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THE HEROES OF THE GREEKS

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THE HEROES OF THE GREEKS

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C. KERÉNYI

TRANSLATED BY
PROFESSOR H. J. ROSE

76 PLATES IN PHOTOGRAVURE

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TO THE POETS OF THE FUTURE

For the earth begets them again
As it has ever begotten them.

Faust II, iii 3

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CONTENTS

LIST OF PLATES	Page xi
PREFACE	xxi
INTRODUCTION	i
BOOK ONE	
I Kadmos and Harmonia	25
II The Theban Dioskuroi	34
III Danaos and his Daughters	40
IV Perseus	45
V Tantalos	57
VI Pelops and Hippodameia	62
VII Salmoneus, Melanippe and Tyro	69
VIII Sisyphos and Bellerophontes	75
IX Phrixos and Helle	85
X Oidipus	88
XI The Spartan Dioskuroi and their Cousins	105
XII Meleagros and Atalante	113
BOOK TWO: HERAKLES	
I The Theban Tales	128
1. <i>Stories of Herakles' Ancestry</i>	128
2. <i>The Hero's Birth</i>	131
3. <i>The Tales of his Youth</i>	136

11	The Twelve Labours	Page 140
1	<i>The Nemean Lion</i>	140
2	<i>The Hydra of Lerna</i>	143
3	<i>The Hind of Keryneia</i>	146
4	<i>The Boar of Erymanthos</i>	148
5	<i>The Birds of Lake Stymphalos</i>	150
6	<i>The Stable of Augeias</i>	151
7	<i>The Horses of the Thracian Diomedes</i>	154
8	<i>The Bull of Minos</i>	158
9	<i>The Girdle of the Queen of the Amazons</i>	159
10	<i>The Cattle of Geryoneus</i>	163
11	<i>The Apples of the Hesperides</i>	172
12	<i>The Hound of Hades</i>	177
111	Deeds and Sufferings after the Twelve Labours	183
1	<i>Kallinikos</i>	183
2	<i>The Madman</i>	185
3	<i>The Sinner</i>	187
4	<i>The Servant of Women</i>	192
5	<i>The Rescuer of Hera and of Deianeira</i>	197
6	<i>The End of Herakles' Earthly Life</i>	201

BOOK THREE

I	Kekrops, Erechtheus and Theseus	209
II	Jason and Medeia	247
III	Orpheus and Eurydike	279
IV	Tereus, Eumolpos and Kephalos	287
V	Amphiaraos and the Heroes of the Theban War	294
VI	Atreus and his Dynasty	302
VII	The Prelude to the Trojan War	308

Contents

ix

VIII	The Heroes of the Trojan War	<i>Page</i> 319
IX	Iphigeneia and her Brother and Sisters	331
X	Telephos	337
XI	Protesilaos and Laodameia	342
XII	Achilles and the Aftermath of the Trojan War	347

GENEALOGIES	363
-------------	-----

SOURCES	381
---------	-----

INDEX	413
-------	-----

LIST OF PLATES

- ARV Sir John Beazley, *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*, 1942
 ABV Sir John Beazley, *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*, 1956
 Bl. Frank Brommer, *Vasenlisten zur griechischen Heldensage*, 1956

KADMOS KILLS THE DRAGON. In the background, the local goddess Thebe and the spring-nymph Krenaie.
 See p. 30

Plate 1

Trendall, *Paestan Pottery* (1936), p. 24

SCENE IN THE UNDERWORLD. THE SOULS OF THE UNFULFILLED BUSIED IN FILLING A BOTTOMLESS VESSEL. In the foreground, Oknos (the Delayer), a folklore figure of descriptions of the other world. He is plaiting a rope of rushes, which is eaten by an ass behind his back, another picture of life without fulfilment. See p. 43

2

After Cook, *Zeus III*, Plate xxxvi

DANAE AND PERSEUS IN THE OPENED CHEST. Before them stands Diktys, net in hand. See p. 48

3

In Syracuse; after *Athen. Mitt.* xli (1916), opposite p. 8

PERSEUS AND THE FOUNTAIN-NYMPHS. See p. 49

4

Rumpf, *Chalkidische Vasen* (1927), p. 10

PERSEUS SLAYING THE GORGON MEDUSA. See p. 51

5

Hampe, *Frühgriechische Sagenbilder in Böotien* (1936), p. 58

PERSEUS AFTER BEHEADING MEDUSA. See p. 51

6

ARV 365, 53

ANDROMEDA, PERSEUS AND THE SEA-MONSTER (KETOS). See p. 52

7

In the Antikensammlung at Berlin, after a reproduction by the Staatliches Museum

- PELOPS, HIPPODAMEIA AND THE FALL OF MYRTILOS. In the background Nemesis, goddess of retribution. See p. 66 Plate 8
 From Capua, after *Monumenti dell' Istituto*, X, 25
- THE MARRIAGE OF ANTIKLEIA. See p. 78 9
 From Ruvo, after a reproduction by the Antikensammlung at Munich; cf. Furtwängler-Reichhold III, 204
- THE MADNESS OF SALMONEUS. See p. 74 10
 ARV 396, 24. Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago
- THE PUNISHMENT OF SISYPHOS. On either side, the king and queen of the underworld. See p. 79 11
 ABV 383, 12
- BELLEROPHONTES BEFORE IOBATES. See p. 82 12
 From Campania, after Bloesch, *Antike Kunst in der Schweiz*, plate 49
- PHRIXOS AND THE RAM PURSUED BY INO. This episode is not described in my text. See p. 86 13
 ARV 779, 1
- OIDIPUS ON THE ARM OF THE HERDSMAN EUPHORBOS. See p. 93 14
 ARV 634, 4
- OIDIPUS SOLVES THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX. See p. 98 15
 ARV 296, 12
- OIDIPUS KILLING THE SPHINX. Besides the deities, Athene and Apollo, the artist (the 'Meidias painter') has, after his fashion, added other heroic figures to the scene, Kastor, Polydeukes and Aineias. See p. 99 16
 ARV 83, 48
- KASTOR AND POLYDEUKES GREETED BY LEDA AND TYNDAREOS. A work by Exekias. 17
 ABV 145, 13
- HERAKLES SUCKLED BY HERA in the presence of Athene. See p. 134 18
 Bl. 40, D 1

- THE INFANT HERAKLES STRANGLING THE SERPENTS. *See p. 134* Plate 19
 ARV 386, 39
- HERAKLES ESCORTED TO SCHOOL. The grey-haired figure with the lyre has written alongside the name Ger . . .
 pso . . . evidently a compound of *geron* (old man) and *rhapsodos* (reciter of epic); Gerapsos or Geropsos may be the name of the 'aged singer' 20
 ARV 576, 16
- HERAKLES AT SCHOOL. *See p. 135* 21
 Bl. 63, B 7
- THE YOUNG HERAKLES OVERCOMING NEREUS. Unless the painter means some adventure previous to the voyage to the Hesperides (*see p. 172*), the story is otherwise unknown 22
 Bl. 89, B 7
- HERAKLES AND THE SEA-GOD. Unless the same adventure as in the foregoing picture is meant, this is another unknown tale. Herakles has wrenched his trident from the sea-god, with whom he had previously drunk. A Nereid hurries by in fright 23
 In the Museo di Villa Giulia, Rome, after a reproduction by the German Archaeological Institute, 57, 653
- HERAKLES AND GERAS. This story, otherwise unknown, is alluded to for us by vase-paintings. Geras, 'old age', is probably no more than a modified form of Thanatos, Death, whom Herakles fought in so many legends 24
 In the Museo di Villa Giulia, Rome, after a reproduction by the German Archaeological Institute, 57, 682
- HERAKLES AND THE LION. *See p. 141* 25
 ARV 167, 32
- HERAKLES AND THE HIND WITH THE HESPERIDES. *See p. 142* 26
 Bl. 44, A 17

- HERAKLES TAKES THE GOLDEN ANTLERS. Before him stands Apollo, Athene behind him to protect him. *Plate 27*
 See p. 148
 Bl. 43, A 7
- HERAKLES WITH THE BOAR. A variation of the often-repeated scene with Eurystheus in his jar. See p. 150 28
 Bl. 28, A 14
- HERAKLES WITH PHOLOS THE CENTAUR. See 29
 p. 149
 Bl. 105, A 33
- HERAKLES AND THE STYMPHALIAN BIRDS. See 30
 p. 151
 Bl. 122, A 3
- HERAKLES AND THE SEA-MONSTER. See p. 161 31
 After Brommer, *Marburger Winckelmann-Programm*, 1955, Plate 3
- HERAKLES AND THE AMAZON ANDROMACHE. In the legend of the Amazons, this name occurs only on this vase-painting 32
 After Bothmer, *Amazons in Greek Art* (1957), Plate V
- HERAKLES AMONG THE AMAZONS. See p. 161 33
 Bl. 15, D 1
- HELIOS SHOT AT BY HERAKLES. See p. 168 34
 Bl. 39, A 2
- HERAKLES AND GERYONEUS. See p. 168 35
 Bl. 37, C 2
- HERAKLES IN THE CUP OF THE SUN. See p. 168 36
 Bl. 113, A 1
- HERAKLES WITH THE HESPERIDES. See p. 176 37
 Bl. 41, B 12
- HERAKLES BEFORE ZEUS WITH THE APPLES OF THE HESPERIDES. Apollo and Artemis stand in the background, to welcome their former enemy. The head of the lion-skin is drawn incorrectly. See p. 177 38
 Probably Etruscan; after Noël des Vergers, *Etrurie*, Plate IV

HERAKLES CHAINING KERBEROS. See p. 181 Bl. 54, B 1	Plate 39
HERAKLES AND THE KERKOPES. See p. 194 ABV 370, 137	40
THE SHOOTING-MATCH AT OICHALIA. See p. 189 Bl. 32, A 1	41
THE FIGHT FOR THE TRIPOD. See p. 191 After Rumpf, <i>Chalkidische Vasen</i> , Plate 171	42
NESSOS CARRIES OFF DEIANEIRA. See p. 200 Sherd from an ancient Attic vase after Bull. corr. bell., 76 (1952), 347	43
HERAKLES LEAVING THE FUNERAL PYRE. See p. 203 ARV 805, 1	44
HERAKLES JOURNEYING TO OLYMPOS. See p. 203 From the subterranean shrine at Paestum, after <i>Abhandl.</i> <i>Heidelb. Akad., Phil.-hist. Klasse</i> 1957, 2, Plate 16	45
DIONYSIAC APOTHEOSIS OF HERAKLES, who holds the <i>kantharos</i> ; Athene offers him a flower After Lullies-Hirmer, <i>Griechische Vasen</i> (1953), p. 30	46
KEKROPS AND PALLAS ATHENE BEFORE THE SACRED OLIVE. In the background one of the daughters of Kekrops, before her the mysterious basket, covered with a cloth. See p. 212 Bl. 155, B 4	47
THESEUS MEETS SKIRON, PHAIA AND SINIS. See p. 220 Bl. 127, 13	48
THESEUS ON THE TORTOISE. See p. 221 After Zanotti-Zancani, <i>Heraion</i> II, 307	49
THESEUS MEETS KERKYON AND THE MARA- THONIAN BULL. See pp. 222, 226 Bl. 125, 5	50

- THESEUS AND PROKRUSTES. *See* p. 222 Plate 51
 Bl. 127, 13
- RECEPTION OF THESEUS IN ATHENS; a ceremonial welcome, *cf.* p. 223. Athene in person is the first to receive him 52
 Bl. 127, 14
- ARRIVAL OF THESEUS IN THE PALACE OF POSEIDON. Poseidon stands behind the powerful Triton who has brought the boy. *See* p. 229 53
 Bl. 127, 14
- THESEUS BEFORE AMPHITRITE. She hands him the headband for his garland. *See* p. 229 54
 Bl. 127, 14
- THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR. On this picture the monster is called Tautominion. *See* p. 232 55
 From the collection of Jacob Hirsch, in possession of an art-dealer in 1957
- THESEUS AND ARIADNE ON NAXOS. Athene holds Theseus back from the sleeping Ariadne. It is not yet the bridal-night, as there is a boy lying at the bride's feet, after the Naxian custom, by which the *pronymphios hypnos* ('the sleep before the bridegroom') is his. In the air Iris, messenger of the gods, is hurrying to call Dionysos. *See* p. 233 56
 Bl. 130, B 5
- THESEUS CARRIES OFF KORONE. It is more likely that the names written alongside the female figures are out of place and that Theseus is carrying off Helen. The other man is Peirithoos. *See* p. 235 57
 ARV 25, 3
- THESEUS FIGHTING THE AMAZONS; his opponent is Hippolyte. *See* p. 241 58
 ARV 724, 2
- THESEUS AND HERAKLES. *See* p. 239 59
 After Beazley, *Attic Red-figure Vases in American Museums* (1928), p. 136

- PHINEUS ON HIS COUCH. Behind him stands his wife; the name Erichtho was written alongside her. *See* p. 259 Plate 60
Cf. Furtwängler-Reichhold I, 209
- THE SONS OF BOREAS AND THE HARPIES. *See* p. 259 61
 In the Museo di Villa Giulia, Rome, after a reproduction by the German Arch. Inst., 57, 660
- JASON SPEWED UP BY THE DRAGON. *See* p. 265 62
 ARV 286, 93
- MEDeia's REJUVENATING MAGIC. The man who stands opposite her may be Jason. *See* p. 273 63
 ARV 194, 17
- ORPHEUS AMONG THE THRACIANS. *See* p. 281 64
 ARV 703, 1
- THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS. According to this picture, the singer was not torn to pieces with bare hands, but carved up with a sword. *See* p. 285 65
 ARV 646, 15
- POLYNEIKES AND ERIPHYLE. *See* p. 297 66
 ARV 408, 119
- VISIT OF THE GODS TO PELEUS AND THETIS. Thetis is sitting in the nuptial hut, Peleus receiving the visitors, Chiron, Iris, Chariklo, Demeter, Dionysos being visible. *See* p. 312 67
 ABV 76, 1
- THE THREE GODDESSES BEFORE PARIS. Hermes introduces them. *See* p. 316 68
 After Clairmont, *Das Parisurteil in der antiken Kunst* (1923), Plate 3. ABV 87, 16
- PARIS COMING HOME FROM IDA. Artemis stands behind him, Hekabe embraces him, Hektor offers his hand, Priam receives him on his throne. One of the two female figures in the background is Kassandra. *See* p. 317 69
 ARV 246, 4

- PELEUS BRINGS ACHILLES TO CHIRON. See p. 318 Plate 70
 ARV 434, 1
- ORESTES AND IPHIGENEIA BEFORE THE TAUR-
 IAN TEMPLE. In the temple stands the idol of the
 goddess; Iphigeneia carries the temple-key on her shoulder.
 The second man is Pylades. See p. 335 71
 ARV 875, 1
- ACHILLES AND TROILOS. The powerful figure be-
 hind the fountain is Achilles, the small ones in the
 foreground Troilos and Polyxena. See p. 348 72
 In the Museo di Villa Giulia, Rome, after a repro-
 duction by the German Arch. Inst., 57, 659. Cf.
 Kunze, *Archaische Schildbänder* (1950), 140ff
- ACHILLES AND PENTHESILEIA. See p. 352 73
 ARV 582, 1
- ODYSSEUS AND NEOPTOLEMOS. See p. 356 74
 ARV 282, 28
- THE BATTLE OVER THE CORPSE OF ACHILLES.
 In the foreground stand Aias and Glaukos, in the back-
 ground Athene and Paris, who is drawing his bow. See
 p. 354 75
Mon. Istit., I, 51
- MENELAOS BRINGING HELEN HOME AGAIN. See
 p. 360 76
 After Ghali-Kahil, *Les enlèvements et le retour d'Hélène*
 (1955), Plate IV

MYTH is a universal postulation of Greek existence. The entire civilisation, along with all the commissions and omissions, was still the old original one, except that it was gradually evolving. Man was still aware of the mythic and sacred source of countless forms of life, and felt very close to that source. The whole Greek race considered itself to be heir and assign of the Age of the Heroes; retribution was still exacted for wrongs suffered in primaeval times; Herodotus begins his story of the great battle between West and East with the abduction of Io, and the Persian War is a continuation of the Trojan.

Jacob Burckhardt

PREFACE

THE BOOK WHICH I NOW OFFER TO THE PUBLIC is again full of matter, even more so than was my *Gods of the Greeks*. It continues indeed the narrative of that learned Greek islander of our times into whose mouth the story of the gods was put, and complements it at every point where that ran into the story of the heroes. But we may as well take the opposite route, starting from the heavy destinies of these demi-gods who were often for that reason all the more suffering men, and so passing on to the playful existence of the 'easily-living' gods. Here it is not the world of the gods, but a whole world which will be revealed; sometimes it will seem familiar to us, sometimes strange, and handled from this side perhaps for the first time. It is a world which lies between the mouth of the Guadalquivir and the Caucasus, over a space of time beginning about 1500 B.C. and lasting for at least two thousand years. It carried the glory of great gods and goddesses in the shape of their sons, who were venerated as heroes.

It is a part of that history which we may call our own, in the sense of the common inheritance which enables us to remember and adopt it. On the basis of the results of psychologists I doubt if it be possible to eliminate such a portion of history entirely, and as a historian I would account it a falsifying of the general history of mankind to wish to suppress the knowledge of it. I do not for a moment believe that I have presented it in a final form. That is why I have dedicated it to future poets; be it

theirs to transmute it, as a once present truth of the mind, belonging to the history of European literature and religion, into a new form, more fitting than is possible in a work of classical scholarship.

This book does not try to adorn its subject. That has been done by Gustav Schwab's *Schönste Sagen des klassischen Altertums*, which for so long has conformed to the dreams of youth, and by other such descriptions in other languages, whatever their titles may be—for instance, Kingsley's *Heroes*. It is careful not to mask the ancient tradition, so brilliant in its realism. A concealment of tradition can arise even from an honestly meant scientific spirit, a justifiable desire to know, which does not recognise the bounds set to it by this very tradition. The desire to know can be directed to what is traditional, to details and connecting links, which may be daily enlarged by discoveries and decipherments; it may try to illuminate and vivify the whole intellectually, and then it has every right to claim the title 'scientific'. At the same time, the temptation is all too often present to proceed to ask how the tradition arose, and here we generally come into collision with the unknowable, for it is rare for the process of an origin to be handed down to us. This is most especially true of the material of the stories of gods and heroes.

The tradition is found in texts and in art-monuments. To occupy oneself with the history of this form of tradition is important for the recognition of what is really traditional. But it implies a vast departure from the tradition itself, in the direction of theories of origins and reconstructions of lost works, to arguments which in the last analysis depend on what cannot be proved. Such hypotheses and attempts at reconstruction, even when they do not turn into a play of fancy cut off from anything concretely present, can easily conceal concrete matter.

My aim has been to proceed resolutely to the contents of the myths. This could be done, so far as it was possible, by living with the texts, keeping in sight the inexhaustible works of the vase-painters and sepulchral art (since graves were the sites of a long-surviving worship of heroes), not for the sake of

interpretation, but of the atmosphere. This entailed bringing the traditional material into a state of liveliness and detachment, from which the forms of the heroes could emerge as it were of themselves in their original outlines. Here the development of the art of story-telling since Virginia Woolf, has given much encouragement even to a scientific writer. Every hero is, when treated along with his cult, Virginia Woolf's Orlando, and many comparisons between heroes and deities had to be left as uncertain as the mythological self-identifications of Thomas Mann's young Joseph.

The smooth level of narration from one point of view has long ago been ended in great literature. A form which lets the ancient narrators—even several of them, alongside of or after one another—and the reflective re-tellers of the tales all have their say should be developed also in scientific literature, without even attempting to produce the effect of an original narrative work, but only trusting to the self-maintenance of a most ancient narrative material. To test this self-maintenance during years of work at selecting, releasing and fitting together the concrete human content, first on myself, then on others, attracted me, I confess, as a scientific experiment, and I found it at the same time an attempt at living humanism, which always is somehow connected with the Greeks. We must find the right attitude towards Greek heroic mythology also, on the basis of a picture neither simplified after the fashion of a school-master nor tidied in the manner of *belles-lettres*, or concealed or veiled in any way at all.

The dedication to the Poets of the Future is not meant to cancel out the dedications of particular chapters which were presented as festival gifts—that of 'Kadmos and Harmonia' to Walter F. Otto, that of 'Perseus' to C. G. Jung, and that of 'Sisyphos and Bellerophontes' to Thomas Mann—to each of those three great encouragers of my labours in mythology on their eightieth birthdays.

It gives me especial pleasure that the translation is due to Professor H. J. Rose, the author of a well-known *Handbook of*

Greek Mythology. I feel all the more obliged to him because I know that he cannot agree with all the ideas and conclusions in this book. Surely this translation bears witness to the existence of a veritable *res publica doctorum virorum* in classical scholarship, although not to any identity of opinion between translator and author.

C.K.

Ascona, Switzerland

INTRODUCTION

IF GREEK MYTHOLOGY were confined to the gods and at any rate to myths of the origin of the human race, the heroes would have to remain on the verge of it. But the gods demand the heroes, and these still belong to mythology. Thence they spread to the time which deals no longer with 'stories' but with 'history'. An essential difference between the legends of heroes and mythology proper, between the myths of the gods and those of the heroes, which are often entwined with them or at least border upon them, consists in this: that the latter prove to be, whether more or less, interwoven with history, with the events, not of a *primaeval* time which lies outside of time, but with historical time, and bordering on it as closely as if they were already history proper and not mythology. We cannot on principle deny factual existence, historicity, to the heroes. They appear before us as if they had in fact existed and only exceptionally achieved the status of gods, on Olympus in the case of Herakles, otherwise in the underworld. But even if they were once historical persons, they exist in their 'legends' in a manner which takes them out of 'history'. We cease to be quite fair to them when we prove their 'historicity'. They forfeit thereby their mythological aspect, which connects them with the gods and by virtue of which they, like the gods, act as Prototypes. Their existence is a special kind of quasi-existence, which is both less and more than the ordinary existence of human beings—more, because it includes also their posthumous life in cult.

They were not always distinguished, not even, for instance, by heroism; that is why English 'hero' is not a satisfactory rendering of Greek *heros*, though it must be used for want of a better word. Far more than by any peculiarity, the heroes in all their legends are marked by their substantiality, by a remarkable solidity, which they share with the divine figures. The gods of many mythologies unconnected with the civilisations of the Near East and the Mediterranean occupy this middle position between gods like those of the Greeks and human beings. This solidity is one which has been preserved in the poetical representation to which the heroes were continually liable, to such an extent that an Alexander, Caesar or Napoleon, completely transformed by the arbitrary imagination of some writer, is more conceivable than a Perseus or an Oidipus, who is quite different. Indeed a transformed Alexander the Great is less so, because he had already passed into the ranks of the heroes in antiquity. To the 'heroes' of history, historical time belongs. They are embedded in a single period of time, which is determined by innumerable contemporary happenings and which cannot be altered. Even a completely 'new' Caesar or Napoleon would have his outlines therefrom, and would be recognisable by his temporal outside. The unchangeable part of the heroes of mythology, on the other hand, is an unalterable kernel which is always to be found in the same hero. Ralph Waldo Emerson's dictum is true also in the factual sense belonging to the history of religion: 'The hero is he who is immovably centred.' He may resemble other heroes in one or several traits; there are heroic types, as there are types of ordinary men. But in the central point of his traits which makes him one the hero remains unique. The reduction of the hero, solid in his uniqueness, to a possibility performed in man and in his world, the proof and definition of his archetypal character, must remain the task of a special treatment, which could be properly undertaken only from the point of view of psychology and philosophy, though hardly without the historical foundation which is supplied by a description of the tradition concerning

the heroes of the Greeks that is conscious of its limitations. However, the philosophical style of expression cannot be wholly avoided in this introduction, and a 'Myth of the Hero' will emerge.

The hero, as he meets us in his 'legends' assuredly embodies, even more than the gods of the Greeks, a teaching concerning mankind. His purely human characterisation is fully possible, but there falls a glory upon him, which from the point of view of the history of religions, for which the divine is the datum serving as its starting-point,¹ we may term the glory of the divine, the word 'glory', 'radiance' or 'splendour' being of course used metaphorically, yet in a way which is as well justified as when we speak of the 'glory' of a work of art, and are understood by all who possess—what is common to mankind but distributed in various proportions—the power to perceive it. The glory of the divine, which falls on the figure of the hero, is strangely combined with the shadow of mortality. This results in a mythological character, that of a peculiar being, to whom belongs at least one story, the narrative concerning just that hero and no other. If the mythological character is replaced by one purely human, the legends of heroes become tales of warlike men, to whom the epithet of 'hero' applies only in that sense, divorced from cult, in which Homer uses it, approximately 'noble gentleman', and thus mythology, even the mythology of heroes, finds its limit.

This occurs in the epic poems concerning the journeys and campaigns of whole companies of heroes, such as the voyage of the Argo or the War of Troy. All this, and certainly also the expedition of the Seven against Thebes and a number of lost pre-Homeric epics, has become heroic poetry, with an atmosphere of its own, even when its heroes belong to the heroes of mythology. Like every mythology, that of the heroes has its connection with cult. Heroic poetry is, so far as we know it, unconnected with cult. The hero with his cult is more differentiated from the hero of Epic than from the hero of Tragedy, which after all presents an act of cult. There is no

boundary in the matter, but there is one between the atmospheres. The description of the heroes in Greek mythology must also submit to such a differentiation, if it is not to become in the end a mere table of contents of heroic poetry and so either strip off its peculiar atmosphere (besides, it will not wish to arouse interest in accounts of battles), or else confuse it with another. Here the voyage of the Argonauts and the expedition of the Seven constitute a middle stage, by the fashion in which they are handed down, the one by the learned poet Apollonios of Rhodes, the other in Tragedy, and this must not be excluded in a re-telling of the heroic mythology. A re-telling of purely heroic poetry, which could communicate the content of both the poems connected with the name of Homer, the 'Iliad' and the 'Odyssey', to men of today, seems to me possible, indeed necessary, but not in this book.

To the hero belonged his cult, a peculiar form of reverence, not to be confounded with hero-worship in Carlyle's sense. It was veritable cult, straightforward, strict ritual observance, a perfectly natural tribute to the hero, not a manner of exalting him. On a smaller scale it was like the reverence which was paid on a larger one to the gods of the underworld, the lords of the departed. The divine, whose glory the hero bears among the dead, produces from the realm of the dead, far more than from the figure of an ordinary mortal who has joined the dead, that deep awe which—as W. F. Otto, with truth on his side, says of it—we describe too one-sidedly as fear, whereas it is also the most solemn and exalted feeling.² The sacrifice for gods of the dead and for heroes was called *enagisma*, in contradistinction to *thysia*, which was the portion especially of the celestial deities. It was offered on altars of a peculiar shape; they were lower than the ordinary altar, *bōmōs*, and their name was *eschára*, 'hearth'. Through them the blood of the victims, and also libations, were to flow into the sacrificial trench. Therefore they were funnel-shaped and open at the bottom. For this kind of sacrifice did not lead up to a joyous feast in which gods and men took part. The victim was held over the trench with its

head down, not, as for the celestial gods, with its neck bent back and the head uplifted; and it was burned entirely. These are the characteristic traits of these rites, which however did not form a rigid, unalterable ceremonial; for example, in many places the sacrifices to Herakles combined these gloomier methods with the brighter ones, and in Attica the bulls were offered to him in the same manner as to the Olympians. And in other ways too, these and other less gloomy details bore witness to the joy of the Greeks even in this cult.

The heroes, although their cult belongs to the complete picture of them, would certainly not have attained to any importance for us through it alone; nor would they from their surviving tombs, although they are impressive enough, as those within and without the Cyclopean walls of Mycenae or those, of truly 'heroic' appearance in their vast and uncouth layout, which have been found near Eleusis, on the road from the Peloponnesos to Thebes, and were supposed to cover six of the famous Seven. Not even the names which are connected with the foundations of cities, with ruling families, noble lineages, and whole tribes would have sufficed for a more general importance, not to mention the large number of heroes who are mere names to us, or remained nameless. Scientific interest would exist for them all, in so far as they belong to the general picture of Greek culture; but the human importance lies in the traditional stories which had their cult for a background.

It often seems as if the tales of gods and heroes alike were to be referred to 'folktale motifs', as if they were further developments of a few *primaeval* folktales, to which they could be easily reduced. This appearance (apart from its being deceptive) is fitted, more than anything else, to distract attention from their humanly absorbing content. 'Motifs' or 'narrative formulae', if handled for their own sakes, are merely the results of abstraction and reduction. They do not exist and are not active of themselves, but only in 'stories', which are more than motifs and formulae. Folktales are in truth full of motifs and of formulae, and although this does not completely exhaust them,

yet they can be largely reduced thereto. In this as in other things they betray their relatively late date. The earliest folktales and the earliest collections of them all lie before us in texts of relatively, indeed absolutely, recent times. To assume 'folktales' as older forms of the legends of gods and heroes on the analogy of these texts is one of the illogicalities of a historical method which has not been thought out. Still, these very texts furnish us with a basis, the only one we really possess, for reflecting on the character of those forms of narrative which are called folktales in English, *Märchen* in German. Anyone who has done so conscientiously enough³ must recognise the comparatively late date of folktales even in their characteristics. The teller of such tales turns against the tragic reality of human existence and the limitations from which it suffers, and opposes it with an anti-tragedy. Consciously or unconsciously the teller of folktales is a denier and an anti-tragedian, and his creation, with reference to that which he denies, is secondary. The primary, that which is denied, is in myth. The folktale ends most willingly with a wedding or other fulfilment. When this occurs, for instance in the story of Perseus, the reason for the folktale flavour of this particular myth lies in the fact that it was probably in a relatively late form from the Mycenaean age that it reached the poets who, for us, are the first to take notice of it. In the tale of Theseus or the story of Peleus (both names of the same type), we can still almost observe the process of the myth turning into a folktale, for in the one case the tragic ending, the death of Theseus at the hands of Lykomedes, is entirely without motive, but does occur, while in the other it is softened, in that the wedding with a goddess was considered, alike in the myth and in the folktale derived from it, to be a piece of good fortune which outweighed all the tragical results.

The stories of heroes in mythology are akin to another form of narrative, one which has similarly tragical features. In Old Norse it is called 'saga', a word which has been adopted into English and, in the form *Sage*, into German also. We can comprehend the saga in the concrete example of Old Icelandic

literature, which presumably goes back to the oral family chronicles of the noble houses that emigrated to Iceland. Like André Jolles, we must define the saga as a 'simple form', as the folktale also is, but with greater veracity: as the formative principle of that very *genre* which shaped and maintained the world in saga. That great Germanist characterises saga as follows:

'Arising from the occupation of the mind with family, kin, and blood-relationship, it built a world from a genealogy, which remained the same in a hundred many-hued varieties, a world of pride of ancestry and of the father's curse, of family property and family quarrels, of abductions of women and adultery, blood-revenge and incest, loyalty to kin and hatred of kinsfolk, of fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, a world of inheritance.'⁴

This sketch reminds us indeed of resemblances, especially of the story of the dynasty of Atreus, but also of differences which we will encounter in Greek stories of heroes. Part of the difference is that we are confronted in Greece with no such solid, self-consistent, independent tradition about the heroes, no such real family tradition, as that of the Icelandic sagas. We must collect fragments, and that always at second hand. It is true that it is often the hand of some great poet, above all of Homer. A world of original heroic mythology preceding the Homeric epics can, however, be inferred; this justifies us in asking whether the mythological tradition concerning the heroes is on Greek soil really what the sagas are in Iceland, rather than a peculiar phenomenon of the history of humanity.

If we pass through the famous gate of the stronghold and royal seat of Mycenae, which has to decorate its gable and to crown it a pillar flanked by lions (a symbol of the cult of the great goddess, the Lady of Wild Beasts, and possibly the place of her epiphany in the form of a bird), the first thing we notice is a great burial-ground. It is surrounded by slabs of stone

arranged parallel to each other. With this surround the deep pit-graves of the earlier kings were walled in in the fourteenth century B.C., after the gate and the mighty Cyclopean fortifications of the stronghold had been built. This was a mark of the veneration of their predecessors, who perhaps were not even the ancestors by blood of the future rulers, on the part of the succeeding generations, the veneration of the House of Perseus, if we may adopt without proof the names from the mythology of the heroes, by the House of Atreus. Schliemann, when he excavated the grave-circle, found there an altar, which had served, in the manner above described, for hero-cult. From the time in which no kingdom belonged any more to the royal castle we know of two surviving cults of heroes in connection with Mycenae, both outside the city: that of Perseus himself, but not of the kings who perhaps were considered as his descendants, as Perseidai, testified to by tradition, and that of the Atreid Agamemnon, known from the discovery of the place where he was venerated.

Schliemann, however, found no gravestone on which the name of any departed royalty honoured within the ring-wall could be read. In those days indeed no one expected written evidence from so early a date. Yet, when not long ago a second ring of similar graves was discovered and excavated outside the walls of the fortress, and grave-stelae were found which bore carvings, scenes of hunting and fighting with powerful beasts, yet not a single inscription, the silence of the stones began to be significant. No discovery from elsewhere justifies us so far in concluding that this silence is mere accident; it is, rather, characteristic. We now know the Mycenaean script; its monuments have been found in the palace of Nestor at Pylos, in Mycenae and to name here only this central point of the legends of heroes, in Thebes. Plutarch tells us of this script, which the Greeks of historical times thought more like Egyptian hieroglyphics than their own letters. The Spartans, who were masters of Boiotia under Agesilaos about 380 B.C., opened a tomb at Haliartos, in which it was said Alkmene,

the mother of Herakles, lay, and found there a bronze tablet with writing of that kind, but far more modest grave-gifts than those which have come to light from the tombs within the stone circle at Mycenae.⁵ In not one of the many graves of Mycenaean date which have been opened by archaeologists has an inscription been found. The inscribed tablets which have been discovered in palaces and houses are lists of property, of sacrifices and tributes belonging to gods and men. For Crete and Mycenae it seems as if the observation which I have already expressed⁶ and may now be repeated in the words of Oswald Spengler still holds good: 'In the whole mass of the Cretan finds there is no indication of historical, political or even biographical consciousness, such as reigned particularly among the people of the Egyptian culture from the earliest days of the Old Kingdom on.' At all events, it has left no trace of an impulse towards immortalising in writing in the Mycenaean burials, carefully though they were arranged and guarded.

The immortalising, however, was there, though not through writing. The magnificent beehive tombs outside the city were built from the fifteenth to the thirteenth century B.C. The shaft-graves, though so richly provided with costly funeral offerings, are not only proof of a cult of the dead in Mycenae, a precursor of the Greek hero-cult in historical times, but in their very dumbness they testify to a cult of memory, to a trust (if we may say it in the language of the historical Greeks, which was already spoken in the stronghold of the grave-circles) in the goddess Mnemosyne. According to much later evidence of a belief which surely rested upon an ancient cult of the dead, the departed themselves had a personal trust in her, and hoped to drink from her fountain in the underworld. He who remembers himself corresponds to the remembrance in which he lives on; that surely would be Mnemosyne's greatest gift. We have, for Mycenaean beliefs concerning death, no such evidence as those little gold tablets on which we find directions for the attainment of this greatest gift; but we cannot fail to provide Mnemosyne with a period of time which was not exclusively one of

more or less dim family memories, and in which the daughters of that great goddess already had their part. The excavation of Nestor's palace at Pylos furnished, in my opinion, the proof that a very human epic poetry, very attached to material things, came before Homer and extended across the confused times at the turn of the millennium until it reached him.⁷

How far writing had already supported both memory and the art of the poet, however, can no longer be exactly stated. Written records certainly did not stand in the foreground in that age which I have therefore called the age of Mnemosyne. And if in that very point we must note a resemblance to the Icelandic sagas, it seems to us that the dark family history of the *Atreidai* is not at all characteristic of Greek hero-mythology as a whole. Many figures of heroes and heroines bear a brighter, a divine radiance, which might even belong to former deities. We do not know how far the kings of Mycenae attempted to resemble the gods, and how far their cult of the dead gave expression to this attempt. The archaeological discoveries⁸ so far tell us unambiguously that Greek hero-cult is the continuation, not of a general cult of the dead in Mycenaean times, but of the Mycenaeans' cult of the royal dead. If that contained a theomorphism, the extent of which is unknown to us, this meets with an anthropomorphism in the myths of the gods, to which an ivory group of two goddesses and a divine child bears testimony already in the manner of Greek mythology.^{8a} This meeting may have arisen in the mythology of the heroes. The divine passed into the human, and the human was exalted to divinity; and so the hero-myth arose. Originating in man himself, it got its nourishment from the double kingdom of Mnemosyne, the realm of the dead, to which the cult at the graves was directed, and the past, which remained present through memory and won to an ideality which could distinguish only godlike men.

Here I made just one assumption concerning the origin of the cult of heroes among the Greeks. If we are inclined to see in the godlike splendour of the men to whom that cult

belonged the realisation in death of a striving native to man's nature, then the fitting means of expression for that is to speak of a contradictory figure which should admit of all variations of hero-mythology, of the figure of the god-man in its countless variations in the countless stories. In that case, the presupposition of the tales of heroes would be this human characteristic, that man is capable, even in the bond of a tribe or a family, of knowing the unique, which will not fit in with it. The origin of the peculiarity and uniqueness of a being brought into the world by his mother as something astonishingly new, which never was there before, the immediacy of the intrusion into the world resulting in a unique career, appears in heroic mythology as a divine origin. Of this we may speak in philosophical language as of a revelation of the being in man, and add that all revelations of this being have passed into forms, wherever they appear, both in history and also in mythology, to which alone our present consideration belongs. The expression 'god-man' I have chosen, independently of its Christian significance, on the basis of the Greek data; its sense is not the redemption of man, but rather a high conception of him, which vainly seeks for its like in the whole history of religion. For the general conception, which is meant here, and its post-Christian expression, we may cite Carlyle:⁹

"The essence of our being, the mystery in us that calls itself 'I'—ah, what words have we for such things?—is a breath of Heaven: the Highest Being reveals himself in man. This body, these faculties, this life of ours, is it not all as a vesture for that Unnamed? "There is but one Temple in the Universe", says the devout Novalis, "and that is the Body of Man. Nothing is holier than that high form. Bending before men is a reverence done to this Revelation in the Flesh. We touch Heaven when we lay our hand on a human body!" This sounds much like a mere flourish of rhetoric; but it is not so. If well meditated, it will turn out to be a scientific fact; the expression, in such

words as can be had, of the actual truth of the thing. We are the miracle of miracles—the great inscrutable mystery of God.’

In this manner Carlyle laid the foundation for his exalted reverence towards heroes, which for him formed the basis of Christianity—an Arianic Christianity it is true, and therefore not wholly unlike antiquity in conception; a reverence for heroes which—it must be said in his own words—is a ‘heart-felt, prostrate admiration, submission, burning, bondless, for a noblest godlike Form of Man’. ‘Is not that,’ he adds, ‘the germ of Christianity itself? The greatest of Heroes is One—whom we do not name here!’ The legends of the Greek heroes on the other hand are as little elevated as their hero-cult. They are, rather, astonishingly realistic and anything but ethically idealising, when they describe the human characteristics of their heroes. Carlyle is poles asunder from them. Greek hero-myths are concerned with the origins of cities, families, and tribes, and at the same time are concerned with the ‘god-man’; in this way their peculiar loftiness is determined. Between these two themes the stories of the discoveries and acquisitions of economic and technical advances play a minor part. The concept of the ‘culture-hero’ introduced by ethnologists belongs to mythologies of a different quality to that of Greece, indeed it would be violent to drag him into it. A culture-hero would be a hero reduced to a single function, and the very humanity of the Greek heroes refuses to endure any such reduction. Herakles, if one wanted to emphasise the ‘culture-hero’ element in him, would become at most a hunting hero, an enemy of wild beasts, an Orion, though Orion too was something more than that. The analysis of the deeds of Herakles is enough to show us something different; it is only the late interpretation of them which fits in with this simplification. Two of the great achievements that were necessary for human culture, corn and fire, are accredited to gods and Titans, Demeter, Hermes, Prometheus; the working of metals, to gods and *primaeval* beings sprung

from the earth—Hephaistos, the Daktyls and the Kabeiroi. Only the bringer of wine is a 'god-man', Dionysos, who it is true is the god-man among the gods.

The mythology of Greek heroes, although it is equally concerned with god-men and with foundations, is characterised by the fact that its emphasis, its peculiar stress, is laid on the side of the human and by no means on the importance of a foundation. In India, for instance, the divine is emphasised and exalted in a crude way, when this country's heroes, by measureless development of power, allow the god who has taken human form to become manifest. For the heroic mythology of the Greeks nothing is more characteristic than that the divine element is taken for granted, and its epiphanies are the most natural thing in the world. The stress is laid rather on the human side in all its manifestations, not least in the burden of destiny and suffering which the heroes endure. With this manner of emphasising the human element, the mythology of the heroes takes a new direction from the very beginning, which characteristically leads into Tragedy. The legends of heroes lead us from the solemn, self-explanatory hero-cult to the Tragic stage, the place of ever new excitements produced by the old material. If we try to find a Greek expression for this particular material of mythology (for Greek has no word answering to Norse *saga* or German *Sage*), we have recourse to that used by Asklepiades of Troilos, who in the time when tragic poetry in Athens was waning set it forth in a prose work and called his book *Tragodumena*, that is to say 'materials of Tragedy'. All these stories, even those which as it happens were never worked up by tragic poets, deserve this title; they were always potential tragedies.

In this material we have to do not only with little dramas whose archetypal scheme contains a necessary group of persons, as in the tales of the gods; fundamentally we always find a certain drama which deals with the destiny of the 'god-man', a drama with countless variations. Besides him there stand ready also other *dramatis personae*, who do not always make their

appearance, especially the mother of the god-man, who conceived him by a god, also the god's substitute, the hero's earthly father, and often an inferior brother, even a twin. But there is no rule for the tasks or the stages which he must pass through or the exploits which he must accomplish in order to be a hero. Destiny and development are not identical. Emerson has uttered and Rilke has confirmed the truth about the hero in the sentence already quoted, 'The hero is he who is immovably centred.' We must continually recall this sentence to mind when we occupy ourselves with the legends of heroes. The glory of the divine rests upon the immovable in him, but is shadowed by his destiny. He carries out the tasks apportioned to him by fate by means of that immovable element, to which his cult still bears witness in his death. It is the rarest of exceptions (as in the case of Herakles) if he does not fall a victim to death; he is always in contact with it, death belongs to his 'shape', and the cult testifies to the last, destined turn of the hero-life, for it is after all a cult of the dead.

The cult and the myth of the hero contain Tragedy in germ, not only as regards its material, its formative principle and its significance, but also in time. Attic Tragedy attaches itself to the cult and the mythology of heroes. There is no break here, no gulf between them. There is an unbroken continuity of intellectual activity, which, with regard to the mythology of the heroes, that hero-cult by narrative, may already be styled an act of cult. Tragedy is no less an act of cult than the sacred proceedings of the worship of heroes. It is a great and solemn action belonging to the cult of Dionysos, full of the sufferings of the heroes. Thus there remains only this question: do the heroes belong to Dionysos and Dionysos to them? The fixed connection between the cult and narrative in honour of the heroes and the dramatic action which we call Tragedy, in honour of Dionysos, is there and itself testifies to an aspect of the god through which he answers our question. For he was the hero among the gods. Thus the women of Elis invoked him with 'Come, hero Dionysos.'¹⁰ If we were certain that in this context

'hero' signified merely 'lord', even so we should have to bestow our attention on the circumstance that the distinctive name with which, in Homer, men with no claim to a cult are addressed is here applied to a god in his worship, and withal to a god whose connections with the realm of the dead and with death itself are made certain, if only by the story of his birth. Whether he was born of Persephone, goddess of the underworld, or of the Theban princess Semele, while she was already burning with Zeus' lightnings,¹¹ it was a subterranean birth, or a birth in death. As the healing god Asklepios was taken from his mother Koronis on her funeral pyre by Apollo, so was Dionysos raised by Zeus from the deadly blaze. It is the story of birth in fire, of the birth of a god who comes from death and is touched by it. Asklepios also must die; his birth, however, was one worthy of the god of healing. And Semele also was a *herois*, a heroine (so the festival at Delphi was called at which she was honoured with secret rites),¹² Dionysos had to bring her up from the underworld.¹³ But he, too, died.

The birth of a god in the grave, even without the theme of burning, must have been a very old story, since it was told also of Perseus, the hero and founder of Mycenae, as his birth-legend. He was born in an underground room, a chamber of bronze, in which, as in a sepulchre, his mother had been imprisoned for ever. Thence the voice of the baby made itself heard in the court of the palace. The scene of the story is Argos, the royal castle opposite to Mycenae. For us, it gives life to the stone ring of graves in the Mycenaean citadel, as if the ancient narrators thought of the chamber of bronze as built there in the depths of the earth. But the death of Dionysos was attributed to Perseus. He killed him, it was said, in trying to exclude his worship, or so the tale is motivated later.¹⁴ He threw the god into the deep waters of Lerna. However, the story of the enmity between Dionysos and Perseus is itself meant to provide a motive for something, namely the belief which was prevalent in the region round Mycenae and Argos that Dionysos had to do with the underworld, the entrance to which was

supposed to be at Lerna, a prehistoric town in the neighbourhood of those named. As at Elis, so here there was a festival at which the god was summoned from the underworld. In Elis the women's song bade the 'Heros Dionysos' rush on his bull's foot into his temple. In Lerna, Dionysos was called upon as Bugenes, the Son of the Bull.¹⁵ He was summoned with a trumpet-call, an unusual ceremony in Greece (all this comes to us as an echo from an earlier world, surely that of Mycenae), and a lamb for the Pylaochos, the 'Keeper of the Gate', was sunk into the depths of the waters. The lord of the underworld, otherwise known also as Hades, was called 'Keeper of the Gate' or 'Closer of the Gate' (Pylartes). According to the legend of the bringing up of Semele from the underworld, Dionysos descended thither at Lerna to fetch up his mother; in the story of Perseus, he was thrown in. But to whom did the trumpet-call belong if not to someone whose home was there and who waited for the summons to appear again among the living?

If he was invoked as 'Heros', this also points to a like close connection with the realm of the dead, and this is but to say the least of it. The philosopher Herakleitos said something of greater import. He found everywhere examples of the One which reveals itself in opposites. He *takes* these examples, he does not construct them, for how, in that case, could they be examples which prove anything? From the visible world: 'The sea is the purest water, and the impurest; to fish it is drinkable and very salvation, but to men undrinkable and deadly.' 'The road upwards and downwards is one and the same.' And from the invisible world: 'Hades and Dionysos are the same.'¹⁶ It is the same lesson (a lesson for us, not for his contemporaries) which art-monuments convey to us, above all that vase-painting of the archaic master Xenokles, who tells us after his fashion how Dionysos, *kantharos* in hand, welcomes, or takes his leave of Persephone.¹⁷ But archaic gravestones from the neighbourhood of Sparta let the secret out most clearly;¹⁸ recently also a large find of clay tablets¹⁹ brings the same identity before our

eyes. The god sits on a throne, with the same wine-cup, the *kantharos*, in his hand, or else a pomegranate, which he has offered to Persephone to eat; the Queen of the Underworld sits beside him. Other signs, the serpent, the dog, the horse, once also the youthful-looking head, the offering which little human figures are bringing to the divine pair, all tell us unmistakably that his Hades and Dionysos in one person represents the 'Heros'. And more than this: one of the grave-stelae bears the name of the Spartan sage Chilon and shows us that the representation is not of a hero in general, but the recently buried dead heroised, and (this is the most important information) heroised as Dionysos.

It seems that Dionysos was once in Greece a lofty mark for theomorphism. It was not apotheosis in general without passing into a definite form which was sought after, but identity with this god, the husband of the Queen of the Underworld and the Lord of the realm of the dead. Probably this was to begin with a royal aspiration, not taken over by Homeric poetry which shut the door against Dionysos. It is to be assumed in the first place in regions where Dionysos was held to be king of the underworld, especially in the Peloponnesos, which was much less penetrated by the spirit of Homer than the island world or Athens. But even the most inconspicuous traces which this striving has left behind betray its meaning, for instance the vine-branches on which the Athenians laid their dead in their graves.²⁰ But some traces the custom has left behind whose similar meaning could easily escape us, namely the burial of wine-cups with the dead. To it we owe treasures of vase-paintings and in general the greater part of our knowledge of this art. Ancient sepulture, that limited kind of hero-cult, is full of the Dionysiac element until the latest times. Everything about it alludes to and conjures up the blessedness bestowed by the god after the unavoidable sufferings of life, which are merely increased by warlike deeds: by the god Dionysos, who had his share of suffering and death. He was the Heros among the gods, whom once the kings strove to

follow. There was a song sung for him also, concerning the kid which as a sacrificial victim represented him in his passion.²¹ That song was called *tragodia*, the Song on the occasion of the Young Buck-goat, and into it, into Tragedy, the sufferings of the heroes were introduced by bolder and bolder poets.

His myth, which originally included the destiny of all living things, plants, beasts and men, took on traits, in the Theban legend of his birth, which characterise the myth of the god-man. His epithet *Bugenes* at Lerna still indicates his descent from deities in bestial shape, and his Theban mother Semele still bears the name which designated the goddess of the underworld in Phrygia.²² But she has now become merely a princess, the chosen bride of the king of the gods. We do her no wrong when we see in her an earthly maiden; she belongs to the lengthy series of mothers of heroes, beloved of gods, who take the foremost place yonder in the other world, as the 'Odyssey' describes it.²³ Genealogical poetry especially reckoned them up and glorified them one after another; 'or like her who . . .' thus the praise of each of them began, and the praises became a poetic *genre*. Odysseus, apart from the meeting with his own mother, seems to have wished to tell only of them. If he says nothing about Semele, it is an impressive silence, which admits of two opposed explanations. Either the poet excluded the god's mother as he did the god himself, or he shows by his silence the validity of that story according to which Dionysos did not long leave Semele in the underworld. According to the holy legend of Thebes, she conceived and bore the god in her father's house as a mortal mother who died in giving birth, and thus in Kadmos' palace the myth of gods passes into a hero-myth. There, in Dionysos, son of a mortal woman, the figure of the god-man, uniting divinity and mortality, showed clear for a moment.

But such were the births of heroes everywhere. A being of divine descent was born, though not in death like Semele's son, yet in the end for death, for the underworld, in order afterwards to be active from his grave and receive veneration at his grave. An inspection of the hero-legends of the Greeks which

treats them as a mythology connected with hero-cult leads us unforcedly and consistently to the origin of Greek Tragedy. Nothing concerned Dionysos so closely as the destiny of a hero who passed through suffering and death into cult. The solution of the old problem presents itself almost obviously from the viewpoint set forth here, and at the same time guarantees its correctness. The viewpoint is won from the tradition, which is now to be set forth in detail, a start being made with the tale of Kadmos and Harmonia, for the myth of the gods passes into that of the heroes in Kadmos' palace not only through the legend of Dionysos' birth but also through the story of this divine pair. Kadmos and Harmonia had no hero-cult in Greece and their story is rather poor in human details; let it therefore be stated to begin with who they probably were.

They were accounted a hero and heroine, who, however, had found their place of rest not among Greeks but in distant Illyria. It was natural enough to tell of their transportation to the Islands of the Blessed, if only because their hero-tombs were nowhere honoured in Greece. Their metamorphosis into serpents would indeed be the obvious form of survival in cult for a hero and heroine, or else—this is the other possibility—in that shape they were connected still more closely with the underworld. And so, very probably, it happened. If they received no hero-cult, yet they had the cult of a pair belonging to the underworld in an even more solemn form. In the centre of their cult stood their wedding. This was celebrated on Samothrace in the mysteries. The other site of like mysteries was Thebes, and it is not easy to decide how far this cult on Theban soil was influenced from Samothrace and to what extent the mysteries of the Thracian island, testified to only by comparatively late buildings, took their form from Thebes. Three of the secret names of the gods of the mysteries, Axieros, Axiokersos and Axiokersa, are Greek, while the fourth, Kadmilos or Kasmilos, is a diminutive form of Kadmos. One of the two witnesses to whom our very succinct source appeals²⁴ is the historian Dionysodoros, most likely he of Boiotia, who could have

information about the Theban divine names. In Thebes, apparently, the divine pair of the mysteries were paraphrased as Axiokersos and Axiokersa, 'those who are worthy of marriage',²⁵ and of these very names we are told that they meant Hades and Persephone. Many vases found in the Theban sanctuary of the mysteries relate to a marriage-festival, and we must not assume that in that Kabirion there was celebrated the marriage of other deities than on the island of the Kabeiroi, Samothrace. The shrine lay outside the city; but in the holy ruins of the palace of Kadmos, on the Theban citadel, the Kadmeia, there stood a very old statue of Dionysos Kadmos.²⁶ No other than he was the worthy bridegroom in Thebes; Dionysos and Hades in one person called Kadmos in the hero-legends, Axiokersos in the mysteries; and no other than Harmonia was the worthy bride, otherwise called Persephone. The tale about it, how they found one another and celebrated their marriage, is handed down to us, however, as a hero-legend.

Neither this nor any other unavoidable interpretation in what follows is intended as an end in itself, but only as a help for the reader to master the material, which is evasive, especially in the oldest stories, and reduced by its very age. The genealogical tables in the Appendix serve to give a general view. In them, as elsewhere, there will be found a certain selection among the traditional names, for only too often these have been invented by the genealogists or taken from petty local traditions. The references to the sources have—as in my *The Gods of the Greeks*—been numbered consecutively throughout. To avoid breaking up the text too much, however, the figures from 1001 to 1999, and again from 2001 on, have been divested of their thousands; to offset any confusion that might arise therefrom, each page of the sources list itself has the numbers of the relevant text pages superposed. In the case of texts which have already been retold in *The Gods of the Greeks*, the references to sources refer to that work. No page-references are given to *The Heroes of the Greeks* itself, since with the help of the Index,

everything that has to do with one figure in several passages can readily be found. Specialists will see that my handling of the material includes criticism of the philological literature on the passages in question (including the interference with the text of Pindar, *Nem.* 3. 22); the general reader will not be disturbed thereby.

In this re-telling of the mythology of the Greek heroes, pictures have again served as sources alongside the written tradition. However, as a text in pictures, even though scattered throughout the book, they are never to be thought of as illustrations, but as variants.

It is important to remember that they stood alone on the vases, and related the myth in a medium other than language and without the help of words. No doubt they were individual variants, just as the *ductus*, the 'handwriting' of the painter could not remain without individuality. But it would be too one-sided to call them the painters' 'own invention'. For while treated from a different angle, they set forth the indispensable other condition of the material expressed in different medium. To particularise the place where this condition produced conspicuous new traits, if and to what extent it was in a 'picture-book' that was there before the vases, and to what extent it was on the vases themselves—is a matter we must leave for a treatment of the painters and their works which shall go beyond the present state of our knowledge of vases, for the future science of vases in fact.

The present-day method of treating our growing treasure of such paintings we owe to the guidance already given us concerning the individuality of the painters, as revealed by their styles, and concerning the current state of the pictorial tradition; and especially to the following three works of classification: Sir John Beazley's *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters* (1956) and *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters* (1942), and Frank Brommer's *Vasenlisten zur griechischen Heldensage* (1956). The sources of the illustrations are given in the List of Plates at the beginning of the book (pp. xi-xviii) and use these three works

of classification wherever they apply. It is only in the case of pictures which fall outside them that an independent source is given. Against these notes are also entered the pages of the text which tell the relevant story.

The author wishes to extend his special thanks to the museums whose reproductions have been placed at his disposal, as well as to the German Archaeological Institute in Rome.

BOOK ONE

CHAPTER I

Kadmos and Harmonia

THERE IS NO CITY IN GREECE, outside Mycenae, which had gathered together so many legends of heroes on its site and in its neighbourhood as Thebes, and no hero was so honoured of gods and men as Kadmos, after whom the citadel of Thebes was called Kadmeia. He belongs to the fifth generation of the *primaeval* kings, the founders of countries and cities, who were sprung from the marriage of Zeus in bull-shape, with Io in the form of a cow.²⁷ The many threads which connected him with the gods were admiringly reckoned.²⁸ His great-grandfather was Zeus, Poseidon his grandfather, Ares and Aphrodite his wife's parents. His daughter Semele became the mother of Dionysos and ascended with her son to heaven.²⁹ Another of his daughters, Ino, also became a goddess, turning into Leukothea, the 'white goddess'. Besides Dionysos, Kadmos had likewise, in her son Palaimon, otherwise named Melikertes, a divine child as grandson. Both children found their way into the tales of the gods.

All this results in a vast web of genealogical tales surrounding Kadmos. They were doubtless the work of Theban genealogists, who wished to secure for him this prominent position in the world of the gods ruled over by Zeus. He was made out to be descended from a race in which Zeus had twice celebrated his marriage in bull-shape, the first time with Io. She was, as we know from the legends of the gods, the daughter of Inachos, the river-god of Argos. Hence she originated from the district in which Mycenae and the other strongholds of the Argive land were to arise. Driven from place to place in the shape of a cow, she fled from her father's river to the Nile, and there bore Epaphos to Zeus; Epaphos became the ancestor of that line concerning which there will be something to say in the story of Danaos and his daughters. The

genealogists included Kadmos also in this line. He is said to have reached Boiotia on the track of a cow and founded the town of Thebes there. Beautiful Europa likewise was a member of that same line; Zeus in the shape of a bull carried her off to Crete in the well-known tradition, but to Boiotia in the less familiar one.

Whether wandering on her track or on that of an ordinary cow, Kadmos appears in this fabric of two bull-marriages, which is nothing else than the story preliminary to the birth of Dionysos, the god in bull-form who was worshipped as Son of the Bull, as a herdsman. But Kadmos appears thus also in the story of the Titans.³⁰ In those days, the lordship of Zeus over the world of the gods was as yet nowise assured. The dragon Typhoeus had cut out his sinews and hidden them in a cave. In this tale Kadmos appears as a herd-boy. He charmed the dragon with his herdsman's pipe, and thus got back the sinews and gave them to Zeus again. This affair took place in Kilikia, in the eastern land, wherein according to the genealogy, Kadmos' brother Kilix was supposed to be reigning.

A herdsman of primæval times, on the track of a cow which yet was no ordinary cow but the bride of a god and carrying the emblem of the moon—thus the form of Kadmos arises from the east, and in his house in Thebes, Dionysos was to be born. It remains obscure—probably it was kept secret—whether he himself begot a divine child. In the circle of the Kabeiroi, who had their secret worship on the island of Samothrace, but also in Thebes, one of the gods was called Kadmilos, that is to say 'little Kadmos'. He was no other than Hermes in that shape in which the Athenians often represented him, in agreement with the sacred legend of the Samothracian mysteries, namely as an ithyphallic herm.³¹ Why was this Hermes styled 'little Kadmos', if he was not Kadmos' divine son? Even in late times the very intimate associations of the messenger of the gods with the first king of Thebes were still known, though it is true that it was said then that Hermes' relation to Kadmos was the same as Apollo's to Hyakinthos.³²

The story of Kadmos' journeyings embraced many countries.

Agenor, who was made out to be his father, a great-grandson of Io and according to his name a 'leader of men', was sovran of Phoenicia.³³ His sons were called Kadmos, Phoinix and Kilix, and his daughter, Europa. According to the older narrators, she was rather the daughter of Phoinix,³⁴ and Kadmos was perhaps her brother in this case also. After the abduction of Europa, her father sent out his sons to look for his stolen daughter. They were not to return home until they had found their sister again. In this way the wanderings of Kadmos began. He was the only one and the real one who took the search for the girl seriously. Of Kilix we are told that he turned back to become king of Kilikia, country near to Phoenicia, to which Phoinix gave his name.

Kadmos journeyed further and reached the country of the Thracians. Concerning this part of his wanderings the tale was told principally on the island of Samothrace, where the same language was spoken as in Thrace. According to some he gave up the search for Europa here, according to others he found here another Europa.³⁵ How this is to be understood we are not told, but in the Thracian stories Kadmos was known by no means as a lonely wanderer, for he is supposed to have taken his mother with him on his quest. She bore the lunar name Telephassa or Telephae, 'she who illuminates afar', or Argiope, 'she of the white face'. Here another brother of Kadmos appears, Thasos, who gave his name to the island adjacent to Samothrace.³⁶ It is the picture of a mother with two sons, which appears in these stories as if it hovered over the coastal and island landscape of the Thracian Sea.

On Samothrace the three had other names as well.³⁷ The mother was called Elektra or Elektryone there; her sons bore the names Dardanos and Eetion or Iasion. Between these brothers, however, there stood as a third figure not only their mother; they had a sister, Elektra having a daughter, as Telephassa had Europa. This daughter was Harmonia, Kadmos' destined bride. According to the Samothracians she was begotten of Zeus; and as Zeus carried off Europa, so

Kadmos did Harmonia. Perhaps that is why it was said that he found another Europa on Samothrace. Elektra sought for her daughter, as Demeter did for Persephone and as Telephassa in company with Kadmos sought for Europa. So Kadmos, who had gone forth to look for his sister, found his bride on Samothrace.

It was also said that the first marriage on earth in which the gods took part and to which they brought their gifts was celebrated here, on the island of the mysteries.³⁸ There was even a tale of how the love began;³⁹ Kadmos had had himself initiated into the mysteries and during the celebration caught sight of Harmonia among the young women. This is a pretty tale, but certainly not a very old one, and it is the model, if it is not the imitation, of one still better known. Philip of Macedon in like manner saw the young Olympias for the first time at the Samothracian mysteries, and she was the future mother of Alexander the Great. It was not till after his marriage with Harmonia on Samothrace that Kadmos received the oracle from Delphi which sent him further on to accomplish his exploit as a founder in Boiotia.⁴⁰

But there was another account,⁴¹ and with it we pass into the sequence of those tales in which Thrace plays no part or no large one; Kadmos was not accompanied by his mother on his search,⁴² but by an armed band.⁴³ With his followers he marched through the lands and on his way consulted the oracle of Delphi. The answer is transmitted to us actually in verse, and it allegedly ran somewhat thus:⁴⁴

'Kadmos, Agenor's son, heed thou my words.
Rise with the dawn, go forth from noble Pytho
In common dress, bearing a hunter's spear,
Through Phlegyan land and Phokis, till thou reach
Herdsman and herd of Pelagon, born to death.
Meet him, and of the lowing kine take one
That hath on either flank a moon-like orb;
Make her thy guide upon the beaten path.

A clear sign I will tell thee, thou shalt know it;
 Where first that hornèd beast that dwells in field
 Shall kneel her down upon the grassy ground,
 There make thou sacrifice to dark-leaved Earth
 Cleanly and holily. Thine offering made,
 Found on the hill a town of spacious streets,
 First sending Ares' dreadful guard to death.
 So shall thy name be known of men to come,
 Thy consort be a goddess, blessed Kadmos.'

It is not to be alleged of this oracle that it is very old, but still the verses were composed assuredly on the basis of an ancient tale. Kadmos found the cow with the lunar emblem which he was looking for in the possession of a herdsman born of clay (his name, Pelagon, was apparently understood as equivalent to *pēlogonos*, 'sprung from clay or mud'),⁴⁵ and bought it from him. The country into which the cow led him⁴⁶ was then named Cowland (Boiotia).⁴⁷ The beast let itself be driven through the whole land, and where it dropped from weariness, it lay down on its right side. This also was a predicted sign. Thereupon Kadmos made his offering ready. He sent out some of his following to look for a spring, since water was one of the necessities for a sacrifice.⁴⁸ But the men he sent did not return; they had been killed by the dragon which guarded the fountain, for there was one in the neighbourhood, known as Arcia, 'spring of Ares'. This formidable serpent had its dwelling over it in a cave; it was the offspring of the war-god,⁴⁹ to whom belonged the hill on which the Kadmeia, the acropolis of the future Thebes, was to rise.

So Kadmos was confronted with the deed which only he could accomplish, whether he really came from abroad or, as some would have it,⁵⁰ was the son of a native *primaeval* man, Ogygos the child of Earth,⁵¹ whom the genealogists then made out to have for his father the hero of the country, Boiotos.⁵² There he stood, on ground for which no people had as yet arisen before his deed in founding the city—at the beginning

of the world, as it were, in *primaeval* loneliness. For he must perform his feat quite alone. Like a god, on the earth which was unpopulated and dwelt in only by some few *primaeval* men, he went to meet the dragon. Pelagon, 'born to death', in whose possession he had found the lunar cow, was also a *primaeval* man, born from clay, whose existence had indeed modified the loneliness of the primitive conditions but not altered it essentially. As a lonely traveller, not like a hero accompanied by a company of heroes, is how the oracle also represents Kadmos, his only weapon being a hunting-spear.

However, he accomplished the deed quite in the manner of *primaeval* conditions, when there were no weapons as yet; Kadmos slaughtered the serpent with a stone.⁵³ There were some narrators⁵⁴ and some vase-painters who could not imagine him without his sword in his hand, but Assteas of Paestum painted him naked, with his traveller's cloak on his back and a little pointed cap. He holds two hunting-spears in his left hand, but makes no use of them; he is hurling the stone with his right hand against the gigantic serpent. Stones will play a part in the continuation of the story also. Most painters and poets, not seeing the divine element in Kadmos himself, were agreed that goddesses and gods supported him in accomplishing his deed. Athene, they tell us, helped him⁵⁵ and advised him to use the dragon's teeth for seed; she even sowed them for him.⁵⁶ All this happened, some believed, according to the will and plan of Ares.⁵⁷

And indeed the outcome of this extraordinary affair in no way contradicted the war-god's meaning. From the dragon-seed there sprung armed warriors, five or more, a whole threatening host for the lone Kadmos who had called them into being. But they did not notice him, for being just born from the earth they had hardly yet opened their eyes. The hero then cast stones at them, and the warriors thought they were attacked by one another. Fighting broke out and they killed each other, only five remaining alive, Udaïos (man of the ground), Chthonios (man of the earth), Pelor (giant),

Hyperenor (more than man), and Echion (serpent-man). They were collectively known as the Spartoi, i.e. 'sown men', and famed as the 'golden-helmed seed'.⁵⁸ Their descendants, the ruling family of the Thebans, still designated themselves as earth-born and bore a spear on their bodies as a birthmark.⁵⁹

Thus the unarmed man created the kernel of an armoured and armed people of warriors. But his action as founder, the founding of a world on the hills of Thebes, where the dragon bore rule no longer, was completed by his marriage with Harmonia, daughter of Ares and Aphrodite. This is clear, not from the name Kadmos, as if we must catch from it an echo of the word *kosmos*, Greek for the ordered universe, but from the name of the bride, Harmonia, and from the wedding itself, which followed at once. Only those who would tell the foundation-legend completely in the spirit of the god of Delphi made out that Kadmos must first serve Ares for a great year (eight ordinary years) by way of penance, as Apollo likewise had to atone for his killing of a dragon.⁶⁰ Harmonia, as her name implies, was harmony itself, the Uniter, a second Aphrodite and at the same time daughter of the god of war. And she united herself to Kadmos as no other goddess, certainly not the great love-goddess, ever did to any hero. Only the marriage of Dionysos, the hero among the gods, with Ariadne when she was already called Aphrodite Ariadne, could be compared to this union. True, the Samothracians named Zeus and Elektra as the parents of Harmonia, and perhaps that was even what the Thebans really thought, since one of the seven gates of their city was named after Elektra.⁶¹ But who knows if Aphrodite also was not meant by Elektra daughter of Atlas, and therefore a younger Aphrodite was no less signified by Harmonia? The two names and the two traditions were also reconciled in a tale⁶² to the effect that Kadmos brought Harmonia with him from Samothrace, from the house of Elektra, for Elektra had taken over Aphrodite's daughter, the fruit of her notorious *affaire* with Ares,⁶³ to bring her up. The Thebans also knew a story according to

which Harmonia knew a great deal about matters which had happened among the barbarians, as if she were one of the princesses come into Greece from distant parts, like Medeia in Corinth.⁶⁴

All the gods came to her wedding,⁶⁵ leaving their heavenly abodes for her sake, and the Muses honoured the bridal pair with their singing;⁶⁶ it was such a festival as seldom happened in the legends of the heroes. A second time was a marriage on earth thus celebrated, when Thetis wedded Peleus, again a goddess with a hero. Zeus, on this occasion, it is said, feasted at the same table as the fortunate Kadmos.⁶⁷ In the wedding procession the pair were brought in by a remarkable team, as can be seen on an old vase-painting; a boar and a lion were yoked to their carriage. King Pelias later wanted the same for his daughter Alkestis, and Apollo helped Admetos to harness the beasts, who agreed so ill with each other.⁶⁸ Such a combination was suitable to the wedding procession of Harmonia, the Uniter. Apollo, who contrived it, walked in beside the carriage. And the Muses sang; we are often told what they sang then,⁶⁹ 'What is fair is ever dear'—'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever', a poet translated it after more than two thousand years. Kadmos' victory was a fair deed, but fairer still was the bride, fair-haired Harmonia with the eyes of a heifer.⁷⁰

It was known also what wedding presents the gods brought her,⁷¹ also what Kadmos gave his bride,⁷² the gift that was to prove fatal to later generations. One wedding-present was a *peplos*, a sort of cloak; another was a necklace, presented to Kadmos by Aphrodite and wrought by Hephaistos,⁷³ the corresponding piece to the wedding gift which Europa received from Zeus.⁷⁴ This also was a token of the incomparably high rank of the marriage, although no pure good fortune came of it. Where Dionysos is near, Tragedy is near also. Four daughters and one son were born to Kadmos and Harmonia; of these, Semele was to be smitten by the lightning of Zeus,⁷⁵ Agaue in horrible madness to tear her own son to pieces,⁷⁶ Autonoe one day to gather up the bones of her son

Aktaion,⁷⁷ and Ino to venture to leap into the sea with her son Palaimon.⁷⁸ The palace of Kadmos was destroyed when Semele burned, before he and Harmonia disappeared. The kingship of Thebes fell to his only son, Polydoros, 'him of the many gifts',⁷⁹ and the line was continued through that ill-starred succession, Labdakos, Laios, Oidipus.

The story was told⁸⁰ that Kadmos and Harmonia left Thebes on a carriage drawn by calves—a divine pair about whom it cannot be known when they turned into snakes. Did this transformation, worthy of true deities of the underworld, already happen in Thebes, before they set out on their journey to the north-west,⁸¹ or was it not till they reached the Illyrians, over whom they ruled and whom they were to lead against the Greeks as far as Delphi? Long after, the Illyrian tribe of the Encheleis still carried snakes as their standards, and this custom may have been connected with the account of the sovereignty of Kadmos and Harmonia over those tribes of the northern Balkan peninsula. Allegedly, they reached the Adriatic on their team of cows at the point where the little harbour town of Budva now stands (it was formerly called Buthoe,⁸² in commemoration of the 'swift cows' of the Theban king and queen). There was also a son born to them there, Illyrios, who gave his name to the Illyrians, of whom the story was told that a snake cherished him in its coils and made him strong.⁸³

In Illyria also, the graves of Kadmos and Harmonia were shown, and two serpent-shaped stones⁸⁴ which were supposedly their memorials. But it was also said that they quitted the earth. Zeus, or—according to those who put the war-god, as Aphrodite's husband, in the foreground—Ares,⁸⁵ transported them to the Islands of the Blessed,⁸⁶ not Kadmos alone, but Harmonia as well, both in serpent-form.⁸⁷ Like the well-known divine pair on the Spartan gravestones (a pair composed of Dionysos, as hero and king of the underworld, and his consort), they doubtless sit enthroned among the dead, but to the living there appears a pair of snakes.

CHAPTER II

The Theban Dioskuroi

THE MARRIAGES OF ZEUS made beauty, order and memory rule in this world. His marriage with Eurynome, a daughter of Okeanos and Tethys, established the rule of beauty, for the Charities were the offspring of this union. His wedding with Themis, the law of nature, a great goddess, who bore Zeus the three Horai, the queens of ripeness and right times, made strong the regularities which form the natural order of the world. His union with Mnemosyne, who presented him with the nine Muses, increased memory by the arts of her nine daughters. Since the wedding of Zeus with Hera, heaven has ruled over us men and in that rule a god and a goddess take part as man and wife. The first marriage on earth, the model for the rest, was that of Kadmos and Harmonia. The sons of Heaven came to Harmonia's bridal. String music, the notes of Amphion's lyre, first made the walls of Thebes, the city between the two rivers, arise.⁸⁸

The Thebans, and not they alone of the Greeks, knew many tales concerning divine twins,⁸⁹ of brothers who were unlike or even hostile. I would merely touch upon the Theban tale of Melia and her two brothers before telling the story of the twins Amphion and Zethos. Melia, as her name implies, was a nymph of the manna-ash, like the mothers and wives of the first men,⁹⁰ a being sprung from the earth,⁹¹ but also the goddess of a spring and reckoned a daughter of Okeanos.⁹² She had two brothers, Ismenos, which is the name of one of the two rivers of Thebes, and Kaaithos or Kaanthos, a very old-fashioned name, the proper form of which the tellers no longer knew. Both were sons of Okeanos. Through them, fratricide came into the world, for they quarrelled over their sister.⁹³ Ismenos seems to have been her favourite,⁹⁴ and therefore his brother killed him. The story is also told thus:⁹⁵

Apollo, who had the surname Ismenios, carried Melia off, and Kaanthos, like Kadmos, was sent by his father to look for his sister. Then, when he found her in the god's possession, he set fire to Apollo's shrine, the Ismenion. Melia bore Teneros the prophet, after whom the plain was named on which the Thebans' temple of the Kabeiroi stood.

This was a trio like that on Samothrace, the island of the Kabeiroi, two brothers with a sister, with the nymph of the manna-ash, the *primaeval* woman, over whom they both strove, who was carried off and sought for, and who was the cause of fratricide or, in the later form of the tale, of the burning of a temple. But in the hero-mythology of the Thebans there was yet another pair of brothers, two young heroes with their mother. Antiope, daughter of Asopos, one of the river-gods of Boiotia, could boast that she had lain in the arms of Zeus. She bore him twins, Amphion and Zethos, who were to found the seven-gated city, for 'without walls they could not dwell in Thebes of the wide dancing-places, strong though they were'.⁹⁶ According to the story alluded to in these words of the 'Odyssey', the city must have been an unfortified place around the Kadmeia, the former palace of Kadmos, as the inhabited places were in Crete around the palaces of Knossos or Phaistos in the days of king Minos.

The beauty of Antiope was famous;⁹⁷ it was the beauty of the moon when she looks upon us with her full face, for that is what her name means. The sun-god's consort at Corinth bore the same name.⁹⁸ If the story speaks of an earthly father of Antiope, at least it gives him the name Nykteus, 'he of the night'. In a late and purely human tale it was not Zeus who was her lover, seducing her, it was said, in the shape of a satyr,⁹⁹ but a king named Epopeus,¹⁰⁰ which signifies the sky-god looking down on us; for the Corinthians, who called their lofty citadel Epope,¹⁰¹ this was Helios, but elsewhere it meant Zeus. It was no mortal woman who brought the King of Heaven the Theban Dioskuroi, the sons of Zeus, as Leda did Kastor and Polydeukes in Sparta,¹⁰² two riders on white

colts.¹⁰³ Amphion and Zethos were born in a cave on Kithairon, on the Attic side of the mountain, between the places called Oinoe and Eleutherai. Their mother left them there.¹⁰⁴ A spring issued from in front of the cave, and there a herdsman bathed the divine twins. They did not find their mother again till they were young men. This is how the story was put on the stage by Euripides, in a famous tragedy entitled 'Antiope'.¹⁰⁵

It has not come down to us complete, but we can still reproduce its contents. It began with the story told by that herdsman to whom Antiope had entrusted the twins on Kithairon. In the tragedy she was the daughter of King Nykteus, who bore rule in Thebes after the death of Pentheus, the grandson of Kadmos, who was torn in pieces. Being with child by Zeus, Antiope had to flee from her father. She wandered over Kithairon until she came to Sikyon on the far shore of the Corinthian Gulf. There Epopeus was king, and in him Antiope found a protecting husband. Nykteus in his fury took his own life, after laying on his brother and successor, Lykos, the 'Wolf', the task of bringing Antiope back. Lykos captured Sikyon, killed Epopeus and took his niece prisoner. Antiope had to return over Kithairon, the mountain of the Kadmeian maenads, where perhaps also Zeus had met her in satyr-shape, as a slave, to the land over which Lykos ruled. On the way, she bore her sons by night in that cave, and handed them over to the shepherd.

In the tragedy, the herdsman told this tale in front of the very cave, in which the twins had grown to young manhood. He had not yet dared to tell them all, seeing that he tended the herds of the king, under whose wife, the imperious Dirke, Antiope now lived the life of a slave. Now Amphion entered, holding the lyre which Hermes, son of Maia and half-brother of the divine twins, had invented and given him. He proceeded to sing of Heaven and of Earth, the universal mother,¹⁰⁶ for that radiant youth lived only for song. Zethos was of a different disposition. He returned from hunting and rebuked

his brother for his idleness. Each spoke in praise of his own way of life, Zethos for that of warfare and activity, Amphion for that of music and contemplation. They were dissimilar brothers, these divine twins, although not hostile like those who quarrelled over their sister. The sage, gentle Amphion was here again the one ready to yield, and he followed his brother to the hunt.¹⁰⁷ But on that day Antiope had escaped from her servitude while her mistress, Dirke, was gone with the Kadmeian women into the hills as a maenad to worship Dionysos.

The fugitive met the glorious youths before the cave. She recognised them as the sons whom she had borne to Zeus and addressed them as their mother.¹⁰⁸ It was in vain; the twins could not recognise the bride of Zeus in this tormented woman, and Zethos repulsed her when she wished to seek refuge in the sheltering cave. For Dirke was entering with the rout of maenads,¹⁰⁹ probably to get a bull from the herdsman to sacrifice to Dionysos. There she met her escaped slave, and in her rage ordered the young men to bind Antiope to the bull dragging her with her own hands to the place where she hoped to find the beast. At this moment the old herdsman came running up. He stopped the twins, who were hesitating, undecided (probably only Zethos had taken part in the foregoing scene), and testified that Antiope was really their mother. The brothers ran after the women, freed Antiope, caught Dirke and bound her to the bull. The queen was consequently dragged to death. Lykos too was overthrown; with the help of the herdsman they enticed him into the cave and would have killed him there if Hermes had not bidden them stop. He brought the commands of the Father; the sovereignty belonged to the sons of Zeus, and Lykos was to hand it over to them voluntarily, to burn Dirke and strew her ashes into the spring of Ares. From then on the spring and the brook, which beyond all others furnished Thebes with pure water, were called Dirke.

Zethos was to be protector of the city and Amphion to

hymn the gods. His lyre-playing and his song set the stones in motion, also the trees, which left their ground and offered themselves to the carpenters. Hermes foretold it, and it was said that Thebes originated as a fortified place thus; the moving stones arranged themselves at the notes of the lyre into a wall with seven gates—seven, probably because Amphion's lyre already had seven strings.¹¹⁰ That was the harmony in this foundation, which also led to the creation of a cosmos. But Amphion's further destiny was less in accordance with it.

For he took to wife Niobe, most beautiful of brides, a daughter of Tantalos, king of Lydia, as Hermes foretold; and we all know¹¹¹ what ill-fortune befell Amphion through her. The daughters whom Niobe bore him were killed by Artemis, the sons by Apollo. One of the daughters was again called Melia,¹¹² and as Kaanthos became an enemy to Apollo because of that Melia of whom we spoke at the beginning, so it was with Amphion too. From anger and revenge for the children who had been shot down he tried to storm the god's temple, and was slain by Apollo.¹¹³ He and Zethos were buried in one tomb,¹¹⁴ though both brothers were reckoned immortal divine riders. From the Thebans they had the cult of heroes, not of gods.

Antiope did not remain on Theban soil. Being a goddess, she ruled a wider region. Perhaps she had originally been a wandering divine woman, like Io or Europa. It was thought therefore that Dionysos had driven her mad and punished her with wanderings, because Dirke was trying to do him honour when she met her death on account of Antiope. It was also told¹¹⁵ that in Phokis, the hero Phokos, after whom the region was named, met her in her wanderings, cured her of madness, and took her to wife. The common tomb of Antiope and Phokos was shown near the town of Tithoreia in Phokis.¹¹⁶ When the sun entered the sign of the Bull, the Tithoreians always used to steal earth from the grave of the sons of Antiope and strew it on the grave of their mother, a custom which

proved the connection of Antiope with a divine bull, whether Zeus or Dionysos, even after her death. The Tithoreians believed that if they were successful in their theft, their land would be blessed with fruitfulness that year more than the land of the Thebans.

CHAPTER III

Danaos and his Daughters

THE TALES OF HEROES and their woes which have Thebes for their scene are very far from being ended yet, but we must now begin with stories which are staged in other cities and districts, especially in Argos. These too begin with Io, and also with names such as Melia and Niobe. Melia, the nymph of the manna-ash, appears in Argos connected with Inachos the river-god, father of Io. To this pair was born the primaeval man Phoroneus,¹¹⁷ with whom, in one connection or another, Niobe the primaeval woman herself was associated. It is not told of Io that she was the daughter of Melia and not of Inachos only. She was supposed then to be the great-grand-mother of Agenor and Belos, the two sons of Poseidon and Libye, after whom the African district of the same name was called. At the beginning of these tales the narrator stands with one foot on the plain underneath the towering citadel of the country and city of Argos, the Larissa, where the Inachos flows, and the other far away, where the Nile (also called Aigyptos in earlier times) comes up from the south and empties into the Mediterranean.

Once more we find twins and brothers unlike each other as the subject of the story;¹¹⁸ Danaos and Aigyptos, the sons of Belos, whose name reproduces the Phoenician Ba'al, 'Lord'. The Greeks, or at least some of them, were called Danaoi in old days, and that is the plural of Danaos. Melia is named among others as the wife of this Danaos. She was a daughter of Agenor.¹¹⁹ One tradition made the twins Danaos and Aigyptos the immediate descendants of Io.¹²⁰ The river-god Inachos of Argos, the wandering Io, the nymph of the manna-ash, Melia, the primaeval woman Niobe and the representatives of peoples and countries have been put together into a genealogy. The unlikeness of Danaos and Aigyptos consisted



1 KADMOS KILLS THE DRAGON



2 SCENE IN THE UNDERWORLD;
THE SOULS OF THE UNFULFILLED BUSIED IN
FILLING A BOTTOMLESS VESSEL

in this, that the one had only daughters, the other none but sons; Aigyptos fifty sons, Danaos fifty daughters. Belos had divided his kingdom so that Danaos got the western half, Libye, Aigyptos originally the eastern, Arabia.¹²¹ Then the brothers fought with one another and we are told that Danaos with his daughters was afraid of the sons of Aigyptos. So he built the first fifty-oared ship¹²² and fled with his band of daughters to their common land of origin on the banks of the Inachos.

Those fifty were no ordinary girls. In one description¹²³ they appear as beings whose voices were not female, who practised sports with war-chariots and sometimes hunted in the sunny woods, sometimes gathered dates, cinnamon and incense. They had already armed themselves for battle against their cousins, the sons of Aigyptos, who desired them as wives.¹²⁴ Or did they merely fit out the ship, which they alone had to row? It is a picture of fifty Amazons, although they are never so called, fifty warlike, man-hating women, such as those were who bore the name of Amazons and were to fight against Herakles and Theseus in their day. Their number reproduces the fifty months of a four-year festival cycle, half a 'great year'. The second half of it had only forty-nine months, as also forty-nine of the daughters of Danaos remained true Danaids. Their victory over their suitors and persecutors involved a horrible deed only here on earth; in heaven the successive moons triumphed over the darkness of night without spilling blood.

In Argos, the name of which signifies 'the bright land', the young women finally arrived with their ship, fleeing before the dark sons of Aigyptos. Their arrival and its immediate consequences were put on the stage by Aeschylus in his tragedy 'The Suppliants'. According to him,¹²⁵ the then king of the plain of Inachos was Pelasgos, a son of the earth-born Palaichthon, the hero 'Ancient Earth'. He and the inhabitants of Argos were prepared to protect the Danaids and their father against the pursuing Aigyptiads. According to others,¹²⁶ Danaos demanded of king Gelanor the return to himself of

the kingship of Argos, since he was the descendant of Inachos, the river and *primaeval* king. On the day on which the people were to decide concerning his demand, a wolf attacked the leading bull of the herds of Argive cattle, fought with it and defeated it. So the people saw in the bull their own king, in the wolf the stranger, and accepted the decision of the gods. Danaos received the sovereignty and by way of thanksgiving founded a temple to Apollo Lykios, Apollo of the Wolves. Ostensibly, he did not deny his daughters to the pursuing sons of Aigyptos, but apportioned the fifty to their fifty cousins. This was the ultimate result in Aeschylus also, though at the end of 'The Suppliants' the Egyptians are still rejected. But the Danaids with their father contrived a horrible ruse. Danaos gave every maiden a dagger;¹²⁷ the bridal night came and forty-nine brides murdered each her bridegroom. The heads of the murdered men were cut off and cast into the deep water of Lerna, which ever since then has sprung from as many heads.

Hypermestra, the only one who was softened by the proximity of a young man, fell in love with him and did not assassinate him, and so became by her husband Lynkeus the ancestress of great heroes, Perseus and Herakles. But by that very act she showed herself faithless to her father and sisters. Danaos cast her into prison the next morning and had her brought to trial.¹²⁸ Aeschylus' 'Danaids' was devoted to her hearing. Not much more is preserved of this tragedy than of the 'Egyptians', the gloomy second member of the trilogy, in which the horrible deed was done. In the 'Danaids', then, Hypermestra appeared as an offender against her sisters and her father, but Aphrodite in person came before the court and informed all who were to judge the case of her universal power. Pure Heaven, she said in effect,¹²⁹ longs to fill Earth with love, Earth is seized with desire for love, the rain from Heaven makes her fruitful and thus she brings forth the plants and animals by which men are nourished. This is the great eternal example which the love-goddess brought forward on Hypermestra's behalf. The young man she had saved had already

taken refuge in the neighbouring village of Lyrkeia at dawn of day; his name was really Lyrkeus, not Lynkeus like the sharp-sighted son of Aphareus, of whom we shall hear later. He made fire-signals from Lyrkeia,¹³⁰ and his loving Hypermestra, now free, answered them from the lofty citadel of Larissa. Thus Lyrkeus became king of Argos after Danaos.

It is also said that Athene and Hermes, by command of Zeus, purified the remaining Danaids from the taint of murder,¹³¹ and that their father Danaos himself thereupon put them, or more correctly only forty-nine of them, at the finish of a racetrack,¹³² as prizes for the runners. Before high noon he had a son-in-law for each of them. Or, were they all (except Hypermestra and another of whom we shall speak shortly) put to death by the one survivor of the brothers?¹³³ This also was alleged, and their forms, in the artists' pictures of the other world, entered the House of Hades as examples of the eternally unfulfilled, of those who never reached the *telos*, the completion, whether that be consummation of marriage or initiation. In the underworld they everlastingly carried water in broken jars, or they poured it into a jar with no bottom. The 'Danaids' jugs' which are never full, passed into a proverb.¹³⁴

There remains only the fate of that Danaid who bore the name Amymone, 'the Blameless'. Aeschylus made her the heroine of a satyr-play which ended the tetralogy that began with the 'Suppliants'. As the tale is told us in this merry piece, it seems as if the bloody deed of the Danaids never took place, or at least as if Amymone could have had no part in it. Danaos had just arrived with his daughter at Lerna, on the Gulf of Argos, at the spot now known as Myli from its water-mills,¹³⁵ and her father sent Amymone out to get water for the sacrifice which he meant to offer. At that time Poseidon was still angry because Inachos, when he and Hera disputed the possession of the land, had adjudged it by his verdict to the queen of the gods.¹³⁶ She, after all, had been the sovran of that district ever since the days of Phoroneus the *primaeval* man, who had been the first to do her honour, and so she remained, ruling from her

famous shrine in the neighbourhood of the city of Argos, between Tiryns and Mycenae. Poseidon had to give way here as he did in Attica also, in competition with Pallas Athene. And as he was therefore angry, a spring was hard to find. Amymone fell asleep from weariness, so the story is told in the style of the Pompeian paintings, and was caught sight of by a prying satyr. Or, if it was desired to show her more like an Amazon, she threw her hunting-spear at a buck and hit a sleeping satyr.¹³⁷ Being hurt, he attacked her. So, whether she hurt him or was taken merely by surprise, the girl screamed for help, and Poseidon hurried up. He threw his trident at the satyr and became the real and victorious bridegroom of the Danaid. She bore him Nauplios, founder of the harbour-town Nauplia, which still stands opposite Lerna.¹³⁸ The god bestowed a splendid morning-gift on the young wife, the future water-nymph. She herself was allowed to pull the trident out of the rock, and in that place there sprang forth the triple fountain Amymone, the most beautiful of the countless springs of Lerna. An ancient poem said:¹³⁹ 'Argos was waterless, the daughters of Danaos made Argos abound in waters.'

CHAPTER IV

Perseus

THERE WAS A VERY OLD STORY which told of a girl of the Danaoi and named her simply Danae accordingly; originally the daughters of Danaos were also called Danaai, that is Danaan girls or women, and that is the plural of Danae. But this was *the* Danaan girl, the chosen of all Danaan women, their most perfect representative, so perfect that she could become the earthly bride of Zeus and the mother of the hero-founder of Mycenae. The story begins with the account of her father and his brother, the grandsons of the Danaid Hypermestra and Lyrkeus.

It is the tale of twin brothers who were enemies,¹⁴⁰ Akrisios and Proitos. They were to have ruled jointly over Argos, but quarrelled with one another even in their mother's womb. They had hardly grown to manhood when they fought for the kingship. On the road from Argos to Epidauros there stood a pyramid decorated with shields, a gigantic tomb,¹⁴¹ the monument of the famous war between the brothers, during which, it was said, the round shield was first invented. According to one tradition, the battle which was fought there remained undecided,¹⁴² and therefore the kingdom was divided between the two brothers; Akrisios bore sway in Argos, Proitos in Tiryns, the neighbouring castle with its fortifications made by the Kyklopes. According to another tradition,¹⁴³ Proitos was defeated and emigrated to Asia Minor, where he took to wife the daughter of the king of Lykia, that Anteia or Stheneboia who was to become notorious through her love for the hero Bellerophon, and with the help of his father-in-law he came back. From there, it is said, came also the seven Kyklopes, who built the indestructible walls.¹⁴⁴ The story of the three daughters of Proitos who would not honour Dionysos and so were driven mad by the god has been told among the tales of the

gods.¹⁴⁵ But his son Megapenthes seems to have played a part like that of Dionysos' Theban persecutor Pentheus. The allegation that Proitos was the real father of Danae's son, that the uncle seduced his own niece,¹⁴⁶ we may neglect. Against it stands the tale of the loves of Zeus and of Akrisios' only daughter, Danae.¹⁴⁷

Akrisios, king of Argos, had but this one child born to him; therefore he inquired of the oracle of Delphi how he might have a son. The god replied that he should never have a son, but that his daughter would, and that his daughter's son would be his bane. Returning from Delphi, Akrisios caused a chamber of bronze to be made in the court of his palace, subterranean like a tomb. Into this he shut his daughter with her nurse. Danae must bid farewell to the light of heaven.¹⁴⁸ She was buried for ever in darkness, in order that she might bear no son. Meanwhile it was the King of the gods himself who desired the Danaan maid; Zeus, changed to a golden rain, poured through the roof of the subterranean chamber. The maid caught it in her garment, and from the rain came forth the King of Heaven. The tomb became a marriage chamber, and a son of Zeus was born.

That is the tale of the conception of Perseus. Danae bore her child and fed it with the help of the nurse secretly. As to what happened after the birth, there is no agreement between the narrators, the dramatists and the vase-painters who continued the story. According to some, Perseus was perhaps some three or four years old when king Akrisios, overhead in the hall of his palace, heard the voice of a child at play coming to him from the depths. The child was playing with a ball, so a vase-painting indicates, when it shows little Perseus with the toy in his hand. He cried out when the ball rolled away from him. The king had Danae brought out from the tomb of bronze. The nurse must die, since it was she who had communication with the upper world, to enable her to feed the girl. In the court of the palace stood an altar to Zeus, as was proper. At this altar Akrisios made his daughter tell him who the child's

father was. She answered, 'Zeus', and was not believed. Akrisios had the mother and child shut up in a chest, a closed ark, and had it cast into the sea. Thus both, devoted to death, were afloat on the waves.

According to other tellers of the story, this happened earlier, just after the birth of the hero. He was born in the darkness of the bronze tomb and straightway shut up in the blackness of the ark. When, in the fair-wrought chest the wind that blew and the stir of the water made her heart sink for fear, while her cheeks were all bedewed, she cast a loving arm about Perseus and said, 'My child, what pain is mine! But thou sleepest, and slumberest with a mind at rest in this comfortless vessel, and in the darkness of its fastenings of bronze thou shinest, a beam of light in the black gloom. The salt depth of the wave that passeth over thy locks thou regardest not, nor the noise of the wind, as thy fair face lies on the purple cloak. If terror were terror to thee, surely thou wouldst lend thy little ear to my words. Sleep on, babe, I bid thee, and let the sea sleep, let our measureless mishap sleep, and may some change come, father Zeus, from thee. If I pray in too bold words and beyond justice, forgive me.'¹⁴⁹

This is how Simonides lets us hear the words of the humble prayer of the god's beloved from the gloomy ark, and see the glory that shines about the divine child. Another poet, Aeschylus, shows us on the stage in his satyr-play 'The Net-drawers', how the chest was sighted from the island of Seriphos.¹⁵⁰ A fisherman called Diktys, the 'man of the nets' saw the floating object from the shore. 'What's this? What shall I call it? Some sea-monster, grampus or shark or whale, do I see? Lord Poseidon! Zeus of the sea! what an unexpected gift you send us from the water! Whatever the thing is, it comes no nearer. I must shout and bawl.' Diktys called for help. A large net was thrown and the chest brought to land. In the satyr-play, when Diktys appeals for aid, instead of country people, shepherds and fishermen, it was Sileinoi who appeared and they are there when the chest is opened—a crowd of the

worthless, half-divine and half-bestial dwellers in the hills and fields, bald-headed, flat-nosed, with faces painted red. Little Perseus laughed at them from the chest.¹⁵¹ This laugh was in itself a proof of his divine origin. Danae is horrified at first at the change in her plight and amid lamentations reveals the secret of who she is and whose son the child is. The fisherman does them both reverence, takes them into his hut and passes them off as his kinsfolk,¹⁵² which they really were through the Danaids, for Diktys was a descendant of Nauplios, the son of Poseidon and Amymone daughter of Danaos.

The lord of Scriphos was not Diktys but his brother Polydektes. Again, the brothers were unlike, fisherman and king, and while not twins (by one account they had the same mother only),¹⁵³ yet they were a pair. The 'receiver of many', i.e. Polydektes, which is the same as Polydegmon, one of the many names of the king of the underworld,¹⁵⁴ belongs to the 'netman'. What the one caught had to be the prey of the other. Thus Danae became the prisoner of Polydektes, and so arrived with her child in the underworld for the third time. She lived henceforth in the king's house as his slave.¹⁵⁵ It was also alleged that she was married to Polydektes,¹⁵⁶ while Perseus was brought up in the temple of Athene as a ward of the goddess at whose birth there had happened something like that which took place when Perseus was conceived; a golden rain fell from heaven.¹⁵⁷

When the hero had grown to manhood and might have been able to free his mother, Polydektes arranged an *eranos*, that is to say a banquet to which every invited guest must bring with him a certain gift. He gave out that a wedding-present for Hippodameia, daughter of Oinomaos, was to be collected;¹⁵⁸ obviously the king was posing as an intending suitor of that fair bride, of whom the whole world was then talking, and of whom we shall soon hear more. To Polydektes' *eranos* each person taking part had to contribute a horse. Perseus, the son of the slave-woman, assuredly possessed none. If, as other narrators would have it,¹⁵⁹ Danae was still living in Diktys'

hut, the hero had been brought up in the poor circumstances of the fisherman, and what other aim could the king have had save to humiliate Perseus deeply? He no doubt assumed that the young hero in the fisherman's cottage could not bring this gift, but for very shame would quit the island and abandon the mother he had so far protected.

Notoriously, fishermen do not breed horses, so how could Perseus have brought one with him? Consequently, he said stubbornly to the king, 'I will bring you the Gorgon's head', and the king answered, 'Bring it.' The Gorgon Medusa has the body of a horse in a very old representation of her; according to the oldest narratives she was a mare, bride of Poseidon at one of his marriages which he entered upon in the shape of a stallion.¹⁶⁰ Thus Perseus promised nothing else than the desired gift, a horse, but a much more unusual one, harder to get and apparently impossible. For the mare which he offered bore the Gorgon face, the look of which made everyone stiffen in death. Polydektes too may have been thinking of just that when he accepted the hero's offer.

Perseus already repented of what he had promised; he retired to the furthest point of the island and lamented, and he did well to lament. If Danae was not yet in the king's power, the danger was now present that this would happen if her son did not keep his word. The freeing of his mother from the might of the 'receiver of many' was at stake. Then Hermes appeared to the hero,¹⁶¹ or was it Athene who came first to his help? In the pictures of ancient artists she stands by him in front of Hermes. But who could lend him the winged shoes, or at least one of them, as we read in Artemidoros, the interpreter of dreams,¹⁶² so that he could leave the island and come into the neighbourhood of the Gorgons, if not Hermes? This probably was how it happened in Aeschylus,¹⁶³ in the tragedy entitled 'The Daughters of Phorkys'. The dramatist simplified the journey of Perseus through the realms of thrice-three goddesses and probably left out the first three, the spring-nymphs.

These, the Naiads, were, however, probably the first who

helped the hero in his desperate situation. They lived in a cave on the island of Seriphos, as they had their dwelling elsewhere also in the stalactite-filled caves of the Greek mountains; and they were in possession of the means which Perseus needed to fulfil his undertaking. Later he could give them back the three invaluable things. Whether they now approached the hero or he visited them in Athene's company, they were his deliverers. On an ancient vase-painting we see the nymphs receiving the hero, one bringing him the winged shoes, another the cap of invisibility, the third the wallet, *kibisis*, for the Gorgon's head.

Thus equipped, Perseus hastened away like a swift walker through the air,¹⁶⁴ over the sea and Okeanos, like the sun. Tradition tells us that¹⁶⁵ the Sun himself bore the name of Perseus. On the other side of Okeanos, near the Garden of the Hesperides, where the realm of Night begins, was the dwelling-place of the Gorgons.¹⁶⁶ Three, or perhaps only two, grey-haired goddesses, daughters of the old man of the sea, Phorkys, the Graiai, kept watch before them.¹⁶⁷ Neither sun nor moon ever shone upon them.¹⁶⁸ A landscape of pathless forests and rocks had its beginning there;¹⁶⁹ it was also called Kisthene, the Land of Rock-roses, and could be reached equally well from the east.¹⁷⁰ It was the land of darkness, in which all the lights of heaven vanish and from which they all appear again, for it borders on east and west alike. It is conceivable that even Pallas Athene did not know the way through that district to the Gorgons, for the younger deities did not know all things whereof the older ones, such as the Moirai and the Graiai, had knowledge. Perseus must first approach the grey goddesses if he wished to find the way to the Gorgons.

The Graiai kept watch turn about,¹⁷¹ for they had but one eye and also but one tooth between them. Would they have caught sight of their visitor with this eye even through the darkness if he had not worn the 'cap of Hades', the cap which made him invisible? There he was, and he waited close at hand for the daughters of Phorkys to change watch, at the entrance to their cave, perhaps the same which hid the Gorgons within

it.¹⁷² As they relieved guard, one Graia passed the single eye to the other, and for so long they were both blind. Perseus had been waiting that moment; he snatched the eye from their hands and would not give it back until they told him the road to the Gorgons. Under that strong compulsion the sisters did so, but when did the hero then give the eye back? Was it when he had discovered that the entrance to the cave led to the Gorgons? Did he toss it to the Graiai only on his flight? Did he, as some would have it,¹⁷³ fling it into Lake Tritonis as he flew away? What a cry of woe must those primæval goddesses have raised! But this came afterwards; beyond a doubt, the 'Phorkides' of Aeschylus was full of their wailings. For us there remains but one line of the piece, 'Boat-like he passed into the cave.'¹⁷⁴

In this cave the three Gorgons were sleeping. Only one of them was mortal, Medusa,¹⁷⁵ the Mistress, as we might translate her name. His fortune, or Athene, must guide Perseus' hand; the hero must feel for the head of Medusa and keep his face turned away,¹⁷⁶ so as not to see her mask-like visage. We are also told that¹⁷⁷ the goddess showed him the Gorgon's head in a bright shield which she had given Perseus or herself held for him.¹⁷⁸ He came armed with a *harpe*, a sword shaped like a reaping-hook, which also was a divine gift, and with this old Titanic weapon he cut off Medusa's head.

She was with child by Poseidon and had in her womb the hero Chrysaor and the steed Pegasus, both of whom sprang out from her severed neck. The hero hid the head in the *kibisis*.¹⁷⁹ Now he must flee, for the two immortal sisters of Medusa awoke and pursued him. The air was the scene of the struggle between Perseus and the Gorgons; on old vase-paintings we see them both flying after the hero, and on one he is actually mounted on Pegasus, being the first to ride him, before Bellerophon.¹⁸⁰ It was impossible to catch him, for on his feet he had the winged shoes and his sword hung from his shoulder; thus a continuator of Hesiod describes him as represented on the shield of Herakles.¹⁸¹ He flew with the speed of thought, his back protected by the terrible head of

Medusa. He carried the *kibisis* slung around him and had the cap of Hades on his brow; the darkness of night spread around the hero.

Perseus was soon beyond the region in which the Gorgons lived, and which bordered on the lands of all peoples who themselves, it is said, dwelt beyond the countries of ordinary mortals. He feasted with the Hyperboreans in the north,¹⁸² and in the south he flew over the land of the Ethiopians. There, on a rocky coast (it is said¹⁸³ that it was in Palestine near Jaffa) he caught sight of a fair maid. She had been exposed there in chains. This sight is a peak not only of the story of Perseus but also of the history of Greek drama, for Euripides gave form to the scene in his 'Andromeda'. This at once gives us the name of the maiden. They tell us that the god in whose honour plays were acted, Dionysos, was himself so enchanted with the piece that he could not be separated from it, or so Aristophanes the comedian jokingly says.¹⁸⁴ It began with a great monologue by Perseus, who supposed that he had caught sight from the air of a figure of a maiden, the work of some artist, not a living girl.¹⁸⁵ The monologue soon passed into a most moving dialogue between the hero and heroine, with the words of Andromeda,¹⁸⁶

'Take me hence, stranger, take me as thy servant,
Or wife, or slave, whatever is thy will.'

The lord of the Ethiopian country was Kepheus.¹⁸⁷ His queen, the proud Kassiopeia, had angered the gods of the sea, in that she entered into a competition of beauty with the Nereids and boasted that she had emerged victorious. Her punishment was that Poseidon sent a flood over the country and a monster, to which her daughter Andromeda must be exposed. So an oracle advised and so it was done. Perseus flew up and slew the monster. An ancient vase-painting shows us Perseus fighting the boar-headed horror, which is rising from the sea, by flinging stones with both hands; Andromeda hands him the stones, the hero having freed her from her bonds.

He took her away from her parents also, who were loath to see her depart, and from her sullen bridegroom, by name Phineus, a name which we shall meet again in the story of the Argonauts. It is said of this Phineus that he was a brother of Kepheus, who wished to marry his niece. Perseus was thus again confronted with an enemy whose appearance, as described in the tales of the Argonauts, resembled the Graiai. Here the Gorgon's head helped him; the hero drew it from the *kibisis*,¹⁸⁸ and Phineus and his men were turned to stone; Perseus carried Andromeda through the air to Seriphos. But all four characters who met in this Ethiopian tale finally reached heaven as constellations, Kassiopeia and Kepheus, Andromeda and Perseus.¹⁸⁹ Athene promised it at the end of the tragedy, but the poet would not have put such a prophecy into the mouth of the goddess if people had not already believed they saw the hurrying figure of Perseus in the skies.

Having cut off Medusa's head and put it into the *kibisis*, and having freed and won Andromeda, Perseus returned to Seriphos. It seems to have been described in another tragedy of Euripides, the 'Dikty's', how the hero found his mother and her protector, Dikty's the fisherman, as suppliants at an altar,¹⁹⁰ to which they had been obliged to flee for refuge from the violence of Polydektes. But now the young hero reappeared sooner than they could have believed. Even the *eranos* to which Perseus had promised to contribute the head of the Gorgon instead of a horse was not yet over.¹⁹¹ The guests, none of whom could bring anything more than ordinary horses, were still assembled when Perseus appeared with his gift, flying through the air on his winged shoes and with Medusa's head hanging from his shoulders in the wallet. No one would believe that the hero had kept his promise, least of all king Polydektes. He called the people together,¹⁹² presumably to convict Perseus of deceit. Apparently the young man was not popular on Seriphos. Perseus appeared before the assembly of the Seriphians, took the head out of the *kibisis* and showed it to the assembled people by way of proof. Since then Seriphos has

been one of the rockiest islands in the Archipelago, for they all turned to stone. The hero dedicated the Gorgon's head to the goddess Athene, who has worn it on her breast ever since. The *kibisis*, the winged shoes and the cap of Hades he gave back to the nymphs. Diktys became king of Scriphos, but Perseus left the island and went home to Argos with Danae and Andromeda.

Akrisios was no longer in power there.¹⁹³ Fearing death from his grandson, he had gone from his native castle to Thessaly, to another stronghold also called Larissa. Perseus went after his grandfather, found him and wanted to be reconciled to him. There was a tragedy of Sophokles on that subject, 'The Larissaians'. The festival of reconciliation was held and Akrisios was ready to return to Argos.¹⁹⁴ At the celebration of the peace the young men of Larissa were playing with the discus, and Perseus could not resist it; he took the sun-like round in his hand, as Apollo did with the like tragic result, and sent it flying. It flew through the air and struck Akrisios—only on the foot, but it was a mortal wound. So the grandfather died at the hands of the grandson, and the hero's glory passed into darkness. Darkness follows the rays of the sun in heaven also; how much the more the deeds of a divine child on earth, even if he were a true child of the Sun!

In those days the lord of the castle of Tiryns with its gigantic stone walls was Megapenthes, only son of Proitos. According to one story he took vengeance for the death of his uncle Akrisios and killed Perseus on his return;¹⁹⁵ but this tale is lost, and only the name of Megapenthes informs us that he was a man 'of great sorrows' and perhaps, like his three sisters, he strove against Dionysos and in the end, like Pentheus the Theban 'man of woe', was punished by the god. It is also said that he exchanged kingdoms with Perseus, since the latter was ashamed of having slain his grandfather and would not return to Argos any more.¹⁹⁶ Thus henceforth Megapenthes ruled in his stead in the Larissa of Argos and Perseus in Tiryns. From there he fortified the rocky strongholds of Midea and Mycenae.

The Mycenaeans later honoured him as their founder-hero and forgot the heroine Mykene, a daughter of Inachos,¹⁹⁷ who had once been as famous as Tyro or Alkmene,¹⁹⁸ and gave her name to the strongest castle in that region. But they could tell no story of any importance of the way in which the foundation took place under Perseus. In one account he took hold of his sword-sheath and finding that the chape, *mykes* in Greek, was lost, he founded *Mykenai* on that spot.¹⁹⁹ Others remembered the famous fountain under the Cyclopean walls of the fortress and were of opinion that Perseus, being tormented with thirst, had picked a mushroom, also called *mykes*, whereupon the spring arose, at which the hero refreshed himself and for very joy founded the city.²⁰⁰ Presumably he then led the water from outside under the walls into the deep fountain, Perseia.

