

Sex, gender, & violence in Greek and Roman myth

Prof. Carman Romano

Reading packet

But Zeus cast sweet desire into the heart of Aphrodite herself 45
to sleep with a mortal man, to bring her exclusion
from mortal beds to a rapid end
and keep her from boastfully announcing in the presence of all the gods
with a happy laugh, smile-loving Aphrodite,
that she involved male gods with mortal women, 50
who bore mortal sons to immortals,
and that she also entangled goddesses with human mortals.
He accordingly implanted sweet desire in her heart for Anchises,
who was then herding cows on the highest peaks

•

of spring-filled Ida, like to an immortal in his build. 55
 When smile-loving Aphrodite saw him, therefore,
 she fell in love, and desire took firm control of her mind.
 She went to Cyprus and descended into her fragrant temple—
 to Paphos; her sacred precinct and her fragrant altar are there.
 She went inside there and shut the shining doors; 60
 and there the Graces washed her and anointed her with imperishable
 oil, the sort that covers the gods who live forever,
 imperishable sweet oil, which had been perfumed for her.
 And after she carefully put lovely garments about her skin
 and was ornamented with gold, smile-loving Aphrodite 65
 rushed off in the direction of Troy, leaving delicious-smelling
 Cyprus behind,
 making her way swiftly, high among the clouds.
 She came to spring-filled Ida, the mother of wild beasts,
 and made her way along the mountainside straight toward
 the cowyard. Fawning

behind her went gray wolves, tawny lions, 70
bears, and swift wildcats, whose hunger for deer is
insatiable. When she saw them, her heart was pleased in her chest,
and she planted desire in their breasts; they all lay down
together in bed, two by two, in their shadowy lairs.
But she arrived at the well-constructed hut, 75
and found him in the out-buildings, left behind alone by the others—
the hero Anchises, as handsome as a god.
They were all following after the cows in the grassy
meadows, whereas he had been left behind alone in the out-buildings
by the others
and was walking back and forth, playing a high-pitched tune
on his lyre. 80

Aphrodite the daughter of Zeus stood before him,
looking like a tall and attractive unmarried girl,
to keep him from being frightened when he laid eyes on her.
When Anchises spotted her, he considered her and was stunned by
her looks and height and shining clothes; 85
for she was dressed in a robe brighter than fire-light,
and she wore curved ‘twists’ and ‘flower-buds’ vibrant with color,
and lovely necklaces, beautiful, golden and elaborately worked, were
around her soft neck, and something like moon-light
shown about her soft breasts—an amazing sight. 90

Anchises was seized by lust, and standing face-to-face to her
 he made a speech:
 ‘Greetings, majesty, whichever of the blessed ones you are
 who have come to my house,
 whether Artemis, or Leto, or golden Aphrodite,
 or well-born Themis, or gleaming-eyed Athena;
 or perhaps you are one of the Graces come here, who keep company 95
 with all the gods and are referred to as immortal;
 or one of the nymphs who inhabit the lovely groves 97
 and the rivers’ springs and the swamp-lands full of grass. 99
 I will build you an altar on a high spot, in a 100
 prominent place, and I will make fine offerings to you
 throughout the year. But as for you—be kind to me,
 and grant that I be a prominent man among the Trojans!
 Make my descendants flourish in the future, and make me personally
 live a long, happy life, and see the sunlight as a man 105

blessed among his people, and reach the threshold of old age!’

Aphrodite the daughter of Zeus then answered him:

“Anchises, most distinguished of humans born upon the earth—

I am no god, I assure you; why do you compare me to the immortal goddesses?

I am a mortal, and the mother who gave birth to me was a woman. 110

My father is the famous Otreus—perhaps you have heard of him—
who is the king of all of well-walled Phrygia.

I am quite familiar with your language as well as ours;

for a Trojan nurse brought me up in our home and took care of me
constantly after she got me, as a tiny child, from my beloved mother. 115

And so, you see, I am well-acquainted with your language too.

But now Argeiphontes of the gold staff abducted me
from a chorus in honor of Artemis of the gold arrow-shafts and
loud cries.

We were dancing, a large group of recent brides and girls whose
dowry

will consist of many oxen, and a crowd beyond counting
 surrounded us. 120
 Argeiphontes of the gold staff snatched me away from there
 and took me over many cultivated fields belonging to human mortals,
 and over much undivided and unsettled land, which
 wild beasts that eat raw flesh in their shadowy lairs pass through—
 I thought my feet would never touch the life-giving earth again!— 125
 and he said that I would be called Anchises' wedded wife
 and share his bed, and that I would bear you fine children.
 After pointing you out and explaining the situation, powerful
 Argeiphontes
 went off again to join the tribes of the immortals,
 whereas I made my way to you, and I have no choice in the matter. 130

I beg you, by Zeus and your distinguished
parents—for base individuals could never produce
a child like you—
take me, unmastered and inexperienced in love-making,
and show me to your father and your devoted mother,
and to your brothers who descend from the same source. 135
I will be an acceptable daughter-in-law for them, not unacceptable.
And quickly send a messenger to the Phrygians with
their rapid steeds,
and inform my father and my mother, upset though she may be.
They will send you sufficient gold and woven clothing,
and you must accept their many lavish gifts. 140

After you do all this, offer a lovely wedding-feast
 that brings you honor among human beings and immortal gods.’
 With these words the goddess implanted sweet desire in his heart.
 Anchises was overcome by lust, and he spoke a word
 and called her by name:

‘If you are mortal; and the mother who bore you was a woman; 145
 and your father is the famous Otreus, as you claim;
 and you came here by the will of the immortal conductor
 Hermes; and you are going to be called my wife your whole life—
 in that case, no god or mortal human
 will prevent me from sleeping with you immediately 150
 here and now, not even if Apollo the far-shooter himself
 were to direct groan-inspiring missiles at me from his silver bow!
 Even then, lady who looks like a goddess, I would be willing
 to go down into the house of Hades after I got in bed with you.’

With those words he took her hand. And smile-loving Aphrodite 155
turned about, casting her lovely eyes downward, and made her way
to the well-spread bed, which even before this had been covered
with soft blankets for the lord; and on top of these
lay skins of bears and of loud-roaring lions
that he personally killed in the high mountains. 160
When they got into the well-constructed bed, then,
he began by removing the shining jewelry from her skin,
the clasps, curved 'twists', 'flower-buds', and necklaces;
and he removed her waist-wrapper, and stripped off

her shining clothing and set it on a chair that had silver nails, 165
 Anchises did. And then—by the will of the gods and by fate,
 not understanding the situation clearly—he lay down,
 although mortal, beside an immortal goddess.
 At the time when herdsmen turn their cows and fine sheep
 back to the farmyard out of the blossom-filled pastures,
 at that point she poured sweet, painless sleep 170
 over Anchises, and she herself put her lovely clothes about her skin.
 And after she carefully placed all her garments about her skin,
 she stood,
 brilliant among goddesses, in the hut; her head touched
 the well-made roof-beam, and immortal beauty
 of the sort particular to violet-crowned Cytherea shone 175
 from her cheeks.
 She roused him from sleep, and spoke a word and called
 him by name:
 ‘Wake up, descendant of Dardanus! Why are you sleeping
 so soundly now?
 Tell me if I look the same to you
 as when you first observed me with your eyes!’

Thus she spoke; and he responded very quickly from his sleep. 180
But when he saw Aphrodite's neck and lovely eyes,
he was frightened and turned his glance aside, in another direction.
And he covered his handsome face again with the blanket
and spoke winged words, pleading with her:
'The moment I first laid eyes on you, goddess, 185
I recognized that you were a god; but you lied to me!
But I beg you by Zeus the aegis-bearer:
do not let me dwell among humans alive
but incapacitated! Pity me! Since no man who sleeps with
immortal goddesses retains his strength unimpaired.' 190

Then Aphrodite the daughter of Zeus answered him:
‘Anchises, most prominent of human mortals:
show some courage, do not be too afraid in your mind!
For you have no reason to fear that you will suffer at my hands
or those of the other blessed ones, since the gods are

well-disposed to you.

195

You will have a son you love, who will be a king among
the Trojans,

and your family line will continue forever.

(Your son’s) name will be Aeneas, on account of the terrible
anguish that gripped me because I was thrown into a
mortal man’s bed.

Of all human beings, the members of your family are
always the closest to the gods in appearance and build.

200

Indeed—Zeus the counsellor abducted blond Ganymede
because of his good looks, so that he could join the immortals
and pour wine for the gods in Zeus’ house,

a marvellous sight, honored by all the immortals
 as he ladles red *nektar* out of a gold mixing-bowl. 205
 Inescapable grief gripped Tros' mind, and he had no idea
 where the divine whirlwind carried his beloved son off to.
 He accordingly mourned for him constantly day after day.
 But Zeus pitied him and offered him, as compensation for his son, 210
 high-stepping horses, the type that carry the immortals.
 He gave these to him to have as a gift; and the conductor
 Argeiphontes,
 on Zeus' orders, explained the entire situation,
 that (Ganymede) was immortal and ageless, exactly like the gods.
 And when (Tros) heard Zeus' message Zeus, 215

then he no longer went on mourning but instead felt joy in his heart,
and he gleefully rode about, drawn by his whirlwind-footed horses.
So too gold-throned Dawn snatched another member
of your family, Tithonus, who resembled the immortals.
She went off to ask the dark-cloud son of Cronus 220
that (Tithonus) be immortal and live forever,
and Zeus nodded his consent to her and fulfilled her wish.
The fool! Mistress Dawn lacked the wit
to ask for youth and to scour him clean of ruinous old age.
So as long as he was young and luscious, 225
he enjoyed gold-throned, early-born Dawn,
living beside Ocean's streams at the furthest end of the earth.
But when the first gray hairs spilled down
from his handsome head and noble beard,
Mistress Dawn indeed avoided his bed, 230

although she kept him in her home and took care of him
with mortal food and ambrosia, and gave him attractive clothes.
But when loathsome old age weighed him down completely
and he was unable to move any of his limbs or raise them,
the following struck her in her heart as the best plan: 235
she deposited him in a bedroom and closed the shining doors.
His voice, in fact, runs on relentlessly, but the strength
in his gnarled limbs is no longer as it was before.
I would not choose for you to be immortal
and to live forever among the immortals like that. 240
If you could go on living as you are, with your current
looks and build, and could be called my husband,
in that case no grief would enwrap my subtle mind.
As it is, however, pitiless, indiscriminate old age will soon
enfold you; it is ruinous and tiresome for human beings 245

who encounter it, and the gods despise it.
But I am going to suffer enormous abuse among
the immortal gods forever and constantly because of you,
whereas previously they feared my whispering and the plots
I used to involve all the immortals with mortal 250
women; for my plans used to overpower them all.
But now my mouth will no longer open wide, pointing
this out among the immortals, since I went enormously,
wretchedly, unspeakably wrong, and behaved insanely,
and I put a child in my belly by going to bed with a mortal. 255
As for him, the moment he first sees the sunlight,
the deep-bosomed, mountain-dwelling nymphs who inhabit
this high, sacred peak will bring him up;
they keep apart from both mortals and immortals.

They live a long time and eat imperishable food, 260
and they nimbly perform their lovely dance in the company
of the immortals;
the silens and sharp-sighted Argeiphontes
go to bed with them in the depths of their lovely caves.
When they are born, firs or high-topped oaks
are produced at the same time on the earth that nourishes men. 265
They stand beautiful, high, and flourishing
in the lofty mountains, and are referred to as sacred precincts
of the immortals; mortals never cut them down with axes.
But when death's doom arrives,
first the lovely trees dry up on the ground, 270
and the bark that covers them falls off on every side, and
their branches drop,
and the nymphs' souls leave the sunlight along with the trees.
They will keep my son with them and bring him up.
But the moment he reaches luscious youth,
the goddesses will bring the child here and show him to you. 275

The moment you lay eyes on the youth, 278
you will be delighted at the sight—he will closely resemble a god—
and you will immediately take him off to windy Troy. 280
But if any human mortal asks you
what mother put your beloved son in her belly for you,
heed my advice and say to him:
‘People claim he is the offspring of a rosy-cheeked nymph,
one of those who inhabit this forest-clad mountain.’ 285

But if you reveal the truth and rashly boast
that you slept with fair-garlanded Cytherea,
Zeus will be angry and will blast you with a smoking lightning-bolt.
You have been told everything. Think the matter over
and restrain yourself rather than mentioning my name;
 beware the gods' wrath!'
With those words, she darted off into the windy sky.
Farewell, goddess, mistress of well-inhabited Cyprus!
I began with you, but will move on to another song.

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without care, a little bit away from the topmost peak of snowy
Olympos. There are their brilliant dancing places and their beautiful
houses. Beside them dwell the Graces, and Desire,⁵⁶ in joyous festivities. 55

Sending forth a lovely sound from their mouth, they sing of the laws
of all, and they celebrate the cherished habits of the deathless ones,
sending forth their lovely voice. Then they went to Olympos, rejoicing
in their beautiful voice, their ambrosial⁶⁰ song, and the black earth 60
resounded about them as they sang, and a lovely sound rose up
beneath their feet as they went to their father. He ruled over the sky,
himself holding the thunderbolt and the flashing lightning, having
overcome through strength his father, Kronos. And he fairly allotted
every portion to the deathless ones, and he established their ranks. 65

So of these things the Muses sang, who have their houses on
Olympos, the nine daughters begotten of great Zeus—Kleio and Euterpê
and Thaleia and Melpomenê and Terpsichorê and Erato and Polyhymnia
and Ourania and Kalliopê, who is the foremost of all, for she too attends
upon respected princes.⁷⁰ 70

Whomever of the god-nourished princes the daughters of great
Zeus honor and behold at birth, they pour sweet dew upon his tongue,
and from his mouth words flow like honey. All the people look toward him
as he settles cases with true judgments. And he, speaking convincingly,

56. *Graces and Desire*: The Greek terms are *Charites* and *Himeros*: They dwell beside the Muses on Mount Olympos, because they have much in common.

60. *ambrosial*: Usually “ambrosial” means “immortal,” but here probably just “pleasant,” “fragrant.”

70. . . . *respected princes*: Hesiod perhaps invented these names of the Muses, which correspond to the functions of song as Hesiod understands them. Later, the Muses were assigned to specific genres: Kleio (“making famous”), history; Euterpê (“giving delight”), elegiac poetry; Thalia (“blooming”), comedy; Melpomenê (“of sweet song”), tragedy; Terpsichorê (“delighting in dance”), dance; Erato (“of love”), lyric poetry; Polyhymnia (“much-hymned”), hymns; Ourania (“heavenly”), astronomy; Kalliopê (“of beautiful voice”), epic poetry. Hesiod’s poem is pitched to the social elite, the princes who require the services of the Muses in maintaining their hold on power.

quickly, and knowingly puts an end to even a great quarrel. For this reason
75 there are wise princes, who turn matters around when the people go astray
in assembly, persuading them with gentle words. And when the prince passes
through a crowd, people seek his favor with honeyed respect. He stands
out when people are assembled: Such is the sacred gift of the Muses to men.

From the Muses and Apollo, who shoots from afar, come singers
80 upon the earth, and the lyre players, but from Zeus come the kings:
That man is blessed, whomever the Muses love—sweet is the voice that flows
from his mouth. For if someone has recent pain in his breast and groans,
troubled in heart, but a singer, servant of the Muses, sings of the great deeds
of men of olden times and of the blessed gods who live on Olympus—
85 then quickly that man forgets his troubles, unconcerned with his sorrows.
The gifts of the goddesses quickly turn him away from these.

So greetings, children of Zeus! Give me lovely song! Celebrate
the holy race of the deathless ones, who last forever, who came forth
from Earth and starry Sky, and dark Night, and those whom salty Sea
90 nourished. Tell us how the gods and Earth first came into being,
and the rivers and the endless sea raging with swells, and the shining
stars, and the broad heaven up above. And tell which gods came from them,
the bestowers of good things, and how they divided their wealth,
and how they divided their spheres of influence, and how they first took
95 possession of Olympus with its many valleys.⁹

Sing to me these things,
Muses who live on Olympos! From the beginning, tell me which
gods first came into being!

First of all Chaos came into being,
then broad-breasted Earth, the ever-safe foundation of all the deathless ones,
who live on the peaks of snowy Olympos, and shadowy Tartaros
100 in a hiding place of the earth with its wide ways, and Eros, who is the most
beautiful of all the deathless gods, who relaxes the limbs and overwhelms

95. . . . *valleys*: Hesiod does not really fulfill this program, never again mentioning the gods' wealth or the division of powers or how the gods first took possession of Olympos.

the mind and wise counsel in the breasts of all the gods and men.^o

From Chaos came Darkness and black Night, and from Night came Brightness and Day, whom Night conceived and bore by uniting in love with Darkness. Earth bore starry Sky first, like to her in size, so that he covered her all around, everywhere, so that there might always be a secure seat for the blessed gods. And Earth gave birth to the blessed Mountains, the pleasant halls of the gods, the nymphs who live in the wooded hills. She bore the barren waters, raging with its swell, Sea, without making delightful love.

105

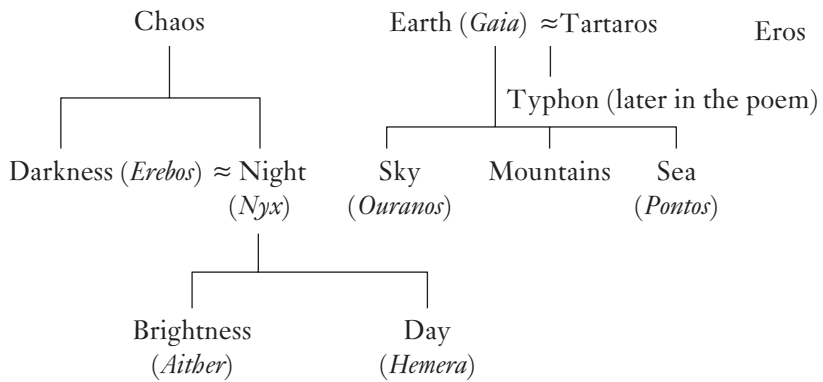
110

But then, uniting with Sky, Earth bore deep-swirling Ocean, and Koios, and Kreios, and Hyperion, and Iapetos, and Theia, and Rhea, and Themis, and Mnemosynê, and golden-crowned Phoibê, and beloved Tethys. After them was born crooked-counseled Kronos, the youngest and most terrible of these children, who hated his powerful father.^o

102. . . . *and men*: Chaos means “chasm” and is related to the English word “gap.” Chaos is a being but embodies the notion that in the beginning there was a separation, as when you open your mouth and a gap appears. Earth and Tartaros then appear (out of Chaos?), both beings too, but also something that one can stand on (Earth), and a dark, mysterious place beneath that something (Tartaros). Eros is sex, the force that makes things happen in the world, that makes one forget what is wise. He is never mentioned again in the *Theogony* (except once in a different connection, in line 164) but is present throughout as the principle of generation.

105. *Darkness*: The Greek for Darkness is *Erebos*; Night is *Nyx*; Brightness is *Aither*; and Day is *Hemera*. In the beginning is darkness, but darkness produces its opposite, light, which is progress.

114. . . . *father*: These twelve gods are the mysterious Titans, a word of uncertain meaning. The story that once there were older gods, overthrown by a younger generation, originated in Mesopotamia, whence arrived much Greek myth and the general outlines of Hesiod's story. Except for Kronos and Rhea, who will replace Sky and Earth as masters of the universe, most of these gods are just names. Ocean was the river that surrounds the world, from which all other rivers come. All that we know of Koios is that he was the father of Leto, the sixth wife of Zeus and mother of Apollo and Artemis. Nothing is known about the obscure Kreios. Hyperion (“he who goes above”) is the father of Sun (*Helios*). Iapetos, evidently the same as the biblical Japeth, a son of Noah (but there are no other obvious connections), is the father of Prometheus. Theia (“goddess”) is the wife of Hyperion. Themis (“law”) and Mnemosynê (“memory”) are early consorts of



Genealogical Chart 1. The primordial gods.

She bore too the Cyclopês with their overweening spirit—Brontês 115
 and Steropês and mighty Argês, who gave to Zeus the thunderbolt
 and manufactured the lightning. These creatures were like the gods
 in all other ways, but they had a single eye in the middle of their foreheads:
 So they were called “Round-Eyes,” because there was a single round
 eye in their foreheads. Strength and power and device were in their works.° 120

Earth and Sky had three other children, great and strong,
 scarcely to be named—Kottos and Briareos and Gygês, prodigal children.
 One hundred arms sprang from their shoulders, scarcely to be imagined,
 and fifty heads grew out of the shoulders of each, mounted on powerful
 limbs. Their strength was unapproachable, mighty in their great forms. 125
 Of all the offspring of Earth and Sky, these were the most terrible children.

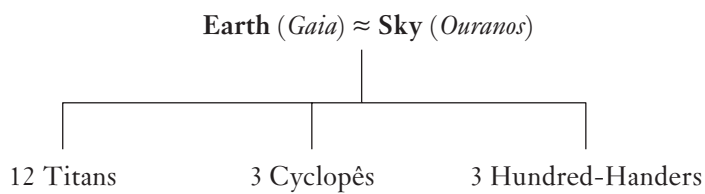
Their father, Sky, hated them from the beginning. And as soon
 as one of his children was born, he would hide them all away in a hiding place
 of Earth and would not allow them to come into the light, and Sky took
 delight in his evil deed. But huge Earth groaned within from the strain, 130
 and she devised an evil trick. Quickly making a gray unconquerable
 substance,° she fashioned a huge sickle, and she spoke to her dear children.
 She said, encouragingly, but sorrowing in her own heart: “My children,
 begotten by a mad father, if you are willing to listen to me,

(114. continued) Zeus. Phoibê (“brilliant goddess,” not to be confused with Phoibos Apollo) is the wife of Koios and mother of Leto. Tethys (“nourisher”?) is probably the same as Mesopotamian Tiamat, a goddess of the primordial waters from which the world emerged. Kronos’ epithet as “crooked-counseled” and as the youngest, and the last mentioned, mark him out as the successor to Sky; the meaning of his name is unknown.

120. . . . *works*: Cyclopês means “with round eyes.” Brontês means “thunderer”; Steropês means “flasher,” and Argês means “brightener.” Scholars have been unable to clarify the relation between these Cyclopês, the armorers of Zeus, and the race of lonely shepherds who persecute Odysseus (*Odyssey* 9). Homer never says that his Cyclops (named Polyphemos) has one eye, but the story requires it.

122. . . . *Gygês*: Briareos may mean “powerful one,” but the meanings of Kottos and Gygês are not clear.

132. *substance*: The “unconquerable substance” is *adamant*, probably meteoric iron or a kind of steel, but the meaning is unclear.



Genealogical Chart 2. The children of Earth and Sky.

let us take vengeance for your father's wicked outrage. For he first
devised unseemly deeds." 135

So she spoke, but fear seized them all, nor did
any of them speak. Then, taking courage, the crooked-counseling Kronos
answered his excellent mother: "Mother, I will undertake this deed,
and I will bring it to completion, for I do not like our father and his evil
name. It was *he* who first began unseemly deeds." 140

So he spoke,
and vast Earth rejoiced greatly in her heart. She took Kronos and hid
him in an ambush. She placed the saw-toothed sickle in his hands.
She laid out the whole plot. Great Sky came, dragging night, and he lay
all over Earth, wanting to make love, and he was spread out all over her.
Then the child reached out from his ambush with his left hand, 145
and with his right hand he held the huge sickle, long and saw-toothed,
and furiously he cut off his father's genitals, and he threw them away,
to fall backwards. They did not flee from his hand for nothing!

Earth received all the bloody drops that shook free, and as the years
rolled around, she bore Erinys and the great and mighty Giants, shining 150
in their armor and holding long spears in their hands, and she bore
the nymphs that people call the Ash Nymphs upon the boundless earth.^o
When he first cut off the genitals with his sickle made of an unconquerable
substance, he threw them from the land into the churning sea, where they

152. . . . *boundless earth*: The image is inconsistent. Sky and Earth are apparently locked in perpetual intercourse, so that her children cannot escape from her womb, the "hiding place," but still Sky comes along desiring sex. The castration of Sky, coming soon in the story, explains how Sky and Earth were separated and the children liberated. According to the pattern of the Succession Myth (see the General Introduction), the son, noted for his cleverness, will overthrow his stupid and brutish father. A sickle is the standard weapon against monsters, used by Perseus against the Gorgon Medusa, and by Herakles against the Lernaean Hydra. Drops from the severed genitals are like semen, fertilizing the Earth to produce Erinys (*er-in-is*), the vengeful spirit of violated oath (especially oaths of obligation toward one's parents), and the Giants, "Earth-born ones," distinguished not so much by their size as by their ferocity as warriors. The Ash-Tree Nymphs (*Meliiai*) are the spirits of ash trees, for some reason singled out here as primordial beings.

155 were borne for a long time over the waves, and a white foam [*aphros*]
arose around the deathless flesh. And in it a young woman was raised up.

She first came to holy CYTHERA, and then from there she arrived in
CYPRUS, wrapped in waves. She came forth an awful and beautiful goddess,
and around her slender feet grass grew. Men and gods call her Aphrodite,
160 a goddess born from the foam, and also lovely-crowned Cythereia—
because she was born of the foam, and Cythereia because she came
to Cythera. And Cyprogenea, because she was born on stormy Cyprus,
and Lover of Laughter because she came to light from the genitals.^o

Eros accompanied her, and beautiful Desire, when she first came
165 into being and went among the tribe of the gods. She has this honor from
the beginning, and has attained her portion among men and the deathless
gods—the whisperings of young girls, and their smiles and deceptions,
and sweet delight, and making love, and gentleness. Great Sky
called these offspring the Titans, insulting his own children, because,
170 he said, “tightening” with folly they undertook a great deed, for which
vengeance was soon to follow.^o

And Night bore hateful Doom and black
Fate and Death, and she bore Sleep, and she bore the tribe of Dreams.
Then she bore Blame and painful Misery—dark Night did, the goddess,

163. . . . *genitals*: Aphrodite is in origin the Eastern goddess of fertility and war, variously called Astarté, Ishtar, Inanna. Somehow “Aphrodite” comes from the Eastern name, but Hesiod provides a folk etymology for the name and derives it from the story of the castration of Sky, from *aphros*, the Greek word for “foam.” Aphrodite seems to have entered the Greek world via the island of CYPRUS, where Semitic-speaking people lived. She had a cult center at PAPHOS in the southwestern part of the island. There was also a cult of the goddess on the island of CYTHERA, off the southern coast of mainland Greece, no doubt brought by Semitic-speaking sailors—that is, Phoenicians. Her epithet “laughter-loving” (*philommeidés*) looks in Greek as if it means “genital-loving” (“genitals” in Greek is *medea*), hence Hesiod’s explanation that she came forth “from the genitals.” Hesiod is much interested in such folk etymologies.

165. . . . *of the gods*: Here Eros seems transmuted from the cosmic principle of generative energy into the Eros that means simply “sexual attraction,” which goes with Desire (*Himeros*) as a quality of Aphrodite.

171. . . . *to follow*: Again Hesiod puns, now on *titaino*, “to tighten,” which really means “to stretch,” as when drawing a bow.

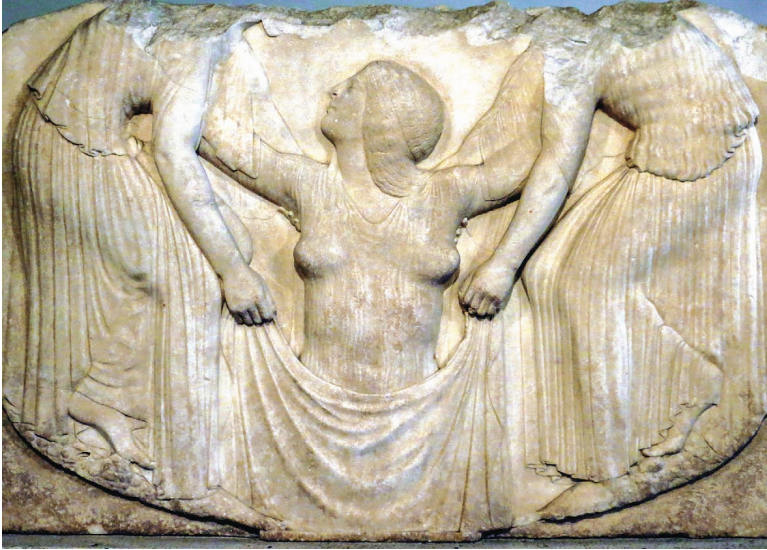
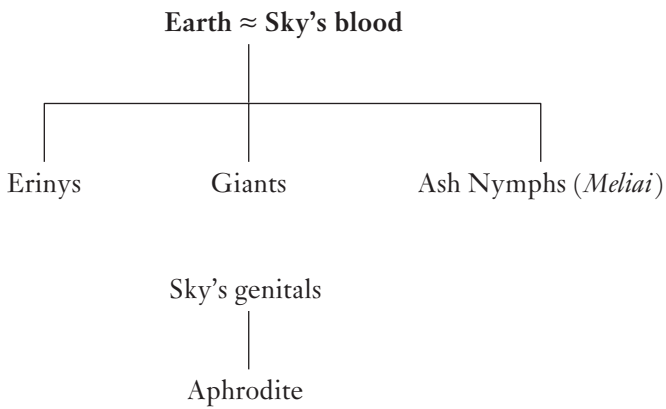


Figure 5. The birth of Aphrodite from the so-called Ludovisi Throne. Found in southern Italy, the marble slab was probably part of an altar. The naked goddess rises in the middle, received by two nymphs who stand on the rocky shore at either side. Museo Nazionale Romano of Palazzo Altemps, Rome (Photo: Sailko; https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/98/Ludovisi_Throne_%288504016347%29.jpg)



Genealogical Chart 3. The offspring of Earth, the blood of Sky, and the birth of Aphrodite.

without having sex with anyone—and the Hesperidēs, who care for the beautiful golden apples and the fruit-bearing trees beyond famous Ocean.^o 175

And Night gave birth to the Destinies and the mercilessly punishing Fates [*Kêres*], Klotho and Lachesis and Atropos, who give good and bad to mortals at their birth, who follow the offenses of men and gods: Nor do the goddesses ever lay off their terrible anger before they take an evil vengeance against anyone who goes astray.^o 180

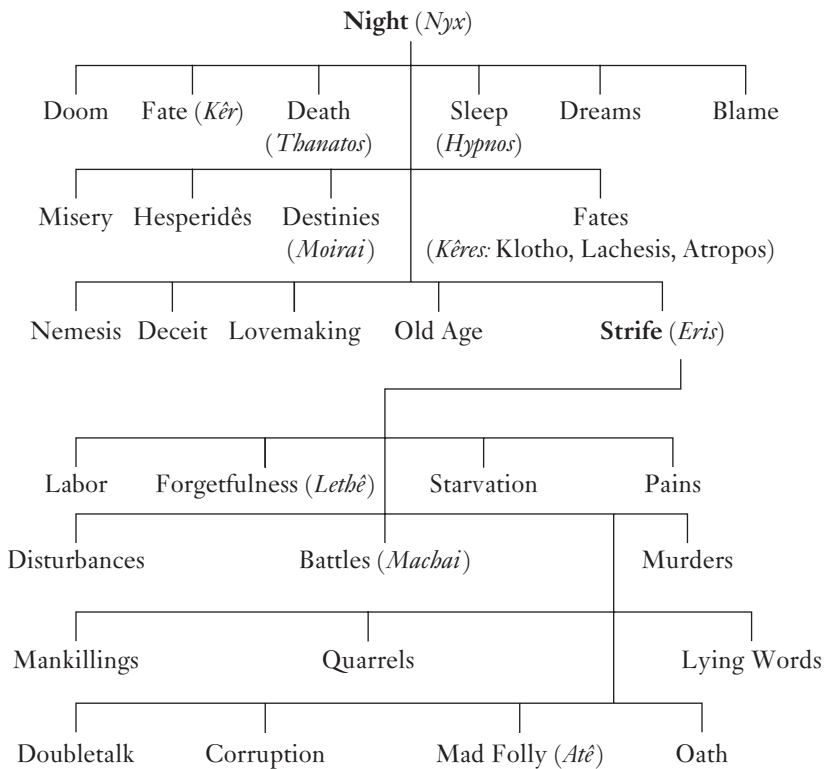
And dread Night bore Nemesis, a burden to mortal men, and afterwards Deceit and Lovemaking and wretched Old Age, and she bore soul-shaking Strife. And wicked Strife bore painful Labor and Forgetfulness and Starvation and tearful Pains and Disturbances and Battles and Murders and Mankillings and Quarrels and Lying Words and Doubletalk and Corruption 185 and Mad Folly—all related to one another; and Oath, which most afflicts mortals upon the earth with pain, when someone knowingly swears a false oath.^o

And Sea begot Nereus, who never lies, and always tells the truth, the oldest of his children, but they call him the Old Man because he is unerring and kind, nor does he forget what laws are laid down, 190

175. . . . *famous Ocean*: Fate (*Kêr*) seems in origin to be a spirit of death, as we say “Lord Death,” a kind of being. Then *Kêr* comes to mean “mortal allotment,” “Fate,” and in the plural, the Fates. The Hesperidēs, “nymphs of the West,” guarded a magical tree that grew in the west at the end of the world. On this tree grew the Golden Apples of Immortality. One of Herakles’ labors was to retrieve these apples. As dwellers in the western seas, where the sun sets, the Hesperidēs were tantamount to spirits of death; hence they are the offspring of Night. Nemesis, “she who gives what is due,” is the spirit of retribution against excess, whether of good or evil.

180. . . . *goes astray*: Klotho means “spinner”; Lachesis, “disposer of lots”; and Atropos, “unbending.” The image of the Fates (here *Kêres*) is that they are like spinners, measuring out a length of thread, then cutting it off. They are also punitive spirits, aware of wrongdoing. Later (line 708–9) Hesiod says that Klotho, Lachesis, and Atropos are the names of the Moirai, “apportioners” or “destinies,” hence “Fates.”

188. . . . *a false oath*: These typical offspring of Night include Lovemaking because in adultery all manner of evils are made, including the Trojan War through the adultery of Paris with Helen. In origin an oath is a curse that one lays upon oneself, which will come to fruition if what one declares is false: If you swear falsely, then you invite punishment by Oath.



Genealogical Chart 4. The descendants of Night (*Nyx*) and Strife (*Eris*).

but his thoughts are just and kind. Uniting with Earth, Sea then begot
great Thaumás and noble Phorkys, and Keto with beautiful cheeks,
and Eurybia, who has a heart of an unconquerable substance in her breast.^o

Of Nereus and Doris of the lovely locks, daughter of Ocean, the circling
river, were born children in the restless sea, lovely among the goddesses— 195
Protho and Eukrantê and Sao and Amphitritê and Eudorê and Thetis
and Galenê and Glaukê and Kymothoê and swift Speo and darling
Thalia and Pasithea and Erato and Eunikê with arms like roses, and graceful
Melitê and Eulimenê and Agavê and Doto and Proto and Pherousa
and Dynamenê and Nesaiê and Aktaiê and Protomedeia and Doris 200
and Panopê and beautiful Galateia and darling Hippothoê
and Hipponoê with arms like roses, and Kymodokê, who together
with Kymatolegê and Amphitritê, who has fine ankles, easily calms
the waves on the misty sea and the blasts of savage winds, and Kymo
and Eionê and Halimedê with the fine crown, and Glaukonomê, 205
lover of laughter, and Pontoporeia and Leiagorê and Euagorê
and Laomedeia and Poulynoê and Autonoê and Lysianassa
and Euarnê, lovely in appearance and blameless in form, and Psamathê,
charming in her figure, and the divine Menippê and Neso and Eupompê
and Themisto and Pronoê and Nemertês, who has the mind 210
of her deathless father. These were the daughters of blameless Nereus,
fifty in number, knowing faultless crafts.^o

Thaumás united with Elektra,

193. . . . *in her breast*: Hesiod mixes up personifications with mythical figures: Thaumás (“wonder”) is a personification of a quality of the Sea. Phorkys is an old spirit of the sea, its powers and dangers, just like Nereus, with whom he is often confused. Keto is “sea monster,” though with beautiful cheeks. Eurybia means “wide of strength,” but otherwise we know nothing about her.

212. . . . *faultless crafts*: The list of the fifty Nereids, the daughters of Nereus and Doris (a daughter of Ocean) is a tour de force, the sort of catalogue in which Hesiod excelled. The names mainly denote positive aspects of the sea: for example, Pasithea “all-divine”; Melitê “like honey”; Galenê “calm”; Kymothoê “wave-swift”; Pontoporeia “making for easy passage on the sea.” Mostly they are just names, but Thetis (of unknown meaning) is the mother of Achilles, and Amphitritê (meaning unknown) is the consort of Poseidon.



Figure 6. Amphitritê stands before Poseidon, her hand raised, as he holds a trident (most of the sea god is broken away). The inscription on the plaque reads, in Corinthian script, APHIRITAEMIPO—that is, “I am A[m]phirita [wife of] Po[seidon].” A[M]PHIRITA is Corinthian dialect for “Amphitritê.” Probably the letters in front of the trident, crowned with a circlet, spell out THR[IAINA]: that is, “trident.” Painted plaque, ca. 560 B.C., from Polyskoupia. Musée du Louvre, Paris (Photo: Marie-Lan Nguyen; https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/5f/Amphitrite_Penteskoupia_Louvre_MNC208.jpg)

the daughter of Ocean with his deep waves, and gave birth to swift
Iris and the Harpies who have nice hair, Storm Wind and Fast Flier,
who follow together the blasts of the winds and the birds on their
swift wings, for they soar high in the air.^o 215

And Keto bore the Gray Old
Ladies, with beautiful cheeks, to Phorkys—gray from birth, whom
the deathless gods and men who live on the earth call the Old Ladies,
Pemphredo with the lovely gown and Enyo with the saffron gown—
and the Gorgons, who live beyond famous Ocean at the edge of Night, 220
where are the Hesperidês, with their high-pitched voices, Sthenno
and Euryalê and Medusa, who came to a bad end. She was mortal,
but the others were deathless and ageless, the two of them.

The Blue-haired god^o slept with Medusa on the gentle meadow
amidst the spring flowers. And when Perseus cut off her head, 225
great Chrysaor leaped out, and the horse Pegasos, so called because
he was born near the springs [*pegai*] of Ocean. Chrysaor was called
that because he held a golden [*chryseion*] sword in his hands.^o

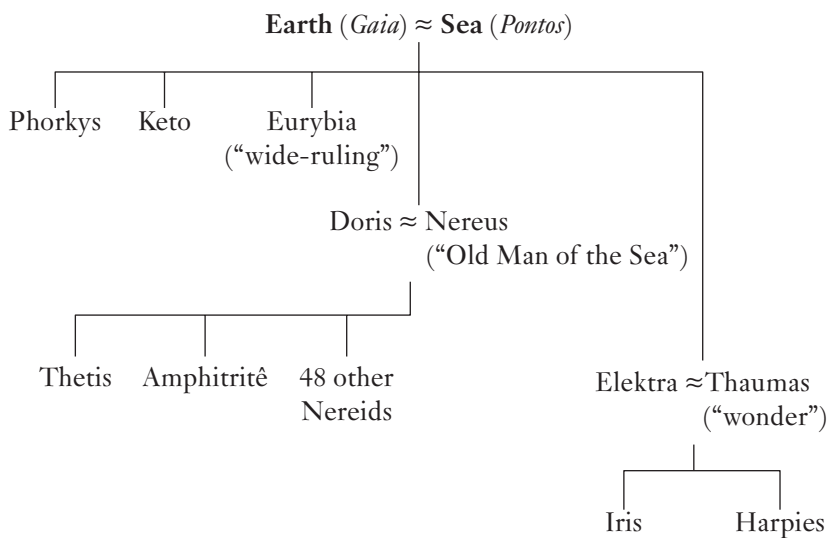
Now Pegasos flew off from the earth, the mother of sheep, and came
to the deathless ones. He dwells in the house of Zeus, carrying the thunder 230
and the lightning flash for Zeus the Counselor. Chrysaor begot three-headed
Geryon, having united in love with Kallirhoê, the daughter of famous Ocean.

216. . . . *high in the air*: Elektra the daughter of Ocean, is not to be confused with Elektra the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, or with Elektra the daughter of Atlas, one of the Pleiadês (**plê**-a-dêz). Elektra means “amber-colored.” Iris (“rainbow”) is the usual messenger of the gods in Homer’s *Iliad* (but not in the *Odyssey*). The Harpies, “snatchers,” are storm winds who, like the spirits of death, sweep one away. The Greek for “storm wind” is *Aello*, and “fast flier” is *Okypetê*.

223. . . . *two of them*: The Gray Old Ladies are the *Graiai*, Pemphredo (perhaps “wasp”) and Enyo (“warlike”). Two of the Gorgons (“fierce ones”) are immortal: Sthenno (“strength”) and Euryalê (perhaps “she of the wide salt sea”). One is mortal: Medusa (“ruler”).

224. *Blue-haired god*: Poseidon.

228. . . . *in his hands*: Perseus’ decapitation of Medusa is the central event in his legend. Chrysaor means “he of the golden sword.”



Genealogical Chart 5. The descendants of Earth and Sea.



Figure 7. The head of Medusa, from an Etruscan temple in Orvieto, Italy, ca. 380 B.C. The head is typical for its boar's tusks, lolling tongue, fearsome eyes and expression, and snaky hair. The temple in which the terra-cotta face was found appears to have been dedicated to Tinia, the Etruscan Zeus. The Etruscans admired Greek myth and adopted many of its main stories. Museo Claudio Faina, Italy (Photo: Sailko; https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Gorgoneia#/media/File:Gorgoneion_dal_tempio_di_belvedere,_orvieto_fine_V_sec._ac..JPG)

The mighty Herakles killed Geryon beside his shamle-footed cattle
 in Erytheia, surrounded by water, on the day when he rustled the broad-
 235 browed cattle and drove them to holy TIRYNS, crossing the stream
 of Ocean, and he killed Orthos and Eurytion the herdsman in the misty
 farmstead beyond famous Ocean.^o

She^o bore another irresistible monster,
 not like mortal men, nor like the deathless gods, in a hollow cave,
 the divine and mighty Echidna, half a young girl with dashing eyes,
 240 of beautiful cheeks, and half a savage snake, huge and terrible,
 nimble and flesh-eating, beneath the hidden parts of the sacred earth.
 There she^o has a cave deep under the hollow rock, far from the deathless
 gods and mortal men, where the gods appointed a famous house
 for her to live in.

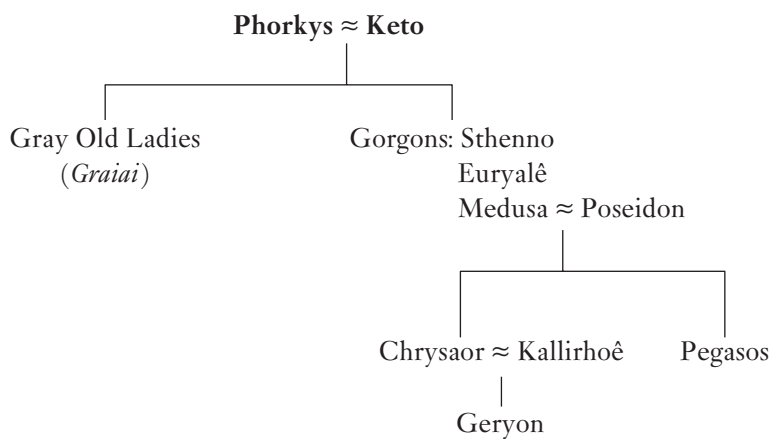
Gloomy Echidna dwells among the Arimoi
 245 beneath the earth, the deathless young girl, ageless for all her days.^o
 They say that Typhon—awful, violent, living without laws—made love
 with the glancing-eyed girl, and that she conceived and brought forth
 ferocious children. First she gave birth to Orthos, the hound of Geryon;
 then she gave birth to Kerberos, irresistible, indescribable, the devourer
 250 of raw flesh, the brazen-voiced hound of Hades with fifty heads,
 ruthless and powerful. Third, she brought forth the Hydra of Lerna,
 knowing only evil things, whom the goddess white-armed Hera

237. . . . *famous Ocean*: Erytheia, “the red land,” is an island somewhere in the far West. Herakles, obeying the commands of his tyrannical cousin, Eurystheus, could reach it only by borrowing the “cup of the sun,” a special vessel by which the sun travels over the sky. Kallirhoë, “beautiful-flowing,” is an Oceanid, belonging to a group parallel to the Nereids but far greater in number (3,000: line 290). Orthos, “true,” was a savage, two-headed hound that with Eurytion (“easily flowing”) protected Geryon’s cattle (the meaning of “Geryon” is unknown).

237. *She*: Presumably Keto.

242. *there she*: Presumably Echidna, but because Hesiod goes on to speak otherwise of Echidna’s home, “she” may mean Keto.

245. . . . *all her days*: It is unclear what is meant by “among the Arimoi,” but perhaps “among the Aramaeans”: that is, the inhabitants of ancient SYRIA, from where this story may have come.



Genealogical Chart 6. The descendants of Phorkys and Keto.

raised up, being extremely angry with Herakles. Herakles, the son
of Zeus of the family of Amphitryon, killed the Hydra with his pitiless
255 bronze, joined by war-loving Iolaos, through the plans of Athena,
leader of the war host.^o

She^o gave birth to Chimaira, breathing deadly
fire, terrible, huge, swift-footed, and powerful. She had three heads:
one of a savage lion, one of a goat, one of a snake, a mighty serpent.
In the front she was a lion, in the back a serpent, in the middle a goat,
260 breathing out the awful strength of blazing fire. Pegasos and noble
Bellerophon killed her.

Chimaira gave birth to the Sphinx, the bane
of the Kadmeians, seduced in love by Orthos; and the Nemean Lion,
that Hera, glorious wife of Zeus, raised up and settled in the hills of NEMEA,
a plague to men. Dwelling there he preyed on the tribes
265 of people, having power over Tretos in the territory of Nemea
and Apesas, but the might of Herakles overcame him.^o

Keto united
in love with Phorkys and begot as her youngest child the dreadful
snake that guards the apples all of gold in the crannies of the dark
earth at its great limits.^o These are the offspring of Keto and Phorkys.

270 Tethys bore to Ocean the swirling rivers, NILE and ALPHEIOS
and deep-eddyding Eridanos and Strymon and Maiandros and beautiful-

256. . . . *of the war host*: It was not until the fifth century B.C. that the adventures of Herakles were canonized as twelve in number. Hesiod here mentions the contest with Geryon, Kerberos, and the Lernaean Hydra, all children of the monstrous Typhon, who later in the poem will be Zeus's most formidable enemy (lines 646–85.). Lerna is a swamp in the southwestern Argive Plain. Iolaos, who assisted Herakles on this adventure, is Herakles' nephew.

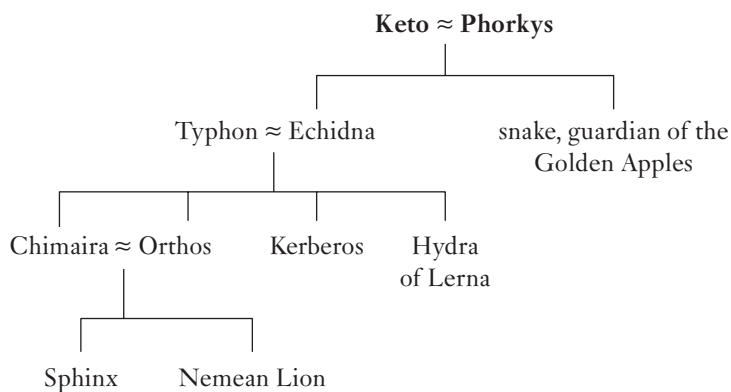
256. *She*: Echidna or Hydra; it is not clear which.

266. . . . *overcame him*: "She" could be Echidna or Chimaira ("she-goat") but is probably Chimaira. The Kadmeians, "descendants of Kadmos," are the Thebans, whom the Sphinx persecuted. Tretos and Apesas are mountains between MYCENAE and CORINTH. After killing the Nemean Lion, Herakles wore his skin as a cloak and helmet.

269. . . . *great limits*: That is, the snake who guards the Golden Apples of the Hesperidēs on the tree that grows at the edge of the world (elsewhere the snake is called Ladon, the name of a river that Hesiod is about to mention).



Figure 8. The Chimaira, a monster with the body of a lion, a goat growing from its back, and a serpent for a tail. South Italian red-figure dish, ca. 350–340 B.C., Musée du Louvre, Paris (Photo: Jastrow; https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b3/Chimera_Apulia_Louvre_K362.jpg)



Genealogical Chart 7. Other descendants of Keto and Phorkys.

flowing Ister and Phasis and Rhesos and silver-swirling Acheloös
and Nessos and Rhodios and Haliakmon and Heptaporos and Granikos
and divine Aisepos and Simoeis and PENEIOS and broad HERMOS
and the fair stream of Kaikos and great Sangarios and Ladon
and Parthenios and Euenos and divine Ardeskos and Skamandros.° 275

She gave birth to a holy race of daughters, who care for youths
over the earth, along with Apollo the king, and the Rivers, and they
have this lot from Zeus: Peitho and Admetê and Ianthê
and Elektra and Doris and Prymno and godlike Ouraniê 280
and Hippo and Klymenê and Rhodeia and Kallirhoê and Zeuxo
and Klytiê and Eiduia and Pasithoê and Plexaurê and Galaxaurê
and lovely Dionê and Melobosis and Thoê and handsome Polydorê
and Kerkeïs, lovely in appearance, and cow-eyed Plouto, Perseïs
and Ianeira and Akastê and Xanthê and fair Petraiê and Menestho 285
and Europê and Metis and Eurynomê and Telesto with the saffron
gown and Chryseïs and Asiê and desirable Kalypso and Eudorê
and Tychê and Amphiro and Okyrhoê and Styx, who stood out
from all the rest.°

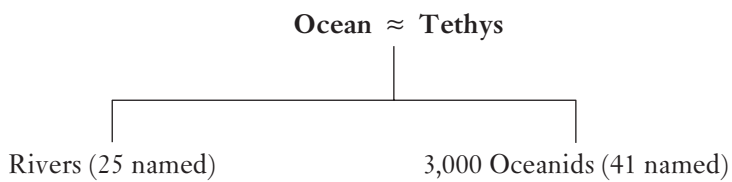
276. . . . *Skamandros*: The NILE is not mentioned in Homer, where the river is called *Aigyptos*, Eridanos was later identified with the PO RIVER in northern Italy; Strymon is in THRACE; Ister is the DANUBE; Phasis is a legendary river thought to be at the eastern end of the BLACK SEA; Rhesos is unknown but perhaps a tributary of the Granikos, northeast of TROY; several rivers were named Acheloös, but probably what is meant is the one in the southwestern mainland, the largest river in Greece; Rhodios is in the Troad, flowing down from Mount Ida; Haliakmon is in MACEDONIA; Heptaporos is in the Troad, a tributary of Skamandros; Granikos, Aisepos, and Simoeis are in the Troad; PENEIOS is in THESSALY; HERMOS is in LYDIA, flowing past Sardis, and the Kaikos is farther north; Sangarios is in PHRYGIA; Ladon is in ARCADIA, a tributary of ALPHEIOS; Parthenios is a small river on the southern shore of the Black Sea; Euenos is in western mainland Greece, where Herakles fought the centaur Nessos, but the Nessos River appears to be in Thrace; Ardeskos is someplace in Thrace; Skamandros is in the Troad. There is little order in this list, reflecting Hesiod's ignorance of real geography.

