny repeats the computer: instead, repeating is a means of connection among women. Repetition as erotic mirroring becomes creative, transformative, and satisfying, largely through the connection the story makes between Gwen's erotic encounters with fans and the fannish erotics of rewriting.

Rewriting here is explicitly troped as "mythology" – or rather "mythologies"; the word (like "legends," close to the end of the drabble) is pointedly plural. Both words refer not to the Echo-Narcissus story, but to unofficial, female-authored or female-voiced productions including both fan fiction or fannish speculation ("they've built

mythologies around Tawny that go far beyond what the show ever did with the character") and gossip/anecdote/folklore/storytelling ("urban legends").

"Echo" is a programmatic example of pop-culture mythography for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the way in which classical mythology is typically fused with other sources in popular culture, and some of the effects that this fusion makes possible, once this fusion is seen as a deliberate strategy rather than as ignorant or superficial decontextualization. Second, it demonstrates the way in which the ahistorical use of classical mythology in popular culture is enabled, underpinned, and structured by a particular understanding of mythology not as a body of religious stories but as a mode of storytelling: one that is often female-voiced, always transcultural, transhistorical, and popular – frequently in the strong sense of "popular" as counter-hegemonic.[2]

Popular Culture and/as Myth

In order to understand the use that popular culture makes of classical myth, we need to understand the definition of "myth" with which the producers and consumers of mass culture are working: it is not the same as that generally used by classical scholars. Popular culture derives its understanding of myth from the Jungian theory of archetypes, as transmitted via New Age mythographic traditions and, centrally, via Joseph Campbell's The Hero's Journey, whose influence on storytelling in mass culture can hardly be overestimated.[3]

The Jungian-Campbellian notion that archetypal characters (Jung) and universal plot structures (Campbell) recur in different guises across different cultural and historical contexts is marginal to contemporary scholarship on myth, but central to the pop-culture construction of myth. For popular culture, "myth" is not a body of stories and characters defined through their historical, cultural, and religious context, as it is for, say, Richard Buxton, who specifically criticizes the use of the term "mythology" "to elide cultural difference in the context and content of storytelling" (1994, 13). Instead, the term refers to the "universal" dimensions of story: infinitely appropriable, transhistorical, and transcultural.

Producers and consumers of mass culture frequently use the term "mythology" and its cognates, including "mythos" and "mytharc" (Glancy 2009), more or less interchangeably with "narrative structure," "fictional universe," or "continuity." The earliest use of the term "mythos" in this sense appears to be the Cthulhu Mythos, developed by H.P. Lovecraft and his collaborators in the 1930s: Lin Carter defines it as "a corpus of fictitious narratives which share as their common background a system of invented lore" (1972, xvii). The term thus draws on the analogy between ancient mythologies and popular serial, multiply authored, transmedia narratives, and defines the unity of a narrative object in terms of its "system of lore" or fictional universe, rather than in terms of narrative closure, textual unity, or authorship.

In pop-culture mythography, this model of "mythology" (as a unifying system within which multiple self-contained narratives can be understood to take place in the same fictional universe) combines with a Jungian-Campbellian notion of myth as deriving from universal, transhistorical forms and containing universal, transcultural character types or archetypes. In this framework, all stories are potentially interconnected. These notions provide the theoretical underpinning for the syncretism that is such a feature of pop-cultural texts. Pop culture understands myth as a kind of universal currency or commons of story: myth is the medium within which all stories are potentially interconnected. Some pop-culture texts literalize this commons of story as a space where figures from many different mythologies meet and interact: examples include Ryhope Wood in Michael Holdstock's novel *Mythago Wood* (1984); the Dreaming in Neil Gaiman's comic-book series *The Sandman* (1989–1996); the mythosphere in Diana Wynne Jones's *The Game* (2007); and The City in fresne's 'The City' series published on AO3 (2006–2012).

Importantly, this understanding of myth as any "huge, sprawling, inconsistent narrative" (Cornell and Orman 2009, 35), or a universal medium of popular storytelling, constructs myth as analogous to, or even continuous with, the products of mass culture itself. It is this understanding of myth that underpins mass culture's use of classical mythology alongside, or indeed fused with, other sources. Popular culture does not understand myth, in the way that much classical scholarship does, as deriving from a specific historical/cultural context: instead it sees myth as a universal, transcultural, and transhistorical stock of archetypes and narratives. Thus, for example, Henry Jenkins writes of *The Matrix* that it borrows "archetypes both from popular entertainment genres (the hacker protagonist … the mysterious men in black) as well as from [classical] mythological sources (Morpheus, Persephone, The Oracle)" (Jenkins 2006, 124).

The richest and most complex example of this syncretism of ancient myth and pop-culture traditions is to be found in the mainstream superhero comics of Marvel and DC. The connection between superheroes and the ancient gods has been oversimplified both by classicists and pop-culture creators. On the classical side, Sulprizio, for example, argues that mythological characters in comics are "subject to a standardizing process of comic 'superheroization'" (2011, 207), drawing on an Adornian tradition which sees mass culture as a "culture industry" mass-producing texts, in Taylorist fashion, out of the raw material of mythology. On the pop-culture side, the comics writer Grant Morrison argues for a literal equation of superheroes with gods, as for example when he identifies The Flash as a personification of "one of [the] secret patron gods" of comics, identified by a string of sacred names from both ancient (Babylonian, Celtic, Norse, and Greek) and contemporary (Vodou and Hindu) religions (Morrison 2011, 30).

Craig Dethloff has shown that the "intimate connection between superheroes and ancient 'pagan' gods" (2011, 113) is more complex than either of these models – standardization or incarnation – allows. In fact, the conventions of superhero comics are a prime example of a pop-cultural mythography created out

of the fusion of specifically pop-cultural narrative forms and techniques with ancient mythological motifs, as shown in Dethloff's neat comparison of the origin stories of Superman and Thor:

> Siegel crafted Superman [in 1938] out of "[Samson, Hercules, and] all the strong men I have ever heard tell of rolled into one." To arrive at Thor, Lee described his thought process as a reversal of the question. In his own account, he was wondering how to create a character stronger than the Hulk, when he hit upon the answer, "Don't make him human – make him a god." Superman may have been a superhero born from stories about gods, but Thor was a god born from stories about superheroes.
>
> (Dethloff 2011, 112)

The first superheroes were based more or less explicitly on ancient gods and mythical heroes: the Flash's winged helmet and boots are borrowed directly from Hermes, and Captain Marvel's magic word Shazam is an acronym standing for 'Solomon, Hercules, Atlas, Zeus, Achilles, Mercury' (Morrison 2011, 33). Once gods and heroes appeared in their own right in the DC and Marvel universes, they did so alongside "ordinary" superheroes, and within a set of comics-specific narrative and iconographic conventions – including, crucially, narrative conventions and devices borrowed from theories of myth.

Myth Only Produces More Myth

The Greek gods now exist as characters in the Marvel universe, alongside both the Norse pantheon and invented superheroes like Spider-Man: indeed, Marvel's Hebe dated Spider-Man, while temporarily separated from her husband Hercules, in *Assault on New Olympus* (Pak and Van Lente 2009). In order to account for the continued existence of the ancient, pagan, gods in a narrative universe based in contemporary Christian or post-Christian modernity, Marvel takes a euhemerist approach, framing ancient stories of the gods as distorted representations of actual historical events. It's just that, in the Marvel universe, the historical events posited are no more plausible than the ancient stories themselves.[4] The Marvel Olympians are not gods, but members of an alien race who live in a "pocket dimension" next to our own, frequently visiting Earth via an interdimensional portal on Mount Olympus in Greece. Here the techniques of euhemerism are being used not to make the fantastic stories of myth disappear into sober history, but to generate more – and more fantastic – stories.

This move is characteristic of the texts of mass culture. The television show *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001) repeatedly uses etiology to generate story rather than to explain myth, most strikingly in the episode "A Solstice Carol." In this episode, the protagonists, Xena and Gabrielle, convince King Silvus to rescind his ban

on "Solstice celebrations" with the help of a red-suited toymaker called "Senticles," who overcomes his fear of small spaces by descending through a chimney, declaring "That was fun! I'm going to do that every year!"

Marvel Comics do not seek to convince their readers that there really is an interdimensional portal on Mount Olympus, and Xena does not make a serious claim that the contemporary myth of Santa Claus derives from a claustrophobic ancient Greek toymaker. Cut loose from their anchoring in history-as-truth, euhemerism and etiology become techniques for generating more stories, in the infinitely expandable web of pop-culture mythography.

This is Going to Make a Great Story

Xena: Warrior Princess is a text which has received little attention from classical scholars (as noted by Lowe 2004), and which tends to come off badly when it is noticed. Symptomatically, Simon Goldhill's book *Love, Sex and Tragedy: How the Ancient World Shapes Our Lives* uses Xena in its opening pages as a synecdoche for "superficial" (i.e., decontextualized and ahistorical) pop-cultural uses of myth that have nothing to teach us about the ancient world, and with which, therefore, "this book is not concerned" (Goldhill 2004, 3). Yet Xena's six seasons, if read according to the conventions of popular culture rather than historically / philologically, show how, precisely, decontextualization and anachronism allow mass culture to make sophisticated uses of mythological material. One particularly dense example is the highly metatextual episode "Athens City Academy of the Performing Bards" (1996), an eloquent exploration of the ways in which mass culture understands myth as storytelling, and understands itself as myth.

The eponymous warrior princess is all-but-absent from this episode, and the narrative instead follows her companion, Gabrielle, as she attends a week-long competition for a place at the Academy of the Performing Bards. Gabrielle befriends four other competitors: Euripides (spelt "Euripedes" in the credits), Stallonus, Orion (a pseudonym), and Twickenham. During the run-up to the competition, the five friends exchange stories and discuss the principles and techniques of story-telling. Orion finally wins the competition and reveals his real name: Homer. In a twist at the very end of the episode, however, we learn that Gabrielle also won a place at the Academy, but resigned it (to Homer?) in order to continue travelling with Xena. The last line of the episode, spoken by Gabrielle happily watching Xena fight off a chance-met band of thugs, is: "This is going to make a great story."

The episode thus clearly foregrounds Xena's own status as storytelling about the past. The motif of the competition, and the exchange of stories between the five competitor-friends, allow Xena to place itself in a specifically mass-culture tradition, both associating itself with and distinguishing itself from other kinds of storytelling, and to clarify its own principles of storytelling.

Among the competitors, Euripides and Stallonus are positioned at opposite ends of a spectrum of representations of the ancient world. Euripides represents classical literature as inaccessible high culture. He consistently speaks in an archaizing register quite different from the usual colloquial-contemporary tone used for dialogue in Xena, with a particular fondness for simile, and is frequently not understood by the other characters ("What Twickenham is trying to say, is that separation tears the heart's core, like the fearsome blade of Ajax toward the ligaments of—" "No! I'm saying good-byes are hard!"). In stark contrast is Stallonus, whose stories are criticized by Gabrielle, first for their lack of characterization ("If you had a little more character stuff and a little less action, you might live through the competition"), and second for their lack of a moral ("The moral is … he kills all the bad guys," says Stallonus. "Why – that's not enough?"). Xena thus positions itself as a colloquial and accessible kind of storytelling, in contrast to Euripides' needlessly difficult style, and, in distinction from Stallonus's spectacular, action-driven stories, as concerned with characters, relationships, and the moral/emotional dimensions of stories.

The stories told by Gabrielle, Euripides, Orion/Homer, and Stallonus throughout the episode are illustrated by clips from earlier episodes of Xena and its sister show, Hercules: The Legendary Journeys – but also from other popular visual representations of the ancient world, including Steve Reeves' Hercules films and Kubrick's Spartacus. This striking – and as far as I know unparalleled – intervention into the conventions of the "clip show" (an episode of a TV serial largely composed of clips recycled from earlier episodes) has a number of effects. First, it constructs a specifically pop-cultural tradition for representing the ancient world, and places Xena squarely in that tradition. Second, by bringing Reeves and Kubrick into the narrative universe of Xena, it suggests that all pop-cultural representations of the ancient world can be understood as representations of a single past or fictional world, invoking the potential interconnectedness of all stories which, as we have seen, is fundamental to pop-culture mythography. Finally, the use of clips from multiple sources demonstrates that Xena and Hercules are only two among many representations of the ancient world – and that all such representations are inevitably partial.

The narrative arc of the episode also plays with the idea of true history vs partial or false representations, as we are presented with an alternative explanation for Homer's reputation as "the blind bard": he is not actually blind, but has to close his eyes in order to "see" the stories unfolding before him. In the episode, it is Gabrielle who encourages him to tell stories in this way, defying his domineering father who wishes him to keep his eyes open in order to judge the audience's reaction. This associates Gabrielle's (and thus Xena's) storytelling with authenticity and immediacy, rather than cynically audience-driven techniques, but also means that Homer owes his storytelling ability – and we owe Homer – to Gabrielle's intervention "behind the scenes" of official history.

The idea of a "true history" is not, however, used here as a claim to accurate knowledge or representation of the past: once again, it is used as a generator for story. "Athens Academy of the Performing Bards" shows no reverence for historical

accuracy or cultural context in its defense of mass-culture storytelling. There is no attempt to make the competitors' names sound as though they derive from a common language or culture (Euripides, Homer, and Orion are Anglicized versions of historically attested ancient Greek names; Stallonus is an obvious piece of humorous cod-Latin in the great tradition of Monty Python's Biggus Dickus; Twickenham is simply inexplicable, marking a refusal of historical coherence rather than functioning as a specific reference[5]). Homer wins a place at the Academy with the story of "Spartacus, the rebel gladiator" (the historical Spartacus lived eight or nine hundred years after the composition of the Homeric epics), and the episode, like other episodes of Xena, combines such references to a pointedly ahistorical "ancient world" with references to contemporary mass culture. The title of the episode references the New York City Academy of the Performing Arts, made iconic by the 1980 film *Fame* and the spin-off TV series of the same name (1982–1987), while its plot borrows both from *Fame* and from the 1975 musical *A Chorus Line* (filmed in 1985).

The episode thus emphasizes the availability of the ancient world as one among many potential resources for present-day mass-culture narratives, and evaluates stories not on the grounds of historical accuracy but on the basis of their characterization, emotional resonance, accessibility, and immediacy. Lowe (2004, n.p.) argues that Xena "deliberately solicits confrontation between classical and contemporary narrative values, and uses the latter to interrogate the former"; in so doing, it uses the pop-culture understanding of mythology as storytelling to subvert the very notion of true history.

The fantastical premise of Xena is that the events portrayed in the series are a lost true history, suppressed or erased by orthodox historiography. This premise underpins several moments when Xena "corrects" the course of history: for example, she helps Helen to leave Troy without either Paris or Menelaus in "Beware Greeks Bearing Gifts" (1996); in "One Against an Army" (1998), she asks Pheidippides to "run on to Athens and tell them about Marathon," advising him: "Pace yourself. In this heat, a run like that could kill you" (in the ancient sources, Pheidippides does indeed die on arrival in Athens). But it is the second season episode "The Xena Scrolls" (1997) which makes the premise explicit. "The Xena Scrolls" flashes forward to 1940s Mesopotamia to narrate the discovery of the scrolls by the maverick archaeologist Janice Covington (clearly modelled on Indiana Jones and played by Renée O'Connor, who usually plays Xena's companion Gabrielle). Covington says that the scrolls have "the power to turn myth into history and history into myth" – that is, the power to overturn our current understanding of history – and we discover, in a metafictional sequence at the end of the episode where Robert Tapert (the executive producer and co-creator of Xena) appears as himself, that the stories on the scrolls are the basis for the events narrated in the show. In an influential reading of Xena, based on a close reading of this episode, Sara Gwenllian-Jones writes:

> XWP's mythopoetic trajectory exceeds the television text to project into history itself, a micronarrative assault on the corpse of the master narrative. Orthodox

versions of the past are constituted as inherently unstable and incomplete, and the audience's imagination is directed toward the possibility of multiple untold histories that at any moment might resurface, like the Xena scrolls, to throw "official" accounts of the past into crisis.

(2000, 405)

The refusal of historical context that characterizes pop-culture mythography can thus shade into a critique of historicism itself. Texts like *Xena: Warrior Princess* use euhemerism and etiology, not as metalanguages that could fix and explain mythic narratives according to historical truths, but rather, in a move reminiscent of Roland Barthes (1981, 44; 1989, 64), as generators of nothing but more story. In this way, as Shahabudin writes of the Italian peplum films of the 1950s and 1960s (some of which appear as stories in "Athens City Academy of the Performing Bards"), pop-culture mythographies "blithely exploit the plasticity of an ancient world whose narratives are never fixed, however many age-old texts we pore over" (2009, 214).

Conclusion

This chapter has sketched the mythographical practices that produce the vast narratives or megatexts of contemporary popular culture – narrative objects whose unity is to be found in their "mythos" rather than within the boundaries of any single text. These mythographical practices are underpinned by a theory of myth as transhistorical and universal, and characterized by the use of euhemerism and etiology not to explain mythical stories, but to produce more of them. Contemporary pop culture, accordingly, tends to treat classical myth in a decontextualized and ahistorical fashion. In so doing, however, it sets up myth as popular, counter-hegemonic storytelling over and against history as master-narrative, or, perhaps more challengingly, as "the scholarly ownership of the past" (Lowe 2004, n.p.).

However, we can only see texts like Xena as doing sophisticated mythographic work, rather than as false, lazy, or superficial, if we approach them in the light of the interpretative practices and values not of historical-philological classical scholarship, but of popular culture itself. Pace Goldhill, we stand to gain a great deal from being concerned with *Xena: Warrior Princess*. After all, it is she and her anachronistic sisters (Ilthit's 'Echo' among them) who, in their refusal to consign ancient myth to the ancient world, evoke and construct Greek myth as a living presence and a potent resource for practices of mythmaking in the present day.[6]

Notes

1   On "mass" vs "popular" culture see Storey (2012, 1–13). The term "mass culture" refers to cultural products that are "mass-produced for mass consumption" (9), and which are generally understood (following Adorno 2001 [1938]) as standardized, in ways which

are analogous to modern industrial mass-production techniques. "Popular culture" can be understood, by contrast, as popular in a counter-hegemonic sense: "the culture that originates from 'the people'" (Storey 2012, 13). In this chapter, I will use both "mass" and "popular" culture, depending on whether I want to emphasize the standardized mass-production techniques of the culture industry, or the counter-hegemonic reading practices brought to bear on them.

2   For the counter-hegemonic possibilities of myth, see Lincoln (1999, 150).

3   Joseph Campbell's book *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* (1949) argues that all mythical narratives can be shown to have the same underlying structure or "monomyth": this is the story of the "Hero's Journey." The idea of the monomyth as a tool for producers of popular narrative was popularized in the 1970s and 1980s by discussion of George Lucas's borrowings from Campbell for the narrative structure of his Star Wars trilogy (*Star Wars* (1977); *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980); *The Return of the Jedi* (1983)); by the 1988 SBS documentary on Campbell, *The Power of Myth*; and by a much-circulated seven-page memo by Christopher Vogler (1985), later expanded into a highly influential book for screenwriters, *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters* (1992). For an account of "The Memo," and its full text, see Vogler (n.d). Rogers (2011, 76–78) and Jenkins (2006, 123–124) give brief narrative accounts of how Campbell's "monomyth" has come to shape storytelling in comics (Rogers) and film (Jenkins).

4   Arguably. As Dethloff points out (2011, 112), Marvel's writers may have been drawing ultimately on a theory put forward seriously by Erich von Daniken in Chariots of the Gods (1968) – another example of pop-culture drawing on non-academic theories of myth.

5   Fanlore reveals that the writer of this episode named Twickenham after the home town of the script co-ordinator because he liked the sound of it (Rudnick 1998, n.p.). Anna Wilson, who beta-read this chapter, suggests that the use of "Twickenham" as one of a set of names connoting "foreignness" and "pastnes" also marks the intended audience of the episode as specifically not British, displacing Britain from the privileged place it sometimes occupies in Anglophone classical reception.

6   Heartfelt acknowledgements are due to four women: Vanda Zajko, for inviting me to write this chapter; Jenny Pausacker, for indefatigable research assistance; Katharine Woods, for the gift (in at least two senses) of Xena; and Anna Wilson, for a transformative beta-reading.

Guide to Further Reading

Popular culture abounds with references to ancient mythology and with thoughtful reflections on its relationship to the present day: you will encounter it in your everyday reading and viewing, or through the work of the scholars in this list. For fan fiction, see works catalogued under "Greek and Roman Mythology" at An Archive Of Our Own (http://archiveofourown.org/tags/Greek%20and%20 Roman%20Mythology/works).

For interesting work on popular culture and/as myth, see Jenkins (2006), Brooker (2012), Knight (2015), Keen (forthcoming), and Willis (forthcoming).

Key edited collections on classical material (including myth) in popular culture are Kovacs and Marshall (2011) and Lowe and Shahabudin (2009). Both are very mixed in terms of passing the "Martindale test," but include some key essays on myth which would certainly be credible to scholars of popular culture as well as to Classicists, notably Dethloff's essay in and the editors' contributions to Lowe and Shahabudin. Kovacs and Marshall's *Son of Classics and Comics* came out in 2016 and is certainly worth reading.

Sarah Iles Johnston is the myth scholar currently doing the most to bring together cutting-edge scholarship from popular-culture studies, especially on serial or "vast" narratives, with Classical scholarship. See Johnston (2015a, 2015b).

References

Primary sources

Film

Galaxy Quest 1999. dir. Dean Parisot.

Novels

Holdstock, M. 1984. *Mythago Wood*. London: Wood.
Jones, D. W. 2007. *The Game*. New York: Firebird.

Videogame

Spartan: Total Warrior 2005. The Creative Assembly: Sega (Playstation 2, Xbox, GameCube).

TV shows

"Beware Greeks Bearing Gifts." *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Renaissance Pictures. January 15, 1996.
"Athens City Academy of the Performing Bards." *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Renaissance Pictures. January 22, 1996.
"A Solstice Carol." *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Renaissance Pictures. December 9, 1996.
"The Xena Scrolls." *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Renaissance Pictures. January 13, 1997.
"One Against An Army." *Xena: Warrior Princess*. Renaissance Pictures. February 9, 1998.

Fanfiction

fresne 2006–2012. "The City." Archive Of Our Own. Online at: http://archiveofourown. org/series/3569 (accessed July 26, 2013).

Ilthit 2004. "Echo." Archive Of Our Own. Online at: http://archiveofourown.org/ works/351653/chapters/572495 (accessed July 26, 2013).

Comics and graphic novels

Gaiman, N. 1989–1996. *The Sandman*. New York: D.C. Comics.

Pak, G. and Van Lente, F. (writers) 2009. *Assault on New Olympus: Prologue*. New York: Marvel.

Shanower, E. 1998–present. *Age of Bronze*. Berkeley, CA: Image.

Various writers 1987–1989. *Young All-Stars*. New York: D.C. Comics.

Secondary sources

Abercrombie, N. and Longhurst, B. 1998. *Audiences*. London: Sage.

Adorno, T. 2001. *The Culture Industry*. London: Routledge. (First published 1938.)

Barthes, R. 1981. "From Work to Text," in R. Howard, trans., *The Rustle of Language*, 56–64. Berkeley: University of California Press. (First published 1971.)

Barthes, R. 1989. "The Theory of the Text," in R. Young, ed., I. McLeod, trans., *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, 31–47. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Brooker, W. 2012. *Hunting the Dark Knight: Twenty-First Century Batman*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Brooker, W. and Jermyn, D., eds. 2003. *The Audience Studies Reader*. London: Routledge.

Buxton, R. 1994. *Imaginary Greece: The Contexts of Mythology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Campbell, J. 1949. *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. New York: Pantheon.

Carter, L. 1972. *Lovecraft: A Look Behind the Cthulhu Mythos*. New York: Panther.

Cornell, P. and Orman, K. 2009. "Two Interviews About Doctor Who," in P. Harrigan and N. Wardrip-Fruin, eds, *In Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*, 33–40. Cambridge, MA: University Press Group.

Dethloff, C. 2011. "Coming up to Code: Ancient Divinities Revisited," in G. Kovacs and C.W. Marshall, eds, *Classics and Comics*, 103–114. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ghita, C. and Andrikopoulos, G. 2009. "Total War and Total Realism: A Battle for Antiquity in Computer Game History," in D. Lowe and K. Shahabudin, eds, *Classics for All: Reworking Antiquity in Mass Culture*, 109–126. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Glancy, A.S. 2009. "World Without End: The Delta Green Open Campaign Setting," in P. Harrigan and N. Wardrip-Fruin, eds, *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*, 77–85. Cambridge, MA: University Press Group.

Goldhill, S. 2004. *Love, Sex and Tragedy: How the Ancient World Shapes our Lives*. London: John Murray.

Gwenllian-Jones, S. 2000. "Histories, Fictions and 'Xena: Warrior Princess.'" *Television and New Media*, 1, 4: 403–418.

Hardwick, L. 2003. *Reception Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harrigan, P. and Wardrip-Fruin, N. eds. 2009. *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*. Cambridge, MA: University Press group.

Hinds, S. 1998. *Allusion and Intertext*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jenkins, H. 2006. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press.

Johnston, S.I. 2015a. "Narrating Myths: Story and Belief in Ancient Greece." *Arethusa*, 48, 2: 173–218.

Johnston, S.I. 2015b. "The Greek Mythic Story World." *Arethusa*, 48, 3: 283–311.

Kaveney, R. 2008. *Superheroes!: Capes and Crusaders in Comics and Films*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Keen, T. Forthcoming. "Are Fan Fiction and Mythology Really the Same?" *Transformative Works and Cultures*.

Knight, S. 2015. *The Politics of Myth*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.

Kovacs, G. and Marshall, C.W., eds. 2011. *Classics and Comics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kovacs, G. and Marshall, C.W., eds. 2016. *Son of Classics and Comics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lincoln, B. 1999. *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press

Lothian, A. 2013. "Archival Anarchies: Online Fandom, Subcultural Conservation, and the Transformative Work of Digital Ephemera." *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. Online at: http://ics.sagepub.com/content/early/2012/09/07/1367877912459132 (accessed April 23, 2013).

Lowe, N. 2004. "Xenaversions of Epic and Tragedy: The Warrior Princess as Radical Archaeologist." Unpublished conference paper, delivered at Greeks And Romans in the Buffyverse: Classical Threads in Fantasy and Science Fiction on Contemporary Television. Milton Keynes.

Lowe, D. and Shahabudin, K. 2009. *Classics for All: Reworking Antiquity in Mass Culture*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars.

Martindale, C. 1993. *Redeeming the Text: Latin Poetry and the Hermeneutics of Reception*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Martindale, C. and Thomas, R. eds. 2006. *Classics and the Uses of Reception*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Morrison, G. 2011. *Supergods: Our World in the Age of the Superhero*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Parkin, L. 2009. "Truths Universally Acknowledged: How the Rules of Doctor Who Affect the Writing," in P. Harrigan, and N. Wardrip-Fruin, eds, *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*, 13–24. Cambridge, MA: University Press Group.

Potter, A. 2009. "Hell Hath No Fury Like A Dissatisfied Viewer: Audience Responses to the Presentation of the Furies in Xena: Warrior Princess and Charmed," in D. Lowe and K. Shahabudin, eds, *Classics for All: Reworking Antiquity in Mass Culture*, 217–236. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Price, R.M. 2009. "With Strange Aeons: H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulu Mythos as One Vast Narrative," in P. Harrigan and N. Wardrip-Fruin, eds, *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*, 225–242. Cambridge, MA: University Press Group.

Rogers, B. 2011. "Heroes UnLimited: The Theory of the Hero's Journey and the Limitation of the Superhero Myth," in G. Kovacs and C.W. Marshall, eds, *Classics and Comics*, 73–88. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rudnick, B.R. 1998. "An Interview with Maggie Hickerson." *Whoosh*! Online at: http://whoosh.org/issue18/ihick1.html (accessed July 26, 2013).

Shahabudin, K. 2009. "Ancient Mythology and Modern Myths: Hercules Conquers Atlantis (1961)," in D. Lowe and K. Shahabudin, eds, *Classics for All: Reworking Antiquity in Mass Culture*, 196–216. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Storey, J. 2012. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, 6th edn. Harlow: Pearson.

Sulprizio, C. 2011. "Eros Conquers All: Sex and Love in Eric Showalter's Age of Bronze," in G. Kovacs and C.W. Marshall, eds, *Classics and Comics*, 207–219. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tulloch, J. and Alvarado, M. 1984. *Doctor Who: The Unfolding Text*. London: St Martin's Press.

Vogler, C. (n.d.). "The Memo That Started It All." Online at: http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero%27s_journey.htm#Memo (accessed July 26, 2013).

Vogler, C. 1992. *The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Storytellers and Screenwriters*. Studio City, CA: M. Wiese Productions.

von Daniken, E. 1968. *Chariots of the Gods*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

Williams, R. 1992. "The Analysis of Culture," in R. Williams, *The Long Revolution*, 41–71. London: Encore. First published 1961.

Willis, I. Forthcoming. "Amateur Mythographies: Fan Fiction and the Myth of Myth." *Transformative Works and Cultures*.

Part II

Approaches and Themes

Circean Enchantments
and the Transformations of Allegory

Greta Hawes

The Old French poem *Ovide moralisé* (fourteenth century) is a treasure trove of medieval allegory. With typical exuberance, the anonymous poet sees in Circe, among other things, an allegorical double of the Whore of Babylon:

> Circe can signify the queen,
> disgusting whore of evil origins,
> mother of abomination
> whom St. John mentioned
> in the Book of the Apocalypse. […]
> It is she who, with vanity,
> And with degradation,
> And with disgusting abomination,
> And with delight in her own whorishness
> makes the poison, the drink
> which intoxicates the princes of this world.
> (14.2567–2571, 2576–2581)

This striking pairing picks out conceptual associations tightly woven into Circe's mythology. She embodied, in the symbolic vocabulary of the time, abstract principles of rampant lust, corporeal degeneracy, and destruction. Her casting as a worldly temptress already had a long lineage: we can trace it back via a chain of mythographers and literary commentators[1] to the rich tradition of ancient allegoresis. But this example provides more than just a lesson in cultural continuity; it illuminates a longstanding interpretative habit, fed by pervasive cultural biases, that conditioned how Circe was understood, and how her story was narrated.

This chapter examines the boldly counter-intuitive readings produced by ancient allegorists and their place in the Greek mythic tradition.[2] Until very recently, ancient allegorical texts were not well served by scholarship. Such reticence reflects distaste for the allegorists' odd and seemingly wayward approaches to literary criticism. Nonetheless, allegoresis furnishes precious evidence for the practice and theory of ancient interpretation (Lamberton 2002, 186–191).

Despite its oddities and bold claims to exceptionalism, allegorical interpretation was neither an isolated curiosity nor a hermeneutic dead-end. Allegorists' detailed, overtly revisionist linguistic analyses often in fact play a surprisingly conservative role in shoring up popular consensus. Allegorical readings can take hold in a "demonic and global way," shaping textual meaning, but they likewise exist as a reflection of their environment and "the authorized region of presuppositions, the horizon of untheorizable practices, in which the study of texts goes on" (Bruns 1988, 389). Responses to ancient myth are never arbitrary; a subtle nexus of established assumptions and habits of thinking guide both interpretation and narration. The extreme dynamics of allegoresis can highlight such underlying narrative prejudices. One strand of Circean interpretation, which associated her overwhelmingly with lust and temptation, provides a particularly clear example of such habitual biases in action.

Double Vision

Books, argues Philip the Philosopher (date unknown), work an ambivalent magic. Commenting on *Modest Chariclea*, he crafts a striking simile: the novel is "like Circe's potion: it changes those who read it impurely into the very image of swinish licentiousness; but it initiates those who interpret it philosophically, like Odysseus, to more sublime thoughts" (p. 383 Hercher). Some readers, then, find enlightenment in an activity that corrupts others. The dangers of misunderstanding texts proved a practical concern in antiquity. Why should the poetic masterworks of the Greek tradition continue to hold sway when their myths of unprincipled gods and inhumane heroes set such poor examples? Plato's solution was to ban poets from his ideal state since children were incapable of understanding the deeper meanings (*huponoiai*) of their work (*Resp*. 378d). A more productive strategy, adopted by Philip and others, capitalized instead on the presence of these underlying meanings to recover wisdom within seemingly frivolous narratives.

This powerful mode of reading – allegoresis – was an instrument of transformation. Allegorists argued boldly for the inherent virtue and utility of poetry, particularly that of Homer. Far from blacklisting him, they pored over his epics as the work of a proto-philosopher and treated his verses as vehicles for philosophical and scientific teachings. Allegoresis provides an extreme illustration of the power of hermeneutic activity to achieve stability through innovation.

Homer's traditional authority could be maintained so long as his poetry continued to evolve conceptually in step with shifting cultural and intellectual demands. The stories of Odysseus' homecoming found canonical form in Homer's *Odyssey*; but this early canonization did not rob them of their fluidity entirely. Indeed, the opposite is true: Homer's pre-eminent reputation ensured that his work, forever on the lips, before the eyes, and in the minds of new generations, would be continually, often unconsciously, up-dated.

Philip's image of a single substance effecting both contemplative insight and dangerous temptation is prefigured in an allegory of the Circe episode in Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems* (early second century CE):

> Circe's drug is the cup of pleasure; licentious men who drink from it, for the sake of short-lived satiety, live lives more pitiful than pigs. This is why Odysseus' companions, a silly lot, were overcome by gluttony; but the wisdom of Odysseus defeated the decadence of Circe's island (72.2–3).

Heraclitus goes on to explain that Homer has Hermes help Odysseus overcome Circe because this god represents wise speech (there are clues in his iconography and in his epithets (72.4–73.7) and that the mysterious herb Hermes gives to Odysseus, *mōly*, is thus the gift of wisdom. The name (*molis*) hints that it is obtained with difficulty; its white flower blooms above a black root to indicate the sweet harvest of its benefits after the struggle of achieving it (73.10–12). These explanations invite the reader to see the Homeric episode in a new light: this is not a frivolous account of a fictitious dalliance but a figuration of the victory of rational self-control over bodily temptations. Nonetheless, one needs to squint slightly to see what Heraclitus is getting at. Heraclitus overplays the significance of certain linguistic correspondences and ignores others to weave a markedly idiosyncratic conception of the episode as an abstract observation on human ethics and behavior.

Evidence for ancient allegorical practice consists of a diverse series of extant texts and fragments. The "tradition" (if we can call it that) spans early interpretations of Homer attributed to the sixth-century critic Theagenes of Rhegium,[3] the religious speculations of the *Derveni Papyrus*, Stoic philosophies of language, Imperial textbooks such as Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems* and Ps-Plutarch's *Life of Homer*, the etymological handbook of Cornutus, Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*, and Neoplatonic literary interpretation, of which Porphyry's *Cave of the Nymphs* is our most impressive survival. Uniting the markedly divergent aims and approaches of these writers is an interest in exploiting the transformative potential of linguistic polyvalence. Allegorists recognize two levels of textual meaning. They ignore surface meanings in favor of the symbolic ones hidden beneath. So, in our example, Homer seems at first glance to be telling a story about a hero's meeting with a goddess; but the allegorical reader should see that, within these verses, lies a lesson about the capacity of wisdom to overcome temptation.

The very term *allēgoria* ("other speaking") encapsulates this distinctive duality. Borrowed from rhetorical composition, *allēgoria* is properly a stylistic trope, an extended metaphor which, in the standard ancient definition, "says one thing but means something else."[4] This label was applied to the practice of analyzing such passages only in later periods (it was a neologism in Plutarch's time [*Quomodo adul.* 4.19]). An earlier term, *huponoia* ("under-meaning") expresses the method of allegorical interpretation spatially: the interpreter searches for textual significance "under" the text itself. Allegorists divorce the true meaning of a text, the knowledge encoded within it, from the elaborate and fictitious scaffolding of its surface content. They portray themselves as seeking something in the text not evident to the casual observer: the *huponoiai* of a narrative only become apparent after grappling with its suggestive *sumbola* (symbols) and *ainigmata* (riddling hints). Medieval commentators, the heirs of this ancient tradition, developed a series of metaphors to describe such processes, emphasizing the paring away of outer layers to access a valuable core: the author of the *Super Thebaiden* depicts himself cracking the shell of a nut to extract its kernel (180–181); others speak of lifting the veil (*integumentum*) of the text to see clearly its true nature.

In peering beneath the surface of texts, allegorists saw themselves as deliberately, even perversely, reading against the grain. This championing of counter-intuitive meanings drew criticism in antiquity as not merely unconventional but mendacious. Cicero has Velleius accuse Chrysippus, a prominent Stoic allegorist, of making even the earliest poets Stoics (*Nat. D.* 1.41). The implication of this attack, that allegoresis willfully distorts poetic material, was countered by the allegorists themselves. Many ancient discussions of allegorical methodology in fact display an overwhelming concern with authorial intention and consider the allegories present in a text deliberately hidden there by the poet.[5] As with any process of interpretation, allegoresis finds what it sets out to, but this is not to say that allegorists engage in an intentionally specious or vacuous practice. Heraclitus boldly justifies the transformations of allegoresis as an essential prerequisite for reading: "If Homer did not compose allegorically, then he was entirely impious; desecrating myths, full of blasphemous madness, tear through both texts" (1.1–2). The attribution of allegorical intent to Homer is, under this rubric, a deliberate choice, but not an arbitrary one: for Heraclitus, allegoresis alone makes sense out of the epics. Porphyry (late third century CE), too, validated his allegory of the *Cave of the Nymphs* through reference to Homer's language: by filling this passage with obscurities and implausibilities, the poet indicates the necessity of active interpretation and thus invites and authorizes allegorical readers (Struck 2010, 60–62).

The rhetorical dogmatism of allegoresis shows up some essential hermeneutic dilemmas. Allegorists speak of different levels of textual meaning as stable, essential entities. They assume a ready distinction between meanings "hidden" within texts and those "clearly visible." In practice, however, literalness is a chimaeric entity: all kinds of meaning, even the most superficial, require some kind

of external imposition; every mode of interpretation produces more than a mere paraphrase of content. The idea that allegorists alone treat language as capable of "saying one thing but meaning something else" is too anemic to be useful.[6] What distinguishes allegoresis as a historically specific tradition is its *overt* embrace of non-literal meaning. Allegorists revel in making a text say first one thing, and then something else. For this very reason, they require a stable basis of "literal" or "surface" meanings to serve as a foil for their hermeneutic transformations.

Allegorical theory rarely interrogates the essentialism of meaning, and allegorical practice shows up these shortcomings. David Dawson productively figures this interplay of textual meanings as an index of cultural habit. He argues that the literal sense of a text in allegorical terms represents not a stable element inherent in it, but a kind of meaning that is culturally expected and automatically recognized by readers (Dawson 1992, 7). Allegorists thus present their interpretations as alternatives to the commonsensical and customary readings of their peers. It is precisely this deliberate rejection of what is seemingly self-evident in a text that imbues allegoresis with its characteristic antithetical tension. But the relationship between conventional and allegorical meanings does not remain stable. What seems a radical imposition to one group of readers might strike another group as an obvious observation. Over time a revisionist interpretation can become more widely accepted so that "new literal meanings are often simply old allegorical innovations that have succumbed to the 'lethargy of custom'" (Dawson 1992, 8). Dawson's observation that allegorical interpretations tend to lose their radical character over time is an important one, but tells only part of the story. This process of domestication is neither linear nor straightforward, as we shall see.

Corrective Lenses

Heraclitus was not alone in portraying Odysseus' encounter with Circe as the struggle between temptation and self-control. The Stoic Cleanthes (third century BCE) considered *mōly* to represent reason, which relaxes (*mōluesthai*) strong passions and instincts (SVF I. 526). Dio Chrysostom records Diogenes' (fourth century BCE) claim that Circe's charms should be understood as the pleasures that assault all the senses with food, drink, and carnal lust (*Orationes*, 8.21). Allegoresis reached its most ambitious zenith under the Neoplatonists, who systematized Homeric interpretation within the context of their distinctive philosophy. They understood Odysseus' journey as a veiled account of the progress of the soul through the material world in its bid to escape to a higher level. Our most detailed cosmological reading of the Circe episode is attributed to Porphyry (third century CE)[7]: the transformation of Odysseus' companions into animals illustrates the eternal nature of the soul: it cannot be destroyed by death just as the companions' minds remain human inside their bestial forms. Their outer forms represent, nonetheless, the degraded soul's rebirth into a lower body which reflects its

inherent love of pleasure and impurity. Circe herself embodies the cyclical process of constant metensomatosis in which souls are trapped on account of their desire for the material pleasures of the sensible world. Hermes, again the embodiment of reason, rescues souls by pointing the way towards the good. In Porphyry's reading Odysseus is the soul who escapes the eternal cycle of reincarnation which leaves other, lesser souls tied to the material world (Stob. *Ecl.* 1.41.60).

This bold reading invigorates the Odyssean narrative, drawing out of it a new eschatological system, which replaces traditional poetic cosmology and the "exhausted myth of the *nekyia*" (Lamberton 1986, 119). But its radical stylings rest on conventional foundations. Allegorical interpretations furnish a corrective gloss on the *Odyssey*, shifting its significance to meet the needs of the exegete; and yet, despite appearances, they are not free inventions.[8] Their forms are conditioned by existing mythological associations. Allegorists do not craft their readings arbitrarily; they do not work in isolation and nor do their interpretations exist in seclusion.

Porphyry and Heraclitus find different meanings in Homer's verses, but their allegories share a common conceptual basis. They both configure the myth as a set of diametrical oppositions. Hermes, representing philosophical virtue, exists in contrast to Circe, the symbol of corporeal temptation. Although never articulated, Circean pleasures implicitly threaten the licit domesticity of Penelope. The different fates of Odysseus and his companions are figured as different reactions to sensual desire. The dynamic core of the episode revolves around the antagonistic pairing of Circe and Odysseus and the narrative of his victory over her hostility. Allegorical readings are not alone in bringing out these tidy structural relationships. A set of basic assumptions about the story ties even the most extreme forms of allegoresis to the mainstream tradition of Greek mythology and pervades ancient habits of reading the episode.

In describing the *Odyssey* as a moral epic (60.2), Heraclitus taps into a long tradition of understanding it as a repository for ethical paradigms. The ancient philosophical schools adopted Odysseus as an exemplary figure of endurance and wisdom. His journey was understood as a sustained test of stamina in overcoming distractions and threatening obstacles. The conceptual virtue of this philosopher-hero requires that those who delay him be understood as hostile to his mission. Circe, Calypso, the Cyclops, Scylla, Charybdis, the Sirens, and all of the other monsters, gods and natural forces which slow his progress – although individuated distinctly in the narrative – come to be conflated into almost interchangeable avatars of the same basic set of ideas.

The interpretative dynamics that shape allegorical readings are at work in more conventional uses of the story of Circe as a moral exemplum. In such contexts, they exist not as overt impositions onto the text but as clarifications of the logic of the narrative itself as it was understood in antiquity. Thus, the protagonist of Plutarch's dialogue *Beasts are rational*, Gryllus, casually describes Odysseus as having proven his immunity to temptation by rejecting Circe (*Mor.* 988 F). Likewise,

Xenophon, recalling Socrates' habit of eating only moderately, has the philosopher defend this tendency "half-jokingly" by suggesting that it was greed that undid Odysseus's men:

> Circe made pigs of her guests by putting on such lavish dinners. But Odysseus, because he had been warned by Hermes and because he was a man of self-restraint who avoided over-indulging in such things, was not turned into a pig. (*Memorabilia*, 1.3.7).

Socrates' point is immediately comprehensible. The effectiveness of his quip rests on the self-evident equivalences that it sets out. In particular, there is a striking appropriateness in assuming that men transformed into pigs would be gluttons. Like the allegorists, Socrates capitalizes on the idea that the reactions of Odysseus' men to Circe provide an obvious foil to those of their leader. The goddess offers pleasure – here typified by feasting – to which the weak-willed are drawn by nature.

This way of thinking about Odysseus through the lens of ethical philosophy became an ingrained habit almost inextricable from the narrative of the epic itself. In *Epistles* 1.2, Horace plots the lessons that one may draw from (re)reading the *Odyssey*:

> You are familiar with […] Circe's cups;
> if he had drunk from them, foolishly and greedily like his companions,
> he would have ended up shamed and mindless under his whore-mistress,
> he would have lived the life of a filthy dog or a pig who loves the mud (23–26).

Horace's particular point, that Circe controls men with lust, is no radical departure. Aristophanes jokes about Philomides' infatuation for the *hetaira* Lais by parodying the pair as Circe and her client-victim Odysseus (*Wealth* 302–315). A "Circe" appears in Petronius' *Satyricon* whose advances emasculate her chosen lover: the encounter results in impotence (126–128).

This characterization crops up in other hermeneutic traditions as well. Heraclitus' *On Unbelievable Tales* (?early second century CE) rationalized the more outlandish elements of myth by tracing them back to misunderstood accounts of actual events.[9] His treatment of Circe is typically historicist[10]:

> Circe was a prostitute. She charmed her clients, at first fawning over them in all manner of ways, and enticed them into loving her. Once this passion was roused in them, she held them captive by desire, and they were swept away, unthinking, in their pleasures. (16)

Such examples of mythic rationalization are distinguishable from allegoresis, and indeed from moralizing readings. These three traditions seek different kinds of meaning in myth and adopt different techniques for extracting it. Rationalists

mine myths for evidence of past events. To them, the value of such stories resides entirely in their "historical" content. Allegorists distil from texts generalized philosophical principles. They consider such truths to be so deeply buried within the narrative that they are only recoverable through recourse to skilled etymologies and other such arguments. Moralizing readings lack these detailed analyses. They view myth as a vocabulary of exemplary models and present the lessons drawn from them as if they should be apparent to the observant reader. To return to Dawson's terminology, these succeed – as we saw in the example attributed to Socrates – by appealing to a kind of recognizable, commonsensical logic. But overly dogmatic attempts to strictly delineate these different approaches risk ignoring the highly porous relationship between them. In practice, myth interpretation took place in a vibrant environment of conceptual cross-fertilization.

Different approaches to the Circe episode converge on similar conclusions. Whether Circe is held up as a paradigm of the dangers of lust and greed as embodied by prostitution (Horace), used as a comic analogy for notorious contemporary prostitutes (Aristophanes), or described as an actual prostitute (Heraclitus the rationalist), she is associated with a narrow set of ideas. It is a short step to turn this prominent exploiter of human weakness into an allegorical symbol of the exploitative tendencies of bodily pleasure, as Heraclitus and Porphyry do. Similarly, from the general observation that Homeric poetry contains any number of paradigmatic illustrations of human behavior, one can cross easily to the position of the allegorists, that these episodes are ethical teachings in the guise of poetry.

Individual instances of interpretation resonate in complex ways with other elements of Greek cultural and intellectual life and function according to the logic of subliminal codes and assumptions. Allegories do not merely become domesticated with time; they arise out of, make use of, and extend a subtle nexus of ideas already accepted as culturally valid. Ancient myth interpretation functioned not as a series of self-contained conduits but as a flexible, fluid network, which extended organically through the ancient myth system. Throughout antiquity and across a range of contexts, Odysseus and Circe remained stubbornly associated with a particular range of ideas and these pervasive habits stayed constant whether the writer professed to be conveying the "obvious" meaning of the text, or plumbing its allegorical depths. We are best, then, to think of instances of interpreting, and indeed (to skip ahead slightly) even of narrating myths, as conditioned in practice by a shared set of habits of thinking about myth. Allegorical interpretations are thus built on observations already considered more or less "obvious"; their laborious imposition of meaning extends patterns of narrative logic apparent elsewhere. To put it another way, ancient readers of Homer were "reading with different eyes" (Kaiser 1964, 110). What Heraclitus presents as a necessary act of rebellious rehabilitation is in fact, at least in part, a culturally conditioned reflex.[11]

Prisms

The practice of allegoresis is bound up in a fundamental cultural shift in Greek intellectual history. The use of myths in highly literate environments from the Hellenistic period onward inspired new perspectives on the utility and validity of such traditional material. In these cosmopolitan contexts, the original significances of mythic stories, connected as they were to local politics, landscape, and cult, ceased to be of primary relevance. A new way of understanding them was necessary. This new world order gives us a systemized "mythology" with a necessarily universal appeal; allegoresis functioned as a transformative tool within this set of cultural changes (Most 2010, 28). The hyper-literate stylings of Hellenistic storytelling have seldom found favor with scholars of Greek myth. But it is wrong to assign to this context an absolute verdict of imaginative decline. The processes of textualization and canonization do not signal the ossification of Greek myth. Texts may preserve a poet's words unchanged, but they do not spell the end of literary evolution. Bookish cultures are similarly adept at "forgetting," "remembering," and "mis-remembering" their traditions.

Allegoresis was caught up in these processes of mythic transformation. As a form of literary commentary, it was closely associated with broader trends of canon formation and transmission. Allegorists' interest in particular, atomized segments of myth found in the Homeric epics gave such episodes prominence at the expense of the wider mythological tradition. So, when allegorists interpret Circe, they are interested only in her Odyssean role. They largely ignore, for example, the events of the *Telegony*, in which Odysseus is killed by Telegonus, his son by Circe, and Circe herself marries Odysseus' other son, Telemachus. They likewise ignore her role in purifying her Medea after the murder of Apsyrtus and her Ovidian incarnation as a love rival for Scylla.

The habits of allegoresis captured a partial vision of Greek literature. Allegorists shone lights into hidden corners of the mythic tradition, but cast a blinkered gaze over other aspects of it. The interpretative habits which attached themselves to Circe become all the more notable when we consider how they skew the very text they sought to explain. They encourage the over-valuation of some elements of the Homeric episode, while ignoring others. The molding of this episode into a coherent ethical pattern requires a selective approach to the Homeric text itself, which simplifies it and flattens its characters.

Homer's description of events on Aeaea in *Odyssey* 10 is rich with narrative complexity. Certainly Circe's transformation of Odysseus' men prompts a battle of wills between the goddess and the hero, but this is only part of the story. Odysseus' victory over the goddess, aided by Hermes' advice and his own violent threats, does not signal the defeat of an enemy but the creation of an ally. Odysseus' companions are released from their swinish captivity and transformed to men once more, a detail ignored by the allegorists. More striking is the lack of interest shown in the second part of the story: the crew joins Circe's household for a year, feasting

happily (10.467–468); Odysseus shares Circe's bed (10.480–481). When the time comes for him to leave, Circe prepares Odysseus for his *katabasis* with instructions for the rites he must perform and useful gifts. On his successful return from the underworld, she again entertains him lavishly and on this occasion too her advice for escaping the Sirens, the Wandering Rocks, and Scylla and Charybdis proves invaluable (12.1–50). Even the knots Odysseus uses he learnt from her (8.446–448).

Homer's Circe is a characterful creation. Her strange powers have a numinous ambivalence: she keeps a strange menagerie of men transformed into fawning lions and wolves, yet, equally, uses her divine knowledge to aid her guests. Her kingdom, for all its strangeness, is decorously civilized; she is first glimpsed skillfully singing and weaving (10.252–255). But this nuanced vision soon drops out of the Greek tradition, and the ambivalent Homeric goddess becomes an increasingly pigeonholed, entirely combatant figure.

After Homer, only the early lyric poet Alcman gives Circe a role as a sympathetic accomplice. He describes her supplying the wax that allows Odysseus' crew to sail by the Sirens unharmed (fr. 80 Diehl). In later treatments, she is the hostile, threatening figure familiar from ancient interpretative traditions. Thus, her perfunctory purification of Jason and Medea in book four of Apollonius' *Argonautica* is overshadowed by a pervasive sense of unease: the imperious Circe, troubled by blood-stained visions, rules over primordial man-beasts frozen in imperfect states of hybridization (see Knight 1995, 184–200). Circe's brief appearance in the *Aeneid* illustrates the extent of her marginalization (7.15–24). Where Homer described Circe's animals fawning like dogs, in the *Aeneid*, these monsters (*monstra*) violently and noisily protest their imprisonment. Circe herself is a threat to the very success of Aeneas' voyage: with Poseidon's help the dutiful Trojans (*pii Troes*) sail safely past; Circe has no other role than as a cruel goddess (*dea saeva*). She is no longer a potential source of aid for the homeward-bound hero, but an obstacle to his quest.

Later writers also typically developed Circe's character as a kind of troubled love-heroine on the model of Medea or Dido and conflated her skill with potions with her lustful reputation. Although Homer has Odysseus claim at one stage that Circe wished to make him her husband (9.31–32), she shows no reluctance to let him leave in the Homeric narrative, indeed quite the opposite. But when Dictys of Crete summarizes the episode, he gives it a rather different slant: he tells us only that Odysseus fled Circe and Calypso, "queens who enticed their guests to love them with charms" (6.5). Virgil describes her, "a lover overcome with desire" (*capta cupidine coniunx*) transforming Picus into a woodpecker (*Aen.* 7.189–191) and this figure of dangerous lust recurs frequently in Ovid's work (see Segal 1968, 436–441 and Bettini and Franco 2010, 252–272). A single example will suffice: in *Remedia Amoris* Ovid has the lovelorn Circe unable to concoct a drug capable of enflaming in Odysseus a desire to match her own for him (263–290). The idea that Circe concocted love potions appears also in Plutarch, *Coniugalia Praecepta* 139A, where her

drugging of Odysseus' companions is used as an exemplum of the tendency for women to lose interest in lovers won by magic.

This shaping of Circe's mythology in literary sources is paralleled elsewhere. The twin themes of metamorphosis and antagonism proved irresistible to ancient artists. The images of her collected in *LIMC* include precious few not related to Odysseus' visit. She is most frequently shown with Odysseus' transformed companions, often being threatened by the hero himself.[12] These depictions of Circe hark back to Homer's archetypal narrative, but in doing so they impose a single antagonistic dynamic onto the epic's much more complex rendering. Across the board, then, Circe is remembered for her actions in the first part of the Homeric episode; her substantial role as a benefactor and ally is ignored. When her story is told, it falls into the familiar patterns of prevailing interpretative habits: Circe is a dangerous figure, controlled by lust, whose transformations, if not guarded against, are permanent.

The traditions of Greek storytelling are complex and multifaceted: they do not settle easily into traditional and revisionist camps but interact continually. Narration and interpretation are not entirely separate activities. Both consist of creative invention practiced within the confines of convention; they share in the same habitual patterns of thinking about myths. The messages that the allegorists found by digging beneath the surface of the text expand on narrative logic already apparent in the myth. The allegorists' portrait of Circe thus magnifies a prevailing tendency to shape the episode in a particular way and to understand it as communicating a specific set of ideas. Instead of thinking about conventional and allegorical approaches as separate enterprises, we should consider the ways in which all reactions to myth feed into one another as organic components of the same conceptual vocabulary. These are not mediations of some essential quality of the myth, they constitute the story itself.

Scattered Beams

Allegorical handbooks and commentaries provided a major conduit for transmitting classical myths into the Middle Ages and Renaissance. These later allegorists made substantial contributions to the tradition. Some did reject the distinctive habits that animated the stories in antiquity: Jean Dorat (1508–1588), in his expository lecture on the *Odyssey*, argued that, because she showed to Odysseus the secrets of the Underworld and the healing properties of herbs, Circe should be seen as a figure of natural philosophy or science, thus radically revising the significance of her traditional materiality (see Demerson 1983, 181–182). But many others normalized and propagated them. Thus, the *Ovide moralisé* refigures Circe within Christian symbolism, but does not break markedly with what had come before. Such accretions controlled the significance of this motif more widely, making Circe a useful illustration of dangerous infatuation. Guillaume

de Machaut's *Dit dou lyon* (1342) features a mysterious island ruled by a captivating lady with a menagerie of fawning wild animals who compete for her attentions. In depicting the ideals of *fin'amor* in this way, the story functions as a broad-brush critique of them. Such criticism is not articulated directly, but operates via the reader's awareness of the clear narrative hints which make this island Aeaea and the lady Circe, with all the oppressive resonances such a parallel carries (Ehrhart 1980).

By the turn of the twentieth century, allegorical thinking was long out of fashion. And yet, the interpretative habits encouraged by its symbolic system continued to resonate. James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) relocates the Circe episode to a brothel where his "Circe," Bella Cohen, is the madam. The choice of profession is conventional given the interpretative history we have traced; the scene is anything but. Likewise ambivalent is the work of New Zealand poet James K. Baxter (1926–1972). Baxter drew on classical, Polynesian and Catholic symbolism to create a distinctive personal mythology cut through with Jungian preoccupations. Circe features as one of his many anima figures. She offers an alternative to domesticity, but this is an escape which offers little by way of satisfaction or spiritual growth (Miles *et al.* 2011, 95–98).

A simple phrase in one of Baxter's unpublished poems prefigures a new way of thinking: "Circe was not to blame / Ulysses' brain changed her" ("Me also"). This revolutionary step of highlighting the prejudices of perception that shaped Circe's tradition re-animated the myth in the second half of the twentieth century. Judith Yarnall has charted the conceptual sea-change these new readings achieved: Katherine Anne Porter reassigns to Circe her role as guide and facilitator ("A defense of Circe" [1955]); Eudora Welty gives us a Circe of unprecedented emotional complexity ("Circe" in *The bride of the Innisfallen* [1955]); Margaret Atwood recasts the story as a study of gendered hierarchies and sexual politics ("Circe / Mud poems" in *You are happy* [1974]) (Yarnall 1994, 182–193). Within this same movement we might place recent scholarly re-appraisals of Circe – Yarnall's work being a prominent example to which we might add Cristiana Franco's excellent survey (Bettini and Franco 2010).

That such revisionary narratives appeared when they did and from the pens of female writers is no accident. These authors work within a feminist aesthetic which delights in upsetting the dynamics of familiar narratives. Such confident displays of "interestedness" have seen feminists compared to medieval allegorists. Certainly, they wield similar overtly transformative powers. But to question the validity of only these two approaches in this way ignores the creative subjectivity that pervades all forms of interpretation and storytelling (Liveley 2006, 63–65). Feminists – like allegorists – may be outspoken in their methodologies, but they, like all exegetes and narrators, work within the prevailing biases and trends of their environment. These new Circes challenge longstanding habits of thinking about myth; and in doing so they institute a few new habits of their own.

Notes

1 For example, Serv. ad *Aen.* 7.19; Boethius, *Consolations* 4 m. 3; Fulg. *Myth.* 2.9; Second Vatican Mythographer 256; Arnulf of Orleans, *Allegorie super Ovidii Metamorphosen* 14.3; Giovanni del Virgilio, *Allegorie librorum Ovidii Metamorphoseos* 14.7; Pierre Bersuire, *Ovidius moralizatus* 400–403.

2 "Allegory" can refer to both the composition of allegories and the interpretation of them. In antiquity, allegoresis was primarily the interpretation of texts as allegorical documents. The deliberate composition of large-scale allegories was rare: Prodicus's *Choice of Heracles* is the most prominent example. Nonetheless, as we will see, the exegetes' tendency to use theories of *allēgoria* derived from instruction in rhetorical composition and their frequent attribution of allegorical readings to authorial intent do blur this distinction.

3 For recent attempts to recover early allegorical practice, see Ford (1999) and Naddaf (2009).

4 For ancient definitions of *allēgoria* as an allegorical trope, see Boys-Stones (2003a, 2–4); Laird (2003, 171–173); Russell and Konstan (2005, xiii); and Copeland and Struck (2010a, 4) note the difficult fit between the definitions of allegory developed in ancient rhetorical theory and the actual practice of allegorical interpretation.

5 Prominent exceptions are found mainly in Stoic allegoresis: see Boys-Stones (2003b); Struck (2009).

6 Northrope Frye's famous contention that "all commentary is allegorical interpretation" still resonates (Frye 1957, 89). But such a position is unhelpful in productively delineating various incarnations of allegoresis as historically situated traditions. See Whitman (2000a, 16–20) and Copeland and Struck (2010a, 1): "The definition of allegory is found in understanding its history. […] [A]ny theoretical statement about allegory that seeks to capture its essence can only be as good as the historical understanding on which it is founded."

7 Other Neoplatonist readings: Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.6.18–21, in which Circe represents sensuous beauty; and Ps-Plutarch, *Life of Homer 126*, which prefigures Porphyry's reading.

8 Rollinson (1981, 6) discusses an important ancient recognition of this in Plut. *De Is. et Os* 274E in which the interpreter ascribes to each myth an interpretation appropriate to it: "Thus, the truth symbolically conveyed is already known to the interpreter, and the practice of symbolic interpretation involves not the understanding of new meanings but the appropriate adjustment of mythic details to truths already understood and known."

9 This Heraclitus, although working at around the same time and in a similar context, is probably not the same man as Heraclitus, author of the *Homeric Problems*.

10 Similar rationalizations are found in later sources: Pallada, *Anthologia Graeca* 10.5; Malalas, *Chronographia* 5.114–122; Tzetz. *Allegoriae in Od.* 10.30–32. For the relationship of allegoresis to rationalization, see Hawes (2014, 28–36, 102–106).

11 The tendency for allegorists to endorse contemporary cultural norms is explored by Dawson (1992, esp. 9–11, 35–38, 51–52).

12 The relationship between image and narrative interpretation comes to the fore in O'Sullivan's argument that the Odyssey Landscapes frescoes encourage the viewer to understand Odysseus' journey philosophically, with the Circe episode playing a central role in depicting the emergence of the hero's assertion of control over his journey (O'Sullivan 2007, esp. 524–525).

Guide to Further Reading

The foundational works on ancient allegory, in French, examine it as a mode of myth criticism: Buffière (1956) and Pépin (1958) are invaluable resources for navigating the tradition. Recent studies have considered allegoresis as a tool of literary criticism (Struck 2004), and philosophical speculation (Lamberton 1986) and as a force of cultural change (Dawson 1992). Brisson (2004) provides a useful overview of ancient and medieval allegory, albeit without much detail or precision. Three recent collections of essays, edited by Whitman (2000b), Boys-Stones (2003a), and Copeland and Struck (2010b) achieve both breadth and detail. For the ancient tradition of rationalistic interpretation, see Hawes (2014).

Allegorical texts are increasingly accessible in English translations. Notable are: Russell and Konstan, (2005), with a particularly useful introduction (more detail is offered by Keaney and Lamberton (1996), Lamberton (1983), and Pontani 2005). For readers of Italian, Ramelli (2007) is a useful compendium of allegorical texts and fragments and serves as a companion to Ramelli and Luchetta (2004). The Derveni Papyrus is available in a number of rival translations. Stern (2003) presents a translation and commentary of Heraclitus' *On Unbelievable Tales*.

An overview of ancient responses to Homer can be found in Richardson (1993, vol. 6 pp. 25–49); for a broader treatment, see Lamberton and Keaney (1992) and Kim (2010). Montiglio (2011) traces the use of Odysseus as an ancient philosophical exemplum; Kaiser (1964) is an invaluable guide to ancient responses to parts of the *Odyssey*, including the Circe episode; Stanford (1954) has a broader scope and is still useful.

For more detailed readings of the figure of Circe, which cover the material presented in this chapter and more, see Segal (1968), Paetz (1970), Tochtermann (1992), Yarnall (1994), and Bettini and Franco (2010).

References

Bettini, M. and Franco, C. 2010. *Il mito di Circe: immagini e racconti dalla Grecia a oggi*. Turin: Einaudi.

Boys-Stones, G.R. 2003a. "Introduction," in G.R. Boys-Stones, ed., *Metaphor, Allegory and the Classical Tradition*, 1–5. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Boys-Stones, G.R. 2003b. "The Stoics' Two Types of Allegory," in G.R. Boys-Stones, ed., *Metaphor, Allegory and the Classical Tradition*, 189–216. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Brisson, L. 2004. *How Philosophers Saved Myths*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bruns, G.L. 1988. "The Hermeneutics of Allegory and the History of Interpretation." *Comparative Literature*, 40: 384–395.

Buffière, F. 1956. *Les mythes d'Homère et la pensée grecque*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Copeland, R. and Struck, P.T. 2010a. "Introduction," in R. Copeland, and P.T. Struck, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 1–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Copeland, R. and Struck, P.T. 2010b. *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dawson, D. 1992. *Allegorical Readers and Cultural Revision in Ancient Alexandria*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Demerson, G. 1983. *Dorat en son temps: Culture classique et presence au monde*. Clermont-Ferrand: Adosa.

Ehrhart, M.J. 1980. "The 'Espruve de fines amours' in Machaut's *Dit du lyon* and medieval interpretations of Circe and her island." *Neophilologus*, 64: 38–41.

Ford, A. 1999 "Performing Interpretation: Early Allegorical Exegesis of Homer," in M.H. Beissinger, J. Tylus, and S. Lindgren Wofford, eds, *Epic Traditions in the Contemporary World: The Poetics of Community*, 33–53. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Frye, N. 1957. *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hawes, G. 2014. *Rationalizing Myth in Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Joyce, J. 1922. *Ulysses*. Paris, France: Shakespeare and Company.

Kaiser, E. 1964. "Odyssee-Szenen als Topoi." *Museum Helveticum*, 21: 109–136, 197–224.

Keaney, J.L. and Lamberton, R. 1996. *[Plutarch]: Essay on the Life and Poetry of Homer*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press.

Kim, L. 2010. *Homer between History and Fiction in Imperial Greek Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Knight, V. 1995. *The Renewal of Epic: Responses to Homer in the Argonautica of Apollonius*. Leiden: Brill.

Laird, A. 2003. "Figures of Allegory from Homer to Latin Epic," in G.R. Boys-Stones, ed., *Metaphor, Allegory and the Classical Tradition*, 151–175. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lamberton, R. 1983. *Porphyry: On the Cave of the Nymphs*. Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press.

Lamberton, R. 1986. *Homer the Theologian: Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lamberton, R. 2002. "Homeric Allegory and Homeric Rhetoric in Ancient Pedagogy," in F. Montanari, ed., *Omero tremila anni dopo*, 185–205. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.

Lamberton, R. and Keaney, J.L., eds. 1992. *Homer's Ancient Readers*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Liveley, G. 2006. "Surfing the Third Wave? Postfeminism and the Hermeneutics of Reception," in C.A. Martindale and R.F. Thomas, eds, *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, 55–66. Oxford: Blackwell.

Miles, G., Davidson, J., and Millar, P. 2011. *The Snake-Haired Muse: James K. Baxter and Classical Myth*. Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington Press.

Montiglio, S. 2011. *From Villain to Hero: Odysseus in Ancient Thought*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Most, G.W. 2010. "Hellenistic Allegory and Early Imperial Rhetoric," in R. Copeland and P.T. Struck, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 26–38. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Naddaf, G. 2009. "Allegory and the Origins of Philosophy," in W. Wians, ed., *Logos and Mythos: Philosophical Essays on Greek Literature*, 99–131. Albany: State University of New York Press.

O'Sullivan, T.M. 2007. "Walking with Odysseus: The Portico Frame of the Odyssey Landscapes." *American Journal of Philology*, 128: 497–532.

Paetz, B. 1970. *Kirke Und Odysseus: Überlieferung Und Deutung von Homer Bis Calderón*. Berlin: de Gruyte.

Pépin, J. 1958. *Mythe et Allégorie: Les Origines Grecques et Les Contestations Judéo-Chrétiennes*. Paris: Aubier.

Pontani, F. 2005. *Eraclito: Questioni Omerichesulle Allegorie Di Omero in Merito Agli Dèi*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS.

Ramelli, I. 2007. *Allegoristi Dell'età Classica: Opere E Frammenti*. Milan: Bompiani.

Ramelli, I. and Lucchetta, G. 2004. *Allegoria. Vol. I: L'età classica*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero.

Richardson, N.J. 1993. http://www.worldcat.org/title/iliad-a-commentary-vol-6-books-21-24/oclc/230020973.

Rollinson, P. 1981. *Classical Theories of Allegory and Christian Culture*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.

Russell, D.A. and Konstan, D. 2005. *Heraclitus: Homeric Problems*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature.

Segal, C.P. 1968. "Circean Temptations: Homer, Vergil, Ovid," *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 99: 419–442.

Stanford, W.B. 1954. https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Ulysses_Theme.html?id=-PE_AQAAIAAJ.

Stern, J. 2003. "Heraclitus the Paradoxographer: Περὶ Ἀπίστων, *On Unbelievable Tales*." *TAPhA* 133: 51–97.

Struck, P.T. 2004. *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts*. Princeton, NJ, and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

Struck, P.T. 2009. "The Invention of Mythic Truth in Antiquity," in U. Dill, and C. Walde, eds, *Antike Mythen: Medien, Transformationen und Konstruktionen*, 25–37. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Struck, P.T. 2010. "Allegory and Ascent in Neo-Platonism," in R. Copeland, and P.T. Struck, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, 57–70. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tochtermann, S. 1992. *Der Allegorisch Gedeutete Kirke-Mythos*. Frankfurt am Main.

Whitman, J. 2000a. "A Retrospective Forward: Interpretation, Allegory, and Historical Change," in J. Whitman, ed., *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period*, 3–30. Leiden: Brill.

Whitman, J., ed. 2000b. *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period*. Leiden: Brill.

Yarnall, J. 1994. *Transformations of Circe: The History of an Enchantress*. Champaign: University of Illinois Press.

The Comparative Approach

Sarah Iles Johnston

One could say that the comparative approach to myth began as soon as people started to discuss (rather than simply re-narrate) myths. Herodotus discusses the differences between the figure whom the Greeks call Heracles, and a different figure (or so Herodotus claims) whom the Egyptians call Heracles. (Hdt. 2.42–45). How are these figures and the stories told about them to be understood in relation to one another, he wonders? Are they all really of Egyptian origin, simply borrowed and elaborated upon by the Greeks? Or perhaps they are really Phoenician in origin, borrowed by both Egyptians and Greeks? At heart, who was this guy Heracles, anyway? This sort of quandary – and the desire to resolve it by seeking some oldest layer of "original" myth and tracing its varied manifestations forward in time – would have a long history among later comparativists, even as their methodologies became more sophisticated.

The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

But if we leave antiquity aside, we could begin the history of the comparative approach in the seventeenth century, when missionaries and other travelers, having encountered natives in the Americas, Africa, and the East, noticed that some of the stories they told were similar to those known from the "high cultures" of Europe, particularly ancient Greece and Rome. Instinctively, the visitors began to compare the two.[1] By the late eighteenth century, the habit of comparing myths was well established enough to be used for other purposes. Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) theorized that the essential spirit of a people (*Volkgeist*) could be recovered by studying their mythology and language. Believing as well in the

original *unity* of humankind, Herder promoted the idea that the comparative study of myths would enable scholars to reconstruct the earliest stage of the shared human *Geist*. He argued that the birthplace of the human race lay in central Asia; this set him in broad alignment with the Orientalist Sir William Jones, who at the same time was working to trace the origin not of all humans, but rather of only what would come to be called the Aryan races, to Central Asia. Franz Bopp (1791–1867) systematized the comparative study of what would be called the Indo-European language family (first called Indo-Aryan or Indo-Germanic), building on the work of Herder and Jones. Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm (1785–1863, 1786–1859) further advanced the comparative study of that language family and began collecting legal antiquities (*Rechtsalterthümer*), ballads, and stories that reflected the *Volkgeist* (Herder 1869).[2]

At about the same time, Adalbert Kuhn (1812–1881) posited an "Aryan myth" that survived in various instantiations in many of its member cultures. The protagonists of all these stories stole things from the gods and delivered them to humanity in order to improve the mortal lot – Prometheus was the familiar Greek example (Kuhn 1859). Friedrich Gottlieb Welcker (1784–1868) contrasted this Aryan story of the culture-hero with the myth of a Fall, which he proposed was endemic to Semitic races (Welcker 1857–1863). This contrast (implicitly anchored in comparison) inspired Friedrich Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* (first edition 1872), with its own exaltation of the Prometheus myth and denigration of the myth of a Fall. Nietzsche honed this idea until, in later works such as *The Antichrist* (1888), he had set ancient Greece and its myths (= high forms of art) against Christianity (= a developed form of Semiticism, and enemy of the artistic spirit).

Meanwhile, in England, Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), an avid admirer of India's languages, culture, and religions, began to work on his own theory of myth. Poetry, for Max Müller, was the highest form of verbal expression; myth, in contrast, was a "disease of language" that had developed parasitically upon it. When the earliest Greeks spoke of *selene* (the moon) kissing to sleep *endymion* (a Greek word that represented "dusk" in Max Müller's interpretation), it was their poetic way of saying that night was falling. It was only later in the evolution of Greek civilization, when the naturalness of poetic speech had been lost, that *selene* became Selene, the goddess of the moon, and *endymion* became Endymion, her young lover who was doomed to sleep forever for reasons that the myth handily provided. As prosaic corruption crept into language, in other words, terms denoting natural objects or phenomena took on personalities, and myth was born.

Max Müller's development of this theory was motivated in part by his desire to prove that the Aryan races he so admired (especially the Greeks and the Indians) had been proto-monotheists, rather than polytheists, and in part by his desire to exonerate those Aryans from the apparent savagery of many of their myths, which sounded every bit as bad as myths that contemporary anthropologists and missionaries were collecting from tribal peoples – that is, from "real" savages. In 1856, Max Müller published the first version of "Comparative Mythology," an essay that set

out to free Zeus and his ilk from the "crudities and absurdities" of myth.[3] Starting with the Vedas, which were written around 1450 BCE and thus earlier than Greek texts, he showed that Hindu gods had names that denoted natural phenomena, the prime example being the sky-god "Dyaus" whose name comes from a root meaning to "beam" with brightness. Indo-European linguistics further enabled him to show that the names of "Zeus," "Jupiter," and the Norse god "Tiw" all derive from this root as well; all are also sky-gods and three of these names were often joined with words meaning "father" (Dyaus-piter, Zeus-pater and Ju-piter). Once the identity of Zeus (for example) as the Sky could be established, all manner of metaphorical interpretations could be applied to myths in which he appeared, and the technique could be easily transferred to other mythological figures, too. (The analysis of Selene and Endymion, mentioned earlier, also comes from this essay.)

In 1868, Max Müller was appointed to the first chair in comparative philology at Oxford, which made his ideas more widely known. As time went on and he revised them, more and more mythological figures became identified with the sun – Heracles, Orpheus, and many other heroes, for example, as well as numerous gods. In 1870, the Rev. R.F. Littledale, an Anglican clergyman and essayist, argued that Max Müller himself was a solar-deity, a mere myth. Littledale's tongue was in his cheek, but not completely so: he wished to demonstrate that Max Müller's comparative method was so flexible as to be useless, so all-embracing as to prove nothing.

Smith, Frazer, Harrison

Most of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century attempts at comparative mythology were anchored in a desire to explore what was understood to be Europe's Aryan heritage and to distinguish Europe from Semitic cultures, on the one hand, and from contemporary "savage," or "primitive," cultures, on the other hand. The next stage in comparative mythology grew out of different yearnings: to apply Darwin's evolutionary principles to religion (for which myth was under-stood to be a handmaiden) and to show, contrary to Max Müller *et al.*, that the earliest stages of the higher cultures, including those of ancient Greece and Rome, had a lot in common with the primitives. The two motivations worked together: if the primitives could be understood to represent cultures that were less evolved than those of the classical Greeks, for example, then one might hope to recapture the earliest stages of Greek (or Roman, or whatever) religious thought and behavior by studying those primitives.

The people who engaged in these approaches are best known to us for having pioneered the "ritualist" approach to myth.[4] Its founding father was the Semiticist William Robertson Smith, who proposed in a series of lectures between 1888 and 1891 that, whereas the heart of any modern religion lay in its system of beliefs, primitive religions focused instead on rituals.[5] Rather than beliefs, these religions

had myths – and the myths were intended to explain not the nature of the universe and all it contained (as E.B. Tylor had proposed two decades earlier) but the existence of the rituals themselves, whose real origins had been forgotten long before. "Primitive," a word that Smith used more-or-less interchangeably with "ancient," included the religions of Greece, where:

> certain things were done at a temple, and people were agreed that it would be impious not to do them. But if you had asked why they were done, you would probably have had several mutually exclusive explanations from different persons, and no one would have thought it a matter of the least religious importance which of these you chose to adopt.

> (Smith 1889, 18)

Note the implicit comparativism: the Greeks were "like" primitives insofar as their myths were rather weak, circumstantial explanations for rituals. In other words, comparativism at this point (and for a long time after) still focused on finding *similarities* among myths rather than thinking about their differences.

It was Smith's younger (and longer-lived) friend James Frazer who took the next step, which carried the link between myth and ritual out into the wider world, and in the process ensured that the fame Max Müller had brought to comparativism would endure. *The Golden Bough* (1890) was Frazer's *magnum opus* which, in its third edition, made up 12 volumes of myths and rituals that Frazer had patiently gathered from what he took to be primitive cultures throughout the world and across historical periods. Many of these myths and rituals, in Frazer's analysis, centered on a figure who sometimes appeared as a king and sometimes as a god, but who always represented the vegetation, and thus the vitality of the world. Like the vegetation, this figure had to periodically die and be "reborn" in order to regenerate the world's vitality; many rituals accomplished the death of this figure in reality or metaphor. Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Balder, and Dionysus were instantiations of this dying-and-reviving figure, but so were many other gods and heroes from a wide span of myths.

The paradigm of the dying-and-reviving god is important for our purposes not only because it brought the comparative method into greater prominence but also because it revived an older, more general vegetation paradigm – that is, the idea that, even in the absence of a central god/king figure, many myths and rituals were at heart about the growth, death, and regeneration of vegetation, however deeply hidden this might be behind superficial features. And this gave new life to an idea that had been around since comparative mythology first took off: namely that there were "Ur-myths," myths that were shared by all or most cultures, however varied the forms of expression they took. Searching for Ur-myths inevitably leads to essentializing what myths are "about," however, which in turn means disengaging them from their narratives, which typically are understood to be merely vehicles that serve to express them. Thus, for Frazer, what mattered in the story of Odysseus and Polyphemus was not how Homer told the story, but rather the fact that after

escaping from Polyphemus's cave, Odysseus taunted him so persistently as to enable Polyphemus to throw a well-aimed rock at Odysseus's ship. This echoes versions of what Frazer proposed was the Ur-myth, in which the hero has a ring or other magical object stuck to his body that persists in crying out to his blinded adversary as the hero tries to escape (Frazer 1921, vol. 2, 404–455).[6] Almost every version of the comparative approach to myth similarly essentialized the stories it treats.

The other important figure in this part of our narrative is Jane Ellen Harrison, who (like Frazer) was associated with Cambridge off and on throughout her career and who was at the center of a group of scholars that has retrospectively been labeled the Cambridge Ritualists. (The label is not entirely correct: they were never a formal group, as the capitalization of "Ritualists" implies, and "Cambridge" is too limited a descriptor, given that one of them, Gilbert Murray, taught at Oxford and that the theories of Friedrich Nietzsche and Émile Durkheim were at least as important to their version of the ritualist paradigm as were Frazer's.)[7]

Harrison took up Frazer's dying and reviving god and gave him a different name, the Year-Spirit or *Eniautos Daimon*. Her introduction of this figure centered on an ancient hymn that had been recently discovered in a sanctuary of Zeus on Crete, which she proposed was the libretto of a ritual performed annually to welcome home a god who took the guise of a young man (*kouros*); the advent of this god reawakened the vitality not only of the fields and flocks but also of the social order itself. And with the involvement of the social order, things took a new turn: Harrison proposed that the ritual celebrating the return of the divine *kouros* simultaneously functioned as an "initiation" ritual analogous to those that anthropologists were discovering among primitive tribes, during which, she argued, the young men (*kouroi*) of Crete were introduced to their adult roles in society; the *kouros* of the hymn represented these initiates (Harrison 1912).[8]

To help support this interpretation, Harrison drew on myths in which Zeus, Dionysus, and an enigmatic god known as Zagreus appear as youths who are guarded by divinities known as Kouretes; in some of these myths, the young god is killed in spite of the Kouretes' care, and must then be resurrected. She found the Year-Spirit lurking behind other characters from myth as well: Heracles, Asclepius, and Achilles, for example. The fact that most of these figures were never resurrected didn't pose a particular problem; myths, in her opinion, were notoriously unreliable, forever drifting away from a ritual's real meaning until a scholar corralled them back. As she had famously pronounced earlier in her career, "*ritual practice misunderstood* explains the elaboration of myth" (Harrison and Verrall 1890, iii; cf. xxxiii).

The Aftermath of the Ritualists

Later in her life, Harrison left classics and turned to Russian literature. Following her departure, classicists' interest in both the ritualist approach and the comparative approach to myth waned. Indeed, their faith in myth as a key to unlock

religion more generally was over for the moment. Another important figure in the field, M.P. Nilsson, placed ritual so firmly at the center of ancient Greek religion as to perform what now seems like an impossible feat: he managed to write his two-volume, 1573-page *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (1941, 1950) almost without mentioning myths at all. Among Semiticists, however, the ritualist approach was still gathering speed – and so, too, the comparative approach that always seems to accompany it, given that ritualists often "recreate" a "lost" ritual by using bits and pieces of what they judge to be similar rituals and myths. The main Semiticist proponent after William Robertson Smith, Samuel Henry Hooke, was a generation younger than Harrison. His first major publication on the topic, the edited volume *Myth and Ritual,* appeared in 1933.

Hooke embraced the paradigm of the dying-and-reviving god and gave pride-of-place within it to the ancient Babylonian Akitu festival, a new-year's celebration during which the human king was first deprived of office and then reinstalled while a priest recited the *Enuma Elish*, a cosmogonic poem that culminates in the installation of Marduk as king of the gods. It was with this particular myth and ritual pairing, Hooke argued, that the paradigm of the dying-and-reviving-god had originated and from which it had then travelled wide and far, expressing itself through many other myth-and-ritual pairings – it was the Ur-myth *par excellence* (Hooke 1933).[9] In contrast to Frazer and Harrison, then, who assumed that myths and rituals of similar natures could develop independently from one another in separate cultures, Hooke was a diffusionist. As Hooke's work spread throughout his own field and others, it nurtured not only the myth-and-ritual approach, but also the drive towards essentialization. Scholars felt newly encouraged to purge away any inconvenient details that a narrative vehicle might have contributed to a given myth or ritual, in order to show that its structure was parallel to what Hooke had described.

And even if the classicists had temporarily left the field, others continued to read and develop their models, including the literary critic Stanley Hyman, who from the 1940s to 1960s pushed Harrison's ideas so far as to argue that ritual underlay not only all myths but also all literature.[10] The ritualist approach to myth (again accompanied by comparativism) was also developed by Lord Raglan, who in his 1936 *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama*, extended the thesis of the dying-and-reviving god into hero tales (Oedipus, Heracles, Moses, and Robin Hood are among his examples). One of Raglan's most enduring contributions is his observation that 22 traits frequently appear in hero stories throughout the world (although almost no story includes all of them). For instance, the circumstances of a hero's conception are often unusual, he is often raised by foster parents, he meets a mysterious death. Again, we should take note of the fact that this sort of comparativism focuses on *similarity* – on collecting as many instantiations as possible of a given "type" but paying little attention to their differences. An approach very similar to Raglan's had been offered by Vladimir Propp in 1928, although it did not gain the wide notice it deserved until it was translated into other European languages.

The Eranos Set

I need to treat briefly several figures who would ideally receive more attention than this short chapter allows: Carl Jung (1875–1961), Karl Kerényi (1897–1973), Joseph Campbell (1904–1987) and Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), all of whom shared a long association with the Eranos Institute, founded in 1933 in Ascona, Switzerland to further the comparative study of psychology, religion, philosophy, and spirituality. Jung (who was a co-founder of Eranos) and Eliade were frequent participants in Eranos's annual conferences from the start; Kerényi became active in the early 1940s and Campbell in the late 1950s. The themes of the conferences often included myths (e.g., *Das hermetische Prinzip in Mythologie, Gnosis und Alchemie* [1942]) (Wasserstrom 1999).

Through their contact at Eranos with one another and other sympathetic thinkers, each of these men enriched his own version of comparative myth. Jung argued for transhistorically and universally shared "archetypes" that were both embedded in the human psyche and encoded in myths; by carrying Jung's work further and applying it to well-known Greek myths, Kerényi contributed significantly to the broader awareness of Jung's ideas. Eliade offered his own version of Jung's archetypes: for him, they were universally and transhistorically meaningful mythic models (e.g., the "Cosmic Tree") that manifest themselves in culturally particular forms called "hierophanies."[11] Although scholars disagree sharply in their evaluation of Eliade's work (in particular, his methodology is often dismissed as being too loose to produce meaningful results), the numerous re-issues of his books have ensured that his version of comparativism is widely known both inside and outside the academy. (Many works by all four men have been published, or republished, in Princeton University Press's Bollingen Series, the name of which comes from the Swiss village where Jung had a country retreat.)

But no advocate of comparative myth is better known than Joseph Campbell. His work is in some ways similar to that of Raglan and Propp, although the influence of Jung is clear as well. For Campbell there is a heroic "monomyth" (he borrowed the term from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* (Campbell 1968, 30n.35), but we are essentially back to the idea of the Ur-myth) that manifests itself continually throughout the world and across the centuries – indeed, it is *the* guiding myth of human culture. As he said in his immensely popular book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (first published in 1949):

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.

> (Campbell 1968, 30)

The overarching theme of the monomyth, which shows Campbell's appreciation of Arnold van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage*, is that of "initiation." It is this element in particular, perhaps, that has led to the work's adoption by many of its readers as a sort of self-help manual of personal exploration. A phrase from the Upanishads that Campbell later quoted, "Follow your Bliss" – by which he meant that each of us should follow our own particular version of the hero's path – was emblazoned on millions of t-shirts, bumper-stickers, and other paraphernalia of popular culture in the 1980s and 1990s (nor are these items absent from the twenty-first-century marketplace).

But I have moved ahead of my story. Campbell's work became widely known in part because of the great popular success of his books, but especially because of the significant influence that *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* had upon George Lucas's "Star Wars" epic – a topic that was subsequently explored in the 1988 six-episode PBS series *The Power of Myth*, during which Bill Moyers interviewed Campbell against the backdrop of Lucas's Skywalker Ranch (and in the course of which "Follow Your Bliss" was uttered a number of times). The series spawned a book of the same name and a boxed videotape (later DVD) set, ensuring that Campbell's ideas would continue to influence authors, artists, and the general public for many years after his death, which occurred during the months between the series' filming and its broadcast. For those of us who teach in the United States, it is this PBS version of comparative myth that we most often find already established in our students' minds.

Walter Burkert: Biological Programs
and the Orientalizing Revolution

In 1972, the German scholar Walter Burkert (b. 1931) published *Homo Necans* (English 1983) and then, in 1979, *Structure and History in Greek Myth and Ritual*. One of the most important ideas that Burkert explored in these two books, as well as in a series of articles, was the premise that, if both myths and rituals are symbolic expressions of biological programs, then myths and rituals can exist and function independently of one another, as well as in tandem. This should have laid the groundwork (as Burkert himself notes several times in his works) for better appreciating the contribution made by specific narrations of myths, and yet the greatest effect of Burkert's work was to spur onwards again the search for myth and ritual pairings, and in its wake, new forms of comparativism and essentialization.[12]

There are two main reasons for this. First, Burkert offered a particularly capti-vating revival of Jane Harrison's argument that the initiation paradigm underlay many Greek myths and rituals – which inevitably revived her ritualist approach to myth as well. By combining initiation with the very new idea of biological pro-grams and with the (at the time) shocking idea that violence lay at the heart of

many religions, Burkert galvanized the topic like no one else had. His timing was right, moreover; the younger classicists who took their cues from Burkert, such as Hendrik Versnel (b. 1936), Fritz Graf (b. 1944), Jan Bremmer (b. 1944) and Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood (1945–2007), had come of age during the 1960s, a period when the western world developed a heightened awareness of society's power to enforce normative expectations of behavior during adolescence. The (often brilliant) work on initiation by Burkert and these younger scholars tended once more to look for comparative material among tribal societies as well as within Greek and Roman cultures themselves, and to emphasize similarities among myths without always adequately appreciating their differences (Versnel being a notable exception in this last regard).[13]

Second, the idea of the biological program is in itself inevitably essentializing – indeed, more essentializing than any previous approach to myth had ever been. In developing his version of it, Burkert drew on the work of Vladimir Propp (1928), who had broken the folktale into 31 motifemes or functions, such as "departure" (the hero leaves home) and "receipt of a magical agent [by the hero]"; and on the work of folklorist Alan Dundes (1964) – particularly a pattern that Dundes argued underlay most stories called "Lack/Lack Liquidated" – that is, most tales are about the resolution of a deficit or failure of some kind. By applying these insights to his own materials, Burkert was able to demonstrate that most Greek myths fall into one of a few patterns: for example, a deity departs, famine or an epidemic befalls the people, the people persuade the deity to return in some fashion, and wellness is restored.

Or rather I should say, he demonstrated that most *ancient Mediterranean myths* fall into one of several patterns, which brings us to the other important contribution to comparativism that Burkert has made: already in *Structure and History in Greek Myth and Ritual* (1979), to a lesser extent in many of his other works but most emphatically in *The Orientalizing Revolution* (1984; English 1992), Burkert brought new evidence and acumen to the old question of how ancient Near Eastern cultures had influenced Greek myths and rituals, providing methodologically more exacting comparisons of Mediterranean myths than the earlier ritualists had been able to offer.

Looking for Difference: Smith, Lincoln, and Doniger

And yet, the emphasis within comparative mythology was still on similarity. I will end by mentioning three scholars, all of whom currently teach in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, who have been particularly eloquent in arguing for a shift in balance: Jonathan Z. Smith (b. 1938), Wendy Doniger (b. 1940), and Bruce Lincoln (b. 1948).

Smith has often returned to the issue of how one compares responsibly, but nowhere more explicitly than in his 1984 essay "In Comparison a Magic Dwells."

There, he categorizes the ways that comparison has been done by scholars and others ("ethnographic," "encyclopedic," "morphological," "evolutionary"), and concludes that all have been "chiefly an affair of the recollection of similarity." He proposes that this is in part born of the delight that humans take in noticing similarities and in part from the common desire to create totalizing systems.

But comparisons of this sort always include a suppressed *tertium quid*: X is [more] like Y [than either of them is to Z] – and implicitly there is often a normative message (whatever it is that X and Y share makes them better than Z – although you can play that other way around, of course: whatever Z lacks makes it superior to X and Y). Smith ends by urging us to remember that:

> comparison is, at base, never identity. Comparison requires the postulation of difference as the grounds of its being interesting (rather than tautological) and a methodical manipulation of difference, a playing across the "gap" in the service of some useful end.
>
> (Smith 1983, 35)

Doniger is perhaps the most engaging comparative scholar of myths of our times. Her method consists of juxtaposing similar myths from different cultures or venues (frequently from ancient Greece and India, as in many chapters of Doniger 1988) and through close readings and re-narrations, revealing to her readers what those myths "are" (she insists that myths themselves are the objects that we must come to know – they *are* the messages rather than merely vehicles of the messages). This rejection of essentialism – this emphasis on the particularity of a given narration – leads to the further conclusion that "myths (like archetypes) do not, strictly speaking, have meanings; they provide contexts in which meaning occurs." Thus:

> The phallus may well be archetypical (for Jungians as well as Freudians, let alone the rank and file), producing a universal, instinctive response in real life as well as in myth; but it is always *someone's* phallus, someone with manifestations (a tone of voice, a taste for a particular brand of Scotch) or (to switch from the Jungians to the structuralists) someone situated within a context (a past, a social role). These are the banal details that make the myth real and also our own.
>
> (Doniger 1988, 35)

And in a 1996 essay that critiques Campbell's "monomyth," Doniger offers instead the *metamyth*: "a kind of nonoccurring [myth] that contains the basic elements from which all possible variants could be created."

Lincoln began his career as an Indo-Europeanist, which enabled him later to write a penetrating study of how the Aryan agenda has shaped the comparative approach to myth (Lincoln 1999). In his own work, he focuses on finding the

differences among similar myths (he rejects the idea of universal patterns) and using them to reveal the narrators' underlying ideologies. "In Praise of the Chaotic" (2009), for example, compares Hesiod's *Theogony*, the Norse theogony narrated by Snorri Sturluson and a Zoroastrian theogony (i.e., three Indo-European theogonies). All begin with a form of the chaotic (the Greek Chaos, the Norse Ginnunga-gap, the Zoroastrian Void existing between Ohrmazd and Ahriman), but whereas Chaos is a space from which other, ordered elements of the cosmos emerge and Ginnunga-gap a catalytic space of productive encounter among cosmic forces, the Void is a buffer between Ohrmazd and Ahriman that will eventually become Ahriman's prison and grave. Lincoln ends this essay with comments on what each myth reveals about its culture's expectations concerning power and its deployment of potentially useful materials. More recently (Lincoln 2012), in a collection of essays on comparison co-edited with Claude Calame, Lincoln has published twelve "Theses on Comparison," which again advocate attention to difference as well as similarity, and stress as well the importance of keeping one's group of *comparanda* reasonably small, to facilitate close study.

Notes

 1 Further in Stroumsa (2010).
 2 Further on all the figures in this part of my essay, Csapo (2005, 10–30); Lincoln (1999, 51–75).
 3 Republished in Max Müller (1867).
 4 For the rest of this chapter, I shall focus on comparativism as it was received by the ritualists, and the effects of their work upon the subsequent comparative study of myth. Another important strand of comparativism, which I cannot treat here, is anchored in Lévi-Strauss's structural approach, the work of Jean-Pierre Vernant and, following him, scholars such as Marcel Detienne and Philippe Borgeaud.
 5 Later published as Smith (1889). The quotation that follows comes from the first edition of the First Series, page 18; cf. Segal (1998, 1–13), Versnel (1993, 21–23).
 6 Cf. Csapo (2005, 57–67).
 7 On Harrison see Beard (2000), Csapo (2005, 145–161), Versnel (1993, 23–32).
 8 The first half of the book focuses on the topic, but it recurs throughout.
 9 See also Versnel (1993, 33–37).
10 For example, Hyman (1955). Further in Segal (1998, 231) and Versnel (1993, 48–60).
11 Tracking where Eliade first presented ideas is a nightmare; he frequently republished material in slightly different forms. Discussions of his "hierophany" are throughout Eliade (1961), for example.
12 On Burkert see also Csapo (2005, 161–80) and Versnel (1993, 51–60).
13 Versnel has frequently raised the issue of difference within his comparative work on ancient Greek and Roman religion and myth; see also his excellent history and analysis of the ritualist approach in Versnel (1993, 15–88). On the rise of initiation among Burkert's younger colleagues, Versnel (1993, 60–87); Graf (2003).

Guide to Further Reading

Csapo, E. 2005. *Theories of Mythology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Doniger, W. 1988. *Other Peoples' Myths. The Cave of Echoes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Doniger, W. 1996. "Minimyths and Maximyths and Political Points of View," in L. Patton and W. Doniger, eds, *Myth and Method*, 109–127. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Lincoln, B. 1999. *Theorizing Myth. Narrative, Ideology and Scholarship*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lincoln, B. 2012. "Theses on Comparison," in C. Calame and B. Lincoln, eds, *Comparer en histoire des religions antiques*, 99–110. Religions 1. Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liége.

Smith, W.R. 1889. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*. Edinburgh: Adam and Black. (2nd edition 1894.)

References

Beard, M. 2000. *The Invention of Jane Harrison*. London: Harvard University Press.

Burkert, W. 1972. *Homo Necans. The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth*. Berkeley: University of California Press. (English edition 1983.)

Burkert, W. 1979. *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Burkert, W. 1984. *The Orientalizing Revolution. Near Eastern Influence on Greek Culture in the Early Archaic Age*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press. (English edition 1992.)

Campbell, J. 1949. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Second edition 1968.)

Csapo, E. 2005. *Theories of Mythology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Doniger, W. 1988. *Other Peoples' Myths. The Cave of Echoes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Doniger, W. 1996. "Minimyths and Maximyths and Political Points of View," in L. Patton and W. Doniger, eds, *Myth and Method*, 109–127. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.

Dundes, A. 1964. *The Morphology of North American Indian Folktales*. Helsinki: Suomalaina Tiedeakatemia.

Eliade, M. 1959. *The Sacred and the Profane. The Nature of Religion*. New York: Harper & Brothers. (English edition 1961.)

Frazer, J.G. 1890. *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*. London: Macmillan. (3rd expanded edition 1911–1915.)

Frazer, J.G., trans, and comm. 1921. *Apollodorus: The Library; With an English Translation*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Graf, F. 2003. "Initiation: A Concept with a Troubled History," in D. Dodd and C. Faraone, eds, *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives*, 3–24. London: Routledge.

Harrison, J.E. 1912. *Themis. A Study of the Social Origins of Greek Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Second edition 1927.)

Harrison, J.E. and Verrall, M. de G. 1890. *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens*. London: Macmillan and Company.

Herder, J.G. 1869. *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus.

Hooke, S.H. 1933. "The Myth and Ritual Pattern of the Ancient East," in S.H. Hooke, ed., *Myth and Ritual*, 1–14. London: Oxford University Press.

Hyman, S. 1955. "The Ritual View of Myth and the Mythic." *Journal of American Folklore*, 68: 462–472.

Kuhn, A. 1859. *Die Herabkunft des Feuers und des Göttertranks*. Berlin: F. Dümmler.

Lincoln, B. 1999. *Theorizing Myth. Narrative, Ideology and Scholarship*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lincoln, B. 2009. "In Praise of the Chaotic," in U. Dill and C. Walde, eds, *Antike Mythen. Medien, Tranformationen und Konstructionen*, 372–388. Berlin: DeGruyter.

Lincoln, B. 2012. "Theses on Comparison," in C. Calame and B. Lincoln, eds, *Comparer en histoire des religions antiques*, 99–110. Religions 1. Liège: Presses Universitaires de Liége.

Littledale, R.F. 1870. "The Oxford Solar Myth." *Kottabos*, 5.

Max Müller, F. 1867. "Comparative Mythology. An Essay," in F. Max Müller, ed., *Chips from a German Workshop II*, 1–141. London: Longmans, Green, and Co.

Propp, V. 1928. *Morphology of the Folktale*. Bloomington, IN: Research Center Indiana University. (English version 1958.)

Raglan, Baron. 1936. *The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama*. Mineola, NY: Dover. (Reprinted 2003.)

Segal, R., ed. 1998. *The Myth and Ritual Theory: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Smith, J.Z. 1983. "In Comparison a Magic Dwells," in J.Z. Smith, ed., *Imagining Religion. From Babylon to Jonestown*, 19–35. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Smith, W.R. 1889. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*. Edinburgh: Adam and Black. (Second edition 1894.)

Stroumsa, G. 2010. *A New Science. The Discovery of Religion in the Age of Reason*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Versnel, H. 1993. Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual. Studies in Greek and Roman Religion 6, II. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Wasserstrom, S.M. 1999. *Religion After Religion. Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade and Henri Corbin at Eranos*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Welcker, Fr. G. 1857–1863. *Griechische Götterlehre*. Göttingen: Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung.

10

Revisionism

Lillian Doherty

Myth is often seen as a conservative force that gives powerful sanction to traditional norms of behavior and reinforces the prevailing ideology of a society. Mircea Eliade quoted a Tibetan prayer to this effect: "As our ancestors in ancient times did – so do we now" (1963, 7). Myth can certainly work this way, explicitly or implicitly, on both conscious and unconscious levels. Theseus's mythic defeat of the Amazons, for example, was used explicitly in Athenian funeral speeches to inspire the surviving citizen-soldiers while implicitly reinforcing the exclusion of women from public life. The portrayal of Circe, the Sirens, Medea, and other female figures as dangerous seducers of men served to reinforce unconscious fears of women's power. The process of canon formation – the emergence of a set of "authorized" literary works, used to educate and edify – intensified this ideological effect, since in ancient Greece and Rome the canon consisted primarily of retellings of heroic myths. The canon added generic and aesthetic norms to the ideological ones, erecting epic and tragedy as the consummate literary forms. The enduring influence of the Greco-Roman canon has been both ideological and aesthetic, as the works it includes have served as models of decorum, "sublimity," truth, and beauty.

But from the beginning, or as near the beginning as we can get, classical myths have also been "revised" to subversive effect. Precisely because of their association with normative behavior, they became an important site for the contestation of norms. To imagine a traditional hero, one of the *aristoi* or "best," behaving like a *kakos*, a "bad" man whose perceived inferiority was not just (or primarily) moral but class-based, was implicitly to question the validity of the social order. Even to portray "realistic," as opposed to idealized, forms of behavior, such as lying or cowardice, was a significant departure from the idealizing tendencies of

Homeric epic. Realism, as we will see, has been a primary tool in the revisionist use of mythology, along with irony, created by the juxtaposition of different points of view or by discrepancies between words and actions. Humor is often involved as well, to make more palatable the affront to established norms.

From a very early stage, aesthetic innovation was seen as potentially subversive as well: thus Plato accused poets of weakening the moral fiber of the Athenians by setting their works to new forms of music (*Resp*. 424b–c). Authors both ancient and modern have deliberately confounded generic norms the better to defy ideological ones. From Ovid and Petronius to Joyce and Walcott, radical innovation in literary form has served to announce the author's radical questioning of the established order. I will explore these entwined tendencies in the revisionist use of myth by focusing on the figures of Odysseus and Penelope in selected works. The former is well-suited to the subversive intent of such revision by his traditional capacity for framing plausible lies; the latter, by the opacity of her motivation in Homer and the sheer implausibility of her 20 years' fidelity to an absent husband. It has proven much easier, however, to make a truly subversive figure of Odysseus than of Penelope, since whether she is portrayed as faithful or unfaithful she can still be seen as "typical" and either praised or condemned according to the gender ideology that prescribes chastity for women and systematically accuses them of violating it.

As W.B. Stanford established in his deservedly famous survey, *The Ulysses Theme* (1954), the character of Odysseus in Homer contains the germ of his later portrayals as an unscrupulous manipulator and a figure of illegitimate or lower-class origin. The beggar's disguise he assumes in order to consummate his revenge, doubled by Helen's story that he once disguised himself as a slave to spy on the Trojans (4.240–258), associates him with lower-class figures, and his veracity is undercut by the elaborate false tales he tells in Ithaca, recasting in more realistic terms the account of his adventures to the Phaeacians in Books 9 to 12. In the *Odyssey*, these falsehoods are expedients he adopts for the sake of ultimate victory in an uneven contest, just as he calls himself Noman to escape from the Cyclops. Likewise, Penelope's ambiguous behavior toward the suitors is seen as a ploy, a show of interest while "her mind is bent elsewhere" (2.92; 13.381).

But Homer's was not the only version of these characters. The Homeric epics emerged from a long oral tradition that contained many strands, including alternative versions of the stories about Odysseus and further adventures ascribed to him after his return to Ithaca. We have the bare outlines of some of these adventures thanks to the authors of myth handbooks produced in late antiquity. Some manuscripts of Homer also preserve plot summaries (attributed to "Proclus") of epics that have been lost. One of these, the *Telegony*, told how Odysseus left Ithaca after killing the suitors, married the queen of the Thesprotians, and ultimately died at the hands of Telegonus, his son by the goddess Circe.[1] Penelope, in this version, marries Telegonus after the death of Odysseus. In addition to these alternative epic versions, the oral tradition contained a wealth of folklore, including tales

about trickster figures like Autolycus – Odysseus's grandfather in the *Odyssey* (19.394–466) – and Sisyphus, who outwitted death; the epithet "son of Sisyphus," used for Odysseus in some fifth-century tragedies, makes him a bastard and suggests that he inherited his lying ways from his rogue of a father.[2]

Outside the *Odyssey*, likewise, there were ancient versions in which Penelope was frankly unfaithful: one made her the mother of the god Pan by Hermes, a trickster figure in his own right who also helped Odysseus and Autolycus (cf. *Od*. 10.277–306, 19.395–398). The exhaustive outline of Greek mythology called the *Library* preserved stories in which Odysseus exiled or killed Penelope upon his return as punishment for sexual liaisons with Hermes or with one (even all!) of the suitors. As we will see, the tradition of her infidelity strongly influenced James Joyce and has been revived in Margaret Atwood's 2005 novel, *The Penelopiad*.

Because we have lost the works, and do not know the historical circumstances, in which the earlier alternative versions were created, we cannot say whether they were deliberate attempts to subvert the authority of the *Odyssey* or of the epic tradition from which it emerged. For the fifth-century tragedians we are on firmer footing: we know enough of the social and political context to see that they are using the eloquence of Odysseus to represent the rhetorical expertise taught by the sophists, itinerant teachers who were popular in democratic Athens. They were figures of controversy because the *technē*, or expertise, they taught could be divorced from traditional values; one of them, Protagoras, even claimed he could "make the weaker argument appear to be the stronger." Attic tragedy, like epic, was an idealizing genre, in which virtually all plots and main characters were borrowed from traditional myths and the poetic form and diction were meant to ensure a dignified, even noble, tone. Yet the genre also made room for formal debates, or *agones*, in which characters upheld opposing sides of a question. The issues that emerge in these debates are often those of the fifth century as recorded by the historian Thucydides and the philosopher Plato: the role of expediency versus loyalty in the exercise of power; the role of nature versus nurture in education; the proper role of "the many" – the lower classes – in society and politics. Against this background the figure of Odysseus was used to explore the different uses to which rhetoric could be put. In Sophocles' *Ajax*, he takes the part of mediator and conciliator; more often, however, he is portrayed as a sophist in the pejorative sense, making the worse argument appear to be the better, or as a demagogue cynically placating the bloodlust of an irrational mob.