He was also supposed to be the founder of a great family, all kings. Andromeda allegedly had already borne him a son named Perses, the ancestor of the Persian kings, who later, when they laid claim to the land of the Hellenes, invoked Perseus as their ancestor.²⁰¹ In Mycenae he had several sons and one daughter; of the former, Alkaios and Elektryon were the grandfathers of Herakles, the daughter was Gorgophone, grandmother of the Spartan Dioskuroi. But Perseus won no such great renown as his great-grandson Herakles because, so it was said,²⁰² he too was one of the persecutors of Dionysos and committed a deed of violence against him. Did he, with his opposition, replace Megapenthes or Megapenthes him?

It was told in Argos that Dionysos arrived there over the sea with Ariadne and attended by mermaids. Perseus fought with them and killed many of his female followers. At Argos they showed the monument of Choreia, 'the Dancer', the name of a maenad,²⁰³ and the grave of the mermaids (*Haliai*), who came with the god.²⁰⁴ Vase-paintings show Perseus fighting with Dionysos' following. He held up the Gorgon's head against their hordes, and another story said that he turned Ariadne into stone before she and her garland reached heaven.²⁰⁵ According to this tale the two heroes, Dionysos and

Perseus, both sons of Zeus, at last concluded a peace.²⁰⁶ A temple with a sacred precinct in Argos was dedicated to the Cretan Dionysos, and there allegedly Ariadne lay buried.²⁰⁷ One old tale even insisted that²⁰⁸ Dionysos was killed by Perseus and thrown into the waters of Lerna, which formed a gate of the underworld. From those depths the god used to reappear, summoned back by the sound of a trumpet.²⁰⁹ But did not the god of himself tread the path to the underworld at Lerna, to free Semele?²¹⁰ Persecutor and persecuted were not unlike each other in this one deed at any rate—the freeing of their mothers. Perseus had a hero's tomb before the city of the Mycenaeans, on the road to Argos,²¹¹ and there received their worship.



3. DANAE AND PERSEUS IN THE OPENED CHEST



4 PERSEUS AND THE FOUNTAIN-NYMPHS



5 PERSEUS SLAYING THE GORGON MEDUSA

CHAPTER V

Tantalos

THE NAME OF NIOBE occurs more than once at the beginning of the history of mankind.²¹² In Argos, it is connected with the primaeval man Phoroneus, in Boiotia with Alalkomeneus, who brought Pallas Athene up. In Thebes she was considered the wife of Amphion. There it was said that this presumptuous and horribly punished woman was the daughter of Tantalos, king of Lydia, a country in Asia Minor, to which his story now takes us.

Tantalos came at the very beginning, quite as much as Alalkomeneus or Phoroneus and even the Theban Dioskuroi to some extent. He was the father of Broteas, who to judge by his name was the first ancestor of mortals, *brotoi*, and was the first to carve an image of the Mother of the Gods on the rocks.²¹³ And he was the father also of Pelops, after whom a large portion of Greece was called the Peloponnesos, 'Pelops' island'. Two sons of Pelops, Atreus and Thyestes, founded the second dynasty of Mycenae, which was even more renowned as a royal line than the first one, the family of Perseus. Thus an important thread takes its beginning in Lydia, Tantalos' kingdom in Asia Minor, on the mountains of Sipylus, whose heights dominate Smyrna and on which Niobe was later pointed out turned to stone. A tarn there bore the name of Tantalos,²¹⁴ and there was a story of another in which his city was sunk.²¹⁵ His much-admired tomb²¹⁶ stood on Sipylus, although this was not the only spot where heroic honours were paid him. Argos believed²¹⁷ it possessed his bones, and the little town of Polion on Lesbos had built him a hero-shrine.²¹⁸ It is said that he with his son Pelops founded on the Sipylus range the first city of that region, if it was not the first in the whole world.²¹⁹

He was held to be a son of Zeus,²²⁰ but Mount Tmolos in

Lydia was also named as his father.²²¹ His mother was Pluto, 'the Rich', a daughter of Kronos,²²² and, as a Berekynthian nymph,²²³ certainly also daughter of the Berekynthian Great Mother, if she was not that goddess herself under a name which fitted the giver of great wealth. From ancient times, Lydia was famous for its gold; gold was hidden in its mountains, in Tmolos above all, and the rivers carried gold in their sands. No name was more fitting to the greatest goddess of this country than Pluto. The wife of Tantalos was variously named, one name being Dione. She was supposed to be a Pleiad, a daughter of Atlas, and bore the same name as one of the great consorts of Zeus.²²⁴ Through her the genealogists connected Atlas, an old god of the race of the Titans, with the king of Lydia.

The realm of Tantalos is supposed to have extended further than this one country; it included also Phrygia, the range of Ida, and the plain of Troy.²²⁵ On the island of Lesbos, where allegedly he had a hero-shrine, there was also a mountain which bore his name.²²⁶ This name was Greek and signified 'adventurer',²²⁷ one who could dare the greatest venture of all. The wealth of Pluto's son became proverbial,²²⁸ and the poets played with the resemblance in sound of his name and that of their heaviest weight of gold, the talent, connecting the 'talents of Tantalos' with each other.²²⁹ Like the sinner Ixion,²³⁰ he sat at the table of the gods,²³¹ and although accounted a man,²³² was no mortal; the everlasting duration of his punishment will show this. He climbed heaven to reach the banquet of the gods,²³³ and invited them to come to him in his beloved city of Sipylos.²³⁴ But the meal which he had prepared for the gods was of such a kind that the poets did not wish to believe it nor like to tell of it,²³⁵ at least, not the Greek poets. Later Romans found it to their taste.²³⁶ But it must be told, for it was Tantalos' venture and to some extent originated in the stories of the gods, which declared²³⁷ that originally the baby Dionysos underwent what was done to the vicarious victim, kid or calf, for he too was cut in pieces and boiled.

This was the sacrificial feast to which Tantalos had invited the gods. He dared to set before them something which involved a much greater sin than the deceit of Prometheus whereby he founded the great sacrificial ritual of the Greeks. Tantalos' sin was that he prepared for the gods' meal no vicarious beast, but the best he had to give,²³⁸ his own son, and this sacrificial meat he had ready for them. He butchered little Pelops,²³⁹ cut him up, had his flesh cooked in a cauldron,²⁴⁰ and intended, so later generations believed,²⁴¹ thus to test the omniscience of his guests. The gods knew of it and refrained. The old narrators found it horrible enough that anyone should present such a sacrifice to the Heavenly Ones in earnest and not, for instance, only as in play, by offering a beast. Rhea, the great goddess, who had also gathered the limbs of the infant Dionysos,²⁴² put the portions together again and made the child arise from the cauldron.²⁴³ Hermes of course could also have recalled him to life,²⁴⁴ or Klotho the Moira, who had not yet determined his death.²⁴⁵

It was, so to speak, a rebirth. The cauldron remained pure, unstained by cruelty, and the boy rose up more beautiful than he was before.²⁴⁶ His shoulder shone like ivory.²⁴⁷ The story was told that one deity had in fact tasted of his flesh at the point that now shone. Most alleged that it was Demeter, made inattentive through the loss of her daughter;²⁴⁸ being an allusion also to the fact that Demeter, in her character of goddess of the earth, had a claim to the body. This was why Pelops ever after had an ivory shoulder, which the gods had put in place of the one devoured, and for that reason his descendants too were distinguished by a birthmark, either an unusually white shoulder²⁴⁹ or a star on the same part.²⁵⁰ Poseidon at once fell in love with Pelops and carried the beautiful boy off; he lifted him on his chariot and brought him with his golden team to the palace of Zeus. This is supposed to have happened before Ganymedes arrived there.²⁵¹ Only evil tongues could allege that the child had been devoured, when he was not brought back to his mother.²⁵² But later the gods sent the young man

back to short-lived human-kind;²⁵³ after sinful Tantalos he was to become a famous ruler upon earth.

For various sins were laid at Tantalos' door, sins indeed, but perhaps only veiled accounts of his great venture, the too exact carrying out of a sacral performance, in this shape a horrible deed, which was to recur among the descendants of Pelops. Such stories as the following were told of the sins of Tantalos: as guest of the gods, he had not been able to hold his tongue,²⁵⁴ but betrayed to mortals what he should have kept quiet,²⁵⁵ the secrets of the Deathless.²⁵⁶ In another account, he let his friends actually share the enjoyment of the food and drink of the gods, their nectar and ambrosia,²⁵⁷ and this again was a theft, not unlike that of Prometheus.

He was likewise involved in the misdoings of others. Among the Cretan Tales was one concerning a golden dog belonging to Zeus.²⁵⁸ Pandareos, son of Merops, one of the forefathers of mankind,²⁵⁹ stole this marvellous creature, brought it to Sipylos and handed it over to Tantalos to keep safe.²⁶⁰ But the receiver played the thief false. On the golden dog being reclaimed from Tantalos, he denied having had it and confirmed his denial by a false oath. Zeus punished them both; he turned Pandareos into stone and flung Tantalos down with Sipylos on top of him. According to others it was not Zeus but Tantalos who was the kidnapper of Ganymedes,²⁶¹ or at least he played some part in the boy's disappearance.²⁶² But he was not punished for this. An ancient song also accused him of no greater crime than that,²⁶³ when Zeus was ready to fulfil any wish of his, as his beloved guest, he asked for the life which the gods live. Angered at this, the Olympian did indeed grant the wish, but caused a stone to hang over Tantalos' head, so that he could get no enjoyment of all that was available to him.

The scene of his punishment was certainly the whole space of the world to begin with, not only because the same story is told of him as of Prometheus, that he must hang with hands bound to a rock,²⁶⁴ or bear up the sky, like Atlas;²⁶⁵ we are told in so many words that he floated between heaven and



6 PERSEUS AFTER BEHEADING MEDUSA



7 ANDROMEDA, PERSEUS AND THE SEA-MONSTER



8 PELOPS, HIPPODAMEIA AND THE FALL OF MYRTILOS



9 THE MARRIAGE OF ANTICLEIA

earth,²⁶⁶ and he got the epithet of 'wanderer in the air'.²⁶⁷ In this condition, so Euripides understood it, he had the sun over his head like a fiery stone.²⁶⁸ But there were also other very ancient punishments which had their place in the spaces of the universe and were transferred to the underworld only in later tellings of them; for instance the punishment of Ixion²⁶⁹ or Tityos,²⁷⁰ not to speak again of Prometheus, the only one who was freed from his pains. Tantalos belonged to those whose penance was eternal.

Poets and painters depicted his lot, when they described the underworld. He stands, says Homer,²⁷¹ in a pool, with the water reaching his chin. He is tormented with thirst and cannot drink, for if the old man bends down to drink, the water disappears as if it were sucked away, and the black earth shows at his feet. Tall trees let their fruit hang down over his head, but if the ancient tries to grasp it in his hand, a gust of wind tosses it up to the clouds. The painter Polygnotos added the threatening rock.²⁷² The picture of the underworld on a Tarentine vase shows us the king in his long robes fleeing from the stone. He is the shadow-picture of the too daring and too wishful for all times.

CHAPTER VI

Pelops and Hippodameia

THAT PORTION OF the European and the Greek continent which is named after Pelops, the son of Tantalos is connected with the rest of Greece by a single narrow strip of land, the Isthmus. As one could get around by sea, starting from Corinth, and thus arrive in the same city again, though in a different harbour, it has always given the impression of being a large island, a separate country. It is, however, cut up by many mountain ranges and in antiquity it was divided among so many tribes that one must think: 'That must have been no common hero and ruler for anything so manifold to be considered a unity under his name!' His renown has remained, but not the memory of any single people whose eponym he might have been. The sceptre which the master-craftsman Hephaistos so skilfully wrought for Zeus, and which later Atreus, Thyestes and Agamemnon, the princes of the second Mycenaean dynasty, carried as the mark of their lordship over Argos and many islands, was sent by the Olympian to Pelops through Hermes.²⁷³ He was thought of as the first ruler of this great realm; it was even believed that Hermes was his father, his mother being Kalyke, 'the bud', a nymph of the region of Elis.²⁷⁴

But what was his exploit as a founder, which could be compared with Kadmos' slaying of the dragon, or Amphion's lyre-music, or even with the building of the walls of Tiryns and Mycenae? No walls due to any action of his were shown; rather the story was told of a foundation which was to assemble more Greek peoples at the expiration of every four years in a common festival than the Peloponnesos contained. The tale of this foundation begins with Oinomaos, king of Pisa, lord over a fertile district on the western edge of the peninsula, on the lower part of the valley of the river Alpheios. To judge by his name, he should have been a gentle monarch, as 'king of

wine'. The king of Aitolia, Oineus, whose name was similar, had a brother unlike himself, Agrios, 'the wild', whereas Oinomaos' savagery was in himself. Even that Oineus or Oinopion who was mentioned in the history of the gods²⁷⁵ showed himself rather cruel than gentle towards Orion. Oinomaos was accounted a son of Ares the war-god.²⁷⁶ In his days snow fell abundantly on the hill which the visitors to Olympia know as the Hill of Kronos. Herakles named it, for while Oinomaos ruled it was nameless as yet.²⁷⁷

The story went²⁷⁸ that king Oinomaos, son of Ares, had a daughter called Hippodameia, 'she who tames steeds', whom no man could get as his wife. Two reasons were assigned for the association between the father and daughter, which were unnatural under human relationships. According to one, Oinomaos was himself in love with Hippodameia, according to the other, an oracle had foretold that he would be killed by his son-in-law. Whether Oinomaos' passion remained unsatisfied or, as others would have it,²⁷⁹ he was already united to his daughter as her husband, he killed her suitors. His weapons and his horses he had got from Ares, two mares called Psylla, 'the Flea' and Harpinna, 'she who snatches', the latter having the same name as Oinomaos' mother.²⁸⁰ Both were as swift as the Harpies,²⁸¹ swifter than the wind.²⁸² He made a show of being ready to give his daughter to anyone who could beat him in a chariot-race,²⁸³ the goal of which was the altar of Poseidon at the Isthmus,²⁸⁴ and the race-track the whole country, the lordship over which was no less at stake than the winning of Hippodameia. It was at the same time a case of bride-stealing, like that of Persephone, only the other way about, for Hippodameia was to be freed from her Hades-like father and husband. The suitor was to take her with him in his chariot, while Oinomaos pursued the fugitive pair. If the suitor was not caught, he won the maid to his wife, otherwise he was put to death by her pursuing father. In this way Oinomaos had already murdered many suitors. He cut their heads off and put them up over his palace; the number of the

slain already amounted to twelve. The no less significant total of thirteen is also mentioned²⁸⁵ (there are twelve months in a year, but thirteen in a leap-year), and it seems as if Oinomaos' time was thus expired. Many narrators did not confine themselves to this limit, but listed the names of still more unfortunates.²⁸⁶

The limit was set by the son of Tantalos, the 'dark-faced' prince, as his name may be understood. Pelops had hardly returned from the gods and the dark down was scarcely springing on his chin,²⁸⁷ when he wanted Hippodameia for his wife. We hear that he went in the darkness to the shore of the grey sea and called upon his divine lover.²⁸⁸ Poseidon at once appeared and heard his prayer: 'If the dear gifts of Her of Cyprus earn aught of thanks, stay thou the bronze spear of Oinomaos, bring me on the swiftest of chariots to Elis and let me meet with victory. For he hath slain thirteen men and delays his daughter's wedlock. But this great danger meeteth with no coward; since die we must, why should one vainly spend a nameless old age, sitting in the shadow, with no share in aught noble? Nay, this exploit shall be my portion, only do thou grant wished-for accomplishment!'

The god gave him a golden car with winged steeds, and on it he flew over the sea from his eastern abode in Sipylon to his future country in the west.²⁸⁹ His words testified to a hero who deserved his victory, and so it came about for him, since, as already said, Oinomaos' time was expired. Hippodameia herself was ready for a real marriage-journey, and beside her stood her helper. The vase-paintings show him youthful, the maker of the marriage, appropriately to his name, for that was Myrtilos, derived from *myrtos*, myrtle, that plant which is beloved of Aphrodite but hated by virginal goddesses. Pelops, so the story was told in his Asian fatherland,²⁹⁰ had vowed a statue of myrtle-wood to Aphrodite if he might be wedded to Hippodameia; and now Myrtilos was present, a son of Hermes,²⁹¹ who served Oinomaos as charioteer, and caused the bridegroom to win.

The story is worthy of a son of Hermes, although it is told us with additions which fit a commonplace faithless servant. Thus we are informed that Pelops promised Myrtilos, who was in love with Hippodameia, the bridal night in return for his help,²⁹² while others put that promise into the mouth of the bride herself,²⁹³ for Hippodameia at once fell in love with Pelops when she caught sight of him and wanted to assure his victory at all costs. Allegedly too, half the kingdom was promised to Myrtilos.²⁹⁴ But he seems to have been much rather the *daimon* of marriage, to whom the first night belonged in a special way, and, like his doublet Hymenaios,²⁹⁵ who did not survive the marriage, he died during the triumphant journey of the pair, allegedly thrown from his chariot by Pelops.²⁹⁶

But here we have anticipated too far. From a tragedy of Sophokles, entitled 'Oinomaos', there are preserved to us the words of Hippodameia, describing the loveliness of Pelops, the magic which streamed from his person and the consuming lightning of his eyes.²⁹⁷ Euripides in describing the arrival of Pelops in his 'Oinomaos' represented him as regretting his purpose when he caught sight of the severed heads over the palace gate.²⁹⁸ From here on the best tellers of the story are the vase-painters, who take up the thread and show us the further course of events in pictures.

Oinomaos made his agreement with the new pretender, as he always did, with a libation on the altar of Zeus Herkeios in the courtyard of his palace. The heads of the murdered suitors Pelargos and Periphas looked down upon the solemn rite. The agreement was made with Hippodameia also, that she should belong to the bridegroom only if he was not caught. Thereupon both got into the chariot. Oinomaos stayed behind yet, to make sacrifice of a ram; the time needed for the offering he was accustomed to allow the suitor by way of a start.²⁹⁹ A vase-painting shows us that the light-coloured ram was not intended for Zeus, as some supposed, but for a goddess to whom human sacrifices were welcome, for the stiff idol of

Artemis watched over the procedure, which at the same time anticipated the sacrifice of the young man. After completing the ritual, the king mounted his chariot, which Myrtilos had ready for him.

The horses of Ares might perhaps have caught even those which Pelops had got from Poseidon, for the pursuit went right across the whole country, but Myrtilos' ruse had decided the victory in advance. He had not put the linch-pins into the wheels of the chariot, or only waxen ones.³⁰⁰ Then, when the wheels began to part from the chariot, Myrtilos jumped out, and Oinomaos, entangled in the reins, was dragged to death.³⁰¹ But it was also said³⁰² that he had the *coup de grace* from Pelops, a superfluous deed of blood, to which was added something worse still, the murder of Myrtilos, which was a sin against Hermes and of dire consequence for the House of Pelops.³⁰³ It was alleged as a motive for this murder that Myrtilos claimed by violence the price of his help.³⁰⁴ His fall from the chariot in which Pelops and Hippodameia rode is to be seen only in a vase-painting, and the vase-painters testify also that the victorious couple, after their goal on the Isthmus was reached, drove all round the land of Pelops, hovering over the sea. This is how it could be stated³⁰⁵ that the Myrtoan Sea, which washes the east coast of the Peloponnesos, got its name from the charioteer's fall.

Another story was³⁰⁶ that Zeus destroyed the detestable palace of Oinomaos with his thunderbolt. The one pillar which was left standing after the fire stood, marked by a bronze tablet, for long afterwards in the sacred precinct which was henceforth to bring the Greek races together for festival contests, the precinct of the King of the Gods, in the Altis at Olympia. There also tales were told of older contests, the races of the five Idaean Daktyls, the eldest of whom was called Herakles and instituted the sport;³⁰⁷ likewise of a wrestling-match between Zeus and Kronos for sovereignty, and of the victory of Apollo over Hermes and Ares.³⁰⁸ But it is not without reason that the poets celebrate the 'racecourse of Pelops'³⁰⁹

and *bis* contests.³¹⁰ For after the victory of his chariot over that of Oinomaos he was Lord of Olympia and was later honoured as a hero among all the shrines which were to rise there.

The hero-tomb which was erected to him after his death in the middle of the Altis³¹¹ was only a 'makeshift grave', a cenotaph at which to worship him. The bones of Pelops were preserved in vineyards of the territory of the vanished city of Pisa, near the temple of Artemis Kordaka.³¹² At his 'makeshift' tomb, however, close to the temple of Hera, a black ram was yearly sacrificed.³¹³ No one who ate of the flesh of that creature might enter the temple of Zeus,³¹⁴ but before every sacrifice to Zeus the hero was remembered with an offering of which nothing was eaten.³¹⁵ Then, when the temple of Zeus, whose prostrate columns we gaze upon in wonder today, was built, its eastern gable bore figures which immortalised the scene before the chariot-race of Pelops and Oinomaos. On one side stood the king with his queen, Sterope, Pelops and Hippodameia on the other, and the Olympian in the middle. The two chariots and their attendants, including Myrtilos,³¹⁶ completed the scene, the preliminaries to the exploit of foundation.

Hippodameia for her part founded, out of gratitude to the Queen of the gods, a festival of Hera, which also recurred every four years, and included a race for girls. Chloris is named as the first to win it;³¹⁷ she was a daughter of Amphion and Niobe, the only one who was spared, and she became the mother of the long-lived Nestor. But the name of Hippodameia betrays the fact that she personally had to do rather with horses and chariots. And this name at least was preserved on the west gable-end of the temple of Zeus in a scene from the story of a Hippodameia who allegedly was not the same, but the bride of the Thessalian hero Peirithoos, whose wedding was the occasion of the fight portrayed on the pediment, that between the Lapithai and Centaurs. Certainly there were Centaurs here also, in the neighbouring mountain range of Pholoe, and perhaps Lapithai too, if that was what the

inhabitants of the Lapithos range opposite were called. But if anything of the kind took place at the wedding of Pelops and Hippodameia, this was already forgotten in late antiquity.

The story tells of six sons of the heroic pair,³¹⁸ among them Atreus and Thyestes who inherited the sceptre that came from Zeus. Two daughters are also named, Lysidike, the future mother of Amphitryon, and Nikippe, afterwards mother of Eurystheus. Again, we hear of thirteen sons,³¹⁹ who founded cities, countries and royal families in the Peloponnesos and on the Isthmus. Only one had no issue, Chrysippos, 'he of the golden steeds', as his name signifies, a double of Pelops. His story will take us back to Thebes. It is said that Hippodameia treated him as a stepson,³²⁰ had him murdered by Atreus and Thyestes, and was therefore obliged³²¹ to flee from Pelops to the stronghold of Midea. From there her bones were brought to Olympia and buried in her shrine, which only women might enter and they only once a year. It was not easy to approach her and learn more of her august figure.



10 THE MADNESS OF SALMONEUS



11 THE PUNISHMENT OF SISYPHOS

CHAPTER VII

Salmoneus, Melanippe and Tyro

AS WE HAVE ALREADY SPOKEN of Oinomaos and lastly also of his wife Sterope, whose name signifies 'lightning', we have now to tell of Salmoneus, the founder of the city of Salmona on the banks of the river Alpheios, near Pisa, who wanted to handle thunder in a sinful manner. Salmoneus belongs to the same series of dark kings in the tales of the heroes as Oinomaos, and even passed into the ranks of the exemplary sufferers of punishment, like Tantalos and Sisyphos, his brother, whose story will be told shortly. His ancestry went back to Deukalion, son of Prometheus, and Pyrrha, daughter of Epimetheus, the two survivors of the most famous deluge,³²² unless it be that his grandfather Hellen, after whom the Hellenes were named, was after all no son of Deukalion but of Zeus and Pyrrha.³²³ In that case Salmoneus too must have been descended from Zeus.

His father bore the name of the king of the winds, with the difference that the other Aiolos was called Hippotades,³²⁴ this one simply Aiolos. He is said to have given their name to the race of the Aiolians. But his grandson had the same name, and either Aiolia on the Propontis or the Aiolian Islands in the west were called after him. This youngest Aiolos was a nephew of Salmoneus. Salmoneus' sister, who bore to Poseidon him and his twin brother Boiotos, the eponym of the inhabitants of Boiotia, was Melanippe. Her story became famous by two tragedies of Euripides, and must be told before that of Salmoneus, the more so as the same thing occurred to his daughter Tyro as to Melanippe: the ancient narrative of the exposed divine twins, founder-heroes, as also the Theban Dioskuroi were.

The elder king Aiolos of Thessaly became, like Boreas the north wind and lover of mares,³²⁵ a lover of a daughter of

Chiron the Centaur. Her name was Hippo or Hippe, a word which signifies a mare. The story is also told that she had originally the shape of a girl and bore some other name. She was ashamed of her pregnancy, fled into the wilderness, and in order that her father should not see her as a woman in childbirth, the gods changed her into a mare.³²⁶ This daughter of Chiron was distinguished for her gift of seer-craft, and told too much of what she foresaw,³²⁷ the death of Asklepios, whom Chiron reared,³²⁸ even the destiny of her father himself.³²⁹ It was said that owing to her freedom of speech she was changed by Zeus into the shape of a beast, namely a vixen.³³⁰

She was changed at the very moment, we are assured,³³¹ when she had borne a daughter. The girl was given the name of Melanippe, the 'black mare', and this surely lets us see that in her family the horse-shape was more original than the human. She found a lover in Poseidon, who was so fond of taking equine shape and having stallion-weddings.³³² She bore him the twins Aiolos and Boiotos. One of the two tragedies of Euripides, 'Melanippe the Wise' (a once famous piece, but now lost with its companion 'Melanippe the Captive'), gave a full account of the matter.³³³ When Aiolos, in consequence of a homicide, was obliged to spend a year in voluntary exile, this happened to his daughter: Melanippe hid her twins from her father on his return home in a byre, where the bull guarded the sucklings and a cow gave them milk. The herdsmen saw the wonderful sight and informed the king. They believed that a cow had dropped human offspring. Aiolos was horrified and asked his old father Hellen what he should do.

Hellen advised him to burn the unnatural births, and thereupon Aiolos ordered his daughter to trim the sucklings for sacrifice, for she had a reputation for wisdom and understood all sacral procedures. Thereupon Melanippe the Wise rose up against the men and in a cunning speech told them of the beginning of things, as she had been taught concerning it by her mother, the Centaur's daughter. She proclaimed the common origin of plants, beasts and men, a doctrine which the

followers and devotees of Orpheus preserved³³⁴ and which is here, through the appeal to the daughter of the wise Centaur, traced back to Chiron himself. According to this there can be no such thing as an unnatural birth. Suppose (Melanippe did not omit even this possibility) some seduced girl had exposed the children, then again to burn them would be to commit a murder and no sacrifice.³³⁵ Thus, or somewhat thus, spoke the embodiment of women's cleverness on the stage. But it was apparently not she but her prophetic mother who rescued the twins; she appeared in the shape of a female Centaur and foretold the children's future as founder-heroes.

In the other tragedy, Melanippe was a prisoner and had come to Metapontum, the city in south Italy. There her sons were being brought up to be men of valour. The details can no longer be told and they would take us too far from Salmoneus, in whose house a like event was to take place. This was staged by Sophokles, but it kept so close to the old tale of the divine twins who were exposed that the Romans, if they read the tragedy, could recognise in it the childhood of their own founder-heroes, Romulus and Remus. And perhaps there were even writers who actually recognised the common element and emphasised it in their re-telling of the legend of the foundation of Rome still more than it discloses of itself. The modern re-teller of the story of Tyro, the milkwhite daughter of Salmoneus must, on the contrary withstand the temptation, lest he land on the banks of Tiber, who according to well-informed tradition³³⁶ was the loving husband of the mother of the Roman stock. He must stay on the Enipeus.

That was the name of the river on which Salmoneus' kingdom lay, first in Thessaly, in the country of his father Aiolos, then in the Peloponnesos, in the district of Elis, where he founded his own city. Enipeus means 'the roarer', a name which any noisy stream and even the sea itself might have. Poseidon had it as an epithet.³³⁷ Tyro was in love with the river Enipeus, the fairest river on earth.³³⁸ She often walked on the banks of the lovely water, which Poseidon had chosen for

the shape of his epiphany, to love the maid. A purple wave rose mountain-like out of the river and hid god and maiden, and he loosed her virgin girdle and poured sleep over her. But when the god had accomplished the works of love, he clasped her by the hand and spake her name, saying, 'Be of good cheer, woman, at this our love-play, for in the course of the year thou shalt bring forth glorious children, since the beds of the Deathless are not without fruit. Tend them and rear them; but now, get thee home and refrain from naming me, for I am Poseidon Earthshaker.' Thus spake he, and plunged under the waves of the sea.

Tyro bore twins and did not dare keep them. She put them into a wooden chest which could both serve as a cradle and float on the water; it was a hollowed-out log which became famous.³³⁹ In this the children were entrusted to their paternal waters, for their mother did not nurture them but handed them over to the Enipeus. They floated on the water, which brought them to a place on the bank where a herd of horses was grazing. The beasts rescued the children; one of them, who got the name of Neleus, was suckled by a bitch belonging to the shepherds,³⁴⁰ and the other by a mare.³⁴¹ As the beast trod on this one's face and made a dark spot which he ever afterwards bore, the boy was named Pelias, 'Grey-face'.³⁴² At last one of the herdsmen found them both, brought them up and also preserved the hollowed log with everything that the mother had given her exposed children.

Tyro's face was white, as if she lived on milk only.³⁴³ Her name itself expressed this, being the very word by which to this day cheese is known in Greece—the white, soft gift of the sheep. The princess' body was soft,³⁴⁴ and her beautiful hair full of the charm of love.³⁴⁵ A harsh stepmother was hers in the person of Sidero, 'the iron woman', as Salmoneus' second wife was called. Suffering under her harshness she appeared in Sophokles' tragedy 'Tyro'. Twenty years had passed since the exposure of the twins, and that milkwhite face was marked with black from the stepmother's blows.³⁴⁶ The lovely hair

was cut short, so that the luckless princess should feel the more abased, like a filly with her mane shorn.³⁴⁷ And in the early morning she had to fetch water from the fountain. There two young men met her, and not far off was the herdsman, carrying their little property in a bag, and also a hollowed log. But their companion, appeared only at the last, to make the recognition possible.³⁴⁸ Sidero was there earlier, the persecutor of her stepdaughter, but was obliged to flee to the temple of Hera from the young men, who took the tormented Tyro under their protection. Neleus drove off Salmoneus, who hurried to his wife's help, and Pelias killed the wicked queen at Hera's altar.³⁴⁹

That he was not straightway punished for this by the Queen of the gods was no doubt thanks to his father Poseidon, who at the last moment stretched his sheltering hand over Tyro and her sons. Not till later did punishment fall on Pelias, in the course of the story of the Argonauts. But Sidero was hardly a favourite of Hera, if she acted in the same way towards the goddess as Salmoneus did towards Zeus. What good kings were like in the days of the hero-legends and what they achieved is described for us in the words of Odysseus, where he compares the fame of Penelope to that of such a king,³⁵⁰

'That ruleth over many mighty men,
Upholding righteous dooms. For him dark earth
Bears wheat and barley; fruit-trees heavy-laden,
And ewes that lamb and fail not, and the sea
Teeming with fish because he ruleth well,
And under him the people prosper still.'

Such kings were conscious of the exalted position to which the gods had called them, but also of the higher power which stood over them. Of course there were others, who 'strove to be Zeus',³⁵¹ and one of these was Salmoneus.

He claimed for himself the sacrifices which were due to the King of the Gods,³⁵² and he attempted, by driving about in his chariot on the banks of the Alpheios, actually to thunder

and lighten.³⁵³ He threw torches among the people, who hated him³⁵⁴ and they also fell into the fields.³⁵⁵ He drove his team over bronze bridges, to mimic the voice of the thunder.³⁵⁶ Or he had bronze cauldrons fastened to his chariot and dragged them about.³⁵⁷ That at least fitted the satyr-play which Sophokles staged. On a vase-painting we see the mad king chained and getting free again from his chains. Finally Zeus struck him down with his lightning, and Salmoneus became one of those everlastingly punished in the House of Hades. According to the most celebrated mention of him, in Vergil's description of the underworld, it would appear that even down there he still dashed about in his chariot with his torches, without ever being able to stop, just as Herakles in the underworld had everlastingly to aim with his bow.³⁵⁸ But that was not Herakles himself, but only a phantom of him, for he himself had reached Olympos, while for Salmoneus there remained nothing else for the future but this image of his wild career.

Tyro, after her deliverance, became the wife of her uncle Kretheus, one of the sons of Aiolos, and bore him three sons, Pheres, Aison and Amythaon. She was thus the mother of five founder-heroes and the ancestress of great families. Her twins, it is true, did not agree together very well.³⁵⁹ Pelias was king of Iolkos in Thessaly, Neleus founded the city of Pylos in the extreme south-west of the Peloponnesos, and took to wife Chloris, daughter of Niobe and winner at the first festival of Hera at Olympia.³⁶⁰ Thus he became the father of Nestor, the oldest of the heroes who fought in the War of Troy. A son of Pheres was Admetos, whom Apollo served as a herdsman.³⁶¹ Aison was the father of Jason, who led the expedition of the Argonauts from Pelias' city of Iolkos to Kolchis. Amythaon's sons included Melampus, 'blackfoot', who purified the daughters of Proitos, Danae's grandfather, from their madness.³⁶² But the story of Bellerophon will bring us back also to Proitos in the strong castle of Tiryns.

CHAPTER VIII

Sisyphos and Bellerophontes

'As is the race of leaves, so that of men,
Of leaves the wind strews some upon the earth,
Others the springtime forest putteth forth,
And so of men, these grow and these decline.'

IT IS IN HOMER³⁶³ that the younger Glaukos begins the story of his ancestry with these words. He descended from Sisyphos, son of Aiolos, grandfather of Bellerophontes, whose grandson he himself was. So it is fitting to begin our story with Sisyphos, who will then quickly lead us (for there is nothing much to tell of the elder Glaukos, Sisyphos' son) to the history of Bellerophontes, the greatest hero and slayer of monsters, alongside of Kadmos and Perseus, before the days of Herakles. There was even a tragedy which made Sisyphos the violent husband of Tyro;³⁶⁴ but he was a man of cunning rather than violence, the subtlest of all mankind.³⁶⁵

He belonged to those primæval inhabitants of the earth who could still look on at the first deeds of the gods, like that remarkable old man at Onchestos in Boiotia who cultivated a vineyard and spied upon little Hermes with his stolen cattle. He betrayed him to his brother Apollo, as we know from the history of the gods.³⁶⁶ Sisyphos lived at Ephyra, in that corner of the Isthmus where Corinth was to arise, which city he was supposed to have founded.³⁶⁷ If anyone wanted to make his way from Phlius, a spot further inland, hidden behind great hills, to the Saronic Gulf, he could easily be spied upon from the towering rocks which bore the name of Akrokorinthos, and that was what happened to Zeus. In Phlius he carried off Aigina,³⁶⁸ daughter of the river-god Asopos and the future mother of Aïakos, for whom the King of the Gods was to turn into men the ants of the island of which she became the

eponym.³⁶⁹ The island lay in the Saronic Gulf and in those days was still called Wine Island, Oinone. Asopos looked for his daughter and arrived at Sisyphos' rocky eyrie. Sisyphos could inform him, but would say nothing until the river-god caused a spring to gush forth for him up among the towering rocks.³⁷⁰ The deep well in its old curb is the only one today which has remained to us up there from antiquity. For this price Sisyphos betrayed the abductor.

Thus the unwelcome spy drew the wrath of the gods upon himself.³⁷¹ Zeus sent Thanatos, Death, against him. He too was espied in good time. We should like to know how Sisyphos outwitted Death, but the story is lost to us. He contrived to do so and threw Death into strong chains. From that moment, no one died on earth, until Ares the war-god set Death free and handed over Sisyphos to him. The cunning man contrived to make one condition before departing for the nether world, to speak once again with his wife, queen Merope. He secretly ordered her to send no more sacrifices down to the king and queen of the realm of the dead. These then were surprised in the underworld when for a long while they got no more libations from above. It seems from this tale that Sisyphos was not only a *primaeval* man but also a *primaeval* king and lord of almost the whole earth. He contrived so to befool Persephone, queen of the nether world,³⁷² with cunning words that she let him go in order that he might let the sacrificial gifts, the flesh and blood of the victims, come abundantly once more. So Sisyphos took leave of the House of Hades, of Zagreus, son of the infernal Zeus and of Persephone,³⁷³ and of all the secrets of the world below. He bade them farewell for ever, in words which could be heard in Aeschylus' satyr-play, the 'Runaway Sisyphos'.³⁷⁴

Now that he has escaped Death for the second time, we may insert here the famous tale of how the arch-rascal and the master-thief, Sisyphos and Autolykos, dealt with each other. Autolykos was a son of Hermes. The god of thieves begot him on one of Apollo's loves. He had taken the place of his elder

brother by night with Chione, the 'Snowmaiden' in a hiding-place on Mt Parnassos, where the snow often falls.³⁷⁵ Thus the 'Wolf itself' (for that is the meaning of Autolykos) was born, and he honoured his father Hermes above all gods. From him he got his talent for theft and clever perjury.³⁷⁶ He could make anything invisible that he touched with his hand.³⁷⁷ He knew how to make white beasts black and black beasts white; he would take the horns off horned beasts and put them on the heads of those that had none.³⁷⁸

At that time, and it must have been the time of *primaeval* men, when the population was scanty, the herds of both rascals pastured on the wide region between Parnassos and the Isthmus. Autolykos could never be caught when he went thieving; Sisyphos saw only that his herds kept growing smaller and the other's larger. Then he thought of a ruse. He was one of the first who mastered the art of letters, and so he engraved the initial letters of his name on the hooves of the cattle. But Autolykos found a way to alter this too,³⁷⁹ because he could alter everything belonging to the beasts. Then Sisyphos poured lead into the hollow of the hooves, in the shape of letters which produced in the footsteps of the cattle the sentence 'Autolykos has stolen me.'³⁸⁰

It was only after this piece of evidence that the master-thief owned himself defeated. It was a contest in cleverness, and Autolykos thought so highly of the winner that he immediately concluded an agreement of friendship and hospitality with him. It is not quite clear who was responsible for what took place in his hospitable house. A so-called 'Homeric' drinking-cup shows pretty undisguisedly Sisyphos in the bed-chamber of his host's daughter, the arch-rogué sitting on the bed and the girl with her spindle. Did he secretly have relations with the beautiful Antikleia? It would have been quite worthy of him. But also it would be a thought worthy of Autolykos to offer his own daughter to the man who had outdone him in cleverness, so that they might produce the cleverest of all.³⁸¹ Thus Antikleia became the mother of

Odysseus; it was not by Laertes, whom we know as the father from the 'Odyssey', but from Sisyphos that she conceived the man of many wiles, if we believe this story; Laertes took her when she was already with child.³⁸² A vase-painter of Magna Graecia has preserved for us the scene in which the young man displays his bride, in an interesting condition, to his astonished followers. For he was not even deceived; Autolykos, in this picture, shows him the name of Sisyphos on a leaf, somewhat larger than a laurel-leaf. It was the evidence which their guest, who loved letters and was responsible for the pregnancy, had left behind. The final victory in the matter was won by Aphrodite, who is also in the picture and is entrusting Odysseus to the care of his foster-father, the still young Laertes.

Sisyphos also had a son by his queen Merope; he was Glaukos, the elder bearer of this name, which means 'the sea-green one' and would fit a deity of the sea, as would also his Poseidonian tastes, for the lord of the sea had a predilection for horses and for horse-shape. About half-way from the Isthmus to the region of Parnassos, in Potniai, Glaukos possessed a stud of horses whose race showed plainly their relationship to the Harpies and Gorgons, for they had to be fed on human flesh, and ended by tearing their own master in pieces at the funeral games of Pelias, king of Iolkos.³⁸³ The story was told in a tragedy of Aeschylus, the 'Glaukos Potnieus'.³⁸⁴

Sisyphos too died at last, from the weakness of old age.³⁸⁵ This form of death he could not escape. Concerning his grave it is said³⁸⁶ that it lay on the Isthmus, but only a few Corinthians knew where. He was one of the heroes honoured on the Isthmus, and allegedly founded the Isthmian Games³⁸⁷ in memory of the dead Melikertes.³⁸⁸ The hero Sisyphos had a statue erected to him there; we can read his name on the pedestal. On the other hand, his famous punishment pictures the eternally vain endeavour to roll away from himself the lot of all mortals. In the underworld he eternally rolls the rock:

'With thrusting hands and feet he ever drave
The stone towards the hill-crest, but whene'er
The height was almost passed, the cruel stone
By might compelled rolled down again to earth.'³⁸⁹

Vase-paintings show us the hill-top looking like the rocks of the Akrokorinthos. Sisyphos always recommences his useless task, while the sweat streams from his limbs and dust defiles his head.

Of his line the only survivor was the son of the elder Glaukos, grandfather of the younger, who tells of him in the 'Iliad'; this was Bellerophontes. If this genealogy, according to which his grandfather was Sisyphos, had not been immortalised by the beautiful verses of Homer, he would have been accounted simply a son of the sea-god, be his name Glaukos or Poseidon. His mother bore the name of the goddess Eurynome,³⁹⁰ a queen of the sea³⁹¹ and a great consort of Zeus in primaeval times,³⁹² or actually Eurymeda,³⁹³ which is a feminine form of Eurymedon, 'wide-ruling', also meaning the lord of the sea.³⁹⁴ He seems to be a heroic child sprung from the sea even as son of Glaukos the 'sea-green'.³⁹⁵ Soon he became the slayer of an original enemy named Belleros, and so Bellerophon or Bellerophontes, understood as 'Belleros-killer'.

There is nothing more to be said of this enemy except that he must have been there from the beginning and have had that name, if Bellerophon got his universally famous appellation from his victory over him, as Hermes his surname Argeiphontes after the killing of the many-eyed Argos. Before this victory the young hero is said to have had some other name,³⁹⁶ for instance Hipponoos, a name which connects him with the noble steed, *bippos*. Or he bore the very same name as the brother of his famous mount Pegasos, a son of Poseidon, who is connected with no story whatever, outside of genealogies and the tale of his birth. No wonder that it was so, if his original name was soon to give place to that of Bellerophontes and the

hero in his boyhood and young manhood was still called Chrysaor. This name, which means 'golden-sworded', comes in a genealogy at the place which usually belongs to Bellero-phontes,³⁹⁷ for this Chrysaor was also a son of Glaukos, the son of Sisyphos.

We know the story of his birth. When Perseus cut off Medusa's head, she was with child by Poseidon of a hero and a winged stallion, Chrysaor and Pegasos. They leapt out through the neck from the body of their beheaded mother. From this moment on we hear no more of Chrysaor, the rest of the tale concerning the stallion only. Pegasos drank from the spring Peirene,³⁹⁸ as the double fountain in Corinth was called, which sprang from the Akrokorinthos rocks from overhead and from below at the beginning of the road leading to Lechaion, the port on the Corinthian Gulf, and to Poseidon's temple. In the name Pegasos itself the connection with a spring, *pege*, is expressed. Hippukrene, the 'fountain of the horse' on Helikon, was supposed to have sprung up from under his hooves,³⁹⁹ and the like tale was told of Peirene itself.⁴⁰⁰ It was easy to attach such stories to him, the son of Poseidon. He seems to have been so fond of visiting Peirene because of its nearness to his father's sanctuary, and perhaps also for his brother's sake, by whom in the end he let himself be caught, the immortal horse by his mortal brother.

Bellerophontes was the mortal brother, whether or not he was the same as Chrysaor, for he too was a son of Poseidon, one of the many that were born on earth to the god. And he asked his father for a winged horse, which Poseidon granted to his son.⁴⁰¹ But it was not easy to catch and hold the beast as he drank, for the bridle had not then been invented. So the hero endured much in his desire, until the virgin Pallas brought him the bridle of gold, in a dream that straightway was waking truth. And she said, 'Sleepest thou, prince of the house of Aiolos? Come, take this charm for the steed and show it to the Tamer thy father as thou makest sacrifice to him of a white bull.'⁴⁰² Up sprang the young man; he had been sleeping

at the altar of the goddess to get advice from her in his troubles. His hand grasped the golden wonder, for there it lay. He ran with it to Polyidos the prophet, the same who found the likeness for the marvellous calf in Minos' herds and revived the little child, Glaukos of Crete, in the honey-jar.⁴⁰³ Now at his bidding Bellerophontes, having made sacrifice to Poseidon, raised an altar to Athena Hippiia. Thus Pegasos became his property, sent him by Poseidon, but led to him and bridled by Athene.⁴⁰⁴ The hero mounted the divine steed and danced with it the war-dance in full armour, to the goddess' honour.⁴⁰⁵

Certainly it was very soon after this that he became 'Bellerophontes', 'the slayer of Belleros', and this name made his former one pass into oblivion. Still, like Apollo after the slaying of the dragon Delphyne,⁴⁰⁶ he also had to do penance and must have himself purified. The tale of how he committed murder and so defiled himself has not been preserved, but we do know⁴⁰⁷ that the hero by way of penance quitted Corinth and betook himself to Tiryns. There king Proitos was on the throne and purified him. Proitos must by that time have been an old king, being great-uncle of Perseus, the slayer of Medusa. This no doubt is why some believed⁴⁰⁸ that there was another of the same name whose wife was that Anteia of whom we shall have more to tell presently. But legends of heroes trouble themselves but seldom with the age of their characters, and almost everlasting youth was characteristic of heroines. This Proitos was certainly Proitos of Argos, he who had striven with his brother Akrisios in their mother's womb and later quitted the disputed kingdom and emigrated to Asia Minor. From there, from the land of Lykia, he came home with a princess for his wife and seven Kyklopes, to build the strong castle of Tiryns. And as Akrisios had withdrawn to Larissa in Thessaly, Proitos as chief king was sovran of the whole land of Argos, from which his three daughters and his son Megapenthes later tried to exclude Dionysos. But this story has not yet got so far; Proitos was still reigning in full power and might.

In his capacity as great king he cleansed Bellerophontes from homicide and kept the royal scion of Corinth with him in Tiryns. But not for long; his wife Anteia (or Scheneboia, as the tragedians call her), the princess from Asia Minor,⁴⁰⁹ fell in love with the handsome rider of Pegasos. It is the story which was to play itself out also in the family of Theseus, and not there only, to the great joy and immortal renown of a narrator even in these latter days, who has taken up the familiar threads after nearly three thousand years. The queen tried to seduce the young man, but failing in this she said to her husband: 'Proitos, or die or slay Bellerophon, Who would enjoy me, all against my will.' The king was angry, but did not dare to kill his guest himself; he sent him to Lykia, to his father-in-law, who according to the tragedians was called Iobates, but according to other and probably the earlier narrators was that very Amisodoros⁴¹⁰ who had reared the Chimaira.⁴¹¹ To him Proitos sent Bellerophontes with fateful written characters on a sealed tablet.

For nine days the king of Lykia feasted him, and nine bulls were killed for that festival. On the tenth day the king read his son-in-law's letter and saw that he was to give Bellerophontes over to death. Therefore he gave him the task of killing the monster which he had among his cattle. Presumably it, like the marvellous coloured calf in Minos' herds with which Polyidos the prophet had to do,⁴¹² had been dropped by one of his own beasts.⁴¹³ The creature was a goat; a young goat which had seen but one winter was called *chimaira* in Greek. Under this name the monstrous Lykian beast too was remembered, although it had the body and the head of a goat only in the middle, being lion in front and serpent behind, a three-headed creature which breathed fire.⁴¹⁴ Bellerophontes mounted his own marvellous steed Pegasos, flew up aloft on him, and shot the Chimaira from above with his arrows.⁴¹⁵ Vase-paintings show him, however, rather with a spear or with Poseidon's trident in his hand.

Thereupon, the king sent him a second time to his death,

against a people beloved of the gods, the Solymoi.⁴¹⁶ But Bellerophon defeated them. The third time he was sent against the Amazons, and as he was returning victorious from that struggle also, the best Lykian champions awaited him in ambush. None of them returned home, for all were killed by Bellerophon. Then the king recognised in him the offspring of the gods, kept him with him, gave him his daughter to wife, and ceded half his kingdom to him. Bellerophon begat two sons and a daughter on this younger sister of Anteia; the daughter was Laodameia, who was to bear Sarpedon to Zeus, though it was elsewhere said that Sarpedon was, like the Cretans Minos and Rhadamanthys, a son of Zeus and Europa.⁴¹⁷ As Lykia was thus connected with Crete and as the person of Pelops, the hero of Olympia, connected Lydia with the Peloponnesos, so Bellerophon connected another Asian country, or rather two, Lykia and Karia, with the kingdom of Argos, which included Corinth also.

Riding on his winged horse, he had his home both here and there. In Euripides' tragedy 'Stheneboia' it was described how the hero, after slaying the Chimaira, came flying to Tiryns, to take vengeance on Proitos' wife. She was in the very act of making an offering to Bellerophon as to one dead, for she still loved him.⁴¹⁸ The hero made a pretence of yielding to the queen's passion, took her on Pegasos' back, as if he would fly with her to his kingdom of Karia, and let her fall into the sea by the island of Melos.⁴¹⁹ Or had he become really reconciled to her and still angry only with the treacherous Proitos? On a vase-painting which shows the fall of Stheneboia, Bellerophon is covering his face with his hand. A fall from Pegasos, like the fall of Phaethon, whether or not he was guilty of that loving woman's fall, was soon to be his lot also.

According to the story,⁴²⁰ he wished to mount up to heaven on his steed and intrude upon the counsel of the gods. How he arrived at this design was shown on the stage in another tragedy of Euripides, the 'Bellerophon'. His experiences had convinced the hero that the old saying is true, that the best of

all is never to be born.⁴²¹ And are there gods⁴²² at all? Possessing as he did his marvellous steed, he wished to investigate the matter for himself. Thus disillusioned and doubting, he was seen on the back of Pegasus on his flight to heaven, uplifted above the stage.⁴²³ But did Bellerophontes need disillusionment and doubts to risk the adventure of a flight to heaven? Was it bitterness or hot-headedness that made him storm the skies? The divine stallion threw his foolhardy rider,⁴²⁴ who fell, as the older narrators already knew, on the plain of Aleion the Plain of Wandering, far off in Asia Minor, where he avoided the company of men.⁴²⁵ Limping, he mourned for the lot of mortals, while the undying Pegasus carries the thunderbolt for the King of the Gods⁴²⁶ or serves the goddess Eos,⁴²⁷ who brings the morning and carries off young men. He was taken up to Olympus, to the ancient mangers of the divine steeds.⁴²⁸

CHAPTER IX

Phrixos and Helle

ATHAMAS WAS ANOTHER SON of the great ancestor with the name of the wind-god, Aiolos. The story of this brother of Salmoneus and Sisypheos belonged partly to the legends concerning Dionysos. For his second wife he had Kadmos' daughter Ino, an aunt of the god of whom it is said⁴²⁹ that he was brought up as a girl in Athamas' house. How the story ended then with the madness of Athamas and his queen and how she with her little son Melikertes or Palaimon leaped into the sea and became the goddess Leukothea is known from those narratives. We know also that Ino as the second wife of Athamas was an evil stepmother to Phrixos and Helle, the king's children by his former wife. This is not to be told at greater length, the more so as the picture of the brother and sister voyaging through the air on the back of the ram, whereby one saved his life and the other fell off, is best connected with the tale of Pegasos' journey.

Athamas, the eponym of the Athamanes, founded the city of Halos in Thessaly,⁴³⁰ but was also accounted king of Boiotia.⁴³¹ In like manner, Salmoneus was at home in two districts, in Thessaly and in the Peloponnesos. In Thessaly the story was told that⁴³² a goddess named Nephele, 'the Cloud', came to king Athamas and chose him for her husband. She was not that cloud of which it was alleged that Zeus sent it in the form of Hera to Ixion,⁴³³ who begot on it Kentauros, the father of the Centaurs. According to this tale, Nephele bore Athamas two children, Phrixos, 'the Curly', and Helle, which might also be the name of a young doe or roe. But the king turned away from the goddess and took an earthly wife. Then Nephele returned to heaven and punished the whole land with drought. Athamas sent messengers to Apollo's oracle to learn what was to be done about it. This story is also

told in this way,⁴³⁴ that it was queen Ino who moved the women of the country secretly to roast the seed-corn, and thus was responsible for the infertility of the fields; and, still according to this version, she bribed the messengers who were sent to Delphi to say that the oracle commanded Nephele's children to be sacrificed.

Euripides in particular staged the tale in this form in his tragedy 'Phrixos'.⁴³⁵ Probably the original story went on to say that young Phrixos offered himself as a victim to drive away a drought from the land.⁴³⁶ In the town of Halos it was long the custom to sacrifice the eldest son of the family of Athamas to Zeus Laphystios, if he entered a particular sacred building, the meeting-place of the leading men.⁴³⁷ Now, we know from the story of Pelops that the human sacrifice was completed by the simultaneous offering of a ram. Here a ram, not merely light-coloured, as in the case of Pelops, but golden-fleeced, came to the rescue. As Pegasus was the fruit of one of Poseidon's unions in stallion form, so this marvellous creature was the offspring of the same deity by a marriage in the shape of a ram.⁴³⁸ Zeus sent it to save the brother and sister,⁴³⁹ for Helle was to be sacrificed with her brother, possibly of her own free choice, since Phrixos offered himself of his free will; or was it the case that neither had any suspicions when Athamas, intending to sacrifice them, sent for them? They lived with the king's herdsmen, and the king bade them fetch the first ram that came to hand with them as a victim.⁴⁴⁰ But this ram was the marvellous beast, and it informed the brother and sister of Athamas' intentions and rescued them.

Another story was⁴⁴¹ that their heavenly mother Nephele had got the ram with the golden fleece as a present from Hera, and sent it to the aid of her children. They mounted the back of the intelligent beast and it flew with them through the air in the direction of the distant eastern land of Kolchis. It was the girl's fate to get only as far as the narrow sea which divides our continent from Asia Minor, and which to this day is known as the Hellespont, the Sea of Helle, because Phrixos' sister fell

into those waters. It was her wedding with Poseidon, or so the vase-painters represented it.

The ram addressed her horrified brother and gave him courage.⁴⁴² Phrixos reached Kolchis, the land of Aietes, son of Helios, who received him hospitably and gave him his daughter Chalkiope, 'bronze-face', to wife. But the ram was intended from the beginning to be sacrificed; Phrixos offered it to Zeus Phyxios, the rescuer of fugitives. Its golden fleece he presented to king Aietes, the brother of Kirke and Pasiphae, whose acquaintance we have made in the history of the gods in connection with the Sun-god's kin. Another daughter of his was Medeia, whose name has become famous and notorious, famous by reason of the golden fleece, notorious for her murderous deeds and her sorceries. The fleece was hung up in the shrine of Ares on an oak; it was for its sake that Jason and the Argonauts came on their venturesome journey to Kolchis.

This happened after Phrixos was dead; he died at a ripe age in Aietes' palace.⁴⁴³ Chalkiope bore him four sons, one of whom entered upon the inheritance of his father's house in Halos after Athamas and Ino were punished with madness.

CHAPTER X

Oidipus

WHAT WAS LEFT after Kadmos in Thebes when he and Harmonia had taken on snake-form and entered into the realm of Beyond? There remained the burned bower of Semele in what had been his palace and was to become a temple of Demeter.⁴⁴⁴ In that bower Zeus had shown the might of his lightnings,⁴⁴⁵ and there he had taken Dionysos to himself from the burned body of his mother. In that place a piece of wood had fallen from heaven and replaced the child for mortals.⁴⁴⁶ Polydoros, Kadmos' son and successor, gave it a casing of bronze and called it Dionysos Kadmos. A vine surrounded the unapproachable spot with its tendrils.⁴⁴⁷ Ivy, the god's other sacred plant, garlanded the infant Dionysos⁴⁴⁸ and what stood for him. According to his name, 'he of the many gifts', Polydoros might have been a little Dionysos too; but he was also called Pinakos,⁴⁴⁹ 'writing-tablet man', because his father Kadmos had introduced the Greek letters from Phoenicia. His son Labdakos⁴⁵⁰ actually bore the name of a letter, Lambda, which follows K in the alphabet. But there is little to tell either of him or of his son, especially as their time was occupied by the story of the Theban Dioskuroi.

And what remained after these, after Amphion and Zethos, the sons of Zeus and Antiope, except their hero-tomb from which the men of Tithorea tried every year to steal earth? Niobe had united herself to Amphion and the tale of the hapless mother and her children is but too well known. No less sorrowful was the family history of Zethos; but this belongs to another and separate form of narrative, which is founded on the common possession by human beings and birds of one gift of the Muses, in that both can sing. The form of birds was not strange even to the Muses themselves.⁴⁵¹ It was related of Zethos' wife⁴⁵² that she was a daughter of Pandareos, like those



12 BELLEROPHONTES BEFORE IOBATES



13 PHRIXOS AND THE RAM PURSUED BY INO



14 OEDIPUS ON THE ARM OF THE HERDSMAN
EUPHORBOS

two who were carried off by the Harpies.⁴⁵³ But she, whose name was Aedon, 'the Nightingale', had accidentally killed Itylos, the son she had borne to Zethos.⁴⁵⁴ An Attic vase-painter shows us the scene, in which she murdered the child in his cot. She did it in a state of unsound mind; by another account, the misguided woman wanted to kill, not her own son, but a little nephew, out of jealousy against her sister-in-law.⁴⁵⁵ In her agony she thereupon wished to quit the world of human kind, and was transformed into a nightingale. It is she who laments for Itylos, if his name was not Itys and he was not the son of Prokne, of whom we shall hear in the story of Tereus.

Zethos died of grief, and the Thebans called Laios, son of Labdakos, to the throne.⁴⁵⁶ 'Laios' signifies, in a shorter form, the same as Laomedon, namely 'king of the people'. He was a baby one year old when Labdakos died, and the two dark brothers, Nykteus and Lykos, who have played their part in the story of Antiope, got possession of the kingship.⁴⁵⁷ In the time of Amphion and Zethos, Laios was still living with Pelops, and thus the Theban stories got a connection with the events which transpired in Pisa. There appears Chrysippos, as the most veritable son of Pelops, indeed his double, a very child of the Sun, whose name means 'he of the golden horses', and who shared much of his father's destiny. He also, like Pelops, was carried off, and his kidnapper was Laios.

Both were endangered by murderous intentions, the Lydian prince in the house of his father Tantalos, who set him before the gods as their food, Chrysippos through the cruelty of his stepmother Hippodameia and his own brothers Atreus and Thyestes, who are said actually to have murdered him.⁴⁵⁸ The stories know him only as a boy, who never lived to marry, but was kidnapped early—by Zeus himself, according to a poetess⁴⁵⁹—like another Ganymedes. But his kidnapping by Laios was better known through a tragedy of Euripides; the son of Labdakos, as the poet represented him on the stage in his 'Chrysippos', was the 'inventor' of homoerotic passion.⁴⁶⁰ As Pelops' guest-friend, he was instructing the handsome boy

in chariot-driving.⁴⁶¹ There was also a story that he did not carry him off from Olympia, but from Nemea, and took him on his chariot to Thebes.⁴⁶² This, it is true, could not be possible if the Nemean Games were not founded till the time of Laios' grandsons. Pelops, then, the story goes on, got back his son by force of arms. A vase-painter shows us the scene of the kidnapping; Chrysippos stretches out his arms to his father from Laios' four-horse chariot. Another artist even showed Hippodameia in the background, desperately crying for help, as if she were not the boy's stepmother. According to this, the kidnapping took place in Pelops' house. Another tradition⁴⁶³ tells us that Laios went five days' journey abroad to fall in love with Chrysippos and carry him off; that was the distance from Pisa and the holy ground of Olympia to Thebes.

Pelops' curse accompanied the kidnapper; he might never beget a son, or if he did, by that son he should be slain.⁴⁶⁴ It was said also⁴⁶⁵ that Chrysippos for very shame took his own life. There is yet another telling of the tale;⁴⁶⁶ Atreus and Thyestes, the elder brothers, caught the kidnapper and brought him and the boy back. Then Pelops had mercy on Laios' love for Chrysippos; only Hippodameia wished to persuade the elder sons to murder the youngest, who was not her child. When these would not take her advice, she made her way by night into the bedroom of Laios where he was sleeping with Chrysippos, drew the lover's sword, wounded the boy with it and left the weapon in the wound. Chrysippos lived just long enough to save Laios by his evidence and to denounce the murderess. Thereupon Pelops divorced Hippodameia and banished her. You already know the other version of the story, according to which Atreus and Thyestes committed the murder. The curse of Pelops followed them also⁴⁶⁷ and their race was not much more fortunate than that of Laios.

A tragedian transported the suicide of Chrysippos to Thebes,⁴⁶⁸ at a time when the son of Laios had long been on the throne there. As king of Thebes, Laios had chosen as his consort the daughter of a great-grandson of Echion the 'snake-man', one

of the dragon's seed and grandson of Pentheus the 'man of woe', son of Agaue, 'the August'. Her name was Epikaste, or as she is much more commonly called, Iokaste. It was under the latter name that she achieved such notoriety, even to the latest times, as hardly any other of the queens who were mothers and wives of heroes. It is said that she combined both relationships to one and the same hero. Also through her, her brother Kreon got the sovereignty over Thebes for a while. Here again there is a report⁴⁶⁹ that Laios slew his father-in-law Menoikeus. It was Iokaste's destiny to become the source of royal power in Thebes.

But Laios should not have begotten a son on her. Three times the oracle of Delphi warned him⁴⁷⁰ that Thebes could be saved only if he died without issue. Laios was incapable of forming a firm resolution,⁴⁷¹ and the consummation of the marriage took place when the bridal pair were, so to speak, afflicted with madness.⁴⁷² So we are told in Aeschylus' tragedy, the 'Seven against Thebes', which was preceded by two plays now lost, the 'Laios' and the 'Oedipus'. In the first, presumably, the story was told how Laios, who had not taken the oracle's advice, yet later exposed the child which he had begotten on Iokaste,⁴⁷³ thus drawing down on himself the wrath of Hera and eventually of the god of Delphi.⁴⁷⁴ Apollo always left his consultants free to follow the better course, which he advised them, or the worse, if they so chose. It needed more to arouse the wrath of the god; the violent death of Chrysippos in the house of Laios at Thebes may have given rise to his abhorrence, for he was the protector of boys and tender youths. It was enough to anger Hera if the boy, kidnapped and withheld by force, was to replace his wedded wife for the king. She sent the Sphinx, the monster of which we have to speak presently, against the Thebans from Ethiopia. Chrysippos took his own life, and thereupon Laios decided to journey to the god at Delphi and inquire of him yet a fourth time; that is one form of the story,⁴⁷⁵ and perhaps it is to be connected with the 'Seven against Thebes', and thus attributed at least in part to Aeschylus. To him, Laios was not the 'inventor' of homoerotic

passion, but the evil lover in whose possession the beloved boy came to a bad end. Teiresias, the wise Theban prophet, who knew that the king was hated by the god, advised against the journey and bade him rather make sacrifice to Hera, goddess of marriage. Laios would not heed the seer, but set out on the way which he must follow at first to the south,⁴⁷⁶ through a narrow cross-road between Kithairon and Potniai.⁴⁷⁷

The tale of the oracle and of Laios' journey is told in another form also, in the words of Iokaste at the beginning of Euripides' *'Phoenissae'*, with which he continued his *'Chrysippos'*. Laios had lived for many years with Iokaste in a childless marriage⁴⁷⁸ when he decided to question the oracle regarding offspring. The god replied to him:

'Beget no child against the will of heaven;
For if a son be thine, that son shall slay thee,
And all thine house shall tread the road of blood.'⁴⁷⁹

Laios should have been content with this and given up all thoughts of offspring, but being overcome with lust and wine he afterwards begat a son⁴⁸⁰ and at once had him exposed. Long years afterwards, impelled by evil apprehensions, he set out to learn of the oracle if the exposed child was still alive; he took the shortest way to Delphi through the region of Phokis,⁴⁸¹ and there arrived at a narrow cross-road.

The third, and the simplest, account of the oracle is contained in that tragedy whose greatness overshadowed all others that were written before or after it on this subject and made them almost wholly forgotten, the *'Oidipus the King'* of Sophokles. The king and queen of Thebes, Laios and Iokaste, received a warning from Delphi that their son would slay his father,⁴⁸² and that was why the child was exposed. Later it was pretended that an oracle in the Pythia's own verses could be produced, though indeed it has no such archaically simple tone, but contains the whole preliminary history.⁴⁸³ That is the only reason for giving it here, before our tale goes on to the fate of the exposed child:

'Laios, Labdakos' son, thou askest the blessing of offspring.
I will give thee a son of thine own, yet destiny willet
That at the hands of thy child thou die, for so hath allowed
Zeus, Kronos' son, who heedeth the bitter curses of Pelops,
Robbed by thee of his son, who invoked these evils upon thee.'

The earlier narrators paid attention, probably, more to the person of Oedipus and less to the preliminaries of his exposure. To judge by his name, the hero was 'swell-foot', and the tellers of the tale gave themselves trouble enough to explain this remarkable name and make it credible that it really had something to do with the feet of the exposed child. Otherwise, one could easily think of one of the Daktyls, one of the earth-born sons of the great Mother of the Gods. In the oldest times proper names which had not even the periphrasis 'swell-foot' were in use, when the peculiarity of the Daktyls was alluded to, consequently one of them might have been called simply Oidyphallos;⁴⁸⁴ but in the days when the story of Oedipus is told us, this seems to have been no longer usual.

The child was exposed in winter, in an earthenware pot; this was the account given in Aeschylus' 'Laios'.⁴⁸⁵ A vase-painting shows him sitting naked on the arm of Euphorbos, who found him. Not till later are his swaddling-clothes mentioned,⁴⁸⁶ and to increase his helplessness his feet are represented as pierced either with a gold pin⁴⁸⁷ or with an iron spike,⁴⁸⁸ so that he was 'swell-foot' all his days. A superfluous cruelty on the part of the narrators hides what they would not credit and what was formerly indicated, the ancient Daktyl-nature of the red-headed⁴⁸⁹ man of whose fits of furious anger we shall soon hear more.

But his story begins exactly like that of other exposed heroes and divine children. It was even alleged⁴⁹⁰ that he was a son of Helios. Something like the stories told of Perseus and once of Dionysos himself⁴⁹¹ was narrated of him, namely that he was thrown into the water in a chest,⁴⁹² either in the Corinthian Gulf or the Euripos, the strait which separates Euboea

from Boiotia. The chest floated about on the sea so far that Hippodameia herself could pick up and rear the foundling, as if he, like Chrysispos, were a son of Pelops;⁴⁹³ for in this version he killed Laios to protect or avenge his supposed brother, and got possession of Iokaste when she came to Pisa for her husband's funeral. He is even represented as a rival of Laios and as murdering him for that reason. These are far-reaching branches of the story, in which new and old are mingled and the ancient thread is quite lost.

According to one old account, the chest with the infant got no further than the neighbourhood of the city in which Polybos, a son of Hermes, bore rule.⁴⁹⁴ Was this Sikyon, Corinth, or Anthedon?⁴⁹⁵ Queen Periboia was washing her clothes by the seashore when the chest came to land there.⁴⁹⁶ On a 'Homeric' cup, as it is called, we see Hermes handing the child to the queen, and Periboia setting him on the lap of the king. Oidipus grew up in the house of Polybos in the belief that he and Periboia, or Merope as she is also named,⁴⁹⁷ were his parents. But the well-known story is that he was exposed, not on the sea, but on Mount Kithairon, where the herdsmen of Thebes from one side and those of Sikyon on the other could meet. If Laios' herdsmen exposed the child, those of Polybos might find him, and so it happened, on Hera's meadow, as Euripides represents it.⁴⁹⁸

Or indeed, the child was never exposed at all—so we are told in the 'Oedipus Rex'—⁴⁹⁹ but the Theban herdsmen handed him over to one from Corinth, to be brought up as his own son. He presented him to his childless king;⁵⁰⁰ Oidipus himself tells the story in this tragedy⁵⁰¹ of how, when he had become the first citizen of Corinth, a drunken guest at a banquet reproached him with not being the king's son, how his foster-parents, when he enquired of them, repudiated the slander, and how he secretly set forth to ask the god at Delphi; and further, how the god did not answer his question, but threatened him with the awful doom of becoming his mother's husband and his father's murderer. Therefore he did not dare

return to Corinth, but took another route, through Phokis, passing a narrow cross-road, where he was to murder an unknown man.

And so the tale, whether we begin from Laios or Oidipus, brings us to a narrow cross-road, wherever it may have lain, between Thebes and Delphi, in Phokis, or to the south of Thebes, between Kithairon and Potniai. There the father and son were to meet, without recognising one another, an ill-starred father and a son no less unfortunate, who should have avoided each other and had even done everything possible to shun the encounter. It was not necessary to the story that they should know the fate which awaited them; it is equally conceivable without the intervention of an oracle. The narrators, who believed in oracles, got hold there of something which from the very beginning had formed the kernel of this tale of unintended and yet perpetrated patricide. Oidipus had no idea in any form of the story that his route through the narrow cross-road would meet that of his father. Also Laios' anxiety lest he be dethroned by his son needed no oracle, for its prototype was found in the history of the gods, in the tale of Uranos and Kronos, a very ancient tradition, common to the Greeks and the Asians from an early date. By means of the prophecy the narrators gave shape to a very ancient fear, and the exposure resulted from that fear, not from Apollo's foretelling, though of course not without his knowledge, if he was already the god of the Delphic oracle. Man so often runs into something terrible through fear of the terrible.

And thus this very human happening occurred; the son's path crossed that of the father in a narrow pass where it was not possible to make room. "Traveller, give way to the king!" cried Laios' herald to the stranger,⁵⁰² as Laios was driving through the narrow place in his chariot. Oidipus' rage boiled up; he strode forward on his way without a word.⁵⁰³ One of the king's horses trod on his foot,⁵⁰⁴ and the old king also struck him on the head from the chariot with the forked goad which he used to drive his team. Thus the measure was fulfilled.⁵⁰⁵ In

anger, and not knowing whom he was striking, as is explicitly told us,⁵⁰⁶ he smote his father dead⁵⁰⁷ with his staff,⁵⁰⁸ and the herald as well.⁵⁰⁹ Aeschylus preserves another detail of the picture of the anger which possessed him; he bit the corpse of his victim and spat the blood out.⁵¹⁰

A very ancient form of the story is referred to by a late narrator, that one who informs us⁵¹¹ that Oidipus was then gone out to steal horses and that Laios when he met him was accompanied by his wife Epikaste. But he shuns the point of the story and alleges that after the murder Oidipus took refuge in the hills, as is usual to this day in Greece, and did not touch Epikaste. How, then, could she in the later course of the narrative have willingly taken the slayer for her husband, after being witness of the murder, if she had not then and there become the prey of the robber? Surely, in that old telling of the story, everything happened in the same outbreak of rage; the son struck his father dead and took possession of his mother, the unknown queen, thus attaining through her the kingship of Thebes as well.

Doubtless the poet of the 'Odyssey' also knew it, as he tells us the tale thus: Epikaste became the wife of her son, who took her when he had killed and taken the spoils of his father, but the gods straightway made all known to men. And he, in woe, was still king of the Kadmeians in lovely Thebes, through the cruel counsels of the gods. But she went to the house of Hades, the mighty guardian of the gate, fastening a rope sheer from the high roof, in the gripe of her grief. To him she left behind many woes, even those which a mother's avenging spirits accomplish.⁵¹² Oidipus' children also must have discovered it; according to the older narrators they were not the offspring of Epikaste but of a second wife, who bore the beautiful name of Euryganeia, 'she who shines joyfully far and wide'.⁵¹³ Indeed yet another name was traditionally borne by a wife of Oidipus, Astymedusa,⁵¹⁴ which would fit any and every queen. It is quite possible that both names mean the same woman. Oidipus himself fell, the Iliad tells us, mightily on the field of battle.⁵¹⁵

Homer says not a word about the wisdom by which Oidipus had to win the throne of Thebes after the murder of Laios, in the best-known form of the story, but speaks as if the Kadmeians had never been plagued by the monster on the neighbouring height of Phikion, the Phix, or, in the more intelligible form of her name, the Sphinx, the Strangler. If Oidipus, as the later teller of the old tale of his horse-thieving expedition would have it,⁵¹⁶ returned to his foster-father Polybos with the plundered horses or mules, and had not taken possession at once of the queen and also of the kingdom, he must have journeyed to Thebes later, to free the city from the Sphinx. After the death of Laios Kreon, brother of Iokaste, ruled there. He and the elders of the city were in great anxiety ever since the winged lioness or bitch with the head of a virgin had invaded the neighbourhood of the town.

As already mentioned it is said that his visitation had assailed Thebes already in Laios' lifetime. Hera had sent the Sphinx from Ethiopia against the Kadmeians, because they tolerated their king's passion for Chrysippos. Or Dionysos might have sent the ravenous lion-virgin against his natal city, which would not honour him. This Euripides seems actually to have alleged,⁵¹⁷ though elsewhere he states,⁵¹⁸ what must have been the view of the sufferers themselves, that the underworld had sent the Sphinx up against Thebes. To Thebes' bane, the mother of so many monsters, the serpent-goddess Echidna, had borne her⁵¹⁹ after mating with her own son, the dog Orthos.⁵²⁰ The Sphinx took her seat on the hill which was named Phikion after her, if she did not perch on a pillar in the Kadmeians' market place, to pick out her victims. In this position she appears, but also on the hill. We see her also carrying off young men and strangling them, and so she was to be seen on the throne of Zeus wrought by Pheidias.⁵²¹ An old account says that she carried off Haimon, son of Kreon, the handsomest and tenderest youth in all Thebes.⁵²² Thereupon Kreon made proclamation that Iokaste and the kingdom should be his who overcame the Sphinx.

Originally no doubt the hero who would kill her must go against her to the hill Phikion. Thus a vase shows us Oidipus raising his club to strike, not pondering over any riddle, as he faces the lion-virgin. According to the well-known account, the Thebans used daily to assemble to puzzle over the riddle which the Sphinx set them, and when they could not solve it, she always seized one of them.⁵²³ She had got the riddle from the Muses⁵²⁴ but here she resembled the Sirens more than the Muses; certainly she was not originally the 'wise virgin',⁵²⁵ rather the artful one who had learned her one ruse. On an engraved stone of the best classical date we see her getting her wisdom from a book-roll, or reading it aloud. She sang her riddle like an oracle,⁵²⁶

'On two feet, yet on four, there treads the earth,
Yea, and on three, a creature of one name.
Alone it changes shape of all that walk
On ground or fly in air or swim the sea.
But when it goes supported on four feet,
Then is the speed the feeblest in its limbs.'

The Sphinx may well have been proud of her riddle, and also it confused people; for they likewise did not understand that riddle which was carved, as a sage's warning, on the porch of Apollo's temple at Delphi, 'Know thyself.' The answer to that is, 'Know that thou art man.' We see Oidipus (as more than one vase-painter represents him) sitting in front of the Sphinx and pondering. 'What does she mean by "yea, and on three"?' And he cried,⁵²⁷

'Of Man thou tellest. When he goes on mould
Four-footed first he creeps, a babe new-born;
In age a staff, third foot, must him uphold,
All heavy-necked, with curv'd eld forlorn.'

When the Sphinx heard this, she did what the Sirens did when anyone failed to succumb to their singing. Just as they threw themselves, winged creatures though they were, into the

sea and thus committed suicide, so also did the winged lion-virgin cast herself down from her rocks⁵²⁸ or from the column on the Theban acropolis.⁵²⁹ We see too on a vase-painting how Oidipus puts her out of her misery with a light spear.

Thus Oidipus became a sage, and also the most foolish of all the kings in the world. He received as the prize of his victory (so the best-known version has it, which does not make Iokaste present at Laios' murder), his own mother to wife and begat on her four children, the sons being Eteokles and Polynikes, the daughters Antigone and Ismene, all to become famous through the misfortunes of the House of the Labdakids. Oidipus, wise in appearance only, had no idea of this. Doubtless he recognised himself in the strange creature which the Sphinx meant by her riddle, but not what man is, not the tricks played him by the fate to which he, unlike the fateless gods, is delivered over. It was human destiny which fulfilled itself in him and that destiny was made plain in time. For not all who had exposed the child, or were supposed to have done so, but did not, were dead.

Also there was the one really wise man in Thebes, the seer Teiresias, whose blind eyes saw through the errors of Oidipus as they formerly had those of Laios. But when he was forced to speak by the king himself, many years had passed under the government of the foolish pair, the mother and the son, and a plague made the Thebans feel that all was not well with their State.⁵³⁰ Teiresias had something in common with Oidipus (his name signifies one who interprets *teireia*, that is signs). He had become blind in his youth, as the hero who had taken his mother to wife was to become in the prime of life. It was told of him too⁵³¹ that he was the descendant of one of the Spartoi, Udaïos, the 'man of the ground'. His mother was named Chariklo, like the wife of the wise Centaur Chiron, and belonged to the train of Pallas Athene. Thus Teiresias in his youth saw what he should not have seen. The goddess, delighting in her horses, was travelling about in Boiotia and stripped off her clothing to refresh herself with a bath. This she

did once in Hippukrene, the 'horse's well' on Helikon, in the stillness of noon and in loneliness.⁵³² Teiresias, on whose cheeks the first down was showing, was hunting there alone with his hounds at the holy place. Impelled by unspeakable thirst, he ran to the spring, poor wretch, and unintentionally he saw that which it is not lawful to behold. He had seen the bosom and the flanks of Athene, but might never see the sun again; the goddess put her hands over his eyes and blinded him.⁵³³ But for love of her lamenting attendant Chariklo she dedicated him prophet, purified his ears so that he could understand the voices of birds, and gave him a staff of cornel wood with which he could walk like a sighted man.

Another story of the blinding of Teiresias had the like meaning; there again he caught sight of something which he ought not to have beheld. When he was a young herdsman,⁵³⁴ so the tale runs, at a cross-roads⁵³⁵ on Kithairon,⁵³⁶ or on Mount Kyllene, in the region where Hermes with the pair of snakes on his staff was at home,⁵³⁷ he saw two serpents coupling. This adventure, which one would think was nothing extraordinary in the life of a herdsman in Greece, must have had a special meaning for ancient times, if later days made it into the starting-point of a veritable divine jest. Teiresias, so we are told, had killed the female snake as she was coupling,⁵³⁸ and in that very instant was himself turned into a woman. As such he lived for the next seven years and experienced the love of man.⁵³⁹ After the seven years he again saw a pair of snakes at the act of love; this time his blow struck the male and he was immediately turned into a man again. At that time Zeus and Hera were disputing with each other as to whether the male or the female kind got more pleasure of love. They chose Teiresias as their umpire, and his decision ran thus:⁵⁴⁰

'Of ten, the man enjoyeth but one part,
Nine parts the woman fills, with joyful heart.'

Hera was furious at this pronouncement and punished him with blindness. Zeus bestowed on him in compensation the

gift of prophecy and caused him to live for seven generations of men. But we are not told that his gift made the sage happy. He sighed, it is said,⁵⁴¹

'Ah, father Zeus, a lesser lease of life
Would thou hadst granted me, and wits no more
Than other men's. No honour hast thou done me,
No, not the least, with this my length of days
To seven generations thus prolonged.'

Blind and gifted with divine wisdom, he was obliged to live through the destinies of Kadmos and his descendants, six generations of them, and alone of all men to keep his intelligence even in the underworld. This gift Persephone granted him.⁵⁴² Odysseus visited him later in the realm of the dead and let him, still carrying a prophet's golden staff, be the first to drink from the blood which filled the sacrificial pit. Teiresias recognised him and addressed him without having drunk the blood,⁵⁴³ and after doing so, foretold him all his future destiny.

He also saw the fate of Oidipus, which was fulfilled even as Teiresias prophesied it.⁵⁴⁴ When that unhappy man could but perceive that he had become the husband of his mother and the brother of his children, he deprived himself of eyesight.⁵⁴⁵ That was the penalty for those who had seen what it was not allowed them to see; as Teiresias had seen the goddess, or the snakes at their deed of kind, so he had seen his mother. It was also said⁵⁴⁶ that he did not blind himself, but the old brothers-in-arms of Laios did so when they meant simply to punish the murderer of their lord and never knew that he was also Laios' son. People tried to give ever-new turns to the old narrative. In the 'Phoenissae' of Euripides, Iokaste herself appears as still an aged queen-mother, many years later than the exposure of her shame, on tottering feet,⁵⁴⁷ and kills herself over the corpses of her two sons, who have slain one another,⁵⁴⁸ thus drinking the woes of her agonising maternity to the very dregs. According to all earlier handlings of the story, she hanged herself at once when her shame was revealed.

The blind Oidipus vanished from the eyes of the Thebans. In order that the pure light of the sun should not be polluted by his presence,⁵⁴⁹ he was kept in hiding, as it were in a dungeon, by his family, either Kreon⁵⁵⁰ or his sons.⁵⁵¹ No longer in his right mind,⁵⁵² and more than ever subject to furious outbreaks of rage, he submitted. He forbade his sons ever again to set the royal dishes before him, the story continues;⁵⁵³ and when fair-haired Polyneikes nevertheless did so, putting pious Kadmos' silver table before him and filling the golden goblet with sweet wine, the blind man perceived it; he took it as an insult, his soul was overcome with grievous evil, and he put a curse on both his sons, that they should divide their paternal inheritance between them with iron.⁵⁵⁴ When on the other hand they once forgot⁵⁵⁵ to send their father the royal portion of a victim, the shoulder-piece, and instead sent him a haunch, he perceived that too, flung the piece to the ground, and cursed his sons again; he directed to Zeus and the other gods his prayer that the two might pass together into the underworld, either slain by the other's hand.

Oidipus in the 'Phoenissae', appears from his palace-prison like a ghost,⁵⁵⁶ to see the fulfilment of his curses. The imprisonment in his own palace, in an underground chamber where according to a late account he died,⁵⁵⁷ was only one form of his sufferings. In this Euripidean tragedy Antigone, the elder and stronger of his daughters, leads him away from the battlefield, where for the last time he had caressed the three beloved bodies, the corpses of Iokaste, Eteokles and Polyneikes.⁵⁵⁸ It was his destiny to become a vagabond too,⁵⁵⁹ and she led him on the road to Kolonos, Poseidon's rocky hill and the threshold of Athens and of the underworld, the holy spot where, according to a pronouncement of the Delphic oracle, he was to end his life.⁵⁶⁰

In Sophokles' last tragedy, the work of his old age, the 'Oidipus at Kolonos', we meet this pair. The younger daughter Ismene was soon to join them on the way which they had long trodden, even before the strife of the brothers. They roamed begging through the land, for the aged Oidipus was no longer

the fiery-tempered man he had been; he asked for little and was content with even less when it was given him.⁵⁶¹ He was become the suffering hero, who after his death should be the treasure and defence of those in whose land he found his rest. This was to happen there in the *petite patrie* of Sophokles, on the territory of the demos Kolonos, at a rocky hill. There the goddesses who avenged a mother, the Erinyes—also called the Eumenides, the Benevolents, by the Athenian people—had their inviolable grove. That was the goal of Oidipus' woeful journey, and there he found grace.⁵⁶²

He entered with confidence the grove which might not be entered. He knew that here he had to await the announcement of his coming, disappearance by earthquake, thunder and lightning.⁵⁶³ He entrusted himself and the secret of his grave, which was to be no ordinary grave but should hereafter protect the Athenians, to the lord of the land, Theseus. Theseus sent for him in all haste, when Zeus gave the first signal with his thunder.⁵⁶⁴ It roared like an unceasing thunderstorm, peal on peal, flash on flash, and now the blind man became the guide of Theseus and his two daughters, who had followed him there. With unhesitating tread he followed the Guide of Souls, whom he seemed to see, for he named him, Hermes, and also the goddess of the realm of the dead, whom he dared not name.⁵⁶⁵ At the edge of the gulf he halted;⁵⁶⁶ through it steps of bronze formed the approach to the very roots of the rocks. The countless roads which lead to the underworld met here; and here, between a hollow pear-tree and a stone tomb, Oidipus sat down, threw off his soiled garments and had himself washed and clothed by his daughters as the dead should be. And with them he raised the lament at departure when the thunder of Zeus of the nether world sounded. This too passed and all were silent. With a shudder they heard the voice of a god, 'Ho there, ho there, Oidipus, why must we wait for you?'⁵⁶⁷ Only Theseus might see what happened then;⁵⁶⁸ he remained standing there a long while and covered his face; Oidipus had vanished.

Probably Aeschylus told much the same story; it was said of him⁵⁶⁹ that he had divulged something in his 'Oidipus' which belonged to the Mysteries of Demeter. Those Mysteries were the Mysteries also of her daughter, the goddess of the realm of the dead. According to the older narrators, Oidipus did not get to Kolonos; he wandered in his sorrows, after he had robbed himself of the light of his eyes, for a long while in the wild mountain scenery of Kithairon,⁵⁷⁰ where he had been exposed and where in his anger he had unwittingly slain his father. In that region also his grave was shown. His kin, so the story went, wished to bury him in Thebes,⁵⁷¹ but the Thebans would not allow it; he was, as it were, marked out by his misfortune. So the burial took place in another district of Boiotia, called Keos. But mishaps befell that village and the inhabitants believed that the cause of them was Oidipus' grave. Finally he was buried in Eteonos, also a village situated in Boiotia and later called Skarphe. It was night when they buried him there in secret, not knowing that the spot was in a sacred precinct of Demeter. When this became manifest, the Eteonians asked the god of Delphi what they were to do, and Apollo replied, 'Disturb not the suppliant of the goddess.' So he remained buried there, and that is why the place is called Oidipus' shrine.

On vase-paintings we see young men and young women approaching the monument. Do the artists mean the sons and daughters of Oidipus, or were these other young people, perhaps even young husbands and wives, bringing an offering to the hero whose sorrows were to bestow blessings, not indeed on his own kin, but on strangers who honoured him? The tomb, marked by a column, bore the inscription,⁵⁷²

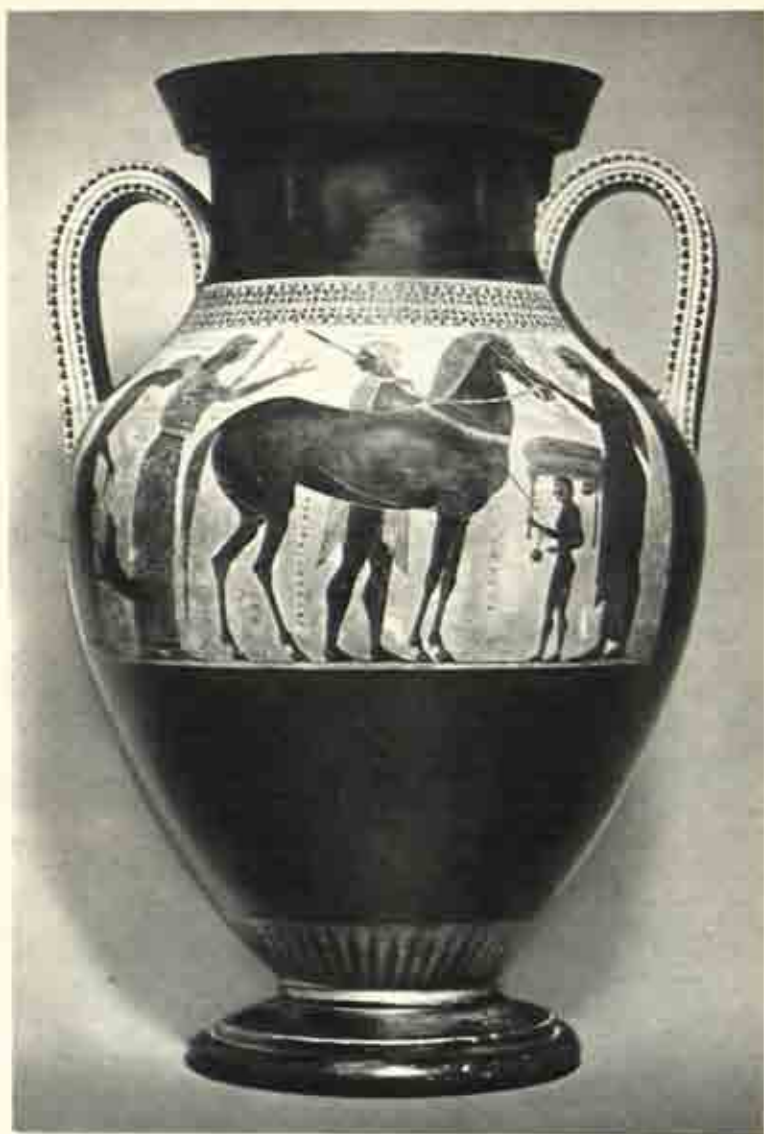
'Mallow above and asphodel I bear,
My lap holds Oidipus, king Laios' heir.'



15 OEDIPUS SOLVES THE RIDDLE OF THE SPHINX



16 OEDIPUS KILLING THE SPHINX



17 KASTOR AND POLYDEUKES GREETED BY
LEDA AND TYNDAREOS

CHAPTER XI

The Spartan Dioskuroi and their Cousins

KASTOR AND POLYDEUKES (still better known perhaps in their Latin form, Castor and Pollux) are the names of a pair who to this day signify for us the inseparable union of brothers. They were not the only ones to be known as *Diōs kúroi*, 'sons of Zeus'; Thebes knew and honoured Dioskuroi among the heroes who founded her, twins whose father was the King of the Gods, the sons of Antiope. Yet when we hear of *the* Dioskuroi, it is especially the twin brothers, sons of Leda, who are meant. We know of them and likewise of their mother from the history of the gods.⁵⁷³ They were also named the Tyndaridai, or still earlier Tindaridai, allegedly after an earthly father called Tyndareos. The appellation 'sons of Zeus' may be hidden in this name also, expressed in a tongue which was spoken earlier in Greece.

The story of Kastor and Polydeukes, so far as it belongs to the legends of the heroes, must therefore start with king Tyndareos. For these legends have a liking for the genealogical tree which connects the heroes with one another through earthly fathers and mothers and a widening circle of kin. It was said, then,⁵⁷⁴ that Gorgophone, daughter of Perseus, 'she who slew the Gorgon', so named in memory of her father's victory, was married first with Perieres, one of the sons of Aiolos, king of Messenia at Oichalia, as Andania, the site of the later mysteries, was then called. To Perieres she bore Aphareus and Leukippos, whose transparent name signifies 'one who has a white horse'. But she is said to have been the first wife⁵⁷⁵ to marry another husband after the death of the first. In her second marriage she became the wife of Oibalos, who to judge by his name was a Daktyl-like primæval being of Lakonia, the 'copulator',

whose father according to some was Kynortas, 'arouser of dogs', a brother of Hyakinthos.⁵⁷⁶ Tyndareos was a son of Oibalos and Gorgophone, or, by another tradition which knows nothing of all this genealogy,⁵⁷⁷ of a fountain-nymph, Bateia, 'the thicker'.

After this the genealogy of the Dioskuroi takes root, through Tyndareos, on Lakonian soil, and so it should for a king of Sparta, which Tyndareos was to become, and for the Spartan Dioskuroi whom his wife bore. True, it is not said that he bore undisturbed sway over Lakonia.⁵⁷⁸ For a time he was driven out by his half-brother Hippokoon; Herakles later restored him. He took refuge in the western part of the Greek mainland. According to most accounts the king there was Thestios, a descendant of Pleuron, founder of the city of the same name among the Kuretes of Aitolia. But it is quite possible that according to other accounts Thestios likewise had founded cities, Thestia in Aitolia and earlier still another Thestia in Lakonia.⁵⁷⁹ According to the Spartans, Tyndareos never moved to Aitolia and Thestios at all, but to the Lakonian town of Pellana.⁵⁸⁰ In Aitolia, Thestios was already the father of a famous daughter, Althaia, of whom we shall have to speak in the story of Meleagros. His other renowned daughter was allegedly Leda, although the tale is told that 'Thestios' wife Panteidyia, 'the all-knowing', conceived her not by Thestios but by Glaukos son of Sisypheos.⁵⁸¹ It was not easy to find a father and a family tree for a primaeval woman such as Leda, to judge by her name, must have been.

We all know the famous tale⁵⁸² of how Leda conceived the Tindarids in Lakonia; Zeus loved her in the shape of a swan under the height of Taygetos, over which those great white birds flew. In the Messenian Gulf, opposite the Lakonian coast, rises the little rocky island of Pepheos; there the twins, Kastor and Polydeukes, came into the world. The island was not supposed to be the birthplace of their sisters Helen and Klytaimnestra. We may remember the vase-painting⁵⁸³ which represents the sons of Leda as young men, while the egg from

which Helen was to be born lies between them on the altar, a scene which is laid in Tyndareos' royal residence, whether that was in Pellana or in Sparta. Pephnos on the other hand is hardly more than a reef, and only heavenly children could find their birthplace there; certainly no woman would visit that rocky island to bring forth her child. That mother must have had wings and laid eggs, like the sea-birds and Leda's heavenly double, the goddess Nemesis. In such shape she, the daughter of Night, by whichever of the two names we like to call her, doubtless brought her sons into the world, and we shall hear later that even their wings were not quite forgotten.

In antiquity the round cap, *pilos*, which the Dioskuroi wore whether on horseback or holding their steeds by the curb was explained⁵⁸⁴ by saying that they got it from the egg out of which they had crept. Hermes, according to later accounts,⁵⁸⁵ brought the divine children from Pephnos to Pellana. On the little island were shown their bronze statues, no more than a foot high, although they too, like the Kabeiroi, were also called Great Gods, and the tale was told⁵⁸⁶ that the flood which swept over the rocks in winter time never washed these figures away. The Spartans were content with two beams, fastened together in the shape of the letter H, or two slender amphorae, around each of which in the representations a serpent often entwines, when they wished to be reminded of their beloved Tindarids.

Messenia, the neighbouring country to Lakonia, also had its divine twins. They were the cousins of the Spartan Dioskuroi. Gorgophone in her first marriage bore Aphareus, and he took to wife Arene, sister of his half-brother Tyndareos.⁵⁸⁷ But he was no more, or no less, the father of his sons than Tyndareos was the begetter of the Dioskuroi. The real father of the twins whom Arene bore was said to be Poseidon;⁵⁸⁸ especially the gigantic Idas was allegedly begotten by the lord of the sea. But Lynkeus, 'lynx-eye', was also an extraordinary being, for his sharp sight pierced into the depths of the earth.⁵⁸⁹ The story of the Lakonian Dioskuroi must include their Messenian cousins, for they were not long in coming to blows with each other.

It was said of Idas⁵⁹⁰ that he was the strongest man on earth. He fought Apollo himself for a beautiful maid, Marpessa, daughter of Euenos king of Aitolia,⁵⁹¹ of whom the same was reported as of Oinomaos, both being sons of Ares, namely that he would give his daughter only to one who beat him in a chariot-race. But Euenos always won, decapitated the men he defeated and ornamented his palace with the heads. But Idas carried Marpessa off from the dances which the virgins were performing in honour of Artemis on a meadow; the meadow was called Ortygia, 'quail meadow', like the birthplace of the goddess. Idas had got the swiftest of horses from his father Poseidon, and Euenos pursued him in vain. When the king saw the maid's abductor escape with his booty at the river Lykormos, he killed his own team and plunged into the river, which henceforth was called Euenos, 'well-bridled'.

After that, Marpessa was nearly lost to her strong bridegroom, for one still mightier appeared and tore Idas' bride from him. The maid lamented like the female fulmar in the arms of Apollo.⁵⁹² This happened after Idas had arrived in Messenia with his booty.⁵⁹³ He was not slack, but bent his bow against the god;⁵⁹⁴ it was said that Idas' shots never missed.⁵⁹⁵ But Zeus did not let the shot be discharged; he sent Hermes⁵⁹⁶ or, according to the representation of a vase-painter, his messenger Iris, and ordered the choice to be left to the girl. Marpessa chose her earthly bridegroom, for she was afraid that Apollo would leave her when she grew old. This is how late narrators account for her choice,⁵⁹⁷ not considering any longer how annihilating for a mortal maid Apollo's embrace must seem. Marpessa behaved no otherwise than if it was Death himself who had her in his power. The daughter whom she bore to Idas bore the nickname of Alkyone, 'fulmar',⁵⁹⁸ in memory of the bitter complaints of her mother in the arms of the god. Otherwise she was known as Kleopatra, 'famed for her father', and became the wife of Meleagros.

Wife-stealing was a definite form of marriage, consecrated by the carrying off of Persephone in *primaeval* times, but

particularly usual in Lakonia. In this the Spartan Dioskuroi set the example to all mortals. Allegedly they had as cousins not only a male but a female pair of twins, the daughters of Leukippos, Tyndareos' other half-brother. But perhaps the girls had no mortal father but were called Leukippides in the sense of celestial 'white fillies'. Apollo was thought to be their father,⁵⁹⁹ and they were given names which fitted two phases of the moon, Phoibe, 'the pure' and Hilaeira, 'the serene', appropriate respectively to the new and the full moon. Phoibe is said also to have been priestess of Athene, Hilaeira of Artemis.⁶⁰⁰ Later they possessed their shrine in Sparta, near the house which was held to be the sacred dwelling of the Dioskuroi.⁶⁰¹ The Leukippides were carried off from the sacred precinct of Aphrodite, where they were playing with their companions when Kastor and Polydeukes lifted them on to the chariot. According to the representation of an Attic vase-painter, the goddess of love and Zeus were present and approved the rape, by which two divine pairs concluded a marriage after the Spartan fashion.

This started the enmity between the two divine pairs of brothers. The Leukippides, the story goes,⁶⁰² were originally betrothed to their Messenian cousins under an oath; but the Dioskuroi bribed Leukippos with larger presents so that they might carry off their cousins. Idas and Lynkeus pursued the kidnappers, caught up with them at Aphareus' tomb, and so the story came to its tragical end. According to the older tellers of the tale,⁶⁰³ the enmity began otherwise. The four cousins made a raid in common on the territory of the Arkadians, which marched with theirs to the north, Kastor and Polydeukes coming from Lakonia, Idas and Lynkeus from Messenia, to steal cattle. They returned with abundant booty and entrusted the division of it to Idas. He quartered a cow and made the proposal that whoever could eat his quarter first should have half the spoil, and the next to finish should take the other half. Thereupon the gigantic Idas swallowed first his own quarter and then also that of Lynkeus, and thus the

Messenian brothers drove home the whole of the captured herd; they had played a foul trick on the Dioskuroi.

The sons of Leda took part also in many other adventures, never separating from one another, Kastor as a horsemaster, Polydeukes as a boxer.⁶⁰⁴ We shall meet them again on the voyage of the Argonauts. But the picture of the Tindarids is not complete unless there stands between them the shining figure of a woman, their beautiful sister or actually the great goddess, the Mother of all the gods. Rock-carvings at the town of Akrai in Sicily testify to the service of the Dioskuroi to the great Mother, Rhea-Kybele. They served their sister Helen in setting her free from the fastness of Aphidna in Attica. This belongs to the history of Theseus, who carried off the daughter of Zeus. The end of the story of the enmity between the cousins and at the same time of the earthly life of the Tindarids⁶⁰⁵ came much later, after the marriage of Peleus and Thetis.

Paris had already set out, encouraged and protected by Aphrodite and accompanied by Aineias, the son of the goddess, to carry off Helen anew. Tyndareos was no longer king of Sparta, but his son-in-law Menelaos. He carelessly enough, soon left his beautiful wife alone with the Asiatic guests. Paris and Aineias, on arrival in Lakonia, first visited the Dioskuroi, the ever-ready guardians of their sister. This was the will of Zeus, who himself no doubt brought it to pass that the brothers should be got away from all that was happening in Sparta and Lakonia. At the feast which was given to receive the guests Idas and Lynkeus were also present. They cracked their rude jests and spoke of the marriage by capture of the Dioskuroi as if they had undertaken it merely to avoid having to pay Leukippos any dowry for his daughters.

'Very well,' replied the Tindarids, 'we will make up for it now, and give him a rich present of fine cattle.' And off they went, to get the herds of Idas and Lynkeus from Messenia. Polydeukes went ahead to drive off the cattle, while Kastor hid in a hollow oak to ambush their cousins, who they guessed

would come after them. They had left their sister unprotected and handed over to the seductive arts of the Trojan prince, who in her brothers' absence attained his end.

The Messenian twins also did not stay long at the feast. Lynkeus hurried homewards up Taygetos, which divides Lakonia from Messenia. From the summit his all-penetrating vision caught sight of Kastor where he lurked in the tree. He told his brother, and Idas took Kastor unawares and speared him. After his murder the cousins took to flight, but Polydeukes was in the neighbourhood (in one version of the story, he too was hidden in the oak) and pursued them both. He caught up with them at Aphareus' tomb, and there the end came. The Messenians tore their father's headstone out of the earth; Polydeukes' spear gave Lynkeus his death-wound, but the gravestone was flung at and struck him, and after the stone came Idas while he was still stunned. But Zeus hurled his thunderbolt between the two and smote down the giant.

There, with none to lament them, the bodies of Aphareus' sons burned. Polydeukes ran to his brother and found him at the last gasp. He raised his voice to Zeus and besought his father that he might die also. Zeus approached him and said,⁶⁰⁶ 'Thou art my son; this man thy mother's husband begat on her afterwards with mortal seed when that hero embraced her.' And he gave Polydeukes his choice, either to live henceforth on Olympos or to pass one day under the earth with his brother, the next with Kastor in the celestial palace with the gods. What Polydeukes chose was to share light and darkness too, for ever. And so they both dwell for one day with Zeus, the next in their hero-grave at Therapne, across the Eurotas from Sparta, where also a shrine was built for Helen. They inhabit⁶⁰⁷ their dark subterranean mansion when they do not enjoy the light of heaven.

It was told⁶⁰⁸ and also believed that they live in heaven as bright stars, and they were recognised⁶⁰⁹ in the constellation of the Twins. A star frequently decorates the crown of their *piles*; often it is even encircled by the moon, as if the two

Dioskuroi represented the two hemispheres of the sky, or at least as if their round caps did so.⁶¹⁰ Certainly at all times they became for their worshippers more than other heroes; they were deities of the heavens, setting as the stars do, yet confined to no grave, but swift riders, who course through the air from above and intervene wherever men in distress invoke them, as helpers and deliverers in the emergencies of the battlefield, but still more often in the perils of the sea.

If they bring aid to a ship in danger during the winter gales, they do not appear as horsemen, but as the gods of earlier days often revealed themselves, in the shape of winged celestial beings. The mariners, so it is told us,⁶¹¹ cry and pray to the sons of great Zeus with sacrifice of white lambs, as they take their stand on the aftermost stern, which the great wind and the wave of the sea have flooded; and they at once appear, flashing through the air on their speedy wings, and straightway they make the blasts of the cruel winds to cease and lay the waves of the foam-white brine on the seas, fair omens to bring surcease of toil. And the mariners rejoice to see them, for they have rest from their grievous labour.

CHAPTER XII

Meleagros and Atalante

LEDA'S SISTER, or rather she who of all the Aitolians was worthiest to pass for a sister of the primaeval woman,⁶¹² Althaia, took her name from the mallow which grows in the swamps. Her husband was Oineus, king of Kalydon, who was named from wine, *oinos*. Kings with names like these had traits very reminiscent of the underworld, particularly Oinomaos, who decorated his palace with the severed heads of Hippodameia's suitors. It is told of Oinopion, king of Chios, who made the hunter Orion drunk and then blinded him,⁶¹³ that he hid underground in a bronze chamber. He was accounted also a son of Dionysos,⁶¹⁴ or else of a notable toss-pot called Oinomaos.⁶¹⁵ Oineus had none of these traits, but he had a brother called Agrios, 'the wild', of whom it was told⁶¹⁶ that he afterwards drove Oineus out; and it was said of Oineus himself that he killed his own son Toxeus, 'the bow-man', because he neglected his father's vineyard and leaped over its ditches.

According to one of the genealogies,⁶¹⁷ Oineus was descended from Aitolos, eponym of the Aitolians. He in turn was accounted a son of Endymion by a fountain-nymph,⁶¹⁸ though elsewhere we hear only of the loves of Endymion and Selene. The love of the moon-goddess for a primaeval being seems to be a very old account of the origin of the human race. According to another genealogy,⁶¹⁹ Oineus was descended from Deukalion, whose son Orestheus was Oineus' grandfather. Orestheus, 'mountain-man', possessed a bitch of which it was told that she brought forth a stick. Orestheus buried the stick and it soon was made clear that it was the first grape-vine. Therefore the bitch could be no other than the hound of heaven, Sirius, which ripens the vine. Orestheus' son (Orestheus was not called Mountain-man to denote that he

lived inside the mountains but probably because he, with his bitch, lived the life of a hunter) was named Phytios, 'planter', and his son in turn was Oineus.

According to other narrators,⁶²⁰ wine was not known to men until the reign of king Oineus. A he-goat repeatedly disappeared from his flocks for a while and seemed to be sated when it returned. The goatherd went after it, and found the he-goat at a grape-vine, the sweet fruit of which it was devouring. The name of the goatherd is traditionally Orista,⁶²¹ a malformation of Orestheus or Orestes; he is also called Staphylos, and allegedly the grape-cluster is called *staphyle* after him.⁶²² Oineus made wine from the grapes and called it by his own name. The water that was mixed with wine for the first time was drawn from the river Acheloos, and the poets never forgot this.⁶²³

But who had taught Oineus how to use the intoxicating drink aright? The tale is told⁶²⁴ that Dionysos had entered the king's house, not to visit him, but Queen Althaia. Oineus pretended not to notice the god's intentions, and left the city to make a sacrifice outside it. In Athens the same thing was the custom; the Queen, the wife of that archon who bore the epithet of King, separated herself from her husband while she awaited the visit of Dionysos. The grape-vine and the instructions what to do with it and with wine were the gift of the grateful deity to Oineus. That the goat which devoured the vine was sacrificed is not told us in these stories, but we know that it was from many traditions concerning the religion of Dionysos.

From her *affaire* with Dionysos, Althaia, it is said, had a daughter, Deianeira, who to judge by her name should be a maiden hostile to men, and a dangerous wife; we shall hear more of her in the history of Herakles. Althaia bore Oineus several sons,⁶²⁵ and it was said of the most famous of them that his father was Ares, whom Althaia had entertained on the same night as Oineus; for it was not easy to believe that Meleagros was of other than divine origin.⁶²⁶ From his birth onwards

another piece of wood was to play a part in the House of Oineus, but it was very different from the stick of which wine was the blessed gift.

The story goes⁶²⁷ that the three Moirai appeared at the birth of Meleagros. They entered the chamber in which Althaia had been delivered of her son. The first of them, Klotho, sang, 'He shall become a man of noble spirit'; Lachesis, the second, sang of the hero he was to become; Atropos, the third, gazed into the fire on the hearth, in which a log was burning, and sang: 'He shall live as long as the brand is not wholly consumed.' Thereupon Althaia sprang out of bed, caught the brand off the fire, and hid it in a chest,⁶²⁸ no one knew where, in the palace. But the boy got the name Meleagros, which means one whose thoughts are on hunting, in the oldest Greek speech, which did not yet run its vowels together.