289. . . . *all the rest*: The Oceanids listed here have a variable importance, or none at all; many seem to have been invented for this catalogue. Some may be the names of real springs; some have no connection with water at all. Their only function, according to Hesiod, is to care for the young. Peitho, "persuasion," is a nymph who adorns Pandora, along with the Graces (*Works and Days*, line 75); Admetê, "unbroken," is appropriate to a nourisher of

These were the oldest offspring of Ocean and Tethys,
 290 but there are many more besides. There are three thousand slender-ankled
 Oceanids, who, dispersed abroad over the earth and the depth
 of the waters, in every place serve alike, the glorious children
 of goddesses. As many other rivers as there are, babbling along,
 the sons of Ocean, whom the revered Tethys bore—of them
 295 it would be hard for a mortal man to tell all the names, but those people
 know who live near them.

And Theia, submitting in love to Hyperion,
 bore great Helios and shining Moon and Dawn, who shines for all
 upon the earth and for the deathless gods who possess broad heaven.
 Eurybia, the awesome goddess, mixing in love with Kreios begot
 300 great Astraïos and great Pallas and Persês, who stands out among

(289. continued) youths; *lanthê*, “violet,” may refer to the color of a spring; *Elektra*, “amber-colored,” was wife of the sea god *Thaumas* and the mother of the messenger goddess *Iris* and the *Harpies*; *Doris*, “giver,” was the mother of the *Nereids*; *Prymno*, “undermost,” was perhaps a nymph of the groundwater; *Ouraniê*, “heavenly,” was also the name of one of the *Muses*. Aquatic deities are often associated with horses, or represented as them, hence *Hippo*, “horse.” *Klymenê*, “famous one,” was the wife of the Titan *Iapetos* and mother of *Prometheus*; *Rhodeia* means “rose-colored”; *Kallirhoê*, “fair-flowing,” was the mother of *Geryon*; *Zeuxo*’s name, “she who joins,” marks her as a goddess of marriage; *Eidua*, “knowing,” was wife to King *Aietês* of *COLCHIS* and the mother of *Medea*, perhaps a goddess of witchcraft; *Pasithoê*, “all-swift,” may refer to a fast-flowing spring; *Plexaurê* perhaps means “water-weaver,” and *Galaxaurê* means “water like milk”; *Dionê*, “female Zeus,” was Zeus’s consort at the oracular shrine of *Dodona* in northwestern Greece; *Melobosis*, “sheep feeder,” is probably a nymph of grassy pastures; *Thoê* means “swift”; *Polydorê* is “much-giver,” and *Plouto* is “wealth”; *Kerkês* is obscure; *Perseïs*, “destroyer,” is the mother by *Helios* of the Eastern despot *Aietês* and the witch *Circe* (“hawk”); *Ianeira* is perhaps goddess of the *Ionians*; *Akastê*, “irregular,” *Xanthê*, “yellow,” *Petraîê*, “rocky,” and *Menestho*, perhaps “lasting,” refer to qualities of springs; *Europa* is goddess of the continent and the name of a spring in *Dodona*. *Metis*, “mind,” is Zeus’s first consort; *Eurynomê*, “wide-ruling,” is Zeus’s third consort and mother of the *Graces*; *Telesto* means “accomplisher”; *Chryseïs* is “golden”; *Asia*, perhaps “muddy,” is the goddess of the territory of *Lydia*, the sister of *Europa*, and the wife of *Prometheus*; *Kalypso*, “concealer,” is probably not the *Kalypso* (the daughter of *Atlas*, not of *Ocean*) who imprisoned *Odysseus* for seven years in the *Odyssey* (7.259); *Eudorê* is “well-giving”; *Tychê* is “chance,” “luck,” a great goddess in later times; *Amphiro* is “flowing-around,” and *Okyrhoê* is “swift-flowing.” *Styx*, “hateful,” is the famous river of the underworld.



Genealogical Chart 8. The children of Ocean and Tethys.

all wise men.^o

Dawn bore to Astraïos the powerful winds,
the brightening West Wind and swift North Wind and South Wind,
a goddess lying in love with a god. After these Early-Born bore the star
Dawn Bringer and the shining Stars that crown the heaven.^o

And Styx,

- 305 the daughter of Ocean, sleeping with Pallas, begot Emulation
and Victory, with slender ankles, in the house. And Styx begot Strength
and Power, splendid children.^o They have no house apart from Zeus,
nor any seat, nor any path except that whereon the god leads them,
but always they take their seat beside loud-thundering Zeus.
310 For so did Styx, the deathless Oceanid, decide on that day when
the Olympian who hurls the lightning^o called together all
the deathless gods to high Olympos, and he said that whoever
of the gods would fight along with him against the Titans,
that they would not be deprived of their reward, but would have,
315 each of them, the honor that he had before among the deathless gods.
He said too that whoever was without honor and reward under
the reign of Kronos would receive honor and reward, as is right.

- Deathless Styx first came to Olympos with her children through
the devising of her father. Zeus honored her and gave her exceptional
320 gifts. He made her to be the great oath of the gods,^o and her children

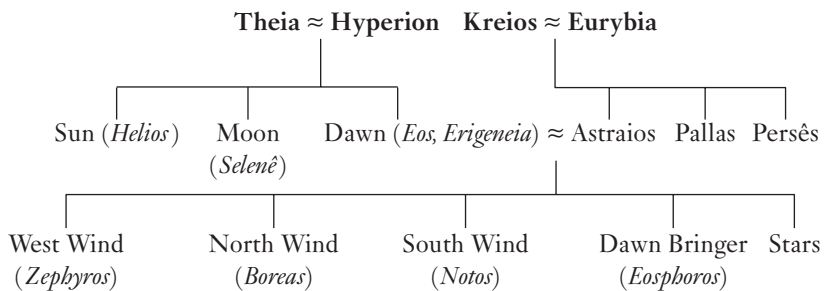
301. . . . *all wise men*: The Sun is *Helios*, the Moon is *Selenê*, and Dawn is *Eos*. The children of Kreios are nonentities: Astraïos, “starry,” is perhaps invented as the father of the stars. Pallas is utterly obscure, as is his relationship to Pallas Athena, to a Giant of the same name whom she killed, and to an early Athenian hero of the same name. Persês is the father of Hekâtê.

304. . . . *the heaven*: West Wind is *Zephyros*; North Wind is *Boreas*; South Wind is *Notos*. Early-Born is *Erigeneia*, a title of Dawn (*Eos*); Dawn Bringer is *Eosphoros*: that is, Venus, the only planet mentioned in Greek literature before the fourth century B.C., the brightest star in the sky, appearing only in the morning and evening.

307. . . . *splendid children*: Emulation is *Zelos*; Victory is *Nikê*; Strength is *Kratos*; Power is *Bia*.

311. . . . *lightning*: Zeus.

320. *oath of the gods*: Only gods could swear by Styx; such an oath could never be broken.



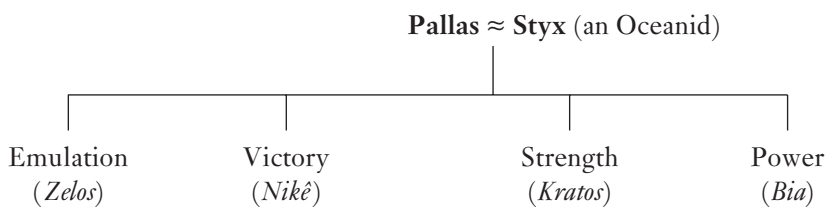
Genealogical Chart 9. The descendants of Theia and Hyperion and of Kreios and Eurybia.

to live with him for all their days. And just as he promised,
he brought it about fully for all, for he himself reigns and rules
with power.

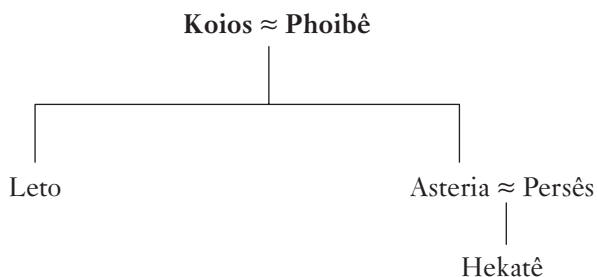
Then Phoibê came to the much-beloved bed of Koios.
The goddess, sleeping with the god, conceived and gave birth
325 to dark-gowned Leto, always gentle, sweet to men and the deathless
gods, gentle from the beginning, the most kindly of those in Olympus.
Phoibê begot the honored Asteria, whom Persês led into his great
house to be called his dear wife.

And Asteria conceived and gave birth
to Hekatê, whom Zeus, the son of Kronos, honored above all others.^o
330 He gave her splendid gifts, to have a share of the earth and of the barren sea.
He allotted her honor in the starry heaven, and she is honored
especially by all the deathless gods. And even now, when someone
of earth-dwelling men makes a lovely holy sacrifice, and prays for favor
according to custom, he calls out to Hekatê. Much honor easily
335 follows him whose prayers the goddess eagerly follows, and she sends
wealth to him, for she has the power to do so. For among as many
as were born from Earth and Sky, and have received their apportionment
of honor, she has her due. Nor did the son of Kronos do her violence
nor take anything away from what she had been apportioned among
340 the former Titan gods, but she holds her reward upon the earth
and in heaven and on the sea, as much as was the first division
from the beginning. Nor, because she was an only child, did the goddess
receive less honor, but she holds even much more, because Zeus
honors her. As she wishes, she stands at one's side and assists
345 with all her power. She sits beside respected chiefs in judgment

329. . . . *above all others*: Asteria was also a name of the island of DELOS, where Leto gave birth to Apollo and Artemis. In later times Hekatê was a goddess of the crossroads, of witchcraft, magic, and the occult arts, but in Hesiod she is a great goddess of boundless benevolence, with whom Hesiod perhaps had a personal relationship. Her cult seems to come from CARIA, in southern Asia Minor, where Hesiod's father may have had connections. Perhaps for this reason he named Hesiod's brother Persês (in *Works and Days*), the name of Hekatê's father. Hekatê plays little role in Greek myth.



Genealogical Chart 10. The children of Pallas and Styx.



Genealogical Chart 11. The descendants of Koios and Phoibê.

and, in the assembly, that man stands out among the people, whomever she wishes.

And when men arm themselves for man-destroying war, then the goddess is there, and she happily grants victory and extends glory to whomever she wishes. Good is she to stand by horsemen,
350 whomever she wishes, and also when men contend at the games: There the goddess stands at their side and gives assistance. And when someone conquers with strength and power, he easily carries the noble contest, rejoicing, and he brings glory to his parents.

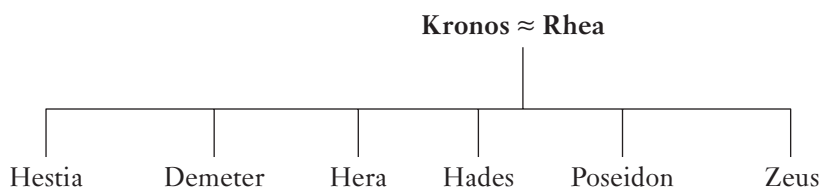
And to those who work the blue distempered sea, who pray to Hekatê and to the loud-crashing Earthshaker,^o
355 the reverend goddess easily grants an abundant catch, and she easily takes it back when it appears, if she wishes. She is good at increasing, with the help of Hermes, the flocks in the fold. She increases from a few the herds of cattle and the broad herds of goats and the flocks of fleecy sheep, if she wishes, or makes the many to be less.

Thus, though
360 her mother begot but one child, she is honored by all the deathless gods. The son of Kronos made her to be a nurse of youths who after her see with their eyes the light of the all-seeing Dawn. And so from the beginning she is the nurse of the young, and such are her spheres of influence. Rhea, sleeping with Kronos, bore splendid children, Hestia and Demeter
365 and Hera with the golden sandals and powerful Hades, who dwells beneath the earth with his pitiless heart, and loud-crashing, earthshaking Poseidon, and wily Zeus, the father of gods and men, who shakes the broad earth with his thunder.^o

And great Kronos swallowed them

354. *Earthshaker*: Poseidon.

368. . . . *with his thunder*: Hestia is the goddess of the hearth, the *focus* (Latin for “hearth”) of household activity; she has few myths. Demeter is the goddess of the grain harvest, whose daughter, Persephone, was snatched away by Hades (“unseen”), god of the underworld, to be his bride. Hera is the wife of Zeus, the goddess of marriage, who persecutes Zeus’s illegitimate offspring (especially Herakles). Poseidon is lord of the sea and is besides god of earthquakes and horses. Zeus is the Greek storm god. All ancient pantheons had a storm god, the power that causes rain and lightning.



Genealogical Chart 12. The children of Kronos and Rhea.

down as each came forth from the holy womb at the knees of its mother.^o
370 His intention was to prevent one of the illustrious descendants of Sky
from taking the kingly honor among the gods. For Kronos had learned
from Earth and starry Sky that he was destined to be overthrown
by his own son, strong though he himself was, through the devices of great
Zeus. He kept no blind man's watch, but keeping alert he swallowed
375 down his children.

Unceasing pain took hold of Rhea. But when
she was about to give birth to Zeus, the father of gods and men,
then she begged her own dear parents, Earth and starry Sky,
to concoct some plan whereby she might secretly conceal the birth
of her dear child, and make the great wily Kronos pay the Erinys
380 of her father, Sky, and of the children whom he had swallowed.^o

They readily listened to their daughter and obeyed her, and they
advised her about what was destined to happen to King Kronos
and his powerful son. They sent her to LYKTOS, in the rich land of CRETE,
when she was about to give birth to her youngest child, great Zeus.
385 Great Earth received him from Rhea in broad Crete to raise up
and to nourish. There Earth came, carrying him through the swift
black night, to Lyktos first, and she took him up in her hands and hid
him in a remote cave beneath the crannies of the holy earth, in a wood,
thick with trees, on Mount Aigaion.^o But for the great ruling son of Sky,

369. . . . *its mother*: Greek women gave birth in a squatting position.

380. . . . *he swallowed*: Erinys (or the Erinyes) came into being when Kronos castrated his father, Sky, emerging from the drops of blood that fell on Earth (lines 149–50). Erinyes represent (sometimes) the spirits of vengeance when a wrong has been done, in this case by a father against his children. Sky and Kronos' children have Erinyes because of Kronos' evil behavior.

389. . . . *Mount Aigaion*: Hesiod's Succession Myth, inherited from the Near East, here attaches to local Cretan traditions, wherein a male year-spirit, who is born and dies annually, is raised in a cave and celebrated by young men banging shields. The Greeks identified this Minoan, non-Greek god with their own Zeus; the supposed grave of Zeus was shown in Crete during the Classical period. LYKTOS is in east-central Crete, on the western slope of Mount Lasithi. The cave that Hesiod refers to may be the Psychro Cave, off the high plateau of Mount Lasithi fairly near Lyktos, where votive offerings have been

king of the earlier gods, she wrapped a huge stone in swaddling clothes 390
 and gave it to him. He took it in his hands and pushed it down into his belly
 —the wretch! He did not know in his heart that, instead of the stone,
 his own son was left behind safe and sound. That son was soon to overcome
 Kronos by force and might and take away his office and himself rule
 among the deathless ones. 395

Then the strength and shining limbs of this king
 increased quickly. And as the year rolled around, the great wily Kronos,
 deceived by the eloquent suggestions of Earth, vomited up his offspring,
 overcome by the arts and power of his own son.^o First he vomited
 up the stone, which he had swallowed last. Zeus set it up in the wide-pathed
 earth in most holy Pytho,^o beneath the valleys of PARNASSOS, to be a sign 400
 in later times, a wonder for mortal men.

And he loosed his uncles,
 the children of Sky, from their deadly bonds, whom their own father
 had bound in his madness. They were mindful of his kindness, and they
 gave him the thunder and the shining thunderbolt and the lightning.
 Before that, huge Earth had hidden them. Trusting in them, Zeus rules 405
 over mortals and the deathless ones.^o

Iapetos took to wife the nymph
 Klymenê with the slender ankles, daughter of Ocean, and he went up
 into her bed. She gave birth to the child Atlas with his powerful mind,
 and she bore the very famous Menoitios and the versatile Prometheus,
 his mind filled with tricks, and scatterbrained Epimetheus, who from 410
 the beginning gave birth to evil for bread-nourished men. For he first

(389. continued) found, but others place the cave on Mount Ida, in central Crete. Mount Aigaion, “goat mountain,” is otherwise unattested but may be an ancient name for Mount Lasithi.

398. . . . *own son*: Hesiod does not say how Zeus forced Kronos to vomit up his children, but later reports say that he administered an emetic drug.

400. *Pytho*: Delphi.

406. . . . *deathless ones*: Zeus’s uncles are the Cyclopês, who forged the thunderbolt by which Zeus overcame the Titans. Earlier they were imprisoned in Tartaros by Sky.

received from Zeus the molded virgin as his wife.^o Far-seeing Zeus
threw down the violent Menoitios into Erebos,^o hitting him with a smoking
thunderbolt because of his foolishness and his horrendous pride.

415 Atlas holds the broad sky from powerful necessity, standing at the ends
of the earth near the shrill-voiced Hesperidēs, with his inexhaustible
head and arms; for wily Zeus assigned this fate for him.

He bound

the clever Prometheus in unbreakable bonds, savage chains, and drove
a shaft through his torso, and he sent a long-winged eagle upon him,
420 who devoured his immortal liver. But it grew back in the night,
as much as the long-winged bird ate in the whole day. Herakles,
the powerful son of Alkmenē with the beautiful ankles, killed the eagle
and warded off the evil affliction from the son of Iapetos, freeing
him from his suffering, and not against the will of Olympian Zeus,
425 who reigns on high, so that the glory of Theban-born Herakles might
be still more than before upon the rich earth.

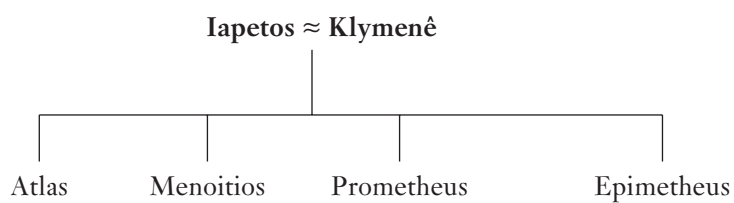
Thinking of this, Zeus honored

his excellent son, and though he was angry he gave up his anger that
he held before because Prometheus had matched wits with the mighty
son of Kronos. For when gods and mortal men disputed at Mekonē,
430 Prometheus divided up and set before them the portions of a great
bull with eager heart, deceiving the mind of Zeus.^o For he set out before him

412. . . . *as his wife*: Atlas is later punished—we do not know why—by being forced to hold up the sky on his shoulders. Menoitios (the same name as the father of Patroklos in the *Iliad*) is utterly obscure. The etymology of “Prometheus” is unclear, but Hesiod seems to have understood it as “forethinker.” Epimetheus, who may be Hesiod’s invention, means “afterthinker.” Epimetheus acts like a man, not a god, and in other accounts he is the husband of Pandora and the father of Pyrrha, who marries the son of Prometheus, Deukalion, the Greek Noah. Pandora is “molded” because Hephaistos made her from earth.

413. *Erebos*: Darkness: that is, the underworld.

431. . . . *mind of Zeus*: Mekonē is an old name for SIKYON, a town to the west of Corinth on the Gulf of Corinth in the PELOPONNESUS. This etiological myth, set in a time when men and gods dined together, explains why in Greek sacrificial ritual the gods are given the bones wrapped in fat, but men eat the delicious flesh and the entrails. The myth marks the division between men and gods.



Genealogical Chart 13. The descendants of Iapetos and Klymenê.



Figure 9. The punishments of Atlas and Prometheus. Atlas, accompanied by a snake, holds the world on his shoulders. Prometheus is bound to a pillar surmounted by a crow while an eagle plucks at his chest. Athenian black-figure wine cup, ca. 550 B.C. Vatican Museums, Vatican City (Photo: Karl-Ludwig G. Poggemann; https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/a/a8/Atlas_Typhon_Prometheus.pdf/page1-1258px-Atlas_Typhon_Prometheus.pdf.jpg)

on the hide the flesh and the entrails rich with fat, concealing them with the bull's stomach, and then he set out before him in turn the white bones of the bull as a cunning trick, attractively concealing them with shining fat. Then the father of men and gods said to Prometheus: "O son of Iapetos, most excellent of all the gods—wow! How you have divided the portions unequally!" So Zeus spoke with a sneer, knowing all things forever. 435

But wily Prometheus answered him, with a slight smile, not forgetting his cunning deception: "Most glorious and greatest of the everlasting gods, of this offering take whatever your spirit within urges you to." 440

So he spoke, keeping his trick in mind. Zeus, who knows all things forever, knew and recognized the trick, but he intended evil for mortal man, which was to come to pass.^o He took up in both his hands the white fat, and he was angry in his heart, and anger overcame his spirit when he saw the white bones of the bull cunningly decked out. And this is the reason that the tribes of men upon the earth burn the white bones to the gods on the smoking altars. 445

Greatly enraged, cloud-gathering Zeus spoke to Prometheus: "O son of Iapetos, always up to your tricks! So, you have still not let up from your trickery!" Thus spoke Zeus in anger, who knows all things forever. From that time, always mindful of the trick, he has not given to ash trees the strength of untiring fire for mortal men.^o 450

But the brave son of Iapetos deceived him when he stole the far-seeing gleam of untiring fire in a hollow stalk of fennel.^o This act stung him to the depths of his spirit, Zeus, who thunders on high,

443. . . . *to pass*: No doubt in an earlier version Zeus was deceived by the trick, but Hesiod wants to preserve the great god's omniscience.

452. . . . *for mortal men*: Evidently referring to a widespread belief that fire lies hidden within trees, so that when you rub pieces of wood together vigorously you can start a fire. Also, lightning that strikes trees will often start a fire. The ash is a common tree in Greece.

453. *fennel*: Not actually a fennel, the Giant Fennel (*narthex*) is a common plant near the Mediterranean. It has a brilliant yellow flower and a thick stalk whose pith can hold a coal without burning through to the outer rind. It was often used, and still is, to transport fire.

455 and his heart grew angry when he saw the far-seeing gleam of fire
among men. He immediately fashioned an evil for men, to balance
out the fire.

The famous crippled god, Hephaistos, made from earth
the likeness of a modest young woman through the devisings of the son
of Kronos. Flashing-eyed Athena wrapped and adorned her in silvery
460 cloth, and with her hands she drew down over her head an embroidered
veil, a marvel to see. And around her head Pallas Athena placed garlands,
the flowers of fresh-blooming grass, seductive. And around her head
she placed a golden band that the very clever lame god himself had made,
working it in his hands, giving pleasure to Father Zeus. He worked
465 into it many ingenious designs, a wonder to see, of wild animals
of the kind that inhabit the sea and the dry land—of these wonderful
things he placed many examples, like living things with voices,
and a great beauty shone from it.

But when he had made the beautiful
evil as the price for the good,^o he brought her forth to where the other
470 gods were, and men, rejoicing in the finery of the flashing-eyed daughter
of loud-thundering Zeus.^o Amazement filled the deathless gods and mortal
men when they saw the bitter deception, which men could not withstand.
From her comes the race of tender women, who dwell among men as a great
affliction for mortals, not bearing up well in Poverty, but happy in Plenty.^o

475 As when bees in roofed hives feed the drones, always up to their evil
deeds—the bees are busy by day, and all day long until the sun goes down
they lay out the white honeycombs while the drones stay inside the roofed
hives and gather the labor of others into their bellies—even so Zeus,
who thunders on high, made women an evil for mortal men, conspirators
480 in harsh deeds.

And he gave a second evil in return for the good:

469. *for the good*: The gift of fire.

471. . . . *loud-thundering Zeus*: The “daughter” is Athena.

474. . . . *Plenty*: Here Poverty and Plenty are personified, as if they were gods.

For whoever flees from marriage and the oppressive ways of women
 and wishes not to marry, then a wretched old age comes upon him,
 and no one to care for him. And although he lives with sufficient substance,
 when he dies distant relatives divide up his estate. As for the man
 who chooses marriage as his lot, and takes a pleasant wife suited 485
 to his own mind, from the beginning evil goes with the good.
 Whoever happens to have a troublemaking wife, he lives with
 endless sorrow in his heart and his breast—this evil cannot be cured!

And so you cannot deceive or get around the mind of Zeus.
 For not even the generous Prometheus, the son of Iapetos, escaped 490
 his heavy anger, but by necessity, though he knew many things, great
 bonds hold him down.

When first Father Sky grew angry in his heart
 at Briareos and Kottos and Gygês,^o he bound them in powerful bonds,
 amazed at their extraordinary manliness and their good looks and their size.
 He made them live beneath the wide-ayed earth. There, dwelling beneath 495
 the earth at the end of creation, at the limits of its greatness, they were
 afflicted for a long time, having great suffering in their hearts.
 But the son of Kronos and the other deathless gods, which bright-haired
 Rhea begot in lovemaking with Kronos, brought them up again
 into the light on Earth's cunning advice. 500

Earth went through the whole
 thing thoroughly with them, explaining how they could be victorious
 and win splendid fame; for the Titans and the gods, as many as were
 begotten by Kronos, were fighting furiously with one another, the bold
 Titans from forested MOUNT OTHRYS, and the gods, the givers of good
 things, from MOUNT OLYMPOS—those whom bright-haired Rhea 505
 had given birth to, after bedding with Kronos.^o They had fought

493. . . . *Gygês*: The Hundred-Handers. Apparently Sky imprisoned them in Tartaros at the time of his oppression of Earth and her children.

506. . . . *bedding with Kronos*: MOUNT OTHRYS (6,560 feet high), lies on the southwestern plain of THESSALY, and Mount Olympos (9,600 feet high) to its north, so that the battle between the gods and the Titans, the Titanomachy, must have taken place on the plain itself.

you don't say something ridiculous, when you could have spoken in peace.

- b Aristophanes laughed and said, You're right, Eryximachus. Let me unsay what was said. Please relax your guard, because I'm worried about what I'm going to say, not lest I say something ridiculous—that would be gain, and native to my Muse—but lest it make me a butt of ridicule.

Having let fly with this, Aristophanes, he replied, do you think you'll escape? Pay attention and speak as if you'll be called to

- c account for it. Perhaps, however, if I think fit, I'll let you off.

The Speech of Aristophanes (1890-1936)

Why really, Eryximachus, said Aristophanes, I intend to say something a bit different from what you and Pausanias said. For I think people do not fully perceive the power of Eros, since if they did, they'd build him their greatest temples and altars and offer their greatest sacrifices, whereas now they do nothing of the kind, though it very much needs doing. For he is the most

- d philanthropic of gods, a helper of human beings and a physician for those ills whose cure would be greatest happiness for the human race. So I will try to describe to you his power, and you will teach others.

You must first learn human nature and its condition. For our ancient nature was not what it is now, but of another kind. In the first place, there were three sexes among men, not two as now,

- e male and female, but a third sex in addition, being both of them in common, whose name still remains though the thing itself has vanished; for one sex was then derived in common from both male and female, androgynous both in form and name, though the name is now applied only in reproach.

Again, the form of each human being as a whole was round, with back and sides forming a circle, but it had four arms and an equal number of legs, and two faces exactly alike on a cylindrical neck; there was a single head for both faces, which faced

- 190a in opposite directions, and four ears and two sets of pudenda, and one can imagine all the rest from this. It also traveled upright just as now, in whatever direction it wished; and whenever they took off in a swift run, they brought their legs around straight and somersaulted as tumblers do, and then, with eight limbs to support them, they rolled in a swift circle.

- b The reason there were three sexes of this sort was that the male originally was the offspring of the Sun, the female of the Earth, and what has a share of both of the Moon, because the Moon also has share of both. They were spherical both in themselves and in their gait because they were like their parents. Well, they were terrible in strength and force, and they had high thoughts and conspired against the gods, and what Homer told of Ephialtes and Otus¹⁹⁶ is told also of them: they tried to storm Heaven in order to displace the gods.
- c Well, Zeus and the other gods took counsel about what they ought to do, and were at a loss, for they didn't see how they could kill them, as they did the Giants, whose race they wiped out with the thunderbolt—because the honors and sacrifices they received from human beings would disappear—nor yet could they allow them to act so outrageously. After thinking about it very hard indeed, Zeus said, "I believe I've got a device by which men may continue to exist and yet stop their intemperance, namely, by becoming weaker. I'll now cut each of them in two," he said, "and they'll be weaker and at the same time more useful to us by having increased in number, and they'll walk upright on two legs. But if they still seem to act so outrageously and are unwilling to keep quiet," he said, "I'll cut them in two again, so that they'll have to get around on one leg, hopping."
- d So saying, he cut human beings in two the way people slice serviceberries¹⁹⁷ to preserve them by drying, or as they cut eggs with a hair; he ordered Apollo to turn around the face and the half-neck of whoever he'd cut to where the cut was made, so that the man would be more orderly by contemplating his own division, and he bid Apollo heal the other wounds. Apollo turned the face around and drew together from all sides the skin on what is now called the belly, as purses are closed by a drawstring, and, tying it off in the middle of the belly, he made a single mouth which people call the navel. And he smoothed out most of the other wrinkles and carefully shaped the chest with a tool of the sort shoemakers use to smooth out wrinkles in the leather on a last; but he left a few wrinkles around the belly and the navel, as a reminder of the ancient suffering. Now when their nature was divided in two, each
- 191a

196. Who planned to overthrow the gods by piling Mount Ossa on Olympus and Pelion on Ossa, to climb the sky (*Odyssey* xi 307–320). Apollo destroyed them.

197. The European *Sorbus domestica*, of the apple family; it resembles the mountain ash, but with larger leaves and fruit, which is edible.

- half in longing rushed to the other half of itself and they threw
 b their arms around each other and intertwined them, desiring to grow together into one, dying of hunger and inactivity too because they were unwilling to do anything apart from one another. Whenever any of the halves died and the other was left, the one left sought out another and embraced it, whether it met half of a whole woman—what we now call a woman—or of a man. And so they perished.

- But Zeus took pity and provided another device, turning their pudenda to the front—for up till then they had those on the out-
 c side too, and they used to beget and bear children not in each other but in the earth, like locusts—well, he turned them to the front and so caused them to beget in each other, in the female through the male, for this reason: so that if male met female, they might in their embrace beget and their race continue to exist, while at the same time if male met male, there'd at least be satiety from their intercourse and they'd be relieved and go back to work and look after the other concerns of life. So Eros for each other
 d is inborn in people from as long ago as that, and he unites their ancient nature, undertaking to make one from two, and to heal human nature.

- Each of us then is but the token of a human being, sliced like a flatfish, two from one; each then ever seeks his matching token.¹⁹⁸
 Men sectioned from the common sex, then called androgynous,
 e are woman-lovers; the majority of adulterers are from this sex, while on the other hand women from this sex are man-lovers and adulteresses. Women sectioned from a woman pay scant heed to men, but are turned rather toward women, and lesbians come from this sex. Those sectioned from a male pursue the masculine; because they are slices of the male, they like men while still boys,
 192a delighting to lie with men and be embraced by them. These are the most noble boys and youths because they are by nature most manly.¹⁹⁹ Some say they're most shameless, but they're wrong: they

198. *οἰζυίλοχον*. Corresponding pieces of a knucklebone or other object which contracting parties broke between them, each party keeping one piece to match in order to have proof of the identity of the presenter of the other. The indenture, at common law, originally an irregularly torn parchment, had an equivalent use.

199. This and what follows is ironical and sarcastic: "Since it is a taunt in Old Comedy (e.g., Aristophanes *Knights* 875-880, Plato Comicus, fr. 186) that eminent politicians in their youth submitted shamelessly (or for money) to homosexual importunities, and this taunt, characteristic of the cynical attitudes of comedy (cf. Dover *Greek Homosexuality*, p. 147/.), must have been familiar to Plato, he means Aristophanes to be speaking tongue-in-cheek." Dover, *Symposium*, on this passage.

don't do it out of shamelessness but out of boldness and courage and masculinity, cleaving to what is like themselves. A great proof: actually, it is only men of this sort who, when they grow up, enter
 b on political affairs. When they reach manhood they love boys, and by nature pay no heed to marriage and the getting of children except as compelled to it by custom and law; it suffices them to live out their lives unmarried, with one another. So this sort becomes wholly a lover of boys or a boy who loves having lovers, ever cleaving to what is akin.

When the lover of boys and any every other lover meets his own particular half, they are then marvelously struck by friendship
 c and kinship and Eros, and scarcely willing to be separated from each other even for a little time. These are the people who pass their whole lives with each other, but who can't even say what they wish for themselves by being with each other. No one can think it is for the sake of sexual intercourse that the one so eagerly delights in being with the other. Instead, the soul of each clearly wishes for
 d something else it can't put into words; it divines what it wishes, and obscurely hints at it.

Suppose Hephaestus with his tools stood over them as they lay together and asked, "What is it you people wish in being at each other's side?" And suppose if they were perplexed he further asked, "Is this your desire—to be in the same place with each other as much as possible, so that you're not parted from each other night and day? Because if that's what you want, I will fuse and
 e weld you into the same thing, so that from being two you become one and, as one, share a life in common as long as you live²⁰⁰ and when you die, even there in the Place of the Dead you'll again be one instead of two, and share being dead in common. See if it is this you love, and if it will suffice for you should it happen."

We know that not a single lover on hearing this would refuse it nor appear to wish for anything else; he'd simply think he'd heard what he desired all along, namely, to join and be fused with his beloved, to become one from two. The cause is that this was our
 19a ancient nature, and we were wholes. Eros then is a name for the desire and pursuit of wholeness. And as I say, before we were one, but now we have been dispersed by the god due to our injustice

200. Aristotle refers to this passage at *Politics* II 1262b 1 *iff.*, where he refers to "the erotic discourses."

as the Arcadians were dispersed by the Spartans.²⁰¹ So there is fear that if we should not be well ordered toward the gods, we shall be split in two again and go around like the people molded in profile on tombstones, sawed in half through the nose, born like split dice.²⁰²

- b This is why all men should urge each other in all things to worship the gods, so we may escape this and meet with that, because Eros is our guide and general. Let no one act to the contrary— whoever acts to the contrary is hated by the gods—for by becoming friends and reconciled to the god we shall discover and meet with our own beloved, which few now do.

- c And Eryximachus must not interrupt me and poke fun at this account on the ground that I only mean Pausanias and Agathon— perhaps they really are of this kind and are both masculine in nature—but I'm saying about everyone, men and women alike, that this is how our race would become happy, if we should fulfill our love and each meet with his own beloved, returning to his ancient nature.

- el If this is best, then necessarily what is nearest to it under present circumstances is also best: that is, to meet a beloved who is naturally likeminded and congenial. In singing praises to the god responsible for it we would rightly hymn Eros, who at present brings us the greatest benefits and leads us into what is properly our own, and provides greatest hope in future that if we offer reverence to the gods, he will restore us to our ancient nature, and heal us, and make us blessed and happy.

- e There, Eryximachus, he said. That's my speech about Eros, of a different kind than yours. As I begged you, don't poke fun at it, so that we may also hear what each of the remaining speakers will say—or rather, what each of the two will say: for only Agathon and Socrates are left.²⁰³

201. The reference is almost certainly to the Spartan dispersion of the Mantineans in 385 BC. The city was razed and the inhabitants dispersed to separate villages. Since the narrative date of the *Symposium* is before the death of Socrates in 399, this again (cf. 182b) is an anachronism.

202. Dice were split as tallies, that is, as *ovfupoAa*. Cf. 19id.

203. Since Aristodemus, the narrator, is lying next to Eryximachus (175a), he would have been next to speak. But he was skipped over when Eryximachus took Aristophanes' turn, and Aristophanes, following the order originally laid down, now looks to Eryximachus's right, to Agathon and Socrates.

He said, I cannot contradict you, Socrates. Let it be as you say.
My beloved Agathon, it is the truth you cannot contradict, since
it's surely not hard to contradict Socrates.

The Speech of Diotima (201d-212a):
Eros as Intermediate (201d—202d)

d And now I'll let you²¹⁹ go. But the account of Eros I once heard
from a Mantineaean woman, Diotima, who was wise in this and
many other things—she once caused the Athenians, when they
offered sacrifices before the Plague,²²⁰ a ten-year delay in the onset
of the disease, and it was she who instructed me in the things of
love—well, the account she used to give I will myself try to describe
to you²²¹ on my own, from the agreements which Agathon and I
have reached, as best I can.

e It is necessary then, Agathon, as you explained, first to recount
who Eros is and of what sort, and his works afterwards.²²² Now, I
think I can most easily recount it as she used to do in examining
me. For I used to say pretty much the same sort of thing to her
that Agathon was saying now to me, that Eros would be a great
god, but of beautiful things; but she refuted me by these argu-
ments I offered him, that Eros by my account would be neither
beautiful nor good.

And I said, How do you mean, Diotima? Eros then is ugly and
bad?

And she said, Hush, don't blaspheme! Or do you suppose that
whatever is not beautiful is necessarily ugly?

202a Yes, of course.

And not wise, ignorant? Are you not aware that there is some-
thing intermediate between wisdom and ignorance?

What is it?

Don't you know, she said, that right opinion without ability to
render an account is not knowledge—for how could an unac-
countable thing be knowledge?—nor is it ignorance—for how

219. Singular, addressed to Agathon.

220. In 430 B.C. See Thucydides II 47.

221. Plural. Socrates is now addressing the company.

222. Socrates loosely repeats Agathon's formula at 195a, but with significant em-
phasis on who Eros is (*τίς ἐόντι*).

could what meets with what is be ignorance? Right opinion is surely that sort of thing, intermediate between wisdom and ignorance.

True, I said.

- b Then don't compel what is not beautiful to be ugly, nor what is not good to be bad. So too for Eros, since you yourself agree that he is neither good nor beautiful, do not any the more for that reason suppose he must be ugly and bad, she said, but rather something between these two.

And yet, I said, everybody agrees he is a great god.

You mean everybody who doesn't know, or also those who know? she said.

Why, absolutely everybody.

- c She laughed and said, And how would he be agreed to be a great god, Socrates, by those who say he is not even a god at all?

Who are these people, I said.

You're one, she said, and I'm another.

And I said, How can you say that?

Easily, she replied. For tell me: don't you claim that all gods are happy and beautiful? Or would you dare deny that any god is beautiful and happy?

Emphatically not, I said.

But you say that it is those who possess good and beautiful things who are happy?

Of course.

- d Moreover, you have agreed that Eros, by reason of lack of good and beautiful things, desires those very things he lacks.

Yes, I have.

How then would what is without portion of²²³ beautiful and good things be a god?

In no way, it seems.

Then you see, she said, that even you do not acknowledge Eros to be a god?

Then what is he? I said. A mortal?

Hardly.

But what, then?

As I said before, she said, intermediate between mortal and immortal.

223. *d/uoigog*, an unusual word used by Agathon at 197c!; cf. 181.

Eros as Daimon (202d-203a)

What is he, Diotima?

A great divinity, Socrates; for in fact, the whole realm of divinities is intermediate between god and mortal,

e Having what power? I said.

Interpreting and conveying things from men to gods and things from gods to men, prayers and sacrifices from the one, commands and requitals in exchange for sacrifices from the other, since, being in between both, it fills the region between both so that the All is bound together with itself. Through this realm moves all prophetic art and the art of priests having to do with sacrifices

203a and rituals and spells, and all power of prophecy and enchantment. God does not mingle with man, but all intercourse and conversation of gods with men, waking and sleeping, are through this realm. He who is wise about such things as this is a divine man, but he who is wise about any other arts or crafts is a mere mechanic.²²⁴ These divinities, then, are many and manifold, and one of them is Eros.

The Myth of Poros and Penia (203a—e)

Who is father and mother?²²⁵ I said.

b It's a rather long story, she replied; nevertheless, I will tell you. When Aphrodite was born, the gods banqueted, both the others and Poros, Resourcefulness, son of Metis, Wisdom. When they dined, Penia, Want, came to beg, as one would expect when there is a feast, and hung about the doors. Well, Poros got drunk on nectar—for there was as yet no wine—and went into the garden of Zeus where, weighed down by drink, he slept. So Penia plotted to have a child by Poros by reason of her own resourcelessness, and lay with him and conceived Eros. This is why Eros has been a follower and servant of Aphrodite, because he was begotten on the day of her birth,²²⁶ and at the same time it is why he is by nature a lover of beauty, since Aphrodite is beautiful.

224. Cf. *Republic* VI 495d-e.

225. The question arises from the fact that Eros is a "divinity," and so either a god or a child of gods.

226. Dover, *Symposium*, remarks on this passage: "Hesiod's injunction (*WD* 735 f.) 'do not beget offspring when you have come home from a funeral, but from a festival of the immortals,' shows the existence of a belief in some kind of connection between the character or fortunes of a child and the occasion of his or her conception."

- Because then Eros is son of Poros and Penia, this is his fortune: first, he is ever poor, and far from being delicate and beautiful, as most people suppose,²²⁷ he on the contrary is rough and hard
- d and homeless and unshod, ever lying on the ground without bedding, sleeping in doorsteps and beside roads under the open sky. Because he has his mother's nature, he dwells ever with want. But on the other hand, by favor of his father, he ever plots for good and beautiful things, because he is courageous, eager and intense, and clever hunter ever weaving some new device, desiring understanding and capable of it, a lover of wisdom through the whole of life, clever at enchantment, a sorcerer and a sophist.²²⁸ And he
- e is by nature neither mortal nor immortal, but sometimes on the same day he lives and flourishes, whenever he is full of resource, but then he dies and comes back to life again by reason of the nature of his father, though what is provided ever slips away so that Eros is never rich nor at a loss . . .

Eros as Philosopher (203e–204c)

- . . . and on the other hand he is between wisdom and ignorance. For things stand thus: no god loves wisdom or desires to become wise—for he is so; nor, if anyone else is wise, does he love wisdom.
- 204a On the other hand, neither do the ignorant love wisdom nor desire to become wise; for ignorance is difficult just in this, that though not beautiful and good, nor wise, it yet seems to itself to be sufficient. He who does not think himself in need does not desire what he does not think he lacks.

- Then who are these lovers of wisdom, Diotima, I said, if they are neither the wise nor the ignorant?
- b Why, at this point it's clear even to a child, she said, that they are those intermediate between both of these, and that Eros is among them. For wisdom is surely among the most beautiful of things, but Eros is love of the beautiful, so Eros is necessarily a philosopher, a lover of wisdom, and, being a philosopher, intermediate between wisdom and ignorance. His birth is the cause of this too: for he is of a wise and resourceful father, but of an unwise and resourceless mother.

227. And as Agathon did, 195c 7.

228. Diotima is herself said to be "most wise," and her mode or reply compared to "an accomplished sophist" at 208b–c.

- This then is the nature of the divinity, my dear Socrates; but
- c there is nothing surprising about what you thought Eros is. You thought, as I gather from what you say, that Eros is what is loved, not the loving. That is why, I think, Eros seemed utterly beautiful to you. In fact, it is what is beloved that is really beautiful and charming and perfect and deemed blessed; but loving has this other character, of the sort I described.

Eros as Wish for Happiness (204c—205a)

- And I said: Very well then, my dear lady; you speak beautifully. But if Eros is of this sort, what usefulness does he have for men?
- d That's the next thing I will try to teach you, Socrates, she said. For since Eros is of this sort and this parentage, he is of beautiful things, as you say. But suppose someone asked us, Why is Eros of beautiful things, Socrates and Diotima? I will ask still more clearly: Why does he who loves, love beautiful things?
- And I replied, To possess them for himself.
- But the answer still longs for the following kind of question, she said: What will he have who possesses beautiful things?
- I still can't quite readily answer that question, I said,
- e But suppose someone changed "beautiful" to "good," she said, and then inquired: Come, Socrates, he who loves, loves good things. Why does he love them?
- To possess them for himself.
- And what will he have who possesses good things?
- This I can answer more easily, I said. He will be happy.
- 205a Yes, she said, for the happy are happy by possession of good things, and there is no need in addition to ask further for what purpose he who wishes to be happy wishes it. On the contrary, the answer seems final.
- True, I replied.

Diotima's Definition of Eros (205a—206a)

- Do you think this wish and this love are common to all men, and that everyone wishes to possess good things for themselves forever?
- Yes, I said: it is common to everyone.
- b Why is it then, Socrates, she said, that we do not say that every-

one loves, if indeed everyone loves the same things, and always, but we rather say that some love and some do not?

I'm also surprised myself, I said.

Don't be, she said. It is because we subtract a certain species of eros and name it Eros, applying the name of the whole, but we use other names for the others.

As what? I said.

As this. You know that making [poiesis] is something manifold; for surely the cause of passing from not being into being for anything whatever is all a making, so that the productions of all the arts are makings, and the practitioners of them are all makers [poietai].

True.

But nevertheless, she said, you know that they are not called makers [poietai] but have other names, while from all making one single part has been subtracted, that concerned with music²²⁹ and meter, and given the name of the whole. For this alone is called poetry [poiesis], and those who have this part of making are called poets [poietai].

True, I said.

d So also then for Eros. In general, it is every desire for good things and happiness, "Eros most great, and wily²³⁰ in all"; but those who turn to him in various other ways, either money-making or athletics or philosophy, are neither said to love nor to be lovers, while those who sedulously pursue one single species get the name of the whole, Eros, and are said to love and be lovers.

Very likely true, I said.

e Yes, and a certain story is told, she said, that those in love are seeking the other half of themselves. But my account is that love is of neither half nor whole, my friend, unless it happens to be actually good, since people are willing to cut off their own hands and feet if they think these possessions of theirs are bad. For they each refuse, I think, to cleave even to what is their own, unless one calls what is good kindred and his own, and what is bad alien;²³¹ because there is nothing else that men love than the good. Do you agree?

229. *juovoixrj* (scilicet *xiyyr*) was any art over which the Muses preside, but especially poetry, which was sung. Cf. *Republic* II 376c

230. *doXsgóg*. The adjective is otherwise rare in Plato, but applied at *Hippias Minor* 365c to Odysseus. See above, 203d.

231. Cf. *Lysis* 210b–c, 22id–222c

- 206a I most certainly do, I said.
 Then one may state without qualification that men love the good? she said.
 Yes, I said.
 Really? Is it not to be added, she said, that they also love the good to be their own?
 It must.
 And not only to be theirs, she said, but also to be theirs forever?
 This too is to be added.
 In sum, then, she said, Eros is of the good, being his own forever.
 Very true, I replied.

The Works of Eros: Begetting in Beauty (206b–207a)

- b Then given that Eros is ever this, she said, in what way, and in what activity, would eagerness and effort among those pursuing it be called Eros? What does this work happen to be? Can you say?
 No, I said. If I could, I would not admire your wisdom so much, Diotima, and keep coming to you to learn these very things.
 But I will tell you, she said: this work is begetting²³² in beauty, in respect to both the body and the soul.
 What you say needs divination, I said, and I don't understand.
 c Why, I'll put it more clearly, she said. All men are pregnant in respect to both the body and the soul, Socrates, she said, and when they reach a certain age, our nature desires to beget.²³³ It cannot beget in ugliness, but only in beauty. The intercourse of man and woman is a begetting. This is a divine thing, and pregnancy and procreation are an immortal element in the mortal living creature.
 d It is impossible for birth to take place in what is discordant. But ugliness is in discord with all that is divine, and beauty concordant. So the Goddess of Beauty is at the birth Moira, Fate, and Eilithyia, She Who Comes in Time of Need. That is why, when what is pregnant draws near to the beautiful, it becomes tender and full of gladness and pours itself forth and begets and procreates; but when it draws near to the ugly, it shrivels in sullen grief and turns away and goes slack and does not beget, but carries with difficulty

232. Or bearing children, *róxog*.

233. *xixreiv*, the verb of which *róxog* is the corresponding noun.

e the conception within it. Whence it is that one who is pregnant and already swollen is vehemently excited over the beautiful, because it releases its possessor from great pangs. For Socrates, she said, Eros is not, as you suppose, of the beautiful.

But what, then?

It is of procreation and begetting of children in the beautiful.

Very well, I said.

207a To be sure, she said. But why of procreation? Because procreation is everlasting and immortal as far as is possible for something mortal. Eros necessarily desires immortality with the good, from what has been agreed,²³⁴ since its object is to possess the good for itself forever. It necessarily follows from this account, then, that Eros is also love of immortality.

Immortality and the Mortal Nature (207a—208b)

b All these things she taught me at various times when she discoursed about matters of love. Once she asked, Socrates, what do you think is cause of this love and desire? Or are you not aware how strangely all beasts are disposed, footed and winged, when they desire to reproduce—all sick and erotically disposed, first for intercourse with each other and next for the nurture of the offspring? In their behalf the weakest are ready to do battle with the strongest, to die in their behalf,²³⁵ to be racked with hunger themselves so as to feed them, to do anything else. One might suppose, she said, that men do these things on the basis of reflection; but what is the cause of beasts being erotically disposed this way? Can you tell?

c And I again used to say I didn't know.