In Euripides' *Hecuba*, for example, Odysseus is credited with persuading the Achaean army to demand the sacrifice of Polyxena, Hecuba's last surviving daughter, as an offering to the dead Achilles. The language of Odysseus's first speech to Hecuba evokes the Athenian assembly, since the decision is described as a "vote" (*psēphon*, 219).[3] Although the assembly takes place offstage, the chorus of captive Trojan women describe it in their entrance-song, which establishes Odysseus' character as *dēmocharistēs* (literally, "pleaser of the people") and summarizes his logic: the Greeks must not, out of concern for a slave, neglect to honor

their greatest hero or show themselves thankless, *acharistoi*, toward those who gave their lives in battle. When Odysseus comes in person to take Polyxena to her death, however, it emerges from his dialogue with Hecuba that he is himself *acharistos* (254): she reminds him that she once spared his life when, in the position of *her* "slave" (257, alluding to *Odyssey* 4), he appealed to her as a suppliant. Odysseus admits his debt to Hecuba but interprets it in the narrowest of terms: he will spare only *her* life, which she would gladly give in exchange for that of her daughter. The irony is complete when Odysseus says in parting that the "barbarians" (meaning the Trojans) will never prosper as long as they fail to "treat friends as friends" (328–329).

Of all the ancient Greek authors, Euripides is the most consistently subversive, challenging not only the traditional idealizing portraits of the mythic heroes – and by extension, the class distinctions they enshrine – but gender norms and religious beliefs. All the tragedians attribute eloquence to their female characters, but Euripides gives it to slaves of both sexes, including some who were born slaves and not enslaved as adults like Hecuba.[4] Frequently he makes his characters express doubts about the gods; in *Hecuba*, for example, the Greek herald Talthybius is prompted by the sight of the enslaved queen to ask whether mortals believe in vain that Zeus watches over them, and whether instead pure chance (*tuchē*) rules their lives (488–491).

By coincidence, Euripides is also the author of the only satyr play to survive intact. This genre, specific to classical Athens, gave a comic twist to the myths by incorporating a chorus of satyrs, the part-human, part-bestial companions of Dionysus. In contrast to Attic Old Comedy, which featured made-up plots and contemporary characters, the satyr plays were anchored in traditional mythology. In the context of the dramatic festivals, they seem to have provided comic relief at the end of each day of tragedy. Euripides' *Cyclops*, which may have been staged on the same day as *Hecuba*,[5] retells the story of the blinding of Polyphemus from the *Odyssey*, with the addition of a chorus of satyrs who hinder rather than help Odysseus. The comic focus of the play is the satyrs' appreciation of the wine Odysseus has brought. Separated from Dionysus and in temporary thrall to the Cyclops, they sorely miss their drunken revels. They are portrayed as creatures of appetite and abject cowards, who will say anything to get a drink or to save their skins; surprised by Polyphemus after they have offered to sell his sheep to Odysseus, they try to shift the blame to the latter, pretending that they tried to protect their master's property. Unlike the aristocratic figures who populate heroic myth, the satyrs are expected to behave in ignoble ways; after all, they are part animal (with horses' ears and tails). The Cyclops too is a monstrous figure who inverts the norm of Greek hospitality by eating his guests. Euripides uses him to frame an extreme version of his other characters' doubts about the gods: as a son of Poseidon, Polyphemus says, he is himself a god (231), who cares nothing for Zeus; he answers Zeus's thunderbolts with his own "belly-thunder" (327–328). He adds that his belly is a god to him and that eating is the only "Zeus" to a sensible man

(334–337). The Odysseus who appears in this play appears less cynical than his avatar in *Hecuba* because his debates are with the Cyclops rather than the enslaved queen; but he is still portrayed as a sophist who tailors his argument to win his case. (Silenus recognizes him as "offspring of Sisyphus" [104] and tells the Cyclops that if he eats Odysseus's tongue, he will become a "great talker" himself [313]). Odysseus tries to appeal to Polyphemus by claiming that in defeating Troy – a stand-in for Persia in many fifth-century works – the Greeks saved the temples of Poseidon, Polyphemus' father. The Cyclops is not impressed by this argument, however, and Odysseus must use the "Noman" trick from the *Odyssey* to escape the monster. In a striking parallel to Talthybius's speech from the *Hecuba*, Odysseus says that if Zeus, the protector of guests, does not help him now, he is no god but a mere "nothing" (354–355).

Satyr-play, like Attic Old Comedy, also deals openly and rudely with sex, a "realistic" facet of life that is kept well in the background in epic and tragedy. In *Cyclops*, for example, the satyr chorus praise the aphrodisiac effects of wine, and under its influence Polyphemus plans to rape Silenus, his "Ganymede" (an irreverent allusion to the boy loved by Zeus). The satyrs also ask Odysseus if when the Greeks took Troy they gang-raped Helen, "since she enjoyed sleeping with many men" (179–181). As with the portrayals of Penelope as unfaithful, this example shows that revisionism can attack certain aspects of ideology while keeping others intact. Helen is stripped of her class privilege (if only in fantasy), but sexual violence is excused and the gender norm according to which a woman is either chaste or a whore is reasserted.

In the context of Roman literature, the figure of Odysseus – now called Ulysses – took on new associations. His connection with rhetoric was maintained, and because elite Romans were suspicious of the Greek rhetorical tradition and its connection to democracy, he became a symbol of "Greek" duplicity. In the great Roman epic, the *Aeneid*, which portrays the Trojans as the ancestors of the Romans, Ulysses is cast as the villain whose trickery (in the form of the Trojan Horse and the lies of Sinon) caused the fall of the city. At the same time, Virgil placed his own hero, Aeneas, in scenes adapted from the *Odyssey* to bring out the differences between the two heroes. Aeneas, the mythic ancestor of Julius and Augustus Caesar, is presented as the incarnation of traditional Roman virtues: honesty, courage, and loyalty. Yet Aeneas's final act in the epic is his vengeful killing of his chief opponent, Turnus. This violent ending, contrasting as it does with the more conciliatory endings of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and with the advice of Aeneas's father Anchises to spare the conquered (*parcere subiectis*, *Aen.* 6.853), has been seen by some readers as an implicit rebuke to the ideology of empire.

The works I have examined up to this point are all set in the mythic past; their allusions to contemporary situations are implicit (or, in the case of Virgil, take the form of prophecies about the future). The rest of the works I will discuss, with one exception, reverse this relationship: they are set instead in the contemporary worlds for which they were created, and the allusions are to the myths. It has

always been possible to make *reverent* allusions to classical myth, but those I will consider are all more or less subversive; they borrow the plots and characters of the ancient stories in order to challenge the ideals they represent. Some of these challenges are frankly comic, while others blend humor with serious challenges to the classical heritage.

One of the most subversive re-castings of the *Odyssey* in antiquity, Petronius's *Satyrica*, is set in southern Italy in the reign of the emperor Nero (first century CE). There is no one-to-one correspondence with the plot of the epic, but the theme of "wanderings" and the device of having the hero narrate his own adventures are strong points of contact. Although only parts of the work survive, there are indications that like Odysseus, the hero has a divine antagonist, the fertility god Priapus, whom he has offended in some way. More specific allusions in individual episodes spell out the Odyssean frame of reference.[6] The *Satyrica* is often classified as a novel, and it works well as a parody of the surviving examples of the ancient Greek novel, but as its title suggests, it also has affinities with satyr play.[7] Encolpius, the central figure who is also the narrator, corresponds to Odysseus, and he is trained in rhetoric; but there the similarities end. Whereas Odysseus lands on his feet almost everywhere, gaining control of situations by keen observation and manipulation of others, Encolpius is usually a victim of the Odyssean machinations of others. Ironically, the rhetoric that serves Odysseus (in his Homeric and later incarnations) so well is actually a handicap to Encolpius, who is himself caught up in it to the point that he loses touch with reality. As Edward Courtney has observed, Encolpius uses his education "as a substitute for realistic efforts to cope with problems and a medium for interpreting and heightening his emotional reactions to events that overwhelm him" (Courtney 2001, 50). Since this education is classical and literary as well as rhetorical, the result is to suggest that the tradition is bankrupt.

In the world of the *Satyrica*, there is no longer any correlation between class status and character. The class origins of the main characters are unclear,[8] but because of their education they feel superior to the wealthy Trimalchio and his freedmen guests, who are obviously more successful in practical terms. Encolpius and his companions are in fact sponging on Trimalchio, their host at an elaborate dinner party, even as they express disdain for his nouveau-riche tastes. The narrative frame, as best we can determine (the beginning and end of the work are lost), is retrospective, as in Odysseus's tale of his adventures to the Phaeacians, and it may be an older and more experienced Encolpius who is telling the story; but whether or not he is being portrayed as seeing the ironies implicit in his tale, Petronius makes them clear to his own audience. Encolpius sees the parallels between his misadventures and the canonical accounts of mythic figures like Odysseus, but this does not help him; if anything it underscores his helplessness. At the same time, it entertains Petronius' audience, who must be similarly educated to "get" the jokes.

The *Satyrica* has been called realistic. Clearly realism is one of the elements Petronius uses to deflate the pretensions of his characters and, by extension, the

value to his contemporaries of the mythic models they have inherited. The language of the work is also realistic in its emulation of the diction and grammar of the lower-class characters. Yet like the satyr play, the *Satyrica* exaggerates in the other direction, emphasizing human weaknesses such as cowardice and lust. Petronius revels in the sordid and "lowlife" dimensions of the story: the petty thievery to which the characters resort when they run out of money; their sexual infidelities, too numerous to count; the orgies in which they are coerced to take part by sex-crazed women. In contrast to Odysseus, Encolpius has no apparent goal and certainly no wife and family to which he might return.

James Joyce's *Ulysses* is remarkably similar to the *Satyrica* in its use of myth despite the gulf of time that separates the two works.[9] Joyce's novel is set in twentieth-century Dublin on a single day, in the course of which his "Ulysses" – Leopold Bloom, an Irish Jew – wanders about the city, meets a "Telemachus" – Stephen Dedalus, a fictional version of Joyce's younger self – and finally returns to the bed in which his wife Molly has spent the afternoon with an unworthy "suitor." The allusions to the *Odyssey* are mostly implicit; Joyce initially gave the chapters titles (e.g., "Calypso," "Oxen of the Sun," "Penelope") spelling out these links, and the titles are still used to identify the episodes, but Joyce omitted them from the final version of the novel. There are many minor details of the plot that evoke details of the *Odyssey* for those who know it well: for example, when Bloom has returned to his wife in the penultimate chapter, he imagines leaving home again for further wanderings. As in the *Satyrica*, a reader who shares the classical education of Joyce and his alter ego Stephen Dedalus will thus get an extra level of enjoyment from the work.

Yet Joyce also made a point of researching the alternative versions of the myth as part of his thorough reimagining of it. In particular, he hints at the many opportunities Molly has had for flirtations, if not affairs, with other men – and her monologue in the last chapter makes it clear that she has slept with one of them that very day. Like Petronius, Joyce deliberately emphasizes and exaggerates the "seamy" side of life, breaking generic taboos by focusing on sexual desire and representing bodily functions such as defecation and passing wind. Also like Petronius but to an even greater degree, he revels in an abundance of realistic detail, adjusting his diction to the speech patterns of different characters. Much of the novel is written in free indirect discourse – what used to be called "stream of consciousness" – focalized by either Bloom or Stephen Dedalus and giving a facsimile of their immediate, unedited reflections on the people and situations they encounter. The intention is clearly to undercut the pretensions of "polite" bourgeois society, as well as the excesses of political rhetoric and even of commercial advertising, then in its infancy. Bloom is barely able to maintain his foothold in the middle class and observes those above and below him with a blend of honesty and sympathy. The book's Telemachus, much better educated, is correspondingly more disillusioned and bitter about the hypocrisy of those who serve the status quo, be they teachers, priests, journalists, or politicians. The rhetoric of

these official figures is portrayed as seductive but often bombastic and pretentious (the "Aeolus" episode, for example, is set in a newspaper office, to emphasize the "windy" quality of journalistic and political prose).

Like Petronius, Joyce is deliberately breaking the taboos and aesthetic conventions of a genre to create something new. The two authors share the subversive goal of shocking readers out of their expectations and use mythic allusions ironically to that end. From our own postmodern perspective, we can see both of them as experimenting with the boundaries of the self, portraying characters who are composed primarily of reactions to their immediate environment. At the same time, Joyce's characters have a substance, and a dignity, that those of Petronius lack. There is more to them than their sexual peccadilloes and picaresque adventures; they have families, detailed memories of their past lives, and complex understandings of their identities. Bloom, for example, is haunted by memories of his father, who committed suicide, and of his son, who died as an infant; Stephen is struggling to break free of his needy family and irresponsible father. Joyce includes "seamy" details less for their comic or shock value than for the sake of exploring the psychological complexity of his characters. This is not to say that there is no serious dimension to Petronius' work; his devastating critique of traditional rhetorical education surely has serious implications. But his use of myth is deliberately destructive, whereas Joyce also uses it to more positive ends. As heir to the intervening history of the serious novel, he is in a sense returning to myth as way of making sense of an increasingly complex and fragmented world. The implicit comparisons between Bloom and Odysseus, Molly and Penelope, do not in the end diminish but enlarge the modern characters.

Derek Walcott is comparable to Joyce in this way. Walcott produced a stage version of the *Odyssey* (1993), in which the setting alternates between the Caribbean and modern Greece. But Walcott's (1990) major reply to Homer is his *Omeros*, a long lyric-epic poem focusing on the people of St. Lucia in the Windward Islands, Walcott's birthplace. Several of the characters have Homeric names (in French spellings), reflecting the fact that such names were often given to slaves. They are ordinary people, like Joyce's characters: Achille and Hector are fishermen, both in love with Helen, who works as a maid or braids the tourists' hair. As the names reflect, both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are points of reference for this work and there is even less-detailed correspondence than in Joyce between the modern plot and Homer's. In fact, there are at least five different Odyssean characters, including Achille (paradoxically), who in a dream or vision "returns" to the part of Africa from which his ancestors were taken as slaves; Major Plunkett, retired from the British army, who with his Irish wife has found a home in St. Lucia; and the narrator himself, a version of Walcott, who returns to the island periodically from the United States, where he teaches. All of these figures are to some extent exiles who must come to terms with that condition. Finally, there is the figure of Homer himself, in two avatars (which merge late in the poem, 280–281): his ancient self, encountered by the narrator in imagination, and an itinerant African storyteller,

aptly called Seven Seas. Walcott uses the modern Greek pronunciation of the ancient poet's name, in which the H is silent; by bringing modern Greece into the picture, as Emily Greenwood has argued, Walcott eludes the specious equation between ancient Greek culture and Western European imperial power (Greenwood 2010, 58–68). In his narrator's imagined encounter with Omeros, the two meet as equals, but the focus is on praise of St. Lucia.

Native, like Joyce, of a country with a history of colonization, Walcott nevertheless – again like Joyce – fell in love with the language and literature of the colonizers, while rejecting the second-class status in which his own people were held. As in *Ulysses*, the mythic background suggests that there is more to the characters than meets the eye. The balance struck by Joyce's characterization between realism and dignity even moves back, in Walcott, in the direction of ide-alization, despite occasional comic touches (e.g., the Cyclone, with its "one eye," that wreaks havoc as the gods, Greek and African together, throw "a hurricane-party in their cloud-house," 53). Walcott's "quiet Achille, Afolabe's son" delights only in the slaughter of fish, "and that from necessity" (320); another character with Homeric antecedents, Philoctete, whose leg wound evokes the wound of slavery and its aftermath, is cured by a wise woman with a herb whose seeds were carried by a bird from Africa. As Greenwood notes, Walcott reverses the direction of the comparison, so that the land and people of St. Lucia are in the foreground and the Homeric figures are compared to *them*.

Like both Joyce and Petronius, Walcott is also an aesthetic innovator, reimagin-ing his genre to suit his own ends. His poem is epic in scope (using Dante's tercets and *terza rima*) but lyric in its texture, intricately crafted, pausing to evoke vivid images in pitch-perfect words: "the grey vertical forest of the hurricane-season," "the sodden mops of the palms," "an elate / sunrise…pouring relentless light" (52, 62). Although there is a plot of sorts, the emphasis is on individual scenes and the states of mind they produce in the characters. The shaping perspective of the nar-rator is also more prominent throughout than in any of the other works I have considered. The narrator's coming to terms with the history of his island and its people is in a way the true subject of the poem.

Only in the very recent past have truly subversive versions of the figure of Penelope been created. It took the women's movement to make this possible, since she has been so deeply implicated in the double standard of sexual behavior for women and men that, whether she was portrayed as faithful or unfaithful, the effect was to reinforce the stereotype. Molly Bloom is somewhat more complex, since Joyce managed to portray her as both faithful and unfaithful at the same time: despite her affair with Boylan and her memories of flirtations with other men, she still thinks more of Bloom, and her monologue ends with a rapturous evocation of the moment when she agreed to marry him. Yet she is stereotypically feminine in many ways, obsessed with clothes, her appearance, and her age, and expresses flagrantly contradictory opinions (for example, she says she hates war but loves to see soldiers in uniform). She is also stereotypically "inscrutable" to

Bloom, an Earth Mother (in Joyce's own description)[10] to be feared as well as loved. Walcott's character Maude Plunkett, Irish like Molly Bloom, is faithful in a more conventional way; even his Helen is eventually domesticated like Homer's, returning to a stable relationship with the hero and finding steady work as a waitress (322–323). She is almost always seen from without, her unapproachable beauty emblematic of her island's, coveted by many men.

Beginning in the 1960s and 1970s with the feminist "second wave," some women writers have imagined different ends to Penelope's story or given a fuller account of her perspective on it. A number of lyric poets in particular have offered relatively brief evocations of Penelope, with the apparent aim of setting the record straight without retelling the myth at length.[11] Several focus on Penelope's weaving and her satisfaction in it, making this a figure for women's art more broadly and for poetry in particular. Some focus on Penelope's relationship with Odysseus and describe her as unhappy with it in some way. An especially interesting example is Eleanor Wilner's "The World Is Not a Meditation" (1984).[12] Its title deliberately evokes that of a poem by Wallace Stevens, "The World as Meditation" (1954), in which Penelope's persistent awareness of her absent husband evokes the relationship of distance between the poet and the world. Wilner, by contrast, emphasizes the poet's stake in the political realities of her time. Like Walcott, she incorporates a class perspective. She portrays Odysseus as a colonizer and exploiter of the lands he visits, while Penelope as his wife is paradoxically both privileged and oppressed by her place within the system, "tied by her own hair to a loom." But this Penelope escapes at the last minute: she locks the door and leaves by the window for a journey of her own.

Margaret Atwood's novel *The Penelopiad* returns to the Homeric version of the plot but makes Penelope the narrator and central character. From the perspective of the underworld, she reflects on her own role in the myth when it has already been played out. At the same time, Atwood inserts brief choral sequences like those in Greek tragedy and comedy, giving voice to the women slaves who in Homer's version are executed by Telemachus on Odysseus's orders for sleeping with the suitors. Once again a creative twist to the conventions of a genre accompanies and abets a subversive reading of the myth. Penelope claims to have remained faithful, but the maids cast doubt on this: they make the point, raised in recent feminist readings of the *Odyssey*, that their low status allowed them to be used as scapegoats. In Homer, their punishment signals what would have awaited Penelope if she had followed their example; in Atwood, they are given the chance – albeit in brief, often comic snatches – to make their own case against her. Penelope herself expresses guilt at using her maids to spy on the suitors and then failing to protect them from Odysseus. (In Walcott's stage version of the *Odyssey*, she does in fact intervene to prevent their deaths.) The whole work has a light and gently mocking tone, as if Atwood were self-conscious about reanimating such an old story. Yet she also makes a number of serious points. In addition to absolving the slave women, she highlights Penelope's solitude, which persists even in the

underworld as Odysseus comes and goes, reincarnated in various guises (the slaves, as might be expected, avoid her altogether). Her relationships with other women, which Homer ignores, are examined in some detail, but they are all strained; she has no real woman friend. For this very reason she enjoyed and sought the companionship of the maids, but as Atwood makes clear, her privilege gave her a distorted view of their situation. She says she realized only in retrospect that if they associated with the suitors they would be seduced or raped by them. Thus, the inequalities perpetuated by the class and gender systems, which were taken for granted in many of the older versions of the myth, are fair game for its most recent adapters.

Although in a sense every version of a myth is revisionist, especially in the modern era when the ideological underpinnings of our societies are radically different from those of antiquity, there are still versions that stand out for the challenges they pose to literary traditions and social norms. That these two kinds of challenges, aesthetic and ideological, often go hand in hand should not surprise us. The vitality of a mythic corpus depends on its being continually renewed for an ever-changing audience. Versions that reinforce the status quo, however officially sanctioned, seem ironically to have a shorter life span.[13] Walcott sums up the advantages of revisionism in the punning words his narrator addresses to the shade of Omeros: "Master, I was the freshest of all your readers" (1993, 283).

Notes

1   The date and authorship of Proclus' summaries are disputed, but Telegonus is also mentioned in Hes. *Theog*. 1014 and a lost play by Sophocles.

2   For example, Eur. *Cyc*. 104; cf. Soph. *Aj*. 189, *Phil*. 417, etc. Laertes is Odysseus' father in Homer; according to a scholiast on Soph. *Phil*., Sisyphus was said to have seduced Anticleia, Odysseus' mother, before her marriage.

3   In the next line, Odysseus says "the Achaeans have decreed …," again using the language of the Athenian democracy, *edox' Achaiois*…, *Hec*. 220.

4   Examples include Phaedra's Nurse in *Hipp*., the maidservant in *Alc*., and the Paedagogus in *El*.

5   Arrowsmith hypothesis.

6   For example, the protagonist Encolpius at one point assumes the false name of Polyaenus, an epithet of Odysseus, and meets a sorceress named Circe.

7   The title is not related to the word *satire*, although the blend of prose and poetry makes the work resemble the genre called Menippean satire.

8   They present themselves as teachers, and have obviously received an elite education, but their Greek names suggest that they may be freedmen (Courtney 2001, 40–41).

9   Courtney even suggests that Joyce's use of the *Odyssey* may have been inspired by the *Satyrica* (2001, 157).

10   In a letter to Frank Budgen dated August 16, 1921 (Ellmann 1975, 285).

11   Cf. Doherty (2008).

12   Wilner (1984, 20–23).
13   Thus the "academic" art of nineteenth-century Europe, with its serious treatment of
      mythic subjects, is less admired today than the modernist art (such as Picasso's) that
      took an irreverent approach to these same subjects.

Guide to Further Reading

Hall (2008) substantially updates Stanford's Ulysses Theme and adds the perspectives of feminist and postcolonial criticism. Rankine (2006) and Greenwood (2010) explore the reception of Homer (among other classical authors) by African-American and Caribbean writers respectively. Graphic novels, notably Chwast (2012), are introducing the *Odyssey* to a new generation. Works of poetry (such as Glück 1996) and fiction (such as Mason 2010) continue to be produced in reaction to, and in conversation with, Homer's characters.

References

Atwood, M. 2005. *The Penelopiad*. New York: Canongate.

Chwast, S. 2012. *The Odyssey: Adapted by Seymour Chwast*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Courtney, E. 2001. *A Companion to Petronius*. Oxford. Oxford University Press.

Doherty, L. 2008. "The Figure of Penelope in Twentieth-Century Poetry by American Women," in G.A. Staley, ed., *American Women and Classical Myths*, 181–205. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.

Eliade, M. 1963. *Myth and Reality*, trans. W.R. Trask. New York: Harper and Row.

Ellmann, R., ed. 1975. *Selected Letters of James Joyce*. New York: Viking Press.

Glück, L. 1996. *Meadowlands*, Hopewell, NJ: Ecco Press.

Greenwood, E. 2010. *Afro-Greeks: Dialogues Between Anglophone Caribbean Literature and Classics in the Twentieth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hall, E. 2008. *The Return of Ulysses: A Cultural History of Homer's Odyssey*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Mason, Z. 2010. *The Lost Books of the Odyssey*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

Rankine, P.D. 2006. *Ulysses in Black: Ralph Ellison, Classicism, and African American Literature*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Stanford, W.B. 1954. *The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero*. Oxford: Blackwell. (Second edition 1963.)

Stevens. 1954.

Walcott, D. 1990. *Omeros*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Walcott, D. 1993. *The Odyssey: A Stage Version*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Wilner, E. 1984. *Shekhinah*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Alchemical Interpretations of Classical Myths

Didier Kahn

Historical Background

Alchemy is best defined as research into transmuting base metals into silver and gold, removing all diseases and prolonging life until God's appointed time through the preparation of the "philosophers' stone" or "universal medicine," and the ability to heal metals and human beings as well (Principe 2013, 1–7). The basic way to reach these goals was to understand the natural laws and try to reproduce the process of nature in the laboratory. Alchemists did not care to evoke spirits or demons, nor to attract the influence of the stars. The subject of their quest was the natural, and above all mineral, world. Since an uncontrolled production of gold might turn the whole world upside down (in addition, the discovery of the philosophers' stone was often considered a *donum Dei*, a "gift of God"), alchemy had to be kept hidden from the unworthy: hence its often obscure, symbolic language.

The first alchemical writings appeared in Egypt in Greek language during the first century CE. Greek alchemy began to be translated into Arabic in the eighth century, and alchemy only reached the Christian West in the twelfth century, when the whole Arabic science began to be translated into Latin. Meanwhile, Greek alchemy had been entirely forgotten, so that in the twelfth century, alchemy seemed to be a novelty of Arabic origin. Even when Greek alchemy was re-discovered in the fifteenth century, its language was found so obscure and corrupt that it raised little interest among humanists. Latin medieval alchemy itself had inherited the obscurity of all previous alchemical texts, for Greek alchemy had been translated in Arabic, then reworked or elaborated upon by Arab alchemists, before being in turn translated into Latin. In fact, it was never quite possible to really

understand an alchemical text: alchemists could only interpret it – which they all did, to the best of their abilities.[1]

Quite surprisingly, classical mythology was not used by Greek alchemists in their symbolic language (Matton 1992, [1]–[3]; Matton 1995, 74). A chronicler from the seventh century alone, John of Antioch, evoked an alchemical interpretation of the *Golden Fleece*. Far from being such a fleece as the poets said, John argued that the *Golden Fleece* was a book written on parchment teaching the reader how to make gold through alchemy; which was the real motivation for the quest of the Argonauts. We do not have, however, any other trace of this kind of exegesis in the whole corpus of the *Græcum chemicum*, which extends from the first to the eleventh century.

Thus, alchemy had no roots in classical Antiquity. Nor had it any in the Bible, nor even in ancient Oriental literature such as *Barlaam and Josaphat*, the romance of the *Seven Sages*, or the Alexander romances (Kahn 2013a, 7–16). To the scholars and writers of the Latin West, alchemy was only a recent discipline, classified as a mechanical art owing to its practical side, and thus deprived of any authority. Therefore, from the twelfth century onwards, alchemists struggled to gain more authority in two different ways: first, by elaborating new matter theories in order to establish their art as a real *scientia*, that is, to give it a philosophical dignity; second, in giving more weight to new treatises by attributing them to the great medieval doctors (Michael Scot, Albertus Magnus, Roger Bacon, Raymond Lull, Thomas of Aquinas, etc.).

"Poetic Theology," "Prisca Theologia," and Renaissance Alchemy

In this quest for authority, classical mythology became a crucial issue in the Renaissance, when poetry, and especially poems transmitting classical myths, such as those of Homer, Virgil, or Ovid, were no longer considered as mere lies (as in Aristotle's works, and more generally in medieval culture), but began to be commonly praised as "poetic theology"; a way for the Ancients to hide divine truths behind fables (Kahn 2013b, 97–99, 108–109). It was in this context that Renaissance alchemists began to alchemically interpret Greek, Roman, and Egyptian mythology, thinking to discover in it the alchemical truths hidden by the Ancients. Fables, they argued, had preserved those truths more safely and faithfully than the alchemical writers did in their obscure treatises. Besides, this allowed Renaissance alchemists to claim much older roots in history than before.

The notion of "poetic theology" was resonating with that of *prisca theologia*, *prisca philosophia*, or *prisca sapientia* ("ancient theology, philosophy, or wisdom"), an idea which originated from the philosophers of late Antiquity such as Diogenes Laërtius, Iamblichus, or Proclus, and from Church Fathers like Augustine, Lactantius, or Tertullian, according to which the most ancient theologians

and philosophers – Hermes Trismegistus, Zoroaster, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Democritus, or Plato –, though pagan they were, met in Egypt with parts of the teaching of Moses, the most ancient theologian of them all. Their doctrines were therefore imbued with part of the Christian revelation, which made them most precious, since they were closer to the origins of the revelation of God than any other doctrine (Schmitt 1966, 507–513). This idea was revived by the Florentine Renaissance in the second half of the fifteenth century, in the frame of the revival of Platonism initiated by Marsilio Ficino, and the "universal concord" that Giovanni Pico della Mirandola tried to establish between all religions. It was incredibly widespread until the end of the seventeenth century. It was a natural complement to the idea of "poetic theology," inasmuch as the most ancient poets, Orpheus, Hesiodus, or Homer, were also intended as "ancient theologians." Classical mythology was understood by most Renaissance thinkers, all the more by supporters of the "ancient theology," as the proper theology of the Greeks and Romans. It was, therefore, quite natural for Renaissance alchemists to investigate classical myths in order to discover in them a hidden truth. This was clearly expressed, for example, in 1585 by an English alchemist, R. Bostock, at the head of a detailed interpretation of the myth of the golden fleece, which was by far the most successful myth among the alchemists[2]:

> Divers Poets before the tyme of Plato, and also after his tyme did wrapp and hide this Arte in Ridles, darke speeches and fables. As by the fable of the golden Fleece brought from Colchos by Argonautae, the companions of Jason, […] by their perilous navigation, by the place where it was kept, which was the fielde called Martius, […] by ye plowing of it with Oxen, that breathed & plowed out fire at their nosethrills, by the ground which should be sowne with the teeth of the Dragon that watched and kept the golden Fleece, by the bringing the Dragon a sleepe, and obtayning the golden Fleece, they signified the practice of this Arte, daungers and perrills in this worke, the purging and preparing of the matters and substaunce of the medicine, in the furnaces that breath out fire at the venteholes continually in equal quantitie: the Quicksilver and Mercury sublimed, which should be sowen in Mars his fielde like seede, which by often sublimation, doth so rise out of the matter contained in the Alembick, into the helme or head, and in it maketh divers formes, figures and fashions, as if men were fighting, and one killing an other.

<div align="right">(Bostocke, 1585, quoted in Debus 1987, 20)</div>

Within a few decades, the alchemical interpretation of classical mythology became an essential nutriment to alchemy. As early as the end of the fifteenth century, the French humanist Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples wrote an alchemical exegesis of two labors of Hercules as part of his unpublished treatise *De magia* (Pierozzi and Mandosio 1996, 207–213). In 1515, another humanist, Giovanni Aurelio Augurelli, gave an alchemical meaning to a number of classical myths such as the love affairs of Mars and Venus, or the quest for the golden fleece, in his alchemical neo-Latin

poem, *Chrysopœia libri tres* ("Three books on the making of gold"). In 1544, Giovanni Bracesco assigned in great detail an alchemical meaning to a comprehensive list of ancient fables in his treatise *La espositione di Geber philosopho*, where he commented on a medieval alchemical treatise. Some examples from it may be quoted (Matton 1995, 77–78): the fixation of the elixir was hidden by the ancients under the Gorgon turning all those watching her to stone. The distillation was hidden under the metamorphosis of Jupiter in eagle, uplifted in the sky with Ganymede:

> Under the thick cloud with which Jupiter wrapped Io is meant the film that appears during the coagulation of the elixir. The black films appearing during the calcination of sulphur are the black sails with which Theseus came back to Athens. […] Under Leto confined in Delos island, the Ancients meant our copper which, once it has been put in the vessel, generates the sun and the moon [i.e., gold and silver].
>
> (Braceso 1544 in Matton 1995, 77–78)

Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Survival of the Alchemical Readings of Classical Myths

The alchemical interpretation of ancient myths became such prominent a topic in the sixteenth-century alchemical literature that it still left traces even after the complete decline of alchemy, in the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries, in the most unexpected places. Thus in 1837, in a short notice on the life and works of the fourth-century Latin poet Claudian, a distinguished professor in the Faculté des Lettres of Paris, Victor Leclerc, mocked "those who figured to recognize the secret of the philosophers' stone in *De Raptu Proserpinae*." Leclerc had probably in mind the alchemical neo-Latin poem published in 1631 by the Strasbourg physician J. N. Furichius, *Chryseidos Libri IIII*, which drew, among others, on the myth of Proserpina as described by Claudian; unless he knew the *Kurtze Erklährung uber die höllische Göttin Proserpinam* published by the German alchemist J.R. Glauber in 1667: "A short explanation about the infernal Goddess Proserpine […] and how the souls of the dead metallic bodies are led, thanks to this Proserpine, from the chemical Hell to the philosophical Heaven."[3] A few years before, in 1829, the German classicist C.A. Lobeck began his *Aglaophamus* with a brief survey of the diverse interpretations of ancient Mysteries up to his time. The very first author he mentioned was the seventeenth-century alchemist Michael Maier, "the most learned of the Spagyrics [i.e., alchemists]," who "stated that the principles of alchemy had been secretly transmitted in the Eleusinian, Samothracian, and Olympian Mysteries."[4] As a matter of fact, between 1614 and 1622, Michael Maier wrote the most systematic alchemical exegesis of classical and Egyptian myths ever seen, in such works as his *Arcana Arcanissima* ("The most secret of secrets"), *Atalanta fugiens* ("The fleeing Atalanta"), or *Cantilenae intellectuales* […] *de phœnice*

redivivo ("Intellectual songs on the resurrected Phenix"). Thus Maier's *Arcana Arcanissima* dealt in turn with:

> (1) The Egyptian Gods, Hieroglyphs, Osiris, Isis, Mercury, Vulcan, Typhon, etc.; the Works and Monuments of Egyptian Kings. (2) The Grecian Myths, the Golden Fleece and Jason, the Apples of the Hesperides, which all have reference to the Golden Medicine. (3) Genealogies of the fictitious Gods and Goddesses shown to be really philosophic, chemical and medicinary. (4) The ancient Festivals and Plays in which the charm of science was commenced. (5) The Labours of Hercules and their meanings. (6) The Trojan Expedition. […] Just as the dismemberment of Osiris and the re-assembly of his fragments by Isis represented to the Egyptians that quest, so, for the Greeks, Jason's hunt for the Golden Fleece.
>
> (Sheppard 1972, 53)

For that reason, Maier's works were among the favorites of a host of alchemists, including such an eager reader of those texts as Isaac Newton.[5]

How fascinating indeed to imagine (odd as it was) that the Ancients might have concealed the secret of the philosophers' stone in the whole range of their myths, the manifest absurdity of which, Maier stated, could only be explained by alchemy being their ultimate meaning. As late as 1932, such a modern, avant-garde author as Antonin Artaud appropriated the alchemical exegesis of ancient Mysteries – an exegesis he probably inferred from the reading of Grillot de Givry's *Le Musée des sorciers, mages et alchimistes*, published three years before – and integrated it in his essay *The Alchemical Theatre* (Kahn 1988, 35–44; Kahn 2007). Since the origins of theater laid in ancient Mysteries, if the myths used by the priests in the Mysteries were actually pertaining to the philosophers' stone, then the origins of theater itself were alchemical. In Artaud's words:

> the Orphic Mysteries which subjugated Plato must have possessed on the moral and psychological level something of this definitive and transcendent aspect of the *alchemical theatre*, [and] with elements of an extraordinary psychological density, […] must have evoked the passionate and decisive transfusion of matter by mind.
>
> (Artaud 1958, 52)

Artaud expressed here his conception of theater as a kind of transmutation of the spectators' minds, giving a spiritual meaning to the mere alchemical meaning which, in the times of Michael Maier, only consisted, however, of plain laboratory processes (thus the castration of Osiris meant that the penis of the god was "these black, useless faeces through which Osiris first took his growth, but which must be separated, after the dissolution, from the cleaned, pure rest of the body"). According to Maier, Orpheus had indeed used ancient Mysteries in order to transmit the Egyptian secrets of alchemy to the Greeks under this veil (Leibenguth 2002, 281; Matton 1987, 213). The same fascination for the alchemical

interpretation of ancient Mysteries may be noticed in the early work of W.B.
Yeats – less surprisingly, given Yeats's temporary addiction to contemporary
"occult" secret societies: thus his story "Rosa Alchemica," published in 1897, signif-
icantly opens on a quotation from Euripides, *Bacchae* 72–77, celebrating those ini-
tiated into the rites of Dionysus (Arkins 1990, 103).

An Example of the Diversity of Alchemical Exegeses of Myths

Was there a consensus among alchemists on the meaning of the myths? By no
means: each alchemist used myths in adapting them to his peculiar alchemical
theory. This situation might be illustrated by many examples. Let us examine
the interpretation of the love of Mars and Venus by two different alchemists:
G.A. Augurelli, in 1515, and Stanislas R. Acxtelmeier, in 1701. In the *Chrysopœia*,
a poem modelled on Virgil's *Georgics*, Augurelli exposed the Ficinian doctrine of
the *spiritus mundi* (the spirit of the world) (Matton 1993, 142–146, 164–166). The
fifteenth-century neoplatonist philosopher Marsilio Ficino conceived the world, in
a typical Platonic manner, as a living being, which possessed a body, a soul, – and a
spirit. This *spiritus mundi* was an intermediary between the soul and the body of
the world – that is, between the world soul and nature. It was the vehicle of the
celestial seeds issued from the world soul, which came on earth to animate every-
thing here below. Even metals were animated by celestial seeds. If the alchemist
was skillful enough to extract the seed of gold through a certain operation on
fire (which Ficino did not explain) and warm the seed long enough, Augurelli said,
to have its germinal power reinforced, then the seed was able to activate the
multiplicative virtue in gold:

> Then comes the time of the sacred marriage [i.e., the mixing of duly prepared gold
> with its own seed]: the chamber of the vivifying husband [i.e., Vulcan's forge, i.e., the
> crucible] is embrased by the perpetual torchs of Hymen, which shall be named
> Venus's real love.
>
> (Augurelli 1659, 236)

Here the alchemical interpretation rests on two analogies: the mixing of gold with
its seed is equated to the love of Mars and Venus, and the crucible is compared to
Vulcan's forge.

The exegesis of the same myth by Acxtelmeier has to be understood within
another context: that of antimonial alchemy. Antimony is a metalloid, the ore of
which is usually combined with sulfur under the form of antimony trisulfide.
From the end of the sixteenth century onwards, more and more alchemists
believed antimony trisulfide to be the prime matter of alchemy, it being able to
purify gold from all his impurities and allied metals. This ability is due to the
sulfur of the trisulfide, which attracts all impurities from gold and separates

at once from the pure metallic antimony, or "antimony regulus," which allies with gold and falls to the bottom of the crucible. The production of antimony regulus (consisting of separating the pure metallic antimony from its sulfur and other impurities) could lead, being skillfully conducted and using some iron, to the so-called "star regulus" of antimony, a star-like crystallization of metallic antimony occurring on the upper surface of the regulus. This "star" was considered by alchemists as a sign of God, like the star of the Magi announcing the birth of Jesus. Therefore, many of them struggled to prepare the philosophers' stone using antimony as their prime matter or an essential ingredient (Principe 2013, 140–166). In this context, bearing in mind that Mars usually means iron, and that Venus does not necessarily mean copper here, but that Mars and Venus also might point to sulfur and mercury as the male and female principles of metals, one can now read Acxtelmeier's exegesis of the love of Mars and Venus:

> Antimony is the rock in which Mars and Venus hide and become golden. Furthermore, the antimony regulus, once produced, is usually covered with a hard skin which is like the net of Vulcan. The fact that all gods come to make Mars and Venus ashamed means that the nature of all metals is hidden in this regulus

> (Telle 1980, 148).

The point here is not only the strong emphasis put on antimony by Acxtelmeier, but his obvious conviction that the ultimate significance of the myth of Mars and Venus is the preparation of the philosophers' stone. We have here two extremely different examples of an alchemical exegesis of one and the same myth. The same is true of the extensive interpretations of classical myths by Michael Maier: besides them, we find many other alchemical exegeses of the same fables. Thus, at the end of the sixteenth century, Vincenzo Percolla interpreted no less than 209 myths in his manuscript *Auriloquio* (Percolla 1996). In 1687, the Dutch classicist Jacob Tollius, head of the Latin school in Gouda, performed a similar task in his *Fortuita* (Matton 1987, 219–221; Matton 1995, 80–83). In the eighteenth century, Maier's *Arcana* were plagiarized, but also extended, by Dom Antoine Pernety in his *Fables égyptiennes et grecques dévoilées* ("The Egyptian and Greek Fables Unveiled and Reduced to One and the Same Principle"), published in 1758 and re-edited as late as 1786 and 1795. This work was supplemented by Pernety with a *Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique*, also published in 1758, both intended to explain the alchemical meaning of allegorical terms and to be used as an index to the *Fables égyptiennes et grecques*. Mostly from the twentieth century, this dictionary became – and still is for unlearned or lazy interpreters – a basic tool for alchemizing nearly everything, as exemplified by the alchemical readings of the nineteenth-century French poet Gérard de Nerval performed by Georges Le Breton in 1945 (Le Breton 1994). Pernety seems indeed to have done his best to concentrate in this dictionary the very essence of the old saying: *omnia in omnibus* ("everything is in everything").

On the other hand, *Les Fables égyptiennes et grecques* offers a pleasant, useful and learned rendering of Maier's views in the vernacular.

Other authors had a less ambitious purpose and focused on a single myth, source, or hero. In the first third of the sixteenth century, Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (the nephew of Giovanni Pico) investigated the myth of the golden fleece on the basis of his alchemical reading of the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes, a Greek epic poem from the third century BCE, and of the *Argonautica Orphica*, a forgery from the fourth or sixth century CE attributed to Orpheus himself (Secret 1976, 93–108). In 1605 the German physician and alchemist Joachim Tancke spoke about his project to both edit Ovid's fables and comment on the secrets of nature and art supposed to be hidden in them (Telle 1980, 141). This project probably was never achieved, but in the years 1690–1710, an unknown alchemist completed an illustrated manuscript entitled *Medea spagyrica* ("The spagyric [i.e. alchemical] Medea"), "or that part of Ovid's Metamorphoses which contains the secrets of the physico-chemical art," with a prologue allegedly written by the god Chronos (Telle 1980, 141 n. 22). In the middle of the seventeenth century, the sieur de Villebressieu, a physician who was in correspondence with Descartes, became convinced (probably on the basis of Maier's writings) that Homer's *Odyssey* contained the secrets of the philosophers' stone under the veils of the fable. As he could not read Greek, he asked his friend Paul Pellisson, the first historian of the French Academy, to translate Homer into French for him (Hepp 1970, 47–56). Another French alchemist and physician, Pierre-Jean Fabre, in his *Hercules piochymicus* published in 1634, purported to systematically unveil the alchemical – and Christian – secrets hidden under the 12 labors of Hercules, thus extending to the whole myth the previous project of Lefèvre d'Étaples (which he did not know of).

The Classical Scholarship of the Alchemists

The alchemical reading of classical mythology often supposed the interpreters to be endowed with a considerable knowledge of Antiquity. While some of them brought together many different authors of all times and languages in order to illuminate the meaning of a myth, others performed a thorough commentary of a myth line by line, as did in 1701 the Kehl professor of medicine Johann Frick, in his *De auro potabili*, with the account of the golden branch in Virgil's *Æneid* (Matton 1995, 82). As early as 1617, Michael Maier theorized the alchemical interpretation of myths, locating it at the very core of the intellectual activity of the alchemists (Leibenguth 2002, 70–71). Maier wanted the alchemists to be knowledgeable in the arts of discourse and language – and especially poetics, since the very subject of poetry had first been to conceal alchemical allegories and enigmas; but also grammar, rhetoric, and logic, which formed the basis of all other fields of knowledge. Besides, the alchemist had to know geometry, arithmetic, astronomy,

and physics; then, of course, medicine. Without these arts and sciences, the alchemist was unable to interpret the allegories; an ignorance that would bring him darkness instead of the truth hidden behind their veils. In addition, the alchemist must learn more specific arts like docimastics, which allows one to know the differences between all the minerals and metals, to analyze the purity of precious metals, to know what pertains to their colors, their vitrification. The arts of the goldsmith and smith were also of great help. Finally, the alchemist must become much experienced in the observation of nature (especially the nature of minerals), and perfectly know the very theory and practice of alchemy. For Maier, the ideal alchemist was thus a sort of encyclopedic scholar, both competent in academic, scientific, and technical fields, due to his major task: to alchemically interpret the classical myths in order to put into practice their secret learning in the laboratory. This encyclopedic purpose was exemplified in 1617 in Maier's *Atalanta fugiens*, "an attempt at a total work" (Van Lennep 1985, 181). This treatise was basically an alchemical exegesis of the myth of Atalanta as related by Ovid in the *Metamorphosis*. Bringing together image, text, and music, Maier composed a series of 50 beautifully engraved mytho-alchemical emblems that simultaneously provided the theme for a musical fugue, an epigram, and a didactic account. Maier's aim was to penetrate the "secrets of nature" through a synthesis of the "three most spiritual senses," namely sight, hearing, and intelligence. Through the interplay of sensory correspondences, alchemical research opened up into a quest for knowledge (Kahn 2013b, 125).

Alchemical elaborations on classical myths

Some early modern alchemists not only interpreted classical myths, but also invented new fables in order to express alchemical processes under the veil of myths of their own. Thus, a medieval Latin allegorical text, the *Visio* of John Dastin, described the lament of the planetary metals (silver / Moon, iron / Mars, lead / Saturn, and so on), stricken by leprosy, unlike their king (gold / Sun), who tried to cure them. In early modern times, the *Visio* was translated into English and versified under the title *Dastin's Dreame*, where the planetary metals became the gods of Olympus (Ashmole 1652, 257–268). In the same manner, the *Metamorphosis Planetarum* ("The Metamorphoses of Planets") by Johannes de Monte-Snyder, published in Amsterdam in 1663, used planets (actually metals), symbolized by the classical gods, in order to describe the changes of metals in the alchemical work. Another example of free mytho-alchemical invention is Basset Jones, an impressive alchemical poet from the years 1650, interested in alchemical *prisca theologia* as well as in laboratory practice. In his neo-Latin *Lapis chymicus*, published at Oxford University in 1648, and in his later manuscript English poem *Lithochymicus: or A Discourse of a Chymic Stone*, Jones elaborated upon the castration of Uranus by Saturn and invented the allegorical love of Pyrelius for Hydra

(Schuler 1995, 272–273, 382–383). Another anonymous seventeenth-century author described an alchemical process in his poem *The Hermet's Tale*, using such mythological characters as Phebus, Vulcan, Narcissus, Mars, and Venus in a new invented fiction. His process was partially deciphered by the prominent alchemist George Starkey, alias Eirenaeus Philalethes, in one of his laboratory notebooks, before his death in 1665 (Ashmole 1652, 415–419; Starkey 2004, 244). A number of such examples are to be found in the alchemical literature.

Responses of mythographs to the alchemical exegesis of myths

Not all early modern scholars, by far, agreed with the alchemical exegesis of mythology. In 1556, the French translator of the first three books of Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, Barthélemy Aneau, refused to follow the alchemists on this field, for he never read "any ancient author, nor Greek, nor Latin, who gave way to such interpretation," and doubted whether Ovid himself, and the ancient Greeks on which Ovid drew, ever thought of any such meaning (Moisan 1987, 135–136). In 1568, one of the prominent mythographs of the sixteenth century, Natale Conti, dismissed alchemical interpretations as an aberration in his influential *Mythologiae sive explicationum fabularum libri X* (Matton 1992, [13]). In 1609, Francis Bacon, in the preface to his *De Sapientia Veterum*, wondered how "sottishly do the Chymists appropriate the Fancies and Delights of Poets in the Transformation of Bodies, to the Experiments of their Fornace."

While Michael Maier replied to Natale Conti in his *Arcana Arcanissima*, Bacon's attack against alchemical readings of classical myths was answered by Elias Ashmole in 1652, in the preface of Ashmole's collection of English alchemical poems, the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*. Ashmole's answer was as much a defense of alchemical poetry as a defense of alchemical readings of mythology (Kahn 2011, 72–73). Ashmole focused on the notion of "poetic theology," yet his point was to affirm the superiority of poetry over prose. He called upon the antiquity of Orpheus and his poem on the Argonauts (the pseudo-Orphic *Argonautica*), which was, he argued, an alchemical treatise, and extolled the innate qualities of poetry in order to show that it was "in the Parabolical & Allusive part" of poetry that the Ancients wrapped their most important mysteries, for that part of poetry was "the most Sacred, and Venerable in their Esteeme, and the securest from Prophane and Vulgar Wits." Accordingly, their "Wisdome and Policy" lay first in finding a way to teach their knowledge and, second, finding a way of concealing it. This art was poetry, both intended as the classical mythological poems of the Ancients, and the medieval and early modern English alchemical poems Ashmole was editing in his book.

In the eighteenth century, the polemics against alchemical exegeses of classical myths did not stop, especially in the work of a famous French mythographer, the Abbé Banier, who opposed Tollius's *Fortuita* and mocked Tollius's scholarship,

which he felt were ridiculous and strained, in his *Explication historique des fables* (*A Historical Explanation of the Fables*), published in 1711 and re-issued in a new version in 1738–1740 under the title *La Mythologie et les fables expliquées par l'histoire* (*Mythology and Fables explained by History*), a witty dialogue led by several fictional characters in an alleged fashionable salon. Banier's book was but a restatement of traditional euhemerism, a rationalizing method of interpretation, going back to the Greek mythographer from the fourth-century BCE Euhemerus, which treated mythological accounts as a reflection of historical events, or mythological characters as historical personages. It was easy for Dom Pernety to ridicule Banier in turn in his *Les Fables égyptiennes et grecques dévoilées*, since the latter was based on Maier's *Arcana Arcanissima*, the polemical parts of which had been already directed against euhemerism through Maier's critics against Natale Conti. The polemics between Banier and Pernety was echoed in 1758 in some of the prominent French journals. Not surprisingly, Pernety's book was attacked in the *Journal Encyclopédique*, which sided with the Encyclopedists, and was defended in the *Année Littéraire* by one of the fiercest opponents of the Encyclopedists, E. C. Fréron (Matton 1995, 80–83). We should not caricature, however, the wide interest in alchemical interpretations of classical myths in the eighteenth century as a battle field between rationalism and obscurantism, Enlightenment and tradition: the reality was far less simple (Kahn 1997, 42–45). Thus, an alchemical manuscript explaining "the genealogy of the gods of the fables" was written in 1789 by an obvious supporter of the French Revolution (Matton 1995, 86). On a scientific level, we even find around the end of the eighteenth century an explanation of Greek and Egyptian mythology grounded on the then leading chemical theory of phlogiston (a principle of fire supposed to be contained within combustible bodies and released during combustion) in a widely circulated manuscript entitled *Concordance mytho-physico-cabalo-ermétique* (*A Mythico-Physico-Cabalistico-Hermetical Agreement*), written by a man named Fabre du Bosquet who knew Lavoisier's first chemical theories, and even used them without acknowledging his source (Matton 1987, 225–226). As a whole, in the eighteenth century the alchemical exegesis of classical myths was no longer accepted in scholarly or scientific circles, but it reached a more popular audience, thanks mostly to Pernety's books.

Notes

1   See Halleux (1986); Halleux (1997); Martelli (2011, 90–94, 125–135).
2   Debus (1987, 20). On this topic, see Faivre (1993, 19–51).
3   Leclerc (1837, 500a); Reiser (2011, 398, *s.v.* "Claudianus"); Telle (1980, 141 n. 25, 142).
4   Lobeck (1829, 6). On Lobeck and the puzzling title of his book, see Brisson (2005, 120–121).
5   Figala (1984, 199–206). For further indications on Newton's keen interest, see Figala *et al.* (1992, 158–159).

Guide to Further Reading

The best introduction to the history of alchemy is Principe (2013). The notion of "poetic theology" is best illuminated by Chevrolet (2007), Demats (1973) and, with regard to alchemy, Obrist (1982). Alchemical interpretations of classical mythology have been contextualized by Matton (1992; 1995) and Telle (1980). A famous example of decipherment of a mytho-alchemical allegory is Newman (1994). The alchemization of ancient Mysteries performed by Michael Maier in the seventeenth century has been given a second life in the twentieth century by Alleau (1953).

References

Alleau, R. 1953. *Aspects de l'alchimie traditionnelle*. Paris: Editions de minuit.

Arkins, B. 1990. *Builders of My Soul: Greek and Roman Themes in Yeats*. Gerrards Cross, UK: Colin Smythe.

Artaud, A. 1958. *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. M.C. Richards. New York: Grove Press.

Ashmole, E. 1652. *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum*. London: J. Grismond for Nathan Brooke.

Augurelli, G.A. 1659. "*Chrysopœiae Libri tres*," in *Theatrum Chemicum*, vol. 3, 197–244. Strasbourg: Zetzner.

Bracesco, G. 1544. *La Espositione di Geber philosopho […] nella quale si dichiarano molti nobilissimi secreti della natura*. Venice: G. Giolito di Ferrarii.

Brisson, L., ed. 2005. *Introduction à la philosophie du mythe, vol. 1: Sauver les mythes*, 2nd edn. Paris: Vrin.

Chevrolet, T. 2007. *L'Idée de fable*. Geneva: Droz.

Debus, A.G. 1987. "Myth, Allegory, and Scientific Truth." *Nouvelles de la République des Lettres*, 1: 13–35.

Demats, P. 1973. *Fabula*. Geneva: Droz.

Faivre, A. 1993. *The Golden Fleece and Alchemy*. Albany: State University of New York.

Figala, K. 1984. "Die exakte Alchemie von Isaac Newton." *Verhandlungen der naturforschenden Gesellschaft in Basel*, 94: 157–228.

Figala, K., Harrison, J., and Petzold, U. 1992. "*De Scriptoribus Chemicis*: Sources for the Establishment of Isaac Newton's (Al)chemical Library," in P. Harman and A. Shapiro, eds, *The Investigation of Difficult Things. Essays […] in Honour of D. T. Whiteside*, 135–179. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Glauber, J.R. 1667. *Kurtze Erklährung/uber die höllische Göttin Proserpinam […] und wie durch Hülff dieser Proserpinae die Seelen der abgestorbenen metallischen Leibern auss der chimischen Höllen in den philosophischen Himmel geführet werden*. Amsterdam: Johann Jansson.

Halleux, R. 1986. "Modes de transmission du savoir chimique, alchimique et technologique." *Academiae Analecta*, 48, 4: 1–11.

Halleux, R. 1997. "La réception de l'alchimie arabe en Occident," in R. Rashed, ed., *Histoire des sciences arabes*, vol. 3, 143–154. Paris: Le Seuil.

Hepp, N. 1970. *Deux amis d'Homère au XVIIᵉ siècle*. Paris: Klincksieck.

Kahn, D. 1988. *"Sur la scène du théâtre chymique*: alchimie, théâtre et théâtralité." *Chrysopœia*, 2: 5–61.

Kahn, D. 1997. "Alchimie," in M. Delon, ed., *Dictionnaire européen des Lumières*, 42–45. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.

Kahn, D. 2007. *"Antonin Artaud and The Alchemical Theatre."* Paper presented at the international conference *Spuren der Avant-Garde: Theatrum Alchemicum*, Berlin, Freie Universität.

Kahn, D. 2011. "Alchemical Poetry in Medieval and Early Modern Europe. Part II – Synthesis." *Ambix*, 58: 62–77.

Kahn, D. 2013a. "Présence et absence de l'alchimie dans la littérature romanesque médiévale." Online at: http://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-00768993 (accessed September 6, 2013).

Kahn, D. 2013b. "La poésie alchimique dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne," in J. Telle, ed., *Alchemie und Poesie. Deutsche Alchemikerdichtungen des 15. bis 17. Jahrhunderts*, 95–158. Berlin: W. de Gruyter.

Le Breton, G. 1994. *Nerval poète alchimique* (1st edn 1945). Entremont-le-Vieux: Quatuor.

Leclerc, V. 1837. "Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Claudien," in D. Nisard, ed., *Œuvres complètes*, by Lucain, Silius Italicus and Claudien, 499–501. Paris: J.J. Dubochet.

Leibenguth, E. 2002. *Hermetische Poesie des Frühbarock: die Cantilenae intellectuales Michael Maiers*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.

Lobeck, C.A. 1829. *Aglaophamus sive de theologiae mysticae Graecorum causis*. Königsberg: Borntraeger.

Martelli, M. 2011. *Pseudo-Democrito, Scritti alchemici*. Paris-Mailand: SÉHA-Archè.

Matton, S. 1987. "L'Égypte chez les 'philosophes chimiques,'" *Les Études philosophiques*, 2–3: 207–226.

Matton, S. ed. 1992. "L'herméneutique alchimique de la Fable antique," in A.J. Pernety, ed., *Les Fables égyptiennes et grecques dévoilées et réduites au même principe*, 2nd edn, vol. 1, [1]-[21]. Paris: La Table d'Émeraude.

Matton, S. 1993. "Marsile Ficin et l'alchimie," in J.-C. Margolin and S. Matton, eds, *Alchimie et philosophie à la Renaissance*, 123–192. Paris: Vrin.

Matton, S. 1995. "Le siècle des Lumières et l'interprétation alchimique de la mythologie antique." *Dix-Huitième Siecle*, 27: 73–87.

Moisan, J.-C. 1987. "Préparation de voie à la lecture, & intelligence de la Métamorphose d'Ovide […] par B. Aneau." *Études littéraires*, 20, 2: 119–147.

Newman, W.R. 1994. *Gehennical Fire. The Lives of George Starkey, an American Alchemist in the Scientific Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Obrist, B. 1982. *Les Débuts de l'imagerie alchimique*. Paris: Le Sycomore.

Percolla, V. 1996. *Auriloquio. Nel quale si tratta dello ascoso secreto dell'Alchimia*, edited by C.A. Anzuini. Paris-Mailand: S.É.H.A.-Archè.

Pierozzi, L. and Mandosio, J.-M. 1996. "L'interprétation alchimique de deux travaux d'Hercule dans le *De Magia naturali* de Lefèvre d'Étaples." *Chrysopœia*, 5: 191–264.

Principe, L.M. 2013. *The Secrets of Alchemy*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Reiser, T. 2011. Mythologie und Alchemie in der Lehrepik des frühen 17. *Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: W. de Gruyter.

Schmitt, C.B. 1966. "Perennial Philosophy: From Agostino Steuco to Leibniz." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27: 505–532.

Schuler, R.M. 1995. *Alchemical Poetry, 1575–1700: From Previously Unpublished Manuscripts*. New York: Garland.

Secret, F. 1976. "G.F. Pico della Mirandola, L.G. Giraldi et l'alchimie." *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 38: 93–112.

Sheppard, H.J. 1972. "The Mythological Tradition and Seventeenth-Century Alchemy," in A.G. Debus, ed., *Science, Medicine and Society in the Renaissance. Essays to Honor Walter Pagel*, vol. 1, 47–59. New York: Science History Publications.

Starkey, G. 2004. *Alchemical Laboratory Notebooks and Correspondence*, edited by W.R. Newman and L.M. Principe. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Telle, J. 1980. "Mythologie und Alchemie. Zum Fortleben der antiken Götter in der frühneuzeitlichen Alchemieliteratur," in R. Schmitz and F. Krafft, eds, *Humanismus und Naturwissenschaften*, 135–154. Boppard: Harald Boldt Verlag.

Van Lennep, J., ed. 1985. *Alchimie. Contribution à l'étude de l'art alchimique*, 2nd edn. Brussels: Crédit Communal.

12

Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism
On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India

Phiroze Vasunia

A new form of cultural cosmopolitanism arose in Europe, in the second half of the eighteenth century, partly as a consequence of the Enlightenment and partly as the result of an increased colonial presence in Asia. One of its most illustrious and influential exponents was William Jones, the linguist, translator, and judge for the East India Company in Calcutta. His lecture "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India," written in 1784 and subsequently revised, offers a perspective on myth that is supple, flexible, and wide-ranging. It appeared some time before his famous statement about the kinship of languages, in the Third Anniversary Discourse of February 1786, and anticipates some of the conclusions at which he arrived later still. In fact, Jones's writings in the months and years before the celebrated discourse of 1786, are already pointing to connections and syntheses across cultures; they offer a conception of mythological and religious contact that is startling in its openness and far removed from the parochialism of numerous contemporaries.

Jones's work demonstrates that a cosmopolitan and transnational recuperation of the ancient narratives exists alongside national or nationalist readings of myth. The emergence of the nation state in the eighteenth century gave a new urgency to the idea and the actuality of the nation and, thus, also an important new context to the relationship between nation and myth. The Founding Fathers and other colonial Americans argued vehemently about the meaning of the story of Aeneas and the establishment of Rome. In France, Jacques-Louis David electrified audiences by raising questions about loyalty, patriotism, and national reconciliation in such paintings as *Antiochus and Stratonice* (1774), *The Oath of the Horatii* (1784), and *The Sabine Women* (1799). And in imperial England, opera from the 1790s mentioned Brutus the Trojan, who was said to have made his way as an exile from Italy to the British Isles, establish New Troy, and change the name of Albion to Britain.

If these are instances of "national" appropriations of classical myths, Jones opens a window onto other prospects, and in that respect, he may be compared to the British and German Romantics, some of whom he directly inspired. The Romantics, with their philhellenism, respected national boundaries (they insisted on the independence of the modern Greek state) but also attempted to confound them ("We are all Greeks"). The philhellenism espoused by Byron, Shelley, and Keats enjoyed an international appeal and allowed radical thinkers worldwide to feel a solidarity of cause and principle. For many of these thinkers, classical Mediterranean culture was cosmopolitan and the common property of all – in Europe, the Americas, and Asia. Jones, a political radical of sorts, made classical Greece and Rome part of a broader discussion about the gods and culture in general. He may have disagreed with the Romantics over the special value they assigned to classical Greece, but he also wrote with no small learning of the alternatives that lay elsewhere.

Well before he arrived, in 1783, on the coast of India, he had secured a reputation, in Britain, as an accomplished scholar of languages and an expert in the literatures of East and West. His publications from this period include a translation, into French and English, of the Persian history of the Afghan ruler, Nadir Shah; a grammar of the Persian language; translations of poems "from the Asiatick languages"; the Latin treatise *Poeseos Asiaticae Commentariorum*; and translations of the speeches of Isaeus, to adduce a small selection from a long list. Jones's interest in non-European literature was not merely academic or linguistic, though he was a linguist of formidable attainments, and his work reflected a deep-seated passion for civilizations outside Europe, and especially those of Persia and India. As early as 1768, he wrote, in Latin, to a correspondent that he used to believe that nothing could be more charming than ancient Greek poetry – until he happened upon Persian and Arabic poetry (Jones 1807, i.78). Later, in Calcutta, he was to place Eastern and Western literatures in dialogue with each other and make them part of a program for mutual respect. When he sketched out a plan for "Hymns in Four Books," the categories that he listed included the Indian and European, Arabian and African, "Hyperborean" and American (Franklin 2011, ix). But more revealing than the plan for the hymns was the stated object of his literary project: "to recommend universal toleration by showing that all nations, even those esteemed the most idolatrous, agree in the essentials of religion, a belief in one God, Creator and preserver, and in a future state of rewards and punishments" (Franklin 2011, ix). Here, then, was a European servant of the British Empire and a judge in Bengal arguing that all peoples shared basic religious beliefs, that their religious dogmas were fundamentally in agreement with one another, and that Christianity offered no unique road to God, truth, and salvation.

Jones's cosmopolitanism turned on the notion that all human beings, ultimately, derived from a common origin. In this idea, he was not far from Johann Gottfried Herder, whose work, however, inspired nationalist rather than cosmopolitan movements in the nineteenth century. Herder wrote voluminously across

a number of years, but among the theories he was developing in the 1770s was one that emphasized the role of Asia as the original homeland of the *Völker* who inhabited the earth. Myths were crucial sources for Herder in the formulation of his work, and he used "the evidence of myths to trace the world's *Völker* back to their place of common origin," namely, Asia (Lincoln 1999, 54). Herder also provides a frame for Jones's theories of commonality: by positing the existence of an originary homeland (*Urheimat*), Herder was arguing that the original inhabitants (*Urvolk*) of this original location would have spoken an original language (*Ursprache*) and believed in a set of original myths (*Urmythen*) (Lincoln 1999, 74). There is no reason to believe that Jones was reading Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* in Calcutta (Herder himself read *Poeseos Asiaticae* and, much later, he was swept up by the *Shakuntala* fever of the 1790s). But it was Jones who supplied the arguments and "evidence" for a common language, a shared Asiatic homeland, and shared features in the religious systems of Greece, Italy, and India.

In relating Jones and Herder in this way, we need to acknowledge a couple of small paradoxes. Herder's impact on nationalism should be set against Jones's cosmopolitan approaches to history, literature, and culture. Joep Leerssen says:

> Most of the "national awakenings" that took place in Central and Eastern Europe, from Germany to Bulgaria and from Slovenia to Finland, can be more or less directly traced back to the philosophy and influence of Herder.

> (Leerssen 2006, 97)

If Jones's research contributed to any nationalism, it was to the Indian nationalism that developed in the later nineteenth century, but such a nationalism found inspiration in a variety of sources and not only in the contributions of the Asiatic Society. Moreover, where Herder investigated folk songs, folk lore, and popular literature as the essence of a nation, Jones confined his writings mainly to the "classical" periods of the literary traditions about which he wrote. Herder published "collections of folk songs from all the corners of Europe and indeed the world"; Jones published on literature in classical Persian and Arabic, in classical Greek and Latin, and in classical Chinese and Sanskrit (Leerssen 2006). "Oh the accursed word *classic!*" [O das verwünschte Wort *klassisch*!], Herder wrote, with a sigh that is audible even today (Quoted in Menges 2009, 202); yet Jones preferred the spelling *Asiatick* for the society he founded precisely because the term was "both classical and proper" (Jones 1807, iii.5 ["Preliminary Discourse"]).

That all religious and mythological traditions shared certain fundamental beliefs is a theme that Jones was exploring in his creative compositions as well as in his essays, and he did so before he had gained a first-hand familiarity with Sanskrit and other Indian traditions. Few of the poems Jones wrote prior to sailing to South Asia capture the flavor of this idea more directly than "Kneel to the Goddess," which he drafted in 1780, supposedly in an hour, out of despair at recent riots

against Catholics. The poem was written for the Druids, a society of judges "who, during the summer circuit at Cardigan, were accustomed to meet and dine in a romantic situation on the banks of the river Teifi" (Llanover 1862, ii.539). As Michael Franklin writes,

> The poem's playful emphasis upon the universality of the divine female (Astarte, Diana, Venus, or Mary) and the ubiquity of inspired revelation, whether Egerian or avian, anticipate the comparative mythology and imaginative syncretism of Jones's path-breaking essay "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India" (1784).
>
> (Franklin 2011, 173)

Here are the first five stanzas:

> What means all this frensy, what mad men are they
>   Who broil and are broil'd for a shade in religion?
> Since all sage inspirers one doctrine convey
>   From Numa's wild nymph to sly Mohamed's pigeon.
>   Then Druids arise,
>   Teach the world to be wise,
> And the grape's rosy blood for your sacrifice pour,
>   Th' immortals invoke,
>   And under this oak
> Kneel, kneel to the Goddess whom all men adore.
>
> By various high titles this Goddess is nam'd,
>   At Ephesus Dian, in Syria Astarte,
> In *New* Rome 'tis Mary, Heaven's Regent proclaim'd,
>   In *Old* Rome 'twas Venus, the buxom and hearty.
>   But crown'd and enthron'd
>   Her Godhead is own'd
> In desert, in valley, on mountain, on shore,
>   Then join our gay crew,
>   Turk, Roman and Jew,
> And kneel to the Goddess, whom all men adore.
>
> When sallow Parsees, in vain Anquetil's rant,
>   Repeat the strange lessons of false Zoroaster,
> Or hymn ruddy Mithra's in rapturous cant
>   As their surest preserver from every disaster,
>   They worship but one,
>   Warm and round as the sun,
> Which Persia's rich kings on their diadems wore;
>   The circle they prize
>   Had long left the skies,
> And they kneel to the Goddess whom all men adore.

When dark visag'd Bramins obsequiously bow
　　To the rock whence old Ganges redundantly gushes,
They feign that they bend to the form of a cow,
　　And save by this fiction the fair maiden's blushes;
　　　　But from Sanscritan Vedes
　　　　The discov'ry proceeds
That her aid, whom we honor, e'en Bramin implores;
　　　　Like us wildly they dance,
　　　　Like us lightly advance,
And kneel to the Goddess whom all men adore.

You have heard of the mysteries hallowed in Greece,
　　And shewn to th' elect in the groves of Eleusis,
Our learned, about them, have cackled like geese,
　　But their learning vain pomp or mere idle abuse is:
　　　　Th' initiate were told,
　　　　In verses of gold,
Mad Jove and rough Neptune to worship no more;
　　　　But with love and with truth
　　　　To frolic thro' youth,
And kneel to the Goddess whom all men adore.
　　　　　　(Quoted in Llanover 1862, ii.539–540)[1]

Franklin, who has devoted considerable attention to Jones's pluralism, has analyzed the poem skillfully (Franklin 2011, 107–110): let it suffice here to add that, in the face of sectarian strife, Jones underlines the folly of religious conflict by saying that all religious systems are founded on essentially similar principles ("all sage inspirers one doctrine convey"). What is significant in Jones's verses is that rather than write only about Anglicans and Catholics, he chooses to cast his plea for toleration in far broader, more global terms. His poem refers to ancient Romans and Greeks, Muslims and Christians, Hindus and Parsis, the last despite his skepticism about Anquetil's claims for Zoroastrianism, and these various believers uniformly appear to pay obeisance to "the Goddess whom all men adore." Jones, ever the Orientalist, responds to religious violence in the best way that he can respond, by speaking, through the person of a Druid, to remind his fellow Britons about the similarities that bind religions together. Even the presence of the Druid in the poem alludes to contemporary arguments that connected druids and brahman priests as much as it nods to the circuiteers' society or to its Welsh haunts (see Drew 1987, 50–51).

　　Jones's "Preliminary Discourse on the Institution of a Society," delivered on January 15, 1784, in Calcutta, returns his audience to the voyage he made to India on the frigate *Crocodile*. Of course, it is possible to discern in that memorable opening the commanding gaze of the European observer, one who is the master of all he surveys, thrilled at the prospect of a new world that appears to beckon to him:

　　When I was at sea last August, on my voyage to this country, which I had long and
　　ardently desired to visit, I found one evening, on inspecting the observations of the

day, that *India* lay before us, and *Persia* on our left, whilst a breeze from *Arabia* blew nearly on our stern. A situation so pleasing in itself, and to me so new, could not fail to awaken a train of reflections in a mind, which had early been accustomed to contemplate with delight the eventful histories and agreeable fictions of this eastern world. It gave me inexpressible pleasure to find myself in the midst of so noble an amphitheatre, almost encircled by the vast regions of *Asia*, which has ever been esteemed the nurse of sciences, the inventress of delightful and useful arts, the scene of glorious actions, fertile in the productions of human genius, abounding in natural wonders, and infinitely diversified in the forms of religion and government, in the laws, manners, customs, and languages, as well as in the features and complexions, of men.

(Jones 1807, iii.1–2).

Yet, if Bruce Lincoln is correct to say that "Mr. Jones fancied himself at the center of the world," Franklin is also right to claim that "Jones encourages a re-centering of perspective from the hub that is India" (Franklin 2011, 205). Jones invites the other founders of his Society to join him in studying "the history and antiquities, the natural productions, arts, sciences, and literature of *Asia*" (Jones 1807, iii.3). Calcutta, not London or Paris, will be the headquarters of this new body whose interests will radiate outward from India to all parts of Asia and "whose members may not be displeased occasionally to follow the streams of *Asiatick* learning a little beyond its natural boundary" (Jones 1807, iii.5). Jones is summoning other Europeans to join him on the further voyage on which he is embarking, after his arrival in India, and it is a voyage whose chief goal is the study of non-European cultures in the East. At his instigation, and with the support of such powerful patrons as Warren Hastings, a new center of learning is established in colonial India. As Franklin observes, "If this sounds imperious, well so it was; if it sounds imperialistic, it was that also; he was building an empire of science" (Franklin 2011, 210).

By the time he composed "On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India," in 1784 (the paper was read to the Asiatic Society on March 24, 1785), Jones was already thinking comparatively about myth and religion, and the basis for his comparisons was now enriched by what he was learning in India.[2] The essay suggests correspondences between Janus and Ganesha, Saturn and Manu or Satyavrata, Jupiter and Indra, Hermes and Narada, Ceres and Lakshmi, Dionysus and Rama, and Apollo and Krishna. Among the other figures Jones discusses are Minos and Manu as well as Vishnu, Kali, Diana, Hecate, Durga, Minerva, Durga, and Saraswati. For Jones, all myths – not just Greek, Roman, Hindu, or Egyptian, but all – appear to be the result of four types of process. One source of myth is history, so that a king of Crete may become a mythological figure or treacherous rocks may be turned into Scylla and Charybdis. A second source of myth is the sun, moon, stars, and other bodies in the sky. A third source is "the magick of

poetry; whose essential business it is, to personify the most abstract notions, and to place a nymph or a genius in every grove and almost in every flower" (Jones 1807, iii.321–322). And a fourth source is metaphor and allegory, "of which a thousand examples might be adduced from Plato, Cicero, and the inventive commentators on Homer in their pedigrees of the Gods" (Jones 1807, iii.322). If Jones is less interested in exploring these processes in detail and more eager to discuss the parallels and resemblances in Greek, Roman, and Indian myths, he is nonetheless also attentive to method and to the problems raised by the comparative study of myth. He is hesitant to argue simply for superficial borrowings across "idolatrous" peoples,

> but, when features of resemblance, too strong to have been accidental, are observable in different systems of polytheism, without fancy or prejudice to colour them and improve the likeness, we can scarcely help believing, that some connection has immemorially subsisted between the several nations, who have adopted them.
>
> (Jones 1807, iii.319)

On the issue of polytheism, Jones implies that systematicity, especially a system derived from the monotheistic religions, is incapable of comprehending the complexity of ancient Greece, Rome, and India. Jones thus declines to point out that "such a God of India was *the* Jupiter of *Greece*; such *the* Apollo; such, *the* Mercury: in fact, since all the causes of polytheism contributed largely to the assemblage of *Grecian* divinities (though Bacon reduces them all to refined allegories, and Newton to a poetical disguise of true history), we find many Joves, many Apollos, many Mercuries, with distinct attributes and capacities" (Jones 1807, iii.323). Jones draws out the multiplicity of Indian notions of divinity and offers numerous examples in which he relates a Greek god to more than one Indian deity, although he does also make the one-to-one parallels that he decries here.

Near the end of his discourse, Jones acknowledges a possible explanation for the many parallels he has identified, but also cautions against the identification of an original source. He observes that it is not unusual to find similarities among the gods of these nations since they are all more or less drawn from a handful of deities. With a proleptic nod to the Indo-European thesis and to Max Müller's solar theories, he says that:

> the characters of all the pagan deities, male and female, melt into each other, and at last into one or two; for it seems a well-founded opinion, that the whole crowd of gods and goddesses in ancient Rome, and modern *Váránes*, mean only the powers of nature, and principally those of the Sun, expressed in a variety of ways and by a multitude of fanciful names.
>
> (Jones 1807, iii.385–386)

Yet, Jones implies that the seemingly reductive nature of this explanation should not be mistaken for simplicity and he suggests that the process of ascertaining how Rome, Athens, and Varanasi arrived at gods that have parallel features cannot be determined too readily. For;

> which was the original system and which the copy, I will not presume to decide; nor are we likely, I believe, to be soon furnished with sufficient grounds for a decision: the fundamental rule, that *natural, and most human, operations proceed from the simple to the compound*, will afford no assistance on this point; since neither the *Asiatick* nor *European* system has any simplicity in it; and both are so complex, not to say absurd, however intermixed with the beautiful and the sublime, that the honour, such as it is, of the invention cannot be allotted to either with tolerable certainty.

> (Jones 1807, iii.386)

In arguing vehemently for parallels between the gods of Greece, Italy, and India, Jones refrains, in this passage, from taking a position on which of the cultures was the source for the others.

Jones's hesitation in declaring an original system is further complicated by his words about Egypt and the putative relationship between Egypt and India. Jones not only supposes that Egypt is an important source of knowledge in the western hemisphere and India in the eastern but also argues for contact between the two ancient cultures. One reason for assuming contact between Egyptians and Indians is the similarity of the name "Misr," in Egypt, with "Mishra," in India, an etymology which, as with many others of Jones, seems dubious in hindsight. Jones also comes close to saying that ancient Egyptians established a colony in India and that Egyptian priests came from the Nile to the banks of the Ganga and the Yamuna. These Egyptian priests learned from brahman priests and presumably took back their learning to Egypt. Thus, Jones argues for a connection between the peoples of Egypt, India, Greece, and Italy, "long before they migrated to their several settlements, and consequently before the birth of Moses" (Jones 1807, iii.391).

If, with these claims, Jones intervenes in eighteenth-century debates about the place of Egypt in world history, he also comments on a related question, that is, the status of Mosaic chronology and early history as it appears in the Bible. While, at first glance, Jones appears to be accepting of biblical history and chronology in this essay and in his other writings, he also qualifies and inflects his remarks in such a way that it seems more appropriate to aver that he makes the deferential gesture toward Christian authority only so that he can then proceed to make claims for the antiquity of non-biblical nations. As one critic observes:

> to declare faith in biblical history, even if not necessarily in good faith, is to give oneself space, within the broadest bounds of orthodoxy, for speculative activities which might yet prove corrosive of traditional authority.

> (David 1996, 175–176)

When Jones writes in the essay that "it is not the truth of our national religion, as such, that I have at heart: it is truth itself," the reader understands that Jones is giving himself the space to move beyond biblical primacy, even as he keeps on insisting that he is not abandoning it. Indeed, Jones's elaborate hand-wringing on the subject ("Either the first eleven chapters of *Genesis*, all due allowances being made for a figurative Eastern style, are true, or the whole fabrick of our national religion is false; a conclusion, which none of us, I trust, would wish to be drawn" (Jones 1807, iii.325)) and the need he feels to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Bible lead us to believe that he is prepared to accept the greater depth of non-biblical history and even the inaccuracy of biblical chronology. Perhaps, Jones's attitude toward Mosaic history is best encapsulated in these words:

> if any cool unbiassed reasoner will clearly convince me, that Moses drew his narra-tive through Egyptian conduits from the primeval fountains of Indian literature, I shall esteem him as a friend for having weeded my mind from capital error, and promise to stand among the foremost in assisting to circulate the truth, which he has ascertained.

> (Jones 1807, iii.325)

There is humor here, and much irony besides, but neither the humor nor the irony should obscure the fact that Jones himself labored hard to establish the antiquity and the wisdom of those primeval fountains of Indian literature.

Jones's essay on the gods of Greece, Italy, and India thus exceeds the scope of its ambitious title and encompasses Egypt and Christianity as well. This combination of diverse traditions stays with Jones through to the end of his essay, where, still protesting too much, he writes that connections between Egypt, India, Greece, and Italy should not be taken to detract from "the truth and sanctity of the *Mosaic* History, which if, confirmation were necessary, it would rather tend to confirm" (Jones 1807, iii.391). Moses must have known about "the mythological system of Egypt" and condemned it, even "though some of their traditions concerning the creation and the flood were grounded on truth" (Jones 1807, iii.391, 392). These traditions, Jones acknowledges, can also be discerned in India and the Mediterranean cultures. And yet:

> There is no shadow then of a foundation for an opinion, that Moses borrowed the first nine or ten chapters of *Genesis* from the literature of *Egypt*: still less can the adamantine pillars of our *Christian* faith be moved by the result of any debates on the comparative antiquity of the *Hindus* and *Egyptians*, or of any inquiries into the *Indian* Theology. Very respectable natives have assured me, that one or two missionaries have been absurd enough, in their zeal for the conversion of the *Gentiles*, to urge, "that the *Hindus* were even now almost *Christians*, because their Brahmá, Vishnu, and Mahésa, were no other than the *Christian* Trinity;" a sentence, in which we can only doubt, whether folly, ignorance, or impiety

predominates. The three *powers*, *Creative*, *Preservative*, and *Destructive*, which the *Hindus* express by the triliteral word *O´m*, were grossly ascribed by the first idolaters to the *heat*, *light*, and *f lame* of their mistaken divinity, the Sun; and their wiser successors in the East, who perceived that the Sun was only a created thing, applied those powers to its creator; but the *Indian* Triad, and that of Plato, which he calls the Supreme Good, the Reason, and the Soul, are infinitely removed from the holiness and sublimity of the doctrine, which pious *Christians* have deduced from texts in the Gospel, though other *Christians*, as pious, openly profess their dissent from them. Each sect must be justified by its own faith and good intentions: this only I mean to inculcate, that the tenet of our church cannot without profaneness be compared with that of the *Hindus*, which has only an apparent resemblance to it, but a very different meaning.

(Jones 1807, iii.392–393)

Jones passes quickly from the "adamantine pillars of our Christian faith" to the efforts of Christian missionaries who attempted to convert natives on the grounds that there were strong similarities between the central tenets of Christianity and Hinduism. Jones points out that the missionaries have misconstrued at least one alleged similarity, the "Indian Triad," which, like the triad described in Platonic dialogue, is not similar in any deep sense to the Christian trinity.

But even as he purports to criticize the missionaries and underline the "sublimity" of Christian doctrine, Jones cannot resist going on, in the words immediately following this extract, to mention yet another Hindu narrative, now about Krishna, whose name and biography "were long anterior to the birth of our Saviour, and probably to the time of Homer" (Jones 1807, iii.293–294). The tradition of Krishna suggests to Jones:

that the spurious Gospels, which abounded in the first age of *Christianity*, had been brought to *India*, and the wildest parts of them repeated to the *Hindus*, who ingrafted them on the old fable of Ce´sava, the Apollo of Greece.

(Jones 1807, iii.395)

With that claim, Jones once again returns us to the syncretism that is a dominant theme of his essay, and here, as often, Jones asserts the originality of Christianity and biblical tradition, only then to advance arguments for contact between the Mediterranean religions and the religions of South Asia. In fact, he ends his essay by saying that neither Muslims nor Hindus in India will easily convert to Christianity and that the only way to ensure such a conversion would be to translate parts of the bible into Sanskrit and Persian. While that logic sounds like a strategy for spreading the word of Christ among the heathen, it also calls on his fellow Britons to devote greater resources to Sanskrit and Persian.

Jones succeeded in communicating his enthusiasm for Indian myths to readers outside of Asia, the essay exerting "a quick, powerful impact in Europe"

(Cannon 1990, 297). Thomas Maurice, a younger contemporary, incorporated Jones' findings in his *Indian Antiquities* (1793–1800), *The History of Hindostan* (1795–1798), and *The Modern History of Hindostan* (1802–1803). *Gentleman's Magazine* described the essay as "a most learned and ingenious investigation to prove the affinity between the systems of Polytheism that prevailed among the Greeks and Romans, and the popular worship of the Hindus" and urged Christian missionaries to heed the advice that Jones delivered to his readers (May, 1801: 441). *The American Museum* magazine serialized much of the essay in 1792. Not all these readers are prepared to extol the Hindu over the Greek and Roman, but they appreciate Jones's labors and insights. Coming in the wake of J.J. Winckelmann and the rise of a wider philhellenism, Jones's arguments for the similarity of the Indian and the Greek systems are a challenge and a provocation. For his part, Herder writes in his *Ideen*:

> The Grecian language is the most refined of any in the World; the Grecian mythology, the richest and most beautiful upon Earth; the Grecian poetry, perhaps the most perfect of its kind, when considered with respect to time and place.
>
> (Herder 1968, 172)

The adult Jones admires the accomplishments of ancient Greece and Rome, but one rarely finds him expressing such a sentiment even before his arrival in India, let alone after 1783.

Jones's essay shows that it is possible, in the late eighteenth century, for a European intellectual to think broadly about mythology and to explore connections across religious traditions. Jones is exceptional in many respects, but, like Orientalists of every age, he is not afraid of declaring his love, and even his preference, for things Eastern. In June of the same year that he composed this essay, he wrote to a friend:

> I am in love with the *Gopia*, charmed with *Crishen*, an enthusiastick admirer of *Ram*, and a devout adorer of *Brimha-bishen-mehais*: not to mention that *Judishteir*, '*Arjen*, *Corno*, and the other warriors of the *M'hab'harat* appear greater in my eyes than Agamemnon, Ajax, and Achilles appeared, when I first read the Iliad.
>
> (Cannon 1970, ii.652)

Those were the feelings that informed his views as he tried to render the religious texts of the Hindus no more strange than the texts of Greece and Italy or even the words of the Bible. His was a Sisyphean task, for so many Europeans had devoted so many tomes to showing the gods, customs, beliefs, and values of non-Europeans as bizarre, disagreeable, and preposterous. A whole set of attitudes and entire systems of thought had been mobilized to demarcate the Eastern gods as essentially alien to Europe. As Marcel Detienne has observed,

"the vocabulary of the scandalous is not gratuitous, it is used to convene the phantoms of alterity" (Detienne 1986, 20). But Jones is not interested in turning the gods of the East into feral barbarians who will obliterate the values of Europe and set the torch to Christian civilization; he seeks to understand the strangeness of the Indian gods and to relate them to the more familiar, classical Greek and Roman deities.

While it is true, lastly, that Christianity and British colonialism provide the contexts for Jones's essay on the gods, Jones himself reframes contemporary European approaches to the Bible and shows how polytheism, rather than biblical monotheism, can serve the cause of universalism. Earlier commentators had argued for a common homeland or language for humanity on the basis of Hebrew scripture – for example, by tracing all peoples back to Noah or his offspring – but Jones turns that discussion on its head by using polytheism to stake the claim for shared beliefs, values, and faiths, without disputing the worthiness of the Bible. Equating the polytheisms of ancient Greece and Rome with that of India in his time can be seen as colonialist or, in the pejorative sense of the term, Orientalist. Yet, Jones frequently accords these polytheist writings the status of authority and deals seriously with their chronological, historical, and religious implications: these writings are part of a wider analysis that encompasses Mosaic ethnology, comparative mythology, and Enlightenment history. Thanks to the influence of thinkers such as Herder, the nations of Europe were each invoking their own mythologies and traditions in order to give their national histories an anchor in the past. Jones overcame the borders that people drew up around their set of histories, literatures, and deities, and made a forceful case to place the gods in a cosmopolitan world.

Notes

1   The poem is reprinted, with helpful notes, in Franklin (1995, 57–61).
2   I quote from the text in Jones (1807, vol. iii), with changes in orthography and capitalization.

Guide to Further Reading

The discourses and writings of William Jones are most easily accessible in Jones (1807), now out of print but widely available on the internet. Franklin (2011) is a readable and recent biography of William Jones. Two different approaches to Jones' work and its influence can be found in Lincoln (1999) and Trautmann (1997). For a sense of the intellectual context, Majeed (1992) is valuable. Hall and Vasunia (2010) and (Vasunia 2013) offer analyses of the relationship between colonial India and the classical tradition.

References

Cannon, G., ed. 1970. *The Letters of Sir William Jones*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon.

Cannon, G. 1990. *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

David, A. 1996. "Sir William Jones: Biblical Orientalism and Indian Scholarship." *Modern Asian Studies*, 30, 1: 173–184.

Detienne, M. 1986. *The Creation of Mythology*, trans. M. Cook. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Drew, J. 1987. *India and the Romantic Imagination*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Franklin, M.J., ed. 1995. *Sir William Jones: Selected Poetical and Prose Works*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

Franklin, M.J. 2011. *Orientalist Jones: Sir William Jones, Poet, Lawyer, and Linguist, 1746–1794*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hall, E. and Vasunia, P., eds. 2010. *India, Greece, and Rome, 1757 to 2007*. London: Institute of Classical Studies.

Herder, J.G. von. 1968. *Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, trans. T.O. Churchill. Abridged and with an introduction by F.E. Manuel. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Jones, W. 1807. *The Works of Sir William Jones*. 13 vols. London: Printed for John Stockdale and John Walker.

Leerssen, J. 2006. *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Lincoln, B. 1999. *Theorizing Myth: Narrative, Ideology, and Scholarship*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Llanover, A.W.H., Lady, ed., 1862. *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany*, 2nd series, 3 vols. London: R. Bentley.

Majeed, J. 1992. *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The history of British India and Orientalism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Menges, K. 2009. "Particular Universals: Herder on National Literature, Popular Literature, and World Literature," in H. Adler and W. Koepke, eds, *A Companion to the Works of Johann Gottfried Herder*, 189–213. Rochester, NY: Camden House.

Trautmann, T.R. 1997. *Aryans and British India*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Vasunia, P. 2013. *The Classics and Colonial India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

13

The Golden Age

Andreas T. Zanker

The motif of the golden age has a long history, one whose contours can be traced back as far as our Greek poetic texts permit. Its debut in extant Greek (Hesiod's "myth of the five races," *Works and Days* 106–201) is most likely an example of reception of near-eastern models (West 1978, 172–177), and it has proved one of the most enduring and versatile ideas that have come down to us. Its post-Hesiodic instantiations have informed philosophical discussions (e.g., Plato, *Politicus* 271a–273e), dramatized the departure of justice from human dealings (e.g., Aratus, *Phaenomena* 96–136), and served as metaphors for the happy life of bygone simplicity (e.g., Horace, *Epodes* 16.63–66); conceptions of the golden age have been incorporated into imperial propaganda (e.g., *Panegyrici Latini* 9(4).18.5), stitched together with Christian eschatology (e.g., Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 7.24), and subjected to ironic inventiveness (e.g., Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 2.277–278); they abounded in the literature of the renaissance (cf. Gombrich 1961; Nodes 2000), have shown a hold on the flickering imaginations of classical philologists (Ax 1996), and are of course still with us in the modern world.

In classical literature, references to a "golden age" were typically made in order to describe a state of affairs preferable to the contemporary world, and the differences could be both negative and positive. To take the former first, the golden age could be described as lacking certain features of existence such as war, sickness, predators and poisonous snakes, private property, land-boundaries, laws, and ship-travel. On the other hand, it could be marked by miraculous events, peace between animals, eternal spring, rivers flowing with wine and trees with honey, the fields producing food of themselves and sheep returning to the folds for milking of their own accord (the *sua sponte* motif, on which see Campbell 2003, 336–353). From the very beginning (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 111) the golden race / age was associated

with the rule of Kronos, who was later assimilated to the Roman god Saturn. Perhaps most importantly, it was frequently marked by *dike/iustitia* ("justice"), sometimes figured as a female divinity on the model of Hesiod's Aidos and Nemesis (Shame and Retribution, who fled the iron race); Aratus, for example, linked the progression of races with the gradual retreat of the virgin into the heavens (*Phaenomena* 96–136), and Virgil reports that it was among the farmers that Iustitia left her last footprints (*Georgics* 2.473–474).

Beyond their basic representation of an ideal, however, there is great variation in ancient descriptions of the golden age; one is tempted to speak not of essential properties but rather of a loose set of family resemblances whose variety stems from the different motivations and aims of the individual authors. Three points should be noted before we proceed further: (i) the distinction between what Lovejoy and Boas termed "hard primitivism," where the idealized early period of human existence is described as rough and difficult, and "soft primitivism," according to which the primal period is conceived of as a wonderland (Lovejoy and Boas 1935); (ii) the structural variability of the schema as a whole – Hesiod describes a seemingly ramshackle descent through five different races, but Horace reduces this to three in *Epodes* 16 (gold, bronze, and iron), and Virgil works with only two ages in his *Georgics*; (iii) Finally, the distinction between speaking of a "golden race," as Hesiod had done, and the "golden age," as did the great majority of its Roman authors from Horace, *Epodes* 16, onwards (Baldry 1952).[1]

While each author adapted the concept of the golden age to his/her own ends, there were also moments of radical innovation. Virgil's conception of the return-ing golden age in *Eclogues* 4 is one such example; here, for the first time in our extant texts (aside from an ambiguous phrase in Hesiod's *Works and Days* and a difficult passage in Plato's *Politicus*), it was suggested that the golden age would return, and some years later the same poet would set its return under the rule of Augustus: *Augustus Caesar, diui genus, aurea condet/saecula* ("Augustus Caesar, the son of a god, will found the golden age" Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.792–793). The idea of the returning golden age became a standard fixture of imperial propaganda, but also paved the way for another key moment in the history of the myth – its adaptation by a particularly inventive Christian apologist soon after the year 300 CE. In Lactantius' *Diuinae Institutiones* (*Divine Institutes*) we see the fusing of the concept of the returning golden age with Christian ideas concerning the kingdom of heaven and the Christian life, and the work probably influenced further key Christian treatments of the theme from the fourth century, such as the Christian interpretation of *Eclogues* 4 recorded in Eusebius. Lactantius' use of Virgil's descrip-tions of the golden age in his *Diuinae Institutiones* demonstrates how a mytholog-ical theme could be re-interpreted in order to function in an entirely new paradigm, and how a late antique author could appropriate a formidable literary tradition in order to forward a variety of ends.[2]

★★★

Lactantius' seven books of *Diuinae Institutiones* were a proselytizing exercise directed at the educated Latin elite in a time of social upheaval. The immediate background was the beginning of the Diocletianic "Great" Persecution in February 303 CE, in which imperial pressure was applied to Christian communities to conform with pagan practice. The prohibitions on Christian worship were of varying severity in different parts of the empire, but the scale of the attack on Christendom would have been alarming to a contemporary believer – even one confident of the ultimate victory of the Faith. The force of the persecutions was, however, blunted by Galerius in 311 CE and was definitively ended by the Edict of Milan of Constantine and Licinius in 313 CE, which endorsed universal religious toleration. The *Diuinae Institutiones*, composed between approximately 305 CE and 311 CE (and modified thereafter), was a work born of a white-hot struggle between two irreconcilable metaphysical systems – a struggle whose outcome was to shape the development of European history.

Lactantius sought to encourage converts by arguing from pagan texts rather than from Christian ones. In his view, the failing of the earlier apologist Cyprian lay in the fact that he only quoted scripture, a set of texts to which pagan audiences accorded little value (*D.I.* 5.4.4–5). Lactantius himself cited pagan sources in order to disprove paganism: Christian truths existed in these *humana testimonia*, albeit ones that had been obscured for the sake of elegance (*D.I.* 1.11.23–25). Inevitably, his employment of classical excerpts reveals at times a cavalier attitude to their original context and purpose, and his interpretations of classical literature – of which there are a great number in the *Diuinae Institutiones* – were generally performed not in order to elucidate the meaning of the original author but used *ad hoc* in order to forward Lactantius' own argumentation: Louis Swift memorably termed Lactantius' use of the golden age motif "polemical pragmatism" (Swift 1968, 155). Indeed, Lactantius' discussions of the golden age involved the creative ventriloquism of key pagan authors, and of Virgil in particular as the premier Roman poet.[3] Just as children needed to be fed on milk before they progressed to solids, so too did pagan readers need to be given the evidence found in their own philosophers and historians before they could absorb the word of God (*D.I.* 5.4.6).

One thing the pages of Lactantius clearly demonstrate is how difficult it can be to sustain the coherence of the idea of a unified golden age when it is employed for multiple purposes within the same text. In what follows, however, I would simply like to consider the usage that Lactantius made of the golden age in the fifth book of the *Diuinae Institutiones*, and particularly his reception of a key passage from Virgil, *Georgics* 1.121–146 (the so-called "theodicy"), where Virgil described Jupiter's closure of the golden age.[4] In his handling of Virgil's *Georgics*, Lactantius (i) associated the golden age before Jupiter with an early age of universal Christianity, (ii) tailored the details of the theme to suit his particular purposes, and (iii) used it to criticize the contemporary persecutors of the Christians – Diocletian and Galerius. To close, I shall briefly consider how the later poet Claudian, undoubtedly aware of the hostile Christian reception of Virgil's

passage, gave Jupiter himself, who supposedly brought the golden age to an end, a moment to defend himself.

★★★

First, however, it will be worthwhile to give an idea of how Lactantius cited earlier authors, since, as mentioned, it often had little to do with what they themselves meant. His reception of Virgil's descriptions of the golden age was based on the principle that, although the earlier poet was no prophet, he had been inspired by authorities such as the Cumaean Sibyl, who did indeed have access to the truth about God's rule. Virgil preserved knowledge of the kingdom of God but was unaware of it himself – a circumstance that gave Lactantius cause to place his own interpretation on Virgil's words. In the first book of his *Diuinae Institutiones*, for example, he argues that Saturn, Jupiter's father, was really just a human being (and not a divinity), appealing to a barrage of Virgilian passages:

> […]*item noster Maro:*
>   '*aureus hanc uitam <u>in terris</u> Saturnus agebat*'
> *et alio loco:*
>   '*aurea quae perhibent illo sub rege fuere*
>   *saecula; sic placida <u>populos</u> in pace regebat.*'
> *neque superius dixit in caelo egisse uitam neque inferius superos in pace rexisse. unde apparet*
> *illum regem fuisse terrenum, quod alibi apertius declarat:*
>   '*aurea condet*
> *saecula qui rursus Latio regnata <u>per arua</u>*
> *Saturno quondam.*'

Likewise, our [Vergilius] Maro:
    'Golden Saturn led this life on earth'

<div align="right">(Virgil, Georgics 2.538).</div>

And, in another place:
    'The golden age that they talk about was under the reign of this king; thus he ruled the <u>people</u> in calm tranquility'

<div align="right">(Virgil, Aeneid 8.324–325).</div>

In the first excerpt, he did not say that he led his life in heaven; and in the second one he did not say that he ruled the gods in peace. From this it appears that he was an earthly king, which Virgil declares more openly elsewhere:
'He will found once again the golden age <u>through the fields</u> once ruled by Saturn'

<div align="right">(Virgil, Aeneid 6.793–795). (D.I. 1.13.12–13)</div>

Three of Virgil's key passages on the golden age are cited in order to back up Lactantius' main point; Saturn was not a god but a *human* king, because he ruled human beings on earth rather than gods in heaven. The emphasis laid on the phrases *in terris*, *populos*, and *per arua* is perhaps out of kilter with Virgil's own emphases, and here the active quality of Lactantius' literary "reception" comes strongly to the fore.

With this in mind, let us turn to our source text, Virgil's "theodicy" from the first book of his *Georgics*. This heavily debated passage engages with the problem of evil: how could a beneficent deity, Jupiter, end the golden age and force upon us the harsh realities of contemporary life?

> *pater ipse colendi*
> *haud facilem esse uiam uoluit, primusque per artem*
> *mouit agros, curis acuens mortalia corda,*
> *nec* <u>torpere graui</u> *passus sua regna* <u>ueterno</u>.
> *ante Iouem nulli subigebant arua coloni:*   125
> *ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum*
> *fas erat; in medium quaerebant, ipsaque tellus*
> *omnia liberius nullo poscente ferebat.*
> *ille malum uirus serpentibus addidit atris,*
> *praedarique lupos iussit pontumque moueri,*   130
> *mellaque decussit foliis, ignemque remouit*
> *et passim riuis currentia uina repressit,*
> *ut uarias* <u>usus</u> *meditando extunderet artes*
> *paulatim et sulcis frumenti quaereret herbam,*
> *ut silicis uenis abstrusum excuderet ignem…*
>
> *…tum ferri rigor atque argutae lammina serrae*
> *(nam primi cuneis scindebant fissile lignum),*
> *tum uariae uenere artes. labor omnia uicit*   145
> *improbus, et duris* <u>urgens</u> *in rebus* <u>egestas</u>.

The father himself did not want there to be an easy method of cultivation, and was the first to cause[d] the fields to be cultivated by means of skill, sharpening mortal hearts with cares; nor did he allow his kingdom <u>to stagnate under heavy lethargy</u>. Before Jupiter, no colonists tamed the fields: nor, indeed, was it permitted to mark or divide up the field by means of a border. They sought livelihood communally, and the earth itself bore all things more generously when no-one demanded them. He [Jupiter] added the evil poison to dark snakes and ordered the wolves to prowl, the sea to be churned up; he knocked the honey from the leaves, removed fire, and dammed up the wine that ran everywhere in rivers – in order that <u>experience</u> might by meditation gradually hammer out the various arts, seek out by means of furrows the blade of grain, knock out the fire that lay hidden in the veins of flint … Then came the stiffness of iron and the blade of the sharp saw (for the first men split the breakable wood by means of wedges), then came the different skills. Insatiable toil occupied all areas of existence, and <u>pressing poverty</u> in difficult conditions.

(Virgil, *Georgics* 1.121–146)

Jupiter apparently brought an end to the idyllic life of the golden age so that the world would not succumb to inactivity: the action was a providential one. However, scholars have long pointed to the violence of Jupiter's actions, and ancient readers – particularly Christians – did so as well: Tertullian, writing at the end of

the second century CE, quoted from line 125 in order to contrast the rule of Saturn with that of the violent son who displaced him (*ad Nationes* 2.13.14), and Lactantius would follow suit.

Lactantius took the golden age as representing an original state of affairs in which the Christian God was universally worshipped under the rule of a mortal king (Saturn). For him, the golden age – an actual historical epoch that preceded the rule of Jupiter – was marked by its justice (*iustitia*), and justice was in turn comprised of (i) piety (*pietas*) towards the one true God, and (ii) a humane attitude (variously termed *aequitas*, *humanitas*, *misericordia*, and *caritas*) towards other human beings (Buchheit 1979a). The first of these was prior and the second followed from it: one's fellows were the creations of God and therefore ought to be cherished. The historicity of this Christian golden age comes out in the following passage:

> *Saturno enim regnante, nondum deorum cultibus institutis nec adhuc illa gente ad diuinitatis opinionem consecrata, deus utique colebatur.*

> When Saturn was ruling, at a time when the worship of the [pagan] gods had yet to be instituted and the people had not yet been committed to the belief in their divine status, God was worshipped everywhere. (*D.I.* 5.5.3)

This was the golden age, a time when swords were sheathed and fraternal discord was non-existent; people preferred to live with slender means – *quod est proprium nostrae religionis* ("which is a characteristic of our faith"), according to Lactantius (*D.I.* 5.5.5). It was from this setting that *iustitia* was put to flight after Saturn's rule was ended and human beings subsequently drifted away from Christianity: without the worship of God there could be no justice, since love of God entailed love of other people. Some of the corollaries are alarming: in Lactantius' account, no pagan could be truly just, since a key component of justice was an awareness of and respect for the Christian God. Even Plato, the author of the *Timaeus*, only "dreamed of God but did not know him" (*D.I.* 5.14.13).

This is the immediate context for Lactantius' direct attack on Jupiter's dissolution of the Christian golden age, where he adapts Virgil's words from *Georgics* 1:

> ʿ*ille malum uirus serpentibus addidit atris*
> *praedarique lupos iussit*ʾ,
> *id est odium et inuidiam et dolum hominibus inseuit, ut tam essent quam serpentes uenenati, tam rapaces quam lupi. quod quidem uere faciunt ii, qui iustos ac fideles deo persequuntur dantque iudicibus saeuiendi aduersus innoxios potestatem. fortasse aliquid eiusmodi Iuppiter fecerit ad expugnandam tollendamque iustitiam et idcirco efferasse serpentes ac lupos acuisse tradatur.*

> ʿHe [Jupiter] added the evil poison to dark snakes and ordered the wolves to prowlʾ (*Georgics* 1.129–130),
> That is, he sowed hatred and malice and trickery in men, in order that they become as poisonous as serpents, as rapacious as wolves. That is exactly the action of [those] who persecute those who are just and faithful to God, and who grant official judges

the ability to be savage towards the innocent. It was possible that Jupiter did something of the kind in order to destroy and abolish justice, and for this reason is said to have sent serpents mad and sharpened wolves. (*D.I.* 5.5.10–12)

Clearly, Lactantius is taking certain liberties with Virgil's lines – for a start, he abstracts them from their immediate context: if he had continued he would have also been required to fit Jupiter's stirring up of the seas and removal of honey from the trees into his allegorical paradigm – acts beyond those of a mortal usurper. Second, Virgil's text is interpreted as supporting Lactantius's own story: Jupiter stole away *aureum illud iustumque saeculum* ("that golden and just age"), forcing men to become evil by leading them away from the worship of the one true god in order that they might worship himself (*D.I.* 5.6.6).

Lactantius, however, also encountered problems in adapting Virgil's description of the golden age to his own purposes: the lack of private property discussed in Virgil's theodicy ("they sought livelihood communally…") does not perfectly map onto Lactantius' vision of the Christian life, and here, rather than pass over the incongruity in silence, the apologist decides to tackle it head on (Bowen and Garnsey 2003, 38–40).

> 'ne signare quidem aut partiri limite campum
>   fas erat; in medium quaerebant'
> …quod poetae dictum sic accipi oportet, non ut existimemus nihil omnino tum fuisse priuati, sed more poetico figuratum, ut intellegamus tam liberales fuisse homines, ut natas sibi fruges non includerent nec soli absconditis incubarent, sed pauperes ad communionem proprii laboris admitterent.

> 'Nor, indeed, was it permitted to mark or divide up the field by means of a border. They sought livelihood communally' (Virgil, *Georgics* 1.126–127).
>   […]We are not to take the poet's words to mean that there was no private property at all in those days; they are rather a poetic image of people being so generous that they did not fence off the earth's produce as their own, nor did they stow them away and sit on them; instead, they labored themselves and also allowed the poor a share of the harvest. (*D.I.* 5.5.5)

For Lactantius, Virgil's lines represent a poetic elaboration – Christians could indeed possess private property. The key thing was that they allowed others access to the fruits of their labors, since their sense of *aequitas* and *humanitas* prompted them to share their own private property with those who were less fortunate. Such an interpretation was essential to meet the criticism that Christians of his age did enjoy private property, and that some were wealthier than others. The communal sharing of the golden age, a prominent aspect of discussions of it in the earlier tradition, could not be allowed to stand. Similarly, Ovid's line *flumina iam lactis, iam flumina nectaris ibant* ("now rivers of milk and honey were flowing," *Metamorphoses* 1.111), was to be read figuratively as the opening up of what remain private storerooms to the needy (*D.I.* 5.5.7).