In Oineus' kingdom the divine huntress Artemis was a great deity. Yet Oineus, the Wine-man, had once forgotten her.⁶²⁹ We are told⁶³⁰ that on the occasion of a harvest-festival he entertained all the gods, but had offered no beast to her at the great sacrificial feast. He had done himself great harm, for the goddess was angered and let loose a wild boar in the king's fertile fields. The beast was so huge⁶³¹ that no single hunter, not even Meleagros, could put an end to it. Men must be assembled from many cities, and even so the boar sent many of them to the funeral pyre. At last Artemis made the hunters fight with one another, and thus the Kalydonian hunt became only the beginning of the punishment which the goddess inflicted on the House of Oineus.

To hunt the boar there came to Kalydon before all others Meleagros' uncles, Althaia's brothers, from Pleuron, the nearby city of the Kuretes. In Aitolia these formed an entire people, whereas in Crete none but three divine youths, who had danced their war-dance around the infant Zeus, bore the name of Kuretes.⁶³² It is even said that heroes from all over Greece came to the Kalydonian hunt.⁶³³ No one stayed at home of all the heroes then alive, with the sole exception of

Herakles, who had his labours to attend to; it was said later⁶³⁴ that he was then serving Omphale. The Dioskuroi, Kastor and Polydeukes, came with their Messenian cousins Idas and Lynkeus; Theseus came from Athens, Iphikles, Herakles' half-brother, from Thebes, Jason, Admetos, Peirithoos, Peleus and his father-in-law Eurytion arrived from Thessaly, Telamon from Salamis, Amphiaraos from Argos, Ankaïos and Atalante from Arkadia, and others as well. The two last named however were those who brought bane with them.

Ankaïos brought it for himself. To judge by his name, he was a wrestler who broke his opponent's ribs in his powerful embrace; along with another of the same name he had taken part in the voyage of the Argonauts. The story was told of the other Ankaïos⁶³⁵ that he had been forewarned that he should never drink the juice of his vineyard. At that time he was at home in Samos, had already planted a vineyard, and the first vintage was just being gathered. He sent for the soothsayer, pressed out with his hand the juice of a bunch of grapes into his cup, and lifted it to his lips. The soothsayer then uttered the famous adage, 'Much lies between the cup and the edge of the lip.' Ankaïos' lips were not yet moistened when a shout was raised that a boar was laying his vineyard waste. He set down the cup with the grape juice, rushed off to dispatch the boar, and was killed by it. The Arkadian Ankaïos too seems to have had a bad omen, for his arms were hidden at home.⁶³⁶ He set out in a bearskin, armed only with a double axe, and met his death at the tusches of the Kalydonian boar. Bleeding from many wounds⁶³⁷ he lay under the feet of the gigantic beast. On Roman sarcophagi the double axe is carried at the Kalydonian hunt by the death-god, under whose sign this adventure assuredly stood.

The participation in the adventure of the beautiful huntress Atalante was to be fatal to Meleagros and the House of Oineus. In her person Artemis herself likewise appeared at the boar-hunt, for surely no one who did not belong to her could have laid it low. Even as a spoil it remained her property. Atalante

was anything but an ordinary mortal. Later no one knew where she was buried; an epigrammatist says merely that it was 'apart'.⁶³⁸ Rather was there a story that she lived forever in the shape of a beast, a lioness, even as Artemis was 'a lion unto women'.⁶³⁹ As her father there was named either Iasios,⁶⁴⁰ also called Iasion,⁶⁴¹ the Cretan hunter,⁶⁴² or else Schoineus,⁶⁴³ 'the man of rushes'; for Atalante was not confined to any particular stretch of country, or at most to those frequented by Artemis. Now her haunts, besides mountains, were swamps. A swamp surrounds Kalydon, and there were swamps everywhere in the place where Schoineus founded a city with the name Schoinus, 'rush-town'.⁶⁴⁴

It was said that⁶⁴⁵ Atalante's father had expected a son before she was born, and that when the baby proved to be a girl, he did not perceive that his daughter was as good as a son, but had her exposed on the hill Parthenion, according to one story.⁶⁴⁶ A she-bear then adopted the child; this was appropriate to the circle of Artemis,⁶⁴⁷ where the great goddess and her little doubles were considered to be she-bears and were called so. Hunters found the child and brought her up. According to another story, she left her father's house of her own accord, to avoid being forced into marriage,⁶⁴⁸ and retired to the wilderness, where she hunted alone. Once she had an experience similar to that of Artemis, who was pursued by the two gigantic boys, sons of Aloeus;⁶⁴⁹ Atalante was attacked by two centaurs, and killed them both with her arrows.⁶⁵⁰

Still, she was not spared by love, as even Artemis was not quite spared.⁶⁵¹ The fair-haired huntress' beauty⁶⁵² attracted suitors after her even into the woods,⁶⁵³ although she had imposed a severe condition. Atalante was the best runner in the world, and she offered to race her followers for marriage or death. She gave the suitor a start and promised to yield to him if he could get to the goal before her; otherwise she had the right to kill him with her arrows when she caught up with him.⁶⁵⁴ It is not recorded how many men she shot; she stripped

naked, as young men did, for the race, and no one could withstand the temptation.⁶⁵⁵ But Hippomenes also was beautiful, a descendant of Poseidon, like Hippolytos, and with a similar name; 'impetuosity of the stallion' is what it means, as Artemis' love was 'stallion let loose'. Hippomenes, who was cunning, ran on, but he had three golden apples in his hand, and that decided the race.

The golden apples came from Dionysos' garland, and Aphrodite brought them to the young man;⁶⁵⁶ there shone an irresistible love-magic from them.⁶⁵⁷ When Atalante caught sight of them, she was seized with amorous madness.⁶⁵⁸ Hippomenes threw the golden apples at her feet. Was she really charmed with their sheen, like a little girl? She snatched at them, picked them up, and her bridegroom had by that time reached the goal. Atalante followed him into a dark grove,⁶⁵⁹ in which stood a hidden forest sanctuary, like that in the *Lucus Nemorensis* on the Lake of Nemi, to which Artemis carried off her beloved Hippolytos and where the hunters, in later times, used to bring her a branch with the apples hanging on it as an offering.⁶⁶⁰ The shrine in which Atalante was united to Hippomenes belonged to the Great Mother of the Gods,⁶⁶¹ who, as we know, was also called the Great Artemis.⁶⁶² She, it is alleged, punished the two lovers by turning them into a lion and lioness and harnessing them to her car; a late story, but one which still gives the lovers immortality, for they everlastingly take part in the triumphal progress of the Mother of the Gods. It is well known, so people declared in those times, that lions live chastely with each other and mate only with leopards, so by their transformation Hippomenes and Atalante were doomed to everlasting chastity.⁶⁶³

Earlier, the tale was told of another wooing of Atalante, the wooing by her cousin Melanion.⁶⁶⁴ He has even been confused with Hippomenes,⁶⁶⁵ and perhaps not without reason. It is the same love-story, only the divine maid in this version has from the beginning a more kindly aspect. The young man's name seems also to be older than Hippomenes or Hippolytos;

it is sometimes written Melanion, sometimes Meilanion, and so cannot be certainly translated. Children in Athens were told, in the time of Aristophanes, how⁶⁶⁶

'Once on a time there was a lad,
Melanion was his name,
He didn't want to marry,
So to the wilds he came,
And lived among the mountains,
And hunted after hares,
And kept a dog besides,
And plaited cunning snares,
And home again he wouldn't go.'

The continuation of the story was probably that he caught sight of Atalante in the mountains, and courted her with the present of a fawn.⁶⁶⁷ He courted her long; his wooing was famous for its length. In this version too he had rivals,⁶⁶⁸ but he won, for he laboured longest for the maid, enduring all the hardships of a hunter's life.⁶⁶⁹ They could tell of his union with her too,⁶⁷⁰ and could name a son whom Atalante bore to Melanion; his name was Parthenopaios,⁶⁷¹ 'son of the maid', and he went later to Thebes with the Seven.

When Atalante appeared in Kalydon for the hunt, there was much excitement among the men. Oineus entertained the assembled heroes for nine days,⁶⁷² but they would not have a woman with them when they undertook that dangerous chase. It was probably an old sacral custom that the men should go entirely by themselves to hunt. This was the first time that any woman had wanted to take part in their hunting. But Meleagros, as Euripides told the old story on the stage, courted Atalante from the first moment that he set eyes on her,⁶⁷³ and compelled the heroes to begin the hunt on the tenth day.⁶⁷⁴ Ankaïos was one of those who opposed him most, and he fell a victim to the boar. This was not the only ill-luck which happened at that hunt; Peleus accidentally hit his father-in-law Eurytion with his spear, and another hunter beside Ankaïos

was killed by the boar. Finally the greatest disaster took place.

The hunt lasted for six days,⁶⁷⁵ and on the sixth the two together, Atalante and Meleagros, dispatched the boar. She was the first to hit the beast with an arrow, and he gave it the death-blow. Now the flesh was to be divided and a great feast to follow, as was usual among men when they went hunting. The head and hide of the boar belonged to him who had dispatched it,⁶⁷⁶ but Meleagros gave these parts to Atalante. This was more than his uncles, Althaia's brothers, could endure. They took their stand on the rights of the kin which they represented.⁶⁷⁷ A quarrel broke out therefore; the spoils were torn from Atalante, the quarrel became a fight and Meleagros killed his uncles. Word was brought to Althaia that her brothers had been laid low by her son and that the strange girl was in triumphant possession of the spoils.

The fight between Meleagros and his mother's brothers was early portrayed. A story was told of a war between the Aitolians of Kalydon and the Kuretes of Pleuron,⁶⁷⁸ and the more the teller of it was at the same time an epic poet, the more he forgot Atalante as the origin of the quarrel and said nothing of the brand, not yet burned, which was in the possession of Althaia, the woman of Pleuron. As we hear the tale in the 'Iliad' from old Phoinix,⁶⁷⁹ the angry mother dropped on her knees on the ground, her bosom wet with her flood of tears, smote the earth with her hands and called on the rulers of the underworld, Hades and Persephone, thus wishing the death of her own son.

When Meleagros heard of this, the epic poet continues the story,⁶⁸⁰ he was enraged at his mother, retired from the war, and lay beside his wife, the beautiful Kleopatra, daughter of Idas and Marpessa. Even in this version, which knows nothing of Atalante and the brand, he was susceptible to womanly charms. In vain did the elders of Kalydon⁶⁸¹ entreat him to go forth against the enemy, in vain did his father, his mother and his brethren do the same. He let the

Kuretes break into the city and force their way even to his house. Not until their stones were falling on the roof of the bedchamber in which Meleagros lay beside the fair Kleopatra, and his wife besought him with tears to preserve her from the degradation of slavery, did he put on his armour and drive the enemy from the town.

But the Erinyes in Erebos had heard the mother's curse.⁶⁸² Apollo with his deadly arrows met the hero in the battle.⁶⁸³ The god's hand made the magic power of the brand of no avail and superfluous. Originally it was not so; thus it was told from time immemorial and thus an old tragedian proclaimed it from the stage,⁶⁸⁴ 'For he escaped not the chill of death, but the swift flame devoured him when the brand was destroyed by his dread mother's evil contriving.' That was what Althaia had done; she had taken the meticulously guarded brand out of the chest and thrown it into the fire on the hearth. As it fell to ashes, Meleagros collapsed on the battlefield,⁶⁸⁵ or, in the oldest version,⁶⁸⁶ while he was still jointing the boar, beside the corpses of his mother's brothers.

The women of Kalydon ceaselessly lamented the hero who died in his prime. In their endless lamentations they turned into the birds which men called *meleagrides*, otherwise known as guinea-fowl.⁶⁸⁷ Where a man who had died young is seen on an Attic gravestone as a dreamy hunter, in a certain way Meleagros is still there; his story is recalled to memory, not in its details but as the tale of an early, undeserved death. In the underworld he was the only one before whose ghost even Herakles was afraid,⁶⁸⁸ and when Meleagros tearfully told the story of the Kalydonian hunt, tears came for the first and only time to the eyes of the greatest of the heroes, the son of Zeus and of Alkmene.

BOOK TWO

Herakles

THE HERO AMONG THE GODS WAS DIONYSOS. His conception and birth in the house of king Kadmos of Thebes as the son of Zeus and the princess Semele were the true conception and birth of a hero. They might have led to a heroic life-history if Dionysos had not been after all a god, a god who in this fashion entered, through his mother, into a more intimate relation with mortals than all other deities, Asklepios excepted. This birth, moreover, was held by many to be but one of three, coming between his first birth from Persephone and his third from the thigh of Zeus, and therefore he was known among the informed as 'the thrice-born'.⁶⁸⁹ These other births made him much greater than a hero. As a god he was born of Persephone, and he was raised to the status of a new god by Zeus himself. Such events were unique in the history of the gods.

In the case of Herakles there happened something only half similar. He entered upon mortal life, begotten by Zeus upon a mortal mother. He had to pass through a long course on earth before he could celebrate his entry into Olympos. Dark shadows fell upon him before his final glory. Those Greeks were probably best advised who, like the inhabitants of the island of Kos,⁶⁹⁰ burned a sheep at evening as a hero's offering and next morning sacrificed a bull to him as to a god. According to the inscriptions and traces of sacrifices that have been found in the excavation of his shrine on Thasos, the inhabitants of that other great island behaved in much the same way. Herodotos the historian believed that he had met the same god there as he had become acquainted with in Phoenicia among the Tyrians.⁶⁹¹ Therefore he strongly approved of the twofold manner of sacrifice. But he can hardly have been right when he tried to separate the god and the hero, as if they were different

persons; at that rate we should have to distinguish between Dionysos son of Persephone and Dionysos son of Semele. Here again we must recognise the one in the other.

The Sikyonians, it is alleged,⁶⁹² at first offered sacrifice only to the hero; but they soon learned better and brought him both kinds of offering. The information that Herakles was a god they owed to one who was in a position to decide, that Phaistos who came to them as a stranger, probably from Crete, and becoming king in Sikyon, journeyed to the great southern island and took over the sovereignty there.⁶⁹³ He was supposedly a son or a grandson of Herakles himself as one of the Idaean Daktyls, who were likewise of Cretan origin. An account was given also of another descendant of Herakles as a Daktylos Idaios in Crete, one Klymenos of the Cretan town Kydonia.⁶⁹⁴ And it was as a Daktyl, not as the son of Zeus and Alkmene, that, so it is said,⁶⁹⁵ he came from Crete and, with his brothers, originated the first race at Olympia, an ancient site of the cult of Hera.

In this capacity, as a Daktylos, he was worshipped by the Tyrians, the Ionians in Asia Minor,⁶⁹⁶ the Koans and certainly also by the Thasians. Tradition has it⁶⁹⁷ that the first half of the Koan rites honoured Herakles the Daktylos. It also was fitting for a Daktylos that he was served on Kos as a deity of marriage.⁶⁹⁸ The peculiarities of a Daktylos marked the beginning of the road which he trod. He was accounted one of the brotherhood of beings of *primaeval* days, sprung from the earth and phallic, as one of the sons of the Mother of the Gods, but a particular one, a single, incomparable divine servant of a goddess. It was, however, not quite right when the poet Onomakritos⁶⁹⁹ made him out to be a Daktylic servant of Demeter. That described rather the beginning of the life-story of Oidipus, a life-story which, as we know, ended in a sacred precinct of Demeter and in the underworld. Herakles exalted himself to the son-ship of Zeus by his service to Hera, the great goddess of marriage.

The divinity of this servant of a goddess is attested by the

rites which on Kos and in Sikyon form a unity although in two phases. His connection with Hera is shown, not only by his office as a god of marriage on Kos, but also by his very name, Herakles, with its obvious meaning 'he to whom Hera gave glory'. How this glory became his portion is to be told in what follows. He had also brought divinity with him into the tales of the son of Zeus and Alkmene, as which the whole world was to know him. The wise poet who styled him *heros theos*, 'the god-hero' was certainly right.⁷⁰⁰ Probably hero-tales were told also of other, earlier gods, but none was so manifestly the god among the heroes as Herakles. '

CHAPTER I

The Theban Tales

I

STORIES OF HERAKLES' ANCESTRY

IT IS PERHAPS no great exaggeration to say⁷⁰¹ that the Thebans honoured no other god with so many processions and sacrifices as Herakles. They were very proud that not only Dionysos but Herakles too had been born among them. This happened, so the genealogists reckoned, in the reign of Kreon the uncle of Oidipus. A Theban hero, like Oidipus, was also Amphitryon, the earthly father of Herakles; and Alkmene, mother of the son of Zeus, was also worshipped as a Boiotian heroine. The genealogists made them both descended from Perseus, since Herakles was otherwise known as a Tirynthian hero and belonging to the kingdom of Argos and Mycenae.

The sons of Perseus ruled over three strongholds in the land of Argos, Mycenae, Tiryns and Midea. One of these sons was named Alkaios or Alkeus. His son was the above-named Amphitryon, again according to the genealogists. Herakles is said to have been known as Alkeides from his grandfather, but the name alludes rather to the valour, *alké*, of the hero. Some also claimed to know that Herakles himself had been earlier called Alkaios,⁷⁰² or simply Alkeides,⁷⁰³ but was later renamed by the Delphic oracle.⁷⁰⁴ His mother Alkmene had likewise the word 'valour' in her name. Elektryon is given as her father, a second son of Perseus, and therefore she was spoken of as 'the maid of Midea' after the third family stronghold of the Perseids.⁷⁰⁵ Her son was called 'the Tirynthian' after the fortified city of Tiryns.⁷⁰⁶ It is said that her husband Amphitryon did not remove from Tiryns to Thebes until after the birth of Herakles.⁷⁰⁷ This occurred after the death of

Elektryon. Then the third son of Perseus, Sthenelos, acquired the kingship over Mycenae and Tiryns, and left that of Midea to Pelops' sons Atreus and Thyestes. After Sthenelos, his son Eurystheus became king of Mycenae and Tiryns,⁷⁰⁸ thus being himself also a Tirynthian and overlord of Herakles,⁷⁰⁹ even if, as was later generally alleged, the latter was born in Thebes. The events which led to the birth of the hero, however, merely began in the realm of the sons of Perseus.

Before the Greek mainland, and to the west, opposite the district of Akarnania, lie the islands of the Taphians or Teleboans, 'those whose cry is heard afar'. Over them ruled king Pterelaos. By grace of Poseidon he could not be conquered so long as he remained in possession of a golden hair.⁷¹⁰ The sea-god was his grandfather, and his great-grandfather on the mother's side was Mestor, a son of Perseus. The six sons of Pterelaos, who were savage pirates,⁷¹¹ on one occasion appeared before Mycenae and demanded the kingship from Elektryon, who had eight sons beside his daughter Alkmene. Thus he rejected the offspring of his brother Mestor. Thereupon they drove off his cattle, and as so often in heroic times, a fight over the cows started. In this there fell seven of the sons of Elektryon (the eighth was too small) and five sons of Pterelaos. The remaining Taphians retired to their ships, which they had lying off the west coast of the Peloponnesos. They left the cattle with the king of Elis, Polyxenos. Amphitryon bought them back from him. Elektryon had entrusted the kingdom and his daughter to him, his nephew, and was about to set forth himself against the Teleboans, to avenge his sons. But then ensued a fresh misfortune, again in connection with the cows which Amphitryon had ransomed and brought back. The details are not handed down, only that Amphitryon became furiously angry.⁷¹² Or was it pure chance that he hurled his throwing-stick at one of the cows? The stick glanced off the beast's horn, when it struck, and killed Elektryon. Therefore Amphitryon had to undertake the campaign against the Teleboans, and might not touch Alkmene, the bride entrusted to him, until

her seven brothers were avenged. This was the condition which she herself imposed after the death of her father. The conceiving of Herakles, son of the King of the Gods, by this virgin princess, was thus prepared.

But first of all, as those narrators knew who laid the conception and birth in Thebes, Amphitryon must find a new fatherland for himself and for Alkmene. His uncle Sthenelos banished him from the realm⁷¹³ after he had killed Elektryon, whether in anger or by pure mischance. So the young couple came to Thebes, where Kreon purified Amphitryon from the homicide. Alkmene remained his virgin wife as long as his vow of revenge was unfulfilled. But this might not be for some time. Thebes was then plagued by a fox,⁷¹⁴ a dangerous creature which had its earth on Mount Teumessos; and as it ran so fast that it could never be caught, it carried off what it liked from the town. Every month the Thebans exposed a child for it, in order to induce the beast to spare them.⁷¹⁵ Amphitryon also could not have dispatched it, for he was engaged in collecting an army against the Teleboans. So he had recourse to Kephalos, the Attic hero, whose wife Prokris had brought Minos' hound, a gift of Zeus to Europa,⁷¹⁶ from Crete.⁷¹⁷ Just as no one could catch the fox of Teumessos, so nothing could get away from this hound. It followed the fox on the plain of Thebes, and Zeus turned them both into stone. Amphitryon then set off with Kephalos, Panopeus of Phokis, and Heleios, the youngest of the sons of Perseus, against the Taphians. It was their good fortune that Komaitho, daughter of Pterelaos, fell in love with one of the commanders, either Amphitryon or the handsome Kephalos,⁷¹⁸ and robbed her father of the golden hair which made him invincible. With this to help him, Amphitryon succeeded in avenging Alkmene's brothers and so returned to her victorious.

But the wedding-night with his virgin wife, the great-granddaughter of Danae, was not reserved for him. Zeus came to her in the shape of Amphitryon; with a golden goblet in his hand and a necklace like that which he had given to

Europa,⁷¹⁹ the King of the Gods entered her bedchamber.⁷²⁰ She questioned him about his victory over the Teleboans, and the god, in her husband's shape, informed her of how revenge had been achieved; the goblet was the token of it, for it had been a present from Poseidon to the first king of the Taphians.⁷²¹ The marriage was consummated, with Zeus in the place of the mortal victor,⁷²² in a night of which it was told that it was three times as long as ordinary nights. As it was said of the first night when Hermes went stealing that the moon rose twice,⁷²³ so it would seem that she rose three times on that occasion, wherefore Herakles, the fruit of the night of Zeus and Alkmene, was called *triselenos*, the child of the triple moon.⁷²⁴

Whether Amphitryon returned that same night,⁷²⁵ or not till the next,⁷²⁶ Alkmene conceived twins, one son of Zeus and the other of Amphitryon, named Iphikles, 'famed for his strength'. But it is also said that the victor was not received by his wife as he had expected to be, for she said to him, 'You came yesterday, made love to me and told me of your doings',⁷²⁷ and showed him the goblet to prove it. Then Amphitryon realised who had taken his place (they say the seer Teiresias helped him also to read the riddle),⁷²⁸ and did not touch the bride of the god.

2

THE HERO'S BIRTH

It is not easy, as the narrative proceeds, to keep to the old story of how Hera, as Herakles' name implies, made him glorious. But as ancient artists, for instance at Paestum, where the Sele runs into the sea, decked the temple of the Queen of the Gods with the exploits of Herakles, we must, after all, believe that she too could take delight in the hero's deeds. In the traditional accounts it looks as though on nearly every occasion she was his bitterest enemy. This state of things began immediately before the birth of the hero, when Alkmene's time was drawing

near. On the day when she was to bear Herakles, Zeus became the victim of Ate, of infatuation, and proclaimed aloud to all the deities,⁷²⁹ 'Hear me, all ye gods and all ye goddesses, that I may utter what the heart in my bosom bids me. This day Eileithyia of the birth-pains shall bring to the light a manchild who shall bear sway over all that dwell around, being of the blood of those men who spring from me.' But Hera pretended that she did not believe him and induced him to swear 'That verily he shall bear sway over all them that dwell around who this day shall fall between the feet of a woman, being of the blood of those men that are of thy race.' Zeus marked not the deceit of her mind, but swore a great oath. Hera sprang forth and left the peak of Olympos, and came in haste to Argos, where she knew the mighty consort of Sthenelos, son of Perseus, was with child, and the seventh month was come. And she caused the child to come forth, though all untimely, and stayed the childbirth of Alkmene, causing the Eileithyiai to halt. When all this was done, she brought word to Zeus that the man who was to rule over all Argives was born—Eurystheus, son of Sthenelos. Vainly did Zeus catch Ate, the goddess of infatuation, by the hair and fling her far away from Olympos, down to mankind. He could not take back his oath.

It seems that Herakles nevertheless saw the light on that same day, but it was Eurystheus, with his name meaning 'the widely powerful', a name which might have adorned the king of the underworld, and not he, who became great king of that kingdom of Argos and Mycenae, and Herakles remained his vassal, although according to this version he was born in Thebes. Eileithyia sat in the vestibule of the palace in which Alkmene lay in labour.⁷³⁰ With her were the three Moirai, with their knees crossed and their hands firmly folded over them. Then a weasel suddenly ran across,⁷³¹ the startled goddesses lifted their hands high, and what had been fastened became open. Or perhaps it was not a weasel, but the 'weasel-girl', Galinthias or Galanthis (*galé* is a weasel), a playfellow of Alkmene, who thought of this trick for herself. It was she who

ran out from the birth-room to the goddesses in the vestibule, and cried, 'According to the will of Zeus, Alkmene is delivered of a boy, and you have nothing more to do.' The goddesses, astonished, opened their hands, and in that instant Alkmene bore Herakles. Then the goddesses, who had been thus befooled, changed the cunning girl into the creature which, as was long after believed, conceives through its ear and bears through its mouth. Hekate took her as her sacred attendant. Herakles established the cult of Galinthias in his house, and the Thebans yearly sacrificed to her before every festival of the hero. They also alleged⁷³² that the victims of her deception were not goddesses, but wicked witches, who were out-manœuvred by Historis, 'the knowing one', a daughter of Teiresias, with the false report that Alkmene had borne her child. But the weasel, owing to its alleged powers of conceiving through the ear, was to become an allegory for the Virgin Mary.

Herakles was born on the second day of the moon,⁷³³ and after him (a night later, as many declared),⁷³⁴ his twin brother Iphikles. He was a doublet of his brother only in name, a Herakles like him, until the latter became famous not only for his strength but with the help of Hera. There is hardly any story of Iphikles, except that he, as if Zeus had robbed him of understanding, left his home and his parents and gave himself willingly into the service of Eurystheus.⁷³⁵ It is said that later he much regretted this, but we hear nothing further about it. It was not he who was Herakles' favourite companion, but Iolaos, who is said to have been the son of Iphikles, and whom the Thebans honoured no less than the Argives did Perseus.⁷³⁶ As regarded Herakles, Zeus and Hera were in agreement;⁷³⁷ Eurystheus was indeed to have the sovereignty over Tiryns and Mycenae and Herakles to be in his service, until he had accomplished twelve labours for him, but after that the son of Zeus should win the immortality which was due to him after his deeds.

But the story still departs very far from this. There is also the

tale that Alkmene, through fear of Hera's jealousy, exposed the little Herakles immediately after his birth, on a spot afterwards known as the Plain of Herakles.⁷³⁸ Pallas Athene and Hera passed that way, ostensibly by accident, but it was not unintentional on the part of the virginal goddess, with whom the *alké*, the warlike courage, of Alkmene's son allied him closely. She expressed her admiration for the sturdy child and persuaded Hera to offer him her breast. However, he sucked at it so strongly that the goddess could not bear the pain and threw the baby from her; but the milk of the Queen of the Gods had already made him immortal. Athene, well content, brought the child back to his mother. According to another account,⁷³⁹ however, what happened was that while Hera was asleep, Hermes brought the baby Herakles to her celestial abode and put him to her breast, and when she cast him from her in pain and her milk continued to flow, the Milky Way came into being.

Such were the events in heaven, but in the palace of Amphytryon other things were happening. According to an old story,⁷⁴⁰ it was immediately after the twins were born; according to a later one, not till they were both ten months old.⁷⁴¹ The picture of a divine child between two serpents may have been long familiar to the Thebans, who worshipped the Kabeiroi, although not represented as a first exploit of a hero as in the following tale. The door of Alkmene's chamber, in which the newborn children lay in their saffron-dyed swaddling-bands, stood open. In crept two serpents, sent by the Queen of the Gods, and with gaping jaws threatened to devour the babes. But he who was to reach renown through Hera, the son of Zeus, lifted his head and tried himself in fight for the first time. With his two hands he seized the two serpents and strangled them until the life left their terrible bodies. The women who were the helpers at Alkmene's childbed were paralysed with fear, but the mother sprang up and would herself repel the monsters' violence. The Kadmeians ran up armed, Amphytryon, sword in hand, first of them all; but he halted,

struck still with surprise, horror and joy, when he saw the unheard-of daring and strength of the child. He at once sent for Zeus' distinguished seer, the soothsayer Teiresias, from the near-by palace, and he revealed to him and to all the people the future destiny of the boy, the many unruly beasts he was to slay by land and sea, how he was to fight by the side of the gods against the Giants, and what reward was to be his in the end.

Nothing would be easier than to go on here with the list of Herakles' instructors, as the later tellers of the story used to do,⁷⁴² alleging that he learned from Amphytryon how to drive a chariot, archery from Eurytos, fighting with weapons from Kastor, wrestling from Autolykos, and so on, as if Herakles had been no more than a prince, of divine origin indeed but not a divine being, not one who resembled other heroes only in appearance, since they were never exalted to Olympos, but like Oidipus passed into a grave in the bosom of Mother Earth. But even in the tales of his life as Amphytryon's son and later as son-in-law of Kreon, the outbreaks of his superhumanly savage nature could not be kept secret.

He was to learn his letters from Linos, of whom it was said that he was the first to introduce them into Greece. Of this Linos everyone knew that he was a son of Apollo,⁷⁴³ or of the Muse Urania,⁷⁴⁴ and that he died young by violence, and that therefore all singers and harp-players lamented for him at banquet or at dance.⁷⁴⁵ One version of his violent death was that Kadmos killed him, because he, Kadmos, wanted to be the first to introduce writing among the Hellenes.⁷⁴⁶ According to another and later account, Linos had to teach Herakles the art of writing and of harp-playing, and went so far as to chastise the unteachable hero-child.⁷⁴⁷ A vase-painter has sketched the scene for us; the young hero is breaking the chair on which he had sat over his teacher's head. For that reason, we are told further,⁷⁴⁸ Amphytryon sent him out to the pastures; there among the herdsmen he grew, till at eighteen he was four cubits tall. The fire of his eyes revealed his divine

nature. He never missed his mark when he shot with his bow or hurled his spear. A great piece of roast meat and a basketful of black bread was his daily ration.⁷⁴⁹ He lived in the open air and slept out-of-doors.⁷⁵⁰ But this already refers to the life of the hero, in his wanderings, not among the herdsmen on Kithairon, where that may have been simply the most natural thing to do.

In the shrine of Apollo Ismenios in Thebes there was shown a tripod, said to have been dedicated by Amphitryon⁷⁵¹ in commemoration of his son Alkaios⁷⁵² having held the post of the laurel-crowned young priest, an annual office in Thebes. The strife of Herakles with his brother for his Delphic tripod, on the other hand, is preserved in art-monuments much older than this tale. This fraternal quarrel, however, came much later in the course of the hero's life and will be told then. We have now to pass to the tales of events in his youth, in Thebes or in the mountains around it. There he was to accomplish his first heroic deed and display his Daktylic nature for the first time.

3

THE TALES OF HIS YOUTH

Kithairon, on the foothills of which the Theban herdsmen pastured their beasts, was the scene of many stories of gods and heroes. It was there that Zeus and Hera met for their sacred wedding; there Semele's sisters roamed after Dionysos; there Amphion and Zethos, the baby Oidipus too, were exposed; there Antiope and the old, suffering Oidipus wandered. Between Kithairon and the other mountain of the gods in Boiotia, Helikon, lay the town of Thespiiai, where later Herakles, we are assured,⁷⁵³ possessed a very old-fashioned sanctuary as Idaios Daktylos. In the days when the young hero was living with the herdsmen, king Thespios bore rule there. The tradition is uncertain whether the lion which ravaged his herds and those of Amphitryon came from Kithairon⁷⁵⁴ or



18 HERAKLES SUCKLED BY HERA



19 THE INFANT HERAKLES STRANGLING THE SERPENTS



20 HERAKLES ESCORTED TO SCHOOL



21 HERAKLES AT SCHOOL

Helikon.⁷⁵⁵ In historical times there were no more lions there; Herakles was to free the land from that scourge.

He went about unarmed between the mountains; but concerning his famous club, without which posterity can hardly conceive him, tradition has it⁷⁵⁶ that he pulled it out of the ground on Helikon, a wild olive, roots and all. Herdsmen often carried such club-like sticks as they moved around; these served them as the simplest kind of weapons for hunting, no less than the well-known curved shepherd's staff which they threw at hares. Herakles dedicated this his first club, or his second or his third, for here again there are several traditions,⁷⁵⁷ to Hermes Polygyios, or more correctly Polygyios, 'of the many limbs', a sign that so mighty a staff was especially suitable to a Daktylic being such as Hermes was when he bore that epithet.

Herakles set out against the lion and arrived at king Theseios' house. The king received him hospitably and gladly, and wished to have grandchildren by the hero, as Autolykos had by Sisyphos.⁷⁵⁸ He had fifty daughters and he caused them all, one after another, to sleep with his guest. One only resisted the hero, and so was all the more closely attached to him. The others bore sons, one or two of them even twins,⁷⁵⁹ (these children of Herakles later colonised the island of Sardinia),⁷⁶⁰ but she, having resisted him, became his priestess for life,⁷⁶¹ the first of the virgin priestesses in the temple of Herakles at Thespiiai, and virgin priestesses are always the wives of the god they serve. Afterwards, he also dispatched the lion, and covered his head and shoulders with its hide;⁷⁶² we know that characteristic costume, concerning which, it is true, there is another tradition,⁷⁶³ that it was taken from the Nemean lion. But that is another story, of which we shall hear later.

From his adventures between Kithairon and Helikon, Herakles turned back to Thebes. He was now eighteen years old—so the later narrators made out, hardly being able any longer to conceive of an ageless hero of early days,⁷⁶⁴ and provided with his club and his lion-skin. On the way he fell in

with ambassadors⁷⁶⁵ coming from the Boiotian city of Orchomenos, a Minyan town, ruled at that time by king Erginos. Years before, Thebans had killed his father, in anger over some trifle, at the festival of Poseidon at Onchestos.⁷⁶⁶ The duty of revenge devolving on Erginos, he besieged the Thebans and laid a heavy tribute on them; they were to send the Minyans a hundred cows a year for twenty years. These twenty years were not yet up; Thebes was quite defenceless,⁷⁶⁷ and the feeble Kreon was ruling there. The ambassadors were coming to collect the tribute when Herakles met them, and their attitude certainly was not conciliatory.

How the meeting between them and the young hero went off is not told us, but only the result of it; Herakles cut off their noses and ears, hung them around their necks and sent that tribute to Erginos. Thereupon the Minyans came again from Orchomenos to wreak vengeance; Herakles went out single-handed against their host, or so the oldest form of the story says.⁷⁶⁸ Provided with arms by Pallas Athene,⁷⁶⁹ he defeated the Minyans and freed Thebes. In return, Kreon gave him his daughter Megara to wife,⁷⁷⁰ and Herakles brought her home to the sound of flutes,⁷⁷¹ to Amphytryon's palace. No one could guess how horribly it was to end. Kreon handed over the sovereignty of Thebes to him.⁷⁷²

Amphytryon, according to one version,⁷⁷³ had fallen in the battle against the advancing Minyans, but according to another he lived in his palace with Megara and his grandchildren, after the hero left them.⁷⁷⁴ The Thebans later on did him honour in his hero-tomb, together with Iolaos,⁷⁷⁵ son of Iphikles, his grandson and Herakles' favourite; it was he who, according to another tradition, led the fifty sons of Herakles to Sardinia. The remains of his palace at Thebes, which the architect-heroes Agamedes and Trophonios, sons of Erginos, built for him, were also shown.⁷⁷⁶ It was even thought that Alkmene's marriage-chamber could still be made out in the ruins. Indeed, the Boiotians claimed also to possess the tomb of Alkmene at Haliartos, until the Spartans, having captured

the Kadmeia, opened it and transported its modest contents, including a tablet with Mycenaean characters on it, to their own city.⁷⁷⁷ These assuredly were old hero-tombs of Mycenaean date which the Thebans and their neighbours ascribed to the relatives of Herakles.

But the tellers of the tale had somehow to get Herakles to Tiryns, after attaching him by so many ties to Thebes; he must come to the Mycenaean kingdom where he was king Eurystheus' vassal. There the goddess bore sway who was known as Hera of Argos from the name of the whole district. Her temple, on an imposing mountain terrace between Tiryns and Mycenae, belonged to no single town, but she also had her temple in Tiryns, where she and not Pallas Athene was considered the lady of the castle. With this castle, the servant of the goddess, Herakles of Tiryns, was also Eurystheus' subject. We have already heard of the ruse by which she is said to have brought about this subjection. This was an old story, but not so old as the connection of Hera with Herakles, which perhaps was even older than that between the Queen and the King of the Gods. In an age when Zeus had not yet won the great goddess of Argos to wife, she might have put her divine servant, to whom she wished to give glory, at the disposal of the king of her country, even without a trick. King Admetos of Thessaly got a divine servant in the very person of Apollo,⁷⁷⁸ and he too was an earthly potentate with a name which might signify the king of the underworld.

It is said that Eurystheus sent to Thebes for Herakles,⁷⁷⁹ or Herakles himself had a fancy to inhabit the Cyclopean walls of Tiryns,⁷⁸⁰ and must pay for it with his Labours. The Theban stories are not finished, but we must now start on those of Tiryns, or of Mycenae, for Eurystheus had his residence in Mycenae and thither Herakles must return after fulfilling each command of the king, to get a further commission.

CHAPTER II

The Twelve Labours

I

THE NEMEAN LION

ON THE NORTHERN EDGE of the plain of Argos, no great distance from Tiryns and Mycenae, rise the mountains over which the road to Corinth leads. The highest, which looks oddly like a table half overset, is the Apesas, on which Perseus made sacrifice to Zeus for the first time;⁷⁸¹ the waters of a deluge on which he had floated still reached that height, according to an old tale. Under Mount Apesas lies the wide valley of Nemea, with many caves in the neighbourhood. One mountain there actually was called Tretos, 'the pierced'.⁷⁸² In this region a lion had his lair and made all the mountain district unsafe. A god had sent him against the inhabitants of the land as a punishment; they were the descendants of the primæval man Phoroneus. So we are told in a simpler story,⁷⁸³ and even this much seems more than is necessary. Was not a lion alone, without having been sent by gods, a sufficient task for a hero?

The details of the twelve Labours of Herakles were told from ancient times by so many poets, named and unnamed, and so adorned, that it is not surprising that we hear a different tale about the origin of this savage creature also. According to some,⁷⁸⁴ the serpent-goddess Echidna⁷⁸⁵ was the mother of the lion by her own son, the hound Orthos. The Nemean lion was thus brother to the Theban Sphinx. Hera brought him from the eastern land of the Arimoj to her own country. According to another version,⁷⁸⁶ the beast was originally at home with Selene, the Moon-goddess; she shook it off, and so it fell down upon Mount Apesas.

It is clear also from the accounts of the fight between Herakles and this marvellous beast that no weapon could wound it.

Such details may be accounted mere decorations, and they were still further elaborated; nevertheless, the lion, against which only a Herakles could prevail, had assuredly something special about him. He may have embodied death and the underworld particularly. The lions which ancient artists put over graves remind us of this, his representative capacity, even if they did not intend to portray the lion of Nemea. Allegedly, Herakles himself after his victory over the Orchomenians set up a lion before the temple of Artemis Eukleia,⁷⁸⁷ a name which signifies that the goddess, herself a 'lioness to women',⁷⁸⁸ is a deity of the underworld. As a hunter, Herakles did not exterminate ordinary beasts of the earth, like Orion,⁷⁸⁹ nor appear in the role of lord of the underworld as a hunter-god; what he hunted was apparently death. He overcame and caught weird beasts which belonged to gods, even definitely to gods of the underworld. When, after his victory over the Nemean lion, he laid its skin and head over his own head and shoulders, that which had formerly threatened mortals with death became a promise of their deliverance.

The story goes⁷⁹⁰ that Herakles, when he set out against the lion, entered the little town of Kleonai on the borders of the wood of Nemea. The later version has it that Molorchos, who was his host, was a poor peasant, a day-labourer,⁷⁹¹ but in the original tale he probably was a *primaevus* man, founder of the city of Molorchia.⁷⁹² The lion had killed his son, and now he wished to offer his only ram in honour of his guest. Herakles bade him wait for thirty days; if by the thirtieth day he had not returned from his combat with the lion, the ram was to be sacrificed to him as to a hero, but otherwise, to Zeus the Deliverer. From Molorchos he learned how he was to attack the lion; it must be a wrestling-match, even if Herakles, as old pictures show him, used sword and spear, or, as was told later,⁷⁹³ first stunned the beast with a blow of his club. He had

to force his way into its den, which allegedly had two openings, one of which Herakles blocked.⁷⁹⁴ It took him the whole thirty days to do all this, not to get from Kleonai to Nemea, which is quite near, but presumably to reach the depths where the monster had his dwelling. Or was it merely the sleep which overtook him after he had strangled the lion that lasted so long? The tale is told of that sleep,⁷⁹⁵ and we should not forget that Sleep is the brother of Death. The carvings on the metopes of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, which represent the Labours of Herakles, show the hero still almost half-asleep, in memory of that dangerous slumber. But when at last he awoke on the thirtieth day, he crowned himself with wild celery, like one come from the grave, for graves were garlanded with this plant.⁷⁹⁶ Later, the victors at the Nemean Games, and after them, those at the Isthmian, wore the same garland.⁷⁹⁷

Molorchos, the story goes on, was just about to sacrifice the ram to the hero as a funeral offering when Herakles appeared. He was carrying the lion on his back. The ram, according to this version, was sacrificed to Zeus Soter, the god who rescues, but it could have been the victim which Herakles received there later. He stayed with Molorchos for one night more, and early in the morning took the road to the south and journeyed over the pass towards Argos. From there he sent his host a mule, which he had promised him, and did him as much honour as if they were connections by marriage.⁷⁹⁸ He came with the lion to Mycenae, Eurystheus' residence,⁷⁹⁹ and the king was so terrified at the hero's uncanny exploit that he forbade him in future to enter the city with his booty. It would be enough for him to appear before the gates. According to this tale, Eurystheus even then had a bronze vessel fixed under the earth and crept into it whenever Herakles came near. He communicated with him only through his herald Kopreus, the 'dung-man'.

The hero stripped the lion of its invulnerable hide after cutting it off with the creature's claws,⁸⁰⁰ but Zeus, to do his

son honour, transported the monster to the skies as a memorial, where it became the Lion in the Zodiac.⁸⁰¹

2

THE HYDRA OF LERNA

Near the city of Argos to the south, but also not far from Mycenae and Tiryns, on the narrow strip of land between Mount Pontinos⁸⁰² and the sea, there are veritable abysses covered over with the fresh water of the many springs which issue from the foot of the limestone range. The story of the Danaids is connected with these springs, but the depths beneath them with the destiny of Dionysos, who when he was killed by Perseus came to the underworld through them, to rule there and when summoned back, to return thence through them. The underworld was the near neighbour of the land of Argos in Lerna's bottomless waters. The sentinel on the border, on the entry to the realm of the dead, was the serpent which Herakles had to overcome after the Nemean lion.

The serpent, too, was said to have the serpent-goddess Echidna for her mother,⁸⁰³ but she had no special name, and therefore it became usual that the word Hydra, that is 'water-snake', meant her and no other. She, the murderous 'bitch of Lerna' (for she was called that too)⁸⁰⁴ had in common with her elder brother Kerberos, the other monster of the underworld, a plurality of heads. He was her elder brother only in their genealogy,⁸⁰⁵ but his office of watcher over the dead remained in men's memory far more than that of the Hydra; this peculiarity of the water-snake of Lerna was soon forgotten. True, it was said that her breath killed men.⁸⁰⁶ It was believed also that she could be exactly located, in the roots of the plane-tree by the triple spring Amymone.⁸⁰⁷ Gigantic planes with gigantic roots and gigantic hollows grow in such places in Greece. The gigantic water-snake, so the story was

told,⁸⁰⁸ grew up in the swamp and ravaged the herds and the countryside.

As Kerberos is now called three-headed and now five-headed,⁸⁰⁹ it is equally hard to give a fixed number for the heads of the Hydra. The five to twelve which are shown in pictures stand for the nine,⁸¹⁰ or fifty,⁸¹¹ or a hundred⁸¹² of which the poets speak. It is also stated that only one head, in the middle of the other eight, was immortal,⁸¹³ and late artists even represented one head of the Hydra as of human shape. In this they departed from a very old tradition, for the picture of the innumerable serpent-heads springing from a common, shapeless body, comes into the history of Herakles from a very old mythology. To the ancient picture-makers of Mesopotamia who were the first to fix the type, its meaning was certainly not in doubt. They expressed in that manner the difficulty of overcoming the enemy they made their heroes do battle with, and that enemy, however he might be named, could be nothing else than death. The hopelessness of the struggle, except for Herakles the unique, was also expressed in the Greek narrative by making two heads grow up in place of every one that was struck off. Herakles himself needed a helper if he would dispatch the monster, and in this Labour had a younger hero, his Theban nephew Iolaos, at his side.

Only this much is preserved of the tale of the adventure.⁸¹⁴ The hero came with Iolaos, driving in his war-chariot, to the neighbourhood of the very ancient town of Lerna, and found the infernal serpent in her lair by the spring Amymon. He shot fire-arrows into the lair and so forced her to crawl out. She had hardly crept forth when he attacked her. The Hydra coiled around one of the hero's feet. On old pictures we see Herakles attacking the serpent, not with his club but with a sickle-shaped sword. But every time he struck off a head, two living ones grew in its place. Besides, there was a gigantic crab in that place and it bit the hero's foot. He had to begin by killing that guardian of the spot, and not till then did he call Iolaos to his aid. The young hero used up almost a whole forest to cauterise

the wounds of the snake with burning brands, so that she could grow no new heads. Now Herakles could cut off the immortal head also. He buried it by the road which led from Lerna to Elaius. He dipped his arrows in the poison with which the serpent's body was filled. The giant crab got into the sky as the next sign of the Zodiac to the Lion; Hera exalted him thither.⁸¹⁵ It is the point at which, according to the doctrine of astrologers, the souls of men descend to lower regions,⁸¹⁶ for the subterranean half of the sky begins at the sign of the Crab.

It appears as if uncertainty prevailed among the tellers of the tale whether Herakles was bound to perform twelve Labours for Eurystheus, or to spend twelve years over the performance of his works, ten Labours being enough for that.⁸¹⁷ The time for purification and service amounted to one great year, that is, eight ordinary years, for the gods. So it was with Apollo,⁸¹⁸ so also, allegedly, with Kadmos, and so, according to one reckoning, with Herakles himself, for he is said to have accomplished the first ten Labours in eight years and one month.⁸¹⁹ Twelve is the number of the months and of the signs of the Zodiac; and we have already heard that Herakles himself fixed in advance the time required to deal with the Nemean lion at thirty days. This may have been an older and more Oriental conception, of which the celestial equivalents of the crab and the lion still remind us. The number twelve proved strong enough to oust the list of ten Labours which undoubtedly was once canonical.

Eurystheus, so the story goes, would not recognise two of the twelve Labours, and, for a start, not the victory over the serpent of Lerna, because in it Iolaos had helped the hero.⁸²⁰ Such excuses were put into Eurystheus' mouth late and not even consistently; but it is a fact that two of the Labours had not the same object as the two already told and eight others, namely the fight against Death. In this struggle it was the wish of Eurystheus that Herakles should succumb; but in that case the Labour of Lerna was one of the ones that counted.

THE HIND OF KERYNEIA

High mountain ranges separate the land of Argos from Arkadia to the west, the Parthenion and the Artemision. Their names (respectively 'Virgin Mountain' and 'Artemis' Mountain') remind us of the great virgin goddess who bore sway there. Artemis had her temple on a peak of the massif of Artemision and there had the title Oinatis, 'she of Oinoe' ('the wine village'), from the last little town and furthest outlying region which still belonged to Argos. Thither Herakles was now to journey, for Eurystheus set him as his third task⁸²¹ to bring the golden-antlered hind alive to Mycenae. It belonged to the goddess of Oinoe, but tried to hide even from Artemis on the rocky hill of Keryneia in Arkadia.⁸²² It ranged the whole wild region of Arkadia and also the goddess' mountains in the neighbourhood of Argos. From there it is said to have visited and laid waste the peasants' fields,⁸²³ but assuredly it was not merely for that reason that it became the third monster in the series of those hunted by Herakles, after the Nemean lion and the hydra of Lerna.

Hinds had no antlers even in those days, and if one of them actually had golden antlers it was no ordinary beast, but a divine being. It is also told⁸²⁴ that a companion of Artemis, the Titaness Taygete, after whom Mount Taygetos was named, was obliged to take the form of this hind, because she had accepted the love of Zeus. That was how Artemis punished her. According to others,⁸²⁵ she meant thus to save her. But when Taygete had later on enjoyed the attentions of Zeus, by way of atonement she dedicated the hind into which she was to have been turned to Artemis Orthosia.⁸²⁶ It is not easy to differentiate between the divine beast, the heroine, and the goddess. When Artemis was pursued by the outrageous giant twins, the Aloadae, she was herself the hunted hind.⁸²⁷ A divine creature with golden antlers, the hind of Keryneia, let

itself be hunted by Herakles—that is the right expression here. The difficult, dangerous and uncanny thing about the hind was not its unusual wildness,⁸²⁸ which would enable it to offer resistance to the hunter, as many believed, but that it fled and the pursuer could not stop trying to make this strange game his prey. The danger lay in the pursuit, which took him beyond the known region of hunters into another country, from which no one ever came back. Therefore, Herakles was to catch the hind, not shoot it down, which would have been easy for so great an archer, and which he actually did in one much too novel variant.⁸²⁹ It was again no common hunt that he had to engage in.

The hind began by running away from him out of Oinoe into Mount Artemision, then further through the whole of Arkadia to the river Ladon. As the hero was neither to kill nor hurt it, he followed it for an entire year.⁸³⁰ Where the creature he pursued led him in all that time we are told in Pindar's ode about the branch of wild olive which Herakles brought to Olympia to be the garland of the victors, and we learn of it from an ancient vase-painting. In Istria, the poem states,⁸³¹ Artemis met the pursuer; there, at the most northerly extremity of the Adriatic Sea, by the mouth of the Timavus, the goddess had a sacred grove of which it was told that deer lived peaceably with wolves in it.⁸³² She was called Reitia by the inhabitants of that country, the Veneti, and that can be a translation of Orthia or Orthosia. Pursuer and pursued arrived there through the country of the Hyperboreans,⁸³³ Apollo's holy people, whom the name Istria designated for the Greeks, as well as the peninsula at the Timavus. From that other-world region Herakles brought the slip of the wild olive to Olympia, which till then was treeless. An old vase-painting, however, shows us that he penetrated still further in his pursuit beyond the world's end, even to the Garden of the Hesperides. The hind stands beneath the tree of the golden apples, guarded by two women, the Hesperides. According to this picture the hero took the homeward path, escaping from the dangers of remaining in

the other world; according to another, his booty was the golden antlers.

The Garden of the Hesperides lay a great way from the Arkadian river Ladon, and yet bordered on it, as the underworld at Lerna bordered on Argos; those were regions outside the world we live in, regions which the narrators but gradually brought into our world. Ladon was the name both of the river and of the serpent that watched over the tree of the golden apples.⁸³⁴ The hind wanted to swim through the waters of the Ladon, and so, by this account, was not yet arrived beyond the world⁸³⁵ when Herakles came up with and caught her. Only very late narrators believed that he shot her. The hero tied his prey's feet together, as a group of statues from the temple of Apollo at Veii shows, took her on his shoulder and journeyed back with her through Arkadia. There he encountered the divine brother and sister, Apollo and Artemis, the god of the other world and the goddess of the lands of mountains and swamps, which lead to the other world. There was nearly a fight between the brothers, both sons of Zeus, as almost happened again later over the Delphic tripod. We see on art-monuments that Apollo tried to take the hind from the hero by force. Artemis accused him of killing her sacred animal, but Herakles excused himself by stating that he was forced to do what he did, and showed her that he was taking the hind alive to Mycenae, or according to certain pictures, only her antlers; the goddess therefore forgave him.

4

THE BOAR OF ERYMANTHOS

The most original district belonging to Artemis, her dancing-place on the lofty mountain-crests, and as dear to her as Taygetos,⁸³⁶ was Mount Erymanthos in the north-western corner of Arkadia, where it borders on the regions of Achaia and Elis. Hither Herakles was sent with his fourth commission,

to get the boar. When the goddess turned a wrathful countenance upon a country, as in the story of Meleagros, she would send a raging boar which laid waste the farmers' fields. Nothing of the kind is told us here, but only that the inhabitants of Psophis had reason to complain of the Erymanthian boar.⁸³⁷ But this again was not why Herakles was to catch it and bring it to Mycenae alive; it would have satisfied the country-people if he had destroyed the beast.

Once more the hero journeyed through the whole of Arkadia, and arrived first at the forests of Pholoe, the high ground between the valley of the Alpheios and Erymanthos. This district was inhabited by Centaurs, of like nature and habits to the semi-animal neighbours of the Lapithai of Thessaly. There were also Lapithai in the neighbourhood, but Herakles had nothing to do with them. He was hospitably received by the Centaur Pholos, who lived there in a cave.⁸³⁸ His host set roast meat before the hero, while he ate raw meat himself. In one version, the wise Chiron was present also,⁸³⁹ the most righteous of the Centaurs.⁸⁴⁰ He had retired before the Thessalian Lapithai to the Peloponnesos, and now lived at Cape Malea instead of on Pelion. Did Herakles ask for wine as well, or was this, too, a part of Pholos' hospitality?⁸⁴¹ He opened the common wine-store of the Centaurs, which he had to keep in a great *pithos* or store-jar. It is even said that this wine was a gift of Dionysos,⁸⁴² intended by the god for the hero himself;⁸⁴³ a dangerous gift, for evidently the Centaurs did not yet know its nature. Old vase-paintings are fond of the scene in which Herakles draws from the great vessel, as yet untouched.

The scent of the wine now attracted the remaining Centaurs, and the drinking-bout of the Centaurs soon changed into a battle with them, another favourite subject of artists and narrators. It is stated that the fighting ranged from the heights of Pholoe to Chiron's cave at Cape Malea, for thither Herakles pursued the Centaurs with his poisoned arrows. One arrow, aimed at Elatos, went through him and struck the divine Chiron. The hero vainly tried to heal him with Chironian

medicaments; the poison of the Hydra was too strong. Being wounded on the knee, the wise Centaur could neither recover nor die, wherefore he retired with his incurable wound to his cave and suffered there until he could be offered to Zeus in place of the tormented Prometheus.⁸⁴⁴ Then at last Chiron died and Prometheus was freed. The good Pholos also died by an arrow of Herakles. He pulled the poisoned missile out of the corpse of a Centaur and marvelled at the tiny thing which could destroy so large a being; it fell on his foot and killed him too. Herakles buried his friend and went his way to Mount Erymanthos.

There he started the boar from its lair, drove it into the snow on the heights, caught it in a snare, threw the beast across his shoulder and travelled back with it to Mycenae. Then occurred the long-prepared scene which again the vase-painters were fond of representing. The hero, with the wild boar on his back, sets a foot on the rim of the buried jar into which Eurystheus had crept; the coward's head and arm are alone visible, for he was as much afraid of the boar as of death.

5

THE BIRDS OF LAKE STYMPHALOS

In the north-eastern corner of Arkadia lies the swampy lake of Stympthalos. It was surrounded once by shady woods.⁸⁴⁵ The number of the birds which inhabited it was beyond all calculation;⁸⁴⁶ when frightened, they darkened the sun.⁸⁴⁷ In the underworld, the souls, innumerable as they, came to the swampy Acheron, 'as many as the birds that flock to the coast from the high seas, when the cold season chases them across the waters and sends them to sunny lands. . . .'⁸⁴⁸ 'One after another thou mayest see them, like a strong-winged bird, swifter than raging fire, hastening towards the shore of the sunset god.'⁸⁴⁹ In these words of a tragic poet, the western shore where the Sun-god sets means the realm of the dead. Here the birds remind us of it.

Their pictures decorated the temple of Artemis Stymphalia,⁸⁵⁰ the ruler over these swamps. Maids with the feet of birds were portrayed there also, and signified the Stymphalian birds as the deadly Sirens of the marsh. They were man-eating birds, according to the story concerning these inhabitants of the marsh,⁸⁵¹ and Ares had reared them.⁸⁵² Their feathers were so sharp that they wounded anyone on whom they fell.⁸⁵³ To say that they damaged fertile fields⁸⁵⁴ is here again an understatement. Once more Herakles was set the task of facing something deadly and frightening it away. He was to drive off the birds from Lake Stymphalos.

He climbed an elevation on the edge of the swamp⁸⁵⁵ and startled the birds by making a great noise. The story goes⁸⁵⁶ that he used a bronze rattle for this, and that was enough in itself to rid the lake of the birds. On old vase-paintings we see the hero aiming at them with a sling or fighting them with a stick, but his weapon against them was above all his bow.⁸⁵⁷ Such birds as he did not shoot flew away to the Island of Ares in the Black Sea. There the Argonauts in their turn had later to do with them.⁸⁵⁸ Carved on a metope at Olympia is Herakles showing his booty to Pallas Athene, who by one account had to advise him in connection with this adventure. Presumably he then brought the deadly birds to Mycenae, as proof of his deed.

6

THE STABLES OF AUGEIAS

His next task awaited Herakles on the west coast of the Peloponnesos. Augeias, king of Elis, a son of Helios, was ruling there. His name signifies 'radiant', and it was also told of him⁸⁵⁹ that sunbeams shone from his eyes. In his herds of cattle he seems to have possessed the wealth of the Sun-god, but his kingdom, there on the western coast, was rather a realm of the setting sun, a lordship over the underworld, than

one over the land of Elis. Eurystheus sent the hero to him,⁸⁶⁰ and the task that was given him reminds us of the other side of the subterranean kingdom, its dirt alongside of its riches. The dung of the cattle filled the byres, and it was stated⁸⁶¹ in this instance also that this bred a pestilence in the whole land. Herakles was now to clear away the filth. His task was made the harder by his being obliged to complete the work in one day.

But it is also told of him that his taskmaster was not only Eurystheus but rather Augeias as well.⁸⁶² In one version,⁸⁶³ Augeias promised him part of his kingdom as payment for the work. It looks as if the hero was to get the king's daughter along with part of the kingdom. But if the work was not completed in one day, presumably he must become Augeias' slave for ever, to remove the droppings from the byres. A daughter of Augeias, Epikaste by name, is reckoned among the wives of Herakles.⁸⁶⁴ That old form of the story, according to which he was cheated out of her hand also and for that reason fought with Augeias later, is lost to us; other narrators say⁸⁶⁵ that Herakles did not inform the king that the task had been imposed upon him by Eurystheus, and bargained on his own behalf for a tenth of the cattle if he could succeed in cleaning the byres. The witness to this contract was Phyleus, the king's son. On a metope at Olympia we may admire the vigour with which he wields a broom or a spade, but according to later narrators he cut through the foundation-wall of the building and led a river, or even two rivers, Alpheios and Peneios, through the byres. The impossible task in which Augeias would not believe was accomplished. When in addition he heard that this work had been imposed on Herakles by Eurystheus, he would not keep his word. According to this version, which assuredly is not the oldest, the king denied that he had ever promised anything, and a certain Lepreus, 'itchy', actually advised him to throw the hero into chains.⁸⁶⁶ The quarrel was to be settled before a court of law;⁸⁶⁷ Phyleus appeared as a witness against his father. Augeias became angry and drove his son and Herakles out of the



22 THE YOUNG HERAKLES OVERCOMING NEREUS



23 HERAKLES AND THE SEA-GOD

country, before the case was decided, a *casus belli* which later led the hero to attack Elis.

On his way back to Mycenae he visited king Dexamenos in the city of Olenos. The king's name, 'receiver', can equally well denote a hospitable mortal as the king of the underworld, who is otherwise known as Polydektes or Polydegmon, 'he who receives many'. Moreover, Dexamenos was not, according to all ancient accounts, a human being and the father of the girl whom Herakles was to rescue, but a Centaur, whose intention was to carry her off.⁸⁶⁸ This Centaur with whom the hero had now to do was also called Eurytion,⁸⁶⁹ a name which, like Eurytos, signifies a good shot and clearly marks a being of the realm of the dead, Geryoneus' herdsman. Oriental artists represented Centaurs as archers and thus expressed the connection of these wild and violent creatures with death. In Greece it was said⁸⁷⁰ that no Centaur employed the bow.

The Centaur Eurytion, the story goes, also had no bow. The hero entered the house of the king of Olenos at the very moment when the wedding of the princess with Eurytion was being celebrated, for he had forced himself upon them as her bridegroom.⁸⁷¹ Or, the marriage was being celebrated with a proper bridegroom, but Eurytion was one of the guests and tried to carry off the bride.⁸⁷² Herakles struck the Centaur dead and saved the girl, but not to keep her for himself. It is only in that version which calls the bride Deianeira even in this connection that he, as Dexamenos' guest, had already possessed her.⁸⁷³ But he promised to come back to her to take her home as his wife. In his absence, Eurytion forced them to accept him as her bridegroom; at the moment when the Centaur with his brethren wanted to take the bride away, Herakles appeared, as he had promised, and again showed himself a slayer of Centaurs, as previously in the story of Pholos and Chiron.

In Mycenae he reported that he had accomplished his work for the king of Elis, but in vain; Eurystheus would not accept it, and reproached the hero with having undertaken it not for him alone but also for Augias.

7

THE HORSES OF THE THRACIAN
DIOMEDES

The order in which the twelve Labours were recounted was not always precisely the same. Still, the narrators seem to be in agreement to this extent at least, that the first task of Herakles was the fight with the Nemean lion and that for his first six Labours he was assigned on each occasion a region of the Peloponnesos around the land of Argos, the kingdom of Mycenae and Tiryns. Only from the seventh Labour onwards did Eurystheus exact from him longer and longer journeys to distant lands. As to what happened on all these journeys, over and above the assignments, more and more stories were told. Thus, to begin with, the journey to Thrace, the object of which was to bring the dangerous horses of king Diomedes to Mycenae. This undertaking is now to open the second series of the Twelve Labours.

The horses of Diomedes ate human flesh, and it was later alleged⁸⁷⁴ that they were the same which had torn Glaukos, son of Sisyphos, to pieces at the funeral games of Pelias. It is indeed hard to decide if the four horses, which on a gem have a man given them to eat—in the 'bloody manger', as a tragic poet puts it⁸⁷⁵—belonged to Glaukos of Potniai or the Thracian king. An ancient vase-painting shows them winged. Assuredly they were related to the Harpies, Gorgons and Erinyes, and were more at home in Thrace, the land of Boreas the north wind, who mated with mares,⁸⁷⁶ than anywhere else. But the king of the underworld was also *klytópolis*, 'famous for his steeds',⁸⁷⁷ and horses brought the heroes to him. So when anyone is shown seated on a throne or lying on a couch and at the same time a horse's head peeps in at the window, there can be no doubt that we have to do with the honour done a dead man. Whether solemnly harnessed to the hearse of a hero on very old sepulchral vases, or furiously tearing him to pieces in

the tales of later narrators, they are always the horses of death, and that, too, is how the strange story of the man-eating steeds is to be understood.

Diomedes, who possessed the horses of death, was a son of Ares the war-god. He was lord of the Thracian tribe of the Bistones. Eurystheus sent Herakles to him to get his horses. The hero went his way through Thessaly and visited king Admetos at Pherai; the tale is immortalised by Euripides in his play *'Alkestis'*. Admetos, the 'unsubduable', himself bore a name of the king of the underworld, and he was the ruler whom Apollo served for a year. The god guarded Admetos' herds⁸⁷⁸ and watered his famous steeds,⁸⁷⁹ the best in the world.⁸⁸⁰ He also helped him to win Alkestis, the most beautiful of the daughters of Pelias, king of Iolkos.⁸⁸¹ Pelias had made it a condition for her suitors⁸⁸² to yoke a lion and a boar to the wedding-coach. Apollo had achieved this already at the marriage feast of Kadmos and Harmonia, and he did it again for Admetos.⁸⁸³ It was also told⁸⁸⁴ that when the bridegroom opened the marriage-chamber, it was full of snakes, allegedly a punishment sent by Artemis, to whom the king had forgotten to sacrifice. Perhaps it is a trace of an older tale in which Admetos and Alkestis celebrated their wedding in serpent-shape, as was fitting for a royal pair of the underworld.

But in this story, the continuation of which the arrival of Herakles in Pherai composes, Apollo promised to placate Artemis; indeed, he befooled the Moirai, who were present at the marriage-feast. He gave them wine till they were drunk,⁸⁸⁵ and asked a wedding-gift of them. Then the tipsy Moirai doubled Admetos' short life, on one condition—that⁸⁸⁶ on the day when he should have died, another, say his father, his mother or his wife, should voluntarily depart this life in his stead. That day soon came, and it is that day which Euripides portrays for us.

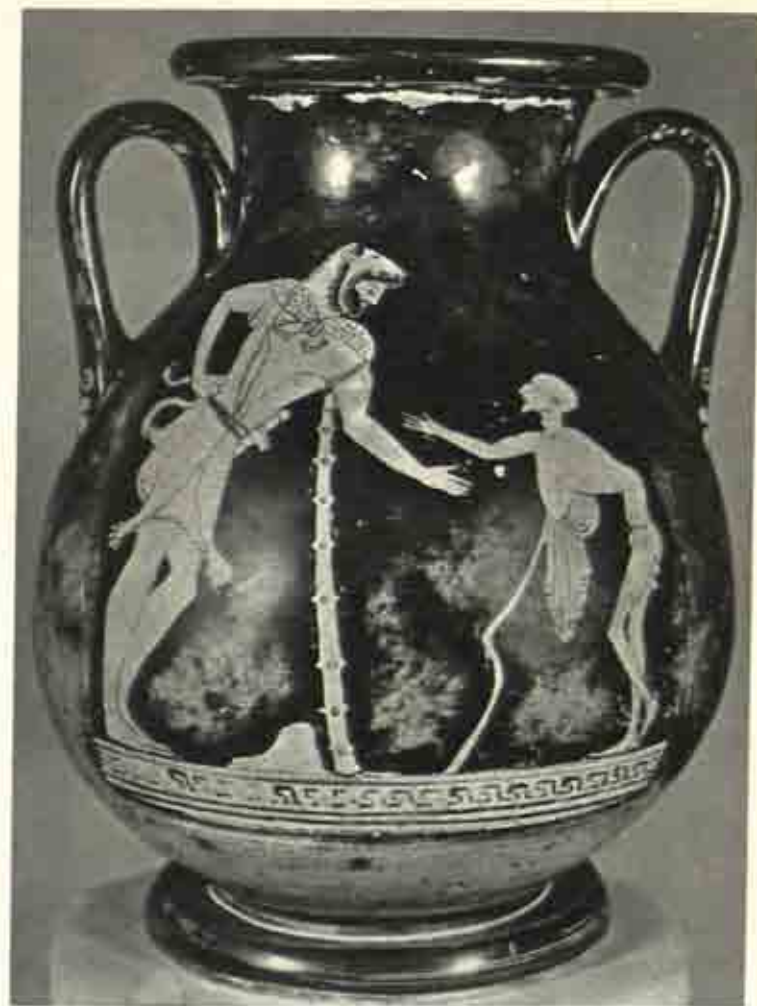
On that day Apollo left the house of Admetos, which Thanatos, Death, entered.⁸⁸⁷ He was come to fetch queen Alkestis, for no one else, not even his aged father or his old mother, would die for Admetos, but only his young wife. She

now takes leave of her husband and her two little children. The palace is full of sorrow and lamentation; and at that moment Herakles arrives.⁸⁸⁸ The king does not let his guest know who is dead, but leaves him to drink at his ease. Alkestis has already been carried out to burial, and Thanatos, Death, is waiting for her behind the sepulchre,⁸⁸⁹ to drag the dead queen away with him. Not till then does the hero learn what has happened. He runs after the funeral procession and in a wrestling-match tears Death's prey from him.⁸⁹⁰ In the famous conversation in the house of Agathon, the tragedian, which the great Plato has immortalised,⁸⁹¹ mention is made of a version according to which the gods of the underworld themselves let Alkestis go, so amazed are they at her voluntary arrival in Hades. But the old tragedian Phrynichos⁸⁹² described the wrestling, body to body, of the hero with Death.

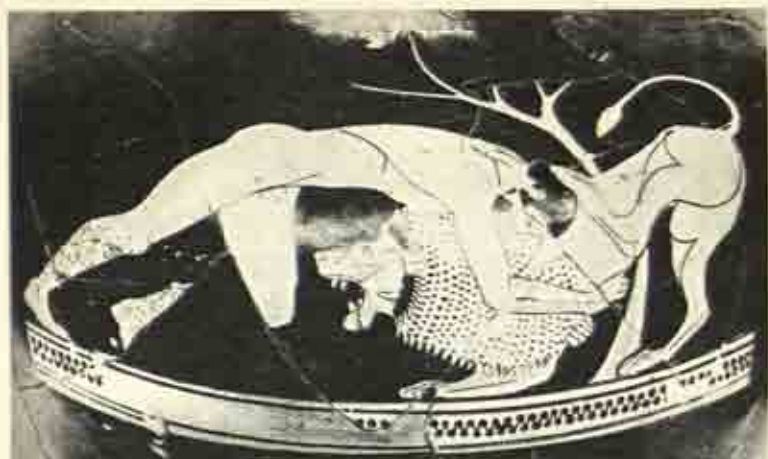
From Admetos, Herakles journeyed on to the cruel Diomedes, son of Ares, one of the most terrible death-gods. It is said of him that he kept his savage horses fastened with iron chains to their bronze manger and fed them on the flesh of unfortunate strangers.⁸⁹³ To tame them, Herakles threw their master himself to the steeds to devour and brought the beasts with him to Mycenae. Eurystheus is said to have dedicated the horses to Hera, and their breed to have lasted until the time of Alexander the Great.⁸⁹⁴

Other narrators connect this story with the foundation of the Greek city of Abdera in Thrace. According to them, Herakles travelled on shipboard in the company of a whole host of followers;⁸⁹⁵ he captured the steeds from their guardians and drove them from the country of the Bistonians down to the sea. Diomedes and the Bistonians pursued him; the hero thereupon left the horses in charge of his favourite, Abderos, joined battle with the pursuers, and put the Bistonians to flight. Meantime Abderos fell a victim to the horses, who dragged him to death, or tore him in pieces as was their custom. Herakles buried Abderos and founded the city of Abdera at his hero-tomb.

We see that in this way the story of the heroes passes into



24 HERAKLES AND GERAS



25 HERAKLES AND THE LION



26 HERAKLES AND THE HIND WITH THE HESPERIDES

narratives of the campaigns of whole companies of them. It was also told how Herakles, after this Thracian exploit, joined the Argonauts;⁸⁹⁶ but he did not long remain with them, for as soon as they landed at a bay on the Sea of Marmora, he lost his young follower, the beloved youth Hylas, to the fountain-nymphs.⁸⁹⁷ While he was desperately seeking him, the ship Argo sailed on with a favouring wind.⁸⁹⁸ Then Herakles, according to the one story, made his way on foot to Kolchis and took part in the winning of the Golden Fleece,⁸⁹⁹ but according to the other,⁹⁰⁰ went back to the Labours which his destiny compelled him to accomplish for Eurystheus.

It was much more fitting for Herakles (in Euripides he says it is his *daimon*, that is, his personal destiny)⁹⁰¹ to fight all three sons of the death-dealing Ares, in Thrace, Macedonia, and Thessaly—Lykaon and Kyknos as well as Diomedes—than to take part in the Argonautic expedition, which was to make famous the name of another hero, Jason. The tale of his victory over Lykaon is not preserved, but a continuator of Hesiod sang of the fight with Kyknos.⁹⁰² To judge by his name, Kyknos, 'the swan', ought to belong to the servants and favourites of Apollo. He lived in a grove of Apollo at Pagasai in Thessaly,⁹⁰³ and assailed the worshippers of the god who passed that way going to Delphi with their hecatombs.⁹⁰⁴ In this account, therefore, he was anything but a servant of Apollo. His father Ares was bodily present to help him, with his charioteers Deimos and Phobos, Fear and Rout. Herakles fought against Kyknos, accompanied on his war-chariot by Pallas Athene, who held victory and renown in her hand.⁹⁰⁵ His bold charioteer was the hero Iolaos, but the horse harnessed to the chariot was the divine steed Arion,⁹⁰⁶ which Poseidon had begotten on Demeter.⁹⁰⁷ Herakles had not stolen it but got it as a present⁹⁰⁸ or a loan,⁹⁰⁹ and returned it to Adrastos.

The result of the fight is sometimes told thus: Ares did indeed help Kyknos, and a thunderbolt from Zeus separated the combatants.⁹¹⁰ But according to most narrators, Kyknos was killed by the hero and Zeus interposed his lightnings only

when his two sons, Ares and Herakles, were fighting one another.⁹¹¹ On an ancient vase-painting the Old Man of the Sea and Poseidon at one side, Apollo and Dionysos at the other, look on at the fight which blazed up over the corpse of Kyknos and was stilled by Zeus in person. In the story as told by Hesiod's continuator the King of the Gods does not interfere. Herakles is warned in advance by Athene that Ares will enter the struggle on his son's behalf, and he wounds the god in the thigh with his spear; his charioteers bring the wounded Ares to Olympos. Herakles takes the arms of Kyknos, whom his father-in-law Keyx later buried, but Apollo has the grave swept away by the river Anauros.⁹¹²

Kyknos belongs rather among the birds, as do his father-in-law Keyx and the latter's wife Alkyone. *Keyx* and *alkyone* apparently mean in Greek respectively the male and the female fulmar. Originally they were, it is said, a human couple, with whom Herakles was in friendly association. They were, however, so overweening as to address each other as Zeus and Hera, and for a punishment they were transformed into birds.⁹¹³ The tellers of the story have also contrived to make the swan, Apollo's sacred bird, of which it was believed that its song was to be heard only when it perceived its death approaching,⁹¹⁴ into the murderous son of the war-god. But they could have found no better opponent for him than Herakles, who became master also of the death-dealing steeds of Diomedes and took them with him to Argos.

8

THE BULL OF MINOS

According to most accounts, Eurystheus sent Herakles first to Crete to get the bull, and not till afterwards to Thrace to bring back the horses. Allegedly, king Minos was in possession of the bull, but should not have been, for it was the very same of which we have already spoken in the Cretan Tales,⁹¹⁵ the

one with which Pasiphae fell in love. In the account handed down to us,⁹¹⁶ there is only this much difference concerning him—that he no longer plays the part of the queen's lover. He arose from the waves, says the tale, and Minos had previously promised to sacrifice to Poseidon that which should come out of the sea.⁹¹⁷ But the beast was so handsome that Minos sacrificed another bull instead and sent this one to his herds of cows.

Up to this point the tale is identical with the history of Pasiphae, as brought on the stage by Euripides in his 'Cretans'. There, however, Minos' punishment consists in the morbid desire for the bull which Poseidon aroused in the queen.⁹¹⁸ But it was told that Poseidon inflicted yet a further punishment;⁹¹⁹ the bull went mad, and it needed Herakles to get rid of it. Therefore Eurystheus sent the hero to Crete, to bring the bull alive to Mycenae. Here Minos himself helped him.⁹²⁰ Ancient vase-paintings show how the bull was caught, with a rope which Herakles throws around the beast's muzzle and foreleg, or without a rope, when he meets the bull head-on. At length he stunned it with his club and brought it to Mycenae, where he let it go. For a long time the untamed beast wandered about the Peloponnesos, but at length it crossed the Isthmus and came to Marathon, where Theseus caught it again and finally sacrificed it to Apollo.⁹²¹

This was rather an exploit for Theseus. If it is true that in earlier days only ten Labours of Herakles were recounted, it certainly was this and the next one which were the later additions.

9

THE GIRDLE OF THE QUEEN
OF THE AMAZONS

Admete, daughter of Eurystheus,⁹²² wanted the girdle of Hippolyte, queen of the Amazons. Herakles therefore was sent to the land of Pontos, in Asia Minor, on the Black Sea, where the Amazons lived by the river Thermodon. They were a

people consisting of warlike women. Of their children they raised only the girls, and they cut off their right breasts, so that they should not be encumbered when shooting with the bow and hurling the spear; they suckled their daughters from the left breast. Hippolyte their queen was the bravest of them all, and as a sign of this she had been given the girdle by her father Ares. Herakles took a whole company with him when he set out on this enterprise, and⁹²³ among his followers were Theseus, about whom we shall have more to say presently, and Telamon,⁹²⁴ the hero of the Salaminians and Aiginetans. It was like another voyage of the Argo, and it was even said that all the Argonauts took part in it.⁹²⁵ According to some accounts, this journey even involved a Trojan war, that which Herakles waged against Laomedon, king of Troy, with a host of Tirythians and with Iolaos and Telamon.⁹²⁶

There was an old tale⁹²⁷ about the deceitful Laomedon, who possessed famous horses, a present from Zeus.⁹²⁸ Of him something like the same story was told as of Admetos. He too, the 'lord of the people'—for that is what his name means, and the king of the underworld is ruler over a great people—had Apollo in his service as a herdsman,⁹²⁹ and with him Poseidon, who built the walls of Troy.⁹³⁰ The gods served him in human form⁹³¹ and competed⁹³² in establishing the city, but then Laomedon cheated them out of their wages, and added a threat⁹³³ to bind them hand and foot, sell them abroad and even cut off their ears. What he had promised as a reward, either to both or, probably, to the winner in their competition in service, was assuredly his famous steeds, and it was for these horses that Herakles too came to Troy with his six ships.⁹³⁴

For, so the tale goes on,⁹³⁵ Poseidon, on being cheated after building the stronghold, sent a sea-monster against the land of the Trojans, and Apollo sent pestilence. His oracle advised⁹³⁶ that Laomedon's daughter Hesione should be given over to the monster. In royal robes⁹³⁷ she was exposed on the shore and Laomedon promised to her rescuer the divine horses of which he had cheated Poseidon. Herakles undertook the task; the

Trojans, with Pallas Athene's help, built him a shelter on the beach, into which he could retire when hard pressed.⁹³⁸ An ancient vase-painting shows the monster, a gigantic fish with open jaws, which the hero enters, his curved sword in his right hand, to cut out the gigantic tongue. Hesione looks on in all her grand attire. It was also stated that Herakles leaped into the creature's gullet,⁹³⁹ indeed that he abode for three days in its belly and came back bald-headed.⁹⁴⁰ Thus he killed the monster.

But Laomedon would not give the steeds to him either, and abused the hero.⁹⁴¹ The result was the first destruction of Troy; the streets of the city were empty when Herakles moved on.⁹⁴² Of his men, Telamon particularly distinguished himself,⁹⁴³ and got Hesione as his wife by way of a gift of honour.⁹⁴⁴ Laomedon and his sons were shot down by Herakles⁹⁴⁵ except the youngest, whom Hesione rescued, ransoming him from the hero for her gold-embroidered veil. Till then the youth had been called Podarkes, 'swift-foot', or so we are told,⁹⁴⁶ but afterwards Priamos, from *priamai*, 'I ransom'. He became king, and in his old age he witnessed the second overthrow of Troy.

According to older accounts,⁹⁴⁷ the voyage against the Amazons followed on this victory, but the later ones⁹⁴⁸ reverse the order. To fulfil the task set by Eurystheus, Herakles landed with his host at Themiskyra, at the mouth of the Thermodon. The Amazons were not unfriendly to the men, and Hippolyte was inclined to make a present of her girdle to Herakles.⁹⁴⁹ A vase-painter shows the scene between the hero, who sits quietly, and the Amazon in her Scythian trousers; she is handing the girdle to him amicably. Or had the capture of her sister Melanippe already occurred,⁹⁵⁰ and was she to be freed at the price of the girdle?⁹⁵¹ But it is told that Hera then appeared in person, disguised as an Amazon,⁹⁵² and roused distrust against Herakles and his followers among the female nation, asserting that the strangers intended to kidnap Hippolyte. According to this tale, the heroes and the Amazons did come to blows, and in the fighting, Herakles killed the queen

and took the girdle from her dead body. That is how the relief on a metope at Olympia shows her, dying on the ground.

According to those narrators who hold that the first hero to fight the Amazons was Herakles, and Theseus was one of his followers, the latter was now given as his meed of honour the Amazon Antiope,⁹⁵³ as Hesione was given to Telamon. According to others, Theseus took the queen of the Amazons prisoner,⁹⁵⁴ made prize of her girdle⁹⁵⁵ and presented it to Herakles. But it is also alleged that the Amazon whom he carried off for himself and by whom he had his son Hippolytos was Hippolyte, not Antiope.⁹⁵⁶ But this story has its proper place in the history of Theseus. The girdle was preserved in Mycenae,⁹⁵⁷ if it was not rather in the temple of Hera, whom Admete served as priestess.⁹⁵⁸

There were tales also of the return voyage of the heroes, one of them very old and connected, not with the easy task against the Amazons, but with the heavy one at Troy.⁹⁵⁹ It was told that⁹⁶⁰ on the very day when Herakles turned his back on Troy, Hera moved Hypnos, the god of sleep, to rock Zeus to profound slumber. She herself aroused a mighty storm and drove the hero to the island of Kos, far from all his friends. Of his six ships he lost five.⁹⁶¹ The inhabitants of the island greeted him with volleys of stones.⁹⁶² He landed at night and dealt with king Eurypylos, 'him of the wide gate', obviously a name for the lord of the underworld. Having killed him,⁹⁶³ he had still to fight his son Chalkodon, 'him of the bronze teeth',⁹⁶⁴ and was wounded by him. Only Zeus could now rescue his son⁹⁶⁵—from whom, in reality? The name has revealed to us already the God of Death.

The inhabitants of the city of Antimacheia on Kos told the story in rather more detail.⁹⁶⁶ After Herakles landed at Cape Laketer from his one remaining ship, saving only his men and their arms, he met a herd of sheep and their shepherd, Antagoras. He is said to have been Chalkodon's brother.⁹⁶⁷ Antagoras, who perhaps originally was Antaios, 'he who encounters', is, surely, but another and less transparent name

for him. Herakles asked the unknown shepherd for a ram, but the son of Eurypylos challenged him to wrestle. The wrestling soon passed into a fight, for the Meropes, the inhabitants of Kos, helped Antagoras, while Herakles' companions were for defending him, their leader. And they were the first to be worsted; the hero himself had to give in. He took refuge with a Thracian slave-girl and disguised himself in women's clothes until he could overcome the Meropes. Dressed in parti-coloured female attire, he then celebrated his marriage with the daughter of the king, Chalkiope, 'bronze-face'. Ever since then, the priest of Herakles at Antimacheia wore women's clothes and a female headdress at the sacrifice, and so did every bridegroom at his wedding. This was not the last time that Herakles dressed like a woman; a story about it shall be told later, for he was thus travestied when he served Queen Omphale; female attire and women's tasks suit the servant of a goddess, who in the oldest stories probably was neither persecuted by Hera nor in need of rescue by Zeus.

As the end of this tale is told by Homer,⁹⁶⁸ the King of the Gods awoke and saw his son in difficulties. He would have thrown Hypnos into the sea and made an end of him, had not the winged god taken refuge with his mother Night, who coerces all gods. Zeus respected her and would not grieve her. But he hung Hera up on a golden rope in the air, with two anvils on her feet. No god could deliver her, and when one of them, Hephaistos, tried to do so, the Olympian threw him from the threshold of the celestial palace far down to the earth.⁹⁶⁹ His son he rescued and guided home to Argos of the horse-pastures.

10

THE CATTLE OF GERYONEUS

To take the cattle of Geryoneus, Herakles was sent to the farthest west. He must cross Okeanos and reach the island of

Erytheia,⁹⁷⁰ the isle of the red sunset-glow, where the herdsman Eurytion and the two-headed dog Orthos, brother of Kerberos and of the Hydra of Lerna,⁹⁷¹ guarded the cattle in their misty byres. They were purple-red cattle,⁹⁷² and their owner was Geryoneus, from whom Herakles was to seize them and drive them all the long way to Argos. It is said of Geryoneus that he was the son of Chrysaor and the Okeanid Kallirhoe,⁹⁷³ of Chrysaor, 'the golden-sworded hero' who sprang along with Pegasus from the neck of Medusa when she was beheaded.⁹⁷⁴

Such a father was appropriate to him, for he was no herdsman but, as art-monuments show him, a helmed and armoured warrior with shield and spear. His name, Geryoneus or Geryones, means 'the shouter', and shouting and fighting went together.⁹⁷⁵ When the wounded Ares screams, it is like the battle-cry of nine or ten thousand fighting men.⁹⁷⁶ His herdsman Eurytion with his bowman's name, borne also by the Centaur in the adventure at Dexamenos' house, was a son of Ares.⁹⁷⁷ Geryoneus is described as having three heads,⁹⁷⁸ but poets and vase-painters alike⁹⁷⁹ agree in giving him three bodies, at least from the trunk up; he fought with six arms and possessed wings as well,⁹⁸⁰ so that like the Harpies, Erinyes or some bird of prey he could pounce on his victim. His shield-device was an eagle. His red cattle pastured at sunset. There he stood on watch, perhaps shouting out of the sunset and calling men who had the desire to do battle and capture herds to their death.

According to the oldest narratives, Herakles certainly did not need to go very far, no further than the west coast of the Peloponnesos, to get on board the only vessel by which he could reach Geryoneus' Red Island. Perhaps it was at Pylos on the south-west coast, where Neleus, with his significant name, 'the pitiless', bore sway; he was the son of Poseidon and Tyro, whose story has already been told. Later accounts⁹⁸¹ made out that Neleus and his sons, save only Nestor, tried to seize the cattle of Geryoneus when Herakles was driving them home,



27 HERAKLES TAKES THE GOLDEN ANTLERS



28 HERAKLES WITH THE BOAR



29 HERAKLES WITH PHOLOS THE CENTAUR

and therefore the hero gave Nestor the kingship of Pylos. But another story was to the effect that the city gate was shut when Herakles arrived before Pylos, without cattle and certainly not, as was alleged later,⁹⁸² to have himself purified, for then the gods would not have personally troubled themselves to bar his entrance. The name Pylos, which is shared by another town on the same coast—and that one actually had a shrine of Hades⁹⁸³—meant for the narrators, who no longer had before them the splendour of Nestor's palace, the gate of Hades, *Hadou pylai*. It was an old tale, already alluded to by Homer,⁹⁸⁴ that Poseidon, Hera and Hades⁹⁸⁵ (other poets add Ares and Apollo)⁹⁸⁶ stood by Neleus when Herakles assailed Pylos; Zeus and Pallas Athene helped the hero. He wounded Hera on the right breast with his three-barbed arrow and caused her incurable pain.⁹⁸⁷ He struck Ares down thrice with his spear, and the third time he pierced him through the thigh.⁹⁸⁸ Also he wounded Hades in the shoulder with his arrow, 'in Pylos among the dead', so it is expressly told.⁹⁸⁹ Paiceon, the physician of the gods, healed him on Olympus.⁹⁹⁰ Neleus and eleven of his twelve sons fell.⁹⁹¹

According to another and perhaps still older version,⁹⁹² Herakles had to deal with only one son of Neleus at Pylos, Periklymenos, 'the very famous'. By him also nothing else is meant than is signified by the sons of Eurypylos on Kos. The story ran that he was really the son of Poseidon, and had received from his father the gift of taking many shapes. Sometimes he appeared as an eagle, sometimes as an ant, again as a bee attended by a whole swarm, sometimes as a snake. He was in the shape of a bee when he settled on the boss of the yoke of Herakles' team. According to the later version of the tale, Herakles recognised him by the help of Athene and shot the bee off. The original version was perhaps that this expert in transformations was not killed after all, but got away in the shape of an eagle.⁹⁹³ Herakles had still a long way to go before he could reach Geryoneus and his cattle, even when he had forced the Gate, Pylos.

According to the later tellers of the story, the journey took him through the regions of North Africa to the far-famed Pillars of Herakles, which he erected on that occasion. Some also declared⁹⁹⁴ that it was on this journey, as he travelled through Libya, that the giant Antaios met him. Antaios, as his name tells us, was simply 'he who meets', and in speaking of appearances of ghosts they would say that they 'met' someone. Demeter, in her capacity as lady of the dead, who were called Demetreioi, was known as Mother Antaia,⁹⁹⁵ and above all, Hekate, the queen of the spectres which she used to send,⁹⁹⁶ was so called; she also could 'meet'. Concerning Antaios two different accounts were current. In one of them,⁹⁹⁷ he was king of the city of Irasa in Africa. Like Danaos, he instituted a race for the suitors of his most beautiful daughter, and that was how Alexidamos of Kyrene became his son-in-law. In the other,⁹⁹⁸ he was a giant, who used to insist upon wrestling with strangers, like Antagoras, whose name is little altered from his. He was stronger than anyone else, and used to decorate the temple of his father Poseidon with the skulls of those he defeated.

But the source of his strength was that he was also a son of Earth, and as soon as his body touched the ground his mother gave him still greater power.⁹⁹⁹ Herakles undertook the struggle with him; he had wrestled in like manner on Kos or at Alkestis' tomb. He did not let Antaios fall to the ground, or if he did, he raised him to his feet again. Thus the giant's strength was exhausted, and he was defeated and killed. But the hero, too, was worn out and lay down to sleep. Then came the Pygmies, the ridiculous dwarfs of the Egyptian territory, who so often play their pranks on Pompeian wall-paintings, and tried, so a quite late version has it,¹⁰⁰⁰ to avenge their brother Antaios. For they also had come forth from the earth. To them, Herakles was a veritable giant. They prepared an attack upon him with engines of war as against some strong fortress, and furnished the model for a much later tale, told not in Greece, but on a misty island the other side of the northern

Sea of the Dead. As for Herakles, he woke up and with a laugh gathered the dwarfs together in his lion-skin, to bring them to Eurystheus as worthy booty.

It was not only this tale that brought Herakles into connection with Egypt on his travels to Geryoneus; there is also the story of Busiris,¹ king of that city in the Nile delta which had the same name, or of another in the neighbourhood of Memphis. It was called 'House of Osiris' in Egyptian, and the word Busiris reproduces this name more or less. The tellers of the tale have transformed Osiris, god of the dead, into the tyrant Busiris. This king was in the habit of sacrificing strangers to Zeus,² and devoured human flesh himself.³ To make the tale more plausible, it was alleged⁴ that Egypt had been visited by nine years of drought, and a diviner from Cyprus had therefore explained an obscure oracle to mean that this horrible sacrifice was to be offered every year. Busiris began by sacrificing the diviner. When Herakles arrived in Memphis, he was made captive; he let it happen. It is also said⁵ that he was obliged to wrestle with the king. In wrestling, or, as the vase-painters like to show it, when he was to be sacrificed at the altar, he downed Busiris and made short work of him and all his blacks. But we have still something to say about Herakles and Antaios.

According to the later accounts, it was not in Libya but in Mauretania, on the straits which divide Africa from Europe, that Antaios and Herakles met. There the giant had founded the city of Tingis, the modern Tangiers, and there his grave was shown later, a mound in the shape of a man lying on his back.⁶ There the sea opens to the west much more widely than at Pylos, and far off opposite, on the Iberian coast, lies Cadiz. There Herakles erected his pillars with the inscription saying that from Gadeira there was no passage westwards.⁷ Further off still, the Guadalquivir runs into the Atlantic. The poet Stesichoros gives us the position of the island of Erytheia: it lay almost exactly opposite the mouth of that stream, the Tartessos of the ancients.⁸ The distance to Erytheia was not so

long as the way which the Sun had to travel to the eastern Ethiopians, but the direction was the same.

The narrators make the hero take this long journey for nothing; he was no nearer his goal here than he had already been 'at Pylos among the dead', where he had aimed his arrows at gods. He must draw his bow against gods if he would force a passage whose existence his inscription denied, there or here. The story goes on as if it immediately continued the events at Pylos. Herakles now drew his bow against the Sun-god,⁹ certainly not because of his great heat;¹⁰ Helios was frightened and lent the hero his great gold cup which he boarded every evening to get to the east across the Ocean.¹¹ The cup¹² was sent and steered by Erytheia, one of the Hesperides, after whom the Island of the Sunset-glow was named.¹³ When the hero was already seated in it, a last attempt to hinder his crossing was made by Okeanos, who roused the waves and showed his threatening countenance.¹⁴ But when Herakles drew his bow against him, he let him through.

On the red island, the hero established himself in the byres on the mountain Abas.¹⁵ The dog Orthos smelled him out at once and attacked him, but Herakles made an end of the beast with his club. Eurytion came to the dog's help and was killed. Another herdsman was pasturing his beasts in the neighbourhood; it was the herd of Hades and its guardian was called Menoites. He told Geryoneus of the robbery. The hero was already driving the cattle along the river Anthemos, the 'stream of flowers', when Geryoneus caught up with him. With three hands he brandished three spears against Herakles, and with three he held three shields to guard against him. He was like unto Ares when he strode to meet him.¹⁶ Herakles fought the triple-bodied monster and shot him down, took the herd with him into the cup and quickly landed at the river Tartessos. The Sun-god stepped into the golden vessel, and the son of Zeus disappeared into the dark thicket of laurels.¹⁷

There were many stories of his return to Argos along the shores of the Mediterranean with the beautiful herd. Robbers



30 HERAKLES AND THE STYMPHALIAN BIRDS



31 HERAKLES AND THE SEA-MONSTER



32 HERAKLES AND THE AMAZON ANDROMACHE



33 HERAKLES AMONG THE AMAZONS

lay in wait for that rare prize everywhere; and among all the peoples and at every city which he touched and because of which he must make longer and longer detours, from Mauretania¹⁸ to distant Scythia,¹⁹ the genealogists were ready to tell of matings of Herakles from which the ruling families might trace their descent. Not all the stories are to be repeated here, as they have hardly anything to do with the hero-legends of the Greeks. One of them, for example, was that which Prometheus had foretold to the hero;²⁰ for the journey to the Hesperides, on which allegedly Herakles met the Titan, did not in all accounts happen later than the wanderings with the cattle of Geryoneus. On the Ligurian coast, two sons of Poseidon tried to steal the cattle from Herakles.²¹ He killed them, and so had to fight the Ligurian nation. Herakles shot all his arrows at the attackers and then, still kneeling, groped for stones, but the ground was soft and he would no doubt have been overpowered had not Zeus come to his help with a rain of stones.²² Now he could drive off the Ligurians by pelting them. That spot became the stony *Plaine de la Crau*.

Herakles drove the cattle on, through the whole of Tyrhenia, the country of the Etruscans, to that place on the Tiber where Rome was later to arise. In those days a son of Volcanus (that was the name by which the inhabitants of the region called Hephaistos) had his dwelling on the Aventine; this was Cacus, whose shape was only half human.²³ He was a fire-breathing murderer, well worthy of his father, whose power was felt not far from the Aventine in the pyres where corpses were burned. Cacus is said also to have been three-headed,²⁴ like Geryoneus, and the story goes that he conceived a great desire for the cattle. He stole four bulls and four cows from Herakles and grasping them by the tails, dragged them backwards to his cave. The hero would never even have noticed the theft had not the imprisoned beasts bellowed when the herd, satisfied with pasture, was moving on. Herakles turned angrily back and ran to the Aventine, following the lowing of the cattle. Cacus was terrified and lowered a block of stone on

chains before the entrance to the cave. Herakles could not force such a gate, but tore a great rock from the hill, so that the cave was suddenly unroofed. That which was revealed there was like the realm of the departed.²⁵ Vainly did Cacus spew his fires against the hero, who caught him in his famous wrestler's grip, the 'knot of Herakles',²⁶ and squeezed him to death. He freed the cattle and dragged the half-bestial corpse out into the daylight. Near by he was given an altar by way of thanks; the Romans called it the *Ara Maxima*, and his hero-cult long endured there.

At the southernmost tip of Italy a young bull got loose²⁷ from the herd and swam across to Sicily. That is said to be why the town of Rhegion, now Reggio, was so called, from *rhēgynai*, 'to break loose', and the country was named after the young bull, Vitalia originally (*vitulus* is the native name for a bull-calf), later Italia.²⁸ Eryx, a son of Poseidon, added the bull to his own herd; this robber had given his name to Mount Eryx. When Herakles thereupon crossed the straits, Skylla also stole bulls from him,²⁹ but he struck her dead, and challenged Eryx, who was one of the Elymoi, to combat. The conditions were that the land of the Elymoi should belong to Herakles if he won, otherwise Eryx should have the entire herd.³⁰ Again it was to be a wrestling-match. Herakles defeated Eryx three times in wrestling; the Greeks, when they came from Sparta and took possession of the land, appealed to this.

Finally the hero with his cattle got to the Isthmus of Corinth. There a great enemy was lying in wait for him, the giant Alkyoneus.³¹ It has been told among the stories of the gods that two men who were partly mortal must be brought in to the battle between the Olympians and the Giants, since only so could victory be gained over the sons of Earth.³² These two were Dionysos and Herakles, the heroes among the gods. Herakles fought the giant Alkyoneus and killed him. The later version of this was that³³ the Giants assailed Herakles on his journey through Italy, at the *Campi Phlegraei* near Cumae,

and that it was the gods who hurried to his help. Thus he was victorious there over the Giants, and Alkyoneus among them.³⁴ According to another version the Phlegraean Fields and Palene, where Herakles fought Alkyoneus, lay on the Chalkidian Peninsula, which extends before Macedonia, and Herakles came there with his followers from Kos. There is yet another variant of the tale which shall likewise be told here.

Alkyoneus was a renowned cattle-owner, like Geryoneus;³⁵ allegedly his cattle had originally been those of the Sun, which pastured in Erytheia, whence the Giant had stolen them,³⁶ and that was the occasion of the fight between the Gods and the Giants.³⁷ But when Herakles and his followers assail the Giants in this version, that is another tale again. Alkyoneus did not let himself be taken by surprise, but shattered twelve war-chariots and their drivers and fighting men by hurling a single stone.³⁸ The tide turned only when Hypnos at the instigation of Pallas Athene put the Giant to sleep. We know of this only from the vase-painters, who show us the Giant asleep, the winged god of sleep hovering over him, and Herakles with his club and bow, followed by Telamon, approaching him from one side, while the goddess can be seen on the other. On other vase-paintings it is Hermes who is assisting the hero, but anyway it is a miniature gigantomachy, fought out by ruse, which causes the death of Alkyoneus in this telling of the story.

Or yet again, the whole business was enacted on the Isthmus; here the Giant was not a herdsman; his presence there, on the Alkyonian Gulf, the 'fulmars' sea', indicates rather that he was a being resembling Kyknos. Among the many reasons adduced for the crying of fulmars on those still winter days known for that reason as 'halcyon days',³⁹ one is that it is the lamentation of the daughters of Alkyoneus for their father whom Herakles killed. The stone which the Giant threw at the hero was shown on the Isthmus;⁴⁰ Herakles parried it with his club and knocked it back to the thrower. Afterwards he reached Mycenae with the cattle of Geryoneus, and Eurystheus sacrificed them to Hera.⁴¹

II

THE APPLES OF THE HESPERIDES

Herakles also had to get the golden apples from the Garden of the Hesperides. He had already wandered that far on the track of the Keryneian hind, and he might have got there from Libya⁴² or some other point on his journey to Erytheia. But in itself and without divine guidance and allowance, this was clearly impossible. The story was told⁴³ that to begin with he must seek out the daughters of Zeus and Themis on the Eridanos, presumably in that cave in which this divine stream breaks forth from beyond the world. The narrators call them merely nymphs, but the Moirai also were supposedly daughters of Zeus and Themis,⁴⁴ and so were the Hesperides.⁴⁵ These enigmatic goddesses were thus the appropriate counsellors. They knew Herakles to be immortal and that the entrance to the Garden of the Hesperides was therefore not debarred him. They advised him to seek out Nereus and use force on him till the Old Man of the Sea showed him the way.

We do not know where Herakles found him, in what bay of the Mediterranean, but it might have been at the mouth of the river Tartessos, since it is said also that Herakles got the gold cup in which to sail to Erytheia from Nereus,⁴⁶ even that he started the journey to the Hesperides from Tartessos,⁴⁷ and finally, that he used the Sun's cup on this journey, too.⁴⁸ Nor do we know why the hero had to wrestle with a younger sea-deity, Triton.⁴⁹ There were stories of Herakles' wrestling with the Triton or with Nereus, which furnished favourite subjects for early artists, but have since been lost. The Old Man of the Sea knew how to turn into various shapes, serpent, water and fire, but the hero would not let him go and gained the victory. The winner of the wrestling-match between Herakles and Nereus was to be given directions to the Garden of the Hesperides, and the prize of the journey originally was, most likely, to become a god.

Aeschylus, too, in his tragedy 'The Freeing of Prometheus',

provided Herakles with a counsellor and prophet in the person of the suffering Titan, the benefactor of mankind. Zeus had none the less reserved it for his son⁵⁰ to release Prometheus from his torments, after Herakles had offered Chiron to suffer eternally on his behalf. The wise Old Man of the Sea apparently had so directed the hero's journey that he began by arriving in the warm lands of the south. It is also said⁵¹ that he passed through Arabia and there killed a son of Eos and Tithonos, Emathion, who tried to stop him gathering the apples of the Hesperides.⁵² Thus he perhaps reached the sacred Red Sea with its purple sands, the sea that glitters like bronze and nourishes all, the sea of the Ethiopians on the Okeanos, where the all-seeing Helios bathes his immortal body and his tired horses in the warm flood of its gentle waters.⁵³

It was from there that the Titans too came to Prometheus, whose torments began on the Scythian Caucasus.⁵⁴ Here, bound to a pillar, said by some to have been driven like a stake through his middle⁵⁵ he was exposed to the eagle which by day devoured his immortal liver, an organ destined to grow again each night. One morning, when the eagle was coming, Herakles shot it; an ancient vase-painter depicts the scene,⁵⁶ while another old vase-painting shows, over against Prometheus, Atlas with the dragon of the Hesperides behind him.⁵⁷ In this version they perhaps were not opposite each other, like the Atlas range and the Caucasus, one at the eastern and the other at the western edge of the world, but one at the south and the other in the north. It is in the north that Atlas carries the axis around which the starry heavens revolve; the pole which the two Bears in the sky keep watch over is there.⁵⁸ Thus it seems that there were several approaches to the Garden of the Hesperides. Emathion had guarded one of them in the south. So Prometheus sent the hero to Atlas, the neighbour of the Hesperides, and advised him not to force a way into the Garden himself but to ask Atlas for the golden apples.⁵⁹ Herakles could probably never have got back from the Hesperides, according to the generally received account.

So according to this tale Herakles had still a long way to go, towards the north. Prometheus gave him exact directions;⁶⁰ it was a straight road on the mainland, as if the hero after all had started from the Caucasus and had first arrived there, as perhaps he also did to the extreme south, on some wonderful vehicle. Apart from that of the Sun's cup, there was a tale, in connection with the journey to Erytheia, of a bronze ship, on which instead of a sail Herakles used his lion-skin.⁶¹ But he could also wade across the sea when necessary.⁶² In fact a vase-painting shows him doing it, in a chariot, with Hermes guiding him.

He would come, the Titan foretold him, first into the realm of the north wind and must be careful lest the everlasting storms whirl him up into the air. Then his way would lead on across the land of the Scythians, who fed on cheese made of mares' milk, and, among them, through the most righteous and hospitable people on earth, the Gabioi, who had no need to work their fields, because the ground bore them everything of its own accord. There he would soon arrive at the Hyperboreans, beyond the Rhipaean Mountains, where the great river Istros (we know it better as the Danube) arises. In the story of the Keryneian hind he also got to the Hyperboreans and from there to the Hesperides, but it was unintentional then.

Certainly not all narrators made the hero take this long, roundabout route. For many, the Garden of the Hesperides lay where the voyage through the red waters by Atlas in the west ends.⁶³ Zeus had a palace there and Hera her marriage-bed, by immortal fountains, where the fruitfulness of the soil beatified even the gods.⁶⁴ The tree of the golden apples was Mother Earth's wedding-present to the Queen of the Gods,⁶⁵ and so something had to be said of it, its guardian serpent and the nymphs that guarded it, in the legends of the gods.⁶⁶ The former had been posted there by Hera; it was the serpent Ladon, a being which never closed its eyes.⁶⁷ The genealogists made out that it was the brother of Echidna, the mother of the deadly hounds Kerberos and Orthos and of the Hydra of

Lerna. Ladon also was many-headed, like the Hydra, and had many voices,⁶⁸ horrible no doubt, certainly not the clear tones of the Hesperides, the evening-daughters of Night, for their song rather attracted others to, than repelled them from, what they guarded.

The three Hesperides, or four, or more, were even equated with the death-goddesses who carried off their prey, the Harpies;⁶⁹ but they never left the Garden around the tree and they did not, like the Sirens, sing where the seafarers' tracks lay. Anyone who came to them, came as it were to the Island of the Blessed; no mortal ever found the road thither. But if anyone had succeeded in reaching them and if also he dared lay hands on the property of the Queen of the Gods, the golden fruit, that would have been double death for him, or would have meant the disturbance and destruction of a luxuriant, sacred region, so far off that it was not the concern of men.

Atlas, the neighbour of the Hesperides, was thought to be a cunning god, a deceitful, treacherous Titan, who was punished by having to hold up the axis of the sky.⁷⁰ He was prepared to get the golden apples, but made it a condition that the hero should carry the heavens in the meantime. Nothing is told us of the ruse by which he got the apples, but something of the trick he played on Herakles.⁷¹ He brought the golden fruit, but not to give it to the hero, who was to continue to hold up the sky in his stead. There was a comical old tale according to which Herakles made a show of agreeing, but asked just one favour of Atlas, that the Titan should take the sky on his shoulders again while Herakles prepared a cushion for his head. And now the cunning Titan proved a stupid Titan, for he laid the apples on the ground and took over the weight of the sky; while Herakles for his part hurried away with his booty to Eurystheus. A carving on a metope at Olympia shows him with the cushion on his neck. There, Pallas Athene is helping the hero, and Atlas, calm and wise, is bringing him the fruit.

But there is another form of the story, namely that Herakles

forced his way to the Hesperides, attacked the guardian serpent and finally killed it.⁷² On vase-paintings we see him also peacefully in the Hesperides' company; according to this version, he accomplished his task with the agreement and help of the goddesses. This is the latest form of the story, which is told us much more by vase-painters than by poets. True, it is also recorded⁷³ that Ladon, the never-sleeping snake, also protected the golden apples from the fancies of the Hesperides, who would gladly have plucked what belonged to Hera, or in another tradition, to Aphrodite.⁷⁴ They therefore gave their assistance to putting the serpent to sleep. The Attic master-painter Meidias, who introduced a whole company of heroes, like an Argonautic expedition, into the Garden of the Hesperides, makes the sorceress Medeia with her box of magic herbs take part in the journey. Assteas of Paestum portrayed the scene even more elaborately, for he puts Kalypso there, whose island, at the sea's navel,⁷⁵ belonged to the same realm beyond the world's end as the Garden of the Hesperides; she is offering the drink to the dragon in a cup, and he merely laps it up, without noticing that on the other side a Hesperid is plucking the fruit, nor that Herakles has already got one apple, and two Hesperides are actually eating others. According to one master, again of Attica, who also painted the Omphalos, the navel of the earth, on the vase,⁷⁶ the magic drink was wine. A great mixing-bowl stands there, the serpent is quite tame, the three Hesperides have become maenads, Panes are looking at them from the background, Iolaos is present also, and Herakles in the middle of the picture is garlanded by a flying Nike, for the victory is his. A third Attic master leaves out the dragon; it has been killed. The Hesperides surround Herakles and two younger heroes; behind his shoulder stands Eros and plucks the apples. Love rules. It is quite different from what we find in the poet Apollonios,⁷⁷ who brings his Argonauts to the Garden of the Hesperides the day after the serpent was killed. The goddesses are weeping in loud voices and in their grief change themselves into trees, a black poplar, an elm and a willow.