She said, Then do you think you'll ever become skilled in the things of love if you don't understand this?

Why, that's why I keep coming to you, Diotima, as I just now said,²³⁶ knowing I need instruction. Please tell me the cause of this, and other things concerning matters of love.

d If then you are persuaded, she said, that love is by nature of what we have often agreed, do not be surprised. For here, in the animal world, by the same account as before, the mortal nature

234. 206a.

235. Compare Phaedrus's speech, 179b.

236. 206b.

seeks so far as it can to exist forever and be immortal. It can do so only in this way, by giving birth, ever leaving behind a different new thing in place of the old, since even in the time in which each single living creature is said to live and to be the same—for example, as a man is said to be the same from youth to old age—though he never has the same things in himself, he nevertheless is called the same, but he is ever becoming new while otherwise perishing, in respect to hair and flesh and bone and blood and the entire body.

- e And not only in respect to the body but also in respect to the soul,²³⁷ its character and habits, opinions, desires, pleasures, pains, fears are each never present in each man as the same, but
 208a some are coming to be, others perishing. Much more extraordinary still, not only are some kinds of knowledge coming to be and others perishing in us, and we are never the same even in respect to the kinds of knowledge, but also each single one among the kinds of knowledge is affected in the same way. For what is called studying exists because knowledge leaves us; forgetting is departure of knowledge, but study, by introducing again a new memory in place of what departs, preserves the knowledge so that it seems to be the same.²³⁸

- b For it is in this way that all that is mortal is preserved: not by being ever completely the same, like the divine, but by leaving behind, as it departs and becomes older, a different new thing of the same sort as it was. By this device, Socrates, she said, what is mortal has a share of immortality both body and everything else; but what is immortal by another device. Do not be surprised, then, if everything by nature values its own offshoot; it is for the sake of immortality that this eagerness and love attend upon all.

Creation in Respect to Body and Soul (208b-20ge)

When I heard this account I was surprised and said, Why really, my most wise Diotima, are these things actually true?

- c And she replied as the accomplished sophists do, Know it well, Socrates. Since indeed if you will look to the love of honor among

237. Application of the claim to the second case distinguished at 206b.

238. Compare Aristotle's account of perception, memory, and experience at *Metaphysics* I 980a 20ff., *Posterior Analytics* II 99b35/f.

- men, you'd be surprised by the unreasonableness of which I've spoken, unless you keep in mind and reflect on how strangely disposed men are by Eros to make a name and "lay up store of immortal glory for everlasting time"; for this they are ready to run
- d every risk, even more than for their children, to spend money, to perform labors of every sort, to die for it. Do you think, she said, that Alcestis would have died for Admetus, or Achilles after Patroclus, or our own Cadmus for his children's kingdoms, if they had not thought the fame of their own virtue, which we now cherish, would be immortal?²³⁹ Far from it, she said; rather, I think, it is for immortal virtue and the sort of fame which brings glory that everyone does everything, and the more insofar as they are better.
- e For they love the immortal.

Some men are pregnant in respect to their bodies, she said, and turn more to women and are lovers in that way, providing in all future time, as they suppose, immortality and happiness for themselves through getting children. Others are pregnant in respect to

209a their soul—for there are those, she said, who are still more fertile in their souls than in their bodies with what it pertains to soul to conceive and bear. What then so pertains? Practical wisdom and the rest of virtue—of which, indeed, all the poets are procreators, and as many craftsmen as are said to be inventors. But the greatest and most beautiful kind of practical wisdom by far, she said, is that concerned with the right ordering of cities and households, for which the name is temperance and justice.

- On the other hand, whenever one of them is pregnant of soul
- b from youth, being divine,²⁴⁰ and reaches the age when he then desires to bear and beget, he too then, I think, goes about seeking the beautiful in which he might beget; for he will never beget in the ugly. Now, because he is fertile, he welcomes beautiful rather than ugly bodies, and should he meet with a beautiful and noble and naturally gifted soul, he welcomes the conjunction of both even more, and to this person he is straightway resourceful in speaking about virtue, and what sort of thing the good man must be concerned with and his pursuits; and he undertakes to educate him.

239. Diotima here contradicts Phaedrus's speech (179b—180a), arguing that Alcestis and Achilles sacrificed themselves not for love, but for love of honor, in order to be remembered.

240. Reading *Seloge* with BTW Oxy. and Bury, against Parmentier's emendation *fjdeog*, accepted by Burnet and Dover. The reading is supported by *Meno* 99C-0! and anticipated by 206c.6.

- c For I think that in touching the beautiful [person] and holding familiar intercourse with it [him], he bears and begets what he has long since conceived, and both present and absent he remembers and nurtures what has been begotten in common with that [him],²⁴¹ so that people of this sort gain a far greater communion with each other than that of the sharing of children, and a more steadfast friendship, because they have held in common children more beautiful and more immortal. Everyone would prefer for himself to have had such children as these, rather than the human
- d kind, and they look to Homer and Hesiod and the rest of our good poets and envy offspring of the sort they left behind, offspring which, being such themselves, provide immortal fame and remembrance.
- But if you wish, she said, look at the sort of children Lycurgus left behind in Sparta, saviors of Sparta and, one might almost say, of Greece.²⁴² Solon also is honored among you because of his begetting of the Laws,²⁴³ and other men in other times and many
- e other places, both in Greece and among the barbarians, who have displayed many beautiful deeds and begotten every sort of virtue; for whom, also, many temples and sacred rites have come into being because of children such as these, but none because of children merely human.

The Ladder of Love (201e-210e)

- 210a Into these things of love, Socrates, perhaps even you may be initiated; but I do not know whether you can be initiated into the rites of and revelations for the sake of which these actually exist if one pursues them correctly. Well, I will speak of them and spare no effort, she said; try to follow if you can.

It is necessary, she said, for him who proceeds rightly to this thing to begin while still young by going to beautiful bodies; and first, if his guide²⁴⁴ guides rightly, to love one single body and beget

241. This sentence is purposefully ambiguous: it refers to the beloved, but also anticipates what will be said in the Greater Mysteries of Eros about Beauty itself.

242. Diotima speaks as a native of Mantinea, located in the Peloponnesus and allied with Sparta. Lycurgus, like Solon in Athens, was supposed to have given laws to Sparta, and those laws are here regarded as his children.

243. The Laws of Athens were often referred to as the Laws of Solon, though there had been (sometimes unacknowledged) changes since his time. Plato was a direct and lineal descendant of Solon.

244. Cf. 210c, e, 211c.

b there beautiful discourses; next, to recognize that the beauty on any body whatever is akin to that on any other body, and if it is necessary to pursue the beautiful as it attaches to form, it is quite unreasonable to believe that the beauty on all bodies is not one and the same. Realizing this, he is constituted a lover of all beautiful bodies and relaxes this vehemence for one, looking down on it and believing it of small importance.

c After this he must come to believe that beauty in souls is more to be valued than that in the body, so that even if someone good of soul has but a slight bloom, it suffices for him, and he loves and cares and begets and seeks those sorts of discourses that will make the young better, in order that he may be constrained in turn to contemplate what is beautiful in practices and laws and to see that it is in itself all akin to itself, in order that he may believe bodily beauty a small thing.

d After practices, he²⁴⁵ must lead him to the various branches of knowledge, in order that he may in turn see their beauty too, and, looking now to the beautiful in its multitude, no longer delight like a slave, a worthless, petty-minded servant, in the beauty of one single thing, whether beauty of a young child or man or of one practice; but rather, having been turned toward the multitudinous ocean of the beautiful and contemplating it, he begets many beautiful and imposing discourses and thoughts in ungrudging love of wisdom, until, having at this point grown and waxed strong, he beholds a certain kind of knowledge which is
e one, and such that it is the following kind of beauty. Try, she said, to pay me the closest attention possible.

The Ascent to Beauty Itself (210e—212a)

He who has been educated in the things of love up to this point, beholding beautiful things rightly and in due order, will then, suddenly, in an instant, proceeding at that point to the end of the things of love, see something marvelous, beautiful in nature: it is *that*, Socrates, for the sake of which in fact all his previous labors existed.

211a First, it ever is and neither comes to be nor perishes, nor has it growth nor diminution.

245. That is, the guide mentioned at 210a.

Again, it is not in one respect beautiful but in another ugly, nor beautiful at one time but not at another, nor beautiful relative to this but ugly relative to that, nor beautiful here but ugly there, as being beautiful to some but ugly to others.²⁴⁶

- Nor on the other hand will it appear beautiful to him as a face does, or hands, or anything else of which body partakes, nor as any discourse or any knowledge does, nor as what is somewhere in something else, as in an animal, or in earth, or in heaven, or in anything else; but it exists in itself alone by itself, single in nature forever, while all other things are beautiful by sharing in *that* in such manner that though the rest come to be and perish, *that* comes to be neither in greater degree nor less and is not at all affected.
- b

- But when someone, ascending from things here through the right love of boys,²⁴⁷ begins clearly to see *that*, the Beautiful, he would pretty well touch the end. For this is the right way to proceed in matters of love, or to be led by another²⁴⁸—beginning from these beautiful things here, to ascend ever upward for the sake of *that*, the Beautiful, as though using the steps of a ladder, from one to two, and from two to all beautiful bodies, and from beautiful bodies to beautiful practices, and from practices to beautiful studies, and from studies one arrives in the end at *that* study which is nothing other than the study of *that*, the Beautiful itself, and one knows in the end, by itself, what it is to be beautiful. It is there, if anywhere, dear Socrates, said the Mantinean Stranger, that human life is to be lived: in contemplating the Beautiful itself. If ever you see it, it will not seem to you as gold or raiment or beautiful boys and youths, which now you look upon dumbstruck; you and many another are ready to gaze on those you love and dwell with them forever, if somehow it were possible, not to eat nor drink but only to watch and be with them.²⁴⁹
- c
- d

- What then do we suppose it would be like, she said, if it were possible for someone to see the Beautiful itself, pure, unalloyed, unmixed, not full of human flesh and colors, and the many other kinds of nonsense that attach to mortality, but if he could behold the divine Beauty itself, single in nature? Do you think it a worth-
- e

246. Or "as being thought beautiful by some but ugly by others." (*bg* with participle: Smyth, 2086b; cf. 2996.

247. In contradiction to Pausanias's sexualized pederasty.

248. Cf. 210a, c, e.

249. Diotima directly recalls the speech of Aristophanes, 191a, i92b-d.

- 212a less life, she said, for a man to look *there* and contemplate *that* with that by which one must contemplate it,²⁵⁰ and to be with it? Or are you not convinced, she said, that there alone it will befall him, in seeing the Beautiful with that by which it is visible, to beget, not images of virtue, because he does not touch an image, but true virtue, because he touches the truth? But in begetting true virtue and nurturing it, it is given to him to become dear to god, and if any other among men is immortal, he is too.

Socrates' Peroration (2i2b-c)

- b These then, Phaedrus and you others, are the things Diotima said, and I am persuaded. Being persuaded, I try also to persuade others that one would not easily get a better partner for our human nature in acquiring this possession than Eros. Therefore I say that every man should honor Eros, and I myself honor and surpassingly devote myself to the things of love and summon others to do so; now and always, I praise the power and courage of
c Eros so far as I am able. Consider this speech then, Phaedrus, if you will, an encomium to Eros, or if you prefer, name it what you please.

After Socrates said this, the rest praised him, but Aristophanes tried to say something, because Socrates in speaking alluded to his own speech.²⁵¹

Interlude: The Arrival of Alcibiades (2i2C-2i5a)

And suddenly, there was a loud knocking at the courtyard door, as of revelers, and they heard the voice of a flute-girl.

- d So Agathon said, Boys, won't you see about it? And if it's one of our friends, invite him in; if not, say that we're not drinking but about to retire.

A moment later we heard in the courtyard the voice of Alcibiades, very drunk and shouting loudly, asking, Where is Agathon? and saying, Take me to Agathon. So they led him in to us, the flute-girl supporting him, with certain others of his followers,
e and he stood in the doorway crowned with a bushy wreath of ivy

250. That is, by mind or intelligence. See *Republic* VI 4goa-b, VII 518c, 533C-CL
251. 205c

Lucius Apuleius

The Golden Ass

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‘In a certain city there lived a king and queen, who had three daughters of surpassing beauty. Though the elder two were extremely pleasing, still it was thought they were only worthy of mortal praise; but the youngest girl’s looks were so delightful, so dazzling, no human speech in its poverty could celebrate them, or even rise to adequate description. Crowds of eager citizens, and visitors alike, drawn by tales of this peerless vision, stood dumbfounded, marvelling at her exceptional loveliness, pressing thumb and forefinger together and touching them to their lips, and bowing their heads towards her in pious prayer as if she were truly the goddess Venus. Soon the news spread through neighbouring cities, and the lands beyond its borders, that the goddess herself, born from the blue depths of the sea, emerging in spray from the foaming waves, was now gracing the earth in various places, appearing in many a mortal gathering or, if not that, then earth not ocean had given rise to a new creation, a new celestial emanation, another Venus, and as yet a virgin flower.

Day by day rumour gathered pace, and the fame of her beauty spread through the nearby islands, the mainland, and all but a few of the provinces. People journeyed from far countries, and sailed the deep sea in swelling throngs, to witness the sight of the age. Venus’s shrines in Paphos, Cnidos, and even Cythera itself were no longer their destinations. Her rites were neglected, her temples abandoned, her cushions were trodden underfoot, the ceremonies uncelebrated, the statues un-garlanded, the altars cold with forsaken ashes. The girl it was, that people worshipped, seeking to propitiate the goddess’ great power in a human face. When she walked out of a morning, they would invoke transcendent Venus in feast and sacrifice. And as she passed through the streets, crowds would shower her with garlands and flowers.

This extravagant bestowal of the honours due to heaven on a mere mortal girl roused Venus herself to violent anger. She shook her head impatiently, and uttered these words of indignation to herself with a groan: “Behold me, the primal mother of all that is, the source of the elements, the whole world’s bountiful Venus, driven to divide my imperial honours with a lowly human! Is my name, established in heaven, to be traduced by earthly pollution? Am I to suffer the vagaries of vicarious reverence, a share in the worship of my divinity? Is a girl, destined to die, to tread the earth in my likeness? Was it nothing that Paris, that shepherd, whose just and honest verdict was approved by almighty Jove, preferred me for my

matchless beauty to those other two great goddesses? But she'll reap no joy from usurping my honours, whatever she may be: I'll soon make her regret that illicit beauty of hers."

And she swiftly summoned Cupid, that son of hers, a winged and headstrong boy, who with his wicked ways and contempt for public order, armed with his torch and his bow and arrows, goes running around at night in other people's houses, ruining marriages everywhere, committing such shameful acts with impunity, and doing not an ounce of good.

Venus, with her words, rousing his natural impudence and wildness to new heights, led him to the city and showed him Psyche in person – such was the girl's name – and told the tale of her rival's loveliness, moaning and groaning in indignation. "I beg you," she said, "by the bond of maternal love, by you arrows' sweet wounds, by the honeyed licking of your flames, revenge your mother fully; exact harsh punishment from defiant beauty. One act of yours, pursued with a will, would accomplish all: let the girl be seized by violent, burning passion for the most wretched of men, one to whom Fortune has denied rank, wealth, even health, one so insignificant there is none on earth equal to him in misery."

With this she kissed her son long and tenderly with parted lips then, seeking the nearest strand of tide-swept shore, stepped on rose-tinted feet over the trembling crests of the foaming waves, and stood once more on the crystal surface of the deep. The ocean instantly obeyed her wishes, as if commanded in advance. The Nereids were there, singing a choral song; Portunus, the god of harbours, with his sea-green beard; Salacia, Neptune's wife, her lap alive with fish; and Palaemon the dolphins' little charioteer. Troops of Tritons too leapt here and there in the water. One blew softly on a melodious conch; another with a silk parasol shielded her from the sun's hostile blaze; another held a mirror to his mistress' eyes; while yet more swam harnessed in pairs to her chariot. Such was the throng escorting Venus as she moved out to sea.

Book IV:32-33 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the oracle

Psyche, for all her conspicuous beauty, reaped no profit from her charms. Gazed at by all, praised by all, no one, neither prince nor commoner, wishing to marry her, sought her hand. They admired her divine beauty of course, but as we admire a perfectly finished statue. Her two elder sisters,

whose plainer looks had never been trumpeted through the world, were soon engaged to royal suitors and so made excellent marriages, but Psyche was left at home, a virgin, single, weeping in lonely solitude, ill in body and sore at heart, hating that beauty of form the world found so pleasing.

So the wretched girl's unhappy father, suspecting divine hostility, fearing the gods' anger, consulted the ancient Miletian oracle of Apollo at Didyma. With prayer and sacrifice he asked the mighty god for a man to marry the unfortunate girl. Apollo, though Greek and Ionian too, favoured the author of this Miletian tale with a reply in Latin:

“High on a mountain crag, decked in her finery,
Lead your daughter, king, to her fatal marriage.
And hope for no child of hers born of a mortal,
But a cruel and savage, serpent-like winged evil,
Flying through the heavens, and threatening all,
Menacing ever soul on earth with fire and sword,
Till Jove himself trembles, the gods are terrified,
And rivers quake and the Stygian shades beside.”

The king, blessed till now, on hearing this utterance of sacred prophecy went slowly home in sadness and told his wife the oracle's dark saying. They moaned, they wept, they wailed for many a day. But the dire and fatal hour soon approached. The scene was set for the poor girl's dark wedding. The flames of the wedding torches grew dim with black smoky ash; the tune of hymen's flute sounded in plaintive Lydian mode, and the marriage-hymn's cheerful song fell to a mournful wail. The bride-to-be wiped tears away with her flame-red bridal veil; the whole city grieved at the cruel fate that had struck the afflicted house and public business was interrupted as a fitting show of mourning.

But the need to obey the divine command sent poor Psyche to meet the sentence decreed, the ritual preparations for the fatal marriage were completed in utter sorrow, and the living corpse was led from the house surrounded by all the people. Tearful Psyche walked along, not in wedding procession, but in her own funeral cortege. Her parents saddened and overcome by this great misfortune hesitated to carry out the dreadful deed, but their daughter herself urged them on:

“Why torment a sorrowful old age with endless weeping? Why exhaust your life’s breath, which is my own, with this constant wailing? Why drown in vain tears those faces I love? Why wound my eyes by wounding your own? Why tear your white hair? Why beat the breasts that fed me? Let this be your glorious reward for my famous beauty. Too late you see the blow that falls is dealt by wicked Envy. When nations and countries granted me divine honours, when with one voice they named me as the new Venus, that’s when you should have mourned, and wept, and grieved as if I were dead. I know now, I realise that her name alone destroys me. Lead me now to that cliff the oracle appointed. I go swiftly towards this fortunate marriage, I go swiftly to meet this noble husband of mine. Why delay, why run from the coming of one who’ll be born for the whole world’s ruin?”

With this, the girl fell silent, and went steadfastly on, accompanied by the throng of citizens around her. They came to the steep mountain crag decreed, and placed the girl, as commanded, on its very top, then deserted her, one and all. They left behind the bridal torches, lighted on the way, and now extinguished by their tears, and heads bent low began their journey home, where her unhappy parents, exhausted by this dreadful blow, shut themselves in the darkness of their room, and resigned themselves to endless night.

Meanwhile Psyche, on the topmost summit, frightened, trembling, and in tears, was lifted by a gentle breeze, a softly whispering Zephyr, stirring her dress around her and causing it to billow, its tranquil breath carrying her slowly down the high cliff slopes to the valley below, where it laid her tenderly on a bed of flowering turf.

End of Book IV

Book V:1-3 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the palace

Psyche, pleasantly reclining in that grassy place on a bed of dew-wet grass, free of her mental perturbation, fell peacefully asleep, and when she was sufficiently refreshed by slumber, rose, feeling calm. She saw a grove planted with great, tall trees; she saw a glittering fount of crystal water.

At the very centre of the grove beside the flowing stream was a regal palace, not made by human hands, but built by divine art. You knew from the moment you entered you were viewing the splendid shining residence of a god. There were coffered ceilings, exquisitely carved from ivory and citron-wood supported on golden pillars; the walls were covered with relief-work in silver, wild beasts in savage herds met your gaze as you reached the doorway. They were the work of some eminent master, or a demigod or god perhaps, who with the subtlety of great art had made creatures all of silver. Even the floors were of mosaic, pictures patterned from precious stones cut into tiny tiles. Blessed twice over or more are those who tread on shining jewels and gems! The length and breadth of the rest of the house was equally beyond price, the walls constructed of solid gold gleaming with their own brilliance, so that even without the sun's rays the house shone like day. The rooms, the colonnades, the very doorposts glowed. And every other feature matched the house in magnificence, so you would have thought, rightly, that this was a heavenly palace made for Jove to use on his visits to the world.

Seduced by the attractions of this lovely place Psyche moved closer and, gaining confidence, dared to cross the threshold. Now her desire to gaze on all these beautiful things led her to examine every object closely. On the far side of the palace she found storerooms made with noble skill, heaped to the roof with mounds of treasure. All that existed was there. And beyond her amazement at the vast quantities of riches, she was especially startled to find not a lock, or bolt or chain to defend this treasure-house of all the world. As she looked around her, in rapturous delight, a bodiless voice spoke to her: "Lady, why are you so surprised at all this vast wealth? All that is here is yours. So retire to your room, and ease your weariness on the bed, and when you wish you can bathe. The voices you may hear are those of your servants, we who wait on you willingly, and when your body is refreshed we will be ready with a feast."

Psyche felt blessed by divine providence, and obeying the guidance of the disembodied voice, eased her weariness with sleep and then a bath. Nearby she found a semi-circular table, and judging from the dinner setting that it was meant for her, she promptly sat down to wait. Instantly trays loaded with food and cups of nectar appeared, without trace of servants, they were wafted and set before her as though by a breath of air. No one was visible, but words could be heard from somewhere, her waiters were merely voices. And after a sumptuous meal, someone invisible came and sang, and someone played a lyre, invisible too. And there came to her ears the interweaving melodies of some large throng, some invisible choir.

Book V:4-6 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the mysterious husband

When these delights were ended, prompted by the sight of the evening star, Psyche retired to bed. Now, when night was well advanced, gentle whispers sounded in her ears, and all alone she feared for her virgin self, trembling and quivering, frightened most of what she knew nothing of. Her unknown husband had arrived and mounted the bed, and made Psyche his wife, departing swiftly before light fell. The servant-voices waiting in her chamber cared for the new bride no longer virgin. Things transpired thus for many a night, and through constant habit, as nature dictates, her new state accustomed her to its pleasures, and that sound of mysterious whispering consoled her solitude.

Meanwhile her father and mother, mourning and grieving ceaselessly, aged greatly. The story had spread far and wide, and her elder sisters learning of all that had occurred, abandoned their own homes, and sorrowing and lamenting, vied with each other in bringing solace to their parents.

One night Psyche's husband spoke to her, though she could not see him, knowing him nonetheless by touch and hearing.

"Sweetest Psyche," he said, "my dear wife, cruel Fortune threatens you with deadly danger, which I want you to guard against with utmost care. Your sisters think you dead and, troubled by this, they'll soon come to the cliff-top. When they do, if you should chance to hear their lament, don't answer or even look in their direction, or you'll cause me the bitterest pain and bring utter ruin on yourself."

Assenting, she promised to behave as her husband wished. But when he had vanished with the darkness, she spent the day weeping and grieving wretchedly, repeating again and again that she was truly dead, caged by the walls of her luxurious prison, bereft of human company and mortal speech, unable to tell her sisters not to mourn for her, and worse unable even to see them. She retired to bed once more, with neither bath nor food nor any drink to restore her, and there she wept profusely. Soon her husband came to join her, earlier than was his wont, and finding her still crying, clasped her in his arms and scolded her.

“Is this what you promised me, dear Psyche? What can I expect or hope from you? Day and night you never stop tormenting yourself even in the midst of our love-making. Well do as you wish, obey your heart’s fatal demands! But remember my dire warning when, too late, you repent.”

But Psyche pleaded with him, threatening to die if he would not agree to her desire to see her sisters, speak with them, and ease her sorrows. So he acceded to his new bride’s prayers, and also said she could give them whatever gold or jewellery she wished. But he warned her, time and again, often with threats, never to yield if her sisters gave her bad advice or urged her to investigate his appearance. Otherwise, through curiosity, her act of sacrilege would hurl her from the heights of good fortune, and she would never enjoy his embraces more.

She gave him thanks and, happier now, cried: “I’d rather die a hundred times than be robbed of your sweet caresses. Whoever you are I love you deeply, and adore you as much as life itself. Not even Cupid could compare to you. But grant me this favour, I beg: let your servant Zephyr waft my sisters here just as he wafted me.” And she began to offer alluring kisses, smother him with caressing words, and wrap him in her entwining limbs, adding to her charms with phrases like: “My honey-sweet, dear husband, your Psyche’s tender soul.” He succumbed reluctantly to the strength and power of her seductive murmurs, promising to agree to everything, and then as daylight drew near vanished from his wife’s embrace.

Book V:7-10 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the wicked sisters

Meanwhile her sisters hurried to the crag where Psyche had been abandoned, and wept their eyes out, beating their breasts, till the cliffs and

rocks echoed with the sound of their loud wailing. Then they called their poor sister's name till Psyche came running from the palace, distraught and trembling, at the sound of their melancholy voices descending the slope.

"Why tear your selves apart with heart-wrenching grief?" she cried. "I who you mourn am here. Cease those sad sounds and dry your cheeks drenched in tears, you can embrace the girl for whom you weep."

Then she summoned Zephyr, reminding him of her husband's orders. He obeyed instantly and her sisters were wafted down to her, safely riding the gentlest of breezes. They all delighted in eager embraces and mutual kisses, and the flow of tears that had been stemmed returned at joy's urging.

"Now enter my home, in happiness," cried Psyche, "and ease your troubled minds beside me."

So she showed them the noble treasures of the golden house and called up the throng of attendant voices. They refreshed themselves, luxuriating in a fragrant bath and tasting the delicacies of an out-of-this-world cuisine. And the result was that, overcome by the fine abundance of truly heavenly riches, they began to nurture envy deep in their hearts. They started to question her endlessly, inquisitively, and intensively. Who owned these divine objects? What sort of man was her husband and who on earth was he? But Psyche could not banish the thought of her secret promise and violate her pledge to her husband, so she pretended he was a young and handsome man, with just the hint of a beard on his cheeks, who spent his days hunting over the fields and hillsides. But afraid of revealing something if the talk continued, and so betraying his trust, she heaped gold and jewellery in their hands, called there and then for Zephyr, and placed her sisters in his charge so he might return them.

Once this was done, those delightful sisters were victims of envy's swelling bile and complained loudly to each other.

"O blind, cruel, iniquitous Fortune," cried one, "Is it your pleasure that we, daughters with the very same parents, should suffer so different a fate? Are we the elder to live like exiles far from family, bound as slaves to foreign husbands, exiled from home and country, while she the youngest, the last creation of our mother's exhausted womb acquires such wealth and a god of a husband? Sister, did you see all those fine gems lying around that palace? Did you see those gleaming clothes and sparkling jewels, and all that gold under our feet? Why she'll not even know how to make use of

it! If she keeps that handsome husband of hers, she'll be the luckiest woman in the world, and perhaps she hopes if their marriage endures and his affection increases her divine husband will make her a goddess too. That's it, that's why she behaved and acted as she did! The girl's already gazing heavenwards, aspiring to deity, with invisible voices serving her, and she giving orders to the breeze. While look at poor me, with a husband older than father, as bald as a pumpkin, and weak as a little child, who makes the house a prison with his bolts and chains!"

The other chipped in: "As for mine, he's bent and bowed with arthritis, and scarcely ever pays homage to my charms. I'm forever massaging his twisted and frozen fingers, and soiling these delicate hands of mine with his odious fomentations, sordid bandages, and fetid poultices. Instead of playing the role of a normal wife, I'm burdened with playing his doctor. Decide for your self, dear sister, with how much patience and, let me be frank, servility you'll endure this situation, but speaking for myself I won't tolerate so delightful a fate descending on so undeserving a girl. Just think of the pride and arrogance she showed us, the haughtiness, the boastfulness of her immoderate display, the reluctance with which she threw us a few little trinkets from her caskets, and then, tired of our presence, quickly ordered us driven out, whistled off, and blown away! If there's a breath left in me, as I'm a woman, I'll see her cast down from that pile of gold. And if you feel the sting of her insults too, as you should, let's devise a workable plan between us. Let's keep from our parents that she's alive, and hide these things she gave us: it's enough that we two have seen all that we now regret seeing, let alone that we should bring glorious news of her to them and the world. There is no glory in unknown riches. She'll discover we're her elder sisters not her servants. Now let's return to our husbands and our plain but respectable homes, and once we've thought carefully about it, let's return in strength and punish her arrogance."

Book V:11-13 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: Cupid's warning

This wicked scheme greatly pleased the two wicked sisters. They hid all the costly gifts, and tearing their hair and lacerating their cheeks, as they deserved to do, falsely renewed their lamentations. They soon frightened their parents into reopening the wound of their sorrow also. Then swollen

with venom, they hastened home to plan their crime against an innocent sister, even to murder.

Meanwhile her unseen husband, on his nightly visit, warned Psyche once more: "See how much danger you're in. Fortune is plotting at a distance, but soon, unless you take firm precautions, she'll be attacking you face to face. Those treacherous she-wolves are working hard to execute some evil act against you, by tempting you to examine my features. But do so and, as I've told you, you'll never see me again. So if those foul harpies armed with their noxious thoughts return, as I know they will, you must hold no conversation with them. And if in your true innocence and tender-heartedness you can't bear that, then at least, if they speak of me, don't listen, or if you must don't answer. You see our family will increase, and your womb, a child's, must bear another child, who if you keep our secret silently will be divine, though if you profane it, mortal."

Psyche blossomed with joy at the news, hailing the solace of a divine child, exulting in the glory of the one to be born, and rejoicing in the name of mother. She counted the swelling days, and the vanishing months, and as a beginner knowing nothing of the burden she bore was amazed at the growth of her seething womb from a tiny pinprick.

But those foul and pestilential Furies, her sisters, breathing viperous venom, were sailing towards her with impious speed. Now for a second time her husband warned Psyche in passing: "The fatal day, the final peril, the malice of your sex and hostile blood have taken arms against you, struck camp, prepared for battle, and sounded the attack. Those wicked sisters of yours with drawn swords are at your throat. What disaster threatens, sweet Psyche! Take pity on yourself and me. With resolution and restraint you can free your home and husband, yourself, and our child from the imminent danger that threatens. Don't look at or listen to those evil women, who with their murderous hostility, their disregard of the bonds of blood, you should not call sisters, as they lean from the cliff-top like Sirens and make the rocks echo with that fatal singing."

Her answer almost lost in tearful sobbing, Psyche replied: "Once before you asked for proof of my loyalty and discretion, now too you will find me just as resolute. Give your servant Zephyr his orders one more: let him perform his task, and if I am not to see your sacred face, grant me at least a glimpse of my sisters. By those cinnamon perfumed locks that adorn your head, by those softly rounded cheeks like my own, by your breast so

warm, so wonderfully aflame; as I hope to find your looks in my unborn child's, at least, I beg you, yield to the loving prayers of a yearning suppliant and allow me the pleasure of sisterly embraces. Fill your dedicated and devoted Psyche's spirit with joy once more. I'll ask no more regarding your appearance. Clasp you in my arms, not even the darkness of the night can hurt me now, my light."

Bewitched by her words and her sweet caresses, her husband wiped away her tears with his hair and gave her his agreement, vanishing swiftly before the light of the new-born day.

Book V:14-21 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the sisters' scheme

Wedded together in conspiracy, her sisters, landing at the nearest harbour, and not even troubling to visit their parents, now hurried to the cliff, and with wild recklessness, not waiting for the attendant breeze, flung themselves into the air. Zephyr, mindful of his master's orders, caught them reluctantly in the folds of his ethereal robes, and set them gently on the ground. Without a moment's hesitation they marched into the palace side by side and with false affection embraced their victim, flattering her, masking the depths of their secret treachery with pleasing smiles.

"Dear Psyche," they said, "no longer the little girl you once were, a mother now, think what a fine thing for us that burden of yours will prove! With what joy you'll fill our whole house! O how lucky we will be, to share in the care for that golden child! If it takes after its father as it ought, it will be a perfect little cupid."

With such simulated expressions of feeling they gradually influenced their sister's mind. Once eased of their travel weariness by rest, and refreshed by vaporous warm baths, they feasted well on fine rich foods and sweetmeats. She ordered a lyre to play, it sounded; flutes to pipe, they trilled; choirs to perform, and voices swelled. Those sounds with no visible musicians caressed the listeners' souls with the sweetest of melodies. But the wickedness of those vile women was not lessened at all by those honeyed modulations. They turned the conversation according to their deceitful scheming casually towards her husband: what kind of a man he was, what his birth and background. In her thoughtless innocence Psyche forgot her earlier inventions, and composed a fresh fiction. She claimed he came from the neighbouring province, a merchant responsible for extensive

trade, middle-aged, with a dash of grey in his hair. Without prolonging the conversation, she heaped lavish gifts on them once again, and sent them back by their airy vehicle.

Once conveyed aloft on Zephyr's tranquil breath, they returned home talking spitefully: "Well sister, what do you say to that foolish girl's monstrous lies? First he's a young man with a new growth of beard, now he's middle-aged with a streak of grey in his hair. Who can change so suddenly from one age to another? The answer my sister, is that she's making the whole thing up or has no idea what her husband looks like. In either case, and we must soon separate her from her riches. If she's truly ignorant of what he looks like, she must have married a god, and it's a divine child that womb of hers is carrying. Well if she becomes the mother of a deity, and let's hope not, I'll tie the noose and hang myself. Meanwhile, back to our parents, and weave the threads of guile to match the pattern of our scheming."

They greeted their parents haughtily, but irritated thus, they spent a troubled and a wakeful night. Early in the morning the wretched pair, hastened to the cliff and, with the help of the breeze as usual, swooped downwards angrily. Rubbing their eyelids to squeeze out a tear, they greeted the girl with cunning: "There you sit, feeling blessed and happy, in ignorance of your dire misfortune, careless of your danger; while we've been awake all night, unsleeping in our concern for your problems, sadly tormented by your impending disaster. We know the truth now, you see, and sharing of course in your ills and troubles we cannot hide it from you: what sleeps beside you, shrouded by the darkness, is a monstrous serpent, a slippery knot of coils, its blood-filled gaping jaws oozing noxious venom. Remember Apollo's oracle which prophesied you were destined to wed some brutish creature. Hunters, and farmers, and others round about have seen the thing returning from its predations, swimming in the shallows of the nearby river. They say that he'll soon cease to nourish you with those delightful offerings, in which he indulges, but once your pregnancy reaches full term and burdens you with its richest fruit, he'll devour you. You must decide about all this, will you listen to yours sisters both concerned for your safety, shun death, and live with us free from danger? Or do you prefer to end in the stomach of that savage beast? If you delight in the sounding solitude of this rural retreat of yours, the foul and perilous

embrace of a clandestine love, the clasp of a venomous serpent, well, at least we loving sisters will have performed our duty.”

Then poor little Psyche, naive and vulnerable, was seized with terror at their dark words. Beyond reason, she forgot all the warnings her husband had issued, and her own pledge, and plunged headlong to ruin. Trembling and pale, the blood draining from her face, stammering feverish words through half-open lips, she answered as follows:

“Dearest sisters, true and loyal as ever to your own, you are right: I believe those who told you all this speak no lie. Indeed, I have never seen my husband’s face, nor do I know what he truly is. I only hear his midnight whispers, and suffer the attentions of an unseen partner who shuns the light. He must be some strange creature, I agree. He always warns me not to try and reveal his features, and threatens harsh punishment for my curiosity concerning his appearance. If you can save your sister from this danger, help me now. Neglect me and you’ll undo the good your care has brought about.”

Her defences were down, and those wicked sisters, having breached the gates of her mind, now quit the cover of their secret scheming, drew their blades, and bore down on the helpless girl’s timidity.

Said one: “Since our love of family compels us to shun all danger where a sister’s life is at stake, we’ll show you the only way to reach salvation, a carefully thought out plan. Take a sharp razor, whet it further, hide it in your palm then place it secretly under the pillow where you lie. Then trim the lamp, fill it with oil, so it shines with a clear light, and conceal it under a little cover. Prepare all this with the utmost caution, and after he’s slithered into bed with you, as he’s lying there enmeshed in the web of sleep, and breathing deeply, slip from the bed and tiptoeing barefoot without a sound free the lamp from its dark prison. Seize the chance for a glorious deed of your own from the light’s clear counsel; and grasping your double-bladed weapon tightly, raise your right hand high, and with the firmest stroke you can muster sever the venomous serpent’s head from his body. Our help will not be lacking. As soon as you’ve won freedom by his death we’ll be waiting anxiously to rush to your aid, and carrying all the treasure back with us, we’ll see you joined in proper marriage vows, mortal to mortal.”

With this inflaming speech they kindled their sister’s now heated mind further and then left her, fearing, themselves, to haunt the scene of so

evil an act. They were wafted by the winged breeze to the summit of the cliff, as before and, hastening away in swift retreat, boarded their ships and were gone.

Psyche was left alone, except that a woman driven by hostile Furies is never alone. In her grief, she ebbed and flowed like the ocean tide. Though the scheme was decided and she determined, still as she drew towards the act itself she wavered, confused in mind, torn by the countless conflicting emotions the situation prompted. She prepared and delayed, dared and feared, despaired and felt anger, while, hardest of all to endure, she hated the beast and loved the husband embodied in a single form. Yet, as evening led towards night, she readied all needed for the wicked crime with frantic haste. Night fell, and her husband came, and after love's skirmishes and struggles he dropped into deep slumber.

Book V:22-24 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: revelation

Then Psyche, though lacking strength and courage, was empowered by cruel fate, and unveiling the lamp, seized the razor, acting a man's part in her boldness. Yet, as the light shone clear and the bed's mysteries were revealed, she found her savage beast was the gentlest and sweetest creature of all, that handsome god Cupid, handsome now in sleep. At the sight, even the lamp's flame quickened in joy, and the razor regretted its sacrilegious stroke. But Psyche, terrified at the marvellous vision, beside her self with fear, and overcome with sudden weariness, sank pale, faint and trembling to her knees. She tried to conceal the weapon, in her own breast! She would indeed have done so if the gleaming blade had not flown from her reckless hands, in horror at her dreadful intent. Exhausted now by the sense of release, she gazed again and again at the beauty of that celestial face, and her spirits revived.

She saw the glorious tresses, drenched with ambrosia, on his golden brow, the neatly tied locks straying over his rosy cheeks and milk-white neck, some hanging delicately in front others behind, and the splendour of their shining brilliance made the lamplight dim. Over the winged god's shoulders white plumage glimmered like petals in the morning dew, and though his wings were at rest, soft little feathers at their edges trembled restlessly in wanton play. The rest of his body was smooth and gleaming, such that Venus had no regrets at having borne such a child. At the foot of

the bed lay his bow, and his quiver full of arrows, the graceful weapons of the powerful god.

With insatiable curiosity Psyche examined, touched, wondered at her husband's weapons. She drew an arrow from the quiver, testing the point against her thumb-tip, but her hand was still trembling and pressing too hard she pricked the surface, so that tiny drops of crimson blood moistened the skin. Thus without knowing it Psyche fell further in love with Love himself, so that now inflamed with desire for Desire, she leaned over Cupid, desperate for him. She covered him eagerly with passionate impetuous kisses till she feared she might wake him. Then as her wounded heart beat with the tremor of such bliss, the lamp, in wicked treachery, or malicious jealousy, or simply longing to touch and kiss, in some fashion, that wondrous body, shed a drop of hot oil from the depths of its flame on to the god's right shoulder. O bold and careless lamp, a poor servant to Love, scorching the god of flame himself, though a lover it was who first invented you so as to enjoy, even at night, an endless sight of his beloved! Scalded like this the god leapt up, and realising his secret had been betrayed, flew swiftly and silently from his unhappy wife's kisses and embrace.

Yet, as he rose, Psyche clasped his right leg with both hands, a piteous impediment to his soaring flight; a trailing appendage; a dangling companion amongst the cloudy regions. At last she fell to the ground, exhausted. As she lay there, her divine lover chose not to desert her, but flew to a nearby cypress tree, from whose heights he spoke to her in her distress:

"Poor innocent Psyche," he cried, "Venus commanded me, though I have disobeyed my mother's orders, to fill you with passion for some vile wretch and sentence you to the meanest kind of marriage, but I flew to you as your lover instead. It was a foolish thing to do, I see that, and illustrious archer though I am, I shot myself with my own arrow, and made you my wife, only for you to think me some savage monster, and sever my head with a sword, a head that bears the very eyes that love you. I told you time and again to beware of this, I warned you over and over for your own good. As for those precious advisors of yours, I'll soon take my revenge for their pernicious machinations; you I punish merely by my flight." With this he took wing and soared into the air.

Book V:25-27 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the sisters' fate

Psyche lay there, on the ground, watching her husband's passage till he was out of sight, tormenting herself with the saddest lamentations. But once he was lost to view, sped onwards into the distance by his beating wings, she hurled herself from the margin of the nearest river. Yet the tender stream, respecting the god who can make even water burn, fearing for its own flow, quickly clasped her in its innocuous current and placed her on the soft turf of its flowery bank. By chance, Pan, god of the wild, was seated on the shore, caressing Echo the mountain goddess, teaching her to repeat tunes in a thousand modes. By the river's edge, wandering she-goats grazed and frolicked, cropping the flowing grasses. The goat-legged god, catching sight of the sad and weary Psyche, and not unconscious of her plight, called to her gently and calmed her with soothing words.

"Sweet lady, though I'm only a rustic herdsman, I benefit from the experience of many a long year. If I surmise rightly, though wise men call it not surmise but rather divination, by your weak and wandering footsteps, your deathly pale complexion, your constant sighs and those sad eyes, you are suffering from love's extremes. But listen to what I say, don't try to find death again by a suicidal leap or in some other way. Cease your mourning, end this sorrow. Rather pray to Cupid, greatest of the gods, worship him and earn his favour through blandishments and deference, for he's a pleasure-seeking, tender-hearted youth."

Psyche gave no reply to the shepherd god, but gave him reverence as he finished speaking, and went her way. After she'd wearily walked a good deal further, not knowing where she was, she came at twilight to a city where one of her brother-in-laws was king. Realising this, Psyche asked that her arrival be communicated to her sister. She was quickly led to her, and when they were done with embraces and greetings, her sister asked the reason for her presence. Psyche explained:

"You'll recall your counsel, when you both advised me to take a sharp razor and kill the monster that played the role of husband and slept with me, before its rapacious jaws might swallow me whole. Well, I acted on that advice, with the lamp my accomplice, but when I gazed on his face I saw an utterly wonderful, a divine sight: Venus's child, the goddess's son, Cupid himself I say, lying there, and sleeping peacefully. Roused by that blissful vision, disturbed by excess of joy, distressed at being unable to

delight in him much longer, through dreadful mischance a drop of hot oil spurted onto his shoulder. The pain roused him from sleep and, seeing that I was armed with flame and steel, he cried: 'For your wicked crime, you are banished from my bed, take what is yours and go. I shall embrace your sister now – he spoke your name formally – in holy matrimony.' Then he ordered Zephyr to drive me from the palace.”

Psyche had barely finished speaking before her sister spurred on by raging passion and venomous jealousy had conceived a tale to deceive her husband. Pretending she had just had news of her parents' deaths, she took ship, and travelled to the cliff-edge. Though an adverse wind was blowing, filled with desire and in blind hope she cried: “Accept a wife worthy of you, Cupid: carry your mistress to him, Zephyr! And she took a headlong leap. Yet even in death she could not reach her goal. Her body was broken and torn on the jagged rocks, as she deserved, and her lacerated corpse provided a ready banquet for the wild beasts and carrion birds.

Nor was the second sister's punishment slow in arriving. Psyche wandered on to the city where her other sibling lived in similar style, who likewise roused by her sister's story, eager to supplant her wickedly in marriage, rushed to the cliff and met the selfsame end.

Book V:28-31 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: Venus is angered

Psyche wandered through the land, seeking Cupid, while he lay in his mother's chamber groaning with pain from his scorched shoulder. Meanwhile a snow-white bird, the seagull that skims the surface of the sea, dived swiftly beneath the ocean waves, found Venus where she swam and bathed in the deep, and gave her the news that Cupid had been burned, was in the utmost pain from his wound, and lay there in doubtful health; moreover the rumours circling through the world, by word of mouth, had heaped reproach on her and gained her whole household a dreadful reputation. People said that they'd both abandoned their post, he to dally in the mountains, she to sport in the sea; that all delight, grace and charm was gone; that all was boorish, rough, unkempt; no nuptial rites, no friendly gatherings, no love of children; only a vast confusion, and a squalid disregard for the chafing bonds of marriage. So that loquacious, meddlesome bird cackled on in Venus' ear, tearing her son to shreds before her eyes.

Venus at once grew angry, crying: “So now that fine son of mine has a girlfriend has he? Come tell me then, my only loving servant, the name of the creature that’s seduced a simple innocent child, Is she one of the host of Nymphs, or the troop of Hours, or the Muses’ choir, or my own companions the Graces?”

The talkative bird’s tongue ran on: “Mistress, I’m not sure, but I heard he was desperately in love with a girl – Psyche, by name, if I remember rightly.”

Now Venus screamed, loud with indignation: “Psyche, that witch who steals my form, that pretender to my name! Is she the one who delights him? Does the imp take me for some procuress, who pointed that same girl out so he might know her?”

With this cry, she swiftly emerged from the sea, and sought her golden chamber, where she found her son, indisposed as she had heard. She shouted from the doorway at the top of her voice: “Fine behaviour, highly creditable to your birth and reputation! First you disregard your mother’s orders, or rather your queen’s I should say, and fail to visit a sordid passion on the girl, then, a mere boy, you couple with her, my enemy, in reckless, immature love-making, presumably thinking I’d love that woman I hate as a daughter-in-law? You presume you’ll remain the only prince, unlovable, worthless, rake that you are, and that I’m too old to conceive again. Well, know that I’ll produce a better son than you. You’ll feel the insult all the more when I adopt one of my slave boys, and grant him your wings and torches, bow and arrows, and all the rest of the gear I gave you, which was never intended to be used this way. Remember your father Vulcan makes no allowance from his estate for equipping you. You were badly brought up from infancy, quick to raise your hands and fire arrows at your elders in disrespect, and expose me, your mother, to shame each day, you monster! You often make me your target, sneer at me as ‘the widow’, without fearing your step-father, Mars, the world’s strongest and mightiest warrior. Why would you, since you provide that adulterer with a ready supply of girls to torment me with? But I warn you: you’ll be sorry for mocking me, when that marriage of yours leaves a sour, bitter taste in your mouth!”

He was silent, but she went on complaining to herself: “Oh, what shall I do, where can I turn now everyone’s laughing at me? Dare I ask for help from my enemy Moderation, whom my son’s very excesses so often offend? Yet I shudder at the thought of tackling that squalid old peasant

woman. Still, whatever its source, the solace of revenge is not to be spurned. I must certainly use her, her alone, to impose the harshest punishment on that good-for-nothing, shatter his quiver and blunt his arrows, unstring his bow, and quench his torch. And I'll spoil his looks with a harsher medicine still: I'll not consider my injuries atoned for till she's shaved off his golden hair, which I brushed myself till it shone like gold; and clipped those wings of his, that I steeped in the stream of milky nectar from my breasts."

With that she rushed out again, bitterly angry, in a storm of passion. At that instant she met with Juno and Ceres, who seeing her wrathful look, asked why that sullen frown was marring the loveliness of her bright eyes. "How opportune," she cried, "my heart is ablaze and here you come to do me a kindness. Exert your considerable powers, I beg, to find my elusive runaway Psyche. I assume the widespread tale of my family, the exploits of that unspeakable son of mine, have not escaped you."

Then they, aware of what had gone on, tried to assuage Venus' savage anger: "My dear," they said, "what is this fault your son committed that you take so seriously, so much so you set out to thwart his pleasures, and seem so eager to ruin the girl he loves? What crime is it, we ask, if he likes to smile at a pretty girl? Don't you know he's young and male? Or have you forgotten his age? Just because he carries his years lightly, do you think him forever a child? You're a mother and a sensible woman besides. Stop spying so keenly on your son's pursuits, blaming his self-indulgence, scolding him for his love affairs, in short finding fault with your own pleasures and talents, in the shape of your handsome son. What god, indeed what mortal, could endure your sowing the seeds of desire everywhere yet constraining love bitterly where your own home is concerned, and shuttering the official workshop where women's faults are made?"

So they obligingly provided the absent Cupid with a plausible defence but Venus, offended that her wrongs were being ridiculed, turned her back on them and swept off towards the sea.

End of Book V

Book VI:1-4 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: Ceres and Juno

Meanwhile Psyche wandered day and night, restlessly seeking her husband, eager if she could not mollify his anger with a wife's caresses, at least to appease him with a devotee's prayers. Spying a temple on the summit of a high mountain, she thought: "How do I know he might not live there?" Swiftly she moved towards it. Though she was wearied from her efforts, hope and desire quickened her step. When she had clambered up to the lofty ridge, she entered the shrine and stood by the sacred couch. It was heaped with ears of wheat, some woven into wreaths, and ears of barley. There were sickles, and all the other harvest implements, but scattered about in total disorder, as if left there by the harvesters escaping the summer sun. Psyche sorted them all into separate piles, thinking she should not neglect the temples or rituals of any deity, but rather appeal to the kindness and mercy of them all.

It was bountiful Ceres who found her, carefully and diligently caring for her shrine, and called to her from afar: "Psyche, poor girl, what's this? Venus, her heart afire, is searching intently for you. She wants to punish you severely, demanding vengeance with all her divine power. Yet here you are looking after my affairs. How can you think of anything but your own safety?"