Moreover, scholars have long suspected that Lactantius' description of Jupiter's destruction of the golden age in book five of the *Diuinae Institutiones* contains a thinly disguised layer of contemporary political polemic[5]; Lactantius was, after all, a teacher of rhetoric, and would naturally have been aware of classical theories of implication (*emphasis*) and "figured speech": deniability was key. Although it was unsafe to proceed directly against the architects of the persecution of 303 CE, the emperors Diocletian and Galerius,[6] it was nevertheless possible to criticize the divinities with whom they associated themselves. Diocletian styled himself as *Iouius*, a name designed to set him in a relationship with Jupiter; it was also adopted by his junior colleague Galerius. While the term *Iouius* had overtones of a father–son relationship, the precise nature of the connection between Diocletian and Jupiter would have been unclear, allowing a broad and malleable identification between god and tetrarch (Buchheit 1979b, 485). As *Iouius*, Diocletian had already been described as bringing back the golden age in a panegyric composed shortly before Lactantius' main work:

> *Adeo, ut res est, aurea illa saecula, quae non diu quondam Saturno rege uiguerunt, nunc aeternis auspiciis Iouis et Herculis nascuntur*

> Indeed, the fact is that that golden age, which was in effect for a short while once upon a time when Saturn was king, is now being reborn under the eternal command of Jupiter and Hercules

> (*Panegyrici Latini* 9(4).18.5).

The trouble with this statement was, of course, that Jupiter was meant to end the golden age. Lactantius exploited this irony (Nicholson 1984, 266): as we have seen, Virgil had spoken of how Jupiter had infused the snakes with poison and commanded the wolves to prowl (Virgil, *Georgics* 1.129–130), which the apologist had interpreted in terms of Jupiter making *men* as poisonous as serpents, as rapacious as dogs (*D.I.* 5.5.10). Just as Jupiter had ended the golden age by causing his subjects to persecute the just (*iusti*), so too was Diocletian (as *Iouius*) sending the other tetrarchs against the assembled Christian nation (Buchheit 1979b, 479–480). Indeed, like Jupiter, Diocletian was an ordinary human being who forced his contemporaries to worship him as a god (*D.I.* 5.6.6). Domitian styled himself as *Augustus* in addition to *Iovius*: what we find in book five of Lactantius' *Diuinae Institutiones* might therefore, in a fashion, be termed an "anti-Augustan" reading of Virgil.

<p style="text-align:center">★★★</p>

The possibly pagan poet Claudian wrote at the end of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth centuries CE, almost a century after Lactantius, and showed just as much inventiveness in his use of the golden age. In his first book *in Rufinum* ("Against Rufinus"), for example, he describes a conference held in Hades in which the fury Allecto addresses an assemblage of wicked monsters and personified sins. According to Allecto, *aurea nascitur aetas* ("the golden age is being born" 1.51), and

Iustitia has not merely returned to earth but is beginning to mock her: a solution must be found. Her sister fury, Megaera, suggests Rufinus as an antidote to the golden age and brings him to Constantinople. Towards the end of the poem, Megaera in turn triumphs over Iustitia and invites her to retreat to the stars, but her adversary gets the last word: the emperor Honorius will arrive, and with him the golden age in all its Virgilian splendor – with one or two picturesque additions that demonstrate the accretive possibilities of the golden age even at this late date:

> […] *pontumque per omnem*
> *ridebunt virides gemmis nascentibus algae*

> […] and throughout the whole sea green seaweed will smile with budding jewels
> <div align="right">(Claudian, in Rufinum 1.386–387)</div>

In the second book of Claudian's unfinished epic *de Raptu Proserpinae* (2.277–305), on the other hand, Pluto attempts to entice Proserpina down to Hades with tales of how the golden age continues there – *illic pretiosior aetas,/aurea progenies habitat* ("a more precious age, the golden offspring lives there" 2.285–286) – and, at the very end of the book, the marriage of Pluto and Proserpina really does effect a kind of golden age in Hades (2.326–360).

But the key moment for our purposes occurs at the beginning of book three of the *de Raptu Proserpinae*, where Claudian puts what had been a third-person theodicy in *Georgics* 1 into Jupiter's own mouth (Ware 2012, 184–187). Here he describes why he brought an end to the golden age:

> *abduxere meas iterum mortalia curas*
> *iam pridem neglecta mihi, Saturnia postquam*   20
> *otia et ignaui senium cognouimus aeui,*
> *sopitosque diu populos <u>torpore paterno</u>*
> *sollicitae placuit stimulis inpellere uitae,*
> *incultis ne sponte seges grandesceret aruis,*
> *undaret neu silua fauis neu uina tumerent*   25
> *fontibus et totae fremerent in pocula ripae.*
> *haud equidem inuideo – neque enim liuescere fas est*
> *uel nocuisse deos – sed, quod dissuasor honesti*
> *luxus et humanas oblimat copia mentes,*
> *prouocet ut segnes animos rerumque remotas*   30
> *<u>ingeniosa</u> uias paulatim exploret <u>egestas</u>*
> *utque artes pariat sollertia, nutriat usus.*

Human affairs, long forgotten by me, have once again diverted my thoughts – forgotten after I knew the sloth of Saturn's rule and the senility of a stagnant age, and it was pleasing to stir up with the goads of a life of worry the people long asleep under the <u>lethargy of my father's</u> [i.e., Saturn's] <u>reign</u>, so that the crops would not grow of their own accord in the untended fields, nor the forest flow with honey, nor the wine

well from the springs, and whole rivers roar into the wine-cups. I don't indeed
begrudge them it – nor is it fitting that gods become jealous or harm – but because
luxury undermines honesty and wealth muddies human minds. I acted so that
<u>cunning poverty</u> might provoke men's lazy minds and might gradually explore the
hidden paths – so that intelligence would give birth to skills, and practice would
nourish them.

(Claudian, *de Raptu Proserpinae* 3.19–32)

After centuries of Christian criticism of Virgil's Jupiter we find something resem-
bling an *apologia*. The references to Virgil are clear, although Jupiter's emphases are
focalized and defensive; while Virgil had written *torpere graui… ueterno* ("to stag-
nate under heavy lethargy"), Claudian rephrases things as *torpore paterno* (paternal
lethargy), and *urgens… egestas* ("pressing poverty") becomes *ingeniosa… egestas*
("cunning poverty"). His violent actions in the *Georgics* – the shaking of honey
from the trees (*decussit*) and damming of the rivers of wine (*repressit*) – are refash-
ioned in order to present them as reasonable measures against unreasonable abun-
dance (*ne… undaret… tumerent… fremerent*). His omissions are as important as his
revisions – for instance, Claudian's Jupiter avoids mention of how in Virgil's
account he commanded (*iussit*) the wolves to prowl. Throughout, the emphasis is
that he did this for the good of humankind: abundance (*copia*) is bad for mortals
and luxury makes them dishonest (*dissuasor honesti/luxus*).

It must be admitted, however, that the reasons Claudian puts in Jupiter's mouth
hardly convince. On the one hand, how does the type of *luxus* that prevailed under
the golden age "undermine honesty?" Moreover, Jupiter's argument regarding his
benevolence remains flimsy: even though Jupiter assures his audience that it is not
possible for a god to envy or harm (27–28), he had stated a few lines earlier – in a
wonderfully arbitrary tone – that it had been "pleasing to stir [people] up with the
goads of a life of worry" (23). This arbitrariness is also apparent at the beginning
of the passage, where Jupiter lets on that he has not truly been paying attention to
humankind (*abduxere…* 19). Claudian's "defense" of Jupiter here is not particularly
heartfelt and is intended primarily to amuse, although his presentation may also
point to the failure of all theodicies: it has always been difficult to explain why a
benign deity would set humankind in an unfriendly environment.[7]

★★★

The motif of the golden age in antiquity could be used for different ends; we have
seen how Lactantius employed it to mount an attack on the supreme pagan deity,
as well as a means to characterize the Christian nation. In the seventh book of his
Diuinae Institutiones he would go on to describe, in a remarkably inventive and
influential passage, the definitive return of the golden age with the arrival of the
kingdom of heaven (*D.I.* 7.24). Only when God's kingdom is achieved will the
golden age flourish once more – and by Lactantius' reckoning this lay only about

two centuries in the future. Claudian, writing in the wake of years of Christian polemic against Jupiter, gives the pagan god an opportunity to defend himself to the readership, although Jupiter apparently fails in this. We can here see the varying reception of a single passage by two different authors in a time of change: while Lactantius latches on to Jupiter's failing, one gets the sense that Claudian is more playful in his treatment of the undeniable contradictions and provocations of the golden age.

Notes

1. Although Horace referred to a <u>*tempus* aureum</u> (Horace, *Epodes* 16.64), references in Latin to a golden <u>*race*</u> begin with Virgil's fourth eclogue (*aurea gens*) and persevered until late antiquity (Ausonius, *Epistulae* 12.27–38: *aurea proles*). Indeed, the Latin noun *saeculum* can mean both "age" or "race."
2. For Lactantius' anticipation of the "Harvard School" of Virgilian criticism, see Wlosok (1990, 437–444, particularly notes 12, 13, 15).
3. Lactantius' references to the golden age in the *Diuinae Institutiones*: 1.11.50; 1.13.11–12; 4.12.21; 5.5–9; 7.2.1; 7.15.7; 7.24.
4. On Lactantius' interpretation of Virgil *in peius*, see Swift (1968, 151), and especially Buchheit (1978). For the negative portrayal of Jupiter in early Christian thought, see Buchheit (1979b, 475–476).
5. See, especially, Monat (1973, 71, and in general, 62–90); Buchheit (1978), 173–175; Buchheit (1979b); and the introduction of Bowen and Garnsey (2003).
6. Their names are not mentioned in the *Diuinae Institutiones*, although their gruesome deaths (Galerius' involving a septic ulcer on his genitals) are the subject of the *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, in which Lactantius explicitly mentions the connection between Diocletian and Jupiter (52.3).
7. For Lactantius' solution to the "Problem of Evil," see *D.I.* 7.27.

Guide to Further Reading

Gatz (1967) remains a starting point for all discussions of the golden age; Lovejoy and Boas (1935) provide a useful compendium of texts with introduction and commentary. West (1978, 172–177) covers the Hesiodic myth of the five races and its origins. For the reception of Hesiod's myth, see van Noorden (2015). Wallace Hadrill (1982) presents a classic interpretation of the role of the golden age in Roman culture; on the early Roman material, see also Feeney (2007, 108–137), Galinsky (1996, 80–40), and Perkell (2002). On the texts investigated in this chapter, see Bowen and Garnsey (2003), Buchheit (1978, 1979a, 1979b), Thomas (1982; 1988), and Ware (2012). For a collection of post-classical texts and images that treat the golden age, see Reid (1993).

Appendix

The following appendix is put together from the references in Lovejoy and Boas (1935) and Gatz (1967); it is hoped that it will be a useful resource for those (i) who have no access to Gatz, or (ii) find Gatz's tables difficult to use. It is designed as a supplement to the appendix in Campbell (2003), which readers will need to consult for the other material in Gatz's tables, such as the *sponte sua* motif. The list is incomplete and only mentions explicit references; book five of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, although it engages with the imagery of the golden age, has therefore been omitted. It is arranged in (roughly) chronological order, with works of uncertain date set off from the rest.

Terminology

1.   χρυσοῦν (χρύσειον, χρύσεον) γένος

χρύσεος (χρυσεία) γενεή
χρυσείη γενέθλη
The "golden race" (Greek)

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 109–201
Eupolis, fr. 298-325 Kassel-Austin
Plato, *Cratylus* 397e–398b
Plato, *Republic* 415a–415c
Plato, *Republic* 468e–469a
Plato, *Republic* 546d–547a
Theocritus, *Idylls* 12.15–16
Aratus, *Phaenomena* 96–136 (114)
Babrius, proem
Lucian, *Saturnalia* 5–9
Lucian, *Saturnalia* 20 (χρυσοῖ ἄνθρωποι, "golden men")
Aristides, *Orationes* 26.106 Keil
Maximus of Tyre, *Orationes* 36.1–2
Pausanias, 5.7.6
Diogenes Laertius, 4.22
Porphyry, *de Abstinentia* 3.27
Porphyry, *de Abstinentia* 4.2
Stobaeus, 2.31.97 Wachsmuth

Oracula Sibyllina 1.283–307 Lightfoot
Orphica fr. 140 Kern
Greek Anthology 5.31
Greek Anthology 8.124

2a.   *aureum saeculum / aurea saecula*: The "golden age" (Latin)

Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.791–795
Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.314–336 (324–325)
Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* 2.276–278
Germanicus, *Aratea* 103–141
Seneca Minor, *Apocolocyntosis* 4.1
Seneca Maior, *Controversiae* 2.7.7
Seneca Minor, *Epistulae* 90.5
Seneca Minor, *Epistulae* 115.13
Calpurnius Siculus, *Eclogues* 4.5–8 (cf. *Einsiedeln Eclogues* 2.21–24)
Anonymous, *Lydia* 47–48
Anonymous, *Aetna* 9–16
Tacitus, *Dialogus* 12
Suetonius, *Tiberius* 59
Fronto, *Laudes negligentiae* 3 (page 215 Naber; page 45, volume 1, Loeb
    volume to Fronto)
Hyginus, *Astronomica* 25
Tertullian, *ad Nationes* 2.13.13–14
Donatus, *Vita Vergiliana* 57
Porphyry, *Commentary on Horace's Epistles* 2.1.157
Commodian, *Carmen Apologeticum* 667–672 (672)
Commodian, *Instructiones* 1.29.7–11 (10)
Commodian, *Instructiones* 1.34.16–18 (18)
Panegyrici Latini 9(4).18.5
Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* 1.11.50–54
Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 5.5.1–5.6.13 (5.6.6; 5.6.11; 5.6.13)
Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 7.2.1
Optatianus Porphyrius, *Carmina* 3.10–18 (12, 18)
Optatianus Porphyrius, *Carmina* 5.28–30
Priscillian, *Liber Apologeticus* 17
Scriptores Historiae Augustae, *Pescennius Niger* 12.5–6
Scriptores Historiae Augustae, *Commodus* 14.1–3
Scriptores Historiae Augustae, *Elagabalus* 35.2
Scriptores Historiae Augustae, *Probus* 23.2–3
Avienus, *Carmina* 2.273–352 (294)
Claudian, *de Consulato Stilichonis* 2.330–339 (335)
Paulinus of Nola, *De Obitu Baebiani* = *Carmina* 33.117–122 (122)
Symmachus, *Orationes* 3.9
Macrobius, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* 2.10
Hieronymus (Jerome), *aduersus Iouinianum* 2.13
Sidonius Apollinaris, *Carmina* 2.102–114 (104)
Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae* 5.8.2

Ennodius, *Epistulae* 9.27
Corippus, *in Laudes Iustini Augusti Minoris* 3.76–82 (78)
Scholia Bernensia, *ad Eclogum* 6

Anthologia Latina 914.63-80 (76)
Carmina Latina Epigraphica 285 Buecheler

2b. *aurea tempora*: The "golden age" (Latin)

Horace, *Epodes* 16.64: *aureum tempus*
Horace, *Carmina* 4.2.21–24, 37–40
Statius, *Siluae* 1.6.39–45
Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 5.5.2
Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 7.15.7
Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 7.24.6–15
Claudian, *Panegyricus Manlio Theodoro Consuli* 113–199 (123)
Corippus, *in Laudes Iustini Augusti Minori* 2.307–309

2c. *aurea aetas*: The "golden age" (Latin)

Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.89–150
Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.96–110, cf. 15.260–261
Anonymous, *Consolatio ad Liuiam* 343–346
Calpurnius Siculus, *Eclogues* 1.33–88 (42)
Claudian, *in Rufinum* 1.45–65 (51)
Symmachus, *Orationes* 4.15
Corippus, *in Laudes Iustini Augusti Minoris* 1.185

2d. *aurea regna*: The "golden kingdom" (Latin)

Statius, *Siluae* 3.3.1–6 (5)
Anonymous, *de Rebus Bellicis* 2.8–9
Scholia Bernensia, *ad Eclogum praefatio*, 4

Anthologia Latina 726.22–39 Buecheler-Riese
Carmina Latina Epigraphica 688.12-16 Buecheler

2e. *aureus annus, aurei anni* : "Golden year", "golden years" (Latin)

Florus, 1.34
Florus, 1.47
Claudian, *de Consulatu Stilichonis* 2.441–476 (450)

2f.　Miscellaneous items

Cicero, *de Natura deorum* 2.159 *aureum genus* ("the golden race")
Virgil, *Eclogues* 4.9 *aurea gens* ("the golden race")
Virgil, *Georgics* 2.536–540 *aureus Saturnus* ("golden Saturn")
Appendix Vergiliana, *Elegiae in Macenatem* 23–24: *aurea Virgo* ("the golden maiden")
Petronius, *Satyricon* 29 *aurea pensa* ("the golden thread" i.e., of life, woven the fates)
Statius, *Thebaid* 3.559–565 *aureus sanguis* ("golden blood")
Martial, 6.3 *aurea fila* ("the golden threads")
Dio Cassius, 72.36.4 χρυσῆ βασιλεία ("the golden kingdom")
Dio Cassius 73.15.6 χρυσοῦς αἰών ("the golden age")
Ausonius, *Epistulae* 12.27–34. *aurea proles* ("the golden race")
Avienus, *Carmina* 2.273–352 (316) *aurea Iustitia* ("golden Justice")
Claudian, *de Raptu Proserpinae* 2.277–306 (286) *aurea progenies* ("the golden race")

Anthologia Latina 395.45–48 (Buecheler-Riese) *aurea festa* ("the golden celebrations")
Poetae Latini Minores 5.81.1–4 (Baehrens) *aurea Roma* ("golden Rome")

3a.　ἐπὶ Κρόνου βίος (ζωή, ἀρχή, etc.):
"The life under Cronus" (Greek)

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 109–201 (111)
Telecleides fr. 1 E (*The Amphictyons*)
Plato, *Leges* 713a–714a
Plato, *Politicus* 271a–273e
Aristotle, *Athenaion Politeia* 16.7
Philodemus, *de Pietate,* p. 51 Gomperz
Diodorus Siculus 5.66.4–6
Dionysius Halicarnassus 1.36
Plutarch, *Aristides* 24.2
Plutarch, *Cimon* 10.6
Plutarch, *Roman Questions* 12
Lucian, *Fugitiui* 17
Lucian, *Saturnalia* 5–9
Maximus of Tyre, *Orationes* 21.5 C
Maximus of Tyre, *Orationes* 23.5 B
Maximus of Tyre, *Orationes* 36.1–2
Porphyry, *de Abstinentia* 4.2

3b.　Κρόνος βασιλεύων (ἄρχων, ἀνάσσων, etc.): "The rule
of Cronus" (Greek)

Cratinus, 176 Kassel-Austin = Athenaeus 6.267
Timotheus, *PMG* 796 = Athenaeus 3.122 D

Ps. Plato, *Hipparchus* 229b
Diodorus Siculus 5.66
Dionysius Halicarnassus 1.36
Plutarch, *Roman Questions* 42
Pausanias 5.7.6

Oracula Sibyllina 1.283–307 (292)
Orphica fr. 139 Kern
Orphica fr. 141 Kern

4a.   *Saturni tempora*: "The time of Saturn" (Latin)

Columella 9.2.4
Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 5.5.2

4b.   Miscellaneous items

Virgil, *Aeneid* 7.202–204 *Saturni gentem* ("the race of Saturn")
Silius Italicus, *Punica* 11.453–458 *casta Saturni saecula* ("the clean ages of Saturn")
Firmicius, *Mathesis* 3.1.11–15 *Saturni tempus* ("the age of Saturn")
Claudian, *de Raptu Proserpinae* 3.18–66 (20–21) *Saturnia otia* ("the Saturnian tranquility")

Anthologia Latina 726.22–39 (Buecheler-Riese) (23) *Saturni dies* ("the time of Saturn")

4c.   *Saturnus regnans*: "The rule of Saturn"

Varro, *de Rebus Rusticis* 3.1.4
Virgil, *Eclogues* 4.6
Virgil, *Eclogues* 6.41
Propertius 2.32.49–54
Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.791–797
Tibullus 1.3.35–52
Ovid, *Amores* 3.8.35–56
Ovid, *Heroides* 4.129–133
Ovid, *Fasti* 1.191-194 (cf. 2.289–300)
Calpurnius Siculus, *Eclogues* 1.33–88 (64)
Ps. Seneca, *Octauia* 385–448 (395)
Juvenal, *Saturae* 6.1–24
Justin, *Epitome of Pompeius Trogus* 43.1.3
Porphyry, *ad Horatii Epistulas* 2.1.157

Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 1.11.50
Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 7.24.9
Panegyrici Latini 9(4).18.5
Claudian, *de Raptu Proserpinae* 3.18–66 (35)
Hieronymus (Jerome), *aduersus Iouinianum* 2.13
Servius, *ad Vergilii Eclogos* 4.10

Themes

1. Saturn's defeat by Jupiter and Arrival in Italy

Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.314–336 (319–327)
Ovid, *Fasti* 1.235–238
Juvenal, *Saturae* 13.23–41 (39)
Tertullian, *ad Nationes* 2.13.13–14
Herodian, *ab Excessu Diui Marci* 1.16
Minucius Felix, *Octauius* 21
Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 5.5.1–5.6.13 (5.6.6)
Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.7
Origo gentis Romanae 3

2a. The Virgin: Dwelling on earth

Catullus 68.153–154
Ps. Seneca, *Octauia* 385–448 (397)
Statius, *Siluae* 3.3.1–6 (5)
Porphyry, *de Abstinentia* 3.27
Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 1.11.50
Symmachus, *Orationes* 4.15

2b. The Virgin: Abandoning the earth, offended by humanity

Aratus, *Phaenomena* 96–136 (133)
Catullus 64.397–408 (398)
Virgil, *Georgics* 2.458–540 (474)
Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.89–150 (150)
Germanicus, *Aratea* 103–141 (137)
Appendix Vergiliana, *Elegiae in Maecenatem* 23–24
Seneca, *Thyestes* 857
Valerius Flaccus, *Argonautica* 2.363–364

Statius, *Thebaid* 11.132–133
Juvenal, *Saturae* 6.1–24 (19)
Hyginus, *Astronomica* 25
Lactantius, *Diuinae Institutiones* 5.5.1–5.6.13
Proba, *Cento* 302
Avienus, *Carmina* 2.273–352 (348)
Servius, *ad Vergilii Eclogos* 4.6

2c. The Virgin: Returning, or returned, to earth

Virgil, *Eclogues* 4 (6); cf. Horace, *Carmen Saeculare* 57–60
Calpurnius Siculus, *Eclogues* 1.33–88 (44)
Statius, *Siluae* 1.4.2
Statius, *Siluae* 5.2.92
Statius, *Siluae* 5.3.89–90
Aristides, *Orationes* 26.106 (Keil)
Ammianus Marcellinus 22.10.6
Ammianus Marcellinus 25.4.19
Symmachus, *Orationes* 3.9
Claudian, *in Rufinum* 1.45–65 (56)
Claudian, *Panegyricus Manlio Theodoro Consuli* 113–199 (117)

Anthologia Latina 726.22–39 (Buecheler-Riese) (23)
Poetae Latini Minores 5.56.180–185 (Baehrens)

References

Ax, W. 1996. "Quattuor Linguae Latinae Aetates. Neue Forschungen zur Geschichte der Begriffe 'Goldene' und 'Silberne Latinität.'" *Hermes*, 124: 220–240.

Baldry, H.C. 1952. "Who Invented the Golden Age?" *The Classical Quarterly*, 2: 83–92.

Bowen, A. and Garnsey, P. 2003. *Lactantius: Divine Institutes*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Buchheit, V. 1978. "Goldene Zeit und Paradies auf Erden (Laktanz, inst. 5,5–8)." *Würzburger Jahrbücher für die Altertumswissenschaft*, 4: 161–185.

Buchheit, V. 1979a. "Die Definition der Gerechtigkeit bei Laktanz und seinen Vorgängern." *Vigilae Christianae*, 33: 356–374.

Buchheit, V. 1979b. "Der Zeitbezug in der Weltalterlehre des Laktanz (Inst. 5.5–6)." *Historia*, 28: 472–486.

Campbell, G.L. 2003. *Lucretius on Creation and Evolution: A Commentary on De Rerum Natura, book 5, lines 772–1104*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Feeney, D.C. 2007. *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Galinsky, K. 1996. *Augustan Culture: An Interpretative Introduction*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gatz, B. 1967. *Weltalter, goldene Zeit und sinnverwandte Vorstellungen*. Hildesheim: Olms Verlag.

Gombrich, E.H. 1961. "Renaissance and Golden Age." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 24: 306–309.

Lovejoy, A.O. and Boas, G. 1935. *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Monat, P. 1973. *Lactance; Institutions Divines, Livre V, Tome II*. Paris: Éditions du Cerf.

Nicholson, O. 1984. "The Wild Man of the Tetrarchy: A Divine Companion for the Emperor Galerius." *Byzantion*, 54: 253–275.

Nodes, D.J. 2000. "Restoring the Golden Age from Lactantius (ca. 240–ca. 325) to Egidio of Viterbo (1469–1532)." *Studi Umanistici Piceni*, 20: 221–236.

Perkell, C. 2002. "The Golden Age and Its Contradictions in the Poetry of Vergil." *Vergilius*, 48: 3–39.

Reid, J.D., ed. 1993. *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Swift, L.J. 1968. "Lactantius and the Golden Age." *The American Journal of Philology*, 89: 144–156.

Thomas, R.F. 1982. *Lands and Peoples in Roman Poetry: The Ethnographical Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society.

Thomas, R.F., ed. 1988. *Virgil: Georgics* (2 vols). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

van Noorden, H. 2015 *Playing Hesiod: The "Myth of Races" in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wallace Hadrill, A. 1982. "The Golden Age and Sin in Augustan Ideology." *Past and Present*, 95: 19–36.

Ware, C. 2012. *Claudian and the Roman Epic Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

West, M.L. 1978. *Hesiod: Works and Days*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wlosok, A. 1990. *Res humanae – res divinae. Kleine Schriften*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter Verlag.

14

Matriarchy and Utopia

Peter Davies

References to societies in which women assume political power and fight in wars, or in which property or the family name are passed down the maternal line, are encountered in Greek sources; however, it is in modern (that is, post-Enlightenment) readings of these sources that "matriarchy" is considered to constitute a distinct period in the development of all societies, and consequently becomes associated with a range of utopian theories. The nineteenth century saw the construction of a story about the origins of culture in a monotheistic Goddess-religion, in which female deities are seen as the embodiments of Nature and of a body-oriented female spirituality and power. The sources that have served as evidence for the existence of a universal period of matriarchy at the origins of European culture are fragmentary at best, consisting of many different genres and originating in vastly different times and cultural contexts: literary re-tellings of creation and foundation myths, ethnographic and travel writing. Modern theorists have read them alongside archaeological evidence and modern ethnographical studies, employing a range of theories of myth, hermeneutics, cultural development, and gender and ethnic difference, in order to arrive at a theory of the matriarchal origins of culture that can then be used to construct utopian alternatives to the modern world.

This chapter is not intended to be an assessment of the evidence for the existence or otherwise of a "matriarchal" cultural stage, nor is it concerned with what the Greek and Latin authors' texts tell us about their societies' need to construct the specter of a topsy-turvy alternative world in order to shore up their own (cf. Wagner-Hasel 1992). It will also not deal with literary matriarchies or in any detail with the "Goddess spirituality" movement (cf. Eller 2000; Fehlmann 2011, 359–420),

concentrating instead on theories that made a claim to historical fact as a foundation for utopian alternatives to the conditions of post-Enlightenment modernity.

Before moving on to look at the modern emergence of matriarchy, it will be useful to consider the range of terminology associated with the idea, since the utopian theories that will be considered here tend to use scholarly language loosely. This is not necessarily out of lack of specialist knowledge, but often because the myth of matriarchy gains its force precisely in the creative ambiguity of the language used to describe it. Terms developed in one particular scholarly discipline are often transferred to another, losing their complexity on the way: one of the key aspects of the status of matriarchy as modern myth lies precisely in the usefulness of the idea in constructing holistic critiques of professional disciplinary specialization, figured as an attack on a technocratic, instrumental, hierarchical, "masculine" rationality in the name of a more intuitive, natural, egalitarian, "feminine" intelligence.

Such holistic myth-making about matriarchy tends to downplay significant terminological distinctions used by anthropologists, sociologists and archaeologists in order to distinguish particular forms of kinship and inheritance relation. Of relevance to the discussion are the distinctions between matrilinear and patrilinear inheritance (inheritance of property and/or family name down the maternal or paternal line) and matrilocal or patrilocal kinship groups (in which the identity of the group is built on kinship with a mother or father, respectively, meaning that on marriage, the man moves to become part of his spouse's kinship group, or the woman part of her spouse's). More recently introduced terms include "matrifocal" or "matristic" societies.

All of these concepts are generally distinguished by scholars from "matriarchy" and "patriarchy," literally meaning "rule by mothers/fathers," but usually referring to the domination of political institutions by women or men. The word "matriarchy" (German: *Matriarchat*; French: *matriarcat*) was coined in the mid-nineteenth century, either by John McLennan or Georg Alexander Wilken, whose book, *Het Matriarchaat bij de oude Arabieren* (1884), seems to have been the first to use the word in a book title (cf. Fehlmann 2011, 19; Hildebrandt 1988, 177; Wesel 1980, 33). The terms "patriarchy" and "matriarchy" are now political terms, and are generally avoided by anthropologists in descriptions of societies, as they suggest monolithic political structures, and are unable to deal with subtle variation: there is, for example, no necessary, or indeed usual, correspondence between matrilinear inheritance structures and female political power either in the present or the past.

Attempts to posit and reconstruct the existence of ancient matriarchal societies usually depend on the theory of "survivals," namely that mythic narratives, symbols, folk customs, or linguistic idioms can be relics of archaic social structures that have been superseded by very different social forms (the classic definition of the term is to be found in Edward Tyler's *Primitive Culture* [Tyler 1871, 14 f.]).

Comparative studies between cultures separated in time and space, bringing to bear ethnographic, linguistic, and textual studies, are held to reveal common origins and evidence of archaic social structures. Utopian matriarchies employ these techniques of comparison and analogy, positing a prehistoric world that has left no written evidence, but which can be reconstructed through comparative studies and overarching, speculative theories of cultural development. A number of different theoretical and methodological assumptions are necessary in order to propose the existence of a discrete period of matriarchal social organization: for example, that myth should be read as the transformed record of a historical event, that oral traditions and folk customs contain reminiscences of the "pre-Christian" or "pre-patriarchal" world, so that interpretation means stripping away what Shirley Ranck calls "patriarchal accretions" (Ranck 1995, 8), or what are seen as layers of Christian interpretation. These procedures already contain the possibility of utopian constructions, since they work with ideas of purity and contamination, repression and recovery, and demand identificatory, emotionally engaged readings: it is an archaeological model of myth interpretation, with the lowest level seen as the point of meaningful origin, and the act of stripping away levels seen in analogy with an exploration of the unsullied depths of the psyche.

The idea of matriarchy posits a clear polarity between male and female principles that can be used to associate disparate ideas and phenomena with each other: it is a holistic, integrating world view, which is defined as "feminine." Ultimately, the theory relies on notions of "sex character" that were commonplace in the nineteenth century, but which have been systematically critiqued by feminists: women represent the inner as opposed to the public space; nature, emotion, and the body, as opposed to civilization and intellect; the spatial as opposed to the temporal/progressive. Naturally, one can trace similar oppositions back much further, but the idea of matriarchy in its modern form arises out of a set of nineteenth century concerns, in which the "feminine" sex character gradually gains huge mythical and political significance until it can form the basis of fully fledged matriarchal utopias.

Assuming the possibility of the historical existence of matriarchal societies permits thought experiments in which a world can be constructed as a critical, utopian opposition to the present. The ideas associated with matriarchy are given a utopian impetus through the assumption that they represent not just the memory of a vanished world, but a potential for the present: the fact of the oppression of women is connected with assumptions about the repression of myth, intuition, emotion by instrumental reason, the dominance of abstract social forms and acquisitive individualism over organic, communal social structures, the destruction of nature in the name of technological progress, and so on. Thus, scientists and scholars may be seen as participating in a conspiracy to repress the memory of matriarchy, and with it "feminine" aspects of human nature and culture.

While the theory of ancient matriarchy did enjoy a period of scholarly respectability in a number of disciplines at the turn of the twentieth century, it has for

the most part been those who are (or who consider themselves to be) outsiders, radicals, or critics of mainstream scholarship who have continued to insist on the historical reality of a universal matriarchal period. This sense of historical reality, combined with the potential to construct a radical view of the essence of femininity in a world in which it is oppressed, makes for a compelling utopian narrative complete with dramatic turning points and a ready-made reservoir of mythic reference and images. As Meret Fehlmann has argued, it is impossible to separate the scholarly discussion of matriarchy from the social tensions that produced the idea and the political movements that instrumentalized it, either positively or as a negative foil to stir up antifeminist feeling (Fehlmann 2011, 35).

Representations of matriarchs and Amazons turned up frequently in European culture through the Middle Ages, but their connection with utopian thinking is a modern one, gaining an initial impetus from colonial encounters. The ground is prepared by Enlightenment-era and early nineteenth-century accounts that make two important contributions: developing a method that allows ancient and contemporary "primitive" cultures to be compared and placed on a continuum of increasing civilization, and linking gender relations and power hierarchies with questions of private property (see Ferguson 1767; Lafitau 1724; Millar 1771; Müller 1855; Welcker 1824). In the wake of the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment, and in particular after the French Revolution, matriarchal ideas come to be associated with the desire for the radical reform of bourgeois society using structures built on a mythically "deepened," and highly politicized, utopian theory of the Maternal (cf. Casaubon 1834 or Girardin 1851).

The name most commonly associated with matriarchy is that of the Swiss jurist and philologist Johann Jakob Bachofen (although he himself never used the word *Matriarchat*). Although he was by no means the first theorist to propose a universal prehistoric matriarchal stage (and thus cannot be described as its "discoverer"), his extensive work codifies and describes the idea in a compelling combination of scholarship and imaginative re-creation (see especially Bachofen 1948; 1954; 1966). A vast range of material is assimilated into a deceptively simple historical scheme that sees history as progressing from "primitive promiscuity," in which property and children are held in common, through "mother right," in which women assert political authority in a society founded on the naturalness of the mother-child bond, to "father right," a higher state of culture in which the more artificial authority of fathers leads to spiritual and intellectual advances, but also to political hierarchies and individualism. Significantly, the transition between stages is always accompanied by the violent repression of the previous state of consciousness. This scheme is supported by extensive reflections on language, symbol, law, gender, and cultural identity: this combination of rich and sometimes ambiguous substance with clear theoretical architecture has ensured that Bachofen's work has exercised an influence even (or especially) when mainstream scholarship claims to have disproved the historical reality of matriarchy. One can see Bachofen's work as a conservative attempt to "tame" the potentially politically radical implications of the earlier ideas.

Bachofen's work forms part of an extensive debate in the later nineteenth century about the history and nature of the institution of marriage: are the structures of bourgeois marriage natural, or are they a relatively recent innovation in human history? Do societies progress according to general rules of evolution, or are they fundamentally different? If maternity is more "natural" and more certain than paternity, must a "primitive" society be organized along maternal lines, with the patriarchal family a sign of a more abstract, complex legal framework? Alongside Bachofen's *Das Mutterrecht* in 1861 came a range of other works (cf. Giraud-Teulon 1884; Lubbock 1865; McLennan 1865; Post 1889; Tyler 1871). Lewis Henry Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877) influenced Marxist thinking in its suggestion that an original, communal attitude to property could return along with the equality of women. What these responses had in common was an evolutionary view of culture that held that societies must develop from the simple to the complex (a view most influentially expressed in Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Sociology*, 1876–1897), an organic view of societies that held that they form a coherent whole in which each part – legal system, marriage relations, and so forth – expresses the structure of the whole, and also that developed societies express in their structures traces of their own history and origins that observers armed with the correct methods can interpret.

Challenges to evolutionist theories came from two directions, both of which offered possibilities for constructing matriarchal utopias: the fieldwork anthropology pioneered by Franz Boas (1896) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1927; 1929), and the *Kulturkreis* theory introduced by Leo Frobenius (1898). Malinowski's fieldwork amongst the Trobriand islanders had led him to the conclusion that there were peoples in existence whose societies did not know patriarchal or individualist structures, and in which children developed without passing through the processes proposed by Freudian psychoanalysis. The free, open sexuality that Malinowski discussed was connected by later writers such as Wilhelm Reich with a paradisal, pre-civilized, matriarchal state.

Theories of cultural change through ethnic conflict have also had a lasting influence on matriarchal thinking, and have mostly supplanted evolutionism in recent mythic-historical narratives. They propose that most cultural change in the ancient world was brought about by migration, invasion, and ethnic conflict: ethnic groups are identified with a particular set of cultural phenomena – material culture, language, social structures – and victorious groups impose these norms on the conquered. In an era of intense nationalism, such racial-ethnic theorizing became attractive, since it became possible to associate the "arrival" of one's own ethnic group with the imposition of higher cultural values: in general, the Indo-European tribes were held to have brought patriarchy and various technological advances to Europe, conquering indigenous settled peoples. Many matriarchal theories, such as those of Marija Gimbutas (see the following) tell the same story while reversing the value judgment.

Thanks to the canonical status of Friedrich Engels's work, the idea that a period of matriarchy should be associated with the period of "primitive communism"

(*Urkommunismus*) at the beginning of human history could always find a place in Marxist thinking, and indeed, the theory retained canonical status in the Soviet Union well into the 1970s: the dialectical return of earlier conditions at a higher level of development was a fundamental tenet of dialectical materialism. The transition from mother right to father right is almost universally connected with the development of private property, and is explained psychologically through the assumption of the dominant male's desire to accumulate property in order to secure the social position of his offspring. Matriarchy tended to become a weapon in the hands of Marxist feminists who wanted to critique the sexism and conservatism of their own movement.

The utopian moment is present at the root of Marxist thinking about the family, in particular in the work of Friedrich Engels and August Bebel, who associate the liberation of women with the abolition of private property as the cornerstone of capitalism: the oppression of women is the inevitable product of capitalism, since it relies on bourgeois family structures. Inspiration is found in Morgan's fieldwork and the historical depth provided by Bachofen; mythic narratives are read rather uncritically in Bachofen's sense as historical records. In Engels's well-known phrase, the coming of patriarchy represented "the world historical defeat of the female sex" (Engels 2010, 87). The relative significance and priority of class conflict and patriarchal oppression was a question that would preoccupy Marxist feminists for a long time to come: for Engels, the two are inescapably linked. During the 1930s, Marxist thinkers connected to the Frankfurt School began to reassess the theory of matriarchy, in particular through a renewed reception of Bachofen's work, which is used in a complex of ideas bringing together Freudian psychoanalysis, feminism, and Marxism, which are employed in order to reflect critically on one another (cf. Fromm 1970, 106–134; Horkheimer 1936).

There had been attempts to synthesize psychoanalysis and Marxism in the name of a utopian politics before this, despite Freud's disavowal of the political consequences of his theory: in particular, the Austrian psychoanalyst Otto Gross, whose frenetic and destructive campaigning for the "liberation" of the unconscious, the overthrow of patriarchy and capitalism in favor of "free love," communism, and matriarchal social structures had a lasting influence on German anarchists and radical writers (Davies 2010, 243–257; Gross 2000; Hurwitz 1979; Michaels 1983). Similarly, Wilhelm Reich saw revolutionary potential in an understanding of matriarchy as a form of society in which patriarchy, capitalism, and authoritarian structures of sexual repression had not yet formed in the oppressive processes represented by the Oedipus complex (1972).

Despite the claims made by antifeminists, matriarchy was never a mainstream feature of campaigning by feminists at the beginning of the twentieth century (on matriarchy and the Women's Movement, see Davies 2010, 107–161; Eller 2011, 100–132; Fehlmann 2011, 285–319). For the most part, it simply served to demonstrate that patriarchy was not an eternal state of affairs, and so could be changed, and to ensure that women became aware that their struggle had a history.

There were, however, a number of creative attempts to combine feminism and matriarchy in the first half of the century, some of which were taken up again in the 1970s. Most of them are concerned with "maternalist" politics, that is, the justification of women's participation in public and political life in terms of their gender-specific caring, communitarian characteristics: theorists tended to combine socialism and pacifism with "sex reform" ideas based on the liberation of the erotic body and eugenicist theories of biological progress. Their work suggests that the "sickness" of modern society can be cured by a renewed emphasis on the naturalness of bodily experience, sex, and childbirth. This politics shades into utopian thinking when political systems based on female characteristics, or female-centered communes, are proposed, for example by some of the activists connected with League for the Protection of Mothers and Sex Reform, founded in Germany in 1905 (see Davies 2010, 110–122; Grossman 1995; Nowacki 1983; Taylor Allen 1991). In these cases, however, it is the biological health of the nation that is at stake, rather than the liberation of women for their own sake: women's authority in politics and the family will guarantee the eugenic improvement of the nation. Other social experiments influenced by matriarchal thinking included the influential anarchist commune at Monte Verità, Ascona, Switzerland, from ca. 1900 (cf. Landmann 2000).

Some significant works from the 1920s form a bridge between prewar anarchist and feminist theories and the renewed interest in matriarchal utopias in the 1930s, in which thinkers like Wilhelm Reich combined anthropology, Marxism, and psychoanalysis in comprehensive critiques of Western culture. Mathilde Vaerting (1921; 1923) argued provocatively that the theory of matriarchy proves that there are no essential psychological differences between men and women: history consists of a series of pendulum movements between patriarchy and matriarchy. In a matriarchy, men exhibit characteristics normally associated with women: passivity, emotion, devotion to children and domesticity, weaker physique and emphasis on external appearance. Therefore, these characteristics are not eternal but are produced by shifting power relations. Other free thinkers, anarchists and sex reformers also continued to try to use matriarchal theories to critique the idea of "eternal" male and female essences and to propose far-reaching transformations in social power structures (cf. Krische and Krische 1927).

These texts preserve a utopian impetus that links the concerns of pre-World War I feminists with the debates of the 1970s and 1980s. One of the most original and interesting works from the 1920s, and which is directly influenced by Vaerting's work, is by Sir Galahad (=Bertha Eckstein-Diener). Her study, *Mütter und Amazonen* (1932), was rediscovered in the 1970s and read widely within the German Women's Movement. The text attempts to make vitalist philosophy and the ethnological and mythic evidence for matriarchies useful for a radical critique of contemporary culture. It is also an attempt to give women access to their own traditions, and to reduce the *motherliness* of matriarchy, sweeping away the idea of women's passive, pacifist nature, and avoiding the contortions of theorists who wish to discuss

matriarchies without accepting the idea of women wielding political power or exercising violence in defense of it. Her focus is always on the present day, drawing parallels between the cultures of the ancient world and the 1920s both for polemical purposes and because her theory of history, influenced by Vaerting and by Robert Briffault's monumental and anachronistically evolutionist study *The Mothers: The Matriarchal Theory of Social Origins* (1931), suggests the cyclical repetition of catastrophes and conflicts between male and female principles.

Despite the discrediting of theories based on ethnic essence, a theory of ethnic conquest of some kind forms the basis of many recent matriarchal utopias: it provides a way of preserving the necessary stark gender oppositions, portrays the imposition of patriarchy as a single, easily understandable, violent event, and offers the possibility of recovering a gender essence that is hidden, but still pure. The work of Marija Gimbutas (1921–1994) provides a link between the ethnic theories of the early twentieth century and the matriarchal spirituality movements that grew out of the New Left in the 1970s: in a number of works, Gimbutas posited a coherent, peaceful, egalitarian, Goddess-worshipping Neolithic culture in Europe, which developed agriculture and early forms of writing, but which was overrun by aggressive patriarchal peoples (which she called "Kurgan") from the Russian steppe (1974; 1989; 1991). This theory, which plays on traditional fears of "Eastern barbarians," provides a very clear ethnic scheme for interpreting archaeological evidence from the Neolithic: symbolic forms in archaeological finds can be seen as evidence of Goddess worship, and connected with particular utopian social conditions. Myths and oral history also contain traces of this ancient civilization, passed on down the generations by women as secret knowledge.

There is no archaeological evidence that can be interpreted unambiguously as pointing to matriarchal social forms, and archaeologists have for the most part dismissed the theory of a unified Neolithic matriarchal culture (Fehlmann 2011, 157–168). Nevertheless, archaeological reconstructions have often functioned as screens for projecting utopian present longings, often pairing a gynomorphic mystical topography (the land or the archaeology interpreted as sacred and female) with a deep suspicion of modernity. Among the most important of these are Arthur Evans's compelling, imaginative reconstruction of a supposedly aristocratic, matriarchal Minoan Crete (see Gere 2009), the study of Palaeolithic "Venus" statuettes (Eller 2000, 117 f.; Röder *et al.* 2001) or of Neolithic remains across Europe (Levy 1949) including Britain (Hawkes 1951), and excavations at Çatalhöyük in Turkey, which have become a focus for Goddess spirituality (Mellaart 1967). The matriarchal scholar Heide Göttner-Abendroth has produced an important, extensive synthesis of the archaeological evidence in favor of a unified Neolithic matriarchy, while at the same time using it as a foundation for a female-centered ritual spiritual practice focused on the "sacred" spaces revealed by archaeologists (Göttner-Abendroth 2010). As Meret Fehlmann has pointed out, matriarchies are sited in a prehistory that is recent enough for women to be credited with the invention of agriculture, but early enough that no direct written evidence is to be found (Fehlmann 2011, 410).

One can see matriarchal interpretations of archaeological findings as an understandable reaction to the traditions of Archaeology that remained stubbornly masculinist until the later twentieth century: nevertheless, their reliance on the traditional association of woman/nature/body/spirituality/intuition has set them apart from many gender-oriented feminist critiques of the discipline.

A fundamental difference in the terms of the discussion within the Women's Movement from the 1970s onwards lay in the fact that there was no longer any professional, "mainstream" scholarship that supported the theory of ancient matriarchies. Any scholarship that supported matriarchal utopias was either carried out by writers who were marginalized by their professions, or who rejected the methods of scholarly disciplines. For this reason, feminists who work with social constructivist theories of gender have had no difficulty dismissing matriarchy as a damaging fantasy that entailed accepting definitions of femininity that reduced women's "nature" to bodily experience, non-rational thought, emotion, intuition, and archaism (cf. Eller 2000; Janssen-Jurreit 1982, 52; Schuster 1983).

Nevertheless, the utopian potential of matriarchal myth remained apparent, and it was precisely the rejection by mainstream scholarship (defined as "masculine") that gave matriarchal ideas their currency as a secret, "repressed" knowledge that women needed to recover. Matriarchal theories begin to appear in critiques of the New Left by women who objected to the subordinate position of women within the radical political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and who came to the conclusion that the idea of a common struggle against capitalism was meaningless without a struggle against patriarchy.

Matriarchal myths became useful in a search for a female myth of origin to set against both the masculinist stories of institutional religion and historical and political narratives in which women's experiences and agency were invisible. The theories of Bachofen, Gimbutas, and Sir Galahad enjoyed a new currency (Sir Galahad's *Mütter und Amazonen* was read in the German student movement in an illegal copy, intensifying the sense of possession of repressed knowledge). Bachofen's work found its way into English in 1967 in a translation of extracts by Ralph Manheim (Bachofen 1992) that stressed Bachofen's grand historical theory and reading of myth, rather than his scholarly source criticism or discussion of anthropological theory.

In the Anglophone world, matriarchy came to be associated with the claim to be able to reconstruct pre-Christian (especially Celtic) belief and ritual through the critical reading of myth: it is influenced by Romantic landscape-nostalgia and anxiety about modernity. Matriarchal utopias are discussed in the context of readings of other myth theorists, such as Jane Harrison: Harrison contributed significantly to the development of the theory of an original European Goddess-religion overthrown by patriarchal invaders; her interpretation of myths about Minoan civilization developed alongside Evans' Cretan archaeology (cf. Harrison 1991). Robert Graves's *The White Goddess* (1999) has proved the most durable foundational text for this discourse, despite its misogyny and anti-Semitism (see also Fehlmann 2011, 335–358, 415–419, for aspects of the debate about anti-Semitism and matriarchy).

With few exceptions, explorations of matriarchal myths from the 1970s onward have a sense of literary reconstruction, utopian projection, criticism of scientific modernity, and universal male/female duality in which women are understood as peaceful and closer to Nature by virtue of the rhythms of menstruation and the experience of motherhood and nurturing. Writers aim to rediscover repressed histories, provide a refuge from an oppressive patriarchal world, and to give women a sense of returning to themselves in the rejection of patriarchal definitions of womanhood.

Definitions of womanhood that stressed biology and the common experience of motherhood produced matriarchal utopias that are reminiscent of certain early twentieth-century ideas. There is, however, an increased emphasis on Goddess and Wiccan spirituality by contrast with the often more secular and socialist earlier campaigners, and a strong link with the developing Green movement, although with an explicitly gendered and gynomorphic view of Nature as female (cf. Budapest 1980; Daly 1979). Writers such as Jane Alpert or Adrienne Rich proceeded from a critique of the oppressive patriarchal and capitalist institution of motherhood to a world view built on the ethical value of motherhood itself: Alpert's call for a matriarchal restructuring of society is an updating of early twentieth-century maternalist politics (Alpert 1974; Rich 1976).

The "feminist spirituality" movement took up these ideas, combining various mythic-historical narratives with calls for the introduction of a female-centered religious practice usually based on rituals connecting the natural world and motherhood. The development of the feminist spirituality movement has been dealt with in detail elsewhere (Eller 2000; Fehlmann 2011, 359–382). The spiritual feminism movement is usually traced to Elizabeth Gould Davis' *The First Sex* (1971) although there were plenty of forerunners among matriarchal theorists before World War II. Davis constructs a historical narrative based on biological and mythical elements, whose driving force is the conflict between the sexes; men are seen as biologically secondary to an original Feminine, while patriarchy is the result of the overthrow of settled matriarchal societies by male war bands. Other writers work with an ethnic narrative of invasion and overthrow influenced by Gimbutas's "Kurgan" theory (e.g., Stone 1976).

Susanne Lanwerd has stated that the greatest contribution of the theory of ancient matriarchy lies not in any "proof" of the historical existence of matriarchies, but in the way that the idea opened the eyes of researchers since the nineteenth century to the possibility of social structures that do not reflect the norms of Western modernity, and forced them to question the "naturalness" of the patriarchal family (Lanwerd 1993, 78). It also played a key role in sensitizing different disciplines to gender and to the traditional invisibility of women in scholarship. Anthropology, Ancient History, Archaeology, Classical and Germanic Philology, Sociology, Psychoanalysis, Religious Studies, and many other disciplines were shaken up and redefined in the years around 1900 in an encounter with matriarchal theories.

The definition of "patriarchy" as a *system* owes much to the cross-disciplinary nature of the theory of matriarchy, even if matriarchy is no longer accepted as a historical fact; however, the stark opposition between "matriarchal" and "patriarchal" societies has been relativized in much recent scholarship. What remains of matriarchy is what was there at least from the early nineteenth century, namely a utopia based on a strictly gendered view of modernity: the dream of a life more fulfilled and authentic than is possible under current conditions; a desire to find and excavate hidden histories, alternative origin stories and "deeper" levels of consciousness without requiring specialist scholarship. It relies on comparative studies, on a particular kind of interpretation of myth, symbol, and folk custom, and on intuitive analogies between body and landscape or psychological and historical depth, rather than on source criticism and other forms of specialist disciplinary methodology.

Matriarchal myth-making can be seen as an expression of frustration at the slow progress of feminism, and it has often arisen in critiques of male-dominated radical political movements. The historical narrative also offers a set of stories that provide a way of talking about and explaining the experience of violence against women throughout history: this unabashed acknowledgment of violence has been an important feature of the theory from the Romantic period onwards. However, with a few exceptions, it relies on a conservative view of essential sex difference, with femininity defined in terms of bodily experience and rhythms, intuition, and archaism. It is a quintessentially modern myth-making project, creating dramatic, unambiguous origin narratives, and seeming to offer a space for reflection and identification that is pure and uncontaminated, but which in fact reflects a range of tensions and anxieties about modernity and gender.

Guide to Further Reading

There is a rich recent literature on the issue of matriarchy, which spans many different disciplines. The most extensive recent attempt to synthesise the evidence in favor of the existence of a coherent matriarchal cultural stage can be found in the work of Heide Göttner-Abendroth (1991; 1996; 2010); opposing views, critiquing the theory from a feminist viewpoint and discussing the archaeological methods employed by matriarchal theorists, are set out most clearly by Cynthia Eller (2000) and Brigitte Röder *et al.* (1996). Cathy Gere (2009) has written critically on archaeologists' interpretations of the remains at Knossos. Cynthia Eller (2011), Peter Davies (2010), and Meret Fehlmann (2011) provide the most detailed cultural-historical studies of the development of matriarchal ideas from the Enlightenment onward, and have extensive bibliographies; Ronald Hutton's *The Triumph of the Moon* (1999) is useful for the British context. There are other useful introductory works by Uwe Wesel (1980), Hartmut Zinser (1996), Rosalind Coward (1983), and Andrew Lyons and Harriet Lyons (2004), while Joan Bamberger (1974), Kate

Millett (1971), Marieluise Janssen-Jurreit (1982), Sonja Distler (1989), and Helga
Laugsch (2011) have written on matriarchy and feminism. The literature on
Bachofen himself is extensive: other useful works include Bourgeaud *et al.* (1999)
and Gossman (1984).

There has never been a complete translation of any of Bachofen's works, which
means that the Anglophone view of Bachofen is very partial. The Manheim trans-
lation, with an Introduction by Joseph Campbell (Bachofen 1992), is based on a
popular selection of extracts from Bachofen's works published in 1927 by Rudolf
Marx (Bachofen 1984) that stresses his historical system and his neo-Romantic,
intuitive approach to myth and symbol, as opposed to his source criticism and
anthropological studies.

References

Alpert, J. 1974. *Mother Right: A New Feminist Theory*. Pittsburgh: Know Inc.

Bachofen, J. 1948. *Das Mutterrecht: Eine Untersuchung über die Gynaikokratie der alten Welt
    nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur. Gesammelte Werke vols 2 and 3*. Basel: B. Schwabe
    & Co. (First published 1867.)

Bachofen, J. 1954. *Versuch über die Gräbersymbolik der Alten. Gesammelte Werke vol. 4*. Basel:
    B. Schwabe & Co. (First published 1859.)

Bachofen, J. 1966. *Antiquarische Briefe vornemlich zur Kenntniss der ältesten Verwandtschaftsbegriffe.
    Gesammelte Werke* vol. 8. Basel: B. Schwabe & Co. (First published 1880–1886.)

Bachofen, J. 1984. *Mutterrecht und Urreligion*. Stuttgart: A. Kröner. (First published 1927.)

Bachofen, J. 1992. *Myth, Religion and Mother Right: Selected Writings*, trans. R. Manheim.
    Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (First published 1967.)

Bamberger, J. 1974. "The Myth of Matriarchy: Why Men Rule in Primitive Society," in
    M.Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, eds, *Woman, Culture and Society*, 263–281. Stanford, CA:
    Stanford University Press.

Boas, F. 1896. "The Limitations of the Comparative Method of Anthropology." *Science*, 4:
    901–908.

Borgeaud, P., Durisch, N., Kolde, A., and Sommer, G. 1999. *La mythologie du matriarcat:
    L'atelier de Johann Jakob Bachofen*. Geneva: Librairie Droz.

Briffault, R. 1931. *The Mothers: The Matriarchal Theory of Social Origins*. New York:
    Macmillan.

Budapest, Z. 1980. *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteries*. New York: Oakland.

Casaubon, E. 1834. *La femme est la famille*. Paris: Chez Gautier.

Coward, R. 1983. *Patriarchal Precedents: Sexuality and Social Relations*. London: Routledge
    and Keegan Paul.

Daly, M. 1979. *Gyn/Ecology. The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Davies, P. 2010. *Myth, Matriarchy and Modernity: Johann Jakob Bachofen in German Culture,
    1860–1945*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Davis, E. 1971. *The First Sex*. Harmondsworth: Putnam.

Distler, S. 1989. *Mütter, Amazonen und Dreifältige Göttinnen: Eine psychologische Analyse der
    feministischen Matriarchatsdebatte*. Vienna: Picus Verlag.

Eller, C. 2000. *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory: Why an Invented Past won't give Women a Future*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Eller, C. 2011. *Gentlemen and Amazons: The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory, 1860–1900*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Engels, F. 2010. *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. London: Penguin.

Fehlmann, M. 2011. *Die Rede vom Matriarchat: Zur Gebrauchsgeschichte eines Arguments*. Zurich: Chronos.

Ferguson, A. 1767. *Essay on the history of civil society*. London: Cadell.

Frobenius, L. 1898. *Ursprung der afrikanischen Kultur*. Berlin: Borntraeger.

Fromm, E. 1970. *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis*. London: Holt, Rinehart, Winston.

Gere, C. 2009. *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gimbutas, M. 1974. *Gods and Goddesses of Old Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gimbutas, M. 1989. *The Language of the Goddess*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Gimbutas, M. 1991. *The Civilisation of the Goddess*. San Francisco: HarperCollins.

Girardin, E. 1851. *La politique universelle*. Paris: Librairie Nouvelle.

Giraud-Teulon, A. 1884. *Les origines du mariage et de la famille*. Geneva: A. Cherbuliez.

Gossmann, L. 1984. "Basle, Bachofen and the Critique of Modernity in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 47: 136–185.

Göttner-Abendroth, H. 1991. *The Dancing Goddess: Principles of a Matriarchal Aesthetic*, trans. M. Krauss. Boston: Beacon Press.

Göttner-Abendroth, H. 1996. *The Goddess and Her Heroes*, trans. L. Freedberg. Stow: Anthony Pub. Co.

Göttner-Abendroth, H. 2010. *Das Matriarchat: Geschichte seiner Erforschung*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Graves, R. 1999. *The White Goddess. A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*. London: Faber and Faber. (First published 1947.)

Gross, E. 2000. *Von geschlechtlicher Not zur sozialen Katastrophe*, ed. R. Dehmlow. Hamburg: Edition Nautilus.

Grossman, A. 1995. *Reforming Sex: The German Movement for Birth Control and Abortion Reform, 1920–1950*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harrison, J. 1991. *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (First published 1903.)

Hawkes, J. 1951. *A Land*. New York: Random House.

Hildebrandt, H.-J. 1983. *Der Evolutionismus in der Familienforschung des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: D. Reimer.

Hildebrandt, H.-J. 1988. *Der Evolutionismus in der Familienforschung des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Berlin: Hirschberg.

Horkheimer, M. 1936. *Studien über Autorität und Familie*. Paris: F. Alcan.

Hurwitz, E. 1979. *Otto Gross: Paradies-Sucher zwischen Freud und Jung*. Zurich: Suhrkamp.

Hutton, R. 1999. *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Janssen-Jurreit, M. 1982. *Sexism: The Male Monopoly on History and Thought*, trans.V. Moberg. New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux.

Krische, P. and Krische, M. 1927. *Das Rätsel der Mutterrechtsgesellschaft: Eine Studie über die Frühepoche der Leistung und Stellung des Weibes*. Munich: G. Müller.

Lafitau, J.-F. 1724. *Les moeurs des sauvages amériquains comparées aux moeurs des premiers temps*. Paris: Chez Saugrain l'aîné.

Landmann, R. 2000. Ascona – Monte Verità: Auf der Suche nach dem Paradies. *Frauenfeld*; Stuttgart: Huber.

Lanwerd, S. 1993. *Zur Geschichte religionswissenschftlicher Begriffe*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer.

Laugsch, H. 2011. *Der Matriarchats-Diskurs in der Zweiten Deutschen Frauenbewegung*. Munich: Utz.

Levy, G. 1949. *The Gate of Horn: A Study of the Religious Conceptions of the Stone Age and their Influence on European Thought*. London: Faber and Faber.

Lubbock, J. 1865. *Prehistoric Times, as Illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages*. London: Wiliams and Norgate.

Lyons, A. and Lyons, H. 2004. *Irregular Connections: A History of Anthropology and Sexuality*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Malinowski, B. 1927. *Sex and Repression in Savage Society*. London: Routledge.

Malinowski, B. 1929. *The Sexual Life of Savages in Northwestern Melanesia*. London: Liveright.

McLennan, J. 1865. *Primitive Marriage: An Inquiry into the Origin of the Form of Capture in Marriage Ceremonies*. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black.

Mellaart, J. 1967. *Çatal Hüyük: A Neolithic Town in Anatolia*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Michaels, J. 1983. *Anarchy and Eros: Otto Gross' Impact on German Expressionist Writers*. New York: P. Lang.

Millar, J. 1771. *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society*. Dublin: T. Ewing.

Millet, K. 1971. *Sexual Politics*. London: Avon.

Morgan, L.H. 1877. *Ancient Society. Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*. Chicago: C. H. Kerr.

Müller, J. 1855. *Geschichte der amerikanischen Urreligionen*. Basel: H. Richter.

Nowacki, B. 1983. *Der Bund für Mutterschutz, 1905–1933*. Husum: Matthiesen.

Post, A. 1889. *Studien zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Familienrechts*. Leipzig: A. Schwartz.

Ranck, S. 1995. *Cakes for the Queen of Heaven: An Exploration of Women's Power Past, Present, and Future*. Chicago: Delphi Press.

Reich, W. 1972. *The Invasion of Compulsory Sex-Morality*, trans. W. Grossmann and D. Grossmann. Milan: Sugar.

Rich, A. 1976. *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. London: Virago.

Röder, B., Hummel, J., and Kunz, B. 2001. *Göttinnendämmerung. Das Matriarchat aus archäologischer Sicht*. Munich: Droemer Knau.

Schuster, V. 1983. "Vorsicht Mythos: Zum Beispiel des Mythos Matriarchat." *Feministische Studien*, 2: 160–166.

Sir Galahad (=Bertha Eckstein-Diener) 1932. *Mütter und Amazonen. Ein Umriß weiblicher Reiche*. Munich: A. Langen.

Spencer, H. 1876-1897. *Principles of Sociology*. New York: Appleton.

Stone, M. 1976. *When God was a Woman*. New York: Dial Press.

Taylor Allen, A. 1991. *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800–1914*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Tyler, E. 1871. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religions, Art, and Custom*. London: J. Murray.

Vaerting, M. 1921. *Die Neubegründung der Psychologie von Mann und Weib*. Vol 1: *Die weibliche Eigenart im Männerstaat und die männliche Eigenart im Frauenstaat*. Karlsruhe: Braun.

Vaerting, M. 1923. *Neubegründung der Psychologie von Mann und Weib.* Vol. 2: *Wahrheit und Irrtum in der Geschlechterpsychologie.* Karlsruhe: Braun.

Wagner-Hasel, B., ed. 1992. *Matriarchatstheorien der Altertumswissenschaft.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

Welcker, F. 1824. *Die Aeschylische Trilogie Prometheus und die Kabirenweihe zu Lemnos.* Darmstadt: C.W. Leske.

Wesel, U. 1980. *Der Mythos vom Matriarchat.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Wilken, G. 1884. *Het Matriarchaat bij de oude Arabieren.* Amsterdam: J.H. De Bussy.

Zinser, H. 1996. *Mythos des Mutterrechts. Verhandlungen von drei aktuellen Theorien des Geschlechterkampfs.* Münster: Lit.

Part III

Myth, Creativity, and the Mind

The Half-Blood Hero

Percy Jackson and Mythmaking in the Twenty-First Century

Joanna Paul

One of the most popular series in children's literature of the twenty-first century has been Rick Riordan's tales of Percy Jackson. Beginning with 2005's *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*, they recount the adventures of the adolescent Percy, a boy growing up in present-day New York, who accidentally discovers that he is the off-spring of a mortal mother and a divine father, Poseidon. The Olympians have never gone away, but are currently based in the United States, where they continue their dalliances with mortals, and where monsters still plague their heroic off-spring. For his own protection, Percy is whisked off to Camp Half-Blood, where he finds a host of youngsters just like him, including Annabeth, daughter of Athena, and Grover, a satyr charged with protecting Percy. Across the five books of the first series, and the follow-up *Heroes of Olympus* set, Percy and the other half-bloods are embroiled in a series of quests, from the recovery of Zeus' lightning bolt to bat-tling the monsters of the Labyrinth.[1] Much of the action is driven by the rivalry between the Olympian "Big Three" – Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades – and the sinister ambitions of the Titan lord Kronos, who is trying to regain supremacy over the Olympians.

Riordan's stories, in which recognizably "classical" heroic quests play out in the modern world, have proved very popular with young audiences (the books are targeted at, roughly, nine- to twelve-year-olds), regularly topping best-seller lists and meeting with widespread critical approval.[2] How, then, are we to understand the appeal of these updated myths, especially in the wider context of contempo-rary receptions of classical mythology? These narratives arguably represent one of the most sustained attempts in recent years to revitalize an ongoing mytho-graphic tradition, and are worthy of consideration for that alone. Furthermore,

their juvenile focus allows us to delve more deeply into an issue that recurs throughout this volume, the particular appeal that classical mythology holds for children, and the ways in which their readings and receptions of those myths manifest themselves. Throughout history, myths have often been reused and reimagined as "allusive poetic shorthand,"[3] but erudite and coded meanings are unlikely to figure for children who may be meeting myth for the first time through Percy Jackson. Instead, I shall argue that it is the creativity of Riordan's approach, and the sense of identification that it fosters, that makes these myths meaningful for children. At the same time, though these stories may be consumed by children, they are created by an adult: interrogating Riordan's own political and aesthetic take on myth will, therefore, deepen our understanding of how classical myth can be received today.

In the limited space available here, then, we will take an overview of the effects and implications of Riordan's mythographic strategy, rather than analyzing in depth the twists and turns of the narrative across the entire series. For simplicity's sake, examples will be drawn primarily from the first series, *Percy Jackson & The Olympians*, and comparisons will also be made with the film adaptation of the first installment, *Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Lightning Thief* (2010), directed by Chris Columbus.[4] Much of each text's appeal comes from its careful interweaving of ancient and modern, a tactic exemplified by the characterization of the central protagonist, Percy, and so a useful point of departure for our discussion. His given name is Perseus, inevitably establishing the ancient hero as the key classical reference point for Percy; this is underlined by the fact that Percy's first major adventure is the defeat of the Gorgon Medusa, the episode for which Perseus is best known (along with the rescue of Andromeda). And yet, he is clearly not "the same" as the ancient Perseus: this new Perseus is the son of Poseidon, not Zeus (since Riordan thought it would be "a little more interesting to have a hero who had to try a little bit harder because his dad was the second most powerful god, rather than the guy sitting in the big throne").[5] How significant is the connection, then? Percy's mother, Sally, tells him that she named him Perseus because "the original Perseus was one of the only heroes in the Greek myths who got a happy ending,"[6] which resonates with other modern interpretations of the myth as a relatively uncomplicated, satisfying narrative. As Daniel Ogden observes, the Perseus myth "has everything to offer: a faultless hero, a classic quest structure, gratifying acts of revenge, romance charged with eroticism, compelling folktale motifs and, last but not least, a pair of intriguing and terrible monsters" (Ogden 2008, 143). Perseus is the kind of hero who is reasonably well-known to modern audiences, but not so well-known – and especially not for troubling attributes like anger, excessive slaughter, or incest – that he can't be molded into new narrative shapes and made suitable for children. Indeed, Riordan's new version of Perseus might be seen to enrich the ancient template by giving Percy a more complex characterization and emotional life, unlike the "cypher action-hero" of antiquity.[7]

Gods in the Modern World

So, this is a reimagined rather than a reincarnated Perseus, an approach that governs most of Riordan's mythic story-telling. As is often the case in modern receptions of myth, there is no undue reverence for the canonical versions; ancient narratives are instead only templates for new stories, and are adapted and reshaped to suit their new context, so that, for example, after the authentically Persean adventures of the first book, the second sees our twenty-first-century hero journey to find the Golden Fleece, while the third matches him up against many of the labors of Hercules. But while many different heroic narratives and motifs are amalgamated and adapted through Percy, the Olympians are, by contrast, the same divine beings that they have always been. Their appearance may change (in true Olympian fashion, they can metamorphose at will, allowing them to walk the streets of Manhattan undetected), and Mount Olympus may have shifted so that it is now accessed via the 600th floor of the Empire State Building (for reasons to which we will return presently), but Zeus remains Zeus and Athena is Athena – their identities remain continuous. The transposition or persistence of the gods into the modern world is a fictional device that has already been quite widely used, whether in children's books such as the *Myth-o-Mania* series by Kate McMullan (2002–2003),[8] or in adult narratives, particularly in the sci-fi genre, as in Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* (2001), or the early *Star Trek* episode, "Who Mourns for Adonais?" (1967); Marie Phillips's *Gods Behaving Badly* (2007) also gives the conceit an adult spin with its sometimes-risqué tale of the gods living in a north London bedsit.[9] But Riordan puts his own stamp on this mythological fantasizing, conjuring up a world in which a whole range of motifs, characters, and stories from classical myth accompany the Olympians into a modern setting, and doing so with considerable flair.

A couple of examples will suffice to illustrate Riordan's creative approach to interweaving ancient and modern, beginning with Percy's encounter with Medusa. The Gorgon is to be found at "Auntie Em's Garden Emporium," for the simple reason that her petrified victims make perfect ornaments for lawns and flower-beds, the ideal front for her monstrous deeds. She remains a snake-haired monster (though a good deal more alluring in the guise of Uma Thurman in the film, compared to the old woman described in the book) and Percy still has to avoid looking at her as he attempts to kill her. But instead of using his shield as a reflecting device, as he does in various ancient accounts, it is the shiny chrome backing of his iPod that fulfils that role (making the film still more inventive than the novel, where he uses a glass orb). At the climax of his first adventure, Percy – like any good classical hero – must undertake a journey to the underworld; so if the Olympians are now based in the United States, where might Hades be located? Los Angeles fits the bill, with the entrance to the underworld aptly appearing beneath the Hollywood sign, in the film, and through the offices of "D.O.A. Records" in the book, where Charon, on reception, can be paid with Amex – or the cost of the

ferryman can be charged to your last cable bill. While we are offered conventional visions of the Olympians at times – especially in the film, with its typically armor-clad Zeus in a celestial Olympian throne-room – the cinematic depiction of Hades exemplifies the sense that these are modernized gods; the king of the dead in our century is played by Steve Coogan as if he were an aging rock-star, living in what looks like the gothic mansion of Ozzy Osbourne and family.[10]

What, then, are the effects of reframing mythological episodes in a modern setting? Above all, Riordan encourages a sense of familiarity and empathy in his readers. Percy and his world make sense to them; young audiences may relate much more readily to a hero who, despite his divine lineage and accoutrements, possesses flying shoes in the form of Converse sneakers, or who encounters the Furies on a Greyhound bus. This is not to say that classical myths *need* to be radically updated before children will engage with them. As the other contributions to this volume show, there has been a long history of children's versions of myths that engage in no such strategy but which still themselves become canonical, from Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Tanglewood Tales* onwards. But Riordan's revised myths offer children something distinctive. Instead of transporting them to a distant, frequently alien, classical past, antiquity is brought to them and made a part of *their* world. By injecting these ancient narratives with the trappings of the present day, their potential to entertain finds a new level; but also, crucially, their didactic potential may be subtly strengthened. As Sheila Murnaghan argues, by stripping myth of its associations with archaic, alienating narratives and fusty elitism, Riordan is:

> calculating that if he enters robustly into an anti-elitist, low-cultural view of the classics, he can somehow promote the more elitist, high cultural values with which they are also identified; that by agreeing that school is boring, he can make kids want to learn; that by denying that myths are metaphors requiring interpretation, he can get kids to benefit from the fact that they are.
>
> (Riordan 2015)[11]

This anti-elitism is enshrined in Percy's characterization as more ordinary boy than hero, further encouraging readers to identify with him. This process starts with Riordan's own son, for whom the stories were first created. Diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and dyslexia, and struggling at school, Riordan set out to encourage him by inventing a character with the same conditions; crucially, Percy's difficulties can be *explained* by his half-blood status – his ADHD is a sign of his superhuman alertness and readiness for battle, while his dyslexia is because his brain is actually hardwired for ancient Greek. Moreover, although his heroism is sometimes played up – certainly in the marketing blurb of the UK editions, which proclaim him "half boy, half god, all hero" – Percy himself more readily fits the archetype of the reluctant hero, making him much more likely to be an object of identification and admiration rather than star-struck

hero worship.[12] Still, the heroic archetype requires that he eventually respond to his "call to arms," and so throughout the series, Percy must negotiate his identity as demigod and his dual inhabitation of both mortal and immortal, supernatural and rational worlds. As is often the case in myth and its retellings, certain characters, usually mentors or teachers, guide the hero through these liminal areas; here, it is primarily Chiron who fulfils this role, whether he appears as an actual centaur, or as Percy's wheelchair-bound teacher in the first book, Mr Brunner.[13]

Re-evaluating the Classical Tradition

Riordan's transposition of mythic motifs into the modern world is certainly an interesting narrative strategy in its own right, and much more could be said about his creative and imaginative techniques. But we must now move on to explore some of its wider ramifications. In particular, this mythographic strategy offers a distinctive slant on the very relationship between antiquity and the present – on the nature of the classical tradition itself, we might say – and implicitly, if not explicitly, subverts and challenges much of what we usually take for granted in modern retellings of classical myths. Since Homer, these stories have generally been founded on the assumption that the age of heroes is past, always finished and over. In antiquity, even if the heroic past has genealogical or etiological connections with the narrative present (or indeed future) – as it does in a text such as Virgil's *Aeneid* – and even if the Olympian gods are still worshipped as divinities with the power to affect events in the present, the heroes inhabit a separate, usually distant, era – as in Hesiod's Heroic Age of "the demigods – the race before our own" (*Works and Days* 160). Frequently in post-classical retellings of myth, too, the implied temporal framework is "once upon a time"[14]; but not so for Percy Jackson. Here, the persistence of the Olympians requires a re-evaluation of the relationship between past and present, ancient and modern; if Zeus and Poseidon are still hanging around in New York then the classical past is, in a very real sense, no longer over and finished. Riordan's account of how this came to be so thus functions as a kind of re-explanation of the classical tradition, of the processes of reception even. In the first book, Chiron addresses Percy in a key passage worth quoting at length:

> "Come now, Percy. What you call 'Western civilization.' Do you think it's just an abstract concept? No, it's a living force. A collective consciousness that has burned bright for thousands of years. The gods are part of it … The fire started in Greece. Then, as you well know – or as I hope you know, since you passed my course – the heart of the fire moved to Rome, and so did the gods. Oh, different names, perhaps – Jupiter for Zeus, Venus for Aphrodite, and so on – but the same forces, the same gods.'
>
> 'And then they died.'

'Died? No. Did the West die? The gods simply moved, to Germany, to France, to Spain for a while. Wherever the flame was brightest, the gods were there. They spent several centuries in England. All you need to do is look at the architecture, People do not forget the gods. Every place they've ruled, for the last three thousand years, you can see them in paintings, in statues, and on the most important buildings. And yes, Percy, they are now in your United States. Look at your symbol, the eagle of Zeus. Look at the statue of Prometheus in Rockefeller Center, the Greek facades of your government buildings in Washington. I defy you to find any American city where the Olympians are not prominently displayed in multiple places. Like it or not – and believe me, people weren't very fond of Rome, either – America is now the heart of the flame. It is the great power of the West. And so Olympus is here."

(Riordan 2005, 73–74)

Wherever the apex of western civilization has happened to be at any given time, then, there are the Olympians. Riordan himself has explained how the physical and visual traces of the classical tradition inspired the whole series:

the Greek stories, the Greek gods, the Greek heritage has stayed with us throughout the strand of, you know, what we call Western civilization. It's always there. … So I started playing with that idea. And I thought that if I were a Greek god and I was around today, I would want to be in the center of everything. And that, for me, just seems to be Manhattan.

(Riordan 2010a)[15]

But by spinning this new mythography, *Percy Jackson* also offers a neat counterfactual explanation of the classical tradition, in which statues of the gods appear in first-century Rome, or eighteenth-century England, not because these cultures were looking back to a Greek past out of nostalgia, or a desire to imitate or surpass the ancients; instead, the images of the gods and their symbols are there because the gods *themselves* are there. Of course, this isn't because Riordan actually invests in the idea of a continuing pagan world-view, but he does assert the importance of mythology as part of our cultural roots. Moreover, it is an image that encourages us to think about reception in different terms, by positing and expanding upon the idea that our relationship with the past is one of persistence and continuity, rather than the lost and lacunose fragmented image that we often reach for.

Still, it is far from being a politically neutral view; classical receptions always reveal something of the concerns and ideologies of the receiving society, and Riordan's version is no exception. As the quoted extract demonstrates, equating the persistence of the Olympians with the onward march of Western civilization can easily be read as a rather brash valorization of the west at the expense of all else. It may be entirely apt, from a historical perspective, to insist on that equation, but some readers will doubtless find the implications uncomfortable. The Olympians ultimately rule the roost, and the whole series is about striving to

prevent their defeat at the hands of the dark forces of Tartarus; the message, seemingly, is that Western civilization cannot, must not, be allowed to perish, and that the heroes of the twenty-first century are those that fight for its survival. That said, Riordan does allow for dissenting voices and alternative world-views. To take just one example, when Annabeth and Percy encounter the Sirens in *The Sea of Monsters*, their song takes the form of whatever is most likely to appeal to a victim's "fatal flaw"; for Annabeth, it is her hubristic (though not necessarily negative) belief that she could change the world for the better, and so they show her a vision of a rebuilt, utopian Manhattan. She later explains to Percy why this is her weakness:

> "I mean, the West represents a lot of the best things mankind ever did – that's why the fire is still burning. That's why Olympus is still around. But sometimes you just see the bad stuff, you know? And you start thinking the way Luke does: 'If I could tear all this down, I would do it better.' Don't you ever feel that way? Like *you* could do a better job if you ran the world?"
>
> (Riordan 2006)

Furthermore, Chiron's acknowledgement that "people weren't very fond of Rome, either" implies the well-worn analogy between the United States and Rome, and conjures with the anxiety over America's own hubris – that, having achieved the heights of political and cultural hegemony (indeed, as a result of achieving them), it can only make enemies and set itself up for decline and fall. The second series, *Heroes of Olympus*, by incorporating the Roman pantheon and its mythology, strengthens this interpretation as it adopts the stereotypical reception of Rome. Characterized differently from the Greeks of the first series – Rome is "more about expansion, conquest and discipline" (Riordan 2010a), according to one character[16] – it underlines the sense that Western civilization may not have been *all* about progress. But the question remains, of course, over how likely it is that younger audiences will pick up on these more nuanced interpretations.

While the novels engage with a political reading of the classical tradition, even if only subliminally, it is notable that the film adaptation of *The Lightning Thief* avoids doing so; but that does not mean that it has nothing interesting to say about the classical tradition. Arguably (and no doubt because it is a visual medium), the film delves further into what we might call the aesthetics of reception, rather than its politics. For example, one of Percy's monstrous adversaries is the seven-headed hydra, which is encountered when the threesome pass through Tennessee on their journey west towards Los Angeles. Where might the hydra be found? In Nashville, of course, in the famous replica of the Parthenon, built in 1897. Locating the action in this literal site of reception is an effective way of dramatizing the whole premise of the *Percy Jackson* stories – that the classical past remains a presence in our world, not only through the actual physical remains in Europe and elsewhere, but also, and especially in America, through the many attempts to recreate and

appropriate that past. This is a new Perseus, in a new Parthenon. Indeed, throughout the film, we are offered a keen sense of the spaces and places in which the "moments" of classical reception might play out, even more vividly than in the book. With the majority of the action taking place in the urban spaces of America, we see the city used as an effective shorthand for modernity, reminding us of the distance that the Olympians have travelled (and highlighted by the difference between Manhattan and the more Arcadian vision of the rural Camp Half-Blood); but we also see how the modern city incorporates and appropriates the fragments of the past, whether in its neo-classical buildings, or in institutional settings like the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the crucial setting for Percy's first encounter with actual – as opposed to sculptural – gods and monsters.[17]

Mythography and Intertextuality

We have, then, gained a sense of the ways in which Riordan's *Percy Jackson* stories offer a particularly presentist view of classical mythology, and of the classical tradition. With this process of reversioning and updating, we might then ask how these new narratives should be categorized and conceptualized: to what extent are they "receptions of" original mythic narratives, and to what extent are they original myths themselves, or the next stages in an ongoing mythographical process? Arguably, they are both. As we have seen, "Percy" both is and is not co-identical with the "Perseus" of antiquity, just as the transferal of canonical myth episodes into modern locations – such as the siting of the Land of the Lotus Eaters in a Las Vegas casino – can be both neatly analogous and intriguingly jarring in its difference. The novels' reshaping of so many fragments from classical myth makes their relationship with existing texts and visual culture obvious, and productive; but at the same time, they make sense on their own terms, and in their own coherent way. The profusion of extra-narrative material around the novels makes this last point especially clear. As well as numerous websites, there are many companion books, such as the short-story collection *The Demigod Files* (Riordan 2009b) and *The Ultimate Guide* (Riordan 2010b), which explain Percy's world to readers by blending canonical information on the classical characters with all the details of Percy and the other inhabitants of Camp Half-Blood. In this way, Rick Riordan is a mythographer both of the classical myths themselves, and of his own fictional heroes that he has grafted onto that world. The various websites associated with the series further add to the plethora of information, from Riordan's own website, to various publishers' sites, to the Wikis created by fans.[18] As Sheila Murnaghan points out, these different platforms allow Riordan, his publishers, and his readers, to create different kinds of messages for different audiences; so, for example, allowing fans to identify with Percy through his apparent distaste for school, while simultaneously engaging teachers with special "educational resource" sections (Murnaghan 2011, 350).

The intermediality of Percy Jackson's world (novels, film, websites) also leads us to think about the intertextuality on which it is founded – not only (and most obviously) through its intertextual relationships with other narratives of classical mythology, ancient or modern, but also with other contemporary narratives of a very similar bent. This American tale of a half-blood hero who must come of age in a special educational institution designed for people just like him, while also embarking on a timeless quest that pits good against evil, inevitably recalls J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. There is no space here to consider how the narratives compare (or how Rowling also utilizes classical mythology in various intriguing ways), but it is well worth remaining alert to the parallelism of the two. It certainly seems to be a question that Riordan himself has frequently been asked, for a Q&A section on his website includes his assertion that "Most of the elements people point out as similarities between the two series come straight from mythology" (Riordan, 2015); that is, the relationship between Percy Jackson and Harry Potter can be best (and perhaps most fairly) understood when we see that they are *both* new mythographies, which take their cue from the classical corpus and the template of the hero's quest, rather than one imitating the other. The field of comparison could be expanded further. Alongside the work of Riordan and Rowling, what happens when we bring Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy into play, or even C.S. Lewis' *Narnia* books? Each of these conjures up a world of fantasy and myth for children that is, again, both new and innovative, and yet also dependent on existing mythological narratives[19]; and with these latter two examples, of course, it is not only pagan mythology, but also the stories and motifs of Christianity that are brought into the fray, whether they are embraced or resisted. Riordan's position with respect to Christianity has, unsurprisingly, not been ignored, particularly by American audiences, and there is a good deal of online discussion among parents who are concerned that novels based on the ongoing presence of pagan gods must therefore be unsuitable reading material for Christian children. Equally unsurprisingly, Riordan himself avoids weighing into the debates ("I'm certainly not interested in changing or contradicting anyone's religious beliefs," he says), but it is intriguing that a sub-plot in the series – the fact that all satyrs, including Grover, are forever searching for the god Pan – has been interpreted in various online forums as a nod to Judeo-Christian theology. Riordan's own explanation of this theme, though – that Pan speaks to environmental concerns, and symbolizes the relationship between man and the natural world – is arguably much more convincing.

In conclusion, then, this short journey around Percy Jackson's world has given us some indication of the methods by which Rick Riordan retells and reinvigorates classical mythology for twenty-first-century children, as well as the cultural, political, and aesthetic implications of this new mythography. Whether this brief exploration can claim to shed much light on how children *themselves* respond to this material remains doubtful: as Sheila Murnaghan rightly argues, "children's literature is written by adults, whose work inevitably answers to adult agendas and

addresses not so much real children as adults' constructions of children"
(Murnaghan 2011, 340). But perhaps that is not the point – what is more important
is that we have seen, through Riordan's narratives, how *any* retelling of classical
myth, whatever its audience, is necessarily embedded in and shaped by contempo-
rary views of the classical past and its ongoing significance and presence in the
modern world. The very premise of the *Percy Jackson* books reminds us that the
gods really have never gone away.

Notes

1 The first *Percy Jackson & The Olympians* series comprises: *The Lightning Thief* (2005),
   The Sea of Monsters (2006), *The Titan's Curse* (2007), *The Battle of the Labyrinth* (2008),
   and *The Last Olympian* (2009a). The subsequent *Heroes of Olympus* series began with
   The Lost Hero (2010a), followed by *The Son of Neptune* (2011) and *The Mark of Athena*
   (2012). Publication dates refer to US editions, where the books are now published by
   Hyperion Books for Children; the UK publisher is Penguin (and page references
   throughout this chapter refer to the UK paperback editions).
2 Another series by Riordan, *The Kane Chronicles*, consists of a trilogy based on Egyptian
   mythology (2010–2012); a series on Norse mythology appeared in 2015.
3 Dowden and Livingstone (2011, 9).
4 The sequel, *Percy Jackson & The Olympians: The Sea of Monsters* was released in 2013.
5 Met Museum podcast, "Episode for Families: *Percy Jackson & the Olympians:
   The Lightning Thief,*" recorded March 14, 2010. Online at: http://www.metmuseum.
   org/metmedia/audio/kids/068-episode-for-families-percy-jackson--the-olympians-
   the-lightning-thief-at-the-met (accessed October 28, 2016).
6 Riordan (2006, 106).
7 Ogden (2008, 145). In the same year as the film adaptation of the first Percy Jackson
   book, a remake of *Clash of the Titans* appeared. Here, Perseus is also center-stage, yet
   also inserted into a narrative that departs from the ancient templates (including, for
   example, elements of Norse mythology, such as the Kraken).
8 Murnaghan (2011, 345–347).
9 A film version of *Gods Behaving Badly* was released in 2013.
10 See Paul (2013, 107–122) on cinematic depictions of the Olympians in the Percy
   Jackson film, among others.
11 Murnaghan (2011, 352).
12 For example, *Percy Jackson and the Battle of the Labyrinth* begins with the line "The last
   thing I wanted to do on my summer break was blow up another school," an event that
   occurs when *empousai*, aptly in the guise of cheerleaders, attack Percy's school.
13 Chiron often appears in this role in other striking modern receptions of myth, such as
   Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Medea*, which offers a neat parallel example of how the centaur
   can straddle both worlds. At different points in the film, Jackson sees him as either an
   ordinary man, or as a centaur, and occasionally both at once. Chiron also plays a key
   role in Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles*.
14 For example, these are the opening words of Charles Kingsley's *The Heroes* (1856)
   which incidentally begins with the tale of Perseus.

15 Met Museum podcast, "Episode for Families: *Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief*" (see n.5). Charles Kingsley reveals a similar inspiration for his retelling of Greek myth, telling his young readers in the preface to *The Heroes* that "you cannot walk through a great town without passing Greek buildings; you cannot go into a well-furnished room without seeing Greek statues and ornaments, even Greek patterns of furniture and paper; so strangely have these old Greeks left their mark behind them upon this modern world in which we now live."

16 Riordan (2010a, 547).

17 Perhaps unthinkingly, Riordan here continues the intriguing trope that figures a museum as a catalyst for an emotional engagement with the past, and not simply as a collection of inert stones; parallels might be sought in, for example, E.M. Forster's *A Room With A View*, or Rossellini's film *Viaggo in Italia*.

18 See, for example, Riordan's own page at www.rickriordan.com, the Puffin books site at www.percyjackson.co.uk, and the Camp Half-Blood Wiki at http://riordan.wikia.com/wiki/Main_Page

19 See Harrisson (2010) on Narnia and classical myth.

Guide to Further Reading

Harrisson, J. 2010. "The Domestication of Classical Mythology in the Chronicles of Narnia." *New Voices in Classical Reception Studies*, 5.

Murnaghan, S. 2011. "Classics for Cool Kids: Popular and Unpopular Versions of Antiquity for Children." *Classical World*, 104, 3: 339–353.

Riordan, R. 2005. *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*. New York: Miramax Books.

References

Dowden, K. and Livingstone, N. 2011. "Thinking through Myth, Thinking Myth Through," in K. Dowden and N. Livingstone, eds, *A Companion to Greek Mythology*, 3–24. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Gaiman, N. 2001. *American Gods*. New York: W. Morrow.

Harrisson, J. 2010. "The Domestication of Classical Mythology in the Chronicles of Narnia." *New Voices in Classical Reception Studies*, 5.

Kingsley, C. 1856. *The Heroes*. New York: H.M. Caldwell.

Murnaghan, S. 2011. "Classics for Cool Kids: Popular and Unpopular Versions of Antiquity for Children." *Classical World*, 104, 3: 339–353.

Ogden, D. 2008. *Perseus*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Paul, J. 2013. *Film and the Classical Epic Tradition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Phillips, N. 2007. *Gods Behaving Badly*. New York: Little, Brown and Company.

Riordan, R. 2005. *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*. New York: Miramax Books.

Riordan, R. 2006. *The Sea of Monsters*. New York: Miramax Books.

Riordan, R. 2007. *The Titan's Curse*. New York: Miramax Books.

Riordan, R. 2008. *The Battle of the Labyrinth*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

Riordan, R. 2009a. *The Last Olympian*. New York: Miramax Books.

Riordan, R. 2009b. *The Demigod Files*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children.

Riordan, R. 2010a. *The Lost Hero*. New York: Disney.

Riordan, R. 2010b. *The Ultimate Guide*. Disney–Hyperion.

Riordan, R. 2011. *The Son of Neptune*. New York: Disney.

Riordan, R. 2012. *The Mark of Athena*. New York: Disney.

Riordan, R. 2015. An interview with Rick. Online at: http://rickriordan.com/about/an-interview-with-rick/ (accessed November 16, 2016).

Myth as Case Study

Heather Tolliday

Myths are not case studies. Classical myths and psychoanalytic case studies both feature characters that capture readers' imaginations because they speak to people's most fundamental anxieties – living and dying, loving and hating, understanding and misunderstanding. But whereas characters in classical myths – Oedipus, Tantalus, Eurydice, Narcissus among many – survive because of the wealth of ways in which their identities might be understood, characters in psychoanalytic case studies – The Rat Man, Dora, Richard and the Mrs. As and Mr. Bs of contemporary psychoanalytic case studies – are of interest because they are the subject of a process designed to restrict the patient's identification to a consistent experience of their behavior.

While there are differences, however, in the use to which characters are put in myths and case studies, classical scholars and psychoanalysts find each other's work mutually beneficial. Classical scholars, especially those working in the reception theory tradition, have adopted psychoanalytic concepts from Lacanian, Freudian, and object-relation traditions to develop the understanding of myths. Sigmund Freud adopted the Oedipus myth because it encapsulated his thinking on the generational and sexual conflicts being unconsciously expressed in the behavior of many of his patients. It is the most celebrated instance of a classical myth reflecting psychoanalytic thinking, but it is not the only one. There are others – for instance Melanie Klein's use of the Oresteia (Klein 1988) and Andre Green's contrast of Ajax' shame with Oedipus' guilt (Green 1983).

This cross-fertilization, however, can lead to difficulties. Concepts derived from and used in a relationship between a psychoanalyst and a patient cannot function in the same way when used in a relationship between a reader and a text. Clinical case experience in a case study is the description of two minds – one mind

belonging to the psychoanalyst (who is also the author) and the other to the patient – engaging in a process to discriminate truth from lies, reality from delusion, understanding from misunderstanding. In classical myths as they are most commonly encountered today, however, there is one mind and there are words on paper, describing events not personally experienced. Readers are free to make differing identifications with any character. Peter Brooks ignores this fundamental difference when he claims that the "difficult, agonistic, and productive encounter" between patient and psychoanalyst is also "true of the reading of texts, where we interpret, construct, building hypotheses of meaning […] seeking both to work on the text and to have text work on us" (Brooks 1994, 72). Whereas patients and their analysts are able to protest if either is attributing motives and associated meanings to the other that they do not recognize, words cannot protest that they are being misunderstood. Sophocles could not protest, any more than Oedipus could, when Freud restricted his attention to the severe difficulties the character of Oedipus had in managing his love and hate in generationally appropriate ways.

Wilfred Bion, a psychoanalytic successor of Freud, practicing in the middle years of the twentieth century and founder of post-Kleinian psychoanalysis, enriched and deepened his predecessor's understanding of Oedipus' character. Freud and Bion had different backgrounds. Bion was a tank commander in World War I before training as a psychoanalyst, while Freud started his career as a doctor in nineteenth-century bourgeois Vienna. They had different case-loads; Bion's focusing on psychotics while Freud's largely comprised of neurotics. And, perhaps most importantly, their knowledge bases were significantly different. Freud was the father of psychoanalysis and Bion a beneficiary of Freud's pioneering work in, among other things, the complexities in the human capacity to love and hate. He also benefitted from Klein's concept of projective identification as infants' nonverbal means to satisfy their instinct to want to know. Bion's experience of his men evading and denying the truth of traumatic experiences, and his psychotic patients' firmly-held delusional beliefs, focused his attention on people's conflicted relationship with their capacity to know. And it was that which Bion found so brilliantly explored in the character of Oedipus, an attribute that had not captured Freud's interest to the same degree. Bion's Oedipus did not invalidate Freud's but enriched it, just as Duncan Kennedy believes that the "infinite possibilities of as yet unthought-of-interpretations" of classical texts need not imply a liberation from the past but a deepening of knowledge (Kennedy 2006, 293).

To Freud's focus on love and hate, Bion added this new component, knowledge, as a constant factor in human intercourse. He also emphasized the function of all three as both positive and negative links in human behavior (Bion 1962, 42–43). His post-Kleinian psychoanalysis encompassed a more complex understanding of the nature of the human mind than had previously been possible. He developed theories about the construction of the human mind and its use – whether in fostering or impeding the instinct to know.

At the core of the case study is an exposition of the processes involved in establishing fundamental truths about human existence. A common feature in all case studies, though, is the tracking of fluctuations in commitment to discovering the truth of experience and in denying it, primarily in the patient and occasionally in the analyst. Why is staying with the truth so difficult? Post-Kleinian psychoanalysis and classical myths suggest the answer lies in people's innate fear of chaos, a return to the state of mind of the newborn child who, without adequate holding by another person, falls into a terrifying world where nothing has meaning – the "gaping void" of Greek myth. Infants are not born with minds. While human infants share with other mammals an instinct to link mouth to nipple to promote physical growth, humans have an additional instinct – to make unconscious emotional links to promote mental growth. Infants' minds have to be built through experience that they can unconsciously evacuate their overwhelming and chaotic sensations, as they are buffeted by internal and external experience in their strange new world, into another mind where they may be made meaningful. This works if a more mature member of the species, ideally the birth mother – for she has a facility (which exists for a short period after birth) for a higher sensitivity to her infant's psychic state than exists in any other human relationship. Donald Winnicott called this emotional attunement "primary maternal preoccupation" (Winnicott 1977, 302). If mothers are sufficiently mentally resilient, they receive unconsciously the emotional impact of their babies' states and, if they are then also able to find a reflection in their own minds of their babies' suffering, they then return to their babies their chaotic experience in modified, because meaningful, form. Psychoanalysts call this process projective identification. Gradually, the infants' confidence grows that their experiences are neither particular to them nor delusional. Sufficient satisfactory experience subsequently helps them to tolerate suffering and confusion and to build a space (their own mind) in which to structure internal experience. They also develop awareness that a world exists, separate from them, in which they can find forms which help to give meaning to their experience. And that is why we make links to characters from classical myths, not only because they entertain but also because they may help us to define who we are and, possibly, to aspire to be someone better. As Donald Meltzer, a post-Kleinian psychoanalyst, says: "Our minds are full of characters in search, not of an author, for we ourselves are the authors, but of players to fit the parts" (Meltzer and Williams 1988, 38). Equally, though, these linkings may help to consolidate the delusional and distorted identifications that are such a feature of psychoanalytic case studies. The richness of classical myths lies in their receptivity to diverse projections. That is a strength but also a weakness. While mothers and infants have the emotional capacity to check for congruity between the internal state and the external form framing it, readers cannot look to words on paper to let them know if they have made a realistic rather than an illusory linking of self to a character in a myth.

Freud's belief that the unconscious is the repository of the truth of experience continues to underpin psychoanalysis. If, as is often argued, classical myths survive because they make the unconscious truth of human existence accessible, it is unsurprising that classical scholars and psychoanalysts find resonances in each other's work. The more we engage with our unconscious, the more effectively can we define and differentiate self and other, truth and lie, internal and external. And yet evidence from both the consulting room and everyday life is that we are reluctant to embrace the unconscious life of the mind – a fact of human life that Virgil represents in Cassandra's fate; never to be believed even though her prophesies turn out to be true. Our sense of ourselves in our world is so precarious that engaging with prompts from the unconscious threatens to throw us back into confusion because they herald a redefining of what we know, and so we tend to cling rigidly to the personal myth developed in infancy to make sense of our experience. We use it to structure our lives, however much that leads to limitation or distortion or denial of possibility. As Meltzer says "We see the external world as a reflection of internal relations from the point of view of meaning and significance" (Meltzer 1978, 311). But the unconscious goes on registering our experience and prompting us, through the myths it constructs in our dreams, to notice disparities between the truth and what we are doing. Virgil uses a vision, a form of dream, to remind Aeneas of his true identity: "This vision stunned Aeneas, struck him dumb;/his terror held his hair erect; his voice/held fast within his jaws." (Virgil 2004, 19: BkIV, 373–375). Heroes can use dreams, no matter how terrifying they are, to engage with the truth whereas ordinary mortals frequently reject their help. Similarly, we are intolerant of the prompts that the unconscious gives us in our waking lives – Freudian slips, *double-entendres*, unexpected fleeting images – that a different myth to the one we are currently acting out is possible. Breaking through our habitual resistance to engaging with the unconscious life of the mind, such prompts surprise and disturb, suggesting the unconscious is capricious – whereas it is our capacity to engage with the unconscious that is capricious.

Giving up certainty in favor of waiting for a formulation of experience is inherently uncertain. It creates disruption and suffering. Will the internal experience be amenable to thought? And, if it is, will the thought that forms prove to be welcome, enriching rather than diminishing the sense of self? Letting the suitors in through the doors of Odysseus' palace brings nothing but complacency and destruction. Letting the beggar/Odysseus in, by contrast, proves reparative and developmental after much suffering and uncertainty. Forming a thought to encapsulate the truth is an arduous and uncertain experience that is hard to sustain, and even more so because the desirability of the outcome is also uncertain.

The recognition by psychoanalysts of this fundamental truth of human existence – our ambivalence towards our unconscious – finds expression in the classical tradition of hospitality towards strangers. Strangers must be looked after, however disturbing their presence may be. Such an injunction suggests the instinctive response to strangers would be to reject them and, with them, their potential

to enrich their hosts with their difference – the fate of prompts from the unconscious in our everyday lives. In Book XVII of *The Odyssey*, the swineherd, Eumaeus, invites Odysseus into his cottage to eat and sleep, while Antinous refuses to give him food, hitting him with a stool so that he withdraws to the threshold of the great hall. The story of Odysseus' return to his own home as a stranger may be taken also as symbolizing an eternal human truth. Those, like Eumaeus, who are able to take in and entertain the disturbing stranger (prompt from the unconscious) facilitate growth and development while those, like Antinous, who fear difference and shun the unknown, misunderstand and fail to thrive. The myth tells us the stranger at the gate is Odysseus. He needs to be at home (mindful) if the destruction wrought by the suitors (representing mindlessness and complacent parasitic habits of mind) is to be stemmed and if developmental relationships with his wife and son are to be reinstated. He needs to get back to his firmly rooted olive tree bed – a place where new life (a baby or a thought) can be conceived through engaging with the firmly rooted truth of his unconscious mind.

Bion considers the unconscious mind-building relationship between infant and breast (the first transference/external object) as fundamental to understanding emotional experience and the basis of all mental development, as well as its deterioration. Klein's psychoanalytic work with small children reveals an internal world furnished with primitively split internal objects; for instance the good breast representing gratifying experiences and the bad breast frustrating ones (Klein 1988, 2). Homer's two contrasting wives, Penelope and Clytemnestra, make this point. Such sorting of experience into good and bad is necessary throughout life if the meaning of experience is to be worked out, but the splitting must subsequently be modified if a reality of human existence is to be recognized – the good breast and the bad breast are two aspects of the same breast, just as a wife can be both loyal and murderous. Homer not only understands this but also how volatile experience of the other is. In Book VI of the *Iliad*, he movingly depicts the rapid oscillations in Astyanax's state of mind when his mother, Andromache, takes him to the battlements with his nurse to plead with the armored Hector not to go into battle. Having rejected his wife's pleas:

> /shining Hector reached down
> for his son – but the boy recoiled,
> cringing against his nurse's full breast,
> screaming out at the sight of his own father,
> terrified by the flashing bronze, the horsehair crest,
> the great ridge of the helmet nodding, bristling terror -
> so it struck his eyes. And his loving father laughed,
> his mother laughed as well, and glorious Hector,
> quickly lifting the helmet from his head,
> set it down on the ground, fiery in the sunlight,
> and raising his son he kissed him, tossed him in his arms,
> lifting a prayer to Zeus and the other deathless gods
> <div align="right">(Homer 1991, 556–567).</div>

The child turns away in terror from a father who has become impermeable to his projections, encased as his head is in the shiny metal helmet with the distracting horsehair plume. Astyanax is doubly fortunate, though, because he has the accommodatingly full breast of his nurse to bury his head in and he also has a father who can take in his son's projection of terror and adjust his behavior accordingly. Astyanax discovers that the "bad breast" is the same breast as the "good" one. He shows he has a trust in a thinking mind being available to him because he feels it is worthwhile to scream for the help that he finds in the arms of his nurse. So fortified, he is then able to risk further engagement with his father.

Resilient babies, like Astyanax, make their need to be understood more forceful if the first response is inadequate – a strategy which may or may not succeed. But where there is enough experience of a containing mind, the infant's trust in the value of engaging with the unconscious life of the mind survives, albeit with some distortions and lacunae. No one can ever know whether they have the mental resilience to bear all experience. However, disaster occurs if steadiness of mind is overwhelmed by the violence of infants' emotional turmoil; then infants' projections are rejected and returned to them, not only unmodified but intensified by terror which belongs to others. This is a catastrophe Bion calls "nameless dread" (Bion 1967, 116). It impairs the infant's contact with reality because it fails to make terrifying experience thinkable and thus compromises growth of the mind.

David Taylor illustrates patients' difficulties in allowing the life of the mind to unfold because of fear that to open up to it will lead to experience of "nameless dread" rather than the relief from terror which comes from finding that what had seemed unthinkable can be thought. He describes an episode where, having been told by the analyst that he had become more open in his contact, his patient acts out a deadly attack:

> A's response was to fall silent for an inordinate time. *I* now did not know what was happening […] I then noticed that he did not even seem to be breathing […] I made myself wait. Gradually the tension diminished. I found myself musing about other feelings that might be coming to the surface in A […] After a long time […] A spoke: "I just don't know how to respond to you here […]" There was a devastating tone to this. I felt a withering sense of failure opening up before me.
>
> (Taylor 2011, 112–113)

Sophocles understands this well. Oedipus symbolizes the child whose mother, unable to bear the impact of her child's projection, forces it back, intensified by her own terror. Such a child cannot risk wanting to get to know the truth of experience, lest the truth prove to be unthinkable because it is too horrific for the mother to face. After Jocasta has hanged herself, Oedipus blinds himself with his mother's golden brooches:

Could I want sight to face this people's stare?
No! Hearing neither! Had I any way
To dam that channel too, I would not rest
Till I had prisoned up this body of shame
In total blankness. For the mind to dwell
Beyond the reach of pain, were peace indeed

(Sophocles 1947: 64)

Growth of the mind through accessing the truth of experience may also be compromised in those infants who, even though they have mothers capable of metabolizing their unbearable experience, reject maternal understanding rather than unconsciously taking it in through what psychoanalysts call introjective identification because they cannot tolerate their envy of their mothers' mental steadfastness.

Elizabeth Spillius, in a case study on envy, gives some clinical material from a session with a patient, Mrs. B. In the previous session, she felt her patient had been helped by her understanding. Mrs. B said she had dreamt but was not going to talk about it:

The atmosphere was heavy with resentment […] then she said "[…] here it is. I'm with my grandmother. She was dancing with me in a lively fashion. I was half enjoying it but half afraid she would have a heart attack and die" […] [Spillius] then said that, like her grandmother in the dream, I thought my patient felt I was unaware of the danger I was in […] idealizing my energy and my dancing partnership with her. Then she said […] "You're right […] It's about your garden. It makes me think you're silly […] you don't care about being overlooked […] so long as you only had a mess out there it didn't matter, there was nothing to see. But now you've put in grass and plants." […] I said the garden was her analysis. So long as it was barren and a mess, she could overlook it […] But now I was aspiring to grow things […] it made her furious […] and she dealt with it by thinking she was the one overlooking me, superior. I was unaware of this and silly.