Another scene has not escaped the artists, or rather they alone have recorded it: Herakles giving back the stolen golden fruit to the gods, Zeus and Hera. We are told merely that he simply showed the apples to Eurystheus,⁷⁸ but it was stated⁷⁹ that the king of Mycenae would not take possession of the booty at all, that he presented it instead to the hero. It would not have been lawful to keep it anywhere, for the apples of the Hesperides constituted the property of the gods, even more sacred than their temple-treasures. If anyone had asked a narrator what became of them, his only possible answer would have been that they came back to their rightful owners.

12

THE HOUND OF HADES

Many narrators followed a sequence in which the bringing up of Kerberos took the last place but one and the tale of the apples of the Hesperides, which amounted to an apotheosis, concluded the list. By no means all did so,⁸⁰ however, for the final test of the divinity of the hero, the last attempt to send him to his death, was the task to capture the hound of Hades from the underworld. Eurystheus never contrived a harder labour for him, as the shadow which represented Herakles in the realm of the dead later recognised.⁸¹ Furthermore, this task again involved the violation of a sacred realm. The House of Hades behind its firmly fixed boundaries had been such a realm ever since the division of the universe between the highest gods. Its violation was an unheard-of exploit, which not even a hero could venture upon, least of all an ordinary hero. The heroes were tragically connected with Hades, save only the divine hero, the victorious fighter against death. But even he did not remain quite untouched in this struggle, as we shall hear later.

The Eleusinians told⁸² how Herakles, so as not to violate the gods of the underworld, first had himself initiated into the Mysteries; thus he could go to them as one of their own. But

he had already killed many and was polluted with the blood of his defeated enemies; he especially needed purification from the killing of the Centaurs. It was also stated⁸³ that in that age, when Eleusis did not yet belong to Athens, no foreigner might receive initiation. Hence Herakles had to be adopted by an Eleusinian called Pyllos, that is to say a 'man from Pylos' or 'from the gate of Hades', and thus became the 'Pylion's' son. This story merely tells in other words what the hero was to attain as an initiate. Eumolpos the hierophant, the high priest of the Mysteries, undertook to purify him; he had received the secret initiation personally from the founder and first initiate of the rite, the great goddess Demeter.⁸⁴ The ceremonies of purification which rid Herakles of pollution were by no means a secret; long after this story arose, they were still represented, for instance, on a sarcophagus and a marble urn found in the neighbourhood of Rome. There Herakles is sitting, with his head veiled, on a throne and having performed over him the sacred ceremonies that would give him back purity in the eyes of gods and men. Behind him is visible the foundress and patroness of the Mysteries, sitting on the closed basket which contained the secret objects used in the cult. On one of the two representations Herakles, now purified, is in the costume of an initiate and already making friends with the goddess' serpent. The initiations themselves might not be exposed to profane eyes, much less told to the uninitiate.

On the other hand, it seems as if certain verses of the poet Euphorion⁸⁵ referred to Eurystheus accompanying Herakles with his curses all the way from Eleusis across the Isthmus to Tainaron at the southern extremity of the Peloponnesos. He was shudderingly afraid that the hero would return alive once more, even from the underworld. Therefore he would have Artemis, to whom the southernmost tip of the peninsula was sacred—it was there that the entrance to the underworld was—shoot him down and make him carry Askalaphos' stone himself in the underworld. These ill-wishes no doubt are founded on the Eleusinian tale, but that was assuredly not the oldest.

Originally, Herakles did not make the detour through Eleusis to get from Tiryns to Tainaron. How this story was told in an old 'Descent of Herakles to Hades' is revealed to us only by the few traces which are left in the later narratives and in Vergil's account of Aeneas' visit to the underworld. From Tainaron a cavern led to the realm of the dead; Herakles forced his way in there, not like an initiate but, we may conjecture, sword in hand.⁸⁶ Elsewhere in this undertaking he tried again to make use of his sword, but vainly, for it seems that against the gods of the dead and the ghosts only wrestling or stone-throwing was of avail. The rough, evergreen strength of Charon, the old ferryman of the dead, is praised by the Roman poet,⁸⁷ but surely not with reference to Aeneas, who drew near him holily, with the golden bough. On the other hand, there might easily have been a wrestling-match between Charon and Herakles; but he must have been so terrified by the hero⁸⁸ that he took him aboard his ancient coracle, sewn together from bark.⁸⁹ The feeble craft all but sank under the weight of Herakles,⁹⁰ seeing that the same thing nearly happened to the Argo, the well-built ship of the Argonauts.⁹¹ Charon later was not pleased that he had taken him aboard,⁹² since, so the story goes, he had to spend a year in chains as punishment for it.⁹³

Thus the hero got across the waters of Hades. The swampy stream was fundamentally the same as the river Acheron, which forms the Acherusian Mere in north-west Greece, a swampy lake like that at Stymphalos. It was said especially of the Acheron in Epeiros and the Styx in Arkadia that they both ran into the underworld.⁹⁴ On the far bank of the swampy region Kerberos was waiting for the newcomers, like a good sheep-dog, knowing which he should include in Hades' flocks and which he should keep away. He even greeted with tail-waggings those whom he was to retain, but if they showed any intention of going back, he devoured them.⁹⁵ He was a beast who liked his meat raw,⁹⁶ and his barking had a metallic ring. He threatened to swallow everything when he opened his

three,⁹⁷ or even fifty,⁹⁸ mouths.⁹⁹ It was not without cause that the Hydra of Lerna was represented as his sister.¹⁰⁰ The artists show us that his body was partly made up of biting snakes, either forming his tail or growing out from him. But when Kerberos caught sight of Herakles, he fled trembling to his master, the king of the underworld, and hid under Hades' throne.¹⁰¹

The ghosts also fled before the hero;¹⁰² Meleagros was the only one whose ghost did not. He had died not long before, and having been obliged to leave his sister Deianeira unwedded in his father's house, entreated Herakles to take her to wife.¹⁰³ It is told how he met his future brother-in-law in shining armour and that Herakles bent his bow against him. But Meleagros explained to him that ghosts could not be wounded and also could not wound.¹⁰⁴ Then Herakles was still apprehensive lest it be Hera who had sent this shining hero against him; but when Meleagros told him his sad tale, there came tears into the eyes of the son of Zeus, for the first and only time. He himself asked Meleagros if he had not a sister left in the house of his father Oineus, for if so he would gladly marry her.¹⁰⁵ 'I left Deianeira at home, in the fresh bloom of youth, a stranger still to golden Aphrodite the enchantress,' answered Meleagros. Thus Herakles in the underworld chose a disastrous wife for himself.

Then the Gorgon's head met him. Before that terrible vision Odysseus was later to retreat without having seen it;¹⁰⁶ Herakles, on the other hand, drew his sword.¹⁰⁷ Again he was informed (it was believed that Hermes this time informed him) that the terrifying face in the realm of shadows was nothing but an empty appearance. But he perhaps attacked the image of Medusa. It was not the only time he assailed the ordinances of Hades, that seemed so inflexible. Under a stone, as it were in a tomb in the very underworld, lay Askalaphos, a daimon in the service of Hades, thus punished for having borne testimony against Persephone.¹⁰⁸ Herakles lifted the stone and set the daimon free, whereupon Askalaphos was turned by

Demeter, who never forgave him for what he had done, into a screech-owl. Herakles wished to feast all the ghosts on warm blood, and so butchered one of the cattle of Hades. Their herdsman was that same Menoites who had revealed the hero's presence to Geryoneus, Menoites son of Keuthonymos, 'him who conceals his name'.¹⁰⁹ He challenged the hero to wrestle with him, and Herakles gave him such a hug that he broke his ribs, and let him go only to please Persephone.

For now he had made his way to the throne of the King and Queen of the underworld. How the original story continued we are informed by a vase-painter. Herakles lifted a stone against the enthroned pair; Hades leapt up and ran away in one direction, his hound in another, but Persephone stayed where she was, face to face with the hero. Later narrators stated¹¹⁰ that the queen received the son of Zeus graciously; he was, after all, her brother. This was still more fitting if Herakles had already been initiated at Eleusis when he came to the realm of the dead.¹¹¹ And, as the tale continued,¹¹² the King of the underworld personally gave him permission to take the hound with him, if he could catch him without weapons, equipped only with his corselet and lion-skin. According to this version, then, Herakles went back to the gate of Hades on the Acheron, where Kerberos stood on guard, and choked him until he yielded. The beast still tried to bite him with his tail, but at last let himself be attached to a chain, and so the hero brought up the hound of Hades on the leash.

Near the gate he saw two captives, Theseus and Peirithoos, who were under punishment for trying to carry off the Queen of the underworld.¹¹³ This story also will be told later. Both heroes were sitting on a stone,¹¹⁴ condemned to sit there for ever.¹¹⁵ They reached out their hands to him as he went by, the rest of them being paralysed; Herakles was able at least to free Theseus from his rigidity; he took him by the hand and aroused him to life again. He wanted to do as much for Peirithoos, but the earth quaked and he let him be.¹¹⁶

Herakles saw the daylight again at Troizen, opposite Athens

on the eastern extremity of Argos,¹¹⁷ or else at Hermione,¹¹⁸ on the south side of the same peninsula. From there, still with Kerberos on the lead, he took the road to Tiryns and Mycenae. Drops fell freely from the foaming mouth of the trembling hound.¹¹⁹ Dragging behind, the snakes hissed under the monster's shaggy belly, right and left. His eyes sparkled with blue lights like the sparks that leap up in a smithy when iron is hammered and the anvil rings under the blows. But he came alive from Hades to Tiryns, the result of the last Labour for the hostile Eurystheus. At the cross-roads near Midea the horrified women and children saw the creature with their own eyes.

An ancient vase-painter has perpetuated the scene of the king of Mycenae fleeing from the chained monster, which was springing at him, into his underground jar, as he had done at sight of the boar of Erymanthos. In one account, Herakles himself led the hound back to Hades,¹²⁰ in another the beast got away from him at the fountain between Mycenae and the temple of Hera, which ever after was known as *eleuteron hydor*, 'the water of freedom'.¹²¹ But Herakles returned from the realm of the dead so formidably changed that he received an epithet connected with the name of Charon; in Boiotia he was worshipped as Charops.¹²²

CHAPTER III

Deeds and Sufferings After the Twelve Labours

I

KALLINIKOS

AFTER HERAKLES HAD RETURNED from the underworld, he justly bore his most famous epithet, Kallinikos, 'glorious victor'. The victory glorious among all victories was surely that over death, and Herakles, almost alone among all gods and heroes, was thus called.¹²³ It became customary among the most simple folk, certainly before late antiquity, to write up over the door:¹²⁴

'Here dwells the Glorious Victor, Herakles,
The son of Zeus; let nothing evil enter.'

'Evil' means above all else death, which people preferred not to mention openly nor write over their own doors. Herakles alone was able to drive away this evil when it was already in the house and he came almost too late and by chance. Poor stupid Death for his part was to believe that the hero had arrived there ahead of him.

The first altar to Herakles Kallinikos,¹²⁵ or Herakles Alexikakos, another name with much the same meaning as the lines just quoted, 'Herakles averter of evil',¹²⁶ is said to have been dedicated by Telamon at the capture of Troy, when he was himself threatened with death by the jealous Herakles; his appeal to that characteristic of the hero saved him. And the victory over Troy now leads us to the history of Herakles' successful campaigns. The Dorians in particular insisted that

the hero had three times helped their oldest king, Aigimios,¹²⁷ under whom they had not yet emigrated to the Peloponnesos; first against the Lapithai, next against the Dryopes and lastly against king Amyntor of Ormenion, all inhabitants of Thessaly and Trachis, in the neighbourhood of the fateful Mount Oita. In Sparta itself, where the Dorians did not yet live, it was Herakles who defeated Hippokoon, brother of Tyndarcos, and his twenty sons and brought back the earthly father of the Dioskuroi to his hereditary throne.¹²⁸

He also owed himself another campaign, the punitive expedition against Augeias, who had cheated him out of his payment for the cleansing of the byres. The king of Elis was helped by the twins whom Molionē, the wife of Aktor, had borne to Poseidon. Aktor was Augeias' brother, and the twins were called the Aktorione after their earthly father, the Molione after their mother.¹²⁹ These sons of Poseidon, Kteatos and Eurytos,¹³⁰ came forth from an egg, like the Spartan Dioskuroi; it was of silver,¹³¹ and the two brothers formed an even more inseparable unit than Kastor and Polydeukes. If one of them held the reins of the steeds who drew their war-chariot, the other wielded the lash.¹³² It was said¹³³ that they were twins in a special sense, a pair grown together, and they gave Herakles more trouble than the byres of Augeias.

Even Herakles cannot overcome two, so said the old proverb,¹³⁴ and the marvellous sons of the god defeated his army when he lay in ambush with it in Elis.¹³⁵ It is said that his half-brother Iphikles fell in that fight.¹³⁶ For, says the tale, during that campaign Herakles was smitten with a disease;¹³⁷ we shall hear presently of this ailment, into which his lust for vengeance could grow. On that occasion he had arranged a truce with the Aktorione, but when they heard of Herakles' illness, they broke the truce and the war continued annihilatingly, till it had to be interrupted because of the festal season of the Isthmian Games. The twins set out to the Games and were treacherously attacked by Herakles at Kleonai; only so did they suffer defeat and fall by the hand of the hero,¹³⁸ and that



34. HELIOS SHOT AT BY HERAKLES



35. HERAKLES AND GERYONEUS



36 HERAKLES IN THE CUP OF THE SUN

success brought him no renown. In this mournful way his struggle against the cunning Augeias and his superhuman allies came to its end. Vainly did Molionē endeavour by her curses to avenge her murdered sons.¹³⁹ In Elis, Herakles set Phyleus, Augeias' son who had formerly borne witness on his behalf, upon the throne in place of his father.¹⁴⁰

He then proceeded to the re-founding of the Olympic Games and became the originator of the finest victories which antiquity knew.¹⁴¹ The winner at Olympia received the garland of olive twigs that Herakles had brought with him from the land of the Hyperboreans.¹⁴² There was another sacred tree which Herakles had transplanted from Acheron to Olympia, the white poplar;¹⁴³ only from its wood might the altar-fire of Zeus at Olympia be lit. Herakles also built the great pyre for hero-offerings to Pelops,¹⁴⁴ erected twelve altars for the twelve gods,¹⁴⁵ and celebrated the Olympic Games in the manner in which they were ever after celebrated. It is added¹⁴⁶ that he won the victory in every contest; who indeed could have seriously wanted to contend with him, the Kallinikos?

2

THE MADMAN

During the time of his service with Eurystheus, Herakles was long absent from the family which he had founded in Thebes. Their destiny belongs properly to the Theban legends and many narrators put it before the Twelve Labours, indeed make out that Herakles took on himself the servitude at Tiryns by way of penance for the fate of his children.¹⁴⁷ However, this tradition of the Boiotians, that Herakles came back from the realm of the dead as Charops—that is to say, grimly altered—seems to justify Euripides, who put this tragic story on the stage and made it take place immediately after the return from the underworld.

The Thebans knew of eight sons whom Megara bore to

Herakles.¹⁴⁸ They did them honour at their graves as young heroes and called them the Chalkoarai, 'those upon whom a curse of bronze fell', but they did not like to tell the story of how these unfortunates met their deaths at their own father's hand. According to Euripides there were but three, but the possibilities of the stage limited him in his representation. In his 'Herakles' he brings on a king Lykos, as in the 'Antiope', this time the son of the other Lykos, who persecutes and wishes to destroy the hero's family, his old stepfather Amphytryon, Megara his wife, and the three sons. They know that Herakles has forced his way into the underworld and that he has not yet returned from it, so now belongs to the dead. Even Amphytryon and Megara can see no way out of their desperate plight than death along with the children. The three little ones are already arrayed as for burial,¹⁴⁹ when Herakles enters, returned from the underworld. He has not gone to Eurystheus, but has left Kerberos in the precinct of the infernal Demeter, Demeter Chthonia, at Hermione,¹⁵⁰ and has hurried to Thebes. He is, however, somewhat confused. He does not at once recognise old Amphytryon, or his name has slipped his memory.¹⁵¹ He threatens the ungrateful Kadmeians with massacre.¹⁵² Now, with Megara and the children, who are soon joined by Amphytryon also, he finds Lykos and his satellites in the palace. They have no idea of his arrival and are killed in a moment. But madness is already in the house. Euripides makes it also come on to the stage in the person of Lyssa, 'insanity' who is sent by Hera and guided by Iris. Herakles is seized by madness and imagines he is now hurrying to Eurystheus, indeed that he is already in his house and that his own children are the other's. He hunts them down, strikes one dead with his club, dispatches the other two with arrows, shoots down Megara, and would kill Amphytryon as well did not Pallas Athene throw a 'stone of sobriety', *lithos sophronister*,¹⁵³ against his breast. At this he collapses, falls into a deep sleep, and wakes heavily, knowing nothing of what he has done.

Euripides himself alludes to the earlier form of the legend,

when he makes Herakles speak of purifying fire.¹⁵⁴ In the original story, it seems he kindled such a fire after his return home. The vase-painter Assteas portrays it, showing him bringing up the first child, after having already thrown the furniture and fittings of the house into the flames. Iolaos, Alkmene, and Mania, 'madness', are looking on from the background, as from the upper storey of the palace, and Megara, lamenting, is escaping through the open door. It was indeed told that Herakles threw his sons into the fire.¹⁵⁵ Another account is¹⁵⁶ that when he recovered his senses he married Megara to Iolaos and left Thebes for ever, to found a family elsewhere. For Herakles was no kidnapper of women like Theseus, the son of Poseidon; this did not happen even in the case of Auge, a peculiar story which shall be told in connection with her son Telephos. Even after this misfortune he remained the servant of Hera.

However, the narrators of the tales concerning Herakles' new courtship have but to postpone the time at which the purifying fire, originally intended for himself, into which he threw his sons first, should at the last flame for him. A courtship which after all lapsed into the rape of a girl and involved him in the sin of murdering a guest-friend brought Herakles living to the pyre.

3

THE SINNER

Herakles got no glory from that earlier deed by which he ambushed and killed the two Molione on their way to the Isthmian Games, but it was a result of the deceit which Augeias, the uncle of the divine twins, had committed against the hero. It belonged to the story of the king of Elis' byres and also no doubt to that of his daughter, who had been promised to Herakles. There is a certain resemblance between that tale and the adventure of Herakles with Eurytos, lord of the

stronghold of Oichalia, which led him first to murder a guest-friend and later to abduct a girl.

No one knows exactly where Eurytos' town lay. Five Greek cities claimed to have been that Oichalia, one in Messenia, others in Thessaly, Aitolia, on Euboia and in Trachis. Perhaps those are right, though, who heard in the name of Oichalia that of the *oichomenoi*, the departed. Eurytos means 'good archer', one who draws his bow and hits the mark, like Apollo, the *rhytōr toxōn*.¹⁵⁷ He was a son of Melas or Melaneus, 'the black one'.¹⁵⁸ It is also told¹⁵⁹ that he challenged Apollo himself to a contest in archery and was shot down by the god. Apollo in person had given him his bow¹⁶⁰ and instructed him in the use of it;¹⁶¹ so the narrators express his close relationship to the god, making Eurytos almost appear as a second Apollo. Apollo at any rate is said to have been his grandfather.¹⁶² The bow which he had from him Eurytos left to his son Iphitos,¹⁶³ who in turn gave it to Odysseus when he met him on the disastrous search for his father's mares in Messenia.¹⁶⁴ And the suitors of Penelope met their deaths on a feast-day of Apollo by the god's gift,¹⁶⁵ as shall be told later.

Like other cruel kings, who were one and all doubles of the death-god, Eurytos proclaimed that he would give his daughter, the beautiful Iole with her flower-name (its older form is Viola, that is to say Violet) in marriage to anyone who defeated him in his speciality.¹⁶⁶ It was told of him as of Oinomaos that he was in love with his daughter and wanted to keep her for himself,¹⁶⁷ which was why he made victory in a contest of archery the condition. Herakles, after awaking from his madness and parting with Megara, came to Oichalia to compete; a later tale¹⁶⁸ says that he had himself been Eurytos' pupil in archery, while others made out that his teacher was a Scythian,¹⁶⁹ or a Cretan, Rhadamanthys,¹⁷⁰ who by one account¹⁷¹ came to Boiotia and took Alkmene to wife after Amphytrion's death. No one was so appropriate an opponent as Herakles for the 'invincible bowman'. Or what other name suits Eurytos as well?



37 HERAKLES WITH THE HESPERIDES



38 HERAKLES BEFORE ZEUS WITH THE APPLES
OF THE HESPERIDES



39 HERAKLES CHAINING KERBEROS



40 HERAKLES AND THE KERKOPES

Details of the contest in archery at Oichalia are told us only by vase-painters, and even they are not sufficiently in accord. Once we see four arrows already sticking in the target, but Herakles, who in all accounts won the match, killed two sons of Eurytos as well, one of them being Iphitos. He is now aiming his bow at the girl, as if he would send even the prize of the archery contest into the underworld; Eurytos and a brother of the girl are trying to restrain the hero from shooting. All accounts agree that although he won the contest they refused him the prize; but now they are compelled to give him Iole. The other side of the vase shows him on a couch, while Dionysos enters the house and the bride crowns the victor with a garland. On another vase-painting Iole stands between the recumbent men, Herakles on one side of her, her father and brothers on the other. Other vase-painters again represent an attack on Herakles by the sons of Eurytos, who have taken away his bow and his club at a banquet. We are told only¹⁷² of the insulting speech in which Eurytos and Iole's brothers excuse their promise-breaking. They reproach the hero with the murder of his children which he had committed when mad, and having disarmed him and weakened him with wine, fling him contemptuously out of the house.¹⁷³

That was the cause of the capture of Oichalia, which, like the punitive expedition against Augeias, must inevitably follow on the deceit and shame. Iphitos, the eldest son of Eurytos, had had the ill-luck to fall into the hands of Herakles still earlier. In seeking twelve mares¹⁷⁴ which had their mule-colts still at their udders, Iphitos came to Tiryns, Herakles, seat. Herakles was in possession of the mares, whether he had taken them himself by way of reprisals¹⁷⁵ or Autolykos had stolen them for him from Eurytos;¹⁷⁶ but he was meditating greater schemes of revenge.¹⁷⁷ He received Eurytos' son hospitably, even inviting him in as if nothing had happened.¹⁷⁸ And, reverencing neither the watchful eyes of the gods nor the table which he had set before his guest, he murdered Iphitos.¹⁷⁹ The criminal act is variously described, but all narrators agree¹⁸⁰

that the host took his guest around the tops of the Cyclopean walls of Tiryns and flung him down from a tower.

Herakles, it was said later,¹⁸¹ had two attacks of insanity, first when he murdered the children and the second time when he murdered his guest. Crime and madness both demanded that the doer should be purified and absolved. Herakles found someone to purify him at Amyklai near Sparta; his name was Deiphobos, son of Hippolytos; no more is told us of this purification,¹⁸² but at least it gave the story-tellers their chance to attach at this point the account of another enmity. This hostility, which made Herakles a still greater sinner, was between him and one who was even greater than the great Eurytos,¹⁸³ the deadliest of all archers. The story went that the hero forced his way into the shrine of Apollo at Delphi and sought to pillage the holiest object that was preserved there, the tripod with its cauldron.

Apollo had twice opposed him during the performance of his Twelve Labours. He supported his sister when Herakles had made his way too far into Artemis' realm and was taking the hind of Keryneia. Also he joined the other gods in defending Pylos, the gate through which Herakles broke to get into the other world. But now he had to defend his own temple against Herakles, who broke into the holy of holies to take possession of the most sacred thing his brother owned. This sin would have been Herakles' greatest exploit, all the greater because Apollo was the greater name of the enemy whom he perpetually fought, greater than all others. However, this adventure was but the boundary of his deeds; it was their significant condensation for those who chose to remember that the arrows of the god in his wrath were most potent to bring death to beasts and men.¹⁸⁴

The robbery of the tripod was later explained¹⁸⁵ by saying that Herakles meant to found an oracle of his own with the holy apparatus, and that he took it as far as Pheneos in Arkadia, wherefore Apollo still held a grudge against the people of that place a thousand years later. A story was told that the quarrel

between the two sons of Zeus started for the reason¹⁸⁶ that Herakles wanted to consult the oracle of Delphi on something, and the Pythia gave him answer that the god was not there and would give him no response. Yet another version made the hero come to Delphi for purification and be repulsed.¹⁸⁷ The murder of Iphitos was reason enough for denying Herakles the oracle, if he entered the temple himself, for homicides were debarred from the sanctuary,¹⁸⁸ although they might get advice as to atonement through a third party.

Artists were fond of immortalising the scene of the quarrel at its hottest, for in it they saw nothing but a strife between brothers, a play between gods. They did this in Delphi itself, and the Thebans even stamped their coins with the figure of Herakles hurrying away with the tripod after his sacrilege. Here the sculptors and vase-painters take up the thread of the story. The hero has already left the temple and seems to have got quite a distance with the tripod along a certain road when Apollo overtakes him, in the company of Artemis. Athene participates in the plundering at the hero's side. The goddesses try to hold him back or to separate the pair; the god holds one foot of the sacred object, Herakles raised his club. If the goddesses did not succeed, only Zeus could end the strife of his sons; it was said that he threw his thunderbolt between the combatants.¹⁸⁹ Thereupon they separated and concluded peace. Perhaps this happened as far from Delphi as Gytheion on the coast of Lakonia, for that town is alleged to have been founded by them in common, after their reconciliation.¹⁹⁰

After this, Herakles had to make atonement—for the sacrilege, according to some,¹⁹¹ but at all events for the murder of his guest. That was the will of Zeus,¹⁹² and so Apollo advised.¹⁹³ He must pay the price of blood, according to one version,¹⁹⁴ not to Iphitos' father but to his brothers; this presupposes that he had already killed Eurytos at the archery contest in Oichalia, and that it was the brothers who would not give him *iole* but sent him away with desire for revenge in his heart. And now he must atone further by taking on himself

the service of a slave for three years. Hermes conducted him to the slave-market and sold him for three talents;¹⁹⁵ the Lydian queen who bought him was named Omphale.

4

THE SERVANT OF WOMEN

Not all tellers of the story believed that Herakles' servitude to Queen Omphale of the golden sandals¹⁹⁶ needed any particular explanation; the Daktyl-nature of the servant of Hera was enough. Servitude to women in that land of gold where once Tantalos ruled was connected with the other adventures of the hero; he might, for instance, have deserted the Argonauts for the beautiful queen's sake.¹⁹⁷ It was perhaps the Lydians themselves or the Greeks in their neighbourhood who started the story¹⁹⁸ that the double axe, the cognisance of the Lydian kings before Kandaules, was a present from Herakles to Omphale; he had taken this sacred weapon from Hippolyte queen of the Amazons, and brought it to Sardes. An old legend again was that of the inhabitants of the island of Kos, which lay within sight of the shores of Asia; they worshipped Herakles as their marriage-deity,¹⁹⁹ put women's clothes on their bridegrooms and alleged²⁰⁰ that Herakles had been the first to do the like in the abode of a Thracian slave-girl. The same is said to have been his lot now with Omphale.

In another tale,²⁰¹ the ancestress of the Lydian kings with their double axe, who were descendants of Herakles, was a slave-woman, daughter of Iardanos. Iardanos is the name of a river in Lydia,²⁰² and Omphale was said to have been his daughter, destined to found a dynasty with Herakles.²⁰³ Her name is the feminine form of *omphalos*, 'navel', and we could believe that slave-women bore that name. But not only does the river-god Iardanos appear as her father, but the mountain-god Tmolos as her first husband,²⁰⁴ and in all accounts she was the mistress and Herakles the servant. What

the Greek narrators were trying to express when they called her a slave-woman or a widow, glossing the matter over or denying it completely, was the most natural thing in the world in Lydia, where the girls did not live as virgins but as courtesans.²⁰⁵ They did so in order to marry; it was the way they collected their dowry, and so arranged their own weddings as their own mistresses.²⁰⁶ Also, *omphalos* means not only the navel of the human body but also a stone object of cult, the navel of the earth, with which also was connected the worship of a goddess, Themis at Delphi, Aphrodite at Paphos.

It is true that no account speaks of Omphale as a goddess; the narrators, who are all Greeks, portray her to us rather²⁰⁷ as a wanton, although Herakles behaves no differently to her than the Koan bridegroom at his wedding. It is often told, and shown by the later artists, how the hero, to please his mistress, put on women's clothes; generally they are portrayed as the clothes and ornaments of Omphale herself. There is still something ceremonial about it when, in a late narrative,²⁰⁸ Herakles first holds the golden parasol over the queen's head as they go to the festival of Dionysos in the vineyards of Tmolos, and then on the eve of the feast-day, chaste and completely continent, they exchange clothes, he putting on all Omphale's delicate and costly attire and she arrayed in his lion-skin and taking his club in her hand.

It was the late narrators also who elaborated Herakles' service to a woman into woman's work, or into a task set him like those in the service of Eurystheus. A spindle was put in his hand and he was set to prepare wool with the slave-girls.²⁰⁹ Of the innumerable deeds attributed to Herakles, those were sought out which could appear petty alongside the twelve Great Labours, and represented as tasks set her servant by the Lydian queen.²¹⁰ Some told a tale²¹¹ of an all-destroying serpent at the Lydian river Sangarios which Herakles killed as he had the Hydra of Lerna, and gave that as the reason why he came among the constellations as Ophiuchos, the man holding a serpent.

One task which he allegedly performed at Omphale's bidding

was to catch the tailed Kerkopes.²¹² 'Tailed' is what their name means, and they might be thought to be Kabeiroi quite as well as monkeys. Old narrators gave them such designations as:²¹³

'Liars and cheats, doers of naughty deeds,
Deceivers; as they journeyed far and wide,
Vagabonds all their days, they choused mankind.'

They comprised a pair of brothers called Olos and Eurybatos. The name Eurybatos actually got the meaning of 'swindler'.²¹⁴ It was said of them both that they came from 'Oichalia' (we know what that place could signify), and that they wandered about cross-roads and robbed the Boiotians. They were known by other names also, which reveal that they were in fact the Kabeiric brethren. One of these brothers was named Akmon,²¹⁵ that is to say 'anvil', and Akmon and Passalos, 'anvil' and 'peg', were also names of Kerkopes,²¹⁶ while their mother was said to be Theia, 'the divine', a daughter of Okeanos,²¹⁷ elsewhere a Titaness,²¹⁸ and a name of the divine Great Mother.

In Asia Minor the Kerkopes were settled in the neighbourhood of Ephesos;²¹⁹ in mainland Greece their haunt was Thermopylai, the narrowest part of the pass through the 'warm gates' (that is what the name means),²²⁰ whose healing springs, according to a later belief, Pallas Athene once caused to arise for Herakles when he was tired.²²¹ It was a place for robbers, but, because of the hot springs, for the Kabeiroi also. There Herakles fell asleep on one of his many journeys. The mother of the Kerkopes had warned them to beware of the *melampygos*, the 'black-rumped man',²²² but the hero was sleeping on his back with his weapons beside him.²²³ These the brothers tried to get hold of, but Herakles was not sleeping deeply enough; he woke up and caught them both in his bare hand, tied the absurd creatures together, hung them by the feet to a carrying-pole, like two buckets, and took them with him. Being head downwards, the fellows laughed aloud behind the back of the hero, although no doubt they were badly frightened at first, for their mother's warning was coming true. Herakles,

surprised, asked them what they were laughing at, and then laughed with them. By way of reward, he let them loose from their bonds. Another tale was that Zeus later turned them into monkeys and sent them to populate the Pithekusai, Monkey Island, Ischia.²²⁴ In southern Italy a farce was played and a vase-painting preserves it, in which Herakles brings them, like two monkeys, in a double cage to king Eurystheus, and amuses himself at his expense.

Another task, alleged again to have been by command of Omphale, was to work for Syleus, the robber who owned a vineyard. 'Robber' is too polite a translation of his name, for a *syleus* is one who takes everything, down to the bare body, and then sells that too. In this story Syleus made the stranger work as a slave in his vineyard.²²⁵ But he had a brother named Dikaïos, 'the just',²²⁶ and a daughter, by name Xenodike, 'she who is righteous to strangers';²²⁷ Syleus alone appears to have dealt outrageously with passing strangers. Where he did so is a point on which the narrators did not agree, for there was a Plain of Syleus in Macedonia,²²⁸ but those who told the story so as to make Omphale send out the hero to destroy the brigand made Syleus a Lydian.²²⁹

As Euripides represented the story on the stage in his satyr-play 'Syleus' it was Hermes who sold the hero to the robber. It was not an easy bargain, for Herakles did not look in the least like a slave,²³⁰ and who wanted to buy a master for his house,²³¹ whose very look induced fear? His flaming eyes were like those of a bull which sees a lion. He did not need even to open his mouth²³² for it to be understood that he was one who gave orders, not took them. Only Syleus was bold enough to buy this slave from the messenger of the gods, and having bought him, he sent him to his vineyard to dig around the vines. That was what Herakles was waiting for, to get a mattock into his hand. Xenodike might run away with the club and lion-skin, which she stole from the hero—a vase-painting shows her doing it, and later narrators make out that she was punished, like her father²³³—but the hero used the mattock as no one else ever did.

He began by digging up all the vines, roots and all,²³⁴ then carried them to Syleus' house and lit a great fire, to bake bread and roast meat. He sacrificed the best bull to Zeus,²³⁵ broke the cellar open and took the cover off the finest wine-jar. He lifted the house door off its hinges and used it as a table, and to put the fire out again he led a river into the garden. Then he began to feast. When Syleus suddenly appeared, furious at the spoiling of his whole property, Herakles invited him to sit down at table too.²³⁶ Whereat, it seems, the ill-advised savage broke out into abuse, and did not escape death. The club somehow awoke in the hero's hand.²³⁷ He bade Xenodike dry her tears and pulled her into the house, but certainly not to punish her.

According to a later version, their love-story played itself out in the house of Dikaios on Mount Pelion.²³⁸ He, after his brother's death, became the girl's foster-father and Herakles' host, and Xenodike became Herakles' wife. When he moved on, she died of longing for him, but he had not left his beloved wife for ever, and came back to her. He found her lying dead on the funeral pyre and wished to choose a fiery death for her sake, but he was restrained, and a shrine of Herakles was built over Xenodike's grave.

The scene of a further deed on the hero's part was the land of Phrygia, which borders on Lydia. But concerning this same deed it is nowhere said that it was performed by order of Omphale. It does, however, belong to Herakles' Asian adventures quite as much as his servitude to the queen of Lydia. It is the tale of the Phrygian reaper Lityrses, who was also a reaper of men. The song which aroused people to their work at harvest-time was also called Lityrses in Greek districts,²³⁹ after the divine reaper who had sung it for the first time.²⁴⁰ No doubt the song originally told how he forced harvest work to be done, even if that was forgotten or suppressed by more delicate singers later. Lityrses lived at Kelainai, the 'dark place', and obliged strangers when they passed that way to compete with him in handling the reaping-hook.²⁴¹ Those whom he defeated he flagellated, so the gentler form of the story said,



41 THE SHOOTING-MATCH AT OICHALIA



42 THE FIGHT FOR THE TRIPOD



43 NESSOS CARRIES OFF DEIANEIRA



44 HERAKLES LEAVING THE FUNERAL PYRE

which doubtless was heard in the majority of the reapers' songs. But it was also told²⁴² that he used to mow the heads off those he defeated (and everyone was worsted against a divine reaper), and bind up their trunks with his sheaves. His father was said to be king Midas,²⁴³ but it is no earthly king who brings home such harvests, only the lord of the underworld.

Furthermore, Lityrses was supposed to be a huge eater.²⁴⁴ He consumed daily three ass-loads of bread alone and called his wine-cup, which held three amphorae, a 'small measure'. That is stated in a satyr-play which told²⁴⁵ how Daphnis, the tender, beloved shepherd, fell into the clutches of this Phrygian ogre and nearly became his victim. But, we are further assured,²⁴⁶ Lityrses was not grudging when others ate with him, and entertained his victims. Herakles appeared at the feast, and began by taking up the king's challenge to a mowing-race. They mowed on the fertile banks of the Maeander, where the corn grew as high as a man. To end it, the hero mowed off Lityrses' head and flung his headless body like a discus into the river.²⁴⁷

It is told, moreover,²⁴⁸ that Herakles was first restored to health by the hot springs of the Lydian rivers Hyllos and Acheles, the latter a tributary of the former. Nymphs, the daughters of Acheles, bathed him in the hot water; and he named one of his sons, whom he begot on Deianeira, Hyllos, and another, whom he had by Omphale, Acheles.

5

THE RESCUER OF
HERA AND OF DEIANEIRA

Herakles was most emphatically a servant of women with Omphale; but he was also a servant of women in his capacity of rescuer—of Hesione from the sea-monster, of Alkestis from Death, of the daughter of Dexamenos from the Centaur. In all these rescues he appeared also as Hera's servant. The story went

that he had rescued the Queen of the Gods herself from similar distress.

That must have been a remarkable story-teller to recount this tale to the artists who reproduced and alone preserved it. He would not be misled in the least by the enmity which according to the poets existed between Hera and Herakles. On the metopes of the temple of Hera where the Sele runs into the sea at Paestum, but also on an Attic vase-painting, we see how the attack took place. It was no Centaur but impudent Silens who were the aggressors. In the heavens themselves, in the Greek representations of the Zodiac, a Silen replaces the Centaur-like Bowman. It was Silens who stopped the goddess on her way, when once she was travelling on Earth.²⁴⁹ Herakles suddenly appeared, to rescue her. The Attic vase-painter added Hermes also as the escort of the Queen of the Gods, but her real rescuer, the one with whom Hera is visibly taking refuge, is the hero who bore her name in his own, and there he stands, with a sword on the metope, with his club on the vase.

In like manner Herakles became the rescuer of Deianeira. This was one of the several names given also to the daughter of Dexamenos who was so nearly the victim of the Centaur. But the real Deianeira was the daughter of Oineus, or as others would have it,²⁵⁰ of Dionysos himself, who had visited queen Althaia in Kalydon. To judge by her name she should be a virgin hostile to men, not merely warlike.²⁵¹ She must have hesitated long before taking a husband, therefore her brother Meleagros implored Herakles in the underworld to take her to wife, since they only seemed worthy of each other.

But when the hero set out on the journey to Aitolia, where Oineus was lord of Pleuron and Kalydon, between the rivers Acheloos and Euenos, a powerful suitor had long been troubling her, and came a-wooing in many forms.²⁵² He was the river-god Acheloos, and courted her as a bull, a serpent, or as a man with a bull's head, like another Minotaur.²⁵³ The ancient artists showed him as a bull with a horned and bearded head,

or even as a Bull-Centaur, except when they wanted to express his likeness to Triton, the Centaur of the sea.²⁵⁴ That he had more than a little to do with the realm of the dead is made clear by the tales which connect him with the Sirens, both the earlier one,²⁵⁵ according to which he was their father, and the later,²⁵⁶ in which they arose from the drops of blood he shed when Herakles broke his horn off.

For that was to be the upshot of it.²⁵⁷ Deianeira looked on from the high bank of the river,²⁵⁸ too frightened to watch her two suitors wrestling with one another.²⁵⁹ It was a real competition, an *agon*, with the bride for prize.²⁶⁰ Later narrators laid much stress on Herakles winning both the bride and Acheloos' horn, which they equated with the horn of Amaltheia, the inexhaustible vessel of plenty which in many works of art the hero carries instead of his club, or receives from Dionysos.²⁶¹ It was also said²⁶² that Acheloos got his own horn back from Herakles, exchanging it with the hero for that of Amaltheia. So the river-god retired defeated, but not without leaving a valuable gift behind.

With this victory over a god the story of Deianeira's homecoming began, but it did not end there. We have already heard, in the history of Meleagros, of old king Oineus.²⁶³ He was a kindly monarch, hospitable and to judge by his name a double of the wine-god; but as the wicked and lawless Syleus, the owner of the vineyard, had a righteous brother in the worthy Dikaios, so Oineus had a savage one. The parents of this pair of unlike brothers were Portheus,²⁶⁴ 'the plunderer' and Euryte.²⁶⁵ Among the sons of Oineus were, besides Meleagros, Toxeus, 'the archer', Thyreus 'the porter', and Klymenos 'the famous'—beings, one and all, with names belonging to Hades. Anyone wishing to leave the kingdom of Oineus in a westerly direction, though the country itself lay to the west, must get across the Acheloos; those who wished to go eastwards must cross the Euenos. On this river, which formerly was known as the Lykormos,²⁶⁶ Herakles and Deianeira met the Centaur, Nessos, as the young wife was being

taken home. The name Nessos was also borne by a river-god, one of the sons of Okeanos.²⁶⁷ This was the ferryman who took people across the water on his back and demanded payment for it.²⁶⁸

Nessos gave out that he had received the office of ferryman from the gods to reward him for his justice,²⁶⁹ and asked no other payment from Herakles than to take the young wife across the river first. He had hardly got Deianeira on his back when he began to molest her. The vase-paintings show us the hero running after him and, whether the Centaur still has his victim on his back or Herakles has recovered her, running him through with a sword or felling him with his club. Then he had to carry her across the water himself, which he doubtless did, although this form of the story has not come down to us. A variant is that Nessos did not molest Deianeira till they reached the far bank.²⁷⁰ The poet Archilochos has described how the young wife, when she realised what the Centaur intended, broke out into long wails and called to her husband for help.²⁷¹ Now Herakles had to display his skill as an archer; his arrow struck the violator from the other bank and saved his wife.

Sophokles, who put the story of Deianeira on the stage in his tragedy 'The Women of Trachis', makes the heroine herself tell of how the misfortune took place in the Euenos. Herakles appears to have waded safely through the water, as he does in other versions also.²⁷² Deianeira felt Nessos' presumptuous hand half-way across the river.²⁷³ She screamed, and the son of Zeus, who had just reached the far bank, turned around and sent his arrow through the breast of the Centaur. While dying he still had time to deceive Herakles' wife. He wished, said the liar, to do her a last favour. The blood which ran out of his poisoned wound had great magical powers, and she should collect it. No doubt Deianeira was carrying a little bottle to hold drinking-water, after the usual manner of Greek travellers. Herakles, so said the lying Centaur, would fall in love with no other woman if he wore a shift saturated with Nessos' blood.

Deianeira followed this fatal advice, caught Nessos' blood when he reached the bank at the point of death, and kept it in her house, hidden in a bronze cauldron.²⁷⁴

This was Deianeira's homecoming. According to most tellers of the tale, though certainly not all, the whole adventure took place shortly after the return of the hero from the nether world, before he received the insult at Oichalia and became Omphale's slave by way of atonement for his murder of Iphitos. Thus Deianeira became a wife who had long to wait, as Megara had been before her, and she bore her husband Hyllos and other sons also.²⁷⁵

6

THE END OF HERAKLES' EARTHLY LIFE

The insult at Oichalia was not yet revenged, so Herakles left Deianeira in the castle of his guest-friend Keyx at Trachis. Thither he had retired with his family after the murder of his guest at Tiryns;²⁷⁶ it lies in the region around Mount Oita. He led an army²⁷⁷ against Eurytos' towered city,²⁷⁸ and Oichalia fell. The lord of the stronghold and his sons were killed and Iole became Herakles' prey. Those who connected her story with that of Deianeira stated²⁷⁹ that Herakles wanted her as his concubine and preferred her to his wife. But there is no separate tradition of a love-affair between him and Iole. However, the very fact that the servant of women became the kidnapper of a woman led up to his end.

Deianeira thought that the moment was come to use Nessos' gift. The Centaur had given her his blood in order to destroy Herakles; he foresaw that the opportunity would arise. His gift and the deceiving of Deianeira together made up the Centaur's present. We hear also of an oracle²⁸⁰ which had predicted to the hero that no living being should bring about his death, but only a dweller in the underworld. Now, without suspicion, he accepted the splendid poisoned robe which

Deianeira, also without suspicion, had sent him to wear when he made his thank-offering to Zeus.²⁸¹ But when the garment began to scorch his skin and he could not tear away the poisoned material from his body,²⁸² he soon recognised the sign²⁸³ and had his pyre built on Mount Oita.

It was said later that he came to this decision on the advice of Apollo.²⁸⁴ In his misery, caused by Nessos' gift, he had sent to Delphi and got the answer that he should go in full equipment to Oita and have a great pyre erected there; Zeus would see to the rest. But even in this version, Herakles mounted the pyre by his own decision. Before this decision, we are told in the tragedy, 'The Women of Trachis', came a terrible outburst of anger. The bodily pains which he felt united with that disease of the heroes, their fits of rage, which really is never very far from madness. He flung the messenger who had brought him the deadly garment off Kenaion,²⁸⁵ the north-western peak of the island of Euboia, into the sea.²⁸⁶ Carried home to Trachis, the sufferer wished to take vengeance on Deianeira, but she had already taken her life by the sword,²⁸⁷ when she learned the result of her deed. And now that Herakles was aware also of the cause of his pains, the Centaur's ruse, he communicated his last wishes to Hyllos, his eldest son by Deianeira. The first wish was²⁸⁸ the construction of the pyre, the second²⁸⁹ the marriage of Iole to Hyllos, a wedding which he was never to see.

He then had himself carried to the lofty mountain-meadow of Zeus on Oita,²⁹⁰ where the grass was never mown.²⁹¹ Ever since the pyre of Herakles blazed for the first time and, surrounded by a stone curb, which has preserved the ashes to our own day, was lit again and again at his festivals, the spot bore the name Phrygia, 'the burned place'.²⁹² There was a story²⁹³ that the river Dyros, now the Gorgopotamos, sprang forth from the mountain then to put out the huge fire in which the body of Herakles was being consumed. The river came forth in vain, for to burn was Herakles' own will. Hyllos had built the pyre at his wish, but hesitated to light it.²⁹⁴ The suffering

Herakles sat on the great pile of wood and awaited some friend, some traveller on the road leading over Mount Oita to Delphi. Philoktetes, the son of Poias,²⁹⁵ came by, he who was one day to cry out the same words in the like pains, 'Light the fire, good man, light the fire!'²⁹⁶ According to others it was Poias himself,²⁹⁷ searching for his strayed sheep on the mountain, who lit the pyre. The reward for this was great, nothing less than the bow of Herakles.²⁹⁸ He himself presented it in return for the act which freed him, either to Philoktetes or to his father Poias, from whom the son inherited it. Only by means of this bow could Troy one day be taken.

But the fire which was kindled there was not a sorrowful burning. Whenever Greeks kindled it in memory of Herakles,²⁹⁹ it was a merry festival, at which the aura of love, the memory of the great Daktyl, bore sway.³⁰⁰ In the purifying flames his limbs became divine;³⁰¹ it was not true that, as many supposed, the mortal body of the god was consumed like the corpse of a mortal.³⁰² A story was told³⁰³ that he rose from the burning pyre in a cloud, amid peals of thunder, to heaven. When his friends tried to collect his bones from among the ashes, as was usual at a cremation,³⁰⁴ they found nothing.³⁰⁵ A master-painter of vases, and probably before him the author of a satyr-play, immortalised the search for Herakles' bones; they represented it as made by satyrs, who leaped back in fright when they found the hero's armour empty on the pyre, which was not completely burned out. Meanwhile Herakles, become young again, almost a child, went with Pallas Athene over the summit of Oita in a four-horse chariot. Astrologers knew³⁰⁶ that he passed through that gate of heaven which is in Scorpius, close to the Archer, the Centaur that was transported to the skies.

Many artists portrayed Herakles' ascension. A fine picture, on an Attic amphora of early date, stood by the sacred couch which was set in honour of Hera in a little underground temple at Paestum, and walled in. Herakles is mounting the chariot with Athene in the presence of his one-time opponents

the brother and sister, Apollo and Artemis. Hermes stands ready to guide the chariot. The vessel could not have stood there with such a design on it if it had not been believed that the Queen of the Gods was well pleased with the ascent of the hero to Olympos. Henceforth he belonged to the company of the gods; in that dazzling assembly the master Sosias shows him crying 'Dear Zeus.' He is then conducted to Zeus by Athene, and Hera, enthroned at Zeus' side, receives him.

Those who believed that there really was enmity between Hera and Herakles told of a reconciliation;³⁰⁷ Zeus, according to them, actually moved her³⁰⁸ to go through the ceremony of the second birth of Herakles. In the position of a woman in labour, she took him to her holy body and let him fall through her clothing to the ground. According to one of the tales which were told of Herakles in Italy and cannot all be repeated here (they would have found less credence in Greece), she now offered him her breast as to a suckling. The scene was represented on the reverse of an Etruscan mirror. Thus Herakles became completely the son of Hera.

In her capacity as Hera Teleia, the great marriage-goddess,³⁰⁹ she herself brought her daughter Hebe to Herakles. The wedding was celebrated by the pair, the stepson of Hera and her young double,³¹⁰ among the Olympians on their mountain.³¹¹ Hera's son-in-law rules over his golden palace³¹² and of this the poets sang,³¹³ 'He is now a god, his woes and his toils are over, he lives where the other dwellers on Olympos live, immortal and ageless, and possesses Hebe, daughter of Zeus and Hera.' The phantom of the earthly Herakles—for there was no forgetting even of the wanderer on earth with his toils—his *eidolon*, went to the underworld, and there Odysseus met it. Around him was heard the cry of the dead, like the cry of birds that are fear-driven every way; and he, like unto dark night, held an uncased bow and an arrow on the string, and dreadful was his unquiet gaze, as he seemed ever about to shoot.³¹⁴ He was to be seen in a like shape even in the sky, for the constellation Engonasin,³¹⁵ the man who kneels on his



45 HERAKLES JOURNEYING TO OLYMPOS



46 DIONYSIAC APOTHEOSIS OF HERAKLES



47 KEKROPS AND PALLAS ATHENE BEFORE
THE SACRED OLIVE

right knee and is always toiling,³¹⁶ was thought of as a memorial to the toils of his son which Zeus had put there.

As far as his friends were concerned, his toils here on earth were all in vain. However many kings and peoples traced their origins to him,³¹⁷ and however many genealogists racked their brains over him and misled posterity, according to his nature Herakles was neither the founder of a dynasty nor the ancestral hero of a clan. He had sent his sons by Megara, his Theban wife, on the way to death by fire, ahead of himself, and he climbed his pyre from the hospitable stronghold of Keyx, for he had not even a dwelling-place of his own when he left Earth. Of the children whom Deianeira bore him various stories were told, but all agreed that the offspring of Herakles had vanished from the Peloponnesos completely. Only thus could the genealogists speak of the return of his descendants and connect the arrival of the Dorians in Sparta, with that return.³¹⁸

According to all tales, the children of Herakles fled from Eurystheus, who threatened them with death after their father had become a god.³¹⁹ Keyx could not protect them against the power of the king of Mycenae, and bade them go further on.³²⁰ They therefore fled from city to city, as far as Thebes according to one account. Those who held that Iolaos did not die in Sardinia, to which he had emigrated with the sons whom Herakles begot on the daughters of Thestios, but lay buried in the tomb of his grandfather Amphitryon, made him, when he was old, set out to meet Eurystheus and cut off his head.³²¹ Indeed there was one story that Iolaos was then already dead and that he rose from his grave to punish Eurystheus. Then he died again.³²²

According to another version,³²³ he remained as the guardian of Herakles' children, which he had been from the beginning, and fled with them from Argos to Attica. The Athenians received the whole band and resisted Eurystheus, who appeared at the head of a great army. Hyllös fought at Iolaos' side and it was he who smote off the head of the king of Mycenae.³²⁴

In another form of the story,³²⁵ the aged Iolaos prayed to Hebe and Zeus to give him back his youth for but one day. Two stars shone over his war-chariot and the people cried, 'Hebe and Herakles!' They hid him in a cloud, and Iolaos emerged from the mist with his youth renewed, captured the king of Mycenae and brought him alive to Alkmene, who would not pardon him, and so Eurystheus met his death.

But, so the tale ran in Athens,³²⁶ a virgin must die to get the victory; Persephone would have that offering. This account, as we shall see later, was a story that often was heard in Athens. Along with old Alkmene the female descendants of Herakles had come to Athens for refuge, and one of them volunteered to be sacrificed, like a true daughter of Herakles.³²⁷ On the spot where she was offered up a spring arose, which preserved her name for the future;³²⁸ as she was called Makaria, the 'blessed one', so also was the spring at Marathon named, a fountain of blessedness.

BOOK THREE

CHAPTER I

Kekrops, Erechtheus and Theseus

IF THE ATHENIANS wished to be named after their heroic founder, they were called Kekropidai, descendants, or rather kinsfolk, of Kekrops; for although they bore that name, they were of opinion that they did not descend from a male primaeval being but directly from the soft, reddish soil of Attica, which in the beginning brought forth human beings instead of wild beasts.³²⁹ Kekrops, in accordance with the original form of his name, which was Kerkops, that is to say 'the tailed',³³⁰ was half-serpent, half-human:³³¹ serpent as having sprung from the earth, yet also with a share in human form and therefore *diphyes*, 'of twofold nature'. Being sprung from the earth and the nurseling of the maiden goddess, Pallas Athene, her father's daughter, and formed after her mind, the picture of the primitive Athenian was first present in Kekrops. We are told that he discovered, as it were, the double descent of human beings,³³² that they come not only from a mother but also from a father. He founded the institution of marriage between one man and one woman,³³³ which was to be under the protection of the goddess Athene. That allegedly was his act of foundation, worthy of a primaeval father, who was not personally the ancestor of the Athenians, although they had him to thank for their patrilineal descent. Historians,³³⁴ who brought little understanding to the matter of origin from the earth, actually wanted to explain his epithet of *diphyes* by supposing that it expressed the double line of descent which had been in use since the time of Kekrops, when they did not go so far as to conceive of him as a bisexual creature of the beginning.³³⁵

His reign was portrayed as that of a human king; the Athenians considered the act of foundation, properly so called, to consist in the *synoikisis* or *synoikismos*, in memory of which the

festival of *synoikia* was held, i.e. the collection of the people who lived scattered about the coastal district known as Attica into one great community. This achievement was accredited to Kekrops,³³⁶ and it was also said that he named the Athenian citadel, the Akropolis that became so famous, after himself.³³⁷ It is nowhere said, however, that he personally built it; rather is it clear from the legends of his daughters³³⁸ that Pallas Athene was busied in making the Akropolis into an impregnable fortress with her own hands. For that purpose she fetched a still higher rock from Pallene, but in anger at the disobedience of Kekrops' daughters, she dropped it in the place where it stands today and bears the name of Lykabettos. But since Kekrops there is said³³⁹ to have existed one *laos*, one people, instead of a multitude, for he caused everyone, when he instituted the first great assembly, to bring a stone, *laos*, with him and throw it down in the midst of them. Thus he counted every original inhabitant of Attica, and there were twenty thousand of them. Also connected with his name³⁴⁰ was the custom of burying the dead in the earth, whereby they were, so to say, laid in the bosom of the great Mother. Corn was sown on the burial-places, which thus were not left as graveyards but given back pure to the living. The funeral repast was eaten with garlands on the head, and songs in praise of the departed were sung; no lies might be told.

Such were the laws ascribed to Kekrops, the primæval king. Although he was not a human being, but one half-human and half-divine, and for all time the protecting hero and lord of the Athenians,³⁴¹ life worthy of human beings is supposed to have begun with him in Attica. Those who emphasised the point that Kekrops instituted marriage were obliged to add³⁴² that men and women had mated promiscuously before his time. The tradition of another status of women than that in historical Athens, where they were excluded from public life, persisted long. Thus we find it even in the latest form of the story of how Pallas Athene took possession of the land. In this version of that famous tale,³⁴³

the olive grew out of the earth for the first time while Kekrops reigned, and at the same time a spring appeared. The king is said to have inquired thereupon of the Delphic oracle and got the answer that the olive signified the goddess Athene, the water the god Poseidon, and the citizens were to decide after which the city was to be named. Now in those days the woman had still the franchise, and they out-voted the men by one; thus Athene was victorious and the city was named Athenai. Poseidon, as many tales teach us that he did, became angry and flooded the coasts. To pacify him, the women had to renounce their former right, and ever since then the children were not distinguished by the names of their mothers but by those of their fathers.

The original account of the greatest event which took place under the rule of Kekrops ran quite differently. The Athenians, and not only they among the Greeks, were well aware that their gods had not ruled over every Greek district from time immemorial, nor all alike. It was told in Argos³⁴⁴ that Hera had had a dispute there with Poseidon about the country. The judges of the case were the local *primaeval* man, Phoroneus, and the river-gods of Argos, and they adjudged the country to the goddess. Undoubtedly, Hera had been the lady of the land from ancient times, and Poseidon was the later arrival. But he then continued to deprive the Argives of water, and to this day the Inachos is generally a quite dry river. Phoroneus is known as an especial devotee and protégé of Hera.³⁴⁵ The position of Kekrops with regard to Athene was similar, and it is hard to say which story imitated the other, or if both existed side by side even originally.

Pallas Athene and Poseidon, so the ancient story goes, strove with each other for the soil of Attica. In their contest, the goddess caused the first olive-tree to spring up on the rock where her temples were to stand. The god struck the stony ground with his trident at the same spot, and there on the rock there sprang up also a salt spring, which was later known as 'Erechtheus' sea'.³⁴⁶ The Erechtheion, the shrine of the patroness of the city,

Athene Polias, was to contain both signs of divine power, the olive and the salt spring. But in those *primaeval* times Kekrops, king of the country (according to this version he was the only being on earth) had to judge which had won. He decided that³⁴⁷ salt water was to be found everywhere that one looked outwards from the dry land, but the olive which had just sprung up in Attica was unique.³⁴⁸ So he assigned the land and the city to Athene as the prize of victory. However, some Athenians believed that so great an event as the acquisition of their native place by Athene was not sufficiently glorified if a mere earthly being like Kekrops had decided the matter, and so they made him simply a witness, not the judge. This is how the contest was represented in the middle of the west pediment of the Parthenon by Pheidias. Kekrops was merely looking on from a corner. In the picture of a vase-painter, he actually is represented only by a snake which twines around the olive. In this form of the narrative, the judges were the twelve great gods.³⁴⁹ Strictly speaking, there can have been but ten of them, since Athene and Poseidon belonged to their number. The narrators again were not in agreement as to whether the contest began in the presence of the gods³⁵⁰ or they appeared only to decide it. Only in the latter case would they need the witness who, as the only being on earth, could testify that Pallas was the first to create the olive.³⁵¹ But it seems that Poseidon originated the dispute;³⁵² here again he was the later arrival. The votes of the gods were equally divided between the two, and Zeus gave his casting-vote in favour of his daughter.³⁵³ Kekrops was the first to entitle him *Hypatos*, 'most high';³⁵⁴ he erected the first altar and set up the first statue of Pallas.³⁵⁵

The very intimate relation of Kekrops to the goddess remained for ever. It was a secret relationship of which little, or nothing at all, was said. But we know of his twofold connection with Aglauros, another title of Athene,³⁵⁶ which she bore at certain gloomy proceedings that were also thought of as mysteries.³⁵⁷ Originally this name and epithet were probably not Aglauros but Agrauros,³⁵⁸ 'she whose abode is in the



48 THESEUS MEETS SKIRON, PHAIA AND SINIS



49 THESEUS ON THE TORTOISE



50 THESEUS MEETS KERKYON AND
THE MARATHONIAN BULL



51 THESEUS AND PROKRUSTES

fields'. She was Kekrops' wife,³⁵⁹ but one of his three daughters also bore that name,³⁶⁰ and this discloses the double connection. Aglauros, the mother of Kekrops' three daughters,³⁶¹ bore him a son also, whose name was Erysichthon, 'protector of the land'. How he protected it we are not told, but only that he died without issue;³⁶² he seems to have been a similar figure to Sosipolis, the 'saviour of the city' at Olympia.³⁶³ Sosipolis again was no hero, but a divine boy in the form of a serpent, who protected that country. Concerning the daughters of Kekrops we are told³⁶⁴ that they had entrusted to them by Athene a boy of like shape, shut up in a basket. It was the baby Erichthonios. We know the story; one of them, or even two, were so inquisitive as to look into the basket, and thus showed themselves no worthy guardians of the mysterious child.

Kekrops repeated himself in a way under both names, Erysichthon and Erichthonios. The place which was shown as his grave was not a grave at all, but yet another sign of his very intimate relationship to Athene. It was within the goddess' holiest precinct, where the first olive stood also. When the beautiful building which still stands today, the Erechtheion, was erected over it, statues of girls had to be raised instead of pillars to uphold the roof of the alleged tomb, the Kekropion. No doubt Kekrops was there in the shape of the snake which was tended in the same building and known as the 'goddess' watchman'.³⁶⁵ But the Attic historians, who tried to give their country a list of kings, made out that in Erichthonios, the second *primaeval* Athenian with the curious birth-legend, which we know from the stories concerning Athene,³⁶⁶ a Kekrops reappeared. They put Erichthonios in the third place after the *primaeval* king and ascribed to him the foundation of the Panathenaia³⁶⁷ and of other great Athenian festivals. Allegedly also, he built the shrine of Athena Polias, already mentioned,³⁶⁸ set up the wooden image of the goddess in it,³⁶⁹ and was buried on the spot. These are not genuine mythological tales, as were those concerning his begetting by Hephaistos and what befell him in the round basket. It seems rather that

his significant name, which emphatically signifies a chthonian, a being from the underworld, originally meant not a ruler, not a king of this our world above, but the mysterious child who was worshipped in mysteries and mentioned in seldom-told tales. The earth-born hero of whom we hear more openly (in Homer we read that Athene reared him³⁷⁰ and chose him as companion in her house,³⁷¹ certainly that temple which got its name, Erechtheion, from him)³⁷²—this hero was called Erechtheus.

The Athenians called themselves Kekropidai after a primæval being, but Erechtheidai after this their king and hero.³⁷³ The name Erechtheus, in its form Erichtheus,³⁷⁴ contains the same elements as the other compound Erichthonios, but with the ending of old and genuine proper names. The tradition of a son whom Hephaistos begot on the goddess Earth referred to him as explicitly as it did to Erichthonios,³⁷⁵ and his connection with Athene was also no less close and intimate. It was not unambiguously told even of Erichthonios that the baby was itself a snake rather than guarded by snakes;³⁷⁶ when he was enrolled on the list of the Athenian kings, he was given fully human shape. For Erechtheus there is no certain evidence in his history which connects him with serpent-form any longer. On the other hand, a story was told of his tragic conflict with Poseidon, in which he was ultimately worsted; under the blows of the trident he disappeared into the bowels of the earth.³⁷⁷ This was a different story from the one in which the sea-god's trident merely caused the salt spring to gush out of the rocky surface of the Akropolis. It told how Poseidon, who in the Olympian family was uncle of the daughter of Zeus, did at last intrude into her very own domain and holy place. However, he could be accorded worship in the common temple of the goddess and her house-companion with the many names (Erechtheus was his name as a hero), only by taking that same name, as Poseidon Erechtheus.³⁷⁸ When the Athenians were already in danger of forgetting the old hero who lived underground beside the mighty god of the sea, an oracle reminded them that they should also make sacrifice to

Erechtheus on the altar of Poseidon in the Erechtheion.³⁷⁹ The common dwelling and cult was the token of their reconciliation, and recognition of the hero by the god as still equally entitled to reside in that shrine.

But the story was long told of the struggle of Erechtheus with sons of Poseidon at least, who came in from the north and remained in Athenian memory as Thracians. One of them was Immarados,³⁸⁰ son of Eumolpos, or, by Euripides' account of the strife in his tragedy 'Erechtheus', Eumolpos himself.³⁸¹ We shall later hear more about Eumolpos, the 'good singer', the hero of the Eleusinians and ancestor of their hierophants. But connected with that struggle (whether Euripides was the first to connect them we can no longer know) was the memory of Athenian maidens, who, like Demeter's daughter, must die as sacrifices to the god of the underworld, of whose heroism tales were told, and who received cult as heroines in Athens.

The place of this cult was no less holy than the Erechtheion or the Theseion at Athens, and like them was a *heroon*. It was the Leokorion³⁸² or Leokoreion,³⁸³ that is to say, the shrine of the Leokoroi, the 'people's maidens', in other words the virgins sacrificed on the people's behalf. It was told later how a certain Leos (in Attica his name sounds exactly like *leos*, people) had his three daughters sacrificed to save the Athenians. Their names, Praxithea, Theope and Eubule,³⁸⁴ might also have been the names of goddesses of the underworld. The same story was told of the Hyakinthides, the four daughters of Hyakinthos, of whom it was later alleged that he was a Spartan;³⁸⁵ we know that Hyakinthos had a cult at Amyklai near Sparta. The Hyakinthides were allegedly sacrificed on behalf of the Athenians when Minos was threatening the city and the people were suffering from plague and famine also. The simplest name under which all these willing victims were honoured was *Parthenoi*, and there was much discussion as to what 'virgins' were meant. Aglauros was mentioned³⁸⁶ as the very first to offer herself for her country, she, was the double of Athene in

certain secret and gloomy ceremonies. Besides her, who was a daughter of Kekrops, there were those of Erechtheus,³⁸⁷ especially one, Chthonia, 'she of the underworld'.³⁸⁸

Without evidence from non-mythological history we shall never be able to decide if women in Athens had once really to die as did their heroines, who are all, in a measure, identical with Persephone. They are often cited as an example of patriotism, ever since Euripides brought them on the stage. When Eumolpos marched against Athens with a great Thracian army, so the tragedy stated,³⁸⁹ King Erechtheus consulted the Delphic oracle and received the answer that he must offer up a daughter for victory. He had three daughters, and his wife Praxithea, 'she who exacts the sacrifice', herself spoke in favour of making the offering.³⁹⁰ The parents did not know that the three girls had sworn³⁹¹ that if one of them died, they all would. Thus the family of Erechtheus came to an end. One daughter was sacrificed, the others took their own lives. Erechtheus was victorious in the battle, killing Eumolpos, as Euripides describes it,³⁹² but he too did not remain alive. At Poseidon's wish, Zeus struck him down with his lightning.³⁹³ At the end of the tragedy Athene appeared and informed the spectators that the daughters of Erechtheus had been turned into the constellation of the Hyades.³⁹⁴

The historians who troubled themselves about the list of Athenian kings gave Erechtheus sons in addition to his daughters, whose number tradition increased to six. The first of them was a second Kekrops,³⁹⁵ whose grandson was Aigeus, the mortal father of Theseus; the divine father of this most renowned Athenian hero, whom they honoured as the true founder of their city, was supposed to be Poseidon. But Aigeus also, to judge by his name, had something to do with that sea which was called the Aegean after him, or so it was said. *Aix*, a goat, was an appellation also of waves,³⁹⁶ and perhaps that was why men called Briareos, the older hundred-armed god of that sea, also Aigaion,³⁹⁷ and Poseidon's double in his role as father of Theseus, Aigeus. Now, after the two



52 RECEPTION OF THESEUS IN ATHENS



53 ARRIVAL OF THESEUS IN THE PALACE OF POSEIDON



54 THESEUS BEFORE AMPHITRITE



55 THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR

sons of Earth, Kekrops and Erechtheus, a son of the sea-god took over the task of a hero-founder in the history of the earliest times of the Athenian State.

Standing on the Akropolis and looking southwards,³⁹⁸ one may make out in the extreme distance, between the mountains of the Peloponnesian coast, the little town of Troizen. When Aigeus ascended the throne of Athens, the ruler there was Pittheus, a son of Pelops and Hippodameia.³⁹⁹ His daughter was named Aithra, like the sky when it is cloudless. The hero Bellerophontes had asked for her hand;⁴⁰⁰ however, she became, not the wife, but the mother of a hero, and was to be renowned for her son. Even her father Pittheus had nothing against her remaining in his house, as if she were a virgin princess, and there bearing him an heir.

Before Troizen lay a little island, so near the coast⁴⁰¹ that one could wade barefoot over to it. Earlier it had been called Sphairia, 'ball-shaped', but later, after the sacred marriage of Aithra, Hiera, 'the holy'; for sacred this islet was from then on to Athene. Aithra had dedicated the temple which arose there to Athene Apaturia, because the goddess had beguiled her by deceit (*apate*) into visiting the island. The epithet Apaturia, however, rather indicated Athene in her capacity of taking virgins, as future mothers, into the shared life which was ruled by the men. Therefore the Troizenian virgins used to offer their girdles in that temple before their wedding. The story was told⁴⁰² that Aithra on that occasion was deceived by Athene in a dream. She dreamed that she must make sacrifice on Sphairia to the ghost of Sphairos, Pelops' charioteer. This charioteer is otherwise known under the name of Myrtilos, but a ball, *sphaira*, likewise signified the union of lovers, as myrtle did. The grave of the charioteer who drove Hippodameia to the wedding was allegedly on the island. When Aithra awoke from her dream, she crossed over and there met her divine bridegroom, Poseidon.

In another version,⁴⁰³ this meeting took place in the temple of Athene herself, on the same night in which Pittheus caused

Aithra to sleep with Aigeus.^{403a} Aigeus had already had two wives, but his marriages proved unfruitful,⁴⁰⁴ and so he made a pilgrimage to Delphi and there got the oracular response, 'Loose not the foot of the wine-skin till thou come to Athens.'⁴⁰⁵ Aigeus did not understand this saying, and instead of going straight home went the roundabout way to Pittheus, who had a reputation as a sage,⁴⁰⁶ and thus was all the better able to understand the god's reply. If Aigeus had gone back to Athens, he would have begotten the son he had wished for; but Pittheus wanted his daughter to become the mother of this long-expected child. Whether he made Aigeus drunk and so deceived him⁴⁰⁷ or merely persuaded him,⁴⁰⁸ cannot be decided now, but before the former left for home, Pittheus contrived that he should spend a night with Aithra. When the hero with the name of a sea-god rose from the side of the girl who bore the name of the light of heaven, he left with her his sword and his sandals. He rolled a huge stone over these means of recognition,⁴⁰⁹ and gave Aithra the following directions; if she should bear a son and this son later became so strong that he could roll away the rock, he was to take the sword and the sandals and come with them to Athens. Thereby Aigeus would recognise his son. With these words he left the young woman in Troizen, which was to be Theseus' first home.

Later there was shown at the little Troizenian harbour of Kelenderis the spot where he was born, which ever after was called Genethlion, 'the birthplace'.⁴¹⁰ In an old account, Pittheus did not play the part of a sage and a protector, for Aithra actually was instructed by Aigeus not to reveal the child's father.⁴¹¹ But the majority of narrators portray the childhood of Theseus as that of a prince in Pittheus' house. When he was seven years old,⁴¹² Herakles, they say, visited the king at Troizen and laid off his lion-skin at table. All the sons of nobles had come to share Pittheus' hospitality, but when they caught sight of the skin, they ran away again, except only Theseus. The children believed that a lion was lying there, and the little hero thought so too; he snatched an axe from a servant

and wanted to kill the beast. Then, when his childhood was over, he went a pilgrimage to Delphi, to offer his hair to Apollo. But he did not have all his boyish hair cut off, only the locks on his forehead, a fashion of wearing the hair which was called Theseis after him.⁴¹³ Being now sixteen years old,^{413a} he turned over the rock under which the sword and sandals of his father lay, and put them on.

They must have fitted him—that was one meaning of the sign. Not only the sword must fit but the sandals also of Aigeus, with which he now set out upon the road to Athens. In the oldest narratives he certainly was a hero of like growth with Aigeus and Poseidon, and although poets and artists contended with each other to describe his youth, those pictures of him were not quite forgotten which showed him with a beard.⁴¹⁴ On one vase-painting we see the bold, beardless youngster (this remained the normal picture of him) trying to draw the sword, which he may only just have got into his possession, for the first time against Aithra, who is caressing him. Did he come to know of the secret of the rock through Pitheus and not through his mother? Did she try to restrain him from the dangerous journey over the Isthmus from Corinth to Athens? There death threatened in many shapes, like those which Herakles overcame. Later it was alleged that at this time Herakles was with Omphale, and therefore the younger hero must take on his mission in Hellas.

The first dangerous fellow whom he met on the neighbouring soil of Epidaurus was Periphetes,⁴¹⁵ 'the widely notorious'—a name which would suit the lord of the underworld also. His nickname was Korynetes, 'club-wielder'.⁴¹⁶ He was a son of Hephaistos and Antikleia, whether that Antikleia who was Sisyphos' daughter and became also Odysseus' mother tradition does not say;⁴¹⁷ his iron club he got from his father, from whom also he probably inherited weak feet. He lay in wait for passers-by and smote them, until he was smitten down by Theseus, who from then on carried the club,⁴¹⁸ with which many pictures show him.

At Kenchreai, one of the two harbours of Corinth,⁴¹⁹ where the road turns off to the Isthmus, a second danger was lying in wait. This was Sinis, 'the robber', a son of Poseidon,⁴²⁰ the god to whom that region of pines was sacred, or else of Polypemon, 'the author of much woe'⁴²¹ (another possible name of Hades), and Sylea, 'her who plunders'. His nickname was Pityokampes, 'bender of pine-trees',⁴²² because he used to tie wanderers to two pines which he had bent down, and then let the trees fly up again, thus tearing the poor fellows in pieces.⁴²³ They had even to help him by holding one pine while he bent the other. This Theseus did, but he made Sinis himself meet his end after what was his own fashion. Concerning his daughter it was said⁴²⁴ that she was a remarkably beautiful and tall girl, named Perigune, 'around the garden'. She took flight from Theseus, hid under the asparagus and pimpernels, and conjured the plants in her garden to rescue their mistress. The hero enticed her with sweet words to come to him and Perigune became the ancestress of a family in which those plants were held in honour.

In the territory of Corinth lay the place called Krommyon,⁴²⁵ named from *krommyon*, an onion. There lived an old woman with a sow which was named, after her mistress,⁴²⁶ Phaia, 'grey' or 'dark'. The colour of ghosts was assuredly meant by this, and the sow thus shown to be a beast of the underworld, and deadly.⁴²⁷ Theseus had to fight the sow with spear and sword, or, as the earliest heroes did, by throwing stones. The vase-paintings show us the old woman (she is once named Krommyo), trying to help her beast by pleading for mercy.

At the most dangerous spot on the road which leads from the Isthmus under the 'Crane Mountain', Geraneios, through the territory of Megara to Athens, sat the death-dealing lord of this limestone region (*skiron* in Greek), with which his name, Skiron, agreed. In old days the road there became a mule-track. To the right rises the steep side of the mountain, as it does today; to the left is a precipitous descent to the water, in which, so the story goes,⁴²⁸ there swam a sea-turtle, a creature

of Hades which seized and devoured men. If the upper path failed, as often happened even in historical times, the wayfarer must climb down to the sea and continue his journey along the narrow beach; or he even had to wade or swim, until he came to the place where he could climb up again to the level of the mule-track. In bad weather there was regularly danger along this strip, and it was always alike a gate of Hades, even without the turtle and even after Theseus had sent Skiron below.

This *lier-in-wait* sat above on a rock and compelled those who came by to wash his feet;⁴²⁹ this was ostensibly the payment for leave to pass. If the wayfarer bent down to do this humble service, Skiron sent him into the sea with a kick, to feed the turtle. But Theseus hurled the foot-bath at his head (this is how the vase-painters showed the proceedings, and no doubt the comedians as well)⁴³⁰ and flung Skiron himself into the sea, so that the murderer was eaten by the turtle.⁴³¹ Certain rare works of art show the hero riding on the turtle's back; on a metope at Paestum he is beardless, on an old vase-painting he is a bearded man—as indeed he was often painted—and is being conveyed in this manner from one rock to another. This was in agreement with a once prevalent account which no poet has handed down to us.

In Megara, it is true, they insisted⁴³² that Skiron did not infest the highway, but was a punisher of robbers and a friend to honest men, the son-in-law of Kychreus and father-in-law of Aiakos. Kychreus was the Kekrops of the inhabitants of Salamis, the island lying opposite; he was born from the earth and was half-man, half-serpent.⁴³³ At the Battle of Salamis he appeared in serpent-form on the Greek ships,⁴³⁴ a token of their victory and a contributor to it, and in his serpent-shape he was Demeter's temple-servant at Eleusis.⁴³⁵ Aiakos, Skiron's son-in-law by Megarian tradition, a son of Zeus by the eponym of the island of Aigina,⁴³⁶ held the keys of the underworld.⁴³⁷ All the places named—the limestone region of Megara, Eleusis and Aigina—can be seen from Salamis, and it is very fitting for both heroes alike, Kychreus and Aiakos,⁴³⁸

to have family relationships with a god of the underworld, which Skiron was.

Arrived on the territory of Eleusis, Theseus met a being whose name, in the oldest narratives, indicates that he might have resembled Kekrops or Kychreus in their serpent-forms, for he was called Kerkyon, 'the man with a tail'. According to the well-known versions he was passionately fond of wrestling,⁴³⁹ like so many of the opponents whom Herakles had to overcome. Like them, Kerkyon compelled wayfarers to wrestle with him, and in wrestling he killed them all. The spot was shown on the road between Megara and Eleusis where he played his deadly game.⁴⁴⁰ Theseus lifted him into the air as Herakles did Antaios, and threw him to the ground so hard that he was smashed to pieces.⁴⁴¹ Later it was alleged⁴⁴² that Theseus was the actual inventor of sportsmanlike wrestling and defeated Kerkyon more by his skill than by brute force.

The sixth form in which death encountered Theseus on the way to Athens had several names, but the best known is Prokrustes, 'the stretcher'.⁴⁴³ He stretched with blows, as a smith stretches iron with hammer-strokes. According to others, Prokrustes was merely his nickname,⁴⁴⁴ like its synonym Prokoptas,⁴⁴⁵ and he was really named Damastes, 'the compeller'.⁴⁴⁶ Here there lay an allusion to the hammer, as in the Daktyl-name Damnameneus.⁴⁴⁷ The hammer was allegedly earlier the property of that Polypemon, 'the author of much woe',⁴⁴⁸ of whom it has just been told that he was supposed to be the father of the brigand Sinis, while others make him father to Skiron also,⁴⁴⁹ and to Prokrustes,⁴⁵⁰ if the latter was not himself called Polypemon too.⁴⁵¹ A hammer-bearing god of the underworld, like the one known to us through Etruscan art, was probably in the minds of those who declared⁴⁵² that his abode was by the wild fig-tree (*erineos*) at which, according to the Eleusinian account, Hades had carried off Persephone.

Others again stated⁴⁵³ that this death-dealing smith was on Mount Korydallos, over which ran the Sacred Way from Athens to Eleusis. There Prokrustes worked with his tools,⁴⁵⁴

which however included, not an ordinary anvil, but a bed hewn in the rocks or made by smith's work, in which he laid wayfarers to work on them with his hammer; for the bed was always too big, and he had to stretch those who lay on it. Later it was stated,⁴⁵⁵ by those who did not think of the meaning of the names Prokrustes, Prokoptas and Damastes, that he even had two beds, a large and a small one, and that he made small men lie in the large bed, large men in the short one, in which case he cut off the projecting parts of their limbs.⁴⁵⁶ Theseus served him in the same manner,⁴⁵⁷ and having thus cleared the whole road of deadly dangers,⁴⁵⁸ arrived in Athens by the Sacred Way.

His reputation had preceded him. At the spot where the Sacred Way crossed the river Kephisos, the clan of the hero Phytalos received him.⁴⁵⁹ Here Phytalos, 'the planter', had once shown hospitality to the goddess Demeter and received as her gift the first fig-tree.⁴⁶⁰ His descendants, the Phytalidai, caused Theseus to pass through a ceremony of purification, of which he stood in need after his many necessary man-slayings.⁴⁶¹ They brought the sacrifice of purification to the altar of Zeus Meilichios, the Zeus of the underworld, to whom the fig tree was sacred. Thus Theseus for the first time rose out of the sphere of death, though only to be immediately threatened again. It was the eighth day of the month of Kronos, which the Athenians later named Hekatombaion;⁴⁶² it corresponded roughly to our July. Now the eighth day of the month belonged to Poseidon,⁴⁶³ and thus Theseus' arrival fell upon a day sacred to his father. But the threat to him came from the sorceress Medeia, according to those narrators who make the hero's earthly father, king Aigeus, already married to her.

She knew in advance that the approaching guest was heir to the throne,⁴⁶⁴ and it was her doing that made Aigeus, after all that was told him of Theseus, conceive a great fear of him,⁴⁶⁵ and let himself be over-persuaded by his wife to offer the guest a poisoned cup. At Athens, that was the method of execution; was it supposed to have been introduced then by Medeia? The

reception of the guest took place in the temple of Apollo Delphinios, of which it was said⁴⁶⁶ that Aigeus' palace had stood there. A later version states⁴⁶⁷ that Apollo's temple was still under construction, the workmen were standing on the walls, which were complete, and the roof was being fetched on an ox-cart. According to this account, Theseus was still beardless, and had on the long Ionian robe which resembled women's clothing, and his hair braided. The men called to him from above, 'What, a girl husband-high, straying alone like that with no company?' Thereat Theseus unyoked the oxen, took the cart with its load of roofing materials, and hurled it up to the workmen. Other tellers of the story, including vase-painters, had this account to give: that the young man was first sent out against the bull of Marathon, and that his reception with the poisoned cup took place only after he had returned victorious.⁴⁶⁸

The rumour that had preceded Theseus spoke of him as a boy in the first bloom of youth, accompanied by two servants.⁴⁶⁹ A cap like that which Spartans wore sat on his auburn hair, on his body he wore a purple tunic and a soft woollen cloak. His eyes glowed with a fire like that of the divine smith on Lemnos, and his mind was set on battle. In this way he had sought the road to Athens, in this way he entered and found a sacrificial banquet going on, at which the poisoned cup awaited him. His father handed him the goblet,⁴⁷⁰ but he drew his ivory-hilted sword from its sheath, as if he meant to cut off a piece of the victim's flesh,⁴⁷¹ yet in reality so that Aigeus should recognise him. He even handed the sword to the old man as he himself took the cup.⁴⁷² 'Stop, my son!' cried Aigeus,⁴⁷³ as now his eyes lighted upon the sandals,⁴⁷⁴ 'do not drink!' And he knocked the cup from the youth's hand.⁴⁷⁵ The spot where the poison spilled upon the floor was fenced around in the Delphinion, and Medeia was banished from the country.⁴⁷⁶ Her own story, to which this invention did not originally belong, will be told soon in detail.

Tradition knows also of native enemies of Theseus in

Attica.⁴⁷⁷ They were Pallas and his fifty sons, who hoped to rule the whole country after Aigeus' death. Their home was in Pallene, on the southern declivity of Pentelikon, and they were a savage giant-people.⁴⁷⁸ Their father Pallas was supposed to be a son of Pandion and brother of Aigeus. His sons went to war against Theseus, and divided themselves into two parties. One made as if it would attack the hero from Sphettos, while the other lay in ambush at Gargettos. But a man from Agnus, that same Leos whose daughters were famed for their sacrificial death, betrayed their strategem to Theseus. He was the herald of the Pallantidai at Gargettos; these the hero killed, and the rest scattered. Ever since there was enmity between the inhabitants of Pallene and those of Agnus (all these are names of villages in Attica, whose locality is seldom known and then only by accident). It was told that Theseus killed Pallas⁴⁷⁹ and all his sons,⁴⁸⁰ or that he killed but one of them, when they were hunting a wild boar,⁴⁸¹ and had to atone even for that with voluntary exile.⁴⁸² This he did by retiring to Troizen for a year; but that must have happened much later.

Perhaps the narrators supposed that the Pallantidai lay in wait for Theseus when he was on his way to Marathon to overcome the bull, for the road there leads under the northern slopes of Hymettos to the Plain of Marathon, which the wild beast was ravaging. According to the most famous account,⁴⁸³ Aigeus, having so unexpectedly got his son back, tried to keep him as it were shut up, so that he should not expose himself to the danger of a new adventure. The series of deeds which one might compare with those of Herakles, had already been completed by the hero; now follow those which rather display his own character: three bold attempts, after the capture of the Marathonian bull, to carry off women, and the war against the Amazons. Of the bull it was indeed alleged later that it was the same one which Herakles brought from Crete to Argos and let loose,⁴⁸⁴ but it may be that this adventure, like the struggle against the Amazons, was told earlier of Theseus and only later of Herakles. One detail, that the bull spewed out

fire, is entirely to be attributed to the latest tellers of the story.⁴⁸⁵ To fight a bull demanded special skill, exactly that skill which the young people of Crete showed in the time of Minos. For Theseus, it was a preparation for his expedition against a far more dangerous bull, the dweller in the Labyrinth at Knossos.

It would be still early morning when he secretly left Aigeus' palace. The sky was crystal-clear,⁴⁸⁶ as only the sky over Attica can be. In the afternoon the clouds gathered over Mount Parnes and lightnings flashed over Hymettos, which Theseus had left behind him. On the spot where he was overtaken by the thunderstorm, a little shrine stood in later times, resembling the tomb of a heroine. The country folk worshipped there with deep affection an inhabitant of the underworld whom they named Hekale, or even more tenderly Hekaline.⁴⁸⁷ She must once have been a great goddess and particularly friendly to the king of the heavens, just as Hekate was;⁴⁸⁸ so the name is better known. But it was told⁴⁸⁹ that she had been a hospitable old woman, whose cottage was shut against no wayfarers. On that night of storm her guest was the young Theseus, who next morning went merrily on and met the bull. He caught it by the horns,⁴⁹⁰ held one horn in his right hand, grasped the nostrils of the snorting beast with his left, and so forced it to the ground.⁴⁹¹ It must needs follow him,⁴⁹² and the hero led the famous creature to Athens on a rope. Many men came and stood by the road, and he cried out to the people,⁴⁹³ "Remain, be of good cheer, but let him that is the swiftest-footed among you go to the city to my father Aigeus with the message, "Theseus is here, nigh at hand, bringing the bull alive from well-watered Marathon." They all remained and sang the paeon, while they pelted the young man with leaves from the trees. Thus his victory was celebrated on all hands. But Theseus hurried back to Hekale, and arrived just as they were getting the old woman ready for burial.⁴⁹⁴ He interred her with great honour and founded the deme Hekale⁴⁹⁵ and the cult of Zeus Hekaleios, or at least these foundations were ascribed to him later. The bull he sacrificed to Apollo Delphinios.

If Androgeos, son of Minos, fell a victim to the bull, as many others had before him, this had already happened before Theseus arrived.⁴⁹⁶ It was alleged⁴⁹⁷ that this did not occur without the fault of the Athenians, for Aigeus had sent out the foreign prince against the savage creature.⁴⁹⁸ Other accounts declared that he was murdered in Attica on his way to Thebes to take part in Laios' funeral games.⁴⁹⁹ But here one might well suppose that the Cretan prince was anxious to try his skill against the famous bull. Minos was staying on Paros⁵⁰⁰ and making sacrifice to the Charites when he got word of his son's misfortune. He tore the garland from his brows and bade the flutes stop; ever since then the Parians made sacrifice to the Charites without garlands or flute-music. The death of Androgeos was to bring misfortune to the Athenians.

We know Minos' own misfortune from the stories of the gods,⁵⁰¹ and also from the narrative of Herakles' Cretan adventure, the love of Queen Pasiphae for the beautiful bull and the birth of the bull-headed Minotaur, which Daidalos' marvellous construction, the Labyrinth, a prison of wandering paths, concealed within it. Minos was then lord of the sea,⁵⁰² and he set out with his navy against Athens, to avenge his son and to demand sacrifices for Pasiphae's son. He first captured Megara. The ruler there was Nisos, another brother of Aigeus. To this son of Pandion immortality was ensured by a purple lock of hair.⁵⁰³ Had not his daughter Skylla fallen in love with the foreign monarch and cut off that lock, he could not have been defeated. Minos was not grateful to her; he had her tied to his ship and dragged through the sea, and while Nisos became a sea-eagle,⁵⁰⁴ Skylla was also transformed into the bird called *ciris*. The inhabitants of those coasts knew which sea-bird they meant, but all we hear is that the one bird ever after has pursued the other. Minos moved on against Athens.

Either his power was sufficient, or it was the strokes of deity,⁵⁰⁵ plague and famine, for the sin against Androgeos, which subdued the Athenians; they undertook to pay a terrible tribute. Every ninth year they were henceforward to send to

Crete seven young men and seven virgins, who were to disappear into the Labyrinth as victims for the Minotaur. When Theseus overcame the Marathonian bull, eighteen years had passed and the third group of victims had to be picked to set out on the voyage to Knossos. The rest were chosen by lot, but Theseus went with them of his own free will,⁵⁰⁶ either as one of the fourteen or as a fifteenth.⁵⁰⁷ There were some indeed who said that he too was simply chosen by lot.⁵⁰⁸ The oldest version, however, suggests that he sailed on his own ship or one belonging to his father Aigeus, to Crete as to an adventure; that story is assuredly one of the later ones which makes Minos come in person to Athens and choose the victims, including Theseus, and take them on his own ship to Knossos.⁵⁰⁹

Those who told the tale or painted it on vases believed they could even give the names of the seven youths and the seven maids.⁵¹⁰ The first of the latter was that Eriboia, remembered also under the name Periboia,⁵¹¹ who later, as the wife of Telamon, became the mother of Aias of Salamis.⁵¹² In the version according to which the king of Crete himself collected his piteous tribute, Minos during the voyage fell in love with the beautiful girl,⁵¹³ and touched her white cheek with his hand, as if she were his slave. Eriboia screamed and called to Theseus, who saw what was happening, wildly rolled his dark eyes beneath his brows, and cruel pain pricked his heart as he spoke: 'O son of peerless Zeus, the spirit in your breast no longer obeys righteous control; withhold, hero, your presumptuous force. Whatever the resistless doom given by the gods has decreed for us, and the scale of Justice inclines to ordain, that appointed fate we will fulfil when it comes. But do you forbear your grievous purpose. If the noble daughter of Phoinix, the maiden of gracious fame, taken to the bed of Zeus beneath the brow of Ida, bare you, peerless among men; yet I, too, was borne by the daughter of wealthy Pittheus, in wedlock with the sea-god Poseidon, and the violet-crowned Nereids gave her a golden veil. Therefore, O war-lord of Knossos, I bid you restrain your wantonness, fraught with

woe; for I should not care to look on the fair light of divine Eos, after you have done violence to one of this youthful company: before that we will come to a trial of strength, and Destiny shall decide the sequel.'

Thus far the hero. The seafarers were amazed at the youth's lofty boldness; and he whose bride was daughter of the Sun-god felt anger in his heart; he wove a new device in his mind. He prayed to Zeus, if he was really his father, to confirm it with a lightning flash. As a sign from Poseidon, he demanded that the youth should bring back the ring which he then threw into the sea; then they should know whom his father would listen to. Zeus heard the unmeasured prayer, and ordained a surpassing honour for Minos; he sent the lightning. Now it was the turn of Poseidon and Theseus. And the spirit of Theseus recoiled not; he took his place on the well-built stern, and sprang thence, and the domain of the deep received him in kindness. The son of Zeus felt a secret awe in his heart but let the ship drive on quickly before the north wind. All the Athenian youths and maidens shuddered when the hero sprang into the deep; and tears fell from their bright young eyes, in prospect of their grievous doom.

According to Bakchylides, the poet whose narrative we have listened to almost word for word, it was dolphins that carried Theseus into his father's house. Vase-painters, who probably followed some famous picture, showed Triton, son of Poseidon and Amphitrite, receiving his younger brother. With gentle hands he accompanied the young man into the palace in the depths of the sea. The king of the sea received him on his couch, the queen on her throne, and there⁵¹⁴ he was awe-struck; for a splendour as of fire shone from the Nereids' radiant forms. Amphitrite clad him in gleaming purple and set on his thick hair a choice wreath, dark with roses, given her at her marriage by the love-goddess. How the boys and girls shouted for joy when Theseus rose near the ship, in royal attire, not even wet with the water, and handed Minos the golden ring;⁵¹⁵ and how startled Minos was!

But, as already said, another way of telling the tale was that the hero undertook the journey to Knossos in his father's ship. It put to sea with black sails, this version had it,⁵¹⁶ but the king had provided it also with a white or even purple set,⁵¹⁷ to be hoisted if Theseus returned victorious. And in all accounts, not only in the one already told, it was a tender womanly figure, if it was not actually a goddess, like Amphitrite, who received the young hero at Knossos. The reception by Amphitrite was no more than the prelude, or possibly the late echo, of his reception by Ariadne. She, a granddaughter of Helios and Zeus, whom Pasiphae, daughter of the Sun-god, had borne to Minos, had pity on Theseus, so it is told in so many words,⁵¹⁸ when he volunteered to be the first to enter the darkness of the Labyrinth. She was famous under that name only, which in Cretan Greek signified 'exceedingly pure', *ari-bagne*, but she also was called Aridela there, i.e. 'exceedingly bright'.⁵¹⁹ Under these two names she had originally been a great goddess, 'pure' as queen of the underworld, 'bright' as queen of the sky.

She had her place then, too, in the stories of the gods when she had to be counted among their unfaithful sweethearts on account of her too-famous passion for Theseus.⁵²⁰ For love of the Athenian youth she betrayed her own brother,⁵²¹ the Minotaur, the monster with the body of a man and the head of a bull, who had also the name of a starry being, Asterios⁵²² or Asterion.⁵²³ For that reason if for no other she could be reckoned among the great sinners,⁵²⁴ and placed beside another granddaughter of the Sun, Medeia, who also murdered her own brother. But properly speaking she was untrue to Dionysos, otherwise the god would not have called in Artemis against her.⁵²⁵ That seems to have been a story better known to the older tellers of it than to the later ones, who have portrayed rather the faithlessness of Theseus. The hero allegedly swore to Ariadne that he would bring her home as his wife, and thus persuaded her to aid him.⁵²⁶ But the tale of how Theseus won the love of the princess is not handed down to us.

It is only a very late version which makes her see him contending with someone named Tauros, that is to say Bull, a human rival of Minos with Pasiphae. But even here there is still preserved from very early times the information that Cretan women looked on at the men's games.⁵²⁷

We are not told how Theseus managed to have a quite private interview with Ariadne and got from her the simple gift that was to guarantee him safety on his return from the Labyrinth. She was occupied in spinning, so a very old representation shows us, when the young man entreatingly and caressingly stretched out a hand to her. It was no doubt her own cleverness which made her give him her spindle with the yarn on it; or was it a ball into which the yarn had already been wound, as we see on an old vase-painting? She did not have to wait to be taught her device by the master-craftsman Daïdalos, as late narrators inform us she did.⁵²⁸ The hero was advised by the clever maid to fasten the end of the clew high up on the door of the Labyrinth and never let it out of his hand. The Labyrinth was not a maze in the sense that an intruder could not find the innermost recess of it, but he must come back from there by the same road, and that was the difficulty. Later, when its constructor, Daïdalos of Athens himself, was shut up in it with his son Ikaros, his only way of escape was to prepare wings of feathers and wax and discover the art of flying. We all know the sad story of how Ikaros flew too near the sun, his wings melted, and he fell into the sea which allegedly was named Ikarian after him.⁵²⁹ Only the old artist saved himself.

In the innermost recess of the Labyrinth the Minotaur slept. Theseus was to catch him by the hair of his brow and sacrifice him to Poseidon. It was told⁵³⁰ by artists as well as narrators that the loving Ariadne accompanied the hero and lightened the darkness for him with her crown. Or had she given Theseus her diadem instead of the clew? That would then be an unpardonable act of infidelity, for by one account she had got the garland as the price of her virginity.⁵³¹ The narrators

and the vase-painters seem, however, not to have thought of a sin in this connection, but only that the garland was Ariadne's ornament, known from of old, no matter from which bridegroom it came, Dionysos or Theseus. Theseus might have brought her that one which he had got from Amphitrite, but in that case also Ariadne's garland, set among the constellations by the god, ended by shining in the heavens. Theseus stabbed the Minotaur to death in the Labyrinth; an old vase-painting shows the outcome of the duel with the bull-headed monster, which there is given the name of Taurominion. With one hand each grasps his opponent; with the other, the hero holds his sword, the half-bestial creature a stone. Another account said⁵³² that Theseus was not in possession of any weapon, but strangled his opponent with his bare hands while wrestling and boxing with him. But he often carries a club or staff. Thus he appeared victorious at the gate of that building of the underworld, if he did not also drag the dead bull-man after him. The Athenian boys welcome him, and one of them kisses his saving hand.

With Ariadne, he embarked. He took the lads and maids with him also, and it is said that he had previously scuttled the Cretan ships.⁵³³ It was night when they began their voyage homeward,⁵³⁴ and if it was that same night when they reached the island of Dia, which witnessed the parting from Ariadne and her reunion with Dionysos, that could not have been Naxos, which is said to have been called Dia in those days,⁵³⁵ but the Dia which lies before the Gulf of Amnisos, the little island near Crete. There is an old account⁵³⁶ according to which Artemis killed the unfaithful daughter of Minos here with her arrows on the evidence of Dionysos. The Cypriots, on the other hand, believed⁵³⁷ that Ariadne died on their island in childbed, while others again held⁵³⁸ that she was left behind in Crete by the faithless Theseus and hanged herself. Those were stories invented because, on the spots where sacrifices were made to her as to a goddess of the underworld who had returned thither, her grave was shown; for instance, at Argos⁵³⁹



56 THESEUS AND ARIADNE ON NAXOS



57 THESEUS CARRIES OFF KORONE



58 THESEUS FIGHTING THE AMAZONS.



59 THESEUS AND HERAKLES.

in the temple of the Cretan Dionysos, next to that of the Celestial Aphrodite, or on Cyprus, where she was herself adored in her heavenly aspect, as Ariadne Aphrodite.⁵⁴⁰ But this very fact that she did not remain a merely chthonian goddess nor a mortal princess, for whom the master-craftsman Daidalos built a beautiful dancing-place,⁵⁴¹ and who was then considered the Lady of the Labyrinth,⁵⁴² was something which Ariadne had Dionysos to thank for. Whether her ascension to heaven with the god took place on the Cretan Dia or, as the Naxians would have it, on theirs, and whether it happened after Theseus had proved his faithlessness or before things could come to that pass, this story was the only authorised one for later times.

In the night on Dia, so ran one form of the story of the ascension of Ariadne,⁵⁴³ Dionysos appeared and took the beautiful bride from the hero. On a Tarentine vase-painting we see Theseus, sword in hand as if to defend himself, retiring to his ship, while the god touches the sleeping Ariadne's breast. In another variant,⁵⁴⁴ also paralleled by a vase-painting,⁵⁴⁵ two deities, Dionysos and Pallas Athene, appeared on Dia. They jointly moved Theseus to journey on without Ariadne. The third form of the story⁵⁴⁶ was, that the god appeared in a dream to the hero and threatened him if he would not yield Ariadne. Theseus awoke in terror and left her, profoundly asleep as the scene is generally described.⁵⁴⁷ That same night she was conducted by Dionysos to Mount Drios on Naxos;⁵⁴⁸ there he first disappeared and she after him. In the later accounts the god comes with his whole following, awakes the sleeping girl and takes her with him in a Dionysiac marriage procession. It was he,⁵⁴⁹ says another version, who sent forgetfulness upon Theseus, so that he was completely oblivious of his bride on that lonesome rocky island⁵⁵⁰ and sailed on without her. She too did not remain there quite alone, but with her nurse Koryne, the 'tree-bud' whose grave was shown on Naxos.⁵⁵¹ In that case Dia was the little island lying before the present Naxos, where people cross by a mole to admire the imposing marble frame of a temple-gate.

Theseus travelled on with the lads and the maidens to Delos, where he danced with them the Crane Dance, an evolution which imitated the windings of the Labyrinth,⁵⁵² made sacrifice to Apollo, and set up the statue of Aphrodite which Ariadne had brought with her as her *alter ego* and presented to him. She was then venerated on Delos as Hagne Aphrodite. According to the representation of an ancient vase-painter, at this festival it was not the statue which was present at the rejoicings over the deliverance, but still Ariadne with her nurse. Theseus led the dance and played on the lyre. The Athenians afterwards,⁵⁵³ in memory of the arrival of their sons and daughters at Phaleron on the coast (it was at the time of the wine-harvest), worshipped the divine pair, Dionysos and Ariadne. But at that feast a sad event was also remembered. Theseus or his pilot forgot in their joy,⁵⁵⁴ or else in their sorrow for the loss of Ariadne,⁵⁵⁵ to change their sails. Aigeus from the Akropolis saw the black sails which the ship had carried on her departure, and flung himself down from the rock. Thus Theseus became king of Athens, and ever after that sea over which the figure of Ariadne, goddess and heroine, broods has been called the Aegean.

If the stories of Theseus' faithlessness were able to hold water, it was simply because the son of Poseidon was reputed to be in any case a great abductor of women.⁵⁵⁶ Allegedly,⁵⁵⁷ he deserted Ariadne because he was devoured by passion for Aigle, daughter of Panopeus. Aigle, 'brightness', is the name for a maid of light, like Phaidra, 'the shining', Ariadne's sister, whom Theseus got as his wife from Deukalion, son of Minos, after he had made an alliance with him,⁵⁵⁸ if indeed he had not, in some forgotten tale, carried her off along with Ariadne. Such names corresponded to the expression of the light-side of Ariadne, as Aridela. One might almost say that in that instance Ariadne was deserted for Aridela. Perhaps the daughter of Panopeus was a goddess in earlier times, and identical with that Aigle who was reputed in Orchomenos, which is near the walled city of Panopeus, to be the mother of

the Charites and wife of Helios,⁵⁵⁹ but also bore the nickname Koronis, 'crow-girl'. The faithless love of Apollo, who bore him Asklepios, was also named Aigle and nicknamed Koronis.⁵⁶⁰ In like manner, Aigle⁵⁶¹ and Koronis⁵⁶² were reckoned among the nurses of Dionysos, like Ariadne herself.⁵⁶³ And finally, a vase-painting shows us Theseus carrying off Korone (the name is written alongside the girl in that form), while two other famous loves of the hero, Helen and the Amazon Antiope, try to prevent him. He had hardly caught sight of her when he ran off with her, the artist's caption tells us.

No narrator has ever found it possible to fix the order of all these abductions of young women so firmly as to make it canonical. There seems to have been an old tradition which stated that Theseus carried off Helen before he did Ariadne.⁵⁶⁴ Against this, it was later calculated⁵⁶⁵ that he must have been fifty years old when he became the first abductor and husband of the beautiful daughter of Zeus. His friend Peirithoos bore a part in this adventure, the carrying away of Helen; it was at his marriage in Thessaly that the struggle between Lapithai and Centaurs began. If the two tales, that of the marriage and that concerning the abduction, were not mutually independent but told alongside each other as part of the life-history of a pair of heroes, and if there was added the maddest adventure of the two champions—their attempt to carry off the queen of the underworld—then certainly their greatest ventures, the objects of which were the two daughters of Zeus, Helen and Persephone, must have taken place when the friends were already well on in years. In time they became the Kastor and Polydeukes of the Athenians, as if they had from time immemorial been connected with Helen, and not famous as her abductors; as if they had not had to get her from Sparta to Aphidna, but the island of Helene which lies before Cape Sunion on its eastward side had got its name from a less-known story of the birth of Nemesis' daughter. Perhaps this Attic version of the birth-legend said that the goddess Nemesis, who was worshipped on the same coast at Rhamnus, had borne her

daughter Helen on the island of Helene. As the tradition lies before us, we must now insert the Thessalian tale of Peirithoos, king of the Lapithai.

Peirithoos had his place in the catalogue of the sons of Zeus,⁵⁶⁶ Dia, wife of Ixion, a heroine whose name connects her with heaven,⁵⁶⁷ bore him to the King of Heaven.⁵⁶⁸ Therefore in later times⁵⁶⁹ he was supposed to be a son of Ixion and brother to the Centaurs, who descended from that sinner.⁵⁷⁰ Zeus allegedly begot him in the shape of a stallion,⁵⁷¹ as Kronos did Chiron. This tribe of the Lapithai was a strong, almost a Titanic race, and Peirithoos was their king. Kaineus son of Elatos belonged to the same stock, Elatos the 'spruce-man',⁵⁷² which was the name also of that Centaur whom Herakles killed. But to begin with, Kaineus was Elatos' daughter and named Kainis, 'the new'. From Poseidon, who was her lover, she got the favour of turning into a man and being invulnerable.⁵⁷³ So the Centaurs hammered him into the ground alive with trunks of pine-trees.⁵⁷⁴ He did not even bend his knees under their blows,⁵⁷⁵ and in the underworld he recovered his earlier, female sex.⁵⁷⁶

This happened after the savage, bestial creatures had tasted wine at the wedding of Peirithoos and Hippodameia;⁵⁷⁷ we know this characteristic of the Centaurs from the history of Herakles. Hippodameia is also known as Deidameia⁵⁷⁸ or Ischomache,⁵⁷⁹ 'she who fights with strength', while in her other names the idea of taming is expressed. She seems to be the same august figure as Pelops' Pisan bride, of whom there was not much more to discover than that she, too, was a 'tamer of steeds', to judge by her name. According to the oldest story, which is set before us with much reticence, the Centaur Eurytion entered Peirithoos' palace alone, where the Lapithai were celebrating the wedding, and behaved scandalously, being maddened by wine. His ears and nose were cut off and he was thrown out; this occasioned the war between the Centaurs and the Lapithai.⁵⁸⁰ Later we have plentiful accounts⁵⁸¹ of how the Centaurs who had been invited to the

feast assaulted the women, Eurytos (another form of his name) attacking the bride, and how the slaughter began, at first with wine-vessels, resulting in the deaths of many on both sides. Theseus too had a share in it, being the first to come to the bridegroom's aid,⁵⁸² or else during the war which followed.⁵⁸³ This war is said to have ended with the expulsion of the Centaurs from the region of Pelion, on the day on which Hippodameia bore her son Polypoites.⁵⁸⁴

The story of the friendship between Theseus and Peirithoos, however, did not have Thessaly for its scene, but the region of Attica, except when the two left the country on their joint ventures. The inhabitants of Attica, especially those of the deme Perithoidai, honoured Peirithoos as their own hero. There is no fixed tradition of how he came there before becoming acquainted with Theseus; he may have been what his name implies, a 'runner around'. The fame of Theseus' strength and valour is said to have reached him,⁵⁸⁵ and incited him to make trial of them. One of Theseus' herds of kine was then pasturing at Marathon; Peirithoos came and drove them away. Theseus caught up his weapons and went after the robber. When the latter saw that, he stood still and turned to face him. They gazed at each other admiringly, each observing the beauty and courage of the other, and refrained from fighting. Peirithoos was the first to offer his hand, and asked Theseus to act as judge concerning the cattle-raid, promising to pay whatever fine he fixed. The other remitted the fine and offered him friendship and alliance. They confirmed their compact with an oath at Kolonos. Later the hollow in the rock was shown which had served them as a mixing-bowl when they drank to their alliance.⁵⁸⁶ Then, according to one account,⁵⁸⁷ Peirithoos invited Theseus to come to Thessaly for his wedding, and it was not till much later that they troubled themselves about the marriage with Helen. According to another,⁵⁸⁸ they decided, since they were sons of Zeus and Poseidon, to get daughters of Zeus for their wives.