Psyche drenched the goddess' feet with a flood of tears, and swept the temple floor with her hair, as she prostrated herself on the ground, uttering countless prayers, seeking to win the deity's favour: "I beseech you by the fruitful power of your right hand, by the joy-filled ceremony of the harvest, by the unspoken mystery of the sacred basket, by the winged flight of your dragon-servants, by the furrowed Sicilian fields and Pluto's chariot and the swallowing earth, by Proserpine's descent to a gloomy wedding, the torch-lit discovery of that same daughter of yours' and her return, and by all the other secrets which your sanctuary in Attica, Eleusis, cloaks in silence, oh, save the life of wretched Psyche, your suppliant. Let me hide for a few days here at least among your store of grain, till the great goddess's raging anger abates with the passage of time, or until my strength, exhausted by my long journey, is restored by a chance to rest."

Ceres answered: "Your tears and prayers move me more than I can say, and I long to help you, but Venus is not simply my niece, we share

ancient ties of friendship, and besides she's so good-hearted, I can't afford to offend her. I fear you must leave the shrine at once, and count yourself fortunate not to be held here as my captive."

Driven away despite her hopes, doubly afflicted with sorrow, Psyche retraced her steps. In the valley below, at the centre of a dimly-lit grove, she caught sight of another beautifully-fashioned temple. Not wishing to miss any path, however uncertain, that might lead to better expectations, and happy to seek help from any deity, she approached the sacred doors. There she saw rich offerings, gold embroidered ribbons, attached to the branches and the doorposts, whose lettering spelled the name of the goddess to whom they were dedicated, with thanks for her aid. So Psyche knelt and clasped the altar, still warm from sacrifice, in her arms, then dried her tears and prayed:

"Sister and consort of mighty Jove, whether you reside in the ancient sanctuary of Samos, which was granted the sole glory of your birth and infant tears and nurturing; or whether you frequent the lofty site of blessed Carthage, where they worship you as a Virgin riding the Lion through the sky; or whether you are defending Argos' famous walls beside the banks of Inachus, where they call you the Thunderer's bride, queen of the gods; you whom the East adores as Zygia goddess of marriage, and the West as Lucina goddess of childbirth: be Juno the Protectress to me in my dire misfortune. I am so weary from my great troubles. Free me from the dangers that threaten, for I know you come willingly to the help of pregnant girls in peril."

As she bowed in supplication, Juno appeared in all the glorious majesty of her divinity. "How I wish," she cried, at once, "I could match my will to your prayer. But it would bring me shame to go against the wishes of Venus, Vulcan's wife and my daughter-in-law, whom I've always loved as if she were my own. And then the law prevents me harbouring another's fugitive servant without their consent."

Book VI:5-8 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: brought to account

Terrified at this second shipwreck of her hopes, unable to find her winged husband, Psyche abandoned all thought of salvation, and took counsel of her thoughts:

“What else can I try, what other aid can ease my tribulations, since the goddesses despite their favourable views cannot help me? Where else can I turn caught in such a web? What roof can conceal me, what darkness can hide me from the all-penetrating eyes of powerful Venus? Why not pluck up courage, as a man would, and abandon idle hope? Go to your mistress willingly, though late, and by yielding to her furious pursuit mollify her. Besides, who knows that you may not find the one you’ve long searched for, there, in his mother’s house?” So, ready to risk the unknown consequences of surrender, even destruction itself, she pondered how she should commence her imminent appeal.

Meanwhile Venus, abandoning all attempts to find her on earth, sought the heavens. She ordered her chariot readied, that Vulcan the goldsmith had carefully wrought with subtle skill, offering it to her as a gift before they entered into marriage. It was noted for its filigree work and more valuable for the very gold removed by the refining file! Four white doves, with glad demeanour, emerged from the dovecote surrounding her chamber, offered their snowy necks to the jewelled harness, then lifted the burden of their mistress and happily took flight. Sparrows rose in the chariot’s wake, chirping madly at its approach; and all the birds, that sing so sweetly, great Venus’s retinue filled with song and unafraid of rapacious eagles or circling hawks along the way, echoed their delight with honeyed melodies. Thus the clouds parted, the Heavens opened, to welcome their daughter and the highest ether received the goddess with joy.

She went straight to Jove’s royal citadel, and urgently demanded to borrow the services of Mercury, the messenger god. Nor was Jupiter’s celestial assent denied her. In triumph she descended from the sky, with Mercury too in her wake, and gave him careful instructions:

“Arcadian, you know your sister Venus has never accomplished a thing without your presence, and no doubt you’re aware I’m trying in vain to find a runaway servant. So nothing remains but for you to publicly proclaim a reward for whoever finds her. Go carry out my order at once, and describe her features clearly, so that no one charged with wrongfully hiding her can claim ignorance as a defence.” With that she handed him the details, Psyche’s name and the rest, and promptly left for home.

Mercury rushed to comply, running here and there from person to person, fulfilling his task with this proclamation: “If any man knows the whereabouts of, or can arrest in flight, the runaway servant of Venus, the

princess named Psyche, he should meet with Mercury, author of this announcement, by the shrine of Venus Murcia in the Circus Maximus. The reward offered is seven sweet kisses from Venus herself, and one more deeply honeyed touch of her caressing tongue.”

After his proclamation, the desire for so fine a reward roused the competitive instinct in every mortal man, and more than anything it put an end to Psyche’s previous hesitation. Familiarity, a servant of Venus, ran at her as she approached her mistress’ door, and began shouting at the top of her voice: “So, you worthless girl, you’ve at last remembered you have a mistress! Just like your thoughtless behaviour to pretend ignorance of all the trouble we’ve endured, searching for you. But now you’ve fallen into my hands and a good thing too, now you’re in Death’s claws indeed, and you’ll pay the price for this endless defiance.”

Book VI:9-10 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the first task

With that she seized her tight by the hair and dragged her inside. The unresisting Psyche was thrust into Venus’ presence. The goddess burst into savage laughter as women do when deeply enraged, beating her round the head and dragging her about by the ear, crying: “So you deign to call on your mother-in-law at last, do you? Or are you here to visit that husband of yours, laid low by your own hand? Don’t you worry, I’ll entertain you as a fine daughter-in-law deserves. Where are those attendants of mine, Anxiety and Sorrow?”

When they entered she handed the girl over to them for punishment. At the goddess’s command they flogged poor Psyche and tortured her in other ways, then returned her to their mistress’s sight. Then Venus screeched with laughter again: “Look at her,” she cried, “trying to stir my pity with that offering, that swollen belly of hers! No doubt she thinks its illustrious origin might gladden its grandmother’s heart. Indeed what joy, in the very flower of my youth, to be known as a grandmother, with the offspring of a lowly servant as Venus’ own grandson! But how foolish of me to call it such: since this ‘marriage’ of mortal and god took place in some country villa, with nary a witness, without the father’s consent. It was not done within the law, and your child too will be illegitimate, if indeed I allow the birth at all.”

Having launched this tirade, Venus flew at her, beat her about the head severely, tore her hair, and ripped her clothes to pieces. Then the goddess called for wheat, millet and barley, poppy-seeds, chickpeas, lentils and beans, and mixed the heaps all together in one pile. Then she returned to Psyche: “You look such a hideous creature you’ll only attract a lover by hard work. So I’ll test out your industriousness myself. Sort that pile into separate kinds, each in its own heap, finish it all by this evening, and show it me for approval.” With that Venus took herself off to a marriage feast.

Psyche sat there dumbfounded, gazing silently at that confused and inextricable mountain of a task, dismayed by its sheer enormity. But a passing ant, a little ant of the fields, pitied the great god’s bride, and seeing the intractable nature of the problem, condemned the goddess’s cruelty. Running this way and that, it summoned and gathered together a whole squadron of local ants, crying: “Nimble creatures of Earth, the Mother of all, take pity on this pretty girl in trouble, run swiftly now to the aid of the wife of Love himself!” Wave after wave of the six-footed folk appeared, and with tireless industry took the heap apart piece by piece, and sorted it into differing piles each of a separate nature, then quickly vanished from sight.

Book VI:11-13 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the second task

Venus returned from the wedding festivities that evening, smelling of balsam and soaked with wine, her whole body garlanded in gleaming roses. When she saw how perfectly the difficult task had been performed, she cried: “This is not your doing, you wretch, but the work of that boy who fell in love with you to your misfortune and his.” Then she threw Psyche a lump of bread for her supper, and went to her bed.

Cupid was still under close custody, locked in a room deep in the house, partly for fear his injury would be worsened by wanton self-indulgence, partly to keep him from meeting his sweetheart. So, under one roof but separated, the lovers spent a wretched night.

But as soon as Dawn’s chariot mounted the sky, Venus summoned Psyche and gave her a fresh task: “Do you see the wood which borders all that bank of the flowing river, where dense thickets overlook the source nearby? Sheep, with fleece that glistens with purest gold, wander there and

graze unguarded. Obtain a hank of that precious wool, in any manner you please, and bring it to me straight away, such is my decree.”

Psyche left willingly, not to fulfil the goddess’ demand, but to escape from her troubles by throwing herself from a cliff into the river. But a green reed, that piper of sweet music, stirred by the touch of a gentle breeze, was divinely inspired to prophesy thus:

“Poor Psyche, though you’re assailed by a host of sorrows, don’t pollute these sacred waters with a pitiful act of suicide. Conceal yourself carefully behind this tall plane-tree that bathes in the same current as I do. Don’t go near those dreadful sheep right now, as they soak up heat from the burning sun and burst out in wild fits of madness, venting their fury on passers-by with those sharp horns set in stony foreheads and their venomous bite, but wait till the sun’s heat fades in late afternoon, when the flock settles to rest under the calming influence of the river breeze. Then while their savagery is assuaged and their temper eased, just explore the trees in the wood nearby, and you’ll find the golden wool clinging here and there to the bent branches.”

Thus a simple reed, in its kindness, taught Psyche in distress how to save her self. She never faltered, nor had reason to regret obeying the advice so carefully given, but accepted her instructions, and easily filled the folds of her dress with soft gleaming gold, carrying her spoils to Venus. Yet her success at this second dangerous task garnered no favour in her mistress’ eyes. Venus frowned and said with a cruel smile: “I know the true author of this achievement only too well. But now a serious test will prove if you’ve real courage and true intelligence. Do you see that steep mountain peak, rising above those towering cliffs? Dark waters flow from a black fount there, down to the nearby valley’s confined depths, and they feed the swamps of Styx, and the bitter stream of Cocytus. Draw me some of the freezing liquid from the bubbling heart of that spring, and bring it me quickly in this little phial.” With that, she gave her a crystal jar, and added a few harsh threats for good measure.

Book VI:14-15 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the third task

Psyche, determined now, if she failed, to end her wretched life at last, clambered swiftly and steadfastly towards the mountain summit. But when she neared the ridge that was her goal, she saw the vast difficulty of

her deadly task. A high and immense rock wall, jagged, precarious, and inaccessible, emitted dread streams from jaws of stone, flowing downwards from their precipitous source through a narrow funnel they had carved, and sliding unseen down to the gorge below. On either side fierce serpents slithered from holes in the cliffs, extending their heads, eyes given to unblinking vigil, their pupils on watch at every moment. Even the waters were alive and on guard, crying out: "Off with you! Where are you going? See here! What are you doing? Beware! Be gone! You'll die!" As if changed to stone though present in body, the helpless Psyche took leave of her senses, and overwhelmed by the threat of inescapable disaster lacked even the last solace of tears.

But the sharp eyes of kindly Providence saw an innocent soul in trouble. Mighty Jupiter's royal eagle, wings outstretched, was there to aid her: the raptor recalled that time long ago when at Cupid's command he had served to carry Ganymede, the Phrygian cup-bearer, through the heavens to Jove. Now he brought timely assistance, honouring Cupid's claim on him. Seeing the ordeal the god's wife was enduring, he left the bright roads of high heaven, and circling above her called: "Simple and innocent as you are, do you really expect even to touch, never mind steal, a single drop from that most sacred and cruel of founts? Jupiter himself, and all the gods, fear these Stygian waters. Surely you know that, just as you swear by the power of the gods, so the gods in turn swear by the power of Styx. Now, pass me that phial!"

He snatched it from her hand, and swept off to fill it from the stream. Balanced on his great sweeping wings he flew beyond the serpents' reach, those savage jaws, those incisors, those triply-grooved flickering tongues, swerving to right and left. The water rose and threatened to harm him if he did not desist, but he gathered them, claiming he sought them at Venus' orders, acting on her behalf, and was granted easier access on that account.

Book VI:16-20 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the underworld

So Psyche regained the little jar, now full, and quickly brought it to Venus. But still the cruel goddess's will was not appeased. Menacing her with greater, more terrible threats, Venus glared at her balefully: "Now I see how readily you've performed those impossible tasks of mine, I'm certain you must be some kind of high and mighty witch. But there's one

more little service you must perform, my dear. Take the jar and plunge from the light of day to the underworld, to the dismal abode of Pluto himself. Hand the jar to Proserpine and say: 'Venus asks that you send her a little of your beauty, enough for one brief day. She has used and exhausted all she had while caring for her son who's ill.' And don't be slow to return, since I need to apply it before I attend a gathering of deities."

Now Psyche felt that this was indeed the end of everything: the veil had been drawn aside, and she saw she was being driven openly to imminent destruction, forced, was it not obvious, to go willingly on her own two feet to Tartarus and the shades. Instantly she climbed to the summit of the highest tower, intending to throw herself from it, as the swiftest and cleanest route to the underworld. But the turret suddenly burst into speech: "Unhappy girl, why seek to destroy your self in this way? Why rashly surrender everything before this the last of your tasks? Once your breath is gone from your body, you'll sink to the depths of Tartarus indeed, but from there you'll not return. Listen to me. Not far from here is the famous city of Achaean Sparta. Seek Cape Taenarus there, in the region, it's remote, that borders on Lacedaemon. There is a breathing-hole of Dis, and through its gaping portal they'll show you a rough-made path. Once cross the threshold and take that road and you'll reach Pluto's palace by the shortest way. But don't go into the shadows without bearing in each hand a barley-cake soaked in honeyed wine, and hold two coins in your mouth. When you've completed a good part of your gloomy journey, you'll meet with a lame ass carrying wood, and an equally lame driver, who'll ask you to hand him some sticks that have fallen from his load. But don't utter a single word, and pass them by in silence. Not long afterwards you'll reach the river of the dead, where Charon the ferryman demands an instant toll, then carries the shades to the further bank in his patched-up skiff. Thus we see that avarice lives even amongst the dead, and Charon, the tax collector for Pluto, that great deity, does nothing without a fee. A pauper who's dying must find the passage-money, and unless there's a coin to hand, no one will allow him to expire. Let that squalid old man have one of the coins you bear, but make sure he takes it out of your mouth with his very own hand. And when you're crossing that slow-moving stream an aged corpse afloat on the surface will raise its rotting hands and beg you to lift him into the boat: but don't be swayed by mistaken pity. One you are across the

river, and have gone a little further, some old women weaving, at the loom, will ask you to lend a hand for a while, but you must not help them either. All these and more are traps laid for you by Venus, to make you let go of one of those barley-cakes. And don't think losing a barley-cake is of little consequence, if you lose either cake you'll not see daylight again. For you'll arrive at the monstrous dog, with triple heads of enormous size, a huge and fearsome creature with thunderous jaws, who barks enough to frighten the dead but in vain; he can do them no harm. He keeps constant guard at the threshold of Proserpine's dark halls, defending the insubstantial palace of Dis. One barley-cake thrown as a sop will hold him, and you can get by easily, and enter Proserpine's presence. She'll receive you courteously and benignly, and try to tempt you to sit down by her in comfort, and eat a sumptuous meal. But you must squat on the ground, demand common bread and eat that. Then tell her why you are there, take what is set before you, and make your way back, bribing the savage dog with that second barley-cake. Give the avaricious ferryman the coin you kept in reserve, cross the river, retrace your steps, and you'll return to the heavenly choir of stars. But above all else, I warn you, be careful, whatever you do, not to open and not to look in the jar you've tied to your waist, and don't let your curiosity loose by thinking too much about that hidden treasure, divine beauty."

Thus the far-seeing tower performed its prophetic service. Psyche reached Taenarus without delay and, with both coins and cakes, hastened down the path to the underworld. She passed the lame ass-driver in silence, gave up her toll to the ferryman, ignored the cries of the floating corpse, spurned the cunning requests of the weaver-women, fed the dog a cake to assuage his fearful madness, and entered the palace of Proserpine. She accepted neither the pleasant seat nor the luxurious meal her hostess offered, but sat on the ground at her feet, and contenting her self with a simple crust, achieved what Venus had asked. In secret, the jar was quickly filled and sealed, and Psyche gathered it up again. She silenced the barking dog with the ruse of that second cake, paid her last coin to the ferryman, and ran even more swiftly back from the underworld. But despite her haste to be done with her terms of service, once she'd returned to the brightness of day, and greeted it with reverence, her mind was overcome by a most unwise curiosity, "Behold," she said to herself, "I'm foolish to be the

bearer of such divine beauty, and not take a tiny drop of it for myself. It might even help me please my beautiful lover.”

Book VI:21-22 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the jar of sleep

And with those words she unsealed the jar; but there was never a drop of beauty there, nothing but deathly, truly Stygian sleep. When the cover was lifted slumber attacked her instantly, enveloping her entire body in a dense cloud of somnolence. She collapsed where she stood, fell on the path, and deep slumber overcame her. She lay there motionless, like a corpse but fast asleep.

Cupid, feeling better now that his scar had healed, could no longer endure the absence of his beloved Psyche and, dropped from the high window of the room where he'd been confined. With wings restored by his long rest, he flew all the more swiftly, and swooping to Psyche's side he wiped away the sleep with care and returned it to the jar where it belonged. Then he roused her with a harmless touch of his arrow, saying: “Look how you've nearly ruined yourself again, poor child, with that insatiable curiosity of yours. Now be quick and finish the task my mother assigned. I'll take care of everything else.” With this he took lightly to his wings, while Psyche, for her part, swiftly carried Proserpine's gift to Venus.

Now Cupid, pale of face, devoured by uncontrollable love, was so concerned by his mother's sudden harshness he returned to his old tricks, quickly flying to heaven's heights on his swift wings, kneeling before great Jove, and attempting to win support for his cause. Jupiter tweaked Cupid's cheek, raised the lad's hand to his lips, kissed it and replied. “My dear son, despite the fact you've never shown the slightest respect granted me by all other deities, but wounded my heart again and again, and shamed me with endless bouts of earthly passion, I, who command the elements, I, who ordain the course of the stars; and despite the fact you defy the law, even the *Lex Julia* itself, and the rules that maintain public order; that you've injured my good name, and destroyed my reputation through scandalous adulteries, transforming my tranquil features vilely into snakes and flames, and birds and beasts, and even cattle; nevertheless, because of my sweet disposition, and the fact that you were cradled in my own arms, I'll do as you ask. But only on one condition; that you beware of making me your

rival by giving me, in payment for this favour, some other girl of outstanding beauty.”

Book VI:23-24 The tale of Cupid and Psyche: the marriage

So saying, he ordered Mercury to call an impromptu gathering of the gods, with a fine of a hundred pieces of gold for failing to attend the heavenly assembly, which threat guaranteed the celestial theatre was filled. Almighty Jupiter, from his high throne, gave the following address:

“O deities, inscribed in the roll-call of the Muses, you all know it to be true that I raised this lad with my own hands. I’ve decided the impulses of his hot youth need curbing in some manner. We must take away the opportunity; restrain his childish indulgence with the bonds of matrimony. He’s found a girl, he’s taken her virginity. Let him have her, hold her, and in Psyche’s arms indulge his passions forever.”

Then he turned to Venus saying: “Now my daughter, don’t be despondent. Don’t fear for your lineage or status, because of his wedding a mortal. I’ll make it a marriage of equals, legitimate, in accord with civil law.” And he ordered Mercury to bring Psyche to heaven at once. Once there he handed her a cup of ambrosia, saying: “Drink this Psyche, and be immortal. Cupid will never renege on the bond, and the marriage will last forever.”

Presently a rich wedding feast appeared. The bridegroom reclined at the head, clasping Psyche in his arms. Jupiter and Juno sat beside them, and all the deities in order. Ganymede, the cup-bearing shepherd lad, served Jupiter his nectar, that wine of the gods, and Bacchus-Liber served all the rest, while Vulcan cooked the meal. Now the Hours adorned everyone with roses and hosts of other flowers; the Graces scattered balsam; the choir of the Muses sounded; Apollo sang to the lyre, and Venus danced charmingly to that outpouring of sweet music, arranging the scene so the Muses chimed together, with a Satyr fluting away, and a woodland creature of Pan’s piping his reeds.

So Psyche was given in marriage to Cupid according to the rite, and when her term was due a daughter was born to them both, whom we call Pleasure.’

CIRCE

For Circe see also 66, 80, 94, 144.

72 Circe, Greek literature’s first witch, and Odysseus

vii B.C. or earlier
Homer *Odyssey*
10.133–405 and
569–74
Greek

133. We sailed on from there grieved in heart, glad to escape from death ourselves, but having lost dear companions. We arrived at the island of Aeaea. There lived Circe of the beautiful tresses, a terrible goddess, endowed with speech. She was the full sister of Aeetes of the destructive mind. Both were born of the Sun that shines on mortals and from their mother Perse, the daughter sired by Ocean. We beached the ship in a harbor suitable for vessels, in silence. We were guided by some god. Then we disembarked and lay there for two days and two nights devouring our hearts with sleep and agonies alike. But when Dawn of the beautiful tresses accomplished the third day, then I took my spear and my sharp sword and swiftly went up from the ship to a place from which I could survey the island, to see if I could see signs of human habitation or hear voices. So I climbed up and stood on a craggy vantage-point. I saw smoke rising from the land of broad roads. It came from the halls of Circe, which I could see through the thick shrubbery and wood. Then I pondered in my heart and mind whether to go and investigate, since I saw the smoke of fire. As I deliberated about this I decided that it was better to go first to my swift ship and the shore of the sea, to give dinner to my comrades, and then to send someone else to investigate. But when, on my way, I came close to the curving-ended ship, one of the gods took pity on me, alone as I was, and sent a great high-horned stag right into my path. He had come down from its pasture in the wood to the river to drink. For the might of the sun oppressed him. As he broke cover I struck him in the middle back on the spine. The bronze spear pierced him all the way through, and he fell down in the dust with a bellow, and his soul flew off. I put my foot against him and drew the bronze spear from the wound. I laid it aside on the ground. I pulled up brushwood and withies and wove a plaited rope a furlong in length and bound the great beast’s feet together. Then I went to the black ship carrying him across my back and leaning on my spear, since he was too big to carry on my shoulder with one hand. For the creature was huge. I threw him down before the ship. I encouraged my comrades with gentle words, standing by each man:

174. “My dear men, we will not yet go down to the house of Hades, grieved as we are, before the fated day comes upon us. But come, while there is food and drink in the swift ship, let us turn our thoughts to eating, and let us not be worn down by hunger.”

178. So I spoke, and they swiftly followed my advice. They unveiled their heads and stood in awe at the stag on the shore of the unharvested sea. For the creature was huge. When they had had enough of gazing at him with their eyes, they washed their hands and prepared a glorious meal. In this way then we sat all day long until sunset dining on unlimited flesh and sweet wine. When the sun had set and darkness had come upon us, we went to sleep on the seashore. When rosy-fingered dawn, child of the morning, appeared, I called a meeting and spoke to them all:

190. “Hear my words, my comrades who suffer much. My friends, we do not know where the west is or where the east is, where the sun that shines on mortals goes under the ground, and where it rises up. Let us quickly consider whether any course of action will be available to us. I don’t think there is. For I went up to a craggy vantage-point and saw that this land is an island, around which the bound-

less sea is wreathed. The island is low-lying. With my eyes I saw smoke in the middle of it through the thick oaks and woods."

198. So I spoke, and their dear hearts were broken, for they remembered the actions of the Laestrygonian Antiphates, and the violence of the man-eating Cyclops. They wailed shrilly and cried heavy tears. But there was no profit in their mourning.

203. But I counted off all my well-greaved companions into two groups, and I gave both groups a leader. I led one, and godlike Eurylochus the other. We quickly shook lots in a helmet fitted with bronze. Out jumped the lot of great-hearted Eurylochus. He set out, and with him twenty-two companions, weeping. They left us behind, and we were wailing too. In the glens they found the house of Circe, built with polished stones, in a sheltered place. Around it were wolves of the mountain and lions, which Circe herself had enchanted, for she had given them evil drugs [*pharmaka*]. But they did not attack the men, but stood on their hind legs and wagged their tails. As when dogs fawn on their master as he comes from dinner, for he always brings them tid-bits to cheer their heart, in this way the strong-clawed wolves and lions fawned on them. But they took fear, when they saw the dreadful wild animals. They stopped in the gatehouse of the goddess of beautiful tresses, and they heard Circe singing within in a lovely voice. She was going back and forth at her immortal loom, making the sort of fine, subtle, and glorious fabrics that goddesses do. Polites, leader of men, was the first to speak. He was the dearest and best of my comrades.

226. "My friends, someone within is going back and forth at a great loom and singing a beautiful song, and all the floor resounds. She is either a goddess or a woman. Let us shout out to her right away."

229. So he spoke, and they shouted out and called to her. She quickly came out, opened her shining doors and invited them in. They followed her in altogether in their ignorance. But Eurylochus stayed back, suspecting a trick. She took them in and sat them down on chairs and thrones, and for them she mixed cheese, grain, and pale honey with Pramnian wine. She blended baleful drugs into the food, so that they should forget their homeland completely. But when she had given it to them and they had drunk it down, she immediately struck them with her wand and shut them into pigsties. They had the heads, voices, bristles, and bodies of pigs, but their minds remained unchanged and just as they were before. Thus they were penned up weeping, and before them Circe threw down varieties of acorn and cornel fruit to eat, the sorts of thing usually eaten by pigs that lie on the ground.

244. Eurylochus came straight back to the swift black ship with news of his comrades and their cruel fate. He could not utter a word, much as he longed to, stricken in heart with great pain. His eyes were full of tears, and his heart knew grief. But when we put questions to him in our astonishment, then he told us of the fate of the other companions:

251. "As you bade us, we went through the oak woods, glorious Odysseus, and we found the beautiful house in the glens made with polished stones, in a sheltered place. There someone was going back and forth at a great loom and singing shrilly, either a goddess or a woman. They shouted out and called to her. She came out immediately, opened the shining doors and invited them in. They all followed her inside in their ignorance, but I stayed back, suspecting a trick. And they all disappeared, and none of them reemerged, although I sat there and watched for them for a long time."

261. So he spoke, but I threw my silver-nailed sword over my shoulder, a great

bronze one, and put my bow around me. I bade him take me back the same way. But he grabbed hold of my knees with both hands and besought me, and, groaning, addressed winged words to me:

266. "Do not make me go there against my will, nursling of Zeus, but leave me here. For I know that neither will you come back, nor will you bring back any other of your companions. But let us escape quickly with these men, for we still have the chance to avoid our evil day."

270. So he spoke, but I answered him and said, "Eurylochus, you stay here in this place, eating and drinking by the hollow black ship, but I will go, for stern necessity is upon me."

274. So I spoke and went inland from the ship and the sea. But when, as I made my way, I was about to come to the great house in the glens of Circe of the many spells [or: drugs—*polupharmakos*], Hermes of the golden wand met me as I approached it. He was in the guise of a young man growing his first beard, the time of youth when they are most charming. He grabbed my hand, addressed me by name, and spoke:

281. "My poor man, where are you going alone through the hills, in ignorance of the country? Your comrades are penned up like pigs in close sties in Circe's house. Do you come here to set them free? I tell you that you will not return, but remain there just like the others. But, come, I will free you from your difficulties and save you. Take this. Go to Circe's house with this good drug, which will keep the evil day from your head. And I will tell you all the deadly tricks of Circe. She will make you a potage, and throw drugs into the food. But even so, she will not be able to bewitch you, for the good drug I will give you will prevent her from doing so. I will explain the details. Whenever Circe strikes you with her long wand, at that point draw your sharp sword from your thigh and rush on Circe, as if you intend to kill her. She will be frightened and bid you go to bed with her. Do not then refuse the goddess' bed, so that she will free your companions and give you hospitality. But bid her swear a great oath by the blessed gods not to devise any other evil woe for you yourself, lest she make you cowardly and unmanly when you have taken your clothes off."

302. So spoke the slayer of Argos and gave me the drug, pulling it up from the ground, and he showed me the nature of it. It was black in the root, but its flower was like milk. The gods call it *môlu*. It is difficult for mortal men to dig up, but the gods can do everything. Then Hermes went off through the wooded island to high Olympus, but I went to the house of Circe. My heart was greatly troubled as I went. I stopped at the doors of the goddess of the beautiful tresses. I stood there and shouted out, and the goddess heard my voice. She quickly came out, opened the shining doors, and invited me in. I followed her, grieved in heart. She took me in and sat me on a beautiful throne, skillfully wrought with silver nails. Under my feet was a footstool. She made a potage for me to drink in a golden cup, and she put a drug into it, plotting evil in her heart. She gave it to me and I drank it down, but it did not bewitch me. She struck me with her wand and spoke to me, addressing me by name: "Go now to the pigsty, and lie with your other comrades."

322. So she spoke, but I drew the sharp sword from my thigh and rushed upon Circe as if I intended to kill her. She cried out aloud, ducked under the blade, grabbed my knees, and, groaning, addressed winged words to me:

325. "What man are you, and where do you come from? Where are your city and parents? I am amazed that you were not bewitched after drinking my drugs. For no other man has been able to resist these drugs, if he has drunk them and taken them past the fence of his teeth. But you have a mind in your breast that

cannot be charmed. I am sure that you are Odysseus of the many wiles. He of the golden wand, the slayer of Argos, was always telling me that he would come, on his return from Troy in his black ship. But come now, put your sword in its scabbard, and let us climb upon my bed, so that we may learn to trust each other by joining with each other in sex and love."

336. So she spoke, but I answered her and said, "Circe, how can you bid me be gentle toward you, when you have made pigs of my companions in your hall. Now you have me myself here, and, plotting trickery, you bid me go to your bedroom and climb upon your bed, so that you may make me a coward and unmanly when I have taken my clothes off. I could not consent to climb upon your bed, unless you would be prepared, goddess, to swear a great oath that you will not contrive some other evil woe against me."

345. So I spoke, and she immediately swore that she would not, as I asked her to. But when she had sworn and completed the oath, then I climbed upon Circe's very lovely bed.

348. In the meantime her maids were at work in the hall. There were four of them, and they did her housework. They were the children of the springs and the groves and the sacred rivers that flow into the sea. The first of them threw beautiful rugs over the thrones, purple on top, but underneath she put linen. The second set silver tables before the thrones and laid golden baskets on them. The third one mixed honied sweet wine in a silver bowl, and distributed golden cups. The fourth one brought water and kindled a roaring fire under a large tripod-cauldron. The water was warmed. But when the water had boiled in this flashing bronze, she sat me in a bathing-tub and washed me with water from the great tripod-cauldron, blending it until it was just right. She poured the water down over my head and shoulders until she had taken the heart-devouring tiredness from my limbs. But when she had bathed me and anointed me well with oil, she threw round me a beautiful cloak and tunic. She brought me into the hall and sat me on a beautiful throne, skillfully wrought with silver nails. Under my feet was a footstool. A maid brought water for me to wash my hands and poured it over them from a beautiful golden ewer and into a silver bowl. Beside me she set a polished table. The estimable housekeeper brought bread and set it beside me, and added much food, helping me generously to what she had. She bade me eat. But I could not bring myself to do so. I sat there in distraction, and my heart had foreboding of bad things.

375. When Circe saw that I was just sitting there without touching the food, and that I was deeply aggrieved, she stood by me and addressed winged words to me.

378. "Odysseus, whyever do you sit there like a man without voice and devouring your heart? Why don't you touch the food and drink? Do you think it's another trick? You have no need to fear, for I have already sworn a strong oath that I will not trick you again."

382. So she spoke, and I answered her and said, "Circe, what decent man could endure to turn to food and drink before liberating his companions and seeing them again with his own eyes? But if you are serious in bidding me drink and eat, free them, so that I can see my trusty companions with my own eyes."

388. So I spoke, and Circe went out of the hall, rod in hand, and opened the gates of the sty. She drove out my companions, who looked like nine-year-old pigs. They stood ranged before her, and she went among them and anointed each of them with another drug. The bristles, which had been caused to grow by that accursed drug that lady Circe had given them, fell from their limbs. They became men again, and younger than they had been, and much more attractive and tall to look

at. They recognized me and held onto my hand. They all turned to passionate lament, and the house reverberated terribly, and even the goddess had pity.

400. The divine goddess stood beside me and spoke to me. "Son of Laertes, descendant of Zeus, Odysseus of the many schemes, go now to your swift ship and the shore of the sea. First, drag your ship up onto the land, and put your goods and all your ship's tackle away in caves. Then come back yourself and bring your trusty comrades."

569. But while we were coming to our swift ship and the shore of the sea, grieving and shedding heavy tears, Circe in the meantime made her own way and tethered a ram and a black ewe beside the ship, easily slipping past us. For who could see with his own eyes a god going to and fro, if the god did not wish it?

THE HOMERIC EPICS ARE TRADITIONAL, ORAL, formulaic productions, generated through hundreds and probably thousands of years of bardic composition. They are thought to have reached the form in which they have come down to us in the seventh century B.C. The Homeric portrayal of Circe is of great importance, for it may be considered the first extant portrait of a witch in Greek literature. The usual terms for "witch" in Greek, *pharmakis* and *pharmakeutria*, both based on *pharmaka*, the "drugs" and/or "spells" that formed the witch's stock-in-trade, are only attested later. Circe is, however, described as "of many drugs" (*polu-pharmakos*, 274–80) and is repeatedly said to use *pharmaka*. The hesitating description "goddess or woman" may suggest the notion of a mortal woman with supernatural powers, although Circe is also defined as a goddess without qualification. Close reading expands the range of powers with which Circe is explicitly attributed here:

- She transforms men into pigs (229–43) and back into men again (388–99). The first is achieved by a drugged potion, wand, and command/spell. The second is achieved by ointment. Circe's bewitching of the lions and wolves around her house need only have been to tame them (203–25), but the supposition that they too are transformed sailors is an easy one and seems to have been made by Apollodorus, who has Circe change Odysseus's companions into pigs, lions, wolves, and asses (*Epitome* 7.14–18). Apollonius of Rhodes, however, fills Circe's island with beings made up from the jumbled body parts of different creatures, à la *Island of Dr. Moreau* (*Argonautica* 4.659–72). He may have taken inspiration from representations of Circe in art, where her victims are portrayed as part men, part pig, in order to convey the narrative of transformation (*LIMC*, Circe, nos. 5–26). Do the Homeric animals fawn upon the visitors to appeal for help? To warn them of the fate that awaits them? To express their longing for their own lost human form? Particular poignancy is added to Odysseus's killing and consumption of the great stag that presents itself to him if we imagine that it was once a correspondingly stout human warrior (133–73). For magical transformations into animals see 107, and for transformations into wolves in particular, see 139–43.
- She rejuvenates Odysseus's men as she returns them to human form, again with the ointment (388–99). While this *need* not be a reference specifically to magical activity in a Homeric context (compare *Odyssey* 6.229–35), the prominence of magical rejuvenation in

the traditions relating to Circe's sister Medea (69) invites us to read it as such.

- She can either render herself invisible or send her soul flying through the air, like the shamans (569–74; see 5–8).
- It is implied that Circe is capable of erotic magic. Odysseus must make her swear not to make him “cowardly and unmanly” once he has taken his clothes off (281–301, 325–35). Faraone has recently observed that women’s love magic against men was perceived as feminizing (1999a). Circe’s doublet in the *Odyssey*, the nymph Calypso, has the power to keep Odysseus sleeping with her on her island indefinitely, even though he still loves and longs for his wife Penelope (73). With their welcoming singing (203–25, for Circe’s), Circe and Calypso resemble in turn Homer’s Sirens, who entrance sailors with their song and trap them on their barren island, where they waste away (*Odyssey* 12.37–54 and 165–200; see 75). Later on, Apuleius’s Meroe was to enslave Socrates and reduce him to beggary by having sex with him once (104). For Circe’s association with erotic magic see 80.
- She is also an expert in necromancy: she instructs Odysseus in the performance of it, provides him with supplies for it, and may even indirectly preside over his consultation, for which see 144.

Odysseus also employs magic against Circe. The *môlu* given to him by Hermes protects him from her attempt to turn him into a pig (281–301). It is unclear whether he is to ingest it as an antidote, or whether he is to wear it as a protective talisman or phylactery (for the wearing of plants in this fashion, see 253, 266). Apollodorus has Odysseus throw the *môlu* into the potage to neutralize it before drinking. Theophrastus (fourth to third centuries B.C.) identified *môlu* as garlic (*Historia Plantarum* 9.15.7). It seems unlikely that Odysseus could have inflicted physical harm on Circe with his sword (322–24), any more than he could have done on the ghosts (see 144), so the significance of this too here may be talismanic. At any rate, we may have here the earliest example of the magical “arms race” and competition between sorcerers in the Greek world.

Early Greek notions of witchcraft are not the only influence on the portrayal of Circe in the *Odyssey*. Aspects of her representation here correspond with episodes in wider folktales and with the Siduri episode in the Mesopotamian *Epic of Gilgamesh* (tablet 10).

For Polites (203–25) see 140, with commentary.

73 Sisters of Circe (1): Calypso 1.11–19. All the others who escaped the absolute destruction of

vii B.C. or earlier
Homer *Odyssey*
1.11–19, 5.151–8
Greek

Troy were at home, and were finished with the war and the sea. But Odysseus alone, longing for his return and his wife, did the lady nymph and noble goddess Calypso detain in her hollow caves, desiring him to be her husband. But when, as the years came round, that one arrived in which the gods had decreed that he should come home to Ithaca, not even then was he done with struggles, and that too with his own friends.

5.151–8. She found Odysseus sitting on the shore. His eyes were never dry of tears. His sweet life was melting away as he grieved about returning, since the



1. Eros Tyrannos

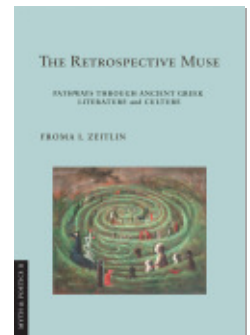
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Chapter 1

EROS *TYRANNOS*

Eros is a god.¹ So is golden Aphrodite. Myths of their origins vary as do the differing concepts of kinship between them. But the fact of divinity acknowledges the overwhelming power of passion; it tells us too that, like all divine forces, carnal desire is something that is ageless and deathless forever. Eros, as Greek culture tells us again and again, is an emotion, an image, a figure, an idea, a supernatural force.² It affects both mind and body, clouding the intellect, loosening the limbs. Radiant with a beauty that stuns the senses, Eros brings the promise of pleasure but more often it is perceived as a mixed blessing, if not an affliction. It burns the soul, sweeps over the lover like a mountain storm, lays him low with sickness, even a madness of spirit, and pierces the bone to the marrow. With a few notable exceptions in the world of the gods, no one is immune to erotic influence, neither beasts nor humans, neither mortals nor immortals. To ignore Eros or to try to

¹ This essay was published in 1996 in Italian, under the title “Eros” in *I Greci: Storia, cultura, arte, società*: vol 1, *Noi e I Greci*, ed. S. Settis, 369–439 (Turin). It appears here in modified form with some omissions and additions and updated references. A shorter version was published in 1999 as “Reflections on Erotic Desire in Archaic and Classical Greece” in *Constructions of the Classical Body*, ed. J. I. Porter, 50–75 (Ann Arbor).

² Needless to say, studies of Eros in ancient Greece continue to proliferate, whether in monographs, collections of essays, sourcebooks, or visual imagery; whether focusing on subjects as varied as gender, emotions, ideology, philosophy, and more. We cannot seem to quit the topic, turning our attention to such issues as virginity, rape, courtesans and prostitutes, corporeality, hermaphroditism, cross-dressing, sex changes, zoophilia-bestiality, medicine, sex objects, and the ever-present preoccupation with pederasty and other same-sex relationships. Queer theory, an approach to literary and cultural study that rejects traditional categories of gender and sexuality, may be the latest addition, but many Greek myths themselves experiment with the non-binary. Some recent more general works I have found enlightening, in varying degrees, include the following: Sanders et al. 2013, Masterson et al. 2015, Skinner 2013, Hubbard 2014, Surtees and Dyer 2020, and Boehringer and Lorenzini 2022.

escape its effects is to invite disaster. Gods are vengeful and punitive more often than providential. They enforce the universal laws of human existence; they claim the rights of nature and necessity. In the case of Eros and Aphrodite, the connection with nature is stronger still because sexual desire is deemed essential for creation, for the reproduction of all living things. Dynamic, mobile, elusive, ever-renewed, erotic energy circulates in all zones of existence. Whether in celebration of or submission to this compulsion, Eros is called a *tyrannos*. His *imperium*, like that of Aphrodite, is the entire cosmos—land, sea, and air. On more than one occasion, the cry goes up that his power is insufficiently acknowledged in comparison to the cults and prestige of the ruling Olympian gods. This is a trope. From the archaic period through the classical and Hellenistic ages and down to the end of antiquity, Eros is a continuing obsession that permeates the cultural fabric in different registers and in different modalities of expression. In myth and cult, in art as in literature, in drama as in philosophy, in the earliest epics as well as in the late romances of the Greco-Roman period, the Greeks never ceased their explorations into the physiology and psychology of desire. Recording endless and varying encounters with the power of Eros through storytelling, dramatic enactments, personal lyrics, visual imagery, and theoretical speculation, this culture has exercised its own power over us, its own tyranny over the Western imagination, even in the face of a current demand for a multiculturalism that would dethrone its so-called privileges.

The insistent preoccupation and the sheer quantity of cultural data might be sufficient in itself to generate and sustain this tyranny. But in its general capacity to represent experience as a convincing form of reality, in its reservoir of powerful archetypal images that lay claim to some privileged kind of truth about human nature, the Greek legacy invokes the prestigious authority of classical antiquity to persuade those who followed of the universal potency (delights along with the dangers) of instinctual life. As models for imitation and elaboration in art and literature, as attestations of deeper psychic impulses or conveyers of mental categories, Greek representations of eros promote (and project) a superior power to express the universal regime, eternal reality, and irreducible mystery of sexual desire. Precisely because this same cultural prestige has established Greece over the centuries as the touchstone of some profound and original wisdom, the Hellenic preoccupation with the identity and operations of eros has served, too, at times as the counterweight to the repressive effects of Western culture and its differently driven systems of religious and political beliefs. In more than one era, the land of the pagan past becomes the site of an imagined libidinal freedom and

truth, whether as a montage of satyrs, maenads, and goat gods playing blissfully in a pastoral setting³ or as a repertory of emotional responses that fuels the discovery and validation of a universal scenario for the development of unconscious psychic life, embodied, for example, in such familiar mythic figures as Oedipus and Narcissus.⁴

Problems and Methods

To return to the Greeks then is never a neutral undertaking, a study of just one culture or period among many others. This principle holds true even today when, in our contemporary climate of research, mystery has yielded to demystification, universals to historical specificities, and the claims of nature are ascribed rather to notions of cultural constructs, social institutions, and discursive practices that change and diversify over time. Indeed, in the current use of anthropological approaches to the general study of the ancient Greek world, no area has been subjected to a greater intensity of focus than the investigation of Eros as a historically and culturally conditioned set of rules, ideas, images, fantasies, norms, and practices. The emphasis now falls on difference rather than on perceived affinities or continuity of influence. The Greeks are not “us”; they are truly “others,” and Eros, above all, can serve as the ultimate proof of the conviction that every culture determines its own variety of meanings for “nature,” its own shifting representations of the human body, its own perceptions of sex and gender, and above all, its own historical “psychology.”

Let me amplify the significance of these observations. As Jeffrey Henderson puts it: “That the same two sexes occur in every society is a matter of biology; that there is always sexuality, however, is a cultural matter. Sexuality is that complex of reactions, interpretations, definitions,

³ As Calame 1999:105–106 observes that “the iconography regarding ithyphallic satyrs [is] appropriate to their semianimal nature.... This leads them into every kind of debauchery: phallic games, sexual harassment, masturbation, exhibitionism, zoophilia, fellatio, and cunnilingus (even with animals!), not to mention—between satyr couples—anal coitus.” On satyrs as the antithesis, often parody, or wish fulfillment of the ordinary Greek male, see also the work of the late François Lissarrague 1990, 2013, and elsewhere.

⁴ In today’s climate in the year 2022 with its rejection of so-called normative categories and its celebration of what has become known as “queerness,” the belated discovery of unusual ancient sexual practices and even beliefs ironically bring to the fore what was always there. No one, in any case, would challenge the power of eros over us, both then and now, but its formulations may differ.

prohibitions, and norms that is created and maintained by a given culture in response to the fact of the two biological sexes.”⁵ Furthermore, once the categories of male and female are taken beyond the simplest anatomical and physiological facts, once it is perceived that these categories are not synonymous with the behaviors associated with each—that is, that masculine and feminine are defined by socially prescribed traits, roles, and obligations and not by biology—then the way is clearer to perceiving the range and extent to which sexual ideology pervades and sustains the larger areas of society. Sexuality is not just an affair between individuals in the private sector. Beyond direct social regulations that govern modes of courtship, as well as sanctioned or unsanctioned sexual unions, rules of marriage, and reproduction, laws of inheritance, initiations into adulthood, or prescribed communal rites that celebrate human sexuality, the erotic domain is available as model, symbol, and metaphor for other disparate forms of social interaction. Through extensions, analogies, and mirrorings of erotic experience, sexuality offers a multivoiced “language” that can be deployed along an entire continuum in all areas of human relations and concerns. More accurately, however construed, it is “one of the languages for defining, describing, interpreting, and hence transacting all manner of other business.”⁶ Erotic expression is therefore deeply implicated in the social, economic, political, and religious institutions of any society. This is certainly the case in ancient Greek culture, with its gendered and sexually active pantheon of divinities, its highly developed structures of symbols and myths, and its general tendency to produce highly codified systems of thought and value.

If the study of sexuality occupies a special place in historical inquiry as the point of intersection between public and private, the social and the psychic, the institutional and the subjective, this same set of conditions must also apply in turn to the conduct of the study itself. Hence, when it comes to mapping the erotic territory of ancient Greece, the new-found emphasis on cultural difference may not be as objective as it might seem at first. Every age inevitably poses the questions appropriate to its own needs and interests. Indeed, if sex, sexuality, and sexual behavior have become legitimate objects of inquiry across all historical periods, the reasons are not far to seek in the social climate of our own times. In our concern for individual freedom of choice and a tolerance for a wide variety of lifestyles in a more permissive society, the bans of censorship have fallen. Liberated from the

⁵ Henderson 1988:1250.

⁶ Halperin et al. 1990:4.

taboos, both verbal and visual, that used to discourage open publicity about such intimate matters, the topic of sexuality has become a prominent part of daily discourse. The search to identify, define, and understand the workings of Eros in a given culture is therefore inevitably conditioned by individual experience and outlook to a much greater extent than any other field of inquiry. Our own status as subjects must come into play, whether consciously or unconsciously. The same kinds of data may be collected and analyzed, but an observer's eye may well be led to emphasize one feature more than another, may be alert to different aspects and details, and, above all, may adopt, modify, or resist a prevailing interpretative grid or style of discourse, depending on one's own position (social, intellectual, sexual, political) in the current heated debates about sex and gender, nature, the body, and society.

Hence, if we turn back to Greek culture, now in the spirit of difference rather than identification, we may find there is more at stake than increasing our fund of knowledge about the ancient world or even contributing to the larger project of composing a general history of sexuality that no longer takes "nature" as its indisputable guide and touchstone of "truth."

Who is speaking for whom and in what voice? An anthropological approach that would report on sexuality within the solidly androcentric bias of ancient society without taking serious account of those hierarchical implications promotes the risk of a discourse that replicates the very terms of the society it aims to explore. Or, in the interest of "objectivity," it may fall into binary thinking to impose a misleading symmetry on the categories of male and female experience (e.g. marriage for women, war for men). On the other hand, it is no accident that some of the major advances in theorizing questions of sexuality and in charting its historical vicissitudes have been due to the less dominant voices in our society—those, in fact, who have been most *defined* by the ruling norms according to their "sexuality" (women and male homosexuals) and those, therefore, most concerned with sexual identity and difference. The gains in our understanding from these points of view are substantial; so are the misapprehensions that may result if the focus is too narrow or the ideological agenda too pervasive. For example, a current "orthodox" line that stresses the categories of "active" and "passive" as central to ancient ideas about sexuality, regardless of gender, encourages certain feminist theorists to press the grievance of female victimhood and oppression over against a more balanced and more complex view of relations between the sexes. That same line inspires gay theorists to underplay differences between the sexes in order to promote a parity between heterosexual and same-sex relations at the cost of undervaluing the role and importance

of the family, procreation, and, I would add, the extensive repertory of male imaginative fantasies. If feminists may be tempted to locate female inferior status in ancient Greece along the spectrum of other patriarchal cultures as a sign of “sameness,” gay theorists will, for their part, stress “otherness.” These remarks are, of course, far too reductive. They are meant only to set the boundary markers of a field which is notable, as might be expected, for the richness of its continuing debates and the wide variety of opinions and approaches.⁷

In larger terms, however, current discussions about sexuality in the Greek world must confront three major lines of inquiry: Freud, Foucault, and feminism(s). While Freud and Foucault may be said to join hands in their male-centered views of the world and the human subject, their divergences are noteworthy and significant: universal psychology vs. contingent historicity, techniques of repression, projection, and sublimation vs. techniques of power, mastery, and knowledge. A feminist outlook intrudes as the third (and perhaps unwelcome) partner to raise the stakes of the game: to destabilize claims made about that erotic being, “woman,” the “other,” to probe further some of the possible explanations for male views of female sexuality, and finally, to explore the tensions, contradictions, and slippages of boundaries that undermine confidence in the comfortable pronouncements of official doctrines, both ancient and modern.

If, when it comes to antiquity, Freud (and his followers, especially Lacan) seem too bounded by modern cultural assumptions about the person and his or her (or their) horizons of expectation for individual choice and emotional fulfillment, the problem of sexuality limited solely to institutional structures and sociological determinants of age, class, gender, and status seems no less unrealistic a set of coordinates through which to consider Greek ideas about eros. There is more to Freud (and psychoanalytic thinking in general) than the Oedipus complex as there is more to Greek definitions of feminine functions than the famous statement of the orator Demosthenes: “We have courtesans to give us pleasure, concubines to attend to our needs, and wives to give us legitimate children” (*Oration* 59.122). Without recourse to a psychological point of reference, how can we do justice to the complexities of Greek representations of eros, the conflicts and anxieties that attend its expression, the proliferation of sexual misadventures in myth and literature?