(Spillius 2007, 154–155)

One way of understanding something of the cruelty in the encounter between Odysseus and Cyclops is that, as well as being motivated by revenge, Odysseus is envious. In such a reading, the son who has neglected the care of his home, his wife and his child cannot tolerate the father-figure who stays at home, lovingly tending what he has. Instead of taking Cyclops' care as inspirational, Odysseus, like Mrs. B, attacks the envied individual's capacity to nurture. This is Homer's description of Cyclops' husbandry:

There were flat baskets laden with cheeses; there were pens filled with lambs and kids, though these were divided among themselves – here the firstlings, there the

later-born, and the youngest of all apart again. Then, too, there were well-made dairy-vessels, large and small pails, swimming with whey.

<div align="right">(Homer 2008, IX, 218–224)</div>

And this is how Odysseus describes Laertes' husbandry in book XXIV:

His father he did find – alone in that well-tended plot, levelling the soil round a tree [….] "Everything here is tended well; not a thing that is growing in this plot, not a vine or fig-tree, not an olive-tree or pear-tree or seed-bed is left uncared for."

<div align="right">(Homer 2008, XXIV, 242–247)</div>

Envy is one form of distortion of the human instinct to want to know; arrogance is another:

If tolerance to frustration […] is too great to bear dominance of the reality principle, the personality develops omnipotence […] This involves the assumption of omniscience as a substitute for learning from experience by aid of thoughts and thinking. There is therefore no psychic activity to discriminate between true and false.

<div align="right">(Bion 1967, 114)</div>

Cassandra tells the truth because she has been given the gift of prophecy by Apollo. She is in touch with her unconscious. However, even when there is evidence in the external world which might corroborate what she says, no one wants to listen – not even Coroebus who loves her:

> […] four times it stalled
> before the gateway, at the very threshold;
> four times the arms clashed loud inside its belly.
> Nevertheless, heedless, blinded by frenzy,
> we press right on and set the inauspicious
> monster inside the sacred fortress. Even
> then can Cassandra chant of what will come,
> with lips the gods had doomed to disbelief
> by Trojans.
> <div align="right">(Virgil 2004, II. 335–343)</div>

Distinguishing understanding from misunderstanding is a perennial problem for human beings. Why should the psychoanalyst's understanding of the patient's story be preferred over the one the patient brings? Is it possible to differentiate among varying interpretations of classical myths based on their fidelity to the original author's intentions? Problems in translating from one language to another to establish a shared text are familiar to classical scholars. Pantelis Michelakis talks of the problems created by "centuries of copying and interpreting" of ancient

texts (Michelakis 2006, 222). While less of a problem for psychoanalysts, it exists. Patrick Mahony, for instance, casts doubt on Strachey's translations of Freud (Mahony 1987). But, for psychoanalysts, the translation of unconscious to unconscious communication and then into a conscious form with the use of words is even more fraught.

Clinical experience in a psychoanalytic case study demonstrates the process of two people working together to come to one mind about the truth of their experience. But that truth can only be finally tested and refined through being put into words. These words pre-exist the internal experiences to which they give external form, and they come with associations through others' use. Their meaning can never be entirely unambiguous. Even when words are being consciously used to promote mutual understanding and not to deceive, there can never be an exact fit between the unconscious experience and the words used to frame it. Bion describes such an incident over the meaning of one small word between two people in intimate and sustained personal contact. How much more difficult must it then be to differentiate truth from falsehood in the understanding a reader derives from reading a text by a writer who is not present at the time of reading?

> The patient complained that he could not sleep. Showing signs of fear, he said "It can't go on like this" […] Referring to material in the previous session I suggested that he feared he would dream if he were to sleep. He denied this and said he could not think because he was wet. I reminded him of his use of the term "wet" as an expression of contempt for somebody he regarded as feeble and sentimental. He disagreed […] From what I knew of this patient I felt that his correction at this point was valid and that somehow the wetness referred to an expression of hatred and envy such as he associated with urinary attacks on an object.
>
> (Bion 1959, 307–308)

Bion proposes an answer to the problem for psychoanalysts of differentiating individual stories for their truthfulness. It lies in his recognition that mothers' and infants' communication through the unconscious interaction of projective and introjective identifications is the bedrock of the truth of experience in all human life. Such communication is, however, largely unacknowledged in adult life in favor of verbal communication, which is considered to be a more controllable and a less emotionally fraught communicative form. Unconscious communication between mothers and babies, essential to the growth of the infant mind, can remain unconscious to a much greater degree than is possible between analysts and patients. Physical intimacy between mother and child allows understanding to be communicated and received through minute physical adjustments and accommodations. Psychoanalysts and patients, while having some access to physical pointers to unconscious meaning (changes in posture, tone and pace of utterances for instance) have to rely much more than do mothers and babies on the translation of their unconscious-to-unconscious communication into conscious form through

words if fluctuations in reciprocity between their two states of mind are to be tracked (see Tolliday 2013). Also psychoanalysts, unlike mothers of infants, are not naturally attuned to their patients' unconscious states, but they develop unconscious attunement through their training and consulting-room disciplines. Freud and Klein worked within the transference – that is, with the unconscious identifications patients make to their analysts from internal structuring of experience. They considered their own emotional reactions (their counter-transference) an impediment to understanding patients' states of mind. Bion disagreed. He valued his countertransference experiences, seeing them as manifestations of the unbearable emotional disturbance patients need to have made thinkable, just as a mother values the disturbance created in her by her baby's projections for its communicative potential. Through attending to his countertransference experience, Bion developed a means to discriminate between truth and lies in his patients' speech and behavior in the consulting room.

Through this "binocular vision" – suffering his emotional disturbance (unconsciously based countertransference) while also reflecting, rather than acting, on it (consciously based thinking) – he could discern when behavior was in the service of understanding or misunderstanding – whether his unconscious and conscious perceptions of the patient correlated. Tragically, the Cyclops Polyphemos is able to hear and consciously formulate Odysseus' reply when asked his name but is unable to receive his unconscious emotional response to the impact of the pace, timing, and timbre of Odysseus' delivery to allow him to know that something is amiss – Odysseus' answer is a lie. Interestingly (when we consider "binocular vision") Cyclops has only the one eye.

Spillius, in a case study illustrating Bion's emphasis on understanding through the emotional impact of the countertransference, tells of Linda who came to her at the age of three because she had stopped speaking nine months earlier after the birth of a sibling and her parents' move to a one-room flat:

> As the sessions went on she soon began playing with the toys I had provided and much of her play involved making things. When I said I thought she was making a baby the way her mother and father had, she looked at me rather contemptuously as if to say, "Why would you need to say something so obvious?" It was clear that her understanding was intact in spite of her not talking.
>
> (Spillius 2007, 193)

At a later session Linda, humming "I'm the King of the Castle," jumped on top of Spillius, shocking her.

> After I had made sure that neither of us was hurt, I said *she* was being the daddy and leaping on my back the way she thought her daddy did to her mummy when they were together in bed and made babies. She looked a bit sobered. Then she nodded. Shortly afterwards she began to speak, first at home and then in her sessions. […] she was giving me a graphic demonstration of how violent and persecuting she felt

her parents' intercourse was and how frightened and resentful she felt at constantly having to witness it […] Unconsciously she was trying to evoke in me her own feelings of shock and outrage – an example of the communicative potential of projective identification, of transference viewed as enactment.

(Spillius 2007, 193–194).

Linda did not need words to communicate her plight; she enacted it. In the clinical material quoted earlier, Taylor "reads" his patient A's silence as it evolves through his countertransference experience, making the silence more eloquent than words. Printed words, except perhaps in the hands of the most skilled of poets, cannot evoke such delicate shifts of experience to help readers to follow the changing meaning of characters' silences. How should we interpret the silence of Alcestis on her return from the underworld? Heracles attributes it to "her purification from her consecration to the gods below" (Euripides 2008, 32). But is that explanation self-serving? Heracles' reputation for potency as a rescuer would suffer if Alcestis, like Hilda Doolittle's Eurydice (Sword 1995), does not wish to be dragged back into the world of the living – a world where words are used to deceive and to make promises which are not honored. Alcestis' mutism may be elective, like Linda's – a rebuke to Admetus for so grossly devaluing words by failing to keep his word never to replace her.

Psychoanalysts too may resort to using self-serving interpretations in circumstances where the pressure to make sense of what is happening in the consulting room becomes too great, just as mothers may try to stop their infants' screams by offering dummies or by distracting them when they feel it is impossible to work out why their infants are so distressed. David Bell describes a dream which a patient, with whom he worked while training as an analyst, brought to him: "A man goes away and comes back wearing second-hand clothes, claiming that they belong to him." Bell initially suggests that the man in the dream is his patient, presumably because of the tendency of patients and, indeed, people generally to take on the desirable attributes of others through introjective identification to obscure aspects of their own personality which they find difficult to face. But on exploring his patient's associations and his own feelings and thoughts, stirred up by his countertransference reactions, Bell feels uneasy about this interpretation and the thought comes to him that he, and not the patient, is the man in the dream. He reflects that in an earlier session he has "known," but has not wanted to acknowledge the truth that an interpretation he made arose, not out of experience in the session but out of some comments his training supervisor had made about the patient. His patient brought the dream, produced by his countertransference awareness that the words his analyst had used in the previous session were not his own (Bell 2011, 96).

Psychoanalytic clinical case material is a story, fundamentally, of cooperation between psychoanalysts and patients to refine the validity of their patients' assumed identities against the reality of their emotional experience. But because psychoanalysts are people and despite their own analyses and training are

potentially susceptible to the frailties of human nature, both patients and a-nalysts must be vigilant in ensuring appropriate identification of what belongs to whom. This is not just a question of whether the Emperor has clothes, but of which clothes fit patient and analyst, which do not and never will, and which ones they might reasonably aspire to grow into. This is done through a conversation, embedded in the emotional immediacy of their encounter. Psychoanalysts are committed to conduct this conversation with mental rigor and vigilance to ensure that, as far as human frailty allows, it is in the service of, and not at the expense of, knowledge of the truth of the patient's reality. The conversation between a long-dead poet's words and the reader cannot emulate this. However, to the extent that classical myths are found to encapsulate the truths of human experience revealed by psychoanalytic practice, the interaction between myth and case study must enrich both.

Guide to Further Reading

Nicholson (2015) argues that classical myths grew out of a Greek civilization that resulted from the fusion of two different worlds around 2000 BCE. Psychoanalysts make abundant use of stories that have found an enduring home in people's imaginations. These are not confined to classical myths nor is introducing myths into the psychoanalytic encounter the sole preserve of the analyst – patients too use their own identifications with myths to help them to express the nature of their difficulties. O'Shaughnessy (2015, 201) shows how a young male patient explicitly used an identification with Frankenstein to encapsulate his solution to his difficulties. It is well known that Freud and other psychoanalysts use Shakespeare's stories and characters to give a culturally familiar form to their thinking but it is worth taking special note of Rusbridger's (2013) paper on Shakespeare's play, *Othello* and Verdi's opera, *Otello*.

 Other myths might equally well have been used in *Myth as Case Study*. See Meg Harris Williams' (2005) reading of the mediaeval myth of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* as a story of the function of the post-Kleinian concept of the internal combined object, or Frances Vargas Gibbons' (1998) slant on the same myth. For an exploration of *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, Bettelheim (1991) demonstrates how these myths resolve, consciously and unconsciously, conflicts created by *id* pressures in ways that are consistent with *ego* and *superego* requirements.

References

Bell, D. 2011. "Anticipation and Interpretation," in C. Mawson, ed., *Bion Today*, 81–101. London: Routledge.

Bettelheim, B. 1991. *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Penguin.

Bion, W.R. 1959. "Attacks on Linking." *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 40, 308–315.

Bion, W.R. 1962. *Learning from Experience*. London: Tavistock.

Bion, W.R. 1967. *Second Thoughts*. London: Heinemann.

Brooks, P. 1994. *Psychoanalysis and Storytelling*. Bucknell Lectures in Literary Theory. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Euripides. 2008. *Heracles and Other Plays: Alcestis*, trans. R. Waterfield. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gibbons. F.V. 1998. "Sir Gawain's Mentors." *PsyArt*. Online at: http://psyartjournal.com/article/show/vargas_gibbons-sir_gawains_mentors (accessed October 30, 2016).

Green, A. 1983. *Narcissisme de vie, narcissisme de mort*. Paris: Minuit.

Homer. 1991. *The Iliad*, trans. R. Fagles. London: Penguin.

Homer. 2008. *The Odyssey*, trans. W. Shewring. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kennedy, D.F. 2006. "Afterword: The Uses of 'Reception,'" in C. Martindale and R.F. Thomas, eds, *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, 288–293. Oxford: Blackwell.

Klein, M. 1988. *Envy and Gratitude*. London: Virago.

Mahony, P. 1987. *Psychoanalysis and Discourse*. London: Tavistock.

Meltzer, D. 1978. *The Kleinian Development*. London: Karnac.

Meltzer, D. and Williams, M.H. 1998. *The Apprehension of Beauty. The Role of Aesthetic Conflict in Development, Art and Violence*. Strath Tay, UK: Clunie Press.

Michelakis, P. 2006. "Reception, Performance, and the Sacrifice of Iphigenia," in C. Martindale and R.F. Thomas, eds, *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, 216–226. Oxford: Blackwell.

Nicholson, A. 2015. *The Mighty Dead. Why Homer Matters*. London: William Collins.

O'Shaughnessy, E. 2015. *Inquiries in Psychoanalysis: Collected Papers of Edna O'Shaughnessy*, ed. R. Rusbridger. London: Routledge.

Rusbridger, R. 2013. "Projective Identification in Othello and Verdi's Otello." *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 94: 33–47.

Sophocles. 1947. *The Theban Plays: King Oedipus*, trans. E.F. Watling. London: Penguin.

Spillius, E. 2007. *Encounters with Melanie Klein*. London: Routledge.

Sword, H. 1995. *Engendering Inspiration: Visionary Strategies in Rilke, Lawrence and Hilda Doolittle*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Taylor, D. 2011. "Bion: The Phenomenologist of Loss," in C. Mawson, ed., *Bion Today*, 102–120. London: Routledge.

Tolliday, H. 2013. "The Mother, The Phsychoanalyst, The Poet and The Artist: Containment and Growth of the Mind." *British Journal of Psychotherapy*, 29, 2: 217–229.

Virgil. 2004. *The Aeneid of Virgil*, trans. A. Mandelbaum. New York: Bantam Dell.

Williams, M.H. 2005. *The Vale of Soulmaking*. London: Karnac.

Winnicott, D.W. 1977. *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis* London: Karnac.

Mythical Narrative and Self-Development

Meg Harris Williams

Coleridge formulated the importance of symbol-formation in promoting the mind's innate "principle of self-development"; following Plato, the getting of wisdom was a matter of "becoming" rather than of possessing knowledge (Coleridge 1812, I. 473). This corresponds closely with the modern (post-Kleinian) psychoanalytic view of development as taking place by means of an evolutionary dialogue between the nascent personality and its internal "objects." Identity is constantly in formation, and is built step by step, through symbolizing the "facts of feeling" and metabolizing them into thoughts (Bion 1970).[1] The psychoanalytic definition of thinking sees it as dependent on the orientation to internal objects, as distinct from purely analytical or discursive reasoning. This may be said to constitute a myth of its own – one that has analogies with the nature of reception, as the vital and ever-changing dialogue with classical myth and culture is now understood. To incorporate classical myth as part of one's own personality development entails a process similar to the psychoanalytic, in terms of the symbolic enrichment of the relationship with the internal "objects" that enable the mind to develop emotionally, ethically, aesthetically, and indeed logically.

Characteristically, in the case of poets, the story of self-development is presented by means of a myth or combination of myths that illustrate the relation between poet and muse. "The creative must create itself" as the Grecophile Keats said so simply (Gittings 1970, 156), while being well aware of the complexities of "the creative," and the dangers and seductions of the pseudo-creative. Indeed, the myth that underlies all the other myths of antiquity (and probably all durable myths) concerns this very story of creativity as a principle that endows the universe with meaning for humans, in a way that is distinct from but complementary to scientific investigation of its physical qualities. The ancient gods in their capacity

as "figures of thought" (Langer 1946, 196) enact conflicting aspects of this human story on behalf of confused and struggling mortals who are searching less for a solution than for a model through which to contain and understand their predicament.

I would like to consider some ways in which myths can illustrate developmental crises, while at the same time having a flavor of some specific stage of personality development – oedipal, latency, puberty, adolescence, maturity, midlife, or senescence – whether or not this is the overt subject of the narrative. My main examples will be taken from Shakespeare, sublime mediator of classical myths (including even those he may never have directly read).[2] I shall begin with one that goes to the heart of all developmental problems, hence its adaptation into psychoanalytic jargon: the story of Narcissus. In *Richard II*, Shakespeare inverts the source myth, so it becomes the story of how Richard overcomes his narcissism and moves from a "paranoid-schizoid" orientation to a "depressive" one (in Kleinian terms). Richard is often thought of as a poet-king. As Gaunt prophesies in the play, he is "possess'd to depose [him]self" (II.i.108); indeed he "masterminds" his own deposition (Nuttall 1988); and it is his poetic impulse that deposes him. This begins to be mobilized when he prevents the duel between Mowbray and Bolingbroke – not from sheer arbitrariness as might appear, but because a feeling-fact is pushing at his consciousness, demanding to be formulated. Mowbray's blood would be a waste of an expensive upbringing; instead, he extracts from him a verbalization of what "banishment" from his idealized object (his mother-country, that "little Eden") really means and feels like. Mowbray describes how his tongue is imprisoned, "doubly portcullis'd with my teeth and lips" (I.iii.167); his capacity for self-expression and symbol-formation has been sealed off; both cutting and its kissing capabilities are closed down.

The sentence pronounced by Richard brings into the open a new awareness of the preciousness of the speaking object, which will provide a pattern for his self-deposition or self-development. Here Bolingbroke dances to Richard's tune, while Richard analyses the brassbound hollowness that he is bequeathing to his successor:

> Allowing him a little breath, a little scene,
> To monarchise, be fear'd, and kill with looks; […]
> As if this flesh which walls about our life
> Were brass impregnable […] (II.ii.169–170).

Power – the unchallengeable possession of the object of desire – is a delusion, a "hollow crown" bound by a toothlike brass circle. Searching for an alternative container for his identity, Richard looks in the mirror:

> O flatt'ring glass,
> Like to my followers in prosperity,
> Thou dost beguile me. Was this face the face
> That every day under his household roof
> Did keep ten thousand men? (IV.i.279–283)

The narcissistic type of self-recognition is a "brittle" glory as easily shattered as the glass, a false reflector of inner life, true only to appearances. Through this tableau he exposes and analyses the delusion of his own kingly beauty; he is no Helen of Troy to attract men or ships like the rays of the sun. Kingship has become a narcissistic veil that needs to be stripped, its hollowness exposed.

As a consequence of this recognition that unlike Narcissus, he is not his own love-object, there follows the tender scene in which Richard achieves a rapprochement with his wife Isabel, on his way to the Tower. The Queen has previously associated herself with a type of mental pregnancy, heavily ripe with "unborn sorrows" resulting from "no thought":

> As, though on thinking on no thought I think,
> Makes me with heavy nothing faint and shrink. (II.ii.31–32)

As his object or Muse, container of thoughts, she laments the end of "the model where old Troy did stand" (11) – the old Richard whose "heart" she fears Bolingbroke has "deposed."[3] But her fears energize Richard, who sees a solution to her heaviness if she converts it into telling his story – "the heavy accent of [a] moving tongue." She will be united with him in his new poetic identity. The old type of Troy-king may tumble down, but it was only "Richard's tomb" not his inner soul. The deposition of his narcissism means in fact the rejuvenation of his creativity; despite his physical imprisonment, the idea of a male-female internal object is born that recalls Isabel's own words and contrasts with the portcullised spiritual prison imagined by Mowbray at the beginning:

> I cannot do it. Yet I'll hammer it out.
> My brain I'll prove the female to my soul,
> My soul the father, and these two beget
> A generation of still-breeding thoughts,
> And these same thoughts people this little world… (V.v.4–10)

The brain is now free to create symbols. In this way Richard becomes a working poet: his solitariness is not that of narcissistic fixation, but a feature of his new-found capacity to people his mind with thought-characters, in identification with his wife as a container whose thoughts are no longer stillborn or hollow but "still-breeding." The Echo aspect of the myth is reversed also: Richard can hear the female voice in his soul; and his poetic contemplation was indeed echoed by Keats in his "Ode to Psyche" (whose "wreathed trellis of a working brain … breeding flowers will never breed the same"). The echoing song traversed the centuries, as did so many whose genesis lies in classical myth – still-breeding, yet never the same.

"Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown": the state of kingship is often, in Shakespeare, a metaphor for a mind that has reached a state of stasis or complacency.

Development then requires some kind of Pythagorean "catastrophic change" (in Bion's term) that will shake the personality, yet enable it to move forwards to a new phase of being. It is a humble, yet essential, type of Ovidian metamorphosis, "death to the existing state of mind" (Bion 1970, 79). As an example of such a "death" I will take *King Lear*, which makes use of the myth of Ixion (Root 1903, 78), and also has an Oedipal substratum, manifest in the nuances of poetic language. In terms of deep narrative, Lear is a baby on the point of weaning, whose reign over his mother-daughters (in the form of part-object breasts) has come to a natural end. His self-knowledge, in the beginning aptly judged by Goneril to be "slender" I.i.293), brings him ultimately to the crux when he finds himself bound on a "wheel of fire," in a new passionate dependency in relation to his good object or internal mother, Cordelia.[4]

Initially this king-baby, sensing the approach of weaning, had split his maternal object into good and bad parts (Cordelia, versus Goneril and Regan) in an attempt to keep control of the inevitable process of dethronement. He made "centaurs" of his daughter-mothers – angels above the waist and devils below (the centaurs being offspring of Ixion and a cloud-woman). During the storm scenes he was assailed both by somatic inflictions (stinging, burning cold and wet, like the baby by his own bodily excretions), and by mental confusion – "madness." As Meltzer has pointed out, Klein's discoveries made it abundantly clear how every aspect of the young child's daily life (eating, sleeping, playing, urinating, defecating, learning, being bathed, dressed, and so on) is fraught with anxieties, whose qualities can nonetheless be "modified by play […] altering the meaning of the outside world" (Meltzer 1973, 30–31).

Yet Lear is never alone in his "madness"; throughout his ordeal, some contact is maintained with the spirit of his mother in the form of Kent, the Fool, and Tom (the "wise Athenian"), who help him to construct a "philosophy" from this experience of abandonment, bringing him progressively closer to rediscovering his internal good object. When this happens, the bringing together of heaven and hell feels like Ixion's punishment, a form of torture:

> LEAR: You do me wrong to take me out o' th' grave:
> Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
> Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
> Do scald like molten lead.
> CORDELIA: Sir, do you know me?
> LEAR: You are a spirit, I know: when did you die? (IV.vii.45–49)

Lear, like another of its classical models, *Oedipus*, narrates the story of how a passionate ("wrathful") infant's quest for self-knowledge is bound up with a quest for knowledge of his mother and he must "stay the course." The death of the breast-feeding mother is coextensive with the death of his infancy. The infant protagonist struggles with emotional ambivalence in relation to the internal object that both

gives and takes away (Meltzer's "aesthetic conflict" [Meltzer and Williams, 1988]); his achievement is to integrate these conflicting aspects of the object, driven by the "epistemophilic instinct" (Klein 1957). Out of this conflict the philosopher-king Edgar is born, in the context of a new view of kingship which is defined in terms of bearing "weight" (the depressive position) rather than of wielding willpower.

In the latency period, however, the emotional turbulence that underpins all such developmental changes may appear absent. Bion makes use of the myth of Palinurus, as related by Virgil in Book 5 of *The Aeneid*, to consider this absence. It is one of six myths that Bion chose to attempt the construction of a schema that could standardize the underlying nature of prototypal situations of emotional turbulence. He saw the death of Palinurus as presenting the smooth reversibility of omnipotence–helplessness in a way particularly characteristic of the latency state of mind (Bion 1989, 11, 29). In this, he takes latency not only as a stage in development, but as a continually recurring vertex in any live thinking activity, such as that within the psychoanalytic consulting room:

> When we disperse to the loneliness of our respective consulting rooms and offices, I suggest that what is there is turmoil. It may appear in a form revealed in verbal expression; it may appear in a form that would seem more appropriately called "latency phase." Palinurus is described, at the end of the fifth book of the Aeneid, as saying that Somnus must think he is very inexperienced if he can be led off course while steering his fleet on the calm and beautiful surface of the Mediterranean. This is something we should not forget; we should not be misled by the superficial and beautiful calm which pervades our various consulting rooms and institutions.
>
> (Bion 1987, 236)

It is through confronting and understanding such moments of turbulence that the personality develops. Bion's point is that the myth applies not only to the analysand, whose conflicts are the official subject of the dialogue, but also to the analyst via the countertransference aroused by the patient's inner life, which is hidden in the same way that primitive or somatic eruptions may be hidden by the smooth surface of a beautiful sea. The myth of Palinurus reminds us to beware of calm weather in the narrative of our self-development, and to sharpen our observation to detect even minimal signs from the stormy unconscious.

By contrast with Palinurus is the resurgence of infantile and Oedipal conflicts that characterize adolescent sexuality: a developmental period that finds mythical nourishment in *Hamlet*. *Hamlet* used to be viewed as a play in which the hero is so obsessed with thinking that he is unable to act. In psychoanalytic terms however, it is a play in which the fantasy of violent intrusion interferes with the capacity to think and to achieve reciprocal relationships. The simmering atmosphere of incipient violence results from the clash between the forward thrust of development and the urge to repress it owing to the accompanying pain and confusion. It is this that makes adolescents appear neurotic and unpredictable, and according to

Meltzer, is best understood in terms of the violation of the object's internal spaces, signifying the urge to possess and control the object from within (Meltzer and Williams 1988, 7–33). This is an intrusive way of knowing: characterized by a belief that knowledge is a "secret" being withheld from the adolescent by the parents (or internal parents).

Hamlet, "crawling between earth and heaven," knows there are "more things in heaven and earth" than he and Horatio have learned at college between the covers of books (III.i.128, I.v.174). His object – primarily his mother, but also her younger embodiment in Ophelia – appears tantalizing and ambivalent: beautiful on the outside, but "breeding maggots" within (II.ii.181). In his search to discover the object's inner meaning, which contains his own meaning, he is driven by projective identification with a childhood image of a father (the Ghost) that exists no longer, has "died" and turned into a sensual beast – from "Hyperion to a satyr" – in response to his own sexual upsurgence. Meanwhile the adult (courtly) world conducts a parallel mission to manipulate the "heart of his mystery." The failure of communication and reciprocity exacerbates his sense of mental imprisonment.

In this drama of projections concerning the inside and outside of the object, Hamlet calls on the heroes of Ilium to both justify and exorcise his *daimon* (the paradoxicality being part of the adolescent condition). In *Hamlet* the classical references are associated with extravagant language and histrionic pseudo-emotion, with false art rather than the true art that aids self-reflection.[5] His departed father has taken the idealized form of a classic hero, by contrast with the current sensual version embodied in Claudius: "Hyperion to a satyr" (I.ii.140). Lamenting that he is himself no "Hercules" (153), Hamlet seeks for an identification that will set him on the glamorous path of classical heroism, making mindless vengeance easy; and he uses the Player King as a demonstration model to incite the appropriate feelings in himself:

> HAMLET: One speech in't I chiefly loved – 'twas Aeneas' tale to Dido – and thereabout of it especially when he speaks of Priam's slaughter. If it live in your memory, begin at this line – let me see, let me see –
>
> > The rugged Pyrrhus, like th'Hyrcanian beast –
> > 'Tis not so. It begins with Pyrrhus –
> > The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
> > Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
> > When he lay couched in the ominous horse… (II.ii.442–450)

Theatre can be used as a drug, as well as a route to self-knowledge. Black-clothed Pyrrhus is one of those alter-egos whom Hamlet uses both to justify his violence, and also to expose to his more thoughtful self the absurdity of "action" – which in this play always means violence. The violent part of Hamlet seeks for a heroic model that reflects his Ghost-father in Fortinbras, Laertes, and fictional figures such as Pyrrhus.[6] The thoughtful part identifies with a "pause" in action (the

famous "Pyrrhus' pause") and with the quiet all-observing Horatio; it is in search of the "undiscovered country" of his future mental landscape – the more developed adult self whose shape is yet unknown but which will not be modeled on the tale of Troy.

The "ominous" Trojan horse is an image of intrusive curiosity, manipulating the object (the city of Troy) from within. Troy, Gertrude, Ophelia, and the play-within-a-play are all representations of an internal mother-object whose meaning is hidden from him, and which fails to aesthetically contain his own meaning. There is no reciprocity between Hamlet and the "other" – only a series of female mousetraps which rebound back on himself and throttle his development. The play-within-a-play becomes one of these because Hamlet – much as he loves theatre – abuses the players, in a way parallel to his misuse of a classical education. He sets up a false pageant where emotionality is not artistically contained, but rather, caricatured: "What's he to Hecuba, or Hecuba to him, that he should weep for her?" Yet at the same time, another part of himself is capable of analyzing his own "madness," and its correspondent "sickness" in the mind of Denmark as a whole; and the play-within-a-play helps him to do so. In *Hamlet* and its companion play *Troilus and Cressida*, the classical heritage (in terms of both myth and rhetoric) is used to help expose the "lie" that results when art or classical myth are used in a despotic way based on projective identification. It is a message that applies analogously to modes of literary criticism and modern classical reception: we may either manipulate the text, or learn from it.

Every growing-point of the personality takes us back to adolescence and to the infantile conflicts that lie behind it. One of Shakespeare's most delightful plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, uses its classical setting to define the nature of mature or maturing love, in relation to that of adolescence. On the point of marriage, Theseus the Duke of Athens is apparently stable in mind and circumstance, his youthful adventuring over: he appears to have "won" Hippolyta. But from the beginning a shadow is thrown across their relationship, cast by the adolescent lovers who reflect unconscious features of the older lovers; and it appears that the Duke's classical robes are scant covering for inner adolescent confusions and misconceptions – the communal "dream" of the main body of the play. At the heart is "Bottom's Dream," which teaches Theseus-as-Oberon love's humility, after his despotic sentence on Hermia in the opening scene, which put him in danger of losing Hippolyta-Titania. Theseus was known in Shakespeare's day by his unheroic abandonment of Ariadne – not the most promising model for a tale of true love, but for Shakespeare, an interesting challenge to be pursued through the Demetrius-and-Lysander aspect of Theseus.

For in this play Theseus is prepared to learn; acknowledging that he must wed Hippolyta "in another key," more subtle than winning by the sword. Although the plot tells us that Bottom's Dream is masterminded by Oberon, the poetry tells us it is masterminded by Titania, who seeks out the hidden gentlemanly quality in the male love-object. It is Titania who dreams of a different type of hero – an

Apuleian golden ass nested in Botticellian nature myth, folklore, and Pauline reve-
lation: "The eye of man hath not heard[…]" (IV.1.210). The fusion of sources is
well known – how the Bible is "translated" by a fertile admixture of the pagan,[7] in
a way analogous to the way the characters themselves are translated by their
dreams. The ultimate test for Theseus comes with his reception of the mechani-
cals' rendition of *Pyramus and Thisbe*. In his famous Platonic speech on the reality
of the imagination, he struggles with its absurdity, yet – remembering the con-
stancy of the "story of the night" – finally acknowledges "the forms of things
unknown" (V.i.15). This enables him to perceive the "welcome" in the play's
"silence" (the silence of its capacity to artfully deceive). As a result, the humble
performance shows him something about himself, and about being a lover, that he
did not "know" before except unconsciously, when he had Bottom's Dream and
saw what the eye could not hear.

Thus, the classical narrative in the play-within-a-play has a function opposite
from that in *Hamlet*. Instead of being hijacked as propaganda it is a dream-breeder,
making the palace a "hallow'd house" not a graveyard or a ruined city. There is a
fertile union between the classical past and the folklore that represents the homely
wisdom of contemporary life. Like Theseus we, the audience, are happy to accept
Puck's invitation to be mere Cave-dwellers; it may be a "tedious" and "lamentable"
condition by comparison with the sphere of the gods but it allows for the opera-
tion of imagination and hence the growth of the personality. In this way
Shakespeare revises the classical definition of a hero, to show how a warrior
becomes a lover, slightly modifying thereby (as in *Antony and Cleopatra*) the
sequence of his "seven ages."

In the later romances, Shakespeare investigates the paradoxical possibility that
the mind may continue to develop even when the brain and body are deterio-
rating. What happens to the psyche-soma when the cloud-capp'd towers melt into
the mist? The Cave like the womb ultimately ejects its contents, forcing more
urgent consideration of the philosophical question: where is the relationship with
the object now? It is not strictly a new question: Cordelia harrowed hell like Christ-
Orpheus when she appeared to Lear from the spirit-world; so did Cleopatra when,
abandoning her lazy tyrannical ways, she raised Antony ("dying, dying") to the
fields of Elysium by her own physical efforts. It is what Hamlet failed to achieve
when he leaped into Ophelia's grave. This kind of drawing-forth of the personality
from its sojourn in Hades merges with the Narcissus or Marsyas types of myth
("tearing me from myself"), which have been interpreted by poets and visual art-
ists (for example Titian) in terms of flaying the narcissistic layers of the personality
to reveal a readiness for new growth. It is a continual, underlying progression rele-
vant to all phases of life: retelling the way the self needs to perpetually remake its
relationship with the object – just as we remake ourselves via rereading the clas-
sics. The most the personality can hope for is to be rescued from Hades (Meltzer's
"claustrum" [Meltzer and Williams 1992]) and restored to the Cave of shadows
which can reflect self-knowledge through symbol-formation.

The myths of Orpheus, and of Ceres and Proserpine – all favorites for exploring the poet's relationship with the Muse – underlie *The Winter's Tale*, where artistic creativity becomes specifically a model for self-development.[8] The traditional poetic concern with posthumous fame is already inbuilt in classical narrative, hence the link with reception (see Porter 2011, 473); it is through his art that the poet will live beyond himself, so his example needs to become receivable. This intensifies the need to focus on truthfulness in the communication between self and object. Time will sift the truth-tellers. Is truth believed to be hidden away within the aesthetic object (person or artform) like a secret hermeneutic code, or is it appreciated as a mystery to be felt on the pulses, that may even change one's life? In *The Winter's Tale* Leontes' mind stops developing as a result of the lies invented by his pseudo-scientific brain, believing he detected the treachery of his love-object Hermione. His observation is impeded and colored by narcissism; thus, he banishes his object and enters a Hades-like "winter" in which the artist-therapist-mother Paulina flagellates his conscience in "storm perpetual" (III.ii.211). While his analytical and misconceiving brain hibernates, Leontes dreams of summer and fertility myths, and subterraneously "recreates" himself. The theme of time is emphasized; for any deep or lasting reunion with the developmental spirit cannot be hurried.

As in other plays, the return of the vital spirit of self-development is associated with music. Paulina, who calls for the music, is – as she makes clear – merely a facilitator in reuniting Leontes with his object Hermione, who is herself an earthly representative of "great creating nature" – the force that brings to life her "statue" as soon as it is recognized by her husband. Nothing has been invented or constructed, but everything is seen differently. Perdita-Proserpine cannot be possessed without the possessor reverting to an identification with dusky Dis – something which momentarily tempts Leontes in the statue scene. The flicker of desire for the younger version of the love-object (once lost, now found) indicates a return of narcissistic possessiveness, but is corrected; for as Meltzer writes: "Desire makes it possible, even essential, to give the object its freedom" (Meltzer and Williams 1988, 27). Hermione's tense and drawn-out release echoes that of Leontes, in close reciprocation of his mental movements. When he is free, so is she: but it is the paradoxical type of freedom that acknowledges dependence on the object. This is the internal developmental constellation achieved after 16 winters – the time needed for the mind to recognize the cast-out "baby" that embodies its meaningful future, and that lives beyond its progenitor. Indeed, the play's structure indicates that this seasonal rhythm within the mind has a certain inevitability, like the oscillation between paranoid-schizoid and depressive orientations in psychoanalytic terminology. Shakespeare suggests, in effect, that it may not be possible for the self to kill its object, only to sever meaningful links – something that Bion would endorse in his theory that development stalls as a result of "attacks on linking" rather than as a result of hate or envy as dominant emotions in themselves.

Creativity in both artwork and in personality development therefore takes the form of tuning into the inevitable thrust of the quest for the unpossessable truth, and aligning the self with it, an actively passive process. Self-development is a process of eternal "becoming" and rests on the capacity to tolerate the unknown: which in itself requires a certain depressive faith in the internal object and its powers of rejuvenation, despite attack by projected infantile emotions. It demands that design and prediction be relinquished in favor of "negative capability," in Keats's famous reformulation of Socrates' advice in the *Phaedrus* to concentrate on "knowing oneself" rather than on the monsters of the myths. In placing this credo inside a group discussion which is itself a fiction,[9] Plato raises the complementary possibility that the internal monsters may be part of the real business of self-knowledge.

Bion, placing psychoanalytic thinking firmly within the Platonic tradition, calls this alignment with "O" – the object, the unknown, the Platonic Form of the good or beautiful, the Kantian noumenon, the "central feature" of the analytic situation (Bion 1970, 88). It involves eschewing memory and desire – slavery to past ruminations and future intentions. This type of knowing is very different from anything paraphraseable, or from the idea of finite significance in a literary text or myth. All poets and philosophers in this tradition recognize the truth is unattainable and needs "falsification" to enter into a sensuous domain, such as that of an existing mind – this is the function of myths, conveying truths not susceptible to analytical or reductive reasoning alone.

This is where the modern psychoanalytic theory of personality development coincides with the critical methodology of classical reception. All forms of reception, from fictional to analytical, face the psychological test of whether to colonize and possess the aesthetic object (the myth or text), or to introject its "meaning." Either authoritarian or solipsistic modes may be colonizing in intent, if the reader or receiver takes possession of the text as container of meaning and supplants it with an interpretation or an ideology.[10] It is not a limitation, but an advantage, that neither the pseudo-objective nor the purely subjective interpretation is a viable means of assimilating the "truth" of the classic. This is precisely what enables us to learn from the narrative, in the psychoanalytic sense of "learning from experience" (Bion, 1970). What is required is to recognize in the narrative's structure an aesthetic object that can serve as a model for our own development, through dialogue and identification – the antithesis of Hamlet's mousetrap.[11]

This means (in psychoanalytic terms) a "depressive" rather than a narcissistic attitude to the classic object, like that worked out by Keats in his reading of a Grecian Urn. Thoughts begin with "pre-conceptions" (Bion 1970, 15), initially felt on the pulses; developing them requires a complex process of identification with a generative, internalized object. The object, like the self, is in a state of evolution, but "contains" more knowledge. In psychoanalysis, the transference-countertransference communication mirrors this dialogue of object relations and evokes symbols that contain the meaning of the emotional situation, leading to growth of the

personality through self-knowledge. In reading, every reader seeks a soulmate for some pre-conception that thereby finds a context, in which thinking about his emotional condition can take place.[12] The classical myths, being generative, continue to perform this service for us if we relate to them aesthetically, linking our pre-conceptions with their metaphorical structures in a way that allows them to play a part in an evolutionary dialogue between self and objects.

Notes

1   Dodds similarly cites William James on how the deepest "recesses of feeling" constitute "real fact in the making" (Dodds 1951, 1).
2   See Brown (2004, 285); Gillespie (2004, 232); Nuttall (2004).
3   On poet and muse from Socrates' Diotima onwards, see Murray (2006); in relation to psychoanalytic thinking, see Williams (2005).
4   On the inversion of mother and daughters see Miller (1975); Adelman (1992); Williams (2011).
5   Root points out that "in his deeper more serious speeches these allusions do not occur" (1903, 9); Nuttall describes Hamlet's "Trojan style" (2004). On Hamlet's "sense of his own fictionality" see Lyne (2007, 133).
6   On Pyrrhus' pause and its relation to the idea of femininity see Sheen (2004, 161–165); on the relation to aesthetic conflict and the internal object see Williams (in Meltzer and Williams 1988, 84–133).
7   On transposition, translation, transformation and transfiguration in the play see Rudd (2000).
8   On the interplay of these with the story of Pygmalion see Miller (1988); Bate (1993); Nuttall (2000).
9   On the dialectic between myth and *logos* in the Platonic dialogues see McCabe (1992) and Warner (1992).
10   See character sketches by Leonard of the receptionist and positivist, theorist and historian (Leonard 2011, 216).
11   The type of identification that facilitates self-discovery is considered by Zajko (2006, 80).
12   See also Williams' use of Adrian Stokes' art criticism as a model for "aesthetic criticism" (in Meltzer and Williams 1988, 178–199).

Guide to Further Reading

For a comprehensive survey of Greek myths and their reception in the areas of philosophy and psychology see Graf (1996); on types of reception study see the collection by Hardwick and Stray (2011). For the function of mythmaking in relation to the development of thinking and symbol-formation in both culture and the individual see Langer (1946), the introduction to the work of Northrop Frye by Russell (1998), Barker and Warner (1992), and Lianeri and Zajko (2008). Focusing

on the world of the unconscious is Dodds' (1951) classic study on the internaliza-
tion of gods. For a modern psychoanalytic view of personality development see
Bion (1970); Meltzer (1973); Meltzer and Williams (1988). On identification, the
reader's developmental experience, and the parallels between poet and muse, and
self and internal objects, see Williams (1988, 2005), essays in Zajko and Leonard
(2006), and Martindale and Thomas (2006). In specific relation to Shakespeare as a
mediator of classical myth see the early study by Root (1903) and the modern
essays in Taylor (2000) and Martindale and Taylor (2004).

References

Adelman, J. 1992. *Suffocating Mothers*. London: Routledge.

Barker, A. and Warner, M., eds. 1992. *The Language of the Cave*. Edmonton: Academic
    Printing and Pub.

Bate, J. 1993. *Shakespeare and Ovid*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bion, W.R. 1970. *Attention and Interpretation*. London: Karnac.

Bion, W.R. 1987. *Clinical Seminars and Four Papers*. Abingdon: Brunner-Routledge.

Bion, W.R. 1989. *Two Papers: The Grid and Caesura*. London: Karnac.

Brown, S.A. 2004. "'There is no End but Addition': The Later Reception of Shakespeare's
    Classicism," in C. Martindale and A.B. Taylor, eds, *Shakespeare and the Classics*, 277–293.
    Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Coleridge, S.T. 1812. *The Friend*. London: Bloomsbury.

Dodds, E.R. 1951. *The Greeks and the Irrational*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gillespie, S. 2004. "Shakespeare and Greek Romance: 'Like an Old Tale Still,'" in
    C. Martindale and A.B. Taylor, eds. *Shakespeare and the Classics*, 225–240. Cambridge:
    Cambridge University Press.

Gittings, R., ed. 1970. *Selected Letters of John Keats*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Graf, F. 1996. *Greek Mythology: An Introduction*. Revised translation, T. Marier. Baltimore:
    Johns Hopkins University Press.

Hardwick, L. and Stray, C., eds. 2011. *A Companion to Classical Receptions*. Oxford: Oxford
    University Press.

Klein, M. 1957. *Envy and Gratitude*. Reprinted in: *Envy and Other Works*. London: Hogarth
    Press.

Langer, S. 1946. *Philosophy in a New Key*. New York: Mentor.

Leonard, M. 2011. "History and Theory: *Moses and Monotheism* and Historiography of the
    Repressed," in L. Hardwick and C. Stray, eds, *A Companion to Classical Receptions*,
    207–218. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lianeri, A. and Zajko, V., eds. 2008. *Translation and the Classic: Identity as Change in the
    History of Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lyne, R. 2007. "Neoclassicisms," in by S.A. Brown and C. Silverstone, eds, *Tragedy in
    Transition*, 123–140. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Martindale, C. and Taylor, A.B., eds. 2004. *Shakespeare and the Classics*. Cambridge:
    Cambridge University Press.

Martindale, C. and Thomas, R.F. 2006. *Classics and the Uses of Reception*. Oxford: Oxford
    University Press.

McCabe, M.M. 1992. "Myth, Allegory and Argument in Plato," in A. Barker and M. Warner, eds, *The Language of the Cave*, 47–67. Edmonton: Academic Printing and Pub.

Meltzer, D. 1973. *Sexual States of Mind*. London: Karnac.

Meltzer, D. and Williams, M.H. 1988. *The Apprehension of Beauty: The Role of Aesthetic Conflict in Development, Art and Violence*. London: Karnac.

Meltzer, D. and Williams, M.H. 1992. *The Claustrum: An Investigation of Claustrophobic Phenomena*. London: Karnac.

Miller, J.M. 1988. "Some Versions of Pygmalion," in C. Martindale, ed., *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, 205–214. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Miller, L. 1975. "A View of *King Lear*." *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 4, 1: 93–124.

Murray, P. 2006. "Reclaiming the Muse." In V. Zajko and M. Leonard, eds., *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought*, 327–354. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nuttall, A.D. 1988. "Ovid's Narcissus and Shakespeare's *Richard II*: The Reflected Self," in C. Martindale, ed., *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, 137–150. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nuttall, A.D. 2000. "*The Winter's Tale*: Ovid transformed," in A.B. Taylor, ed., *Shakespeare's Ovid*, 135–149. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nuttall, A.D. 2004. "Action at a Distance: Shakespeare and the Greeks," in C. Martindale and A.B. Taylor, eds, *Shakespeare and the Classics*, 209–222. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Porter, J.I. 2011. "Reception Studies: Future Prospects," in L. Hardwick and C. Stray, eds, *A Companion to Classical Receptions*, 469–481. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Root, R.K. 1903. *Classical Mythology in Shakespeare*. New York: Gordian Press.

Rudd, N. 2000. "Pyramus and Thisbe in Shakespeare and Ovid," in A.B. Taylor, ed., *Shakespeare's Ovid*, 113–125. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Russell, F. 1998. *Northrop Frye on Myth: An Introduction*. New York: Garland.

Sheen, E. 2004. "'These Are the Only Men': Seneca and Monopoly in *Hamlet*," in C. Martindale and A.B. Taylor, eds, *Shakespeare and the Classics*, 156–172. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Taylor, A.B., ed. 2000. *Shakespeare's Ovid*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Warner, M. 1992. "Dialectical Drama: The Case of Plato's *Symposium*," in A. Barker and M. Warner, eds, *The Language of the Cave*, 157–175. Edmonton: Academic Printing and Pub.

Williams, M.H. 1988. "The Undiscovered Country: The Shape of the Aesthetic Conflict in Hamlet," in D. Meltzer and M.H. Williams, eds, *The Apprehension of Beauty: The Role of Aesthetic Conflict in Development, Art and Violence*. Strath Tay: Clunie Press.

Williams, M.H. 2005. *The Vale of Soulmaking: The Post-Kleinian Model of the Mind*. London: Karnac.

Williams, M.H. 2011. "The True Voice of Feeling: Lear's Pilgrimage." *Psychodynamic Practice*, 17, 2: 141–158.

Zajko, V. 2006. "Hector and Andromache: Identification and Appropriation," in C. Martindale and R. F. Thomas, eds, *Classics and the Uses of Reception*, 80–91. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Zajko, V. and Leonard, M., eds. 2006. *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

18

Finding Asylum for Virginia Woolf's Classical Visions

Emily Pillinger

A stranger has come
To share my room in the house not right in the head,
A girl mad as birds

Bolting the night of the door with her arm her plume.
<div style="text-align: right">Dylan Thomas, "Love in the Asylum"</div>

The language and figure of the prophet are the same from age to age and nation to nation. The clarity of his vision and the burden of his knowledge are too great a load for human senses, and the disbelief and mockery of his hearers tip the balance so that what might have been merely a strange urgency comes close to madness; the apocalyptic vision is expressed in magnificent but unconnected images which to the workaday mind of the hearer seem only to confirm the suspicion that the prophet is deranged.
<div style="text-align: right">Bernard Knox, Word and Action (1979, 46)</div>

In his own splendidly portentous language, Knox (above) identifies a set of continuities that can be found in all representations of the visionary prophet. The prophet is blessed with knowledge that is a curse: his is a privileged understanding that spills beyond normal linguistic and cerebral capacities and destabilizes him, particularly in the eyes and ears of a skeptical audience. A figure whose mental state is challenged by divinely inspired visions, and whose difficulty in sharing those visions serves to detach him from the very community that should value the knowledge most, the prophet either pitches towards insanity or projects the appearance of insanity. The masculine possessive pronouns in the quotation are misleading, however, for Knox is responding to a specific character: to Cassandra in Aeschylus'

Agamemnon, the prophet cursed by Apollo to speak the truth but never be under-
stood. It is the characteristics peculiar to Cassandra's role as prophetess – her sexual
vulnerability as a woman, her tortured but inspired speech, her undervalued
knowledge, her identification with certain myths of metamorphosis, and her
existence on the precipice of insanity ("mad as birds") – that quietly haunt Virginia
Woolf, one of the most important writers on the self in the early twentieth century.

Woolf had an ambivalent relationship with the classical world. As a reader,
essayist, and creative writer of catholic tastes, she could not be untouched by the
literature of Rome and, to an even greater extent, Greece. She writes in her famous
essay "On Not Knowing Greek": "it is to the Greeks that we turn when we are sick
of the vagueness, of the confusion, of the Christianity and its consolations, of our
own age" (Woolf 1984, 38). At the same time, as a woman, excluded from many of
the educational institutions that fostered a sense of ease and familiarity with the
Classics, she was painfully alert to the elitism of classical scholarship. The
patriarchal classical canon had been reinforced by generations of male scholarship,
and women were still not fully accepted within the realms of either the scholars or
the creative artists inspired by those ancient texts. As Woolf notes in "A Room of
One's Own," "women have had less intellectual freedom than the sons of Athenian
slaves" (Woolf 2008, 141).

Nonetheless, while Woolf was often anxious about her piecemeal understanding
of ancient languages and literature, in "On Not Knowing Greek" she also hints at
the peculiar insight that comes from having avoided conventional indoctrination,
from remaining conscious of the unknowability of ancient Greece (Evangelista
2009, 2). She alludes to this when she opens the essay with the sly comment that
schoolboy Greek surely sounds nothing like the language spoken in ancient
Greece. Woolf balances her more general sense of educational disadvantage with
an awareness of her distinctive capacities in the introduction to the first volume of
The Common Reader, in which "On Not Knowing Greek" was published. There she
defines herself as the figure behind the book's title:

> The common reader, as Dr Johnson implies, differs from the critic and the scholar.
> He is worse educated, and nature has not gifted him so generously. He reads for his
> own pleasure rather than to impart knowledge or correct the opinions of others.
> Above all, he is guided by an instinct to create for himself, out of whatever odds and
> ends he can come by, some kind of whole – a portrait of a man, a sketch of an age,
> a theory of the art of writing. (Woolf 1984, 1)

According to this model (another generalization with recourse to provocatively
masculine pronouns), the technique of selectively and instinctively drawing on
canonical culture contributes to an original perspective; Woolf makes a proud
virtue of necessity. Woolf presents herself as the "common reader" with respect to
the Classics perhaps more than she does with any other branch of literature.
Indeed, her defiant amateurism not only allows her to find new paths of meaning

in ancient texts where others slip into scholarly ruts, but it even permeates her lived experience: "Greek, for all my ignorance, has worked its way into me" (quoted in Fowler 1983, 347). Responding to the always-alien language and literature of ancient Greece helped Woolf to develop her own idiosyncratic style of writing, one designed to expose the strange self that she inhabited, as well as to compose the many selves found in both her fiction and her non-fiction.

The most intense interplay between ancient Greek culture and Woolf's writing on the self occurred during the author's renewed Greek studies in the 1920s. Early in the decade Woolf read Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, producing her own crib and notes on the text, and the experience of getting to grips with Aeschylus' language informed and inspired "On Not Knowing Greek." As Prins and Dalgarno have shown, in that essay Cassandra becomes a figure for Woolf's Benjaminian understanding of Greek and the process of translation: Woolf finds that in Aeschylus' play "meaning is just on the far side of language" (Woolf 1984, 31; with Prins 2006 and Dalgarno 2001 and 2012). Working outwards from Woolf's quotation of Cassandra's first *otototoi* in the *Agamemnon*, dubbed by Woolf a "naked cry" of sound detached from semantic sense, Prins shows how Woolf treasures the character whose linguistic richness defies any facile communication of meaning, either on the page or on stage, in the distant past or in contemporary readings. Woolf also had a personal interest in Cassandra's voice. The production of non-sense, as Knox explained, is a marker of Cassandra's prophetic authority, but it is also associated with real or perceived madness. Woolf, seriously troubled by mental ill health, was driven to present her condition through her own articulation of Greek-inspired "naked cries." In turn, the freedom of Cassandra's voice, unbounded by the normal constraints of time or language, offered Woolf a model for a form of writing therapy (Peters 2009, 39). This therapy involved Woolf allowing her own voice to range with similar freedom across the cultural canon, reformulating mental trauma and dislocated authority as inspired creativity that could be valued in the present moment.

In her essays Woolf shows how silences, sounds, and words can create a language of mental and physical illness. For example, Woolf's use of ellipse becomes a reference to the enigmatic internal self: in "A Room of One's Own" its frequency has been interpreted as reflecting repression, unconscious desire, and self-conscious questioning (Allen 2010), and in her letters it bears sexual connotations (Cramer 2010). When it comes to portraying the most inaccessible forms of inspiration and delusion, Woolf turns to foreign literature, that which the non-native reader perceives as "the far side of language." In "On Being Ill," an essay that insists on the connection between mental and bodily suffering, Woolf writes of what it feels like to read when ill:

> In illness words seem to possess a mystic quality. We grasp what is beyond their surface meaning … In health meaning has encroached upon sound. Our intelligence domineers over our senses. But in illness, with the police off duty, we creep beneath some obscure poem by Mallarmé or Donne, some phrase in Latin or Greek, and the words give out their scent and distil their flavour. (Woolf 2012, 21)

In other words, Woolf grants her readers permission to identify her various pathologies as a true melding of *pathos* and *logos*: a medical phenomenon that always retains an intellectual and aesthetic dimension. Lee, sensitively warning against the danger of biographers dispossessing Woolf of her own illness, notes that Woolf herself "transforms illness into a language of power and inspiration" (Lee 1997, 194).

One much-analyzed story epitomizes the impossibly interwoven nature of Woolf's analytical, creative, and hallucinatory experiences in the context of Greek language and myth. According to Woolf, during her second mental breakdown in 1904 she lay in bed "thinking that the birds were singing Greek choruses and that King Edward was using the foulest possible language among Ozzie Dickinson's azaleas" (Woolf 2002, 45). The story was repeated by Woolf's family members and biographers, from her husband Leonard (who also applies it to a later breakdown) to her nephew Quentin Bell, who concludes his account with, "All that summer she was mad" (Bell 1972, 89–90). Dalgarno interprets these auditory hallucinations according to Woolf's ideas on the strained language of illness:

> in her biography Greek stands for the most distant horizon of intelligibility, the point beyond which the sane mind does not reach. Birdsong is communication in a language that the listener does not know, and to acknowledge it as language albeit unknown compromises the listener's social identity in a way that invites being labelled insane. (Dalgarno 2001, 33)

For Poole (1995), the vision exposes Woolf's sense of her limited knowledge of the Classics, a mortification compounded by the humiliation induced by the sexual advances she suffered from her half-brother George Duckworth, which she described in the context of a Greek lesson, and by her difficult sexual relations with her husband Leonard, another accomplished classicist. Poole's interpretation links Woolf's impression that the birds were singing Greek to her discussions of birds from specific myths elsewhere in her work. In "On Not Knowing Greek" Woolf talks of Sophocles' tragedies: "Here we listen to the nightingale whose song echoes through English literature singing in her own Greek tongue" (Woolf 1984, 28). From her references to the words of Sophocles' Electra on the grief of the nightingale Poole connects Woolf's hallucinations of Greek-singing birds to the myth of the sisters Procne and Philomela, the tale of literally unspeakable sexual and domestic violence. Philomela, raped and with her tongue cut out by her sister's husband Tereus, tells her sister what has happened by weaving the tale into a tapestry. In vengeance Procne and Philomela slaughter Itys, the child of Procne and Tereus, and feed him to his father, before in a mass metamorphosis all protagonists are transformed into birds. Tereus becomes a hoopoe, while Procne and Philomela become a nightingale and a swallow respectively (in most versions):

Procne laments the loss of her son in her beautiful song, while Philomela chitters incomprehensibly as the swallow.

While Poole has Woolf allude to the myth to express her feelings of shame and cultural inadequacy, others identify more optimism in the references. Dalgarno (2001) focuses on the power of the nightingale's voice, tracing the myth of Procne and Philomela through texts Woolf had mastered, including Aristophanes' *Birds* (which Woolf saw performed as the Cambridge Greek Play in 1903 and read in 1924); Prins (2006) explores Woolf's enthusiasm for the deliberate evasions of both birds. In fact it is the confusion between the two birds' voices that links the myth of Procne and Philomela to the prophet Cassandra in Aeschylus' drama, and Woolf picks up on this flexibility of association. In the *Agamemnon* Cassandra's inability to communicate is mapped onto the myth: initially Clytemnestra suggests that the prophet may speak a foreign language sounding like a swallow's song (1050–1051). Just a few lines later the chorus responds to Cassandra's voice with the suggestion that she is like the nightingale Procne:

> you cry forth about yourself
> a song that is no song, like a vibrant-throated bird
> wailing insatiably, alas, with a heart fond of grieving,
> the nightingale lamenting "Itys, Itys!" for a death
> in which both parents did evil. (Sommerstein 2008, 1140–1145)

Cassandra responds with the despairing wish that she were indeed Procne:

> Ió ió, the life of the clear-voiced nightingale!
> The gods have clothed her with a feathered form
> and given her a pleasant life with no cause to grieve. (Sommerstein 2008, 1146–1148)

Cassandra does not see herself as "clear-voiced," knowing as she does that her voice is defined by what Prins calls the "Cassandra effect": "something untranslatable in Greek, a foreign element within any language that sounds like the twittering of a swallow" (Prins 2006, 183).

The communicative difficulties and identity problems of Procne and Philomela reflect the multiple dimensions of Cassandra's vocal (dis)ability, a state to which Woolf responds as both a patient and a writer. To her listeners, Cassandra's language is strange and fragmentary, and at times beautiful. Her identification as either the swallow or the nightingale is not absolute, but something that occurs to her audience in the process of responding to her voice. When Cassandra intervenes to dismiss any comparison of herself with the nightingale, she effectively joins the audience in detached observation of her own dubious double. Woolf constructs a similarly fluid relationship with her avian counterparts, not only when she identifies (with) the language of the birds outside her window, but also when she uses the notion of Greek-speaking

birds to describe the chorus in Greek drama as the refracted and externalized versions of an authorial mind. They are:

> the old men or women who take no active part in the drama, the undifferentiated voices who sing like birds in the pauses of the wind; who can comment, or sum up, or allow the poet to speak himself or supply, by contrast, another side to his conception. (Woolf 1984, 29)

In her fiction Woolf develops the idea of birdsong as a marker of troubled creativity. While Woolf was writing the essays of the first *Common Reader*, she was also writing the novel *Mrs Dalloway*. In *Mrs Dalloway* a devastating subplot concerns the veteran, Septimus, who is portrayed as gradually succumbing to the horrors of a breakdown following shellshock suffered in the Great War. Meanwhile his anxious Italian wife Rezia and his blusteringly incompetent doctors look on uncomprehendingly, moving further and further from any kind of communication with Septimus. Septimus sees visual and aural patterns where others see everyday life, responding to a very English bird: "The sparrows fluttering, rising, and falling in jagged fountains were part of the pattern […] Sounds made harmonies with premeditation; the spaces between them were as significant as the sounds" (Woolf 1996, 21). Septimus also suffers from the impression that birds are speaking Greek, just as Woolf had done during her illness. The sparrows have replaced the swallow's lament "Itys, Itys" with a new lament for Septimus:

> He waited. He listened. A sparrow perched on the railing opposite chirped Septimus, Septimus, four or five times over and went on, drawing its notes out, to sing freshly and piercingly in Greek words how there is no crime and, joined by another sparrow, they sang in voices prolonged and piercing in Greek words, from trees in the meadow of life beyond a river where the dead walk, how there is no death. (Woolf 1996, 23)

As with Woolf's hallucinations, it would be reductive to gloss Septimus' mental trauma as simply a literary function, but there is no doubt that Woolf wanted to connect Septimus' suffering with a particular way of experiencing words, texts, literary traditions. Septimus' illness involves a shift in his sensory perceptions that approaches a kind of poetic sensibility: "He was attaching meanings to words of a symbolical kind. A serious symptom" (Woolf 1996, 96). This takes the man into a space where he feels capable of making unique sense of the cultural productions of the Western canon:

> He, Septimus, was alone, called forth in advance of the mass of men to hear the truth, to learn the meaning, which now at last, after all the toils of civilization – Greeks, Romans, Shakespeare, Darwin, and now himself – was to be given whole to… "To whom?" he asked aloud" (Woolf 1996, 67; the ellipse is Woolf's)

Septimus becomes a medium for speech from the past, relaying it to his wife:

> His friend who was killed, Evans, had come, he said. He was singing behind the
> screen. She wrote it down just as he spoke it. Some things were very beautiful; others
> sheer nonsense. And he was always stopping in the middle, changing his mind; want-
> ing to add something; hearing something new; listening with his hand up. But she
> heard nothing. (Woolf 1996, 142)

A song heard only by the traumatized becomes, in the process of translation, a
jumble of nonsense and poetry, voice and writing, quotation and supplementation.
As Septimus spirals deeper into suicidal mania he finally sees Aeschylean swallows,
but appearing as the pattern on the screen that had previously hidden Evans, they
represent a frightening invasion of reality and expose the very frailty of his
hallucinations.

> There was a screen in front of him, with black bulrushes and blue swallows. Where
> he had once seen mountains, where he had seen faces, where he had seen beauty,
> there was a screen. (Woolf 1996, 147)

Mrs Dalloway picks up on elements of Woolf's experience of psychological trauma
to describe Septimus' mental disintegration. The less the patient is understood by
family and acquaintances, the more this inspires a kind of trans-historical cultural
awareness, an awareness that is marked by birds(ong) fluttering out of Cassandra's
distant story of visions and obscured communications. The myth of Procne and
Philomela that underpins this birdsong is certainly one of terrible violence. Yet it
is also a myth of metamorphosis-as-therapy. After rape and revenge, the protago-
nists are whirled out of their incestuous world and transformed into birds, to sing
their Greek song to the few listeners whose minds are uniquely tuned to their fre-
quency: the prophet Cassandra, and now the veteran Septimus, and the writer
Virginia Woolf. The characters who "hear" the Greek birds in their madness are
strangely sensitive to the ebb and flow of literary tradition: they know, or show,
how trauma is transformed into art. Herein lies the therapeutic potential of the
myth. For Woolf, metamorphosis is not just about modernist tropes, or ancient
mythography, but personal renewal, and this belief underpins two of her other
novels of the 1920s: *To the Lighthouse* and *Orlando*.

    To the Lighthouse is a novel primarily about family and social class, and about the
passage of time as it is measured by Woolf's memories of her own family at the
turn of the century. It is an *Odyssey* of sorts, with the past configured as an
Underworld. In *To the Lighthouse* a story of visual creativity punctuates the verbal
fireworks of the narrative: Lily Briscoe paints in the face of the arrogant scholar-
ship of Mr Ramsey, Mr Bankes, and Mr Charles Tansley, returning obsessively to
Tansley's awkward remark that "women can't paint, women can't write." Early in
the novel Lily's mental language swirls around her defiant efforts to paint in an
abstract style that baffles Mr Bankes. She is tackling a scene that will be brought

together by the correct placement of a tree. Free-associating words and surreal images combine in a mind on the verge of inspiration: "to follow her thought was like following a voice which speaks too quickly to be taken down by one's pencil" (Woolf 2000, 29). As Lily's ideas race on, birds appear in a sudden climax provoked by a young character's exploits with a shotgun:

> her thought which had spun quicker and quicker exploded of its own intensity; she felt released; a shot went off close at hand, and there came, flying from its fragments, frightened, effusive, tumultuous, a flock of starlings. (Woolf 2000, 29–30)

Lily's experience of the birds has them appear at points when she is most determined to assert her power as an individual and as an artist. In two episodes Lily replays in her head scenes of Mrs Ramsey pressuring her to marry, and in both she notices that birds are singing outside the window. The second time around the chant "Septimus, Septimus" is rephrased as Mrs. Ramsay insisting "'Marry, marry!' (sitting very upright early in the morning with the birds beginning to cheep in the garden outside)" (Woolf 2000, 190). By now, though, a decade has passed and Lily has mastered the uneasy memory; with this comes a transformation in Lily's creative work and in Woolf's novel. Lily's development of her artwork out of past trauma stretching into classical antiquity mirrors Woolf's: "as she dipped into the blue paint, she dipped too into the past"; meanwhile the "winy smell" of the sea that surrounds the narrative brings the colors of Homeric Greek into Lily's painterly mind and into Woolf's writing, translated through a sense-perception that is neither visual nor verbal (Woolf 2000, 187, 191). Both artworks draw to a close in the final lines, where Lily places the final touch on her painting. There she draws the single line in the center of her canvas that represents the correctly-placed tree, and with that, her comment on the image concludes Woolf's novel: "I have had my vision" (Woolf 2000, 226).

In its negotiation of family history as both stimulus and obstacle to artistic creativity, *To the Lighthouse* offered a real form of therapy for Woolf, who claimed that after writing it she stopped thinking of her parents on a daily basis: "writing *The Lighthouse*, laid them in my mind" (Woolf 1977–1984, *Diary* III: 1925–1930, 208). In her next novel, *Orlando: A Biography*, myth-inspired metamorphosis as therapy for the creative artist becomes the conceit that drives the entire narrative, through the metamorphosis of the main character and through literary, rather than family, history. The novel is a self-referential piece of writing. The novel is dedicated to Vita Sackville-West, with whom Woolf was passionately involved in the 1920s. However, while the trappings of the book's narrative are modelled on the house and heritage of Sackville-West, in its central preoccupations the book is as autobiographical as it is biographical (Raitt 1993).

This chapter began with a clutch of misleading masculine pronouns. *Orlando* begins with one of the most loaded pronouns in English literature: "He – for there could be no doubt of his sex." The "biography" of Orlando is structured by two

fantastic impossibilities: Orlando's Tiresias-like (though effortless and unmotivated) shift from a male to a female existence, and the fact that this existence lasts for multiple centuries. The life of Orlando as an author sits at the center of the novel, mapping out a literary history that embraces both male and female experiences of writing (De Gay 2006; Gualtieri 2000). Woolf's "common reader" had reached into the past to create a personal but coherent narrative of the canon: "some kind of whole." The writer Orlando, by contrast, experiences literary history as his/her fragmented present – "she had a great variety of selves to call upon" (Woolf 1992, 314) – and reaches forward to a time, place, sex, and literary mode in which to flourish as an individual, whole and complete. It is only once Orlando attains this that his/her writing, which has been undergoing its own metamorphoses in tandem with the writer, can meet its potential.

Over the course of the biography Orlando's writings keep transforming, shifting to suit the age in which they are written. Orlando's early years see his uncontrolled emotions inspiring florid poetry; he declares his love for the Russian princess Sasha through the narrator's mocking alliteration: "the words coming on the pants of his breath with the passion of a poet whose poetry is half pressed out of him by pain" (Woolf 1992, 47). The narrator also teases Orlando for his derivative efforts, referring to a cabinet full of his Elizabethan writings on the subjects of Greek myth:

> One was inscribed "The Death of Ajax." Another "The Birth of Pyramus," another "Iphigenia in Aulis," another "The Death of Hippolytus" another "Meleager," another "The Return of Odysseus," – in fact there was scarcely a single drawer that lacked the name of some mythological personage at a crisis of his career. (Woolf 1992, 76)

Yet there is one artwork that evolves alongside Orlando and, as with Lily Briscoe's painting, it all hinges on the representation of a tree. At the beginning of the novel Orlando sits as a boy under an oak tree that, like Odysseus' olive, marks the place that is his home. He returns to it regularly while its sprouting and falling leaves measure the passing of years, and stands under it as a woman at the end. "The Oak Tree" is also a poem on which Orlando works for several centuries. The natural feature and the poem together form a kind of identity for Orlando, who *is* a tree to his admirers: for Queen Elizabeth he is "the oak tree on which she leant her degradation," while for Sasha he is like "a million-candled Christmas tree" (Woolf 1992, 26, 54). Indeed, Orlando's relationship with the tree as both art and lived experience recalls the tale of Apollo and Daphne, the first erotic myth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, in which Daphne is transformed into a laurel tree (and thence into poetry) as she flees Apollo (Brown 1999, 206-207). This association is reinforced by the presence of a tapestry in Orlando's house that portrays the myth, to which Orlando also repeatedly turns as a source of reassurance: "rising and falling on the eternal faint breeze which never failed to move it. Still the hunter rode; still Daphne flew" (Woolf 1992, 317).

The tapestry as a symbol of the overlaps between Greek myth, art, and life, offers a faint echo of Philomela, who wove her autobiography into a tapestry. Orlando's creativity concerning her own life is associated with another kind of needlework. Orlando's memory is "a seamstress," who "runs her needle in and out," and by the time of the nineteenth century the narrator tells readers that the manuscript of "The Oak Tree," in a charmingly mundane twist on the theme, "looked like a piece of darning most conscientiously carried out" (Woolf 1992, 78, 236). Nor is this the only appearance of Procne and Philomela. *Orlando* sees a return of the imagery of birds that represented the sisters' escape through metamorphosis, and, as in *To the Lighthouse*, the appearance or singing of birds now marks the artist's development into a healthy whole: "a single self, a real self" (Woolf 1992, 314).

In the middle of *Orlando* the discombobulated protagonist ponders her version of hearing the birds sing Greek, in a typical combination of lofty philosophizing and bathos:

> "What a phantasmagoria the mind is and meeting-place of dissemblables. At one moment we deplore our birth and state and aspire to an ascetic exaltation; the next we are overcome by the smell of some old garden path and weep to hear the thrushes sing." And so bewildered as usual by the multitude of things which call for explanation and imprint their message without leaving any hint as to their meaning upon the mind, she threw her cheroot out of the window and went to bed. (Woolf 1992, 176)

Later, the birds become more tightly linked to Orlando's creative spirit through the feather as writing implement. Here, as for Lily Briscoe, the connection is made at a point where the artist is resisting the pressure to marry; as Orlando's ring finger tingles the pen starts to produce sentimental doggerel against Orlando's will, displaying a mind of its own in what Orlando identifies as "some infirmity of the quill" (Woolf 1992, 238).

Unlike Lily, though, Orlando ultimately finds a healthy resolution in marriage, partly because she and her husband Shelmerdine consistently challenge each other in their gender roles: "'You're a woman, Shel!' she cried. 'You're a man, Orlando!' he cried" (Woolf 1992, 252). So the birds start to align in a mark of good omen with this new partnership. Orlando's first meeting with Shelmerdine is prefaced by a mysterious walk punctuated by falling birds' feathers, after which:

> some strange ecstasy came over her. Some wild notion she had of following the birds to the rim of the world and flinging herself on the spongy turf and there drinking forgetfulness, while the rooks' hoarse laughter sounded over her. (Woolf 1992, 248).

After their marriage Orlando speaks to her husband in an affectionate voice that transforms Woolf's traumatic hallucinations of birds singing Greek in the azalea shrubbery outside her window: readers are told to imagine of Orlando's voice that "a nightingale might be singing even so among the azaleas"

(Woolf 1992, 257). Soon the very sounding of their names further exorcises the memory. After a jay shrieks "Shelmerdine," husband and wife call out to each other, and just as they always grasp each other's meaningful nonsense (such as "Rattigan Glumphoboo," found in Orlando's telegram to Shelmerdine), so the fragmentation of language that the birds represent becomes a positive force. The chapter concludes:

> the words went dashing and circling like wild hawks together among the belfries and higher and higher, further and further, faster and faster, they circled, till they crashed and fell in a shower of fragments to the ground; and she went in. (Woolf 1992, 262)

In the next and final chapter, Orlando will complete the triumph that is "The Oak Tree," and the birds will mark the very ordinariness and sanity of the world in which she now lives.

> Orlando pushed away her chair, stretched her arms, dropped her pen, came to the window, and exclaimed, "Done!" She was almost felled to the ground by the extraordinary sight which now met her eyes. There was the garden and some birds. The world was going on as usual. (Woolf 1992, 271)

Orlando brings to a comforting resolution the myths of Daphne and Procne and Philomela. It also, albeit indirectly, rewrites the mythic story of Philomela's literary descendant, Cassandra. Cassandra suffered a terrible and personal penalty for the mental time-travel caused by her prophetic gift. External audiences of the ancient texts that tell her story understand that she looks forward into the future, but in failing to communicate to her immediate interlocutors the narrative that tells of those events, her own existence is doomed. Orlando positively reframes Cassandra's situation in several respects. "The Oak Tree" is ultimately understood and well-received by an internal audience, though the readers of *Orlando* are not privileged to read or hear the poem. However, those external readers of the biography do get to perceive the moment where lived experience finally produces a text that finds its perfect audience, in Shelmerdine's conjugal understanding, and in the "spirit of the Age," which enables Orlando both to write and to reach an appreciative readership. Meanwhile the external readers also get to appreciate the text of Woolf, the profoundly uncommon Common Writer, who has produced "a portrait of a man, a sketch of an age, a theory of the art of writing," all in perfect synchrony. In place of Cassandra's doomed voice crying out truthfully but incomprehensibly into the future, *Orlando* tells of two apparently contented and productive writers, Orlando and Woolf, both finding sanctuary in the age they inhabit and equipped with powerful responses to the mythic and literary past. Orlando's "biographer" hears birds singing not of loss, sexual shame, exclusion, or miscommunication. Rather, at least for a moment, "Life, Life, Life! cries the bird" (Woolf 1992, 269–270).

Guide to Further Reading

For the challenges faced by women seeking to study and write about classical antiquity at the turn of the twentieth century see Delgano (2001), Fiske (2008), Fowler (1983; 1999), Hurst (2008), Marcus (1987), Olverson (2008), Prins (1999), Richlin (1992), Stray (1998). Woolf's theories of translation and her identification of Greek as "the perfect language" are imaginatively explored by Dalgarno (2001; 2012) and Prins (2006). Koulouris (2011) addresses Woolf's adoption of Greek culture more broadly. On Woolf's feminist reinterpretations of the broader literary canon see De Gay (2006) and Gualtieri (2000). The ethical and scholarly difficulty in untangling the "fictions" and "realities" of Woolf's mental illness is sensitively addressed in the superb biography of Lee (1997), following earlier works by Caramagno (1992) and Trombley (1981).

References

Allen, J. 2010. *Virginia Woolf and the Politics of Language*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Bell, Q. 1972. *Virginia Woolf: A Biography*. London: Hogarth Press.

Brown, S.A. 1999. *The Metamorphosis of Ovid: From Chaucer to Ted Hughes*. London: Duckworth.

Caramagno, T. 1992. *The Flight of the Mind: Virginia Woolf's Art and Manic-Depressive Illness*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Cramer, P.M. 2010. "Virginia Woolf and Sexuality," in S. Sellers, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Virginia Woolf*, 2nd edn, 180–196. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dalgarno, E. 2001. *Virginia Woolf and the Visible World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dalgarno, E. 2012. *Virginia Woolf and the Migrations of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

De Gay, J. 2006. *Virginia Woolf's Novels and the Literary Past*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Evangelista, S. 2009. *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fiske, S. 2008. *Heretical Hellenism: Women Writers, Ancient Greece, and the Victorian Popular Imagination*. Athens: Ohio University Press.

Fowler, R. 1983. "'On Not Knowing Greek': The Classics and the Woman of Letters." *The Classical Journal*, 78, 4: 337–349.

Fowler, R. 1999. "Moments and Metamorphoses: Virginia Woolf's Greece." *Comparative Literature*, 51, 3: 217–242.

Gualtieri, E. 2000. *Virginia Woolf's Essays: Sketching the Past*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hurst, I. 2008. *Victorian Women Writers and the Classics: The Feminine of Homer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Knox, B. 1979. *Word and Action: Essays on the Ancient Theater*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Koulouris, T. 2011. *Hellenism and Loss in the Work of Virginia Woolf*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Lee, H. 1997. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Vintage Books.

Marcus, J. 1987. *Virginia Woolf and the Languages of Patriarchy*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Olverson, T.D. 2008. *Women Writers and the Dark Side of Late-Victorian Hellenism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Peters, N.D. 2009. "'The Sirens Who Lure Us to These Perilous Waters': The Influences of Greek Tragedy, Epic Poetry, Virgil's *Georgics* and Juvenal's *Satires* in Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out*, *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*." PhD thesis, Sydney.

Poole, R. 1995. *The Unknown Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (First published 1978.)

Prins, Y. 1999. "Greek Maenads, Victorian Spinsters," in R. Dellamora, ed., *Victorian Sexual Dissidence*, 43–83. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Prins, Y. 2006. "OTOTOTOI: Virginia Woolf and 'The Naked Cry' of Cassandra," in F. Macintosh, P. Michelakis, E. Hall, and O. Taplin, eds, *Agamemnon in Performance: 458 BC to AD 2004*, 163–185. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Raitt, S. 1993. *Vita and Virginia: The Work and Friendship of V. Sackville-West and Virginia Woolf*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Richlin, A. 1992. "Striking Back at the (Roman) Empire: The Artist as Classicist in Stead and Others." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 11: 265–287.

Sommerstein, A.H., trans. 2008. *Aeschylus. Oresteia; Agamemnon; Libation-Bearers; Eumenides*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Stray, C. 1998. *Classics Transformed: Schools, Universities, and Society in England, 1830–1960*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Trombley, S. 1981. *"All that Summer She was Mad": Virginia Woolf and Her Doctors*. London: Junction.

Woolf, V. 1977–1984. *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*, volumes I-V, ed. A.O. Bell. London: Hogarth Press.

Woolf, V. 1984. "On Not Knowing Greek," in A. McNeillie, ed., *The Common Reader*, 23–38. San Diego: Harcourt. (First published 1925.)

Woolf, V. 1992. *Orlando: A Biography*. San Diego: Harcourt. (First published 1928.)

Woolf, V. 1996. *Mrs Dalloway*. London: Penguin. (First published 1925.)

Woolf, V. 2000. *To The Lighthouse*. London: Penguin Classics. (First published 1927.)

Woolf, V. 2002. *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*, ed. J. Schulkind, with an introduction by H. Lee. London: Pimlico.

Woolf, V. 2008. "A Room of One's Own," in M. Shiach, ed., *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, 1–150. Oxford: Oxford World's Classics. (First published 1929.)

Woolf, V. 2012. *On Being Ill,* with *Notes from Sick Rooms* by J. Stephen, ed. H. Lee. Ashfield, MA: Paris Press. (First published 1926.)

Part IV

Iconic Figures and Texts

Orpheus and Eurydice

Genevieve Liveley

It seems only fitting that the first literary reference we have to "famous Orpheus" (*onomaklyton Orphēn*) should be in a mid-sixth century BCE lyric fragment (Ibycus, frag. 306), and that the earliest extant image we possess should be part of an early sixth century BCE temple frieze fragment (of the Sicyonion treasury at Delphi) depicting a badly disfigured and defaced "Orpheus" playing his lyre on the deck of the Argo. The fragmented afterlife of antiquity's most famous poet, lover, prophet, and priest, infamously torn to pieces by angry women, aptly dismembers even as it remembers Orpheus, reminding us always that there never was a fully incorporated Orpheus myth. We cannot piece together an original form of the myth, intact and untouched by later receptions and mutilations: in the beginning, as in the end, Orpheus is composed of many parts.

Indeed, the tripartite themes that we now associate with Orpheus – the shamanic musician who charmed birds, beasts, and wild men with his songs; the devoted lover who went to hell and back to recover his dead wife, only to lose her again; the misogynist pederast torn to pieces by women – are themselves discrete fragments of scattered stories that the reception of Orpheus has seen re-assimilated and re-assembled since antiquity, with different parts overlooked and with others picked up and placed in different positions of prominence at different times. This chapter seeks to piece together some of the scattered fragments of this myth from different dates in its reception, concentrating not upon its great many orthodox retellings and harmonious translations (characterizing the "traditional" rememberings and reconstructions of the Orpheus myth), but, instead, focusing upon moments of schism, of mutilation and *sparagmos* (characterizing the moments of anger, resistance, and pain in the myth's reception). In reviewing these necessarily selective and fragmented pieces of the Orpheus "corpus," it will seek to argue that Orpheus is most appropriately remembered by his

"dismembering" – and that it is those who resist the legendary charms of his song, like the women who tear the poet apart and scatter pieces of his corpus abroad, who keep the head and lyre of Orpheus singing still.

Dismembering Orpheus

For the Sicyonians dedicating their treasury to Apollo at Delphi in the sixth century BCE, as for the lyric poet Simonides writing in the fifth century BCE, and for Apollonius writing in the fourth century BCE, famous Orpheus was famed above all for his abilities as a musician and his shaman-like powers over the natural world. Indeed, Apollonius tells us (*Argonautica* 1.23) that it was solely on account of Orpheus' abilities to charm and calm birds and beasts, men and monsters, that the unlikely hero was recruited as an Argonaut to help on Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece. For Horace in the first century BCE (*Ars Poetica* 391–399), as for Seneca in the first century CE (*Medea, Hercules Furens*), this too was how Orpheus was best remembered. The same charming poet Orpheus held the same attractions for Shakespeare in the sixteenth century (*Merchant of Venice* 5.1.70–88, *Two Gentleman of Verona* 3.2.72–80) and for Milton in the seventeenth ("L'Allegro" 136–152; "'Il Penseroso'" 103–108; "Lycidas" 50–63; and *Paradise Lost* 7.1–39). And the same Orphic Ur-poet worked his magic upon Dryden, Pope, the Romantics, and innumerable poets, musicians, and artists in-between and thereafter (see Miles 1999; Strauss 1971; Warden 1982).

But as charming a figure as this Ur-poet Orpheus may have presented to these fellow poets, evidence from the fifth century BCE onwards suggests that Orpheus' magical musical powers were always somewhat less potent when it came to women. Whereas Orpheus' harmonies could civilize the most savage men and beasts, they appear to have had the opposite effect upon the opposite sex. The lost Aeschylean tragedy, the *Bassarids*, has Orpheus torn to pieces and his body parts scattered abroad by a chorus of bacchants. Numerous fifth-century BCE vases similarly depict Orpheus being attacked by women (see Guthrie 1966, figs and plates 4 and 6). And in the fourth century BCE, Plato touches upon this same motif in the *Republic* (10.620a), where he describes the gynophobic ghost of Orpheus electing to be reincarnated as a swan, preferring to hatch from an egg rather than to have any physical contact with the sex responsible for his violent death and dismemberment.

It is possible to speculate that these ancient accounts of Orpheus' *sparagmos*, stressing a profound lack of sympathy between Orpheus and women, reflect some strand of misogyny (or promotion of celibacy) in the philosophical or theological doctrines attributed to "Orphism" and thus to Orpheus in antiquity (see Parker 1995), or relate to a primitive Dionysian fertility tradition allied with the myth (see Clark 1979; Segal 1989, 157, 162, 180). But, whatever its origins, the hostility surrounding Orpheus' reception by women – in stark contrast to the positive response

evinced by every other audience – is repeatedly highlighted as the focal point of these ancient Greek forms of the myth and thus carries particular significance for the myth's later reception. Indeed, this focus marks reception and "feminist" reception in particular as among the central concerns not only of the early reception of this myth but of its continuing afterlife in the classical literary tradition.

In English letters, Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, offers one of the earliest acknowledgements of this aspect of the myth in an early eighteenth-century literary riposte "To Mr Pope." Contextualizing her verse as "occasioned by a little dispute upon four lines in "The Rape of the Lock," in which Pope had mocked female poets and their works, Finch identifies her fellow female poets with the bacchants of the myth, and playfully warns Pope to "soothe the ladies" so that "The *Lock* won't cost the head." Finch's proto-feminist response to the myth's reception motif is later echoed in a barbed witticism launched (again against Pope) by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who likens Pope's audience of admirers to the dumb beasts and blocks of stone charmed by Orpheus' poetry: the clear implication of her simile being that she, like the bacchants of the myth, is resistant to such charms. Milton in the mid seventeenth century had already mapped the "barbarous dissonance / Of Bacchus and his revellers, the race / Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard" (*Paradise Lost* 7.32–34) as a potent metaphor for poetic reception, employing the Orpheus myth "to express his sense of the poet's vulnerability" (Miles 1999, 121) and unambiguously likening Orpheus' hostile reception to his own during the Restoration. More recently, in Margaret Atwood's 1984 "Orpheus (2)" – one of three pieces by her responding to the myth and its reception – Orpheus' bloody torture and death at the hands of unidentified persecutors takes on a very modern political dimension, as the poet continues to sing to – and for – "the mouthless ones, … / those with no fingers, those / whose names are forbidden," his refusal to be silenced a defiant political no less than poetical gesture.

It is for female and for feminist poets that this aspect of the myth has proved to have particular resonance, and the *sparagmos* has received special emphasis in twentieth-century feminist receptions of Orpheus – although, as we shall see, this emphasis forms part of the myth's fragmented reception in antiquity too. In Adrienne Rich's 1968 poem, "I dream I'm the Death of Orpheus," a potent work of reception responding directly to Cocteau's cinematic retelling of the traditional Orpheus myth, the poet identifies with the female figure "Death," who watches herself "driving her dead poet" into the afterlife – a compelling analogy for this feminist poet's own reception of the classical world and all its dead poets. Elaine Feinstein, writing in 1980, similarly tunes into Cocteau's re-visioning of the myth in "The Feast of Eurydice," where her bacchants play a dual role in their reception of Orpheus' music. The Orphée of Jean Cocteau's 1950 film *Orphée* (just one piece of Cocteau's own fragmented Orphic corpus), receives scrambled fragments of poetry, numbers, and sound through his car radio and tries desperately to make sense of them, to make order and harmony out of scraps of noise. In Feinstein's poem, the whole world falls silent: "Click! All transistors off. / Traffic stops." And

while the mindless, murderous maenads represent "the curse of all future/poets to die by/rope or stake or fire," these women are also instrumental in reuniting Eurydice and Orpheus in death, paradoxically restoring harmony to the world through their violent *sparagmos*.

Sandra Gilbert, similarly makes Orpheus' *sparagmos* a catalyst (and metaphor) for harmony in her 1984 poem "Bas Relief: Bacchante" (the bas relief of the title a fiction but one recalling Rilke's 1904 poem *Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes* – one of the poetic "fragments" of his *Neue Gedichte* – inspired by an ancient bas relief with that title: for a reading of this poem see Segal 1989, 122–126). Gilbert identifies directly with the bacchants responsible for Orpheus' death and dismemberment, and offers a case for their defense: Orpheus – "the bastard" – with his phallic flute and conductor's baton demanded silence from everything else in the world – trees, birds, the wind, women – so that his "manly anthems" might be heard (for a discussion of the poem as feminist writing see Ostriker 1982, 133–134). His *sparagmos* at the hands of the bacchants returns music to the world.

Muriel Rukeyser appropriately responds to this key aspect of the myth in different poetic pieces. Three of her most important poems deal with Orpheus: the 1949 "Pieces of Orpheus" (concerning the immediate aftermath of the poet's death and dismemberment as the bacchants flee the scene of the murder – "one woman in a million shapes,/procession of women down the road of time"); a longer "Orpheus" poem from the same year (in which the poet's scattered body-parts individually sing of their loss and are re-composed through the power of their own music) ; and, 19 years later, her 1968 "The Poem as Mask: Orpheus" (in which the poet revisions the bloody dismemberment and rebirth of Orpheus as an allegory of her own bloody experiences of childbirth: of awakening from the anesthetic of a caesarean delivery to discover that an emergency hysterectomy had also been performed). Although in "The Poem as Mask," Rukeyser identifies with Orpheus ("When I wrote of the god,/fragmented …/it was myself, split open, unable to speak") she clearly empathizes with the women who dismember him (identifying both with those women on the mountainside and those "down the road of time"). She represents them as:

> […] those who, deprived at the root,
> flourish in thorny action, having lost the power
> to act essentially, they fall into the sin
> Of all the powerless. They commit their acts of evil
> in order to repent, repent and forgive, murder and begin again.

Rukeyser's description of the Bacchants' violence against the poet Orpheus here is conspicuously echoed in the language used by Alicia Ostriker to describe the act of "revisionist mythmaking" by feminist poets who "examine the blackness that has represented femaleness so often in our culture … [and conclude] that the female power to do evil is a direct function of her powerlessness to do anything else"

(Ostriker 1982, 78). Yet, although in "The Poem as Mask" Rukeyser declaims "No more masks! No more mythologies," it is clear that her re-visioning of the Orpheus myth here is not (only) a gesture of rejection born out of a position of powerlessness, but (also) a powerful gesture of forgiveness and rebirth – of beginning again. As Lorrie Goldensohn suggests in her reading of the final stanza of the poem (in which Rukeyser describes how, as "the god lifts his hand,/the fragments join in me"):

> The lifted hand becomes an acceptance of myth both paradoxical and necessary […] By the time actual memory confronts myth through the reality of the birthing female, exile from the self is undone, and under the baton of the god's lifted hand, the shattered fragments of the self enact a literal movement of recollection and raise "their own music." And their own new mythology.
>
> (Goldensohn 1999, 121; see also DuPlessis 1985; Kolodny 1987).

The act of resistance, the act of *sparagmos*, here, as in the other poems discussed above, thus becomes an act of acceptance, rejection becomes reception, and feminist "dismembering" is reformed as a kind of mythopoetic remembering.

Remembering Eurydice

However, with the significant exception of Feinstein's poem, in each of these receptions responding to (receptions of) the reception motif in the Orpheus myth a key piece of the myth seems to have been forgotten: the bacchants figure predominantly in these revisionist readings, but Eurydice is cut out. Even in Rukeyser's long "Orpheus" poem, which unusually incorporates allusions to the myth's full sphere of traditional influence, from Orpheus' role as Argonaut to disciple of Moses, Eurydice is no more than a name: indeed, when Orpheus looks back at her, she has not even a face (on the "totality" of Rukeyser's treatment of the myth see Segal 1989, 180–184). Yet, in excising Eurydice from their mythopoetic rememberings of Orpheus, these poets invite us to look back to earlier receptions of the myth where "Eurydice" similarly appears as an indistinct, barely visible presence. In ancient Greek receptions of the myth she is not even named until the third century BCE, when the poet Hermesianax (*Leontion III* = Kern, *Orph. Fragm.*, test. 61) refers to her as Agriope (Savage Watcher or "fierce-faced"), a cult name associated with Persephone, queen of the Underworld, and judge of the dead. And, it is not until the first century BCE that we hear the more familiar name used for the first time in the Lament for Bion, in which Agriope is "translated" into Eurydice (the Wide Ruler or "wide justice"), a cult title similarly associated with Persephone – whose own myth closely mirrors and colors that of Agriope/Eurydice. Similarly, in the visual culture, according to Henry, "Ancient representations of Orpheus with Eurydice [were] rare. Vase painters and others more often showed Orpheus with animals, or with maenads, or occasionally at the entrance to

Hades" (1992, 11). A bas relief, apparently depicting Hermes as *psychopompos* either returning Eurydice to Orpheus or leading her (back?) to hell, is presumed to be a Greek fifth-century BCE work (extant in three Roman copies) but the names inscribed over the figures were certainly added at a much later date and it is impossible to identify who the female figure in the scene might "originally" have represented and which fragment of the myth's many narratives it might depict.

An allusion in Euripides's late fifth-century BCE tragedy *Alcestis* (lines 357–362), certainly assumes the audience's familiarity with a story in which Orpheus uses his music to charm the gods of the Underworld: Alcestis' husband Admetus laments that, had he "the lips of Orpheus and his melody" (my translation), he would have been able to bring his wife back from the dead. Orpheus' wife is not named here, however, and the force of the allusion may well be to the incredible range of Orpheus' musical powers and his ability to overturn the laws of nature (by bringing the dead back to life) rather than to an already distinct story in which Orpheus rescues a particular woman from the Underworld. Disentangling the myth of Alcestis from that of Eurydice to assess the priority of either one is unviable, of course, but Euripides's allusion to Orpheus certainly reminds us that the yet-to-be-named-Eurydice shares several common characteristics with Alcestis, and that the reception of the Orpheus myth in antiquity is unequivocally colored by its associations with this other myth. Indeed, Plato makes an explicit connection between the Admetus/Alcestis story and that of Orpheus in his *Symposium,* claiming that:

> They sent away Orpheus, son of the harpist Oeagrus, empty-handed, giving him only an apparition of the girl he sought, refusing to give up the girl herself because he showed no spirit; he was only a harpist, and did not dare like Alcestis to die for love, but tricked his way into Hades alive. And afterwards, as punishment for this cowardliness, they brought about his painful death at the hands of women.
>
> (*Symposium* 179d: my translation)

Once again, the female object of Orpheus' Underworld quest is unnamed here, as she remains in all extant sources until the third century BCE. Yet, even when Eurydice gains sufficient focus in the Orpheus myth so as to become individuated as a distinct character, her initial role appears to have been very different to that of the tragic part for which she would eventually become best known. Just as the allusion to Orpheus in the *Alcestis* implies success, and the allusion in Plato to modified success, Hermesianax claims the rescue of Agriope/Eurydice a triumph, as does the *Lament for Bion,* Isocrates' *Busiris* (2.8), and Diodorus Siculus (*Bibl* 4.25.4). In fact, it is not until Virgil breaks away from the established pattern to introduce the fatal look back in his influential reception and retelling of the myth (*Georgics* 4.453–527), the first extant version to introduce Persephone's injunction to Orpheus not to look as he leads Eurydice up from the Underworld, that the double loss of Eurydice takes up its "traditional" position at the center of the Orpheus myth – and we find perhaps the first "proto-feminist" response to it.

Virgil's innovative addition to the myth (although a contemporary parallel is also found in Conon's *Narrationes* 45) has tended to overshadow in received readings of the *Georgics* (4.429–558) his subtler reprise of other aspects of the Orpheus story: in particular, the prominence of discordant female voices and viewpoints in the myth (for important scholarly receptions of Virgil's Orpheus see Heath 1994; Segal 1989; Warden 1982). Yet if we look back at Virgil's Orpheus in the light of the myth's earlier – and later – incorporations, we notice here the remarkable authority given to angry women seeking retribution and settled scores. The framing narrative within which Virgil's story of Orpheus and Eurydice is set, describes how the beekeeper Aristaeus, confused at the sudden death of his bee-hive, consults his mother and then the sea-god Proteus to find the cause of and remedy for this misfortune. Proteus advises that Orpheus is the cause of his troubles and narrates the history of Orpheus and Eurydice – but it is then left to Aristaeus' mother, Cyrene, to make sense of this story. Her reception of Proteus' story effectively offers a radical re-visioning of that narrative: Cyrene declares that it is *not* Orpheus but Eurydice's female companions, her fellow nymphs, who have punished Aristaeus for causing Eurydice's death. She advises Aristaeus to appease Eurydice and her nymphs with sacrificial offerings (*Georgics* 4.534–557), drawing an explicit distinction between the simple flowers that he is to offer Orpheus, and the expensive cattle that are to be sacrificed to placate Eurydice and her angry nymphs and so restore bees to Aristaeus' hives – and harmony to his garden.

Cyrene's revisionist reception of Proteus' retelling of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth provides a pattern of response that we see again in Ovid's reception and re-visioning of the "Virgilian" retelling of the myth (*Metamorphoses* 10.1–11.84: for a useful summary of the Virgil and Ovid Orpheus narratives set side by side, see Anderson 1982, 37–39). Like Cyrene, Ovid also highlights the central role played by angry women in the Orpheus myth, not only focusing upon the bacchants and their angry response to Orpheus, but performing his own form of textual *sparagmos* in chopping up the Orpheus myth and physically separating its parts into different books of his *carmen perpetuum*. After losing Eurydice for the second time, Ovid's Orpheus sings of his loss to a spell-bound audience of trees, wild beasts, and birds (10.143f; 11.1f) – which, as Glenn wryly observes, "since Orpheus proceeds to tell the owl and the wild pussy-cat about Ganymede, Hyacinthus, Pygmalion, Myrrha, and Adonis, there is something comic about the situation, just as there would be about singing true romances to a tortoise" (1986, 136).

There is, however, another internal audience here, and it is not so charmed – or amused. The women of Thrace, apparently offended by Orpheus' unsympathetic treatment of women – not only his misogynistic rejection of the female sex but his treatment of all the other female characters in his poetic repertoire – tear him to pieces. Orpheus is unable to calm or to charm the women, and although his music initially renders harmless the rocks and ivy-wreathed spears that they throw at him, the women drown out the sound of the poet's song with their own, with the clamor of flutes and horns, with the beating of breasts and drums (11.1–43). As if

anticipating feminist Amy Richlin's suggestions of ways to deal with misogynist texts – "throw them out, take them apart, find female based ones instead" (1992, 161) – the Thracian women refuse to listen to Orpheus, they tear *him* apart, and they drown out his music with their own (see Liveley 2011, 111). Yet their resistance is not wholly destructive: the seeds of their *sparagmos* are scattered on fertile ground. The head and lyre of Ovid's Orpheus (singing an elegiac "weepy something": 11.52) eventually washes up on the shores of Lesbos (11.55), home of Sappho – who thus becomes the first female poet in the classical canon potentially to "receive" Orpheus in this highly self-reflexive reworking of the Orpheus' myth *and* its reception.

Both Virgil's and Ovid's "revisionist mythmaking" returned female voices and feminist perspectives to the core of the Orpheus myth, placing the interpretation and reception of the myth into the hands of women. And, whatever Sappho may or may not have done upon receiving the head and lyre of Orpheus, her feminist (and proto-feminist) literary successors have embraced that agency, contributing their own fragments of revisionist mythmaking to the Orpheus corpus, in part by cutting Orpheus out of the story and looking to Eurydice instead.

In the Middle Ages, Eurydice was a shadowy, passive figure, transformed either into a fairytale "Sleeping Beauty" (as in the early fourteenth century Middle English romance *Sir Orfeo*) or identified in Christian allegories (such as those of Pierre Bersuire and Thomas of Walsingham) with Eve, her rescue from hell euhemerized as the redemption of Orpheus' soul from sin (see Friedman 1970, 127–129). Renaissance receptions typically looked away from the drama centered upon Orpheus and Eurydice and turned back instead to remember famous Orpheus' powers as Ur-poet and musician (see Warden 1982). However, in the Restoration, Henry Fielding's 1737 farce *Eurydice* offered a striking and influential illustration of a "pre-feminist" re-visioning of the myth, representing Eurydice as a modern woman with an agenda of her own. His Eurydice is a scheming adulteress, desperately contriving to resist the attempts of Orpheus to "rescue" her from the Underworld where she is happily living with her coterie of lovers; his Orpheus is an unsympathetic opera-singing *castrato* (caricaturing the fashion in Italian opera for *castrati* no less than the ubiquity of the Orpheus myth on the operatic stage: see Henry 1992). Fielding's comic restaging of the myth, despite its playful antifeminist tenor, was ground-breaking in cutting away from the traditional Orpheus narrative and offering Eurydice a voice and viewpoint of her own, and might, therefore, lay claim to present an early "pre-feminist" Eurydice. Indeed, while various tragic Eurydices might be heard lamenting untimely deaths or celebrating happy reunions with Orpheus in innumerable Italian, French, and German operas in the interim, it would be another century before Eurydice's perspective and voice would again take center-stage – in the unlikely venue of a Royal Academy exhibition.

Directly inspired by Frederick Leighton's 1864 painting *Orpheus and Eurydice* (and published in the exhibition catalogue alongside it), Robert Browning's 1864 short poem "Eurydice to Orpheus" presents a reconstructed narrative fragment

from the Orpheus myth, in which the silent Eurydice represented in Leighton's painting finds her own poetic voice. Leighton's Orpheus is seen in anguish with eyes tightly shut as a woman clings to him, gazing at his face, as if beseeching him, in Browning's words, for "one look … one immortal look!" Resisting the Victorian sentimentality that colored so many responses to Orpheus in this period, Eurydice's final entreaty offers a powerful break with the "traditional" myth, positing Eurydice as the one who forces Orpheus to break the infamous (Virgilian) injunction not to look at her, entreating: "no past is mine, no future: look at me!"

A few years later, Edward Dowden, in his 1876 poem "Eurydice" would pick up Leighton's cue to offer a radically new revision both of the myth and of the central relationship between Orpheus and his wife by re-viewing them from her perspective. Dowden's Eurydice regretfully imagines that *she* rather than Orpheus had taken the lead in petitioning Hades and Persephone for her release, and that she had led rather than followed on their way back from Hell. Had their roles been reversed, she assures us that she would not have looked back, and that Orpheus – "as a babe" – would have followed patiently behind her until they safely reached the upper air together. Throughout the poem, there is repeated insistence upon Eurydice's autonomy, agency, and authority: she laments that she did not more strongly claim "partnership with him/[…] urging my right of wife"; she defends Orpheus as "Worthier than I, yet weaker"; she accepts the loss of "mastery" that her second death entails; and worries that the afterlife will slowly erase her identity, that she will fade:

> … till I am no more
> Eurydice, and shouldst thou at thy time
> Descend, and hope to find a helpmate here,
> I were grown slavish, like the girls men buy
> Soft-bodied, foolish-faced, luxurious-eyed,
> And meet to be another thing than wife.

What is particularly significant about this Victorian Eurydice is that, even as she creates a new image of and for herself, she is concerned for the status of her own reception, eager to hear stories about "How Orpheus … had loved Eurydice," anxious to be remembered as an active and equal partner to Orpheus. Thus, she is, arguably, the first "feminist" Eurydice, leading Orpheus, his myth, and a new generation of feminist poets and artists in a new direction – albeit a direction already signaled by Aeschylus' bacchants and further signposted by Virgil and Ovid.

Among these more recent feminist revisions of the Orpheus myth, it is often Eurydice rather than Orpheus around whom the reception is focused and, in many cases, Orpheus is not merely cut up but cut out of his own myth, as American poet Alta's powerful 1980 short piece illustrates:

> all the male poets write of orpheus
> as if they look back & expect

> to find me walking patiently
> behind them. they claim i fell into hell.
> damn them, i say.
> i stand in my own pain
> & sing my own song.

In fusing the subjectivity of the female poet who speaks "i" here with that of "Euridice," Alta self-reflexively reconfigures and resists both the Orpheus myth and its literary reception – the palpable pain and violence of that resistance evoking Rukeyser's in "The Poem as Mask." In an alternative vein, Rachel DuPlessis' 1973 poem "Eurydice" revisions and re-makes the myth by retuning the harmonious affinity with the natural world usually attributed to Orpheus and ascribing these creative powers to Eurydice instead. Resisting Orpheus' desire to take her back to the light, within the dark "living cave" of the underworld, Eurydice is transformed into a snake, a thread of silver running through a rock, a plant and its roots, a "great cunt," a fragrant flower bearing "seeds of Eurydice." Given the self-reflexive emphasis upon female fertility and creativity throughout the poem, it is appropriate that these feminist "seeds of Eurydice" should find fertile ground in the works of other women writers and artists: notably Alta, Elaine Feinstein, Margaret Atwood (whose 1984 resisting "Eurydice" even holds a forgotten "red seed" – also recalling Persephone's pomegranate – as she reluctantly follows Orpheus back from hell), Carol Ann Duffy (whose 1999 "Eurydice" remembers the traditionally received myth of "Big O" very differently), and Bracha Ettinger (whose "Eurydice" series of paintings, produced between 1990 and 2003, offers an exquisitely messy and fragmented visual re-visioning of the myth). For Ettinger, as for these other responses to the Orpheus myth:

> Eurydice is not distinct. And she is not singular. Her image is redoubled, and there seems to be a set of them, all of them fading and appearing at once … Somewhere, sometime, something was lost, but no story can be told about it; no memory can retrieve it, for the memory is itself fractured, partial, fading into an oblivion. Images emerge against and as a fractured horizon, and there is no chance of a recovery here […] this is loss that does not stop happening, this is a past that does not stop being the past, that insists itself on the present […].
>
> (Butler *et al.* 2006, viii)

As with Ettinger's paintings, the sequence of organic creation described in DuPlessis' poem reminds us to look back for the "seeds of Eurydice" in earlier receptions of the myth too. Edith Sitwell's 1945 "Eurydice" similarly celebrates the "great linked chain" of life and death seen in DuPlessis' poem, transforming Eurydice into "bright gold" (contrast Duplessis' silver), the same color as the ripe grains of golden wheat seeded throughout the poem, and explicitly linking the Orpheus myth to other ancient fertility myths: Proserpina / Persephone, Osiris,

Adonis, and Dionysus. Sitwell's optimistic re-visioning of the myth itself draws directly upon earlier receptions in which we witness Eurydice speak of her life in and after death: Eurydice's description of herself as "heavy with Death, as a woman is heavy with child" explicitly echoes Rilke's famous picture of the same in his 1907 "Orpheus. Eurydice. Hermes." Yet Rilke's own description of Orpheus' attempt to rescue Eurydice as a kind of rape or violation (death having returned Eurydice to a state of virginity, like a flower closed at twilight) is radically different to the positive celebratory tone of Sitwell's poem. In fact, Rilke's poem shares more with Duplessis' – from the vein of silver ore glimpsed in the rocks of its opening stanza, through its flowers and fruits, to its final figuring of Eurydice as "root."