Helen was then but twelve years old,⁵⁸⁹ or even younger,⁵⁹⁰

whether it was Leda who had borne her to Zeus in Lakonia or the goddess Nemesis in Attica. From Theseus' city Aphidna one could see down into the valley of Rhamnus, in which the daughter of Night, Helen's divine mother, had her sanctuary. The tale was told later⁵⁹¹ that Theseus had asked for the girl's hand from Tyndareos and would gladly have had the Spartan Dioskuroi for his brothers-in-law.⁵⁹² It was only when he could not get Helen peaceably that he carried her off from the dance at the temple of Artemis Orthia,⁵⁹³ unless it was at Rhamnus or the neighbouring temple of Artemis at Brauron that it happened. Nothing is told us, it is true, about this, only of the abduction from Sparta. The abductors were followed by the Dioskuroi as far as Tegea; they then cast lots to see which of them should have Helen for his wife, and Theseus won the lot-casting.⁵⁹⁴ He took the maid home to Aphidna, to his mother Aithra. Helen was rescued from Aphidna by Kastor and Polydeukes, and Aithra became their prisoner.⁵⁹⁵ Theseus' mother was still serving Helen in Troy,⁵⁹⁶ where she, thus twice abducted, waited in vain for her brothers to appear and set her free again.⁵⁹⁷ She bore a girl-child to Theseus, that Iphigeneia who then passed for the daughter of Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra,⁵⁹⁸ since Helen, after being delivered of her in Argos, handed her over to her sister. By one account,⁵⁹⁹ the destiny of this girl had a further connection with Attica, for it was not at Aulis but at Brauron that she was apparently sacrificed.

Aphidna was defended against the Dioskuroi, not by Theseus but by the eponym of the place, Aphidnos, who even wounded Kastor in the right thigh.⁶⁰⁰ Theseus himself had been obliged to leave his young wife, whom he kept imprisoned and hidden in Aphidna, and in his turn to follow Peirithoos on a much more perilous journey—to carry off a daughter of Zeus for him also.⁶⁰¹ Or was it originally his own venture, appropriate to the seducer of Ariadne, and only later ascribed to Peirithoos on account of its wickedness? For the journey led to the other world, for which later accounts substituted

the country of the Thesprotians⁶⁰² or the Molossians⁶⁰³ in Epeiros, and the intended bride was Persephone. The mad adventurers wished to take the Queen of Hades with them⁶⁰⁴ from the bedroom which she shared with the King of the underworld. They made their way through the hell-mouth at Tainaron⁶⁰⁵ (a Roman poet makes Theseus describe it),⁶⁰⁶ the very place by which Herakles was later to force his entrance, not long after them.

It was said⁶⁰⁷ that they did not find Charon with his boat at his usual harbour on the Acheron. We have lost the continuation of the story, and can no longer say how they managed to induce the ferryman of the dead to come to them, and while still alive to board the ship of souls.⁶⁰⁸ Probably it was not done by force, for that was reserved for Herakles, but by guile, since it was by guile also that the lord of the underworld subsequently caught them. He bade them sit on thrones⁶⁰⁹ hewn out of the rock⁶¹⁰ beside the gate of his palace.⁶¹¹ They were to sit there while he fetched them his gifts. But these were the seats of forgetfulness, of Lethe.⁶¹² They sat there as if they were fettered;⁶¹³ forgetfulness of self had paralysed them. They could only stretch out their hands to Herakles when he passed.⁶¹⁴ The fetters of Lethe are described as if they were snakes,⁶¹⁵ or hundreds of chains,⁶¹⁶ or as if both men had grown into the seats.⁶¹⁷ There was a comic account⁶¹⁸ of how Theseus left part of his back-side sticking when Herakles dragged him up; the lithe outlines of his descendants, the Athenian youths, were due to this. We know from the stories of Herakles that only Theseus could be awakened and return. In the old accounts he probably was still young then, and it was even alleged that Peirithoos returned with him.⁶¹⁹ But after his death, Theseus' punishment had to continue; he then had to sit for ever on his rocky seat,⁶²⁰ while a like penalty was reserved for his friend as for the sinner Ixion,⁶²¹ who wished to seduce the Queen of Heaven, or for Tantalos before them.

It seems that a long life still awaited Theseus, although it is

explicitly said only of the abduction of Helen that it preceded the Cretan adventure, but not also of the invasion of Hades. A tale that he won his way there once again in his lifetime and perhaps (though later generations would not believe this)⁶²² delivered Peirithoos, has not come down to us, and there were even some⁶²³ who denied his own deliverance from the underworld. His famous return was from the Labyrinth, although he could no more claim its lady as his own for ever than he could Persephone. The Dioskuroi had taken Helen from him, as Dionysos had Ariadne; nothing was left him but the sovereignty of Athens, ever since Aigeus at sight of the black sails had flung himself from the Akropolis, or, as some who claimed more accurate knowledge declared,⁶²⁴ into the sea which bears his name. Theseus' famous act as founder was the uniting of the village-communities of Attica into the city of the Athenians; it was allegedly his doing that a single common *politeia*, a communal life in one State, came into being.⁶²⁵ This was a deed the scene of which was the whole land of Attica and which was perpetually celebrated at the festival of the Synoikia. It was not as a union of village-communities already in existence but as the assembling of primaeval dwellers in the land that a similar action was accredited to Kekrops. Theseus is said to have been the first⁶²⁶ to give the city its plural name, *Athenai*, and make the Panathenaia, of which it was otherwise stated that it had been instituted by Erichthonios, into the festival of 'all Athenians', not of the inhabitants of the city only but also of those of the countryside. The narrators made him take part in nearly all the common undertakings of the heroes of his day, and a proverb sprang up, 'Not without Theseus',⁶²⁷ or, since he himself needed no one to help him, 'A second Herakles is come.'⁶²⁸

Thus he became Herakles' follower in the campaign against the Amazons. From this adventure he brought back the war-like consort who bore him Hippolytos. But the undertaking was worthier of Theseus than of Herakles. The Amazonian queen whom Herakles had to deal with was named Hippolyte,

as the mother of Hippolytos often is, a name which perhaps originally connected her with him as her son. The report that it was Theseus who made the girdle of Hippolyte his booty and presented it to the older and greater hero was even preserved in the legends concerning Herakles. The narrators had some trouble to distinguish between Herakles' Amazons and those of Theseus. Those who held that Theseus got his Amazon from the son of Zeus as a meed of honour spoke of her as a sister of the queen of the Amazons and gave her the lunar name Antiopeia or Antiope, which was borne also by the mother of the Theban Dioskuroi. In the stories concerning Theseus the figure of the Amazon was associated with those of Helen, Persephone and Ariadne, who all resembled each other, and it was apparently this figure which the narrators had in their mind's eye under the different names.

Indeed, she appears to us as an Asian Helen, carried off from east to west and then fought over on Greek soil, as the daughter of Leda was on eastern, at Troy. The tale of the Danaids was one of the arrival of Amazonian maidens from the Orient to Greece. But the Athenians alone had the story that the real Amazons came from Asia Minor with their whole army and besieged the Akropolis. Curious graves were shown to strangers and ascribed to the Amazons, in Athens the grave of Antiope,⁶²⁹ in Megara that of Hippolyte.⁶³⁰ The latter tomb, it was thought, could be known by having the shape of the half-moon Amazonian shield. The war against the Amazons in which Theseus had to defend his own city was preceded by the abduction of the Amazon, and here again the original tale was surely that not Herakles but Theseus carried her off.

There was a story⁶³¹ that Herakles vainly besieged the Amazons' city of Themiskyra and could not take it until Antiope fell in love with Theseus and betrayed her own people. A more famous account, however,⁶³² was one in which Theseus had Peirithoos with him when he set out to abduct the Amazon, much as when they went out to steal Helen. A vase-painting shows Antiope in the arms of Theseus,

while his friend stands beside him to protect him. In Athens, the Amazon bore him a son. According to most accounts this son was Hippolytos; according to an older one it was that Demophon, who was later to go on the expedition to Troy and rescue his grandmother Aithra from the burning city.⁶³³ Otherwise, Demophon and his brother Akamas are accounted the sons of Phaidra, Theseus' wife after he concluded a peace with the Cretans. Antiope, or whatever the name of the Amazonian queen was, lived until that time with her abductor, as Helen did with Paris in Troy.

To free their queen,⁶³⁴ or to wipe out the disgrace inflicted on them by Theseus taking a second wife,⁶³⁵ the Amazon host appeared. It came from a northerly direction, making wide detours, from the coasts of the Black Sea, since the Amazons were no seafarers but a people of riders.⁶³⁶ Or it could have been merely a rebellion of the female warriors, which the injured Antiope herself commanded. The left wing of their army⁶³⁷ rested on the Areopagos at the point where the Amazoneion, the hero-shrine in honour of the Amazons, was to stand, and their right wing on the Pnyx. From there they drove forwards against the Akropolis. But an Athenian army fell upon their rear from the Hill of the Muses, and thus they were compelled, in the fourth month of the siege, to make peace. For the Athenians, all this was real history. Two great wall-paintings showed them the battle with the Amazons, one in the Theseion, the shrine of Theseus (not the one which was so called in later times),⁶³⁸ the other in the Stoa Poikile, the 'many-coloured hall'.⁶³⁹ The vase-painters also were fond of representing individual scenes, not to speak of the sculptors who decorated so many buildings, and not in Athens alone, with reliefs of the fighting and dying Amazons.

It is true that another story said⁶⁴⁰ Herakles hurried to the assistance of his friend, and that the other famous Amazon, who later went to Troy and fell at the hands of Achilles, Penthesileia, already took part in this struggle. It is said that she accidentally killed her lady,⁶⁴¹ but others held that it was

Theseus himself, or perhaps his followers, at the moment when the Amazons' revolt flared up and the queen was threatening the guests in the palace at Phaidra's wedding.⁶⁴² Finally, there was also the following tale of the death of Antiope:⁶⁴³ she was fighting at the side of Theseus against her countrywomen, who wanted to get her back by force, when she fell to the arrow of the Amazon Molpadie, 'the singer', and was immediately revenged by the hero. The Athenians put up a sepulchral monument to Molpadie as they did for Antiope, or at least they believed that two old gravestones in the city belonged to the two Amazons.

The hero was now left with only the second Cretan princess, Phaidra, and the son of the Amazon, the beautiful and strange youth Hippolytos. The great deity whom the Amazons served above all others was Artemis, although they made the cruelty of the goddess worshipped on the Black Sea their model, rather than the purity of the Greek Artemis. If we go by his name, Hippolytos must have been the wild stallion let loose, as the Amazons resembled uncontrolled mares and therefore bore names such as Hippolyte, or that Hippo who according to one tradition founded the temple of Artemis at Ephesos,⁶⁴⁴ but was afterwards punished by the goddess because she ceased to take part in the dances of the virgins before her altar. Hippolytos as a young hunter in Troizen served none but the virginal Artemis; it was there that he grew up, in the country of his great-grandfather Pitheus, and it was there⁶⁴⁵ that Phaidra fell in love with her sublime, maiden-like stepson.

Euripides put the story of this unfortunate love twice on the stage, and one of the two tragedies has come down to us. The Athenians had, high up on the south slope of the Akropolis,⁶⁴⁶ a little shrine of Aphrodite 'for Hippolytos', and said⁶⁴⁷ that Phaidra had founded it when she looked out from there with lovelorn gaze to the coast of Troizen. According to this version,⁶⁴⁸ she saw the youth for the first time when he, being devoted to all initiatory rites, including those of Orpheus,⁶⁴⁹ came to Athens to take part in the Eleusinian Mysteries. She

restrained herself for a long time before Hippolytos, who guessed nothing of her secret, until she was obliged to go to Troizen with Theseus. The Troizenians for their part⁶⁵⁰ possessed in their shrine of Hippolytos a temple of the 'spying Aphrodite', and told how from that spot the amorous Phaidra used to look across to the stadium where Hippolytos exercised naked, and which was later known by his name. There also stood the myrtle whose leaves she used to prick through with her hairpin in the outbursts of her passion. Aphrodite went mightily to work, but only the beautiful queen was overcome by her, not the youth as well. He would know only of Artemis, not of Aphrodite also.⁶⁵¹ However, Phaidra's love was made known to him, and he repulsed the proud woman.

And thus the story of Bellerophontes was repeated, a story which was told not only among the Greeks. The despised love of the royal lady, who had offered herself in her passion, turned to hate and fear. Phaidra complained to Theseus that Hippolytos had tried to seduce her. In the simplest form of the narrative,⁶⁵² she showed him the door of her bedchamber broken open and her clothing torn. Her husband believed her, cursed his son and banished him from the kingdom; and, as his father Poseidon had granted him fulfilment of three wishes,⁶⁵³ he wished death for Hippolytos. As the youth was driving his noble steeds along the coast of the Saronic Gulf to Epidauros, intending to go on from there to Argos,⁶⁵⁴ there came an earthquake and a disturbance of the sea. A wave arose which hid the Isthmus, a bull emerged from it and made Hippolytos' horses wild with fright; they broke loose, tore the chariot from the driver's control and dragged him to death. But the Troizenians denied that Hippolytos came to his end in that manner. Also, they did not display his grave,⁶⁵⁵ as the Athenians did,⁶⁵⁶ although they knew where it was; but they showed the wild olive near the temple of Artemis Saronia and told⁶⁵⁷ how Hippolytos had entangled himself in the reins of his horses there and been hanged somehow on the crooked tree. That was a kind of death which often took place in Artemis'

sphere. Phaidra too hanged herself, and it was said⁶⁵⁹ that in the underworld she swung to and fro on a swing, in mockery of her end.

The virgins of Troizen used to mourn for Hippolytos in the beautiful shrine which Diomedes founded in his honour;⁶⁵⁹ they did so on the day before their own marriage,⁶⁶⁰ and offered up to him the sacrifice of woman's devouring love, a lock of their hair. For all that, he was not dead. He was not one of those heroes who die once and for all, for Artemis delivered her darling from death. For her sake,⁶⁶¹ Asklepios, whose home was close at hand in Epidauros, recalled him⁶⁶² with his simples to life again. The Troizenians recognised him in the sky in the constellation of the Charioteer,⁶⁶³ but the inhabitants of the Alban Hills in Italy, near Rome, knew that the god Virbius, who hid himself in the grove of Diana near Aricia, in the dark woods about the Lago di Nemi, was no other than Hippolytos, whom Artemis had carried away thither.⁶⁶⁴ That was why no horses might be brought into the sacred precincts, being the beasts which reminded men of the death of the re-awakened god.

As to the death of Theseus, there is no unambiguous tradition. He, who had received Oidipus, so that the Theban hero should find his rest in the soil of Attica, and who had helped the Herakleidai to get free for good and all from Eurystheus, their father's enemy and their persecutor, must leave Attica and lie in a distant grave, on the island of Skyros, until his bones were found again many centuries later.⁶⁶⁵ And there were some who claimed that he never came back again from the underworld, whither he had gone with Peirithoos to carry off Persephone. Others again, who also put his journey to Hades towards the end of his career, had a tale⁶⁶⁶ of a great-grandson of Erechtheus, the first demagogue, who made the people rebellious against him while he was in the realm of the dead. That allegedly was why he voyaged to Skyros and there was cast by king Lykomedes from a high rock into the sea;⁶⁶⁷ a death which he suffered in a far country without cause, and

after which there cannot originally have been a grave, assuredly no site for hero-worship, remaining; it was more like a rape from the earth. His shrine, the Theseion near the ascent to the Akropolis, became his tomb only when his supposed bones were brought there from Skyros in the year 473 B.C.

CHAPTER II

Jason and Medeia

THE HERO WHO WENT FORTH to get the Golden Fleece was born into that family to which Phrixos, son of Athamas, belonged. The golden ram had brought him to Kolchis on the Caucasus. Besides Athamas, father of Phrixos, Salmoneus and Kretheus were also sons of Aiolos, from whom this great line was descended. The ancestress of the branch of which we have now to speak, Tyro daughter of Salmoneus, bore to Poseidon the twins Nelus and Pelias, and afterwards several sons to her uncle Kretheus, the eldest being Aison, who founded the city of Aison in Thessaly. His son Jason (properly Iason or Ieson) was the hero of the Golden Fleece. After Phrixos, his father's cousin, died in Kolchis as son-in-law of Aietes, the Fleece remained in the possession of the son of Helios, this same Aietes. From him it was to be recovered for the family.

The cities of Aison and Iolkos, the latter a foundation of Kretheus, lay close to each other on that great Thessalian bay, the Gulf of Pagasai, now known as the Gulf of Volo. In Iolkos the stepson of Kretheus, Pelias son of Poseidon, was king; Aison was his half-brother, and their common mother was Tyro, as already said. All the brothers had had sons born to them, Akastos to Pelias, and as many as twelve sons to Neleus, who ruled at Pylos on the south-western extremity of the Peloponnesos; one of his sons was Nestor. Their half-brothers Aison, Pheres and Amythaon had sons too; Amythaon, the seer, Melampus, who healed the daughters of Proitos; Pheres, Admetos, the beloved of Apollo and husband of Alkestis, Aison, as already said, Jason. The mother of this, the most famous figure of the entire stock, is known, or rather hidden, under a variety of names, Polymede,⁶⁶⁸ said to be⁶⁶⁹ a daughter of Autolykos, Alkimede,⁶⁷⁰ to mention

no others. Jason was brought up by the wise Centaur Chiron,⁶⁷¹ whose habitat, Mount Pelion, rises above both towns, Aison and Iolkos. The divine forest creature is said to have been the first to name the boy *Iason*,⁶⁷² and the name was felt to signify something healing or health-bringing.⁶⁷³

So far as his name goes, indeed, Jason might have had something in common with Iasios or Iasion, the beloved of Demeter.⁶⁷⁴ He, however, was a favourite of Hera, not of the mother of Persephone.⁶⁷⁵ It is told of the two great sister-goddesses that they wandered about on Earth, Demeter in search of her daughter, Hera when in anger she had withdrawn from Zeus, or was returning to him. On that occasion also she was assailed by impudent Silens, as we know from the history of Herakles. Jason met her when he was hunting, as no doubt the Cretan hunter Iasios or Iasion met Demeter, but this meeting happened by a river which was in spate, whether it was the Thessalian Anauros,⁶⁷⁶ or Enipeus,⁶⁷⁷ or some other stream.⁶⁷⁸ Jason did not recognise the goddess in the old woman whose shape Hera had assumed, but he took her on his back and carried her across the water. It is said⁶⁷⁹ that in doing this he lost a sandal, and consequently presented himself with but one shoe at the sacrifice⁶⁸⁰ which Pelias was making in Iolkos to his father Poseidon and the other gods, but not to their Queen.⁶⁸¹ As we know from the story of Tyro, he was no worshipper of Hera. For this, too, he was to be punished.

Jason lost a sandal in all of the stories, and the arrival of the *monosandalos*, the man with one shoe, was ominous, and not only in the history of this hero. The person in question, even if he was a god, like Dionysos, always gave the impression that he came from another world, possibly from the underworld, and had left the other shoe there as a token and pledge that he had one foot in it. Moreover, Pelias had received an oracle that he should die at the hands of a man with one sandal.⁶⁸² Now, when he had invited the whole town of Iolkos to his sacrifice, the hero was in the fields on the other side of the Anauros.



60 PHINEUS ON HIS COUCH



61 THE SONS OF BOREAS AND THE HARPIES



62 JASON SPEWED UP BY THE DRAGON

Those who represented him as a ploughman, not a hunter,⁶⁸³ alleged that he had left his plough by the Anauros, waded barefoot through the river and forgotten to fasten on his left sandal again. Otherwise, he lost it in the river.⁶⁸⁴ When, therefore, he appeared before Pelias, the latter at once thought of the oracle. He said nothing that day, but the next day he sent for Jason again and asked him what he would do if it were foretold him that he should be murdered by a certain fellow-citizen. 'I would send that man to fetch the Golden Fleece', replied Jason and Pelias answered, 'Go and fetch it.'

There is another version,⁶⁸⁵ in which Pelias had actually had two oracles. One threatened him with death from a descendant of Aiolos, but according to the other, he was to take the greatest heed of 'him who came from lofty pastures down to Iolkos, wearing but one sandal'. And in the fullness of time, there came the man, arousing terror and astonishment. He carried two spears and was clad after the fashion of Magnesia, the neighbouring peninsula. Also, a panther-skin covered his shoulders to protect him from rain. He had never cut his hair, and it hung gleaming down his back. As if he would test his own self-possession, he stood on the market place of Iolkos amid the thronging people. No one knew him, and all tried to guess who he was; they thought of Apollo, of Ares, of the Aloadae and Tityos, and then rejected these thoughts. While the people were thus talking to one another, Pelias the king came up on his mule-carriage. His eyes were riveted on the sandal which the youth strangely wore on his right foot only. He concealed his terror and asked the stranger where his home was and who his parents were.

And he was of good cheer and replied in courteous words: 'I bring with me the teaching of Chiron, for I come from his cave, from Chariklo and Philyra, his wife and mother, where the Centaur's virgin daughters reared me. Twenty years have I spent and never done a deed or spoken a word to them that was out of season, and now am I come home to get the ancient honour of my sire, now governed against justice, the honour

which Zeus formerly gave to prince Aiolos and to his offspring.'

This and more he said with great frankness, not guessing before whom he stood. By this account Pelias had usurped the sovereignty which belonged to Jason's parents, and therefore, in fear for their child's life, they had made a show of mourning him as if he had died immediately after birth, but secretly sent him to Chiron. Now the young man asked the way to the house of his father Aison and named the name which the wise Centaur had given him.

The presupposition, therefore, of this story was that Aison, the eldest son of Kretheus, should have been ruler of Iolkos, not Pelias, whom Tyro had borne to Poseidon before her marriage to Kretheus. Aison, the tale goes on, received his son with tears in his eyes.⁶⁸⁶ His brothers and their sons arrived to greet their nephew and cousin, Pheres and Admetos from Pherai in Thessaly, Amythaon and Melampus from Messenia. For five days and nights Jason feasted them in his father's house, but on the sixth day he laid before them his intention to demand the kingship back from Pelias. They arose at once and accompanied him to Pelias' palace, where he spoke gently and wisely to the king. He appealed to their common ancestry on the distaff side and proposed a peaceful partition; Pelias might keep the herds and lands which he had taken from Aison, but must give back the sceptre and throne which were the due of a son of Kretheus. And Pelias answered him quietly; he would do this, but a demand from the powers below troubled him. He was too old to satisfy it, but Jason was in the prime of his young strength. Phrixos, said Pelias, had appeared to him in a dream and desired that someone should go to the house of Aietes and thence bring his soul and the Golden Fleece. Pelias had thereupon consulted the oracle at Delphi, and it agreed that a ship should be sent. That should be Jason's price for the kingship; this he confirmed with an oath.

In the golden chambers of Aietes, an old narrative stated,⁶⁸⁷ the rays of the sun rested at night. It was assuredly not thought

of as a place for mankind, this dwelling of Aietes on the banks of the Phasis, which according to the accounts of seafarers ran from the Caucasus into the Black Sea. Aia was the name of the city, and from Aia Aietes derived his name; Aia was also the name of the country which was equated with Kolchis on the Caucasus, but probably meant the Land of Morning, of Eos. For a royal soul on its way to becoming a god (for Pelias certainly lied with his story of his dream, or expressed the ideas of a later age), this far-off land of dawn was the proper place. It must be a place for immortal, divine beings. We know⁶⁸⁸ that Aietes was a son of Helios and the Sun's consort, Perse⁶⁸⁹ or Perseis,⁶⁹⁰ a brother of the Cretan queen Pasiphae and of Kirke, whose island of Aiaia belonged to Aia, whether it lay east or west of that land in which the sun's rays slept and woke again. As the house of the Sun, but at the same time a house of invisibility, of Hades—thus we must think of the mansion of Aietes. It sheltered the Golden Fleece, well guarded in the care of a huge serpent. Jason had to undertake an adventure like that of Perseus, and like Kadmos, to fight a dragon. And also, as Kadmos found Harmonia and Perseus Andromeda, he was to find a bride whom he had not gone out to seek and in whom he should have a helper as Theseus had in Ariadne; a second granddaughter of the Sun, who should accompany him to the world of men, but not to his lasting happiness.

According to all accounts, Jason took upon himself no more than what he had in some measure invited, the task of winning back the Golden Fleece from that house outside the mortal world. It was said that this task had lain like a curse upon the race of Aiolos, ever since Athamas had wished to sacrifice his son Phrixos and forced him to take flight to that other-worldly realm of Aietes.⁶⁹¹ The sacrifice of the king's 'curly-headed' son was in a way accomplished thereby, the wrath of Zeus aroused against the sacrificer and atonement made necessary. A consequence of this was the gathering of the company that was to go with Jason. He needed, if he was to be able to get to Aietes and come back again, an extraordinarily

fast ship and a crew of companions who were ready to die. This ship, which was as much admired⁶⁹² as if she had been the first ever constructed,⁶⁹³ was built for her with the help of the goddess Athene,⁶⁹⁴ if not actually by her.⁶⁹⁵ She was called 'Swift', *Argo*,⁶⁹⁶ and her earthly constructor Argos. Pines were felled on Pelion,⁶⁹⁷ and descended to the bight of Pagasai.⁶⁹⁸ The ship which was made from them had, in the oldest accounts, the gift of speech,⁶⁹⁹ because, as was averred later,⁷⁰⁰ wood from the oaks of Dodona was built into her. The first crew was composed of Minyans,⁷⁰¹ the inhabitants of many a town in the regions over which Athamas (a son of Minyas in one tradition)⁷⁰² had ruled. Such towns were Orchomenos in Boiotia and Minya in Thessaly. In Orchomenos the Minyans worshipped Zeus Laphystios, to whom Phrixos was to have been sacrificed. They boarded the *Argo* with Jason and rowed her, when she was not speeding under sail, towards distant Aia.

The *Argo* had to be particularly fast because of the return journey. The very little which we can tell of the oldest tales concerning the sailors on the *Argo*, the Argonauts, as they were always called then, is told by Kirke to Odysseus,⁷⁰³ though not quite exactly, as she did not want to expose the whole secret of the route. Odysseus was then staying on the island of Aiaia, on the return journey from the realm of the dead, and in the oldest account of the Argonauts probably the rocky gate which led to the other world was dangerous only to those returning. Kirke revealed the name by which it was known among men; she called it the *Planktai*, the 'moving rocks'. She further told that the doves which brought ambrosia to Father Zeus flew by these rocks, but even they invariably lost one of their number, and the Father had always to make it up again. He did this, it is not hard to guess, so that the flock of doves in the sky should ever remain as we see them, in the Pleiades. The land from which the doves came with the ambrosia assuredly can be compared only with the Garden of the Hesperides. But the hindmost dove always fell a victim to the moving rocks when they clashed together. Therefore these

were known more accurately as Plegades⁷⁰⁴ or Symplegades,⁷⁰⁵ less correctly as Planktai.⁷⁰⁶ Apart from the doves, the Argo, beloved of all and guided by Hera, was the one thing to get past them safely on the return journey from Aietes. So the sorceress declared;⁷⁰⁷ the Argonauts had reached her on that return journey.

As the journey is described to us by later poets, and especially by Apollonios of Rhodes, not only Minyans but heroes from all over Greece took part in it, as in the Kalydonian hunt. Jason, it is said,⁷⁰⁸ after king Pelias had set him this toilsome task, which was equal to a whole series of difficult exploits,⁷⁰⁹ and after Argo (whoever his father was)⁷¹⁰ had completed the Argo under Athene's guidance, sent out heralds to enlist them. The Argo, according to the received tradition,⁷¹¹ was built for fifty oarsmen, so at least that number of men must assemble for the undertaking. Let us begin by naming Tiphys, the Boiotian helmsman, who was connected with the Argo most probably even in the time when she carried only Minyans. He was doomed to death, although it was Athene herself who induced him to join the voyage;⁷¹² Jason lost him on the journey, as Aeneas did his Palinurus.⁷¹³ Of the sons of gods, those of Zeus were the very first to arrive in Iolkos:⁷¹⁴ Herakles, Kastor and Polydeukes. Next came the sons of Poseidon: Euphemos of Tainaron and Periklymenos of Pylos, who was otherwise accounted a son of Neleus, Nauplios son of Amy-mone,⁷¹⁵ and the Messenian twins Idas and Lynkeus.⁷¹⁶ From Apollo's stock came Orpheus,⁷¹⁷ with whom also the singer Philammon,⁷¹⁸ a son of Apollo,⁷¹⁹ took part in the voyage. Sons of Hermes were Echion and Erytos the twins,⁷²⁰ and Authalides the Argonauts' herald.⁷²¹ Following them came Augeias king of Elis, who as we know from the history of Herakles was a son of Helios,⁷²² and the sons of Boreas, Zetes and Kalais; furthermore, two prophets, Idmon, another son of Apollo,⁷²³ and Mopsos, whom Apollo had taught,⁷²⁴ Peleus and Telamon,⁷²⁵ sons of Aiakos and grandsons of Zeus, Admetos,⁷²⁶ Jason's cousin, and even Akastos, son

of Pelias, of whom it was said that he came against the will of his father.⁷²⁷

So far, we have gone through the list of sons of gods, and yet not all have been named who could lay claim to divine descent. Lastly even Meleagros and Atalante⁷²⁸ were added to that brilliant company, Theseus and Peirithoos too;⁷²⁹ this assembly of heroes which now replaced the nameless or forgotten Minyans was the greatest before the Trojan War. Therefore in the later tales of the journey, attention is paid to many famous names. The separate adventures of each hero, however, did not make up the destiny of Jason; only the events affecting the Argo and the company of Argonauts belong to it. Risks were indeed run, but they did not, in the known versions of the story, go beyond the world of mortals; they did not pass over into a world beyond ours, but made up a voyage from Iolkos to the shores of the Black Sea. The voyage was begun with the building of an altar to Apollo Embasios, the god of embarkation, however, and a sacrifice to him,⁷³⁰ and its prelude was furnished by Orpheus,⁷³¹ who of all mortals should best know the way to the underworld and back again to the land of the living. He sang, the night before the start, of the beginning of things and of the gods. It was the preparation for a specially sacred journey.

Indeed the enterprise took, on the first island where the Argonauts landed, a peculiar, though not unambiguously Apolline trend. There was a curse on that island, the Lemnian evil, the greatest that Greece knew even in later times.⁷³² The women of the great island of Lemnos had apparently the same feelings of hostility towards men as the daughters of Danaos and the Amazons; they did not pay the proper honours to Aphrodite,⁷³³ and were punished by the goddess with an unaphrodisiac stench. Their men would have no more to do with them, adopted the manners of the Thracian coast,⁷³⁴ carried off Thracian girls and lived with them. Thereupon the Amazonian fury of the Lemnian women against the men and their concubines broke out. They conspired among themselves

and made an end not only of the offenders but of the whole male sex in the island, fathers, husbands and sons. Hypsipyle, who now became queen of Lemnos, saved a solitary male, her father, king Thoas, 'the quick-moving', a son of Dionysos. She put him into a chest on the sea, as happened to Perseus and, according to the legend told by the inhabitants of Prasiai,⁷³⁵ to Dionysos himself. With him the Kabeiroi, the male deities of the island, forsook Lemnos.⁷³⁶ The women ruled there alone, but they could get no more husbands.

That was the first great evil in Lemnos, the massacre of the men and its consequences. Later yet another was recounted,⁷³⁷ the slaughter of the Lemnians' Attic concubines, but that no longer forms part of this story. In this matter Jason and his Argonauts brought a remedy, and that is where the Apolline trait appears. Two great tragedians, Aeschylus and Sophokles, dramatized the story of their coming.⁷³⁸ A storm is said to have forced them to land; the Lemnian women ran armed to the coast⁷³⁹ and made to drive the men off, until an agreement was reached between Jason and Hypsipyle, as to which should pacify Aphrodite. The agreement was not due to Herakles, for he would have nothing to do with the Lemnian women,⁷⁴⁰ but to the hero who set out after the Golden Fleece and already found the love of a royal maiden here. For it he had to thank the women's yearning for love. Games were instituted; the victors among the Argonauts were given handsome garments and thus celebrated their union.⁷⁴¹ Erginos was prematurely grey, and the women laughed at him when he took part in the race in full armour, but he won and thus showed that youth and white hair can go together.⁷⁴² At the great wedding-feast the Kabeiroi reappeared on the island and filled the wine-jars.⁷⁴³ The festival lasted several days⁷⁴⁴—according to later narrators it was months or years⁷⁴⁵—on Lemnos. Aphrodite was reconciled⁷⁴⁶ and Hypsipyle, who was to become a tragic heroine, thanks to Euripides, when she was deserted, did not complain of Jason when he was obliged to sail on.⁷⁴⁷ She bore him two sons, Euenos⁷⁴⁸ and little

Thoas.⁷⁴⁹ The other Lemnians also bore children again and the island was repopulated with the two sexes.

Samothrace lies not far from Lemnos, and the Samothracians later told⁷⁵⁰ that Jason and the Dioskuroi, Herakles and Orpheus, were initiated into their mysteries and shared in the epiphany of the Great Gods. That was why these heroes always had good fortune on their voyages and campaigns. They also showed the goblets which the Argonauts dedicated⁷⁵¹ after they had landed and received initiation.⁷⁵² This too was to sanctify the voyage.

An older account of how the Argonauts sailed through the Hellespont and met an adventure at the Bear's Fountain, Artakia, perhaps at the very place where Odysseus and his followers were supposed to have been attacked with stone-throwing by the gigantic Laistrygones,⁷⁵³ has not been preserved to us. The citizens of the city of Kyzikos, which afterwards stood at the same spot on the Propontis (the Sea of Marmora, as it was named later), had a tale that six-armed sons of Earth lived in their neighbourhood, on Bear Island, or rather Bear Peninsula, where Mount Dindymon rose.⁷⁵⁴ They themselves, the Doliones, did not suffer at their hands, being descended from Poseidon. Their king, Kyzikos, a young man of Jason's age, had once received a warning to meet in friendly wise a company of heroes if one should visit him. He was in the middle of his honeymoon with Kleite, 'the famous', daughter of the king of Perkote, when the Argonauts landed. But he hurried to meet them and showed them lavish hospitality. Only when the heroes wished to climb Mount Dindymon was the Argo attacked by the native giants. However, Herakles was there; he killed most of them and the returning Argonauts the rest. Here began the misfortune which the heroes were to bring upon the Doliones.

They left their harbour with the Argo at once and did not notice that during the night they were driven back by the wind to a spot on the coast which was later to be known as the Sacred Rock, but in the darker sense of the word 'sacred'. In

the darkness they did not recognise the Doliones nor the Doliones them, but supposed that enemies were trying to attack them, and so met the arrivals in hostile fashion. Again king Kyzikos left his young wife, and never returned to her. He fell, and many of his men with him, at the hands of the Argonauts. When day dawned and the supposed enemies recognised each other, the Argonauts were the first to raise the lament for the fallen, and their wailing lasted three days. The nymphs wailed for the young wife, who hanged herself on receiving news of her husband's death. From their many tears arose the spring, Kleite. After this, contrary winds blew for twelve days and prevented the Argonauts from going further. On the twelfth day the diviner Mopsos noticed the cry of the fulmar and understood it. He advised Jason to appease the Great Mother of the gods. The heroes climbed Dindymon again and found in the woods an extraordinarily thick grape-vine growing wild. The woodworker Argos, who built the Argo, carved it into a statue of Rhea, the goddess to whom of all goddesses the grape-vine surely was sacred.⁷⁶⁵ She was called Dindymene from this mountain and others of the same name.

As they journeyed on, in the country of Mysia, the Argonauts lost the beautiful Hylas to the water-nymphs,⁷⁶⁶ and with him Herakles, who went back to his Labours⁷⁶⁷ after long and vain search for the beloved lad. In the country of the Bebrykes, later known as Bithynia, on the Sea of Marmora, Polydeukes showed that he was the best of boxers. He overcame the local potentate and owner of the spring from which the heroes wanted to draw water. His name was Amykos, a son of Poseidon and the Bithynian Nymph Melia.⁷⁶⁸ Perhaps Polydeukes did not even kill him,⁷⁶⁹ but merely bade him swear by his father that he would no longer molest strangers who came that way. According to this story the Argonauts by that time had already put the Bosphorus behind them, but in the better-known version of the tale they landed once again before reaching this last strait, on the European coast opposite Bithynia, among the Thynians in Thrace.

The narrators transferred to this people the palace of Phineus, which originally was stationed where the realm of darkness begins. For that reason Perseus had already met a Phineus, who wanted to take his niece Andromeda to wife, as Hades did Persephone. The genealogists counted him among the descendants of Agenor⁷⁶⁰ in about the same degree as Kadmos, either as son or as grandson, when they did not actually make him out a brother of Agenor and a son of Belos,⁷⁶¹ or simply a son of Poseidon.⁷⁶² The oldest narrators probably gave him Erichtho as his wife, as an ancient vase-painter does; her name marks Phineus as at once the husband of the queen of the underworld and of a daughter of Boreas, for both one and the other were known by the name Chthonia, the more transparent form of Erichtho. However, in the stories that have come down to us, Phineus is rather the victim than the lord of the underworld, which torments him in a variety of shapes, that of blindness and of the Harpies. But blind though he was, he knew, since he must endure the horrors of the realm of the dead more than anyone else, being in its neighbourhood, how one could force a way into it so as to have perhaps some chance of return. The men who were capable of this should also bring him release from his torments.

Thus he is represented as a prophet, who, being in possession of the gift of seeing everything, had himself chosen length of days with blindness of his eyes;⁷⁶³ this blindness was allegedly his punishment for this overweening choice, or else for having previously shown Phrixos the way to the other world. For other narrators (since they all wanted somehow to account for Phineus' combination of blindness with sharp sight into the darkness of the realm of the dead), his prophetic gift was a present to him from Apollo, while Zeus had inflicted loss of sight and the weariness of old age upon him.⁷⁶⁴ The King of the Gods was ill-pleased that he revealed the future to men, even to its uttermost end. Helios is said to have sent the Harpies against him because⁷⁶⁵ he presumptuously renounced the sight of the sun's beams. They always came when Phineus'

meal was served and snatched it from his hand and mouth. What they left was infected with a stench that no one could bear at close quarters.⁷⁶⁶

On the famous vase-painting which once also showed the name of the woman who sits at the head of his couch as Erichtho, he appears like a corpse, blind and with sunken cheeks; and that also is how the narrators describe him.⁷⁶⁷ The Harpies were with him again, robbing him of his food, but he heard the heroes drawing near, and of them he knew by what Zeus had told him that they would give him back the enjoyment of eating. Like a lifeless shadow he arose from his couch, and felt his way along the wall, supported on his staff, on shrivelled feet to the door. His limbs trembled as he walked, from weakness and age. Dirt lay like a stiff crust on his dried-up body, where only the skin held the bones together. He left the hall, but his knees could take him no further; a dark red cloud of faintness shrouded him and the ground seemed to slip from under his feet. He collapsed in a swoon. The Argonauts gathered around him astonished. The old man could hardly recover breath to greet the heroes, of whom he knew everything, and to tell them of his own lot. His two brothers-in-law, the sons of Boreas, Kalais and Zetes, who had come with the Argonauts, were to rid him of the Harpies.

This the twins did, after Phineus had sworn to them that they would anger no god thereby, a proof that the Harpies had not been sent by any deity to Phineus' abode on the edge of the other world, which began there for the Argonauts. The young heroes set food before the corpse-like ancient for the Harpies' last prey. These swooped screeching upon it, and the men cried out, but the two winged sons of Boreas stood ready with drawn swords and flew after the birds of prey, who had swallowed everything in an instant and left only their foul odour behind. The pursuit was over the sea, as we know from the stories of the gods,⁷⁶⁸ as far as those islands that were known from this incident as the Strophades, the Islands of Turning. There pursuers and pursued turned back, when Iris, the

winged messenger of Zeus, stopped the brothers and swore to them that the Harpies should never molest Phineus again. They could not die, for they too belonged to the natural order, but for their dwelling they chose the depths of the earth under Crete, Minos' island.⁷⁶⁹

All that night, until Kalais and Zetes returned, the Argonauts feasted with Phineus, and he now instructed them, as Kirke had Odysseus, concerning the road by which one may pass from one world to the other. Originally, no doubt, the Argonauts learned from Phineus how they were to return, not how they were to make their way thither. For, by the counsel of the blind prophet, they were to imitate the doves of Zeus who brought ambrosia from the other world to the gods of our world on Olympus. At the 'dark blue rocks', which were at the Bosphorus, but originally at the borders of the world beyond this one, they were to let a dove fly through the gap; as it came through, so should they. The rocks clashed together to kill the bird as it flew, then opened again—and lo and behold, as they never could catch any but the last of the doves of Zeus, so now they had but cut off a few feathers from the tail of the dove which the Argonauts, by Phineus' advice, had brought with them. And between the rocks, which had just drawn back again, the Argo flew like a feathered arrow. Only the extremity of her stern was torn off, otherwise she was undamaged. From that time on, the rocks have stood as close together as was later reported of the Bosphorus with some exaggeration; actually the strait widens towards the Black Sea. Originally this road to the other world closed, most likely for good and all, after some human hero had succeeded in getting back through it. But as the story was then told, the rocks separated for ever after Jason with Medeia had passed them.⁷⁷⁰ Even a later narrator of the story, the poet Apollonios, makes the heroes, when the Argo has happily won through, tell each other that they are saved from Hades.⁷⁷¹

But according to Phineus' revelation, after they had escaped from the 'dark blue rocks' they were to come to a 'black rock',

and from the 'black rock' to a 'promontory of Acheron',⁷⁷² where a steep path leads to Hades and the river Acheron flows into the sea. Phineus did not mention the name of king Lykos, the 'wolf', who received the Argonauts hospitably;⁷⁷³ but although this country appeared so friendly, they lost two of their number there, who were overtaken by death—Idmon the prophet and Tiphys the pilot. And on the desert island of Thynias,⁷⁷⁴ the 'island of tunnies', which stands before the coast of Asia Minor just where Bithynia borders on the land of the Maryandynoi, Lykos' people, they met Apollo.

Tradition also has it⁷⁷⁵ that the goddess Athene forced back the 'dark blue rocks' with her left hand while she pushed on the Argo with her right. However, when the Argonauts arrived at the little bay on that desolate island, it was the hour of dawn, the time when the god of night changes to the god of day, and at that moment he appears completely. The son of Leto was coming from Lykia, and hastening to the Hyperboreans, or so it was told.⁷⁷⁶ His golden locks swung like grapes hanging on the vine on either side of the god's cheeks as he strode along. In his left hand he held his silver bow, and the quiver hung down his back from his right shoulder. Under his feet the whole island shook and the waves rose high on the beach. Helpless astonishment seized on the Argonauts, and none of them dared look the god in his beautiful eyes. They could only stand with their eyes on the ground, but he passed over the sea through the air. Not till much later did Orpheus find his voice, and he said to the heroes: 'Come now, let us name this island holy to Apollo of the Dawn, since at dawn he passed and was revealed to us all; and let us make sacrifice to him of what comes to hand, erecting an altar on the seashore. If he grant us safe return, then will we offer up thigh-pieces of horned goats. Now let us but seek his favour with burnt sacrifice and with libations. And do thou, O Lord, be gracious, be gracious, thou who hast appeared to us.'

Apollo sent the heroes good fortune in hunting and thus they could make him an abundant offering. They called upon

him as Heoos, Apollo of the Dawn, and they sang the paean to him and danced before him. Orpheus began their singing with a hymn to the divine child who had shot the dragon on Parnassos, and to end the feast, they swore fidelity to each other, with their hands on the offering, and dedicated a sanctuary to Homonoia, Concord, a sanctuary which in later times still stood there. On the third day the Argonauts left the island of Thynias.

Phineus had foretold them which coasts and which peoples, beginning with the Mariandynoi, they were to visit and which they were to pass by before they rowed up the broad river Phasis in the land of Kolchis to Aia, the seat of king Aietes. At the tomb of Sthenelos,⁷⁷⁷ who had fought against the Amazons with Herakles and fallen on the shore, no great way from the Acheron and the Dionysiac river Kallichoros,⁷⁷⁸ the Argonauts offered sacrifice. For Persephone allowed the ghost of that hero to appear on his grave-mound in full armour and to see the men with whom he had lived. At Sinope,⁷⁷⁹ three more companions of Herakles, who had remained there, encountered the Argonauts. In the country of the Amazons, at the mouth of the Thermodon, Jason also pitched camp, but it did not come to a fight with the inhabitants, as Zeus sent them a timely favourable wind.⁷⁸⁰ The land of the wretched Chalybes, who work at iron, shrouded in smoke,⁷⁸¹ the heroes merely passed by; as also they did those of the Tibarenians and the Mossynoikoi, two peoples who live perversely, for among the Tibarenians the men lie in bed while the women are in childbirth,⁷⁸² and among the Mossynoikoi everything is done openly which is done privately elsewhere, even the act of love, and that is done privately which elsewhere is done openly.⁷⁸³

Following Phineus' advice, however, the Argonauts landed on the island of Ares, where the birds of Lake Stymphalos had settled when they were driven out of Greece by Herakles. They endangered the heroes with their sharp feathers, which they dropped on them. This the Argonauts were able to detect as

they approached the island,⁷⁸⁴ and the heroes divided themselves, only half remaining at the oars, while the other half roofed over the ship with their shields and made a noise with their weapons, which scared the death-dealing birds away. Thus the four sons of Phrixos—Argos, Kytissoros, Phrontis and Melas—were able to land on the island of Ares at the same time, clinging to planks, for they had been saved from a shipwreck. It was the wish of their deceased father that they should undertake the journey to Orchomenos in Boiotia to get possession of the treasures of their grandfather Athamas. And since Athamas and Kretheus, the grandfather of Jason, had been brothers, they could now be useful to their kinsman; they returned to Aia with the Argonauts to introduce the heroes there to their maternal grandfather, Aietes.

The island which the Argonauts passed after this adventure⁷⁸⁵ was called the Island of Philyra, not after the lime-tree, which has the same name, but after Kronos' love,⁷⁸⁶ a daughter of Okeanos, who bore him the wisest of the Centaurs, Chiron. There Rhea, mother of the gods, surprised the two lovers, and the father of the gods leaped away like a stallion from the nymph's embrace.⁷⁸⁷ She, too, fled in shame, to Mount Pelion in Thessaly, and there the Centaur was born. This happened in the days of the Titans, when Zeus was still a baby and lay hidden in a cave on Crete. But from this island of Kronos, as it once was, the Argonauts soon came within view of the Caucasus. They caught sight of the eagle of the King of the Gods, making his way with a stronger wing-beat than common birds have to the highest peak, and ere long they heard also the lamentation of the tortured Titan, whose liver the eagle was devouring. The deliverer of Prometheus had not yet appeared when the Argo turned up the stream of the Phasis at the foot of the Caucasus.

In the oldest accounts, the sons of Phrixos play hardly any part in the history of the Argonauts; indeed, they had gone back to their father's country earlier. Even according to the poet Apollonios, whom we have followed thus far, when they

introduced Jason with two of his company into the palace of Aietes, they rather irritated that son of Helios than soothed him. He is said to have learned from his father⁷⁸⁸ that danger threatened him from his own kin, but he harboured no suspicion of either his own son Apsyrtos, whom the Kolchians called also by the solar name Phaethon,⁷⁸⁹ nor his daughter Medeia, but only against the sons of Phrixos and Chalkiope, who now arrived with the strange warriors. Also, it is probable that in the older accounts Aietes had not two daughters, Chalkiope, 'bronze-face', and Medeia, 'well-counselled', but only the latter, whom his wife Eidyia, 'the knowing one'⁷⁹⁰—or, to give her another lunar name, Neaira, 'the new'⁷⁹¹—had borne him. In all accounts, the lord of Aia was suspicious and ill-tempered, while his daughter Medeia, full of helpful and harmful magic, yet herself enchanted by the love for Jason, had a beautiful countenance though quick to darken.

In the oldest account, Jason came without an intermediary before the king of the land of Aia, and claimed the return of the Golden Fleece for his kin. Probably also the Argo did not remain hidden in the reeds of the Phasis as she does in Apollonios. The youth, so the well-known account tells us,⁷⁹² who shone like Sirius, glimpsed the princess through the silver veil which covered her.⁷⁹³ The king's reply was to send the hero into the jaws of the gigantic serpent which watched the Golden Fleece. We also hear that the Fleece hung, in a thicket, from the mouth of the dragon, which could easily swallow such a ship as the Argo whole, with all her fifty oarsmen.⁷⁹⁴ This dense thicket was called the Grove of Ares, and that, in all stories, exactly as in the Theban tale of Kadmos and Harmonia, means a place of death, a precinct of Hades. And the Fleece, if it did not hang from the mouth of the monster, was hung, spread out on the branches, from the top of an oak⁷⁹⁵ that was guarded by the serpent, or, as vase-paintings show it, it lay on a rock around which the dragon was coiled.

It is from a vase-painter again that we learn how Jason returned from the jaws of the gigantic snake. He was in the



63 NEDEIA'S REJUVENATING MAGIC



64 ORPHEUS AMONG THE THRACIANS



65 THE DEATH OF ORPHEUS

same state as Herakles when he emerged from the Nemean lion's den, as indeed it was natural for a mortal to be whenever the underworld gave one back to the world of the living. He hung fainting from the dragon's mouth. The Fleece can be seen on the tree, and the presence of the goddess Athene with her owl testifies that the hero after all is not dead. Lifeless from exhaustion he came back from the belly of the monster and needed a rescuer who should awaken him from the drunken swoon of death. In this painting it is Athene who does this; elsewhere it is Medeia, who is seen on vase-paintings following the hero with her magic herbs. The hardest point for the later narrators was the death apparently, and in a sense really, undergone by Jason, through which he won the Golden Fleece.

They preferred to say that Jason had three trials assigned him by Aietes,⁷⁹⁶ and that with the help of Medeia he succeeded in all three.⁷⁹⁷ Even in this later form of the story, the slaying of the dragon must originally have taken the first place. The second test was a contest in ploughing with Aietes, and this finally was actually moved up to the first place. Hephaistos had presented to the son of Helios two bulls with bronze hooves and bronze mouths, from which they snorted fire, and a plough of steel, all made in one piece.⁷⁹⁸ With this Aietes was able to plough a deep furrow, and Jason was now required to do the same. He threw off his clothing;⁷⁹⁹ his limbs were protected against the fire by an ointment which Medeia had given him. Thus he forced the marvellous beasts under the yoke and ploughed the furrow assigned to him.

To this test yet another was added.⁸⁰⁰ After the ploughing-match, the hero must undertake to sow the teeth of the slain dragon and kill the gigantic warriors who sprang up from them. Those who relegated Jason's killing of the dragon to the third place declared⁸⁰¹ that Pallas Athene had kept back half the teeth from Kadmos' sowing in Thebes and given them to Aietes for this purpose. Thus there was nothing left for Jason too, but to imitate Kadmos further⁸⁰² by throwing a great stone among the earth-born men, who thereupon began

to slaughter one another. The rest he did himself with the Argonauts.

But in all these accounts—in the old ones, which are full of meaning, and where Jason won the Golden Fleece from the darkness of death, from the belly of the serpent, and in the later, idle inventions which told of the trials—the exploits would have been in vain if the heroes had not succeeded in escaping the vigilance of Aietes, who wished to annihilate them. The dark son of Helios and his dwelling were like Hades and his house. In one of the older versions it is stated⁸⁰³ that the Golden Fleece lay in the house of Aietes. After Jason had succeeded in the trial (in this case it was probably only the ploughing-match), the king invited the Argonauts to a banquet. He intended to set the Argo on fire as the heroes were feasting. But when it had nearly come to that, Aphrodite aroused in Aietes a longing for the love of his wife Eurylyte.⁸⁰⁴ The king lay at the queen's side, the prophet Idmon called to the Argonauts to flee, and the trample of their feet was the signal for Medeia, who also rose and fled with Jason.

The poet Apollonios describes this otherwise.⁸⁰⁵ Medeia rose while Aietes, after the two trials which Jason had passed—the ploughing-match and the killing of the giants who grew out of the ground—was taking counsel with his men how they might destroy the Argonauts. The Titaness of night,⁸⁰⁶ the moon-goddess, saw the princess hurrying through the night as though it were herself; her double, Medeia,⁸⁰⁷ called Jason to her from the Argo, and they entered the holy Grove of Ares, where the gigantic snake guarded the Fleece. With the branch of a freshly cut juniper, which she had previously dipped in a magical preparation, Medeia, singing, sprinkled the eyes of the dragon. The monster fell asleep and Jason took the Fleece from the oak. According to this version he did not kill the serpent but merely departed, looking behind him, till the maid rejoined him. As a virgin in her bower tries to catch the light of the rising full moon in her thin night-attire and is pleased with it, so Jason now was joyous as he lifted the great Golden

Fleece on high, the sheen of which was reflected from his head.⁸⁰⁸ According to an older account,⁸⁰⁹ they made love to each other at once, on the bank of the Phasis, but in the well-known later poetry Medeia followed the Argonauts for some time yet as the virgin bride of Jason, until their wedding was celebrated on the island of the Phaiakians.

More than once Apollonios portrays for us Medeia's visit to Hekate. She was the expert priestess of the nocturnal goddess, who ruled over the entrance to the underworld; nay more, who in her secret identity with Persephone, under the name of night-wandering Brimo, the infernal, the lady of the dead,⁸¹⁰ governed the realm of the dead itself. Some genealogists⁸¹¹ declared that Hekate was the mother of both the sorceresses: Kirke, who was supposedly the sister of Aietes, and Medeia. The latter had spoken to Jason for the first time in the temple of Hekate,⁸¹² where she took the ointment from her breast-band⁸¹³ and handed it to the hero, so that he should be protected against the fire of the bulls. It was the 'Promethean ointment',⁸¹⁴ the juice of the flower which sprang up in the glens of the Caucasus from the blood of the tormented Titan; a cubit high, in hue like the Corycian saffron, but with a flesh-coloured root. The earth roared and shook when it was cut from the ground. The second time⁸¹⁵ that Medeia made sacrifice to Hekate was at the mouth of the Halys in Paphlagonia, on the third day of her flight with Jason. The poet does not venture to describe the gruesome rite.

Others have described the horrible act⁸¹⁶ which Medeia committed to check Aietes and the Kolchians from pursuit. This terrible deed was comparable to the action of Tantalos, or the rending of the infant Dionysos, son of Persephone, by the Titans,⁸¹⁷ save that here the intention was not that the limbs should serve as food but that they should be collected. It has already been said that Medeia had a brother by the name of Apsyrtos or Phaethon.⁸¹⁸ His mother was called Astero-deia,⁸¹⁹ 'she of the starry path', a name for the moon-goddess.⁸²⁰ According to the older narrators,⁸²¹ Apsyrtos was a small

child, perhaps like the stars which are always fading away in the sky. Medeia lifted him from his cradle and took him on board the *Argo* with her. It was also alleged⁸²² that she murdered her brother before leaving home, in the palace of Aietes, and did not wait till they were under way and the pursuit had begun. For that was the purpose here of the sacrifice of the child; he was cut in pieces and his limbs strewn before the feet of the pursuers, or cast into the Phasis. By the time Aietes had picked them up and fitted them together, the Argonauts were out of reach.

To Apollonios, Apsyrtos was the full-grown son of Aietes. As the *Argo* was crossing the Black Sea from the mouth of the Halys and running into the mouth of the Istros (the Danube, of which it was believed that it had an additional mouth, leading into the Adriatic), Apsyrtos is represented as getting ahead of the heroes by another branch of the river. A tale was told of an island of the Istros in the Ionian Sea, the extension of the Adriatic, which had a temple of Artemis.⁸²³ By this was meant probably that sanctuary of the goddess in Istria which Herakles allegedly reached in pursuit of the hind of Keryneia. Here the Argonauts found themselves surrounded by an army of Kolchians, whose commander was Apsyrtos. Another Kolchian fleet was rounding Greece and coming up from the other side of the Ionian Sea. Medeia was to be left to her fate in the temple of Artemis and the company of heroes to proceed unmolested with the Golden Fleece; that was the compact with which Medeia cajoled her brother into the ambush. Jason slaughtered him like a bull close by the temple.⁸²⁴ The Kolchian army dispersed, and the *Argo* again ran into a Greek sea, the Ionian, from the Adriatic, laden not only with the Golden Fleece, but with a blood-polluted pair. She was passing 'Black Kerkyra', the island now known as Korčula, seriously endangered by carrying the two sinners,⁸²⁵ when the ship herself raised her voice,⁸²⁶ and warned the heroes to make for the dwelling of the sorceress Kirke, who could purify Jason and Medeia from the murder of Apsyrtos.

The Argonauts therefore chose a course northwards around the Apennine peninsula, which was believed to be an island, bounded to the north by two mighty rivers, Eridanos, the Po, and Rhodanos, the Rhone. The heroes sailed up one stream until they got into the other, of which it was told that besides the Eridanos it had two further arms, running one of them into Okeanos and the other into the Tyrrhenian Sea.⁸²⁷ They nearly missed the Tyrrhenian arm, but in Apollonios' narrative Hera stood by them at that moment. Kirke, in this tale, did not live in the east, but in the west; to be precise, where Monte Circeo rises, nowadays no longer on an island but on a peninsula of the Tyrrhenian coast. She knew her niece by the golden sheen of her eyes, a peculiarity of all children and grandchildren of the Sun-god,⁸²⁸ and she cleansed the pair,⁸²⁹ holding a newborn pig over them both and praying to Zeus the god who purifies, her hands dripping with the beast's blood. But then Kirke bade Medea depart from her house, because she had betrayed her father.⁸³⁰

The Argonauts, except Jason, had not entered Kirke's dwelling, and they were able to pass the Sirens' rocks because Orpheus drowned their baleful singing with a cheerful strain. Between Skylla and Charybdis and between the Planktai, which this version distinguishes from the Symplegades, the 'Dark-blue Rocks' on the Bosphorus, Thetis with the Nereids helped the Argo to pass.⁸³¹ The heroes saw the cattle of Helios and heard their lowing on Trinakria,⁸³² and, quickly leaving Sicily behind them, soon landed on the island of the Phaiakians.⁸³³ Its name Makris or Drepane, 'the reaping-hook', denotes Corfu. Immediately after the Argonauts, the Kolchians' other force also arrived there and demanded of King Alkinoos the surrender of Medea, who had begged protection of Queen Arete; that is how the story in this late form is fitted on to the adventures of Odysseus, which were to take place there later in the sequence of the stories of the heroes.

It is said that then⁸³⁴ Alkinoos had decided to give the Kolchian princess back to her father only if she was not yet

Jason's wife. Arete learned of this decision in a conversation with the king at night, and secretly passed it on to the Argonauts. In that same night they celebrated the wedding, in the cave of Makris, the nymph of the island. There the bed was made ready and the great Fleece spread out upon it.⁸³⁵ Hera, who loved Jason, willed the marriage and as marriage-goddess was in future to protect Medeia; she sent a whole choir of nymphs to the wedding, with bright-coloured flowers in their white bosoms. The sheen of the Golden Fleece, which shone about them also, inflamed the fire of longing in their eyes, but they were ashamed to let their hands touch it. The heroes, garlanded, sang the nuptial song to the tones of Orpheus' lyre. Medeia and Jason must imagine that their marriage was being consummated not in a cave but at home in Iolkos in Aison's palace, as indeed it should have been.

But they were still far from arriving in Jason's native land. Storms drove the Argo from Drepane in nine days and nights⁸³⁶ to Libya, to the shallow, dangerous Syrtis, where there was nothing left for them but to disembark and travel through the desert. There, in the heat of noonday, three ghost-like divine women,⁸³⁷ the daughters of Libye,⁸³⁸ appeared to Jason and advised him to recompense the benefit of their mother, who had borne their heavy weight in her own body, by doing her a like service. Thus it happened⁸³⁹ that the heroes took the Argo on their shoulders and carried the ship for twelve days and nights through the desert. During this time they suffered terribly from the torments of thirst, and when at last they laid down their burden on the surface of Lake Tritonis, they hurried to find a spring. Thus the Argonauts reached the holy ground⁸⁴⁰ where, up to the previous day, the serpent Ladon had guarded the apples of the Hesperides; for Herakles had come there and killed the dragon but one day earlier. He had taken the apples with him. Before the eyes of the heroes, the mourning Hesperides were transformed into three trees, but they could also change back again, and they showed them the spring,⁸⁴¹ which Herakles had caused to rise from the ground

with a blow of his foot.⁸⁴² The men were too late to catch up with the son of Zeus; only Lynkeus fancied that he could catch a glimpse of him in the extreme distance, striding through the country.⁸⁴³

They would also have failed to find the way out from lake Tritonis to the open sea if the Triton had not met them, first in human shape,⁸⁴⁴ then as a god with the tail of a sea-creature. In his human form he presented the Argonauts with a clod of earth, which the hero Euphemos, son of Poseidon, thankfully accepted. In his own shape he then guided and pushed the Argo into the sea. The heroes were able to land in Crete only after Medea had with her magic overthrown Talos, the man of bronze,⁸⁴⁵ who walked around the great island three times a day. With a hostile gaze she bewitched the eyes of the giant;⁸⁴⁶ he accidentally grazed his ankle on a sharp stone at the spot where his vulnerable vein lay concealed, and fell bleeding with a great crash to the ground. Then the Argonauts, as they had previously built altars to Poseidon and to his son Triton,⁸⁴⁷ now erected a shrine to the Minoan Athene.⁸⁴⁸

Finally, in the dead of night, they reached the Greek islands, which they once had quitted by the Hades gate of the 'Dark-blue Rocks' on their way through the Hellespont and the Bosphorus. That night was so dark, so ugly and black, that the Argonauts no longer knew if they were sailing through Hades or over the waters.⁸⁴⁹ Jason extended his arms and called with a loud voice on Phoibos; then the god appeared again on a lonely island, as he had done before when the heroes had forced their way through the 'Dark-blue Rocks'. At his former epiphany, on the island of Thyias, Apollo's silver bow had shone in his left hand;⁸⁵⁰ now he held the golden bow on high in his right⁸⁵¹ and stood on one of the two Melantian Rocks, which allegedly were not so named until later, after a man called Melas, 'the black'.⁸⁵² In the splendour of the god the Argonauts caught sight of a tiny islet, and as they were landing on it, the light of dawn arose. They built an altar in a shady grove on the island and forthwith gave Apollo the

added name of Aigletes after the splendour, *aigle*, in which he had appeared; they called the island itself Anaphe, a name which for Greek ears contained the word for lighting a fire, *anapto*. A festival of Apollo Aigletes was straightway held.⁸⁵³

When the heroes were leaving Anaphe after the festival, Euphemos remembered a dream he had had that same night, and told it to Jason. He had dreamed of the clod⁸⁵⁴ which he still kept as the Triton's gift. In the dream, he was holding it to his breast and it appeared to him that the clod was quite saturated in his milk; but then it turned into a maiden and he had union with her. He was sorry for what he had done, since he had himself suckled the girl, but the young woman comforted him and introduced herself as a daughter of the Triton and the goddess Libye. He was to make her the companion of the Nereids, so that she could live in the sea near Anaphe and soon after rise into the sunlight again as a dwelling-place for his descendants. By Jason's advice, Euphemos threw the clod into the sea, and then there arose from the depths the island Kalliste, 'most beautiful', which was later known as Thera, 'the hunting-ground', and inhabited by a clan which descended from Euphemos.

That was the tale told by the inhabitants of Thera, the modern Santorin. The Aiginetans also had a story of the landing of the Argonauts on their island;⁸⁵⁵ so as not to miss a favourable wind, they had made a race of carrying water to the Argo and thus founded the festival of the Hydrophoria.⁸⁵⁶ But the great tale of Jason and Medeia, which was no longer also the story of the Argonauts, for that ended with the arrival of the Argo in the Gulf of Pagasai, was to take a new turn in Iolkos. We now see the common element and the difference between the fortunes of Jason and those of Theseus. Both heroes forced their way into a region of the underworld, Jason into the jaws of the serpent of Aia, Theseus into the Labyrinth; each found a gracious helper in a divine maiden of that region, Theseus in Ariadne, the 'Lady of the Labyrinth', who betrayed her father for his sake and gave over her brother to death, Jason in Medeia

who did the like. Ariadne too entered upon the road to the hero's native world, but she was brought back. Medeia, who like her was at home yonder in the world beyond ours, and belonged to the family of Helios, made her entrance with Jason into his home, and the people now were soon able to discover the power of a lady of the other world.

It was told of her that she could bring about rebirth and rejuvenation by killing and cutting in pieces, the sort of thing that it was alleged Dionysos had undergone at the hands of the Titans.⁸⁵⁷ It was a gloomy performance, belonging to the underworld, which was undertaken in cult with a sacrificial victim, probably openly in early days, secretly later. Medeia had already sacrificed her brother in this fashion, but it must have appeared even more gruesome when the pieces of the butchered victim, who represented the god, were boiled in a cauldron according to an elaborate ritual.⁸⁵⁸ Still, there was no doubt consolation in being told that the Sun himself entered a cauldron every evening (the poets sometimes called it a golden goblet), travelled in it over Okeanos in the night and emerged from it rejuvenated in the morning.⁸⁵⁹ We know the story of how Helios let Herakles have the use of his cauldron for the journey to Geryoneus. The tales of Medeia's magic cauldron connect with the series of reminiscences of such a vessel, a sacrificial one in cult, but for the narrators a wonderful vessel, out of which Pelops once leaped alive, and before him assuredly some divine child.⁸⁶⁰

When Jason and the Argonauts arrived in Iolkos, his father Aison was grown so old that he could not even take part in the great feast with which the people and the other fathers and mothers welcomed the heroes.⁸⁶¹ That, they say, was the first time that Medeia showed her art, with which, according to poets and other narrators, she later rejuvenated Jason also.⁸⁶² It is possible that Pelias was already dead by the time the heroes arrived, and his son Akastos, who had made the journey with Jason, came just in time to institute the funeral games which were such a favourite subject for art⁸⁶³ and for song;⁸⁶⁴ the

Argonauts too took part in them then, before they dispersed. But it was also said that Pelias was still alive, though now an old man, in need of rejuvenation. Towards him Medeia showed a different countenance, for it was out of the question for Pelias, after having driven Aison, his wife and a younger brother of Jason to death, as this version had it,⁸⁶⁵ now to get the Golden Fleece. Also, according to the oracle concerning the man with the one sandal, it was bound to transpire that Jason and Medeia were bringing destruction for Pelias.⁸⁶⁶ The foreign woman hoodwinked the king's daughters into undertaking the sorcery which should make their father young again. Of Pelias' daughters (they numbered five in one account),⁸⁶⁷ only Alkestis refused any credence to Medeia, and according to art-monuments also she alone turned away from the deed. But the other four, or perhaps there were only two,⁸⁶⁸ let themselves be deceived into doing it, after the sorceress had first cut up an old ram, boiled the pieces in a cauldron, and made a lamb leap out of the vessel. They cut their father in pieces and boiled him, but he never came to life again.

After this act of vengeance Jason left the kingship of Iolkos to Akastos and set off with his wife to the place where the Sun's granddaughter herself had an ancestral home in Greece, where she was queen and could share her throne with her husband.⁸⁶⁹ Corinth, of all the cities of the mainland, was part of Helios' possessions. The Corinthians honoured him, the Sun-god, as the highest among all gods. His sacred place was the towering summit of the Akrokorinthos,⁸⁷⁰ which the god handed over to the goddess Aphrodite.⁸⁷¹ His wife bore the name of Antiope, like the mother of the Theban Dioskuroi who elsewhere is the reputed bride of Zeus. She had borne Aietes to Helios,⁸⁷² also Aloeus, who was hardly to be distinguished from the father of the Aloadae⁸⁷³ and received the land below on the river Asopos as the Sun-god's gift. Aietes got Corinth as his share of the division; his governor was named Bunos after an elevation on the Akrokorinthos. On that height, but not so high as the temple of Aphrodite Urania,

stood the temple of Hera Akraia,⁸⁷⁴ or, to give her her Corinthian title, Bunia.⁸⁷⁵ Thither the Corinthians used to send for the service of the temple as many children as the Athenians sent to the Labyrinth at Knossos, seven boys and seven girls,⁸⁷⁶ who must spend a whole year in the shrine, as if they were in banishment or death. They were mourned for and offerings were made them as if they were wrathful chthonian gods.

It was indeed said of Medeia that she founded the temple of Aphrodite on the highest point.⁸⁷⁷ But her temple there was the temple of Hera, as in Aia it was that of Hekate. It was alleged⁸⁷⁸ that Zeus desired to be her husband, but as she remained faithful to Hera, the goddess promised her children immortality. In this immortality the sons and daughters of the Corinthians participated in the shrine of Hera. If, according to the well-known tale, the children of Medeia must nevertheless die and the seven boys and seven girls had to undergo death in their stead in a modified form, the responsibility for that probably rested simply on the course of the lunar month, of which fourteen days were consecrated to the waxing and then to the waning. As soon as Medeia bore a child—so ran a version which allotted part of the blame to her—she sent it to the shrine of Hera, and she kept them all hidden, in hopes that they would become immortal.⁸⁷⁹ What she did with the children there we are not told, but only that she made a fatal error and Jason caught her at her unnamed procedure—a thing which happened also to Demeter when she wished to make Demophoon immortal at Eleusis,⁸⁸⁰ and to Thetis, when she tried the same experiment on the child Achilles.⁸⁸¹ Jason did not understand Medeia's exculpation, would not forgive her, and went back to Iolkos. Medeia, too, thereupon left Corinth, and according to other, later, stories Sisypheos, whom she loved, received the kingdom from her.⁸⁸²

It was also alleged⁸⁸³ that it was the Corinthians who could not bear the rule of the foreign sorceress and murdered her seven sons and seven daughters. Or it was the relatives of King Kreon, the second in succession from Bellerophonos,⁸⁸⁴ who

did this by way of revenge, because Medeia had killed the king. They also put about the rumour that she was the murderess of her own children. That must have been an old form of the tale of the apparent death of the fourteen. It was a trait belonging to that other face of Medeia which she had already shown, in the course of these stories, to Aietes and Apsyrtos, Pelias and his daughters, and which Euripides made known to all the world in his tragedy 'Medeia'. In his hands, Medeia, wronged in her love and in her dignity as queen and wife, Medeia the representative of Hera the goddess, appeared on the stage as a mortal woman,⁸⁸⁵ bearer of the common lot of womankind,⁸⁸⁶ and of the greatest injustice and ingratitude that ever fell to the share of any deliverer.⁸⁸⁷

The Corinthians had a legend concerning the fountain Glauke, which springs from an immense cube of rock, not far from the market place of their city. According to it the nymph of this name was once a princess who had cast herself into that water to be rid of the torments that Medeia's gift had brought her; for it was for her that Jason deserted the daughter of Aietes in Corinth. Thereupon the sorceress in her anger sent to his new wife the gift which destroyed her. The carriers of it were the two sons whom she had borne to Jason, Mermeros and Pheres. In this tale they were stoned to death by the Corinthians. There were monuments to them near the fountain. But Euripides insists that they died at their mother's hands, and tells us also of greater insults than the choice of a second wife and the repudiating of Medeia.⁸⁸⁸

According to him, Kreon, the bride's father—this royal name, 'ruler', was always and everywhere at the service of poets and other narrators—banished the Kolchian woman from the country. With this, the cup of her humiliation was full.⁸⁸⁹ Jason appeared beside her, not as a co-regent alongside a queen of the blood of the Sun, but as a truckling refugee, who wished to turn to advantage his marriage to the king's daughter.⁸⁹⁰ At this point there appeared suddenly a real king, Aigeus of Athens, still childless and on his way from Delphi

to Pitheus at Troizen.⁸⁹¹ And with him also appeared the promise of a new home,⁸⁹² the earthly land of gods, Attica,⁸⁹³ for Medeia. Nothing now could contain the savagery of the royal lady from Aia, land of a Titaness.⁸⁹⁴ Jason should become childless. She guilefully besought him for permission to send gifts to the bride by her children.⁸⁹⁵ The two fair-haired boys⁸⁹⁶ presented the bewitched robe and golden diadem, by which the princess and her father were burned, and they were afterwards butchered by their own mother, so that their father Jason might, as he deserved, be also smitten by the annihilating doom.

The murderess appeared with the corpses of the boys on the chariot which Father Helios gave her:⁸⁹⁷ a car drawn by dragons, like that of Triptolemos, who rose from the realm of Persephone on it. But Medeia's chariot, as vase-paintings show us, was drawn by yet more formidable serpents. On one painting a daimon from the underworld, named Oistros, 'rage of madness' conducts it; he has serpents in his hair. Medeia took the dead children with her into the sacred precinct of Hera Akraia, and buried them there with her own hands, so that in the future they should share in the mystic worship.⁸⁹⁸ To Jason she foretold the death which was to overtake him in the place where he had dedicated the Argo to the goddess. This is said to have occurred on the Isthmus, in the sanctuary of Poseidon.⁸⁹⁹ There the hero lay down in the shadow of the decaying ship and was struck by a plank from her;⁹⁰⁰ or he was struck down in the temple of Hera, where the Argo's figurehead had been dedicated to the goddess.

Medeia was immortal.⁹⁰¹ She lived with Aigeus until Theseus came and took over the power of the king of Athens. This she could not prevent. To Aigeus she bore Medos,⁹⁰² and, it is said, fled with this her son to the Orient, where she became through him the eponym of the Medes. These and similar tales, which would take us far from Greece, were readily attached to the older tales, which told of another and final arrival of the Sun's granddaughter. In Elysion,⁹⁰³ or, if

we prefer to use the other name of the place where Kadmos and Harmonia also lived forever, on the Islands of the Blessed,⁹⁰⁴ Medeia was married for ever to Achilles. Sanctuaries were erected to Jason in places which it was supposed the Argonauts had reached, even in Armenia and Media.⁹⁰⁵ But in Greece his fame had to give way to that of the younger hero, just named, who at that time was still being nurtured in Chiron's cave by the nymphs.⁹⁰⁶

CHAPTER III

Orpheus and Eurydike

WITHOUT ORPHEUS, the wonderful singer and lyre-player, we could not now imagine the Argo. Ancient artists already show him as one of the Argonauts. He, if anyone, could be useful to their company, which wished to make its way into the other world. The very thing for which Orpheus was famous was that he had been capable of undertaking the dangerous journey into the underworld quite alone. He was not the first of whom it was said, in the tales of gods and heroes, that he had performed miracles with his singing and lyre-playing (the two made up but one art). We know that Hermes invented the lyre and was the first to sing to its strains.⁹⁰⁷ Among the gods, he presented the lyre to his brother Apollo; among the heroes, to another brother, who later quarrelled with Apollo, Amphion. When we are told concerning Orpheus that the endless flocks of birds flew about over his head as he sang, and the fish leaped high from the dark-blue sea to meet him, we know that this was the effect of his song.⁹⁰⁸ We see him, lyre in hand, travelling on the Argo. But when we also are told that his song set stones and trees in motion,⁹⁰⁹ we remember the walls of Thebes, which Amphion's lyre raised. The deed which only Orpheus accomplished was that he subdued everything wild, even the savage powers of the underworld, by his song, and made his way to Persephone. That puts him alongside of Perseus and Herakles, Theseus and Jason in the ranks of the Greek heroes.

His worship was maintained by a great community which believed itself to be in possession of books containing revelations of Orpheus, accounts of his journey to the underworld and all that he had learned there and afterwards taught and originated. In the popular mind he was more closely linked to the community of his disciples and adherents than with any

particular race or family. Apart from them, his legends, and also the sites of his worship, connected him especially with the region of Olympus and not till later with districts which lay further north. By all accounts he was the son of a Muse, and according to most,⁹¹⁰ of Kalliope. To his son⁹¹¹ and disciple⁹¹² was given the name Musaios; or a certain Musaios, 'the Muses' man' was made out to be the son of him who had been entitled to the same name. And being 'musical', he surely was originally Apolline.⁹¹³ Apollo could be regarded as his divine father,⁹¹⁴ whereby his fundamental Apolline nature was doubly emphasised, through his mother and through his father. But those who claimed to know more of his descent and birth called his father Oiagros.⁹¹⁵ Whether a river north of Olympus had that name,⁹¹⁶ as, for instance, Marsyas was the name of a river and also of a wild inhabitant of the woods who competed with Apollo, need not concern us. Oiagros means 'lonely hunter', 'one who hunts all alone'. Orpheus grew up in Pieria,⁹¹⁷ the country of the Olympian Muses. Apollo is said to have been his teacher;⁹¹⁸ the god gave him lessons on that lyre which Hermes had given him and he presented to Orpheus. In the wooded glens of Olympus⁹¹⁹ the young man first gathered about him by the music of his lyre and his song the trees and the wild beasts. The son of Kalliope showed himself there as a double of Apollo, the god to whose music wild creatures, lynx and lion and stag, yielded as he guarded the herds of Admetos.⁹²⁰ If the name of the singer were not expressly named or written alongside the pictures which show Orpheus playing his lyre, we should not always know which of the two is meant by the scene depicted.

For most narrators the savage land of Thrace began there, on the slopes of Olympus, although Pieria was still on the Macedonian side of the border. They sang⁹²¹ of a Thracian Pieria and made Orpheus a king there, alleging that the trees had followed him thither from the real Pieria; they dubbed him a Thracian. The later vase-painters believed them, whereas the earlier ones still held to the true account, without which

the legends of Orpheus and the hero himself would lack all meaning. He is represented as a Hellene among the Thracians, and his name is not at all foreign. 'Orpheus' would be pronounced differently on Thracian lips. True, it is not so readily intelligible as *Oiagros*, which also cannot be the name of a Thracian in his own tongue. But perhaps it was not out of place and not without object when a late disciple of the singer described the sombre garment in which Orpheus made sacrifice to Hekate on behalf of the Argonauts with a word⁹²² derived from *orphe*, 'darkness'. Orpheus was connected with darkness, both in his journey to the underworld and also later, when he communicated his initiations at night, as was proper.

Longing for Eurydike led the Muse's son into the other world. In this he was different from Theseus and Jason, not to speak of Perseus and Herakles, who made their journeys for love of no woman, mortal or divine. Orpheus, however, shared the fate of Theseus to this extent, that Eurydike might not, any more than Ariadne, become the lasting possession of her beloved nor follow him to his home. It is indeed said of her that she had been the singer's wife, but Orpheus, like Theseus in Dionysos, had had a divine rival, and to that rival was due Eurydike's early association with the realm of the dead.

To go by her names—for the heroine of this famous tale has two names given her by tradition, even as Ariadne was also known as Aridela—she might even have been the queen of the other world. 'Eurydike' means 'wide-ruling', a name which originally belonged to the queen of the underworld only, however many distinguished women bore it later among mortals. We can no longer be sure of her other name; it may have been either Agriope, 'wild-faced',⁹²³ or Argiope 'bright-faced', like the mother of the singer Thamyris.⁹²⁴ In favour of Argiope, later disciples of Orpheus,⁹²⁵ who otherwise held that Musaios was the son of their master, made Selene the moon-goddess his mother. It seems that the beloved wife of Orpheus resembled the moon in the opinion of the narrators, even when they knew

her as a victim, not as the queen, of the underworld. Persephone, it is true, was victim and queen in one, having been abducted by Hades, and to her Orpheus descended, into the house of her husband, impelled by love of Eurydike.

The tale as it is told us⁹²⁶ began in Thessaly, where a faithful wife, Alkestis, king Admetos' queen, had already been rescued from the claws of Death. We know of Herakles' adventure on his way to Diomedes the Thracian. As Apollo had done earlier in Admetos' household,⁹²⁷ so Aristaios was living the life of a herdsman in the beautiful valley of Tempe under Olympos; the nymph Kyrene had borne him to the son of Leto, to be a little Zeus, a second holy Apollo.⁹²⁸ Aristaios' greatest pride was notoriously his bees. His name signified that he was 'the best' that the world has to show. The 'honeyed' Zeus of the dead, Zeus Meilichios, who was accustomed to receive the worship of the living in serpent-form, was of course no other than Aristaios, although no legend specifically mentions his bees. This divine bee-keeper lay in wait for the newly-married⁹²⁹ Eurydike; she fled from him and in that flight she met her end, for a snake had bitten her on the ankle.⁹³⁰ Her companions the Dryads mourned her in the mountains, far into Thrace.⁹³¹ When Orpheus ran up, his young wife had already been carried off by Hades. He journeyed after her with doleful singing, all through Greece to the southernmost point of the Peloponnesos, Tainaron.

Putting his trust in his lyre,⁹³² he entered upon the gloomy road to the realm of the dead,⁹³³ on which but few living men had preceded him—the two friends Theseus and Peirithoos, and Herakles when he brought Kerberos up. Charon remembered them only too well,⁹³⁴ but the lyre had its way even with him. It is said⁹³⁵ that he quitted his boat and followed Orpheus as he sang, to listen to the wonderful song which he gave before the lord and lady of the lower regions. While Orpheus sang, Kerberos did not bark, Ixion's wheel stood still, Tityos' liver was not torn, the daughters of Danaos ceased their fruitless water-carrying, Sisyphos sat down on his stone, Tantalos

forgot hunger and thirst, the Erinyes were awe-struck and the judges of the dead wept.⁹³⁶ The numberless throng of the ghosts which had gathered about Orpheus wept also; but Eurydike was not yet there, for she was still one of the newly arrived phantoms, and came slowly up with her bitten ankle.⁹³⁷ The painting of a master from Magna Graecia, where the vases in graves often have scenes from the underworld, shows her brought by love in the form of a flying Eros. Persephone also is to be seen, softened by the singing and summoning Eurydike with a gracious gesture. The singer stands between the two; he already holds the hand of his beloved, but in none of these pictures is he looking at anyone.

That was the law of the infernal powers; no one must look at them. Sacrifice to the deities of the dead was made with averted face; no looking, only the voice, was allowed in the realm of the departed. That could work miracles, but had no power to undo death, to effect release from the gods of that other realm. The law of those below was the law of Persephone,⁹³⁸ and was only confirmed when the living strove against it. Only when it was violated did the law take its course. Eurydike might follow her loving husband; that much Orpheus had accomplished with his singing, but on the hard road which led from death into life, he must not look upon her. Then why did the singer do so? What was the reason, except the great and final separation between the living and the dead? Was it madness?⁹³⁹ Did he wish to kiss her?⁹⁴⁰ Or was he only anxious to make sure she was following him?⁹⁴¹ The scene is represented on a much admired Attic relief on which there are now not two figures but three; Orpheus is turning around and looking at Eurydike, whose left hand lightly touches his shoulder in loving farewell, but her right is already caught by Hermes the Guide of Souls. As it was told that Zeus thundered on the disappearance of Oidipus at the threshold of the underworld, so it was said there came also a peal of thunder thrice repeated, the sound of inexorable destiny, when Eurydike was recalled to the realm of the dead.⁹⁴²

In vain did Orpheus try to run after her when she disappeared to return to the underworld. Charon would no longer ferry him over.⁹⁴³ The analogies drawn in antiquity⁹⁴⁴ between Orpheus and Dionysus were over-presumptuous. The god brought up his mother Semele from Hades, but what he could do, Orpheus could not. Yet the shadow which from then on fell over his Apolline nature was Dionysiac. Orpheus did not belong to the one god more than to the other. Nevertheless he did not become the opponent or the victim of Dionysos, but the opponent and victim of the Thracian women's wild excesses, the exaggerated outcome of their worship of the wine-god. Seven months long, it is said, he lived in a cave under a huge rock at the mouth of the Macedonian river Strymon,⁹⁴⁵ having first, as others add,⁹⁴⁶ endured for seven days by the river of the underworld without tasting a morsel. He kept away from women and would enter upon no second marriage.⁹⁴⁷ At this time the wild dwellers in the woods came to him,⁹⁴⁸ men of Thrace, as vase-paintings show us; or satyrs, older and younger boys, as a later bas-relief records. They were not the very young boys, not yet old enough for the higher initiations, but adolescents. Orpheus refrained from the eating of flesh, according to the 'Orphic way of life', sang to them of the beginning of things and of the gods, and caused them to take part in the initiations which he had brought back from his visit to the queen of the underworld. Later it was told⁹⁴⁹ that Zeus smote him with his thunderbolt because he taught men through the Mysteries.

But the older account ran thus: it was the women of Thrace who took it ill that Orpheus had kept away from the love of women for three whole years.⁹⁵⁰ He was accustomed to seek the company only of youths, and it was said of him⁹⁵¹ that he had introduced homoerotic passion into Thrace. He was all the more like Apollo for that very reason, that it was young men who surrounded him and not women, as they did Dionysos. In his tragedy 'The Bassarai', the Thracian name of the Bacchantes, Aeschylus made him wake up in the night and

climb Mount Pangaion to adore Apollo in the rising sun.⁹⁵² Thither also the Thracian maenads were driven by their god⁹⁵³ at their nocturnal festivals of Dionysos in hurrying throngs. They could hardly have known the secret which Aeschylus seems to have revealed in another tragedy of the same trilogy, the 'Young Men', in which he made his chorus invoke Apollo himself as Kisseus and Bakcheus, that is 'ivy-garlanded' and 'Bacchant'.⁹⁵⁴ And perhaps in the poet's opinion Orpheus went too far in a one-sided worship after his return from the realm of the dead and the beginning of his grudge against the gods of the underworld, among whom Dionysos held sway as Hades and subterranean Zeus. As he wandered over Mount Pangaion, the singer fell in with the secret ceremony of the Thracian Bacchantes.⁹⁵⁵ They recognised him indeed—it was no fit of madness as with the women of Thebes who mistook Pentheus for a lion—and they tore the son of the Muse limb from limb.

One narrator,⁹⁵⁶ on the other hand, knew of a great hall of initiation instituted for secret ritual in the city of Libethra in Macedonia, probably like that one which has been excavated on Samothrace. Thither on a certain day the men of Thrace and Macedonia came to Orpheus. They were accustomed to lay down their arms before the doors. The angry women snatched up the weapons, killed the men who fell into their hands, and flung the dismembered body of the priest of the initiation, Orpheus, limb by limb into the sea. According to this version Orpheus' head floated into the mouth of the river Meles at Smyrna, where subsequently Homer the poet of the Trojan War was said to have been born, being a son of the river-god. There the head was picked up and a hero-shrine of Orpheus, later a temple, built, which no woman was allowed to enter.

According to another tale,⁹⁵⁷ Orpheus journeyed all over Thrace, as the Orphic initiators later did in Greece, and the men joined him. At first the women dared not attack him, but then they drew courage from wine, and ever after the Thracians

used to go drunken into battle. Vase-paintings show us the drunken women of Thrace attacking the gentle singer with spears, large stones, or anything they could lay their hands on. He has only his lyre, with which, as he falls to the ground, he vainly defends himself. The fragments of his body were strewn in all directions;⁹⁵⁸ the Muses are said to have collected them and buried their darling in Libethra. His lyre, which could find no worthy owner after Apollo and Orpheus, was set by Zeus among the constellations as Lyra.

There was a separate story about his head and his lyre.⁹⁵⁹ The murderesses cut off Orpheus' head, nailed it to the lyre, and so threw it into the sea, or rather into the Thracian Hebros,⁹⁶⁰ in which it floated singing while the lyre went on playing.⁹⁶¹ The current brought the singing head to the sea and the drift of the sea to Lesbos, the island which later was to be the richest in song and in the sweet strains of the lyre. The head was buried in the Bakcheion, the shrine of Dionysos, and the lyre was preserved in the temple of Apollo.⁹⁶² That was as it should be, and well-becoming to the Dionysiac fate and the Apolline nature of Orpheus. Much later a tale was told⁹⁶³ of his oracle on Lesbos, and beautiful vase-paintings and gems testify that young men received revelations from the head of the singer until Apollo himself bade it be silent.⁹⁶⁴

Wherever Orpheus lay buried, nightingales nested on his tomb and sang there, more sweetly and full-throated than they sing elsewhere.⁹⁶⁵ There were two graves of Orpheus in Macedonia, at the foot of Olympos: one at Libethra⁹⁶⁶ and another at Dion,⁹⁶⁷ the City of Zeus, to which the bones must have been transported after the other tomb was laid open by the collapse of its pillars. The pillars and the urn were accidentally knocked over by a great crowd which had come together to hear the marvel with their own ears; a shepherd had gone to sleep at noonday on the tomb and in a dream he sang sweetly and loudly the songs of Orpheus, as if it were his immortal voice sounding from the realm of the dead.⁹⁶⁸

CHAPTER IV

Tereus, Eumolpos and Kephalos

TEREUS, IN THE LEGENDS and on the Attic stage, appears as a genuine Thracian. He was connected to the royal family of the Athenians through his two wives, Prokne and Philomela, just as Eumolpos, another Thracian, was through his mother Chione, or Kephalos through his faithless wife Prokris, beloved of Eos. The stories of these three heroes and their wives bring us back to Attica or its neighbourhood, before we take up the thread of the great events in Thebes and Mycenae once more.

For Tereus allegedly reigned not far from the border of Attica, in Daulis,⁹⁶⁹ at the foot of Parnassos. He too, therefore, can hardly have been at home in Thrace itself. Only in a late version⁹⁷⁰ do we hear that he came by sea to visit his father-in-law, king Pandion, in Athens. He belonged rather to those Thracians who, like their modern kinsfolk the Albanians, were settled in wild mountainous regions in the middle of Greece, and of whom the Athenians had something to tell in their earliest history. Later, the grave of Tereus was actually shown in Megara,⁹⁷¹ and the story there was that he turned not, as in the usual version, into a hoopoe but into a falcon. It was merely stated that the hoopoe was first seen in that region. The metamorphosis by which the tragical story of the hero was transformed into one of the many tales of birds was perhaps not told everywhere even of him. It was narrated especially of his wives and even before them of the wife of Zethos, a daughter of Pandareos called Aedon, which as we know signifies a nightingale. There is also an ancient picture in which the wives of Tereus too are called, not Prokne and Philomela, but Nightingale and Swallow, Aedon and Chelidon.

Tereus, king of Thrace and son of Ares⁹⁷² was given Prokne's hand by Pandion. She was one of the two daughters

of the king of Athens, a granddaughter of Erichthonios. Tereus was thus rewarded for the help which he had given in the war against Labdakos king of Thebes. Prokne bore him one son, Itys, who was soon and for ever to be mourned. For not long after, the Thracian came back to Athens to get Prokne's sister Philomela, 'the lover of flocks'—a name which fits a swallow, since it is fond of nesting in byres, but also Hekate the infernal goddess, who is no less fond of byres and cattle.⁹⁷³

Indeed, the story of Philomela reminds us of the underworld. Tereus brought to Athens a false report of the death of Prokne,⁹⁷⁴ so as to get the other princess as well for his wife. And when he had possession of her, he brought word of her death to Prokne.⁹⁷⁵ It was quite untrue; but that was how the fate of Persephone, too, appeared to ill-informed mortals, who did not know that she had become the queen of the underworld. The same thing might have been said of her as of Philomela, that she had suffered violence and was become as dumb as a corpse. Exactly that was told in Italy of a goddess of the lower world,⁹⁷⁶ but the other way about; namely, of Lara, who used to chatter like any swallow, but became dumb for ever and had to follow Mercurius, as the Romans called Hermes, into the subterranean grove of the dead. On the way, against her will, she was made mother of the Lares by the Guide of Souls.

Philomela became the victim of the dark king, her sister's husband, in a byre hidden away in the depths of a wood.⁹⁷⁷ There Tereus secretly conveyed his sister-in-law, and to prevent her telling of his deed of violence, the barbarian cut out her tongue. In that byre in the primaeval forest she was thenceforth kept prisoner, and Prokne was to suppose her sister dead. But Philomela was skilled in weaving, and in her forest prison she embroidered a garment with pictures of her unhappy story and sent it to Prokne. The queen realised the crime Tereus had committed. It was the time of the nocturnal festival of the wine-god; she ranged through the woods with the Bacchantes and

caught up Philomela into the hurrying throng. Now the two sisters treated the child Itys as the daughters of Minyas, when Dionysos brought madness upon them, did a little son;⁹⁷⁸ they did not tear but cut the boy in pieces. This they did knowingly and of set purpose, and boiled the pieces in a cauldron. Thus it happened also in the history of Dionysos,⁹⁷⁹ not to mention the terrible deeds of Medeia. Prokne invited her husband as to a secret sacral banquet,⁹⁸⁰ but it was that banquet of Titans to which Zeus was beguiled into coming,⁹⁸¹ the banquet of Tantalos to which the gods were invited. Tereus ate, and realised what he had devoured only when Philomela threw his son's head at him. Then he drew his sword and pursued both women, and would have killed them but that Zeus turned all three into birds. However, it did not result in an unambiguous tale of metamorphosis, for there was no agreement as to whether Tereus took the form of a falcon or a hoopoe, or whether Philomela, who in the older versions is a swallow, does not mourn for Itys in the shape of a nightingale,⁹⁸² as Prokne does according to most accounts.

The Thracian Eumolpos has been named in connection with Erechtheus, Pandion's successor in the list of kings. The leading family of the Eleusinians traced their descent from him; it was that family which on every occasion gave them the chief priest of the Mysteries, the hierophant, or 'revealer of the holy things'. They were the Eumolpidae, originally no doubt all *eumolpoi*, good singers, for they all needed to be able to sing well, seeing that they led the secret ceremonies on the holy nights. *Eumolpos* was not a personal name, but a ceremonial title which the priest of the Mysteries adopted along with his office, during which he had no name,⁹⁸³ for he cast his old name into the sea,⁹⁸⁴ to whose depths the original Eumolpos of Thrace stood in a special relationship, as will appear from his story.

This is almost the same as the history of Tereus, only we do not hear of a tragical outcome, nor have the narrators anything to say of a transformation of Eumolpos into the shape of a bird. However, on a vase-painting of classical date, where he appears

as a pendant to his father Poseidon, there is shown at his feet a swan, a singing bird in the belief of the ancients, and to the Athenians a Thracian fowl, whose habitat was the mouth of the Strymon. It is, of course, possible that those who called Eumolpos a Thracian were not thinking of the northern region any more than in the case of Tereus, but of the district of Megara, which borders Eleusis to the south. Stories were told of a Lake Eschatiotis,⁹⁸⁵ the 'lake of the uttermost end', which lay beyond the Isthmus, and where many of Eumolpos' Thracian host, with which he helped the Eleusinians against the Athenians, disappeared while bathing.

Eumolpos' mother Chione, 'snow-white', may have originated from this Lake Eschatiotis and the sea between the Isthmus, Salamis and Megara, just as well as from the Thracian Sea in the far north. Through her, the priestly singer was connected with the royal family of Athens. Boreas, the god who reveals himself in the north wind,⁹⁸⁶ had carried off Oreithyia, daughter of Erechtheus and niece of Prokne and Philomela, from the Ilissos.⁹⁸⁷ Oreithyia, 'she who rages on the hills', a Bacchante like her aunts to judge by her name, bore the wind-god his winged sons Kalais and Zetes, who took part in the voyage of the Argo, and Chione, with whom Poseidon celebrated one of his innumerable marriages.⁹⁸⁸ In secret, she bore Eumolpos to the god of the sea, and into the sea she cast her child. It was told how his father took him up and brought him to Ethiopia. Where the baby was reared is revealed by the name of his foster-mother, Benthesisikyme, 'she who dwells in the depths of the waves'. There, in the realm of waters, much the same history as that of Tereus took place. Grown to manhood, the boy took to wife a daughter of Benthesisikyme, and to her his son Ismaros or Immarados (both names are Thracian) was born, who was to die in the battle against Erechtheus on the side of the Eleusinians.⁹⁸⁹ But Eumolpos is said to have ventured to force his attentions upon his wife's sister.⁹⁹⁰ Nothing is said of what came of this instance of the marriage of one husband to two wives, of the union of one hero with

two heroines, probably two goddesses originally. These events took place in the depths of the sea, in an underworld, which Eumolpos was obliged to leave with his son on account of his audacity. But by the grace of Demeter he was one of the first to be admitted to the Mysteries,⁹⁹¹ which he and his descendants at Eleusis were to make accessible to the initiated.

Prokris, 'the chosen above all', was the name of a daughter of Erechtheus, a sister of Oreithyia, and therefore again a niece of Prokne and Philomela. Of all the women of her royal house she most resembled the moon-goddess. Selene also not only loved Endymion but let herself be seduced by Pan; change is characteristic of the moon. The husband with whom Prokris played tit-for-tat at loving and deceiving was the 'handsome head', Kephalos, from *kephale*, head; an Attic community also had that name. The name and the appearance of the young man we know from the history of the gods.⁹⁹² He was even reckoned among the kings of Athens.⁹⁹³ Thorikos, where he ruled according to most accounts, lay on the east coast of the country, near the southern extremity of the peninsula, and of all harbour-towns in Attica was most directly opposite Crete; more so than even Prasiai, from which they used to voyage to Delos and Naxos and only from there on to Crete. In the mountains inland from it stretched the hunting-grounds of Kephalos and Prokris.

For not only was Kephalos passionately fond of hunting,⁹⁹⁴ but Prokris too was a great huntress. She possessed a spear which never missed,⁹⁹⁵ also the swift, immortal hound, the story of which has already been told in connection with the fox of Teumessos, in the history of Herakles. The story of her first infidelity is connected with her golden headband. It is said that the hero Pteleon, founder of Ptelea, 'Elmsby', in Attica, seduced her with the gift of this headband. Kephalos caught her making love to the stranger. In another account, Kephalos concealed himself by assuming the shape of the stranger. He left his young wife, making a pretext of his love of hunting,⁹⁹⁶ or of pollution from homicide which obliged

him to make her wait untouched for eight years.⁹⁹⁷ According to this version he himself came with the golden ornament in so beautiful a shape that Prokris no longer recognised him and let him seduce her. Or he came at night,⁹⁹⁸ after sending on ahead a pandering messenger with much gold, and moved her to the adventure. Only on the bed of love did he reveal himself to his deluded wife. Prokris leapt up, ashamed and offended, and fled to Minos on his great island.

Thence she came back, after she had helaed the king of Crete and got from him as her fee the spear and the hound. The form Minos' sickness took, at least as it is indicated and described in late accounts, was that he could approach no woman, for in the embrace creatures poured forth from his body: snakes, scorpions and millepedes. These late narrators do not agree either as to whether Pasiphae wished with such evil magic⁹⁹⁹ to prevent her husband's love-affairs or the illness had some other cause, nor yet as to what remedies Prokris applied to it. Pasiphae was by no means thought of merely as an unhappy queen, but also as an immortal goddess. We know of course what a monster she had borne. Here a mysterious old Cretan legend survived, associated for better or for worse with the absence of Prokris from Attica and with sundry magical arts, such as are proper to moon-like women.

When Prokris returned to Attica, she was still in love with Kephalos and jealous of the love-affairs which he might have had during his long absences, ostensibly at the chase. It was told¹⁰⁰⁰ that she now wished to test her husband in her turn, and under the disguise of a stranger she led the handsome young man into temptation. According to this story Prokris did not reveal herself to Kephalos until he yielded to the temptation. Thus he was put to shame, but afterwards his loving wife presented him with the spear and the hound. According to other narrators,¹ Kephalos' hunting-spear, when Prokris ran after him and hid in some bushes, struck the jealous huntress accidentally. He thought that his throw was killing a beast in the thicket. Whether she now died or lived

on—a lunar being could combine both in her own person—Kephalos was torn from her. We heard in the history of the gods how Eos, goddess of the dawn, whose jealousy late tellers of the tale made responsible for the folly of Kephalos,² fell in love with his beauty and carried him off.

CHAPTER V

Amphiaraos and the Heroes of the Theban War

IN THEBES the curse of Oidipus fulfilled itself on both his sons—on Eteokles, 'the man of true renown' and on Polyneikes, 'him of much strife'. The first name many kings and other outstanding persons bore in old times, but not all narrators and dramatists always kept in mind that originally only Eteokles could be the worthy brother and Polyneikes the bad one. Sophokles understood³ that at first the brothers wished to leave the sovereignty entirely to their uncle Kreon, because they both feared the curse—the curse which weighed upon the family of Oidipus. Then longing for mastery and strife became too much for them both. To begin with Polyneikes, the elder, was king, apparently together with Kreon, since Oidipus accuses them both of having driven him into banishment.⁴ But then it appears that Polyneikes was sole monarch and that Eteokles, the younger, drove him out.⁵

Euripides understood it differently.⁶ According to him, the brothers agreed to rule by turns, each for a year, while the other went into voluntary exile. Eteokles, who was the elder, was the first to rule and Polyneikes, the younger, to be exiled. But at the expiration of the year Eteokles had no desire to quit his throne, and he banished Polyneikes permanently. Polyneikes therefore sought help against his brother in Argos. But the oldest version seems to be that which perhaps Aeschylus also followed in his tragedy 'Seven against Thebes', for he made Polyneikes, who justified his name as being quarrelsome from his birth and childhood, the very opposite of Eteokles.⁷ In this ancient version the bridal gifts which Kadmos received from the goddesses and with which he adorned Harmonia—the garment of Athene and the necklace of Aphrodite—played their fatal role.

For Polyneikes, so the story ran, was given his choice between the kingdom of Thebes and the treasures from the inheritance of Kadmos, if he wished to rule in some other city.⁸ But he wished to have both, or rather, to destroy his brother at all costs. Therefore he chose the treasures and went with them to Argos, where Adrastos, 'he who flees from nothing', was king. Let us now say a few words as to how the kingship came to Adrastos.

After Perseus had unwittingly killed his grandfather Akrisios, he left Argos to his great-uncle Proitos and took Tiryns in exchange for it. We know the history of Proitos' two, or three, daughters from the legends of Dionysos;⁹ as they would not accept the secret rites of the god, madness overtook them. It was the prophet Melampus, a son of Amythaon and cousin of Jason, who cured them, at the price of two-thirds of the kingdom of Argos. One-third remained for Megapenthes, Proitos' son, one-third Melampus kept and one-third he ceded to his brother Bias. Melampus in all accounts was the helper of his brother. We shall hear presently how he got him the beautiful daughter of Neleus, Pero, for his wife. He was himself more a prophet and an apostle of the worship of Dionysos, whose phallic rites he introduced, it is said, among the Greeks,¹⁰ than ruler of any city. His closest connections were with the harbour of Aigosthena at the southern foot of Kithairon, where his grave was shown in later times and a yearly festival held in his honour.¹¹ In Argos, Bias and his descendants bore rule; his son Talaos and then Adrastos, son of Talaos. Before Polyneikes came to Argos, Adrastos received a strange oracle; he was to marry his daughters to a lion and a boar.

In the same night as Polyneikes, another banished man arrived in Argos, Tydeus, a half-brother of the unfortunate Meleagros of Aitolia. By the will of Zeus, Gorge, daughter of Oineus, had borne him to her own father.¹² This sinister hero with such an unholy origin had made a massacre of his cousins at home, for allegedly plotting against the life of Oineus.¹³ He was the most savage of all the warriors of old

days. Adrastus was lying sleepless on his bed, pondering over the meaning of the strange oracle,¹⁴ when the clash of arms reached his ears from the forecourt of his palace. The two exiles were fighting before his gate for a sheltered place to pass the night. Adrastus came out by the gate and suddenly understood the oracle; the two were like a boar and a lion.¹⁵ Late narrators wished to make it easier for him, and declared¹⁶ that the combatants carried a boar and a lion as devices on their shields, or even¹⁷ that Polyneikes was clad in the hide of a lion, Tydeus in that of a boar. Surely Adrastus did not need this; he knew already what lay before him when he caught sight of the two heroes, and he gave his daughter Deipyle in marriage to Tydeus (from that marriage Diomedes, the terrible champion of the Trojan War, was born), his other daughter, whose name was Argeia, to Polyneikes. He promised to restore them both to their native lands, and the Theban first.

Had Polyneikes brought Harmonia's treasures as a bridal gift for the 'Maiden of Argos', Argeia? He now made use of the necklace at the gathering of the army against his father's and mother's city. Seven leaders were needed against the seven gates of Thebes, and Amphiaraos, Adrastus' brother-in-law and once his most powerful enemy, who had even driven him out of Argos for a while, must not be missing.¹⁸ For his sufferings, Adrastus was to receive in Sikyon similar honours to those which Dionysos enjoyed elsewhere.¹⁹ Amphiaraos, son of Oikles, was descended from Melampus as Adrastus was from Bias. It was said also²⁰ that Adrastus' father Talaos, 'the endurer', was killed by Amphiaraos, 'the twice Ares-like', when the latter drove out Adrastus. But Adrastus remained the stronger; he won Argos back, and the former enemies were reconciled. They bowed to the decision of a woman, for they chose as arbitress Eriphyle the wife of Amphiaraos, a daughter of Talaos by most accounts.²¹ We recognise the old triad, one woman and two men. Now the two heroes became connections by marriage through her. However great the quarrel between them may have been,²² they promised

Eriphyle to accept her decision. The quarrel consisted in this, that Amphiaraos would not go to the war which Adrastos was preparing against Thebes. He advised against it,²³ for although a great warrior, he also had that trait of beings connected with the underworld (perhaps this was why he was called 'the twice Ares-like'), that he could see the future. He knew that he would meet his end in the war against Thebes.

But now Eriphyle too was to display her infernal nature, for which she was famous.²⁴ Amphiaraos had not only refused to set out against Thebes, but, so late narrators tell us,²⁵ had hidden himself, and only his wife knew where he was concealed. So Polyneikes resorted to her. A famous vase-painting shows him coming as a wanderer before the beautiful Eriphyle, while a crane, the swan's kinsman, stands between the pair, and bringing the young wife into temptation by taking the necklace of Harmonia out of the jewel-box. She betrayed her husband and bade him obey Adrastos. Amphiaraos, prophet as he was, knew also of the bribery; he went to the war, but he ordered his sons to kill their mother if he did not come back from the war.

Amphiaraos had foreseen not only his own end but that of the rest of the seven commanders who were assembling. He also threatened Adrastos with it,²⁶ but Adrastos did not, in all accounts, appear in person before the gates of Thebes. In one version he escaped death, with his garments torn,²⁷ saved by the horse Arcion, a present from Herakles.²⁸ His sufferings, of which we are not told, still awaited him. There was one story²⁹ in which he and his son Hipponoos, following the advice of Apollo, threw themselves, like Herakles, willingly on the funeral pyre. But this tale is lost, like the epics which described the campaign against Thebes in detail. However, we can see that the expedition of the Seven was the most useless and most tragical campaign that ever yet was undertaken. Its only result was that Polyneikes and Eteokles were able to destroy each other and the seven gates beat off every attack.

After Polyneikes, Tydeus was the most vigorous instigator

of this war.³⁰ According to an old account,³¹ he went as an ambassador to Thebes in advance of the great army. The message which he had to deliver to Eteokles and the Kadmeians is easy to guess; they were to hand over the sovereignty to Polyneikes. Zeus protected the ambassador and Pallas Athene guarded Tydeus with especial affection.³² He was of small stature, but he had challenged the young warriors of Thebes one after another to contests and easily defeated them all. Then the Kadmeians sent fifty men to lie in wait for him as he took the road back. With one exception he killed them all, and that one was allowed to escape because the gods delivered him by a sign.

All the omens of the gods gave warning when the whole army moved.³³ Among them was reckoned the fate of a child, whose sufferings at Nemea gave rise to the founding of famous festal games, much as those of the child Palaimon did on the Isthmus.³⁴ Only epithets and not real personal names of this child have come down to us; he was styled Opheltes, 'the helpful'³⁵ or Archemoros, 'the first-in-death', which is what Amphiaraos is said to have called him because his death was but the beginning of the disaster. He is said to have been the son of a king and tended by a nurse of famous name, Hypsipyle, 'her of the high gate', whom Euripides identified with the queen of Lemnos, daughter of Thoas the son of Dionysos, alleging that she was carried as a slave from that distant island to Nemea, and the later narrators followed the tragic poet.³⁶

Her name was also worthy of the queen of the underworld, this Hypsipyle, to whom the child of the king of Nemea was entrusted. A tale was told of an oracle which forbade the baby to be put on the ground before he could walk.³⁷ The army of the Seven was marching through the valley of Nemea; the men were looking for a spring and asked the nurse, who happened to meet them with her charge, to show them one. In her confusion she laid the child on the ground, where a flourishing plant grew in abundance; it was wild celery, with which the dead used to be garlanded, assuredly not without an

allusion to a flourishing condition after death. Hypsipyle ran on before the heroes to show them the spring, which was thereafter to be called Adrasteia³⁸ and meanwhile the baby was almost entirely devoured by a great serpent who guarded the place.³⁹ The heroes killed the dragon, buried the child, and originated in his honour the funeral games which thenceforth were repeated in every second year as the Nemean Games.