Foucault, for his part, is certainly not immune to criticism. But his development of the idea that “the uses of pleasure” become central to the project

⁷ See n2 for further studies of eros and sexuality.

of male self-fashioning and his emphasis on the need to integrate erotics into the broader fields of regimen, economics, and philosophy (and vice versa) are both astute and meritorious.⁸ True, he restricts himself to too limited a repertory of prescriptive texts (e.g. Xenophon, the Hippocratic corpus, Plato, and Aristotle) and, although he refers in passing to different and even dissident voices, his single-minded focus, conducted from a purely male point of view, leads at times to some significant errors and distortions. Page duBois rightly objects that Foucault “remains fixed inside the universe defined by Plato, where the single, masculine, rational, and disciplined self is identical with the subject of history. He takes for granted and thus ‘authorizes’ exactly what needs to be explained. Hence his work is a superior example of [those] very prejudices, historical and sexual...” that may and should be exposed to inquiry.⁹ Yet, by comparison to other cultures, anxiety about the status and definition of the masculine self along with a marked concern for strategies of acquiring (and maintaining) power—over others as over oneself—are among the most particular (and insistent) themes of Greek concepts about eros that lead out far beyond Foucault’s particular set of concerns.

This is a society that from Homer on promotes competition between men in war, athletic exploits, political debates, and even artistic production, with the aim of meeting standards of male achievement in a contest that must always be renewed (and hence never satisfied). The male self must put himself at risk because that self is always at risk. He is judged by the degree to which he maintains autonomy, bodily integrity, and defends himself against threats of ridicule, shame, and, most of all, effeminization. The assaults of Eros always compromise the boundaries of that self, who is both willing and unwilling, both subject and object of a desire that is conceived as emanating from a coercive external source, whether in the personified form of Eros or in the irresistible attraction exercised by the beloved. Indeed, a certain paradox inheres in these representations of the psychology/physiology of desire: if phallic aggression also means submission to another’s control, the lover is both active and passive at the same time, in a position of both strength and weakness. According to this norm, desire is not a reciprocal affair not even, it would seem, in its fulfillment.

⁸ See especially, Foucault 1986 and 1988. Foucault himself, it should be noted, is indebted to classical scholars who preceded him. For an excellent critique of Foucault and his philosophical dualism regarding the sexual subject, see most recently, Calame 2022. But in defense of Foucault, see Sissa 2014.

⁹ DuBois 1988:2.

The myth of Narcissus, despite the lateness of our sources, is characteristically Greek in its implications. Refusing the constraints of desire, he is punished by falling in love with his own reflection. The offense and the retribution are warnings to young men that self-love is an impossible dream—but that it is dreamed at all suggests its temptations to the male self who can both experience the intensity of desire and yet remain self-sufficient unto himself. The motif is extended in Socratic teaching in Plato's dialogues, where the goal of a lover is to find in the beloved a reflection wherein he might see himself and transcend that duality, not only in the interests of achieving the true love of Beauty, but in the fantasy of becoming pregnant and giving birth to himself.

Sources and Their Limitations

Despite the abundance of data across the expanse of Greek culture from archaic to late antiquity, the kinds of evidence we have place certain inevitable restrictions on our knowledge. We have virtually no secure means of assessing gaps between theory and practice, between what people said in public and what they did (or thought) in private. We know little beyond the textual and pictorial evidence, most often produced for and by a cultural elite. Even information about courtesans and prostitutes is sadly deficient.¹⁰ Although such evidence as comic obscenity, dream books, folklore, and magic love charms may give us a glimpse into sexual attitudes that include other classes of society, the virtual absence of women's own voices is notable. That absence indeed verifies their muted social roles in a culture of marked asymmetry between male and female roles and respective levels of participation in cultural life. If we "hear" and "see" women, therefore, in the literary and pictorial traditions, we must keep in mind that these are figures, not persons. Their images are filtered through conventions of artistic representation and norms for social behavior. This obvious fact does not mean that we cannot form some idea of the modes of acculturation for women or that we thereby exclude as invalid any perceptions men may have regarding female sexuality. But without access to evidence about women's private lives, their habits, their attitudes, their own "cultures" of expression, we cannot speak

¹⁰ Although subsequently see Faraone and McClure 2006 and Glazebrook and Henry 2011.

with any confidence of how women might have understood their erotic experiences in ways different from and apart from men.¹¹

Sappho is, of course, a notable exception. In a sense, this is an unfortunate historical accident. We neither have access to the whole body of her poetry nor to the precise social conditions of seventh-century Lesbos. The tantalizing fragments that remain suggest an approach to Eros in keeping with essentialist and stereotyped notions about “femininity” in its more romantic, more personalized intensity, reinforced by the idea that the passions of Eros are the source of female creativity. These fragments have also given rise to an entire industry that aims to determine once and for all the nature of her relationships with other women—ranging from schoolmistress to full homoerotic partner, with many variants in between. Even an anthropological perspective that takes the musical training of girls as a preparation for their future lives as wives and mothers cannot overcome the uniqueness of her position¹² and the consequent distortion of her place in both erotic and literary history by modern critics.

Aside from Sappho (and fragments from a few other women poets), then, we mostly know what certain men publicly articulated and took for granted. “Women remain,” in the words of Jeffrey Henderson, “a public myth and a potent social reality.”¹³ More than one text suggests that husbands were suspicious of other women’s potentially corrupting influence over their wives when they are in one another’s company apart from men. Numerous references from the archaic period onward attest that husbands imagine feminine conversation in the privacy of the house as occasions for gossip and unwholesome talking about sex. Since women are credited in any case by their menfolk with a dangerous excess of sexuality that requires strict protocols to contain its potential misuse, the fact of women’s unheard voices on the subject is all the more profound. But this absence from our sources may be precisely the point in a system that tended to equate chastity with silence but also counted on women’s conspiratorial secrecy to veil an unspoken and “unspeakable” truth. We see this complex of ideas expressed comically in Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazousae* where women (that is, male actors dressed as women) bring charges against the tragic poet, Euripides, for having spilled their secrets in his representations of sexually outrageous heroines on the

¹¹ Ancient prose fiction, a genre in Greek literature under the empire, gives voice, at least, to feminine desire, as we will see at the end of this essay.

¹² See the pioneering work of Calame 1977.

¹³ Henderson 1988:1249.

public stage. Euripides slanders respectable women, they claim, with these lurid tales of female misconduct, but their protests are undermined by the comic setting itself, which here as elsewhere delights in its typical stereotypes of women's libidinal excesses.

My intention is not to seek some imaginative reconstruction of women's lost voices as a way of redressing the imbalance in our sources. Quite the opposite. Rather, I would like to use my position as "other" with respect to the dominant male subject to enlarge the perspective by which we view and evaluate Greek sexual attitudes in the formative periods of the archaic age (eighth to sixth centuries BCE) and the classical era of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE (largely represented by Athens), followed by a brief look at the ancient novel, which belongs to a much later age of Greek literature under the empire in which heterosexual eros takes center stage.

If we have grasped the essential "otherness" of this culture in its uses of eros to acculturate and maintain social identities in a civic context, then it may be salutary to resist the idea that the only outcome of imaginative scenarios and erotic discourse is to reinforce prescriptive norms and hierarchical realities.¹⁴ Teleology has its uses, but the end is not the whole story. The route to getting there also counts in assessing the continuing threats to the security of male dominance as well as dreams of increasing it. The distance between social unequals does not only set the rules for their interaction; it also conjures up ideas of resistance, competition, reversal, and subversion by both partners.

Norms and Counternorms

The Greek social system was built on the principle of a divided world, which enforced strong distinctions between the genders, assigning to male and female their defined roles, attributes, spaces, and spheres of influence. Institutionally, eros had its uses in acculturating the young of both sexes to perform their approved functions: boys as future active citizens in public space, girls to be brought under the yoke of matrimony as wives and mothers in the private domain of the house. As a rule, our sources of this period do not emphasize what we would call conjugal love. Aphrodite is a dangerous

¹⁴ Cohen's remarks (1991:201–202) are salutary: "A culture is not a homogeneous unity.... The widely differing attitudes and conflicting norms and practices ... represent the disagreements, contradictions, and anxieties which make up the patterned chaos of a complex culture. They should not be rationalized away."

commodity for women: before marriage, the girl is a vulnerable virgin, who fears unwanted advances; afterwards, as a wife (and later, mother), sexuality is a dangerous temptation.

This insistence on the supposed nature of female sexuality in an ancient Mediterranean culture is one that is not unfamiliar to us in the long history of patriarchal, husband-oriented societies that transfer a woman from her father's house to that of her spouse and enjoin a strict chastity upon her (with its accompanying suspicion of her hypersexuality) in order to be certain of her loyalty and to assure the legitimacy of the paternal line. Her professed inferiority only increases his insecurity, his conviction that women are all too adept in the uses of guile and deception, especially with respect to sexual betrayal. The logic that attributes to women less control over carnal appetites as justification for placing them under masculine control also paradoxically, perhaps, gives women a greater control over men, especially in a culture conditioned by the ethics of honor and shame. The threat that a woman's sexual misconduct will bring shame upon her husband's family is an ideological constraint on her behavior. But it gives her leverage in readjusting the balance of power and encourages her husband to be mindful of her presence and of her rights in fear of her retaliation. Medea may be an anomalous figure—a foreigner, adept in the uses of magic and also a person of divine pedigree—but she claims to speak for the general situation of all Greek wives (to which the female chorus gives its assent), and Jason pays a terrible price for his betrayal of her.

The assertions of male dominance, therefore, are far from secure, not only susceptible to being undermined from within by female deceptiveness and capacity for revenge, but by an open confrontation between male and female interests. More than one myth (and certainly, tragedy) stages a battle between the sexes, and if men inevitably win at the end, they do so not by brute force but by negotiation and compromise. The law of the talion is a highly operative principle in Greek thought and practice. It extends to vengeance in the execution of justice, but it also applies to the principle of compensation (or compromise), which levels out to some extent the potential for unlimited power of the stronger over the weaker and certainly challenges any facile reduction of sexual difference to categories of active and passive.¹⁵

What seems to me to be more distinctive about this Mediterranean culture, however, is the institution of pederasty: the highly stylized erotic

¹⁵ The end of the *Oresteia* is noteworthy in this respect.

relations between men and boys and the emotional investment in the public affirmation of the value of such relationships. While it is true that the most substantial data come to us from a very particular period (late archaic / classical) and in the city of Athens,¹⁶ the persistence of these practices into later periods (although with differing evaluations of its significance and even desirability) suggests a very different attitude about same-sex relations between men and, consequently, a different axis of sexual definition than one based solely on the anatomical differences between male and female.

Whatever uses the institution of pederasty may have had in educating pubescent boys through the stated aims of leading them to emulate the manly virtues of their more mature lovers, the existence of pederasty has a profound effect, not only on relations between male and female, but also on the evaluation of feminine sexuality. It is no accident, I think, that the high anxiety I perceive in Greek attitudes toward female sexuality and indeed toward the female body, along with a striking degree of fear of effeminization, can be linked to, is conditioned by, the alternative (at least, temporarily) of pederasty. It seems logical therefore that only with the waning of this publicly approved system as an integral part of a citizen's life we perceive a concomitant rise in the valuation of conjugal sexuality including affective relations between men and women in the first century CE.

These brief remarks are too brief, of course, to give any satisfactory account of the range of Greek attitudes and behaviors in anthropological terms. Such accounts may be found elsewhere.¹⁷ But with the aim of liberating ourselves from the tyranny of a functionalist perspective that interprets our cultural data as aimed at producing social conformity, let me propose the following mixture of items as a point of departure:

If Eros is called a *tyrannos*—

If erotic desire is experienced as an assault on the self and its boundaries,
 whatever its sensual delights, and its outcome may be figured as fusion or
 fragmentation—

If Eros is a madness, a wound, a disease, a fire—

¹⁶ Sparta is another, even stronger, case in point. As a militaristic state, it required pederasty as an integral part of training young warriors. But in its emphasis on collective life which dictated a different balance between public and private life, including different marriage customs and roles for women, Sparta is sufficiently atypical to warrant a separate discussion.

¹⁷ See, for example, Detienne 1994 and 1977, Dover 1974 (especially 205–216) and 1979, Vernant 1974b, Calame 1977 and 1999, Carson 1985, Borgeaud 1988, Katz 1989, Halperin 1990a, the essays in Halperin et al. 1990, Winkler 1990, Zeitlin 1990b, and Loraux 1993b and 1995. See further the items in n1.

- If erotic protocols favor a relationship between partners unequal in status and age, regardless of the gender of the beloved—
- If therefore courtship is most often represented in the form of pursuit and flight—
- If love is a sport that takes on the languages of the hunt and horse taming in images of net, snare, and trap or those of bit, bridle, and reins—
- If, consequently, erotic discourses elide expressions of reciprocal desire and mutual satisfaction—
- If the idea of “erotic justice” is extortionate, demanding that the beloved return the lover’s desire or else be condemned to suffer the same rejection when it is his or her turn—
- If female sexuality is perceived as excessive and threatening—roasting a man with a fire that brings him to a premature old age—
- If woman is created for man as a punishment, a thievish creature, in return for the theft of fire, the instrument too of definitively dividing men from gods—
- If the blood sacrifice of virgins (Polyxena, Iphigenia) is an important theme—
- If, on the contrary, outraged virgins (Danaids) slay their bridegrooms on their wedding night, contrary to the dictum that men shed blood but women bleed—
- If the love of boys is a significant or compatible alternative in the city-state—
- If Zeus takes Ganymede to Olympus to be his cupbearer where he remains eternally young, pouring out endless streams of precious liquid—
- If, conversely, when the goddess Dawn (Eos) takes the boy Tithonus to her bed, she forgets to procure his exemption from the desiccating effects of age so that he dwindles into a feeble child—
- If Socrates’ novel myth of the birth of Eros makes him the child of Penia (poverty) and Poros (resources), brought into being at the feast in honor of Aphrodite’s birth by his mother’s theft of his father’s substance—
- If this myth is yet another variant on the widespread notion that the female body is figured on the model of excess and lack—
- If in Aristotle’s biological theories, the female provides the matter, the male the form and spirit—
- If the goddess Aphrodite in Hesiod’s account of how the world came to be is born from the semen of the severed phallus belonging to the primordial male god, Ouranos (Heaven), consort of Gaia (Earth)—
- If his drops of blood fall to the earth and produce the Erinyes, female agents of retribution—
- If the mythic imagination invents many other ingenious strategies of reproduction and birth, including Zeus’ well-known obstetrical adventures, which produce Athena from his head and Dionysus from his thigh—
- If in retaliation for the theft of maternal functions, Zeus’ consort, Hera, invokes her female capacity for parthenogenesis and brings forth monsters—

If Ixion can assault Hera but impregnate instead, her cloudlike substitute
 (Nephele)—
 If this union produces the race of lustful hybrid centaurs and earns for Ixion
 the penalty of being fastened to a fiery wheel forever—
 If the appropriate punishment then is to know no respite from the torments of
 desire—
 If erotic pursuit finds only a phantom, an empty dream, an illusion—
 If clouds can be impregnated—
 If, in some versions, the real Helen never went to Troy but only an *eidolon*—
 If finally, Eros and Thanatos are not strangers to one another—

Admittedly, this allusive list is both highly selective and purposefully mixed. I chose this assortment of items to focus our questioning on a complex of erotic attitudes and fantasies that exceed a purely social explanation and immeasurably darken the pleasures of desire. As Patricia Storace observes, “The source of sexual tension in ancient Greek myth is not so much the drive to the ecstasy of consummation, as uncertainty whether either or both partners will survive the sexual act.”¹⁸ This strategy, it may rightly be objected, is too partial. It takes the bitter and forgets the sweet. True, desire is a tempestuous storm that sweeps over the helpless lover; true, Boreas, the storm wind from the north, snatches off maidens it desires. But where are the Zephyrs, the gentle breezes? Where are the gardens, the meadows, the perfumed scents of fruit and flowers? Where is the golden sheen of sexual allure, the persuasive charms of *charis* (grace) that emanate from the object of desire? Where are the companions of Aphrodite—*Pothos* (longing), *Himeros* (desire), *Oaristys* (love talk), and *Erôs*—to compensate for her negative associations with *Apatê* (Deceit) and *Dolos* (trickery)? Above all, where is beauty?¹⁹ Socrates, in the myth mentioned above, invokes the occasion of Eros’ conception at the celebration of Aphrodite’s birth to claim this as the reason why Eros is “a lover of beauty, because Aphrodite herself is especially beautiful.” More generally, where are the aesthetics of eros that strikes a subject with amazement at the sight of the beautiful and links this enchantment (*thelxis*) with the charms of poetry, music, and art?

All these elements are indeed present in many representations of and allusions to the gentler pleasures of eros in both literary and iconographic sources. The lover may speak wittily of a playful Eros in lyric poetry; vase paintings may show an Aphrodite flanked by the personified figures of

¹⁸ Storace 1996.

¹⁹ See now Konstan 2014:62–95 on the usual associations between *kallos* (beauty) and *erôs*.

Himeros (desire) and *Pothos* (longing), while choral song may portray her as a tender and gentle influence in the company of the Muses. But like Pandora, created by Hephaestus at Zeus' behest in retaliation for Prometheus' theft of fire in Hesiod's two texts (*Theogony* and *Works and Days*), the beauty of sexual allure also proves more often to be a snare and delusion rather than an unmixed joy. The lovely shape that is the maiden who resembles the immortal goddesses and is adorned with all the shining garments and crown of a bride is designed to be a "bane (*pêma*) to mortal men." Aphrodite is bidden to pour grace (*charis*) over her head but also adds "cruel longing and cares that weary the limbs." To complete her person, Hermes endows her with a shameless (bitchy) mind and a thievish nature. So, while the Graces (*Charites*) and Persuasion (*Peithô*) give her golden necklaces and the Hours (*Hôrai*) crown her with spring flowers, Pandora (and through her the pleasures of eros) is named from the outset as a treacherous gift given by the gods to men's sorrow and ruin (*Works and Days* 59–82), a seductive creature who will steal man's substance and dry him up before his time (*Works and Days* 705).

If I have, however, stressed the negative aspects of eros as threatening to the boundaries of the self, both in sex and reproduction, was it always this way? Or should we accept a commonly held view that ascribes to Homer a relatively unproblematic view of heterosexuality ("it is the way of the world for a man to enjoy sex with a woman," *Iliad* 9.276) by contrast to the "sexually repressive society of late archaic and early democratic Athens, with its segregation of women and strict citizenship laws," as Jeffrey Henderson sensibly suggests?²⁰ The answer is yes and no, depending on the context and the attitude in question. Certainly, explicit pederastic or sexual relations of peers are absent from Homeric epic, and it is only later authors who ascribe such a bond to the comradely love between Achilles and Patroclus on the battlefield at Troy. The idea that a warrior, whether lover or beloved, would fight more bravely in the presence of the other and suffer increased shame if he did not do so, as particularly in the Spartan military system, for all its apparently ancient, even tribal aspects, is not openly promoted and extolled until a much later period.²¹

On the other hand, there is more to say about the subsequent emphasis on eros than what Henderson perceives as the compensatory "exaltation and

²⁰ Henderson 1988:1256.

²¹ One might also point to pseudo-Lucian *Erôtes* (Amores) 7, which treats the relationship between Orestes and Pylades as both friends and lovers.

exaggeration of sexuality” on public festive occasions, such as celebrations of Dionysus with expressions of comic obscenity and men costumed as phallic satyrs. These same repressive constraints, he argues, also “made sexuality a central topic of ethical debate, notably in the Socratic ‘schools’; and prized dramas that portrayed individuals ruined by (tragedy) or evading (comedy) ideal norms of kinship, citizenship, the complementary natures of *polis* and *oikos*, and the behaviors assigned to men and women.”²² To these cultural products we may also add the explicit sexual iconography of vase paintings in the late archaic period and the later proliferation of Eros and the figure of Aphrodite in scenes depicting private life.²³ But if there is no doubt of the increasing preoccupation with the nature of eros and with sexual expression in the city-state by comparison to the archaic age, Henderson’s hypothesis also seems far too limited to account for the differences he notes. His model of inhibition and restraint is more suited to festive comedy than to the rest of the data in which eros figures but is put at the service of different causes, such as conflict in the family, unwanted sexual advances, or uneasy passage to adulthood. Chief among these larger issues seems to be a marked preoccupation with the status of the individual in relation to society that manifests itself in many spheres of life, including the conduct of eros which contributes in no small part to the project and problems of self-definition in a newer era.

A Homeric Illusion?

In any case, despite the substantial differences between these later developments in a civic context and what we may infer of the aristocratic society that forms the background of Homeric epic, we should not overlook the marked continuities in erotic attitudes. Indeed, if we consider the matter more closely, we will see that the typical anxieties about sexuality and its effects on the self are already expressed in both epics, whose plots are based on the fact (Helen) or possibility (Penelope) of a wife’s infidelity. For all the conjugal ideals promoted by the *Odyssey*, the specter of Clytemnestra, who killed her husband on his return, casts a long shadow over all women, including Penelope (24.192–202), and, even more, female eroticism poses obstacles to Odysseus’ return with bodily threats of detention, unmanning,

²² Henderson 1988:1256.

²³ For a brief overview of erotic iconography and its various themes and developments, see Calame 1999:65–88. In the chapter, “The Pragmatics of Erotic Iconography.” See also, among others, Vout 2013.

or engulfment (Circe, Calypso).²⁴ On the other hand, the motif of competition over women is repeated as the initial motivation for the entire action of the *Iliad* in the conflict between Agamemnon and Achilles. To assert his kingly position in the Greek camp, Agamemnon takes the woman allotted to Achilles as his share of booty in compensation for the loss of his own prize, who by Apollo's orders must be returned to her priestly father. This display of superior royal rank instigates Achilles' anger over the insult to his superior heroic status, and the rest, as we know, follows.

A second source of continuity with the archaic age is one that engages sacred and not just social concerns in a system of beliefs that ascribes erotic power to divinity. Hence, throughout antiquity, in mythic, mystic, and psychological terms, questions about an individual's status as a creature of erotic desire also entail the larger metaphysical questions of the lines that divide mortals from immortals and are nowhere more evident than in the fact that members of both categories are sexual beings, who may even couple with one another.

The Power of Aphrodite

Let us now pay closer attention to some representative texts from different periods and genres of literature: epic, hymn, tragedy, philosophy, and romance. For the archaic and the classical eras, I first take the figure of Aphrodite as a guiding thread before turning to Eros in the last two works. Eros and Aphrodite may be used interchangeably to refer to sexuality, sexual desire, and sexual pleasure, either singly or together. If Eros, however, may be more accurately limited to the instinct of amorous desire, Aphrodite is engaged in all the activities that lead from sexual appeal to the performance of sexual acts. Erotic allure is a "gift" of Aphrodite; her "works" are the consummation of desire. *Ta aphrodisia* (things of Aphrodite) cover the entire erotic spectrum of sexual behaviors. While the status of Eros fluctuates according to theogonic, philosophical, or mystic traditions as to whether he is the oldest or youngest of the gods or both at the same time, he is more usually depicted as subordinate to the goddess. He is sometimes her attendant, sometimes her child. In a gendered system of values, it matters that one is female and the other male; it matters too that the female is dominant over the male. As an acknowledged member of the Greek pantheon of

²⁴ To say nothing of such feminine threats from the sea (Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis)

gods, Aphrodite is entitled to the full range of privileges accorded to divine rank; like other gods, she wields dangerous power, requiring honor and worship and punishing affronts or challenges to her influence. Unlike them, however, she also operates in the world of the gods, where sexuality represents male potency but also, paradoxically, a limitation in having to yield to the constraints of erotic desire. Aphrodite's influence over all domains of existence attests to the cosmic and universal force of eros. But if desire is configured as an irresistible force that acts on the body and soul of the lover, its embodiment in a female figure intensifies the ambivalence that surrounds sexuality from the devious paths of seduction to the dynamics of actual performance.

This ambivalence that, at its limit, may be configured as a political struggle between the sexes is best represented in the example of Zeus himself, the chief divinity, "father of gods and men" (Hesiod *Theogony* 45, 453, etc.) for whom susceptibility to erotic desire offers a challenge to his authority and his claims to dominance. On the one hand, his notorious sexual appetite is proof of a super-virility, which allies the sign of the phallus with political and cosmic power, symbolized by the scepter and thunderbolt, and his pursuit and conquest of female partners may be added to his claims of mastery over others. Yet, as an easy prey to erotic seduction, Zeus, in turn can be mastered by the imperious demands of the flesh that "takes away one's wits" through deceptive feminine wiles.²⁵

We will look first briefly at two examples from the archaic age in epic (*Iliad* 14) and cultic hymn (the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*). Both involve the actions of Aphrodite in the divine milieu and set important paradigms about the psychology and enactment of sexual desire. Then, we turn to two influential genres of the classical period in Athens: tragedy (Euripides' *Hippolytus*) and philosophy (Plato's *Symposium*). Both texts exemplify the effects of eros in the human world, albeit with vastly different outcomes. Finally, we will take a brief look at a scene from one of the prose romances (Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*) to take the measure of the drastic changes regarding Eros and his overpowering influence in the expanded world of later antiquity under the Roman Empire.

²⁵ E.g., "Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite," 36.

through his vigilant eye and deliberate counsels, the challenge represented by erotic surrender assumes larger, more cosmic dimensions.

Hymn: The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*

The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* directly confronts this dilemma of hierarchical status. It recounts Zeus' plan to assert his superior power over the goddess by subjecting her to the same desire she has inflicted on others but from which, until now, she herself has been exempt. As a poem ostensibly designed to honor Aphrodite and, like other hymns to the individual gods, to celebrate and define her spheres of power and modes of her intervention in the world, the curious ambiguity that results from the initial premise of the plot subverts the confident opposition between praise and blame, between triumph and defeat.²⁶ In the process of both exalting and diminishing the power of Aphrodite, the hymn offers us the most brilliant and most subtle exploration of the quandaries and conflicts of Greek erotic psychology.

The most common term for sexual intercourse is *mixis*, the mingling of two partners (or their seeds) in the act of love. This is not a neutral concept in a culture that puts such a high value on the integrity of the individual body and is so preoccupied with defining and maintaining boundaries between different domains. One such boundary is the line that divides male from female. A more pervasive principle that organizes the entire cosmos is the line that divides beast from humans and humans from gods. Sexual desire not only induces *mixis* between male and female within these three separate species. It operates, too, as a force that crosses boundaries in allowing gods to mate with mortals, whether in anthropomorphic form or other non-human disguises. While in other contexts the mixing of human and divine seed accounts for aristocratic pedigrees and political claims to hegemony, in this hymn that capacity is construed by Zeus as a threatening transgression—of hierarchy, propriety, and of male self-esteem. The purpose of the hymn may be to reassert these boundaries at the end by dividing the world of eternity from the world of aging mortality. But in questioning the puzzling nature of the relationship between gods and mortals by means of the sexuality they share, the poem also reveals the degree to which the divinization of erotic desire inevitably mixes with the humanizing of the divine. Ontological

²⁶ For further details, see Bergren 1989.

certainty in an anthropomorphic concept of divinity is never quite as stable as official belief would claim.

The opening of the hymn declares the universal *imperium* of the goddess over all living creatures in all domains of existence—sky, land, and sea. It will culminate with the dictum that no one, “neither blessed god nor earthly mortal, has ever escaped Aphrodite.” The triumphant proof of this principle, the pinnacle of praise for the goddess’s power, is her power over Zeus:

She even led astray the mind of Zeus who delights in thunder
and who is the greatest and has the highest honor.
Even his wise mind she tricks when she wills it
and easily mates him with mortal women,
making him forget Hera, his revered wife. (36–40)

The sexuality of the gods may later become a theological problem. Here it is framed as an internal struggle for power in the divine pantheon. Aphrodite has challenged Zeus’ hegemony, and her victim retaliates in kind. He will “place sweet longing in Aphrodite’s heart to mate with a mortal man” (45–46). Aphrodite had flouted all the social rules. She not only promotes erotic mismatches between partners of unequal rank, but what is worse, she encourages adultery. Moreover, she has added insult to injury by advertising these shameful indiscretions in order to boast of her exploits, “how she had joined in love gods to mortal women, who bore mortal sons to the deathless gods and of how she had paired goddesses with mortal men” (48–52). The phrasing implies that it is only the gods and not the goddesses who, mating with mortals, leave behind tangible (and permanent) signs of their impropriety in the offspring they sire, leaving the rest of the hymn to repair the imbalance in the retribution that Zeus’ plan will shortly visit on Aphrodite herself.

Now it is Aphrodite’s turn to undergo the same indignity she had formerly visited upon the gods and to be compelled to acknowledge that mortifying fact. Rising from Anchises’ bed, she tells him that she has incurred shame among the gods because of him. Until now they feared her scheming wiles and the arrogant disclosure of her exploits. Now others will know that she too was driven out of her mind with desire for a mortal, and if that were not enough, she is pregnant too. This at least is the embarrassing secret she can keep, unless, that is, Anchises is less discreet. “If you reveal the name of the child’s mother,” she declares, and “boast with foolish heart to have mingled in sex with Aphrodite, an angry Zeus will smite you with a smoking thunderbolt” (281–289). In this reversal of the balance of power, males now have

the upper hand—from both sides. Her human lover may betray her secret; she is obliged to invoke Zeus' power to protect her honor.

It has been suggested that Aphrodite's defeat spells the end of these embarrassing liaisons between gods and mortals. Henceforth, so the argument goes, she will continue to instigate desire, but only among those of the same kind. The text makes no such overt claims. The full range of sexuality still belongs to Aphrodite; it can erupt at any time. But even if gods continue to mate with mortals, at least the scandal of publicity will be avoided. What the goddess has lost, it seems, now that she too has a secret to hide, is the right to self-praise, the pride she has shown in celebrating the success of her wiles. Yet ironically the secret will be—must be—told. This is the task of the poet-worshiper, who in relating the scandal of Aphrodite's humiliating defeat rejects the demand for secrecy by the very hymnic requirement to voice his praise of her.

If the work is structured as a hymn in acclaim of the goddess's erotic power which Zeus both appropriates and turns against her on the divine level, the meeting between Aphrodite and her mortal lover exemplifies her power over men. The poem, as Ann Bergren points out, "attempts to resolve the tension between a cosmos controlled by Aphrodite and one controlled by Zeus into a stable hierarchy in which immortal males 'tame' the principle of sexuality as an immortal female, who herself 'tames' the mortal male."²⁷ But even so, matters are not so simple. There is a further tension in Aphrodite's status as both female and goddess, which casts the problem of mortal and immortal into another light. Male gods may ravish their mortal women in disguise—a cloud, a shower of golden rain, the form of a satyr, a swan—or even in person. A female divinity, however, cannot simply enforce her desire. The protocols of courtship require that the other, the male, desire her. For a female, to be desirable means to be a young and beautiful maiden on the threshold of marriage, a girl not yet experienced in sex. She is desired because at that moment she partakes in the "gifts of Aphrodite," bestowed upon her by the goddess.

In the rhetoric of sexual encounter, the glamour that surrounds a lovely mortal derives from the momentary radiance of a divine *élan* that makes her "like to the gods." This is the standard compliment to human beauty, which strikes the beholder with the force of a divine epiphany. After lovemaking, Aphrodite will indeed reveal her identity to Anchises as a true manifestation of divinity. But this fact only acknowledges the further deceptiveness of her

²⁷ Bergren 1989:7.

seductive wiles, since she deceives him at first by denying her divinity in order to allay his fears (“I am surely no goddess: why do you liken me to the immortals?” 109), representing herself as a nubile maiden who is looking for matrimony and a respectable status in the world of human social relations, based on her fine lineage and her family’s resources (110–141). The confusion, however, implies that if beautiful mortals may look like goddesses, beautiful goddesses may look like mortals. In Bergren’s reading, this hesitation between the two alternatives is epistemological in nature. “How to tell the truth from an imitation of the truth?” The answer is never clear, she continues, since we know from Hesiod’s *Theogony* that the first woman, Pandora, was fashioned as a virgin bride, with “a face like to the immortal goddesses” (Hesiod *Works and Days* 59) created at Zeus’ orders as a deceptive gift to mortals in return for Prometheus’ theft of fire.²⁸

Yet this question of imitation is not limited to the female form. When Zeus places desire in Aphrodite’s heart for the handsome Anchises, we are told that the young man too “resembles an immortal in his body.” The goddess sees him and falls in love, ensnared both by Zeus’ will and by Anchises’ godlike form. Physical beauty is an attribute that in the case of both sexes owes its ultimate referent to models of divine permanence and perfection. The result is that in this situation of planned *mésalliance* between gods and mortals, the literal and figurative properties of language both coincide and diverge to reflect on the more general rhetoric of courtship and the divine nature of eros.

These brief remarks do not do justice to the complex circularity of this text and its paradoxical contradictions, particularly with regard to the unexplained “logic” that allows Zeus to instigate sexual desire in the first place. I limit myself, however, to two further reflections. By his tactics, Zeus restores the balance of power between the sexes in the cosmic hierarchy. He does so by placing Aphrodite in the same position as she had previously put the male gods. Yet the retaliation cannot be exact. Males inseminate, females procreate. Male gods leave their progeny behind; so does Aphrodite, when she leaves the child (Aeneas), a mortal, for others to rear. But the fact that she is subject to pregnancy and childbearing already attests to a more fundamental, irreducible difference between the genders. We may discern further differences in assessing the significance of the two myths about other Trojan youths that Aphrodite tells Anchises, once she has revealed her divinity. The first is the myth of Ganymede and Zeus:

²⁸ Bergren 1989:2; cf. 11–13.

Wise Zeus abducted fair-haired Ganymede
 for his beauty, to be among the immortals
 and pour wine for the gods in the house of Zeus,
 a marvel to look upon, honored by all the gods. (202–205)

The following story that she relates to Anchises is how “Eos abducted Tithonus, one of your own race, who resembled the immortals.” She had gone to Zeus to ask him to make her lover immortal and live forever with her. He granted her wish, but in her foolishness, she forgot to ask that her lover remain eternally young. Tithonus took his delight in the goddess until gradually he started to age, and when she ceased to desire him, she still kept him, fed him, and put him away in a closed chamber, where “his voice flows endlessly and there is no strength” (218–238).

The male god has the power to bestow immortality; the female does not.²⁹ She seems not to be as theologically adept as he. She neglected to consider that divinity consists in two prerequisites: to be both “ageless *and* deathless forever” (ἄθάνατος καὶ ἀγήρω).³⁰ A second difference between the two stories is a spatial one, pertaining both to geographical location and to dimensions of public and private zones. When Zeus abducts the boy, he takes him to the heights of Olympus, seat of the blessed gods, to serve them and to enjoy their public admiration amidst the joys of the banquet. She, on the other hand, takes her lover into the privacy of her bedroom which is located in a distant place, by the stream of Oceanus at the ends of the earth.

What may be implied by these different outcomes? In the first place, why is the beloved in each case a male? The simple answer to this question lies in Aphrodite’s motive for telling these stories to Anchises as the reason why she cannot promise *him* the same immortality. But the difference in status behind Ganymede and Tithonus depends on the distinction between heterosexual and homosexual eros. The latter, by necessity, cannot entail the further process of procreation and hence is exempt from the mortal sequence of birth, aging, and death. The contrast may be framed, as here, as one between the wet and the dry. Ganymede, the cupbearer, pours out endless streams of liquid, an inexhaustible supply of male substance.³¹ By contrast,

²⁹ Calypso, yielding to Zeus’ command to release Odysseus, complains of the same imbalance (*Odyssey* 5.118–139) and although she promises to make Odysseus “ageless and deathless forever,” (135–136), it is an offer that at any rate he refuses.

³⁰ A common phrase. See e.g. Homer *Iliad* 8.359 and *Odyssey* 5.192.

³¹ On the equation between the “flowing stream of wine” and “the flood of passion” which Zeus, as the lover of Ganymede, pours in upon the lover, as Plato says, see *Phaedrus* 255c. The name

Tithonus shrivels as he ages, possessing nothing but the “endless flowing of a shrill, clear voice” and reduced finally, as other versions tell us, to a chirping dry cicada.³² All Aphrodite can promise Anchises is that he will not undergo the unhappy fate of poor Tithonus, who lives forever but in a diminished state of eternal dependency on a female nurturer, an outcome whose logic perhaps accords with his initial role as the sexual plaything of a woman. The point of both tales is to reassure Anchises that sex with a goddess will not unman him and that his line will continue. “You shall have a dear son who will rule among the Trojans, and to his offspring children shall always be born” (196–197). She knows because she now carries his child. Sexuality and fertility go together, despite the incongruity of a female eroticism mixed with maternity and the shame that now covers her in the eyes of the immortal gods.

Her reassurance that his sexual contact with her will not unman him, however, remains only a conditional promise. His manhood depends on his keeping her secret. Later tradition suggests that he did not (and indeed the very recital of the poem already reveals it), relating that he was indeed struck by Zeus’ thunderbolt or was then either paralyzed or blinded. The evidence is vague, but the threat that Aphrodite has the power to deprive a male of his manhood recalls not only the generalized fear that feminine sexuality is dangerous to the male, but also the best-known version of how she was born. Elsewhere, Zeus’ efforts to tame the power of Aphrodite and to bring her under his control results in a genealogy that makes her the daughter of Zeus and Dione (whose name is simply a biform of Zeus’ name [Dios]). The first myth, however, known to us from Hesiod’s *Theogony*, records her birth from the semen of the severed phallus of Ouranos, when Cronos castrated him, in obedience to the wishes of his mother, Gaia. On the one hand, Ouranos (or at least, his generative part) initiates the first challenge to female fecundity and her capacity for parthenogenetic birth. On the other hand, the price is the loss of his virility: he can no longer enjoy sexual relations and his procreational function is at an end.

Ganymede can be read to mean “glistening genitals.” Aphrodite’s epithet, *philomeidēs*, could with the alteration of epsilon to iota (*philomēdēs*) can be read as “genital loving.”

³² Now that Tithonus has no more vital juices, he is no longer useful for “irrigating” the female. In Greek medical theory, the male is generally associated with the hot and the dry, e.g. the excellent discussion of Hanson 1992, with further bibliography. My point in assigning the “wet” to the male in Ganymede and the “dry” to the female in Tithonus is one between eternal youth and aging, between the vital juices of wine (and semen) as the elixir of life and the desiccation of old age (and dry bones in death).

Aphrodite's origins from male semen may be interpreted in a number of ways. The separation of the primordial couple, Earth and Sky, was essential if their children, still hidden in the depths of the mother, were to see the light of day. It was Ouranos' refusal of this necessity that occasioned Gaia's intrigue against him. Aphrodite is born at this moment of disjunction as the principle of desire that henceforth is needed to rejoin male and female in the act of sex. But that this principle of sexual union is female and born only from a prior act of male castration is matched by Aphrodite's power, as Anchises fears, to duplicate the circumstances of her birth in other males, reversing upon them the very action that resulted in her creation.

The plot of the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* turns on the enigmatic paradox of a sexuality that instigates desire in others without itself succumbing to that same desire. If sexuality is embodied in a beautiful female, as here, this riddle is framed as a threat to male dominance, and the problem is solved by a simple application of the law of reversal: "subdue" the one who "subdues" you; use the same means she has used and produce the same reaction in her.

A more logical alignment of woman and goddess portrays Aphrodite as herself a partner in an adulterous triangle. Married off to the ugly lame artisan god, Hephaestus, she consorts instead secretly with that virile specimen of manhood who is Ares, the god of war. This triangle is conceptually profound. Love and war are opposites. When they join, they create a daughter Harmonia as the reification of the very principle of a union of contraries.³³ They also produce Fear (*Phobos*) and Terror (*Deimos*), a result that maintains their fundamental incompatibility—or perhaps is another way of depicting the awesome two-sidedness of sexual mixing. At the same time, Hephaestus matches with Aphrodite: both a pair of contrivers, each endowed with cunning skill, and both associated with fire: the fire of the forge, the fire of sexuality. Aphrodite indeed is rightfully associated with both males, but in accounting for her own desire, the relationship can only be configured as a triangle of a cheating wife, a handsome lover, and an ugly cuckolded husband.

In the celebrated song of the bard in the *Odyssey* (8.266–366), Hephaestus catches the errant couple in bed together and by the finely woven golden net he has suspended invisibly above them in advance, he entraps them and exhibits them in the shame of their locked embrace to all the gods for their amused laughter. Whether Aphrodite consorts with mortals, as in the hymn, or with gods, as in the *Odyssey*, the final outcome is the same: humiliation of

³³ Scholia on Homer *Iliad* B, 494, 80, 43 ed. Bekker, as cited in Hellanicus' *Boeotica*.

the goddess in public exposure and the charge of fomenting or embodying the disruptive threat of an illicit sexuality that shames the male partners in turn. At the same time the two accounts differ in representing Aphrodite herself as impersonating a virgin bride in the hymn, while in the epic she plays true to her role as an adulterous wife. Hera, we may recall, in her deception of Zeus in the *Iliad*, uses the magical breastband of Aphrodite to arouse a desire, whose intensity can only be measured by comparison to the thrill of the first time. Hera's feigned reticence that is designed to arouse Zeus all the more is the proper demeanor assigned to the uninitiated bride to be brought under the yoke of matrimony. Once initiated, however, the wife's sexuality continually falls under suspicion of leading her to desire another man, not her own. Aphrodite intervenes at the start of a marriage in endowing the bride with her own attributes of sexual allure; when she intervenes again, once the bride has become a mother-wife, it is to promote a dangerous and illicit compulsion that, in the world of mortals, leads to destructive, tragic results. This is the theme, in fact, that enters tragic plots in the fifth-century theater and that through dramatic enactment both verifies and transcends the archaic models of eros and conceptualizations of desire to turn its catalytic effect on the more general dynamics of social relations.

Tragedy: Euripides' *Hippolytus*

Euripides, the third and last of the great tragic poets, was notorious, even in his own day, for his interest in erotically charged plots.³⁴ The scandal and censure that in some instances followed his productions suggest a response to a serious breach of propriety in public discourse. Euripides' innovation was to use the resources of the theater of Dionysus to bring Eros out of hiding, no longer protected by high-flown language and rich metaphorical innuendo, but openly expressed by realistic characters and made into an obsessive focus of interest. Comedy, the companion genre of tragedy, had the ritual privilege in the same period of airing men's fantasies of women's imagined fondness for overindulgence in sex and wine. Obscenity and the breaking of *all* repressive taboos on speaking of bodily appetites and functions were integral, even required, ingredients of comic license, where the carnival atmosphere served, it is thought, as a stimulation to the fertility

³⁴ Aristophanes is our best contemporary witness (especially in the *Thesmophoriazousae* and the *Frogs*) to the scandal of Euripides' overly realistic portrayal of "bad" women.

control his steeds, who now revert to their wild state. The young man who had wished to remain alone and aloof in the untouched meadow of Artemis has, in his encounter with Phaedra, been entangled in the complexities of a plot that leaves him entangled in the reins of the horses which he had raised with his own hands and who have now turned against him. The law of the father is upheld and Hippolytus' pride in those virtues of self-mastery and self-control (*sôphrosynê*) has been wrecked in the wreckage of the chariot.

These signs enact the failure of Hippolytus' initiation into adulthood as the failure to reach sexual maturity. He will never be a bridegroom, bringing a wife under the "yoke" of matrimony. But he is also a failed bride. In the desire to remain an untouched virgin all his life, Hippolytus allies himself with Artemis, imitating the role of the reluctant maiden, who, like the archetypal Persephone, will be snatched by *Hades* (Death) while plucking flowers in the meadow. He was always the secret double of the female. Brought back onstage in physical pain on the point of death, Hippolytus' broken body now imitates the condition of the violated virginal body. Now too he can "share in Phaedra's disease," as she had predicted, matching his suffering to hers at the beginning of the play in symptoms that parody those of the adult woman, in both lovesickness and childbirth.

The goddess Artemis is already there, however. She came first to inform Theseus of the truth. Aphrodite was the cause and the innocent Phaedra was both her victim and later her agent of Hippolytus' doom. She comes too to restore Hippolytus' virtue and to take her leave of her devoted worshiper: she sees him, he hears her voice. Her last act is to reconcile father and son, whose nobility of soul, now at the moment of death, has effaced his bastard status in his father's eyes. Nevertheless, Aphrodite has triumphed. All, even the dying Hippolytus, now acknowledge her power, a power that in this play opens out to include all human relations, in both love and hate, both rage and forgiveness. And it leads the woman, divided in herself, to ponder the epistemological and ethical problems of life that escape full understanding.

Philosophy: Plato's *Symposium*

In the course of Phaedra's anguished remarks in the *Hippolytus* as she reveals the steps she had taken to repress her desire, she says:

Many a time in night's long empty spaces
I have pondered on the causes of a life's shipwreck.
I think that our lives are worse than the mind's quality

would warrant. There are many who know virtue.
 We know the good, we apprehend it clearly.
 But we can't bring it to fulfillment. (375–381)

Critics like to read this passage as controverting Socrates' famous dictum that knowledge is the guarantee of virtue. Eros is a good test case, and Plato rises to meet the challenge in his dialogue, the *Symposium*, which is entirely devoted to the philosophical discussion of Eros. I turn to this text, not because I piously view it as the culminating achievement of the classical period with respect to ideas about Eros. Quite the contrary. I choose it because its ideological agenda is so transparent and because its seductive influence has been so profound on later Western thought, continuing even today, especially in recall of its two most famous myths.

The setting is a symposium in honor of the tragic poet Agathon, who has just won first prize in the dramatic contest. Six friends are present, including Socrates, the philosopher, and Aristophanes, the comic poet. The ostensible program is the decision to use the occasion to honor Eros, whose praises, it is claimed, have been neglected by comparison to other gods. Each will deliver a speech in turn, culminating with Socrates. The underlying idea is another contest, this time, between tragedy, comedy, and philosophy, which Socrates, of course, wins, both because of his crowning discourse and because he outlasts both poets by remaining awake all night while they drift finally into sleep.

This is a men's party and Eros is a male god. Aphrodite makes only brief appearances, mainly in her role as mother of Eros. Not surprisingly, every speaker seems to create an Eros in his own image. Broadly speaking, the speeches follow a dialectical sequence of ascending order from lower to higher, from physical to ethical, from body to mind, although Eros is invested with moral power from the start. Yet, while each discourse seems to be superseded by the next one in an upward progression, each presents a different facet of the god's power and all contribute elements that are woven into the texture of the entire dialogue. Taken together, they comprise a compendium of theoretical speculations about the nature and operations of Eros that must have been current in Plato's day and culminate in the novelty of Socrates' great speech. Each discourse deserves extensive analysis, as does its place in the entire series. This is a task beyond the scope of this chapter. I note only in passing that the same uncertainties we have seen throughout concerning the nature, location, and effects of Eros—whether in the lover, the beloved, or somewhere in between—reoccur in the course of the dialogue

in the different views of Eros' identity. I will focus, however, on a few significant aspects, taking the woman's part as one excluded from the banquet—with the exception of the priestess, Diotima ("honored of Zeus"), whom Socrates claims as his teacher and the author of his discourse. Noteworthy is the reliance on mythic authority, particularly in the case of origins, as the traditional mode of accounting for essence and function. Whether revisions of old myths or introductions of new ones, the hierarchies of value concerning male and female bodies, the reproduction of children, and the connection of sexuality with divinity are quite clear. Plato's mythmaking is useful to consider in the light of our previous analyses and offers a fitting coda to our venture into the mysterious domains of Aphrodite and Eros in classical Athens.³⁸

The centerpiece of the dialogue is Aristophanes' famous contribution to the erotic discourse, as the dialogue turns first to the comic poet, then the tragic one, and finally the philosopher. The myth he tells about Eros shifts to a story about human origins, which for all its novelty, is a clever version of a creation myth in which original unity yields to an enforced separation. Long ago, there were three kinds of human beings, not two as now, male and female. The third, a combination of the two, survives only in name as an androgyne; today it is a term of reproach. These creatures were spherical beings, with two faces, two sets of hands and feet, two sets of genitals, but with one face (and four ears). Their mode of locomotion was circular and hence emboldened by their strength and power, they behaved badly, going so far as to make an assault on the gods. Zeus devises a plan. He cuts them in half. But in yearning for the other half, they clung to one another and "would die from hunger and general lack of activity, because they would not do anything apart from one another" (191b). To ensure human survival, Zeus refines his anatomical scheme. "The sex organs used to be outside and they cast seed and made children, not in one another, but in the ground, like cicadas." Now Zeus moves the genitals around to the front, thus inventing interior reproduction, by the man in the woman. In this way, "a man embracing a woman would cast his seed and they would have children." As for males and other males, "they would at least have the satisfaction of intercourse" and could then return to their daily affairs. And so, Aristophanes explains, "this is the source of our desire to love each other. Eros is born into every human being; it calls back the halves of our original

³⁸ For reasons of space, I omit discussion of the speeches of Phaedrus, Pausanias, Erysichamus, and Agathon.

nature together; it tries to make one out of two and heal the wound of human nature" (191b–d).

The comic poet's myth lays the foundation for a romantic ideology of Eros. Ordained by both divinity and biology, our quest for Eros can only be fulfilled in an instant recognition of that other "half," without whom we can never be complete. This is a marvelous fantasy. It is difficult to relinquish. We certainly have not abandoned it, even in our own day. A second feature of this tale is even closer to our current debates, with important social and political implications, the myth declares that sexual orientation is assigned by nature and not by culture. Innate to our very genetic being, our preferences for heterosexual or same-sex partners are equally distributed and equally valid. Finally, in our quest for parity between the sexes, the figure of Aristophanes' androgyne seems to provide a unified ideal of humankind, with no hierarchical division between the sexes.