Mediating, Hermes-like, between these two feminist receptions is H.D., whose 1917 "Eurydice" poem reiterates Rilke's sexualized flower imagery ("hell must open like a red rose/for the dead to pass") but transforms Rilke's Eurydice from a passive figure of acceptance into a resentful figure of resistance. Addressing Orpheus directly, H.D.'s Eurydice unequivocally and repeatedly blames his "arrogance" and his "ruthlessness" as well as his careless, casual "glance" for condemning her to a second death. And yet, like the Eurydices of Rilke, Sitwell, and DuPlessis (and, indeed, of Alta, Feinstein, Atwood, and Duffy) she accepts her death as a kind of independence: "At least I have the flowers of myself/and my thoughts." Described by Geoffrey Miles as "the first and fiercest of [the] feminist Eurydices" (1999, 71), H.D.'s Eurydice clearly led the way for other feminist revisions of the myth to follow, re-viewing the story from Eurydice's perspective and effectively merging her viewpoint and voice with that of the angry bacchants – the women who are transformed into trees in Ovid's metamorphosis of the myth. Yet, amidst the fragmented reception of the Orpheus myth, there are, as we have seen, several other scattered pieces that might claim precedence in this regard. Indeed, arguably, all of these fierce feminist responses glance back – sometimes carelessly, sometimes purposely – to the first fierce audience of women to respond to (or, rather, to resist) Orpheus: the bacchants. And, so it seems, it continues to be those who resist the charms of famous Orpheus, the women who tear the poet apart, who cut him about and out of the picture, who thus, paradoxically, play a fundamental part in maintaining the integrity of the Orpheus corpus and in keeping the head and lyre of Orpheus singing on.

Guide to Further Reading

Miles' (1999) critical anthology includes an excellent selection of literary sources responding to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. His diverse collection, ranging from antiquity through to the late twentieth century, includes John Gay's delightful 1727 poem "The Monkey Who Had Seen the World" (an irreverent satire of Orpheus' legendary civilizing powers) and John Heath-Stubbs' 1985 transformation of Orpheus into an androgynous bisexual 1980s rock star ("Orph Gyandromorph") torn to pieces by his own groupies. Miles' concise overview of the metamorphoses

of the Orpheus myth in medieval, Renaissance, Romantic, Victorian, and modern English letters is worth consulting too, alongside the more detailed treatments offered in Strauss (1971), Warden (1982), and Segal (1989). For feminist (re)visions of Eurydice's myth, the classics are still Ostriker (1982), DuPlessis (1985), and Kolodny (1987). A look back at each one of these essays is always worthwhile.

References

Anderson, W.S. 1982. "The Orpheus of Virgil and Ovid: *flebile nescio quid*," in J. Warden, ed., *Orpheus: The Metamorphosis of a Myth*, 25–50. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Butler, J., Ettinger, B., Massumi, B., and Pollock, G. eds. 2006. *The Matrixial Borderspace (Theory Out of Bounds)*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Clark, R. 1979. *Catabasis: Virgil and the Wisdom Tradition*. Amsterdam: Griiner.

DuPlessis, R.B. 1985. *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Friedman, J.B. 1970. *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge, MA: Princeton University Press.

Glenn, E.M. 1986. *The Metamorphoses: Ovid's Roman Games*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Goldensohn, L. 1999. "Our Mother Muriel," in A.R. Herzog and J.E. Kaufman, eds, *How Shall We Tell Each Other of the Poet: The Life and Writing of Muriel Rukeyser*, 121–134. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Guthrie, W.K. 1966. *Orpheus and Greek Religion: A Study of the Orphic Movement*. Cambridge, MA: Princeton University Press.

Heath, J. 1994. "The Failure of Orpheus." *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 124: 163–196.

Henry, E. 1992. *Orpheus with His Lute: Poetry and the Renewal of Life*. Bristol: Bristol Classical Press.

Kolodny, A. 1987. "The Influence of Anxiety: Prolegomena to a Study of the Production of Poetry by Women," in M. Harris and K. Aguero, eds, *A Gift of Tongues: Critical Challenges in Contemporary American Poetry*, 112–141. Athens: The University of Georgia Press.

Liveley, G. 2011. *Ovid's Metamorphoses: A Reader's Guide*. London: Continuum.

Miles, G. 1999. *Classical Mythology in English Literature: A Critical Anthology*. London: Routledge.

Ostriker, A. 1982. "The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking." *Signs*, 8, 1: 68–90.

Parker, R. 1995. "Early Orphism," in A. Powell, ed., *The Greek World*, 483–510. London: Routledge.

Richlin, A., ed. 1992. *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Segal, C. 1989. *Orpheus: The Myth of the Poet*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Strauss, W. 1971. *Descent and Return: The Orphic Theme in Modern Literature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Warden, J., ed. 1982. *Orpheus: The Metamorphosis of a Myth*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

20

Narcissus and Echo

Rosemary Barrow

Echo: *See* **Narcissus**

In 1937 Salvador Dali painted what was to become one of his most acclaimed works, *Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. The previous year his fellow surrealist Max Ernst produced the less well known *The Nymph Echo* (Figure 20.1).

Surrealists saw in classical myth a vehicle for the dream-like free association of objects, below the level of rational consciousness, which their reading of reality calls for. Hence the case in Dali's painting. Two Narcissus figures are set in a fantasy landscape of red cliffs and volcanic sky: the first is a kneeling sculpture with a faceless head looking at his reflection and the second a bodiless hand holding an egg from which the narcissus flower grows. While Echo is absent from Dali's picture, she is the title figure in Ernst's *The Nymph Echo*. The setting here, fantastical once again, consists of monstrous vegetation that serves to camouflage a small standing nude – Echo – in the top right-hand corner of the canvas. The contrasting reputations of these works by Dali and Ernst (and indeed the unobtrusive presence of the nymph in Ernst's canvas) mirror much of the reception of Narcissus and Echo. Echo is taken to be of secondary importance. In Reid's *Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts* (1993), representatively, she is listed in the index, simply: "*See* Narcissus."

Narcissus, the beautiful boy who falls in love with his own reflection, engenders a copious tradition in post-classical art, literature, and thought. Son of the river god Cephissus and the nymph Liriope, Narcissus grows up be a handsome youth who rejects his many suitors. Pausanias (9. 31.7–9) rationalizes the story with the suggestion that Narcissus' image reminds him of a beloved twin sister, now dead. The Greek mythographer Conon (*Narr.* 24) tells us that Narcissus killed himself in guilt over the suicide of spurned (male) lover called Ameinias. It is Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (3. 351–401) that unites Narcissus with Echo. The loquacious nymph had been

Figure 20.1   *The Nymph Echo*. *Source*: Max Ernst 1936. Reproduced with permission of Museum of Modern Art, New York.

punished by Juno for distracting her while Jupiter slipped away to commit adultery. Condemned now to repeat the speech of others, she falls in love with Narcissus, but can only communicate by repeating his words; and in her unrequited love she fades away to a mere voice, while her bones turn to stone. Meanwhile, Narcissus, catches sight of his own reflection in a pool, and, unable to embrace his image, pines away to be transformed into a flower on his death.

The Narcissus myth raises both pictorial and philosophical questions concerning "the distinction between illusion and reality and that between self and other" (Spaas 2000, 1). Leon Battista Alberti's treatise on painting *Della Pittura* (1435–1436) actually ascribes to Narcissus the invention of painting – thus connecting the image, but also the self, with artistic creativity. In the same period, the myth is widely interpreted as a moral allegory, while in later centuries it becomes a parable of creative autonomy, or, very differently, of homoerotic desire. Around the beginning of the twentieth century, Sigmund Freud appropriates Narcissus as a central concept of psychoanalytic theory, which Jacques Lacan and then Julia Kristeva refine to illuminate ego formation in child development.

But what about Echo? Although she is there, with Narcissus, in Ovid's influential text, Echo receives remarkably little attention until the modern age. Independently of Narcissus she does make an appearance as a divine or prophetic

character (Hollander 1981, 15–17) found in Henry Reynold's Neoplatonic treatise *Mythomystes* (1632) and then in Milton's *Comus* (1634). Otherwise, she is relegated to a minor role in the myth's reception until reclaimed as a pathetic love-lorn heroine in Victorian painting. Then, belatedly, a quite different Echo emerges at the end of the twentieth century, when she becomes a significant figure in debates concerning gender and language. In particular, Jacques Derrida relates Echo's repetitions to his philosophy of speech. In tracing the diverse receptions of Narcissus and Echo, then, this chapter will investigate the way that Echo is at first marginalized, then brought into play to take over the major role previously ascribed to Narcissus.

Metamorphosis of Narcissus

Medieval reworkings of the Narcissus myth tend to moralize him. The anonymous twelfth-century Norman-French *Lai de Narcisse* is a meditation on the futility of unrequited love and in Guillaume de Lorris's thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose* Narcissus is depicted as the cruel beloved. This moralizing continues into the early modern period with neo-Platonic readings, deriving from Plotinus' third-century CE *Enneads* (1.6.8), where Narcissus is a symbol of selfish arrogance. In his *Commentarium in convivium Platonis de amore* (1496), Marsilio Ficino takes Narcissus as an example of one who loves the transient body over the eternal soul. The *vanitas* associations of the futility of earthly love are made explicit in sixteenth-century emblem books: thus in the 1546 edition of Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber*, under the label "self-love," an illustration of Narcissus gazing at his own reflection is used to exemplify the vice of solipsism.

Caravaggio's *Narcissus* (1597–1599) draws on the *vanitas* iconography of emblem books, but the painting also hints at a more sympathetic character who, in contemplating his reflection, may show awareness of his true self. As is characteristic of the artist, the combination of sixteenth-century dress and timeless setting point invites reference to the eternal meaning of myth. The philosophical potential of the figure is further explored in the work of the Italian Baroque poet, Giambattista Marino in his poetic cycle *La Galeria* (1620), where a comparison of art and nature shows image triumphant over reality. Yet Narcissus' status as cautionary tale does not disappear: in Ben Johnson's play *Cynthia's Revels or The Fountaine of Selfe-Love* (1601) the hapless youth is rebuked for his vanity. The trope is revised in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's early comedy *Narcisse ou l'amant de lui-même* (staged in 1752), which duly mocks "amour propre" ("self-love"). A more light-hearted construction of Narcissus as the beautiful egotist features in Rococo art with François Le Moyne's *Narcissus* (1725–1728), showing a rosy-cheeked and golden-haired boy, admiring his image in a pool.

In the Romantic age, Narcissus gains a new gravity. In 1798 August Schlegel declares that "Dichter sind doch immer Narcisse" ("Poets are always Narcissi")

(Vinge 1967, 305), and in the century that follows writers and artists repeatedly see Narcissus as a symbol of creativity. At the same time, a homoerotic subculture that uses classical myth as a convenient code embraces him, along with Icarus, Hylas, and Hyacinthus as "the tragic youth: the beautiful boy doomed to die at the height of his beauty" (Barrow 2001, 128). This is the Narcissus of French Symbolist artist Gustave Moreau (1890), in whose depiction an androgynous nude displays his body, his eyes gazing out at the viewer as much as concentrating on himself. André Gide's *Le Traité du Narcisse* (1891) revises the myth, excluding Echo altogether, and returns to the notion of Narcissus as creator. In the same year, Paul Valéry publishes his first Narcissus poem: "Narcisse parle." Coming back to the theme later with "Fragments du Narcisse" (1926), and "Cantate du Narcisse" (1939), he converts the Narcissus figure into an emblem of poetic self-discovery.

While Valéry was working out his own poetic identity through myth, Narcissus was to take on new connotations in the field of psychoanalysis. The English psychologist Havelock Ellis first used the phrase "Narcissus-like tendency" in an 1898 article, and, in the following year the term narcissism was coined in a discussion of Ellis's article by German psychiatrist Paul Näcke. The concept was then developed by Freud in a 1914 essay entitled "Zur Einführung des Narzißmus" ("On Narcissism"). For Freud, "primary narcissism" is a normal element of child development in which the infant connects self-identification and libido with the crucial formation of the ego associated with the individual's initial attachment to their own body as love object. "Secondary narcissism," by contrast, is a psychopathological state in which a person's libido fails to transfer to another love object and withdraws from the world.

Freud's principle of "primary narcissism" (and its connection with the formation of the ego) is recast by Jacques Lacan. Lacan developed the model of the "mirror stage" in which an infant of six to eighteen months recognizes its own reflection as a whole rather than as the fragmented self that it had perceived hitherto. We only become a unified subject only when we identify an externalized image of ourselves that we then view as the first love object. This principle is subsequently an influence, in turn, on Julia Kristeva's narcissistic theory (See "Tales of Love" section below).

Meanwhile, under the more general influence of Freudian understandings of dreams as revelations of the unconscious, surrealist artists and writers explore oneiric imagery where combinations and dispositions of objects offer a challenge to rational order. The *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* was the example of his work that Dali brought with him when he met Freud in London in 1938 (he had already met Lacan, in 1933, but long before the publication of Lacan's theory of the mirror stage in *Ecrits* [1966]). Produced by Dali's "paranoiac critical method," the painting not only foregrounds the irrational, but seems to invoke Freud specifically, in that its double Narcissus figures could be related to the two Freudian narcissistic stages. On the right of the painting, however, a third Narcissus stands in the background in the form of a male nude evoking classical statues of the youth, while, to his left, more nudes are crowded together, Narcissus' unrequited lovers.

The desert landscape, recalling the Catalonian coastline familiar in Dali's work, is barren, but signs of life are indicated by ants crawling over the stone hand and by an emaciated dog eating the remains of a carcass. These eerie details, nevertheless, are subordinate to an overall mood of joy at the birth of new life. In an illustrated pamphlet accompanying the painting Dali published a newly composed poem that adds an autobiographical meaning to the works. The poem ends not with death but with metamorphosis:

> When that head splits
> When that head bursts
> When the head shatters in pieces
> It will be the flower,
> The new Narcissus,
> Gala,
> My narcissus.

(Lomas 2011, 167)

While neither painting nor poem include Echo, the female presence at the end of the poem is Dali's wife and muse, Gala. It is his love for her that saves and revives him, so that he escapes the death of the classical Narcissus as told by Ovid and retold in other versions of the myth.

Contemporary artists continue to explore the Narcissus theme. German conceptual artist Olaf Nicolai's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Weeping Narcissus* (2000) is a life-size cast of Nicolai himself, in which a motor produces tears that fall into a plastic pool. An ironic allusion to Narcissus as Romantic trope of individual creativity, this work also suggests postmodern notions of authorship: the artist cries over the death of the author as well as his own self-image.

At the same time, the myth has also been the subject of cross-gender transformations, whereby female artists identify themselves with Narcissus and not Echo. In 1965 Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama created an unofficial installation at the Venice Biennale entitled *Narcissus Garden*. Consisting of 1,500 silver-colored balls accompanied by the artist herself, the installation produced an effect of a shimmering lawn that evoked both a mirror and Narcissus' pool. And water is once again the focus of Swiss conceptual artist Pipilotti Rist's video installation, *Sip My Ocean* (1996), where Narcissus' pool becomes an ocean, and shots of a coral reef are combined with doubled close-ups of the artist's own body.

Narcissus and Echo

Narcissus is a common figure in Roman art. In Pompeian paintings, he is depicted alone, whereas "Echo, if present at all, appears as a diminutive figure in the background, looking out of a cave or lurking behind a rock" (Panofsky 1949, 113).

Medieval and early-modern reception follows Roman visual models: retellings of the myth tend to concentrate on Narcissus alone. Echo makes an appearance in sixteenth-century pastoral love poetry, and, with Narcissus, she features prominently in early opera, where her role leads to compositional innovations in the shape of the "choral echo" and the "echo aria." Between 1638 and 1793 no fewer than 15 Echo and Narcissus operas were performed throughout Europe (Marek 2012), although none achieved a permanent place in the operatic repertoire.

In the visual arts, Echo is, at first, less in evidence. Aside from in a small number of Florentine cassoni (Baskins 1993) Narcissus and Echo do not appear together until the seventeenth century. Poussin's *Echo and Narcissus* (1627–1628) shows a dead Narcissus and a grieving Echo, while the same configuration is also included in his *Birth of Bacchus* (1657). In Poussin's *The Realm of Flora* (1630) Narcissus is depicted along with others who are transformed into flowers after death. This time, though, he is still alive and gazing at his own reflection in a large vase of water, offered to him by a seated female figure, who is identified as Echo by Panofsky (1949). In holding the vase Echo is an agent in Narcissus' fate. After Poussin the subject enters the landscape genre with Claude Lorrain's *Landscape with Narcissus and Echo* (1644) and (much later) Turner's *Narcissus and Echo* (1804). In both of these Narcissus is observed by three nymphs, but it is unclear which one is actually the Echo of the title.

It is only in the Victorian period that Echo begins to take on a more prominent role in visual art. Whereas a homoerotic Narcissus is common in decadent poetry and Symbolist painting, academic art seeks to heterosexualize the myth. In Solomon J. Solomon's *Echo and Narcissus* (1895), a feverish Echo clasps a heedless Narcissus; she gazes longingly into his face as he looks at himself in the pool below; and in John William Waterhouse's *Echo and Narcissus* (1903), a coy Echo glances wistfully at Narcissus while he leans over the water, enchanted by his own reflection. In both paintings Echo's drapery falls from her body, and it is the female nude that is positioned to attract the viewer's attention, rather than the less prominent Narcissus. For the first time, Echo takes pride of place in picture titles, and now she even appears on her own in paintings by G. F. Watts (1844–1846), Alexandre Cabanel (1874), and Henrietta Rae (1906), and sculpture by Edward Onslow Ford (1895). The nineteenth century casts Echo as a deserted heroine (like Ariadne), who is unlucky in love (like Tennyson's Mariana) and fated to die young (like the Lady of Shalott). Here artists defer to gender stereotypes of the period, but, even so, the new prominence given to Echo paves the way for the twentieth-century engagement with her myth and its contemporary relevance.

The Nymph Echo

In the Lady's Song from Milton's *Comus* (230–243), a young woman looking for her brothers in the woods calls out for help to Echo, addressing her as "sweet Queen

of Parley, Daughter of the Sphere." Her song is followed by several scenes of verbal exchange with Comus himself, the eloquent villain of the masque. Avoiding Comus' attempt at seduction, the Lady defends her chastity with intelligent debating skills and through adroit word play. In appealing to the "Queen of Parley," the Lady herself takes a surprisingly assertive role for a female masque character traditionally cast as modest and naïve. Milton's Lady "is a rare voice issuing from the tantalizing zone of female silence" (Shullenberger 2008, 172), and, as such, presents an early example of the association between Echo and a constructive female identity.

More recently, feminist thinking has reinterpreted Echo across a range of subjects. Some critics see the nymph as a passive presence, a paradigm of women's roles within the patriarchy, lacking voice and power. In Segal's (1988) reading of works by French male authors, Echo is a symbol of the silencing of women's speech, while Lawrence's (1991) examination of Hollywood uses Echo to illustrate the way that women's voices are interrupted and repressed within patriarchal narratives. Similarly, Nouvet (1991) finds Echo imitative and inferior; Spivak's (1993) postcolonial study comprehends Echo's speech as chance rather than choice; and in Blanchot's (1995) interrogation of language, Echo has no qualities of otherness and is merely an auditory illusion.

Others writers find a more positive meaning in Echo's repetition of Narcissus' speech. Greenberg's (1990) study of the female reader figures Echo as woman confronting male text who must revise his words to provide her new meaning. Likewise, Berger's (1996) analysis of language and gender argues that Echo does not repeat but transforms Narcissus' language into words that express her own desire. Petek's (2008) psychoanalytical study of film spectatorship reads the communication between Echo and Narcissus as a dialogue. And the Echo of George Sandys's 1632 translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is interpreted by Bloom (2001) as signaling female agency.

Ovid's text itself has been the subject of much debate among Latinists. In 1976 Brenkman described Echo's story as "the drama of the self's identity and integrity restored" (301). More recently, Tissol (1997) reads the nymph as a creative manipulator of language who makes Narcissus' words her own, whereas Salzman-Mitchell (2005, 37) sees no self-agency but only an empty voice. Strikingly, though, Rimell (2009) argues that Echo's repetition becomes originality: as a carrier of Ovidian wit, she is identified with the authorial voice itself.

All in all, most scholars convincingly agree that Echo is a symbol of female resistance rather than oppression. Ingeniously, she transcends her vocal limitations to reclaim an independent voice. This is also the Echo of Derrida, whose meditations on Narcissus' speech identify, in Echo, an "infinite cunning" (*Derrida* 2004). In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Derrida suggests, the meaning of the scene hinges on the imperative "come" (2005, xii). After Narcissus cries "veni" (3.382) – "come" – Ovid's text continues, "vocat illa vocantem" – "she calls as he calls." Echo's reply is more than reiteration: her choice of word even allows her to begin a conversation with

Narcissus. As the exchange continues, Echo "speaks the other and makes the other speak" (Derrida 1989, 37–38). When Narcissus calls out "ecquis adest?" (3.380) – "is anyone here?" – Echo repeats, as if in reply, "adest" – "here"; and when he suggests "huc coeamus" (385) – "we must come together," Echo assents with "coeamus" (387) – "come together." Echo's repetitions thus acquire an important communicative significance:

> In repeating the words of the other, she signifies her own love. By repeating his words, she responds to him. By repeating, she communicates with him. An amazing ruse: she speaks for herself by just repeating his words.
>
> (*Derrida* 2004)

Yet a generation or so before Derrida, or before modern feminism, the painter Max Ernst had already invested Echo with significance. Ernst produced several versions of *The Nymph Echo* [Figure 20.1]. Amidst exotic undergrowth we see a small green nude. Standing on a ledge beneath a broken pillar and accompanied by a snake, Echo peers over the top to look at a lion who returns her gaze. Seemingly in constant flux, the aliveness of the jungle vegetation is heightened by the presence of two human hands camouflaged in green, but emerging distinctly between giant leaves. The interaction between human, animal, and vegetational typifies the distinctive surrealist interest in hybridity. Where modernism blurs the boundaries between human and animal, and human and machine, with references to advances in biology and technology, surrealism embraces the liminal space between natural and artificial, myth and reality.

Loreti (2011, 12) suggests that Ernst's Echo "finally possesses Narcissus" through the linking of her natural presence to his transformation into a flower. But nothing in the painting points to Narcissus: instead this is Echo's story. Ovid tells us that after she fades away to a voice, "inde latet silvis nulloque in monte videtur / omnibus auditur: sonus est, qui vivit in illa" ("she hides in the woods, no longer seen on any hill, but heard by all, it is her sound that lives on within her"), (Ov. *Met*. 400–401). Examining Ovid's text, Berger (1996) notes that, when rejected by Narcissus, Echo "is always there, dissolved by pain and henceforth intermingled with the forest into which she has retreated"; and when Narcissus dies "she outlives him, as she has outlived herself" (630). Just so, Ernst paints Echo as an eternal presence merging with the woods she lives in. Outside Ovid, mythological tradition depicts Echo as pursued by Pan (HH 19; Longus 3.22; Mosch 5; Nonnus, *Dion*. 15. 306; 48. 489), as a nymph who leads a solitary life in mountain caves (HH 19; Sen., Troad. 107) or as one who dwells in the rocks of the thick forest (Aristoph., *Thesm*. 970). All these Echoes exist without Narcissus.

In the 1930s, Ernst painted a number of jungle landscapes. These include *Garden Airplane-Trap* (1935), where carnivorous plants attack airplanes as if they were insects, and *The Joy of Life* (1936), in which plant and insect morph into one another

in tangled undergrowth and take on monstrous proportions, dwarfing figures of a woman and a lion. These settings recall a trip the artist made to Singapore, Indochina, Angkor Wat, and the jungles of Southeast Asia in 1924 (Spies and Rewald 2005, 5). Ernst's exotic plants and animals derive from reality, but are magnified and transformed as if in a dream. The artist refers to these works himself in classical-mythological terms:

> On my return to the garden of the Hesperides I follow, with joy scarcely concealed, the rounds of a flight between two bishops …Voracious gardens in turn devoured by a vegetation which springs from the debris of trapped airplanes […] With my eyes I see the nymph Echo.
>
> (Ernst 1961, 14)

Along with the hybridity of plant, animal, and human, comes a conflation of antiquity and modernity whereby the painter sees a classical nymph after viewing modern airplanes. In marked contrast with the abandoned heroine of the Victorian imagination, Ernst's Echo merges with the undergrowth of a tropical jungle and communes, or communicates, with plants and animals within which she has become herself a vibrant life force, both positive and current.

Tales of Love

Building on Freud and Lacan, Julia Kristeva turns to Narcissus, a figure who occupies "a very particular place […] in the history of Western subjectivity" (Kristeva 1987, 105) in her *Histoires d'amour* (1983; translated as *Tales of Love*, 1987). She rejects Freud's primary narcissism as a stage in infant development in favor of a "narcissistic structuration" (Kristeva 1987, 44) that provides the infant with a way of understanding the difference between self and other. She develops the notion of a "chora": a psychic space in which the infant resides, initially oriented towards the mother. At first, the infant imagines the mother's breast to be part of itself, until it then realizes itself as a subject distinct from the mother. Separation from the maternal means confronting "the abject," but the stage of abjection is a precondition of narcissism, and distinguishing the real from the symbolic is achieved through the narcissistic imagination. Kristeva compares this process with the development of speech. Incorporating the speech of the other, the infant is able to identify itself:

> In being able to receive the other's words, to assimilate, repeat, and reproduce them, I become like him: One. A subject of enunciation. Through psychic osmosis/identification. Through love.
>
> (Kristeva 1987, 26)

Kristeva's analysis draws on Narcissus, who is a central figure in *Histoires d'amour*, and yet her discussion of language is far more pertinent to Echo. Like the nymph, the infant assimilates, repeats, and reproduces words. For Kristeva, words as well as images make up the imaginary, and indeed have primacy; words "in the final analysis, shape the visible" (Kristeva 1987, 37). The creating of boundaries between self and (m)other is the process that leads to self-identification. In Kristeva, as in Lacan and Freud, a sad tale of unrequited love yields explorations of human development, as it had once generated moral lessons and paradigms of creativity. Echo herself, for centuries a bit-player in the Narcissus story, is reclaimed as pitiful heroine, then as feminist symbol of resistance, but finally as the secret of communication and identity itself.

Guide to Further Reading

Vinge (1967) remains the most comprehensive discussion of the literary reception of Narcissus up to the Romantic period. Knoespel (1985) concentrates on medieval literature, in particular, and Hollander (1981) looks at Milton, but also offers an overview of Echo's classical sources and their meanings. In the field of the visual arts, Bann (1989, 105–156) presents a thematic analysis of Narcissus in paintings including a close reading of Caravaggio's picture. Chadwick (1980) still offers the fullest overview of myth and surrealism. Ernst's *The Nymph Echo* is discussed in Warlick (2001) and Spies and Rewald (2005), an exhibition catalogue accompanying a retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Dali's *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* has generated a vast bibliography: Finkelstein (1996) offers a summary of debate and full interpretation of the painting. See also the fascinating discussion in Lomas (2011), a catalogue accompanying an exhibition at the Fruitmarket Gallery in Edinburgh. The exhibition showed Dali's work alongside a selection of surrealist photography and film, as well as works by contemporary artists. A significant counterpart to *Metamorphosis of Narcissus* was *Narkissos* (1976–90), a collage by San Francisco-based artist Jess. Intended as a homage to Gustave Moreau, it illustrates the artist's three decades of research into the reception of Narcissus. The catalogue also includes discussion of works by Rist and Kasuma, while Kasuma's *Narcissus Garden* is also the subject of Cutler (2011).

Of the feminist responses to Echo in the field of literary and cultural studies, Berger (1996) is the most illuminating. Although the focus of Petek (2008) is film spectatorship, the first three chapters offer useful engagement with the myth of Narcissus and Echo in the psychoanalytical works of Freud, Lacan, and Kristeva. For a discussion of Kristeva's Narcissus, also see DeArmitt (2005), and for Derrida's Echo, see DeArmitt (2009).

References

Bann, S. 1989. *The True Vine: On Visual Representation and Western Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barrow, R. 2001. "Mad about the Boy: Mythological Models and Victorian Painting." *Dialogos: Hellenic Studies Review*, 7: 124–142.

Baskins, C.L. 1993. "Echoing Narcissus in Alberti's *Della Pittura*." *Oxford Art Journal*, 16, 1: 25–33.

Berger, A. 1996. "The Latest Word from Echo," trans. R. Gabara. *New Literary History*, 27, 4: 621–640.

Blanchot, M. 1995. *The Writing of the Disaster*, trans. A. Smock. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Bloom, G. 2001. "Localizing Disembodied Voice in Sandys' 'Translation of Narcissus and Echo,'" in G. Stanivukovic, ed., *Ovid and the Renaissance Body*, 129–154. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Brenkman, J. 1976. "Narcissus in the Text." *Georgia Review*, 30: 293–327.

Chadwick. W. 1980. *Myth in Surrealist Painting, 1929–1939*. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press.

Cutler, J. 2011. "Narcissus, Narcosis, Neurosis: The Visions of Yayoi Kasuma," in L. Wallace and J. Hirsh, eds, *Contemporary Art and Classical Myth*, 187–109. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

DeArmitt, P. 2005. "On the Border between Abjection and the Third: The (Re) Birth of Narcissus in the Works of Julia Kristeva," in T. Chanter and E. Płonowska Ziarek, eds, *Revolt, Affect, Collectivity: The Unstable Boundaries of Kristeva's Polis*, 181–191. New York: State University of New York Press.

DeArmitt, P. 2009. "Resonances of Echo: A Derridean Allegory." *Mosaic*, 42, 2: 89–100.

Derrida. 2004. Dir. K. Dick and A. Ziering Kofman. Zeitgeist Films.

Derrida, J. 1989. *Mémoires: For Paul de Man*, trans. C. Lindsay, J. Culler, and E. Cadava. New York: Columbia University Press.

Derrida, J. 2005. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. P. Brault and M. Naas. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Ernst, M. 1961. "An Informal Life of M.E. (as Told Himself to a Young Friend)," in W.S. Lieberman, ed., *Max Ernst (Exhibition catalog)*, 7–24 New York: Museum of Modern Art.

Finkelstein, H. 1996. *Salvador Dali's Art and Writing, 1927–1942: The Metamorphosis of Narcissus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Greenberg, C. 1990. "Reading Reading: Echo's Abduction of Language," in S. McConnell-Ginet, R. Borker, and N. Furman, eds, *Women and Language in Literature and Society*, 309–330. New York: Praeger.

Hollander, J. 1981. *The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Knoespel, K.J. 1985. *Narcissus and the Invention of Personal History*. New York: Garland.

Kristeva, J. 1987. *Tales of Love*, trans. L.S. Roudiez. New York: Garland.

Lawrence, A. 1991. *Echo and Narcissus. Women's Voices in Classical Hollywood Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lomas, D. 2011. *Narcissus Reflected: The Narcissus Myth in Surrealist and Contemporary Art*. Edinburgh: University of Chicago Press.

Loreti, S. 2011. "Modern Narcissus: The Lingering Reflections of Myth in Modern Art." *Papers of Surrealism*, 9: 1–29.

Marek, H. 2012. "Narcissus," in M. Moog-Grünewald, ed., *Brill's New Pauly Supplements I – Volume 4: The Reception of Myth*. Brill: Koninklijke Brill NV.

Nouvet, C. 1991. "An Impossible Response: The Disaster of Narcissus." *Yale French Studies*, 79: 103–134.

Panofsky, D. 1949. "Narcissus and Echo; Notes on Poussin's Birth of Bacchus." *The Art Bulletin*, 31, 2: 112–120.

Petek, P. 2008. *Echo and Narcissus: Echolocating the Spectator in the Age of Audience Research*. Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Pub.

Reid, J.D. 1993. *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300–1900s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rimell, V. 2006. *Ovid's Lovers: Desire, Difference and the Poetic Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Salzman-Mitchell, P.B. 2005. *A Web of Fantasies: Gaze, Image and Gender in Ovid's Metamorphoses*. Columbus: Ohio State University.

Segal, N. 1988. *Narcissus and Echo: Women in the French Récit*. Manchester, UK: St. Martin's Press.

Shullenberger, W. 2008. *Lady in the Labyrinth: Milton's Comus as Initiation*. Madison, WI: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

Spaas, L. 2000. *Echoes of Narcissus*. New York: Berghahn Books.

Spies, W. and Rewald, S. 2005. *Max Ernst*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Spivak. G.C. 1993. "Echo." *New Literary History*, 24, 1: 17–43.

Tissol, G. 1997. *The Face of Nature: Wit, Narrative and Cosmic Origins in Ovid's Metamorphoses*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Vinge, L. 1967. *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early Nineteenth Century*. Lund, Sweden: Gleerups.

Warlick, M.E. 2001. *Max Ernst and Alchemy: A Magician in Search of a Myth*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Prometheus, Pygmalion, and Helen
Science Fiction and Mythology

Tony Keen

Introduction: Science Fiction and (or as) Mythology

Critics of science fiction wishing to explain the genre often fall back upon mythology as a hermeneutic tool. For instance, Friedman (1968, 37) claims that "Science fiction will presently be shown to have contrived a 'mythology for our times.'"

However, the basic idea is surely too simplistic, and must be subjected to criticism and clarification. Though some SF[1] critics (e.g., Fredericks 1980, 89, 103) embrace this formulation, others often object. James Blish argued that myth was "static and final in intent and thus entirely contrary to the spirit of sf, which assumes continuous change" (cited in Nicholls 2012b). Ursula Le Guin (2005) writes:

> It's often said that science fiction is the modern mythology. In the case of the rare science-fictional creation with archetypal power, such as Shelley's *Frankenstein*, this becomes an arguable statement, but in general I think it's meaningless. Myth, legend, and folktale are ancestral to, not forms of, modern fiction. Elements of myth and legend may be used consciously or unconsciously by fiction-writers, but we don't write myths. The nearest we come to it is fantasy.
>
> (See also Le Guin [1976]; by 2005 her attitude to the claiming of science fiction as the modern mythology had considerably hardened.)

Influential though Blish and Le Guin are as critics, it is not necessary to accept their arguments. Blish's comment, in particular, seems to me to misunderstand myth's ever-changing nature (Woodard 2007, 1), while Le Guin's argument that SF writers

can only write stories that use myth, rather than stories that are myths themselves, rests on an assumption that myth-making has ceased, an assumption I believe to be false.

The critic Roz Kaveney in the 1970s devised the notion of the Big Dumb Object, a term to describe a mysterious object in a story that is a source of wonder (Nicholls 2000, 13; Langford and Nicholls 2011; the earliest record of her using it is in Kaveney 1981, 26). She later expanded this into the term Big Dumb Narrative Object, a term she applied to large narrative continuities, such as that of the *Star Trek* franchise. Nick Lowe conceives of all of SF and fantasy literature as a Big Dumb Narrative Object (cited in Kaveney 2005, 3–4). Peter Nicholls (2012b) has made a case that SF creates its own mythological tropes that cross from story to story. An example of this is the picture of the planet Mars, which is created by no single author, and is not related much to the real planet, yet recurs largely unchanged across many otherwise unconnected works (Nicholls cites the works of Leigh Brackett and Ray Bradbury). These tropes and stylistic ticks could be seen as constituting a shared mythology, which writers may draw upon, knowing that their readers will understand and fill in the background to stories through their comprehension of these. Nevertheless, the entirety of SF literature is broad, multifaceted and fragmented and shares tropes rather than characters and background. It is hard to see that this could be considered as a single mythology as coherent as that of the Greeks and Romans, for all the inherent contradictions that Classical mythology encompasses.

There is more truth in the idea that large commercial franchises, such as *Star Trek* or *Star Wars*, create their own individual mythologies, in the sense of creating a series of heroes and villains, adventures and backgrounds, all of which interconnect within the franchise. These broad narrative constructs (Kaveney's "Big Dumb Narrative Objects") can capture the imagination of readers, often to the point of inspiring them to create their own new stories within the mythologies. It is important to note the pluralities of these, as each franchise creates a separate mythology, and these rarely interact with one another, outside the realms of cross-over fanfiction. This situation is not analogous to that experienced by the Greeks and Romans, where new stories, such as Plato's myth of Er (*Resp.* 614b2–621d3), would be incorporated into the overarching framework of Olympian mythology (albeit with scant regard for any contradictions). But it is more analogous to the experience of Renaissance and post-Renaissance painters, where mythological paintings could draw for their subject matter upon Classical, Biblical, and (later) Norse mythology, without there being any possibility of Pan appearing to Christ in Gethsemane.

The longer-established a franchise, the more like a mythology it starts to appear. So, the British television series *Doctor Who* (running on television from 1963 to 1989, and since 2005, with books, comics, audios, and other spin-off material keeping the franchise going when the show was off the air) looks very like a mythology (on this see Harvey 2010). Most like mythologies are the two superhero universes presided over by DC and Marvel Comics. Over more than seven decades of

publishing, these have created the largest shared narrative continuities, or Big Dumb Narrative Objects, that have ever existed (Kaveney 2008, ix; and see Keen 2008). In particular, the "rebooting" (Willits 2009) of various stories over the years, together with their retellings in other media, has resulted in a number of different versions being available. To take only the most famous example, the origin of Superman has been told in different ways in comics in *Action Comics* no. 1 (Siegel and Schuster 1938), and John Byrne's 1986 *Man of Steel* mini-series (Byrne and Giordano 1987), in movies in *Superman: The Movie* (USA, Richard Donner, 1978) and *Man of Steel* (USA, Zach Snyder, 2013), and on television in *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman* ("Strange Visitor (From Another Planet)" 1993) and *Smallville* ("Pilot" 2001), to name only a few instances. A similar pattern can be seen with characters such as Batman and Spider-Man, and these retellings parallel the various different versions of the characters of Greek and Roman myth (further on super-hero comics and their relationship to mythology, see Willis, Chapter 7, this volume)

It appears, then, that SF as a whole cannot be treated as a modern mythology, only individual continuities within the broad spectrum of SF. But in a sense, this is actually a red herring for this chapter, concerned as it is with the reception of Classical mythology in SF, rather than the creation of mythology within SF. As Nicholls (2012b) says, much confusion arises from failing to distinguish between SF *being* mythology, and SF *using* mythology.

It is clear that SF has strong links with Classical mythology. Indeed, how could it not? SF is, of course, a product (largely) of western culture, and Greece and Rome lie at the heart of western culture. Nicholls (2012b) makes this point extremely clearly: "Mythology in sf reflects a familiar truth, that in undergoing social and technological change we do not escape the old altogether, but carry it encysted within us." Though it is probably going too far to claim that the *Odyssey* (or the Epic of Gilgamesh, as suggested by del Rey 1979, 12) *are* SF, there is a clear line in the literature of the fantastic leading from Homer's *Odyssey* to modern SF (Nicholls 2012a; Stableford 2013 is more skeptical), and to the related genre of fantasy; space, however, does not allow here a full discussion of fantasy, which uses mythology in both similar and very different fashions (see Ashley 1997, and Bernstein 1997 on Greek and Roman Classics and fantasy).

It is impossible in a single chapter to cover all the ways in which SF employs Classical mythology. These can go from the use of names drawn from Greco-Roman myth in both the original (1978–1979) and re-imagined (2003–2009) *Battlestar Galactica* (Porter *et al.*, 2008, 205–214),[2] to the wholesale reuse of ancient plots in modern texts, such as Robert Silverberg's *The Man in the Maze* (1969), which draws heavily upon Sophocles' *Philoctetes*. (Further examples can be found by consulting the "Guide to Further Reading" in the following, especially Nicholls 2012b). What I will do in the remainder of this chapter is examine three particularly iconic mythical figures, who are closely connected in the ways in which SF employs them. (I have chosen, for reasons of space, to focus upon those SF texts that explicitly mention a Classical myth. There are, of course many SF texts where

the mythological reception is unspoken. For example, there appears to be considerable implicit reception of Homer's *Odyssey* in H.G. Wells' 1896 novel *The Island of Dr Moreau* (Wells 2005).

Prometheus

The Prometheus myth is well-covered in other parts of this volume (especially Michael O'Neill's Chapter 28 on Percy Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*), and it might appear otiose to consider it here. But in the context of SF, it is absolutely necessary. If there is one Classical myth that is key to SF, one figure that SF has adopted as its (literal) torchbearer, then that figure is Prometheus (Fredericks 1980, who divides all SF into "Promethean" and "Odyssean" modes).

Prometheus has always been a symbol of progress, even in ancient times (Dougherty 2006, 75–78), and remains a contemporary touchstone for scientists (Dougherty 2006, 119–122). Humphrey Davy was described as "the chemical Prometheus" (Adams 2009, 45, 302 n.24; Paris 1831). So, it is hardly surprising that Prometheus, as the teacher of man found in the Aeschylean *Prometheus Bound* (the most Science Fictional of all Greek tragedy), is also cited in SF. Few go as far as Hal Duncan's SF/fantasy *Vellum* (2005), which embeds *Prometheus Bound* in its own plot (Duncan and Keen 2009, 11; Keen 2009, 16–18). The annual award given for libertarian SF is the Prometheus Award. Many fictional spaceships are named *Prometheus*, usually experimental and/or pioneering vessels, for example, in *Stargate* ("*Prometheus*," 2002), *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* ("Second Sight," 1993), *Star Trek: Voyager* ("Message in a Bottle," 1998), and most recently, Ridley Scott's *Prometheus* (USA, Ridley Scott, 2012), which featured an eponymous spaceship, sent out to contact humanity's progenitors, the Engineers. Scott has explicitly linked the name of the movie to the theme of the mythological Prometheus:

> The film's central metaphor is about the Greek Titan Prometheus, who defies the gods by giving humans the gift of fire, for which he is horribly punished … When you talk about the myth on which the title is based, you're dealing with humankind's relationship with the gods – the beings who created us – and what happens when we defy them.
>
> (Quoted in *Inquirer Movies* 2012)

Of course, Scott's interpretation is based on a reading of the myth that sees it primarily as a warning against challenging the gods. Such a reading is understandable, given the survival of the Aeschylean *Prometheus Bound* and the loss of the following *Prometheus Unbound*, leaving the Titan punished on the Caucasus as the myth's dominant narrative (see Morford *et al.* 2011, 24, for the forming of dominant versions of myths). It does, however, overlook Prometheus' eventual release and redemption (already foreshadowed in Aesch., *PV* 771–774).

However, for SF, another aspect of the Prometheus myth is even more significant than the Titan punished for his presumption. This is Prometheus who helped to

create mankind. This is a comparatively late addition to the story, at least insofar as can be told from the literary accounts; it is absent from Hesiod's story of Prometheus in *Theogony* (507–569), and does not seem to appear until the fourth century BCE (Heracleides Ponticus *apud* Hyg. *Poet. astr.* 2.42.1; see Gantz 1993, lxv n.31). It is best-known from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1.82–83).

This is of interest to SF because the creation of artificial life is a major theme of SF (Stableford 2012). The story of man's relationship with Nature eventually becomes an account of his attempts to overcome nature's restrictions. Such attempts are often explored and extrapolated through SF. The ultimate expression of this is the supplanting of nature in the creation of new life. Additionally, stories dealing with such a theme often moralistically address the dangers of such attempts, which in a Judeo-Christian context would be seen as challenging the Creator. Because Prometheus embodies both the creator and the challenger of the gods, he is a particularly appropriate figure to draw upon in these circumstances.

Such appropriations of the Prometheus myth by SF go back, of course, to Mary Shelley's 1818 work *Frankenstein* (1992), with its subtitle *The Modern Prometheus*. *Frankenstein* has been identified by some as the first SF novel, notably by Brian Aldiss (Aldiss and Wingrove 1986, vii, 3–37, repeating a suggestion first made by Aldiss 1973a, 3; Scholes and Rabkin 1977, 6–8), though others (e.g., Clute 2013) are more skeptical. Whether or not it can be taken as SF, *Frankenstein* clearly anticipates SF's themes. Victor Frankenstein is the Prometheus figure, creator of life, and the man who will be punished for his presumption (though Sparke 1951, 134, argues that the Creature can also be seen as taking a Promethean role; for more on the Prometheus myth in *Frankenstein*, see Dougherty 2006, 108–114).

This use of Prometheus by Shelley continues to resonate with modern SF, perhaps most obviously in Brian Aldiss' *Frankenstein Unbound* (1973b), whose title harks back to the lost Aeschylean play, via Percy Shelley. (On *Frankenstein Unbound*, see Fredericks 1980, 95–96; Martin 2003; Mathews 1977. For more uses of Prometheus in SF, see Fredericks 1980, 96–99.)

Pygmalion

Prometheus is not the only mythological character who is invoked in the exploration of the creation of life. Often the purpose behind that creation is the sexual gratification of men; this is something that SF has addressed from very early on. It is already found in *Frankenstein*, where the Creature demands that Victor Frankenstein provide him with a mate.

A myth that is often a touchstone for this sort of story is that of Pygmalion, the artist who carved an ivory statue with which he fell in love, and which then "blest" him by coming to life, marrying Pygmalion and bearing him a child. The story is best-known from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (10.243–298), though the statue's name, Galatea, is post-Classical (Reinhold 1971).

SF uses this myth for asking questions about the morality of such acts of creation and manipulation. The relationship of this myth to *Frankenstein* has been observed (Hindle 1992, xxiii), and there is a sense in which Shelley is reworking Pygmalion as much as she is Prometheus. However, in Shelley's version the artist, Victor Frankenstein, is not creating a mate for himself, but for the monster, and in the end Frankenstein destroys the bride.

A more modern reworking of the theme is found in Alfred Bester's 1979 story "Galatea Galante" (Bester 1997, 292–333; originally published in the April 1979 issue of *Omni*). Here Galatea is created not for her creator, Regis Manwright (clear nominative determinism), but for Manwright's client. Nevertheless, Manwright ends up with Galatea, as he and Galatea sleep together when neither of them is fully conscious, and conceive a child. This story is replete with other references to Classical myth; for another client Manwright makes a Siren, and the story begins in a freak show including a centaur, sphinx, hydra, Cerberus, and so on.

As with many recent versions of the Pygmalion myth, "Galatea Galante" is filtered through George Bernard Shaw's 1912 play *Pygmalion* (Shaw 2003). This introduces the element of education to the mythic framework, and this is to be seen in Bester's story. The educational element is even clearer in Chris Beckett's novel *The Holy Machine* (2004). Here the protagonist George, who becomes the lover of the Galatea figure (here called Lucy), has no role in her physical creation (she is a synthetic being created to be a mindless sex toy), though it can be argued that his interaction with her is the spark that gives her independent thought (the equivalent of the "breath of life" found in some versions of the Pygmalion myth, such as those painted by Edward Burne-Jones). And once she has shown this independence, George tries to educate her. The story further deviates from the Pygmalion myth when George betrays Lucy, and ends with her stripped of her gender, something that was always imposed by those around her. (For *The Holy Machine*, see Keen 2014.)

In Richard Powers' *Galatea 2.2* (1995) the Pygmalion figure is split between two men, Philip Lentz, who created her, and "Richard Powers," who educates her. Here the Galatea figure does not have a physical form – she is a series of computer programs, exploiting SF's ability to develop the Pygmalion theme beyond the physical body. A central theme of the novel is whether this computer actually has any independent consciousness – for this reason, it is important that the novel is told in first person narration. (On the reinscribing of the Pygmalion story in this novel and other examples, see Liveley 2006, 282. Other screen SF versions of the Pygmalion myth are discussed in James 2013.)

Helen

The Galatea figure in *Galatea 2.2* is named Helen. This leads to the final myth I want to discuss in this chapter. If a man is going to create his own ambulatory sex toy, then it stands to reason that he will want to create that toy in the image of

his ideal woman. So, it is not surprising that he would choose to name her after the most beautiful woman in the world (for the general reception of Helen see Hughes 2005 and Maguire 2009).

Another example of the use of Helen as a symbol is Lester del Rey's 1938 story "Helen O'Loy" (1970). In this story Helen is a robot made to appear female, who is then brought to sentience by the protagonists Dave and Phil. Though she is described as a "beauty" and a "young goddess," this is once again more a variant on Pygmalion (Helen falls in love with Dave, and eventually they marry) than Helen of Troy (see further Huntingdon 1989, 95–100).

Other science fictional uses of Helen tend to engage with the actual person, such as in Dan Simmons' novels *Ilium* (2003) and *Olympos* (2007), though there is a 1968 *Star Trek* episode "Elaan of Troyius" (discussed in Keen 2007).

Conclusion

As noted earlier, this chapter has done little more than scratch the surface of the multifarious uses of the iconic figures from Classical mythology. I have found little space for the many SF works that take their inspiration from Homer (for examples: Fredericks 1980, 99–103; Nicholls 2012b). Nor have I been able to discuss Gene Wolfe, the author who, according to Nicholls (2012b) "makes the most sophisticated use of myth of any modern sf writer," though Wolfe's clearest and most effective uses of myth, the *Soldier* series (1986, 1989, 2006), are strictly speaking fantasy.

What I have tried to show is that the relationship between SF and classical mythology is close and productive. Mythology and SF are both modes of writing about the fantastic, and classical mythology provides a number of touchstones for themes that are central to SF. Sometimes this is done in an extremely sophisticated fashion, such as the use of Greek tragedy in the works of Hal Duncan (2005; 2007; see Keen 2009), and sometimes rather crudely, as in the wholesale lifting of Greek mythological plots in 1970s *Doctor Who* (Keen 2010, 108–110).

Given all that has been argued here, it is quite clear that SF will continue to draw heavily upon ancient mythology, and there will be more stories, and more uses of mythology, to examine in the future. Both SF and classical mythology seize the imagination of the reader, and provide multilayered universes for people to explore.

Notes

1   I have adopted standard practice among science fiction critics (e.g., Aldiss and Wingrove 1986, x), and use the abbreviation "SF" rather than "sci-fi."
2   It has also been argued (e.g. Higgins 2009) that *Galactica* is a reworking of the themes of Virgil's *Aeneid*. There is some truth to this – both stories begin with the flight of survivors after a long-running war has been devastatingly won by one side through an act of trickery – but it should not be pressed too far, as one ends up desperately searching for the *BSG* equivalents of Dido, Turnus, and so on, and they are not necessarily there to be found.

Guide to Further Reading

Bourke, L. 2011. "SFF and the Classical Past." Online at: http://www.tor.com/features/ series/sff-and-the-classical-past (accessed August 14, 2013). Less academic than other introductions mentioned here, but still interesting.

Brown, S.A. 2008. "'Plato's Stepchildren': SF and the Classics," in L. Hardwick and C. Stray, eds, *A Companion to Classical Reception*, 415–427. Oxford: Blackwell. Introduction to the subject of Classics and SF in general.

Clute, J., Langford, D., Nicholls, P., and Sleight, G., eds. 2013. *SFE: The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*[3]. Online at: http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com (accessed August 14, 2013). Many relevant articles, for example, those on "Homer" and "Mythology"; the latter includes brief descriptions of a number of SF works drawing upon mythology.

Fredericks, S.C. 1975. "Science Fiction and the World of Greek Myths." *Helios*, n.s. 2: 1–22. Early, short study of the reception of Classical mythology in SF and fantasy.

Keen, T. 2016. "Are Fan Fiction and Mythology Really the Same?," in I. Willis, ed., "The Classical Canon and/as Transformative Work," *Transformative Works and Cultures* 21. Examines the relationship between fanfiction and mythology.

Nisbet, G. 2011. "Prolegomena to a Steampunk Catullus: Classics and SF." Online at: http://www.academia.edu/543120/Prolegomena_to_a_Steampunk_Catullus_ Classics_and_SF (accessed August 14, 2013). Another introduction to the subject, in a different style from Brown.

Provini, S. and Bost-Fiévet, M., eds. 2014. *L'Antiquité dans l'imaginaire contemporain: Fantasy, science fiction, fantastique*. Paris: Classiques Garnier.Collection of essays on SFF and antiquity, including case studies of SF and mythology.

Rogers, B.M. and Stevens, B. 2012. "Classical Receptions in Science Fiction." *Classical Receptions Journal*, 4: 127–147. Preliminary moves towards a critical and theoretical framework for Classics in SF, including a useful, but by no means complete, list of published case studies.

Rogers, B.M. and Stevens, B, eds. 2015. *Classical Traditions in Science Fiction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Collection of essays on SF and Classics, including case studies of SF and mythology.

Seed, D. 2011. *Science Fiction: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. The best introduction to SF.

References

Adams, M. 2009. *The Firebringers: Art, Science and the Struggle for Liberty in Nineteenth-century Britain*. London: Quercus.

Aldiss, B.W. 1973a. *Billion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Aldiss, B.W. 1973b. *Frankenstein Unbound*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Aldiss, B.W. and Wingrove, D. 1986. *Trillion Year Spree: The History of Science Fiction*. London: Gollancz.

Ashley, M. 1997. "Myths," in J. Clute and J. Grant, eds, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, 675–676. London: Orbit.

Beckett, C. 2004. *The Holy Machine*. Rockville, MD: Wildside Press.

Bernstein, J. 1997. "Greek and Latin Classics," in J. Clute and J. Grant, eds, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, 432–435. London: Orbit.

Bester, A. 1997. *Virtual Unrealities: The Short Fiction of Alfred Bester*. New York: Vintage.

Byrne, J. and Giordano, D. 1987. *The Man of Steel*. New York: DC Comics.

Clute, J. 2013. "Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft." Online at: http://www.sf-encyclopedia. com/entry/shelly_mary_wollstonecraft (accessed August 14, 2013).

del Rey, L. 1970. "Helen O'Loy," in R. Silverberg, ed., *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame. Volume One, 1929–1964*, 42–52. New York: Doubleday.

del Rey, L. 1979. *The World of Science Fiction 1926–1976: The History of a Subculture*. New York: Ballantine.

Dougherty, C. 2006. *Prometheus*. London: Routledge.

Duncan, H. 2005. *Vellum*. London: Pan Macmillan.

Duncan, H. 2007. *Ink*. London: Pan Macmillan.

Duncan, H. and Keen, T. 2009. "Across the Dickian Multiverse: Hal Duncan interviewed by Tony Keen." *Vector*, 260: 10–15.

Fredericks, S.C. 1980. "Greek Mythology in Modern Science Fiction: Vision and Cognition," in W.M. Aycock and T.M. Klein, eds, *Classical Mythology in Twentieth Century Thought: Proceedings of the Comparative Literature Symposium, Texas Tech University*, 98–106. Lubbock: Texas Tech Press.

Friedman, A.B. 1968. "The Best Turnips on the Creek." *New York Review of Books*, March 28.

Gantz, T. 1993. *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources. Volume 1*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Harvey, C.B. 2010. "Canon, Myth and Memory in *Doctor Who*," in A.S. Burdge, J. Burke, and K. Larsen, eds, *The Mythological Dimensions of Doctor Who*, 22–36. Crawfordville, FL: Kitsune.

Higgins, C. 2009. "*Battlestar Galactica* revealed as the new Virgil's *Aeneid*." Online at: http://www.theguardian.com/culture/charlottehigginsblog/2009/feb/24/classics-classics (accessed August 14, 2013).

Hindle, M. 1992. "Introduction," In M. Shelley, *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus*, vii–xliii. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Hughes, B. 2005. *Helen of Troy: Goddess, Princess, Whore*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Huntingdon, J. 1989. *Rationalizing Genius: Ideological Strategies in the Classic American Science Fiction Short Story*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Inquirer Movies. 2012. "'Prometheus' Crew: On A Mission Collision." Online at: http:// movies.inquirer.net/3843/%E2%80%9Cprometheus%E2%80%9D-crew-on-a-mission-collision (accessed August 14, 2013).

James, P. 2013. *Ovid's Myth of Pygmalion on Screen: In Pursuit of the Perfect Woman* (corrected paperback edn). London: Bloomsbury.

Kaveney, R. 1981. "Science Fiction in the 1970s: Some Dominant Themes and Personalities." *Foundation*, 22: 5–35.

Kaveney, R. 2005. *From the Alien to the Matrix: Reading Science Fiction Film*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Kaveney, R. 2008. *Superheroes! Capes and Crusaders in Comics and Films*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Keen, T. 2007. "'T for Tiberius': The Original *Star Trek*." Online at: http://tonykeen.blogspot. co.uk/2007/04/april-23rd-is-apparently-international.html (accessed August 14, 2013).

Keen, T. 2008. *"Superheroes!* by Roz Kaveney." Online at: http://www.strangehorizons. com/reviews/2008/05/superheroes_by_.shtml (accessed August 14, 2013).

Keen, T. 2009. "Euripides Bound: Hal Duncan's use of Greek Tragedy." *Vector*, 260: 16–20.

Keen, T. 2010. "It's about Tempus: Greece and Rome in 'Classic' *Doctor Who*," in D.C. Wright, Jr and A.W. Austin, eds, *Space and Time: Essays on Visions of History in Science Fiction and Fantasy Television*, 100–115. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Keen, T. 2014. "Femme parfaite sur commande: Le mythe de Pygmalion dans deux romans de science-fiction et fantasy," in S. Provini and M. Bost-Fiévet, eds, *L'Antiquité dans l'imaginaire contemporain: Fantasy, science fiction, fantastique*, 205–213. Paris: Classiques Garnier.

Langford, D.R. and Nicholls, P. 2011. "Big Dumb Objects." Online at: http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/big_dumb_objects (accessed February 2, 2014).

Le Guin, U.K. 1976. "Myth and Archetype in Science Fiction." *Parabola*, 1, 4: 42–47.

Le Guin, U.K. 2005. "Plausibility Revisited: Wha Hoppen and What Didn't." Online at: http://www.ursulakleguin.com/PlausibilityRevisited.html (accessed August 14, 2013).

Liveley, G. 2006. "Science Fictions and Cyber Myths: or, Do Cyborgs Dream of Dolly the Sheep?," in V. Zajko and M. Leonard, eds, *Laughing with Medusa: Classical Myth and Feminist Thought*, 275–294. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maguire, L. 2009. *Helen of Troy: From Homer to Hollywood*. Oxford: Wiley.

Martin, S. 2003. "In Mary Shelley's Loving Arms: Brian Aldiss's *Frankenstein Unbound* and its Film Adaptation by Roger Corman." *Foundation*, 89: 76–92.

Mathews, R. 1977. *Aldiss Unbound: The Science Fiction of Brian W. Aldiss*. San Bernadino, CA: Borgo Press.

Morford, M.P.O., Lenardon, R.J., and Sham, M. 2011. *Classical Mythology (international* 9th edn). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nicholls, P. 2000. "Big Dumb Objects and Cosmic Enigmas: The Love Affair between Space Fiction and the Transcendental," in G. Westfahl, ed., *Space and Beyond: The Frontier Theme in Science Fiction*, 11–234. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Nicholls, P. 2012a. "Homer." Online at: http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/homer (accessed August 14, 2013).

Nicholls, P. 2012b. "Mythology." Online at: http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/ mythology (accessed August 14, 2013).

Paris, J.A. 1831. *Life of Sir Humphrey Davy, Bart*. London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley.

Porter, L.R., Lavery, D., and Robson, H. 2008. *Finding Battlestar Galactica: An Unauthorized Guide*. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks.

Powers, R. 1995. *Galatea 2.2*. London: Picador.

Reinhold, M. 1971. "The Naming of Pygmalion's Animated Statue." *The Classical Journal*, 66: 316–319.

Scholes, R. and Rabkin, E. 1977. *Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Shaw, G.B. 2003. *Pygmalion*. London: Penguin.

Siegel, J. and Schuster, J. 1938. "Superman." *Action Comics*, 1.

Silverberg, R. 1969. *The Man in the Maze*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson.

Simmons, D. 2003. *Ilium*. New York: HarperCollins.

Simmons, D. 2005. *Olympos*. New York: HarperCollins.

Sparke, M. 1951. *Child of Light: A Reassessment of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley*. Hadleigh, UK: Tower Bridge Publications.

Stableford, B. 2012. "Androids." Online at: http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/androids (accessed August 14, 2013).

Stableford, B. 2013. "Proto SF." Online at: http://www.sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/proto_sf (accessed August 14, 2013).

Wells, H.G. 2005. *The Island of Doctor Moreau*. London: Penguin.

Willits, T.R. 2009. "To Reboot or Not to Reboot: What is the Solution?" Online at: http://www.bewilderingstories.com/issue344/reboot1.html (accessed August 14, 2013).

Wolfe, G. 1986. *Soldier of the Mist*. New York: Tor.

Wolfe, G. 1989. *Soldier of Arete*. New York: Tor.

Wolfe, G. 2006. *Soldier of Sidon*. New York: Tor.

Woodard, R.D. 2007. "Introduction: *Muthoi* in Continuity and Variation," in R.D. Woodard, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Mythology*, 1–13. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dionysus in Rome

Fiachra Mac Góráin

Introduction

For the classical Greeks, Dionysus presided expansively over wine and nature, ritual ecstasy, theatre and the afterlife. On the surface, at least, our Roman and Italian evidence for Bacchus and his Italian counterpart Liber paints a similar picture, with the major difference that Bacchus was not central to the public worship of the state gods. As a result, we are often unable to judge whether the presence of Dionysian myth or imagery is evidence of actual cultic ritual or merely of a mythical and iconographic rhetoric. Such factors make the study of Dionysus in Rome and Italy a complex and useful test case in reception studies. Prolonged and vibrant cultural traffic around the ancient Mediterranean, whether due to trade, warfare, or migration, entailed that the Roman reception of Dionysus was not simply a unidirectional process in which one nation absorbed the culture of a discrete other, or even a mutual conquest of two parties, as in Horace's binary formula, that "Greece, once conquered, in turn conquered her savage victor" (*Epist.* 2.1.156). Rather, we are dealing with a closely meshed system of dynamic cultural interactions and appropriations between a number of nations who spoke different languages, which the state of our evidence allows us to reconstruct in more than one way. From his earliest apparent sightings on Italian soil then, Dionysus forces us to think also of later receptions of his ancient reception. This chapter will review the evidence for Dionysus' early accommodation in Italy, before presenting a series of snapshots involving Dionysian ritual or role-playing from Roman history.

Earliest Evidence for Dionysus in Italy

This survey of the "reception" of Dionysus in Italy is complicated by the fact that our evidence does not enable us to determine whether Dionysus was in fact 'imported' from the Greek world onto Italian soil, or how he came to be associated and ultimately identified with the Italic Liber and the Etruscan Fufluns. Two archaic Italian inscriptions have given rise to diverging scholarly opinions about his antiquity in Italy. One of our very earliest inscriptions in Greek (from ca. 800 BCE) on a pot found in a cemetery near Gabii in Latium, reads EUOIN (or possibly EULIN). Optimistic scholars have interpreted this as a version of the Bacchic ritual cry "euoi," and found significance in the pot's funerary provenance, suggesting that it may even have had a ritual use (Wiseman 2004, 13). Others have classified the word among "nonsense inscriptions" arguing that it may just as likely be "doodling" or "a string of letters with no meaning" (Wilson 2009, 500). Secondly, A Faliscan inscription (*CIE* 8079) from a fragmentary pot found at Civita Castellana in Viterbo known as the "Ceres inscription" is dated to about 600 BCE; a conjectural restoration of the words "Louf[i]r ui[no]m" ("Liber wine") after the words "ceres farme" ("Ceres grain") has been "considered certain" by some scholars (Joseph and Klein 1981, 293), while others confirm that this reading is impossible (e.g., Bakkum 2009, 398, from autopsy; Radke 1965, 180). What both of the "Dionysianizing" readings have in common is a drive to back-date the archaic Italian worship of Dionysus/Liber as far as possible. Wiseman's speculation is grounded in the profound Hellenization of central and southern Italy, which would have almost guaranteed early transmission of Dionysian media, if not worship, while the case for a Faliscan Liber distorts the evidence, being directed at a preconceived conclusion. One important scholarly precedent for the back-dating strategy is the rehabilitation of archaic Rome and Italy vis-à-vis Greece in continental scholarship of the mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries: scholars such as Schur (1927) and Wissowa (1912) strove to magnify our evidence for archaic Italian religion, working with a legacy that saw Roman religion as inferior to Greek. At the extreme end of the spectrum these scholars asserted the pre-Greek character of Italic deities, and thus the pre-Dionysian existence of Liber Pater, whom they see as an offshoot of Jupiter Liber. The evidence does not support claims that there was an Italic Liber independent of Dionysus: indeed Liber's story is entirely bound up with the Greek Dionysus, so much so that one reviewer criticized Adrien Bruhl's richly documented 1953 monograph, *Liber Pater*, for attempting to consider Liber in isolation from Dionysus (Boyd 1955). Others such as Altheim (1931) stressed the Oscan and Etruscan filtering of Greek cultural seepage from the much-earlier-Hellenized Magna Graecia, where there is early evidence for Bacchic worship. A fifth-century inscription from Cumae, the earliest Greek colony on Italian soil, designates a place of burial reserved for those who have been initiated into Bacchic cult (see Casadio 2009). Several Bacchic references on the "Orphic" golden leaves found in southern Italy as well as on mainland

Greece and Crete suggest some level of shared ritual and eschatology at least from the fourth century onwards (see Graf and Iles Johnston 2013 and Edmonds 2011). As for Italic filtering, a large body of art from central Italy, from painted pots to chased mirrors and bronze chests, attests to the circulation of Dionysian myth of Greek origin but often with local inflections from as early as the fifth and sixth centuries BCE (see Bomati 1983; Bonfante 1993; Wiseman 2004, 2008). In many of the Etruscan examples, Dionysus is labelled "Fufluns," or "Fufluns Pachies." Now, while "Pachies" is clearly a version of "Bacchus," the distinctive "Fufluns" might suggest a pre-Greek Etruscan deity with whom Dionysus became identified.

Later literary sources attest to a cult presence in Rome itself from the early-fifth century involving a blend of Greek and indigenous elements. Liber shared a temple with Ceres and Libera at the foot of the Aventine near the Circus Maximus. It was built in 493 BCE, having been vowed 3 years earlier by the consul Postumius. Our source is Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a Greek chronicler of Roman antiquities writing in Greek at the time of Augustus. He tells us that Postumius consulted the Sibylline oracles amid a food shortage in 496 before the battle of Lake Regillus. The oracles urged him to propitiate "Demeter, Dionysus, and Kore." Postumius promised these gods a temple and annual sacrifices if they would provide food to the troops. The gods heard his prayer and caused the land to produce rich crops. Under their protection, the Romans defeated their enemies, the Latin League led by the deposed king Tarquin, and so the Romans held feasts and sacrifices for the gods in gratitude for repelling the war brought on them by the tyrant (*Rom. Ant.* 6.10, 6.17; see Wiseman 1998, 35–37). Dionysius' Greek perspective is crucial. Naturally he will have thought of these three gods as the Eleusinian triad, who promoted fertility and were widely worshipped, and he is thinking in terms of a straightforward importation from Greece to Rome. The investment of public ritual in the food supply is a notable feature of the story. Dionysius has also synchronized Greek and Roman history, aligning the foundation of the Roman republic in 509 and the expulsion of the Tarquins with the liberation of Athens from tyranny by the assassination of the Peisistratids. Dionysus' role as god of freedom may well be relevant here, especially since the temple was the headquarters of the Roman plebs.

Most probably the temple was originally a simple one in the native Etruscan style. Writing at around the same time as Dionysius, Vitruvius tells us that its pediments were ornamented in the Etruscan fashion with statues of terracotta or gilt bronze (*Arch.* 3.3.5). But the temple also had some Greek features, emblematic of Rome's receptivity to Greek culture. Varro, quoted by Pliny the Elder, tells us that everything was Etruscan in the temples *until* the temple of Ceres, Liber, and Libera was built. Pliny himself tells us about the signatures of two Greek craftsmen, Damophilus and Gorgasus, who provided the temple with statues and paintings (*HN* 35.45.154). On the basis of this evidence some scholars have stressed the Greek character of the temple at a time of increasing cultural influence (e.g., le Bonniec 1958, 254–276), but in light of Vitruvius' reference to Etruscan-style

decoration we should think rather in terms of an indissociable fusion. Cicero was impressed by the temple and described it as "most beautiful and magnificent" (*pulcherrimum et magnificentissimum*, *Verr.* 2.4.108). The grandeur suggested here was probably that of a temple later than the fifth-century original. Tacitus records (*Ann.* 2.49) that Tiberius finished restoring the Temple of Ceres, Liber, and Libera that had been destroyed by a fire, probably in 31 BCE. Augustus had begun the restoration. Why he had not prioritized it in his program of temple reconstruction (*RG* 20) is a question to which we shall return shortly.

Liberalia

The main festival celebrated at this temple was the Cerealia on April 19 in honor of the three gods. But our earliest fasti (Roman festival calendars), also attest Liberalia for March 17 (Degrassi 1963, 425). What form did these celebrations take, and what do they tell us about the reception of Dionysus in Rome? The festival may have involved freedom of speech, as a fragment of Naevius (270–201 BCE) from an unknown context reads "Libera lingua loquemur ludis Liberalibus" ("We will speak with a free tongue at the games of the Liberalia," Naev. com. 112 Ribbeck 1873). Many sources connect Liber with different kinds of freedom, and once again there may be a valid analogy to be drawn between Liber of the Roman republic and Dionysus Eleuthereus of Athens liberated from the tyrants. Ovid records that young men assumed the *toga libera* ("free toga") on this day, as they entered upon greater freedom in public life (*F.* 3.777–8). Cicero puns obsessively on the etymological connection between Liber and two different political meanings of *libertas* ("freedom of agency" and "freedom of speech") in a letter to Atticus (14.14) about the senatorial gathering on the Liberalia 2 days after Julius Caesar's assassination on the Ides of March 44 BCE:

> On the Liberalia (*Liberalibus*), who could have avoided going to the senate? And even supposing that that had been possible, having gone there, how could I have spoken my mind freely (*libere*)? […] The Ides of March … have not given the people liberty (*libertatem*). [Antony will propose the allotment of the provinces for discussion.] Will we senators be able to decide freely (*libere*)? If we are, I will rejoice that liberty (*libertatem*) has been regained. […] Supposedly we have been freed (*liberati*), but we are not free (*liberi*). (Cic, 14.14, my translation)

Cicero was one of several contemporaries to consider Caesar and later on Antony tyrants (see Arena 2012, 76), but here he is also writing in a tradition of etymologizing about Liber and *libertas*, which finds parallels in Greek etymologies of Dionysus Lysios and Lyaeus from Greek λύειν, "to loosen" (see Leinieks 1996, 302–325; Seaford 1996, 190). The tradition also encompasses philosophical freedom from cares (Sen. *Tranq. An.* 9.17.8) and the freedom of spiritual purgation (Serv. ad. *Geo*. 1.166).

As for the rituals of the Liberalia itself, several of our later sources, Tertullian, Ausonius, pseudo-Cyprian, and Servius, speak of theatrical performances (*ludi/ludi scaenici*), which for Ovid were already a thing of the past (for the sources see Degrassi 1963, 425–426; cf. Ov. *F.* 3.783–786). In all likelihood these late authors knew little or nothing about the Liberalia, but were assuming or reconstructing what they thought was likely to have happened by analogy with the Athenian Dionysia. Knowingly or otherwise, Virgil too had conflated Athenian and Italian Bacchic festivals involving drama and ribald festivity in his etiology of tragedy and the goat sacrifice in the *Georgics* (2.380–396). Other ritual motifs are better attested. Priestesses of Liber wore garlands of ivy on their heads and roasted cakes on braziers, which they sold to celebrants (Varro, *LL* 6.14; Ov. *F.* 3.725–770). St Augustine represents Varro's account of the phallic procession in honor of Liber in scandalized tones:

> Inter cetera, quae praetermittere, quoniam multa sunt, cogor, in Italiae compitis quaedam dicit sacra Liberi celebrata cum tanta licentia turpitudinis, ut in eius honorem pudenda virilia colerentur, non saltem aliquantum verecundiore secreto, sed in propatulo exultante nequitia. Nam hoc turpe membrum per Liberi dies festos cum honore magno plostellis inpositum prius rure in compitis et usque in urbem postea vectabatur. In oppido autem Lavinio unus Libero totus mensis tribuebatur, cuius diebus omnes verbis flagitiosissimis uterentur, donec illud membrum per forum transvectum esset atque in loco suo quiesceret. Cui membro inhonesto matrem familias honestissimam palam coronam necesse erat inponere. Sic videlicet Liber deus placandus fuerat pro eventibus seminum, sic ab agris fascinatio repellenda, ut matrona facere cogeretur in publico, quod nec meretrix, si matronae spectarent, permitti debuit in theatro.

> Among other rites which I am compelled to pass over due to their sheer number, there are certain rites of Liber that [Varro] says are celebrated at Italian crossroads with such shameful abandon that the private parts of the male are worshipped in the god's honour, and not even in secret, out of some deference to modesty, but openly and with wantonness running riot. Yes indeed, during Liber's festal days this disgusting member would be exhibited on a waggon with great honour, and carried first around the crossroads in the countryside, and then brought all the way into the city. In the town of Lavinium they even dedicated a whole month to Liber, and during these days they all used such disgraceful language until that member had been carried through the forum and come to rest in its own place. Then the most respectable woman, a mother of a family, had to place a garland on said dishonourable member. In this way, supposedly, the god Liber was to be propitiated so that all would turn out well with the seeds; in this way the hex needed to be warded off the fields. So a matron was forced to do in public what not even a prostitute should be allowed to do in the theatre if there are respectable women watching.

> (*City of God* 7.21.2–4)

The passage comes from a sustained polemic against pagan religion, our main source for Varro's *Antiquitates rerum divinarum* ("Religious Antiquities"). Since Augustine informs us that he is selecting the most lurid aspects of the rite to expose the pagans' "arrogant obtuseness" (*superbam hebetudinem*, 7.21.1), we can hardly expect the whole

truth (for his treatment of Varro's *Antiquitates* see Hagendahl 1967, 601–617). Nonetheless, Augustine records (*CD* 6.2.5) that Varro's stated purpose had been to preserve memory of the Roman gods, and that he had classified Liber among the *di publici populi Romani* (7.17.2), which gives Liber considerable prominence and civic sanction. We have no other report of a phallophoria at the Liberalia, and no basis for dating this ritual, except that Varro's *Antiquitates* were published by 45 BCE. Apparently the phallus is conveyed *usque in urbem* ("all the way into the city"): this probably refers to the city of Rome, often called simply *urbs* ("the city") in contrast to *oppida* ("towns," such as Lanuvium, *in oppido autem Lanuvio*), and Pliny the Elder records that the Vestals were custodians of the *fascinus* ("phallus," *NH* 28.VII, 39).

Dionysus is a prominent subject of interest for the early Christian fathers owing to his many points of contact with Christ, including their mixture of divine and mortal parentage, their provision of wine, their sufferings and return to life, and their connection with eternal life. These features made Dionysus a force to be reckoned with, either to be used as a source of motifs, to be accommodated apologetically, or as a target of polemical contempt (for early Christianity see Massa 2010, 2011; Wacht and Rickert 2010, 91–95). While Augustine does not make the Dionysus–Christ relationship explicit, it is just possible that devotional Christian processions, attested for the fourth century by Ambrose (*Ep*. 40.16) may lie behind his denunciation of the phallophoria.

For Augustine, the shamefulness and theatricality of the rite entail that it desecrates and violates the soul (7.21.4). In the previous book (6.9) he had derided the worship of male and female genitalia in fertility ritual and excoriated Bacchic madness as psychic pollution. While in 6.9 he likens the division of labor between Roman deities to an absurd farce (*desipere* […] *mimo simile*), here in 7.2 he suggests an awareness of the link between the performance of ritual for Liber and Dionysus as a god of theatre. The theatre comparison is pointed: normally matrons are not even allowed to watch such an indecent show (*spectarent* […] *in theatro*), and so to have them actually performing it in public (*in propatulo*), a shameful act (*pudenda*) without even a concession to modesty (*verecundiore secreto*) is especially galling. The sexual character of the rite is conspicuous: apart from the phallus itself, there is postcoital innuendo in *quiesceret* at the end of the rite (Walsh 2010, 195), and the indecent language (*verbis flagitiosissimis*) may also have been of a sexual nature.

The sustained analogy between Roman religious ritual and theatrical performance serves an additional purpose in Augustine's rhetoric. Varro had worked with a tripartite division between the theology of the poets, the philosophers, and the state, and Augustine's contention that civic ritual is theatrical and even farcical goes some way to challenging this neat division, undermining especially Varro's distinction between theatrical myth and civic ritual (see e.g., *CD* 4.27, 6.5, 6.9.3, 6.7, 6.10.1). For Augustine, then, fiction often informs ritual, but in this case he does not claim that a myth is being enacted. The scurrilous myth of Prosymnos, which we know partly from Christian sources that deride Dionysus, may have been generated to explain the ritual of phallic veneration. Indeed

Augustine rarely mentions Greek or foreign cults at all, but while he does not relate Liber's phallic procession to a Greek counterpart, we are in a position to do so. Herodotus considers the phallophoria the first ritual which Melampus taught the Greeks when he introduced the worship of Dionysus (2.49), and so the rite was almost certainly imported. We have abundant evidence of the phallic procession from Athenian and other contexts, which attest to Dionysus' agrarian role: as god of the liquid element he is responsible for the sap of life, for wine and for vegetal fertility in general (for the phallus in Dionysian ritual see Csapo 2013; Matz 1963). The Italian Liber shared these functions, as his presence in the invocations to Varro's *De re rustica* and Virgil's *Georgics* indicate (see Castriota 1995, 87–106).

Bacchanalia

A sign of Augustine's personal distance from the worship of Bacchus/Liber is that he conflates Liberalia with the more notorious Bacchanalia, with reference to the Senate's brutal clampdown of 186 BCE (*CD* 6.9). This Bacchanalian "conspiracy" was deemed so important that an extraordinary inquest involving both consuls was set up to investigate it, which concluded by making participation in the Bacchanalia a capital crime except by senatorial permission, ordering the destruction of shrines, and the hunting down of initiates. Why was the senate's reaction so severe if the Roman state, so generally hospitable to foreign cults, had installed Liber along with Ceres and Libera on the Aventine in the fifth century BCE? And what does the episode tell us about the relationship between Liber and Dionysus?

The affair has given rise to important discussions about Roman religious and political history and the interaction between these two overlapping spheres (see especially North 1979 and Gruen 1990; for an overview of the ample bibliography see Pailler 1988, 231 and Briscoe 2008, 230). The scholarly consensus is that the senate stamped out a rival power structure that threatened to undermine its own authority, while making allowance for the regulated worship of an ancestral god, and at the same time bullishly extending the reach of its power into southern Italy. The affair also seems to point to Roman patriarchal fear of the power of women, especially in the generation after the Hannibalic War. The events of 186 BCE were certainly not the end of Bacchic worship in Italy. A much later inscription of ca. 160 CE, from Torre Nova attests to a large Bacchic thiasos listing the names of over 400 male and female initiates and in some cases their priestly function (see Jaccottet 2003, I, 30–53).

Our two main sources, Livy's colorful narrative (39.8–18) and a report of the senatorial edict from an inscription found at Tiriolo in Calabria (*CIL* I² 581 = *ILLRP* 511, photo in Bowden 2010, 125) make it quite clear that a distinction was perceived between the worship of ancestral gods, including Liber, and the Bacchanalia. As early as book 3.55.7 (on the events of 449 BCE; see also 33.25.3) Livy shows awareness of the temple of Ceres, Liber, and Libera. His Bacchanalian tale begins with a xenophobic account of an obscure Greek, a prophet and priest of petty

sacrifices who first introduced the Bacchanalia to Etruria (39.8, *Graecus ignobilis in Etruriam primum venit* […] *sacrificulus et vates*). This Greek brought with him none of the fine arts of that most cultured country, but practiced nocturnal mysteries, which at first he revealed only to a few, until gradually more worshippers were attracted by wine and feasting. Initiates participated not only in the most degrading sexual acts, but also forged wills, falsified testimonies, and even committed murders. The atrocities of the cult were concealed: the shrieks of those suffering rape and violence were drowned out by the noise of drums and cymbals: "This evil sickness penetrated from Etruria to Rome like the contagion of a disease" (39.9.1). In a similar if slightly less sensationalist vein the consul Postumius begins his speech to the senate by appealing to a distinction between ancestral gods and these wicked and depraved foreign rites; he reassures the senators that Rome's religious authorities have always forbidden the practice of foreign rites except those conducted in accordance with Roman custom, and that they should have no scruple about ordering the destruction of Bacchic shrines (39.15.2–3, 16.8–11). Archaeological evidence from Bolsena confirms that Bacchic shrines were indeed demolished in accordance with the senate's decree; but in both Livy's and the epigraphic account of the edict, ancestral altars and statues were exempt, and provision was made for worshippers to obtain permission from the authorities to practice Bacchic rites in small numbers. Cicero too distinguishes between Liber, son of Semele, and Liber, son of Ceres, though he still calls both of them Liber (*DND* 2.62). Liber, Bacchus, and Dionysus seem to have coalesced in Roman drama at least as early as the third-century BCE Naevius' tragedy *Lycurgus* (Rousselle 1987, 194), and it is easy to see how Augustine might have confused them.

Roman drama, so central to Augustine's take on the Liberalia, also plays a part in our interpretation of the Bacchanalian affair. Eight of Plautus's comedies refer to Bacchic rites as a violent, suspicious, or irrational phenomenon: *"Bacchis, Bacchas metuo et bacchanal tuom* […] *nam huic aetati non conducit, mulier, latebrosus locus"* ("I dread the Bacchic women and your Bacchic shrine, Bacchis […] oh no, your shady den is not suitable for my tender age, lady") exclaims Pistoclerus at *Bacchides* (53–56). Plautus died in 184 BCE, and appealed in his comedies to traditional Roman values. These Bacchic references are usually read as evidence for widespread familiarity with the cult, and in at least one case possibly with its suppression (*Casina* 980–982; see Flower 2000). Livy's own account has both comic and tragic elements: the melodramatic sequence whereby the consul Postumius extracts a confession from the prostitute and freedwoman Hispala Faecenia reads like the plot of a Greek new comedy. The characters are comic stereotypes, and as in a comedy, order is restored, evil is punished, and the good are rewarded (Scafuro 1989; Walsh 1996). The hostility to the cult exhibited by Livy, Hispala, and Postumius restages the prudishness and xenophobia of Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae*. As Hispala cowers in fear before the consul and his mother, she worries that she may be ripped apart by her interlocutors with their bare hands (39.13.5), a motif that recalls the sparagmos of Pentheus. It may be that one of Livy's sources hostile to the Bacchanalia,

perhaps even the consul's memoirs, used sensational dramatic elements to vilify the cult. Scholars such as Gruen (1990) have explained Livy's account and its sources as justifying the senate's persecution rather than accounting for it.

Roman hostility to Dionysus reared its head again in response to Mark Antony's cultivation of the god during the second triumvirate. The hostility in part was fueled by his entry into Ephesus in 41 bce, accompanied by a Bacchic entourage, when he styled himself a "new Dionysus." According to Plutarch (*Ant.* 24.4–5) some of the Ephesians hailed him as Dionysus the Giver of Joy and the Gentle (Χαριδότην καὶ Μειλίχιον), while to others, victims of his corrupt governance, he was Dionysus the Raw-Eater and the Savage (Ὠμηστὴς καὶ Ἀγριώνιος). While Antony's identification as Dionysus will have endeared him to some easterners and Egyptians, long accustomed to ruler cult, and while it will have marked him out as the successor of Alexander, there is a sense in which he is not in control of the god's polyvalent symbolism. Dio's Octavian, in a speech to his troops before the battle of Actium, reprehends Antony for his un-Romanness, for having "gone native" in the east, including his self-identification as a new Dionysus (50.25.4). Plutarch records rumors that on the night before the battle of Actium a Bacchic thiasos was heard tumultuously leaving Alexandria, and that this was interpreted as a sign that the god was deserting Antony (*Ant.* 75.3). (For Antony's Bacchism see Fuhrer 2011, and for counterpropaganda, involving also Octavian's use of Apollo, see Scott 1929). It may have been Dionysus' associations with Antony that led Augustus to leave the temple of Ceres, Liber, and Libera unrepaired for decades, after the fire of 31 bce. Be this as it may, a growing body of scholarship is empha- sizing the prominence of Bacchus in Augustan culture, from the Bacchic paintings in the "Auditorium of Maecenas" (Wyler 2013) to the vegetal frieze on the Ara Pacis (Castriota 1995) to the role of Bacchus in Augustan poetry, such as Horace's *Odes* 2.19 and 3.25 (Schiesaro 2009) and Virgil's *Eclogues*, *Georgics* and *Aeneid* (see Cucchiarelli 2012; Mac Góráin 2013; Smith 2007; Weber 2002), and also Miller (2002 on Ovid's *Fasti*). It is as though Octavian managed to recuperate a benign Italian Liber, decoupling him from Dionysus' more suspicious aspects, drunken debauchery, theatricality, and foreignness.

But these depraved associations could come back into play at any moment, and if Augustus managed to sanitize Liber for the imperial court, several decades later Messalina, the wife of the emperor Claudius stages a bacchanal, signaling a rever- sion from mild to wild Bacchism. Tacitus is our source:

> at Messalina non alias solutior luxu, adulto autumno simulacrum vindemiae per domum celebrabat. urgeri prela, fluere lacus; et feminae pellibus accinctae adsulta- bant ut sacrificantes vel insanientes Bacchae; ipsa crine fluxo thyrsum quatiens, iux- taque Silius hedera vinctus, gerere cothurnos, iacere caput, strepente circum procaci choro. ferunt Vettium Valentem lascivia in praealtam arborem conisum, interrogan- tibus quid aspiceret, respondisse tempestatem ab Ostia atrocem, sive coeperat ea species, seu forte lapsa vox in praesagium vertit. (*Ann.* 11.31)

> Meanwhile Messalina, never before more unrestrained in her debauchery, was celebrating a mock-vintage in the house at the height of autumn. The wine presses were being trodden, the vats were overflowing, and women girt in animal skins were leaping about like maenads sacrificing or out of their minds. Messalina herself was shaking the thyrsus with her hair flowing, Silius beside her wreathed in ivy, wearing tragic buskins, tossing his head about, a wanton chorus shrieking around them. The story goes that Vettius Valens climbed up a very tall tree as a joke. When asked what he could see, he replied "a frightful storm from Ostia." So either something resembling a storm was on the horizon, or maybe a chance word let fall turned into a prophecy.

This passage comes soon after the "marriage" of Messalina to her lover Silius, and shortly before Messalina's downfall. Bacchus often presides over innocuous displays of luxury and the good life, as for example, in Campanian wall painting (see Hayles 2008; Zanker 1998). This role is an extension of his benign associations with wine and abundance, represented for example, in the famous fresco of Bacchus as a cluster of grapes with Vesuvius in the background and a snake (perhaps guardian spirit of the vines) in the foreground, from the House of the Centenary in Pompeii. But the Dionysian rhetoric in this scene from *Annals* 11 is so decadent that it characterizes the empress as an unbridled voluptuary, utterly depraved, with broader reflections on the intrigues of a corrupt imperial court. There is a cluster of motifs not merely Dionysian but specifically theatrical, notably Silius' buskins and the shrieking chorus. Tacitus had introduced the sequence of the "marriage" between Messalina and Silius as "like a drama" (*fabulosum*, 11.27.1). Now, while the Julio-Claudian court often seemed to play host to dramatic performances, a tendency that reached its apogee under Nero (Bartsch 1994), this particular vignette seems to replay the scene in Euripides' *Bacchae* in which Pentheus climbs up a tree to spy on the maenads (Henrichs 1978, 159). It may be that to Vettius Valens, Claudius is already to be seen kicking up a storm as he returns from Ostia. As in the tragedy, catastrophe will ensue not only for Vettius Valens himself, but for the other participants in the drama. It is difficult to tell how much Tacitus embellished the plot, and whether he is introducing the maenadic metaphor as part of a detailed literary and dramatic texture to characterize Messalina's licentiousness (Santoro L'hoir 2006, 234–237), or whether Messalina herself did in fact stage a bacchanal and behave like a bacchante. The event may well have been in Tacitus' sources (Malloch 2013, 432), but the passage as it stands evokes Livy's Bacchanalia, Antony's theatrical Bacchism, and all of their negative associations (see Jaccottet 2008, 204). It would be tempting to assert that we are far from the "genuine" worship of Dionysus/Bacchus/Liber considered earlier in this chapter, and that we have moved into the realm of "purely artificial performance" of Dionysian myth and ritual, if it were not for the fact that ritual impersonation and transformation had formed part of Dionysian worship at least since the dramatic festivals of fifth-century Athens, and that dramatic rituals had also been at home on Italian soil since around the same time (Wiseman 2006, 56–57).

Acknowledgments

Guide to Further Reading

The most detailed general study of Dionysus/Liber in Italy remains Bruhl (1953); see also Musiał (2009) in Polish, with polyglot bibliography. Pailler (1988) examines all the evidence for the Bacchanalian affair of 186 BCE, while Pailler (2004) offers a both broader and briefer treatment of Bacchus in Italy. For Bacchus in Roman poetry see Flower (2000), on Plautus Batinski (1990–1991) and Schiesaro (2009) on Horace; on Virgil see Bocciolini Palagi (2007), Cucchiarelli (2012), Krummen (2004), Mac Góráin (2013), Smith (2007) and Weber (2002). On Bacchus in Roman politics see Fuhrer (2011). On Dionysus in wall painting and other art see Hayles (2008), Wyler (2015) and Zanker (1998). On Dionysus and Christianity see Massa (2014).

References

Altheim, F. 1931. *Terra Mater: Untersuchungen zur altitalischen Religionsgeschichte*. Giessen: A. Töpelmann.

Arena, V. 2012. *Libertas and the Practice of Politics in the Late Roman Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bakkum, G.C.L.M. 2009. *The Latin Dialect of the Ager Faliscus*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Bartsch, S. 1994. *Actors in the Audience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Batinski, E.E. 1990–1991. "Horace's Rehabilitation of Bacchus." *Classical World*, 84: 361–378.

Bocciolini Palagi, L. 2007. *La trottola di Dioniso. Motivi dionisiaci nel vii libro dell*. Eneide. Bologna: Pàtron.

Bomati, Y. 1983. "Les légendes dionysiaques en Étrurie." *Revue des Etudes Latines Paris*, 61: 87–107.

Bonfante, L. 1993. "Fufluns Pacha: The Etruscan Dionysus," in T.H. Carpenter and C.A. Faraone, eds, *Masks of Dionysus*, 221–235. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Bowden, H. 2010. *Mystery Cults in the Ancient World*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Boyd, M.J. 1955. Review of Bruhl. 1953. *Classical Review*, 5: 95–96.

Briscoe, J. 2008. *A Commentary on Livy; Books 38-40*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bruhl, A. 1953. *Liber Pater*. Paris: E. de Boccard.

Casadio, G. 2009. "Dionysus in Campania: Cumae," in G. Casadio and P.A. Johnston, eds, *Mystic Cults in Magna Graecia*, 33–45. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Castriota, D. 1995. *The Ara Pacis Augustae and the Imagery of Abundance in Later Greek and Early Roman Imperial Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Csapo, E. 2013. "Comedy and the Pompe: Dionysian genre-crossing," in E. Bakola, L. Prauscello, and M. Telo, eds, *Greek Comedy and the Discourse of Genres*, 40–80. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cucchiarelli, A. 2012. "Ivy and Laurel. Divine Models in Virgil's 'Eclogues.'" *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 107: 155–178.

Degrassi, A. 1963. *Inscriptiones Italiae. Volumen XIII – Fasti et Elogia. Fasciculus II – Fasti Anni Numani et Iuliani. Accedunt Ferialia, Menologia Rustica, Parapegmata*. Rome: Libreria dello Stato.

Edmonds, R.G. III ed., 2011. *The "Orphic" Gold Tablets and Greek Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Flower, H. I. 2000. *"Fabula de Bacchanalibus:* The Bacchanalian Cult of the Second Century BCE and Roman Drama," in G. Manuwald, ed., *Identität und Alterität in der frührömischen Tragödie*, 23–36. Würzburg, Germany: Ergon.

Fuhrer, T. 2011. "Inszenierungen von Göttlichkeit: die politische Rolle von Dionysos/ Bacchus in der Römischen Literatur," in R. Schlesier, ed., *A Different God?: Dionysos and Ancient Polytheism*, 373–389. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Graf, F. and Iles Johnston, S. 2013. *Ritual Texts for the Afterlife: Orpheus and the Bacchic Gold Tablets*. New York: Routledge.

Gruen, E.S. 1990. *Studies in Greek Culture and Roman Policy*. New York: E.J. Brill.

Hagendahl, H. 1967. *Augustine and the Latin Classics*, 2 vols. Gothenburg: Almqvist & Wiksell.

Hayles, S. 2008. "Aphrodite and Dionysus: Greek Rome Models for Roman Homes?" in S. Bell and I.L. Hansen, eds, *Role Models in the Roman World: Identity and Assimilation*, 235–255. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Henrichs, A. 1978. "Greek Maenadism from Olympias to Messalina." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 82: 121–160.

Jaccottet, A.-F. 2003. *Choisir Dionysos. Les associations dionysiaques ou la face cachée du dionysisme. Vol. I: Text; II: Documents*. Zürich: Akanthus-Verl.

Jaccottet, A.-F. 2008. "Das bakchische Fest und seine Verbreitung durch Kult, Literatur und Theater," in J. Rüpke, ed., *Festrituale in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, 201–213. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Joseph, L.S. and Klein, S. 1981. "A New Restoration in the Faliscan Ceres-Inscription with Notes on Latin Molere and Its Italian Cognates." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 85: 293–300.

Krummen, E. 2004. "Dido als Mänade und tragische Heroine: Dionysische Thematik und Tragödientradition in Vergil's Didoerzählung." *Poetica*, 36: 25–69.

le Bonniec, H. 1958. *Le culte de Cérès à Rome*. Paris: C. Klincksieck.

Leinieks, V. 1996. *The City of Dionysos. A Study of Euripides'* Bakchai. Stuttgart: Teubner.

Mac Góráin, F. 2013. "Virgil's Bacchus and the Roman Republic," in D. Nelis and J. Farrell, eds, *Augustan Poetry and the Roman Republic*, 124–145. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Malloch, S.J.V. 2013. *The Annals of Tacitus. Book 11*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Massa, F. 2010. "Entre la vigne et la croix. Dionysos dans les discours littéraires et figurés chrétiens (IIe – IVe siècles). Résumé de thèse." *Asdiwal. Revue genevoise d'anthropologie et d'histoire des religions*, 6: 153–160.

Massa, F. 2011. "La promotion des Bacchantes d'Euripide chez les Pères de l'Eglise." *Cahiers Glotz*, 21: 419–434.

Massa, F. 2014. *Tra la vigna e la croce. Dioniso nei discorsi letterari e figurativi cristiani ii-iv secolo*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Matz, F. 1963. "ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΑΚΉ ΤΕΛΕΤΉ [DIONYSIAKÊ TELETÊ]: Archäologische Untersuchungen zum Dionysoskult in hellenistischer and römischer Zeit," in *Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse, Akademie der Wissenschaft u Literatur* 15: 1395–1453. Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur.

Miller, J.F. 2002. "Ovid's Liberalia," in G. Herbert-Brown, ed., *Ovid's Fasti. Historical Readings at its Bimillennium*, 199–224. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Musiał, D. 2009. *Dionizos w Ryzmie*. Krakow: History Lagellonica.

North, J.A. 1979. "Religious toleration in Republican Rome." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, 25: 85–103.

Pailler, J.M. 1988. *Bacchanalia. La répression de 186 av. J.-C. à Rome et en Italie: vestiges, images, tradition*. Paris: Diffusion de Boccard.

Pailler, J.M. 2004. *Bacchus. Figures et pouvoirs*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Radke, G. 1965. *Die Götter Altitaliens*. Münster: Aschendorff.

Ribbeck, O., ed. 1873. *Comicorum Romanorum praeter Plautum et Terentium Fragmenta*. Leipzig: Teubner.

Rousselle, R. 1987. "Liber-Dionysus in Early Roman Drama." *Classical Journal*, 82: 193–198.

Santoro L'hoir, F. 2006. *Tragedy, Rhetoric, and the Historiography of Tacitus'* Annales. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Scafuro, A. C. 1989. "Livy's Comic Narrative of the Bacchanalia." *Helios*, 16: 119–142.

Schiesaro, A. 2009. "Horace's Bacchic Poetics," in B.T. Houghton and M. Wyke, eds, *Perceptions of Horace*, L61–79. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schur, W. 1927. "Liber Pater." *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 13: 36–76.

Scott, K. 1929. "Octavian's Propaganda and Antony's *De Sua Ebrietate*." *Classical Philology*, 24: 133–141.

Seaford, R.A.S. 1996. *Euripides'* Bacchae. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.

Smith, R.A. 2007. "In vino civitas: The Rehabilitation of Bacchus in Vergil's *Georgics*." *Vergilius*, 53: 52–86.

Wacht, M. and Rickert, F. 2010 "Liber (Dionysos)," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum. Band XXIII*, 67–99. Stuttgart: Hiersemann.

Walsh, P.G. 1996. "Making a Drama Out of a Crisis: Livy on the Bacchanalia." *Greece and Rome*, 43: 188–203.

Walsh, P.G. 2010. *De civitate Dei. Books VI & VII/Augustine*. Oxford: Aris & Phillips.

Weber, C. 2002. "The Dionysus in Aeneas." *Classical Philology*, 97: 322–343.

Wilson, J.-P. 2009. "Literacy," in K.A. Raaflaub and H. van Wees, eds, *A Companion to Archaic Greece*, 542–563. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Wiseman, P. 1998. *Roman Drama and Roman History*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

Wiseman, P. 2004. *Myths of Rome*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

Wiseman, P. 2006. "Documentation, Visualisation, Imagination: The Case of Anna Perenna's Cult Site," in L. Haselberger and J. Humphrey, eds, *Imaging Ancient Rome: Documentation – Visualisation – Imagination*, 51–61. JRA supplementary series 61. Portsmouth, RI: JRA.

Wiseman, P. 2008. *Unwritten Rome*. Exeter: University of Exeter Press.

Wissowa, G. 1912. *Religion und Kultus der Römer*. Munich: C. H. Beck.

Wyler, S. 2013. "An Augustan Trend toward Dionysos: Around the 'Auditorium of Maecenas,'" in A. Bernabé *et al.*, eds, *Redefining Dionysos*, 541–553. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Wyler, S. 2015. *Les images de Liber. Perceptions du dionysisme dans la Rome républicaine et augustéenne*. Rome: Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome.

Zanker, P. 1998. *Eine Kunst für die Sinne: zur Bilderwelt des Dionysos und der Aphrodite*. Berlin: Wagenbach.

23

Cupid and Psyche

Julia Haig Gaisser

The story of Cupid and Psyche (unlike other myths in this volume), is a literary creation that can be dated and attributed to a particular author.[1] The story was created by Apuleius (ca. 126–170 CE) in his novel, *Metamorphoses* (also called the *Golden Ass*; Zimmerman 2004). The lovers Cupid and Psyche existed before Apuleius, both in art and in Hellenistic epigram, but there is no evidence that they ever existed in a narrative. Although Apuleius' story contains several themes with parallels in folktale, the relevant folktales cannot be traced as far back as the second century, and none can be fully matched to the narrative as a whole. But Apuleius did not completely fabricate the story. He drew on various sources, including Platonic myth, elements from the stories of heroines in his literary predecessors, and the representations of Cupid and Psyche in art and epigram.

In Apuleius the story is one of the many tales overheard in the course of his adventures by Lucius, the hero of the novel. It is also the longest, taking up nearly one-fifth of the work. It goes like this:[2] A king and queen had three daughters. The youngest, Psyche (whose name means "Soul" in Greek), was so beautiful that she incurred the enmity of Venus, who instructed her son, Cupid, to destroy her. An oracle required Psyche to be exposed on a cliff to be wed to a terrible monster. Carried from the cliff by Zephyr, she became the bride of an invisible lover whom she was forbidden to see. When she became pregnant, her husband warned her that the child would be divine if she kept his secret, but mortal if she revealed it. Her jealous sisters persuaded her to break the taboo, convincing her that her unseen husband was a great serpent and that to save herself and her unborn child she must light a lamp as he slept and cut off his head. Upon lighting the lamp, however, she saw not a serpent, but Cupid himself. Playing with one of his arrows, she pricked herself, and, as Apuleius tells us, "she fell in love with Love" (*Met.* 5.23.3). But a drop of hot oil from the lamp fell on his shoulder, and the wounded god awoke and flew away, abandoning her. In despair, Psyche began to wander the

earth. She found her wicked sisters and lured them to their deaths. Finally she came into the clutches of Venus, who set her several tasks of increasing difficulty, each of which she accomplished with supernatural assistance. Her final task was to bring Venus a box of Proserpina's beauty from Hades. Although warned not to open the box, she fell prey to curiosity and opened it, finding not beauty but Stygian sleep, which immediately plunged her into a deathlike unconsciousness. But Cupid came to her rescue, awakening her with a prick of his arrow, and sent her to complete her errand for Venus. He pleaded his case to Jupiter, and Psyche was brought to heaven, given the cup of immortality, and formally married to Cupid. In time she gave birth to a daughter, Pleasure (*Voluptas*).

In the *Golden Ass* the story of Psyche is a counterpart to that of Lucius. Each is warned of the dangers of curiosity and disregards the warning with disastrous results: Lucius is transformed into an ass and loses his human identity; Psyche is driven from her divine marriage. Each fails to learn from experience: Lucius is asinine throughout, Psyche silly and disobedient, as her opening of Proserpina's box attests. Each is essentially undeserving, and each is ultimately redeemed by divine favor: Lucius by Isis, Psyche by Cupid. The relation of the two stories is central to the interpretation of the novel. Although disagreeing about the details, most scholars would see the story of Cupid (Love) and Psyche (Soul) as a fable with Platonic overtones that mirrors, foreshadows, and illuminates the fortunes of Lucius.

Apuleius' invented story passed into myth, and its outlines have long been as familiar as those of the stories of Oedipus or Medea. Like all myths, that of Cupid and Psyche is rich in interpretative possibilities. It is capable of many tellings, and even slight differences between them create new stories with different meanings. Everything depends on which details are omitted or included, on the identity and point of view of the narrator, on where the story begins and ends, and on the historical, literary, or artistic context in which it appears. Looking at examples from various periods, I will discuss the reception of Cupid and Psyche in four genres: allegory, visual art, translation, and literary imitation. These genres, however, are not self-contained. Cross-fertilization is one of the most important elements in the reception of the story.

Allegory

In Apuleius, Soul is joined to Love and their union culminates in Soul's immortality and the birth of Pleasure. The story and the names of its characters present an obvious invitation to allegory.[3] Readers ever since have accepted the invitation, fashioning allegories suited to the religious and intellectual ideas of their own time and place, and modifying details of the story to support them.

Allegorical interpretation was widely practiced in late antiquity, and it is conceivable that interest in allegory might be partly responsible for the survival of the

Golden Ass, which survived the Middle Ages in a single manuscript.[4] Our oldest manuscript is descended from one corrected at the end of the fourth century by a student and his teacher in a rhetorical school. We do not know that they had allegory in mind, but a Neoplatonist Christian allegory dated to the fifth century interprets another ancient novel, Heliodorus' *Ethiopica*.[5] The reading, like many of those of the story of Psyche, depends largely on the name of the heroine.[6]

The earliest known allegorical readings of Psyche, however, are those of Martianus Capella and Fulgentius the Mythographer. Little is known about either, except that both lived in Apuleius' homeland, North Africa, and that Martianus was a pagan, Fulgentius a Christian. Martianus' brief allegory appears in his *Marriage of Mercury and Philosophy*, (ca. 470–490).[7] Martianus refers to Psyche's union with Cupid ("she was held captive by Cupid with unbreakable bonds," Mart. *Cap*. 1.7), but his allegory lacks a narrative and has little to do with Apuleius' story. His Psyche even has different parents – not Apuleius' unnamed "king and queen," but Apollo and Endelichia ("continuous or perennial motion").

Fulgentius' allegory appears in his *Mitologiae* (ca. 550).[8] He tells Apuleius' story, omitting both Psyche's name and every detail connected with her redemption and final happiness: her pregnancy and the birth of Pleasure, her rescue by Cupid from her Stygian sleep, her immortality and joyous marriage in heaven.[9] In Apuleius, Psyche's misfortunes, like those of Lucius, are largely the work of malignant Fortune (*Met*. 5.5.2–3; 5.11.3–6), but Fulgentius makes Psyche herself entirely to blame, interpreting her story with an allegory about the evils of sexual desire.

The city of the girl's birth represents the world, and her parents, the king and queen, are god and matter. The three daughters are Flesh, Free Will, and Soul (*anima*, "which in Greek is called Psice").[10] Soul, superior to Free Will and nobler than Flesh, is the most beautiful. She is envied by Venus, that is, Lust, who sends Desire (*Cupiditas*) to destroy her. But Desire loves Soul and joins with her as if in a marriage, and he urges her not to let her sisters persuade her to see his face – that is, to learn the delights of desire. Fulgentius expands this explanation with a revealing comment: "Whence also Adam, although he sees, does not see that he is naked until he eats from the tree of concupiscence" (*Mit*. 3.6.118). He leaves it to us to infer that seeing the face of Desire is equivalent to eating the apple: each is a fall from innocence into carnal awareness and lust. When Soul takes the lamp from its hiding place, "she reveals the flame of longing hidden in her heart, sees that it is sweet, and falls in love with it" (*Mit*. 3.6.118). Fulgentius' heroine sees what has been there all along – her own sexual longing, its light unfortunately no longer hidden. Consequently, "she is deprived of her mighty fortune and tossed by dangers and driven from her royal palace" (*Mit*. 3.6.118). Here the allegory ends. Soul, like Adam, has succumbed to temptation and gained forbidden knowledge, and she is driven from her Eden.