At last the Seven leaders arrived before the seven gates; according to Aeschylus⁴⁰ they were Tydeus, Kapaneus, Eteoklos, Hippomedon, Parthenopaios, Amphiaraios and Polyneikes, and in Euripides they are the same, with the exception of Eteoklos, for according to him Adrastos, the sole survivor, also took part.⁴¹ In Aeschylus' tragedy, the 'Seven against Thebes', the Theban heroes whom Eteokles selected and opposed to the assailants are also named, but the Seven who stood without were more famous, and of them, those who met a remarkable death during the attack were especially so. Kapaneus, a grandson of Megapenthes son of Proitos, thought he could storm the wall with a scaling-ladder,⁴² being the first and only hero among the Greeks who climbed up one and in his foolhardiness he challenged Zeus, crying⁴³ that the lightning would be merely like hot sunbeams to him. With a single flash Zeus hurled him down from his ladder.

The death of Tydeus was also a dreadful example. Melanippos, 'he of the black steed', son of Astakos, 'the lobster', said to have been one of the race of the Spartoi,⁴⁴ though perhaps rather a Poseidonian hero, thrust his lance into the belly of Athene's terrible favourite.⁴⁵ It is not clearly told by tradition whether he was then himself mortally wounded by Tydeus or by Amphiaraios, who hurried to the rescue. His enemy was already lying in the death-agony, and Athene was approaching to bring her protégé the drink of immortality, when Tydeus, bleeding and raging from his wound, called to Amphiaraios to throw him the head of his opponent.⁴⁶ The prophet knew what the result would be, but he abominated the instigator of the war and threw him the severed head of Melanippos.⁴⁷ Like

a beast of prey, Tydeus with his last breath sucked his enemy's brain.⁴⁸ Athene turned away and left him to die.

Amphiaraos now saw Periklymenos, 'the very famous' coming against him; he was a son of Poseidon and had a name which would fit Hades also. It was he who had already killed Parthenopaios, son of Atalante, with a stone hurled from the battlement of the gate.⁴⁹ The prophet took to flight on his chariot before him, and the son of Poseidon pursued him. How far the pursuit went, narrators did not agree, for there were many spots in the neighbourhood of Thebes, and even rather further off, which claimed Amphiaraos for themselves as a hero dwelling in the depths of the earth. To spare him the disgrace of an enemy's spear wounding his back, Zeus split the ground with his thunderbolt, and it swallowed up the prophet, chariot and all.⁵⁰ But where did this happen? The inhabitants of Oropos, a little harbour town on the north coast of Attica and on the border of Boiotia, declared that it occurred in their territory, in a mild valley, shut off like a ravine, where a sanctuary of Amphiaraos, an Amphiareion, stood later. There, henceforth, the great warrior-prophet had his oracular seat, and there likewise he was worshipped as a chthonian god of healing, a second Asklepios.

In him the saying was already justified which we shall encounter in the history of Telephos, 'he that wounds shall also heal'. Thus it was also with his son, who bore the warlike name of Amphilochos, 'he of the twofold ambush'. He too became a healing hero after his death.⁵¹ The other son, Alkmaion, revenged his father's death on his mother. According to a late account, Eriphyle let herself be corrupted again, by Thersandros, son of Polyneikes, who bribed her with the garment of Harmonia, and drove her son into the war of the Epigonoï, the sons of the Seven, who again set out against Thebes. Alkmaion killed Eriphyle, but the fatal gifts remained in his family, and he too was in the end murdered for them.⁵²

We know from the history of Oidipus that the brothers Eteokles and Polyneikes fell in a duel, each by the other's

hand, and from Sophokles' tragedy which bears the name of Oidipus' elder daughter, the august virgin Antigone, that she, against Kreon's edict, buried her banished brother and had to die for it. There was also a story concerning the burial of the Seven—or rather of the six only who were to be buried, for at any rate Amphiaraos' pyre remained vacant⁵³—which said⁵⁴ that the Thebans would not yield the bodies of the fallen at all for their mothers to bury, and that it was Theseus who at the entreaty of Adrastos and the mothers brought the dead by force of arms to Eleusis and Kithairon; Euripides put it on the stage in his tragedy 'Hiketides', 'The Suppliants'.⁵⁵ It was believed in antiquity concerning six imposing tombs of early date in the neighbourhood of Eleusis that they concealed the bones of the greatest heroes of the Theban War.⁵⁶ Concerning those same tombs it is believed today that they have been rediscovered.

What the fathers failed to do, the sons, the Epigonoí, accomplished. Ten years later they set out against Thebes, where Laodamas, the 'master-of-folk', son of Eteokles, was then on the throne.⁵⁷ In this war Thebes was taken for the first time, and (as some even ventured to declare) destroyed. Of the seven new commanders only Aigialeus, son of Adrastos, fell, in contrast to his father, who was the only one who did not meet his end in the first Theban War.⁵⁸ Many of them were soon to fight under the walls of Troy, where also the son of Tydeus, Diomedes, was to win his renown.

CHAPTER VI

Atreus and his Dynasty

TWO SONS OF PELOPS, Atreus and Thyestes, were closely associated with their mother Hippodameia. After the murder of Chrysippos, all three found refuge in the lofty citadel of Midea in the realm of the descendants of Perseus under king Sthenelos.⁵⁹ This was certainly a flight of the three after the horrible deed perpetrated upon the youngest brother. In Mycenae, the House of Perseus came to an end with Eurystheus, when he was slain by Hyllos in punishment for the sufferings of Herakles and his descendants. But the Herakleidai were not allowed to return at once to the Peloponnesos. Omens from the gods stopped them.⁶⁰ Atreus then took over the kingdom of Mycenae⁶¹ and led an army of Peloponnesians, including men of Tegea, against the Herakleidai. Hyllos, Herakles' son, fell in a duel with Echemos king of Tegea. The Herakleidai retired to Trikorythos in Attica, and it was not till fifty years later that they might return home.⁶² It was in vain that Polyneikes and Tydeus had visited Mycenae to seek assistance for the war against Thebes, in which Argos was to be bled white; Zeus stopped the Mycenaeans from taking part by terrifying signs.⁶³ Therefore the last fifty years of Greek hero-mythology before the return of the Herakleidai were reserved for the House of Atreus and its deeds, the greatest of which was the Trojan War.

The sceptre of an empire over Greece, corresponding here on earth to the kingdom of Zeus on Olympos, had not been held by Perseus, nor by any sovran of Thebes, nor by Herakles, who in one place and the other, in Thebes and in Mycenae, was the subordinate of the king. Pelops, who emerged from the sacrificial cauldron of Tantalos his father, was the first to receive the sceptre; we hear in Homer⁶⁴ that Hephaistos fashioned it and gave it to Zeus; the King of the Gods handed it on to Hermes,

Hermes to Pelops, and Pelops bestowed it on Atreus. After that, the kings of Mycenae inherited it; Thyestes had it from Atreus, Agamemnon from Thyestes. But the two brothers inherited something else also from their father,⁶⁵ the curse of Pelops, because they had murdered his favourite child Chrysis, a murder the story of which has been lost, but which forms a kind of link between the butchering of Pelops and that of the sons of Thyestes. And there was also another fateful possession in the house, the golden ram,⁶⁶ upon which, not less than upon the sceptre of Zeus, the sovereignty depended. Jason's Golden Fleece appears to be an allusion to, and abbreviation of, this marvellous beast, in another cycle of tales.

In the history of Pelops, Oinomaos offered up a light-coloured ram, a vicarious sacrifice, while the future ruler escaped death. The sacrifice took place before a statue of the goddess whom the Greeks called Artemis and who was accustomed to receive human sacrifices on the Black Sea. After the death of the hero, at least his bones were laid away in a sanctuary of Artemis. In the history of Phrixos, the ram which rescued him from death at the altar bore the Golden Fleece, which Jason must bring back from the Black Sea in order to win the throne of Iolkos. How Phrixos was to have been sacrificed we are not told, but we know from the history of the gods⁶⁷ that his stepmother Ino threw two sons of Athamas, her own children, into the cauldron of sacrifice. From Medea's cauldron at Iolkos a rejuvenated ram emerged. Probably there was an old Eastern tale in which a young ram, replacing the future ruler, experienced the sufferings of a god cut in pieces and cooked in the cauldron, or a golden lamb did so, the forerunner of the symbol of Christ, the Son of the King of Heaven. In Mycenae the possession of the ram was the sure mark of the rightful king.

When the story of the kingship of Atreus and his brother Thyestes begins for us,⁶⁸ they were residing in Midea, but no longer with their mother Hippodameia to make a third. Another, ominous, female figure united them, as Eriphyle did

Adrastos with Amphiaraos. She bore the name Aerope, 'she with a face of white mist', and is said to have been a granddaughter of Minos and wife of Atreus, but she deceived her husband with Thyestes. She kept the golden lamb shut up in a chest, undoubtedly in the shape of its fleece, and passed it secretly to her lover. The narrators knew that the lamb belonged to Artemis as a sacrificial victim, and coloured the narrative thus: Atreus once vowed to offer to the goddess the finest head of his cattle, and failed to do so when he saw its golden fleece. Wishing to keep it for himself, he hid the treasure in a chest. Others claimed to know⁶⁹ that Hermes, the father of that unfortunate Myrtilos, the charioteer to whom Pelops owed his victory over Oinomaos, put the marvellous creature among the flocks of Atreus in order to avenge the death of his son upon the family of the victor. A shepherd brought the lamb to Atreus, and so, thanks to Aerope's infidelity, it finally made its way to Thyestes. All this took place while they were still in Midea.

Now when the Mycenaeans received an oracle⁷⁰ bidding them choose a son of Pelops for their king, they sent for Atreus and Thyestes. A quarrel began as to which of the two should be king, and Thyestes slyly proposed that they should choose the one who possessed the golden lamb. Atreus, who imagined that he was in possession of it, agreed, and now Thyestes produced the fleece and became king of Mycenae; Atreus had to go into exile.⁷¹ But Zeus could not allow this. He altered the motion of the heavenly bodies, making the sun rise in the west and set in the east.⁷² At this the Mycenaeans realised that they had made the wrong choice, and thereupon Atreus drove his brother out,⁷³ and Thyestes wandered here and there as a banished man. But the other also was not in sure possession of the kingship, for Thyestes, who had obtained the golden lamb by grace of Aerope, seems after all to have had a better claim to it than his brother. The meaning of his name is 'the man of the sacrifice', however little later narrators still knew of any such sacrifice. By virtue of it he had been consecrated king,

and this consecration must now be reversed. Thereupon Atreus contrived his most horrible deed.

The later narrators had great difficulty in finding a reason for this horror. They alleged⁷⁴ that it was not till then that Atreus discovered his wife's infidelity, and that he summoned Thyestes back under colour of a reconciliation, in order to take vengeance upon him. In the older versions, however, perhaps Thyestes had not gone into banishment at all, but it was immediately after Atreus ascended the throne that he set that horrible meal before his brother. As a result, the world governed from Mycenae under this dynasty fell into complete disorder. Atreus did what was told of his grandfather Tantalos, but he did not butcher his own son. He slew the children of Thyestes, and invited his brother, quite alone, to eat⁷⁵ of the roasted viscera and the boiled flesh.⁷⁶ Prokne and Philomela had issued a similar invitation to Tereus. In the East, this was a horrible punishment,⁷⁷ the unholy carrying-out of a sacred act, which in Greece was preserved in the form of the boiling and roasting of a kid, the vicarious victim in the mysteries of Dionysos.⁷⁸ This offering had already been profaned by Tantalos, and it was now profaned still more by Atreus, so that Thyestes, on eating of it, should himself become unholy and be totally destroyed. When Thyestes realised what he had eaten,⁷⁹ he fell backwards, vomited up his meal, dashed the table over with his foot and put a curse upon his family that it should be overthrown in like manner. It was also said⁸⁰ that the Sun on that occasion turned back his chariot.

Atreus had two sons by Aerope, Agamemnon and Menelaos. Thyestes, after the butchering of his sons, had left only a daughter. So most narrators have it; only those who wished to avoid relating the story of the birth of Aigisthos⁸¹ made out that the avenger was then already born and was taken with him into exile as a baby by Thyestes. As to how the avenger came to be born, there were two versions of a tradition undoubtedly old. Manifestly that tradition would have it that the avenger was sprung from a union not of this world, the union

of the father of the murdered children with his own daughter, like the legendary wedding of Zeus with Persephone.⁸² In one account Thyestes received from the oracle at Delphi the direction to raise up the avenger in this manner.⁸³ He had taken refuge with king Thesprotos on the borders of the underworld.⁸⁴ There he had relations with his daughter Pelopia, who showed herself most pious towards her father, in that she conceived the avenger by him.⁸⁵ In the other version, much the same thing happened to her as did to Auge, Athene's priestess at Tegea,⁸⁶ who conceived Telephos by Herakles, a tale which shall shortly be told. Pelopia was living at Sikyon; Thyestes came there during the night in which a sacrifice was made to Athene.⁸⁷ His daughter was leading the virgins' dance at the festival; while dancing she slipped and stained her dress with the blood of the victim. She then left the maidens and went down to the river, to wash her clothes clean of the marks of blood. When she was unclothed, Thyestes, who had hidden in some bushes, veiled his head and assaulted her. Thus she bore a son whom she abandoned. A she-goat nourished the boy, and therefore he was named Aigisthos.⁸⁸ On reaching manhood, he learned who his father was, murdered Atreus and put Thyestes on the throne of Mycenae again.⁸⁹

In later times, the tomb of Atreus was shown in Mycenae,⁹⁰ and that of Thyestes by the road which led to Argos. It was crowned with a stone ram.⁹¹ Many old graves have similar decorations, but if it was told that this particular grave belonged to Thyestes, it must also have been believed that he and not Atreus was the king marked out by the possession of the golden lamb. In another story,⁹² Thyestes was driven away by Agamemnon and Menelaos to the Island of Kythera. Not all narrators agree that these were the sons of Atreus, for some make them his grandsons and the sons of Pleisthenes,⁹³ whom the genealogists introduced into the family tree of the Pelopidai with no agreement as to his place. The brothers who were to continue the dynasty grew up in exile. Tyndareos king of Sparta later brought them home to Mycenae. Thyestes took

refuge from them at the altar of Hera,⁹⁴ and so saved his life. Agamemnon became the Great King of Mycenae, Menelaos inherited the kingship of Sparta from Tyndareos. That kingship was not to prove happy, but the heavier curse lay upon the elder brother, who bore the sceptre of Pelops after Thyestes.

CHAPTER VII

The Prelude to the Trojan War

NEITHER DID THE ELDER HEROES OF GREECE lack the protecting and gracious power of great goddesses. Pallas Athene, daughter of Zeus, stood by the sons of Zeus. It was she who had brought about the begetting of Theseus by Poseidon; Hera in her fashion aided Herakles and Jason to win fame. As mother of divine twins, a celestial goddess under various names (Antiope, Melanippe, Tyro and Leda are the most famous) took upon herself the part of the *primaeval* woman, not to speak of divine maidens such as Harmonia, Ariadne or Medeia, in whose shape she contracted relations with mortals. But only at the beginning of that Heroic Age with which the history of the world began in mythological fashion, in the days when the earth was already suffering under the weight of all too numerous mankind⁹⁵ were great goddesses condemned likewise to bear sons to mortal men. Through these the human race was to reach its ultimate peak. We may say that the history of the heroes in 'time', in our sense, opens here; everything earlier was either '*primaeval time*' or 'time' still blended with the '*primaeval*'.

On the Asian side of the Greek sea the goddess of love mated with the Trojan herdsman Anchises,⁹⁶ nephew of that Laomedon who was punished by Herakles, and bore him Aineias, who she did not rear herself but entrusted to the nymphs on Mount Ida.⁹⁷ Aphrodite's son is said to have become like the gods in appearance,⁹⁸ and he alone in Troy was so protected by the Celestial Ones⁹⁹ that he was saved for the future history of mankind. In him the Romans honoured the founder of their nation, the originator of their power, which was to include all the coasts of the Mediterranean and more as well. His mother and Phoibos Apollo saved him from his fight with Diomedes,¹⁰⁰ Poseidon from the defeat which he

nearly underwent at the hands of Achilles.¹⁰¹ On the Greek side, Achilles was the son of a goddess. The story of Aineias' birth we know already from the tales of the gods. How the birth of Achilles came about shall now be told.

We know from the stories of the gods¹⁰² that besides Tethys, Eurynome and Amphitrite, Thetis also was one of the great goddesses of the Greek sea. Before she became Achilles' mother, Zeus and Poseidon had striven for her. Had she borne a son to one of the two great gods, that son would have become still mightier than his father, and instead of the wars at Thebes and Troy in which mankind weakened itself in and around Greece, the age of a new divine sovereignty under a new king of the gods would have dawned. Themis, the mother of the Horai, who neither befool nor deceive but bring the times to their ripeness in due season, knew of the threatened change in the rulership of the world. She warned the rival brothers,¹⁰³ and on her advice¹⁰⁴ Zeus decided to force the sea-goddess into marriage with a mortal.¹⁰⁵ Other ancient narrators add that Hera had chosen for her a husband especially dear to the gods, for Hera had brought her up¹⁰⁶ and for Hera's sake she had herself fled from marriage with Zeus,¹⁰⁷ assuredly into her own element, the sea. There the King of the Gods suddenly found himself confronted with Poseidon and the struggle between the brothers would then and there have come about if the saying of Themis had not sobered them both.

The chosen bridegroom of the sea-goddess lived in Thessaly, on Pelion, with the Centaur Chiron.¹⁰⁸ We can no longer say if his name connected him with that great mountain or with clayey soil, *pelós*, or if 'Peleus' meant something else, which is hidden from us. Aiakos, son of Zeus and of the island-goddess Aigina, for love of whom the King of the Gods made men, the Myrmidones, come forth from ants,¹⁰⁹ begot Peleus on Endeis, 'her who lives at enmity', the daughter of the infernal Skiron whom Theseus killed. Others, who insisted that the Myrmidones, said to have composed Achilles' following at Troy, were a people settled in Thessaly and not immigrants

to the country with Peleus,¹¹⁰ declared¹¹¹ that Chiron was Endeis' father, and Zeus had brought his son from Aigina to Thessaly and established him on Pelion as king.¹¹² Otherwise, the piety of Aiakos was famous.¹¹³ He is said to have freed all Greece from the unfruitfulness under which it suffered on account of Pelops, who, making hypocritical pretence of friendship, had killed king Stymphalos and scattered his limbs all over the land—yet another tale of a sacrifice made unholily, such as we have already had to mention so often. Aiakos was honoured not only by Zeus but by the King of the underworld; we know that he received the keys of Hades.

Allegedly, Peleus was not his only son. It was told of Telamon, the 'bearer' or 'endurer', the father of Aias of Salamis, that he was not only the friend but also the brother of Peleus.¹¹⁴ The two had also a half-brother in the person of Phokos, the 'seal-man', whom Aiakos begot upon Psamathe, the 'sand-girl', a daughter of Nereus, who tried to hide from him by taking the shape of a seal.¹¹⁵ This Phokos was killed, accidentally or of set purpose, by the brothers.¹¹⁶ His grave was shown on Aigina near the shrine of his father, the keeper of the keys of Hades.¹¹⁷ Telamon thereupon, the story continues, emigrated to the island of Salamis, Peleus to Thessaly. He found a refuge with the king of Phthia, who bore the Centaur-name of Eurytion. By him he was purified and had a third of the country given him as the king's son-in-law.¹¹⁸ But Peleus was then, as it were, in deep shadow and brought misfortune with him. He went to the Kalydonian hunt with Eurytion, and, as we know from the story of that luckless undertaking, accidentally killed his father-in-law.¹¹⁹ Instead of returning to Phthia, he had to flee to Iolkos, and there he was purified by Akastos, son of Pelias. As a wrestler, Peleus took part in that favourite theme of poets, the funeral games of Pelias.¹²⁰ Artists were fond of portraying his wrestling, especially his bout with the beautiful Atalante, an exciting spectacle, in which all precautions were taken to prevent the wrestling becoming a lovers' encounter. For Peleus also was handsome,

and it is not to be wondered at that his beauty was as harmful to him as that of Bellerophon and of Hippolytos. Akastos' wife fell in love with the wrestler, and as the hero would not comply with her, she tried to ruin him. According to the late narrators, who have put together all these tales about Peleus, the first victim of her slander was Eurytion's daughter in Phthia, who felt deserted by her husband and hanged herself.¹²¹

Akastos believed his wife, as the husbands always do in this old tale, and acted accordingly. As his host, he would not himself murder the guest whom he had just purified, but sent him out to hunt the wild beasts on Pelion, at first not alone but in competition with other hunters. This too appears to be an ancient tale, by which originally the custom of bringing only the tongues of the game as offerings to the deities of hunting, Artemis Agrotera and Apollo Agraios, was explained;¹²² for the story was told that¹²³ the other hunters brought back the beasts which Peleus had killed and claimed the prize of victory for themselves. Meanwhile the hero was probably asleep on Pelion, and came in last, with the tongues in his wallet, thus proving his superiority.¹²⁴ Akastos tried to destroy the hero, as he slept in a byre, by first taking possession of his knife.¹²⁵ The details are not preserved to us; all we can discover is that Peleus got the knife, a masterpiece of Daidalos, from the gods as a reward for his virtue,¹²⁶ and that Akastos, when he had the marvellous object in his hand, found nothing better to do with it¹²⁷ than to pray, and hide it under some cow-dung,¹²⁸ so that at least the hero should not be able to defend himself against the Centaurs who prowled about. It seems that it was a magic knife, and that the reason why it was called a product of the arts of Daidalos was that it would not let itself be used against its master. Chiron sought it out again from under the cow-dung, and gave it back to the hero. In his cave,¹²⁹ the message of the gods reached Peleus, that he, as the most pious mortal in all the country, was to celebrate his marriage with Thetis.

Next to the marriages of Zeus and the union of Kadmos

with Harmonia, this wedding-feast was the most important of all those told in the stories of the gods and heroes. But it was not made so easy as later poets give us to understand¹³⁰ for Peleus to bring the sea-goddess out of Nereus' palace first into Chiron's cave¹³¹ and finally to Phthia on the fertile mainland where Eurytion had once ruled.¹³² A night of full moon must first be awaited,¹³³ a wedding-night.¹³⁴ At the full moon, Thetis used to visit the cuttle-fishes' shore, the beach by the steep slope of Pelion, and to dance with her sisters about the altar on which they, the daughters of Nereus, received their offerings. The silver-footed goddess¹³⁵ emerged from the waves even as at the beginning of time Phoibe came forth from her own lake on the western side of the same mountain.¹³⁶ It was for the hero to get her in an enduring grip and hold her fast in his arms.¹³⁷ This was no mere wrestling-match like that with Atalante, but a struggle for love. The resisting bride displayed all the old sea-deities' arts of transformation. She changed herself into fire and into water,¹³⁸ bared the teeth of a lion,¹³⁹ and tried in the form of a snake to defend herself against his embrace.¹⁴⁰ At last she surrendered in the form of the most delicate of all fish, that after which that coast is known, the *Sepias Akte*.¹⁴¹ Not a sound escaped the mouths of the wrestlers.¹⁴²

In the morning the gods came to the wedding-feast. It was an ancient Greek custom, which is merely confirmed by this story, for the relatives on the day after the marriage-night to bring their gifts to the young couple, a continuation of the festival. This was known as *Epaulia*,¹⁴³ because in very early days the bride and bridegroom probably had slept together for the first time in an *aulon*, a hut in the fields. It seems that the ancient vase-painter Klitias meant to show Thetis in such a lodging on that morning: in a round mud-hut, which, however, the artist decked in his picture with columns and a gable, to ennoble it. Before it stood the hero, to receive the procession of gods. The first was Chiron, who greeted him. Beside him Iris, the messenger, strode in and led the goddesses and gods.



66 POLYNEIKES AND ERIPHYLE



67 VISIT OF THE GODS TO PELEUS AND THETIS



68 THE THREE GODDESSES BEFORE PARIS

Hestia, Demeter and Chiron's wife Chariklo came first, Dionysos and the three Horai at their heels, then Zeus and Hera with the Muses, of whom we hear elsewhere¹⁴⁴ that they sang at the feast. Other pairs of gods followed, Poseidon and Amphitrite, Aphrodite and Ares, Apollo and Artemis, Nereus and Doris, Hermes and his mother Maia, and before these two the Moirai, four in number, who perhaps intended, like the Muses, to sing at the banquet¹⁴⁵ and foretell the birth of the great son. Okeanos also was present, and with him certainly Tethys arrived; they constituted the great pair of grandparents, while Zeus also may have appeared as grandfather of Peleus. It is certain that the Charites came, for without them it would have been no real wedding.¹⁴⁶ As his gift, Dionysos brought the wine along, in an amphora on his back; the artist and the spectators of his picture knew that it was to have a tragic significance. The story went¹⁴⁷ that on that occasion Poseidon presented Peleus with the immortal horses, Balios and Xanthos—Dapple and Chestnut—which accompanied Achilles to Troy and proved themselves prophets of tragedy. It was then that Chiron presented the ash spear which in the hands of Peleus' son, whose birth this wedding indirectly solemnised, was likewise to have a tragical renown;¹⁴⁸ unless indeed it was Peleus himself who cut it and with it in his hand went forth alone against Iolkos and captured the city.¹⁴⁹

But that happened rather later. The gods came not only to greet and to bestow but also to feast,¹⁵⁰ for in those days immortals and mortals often sat and ate together.¹⁵¹ At Thetis' wedding with the mortal Peleus this occurred for the last time. All the gods were there together, for Zeus had invited them all, except self-evidently (or so it might seem), the goddess Eris, Strife.¹⁵² But previously he had taken counsel, we may suppose, with Themis the wise goddess,¹⁵³ by whom he had been prevented from celebrating a marriage himself with Thetis to his own ruin; or did perhaps a great sea-goddess come and advise him? According to another tradition¹⁵⁴ it was Momos, Blame, who counselled him then. When, at the complaint of

the overladen Earth, he was for destroying mankind by lightning and flood, it is said that Momos found fault with Zeus, and advised him instead to beget Helen and arrange the marriage of Thetis and Peleus, with all the consequences which would result from these two events, including the final one, which consisted in the disappearance of the race of heroes.¹⁵⁵ However, Eris was to appear at the marriage-feast, and not being admitted, she threw an apple into the midst of the company,¹⁵⁶ which was to become almost as famous to posterity as that of which the Hebrews had to tell.

Now, whether Eris' apple came from the Garden of the Hesperides, as one very late poet would have it,¹⁵⁷ or was simply made of gold¹⁵⁸ because nothing else would be suitable among goddesses, it had added to it a word which, whether scratched on it¹⁵⁹ or spoken with it¹⁶⁰ or not mentioned at all was yet understood by everyone: 'To the Fairest'. Now 'Fairest', *Kalliste*, was in human mouths a divine name, which Artemis bore above all other goddesses.¹⁶¹ Then the three most powerful, Hera, Athene and Aphrodite, grasped at that harm-laden dedication. A dispute broke out, which was to lead, through the decision of a mortal, to the weakening of the human race, the annihilation of Troy and the dissolution of the empire of Mycenae. The King of the Gods himself nominated the young man with whom the decision rested.¹⁶² To him Hermes must bring the apple and lead the three goddesses across the sea, while Peleus with his spear and his immortal horses first set out against Iolkos to punish Akastos and his wife, and then made his entry into Phthia with Thetis and his booty.¹⁶³ According to the later narrators,¹⁶⁴ it was in the cities of Pharsalos and Thetideion—'shrine of Thetis'—that he lived.¹⁶⁵ There he ruled, the mortal husband of a goddess, who, as we shall presently hear, did not in all traditions remain with him.

Across the Hellespont rose Mount Ida, and under that mountain of the gods, on a hill on the banks of the river Skamandros (in the language of the gods it was Xanthos, 'the fair-haired'),¹⁶⁶ stood the strong city of Troy. Poseidon and

Apollo had built it for Laomedon, and Herakles and Telamon, Peleus' brother or friend, had destroyed it for the first time; we have heard the story of it. Now Priam was ruling there, the only son of Laomedon whom Herakles had spared.¹⁶⁷ Originally he had been named Podarkes, 'Swift-foot', but we know the tale of how he allegedly got his famous name. His sister Hesione had ransomed him from Herakles with her gold-embroidered veil. She herself had followed Telamon to Salamis and borne him Teukros, who later took part in the Trojan War with his half-brother Aias.¹⁶⁸ For her hope, that Troy should arise again under the rule of her youngest brother,¹⁶⁹ had been fulfilled. In the newly built city Priam founded the most numerous royal family of which the legends of the heroes tell. His wife and his concubines bore him fifty sons, not to speak of his daughters; he mentions that number to Achilles¹⁷⁰ after most of them were fallen. Really, *Priamos* means much the same as *perramos*; that is, 'king'.¹⁷¹ On the other hand, his queen Hekabe bore a divine name, for that is how the name of the goddess whom Attic peasants called Hekale must have been pronounced in Phrygian. Behind both old ladies of heroic legend rises the uncanny figure of the great goddess Hekate. Hekabe's father was said to have been the river Sangarios, or, if he was a mortal, a certain Kisseus, 'the ivy-bearer'.¹⁷² Also, she was not to die as women die, but turn into a bitch—a ghostly bitch with fiery eyes¹⁷³—and cast herself into the sea,¹⁷⁴ in a manner worthy of the 'strong goddess' of whom the sea-bitch Skylla was one name.¹⁷⁵

Soon after the birth of her first son, Hektor, 'the supporter', who was to have the most success in keeping the Greeks away from Troy, Hekabe,¹⁷⁶ pregnant for the second time,¹⁷⁷ dreamed that she had brought forth a burning brand, the fire of which spread all over the city. A fire-bearing Erinys with a hundred arms tore down Troy in her dream, so says a poet.¹⁷⁸ Among the interpreters who had to explain the dream we hear of Herophile, 'beloved of Hera', the first and oldest of the Sibyls, priestess of Apollo Smintheus.¹⁷⁹ But Kassandra also

was a prophetess, a daughter of Priam who likewise had Apollo to thank for her prophetic gift, although, since she rejected the love of the god, she never was believed.¹⁸⁰ Kassandra demanded that the child that Hekabe was to bear should be killed;¹⁸¹ thereupon Priam had the boy taken to Mount Ida and exposed there.¹⁸² It was the realm of the Lady of Wild Things, of whom we know¹⁸³ that she favoured the form of a bear. The child had the same experience as Atalante, for a she-bear suckled him for five days.¹⁸⁴ The shepherds who found him¹⁸⁵ at first named the child Paris,¹⁸⁶ but later Alexandros, 'repeller of men',¹⁸⁷ both names apparently befitting a king's son from the very beginning. Was Oinone, the nymph with the Dionysiac name, daughter of a river-god, whom the late narrators know¹⁸⁸ only as Paris' wife while he was a shepherd, originally his nurse? Whatever her form and whatever her name, a divine inhabitant of Mount Ida had preserved the child alive.

To this Trojan prince and herdsman Hermes, by command of Zeus, conveyed the three goddesses, so that he should decide to which the apple belonged. He was to say which was the most beautiful—so it is expressed by the old poets and other narrators, who by no means meant mere erotic charm, but the highest of all good things that the world contains. For it needed neither a king's son nor a herd-boy to decide that Aphrodite possessed the most erotic attractiveness of all in Heaven, on Earth and in the Sea. That philosopher was right who stated¹⁸⁹ that Paris had to choose between warlike discipline, a life devoted to love, and sovereignty; the first was Athene's gift, the last Hera's. He was confronted by three forms of beauty all of which were divine; the representatives of its forms wore beauty's splendour. All three were beautiful, but to enhance their beauty they washed in the abundant springs of Ida.¹⁹⁰ In the old accounts, however, not even Aphrodite disrobed, for in those versions it was not the glory of a beautiful body that was in question. The goddess of love caused the Charites and the Horai to clothe her in a

splendid dress having all the colours of spring, crown her with fragrant flowers and lead her with song to Paris.¹⁹¹ But for all that, when the goddesses appeared the shepherd's hair stood on end,¹⁹² as if he were seeing ghosts. He would dearly have liked to run away. Then the goddesses offered him their gifts:¹⁹³ Athene victory and heroism, Hera empire over Asia and Europe, Aphrodite the possession of Helen, daughter of Zeus.

When Paris realised what choice he might make, he abused the other two goddesses.¹⁹⁴ In his folly, he harmed himself unnecessarily and yielded to his love-madness, without ever having seen the beautiful sister of the Dioskuroi. The renown of her beauty had at that time filled the whole world. Theseus had already carried her off, but her brothers had brought her back from Aphidna and she was living in Lakonia. Thither Paris was to voyage. Ships must be built for him,¹⁹⁵ whence no doubt the scene arose which a vase-painter apparently gives us. Aphrodite first conducted the prince back to the home of his parents. It was also told that Paris himself was busy felling pines on Ida to make the ship that was to create incomparably more woe than that other which of old came down to the sea from Mount Pelion.¹⁹⁶

There in Thessaly Thetis had borne Peleus a son and afterwards, according to most accounts, went back to the depths of the sea,¹⁹⁷ though perhaps not for ever; she may have divided her divine existence between the house of Peleus and the palace of Nereus. True, there were some narrators who would have it that she was united but once to the hero,¹⁹⁸ as Aphrodite was to Anchises in the well-known tale of the gods.¹⁹⁹ Perhaps according to this story Achilles was born in the depths of the sea and placed by his mother on the shore, to which he so often resorted later to invoke her.²⁰⁰ The name Achilles, properly Achilleus, is most nearly connected with those of river-gods, beings who live in the deeps, such as Acheloos and Acheles. There was also a tale concerning him²⁰¹ that his name had been changed, he having been earlier known as Ligyron, 'clear-voiced'. Various reasons were invented to account for

Thetis' natural preference for her own element over the fruitful soil of Phthia. Peleus allegedly insulted her,²⁰² or she tried to test her children (she bore several according to these late narrators) to see if they were immortal, by throwing them into a cauldron full of water;²⁰³ or she wanted to make them immortal by laying them on the fire, as Demeter did with Demophoon.²⁰⁴ They all died of it, excepting Achilles who was rescued by Peleus. But Thetis was angered, like Medeia, when she was disturbed in her secret activity.²⁰⁵ All these are the merest repetitions of well-known tales which originally were all quite foreign to Achilles. It seems to be an older story, although not very old, that the goddess dipped her son in the infernal river Styx,²⁰⁶ and so Achilles became invulnerable, except for the heel by which his mother held him. But then, too, she left even the son she had nearly made immortal. Peleus brought the lad to Chiron, and the Centaur nurtured him in his cave with the entrails of lions and boars and the marrow of bears.²⁰⁷ At six years of age he began to hunt wild beasts;²⁰⁸ he had Chiron to thank for his simple ways,²⁰⁹ and from him he learned the art of healing.²¹⁰ That Achilles was taught by Chiron to play a stringed instrument was later readily believed and portrayed.²¹¹

CHAPTER VIII

The Heroes of the Trojan War

THE OLD NARRATORS never succeeded in fitting together the separate tales belonging to the mythology of the heroes into a single long narrative without any contradictions. Especially did uncertainty always remain as to what happened simultaneously, or later, or earlier. Everybody knew that the two sons of Atreus, Agamemnon and Menelaos, chose as their wives the two most dangerous daughters of the house of Tyndareos, who had brought the brothers home—Klytaimnestra and Helen. But when did that happen? As Helen had already been ravished once before Menelaos married her, so too Klytaimnestra had had a husband before Agamemnon. Allegedly he was a son of Thyestes,²¹² named Tantalos after his great-grandfather. Agamemnon must have been consumed by strong passion for his cousin's wife, and that was when his royal nature, which never knew any bounds, his character of a Zeus on earth, with even the Titanic traits of his youth, displayed itself for the first time. He struck Tantalos dead, tore his child from its mother's breast, dashed it on the ground, and carried off the young wife by force.²¹³ His early passionate union with Klytaimnestra, who was not thought to be a daughter of Zeus, explains why Agamemnon, after the Dioskuroi had set Helen free, came a-wooing to her on behalf of his brother Menelaos; for the great king of Mycenae must not be absent from that wooing, but must emerge victorious.

The wooing of Helen, then, came as early as the time when Agamemnon was on the throne in place of Thyestes. But the statement²¹⁴ that the only reason why Achilles did not outdo Menelaos on that occasion was that he was still a child under Chiron's guardianship, or Helen's gossip in Euripides²¹⁵ about the son of Thetis having been one of her suitors, will not fit the chronology. If Helen, when Paris carried her off, left behind

her little daughter,²¹⁶ who was perhaps nine years old,²¹⁷ then her marriage must have taken place earlier than the wedding of Peleus and Thetis. The meaning of the custom of letting a princess be wooed by claimants from the whole country all at once was not so much to give the girl an opportunity to choose as to furnish the suitors with the possibility of displaying all the splendour and power of which they were capable. They could do so even if they did not appear in person.

It was now a sort of competition for the famous and beautiful daughter, the likeness of golden Aphrodite,²¹⁸ whom Leda, a daughter of Okeanos at least—for such by one account she was²¹⁹—had borne to Zeus and Tyndareos. Besides her earthly father,²²⁰ her brothers the Dioskuroi could take on themselves the post of judge.²²¹ It was told²²² that all the heroes who were to fight at Troy for Helen's sake took part one way or another in the wooing; that is, those who were not merely petty kings or their retainers, 'heroes' only in the sense of gentlefolk, but destined to have their history and especial honour after their death, figures upon whom rested the shadow of a fate which could be interchanged with no other. Anyone who would know them must look forward to that destiny.

It has already been said that Agamemnon joined the suitors, not on his own behalf but for his younger brother. For Menelaos he was also to lead the army of the Greeks against Troy, and after nine years of warfare nearly become the cause of a complete setback, simply because he was what he always showed himself to be, a king through and through,²²³ with head and eyes like those of Zeus, with loins like those of Ares, a breast like Poseidon's, handsome and majestic;²²⁴ yet always connected dangerously with a woman—before Troy it was with Chryseis, daughter of Chryses, priest of Apollo, his concubine, on whose account he insulted the god.²²⁵ He was then more passionately attached to this woman than to Klytaimnestra,²²⁶ who meantime²²⁷ was associating herself in Mycenae with the avenger, the son of Thyestes by his 'underworldly' connection with Pelopia. It was a story fit for the tragic stage,

the great king slaughtered like a bull²²⁸ by the lover of his wife. The image of the bull and the cow which the prophetess *Kassandra*, brought by *Agamemnon* to *Argos*, saw in the royal couple,²²⁹ was indeed in old days not unworthy of even a divine pair such as *Zeus* and *Hera*. In *Sparta*, the kingdom of his surviving brother *Menelaos*, there stood an altar of *Zeus Agamemnon*,²³⁰ as if the hero after his death was actually identified with the King of the Gods. The sheltering earth has preserved to us the place of his worship, on the outskirts of *Mycenae*, where *Perseus* also had a cult, near an ancient bridge on the road leading to the city.

Odysseus is named to us as the first,²³¹ or one of the first,²³² of the suitors. He did not come himself and also sent no gifts, since he knew very well that *Menelaos* would be the successful one; a king of little *Ithake* could not compete with the brother of the Great King of *Argos* and *Mycenae*. He only advised the *Dioskuroi* from a distance by his messengers.²³³ It is said that he was the author of the counsel²³⁴ that *Tyndareos* should take an oath of the suitors to acquiesce in *Helen's* choice and afterwards to help the man she chose if anyone tried to dispute the possession of his wife. For when they came to woo, they were full of murderous feelings against each other.²³⁵ So all of them took the oath, standing on a sacrificed horse.²³⁶ That was one of the reasons—the other was the leading power in the hands of *Agamemnon*—why the former suitors took part in the expedition against *Troy* as helpers of *Menelaos*.

Odysseus preferred wedding *Penelope* to marrying *Helen*; she was the daughter of *Ikarios*, a brother of *Tyndareos*, and was to become the emblem of fidelity for all time.²³⁷ Her name contained the word *penelops*, 'duck',²³⁸ a bird whose image on old vases found in graves so often signifies a protecting, kindly goddess. The human form of *Odysseus' wife*, however, belongs to heroic poetry, the borders of which must continually be touched here, but not passed unless it is unavoidable for the setting forth of heroic mythology.

We see that *Odysseus* showed himself the cleverest of all

men, though not so clever—as we shall shortly hear—that he could escape the dolorous and painful war which was to separate him from Penelope and end, for him, in his famous and adventurous journey. But even so, he was worthy of his grandfather, the master-thief Autolykos, who according to an old tale that we have already told brought his daughter Antikleia and the arch-rogue Sisyphos together in order that between them they might produce him just such a grandson. When Odysseus was born in the house of Laertes, for whose son he passed among the heroes of the Trojan War, Autolykos was staying there as the guest of his son-in-law and his daughter. They set the baby on his grandfather's knee and asked him to find a name for the new arrival.²³⁹ The old robber then is said to have replied, 'As the hate of so many people attended me here, he shall be called Odysseus.' The Greek for 'hated' is *odyssámenos*, and that is how the poet of the 'Odyssey' explained the name of his hero, although there he is portrayed as by no means so hateful a figure as in other tales which do not come from Homer. Here we learn that in those days names must have a meaning, among the Greeks as among other peoples.

Through Autolykos, son of Hermes, Odysseus was descended from that god. But at the same time he was one of those heroes who were under the especial protection of the goddess Athene.²⁴⁰ He was born, so it is said,²⁴¹ within the precincts of the temple of Athene Alalkomene in Boiotia, and that, so the story goes on, is why a town in Ithake was also called Alalkomenai. Be it from one or the other holy place of the Alalkomene, the goddess took him under her charge from his birth. In the Trojan War he was most closely associated with another protégé of Pallas Athene, Diomedes, who was named immediately after him among the suitors of Helen.²⁴² With him he undertook bloody deeds, and not only those which were essential for the capture of Troy. They made him hated by many people, not to speak of the hate of Aias against Odysseus. We shall hear of all this by and by.

Among the Seven who marched against Thebes, the father

of Diomedes, Tydeus, was Athene's favourite, but, as will be remembered, a horrible and unworthy favourite. The goddess transferred her maternal affection to his son. He, as already mentioned, took part in the destruction of Thebes by the Epigonoï and ruled in Argos as Adrastos' son-in-law. He was of a character not much gentler than his father's, more like a second Ares, associated with Athene. Under the walls of Troy he was to be the mightiest warrior next to Achilles and to show himself actually superior when opposed to Ares. Supported by Athene, he struck the war-god with his spear, so that he fell and screamed like the shout of nine or ten thousand fighting men.²⁴³ Before that he had wounded Aphrodite, who had rescued her son Aineias from him.²⁴⁴ Among all those who fought, Athene took away the mist from his eyes above, so that he might recognise the gods in the turmoil of battle.²⁴⁵

But the punishment of the passionate warrior, who left his beautiful wife for his gory work, was already prepared. Aigialeia, the clever daughter of Adrastos, was not for long to sob by night in a lonely bed, so that the whole house was awakened.²⁴⁶ She soon sought consolation among the youths of Argos.²⁴⁷ Whether Diomedes ever came home²⁴⁸ and was driven out by his wife's lovers,²⁴⁹ or avoided Argos²⁵⁰ and made at once for southern Italy, it is said²⁵¹ that the fair-haired goddess with the owl's eyes made him an immortal god who received worship in Magna Graecia,²⁵² especially on one of the little islands, now known as Le Tremiti, opposite Monte Gargano. It was to bear his name while his followers turned into shearwaters, 'birds of Diomedes', in the marshes under Garganus.²⁵³ Up on the mountain, where the Archangel Michael has his cult now, Kalchas, the diviner of the Greeks before Troy, supposedly had his oracle.²⁵⁴

The future enemy of Odysseus, Aias son of Telamon, was also one of Helen's suitors.²⁵⁵ From his little island of Salamis he could not promise much, but he offered, and that seemed to him a large offer,²⁵⁶ to make spoil of all the herds of Troizen, Epidauros, Aigina, Megara, Corinth, Hermione, Mases and

Asine. And with his long spear he would have been capable of doing it. Without the protecting presence of the goddess Athene he strode like Ares into battle.²⁵⁷ In his appearance and his warlike exploits he was inferior only to Achilles.²⁵⁸ Of gigantic stature,²⁵⁹ with his tower-like shield,²⁶⁰ which could completely cover his half-brother Teukros as well as himself,²⁶¹ unique in that he wore no corslet, he stood out above the fights at Troy like one from the olden days. Stone-throwing, like that of the ancient heroes, was still part of his art of war.²⁶² Later narrators made him out invulnerable, as they did Achilles,²⁶³ and alleged that Herakles was the author of his name.²⁶⁴ The son of Zeus visited Telamon, to summon him to his expedition against Troy, just as he and his followers were sitting at table. Holding the golden goblet in his hand, Herakles prayed to his father and asked a bold son for his guest-friend, the husband of fair Eriboia, a son whose body should be as impervious to wounds as his own lion-skin and whose courage should accord therewith. Zeus caused his eagle to fly to them in confirmation of these words, and thereupon Herakles, like a prophet, cried, 'A son shall be born to thee, Telamon, the son thou wouldst have. From the eagle [*aïetos*] do thou name him Aias.'

According to another version,²⁶⁵ Herakles made the little Aias invulnerable by wrapping him in his lion-skin, all except his armpit, where the child was not touched by the skin. For Aias was very vulnerable in his unrestrained nature, which knew no bounds either in its itch for plunder or in its munificence. At the funeral games in honour of Achilles matters came to a head. Thetis had made her son's armour, which had been fashioned by Hephaistos, the prize of honour for that hero who had deserved best in the war against Troy.²⁶⁶ It was a difficult decision that had to be made between Odysseus and Aias.²⁶⁷ When finally, by the will of Pallas Athene,²⁶⁸ it was made in favour of the subtle and not the strong claimant, Aias went mad and killed himself.²⁶⁹ It was a gruesome example of the punishment which the gods

inflict on a lack of restraint which seems to us rather childish than sinful and is characteristic of none of the heroes so much as of this giant with his long spear and his towering shield.²⁷⁰ In the underworld, he still was angry with Odysseus and would not answer his conciliatory words.²⁷¹ But the people of Salamis built him a shrine in their market place and erected there his statue in ebony, and the Athenians joined in their worship.²⁷² Before the battle of Salamis, all the Greeks prayed to Aias and his father.²⁷³

Allegedly, another hero of the same name, Aias son of Oileus, from East Lokris, north of Boiotia, was one of Helen's suitors, too.²⁷⁴ The Salaminian was so friendly with him before Troy that, although the second was a man of far smaller stature,²⁷⁵ they appeared almost as a pair of heroes, the two Aiantes, like two lions who make their prey of the same kid,²⁷⁶ or two oxen who draw the same plough;²⁷⁷ both were insatiable for battle.²⁷⁸ Being smaller, the son of Oileus had swift feet to pursue the enemy,²⁷⁹ and he was a real sinner against the gods. When Troy fell and Kassandra took refuge with the statue in which the Trojan women honoured Athene, Aias dragged her away by force. She clung to the image of the goddess so that it was overthrown.²⁸⁰ But the savage Aias paid no heed to this. Even if it is not true²⁸¹ that he violated the unhappy prophetess and that the idol at sight of that sin raised its eyes to heaven,²⁸² that was only because the Greeks themselves prevented it and would have stoned him.²⁸³

Aias, who cared nothing for the gods, denied it upon oath,²⁸⁴ and Kassandra had to follow Agamemnon, but the wrath of Athene pursued them both, Aias especially.²⁸⁵ The fleet with which both sinners intended to return home, Agamemnon taking Kassandra, was caught in a storm off Cape Kaphareus, the southernmost extremity of the island of Euboea.²⁸⁶ Aias' ship was sunk, but Poseidon let him get himself to the near-by rocks by swimming.²⁸⁷ He held fast to them and cried that he had saved himself against the will of the gods. The sea-god shattered the rock and Aias was drowned.

However, the inhabitants of Opus in Lokris honoured the hero,²⁸⁸ probably in the form of a great serpent which, as a late narrator told, used to follow him like a dog while he lived.²⁸⁹ But to atone for his sin the Lokrians²⁹⁰ had for a thousand years,²⁹¹ or even more,²⁹² to send a constant supply of their daughters to do the hardest service for Athene at Ilion, once in the country of Priam.²⁹³

It is said²⁹⁴ that the two physician-heroes of the Trojan War, Machaon and Podaleirios, the sons of Asklepios, also wooed Helen. When Machaon, the wonderful physician, was wounded by Paris' arrow, it was the worst moment of the war for the Greeks.²⁹⁵ Of Idomeneus, grandson of Minos, it is said in so many words that he came in person to press his suit and did not send messengers, or the like.²⁹⁶ But he, too, was not destined to become famous as Helen's husband, but only through his warlike exploits before Troy and by the fate which overtook him after his return. He also met with a great storm on his voyage home. In fear, he vowed to sacrifice to Poseidon the first living thing he encountered;²⁹⁷ but the first to meet him on land was his own son. Or, according to another version of the story, it was his daughter.²⁹⁸ The late narrators do not say if he did actually sacrifice his child; perhaps he refused. He was driven out by his people and so had to emigrate to Magna Graecia, where he took possession of the farthest extremity of the land, south of Otranto.

Helen handed to Menelaos the crown that was reserved for the son-in-law of Zeus.²⁹⁹ Agamemnon's brother's place in the great story would have been merely that of yet another king from Asia Minor, crowned by the grace of a goddess, if the deity, in the shape of Helen and by the will of Zeus and of her mother Nemesis, had not chosen him as her consort. Opposite Sparta, on the east bank of the Eurotas, stood in old days the shrine of the goddess Helen, who, as the tale went, also appeared there in person when it was a question of making an ugly baby into a beautiful girl.³⁰⁰ But Menelaos was destined, after being promoted to a godhead by Helen,³⁰¹ to be carried off

while yet in the body to Elysion,³⁰² although both of them were worshipped in Therapne at so-called tombs.³⁰³ He was to be named as not the least of the heroes at Troy,³⁰⁴ and also renowned for all time by virtue of his gentleness,³⁰⁵ as befitted the companion, rather serving than commanding, of his divine consort. If the name Menelaos, 'he who awaits the people', suits a god of the underworld, yet this was a gentle god of the dead. He was fair-haired, with blue eyes, the down of youth on his cheeks, and with shapely feet.³⁰⁶ Helen bore him one daughter, as it were her younger double, as Hebe was of Hera and she herself of Leda or Nemesis. The gods, so says the old tradition,³⁰⁷ manifested no offspring again to Helen when once she had brought forth her lovely child Hermione.

The marriage were best compared with that of Thetis and Peleus, if, once more by the will of Zeus and this time of Aphrodite also, Paris, the new chosen one, had not made his appearance. This happened apparently in the tenth year after the wooing of Helen. We remember from the history of the Spartan Dioskuroi that the Trojan prince, who came to Lakonia in company with Aineias, the son of the love-goddess, was received by Kastor and Polydeukes. This happened not in Sparta itself but at Amyklai.³⁰⁸ Furthermore, we know already that the Dioskuroi were soon drawn away by their quarrel with their cousins of Messenia. In Sparta Menelaos received the strangers. On the tenth day³⁰⁹ (ten is the significant number in this story), he was obliged to journey to Crete, for he had often had Idomeneus, the grandson of Minos, for his guest.³¹⁰ Helen yielded to the power of Aphrodite like any mortal queen, as which she is represented by the great Homer.³¹¹ She followed Paris in the night, taking with her many treasures from the royal house.³¹² The pair were united on a 'Rocky Island', Kranae,³¹³ whichever one of the innumerable little islands of the Aegean that may have been. It was like a repetition of the story of Ariadne, save that Paris played the parts of both Theseus and Dionysos. The wedding-feast was celebrated in Troy.³¹⁴

Iris, the messenger of the gods, brought the news to Menelaos in Crete.³¹⁵ He betook himself to his brother at Mycenae,³¹⁶ and also sought advice from king Nestor at Pylos,³¹⁷ the one surviving son of Neleus, for Herakles had killed the rest; it seems that the gist of the counsel of that already old and wise man was this, to go with Odysseus to Peleus and induce him to send his son Achilles to Troy.³¹⁸ The fate of Thetis' son was bound up with Troy; of that the Moirai must have sung with lofty yet obscure words at the wedding of his parents. All Greece seems to have known of this destiny, though not so well as his divine mother. But Achilles was not bound by the oath of the suitors to take part in the campaign. To the erstwhile suitors Agamemnon sent messengers,³¹⁹ reminding them of their oath and also that from then on no king in all Greece could be sure of his wife if they did not punish the seducer. Even so it needed ten years³²⁰ to move them all to assemble their men and ships at Aulis and then to sail away towards Troy.

Odysseus was cunning enough—he alone³²¹ with the exception of Peleus, who knew from Thetis of his son's destiny and therefore did not wish to send him³²²—to avoid the call. It was said³²³ that an oracle had warned him that he should return alone to his people only after twenty years. And in fact the Trojan War was to last ten years and the wanderings of Odysseus another ten. So, when Agamemnon, with a great following which included not only Menelaos but also Palamedes, son of Nauplios and the Danaid Aymone,³²⁴ arrived in Ithake, the ingenious Odysseus behaved like a madman. Not long before, he had married Penelope. They had a little son, whom they were soon, with good reason, to name Telemachos, for then it was decided that his father should become 'a fighter far away'. As if he were completely out of his wits, Odysseus yoked a horse and an ox to his plough and wore a cap on his head³²⁵ which was quite unworthy of a king but made him look like a comic Kabeiros, or Hephaistos.

Palamedes, the hero of 'skill of hand and feats of skill', *palamai*, saw through him. He put little Telemachos on the



69 PARIS COMING HOME FROM IDA



70 PELEUS BRINGS ACHILLES TO CHIRON



71 ORESTES AND IPHIGENEIA BEFORE
THE TAURIAN TEMPLE

ground in front of the insane ploughman, and said to him, 'Come and join us.'³²⁶ Odysseus had no choice, unless he wanted to drive the furrow through his own son. But he soon showed his hateful side to Palamedes. The latter was to be known to posterity not only as a great inventor, the originator of letters,³²⁷ numbered dice and counting,³²⁸ but also as the first man to be unjustly condemned. The Greeks stoned him under the walls of Troy after Odysseus had smuggled gold and a forged letter from Priam into his tent.³²⁹

In Homer we hear nothing of all this, nor is the tale told of how Achilles, before Nestor and Odysseus could bring him, was placed in safety by Thetis.³³⁰ She sent the lad, then nine years old,³³¹ to king Lykomedes on the island of Skyros, where Theseus met his undeserved death; according to his name, the king had the 'thoughts of a wolf'. Achilles, in Homer, calls the king of Skyros Enyeus,³³² a name which means a good warrior, but elsewhere we learn of this Enyeus that he was a son of Dionysos and Ariadne.³³³ Achilles fared on Skyros as the child Dionysos had in the house of Athamas;³³⁴ he was brought up there as a girl. He lived with the king's daughters and was known as Pyrrha, 'red-head', from the colour of his hair.³³⁵

Word got abroad that Achilles was hidden in Lykomedes' house. The king of Skyros was sure that the boy would not be found, and sent a message to the kings gathered about Agamemnon, 'Come and look for him.' Odysseus made his appearance in Lykomedes' palace and brought women's clothes with him, which he wished to offer to the king's daughters. Thus he was admitted to the *parthenon*, the girls' quarters.³³⁶ Under the clothing were hidden a shield and a spear. While Odysseus was showing the girls all the finery, he had a trumpet-call sounded as if to battle. Achilles snatched at the weapons and was thus discovered. But by that time the princess Deidameia, 'compeller of enemies', was pregnant by the hero.³³⁷ She bore him the future warrior with the double name, Pyrrhos, 'red-head', or Neoptolemos, 'renewer of war', and Achilles was proud of his son.³³⁸ Later, Odysseus was

to fetch him also from Skyros,³³⁹ so that the Greeks could take Troy.

As Homer tells the story,³⁴⁰ Achilles ran out from his father's house to meet Odysseus and Nestor, admiringly led the two heroic warriors in by hand, and Peleus could not bear to hold him back. He gave his son his immortal horses, the gift of Poseidon, to which Hera was to lend human speech,³⁴¹ to warn their young master or to foretell his early end, and his mighty spear, the shaft of which had been cut at his wedding.

CHAPTER IX

Iphigeneia and her Brother and Sisters

WHEN AGAMEMNON WENT TO AULIS to the assembly of the allied kings, in order to lead the army of the Greeks against Troy, he left three daughters and one promising son,³⁴² the little Orestes, behind in his city with his unhallowed wife Klytaimnestra. The names of the daughters were, according to Homer, Chrysothemis, Laodike and Iphianassa,³⁴³ but the two who were to be renowned especially through the tragedians are known to us by different names, Elektra instead of Laodike and Iphigeneia instead of Iphianassa.³⁴⁴ True, not all poets took Iphigeneia and Iphianassa to be two names for the same heroine,³⁴⁵ though it is certain that to begin with they served indifferently to address the same divine being, who had not belonged from all time to the family of Agamemnon. Iphianassa signifies 'she who governs mightily', and Iphigeneia 'she who governs births mightily', perhaps, and Iphigeneia was a title of Artemis.³⁴⁶ In her person there appeared alongside of Helen another and much sterner manifestation of the Moon-goddess in her many forms, resembling Artemis and not Aphrodite, in the closest connection with the House of Atreus.

We know from the stories of Theseus that Iphigeneia was actually thought to be a daughter of Helen, who bore her after being rescued from Aphidna and handed her over to her sister to be reared. According to the story which now follows, Iphigeneia was the first-born and most beautiful daughter of Agamemnon and Klytaimnestra. While the army and the fleet which was to take it across were assembling at Aulis—indeed were assembling for the second time, according to the Cyprian poet who told of the prelude to the War of Troy and

the events of it up to those in the 'Iliad', interpolating the tale of Telephos before that of Iphigeneia—the great king and commander of the Greeks sinned against Artemis.³⁴⁷ The great bay where the ships were waiting lay, it seems, between Hyria and Aulis—the two places which Homer names first³⁴⁸—opposite Euboeia, in Boiotia, in a region where now there are no woods to be seen any more; but it then had, besides the temple of the goddess,³⁴⁹ a sacred grove of Artemis.³⁵⁰ There Agamemnon's sin was committed, and there it must be atoned for.

The story of Agamemnon's offence is not easy to repeat, since the late narrators of it shorten and simplify it very much,³⁵¹ if they do not corrupt it,³⁵² and the tragedians do no more than allude to it. It would appear that on that occasion unfavourable weather for the sea-voyage was lasting unusually long. Thereupon Agamemnon promised to offer to the goddess the fairest thing that the year had yielded.³⁵³ This, it seems, Artemis accepted; but it happened that the king accidentally³⁵⁴ caught sight of a fawn in the goddess's grove, with its antlers sprouting and a dappled hide.³⁵⁵ Did the goddess desire this beautiful creature as a sacrifice to herself? A careless word escaped the king's mouth,³⁵⁶ 'Not even Artemis herself...'.³⁵⁷ He probably meant³⁵⁸ 'Not even Artemis, if she wished, could save the beast now', for he killed the fawn immediately³⁵⁹ with sure aim, in the sacred grove. If only his too great self-confidence had not called the power of the goddess in question!

So the favourable weather ceased again, be it that a gale rose³⁶⁰ or that the wind failed altogether.³⁶¹ Kalchas, the diviner of the army, was consulted, and he revealed³⁶² that Agamemnon's eldest daughter must be sacrificed to calm the wrath of the offended goddess; she was the only equivalent for the misconducted sacrifice.³⁶³ But how would Klytaimnestra yield up her daughter to be a victim? Odysseus is said to have thought of the lie:³⁶⁴ Iphigeneia was to come to Aulis to marry Achilles. Marriage and death, as in the famous lament of Oidipus' daughter,³⁶⁵ were always associated ideas, ever since

Hades carried off Persephone. An embassy was sent to Klytaimnestra, with Odysseus for its spokesman,³⁶⁶ and she herself accompanied her daughter to the wedding.³⁶⁷

But Iphigeneia was not dragged by her fair hair to the sacrifice.³⁶⁸ A wall-painting at Pompeii shows us Odysseus and Diomedes lifting her up in their arms³⁶⁹ and carrying her to the altar. The saffron-dyed dress³⁷⁰ which the girls who served Artemis at Brauron used to wear³⁷¹ slipped off her, her bosom lay bare to the knife.³⁷² Agamemnon turned away and covered his face. She stretched out her arms to her goddess. Kalchas, the sacrificial priest, however, now saw what was coming. Artemis watched over the scene and showed her power to save, which Agamemnon had doubted. At the very moment of the killing³⁷³ she substituted a hind for the girl and carried off Iphigeneia through the air to the Tauric Peninsula—we call it the Crimea now—to serve her as priestess among the barbarians. Human beings were sacrificed to her there, namely such Greeks as were cast ashore. These the priestess had to take possession of for the goddess,³⁷⁴ who there was named Parthenos—that is, Maiden—or actually Iphigeneia,³⁷⁵ and who enjoyed such inhuman worship. Yet Iphigeneia was to find her Greek home again on Attic soil, at Brauron, as a heroine in the service of Artemis and her *alter ego*.³⁷⁶

The Greeks were of opinion that they had sacrificed Iphigeneia,³⁷⁷ and it was in vain that Klytaimnestra knew better, if indeed she did. Her maternal pride was injured by the deceit and the loss of her daughter, and her savage nature showed itself to the uttermost against her husband. So there were deeds of blood in Agamemnon's house after his return from the war, which his eldest daughter was to learn of much later. Agamemnon was butchered like an ox, says the account in the 'Odyssey', not in his own palace but in the house of Aigisthos, who had received him hospitably on his arrival.³⁷⁸ He never guessed that his wife had long since followed the avenger who had seduced her to his home.³⁷⁹ The only person who could have warned him, Cassandra, fell a victim to the hand of

Klytaimnestra, whose first murder was that of her husband's concubine.³⁸⁰ The merciless woman³⁸¹ raged in the fulfilment of her long-planned revenge (it occurred, according to Aeschylus, in the palace of Agamemnon), and struck home twice, even a third time, with her axe³⁸² when the Great King, stepping out of his bath and entangled in the bath-robe, could not defend himself. Thus she herself describes it³⁸³ in the tragedy which bears the name of Agamemnon for its title. It might have been part of the plan of revenge to murder also the future avenger, her own son, Orestes.

Him Elektra had protected, the sister with the name of a great goddess whom we know from the history of Kadmos, like a second Pallas Athene; she had brought him out of range of Aigisthos' power into safety.³⁸⁴ Orestes was worthy of his name, 'man of the mountain', during the time when he was growing up in Phokis and later, when after the murder of his mother he wandered about pursued by the Erinyes. Phokis includes the high mountainous country about Delphi. There the boy was received at the foot of Parnassos, probably in the town of Krisa, by old Strophios, his father's guest-friend³⁸⁵ and relative,³⁸⁶ and found in his son Pylades the true friend who was to accompany him in his wanderings. They grew up together, two young men, certainly dear to and under the protection of Apollo, the god of the oracle in whose neighbourhood they lived. When Orestes inquired of the oracle³⁸⁷ if he should avenge his father's murder, that was even more fitting than the inquiries by other heroes of the god of Delphi. As his father's adult son he would no doubt have set out to revenge him even of his own design; but might the son take vengeance for his father's death on his own mother? Who would take the responsibility for that? Apollo, by one account, presented the youth with a bow with which to defend himself against the Erinyes, the avenging spirits of his mother.³⁸⁸ The god's directions left no room for doubt.

For seven years Aigisthos ruled over the kingdom of Argos and Mycenae. In the eighth year Orestes returned from Phokis

by way of Athens.³⁸⁹ He came, it would seem, under the protection of Pallas Athene, a true daughter of her father, who was represented as it were in the family of Agamemnon by Elektra, to the royal city of his fathers. Homer refrains from details and avoids describing the revenge of the son on his mother and her paramour. We will follow his example rather than that of the great tragedians, who act out the scene of the murder each in his own fashion; Aeschylus in the 'Choephoroi', that is 'The Libation-bearers', Sophokles and Euripides in the tragedies which are both entitled 'Elektra'. They may be taken as guides on this field of blood. On the day on which Orestes organised the funeral feast over his horrible mother and the cowardly Aigisthos, Menelaos too arrived at Argos with Helen from their wanderings after the Trojan War, and went on further overland to Sparta.³⁹⁰ Orestes was still very far from finding his rest in a hero's grave in Arkadia.³⁹¹

Two of the great tragedians picture to us his pursuit by the Erinyes, Aeschylus in his 'Eumenides' and Euripides in the 'Orestes'. The bow which Apollo gave him, indeed the very arrows of the god, which he aimed in his Delphian temple against the primæval goddesses who avenged matricide,³⁹² did the victim of their pursuit little good. Even the supreme Athenian court, before which Apollo took the responsibility on himself and Athene cast her vote for Orestes,³⁹³ did not by universal tradition free the matricide by its equally divided verdict. The wanderings of Orestes were not to end yet. Not all the Erinyes set him free; many followed him further.³⁹⁴ Then he prostrated himself on the ground before the altar of the god at Delphi and begged for a final counsel, since otherwise he could not remain alive.³⁹⁵

Thus Orestes received the direction to bring from the land of the Taurians the image of Artemis which fell from heaven.³⁹⁶ Iphigeneia served before that image, and to her the god, without saying so, had sent Orestes and Pylades. When they arrived, the two young Greeks were to be consecrated for sacrifice by her. Then followed the recognition and the rescue

of them all, the theft of the image and the bringing home of the priestess, a tale for poets, old and new, to relate. Of the ancients, Euripides made it his subject, and after him a modern, in a manner still more worthy, as it must seem to us today, of the hardly veiled divine figure of Iphigeneia.

CHAPTER X

Telephos

IT WAS NOT only the Trojan War which started from Aulis. The sequel of the sacrifice of Iphigeneia takes us far beyond it into the future. The first expedition of the Greeks turned into an involuntary campaign, the description of which must lead us back to earlier events. The tale went that the Greek fleet which assembled at Aulis put to sea as early as the second year after the abduction of Helen,³⁹⁷ but that by mistake it landed, not in Phrygia, Priam's kingdom, but somewhat further south, in the coastal district of Mysia which was called Teuthrania after king Teuthras.³⁹⁸ There the Greeks found kinsfolk to oppose them, who strove to check their advance, and as their principal opponent a hero who according to the tellers of the tale had been driven there from Arkadia, but whose worship, both on the Arkadian mountain Parthenion and in Asia Minor, seems to rest on very old legends. He was represented as not only a son of Herakles, but as that son whom his mother bore to resemble his father most closely.³⁹⁹ His name was Telephos, or more accurately—so it seems to have been understood and used again—Telephanes, 'he who shines afar'.

In most versions his mother is called Auge, a word ordinarily used to mean 'light'. No doubt that is what she was called in that old tale also,⁴⁰⁰ in which Herakles met her on his way to Laomedon, assuredly in the house of king Teuthras, who in all accounts had received the mother of Telephos. According to this legend, Telephos, son of Herakles, was begotten in Asia Minor and did not merely emigrate there from Arkadia.⁴⁰¹ In Arkadia itself there was a sacred story, connected with the temple of Athena Alea and the holy precinct of Telephos on Parthenion, which was told of the conception and birth of the hero. Alea, the epithet of Athena at Tegea, signifies the cherishing warmth which is eagerly sought in the south during

the cold and damp of certain seasons of the year. After it also the father of Auge⁴⁰² and founder of the temple⁴⁰³ was called Aleos. Auge was supposed to be a priestess of Athena at Tegea;⁴⁰⁴ she was rather her *alter ego*, save for this difference—that she underwent childbirth and consequently had her image in Tegea as 'Auge on the knees', in the attitude of a woman in labour in old times.⁴⁰⁵

How she conceived her child was a sacred story, because it was connected with a temple. But it was none the less a gloomy one; it resembled the story of the violation of Pelopia by her own father. It can hardly have happened at the full moon in a night when the nuptials were celebrated and Achilles was conceived, although the narrators know of a nocturnal choral dance.⁴⁰⁶ These were held for Athene at new moon. It was also the time at which girls used to wash their clothes, blood-spotted clothes according to the story of Pelopia, and we are told in so many words that Auge was surprised at the spring by the temple of Athena Alea by Herakles.⁴⁰⁷ Pompeian wall-paintings show her just in the act of washing her garments. By way of excuse for Herakles it is alleged that he was drunk.⁴⁰⁸ He was then coming from Sparta,⁴⁰⁹ where he had put Tyndareos back on the throne,⁴¹⁰ and what happened was rare in the career of that servant of women; as the tool of the divine power which willed this birth he became a violator.

According to one account, Auge hid her secretly born child at first in the sacred precinct of Athena;⁴¹¹ but the goddess would have none of this and sent warning signs. Aleos discovered the secret, exposed Telephos on Parthenion, and sent Auge oversea by Nauplios, son of Poseidon.⁴¹² Thus, or even in a chest, as the coins of the harbour town of Eleia in Teuthrania show us, she came to king Teuthras. Telephos was suckled by a hind on Parthenion, which by another account was his birthplace.⁴¹³ She wore antlers,⁴¹⁴ like the wonderful hind of Artemis. The great goddess, who presumably was called Parthenos on those heights and Alea below on the plain of Tegea, protected the child and perhaps had willed his birth.

Herakles also returned and was amazed at the marvellous child, who found a companion on Mount Parthenion in the person of Parthenopaios, Atalante's son.⁴¹⁵

That is the more cheerful tale of the birth which followed upon the gloomier one of the conception, as decked out by poets and painters. The boy nurtured by the doe, a son of Herakles who resembled his father, had to become a wanderer. Not very different in his lot from other errant heroes, he grew up among king Korythos' herdsmen⁴¹⁶ in Arkadia and was adopted by the king himself as his son.⁴¹⁷ Korythos was an epithet also of Apollo, as a god of healing,⁴¹⁸ whom Telephos later sorely needed. As a young man he became the slayer of his uncles, the brothers of Auge, and so was struck dumb,⁴¹⁹ for it was the law for homicides that they must lose their voice.⁴²⁰ The oracle bade the speechless Telephos⁴²¹ depart to 'the farthest Mysians'.⁴²² Without uttering a word, he journeyed across the sea to Teuthrania. It was also said that Parthenopaios accompanied him.⁴²³ King Teuthras was hard pressed by an enemy, and the two heroes, especially Telephos, rescued him. Certainly Teuthras purified him from blood-guilt, but did he recover his voice? Was he dumb by design or in reality? There almost the same thing happened to him as to Oidipus;⁴²⁴ Teuthras gave him Auge, whom he had adopted as his daughter, to wife, and they were already lying together when a huge snake appeared between them. At that moment—if not, indeed, earlier—Telephos got his voice back, and the mother recognised her son.

By all accounts, Telephos succeeded Teuthras on the throne. His wife is variously named Argiope, 'white-faced', or⁴²⁵ Hiera, 'holy', an imposing Amazonian figure, who was to fall in the great battle with the Greeks on the plain of Kaikos.⁴²⁶ His son was Eurypylos, 'he of the wide gate', leader of the Keteioi,⁴²⁷ a people whom the later Greeks almost completely forgot,⁴²⁸ but they probably were survivors from the empire of the Hittites. Among the sons of Telephos were also reckoned Tarchon and Tyrsenos, two founder-heroes of the Etruscans

who made a home in Italy,⁴²⁹ and finally Kyparissos,⁴³⁰ Apollo's beloved who was turned into a cypress.⁴³¹ Telephos, the Arkadian hero with Asian connections, perhaps a hero of that distant time in which Greeks still belonged to the Hittite empire, joined battle with the Greeks who, imagining that they were in the Troad, were laying Teuthrania waste.

The battle-field was the plain at the mouth of the river Kaikos.⁴³² Telephos drove the new arrivals back to their ships,⁴³³ only Achilles and Patroklos resisting him still.⁴³⁴ Patroklos had been sent by Peleus as an older⁴³⁵ follower to serve Achilles.⁴³⁶ But from then on, as that follower showed his courage, the younger hero never again allowed himself to be separated from him on the battle-field. For Patroklos, who should have attended to Achilles, was already heedless; he was wounded by Telephos. The vase-painting of the master Sosias shows us how he who had learned to treat wounds from Achilles,⁴³⁷ was himself bandaged by him. Telephos was driven back by Achilles and took to flight; in his flight he was entangled in the vines which covered the plain of the Kaikos,⁴³⁸ and thus received from Achilles a deep wound in the upper thigh, which would not heal.

However, he had not driven off the Greeks in vain. They sailed back to Argos⁴³⁹ and were slow in reassembling at Aulis; but for Telephos there now began the most painful journey to the man who had wounded him. From the oracle of Apollo at Patara in Lykia⁴⁴⁰ he received by way of advice the saying, 'He who wounded shall also heal.'⁴⁴¹ He must seek out Achilles and obtain healing from him, a story which the tragedians fastened upon still more than they did upon the earlier fortunes of Telephos. Euripides put him on the stage in the guise of a beggar, wearing the Mysian felt cap,⁴⁴² in the circle of the Greek kings.⁴⁴³ His eloquence and the means which he employed to attain his end do not belong to the old tale. Achilles, who had cured Patroklos, healed him; it was also told, however, that the cure must be brought about not by the hero who had dealt the wound but by the weapon which

had done so.⁴⁴⁴ The remedy was scraped off the point of the famous spear⁴⁴⁵ and sprinkled on the wound. Cured and become a friend of the Greeks, Telephos was able to return home, if he did not himself actually lead them to Troy.⁴⁴⁶

It was not to him but to his son Eurypylos, who succeeded him on the throne,⁴⁴⁷ that Priam sent an embassy and begged help. At first Eurypylos did not venture, for his mother's sake, to respond to the call; then Priam sent him a golden vine,⁴⁴⁸ presumably to atone for the wound which Telephos had once got when entangled in the vines, and so the son set out for the war. His mother was surely not that Hiera who had fallen in battle against the Greeks. Heroic offerings were later made to Telephos at Pergamon. No one coming from these offerings was to enter the temple of Asklepios until he had bathed.⁴⁴⁹ In the hymns which were sung to the healing god in the Asklepion, however, Telephos was celebrated first.⁴⁵⁰ But it was forbidden for Eurypylos to be mentioned by anyone in the holy place because under the walls of Troy he had killed the physician-hero Machaon.

CHAPTER XI

Protesilaos and Laodameia

EIGHT YEARS ELAPSED after the first sortie of the Greeks before they reassembled in Aulis⁴⁵¹ and were ready to start. They knew that at least nine years of war awaited them, for they had been gathered in Aulis but two or three days when the portent took place which Homer relates in the 'Iliad'.⁴⁵² They were busied about the making of an offering of the finest cows at altars close to a freely flowing spring, which, like so many in Greece, poured forth under a great plane-tree. Many centuries later a piece of wood from that tree was shown in the temple of Artemis.⁴⁵³ During the sacrifice there appeared a snake with a blood-red back. From the altar, out from under which it had crept, it hurled itself at the plane, on the topmost branch of which was the nest of a swallow with her brood. The snake devoured the eight nestlings at once, then finally, their mother. The monster itself was turned to stone by Zeus. Thus it was seen that this was no natural happening, and Kalchas the prophet interpreted it: the war was to last nine years, and Troy would not fall till the tenth.

Troy, also known as Ilios or Ilion, already showed itself by this sign to be a place of death for the Greeks, where so many years of each one of their lives and so many lives themselves should be completely devoured. Apollo of the silver bow⁴⁵⁴ in his deadliest form defended the city. Troy stood under the protection of the bow, whether the god himself or a mortal hand guided by him directed the arrows of death. Spears and swords, nay even shields and corslets, were of little use there. Only one bow could have opposed it. It will not have been forgotten that Herakles on his pyre presented his bow, with which he had so often fought death, to a passer-by who had taken the way over Mount Oita; whether it was Poias or Philoktetes, the father or the son, the recipient was a native of

Thessaly, in the neighbourhood of Phthia, where Eurytion had once been ruler, and Peleus after him. With this bow Philoktetes now appeared in Aulis, for the 'lover of the possession' (that is what his name means) never would be separated from this possession. He was soon to be separated from his followers, who accompanied him on seven ships and were all good bowmen,⁴⁵⁵ and the bow was to be of no use to the Greeks, now heading for Troy, for a long time yet.

There lay a little island some considerable distance from Troy, close to Lemnos.⁴⁵⁶ It was long known;⁴⁵⁷ the altar which had become famous through Philoktetes, the hero's weapons and a bronze figure of a snake were shown on it. The islet was also called Nea, that is 'new',⁴⁵⁸ a very proper name for a volcanic island which could easily disappear again, as it is said this one ultimately did.⁴⁵⁹ For the old narrators its name was Chryse, 'the golden', after the golden cult-partner of the god with the silver bow, who could also manifest himself with one of gold.⁴⁶⁰ Apollo stood over the island as its protector and lord;⁴⁶¹ he had his altar there, to which nine years later the Greeks were to send a hecatomb by way of sin-offering.⁴⁶² On that occasion, when they landed on Chryse for the first time and so passed the border by which the larger circuit of Troy might be bounded, it is said that Philoktetes guided them there, to bring an offering to the goddess, which was a prerequisite for the taking of Ilios.⁴⁶³ Jason had built the altar⁴⁶⁴ (in late accounts Philoktetes was one of the Argonauts),⁴⁶⁵ or else it was Herakles on his journey to Laomedon.⁴⁶⁶

Now, whether it was Philoktetes who led them to the altar or the Greeks of their own design wished to visit the sanctuary, the goddess brought to pass something compared to which the portent at Aulis was at best but a pale imitation. Her sacred serpent, the guardian of the temple,⁴⁶⁷ attacked, of all those that approached, him who carried the bow of Herakles. It bit him in the foot,⁴⁶⁸ and from the bite was left a festering wound which repelled all the Greeks.⁴⁶⁹ His retainers carried the wounded man over to Lemnos and left him and his bow lying

there. Philoktetes was the first victim, but the second, who actually died, followed when the Greeks trod Trojan soil for the first time. This second victim was perhaps a cousin of Philoktetes, being a son of Iphiklos, who according to one tradition⁴⁷⁰ was a brother of Poias.

Iphiklos belonged to Phylake, again in the neighbourhood of Phthia, and was a son of Phylakos, who was renowned for his herds; his name means 'watcher'.⁴⁷¹ Iphiklos himself, whose name signifies 'renowned for strength', had no children, for he was unable to beget any. Then the prophet Melampus—he whom we know as Proitos' heir and the healer of his daughters⁴⁷²—came to Phylake to steal Phylakos' cows, with which he meant to woo the beautiful Pero, Neleus' daughter, for his brother Bias; but he was caught before he could do so. Yet, since he actually understood the speech of the wood-worms in the beams, he succeeded, to the great amazement of Phylakos and his men, in saving himself from his prison, which was about to collapse. The price of his liberty and of the cows was, however, the healing of Iphiklos. Melampus had two bulls slaughtered and with their meat attracted the birds of prey, among whom an old vulture came flying down, and from him Melampus learned the reason for Iphiklos' weakness. As a child he had seen his father geld rams and afterwards throw down the knife close to him. The boy ran away, his father was furious and drove the knife deep into a sacred oak. In time the bark grew over it. The prophet had the knife taken out of the tree, scraped it and gave the rust to Iphiklos to drink.

Thus Iphiklos was cured. He first begot Podarkes, 'swift-foot', to whom he gave that name because he could himself run so quickly over the cornfields that he never bent a stalk.⁴⁷³ His second, and better, child was Protesilaos,⁴⁷⁴ whose name expressed the claim to be foremost, 'the first who looses the warriors'. He was the first to jump ashore when the ships were beached at Troy. An unknown Trojan killed him, and he left behind a young wife and a half-finished house.⁴⁷⁵ But in those days a consummation, the carrying out to the end of a sacrifice



72 ACHILLES AND TROILLOS



73 ACHILLES AND PENTHESILEIA

or taking part in an initiation which brought the initiates into close association with the underworld powers, a *telete*, was war too.⁴⁷⁶ Later it was told⁴⁷⁷ that Protesilaos had given Ilios its first initiation, and the Greeks raised him a particularly high barrow at Elaius across the Hellespont. From its summit Troy could be seen,⁴⁷⁸ and inside it the hero was honoured as in a temple.⁴⁷⁹ It was believed⁴⁸⁰ that the elms which stood about this hero-shrine⁴⁸¹ withered, and then grew again, when they were so tall that their tops could see the hostile city.

But a great favour of the gods of the underworld was reserved for Protesilaos. His young wife was left unsatisfied by the scarcely begun marriage; nor could the highest honours which a fallen hero could receive compensate her for the loss of her husband. She had been really the wife of Protesilaos for but a single day,⁴⁸² this Polydora, daughter of Meleagros,⁴⁸³ or, to use the name which poets both early and late have made famous,⁴⁸⁴ Laodameia, daughter of Akastos. As Laodameia, she herself bore a name of the queen of the underworld, 'she who masters the people'. As Polydora, 'rich-in-gifts', she had rather a Dionysiac name. What she undertook was worthy also of the house of her grandfather Oineus, who was once visited by Dionysos. For from the half-finished house of Protesilaos she returned thither, rather than, as others would have it,⁴⁸⁵ to that of Akastos, and was to be married a second time.⁴⁸⁶ But she preferred the nocturnal rites of Dionysos, secret ceremonies which representations on late sarcophagi hint at to us. Thus it fell to her lot that not Dionysos but her own husband appeared from the underworld and she united herself to him in everlasting companionship.

The gods of the underworld showed Protesilaos this favour; they let him go for one day,⁴⁸⁷ or perhaps but three hours,⁴⁸⁸ to his wife, not as a shade but in his living vigour, as if he had not died.⁴⁸⁹ Tales were told of an image of her husband which she contrived and to which she was actually talking when Hermes brought Protesilaos to her.⁴⁹⁰ The representation on a sarcophagus shows the head in a shrine for Dionysiac sacred

objects. She was bringing the portrait an offering of fruits,⁴⁹¹ in the winnowing-basket, as we can see on another sarcophagus. Now she belonged again to her husband, and after Protesilaos disappeared, she too was dead. She died in his embrace,⁴⁹² or took her own life.⁴⁹³ She was burned with the image and the Dionysiac apparatus.⁴⁹⁴ In his native town of Phylake there were also races in honour of Protesilaos.⁴⁹⁵ On the Hellespont he received offerings of grapes and other fruits and in spring, of milk.⁴⁹⁶

CHAPTER XII

Achilles and the Aftermath of the Trojan War

HIS MOTHER had been loth to let Achilles go against Ilios. Agamemnon and his allies had done everything possible to induce him to join in the war and to move Peleus to send his son with them. They knew of Achilles' origin and that he was the only son of a goddess among them. Thetis on the other hand clearly foresaw her son's fate, that he could not with impunity overthrow Hektor, the bulwark of the city which Apollo protected. And who would be capable of holding him back from an achievement which his great soul drove him to? His was a different destiny from that of the 'god-hero' Herakles. Achilles, the most beautiful of the heroes who gathered before Troy,⁴⁹⁷ and so much 'born for a short time'⁴⁹⁸ that he above all others must be called the 'mortal hero', maintained in the face of death, and taking death upon himself, his half-divine form with the dark shadow which it bore.

The Judgement of Paris and his unnecessarily insulting words put two goddesses on the side of the assailants from the outset, even if they had not been already the protectresses of Greek heroes: Athene and Hera. It was not mortals delivered over entirely to the arrows of Apollo, but heroes with destinies of their own, who wished to take Troy. They had free play in the struggle with the warriors who came against them; the god did not guide the hand of every one of them. According to the old narrators, even the Kyknos who tried to hinder the Greeks in the strait between the mainland and Tenedos,⁴⁹⁹ or on the shore afterwards,⁵⁰⁰ was no son of Apollo, any more than that other Kyknos whom Herakles killed on his way back from Diomedes of Thrace. It is only of a third Kyknos that we are told in late narratives⁵⁰¹ that he was Apollo's son, and of a

fourth, a king of the Ligurians and a relative of Phaethon, that he turned into a swan⁵⁰² in his mourning for the son of Helios, which of course does not prevent there having been some lost and very old tale of a single Kyknos, a son of Apollo whose name was Swan, and who probably was always a Thracian.

The Kyknos who was the first to attack the Greeks may have been a Thracian ally of Priam; allegedly he was the offspring of Poseidon and Kalyke, 'flower-calyx', a nymph. The child was surrounded by swans when fishermen found him on the beach.⁵⁰³ When he met Achilles, the next after Protesilaos to land, he was not like a man but like a figure of terror, all white⁵⁰⁴ and invulnerable.⁵⁰⁵ He threatened the son of Thetis⁵⁰⁶ with blows from a leather thong, and Achilles struck down this primæval figure with a stone,⁵⁰⁷ a deed long celebrated by the poets.⁵⁰⁸ Kyknos let out a cry⁵⁰⁹ like the swans in the hour of their death; but the Trojans, when they saw him fall, retired behind their walls, and the siege began.⁵¹⁰ The women from the city came out only to a certain fountain in front of the oft-mentioned Skaian Gates, near the temple of Apollo Thymbraios, named from the fragrant savory, *thymbra*.⁵¹¹ They fetched water, accompanied by a young man on horseback; and this led to a terrible deed of Achilles, which the poets of later times hardly recounted any more, though the older artists were all the fonder of putting it on vases intended for graves, on the pediments of temples, and on weapons or on the walls of sepulchres. The character of the sacrifice to a horrible deity preserved this deed for ever.

How else could it be understood that Achilles lurked behind the well-house,⁵¹² not for the purpose of capturing the women, but to slay the young man at the near-by altar of the god? In Greece, young men belonged to Apollo, although not as blood-sacrifices. They were accustomed to bring rams for themselves. But we know that handsome youths such as Hyakinthos⁵¹³ or Kyparissos⁵¹⁴ often enough had the god's impetuosity to thank for their deaths. It seems as if Achilles wanted to mollify the Trojans'

deadly Apollo by this human sacrifice. He let the women and girls run away—one of them was a daughter of Priam and Hekabe, Polyxena—and dashed at the fleeing youth, who was little more than a boy; it was Troilos, a brother of Polyxena and perhaps actually a son of Apollo, whom Hekabe had conceived by the god.⁵¹⁵ Tradition tells us⁵¹⁶ that his death was a necessary preliminary to the taking of Ilion. Then it was seen how thoroughly Achilles deserved his epithet of Swift-foot.⁵¹⁷ He caught the lad as he galloped away on his great horse, pulled him down by his hair and dragged him to the altar of Apollo Thymbraios, on which, according to the testimony of an ancient art-monument, it was customary to offer cocks. By this time Troilos' brothers, led by Hektor, were hurrying to his help, but they were not able to prevent the butchery; vase-paintings show us the boy's trunk lying on the altar while Achilles flings the victim's head to the Trojans. Troilos' delight in riding⁵¹⁸ was all too premature and Achilles' cruel approach to Thymbraian Apollo was of no avail.

The predicted nine years went on with the pillage of the country around Troy and the capture of many cities by the hand of Achilles. He even led plundering raids on the great island of Lesbos and brought back women of skill by way of booty. He gave them nearly all to Agamemnon,⁵¹⁹ yet kept for himself the beautiful Diomede,⁵²⁰ though she could hold but second place, after Briseis, daughter of Briseus.⁵²¹ Briseis' father had a name which was an epithet of Dionysos on Lemnos and probably also in Mysia, where Briseus was his priest.⁵²² And Briseis was like golden Aphrodite;⁵²³ Achilles had made her his prey at Lyrnessos in Mysia,⁵²⁴ the city of her husband Mynes, whom he killed in battle along with her three brothers.⁵²⁵ She would gladly have accompanied him to Phthia as his wife.⁵²⁶

In the same raid,⁵²⁷ at the taking of Thebe, the strong city under wooded Plakos, Chryseis, daughter of Chryses, fell into Greek hands.⁵²⁸ This Thebe was the home of Eetion, father of Andromache, Hektor's wife with her Amazonian name, 'she

of the battle against men'. Eetion was killed in battle by Achilles and buried with heroic honours.⁵²⁹ Andromache's seven brothers also fell, all on the same day and by the hand of Achilles.⁵³⁰ Andromache's mother, who ruled as queen in Thebe,⁵³¹ became his prisoner, but he let her go for ransom. The daughter of Chryses, priest of Apollo at Chryse, was assigned to Agamemnon when the booty was divided.⁵³² She was the only one who could be thought equal to Briseis as a concubine. It was in vain that Chryses came later (it doubtless needed time for him to get word of his daughter's capture on his out-of-the-way island), in his priestly costume,⁵³³ to the king, to ask for her return at the price of a large ransom. We know already that Agamemnon was not the man to part easily from a woman. He rudely repulsed the priest,⁵³⁴ and so the anger of the god broke out over the Greek host, as it were from that ominous island Chryse.

The arrows from his silver bow⁵³⁵ sent plague, first among the mules and dogs of the Greeks, then among themselves. This led to the quarrel between Agamemnon, who was now obliged to send Chryses' daughter back, and Achilles, from whom the great king took Briseis as compensation. Thetis' son withdrew in high dudgeon from the fighting (we know the story of all those gloomy days and sorrowful nights in the tenth year of the war, from the 'Iliad') and would have voyaged home with his Myrmidones, had not the inconsiderate Patroklos, to whom in a moment of weakness he gave the use of his own armour, been so bold as to try to mount the walls of Troy, where Apollo stood on guard.⁵³⁶ Three times Patroklos gained the battlements, and three times the god thrust him back. And when he proceeded to attack three times more and killed thrice nine Trojans,⁵³⁷ Apollo struck him with his bare hand, so that Achilles' armour fell off him. Of the human beings, Eurphorbos, son of Panthus, the priest of Apollo at Troy,⁵³⁸ hurled a spear at him, and Hektor came third and administered the *coup de grace* with a lance-thrust.⁵³⁹

Achilles had entrusted his armour to his friend on condition

that he should not allow himself to be tempted into attacking Ilium without him, for Apollo loved the Trojans too much.⁵⁴⁰ But what took place was what Thetis had foretold to her son.⁵⁴¹ And now again, when, forgetting his wrath, he was for charging out at once against Hektor to avenge Patroklos, she gave him another prophecy, 'When Hektor falls, straightway your death is nigh.'⁵⁴² He replied,⁵⁴³ 'Then let me die straightway.' Thus he took death upon himself. It meant nothing to him that he recovered Briseus' fair daughter with a great oath from Agamemnon that he had not touched her.⁵⁴⁴ Homer gives us a sufficient description of the beautiful armour which Hephaistos forged for Achilles at Thetis' wish;⁵⁴⁵ but the recipient's thoughts were at once engaged again by the corpse of his friend and he wished his mother to protect it against the flies.⁵⁴⁶

It would be impossible for Hektor to withstand his attack, and nothing was more natural than that he began by fleeing from the raging Achilles, whom not even the gods could have stayed.⁵⁴⁷ Pallas Athene, the enemy of the Trojans and protectress of Achilles, watched over the duel which had become so unequal. Apollo appeared to Hektor for the last time,⁵⁴⁸ but his dying eyes saw the god return⁵⁴⁹ to avenge him in days to come. Achilles would not be deterred by any prophecy, and was about to lead the attack upon Troy at once over Hektor's body, when he stopped in the middle of his fiery speech.⁵⁵⁰ The thought of his friend's still unburied corpse held him back. He had yet to perform the most grisly offering to the dead, the slaughter of twelve young Trojans on Patroklos' funeral pyre,⁵⁵¹ and to be softened by old Priam, who ventured to make his way to the slayer of so many of his sons in the Greek camp by night. Achilles gave up the ill-used body of his enemy Hektor to be buried with heroic honours.⁵⁵²

There were also battles awaiting him, which Homer no longer sang, with allies of the Trojans, famous opponents who came against him after the fall of Hektor and undertook the defence of Troy. There came Penthesileia the Amazon. She is

said to have accidentally killed the mother of Hippolytos, Hippolyte or whatever the queen of the Amazons was called. This has been told in connection with Theseus. Priam was to purify Ares' daughter from this homicide,⁵⁵³ though in his youth the old king had had to fight the Amazons himself on the river Sangarios;⁵⁵⁴ it was a battle in which large armies were engaged on both sides. It was alleged⁵⁵⁵ that these warlike women had to distinguish themselves in battle against men before they might choose a lover, and therefore the virgin Penthesileia now hastened with her followers to the walls of Troy. She appeared during Hektor's funeral with an army of Amazons.⁵⁵⁶ Achilles had granted Priam eleven days' truce in which to bury his son.⁵⁵⁷ So this was the twelfth day, and the hero had scarcely recovered yet from his profound grief. Then the beautiful Penthesileia, whose name contained the element *penthos*, 'mourner's grief', assailed him like an incarnation of the queen of the underworld. How lovely she was and how worthy to replace the daughter of Briseus (although she was more like Artemis than like Aphrodite)⁵⁵⁸ Achilles did not realise until his spear had already pierced her breast⁵⁵⁹ and she could scarcely raise herself from the ground;⁵⁶⁰ her equipment then fell off her, and the helmet left her noble head bare.⁵⁶¹ In the picture by a great vase-painter, who has been named after Penthesileia, Achilles is driving his sword into the Amazon's heart as if she were an unarmed boy.

Achilles returned the body of Penthesileia to the Trojans for burial. As unexpected as she had been, the handsome Memnon,⁵⁶² son of the goddess Eos, came hurrying up from the land of the Ethiopians in his armour, the work of Hephaistos, to set free Ilion.⁵⁶³ And like the Amazon, the young hero from the east fell, being overcome in a famous duel by Achilles.⁵⁶⁴ There, two sons of goddesses opposed one another. So now it needs must be that Zeus took his golden scales in his hand,⁵⁶⁵ as he had done before,⁵⁶⁶ when the fates of Achilles and Hektor were in the balance. Vase-painters put a winged creature in either pan, the death, the *ker*, of the two

heroes.⁵⁶⁷ But it was at the same time a *psychostasia*,⁵⁶⁸ a weighing of the souls the possession of which signified life.⁵⁶⁹ In Aeschylus' tragedy of that title, probably two figures of young men were weighed, of whom one was shortly to 'quit youth and manly vigour, wailing'.⁵⁷⁰ Memnon's *ker* pulled his scale-pan down, and the goddess of the dawn had to mourn for her dead son.⁵⁷¹

In Aeschylus' 'Weighing of Souls' she, who was so fond of carrying off young men,⁵⁷² now carried off his fair body, for Zeus in the end did allow her to make her son immortal.⁵⁷³ Nevertheless, at the mouth of the Aisepos on the Sea of Marmora⁵⁷⁴ the grave-mound of Memnon was shown, which was yearly visited by the 'birds of Memnon', ruffs or whatever they may have been, who engaged in bloody fights in honour of the hero.⁵⁷⁵ And one of the two colossi at Thebes in Egypt, which allegedly emitted sounds when the dawn appeared, was supposed to be his statue.

'Thou shalt sound, Leto's son; for Memnon's here,
A part of thee, touched by dawn's radiance clear.'

So run the verses of a late poet, written on its gigantic leg.⁵⁷⁶ This might make it hard to decide who exactly is to 'sound', Apollo or Memnon, who is regarded as a part of the god, and who, no doubt, originally appeared like a young sun-god before Troy.

Still more exalted by this victory of the son of a goddess than the fall of Hektor had already exalted him, Achilles irresistibly drove the Trojans back into the city,⁵⁷⁷ and forced his own way in through the Skaian Gate at the back of the fleeing enemy. There he was struck from behind in the heel⁵⁷⁸ by the arrow which Paris discharged with a sure hand, for Apollo guided it.⁵⁷⁹ Was Paris, even in this old account, lying in wait in the precinct of Thymbraian Apollo, quite close to the city gate, as Odysseus on other occasions did?⁵⁸⁰ Is that the very foundation of the late tale⁵⁸¹ which puts the slaying of Achilles wholly on that spot? Achilles fell in the Skaian Gate,

as the dying Hektor saw and foretold.⁵⁸² Struck in the right heel, the hero turned around once more, and then a second arrow struck him in the breast. This is how an ancient vase-painting shows it. Aias of Salamis took the corpse on his back and carried it under a rain of missiles out of the fight,⁵⁸³ while Odysseus protected him against the attacks of the Trojans.⁵⁸⁴ The dead Achilles very nearly fell into the hands of the enemy. Glaukos the Lykian, Bellerophontes' grandson, had already passed a thong through his heel when he was killed by Aias.⁵⁸⁵ The fight over the body lasted all day, until Zeus put an end to it with his thunderstorm.⁵⁸⁶

Thetis came to her son as he lay on his bier, accompanied by all the goddesses of the sea.⁵⁸⁷ The voices of the wailing Nereids could be heard while they were still far off, and the Greeks would all have fled in terror if Nestor had not restrained them and explained what the sounds meant. The Muses came with the daughters of Nereus, and sang the lament.⁵⁸⁸ Seventeen days the lamentations of immortals and mortals continued over the corpse, but on the eighteenth, Achilles, dressed like a god and with ointment and honey poured over him, was laid on the pyre. Sheep and cattle were killed and the warriors were in continual movement on foot and in their chariots, with great clashing of weapons as they passed around the huge fire. In the morning, when the flames had died down, the bones were gathered up, and put into the golden amphora, Dionysos' gift at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis, with wine and ointment, united to the bones of Patroklos, as the two friends had wished.⁵⁸⁹ The entire consecrated army⁵⁹⁰ raised the barrow over the grave on a prominent cape on the coast at the entrance to the Hellespont, towering high, so that seafarers saw it from a great distance ever after. There the gigantic monument stood, on Cape Sigeion, and was still honoured with funeral offerings by posterity,⁵⁹¹ and garlanded by Alexander the Great.⁵⁹²

Such was the death which Achilles took upon himself. Hardly any ancient poet had anything to say of the slaughter of

Polyxena on his tomb after the conquest of Troy.⁵⁹³ She had escaped him when he was hunting Troilos; it was told later that the hero appeared on his tomb and demanded as his share in the booty the sacrifice of the daughter of Priam and Hekabe.⁵⁹⁴ The poets prefer to tell us that Thetis snatched her son from the pyre, as Eos had the corpse of hers, and brought him to Leuke, the 'White Island'.⁵⁹⁵ This was a kind of immortality, although not that of the gods or of Herakles on Olympos. The distant island with its white sheen was looked for in the Pontos Euxeinos, the Black Sea,⁵⁹⁶ and some believed they had found it in a little islet lying before the estuaries of the Danube, or in the island of Borysthenitis off the estuary of the Dnieper, where the Greek settlers built a temple⁵⁹⁷ to Achilles as Pontarches, 'Lord of the Pontos',⁵⁹⁸ and also, as was appropriate to the cult of a hero, showed his grave.⁵⁹⁹

Here it is said he was united to a great lady of the Pontos, Medeia.⁶⁰⁰ Or, as another tale ran,⁶⁰¹ Iphigeneia did not go home with Orestes, but came to Achilles as his wife under the name of the goddess Orsoloche⁶⁰² or Orsolocheia, 'she who incites to attack', which was also a name of the Taurian Parthenos. Finally, some held⁶⁰³ that Helen was married to Achilles on Leuke. While he was still under the walls of Ilion, they said, Thetis had brought her to him with the help of Aphrodite, because he wished at least to see that fairest of women, for whose sake he was fighting.⁶⁰⁴ True to his character, however, he dwelt, a shade among the shades, in the underworld.⁶⁰⁵ He did not let Odysseus comfort him concerning death. 'Liefer would I be in the fields, the serf of another, of a portionless man with little wealth, than be king of all the perished dead.' Those were his words, as he passed with great strides through the asphodels, and was glad only at what Odysseus told him of his son: that in the Trojan War he had followed in his father's footsteps.

For, after all, Troy the holy city must sometime fall. Hektor knew it,⁶⁰⁶ and the Greeks endeavoured also to learn from diviners and oracles how they might at last conquer it. It was

even said that they were to bring the bones of Pelops from Olympia to Troy,⁶⁰⁷ but more serious conditions, not yet fulfilled, were to fetch Philoktetes with Herakles' bow from Lemnos,⁶⁰⁸ and Neoptolemos, Achilles' son, from Skyros.⁶⁰⁹ The second condition was the easier to fulfil. Odysseus sailed over to Skyros,⁶¹⁰ and whether it was his powers of persuasion which produced the result, or those of old Phoinix, who accompanied him and had been Achilles' fatherly friend,⁶¹¹ or the appearance in a dream of Achilles himself⁶¹² that furnished the impetus, Neoptolemos was soon wearing his father's armour in the struggles for Troy, for Odysseus, who had formerly won it against Aias, handed it over to him.⁶¹³ It was more difficult in the case of Philoktetes, who could not forgive the Greeks for leaving him on Lemnos with his festering wound. It needed all the cunning and violence of the man of Ithake, the son of Sisypheos. As an assistant, Diomedes came with him,⁶¹⁴ but in the 'Philoktetes' of Sophokles it is Neoptolemos. What torments of the ailing and betrayed hero fill that tragedy! But after the appearance of Herakles⁶¹⁵ had moved Philoktetes to accompany them and the arts of the sons of Asklepios had healed him,⁶¹⁶ a shot from the fated bow struck Paris in a duel.⁶¹⁷ So fell the fate-laden prince, the possessor of Zeus' daughter Helen by grace of Aphrodite, and with his fall the ruin of Troy set in.

Ilios possessed a divine image which had fallen from heaven. Ilios, father of Laomedon, found it one morning in front of his tent, cast there by Zeus as a sign of his approval of the founding of the city.⁶¹⁸ The figure was a Palladion, a representation of Pallas; not the goddess herself, according to a legend of Pallas Athene's youth,⁶¹⁹ but Pallas her companion, who had been killed in a sham-fight with the goddess. This archaic statue measured three cubits in height; its feet were not separated, and it held a spear in its right hand, a distaff and spindle in its left, like a goddess of death and fate.⁶²⁰ After the pattern of this image a number of replicas of different sizes were fashioned,⁶²¹ so that no one should know which was the

genuine one. For the continuance of the city depended on the possession of the Palladion; if it fell into the hands of the enemy, Ilium fell. Odysseus and Diomedes undertook to fulfil the condition and steal the Palladion.

First Odysseus, disguised as a beggar and disfigured with stripes, stole into the city alone.⁶²² His business was to find the way through the streets and the many apartments of the royal palace to the hidden shrine where the figure and its replicas were stored. Unrecognised and almost without trying he found his way to Helen. After the death of Paris she had been given in marriage to another son of Priam, Deiphobos, who bore the warlike name of 'router of the enemy', but had soon to pay dearly for his brief happiness. Helen recognised the beggar⁶²³ and longed for her home, her daughter and the husband she had left.⁶²⁴ She swore to Odysseus that she would not betray him, and it was her advice⁶²⁵ which made possible the theft of the genuine Palladion, the smallest of all.⁶²⁶ In the night Odysseus returned with Diomedes.⁶²⁷ They had to climb over the city walls,⁶²⁸ get into the palace by the drain,⁶²⁹ and kill the guards.⁶³⁰ The story was told that they returned with the Palladion to the Greek camp, but no longer as friends.⁶³¹

Even before this condition was fulfilled, the building of the gigantic horse allegedly began;⁶³² it was a ruse of Odysseus',⁶³³ inspired by Pallas Athene,⁶³⁴ and at the same time a gift for her, to replace the Palladion. She bore the epithet Hippias, that is to say 'horse-goddess',⁶³⁵ and took pleasure in exercising her horses.⁶³⁶ We know that Bellerophon had her to thank for the gift of the bridle and the taming of Pegasus.⁶³⁷ The wooden horse which was now being built is said to have borne the inscription 'From the Greeks, a thank-offering to Athene.'⁶³⁸ It was so constructed that the Trojans, if they would draw the votive offering into the city,⁶³⁹ must break down the lintel of the Skaian Gate itself. This, too, allegedly was a condition of the taking of the city,⁶⁴⁰ the removal of the gigantic stone beam which the ancient narrators probably pictured to themselves as being like those which we still admire today above the

gates of Mycenae. Odysseus with a chosen band of warriors climbed into the belly of the steed;⁶⁴¹ the rest of the army burned its tents⁶⁴² and disappeared with the fleet behind the island of Tenedos.

Except Cassandra, to whom no one would listen,⁶⁴³ only one person tried to prevent the Trojans, doomed as they were to destruction, from doing in their joy and folly what was expected of them. This was Laokoon, at that time chosen by lot to be priest of Poseidon,⁶⁴⁴ but, as later experts in the antiquities of Troy still knew,⁶⁴⁵ a priest of Apollo Thymbraios, who hated him because he had made love to his wife in the shrine of the death-dealing god and begotten sons there.⁶⁴⁶ He hurled his spear at the planking of the horse. When he was then about to bring, with his two sons, the offering of a bull to the sea-god, two enormous snakes appeared from the direction of the islands⁶⁴⁷—one of which was Chryse—devoured the two youths, then killed the father and afterwards retired to the feet of the statue of Athene which was worshipped in the citadel.⁶⁴⁸ It thus became manifest that the two deities, the god who guarded Ilios and the goddess who was the Trojans' enemy, had united to overthrow the city. According to one tradition,⁶⁴⁹ it was then that Aineias retired to Mount Ida with his people, without waiting until the city was on fire. Laokoon's fate, however, as an example of futile opposition to divine ordinances, was to be immortalised by great sculptors and stand among the dedications in a temple of Athene.

The Trojans were blind; they gave themselves up to revelry,⁶⁵⁰ and were overcome by sleep.⁶⁵¹ The great warriors in the belly of the horse wept and trembled all this while,⁶⁵² for Helen put them to one more terrible test.⁶⁵³ It is not told us whether this happened while the Wooden Horse still stood outside the city or after it had been brought with great difficulty up to the citadel. Helen of course knew of this stratagem through Odysseus. Three times, accompanied by Deiphobos, she walked around the war-engine and called the names of the leading Greeks in the voices of their wives. Menelaos, Diomedes

and the younger men would have rushed out if Odysseus had not held them back by main force. But Neoptolemos was not one of these, nor of those who trembled.⁶⁵⁴ Odysseus had to restrain him also, but only because he could hardly wait for the agreed signals which announced the return of the fleet and beginning of the attack.

He was the hero of that bloody night, a *heros* indeed, because under the name of Pyrrhos he was to become the ancestor of the kings of the Epeirote tribe of the Molossians,⁶⁵⁵ and receive a hero's tomb at Delphi;⁶⁵⁶ but it was a questionable fame, for he paid the penalty of death in the very shrine of the purifying god for what he had done at Troy.⁶⁵⁷ In that last night of Troy he had murdered the aged king Priam, whom Achilles had spared, at the altar of Zeus in his palace.⁶⁵⁸ He did as much for the son of Hektor, whom Hektor himself had named Skamandrios, as if the child were a gift of the river-god Skamandros, but the Trojans called Astyanax, 'lord of the city', since his father guarded their city.⁶⁵⁹ Pyrrhos tore the child from his nurse's breast and flung him down from the city walls, while he was driving his booty of slave-women, including Andromache, as being the most valuable, before him to the ships.⁶⁶⁰ Thus were fulfilled the gloomy prophecies both of Hektor himself⁶⁶¹ and of the unhappy mother of his son.⁶⁶² The House of Priam was extinct.