Closer inspection of this myth yields very different results. It turns out that the descendants of the original androgyne, whether men or women, are lecherous by nature, each kind chasing immoderately after the other. A single sentence is devoted to females who love other females. The rest is devoted to the superior virtues of pederasty. The best boys embrace men and thereby give proof that "they are bold and brave, and masculine, and tend to cherish what is like themselves." These are the only ones, he adds "who grow up to be politicians." Moreover, as grown men, "they are lovers of young men, and naturally pay no attention to marriage or to making babies, except where required by local custom" (191e–192b). Although Aristophanes means his myth to apply to men and women alike in "bringing eros to its perfect conclusion" (193c), it is clear that his emphasis at the end reverts to the idiom of male homosexual love as the summit of erotic consummation.

After Agathon, the tragic poet, whose portrait of a delicate, sensuous Eros, is in keeping with his own well-known effeminate ways, it is finally Socrates' turn to deliver the discourse he learned from the wise priestess, Diotima, starting with her version of the origins of Eros. He is no longer the child of Aphrodite, but he comes into being at the banquet which the gods held in honor of her birth. This coincidence accounts for the fact that Eros follows and serves her, and also that "he is by nature a lover of beauty, because Aphrodite herself is especially beautiful" (203c). But his true parents are *Poros* (Resources), son of *Mêtis* (Cunning Intelligence) and *Penia* (Poverty), without a genealogy of her own. *Poros* got drunk (on nectar; wine was not yet invented) and fell asleep in the garden of Zeus. *Penia*, seeing her advantage, schemed up a trick to get a child from *Poros* and thereby

remedy her own lack (*aporia*). “So she lay beside him and got pregnant with Eros” (203c).

A reader of Freud would have no difficulty in interpreting the import of this myth. The male has a penis; the female, lacking one, connives to procure a child from him as its substitute. A reader of Greek myth will recognize a set of familiar elements rearranged into new patterns. *Poros*’ qualities, we may note, are not originally male, since he owes them to his mother, *Mêtis* (Cunning Intelligence). Moreover, the offspring of *Mêtis* is more usually another female, Athena, whom Zeus in the *Theogony* produced from his own head, after first swallowing the pregnant *Mêtis*. In this way, Zeus appropriates the principle of female intelligence for himself, thus avoiding all future male rivals to whom she might give birth (as an oracle had predicted) and disseminating that quality in the world through the less dangerous person of his daughter, who is wholly dependent on him. The power of Zeus resides in no small part in his ability to maintain a vigilant gaze, outmatch all others in any game of wits, and prove himself a better deceiver (as in the case of Prometheus). But the female is all deception, especially when it comes to sex, as we know from our previous texts, and erotic feminine allure easily takes away a male’s wits, even and especially those of Zeus, as in *Iliad* 14.

The choice of the garden of Zeus for the mating of *Poros* and *Penia* may give us the clue to this analogy. But note the differences. In Homer, Hera’s deception of Zeus entailed an elaborate erotic seduction, and sleep only follows *after* sex as its natural result. The present myth goes further: sleep *without* seduction, sex *without* conscious consent. It may be argued that sexual desire cannot exist without the prior existence of Eros, even though Aphrodite has already been born. But by his reticence, Socrates sanitizes the mating of *Poros* and *Penia*, perhaps in preparation for the erotic theory of sublimation he is about to propound.

More significant, however, is the fact that this myth of origins accounts for the nature of Eros as an intermediate figure who combines the qualities of both parents. He is poor like his mother, always living with Need, but like his father he is “a schemer after the beautiful and the good ... resourceful in his pursuit of intelligence, a lover of wisdom” (i.e. a *philosopher*, 203d). Similarly, he is neither immortal nor mortal, but rather oscillates between the two states in a condition of plenitude (life) and loss (death). Eros is a lover of wisdom because wisdom is very beautiful, but he falls between wisdom and ignorance. This hesitation is also hereditary: “It comes to him from his parentage, from a father who is wise and resourceful and a mother who is not wise and lacks resources” (204b).

Diotima's confirmation of the radical inferiority of the female in this myth of Eros does nothing to diminish her own resourceful wisdom. Her authority is due to her role as priestess, who without any womanly cause of her own to protect, is free to advocate masculine interests. Like every female, she is supposed to know the secrets of desire better than the male. And armed with the prestige of her sacred vocation, she is called upon to instruct men as to how they might transcend feminine influence (paradoxically, by imitating, to some degree, the feminine roles in sex and procreation) and, through the sublimations of pederastic love, even give birth to themselves. "All of us [even virgins] are pregnant both in body and in soul," she claims. The reason is that Eros desires "reproduction and birth in beauty." "Reproduction goes on forever; it is what mortals have in place of immortality," and she concludes, if "Eros wants to possess the good forever, it follows ... that he must desire immortality" (206c–207a).

If the Socratic myth of the origins of Eros was based on a female's envy of male presence and potency, surely, the roles are reversed here to suggest that the male envies the female. But the symmetry is not precise. The female never repairs her lack; she must depend upon a male for periodic replenishment. By contrast, the male, having appropriated her functions, uses her model of deficiency to fulfill a persistent dream of the Greek imagination that will promise him immortality, if he can liberate himself from female contingency. This aspiration requires an ascent from lower to higher forms of Eros, from the physical to the spiritual and from body to soul and validates an erotic desire that remains essentially in the society of men. Socrates, through Plato, inaugurates a new role for Eros. He revises the protocols of pederastic relations between lover (*erastês*) and beloved (*erômenos*) in favor of greater erotic reciprocity.³⁹ Yet, for all his innovations, the ideas he proposes not only follow but exceed standard Greek attitudes about eros and the feminine. This entire dialogue, dedicated to the praise of Eros, elides the bitter and exalts the sweet, investing desire with a moral imperative and impressive rewards. It extends the idea of a lover of beauty to a lover of the good and takes love as the route to the highest attainment of the soul. But in this scheme, the female in the person of the priestess is the logical source of knowledge about an erotic desire that is necessarily linked to reproduction and which she transfers to men for their use.

³⁹ On the novelties of erotic reciprocity in Plato, see Halperin 1990b.

On the other hand, while in Diotima's myth Eros arises out of female deceit and theft of male substance, once *Penia's* essence (i.e. lack and need) is located in a male self, it proves to be the route to philosophical transcendence. Socrates makes no claims for the prestige of Eros as the first of the gods, nor in fact as the youngest. Eros' dependency on Aphrodite follows from the mere fact that he was conceived on the day of her birth. Unlike the goddess, he is an intermediate being, neither mortal nor immortal. Yet in the face of the eternal renewal of sexual desire, he "imitates" immortality by himself "imitating" the continuing cycles of birth, death, and rebirth.

Socrates' myth may be taken as one more contribution to the mystification of sexuality in the Greek imagination, which in all the varied ways we have seen always seems to hesitate on the threshold between power and limitation, between aspiration and deflation, between plenitude and loss, between reality and myth, and finally, between mortality and immortality. While Eros is fundamentally the sign of our creaturely embodiment, our subjection to human physical needs and impulses that brings us close to the animal world, it can, as in Plato's *Symposium* and other mystic traditions, serve as the means of transcending those needs in favor of reaching the heights of the gods and of denying our own eventual demise, which is what we most fear. Plato's seductive discourse is difficult to resist and, at the same time, requires us to resist it. Modern readers will extract for themselves from this dialogue what they would like most to believe—whether a prestigious affirmation of the right to sexual preference or the encouragement to seek a perfect partner, our "other half." They may also see in Plato the foundation of truths about the relations between Eros and Thanatos, the uses of sublimation in the pursuit of eros, and also the means by which to transcend or transpose it to another level. In fact, the mystique of Plato's *Symposium* may be said to usher in a new vision of eros beyond its embodiment in human physical needs and impulses to offer the most influential version of men's quest for immortality. It uses eros, not only to enlist it in the service of a higher philosophical calling, but to claim eros finally as a worthy concern for men in the interests of self-fashioning. Eros may always hesitate between the carnal and the sublime, but from a gendered perspective, I chose to close this examination of archaic and classical literature with the *Symposium*, because its ideological agenda is so transparent, not only in the service of a higher philosophical calling, but in its seductive influence on later Western thought.

THE METAMORPHOSES



Ovid

A Translation into English Prose

by A. S. KLINE

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endure hard labour, and the proof we give of the source from which we are sprung.

BK I:416-437 OTHER SPECIES ARE GENERATED

Earth spontaneously created other diverse forms of animal life. After the remaining moisture had warmed in the sun's fire, the wet mud of the marshlands swelled with heat, and the fertile seeds of things, nourished by life-giving soil as if in a mother's womb, grew, and in time acquired a nature. So, when the seven-mouthed *Nile* [p. 589] retreats from the drowned fields and returns to its former bed, and the fresh mud boils in the sun, farmers find many creatures as they turn the lumps of earth. Amongst them they see some just spawned, on the edge of life, some with incomplete bodies and number of limbs, and often in the same matter one part is alive and the other is raw earth. In fact when heat and moisture are mixed they conceive, and from these two things the whole of life originates. And though fire and water fight each other, heat and moisture create everything, and this discordant union is suitable for growth. So when the earth muddied from the recent flood glowed again heated by the deep heaven-sent light of the sun she produced innumerable species, partly remaking previous forms, partly creating new monsters.

BK I:438-472 PHOEBUS KILLS THE PYTHON AND SEES DAPHNE

Indeed, though she would not have desired to, she then gave birth to you, great *Python* [p. 637], covering so great an area of the mountain slopes, a snake not known before, a terror to the new race of men. The archer god, with lethal shafts that he had only used before on fleeing red deer and roe deer, with a thousand arrows, almost emptying his quiver, destroyed the creature, the venom running out from its black wounds. Then he founded the sacred *Pythian* [p. 637] games, celebrated by contests, named from the serpent he had conquered. There the young winners in boxing, in foot and chariot racing, were honoured with oak wreaths. There was no laurel as yet, so *Phoebus* [p. 622] crowned his temples, his handsome curling hair, with leaves of any tree.



Phoebus's first love was *Daphne* [p. 496], daughter of *Penens* [p. 612], and not through chance but because of *Cupid's* [p. 490] fierce anger. Recently the *Delian* [p. 498] god, exulting at his victory over the serpent, had seen him bending his tightly strung bow and said 'Impudent boy, what are you doing with a man's weapons? That one is suited to my shoulders, since I can hit wild beasts of a certainty, and wound my enemies, and not long ago destroyed with countless arrows the swollen Python that covered many acres with its plague-ridden belly. You should be intent on stirring the concealed fires of love with your burning brand, not laying claim to my glories!' *Venus's* [p. 676] son replied 'You may hit every other thing *Phoebus* [p. 622], but my bow will strike you: to the degree that all living creatures are less than gods, by that degree is your glory less than mine.' He spoke, and striking the air fiercely with beating wings, he landed on the shady peak of *Parnassus* [p. 606], and took two arrows with opposite effects from his full quiver: one kindles love, the other dispels it. The one that kindles is golden with a sharp glistening point, the one that dispels is blunt with lead beneath its shaft. With the second he transfixed *Penens's* [p. 612] daughter, but with the first he wounded *Apollo* [p. 446] piercing him to the marrow of his bones.

BK I: 473-503 PHOEBUS PURSUES DAPHNE

Now the one loved, and the other fled from love's name, taking delight in the depths of the woods, and the skins of the wild beasts she caught, emulating virgin *Phoebe* [p. 621], a careless ribbon holding back her hair. Many courted her, but she, averse to being wooed, free from men and unable to endure them, roamed the pathless woods, careless of *Hymen* [p. 536] or *Amor* [p. 438], or whatever marriage might be. Her father often said 'Girl you owe me a son-in-law', and again often 'Daughter, you owe me grandsons.' But, hating the wedding torch as if it smacked of crime she would blush red with shame all over her beautiful face, and clinging to her father's neck with coaxing arms, she would say 'Dearest father, let me be a virgin for ever! *Diana's* [p. 500] father granted it to her.' He yields to that plea, but your beauty itself, *Daphne* [p. 496], prevents your wish, and your loveliness opposes your prayer.

Phoebus [p. 622] loves her at first sight, and desires to wed her, and hopes for what he desires, but his own oracular powers fail him. As the light stubble of an empty cornfield blazes; as sparks fire a hedge when a traveller, by mischance, lets them get too close, or forgets them in the morning; so the god was altered by the flames, and all his heart burned, feeding his useless desire with hope. He sees her disordered hair hanging about her neck and sighs 'What if it were properly dressed?' He gazes at her eyes sparkling with the brightness of starlight. He gazes on her lips, where mere gazing does not satisfy. He praises her wrists and hands and fingers, and her arms bare to the shoulder: whatever is hidden, he imagines more beautiful. But she flees swifter than the lightest breath of air, and resists his words calling her back again.

BK I: 504-524 PHOEBUS BEGS DAPHNE TO YIELD TO HIM

'Wait nymph, daughter of *Penens* [p. 612], I beg you! I who am chasing you am not your enemy. Nymph, Wait! This is the way a sheep runs from the wolf, a deer from the mountain lion, and a dove with fluttering wings flies from the eagle: everything flies from its foes, but it is love that is driving me to follow you! Pity me! I am afraid you might fall headlong or thorns

undeservedly scar your legs and I be a cause of grief to you! These are rough places you run through. Slow down, I ask you, check your flight, and I too will slow. At least enquire whom it is you have charmed. I am no mountain man, no shepherd, no rough guardian of the herds and flocks. Rash girl, you do not know, you cannot realise, who you run from, and so you run. *Delphi's* [p. 499] lands are mine, *Claros* [p. 483] and *Tenedos* [p. 660], and *Patara* [p. 607] acknowledges me king. *Jupiter* [p. 549] is my father. Through me what was, what is, and what will be, are revealed. Through me strings sound in harmony, to song. My aim is certain, but an arrow truer than mine, has wounded my free heart! The whole world calls me the bringer of aid; medicine is my invention; my power is in herbs. But love cannot be healed by any herb, nor can the arts that cure others cure their lord!

BK I:525-552 DAPHNE BECOMES THE LAUREL BOUGH



He would have said more as timid *Peneis* [p. 612] ran, still lovely to see, leaving him with his words unfinished. The winds bared her body, the opposing breezes in her way fluttered her clothes, and the light airs threw her streaming hair behind her, her beauty enhanced by flight. But the young god could no longer waste time on further blandishments, urged on by *Amor* [p. 438], he ran on at full speed. Like a hound of *Gaul* [p. 520] starting a

hare in an empty field, that heads for its prey, she for safety: he, seeming about to clutch her, thinks now, or now, he has her fast, grazing her heels with his outstretched jaws, while she uncertain whether she is already caught, escaping his bite, spurts from the muzzle touching her. So the virgin and the god: he driven by desire, she by fear. He ran faster, Amor giving him wings, and allowed her no rest, hung on her fleeing shoulders, breathed on the hair flying round her neck. Her strength was gone, she grew pale, overcome by the effort of her rapid flight, and seeing Peneus's waters near cried out 'Help me father! If your streams have divine powers change me, destroy this beauty that pleases too well!' Her prayer was scarcely done when a heavy numbness seized her limbs, thin bark closed over her breast, her hair turned into leaves, her arms into branches, her feet so swift a moment ago stuck fast in slow-growing roots, her face was lost in the canopy. Only her shining beauty was left.

BK I:553-567 PHOEBUS HONOURS DAPHNE

Even like this *Phoebus* [p. 622] loved her and, placing his hand against the trunk, he felt her heart still quivering under the new bark. He clasped the branches as if they were parts of human arms, and kissed the wood. But even the wood shrank from his kisses, and the god said 'Since you cannot be my bride, you must be my tree! Laurel, with you my hair will be wreathed, with you my lyre, with you my quiver. You will go with the Roman generals when joyful voices acclaim their triumph, and the Capitol witnesses their long processions. You will stand outside Augustus's doorposts, a faithful guardian, and keep watch over the crown of oak between them. And just as my head with its un-cropped hair is always young, so you also will wear the beauty of undying leaves.' *Paeon* [p. 600] had done: the laurel bowed her newly made branches, and seemed to shake her leafy crown like a head giving consent.

Bk I:568-587 INACHUS MOURNS FOR IO



There is a grove in *Haemonia* [p. 523], closed in on every side by wooded cliffs. They call it Tempe. Through it the river *Penens* [p. 612] rolls, with foaming waters, out of the roots of *Pindus* [p. 626], and in its violent fall gathers clouds, driving the smoking mists along, raining down spray onto the tree tops, and deafening remoter places with its roar. Here is the house, the home, the innermost sanctuary of the great river. Seated here, in a rocky cavern, he laid down the law to the waters and the nymphs who lived in his streams. Here the rivers of his own country first met, unsure whether to console or celebrate with *Daphne's* [p. 496] father: *Spercheus* [p. 652] among poplars, restless *Enipeus* [p. 508], gentle *Amphrysus* [p. 439], *Aeas* [p. 425] and ancient *Apidannus* [p. 446]; and then later all the others that, whichever way their force carries them, bring down their weary wandering waters to the sea. Only *Inachus* [p. 542] is missing, but hidden in the deepest cave he swells his stream with tears, and in utter misery laments his lost daughter, *Io* [p. 543], not knowing if she is alive or among the shades. Since he cannot find her anywhere, he imagines her nowhere, and his heart fears worse than death.

BK I:587-600 JUPITER'S RAPE OF IO



Jupiter [p. 549] first saw her returning from her father's stream, and said 'Virgin, worthy of Jupiter himself, who will make some unknown man happy when you share his bed, while it is hot and the sun is at the highest point of its arc, find shade in the deep woods! (And he showed her the woods' shade). But if you are afraid to enter the wild beasts' lairs, you can go into the remote woods in safety, protected by a god, and not by any lesser god, but by the one who holds the sceptre of heaven in his mighty hand, and who hurls the flickering bolts of lightning. Do not fly from me!' She was already in flight. She had left behind *Lerna's* [p. 559] pastures, and the *Lyrcean* [p. 567] plain's wooded fields, when the god hid the wide earth in a covering of fog, caught the fleeing girl, and raped her.

BK I:601-621 JUPITER TRANSFORMS IO TO A HEIFER

Meanwhile *Juno* [p. 547] looked down into the heart of *Argos* [p. 450], surprised that rapid mists had created night in shining daylight. She knew they were not vapours from the river, or breath from the damp earth. She looked around to see where her husband was, knowing by now the intrigues of a

spouse so often caught in the act. When she could not find him in the skies, she said 'Either I am wrong, or being wronged' and gliding down from heaven's peak, she stood on earth ordering the clouds to melt. *Jupiter* [p. 549] had a presage of his wife's arrival and had changed *Inachus's* [p. 542] daughter into a gleaming heifer. Even in that form she was beautiful. *Saturnia* [p. 643] approved the animal's looks, though grudgingly, asking, then, whose she was, where from, what herd, as if she did not know. Jupiter, to stop all inquiry, lied, saying she had been born from the earth. Then Saturnia claimed her as a gift. What could he do? Cruel to sacrifice his love, but suspicious not to. *Shame* [p. 635] urges him to it, *Amor* [p. 438] urges not. Amor would have conquered Shame, but if he refused so slight a gift as a heifer to the companion of his race and bed, it might appear no heifer!

BK I:622-641 JUNO CLAIMS IO AND ARGUS GUARDS HER

Though her rival was given up the goddess did not abandon her fears at once, cautious of *Jupiter* [p. 549] and afraid of his trickery, until she had given *Io* [p. 543] into *Argus's* [p. 450] keeping, that son of *Arestor* [p. 449]. Argus had a hundred eyes round his head, that took their rest two at a time in succession while the others kept watch and stayed on guard. Wherever he stood he was looking at Io, and had Io in front of his eyes when his back was turned. He let her graze in the light, but when the sun sank below the earth, he penned her, and fastened a rope round her innocent neck. She grazed on the leaves of trees and bitter herbs. She often lay on the bare ground, and the poor thing drank water from muddy streams. When she wished to stretch her arms out to Argus in supplication, she had no arms to stretch. Trying to complain, a lowing came from her mouth, and she was alarmed and frightened by the sound of her own voice. When she came to *Inachus's* [p. 542] riverbanks where she often used to play and saw her gaping mouth and her new horns in the water, she grew frightened and fled terrified of herself.

BK I:642-667 INACHUS FINDS IO AND GRIEVES FOR HER

The *naiads* [p. 583] did not know her: *Inachus* [p. 542] himself did not know her, but she followed her father, followed her sisters, allowing herself to be

petted, and offering herself to be admired. Old Inachus pulled some grasses and held them out to her: she licked her father's hand and kissed his palm, could not hold back her tears, and if only words could have come she would have begged for help, telling her name and her distress. With letters drawn in the dust with her hoof, instead of words, she traced the sad story of her changed form. 'Pity me!' said her father Inachus, clinging to the groaning heifer's horns and snow-white neck, 'Pity me!' he sighed; 'Are you really my daughter I searched the wide world for? There was less sadness with you lost than found! Without speech, you do not answer in words to mine, only heave deep sighs from your breast, and all you can do is low in reply to me. Unknowingly I was arranging marriage and a marriage-bed for you, hoping for a son-in-law first and then grandchildren. Now you must find a mate from the herd, and from the herd get you a son. I am not allowed by dying to end such sorrow; it is hard to be a god, the door of death closed to me, my grief goes on immortal for ever.' As he mourned, Argus with his star-like eyes drove her to distant pastures, dragging her out of her father's arms. There, sitting at a distance he occupied a high peak of the mountain, where resting he could keep a watch on every side.

BK I:668-688 JUPITER SENDS MERCURY TO KILL ARGUS

Now the king of the gods can no longer stand *Phoronis's* [p. 624] great sufferings, and he calls his son, born of the shining *Pleiad* [p. 627], and orders him to kill *Argus* [p. 450]. *Mercury* [p. 574], quickly puts on his winged sandals, takes his sleep-inducing wand in his divine hand, and sets his cap on his head. Dressed like this the son of *Jupiter* [p. 549] touches down on the earth from his father's stronghold. There, he takes off his cap, and doffs his wings, only keeping his wand. Taking this, disguised as a shepherd, he drives she-goats, stolen on the way, through solitary lanes, and plays his reed pipe as he goes. *Juno's* [p. 547] guard is captivated by this new sound. 'You there, whoever you are' Argus calls 'you could sit here beside me on this rock; there's no better grass elsewhere for your flock, and you can see that the shade is fine for shepherds.'

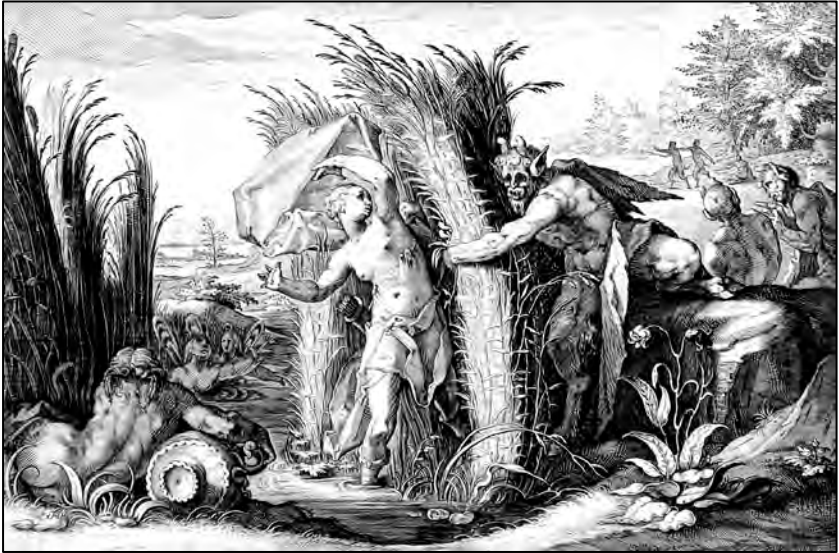


The descendant of *Atlas* [p. 455] sits down, and passes the day in conversation, talking of many things, and playing on his reed pipe, trying to conquer those watching eyes. Argus however fights to overcome gentle sleep, and though he allows some of his eyes to close, the rest stay vigilant. He even asks, since the reed pipe has only just been invented, how it was invented.

BK I:689-721 MERCURY TELLS THE STORY OF SYRINX

So the god explained ‘On *Arcadia*’s [p. 448] cold mountain slopes among the wood nymphs, the hamadryads, of Mount *Nonacris* [p. 591], one was the most celebrated: the nymphs called her *Syrinx* [p. 655]. She had often escaped from the *satyrs* [p. 643] chasing her, and from others of the demi-gods that live in shadowy woods and fertile fields. But she followed the worship of the *Ortygian* [p. 599] goddess in staying virgin. Her dress caught up like *Diana* [p. 500] she deceives the eye, and could be mistaken for *Leto*’s [p. 556] daughter, except that her bow is of horn, and the other’s is of gold. Even so she is deceptive. *Pan* [p. 604], whose head is crowned with a wreath of sharp pine shoots, saw her, coming from Mount *Lycæus* [p. 564], and spoke to her.’ Now Mercury still had to relate what Pan said, and how the nymph, despising his entreaties,

ran through the wilds till she came to the calm waters of sandy *Ladon* [p. 553]; and how when the river stopped her flight she begged her sisters of the stream to change her; and how Pan, when he thought he now had Syrinx, found that instead of the nymph's body he only held reeds from the marsh; and, while he sighed there, the wind in the reeds, moving, gave out a clear, plaintive sound. Charmed by this new art and its sweet tones the god said 'This way of communing with you is still left to me.' So unequal lengths of reed, joined together with wax, preserved the girl's name.



About to tell all this, *Cyllenian* [p. 493] Mercury saw that every eye had succumbed and their light was lost in sleep. Quickly he stops speaking and deepens their rest, caressing those drowsy eyes with touches of his magic wand. Then straightaway he strikes the nodding head, where it joins the neck, with his curved sword, and sends it bloody down the rocks, staining the steep cliff. *Argus* [p. 450], you are overthrown, the light of your many eyes is extinguished, and one dark sleeps under so many eyelids.

BK II:401-416 JUPITER SEES CALLISTO

Now the all-powerful father of the gods circuits the vast walls of heaven and examines them to check if anything has been loosened by the violent fires. When he sees they are as solid and robust as ever he inspects the earth and the works of humankind. Arcadia above all is his greatest care. He restores her fountains and streams, that are still hardly daring to flow, gives grass to the bare earth, leaves to the trees, and makes the scorched forests grow green again.

Often, as he came and went, he would stop short at the sight of a girl from *Nonacris* [p. 591], feeling the fire take in the very marrow of his bones. She was not one to spin soft wool or play with her hair. A clasp fastened her tunic, and a white ribbon held back her loose tresses. Dressed like this, with a spear or a bow in her hand, she was one of *Diana's* [p. 500] companions. No nymph who roamed *Maenalus* [p. 568] was dearer to *Trivia* [p. 500], goddess of the crossways, than she, *Callisto* [p. 467], was. But no favour lasts long.

BK II:417-440 JUPITER RAPES CALLISTO

The sun was high, just past the zenith, when she entered a grove that had been untouched through the years. Here she took her quiver from her shoulder, unstrung her curved bow, and lay down on the grass, her head resting on her painted quiver. *Jupiter* [p. 549], seeing her there weary and unprotected, said 'Here, surely, my wife will not see my cunning, or if she does find out it is, oh it is, worth a quarrel!' Quickly he took on the face and dress of *Diana* [p. 500], and said 'Oh, girl who follows me, where in my domains have you been hunting?'

The virgin girl got up from the turf replying 'Greetings, goddess greater than Jupiter: I say it even though he himself hears it.' He did hear, and laughed, happy to be judged greater than himself, and gave her kisses unrestrainedly, and not those that virgins give. When she started to say which woods she had hunted he embraced and prevented her and not without committing a crime. Face to face with him, as far as a woman could, (I wish you had seen her Juno: you would have been kinder to her) she fought him, but how could a girl win, and who is more powerful than

Jove? Victorious, Jupiter made for the furthest reaches of the sky: while to *Callisto* [p. 467] the grove was odious and the wood seemed knowing. As she retraced her steps she almost forgot her quiver and its arrows, and the bow she had left hanging.



BK II:441-465 DIANA DISCOVER'S CALLISTO'S SHAME

Behold how *Diana* [p. 500], with her band of huntresses, approaching from the heights of *Maenalus* [p. 568], magnificent from the kill, spies her there, and seeing her calls out. At the shout she runs, afraid at first in case it is *Jupiter* [p. 549] disguised, but when she sees the other nymphs come forward she realises there is no trickery and joins their number. Alas! How hard it is not to show one's guilt in one's face! She can scarcely lift her eyes from the ground, not as she used to be, wedded to her goddess's side or first of the whole company, but is silent and by her blushing shows signs of her shame at being attacked. Even if she were not herself virgin, Diana could sense her guilt in a thousand ways. They say all the nymphs could feel it.



Nine crescent moons had since grown full when the goddess faint from the chase in her brother's hot sunlight found a cool grove out of which a murmuring stream ran, winding over fine sand. She loved the place and tested the water with her foot. Pleased with this too she said 'Any witness is far away, let's bathe our bodies naked in the flowing water.' The *Arcadian* [p. 448] girl blushed: all of them took off their clothes: one of them tried to delay: hesitantly the tunic was removed and there her shame was revealed with her naked body. Terrified she tried to conceal her swollen belly. Diana cried 'Go, far away from here: do not pollute the sacred fountain!' and the Moon-goddess commanded her to leave her band of followers.

Bk II:466-495 CALLISTO TURNED INTO A BEAR

The great Thunderer's wife had known about all this for a long time and had held back her severe punishment until the proper time. Now there was no reason to wait. The girl had given birth to a boy, *Arkas* [p. 448], and that in itself enraged *Juno* [p. 547]. When she turned her angry eyes and mind to thought of him she cried out 'Nothing more was needed, you adulteress, than your fertility, and your marking the insult to me by giving birth,

making public my *Jupiter's* [p. 549] crime. You'll not carry this off safely. Now, insolent girl, I will take that shape away from you, that pleased you and my husband so much!' At this she clutched her in front by the hair of her forehead and pulled her face forwards onto the ground. *Callisto* [p. 467] stretched out her arms for mercy: those arms began to bristle with coarse black hairs: her hands arched over and changed into curved claws to serve as feet: and her face, that Jupiter had once praised, was disfigured by gaping jaws: and so that her prayers and words of entreaty might not attract him her power of speech was taken from her. An angry, threatening growl, harsh and terrifying, came from her throat. Still her former feelings remained intact though she was now a bear. She showed her misery in continual groaning, raising such hands as she had left to the starry sky, feeling, though she could not speak it, Jupiter's indifference. Ah, how often she wandered near the house and fields that had once been her home, not daring to sleep in the lonely woods! Ah, how often she was driven among the rocks by the baying hounds, and the huntress fled in fear from the hunters! Often she hid at the sight of wild beasts forgetting what she was, and though a bear she shuddered at the sight of other bears on the mountains and feared the wolves though her father *Lycæon* [p. 564] ran with them.



Bk II:496-507 ARCAS AND CALLISTO BECOME CONSTELLATIONS

And now *Arcas* [p. 448], grandson of *Lycaon* [p. 564], had reached his fifteenth year ignorant of his parentage. While he was hunting wild animals, while he was finding suitable glades and penning up the *Erymanthian* [p. 512] groves with woven nets, he came across his mother, who stood still at sight of Arcas and appeared to know him. He shrank back from those unmoving eyes gazing at him so fixedly, uncertain what made him afraid, and when she quickly came nearer he was about to pierce her chest with his lethal spear. All-powerful *Jupiter* [p. 549] restrained him and in the same moment removed them and the possibility of that wrong, and together, caught up through the void on the winds, he set them in the heavens and made them similar constellations, the *Great* [p. 675] and *Little Bear* [p. 676].



Bk II:508-530 JUNO COMPLAINS TO TETHYS AND OCEANUS

Juno was angered when she saw his *inamorato* shining among the stars, and went down into the waters to white-haired *Tethys* [p. 661] and old *Oceanus* [p. 593] to whom the gods often make reverence. When they asked her the reason for her visit she began ‘You ask me why I, the queen of the gods, have left

my home in the heavens to be here? Another has taken my place in the sky! I tell a lie, if you do not see, when night falls and the world darkens, newly exalted stars to wound me, set in the sky, where the remotest and shortest orbit circles the uttermost pole. Why should anyone wish to avoid wounding Juno or dread my enmity if I only benefit those I harm? Oh what a great achievement! Oh what marvellous powers I have! I stopped her being human and she becomes a goddess! This is the punishment I inflict on the guilty! This is my wonderful sovereignty! Let him take away her animal form and restore her former beauty as he did before with that *Argive* [p. 450] girl, *Io* [p. 543]. Why not divorce *Juno* [p. 547], install her in my place, and let *Lycæon* [p. 564] be his father-in-law? If this contemptible insult to your foster-child moves you, shut out the seven stars of the *Bear* [p. 675] from your dark blue waters, repulse this constellation set in the heavens as a reward for her defilement, and do not let my rival dip in your pure flood!



BK II:531-565 THE RAVEN AND THE CROW

The gods of the sea nodded their consent. Then *Saturnia* [p. 643], in her light chariot drawn by painted peacocks, drove up through the clear air. These peacocks had only recently been painted, when *Argus* [p. 450] was killed, at the same time that your wings, *Corvus* [p. 487], croaking Raven, were suddenly

assurances of peace from his brothers, and gave them in return. The *Sidonian* [p. 648] wanderer had these men as companions in his task when he founded the city commanded by *Apollō's* [p. 622] oracle.

Now *Thebes* [p. 662] stands, and now you might be seen as happy, in your exile, Cadmus. You have *Mars* [p. 569] and *Venus* [p. 676] as your *bride's* [p. 524] parents, and added to this the children of so noble a wife, so many sons and daughters, and dearly loved descendants, your grandchildren, who now are young men. But in truth we should always wait for a man's last day, for that time when he has paid his last debt, and we should call no man's life happy until he is dead.

Bk III:138-164 ACTAEON RETURNS FROM THE HUNT

Actaeon [p. 423], one of your grandsons, was your first reason for grief, in all your happiness, *Cadmus* [p. 465]. Strange horns appeared on his forehead, and his hunting dogs sated themselves on the blood of their master. But if you look carefully, you will find that it was the fault of chance and not wickedness: what wickedness is there in error? It happened on a mountain, stained with the blood of many creatures, and midday had contracted every shadow and the sun was equidistant from either end of his journey. Then Actaeon, the young *Boeotian* [p. 535], with a quiet expression, spoke to his companions in the hunt as they wandered through the solitary wilds 'Friends, our spears and nets are drenched with the blood of our victims, and the day has been fortunate enough. When *Aurora* [p. 457] in her golden chariot brings another day we will resume our purpose. Now *Phoebus* [p. 622] is also between the limits of his task, and is splitting open the earth with his heat. Finish your present task and carry home the netted meshes.' The men obeyed his order and left off their labour.

There was a valley there called *Gargaphie* [p. 520], dense with pine trees and sharp cypresses, sacred to *Diana* [p. 500] of the high-girded tunic, where, in the depths, there is a wooded cave, not fashioned by art. But ingenious nature had imitated art. She had made a natural arch out of native pumice and porous tufa. On the right, a spring of bright clear water murmured into a widening pool, enclosed by grassy banks. Here the woodland goddess, weary from the chase, would bathe her virgin limbs in the crystal liquid.

BK III:165-205 ACTAEON SEES DIANA NAKED AND IS TURNED INTO A STAG

Having reached the place, she gives her spear, quiver and unstrung bow to one of the nymphs, her weapon-bearer. Another takes her robe over her arm, while two unfasten the sandals on her feet. Then, more skilful than the rest, *Theban* [p. 662] *Crocale* [p. 489] gathers the hair strewn around her neck into a knot, while her own is still loose. Nephele, Hyale, Rhanis, Psecas and Phiale draw water, and pour it over their mistress out of the deep jars.

While *Titania* [p. 668] is bathing there, in her accustomed place, *Cadmus's* [p. 465] grandson, free of his share of the labour, strays with aimless steps through the strange wood, and enters the sacred grove. So the fates would have it. As soon as he reaches the cave mouth dampened by the fountain, the naked nymphs, seeing a man's face, beat at their breasts and filling the whole wood with their sudden outcry, crowd round Diana to hide her with their bodies. But the goddess stood head and shoulders above all the others. *Diana's* [p. 500] face, seen there, while she herself was naked, was the colour of clouds stained by the opposing shafts of sun, or *Aurora's* [p. 457] brightness.

However, though her band of nymphs gathered in confusion around her, she stood turning to one side, and looking back, and wishing she had her arrows to hand. She caught up a handful of the water that she did have, and threw it in the man's face. And as she sprinkled his hair with the vengeful drops she added these words, harbingers of his coming ruin, 'Now you may tell, if you can tell that is, of having seen me naked!' Without more threats, she gave the horns of a mature stag to the head she had sprinkled, lengthening his neck, making his ear-tips pointed, changing feet for hands, long legs for arms, and covering his body with a dappled hide. And then she added fear. *Autonoë's* [p. 458] brave son flies off, marvelling at such swift speed, within himself. But when he sees his head and horns reflected for certain in the water, he tries to say 'Oh, look at me!' but no voice follows. He groans: that is his voice, and tears run down his altered face. Only his mind remains unchanged. What can he do? Shall he return to his home and the royal palace, or lie hidden in the woods? Shame prevents the one, and fear the other.

BK III:206-231 ACTAEON IS PURSUED BY HIS HOUNDS

While he hesitates his dogs catch sight of him. First ‘*Black-foot*’, Melampus, and keen-scented Ichnobates, ‘*Tracker*’, signal him with baying, Ichnobates out of *Crete* [p. 488], Melampus, *Sparta* [p. 652]. Then others rush at him swift as the wind, ‘*Greedy*’, Pamphagus, Dorceus, ‘*Gazelle*’, Oribasos, ‘*Mountaineer*’, all out of *Arcady* [p. 448]: powerful ‘*Deerslayer*’, Nebrophonos, savage Theron, ‘*Whirlwind*’, and Laelape, ‘*Hunter*’.

Then swift-footed Pterelas, ‘*Wings*’, and trail-scenting Agre, ‘*Chaser*’, fierce Hylaeus, ‘*Woody*’, lately gored by a boar, the wolf-born Nape, ‘*Valley*’, Poemenis, the trusty ‘*Shepherd*’, and Harpyia, ‘*Snatcher*’, with her two pups. There is thin-flanked Sicyonian Ladon, ‘*Catcher*’, Dromas, ‘*Runner*’, ‘*Grinder*’, Canache, Sticte ‘*Spot*’, Tigris ‘*Tigress*’, Alce, ‘*Strong*’, and white-haired Leucon, ‘*Whitey*’, and black-haired Asbolus, ‘*Spot*’.

Lacon, ‘*Spartan*’, follows them, a dog well known for his strength, and strong-running Aëlo, ‘*Storm*’. Then Thoos, ‘*Swift*’, and speedy Lycisce, ‘*Wolf*’, with her brother Cyprius ‘*Cyprian*’. Next ‘*Grasper*’, Harpalos, with a distinguishing mark of white, in the centre of his black forehead, ‘*Black*’, Melaneus, and Lachne, ‘*Shaggy*’, with hairy pelt, Labros, ‘*Fury*’, and Argiodus, ‘*White-tooth*’, born of a Cretan sire and Spartan dam, keen-voiced Hylactor, ‘*Barker*’, and others there is no need to name. The pack of them, greedy for the prey follow over cliffs and crags, and inaccessible rocks, where the way is hard or there is no way at all. He runs, over the places where he has often chased, flying, alas, from his own hounds. He longs to shout ‘I am Actaeon! Know your own master!’ but words fail him, the air echoes to the baying.

BK III:232-252 ACTAEON IS KILLED BY THE DOGS

First ‘*Black-hair*’, Melanchaetes, wounds his back, then ‘*Killer*’, Theridamas, and Oresitrophos, the ‘*Climber*’, clings to his shoulder. They had set out late but outflanked the route by a shortcut over the mountains. While they hold their master the whole pack gathers and they sink their teeth in his body till there is no place left to wound him. He groans and makes a noise, not human, but still not one a deer could make, and fills familiar heights with

mournful cries. And on his knees, like a suppliant begging, he turns his wordless head from side to side, as if he were stretching arms out towards them.

Now his friends, unknowingly, urge the ravening crowd of dogs on with their usual cries, looking out for Actaeon, and shouting, in emulation, for absent Actaeon (he turning his head at the sound of his name) complaining he is not there, and through his slowness is missing the spectacle offered by their prey. He might wish to be absent it's true, but he is here: he might wish to see and not feel the fierce doings of his own hounds. They surround him on every side, sinking their jaws into his flesh, tearing their master to pieces in the deceptive shape of the deer. They say *Diana* [p. 500] the Quiver-bearer's anger was not appeased, until his life had ended in innumerable wounds.

BK III:253-272 JUNO SETS OUT TO PUNISH SEMELE

The debate is undecided: to some the punishment is more violent than just, merely for seeing the face of a goddess, others approve it and call it fitting because of her strict vow of virginity, and both can make a case. Only Jupiter's *wife* [p. 547] was saying nothing, neither of praise or blame. She was glad of the disaster that had come down on the house of *Agenor* [p. 432], and had transferred her hatred from *Europa* [p. 515], to those who were allied to the *Tyrian* [p. 674] girl by birth. Then there was a fresh wrong added to the first. She was grieved by the fact that *Semele* [p. 646] was pregnant, with the seed of mighty *Jove* [p. 549]. Swallowing words of reproach, she said 'What, in truth, have I gained from frequent reproaches? I must attack her. If I am rightly to be called most powerful Juno, if it is right for me to hold the jewelled sceptre in my hand, if I am queen, and sister and wife of Jove, sister at least, then it is her I must destroy. Yet I think she is content with her secret, and the injury to my marriage will be brief. But she has conceived – and that damages me – and makes her crime visible in her swollen belly, and wants, what I have barely achieved, to be confirmed as the mother of Jupiter's child, so great is her faith in her beauty. I will render that faith hollow. I am not *Saturnia* [p. 643] if she does not plunge into the *Stygian* [p. 653] waters, overwhelmed by Jove himself.'

Bk III:273-315 SEMELE IS CONSUMED BY JUPITER'S FIRE

At this she rose from her seat and cloaked in a dark cloud she came to *Semele's* [p. 646] threshold. But before she removed the cloud she disguised herself as an old woman, ageing her hair, ploughing her skin with wrinkles, and walking with bowed legs and tottering steps. She made her voice sound old and was herself *Beroë* [p. 462], *Semele's Epidaurian* [p. 509] nurse. So, when they came to *Jupiter's* [p. 549] name, in the midst of their lengthy gossiping, she sighed, and said 'I hope, for your sake, that it really is Jupiter, 'but I am suspicious of all that sort of thing. Many men have entered the bedrooms of chaste women in the name of the gods. It's not good enough for him merely to be Jove: he must give a proof of his love if it truly is him. Beg him to assume all his powers before he embraces you, and be just as glorious as when Juno welcomes him on high.



With such words *Juno* [p. 547] gulled the unsuspecting daughter of *Cadmus* [p. 465]. Semele asked Jupiter for an unspecified gift. 'Choose!' said the god, 'Nothing will be refused, and, so that you may believe it more firmly, I swear it by the Stygian torrent, that is the divine conscience, the fear, and god, of all the gods.' Pleased by her misfortune, too successful, and doomed to be undone by her lover's indulgence, Semele said 'As *Saturnia* [p. 643] is

used to your embrace, when you enter into the pact of *Venus* [p. 676], give yourself to me!' The god would have stopped her lips as she spoke: but her voice had already rushed into the air.

He groans, since she cannot un-wish it or he un-swear it. So, most sorrowfully, he climbs the heights of heaven, and, with a look, gathered the trailing clouds, then added their vapours to lightning mixed with storm-winds, and thunder and fateful lightning bolts. Still, he tries to reduce his power in whatever way he can, and does not arm himself with that lightning with which he deposed hundred-handed *Typhoeus* [p. 673]: it is too savage in his grasp. There is a lighter dart to which the *Cyclops*'s [p. 492] hands gave a less violent fire, a lesser anger. The gods call these his secondary weapons. Taking these he enters *Agenor*'s [p. 432] house. But still Semele's mortal body could not endure the storm, and she was consumed, by the fire of her nuptial gift.

The infant *Bacchus* [p. 459], still unfinished, is torn from the mother's womb, and (if it can be believed) is sewn into his father's thigh to complete his full term. *Ino* [p. 542], his mother's sister reared him secretly, in infancy, and then he was given to the nymphs of Mount *Nysa* [p. 593] who hid him in their cave and fed him on milk.

BK III:316-338 THE JUDGEMENT OF TIRESIAS



While these things were brought about on earth because of that fatal oath, and while twice-born *Bacchus's* [p. 459] cradle remained safe, they say that *Jupiter* [p. 549], expansive with wine, set aside his onerous duties, and relaxing, exchanging pleasantries, with *Juno* [p. 547], said 'You gain more than we do from the pleasures of love.' She denied it. They agreed to ask learned *Tiresias* [p. 667] for his opinion. He had known *Venus* [p. 676] in both ways.

Once, with a blow of his stick, he had disturbed two large snakes mating in the green forest, and, marvellous to tell, he was changed from a man to a woman, and lived as such for seven years. In the eighth year he saw the same snakes again and said 'Since there is such power in plaguing you that it changes the giver of a blow to the opposite sex, I will strike you again, now.' He struck the snakes and regained his former shape, and returned to the sex he was born with.



As the arbiter of the light-hearted dispute he confirmed Jupiter's words. *Saturnia* [p. 643], it is said, was more deeply upset than was justified and than the dispute warranted, and damned the one who had made the judgement to eternal night. But, since no god has the right to void what another god has done, the all-powerful father of the gods gave Tiresias knowledge of the future, in exchange for his lost sight, and lightened the punishment with honour.



BK III:339-358 ECHO SEES NARCISSUS

Famous throughout all the *Aonian* [p. 445] cities, *Tiresias* [p. 667] gave faultless answers to people who consulted him. Dusky *Liriope* [p. 562], the *Naiad* [p. 583], was the first to test the truth and the accuracy of his words, whom once the river-god *Cephisus* [p. 475] clasped in his winding streams, and took by force under the waves. This loveliest of nymphs gave birth at full term to a child whom, even then, one could fall in love with, called *Narcissus* [p. 584]. Being consulted as to whether the child would live a long life, to a ripe old age, the seer with prophetic vision replied ‘If he does not discover himself’.

For a long time the augur’s pronouncement appeared empty words. But in the end it proved true: the outcome, and the cause of his death, and the strangeness of his passion. One year the son of Cephisus had reached sixteen and might seem both boy and youth. Many youths, and many young girls desired him. But there was such intense pride in that delicate form that none of the youths or young girls affected him. One day the nymph *Echo* [p. 506] saw him, driving frightened deer into his nets, she of the echoing voice, who cannot be silent when others have spoken, nor learn how to speak first herself.

Bk III:359-401 HOW JUNO ALTERED ECHO'S SPEECH

Echo [p. 506] still had a body then and was not merely a voice. But though she was garrulous, she had no other trick of speech than she has now: she can repeat the last words out of many. *Juno* [p. 547] made her like that, because often when she might have caught the nymphs lying beneath her *Jupiter* [p. 549], on the mountain slopes, Echo knowingly held her in long conversations, while the nymphs fled. When *Saturnia* [p. 643] realised this she said 'I shall give you less power over that tongue by which I have been deluded, and the briefest ability to speak' and what she threatened she did. Echo only repeats the last of what is spoken and returns the words she hears.

Now when she saw *Narcissus* [p. 584] wandering through the remote fields, she was inflamed, following him secretly, and the more she followed the closer she burned with fire, no differently than inflammable sulphur, pasted round the tops of torches, catches fire, when a flame is brought near it. O how often she wants to get close to him with seductive words, and call him with soft entreaties! Her nature denies it, and will not let her begin, but she is ready for what it will allow her to do, to wait for sounds, to which she can return words.

By chance, the boy, separated from his faithful band of followers, had called out 'Is anyone here?' and '*Here*' Echo replied. He is astonished, and glances everywhere, and shouts in a loud voice 'Come to me!' She calls as he calls. He looks back, and no one appearing behind, asks 'Why do you run from me?' and receives the same words as he speaks. He stands still, and deceived by the likeness to an answering voice, says 'Here, let us meet together'. And, never answering to another sound more gladly, Echo replies '*Together*', and to assist her words comes out of the woods to put her arms around his neck, in longing. He runs from her, and running cries 'Away with these encircling hands! May I die before what's mine is yours.' She answers, only '*What's mine is yours?*'

Scorned, she wanders in the woods and hides her face in shame among the leaves, and from that time on lives in lonely caves. But still her love endures, increased by the sadness of rejection. Her sleepless thoughts waste her sad form, and her body's strength vanishes into the air. Only her bones and the sound of her voice are left. Her voice remains, her bones,

they say, were changed to shapes of stone. She hides in the woods, no longer to be seen on the hills, but to be heard by everyone. It is sound that lives in her.

BK III:402-436 NARCISSUS SEES HIMSELF AND FALLS IN LOVE

As *Narcissus* [p. 584] had scorned her, so he had scorned the other nymphs of the rivers and mountains, so he had scorned the companies of young men. Then one of those who had been mocked, lifting hands to the skies, said ‘So may he himself love, and so may he fail to command what he loves!’ *Rhamnusia* [p. 638], who is the goddess *Nemesis* [p. 586], heard this just request.

There was an unclouded fountain, with silver-bright water, which neither shepherds nor goats grazing the hills, nor other flocks, touched, that no animal or bird disturbed not even a branch falling from a tree. Grass was around it, fed by the moisture nearby, and a grove of trees that prevented the sun from warming the place. Here, the boy, tired by the heat and his enthusiasm for the chase, lies down, drawn to it by its look and by the fountain. While he desires to quench his thirst, a different thirst is created. While he drinks he is seized by the vision of his reflected form. He loves a bodiless dream. He thinks that a body, which is only a shadow. He is astonished by himself, and hangs there motionless, with a fixed expression, like a statue carved from *Parian* [p. 606] marble.

Flat on the ground, he contemplates two stars, his eyes, and his hair, fit for *Bacchus* [p. 459], fit for *Apollo* [p. 446], his youthful cheeks and ivory neck, the beauty of his face, the rose-flush mingled in the whiteness of snow, admiring everything for which he is himself admired. Unknowingly he desires himself, and the one who praises is himself praised, and, while he courts, is courted, so that, equally, he inflames and burns. How often he gave his lips in vain to the deceptive pool, how often, trying to embrace the neck he could see, he plunged his arms into the water, but could not catch himself within them! What he has seen he does not understand, but what he sees he is on fire for, and the same error both seduces and deceives his eyes.