Fulgentius was well known in the Middle Ages. His version (without the allegory) is found in the First Vatican Mythographer (dated between 875 and 1075).[11] This allegory also appears in the margins of a late-fourteenth-century manuscript

of Apuleius probably annotated by Benvenuto da Imola (ca. 1320–1387/88).[12] By this time, however, interpreters were already moving away from Fulgentius.

Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375) presents his allegory in *Genealogies of the Pagan Gods*.[13] The work exists in two versions, the autograph and the vulgate. In the case of Psyche the autograph is corrected and superseded by the vulgate, which condenses and slightly alters the narration and presents a subtly different allegory. In Boccaccio Psyche's parents are not god and matter as in Fulgentius, but Apollo and Endelechia as in Martianus Capella. (The change fits Psyche into the structure of the *Genealogies*, where she is presented as the fifteenth daughter of Apollo, but it is also theologically necessary since in medieval theology God creates each soul *ex nihilo*, not from existing matter).[14] Psyche's husband is God himself – a point that radically affects the meaning of his prohibition: no one can see or understand God through reason; he can be known only by faith. Boccaccio, like Apuleius, ends his narrative with Psyche in heaven in an eternal union with Cupid, and giving birth to Pleasure. His vulgate revises the autograph at several points, with each change deepening the religious meaning of the allegory. The most important change is in the treatment of Psyche's immortality. The vulgate, unlike the autograph, omits the point that Psyche is made immortal, since in Christian doctrine the soul is immortal by definition and (unless damned) is ultimately received into heaven. Fulgentius had suppressed Psyche's happy ending; by restoring it, Boccaccio presents a religious allegory of redemption (Fulgentius had presented only the fall).

In the fifteenth century allegories took a new direction, treating Psyche less as a religious abstraction than as a model for human aspiration. In the 1470s the poet Matteo Maria Boiardo wrote a tercet on Psyche for a set of tarot cards. Psyche appeared on the card called Patience:

> Psyche had patience in her misfortunes
> And for that reason was aided in her distress,
> And in the end was made a Goddess who is an example to us.[15]

Filippo Beroaldo quoted and rejected Fulgentius' allegory in his famous commentary on the *Golden Ass* (1500), but treated Psyche's happy ending as a model for his own marriage:

> May the gods make this marriage fertile and happy and fortunate for us, so that from it pleasure [*voluptas*] may be born [….] May the offspring born of us be pleasure-bringing [*voluptifica*], like that born of Psyche and Cupid.
>
> (Beroaldo (1500) fols. 134v–135r).

The child he looks forward to, however, is a son.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, allegorizers returned to ideologies as the basis for their interpretations, but now their modes were not Christian but Platonic or psychological. They usually avoided the term allegory. An early Platonic

allegory appears in Gustav Friedrich Hildebrand's commentary on Apuleius (1842).[16] Hildebrand identifies Psyche as the pure and chaste soul that Plato tells us originated from the highest god. Her sisters are the vile desires of the flesh. Cupid, his sensual aspects notwithstanding, is Plato's celestial Love. Hildebrand relates Psyche's immortality and reconciliation with Cupid, but omits the birth of Pleasure, probably because of his almost Fulgentian concern with sexual purity. Hildebrand also links his allegory to the story of Lucius, arguing that Psyche's trials, purification, and redemption prefigure those in Lucius' initiation in Book 11. Of many subsequent Platonic readings, the most notable is that of Kenney (1990b), who suggests that the stories of both Psyche and Lucius feature Venus and Love (Cupid) in the higher and lower forms identified by Plato.

Psychologists have produced their own allegories, with Freudians differing from Jungians, and devotees of both schools differing among themselves.[17] Freudians often allegorize the story as a young woman's sexual anxiety and fantasy of the male as a monster. The most influential Jungian reading is that presented in 1952 by Erich Neumann. The sexual encounter, claimed Neumann, "is for the feminine destiny, transformation, and the profoundest mystery of life" (Neumann 1962, 63). Neumann's reading was countered by Rachel Blau DuPlessis (1979) with a complex feminist allegory. Neumann asserted that the meaning of Psyche's quest was not a growth of understanding (gnosis), but a mystery of Eros (Neumann 1962, 139). DuPlessis argues for gnosis, and for an integration in Psyche's nature that she calls "wholeness": "Inside Psyche Is Eros, the love she bears, and Joy [Pleasure], the new self she bears. These are as much Psyche as Psyche herself" (DuPlessis 1979, 90).

Visual Art

Psyche's story lends itself to artistic representation. Its principal events stick in the mind as scenes, still points in the action that function almost like freeze frames in cinema. The narrative is studded with pictures like Psyche on the cliff waiting for her deadly bridegroom, Psyche poised with lamp and dagger over her sleeping husband, Psyche rescued from her Stygian sleep, and Psyche and her joyous wedding to Cupid.

Artists began to depict parts of the story in late antiquity. The earliest example appears on a painted ceiling from a Constantinian residence in Trier, which was built in 315 and demolished in 326.[18] The reconstructed ceiling alternates portrait busts and pairs of putti, checkerboard fashion. One pair, different from the rest, represents Cupid and Psyche (identified, as often in antiquity, by her butterfly wings). Next to them is a portrait bust of a philosopher identified as Apuleius. Psyche holds a box in her hand, and Cupid seems to be rushing her along. The box is Proserpina's casket of beauty, and the painting shows the moment just after Cupid has roused Psyche from her Stygian sleep. The juxtaposition of the image

with the bust of Apuleius invites a philosophical reading: that Psyche (Soul) has been saved by Cupid (Love) and is on her way to eternal happiness.

A thousand years later Psyche was depicted in two illuminations in a manuscript of the *Golden Ass* (1345).[19] The illumination for Book 5 shows Psyche asleep in the garden of Cupid's palace after being carried down from her cliff by Zephyr. The first word in the book is "Psyche," and the scene is enclosed by the initial "P," creating a visual pun: both the word and the image represent Psyche. But the enclosing "P" also creates the effect of a walled garden, which, like Psyche's sleep, symbolizes her virginity.

The Trier ceiling and the illuminations show isolated scenes, but later artists often presented the whole story in a series of images. The earliest examples appear on panels from several pairs of fifteenth-century Florentine wedding chests (*cassoni*) of similar but not identical iconography.[20] The first panel always shows scenes from Psyche's conception to the flight of Cupid; the second begins with Cupid chastising Psyche and ends with their wedding. The painters follow Boccaccio in showing her father as the sun (Apollo). As in Boccaccio's vulgate version, they omit her drink from the cup of immortality.[21] They show the marriage (omitted in the vulgate, but *de rigueur* on a wedding chest), but elegantly extend Boccaccio's symbolism. Boccaccio treats the marriage of Psyche and Cupid as the everlasting union of the soul with God; the *cassoni* present it as a model for human marriage. They show the wedding party standing on the ground, but with clouds under their feet, so that the wedding seems to take place in heaven and earth at the same time.

Psyche's story was also painted on a larger scale, in frescoes adorning the walls of princely villas (Cavicchioli 2002, 86–144). The fashion began in the 1470s, when Matteo Maria Boiardo translated the *Golden Ass* for Ercole I d'Este in Ferrara. Around 1491 Niccolò da Correggio used Boiardo's translation as the basis for his Italian poem *Fabula Psyches et Cupidinis*. Correggio's poem, in turn, inspired a cycle of frescoes painted before 1497 in Ercole's now demolished Villa Belriguardo in Ferrara (Gundersheimer 1973, 249–262). It also inspired the cycle of Raphael in Rome (1518–1519) in the loggia of what is now called the Villa Farnesina. Raphael designed the frescoes (largely executed by others) as a pictorial epithalamium for the wedding of the rich banker Agostino Chigi. The paintings appear only on the vaulted ceiling and represent only the events taking place in heaven; those on earth were perhaps to appear in the lunettes and on the walls below. The flat part of the ceiling shows Psyche's wedding banquet and the council of the gods. In the spandrels, scenes from the story alternate with flights of cupids carrying attributes of the gods. The cupids are derived from Correggio's poem and reflect his theme that the power of love conquers every living thing, an idea suiting the epithalamial purpose of the cycle.

A decade later (1528–1529), Raphael's pupil Giulio Romano painted a Psyche series for Palazzo Te in Mantua for Duke Federico II Gonzaga, grandson of Ercole d'Este. Giulio was influenced by Raphael and Correggio, but still more by other

sources, especially the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* of Francesco Colonna (1499). His paintings, which appear in a great audience room, the Sala di Psyche, include the whole story of Psyche, but also scenes from other erotic tales. The room as a whole, given the prominence of Venus in the Psyche cycle and the strongly erotic quality of the other paintings, seems a virtual shrine to Venus.

There were other Renaissance cycles, but the most influential was the series of engravings attributed to Agostino Veneziano and an anonymous artist called the Master of the Die.[22] These were based on drawings made in the mid-1530s, probably by the Flemish artist Michael Coxie, using details from the Farnesina. The engravings, which were soon accompanied by Italian verses describing each scene, became enormously popular, both in their own right and as models for other artists. Their descendants include the fresco cycle of Perin del Vaga in Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome (1546), the stained glass windows of Château d'Écouen in France (1544) with French verses, and many later tapestries and enamels. In 1546 woodcuts based on the engravings, accompanied by the Italian and French verses, were printed in Paris in a little book called *L'Amour de Cupido et de Psiche*. Similar books followed, and Psyche's story became so popular that sixteenth-century printers of texts and translations of Apuleius in France and England made sure they mentioned it on their title pages.

Psyche cycles continued in the following centuries. Among the most notable are Gobelin tapestries (late-seventeenth century), woodcuts by Max Klinger for a German translation of Apuleius (1880), the painted dining room of Palace Green in London by the famous Pre-Raphaelite Edward Burne-Jones (1881), and *Histoire de Psyche*, 13 panels painted by Maurice Denis for the Moscow mansion of the Russian collector Ivan Morozov (1908–1909). Burne-Jones' paintings were based on earlier designs for woodcuts to illustrate William Morris's poem on Psyche in *The Earthly Paradise*, which was never published in its intended form.

There are also noteworthy representations of single episodes. Examples include: *Cupid and Psyche* by Anthony van Dyck (Cupid discovering Psyche asleep, ca. 1639–1640); *The Wedding of Cupid and Psyche* by Pompeo Batoni (1756); *Cupid Awakening Psyche with a Kiss* by Antonio Canova (sculpture and painting, 1790s); *Cupid Drying Psyche's Tears with Her Hair* by Angelika Kauffmann (1792); *Cupid and Psyche* by Jacques-Louis David (Cupid leaving the sleeping Psyche, ca 1817); *Charon and Psyche* by John Spencer Stanhope (1883); *Psyche Opening the Golden Box* by John William Waterhouse (1903). Psyche with her lamp is always a popular subject; the surrealist painter Leonor Fini (1907–1996) shows a naked Psyche discovering her lover in the form of a large yellow cat.

In the twentieth century many interesting depictions were produced as book illustrations. Examples include: Dorothy Mullock in *The Most Pleasant and Delectable Tale of the Marriage of Cupid and Psyche by Apuleius* (1914); Edmund Dulac in Walter Pater's *Marriage of Cupid and Psyche* (1951); Errol Le Cain in Walter Pater's *Cupid and Psyche* (1977).

Translations

Translations introduced Psyche to readers all over Europe. But translation is not a transparent vessel for moving content from one language to another; it is an artifact permeated by its own time and place that shapes a work to the thought of the translator. Since a translation presents an interpretation, not an unmediated encounter, it not only makes a work accessible to others, but also influences their understanding of it.

By 1570 translations of the *Golden Ass* had been printed in every major European language: Spanish (Diego Lopéz de Cortegana, 1513), French (Michel de Tours, 1518; George de La Bouthière, 1553; Jean Louveau, 1553), German (Johann Sieder, 1538), Italian (Matteo Maria Boiardo, 1518; Agnolo Firenzuola, 1549), and English (William Adlington, 1566).[23] Most interesting for the reception of Psyche are those of Boiardo, La Bouthière, and Adlington.

Boiardo's was the earliest and arguably the most important. Written in the 1470s, it set off a chain reaction of literary works and fresco cycles. Boiardo made small but significant changes to the story.[24] He called the pilgrims who came to see Psyche's beauty not "many mortals," like Apuleius, but "an infinite number of nobles."[25] Psyche is put to bed in Cupid's palace "nude, on a pure white bed" – points lacking in Apuleius, as is the further detail that Psyche's delight in Cupid's embraces replaces all thought of her parents and sisters and homeland (Boiardo 1988, 243). Boiardo's noble sightseers and sensual additions were appropriate for his sophisticated audience, but his major change fits the cultural expectations of his society as a whole. The last words in Apuleius are: "So Psyche was married to Cupid, and in the fullness of time to them was born a daughter, whom we call Pleasure." Boiardo translates: "and of them was born a son, who is called Delight."[26] Correggio follows the baby's sex change (Correggio 1969, 169), and Giulio Romano may allude to it in Palazzo Te, where the wedding feast shows a nude Cupid and Psyche reclining on a couch with a child of indeterminate sex between them. Is it their daughter, Pleasure, as most scholars assume, or their son, Delight?

The French translations of La Bouthière and Louveau were published within a few months of each other in Lyon, a sophisticated intellectual center with an Italian flavor. Both translators hoped to capitalize on the French interest in Psyche inspired by the windows in Château d'Écouen and the Paris editions of the Psyche woodcuts. Louveau's straightforward translation was designed for the educated general reader, but La Bouthière aimed for the fashionable market, and he rewrote accordingly. He used and embellished Boiardo's additions, promoting Psyche's admirers from mere nobles to "all the princes and great lords of the realm, with an infinite number of dukes, counts, marquises, and barons," and giving her a bed that is not only white, but perfumed. But he goes well beyond Boiardo at the end of the story:

> So this noble princess Psyche after ten thousand pains and sufferings was finally returned to the hands and power of her lover the god Cupid … and soon after had

the malady common to young wives, which is to become pregnant right after their marriage, so that she soon gave birth to a fine daughter who was named Pleasure (*Volupté*).

<div align="right">(La Bouthière 1553, 337–338)</div>

The English translator, William Adlington (1566), drew on the work of several predecessors, particularly Louveau, adding few embellishments. In Adlington Psyche is admired by "innumerable strangers," not crowds of princes, and her bed is not described. What distinguishes his work is its language. Here is how he translates Psyche's reaction her pregnancy:

> Then Psyches was very gladde that she should bringe forth a divine babe, and very joyfull in that she should be honored as a mother. She reckened and nombred carefully the daies and monethes that passed, and being never with childe before, did marvell greatly that in so small a time her belly should swell so bigge.

<div align="right">(Adlington 1566, 49v)</div>

Adlington's translation was influential in its own time (it was reprinted five times before 1640);[27] and it was primarily through Adlington that Anglophone readers knew Psyche for the next 400 years, for his remained the translation of choice until well into the twentieth century.

Literary Interpretations

Literary interpretation of Psyche's story began in the Italian Renaissance, and even the earliest examples show writers experimenting with its artistic possibilities (Gaisser 2008, 185–195). In Niccolò da Correggio's poem, *Fabula Psyches et Cupidinis* (ca. 1491), Cupid is the first-person narrator. We see everything through his eyes, and the story is about him, not Psyche. Around 1500 Galeotto Del Carretto put Psyche in a comedy, *Noze de Psiche e Cupidine* (*The Marriage of Psyche and Cupid*). Although the focus is always on Psyche, the dramatic form presents several voices and points of view. For Psyche's spiritual benefit (and to achieve a happy ending), Del Carretto resurrects her sisters in the last act so that she can forgive them before her apotheosis.

After Adlington's translation Psyche became easily available to writers in English, who have used her story ever since. Among the most notable examples are Thomas Heywood's masque, *Love's Mistress, or The Queen's Masque* (1634); Walter Pater's *The Story of Cupid and Psyche* (1885); and C. S. Lewis' novel *Till We Have Faces* (1956).

Heywood's masque, first performed for King Charles I and his consort, Queen Henrietta Maria, emphasized the Neo-Platonic themes in vogue at their court – especially a spiritualized view of love, an association of love and beauty, and the

idea that the condition of the soul determines the beauty (or ugliness) of the body. Heywood's Psyche loses her spiritual beauty from the moment that Cupid is burned by her lamp, and her inner ugliness is accompanied by outer deformity when the god calls on the north wind to destroy both his bower and Psyche's beauty;

> Rend off her silks, and clothe her in torn rags;
> Hang on her loathed locks base deformity,
> And bear her to her father; leave her there,
> Barren of comfort, great with child of fear.[28]
>
> (Heywood 1977, 45)

Spiritually and physically deformed, Psyche fails at her last task, opening the fatal vial of Proserpina's beauty. But, although undeserving, she is redeemed and restored by Love. Waking her from her Stygian sleep, Cupid comforts her, clears away her "black deformity," and promises her immortality.[29] Psyche forgives her sisters, and all join in the wedding feast.

In Pater's *Marius the Epicurean*, as in Apuleius, the story of Psyche is embedded in a novel and resonates with the life of its hero (Monsman 1967, 65–97). Early in his spiritual journey from paganism to the brink of Christianity, Pater's Marius reads Apuleius' novel ("The Golden Book," as he calls it), becoming especially moved by "The Story of Cupid and Psyche," which is an allegorical reflection of his own quest for divine love.

> This episode … served to combine many lines of meditation, already familiar to Marius, into the ideal of a perfect imaginative love, centered upon a type of beauty entirely flawless and clean—an ideal which never wholly faded from his thoughts, though he valued it at various times in different degrees.
>
> (Pater 1909, 68)

Pater presents the story in an elegant translation, modifying Apuleius just enough to justify Marius' idealistic reading and to meet both his own stylistic principles and late-Victorian ideas of decorum (Brzenk 1958; Turner 1960). He omits Apuleius' humorous touches as well as the selfish complaints of Psyche's sisters and Psyche's murderous revenge.[30]

In *Till We Have Faces*, Lewis presents events through the perspective of Psyche's sister Orual, an unreliable narrator, who loves Psyche but does not understand that her love is a selfish one. Her possessive love and excessive reliance on human reason blind her to the reality of Pysche's experience – she cannot even see her beautiful palace. After she has driven Psyche to break the taboo, the god speaks to her:

> Now Psyche goes out in exile. … Those against whom I cannot fight must do their will upon her. You, woman, shall know yourself and your work. You also shall be Psyche.
>
> (Lewis 1984, 173–174.)

In her ensuing spiritual journey, undertaken without comprehension or volition, Orual becomes a surrogate for Psyche, performing her labors on a psychological level, and without knowing it, lightening her tasks. Lewis' work is religious (he was a well-known Christian apologist), but it is not only that. It is a psychological novel of self-deception and final understanding, human relationships and emotions, and the limits of human reason, all experienced by a complex central character. Lewis has put believable flesh on the bones of Apuleius' story.

Psyche has also been of interest to poets. Notable twentieth-century examples in English include: Ezra Pound, "Speech for Psyche in the Golden Book of Apuleius" (1909); H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), "Psyche. Love Sent Her to Hell" (1927/1983); Archibald MacLeish, "Psyche with the Candle" (1948); Kathleen Raine, "Psyche and the God" (1949/1952); Daryl Hine, "Aftermath I-IV" (1978); Alicia Ostriker, "Message from the Sleeper at Hell's Mouth" (a cycle of six poems, 1982); Sandra Gilbert, "Psyche" (1984); A.E. Stallings, "Three Poems to Psyche" (2010–2011); Marly Youmans, "The Throne of Psyche" (a cycle of seven poems, 2011).

Notes

 1 Kenney (1990a, 17–22); Schlam (1976); Schlam (1992, 85–98).
 2 *Met*. 4.28–6.24. Modern translations include: Kenney (1990a); Relihan (2009).
 3 Other characters also have the names of personified abstracts. The servants of Venus who punish Psyche in *Met*. 6.8–9 are Habit (*Consuetudo*), Anxiety (*Sollicitudo*), and Sorrow (*Tristities*).
 4 Gaisser (2008, 43–52), with earlier bibliography.
 5 Stramaglia (1996, 141–143). For translation, see Lamberton (1986, 306–311).
 6 Her name, Chariclea, combines the words *charis* (grace) and *kleos* (fame).
 7 Martianus Capella, 1.7. For translations, see Carver (2007, 37–38); Relihan (2009).
 8 Fulgentius, *Mitologiae* 3.6. For discussion see Gaisser (2008, 53–59). For translations see Carver (2007, 41–45); Relihan (2009, 62–67). For the date, see Hays (2003, 244).
 9 She is married to Cupid, but not joyously: "Afterwards at the urging of Jupiter he took her in marriage" (*Mit*. 3.6.116).
10 *Mit*. 3.6.117. Fulgentius mentions Psyche's name only here.
11 *Myth. Vat* I.3.29. See Zorzetti and Berlioz (1995, xii, 126–127). For an English translation, see Pepin (2008, 95–96).
12 Vatican Library, Vat. lat. *3384*, fols. 46r–47v.
13 Boccaccio, *Gen* 5.22. See Gaisser (2008, 110–118).
14 Hijmans (1981, 40, n. 8).
15 Boiardo (1993, 5.25–27) (ed. Foà, 57). Gaisser (2008, 180–184).
16 Hildebrand (1842, I: xxxii–xxxvii).
17 For a useful summary, see Gollnick (1999, 81–106).
18 Gaisser (2008, 25–27, plates 1–3); Simon (1986).
19 Vatican Library, Vat. lat. 2194, fols. 24r and 30r. See Gaisser (2008, 82–93, plates 11–12).
20 Cavicchioli (2002, 65–79, plates 3–39).

21 Gaisser (2008, 118–120, plates 15–16).
22 Cavicchioli (2002, 154–171); Gaisser (2008, 275–279).
23 Gaisser (2008, 175–176, 243–295).
24 He also made a major change to the novel, replacing Book 11, the Isis book, with the ending of pseudo-Lucian's *The Ass*.
25 Apuleius, *Met*. 4.29.2: *multi mortalium*. Boiardo (1988, 221): "infinita quantitate de nobili omini."
26 "e di lor nacque quello figliolo che Dilecto è chiamato." Boiardo (1988, 345).
27 Whibley (1967, xxviii n.1)
28 Heywood (1977, 45 III. i. 72–75).
29 Heywood (1977, 80 (V. ii. 49–51).
30 Other Victorians also omitted Psyche's revenge. William Morris has Cupid lure the sisters to their deaths (Morris 1868, 397–399); Robert Bridges has Cupid send Psyche to lure them (Bridges 1885, 6.1–3, 6.21–31).

Guide to Further Reading

Reception and interpretation: for a survey, see Steigerwald (2010); for a catalogue of artistic and literary representations, see Reid (1993, 2: 939–955). For representations in ancient art, see Schlam (1976) and Icard-Gianolio (1994). For a good survey of various approaches to interpretation, see Relihan (2009, 78–87). Various interpretations in scholarship and Italian literature are summarized by Moreschini (1994, 7–96). Interpretations of Apuleius' story are presented by: Hooker (1955); Kenney (1990b) (a Platonic reading); Penwill (1975) (on Psyche's story as representing "slavery of the soul to sexual appetite"); Graverini (2007, 105–132) (on the ironic/philosophic importance of Psyche's story as an "old wives' tale").

For a modern edition and an Italian translation of the vulgate version of Boccaccio's allegory, see Boccaccio (1998, 560–569, 1650–1651). English translations are found in Haight (1945, 125–130, 196–201); Carver (2007, 133–139). For a text and translation of the autograph, see Boccaccio (2011, 1, 684–698).

Artistic representations; Cavicchioli (2002) presents an indispensable account with fine illustrations. For an extensive illustrated chronological list, see "Images of Cupid and Psyche": http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/~mjoseph/CP/ICP.html#pre1600

Literary interpretations: Moreschini (1994, 7–96) treats Psyche in Italian literature. Among the most important French interpretations is Jean La Fontaine's *Les amours de Psyché et de Cupidon* (1664); see Steigerwald (2010, 570). English sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literary treatments are discussed by Carver (2007, 327–428). For the neo-Platonic background of Heywood's *Love's Mistress*, see Shady in Heywood (1977, xlvi–liii). Helpful studies of *Till We Have Faces* include Schakel (1984) and Hooper (1996, 243–263). Another important literary treatment of Psyche is Eudora Welty's short novel, *The Robber Bridegroom* (1942), which conflates Grimm's fairy tale of the same name with Apuleius' story of Psyche.

References

Adlington, W., trans. 1566. *The xi Books of the Golden Asse*. London: Alchorn.

Beroaldo, Fo. 1500. *Commentarii a Philippo Beroaldo conditi in Asinum aureum Lucii Apuleii*. Bologna: Benedictus Hectoris Faell.

Boccaccio, G. 1998. *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, ed. V. Zaccaria. Milan: A Mondadori.

Boccaccio, G. 2011. *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, vol. 1, ed. J. Solomon. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Boiardo, M.M. 1988. "La favola di Amore e Psiche," in E. Fumagalli, ed., *Matteo Maria Boiardo volgarizzatore dell' Asino d'Oro: contributo allo studio della fortuna di Apuleio nell' Umanesimo*, 217–345. Padova: Antenore.

Boiardo, M.M. 1993. *Tarocchi*, ed. Simona Foà. Rome: Salerno editrice.

Bridges, R. 1885. *Eros and Psyche. A Poem in Twelve Measures*. London: G. Bell and Sons.

Brzenk, E.J. 1958. "Pater and Apuleius." *Comparative Literature*, 10: 55–60.

Carver, R.F. 2007. *The Protean Ass: Apuleius' Metamorphoses from Antiquity to the Renaissance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cavicchioli, S. 2002. *The Tale of Cupid and Psyche: An Illustrated History*. New York: George Braziller.

Correggio, N. da. 1969. "Fabula Psiches et Cupidinis," in A. Tissoni Benvenuti, ed., *Niccolò da Correggio. Opere*, 47–96. Bari: G. Laterza.

Doolittle, H. (H.D.). 1983. "Psyche. Love Sent Her to Hell." *Collected Poems 1912–1944*, ed. L.L. Martz, ed., *339*–340. New York: New Directions. (First printed in "Five Poems," *Transition*, 4: July 1927.)

DuPlessis, R.B. 1979. "Psyche, or Wholeness." *The Massachusetts Review*, 20: 77–96.

Fulgentius. 1898. *Fabii Planciadis Fulgentii V. C. Opera*, ed. R. Helm. Leipzig: B.G. Teubneri.

Gaisser, J.H. 2008. *The Fortunes of Apuleius and the Golden Ass: A Study in Transmission and Reception*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gilbert, S.M. 1984. "Psyche," in *Emily's Bread: Poems*, 87–88. New York: W. W. Norton.

Gollnick, J. 1999. *The Religious Dreamworld of Apuleius' Metamorphoses*. Waterloo, Ontario: Canadian Corporation for Studies in Religion.

Graverini, L. 2007. *Le Metamorfosi di Apuleio. Letteratura e Identità*. Pisa: Pacini.

Gundersheimer, W.L. 1973. *Ferrara. The Style of a Renaissance Despotism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Haight, E. H. 1945. *More Essays on Greek Romances*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.

Hays, G. 2003. "The Date and Identity of the Mythographer Fulgentius." *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 13: 63–252.

Heywood, T. 1977. *Love's Mistress, or the Queen's Masque*, ed. R.C. Shady. Salzburg: University of Salzburg.

Hijmans, B.L. Jr. 1981. "Boccaccio's Amor and Psyche," in B.L. Hijmans, Jr. and V. Schmidt, eds, *Symposium Apuleianum Groninganum*, 30–45. Groningen: University of Groningen.

Hildebrand, G.F. 1842. *L. Apuleii Opera Omnia*, eds, B.L. Hijmans, Jr. and V. Schmidt. 2 vols. Leipzig: Knobloch.

Hine, D. 1978. "Aftermath," in *Daylight Saving: Poems*, 25–26. New York: Atheneum.

Hooker, W. 1955. "Apuleius' 'Cupid and Psyche' as a Platonic Myth." *Bucknell Review*, 5: 24–38.

Hooper, W. 1996. *C.S. Lewis. A Complete Guide to His Life and Works*. San Francisco: Harper.

Icard-Gianolio, N. 1994. "Psyche," in *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae 7*, 569–785. Zurich: Artemis Verlag.

Kenney, E.J. ed., trans. and comm. 1990a. *Apuleius. Cupid and Psyche*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kenney, E.J. 1990b. "Psyche and her Mysterious Husband," in D.A. Russell, ed., *Antonine Literature*, 175–198. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

La Bouthière, G. de, trans. 1553. *Metamorphose, autrement l'Asne d'or de L. Apulee de Madaure Philosophe Platonique*. Lyon: Tournes et Gazeau.

Lamberton, R. 1986. *Homer the Theologian. Neoplatonist Allegorical Reading and the Growth of the Epic Tradition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Lewis, C.S. 1984. *Till We Have Faces. A Myth Retold*. London: Harcourt Brace & Co. (First published 1956.)

MacLeish, A. 1948. *Act Five and Other Poems*. New York: Knopf.

Monsman, G.C. 1967. *Pater's Portraits. Mythic Pattern in the Fiction of Walter Pater*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Moreschini, C. 1994. *Il mito di Amore e Psiche in Apuleio*. Naples: M. D'Auria.

Morris, W. 1868. "The Story of Cupid and Psyche." *The Earthly Paradise*, March–August: 347–436.

Neumann, E. 1962. *Amor and Psyche. The Psychic Development of the Feminine*, trans. R. Manheim. New York: Harper & Row. First published in 1952 as *Apuleius: Amor und Psyche:* […] *Ein Beitrag zur seelischen Entwicklung des Weiblichen*. Zurich.

Ostriker, A. 1982. "Message from the Sleeper at Hell's Mouth," in *A Woman under the Surface. Poems and Prose Poems*, 41–47. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Pater, W. 1885. *The Story of Cupid and Psyche*. Portland, ME: T.B. Mosher.

Pater, W. 1909. *Marius the Epicurean. His Sensations and Ideas*. New York: Modern Library. (First published 1885.)

Penwill, J.L. 1975. "Slavish Pleasures and Profitless Curiosity." *Ramus*, 4: 49–82.

Pepin, R.E. 2008. *The Vatican Mythographers*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Pound, E. 1990. "Speech for Psyche in the Golden Book of Apuleius," in L. Baechler and A. W. Lutz, eds., *Personae*, 37. New York: New Directions. (First published 1909.)

Raine, K. 1952. "Psyche and the God," in *The Pythoness and Other Poems*, 50–51. New York: Farrar, Straus and Young. (First published 1949.)

Reid, J.D., ed. 1993. *The Oxford Guide to Classical Mythology in the Arts, 1300–1900s*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Relihan, J.C., transl. 2009. *Apuleius. The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

Schakel, P.J. 1984. *Reason and Imagination in C.S. Lewis. A Study of "Till We Have Faces."* Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans.

Schlam, C.C. 1976. *Cupid and Psyche: Apuleius and the Monuments*. University Park, PA: American Philological Association.

Schlam, C.C. 1992. *The Metamorphoses of Apuleius: On Making an Ass of Oneself*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Simon, E. 1986. *Die konstantinischen Deckengemälde in Trier*. Trierer Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 3. Mainz am Rhein: P. von Zaber.

Stallings, A.E. 2010–2011. "Three Poems to Psyche." *Valparaiso Poetry Review*, 12, 1.

Steigerwald, J. 2010. "Psyche," in M. Moog-Grünewald, ed., *The Reception of Myth and Mythology*, 568–576. Leiden: Boston.

Stramaglia, A. 1996. "Fra 'consumo' e 'impegno': usi didattici della narrrativa nel mondo antico," in O. Pecere and A. Stramaglia, eds, *La letteratura di consumo nel mondo greco-latino:*

Atti del Convegno Internazionale Cassino, 14–17 settembre 1994, 97–166. Cassino: Università degli studi di Cassino.

Turner, P. 1960. "Pater and Apuleius," *Victorian Studies*, 3:290–296.

Welty, E. 1970. *The Robber Bridegroom*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. (First published 1942.)

Whibley, C., ed. 1967. *The Golden Ass of Apuleius*, William Adlington, trans. ed. of 1639. New York: AMS Press. (First published in *The Tudor Translations IV*. London, 1893.)

Youmans, M. 2011. *The Throne of Psyche*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Press.

Zimmerman, M. et al., ed., transl., and comm. 2004. *Apuleius. Metamorphoses, Books IV. 28–35, V and VI. 1-34. The Tale of Cupid and Psyche*. Groningen: Egbert Forsten.

Zorzetti, N. and Berlioz, J., eds and trans. 1995. *Le premier mythographe du Vatican*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Constructing a Mythic City in the *Book of the City of Ladies*

A New Space for Women in Late Medieval Culture

Kathryn McKinley

Christine de Pizan has received much attention in recent decades for her intervention in late-medieval scholarly discourse on the "woman question." Drawing extensively on Biblical narratives, classical mythology, and hagiography, Christine constructs an allegorical literary city, or citadel, which celebrates the considerable contributions of women in political, literary, and religious history. Her protofeminist revisions of narratives featuring mythological heroines, such as those found in Ovid, Jean de Meun, and Boccaccio, display an impressive command of late-medieval rhetorical strategies. As much as her predecessors, Christine herself engages in myth-making as she constructs a literary edifice that will protect women against history's mischaracterizations. Like many medieval authors, Christine thinks in dialogue; she regularly writes her narrative in relation to the authors who have passed down these myths. Her work is a "compilation" of medieval renderings of myths, and she frequently establishes her authority by reference to her literary predecessors, whether Ovid, Virgil, or Boccaccio. Christine "thinks through" myth to claim a place for women's voices in the making of history and their contributions to literary traditions.

Christine's Many-Layered Mythic City in the *Book of the City of Ladies*

Many medieval authors (St Augustine, Jean de Meun, Dante, Chaucer) employed architectural allegory, featuring castles, citadels, buildings, and palaces, to explore

profoundly serious intellectual problems, and, as Christine did, to imagine a more complete vision of human society.[1] Christine uses the building trope to redress manifold injustices perpetrated against women in literary and clerical tradition, but does so innovatively through her namesake narrator's continued parlance with God, and with the ladies (Reason, Rectitude, and Justice) he sends to help her narrator construct the city. Earl Jeffrey Richards points out that Christine's use of a "city" allegory is that of a "legal model," since few cities in the later Middle Ages were inhabited by nobles; for Christine this metaphor reflected an ideal freedom and autonomy for women far superior to that of a convent (Richards 1994, 226–228).

Christine found ways not only to rewrite her predecessors' fables about women, but to build something new. She made several major departures from Boccaccio in his *De mulieribus claris* (*On Famous Women*), in addition to the most central: recasting women as inherently virtuous. Rosalind Brown-Grant points out that Christine established her new "cité" on both reason (*raison*) and a theological foundation (Brown-Grant 1999, 150–152). Christine also depicts her namesake narrator, as Dante did in the *Divine Comedy* with Virgil, as the recipient of truths given by dream-guides (Reason, Rectitude, and Justice in the *Book of the City of Ladies*) (Brown-Grant 1999, 150–152). In addition, she not only supplies a multitude of exemplary medieval women in her work (something Boccaccio had omitted), but completes the architectural structure by adding a third tier, for holy women (Brown-Grant 1999, 140–141). These are just some of the many ways Christine constructed a literary fortress unassailable by her enemies. Richards notes that in the *Book of the City of Ladies* she uses the verb of *deffendre* 13 times, and *deffense* and its forms ten times (Richards 1994, 229). This architectural framework is multivalent: while at first glance it implies protection and confinement, it also conveys a sense of freedom: an imaginary space, yet one created to reframe the "spaces" previously allotted to women in the history Christine charts. As Brown-Grant emphasizes, this new city is established on the basis of the morality of women; grounded in reason, tempered with the moral right (*droiture*), and crowned with justice, the structure not only conveys safety for women but it reconstructs the very meaning of the feminine in later medieval France.[2] Christine's innovations in rewriting the nature of woman are so many that in a sense her "fortress" imagery is warranted, certainly from the standpoint of late-medieval horizons of expectation regarding women.

A New Space for Women and the Rewriting of Myth

Having created a new, well-fortified intellectual space in which to carry out her revision of women's history, Christine takes up a range of myths and tales and rewrites them. Often she engages and recasts myths Boccaccio had used in his *De mulieribus*, but she freely adds in other stories as well. Wendy Doniger has fruitfully distinguished between dogma and myth in ways that can be applied to Christine's own "battles" in the *Book of the City of Ladies*. She argues that "where

myth encourages a wide range of beliefs, dogma would narrow that range"
(Doniger 1998, 100). What Christine really faced, by 1404, the date of the compo-
sition of the *Book of the City of Ladies*, was extremely entrenched dogma about
woman's nature. Her uses of myth show how she creatively resists such dogma.
Doniger makes an important distinction about dogma in her assessment of Martin
Buber; I will quote his discussion first:

> All positive religion rests on an enormous simplification of the manifold and wildly
> engulfing forces that invade us: it is the subduing of the fullness of existence. All myth,
> in contrast, is the expression of the fullness of existence, its image, its sign; it drinks
> incessantly from the gushing fountains of life. Hence religion fights myth where it
> cannot absorb and incorporate it … It is strange and wonderful to observe how in this
> battle religion ever again wins the apparent victory, myth ever again wins the real one.
>
> (Buber 1955, 11)

Doniger notes:

> What Buber says about religion, I would limit to dogma. What that corrective,
> I think Buber's statement a marvelous testimony to myth's ability to keep open the
> doors of imagination within the most constricting dogmatic frameworks. It has
> been said that language is a dialect with an army; I would say that dogma is a myth
> with an army.
>
> (Doniger 1998, 101)

I draw in Buber here since Christine is largely waging a battle against centuries of
orthodox teaching about women, sanctioned and produced by the Church.[3] By her
time, the teachings on women had become "a myth with an army," and it is against
this overdetermined tradition that she constructs her intellectual citadel. She fills it
with a multitude of myths (here in the sense of fables); and her uses of them falls
under the category of "revolutionary myths," which convey the *fluxus quo*, rather
than the *status quo* – when used like this, myths "can subvert the dominant para-
digm" (Doniger 1998, 107). This was the work of the *Book of the City of Ladies*,
carried on within the spaces of its newly constructed intellectual fortifications.

   We first meet the architectural trope early in the *Book of the City of Ladies*,
once the narrator Christine in her discouragement has been visited by the three
ladies, Reason, Rectitude, and Justice. In Reason's first dialogue with Christine,
she explains why they have visited her: they come to eradicate "from the world
the same error into which you had fallen" (Part I.3.3): believing negative
discourse about women. The author Christine later cunningly characterizes this
error as heresy: such thinking is theologically false. After Reason has cleared
away much dirt and created a wide ditch, she bids Christine to place the
foundation stones of the city (a foundation of reason, not false report), beginning
with the first large stone (I.14.4). By this, Reason refers to the story of Semiramis,
which forms the first tale in the *Book of the City of Ladies*. The widow queen
Semiramis herself controlled armies and had defenses built around Babylon; she

is also first because she is very ancient. Though Semiramis is also known for incest (marrying her son), some have seen her as significant in that she disrupted the traffic in women and would not allow herself to be bought in marriage as a queen. Presumably Christine selected Semiramis as the "first" stone because of her legendary work helping to build Babylon; she is also invoking Boccaccio in her placement of the heroine. Boccaccio himself places Semiramis second, only after Eve, in the *De mulieribus claris* (chapter 2); his chapter on the heroine is laudatory in its first half but devolves into condemnation of her "crime."[4] Christine omits the less salutary details, celebrating Semiramis for her wisdom, judgment, and influence as a queen. In the *Book of the City of Ladies*, both Arachne and Queen Dido (Part I.39, 46) also figure as mythological characters who, through their intellect, illustrate the ingenuity and excellence of womankind. In both myths Christine also directly rewrites Boccaccio. Just as Christine builds this new "city" through her pen and her intellect, Arachne "builds" meaning through her skill in weaving, also challenging Athena's authority. Boccaccio's tale of Arachne in *De Mulieribus Claris* (18) offers praise for her introduction of the "use of linen" and her invention of nets. She was also famed for her spinning, creating in her weaving "what a painter does with his brush" (Boccaccio 2001, 81). Boccaccio briefly traces her developing pride in her skill and her audacity in challenging Athena to a weaving contest. When she was defeated, she hung herself. Boccaccio ends the tale by condemning the folly of pride ("stultissimum hercle" 18.6). Boccaccio's account departs from Ovid's more nuanced one. In Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 6), the daring Arachne does challenge Minerva, but the textiles each weave play into Ovid's larger themes of the deceptions of the gods and the sometimes greater piety of humans. There Arachne's web depicts many tales of gods' falsehoods; Minerva extols the virtues of the gods. Although Minerva finds no errors in Arachne's weaving, she is offended by the sacrilegious nature of the scenes; she strikes Arachne repeatedly on the head with her shuttle until Arachne finally hangs herself (*Metamorphoses* 6. 121–150). Ovid's empathetic portrait of the honest artisan highlights the fundamental dishonesty of Minerva and her abuse of her own power. Boccaccio does not devote space to describing the webs each wove and he eliminates Minerva's violent actions. He offers two different readings of her hanging: an etiological one relating to spiders, that her name is connected to spiders, and that "Arachne, through the mercy of the gods, was turned into a spider and plies her former art with unceasing diligence." He reports another tradition that servants kept her from suicide, and that "once she put aside her work, she was liberated from her anguish" (18.4). Yet his inclusion of this reading registers a possible anxiety about Arachne's connections to her work, her artistry. Finally Boccaccio condemns the pride of this young woman for taking on heaven (as he says) and expecting God "to open the treasure of his munificence and bestow upon her all his favor to the exclusion of everyone else" (18.5). He ultimately likens Arachne to a "blockhead" (*stolide mentis*) for making such an assumption (18.8).

Christine instead presents Arachne as one of many heroines gifted as artists. Reason tells the story of Arachne, who was famed for her "marvelously subtle mind" (81). Arachne was "the first to invent the art of dyeing woolens in various colors and of weaving art works into cloth, like a painter, according to the 'fine thread' technique of weaving tapestry" (*Book of the City of Ladies* 1.39.1). Here Christine identifies the mythic heroine who first gave women the skill and art of weaving (39.2). She "discovered an even more necessary science," being the first to develop the process for "cultivating flax and hemp," and used nets, snares, traps, and the art of fishing and trapping (39.2). Christine dismisses Boccaccio in a phrase by saying that he believed that "the world was better off when people lived only from haws and acorns and wore nothing more than animal skins than it is now that they have been taught to live in greater refinement" (39.3). Christine displays Arachne the textile artist and inventor, concluding that earthly goods and favors granted by God are not inherently evil in themselves, but require the possessor to make proper use of them in her service to God. Interestingly Christine does not deal with the detail of pride that appears in both Ovid and especially in Boccaccio. Her emphasis instead is what skills and gifts Arachne contributed to the world, from her ingenuity.

Boccaccio also relates the story of Queen Dido in several works, among them the *Amorosa Visione* (ca. 1342–1343) and the *De mulieribus* Claris.[5] In the *De mulieribus claris* (ca. 1361), Boccaccio's tale of Dido is uniformly flattering, but that is because it leaves out any mention of Aeneas. Some say that Boccaccio evolved in his thinking about Dido. In his earlier works, such as the *Amorosa Visione* and the *Fiammetta*, he depicts the "unchaste" Dido, who loves Aeneas; there he seems to have followed both Ovid and Dante's approaches. Robert Hollander argues that a letter from Petrarch to Federico Aretino (ca. 1364–1367) turned Boccaccio away from this version of the Dido tale and towards one that was then considered more "historically" accurate: the story of Dido as a "chaste" widow who dies of suicide without ever having met Aeneas (since the two would have lived several hundred years apart). Such a shift to a more "historically" accurate version would have been important to the emerging humanist Boccaccio. Craig Kallendorf (1985) has also traced the shift in Boccaccio's views of the heroine, seeing it as part of Boccaccio's response to the demands of emerging Italian humanism. The "chaste widow" Dido of Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*, then, is the result of Boccaccio's shift towards Petrarch on this question. Yet this "historical" tradition on Dido, in which she displays absolute fidelity to her first husband to the point of committing suicide before remarrying, also highlights one of the abiding problems of medieval misogyny: the hostility towards remarriage, and the idea that the only good widow was one who never remarried.

Christine's narratives in the *Book of the City of Ladies* reveal that she preferred to present both Didos. In Part I. 46, for the "chaste widow" version of Dido as queen and city-builder, Christine draws on the *De mulieribus claris*; but for the rendering of Dido in Part II.55, she brings in the Dido who later loves Aeneas. Closer analysis of Boccaccio's two works, however, challenges the old commonplace of Boccaccio as the unchanging sign of "misogynist author," one whom Christine always resisted.[6]

Book of the City of Ladies, Part II

Part II of the *Book of the City of Ladies* commences with Lady Droiture (Rectitude) instructing the Christine-narrator to "mix the mortar in your ink bottle so that you can fortify the City with your tempered pen." Here Rectitude educates Christine about the importance of sibyls in history, "foremost among the ladies of sovereign dignity" (II.1.3). Christine presents narratives about these ancient female prophetesses, such as Almathea, and states that the sibyls were more effective than the traditional Old Testament prophets (II.1.3). This leads into her discussion of women prophets in Hebrew and classical tradition.

Throughout the *Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine presents a range of exempla, drawn from historical, religious, and classical traditions; thus queens from medieval history may be found next to mythological persons. In Part II, there are many fewer mythological heroines than there were in Part I, a trend that will be even stronger in Part III, peopled almost entirely with Christian holy women. In Part II Christine includes Penelope, Medea, Dido, Thisbe, and Hero.

Christine's Penelope is drawn largely from Boccaccio, who features her as an illustration of wifely fidelity (*De mulieribus claris* XL). Christine (the author) offers Penelope similarly (II.45.1), to disprove the historic claims of women's infidelity— claims that Christine-narrator raises in her dialogue with Rectitude. Penelope's story is placed side by side with those of Sarah, Ruth, Rebecca, Mariannes, and Antonia. Later, as Rectitude answers Christine-narrator, she presents the tales of Medea, Dido, Thisbe, and Hero (Part II. 55–58). Indeed, all of these mythological heroines form part of a rebuttal in the larger narrative to misogynist claims about women's infidelity. This is the work of "dismantling" that makes up the larger narrative.

Since space does not permit analysis of all five mythological heroines, I will treat here only Christine's depictions of Medea and Dido. She features Medea briefly in Part I, in her discussion of learned women: there Medea is famous for her knowledge of magic and spells (I. 32). In Part II, however, Medea is rather uneasily presented as an exemplar of fidelity in love. Christine elides the parts of Medea's story that are less flattering: her dismemberment of her brother Absyrtus, her killing of Pelias, and her killing of her two sons. Such details are found in Ovid, *Metamorphoses* book 7 as well as in *Amorosa Visione*, chapter 21.51–88, which nevertheless reworks Medea's lament in *Heroides* 12. In Part II.56, Christine presents only the story of Medea's faithful love of Jason; she describes Medea as the "daughter of the king of Colchis … who possessed such great knowledge, [and] loved Jason with a too great and too constant love" (II.56.1). Much of Christine's narrative is set in Colchis, where the young Medea first sees and falls in love with Jason. Here Medea resolves to defy her father and save the life of the young Greek, employing her magical arts to protect him from the dangers relating to the enchanted Golden Fleece. Christine continues to fill the narrative with empathetic intensifiers: "too much pity overwhelmed her at the thought that this knight would

have to die in such a way." The tale ends swiftly with Jason's betrayal of his promise to marry her; Christine does not detail their trip back to Corinth, and his desertion of Medea there for Glauce. Medea merely "turns despondent, nor did her heart ever again feel goodness or joy." In sanitizing myth, Christine had plenty of medieval precedents, for medieval authors saw myth as infinitely malleable for different narrative ends.[7] Christine appears not to have drawn on the *Ovide moralise* or the *De mulieribus claris*. In the latter work, Boccaccio (perhaps seeking a Petrarchan tone) had excoriated the Colchean heroine (chapter XVII) for her treachery, greed, brutality, and above all, her morally lax gazing on Aeneas in the beginning. That being said, he also devotes space to Medea's abandonment and suffering in *Amorosa Visione*, Canto 21. 51–88. Christine presents a wholly positive portrait of Medea; although she does not draw much detail from the *Amorosa Visione*, which imitates the speech in the *Heroides*, she manifests something of its sympathetic tone.

When Christine returns to Dido in Part II.55, she details her relationship with Aeneas, and her final days. In this way Christine takes up Boccaccio's positive account (in *De mulieribus*) of Dido's early days as chaste widow-queen but also in the same work completes the history, showing Dido as an even greater heroine. Here Christine rejects the humanist impulse to offer a more historically "accurate" account of the Dido tale, which recognizes that Dido and Aeneas could never have met, living several hundred years apart. Christine instead, like Boccaccio of the *Amorosa Visione* and like Chaucer, embraces the fictional love story of Dido and Aeneas, to her own ends.

The "continuation" of Dido's life in the *Book of the City of Ladies* Part II has been called Christine's "invention" of Dido, a somewhat conventional critical approach by which Christine "improves" upon the "chaste widow" of Boccaccio's *De mulieribus*.[8] Marilynn Desmond notes "Boccaccio's privileging of the historical over the Virgilian version of Dido's story"; she argues further, that in the *Book of the City of Ladies* "where Christine programmatically reads history from a female subject position, she 'invents' a version of Dido that is quite distinct from any other representation." This "new" Dido is both an exemplar for Christine's own "self-fashioning" as author, and a female character of considerable agency, yet who is neither deprived of her sexuality (as in the historical version) nor defined by it (the original Virgilian version). To some extent, Desmond is correct insofar as Dido can represent Christine's own authorial position; yet once one considers the vastly different treatment of Dido in Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione* it becomes clear that the situation is more complex than many scholars have recognized. Given Christine's reading knowledge and extensive use of the Italian *Decameron* in addition to the *De mulieribus*, it would be surprising if she did not have access to the *Amorosa Visione* as well. It cannot be decisively shown in the Dido passage of Part II that Christine was using the *Amorosa Visione*'s account; what we do know is that in Part II.55 she offers an account valorizing Dido's love for Aeneas and her tragic death. Even if Christine did not use the work, however, it is

important to draw in Boccaccio's portrait of Dido in the *Amorosa Visione* for a number of reasons.

Boccaccio's dream vision presents a long gallery of classical characters, many of whom engage in speech-giving, as the narrator views their stories painted on the walls of the chamber before him. In the first part of the poem, as the narrator learns about the nature of worldly glory and fame, he views a long (interminably long, for many modern readers) panorama of such classical figures. The *Amorosa Visione* is generally characterized as an "artistic failure" (Hollander 1977, 202.57; Houston 2010, 164)[9] among other pejorative phrases. I don't wish to dispute that modern assessment; yet it is likely to have inspired Petrarch's *Triumphi* (Branca 1941, 681–708). The conventional wisdom is that in Boccaccio's later years he was moving towards a more humanist conception of poetry, towards Latin poetry, and away from the amatory "light" verse of his youth. What is significant about this, whether Christine drew on the work in this instance or not, is that she did not wholly "invent" the treatment of Dido in *Book of the City of Ladies* Part II. The *Amorosa Visione* reworks the *Heroides* 7 depiction of Dido in love at some length: Boccaccio devotes 118 lines (Cantos 28 and 29) to this story. His depiction of the widow Dido in Carthage frequently employs laudatory language: "she enabled Carthage to advance in a beneficial and beautiful site' (7–8); 'honoring Aeneas and hismen generously'" (11–12); he depicts her "shining visage" and "benevolent expression" (25–26) in welcoming Aeneas. Christine too employs the word "honneur" and its variations three times in her relatively short account (55 lines) of Dido's reception of Aeneas.[10] Boccaccio renders their love with some sympathy and ambiguity, even while implying Aeneas' actions would prove false:

> There it seemed that Dido first to Aeneas
> was saying many loving words,
> after which she made known her desires;
> where Aeneas seemed to hear such things and embrace her tenderly,
> to accomplish what she had proposed to him.
> Coming then to their royal palace,
> staying there long in happiness,
> taking the fill of pleasure from one another,
> in that very place seemed changed the appearances of one
> and the wishes of the other. (49–60)

Boccaccio then moves swiftly to Dido's sight of Aeneas' departure. Significantly, too, from the standpoint of Chaucer in his *House of Fame* Book 1, Boccaccio gives Dido a moving speech (taken in part from *Heroides* 7) lamenting Aeneas' desertion of her (28.65–88):

> Ah, Aeneas, what did I do to you
> that by fleeing you desire my death?
> this is not keeping the pact between us
> which you made with me; now is apparent

the deceit which you hid behind false action.
Oh, do not flee! If by chance you do not wish
to be courteous to me, oh, at least let pity for
your men overcome you, for you see the many dangers
with which the salty waves of the sea
still menace you, now that harmful winter begins […]
Rest yourself awhile, and your fleet;
allow me at least to learn to blame myself,
picturing my perpetual grief;
and then, if you wish, you may leave me. (65–75; 85–88)

Christine does not often give her classical heroines lengthy speeches, while Chaucer follows Boccaccio's decision to include such laments.

Throughout the first half of the *Amorosa Visione*, Boccaccio the author is much concerned with depicting the outcomes of tragic loves, and this often involves the incorporation of *Heroides*-inspired speeches (Hypsipyle, Medea, Laodamia, Dido, Deianira, Briseis). This extended focus on the plights of many female characters in the *Amorosa Visione*, a nod to Ovid, shows us a somewhat different Boccaccio from the author who composed the *De mulieribus claris* in 1361. As Virginia Brown has pointed out, the misogyny of the *De mulieribus* is considerable, but also widespread within fourteenth-century literary culture. She goes on to say, however, that "in general he is much more expansive than his sources in praising women's intellectual powers or their literary accomplishments or their moral virtues or their artistic creations" (Boccaccio 2001, xix). The *Amorosa Visione*, for its part, continues to offer a major hermeneutic challenge to its readers. Does the dreamer/lover learn to reject earthly love at the end of the erotic dream and the end of the work? Or does the poem instead present the polarizing clerical understanding of love (virtuous love = non-sexual; sinful love = erotic) as, finally, inadequate? Although the work is aesthetically not in line with modern tastes, it does share the feature of the repetitive catalogue seen in the *Book of the City of Ladies* as well. But apart from its final success or failure as a work of poetry, it seems very clear that Boccaccio the author saw the lamenting classical heroine's situation as a central means to stage his desire for a secular, vernacular poetry. As Jason Houston argues, in the *Amorosa Visione*, Boccaccio's largest battle was between Dante's vernacularity and Petrarch's classicism (Houston 2010, 164). I would add that Ovid also played a considerable role in this "battle." The moral ambiguity of the ending of the *Amorosa Visione* in its treatment of human love, largely aided by the pathos of the abandoned heroine passages, would leave a powerful legacy for Chaucer, who would himself employ classical myth in much the same way.[11] Dido, in the *Amorosa Visione*, is only one of many mythological heroines given space to lament; their laments, in fact, form an important part of Boccaccio's struggle to legitimize an ethical yet secular vernacular poetics, a struggle that led to internal crisis at various points in his literary career.

Christine's portrayal of Dido in Part II.55, in its affirmation of her faithful loving of Aeneas, is in some ways a daring move for a sometimes-traditional author. When Aeneas arrives at the port, Christine highlights Dido's recognition of Aeneas' stature in the world:

> And when, out of fear of inadvertently landing without permission, he sent to the queen to know whether it would please her that he come into port, the noble lady, full of honor and valiance and well aware that the Trojans enjoyed a better reputation than any other nation of the world at that time and that Aeneas was of the royal house of Troy, not only gave him leave to land but also went out with a most noble company of barons and ladies and maidens to the shore to meet him and there received him and his entire company with the greatest honor. She brought him into her city and honored and feasted him and put him at ease […] Dido and Aeneas spent so much time with one another that Love, who knows how to subjugate all hearts with the greatest of skill, made them become enamored of one another.

In this version Christine includes the Virgilian detail of the role of Cupid, whom Venus used to cause Dido to fall in love with Aeneas. In the *Amorosa Visione*, Boccaccio likewise incorporates the intervention of the god of Love:

> I seemed then to see
> much clasped Cupid held in her arms,
> whom she thought was Ascanius;
> kissing him frequently, she took in
> unknowingly a great amount of his fire, all the while
> keeping it closed in the depths of her heart. (Canto 28.13–18)

Soon after this in Christine's work, Dido's love for Aeneas "was far greater than his love for her"; he broke his "pledge," only after receiving "property and ease, ships refreshed […] treasure and wealth." He set sail secretly "without farewells and without her knowledge. This was how he repaid his hostess." Christine notes with uncertainty both versions of Dido's death – fire or sword. Ultimately she valorizes the childless widow Dido, who is nevertheless characterized by lasting desire for her beloved. Christine ends the narrative by lamenting that "the noble queen Dido died in such a pitiful manner, who has been honored so greatly that her fame has surpassed that of all other women of her time"; the highest praise she offers to any of her characters, other than the Virgin Mary.

The Dido myth is central in Christine's imaginary because Dido helps to construct the city of Carthage and also because Dido as a widow is more than just self-sacrificing in her sexual chastity as the *De mulieribus claris* has it – she actually loves again after her marriage and remains faithful to her lover. This is Christine's way of embracing the dominant, albeit "false" version of the Dido myth, to attack medieval misogamy and medieval clerical hostility to widows remarrying and continuing to be sexually active. Christine's choice to include the "unchaste" story

of the widow Dido's life is born of her own identity as a widow who faced extreme legal and social difficulties in French society, after the premature death of her husband Etienne.[12] As Desmond has observed in Christine's case, "Dido […] becomes the originary literary figure who engenders the late medieval feminist writer."[13] Dido is ideal as a narrative choice in the *Book of the City of Ladies* as a queen known for her "prudence" and ingenuity; she oversees the building of the walls of Carthage; but even more, she loves after her first marriage, and Christine portrays her only flaw as "loving too much." In this way Christine can "dismantle" and "rebuild" prevailing medieval notions about female sexuality, purity, and widowhood. As Brown-Grant observes, Christine's vision is progressive, directed to women readers, and situated in the ordinary: "in spite of [social] constraints, her female readers can still aspire to and achieve moral virtue in their own particular sphere of influence."[14] For all of the holy women in Part III, whose devotion to God alone guaranteed the highest clerical approbation in the Middle Ages, Dido of Part II stands as perhaps Christine's most radical use of myth in challenging medieval biases against marital sexual love and against widows acting on their own volition to enter love relationships.

Book of the City of Ladies, Part III

Christine completes her larger project by "enhancing" Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* through the addition of a third tier to her city: that of holy women. Part III opens with Justice presiding and explaining how and for whom "the high roofs of the towers were completed." Justice invites the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven, to dwell among them (III.1.2). Even as Christine opens the *Book of the City of Ladies* with the narrator's recognition that misogyny is heresy, and unsupportable theologically, she closes the work with a powerful rhetorical argument: the vindication of woman through an array of holy Christian women. Justice herself has completed the roofs and towers (III.18.9). The women of part III, including Saint Christine, Saint Barbara, and Saint Catherine, represent the ascetic devotion that was believed to operate as an antidote against woman's more inherently sinful nature. Christine's careful situating of her holy women segment as her final rhetorical move is designed to win the approbation of the doubting, predominantly male, readers of her day.

   Yet although one can understand Christine's logic in placing these holy women last, the Dido figure (the remarried or sexually active widow) continues on as an absent presence in Part III. As many have noted, the Christine-author makes a specific address to her married female readers at the end of the work. In III.19.1–6, the "author" addresses successively a range of classes of female readers, including married women, virgins, and widows. The preponderance of her advice goes to married women (III.19.2); while many modern readers have found fault with her counsel to married women to accommodate themselves to abusive husbands,

Christine clearly elevates these women over both virgins and widows, thus challenging the preferred hierarchies in clerical teachings of her day. This final section is not without difficulties for the modern reader, yet it reflects Christine's determination to reconstruct the sexual hierarchy, valorizing the married woman.

In her uses of myths, Christine often engages in a dialogue with her predecessor Boccaccio. In one respect, her lofty tier of holy women forms a rebuttal to the absences in his writings on women in the *De mulieribus claris*, and in some sense "trumps" that work theologically. Yet in another respect, Boccaccio's writing in the *Amorosa Visione* forms another type of discourse about mythological heroines, one which was very sympathetic to Christine's own project of recuperating their voices and dignity. *The Book of the City of Ladies*, in itself quite mythical, forms a powerful rewriting of women's history. Ultimately it also functions to advocate for the lowliest of type of woman in medieval culture: the married woman. Dido champions Dido above all, for her daring choice to love even in widowhood, to love on even after betrayal. Throughout the *Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine simultaneously dismantles even as she builds; her construction of the mythic city depends upon her rewriting of many social and mythological narratives long considered correct and mainstream.

Notes

1   Holderness (2005, 161–175); Whitehead (2003).
2   Brown-Grant usefully situates Christine's protofeminism within its cultural and historical contexts; for further discussion of the mixed modern reception of Christine's "feminism," see her Introduction.
3   For representative discussions of medieval clerical views of women, see Blamires 1992; Bloch 1992; Klapisch-Zuber 1992.
4   In his brief description of Semiramis in the *Amorosa Visione*, however, Boccaccio mentions only her beauty and bravery (Canto 7.35).
5   Boccaccio 1986; a bilingual edition.
6   Marilynn Desmond (1994), tends to take this line (57–67); she does not investigate Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione* in her study of Dido. This is a common approach to the analysis of Christine de Pizan and Boccaccio; see also Phillippy (1997), which shows no awareness of the *Amorosa Visione* and its Ovidian heroines. Although Boccaccio's depictions of female characters remain problematic (in the *Decameron* and elsewhere), recent scholarship has thrown new light on one of his most "virulent" misogynist works, *Il Corbaccio*; see Houston (2010, 101–114) that *Il Corbaccio* is an invective aimed mainly at Dominican preachers who themselves used antifeminist rhetoric in their preaching as well as attacking uses of the Italian vernacular.
7   For a range of treatments of the Medea myth, see Morse (1998).
8   Ferguson (2003) is another example in Christine scholarship of the tendency to reduce Boccaccio only to the *De mulieribus claris* (or its French translation, *Des Cleres Femmes*).
9   Hollander (1977, 202n.57); Houston (2010, 164) refers to Vittore Branca's assessment of it as a "mediocrissimo poemetto"; Branca (1974, 20).
10 London, British Library Harley MS 4431, fols. 351–352.

11   See McKinley (2011: 215–232). Other works of Chaucer employing classical myth as major structural components are *The Book of the Duchess*, *The Legend of Good Women*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and the Manciple's Tale.
12   Willard (1984); also Curnow (1992).
13   Desmond (1994, 224). Desmond qualifies the term "feminist" repeatedly in her discussion of Christine; the larger point here is the power of the Dido myth, and its potential to express feminine agency, for Christine's purposes.
14   Brown-Grant (1999, 217).

Guide to Further Reading

For biography and overview of Christine's writings, see Willard (1984) and Margolis (2011). Brown-Grant (1999) remains one of the best studies of Christine, including her uses of classical myth. Collections of criticism include Altmann and McGrady (2003), Desmond (1998), and Richards (1992). Studies with a political focus include Adams (2014) and Forham (2002). On the medieval reception of classical myth, see Blumenfeld-Kosinski (1997, chapter 5), Clark *et al.* (2011), Desmond and Sheingorn (2006), and Minnis *et al.* (1992). For Boccaccio and Christine, see Franklin (2006). On gender in Boccaccio, see Miguel (2003); for further contexts on Boccaccio, see Kirkham *et al.* (2013). For a study of Christine's uses of mnemonics in architectural allegory, see McCormick (2003).

References

Adams, T. 2014. *Christine de Pizan and the Fight for France*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Altmann, B. and McGrady, D., eds. 2003. *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*. New York: Routledge.

Blamires, A. 1992. *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended: An Anthology of Medieval Texts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bloch, H. 1992. *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Blumenfeld-Kosinski, R. 1997. *Reading Myth: Classical Mythology and Its Interpretations in Medieval French Literature*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Boccaccio, G. 1974. *Amorosa visione*, ed. V. Branca. Vol. 3 of *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*. Milan: Mondadori. "A" text.

Boccaccio, G. 1986. *Amorosa Visione*, trans. R. Hollander and T. Hampton. London: University Press of New England.

Boccaccio, G. 2001. *Famous Women*, trans. V. Brown. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Branca, V. 1941. "Per la Genesi die Trionfi." *La Rinascita*, 4: 681–708.

Brown-Grant, R. 1999. *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading Beyond Gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Buber, M. 1955. *The Legend of Baal-Shem*, trans. M. Friedman. New York: Schocken Books.

Clark, J., Coulson, F., and McKinley, K., eds. 2011. *Ovid in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Curnow, M.C. 1992. "'La Pioche d'Inquisicion': Legal-Judicial Content and Style in Christine de Pizan's *Livre de la Cité des Dames*," in E.J. Richards, ed., *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*, 157–173. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Desmond, M. 1994. *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality, and the Medieval "Aeneid."* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Desmond, M., ed. 1998. *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Desmond, M. and Sheingorn, P. 2006. *Myth, Montage and Visuality in Late Medieval Manuscript Culture: Christine de Pizan's Epistre Othea*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Doniger, W. 1998. *The Implied Spider: Politics & Theology in Myth*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ferguson, M.W. 2003. *Dido's Daughters: Literacy, Gender, and Empire in Early Modern England and France*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Forhan, K.L. 2002. *The Political Theory of Christine de Pizan*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Franklin, M. 2006. *Boccaccio's Heroines: Power and Virtue in Renaissance Society*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate

Holderness, J.S. 2005. "Castles in the Air? The Prince as Conceptual Artist," in K. Green and C.J. Mews, eds, *Healing the Body Politic: The Political Thought of Christine de Pizan*, 161–175. Turnhout: Brepols.

Hollander, R. 1977. *Boccaccio's Two Venuses*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Houston, J. 2010. *Building a Monument to Dante: Boccaccio as Dantista*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Kallendorf, C. 1985. "Boccaccio's Dido and the Rhetorical Criticism of Virgil's *Aeneid*." *Studies in Philology*, 82, 401–415.

Kirkham, V., Sherberg, M., and Smarr, J.L., eds., 2013. *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Klapisch-Zuber, C., ed. 1992. *A History of Women in the West, vol. 2: The Silences of the Middle Ages*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Margolis, N. 2011. *An Introduction to Christine de Pizan*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

McCormick, B. 2003. "Building the Ideal City: Female Memorial Praxis in Christine de Pizan's Cité des Dames." *Studies in Literary Imagination*, 36: 149–171.

McKinley, K. 2011. "*Ekphrasis* as Aesthetic Pilgrimage in Chaucer's *House of Fame* Book 1," eds, N. Zchomelidse and G. Freni, *Meaning in Motion: Semantics of Movement in Medieval Art*, 215–232. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Miguel, M. 2003. *A Rhetoric of the Decameron*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Minnis, A.J., Scott, A.B., and Wallace, D., eds. 1992. *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100–c. 1375*, rev. edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Morse, R. 1998. *The Medieval Medea*. Cambridge, UK: Brewer.

Phillippy, P. 1997. "Establishing Authority: Boccaccio's *De Claris Mulieribus* and Christine de Pizan's *Le livre de la cite des dames*," in R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, ed., *The Selected Writings of Christine de Pizan*, 329–361. New York: W.W. Norton.

Richards, E.J., ed. 1992. *Reinterpreting Christine de Pizan*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Richards, E.J. 1994. "Where are the Men in Christine de Pizan's City of Ladies? Architectural and Allegorical Structures in Christine de Pizan's Livre de la Cité des Dames," in R. Blumenfeld-Kosinski, K. Brownlee, and L. Walters, eds, *Translatio Studii*, 226, 227, 228. Amsterdam: Walter de Gruyter.

Francis Bacon's *Wisdom of the Ancients*
Between Two Worlds

John Channing Briggs

The Wisdom of the Ancients, published in 1609, gives us Francis Bacon's commentary on 31 mythological figures, whose separate stories he interprets in the light of what he famously called the new learning (Bacon 1968). In framing his intriguing, eccentric collection of ancient myths, he presents himself as an explorer of the oldest forms of learning for the sake of the newest. He goes further, presenting his findings as intimations of the new learning *within* the old. He offered his readers a glimpse not only of ancient precursors of modern scientific discoveries, but of the dawn – fragmentary, perhaps largely subconscious, yet strangely prescient – of a new, scientific understanding of the world deep in the wisdom of the past, beneath the common understanding of what wisdom is or can be. For him the ancient stories yielded aspects of that wisdom, and in so doing pointed toward the hidden laws of the forms. The discovery of such laws, if their cryptic traces were recognized, would enlarge and renew mankind's estate by offering the means of mastering mutability and extending life.

The popularity of the work's many editions testifies to its early readers' interest in the discovery of modern truths in ancient myths. Consistent with his role as a founder of the Virginia Company, Bacon's mythography set out and hinted at the discovery of another world of new learning that confirmed the wisdom of the myths, intimated their connection with the world-changing methods and principles of the new sciences, and manifested ways in which ambitious innovation might go wrong.

How was it possible for the ancient myths to carry such secrets? Bacon's claim seems to run counter to much of his other work, and certainly against his stereotypical reputation as the herald of a new learning overcoming the idolatries of the old. But in another sense, the treatise is typical of his entire project. It is not enough

to read *The Wisdom of the Ancients* as though it were the confirmation of a few modern principles of the new sciences (e.g., the generation of flame by friction in the story of Prometheus). Bacon's work pushes deeper, offering glimpses of his scientific philosophy.

Bacon argued throughout his chapters that a foundational *wisdom* was adumbrated in the myths, a wisdom the ancients may have glimpsed but did not compass. The term is freighted with ancient and modern meaning, most of it drawn from the Wisdom Literature attributed to Solomon, whom Bacon considered to be the ancient world's philosopher-king of the new learning. A true reading of the wisdom of the myths demands a heretofore undiscovered *method* of interpretation: a decoding and sifting, and a means of understanding that is driven not by a conventional explorer's desire but by the systematic suppression and sacrifice of preceding expectations. Wisdom is an abjuration of hope that somehow retains a vision of an unprecedented, scientific power of mastering nature.

The ancient poets took a very different set of paths when they entered the forest of ancient myth. First, we are impressed by their haunting tales of the ennobling and baleful power of *love*. In the myth-ordering axletree that is the Trojan War, warriors and cities die for the sake of possessing Helen (and Helen's possession of her captors' spirits, either in love or by resistance). In loving war and warring love, Greeks and Trojans struggle with the very landscape, momentarily reconciling in magnanimity and mercy before their doom comes. Second, we see the great poets move toward forms of order. While the Golden Age gives way to silver, bronze, and iron, we read of the giants subdued, and Zeus or Jove taking precedence, somehow presiding over this world of flux. Aeneas emerges from the burning city with his household gods. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* ends with anticipation of universal peace under Augustus.

Persisting through shipwreck and disaster after victory at Troy, Odysseus reestablishes the order of married love when he overcomes island enchantments and the suitors' appetites in Ithaca. Aeneas, voyaging beyond his burning city, leads a remnant of the defeated Trojans to found a new Trojan dynasty in Rome. Ovidian transformations move toward an apotheosis of worldly authority. Love ruins and rebuilds; however imperfectly, order comes. The dynastic struggles among the gods, from chaos to Saturn to Jove, lead to a flawed yet more stable age.

Bacon does not ignore these large themes in the many lines of narrative that make up classical mythology. Yet it is important to notice how strange his selections are, and how odd his interpretations can be. Rather than imitating Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Virgil, or Ovid – those master interpreter-creators who summoned and sculpted their materials with a new intensity and ordering genius – Bacon works with subtlety upon radically dispersed fragments, on pieces of narrative that rarely make their way into the old unifying texts. A reading of Bacon that looks for a confirmation of later scientific breakthroughs misses the point. Bacon intimates a deeper, coded order in the fragments. By definition, their strangeness and remoteness from anticipations of coherence makes them apt sources of the new knowledge, its method and principles.

One can approach the reading of *The Wisdom of the Ancients* as an inquiry into laws of the forms, a quest that depends upon arduous inductive experience and wise cryptography. The experience of reading the work, like experimental experience appropriate to the new sciences, calls for a kind of humiliation as well as a special knowledge of codes. Ostentation and self-indulgent imagination are vain anticipations of success, leftovers from the pseudo-scientific efflorescence of the old learning (e.g., alchemy). What is needed is a methodological austerity heretofore unknown, a method enforced by mechanical and artful aids, enlivened by an assurance Bacon says can be found wisely in the springs of scripture. Those great distracters, desire and aspiration (in a word, love) must for these purposes be abjured, or rigorously transformed. The old idea of order – a limit, and yet a cryptic source of new ideas of order in the new sciences – must be simultaneously renovated and replaced.

The reduction and renovation of love is so paradoxically prominent in Bacon's project that it is, characteristically, the subject of the book's briefest and central chapter (chapter 16 of 31). "Juno's Suitor, or Dishonour" is the tale of Zeus's self-humiliation in pursuit of Juno's love. Having assumed the shapes of many beasts and a shower of gold, the suitor-god's effort to win the fickle goddess requires his transformation into the shape of the abandoned cuckold he would least aspire to be: "a wretched cuckoo, drenched with rain and tempest, amazed, trembling, and half dead." This metamorphosis becomes Bacon's model for wise men of court in the most unpromising circumstances. They must seek to master this truth of the moral sciences, not by flattering a most intractable and (Bacon adds) "proud and malignant" beloved, but by an "outward show and character of abjectness and degeneracy" (6.728). (This theme is one of the principles of courtly behavior in chapter 8, "The Favourite" [6.717].) Bacon's version of Zeus's story condemns perverse rulers and their effects on honorable courtiers who are unable to persuade them without appearing as degenerate as their rulers are. But he is also setting the stage, as we see him doing throughout his sequence of commentaries, for an understanding of true inquiry into the deepest secrets of nature. In chapter 27, the extreme case is Oedipus. The great riddle-solver succeeds in extracting the monstrous Sphinx's secret only because he approaches arduously and haltingly. His history of pain and desire as the maimed son of Laius turns the cruelty of father and fate to his advantage (6.757).

Debasement does not ultimately demean the scientific inquirer if he persists unto success; it elevates him: "For he who understands his subject is master of his end; and every workman is king over his work" (VI. 757). The antitypes of Zeus and Oedipus are the inexperienced, hasty young men (Memnon of chapter 14, or Icarus in chapter 19) whose unalloyed ambition, early ripeness, and "ostentatious" art doom them to the whims of malevolent powers.

Although *The Wisdom of the Ancients* ostensibly moves from courtly advice to scientific principles, it actually mixes them throughout – in counsel about political behavior that has implications for scientific method, and for the application of

natural to moral science. Of its first ten chapters, nine interpret myths primarily in the light of political and moral questions (concerning speech, rebellion, the king's weapons of governance, vain self-regard, treaties, war, flattery, fame, and rashness), frequently with implicit applications to the disposition and wisdom of the scientific mind. Amidst these brief chapters, there is the long chapter 6, on Pan (or Nature), which includes observations about conduct at court. The remainder of the collection turns more emphatically to the myth's adumbrations of the new sciences, with titles like "Philosophy," the "Origin of Things," "Matter," "The Atom," and "The Mechanic." The most prominent and by far the longest chapters of this second section mix courtly morality and science, usually in the context of love. Love is a central theme of eight chapters, while at least as many – sometimes the same ones – revolve around ideas about the order of the natural universe.

We find that these echoes of the great ancient mythic themes profoundly change – even as they reflect – what Bacon is analyzing. Love, which is rarely far away from Bacon's thoughts, turns into what is essentially a physical instinct. Order (at least in the lower world) becomes the manifestation of fundamental *and masterable* laws of nature. We learn that the way to attain such wisdom is at least as important as wisdom itself. There must be wise humiliation for the sake of a wise mastery of the laws, that is, for the sake of restoring to humankind its ancient state of life beyond mortal flux and mutability, without making it a false cure worse than the disease.

What are the forms of abasement that go *beyond* mere humiliation and pain; those most conducive to the wise progress of the sciences? What are the greatest hazards to inquirers as they embark on that work? How do these relate, if at all, to the deeper order of the universe, as it might be formulated in what Bacon elsewhere calls Laws of the Forms? Does the Wisdom of the Ancients offer hints of what those laws are or might be? How precisely are they related to mastery over mutability?

Some answers to these questions can be found in Bacon's treatments of love, which he tends to condemn in its traditional forms, or convert to a power of atoms. In the old stories, the treatment of love is often strange, sometimes horrifying, but in it one frequently recognizes aspects of the human experience of love. Jove's amorous excesses in the old stories often have fearsome consequences (witness the end of Daphne or Arethusa), but they are also transformations of an anthropomorphic attraction. Jove is himself taken in by love.

In Bacon's alembic the result is profoundly different. Love in *The Wisdom of the Ancients* swerves from human desire, losing human dimension. Zeus's love makes Cassandra an object lesson, one who must live in a world indifferent to her prophecies. She must suffer *justifiably* as a self-condemning exemplum of untimely – and hence, destructive – counsel. Likewise, love diminishes Narcissus not to fatal self-absorption – a condition accessible to our moral discourse as well as our fascination – but to the scientific sin of "uselessness" (6.705). Endymion becomes a toady rather than the suffering mortal consort of the moon (one of Keats's favorite

mythological subjects). Pentheus and Acteon are object lessons for the need for secrecy at court and the avoidance of "rash audacity," as though their agony of entrapment in the nets of eros meant nothing (6.719–20). Orpheus loses his wife to his culpable anxiety for her safety. Pan, or Nature, is punished by Cupid for attempting to rival him, and so – almost unique among the myths' anthropomorphic beings – experiences few amours and has almost no issue. His marriage is to the almost sex-less Echo, in Bacon's terms a type of the best discourse of nature: one that faithfully mirrors its subject. Cupid is busy elsewhere (6.713–14).

Dionysus, whom Bacon calls Desire, is not much more prosperous. Dionysian desire is almost indistinguishable from perversion and disgust: "[E]very passion flourishes and acquires vigour by being resisted and forbidden" (6. 741). Like the passion of anger, love "goes on and on with infinite insatiable appetite" (6.743). Its saving quality, to the extent it has one, is the fact that "even the most noxious" desires arise from "the appetite and aspiration for apparent good," while "the conception [beginning] of it is always in some unlawful wish" (6.741). Love's desire for the Good is for *seeming* good. Unless reason rules over it, it tends to perish in its fruition. It is a warning to the distractible sons of science far more than a cause for lament. And in his way of telling the story Bacon is indeed judging love as much as he is forecasting the usefulness of the new objectivity to the new sciences. Once love triumphs over reason, it is "cruel, savage, and pitiless towards everything that stands in its way" (6.742).

There is an instructive exception to this pattern with regard to religion, in the story of Diomedes (on "Religious Zeal"), about the Greek warrior who wounds Venus during the Trojan War and is later killed by his host in order to lift a curse. In his general argument, Bacon turns the tale into advice to overzealous rulers who imitate Diomedes by doing violence to non-conforming sects (in Bacon's time most likely Christians who were thought beyond the pale). But Diomedes' action is condemnable here not because he injures a type of love, but because he acts *in* passion, without sufficient "force of reason and doctrine and by sanctity of life and by weight of examples and authorities to correct and confute" (6.732).

Bacon identifies the transgression with the violation only of a certain *kind* of love. The rash reformer, like Pallas-goaded Diomedes, indeed wounds a form of love when he visits violence upon dissenters. He blocks pity, which men must have for their fellows. Venus's sect, insofar as it promotes pagan indulgence, might indeed be heretical ("vain and slight" [6.732]), but unthinking violence against it is eschewed because it destroys what Bacon's Latin original calls *misericordia* (6.658): tender-heartedness, compassion, pity. "[A]lmost every kind of violence is in the end unprosperous," and religious violence is particularly damaging because it sets friend against friend until pity itself is disdained (6.733):

> [A]lmost every crime is open to pity, insomuch that they who hate the offense may yet in humanity commiserate the person and the calamity of the offender, – and it is the extremity of evil to have the offices of compassion interdicted – yet where religion and piety are in question, the very expression of pity is noted and disliked.

Yet when the commentary is taken as a whole, Diomedes' wounding of Venus is also a wounding of the mythological legacy of love. The world of myth surrounding Venus drops away. Ungoverned zeal is fundamentally abhorrent because it is an unpractical loss of reason that wounds kindness.

In the work overall, Bacon's commentaries dwell upon the new scientific frame of mind. He endorses the non-violent persuasion of nature, but not out of pity or desire. He says that inquirers should "woo" her "with due observance" in order to learn her secrets (6.736). In a set of passages that echo elsewhere in Bacon's works, he humanizes matter in the person of Proteus, and goes so far as to make the search for natural knowledge an interrogation. He takes pains to explain how Proteus will reveal his secrets under a form of torture:

> [I]f any skillful Servant of Nature shall bring force to bear on matter, and shall vex it and drive it to extremities as if with the purpose of reducing it to nothing, then will matter (since annihilation or true destruction is not possible except by the omnipotence of God) finding itself in these straits, turn and transform itself into strange shapes, passing from one change to another till it has gone through the whole circle and finished the period; when, if the force be continued, it returns at last to itself. And this constraint and binding will be more easily and expeditiously effected, if matter be laid hold on and secured by the hands; that is, by its extremities (7.726).

Torture is the means to get Proteus to talk – to reveal the past, present, and future.

Bacon's swerve from ancient *eros* regarding method and matter is accompanied by his ambivalent treatment of Christianity. As we see in his discussion of Prometheus, the new sciences repeatedly approach topics of great moment to Christianity while avoiding their explicit development:

> It is true that that there are not a few things [in the myth of Prometheus] beneath which have a wonderful correspondency with the mysteries of the Christian faith. [...] But I purposely refrain myself from all licence of speculation in this kind, lest peradventure I bring strange fire to the altar of the Lord (6.753).

Bacon's philosophy of matter and motion in *The Wisdom* changes mythological history to harmonize with Christianity, but only sparingly, and for the purposes of the new sciences. Thus he recasts the mythological history of the world's progression from age to age for the purpose of accounting scientifically for motion and change, and then harmonizes that understanding with biblical authority. Ostensibly, he presents Democritus' idea of the eternity of matter and the Bible's rendering of the Creator's all-creating power as though they were one. But the argument proceeds in two directions at once, citing questionable biblical authority for the atomistic view that matter is eternal (6.723), while using the history of the ages to make a place for Venus's power of motion (that is, her power as the motion of the atom). Although the second part of the account has no connection to Genesis, Bacon makes a point of saying it does not question the biblical Creator's ultimate power (6.725). Is it true, then, that matter is indeed eternal in the face of that power?

Bacon's use of classical mythology both assists and complicates his effort to thread his way through this labyrinth. His summary of the transition from a time of chaos – identified with Coelum (probably the Roman god Coelus, or Uranus, the father of Saturn) – to a universe loosely governed by changeable Saturn, and then to the one under Jove's greater power, is shown to be a progression toward greater order. Jove presides over motion and change, and so holds it (as far as he is able) in check. Venus or "concord" is born (here Bacon does not cite the unsettling mythological fact that she arises from the deposed Saturn's severed testicles). The new version of love is motion that complements order. Venus produces radical change on the atomic level but does not disturb the larger order of things – the eternity of matter under Jove, and the biblical God's power over all. The goddess ensures that "change proceeds part by part only, the total fabric remaining entire and undisturbed" (6.724).

We see that the motions of Venus and Cupid (called the atom in a later chapter) are therefore governed by a new kind of love adapted to the new sciences. This love can somehow change everything about atoms' relation to one another yet nothing about matter itself. It is as though Ovid's passion-driven metamorphoses were concentrated in the story of Proteus – the shape-shifter Bacon identifies with matter, who manifests all possible forms until his essential nature is revealed. In fact the contrast is more drastic. The old myths' metamorphoses of gods and men were of course most commonly from one type of being to another: from mortal flesh to tree, animal, or living star. There were monsters but they too were living beings, not assemblages. The agents of metamorphosis, when we knew what they were, were gods. The atomistic world permits and requires Bacon's wise man of science to be ready to annihilate his subject for the sake of discovering its true substance and form, and hence to be able to create new entities at will (6.726). Without injuring eternal matter, the inquisitor can then know "the conditions, affections, and processes of matter" (6.726), without knowing them as beings with their own forms.

The love traditionally embodied by Venus and Cupid is thereby mostly emptied, in Bacon's analysis, of recognizable human desire. There are "affections," but they are impulses far more than desires. The mysterious Cupid, the atom, is an "impulse of desire impressed by God upon the primary particles of matter which makes them come together" by "repetition" and "multiplication." The god's mechanical instinct is sealed by the Creator, joining other atoms by seemingly arbitrary means. With or without parents (Bacon cannot tell) he is "the most ancient of the gods," quite possibly the agent who "out of Chaos begot all things, the gods included" (7.729). But what there is of love in his motions is beyond human ken: "a thing which mortal thought may glance at, but can hardly take in." He is not the ancient "blind and babbling" god of erotic yearning – as the Peripatetics thought – the god who seeks what his erotic thirst lacks in beauty or virtue. Rather, this mysterious Cupid possesses "a single desire or primary motion simply and absolutely" (6.730). Democritus saw this, Bacon argues, but wrongly believed that motion was directed

toward the center of the world. The desire of Bacon's Cupid's is toward other atoms near it. Separated from the vagaries of erotic aspirations, Cupid's motion is eminently available, once its paradoxical motions can be grasped, to scientific manipulation.

Bacon asserts that the direction of Cupid's motion is undecipherable. He means by this that upon closer examination, the motion – if not the motive – can be detected and used by those who are wise, who see in its appearance of "very little providence" the power and direction (if not the intention) of true Providence (7.731). The seeming randomness of providential motion is paradoxically the key to its order. Bacon's Venus somehow preserves concord in the universe by joining one atom to the next, and "Cupid has an allegorical meaning full of wisdom." With Venus, Cupid "contrives out of subjects peculiarly empty and destitute of providence, and as it were blind, to educe by a fatal and necessary law all the order and beauty of the universe" (6.731). Man cannot know God's providential purposes, but the wise man can know the work of God's will in such providential patterns of motion and order that enable him to crack the providential code at work in the lower Jovian world.

The goal of the endeavor is to secure for the sons of science a power over change, and hence power over mortality. Jupiter's realm, in which men live, is haunted by flux and mutability. It might eventually confirm Lucretius' fear that it too will lapse into disorder (1872, 6.724). But the promise of a self-restoring order, thanks in part to the new sciences, is now apparent. The new learning has come into the world to do what the old natural philosophy, bodied forth in the myth of Orpheus, aspired but failed to do: "nothing less than the restitution and renovation of things corruptible," or, in the lower world, "the retardation of dissolution and putrefaction" (1872, 6.721). According to the story of Prometheus, the old order has come down to us having lost the ancient promise of immortality, which the new learning might now recover. Like Orpheus, those wise inquirers who possessed it could then venture into the underworld and bring Persephone into the light to stay. Going beyond Orpheus, whose anxious love ruined his exploit, the new sciences hold the promise of pursuing that goal by transcending humankind's long history of vacillation, vain hope, and perplexity over the mysteries of nature (6.720).

The project of overcoming mortality requires inquiry free from wayward imaginings and misleading ambitions for the sake of mastering Proteus. It is understandable, therefore, that Baconian science has long been identified with technology, as though science were an art of technological understanding and manipulation free of speculation. But that truth is seriously incomplete. While *The Wisdom of the Ancients* exhibits a fascination with technological discoveries and applications, it expresses strong reservations about such innovation for its own sake, even for pursuing the goal of achieving immortality. Daedalus is Bacon's object lesson in this regard, and the story of Prometheus is the shadowing forth of technology's salvation when the myth is rightly understood.

The new learning needs a form of piety and grace. A form of divine intervention is necessary because Bacon sees a great potential for evil in the dark history of one of the most prominent of ancient artificers, Daedalus, who worked for Minos, the tyrant whose perversities demanded the invention of ingenious types of machinery. Daedalus "the mechanic" is a master inventor, admirable in his skill. He is also a vile murderer, the furnisher of "remedies as well as instruments of evil" (6.734). He makes both the prized ornaments of religion and the "instruments of lust" and death, as well as the threaded clue to freedom and the labyrinth that requires that clue. His art is adaptable to all purposes and void of the power to determine what those purposes should be: "For the mechanical arts may be turned either way, and serve as well for the cure as for the hurt and have power for the most part to dissolve their own spell" (6.735). Only a more complex artificer, Prometheus, has the means to redeem the mechanical arts, and then only because his story – as told in Bacon's longest chapter by far – depends upon divine intervention.

To get to this point Bacon brings into the well-known story some esoteric shards. He has Prometheus make men and steal fire from the gods. Zeus punishes the thief for multiple offenses. But then Bacon makes much of a peripheral Promethean story about mankind's rejection of the initial gift of fire and the benefactor. He finds high virtue in the relatively obscure account of Zeus giving mankind eternal youth in return for their willingness to indict Prometheus. And he features the relatively minor fact of mankind's losing that gift after conveying it on the back of an ass. These details are crucial to his critique and defense of world-changing inventions. They emphasize the importance of not seizing such advantages for ambitious gain or spite. They must not be used without recognition that they are somehow gifts from beyond. Mankind is so deluded by desires for the fruits of inventions that the only means for at least wise men to rise above their self-undoing idolatries (their "evil genius" [6.749]) is help from a higher source.

In this story the help comes from the intervention of Hercules, who slays the eagle tormenting the bound Prometheus. But we miss Bacon's point if we do not appreciate the importance he attaches to another obscure branch of the story. Hercules seems to come out of nowhere, born by an exceedingly frail craft (a god-given teacup, says Bacon, picking up on a line we find in Apollodorus) to reach Mount Caucasus and kill the ravening bird. In this turn of events Bacon finds a key to the kingdom of the new sciences. Hercules has succeeded in using what the *Wisdom of the Ancients* elsewhere calls the "abstruse and out of the way" methods that are most characteristic of the new learning. In his resolute paddling of his exceedingly delicate, radically humbling, god-given vessel, he shows indispensable "fortitude and constancy of mind," thereby restoring the promise of eternal youth.

Bacon sees no blasphemous contradiction in the fulfillment of this revised Promethean ambition because – as he hints by using a quote from Seneca – God has given mankind the natural world for the wise to search out its mysteries (6.752). With the right kind of humility and vision, and with resolutely patient

reading and experimentation, one can begin to see order in the flux. Wisdom can be found in nature as it is in Solomon's Proverbs: not only as taking satisfaction in mastery of conventional moral sayings, but as an ordeal of gnomic fragments that humbles the ambitious or fanciful interpreter until he can pursue a new kind of learning.

In the mythography Bacon assembles upon these principles, we see the opening of a chasm between the "vulgar" and the "wise," one that has important consequences for the birth of new sciences and the applications of their metamorphic powers to both the human and natural worlds. In his own way, Bacon has taken on the role of a myth-mastering Homer or Aeschylus after all – though in a manner that radically separates his audience into two groups: casual readers (whom he tends to call the vulgar), and the wise or potentially wise (the sons of science) who might see beneath the work's mutable surface, connect its significant shards, and begin the work of transforming the mutable world. With the separation of audiences comes, as we have seen, a tendency for the sciences of nature to trump traditional imaginings and understandings of humankind. When we go back to the biblical text, however, Solomon's verses lead in a different direction:

> [Wisdom] crieth upon the highest places of the city,
> Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,
> Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.
> Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.
> <div align="right">(Proverbs 9.3–6, KJV)</div>

Should it matter that Bacon makes a more systematic division than Solomon's? Solomon sees fools and wise men too. Natural science's predominance over the traditional arts and disciplines is the proverbial wisdom of modernity, as is at least the putative dominance of scientific elites. Why worry in the end about the human things if the natural world can be mastered for humanity's good? Writing out of the past, Bacon sounds a warning in response to such modern questions, even as he promotes his new dispensation. When the dangers of Promethean overreaching so thoroughly mingle with the promise of eternal youth, must we conclude that the path of the new sciences is obviously superior to that of the Ancients? These are questions that Bacon's *The Wisdom of the Ancients* treats with notable caution and respect, and they remain before us in the modern age.

Guide to Further Reading

For a suggestive treatment of these topics in the context of hermetic speculation and practice, see the suggestive and wide-ranging treatments by Edgar Wind's *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (1968) and the work of Frances Yates, particularly

Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition (1964). Charles Lemmi's *The Classic Deities in Bacon: A Study in Mythological Symbolism* (1969) provides a useful if elementary introduction to Bacon's appropriation of mythological material. Specialized discussions can be found in Barbara Carman Garner's "Francis Bacon, Natalis Comes and the Mythological Tradition" (1970) and Silvia Alejandra Manzo's "Holy Writ, Mythology, and the Foundations of Francis Bacon's Principle of the Constancy of Matter" (1999), and Rhodri Lewis's "Francis Bacon, Allegory and the Uses of Myth" (2010). In *Francis Bacon: from Magic to Science* (1968), Paolo Rossi makes a science-oriented reading of Bacon's use of mythology that contrasts with my approach. A particularly interesting attempt to rehabilitate Bacon's Proteus as a paradigm for the work of enlightened modern science can be found in Peter Pesic's "Wrestling with Proteus: Francis Bacon and the 'Torture' of Nature" (1999). The best introduction to Bacon's work overall is Brian Vickers's *Francis Bacon* (1978). My own book, *Francis Bacon and the Rhetoric of Nature* (1989), connects Bacon's use of mythology to his larger project for mastering the world of appearances.

References

Bacon, F. 1968. *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. J. Spedding, 14 vols. New York: Garrett Press.

Briggs, J. 1989. *Francis Bacon and the Rhetoric of Nature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Garner, B.C. 1970. "Francis Bacon, Natalis Comes and the Mythological Tradition." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 33: 264–291.

Lemmi, C.W. 1969. *The Classic Deities in Bacon: A Study in Mythological Symbolism*. Folcroft, PA: Folcroft Press.

Lewis, R. 2010. "Francis Bacon, Allegory and the Uses of Myth." *Review of English Studies*, 61, 250: 360–389.

Lucretius. 1872. *On the Nature of Things*. New York, De W.C. Lent & Co

Manzo, S.A. 1999. "Holy Writ, Mythology, and the Foundations of Francis Bacon's Principle of the Constancy of Matter." *Early Science and Medicine*, 4: 114–126.

Pesic, P. 1999. "Wrestling with Proteus: Francis Bacon and the 'Torture' of Nature." *Isis*, 90: 81–94.

Rossi, P. 1968. *Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science*, trans. S. Rabinovitch. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vickers, B. 1978. *Francis Bacon*. Harlow, UK: Longman.

Wind, E. 1968. *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance*. New York: W. Norton & Co.

Yates, F.A. 1964. *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*

Jeanne Nuechterlein

We look out onto an expansive vista of distant mountain peaks circling green-blue sea (Figure 26.1). After exploring the distant waters, our eye might drift next to the rather lumpish foreground farmer, intently ploughing furrows into a narrow strip of land: not only is he the largest figure in the painting, but his red sleeves jump out against the dominant blue/white/brown.[1] Just behind him, on a further promontory adjoining the water, a shepherd leans on his staff, staring up into empty space as his sheep contentedly graze. One other patch of bright red attracts the eye, the under-cap of the fisherman down in the lower right, leaning out hoping for a catch. Perhaps via the fisherman, or via the large ship pulled by billowing sails towards the distant city harbour at the upper left, do we finally notice what ought to be the crux of the painting: a right hand and two white legs kicking at the surface of the water, as a few feathers float down. As William Carlos Williams concluded his 1960 poem on this painting, "a splash quite unnoticed/this was/Icarus drowning" (Caws 1983, 325–327; Williams 1960, 11–12).

Once the painting has become well known, it is difficult to re-imagine an initial viewing experience, but it seems evident that the artist – originally Pieter Bruegel the Elder (ca. 1525–1569) – intended something like this wandering eye, drifting over various aspects of the landscape/seascape before eventually discovering the easily-overlooked detail in the lower right corner. In the sixteenth century, of course, paintings were not given fixed titles: in contrast to today's Royal Museum of Fine Arts in Brussels, there would have been no adjacent label handily signalling what to look for. It seems that Bruegel wanted to show the fall of Icarus as a small and unnoticed matter, and thus his image constitutes a partial inversion of the mythological subject, encouraging viewers to reflect on its meaning in new (and potentially unresolved) ways. This was an unprecedented manner of rendering the

Figure 26.1   After Pieter Bruegel the Elder, *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus*, late 16th/early 17th century. *Source*: Reproduced with permission of Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Brussels.

story, unprecedented for Bruegel himself – who almost never depicted classical myth – and among his contemporary artists who did. Here I shall examine the significance of Bruegel's unique composition as a distinctive interpretive reception of the Ovidian tale, one that has generated its own successive wave of further receptions.

First, about the myth itself. The best-known version comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, probably the source that Bruegel himself knew, given that the text (and variations thereof, such as the late-medieval *Ovide moralisé* (Ovid 1484) circulated widely at the time; he had likely already encountered the Icarus tale by the time of his travels around Italy in the early 1550s (Kilinski II 2004, 94). In Book 8, lines 183–259, Ovid recounts in hexameter how Daedalus, imprisoned at Crete while constructing the labyrinth for King Minos, employed his cunning to escape by fashioning wings for himself and his son Icarus out of feathers and wax. Daedalus warned Icarus to keep to the middle way when flying, avoiding both sun and water, but after initial obedience the boy soared too high, whereupon the sun's heat melted the wax, plummeting him down into the sea. The text implies that Daedalus had lost sight of Icarus before discovering the feathery remains of the wings floating on the water although visual representations typically depart from Ovid on that front, probably to enhance the emotional drama by showing Daedalus looking on in helpless horror. While Daedalus sorrowfully buried his son, a noisy partridge watched: this was Perdix, Daedalus' nephew, who had been his apprentice and whom he attempted to murder by pushing him off of Minerva's high citadel,

out of jealousy at his cleverness. Minerva, however, saved the boy by transforming him into a bird, feathering his arms just as Daedalus later did his son.

Though Ovid does not explicitly say so, readers might infer that Icarus' literal downfall had as much to do with punishing Daedalus as with Icarus' foolhardiness. But in the late medieval moralized Ovid, the blame is given more to Icarus himself, contrasting his arrogant ambition to Perdix' humility (*Ovide moralisé* 1484, 204v–205r), and this critique of misguided self-importance remained the most common response to the myth in the sixteenth-century Low Countries. It is worth observing that the character of Icarus can subtly vary depending on one's source text, for instance when reading different modern English translations, some of which follow Ovid's verse narrative in prose while others construct their own regular verse line such as rhymed or unrhymed iambic pentameter, thus necessarily altering more narrative details (McDonough 2004; Parker 1956; Wheelwright 1956). In some versions Icarus seems a happy innocent, playfully getting in the way while Daedalus constructs the wings and then getting caught up in the joy of flight, while in others he comes across as an irritating ignoramus who interferes with Daedalus' work (a distinct contrast to Perdix' earlier but subsequently-reported ingenuity) and then foolishly ignores his father's wise counsel. It could be argued whether Ovid's Latin verse better supports the former or the latter interpretation (or both equally), but what is important here is how each re-telling and re-reading allows new emphases to emerge, depending on the translator's/reader's particular interests.

Bruegel's painted composition seems to take such re-reading to an extreme. Rather than tell the whole story, Bruegel reduces it down to its most ignominious moment and pushes it into a corner. There is no way of knowing if he had closely read the original text (how proficient was his Latin?), or a vernacular translation, or mainly learned the details through discussion with more Latinate readers, but a number of resonances between his painting and Ovid suggest that he knew that version reasonably well: the setting with its islands and the fortress in the bay at the left; the figures of the farmer, shepherd, and fisherman, who according to Ovid would have been astonished by the flying figures and even taken them for gods; perhaps most importantly, the juxtaposition of Icarus' vanishing limbs with an open-beaked partridge, suggesting that Bruegel was particularly interested in the implied comparison between the two boys, the expert young craftsman who survived (albeit in metamorphosed form) and the inept one who did not. As in Ovid's text, the comparison is more implied than overtly stated, but what most obviously departs from Ovid's myth is the relegation of Icarus' fall to a minor detail while the farmer, shepherd and fisherman, rather than taking the boy for a god, do not notice him at all. Daedalus, moreover, makes no appearance, as if he has temporarily flown beyond the picture and will shortly return to find the floating feathers. Another version of the painting in the Van Buuren Museum in Brussels, a somewhat lesser copy, includes the figure of Daedalus flying towards the left, seemingly in the shepherd's line of sight (Currie and Allart 2012, 3: 854, 64–72). It is not

entirely certain whether Bruegel originally meant to include Daedalus or not; technical study indicates no trace of him on the damaged Royal Museum canvas (Currie and Allart 2012, 3: 854), and art historians have debated whether his addition in the other copy clarifies the picture or interferes with Bruegel's intentions (De Vries 2003, 6–8; Kilinski II 2004, 99–101).

Other sixteenth-century depictions of the subject, while not necessarily slavish adherents to Ovid's story, do typically give greater visual emphasis to the main characters. Some woodcut illustrations in mid-century printed *Metamorphoses* show the two figures in comparatively large scale, Icarus in mid-fall as Daedalus looks on, and most other detail is stripped back other than the sea below, bits of land to the sides, and a tower on an island behind them.[2] In many Netherlandish images both figures shrink in scale to become small staffage within an expansive landscape, and in fact two such prints claim to be after Bruegel's design. One, an engraving executed by Frans Huys, appears in a series of ten prints depicting ships issued in the 1560s, most showing the vessels alone though three include mythological figures – Daedalus and Icarus, Arion, Jupiter and Phaeton – to generate a mythological narrative component (Orenstein 2001, 212–218). Though the majority of the print space is taken up with the central armed three-master, the figures of Daedalus and Icarus are clearly visible in the upper right corner, Icarus just beginning to fall underneath a blazing sun. The other after-Bruegel Icarus print, one of a series of six etched landscapes containing classical or mythological subjects, was only issued late in the century (well after Bruegel's death) but claims in its accompanying inscription to reproduce a drawing he had made in Rome in 1553 (Kilinski II 2004, 95–96). There the two figures are closer to the centre of the picture, but the setting is an expansive landscape with a river running through it – out of keeping with Ovid's sea – and it seems entirely possible that Bruegel's lost original drawing depicted the landscape alone. The addition by engraver/publisher of an ostensible narrative subject to add increased interest also happened with some of Bruegel's early *Large Landscapes* series (Levesque 1994, 30–31; Orenstein 2001, 120–134).

These are literally the only extant cases where classical subjects appear in works by (or purported to be after) Bruegel. His prints and paintings specialized in very different genres: landscapes, Boschian fantasies, virtues and vices, religious scenes, peasants, and popular sayings translated into visual images. Moreover, in keeping with these types of subjects, he pointedly specialized in a native "Netherlandish" mode of depiction (Freedberg 1989a, 55–56; Meadow 1997, 197–201), with much attention to natural detail but also often embracing a somewhat rough-and-ready style of brushwork or line, with the occasional bout of fantastical invention where appropriate to the subject. In contrast, most of the Netherlandish artists who regularly portrayed mythological scenes were of the so-called "Romanist" school, like Maarten van Heemskerck, Lambert Lombard, Frans Floris, and slightly later Hendrik Goltzius, all of whom admired classical and Italian styles of depiction and sought to emulate contemporary Italianate examples of classically draped or nude

muscled figures, often populating classical-style architecture. Goltzius for instance included Icarus among a set of roundel engravings issued in 1588 known as the *Four Disgracers* (Lowenthal 1983), in which he zoomed in on a large-scale and heavily-muscled figure artfully positioned in mid-fall, surrounded by a moralizing inscription. Though Daedalus is shown hovering at a distance in the sky below, the ultimate purpose is more a study in anatomical arrangement and moral lesson than in narrative.

Broadly speaking, the Romanist artists sought to match classical subjects to an appropriately classical style of representation, which also accords with the classical conception of *decorum*, according to which all parts of a work should be well-suited to its overall subject or purpose and coordinated into a balanced whole (Richardson 2011, 180–181). It could be said that Bruegel also followed the principle of decorum, but within an entirely different style set. Scattered evidence suggests there was little love lost between the two camps: a 1565 poem by Lucas De Heere, a supportive pupil of Frans Floris, scathingly critiques a "certain painter" who disdains Floris' sugary pictures but whose own works depict mere carnival dolls and show no evidence of his experience of Italy (Freedberg 1989a, 62–63; Meadow 1997, 181–182).[3] It seems likely that the painter was meant to be Bruegel, but even if directed at someone else, the non-Romanist style that the poem refers to clearly applies to Bruegel's work.

Bruegel's choice of "vernacular" painted style closely relates to what he chose to do with the Icarus tale. Clearly he was not much interested in recounting the narrative in Ovidian terms. To some degree his implied purpose resonates with the contemporary Netherlandish taste for moralizing, which it has been argued applied to both Italianate and "vernacular" styles and dominated the reception of classical motifs (Veldman 1990). The late sixteenth-century after-Bruegel Icarus landscape does just this with its appended Latin inscription, *"Inter utrumque vola, media tutissimus ibis"* ("Fly between the two; you will go safest in the middle"), followed by a few lines on the narrative which somewhat conflates Ovid's Daedalus and Phaeton texts – the two subjects were often linked by their shared "pride goeth before a fall" theme (Kilinski II 2004, 95–96). Although by the later sixteenth century the overtly Christian interpretations expressed in the *Ovide moralisé* were no longer at the forefront, figures like Icarus were taken up in texts and images as exemplars for analogous messages – most often in his case, exhortations toward moderation (in a wide variety of contexts) and/or critiques of excessive pride (Kavaler 1999, 62–67).