In the midst of such cruelties, Helen was awaiting her deserted husband. Odysseus led Menelaos to her in Deiphobos' quarters, no doubt in the great royal palace,⁶⁶³ near the shrine of the Palladion, the way to which he already knew. Menelaos threw himself upon her, the cause of the long war and of that terrible night, with drawn sword. Did she need to take refuge in the sanctuary, as artists and poets afterwards elaborated the scene, introducing Aphrodite as her rescuer or even transferring the encounter to her temple?⁶⁶⁴ Helen uncovered her breasts as if she would receive the blow, but the sword fell to the ground.⁶⁶⁵ The two kissed one another.⁶⁶⁶ Did Deiphobos fall, slain by Menelaos, before this or not till after? They

hurried to the ships,⁶⁶⁷ and thenceforth it remained for Helen's husband only to set about his homeward journey as soon as might be with the divine bride he had recovered.⁶⁶⁸

The return of the heroes of the Trojan War now began. We know that for Agamemnon it ended at the hands of murderers, for Aias the Lokrian in shipwreck and death, for Diomedes and Idomeneus in exile to the southern coasts of Italy. Only a few, like old Nestor of Pylos, achieved a fortunate homecoming. Helen and Menelaos in the end reached their palace in Sparta, where in the tenth year after their reunion they entertained Telemachos, the son of Odysseus, who had set out to search for his still absent father.⁶⁶⁹ But they too had not long arrived, after eight years of wanderings.⁶⁷⁰ After being wrecked at Phaistos⁶⁷¹ on the south coast of Crete, where they had lost fifty-five of their sixty ships,⁶⁷² their journey took them against their will to Cyprus, Phoenicia, Egypt and Libya.⁶⁷³ From the little sandy island of Pharos, where Menelaos was so fortunate—we know the story from the history of the gods⁶⁷⁴—as to hold the old man of the sea fast and get advice from him, Proteus sent them back to the Nile, there to repeat the neglected sacrifice to Zeus and all the gods.⁶⁷⁵ Later, a story was told that Menelaos took his real wife home with him from Pharos and Egypt, the veritable daughter of Zeus, who ever since she was carried off had been waiting there for him.⁶⁷⁶ The insulted Hera had put a living image of Helen into the arms of Paris and had Helen herself taken by Hermes to Proteus.⁶⁷⁷ It was for an idle appearance on account of an idle choice that all that blood flowed at Troy.

Of many an adventure experienced by Odysseus on his way home we know from the history of the gods.⁶⁷⁸ For this unfortunate man, most ill-rewarded for his ruses in wartime, continually hovered over gulfs and precipices, always close to death, which often displayed itself to him in the frightening shapes of *primaeval* divine beings. He underwent much the same things as Herakles, and at last returned home from the underworld in the tenth year of his wanderings, after dangerous



74 ODYSSEUS AND NEOPTOLEMOS



75 THE BATTLE OVER THE CORPSE
OF ACHILLES



76 MENELAOS BRINGING HELEN
HOME AGAIN

encounters with Death in his many forms. But he escaped that great enemy only with sore pain and trouble, not as a victorious hero but as an old, ship-wrecked beggar-man. An aged body hid the hero within it, and only the goddess Athene could restore his glory to him.⁶⁷⁹ He had left his powerful bow at home, and no one except himself could now bend it. At the new moon,⁶⁸⁰ the festival of Apollo,⁶⁸¹ him of the silver bow, he stood once more in his palace and might handle his bow, as men did on that day in honour of the god.⁶⁸² Odysseus hit his mark, then shot down the haughty suitors who were oppressing his wife, and became once more the lord of his house and his island.

Death came for him out of the sea, by the hand of the son whom Kirke had borne him, Telegonos, 'the one born far off'. He landed on Ithake⁶⁸³ in quest of his father, when Odysseus imagined that he had escaped all danger. Word was brought him of a robber who had come to steal his herds. He ran to the coast to punish him, and fell to the spear of Telegonos, a weapon whose point was formed by the sting of a ray.⁶⁸⁴ Too late the son recognised his father, but was not too late in recognising his brother Telemachos. The two sons carried the dead Odysseus and the ever-young Penelope with them to Kirke.²⁶⁸⁵ There they lived as two couples, Telegonos with Penelope and Telemachos with Kirke, on Aiaia, the magic island, which, as we know from the story of the Argonauts, can very well signify a promontory which rises up from the Tyrrhenian Sea, the worthy abode of a daughter of the Sun, Monte Circeo.

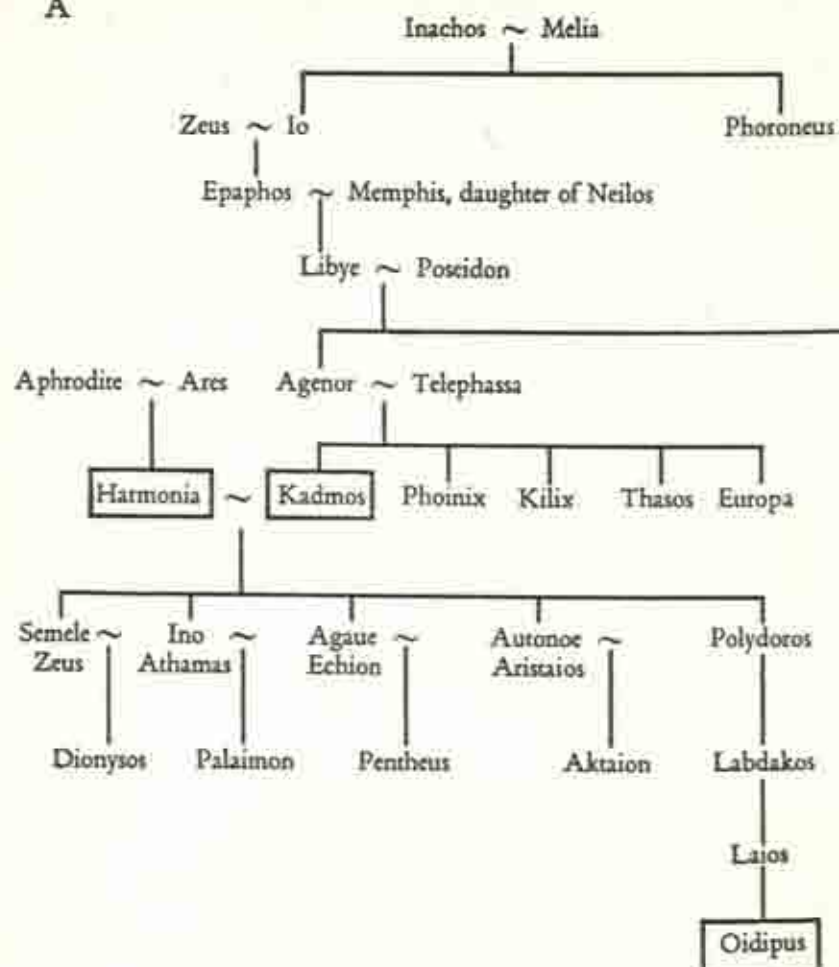
GENEALOGIES

Concordance

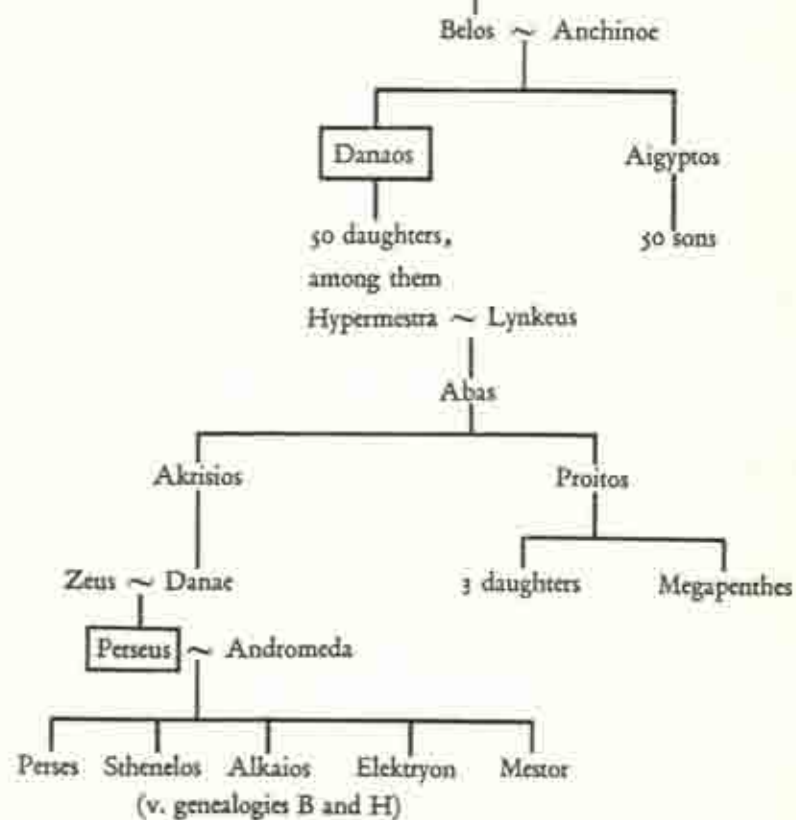
- around the name of a hero or heroine signifies that he or she is dealt with in more detail in the text
 ~ marriage or other sexual union

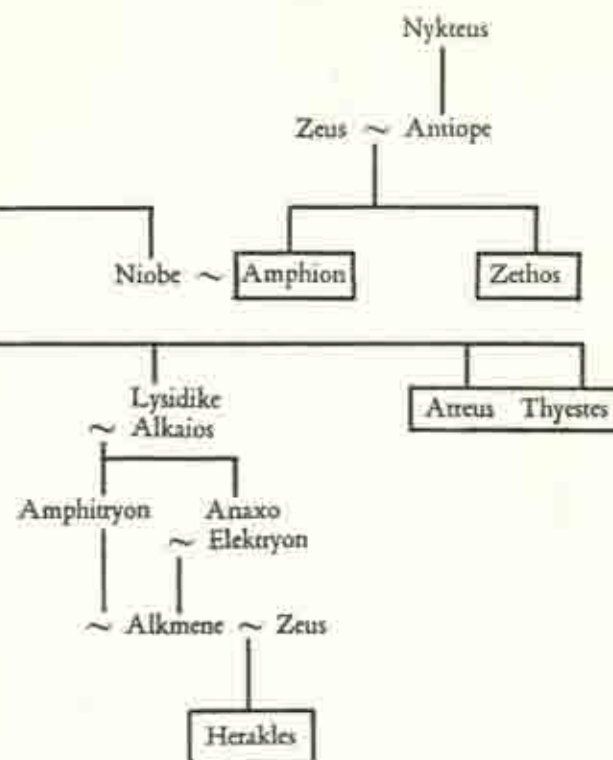
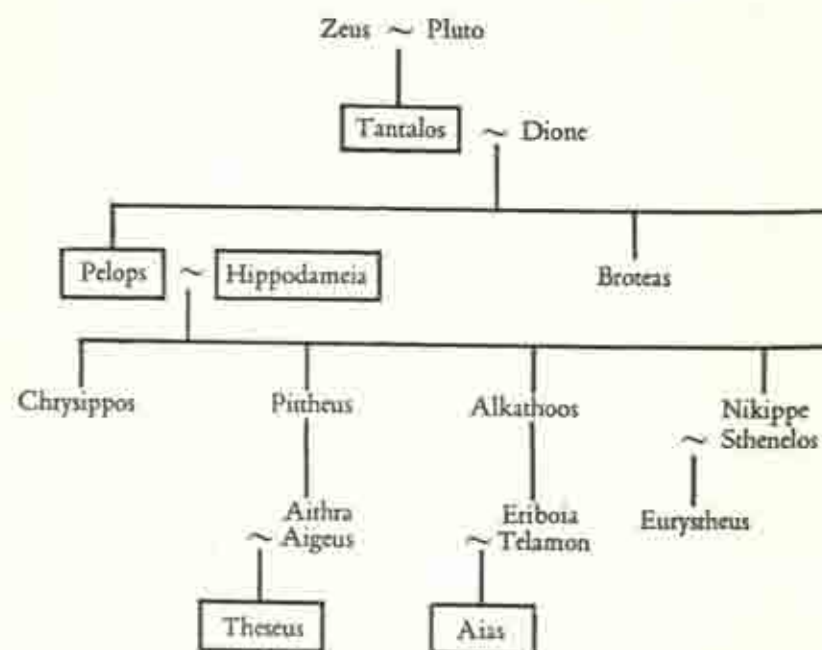
BOOK I	<i>genealogy</i>	BOOK II	<i>genealogy</i>
I	A		H
II	B		
III	A	BOOK III	
IV	A	I	IL
V	B	II	C
VI	B	IV	I
VII	C	V	C
VIII	C	VI	K
IX	C	VII	E
X	D	VIII	E G,K
XI	F	IX	K
XII	G	XII	E

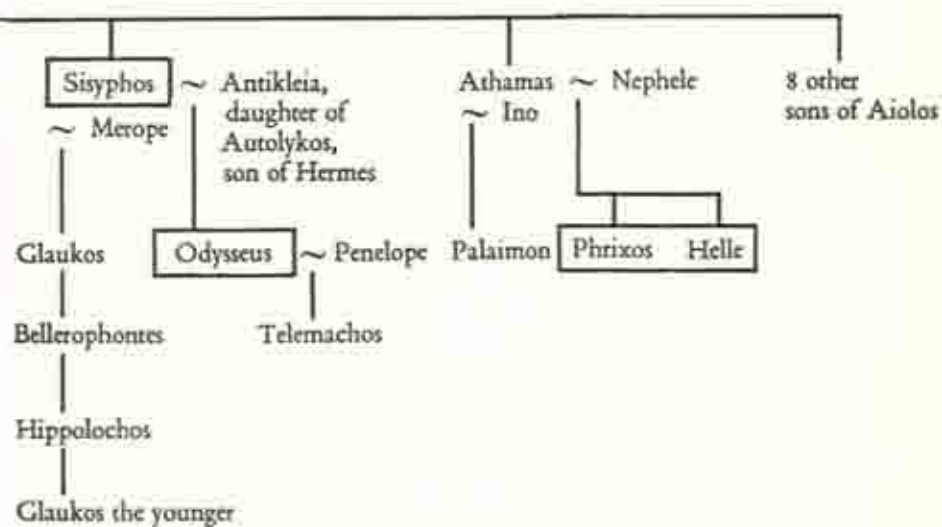
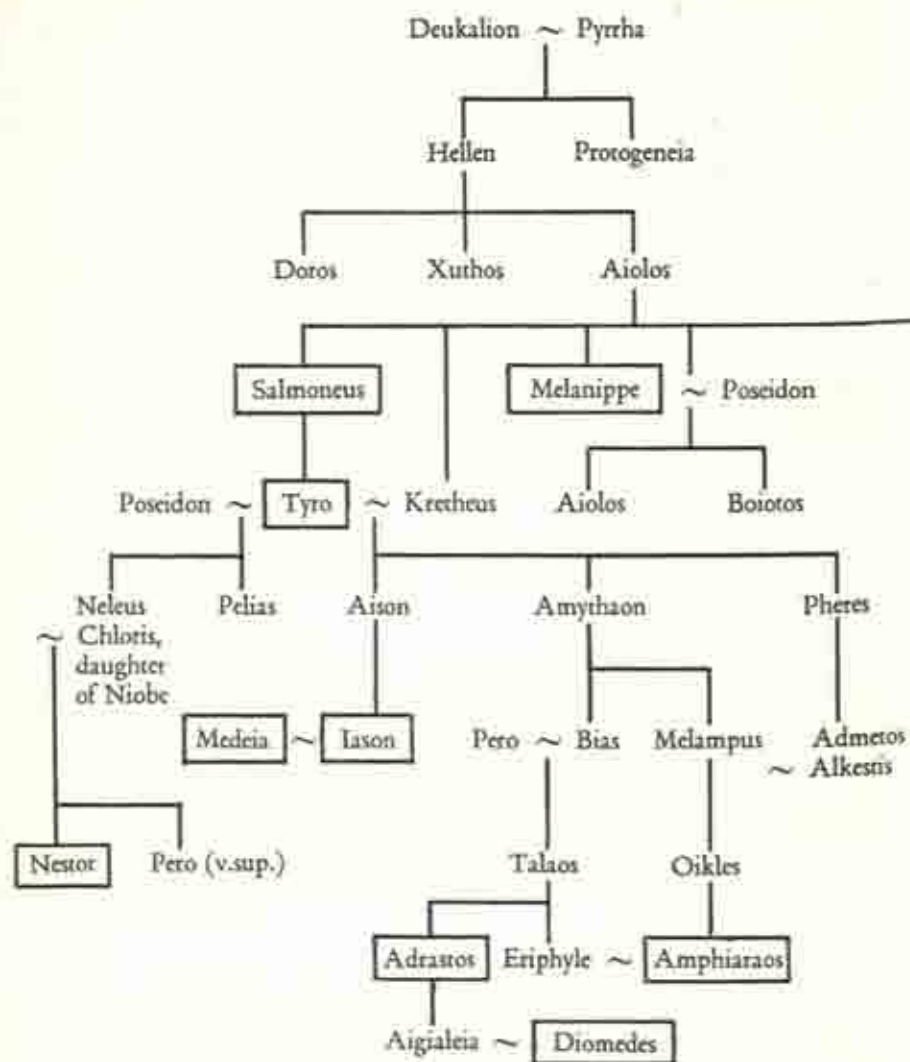
A

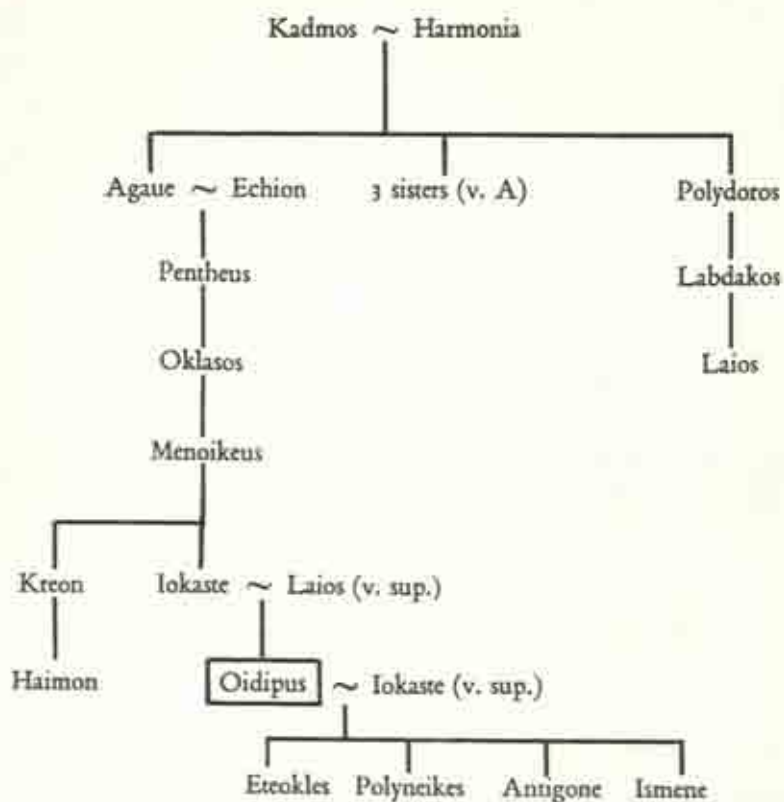


TO BOOK ONE, I, III, IV



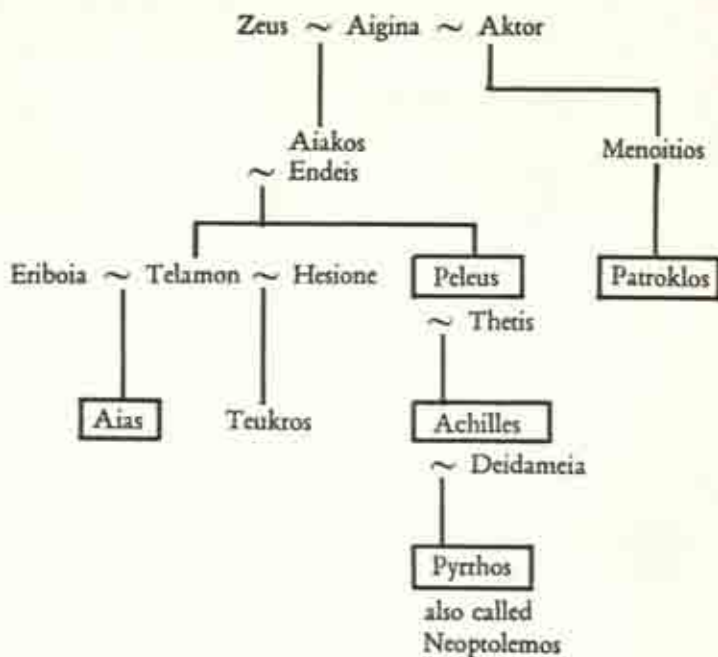


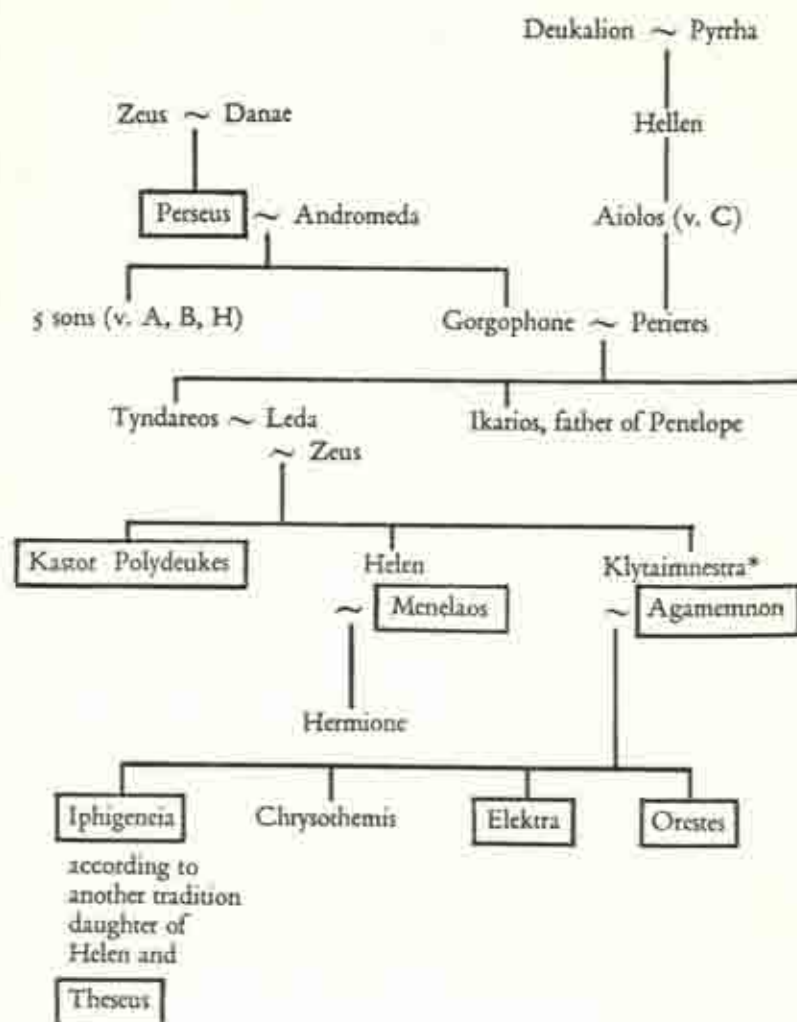




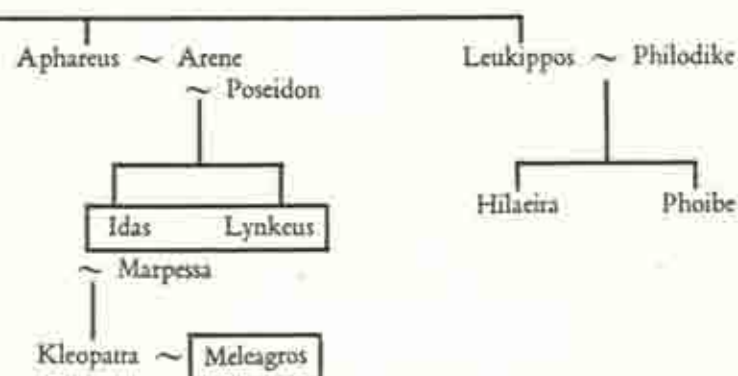
E

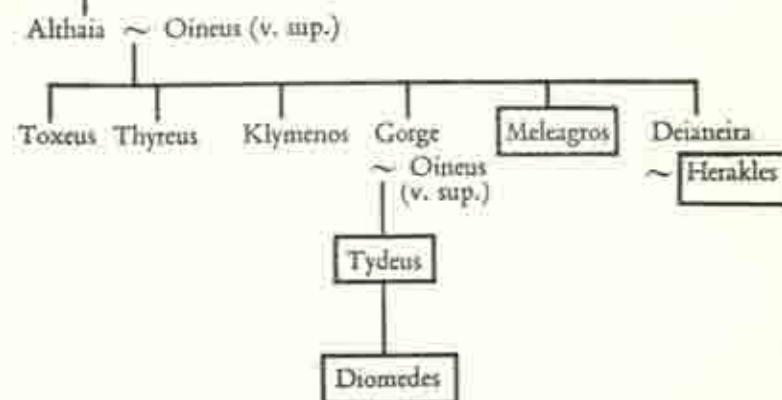
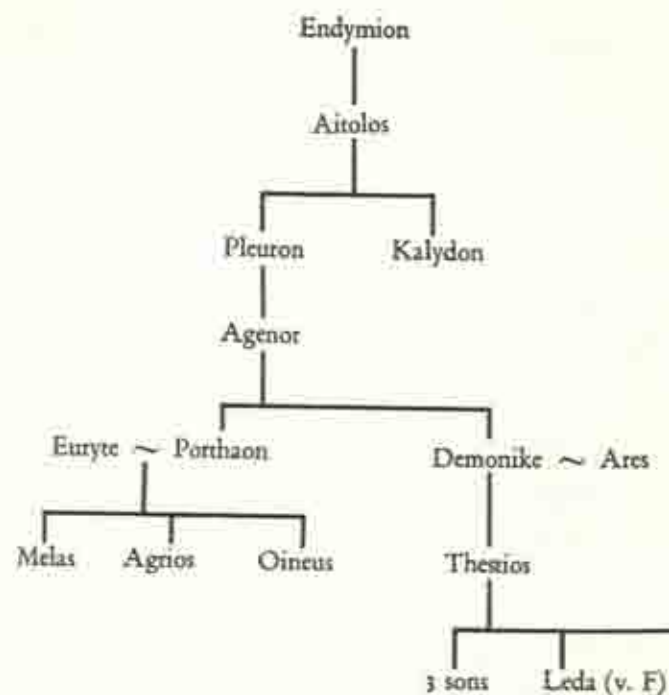
TO BOOK THREE, VII, VIII, XII

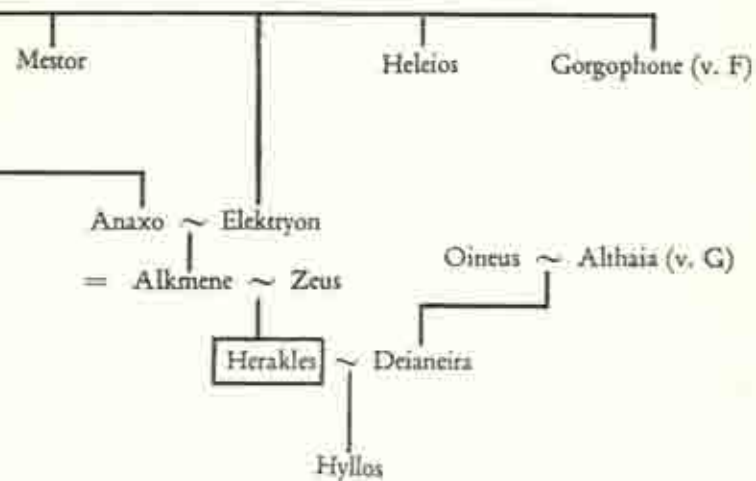
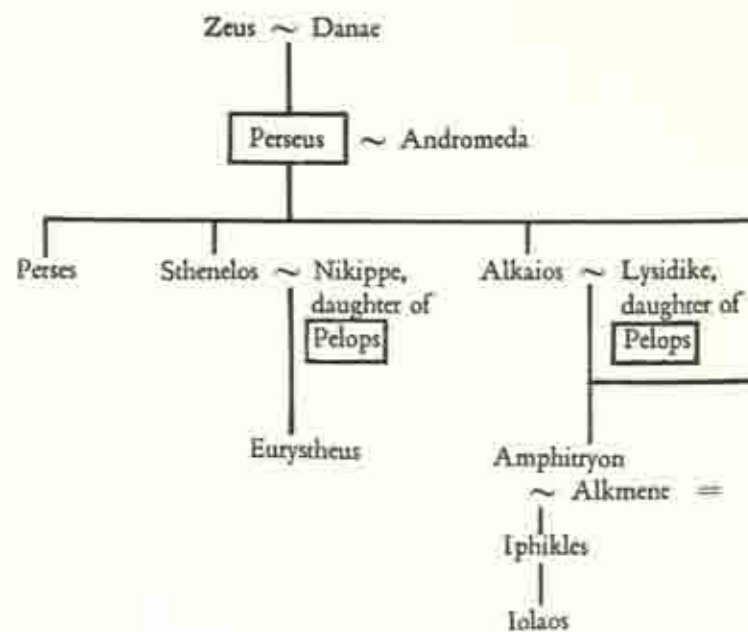




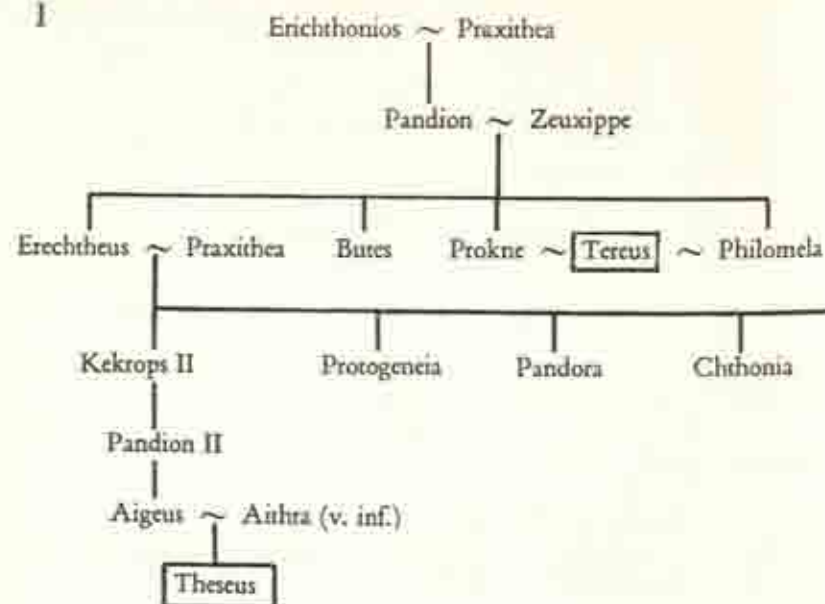
* Klytaimnestra is treated as a daughter of Tyndareos, not of Zeus



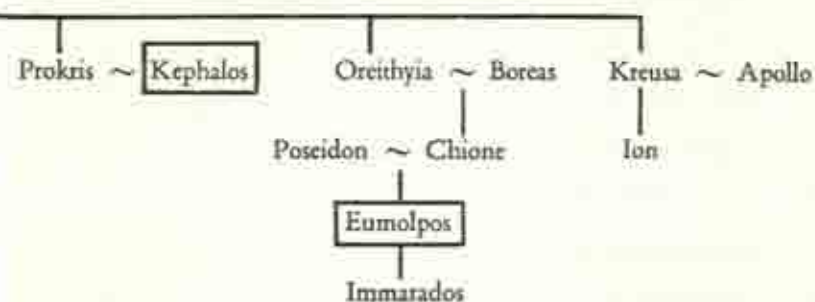




I

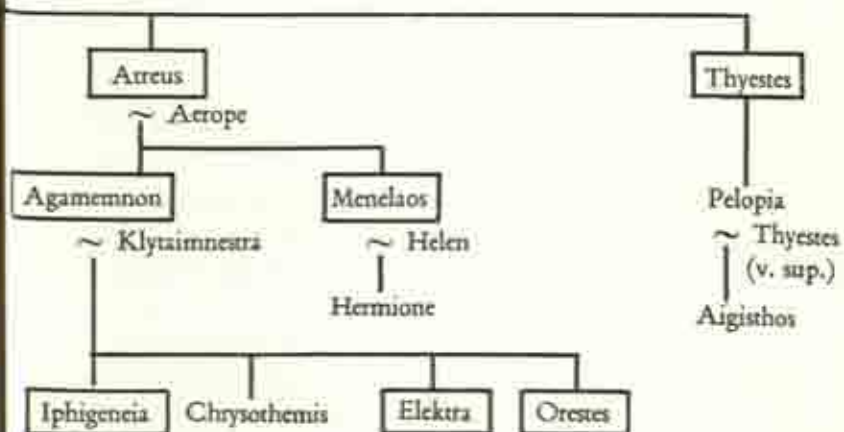
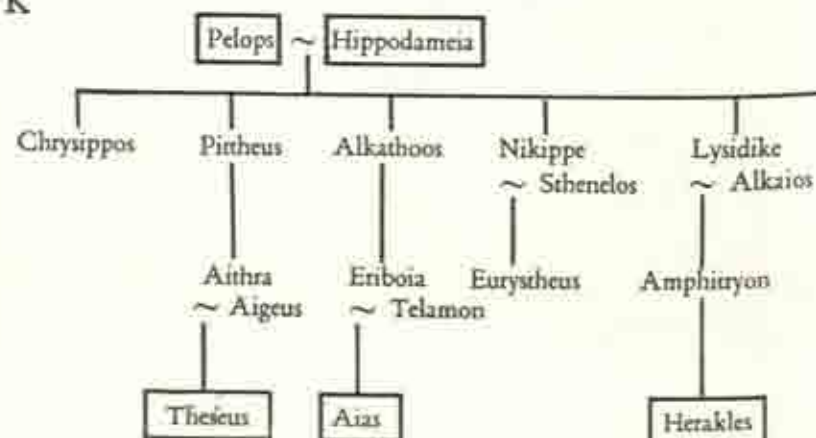


TO BOOK THREE, I, IV



K

TO BOOK THREE, VI, VIII, IX



L LIST OF KINGS OF ATHENS UP TO
 THE TROJAN WAR

KEKROPS

KRANAOS ('STONY')

AMPHIKTYON ('DWELLER AROUND')

ERICHTHONIOS

PANDION

ERECHTHEUS

KEKROPS II

PANDION II

AIGEUS

THESEUS

MENESTHEUS, LEADER OF ATHENIANS
IN TROJAN WAR

SOURCES FOR INTRODUCTION

- 1: In accordance with the principles set forth in my book *Umgang mit Göttlichem*, Göttingen 1955.
- 2: W. F. Otto, *Die Götter Griechenlands*, Frankfurt a/M. 1947, p. 183.
- 3: See André Jolles, *Einfache Formen*, Halle-Saale 1930, p. 238.
- 4: *Op. cit.*, p. 82.
- 5: Plutarch, *de genio Socratis*, 557c.
- 6: Kerényi, *Apollon*, Düsseldorf 1953, p. 162; Spengler in the periodical *Die Welt als Geschichte*, Stuttgart 1935, p. 197.
- 7: See Kerényi, *Griechische Miniaturen*, Zürich 1957, p. 109; T. B. L. Webster in the periodical *Classica et Mediaevalia*, Copenhagen 1956, p. 149.
- 8: cf. G. E. Mylonas in *Studies Robinson*, 1951, p. 64.
- 8a: See Kerényi in A. Randa, *Handbuch der Weltgeschichte* I, Olten and Freiburg i. Br. 1954, 64.
- 9: Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, Lecture I.
- 10: Plutarch, *Quaest. Graec.*, 36.
- 11: *The Gods of the Greeks*, p. 257. For Asklepios, see my *Asklepios* New York and London 1959, p. xix.
- 12: Plutarch, *op. cit.*, 12.
- 13: *The Gods of the Greeks*, p. 259.
- 14: Schol. Townl. on *Iliad*, 14, 319.
- 15: Plutarch, *de Iside et Osiride*, 364f.
- 16: Fgts. 15, 60 and 61 Diels.
- 17: *The Gods of the Greeks*, p. 253, with illustration there.
- 18: See Todd-Wace, *A Catalogue of the Sparta Museum*, Oxford 1906, p. 102 and Plates 1-3 and 10.
- 19: Publication by Ch. A. Christu in preparation.
- 20: Aristophanes, *Eccles.* 1031; *Athenische Mitteilungen*, 1893, pp. 165, 184.
- 21: cf. *Dramatische Gottesgeburt in der griechischen Religion*, *Erano's Jahrbuch*, Zürich 1951, p. 13.

- 22: See the periodical *Maia*, Florence 1951, p. 12.
23: W. F. Otto, *Dionysos*, Frankfurt a/M. 1939, p. 62.
24: Schol. on Apollonios Rhodios, 1, 916.
25: cf. Hesychios s.v. κέρσαι, κόψαι, τεμεῖν, κείραι, γαμήσαι, first taken into consideration by N. Fréret in 1761. For the form, cf. E. Schwyzler, *Griechische Grammatik*, i, p. 516, n. 6, and for the meaning, V. Magnien in *Mélanges Cumont*, p. 319.
26: Pausanias 9, 12, 4, according to the MS. text.

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS USED IN FOLLOWING SOURCES LIST

- A.: *Aeschylus*
 A.: *Agamemnon*
 Ch.: *Choephoroi*
 Eu.: *Eumenides*
 Pe.: *Persae*
 Pr.: *Prometheus*
 Se.: *Septem contra Thebas*
 Su.: *Supplices*
 AAmbr.: *Anonymus Ambrosianus*
 in Studemundi Analectis I p. 224
 Acc.: *Accius Tragicus*
 M.: *Medea*
 Ach. Intr.: *Achillis Introductio in*
 Aratum
 Ae.: *Aelianus*
 NA: *De Natura Animalium*
 VH: *Varia Historia*
 AL: *Alcaeus*
 ALib.: *Antoninus Liberalis Mytho-*
 graphus
 Alcid.: *Alcidamantis Ulisses*
 Am. M.: *Ammianus Marcellinus*
 Historicus
 Ant.: *Antigonus Carystius Para-*
 doxographus
 Ap.: *Apollodorus Mythographus*
 APal.: *Anthologia Palatina*
 Apost.: *Apostolius Paroemiographus*
 App.: *Appianus Historicus*
 M.: *Bellum Mithridaticum*
 Ar.: *Aristophanes*
 Ach.: *Achaeans*
 Av.: *Aves*
 Eq.: *Equites*
 Ly.: *Lysistrata*
 N.: *Nubes*
 Pax
 Th.: *Tesmophorizusae*
 Ve.: *Vespae*
 Arat.: *Aratus Epicus*
 Archil.: *Archilochus Lyricus*
 ARh.: *Apollonios Rhodios*
 Ari.: *Aristoteles*
 EN.: *Ethica Nicomachea*
 HA.: *Historia Animalium*
 MA.: *De Motione Animalium*
 Po.: *Poetica*
 Pr. an.: *Problemata anecdota*
 Aristid.: *Aristides Rhetor*
 Arn. AN.: *Arnobius Adversus*
 Nationes
 Arr. A.: *Arriani Anabasis*
 Art.: *Artemidori Onirocriticus*
 Athenag.: *Athenagoras Apologeta*
 Aug. CD: *Augustinus De Civitate*
 Dei
 B.: *Bacchylides*
 Batr.: *Batrachomyomachia*
 Bion Batolicus
 BKT.: *Berliner Klassikertexte*
 c.: *cum*
 Ca.: *Callimachus*
 Ap.: *Hymnus in Apollinem*
 Ce.: *Hymnus in Cererem*
 De.: *Hymnus in Delum*
 Di.: *Hymnus in Dianam*
 Dic.: *Diegemata*
 He.: *Hecale*

- Ca.: *Callinachus—contd.*
 Io.: *Hymnus in Iovem*
 LP: *Lavacrum Palladis*
 Cat.: *Catullus*
 CG.: *Kaibel, Comicorum Graecorum*
 Fragmenta
 Chr.: *Chrysippus Stoicus*
 Ci.: *Cicero*
 Le.: *De Legibus*
 ND: *De Natura Deorum*
 TD: *Tusculanae Disputationes*
 CIA: *Corpus Inscriptionum*
 Atticarum
 CIG: *Corpus Inscriptionum*
 Graecarum
 Cl.: *Clemens Alexandrinus*
 Pr.: *Protrepticus*
 Str.: *Stromateis*
 Cla. RP: *Claudianus De Raptu*
 Proserpinae
 Co.: *Coluthus Epicus*
 c. s.: *cum scholiis*

 D. Chr.: *Dio Chrysostomus*
 Diog. Ep.: *Diogenes Cynicus in*
 Epistolographis Graecis
 D. H.: *Dionysius Halicarnassensis*
 AR: *Antiquitates Romanae*
 Op.: *Opuscula*
 DM: *Ventris, Chadwick, Documents*
 in Mycenaean Greek
 D. P.: *Dionysius Periegeta*
 D. S.: *Diodorus Siculus*

 E.: *Euripides*
 Al.: *Alcesteis*
 An.: *Andromache*
 B.: *Bacchae*
 Cy.: *Cyclops*
 E.: *Electra*

 He.: *Hecuba*
 Hel.: *Helena*
 Her.: *Heraclidae*
 HF: *Hercules Furens*
 Hi.: *Hippolytus*
 IA: *Iphigenia Aulidensis*
 Ion
 IT: *Iphigenia Taurica*
 Me.: *Medea*
 Or.: *Orestes*
 Ph.: *Phoenissae*
 Rh.: *Rhesus*
 Su.: *Supplices*
 Tr.: *Troades*
 EGr.: *Kaibel, Epigrammata Graeca*
 ex lapidibus collecta
 Enn.: *Ennius*
 Ep.: *Epimenides Philosophus*
 ep.: *epitoma*
 Er. C.: *Eratostrbenis Catasterismi*
 Et. Gen.: *Etymologicum Genuinum*
 Et. Gud.: *Etymologicum Gudianum*
 Et. M.: *Etymologicum Magnum*
 Eud.: *Eudoxiae Violarium*
 Eu. Il.: *Eusthatus ad Iliadem*
 Eu. Od.: *Eusthatus ad Odysseam*
 Euph.: *Euphorio Epicus*
 Eus.: *Eusebius Caesariensis*
 Chr.: *Chronica*
 PE: *Praeparatio Evangelica*

 Fe.: *Festus Grammaticus*
 FGH: *Jacoby, Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*
 fr.: *fragmentum*

 GArat.: *Germanici Aratus*
 GG: *Kerényi, The Gods of the Greeks*
 The figures in brackets refer
 to the Penguin edition

- Gra. Cy.: *Grattii Cynegetica*
 h. Ap.: *Homeri hymnus in Apollinem*
 h. C.: *Homeri hymnus in Cererem*
 h. Ho.: *Homeri Hymni*
 h. M.: *Homeri hymnus in Mercurium*
 h. Ve.: *Homeri hymnus in Venerem*
 Harp.: *Harpocratio Grammaticus*
 Hdt.: *Herodotus*
 He.: *Hesiodus*
 Sc.: *Scutum Herculis*
 Her.: *Herodas Mimographus*
 Him.: *Himerii Orationes*
 Him. E.: *Himerii Eclogae*
 Hi. RH: *Hippolyti Refutatio Omnium Heresium*
 Hor.: *Horatius*
 AP: *Ars Poetica*
 C.: *Carmina*
 Epi.: *Epistulae*
 Hsch.: *Hesychius Lexicographus*
 Hy.: *Hygini Fabulae*
 Hy. A.: *Astronomica*
 Hyp.: *Hyperides*
 hyp.: *hypothesis*

 Ib.: *Ibycus*
 ICo.: *Inscriptions of Cos*
 IG.: *Inscriptiones Graecae*
 Il.: *Homeri Ilias*
 Io.: *Iosephus Historicus*
 BI: *Bellum Iudaicum*
 Is.: *Isocrates Orator*
 Iust.: *Iustinus Historicus*

 La. Inst.: *Lactantii Institutiones*
 Li.: *Libanii Orationes*
 Li. N.: *Libanii Narrationes*
 Li. Pt.: *Libanii Progymnasmata*
 Lic.: *Lycymnius Lyricus*

 Lu.: *Lucianus*
 Am.: *Amores*
 Ba.: *Bacchus*
 Charid.: *Charidemus*
 Cy.: *Cynicus*
 DD.: *Dialogi Deorum*
 DMar.: *Dialogi Marini*
 DMo.: *Dialogi Mortuorum*
 Ind.: *Adversus Indoctum*
 ITr.: *Iuppiter Tragoedus*
 Lex.: *Lexiphanes*
 Ph.: *Philopseudes*
 Sa.: *De Saltatione*
 SyrD.: *De Syria Dea*
 Ly.: *Lycophron*
 Lycurg.: *Lycurgus Orator*

 Ma.: *Macrobius*
 S.: *Saturnalia*
 So.: *Somnium Scipionis*
 Mal. Chr.: *Malalas Chronographus*
 Me.: *Menander Comicus*
 Mi.: *Mimnermus*
 Mo.: *Moschus Bucolicus*
 Mo. Chor. Pr.: *Mosis Chorenensis Progymnasmata in Eusebii Chronica ed. Mai*
 MVat.: *Mythographus Vaticanus*

 N. Al.: *Nicandri Alexipharmaca*
 N. D.: *Nonni Dionysiaca*
 N. N.: *Nonnus commentator Gregorii Nazianzeni*
 N. Pr.: *Nicolai Progymnasmata*
 N. Th.: *Nicandri Theriaca*

 Od.: *Homeri Odyssea*
 Op.: *Hesiodi Opera et Dies*
 Opp.: *Oppiani Halieutica*
 Or.: *Kern, Orphicorum Fragmenta*

- Or. A.: Orphei Argonautica
 Or. H.: Orphei Hymni
 Ori. C.: Origenes contra Celsum
 Ov.: Ovidius
 AA.: Ars Amatoria
 Am.: Amores
 F.: Fasti
 Ib.: Ibis
 M.: Metamorphoses

 Pa.: Pausanias Periegeta
 Pac.: Pacuvius Tragicus
 Par.: Parthenius Mytographus
 Ph.: Philostratus Sophista
 Het.: Heroicus
 Im.: Imagines
 VA.: Vita Apollonii
 Pha.: Phanocles Elegiacus
 Phi.: Philemon Comicus
 Philo.: Philo Iudaeus
 Ph. iun.: Philostratus iunior
 Phot.: Photii Lexicon
 Phot. B.: Photii Bibliotheca
 Phr.: Phrynichus Tragicus
 Pi.: Pindarus
 I.: Isthmia
 N.: Nemea
 O.: Olympia
 P.: Pythia
 Pl.: Plato
 Ax.: Axiocles
 Epi.: Epinomis
 Ethd.: Euthydemus
 Ethph.: Euthyphron
 Le.: Leges
 Mx.: Menexenus
 Phd.: Phaedo
 Phdr.: Phaedrus
 Pr.: Protagoras

 Sy.: Symposion
 Ti.: Timaeus
 Pla.: Plautus Comicus
 Am.: Amphitruo
 B.: Bacchides
 Ru.: Rudens
 Pl. NH.: Plinii Naturalis Historia
 Plu.: Plutarchi Moralia
 Plu. Ro.: Plutarchi Romulus
 Plu. Ser.: Plutarchi Sertorius
 Plu. Ti.: Plutarchi Timoleon
 Plu. Th.: Plutarchi Theseus
 PMag.: Preisendanz, Papyri Magici Graeci
 PO.: Oxyrhynchus Papyri
 Pol.: Pollux Grammaticus
 Po. M.: Pomponius Mela Geographus
 Pr. Chr.: Procli Cbrestomathia; quae ad Homerum pertinent ed. Allen, caetera ed. Bekker
 Prop.: Propertius
 PSI.: Papiri della Società Italiana

 Q. S.: Quintus Smyrnaeus

 Rh. Gr.: Spengel, Rhetores Graeci

 s.: scholium in (Servius vel Probus in Vergilium)
 S.: Sophocles
 Ai.: Ajax
 An.: Antigone
 E.: Electra
 OC.: Oedipus Coloneus
 OT.: Oedipus Tyrannus
 Ph.: Philoctetes
 Tr.: Trachiniae
 Sa.: Sappho
 Scy.: Scythianus Lyricus

- Sc.: *Seneca Tragicus*
 HF: *Hercules Furens*
 HOe: *Hercules Oetaeus*
 Thy.: *Thyestes*
 Tr.: *Troades*
 SEmp.: *Sextus Empiricus Philo-*
 sophus
 Si.: *Simonides Lyricus*
 Sol.: *Solinus Historicus*
 Sosi.: *Sosithus Tragicus*
 St. By.: *Stephanus Byzantinus*
 Lexicographus
 Ste.: *Stesichorus Lyricus*
 Str.: *Strabo Geographus*
 St. Th.: *Statii Thebais*
 Su.: *Suidas Lexicographus*
 Sup. E.: *Supplementum Euripideum*
 ed. Arnim
 Syll.: *Dittenberger, Sylloge*
 Inscriptionum Graecarum ed. 3.
 Tert. Val.: *Tertullianus contra*
 Valerianos
 Th.: *Hesiodi Theogonia*
 The.: *Theocritus*
 Thgn.: *Theognis*
 Thu.: *Thucydides*
 Tz.: *Tzetzes*
 Chil: Chiliades
 Co.: de Comoedia
 Ly.: ad Lycophronem
 Posthom.: Postbomerica
 Va. LL: *Varro De Lingua Latina*
 Ve.: *Vergilius*
 A.: Aeneis
 Cu.: Culex
 E.: Eclogae
 G.: Georgica
 V. Fl.: *Valerii Flacci Argonautica*
 Terp.: *Terpander Lyricus*
 Zen.: *Zenobius Prooemiographus*

SOURCES FOR BOOKS I, II, III

- 27: GG 112 (99)
- 28: s. Pi. P. 3. 153
- 29: GG 254 (228)
- 30: GG 28 (24)
- 31: Hdt. 2. 51. 2
- 32: Lu. Charid. 9
- 33: Ap. 3. 1. 1
- 34: Il. 14. 321
- 35: s. E. Rh. 29
- 36: Ap. 3. 1. 1
- 37: D. S. 5. 48. 2
s. E. Ph. 7
s. A. Rh. 1. 916
- 38: D. S. 5. 49. 1
- 39: s. E. Ph. 7
- 40: D. S. 5. 49. 1
- 41: s. Il. 2. 494
Ov. M. 2. 8
- 42: Ap. 3. 4. 1
- 43: Hdt. 4. 147. 5
s. Ly. 1206
- 44: s. E. Ph. 638
- 45: s. Ca. Io. 3
- 46: Pa. 9. 12. 2
- 47: s. Il. 2. 494
- 48: Ov. M. 3. 26
- 49: s. S. An. 126
- 50: Phot. B. 2 277. 6
- 51: Pa. 9. 5. 1
- 52: s. A. Rh. 3. 1178
- 53: E. Ph. 663
- 54: s. E. Ph. 662
- 55: E. Ph. 667
- 56: s. E. Ph. 670
- 57: s. A. Rh. 3. 1178
- 58: E. Ph. 939
- 59: Ari. Po. 16
Hy. 72
- 60: Ap. 3. 4. 2
- 61: s. A. Rh. 1. 916
- 62: N. D. 3-4
- 63: GG 72 (63)
- 64: Pa. 9. 16. 4
- 65: Ap. 3. 4. 2
- 66: Pi. P. 3. 90
Ap. 1. 4. 2
s. Il. 2. 494
- 67: N. D. 5. 120
- 68: Ap. 1. 9. 15
- 69: Thgn. 15
E. B. 881; 901
- 70: Pi. P. 3. 91
Ca. fr. 11. 4
- 71: s. Il. 2. 494
Pa. 3. 18. 12
- 72: Ap. 3. 4. 2
- 73: s. Pi. P. 3. 167
Ap. 3. 4. 2
- 74: GG 109 (96)
- 75: GG 257 (226)
- 76: GG 262 (230)
- 77: GG 146 (124)
- 78: GG 264 (233)
- 79: Pa. 9. 5. 3
- 80: E. B. 1333
- 81: E. B. 1330; 1334
- 82: St. B.
- 83: s. V. Ae. 1. 243
- 84: Ca. fr. 11. 4
- 85: E. B. 1338
- 86: Pi. O. 2. 77
- 87: Ap. 3. 5. 4
- 88: E. Ph. 822
- 89: GG 153 (135)
- 90: GG 204 (184)
- 91: Ca. De. 80
- 92: s. Ly. 1211
- 93: PO. 1241. IV. 6
- 94: s. Pi. P. 9. 5
- 95: Pa. 9. 10. 5
- 96: Od. 11. 260-5
- 97: Pa. 2. 6. 1
- 98: s. Pi. O. 13. 74
- 99: s. A. Rh. 4. 1090
- 100: Pa. 2. 6. 2
- 101: St. B.
- 102: Hsch.
- 103: E. HF 29
- 104: Pa. 1. 38. 9
- 105: Sup. E. p. 11
- 106: E. fr. 1023
Ph. Im. 1. 10
- 107: Hor. Epi. 1. 18.
41
- 108: Pac. fr. XIII
- 109: Pa. 9. 17. 6
- 110: Pa. 9. 5. 7
- 111: GG 222 (196)
- 112: s. E. Ph. 159
- 113: Hy. 9
- 114: Pa. 9. 17. 4
- 115: Pa. 9. 17. 6
- 116: Pa. 10. 31. 10
- 117: GG 222 (196)
- 118: Ap. 2. 1. 4

- 119: s. A. Rh. 3. 1186
 120: s. E. He. 886
 121: Ap. 2. 1. 4
 122: s. Il. 1. 42
 123: Ath. 651 f
 124: Cl. Str. 4. 19.
 120. 4
 125: A. Su. 250
 126: Pa. 2. 19. 3
 127: Ap. 2. 1. 5
 128: Pa. 2. 19. 6
 129: A. fr. 44
 130: Pa. 2. 25. 4
 131: Ap. 2. 1. 5
 132: Pi. P. 9. 112
 133: s. E. He. 886
 134: Pl. Ax. 371 c
 135: Hy. 169
 136: Pa. 2. 15. 5
 137: Ap. 2. 1. 4
 138: Pa. 2. 38. 2
 139: Str. 8. 6. 8
 140: Ap. 2. 2. 1
 141: Pa. 2. 25. 7
 142: Pa. 2. 16. 2
 143: Ap. 2. 2. 1
 144: Str. 8. 6. 11
 145: GG 253
 146: s. Il. 14. 319
 147: s. A. Rh. 4. 1091
 148: S. An. 944
 149: Si. 27
 150: PSL 1209
 151: PO. 2161. I. 23
 152: s. A. Rh. 4. 1091
 153: s. A. Rh. 4. 1515
 154: h. C. 9 et 17
 155: Pi. P. 12. 15
 156: Hy. 63
 157: GG 129 (114)
 158: Ap. 2. 4. 2
 159: s. A. Rh. 4. 1515
 160: GG 185 (164)
 161: s. A. Rh. 4. 1515
 162: Art. 4. 63
 163: Er. C. 22
 164: N. D. 25. 32
 165: Et. Gud. 462
 166: Th. 275
 167: GG 45 (40)
 168: A. Pr. 796
 169: Ov. M. 4. 778
 170: A. Pr. 791
 171: Hy. A. 1. 12
 172: N. D. 31. 17
 173: Er. C. 22
 174: A. fr. 261
 175: GG 49 (43)
 176: s. A. Rh. 4. 1515
 177: Ap. 2. 4. 2
 178: Lu. DMo. 14. 2
 179: Ap. 2. 4. 3
 180: Ov. Am 3. 11.
 24
 181: He. Sc. 220
 182: Pi. P. 10. 31
 183: Pa. 4. 35. 9
 Str. 16. 2. 28
 Io. Bl. 3. 9. 3
 184: Art. R. 52
 185: E. fr. 125
 186: E. fr. 132
 187: Ap. 2. 4. 3
 188: Ov. M. 5. 180
 189: Er. C. 15-17; 22
 190: Ap. 2. 4. 3
 191: s. Pi. P. 72
 192: s. A. Rh. 4. 1515
 193: Ap. 2. 4. 4
 194: s. A. Rh. 4. 1091
 195: Hy. 244
 196: Ap. 2. 4. 4
 197: Pa. 2. 16. 4
 198: Od. 2. 120
 s. N. Al. 103
 199: s. Il. 15. 302
 200: Pa. 2. 16. 3
 201: A. Pe. 79
 202: s. Il. 14. 319
 203: Pa. 2. 20. 4
 204: Pa. 2. 22. 1
 205: N. D. 47. 666
 206: Pa. 2. 23. 7
 N. D. 47. 714
 207: Pa. 2. 23. 8
 208: s. Il. 14. 319
 209: Plu. 364 f
 210: GG 259 (228)
 211: Pa. 2. 18. 1
 212: GG 222 (196)
 213: Pa. 3. 22. 4
 s. E. Or. 5
 214: Pa. 5. 13. 7
 8. 17. 3
 215: Pa. 7. 24. 13
 216: Pa. 2. 22. 3
 217: Pa. 2. 22. 2
 218: St. By.
 219: Aristid. 15
 220: E. Or. 5
 221: s. E. Or. 5
 222: s. Pi. O. 41
 223: N. D. 48. 730
 224: Hy. 83
 225: A. fr. 158
 226: St. By.
 227: Him. E. 3. 11

- 228: Pl. Ethph. 11c
 229: Apost. 16. 16
 230: GG 159 (141)
 231: E. Or. 9
 232: E. Or. 8
 233: Plu. 607f
 234: Pi. O. 1. 38
 235: E. IT 386
 236: Sc. Th. 144
 237: GG 254 (224)
 238: s. Ly. 152
 239: E. Hel. 389
 240: Pi. O. 1. 48
 241: s. Ve. G. 3-7
 242: Or. 36
 243: B. fr. 42
 244: s. Pi. O. 1. 40
 245: Pi. O. 1. 26
 246: Ap. ep. 2. 3
 247: Pi. O. 1. 27
 248: s. Ly. 152
 249: s. Ly. 152
 250: Ari. Po. 16
 251: Pi. O. 1. 43
 252: Pi. O. 1. 47
 253: Pi. O. 1. 65
 254: E. Or. 10
 255: Ov. AA 2. 606
 256: D. S. 4. 74. 2
 257: Pi. O. 1. 60
 258: GG 109 (96)
 259: GG 210 (186)
 260: ALib. 36
 261: Eus. Chr. 2 p. 40
 262: s. Il. 20. 234
 263: Ath. 281b
 264: s. Od. 11. 582
 265: s. E. Or. 982
 266: E. Or. 7 cum s.
 267: N. D. 18. 32; 35.
 295
 268: E. Or. 982 cum s.
 269: GG 159 (141)
 270: GG 135 (119)
 271: Od. 11. 582
 272: Pa. 10. 31. 12
 273: Il. 2. 101
 274: s. Il. 2. 104
 275: GG 202 (178)
 276: s. A. Rh. 1. 752
 277: Pi. O. 10. 49
 278: Ap. ep. 2. 4
 279: Hy. 253
 280: Pa. 5. 22. 6
 281: Ly. 166
 282: s. A. Rh. 1. 752
 283: Ap. ep. 2. 5
 284: D. S. 4. 73. 5
 285: Pi. O. 1. 79
 286: s. Pi. O. 1. 127
 287: Pi. O. 1. 67
 288: Pi. O. 1. 71
 289: Ci. TD 2. 27. 67
 290: Pa. 5. 13. 7
 291: Pa. 8. 14. 10
 292: Pa. 8. 14. 11
 293: s. Ve. G. 3. 7
 294: Hy. 84
 295: GG 173 (153)
 296: s. S. E. 504
 297: S. fr. 433
 298: Hy. 84
 299: D. S. 4. 73. 4
 300: s. A. Rh. 1. 752
 301: Ap. ep. 9. 2. 7
 302: E. IT 823
 303: S. E. 504
 E. Or. 987; 1547
 304: Ap. ep. 9. 2. 8
 305: Pa. 8. 14. 12
 306: Pa. 5. 20. 6
 307: GG 84 (74)
 308: Pa. 5. 7. 10
 309: Pi. O. 1. 94
 310: B. 7. 53
 311: Pi. O. 1. 93
 312: Pa. 6. 22. 1
 313: Pa. 5. 13. 2
 314: Pa. 5. 13. 3
 315: s. Pi. O. 1. 149
 316: Pa. 5. 10. 6
 317: Pa. 5. 16. 4
 318: Pi. O. 1. 89
 319: s. E. Or. 4
 320: s. Il. 2. 105
 321: Pa. 6. 20. 7
 322: GG 228 (201)
 323: Ap. 1. 7. 2
 324: Od. 10. 2
 325: GG 206 (182)
 326: Er. C. 1. 18
 327: Ov. M. 2. 639
 328: GG 144 (127)
 329: GG 221 (196)
 330: E. fr. 481. 15
 331: Hy. A. 1. 18
 332: GG 185 (163)
 333: Rh. Gr. 7. 1313.
 6
 334: GG 16 (14)
 335: D. H. Op. p.
 346. 19
 336: Hor. C. 1. 2. 17
 337: s. Ly. 722
 338: Od. 11. 238
 339: s. Ar. Ly. 139
 340: s. Il. 10. 334

- 341: Ae. VH 12. 42
 342: Ap. 1. 9. 8
 343: S. fr. 648 Pearson
 344: D. S. 6. 6. 5
 345: Pi. P. 4. 136
 346: Pol. 4. 141
 347: S. fr. 598
 348: s. E. Or. 1691
 349: Ap. 1. 9. 8
 350: Od. 19. 109
 351: Pi. I. 5. 14
 352: Ap. 1. 9. 7
 353: Ve. A. 6. 586
 E. fr. 14
 354: Hy. 61
 D. S. 4. 68. 2
 355: V. Fl. 1. 665
 356: s. Ve. A. 6. 585
 357: Ap. 1. 9. 7
 358: Od. 10. 608
 359: Ap. 1. 9. 9
 360: Ap. 1. 9. 9
 361: GG 138 (122)
 362: GG 261 (230)
 363: Il. 6. 146
 364: Hy. 60
 365: Il. 6. 153
 366: GG 163 (145)
 367: Ap. 1. 9. 3
 368: s. Ly. 174
 369: GG 210 (186)
 370: Pa. 2. 5. 1
 371: s. Il. 6. 153
 372: Thgn. 703
 373: GG 250 (220)
 374: A. fr. 220
 375: Hy. 200
 s. Od. 19. 432
 376: Od. 19. 396
 377: He. fr. 136
 378: Hy. 201
 379: Tz. Ly. 344
 380: Polya. 6. 52
 381: s. S. Ai. 190
 382: A. fr. 175
 S. Ai. 189
 S. Ph. 417
 S. fr. 142
 E. Cy. 104
 IA 524
 Ly. 344; 1030
 383: s. Ve. G. 3. 267
 384: A. fr. 39
 385: s. Il. 6. 153
 386: Pa. 2. 2. 2
 387: Pa. 2. 1. 3
 388: GG 265 (234)
 389: Od. 11. 593
 390: Hy. 157
 391: GG 42 (37)
 392: GG 44
 393: Ap. 1. 9. 3
 394: GG 50 (44)
 395: GG 112 (98)
 396: s. Il. 155
 397: St. By. Mylasi
 398: Str. 8. 6. 21
 399: GG 105 (42)
 400: St. Th. 4. 61
 401: s. Il. 155
 402: Pi. O. 13. 63
 403: GG 111 (98)
 404: Pa. 2. 4. 1
 405: Pi. O. 13. 86
 406: GG 138 (122)
 407: Ap. 2. 3. 1
 408: Pa. 10. 30. 5
 s. Od. 11. 326
 409: Il. 6. 160
 410: s. Il. 6. 170
 411: Il. 16. 328
 412: GG 111 (98)
 413: s. Il. 16. 328
 414: Il. 6. 181
 Th. 319
 415: Ap. 2. 3. 2
 416: s. Il. 6. 200
 417: GG 110 (97)
 418: E. fr. 664
 419: s. Ar. Pax 141
 420: Pi. I. 7. 45
 421: E. fr. 285
 422: E. fr. 286
 423: E. fr. 306-8
 424: Pi. I. 7. 44
 425: Il. 6. 201
 426: Th. 286
 427: s. Il. 6. 155
 428: Pi. O. 13. 92
 429: GG 264 (233)
 430: Str. 9. 5. 8
 431: Ap. 1. 9. 1
 432: s. Ar. N. 357
 433: GG 159 (141)
 434: GG 264 (233)
 435: Hy. 2
 436: s. Pi. P. 4. 288
 437: Hdt. 7. 197. 2
 s. A. Rh. 2. 654
 438: GG 183 (162)
 439: Pa. 9. 34. 5
 440: s. A. Pe. 71
 441: s. Ly. 22
 442: s. A. Rh. 1. 256
 443: A. Rh. 2. 1151
 444: Pa. 9. 16. 5
 445: GG 257 (226)

- 446: Pa. 9. 12. 4
 447: E. B. 11
 448: E. Ph. 651 c. s.
 449: s. E. Ph. 8
 450: Ap. 3. 5. 5
 451: GG 105 (92)
 452: Od. 19. 518
 453: GG 62 (55)
 454: Od. 19. 522
 455: s. Od. 19. 518
 456: Pa. 9. 5. 9
 457: Ap. 3. 5. 5
 458: Th. 1. 9. 2
 459: Ath. 603a
 460: Ac. NA 6. 15;
 V. H. 13. 5
 461: Ap. 3. 5. 5
 462: Hy. 85
 463: Plu. 750b
 D. S. 4. 64. 2
 464: hyp. E. Ph.
 465: s. E. Ph. 1760
 466: Plu. 313c
 467: s. Il. 2. 105
 468: s. E. Ph. 1760
 469: s. E. Ph. 1010
 470: A. Se. 745
 471: A. Se. 750; 802;
 842
 472: A. Se. 756
 473: A. fr. 122
 474: A. Se. 691
 475: s. E. Ph. 1760
 476: s. E. Ph. 1760
 477: A. fr. 173
 478: E. Ph. 14
 479: E. Ph. 18
 480: E. Ph. 22
 481: E. Ph. 38
 482: S. OT 713
 483: hyp. S. OT III
 484: DM. PY 40
 Palmer
 485: Ar. R. 1190
 486: s. E. Ph. 1760
 487: hyp. E. Ph. I
 104
 488: E. Ph. 26
 489: E. Ph. 32
 490: s. E. Ph. 26
 491: GG 263 (232)
 492: s. E. Ph. 26; 28
 Hy. 66
 493: s. E. Ph. 26
 494: Pa. 2. 6. 6
 FGH 90. 8
 495: Ath. 296b
 496: Hy. 66
 497: s. E. Ph. 1760
 S. OT 775
 498: E. Ph. 24
 499: S. OT 1157
 500: S. OT 1022
 501: S. OT 774
 502: E. Ph. 40
 503: E. Ph. 41
 504: E. Ph. 42
 505: S. OT 809
 506: Hy. 67
 507: S. OT 811
 508: E. Ph. 44
 509: S. OT 806
 510: Et. Gen.
 511: FGH 90. 8
 512: Od. 11. 271
 513: Pa. 9. 5. 11
 s. E. Ph. 1760
 514: s. E. Ph. 53
 515: Il. 23. 675
 516: FGH 90. 8
 517: s. E. Ph. 934;
 1031
 518: E. Ph. 810
 519: Th. 326
 520: GG 52 (46)
 521: Pa. 5. 11. 2
 522: s. E. Ph. 1760
 523: s. E. Ph. 45
 524: Ap. 3. 5. 8
 525: E. Ph. 48
 526: s. E. Ph. 50
 527: s. E. Ph. 50
 528: D. S. 4. 64. 4
 529: Ap. 3. 5. 8
 530: S. OT 60
 531: Ap. 3. 6. 7
 532: Ca. LP 70
 533: Ap. 3. 6. 7
 534: Hy. 75
 535: ALib. 17
 536: s. Ly. 683
 537: Ap. 3. 6. 7
 538: s. Od. 10. 494
 539: Ov. M. 326
 540: s. Od. 10. 494
 541: s. Ly. 372
 542: Od. 10. 493
 543: Od. 11. 91
 544: S. OT 372
 545: A. Se. 783
 Se. OT 1270
 546: s. E. Ph. 61
 547: E. Ph. 303
 548: E. Ph. 1457
 549: S. OT 1426
 550: S. OT 1429
 551: E. Ph. 63

- 552: A. Se. 709; 725;
 781
 553: Ath. 465c
 554: A. Se. 727; 788;
 815
 E. Ph. 66
 555: s. S. OC 1375
 556: E. Ph. 1543
 557: MVat. 2. 230
 558: E. Ph. 1693
 559: S. OT 420
 560: E. Ph. 1705
 561: S. OC 3
 562: S. OC 88
 563: S. OC 95
 564: S. OC 1456
 565: S. OC 1548
 566: S. OC 1590
 567: S. OC 1621
 568: S. OC 1644
 569: s. Ari. EN 1111a
 7
 570: S. OT 421
 571: s. S. OC 91
 572: EGr. 1135
 573: GG 107 (94)
 574: Pa. 4. 2. 4
 575: Pa. 2. 21. 7
 576: Pa. 3. 1. 4
 577: Ap. 3. 10. 4
 578: Ap. 3. 10. 5
 579: Mal Chr. IV O
 100
 580: Pa. 3. 1. 4
 581: s. A. Rh. 1. 146
 582: h. Ho. 33. 4
 583: GG Pl. IVa
 584: s. Ly. 506
 585: Pa. 3. 26. 2
 586: Pa. 3. 26. 3
 587: Pa. 4. 2. 4; 7
 588: s. Il. 9. 557
 589: Ap. 3. 10. 3
 590: Il. 9. 558
 591: s. Il. 9. 557
 592: Il. 9. 564
 593: Ap. 1. 7. 9
 594: Il. 9. 559
 595: MVat. 1. 77
 596: s. Il. 9. 557
 597: Ap. 1. 7. 9
 598: Il. 9. 562
 599: Pa. 3. 16. 1
 600: Hy. 80. 1
 601: Pa. 3. 16. 1-3
 602: The. 22. 137
 603: Ap. 3. 11. 2
 604: Od. 11. 300
 605: Pr. Chr. 103. 13
 Ly. 535-52
 s. Ly. 536-52
 Pi. N. 10. 55
 s. Pi. N. 10. 114
 Ap. 3. 11. 2
 606: Pi. N. 10. 79
 607: Od. 11. 301
 608: E. Hel. 140
 609: Er. C. 10
 610: SEmp. 9. 37
 611: h. Ho. 33. 8
 612: Ap. 1. 8. 1
 613: GG 202 (178)
 614: He. fr. 120
 615: N. D. 43. 60
 616: Hy. 175
 617: Ap. 1. 7. 7
 618: Ap. 1. 7. 6
 619: Ath. 35ab
 620: Ap. 1. 8. 1
 621: MVat. 1. 87
 622: s. Ve. G. 1. 9
 623: Ve. G. 1. 9
 624: Hy. 129
 625: He. fr. 135
 626: Hy. 171
 627: Hy. 171
 628: Ap. 1. 8. 2
 629: Il. 9. 533
 630: Il. 9. 544
 631: Il. 9. 547
 632: GG 84 (73)
 633: Ap. 1. 8. 2
 634: Ap. 2. 6. 3
 635: s. A. Rh. 1. 188
 s. Ly. 488
 636: A. Rh. 1. 169
 E. fr. 530. 5
 637: Pa. 8. 45. 7
 638: Ari. fr. 640. 44
 639: Il. 21. 482
 640: Thgn. 1288
 641: Ae. VH 13. 1
 642: GG 113 (99)
 643: He. fr. 20; 21
 644: Pa. 8. 35. 10
 645: Ap. 3. 9. 2
 646: Ae. VH 13. 1
 647: GG 146 (129)
 648: Thgn. 1291
 649: GG 153 (136)
 650: Ca. Di. 221
 651: GG 204 (180)
 652: Thgn. 1291
 653: Ov. M. 10. 560
 654: Hy. 185
 655: Ov. M. 10. 578
 656: s. The. 2. 120

- 657: The. 2. 120
 658: The. 3. 42
 659: Ov. M. 10. 687
 660: Gra. Cy. 490
 661: Ov. M. 10. 686
 662: GG 89 (78)
 663: s. Ve. A. 3. 113
 664: Ap. 3. 9. 2
 665: Ap. 3. 9. 2
 666: Ar. Ly. 781
 667: Pa. 5. 19. 2
 668: Prop. 1. 1. 9
 669: Xe. Cyn. 1. 7
 670: Ov. AA 3. 775
 671: Ap. 3. 9. 2
 672: Ap. 1. 8. 2
 673: E. fr. 520
 674: Ap. 1. 8. 2
 675: B. 5. 113
 676: Il. 9. 548
 677: Ap. 1. 8. 2
 678: Ap. 1. 8. 2
 679: Il. 9. 549
 Pa. 10. 31. 3
 680: Il. 9. 566
 681: Il. 9. 553
 682: Il. 9. 571
 683: Pa. 10. 31. 3
 684: Pa. 10. 31. 4
 685: ALib. 2
 686: Ap. 1. 8. 3
 687: Ae. NA 4. 42
 688: B. 5. 89
 689: GG 272 (240)
 690: Syll. 1027
 691: Hdt. 2. 44. 3-5
 692: Pa. 2. 10. 1
 693: Pa. 2. 6. 6-7
 694: Pa. 6. 21. 6
 695: Pa. 5. 7. 7
 696: Pa. 9. 27. 8
 697: Ci. ND 3. 42
 698: Plu. 304c-e
 699: Pa. 8. 31. 3
 700: Pi. N. 3. 22
 701: Is. 5. 32
 702: D. S. 4. 10. 1
 703: Pi. fr. 301
 704: Ae. VH 2. 32
 705: The. 24. 1
 706: s. St. Th. 4.
 147
 707: D. S. 4. 10. 2
 708: E. HF 388
 709: E. Al. 481; 491
 710: s. Ly. 932
 711: s. A. Rh. 1.
 747
 712: He. Sc. 12
 713: Ap. 2. 4. 6
 714: Pa. 19. 1. 1
 715: Ap. 2. 4. 7
 716: GG 109 (96)
 717: ALib. 41
 718: s. Ly. 932
 719: GG 109 (96)
 720: s. Od. 11. 266
 Pa. 5. 18. 2
 Pla. Am. 760
 721: Ath. 498c
 722: Ap. 2. 4. 8
 723: GG 164 (146)
 724: APal. 9. 441
 725: s. Od. 11. 266
 726: Ap. 2. 4. 8
 727: Hy. 29
 728: Ap. 2. 4. 8
 729: Il. 19. 100
 730: s. Il. 19. 119
 ALib. 19
 Ov. M. 9. 397
 731: Ae. NA 12. 5
 732: Pa. 9. 11. 3
 733: Hsch. tetradi
 734: The. 24. 2
 735: He. Sc. 89
 736: Pi. I. 5. 32
 737: D. S. 4. 9. 5
 738: D. S. 4. 9. 6
 739: Hy. A. 2. 43
 Er. C. 44
 Ach. Intr. 24
 740: Pi. N. 1. 33
 741: The. 24. 1
 742: Ap. 2. 4. 9
 743: Pa. 1. 43. 7
 744: Su.
 745: s. Il. 18. 570
 746: Zen. 4. 45
 747: Ap. 2. 4. 9
 D. S. 3. 67. 2
 748: Ap. 2. 4. 9
 749: The. 24. 37
 750: Plu. 271b
 751: Pa. 9. 10. 4
 752: IG. 14. 1293 B
 753: Pa. 9. 27. 8
 754: Ap. 2. 4. 9
 755: s. The. 13. 6
 756: The. 25. 207
 757: Pa. 2. 31. 10
 Ap. 2. 4. 11
 758: Ap. 2. 4. 10
 759: Pa. 9. 27. 7
 760: D. S. 4. 29. 3
 761: Pa. 9. 27. 6
 762: Ap. 2. 4. 10

- 763: Pi. I. 6. 47
 764: Ap. 2. 4. 9
 765: Ap. 2. 4. 11
 766: Pa. 9. 37. 1
 767: D. S. 4. 10. 4
 768: E. HF 220
 769: Ap. 2. 4. 11
 770: Od. 11. 269
 771: E. HF 11
 772: D. S. 4. 10. 6
 773: Ap. 2. 4. 11
 774: E. HF 1
 775: Pi. P. 9. 81
 776: Pa. 9. 11. 1
 777: Plu. 577f
 778: GG 138 (122)
 779: D. S. 4. 10. 6
 780: E. HF 16
 781: Pa. 2. 15. 3
 782: D. S. 4. 11. 3
 783: The. 25. 200
 784: Th. 326
 785: GG 51 (45)
 786: Ep. fr. 2 Diels
 787: Pa. 9. 17. 2
 788: Il. 21. 483
 789: GG 209 (177)
 790: Ca. fr. 54-59
 791: Ap. 2. 5. 1
 792: St. B.
 793: The. 25. 256
 794: D. S. 4. 11. 4
 795: s. Ve. G. 3. 19
 Keil
 796: Plu. Ti. 26
 797: Plu. 676f
 798: Ca. fr. 59. 18
 799: Ap. 2. 5. 1
 800: The. 25. 277
 801: Er. C. 12
 802: Pa. 2. 36. 8
 803: Th. 313
 804: E. HF 420
 805: Th. 311
 806: Hy. 30
 807: Pa. 2. 37. 4
 808: Ap. 2. 5. 2
 809: GG 51 (45)
 810: Al. fr. 118 Bergk
 811: S. fr. 203 Bergk
 812: E. HF 1190
 813: Ap. 2. 6. 2
 814: Ap. 2. 5. 2
 815: Er. C. 11
 816: Ma. So. 1. 12. 2
 817: Ap. 2. 4. 12
 818: GG 138 (122)
 819: Ap. 2. 5. 11
 820: Ap. 2. 5. 3
 821: Ap. 2. 5. 5
 822: Ca. Di. 109
 823: E. HF 377
 824: E. Hel. 382
 825: s. Pi. O. 3. 53
 826: Pi. O. 3. 30
 827: GG 154 (136)
 828: Hy. 30
 829: E. HF 378
 830: Ap. 2. 5. 3
 831: Pi. O. 3. 26
 832: Str. 5. 1. 9
 833: Pi. O. 3. 31
 834: GG 53 (46)
 835: Ap. 2. 5. 3
 836: Od. 6. 103
 837: FGH 1. 6
 838: Ap. 2. 5. 4
 839: The. 7. 149 c. s.
 840: GG 160 (146)
 841: Ap. 2. 5. 4
 842: s. The. 7. 149
 843: D. S. 4. 12. 3
 844: Ap. 2. 5. 4
 845: Ap. 2. 5. 6
 846: D. S. 4. 13. 2
 847: Se. HF 243
 848: Ve. A. 6. 311
 849: S. OT 175
 850: Pa. 8. 22. 7
 851: Pa. 8. 22. 4
 852: s. Ve. A. 8. 299
 853: A. Rh. 2. 1036
 854: D. S. 4. 13. 2
 855: Ap. 2. 5. 6
 856: Pa. 8. 22. 4
 D. S. 4. 13. 2
 857: Ap. 2. 5. 6
 858: A. Rh. 2. 10. 30
 859: s. A. Rh. 1. 172
 860: Ap. 2. 4. 5
 D. S. 4. 13. 3
 861: Pa. 5. 1. 9
 s. Ve. A. 8. 299
 862: Ap. 2. 5. 5
 863: Pa. 5. 1. 9
 864: Ap. 2. 7. 8
 865: Ap. 2. 5. 5
 866: Ath. 412a
 867: Ap. 2. 5. 5
 868: s. Ca. De. 102
 869: Ap. 2. 5. 3
 870: Er. C. 28
 871: Ap. 2. 5. 5
 872: D. S. 4. 33. 1
 873: Hy. 33
 874: s. Ve. G. 3. 267
 875: E. HF 382

- 876: CG 206 (182)
 877: Il. 11. 445
 878: Se. HF 451
 879: s. Pi. P. 4. 126
 880: Il. 2. 763
 881: Il. 2. 715
 882: Ap. 1. 9. 15
 883: Ap. 1. 9. 15
 884: Ap. 1. 9. 15
 885: CG 33 (28)
 886: Ap. 1. 9. 15
 887: E. Al. 24
 888: E. Al. 476
 889: E. Al. 1142
 890: Pl. Sy. 179b
 891: E. Al. 1140
 892: Phr. 2 Nauck
 893: D. S. 4. 15. 3
 894: D. S. 4. 15. 4
 895: Ap. 2. 5. 8
 896: D. S. 4. 15. 4
 897: CG 179 (159)
 898: A. Rh. 1. 1275
 899: The. 13. 75
 900: A. Rh. 1. 1317
 901: E. Al. 499
 902: He. Sc. 319
 903: He. Sc. 70
 904: E. HF 591
 He. Sc. 479
 905: He. Sc. 338
 906: He. Sc. 120
 907: CG 185 (163)
 908: s. Il. 23. 347
 909: Pa. 8. 25. 10
 910: Ap. 2. 5. 11
 911: Hy. 31
 912: He. Sc. 477
 913: Ap. 1. 7. 4
 914: Pl. Phd. 84e
 915: CG 110 (97)
 916: Ap. 2. 5. 7
 917: BKT 5. 2. 73. 24
 Ap. 2. 5. 7
 918: BKT 5. 2. 73.
 26
 919: Ap. 2. 5. 7
 920: D. S. 4. 13. 4
 921: Plu. Th. 14
 922: Ap. 2. 5. 9
 923: E. HF 409
 924: Pi. N. 3. 38
 925: s. Pi. N. 3. 64
 926: Pi. I. 6. 28
 927: Pi. N. 3. 37
 928: Il. 5. 266
 929: Il. 21. 448
 930: Il. 21. 448
 931: Ov. M. 11. 203
 932: Il. 7. 453
 933: Il. 21. 453
 934: Il. 5. 640
 935: s. Il. 20. 146
 Ap. 2. 5. 9
 s. Ly. 34
 936: D. S. 4. 42. 3
 937: s. Ly. 34
 938: Il. 20. 145
 939: s. Il. 20. 146
 940: s. Ly. 34
 941: Il. 5. 650
 942: Il. 5. 642
 943: S. Ai. 435
 944: S. Ai. 1301
 Xc. Cy. 1. 9
 D. S. 4. 32. 5
 Ap. 2. 6. 4
 945: Ap. 2. 6. 4
 946: Ly. 337 c. 5.
 Ap. 2. 6. 4
 947: Pi. N. 3. 38
 948: Ap. 2. 5. 9
 949: Ap. 2. 5. 9
 950: D. S. 4. 16. 4
 951: A. Rh. 2. 966
 952: Ap. 2. 5. 9
 953: Plu. Th. 12a
 954: Ath. 557a
 955: Ly. 1329
 956: Ap. ep. 1. 16;
 5. 2
 St. Th. 12. 534
 957: E. HF 416
 958: IG. 14. 1293 D
 959: Il. 15. 30
 960: Il. 14. 250
 961: Plu. 304c
 962: Ap. 2. 6. 7
 963: s. Il. 14. 78
 964: Hsch.
 965: Ap. 2. 7. 1
 966: Plu. 304c
 967: s. The. 7. 5
 968: Il. 14. 256; 15. 18
 969: CG 156 (138)
 970: Th. 293
 971: Th. 309
 972: Ap. 2. 5. 10
 973: Th. 287
 974: CG 50 (44)
 975: Il. 6. 328
 976: Il. 5. 859
 977: s. Th. 293
 978: Th. 287
 979: Ve. A. 6. 289
 980: s. Th. 287
 981: Is. 6. 19

- 982: s. Il. 11. 690
 983: Pa. 6. 25. 3
 984: Il. 5. 392
 985: s. Il. 11. 690
 986: Pi. O. 9. 31
 987: Il. 5. 394
 988: He. Sc. 359
 989: Il. 5. 397
 990: GG 143 (126)
 991: Il. 11. 690
 992: s. A. Rh. 1. 159
 s. Il. 2. 336
 993: Hy. 10
 994: D. S. 4. 17. 4
 995: Or. H. 41
 996: Hsch.
 997: Pi. P. 9. 105
 998: Pi. I. 56
 999: Ap. 2. 5. 11
 1000: Ph. Im. 2. 22:
 1: D. S. 4. 18. 1
 2: s. A. Rh. 4.
 1396
 3: s. Lu. ITr. 21
 4: Ap. 2. 5. 11
 5: D. Chr. 8. 32
 6: Po. M. 1. 26;
 10. 105
 7: Pi. N. 3. 21;
 4. 69
 s. Pi. O. 3. 79
 8: Str. 3. 2. 11
 9: Ath. 470c
 10: Ap. 2. 5. 10
 11: GG 191 (164)
 12: Ath. 470f
 13: s. A. Rh. 4.
 1399
 14: Ath. 470d
 15: Ap. 2. 5. 10
 16: A. fr. 74
 17: Ath. 469c
 18: Plu. Ser. 9
 19: Hdt. 4. 8
 20: A. fr. 199
 21: Ap. 2. 5. 10
 22: Str. 4. 1. 7
 Po. M. 2. 78
 23: Ve. A. 8. 194
 24: Prop. 5. 9. 10
 25: Ve. A. 8. 243
 26: Ve. A. 8. 260
 27: D. H. AR 1. 35.
 2
 28: Ap. 2. 5. 10
 29: GG 38 (33)
 30: Pa. 3. 35. 2
 31: s. Pi. N. 4. 43
 32: GG 24 (26)
 33: D. S. 4. 21. 5
 34: Cla. RP 3. 184
 35: Pi. I. 6. 32
 36: Ap. 5. 6. 1
 37: s. Pi. I. 6. 32
 38: Pi. N. 4. 25
 39: Su.
 40: s. Pi. N. 4. 25
 41: Ap. 2. 5. 10
 42: Ap. 2. 5. 11
 43: s. A. Rh. 4. 1396
 44: GG 32 (28)
 45: GG 54 (48)
 46: Ath. 469d
 47: s. A. Rh. 4. 1396
 48: Ap. 2. 5. 11
 49: GG 187 (166)
 50: Th. 529
 51: Ap. 2. 5. 11
 52: s. Il. 11. 1
 53: A. fr. 192
 54: GG 220 (195)
 55: Th. 522
 56: GG Pl. XI b
 57: GG Pl. XI a
 58: E. fr. 594
 59: Ap. 2. 5. 11
 60: A. fr. 195-8
 61: s. Ve. A. 8. 299
 62: Se. HF 324; 535
 63: E. Hi. 742
 64: E. Hi. 748
 65: s. A. Rh. 4. 1396
 66: GG 53 (47)
 67: Hy. A. 2. 6
 68: Ap. 2. 5. 11
 69: Ep. fr. 11 Diels
 70: Od. 1. 52
 71: s. A. Rh. 4. 1396
 72: Hy. A. 2. 6
 73: Er. C. 2. 3
 74: s. Ve. A. 4. 484
 75: Od. 1. 50
 76: GG Pl. II b
 77: A. Rh. 4. 1396
 78: s. A. Rh. 4. 1396
 79: Ap. 2. 5. 11
 80: Ap. 2. 5. 12
 81: Od. 11. 603
 82: Ap. 2. 5. 12
 83: Ap. 2. 5. 12
 s. Il. 8. 368
 84: h. C. 475
 85: Euph. fr. 95
 86: Ve. A. 6. 260
 87: Ve. A. 6. 304
 88: s. Ve. A. 6. 392
 89: Ve. A. 6. 413

- 90: Se. HF 775
 91: St. Th. 5. 401
 92: Ve. A. 6. 392
 93: s. Ve. A. 6. 392
 94: GG 34 (30)
 95: Th. 770
 96: Th. 311
 97: Th. 312
 98: S. Tr. 1098
 99: Ve. A. 6. 421
 100: Th. 313
 101: Ve. A. 6. 396
 102: Ap. 2. 5. 12
 103: s. Il. 21. 194
 104: B. 5. 71
 105: B. 5. 172
 106: Od. 11. 633
 107: Ap. 2. 5. 12
 108: GG 126 (111)
 109: Ap. 2. 5. 12
 110: D. S. 4. 26. 1
 111: E. HF 613
 112: Ap. 2. 5. 12
 113: Ap. 2. 5. 12
 114: s. A. Rh. 101
 115: Ve. A. 6. 617
 116: Ap. 2. 5. 12
 117: Pa. 2. 31. 2
 118: Pa. 2. 35. 10
 119: Euph. fr. 62
 120: Ap. 11. 5. 12
 121: Hsch.
 122: Pa. 9. 34. 5
 123: Archil. 119
 124: Diog. Ep. 36
 125: Ap. 2. 6. 4
 126: Ly. 469
 127: Ap. 2. 7. 7
 128: Ap. 2. 7. 4
 129: GG 153 (136)
 130: Il. 2. 620
 131: Ib. 2
 132: Il. 23. 641
 133: s. Il. 23. 641
 134: Pl. Phd. 89c
 c. s.
 135: Pi. O. 10. 33
 136: Pa. 8. 14. 9
 137: Ap. 2. 7. 2
 138: Pi. O. 10. 26
 139: Pa. 5. 2. 2
 140: Ap. 2. 7. 2
 141: Pi. O. 2. 3
 142: Pi. O. 8. 3.
 11
 143: Pa. 5. 14. 2
 144: Pa. 5. 13. 2
 145: Ap. 2. 7. 2
 146: D. S. 4. 14. 1
 147: Ap. 2. 4. 12
 148: Pi. I. 4. 69
 149: E. HF 526
 150: E. HF 615
 151: E. HF 575
 152: E. HF 572
 153: Pa. 9. 11. 2
 154: E. HF 937
 155: s. Pi. I. 4. 104
 156: Ap. 2. 6. 1
 D. S. 4. 31. 1
 157: Ar. Th. 108
 158: s. S. Tr. 354
 Pa. 4. 33. 5
 159: Od. 8. 224
 160: A. Rh. 1. 88
 161: s. Il. 5. 392
 162: Pa. 4. 2. 2
 163: Od. 21. 32
 164: Od. 21. 15
 165: Od. 21. 258
 166: Ap. 2. 6. 1
 167: s. S. Tr. 354
 168: The. 24. 107
 169: s. The. 13. 56
 170: s. Ly. 50; 458
 171: Ap. 3. 12
 172: Ap. 2. 6. 1
 D. S. 4. 31. 2
 173: S. Tr. 268
 174: Od. 21. 22
 175: D. S. 4. 31. 2
 176: s. Od. 21. 22
 177: Od. 21. 26
 178: Ap. 2. 6. 3
 179: Od. 21. 28
 180: Ap. 2. 6. 2
 D. S. 4. 31. 3
 181: s. Pi. I. 4. 104
 182: Ap. 2. 6. 2
 183: Od. 8. 226
 184: Il. 1. 53
 185: Plu. 557d
 186: s. Pi. O. 9. 43
 187: Ap. 2. 6. 2
 Hy. 32
 s. Ve. A. 8. 299
 188: Pa. 10. 13. 8
 189: Ap. 2. 6. 2
 190: Pa. 3. 21. 8
 191: Hy. 32
 s. Ve. A. 8. 299
 192: s. Ve. A. 8. 299
 S. Tr. 275
 193: Ap. 2. 6. 3
 194: D. S. 4. 31. 6
 195: s. Od. 21. 22
 196: Lu. DD. 23. 2

- 197: s. A. Rh. 1. 1289
 198: Plu. 301 f
 199: ICo. 36 c
 200: Plu. 304 c
 201: Hdt. 1. 7. 4
 202: St. By.
 203: D. S. 4. 31. 5
 204: Ap. 2. 6. 3
 205: D. S. 4. 31. 5
 206: Hdt. 1. 93. 4
 207: Ath. 516 a
 208: Ov. F. 2. 305
 209: Ov. Her. 9. 73
 210: D. S. 4. 31. 5
 211: Hy. A. 2. 14
 212: Ap. 2. 6. 3
 213: Su.
 214: Su.
 215: CG 85 (74)
 216: Eud. 72
 217: s. Ly. 9
 218: CG 21 (18)
 219: Ap. 2. 6. 3
 220: Hdt. 7. 216
 221: s. Ar. N. 1050
 222: Su.
 223: Eud. 72
 224: App. BC 5. 69
 225: Ap. 2. 6. 3
 226: FGH 26. 1. 17
 227: Ap. 2. 6. 3 cum
 Tz. Chil. 2. 434
 228: Hdt. 7. 115
 229: Ap. 2. 6. 3 cum
 Tz. Chil. 2. 432
 230: E. fr. 688
 231: E. fr. 689
 232: E. fr. 690
 233: Ap. 2. 6. 3
 234: Tz. Com. 3. 27
 235: Philo II 461 M.
 236: E. fr. 691
 237: E. fr. 693
 238: FGH 26. 1. 17
 239: s. The. 10. 4
 240: The. 10. 41
 241: Pol. 4. 54
 242: Su.
 243: s. The. 10. 4
 244: Ath. 415 b
 245: s. Ve. E. 8. 68
 246: Sosi. fr. 2. 1
 247: Sosi. fr. 3
 248: s. Il. 24. 616
 249: GG 159 (141)
 Pl. VIa
 250: Ap. 1. 8. 1
 251: Ap. 1. 8. 1
 252: S. Tr. 18
 253: S. Tr. 10
 254: GG ill. on p. 57
 (50)
 255: CG 56 (49)
 256: GG 56 (50)
 257: s. Il. 21. 194
 258: S. Tr. 523
 259: S. Tr. 21
 260: S. Tr. 26; 516
 N. D. 43. 13
 261: Ov. M. 9. 85
 262: Ap. 2. 7. 5
 263: S. Tr. 569
 264: Il. 16. 115
 265: Ap. 1. 7. 10
 266: Str. 10. 2. 5
 267: Th. 341
 268: S. Tr. 559
 269: Ap. 2. 7. 6
 270: D. S. 4. 35. 4
 271: D. Ch. 60. 1
 272: Ap. 2. 7. 6
 273: S. Tr. 565
 274: S. Tr. 556
 275: He. fr. 135. 19
 cum PO.
 2075. 9
 276: S. Tr. 38
 277: S. Tr. 259
 278: S. Tr. 354
 279: S. Tr. 360
 280: S. Tr. 1160
 281: S. Tr. 750
 282: Ap. 2. 7. 7
 283: S. Tr. 1157
 284: D. S. 4. 37. 3
 285: S. Tr. 735
 286: S. Tr. 780
 287: S. Tr. 930
 288: S. Tr. 1191
 289: S. Tr. 1219
 290: S. Tr. 1255
 291: S. Tr. 200
 292: Ca. Di. 159
 293: Hdt. 7. 198
 294: S. Tr. 1214
 295: D. S. 4. 38. 4
 296: S. Ph. 801
 297: Ap. 2. 7. 7
 298: S. Ph. 802
 299: Lu. Am. 54
 300: Lu. Am. 1
 301: Ca. Di. 159
 302: Li. 36. 30
 303: Ap. 2. 7. 7
 304: Il. 23. 252
 305: D. S. 4. 38. 5
 306: s. Ve. G. 1. 34

- 307: Ap. 2. 7. 7
 308: D. S. 4. 39. 2
 309: Pi. N. 10. 118
 310: GG 98 (87)
 311: Th. 950
 312: Pi. I. 4. 67
 313: PO. 2075. 16
 314: Od. 11. 601
 315: Er. C. 4
 316: Arat. 63
 317: Aristid. 40. 16
 318: Hdt. 6. 52. 1
 319: E. Her. 12
 320: FGH 1. 30
 321: Pi. P. 9. 80
 322: s. Pi. P. 9. 137
 323: E. Her. 6
 324: Ap. 2. 8. 1
 325: E. Her. 851
 326: E. Her. 403
 327: E. Her. 41
 328: Pa. 1. 32. 6
 329: GG 210 (185)
 330: GG 124 (109)
 331: Ap. 3. 14. 1
 s. Ar. Ve. 438
 332: s. Ar. Pl. 773
 333: Ath. 555c
 334: FHG 2. 319
 Iust. 2. 6. 7
 335: Su.
 336: Str. 9. 20
 337: Pli. NH 7. 194
 338: GG 124 (110)
 339: s. Pi. O. 9. 68
 340: Ci. Le. 2. 63
 341: Ar. Ve. 438
 342: Ath. 555c
 343: Aug. CD 18. 9
 344: Pa. 2. 15. 5
 345: GG 222 (196)
 346: Ap. 3. 14. 1
 347: s. Il. 17. 54
 348: Hdt. 5. 82
 349: Ap. 3. 14. 1
 350: Ov. M. 6. 72
 351: Ap. 3. 14. 1
 352: Ap. 3. 14. 2
 353: Su.
 354: Pa. 8. 2. 3
 355: Eus. PE 10. 9. 22
 356: Su.
 357: Athenag. 1
 358: GG 124 (110)
 359: Ap. 3. 14. 2
 360: GG 124 (110)
 361: E. Ion 496
 362: Ap. 3. 14. 2
 363: Pa. 6. 20. 2-5
 364: GG 125 (110)
 365: Hdt. 8. 41. 2
 Ar. Ly. 759
 366: GG 123 (109)
 367: Ap. 3. 14. 6
 368: Hy. A. 2. 13
 369: Ap. 3. 14. 6
 370: Ap. 3. 14. 7
 371: Il. 2. 547
 372: Od. 5. 8
 373: E. Me. 824
 374: IG. 12. 444. 24
 375: Plu. 843 b
 376: E. Ion 23
 377: E. Ion 281
 378: Athenag. 1
 379: Pa. 1. 26. 5
 380: Pa. 1. 5. 2
 381: Thu. 2. 15. 1
 382: Str. 9. 1. 17
 383: Thu. 1. 20. 2
 384: Ae. VH 12. 28
 385: Ap. 3. 15. 8
 386: FGH 328. 105
 387: Su.
 388: Hy. 46
 389: Lycurg. 98
 390: E. fr. 360
 391: Ap. 3. 15. 4
 392: Ap. 3. 15. 5
 393: Hy. 46
 394: E. fr. 357
 395: Ap. 3. 15. 5
 396: Ant. 2. 12
 397: GG 24 (21)
 398: E. Hi. 30
 D. S. 4. 62. 2
 399: E. Me. 683
 400: Pa. 2. 31. 9
 401: Pa. 2. 33. 1
 402: Pa. 2. 33. 1
 403: Hy. 37
 403a: Ap. 3. 15. 7
 404: Ap. 3. 15. 6
 405: Ap. 3. 15. 6
 Plu. Th. 2c
 406: s. E. Hi. 11
 407: Ap. 3. 15. 7
 408: Plu. Th. 2c
 409: Ap. 3. 15. 7
 410: Pa. 2. 32. 9
 411: Ap. 3. 15. 7
 412: Pa. 1. 27. 7
 413: Plu. Th. 2e
 413a: Pa. 1. 27. 8
 414: Lu. Cy. 14
 415: Ap. 3. 16. 1
 416: Plu. Th. 4b

- 417: Ap. 3. 16. 1
 418: Plu. Th. 4b
 419: Pa. 2. 1. 3
 420: B. 18. 20
 421: Ap. 3. 16. 2
 422: Str. 9. 1. 4
 423: Pa. 2. 1. 3
 424: Plu. Th. 4c
 425: Pa. 2. 1. 3
 426: Ap. ep. 1. 1
 427: B. 18. 23
 428: Pa. 1. 44. 8
 429: Ap. ep. 1. 2
 430: CG 114
 431: s. E. Hi. 979
 432: Plu. Th. 4f
 433: Ly. 111
 434: Pa. 1. 36. 1
 435: Str. 9. 1. 9
 436: CG 210 (186)
 437: Ap. 3. 12. 6
 438: Pl. Ap. 41a
 439: D. S. 4. 59. 5
 440: Pa. 1. 39. 3
 441: Ap. ep. 1. 3
 442: Pa. 1. 39. 3
 443: Hy. 38
 444: D. S. 4. 59. 5
 445: B. 18. 28
 446: Ap. ep. 1. 4
 447: CG 85 (74)
 448: B. 18. 27
 449: s. Ve. G. 1. 399
 450: Ov. Ib. 407
 451: Pa. 1. 38. 5
 452: Pa. 1. 38. 5
 453: D. S. 4. 59. 5
 454: S. fr. 19
 455: Ap. ep. 1. 4
 456: D. S. 4. 59. 5
 457: Plu. Th. 5b
 458: Ap. ep. 1. 5
 459: Plu. Th. 5c
 460: Pa. 1. 37. 2
 461: Pa. 1. 37. 4
 462: Plu. Th. 5d
 463: Plu. Th. 17d
 464: Plu. Th. 5d
 465: B. 18. 30
 466: Plu. Th. 5d
 467: Pa. 1. 19. 1
 468: Ap. ep. 1. 5
 469: B. 18. 46
 470: Ov. M. 7. 420
 471: Plu. Th. 5c
 472: Ap. ep. 1. 6
 473: Ca. fr. 233
 474: s. Il. 11. 741
 475: Plu. Th. 5c
 476: Ap. ep. 1. 6
 477: Plu. Th. 5f
 478: S. fr. 872
 479: Hy. 244
 480: Ap. ep. 1. 11
 481: s. E. Hi. 35
 482: E. Hi. 35
 483: Ca. Di. 10. 21
 484: Pa. 1. 27. 10
 485: s. Ve. A. 6. 20
 486: Ca. fr. 238. 15
 487: Plu. Th. 6b
 488: Th. 411
 489: Ca. fr. 231
 490: Ca. fr. 258
 491: APal. 16. 105. 3
 492: Ca. fr. 259
 493: Ca. fr. 260. 4
 494: Ca. fr. 262
 495: Ca. Di. 11. 5
 496: Plu. Th. 6b
 497: Plu. Th. 6c
 498: Ap. 3. 15. 7
 499: Ap. 3. 15. 7
 D. S. 4. 60. 5
 500: Ap. 3. 15. 7
 501: CG 110 (97)
 502: Ap. 3. 15. 8
 503: Ap. 3. 15. 8
 504: Ov. M. 8. 145
 505: Plu. Th. 6c
 506: Plu. Th. 7c
 507: B. 17. 2
 508: Ap. ep. 1. 7
 509: Plu. Th. 7c
 510: s. Ve. A. 6. 21
 511: Pa. 1. 17. 3
 512: D. S. 4. 72. 7
 513: B. 17. 8
 514: B. 17. 102
 515: Hy. A. 2. 5
 516: Plu. Th. 7d
 517: Si. fr. 33
 518: s. Ve. G. 1. 222
 519: Hsch.
 520: CG 269 (237)
 521: Hy. 42
 522: Ap. 3. 1. 4
 523: Pa. 2. 31. 1
 524: Hy. 255
 525: Od. 11. 323
 526: Ap. ep. 1. 8
 527: Plu. Th. 8b
 528: s. Od. 11. 322
 529: Ap. ep. 1. 11
 Ov. M. 8. 188
 530: Hy. A. 2. 5
 531: s. Ve. G. 222

- 532: s. Pi. N. 5. 89
 533: Plu. Th. 8a
 534: D. S. 4. 61. 5
 535: D. S. 4. 61. 5
 536: Od. 11. 322
 537: Plu. Th. 9a
 538: Plu. Th. 8f
 539: Pa. 2. 23. 7
 540: Plu. Th. 9c
 541: Il. 18. 591
 542: DM. KN 205
 Palmer
 543: D. S. 4. 61. 5
 544: Pr. Chr. p. 322
 Bek.
 545: Pl. XVI b
 546: D. S. 5. 51. 4
 547: Hy. 43
 548: D. S. 5. 51. 4
 549: s. The. 2. 45
 550: The. 2. 46
 551: Plu. Th. 9c
 552: Plu. Th. 9d
 553: Plu. Th. 10d
 554: Plu. Th. 9c
 555: Ap. ep. 1. 10
 556: Plu. Th. 13c
 Plu. Ro. 38e
 Ath. 557a
 557: Plu. Th. 8f
 558: D. S. 4. 62. 1
 559: Pa. 9. 35. 5
 560: IG, 4² 1. 128. 43
 561: N. D. 14. 221
 562: D. S. 5. 52. 2
 563: GG 271 (238)
 564: Ath. 557a
 565: Plu. Th. 14e
 566: Hy. 155
 567: GG 154 (141)
 568: Il. 14. 317
 569: Hy. 14. 6
 570: GG 160 (142)
 571: s. Il. 1. 263
 572: He. fr. 200
 573: s. Il. 1. 264
 574: A. Rh. 1. 59
 575: Pi. fr. 150. 5
 576: Ve. A. 6. 449
 577: Ap. ep. 1. 21
 578: Plu. Th. 14c
 579: Prop. 2. 2. 9
 580: Od. 21. 295
 581: Ov. M. 12. 210
 582: Ov. M. 12. 227
 583: Il. 1. 265
 Plu. Th. 14d
 584: Il. 2. 742
 585: Plu. Th. 14b
 586: S. OC 1539
 587: Plu. Th. 14c
 588: s. Il. 3. 144
 Pi. fr. 227
 589: Ap. ep. 1. 23
 590: D. S. 4. 63. 2
 s. Ly. 513
 591: Is. 10. 19
 592: Pa. 1. 41. 5
 593: Plu. Th. 14f
 594: Plu. Th. 15a
 D. S. 4. 63. 3
 595: Pa. 5. 17. 6
 596: Il. 3. 143
 597: Il. 3. 236
 598: Pa. 2. 21. 6
 599: s. Ar. Ly. 645
 600: s. Il. 3. 242
 601: s. A. Rh. 1. 101
 602: Pa. 1. 17. 4
 603: Plu. Th. 15a
 604: Ve. A. 6. 397
 605: Hy. 79
 606: Se. HF 662
 607: Pa. 10. 28. 2
 608: Ve. A. 6. 393
 609: Ap. ep. 1. 24
 610: Pa. 10. 29. 9
 611: Ap. 2. 5. 12
 612: Ap. ep. 1. 24
 613: Hor. C. 4. 7. 27
 614: Ap. 2. 5. 12
 615: Ap. ep. 1. 24
 616: Hor. C. 3. 4. 79
 617: Pa. 10. 29. 9
 618: s. Ar. Eq. 1368
 619: Hy. 79
 620: Ve. A. 6. 617
 621: Ve. A. 6. 601
 622: Hor. C. 4. 7. 28
 623: D. S. 4. 6. 4
 624: Hy. 43
 625: Thu. 2. 15
 Plu. Th. 10f
 626: Plu. Th. 11a
 627: Plu. Th. 13f
 628: Plu. Th. 14a
 629: Pa. 1. 2. 1
 630: Pa. 1. 41. 7
 631: Pa. 1. 2. 1
 632: Plu. Th. 12a
 Pa. 1. 2. 1
 633: Q. S. 13. 496
 634: Ap. ep. 1. 16
 635: Plu. Th. 13a
 636: Ar. Ly. 679
 637: Plu. Th. 13a
 638: Pa. 1. 17. 2