Fool, why try to catch a fleeting image, in vain? What you search for is nowhere: turning away, what you love is lost! What you perceive is the shadow of reflected form: nothing of you is in it. It comes and stays with you, and leaves with you, if you can leave!

Bk III:437-473 NARCISSUS LAMENTS THE PAIN OF UNREQUITED LOVE

No care for *Ceres's* [p. 476] gift of bread, or for rest, can draw him away. Stretched on the shadowed grass he gazes at that false image with un-sated eyes, and loses himself in his own vision. Raising himself a little way and holding his arms out to the woods, he asks, 'Has anyone ever loved more cruelly than I? You must know, since you have been a chance hiding place for many people. Do you remember in your life that lasts so many centuries, in all the long ages past, anyone who pined away like this? I am enchanted and I see, but I cannot reach what I see and what enchants me' – so deep in error is this lover – 'and it increases my pain the more, that no wide sea separates us, no road, no mountains, no walls with locked doors.

We are only kept apart by a little water! Whenever I extend my lips to the clear liquid, he tries to raise his lips to me. He desires to be held. You would think he could be touched: it is such a small thing that prevents our love. Whoever you are come out to me! Why do you disappoint me, you extraordinary boy? Where do you vanish when I reach for you? Surely my form and years are not what you flee from, and I am one that the nymphs have loved! You offer me some unknown hope with your friendly look, and when I stretch my arms out to you, you stretch out yours. When I smile, you smile back. And I have often seen your tears when I weep tears. You return the gesture of my head with a nod, and, from the movements of your lovely mouth, I guess that you reply with words that do not reach my ears!

I am he. I sense it and I am not deceived by my own image. I am burning with love for myself. I move and bear the flames. What shall I do? Surely not court and be courted? Why court then? What I want I have. My riches make me poor. O I wish I could leave my own body! Strange prayer for a lover, I desire what I love to be distant from me. Now sadness takes away my strength, not much time is left for me to live, and I am cut off in the prime of youth. Nor is dying painful to me, laying down my sadness in death. I wish that him I love might live on, but now we shall die united, two in one spirit.'

BK III:474-510 NARCISSUS IS CHANGED INTO A FLOWER

He spoke, and returned madly to the same reflection, and his tears stirred the water, and the image became obscured in the rippling pool. As he saw it vanishing, he cried out 'Where do you fly to? Stay, cruel one, do not abandon one who loves you! I am allowed to gaze at what I cannot touch, and so provide food for my miserable passion!' While he weeps, he tears at the top of his clothes: then strikes his naked chest with hands of marble. His chest flushes red when they strike it, as apples are often pale in part, part red, or as grapes in their different bunches are stained with purple when they are not yet ripe.

As he sees all this reflected in the dissolving waves, he can bear it no longer, but as yellow wax melts in a light flame, as morning frost thaws in the sun, so he is weakened and melted by love, and worn away little by little by the hidden fire. He no longer retains his colour, the white mingled with red, no longer has life and strength, and that form so pleasing to look at, nor has he that body which *Echo* [p. 506] loved. Still, when she saw this, though angered and remembering, she pitied him, and as often as the poor boy said 'Alas!' she repeated with her echoing voice '*Alas!*' and when his hands strike at his shoulders, she returns the same sounds of pain. His last words as he looked into the familiar pool were 'Alas, in vain, beloved boy!' and the place echoed every word, and when he said 'Goodbye!' *Echo* also said '*Goodbye!*'

He laid down his weary head in the green grass, death closing those eyes that had marvelled at their lord's beauty. And even when he had been received into the house of shadows, he gazed into the *Stygian* [p. 653] waters. His sisters the *Naiads* [p. 583] lamented, and let down their hair for their brother, and the *Dryads* [p. 504] lamented. *Echo* returned their laments. And now they were preparing the funeral pyre, the quivering torches and the bier, but there was no body. They came upon a flower, instead of his body, with white petals surrounding a yellow heart.

BK X:1-85 ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE

Hymen [p. 536], called by the voice of *Orpheus* [p. 598], departed, and, dressed in his saffron robes, made his way through the vast skies to the *Ciconian* [p. 480] coast: but in vain. He was present at Orpheus's marriage, true, but he did not speak the usual words, display a joyful expression, or bring good luck. The torch, too, that he held, sputtered continually, with tear-provoking fumes, and no amount of shaking contrived to light it properly. The result was worse than any omens. While the newly wedded bride, *Eurydice* [p. 516], was walking through the grass, with a crowd of *naiads* [p. 583] as her companions, she was killed, by a bite on her ankle, from a snake, sheltering there. When *Thracian* [p. 666] *Orpheus* [p. 598], the poet of *Rhodope* [p. 639], had mourned for her, greatly, in the upper world, he dared to go down to *Styx* [p. 653], through the gate of *Taenarus* [p. 655], also, to see if he might not move the dead.

Through the weightless throng, and the ghosts that had received proper burial, he came to *Persephone* [p. 614], and the *lord of the shadows* [p. 502], he who rules the joyless kingdom. Then striking the lyre-strings to accompany his words, he sang: 'O gods of this world, placed below the earth, to which all, who are created mortal, descend; if you allow me, and it is lawful, to set aside the fictions of idle tongues and speak the truth, I have not come here to see dark *Tartarus* [p. 657], nor to bind *Cerberus* [p. 475], *Medusa*' [p. 571]'s child, with his three necks, and snaky hair. My wife is the cause of my journey. A viper she trod on diffused its venom into her body, and robbed her of her best years. I longed to be able to accept it, and I do not say I have not tried: *Love* [p. 438] won.

He is a god well known in the world above, though I do not know if it is so here: though I do imagine him to be here, as well, and if the story of that rape in ancient times is not a lie, you also were wedded by *Amor* [p. 438]. I beg you, by these fearful places, by this immense abyss, and the silence of your vast realms, reverse Eurydice's swift death. All things are destined to be yours, and though we delay a while, sooner or later we hasten home. Here we are all bound, this is our final abode, and you hold the longest reign over the human race. Eurydice, too, will be yours to command, when she has lived out her fair span of years, to maturity. I ask this benefit as a gift; but, if the fates refuse my wife this kindness, I am determined not to return: you can delight in both our deaths.'

The bloodless spirits wept as he spoke, accompanying his words with the music. *Tantalus* [p. 656] did not reach for the ever-retreating water: *Ixion's* [p. 552] wheel was stilled: the vultures did not pluck at *Tityus's* [p. 669] liver: the *Belides* [p. 461], the daughters of Danaüs, left their water jars: and you, *Sisyphus* [p. 650], perched there, on your rock. Then they say, for the first time, the faces of the *Furies* [p. 515] were wet with tears, won over by his song: the king of the deep, and his royal bride, could not bear to refuse his prayer, and called for Eurydice.

She was among the recent ghosts, and walked haltingly from her wound. The poet of Rhodope received her, and, at the same time, accepted this condition, that he must not turn his eyes behind him, until he emerged from the vale of *Avernus* [p. 459], or the gift would be null and void.

They took the upward path, through the still silence, steep and dark, shadowy with dense fog, drawing near to the threshold of the upper world. Afraid she was no longer there, and eager to see her, the lover turned his eyes. In an instant she dropped back, and he, unhappy man, stretching out his arms to hold her and be held, clutched at nothing but the receding air. Dying a second time, now, there was no complaint to her husband (what, then, could she complain of, except that she had been loved?). She spoke a last 'farewell' that, now, scarcely reached his ears, and turned again towards that same place.

Stunned by the double loss of his wife, Orpheus was like that coward who saw Cerberus, the three-headed dog, chained by the central neck, and whose fear vanished with his nature, as stone transformed his body. Or like *Olenos* [p. 595], and you, his *Lethaea* [p. 559], too proud of your beauty: he wished to be charged with your crime, and seem guilty himself: once wedded hearts, you are now rocks set on moist Mount *Ida* [p. 540].

Orpheus wished and prayed, in vain, to cross the *Styx* [p. 653] again, but the ferryman fended him off. Still, for seven days, he sat there by the shore, neglecting himself and not taking *nourishment* [p. 476]. Sorrow, troubled thought, and tears were his food. He took himself to lofty Mount *Rhodope* [p. 639], and *Haemus* [p. 524], swept by the winds, complaining that the gods of *Erebus* [p. 510] were cruel.

Three times *the sun* [p. 668] had ended the year, in watery *Pisces* [p. 627], and Orpheus had abstained from the love of women, either because things ended badly for him, or because he had sworn to do so. Yet, many felt a desire to be joined with the poet, and many grieved at rejection. Indeed, he was the first of the *Thracian* [p. 666] people to transfer his love to young boys, and enjoy their brief springtime, and early flowering, this side of manhood.

BK X:86-105 THE GATHERING OF THE TREES

There was a hill, and, on the hill, a wide area of level ground, turfed with fresh blades of grass: shade was absent there: but when the poet, born of the god, sounded the strings of his lyre, shade gathered there. *Jupiter's* [p. 549] *Chaonian* [p. 477] oak-tree came; and *Phaethon's* [p. 616] sisters, the *Heliades* [p. 527], the poplars; the durmast oak with its deep foliage; the soft lime-tree; the beech; the virgin sweet-bay, laurel; the hazel, frail; the ash-tree, used for spears; the sweeping silver-fir: holm-oak, heavy with acorns; pleasant plane-tree; the many-coloured maple; with the river-haunting willow; lotus, water-lover; boxwood ever-verdant; the slender tamarisk; the myrtle, with, over and under its leaves, the two shades of green; and the blue-berried wild-bay, *laurus tinus*. You came, also, twining ivy, together with shooting vines; the vine-supporting elms; the flowering 'manna' ash; the spruce; the strawberry tree, weighed down with its red fruit; the pliant palms, the winner's prize; and you, the shaggy-topped pine tree, armed with needles, sacred to *Cybele* [p. 491], mother of the gods, since *Attis* [p. 456] exchanged his human form for you, and hardened in your trunk.

BK X:106-142 THE DEATH OF CYPARISSUS

Among the crowd came the cypress, formed like the cone-shaped *meta*, that marks the turning point in the race-course: once a boy, but now a tree: loved by the god who tunes the lyre, and strings the bow.

There was a giant stag, sacred to the nymphs that haunt the *Carthaeian* [p. 470] country, which cast deep shadows, around its head, from his wide-branching antlers. The antlers shone with gold, and the gems of a jewelled

collar, around his polished neck, hung down onto his shoulders. A *bullā*, a silver charm, fastened with small strips of leather, quivered on his forehead, and on either side of his hollow temples matching pearls of bronze gleamed from both ears. Free from fear, and forgetting his natural shyness, he used to visit people's houses, and offer his neck to be stroked by strangers' hands. Yet, above all others, he was dear to you, *Cyparissus* [p. 494], loveliest of the *Cean* [p. 472] boys. You led the stag to fresh pastures, and the waters of the clear spring. Now you would weave diverse flowers through his horns, and then, astride his back like a horseman, delight in tugging his soft mouth one way or the other by means of a purple muzzle.

It was noon of a summer's day, when the curving claws of shore-loving *Cancer* [p. 469] were burning in the hot sun. Tired, the stag had settled its body on the grassy turf and was enjoying the cool of the woodland shade. The boy, without intention, transfixed it with his sharp spear, and when he saw it dying from the cruel wound, he wished to die himself. What was there *Phoebus* [p. 622] did not say, in solace, advising a moderate grief matching the cause! He only sighed, and begged, as the last gift of the gods, that he might mourn forever. Then, his blood discharged among endless tears, his limbs began to turn to a shade of green, and his hair that a moment ago hung over his pale forehead, became a bristling crown, and he stiffened to a graceful point gazing at the starry heavens. The god sighed for him, and said, sadly: 'I will mourn for you: you will mourn for others, and enter into sorrows'.

BK X:143-219 ORPHEUS SINGS: GANYMEDE; HYACINTHUS

Such was the grove of trees the poet gathered round him, and he sat in the midst of a crowd, of animals and birds. When he had tried a few chords, stroking the lyre with his thumb, and felt that the various notes were in tune, regardless of their pitch, he raised his voice to sing: 'Begin my song with *Jupiter* [p. 549], *Calliope* [p. 467], O *Muse* [p. 581], my mother (all things bow to Jupiter's might)! I have often sung the power of Jove before: I have sung of the *Giants* [p. 521], in an epic strain, and the victorious lightning bolts, hurled at the *Phlegraean* [p. 620] field. Now there is gentler work for the lyre, and I sing of boys loved by the gods, and girls stricken with forbidden fires, deserving punishment for their lust.

The king of the gods once burned with love for *Phrygian* [p. 624] *Ganymede* [p. 520], and to win him Jupiter chose to be something other than he was. Yet he did not deign to transform himself into any other bird, than that eagle, that could carry his lightning bolts. Straightaway, he beat the air with deceitful wings, and stole the *Trojan* [p. 541] boy, who still handles the mixing cups, and against *Juno's* [p. 547] will pours out Jove's nectar.

You too, *Hyacinthus* [p. 534], of *Amyclae* [p. 440], *Phoebus* [p. 622] would have placed in heaven, if sad fate had given him time to do so. Still, as it is, you are immortal, and whenever spring drives winter away, and *Aries* [p. 451] follows watery *Pisces* [p. 627], you also rise, and flower in the green turf. My father, Phoebus, loved you above all others: and *Delphi* [p. 499], at the centre of the world, lost its presiding deity, while the god frequented *Eurotas* [p. 516], and *Sparta* [p. 652] without its walls, doing no honour to the zither or the bow. Forgetting his usual pursuits, he did not object to carrying the nets, handling the dogs, or travelling as a companion, over the rough mountain ridges, and by constant partnership feeding the flames.

Now, *the sun* [p. 668] was midway between the vanished and the future night, equally far from either extreme: they stripped off their clothes, and gleaming with the rich olive oil, they had rubbed themselves with, they began a contest with the broad discus. Phoebus went first, balancing it, and hurling it high into the air, scattering the clouds with its weight. Its mass took a long time to fall back to the hard ground, showing strength and skill combined. Immediately the *Taenarian* [p. 655] boy, without thinking, ran forward to pick up the disc, prompted by his eagerness to throw, but the solid earth threw it back, hitting you in the face, with the rebound, Hyacinthus.

The god is as white as the boy, and cradles the fallen body. Now he tries to revive you, now to staunch your dreadful wound, and now applies herbs to hold back your departing spirit. His arts are useless: the wound is incurable. Just as if, when someone, in a garden, breaks violets, stiff poppies, or the lilies with their bristling yellow stamens, and, suddenly, they droop, bowing their weakened heads, unable to support themselves, and their tops gaze at the soil: so his dying head drops, and, with failing strength, the neck is overburdened, and sinks onto the shoulder.

'You slip away, *Spartan* [p. 594], robbed of the flower of youth' Phoebus sighed, 'and I see my guilt, in your wound. You are my grief and my

reproach: your death must be ascribed to my hand. I am the agent of your destruction. Yet, how was it my fault, unless taking part in a game can be called a fault, unless it can be called a fault to have loved you? If only I might die with you, and pay with my life! But since the laws of fate bind us, you shall always be with me, and cling to my remembering lips. My songs; the lyre my hand touches; will celebrate you. As a new-formed flower, you shall denote my woe, by your markings. And the time will come, when *Ajax* [p. 433], bravest of heroes, will associate himself with this same flower, and be identified by its petals.

While the truthful mouth of Apollo uttered these words, look, the blood that had spilt on the ground staining the grass was no longer blood, and a flower sprang up, brighter than *Tyrian* [p. 674] dye, and took the shape of a lily, though it was purple in colour, where the other is silvery white. Not satisfied with this alone, Phoebus (he, indeed, was the giver of the honour) himself marked his grief on the petals, and the flower bore the letters AI AI, the letters of woe traced there. Nor was Sparta ashamed of producing Hyacinthus: his honour has lasted to this day, and by ancient custom the *Hyacinthia* [p. 534] is celebrated, at its annual return, by displaying the flower in procession.’

BK X:220-242 ORPHEUS SINGS: THE PROPOETIDES

‘But if you should ask the *Cyprian* [p. 494] city of *Amathus* [p. 437], rich in mines, whether it would have wished to have produced those girls, the *Propoetides* [p. 633], it would repudiate them, and equally those men, whose foreheads were once marred by two horns, from which they took their name, *Cerastae* [p. 475]. An altar, to Jove the Hospitable, used to stand in front of the gates: if any stranger, ignorant of their wickedness, had seen it, stained with blood, they would have thought that calves or sheep, from Amathus, were sacrificed there: it was their guests they killed! Kindly *Venus* [p. 676] was preparing to abandon her cities, and the *Cyprian* [p. 597] fields, outraged by their abominable rites, but ‘How,’ she said, ‘have my cities, or this dear place, sinned? What is their crime? Instead, let this impious race pay the penalty of death or exile, or some punishment between execution and banishment, and what might that be but the penalty of being transformed?’ While she is deciding how to alter them, she turns her eyes towards their

horns, and this suggests that she might leave them those, and she changed them into wild bullocks.

Nevertheless, the immoral Propoetides dared to deny that Venus was the goddess. For this, because of her divine anger, they are said to have been the first to prostitute their bodies and their reputations in public, and, losing all sense of shame, they lost the power to blush, as the blood hardened in their cheeks, and only a small change turned them into hard flints.⁷

BK X:243-297 ORPHEUS SINGS: PYGMALION AND THE STATUE

Pygmalion [p. 635] had seen them, spending their lives in wickedness, and, offended by the failings that nature gave the female heart, he lived as a bachelor, without a wife or partner for his bed. But, with wonderful skill, he carved a figure, brilliantly, out of snow-white ivory, no mortal woman, and fell in love with his own creation. The features are those of a real girl, who, you might think, lived, and wished to move, if modesty did not forbid it. Indeed, art hides his art. He marvels: and passion, for this bodily image, consumes his heart. Often, he runs his hands over the work, tempted as to whether it is flesh or ivory, not admitting it to be ivory. He kisses it and thinks his kisses are returned; and speaks to it; and holds it, and imagines that his fingers press into the limbs, and is afraid lest bruises appear from the pressure. Now he addresses it with compliments, now brings it gifts that please girls, shells and polished pebbles, little birds, and many-coloured flowers, lilies and tinted beads, and the *Heliades*'s [p. 527] amber tears, that drip from the trees. He dresses the body, also, in clothing; places rings on the fingers; places a long necklace round its neck; pearls hang from the ears, and cinctures round the breasts. All are fitting: but it appears no less lovely, naked. He arranges the statue on a bed on which cloths dyed with *Tyrian* [p. 674] murex are spread, and calls it his bedfellow, and rests its neck against soft down, as if it could feel.

The day of *Venus*'s [p. 676] festival came, celebrated throughout *Cyprus* [p. 494], and heifers, their curved horns gilded, fell, to the blow on their snowy neck. The incense was smoking, when Pygmalion, having made his offering, stood by the altar, and said, shyly: "If you can grant all things, you gods, I

wish as a bride to have...” and not daring to say “the girl of ivory” he said “one like my ivory girl.” Golden Venus, for she herself was present at the festival, knew what the prayer meant, and as a sign of the gods’ fondness for him, the flame flared three times, and shook its crown in the air. When he returned, he sought out the image of his girl, and leaning over the couch, kissed her. She felt warm: he pressed his lips to her again, and also touched her breast with his hand. The ivory yielded to his touch, and lost its hardness, altering under his fingers, as the bees’ wax of *Hymettus* [p. 536] softens in the sun, and is moulded, under the thumb, into many forms, made usable by use. The lover is stupefied, and joyful, but uncertain, and afraid he is wrong, reaffirms the fulfilment of his wishes, with his hand, again, and again.

It was flesh! The pulse throbbed under his thumb. Then the hero, of *Paphos* [p. 605], was indeed overfull of words with which to thank Venus, and still pressed his mouth against a mouth that was not merely a likeness. The girl felt the kisses he gave, blushed, and, raising her bashful eyes to the light, saw both her lover and the sky. The goddess attended the marriage that she had brought about, and when the moon’s horns had nine times met at the full, the woman bore a son, *Paphos* [p. 605], from whom the island takes its name.’

Bk X:298-355 ORPHEUS SINGS: MYRRHA’S INCESTUOUS LOVE FOR CINYRAS

‘*Cinyras* [p. 481] was the son of *Paphos* [p. 605], and he might have been counted amongst the fortunate, if he, in turn, had been childless. I speak of terrible things. Fathers and daughters, keep away: or if your mind takes pleasure in my song, put no faith in this story of mine, and imagine it did not happen. Or, if you do believe it, believe in the punishment also, that it brought. If nature, however, allows such crimes to be visible, then I give thanks that the *people of Thrace* [p. 545], this city, and this land, are far from the regions where such sin is born. Let the land of *Panchaia* [p. 604], beyond Araby, produce its balsam, cinnamon, costmary; its incense, exuded from the trees; its flowers different from ours; if it produces myrrh: a strange tree is not worth such a price.

Cupid [p. 490] denies that his arrows hurt you, *Myrrha* [p. 582], and clears his fires of blame for your crime. One of the three sisters, the *Furies* [p. 519], with

her swollen snakes, and firebrand from the *Styx* ^[p. 653], breathed on you. It is wrong to hate your father, but that love was a greater wrong than hatred. The pick of the princes, from everywhere, desire you: young men, from the whole of the East, come to win you in marriage. Out of the many, choose one for your husband, Myrrha, but let one man not be amongst the many.

Indeed, she knows it, and fights against her disgraceful passion, and says, to herself: “Where is my thought leading? What am I creating? You gods, I pray, and the duty and sacred laws respecting parents, prevent this wickedness, and oppose my sin, indeed, if sin it is. But it can be said that duty declines to condemn such love. Other creatures mate indiscriminately: it is no disgrace for a heifer to have her sire mount her, for his filly to be a stallion’s mate: the goat goes with the flocks he has made, and the birds themselves conceive, by him whose seed conceived them. Happy the creatures who are allowed to do so! Human concern has made malign laws, and what nature allows, jealous duty forbids.

Yet they say there are races where mother and son, and father and daughter, pair off, and affection is increased by a double bond. Alas for me, that I did not happen to be born there, and that I am made to suffer by an accident of place! – Why do I repeat these things? Forbidden hopes, vanish! He is worth loving, but only as a father. – I could lie with *Cinyras* ^[p. 481], if I were not Cinyras’s already. Now, he is not mine, because he is already mine, and the nearness of our relationship damns me: I would be better off as a stranger. I would be happy to go far away, and leave the borders of my homeland behind me, if I might run from evil: but even if nothing more is permitted, a wicked desire to see Cinyras, touch him, speak to him, and kiss him, face to face, prevents my leaving. But then, what more might you look to have, impious girl? Do you realise how many names and ties you are throwing into confusion? Would you be, then, your mother’s rival, and your father’s mistress? Would you be known, then, as your son’s sister, your brother’s mother? Do you not fear the three sisters, with black snaky hair, that those with guilty hearts, their eyes and mouths attacked with cruel torches, see? Since you have still not committed sin in the flesh, do not conceive it in your mind, or disregard the prohibitions of mighty nature, in vile congress! Grant that you want it: the reality itself forbids it. He is a good man, and mindful of the moral law – but, O, how I wish the same passion were in him!” ’

Bk X:356-430 ORPHEUS SINGS: MYRRHA AND HER NURSE

‘She spoke: *Cinyras* [p. 481], however, who was made doubtful of what to do by the crowd of noble suitors, naming them, asked her whom she wanted, as a husband.

At first she is silent, and staring at her father’s face, hesitates, her eyes filling with warm tears. *Cinyras* thinking this to be virgin shyness, forbids her to cry, dries her cheeks, and kisses her on the lips. *Myrrha* [p. 582] is overjoyed at this gift, and, being consulted as to what kind of husband she might choose, says: “Someone like you”. Not understanding this, however, he praises her, saying: “Always be so loving.” At the word “loving”, the girl, lowers her glance, conscious of her sin.

It was midnight, and sleep had released mortal flesh from worldly cares, but *Cinyras*’s daughter, wakeful, stirring the embers, reawakens her ungovernable desires, one moment despairing, at another willing to try, ashamed and eager, not yet discovering what to do. As a tall tree, struck by the axe, the last blow remaining, uncertain how it will fall, causes fear on all sides, so her fickle mind, swayed this way and that, her thought taking both directions, seeing no rest for or end to her passion, but death. She felt ready to die. She got up, determined, to fix a noose round her throat, and, fastening a cord to the doorway’s crossbeam, she said: “Goodbye, dear *Cinyras*, and realize the reason for my death!” And she tied the rope around her bloodless neck. They say that the murmured words came to the ears of her loyal nurse, who watched at her foster-child’s threshold.

The old woman gets up, and opens the door, and, seeing the equipment of death, cries out, and in the same moment, strikes her breast, snatches at the folds of her robe, and tearing the noose from the girl’s neck, pulls it apart. Then, finally, she has time to cry, to embrace her, and demand the reason for the rope. The girl is mute and still, looking, fixedly, at the ground, and unhappy that her belated attempt at death has been discovered. The old woman insists on knowing, baring her white hair and withered breasts, and begs her to say what grieves her, invoking her infant cradle, and first nurturing.

The girl turns away from her pleading, with a sigh. The nurse is determined to know, and promises more than loyalty. “Tell me,” She says,

“and let me bring you some help: age does not slow me. If it is some frenzy, I have herbs and charms that heal: if someone is seeking your harm, I will purify you with magic rites: if the gods are angry, anger is appeased by sacrifice. What else could it be? The destiny of your house is fortunate, and on course: they are well, your mother and father.”

Hearing the word “father”, Myrrha sighed deeply. Even then the nurse had no idea of the sin in her mind, though she guessed it might be some love affair. She begged her, tenaciously, to tell her what it was, and took the weeping girl to her aged breast, and holding her with trembling arms she said: “I know, you are in love! And in this matter (have no fear) my diligence can serve you, your father will never know.” The frenzied girl leapt from her arms, and burying her face in the bed, said, urgently: “Go, I beg you, and forgo the knowledge of my wretched shame! Go, or stop asking why I am grieving. What you are striving to know, is wickedness.” The old woman shuddered, and stretching out her hands that trembled with age and fear, she fell at her foster-child’s feet, pleading, then coaxing, then frightening her, into making her party to it. She threatens her with the evidence of the noose, and the attempt on her life, and promises her help in her love affair. The girl raises her head, and her welling tears rain on her nurse’s breast. She often tries to confess, and often stops herself, and hides her face, in shame, in her clothing: then gets as far as “Mother, you are happy in your husband!” and sighs.

A shudder of cold penetrated the nurse’s flesh and bone (now she understood) and her white hair stiffened all over her head. She told her at length, to banish, if she could, this fatal passion. Though the girl knew she was being advised rightly, she was still determined to die, if she could not possess her love. “Live,” said the nurse, “possess your....” - and did not dare say: “father”. She was silent, and confirmed her promise in the sight of heaven.’

BK X:431-502 ORPHEUS SINGS: MYRRHA’S CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

‘The married women were celebrating that annual festival of *Ceres* [p. 476], when, with their bodies veiled in white robes, they offer the first fruits of

the harvest, wreathes of corn, and, for nine nights, treat sexual union, and the touch of a man, as forbidden. *Cenchreis* [p. 473], the king's wife was among the crowd, frequenting the sacred rites. Finding *Cinyras* [p. 481] drunk with wine, the king's bed empty of his lawful partner, the nurse, wrongly diligent, told him of one who truly loved him, giving him a fictitious name, and praised her beauty. He, asking the girl's age, she said: "*Myrrha's* [p. 582] is the same." After she had been ordered to bring her, and had reached home, she said: "Be happy, my child, we have won!" The unhappy girl felt no joy at all in her heart, and her heart prophetically mourned, yet she was still glad: such was her confusion of mind.

It was the hour, when all is silent, and *Boötes* [p. 462], between the *Bears* [p. 670], had turned his wagon, with downward-pointing shaft: she approached the sinful act. The golden moon fled the sky; black clouds covered the hidden stars; night lacked its fires. You, *Icarus* [p. 539], and you, *Erigone* [p. 511], his daughter, immortalised for your pious love of your father, hid your faces first. Myrrha was checked by an omen, three times, when her foot stumbled: three times, the gloomy screech owl gave her warning, with its fatal cry: she still went on, her shame made less by blindness and black night. With her left hand, she kept tight hold of her nurse, groping with the other she found a way through the dark.

Now she reaches the threshold of the room, now she opens the door, now is led inside. But her trembling knees give way, her colour flees with her blood, and thought vanishes as she goes forward. The closer she is to her sin, the more she shudders at it, repents of her audacity, and wants to be able to turn back, unrecognised. When she hesitated, the old woman took her by the hand, and, leading her to the high bed, delivered her up, saying: "Take her Cinyras, she is yours", uniting their accursed flesh. The father admitted his own child into the incestuous bed, calmed her virgin fears, and encouraged her timidity. Perhaps he also said the name, "daughter", in accordance with her age, and she said, "father", so that their names were not absent from their sin.

She left the room impregnated by her father, bearing impious seed in her fatal womb, carrying the guilt she had conceived. The next night the crime was repeated: nor did it finish there. Eventually, Cinyras, eager to discover his lover after so many couplings, fetching a light, saw his daughter and his guilt, and speechless from grief, he snatched his bright sword out of

the sheath it hung in. Myrrha ran, escaping death, by the gift of darkness and secret night. Wandering the wide fields, she left the land of *Panchaea* [p. 604], and palm-bearing *Arabia* [p. 447], behind, and after roaming through nine returns of the crescent moon, weary, she rested at last in the land of the *Sabaeans* [p. 641].

Now she could scarcely bear the weight of her womb. Tired of living, and scared of dying, not knowing what to pray for, she composed these words of entreaty: “O, if there are any gods who hear my prayer, I do not plead against my well deserved punishment, but lest, by being, I offend the living, or, by dying, offend the dead, banish me from both realms, and change me, and deny me life and death!” Some god listened to her prayer: certainly the last request found its path to the heavens. While she was still speaking, the soil covered her shins; roots, breaking from her toes, spread sideways, supporting a tall trunk; her bones strengthened, and in the midst of the remaining marrow, the blood became sap; her arms became long branches; her fingers, twigs; her skin, solid bark. And now the growing tree had drawn together over her ponderous belly, buried her breasts, and was beginning to encase her neck: she could not bear the wait, and she sank down against the wood, to meet it, and plunged her face into the bark.

Though she has lost her former senses with her body, she still weeps, and the warm drops trickle down from the tree. There is merit, also, in the tears: and the myrrh that drips from the bark keeps its mistress’s name, and, about it, no age will be silent.’

BK X:503-559 ORPHEUS SINGS: VENUS AND ADONIS

‘The child, conceived in sin, had grown within the tree, and was now searching for a way to leave its mother, and reveal itself. The pregnant womb swells within the tree trunk, the burden stretching the mother. The pain cannot form words, nor can *Lucina* [p. 563] be called on, in the voice of a woman in labour. Nevertheless the tree bends, like one straining, and groans constantly, and is wet with falling tears. Gentle *Lucina* stood by the suffering branches, and laid her hands on them, speaking words that aid childbirth. At this the tree split open, and, from the torn bark, gave up its living burden, and the child cried. The *naiads* [p. 583] laid him on the soft grass, and anointed him with his mother’s tears. Even Envy would praise his

beauty, being so like one of the torsos of naked *Amor* [p. 438] painted on boards. But to stop them differing in attributes, you must add a light quiver, for him, or take theirs away from them.

Transient time slips by us unnoticed, betrays us, and nothing outpaces the years. That son of his grandfather, sister, now hid in a tree, and now born, then a most beautiful child, then a boy, now a man, now more beautiful than he was before, now interests *Venus* [p. 676] herself, and avenges his mother's desire. For while the boy, *Cupid* [p. 490], with quiver on shoulder, was kissing his mother, he innocently scratched her breast with a loose arrow. The injured goddess pushed her son away: but the wound he had given was deeper than it seemed, and deceived her at first. Now captured by mortal beauty, she cares no more for *Cythera's* [p. 494] shores, nor revisits *Paphos* [p. 605], surrounded by its deep waters, nor *Cnidos* [p. 484], the haunt of fish, nor *Amathus* [p. 437], rich in mines: she even forgoes the heavens: preferring *Adonis* [p. 424] to heaven.

She holds him, and is his companion, and though she is used to always idling in the shade, and, by cultivating it, enhancing her beauty, she roams mountain ridges, and forests, and thorny cliff-sides, her clothing caught up to the knee, like *Diana* [p. 500]. And she cheers on the hounds, chasing things safe to hunt, hares flying headlong, stags with deep horns, or their hinds. She avoids the strong wild boars, the ravening wolves, and shuns the bears armed with claws, and the lions glutted with the slaughter of cattle. She warns you Adonis, as if it were ever effective to warn, to fear them too, saying: "Be bold when they run, but bravery is unsafe when faced with the brave. Do not be foolish, beware of endangering me, and do not provoke the creatures nature has armed, lest your glory is to my great cost. Neither youth nor beauty, nor the charms that affect Venus, affect lions or bristling boars or the eyes and minds of other wild creatures. Boars have the force of a fierce lightning bolt in their curving tusks, and so does the attack of tawny lions, in their huge anger: the whole tribe are hateful to me."

When he asks her why, she says: "I will tell, and you will wonder, at the monstrous result of an ancient crime. But now the unaccustomed effort tires me, and, look, a poplar tree entices us with its welcome shade, and the turf yields a bed. I should like to rest here on the ground," (and she rested) "with you." She hugged the grass, and him, and leaning her head against the breast of the reclining youth, she spoke these words, interspersing them with kisses:

BK X:560-637 VENUS TELLS HER STORY: ATALANTA AND HIPPOMENES

“Perhaps you have heard of a girl who beat the fastest men at running: that was no idle tale, she did win. Nor could you say whether her speed or her beauty was more deserving of high praise. Enquiring of the god, about a husband, the god replied: ‘You don’t need a husband, *Atalanta* [p. 453]: run from the necessity for a husband. Nevertheless, you will not escape, and, still living, you will not be yourself.’ Afraid of the god’s oracle, she lived in the dark forests, unmarried, and fled from the crowd of insistent suitors, setting harsh conditions: ‘I will not be won, till I am beaten in running. Compete in the foot-race with me. Wife and bed will be given as prizes to the swift, death to the tardy: let those be the rules.’

Truly she was pitiless, but (such was the power of her beauty) a rash crowd of suitors came, despite the rules. *Hippomenes* [p. 533] had taken his seat as a spectator at the unjust contest, and said ‘Who would try for a wife at such a risk?’ condemning the young men for their excess of passion. But when he saw her face and her unclothed body, one like mine, *Adonis* [p. 424], or like yours if you were a woman, he was stunned. Stretching out his hands, he said: ‘Forgive me, you, that I just blamed! I had not yet realised what the prize was you were after.’ Praising her, he falls in love with her, and hopes none of the youths run faster, afraid, through jealousy. ‘But why, in this competition, is my luck left untested?’ he says. The god himself favours the bold!

While Hippomenes was debating with himself like this, the virgin girl sped by on winged feet. To the *Aonian* [p. 445] youth she flew like a *Scythian* [p. 645] arrow, yet it made him admire her beauty all the more. The race gave her a beauty of its own. The breeze blew the streaming feathers on her speeding sandals behind her, and her hair was thrown back from her ivory shoulders. Ribbons with embroidered edges fluttered at her knees, and a blush spread over the girlish whiteness of her body, just as when a red awning over a white courtyard stains it with borrowed shadows. While the stranger was watching this, the last marker was passed, and the victorious Atalanta was crowned with a festive garland, while the losers, groaning, paid the penalty according to their bond.

Undeterred by the youths' fate, Hippomenes stepped forward and, fixing his gaze on the girl, said 'Why seek an easy win beating the lazy? Race me. If fortune makes me the master, it will be no shame for you to be outpaced by such a man as me, since *Megareus* [p. 572] of *Onchestus* [p. 596] is my father, and his grandfather was *Neptune* [p. 586], so I am the great-grandson of the king of the ocean, and my courage is no less than my birth. Or if I am beaten, you will have a great and renowned name for defeating Hippomenes.' As he spoke *Schoeneus's* [p. 643] daughter looked at him with a softening expression, uncertain whether she wanted to win or lose, and said to herself: 'What god, envious of handsome youths, wants to destroy this one and send him in search of marriage, at the risk of his own dear life? I am not worth that much, I think. Nor is it his beauty that moves me (yet I could be touched by that too) but that he is still only a boy. He does not move me himself: it is his youth. What if he does have courage, and a spirit unafraid of dying? What if he is fourth in line from the ruler of the seas? What if he does love, and thinks so much of marriage with me, that he would die, if a harsh fate denies me to him? While you can, stranger, leave this blood-soaked marrying. Wedding me is a cruel thing. No one will refuse to have you, and you may be chosen by a wiser girl. – Yet why this concern when so many have already died before you?

Let him look out for himself! Let him perish, since he has not been warned off by the death of so many suitors, and shows himself tired of life. – Should he die, then, because he wants to live with me, and suffer an unjust death as the penalty for loving? My victory would not avoid incurring hatred. But it is not my fault! I wish you would desist, or if you are set on it, I wish you might be the faster! How the virginal expression of a boy clings to his face! O! Poor Hippomenes, I wish you had never seen me! You were so fitted to live. But if I were luckier, if the harsh fates did not prevent my marriage, you would be the one I would want to share my bed with.' She spoke: and inexperienced, feeling the touch of desire for the first time, not knowing what she does, she loves and does not realise she loves." ' "

Bk X:638-680 VENUS TELLS HER STORY: THE FOOT-RACE

"Now her father and the people were calling out for the usual foot-race, when *Hippomenes* [p. 533], *Neptune's* [p. 586] descendant invoked my aid, as a

suppliant: ‘*Cytherea* [p. 494], I beg you to assist my daring, and encourage the fire of love you lit.’ A kindly breeze brought me the flattering prayer, and I confess it stirred me, though there was scant time to give him my help. There is a field, the people there call it the field of *Tamasus* [p. 656], the richest earth in the island of *Cyprus* [p. 494], which the men of old made sacred to me, and ordered it to be added to my temples, as a gift. A tree gleams in the middle of the field, with rustling golden leaves, and golden branches. Come from there, by chance, I was carrying three golden apples, I had picked, in my hands, and I approached Hippomenes, showing myself only to him, and told him how to use them.

The trumpets gave the signal, and, leaning forward, they flashed from the starting line, and skimmed the surface of the sand, with flying feet. You would think them capable of running along the waves without wetting them, and passing over the ripened heads of the standing corn. The young man’s spirit was cheered by shouts and words of encouragement: ‘Run, Hippomenes! Now, now is the time to sprint! Use your full power, now! Don’t wait: you’ll win!’

Who knows whether *Megareus’s* [p. 572] heroic son, or *Schoeneus’s* [p. 643] daughter, was more pleased with these words? O how often, when she could have overtaken him, she lingered, and watching his face for a while, left him behind against her will! Panting breath came from his weary throat, and the winning post was far off. Only then did *Neptune’s* [p. 586] scion throw away one of the fruits from the tree. The girl was astonished, and, eager for the shining apple, she ran off the course, and picked up the spinning gold. Hippomenes passed her: the stands resounded with the applause. She made up for the delay and the lost time by a burst of speed, and left the youth behind once more. Again she delayed when a second apple was thrown, followed, and passed the man. The last section of track was left. ‘Now,’ he said, ‘be near me, goddess who made me this gift!’ He threw the shining gold vigorously, sideways, into the deep field, from where she would take longer to get back. The girl seemed to hesitate as to whether she should chase it: I made her pick it up, and added weight to the fruit she held, and obstructed her equally with the heaviness of the burden and the delay. And lest my story be longer than the race itself, the virgin was overtaken: the winner led away his prize.”

BK X:681-707 VENUS TELLS HER STORY: THE TRANSFORMATION

“*Adonis* [p. 424], did I deserve to be thanked, to have incense brought me? Unthinking, he neither gave thanks, nor offered incense to me. I was provoked to sudden anger, and pained by his contempt, so as not to be slighted in future, I decreed an example would be made of them, and I roused myself against them both.

They were passing a temple, hidden in the deep woods, of *Cybele* [p. 491] mother of the gods, that noble *Echion* [p. 505] had built in former times fulfilling a vow, and the length of their journey persuaded them to rest. There, stirred by my divine power, an untimely desire to make love seized *Hippomenes* [p. 533]. Near the temple was a poorly lit hollow, like a cave, roofed with the natural pumice-stone, sacred to the old religion, where the priests had gathered together wooden figures of the ancient gods. They entered it, and desecrated the sanctuary, with forbidden intercourse. The sacred images averted their gaze, and the Great Mother, with the turreted crown, hesitated as to whether to plunge the guilty pair beneath the waters of the *Syx* [p. 653]: but the punishment seemed too light. So tawny manes spread over their necks, that, a moment ago, were smooth; their fingers curved into claws; forelegs were formed from arms; all their weight was in their breast; and their tails swept the surface of the sand. They had a fierce expression, roared instead of speaking, and frequented the woods for a marriage-bed. As lions, fearful to others, they tamely bite on Cybele's bit. You must avoid, them, my love, and with them all the species of wild creature, that do not turn and run, but offer their breasts to the fight, lest your courage be the ruin of us both!”

BK X:708-739 ORPHEUS SINGS: THE DEATH OF ADONIS

‘She warned him, and made her way through the air, drawn by harnessed swans, but his courage defied the warning. By chance, his dogs, following a well-marked trail, roused a wild boar from its lair, and as it prepared to rush from the trees, *Cinyras's* [p. 481] grandson caught it a glancing blow. Immediately the fierce boar dislodged the blood-stained spear, with its crooked snout, and chased the youth, who was scared and running hard. It sank its tusk into his groin, and flung him, dying, on the yellow sand.

Cytherea [p. 494], carried in her light chariot through the midst of the heavens, by her swans' swiftmess, had not yet reached *Cyprus* [p. 494]: she heard from afar the groans of the dying boy, and turned the white birds towards him. When, from the heights, she saw the lifeless body, lying in its own blood, she leapt down, tearing her clothes, and tearing at her hair, as well, and beat at her breasts with fierce hands, complaining to the fates. "And yet not everything is in your power" she said. "*Adonis* [p. 424], there shall be an everlasting token of my grief, and every year an imitation of your death will complete a re-enactment of my mourning. But your blood will be changed into a flower. *Persephone* [p. 614], you were allowed to alter a woman's body, *Menthe's* [p. 574], to fragrant mint: shall the transformation of my hero, of the blood of *Cinyras* [p. 481], be grudged to me?" So saying, she sprinkled the blood with odorous nectar: and, at the touch, it swelled up, as bubbles emerge in yellow mud. In less than an hour, a flower, of the colour of blood, was created such as pomegranates carry, that hide their seeds under a tough rind. But enjoyment of it is brief; for, lightly clinging, and too easily fallen, the winds deflower it, which are likewise responsible for its name, windflower: *anemone*.

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Bittersweet

It was Sappho who first called eros “bittersweet.” No one who has been in love disputes her. What does the word mean?

Eros seemed to Sappho at once an experience of pleasure and pain. Here is contradiction and perhaps paradox. To perceive this eros can split the mind in two. Why? The components of the contradiction may seem, at first glance, obvious. We take for granted, as did Sappho, the sweetness of erotic desire; its pleurability smiles out at us. But the bitterness is less obvious. There might be several reasons why what is sweet should also be bitter. There may be various relations between the two savors. Poets have sorted the matter out in different ways. Sappho’s own formulation is a good place to begin tracing the possibilities. The relevant fragment runs:

Ἔρος δὴντέ μ’ ὁ λυσιμέλης δόνει,
γλυκύπικρον ἀμάχανον ὄρπετον

Eros once again limb-loosener whirls me
sweetbitter, impossible to fight off, creature stealing up
(LP, fr. 130)

It is hard to translate. “Sweetbitter” sounds wrong, and yet our standard English rendering “bittersweet” inverts the actual terms of Sappho’s compound *glukupikron*. Should that concern us? If her ordering has a descriptive intention, eros is here being said to bring sweetness, then bitterness in sequence: she is sorting the possibilities chronologically. Many a lover’s experience would vali-

date such a chronology, especially in poetry, where most love ends badly. But it is unlikely that this is what Sappho means. Her poem begins with a dramatic localization of the erotic situation in time (*dēute*) and fixes the erotic action in the present indicative tense (*donei*). She is not recording the history of a love affair but the instant of desire. One moment staggers under pressure of eros; one mental state splits. A simultaneity of pleasure and pain is at issue. The pleasant aspect is named first, we may presume, because it is less surprising. Emphasis is thrown upon the problematic other side of the phenomenon, whose attributes advance in a hail of soft consonants (line 2). Eros moves or creeps upon its victim from somewhere outside her: *orpeton*. No battle avails to fight off that advance: *amachanon*. Desire, then, is neither inhabitant nor ally of the desirer. Foreign to her will, it forces itself irresistibly upon her from without. Eros is an enemy. Its bitterness must be the taste of enmity. That would be hate.

“To love one’s friends and hate one’s enemies” is a standard archaic prescription for moral response. Love and hate construct between them the machinery of human contact. Does it make sense to locate both poles of this affect within the single emotional event of eros? Presumably, yes, if friend and enemy converge in the being who is its occasion. The convergence creates a paradox, but one that is almost a cliché for the modern literary imagination. “And hate begins where love leaves off . . .” whispers Anna Karenina, as she heads for Moscow Station and an end to the dilemma of desire. In fact, erotic paradox is a problem antedating Eros himself. We find it first enacted on the wall of Troy, in a scene between Helen and Aphrodite. The interchange is as sharp as a paradigm. Homer shows us Helen, embodiment of desire, fed up with the impositions of eros and defying an order from Aphrodite to serve Paris’ bed. The goddess of

love responds angrily, wielding erotic paradox as a weapon:

μή μ' ἔρεθε σχετλίη, μή χωσαμένη σε μεθείω,
τὼς δέ σ' ἀπεχθήρω ὡς νῦν ἔκπαγλ' ἐφίλησα

Damn you woman, don't provoke me—I'll get angry
and let you drop!

I'll come to hate you as terribly as I now love you!

(*Il.* 3.414-15)

Helen obeys at once; love and hate in combination make an irresistible enemy.

The simultaneity of bitter and sweet that startles us in Sappho's adjective *glukupikron* is differently rendered in Homer's poem. Epic convention represents inner states of feeling in dynamic and linear enactment, so that a divided mind may be read from a sequence of antithetical actions. Homer and Sappho concur, however, in presenting the divinity of desire as an ambivalent being, at once friend and enemy, who informs the erotic experience with emotional paradox.

Eros appears in other genres and poets, too, as a paradox of love and hate. Aristophanes, for example, tells us that the seductive young libertine Alkibiades was able to inspire a feeling like lover's passion in the Greek *dēmos*:

ποθεῖ μὲν, ἐχθαίρει δέ, βούλεται δ' ἔχειν.

For they love him and they hate him
and they long to possess him.

(*Ran.* 1425)

In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Menelaos is described wandering about his empty palace after the departure of Helen. The rooms seem haunted by her; at their bed-chamber he stops and cries out for "ruts of love in the bed" (411). There is no question it is desire he feels (*pothos*, 414), yet hate seeps in to fill the void (*echthetai*):

Bittersweet

πόθω δ' ὑπερποντίας
φάσμα δόξει δόμων ἀνάσσειν·
εὐμόρφων δὲ κολοσσῶν
ἔχθεται χάρις ἀνδρί,
ὁμμάτων δ' ἐν ἀχηνίαις
ἔρρει πᾶς Ἀφροδίτα.

Because of his longing for something gone across
the sea
a phantom seems to rule the rooms,
and the grace of statues shaped in beauty
comes to be an object of hate for the man.
In the absences of eyes
all Aphrodite is vacant, gone.
(Ag. 414-19)

Love and hate furnish a subject for the Hellenistic epigram as well. Nicharchos' injunction to his beloved is typical:

Εἴ με φιλεῖς, μισεῖς με· καὶ εἰ μισεῖς, σὺ φιλεῖς με·
εἰ δέ με μὴ μισεῖς, φίλτατε, μὴ με φίλει.

If you love me, you hate me. And if you hate me, you
love me.
Now if you don't hate me, beloved, don't love me.
(*Anth. Pal.* 11.252)

Catullus' epigram is perhaps the most elegant distillate we have of this cliché:

Odi et amo. quare id faciam, fortasse requiris.
nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

I hate and I love. Why? you might ask.
I don't know. But I feel it happening and I hurt.
(Catullus 85)

The poets of the Greek lyric tradition sometimes conceptualize the erotic condition as starkly as this, but Sappho and her successors in general prefer physiology to

concepts. The moment when the soul parts on itself in desire is conceived as a dilemma of body and senses. On Sappho's tongue, as we have seen, it is a moment bitter and sweet. This ambivalent taste is developed, in later poets, into "bitter honey" (*Anth. Pal.* 12.81), "sweet wound" (*Anth. Pal.* 12.126), and "Eros of sweet tears" (*Anth. Pal.* 12.167). Eros knocks a lover flat with the shock of hot and cold in Anakreon's poem:

μεγάλῳ δὴντέ μ' Ἔρως ἔκοψεν ὥστε χαλκεὺς
πελέκει, χειμερίῃ δ' ἔλουσεν χαράδρῃ.

With his huge hammer again Eros knocked me like a
blacksmith
and doused me in a wintry ditch
(PMG 413)

while Sophokles compares the experience to a lump of ice melting in warm hands (Radt, fr. 149).¹ Later poets mix the sensations of hot and cold with the metaphor from taste to concoct "sweet fire" (*Anth. Pal.* 12.63), lovers "burned by honey" (*Anth. Pal.* 12.126), erotic missiles "tempered in honey" (Anac. 27E). Ibykos frames eros in a paradox of wet and dry, for the black thunderstorm of desire drives against him not rain but "parching madnesses" (PMG 286.8-11). These tropes may have some basis in ancient theories of physiology and psychology, which associate action that is pleasurable, desirable or good with sensations of heat, liquidity, melting, and action that is unpleasant or hateful with cold, freezing, rigidification.