As several recent art historians have argued, Bruegel's painting shares much with this vein of reception. If Icarus symbolizes inordinate pride or disobedience that earns a just fall, his fate is all the more accentuated by the fact that no one cares about his demise, and the painting wittily makes it difficult even for the viewer to notice what has happened. The painting has further been read as an expression of Bruegel's rather traditional attitude towards the social order, showing the "common man" dedicated to work and content with his lot, in contrast to

Icarus who sought a position he did not deserve (Kavaler 1999, 57–76). It has also been perceived as an allegory of the painter as poet, Bruegel's symbolic investigation of the rightful place of the creator in society (Sullivan 2010, 214–217). Sullivan further points out, persuasively, that Ovid need not have been Bruegel's only classical source here: though the style is resolutely contemporary, the satirical take on the subject recalls satirical writers like Horace, Lucian, and Martial, who disdained other authors who took themselves and their purple-prose subjects too seriously (Sullivan 2010, 211–214). Just as the poet should write about contemporary truths, so too does Bruegel's composition extol the real-world subjects of landscape and ordinary men over a foolish boy with fake wings.

It is striking that although today's art historians generally all attempt to understand what paintings meant in their own time, this supposed unity of purpose does not prevent a wide array of sometimes conflicting interpretations from emerging. There is no means of establishing which is the "right" view of Bruegel's work, and indeed they may all have validity given that the painting does not clearly point towards its own interpretation; Bruegel surely wanted it to be open to reception in varied ways and on various levels, otherwise he would have resolved his own image more forcefully. In that sense the image does resemble Ovid, who tells his stories in beautiful language with enticing detail and to a large extent leaves readers to derive their own moral conclusions (or, if they wish, ignore morals entirely and simply enjoy the story – we could easily approach Bruegel's painting as an attractive image filled with fascinating renditions of natural scenery, and Icarus' flailing legs merely as an amusing joke).

One of the most striking features of the painting, though paradoxically one that tends to go rather unexamined, is its decision to render a classical myth as so emphatically taking place in Bruegel's present day (as also in the two after-Bruegel prints). To a large extent this seems a perfectly natural decision – artists of religious subjects did that all the time – which perhaps accounts for why it is generally taken for granted without much explicit comment; however, given the source material, such "contemporization" has a particularly significant impact. Bruegel's contrast with his Romanist contemporaries lies not only in style per se, but in how style makes an image's subject relevant and meaningful to viewers.

In order to assess fully Bruegel's decisions here it is enlightening to compare *Icarus* with a painting of a religious subject, the *Massacre of the Innocents*. The original panel is in Hampton Court with a number of further copies elsewhere, most made in the workshop of Bruegel's younger son, who was born shortly before his father died (Campbell 1985, 13–18; Currie and Allart 2012, 2: 647). A much larger work than the *Fall of Icarus*, the *Massacre* depicts the biblical story of Herod's murder of all of the young boys in Bethlehem in his futile attempt to eradicate the foretold ruler-to-be Jesus. Bruegel portrays this event taking place in a snow-covered Flemish village; armoured and mounted knights in the middle distance plus a scattering of red-uniformed officials look on complacently as foot-soldiers break into the houses and systematically run swords and lances through

infants and toddlers (Kunzle 2002, 104–107; Shawe-Taylor and Scott 2007, 88–89). What makes this large painting particularly powerful – though difficult to fully appreciate without seeing it full-size in person – is the raw emotion of the villagers subjected to this atrocity. Mothers lament over tiny corpses; parents and family members plead before indifferent soldiers. With a few deft brushstrokes Bruegel captures the real-world heartbreak caused by this story, such as the pained expression of the grandfather at the lower centre, or farther to the right the desperate reach of a tiny girl up towards her mother as a soldier carries away her baby brother.

At some point in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, an owner of this picture evidently found its subject excessively harrowing and decided to cover up the dead children with packages and foodstuffs, thus transforming the picture into a generic plundering of a village (Campbell 1985, 13–14) – still a rather disturbing subject, but not at the same level. It would be hard to imagine a viewer driven to make the same transformation to a classicized version of this subject, say to Marcantonio Raimondi's famous *Massacre of the Innocents* engraving made in the early sixteenth century after Raphael's design (Landau and Parshall 1994, 133–134; Pon 2004, 118–122), or a 1551 engraving of the subject after a drawing by Maarten van Heemskerck, or the engraving after a lost painting by Frans Floris made in the late 1560s (Kunzle 2002, 113–116, 51–54). Marcantonio/Raphael sets the scene in Rome before the ancient Ponte Fabricus, while Heemskerck and Floris surround the event with imagined classical buildings; all depict much well-defined bare flesh and despairing gestures (somewhat histrionic in the Netherlandish prints), though the supposed infant corpses display no signs of bodily injury – indeed the central sprawled child of Marcantonio's engraving was taken by Parmigianino as an excellent model for a lazily sleeping Cupid (Welsh Reed and Wallace 1989, cat. no. 3). Perhaps partly due to personal inclinations, I find it extremely easy to look at such images for long spells without much attending to the fact that they depict the murder of small children, given that the figures appear to be stage-acting and bear little relation to everyday life. The Heemskerck engraving has been memorably described as looking at first sight "like a furious brawl at a naturist campsite," (Veldman 1990, 125). In front of Bruegel's *Massacre*, on the other hand, it is genuinely a struggle to hold back tears looking at that little girl whose terrified plea to be picked up and protected is so perfectly expressed.

The *Massacre of the Innocents* exemplifies a common feature of Bruegel's religious paintings: as with so much of northern Renaissance religious art, but taken to the ultimate degree, he imagined what it would be like for the subject to take place here and now – not a play performed by contemporary actors, as is typically the effect of other such religious pictures, but actually *happening*. He discarded familiar precedents and paid no regard whatsoever to the subject's likely historic context, either chronological or locational. This was not in itself a singular thing for Bruegel to do; rather, what is exceptional is the extent to which he so thoroughly transformed such subjects into modern events. These paintings force

viewers to pay attention to what the event would be like for the human beings living through it. The familiarity of well-known pictures often makes it easy to instantly label, and then instantly disregard, just what is being shown, and that is particularly a danger for often-repeated subjects like popular biblical subjects and myths. No chance of that with the *Massacre*.

The *Landscape with Icarus* bears some similarities in conception to Bruegel's religious works, but its differences underline Bruegel's distinctive take on classical mythology. In *Icarus* Bruegel again discards previous versions of the narrative and envisages a fully here-and-now event: unlike his Romanist contemporaries who attempted to construct plausible "ancient" or "classical" settings together with "ancient" or "classical" figures to inhabit them, Bruegel envisages this tale of doomed over-ambition unfolding in the recognizable sixteenth century, albeit in an exotic location that reflects his travels in Italy rather than the Low Countries. But his image seems to suggest that the only real way of making Ovidian classical tales speak to the present day is to show them up as trivial ephemera. In today's world of hard work and commerce, the painting implies, those would-be gods with their foolish escapades make their splash and rightfully disappear, while real people get on with the proper business of existence. Bruegel's reception of classical tradition thus differs sharply from his reception of Christianity: religious events are relevant and true, whereas classical subjects are either absent or in the process of demise. It seems entirely plausible that Bruegel thereby intended a subtle dig at the Romanist painters who focused on classical subjects and sought thereby to re-create a long-vanished world. Good riddance, Bruegel suggests.

The visual inversion of the *Icarus* composition – relegating the "main" subject to the margin – relates to, though in critical respects differs from, a similar inversion sometimes used in contemporary religious images. Pieter Aertsen in particular, a slightly older fellow non-Romanist painter, specialized in depicting large-scale still life in the foreground juxtaposed with distant religious imagery in the background, thereby forcing the viewer to question the moral or thematic relationships between the two parts of the picture and their seeming reversal of natural values (Sullivan 1999). These works generally use inversion in order to bring viewers to a more thoughtful contemplation, as is also the case in one of Bruegel's religious paintings, the *Carrying of the Cross* in Vienna, which portrays Christ as a tiny figure lost in a vast crowd of people heading towards the crucifixion (Gibson 2000). As with Icarus, Christ can only be discovered through careful attention, but in this case the painting signals that we are ultimately meant to recognize his true importance (a diamond in the haystack, to mix metaphors): partly because a foreground group of Christ's followers stand out in old-fashioned biblical dress and signal the sorrowful reactions the viewer too should adopt; and also because, once found – in fact virtually dead center – Christ proves a dignified if beleaguered figure. The act of visual discovery thus creates a sudden shock of recognition that it would be all too easy, but profoundly wrong, to overlook God's hidden presence in the whirl-wind of life. Icarus, on the other hand, is not only easy to overlook, and shunted

off to a corner, but once detected he elicits little respect. And not even necessarily sympathy: those flailing legs seem more comical than tragic.

It is entirely fitting in this context of re-interpretive reception that the canvas painting in the Brussels Royal Museum was not in fact painted by Bruegel. After several decades of debate over its attribution, recent technical analysis has proved definitively that this is a later sixteenth- or early seventeenth-century copy, which has moreover suffered much surface damage and later over-painting (Currie and Allart 2012, 3: 846–864). Infrared study beneath the paint surface has also revealed another enlightening detail, that the light-colored round object in the shrubbery at the left – long taken to represent the head of a corpse, and thus signaling the proverb "the plough does not stop for a dying man" – is actually supposed to be the unsavory end of a defecating figure, a creature who also appears in a few other Bruegel paintings and prints, though whether here for some thematic purpose or mere comic relief is hard to say. At some point in the painting's history he became masked, and the incongruously setting sun also appears to be a later, misguided addition (Currie and Allart 2012, 3: 849, 54). Thus this long-admired object – the best version still in existence of *Landscape with the Fall of Icarus* – is only a reception of Bruegel rather than Bruegel himself.

The only other extant known copy is the slightly smaller painted panel in the Van Buuren museum, and this relative isolation stands in marked contrast to several of Bruegel's other works (particularly religious and peasant scenes) which survive in multiple copies, often the results of a factory-like production led by Pieter Brueghel the Younger (note the change of name spelling), who astutely capitalized on the popularity of his father's compositions (Van den Brink 2001). There may be a technical reason why *Icarus* did not share this wide circulation, for instance if it was sold at an early date to a relatively inaccessible collection and no model drawings survived (both *Icarus* paintings have the same color scheme and appear to derive from a painted model, whereas Pieter Brueghel the Younger typically created his best-selling reproductions via full-size cartoons (Currie and Allart 2012, 3: 746–752, 872). But it seems highly likely that the mythological content of this work was deemed not especially amenable to sixteenth-century audiences – or, put another way, that the audiences who might be interested in a painting of Icarus probably wanted one in a properly classical format, while those who wanted a Brueg(h)el painting probably wanted one of his "native" subjects.

Landscape with the Fall of Icarus disappeared from view for many centuries until it resurfaced on the art market in 1912 and was bought by the Brussels museum (Currie and Allart 2012, 3: 844, 6). From there it attracted widespread admiration and elicited its own receptions, particularly among writers: it became one of the most commonly discussed Old Master paintings among literary critics, especially through the poems by W.H. Auden in 1938 and William Carlos Williams in 1960 (Caws 1983), and it has also inspired some excursions into narrative and visual theory (Altman 2008, 212–216; Didi-Huberman 1989, 140–143). Unlike art historians, who dutifully attempt to reconstruct the mind-set contemporary to the

making of an artwork, poets and theorists (like other viewers) are free to simply respond to a painting as it strikes them, and accordingly Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" has been particularly influential in modern perception of the work, emphasizing detachment in the face of human suffering ("About suffering they were never wrong,/The Old Masters…/In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away/Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may/Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,/But for him it was not an important failure…"). Auden's reading, heavily influenced by his own experiences and the broader cultural concerns of his time (Nemerov 2005), somewhat aligns with Bruegel's likely interests, though not entirely. It certainly has little to do with Ovid. But that is what makes Bruegel's composition such a successful reception of classical myth, that in re-telling the story for its own time, it also allows later audiences to re-tell their own viewing as they see fit.

Notes

1   The original color would have been more blue than the slightly greenish tinge currently given by the yellowed varnish, Currie and Allart (2012, 3: 863).
2   As in Virgil Solis' woodcut reproduced in numerous Frankfurt editions from 1563 onwards, including both the original Ovid text (Ovid 1563, 278) and contemporary paraphrases (Spreng 1563, 95); Solis' woodcut closely followed Barnard Salomon's (Ovid 1557, g2), from a series of Metamorphoses images each accompanied by a French verse. For discussion of these editions see Duplessis (1889) and Kinney and Styron (n.d.).
3   I am not persuaded by the critique of Freedberg and Meadow in Richardson (2011, 34–50).

Guide to Further Reading

A number of recent studies have argued for various readings of Bruegel's painting, including Kavaler (1999, chapter 2, based on an earlier article), De Vries (2003), Kilinski II (2004), and Sullivan (2010, epilogue). Freedberg (1989a; 1989b) and Meadow (1994) provide intriguing analyses of Bruegel's "vernacular" style in relation to sixteenth-century and classical art theory. On literary reception of Bruegel, particularly via Auden and Williams, start with Caws (1983) and Nemerov (2005). The website compiled by Dale Kinney and Elizabeth Styron (Kinney and Styron n.d.) provides an excellent database of visual and textual interpretations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

References

Altman, R. 2008. *A Theory of Narrative*. New York: Columbia University Press.
Campbell, L. 1985. *The Early Flemish Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Caws, M.A. 1983. "A Double Reading by Design: Breughel, Auden, and Williams." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 41, 3: 323–330.

Currie, C. and Allart, D. 2012. *The Brueg(H)el Phenomenon: Paintings by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Pieter Bruegel the Younger with a Special Focus on Technique and Copying Practice*. 3 vols. Brussels: Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage.

De Vries, L. 2003. "Bruegel's 'Fall of Icarus': Ovid or Solomon?," *Simiolus*, 30, 1/2: 4–18.

Didi-Huberman, G. 1989. "The Art of Not Describing: Vermeer – the Detail and the Patch." *History of the Human Sciences*, 2, 2: 135–169.

Duplessis, G. 1889. *Essai bibliographique sur les différentes éditions des œuvres d'Ovide ornées de planches publiées aux XVe et XVIe siècles*. Paris: Vve L. Techene.

Freedberg, D. 1989a. "Allusion and Topicality in the Work of Pieter Bruegel: The Implications of a Forgotten Polemic," in D. Freedberg, ed., *The Prints of Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, 53–65. Tokyo: Bridgestone Museum of Art.

Freedberg, D., ed. 1989b. *The Prints of Pieter Bruegel the Elder*. Tokyo: Bridgestone Museum of Art.

Gibson, M.F. 2000. *The Mill and the Cross: Peter Bruegel's "Way to Calvary."* Lausanne: Editions Acatos.

Kavaler, E.M. 1999. *Pieter Bruegel: Parables of Order and Enterprise*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kilinski II, Karl. 2004. "Bruegel on Icarus: Inversions of the Fall." *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 67, 1: 91–114.

Kinney, D. and Styron, E. (n.d.) *Ovid Illustrated: The Reception of Ovid's Metamorphoses in Image and Text*. Online at: http://ovid.lib.virginia.edu (accessed March 15, 2013).

Kunzle, D. 2002. *From Criminal to Courtier: The Soldier in Netherlandish Art 1550–1672*. Leiden: Brill.

Landau, D. and Parshall, P. 1994. *The Renaissance Print, 1470–1550*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Levesque, C. 1994. *Journey Through Landscape in Seventeenth-Century Holland: The Haarlem Print Series and Dutch Identity*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Lowenthal, A.W. 1983. "The Disgracers: Four Sinners in One Act," in A.-M. Logan, ed., *Essays in Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on His Sixtieth Birthday*, 148–153. Doornspijk: Davaco.

McDonough, C.M. 2004. "Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' in Our Time." *The Sewanee Review*, 112, 3: 463–467.

Meadow, M. 1997. "Bruegel's *Procession to Calvary*, Aemulatio and the Space of Vernacular Style," in J. De Jong, M. Meadow, H. Roodenburg and F. Scholten, eds, *Pieter Bruegel*. Vol. 47, *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, 180–205. Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers.

Nemerov, A. 2005. "The Flight of Form: Auden, Bruegel, and the Turn to Abstraction in the 1940s." *Critical Inquiry*, 31, 4: 780–810.

Orenstein, N.M. 2001. *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints*. New York: Yale University Press.

Ovid. 1484. *Ovide moralisé*. Bruges: Colard Mansion.

Ovid. 1557. *La Metamorphose d'Ovide figurée*. Lyon: De Tournes.

Ovid. 1563. *Metamorphoseon libri XV*. Frankfurt: Georg Corvinus, Sigismund Feyerabend, and heirs of Wigand Gallus.

Parker, D. 1956. "Ovid Returned." *The Hudson Review*, 9, 3: 466–474.

Pon, L. 2004. *Raphael, Dürer, and Marcantonio Raimondi: Copying and the Italian Renaissance Print*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Richardson, T.M. 2011. *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Art Discourse in the Sixteenth-Century Netherlands*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Shawe-Taylor, D. and Scott, J. 2007. *Bruegel to Rubens: Masters of Flemish Painting*. London: Royal Collection.

Spreng, J. 1563. *Metamorphoses Ovidii, argumentis quidem soluta oratione*. Frankfurt: Corvinum.

Sullivan, M.A. 1999. "Aertsen's Kitchen and Market Scenes: Audience and Innovation in Northern Art." *Art Bulletin*, 81, 2: 237–266.

Sullivan, M.A. 2010. *Bruegel and the Creative Process, 1559–1563*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Van den Brink, P. 2001. *Brueghel Enterprises*. Ghent-Amsterdam: Ludion.

Veldman, I.M. 1990. "Elements of Continuity: A Finger Raised in Warning." *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art*, 20, 2/3: 124–141.

Welsh Reed, S. and Wallace, R. 1989. *Italian Etchers of the Renaissance and Baroque*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts.

Wheelwright, P. 1956. "Rediscovering Ovid." *The Sewanee Review*, 64, 2: 283–296.

Williams, W.C. 1960. "Pictures from Brueghel." *The Hudson Review*, 13, 1: 11–20.

Ancient and Modern Re-sounding
Monteverdi's Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria

George Burrows

Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria (The Return of Ulysses) is one of the most unusual, fascinating, and powerful pieces of musical theater of the seventeenth century. It represents the earliest extant example of an opera based on an extant Ancient Greek source text, as it is an adaptation of books 13–24 of Homer's *Odyssey*. To adapt this epic for the Venetian operatic stage, a first-time librettist, Giacomo Badoaro (1602–1654), teamed up with an aging but renowned composer, Claudio Monteverdi (1567–1643), who had not produced an opera in some years.

In *Il ritorno,* Monteverdi produced an opera that utilized an unusual musical style: full-blown *arioso* (lyrical song) generally took second place to a hybrid style of *recitativo* (speech-like song) that featured only snatches of *arioso*-styled music. This unusual balance has been articulated by musicologists like Tim Carter (2002) with Monteverdi's brilliant reframing of Penelope as the central character of the drama. However, this chapter will argue that Monteverdi's approach had as much to do with his representation of contemporary understandings of Ancient Greek tragedy that prevailed in Florence and Venice as it did with recasting Homer's narrative for a 1640s' Venetian audience.

Michael Ewans (2007) has argued that, in updating Homer, Badoaro and Monteverdi transformed the theodicy of the original myth into contemporary Christian ideology. However, the second enterprise of this chapter is to extend Ewans' reading by considering the way that both Monteverdi and Badoaro were steeped in understandings of the way Ancient Greek sources offered models (in their spirit if not their letter) for the "modern" musical-dramatic practices of seventeenth-century Venice. Thus, Monteverdi's take on Badoaro's reception of Homer will be shown to resound with markers of both the Ancient and modern worlds that are at once dissonant and concordant and thereby powerfully discursive.

The first production of *Il ritorno* was undoubtedly a success by contemporary standards because the opera not only toured to Bologna but it was granted an unprecedented second run of performances in the very next season in Venice. No other Venetian opera of the whole century enjoyed such an honor but, until relatively recently, *Il ritorno* was overlooked by opera companies, despite it being one of the most fascinating, emotive, and illuminating representations of the reception of Ancient Greek myth for the operatic stage (Rosand 2007a, 7).[1]

Part of the trouble was that until the 1920s the somewhat contradictory sources for *Il ritorno* were confined to archives. This made it difficult to assess the form and merits of the opera. When the score was eventually published for the first time in 1922, scholars cast considerable doubt on Monteverdi's authorship of *Il ritorno* because of its seemingly uncharacteristic musical style (see Osthoff 1956). Thus Monteverdi's other works for the musical stage, notably *Orfeo* (1607) and *L'incoronatione di Poppea* (1643), overshadowed *Il ritorno,* as the authorship of these seemed more certain. However, it is now generally accepted that *Il ritorno* is an unjustly neglected masterpiece by Monteverdi, who crowned Badoaro's mediation of Homer with wonderful music and an astute understanding of how to handle such received material from the Ancient world for the musical stage of his time and ours.

This chapter will attempt to account for the extraordinary handling of the Ancient Greek myth by Badoaro and Monteverdi.[2] Their treatment of the narrative is unusual both in its faithfulness to what they understood of the performance style of Ancient Greek tragedy and the way their adaptation served to further the meaning and emotional depth of the original narrative for their contemporary audience. So, part of the agenda here is to illuminate some of the mediations that occurred between the Ancient text and the particular treatment of the narrative by Badoaro before considering how Monteverdi made this work within and beyond the conventions of the Venetian musical stage of the 1640s.

This will allow for a historically appropriate understanding of the reception that the Ancient narrative received as it became musical theater in the hands of a novice librettist and an experienced composer. However, in order to put this special interdisciplinary theatrical form into its own appropriate context, it is also necessary to impart something of the contemporaneous culture and discussions that lay behind Badoaro and Monteverdi's approach to writing musical theater. This is informed by a discussion of the textual sources for *Il ritorno*, which draws on much of the insightful musicological detective work that has been directed at the contemporary manuscripts in recent years.

The chapter ends by considering Monteverdi's musical treatment of the central role of Penelope as a metaphor for the meeting of Ancient and modern cultures that is exemplified in the musical style of the opera as much as its changed narrative. This serves to illuminate how interconnected tensions between musicalized speech and full-blown song and between love and abstinence are at the heart of understanding the way the power of musical theater is harnessed by Monteverdi and Badoaro to re-sound Homer's narrative in a new operatic context.

Two Scores for the Price of One: Differing Sources, Forms, and Prologues of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*

Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria contains nearly three hours of music. It is scored for a company of at least 14 singers (assuming some covered several roles) and an accompanying ensemble of strings (scored in five-parts) supported by various continuo instruments.[3] It is hard to relate much more than this about the form and content of the opera without first detailing something of the fascinating but often contradictory sources through which we have come to know the work. Uppermost in this consideration is the only surviving contemporaneous manuscript score of *Il ritorno*, which has long been held in archives of the Austrian National Library. Alan Curtis has determined that, although a Viennese library has held this score since around 1675, it was actually produced in Italy some decades earlier by a copyist who was most probably working from Monteverdi's autograph manuscript (Curtis 2002, vii–viii).

At first glance this copy-score seems to represent a three-act opera that is at odds in its form, prologue and ending with any of the 12 surviving libretti manuscripts.[4] These libretti all present Badoaro's drama in five acts and the two copies that are most contemporaneous with the first production of *Il ritorno* show that there are bits of Badoaro's text missing in the copy-score, including a whole scene (Badoaro's act V, scene 2). However, on closer inspection, the copy-score can be seen to contain at least two "layers" of amendments. These markings, in two different shades of what now appears as brown ink, represent a typical second-copying pass, which served to fill out inessential details of the score (e.g., accompanying instrumental lines) that were not completed in the initial draft, and a further editorial pass, which transformed the score from one originally in five acts to one in three and added associated rubrics such as scene designations (see Rosand 2007a, 69–88).

In fact there is further evidence to support this notion of an opera that was changed from five to three acts and this supports the notion that the copy-score shows that Badoaro's text was edited into a new form during the course of the opera's production.[5] The copy-score thus represents a working document that shows something of the process of refinement of the opera. As Rosand puts it:

> It is a fluid document that not only shows two versions simultaneously, the five-act original and a three-act revision, but demonstrates how and at what point – though not why – the one was transformed into the other. It also provides information about how it was copied and the reasons for some of its alterations and inconsistencies. What is more interesting, we can see that much of the editing was made to prepare or facilitate the actual process of production and performance.
>
> (Rosand 2007a, 70)

The copy-score thus demonstrates that early operas were as much "works-in-process," to use Bruce Kirle's (2005) term, as the musicals of our era and, like the deals offered

by supermarkets and window-replacement companies of nowadays, this copy-score represents (via some philological detective work) two scores for the price of one.

The 12 surviving manuscript copies of Badoaro's libretto offer variants of the text of the opera. However, only two of these drafts are roughly contemporaneous with the early 1640s, while the others are later eighteenth-century copies. One of these two contemporaneous libretti is particularly significant, not least because it contains a preface by Badoaro. This reveals a great deal about the poet's motives for producing his libretto.[6]

Badoaro explains that, at the time of writing his preface, *Il Ritorno* had already enjoyed a run of ten performances (a great number by seventeenth-century Venetian standards) and that his central motivation in writing his libretto was to lure Monteverdi back to the operatic stage. Monteverdi had held the high-profile post of *maestro di cappella* at St Mark's basilica in Venice since 1613. However, despite his prevailing reputation as the father of opera, as Badoaro characterizes him, in Venice he had concentrated on producing music in other genres and had not contributed to the new and burgeoning culture of public opera that was gripping the city by the late 1630s. The demand for new Venetian operas had thus so far been met by other composers, which Badoaro casts as mere imitators ("painted suns") of Monteverdi's original mastery in the operatic field. From this perspective, Badoaro's choice of narrative has been read as a powerful metaphor for Monteverdi's return to opera to restore his rightful place as the original master ("sun") of the genre; after all, Ulysses returns to his rightful place by slaying all pretenders to his wife and crown (see Rosand 1994).

A comparison of the copy-score with the contemporary libretti is revealing because it illuminates the way Monteverdi applied his experience and good theatrical sense to adjust the work of his young first-time librettist. Even Badoaro had to admit in his preface that he hardly recognized some of his own writing in the opera (Badoaro in Curtis 2002, xx–xxi). Whether it is cast in three or five acts, the action of the opera proceeds following an allegorical prologue, a typical framing device in seventeenth-century theater. The prologue in the copy-score is entirely different from that in Badoaro's libretti and it serves to illuminate the overriding effect of Monteverdi's refashioning of Badoaro's reception of Homer.

The prologue in the copy-score foreshadows the underlying moral scenario of the drama by presenting *Humana Fragilità* (human frailty) at the mercy of *Tempo* (time), *Fortuna* (fortune), and *Amore* (love). When the action of the opera begins, this moral scenario is then played out with respect to Penelope's character rather than any other. So, as Carter notes, in bringing in a new prologue, Monteverdi places Penelope rather than Ulisse at the center of the opera. (Carter 2002, 248) As we will see, this also brings seventeenth-century Christian-humanist values to Homer's narrative.

The entirely different prologue in Badoaro's text emphasized the hopelessness of man's bravery and prudence in the face of fate. This allegory returned at the

end of Badoaro's text in a final chorus but this is cut in the copy-score in favor of ending with a joyful duet for the reunited couple.[7] This change illustrates Monteverdi's desire not to preach humanist values, as in Badoaro's text, but to demonstrate them via an all-important empathy with the human characters at the center of the drama. This change also makes good theatrical sense because it establishes a narrative "trajectory of desire," which allows the audience to believe characters' emotions are motivated by the obstacles they must surpass. It is specifically in the songs of musical theater that such emotions are portrayed and this explains why it took an experienced musician to realize these aspects of Badoaro's text needed adjusting for the musical stage. However, before we can consider any more of Monteverdi's treatment of Badoaro's text, we need to relate its narrative to Homer's original.

Revamping a Classic: Towards Understanding the Reception of Homer's *Odyssey* in Seventeenth-Century Venice

Act I of the *Il ritorno* opens in the Ithacan palace. Penelope longs for her husband, Ulisse, to return from the Trojan wars and even her trusted nursemaid, Ericlea, is unable to console her. In the face of Penelope's frustration and constancy, Melanto, who is a daughter-figure as much as a maid to Penelope, reflects on the contrasting nature of her own – more naive – love for the shepherd Eurimaco. At the seaside, the angry gods Netturno and Giove turn the Pheacian's (Feaci) ship into a rock for bringing the sleeping Ulisse to the Ithacan shore. Ulisse awakens disorientated and abandoned but Minerva appears disguised as a shepherd and informs him that he has arrived home. She astonishes Ulisse by assuming her godly form to convince him to bathe in a sacred fountain in order to transform into an old beggar to pass unrecognized into his palace and outwit the suitors (Antinoo, Pisandro, and Anfinomo), who have designs on his wife and crown. Minerva promises to fetch his son, Telemaco, back from Sparta in the meantime.

Back in the palace, Melanto urges Penelope to forget Ulisse and love another. Out in the fields, Ulisse's loyal servant, the shepherd Eumete, argues with the social menace Iro, who always seems to cause trouble. On Iro's exit, the disguised Ulysses arrives and warns Eumete of the immanent return of his master. Minerva then brings Telemaco to Ithaca on her chariot and Eumete introduces the old beggar to relate his news of Ulisse's return. A heaven-sent thunderbolt momentarily reveals Ulisse in his true form to Telemaco.

Back in the palace, Melanto and Eurimaco discuss Penelope's unfaltering devotion to Ulisse. Penelope continues to resist the advances of the suitors who become unsettled when Eumete arrives and announces the imminent arrival of Ulisse and Telemaco. They plot Telemaco's murder but drop the plan when Giove's eagle is seen flying overhead, which they take as a sign and decide instead to redouble their efforts to woo Penelope.

Back in the fields, Minerva gives Ulisse a plan to get rid of the suitors and Eumete reports of Penelope's faithfulness before he and Ulisse set off together for the palace. At the palace, Telemaco tells Penelope of his travels and that Helen of Troy has foreseen Ulisse's return. Antinoo and Iro meet Eumete and the disguised Ulisse. Antinioo is rude towards them and Ulisse is provoked to thrash fat Iro in a fight but Penelope orders that the beggar be made welcome in the palace. The suitors intensify their efforts to impress her with rich gifts but she vows she will only marry the one who can string Ulisse's great bow. The suitors all fail this test but the beggar, who had already renounced the prize, succeeds and, calling on Minerva, kills the suitors with arrows shot from the bow.

Iro grieves melodramatically for his suitor friends. Penelope doesn't believe Eumete's claim that the beggar is Ulisse and even Telemaco cannot convince her. Minerva and Giunone, worried that the suitors' deaths will be avenged, petition Giove for Ulisse's happiness. Wrathful Netturno is duly placated, prompting choral rejoicing from heavenly and watery spirits. Ericlea ponders how to help Penelope see sense but suspects a trick even when Ulisse arrives in his true form. Ericlea claims she recognized a scar when he was bathing but Penelope is only convinced of Ulisse's true identity when he accurately describes the embroidery covering their nuptial bed. They celebrate their longed-for reunion in a joyful final duet.

Those readers who are familiar with Homer's *Odyssey* will immediately notice the fundamental changes that Baodaro and Monteverdi made to the Ancient Greek narrative, notably in the different characterizations and ending.[8] In this regard, Michael Ewans has made an insightful comparison between the Homeric source for *Il ritorno* and its adaptation by Badoaro and Monteverdi in *Opera from the Greek* (2007). This comparison enables Ewans to make two fundamental points; that the authors try to fit the theodicy of the original with the astrological-Christian values of their own era (Ewans 2007, 12–16) and that the now central character of Penelope is transformed from one representing the Ancient Greek wifely ideals of *sophrosyne* (chastity and self-restraint) to a Renaissance woman concerned with contemporaneous questions of love's constancy and sexual fidelity within a Christian social context (Ewans 2007, 16–22).

Ewans documents how the latter feature necessitates the further altering of the characters of Eurymachus (Eurymaco) and Melantho (Melanto) in the opera: the former is removed from Homer's group of loathsome suitors (reduced in number from one hundred or so in Homer to just three) to become the *bona fide* lover of Melanto. She is thereby no longer figured as an unfaithful woman of Ulysses' household, as in Homer, but as a loyal daughter figure to Penelope who supports the vengeance that is eventually meted out by Ulysses (Ulisse) on the suitors (Ewans 2007, 19). But that brutal vengeance is itself somewhat muted in the opera because, from Ewans' perspective, this doesn't fit the Christian ideology of Monteverdi's time. Ulysses' characteristics are thus, like Penelope's, softened. Ewans asserts that, "Badoaro has weakened the original character's strength, feistiness, and power of deception" (Ewans 2007, 23), and shows this only further serves to mark the characterization of Jupiter (Giove) in the opera's narrative as the omnipotent and merciful Christian God behind the characters' actions.

Ewans' reading of the Christian reception of Homer in *Il ritorno* is illuminating and in many ways highly appropriate to the 1640s social context[9] but it somewhat bypasses the all-important cultural context in which Badoaro and Monteverdi were working as creative artists. For one thing, Rosand has suggested that Badoaro probably did not draw directly on Greek sources but on a sixteenth-century Italian translation of the *Odyssey*, which already included many of the changes made to the Ancient story (Rosand 2007a, 133–140). We might thus develop Ewans' analysis by considering more specific ways in which Italian (specifically Florentine and Venetian) society of the seventeenth century concerned itself with the Ancient world and the motivations for doing so. In particular, we will consider the relationship between the contemporary study of models from Antiquity and the concern to develop new forms of dramatic-vocal expression from the perspective of two learned-creative societies that were active in the cultural centers of Florence and Venice respectively. Of particular interest here is Venice's cynical but libertine *Accademia degli Incogniti,* of which Badoaro was a leading member. However, before discussing this literary academy, it is useful to consider the so-called "Florentine Camerata" and their influence on the earlier development of dramatic solo song, as this was highly influential on Monteverdi and indeed on the whole enterprise of creating works for the musical stage. This has the merit of showing that the culture of looking back to the Ancient world for inspiration was a long-standing one that went hand-in-hand with the development of opera in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy.

Reconceiving Greek Tragedy: The Florentine Camerata and the *Accademia degli Incogniti*

The roots of Monteverdi's approach to composing opera are often traced back to discussions that occurred in Florence in the last three decades of the sixteenth century about the nature of music deployed in Ancient Greek tragedy.[10] It was in Florence that a rather informal gathering of young noblemen with interests in music started to meet regularly in the house of the musical Count of Varnio, Giovanni Bardi to discuss such things. There they would "pass the time in honorable recreation, with delightful singing and praiseworthy discussions" (Vincenzo Galilei in Palisca 1989, 3).[11] Many of the participants in this "Florentine Camerata" would go on to compose the first works resembling operas (pastorals and *intermedi*).[12] Palisca explains that the group had an educational function:

> [It] served to introduce sons of noblemen to literature, philosophy, science, music, and antiquities and to induce them to study these in depth. Some of the older members acted as preceptors, while others mainly listened and debated. It probably prepared young men for participation in the more formal academies and for university studies.

> (Palisca 1989, 4)

However, there are problems with the notion that opera was born directly out of the discussions of the applicability of Ancient culture by Bardi's circle in Florence. For one thing, this group did not have a shared objective in that or any other direction and it was not the only such group in Florence concerned with developing dramatic song. In fact, as Nino Pirrotta has demonstrated, rivalry between those within Bardi's circle and those in another group of young aristocrats surrounding the nobleman, Jacopo Corsi, helped spur on the development of the form of expressive solo song (monody), which was in any case already emerging in the theater of the period (Pirrotta 1984, 218). Nevertheless, even the skeptical Pirrotta concedes that the influence of the discussions of Bardi's group on the dramatic works of the likes of Giulio Caccini (1551–1618) and Jacopo Peri (1561–1633), is undoubted and had far-reaching implications: Peri's *Euridice* (1600), was certainly known to Monteverdi (Carter 2002, 13).

Caccini first referred to Bardi's group as a *"Camerata"* in the preface to his manual of monody, *Le nuove musiche* (1602), and then again in the preface to his score of the pastoral *L'Euridice* (1600), which was dedicated to Bardi.[13] In his 1602 preface, Caccini recalled that his motivation to produce monody was inspired by Bardi who "had spoken of a style of music that the ancient Greeks used in representing their tragedies and other tales (*favole*)" (Palisca 1989, 3). Bardi's surviving writings on Ancient Greek music and tragedy make for interesting reading more for what they tell us of contemporary attitudes than of precise stylistic features (see Palisca 1989, 78–151). Palisca explains that:

> The [Camerata's] focus on ancient Greek music probably became most intense from around 1572 to 1578, when Vincenzo Galilei [father of Galileo] and Bardi were corresponding with Girolamo Mei [an authority on Ancient Greek sources], each of whose letters brought fresh discoveries about Greek music to stimulate new rounds of debate.
>
> (Palisca 1989, 5)[14]

Caccini evidently felt that his monodies were indebted to the study of Ancient Greek culture that Bardi encouraged. However, no matter how rigorous such study was, it was based on comparatively little source material from the Ancient world.[15] This led to what now appear as quite basic misconceptions: most notably the idea that opera should follow Greek tragedy in being through-sung.[16] Nevertheless, the challenges posed by the research of Bardi's Camerata were met by the creative talents of Caccini (and later Monteverdi) that, as the likes of Pirrotta and Carter have shown, were at least as indebted to existing Italian forms of accompanied vocal music, like the *villanella* and *canzonetta,* as they were to their knowledge of Ancient Greek culture (Carter 1992, 191; Pirrotta 1984, 221).

So, the departures from what we now know of Greek myth, which Ewans notes in his comparison of *Il ritorno* with Homer's *Odyssey*, are actually the result of a longstanding and broader culture of the reception of Ancient Greek sources by

Italian theorist-practitioners of the period. The development of monody and related early operatic forms, which Monteverdi drew upon and developed himself, are themselves as much part of the mediation of Greek myth as the opera's narrative. As we will see, when read this way, at the heart of the 1640 opera is an aesthetic-ideological debate about the relationship between the Ancient world and contemporary art and society. This discourse is surely as relevant now as it was in late sixteenth-century Florence or in 1640s Venice, where it was a central concern for the debates of the *Accademia degli Incogniti,* of which Badoaro was a leading member.

Venice's *Accademia degli Incogniti* was a much more formally constituted creative think-tank than the "Florentine Camerata" groups of the previous century. It was the most important literary academy of its type in Venice and it generally attracted the more seasoned and rigorous thinkers. It offered topical debate and motivated the publication of numerous texts that were concerned with a whole range of Ancient sources. Rosand explains:

> [T]he academy comprised a group of mostly aristocratic writers united by libertine attitudes; they debated moral, political, and social issues at weekly meetings and in streams of publications – religious pamphlets, philosophical tracts, and novels. Their innumerable writings conveyed their commitment to the exploitation of history for political purposes. They investigated the lives of the ancient rulers as models of good government, applicable to present-day circumstances. And they sought moral exempla in literature of the past, which they subjected to a variety of treatments, ranging from straightforward translations to freely embellished reinterpretations.
>
> (Rosand 2007a, 20)

The main thing that united the members of this academy was their commitment to the Venetian Republic. They were effectively patriotic cheerleaders for this comparatively democratic system of governance. Their interest in Ancient texts and myths was thus concerned with demonstrating the way the Republic reflected or could reflect lessons learned from studying antiquity. Members of the academy thus produced opera libretti on Classical themes (including the libretti to all three of Monteverdi's late operas) precisely because they felt this form of musical theater had a direct lineage from the styles employed in Ancient Greek tragedy.[17] Furthermore, Venice's opera houses were relatively democratic places because ticket prices were low enough to attract a wide cross section of Venetian society (Worsthorne 1954, 6). Thus, the academy's members saw opera as a high-profile forum in which to demonstrate the connections that they perceived between the Ancient world and the current Venetian one.[18]

One of Badoaro's colleagues in the academy was Frederico Malipiero (1603–1642). His writings form part of the evidence for the dating of the first production of *Il ritorno* to 1640 and they even suggest some of the features of that production via some tantalizingly indirect references. In a preface to his novel

La peripezia d'Ulisse overo la casta Penelope (1640) Malipiero explicitly states that he was motivated to write his novel by experiencing Monteverdi's opera (see Rosand 2007a, 55–56). The novel conveys Homer's narrative prior to the point at which the opera picks it up, but Malipiero went on to offer a (more than) complete version of the *Odyssey* in a subsequent publication. This was something of an elaborated translation of Homer entitled *L'Odissea d'Omero trapportata dalla greca nella toscana favella* (published posthumously in 1643). In this Malipiero goes beyond Homer in several respects and Rosand has suggested that Malipiero's many additions, mostly contained in his editorial marginalia, indicate the profound influence that *Il ritorno* had on his reception and re-interpretation of Homer (Rosand 2007a, 140–141).

Malipiero's description of Melanto is especially illuminating for the way it follows the opera in portraying this secondary character as a lascivious daughter figure to Penelope rather than the unfaithful servant that she is in Homer.[19] However, Malipiero's particularly picturesque description of Penelope, which first reflects the flavor of the opera's first scene and then reads like her stage directions, seems to hint at details of that first Venetian production. The pseudo-stage-directions read (in Rosand's translation) as follows:

> […] after getting up, accompanied by two maids who supported her between themselves, she left her bedroom and went, more beautiful than Beauty herself, to show herself to the Suitors […] She had covered her head with the thinnest of veils, which not only covered her eyes, but – like a cloud of finest vapor – veiled her cheeks, and these and those through the transparent veil appeared to be moons or stars in the heavens covered by a delicate pure mist. At this unexpected appearance, the suitors fell stunned upon the ground. Every one of her lovers at this point felt his heart pierced by a thousand amorous arrows, his soul lit by one thousand passionate flames.
>
> (Malipiero in Rosand 2007a, 142)

Rosand suggests that such visual detail could well have been inspired "by the appearance of Badoaro's Penelope or even the reactions to her on the part of her audience: on stage and in the theater" (Rosand 2007a, 142). This admittedly speculative analysis might well explain why Venetian audiences made the extraordinary demand for a second chance to see this retelling of Homer. Malipiero was himself clearly influenced by the very modern portrayal of the women in *Il ritorno* and thus doubtless received a version of Homer that resounded with a powerful and unresolved dialectic of Ancient and contemporary meanings. It thus might well be this central tension of the opera, emoted by Monteverdi's deeply expressive monody, which sang/spoke to the Italian audiences of the 1640s of Homer's narrative in a gloriously contemporaneous way. Let us turn now to consider Monteverdi's musical treatment of this ancient/modern dichotomy in the opera to conclude this odyssey.

Penelope's Song and Fidelity: Monteverdi's Ancient and Modern Music

When compared to Monteverdi's earlier operatic writing, the music of *Il ritorno* offers a much less clear distinction between musicalized speech (*recitativo*) and lyrical-vocal set pieces (*arioso*). Instead Monteverdi seems to slip swiftly and effortlessly between these two styles while using devices like repeated refrain lines and emotive triple time to render this hybrid style cohesive.[20] The overriding stylistic fluidity for Carter:

> suggests a degree of acceptance of the musical conventions of opera on the part of audiences, chiefly, one assumes, by virtue of their increasing familiarity with the genre, and of newly emerging expectations of its desired aesthetics and other effects. Singing rather than just musical "speaking" is now both natural and inevitable.
>
> (Carter 2002, 249)[21]

However, one of the ways Monteverdi characterizes the central character of Penelope is precisely by denying her the artifice of full-blown song (*arioso*). This functions as something of a musical metaphor for the frustrated position of her character for the audience.

In the opera's lengthy first scene (after the prologue) Penelope laments for her absent husband almost entirely in brooding minor-key *recitativo*. Only briefly does she escape this style to "sing" in fully-fledged *arioso*, at the line "Torna il tranquillo al mare" ("Quiet returns to the sea"). In she is momentarily freed by a remembering of past times that contrast her current situation. It seems she won't allow herself to give in to full-blown "song" and Carter reads this as emblematic of her unfaltering love for her husband in the face of the aggressive wooing of her by the suitors. Thus, when she responds to the suitors' later advances with a "foot-stamping refrain" featuring the line "Non voglio amar, no, no" ("I won't love, no, no"), it quickly returns her to the safety of recitative, as if she has calmed the momentary quickening of her pulse (Carter 2002, 258). By contrast, Melanto's more lascivious outpourings in song act so as to frame such proud resistance to passionate love ("song") as unnatural and, crucially, somewhat old-fashioned. As the end of opera approaches, Penelope admits she is numb to all feeling and it takes considerable effort for her to reawaken her vocal faculties and her libido and thus recognize her husband in song: he first encourages her to "loosen her tongue" and then has to describe their nuptial bed to convince her their love is restored and it is okay to "sing" again.

Penelope's hybrid *recitativo*-styled music is perhaps nearer to the ideal style that was envisaged by what the Florentine Camerata and the *Incogniti* knew of Ancient Greek tragedy than that of any other contemporaneous operas. In these *arioso* was the dominant style.[22] By generally denying Penelope *arioso*, except at certain strategic points, Monteverdi was thus not only characterizing Penelope's pain and frustration but also highlighting a stylistic fidelity to Ancient Greek tragic expression in the face of audience expectations of a contemporary "operatic" one. Only

at the very end of the opera is the audience's stylistic expectation fulfilled with a fully committed "song" (*"Illustratevi o cieli"*) for Penelope – even if it does become a duet. When the opportunity for this music eventually arrives, in Penelope's final clinch with Ulisse, it certainly comes as a great relief after several hours of music that contain only tantalizing snatches of *arioso* for the leading lady. It is testament to Badoaro and Monteverdi's reception of Ancient Greek texts and practices, however mediated, that the power of such Ancient *and* modern expression resounds as palpably today as it did in 1640 or even in Homer's day.

Notes

1   Robert Haas' facsimile edition of the score (see Hass 1922) rekindled the interest of performers and scholars in the opera.

2   Rosand has suggests that Badoaro knew Homer's *Odyssey* through Lodovico Dolce's translation that was published in Venice in 1573 (Rosand 2007a, 133).

3   Carter gives a table showing how the 30 roles in the opera could be distributed among 14 singers (Carter 2002, 102–103). He also suggests the string ensemble, a much smaller orchestra than Monteverdi used in *Orfeo*, probably resulted from the commercial pressures of Venetian theater (Carter 2002, 238). The term *continuo* describes a flexible ensemble usually comprised of one or more keyed or plucked instruments (harpsichord, organ, lute, theorbo, guitar, etc.) capable of realizing chords based on the written bass line (aided by the appended figures) and one or more bowed string instruments (cello, viola da gamba, contrabass, etc.) that performs the bass line exactly as it is written.

4   A list of the libretti is given in Curtis (2002, x). Unlike opera of later eras, in 1640s' Venice it was not common practice to provide a full printed libretto ahead of the premiere for the benefit of the audience attending the theater. In Venice, these sorts of publications were produced only in limited numbers of manuscript copies following a successful run and then in celebration of the poet-librettist – a rather different function from the *libretti* of the later Baroque period that were intended to help the audience interpret the narrative. The Venetian audience was able to obtain a shorter and more general synopsis (scenario) of the action to aid them in following the stage narrative. Although such a scenario was almost certainly printed in large numbers for the first audiences of *Il Ritorno*, no such document has yet surfaced.

5   Carter reaches similar conclusions from charting the distribution of the scenery against the three-act structure. (See Carter 2002, 81–84.)

6   This is the copy held by Museo Civico Correr in Venice where it is catalogued as MS Cicogna 564. It is discussed in Curtis (2002, x, 240) and Rosand (2007a, 52–58). The preface is reprinted and translated in Monteverdi (2002, xx–xxi).

7   The text and translation of the excised chorus is given in Carter (2002, 247).

8   In Homer the narrative ends with a recognition scene involving the immovable nuptial bed, which Ulysses built using an olive tree as a bedpost (Odyssey XXIII, 177ff). The change to Badoaro's description of a quilt that Penelope embroidered only lends weight to the repositioning of her character at the center of the narrative in the opera.

9   It is a particularly appropriate reading in view of the fact that Monteverdi took minor holy orders once he settled in Venice.

10 This is because this occurred just a few years before Monteverdi produced *Orfeo* (1607), which has long been considered to be the first "great" opera. Palisca has established that Bardi's Florentine Camerata were active "from around 1570 – certainly from 1573 – to around 1592. It reached its height between 1577 and 1582 and was declining by the mid-1580s" (Palisca 1989, 7) However Pirrotta has suggested dates of 1576 to 1581 or 1582 for the same group (Pirrotta 1984, 218).

11 It seems Bardi's idea was to keep young nobles out of mischief. His son Pietro, recalled in a letter of 1632 or 1634 (Pirrotta 1984, 218) that his father "had always around him the most celebrated men of the city, learned in the [musical] profession. Inviting them to his house, he formed a delightful virtual continuous academy, which kept vice and every sort of gambling in particular at a distance. Thus, the noble Florentine youth was raised with great advantage, occupying themselves not only in music but in discourses and instruction in poetry, astrology, and other sciences, which brought mutual profit to such beautiful conversation" (Pietro de'Bardi in Palisca 1989: 4).

12 Pastorals involve musicalized narratives set in idyllic arcadia and *intermedi* are elaborate musical entertainments that were staged in the interval of longer stage works. Joachim Steinheuer points out that despite the persistence of the idea that such works were attempts to reinvent Ancient Greek tragedy they were not strictly tragedies in the Aristotelian sense. He suggests they rather fall within the Renaissance genre of the pastoral play exemplified by the works of Torquato Tasso and Giovano Battista Guarini (see Steinheuer 2007, 119).

13 Caccini's preface is translated in H. Wiley-Hitchcock's critical edition (Caccini 2009). Palisca notes that "Caccini's use of the term *camerata* rather than *accademia* was judicious; it refers to an informal group, an 'assemblage of people who live and converse together'" (Palisca 1989, 4).

14 Bardi's son later recalled that Galilei in particular had felt a principle goal of the Camerata was "the rediscovering of ancient music, however much this was possible in such a dark area, to improve modern music …" (Palisca 1989, 6). As both Pirrotta and Carter note, Galilei was deeply conservative and used his Classical studies to complain at some length about the complexity of current vocal forms and especially the polyphonic madrigal with its intricate interweaving of individual vocal lines (Carter 1992, 186; Pirrotta 1984, 219). Galilei explained that he advocated song composed "according to the usage of the ancient Greeks, which among other characteristics, … is to have a single singer recite, and not so many [notes] as (contrary to every right) is customary today" (Palisca 1989, 6). However, he gives no precise details of how such music should be composed and his few existing compositions shed little light on the matter. Pirrotta has thus questioned both Galilei's scholarship and compositional ability (Pirrotta 1984, 220).

15 Steinheuer (2007, 120) states "the use of musical models from antiquity was out of the question anyway, since only a few fragments were known and these were of a non-dramatic nature."

16 As Ewans (2007, 3) documents, we now know that only certain sections of Ancient Greek tragedy (e.g., *kommi* – "laments") were sung and that spoken dialogue was otherwise incorporated.

17 This was a somewhat different perspective to that expounded by the likes of Caccini and Galilei of the Florentine Camerata because, as Pirrotta has noted, they were not concerned specifically with music for theater but with music more generally with a

slight preoccupation (displayed by Galilei in particular) on developing the contemporary Madrigal (see Pirrotta 1984).

18   The anonymity surrounding membership of the *Incogniti* was important in this regard because its members included many of the leading political figures in Venetian society for whom public recognition of involvement would be damaging. Although some of the academy's authors were less incognito than others, such was the secrecy surrounding the authorship of the documents produced by the academy that it has taken some effort by archival researchers like Rosand to be certain as to who wrote all the libretti of Monteverdi's last three operas. Fortunately, even when the academy's authors have not named themselves, other less scrupulous members tended to "out" their colleagues in their writings. This has allowed scholars to solve some longstanding mysteries concerning the authorship and dating of the sources of *Il ritorno*.

19   Rosand translates Malipiero's description of Melanto as follows: "Melanto was a lovely but shrewd maiden. She was educated by Penelope herself, who kept her among all the royal delicacies as if she were one of her own daughters. Though Melanto received so many favors from Penelope, the immoral girl failed to shed tears for her mistress's affliction, but rather was accustomed to amusing herself lasciviously with her paramour, Eurimaco" (Rosand 2007a, 141).

20   Carter explains that the use of triple time as a special kind of signifier of mutability, circularity, joy, and emotional emphasis "removed from mimetic function" derives from Monteverdi's Seventh Book of madrigals of 1619 (Carter 2002, 251–252).

21   Monteverdi was clearly expecting a lot of his Venetian audience because not only did they need to understand his manipulation of stylistic markers but they also needed to know the narrative well, as the characters are not easily identified without prior knowledge of the *Odyssey*.

22   As Carter (2002, 260) writes, "the Incogniti were clear that beauty could all too easily be an instrument of deceit (Loredano quotes Tasso: 'Beauty is an infamous monster, an unworldly monster, heaven's scourge with which to beat the world')."

Guide to Further Reading

Ewans (2007) offers an interesting comparison of Monteverdi's opera with Homer. Rosand (2007a) offers by far the most detailed textual study of the opera complemented by her two chapters in (Rosand 2007b and 2007c). Carter (2002) offers a fascinating musicological consideration of the opera that clearly influenced some of Rosand's reading. Carter's work is itself indebted to several of Rosand's fascinating articles including Rosand (1992) and Rosand (1994). Alan Curtis's Novello edition of the full score (2002) is by far the most comprehensive yet published and it contains a useful discussion of sources (some included and translated) in its preface and the full text of the opera. The Novello edition features Anne Ridler's translation, which is a poetic interpretation rather than a literal one. It can thus be useful to consult the translations in the liner notes to unabridged recordings of the opera. The old Faber libretto (Badoaro 1973), with a translation by Geoffrey Dunn, represents Raymond Leppard's early-1970s "realization" that involves various cuts.

These are also evident in the filmed Glyndebourne Production starring Janet Baker and directed by Peter Hall (1973). Several audio recordings of the opera are also cut but some of these offer good performances, notably René Jacobs' 1992 version on Harmonia Mundi. Nikolaus Harnoncourt's complete version for Teldec (1973) is still a fairly reliable classic recording but it has been overtaken by more recent unabridged recordings made by the likes of Gabriel Garido's mainly Italian ensemble (K617, 1998) and Jacobs, whose 2011 complete version offers the five-act scenario. William Christie's French theater production (2004) is still widely considered to be the best of the filmed versions of the opera.

References

Badoaro, G. 1973. *Il ritorno d'Ullise in patria* [libretto], trans. G. Dunn. London: Faber Music.

Caccini, G. 2009. *Le nuove musiche*, ed. H. Wiley-Hitchcock, Madison, IL: A-R Editions.

Carter, T. 1992. *Music in Late Renaissance and Early Baroque Italy*. Portland, OR: Amadeus Press.

Carter, T. 2002. *Monteverdi's Musical Theatre*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Curtis, A. 2002. "Preface," in C. Monteverdi and A. Curtis, eds, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria [full score]*. London: Novello.

Ewans, M. 2007. *Opera from the Greek: Studies in the Poetics of Appropriation*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Haas, R. 1922. "Zur Neueausgabe von Claudio Monteverdis *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*." *Studien zur Musikwissenschaft*, 9: 3–42.

Kirle, B. 2005. *Unfinished Show Business: Broadway Musicals as Works-in-Process*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Monteverdi, C. 2002. *Il ritorno d'Ullise in patria*, ed. A. Curtis. London: Novello.

Osthoff, W. 1956. "Zu dem Quellen von Monriverdi's 'Ritorno di Ullise in Patria.'" *Die Musikforschung*, 11: 67–78.

Palisca, C. 1989. *The Florentine Camarata: Documentary Studies and Translations*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Pirrotta, N. 1984. *Music and Culture in Italy from the Middle Ages to the Baroque: A Collection of Essays*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Rosand, E. 1992. "Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* and the Power of Music." *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 4: 75–80.

Rosand, E. 1994. "The Bow of Ulysses." *The Journal of Musicology*, 12: 376–395.

Rosand, E. 2007a. *Monteverdi's Last Operas: A Venetian Trilogy*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Rosand, E. 2007b. "Monteverdi's Late Operas," in J. Whenham and R. Wistreich, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi*, 227–242. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosand, E. 2007c. "*Il ritorno d'Ullise* (1640), Act V, scene 10," in J. Whenham and R Wistreich, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi*, 243–248. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Steinheuer, J. 2007. "Orfeo (1607)," in J. Whenham and R. Wistreich, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Monteverdi*, 119–140. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Worsthorne, S.T. 1954. *Venetian Opera in the Seventeenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shelley *Prometheus Unbound*

Michael O'Neill

In *Memorial* the modern poet Alice Oswald re-orchestrates Homer's *Iliad*. It is a reworking that involves, in her words, a "reckless dismissal of seven-eighths of the poem." Her sequence, she hopes with much justification, will "have its own coherence as a series of memories and similes laid side by side." She makes new Homer's vision of the anarchic futility of battlefield slaughter and the endless plangency of often stoic lament that comes in its wake. In so doing, her performance is, as she claims, "compatible with the spirit of oral poetry, which was never stable but always adapting itself to a new audience." But classical myths embodied in written language also open themselves to innovative interpretation; they, too, like oral poetry on Oswald's account, turn out to be "still alive and kicking" (Oswald 2012, 2).

Oswald's re-energizing activity in *Memorial* has its roots in a Romantic tradition of emulous originality. If "Homer knew sixty-odd ways to say 'so-and-so died' and they are all different" (Manguel 2007, 224), Oswald shocks the reader into a fresh recognition of the presence of such knowledge in the *Iliad*; her poem seems to speak with particular urgency to and of the present while drawing into itself the long history of Homeric adaptation. In ways that are at once comparable and at times more radically disjunctive, Romantic poetry would not exist, were it not for its often turbulent love-affair with classical myth. In *The Excursion* Wordsworth presents pagan myth with qualified approval as characterizing a time when "The Imaginative Faculty was Lord/Of observations natural" (IV. 703–704; quoted from Gill 2010). Though his explanation of myth as having its origins in "animism" may have been "firmly rational" (Barnard 1987, 27), it left a deep impression on second-generation Romantic poets, especially Keats, who was inspired through imitation and reaction to affirm the value of classical mythology. Yet this affirmation is aware of its own belatedness. The poet of "Ode to Psyche" knows, in building a fane for a distinctly mental goddess, that he lives in times far removed from "happy pieties" (41) and the "fond believing lyre (37)." Classical myth risks obsolescence

here, but, when Keats sees and sings by his "own eyes inspir'd" (43; Allott 1970), it emerges as the source of fresh inspirations. In the final stanza Apuleius's late classicism sponsors a Romantic dedication to a goddess housed "In some untrodden region of my mind" (51).

In *Endymion* Keats turns the story of Endymion's romance with the moon into a vehicle for a story of "Imagination's struggles" (155). In *Hyperion* he finds myth, the overthrow of the Titans by the Olympians, suited, at least partially, to his reflections on an age of revolutions and succession in the world of poetry. *The Fall of Hyperion* suggests that the poet despairs of the efficacy of myth and finds himself, desolately alone, in a landscape that anticipates Arnold's darkling plain at the close of "Dover Beach." But the aloneness is a function of the poet's attempt to sustain a reworked myth; the poem rewrites the earlier *Hyperion* to underscore the heroic burden involved in the effort to adapt the mythic to the contemporary.

Shelley was aware of Keats's fascination with myth and its relevance to his own search for forms in which to express ardent hopes (and latent fears). In an unsent letter to William Gifford, editor of the *Quarterly Review*, in whose pages Keats's *Endymion* had been savaged, he singles out as manifesting "promise of ultimate excellence" (Jones 1964, II. 252) a passage that describes the origin and transmission of myth, poetic "story": a poet, writes Keats, "sang the story up into the air,/ Giving it universal freedom" (II. 836–837). "Giving it universal freedom" eloquently describes one principal goal of the second-generation Romantic recreation of myth; former myths are freed into new and fluid relations.

It has been claimed by Jeffrey N. Cox (1998) that Keats and Shelley were members of a circle presided over by the poet and critic Leigh Hunt, a circle for whom classical myths, their sexual charge liberated, served to challenge repressive orthodoxies. Certainly Shelley's most ambitious poem *Prometheus Unbound* celebrates love as the force that should rule the human and natural world. Shelley turns away from the usual genealogy that has Asia as the mother of Prometheus (with Hesione as his wife) and builds on Herodotus's account of her as his wife (Butter 1970, 280). Her "nuptial boon" (3. 3. 66) is a shell into which Proteus, god of change, breathed "A voice to be accomplished" (3. 3. 67); and much of *Prometheus* uses classical myth as a means, not to look back nostalgically, but to gaze forwards with hope to that which is still "to be accomplished." Such myths are, in Shelley's hands, themselves "protean," the heralds and vehicles of change, among "The wandering voices and the shadows …/ Of all that man becomes, the mediators/ Of that best worship, love" (3. 3. 57–59).

If *Prometheus Unbound* (cited from Everest and Matthews 2000) deploys classical myth as a springboard for a leap into Utopian futurity, it also uses such myth to enact its own sense of the nature and function of poetry. In the preface, thinking about his debts to his contemporaries, but also about his engagement with the past, Shelley asserts:

> Poetical abstractions are beautiful and new, not because the portions of which they are composed had no previous existence in the mind of man or in nature, but because the

whole produced by their combination has some intelligible and beautiful analogy with those sources of emotion and thought, and with the contemporary condition of them.

(Everest and Matthews 2000, 474)

Shelley does not and could not claim to have invented the story of Dionysus and the Maenads, memorably depicted in Euripides' *Bacchae*. But in 2. 3. Shelley shows that he finds in that myth, and in that dramatic treatment of the myth, "an intelligible and beautiful analogy" with his own concern, one bordering on obsession, with processes of world-transforming imaginative inspiration. Panthea speaks of the "oracular vapour […] hurled up" (4) from "the realm/Of Demogorgon" (1–2) as akin to a "maddening wine of life" (7), which leads those who drink it to "uplift,/Like Maenads who cry loud, Evoe! Evoe!/The voice which is contagion to the world" (8–10). These Maenads are the type of those who communicate a "voice which is contagion to the world," a phrase that embodies a characteristically Shelleyan ambivalence: "contagion" might mean "disease" or "the source of enthusiasm." Shelley, through Asia, finds a way of discussing his own project in *Prometheus Unbound* and its likely reception from an angle that is almost detached; the phrasing is aswarm with multiple possibilities and this detachment frees the poem from any suspicion that it is seeking to brainwash the reader, and shows that it obeys its creator's dislike of "Didactic poetry" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 475).

Composed between 1818 and 1820, and published in 1820, *Prometheus Unbound* embodies one of the most creative responses in the Romantic period or, indeed, any literary epoch, to the classical tradition. Most obviously, Shelley enters into transgressive dialogue with Aeschylean tragedy. In doing so he appeals, in his Preface, to the precedent of "The Greek tragic writers" themselves, who displayed in their treatment of history and mythology "a certain arbitrary discretion." They were not bound by "the common interpretation," Shelley argues; "The Agamemnonian story was exhibited on the Athenian stage with as many variations as dramas." He employs "a similar license" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 472) in his "lyrical drama," as he subtitles his work: the hybrid genre suggesting the enactment and resolution of conflict associated with the drama, as well as the expression, often through the strategic deployment of shorter stanzaic forms, of emotions such as love and yearning associated with lyric. It is a title, too, that alerts us to the way in which Shelley's work enfolds many genres from classical literature, including epic (there is, in act 2, a descent into an underworld of sorts, the world of Demogorgon); pastoral; tragic agon; choral lyric.

Aeschlyus's *Prometheus Bound* is Shelley's point of departure. Prometheus, chained to a rock and tormented by Zeus (Jupiter in Shelley's re-handling), features in the Aeschylean play as the friend and benefactor of humankind. He is comforted in his agony (each day his liver is eaten by an eagle and each night it grows again) by a Chorus of Oceanids (daughters of Ocean); Zeus is an oppressive despot and torturer, determined to wrest from Prometheus a secret that the latter refuses to disclose: namely, that the goddess Thetis, loved by Zeus, would give

birth to a child greater than his father. Many elements from *Prometheus Bound* find their way into Shelley's lyrical drama, especially in the first act.

These elements nearly always undergo transformation. Far from seeking to treat the Promethean story in a spirit of dutiful homage to Aeschylus, Shelley wishes to do more than try to "restore the lost drama" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 472) that formed a sequel to *Prometheus Bound*. For example, the "secret known/To thee and to none else of living things" (I. 371–372), as Mercury calls it, is never stated. Jupiter arrogantly claims control over the matter when he boasts of having ravished Thetis and, in so doing, "begotten a strange wonder,/That fatal child, the terror of the earth" (3. 1. 18–19). Here, Jupiter engages in "all-miscreative" (I. 448) parody of Shelley's creative reworking of myth. The "fatal child" may be the anti-Utopian ideas of Thomas Malthus, represented in a coded allegory as the offspring of tyranny. Malthus asserted that population growth, unless controlled by war and famine, will exceed the capacity of human beings to produce food (see Everest and Matthews 2000, 577). In fact, the only "child" to whom Jupiter gives rise is Demogorgon who topples Jupiter with the enigmatic words, "I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child" (3. 1. 54), meaning less that he is Jupiter's literal than his figurative "child." Demogorgon presides over the inevitable end of tyranny (on the lyrical drama's myth) and ushers in an era of potential change. Finally, it may be, Prometheus's "secret" is the foreknowledge that a renovated world is imaginable, one in which it is possible to "Make bare the secrets of the Earth's deep heart" (4. 279).

Aeschylus spurs Shelley in the direction of an independent reconception. The Romantic poet sets out his stall in his epigraph to the volume of which the lyrical drama is the title poem: "Audisne haec, Amphiarea, sub terram abdite" ("Do you hear this, Amphiaraus, concealed beneath the earth"). This epigraph is a line from the lost Aeschylean play *Epigoni*, which is quoted in Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* (II. 25. 61). There, it is a remark addressed to the dead Zeno, a stoic philosopher, by Cleanthes, one of his disciples, who is disgusted by the retreat from stoic principles of another of Zeno's disciples, Dionysius, after the latter had experienced the reality of pain because of a disease of the kidneys. In a draft, Shelley addresses the phrase "To the Ghost of Aeschylus" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 471). This address reinforces the sense that, through the epigraph, Shelley turns the allusion into a provocative challenge to Aeschylus. The lost *Prometheus Unbound* by the Greek playwright "supposed," Shelley tells the reader in his Preface, "the reconciliation of Jupiter with his victim as the price of the disclosure threatened to his empire by the consummation of his marriage with Thetis" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 472). One can see how Shelley politicizes his source story through the use of a word such as "empire" and, in accord with the anti-tyrannical values espoused in the lyrical drama, he announces that he "was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 472). For him, such a "catastrophe" (or dramatic outcome) would be "feeble" because it would involve an understanding of Prometheus as "unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 472).

In the lyrical drama, there is no question of Prometheus "quailing" before Jupiter, but Shelley stages a scene in which his hero does "unsay his high language," or at least subjects it to critique. Ultimately, Shelley is less interested in reasserting the "high language" of defiance than in finding a more mobile mode of speech, one that relies on imagery of music to evoke a growingly participative harmony. Language in the lyrical drama aspires after the condition of "the perpetual Orphic song" (4. 415) described in the final act. Indeed, the play's language traces a journey from rebellious Titanism to an "Orphic song," whose presider is Shelley as Orpheus, the "mythical father of Greek poetry" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 639) bequeathing his transmuting powers to his English Romantic heir.

In the first act, Earth, in response to Prometheus's request that he should re-hear what for the elements are the "treasured spell" (I. 184) of his curse of Jupiter, describes a shadow world "where do inhabit / The shadows of all forms that think and live." The "shadow world" is a vast repository of "Dreams and the light imaginings of men, / Of all that faith creates or love desires" (I. 200–201). From it, Earth summons the Phantasm of Jupiter, who speaks the curse Prometheus once pronounced on Jupiter. Hearing it again, Prometheus is minded to "repent": "Grief for awhile is blind, and so was mine" (I. 303, 304). This assertion that "words are quick and vain" (I.302) leads Earth erroneously to believe that he has capitulated to Jupiter; in fact, he has not, but he has certainly come close to "unsaying his high language." Much of the work's inventiveness, as noted above, derives from its quest for a language that outstrips obdurate defiance in the ethical realm just as it is never content with a "feeble" imitation of classical myth. In the evocation of the shadow-world, for example, Shelley draws on Zoroastrian ideas and images of division as well as classical notion of Hades and Platonic concepts of forms and shadows; all are slightly but perceptibly altered so that they no longer carry quite their customary meanings. The shadow world is less Plato's dimension of eternal Forms than a place where the products of human thought and longing reside: cast-off ideologies, perhaps, but also the materials from which new creations can be made. The passage seems at moments to look at the new myth developing in the lyrical drama through a telescope that trains its eye on itself. Earth tells Prometheus, for example that:

> There art thou, and dost hang, a writhing shade,
> 'Mid whirlwind-shaken mountains; all the Gods
> Are there, and all the Powers of nameless worlds,
> Vast, sceptred Phantoms; heroes, men, and beasts;
> And Demogorgon, a tremendous Gloom;
> And he, the supreme Tyrant, throned
> On burning Gold. (I.203–209)

The characters of the lyrical drama appear in this "There" as in a virtual negative of the play's reality, a negative where the world of *Prometheus Unbound* dwells in a state of potentiality, waiting to be summoned into being by the poet's imaginative fiat. Among

the passage's multiple meanings are hints about the poet's readiness to reshape "Dreams and light imaginings of men" (including classical myths) for his own purposes. Accordingly, the lyrical drama expends time on the process by which Prometheus confronts his past and relatively unregenerate self. In so doing, it trains the reader to be aware of Shelley himself as revoking and reshaping even as he remembers.

Such reshapings occur in local details and larger design. *Prometheus Bound* is usually supposed to be set in the Georgian Caucasus, though there is no "specific sanction for this in Aeschylus" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 477). Shelley's work begins in "a ravine of icy rocks in the Indian Caucasus," a region "associated with the golden age," thus supplying a suitable locale for the renovation of humans and nature imagined by the lyrical drama (Butter 1970, 265). Binding Prometheus to the rock, the sorrowful Hephaestus says in Aeschylus's work: "glad shalt thou be when spangled-robed night shall veil his brightness and when the sun shall scatter again the rime of morn" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 480). In Shelley, these lines are given to Prometheus, who adds his own necessitarian, millennial gloss. The "day and night" are welcome because among "Their wingless, crawling Hours" (I. 48) is one that will witness Prometheus's release and the overthrow of Jupiter's tyranny. There is a difficult optimism here that contrasts with the Aeschylean hero's defiant submission to the dictates of necessity. Necessity in the Greek dramatist means, at the outset, the dictates of power; in Shelley's universe it means an inexorable chain of events that must lead, he at once believes and hopes, to the harmonious and benevolent reconstitution of human societies and individuals.

But that inevitability depends on the right alignment of the will. Shelley's major departure from Aeschylus in his recasting of *Prometheus Unbound* is the description of Prometheus's attempted forgiveness of Jupiter, whom he has been in danger of resembling through his longing for vengeance. As it seeks to negotiate both with vast cultural and political sweeps of time and with contemporary history, the lyrical drama highlights the significance of states of mind, postures of the spirit. Mercury may combine elements from Aeschylus's trio of Hephaestus, Hermes, and Oceanus (Everest and Matthews 2000, 496); he also emerges as a penetratingly dramatic study of unwilling complicity in tyranny: "Alas," he says to the hero, "I pity thee, and hate myself / That I can do no more" (I. 356–357). This "pity" for Prometheus echoes yet contrasts with the latter's for Jupiter: Prometheus's pity catalyses a change of heart; Mercury's speaks of the ineffectual, would be liberal's entrapment within structures of power. Shelley has his eye trained firmly on the condition of post-Revolutionary despair he subjects to acute critique in *Laon and Cythna* (1817), his first major long poem to seek to respond to the new world order bequeathed by the long battle with Napoleon: "gloom and misanthropy have become," he writes there, "the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 37). By embodying such a condition in the updated mythical figure of Mercury, Shelley communicates his abstractions in graspable dramatic form.

The Furies, employed by Mercury to torment Prometheus, function as near-allegorical personifications of the "human anguish" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 503) from which they take their form. In Greek drama, the Furies appear as a chorus in another drama by Aeschylus, his *Eumenides*, the third play of the Oresteian trilogy. They are the loathsome but necessary forces that pursue and madden Orestes after the murder of his mother Clytemnestra: at once embodiments of remorse, guilt, and social disapprobation for the crime of matricide. They must be appeased, as they are through a cult ordained in their honor after Athena has cast the deciding vote in favor of Orestes's acquittal. Shelley emphasizes their role as creatures who illuminate what in his Preface he calls "the operations of the human mind" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 473). They torment Prometheus with his own anxieties and doubts, doubts and anxieties that are, in turn, the product of external events: the fate of Christianity, represented as an epoch of religious wars after the turning away from Christ's example of peace and gentles (I. 546–562); the French Revolution, falling away from dreams of liberty, fraternity and equality into internecine, state-based war (567–577).

Shelley's Furies taunt Prometheus with their ambiguity (I. 483–491), mocking his attempt to define who they are; character and reader experience their voices as both external and internal. Their visions of persecuted idealism passes into a final speech by one of their number, in which the impasse of things as they are arrives at trenchant definition in lines that would influence Yeats's imaginings in "The Second Coming": "The good want power, but to weep barren tears. / The powerful goodness want: worse need for them" (I. 625–626). The Fury voices Shelley's diagnosis of what has gone awry in post-Waterloo Europe, serving as both scourge and minister in the process. Prometheus recognizes the value of the torture the words inflict when he vanquishes the Fury with the line, "And yet, I pity those they torture not" (I. 633): a second catalytic moment of pity in the first act.

The Furies give way to the Spirits of the Human Mind, read by Earl Wasserman as "deriving from the New Testament angels who minister to Christ" and "contrasting with the Hellenic character of the Furies" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 516). Wasserman's contrast brings out how Shelley uses classical allusions as a springboard for wide-ranging cultural exploration. If ideas associated with eastern religions have already appeared in the first act's Zoroastrianism, here the lyrical drama shows an appreciation of some aspects of Christian myth. At the same time, Prometheus, as heterodox Christ, accords with Shelley's admiration for Christ and detestation of historical Christianity. The solacing "angels" may enter from the New Testament, but both the Fourth Spirits adapt Plato to their complex visions. The Fourth Spirit glances at Plato's theory or myth of ideal forms when it describes how the poet creates "Forms more real than living man, / Nurslings of immortality" (I. 747–748), lines that serve as a gloss on how Shelley sees classical myths in his lyrical drama. And the Sixth Spirit's warningly enticing account of "Desolation" (772), the disenchantment attendant on idealistic disappointment, draws on Plato's description of "Calamity" in a passage from the *Symposium*, a

work that Shelley translated in 1818. At such moments, classical nomenclature and precedent serve as a revealing mask for Shelley, as an indirect way of discussing the present, as was noted by a contemporary reviewer who proved equal to the poem's obliquities: "it is quite evident that the Jupiter whose downfall has been predicted by Prometheus means nothing more than Religion in general, that is, every human system of religious belief" (quoted in O'Neill 1989, 92). Prometheus ends the act as a humanist Christ, "The saviour and the strength of suffering man" (817), one who has withstood the torments inflicted by a Jupiter who is, among other things, a tyrannical God the Father.

Shelley's way with tradition is not straightforwardly syncretic. That is, though he is fascinated by affinities between different traditions, he does not seek to weave them into a unified version, an all-encompassing myth of human development. Rather, he makes us aware, as Jerrold E. Hogle (1988) has argued, of crossings between myths in accord with the lyrical drama's imagining of change, one that is evolving, transformative, redefining; Prometheus is neither merely Aeschylus's defiant hero, nor is he simply an avatar of Christ; he shares the one's defiance and the other's capacity for love and forbearance, yet he unlearns the hatred of the former and embraces an eroticism not usually associated with the latter, as the opening of act 2 brings out. In this act, brimming with intimations of transformation, Prometheus does not appear in person, but his erotic power is evoked by Panthea in her account, in 2. 1, of a dream; a Semele undestroyed by Zeus, she describes how she "felt / His presence flow and mingle through my blood / Till it became his life, and his grew mine" (79–81). Allusions to various forms of transformation cluster in this act, which opens with Panthea's vision of a transfigured Prometheus and closes with one by the same character of an Asia who has assumed the appearance of Aphrodite (see Everest and Matthews 2000, 570).

Shelley turns Panthea's role as one of the Oceanides who comfort Prometheus in the source-play into something distinctively Romantic; she becomes an agent and medium of vision. Given this role, it is apt that she should speak lines that not only recall but also startle into vividly verbalized life Botticelli's painting *The Birth of Venus*, which Shelley may well have seen in the Uffizi in Florence (see Everest and Matthews 2000, 570). Panthea recounts a myth of origins, recalling, by means of "The Nereids" (2. 5. 20) and their story, "the day when the clear hyaline / Was cloven at thine uprise, and thou didst stand / Within a veinèd shell, which floated on / Over the calm floor of the crystal sea" (2. 5. 21–24), where the poetry's rhythms are attuned to Asia's Aphrodite-like regal arrival. The very word "hyaline," deriving from the Greek of Revelation 4: 6, transports the poetry back to mythic origins as "glassy sea" (its meaning) could not.

Typifying the way in which classical mythology serves as a potent instigator of imaginative renewals in the lyrical drama, these lines glide into an echo of a famous moment of Romantic wonder, as Panthea (her name lending itself to a buoyant unstated pun on pantheism) alludes briefly to the climax of Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*. Wordsworth writes of having a sense of "something far more deeply

interfused" (96) located in "the light of setting suns, / And the round ocean, and the living air" (98–99). Panthea speaks of a comparable force, which she calls "love" (26) that "Burst from thee, and illumined Earth and Heaven / And the deep ocean" (28–29). When, in Asia's final lyric in the act, she describes how "Borne to the ocean, I float down, around, / Into a sea profound of ever-spreading sound" (2. 5. 83–84), she comes close to evoking the oceanic diffusion of feelings and ideas at which the lyrical drama itself aims. Classical mythology contributes its depths to the poem's "sea profound of ever-spreading sound"; the final stanza of Asia's lyric, depicting a voyage that leads backwards from "Age's icy caves" (98) through "shadow-peopled Infancy" (102) "to a diviner day" (103) constructs its own myth of origins and ends from sources as various as Plato's *Statesman* and Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" (itself influenced by the Platonic myth of the soul's pre-existence). Ultimately the journey is towards a new poetic place "Peopled by shapes too bright to see" (108), forms that prefigure the renovated universe that Shelley seeks to evoke in the final two acts.

But, before he does so, he ensures that his lyrical drama confronts the problem posed by Jupiter and one that haunts any mythology, classical or modern: that is, the nature of evil. The lyrical drama plays with and complicates the Manichean dualism at the heart of Zoroastrianism; such dualism is a force shadowing any account of suffering and evil. Shelley chose Prometheus rather than Satan as his hero because he felt the latter was too entangled in ambivalence, too calculated to engender in the reader's mind "a pernicious casuistry" (Preface, 472). But in his attempt to ensure that his way to the better exacts a full look at the worst, he himself seems consciously to engage in ambivalence, casuistry. Jupiter is at once a symbol of ultimate evil and, it is suggested, a projection, a phantasm, a being who cannot exist once love and pity expel fixation and hatred. Crucial to Shelley's lyrical drama is his inclusion of Demogorgon, a mysterious figure, conjured out of hints and mentions in classical and later texts. His name probably derives from the Demiourgos, who in Plato's *Timaeus* fashions the world out of materials patterned on a divine idea (see Butter 1970, 285). Demogorgon is himself a proof of the complexity of classical legacy, since he seems primarily a Renaissance notion, an "obscurely powerful figure" modelled on the idea of the Demiourgos and associated by Boccaccio, Spenser, Milton, and Ben Jonson with "Eternity […] Chaos, or Fate" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 467, 468). Closer to home, Shelley's friend Peacock, a major ally in the poet's reading and reworking of classical myth, refers to Demogorgon in a note to his poem *Rhododaphne* (1818) as "the genius of the Earth, and the Sovereign Power of the Terrestrial Daemons" (Butter 1970, 285).

Shelley's creative distinction shows in his avoidance of such labels; if his Demogorgon serves as some form of what Mary Shelley calls "Primal Power" (Everest and Matthews 2000, 467), he is more impressive for his capacity to provoke thought. Without his (or, given, the unspecificity of gender-indications, its) involvement, the change instigated by Prometheus's courage and Asia's capacity for love and willingness to follow intimations of renewal would stall. All that is

unleashed by will and love must conform to "Demogorgon's mighty law" (2. 2. 43), as it is described in a scene whose choral inventiveness enacts the metamorphosis of classical myth into Romantic imagining taking place in the lyrical drama. Yet Demogorgon is no all-controlling deity; if he embodies necessity or potentiality, he makes us recognize that such concepts, for Shelley, involve the spirited, free play of human thought and emotion. In the catechizing scene between Asia and Demogorgon (2. 4), Demogorgon serves effectively as a non-interfering therapist: "I spoke but as ye speak" (112), he tells Asia, prompting her awareness that answers to ultimate questions about God and the source of evil must come from the individual: "of such truths / Each to itself must be the oracle" (122–123).

Demogorgon is Shelley's most sombre and yet energizing piece of mythmaking in the work. His presence means that the work is able to gesture towards modes of indirect causation that are unignorable in any consideration of historical process. The final two acts contain much that celebrates the achievement of human free-dom, often through reshapings of classical myth: as Asia and Prometheus retire to their cave in 3. 3., the task of growing "wise and kind" falls to "man" (3. 3. 61), specifically the reader, who is prompted to fill their place in the work's emergent myth. But the lyrical drama will conclude with Demogorgon's "spells" (568) to be considered, should tyranny reassert itself. They include the capacity "to hope, till Hope creates / From its own wreck the thing it contemplates" (573–574). The rec-ommendation is also a description of the lyrical drama's creative mode. *Prometheus Unbound* contemplates the "wreck" of former human hopes, often embodied in past literature and myth, and "creates" out of the wreckage the new "thing it con-templates": a myth of human potential that is wary of myth's tendency to codify into structures of belief, even as it thrives on classical myth's generous invitation to invent in unforeseen ways.

Guide to Further Reading

A standard and erudite work on Romanticism and mythology, including material on Shelley, is Douglas Bush's *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (1937). Harold Bloom's *Shelley's Mythmaking* (1959) sees Shelley as a mythopoeic writer, in which he creates and explores his own myths of relationship. Earl R. Wasserman, in *Shelley: A Critical Reading* (1971), ascribes to Shelley a sophisticated syncretism, one that invites us sometimes deliberately to annul our knowledge of the revised myth's obsolete sources. In *Shelley's Annus Mirabilis* (1975) Stuart Curran provides abundant information about and insights into Shelley's knowledge of Eastern mythology and his fusion of East and West in the *Prometheus Unbound* volume. For brilliant discussion of Shelley and Orphic myth, see James Rieger, *The Muting Within: The Heresies of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1967). Easily the most significant discussion in recent decades of Shelley and myth is contained in Jerrold E. Hogle's *Shelley's Process* (1988). Hogle views Shelley as a poet who challenges past myths in

a spirit more of sympathetic critique than of any syncretic desire to erase disharmony between rival views; Hogle's Shelley frees past myths into new relations with the present; his writings "acknowledge the pull of the past" before they "succeed in escaping from previous boundaries." For Hogle, "Act 1 of *Prometheus Unbound* […] is the most sustained battle in Shelley between the drawing power of established myths and the turning away from them in alternative figures" (172). Standard editions contain useful information about Shelley's handling of mythological sources. There is much of value, in particular, to be gleaned from the commentary and notes in the editions by Butter, and Everest and Matthews; each glosses allusion and provides an intelligent and suggestive account of Shelley's overall purposes. For Shelley's generic originality, see David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (2009). There is much relevant material in *The Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (O'Neill *et al.* 2012).

References

Allott, M. ed., 1970. *The Poems of John Keats*. Harlow: Longman.

Barnard, J. 1987. *John Keats*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bloom, H. 1959. *Shelley's Mythmaking*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Bush, D. 1937. *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Butter, P.H., ed. 1970. *Alastor and Other Poems, Prometheus Unbound with Other Poems, Adonais*. London: Collins.

Curran, S. 1975. *Shelley's Annus Mirabilis*. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library.

Cox, J.N. 1998. *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Shelley, Keats, Hunt, and Their Circle*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duff, D. 2009. *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Everest, K. and Matthews, G. eds. 2000. *The Poems of Shelley: Volume Two: 1817–1819*. London: Longman.

Gill, S., ed., 2010. *21st-Century Oxford Authors: William Wordsworth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hogle, J.E. 1988. *Shelley's Process: Radical Transference and the Development of His Major Works*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jones, F.L., ed. 1964. *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Manguel, A. 2007. *Homer's The "Iliad" and The "Odyssey": A Biography*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press.

O'Neill, M. 1989. *Percy Bysshe Shelley: A Literary Life*. London: Macmillan.

O'Neill, M. and Howe, A., eds. with Callaghan, M. 2012. *Oxford Handbook of Percy Byshhe Shelley*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Oswald, A. 2012. *Memorial*. London: Faber.

Reiger, J. 1967. *The Mutiny Within: The Heresies of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. New York: George Braziller.

Wasserman, E.R. 1971. *Shelley: A Critical Reading*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

George Bernard Shaw
Pygmalion

Helen Slaney

Statues do not speak. Even the ivory virgin who fulfils the idolatrous fantasies of Ovid's Pygmalion does not utter a single word, pliantly yielding to the sculptor's masterhand. Product of his genius, animated at a stroke, she exists purely to receive his devotion and reward his obsession with form. Her perfect, perfected body, untroubled by the stirrings and agitations of speech, need only perform mechanical, unconscious actions: softening, blushing, conceiving; because speech, so the argument goes, defines the subject: the self declares autonomy, and even authority, through the use of discourse.[1] The individual chisels his identity into the world using words to create an impression. Speech has agency; matter is passive. Pygmalion, then, the artist who shapes mute beauty, is the protagonist of a myth wherein desire is consummated; his ivory mistress remains co-operatively receptive, art-object and love-object, classic emblem of a femininity crafted by the artist's tender, inexorable hand. A clear-cut case of poetic chauvinism.

George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (first staged in 1914) complicates matters somewhat. In 1987, Errol Durbach called Shaw's version "demythological," arguing that it debunks the double romance of Pygmalion and Cinderella, kindling a recognition of the paradigm only to douse it with "realist" pragmatism (Durbach 1987, 89). On the contrary, I would argue that Shaw does not represent a rationalist's repudiation of myth so much as a transformation in the substance of that myth, a turning point in our regard for both Pygmalion and the milk-white mannequin known in the nineteenth century as "Galatea."[2] Shaw's artist, elocution coach, and dialect expert Professor Henry Higgins, trades not in marble but in discourse; and herein lies the play's crucial paradox. *Pygmalion*, for Gail Marshall, exemplifies the new wave of intellectual drama that gave Edwardian actresses the opportunity to play more than desirable victims, to exercise "interpretive intelligence [… and]

engagement with textuality rather than the immediacy of physical spectacle"
(Marshall 1998, 143). Eliza, in other words, is a Galatea who has found her voice.
She has escaped not only from the proletarian squalor of "the gutter" but the stulti-
fying rigidity of a myth that condemned her to perpetual objectification.
Empowered by speech, Eliza can leave her pedestal, can declare herself autono-
mous, can choose her own lover and determine her own career. It is a utopian
reading; but myths are not so easily shaken off. Eliza's voice – precisely the index of
her apparent self-assertion – is not her own. From the level of phonemes through
grammatical structure to the pragmatics of her utterances, it is her speech that
Higgins has magisterially crafted with the same tyrannical self-absorption as every
other Pygmalion. Eliza remains encased in myth, even as the myth shifts around her
to accommodate this revolutionary dimension.

Shaw's treatment highlights an important fault line in the Pygmalion myth as it
brings the dynamics of gender into problematic conjunction with the dynamics of
artistic creation. Theatre is a singularly appropriate medium in which to present
these ideas, as the position of the actress – in a more overtly gendered fashion than
that of the actor – is already fissile; is she artisan and/or material? A performer
asserting her presence, and/or a ventriloquist's dummy? The aesthetic struggle
between actor and text encapsulates the inescapable social struggle of the
individual with her language, the frustration of expressing subjectivity in bor-
rowed words (Belenky et al. 1986; Bovenschen 1985; Breitling 1985; Irigaray 1985;
Showalter 1981). This struggle may be gendered, and it certainly appears most
palpably when issues of class are at stake, but it contains a fundamental paradox
even (and especially) for the fluent: mastery entails surrender. Possess language,
and it possesses you. In transferring Pygmalion's craftsmanship from the plastic
arts to speech, Shaw's play brings this paradox to the surface, a paradox whose con-
sequences continue to be played out in *Pygmalion*'s theatrical afterlife.

Before examining the play itself, a brief sketch of some previous Pygmalions
will help illustrate the development of the myth prior to Shaw's intervention. The
fullest and most influential account from antiquity is Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 10.243–
297 (Joshua 2001, 1–6 and Miller 1988, 205–206). Offended by the promiscuity of
real women, Ovid's Pygmalion sculpts an ideal female form from ivory (*niveum
mira feliciter arte/sculpsit ebur formamque dedit*) and falls in love with his creation
(*operisque sui concepit amorem*). The statue is so skillfully executed it appears lifelike:
ars adeo latet arte sua. Pygmalion embraces the figure (256–258), showers it with
gifts (258–262), adorns it in robes and jewels (263–266) and treats it as his bedmate
(268). Finally, the goddess Venus grants his prayer and the statue warms and softens
into life, blushing as she feels his kisses and raising luminous eyes to her lover
(293–294). As Alison Sharrock has shown, this episode reproduces the generically
prescribed relationship between the elegiac poet – the craftsman – and his *puella* or
beloved, the *materia*, which he fashions as an embodiment of his own desires
(Sharrock 1991). According to this general consensus on the expression of power
relations in erotic elegy (Greene 1998; Wyke 1987), the male poet/lover retains

control over the image of the discursively represented *puella* who has no substance, presence, or consciousness that is not conferred by her creator. Despite Pygmalion's postures of *servitium amoris*, it is the statue who remains subservient and disempowered, entirely a product of the masculine discourse in which she has been inscribed.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Pygmalion's statue acquired an onstage presence of unprecedented prominence. At a time when pure white marble was regarded as the epitome of Classical perfection, actors were exhorted to model themselves on antique sculpture (Marshall 1998; West 1991, 119–120). Emma, Lady Hamilton's "Attitudes" (sequences of graceful poses copied from her husband's collection of antiquities) took this injunction literally; as one contemporary commented, "Sir William has actually married his gallery of statues" (Walpole in correspondence, 1791). Emma's tragic heroines and bacchants did not speak, remaining mute testament to the consumption of femininity as docile spectacle. In Rousseau's *Pygmalion: Scène Lyrique* (1770), the statue, now named "Galatea," does deliver a few words, but they scarcely emancipate her. Having asserted her separation from the stone around her – *"Ce n'est plus moi"* – she immediately turns to her creator and, touching him, re-assimilates herself to his essential being: *"Ah! encore moi."* Without a masculine reference point, Galatea is unable to identify herself, lacking orientation in her strange new world. The comic potential of this theme is explored in W.S. Gilbert's satirical *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1871). Gilbert's Galatea, archly innocent in matters of human intimacy, encounters the absurdities of convention that govern sexual relationships. Her Pygmalion is already married, and his wife understandably reluctant to enter a *ménage-a-trois* with a statue; in the end, Galatea sacrifices her own desires and returns to stone to preserve the status quo. Although Gilbert gives Galatea a unique persona not found in previous versions, she still uses her new-found voice to describe her love in terms of submissiveness:

> A sense that I am made by thee *for* thee,
> That I've no will that is not wholly thine,
> That I've no thought, no hope, no enterprise
> That does not own *thee* as its sovereign.
>   (Miles 1999, 422)

By the 1890s, British theatre was polarized in its choice of roles for actresses. At one end of the spectrum, the music halls displayed nude tableaux, "Living Statues," peep-shows thinly veiled in classical nomenclature. Living Statues, in a curious concession to respectability, were tolerated if they neither moved nor spoke, if their nudity constituted visual art rather than performance art, exposing poseable mannequins rather than self-conscious exhibitionists; and yet part of the titillation afforded by these spectacles derived from the audience member's awareness of his proximity to live female bodies (Marshall 1998, 75, 131–135). At the same time, the

impact of Ibsen's drama on the London stage meant that new roles for women emerged: subversive, articulate, rebellious, mature. Hedda Gabler and Nora Helmer offered a dramatic paradigm altogether different from the vapid Victorian ingénue (Marshall 1998, 138–43, 164). Among Ibsen's works, the haunting *When We Dead Awaken* (1899) provides an analogue to Pygmalion in the sculptor Rubek, who has used the body of Irena, his model, to create a work of transcendent art but rejected her sexually. Discarded, Irena has "posed in the music halls, naked on a turn-table as a living statue," abusing her own body as the soulless commodity to which she feels Rubek has reduced it. When the aging Rubek begs her to return and "unlock" his frozen talent, Irena responds with cynical candor: "I haven't the key to you any longer … There's no resurrection of a partnership like this one." Art and sexuality are regarded – by Rubek, at any rate – as incompatible, as opposites; to the consummate artist, female nakedness functions as a professional utensil, not an erogenous invitation.[3]

This is an appropriate juncture at which to re-enter Shaw's *Pygmalion*. Throughout the play, Shaw flirts with the possibility of an erotic attachment between his protagonists, only to explicitly reject it. Not only in his explanatory "Sequel" and his revisions of the final scene – which will be discussed in more detail presently – but in the dialogue itself, Shaw repels any suspicion of romance. At the same time, however, the relationship that develops between Eliza and her tutor is figured in erotic terms, and already implies a certain trajectory as established in the anticipated conclusion to the Pygmalion myth. Shaw's resistance to this trajectory may be read at face value, as a genuine absence of erotic tension (unlikely, given the attention that is drawn to its immanence); or it may be read as a straightforward symptom of sexuality repressed (possible, but this makes the lack of resolution dramaturgically inexplicable); or, most fruitfully, it appears to represent a full-bodied displacement of the mundane erotics of sex by the equally powerful erotics of pedagogy.

"I'm a good girl, I am," protests Eliza, when Higgins proposes taking her into his household, "I don't want no gold and no diamonds" (2.477). Higgins' intentions may be "entirely honorable" (2.1014) in that – like Ibsen's Rubek – he has no sexual use for Eliza's body, but in other respects, the apparently comic misapprehensions of this scene conceal in plain sight the underlying mechanics of seduction for exploitative purposes. The professor's excitement as he is "tempted" by the prospect of educating a "draggletailed guttersnipe" finds expression in the vocabulary of a sordid desire to plunge into the filth she represents: "It's almost irresistible. She's so deliciously low – so horribly dirty – " (2. 268–269). When Eliza objects to the outrageous suggestion that she is to be stripped naked and wrapped in brown paper like a package (a "baggage") while her own clothes are burnt, Higgins responds that "We want none of your Lisson Grove prudery here, young woman. You've got to learn to behave like a duchess" (2. 302–303). Modesty, Higgins implies, has no place in his establishment, dismissing the retention of personal inviolability as mere "prudery." Duchesses must routinely submit to being stripped

and beaten as a corollary to wearing diamonds and riding in taxis. On one level, of course, the threats are comically excessive coming from the blustering but essentially innocuous Higgins, but on another level they duplicate an economy of abuse not altogether uncommon for women from Eliza's class.

In a scene not included until Shaw's 1941 version of the script, Eliza is forcibly bathed by Higgins' housekeeper. Previous productions concluded the scene with Eliza's exit to the bathroom, but the 1941 version makes explicit her loss of control over the appearance and condition of her body.[4] Even if performed behind a screen in accordance with the censor's recommendation (Conolly 2008, 41 [note to lines 545–546]), the dialogue emphasizes Eliza's anguish as she is coerced, naked and screaming, into the water. Throughout the play, "dressing Eliza" becomes almost as important as modifying her speech. This is a typical element of most Pygmalion narratives,[5] beginning with Ovid's, in which the sculptor arrays his statue in rich garments and precious stones. The fact that Eliza may not keep her own clothes receives considerable attention in act 2, and her battle with Higgins in act 4 culminates with the return of her jewelry, an act that provokes him to rage. Their whole quarrel resembles the end of a passionate affair, complete with mutual recriminations, threatened violence, and a ring dashed into the fireplace. Eliza's reaction to Higgins' loss of temper – "drinking in his emotion like nectar," "thrilling with hidden joy" when he admits she has hurt him – exposes the depth of mingled pleasure and antagonism in their relationship, although it is not a conventional coupling.[6] Higgins informs Eliza she is now eligible for the marriage market, following this appraisal of her sexual commodification with the unthinkingly cruel remark that when she sees herself in the mirror she "won't feel so cheap" (4.225). Higgins has not groomed Eliza for his own personal sexual gratification, but has transformed her nevertheless into what he considers an example of feminine refinement suitable for circulation among other men of his status.

When Mr Doolittle arrives to reclaim his daughter, he falls into an identical assumption of impropriety: "She said she didn't want no clothes," he accuses Higgins. "What was I to think from that, Governor?" (2. 944–945). The ensuing transaction comes satirically but discomfortingly close to the sale of a woman for sexual services; indeed, the price of £5, which changes hands, echoes a current scandal concerning the prostitution – effectively, sexual enslavement – of impoverished girls (Marshik 2000, 322). Higgins feels bound to assure Doolittle of his "honorable" intentions, but Doolittle's pragmatism overrides any such scruples: his price for a man with *dis*honorable intentions, he informs Higgins jovially, would have been raised to £50. The policeman dispatched to find Eliza after her disappearance also suspects the professor and Pickering of employing her for "some improper purpose" (5.62). Before Mrs Higgins has been fully apprised of the situation, she likewise assumes a more genteel version of her son's involvement with the girl he has "picked up," interpreting it as romantic. Obtusely, in the face of every other character's immediate apprehension, only Higgins remains oblivious to the eroticism implicit in his use of Eliza.

Even Pickering feels it necessary to determine that his friend will take no advantage of the flower-girl's vulnerability. Higgins responds that he has taught elocution to so many heiresses, "the best looking women in the world," that he has become "seasoned," immune to improper feelings where pupils are concerned. "They might as well be blocks of wood," he adds, a sculptural image that brings Pygmalion again to mind, even in the midst of Higgins' most emphatic denial of sexuality. "I might as well be a block of wood" (2.69–695). He lives with Pickering as a "confirmed old bachelor" (4.217), represented as self-consciously asexual, but Higgins is nevertheless not immune from desire. Desire – eroticism – is instead redirected, diverted from the objective of sexual gratification towards an objective that might be called sublimated if it were not still so intimately rooted in the body: namely, the total creative possession of another human being.

In an exchange that encapsulates this transfer of erotic attachment, Higgins justifies his obsessive interest in Eliza to his mother:

HIGGINS	As if I ever stop thinking about the girl and her confounded vowels and consonants. I'm worn out, thinking about her, and watching her lips and her teeth and her tongue, not to mention her soul, which is the quaintest of the lot.
MRS HIGGINS	You certainly are a pretty pair of babies, playing with your live doll.
HIGGINS	Playing! The hardest job I ever tackled: make no mistake about that, mother. But you have no idea how frightfully interesting it is to take a human being and change her into a quite different human being by creating a new speech for her. It's filling up the deepest gulf that separates class from class and soul from soul. […]
PICKERING	[…] We're always talking Eliza.
HIGGINS	Teaching Eliza.
PICKERING	Dressing Eliza.
MRS HIGGINS	What!
HIGGINS	Inventing new Elizas (3.568–599).

Higgins and Pickering have taken over Eliza's body for their own enjoyment in an unconventional but no less intimate way. The symptoms of Higgins' involvement resemble those of sexual desire: constantly, irresistibly drawn to think about the attributes of the beloved, concentrating obsessively to the point of exhaustion on her features, in particular that overwhelmingly sensual organ, her mouth; entering a scopic fascination that fastens the eyes on the minute play of facial muscles, every twitch and ripple played and replayed, crafted into expressiveness by his own intervention; controlling the issue of breath, from the care of the diaphragm to the expansion and contraction of the throat, soliciting resonance and harmonics: her inhalation, inspirational respiration composed of spirit, or, in other words, her "soul." New Elizas can be invented prodigally, for as long as the breath holds out, since – as Higgins observes – it is possible to become "a quite different human being" through the alteration of one's speech. Mrs Higgins accuses her son of

treating his acquisition like a "live doll," an insight that recalls the Living Statues, female automata stripped of somatic and personal autonomy. Immersed in devotion to their project, their product, Higgins and Pickering fail to notice that the unique liminality of speech, a bodily function under intellectual control, gives it the peculiar capacity to awaken consciousness.

In the first act, Eliza is almost incomprehensibly inarticulate. The string of open vowels, pure emotion unimpeded by significatory consonants – "Ah-ah-oh-ow-ow-oo-o!" – with which she variously responds to threat, excitement, criticism, affront, and surprise, is so idiolectic that it must be translated by Shaw's para-textual directives: "protesting extremely," "strongly deprecating this view," and so on. For the actress, such outcries are incredibly powerful, tapping immediately into the breath and capable of bearing the soul on an operatic scale. They remain, however, fundamentally uncommunicative, stubbornly inseparable in their signification from the crying body that utters them. Higgins calls Eliza an "incarnate insult to the English language": incarnate, an embodied presence; insulting, because she reduces linguistic abstraction to its scandalously incarnate source; and specifically, a blow to Higgins' cherished, privileged, fetishized *English* language ("the language of Shakespeare and Milton"). "A woman who utters such depressing and disgusting sounds has no right to be anywhere," Higgins declares. "No right to live" (1.390–391). The raw cadences of dispossession must be stripped of their offensive stridency and subjected to Miltonic modulation.

Until her unfathomable vowels have been toned down, clipped into prose, Eliza barely counts as human. Her first assertion of an independent subjectivity, marked in fact by Higgins' unintentionally accurate observation that "all this irritation is purely subjective" (4.190), coincides with a realization that she has been irrevocably changed. "I have forgotten my own language," Eliza laments, "and can speak nothing but yours" (5.498–499). From this point on, as if seeking to secure his eroded authority, Higgins repeatedly refers to his pupil as a "creature" (4.139, 4.314, 5.332), further attempting to dehumanize her by claiming to have "created this thing out of the squashed cabbage leaves of Covent Garden" (5.398). Not surprisingly, several commentators have identified the close thematic parallel between Shaw's *Pygmalion* and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*; both works address the flawed dynamic between a creator and his creature / creation, upset as soon as the creature's own consciousness must be acknowledged. Unlike the clean lines of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which in featuring only one perspective presents the statue purely as art-object, mute reflection of her creator's desire, the Frankenstein model disrupts such a self-congratulatory circuit.

Does speech equate to agency? Classic feminism would maintain that the phallogocentric principle of language locates authority in the mastery of discourse, an authority from which women are traditionally excluded: "When a woman writes or speaks herself into existence," according to Carolyn Burke, "she is forced to speak in something like a foreign tongue" (quoted in Showalter 1981, 190–191). Shaw's Higgins effects the creation of humanity by endowing hitherto misused

organs of speech with an articulate voice; and yet this voice, this irreconcilably foreign language, is not Eliza's own. Her mimicry may be impeccable, but it lacks authenticity; to be (re)born into Society, Eliza must submit herself to the alien patterns of speech-production appropriate to her role. Shaw's Galatea has indeed acquired a voice, but right up to the play's notoriously unsatisfying end, she remains Higgins' creature. Even her bid to compete with her former teacher on his own turf, to offer elocution lessons herself and thus become artisan rather than image, prompts Higgins to exclaim, "By George, Eliza, I said I'd make a woman of you; and I have. I like you like this" (5.907). This infuriating re-appropriation subsumes even Eliza's rebellion under the genius of her creator. The more skilled she shows herself in mastering the discourse of the elite, the more she hardens into evidence for Higgins' pre-conditional mastery of her tongue. In this respect, then, speech provides no escape from the confines of the Galatea-myth. Shaw has transferred its erotic drive from the sexual to the pedagogical, and its imposition of form from the visual domain (the female nude) to the aural/oral (the female voice). Despite the potential for emancipation it seems to offer Galatea, *Pygmalion* ultimately traps her again between the unpalatable options of ventriloquism or un-representability; subordination, or silence. Either way, self-abnegation ensues.

Nevertheless, despite this ironic twist, Shaw's *Pygmalion* ostensibly presented an alternative paradigm to a myth previously focused exclusively on masculine desire. Shaw himself maintained that "When Eliza emancipates herself – when Galatea comes to life – she must not relapse. She must retain her pride and triumph to the end" (quoted in Dukore 2000, 149). Specifically, this was supposed to be realized in Eliza's departure from Higgins' household to marry Freddy, and conceivably "make something of him" (5.806), assuming the New Woman's dominant role in her relationship. Having outgrown Higgins, she can successfully break the mold of the myth, escaping the saccharine wish-fulfilment played out on the submissive plasticity of other Galateas. *Pygmalion* may not altogether subvert its inherited power structure, but it does subvert the romantic impulse that altogether protects this power structure from open challenge.

Or does it? The performance history of Pygmalion consists of an ongoing struggle between the creative authority of George Bernard Shaw, insisting upon Eliza's autonomy, and the equally insistent desire of directors and actors to return the myth to its accustomed course. Even in the 1914 premiere, Beerbohm Tree as Higgins undermined the ambiguity of Shaw's original ending by "shoving his mother out of the way and wooing Eliza […] like a bereaved Romeo," showering her with flowers as the curtain came down (Crompton 1987, 52). In this original version of the text, when Higgins orders Eliza to obtain for him his ham and Stilton and gloves, she replies,

ELIZA   [disdainfully]: Buy them yourself. [She sweeps out].
MRS HIGGINS I'm afraid you've spoiled that girl, Henry. But never mind dear, I'll buy
             you the tie and gloves.

> HIGGINS [SUNNILY] Oh don't bother. She'll buy em all right enough. Good-bye. [They
> kiss. Mrs Higgins runs out. Higgins, left alone, rattles the cash in
> his pocket; chuckles; and disports himself in a highly self-satisfied
> manner.] (5.939ff; lines 13–22 of Conolly's Appendix 3)

Tree, however, felt that these stage directions made Higgins' indubitably amorous inclinations insufficiently obvious. Irritated by Tree's presumptuous disregard for his directorial intent, Shaw added a prose epilogue to the play-text (the "Sequel"), recounting the definitive afterlives of his characters: Eliza marries Freddy and Higgins remains an irascible bachelor. Undeterred, producers continued to bring out *Pygmalion*'s supposed romantic sub-text. Most infamously, the 1938 film, later adapted into the musical *My Fair Lady*, concludes not with Eliza's exasperated exit but with her re-entry into Higgins' home and the evident implication – to judge by her indulgent simper – that she will be perfectly content to fetch him his slippers in domesticated perpetuity. In 1941, Shaw made considerable revisions to the script in order to forestall any future ad libs, including the following:

> MRS HIGGINS I'm afraid you've spoiled that girl, Henry. I should be uneasy about
> you and her if she were less fond of Colonel Pickering.
> HIGGINS Pickering! Nonsense: she's going to marry Freddy. Ha ha! Freddy!
> Freddy! Ha ha ha ha ha! [He roars with laughter as the play ends.]
> (5.945–951)

Even this incontrovertible statement was turned against Shaw, however, as Rex Harrison's Higgins scoffs, "Marry Freddy! Ha!" converting the play-text's affirmation of this fact into an improbability duly refuted.

Shaw's unwillingness to relinquish control over his work mirrors Higgins' inability to accept Eliza's independence. Arnold Silver notes the similarity between Higgins' manipulative artistry and that of the playwright-director (Silver 1982, 186–187); as Bernard Dukore shows, Shaw took an intense and at times autocratic interest in the execution of his work (Dukore 2000, esp. 8–15). Through meticulous stage directions, constant revisions to the dialogue, presence in the rehearsal room and written instructions to his actors, Shaw attempted to set strict limits on the ability of performers to alter his aesthetic vision; as *auteur* as well as *auctor*, he continued to exert authoritarian will well beyond the imprint of the text. This extended to issues of vocal delivery. Convinced that the goal of modern theatre was realism, achieved by absolute precision in the technical aspects of stagecraft, especially speech (intonation, articulation, dynamics, phrasing, pitch, and muscularity), Shaw assigned vocal exercises to his actresses to reinvent them not as duchesses, but as artists. Like Ovid's sculptor, he worked to elicit a delivery so lifelike that "all of the technical skills which the actor so painstakingly acquires should be concealed" (Dukore 2000, 51). *Ars adeo latet arte sua.* Dukore recognizes *Pygmalion* as a paradigmatically meta-theatrical play, in which an actress (Eliza) is coached

and rehearses a role that she carries off successfully in public (Dukore 2000, 206–207). What he does not examine, however, is the ensuing conflict between the internal narrative of emancipation and the external narrative of paternalistic tyranny. Any actress playing Shaw's Eliza is perpetually caught between father-figures and narratives that compromise her autonomy. Either she subverts Shaw by falling for Higgins despite all contrary directives, or she consents to subvert Pygmalion's romantic trajectory in carrying out the realist Shavian program. In any case, she becomes the vessel for one male fantasy or another, whether that of the silent, infinitely yielding Living Statue or that of a masculine language that empowers.

Willy Russell's 1981 transposition of *Pygmalion* to a university setting, *Educating Rita*, caustically addresses the sacrifice of a personal voice to the kind of "acceptable, trendy" academic protocol that will enable the young working-class protagonist to qualify as intellectual. Her mentor, Frank, is extremely reluctant to curtail the vitality of her opinions and self-expression. "You're going to have to suppress, perhaps even abandon your uniqueness," he warns her, "I'm going to have to change you" (1.8 [33]). Rita regards this transformation as wholly desirable, representing entry to a privileged status; Frank, the cynical insider, is dubious about the value of the hollow formulae that his protégé so eagerly absorbs. When she praises his excruciatingly highbrow poems for their allusive wit, Frank reacts with a kind of horror:

> FRANK Oh, I've done a fine job on you, haven't I. […] I think that like you I shall change my name; from now on I shall insist upon being known as Mary, Mary Shelley – do you understand that allusion, Rita?
>
> RITA What?
>
> FRANK She wrote a little Gothic number called *Frankenstein*. (2.5 [67–68])

The anxiety latent in Shaw's *Pygmalion* regarding Eliza's appropriation of false language here becomes the primary conflict for Russell, as Rita accuses the professor of attempting to keep her a dull peasant while Frank tries to salvage something of her individual brilliance from the tide of intellectual banality. Like Shaw's treatment, Russell's treatment pivots on the loss of a native language in the adoption of a master-tongue which, it is implied, may be just as impotent. Pygmalion's statue craves speech, but as soon as she attains this desideratum it comes apart in her hands – in her mouth – mocking her with a constant, tormented sense of something lost, instead of won.

This chapter has covered a number of interrelated points, which I will attempt to draw together by way of conclusion. In Shaw's *Pygmalion*, Eliza's body is possessed by Higgins in quite a different way from prior versions. In place of the commonplace erotic urge towards sexual pleasure, it plays out the consequences of an urge towards pedagogical transformation, a metamorphosis effected not on the female form but on the speaking voice. Voice, especially for the professional actor, is not a natural phenomenon but an acquired skill comparable to the

mastery of a musical instrument, only the instrument mastered in this case is the live performing body. Speech organs (male as well as female) are delicate, fickle, responsive to mood, tensile and muscular, finely tuned, supple and sensual, and above all, physical: the primary interface between interior experience and an appreciable externalization of the conscious self. Speech has been equated with empowerment, but it also raises the problematic issue of the inadequacy of language to express anything other than a partial consciousness of phenomenological reality, usually that of a dominant social group.[7] One aspect of Eliza's metamorphosis that has not been addressed in depth here is the gendering of her voice as she learns to masquerade not only as a member of the elite but also, specifically, as a *lady*, a gender role enacted via the tone (timbre, pragmatics) of her utterances.[8] Vocal gendering accompanies socialization into language for both sexes, and while exerting particular pressures upon women, it should be recognized that this mechanism operates across the board.[9] Indeed, the more adept one becomes at discursive appropriation, the more adapted the individual mouthpiece to a socially formulated medium.

Galatea's entry as Shaw's Eliza into the human speech community intervenes provocatively into one of the reigning myths of the twentieth (and twenty-first) century: that the possession of discourse equates to possession of power. Perhaps one way to reformulate this question may also be extrapolated from *Pygmalion*. It is generally assumed that physicality – matter – is passive, the sculptor's block ready for chisels and gazes, whereas the voice lays claim to presence and agency. In Shaw's play, however, this dichotomy does not hold; for the voice itself, that masculine exertion that commands authority, is exposed as a product of shaping and crafting, a physical site where social forces converge. Language surges through us and we seize on it, we worry it, we wear it at our throat like hired jewels; but even in this most deliberate of speech-acts, I am conscious of Pygmalion at work, and cannot yet with integrity embrace objectification's end.

Notes

1   Most pertinently (and not surprisingly) argued from the perspective of lacking access to such authority and self-expression, giving rise to critiques of master-discourse such as Irigaray, who asks, "How can women analyse their own exploitation, inscribe their own demands, within an order prescribed by the masculine?" (1985, 81), a concern applied to the language of art by Breitling (1985, 163–164). Butler reformulates the language / subjectivity issue from various angles (1990, 37; 79; 115–116; 142–145). From a sociolinguistic perspective, however, Gal cautions that *voice* as a metaphor denoting "the public expression of a particular perspective on self and social life, the effort to represent one's own experience" is not necessarily synonymous with the praxis of *speech* (1995, 174). Fantham regards speech as "the mark of humanity"' in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (2004, 18).
2   The name "Galatea" was standardized by Rousseau in 1770, and first appeared in England in 1871 (Joshua 2001, 33, 50).

3   Compare the following passage quoted in Stoichita on the professional artist's model: "She will continue to blush, by instinct, until she steps up onto the wooden pedestal; for the moment a model finds herself on a pedestal, she becomes a natural statue, frozen and cold, and her sex is nothing but a formality" (2008, 141).

4   Gainor reads the bathroom scene as a rape (1991, 235–238). According to Silver "He [Higgins] so completely violates her being" that she contemplates murder and suicide (1982, 216).

5   Stoichita notes that dressing/adorning the statue is a recurring element of the "Pygmalion neurosis" (2008, 195).

6   Silver identifies sado-masochistic elements in *Pygmalion* (1982, 204–217).

7   Spivak articulates the paradox nicely: "The assumption and construction of a consciousness or subject […] will, in the long run, cohere with the work of imperialist subject-constitution, mingling epistemic violence with the advancement of learning and civilization. And the subaltern woman will be as mute as ever" (1988, 275).

8   As Butler shows, "The subject of the speaking "I" is formed by virtue of having gone through such a process of assuming a sex" (1993, 3).

9   This should certainly not imply that the acquisition of language is not gendered. As Gallop points out, although in Lacanian terms "Men are no more in possession of the phallus than women" (i.e., can come no closer to absolute, isomorphic signification), it is nevertheless impossible in practice to distinguish penis from phallus "in the belief that phallocentric discourse need have no relation to sexual inequality, no relation to politics" (1988, 126).

Guide to Further Reading

For more detailed accounts of the myth's historical evolution, see Brown (1999), Joshua (2001), Miller (1988), and Stoichita (2008). On Hamilton's performances, see Lada-Richards (2010) and Touchette (2000). For comment on W.S. Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea*, see Durbach (1987, 89–90) and Joshua (2001, 104–108). On the similarity of *Pygmalion* to *Frankenstein* see Brown (2005, 139); Ganz (1987, 105); Joshua (2001, 57; 63; 121). For the question of women speaking masculine discourse, see generally Irigaray (1985), with comment by Butler (1990).

References

Belenky, M.F., Tarule, J.M., Rule, N., and McVicker Clinchy, B. 2006. *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice and Mind*. New York: Basic.

Bovenschen, S. 1985. "Is There a Feminist Aesthetic?," in G. Ecker, ed., *Feminist Aesthetics*, trans. B. Weckmueller, 23–50. London: Women's Press.

Breitling, G. 1985. "Speech, Silence and the Discourse of Art," in G. Ecker, ed., *Feminist Aesthetics*, trans. B. Weckmueller, 162–174. London: Women's Press.

Brown, S.A. 1999. *The Metamorphosis of Ovid from Chaucer to Ted Hughes*. London: Duckworth.

Brown, S.A. 2005. *Ovid: Myth and Metamorphoses*. London: Bristol Classical Press.

Butler, J. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge.

Conolly, L.W., ed. 2008. *Bernard Shaw: Pygmalion*. London: Methuen.

Crompton, L. 1987. "Improving Pygmalion," in H. Bloom, ed., *George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion*, 45–56. New York: Chelsea House.

Dukore, B. 2000. *Shaw's Theatre*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

Durbach, E. 1987. "Myth and Anti-myth in the Plays of Ibsen and Shaw," in H. Bloom, ed., *George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion*, 87–98. New York: Chelsea House.

Fantham, E. 2004. *Ovid's Metamorphoses*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gainor, J.E. 1991. *Shaw's Daughters: Dramatic and Narrative Constructions of Gender*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan.

Gal, S. 1995. "Language, Gender and Power: An Anthropological Review," in K. Hall and M. Bucholz, eds, *Gender Articulated: Language and the Socially Constructed Self*, 169–182. London: Routledge.

Gallop, J. 1988. "Beyond the Phallus," in *Thinking Through the Body*, 119–133. New York: Columbia.

Ganz, A. 1987. "The Problematic Ending of *Pygmalion*," in H. Bloom, ed., *George Bernard Shaw's Pygmalion*, 99–106. New York: Chelsea House.

Greene, E. 1998. *The Erotics of Domination: Male Desire and the Mistress in Latin Love Poetry*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Irigaray, L. 1985. *This Sex Which is Not One*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell.

Joshua, E. 2001. *Pygmalion and Galatea: The History of a Narrative in English Literature*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Lada-Richards, I. 2010. "Dead but Not Extinct: On Reinventing Pantomime Dancing in Eighteenth Century England and France," in Fiona Macintosh, ed., *The Ancient Dancer in the Modern World*, 19–38. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marshall, G. 1998. *Actresses on the Victorian Stage: Feminine Performance and the Galatea Myth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marshik, C. 2000. "Parodying the £5 Virgin: Bernard Shaw and the Playing of Pygmalion." *Yale Journal of Criticism*, 13, 2: 321–341.

Miles, G. 1999. *Classical Mythology in English Literature: A Critical Anthology*. London: Routledge.

Miller, J.M. 1988. "Some Versions of Pygmalion," in C. Martindale, ed., *Ovid Renewed: Ovidian Influences on Literature and Art from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century*, 205–214. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sharrock, A. 1991. "Womanufacture." *Journal of Roman Studies*, 81: 36–49

Showalter, E. 1981. "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness." *Critical Inquiry*, 8, 2: 179–205.

Silver, A. 1982. *Bernard Shaw: The Darker Side*. Los Angeles: Stanford University Press.

Spivak, G.C. 1988. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, eds, *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, 271–316. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Stoichita, V. 2008. *The Pygmalion Effect from Ovid to Hitchcock*, trans. A. Anderson. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Touchette, L-A. 2000. "Sir William Hamilton's 'Pantomime Mistress': Emma Hamilton and her Attitudes," in C. Hornsby, ed., *The Impact of Italy: The Grand Tour and Beyond*, 123–169. London: British School at Rome.

West, S. 1991. *The Image of the Actor: Verbal and Visual Representation in the Age of Garrick and Kemble*. New York: St Martin's.

Wyke, M. 1987. "Written Women: Propertius' *scripta puella*." *Journal of Roman Studies*, 77: 47–61.

Camus and the Myth of Sisyphus

Kurt Lampe

In one of his journals Camus has jotted down, "The world in which I feel most *at ease*: Greek myth" (2010a, 249). At no point, however, does he offer a clear explanation of what constitutes a "Greek myth" or how it should be interpreted.[1] Regarding the former we can say that he primarily has in mind the traditional stories of heroes and gods passed down by ancient Greek and Roman authors, although he often treats newer fictional and historical narratives in more or less the same way. Regarding the latter, statements are scattered throughout his works. For example, in "Prometheus in the Underworld" he says, "If one man in the world answers their call, [myths] give us their strength in all its fullness. We must preserve this myth, and ensure that its slumber is not mortal so that its resurrection is possible" (1978, 141; cf. 2010b, 80). This seems to imply that myths – like the sleeping heroes they sometimes represent – have a certain fixity of form and meaning, which each generation "awakens." On the other hand, in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, he writes, "Nothing is said about Sisyphus in the underworld. Myths are made for the imagination to breathe life into them" (1991,120). This appears to acknowledge that, notwithstanding their trans-historical stability, myths always present opportunities for imaginative engagement. Only by supplementing their meanings can we "breathe life into them."

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate how Camus gives meaning to just one myth, that of Sisyphus. In the following section I discuss how Camus' beliefs about the human condition determine his parsing and interpretation of the myth's elements. His handling of Sisyphus has given rise to charges of both philosophical obtuseness and "unmythical" and "ahistorical" allegorizing.[2] In order to evaluate both criticisms in the subsequent two sections I show that the matrix of meaning Camus constructs around Sisyphus evolves through critical interaction with classical texts and their previous scholarly, philosophical, and poetic reception. It is

thus more complex than some analytical critics realize, and far from a crude allegory of supposedly eternal truths.

Sisyphus' Hatred of Death and Scorn for the Gods

The Myth of Sisyphus concludes with a section also entitled "The Myth of Sisyphus," of which the first third concerns Sisyphus before his legendary punishment (1991, 119–120). As Faucon and Archambault have documented, the first paragraph follows P. Commelin's *Nouvelle mythologie grecque et romaine* extremely closely. The second paragraph is equally indebted to an article in P. Larousse's *Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe siècle.*[3] First Camus sketches Sisyphus' character: he was the "wisest and most prudent of men," but also a criminal (1991, 119). Next he summarizes the reasons for Sisyphus' punishment. He stole and shared the gods' secrets. He chained Death himself, causing havoc until Pluto sent Mars to rescue him. Finally, after dying he tricked Pluto into releasing him "temporarily" in order to chastise his wife for not burying him. He then refused to return to the underworld.

Camus concludes the overview of Sisyphus' adventures with a pointed comment:

> You have already grasped that Sisyphus is the absurd hero. He *is*, as much through his passions as through his torture. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted toward accomplishing nothing.
>
> (Camus 1991, 120)

This is where Camus' imaginative re-interpretation really begins. The reader is not only reminded that she should be looking for "the absurd" in this story, she is provided with a set of specific heuristic tools: "hatred of death," "scorn of the gods," and "passion for life" are all symptoms of Sisyphus' absurd sensitivity.

I will begin by focusing on hatred of death and scorn of the gods, leaving passion for life for later. Early in *The Myth of Sisyphus* Camus sketches some of the experiences that make up the absurd. For example, he imagines the moment when a young man, hitherto straining toward his goals in the future, suddenly realizes "that he stands at a certain point on a curve that he acknowledges having to travel to the end" (1991, 13). The epiphany that death is the end toward which his aspirations convey him raises a shiver, which Camus calls "the revolt of the flesh" (1991, 14). This is one manifestation of the absurd. Another is the encounter with bodily mortality, "this inert body on which a slap makes no mark" (1991, 15). A third is the way in which an agent's awareness of her future annihilation saps her freedom to posit goals and make decisions (1991, 57). Camus does not explain this problem clearly, but we can clarify it with reference to the foregoing: if her endeavors as a whole converge on her non-being, or on the dumb carnality of her lifeless corpse, then they are somehow drained of efficacy.[4] In these ways the experience of mortality destabilizes human values and goals.

The foregoing phenomenology of mortality dovetails with Camus' diagnosis of the malaise of human reasoning (1991, 16–20).[5] He explains that people seek clarity and familiarity in their interactions with the world, yet on rigorous investigation, find that nothing in the world is fully clear or familiar. Absolute truth and ultimate meaning are elusive. "The world itself is not absurd," he stipulates. "But what is absurd is the confrontation of this irrational [*sic*] and the wild longing for clarity whose call echoes in the human heart" (1991, 21). The feeling of death's absurdity and the malaise of reason are thus two parts of the same existential estrangement.

Hatred of death can certainly arise at this level. For example, the starting point for Caligula's journey into absurdity is the realization that "Men die; and they are not happy" (2006a, 40). He is outraged by the unintelligibility of suffering and mortality. But Sisyphus, like Caligula, becomes an absurd hero by lucidly acknowledging the implosion of value and sterilization of hope. Such heroes perceive that, since values are illusory, quantity of experience is more important than quality (1991, 60–92).[6] That is why Camus "sees no contradiction" in the tradition that Sisyphus, the wisest of mortals, was also a "highwayman." There exists no firm evaluative distinction between brigandage and any other realm of experience. This brings us to the second reason that death is hateful, as a privation of some quantity of experience (1991, 63).

We are now in a position to explain how Camus infers Sisyphus' hatred of death. Like Caligula, Sisyphus both understands how mortality makes human life absurd and refuses to resign himself to it. Repudiating the absurd, he hates the facticity of dying; acknowledging the absurd, he hates the privation of experience. In a futile display of defiance, Caligula demands the moon and goes on a killing spree; his dying words are "I'm still alive!" (2006a, 104). Sisyphus imprisons Death himself. But neither can overcome his condition: Caligula's maniacal violence and impossible demands conclude with his assassination, and Sisyphus is dragged back to the underworld.[7]

Let us now turn to Sisyphus' scorn for the gods. One of Camus' epigrammatic formulations is that "the absurd is sin without god" (1991, 40). Wanting to understand the world and being dissatisfied with it are both forms of sin: one places human reason above divine revelation, the other implies criticism of the Creator (1991, 40, 49). Thus, the absurd hero sins against gods whose very existence, paradoxically, he considers unknowable (1991, 51). From this perspective Sisyphus' "levity in regard to the gods" (1991, 119) can be interpreted as the loosest of allegories. The first meaning of Sisyphus' connivance against Zeus and disobedience of Pluto would simply be that he "sinfully" trusts his own reasoning and follows his own impulses, disregarding any supposedly transcendental sources of truth or morality.

But this does not fully explain either the emotional valence or the cognitive structure of "scorn," which involves a negative judgment about its object. Although the French *mépris* has broader connotations than English "scorn," ranging from "disregard" to "disdain,"[8] we should recall that Camus groups it with hatred of death and

love of life as a "passion." This fits better with disdain than disregard. We should also observe that his account of Sisyphus' punishment ends with the same word:

> Sisyphus, proletarian of the gods, powerless and rebellious, knows the whole extent of his wretched condition: it is what he thinks of during his descent. The lucidity that was to crown his torture at the same time crowns his victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn (*mépris*).
>
> (Camus 1991, 121)

The emphasis on Sisyphus' rebellion and his personal relationship with his punishers encourage us to read *mépris* as an impassioned response rather than as magnanimous detachment. Sisyphus' *mépris* for the gods, like his *mépris* for the punishment they assign him, shares with his hatred of Death a vehement hostility toward its object.

Sisyphus' scorn has attracted much critical commentary. In one of the earliest Anglo-American philosophical responses to Camus, Nagel writes:

> We can salvage our dignity, he appears to believe, by shaking a fist at the world which is deaf to our pleas, and continuing to live in spite of it. This will not make our lives un-absurd, but it will lend them a certain nobility.
>
>   This seems to me romantic and slightly self-pitying.
>
> (Nagel 1979, 22)[9]

Solomon and Sherman develop this criticism more sympathetically, suggesting that Camus, who was captivated by Nietzsche, nevertheless falls into what Nietzsche calls "the shadow of god."[10] In other words, what Camus calls the universal longing for absolute values is actually the feeling of loss expressed by the madman of Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*:

> "I'm looking for God! I'm looking for God!…. *We have killed him* – you and I! We are all his murderers. How did we do this? How were we able to drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon?"
>
> (Nietzsche 2001, 125)

Compare the final lament of Camus' Caligula:

> "If I'd had the moon, if love were enough, all might have been quite different. But where could I quench this thirst? What human heart, what god, would have for me the depth of a great lake?"
>
> (Camus 2006a, 103)

Camus' absurd heroes cannot accept the absence of God's abyssal profundity and horizon-setting commandments and prohibitions. According to this interpretation the origin of Sisyphus' scorn is Camus' own resentment toward a God who has withdrawn His orienting presence.

But resentment toward "God's empty throne" does not exhaust the motivation for Sisyphus' scorn.[11] We could also take it as an angry rejection of the rules

attributed to gods *by mortals*. In other words, like his criminality Sisyphus' impiety could represent revolt against the supposedly transcendental truths of human conventions and institutions. The gap between the superficial and the latent meanings of Sisyphus' story, which we must fill during the process of interpretation, leaves his scorn over-determined. In order to get a clearer perspective on several possibilities opened up by "hatred of death" and "scorn of the gods," and to see how Camus acknowledges the historicity of this complex, it will be useful to compare what he says about "Greek" rebellion nine years later in *The Rebel*.[12]

Epicurean Hatred of Death and Scorn for the Gods

Part II of *The Rebel* begins with a prehistory of "metaphysical rebellion" in Greek literature (Camus 2008, 83–87), which is inexplicably missing from Bower's translation. In it Camus distills the product of his extended reflections on Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, Sophocles' Theban plays, Homer's Achilles, Plato's Callicles, and Epicurus and Lucretius. Here I will focus on his treatment of the Epicureans, which is the most fully developed, though previous scholars have scarcely addressed it.[13]

Camus defines metaphysical rebellion as "the justified claim of a desire for unity against the suffering of life and death – in that it protests against the incompleteness of human life, expressed by death, and its dispersion, expressed by evil" (2000, 30). The "protest against the incompleteness of human life" clearly resonates with Sisyphus' hatred of death. Less obviously, the "protest against evil" permits us to interpret Sisyphus' scorn for the gods as a "justified claim against" the cause of "the suffering of life." Compare Rieux in *The Plague*, whose patient endurance of innumerable meaningless deaths finally snaps: "[T]here are times in this town," he explains afterward, "when I can only feel outrage and revolt" (Camus 2001, 169). The Jesuit Paneloux responds with a sermon concluding, "We must accept what is outrageous, because we have to choose to hate God or to love him. And who would choose hatred of God?" (Camus 2001, 176) Interpreting *The Myth of Sisyphus* retrospectively, we might say that "hatred of gods" as agents of unjustified suffering is precisely what Sisyphus chooses.

In *The Rebel*, however, Camus stipulates that metaphysical rebellion requires monotheism (2008, 84–85); because the Greeks acknowledge no single cause for the human condition, this sort of revolt is essentially foreign to them. Even Aeschylus' Prometheus "does not set himself against the whole of creation, but against Zeus, who is never more than one of the gods" (2008, 83; cf. 2010a: 128). The principal unifying agency in Greek thought is "nature," and "rebelling against nature amounts to rebelling against oneself. It's banging your head against a wall" (2008, 83). Hence Achilles, Oedipus, Antigone, and Callicles never contemplate "total condemnation" of the world (2008, 84). Only with Epicurus and Lucretius, whom Camus misleadingly groups as "the final moments of ancient thought" (2008, 85), do we approach metaphysical rebellion.[14]

The starting point for Camus' analysis is Epicurus' "dreadful sadness" (2008, 85). This approach to Epicurus once again owes something to Camus' fascination with Nietzsche, who writes in *The Gay Science*:

> *Epicurus* … Only someone who is continually suffering could invent such happiness – the happiness of an eye before which the sea of existence has grown still and which now cannot get enough of seeing the surface and this colourful, tender, quivering skin of the sea: never before has voluptuousness been so modest.
>
> (Nietzsche 2001, 45)[15]

Yet Camus has also read (at least) Epicurus' *Letter to Menoeceus*, *Principal Sayings*, and *Vatican Sayings*, quotations from which anchor his interpretation.[16] The thematic centerpiece of this interpretation is *Vatican Saying* 31: "One can secure oneself against all sorts of things, but when it comes to death, we are all like inhabitants of a demolished citadel" (2008, 85). Camus believes that "anxious fear of death" is the root of Epicurus' sadness. In order to escape it Epicurus "exhausts himself raising walls around man, refortifying the citadel" (2008, 86). One part of this fortifying self-isolation involves identifying with the atoms, the basic elements of Epicurean physics. Camus interprets this as ontological petrification: "Stone: that's Being" (2008, 85). This petrification extends into Epicurus' ethical goal, which is the removal of pain and distress. "It's the happiness of stones," Camus comments (2008, 85). The other part of this self-isolation is "killing" people's "expectation of salvation," which otherwise "pulls them from the silence of the citadel" (2008, 85).[17] This mortification of hope is accomplished by attributing "vertiginous remoteness" to the gods, who neither care about nor act upon the world. Combined with ontological and ethical petrification, it enables Epicurus' paean of triumph: "When the inevitable hour of departure sounds, our scorn for those who vainly protest against existence will ring out with this fine song: 'Ah, how worthily we have lived!'" (2008, 86).

It is clear from this interpretive summary that Camus' Epicurus is not a metaphysical rebel. His repressed fear and bitterness lead to ratiocinative defense mechanisms, not open condemnation of the universe and its makers. His physics and ethics extinguish desire for joy the world cannot provide, while hardening the body against suffering; and his theology eliminates hope. But Camus believes that the repressed returns in Lucretius, who "trembles […] at the injustice done to man" (2008, 87). He cites Lucretius' depiction of Iphigenia's slaughter in the name of religion (*DRN* 1.84–101), and his mention of "divine" lightning that "bypasses the guilty and will deprive the innocent of life through an unmerited punishment" (*DRN* 5.1103–1104). Lucretius' indignation breaks Epicurus' compromise formation, leading this Roman Epicurean not only to "deny the unworthy and criminal gods" (2008, 87) but to put Epicurus in their place: "Thus religion in its turn is overthrown and trampled underfoot, victory raises us to the heavens" (*DRN* 1.78–79). Camus hints that this is the beginning of ideological terror, in which the "scorn" for the unenlightened attributed to Epicurus (in a "quotation" invented by

Camus[18]) somehow evolves into Lucretius' vision, at the conclusion of book 6, of "divine sanctuaries bursting with corpses" (2008, 87). It thus looks forward to part III of *The Rebel*, which climaxes with a critique of fascist and especially Soviet ideologies and the atrocities to which they lead.[19]

This interpretation not only grows out of Camus' reading of (Nietzsche's reading of) Epicurus, it also develops the post-Enlightenment motif of Lucretius' tortured psyche.[20] For example, Camus may have been familiar with Constant Martha's *Le poëme de Lucrèce*, which argues at length that Lucretius' "sadness," "bitterness" and "bitter reflections," "spiritual affliction," "profound emotion," and "irascibility" are all the result of the encounter of his poetic sensitivity with Epicurus' "unjust and hard" doctrines.[21] More importantly for us, Camus' appropriation of this interpretive tradition generates a more nuanced understanding of how the impulses underlying Sisyphus' hate-scorn complex manifest themselves. His reading of Epicurus and Lucretius concretizes the polysemy of Sisyphus' fabulous story in two historically particular forms, each with its own psychology and latent political ideology. Classical texts thus help Camus to bridge the gap between the dehistoricized, individual problematic of *The Myth of Sisyphus* and the historicized politics of *The Rebel*.

The Happiness of Sisyphus, Pindar, and Valéry

Although it is now very familiar, Camus intends the final sentence of *The Myth of Sisyphus* to be shocking: "One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (1991, 123). After all, how can the victim of eternal torment be happy? Building on his interpretation of Camusian scorn, Solomon speaks of Sisyphus' "'sour grapes' self-satisfaction that tries to pass as 'happiness,' the spiteful joy of 'negating the gods,' that desperate last-ditch strategy of accepting and even celebrating a hopeless and even futile life."[22] There is some justice in Solomon's accusation. Camus emphasizes Sisyphus' reflection on the futility of his labor during his descent from the mountain. The decision to continue despite the lucidity of his reflection makes him "superior to his fate"; as we have already read, "There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn" (Camus 1991, 121). This suggests that Sisyphus' courageous ability and pugnacious desire to face the truth help to make him happy. But this happiness is not solely grounded in Camus' celebration of "puckish despair."[23] We can broaden our understanding of the essay's ending by asking why it begins with an epigraph from Pindar's *Pythian* 3.61–62: "O my soul, do not aspire to immortal life, but exhaust the limits of the possible" (1991, 2).[24]

If we take this quotation to anticipate Sisyphus' scornful attitude toward human and divine laws, we may suspect Camus of ignoring its context. Pindar's theology and politics are deeply conservative.[25] The occasion and meaning of *Pythian 3* are debated by scholars,[26] but one of its messages is that human beings, acknowledging their subordination to the gods, must moderate their thoughts and hopes

(3.59–60). Thus, Coronis, pregnant with Apollo's child, is killed for sleeping with a mortal man (Camus 1991, 5–37); her son Asclepius, gifted with healing powers, is incinerated for resurrecting the dead (Camus 1991, 38–58); and even the divine marriages of Cadmus and Peleus are followed by the suffering of their children (1991, 86–103). In each case humans who have the good fortune to mingle with the gods are reminded of their ethical and ontological subordination. This is hardly a lesson Camus' Sisyphus would deign to learn.

But perhaps we are focusing on the wrong facet of Pindar's message. Pindar also intends to celebrate his patron Hiero, "Who rules as king of Syracuse,/kind to strangers, not begrudging to good men, a wondrous father to strangers" (1991, 70–71). In other words, he both subtly advises Hiero to practice moderation in his prosperity and praises him for already doing so. Simultaneously he elevates and cautions himself in a similar manner (1991, 107–111).

This message of simultaneous self-assertion and self-limitation is one Camus can eagerly embrace. In fact, the penultimate section of *The Rebel* is entitled "Moderation and Excess" (2000, 258–265), and takes the Greek Nemesis as its figurehead (2000, 260).[27] In *The Rebel* Nemesis represents the disastrous consequences of erecting transcendental principles on the foundation of metaphysical rebellion. In other words, justified protest against unintelligible suffering should not lead to fantasies about a world free from evil. That would introduce intelligibility at the cost of justifying murder. A utopian future justifies any means whatsoever of its actualization; Lucretius' nightmare becomes manmade reality. It would then be humans themselves, not the gods, who inflicted their own punishment.

But in *The Myth of Sisyphus* the accent is on moderation, not the penalties for excess. Far from positing universal values, Sisyphus simply resolves to find good and evil within his absurd situation:

> His fate belongs to him. His rock is his thing. Likewise, the absurd man, when he contemplates his torment, silences all the idols. In the universe suddenly restored to its silence, the myriad wondering little voices of the earth rise up. Unconscious, secret calls, invitations from all the faces, they are the necessary reverse and price of victory.
>
> (1991, 123)

Sisyphus' "victory" represents his forswearing of divinely guaranteed values. He accepts the burden of living in divine "silence," struggling to hear the "unconscious, secret calls" of a merely human world. But there is also something beautiful in the "myriad wondering little voices of the earth." On the one hand this recalls Camus' early notebooks, where the condition for ecstatic sensitivity to "the world of flesh and light" is the disciplined silence of the mind's hopes and fears (2010b, esp. 9, 17, 43, 55, 66–67, 105, 130, 173, and so on).[28] On the other, Sisyphus' rock represents immanent purpose: "The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart" (1991, 123). This anticipates Rieux's Sisyphean struggle against the illness in *The Plague*, which he says is simply "his job" (2001, 93–100). Sisyphus'

happiness is thus stretched between the joy of evanescent moments and the purposefulness of tasks that lack ultimate justification. This is a consciously limited form of happiness, scrupulously pruned of superhuman hopes, and in this respect harmonizes with Pindar's sentiment.

In fact, the significance of this epigraph can be pursued even further, since Camus knows it is also the epigraph to Paul Valéry's "The Graveyard by the Sea" (1920). Through the dazzling interplay of symbols in this poem – the graveyard and its dead, the ocean and its waves, the sun and its light – Valéry explores his desire for knowledge, unity, eternity, and ultimately death.[29] His reverie climaxes with an address to Zeno:

> Zeno, Zeno, the cruel Elean Zeno!
> You've truly fixed me with that feathered arrow,
> Which quivers as it flies and never moves!
> The sound begets me and the arrow kills!
> Ah sun! … What a tortoise shadow for the soul,
> Achilles motionless in his giant stride!
> (1971, 121–126)

Here Valéry invokes two Zenonean paradoxes, both of which are designed to show that motion is impossible: an arrow in flight cannot progress, and Achilles can never overtake a tortoise (Ar. *Ph.* 6.9.239b5–18 with Simpl. *in Ph.* 1014.5). The goal of these paradoxes is usually understood to be confirmation of Parmenides' ontological monism. The allure of this monism "kills" Valéry, whose swift soul (Achilles) struggles in vain to overtake unmoving Being (the tortoise).[30] But the last three stanzas reject this mortifying nostalgia, beginning with the very next line: "No, no! Up! and away into the next era!" (Valéry 1971, 127) Valéry propels himself into the succession of temporality, embracing a Dionysian vision of the sea that previously appeared immobile: "Yes, gigantic sea delirium-dowered, / … Absolute hydra, drunk with your blue flesh, / Forever biting your own glittering tail" (1971, 132–138). His opening citation of Pindar thus signifies his regretful rejection of unity in preference for sensuality and plurality.

Camus' thoughts on "The Graveyard by the Sea" can be inferred from an unpublished poem of 1933 (Camus 2006b, 976–978).[31] Here a man observes the Mediterranean at morning, midday, evening, and again in the morning.[32] The setting is emphatically *not* a cemetery: "At the graveyards by the sea there is only eternity. / There infinity with its funereal spindles grows weary." With these verses Camus repudiates Valéry's nostalgia. He writes that the Mediterranean is "made to our measure, / Man and tree unite and in them the universe plays a comedy, / in travesty of the golden number." In mocking the numerological ideal of the golden number Camus rejects the desire to reduce the world to arithmetic clarity. It is thus not coincidental that he frames *both* ends of his poem with the "brilliant blue teeth" of the sea, recalling Valéry's "hydra, drunk with your blue flesh, forever biting your own tail." Camus' protagonist observes "yellow, green and red" curtains, "young

girls with naked arms hanging out the linen," and in general the vivid activity of Mediterranean life. Although his Mediterraneans "know their limits" and "wait for death" in its purity, Camus' emphasis is on the dazzling sensuality of their life.

Camus' appropriation of Valéry's epigraph in *The Myth of Sisyphus* thus builds on his criticism in 1933 of Valéry's reluctance to abandon unity and purity for temporality and carnality. This in turn amplifies the significance of that epigraph for the understanding of absurd happiness. Far from communicating a message about submission to divine hierarchy, for Camus these verses express the need to abandon the temptations of both popular faith and Valéry's esoteric mysticism. Later they will also come to signify rejection of political absolutes. This is what Camus intends by giving up "immortal life." "Exhausting the limits of the possible" means embracing immanent purposes, even though they lack foundations, and enjoying each pleasant moment, even though many moments are almost unbearably painful.

Conclusions

Camus' highly systematic literary project, which was (absurdly) cut short by his accidental death in 1959, means that the significance of Sisyphus ramifies across his works. Camus writes:

> My work will count as many forms as it has stages on the way to an unrewarded perfection. *The Stranger* is a zero point. Likewise, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. *The Plague* is a progress, not from zero toward the infinite, but toward a deeper complexity that remains to be defined.
>
> (2010a: 20. Cf. 1978: 155)

In this short chapter, I have only begun to explore the Greek and Roman texts and their previous interpreters which helped Camus to arrive at the "zero point" of *The Myth of Sisyphus.* Through *The Rebel* in particular I have also looked at how the same texts supported his "progress toward a deeper complexity that remains to be defined." Thus, we can see that, despite his sometimes universalizing and ahistorical attitude, the "world of Greek myth" by which his project was nourished weaves together a colorful and ever-changing sequence of scholarly, literary, historical, and philosophical influences.

Notes

1   Crochet (1973, 21).
2   Regarding allegory see Chabot (2002, 103–104) and Miller (2007, 43–45). Regarding philosophy, see later.
3   Faucon in Camus (1965, 1451–1452); Larousse (1865–1888, vol. 14, 773–774); Commelin (1907, 238–239); Archambault (1972, 17–21).
4   Compare Nagel (1979, 12).

5 On the importance of phenomenology in Camus' work (often misleading presented as metaphysics), see Solomon (2006, 34–59), Carroll (2007, 55–60), and Sherman (2009, 38–44).

6 For criticism of this inference see especially Nagel (1979), Solomon (2006, 34–59), and Sherman (2009, 32–37).

7 On the relationship of *Caligula* to *Myth* see Miller (2007, 47–51), Sherman (2009, 80–85).

8 Robert (2001, s.v. *mépris*, def. 1–3).

9 Cf. Ayer (1946, 161–162).

10 Solomon (2006, 41–42), Sherman (2009, 25–37). Regarding the evolution of Camus' relationship to Nietzsche, see Weyembergh (1998, 41–50).

11 Sherman (2009, 46).

12 Scorn is also a theme of Camus' enigmatic final novella, *The Fall* (published 1956). See Aronson (2004, 192–200), Sherman (2009, 86–105).

13 Fraisse (1959) badly misunderstands Epicureanism, while Archambault (1972, 60–62) merely identifies the passages and the 1920 translator (Ernout) of Lucretius used by Camus.

14 Epicurus lived ca. 341-270 BCE, and Lucretius in the middle of the first century BCE.

15 On Nietzsche and Epicurus see Caygill (2006).

16 He quotes *Letter to Menoeceus* 135, *Principal Sayings* 1–2, and *Vatican Sayings* 14 and 31. Camus' Greek was rudimentary (Quilliot in Camus 1965, 1173, cited by Crochet 1973, 28), so he was certainly using translations. For *PS* 1 the latter part of his translation coincides with Genaille (1933, 249): "Le sage qui, possède la béatitude immortelle [*sic*], n'a point d'affaires et n'en crée a personne." Either Camus or his immediate source has perceived that the first part of Genaille's translation is badly confused. The Greek subject is τὸ μακάριον καὶ ἄφθαρτον. Thus, Camus rightly gives, "L'être bien-heureux et immortel n'a point d'affaires et n'en crée a personne" (Camus 2008, 85). For *PS* 2 Camus adopts almost verbatim the translation of Guyau (1927, 109–110). I have not been able to identify his source for the other translations from Epicurus.

17 The motif of Epicurean "mortification" may be influenced by Guyau (1927, 110–125).

18 The quotation at the end of the last paragraph does not appear in Epicurus, though it may be inspired by *PS* 20, *Men.* 133, and Lucretius, *DRN* 2.1–61.

19 Soviet politics were intensely debated in Camus' post-war intellectual circles. See Aronson (2004, 66–175), Zaretsky (2010, 79–119).

20 See Johnson (2001, 79–133).

21 Martha (1896, 315–337).

22 Solomon (2006, 58).

23 Solomon (2006, 34).

24 Camus uses the 1931 translation by Puech (L. Faucon in Camus 1965, 1430).

25 See, for example, the readings of *Pythian* 1 by Segal (1998, 9–24) and *Pythian* 2 by Most (1985, 60–132).

26 Young (1968, 64–68), Slater (1988), Lefkowitz (1991, 50–55).

27 On Camus' Nemesis see Ward (1990, 183–186), Viglieno (2007).

28 Cf. Sherman (2009, 21–25) on Camus' early essays.

29 See especially Ygraunin (1997, 1012–1023); also Shankman (1994, 122–143), Hamilton (2003, 48–51).

30 Ygraunin (1997, 1018–1019).

31 Cited by Foxlee (2010, 99).

32 On Camus' "Mediterraneanism," see Ward (1990); Foxlee (2010); Richardson (2012, esp. 82–86).

Guide to Further Reading

Archambault (1972) is the best starting point for tracing Camus' indebtedness to ancient Greek sources. Miller (2007, 43–51) situates Camus in a rich tradition of theorizing and portraying "authentic" subjectivity by adapting classical Greek and Roman models; Richardson (2012) does the same for Camus' deployment of the signifiers "Greece" and "Rome." On Camus' philosophy, see especially Sharpe (2015), Sherman (2009), Solomon (2006) and Weyembergh (1998). All of these topics are illuminated in the biography of Zaretsky (2010), as well as in the absolutely superb Aronson (2004) (simply the finest biography I have ever read: simultaneously gripping and intellectually subtle). Finally, the extensive notes in both Gallimard editions of the *Oeuvres complètes* of course merit consultation.

References

Archambault, P. 1972. *Camus' Hellenic Sources*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Aronson, R. 2004. *Camus & Sartre: The Story of a Friendship and the Quarrel that Ended It*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Ayer, A.J. 1946. "Novelist-Philosophers-VIII: Albert Camus." *Horizon*, 13, 75: 155–168.

Camus, A. 1965. *Essais*. Introduction by R. Quilliot. Annotated and edited by R. Quilliot and L. Faucon. Paris: Gallimard.

Camus, A. 1978. *Lyrical and Critical Essays*. London: H. Hamilton. (First published 1967.)

Camus, A. 1991. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. J. O'Brien. New York: Vintage International. (First published 1955.)

Camus, A. 2000. *The Rebel*, trans. A. Bower. London: Penguin. (First published 1953.)

Camus, A. 2001. *The Plague*, trans. R. Buss. London: Penguin.

Camus, A. 2006a. *Caligula and Other Plays*, trans. S. Gilbert, H. Jones, and J. O'Brien. London: Penguin.

Camus, A. 2006b. *Oeuvres complètes: I (1931–1944)*. Édition publiée sous la direction de Jacqueline Lévi-Valensi, avec, pour ce volume, la collaboration de Raymond Gay-Crosier [*et al.*]. Paris: Gallimard.

Camus, A. 2008. *Oeuvres complètes: III (1949–1956)*. Édition publiée sous la direction de Raymond Gay-Crosier. Avec la collaboration de Robert Dengler [*et al.*]. Paris: Gallimard.

Camus, A. 2010a. *Notebooks 1942–1951*, trans. J. O'Brien. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee. (First published 1965.)

Camus, A. 2010b. *Notebooks 1935–1942*, trans. P. Thody. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee. (First published 1963.)

Carroll, D. 2007. "Rethinking the Absurd: *Le Mythe de Sisyphe*." in E.J. Hughes, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Camus*, 53–66. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Caygill, H. 2006. "Under the Epicurean Skies." *Angelaki*, 11, 3: 107–115.

Chabot, J. 2002. *Albert Camus, "La pensée du midi."* Aix-en-Provence: Édisud.

Commelin, P. 1907. *Nouvelle mythologie grecque et romaine*. Paris: Garnier Frères.

Crochet, M. 1973. *Les mythes dans l'oeuvre de Camus*. Paris: Éditions universitaires.

Foxlee, N. 2010. *Albert Camus' "The New Mediterranean Culture": A Text and its Contexts*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Fraisse, S. 1959. "De Lucrèce à Camus, ou les contradictions de la révolte." *Esprit*, 3: 437–457.

Genaille, R. 1933. *Diogène Laërce: Vie, doctrines, et sentences des philosophes illustres, new translation with introduction and notes*. 2 vols. Paris: Garnier Frères.

Guyau, J.-M. 1927. *La morale d'Épicure et ses rapports avec les doctrines contemporains*. Paris: Librairie Félix Alcan.

Hamilton, J.T. 2003. *Soliciting Darkness: Pindar, Obscurity, and the Classical Tradition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Johnson, W.R. 2001. *Lucretius and the Modern World*. London: Duckworth.

Larousse, P. 1865–1888. *Grand dictionnaire universel du XIXe siècle : français, historique, géographique, mythologique, bibliographique, littéraire, artistique, scientifique, etc*. Paris: Administration du grand dictionnaire universel.

Lefkowitz, M. 1991. *First-Person Fictions: Pindar's Poetic "I."* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Martha, C. 1896. *Le poëme de Lucrèce: Morale-religion-science*, 5th edn. Paris: Librairie Hachette.

Miller, P.A. 2007. *Postmodern Spiritual Practices: The Construction of the Subject and the Reception of Plato in Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Most, G.W. 1985. *The Measures of Praise. Structure and Function in Pindar's Second Pythian and Seventh Nemean Odes*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Nagel, T. 1979. *Mortal Questions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nietzsche, F. 2001. *The Gay Science*, ed. B. Williams, trans. J. Nauckhoff, and A. Del Caro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Puech. A., trans. 1931. *Pindare. Vol. 2: Pythiques*. Paris: Belles Lettres.

Richardson, L. 2012. "Sisyphus and Caesar: The Opposition of Greece and Rome in Camus' Absurd Cycle." *Classical Receptions Journal*, 4, 1: 66–89.

Robert, P. 2001. *Le Grand Robert de la langue française: deuxième édition dirigée par Alain Rey du Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française*. Paris: Dictionnaires le Robert.

Segal, C. 1998. *Aglaia: The Poetry of Alcman, Sappho, Pindar, Bacchylides and Corinna*. Lanham, MD: Littlefield and Row.

Shankman, S. 1994. *In Search of the Classic: Reconsidering the Greco-Roman Tradition, Homer to Valéry, and Beyond*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Sharpe, M. 2015. *Camus, Philosophe. To Return to Our Beginnings*. Leiden: Brill.

Sherman, D. 2009. *Camus*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Slater, W.J. 1988. "Pythian 3: Structure and Purpose," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, 29, 2: 51–61.

Solomon, R.C. 2006. *Dark Feelings, Grim Thought: Experience and Reflection in Camus and Sartre*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Valéry, P. 1971. *The Collected Works of Paul Valéry. Vol. 1: Poems*, ed. J. Mathews, trans. D. Paul and J.R. Lawler. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Viglieno, L. 2007. "Némésis, Déesse inspiratrice du dernier Camus?," in A. Fosty, ed., *Albert Camus et la Grèce* 49–66. Aix-en-Provence: Écritures du Sud.

Ward, B. 1990. "The Recovery of Helen: Albert Camus's Attempt to Restore the Greek Idea of Nature." *Dionysius*, 14: 166–194.

Weyembergh, M. 1998. *Albert Camus, ou la mémoire des origines*. Paris: De Boeck & Larcier.

Ygraunin, J. 1997. *Pindare et les poètes de la célébration. Vol. VII: le Symbolisme au bord de la Méditerranée. Valéry*. Fleury-sur-Orne: Minard.

Young, D.C. 1968. *Three Odes of Pindar: A Literary Study of Pythian 11, Pythian 3, and Olympian 7*. Leiden: Brill.

Zaretsky, R. 2010. *Albert Camus: Elements of Life*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Creative Strategies
Lars von Trier's Medea

Mette Hjort

Lars von Trier's *Medea* was commissioned for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation by Birgitte Price, who offered the then still emerging young director an already completed script and an almost fully selected cast (Udo Kier as Jason was Lars von Trier's choice) to work with. Broadcast on Danish television on Good Friday in 1988, *Medea* was made in the wake of the first of von Trier's "Europa" trilogy films, *Element of Crime* (1984), and concurrently with the shooting of its second film, *Epidemic* (1987). The status of the script that Price offered von Trier was rather unique, having been written by Denmark's most celebrated art film director, Carl Th. Dreyer (1889–1968), in collaboration with Preben Thomsen, a priest with knowledge of classical antiquity. Based on Euripides' treatment of the Medea myth in his second play from 431 BCE, Dreyer's script was to have become his first color film, with opera singer Maria Callas as Medea and Peter O'Toole as Jason.[1]

Von Trier has always expressed a strong affinity with Dreyer, and while a "shared commitment to producing great uncompromising cinematic art" is the most important basis for it, the filmmakers' personal histories, which are similarly traumatic in certain respects, may also be a factor (Schepelern 2010). The affinity in question is thematically apparent in the oeuvre of the younger filmmaker, who, much like Dreyer, has been drawn to stories about suffering women. Cameo appearances by von Trier wearing Dreyer's tuxedo in the TV series *The Kingdom* playfully articulate a sense of connection, as do von Trier's well-known remarks about the pleasures of owning Dreyer's desk and tea cup (Schepelern 2010). Queried as to his reasons for accepting the

commissioned Medea project, von Trier's response evoked a personal and intimate relation to the script's principal author:

> I accepted the project because someone else would have taken it if I hadn't. And it would have been horrible for me if someone else had taken it—to have to see someone else doing it. So I did it. But I would say that I'm not really directly inspired by Dreyer so much as I'm inspired by his way of directing. For I think that he's a very honest director. He never made anything in a calculated fashion. Or, in other words, he always, so to speak, went against what was in vogue.
>
> (Björkman and Nyman 2003, 101; cited in Schepelern 2010)

As an instance of what Hans Georg Gadamer might call the "effective history" (1975) of Euripides' *Medea*, von Trier's *Medea* is especially complex. The film is the result of the reworking of a classic text – itself mediated by centuries of commentary and interpretation – not by one art film director, but two, although it is von Trier who assumes the position of executive control that is so decisive for the authorship of a cinematic work.[2] Whereas Dreyer felt compelled to state his intentions with reference to Euripides, Trier's main concern is to make his intentions vis-à-vis Dreyer clear. In an interview with *Cahiers du Cinéma*, Dreyer (jokingly?) evoked telepathic contact as way of describing and legitimating his approach: "*Medea* is very cinematic, and I take a free approach to the play. I've namely asked Mr. Euripides to give me free hands, and he's quite happy to do so" (Wellendorf 1988, 16). The brief statement that prefaces the Dreyer/Thomsen script defines the approach taken in terms of creative freedom, based on inspiration, but also truth:

> This screenplay is not directly based on the tragedy of Euripides, but it is inspired by his play. At the same time the film is an attempt to tell the *true* [emphasis added] story that might have inspired the great greek [sic] poet.[3]

Citing or imitating Dreyer's telepathic gesture, Trier himself claimed to have had contact with the Danish master during the making of *Medea*. The inter-titles that introduce Trier's film describe his project as a personal and humble homage to Dreyer:

> This film is based on a script by Carl Th. Dreyer and Preben Thomsen – after Eurpides' drama MEDEA. Carl Th. Dreyer never realized his script. This is not an attempt to make a "Dreyer" film, but with due reverence for the material – a personal interpretation and homage to the master.
>
> Lars von Trier.

In interviews given during the film's process of production, Trier pointed out that *Medea* would be more "accessible" than *Element of Crime* and *Epidemic*, "for the simple reason that the story is known in advance." Tellingly, he went on to say: "but I have of course produced the images in such a way that nobody will be able to doubt that it's also *my* film" (Jensen 1988). The complex production history of *Medea*, it is clear,

is shaped by attempts to define the precise nature of the art film director's role when mediating myths that viewers will be inclined to think of as well known.

Reference to von Trier's training at the National Film School of Denmark provides a way of making sense of the director's use of the term "personal," and of his evocation of individual style with reference to a script inherited from a master filmmaker who himself emphasized creative freedom in relation to a canonized playwright's treatment of an ancient and still enduring myth. Founded in 1966, the National Film School of Denmark has come to be seen as one of the world's leading film schools. The story of the School's success involves many elements, but relevant here are graduates' frequent references to the encouragement they receive to produce *personal* films. Documentary filmmaker Mikala Krogh puts the point as follows:

> The Film School has a very clear philosophy […]. A […] guiding principle is that the students are supposed to figure out what they, quite personally, have to offer. We were taught to ask questions like, "What are some of the basic stories that I, personally, have to tell and that I can build on?"
>
> (Hjort, Bondebjerg, and Novrup Redvall 2013)

A philosophy of cinematic creativity that gives weight to the idea of filmmakers developing a deeply personal relation to their material might be seen as especially crucial in the context of classical materials that have been told and re-told, interpreted and re-interpreted by countless artists, scholars, translators, and teachers, over a period of many centuries. Responses to the question as to how best, as an artist, to engage with such materials clearly vary quite significantly. In the performing arts, one approach has been to make room for innovation, creativity, and a personal perspective through a process of historical updating. The thought, it seems, is that absolute contemporaneity helps to convey certain deeper truths, but also to articulate the continued relevance of an age-old myth.[4]

Von Trier looks elsewhere for a personal angle on his mythic material, for in the *Medea* that emerges from his engagement with the Dreyer/Thomsen script there is a sense of a distant Nordic past, the film's locations being provided by the wind-swept beaches and dunes of the West coast of Denmark. During the production of the film, von Trier expressed a personal attachment to the unique qualities of the sea- and landscapes of the small islands of Mandø and Fanø, the former being reachable, at low tide, by a seabed road: "I'm very inspired by *Vadehavet* because of the unique nature. So I shot a lot of the film there, as well as in the Mønsted chalk mines" (Jensen 1988). In an earlier newspaper article, tellingly entitled "Greek Drama in Viking Garb," von Trier links his choice of locations to a home-grown, and thus, national genre, that of the *"Danmarksfilm"*: "We get around in Denmark, so you could say that the Greek tragedy becomes a real '*Dansmarksfilm*'" (Thorup Thomsen 1986). The *visual* transposition of *Medea* from ancient Greece to a later, but still historically distant Viking North brings into play another personal dimension, one mediated by the national identity of

the film's maker. Von Trier worked closely with the Viking Museum in Roskilde, and with Moesgård Museum in Aarhus, which also has expertise in the area of Viking history. Von Trier's production team borrowed equipment of all sorts from various Viking festival organizers, and a Viking boat, measuring 20 meters and weighing 20 tons, from the Byrding Boat Guild near Haderslev. The Viking house in Fyrkat became Medea's home in the film, von Trier having been given permission to create a temporary artificial swamp in its immediate vicinity (Thorup Thomsen 1986). If concepts of Denmark and Danish history figure centrally in von Trier's artistic strategy of personalization, they do so in ways that are anything but hackneyed. In von Trier's *Medea*, as we shall see, the various locations are transformed, through stunning images, into a mythological landscape that is entirely consistent with the distinctive style for which the director is known. No one, paraphrasing von Trier, can doubt that Medea is *his* film, not Dreyer's.

Von Trier's film favors spectacle over plot, with the exception of one central action. More specifically, von Trier devotes considerable space to his re-interpretation of the action that makes the myth of Medea so tell-able, namely her children's death at their mother's own hands. In von Trier's provocative re-telling, one of Medea's two children actively supports the mother's murderous intentions. Here too we detect continuity with the director's carefully crafted artistic persona, for von Trier has made provocation as well as what he at times calls self-provocation an integral part of his artistic practice, and a recurring element, not only of his films, but of his particular way of framing them, be it through manifestos or exchanges with critics and festival organizers, among others (Hjort, Bondebjerg, and Novrup Redvall 2011). Von Trier's response to the artistic challenge that the re-telling of a well-known myth represents is to produce a film that is deeply personal, both in terms of its visual style and plot elements. *Medea* provides a visual spectacle, largely based on sea- and landscapes, that is not easily forgotten, and a murder scene so provocative that it too becomes deeply etched in viewers' memories. I propose in what follows to look closely at von Trier's approach to visual spectacle, and briefly at his treatment of the most central element in the Medea story. To set the stage for such a discussion, I briefly outline some of the tendencies in the reception history of von Trier's provocative film.

The Reception of von Trier's *Medea*

There is a clear distinction to be made between the reception of von Trier's film following its broadcast on Danish TV in 1988 (almost entirely negative), and the film's international reception, both at the time and later (very favorable indeed). Over the years, as von Trier has delivered on the promise he demonstrated as an emerging director in 1988, newer Danish perspectives on *Medea* have been closer to international ones. Whereas the positive assessments pinpoint features that support von Trier's inclusion in a *Companion* devoted to the reception of classical

myth, some of the objections leveled at von Trier's work provide insight into his artistic strategy for somehow making the iconic text his.

Von Trier's *Medea* won the Jean d'Arcy prize for Best TV Film in 1989, but only became more readily available to art film viewers with its DVD release through Facets in 2003. The DVD release prompted an enthusiastic response from critics writing for *The New York Times*, *The Chicago Reader*, *The Chicago Tribune*, among others. Central to this response was an appreciation of what von Trier had achieved with the technology of video and with the window of TV (*Medea* was initially shot on ¾" video and broadcast from 1" video, following re-shooting of the initial images on 35mm film and a subsequent transfer of this material to video [Schepelern 2000, 140–141]). Referring to von Trier as a "vastly talented and infinitely perverse" filmmaker, Dave Kehr draws attention to the filmmaker's technical innovations and to their implications for the film's distinctive visual style:

> Taking the greatest limitation of video—the medium's lack of depth of field—Mr von Trier turns it into a strength, flattening perspectives in a way that collapse his foreground characters into the tumultuous backgrounds (waves, wind-swept fields) that surround and dominate them.
>
> (Kehr 2003)

Entitling his review of von Trier's work "Taking Wing: Heights of Achievement," Michael Atkinson describes *Medea* as the filmmaker's "most vivid" film, and as his "least indulgently snarky." He too is intensely interested in the film's visual style, making reference to von Trier's "grandly expressionist" images, to his judicious use of "solarized shadow," "shifting video backgrounds," and "visual degradation." Atkinson also takes seriously von Trier's stated intent to produce a homage to Dreyer: "von Trier's stark tableaux evoke frames from *The Passion of Joan of Arc*, *Vampyr*, and *Day of Wrath*." Writing after *Breaking the Waves* (1996), *The Idiots* (1998), and *Dancer in the Dark* (2000), Atkinson identified the earlier and less well-known *Medea* as a true high point within the filmmaker's oeuvre: "[With *Medea* von Trier] achieves an abrading, intimate, primal force his later films only hint at. It's difficult to imagine the Euripides original ever being more eloquently adapted" (Atkinson 2003). Atkinson's assessment is by no means idiosyncratic. Writing for *Senses of Cinema*, Thomas Beltzer, for example, draws attention to visual continuities between von Trier's breakthrough film, *Element of Crime*, and *Medea*, before concluding that *Medea* is the filmmaker's "most beautiful and elegant film" (Beltzer 2002/2005).

When von Trier's *Medea* was shown on Danish TV, the critical response was almost uniformly negative. A few lone figures – the filmmaker Christian Braad Thomsen (1988) and Jan Kornum Larsen (1988) – disagreed not only with the verdicts rendered, but with their dismissive nature, to the point of being moved to describe the reception of von Trier's work as an instance of "murder perpetrated by critics" (Braad Thomsen 1988). Preben Thomsen, co-author of the Dreyer

script that von Trier inherited, condemned the younger filmmaker's efforts for their insistence on spectacle at the expense of plot:

> Lars von Trier has absolutely no understanding of words. He's cut our manuscript by about two thirds. But he should keep his image-driven fingers off one of the world's greatest, and most dramatic, of female figures. For me it's about life and death, and about words, the interpretive power of which is far greater than images.
>
> (Lyster 1988)

Although scholars have noted von Trier's shift of the story from Greece to Denmark, and from indoor settings to outdoor ones, little notice has been taken of the refusal of words to which Thomsen rightly draws attention. Von Trier's omissions are by no means trivial, for they include lines reprising text from Euripides' play that classicists consider crucial to the dramatic characterization of Medea and Jason and thus to their reception by Greek audiences. Dreyer and Thomsen, for example, have Jason insist that Eros, having made Medea love him, is ultimately his true benefactor. The argument, which is part of the *agon* or rhetorical contest between Jason and Medea in Euripides (lines 526–535), is put forward by Jason as a means of exempting him from the debt of gratitude that he otherwise owes the lover he has abandoned. Jason's argument cancels the Greek idea of "double determination," where action is at once shaped by divine forces yet a matter of free will, and reflects the influence of Sophistic thinking. Jason's argument is likely to have "detracted from [his] moral credibility and intellectual seriousness" in the Greek context (Blondell et al. 1999, 17) and was no doubt envisaged by Dreyer and Thomsen as playing a similar role in the film for which their script was to provide a blueprint.

There are also cases, no doubt equally exasperating to Thomsen, where von Trier omits deviations from the Euripidean text that appear to have been attempts to render the myth psychologically plausible to contemporary audiences. The script by Dreyer and Thomsen includes an important, highly verbal scene that tends towards seduction yet ends with Jason's rejection, once again, of Medea. Fueled by Medea's question as to whether Jason remembers his dreams, the scene provides a history of their early desire for one another, and parallels the passage in Euripides where Medea indicates that she will begin her "speech where everything began" (line 475) and then goes on to recount her bloody deeds, committed in connection with Jason's pursuit of the Golden Fleece. Von Trier remains true to the Dreyer / Thomsen script, in his emphasis on desire as opposed to violent actions. At the same time, his rendering of the scene is almost entirely wordless, the emotional, and indeed sexual energy of the former lovers' interaction being conveyed through truly virtuoso images that are defined by dramatic colors and editing, with each of the characters initially occupying a different part of the color spectrum. Thomsen and von Trier, it is clear, disagree profoundly over the power of words as compared to images. And that disagreement is not without implications

for questions of innovation, creativity, and personal voice, as von Trier understands them in relation to the task of engaging effectively with a well-known myth.

Dan Nissen, for many years Head of the Museum and Cinemathèque at the Danish Film Institute, was willing to recognize von Trier's abilities as an image maker in his response to *Medea*, but raised questions, having to do with both coherence and propriety, about the story that the filmmaker was trying to tell. In his highly critical review of the film, Nissen reminded the reader of von Trier's *Element of Crime* manifesto, where the filmmaker insisted on fascination as a source of creative energy. The archivist drew attention to what he saw as a formal feature of von Trier's work, the tendency for the horizontal thrust of the action or plot to be interrupted by images that convey the filmmaker's fascination with the characters' inner landscapes of thought and emotion. The spectacle that these images provide may be visually intriguing, even fascinating, but in Nissen's mind they cannot compensate for the deficiencies of the Medea story, as told by von Trier:

> There's enough to look at. Trier still knows how to produce images, but clearly didn't feel like making Medea. But, as usual, he did feel like being provocative. Medea's murder of her dear young ones and the horse's agony as it expires are sure to offend; especially in the midst of coffee, and on a solemn Good Friday. The provocation isn't the worst of things, but it's a pity there's not more substance to it.
>
> (Nissen 1988)

From Settings to Fascinating Landscapes: Trier's Depiction of Nature

Aristotle's thinking about Greek tragedy in what we know as *The Poetics* sheds light on the structure of works from the fifth century BCE, including Euripides' *Medea*. The philosopher is likely to have found considerable merit in the plot of *Medea*, for it is fueled by conflicts arising, as was preferred, "in relationships of *philia*" (*The Poetics* 1443b; cited in Blondell et al. 1999, 22). At the same time, Aristotle comments critically on Euripides' use of unexpected plot twists, in the form of Aigeus' arrival in Corinth and the appearance of the sun chariot that rescues Medea. Relevant in the context of a discussion of Trier's treatment of the Medea myth is Aristotle's hierarchy of tragic elements, for in his quest to bring a personal dimension to its re-telling, the filmmaker clearly inverts an order that was considered normative in classical antiquity. Whereas Aristotle considered plot (*mythos*), character (*ethos*), and thought (*dianoia*) most important, followed by diction (*lexis*), music (*melos*), and spectacle (*opsis*), Trier's *Medea* is very much about the images produced by cinematographer Sejr Brockmann and editor Finnur Sveinsson, at times supported by Joachim Holbek's suggestive original music (Holbek was allegedly asked to compose "romantic music" with a spaghetti western feel to it; Erlendsson 1988).

One of von Trier's striking departures from the Dreyer/Thomsen script is the decision to make use of outdoor and underground spaces, the former being used, not as mere settings, but as landscapes demanding attention in their own right. In von Trier's depiction of nature, we discover another instance of creative, stylistic innovation, for as Martin Lefebvre, referring to the work of Anne Cauqelin, remarks, the concept of landscape, of "space freed from eventhood," was absent from ancient Greek thought (Lefebvre 2006, 22). There is a clear tendency in von Trier's depiction of outdoor, natural spaces towards what Lefebvre calls "autonomous landscapes" (Lefebvre 2006, 23). That is, the camera lingers on stunning natural spaces, which may evoke moods, but are ultimately semantically underspecified and thus not principally vehicles for the representation of action. Striking examples of the *quasi*-autonomy of nature as visual spectacle, include the following shots and sequences, all of them accompanied by Holbek's music: the scene, lasting 26 seconds, that shows Medea as a tiny figure against a vast, wind-swept beach, following her preparation of a poisoned gift for Glauce (Figure 31.1); the sequence intercutting images of Jason's new bride caressing Medea's poisoned gift and aerial as well as other shots of the horse, already poisoned by a scratch from the crown, galloping to its agonizing death on a vast beach (Figure 31.2); sequences showing the mesmerizing texture of grasslands from the aerial perspective of a helicopter, with the diminutive and anguished figure of Jason moving in and out of the frame (Figure 31.3).

As more than mere representations of a setting where actions unfold, these depictions of nature demand the spectator's attention, to the point where fascination with their aesthetic properties moves to the very center of the viewing experience.[5]

Figure 31.1

Figure 31.2

Figure 31.3

Analyzing *Medea* as a work of aesthetic experimentation within the expressive and technical confines of the TV medium, Henning Pryds notes that "the perspectives [in the film] seem always to be unstable. The agents are not fully anchored in relation to [a given] space, nor is [that] space [anchored] in relation to them" (Pryds 1991, 146). This instability, which facilitates the autonomy of the film's depictions of nature, is signaled early on, in a sequence preceding the film's title. Watching Aigeus' boat sail by, as if from the perspective of

Medea, whose face has just been captured in a medium close-up, the viewer unexpectedly finds herself watching the sea in which the woman is standing, from behind her back. Captured from behind, Medea's figure diverts the emphasis to the natural spectacle before her, to paraphrase David Melbye's comments on Caspar David Friedrich's landscape depictions in *Landscape Allegory in Cinema: From Wilderness to Wasteland* (Melbye 2010, 10). Seconds later, the camera dives beneath the sea, further de-stabilizing the sequence and the spatial and perspectival relations that are constitutive of it.

Careful reflection on the role of depicted nature figures centrally in *Medea*'s production history, for the director made a point of emphasizing his preference for a "mythological landscape" (Bruun 1988). He further indicated that he saw the depicted natural elements and spaces as "underscoring the action and mood" and as articulating the chorus' comments. Von Trier would seem here to have in mind various sequences where depictions of nature are used to express the thoughts and feelings that are driving the plot. For example, after Medea's exchange with Aigeus about the weighty problem of childlessness, von Trier cuts to an image of a dramatic sky (Figure 31.4). Medea subsequently appears in the frame, as though rising into it from below (see Figure 31.5).

As far as von Trier's remarks about nature and the choric commentary are concerned, it is worth noting that in the Dreyer/Thomsen script (n.d.) the chorus plays a very minimal role, offering only some prefatory and largely plot-orienting remarks, and a few concluding comments about the hand of God. When von Trier refers to the "chorus' comments" as "lying in the images," as in the case of the "lark, who sings above a sundrenched landscape, as the killings occur" (Bruun 1988), he must necessarily have the Euripidean text in mind. The sights and sounds

Figure 31.4

Figure 31.5

of nature, it would appear, are intended in this crucial scene, to establish an upbeat mood. That mood may be consistent with von Trier's provocative intentions, to which I return below, but connects only very loosely with the comments made by the chorus of Corinthian women in Euripides' play. Overall, the "internal audience—the chorus of Corinthian women—responds sympathetically" (Blondell 1999, 157) to Medea, offering proto-feminist reflections on the plight of women. Yet, there is considerable nuance in their commentaries, and certainly utterances reflecting the view that her actions are at odds "with law and custom" (line 813) and require prevention (lines 1,258, 1,275). The semantic meaning of the natural scene is, quite simply, underspecified (although clearly at odds with the horror of Medea's actions), lending support to the argument that von Trier prioritizes visual spectacle over plot in what is ultimately a highly aestheticized, tableau-like treatment of the myth.

Always the Provocateur: From one Murderer and Two Deaths to Two Murderers and a Suicide

It is fair to say that visual imagination, as opposed to storytelling, has always been von Trier's strength. When it comes to storytelling, von Trier's efforts are inconsistent, and sometimes they are provocative to the point of being offensive, even irresponsibly so. Unsurprisingly, the thread of provocation running through the director's oeuvre is also present in *Medea*. Euripides' tragic play depicts Medea as the conflicted killer of her two sons, with the murder perpetrated off-stage and with a sword. Dreyer and Thomsen retain the psychological conflict, but bring the

Figure 31.6

Figure 31.7

killing into the picture, in a bedroom scene where Medea administers what she describes as "medicine" to her children. Von Trier not only depicts the killing, now by hanging, but makes the eldest of the sons the mother's accomplice. Discussing the twist that he brings to the well-known plot, Trier evokes research, fascinating to him, about the alleged collaboration of victims of Nazi experimentations with their victimizers. The director's comments bring to mind some of the premises of

Help me, Mother.

Figure 31.8

his later films, including those of *Manderlay* (2005), where slaves are represented as desirous of, and as participating in, their own enslavement (Hjort 2011). In von Trier's *Medea*, the stage is set for the actions of the eldest boy when he indicates to his mother that he "knows what is to happen" (Figure 31.6). When the younger child wanders off into the grass, the elder child brings him back to the tree where the noose awaits him (Figure 31.7). Once Medea has attached the noose to the child's neck, she and her accomplice jointly hold the struggling body as its weight completes their murderous plans. Trier goes on to show Medea sitting in the grass, absorbed in thought. It is the eldest son who initiates his own now suicidal murder at her hands, for he taps her on the shoulder, gives her the rope, and asks her to "help" him (Figure 31.8).

The figure of Medea, killer of her own children, has often been regarded as exemplifying the very essence of *akratic* action. Broadly speaking, the defining feature of such actions is that they are the result of an agent's better judgment being overwhelmed by passions powerful enough to eclipse the workings of the will. Whether Euripides' Medea should be seen as engaging in genuinely akratic action depends, as Gail Ann Rickert argues, on how key lines are understood ("I understand the evil I'm about to do, and yet my raging heart is stronger than my plans—the heart which causes mortal kind the greatest evils"; lines 1,078–1,080). Rickert favors an interpretation that sees Medea, not as driven by passion to act against her better judgment, but as caught up in a conflict of values, where the pursuit of "one valued course of action precludes pursuing another or even requires an agent to breach a value" (Rickert 1987, 114). On this reading, Medea's killing of her children appropriately punishes Jason for violating his oath to her, but conflicts with

values having to do with her role, identity, and indeed, duties as a mother. It is not necessary to pursue the intricacies of interpretive debates focusing on the psychology of Euripides' Medea any further, for even this briefest of evocations of some of the relevant issues suffices to suggest that von Trier's twist on the plot brings further complexity to an already highly complicated situation. Is the child's participation in the killing an attempt to convey some sense of necessity that would help to diminish the horror of the mother's actions? Perhaps. But it would also be quite reasonable to claim that the plot twist is motivated primarily by a desire, entirely consistent with von Trier's directorial persona, to be provocative. Von Trier set out to make the Dreyer/Thomsen script, and indeed the Medea story, *his*. It seems fair to say that he succeeded in doing precisely that, for watching *Medea* is surely a remarkable aesthetic experience, although the story that it tells has strong elements of the genuinely perverse. Von Trier's *Medea* is a work of considerable originality – as such it has a role to play in the ongoing transmission and continued reception of a central myth.

Notes

1 Pier Paolo Pasolini cast Callas as Medea in his 1969 film. Pasolini's film similarly draws on Euripides, but fleshes out the story of Jason and the Argonauts that remains largely implicit in the tragedian's play, as well as in the Dreyer/Thomsen script.
2 See Livingston (2009) for relevant accounts of cinematic authorship.
3 The original script is available through the Danish Film Institute's Dreyer site, entitled "Carl Th. Dreyer – The Man and His Work." See, http://english.carlthdreyer.dk/ Service/Dreyer_News/2011/Dreyers-Medea-script-online.aspx
4 See, for example, the performance of *Medea* by the Seattle-based theater group, Greek Active (Blondell 1999, 171).
5 Susan Joseph and Marguerite Johnson (2008) acknowledge the importance of nature in von Trier's *Medea* and argue that "Nature, as in fifth-century performances of Greek tragedies, is a protagonist: the mise-en-scène and sound score replicate the sights and sounds of an open-air performance" (115). While interesting, this line of argument fails to be persuasive, because it does not do justice to the expressive dimension of the relevant depictions and also neglects their at times quasi-autonomous status.

Guide to Further Reading

For a critical examination of von Trier's persistent use of provocation as a creative strategy in his artistic projects, see Hjort (2011). A wide-ranging, thought-provoking account of how the challenge of adaptation has been taken up across a range of media can be found in Hutcheon (2012).

References

Atkinson, M. 2003. "Taking Wing: Heights of Achievement." *The Village Voice*, April 15.

Beltzer, T. 2002 (rev. 2005). "Lars von Trier." *Senses of Cinema* 22. Online at: http://sensesofcinema.com/2002/great-directors/vontrier/(accessed November 4, 2016).

Björkman, S. and Nyman, L. 2003. "I am Curious, Film: Lars von Trier," in J. Lumholdt, ed., *Lars von Trier Interviews*, 100–102. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi.

Blondell, R. 1999. "Introduction," in R. Blondell, M.-K. Gamel, N. Sorkin Rabinowitz, and B. Zweig, eds, *Women on the Edge: Four Plays by Euripides*, 149–169. New York: Routledge.

Blondell, R., Gamel, M.-K., Sorkin Rabinowitz, N., and Zweig, B. 1999. *Women on the Edge: Four Plays by Euripides*. New York: Routledge.

Braad Thomsen, C. 1988. "Morden paa 'Medea.'" *Politiken*, April 9.

Bruun, T. 1988. "Stærk kvinde i sort tragedie." *Berlingske Tidende*, March 31.

Dreyer, C. Th., and Thomsen, P. (n.d.) "Medea Script." Danish Film Institute. Online at: http://english.carlthdreyer.dk/Service/Dreyer_News/2011/Dreyers-Medea-script-online.aspx (accessed November 4, 2016).

Erlendsson, K. 1988. "Jason fra Medea var Fassbinders samlever." *B.T.*, April 2.

Gadamer, H-G. 1975. *Truth and Method*. London: Continuum.

Hjort, M. 2011. "The Problem with Provocation: On Lars von Trier, Enfant Terrible of Danish Art Film." *Kinema: A Journal for Film and Audiovisual Media*, Fall. Online at: http://www.kinema.uwaterloo.ca/article.php?id=492&feature (accessed November 4, 2016).

Hjort, M., Bondebjerg, I., and Novrup Redvall, E. 2013. *The Danish Directors 3: Dialogues on the New Danish Documentary Cinema*. Chicago: Intellect.

Hutcheon, L. 2012. *A Theory of Adaptation*. London: Routledge.

Jensen, E. 1988. "Von Trier drejer *Medea* til TV." *Ekstra Bladet*, January 18.

Joseph, S. and Johnson, M. 2008. "'An Orchid in the Land of Technology': Narrative and Representation in Lars von Trier's *Medea*." *Arethusa*, 41: 113–132.

Kehr, D. 2003. "Medea." *New York Times Review*, April 18.

Kornum Larsen, J. 1988. "Anmeldermordet paa Lars von Triers 'Medea' – forstokkethed." *Weekendavisen*, April 8.

Lefebvre, M. 2006. "Between setting and landscape in the cinema," in M. Lefebvre, ed., *Landscape and Film*, 19–59. New York and London: Routledge.

Livingston, P. 2009. *Cinema, Philosophy, Bergman: On Film as Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lyster, H. 1988. "Forfatter-slagsmaal." *Det fri Aktuelt*, April 3.

Melbye, D. 2010. *Landscape Allegory in Cinema: From Wilderness to Wasteland*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nissen, D. 1988. "Tryllerier og tomhed." *Information*, April 2.

Pryds, H. 1991. "Medea et TV- æstetisk eksperiment." *Sekvens – Filmvidenskabelig årbog*, 141–155.

Rickert, G.A. 1987. "Akrasia and Euripides' Medea." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 91: 91–117.

Schepelern, P. 2000. *Lars von Triers film: Tvang og befrielse*. Copenhagen, Denmark: Rosinante.

Schepelern, P. 2010. "Fra Dreyer til Trier." Online at: www.carlthdreyer.dk/omdreyer/temaer/fra-dreyer-til-trier.aspx (accessed November 4, 2016).

Thorup Thomsen, J. 1986. "Græsk drama i Vikingeklæder." *Aalborg Stiftstidende*, June 30.

Wellendorf, K. 1988. "Medea og manden i muddergrøften." *Kosmorama*, 184: 16–17.

Regarding the Pain of Others with Marsyas
On Tortures Ancient and Modern

Lisa Saltzman

In his quest to trouble the categorical distinctions between literalism and likeness, proximity and distance, figuration and abstraction, subjectivity and anonymity, in 1960, Jasper Johns pressed the philosophical and material gambit of his signature targets with plaster casts to their ethical limit with a hypothetical project he described in the following terms:

> Make a Plaster Negative of a whole head.
> Make a thin rubber positive of this.
> Cut this so it can be (stretched) laid on a board fairly flat.
> Have it cast in bronze and title it *Skin*…[1]
>
> (Johns 1996, 50)

The piece was never realized, a project foreclosed for its irreducible associations with flayed skin. All that remains of the project, beyond his words, are a subsequent series of studies, dating to 1962, when Johns used his own body, his own skin, for a series of drawings. Coating his head and hands with mineral oil, Johns pressed himself upon the surface of the paper and then covered the greasy trace with charcoal to create something like a self-portrait, the visible evidence of his activity dispersed across the picture plane, a contact sheet to trump anything that might emerge from the photographic darkroom. But, even so, these works on paper were as close as Johns would come to the sculpture he once imagined as *Skin*.

Just a few years later, Eva Hesse would seek another answer to the question of the body and its representation, finding in the materials of her de-industrialized German studio, if not also in the fat and felt of Joseph Beuys, a way out of the rigors of minimalism and toward a more suggestive sculptural language. If a

writhing tangle of ropes could be utilized to transform a geometric armature into a post-minimalist *Laocoon* (1966), its expression of anguish accomplished through a combination of metaphor and material, so too could translucent panels of latex and polyurethane (*Contingent* 1969) be shaped and suspended to evoke so many other bodies, opened and exposed, their suffering almost palpable, and yet, at the same time, wholly cloaked in the anonymity, the remove, of abstraction.

In a sense, then, even as Hesse's work hued to the modernist paradigm put forth in Clement Greenberg's 1940 essay, "Toward a Newer Laocoon,"[2] most literally in her *Laocoon*, but, more broadly, in her sustained commitment to a sculptural language of abstraction, Hesse's work also reached beyond the critical parameters of high modernism to define, in material terms, a different representational order, one bound to the body, and, moreover, to the body in pain.[3] Hesse's *Contingent* may evoke nothing so much as flayed skin. But it is also a defiantly non-figurative work of sculptural abstraction, its refusal to represent that body – hers, history's – all the more powerful when set against the nascent context of performance art, where the artist's body, and even the body in pain, would come to structure a series of real-time experiments in figurative sculpture, most dramatically in its masochistic iterations in Viennese Actionism in the 1970s or, to this day, in the work of Marina Abramovic. Fashioning an aesthetic practice that could not be divorced from an ethical imperative, even as she adhered to abstraction Hesse found a way to give expression to personal and historical experience. She created a sculptural language with which to take on those subjects that deny yet demand representation, to give voice to suffering. One might think, here, of the contemporaneous writings of Theodor Adorno, who, in the course of his *Negative Dialectics*, introduced a palinode to his earlier, almost biblical prohibition on aesthetics after Auschwitz. As Adorno wrote, "Perennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream."[4]

But my aim here is not to write a history of those moments in postwar art, or postwar sculpture, when the aesthetic obligations of abstraction are tested by the call of the body, and specifically, of the body in pain. Rather, it is to provide a point of departure for thinking about a specific sculptural project, Anish Kapoor's *Marsyas*, as realized for and installed in the Turbine Hall of the Tate Modern in London in the winter of 2002–2003.[5] A project that relied on the cultural inheritance of classical antiquity even as it tarried with the legacy of modernism in a post-minimalist idiom, Kapoor's monumental *Marsyas* summoned the mythic subject of a body in pain only to refuse anything like its literal representation.

Why Marsyas?

But before why, perhaps who? A satyr who had the audacity to challenge the God Apollo to a musical contest, his act of hubris met with a cruel and gruesome punishment. Flayed alive, his skin nailed to a tree, Marsyas' blood poured forth from

his violated body to form a river, a river that, in some versions of the tale of his torture, rose up from tears of mourning.

And so it was, with this armature from antiquity, that Kapoor's modernist *Marsyas* took shape, took form, took flight. Anchored by three enormous steel hoops, two of which, mounted vertically, defined its lateral ends, the third of which, suspended horizontally, not quite its midway point, *Marsyas* was a sculpture wrought of fine PVC fabric, stretched taut across its vein-like supports, a cruciform assemblage of trumpet-like parts. A feat of engineering and an act of imagination, the massive tensile sculpture was more imposing than inviting, the funneling forms dwarfing its audience even as it drew its members into the maws of its cavernous apertures.

But the invitation was, in this instance, to something more than a letting go, an opening of the self to the perceptual adventure common to so many of Kapoor's sculptural works, be it to the inversions or distortions of the body before his highly polished, mirrored surfaces or to the more profound disorientation before the void of his sculptural bore-holes or caverns, the vertigo that ensues when confronted by his coupling of just so much pigment with a receding curve of concavity, volume dissolved into something like a glimpse of the infinite. In *Marsyas*, the bright red color characteristic of so much of Kapoor's prior work turned darker, nearer in tonality to the contemporaneous *My Red Homeland* (2003) than to the projects of earlier decades. Thus, even as *Marsyas* shared in the loose symbolic economy of the collective palette of those earlier works, everything from the promise of a ripe chili pepper to the rites of Hindu marriage, it was also laden with the weighty significance of soil and blood, sacrifice and wound. Indeed, in *Marsyas*, the deep red color operated on a level that was utterly visceral, the taut membrane of fabric a raw, bleeding expanse of yard upon yard of freshly flayed skin.

Where most turn to Titian's *Marsyas*, *The Flaying of Marsyas* (ca. 1560–1576) the satyr strung up by his cloven hoofs as Apollo begins to exact his punishment, knife skinning flesh, blood staining soil, as the obvious pictorial point of reference, if not inspiration, for Kapoor's suspended sculptural installation, or to the flayed animal flesh of the expressionist canvases of Chaim Soutine (e.g., *Carcass of Beef*, 1923), it is, at least to my eye, José Ribera's rendition of the subject (1637) that comes closest to Kapoor's realization, not so much for the more vivid depiction of flaying, but for the sweep and swirl of Apollo's roseate garment, at once a decorous cloak for the nakedness of both bodies and an emblem of the skin already loosened and all that is still to come. Ribera's painting insists that we bear witness to this act of torture; but it also deflects, distracts our gaze with the rippling folds of fabric. And so the drapery is two-fold in its function, at once a visual echo of the flayed skin and an antidote when we recoil at the horror.

And Kapoor's *Marysas*? There is no body from which to deflect the gaze. There is no scene of torture. There is nothing but fabric. Or, if we attend to Kapoor, there is nothing but skin. Listen, as he explains in an interview with the Donna De Salvo, Senior Curator at Tate Modern, in June 2002:

The shiny pieces, the painted pieces, they all had skin. Skin is a consistent quantity in everything I've ever done. It's a notion that I've talked about in my work for twenty years now. Skin is the moment that separates a thing from its environment, it is also the surface on which or through which we read an object, it's the moment in which the two-dimensional world meets the three-dimensional world. Seemingly obvious statements, but I think that looked at in any detail they reveal a whole other process. There's a kind of implied unreality about skin which I think is wonderful … Perhaps this is the first work that is not only talking about a skin, but is actually made of a skin.[6]

(Kapoor *et al.* 2002, 64)

"Made of a skin," albeit a synthetic skin, elastic and expansive, Kapoor's *Marsyas* continues his longstanding formal quest to collapse the distinction between interior and exterior, surface and substance, even as he presses those materials into meaning.[7]

The question, then, is how does that fabric make meaning? How does *Marsyas* communicate its subject? Here, a sculptural antecedent intercedes, closer, in some respects, to Kapoor's *Marsyas* than any of the paintings that share its subject. The piece, a massive sculptural installation by the sculptor Tim Hawkinson, is *Uberorgan* (2000), a sinuous concatenation of balloons, bags and ducts stitched together and suspended to form an insistently, uncomfortably intestinal object.[8] Though droopy and bleached of any color, Hawkinson's sculpture shares much with Kapoor's, most obviously in its scale and relation to space, but also in its invocation of the permeability of the body, from its porous skin to its orifices. But in one crucial respect, Hawkinson's elevated organ is utterly distinct from Kapoor's. Hawkinson's installation has an acoustic dimension. It is a kind of instrument, a massive bag-pipe, whose orifices are designed to wheeze with sound. *Marsyas*, on the other hand, is wholly silent.

That said, Kapoor's *Marsyas* did serve as the backdrop, the inspiration, for two other artists, the American theater director Peter Sellars and the Estonian composer Arvo Pärt. Their performances broke the reigning silence of the sculpture and introduced, albeit only temporarily, sound and voice to Kapoor's mute *Marsyas*, the latter composing an orchestral piece, "LamenTate," the former staging Antonin Artaud's "For an End to the Judgment of God" (each piece ran for two nights in early February 2003 for a total of four performances). And if the playing of Pärt's composition enrobed Kapoor's sculpture in a moving, lyrical lament, it was Sellars' staging of Artaud that sharpened that sound into a cry of contemporary political critique.

As Sellars explained:

In a certain stratum of the art world it is very difficult for political content to be acknowledged. Few have responded to *Marsyas* politically, but his sculpture, about a person skinned alive, make it a *Guernica* for the 21st century; three gigantic mouths are screaming from the flayed skin in a great howl of pain. Which is why I wanted the voice of Artaud, that voice coming from a man who spent years in asylums. His voice is at that extreme pitch. I wanted that voice to echo through the sculpture.

(Sellars 2003)

In staging the reading as a Pentagon press conference, Sellars sought to draw parallels between the Germany of the 1930s that inspired Artaud's drama and the United States in the aftermath of the events of September 11, 2001 that inspired his own, offering Artaud's words as a counter to the overwhelming public silence he witnessed in the face of what he saw as an erosion of democratic principles under the Bush administration.

But this is Sellars speaking, not Kapoor. Indeed, there is no indication that, for Kapoor, *Marsyas* is a cry against US foreign or domestic policy.[9] The great mouths of Kapoor's *Marsyas* unleash no cry of anguish, no howl. Unlike the satyr who bears witness in Ribera's painterly representation, covering his ears in an attempt to muffle Marsyas's screams, the audience in the Tate has no such need. Rather, this Marsyas asks that we listen more closely. For to hear its cries we need to be more receptive to all that resonates in the abstract form that is Kapoor's monumental red, cruciform installation. In order to experience *Marsyas* as "a *Guernica* for the 21st century," we need to consider the ways in which abstraction, for all its visual silence, might be the site, the source, for a powerful lament. For if Kapoor is as an artist who looks to the painters of the Italian Renaissance and works in the wake of the sculptors of the postwar present (which is to say, not just Johns and Hesse, but also Beuys and Richard Serra), he is also an artist with a deep and acknowledged affinity to that sublime colorist of the postwar period, the abstract painter Barnett Newman. And as we contemplate the cruciform form stretched taut across the expanse of the Turbine Hall, we might do well to remember not only that Kapoor is the artist who, in 1989–1990, rent the pristine white wall of the museum with an angled gash, saturated in red pigment, and dubbed it *The Healing of St. Thomas*, transforming Lucio Fontana's destructive modernist slash into an allegory of belief, but that Newman created a *Stations of the Cross*.[10]

Newman's *Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani* (1958–1966) poses a question, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" "Lema sabachthani," such is the utterance, the titular, if not also, pictorial inquiry, the cry of Newman's paintings, in which Christian narrative is used to give structure and meaning to a cycle of modernist paintings. As Newman writes of his work, in the catalogue that accompanies their debut exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1966, repeating the subtitle of the painterly cycle and offering something of an explanation of its relation to the words of Christ, as described in the books of Matthew and Mark:

> *Lema Sabachthani* – Why? Why did you forsake me? Why forsake me? To what purpose? Why? That is the Passion. This outcry of Jesus. Not that terrible walk up the Via Dolorosa, but the question that has no answer…
> *Lema*? To what purpose – is the unanswerable question of human suffering.[11]

> (Newman 1990, 187)

Shifting from the Psalmist's "God, why hast thou forsaken me?" to a more colloquial, or vernacular, "Why did you forsake me? Why forsake me? Why?"

Newman presses the question of the Passion into the vocabulary of the present, much as he presses its visual expression into the pictorial language of the present, that is, into abstraction.[12]

Devoid of vivid depictions of suffering or even its symbolism, Newman gives his audience nothing more and nothing less than black paint, white paint and raw canvas. Each canvas in Newman's *Stations of the Cross* offers up the blankness of an empty tablet, each puts forth an iconography of absence and erasure, each presents to the viewer a visual field devoid of any of the traditional markers of figurative representation, let alone representations of a body in pain. If there is a subject to be found in Newman's canvases, on Newman's canvases, if there is something akin to narrative or story, it is, as with much modernist painting, purely formal. What develops in the paintings is the varying treatment of the so-called zip. For, conceived and installed as they are as a cycle, the paintings demand that the zip, the vertical band of paint that had come to characterize Newman's mature abstraction since *Onement I*, 1948, become active, that its variations in saturation, oiliness, thickness, and sharpness bring at once coherence and dynamism to the painterly cycle. But even if the zip materializes as a kind of subject, it is never a figure. For while the zip varies enormously, reading as both positive and negative, its placement and treatment never allows for a reading of figure against ground.

Already, with his sternly authoritative 1949 canvas *Abraham*, Newman painted a picture that not only enacted the possibility of pure abstraction, black against black, but put forth its renunciatory pictorial form as biblical, and, more particularly, Talmudic pronouncement. Newman's *Abraham* intensified the pictorial proposition that was modernist painting, pairing the challenge of Clement Greenberg's modernist paradigm with that of biblical prohibition. *Abraham*, like his *Covenant* or *The Promise*, like his *Adam* or *Eve*, was at once utterly non-objective and yet deeply allusive, bringing with it all of the historical and religious force of the Hebrew Bible. But if it was *Abraham* that put forth as both formal and declarative statement a visual iconoclasm, if it was *Abraham* that positioned Newman's practice as a kind of philosophical proposition, it was his painterly cycle *Stations of the Cross* that fully enacted and realized his ethics of representation. In *Stations of the Cross*, each canvas is emphatically anti-iconic. Offering iconoclasm in the place of icons, Newman's cycle is a powerful refusal of an entire history of Judeo-Christian image-making.

If Newman asks the unanswerable question of human suffering, the question that tests the limits of belief, he does so by painting a set of paintings that test the very limits of their medium, that test the very limits of what painting might be, that refuse to depict the suffering to which they allude. And that refusal is all the more powerful given the scale of the pictures, which is, in the end, emphatically human, their width roughly that of an adult arm span. But if, as such, they explicitly refuse to represent the outstretched arms of Christ on the cross, they also refuse to represent *any* body. Given their scale, what might well be experienced as a reflection of the self is instead, a deflection of the self, the paintings offering up not the specular glass, but instead, the tain of the mirror. Newman's pictures offer

no recourse to the body, to the figure. They do not represent their martyred subject. They are obdurately abstract, emphatically anti-mimetic. Newman's paintings thus simultaneously propose and perform a certain visual restraint that is not only aesthetic, an enactment of the tenets of modernist painting, but in the end, ethical, a declaration of respect for all that cannot, or, more to the point, perhaps should not be depicted.

One question remains. Why would Newman, a Jewish artist working in postwar America, paint a *Stations of the Cross*? Why *this* subject? On the other hand, we might just as well ask instead, how could he not? That is, might Newman have turned to this subject, been compelled by this subject, precisely to find a means of representing, without figuring, the historical atrocity, "the Passion of the Passions," "the Passion lived out by Judaism between 1940 and 1945,"[13] to invoke the words of the French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, to which its titular call and metaphors of martyrdom inevitably allude? For in turning to the Passion, Newman may have sought and found not just a metaphor for contemporary historical suffering, but a structure through which to pursue a very particular painterly relation to its representation.

There is no doubt that Newman, Mark Rothko, and other artists of the New York School, Jewish and non-Jewish, were deeply affected by the Holocaust and understood their move away from the figure as inextricably bound up in world events. Rothko spoke of not wanting to "mutilate" the figure any further (cited in Chave 1989, 28).[14] Newman himself spoke of a "crisis" in painting occasioned by the seeming triviality and banality of traditional subjects in the aftermath of historical catastrophe (Newman 1990, 287–288).[15] That said, Newman's paintings are neither history paintings nor Holocaust paintings (see Godfrey 2007).[16] But perhaps that is precisely because such paintings are no longer possible, aesthetically or ethically. Instead, they are paintings that bespeak, in their secularization of sublimity, a representational ethics. They are not so much Holocaust paintings, as post-Holocaust paintings, both as aesthetic category and as ethical imperative. While the titular cry of the paintings may be "why," the challenge of the paintings is "how, how to represent human suffering?" And what the paintings propose, as a solution at once aesthetic and ethical, is quite simply, that one not. Which is not to say that one ceases to paint. For what Newman has succeeded in producing in his monumental painterly cycle *Stations of the Cross: Lema Sabachthani* is a series of fully abstract yet deeply historical paintings, paintings that put forth suffering as subject but then, necessarily, withhold its representation.

What they represent, instead, is painting as a manifest act of renunciation, painting as an explicit act of refusal. For their subject – the suffering and sacrifice of humanity – might be said to exceed representation, might be said to have warranted, not new forms, but no forms. Painting in the aftermath of Auschwitz, Newman takes on the epistemological and ethical challenge that faces aesthetic practice. Newman's paintings, as paintings, thus propose iconoclasm in the place of icons, they offer up the blank face of abstraction in the place of figurative representation, voiding the very subject they take as their object. Paintings without color, paintings

without figures, Newman's cycle presents the *Stations of the Cross* not as an image of suffering, but as a suffering of the image, the very project of painting etiolated to the point of its effective disappearance – white paint, black paint, raw canvas.

But even as the figurative tradition is utterly undone in Newman's cycle of paintings, meaning adheres. Inextricably bound to texts and contexts both ancient and modern, these paintings insist upon their relation to the word, and with that, the world. Their subject at once fully evacuated yet wholly immanent, Newman's paintings establish not simply an aesthetic position, but an ethical one. Newman's paintings use the tenets of modernism to propose that perhaps abstraction, that is, non-figurative practice, is able to achieve a different kind of pictorial presence, a different kind of pictorial purpose.

Which brings me back to Anish Kapoor and his cruciform *Marsyas*. Certainly, in discussing Newman's *Station of the Cross*, my ambition is neither to claim a Hebraic ethics in Kapoor's abstract forms nor to propose a Christian reading of this scene of torture, in which the flaying would then become a rite of purification, a sloughing off of s(k)in. Nor is it to place his *Marsyas* in the lineage of that distinctly American project of postwar abstraction. If anything, *Marsyas* is Kapoor at his most British, the moment when he takes holds of a realist painterly tradition that runs from Walter Sickert to Jenny Saville, by way of Francis Bacon, Lucien Freud, Frank Auerbach, and Leon Kossoff, and transforms their fleshly bodies, their painterly acts of flaying, their taut, stretched canvases, into one monumentally abstract yet allusive sculptural form (see Braun 2009, 27–42).[17] Rather, in triangulating the inheritance of classical antiquity, biblical antiquity, and modernist aesthetics for this contemporary artist, my aim is to get us to a point where we might begin to ask of this resonant work of sculptural abstraction, whose suffering? For Sellars, the answer is all too clear. For the rest of us, whether there in the Tate in the winter of 2002–2003, or now, some years later, there is no such easy answer.

But perhaps we might approach an answer by turning to the question that, at least by way of Ovid, we know is Marysas': "quid me mihi detrahis," "Why do you tear me from myself?" And while I leave it to two of Kapoor's most acute post-colonial interpreters, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak,[18] to press what this question, this subject may mean in the hands of this Bombay-born sculptor, working in London at the dawn of a new millennium, I would simply conclude by suggesting that we may find in *Marysas* not only a monumental memorial to tortures ancient and modern, but also an occasion to reflect on the experience of migration in the global present, when so many of us feel the pull of a homeland even as we live in a place that we now call home.

Notes

1   Johns (1996, 50), as cited in Katz (1999, 184). I should here forthrightly acknowledge how indebted I am to Katz's essay in pressing the valences of the body in Johns' work.
2   Greenberg (1986).

3   For a penetrating discussion of the difficult question of art and autobiography, subject and object, particularly as it pertains to the work and treatment of women artists, and Hesse in particular, see Chave (1992, 131–153).

4   Adorno (1966, 362).

5   The installation opened on October 9, 2002 and closed on April 6, 2003.

6   Kapoor *et al.* (2002, 64).

7   In addition to the 2002 Tate catalogue, which, in addition to de Salvo's interviews, includes de Salvo's essay, "Making Marsyas," pp. 12–17, as well as Cecil Balmond's "Skinning the Imagination," pp. 66–69, see, for other discussions of Kapoor's *Marsyas*, Anfam (2009, 88–113) and Burton (2009, 162–173).

8   Unlike Kapoor's *Marsyas*, which was designed for and exhibited only in Tate Modern, Hawkinson's *Uberorgan* was installed and reconfigured in multiple locations, among them, the Atrium of the IBM building in New York, Mass MoCA and the Getty.

9   That said, a decade later, in November 2012, Kapoor produced his most explicitly political piece, a video, circulated on Youtube, in which he marshals choreographers and curators, museum directors and staff to join him, from locations around the globe, to protest the treatment of the dissident Chinese artist Ai WeiWei, the specific catalyst, the censoring of Ai's Gangnam-style dance video, which Kapoor emulates in his own.

10 In regard to my invocation of Barnett Newman, and the relation I seek to establish, I would point as well to an essay that shares my interests and goals, the jointly authored Crone and von Stosch (2008, 21–55).

11 Newman (1990, 187).

12 See Alloway (1966).

13 Levinas (1990, 143, 162).

14 As cited in Chave (1989, 28).

15 Newman (1990, 287–288).

16 Here, I must acknowledge the work of Mark Godfrey, whose readings of postwar abstraction, of not only Newman but also Morris Louis and Frank Stella, have helped to open the interpretation of modernist painting to the claims of history (see Godfrey 2007).

17 For an excellent account of these artists, see Braun (2009, 27–42).

18 See, for example Bhabha (1998, 11–41; 2009, 24–35; 2010, 125–140) and Spivak (2008, 56–75). See also Mitter (2008, 104–119).

Guide to Further Reading

For the most comprehensive and authoritative collection of Adorno's essays dedicated to questions of ethics and aesthetics, see Adorno (2003). For a crucial, indeed, fundamental meditation on bodily vulnerability and the political consequences of torture, see Scarry (1985).

For a collection of essays dedicated to the relationship between modern and contemporary art and trauma, see Saltzman and Rosenberg (2006).

For additional essays dedicated to the relationship between contemporary art and classical mythology, see Wallace and Hirsh (2011). For excellent photographs of Anish Kapoor's Marysas, as installed in the Tate's Turbine Hall, as well as excellent essays, see de Salvo and Balmond (2002).

For additional images of and essays on Kapoor, particularly those featuring contributions by leading post-colonial theorists Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, see Bhabha (1998; 2009 2010) and Spivak (2008).

References

Adorno, T. 1966. *Negative Dialectics*. New York: Continuum.

Adorno, T. 2003. *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. R. Tiedemann, trans. R. Livingstone *et al.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Alloway, L. 1966. *Barnett Newman: Stations of the Cross*. New York: Guggenheim.

Anfam, D. 2009. "To Fathom the Abyss," in Anish Kapoor, 88–113. London: Royal Academy of Arts.

Bhabha, H.K. 1998. "Anish Kapoor: Making Emptiness," in *Anish Kapoor*, 11–41. London: Hayward Gallery and Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

Bhabha, H.K. 2009. "Elusive Objects: Anish Kapoor's Fissionary Art," in *Anish Kapoor*, 24–35. London: Royal Academy of Arts.

Bhabha, H.K. 2010. "Fleeting Objects," in *Anish Kapoor*, 125–140. New Dehli: National Gallery of Modern Art.

Braun, E. 2009. "Skinning the Paint," in M.W. Scala and S.H. Edwards, eds, *Paint Made Flesh*, 27–42. Nashville: Frist Center for the Visual Arts; Vanderbilt University Press.

Burton, J. 2009. "Namely, What is Called Love?," in *Anish Kapoor*, 162–173. London: Royal Academy of Arts.

Chave, A.C. 1989. *Mark Rothko: Subjects in Abstraction*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Chave, A.C. 1992. "Eva Hesse: A 'Girl being a Sculpture,'" in H. Cooper, ed., *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective*, 131–153. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press and Yale University Art Gallery.

Crone, R. and Von Stosch, A. 2008. "Sublime Shifts: From Color to Darkness," in *Anish Kapoor: Svayambh*, 21–55. Munich, Berlin, London and New York: Prestel.

De Salvo, D. and Balmond,C. 2002. *Anish Kapoor: Marsyas*. London: Tate.

Godfrey, M. 2007. *Abstraction and the Holocaust*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Greenberg, C. 1986. "Toward a Newer Laocoön" (1940), in J. O'Brian, ed., *The Collected Essays and Criticism: Vol. 1 Perceptions and Judgments, 1939–44*, 23–37. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Johns, J. 1996. *Sketchbook Notes, Interviews*, ed. K. Varnedoe. York: Museum of Modern Art.

Kapoor, A., De Salvo, D.M., and Balmond, C. 2002. "A Conversation: Anish Kapoor with Donna de Salvo (June 2002)," in *Anish Kapoor: Marsyas*, 64. London: Tate Publishing.

Katz, J. 1999. "Dismemberment: Jasper Johns and the Body Politic," in A. Jones and A. Stephenson, eds, *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, 159–173. New York and London: Routledge.

Levinas, E. 1990. "Loving the Torah More than God" and "Jewish Thought Today," in S. Hand, trans, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, 143 and 162. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Mitter, P. 2008. "History, Memory and Anish Kapoor," in *Anish Kapoor: Past Present Future*, 104–119. Boston: Institute of Contemporary Art.

Newman, B. 1990. *Selected Writings and Interviews*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Saltzman, L. and Rosenberg, E., eds. 2006. *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity*. Hanover: Dartmouth College/University Press of New England.

Scarry, E. 1985. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sellars, P. 2003. "Marsyas, Part 2: Theater by Peter Sellars." *The Guardian*, January 25.

Spivak, G.C. 2008. "Signs and Trace," in *Anish Kapoor: Memory*, 56–75. New York: Guggenheim Museum.

Wallace, I.L. and Hirsh, J. eds. 2011. *Contemporary Art and Classical Myth*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Index