But no simple map of the emotions is available here. Desire is not simple. In Greek the act of love is a mingling (*mignumi*) and desire melts the limbs (*lusimelēs*, cf. Sappho fr. 130 above). Boundaries of body, categories of thought, are confounded. The god who melts limbs pro-

¹ See also the section on "Ice-pleasure" in the Sophoklean fragment below.

ceeds to break the lover (*damnatai*) as would a foe on the epic battlefield:

ἀλλά μ' ὁ λυσιμελὴς ὥταίρε δάμναται πόθος.

Oh comrade, the limb-loosener crushes me: desire.
(Archilochos, West, *IEG* 196)

The shape of love and hate is perceptible, then, in a variety of sensational crises. Each crisis calls for decision and action, but decision is impossible and action a paradox when eros stirs the senses. Everyday life can become difficult; the poets speak of the consequences for behavior and judgment:

οὐκ οἶδ' ὅττι θέω διίχα μοι τὰ νοήματα

I don't know what I should do: two states of mind
in me. . . .

(*LP*, fr. 51)

Sappho says, and breaks off.

ἐρέω τε δηῦτε κοῦκ ἐρέω
καὶ μαίνομαι κοῦ μαίνομαι.

I'm in love! I'm not in love!
I'm crazy! I'm not crazy!
(*PMG* 428)

cries Anakreon.

ἐξ οὗ δὴ νέον ἔρνος ἐν ἡϊθέοις Διόφαντον
λεύσσων οὔτε φυγεῖν οὔτε μένειν δύναμαι.

When I look at Diophantos, new shoot among the
young men,
I can neither flee nor stay
(*Anth. Pal.* 12.126.5-6)

“Desire keeps pulling the lover to act and not to act” is the conclusion of Sophokles (*Radt*, fr. 149). Not only action founders. Moral evaluation also fractures under

pressure of paradox, splitting desire into a thing good and bad at the same time. The Eros of Euripides wields a bow that is “double” in its effect, for it can bring on a lovely life or complete collapse (IA 548-49). Euripides goes so far as to double the god of love himself: twin Erotes appear in a fragment of his lost play *Sthenoboea*. One of them guides the lover in a life of virtue. The other is a lover’s worst enemy (*echthistos*) and leads him straight to the house of death (Page 1932, 3.128.22-25). Love and hate bifurcate Eros.

Let us return to the question with which we began, namely, the meaning of Sappho’s adjective *glukupikron*. A contour has been emerging from our examination of the poetic texts. “Sweetbitter eros” is what hits the raw film of the lover’s mind. Paradox is what takes shape on the sensitized plate of the poem, a negative image from which positive pictures can be created. Whether apprehended as a dilemma of sensation, action or value, eros prints as the same contradictory fact: love and hate converge within erotic desire.

Why?

Gone

Perhaps there are many ways to answer this. One comes clearest in Greek. The Greek word *eros* denotes ‘want,’ ‘lack,’ ‘desire for that which is missing.’ The lover wants what he does not have. It is by definition impossible for him to have what he wants if, as soon as it is had, it is no longer wanting. This is more than wordplay. There is a dilemma within *eros* that has been thought crucial by thinkers from Sappho to the present day. Plato turns and returns to it. Four of his dialogues explore what it means to say that desire can only be for what is lacking, not at hand, not present, not in one’s possession nor in one’s being: *eros* entails *endeia*. As Diotima puts it in the *Symposium*, Eros is a bastard got by Wealth on Poverty and ever at home in a life of want (203b-e). Hunger is the analog chosen by Simone Weil for this conundrum:

All our desires are contradictory, like the desire for food. I want the person I love to love me. If he is, however, totally devoted to me he does not exist any longer and I cease to love him. And as long as he is not totally devoted to me he does not love me enough. Hunger and repletion. (1977, 364)

Emily Dickinson puts the case more pertly in “I Had Been Hungry”:

So I found
that hunger was a way
of persons outside windows
that entering takes away.

Petrarch interprets the problem in terms of the ancient physiology of fire and ice:

I know to follow while I flee my fire
I freeze when present; when absent, hot is my desire.
(“Trionfo d’Amore”)

Sartre has less patience with the contradictory ideal of desire, this “dupery.” He sees in erotic relations a system of infinite reflections, a deceiving mirror-game that carries within itself its own frustration (1956, 444-45). For Simone de Beauvoir the game is torture: “The knight departing for new adventures offends his lady yet she has nothing but contempt for him if he remains at her feet. This is the torture of impossible love . . .” (1953, 619). Jacques Lacan puts the matter somewhat more enigmatically when he says “Desire . . . evokes lack of being under the three figures of the nothing that constitutes the basis of the demand for love, of the hate that even denies the other’s being, and of the unspeakable element in that which is ignored in its request” (1966, 28).

It would seem that these various voices are pursuing a common perception. All human desire is poised on an axis of paradox, absence and presence its poles, love and hate its motive energies. Let us return once more to the poem of Sappho with which we began. This fragment (*LP*, fr. 130), as it is preserved in the text and scholia of Hephæstion, is followed without a break by two lines in the same meter, which may be from the same poem:

Ἀτθί, σοὶ δ’ ἔμεθεν μὲν ἀπήχθετο
φροντίσδην, ἐπὶ δ’ Ἀνδρομέδαν πόται

Atthis, your care for me stirred hatred in you
and you flew to Andromeda.

(*LP*, fr. 131)

Who ever desires what is not gone? No one. The Greeks were clear on this. They invented eros to express it.

Ruse

Let no one enter here who is ignorant of geometry.

(inscription over the door of Plato's Academy)

There is something pure and indubitable about the notion that eros is lack. Moreover, it is a notion that, once adopted, has a powerful effect on one's habits and representations of love. We can see this most clearly in an example: consider Sappho's fragment 31, which is one of the best-known love poems in our tradition.

φαίνεται μοι κῆνος ἴσος θεοῖσιν
ἔμμεν' ὦνηρ, ὅττις ἐνάντιός τοι
ἰσδάνει καὶ πλάσιον ἄδν φωνεῖ-
σας ὑπακούει

καὶ γελαίσας ἰμέροεν, τό μ' ἦ μὰν
καρδίαν ἐν στήθεσιν ἐπτόαισεν,
ὥς γὰρ ἔς σ' ἴδω βρόχε' ὥς με φώναι-
σ' οὐδ' ἐν ἔτ' εἴκει,

ἀλλ' ἄκαν μὲν γλῶσσα †ἔαγε λέπτον
δ' αὐτικά χρῶ πῦρ ὑπαδεδρόμηκεν,
ὀππάτεσσι δ' οὐδ' ἐν ὄρημμ', ἐπιρρόμ-
βεισι δ' ἄκουαι,

†έκαδε μ' ἰδρως ψυχρος κακχέεται† τρόμος δὲ
παῖσαν ἄγρει, χλωροτέρα δὲ ποίας
ἔμμι, τεθνάκην δ' ὀλίγω 'πιδεύης
φαίνομ' †αι

He seems to me equal to gods that man
who opposite you

sits and listens close
to your sweet speaking

and lovely laughing—oh it
puts the heart in my chest on wings
for when I look at you, a moment, then no speaking
is left in me

no: tongue breaks, and thin
fire is racing under skin
and in eyes no sight and drumming
fills ears

and cold sweat holds me and shaking
grips me all, greener than grass
I am and dead—or almost
I seem to me.

(*LP*, fr. 31)

The poem floats toward us on a stage set. But we have no program. The actors go in and out of focus anonymously. The action has no location. We don't know why the girl is laughing nor what she feels about this man. He looms beyond the footlights, somewhat more than mortal in line 1 (*isos theoisin*), and dissolves at line 2 into a pronoun (*ottis*) so indefinite that scholars cannot agree on what it means. The poet who is staging the *mise-en-scène* steps mysteriously from the wings of a relative clause at line 5 (*to*) and takes over the action.

It is not a poem about the three of them as individuals, but about the geometrical figure formed by their perception of one another, and the gaps in that perception. It is an image of the distances between them. Thin lines of force coordinate the three of them. Along one line travels the girl's voice and laughter to a man who listens closely. A second tangent connects the girl to the poet. Between the eye of the poet and the listening man crackles a third current. The figure is a triangle. Why?

An obvious answer is to say that this is a poem about jealousy. Numbers of critics have done so. Yet, just as

many readers deny that there is any hint of jealousy here.² How is such blanket disagreement possible? Are we all operating with the same idea of what jealousy is?

The word 'jealousy' comes from Greek *zēlos* meaning 'zeal' or 'fervent pursuit.' It is a hot and corrosive spiritual motion arising in fear and fed on resentment. The jealous lover fears that his beloved prefers someone else, and resents any relationship between the beloved and another. This is an emotion concerned with placement and displacement. The jealous lover covets a particular place in the beloved's affection and is full of anxiety that another will take it. Here is an image of the shifting pattern that is jealousy, from more modern times. During the first half of the fifteenth century a type of slow pacing dance called the *bassa danza* became popular in Italy. These dances were semidramatic and transparently expressive of psychological relationships. "In the dance called *Jealousy* three men and three women permute partners and each man goes through a stage of standing by himself apart from the others" (Baxandall 1972, 78). Jealousy is a dance in which everyone moves, for it is the *instability* of the emotional situation that preys upon a jealous lover's mind.

No such permutations jeopardize Sappho in fragment 31. Indeed, her case is the reverse. Were she to change places with the man who listens closely, it seems likely she would be entirely destroyed. She does not covet the man's place nor fear usurpation of her own. She directs no resentment at him. She is simply amazed at his intrepidity. This man's role in the poetic structure reflects that of jealousy within Sappho's feelings. Neither is named. It is the beloved's beauty that affects Sappho; the man's presence is somehow necessary to delineation of that emotional event—it remains to be seen how. "Lovers all

² The two most recent commentators on this poem assemble scholarship for and against jealousy: Burnett 1983, 232-43; Race 1983, 92-101.

show such symptoms as these," says Longinus, the ancient critic to whom we owe preservation of Sappho's text (*De Sublimitate* 10.2). Jealousy may be implicit in the symptoms of love whenever they occur, but jealousy does not explain the geometry of this poem.

Another popular theory about fragment 31 is the rhetorical theory, which explains the man who listens closely as a poetic necessity (see note 2). That is, he is not to be thought of as a real person but as a poetic hypothesis, designed to show by contrast how deeply Sappho is affected in the presence of her beloved. As such he is a cliché of erotic poetry, for it is a common rhetorical maneuver to praise one's beloved by saying "He must be made of stone who could resist you." Pindar, for example, in a well-known fragment (Snell-Maehler, fr. 123) contrasts his own response to a beautiful boy ("I melt like wax as the heat bites into it") with that of an impassible observer ("whose black heart was forged of adamant or iron in a cold flame"). The rhetorical point may be reinforced by adding a comparison with divine impassivity, as in the Hellenistic epigram that says "If you looked upon my beloved and were not broken by desire, you are totally god or totally stone" (*Anth. Pal.* 12.151).³ With this contrastive technique, the lover praises his beloved, and incidentally begs sympathy for his own suit, by aligning himself with normal human response: it would be an unnatural heart or supernatural heart that failed to be moved by desire for such an object. Is this what Sappho is doing in fragment 31?

No. In the first place, the register of normality is missing from Sappho's poem. Her record of erotic emotion is singular. We may recognize her symptoms from personal memory but it is impossible to believe she is representing herself as an ordinary lover. Moreover, praise of the beloved does not stand out as the principal purpose of this

³ See Dover 1978, 178 n. 18; Race 1983, 93-94.

poem. The girl's voice and laughter are a significant provocation but she disappears at line 5 and Sappho's own body and mind are the unmistakable subject of all that follows. Praise and normal erotic responses are things that occur in the real world: this poem does not. Sappho tells us twice, emphatically, the real location of her poem: "He seems to me. . . . I seem to me." This is a disquisition on seeming and it takes place entirely within her own mind.⁴

Jealousy is beside the point; the normal world of erotic responses is beside the point; praise is beside the point. It is a poem about the lover's mind in the act of constructing desire for itself. Sappho's subject is eros as it *appears* to her; she makes no claim beyond that. A single consciousness represents itself; one mental state is exposed to view.

We see clearly what shape desire has there: a three-point circuit is visible within Sappho's mind. The man who listens closely is no sentimental cliché or rhetorical device. He is a cognitive and intentional necessity. Sappho perceives desire by identifying it *as* a three-part structure. We may, in the traditional terminology of erotic theorizing, refer to this structure as a love triangle and we may be tempted, with post-Romantic asperity, to dismiss it as a ruse. But the ruse of the triangle is not a trivial mental maneuver. We see in it the radical constitution of desire. For, where eros is lack, its activation calls for three structural components—lover, beloved and that which comes between them. They are three points of transformation on a circuit of possible relationship, electrified by desire so that they touch not touching. Conjoined they are held apart. The third component plays a paradoxical role for it both connects and separates, marking that two are not one, irradiating the absence whose presence is demanded by eros. When the cir-

⁴ On seeming in this poem, see Robbins 1980, 255-61.

Ruse

cuit-points connect, perception leaps. And something becomes visible, on the triangular path where volts are moving, that would not be visible without the three-part structure. The difference between what is and what could be is visible. The ideal is projected on a screen of the actual, in a kind of stereoscopy. The man sits like a god, the poet almost dies: two poles of response within the same desiring mind. Triangulation makes both present at once by a shift of distance, replacing erotic action with a ruse of heart and language. For in this dance the people do not move. Desire moves. Eros is a verb.

Tactics

The ruse of inserting a rival between lover and beloved is immediately effective, as Sappho's poem shows, but there are more ways than one to triangulate desire. Not all look triangular in action, yet they share a common concern: to represent eros as deferred, defied, obstructed, hungry, organized around a radiant absence—to represent eros as lack.

Mere space has power. *L'amour d'loonh* ('love from a distance') is what the canny troubadours called courtly love. We have seen Menelaos haunted through his empty palace by "absences of eyes in the statues" (Aesch. Ag. 411). With this vacancy we might compare Virgil's *Aeneid*, where the space of desire echoes around Dido in the streets of Carthage:

illum absens absentem auditque uidetque

. . . him not there not there she hears him, she sees him.
(4.83)

A lover like Theognis, on the other hand, neatly accommodates the pain of absent presence, announcing to his boy:

Οὔτε σε κωμάζειν ἀπερύκομεν οὔτε καλοῦμεν
ἀργαλέος παρεών, καὶ φίλος εἴτ' ἄν ἀπῆς.

We aren't shutting you out of the revel, and we aren't
inviting you, either.

For you're a pain when you're present, and beloved
when you're away.
(1207-208)⁵

The separating power of space can be marked with various activities; by racing through it, for example, as Atalanta does when she puts miles between herself and her suitors:

. . . ὥς ποτέ φασιν
Ἰασίου κόρην παρθένον Ἰασίην,
ῥαίην περ εἰῶσαν, ἀναινομένην γάμον ἀνδρῶν
φεύγειν· ζῶσαμένη δ' ἔργ' ἀτέλεστα τέλει
πατρός νοσφισθεῖσα δόμων ξανθῇ Ἀταλάντῃ·
ῥῆτο δ' ὑψηλὰς ἐς κορυφὰς ὀρέων
φεύγουσ' . . .

. . . as they say once
the daughter of Iasios fled young Hippomenes
and said No to marriage, although she was ripe.
But she girded herself to achieve the impossible.
Leaving behind her the house of her father,
lighthaired Atalanta,
gone to the high tops of mountains
in flight. . . .

(Theognis 1287-93)

The Trojan War and a long tradition of erotic quests represent the other side (the lover's) of this stereotypical activity. Pursuit and flight are a *topos* of Greek erotic poetry and iconography from the archaic period onward. It is noteworthy that, within such conventional scenes, the moment of ideal desire on which vase-painters as well as poets are inclined to focus is not the moment of the *coup de foudre*, not the moment when the beloved's arms open

⁵ The text is that of Carrière 1962, against West 1966, whose *wan harpaleos* (for the codices' *argaleos*, after Bergk) reduces a finely agitated chiasmus to little.

to the lover, not the moment when the two unite in happiness. What is pictured is the moment when the beloved turns and runs. The verbs *phugein* ('to flee') and *diōkein* ('to pursue') are a fixed item in the technical erotic vocabulary of the poets, several of whom admit that they prefer pursuit to capture. "There is a certain exquisite pleasure in the wavering of the balance" Theognis says of such erotic tension (1372). Kallimachos characterizes his own eros as a perverse hunter "bypassing game that lies available, for it knows only to pursue what flees" (*Epi-grammata* 31.5-6).

Lovers who do not wish to run may stand and throw: an apple is the traditional missile in declarations of love (e.g., Ar. *Nub.* 997). The lover's ball, or *sphaira*, is another conventional mechanism of seduction, so often tossed as a love challenge (e.g., Anakreon 358 PMG; *Anth. Pal.* 5.214, 6.280) that it came to emblemize the god himself, as Eros Ballplayer, in later verse (Ap. Rhod. 3.132-41). The glance of the eye can be an equally potent projectile. The poets call upon a vocabulary of innuendo that ranges from the "slantwise stare" of a flirting Thracian filly (Anakreon 417 PMG) to Astymeloisa's glance "more melting than sleep or death" (Alkman 3.61-62 PMG) and the limb-dissolving gaze of Eros himself "down from underneath blue eyelids" (Ibykos 287 PMG).

Eyelids are important. From the eyelids may issue an erotic emotion that sets the interval between two people vibrating:

Aidōs dwells upon the eyelids of sensitive people
as does *hybris* upon the insensitive. A wise man
would know this.

(Stob. *Flor.* 4.230M)

Aidōs ('shamefastness') is a sort of voltage of decorum discharged between two people approaching one another for the crisis of human contact, an instinctive and

mutual sensitivity to the boundary between them. It is the shame suitably felt by a suppliant at the hearth (e.g., *Od.* 17.578), a guest before his host (e.g., *Od.* 8.544), youth making way for old age (e.g., *Soph.* *OC* 247), as well as the shared shyness that radiates between lover and beloved (e.g., *Pind.* *Pyth.* 9.9-13). The proverbial residence of *aidōs* upon sensitive eyelids is a way of saying that *aidōs* exploits the power of the glance by withholding it, and also that one must watch one's feet to avoid the misstep called *hybris*. In erotic contexts *aidōs* can demarcate like a third presence, as in a fragment of Sappho that records the overture of a man to a woman:

θέλω τί τ' εἶπην, ἀλλὰ με κωλύει αἰδώς. . . .

I want to say something to you, but *aidos* prevents
me. . . .

(*LP*, fr. 137.1-2)

The static electricity of erotic “shame” is a very discreet way of marking that two are not one. More vulgarly, *aidōs* may materialize as an object or a gesture. Here again the conventions of Greek vase-painting assist our understanding of poetic nuances. Erotic scenes on vases offer clear evidence that eros deferred or obstructed, rather than eros triumphant, is the favored subject. Pederastic vases frequently depict the following moment: a man touches a boy on chin and genitals (the customary gesture of erotic invitation), while the boy responds with the (equally customary) gesture of dissuasion, right arm turning away the man's hand from his chin. One vase has the inscribed dialogue: “Let me!” “Stop it!” This image of the two courtship gestures intersecting at a moment of impasse seems to summarize erotic experience for these painters. “Eros is often sweeter when he is being difficult” says a Hellenistic poet (*Anth. Pal.* 12.153). Heterosexual scenes, in Greek poetry as well as visual art, make significant use of the

woman's veil. A chaste wife like Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey* "holds her veil up on either side of her face" (16.416, 18.210) when confronting suitors, while Medea's decision to abandon chastity for Jason is indicated by "holding her veil aside" (Ap. Rhod. 3.444-45). Plato takes over the motif of veiling in an erotic scenario between Sokrates and Alkibiades in his *Symposium*. Alkibiades is recounting the frustrations of his love affair with Sokrates. The affair is getting nowhere because Sokrates steadfastly fails to respond to Alkibiades' beauty. Even when they sleep in the same bed, nothing happens. A cloak comes between them:

Ἐγὼ μὲν δὴ ταῦτα ἀκούσας τε καὶ εἰπὼν, καὶ ἀφείς ὥσπερ βέλη, τετρώσθαι αὐτὸν ᾧμην· καὶ ἀναστὰς γε, οὐδ' ἐπιτρέψας τούτῳ εἰπεῖν οὐδὲν ἔτι, ἀμφιέσας τὸ ἱμάτιον τὸ ἐμαντοῦ τούτου—καὶ γὰρ ἦν χειμῶν—ὑπὸ τὸν τρίβωνα κατακλινεῖς τὸν τουτουί, περιβαλὼν τῷ χειρὶ τούτῳ τῷ δαιμονίῳ ὡς ἀληθῶς καὶ θαυμαστῶ, κατεκείμεν τὴν νύκτα ὅλην. καὶ οὐδὲ ταῦτα αὖ, ὦ Σώκρατες, ἐρεῖς ὅτι ψεύδομαι. ποιήσαντος δὲ δὴ ταῦτα ἐμοῦ οὗτος τοσοῦτον περιεγένετό τε καὶ κατεφρόνησεν καὶ κατεγέλασεν τῆς ἐμῆς ὥρας καὶ ὕβρισεν—καὶ περὶ ἐκεῖνό γε ᾧμην τὶ εἶναι, ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί· δικασταὶ γὰρ ἐστε τῆς Σωκράτους ὑπερηφανίας—εἴ γὰρ ἴστε μὰ θεούς, μὰ θεάς, οὐδὲν περιττότερον καταδεδαρθηκώς ἀνέστην μετὰ Σωκράτους, ἢ εἰ μετὰ πατρός καθυῖδον ἢ ἀδελφοῦ πρεσβυτέρου.

Well, after I had exchanged these words with him . . . I got up and, without permitting the man to say anything more, wrapped my own cloak around him—it was winter—stretched out under his threadbare coat, wound my two arms around this genuinely miraculous, amazing man and lay there all night long. . . . And when I had done this, he so scorned and disdained it, and laughed at my beauty

and made light of the very thing I thought was a big deal . . . that when I rose I had no more “slept with” Sokrates than if I had lain down with my father or elder brother. (219b-c)

There are two garments in this scene and the way Alkibiades uses them is a concrete symbol of his own contradictory desire: he first wraps Sokrates up in his own cloak (because it is a cold winter night) then throws Sokrates’ old coat over himself and lies on the bed, embracing the bundled-up object of his desire, until morning. Both the gesture of embrace and the gesture of separation are Alkibiades’ own. Eros is lack: Alkibiades reifies the lover’s guiding principle almost as self-consciously as Tristan, who places a drawn sword between himself and Iseult when they lie down to sleep in the forest.

This principle is reified also in the social attitudes that surround a lover. A society, like our own, for example, that sets a high value on both the chastity and the prolicacy of the female, will assign to the beloved the role of seductive unattainability. A titillating triangle comes into play between the lover, the bad girl who attracts him and the good girl who honours him by saying no. Familiar with such double standards ourselves, we may look to fifth-century Athens for their archetype. Double standards are a topic of conversation in Plato’s *Symposium*, where Pausanias describes the contradictory ethic enjoined upon homosexual lovers by Athenian social convention (183c-85c). Upper-class mores encouraged men to fall in love with and lay suit to beautiful boys while at the same time commending boys who spurned such attentions. “It is no simple thing” to understand or to practice such an ethic, says Pausanias (183d) and he attaches to it the interesting label *poikilos nomos*. Let us consider what Pausanias means.

The phrase *poikilos nomos* sums up the problem of erotic ambivalence. *Nomos* means ‘law,’ ‘custom,’ or

'convention' and refers to the code of conduct for Athenian lovers and their boys in aristocratic circles of the time. *Poikilos* is an adjective applicable to anything variegated, complex or shifting, for example, a 'dappled' fawn, a 'spangled' wing, an 'intricately wrought' metal, a 'complicated' labyrinth, an 'abstruse' mind, a 'subtle' lie, a 'devious' double-entendre. *Nomos* implies something fixed firm in conventional sentiment and behavior; *poikilos* refers to what scintillates with change and ambiguity. The phrase verges on oxymoron; or at least the relation between noun and adjective is a richly devious one. The Athenian *nomos* is *poikilos* in that it recommends an ambivalent code of behavior (lovers should chase beloveds yet beloveds should not be caught). But the *nomos* is also *poikilos* in that it applies to a phenomenon whose essence and loveliness is *in* its ambivalence. This erotic code is a social expression of the division within a lover's heart. Double standards of behavior reflect double or contradictory pressures within erotic emotion itself.

Even more blatant was the legitimation given erotic ambivalence by Cretan society with its peculiar custom of *harpagmos*, a ritual homosexual rape of boys by their lovers. The rape began with a conventional gift-exchange and ended with the rapist carrying off his beloved on horseback for a two-month sojourn in hiding. As the couple rode away, the boy's family and friends would stand around uttering token cries of distress: "If the man is equal to or superior to the boy, people follow and resist the rape only enough to satisfy the law but are really glad . . ." confides the fourth-century historian Ephoros (*FGrH* F148). The roles in this erotic set piece are conventional. Legitimate marriage rites throughout the Greek world adopted much of the same imagery and attitude. Mock abduction of the bride formed the central action of the Spartan wedding ceremony and a similar rite may have been practiced at Lokri and other Greek

states, including Athens (Sirvinou-Inwood 1973, 12-21). Painters who depict such rites on vases make clear by iconographic details of posture, gesture and facial expression that a scene of resistance and tension is being represented, not a happy and harmonious elopement. The abducting bridegroom may hold his bride diagonally across his body as he mounts the wedding chariot; the bride expresses unwillingness by various startled gestures of the left hand and arm; frequently she is seen pulling her veil across her face with one hand in the symbolic gesture of female *aidōs* (Jenkins, 1983, 137-45). It should be emphasized that these paintings, although evocative of mythical prototypes like the rape of Persephone, are not in themselves to be interpreted as mythical scenes but as ideal representations of normal wedding rites, bristling with ambiguities as such rituals do in many cultures. Anthropologists explain the ambiguities from many different angles, for marriage finds analogies in war, initiation, death or a combination of these in various societies. From beneath these social and religious layers, however, a fundamental emotional fact exerts its shaping pressure on iconography and ritual concept: eros. Such societal and aesthetic sanction given at once to lover's pursuit and beloved's flight has its image on Greek vases as a moment of impasse in the ritual of courtship, its conceptual ground in the traditionally bittersweet character of desire. *Odi et amo* intersect; there is the core and symbol of eros, in the space across which desire reaches.

The Reach

Lest thou thy love and hate and me undoe,
To let mee live, O love and hate mee too.

John Donne, “The Prohibition”

A space must be maintained or desire ends. Sappho reconstructs the space of desire in a poem that is like a small, perfect photograph of the erotic dilemma. The poem is thought to be an epithalamium (or part of an epithalamium) because the ancient rhetorician Himerios alluded to it in the course of a discussion of weddings, saying:

It was Sappho who likened a girl to an apple . . . and compared a bridegroom to Achilles. (*Orations* 9.16)

We cannot certainly say whether Sappho composed this poem for a wedding and intended it as praise of a bride, but its overt subject remains clear and coherent. It is a poem about desire. Both its content and its form consist in an act of reaching:

οἶον τὸ γλυκύμαλον ἐρέυθεται ἄκρῳ ἐπ’ ὕσδῳ,
ἄκρον ἐπ’ ἀκροτάτῳ, λελάθοντο δὲ μαλοδρόπῃες,
οὐ μὲν ἐκλελάθοντ’, ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐδύναντ’ ἐπίκεσθαι

As a sweet apple turns red on a high branch,
high on the highest branch and the applepickers
forgot—
well, no they didn’t forget—were not able to reach

. . .

(*LP*, fr. 105a)

The Reach

The poem is incomplete, perfectly. There is one sentence, which has no principal verb or principal subject because the sentence never arrives at its main clause. It is one simile, whose point remains elusive since the *comparandum* never appears. It may be from an epithalamium, but it seems precarious to say so in the absence of the wedding party. If there is a bride, she stays inaccessible. It is her inaccessibility that is present. As the object of comparison suspended in line 1, it exerts a powerful attraction, both grammatical and erotic, on all that follows; but completion is not achieved—grammatical or erotic. Desiring hands close on empty air in the final infinitive, while the apple of their eye dangles perpetually inviolate two lines above.

The action of the poem occurs in present indicative verbs that attain, with the last word, infinite disappointment. This final falling short is gently, repeatedly prepared by what comes before. The three lines of the poem follow the poet's mind on a trajectory through perception to judgment, a trajectory in which both the perception (of the apple) and the judgment (of why it is where it is) suffer self-correction. As the poet's eye reaches up to locate the apple ("on a high branch"), that location is made more exact ("high on the highest branch") and more remote. As the poet's interpretation reaches to explain the apple ("and the applepickers forgot"), that explanation is emended in stride ("well, no they didn't forget—were unable to reach"). Each line launches an impression that is at once modified, then launched again. Second thoughts grow out of initial misapprehensions, and this mental action is reflected in the sounds of the words as the anaphoric syllables reach after one another from verse to verse (*akrō . . . akron . . . akrotatō lela-thonto . . . eklelathont'*). This motion is corroborated in the rhythm of the verse: dactyls (in lines 1 and 2) slow and elongate to spondees (in line 3) as the apple begins to look farther and farther away.

Each verse, we should also note, applies corrective

The Reach

measures to its own units of sound. The first verse contains two examples of a metrical procedure called 'correction.' Correction is a licence permitted to dactylic hexameter whereby a long vowel or diphthong is shortened but allowed to remain in hiatus before a following vowel. Here the two corrections occur in close succession (*-tai akrō ep-*) and make the verse seem crowded with sounds that move and rustle against one another, as the tree is thick with branches over which your eye climbs steadily to the topmost one. Lines 2 and 3 make use of a different corrective device: elision. Elision is a brusquer approach to the metrical problem of hiatus; it simply expels the first vowel. Elision occurs once in the second line (*ep' ak-*) and three times in the third verse (*-thont' all' ouk edunant' ep-*). Both correction and elision may be regarded as tactics to restrain a unit of sound from reaching beyond its proper position in the rhythm. The tactics differ in permissiveness, for the former partially concedes, while the latter entirely curtails, the reach. (Or one might think of correction as a sort of metrical décolletage, in contrast to elision, which bundles the too tempting vowel quite out of sight.) One gets the sense, as the poem proceeds, of a gradually imposed constraint. The reaching action of desire is attempted again and again in different ways through the different lines; with each line it becomes clearer that the reach will not succeed. The triple elision of line 3 is conspicuous. Lines 1 and 2 permit the poet's eye a comparatively uninhibited ascent to the topmost apple. Line 3 crops the apple-pickers' hands in midair.

There are five elisions in the poems, of which three affect the preposition *epi*. This word deserves our closer attention for it is crucial to the etymology and morphology of the poem. *Epi* is a preposition expressing motion to, toward, for, in quest of, reaching after. The action of this ardent preposition shapes the poem on every level. In its sounds, in its rhythmic effects, in its process of thought, in

The Reach

its narrative content (and in its external occasion, if these lines are from an epithalamium) this poem acts out the experience of eros. It is a compound experience, both *gluku* and *pikron*: Sappho begins with a sweet apple and ends in infinite hunger. From her inchoate little poem we learn several things about eros. The reach of desire is defined in action: beautiful (in its object), foiled (in its attempt), endless (in time).



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I.1

Cynthia's eyes ensnared me who'd never before been caught
in desire's nets: then I bent my once proud head
(as Meleager describes) in submission to Amor's triumph.

That villain forced me to do his vulgar dance,
to avoid decent young girls and live in demimondaine
excess—an entire year is down the drain,
wasted in frenzy the gods look down on in pained distaste.

Consider, dear Tullus, your friend in my sorry plight.
I'm not at all the Milanion, whom Atalanta disdained
until at last he won her. Lovelorn, distraught, 10
he wandered her haunts in Arcadia's rugged hillsides and valleys
braving the shaggy beasts of that wild country,
and Hylaeus, the Centaur, who also yearned for the swift-footed
girl,

attacked with a club and smote him: he lay on the ground
stricken for his devotion and moaning . . . and won her heart.

For me, however, there's no such peripeteia.
Love has turned clumsy and dull and seems to be no help
whatever.

I need a witch who can lure the moon from the sky
and conjure spirits to come with her chants and her altar's fire.

Let her cast a spell on my mistress' heart, 20
and then her cheek will turn as pale as mine with longing,
and I shall sing praises of powers as strong as Medea's.
The only other option is to take my friends' advice
and go to a doctor for cures for my cardiac ailment.
Surgeons perhaps can cut or cauterize my wound.

Anger may be the answer. Or travel to lands
far away where women will never know how to find me.

And you, whom the god has favored with comfy love,
be content, stay at home, and enjoy yourselves, for Venus
has made my nights a torment, and Cupid is busy 30
all day long. Be warned. Avoid these terrible pangs.

Hold on tight to your sweethearts and wives. Don't rove,
or else you'll have occasion to think of me and remember

I warned you what it was like, and you didn't believe me.

I.20

To reciprocate for your constant love, Gallus, I offer
this poem as gift—a cautionary tale
I urge you to read and remember. It tells of the perils of lovers
and how, where you least expect it, disaster lurks,
for this is the story of Hylas, the Argonaut, and the sorry
turn of events at the River Ascanius. You
have a friend, I think, who is equal to Hylas in looks and bearing.
You two can go for a sail or stroll by the bank
of an Umbrian stream or stop to bathe your feet or admire
the woods and recount to each other the local legends, 10
but you must be on your guard for the dangerous Nymphs and
Dryads
who may at any moment emerge from the water
or appear from the woods to reach out with lustful hands to grab
and carry your boyfriend away . . . Poof! And he's gone,
and you're running from brook to brook in an endless and useless
quest
as Hercules once did, heartbroken, searching
for Hylas: he never found him and there on Ascanius' cold

and desolate bank, the hero wept bitter tears.
 But first, let us set the scene: the *Argo* they built at the dockyards
 at Pagasa put out to sea on its way to the Phasis; 20
 it has passed the Hellespont and the Mysian cliffs and is beached
 on a peaceful and welcoming shore where the ground is soft
 with a carpet of leaves; and Hylas, Hercules' great and good
 friend,
 has gone inland in search of the fresh spring water
 the ship will need. Now, two of his crewmates, the brothers, Zetes
 and Calais, in a sporting way, pursue him,
 playing a rough-and-tumble game of woodland grab-ass
 that's half in fun. And Hylas feinting, dodging,
 and darting this way and that escapes them again and again.
 They grab him and kiss him, but once again he slips free, 30
 and at last Pandion's sons, the Northwind's noble descendants,
 give up, let Hylas go, and he climbs the slope
 of Mount Arganthus to find the shaded spring-fed pool—
 the Pege they call it—dear to the Bythnian nymphs
 who love its pristine beauty, the silence, the sweet smells
 of the apple trees no humans have touched and the flowers,
 the vistas of crimson poppies with clumps of white of the lilies
 that grow here and there by the bank, and Hylas, enchanted,
 defers his chore for a time to pick himself a bouquet.
 Then at the edge of the water, he kneels and sees 40
 in the surface beneath his face the reflected boughs of the trees,
 and patches of sky, and it's gorgeous. He's poised for a moment,
 about to scoop up water to fill his skins, when the Dryads,
 stricken, in love with the boy whom they think delicious,
 forget the steps of their ritual dance and turn to him
 and grab, and he slips and the ground gives way, and he falls

into the yielding water. He tries to shout but he sinks
in an instant under the water's surface. His friend
Hercules hears the splash and calls out, "Hylas!" again
and again, but only an empty echo answers, 50
fainter and fainter, and that, too, dies away. The lesson,
Gallus, is clear. At Tivoli, Baiae, at all
those posh resorts you like to go to together, be careful,
trust no one, and watch your ass, and his.



THE POETRY OF
SAPPHO



Translation and Notes by

JIM POWELL

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Artfully adorned Aphrodite, deathless
child of Zeus and weaver of wiles I beg you
please don't hurt me, don't overcome my spirit,
goddess, with longing,

but come here, if ever at other moments
hearing these my words from afar you listened
and responded: leaving your father's house, all
golden, you came then,

hitching up your chariot: lovely sparrows
drew you quickly over the dark earth, whirling
on fine beating wings from the heights of heaven
down through the sky and

instantly arrived—and then O my blessed
goddess with a smile on your deathless face you
asked me what the matter was *this* time, what I
called you for this time,

what I now most wanted to happen in my
raving heart: "Whom *this* time should I persuade to
lead you back again to her love? Who *now*, oh
Sappho, who wrongs you?"

If she flees you now, she will soon pursue you;
if she won't accept what you give, she'll give it;
if she doesn't love you, she'll love you soon now,
even unwilling."

Come to me again, and release me from this
want past bearing. All that my heart desires to
happen—make it happen. And stand beside me,
goddess, my ally.

[LP 1]



l heavenly summit of the
mountain descending

[LP 2.1A]



Come to me from Crete to the sacred recess
of this temple: here you will find an apple
grove to welcome you and upon the altars
frankincense fuming.

Here ice water babbles among the apple
branches, the musk roses have overshadowed
all this ground and out of the flickering leafage
settles entrancement.

ARCHILOCHUS

A contemporary of king Gyges of Lydia (ca.687–652 B.C.), Archilochus came from the island of Paros. He went as a soldier to the Parian colony of Thasos, and died back in Paros some time after 648 (fr.122 West mentions a total solar eclipse probably dateable to April 6 of that year) in a battle against the Naxians. In antiquity Archilochus was considered the foremost representative of “iambos,” or blame-poetry. Such poetry was especially connected with iambic trimeter—though there was enough blame to go around to other meters too. Archilochus’ invective was most famously associated with the story of Lykambes and his daughters. Lykambes was said to have promised his daughter Neoboule to Archilochus in marriage, but to have gone back on his word. Archilochus avenged this insult by attacking the family in poems so vitriolic that it drove them all to hang themselves. In this story (as in those surrounding the later blame-poet, Hipponax), however, we must reckon with the possibility that these figures were “stock characters in a traditional entertainment.”¹ In support of this theory, it has been noted that the names of both Lykambes and Neoboule may be significant, the former possibly meaning “Wolf-walker,” the latter “she who always has a new plan,” i.e. who is fickle. It is characteristic for Greek and Roman poetry as a whole that we find in such invective the coarsest, most explicit sexual language and descriptions. Blunt sexuality, then as now, was a favored mode of derogation and attack.

1. Thus West, *Studies* p.27. On the controversy unleashed by this suggestion, cf. R. Rosen, “Hipponax, Boupalos and the Conventions of the Psogos,” *TAPA* 118 (1988) 29–41.

The First Cologne Epode, P. Colon.7511 = SLG 478²

".....³

holding back completely; and you've got to do the same.

But if you're in a hurry and passion urges you on,

there is someone in our house who really wants to now[,
a lovely, tender girl. I think

her looks are flawless. Make her your [....]"

5

So much she said, and I answered

"Daughter of Amphimedo, that good and [
lady whom the mouldy earth holds,⁴

there are many pleasures of the goddess for young men
besides the divine thing;⁵ one of those will suffice.

10

But those things you and I shall consider

at our ease, with help from heaven, when.....darkens.

I'll do what you tell me.....me a lot.

2. This poem, which comes from a papyrus in Cologne, was first published in 1974. It is the longest fragment of Archilochus to date. We call it an "epode" because it consists of a couplet, one verse of which is in a given meter, and the next (the so-called "epodos stichos" or "verse sung after") in an independent meter.

3. The speaker at the beginning of the fragment (vv. 1–5) is a girl, who rebuffs the sexual advances of a male addressee, proposing another girl in her house as a substitute. She does not mention the other girl's name, and her description implies that she thinks that the girl is not known to the addressee (though perhaps she ironically feigns ignorance). Verse 6 reveals that the fragment as a whole is narrated by the male addressee, who then recounts his reply to the girl (vv. 7–29). In verse 17ff. we find out that far from not knowing the proposed substitute, he knows her all too well, and from personal experience: she is Neoboule. The female speaker at the beginning of the fragment is thus probably Neoboule's sister, the younger daughter of Lykambes known from the tradition.

4. The fact that the girl's mother is dead means that the traditional guardian of her maidenhood is absent.

5. Probably a euphemism for sexual intercourse.

But under the coping-stone and the gates,⁶
 don't grudge me, darling [15
 for I will land in the grassy meadows.⁷
 But there's something I want you to know right now: some
 other man can
 have Neoboule. Oh god! she's overripe; twice as old as you;
 her maiden blossom's fallen away,
 and the grace that once was hers; for she can't get enough[20
 That rabid woman has shown the lengths she'll go to.
 She can go to hell. I hope I never get stuck
 with a woman like that and become
 the laughing-stock of the neighborhood. You're the one I
 really want.
 You I can trust, you're no double-dealer. 25
 She, though, is cunning, and makes many men [
 I'm afraid that, in my hurry, I gave birth
 like the bitch in the proverb to blind pups, born too soon."⁸
 This much I said. I took the girl and laid her down
 among blooming flowers, and covering her with my soft 30
 cloak, cradling her nape in my elbow,
]just like a fawn[.
 With my hands I gently clasped her [;

6. Almost certainly sexual metaphors. The coping is the top course of stones on a wall, here perhaps referring to the top of the vulva. Gates are a common metaphor for an opening, vaginal or anal, cf. J. Henderson, *The Maculate Muse* (New Haven 1975) 137.

7. The metaphor probably refers to the *mons Veneris*, i.e. the speaker promises to ejaculate outside the vagina.

8. In this context, the proverb "the hasty bitch bears blind pups," may refer to an unhappy past involvement between the speaker and Neoboule (if we equate the speaker with Archilochus, we may think of the story of his intended marriage to Neoboule, cf. intro. above), i.e. by being overhasty in his previous dealings with her, the speaker was hurt.

her fresh skin showed, the magic of her youth.

And handling her beautiful body,
I spent my force, touching her blond hair.⁹

35

Iambic Fragment 23 (West)

]I replied to her:

"Woman, don't be at all afraid of what men
say. I'll take care of

So soften your heart.

Did you think I'd sunk to such a state
of wretchedness—did I seem to you so cowardly?
That's not the kind of man I am, nor was my family.
I know how to love where I am loved
and hate the hateful and

An ant

This city []you're roaming over
men have never sacked; but you've
taken it at spear-point and won great fame.
Rule it now, be tyrant of the place;
you'll be the envy of many men.¹⁰

9. While this passage evidently refers to orgasm, it is unclear how the speaker achieves it and whether he keeps his promise to make do with lesser pleasures. This uncertainty—as Slings (in J.M. Bremer, A. Maria van Erp Taalman Kip and S.R. Slings, *Some Recently Found Greek Poems*, Mnemosyne Suppl.99 [Leiden 1987] 51) has proposed—may be deliberate. We may ask what is the intention of a poem in which the male narrator proposes sex other than full intercourse, fails to tell whether he keeps to this proposition, and includes a lengthy section of abuse aimed at Neoboule. Is the younger daughter merely the instrument of his revenge against Neoboule and Lykambes?

10. We agree with West, *Studies* p.119f. and Burnett, *Three Archaic Poets* (London 1983) pp.70–76, that the city is an erotic metaphor, as at Theognis 949–954. A woman has succeeded in her sexual conquest of the speaker where previously men had failed. Against this interpretation cf. Slings (*op. cit.* p.6).

Iambic fragment 30–32 (West)

she took pleasure in holding a sprig of myrtle
and the lovely blossom of the rose, and her hair
shaded her shoulders and back.

Iambic fragment 41 (West)

(the girl, like a) halcyon
perched upon the jutting stone, flapping.

Iambic fragment 42 (West)

As on a straw a Thracian man or Phrygian
sucks his brew, forward she stooped, working away.

Iambic fragment 43 (West)

His cock, like that
of a crop-gobbling donkey from Priene, overflowed.

Iambic fragment 46 (West)

out of the pipe and into the pail

Tetrameter fragment 119 (West)

and to go at a hard-working bag and thrust
belly on belly, thigh on thigh.

Epode fragment 184 (West)

She's cunning, in one hand she
carries water, in the other, fire.

2nd Cologne Epode = P. Colon.7511 = SLG 478b (188 West)¹¹

No longer does your soft flesh bloom, the swath
is sere.....of horrid age is overtaking you.
The sweet lure of your alluring face has dissolved
.....Yes, many gusts
of winter wind have blasted you.

Epode fragment 189 (West)

Many's the blind eel you've taken in

Epode fragment 191 (West)

Such desire for love, coiled at my heart,
shed a thick mist over my eyes,
stealing the tender senses from my breast.

Epode fragment 193 (West)

Wracked with desire I lie,
lifeless, pierced through the bone
by the crushing pains of the gods.

11. Both subject matter and meter of this fragment are consistent with those of 189 and 191, and may be from the same poem.

Epode fragment 196 (West)

but desire unhinges me, my friend, it masters me

fragment 331 (West)

fig tree on the crag, feeding hordes of crows,
friendly to all comers, Pasiphile the welcomer.¹²

12. In Greek, "Pasiphile" means "a woman loved by all."

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ANACREON

Anacreon (ca. 570–485 B.C.), the great poet of solo lyric or “monody” for the *symposium*, came from the Ionian city of Teos in Asia Minor. He fled together with his countrymen before the advancing Persians (ca. 545), and settled with them in their newly founded colony of Abdera in Thrace. Thereafter, he worked in Samos at the court of the tyrant Polykrates (who ruled ca. 533–522). When Polykrates was swept from power, Hipparchus, the son of the Athenian tyrant Peisistratus, sent a ship to fetch Anacreon to Athens, and there he joined such other musical luminaries as Simonides and Lasus of Hermione, who had likewise been invited by Hipparchus. Together with these, he probably contributed to the literary flowering in Athens that culminated in the development of tragedy, cf. J. Herington, *Poetry into Drama* (Berkeley 1985) 92–95, 110–111.

Elegy 2 (West)

I don't kiss the guy¹ who guzzles wine beside the brimming bowl
and talks battles and tearful war,
but the one who mingles dazzling gifts of the Muses and Aphrodite
singing of lusty play.

PMG 346 fr.1

.....

but your heart trembles before another man,
O pretty child.

3

1. These words are usually rendered in a more neutral way: “I have no love for the man who. . . .” (Fränkel), “I have no liking for one who. . . .” (Gentili), or the like. We feel, however, that the Greek, *ou phileo, hos. . . .*, can sustain the more erotic

.....thinks
she is raising you among the lilies
as a sensible girl, but you.....have slipped off 6

to the fields of hyacinth
where Kypris has unharnessed
her horses and hitched them on a rope. 9)

And you have burst.....into the middle
.....exciting the hearts
of many citizens, 12

Herotima, whom all men ride.

fr.4

....I was fighting with a tough.....
....now I see....and raise my head.....
...deeply thankful
that I got away from love...
...completely,from stubborn bonds....
.....by Aphrodite.....
....bring wine.....
....bring water....
.....call

PMG 347

and of the hair that
shaded your delicate neck.

translation we have given it. If we are correct, this may be one of the rare instances in which we hear the voice of the *eromenos* (cf. n. on Theognis 1097–1100).

88 ANACREON

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But now your hair is cropped.
It fell into rude hands
and tumbled into the black dust
in a heap

patiently abiding the slash
of the knife. But I am worn away
with distress. For what can one do

PMG 357

O lord, with whom Eros the subduer
and the dark-eyed nymphs
and glistening Aphrodite
join in play, you who roam
the high crests of the mountains,
I kneel and beg you, come to me
kindly, hear my prayer,
and may it please you:
Give wise counsel
to Kleoboulos, get him,
Dionysus, to accept my love.²

PMG 358

Once more Eros of the golden hair
hits me with his purple ball,
calls me out to play with the girl

2. The prayer to Dionysus may indicate a sympotic setting, and the underlying assumption may be that if Kleoboulos gets sufficiently drunk (i.e. accepts Dionysus' counsel) he will yield to the speaker. The speaker's request receives an added twist with a play on the name Kleoboulos ("famed for counsel"). Anacreon thus humorously appropriates the dignified, formal language of prayer to voice his hopes for a drunken seduction.

with the flashy slippers.
But she, since she comes from noble
Lesbos, scoffs at my hair,
since it's white, and gapes
for another girl.³

PMG 359

For Kleoboulos I yearn,
of Kleoboulos I rave,
at Kleoboulos I gaze.

PMG 360

Boy with the girlish glance
I pursue you, but you won't listen,
you don't know that you hold the reins
of my soul.

PMG 376

Flung once more from the cliffs of
Leukas, I plunge into the foaming wave, drunk on love.

3. The interpretation of the girl's rejection of the speaker is much disputed. Our translation reflects what we consider the most probable solution, i.e. that the girl is attracted to another female. This is, however, in no way connected with the fact that she is from Lesbos. As Dover points out, " 'Lesbian' did not, in his (sc. Anacreon's) time or at any other time in antiquity, have a primary connotation of homosexuality" (*Greek Homosexuality* [New York 1978] 183); it connoted sexual aggressivity and shamelessness, and the verb *lesbiazein* could mean to "fellate." Another possibility is that the (feminine) "other" that the girl gapes at can, in the Greek, take the (feminine) noun "hair" as its antecedent. In this case, the girl would reject the speaker's white hair for "another" (scil. younger man's) head of hair; or, if the poet is playing on the

PMG 389

Girl, since you're sweet to strangers, give a thirsty fellow a drink.

PMG 396

Bring water, bring wine, boy, bring us blossoming
garlands, bring them, so I can box with Eros.

PMG 398

The dice that Eros plays with
are raving madness and battle din.

PMG 400

Running away from love,
I slipped back to Pythomandros—again.

PMG 413

Once more, like a blacksmith, Eros battered me with his huge
axe, and doused me in an icy torrent.

PMG 414

But you cut the flawless blossom of your delicate hair.

Lesbian reputation for fellation, the girl might prefer the dark (pubic) hair of another,
younger man.

PMG 417

Thracian filly, why do you eye me with mistrust
and stubbornly run away, and think that I'm unskilled?
Rest assured, I could fit you deftly with a bridle
and, holding the reins, could steer you past the end posts of our
course.

Now as it is, you graze the fields and frisk in childish play
since you lack a rider with a practiced hand at horsemanship.

PMG 428

I love again, and do not love;
I am insane, and still I'm sane.