- 639: Pa. 1. 15. 2
 640: Plu. Th. 13 d
 641: Ap. ep. 5. 2
 642: Ap. ep. 1. 17
 643: D. S. 4. 28. 4
 Pa. 1. 2. 1
 Plu. Th. 13 b
 644: Ca. Di. 239; 266
 645: D. S. 4. 62. 2
 646: IG. 1². 310. 280
 647: E. Hi. 31
 648: E. Hi. 24
 649: E. Hi. 953
 650: Pa. 2. 32. 3
 651: E. Hi. 72
 652: Ap. ep. 1. 18
 653: E. Hi. 888
 654: E. Hi. 1197
 655: Pa. 2. 32. 1
 656: Pa. 1. 22. 1
 657: Pa. 2. 32. 10
 658: Pa. 10. 29. 3
 659: Pa. 2. 32. 1
 660: E. Hi. 1425
 661: Ve. A. 7. 769
 662: Pa. 2. 27. 4
 663: Pa. 2. 32. 1
 664: Ve. A. 7. 774
 665: Plu. Th. 17 b
 666: Plu. Th. 15 b
 667: Plu. Th. 16 f
 668: He. fr. 18
 669: Ap. 1. 9. 16
 670: A. Rh. 1. 232
 671: He. fr. 19
 Pi. N. 3. 54
 672: Pi. P. 4. 119
 673: A. Rh. 1. 554
 674: GG 113 (99)
 675: Od. 12. 72
 676: A. Rh. 3. 67
 677: V. Fl. 1. 83
 678: Hy. 13
 679: Hy. 13
 680: Hy. 12
 681: A. Rh. 1. 12
 682: A. Rh. 1. 5
 683: s. Pi. P. 4. 133
 684: Ap. 1. 9. 16
 685: Pi. P. 4. 71
 686: Pi. P. 4. 120
 687: Mi. 11. 5
 688: GG 194 (171)
 689: Od. 10. 139
 690: Th. 957
 691: A. Rh. 2. 1194
 3. 191; 337
 692: Acc. M. fr. 1
 693: s. A. Rh. 1. 4
 694: A. Rh. 1. 19
 695: A. Rh. 1. 551;
 721
 696: s. E. Me. 1
 D. S. 4. 41. 3
 697: E. Me. 3
 698: Hy. A. 2. 37
 699: Ly. 1319
 Ca. fr. 16
 700: Ap. 1. 9. 16
 701: Pi. P. 4
 702: s. A. Rh. 1. 230
 703: Od. 13. 59
 704: A. Rh. 2. 596
 705: s. A. Rh. 2. 596
 706: A. Rh. 4. 786
 707: Od. 13. 70
 708: Pi. P. 4. 169
 709: Th. 995
 710: A. Rh. 112
 Ap. 1. 9. 16
 V. Fl. 1. 124
 711: Ap. 1. 9. 6
 712: A. Rh. 1. 109
 713: A. Rh. 2. 854
 714: Pi. P. 4. 171
 715: A. Rh. 1. 137
 716: A. Rh. 1. 151
 717: Pi. P. 4. 176
 718: s. A. Rh. 1. 23
 719: s. Od. 19. 432
 720: Pi. P. 4. 178
 721: A. Rh. 1. 54
 722: A. Rh. 1. 142
 723: A. Rh. 1. 172
 724: A. Rh. 1. 65
 725: A. Rh. 1. 93-4
 726: A. Rh. 1. 49
 727: A. Rh. 1. 323
 728: Ap. 1. 9. 16
 729: Hy. 14
 730: A. Rh. 1. 359
 731: A. Rh. 1. 494
 732: A. Ch. 631
 733: Ap. 1. 9. 17
 734: s. Il. 7. 468
 735: Pa. 3. 24. 3
 736: Phot.
 737: Hdt. 6. 138. 4
 738: s. A. Rh. 1. 769
 739: A. Rh. 1. 635
 740: A. Rh. 1. 855
 741: Pi. P. 4. 253
 742: Pi. O. 4. 30
 743: A. fr. 96
 744: A. Rh. 1. 861
 745: V. Fl. 2. 367
 St. Th. 5. 460

- 745: Ov. H. 6. 56
 746: A. Rh. 1. 850
 747: A. Rh. 1. 886
 748: Il. 7. 468
 749: hyp. Pi. N.
 750: D. S. 5. 49. 6
 751: D. S. 4. 49. 8
 752: A. Rh. 1. 917
 753: Od. 10. 108
 754: A. Rh. 1. 936
 755: s. A. Rh. 1. 1117
 756: A. Rh. 1. 1221
 GG 179 (159)
 757: A. Rh. 1. 1317
 758: A. Rh. 2. 1
 759: The. 22. 27
 760: s. A. Rh. 2. 178
 761: s. A. Su. 317
 762: Ap. 1. 9. 21
 763: s. A. Rh. 2. 178
 764: A. Rh. 2. 180
 765: s. Od. 12. 69
 766: A. Rh. 2. 191
 767: A. Rh. 2. 194
 768: GG 63 (56)
 769: A. Rh. 2. 299
 770: E. Me. 432
 771: A. Rh. 2. 609
 772: A. Rh. 2. 345
 773: A. Rh. 2. 752
 774: A. Rh. 2. 673
 775: A. Rh. 2. 598
 776: A. Rh. 2. 674
 777: A. Rh. 2. 911
 778: A. Rh. 2. 904
 779: A. Rh. 2. 946
 780: A. Rh. 2. 970
 781: A. Rh. 2. 1007
 782: A. Rh. 2. 1011
 783: A. Rh. 2. 1018
 784: A. Rh. 2. 1030
 785: A. Rh. 2. 1231
 786: GG 160 (142)
 787: A. Rh. 2. 1235
 788: A. Rh. 3. 598
 789: A. Rh. 3. 245
 790: Th. 960
 791: s. A. Rh. 3. 240
 792: A. Rh. 3. 957
 793: A. Rh. 3. 445;
 834
 794: Pi. P. 4. 244
 795: A. Rh. 2. 465
 796: s. Ve. G. 2. 140
 797: Enn. fr. sc. 274
 798: A. Rh. 2. 270
 Pi. P. 4. 224
 799: Pi. P. 4. 232
 800: Ap. 1. 9. 23
 801: A. Rh. 3. 1182
 802: A. Rh. 3. 1365
 803: s. A. Rh. 4. 87
 804: s. A. Rh. 4. 86
 805: A. Rh. 4. 11
 806: A. Rh. 4. 54
 807: A. Rh. 4. 57
 808: A. Rh. 4. 167
 809: s. A. Rh. 4. 1053
 810: A. Rh. 3. 862
 811: D. S. 4. 45
 812: A. Rh. 3. 1025
 813: A. Rh. 3. 1013
 814: A. Rh. 3. 845
 815: A. Rh. 4. 245
 816: Ap. 1. 9. 24
 817: GG 254 (224)
 818: s. A. Rh. 3. 1236
 819: A. Rh. 3. 242
 820: Pa. 5. 1. 3
 821: s. A. Rh. 4. 223
 822: E. Me. 1334
 823: A. Rh. 4. 331
 824: A. Rh. 4. 466
 825: A. Rh. 4. 571
 826: A. Rh. 4. 581
 827: A. Rh. 4. 631
 828: A. Rh. 4. 727
 829: A. Rh. 4. 702
 830: A. Rh. 4. 745
 831: A. Rh. 4. 930
 832: A. Rh. 4. 965
 833: A. Rh. 4. 982
 834: A. Rh. 4. 1104
 835: A. Rh. 4. 1141
 836: A. Rh. 4. 1234
 837: A. Rh. 4. 1309
 838: A. Rh. 4. 1324
 839: A. Rh. 4. 1384
 840: A. Rh. 4. 1396
 841: A. Rh. 4. 1428
 842: A. Rh. 4. 1446
 843: A. Rh. 4. 1478
 844: A. Rh. 4. 1551
 845: GG 110 (96)
 846: A. Rh. 4. 1670
 847: A. Rh. 4. 1621
 848: A. Rh. 4. 1691
 849: A. Rh. 4. 1699
 850: A. Rh. 2. 678
 851: A. Rh. 4. 1709
 852: s. A. Rh. 4. 1707
 853: A. Rh. 4. 1730
 854: A. Rh. 4. 1733
 855: A. Rh. 4. 1765
 856: Ca. fr. 198
 857: GG 254 (224)
 858: GG 254 (224)

- 859: GG 191 (169)
 860: CGill. on pl. 265
 (233)
 861: Ov. M. 7. 159
 862: s. Ar. Equ. 1321
 s. Ly. 1315
 863: Pa. 3. 18. 16.
 5. 17. 9
 864: Ath. 172d
 865: Ap. 1. 9. 27
 866: Pi. P. 4. 250
 867: Hy. 24
 868: Pa. 8. 11. 3
 869: s. E. Me. 9; 19
 870: Pa. 2. 1. 6
 871: Pa. 2. 4. 6
 872: s. Pi. O. 13. 74
 873: GG 153 (136)
 874: s. E. Me. 264
 875: Pa. 2. 4. 6
 876: GG. 206
 877: s. Pi. O. 13. 32
 878: s. Pi. O. 13. 74
 879: Pa. 2. 3. 11
 880: GG 236 (208)
 881: A. Rh. 4. 869
 882: s. Pi. O. 13. 74
 883: s. E. Me. 264
 884: s. E. Me. 19
 885: E. Me. 383
 886: E. Me. 230
 887: E. Me. 476
 888: Pa. 2. 3. 6
 889: E. Me. 271
 890: E. Me. 551
 891: E. Me. 663
 892: E. Me. 725
 893: E. Me. 824
 894: A. Rh. 4. 131
 895: E. Me. 947
 896: E. Me. 1141
 897: E. Me. 1321
 898: E. Me. 1382
 899: Ap. 1. 9. 28
 900: s. E. Me. 1387
 901: s. E. Me. 9
 902: Ap. 1. 9. 28
 903: A. Rh. 4. 814c. s
 904: Ap. ep. 5. 5
 905: Str. 1. 2. 39
 906: A. Rh. 4. 812
 907: GG 185 (164)
 908: Si. 27
 909: Ap. 1. 3. 2
 E. IA 1212
 E. B. 562
 910: Ap. 1. 3. 2
 A. Rh. 1. 23
 Or. H. 24. 12
 911: D. S. 4. 25. 1
 912: Su.
 913: Ov. M. 11. 8
 914: s. Pi. P. 4. 313
 915: Pi. fr. 126. 9
 916: s. Ve. A. 6. 645
 917: Ti. Pers. 234
 918: Hy. A. 2. 7
 919: E. B. 560
 920: E. Al. 579
 921: A. Rh. 1. 34
 922: Or. A. 965
 923: Ath. 597b
 924: Ap. 1. 3. 3
 925: s. Ve. A. 6. 667
 926: Ve. G. 4. 317
 927: GG 138 (122)
 928: GG 142 (126)
 929: Ve. G. 4. 460
 930: Ov. M. 10. 8
 931: Ve. G. 4. 460
 932: Or. A. 42
 Ve. A. 6. 120
 933: Or. A. 41
 Ve. G. 4. 457
 934: Ve. A. 6. 892c. s
 935: Se. HOe 1072
 936: Ve. G. 4. 471
 Hor. C. 21
 Ov. M. 10. 40
 Se. HOe 1067
 Se. HF 578
 937: Ov. M. 10. 49
 938: Ve. G. 4. 487
 939: Ve. G. 4. 488
 940: Ve. Cu. 299
 941: Ov. M. 10. 56
 942: Ve. G. 4. 493
 943: Ve. G. 4. 502
 944: D. S. 4. 25. 4
 945: Ve. G. 4. 507
 946: Ov. M. 10. 73
 947: Ve. G. 4. 516
 948: Hor. AP 391
 949: Pa. 9. 30. 5
 950: Ov. M. 10. 78
 951: Ov. M. 10. 83
 Pha. fr. 1. 9
 952: Er. C. 3. 26. 8
 953: Hor. C. 3. 26. 8
 954: Ma. S. 1. 18
 955: Ve. G. 4. 521
 956: FGH 26. 45
 957: Pa. 9. 30. 5
 958: Er. C. 24
 959: Pha. fr. 1. 11
 960: Ve. G. 4. 524
 961: Ov. M. 11. 52

- 962: Ph. Her. 5. 3
 963: Lu. Ind. 109
 964: Ph. VA 4. 14
 965: Pa. 9. 30. 6
 966: Pa. 9. 30. 9
 967: Pa. 9. 30. 7
 968: Pa. 9. 30. 10
 969: Thu. 2. 29
 970: Ov. M. 6. 444
 971: Pa. 1. 41. 8
 972: Ap. 3. 14. 8
 973: Th. 444
 974: Ap. 3. 14. 8
 975: Ov. M. 6. 565
 976: Ov. F. 2. 607
 977: Ov. M. 6. 521
 978: GG 260 (229)
 979: GG 254 (224)
 980: Ov. M. 6. 648
 981: GG 254 (224)
 982: Hy. 45
 983: Lu. Lex. 10
 984: CIA 3. 900
 985: Et. M.
 986: GG 205 (181)
 987: Pl. Phdr. 229b
 988: Ap. 3. 15. 4
 989: Pa. 1. 38. 3
 990: Ap. 3. 15. 4
 991: h. C. 476
 992: GG 200 (179)
 993: Hy. 48
 994: Hy. 189
 995: Ap. 3. 15. 1
 996: ALib. 41
 997: s. Od. 11. 321
 998: ALib. 41
 999: Ap. 3. 15. 1
 1000: ALib. 41
- 1: Ap. 3. 15. 1
 2: Ov. M. 7. 713
 3: S. OC 367
 4: S. OC 770; 1356
 5: S. OC 375
 6: E. Ph. 71
 7: A. Se. 664
 8: s. E. Ph. 71
 9: GG 261 (229)
 10: Hdt. 2. 49. 2
 11: Pa. 1. 44. 5
 12: Ap. 1. 8. 5
 13: Ap. 1. 8. 5
 14: PO. 852 V 8. 9
 15: E. Ph. 420
 E. Su. 146
 16: Ap. 3. 6. 1
 17: Hy. 69
 18: Pi. N. 9. 13
 19: Hdt. 5. 67. 5
 20: s. Pi. N. 9. 30
 21: s. Od. 11. 326
 22: s. Pi. N. 9. 30
 23: Ap. 3. 6. 2
 24: Od. 11. 326
 25: s. Ve. A. 6. 445
 s. St. Th. 3. 274
 26: E. Su. 158
 27: Pa. 8. 25. 8
 28: s. Il. 23. 346
 29: Hy. 242
 30: A. Se. 572
 31: Il. 4. 348; 5. 803
 32: Il. 5. 802
 33: Pi. N. 9. 18
 34: Pa. 8. 48. 2
 GG 265 (234)
 35: Ap. 3. 6. 4
 36: hyp. Pi. N.
- 37: Hy. 74
 38: Pa. 2. 15. 3
 39: Hy. 74
 40: A. Se. 375
 41: E. Ph. 1104
 42: E. Ph. 1179
 43: A. Se. 430
 44: A. Se. 412
 45: Ap. 3. 6. 8
 46: s. Pi. N. 10. 12
 47: Ap. 3. 6. 8
 48: s. Il. 5. 126
 49: E. Ph. 1156
 50: Pi. N. 9. 24
 51: Pa. 1. 34. 3
 52: Ap. 3. 7. 5
 53: Pi. O. 5. 15
 54: E. Su. 16
 55: Plu. Th. 14a
 56: Pa. 1. 39. 2
 57: Ap. 3. 7. 3
 58: Hy. 71
 59: Pa. 6. 20. 7
 Ap. 2. 4. 6
 60: Ap. 2. 8. 2
 61: D. S. 4. 58. 2
 62: D. S. 4. 58. 5
 63: Il. 4. 381
 64: Il. 2. 101
 65: s. Il. 2. 105
 66: Se. Th. 233 et 226
 67: GG 264 (232)
 68: Ap. ep. 2. 10
 69: s. E. Or. 995
 70: Ap. ep. 2. 11
 71: s. E. Or. 998
 Se. Th. 237
 72: E. El. 726
 73: A. A. 1583

- 74: Ap. ep. 2. 13
 75: A. A. 1595
 76: Se. Thy. 765
 77: Hdt. 1. 119. 3
 78: Ari. Pr. an.
 3. 43
 79: A. A. 1598
 80: Hy. 88
 81: A. A. 1605
 82: GG 252 (221)
 83: s. E. Or. 15
 84: Hy. 88
 85: Hy. 254
 86: Mo. Chot. Pr. p.
 294
 87: Hy. 88
 88: Hy. 87
 89: Ap. ep. 2. 14
 90: Pa. 2. 16. 6
 91: Pa. 2. 18. 1
 92: Tz. Ch. 1. 461
 93: He. fr. 98
 94: Tz. Ch. 1. 460
 95: GG 225 (199)
 96: GG 77 (67)
 97: h. Ve. 256
 98: h. Ve. 279
 99: Il. 20. 92
 Il. 20. 347
 100: Il. 5. 309; 344
 101: Il. 20. 318
 102: GG 224 (198)
 103: Pi. I. 8. 37
 104: Pi. I. 8. 39
 105: Il. 18. 433
 106: Il. 24. 60
 107: He. fr. 80
 108: Pi. I. 8. 41
 109: GG 210 (186)
 110: Str. 9. 5. 9
 111: s. Il. 16. 14
 112: s. Ve. A. 4. 420
 113: Ap. 3. 12. 6
 114: Ap. 3. 12. 6
 115: Th. 1004
 116: D. S. 4. 72. 6
 117: Pa. 2. 29. 9
 118: Ap. 3. 13. 1
 119: Ap. 3. 13. 2
 120: Hy. 273
 121: Ap. 3. 13. 3
 122: Pa. 1. 41. 3
 s. A. Rh. 1. 517
 123: Ap. 3. 13. 3
 124: Ap. 3. 13. 3
 125: Pi. N. 4. 59
 126: s. Ar. N. 1063
 127: He. fr. 79
 128: Ap. 3. 13. 3
 129: Pi. I. 8. 45
 130: Cat. 64. 20
 131: Al. 74. 7
 132: He. fr. 81
 133: Pi. I. 8. 48
 134: E. IA 716
 135: Il. 1. 538
 136: GG 143 (126)
 137: Pi. N. 3. 35
 138: S. fr. 154
 139: Pi. N. 4. 62
 140: Pa. 5. 18. 5
 141: s. E. An. 1265
 142: S. fr. 561
 143: Hsch.
 144: Pi. N. 5. 22
 145: Cat. 64. 305
 146: GG 160 (141)
 147: Ap. 3. 13. 5
 148: Il. 19. 390
 149: Pi. N. 3. 33
 150: s. Il. 16. 140
 151: He. fr. 82
 152: Hy. 92
 153: Pr. Chr. 102. 13
 154: s. Il. 1. 5
 155: Ap. ep. 3. 1
 156: Hy. 92
 157: Col. 59
 158: s. Ve. A. 1. 27
 159: s. Ly. 93
 160: Hy. 92
 161: GG 146 (128)
 162: Pr. Chr. 102. 16
 163: He. fr. 81
 164: s. Pi. N. 4. 81
 165: Et. M.
 166: Il. 20. 74
 167: Ap. 2. 6. 4
 168: Ap. 3. 12. 7
 169: s. Ly. 337
 170: Il. 24. 495
 171: Hsch.
 172: Ap. 3. 12. 5
 173: E. He. 1265
 174: E. He. 1259
 175: GG 37 (32)
 176: Il. 24. 730 c. s.
 177: Ap. 3. 12. 5
 178: Pi. fr. 43. 11
 179: Pa. 10. 12. 5
 180: Hy. 93
 181: E. An. 296
 182: E. Tr. 921
 183: GG 146 (129)
 184: Ap. 3. 12. 5
 185: s. Il. 3. 325
 186: s. E. An. 293

- 187: Ap. 3. 12. 5
 188: Ap. 3. 12. 6
 Par. 4
 FGH 23
 Ov. H. 5
 189: s. E. An. 276
 190: E. An. 284
 Hel. 676
 191: Ath. 682c
 192: Ov. H. 15. 67
 193: E. Tr. 925
 IA 1304
 Ap. ep. 3. 2
 Hy. 92
 194: Il. 24. 29
 195: Il. 5. 62
 196: E. Hel. 631
 197: Ar. N. 1068
 198: s. Ly. 178
 199: h. Vc. 291
 200: Il. 348
 201: Ap. 3. 13. 6
 202: s. A. Rh. 4. 816
 203: s. A. Rh. 4. 816
 204: A. Rh. 4. 869
 205: s. Ar. N. 1068
 206: s. Ve. A. 6. 57
 Hy. 107
 207: Ap. 3. 13. 6
 208: Pi. N. 3. 49
 209: E. IA 927
 210: Il. 11. 832
 211: Ov. AA 1. 11
 212: Pa. 2. 22. 3
 213: E. IA 1150
 214: He. fr. 96. 51
 215: E. Hel. 109
 216: Il. 3. 175
 217: Ap. ep. 3. 3
 218: He. fr. 94. 5
 219: He. fr. 92
 220: s. Il. 2. 339
 221: He. fr. 94. 13
 222: Ap. 3. 10. 8
 223: Il. 2. 478
 224: Il. 3. 169
 225: Il. 1. 28
 226: Il. 1. 113
 227: Od. 3. 272
 228: Od. 11. 411
 229: A. A. 1125
 230: s. Ly. 1123
 231: Ap. 3. 10. 8
 232: He. fr. 94. 21
 233: He. fr. 94. 26
 234: Ap. 3. 10. 9
 235: E. IA 54
 236: Pa. 3. 20. 9
 237: Ap. 3. 10. 9
 238: s. Pi. O. 9. 79
 239: Od. 19. 403
 240: Il. 10. 244; 279
 241: Plu. 301 d
 242: Ap. 3. 10. 8
 243: Il. 5. 860
 244: Il. 5. 311
 245: Il. 5. 127
 246: Il. 5. 412
 247: s. Il. 5. 412
 248: Od. 3. 180
 249: s. Il. 5. 412
 250: s. Ve. A. 8. 9
 251: Pi. N. 10. 7
 252: s. Pi. N. 82
 253: Plu. NH 10. 126
 254: Str. 6. 3. 9
 255: Ap. 3. 10. 8
 256: He. fr. 96. 5
 257: Il. 7. 208
 258: Il. 17. 279
 259: Il. 3. 229
 260: Il. 7. 219
 261: Il. 8. 331
 262: Il. 7. 208
 14. 410
 263: s. Pi. I. 6. 67
 264: Pi. I. 6. 35
 265: s. Il. 23. 821
 266: Od. 11. 546
 Ap. ep. 5. 5
 267: s. Ar. Eq. 1056
 Plu. 337c
 268: Od. 11. 547
 269: Pi. N. 7. 25
 s. Il. 11. 515
 270: S. Ai. 127
 271: Od. 11. 563
 272: Pa. 1. 35. 3
 273: Hdt. 8. 64
 274: Ap. 3. 10. 8
 Hy. 81
 275: Il. 2. 528
 276: Il. 13. 198
 277: Il. 13. 703
 278: Il. 12. 335
 279: Il. 14. 521
 280: Pr. Chr. 108. 3 4
 E. Tr. 70
 281: E. Tr. 324; 453
 282: Ap. ep. 5. 22
 283: Pr. Chr. 108. 4
 284: Pa. 10. 26. 3
 285: E. Tr. 77
 Ve. A. 1. 39
 286: E. Tr. 99
 287: Od. 4. 500
 288: s. Pi. O. 166

- 289: Ph. H. 8. 1
 290: s. Ly. 1159
 291: Ap. ep. 6. 20
 292: s. Ly. 1159
 293: Plu. 557d
 294: Ap. 3. 10. 8
 295: Il. 11. 508
 296: He. fr. 96. 16
 297: s. Ve. A. 3. 121
 11. 264
 298: MVar. 1. 195
 299: Hy. 78
 300: Hdt. 6. 61. 4
 301: Is. 10. 62
 302: Od. 4. 563
 303: Pa. 3. 19. 9
 304: Il. 4. 181
 305: Ph. Im. 2. 7. 2
 306: s. Il. 4. 147
 307: Od. 4. 12
 308: Se. Tr. 70
 309: Ap. ep. 3. 3
 310: Il. 3. 232
 311: Il. 3. 173; 420
 312: Ap. ep. 3. 3
 313: Il. 3. 445
 314: Pr. Chr. 103. 12
 315: Pr. Chr. 103. 17
 316: Ap. ep. 3. 6
 317: Pr. Chr. 103. 20
 318: Il. 11. 769
 319: Ap. ep. 3. 6
 320: s. Il. 9. 668
 321: A. A. 841
 322: Hy. 96
 323: Hy. 95
 324: Od. 24. 115
 325: Hy. 95. 2
 326: Hy. 277
 327: Alcld. 22
 328: S. fr. 399; 438
 329: Ap. ep. 3. 8
 330: Hy. 96
 331: Ap. 3. 13. 8
 332: Il. 9. 668
 333: s. Il. 9. 668
 334: GG 264 (233)
 335: Hy. 96
 336: s. Il. 9. 668
 337: E. fr. 682
 338: Il. 19. 326
 339: Od. 11. 508
 340: Il. 11. 777
 341: Il. 19. 407
 342: Il. 9. 143
 343: Il. 9. 145
 344: s. Il. 9. 145
 345: S. E. 157
 346: Pa. 2. 35. 1
 Hsch.
 347: Pr. Chr. 104. 12
 Ap. ep. 3. 21
 348: Il. 2. 496
 349: Pa. 9. 19. 6
 350: S. E. 566
 E. IA 185
 351: Ap. ep. 3. 21
 352: s. Il. 1. 108
 s. E. Or. 658
 Pr. Chr. 104. 13
 353: E. IT 20
 354: S. E. 567
 355: S. E. 568
 356: S. E. 569
 357: Ap. ep. 3. 21
 358: Ap. ep. 3. 21
 Sabb.
 359: S. E. 568
 360: A. A. 192
 Pr. Chr. 104. 15
 361: S. E. 564
 E. IT 15
 362: E. IT 17; 209
 363: S. E. 571
 364: Hy. 98
 365: S. An. 899
 366: S. fr. 284
 367: E. IA 610
 368: A. IA 1366
 369: E. IT 27
 370: A. A. 239
 371: Ar. Ly. 645
 372: E. IA 1579
 373: E. IT 26
 374: E. IT 40
 375: Hdt. 4. 103
 376: E. IT 1462
 377: Ae. NA 7. 39
 378: Od. 4. 529
 11. 410
 379: Od. 3. 172
 380: Od. 11. 422
 381: Pi. P. 11. 22
 382: Se. Ag. 897
 383: A. A. 1377
 384: S. E. 12
 A. A. 881
 385: Pi. P. 11. 34
 386: E. IT 918
 387: Ap. ep. 6. 24
 388: s. E. Or. 268
 389: Od. 3. 307
 390: Od. 3. 311
 391: Ap. ep. 6. 28
 392: A. Eu. 179
 393: A. Eu. 738
 394: E. IT 970

- 395: E. IT 973
 396: E. IT 977
 Ap. ep. 6. 26
 397: Ap. ep. 3. 18
 398: Str. 13. 1. 69
 399: Pa. 10. 28. 8
 400: PO. XI. 1359
 401: Pa. 1. 4. 6
 402: Ap. 2. 7. 4
 403: Pa. 8. 4. 8
 404: Ap. 3. 9. 1
 405: Pa. 8. 48. 7
 406: Mo. Chor. Pr. p.
 294
 407: Pa. 8. 47. 4
 408: E. fr. 265
 Alcid. 15
 409: D. S. 4. 33. 7
 410: Ap. 2. 7. 3
 411: Ap. 3. 9. 1
 412: Ap. 2. 7. 4
 413: E. fr. 696. 4
 414: Ae. VH 7. 39
 415: Hy. 99
 416: Ap. 3. 89. 1
 417: D. S. 4. 33. 11
 418: Pa. 4. 34. 7
 419: Hy. 244
 420: A. E. 488
 421: Ari. Po. 24
 422: s. E. Rh. 251
 423: Hy. 100
 424: Ae. NA 3. 47
 425: D. S. 4. 33. 12
 426: Ph. Her. 3. 34
 427: Od. 11. 521
 428: Str. 13. 1. 69
 429: s. Ly. 1249
 430: s. Ve. A. 3. 680
 431: GG 140 (124)
 432: Pa. 9. 5. 14
 433: Pi. O. 9. 72 c. 1.
 434: Pi. O. 9. 71
 435: Il. 11. 787
 436: Il. 23. 90
 437: Il. 11. 831
 438: Pi. I. 8. 54
 Ap. ep. 17
 439: s. Il. 1. 59
 440: E. fr. 700
 Pa. 9. 41. 1
 441: s. The. 12. 25
 442: Ar. Ach. 439
 443: E. fr. 697; 698
 444: Hy. 101
 445: E. fr. 724
 446: Pr. Chr. 104. 11
 447: s. Od. 11. 520
 448: s. E. Or. 1391
 449: Pa. 5. 13. 3
 450: Pa. 3. 26. 10
 451: Ap. ep. 3. 18
 452: Il. 2. 303
 453: Pa. 9. 19. 7
 454: Il. 1. 49
 455: Il. 2. 720
 456: S. fr. 353
 457: App. M. 1. 77
 458: St. B.
 459: Pa. 8. 33. 4
 460: A. Rh. 4. 1709
 461: Il. 1. 37
 462: Il. 1. 430
 463: D. Chr. 59. 9
 464: Ph. iun. 17
 465: V. Fl. 1. 391
 466: s. S. Ph. 194
 467: S. Ph. 1327
 468: Hy. 102
 469: Ap. ep. 3. 27
 Pr. Chr. 104. 22
 470: s. Il. 2. 695
 471: Ap. 1. 9. 12
 472: GG 261 (230)
 473: He. fr. 117
 474: Il. 2. 701
 475: Il. 2. 701
 476: Barr. 303
 477: APal. 7. 385. 1
 478: APal. 7. 385. 9
 479: Hdt. 9. 116
 480: Pli. NH 16. 238
 481: Ph. Her. 3. 1
 482: s. Aristid. p. 671
 483: Pa. 4. 2. 7
 484: Cat. 68. 74
 485: Hy. 104
 486: Eu. Il. 325. 29
 487: s. Aristid. p. 671
 488: Hy. 103
 489: Lu. DMO. 23. 3
 490: Ap. ep. 3. 30
 491: Hy. 104
 492: s. Ve. A. 6. 447
 493: Ap. ep. 3. 30
 494: Hy. 104
 495: s. Pi. I. 1. 83
 496: Ph. Her. 3. 6
 497: Il. 2. 674
 498: Il. 1. 352
 499: s. Pi. O. 2. 147
 Thom.
 500: Ap. ep. 3. 31
 501: ALib. 12
 502: Hy. 154
 503: s. Ly. 237
 504: s. The. 16. 49

- 505: S. fr. 500 Pearson
 506: S. fr. 460
 507: Ap. ep. 3. 31
 508: Pi. O. 2. 83
 I. 3. 39
 509: S. fr. 499 Pearson
 510: Ap. ep. 3. 31
 511: s. Ve. A. 3. 85
 512: Ap. ep. 3. 32
 513: GG 139 (123)
 514: GG 140 (124)
 515: Ap. 3. 12. 5
 516: Pla. B. 953
 517: Il. 1. 58
 518: Il. 24. 257
 519: Il. 9. 129
 520: Il. 9. 664
 521: Il. 1. 392
 522: Hy. 106
 523: Il. 19. 282
 524: Il. 2. 690
 525: Il. 19. 291
 526: Il. 19. 298
 527: Il. 2. 691
 528: Il. 1. 366
 529: Il. 6. 414
 530: Il. 6. 422
 531: Il. 1. 425
 532: Il. 1. 368
 533: Il. 1. 14
 534: Il. 1. 25
 535: Il. 1. 49
 536: Il. 16. 700
 537: Il. 16. 785
 538: Ve. A. 2. 319
 539: Il. 16. 850
 540: Il. 16. 96
 541: Il. 18. 8
 542: Il. 18. 96
 543: Il. 18. 98
 544: Il. 19. 258
 545: Il. 18. 478
 546: Il. 19. 21
 547: Il. 22. 136
 548: Il. 22. 203
 549: Il. 22. 359
 550: Il. 22. 385
 551: Il. 23. 175
 552: Il. 24. 560
 553: Ap. ep. 5. 1
 554: Il. 3. 189
 555: Tz. Posthom. 14
 556: s. Il. 3. 189
 557: Il. 24. 670
 558: Q. S. 1. 664
 559: Q. S. 1. 594
 560: Pa. 5. 11. 6
 561: Prop. 3. 11. 15
 562: Od. 11. 522
 563: Pr. Chr. 106. 1
 564: Pi. 2. 83
 565: GG 32 (28)
 566: Il. 22. 209
 567: GG 33 (24)
 568: Plu. 172
 569: Il. 22. 161
 570: Il. 16. 857
 571: GG 200 (177);
 Pl. VIII b
 572: Pol. 4. 130
 573: Pr. Chr. 106. 6
 574: Pa. 10. 31. 6
 575: Ae. NA 5. 1
 576: EGr. 987
 577: Pr. Chr. 106. 7
 578: Ap. ep. 5. 3
 579: Ve. A. 6. 57
 580: E. Rh. 508
 581: s. Ve. A. 3. 85
 582: Il. 22. 359
 583: s. Ar. E. 1056
 584: Ap. ep. 5. 4
 585: Ap. ep. 5. 4
 586: Od. 24. 47
 587: Od. 24. 47
 588: Od. 24. 60
 589: Il. 23. 91; 244
 590: Od. 24. 81
 591: Str. 13. 1. 32
 592: Arr. A. 1. 12. 1
 593: Pr. Chr. 108. 7
 594: E. Hec. 37
 595: Pr. Chr. 106. 14
 596: Pi. N. 4. 49
 E. An. 1262
 597: CIG 2. 2076
 598: D. Chr. 36. 9
 599: Pli. NH 4. 83
 600: A. Rh. 4. 814
 c. s.
 601: ALib. 27
 602: Am. M. 22. 8. 34
 603: Pa. 3. 19. 13
 604: Pr. Chr. 105. 9
 605: Od. 11. 467
 606: Il. 6. 448
 607: Ap. ep. 5. 10
 608: Ap. ep. 5. 8
 609: Ap. ep. 5. 10
 610: Od. 11. 509
 611: Ap. ep. 5. 11
 612: Pr. Chr. 106. 30
 613: Pr. Chr. 106. 30
 614: Ap. ep. 5. 8
 615: S. Ph. 1408
 616: Pr. Chr. 106. 26
 Ap. ep. 5. 8

- 617: Ap. ep. 5. 8
 618: Ap. 3. 12. 3
 619: GG 122 (107)
 620: Ap. 3. 12. 3
 621: FGH 26. 34. 2
 622: Od. 4. 244
 623: Od. 4. 250
 624: Od. 4. 261
 625: Ap. ep. 5. 13
 626: FGH 26. 34. 2
 627: Pr. Chr. 107. 7
 628: FGH 26. 34. 3
 629: s. Ar. Ve. 351
 630: s. Ve. A. 2. 166
 631: FGH 26. 34. 4
 632: Pr. Chr. 107. 2
 633: Ap. ep. 5. 14
 634: Od. 8. 493
 635: Pa. 1. 30. 4
 5. 15. 6
 636: Ca. LP 2
 637: Pi. O. 13. 65
 638: Ap. ep. 5. 15
 639: Od. 8. 509
 640: Pla. B. 953
 641: Ap. ep. 5. 15
 642: Od. 8. 501
 643: Ap. ep. 5. 17
 644: Ve. A. 2. 201
 645: s. Ve. A. 2. 201
 646: Hy. 135
 647: Ap. ep. 5. 18
 648: Ve. A. 2. 227
 649: Pr. Chr. 107. 25
 650: Pr. Chr. 107. 22
 651: Ap. ep. 5. 19
 652: Od. 11. 527
 653: Od. 4. 274
 654: Od. 11. 530
 655: Ap. ep. 6. 12
 656: Pa. 10. 24. 6
 657: Pi. N. 7. 40
 fr. 40. 112
 Pa. 4. 17. 4
 658: Ap. ep. 5. 21
 659: Il. 6. 402
 660: s. Lyl 1268
 661: Il. 6. 455
 662: Il. 24. 735
 663: Od. 8. 517
 664: s. E. An. 631
 665: Ar. L. 155 c. s.
 666: E. An. 630
 667: Pr. Chr. 108. 1
 668: Od. 3. 141
 669: Od. 4. 1
 670: Od. 4. 82
 671: Od. 3. 299
 672: Il. 2. 587
 673: Od. 4. 83
 674: GG 43 (38)
 675: Od. 4. 772
 676: Ste. 11
 677: E. Hel. 31
 678: GG 37, 59, 206,
 247 (32, 52,
 182, 218)
 679: Od. 23. 156
 680: Od. 14. 162
 19. 306
 681: Od. 21. 258
 s. Od. 20. 155
 682: Od. 21. 259
 683: Ap. ep. 7. 36
 684: Ly. 796
 2685: Pr. Chr. 109. 23

INDEX

Numbers in italics refer to Plates
The letters A-L refer to the Genealogies

I

NAMES AND EPITHETS

- Abas, A
 Abderos, 156
 Acheles, 197, 317
 Acheloos, 198, 317
 Achilles (Achilles), 242, 275, 278,
 309, 313, 315, 317, 318, 319, 323,
 324, 328, 329, 332, 340, 347-61;
 70, 72, 73, 75; E
 Admete, 159, 162
 Admetos, 32, 74, 116, 139, 155, 156,
 160, 247, 250, 253, 280, 282; C
 Adrastus, 157, 295, 296, 297, 301,
 304, 323; C
 Aedon, 89, 287
 Aeneas, *see also* Aincias, 179, 253
 Aerope, 304; K
 Agamemes, 138
 Agamemnon, 8, 62, 238, 303, 305,
 306, 319, 320, 321, 325, 326, 328,
 329, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 347,
 349, 350, 351; F, K
 Agaue, 32, 91; A, D
 Agenor, 27, 28, 40, 258; A, G
 Aglauros, 212, 215
 Agraulos, 212
 Agriope, 281
 Agrios, 63, 113; G
 Aiakos, 75, 221, 253, 309; E
 Aias s. of Oileus, 325, 360
 Aias s. of Telamon, 228, 310, 315,
 322, 323, 324, 325, 354, 358; 75;
 B, E, K
 Aietes, 87, 247, 250, 251, 253, 262,
 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 274,
 276
 Aigaion, 216
 Aigeus, 216, 217, 218, 219, 223, 224,
 225, 226, 227, 234, 240, 276, 277;
 B, I, K, L
 Aigialeia, 323; C
 Aigialeus, 301
 Aigimios, 184
 Aigina, 75, 309; E
 Aigisthos, 306, 334, 335; K
 Aigle, 234
 Aigletes, 272
 Aigyptos, Aigyptiads, 40, 41, 42; A
 Aincias, *see also* Aeneas, 110, 308,
 309, 323, 327, 358; 16
 Aiolos, 69, 70, 71, 74, 75, 80, 85, 105,
 247, 249, 250, 251; C, F
 Aiolos Hipponades, 69
 Aison, 74, 247, 250, 270, 273, 274; C
 Aithalides, 253
 Aithra, 217, 219, 238, 242; B, I, K
 Aitolos, 113; G
 Akamas, 242
 Akastos, 247, 253, 274, 311, 314, 345
 Akmon, 194
 Akrisios, 45, 46, 47, 54, 81, 295; A
 Aktaion, 33; A
 Aktor, Aktorione, 184; E
 Alalkomene, 322
 Alalkomeneus, 57
 Alea, 337, 338
 Aleos, 338
 Alexander the Great, 2, 354
 Alexandros (Paris), 316
 Alexidamos, 166
 Alexikakos, 183
 Alkaios, 55, 128, 136; A, B, H, K
 Alkathoos, B, K

- Alkeides, 128
 Alkestis, 32, 155, 156, 166, 197, 247, 274, 282; C
 Alkmene, 8, 55, 121, 126, 127, 128, 129, 131, 132, 133, 134, 138, 187, 188, 206; B, H
 Alkyone, 122, 158
 Alkyoneus, 170, 171
 Aloadai, 146, 249, 274
 Aloeus, 117, 274
 Althaia, 106, 113, 114, 115, 120, 121, 198; G, H
 Amaltheia, 199
 Amisodaros, 82
 Amphiaraios, 116, 294-301, 304; C
 Amphiktyon, I
 Amphilochos, 300
 Amphion, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 57, 62, 67, 88, 89, 136, 279; B
 Amphitrite, 229, 232, 309, 313; 54
 Amphiryon, 68, 128, 129, 130, 131, 134, 135, 136, 138, 186, 188, 205; B, H, K
 Amykos, 257
 Amymone, 43, 44, 48, 143, 144, 253, 328
 Amyntor, 184
 Amythaon, 74, 247, 250, 295; C
 Anaxo, B, H
 Anchinoc, A
 Anchises, 308, 317
 Androgeos, 227
 Andromache, 349, 359; 33
 Andromeda, 52, 53, 54, 55, 251, 258; 7; A, F, H
 Ankaioi, 116, 119
 Antagoras, 162, 166
 Antaios, 162, 166, 167, 222
 Anteia, 45, 81, 82, 83
 Antigone, 99, 102, 301; D
 Antikleia, 77, 219, 322; 9; C
 Antiope, Theban, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 88, 89, 105, 136, 308; Amazon, 162, 235, 241, 242, 243; consort of Sun, 274
 Antiopcia (Antiope the Amazon), 241
 Apaturia, Athene, 217
 Aphareus, 43, 105, 107, 111; F
 Aphidnos, 238
 Aphrodite, 25, 31, 32, 33, 42, 64, 78, 109, 110, 118, 176, 180, 193, 233, 234, 243, 244, 255, 266, 274, 294, 308, 313, 314, 316, 317, 320, 323, 327, 331, 349, 352, 355, 359; A; Urania, 274
 Apollo, 15, 26, 31, 32, 35, 38, 54, 66, 74, 75, 76, 81, 85, 91, 95, 104, 108, 109, 121, 135, 139, 145, 147, 148, 155, 157, 158, 159, 160, 165, 188, 190, 191, 202, 204, 219, 234, 235, 247, 249, 253, 258, 261, 262, 271, 272, 279, 280, 282, 284, 286, 297, 308, 313, 315, 334, 335, 339, 340, 342, 343, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 353, 361; 16, 27, 38; 1; Agraios, 311; Aigletes, 272; Delphinios, 224, 226; Embasios, 254; Ismenios, 35, 136; Korythos, 339; Lykios, 42; Smintheus, 315; Thymbraios, 348, 349, 353, 358
 Apisytos, 264, 267, 268, 276
 Archemoros, 298
 Areion, 157, 297
 Arene, 107; F
 Ares, 25, 29, 30, 31, 33, 63, 66, 76, 108, 114, 151, 155, 156, 157, 160, 164, 165, 168, 249, 264, 266, 287, 313, 320, 323, 324, 352; A, G
 Arete, 269, 270
 Argeia, 296
 Argeiphontes, 79
 Argiope, 27, 281, 339
 Argo, 157, 179, 252, 253, 254, 256, 257, 260, 261, 263, 264, 266, 268, 269, 270, 271, 272, 277, 279
 Argos, builder of the Argo, 252, 253, 257; s. of Phrixos, 263; Panoptes, 79
 Ariadne, 31, 56, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 238, 251, 273, 281, 308, 327, 329; 56; Ariadne Aphrodite, 233

- Aridela, 230, 281
 Arion, *see* Areion
 Aristaios, 282; A
 Artemis, 38, 66, 108, 109, 115, 116,
 117, 146, 147, 148, 155, 178, 190,
 191, 204, 230, 232, 243, 244, 245,
 268, 303, 304, 313, 314, 331, 332,
 333, 335, 338, 352; 38, 69; Agro-
 tera, 311; Eukleia, 141; Kordaka,
 67; Orthia, 238; Orthosia, 146;
 Saronia, 244; Symphalia, 151
 Askalaphos, 178, 180
 Asklepios, 15, 70, 125, 235, 245, 300,
 326, 341, 356
 Asopos, 35, 76
 Astakos, 299
 Asterios, 230
 Asterodeia, 267
 Asyanax, 359
 Astymedusa, 96
 Atalante, 113-20, 254, 300, 310, 312,
 339
 Ate, 132
 Athamas, 85, 86, 247, 251, 263, 303,
 329; A, C
 Athene, Pallas, 30, 43, 44, 48, 49, 50,
 51, 53, 54, 57, 81, 99, 109, 134,
 138, 139, 151, 157, 161, 165, 171,
 175, 186, 191, 194, 203, 209, 210,
 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217,
 233, 252, 253, 261, 265, 294, 298,
 300, 306, 308, 314, 316, 317, 322,
 323, 324, 325, 326, 334, 335, 337,
 347, 351, 356, 357, 361; 16, 18, 27,
 46, 47, 52, 56, 75; Alalkomene, 322;
 Alea, 337; Apaturia, 217; Hippia,
 81; Minois, 271; Polias, 212, 213
 Atlas, 31, 58, 60, 173, 175
 Atreus, Atreidai, 7, 8, 10, 57, 62, 68,
 89, 90, 129, 302-7, 319, 331; B, K
 Atropos, 115
 Auge, 187, 306, 337, 338, 339
 Augeias, 151-3, 184, 185, 187, 253
 Autolykos, 76, 77, 78, 135, 189, 247,
 322; C
 Autonoe, 32; A
 Axieros, 19
 Axiokersa, 19
 Axiokersos, 19, 20
 Baal, 40
 Bakcheus, 285
 Balios, 313
 Bateia, 106
 Bellerophon, Bellerophontes, 45, 51,
 74, 75-84, 217, 244, 275, 311, 354,
 357; 12; C
 Belleros, 79
 Belos, 40, 258; A
 Benthesis, 290
 Berekyinthian Great Mother, 58
 Bias, 295; C
 Boiotos, 29, 69, 70; C
 Boreas, Boreades, 69, 154, 253, 259,
 260, 290; 61; I
 Briareos, 216
 Brimo, 267
 Briseis, 349, 350, 351
 Briseus, 349, 351
 Broctas, 57; B
 Eugenes, 15, 18
 Busiris, 167
 Butes, I
 Cacus, 169
 Castor and Pollux, *see* Kastor and
 Polydeukes
 Centaurs, *see* Kentauroi
 Chalkiope, d. of Aietes, 87, 264; d. of
 Antagoras, 163
 Chalkozarai, 186
 Chalkodon, 162
 Chariklo, m. of Teiresias, 99; w. of
 Chiron, 99, 249, 313; 67
 Charites, 34, 227, 235, 313, 316
 Charon, 179, 182, 239, 282, 284
 Charops, 182, 185
 Charybdis, 269
 Chelidon, 287
 Chilon, 17
 Chimaira, 82, 83
 Chione, 77, 287, 290; I

- Chiron, 70, 99, 149, 150, 153, 173, 236, 248, 249, 263, 278, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 318, 319; 67, 70
 Chloris, 67, 74; C
 Choreia, 55
 Christ, 303
 Chrysaor, s. of Medusa, 51, 164; other name of Bellerophon, 80
 Chryse, 343
 Chryseis, 320, 350
 Chryses, 320, 350
 Chrysippos, 68, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 97, 302, 303; B, K
 Chrysothemis, 331; F, K
 Chthonia, d. of Boreas, 258; d. of Erechtheus, 216
 Chthonios, 30
 Ciris, 227
 Daidalos, 227, 231, 233, 311
 Daktyloi, Daktyls, 12, 66, 93, 105, 126, 136, 137, 192, 203, 222; Daktylos Idaios, 126, 136
 Damastes, 222, 223
 Damnameneus, 222
 Danae, 45, 46, 48, 49, 54, 74, 130; 3; A, F, H
 Danaids, daughters of Danaos, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 48, 143, 241, 254, 282, 328
 Danaos, 25, 40-44, 45, 166; A
 Daphnis, 197
 Dardanos, 27
 Deianeira, 114, 153, 180, 198-202, 205; 43; G, H
 Deidameia, w. of Peirithoos, 236; m. of Neoptolemos, 329; E
 Deimos, 157
 Deiphobos, of Amyklai, 190; of Troy, 357, 358, 359
 Deipyle, 296
 Delphyne, 81
 Demeter, 12, 28, 59, 104, 126, 157, 166, 178, 181, 186, 215, 221, 223, 248, 275, 291, 313, 318; 67; Demeter Chthonia, 186
 Demonike, G
 Demophoon, Demophon, s. of Theseus, 242; of Eleusis, 275, 318
 Deukalion, s. of Prometheus, 69, 113; s. of Minos, 234; C, F
 Dexameneos, 153, 164, 197, 198
 Dia, 236
 Diana, 245
 Dikaioi, 195, 196, 199
 Diktys, 47, 48, 54; 3
 Diomede, 349
 Diomedes, Thracian, 154-8, 282, 347; s. of Tydeus, 296, 301, 308, 322, 323, 333, 356, 357, 358, 360; C, G
 Dione, 58
 Dionysos, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 25, 26, 31, 32, 33, 37, 38, 39, 45, 52, 55, 56, 59, 81, 85, 88, 93, 97, 113, 114, 118, 125, 126, 128, 136, 143, 149, 158, 170, 189, 193, 198, 199, 230, 232, 233, 234, 235, 240, 248, 255, 262, 267, 273, 281, 284, 285, 286, 289, 295, 296, 298, 305, 313, 316, 327, 329, 345, 346, 349, 354; 46, 56, 67; A; Dionysos Kadmos, 20, 88
Dios Keroi, 105
 Dioskuroi, 34-39, 55, 69, 88, 105-12, 116, 184, 238, 240, 241, 256, 274, 317, 319, 320, 321, 327
 Dirke, 36, 37
 Doris, 313
 Doros, C
 Dryads, 282
 Echemos, 302
 Echidna, 97, 140, 143, 174
 Echion, Spantos, 31, 90; s. of Hermes, 253; A, D
 Eetion, Samothracian, 27; f. of Andromache, 349
 Eileithyia, 132
 Elatos, Centaur, 149; f. of Kainis-Kaineus, 236

- Elektra, m. of Kadmos, 27, 31; d. of Agamemnon, 334, 335; F, K
 Elektryon, 55, 128, 129, 130; A, B, H
 Elektryone, 27
 Endeis, 309, 310; E
 Endymion, 113, 291; G
 Enipeus, 71, 72
 Enyeus, 329
 Eos, 84, 173, 229, 251, 287, 293, 352, 353
 Epaphos, 25
 Epikaste (Iokaste), 91, 96; d. of Augeias, 152
 Epimetheus, 69
 Epopeus, 36
 Erechtheus, Erechtheidai, 209-46, 289, 290, 291; I, L
 Erginos, king of Orchomenos, 138; Argonaut, 255
 Eriboia, 228, 324; B, E, K
 Erichtho, 258, 259; 60
 Erichthonios, 213, 214, 240, 288; I, L
 Erinyes, 103, 121, 154, 164, 283, 315, 334, 335
 Eriphyle, 296, 297, 300, 303; 66; C
 Eris, 314
 Eros, 176, 283
 Erysichthon, 213
 Erytos, 253
 Eteokles, 99, 102, 294, 298, 299, 300, 301; D
 Eteoklos, 299
 Eubule, 215
 Euenos, f. of Marpesia, 108; s. of Jason, 255
 Eukleia, 141
 Eumenides, 103
 Eumolpos, 178, 215, 216, 289-91; I
 Euphemos, 253, 271, 272
 Euphorbos, finds Oidipus, 93; 14; Trojan, 350
 Europa, Europe, 26, 27, 28, 32, 38, 83, 130, 131; A
 Eurybatos, 194
 Eurydike, 279-86
 Euryganeia, 96
 Eurylyte, 266
 Eurymeda, 79
 Eurymedon, 79
 Eurynome, d. of Okeanos, 34, 309; m. of Belleroophon, 79
 Eurypylos, of Kos, 162, 165; s. of Telephos, 339, 341
 Eurytheus, 68, 129, 132, 133, 139, 142, 145, 146, 150, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 161, 167, 171, 175, 177, 178, 182, 185, 186, 193, 195, 205, 245, 302; 28; B, H, K
 Euryte, 199; G
 Eurytion, Peleus' father-in-law, 116, 119, 310, 311, 312, 343; Centaur, 153, 236; Geryoneus' herdsman, 164, 168
 Eurytos, f. of Iole, 135, 153, 187, 188, 189, 190, 201; Centaur, 237; b. of Kteatos, 184
 Galinthias, 132, 133
 Ganymedes, 60, 89
 Gelanor, 41
 Gerapso, Geropso, 20
 Geras, 24
 Geryoneus, 153, 163-71, 181, 273; 35
 Giants, 135, 170, 171, 225
 Glauke, 276
 Glaukos the younger, 75, 79, 354; 75; C; the elder, 75, 78, 79, 80, 106, 154; C; of Crete, 81
 Gorge, 295; G
 Gorgon(s), 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 78, 154, 180; 56
 Gorgophone, 55, 105, 106, 107; F, H
 Graiai, 50, 51, 53
 Hades, *see also* Dead, Underworld, 16, 19, 20, 43, 74, 76, 96, 120, 165, 168, 177-82, 199, 220, 221, 239, 240, 251, 260, 264, 266, 271, 282, 285, 300, 310, 313
 Haimon, 97; D
 Haliai, 55

- Harmonia, 19, 20, 25-33, 34, 88, 155, 251, 264, 278, 294, 296, 297, 300, 312; A, D
 Harpinna, 63
 Harpies, 63, 78, 89, 154, 164, 175, 258, 259, 260; 61
 Hebe, 204, 206, 327; 46
 Hekabe, 315, 316, 349, 355; 69
 Hekale, Hekaline, 226, 315
 Hekate, 166, 226, 267, 281, 315
 Hektor, 315, 347, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 355, 359; 69
 Heleios, 130; H
 Helen, 106, 110, 111, 235, 237, 238, 240, 241, 242, 314, 317, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 325, 326, 327, 331, 335, 337, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360; 57, 76; F, K
 Helios, 35, 87, 89, 93, 151, 168, 171, 174, 230, 235, 247, 251, 253, 258, 264, 265, 266, 269, 273, 274, 277, 348, 353; 34
 Helle, 85-87; C
 Hellen, 69, 70; C, F
 Heos, 262
 Hephaistos, 12, 31, 62, 163, 169, 214, 219, 265, 302, 324, 351, 352
 Hera, 34, 43, 73, 85, 91, 94, 97, 100, 126, 127, 131, 132, 133, 136, 139, 140, 145, 156, 158, 161, 162, 163, 165, 171, 174, 175, 176, 186, 187, 192, 197-201, 203, 204, 211, 248, 253, 269, 270, 275, 277, 308, 309, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 321, 327, 330, 347, 360; 18; Hera Akraia, 275, 277; Bunia, 275; Teleia, 204
 Herakles, 1, 4, 8, 12, 41, 42, 51, 55, 63, 66, 74, 75, 106, 114, 116, 121, 125-208, 218, 219, 222, 225, 227, 236, 239, 240, 241, 245, 248, 253, 255, 256, 257, 262, 265, 268, 270, 273, 279, 281, 282, 291, 297, 302, 306, 308, 315, 324, 328, 337, 338, 339, 343, 347, 355, 356, 360; 18-40, 44-46, 59; B, C, H, K; Herakles Kallinikos, 183-5
 Hermes, 12, 26, 36, 37, 43, 49, 59, 62, 64, 65, 66, 75, 76, 79, 94, 100, 103, 107, 108, 131, 134, 137, 171, 174, 180, 192, 195, 198, 204, 253, 279, 280, 283, 288, 302, 304, 313, 314, 316, 322, 345, 360; 68; C
 Hermione, 327; F, K
 Herophile, 315
 Hesione, 160, 161, 197, 315; E
 Hesperides, 50, 147, 148, 168, 169, 172-7, 252, 270, 314; 22, 26, 37, 38
 Hestia, 313
 Hiera, 339, 341
 Hilairea, 109; F
 Hippias, 357
 Hippe, Hippo, d. of Chiron, 70; Amazon, 243
 Hippodameia, d. of Oinomaos, 48, 62-68, 90, 94, 113, 217, 302, 303; w. of Peirithoos, 236, 237; 8; B, K
 Hippokoon, 106, 184
 Hippolochos, C
 Hippolyte, 159, 160, 161, 162, 192, 240, 241, 243, 352; 58
 Hippolytos, s. of Theseus, 118, 162, 240, 242, 244, 245, 311, 352; s. of Deiphobos of Argos, 190
 Hippomedon, 299
 Hippomenes, 118
 Hipponoos, other name of Bellerophon, 79; s. of Adrastos, 297
 Historis, 133
 Homer, 306
 Homonoia, 262
 Horai, 34, 309, 313, 316
 Hyades, 216
 Hyakinthos, Hyakinthides, 26, 106, 215
 Hylas, 157, 257
 Hyllos, 197, 201, 202, 205, 302; H
 Hymenaios, 65
 Hypatos, 212
 Hyperenor, 31
 Hypermetra, 42, 43, 45; A
 Hypnos, 162, 163, 171
 Hypsipyle, 255, 298, 299

- Iardanos, 192
 Iasion, 27, 248
 Iason, Ieson, Jason, 74, 87, 116, 157, 247-78, 281, 295, 303, 308, 343; 62, 63, 65; C
 Idas, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 116, 120, 253; F
 Idmon, 253, 261, 266
 Idomeneus, 326, 327, 360
 Idyia, 264
 Ikarios, 321
 Ikaros, 231
 Ilios, f. of Laomedon, 356
 Illyrios, 33
 Immarados, 215, 290
 Inachos, 25, 40, 42, 43, 55; A
 Ino, 25, 33, 85, 86, 87, 303; 13; A, C
 Io, 25, 27, 38, 40; A
 Iobates, 82; 12
 Iokaste (Jocasta), 91, 92, 97, 99, 101, 102; D
 Iolaos, 133, 138, 144, 145, 157, 160, 176, 187, 205, 206; H
 Iole, 188, 189, 191, 201, 202
 Ion, 1
 Iphianassa, 331
 Iphigeneia, 238, 331-6, 337, 355; 71; F, K
 Iphikles, 116, 131, 133, 138, 184
 Iphiklos, 344; H
 Iphitos, 188, 189, 191, 201
 Iris, 108, 186, 259, 312, 328; 56, 67
 Ischomache, 236
 Ismaros, 290
 Ismene, 99, 102; D
 Ismenos, 34
 Itylos, 89
 Itys, 89, 288, 289
 Ixion, 58, 61, 85, 236, 239, 282

 J, *see under* I

 Kaanthos, 34
 Kaanthos, 34, 35, 38
 Kab(e)iroi, 12, 19, 107, 134, 194, 255, 328
 Kadmilos, Kasmilos, 19, 26
 Kadmos, 18, 19, 20, 25-33, 34, 35, 36, 62, 75, 85, 88, 101, 102, 125, 134, 145, 155, 251, 258, 264, 265, 278, 294, 311, 334; 1; A, D
 Kaineus, 236
 Kainis, 236
 Kalais, 253, 259, 290
 Kalchas, 323, 332, 333, 342
 Kallinikos, 183-5
 Kalliope, 280
 Kallirhoe, 164
 Kalliste, 314
 Kalydon, C
 Kalyke, 62, 348
 Kalypso, 176
 Kandaules, 192
 Kapaneus, 299
 Kassandra, 315, 321, 325, 333, 358; 69
 Kassiopeia, 52, 53
 Kastor, 35, 105-12, 116, 135, 184, 235, 238, 253, 327; 16, 17; F
 Kekrops, Kekropia, Kekropidai, 209-46; 47; 1, L
 Kekrops II, 1, L
 Kentauroi, Centaurs, 67, 70, 71, 85, 99, 117, 149, 150, 153, 164, 178, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 235, 236, 248, 249, 250, 263, 309, 311, 318; 29; *see also* Chiron
 Kentauros, 85
 Kephalos, 130, 287-93; 1
 Kepheus, 52, 53
 Kerberos, 143, 144, 164, 174, 177, 179, 180, 181, 182, 186, 282; 39
 Kerkopes, 194; 40
 Kerkyon, 222; 50
 Keuthonymos, 181
 Keyx, 158, 201, 205
 Kilix, 26, 27; A
 Kirke, 87, 251, 252, 260, 267, 268, 269, 361
 Kisseus, title of Apollo, 285; f. of Hekabe, 315
 Kleite, 256, 257

- Kleopatra, 108, 120, 121; F
 Klotho, 59, 115
 Klymenos, of Kydonia, 126; of
 Kalydon, 199; G
 Klytair(n)estra, 106, 238, 319, 320,
 331, 332, 333, 334; F, K
 Komaitho, 130
 Kopreus, 142
 Korone, 235; 57
 Koronis, m. of Asklepios, 15, 235; w.
 of Helios, 235
 Koryne, 233
 Korynetes, 219
 Korythos, 339
 Kranaos, 1
 Krenaike, 1
 Kreon, various kings styled, 91, 97,
 102, 128, 135, 138, 275, 276, 294,
 301; D
 Krateus, 74, 247, 250, 263; C
 Kreusa, 1
 Kronos, 58, 63, 66, 95, 223, 236, 263
 Kteatos, 184
 Kychreus, 222
 Kyklopes, Cyclopes, 45, 81
 Kyknos, s. of Ares, 157, 158, 171,
 347; s. of Poseidon, 347, 348; s. of
 Apollo, 347, 348; Ligurian, 348
 Kynortas, 106
 Kyparissos, 340, 348
 Kytissos, 263

 Labdakos, Labdakidai, 33, 88, 89,
 288; A, D; *see also* Laios
 Lachesis, 115
 Ladon (serpent), 148, 174, 175, 270
 Laertes, 78, 322
 Laios, 33, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95,
 96, 97, 99, 101, 104, 227; A, D
 Laistrygonians, 256
 Laodamas, 301
 Laodameia, d. of Bellerophon, 83;
 w. of Protesilaos, 342-6
 Laodike, 331
 Laokoon, 358
 Laomedon, 89, 160, 161, 308, 315, 356

 Lara, 288
 Lares, 288
 Leda, 35, 105, 106, 107, 110, 113,
 238, 241, 308, 320, 327; 17; F, G
 Leos, 215, 225
 Lepreus, 152
 Lethe, 239
 Leto, 261, 282, 353
 Leukippos, Leukippides, 105, 109,
 110; F
 Leukothea, 25, 85
 Libye, 40, 270, 272; A
 Ligyron, 317
 Linos, 135
 Liryerses, 196
 Lykaon, 157
 Lykomedes, 6, 245, 329
 Lykos of Thebes, 36, 37, 89, 186; k.
 of the Mariandynoi, 261
 Lynkeus, husband of Hypermetra,
 42, 43; s. of Poseidon, 107, 109,
 110, 111, 253, 271; A, F
 Lyrkeus, 43, 45
 Lysidike, 68; B, H, K
 Lyssa, 186

 Machaon, 326, 341
 Maia, 36, 313
 Makaria, 206
 Makris, 270
 Mania, 187; 40
 Marpessa, 108, 120; F
 Maryas, 280
 Mary, the Virgin, 133
 Medeia, 32, 87, 176, 223, 224, 230,
 247-78, 289, 303, 308, 318, 355;
 63; C
 Medos, 277
 Medusa, 49, 51, 52, 53, 80, 81, 164,
 180; 5, 6
 Megapenthes, 46, 54, 55, 81, 295,
 299; A
 Megara, 138, 186, 187, 188, 201, 205
 Melampus, 74, 247, 250, 295, 296,
 344; C
 Melampygos, 194

- Melaneus, 188
 Melanion, 119
 Melanippe, d. of Aiolos, 69-74, 308;
 Amazon, 161; C
 Melanippos, 299
 Melas, f. of Eurytos, 188; s. of Phrixos,
 263; eponym of Melantian Rocks,
 271; G
 Meleagros, 106, 108, 113-21, 149,
 180, 198, 199, 254, 295, 345; F, G
 Melia, 34, 35, 40, 257; A
 Melikertes, 25, 78, 85
 Memnon, 352, 353
 Memphis, A
 Menelaos, 110, 305, 306, 307, 319,
 320, 321, 328, 335, 358, 359, 360;
 76; F, K
 Menestheus, L
 Menoikeus, 91; D
 Menoites, 168, 181
 Menoitios, E
 Mercurius, 288
 Mermeros, 276
 Merope, w. of Sisyphos, 76, 78; w. of
 Polybos, 94; C
 Merops, 60
 Mestor, 129; A, H
 Michael, Archangel, 323
 Midas, 197
 Minos, 35, 81, 82, 83, 130, 158-9,
 215, 226, 227, 228, 229, 230,
 231, 232, 234, 260, 292, 304, 326,
 327
 Minotaur, 198, 227, 230, 231; 55
 Minyad, 247
 Minyas, 252, 289
 Mnemosyne, 9, 10, 34
 Moira, Moirai, 50, 59, 115, 132, 155,
 172, 313, 328
 Molionē and the Molione, 184, 185,
 187
 Molochos, 141, 142
 Molpadie, 243
 Momos, 313
 Mopros, 253, 257
 Musaios, 280, 281
 Muses, 32, 34, 88, 98, 135, 280, 281,
 285, 286, 313, 354
 Mykene, 55
 Mynes, 349
 Myrilos, 64, 65, 66, 217, 304; 8
 Naiads, Neides, fountain-nymphs,
 49; 4
 Nauplios, 44, 48, 253, 328, 338
 Neaira, 264
 Neilos, A
 Neleus, 72, 74, 164, 165, 247, 253,
 295, 328, 344; C
 Nemesis, 107, 235, 238, 327; 8
 Neoptolemos, 329, 356, 359; 74; E
 Nephelē, 85, 86; C
 Nereids, 52, 228, 229, 269, 272, 354;
 73
 Nereus, 172, 310, 312, 313, 317, 354;
 22
 Nessos, 200, 201; 43
 Nestor, 8, 9, 67, 74, 164, 165, 247,
 328, 329, 354, 360; C
 Nike, 176
 Nikippe, 68, 132; B, H, K
 Niobe, 38, 40, 57, 67, 74, 88; B, C
 Nisos, 227
 Nykteus, 35, 36, 89; B
 Nymphs, 34, 40, 44, 50, 54, 58, 62,
 106, 113, 157, 172, 197, 257, 263,
 270, 276, 278, 282, 308, 316, 348;
 1, 5
 Odysseus, 18, 78, 101, 180, 188, 204,
 219, 252, 256, 260, 269, 321, 322,
 323, 324, 325, 328, 329, 330, 354,
 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 361;
 74; C
 Ogygos, 29
 Oiairos, 280, 281
 Oibalos, 105
 Oidipus, 2, 33, 88-104, 126, 128,
 135, 136, 245, 283, 294, 300, 301,
 332, 339; 14-16; A, D
 Oidyphallos, 93
 Oikles, 296; C

- Oinatis, 146
 Oineus, 63, 113, 114, 115, 116, 119, 180, 198, 199, 295, 345; G, H
 Oinomaos, 48, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 108, 113, 188, 303, 304
 Oinone, 316
 Oinopion, 63, 113
 Oistros, 277
 Okeanos (Ocean), 34, 50, 163, 164, 168, 173, 194, 200, 263, 269, 273, 313, 320
 Oklasos, D
 Oknos, 2
 Olos, 194
 Omphale, 116, 163, 192-7, 219
 Opheltis, 298
 Ophiuchos, 193
 Oreithyia, 290, 291; I
 Orestes, 114, 331, 334, 335, 355; 71; F, K
 Orestheus, 114
 Orion, 12, 63, 113, 141
 Orista, 114
 Orpheus, 71, 243, 253, 254, 261, 269, 270, 279-86; 64, 65
 Orsiloches, 355
 Orthia, 147
 Orthos, 97, 140, 164, 168, 174
 Orthosia, 147
 Osiris, 167

 Paieon, 165
 Palaichthon, 41
 Palaimon, 25, 33, 85, 298; A, C
 Palinurus, 253
 Pallas, Pallantidai, 225
 Pallas, companion of Athene, 356
 Pallas Athene, *see* Athene
 Pan, Panes, 176, 291
 Pandareos, 60, 88, 287
 Pandion, 225, 227, 287
 Pandion II, 1, L
 Pandora, 1
 Panopeus, 130, 234
 Panteidyia, 106
 Panthus, 350
 Paris, 110, 316, 317, 319, 326, 327, 347, 353, 356, 357, 360; 68, 69, 75
 Parthenoi, 215
 Parthenopaios, 119, 299, 300, 339
 Parthenos, 333, 338
 Pasiphae, 87, 159, 227, 230, 231, 292
 Passalos, 194
 Patroklos, 340, 350, 351, 354; E
 Pegasus, 51, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 164, 357
 Peirithoos, 67, 116, 181, 235, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 245, 254, 282; 57
 Pelagon, 28, 29, 30
 Pelargos, 65
 Pelagos, 41
 Peleus, 6, 32, 116, 119, 253, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 317, 320, 327, 328, 330, 340, 343, 347, 354; 67, 70; C
 Pelias, 32, 72, 73, 74, 78, 154, 155, 247, 248, 249, 250, 251, 253, 254, 274, 276, 310; C
 Pelopia, 306, 320, 338; K
 Pelops, Pelopidai, 57, 59, 60, 62-68, 83, 86, 89, 90, 93, 94, 129, 217, 236, 273, 302, 303, 304, 307, 310, 356; 8; B, H, K
 Pelor, 30
 Penelope, 73, 188, 321, 322, 328, 361; C, F
 Penthesileia, 242, 352; 73
 Pentheus, 36, 46, 54, 91, 285; A, D
 Periboia, w. of Polybos, 94; Athenian virgin, 228
 Perieres, 105; F
 Perigune, 220
 Periklymenos of Pylos, 165, 253; of Thebes, 300
 Periphas, 65
 Periphetes, 219
 Pero, 295, 344; C
 Perse, 251
 Perseis, 251

- Persephone, 14, 16, 19, 20, 28, 63,
 76, 101, 108, 120, 125, 126, 180,
 181, 206, 222, 235, 239, 241, 245,
 248, 258, 262, 267, 279, 282, 283,
 288, 306, 333
 Perses, 55; A, H
 Perseus, 2, 6, 7, 15, 16, 42, 45-56, 57,
 75, 80, 93, 105, 128, 129, 130, 132,
 133, 140, 143, 251, 255, 258, 279,
 281, 295, 302; 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; A, F, H
 Phaethon, s. of Helios, 83, 348;
 Apsyrtos, 264, 267
 Phaia, 220; 48
 Phaiakes, 269
 Phaidra, 234, 242, 243, 244, 245
 Phaistos, 126
 Pheres, f. of Admetos, 74, 247, 250;
 s. of Medeia, 276; C
 Philammon, 253
 Philodike, F
 Philoktetes, 203, 345, 344, 356
 Philomela, 287, 288, 289, 291, 305; I
 Philyra, 249, 263
 Phineus, uncle of Andromeda, 53,
 58; prophet, 258, 259, 260, 262;
 60
 Phix, 97
 Phobos, 157
 Phoibe, d. of Leukippos, 109;
 Titaness, 312; F
 Phoibos, *see* Apollo
 Phoinix, s. of Agenor, 27, 228; tutor
 of Achilles, 120, 356; A
 Phokos, eponym of Phokis, 38; s. of
 Telamon, 310
 Pholos, 149, 150, 153; 29
 Phorkys, 49, 50, 51
 Phoroneus, 40, 43, 57, 140, 211; A
 Phrixos, 85-87, 247, 250, 251, 258,
 263, 264, 303; 13; C
 Phrontis, 263
 Phylakos, 344
 Phyleus, 152, 185
 Phytalos, 223
 Phytios, 114
 Pinakos, 88
 Pintheus, 217, 218, 219, 228, 243,
 277; B, K
 Pityokampes, 220
 Pleiades, 58, 252
 Pleisthenes, 306
 Pleuron, C
 Pluto, 58; B
 Podaleirios, 326
 Podarkes, earlier name of Priam, 161,
 315; s. of Iphiklos, 344
 Poias, 203, 342, 344
 Polybos, 94, 97
 Polydegmon, 48, 153
 Polydektes, 48, 49, 53, 153
 Polydeukes, 35, 105-12, 116, 184,
 235, 238, 253, 257, 327, 16, 17; F
 Polydora, 345
 Polydoros, 33, 88; A, D
 Polygyios, 137
 Polyidos, 81, 82
 Polymede, 247
 Polyneikes, 99, 102, 294, 295, 296,
 297, 298, 299, 300, 302; 66; D
 Polypemon, 220, 222
 Polyposos, 237
 Polyxena, 355; 72
 Polyxenos, 129
 Porthaon, C
 Portheus, 199
 Poseidon, 25, 40, 43, 44, 47, 48, 49,
 51, 52, 59, 63, 64, 66, 69, 70, 71,
 73, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 86, 102, 107,
 118, 129, 131, 138, 158, 159, 160,
 164, 165, 169, 170, 184, 187, 211,
 212, 214, 215, 216, 217, 219, 220,
 223, 228, 229, 231, 236, 237, 244,
 247, 248, 250, 251, 256, 257, 258,
 271, 290, 300, 308, 309, 313, 314,
 320, 325, 330, 338, 348, 358; 53; A,
 C, F, I; Poseidon Erechtheus, 214
 Praxithea, 215, 216
 Priam (Priamos), 161, 315, 316, 326,
 329, 337, 341, 348, 349, 351, 355,
 357, 359; 69
 Proitos, 45, 46, 54, 74, 81, 82, 83,
 247, 295, 299, 344; A

- Prokne, 89, 287, 288, 289, 290, 291, 305; A
 Prokoptas, 223
 Prokris, 130, 287, 291, 292; I
 Prokrustes, 223; 51
 Prometheus, 12, 59, 60, 69, 150, 169, 172, 173, 174, 263, 267
 Protesilaos, 342-6
 Proteus, 360
 Protogeneia, C, 1
 Psamathe, 310
 Psylla, 63
 Pterelaos, 129, 130
 Pygmies, 166
 Pylades, 334, 335; 71
 Pylaochos, 16
 Pylartes, 16
 Pylios, 178
 Pyrrha, w. of Deukalion, 69; name of Pyrrhos disguised, 329
 Pyrrhos, 329, 359; E
 Pythia, 92, 191

 Reitia, 147
 Rhadamanthys, 83, 188
 Rhea, Rhea-Kybele, 59, 110, 257, 263
 Romulus and Remus, 71

 Salmons, 69-74, 85, 247, 10; C
 Sarpedon, 83
 Satyr(s), 36, 44, 203, 284
 Schoineus, 117
 Selene, 133, 140, 281, 291
 Semele, 14, 15, 16, 18, 25, 32, 56, 88, 125, 126, 136, 284; A
 Sibyl, 315
 Sidero, 72
 Silen(os), -oi, 47, 198, 248
 Simis, 220, 222; 48
 Siren(e)s, 98, 151, 175, 199, 269
 Sirius, 113
 Sisyphe, 69, 75-84, 85, 106, 137, 154, 219, 275, 282, 322, 356; 11; C
 Skamandrios, 359
 Skiron, 220, 221, 222, 309; 48
 Skylla, sea-monster, 170, 269, 315; d. of Nisos, 227
 Sosipolis, 213
 Spartoi, 31, 299
 Sphairos, 217
 Sphinx, 91, 97, 98, 99, 140; 15, 16
 Staphylos, 114
 Sterope, 67, 69
 Sthenelos, 129, 130, 132, 262, 302; A, B, H, K
 Stheneboia, 45, 82, 83
 Strophios, 334
 Symphalos, 310
 Sylea, 220
 Syleus, 195, 196, 199

 Talaos, 295, 296
 Talos, 271
 Tantalos, 38, 57-61, 62, 64, 69, 89, 192, 239, 267, 282, 289, 302, 305, 319; B
 Tarchon, 339
 Taurominion, 232; 55
 Tauros, 231
 Taygete, 146
 Teiresias, 92, 99, 100, 101, 133, 135
 Telamon, 116, 160, 161, 162, 171, 183, 228, 253, 310, 315, 323; B, E, K
 Telegonos, 361
 Telemachos, 328, 360, 361; C
 Telephae, 27
 Telephanes, 337
 Telephassa, 27, 28; A
 Telephos, 187, 300, 306, 332, 337-41
 Tenetos, 35
 Tereus, 89, 287-95, 305; I
 Tethys, 34, 309, 313
 Teukros, 315, 324; E
 Teuthras, 337, 338, 339
 Thamyris, 281
 Thanatos, 76, 155, 156; 24
 Thasos, 27; A
 Thebe, 1
 Theia, 194
 Themis, 34, 172, 193, 309, 313
 Theope, 215

- Thersandros, 300
 Theseus, 6, 41, 82, 103, 110, 116, 159, 162, 181, 187, 209-46, 251, 254, 272, 277, 279, 281, 282, 301, 308, 309, 317, 327, 329, 331, 352; 48-59; B, F, I, K, L
 Thespios, 137, 205
 Thesprotos, 306
 Thestios, 106; G
 Thetis, 32, 110, 269, 275, 309, 312, 313, 314, 317, 319, 324, 327, 328, 347, 348, 350, 351, 354, 355; 67; E
 Thoas, f. of Hypsipyle, 255, 298; her s. by Jason, 256
 Thyestes, 57, 62, 68, 90, 129, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 319, 320; B, K
 Thyreus, 199; G
 Tiphys, 253, 261
 Titan(s), Titaness(es), 12, 26, 58, 146, 169, 173, 174, 175, 194, 236, 263, 266, 267, 273, 277, 289, 319
 Tithonos, 173
 Tityos, 61, 249, 282
 Tmolos, 192
 Toxeus, 113, 199; G
 Triptolemos, 277
 Triton, 172, 199, 229, 271, 272; 53
 Troilos, 349, 355; 72
 Trophonios, 138
 Tydeus, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 323; G
 Tyndareos, 105, 106, 107, 109, 184, 238, 307, 319, 320, 321, 338; 17; F
 Tyndaridai, *see* Disokuroi, 105
 Typhoeus, 26
 Tyro, 55, 69-74, 75, 247, 248, 250, 308; C
 Tyrsenos, 339
 Udaïos, 30, 99
 Urania, 135
 Uranos, 95
 Virbius, 245
 Vulcanus, 169
 Xenodike, 195, 196
 Xuthos, C
 Zagreus, 76
 Zetes, 253, 259, 260
 Zethos, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 88, 89, 136, 287; B
 Zeus, 15, 25, 26, 27, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 45, 46, 47, 57, 59, 60, 62, 65, 66, 67, 69, 73, 74, 75, 83, 85, 86, 88, 89, 93, 97, 100, 101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 115, 121, 125, 126, 127, 128, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 139, 140, 141, 142, 146, 148, 150, 157, 160, 162, 163, 165, 167, 169, 172, 173, 174, 177, 181, 183, 185, 191, 195, 196, 200, 202, 204, 205, 212, 216, 221, 228, 229, 230, 235, 236, 237, 238, 241, 248, 250, 251, 252, 253, 258, 259, 260, 262, 263, 269, 271, 274, 275, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 289, 295, 298, 299, 302, 303, 304, 306, 308, 309, 310, 311, 313, 314, 316, 319, 320, 321, 324, 326, 342, 352, 356, 359, 360; 38; A, B, E, F, H; Zeus Agamemnon, 321; Hekaleios, 226; Herkeios, 65; Laphystios, 86, 252; Melichios, 223, 282; Phyxios, 87; Soter, 142
 Zeuxippe, 1

PLACES AND GENERAL SUBJECTS

- Abas, Mt., 168
 Abdera, 156
 abstinence, 284
 Achaia, 148
 Achelex, 197
 Acheloos, 114, 198, 199
 Acheron, 150, 179, 181, 185, 239, 261, 262
 Acherusian mere, 179
 Adrasteia, 299
 Adriatic, 147, 268
 Aegean, 116, 234, 240, 327
 Agnus, 225
 Aia, 251, 252, 262, 263, 264, 272, 275, 277
 Aiaia, 251, 252, 361
 Aigina, 75, 160, 221, 272, 310, 323
 Aigosthena, 295
aigne, 272
 Aigypnos (Nile), 40
 Aiolia, Aioliens, 69
 Aisepos, 353
 Aison, 247, 248
 Aitolia, Aitolians, 63, 106, 108, 113, 115, 120, 188, 198, 295
aix, 216
 Akarnania, 129
 Akrai, 110
 Akrokorinthos, 75, 79, 80, 274
 Akropolis, 210, 217, 234, 240, 241, 242, 243, 246
 Alalkomenai, 322
 Alban Hills, 245
 Albanians, 287
 Aleion, 84
alke, 128, 134
 Alkyonian Gulf, 171
 Alpheios, 62, 69, 73, 149, 152
 Amazons, 41, 44, 83, 159-63, 192, 225, 235, 240, 241, 242, 243, 254, 262, 349, 351, 352; 32, 33, 58
 ambrosia, 60, 252, 260
 Amnisos, 332
 Amyklai, 190, 215, 327
 Amymone, 44, 143, 144
 Anaphe, 272
anapla, 272
 Anauos, 248, 249
 Andania, 105
 Anthedon, 94
 Anthemos, 168
 Antimacheia, 162
 anti, 75, 165, 309
apate, 217
 Apesai, 140
 Aphidna, 110, 255, 238, 317, 331
 apotheosis, 172, 204, 251, 326; 46
 Appennine peninsula, 269
 apples, 118, 147, 148, 172-7, 270, 314, 316
 Arabia, 41, 173
 Ara Maxima, 170
 Archon basileus, 114
 Arcia, 29
 Ares, Island of, 262; Spring of, 37
 Argonauts, 3, 53, 73, 74, 87, 110, 116, 151, 157, 160, 176, 179, 192, 251-74, 278, 279, 281, 290, 343, 361
 Argos, 15, 25, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 54, 55, 56, 57, 62, 81, 83, 116, 128, 132, 139, 140, 142, 143, 146, 148, 154, 158, 163, 168, 182, 205, 211, 225, 232, 238, 244, 294, 295, 296, 302, 306, 321, 323, 335, 340
 Aricia, 245
ari-lugne, 230
 Arimoi, 140
 Ark, *see* chest
 Arkadia, Arkadians, 109, 116, 146, 148, 149, 150, 179, 190, 335, 337, 340

- Armenia, 278
 arrow, 82, 117, 120, 121, 144, 145,
 151, 165, 168, 186, 190, 200, 204,
 241, 326, 335, 350, 353, 354
 Artakia, 256
 Artemision, Mt., 146, 147
 ash-trees, 34, 35, 40
 Asia Minor, 45, 57, 64, 81, 82, 84,
 86, 126, 159, 194, 196, 241, 308,
 326, 337, 340
 Asine, 324
 Asopos, 35, 274
 asparagus, 220
 asphodel, 104, 355
 Athamane, 85
 Athens, Athenians, 17, 102, 103,
 114, 116, 119, 178, 181, 205, 206,
 209-28, 232, 234, 235, 239, 240,
 241, 242, 243, 244, 276, 277, 287,
 288, 290, 291, 325, 335; 52; 1
 Atlas, 175
 Attic, Attica, 4, 36, 44, 110, 130,
 205, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 215,
 225, 227, 235, 237, 238, 240, 245,
 277, 287, 300, 302, 315, 333
aullon, 312
 Aulis, 238, 328, 331, 332, 337, 340,
 342, 343
 Aventine, 169

 Bacchantes, 284, 288, 290
 Bakcheion, 286
 ball, 46, 217
 basket, 178, 213; 47
 bear (for constellation, *see* star), 117,
 316, 318; Bear Island, 256; Bear
 Fountain, 256
 beasts, 17, 42, 70, 280
 beauty, 34
 Bebrykes, 257
 beehive tombs, 9
 bees, 165, 282
 bird, 7, 88, 100, 107, 121, 150-1,
 158, 164, 227, 279, 287, 289, 353
 birthmark, 31, 59, 72
 bisexuality, 209

 Bistones, 155, 156
 Bithynia, 257, 261
 blind, blinding, (mental) blindness,
 99, 100, 101, 102, 104, 113, 132,
 258, 259
 boar, 32, 115, 116, 119, 120, 148-50,
 155, 182, 296, 318; 28
 Boiotia, Boiotians, 8, 26, 28, 29, 35,
 57, 69, 75, 85, 94, 99, 104, 128,
 138, 182, 185, 188, 194, 252, 253,
 263, 300, 322, 332
bomos, 4
 Borysthenitis, 355
 Bosporos, 257, 260, 269, 271
 bow, 74, 135, 151, 153, 160, 168,
 169, 171, 180, 188, 189, 203, 204,
 261, 271, 335, 343, 350, 356, 361;
 75
 Brauron, 238, 333
 bread, 136, 196, 197
 bride-stealing, *see* abduction
 bronze, 15, 46, 88, 107, 113, 142, 156,
 162, 174, 201, 265, 271
brotoi, 57
 brothers, pairs of, 45, 48, 63, 89, 109,
 194, 199, 294; *see also* twins,
 Dioskuroi
 buck-goat, *see* goat, 17
 Budva, 33
 bull, *see* steer
 burial, 104, 210, 286, 301, 351
 Buthoe, 33
 Busiris (city), 167

 Cadiz, 167
 cattle, 75, 77, 81, 82, 109, 110, 129,
 163-71, 181, 237, 269, 328, 354;
 see also cow
 Caucasus, xxi, 173, 247, 251, 263,
 267
 cauldron, 59, 190, 201, 273, 289, 303,
 318
 cave, lair, earth, 26, 29, 36, 37, 51,
 130, 140, 142, 144, 149, 150, 169,
 170, 179, 249, 263, 265, 270, 284,
 311, 318

- celery, wild, 142, 298
 Chalkidike, 171
 Chalybes, 262
 chariot, charioteer, team, 32, 33, 59, 64, 65, 66, 67, 73, 74, 108, 118, 135, 144, 174, 204, 224, 277, 300
 chest, 47, 72, 93, 94, 255; 3
 Chios, 113
 Chryse, 343, 350, 358
 clew, Ariadne's, 231, *see also* yarn
 club, 98, 129, 137, 141, 144, 159, 168, 171, 186, 191, 193, 195, 198, 199, 200, 219, 232
 cocks, 349
 colours, black, 77, 230, 234, 240, 271; red (purple), 164, 173, 174, 224, 227, 229; saffron, 333; white, 25, 27, 72, 77, 105, 106, 109, 230
 colt, *see* horse
 contest, 63, 66, 67, 77, 108, 117, 126, 166, 185, 188, 189, 191, 196, 197, 199, 211, 212, 231, 255, 265, 266, 272, 298, 304, 310, 320, 346; 41
 Corfu, 269
 Corinth, Corinthians, 32, 35, 36, 62, 75, 78, 80, 81, 93, 94, 95, 140, 170, 219, 274, 275, 276, 323
 corn, 12, 210
 cow, cow-shaped, 25, 26, 29, 30, 32, 33, 42, 70, 129, 138, 151, 152, 163, 164, 169, 321, 342, 344
 crab, 144, 145
 crane, 220, 234, 297
 Crete, Cretan, 9, 26, 35, 56, 60, 81, 83, 115, 117, 126, 130, 158, 188, 225, 226, 227, 228, 230, 231, 232, 233, 240, 242, 243, 248, 251, 260, 263, 271, 291, 292, 328, 360
 Crimea, 333
 Crau, Plaine de la, 169
 cross-road, 194
 cult, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 273; cult-object, 178, 191
 Cumae, 170
 cup, *see* goblet
 cypress, 340
 Cyprus, 167, 232, 360
 daemon, 65, 157, 180, 277
 Danaoi, Danae, 45
 dance, dancing-place, 148, 233, 234, 306, 312, 338
 Danube, 174, 268, 355
 Dardanelles, *see* Hellespont
 Daulis, 287
 dead, death, 14, 15, 18, 76, 116, 121, 141, 142, 144, 145, 150, 155, 156, 158, 175, 177, 183, 190, 197, 222, 223, 264, 265, 272, 282, 283, 332, 342, 353, 356, 361; cult of, 9, 10, 14; god of, 188, 356, *see also* Hades, Thanatos; realm of, 4, 14, 16, 17, 76, 101, 103, 143, 150, 170, 177-82, 185, 199, 245, 252, 258, 267, 281, 282, 283, 284, 285, 286, 355; *see also* Hades, Underworld
 Delos, 234, 291
 Delphi, 15, 28, 31, 33, 46, 86, 91, 92, 94, 95, 98, 102, 104, 128, 136, 148, 157, 190, 191, 193, 202, 203, 211, 216, 218, 250, 276, 306, 334, 335, 359
 Delphinion, 224
 deluge, flood, 52, 69, 140
 destiny, Fate(s), 13, 14, 18, 157, 283, 320, 328, 347, 352, 356
 Dia, 232, 233
 Dindymene, 257
 Dindymon, 256
 Dion, 286
 diplax, 209
 Dirke (spring), 37
 discus, 54
 disguise, 163, 192, 193
 dismembering, 58, 59, 267, 268, 273, 274, 285, 303, 304; 65
 divine child, 25, 26, 47, 54, 91, 134, 213, 214, 262, 273
 Dnieper, 355
 Dodona, 252
 Doliones, 256, 257
 dolphin, 229
 Dorians, 183, 184, 205

- double axe, 116, 191
dove, 252, 260
dragon, 26, 29, 30, 31, 81, 91, 174,
251, 262, 264, 265, 266, 270, 277,
299; 1, 67; *see also* snake
dream, 49, 80, 233, 250, 272, 286,
315, 356; *see also* sleep
Drepan, 269
Drios, Mt., 233
duck, 321
dumbness, 288, 339
dwarfs, 166
Dyros, 202
eagle, 164, 165, 173, 227, 263, 324
ear, conception by, 133
Earth, 29, 30, 34, 36, 42, 61, 166, 170,
209, 214, 221, 236, 256, 309, 314;
earth-goddess, 59, 174, 214
earthquakes, 103, 181, 244, 267
egg, 107, 184
Egypt, Egyptian, 166, 353, 360
Elai, 338
Elaius, 145, 345
Eleusis, Eleusinians, 5, 177, 178, 181,
215, 222, 243, 275, 289, 290, 301
Eleutherai, 36
Eleutheron Hydor, 182
Elis, Elean, 14, 15, 62, 64, 71, 129,
148, 151, 152, 153, 184, 185, 187,
253
elm, 176, 291, 345
Elymoi, 170
Elysion, 277, 327
Emathion, 173
~~enagimoi~~, 4
Encheleis, 33
Engonasin, 204
Enipeus, 71, 248
~~epaulia~~, 312
Ephesos, 194, 243
Ephyra, 75
Epidauron, 45, 244, 245, 323
epiphanies, 7, 271
Epirus, Epeiros, 179, 239, 359
Epoee, 35
~~eranos~~, 48, 53
Erechtheion, 211, 213, 214, 215
~~erineos~~, 222
Erymanthos, 148-50, 182
Erytheia, 164, 167, 168, 171, 172, 174
Eryx, 170
~~eschara~~, 4
Eschatiotis, 290
Eteonos, 104
Ethiopia, Ethiopians, 52, 91, 97, 168,
173, 290, 352
Etruria, Etruscans, 169, 204, 222, 339
Euboia, 93, 188, 202, 325, 332
Euenos, 108, 198, 199, 200
~~eumolpoi~~, 289
Euripos, 93
Eurotas, 111, 326
eye, 50, 51, 269, 271, 315
Fate(s), *see* destiny
feasts, festivals, 67, 74, 138, 188, 203,
210, 213, 240, 272, 295, 361
fig-tree, 222, 223
fire, 15, 169, 170, 172, 187, 202, 203,
226, 265, 312, 315, 318
fish, 161, 279, 312
fisher, 47, 48, 49, 53
flower, 267; 46
flute, pipe, 26, 138, 227
flying, 231; *see also* wings
foal, *see* horse
foundation, foundation-hero, 12, 15,
31, 45, 55, 62, 67, 68, 69, 71, 75,
105, 209, 216, 240, 291, 308, 339;
see also towns
fountains, 55, 76, 182, 206, 348
fox, vixen, 70, 130, 291
friendship, 217, 334
fruitfulness, unfruitfulness, 39, 86,
174, 310
fulmar, *see* halcyon
Gabioli, 174
Gadeira, 167
~~gale~~, 132
Gargettos, 225
Genethlion, 218

- Gerancios, Mt., 220
 giant(s), 30, 107, 111, 146, 166, 167, 170, 171, 256, 271, 324
 Gigantomachy, 171
 girdle, 159-63, 241
 Glauke, 276
 goats, bucks, kids, 58, 82, 114, 216, 261, 305, 306
 goblet, 102, 168, 174, 224, 273, 324
 gold, golden, 31, 58, 59, 64, 68, 80, 89, 93, 101, 102, 118, 129, 130, 146, 148, 161, 163, 168, 172-7, 179, 192, 193, 204, 229, 247, 250, 261, 269, 271, 273, 277, 291, 292, 303, 314, 315, 324, 329, 341, 343, 352, 354; Golden Antlers, 27; Golden Fleece, 86, 87, 157, 247, 249, 250, 251, 255, 264, 265, 266, 268, 270, 274, 303, 304; golden rain, 46, 48; 3; golden ram, 247, 303, 304, 306
 Gorgopotamos, 202
 grape, 114, 116, 346; *see also* vine
 grave, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 18, 33, 38, 45, 46, 47, 55, 57, 67, 78, 88, 103, 104, 109, 111, 135, 138, 139, 141, 142, 156, 166, 167, 196, 205, 213, 217, 226, 232, 233, 241, 243, 244, 245, 246, 262, 286, 287, 295, 300, 301, 306, 310, 327, 335, 345, 354, 359
 Great Goddess, 7, 59, 139, 140, 178
 Great Mother, 58, 93, 110, 194, 257
 great year, 31, 41, 145, 155
 Guadalquivir, xxi, 167
 guinea-fowl, 121
 Gythcion, 191
 Hades, journey to, 179, 245, 279, 281
 Hadou pylai, 165
 hair, hair-style, 129, 130, 219, 227, 245
 halcyon, fulmar, 158, 171, 257; halcyon days, 171
 Haliartos, 8, 136
 Halys, 267, 268
 hammer, 223
 hanging, suicide by, 101, 245, 257, 311
 harpe, 51
 hare, 119, 137
 hart, hind, roe, fawn, buck, 44, 85, 119, 146-8, 172, 174, 190, 268, 280, 332, 333, 338; 26
 harvest, 196
 hawk, falcon, 287, 289
 head-covering, cap, etc., 30, 50, 52, 54, 107, 111, 224, 328, 340
 heads, multiple, 82, 144, 163, 164, 180
 heaven, journey to, 203, 233; king, queen of, 25, 34, 42, 53, 58, 60, 84, 88, 107, 111, 113, 134, 143, 145, 175, 198, 204, 226, 230, 232, 236, 239, 252, 254
 Hebros, 286
 hecatomb, 157, 343
 Hekale (deme), 226
 Hekatombaion, 223
 Helene (island), 235
 Helikon, 80, 100, 137
 Hellespont, 86, 256, 271, 314, 345, 346, 354
 herd, herdsman, 26, 29, 36, 37, 42, 47, 70, 72, 73, 74, 77, 82, 94, 100, 110, 114, 135, 136, 159, 162, 164, 168, 170, 171, 181, 197, 282, 286, 288, 304, 308, 316, 338
 herm, 26
 Hermione (town), 182, 186, 323
 heroes, cult and worship of, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 57, 67, 111, 125, 126, 133, 170, 185, 192, 202, 203, 214, 226, 245, 246, 277, 279, 295, 320, 321, 323, 325, 337, 345, 354
 heros theos, 127
 hetairai, 193
 Hiera (island), 217
 hierophant, 178, 215, 289
 hind, *see* hart
 hippos, 79
 Hippukrene, 80, 100

- Hittites, 339
 homoerotic, 89, 90, 91, 284
 honey, 81, 282, 354
 hoopoe, 287, 289
 horn, horned, antlers, 29, 77, 146, 148, 199, 338, 339; 27
 horse (colt, foal, mare, stallion, steed), 16, 36, 48, 49, 53, 63, 64, 66, 67, 69, 70, 72, 73, 78, 79, 80, 82, 83, 84, 86, 89, 95, 96, 99, 107, 108, 109, 110, 118, 154-8, 160, 161, 173, 184, 188, 189, 236, 243, 244, 297, 313, 314, 321, 328, 330, 349, 357; Wooden, 357, 358
 hound, dog, bitch, 16, 60, 72, 97, 106, 113, 119, 130, 140, 143, 164, 168, 174, 177-82, 291, 292, 315
 hundred-armed, 216, 315
 hunt, hunters, hunting, 8, 12, 30, 37, 113-21, 137, 141, 146, 147, 225, 243, 248, 249, 261, 280, 291, 292, 310, 311, 318; 69
 Hydra, 143, 144, 145, 150, 164, 174, 180, 193
 Hydrophoria, 272
 Hyllos, 197, 202, 205
 Hymettos, 225
 Hyperboreans, 52, 147, 174, 185, 261
 Hyria, 332

 Iardanos, 192
 Ida, Mt., Idaean, 58, 66, 126, 228, 308, 341, 316, 317, 358; 69
 Ikarian Sea, 231
 Ilion, Ilios, *see* Troy
 Ilissos, 290
 Illyria, Illyrians, 19, 35
 immortality, 134, 172, 227, 275, 277, 286, 291, 299, 318, 323, 353
 Inachos, 25, 40, 41, 211
 insanity, *see* madness
 Iolkos, 74, 78, 155, 247, 248, 249, 250, 253, 270, 272, 273, 274, 275, 303, 310, 313, 314
 Ionian, Ionians, 126
 Ionian Sea, 268
 Irasa, 166
 Ischia, 195
 islands, 232, 251, 254, 261, 270, 271, 272, 327, 343, 355; Island of Sunset-glow, 164, 168; Islands of the Blessed, 19, 33, 175, 278
 Ismenion, 35
 Ismenos, 34
 Isthmus, 62, 63, 66, 68, 75, 77, 78, 159, 170, 171, 178, 184, 219, 220, 244, 277, 290, 298; Isthmian Games, 78, 142, 184, 187, 298
 Istria, 147, 268
 Iutros, 174, 268
 Italian, Italy, 170, 204, 245, 288, 360
 Ithaca (Ithake), 321, 322, 328, 361
 ithyphallus, *see* phallic, phallos
 ivory, 59, 224
 ivy, 88, 205, 315

 Jaffa, 52
 juniper, 266

 Kabirion, *see* sanctuary
 Kadmeia, Kadmeians, 20, 25, 29, 35, 96, 97, 139, 298
 Kaikos, 340
 Kallichoros, 262
 Kallise, 272
 Kalydon, Kalydonian Hunt, 113, 115, 116, 119, 120, 121, 198, 253, 310
 Kaphareus, Cape, 325
 Karia, 83
 Kelainai, 196
 Kelenderis, 218
 Kenaion, 202
 Kenchreai, 220
 Keos, 104
kephale, 291
 Kephalos, 291
 Kephissos, 223
ket, 352
 Kerkyra Melaina, 268
 Keryneia, 146, 172, 174, 190, 268
 Keteioi, 339

- kibisis*, 30, 51, 52, 53, 54
 Kilikia, 26
 king, kingdom, 73, 74, 76, 114, 302, 303, 315
 Kisthene, 50
 Kithairon, 36, 92, 94, 100, 104, 136, 137, 295, 301
 Kleite, 257
 Kleonai, 141, 142, 184
klytopolis, 154
 Knossos, 35, 226, 228, 230, 275
 Koichis, 74, 87, 157, 247, 251, 262, 264, 267, 268, 269, 276
 Kolonos, 102, 103, 237
 Korcula, 268
 Korydallos, 222
 Korykian, 267
 Kos, 125, 126, 127, 162, 163, 165, 166, 171, 192, 193
kosmos, 31, 38
 Kranai, 327
 Krisa, 334
 Krommyon, 220
 Kuretes, 106, 115, 120, 121
 Kydonia, 126
 Kyllene, 100
 Kyrene, 166, 282
 Kythera, 306
 Kyzikos, 256

laos, *laos*, 210
 Labyrinth, 226, 227, 230, 231, 233, 234, 240, 272, 275
 Ladon, 147, 148
 Lady of Wild Things, 7, 316
 Laketer, Cape, 162
 Lakonia, 105, 106, 107, 109, 110, 191, 238, 317, 327
 lamb, *see* sheep
 lance, spear, 64, 141, 158, 164, 165, 220, 314, 324, 325, 329, 341, 350, 352, 361
 Lapithai, 67, 149, 184, 235, 236
 Lapithos, Mt., 68
 Larissa, 40, 43, 54, 81
 Lechaion, 80
 Lemnos, 254, 255, 298, 343, 356;
 Lemnian evil, 254
 Leokorion, 215
 leopards, 118
 Lerna, 15, 16, 43, 44, 56, 143-5, 148, 164, 175, 180
 Lesbos, 58, 286, 349
 Leuke, 355
 Libethra, 285, 286
 Libya, 40, 41, 166, 167, 172, 270, 360
 lightning, 15, 32, 66, 69, 74, 84, 88, 103, 111, 157, 191, 216, 226, 229, 284, 299, 314
 Liguria, Ligurians, 169, 348
 limping, 84
 linden-tree, lime, 263
 lion (not constellation), 32, 82, 97, 98, 117, 118, 136, 137, 140-3, 145, 146, 154, 155, 193, 195, 265, 280, 285, 296, 312, 318; 25
 lion-skin, 137, 142, 167, 174, 181, 218, 324; 38
litobos sophronister, 186
 liver, 173, 263, 282
 Lucus Nemoensis, 245
 Lydia, Lydians, 38, 57, 58, 83, 89, 192, 193, 195, 196, 197
 Lykabettos, 210
 Lykia, 45, 82, 83, 261, 340, 354
 Lykormos, 108, 199
 lyre, 36, 38, 62, 234, 270, 279, 280, 282, 286
 Lyrkeia, 43
 Lyrnessos, 349

 Macedonia, 157, 171, 195, 280, 284, 285, 286
 madness, insanity, 32, 38, 45, 74, 85, 87, 91, 102, 118, 185-7, 188, 189, 190, 202, 216, 277, 283, 289, 295, 324, 328
 Maeander, river, 197
 maenads, 36, 37, 55, 176
 magic, magician, 80, 87, 118, 176, 200, 223, 253, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 271, 273, 274, 276, 292; 63

- Magnesia, 249
 meal, banquet, funeral feast, 48, 58, 59, 110, 120, 135, 210, 224, 255, 289, 305, 312, 313, 324, 335
 Makaria, 206
 Makris, 269
 Malis, Malian, 202
 Malea, Cape, 149
 mallow, 104, 113
 Marathon, 159, 206, 224, 225, 226, 228, 237
märchen, folktales, 5, 6
 mate, *see* horse
 Mariandynoi, 261, 262
 Marmara, Sea of, 157, 256, 257, 353
 marriage, wedding, 6, 19, 20, 28, 31, 32, 34, 43, 45, 48, 64, 68, 85, 108, 110, 118, 119, 130, 136, 153, 155, 163, 169, 193, 204, 217, 233, 235, 236, 243, 245, 267, 270, 290, 309, 312, 313, 314, 327, 329, 332, 338, 354; 58; god of, 126, 127; marriage-chamber, 138, 321; 67
 Mases, 323
 Mauretania, 169
 Medes, 277; Media, 278
 Megara, 220, 221, 227, 241, 287, 290, 323
 Melantian Rocks, 271
 Meles, 285
 Melos, 83
 memory, 34
 Memphis, 167
 men, mankind, mythology of, 17, 70, 75, 99, 113, 173, 209, 308, 313, 314
 Meropes, 163
 Messenia, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 116, 188, 250, 253, 327
 metal, 12
 Metapontum, 71
 Midea, 54, 68, 128, 129, 182, 302, 303
 milk, 72, 134, 272, 346
 Milky Way, 134
 Minya, 252
 Minyans, 138, 252
 Molotchia, 141
 Molossians, 239, 359
 monkeys, 194, 195
monosandalos, 248
 monster, 52, 91, 97-99, 160, 161, 264-6, 292, 342; 31, 55; *see also* sea
 Monte Circeo, 269, 361
 Monte Gargano, 323
 moon, new moon, full moon, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 35, 41, 50, 109, 111, 113, 131, 133, 140, 241, 266, 267, 275, 281, 291, 292, 293, 312, 331, 338, 361
 Mother of the Gods, 57, 118, 126, 263
 Mossynoikoi, 262
 mule, 97, 142
 murder, fratricide, child-murder, 34, 42, 63, 71, 73, 82, 89, 90, 91, 94, 95, 111, 120, 188, 189, 190, 191, 201, 223, 230, 255, 268, 277, 303, 310, 333, 334, 339, 352
 Mycenae (Mykenai), Mycenaean(s), 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 25, 44, 45, 54, 55, 56, 62, 128, 129, 132, 133, 139, 140, 142, 143, 146, 148, 149, 150, 151, 153, 154, 156, 159, 162, 171, 177, 182, 206, 287, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 314, 319, 321, 328, 334, 358
mykes, 55
 Myli, 43
 Myrmidones, 309, 350
 myrtle, 64, 217, 244
 Myrtoan Sea, 66
myrthos, 64
 Mysia, 257, 337, 339, 340, 349
 mysteries, 19, 20, 26, 28, 104, 105, 177, 178, 212, 214, 243, 256, 285, 289, 291, 305
 myth, 5, 6, 10, 14
 nativity, birth-legends, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 26, 46, 48, 80, 115, 125, 128, 129, 130, 131-6, 204, 213, 218, 227, 235, 262, 305, 306, 313, 329, 331, 338, 339

- Nauplia, 44
 Naxos, 232, 233, 291; 56
 Nea, 343
 necklace, 32, 294, 296, 297
 nectar, 60
 Nemea, 90, 137, 139-43, 145, 146, 154, 265, 298, 299; Nemean Games, 142, 299
 Nemi, Lake of, 245
 night, 42, 50, 107, 131, 163, 173, 175, 238, 266, 267, 281, 312, 338
 nightingale, 89, 287, 289
 Nile, 25, 40, 167, 360
 North Africa, 166
 numbers: '3', 34, 44, 45, 49, 50, 54, 115, 118, 131, 143, 144, 161, 164, 168, 170, 175, 180, 270, 271, 283, 284, 313, 314, 316, 350; '4', 32, 41, 62, 67, 109, 154, 169, 175, 215, 313; '5', 30, 66, 144, 316; '6', 68, 101, 129, 216, 256; '7', 31, 35, 38, 45, 81, 100, 218, 228, 275, 284, 334, 350; '8', 31, 129, 145, 185, 292; '9', 14, 49, 82, 119, 144, 167, 227, 270, 342, 349, 350; '10', 134, 145, 327, 328, 342, 350, 360; '11', 352; '12', 64, 133, 140, 144, 145, 165, 185, 189, 212, 247, 351, 352; '13', 64, 68; '14', 228, 275, 276; '17', 354; '20', 184; '30', 141, 142; '48', 43; '49', 41, 42; '50', 4, 42, 137, 138, 144, 180, 225, 253, 264, 298, 302, 315; '100', 138, 144; in general, 329; *see also* Thebes
 oak, 87, 111, 252, 264, 266, 344
 oath, perjury, 77, 250, 257, 321, 328
odysseomenos, 322
 Oichalia, 105, 188, 189, 191, 194, 201; 41
oichomenoi, 188
 Oinoe, 36, 146, 147
 Oinone, 76
oinos, 113
 Oita, 184, 201, 202, 203, 342
 Olenos, 153
 olive branch, tree, 137, 147, 185, 211, 212, 244; sacred olive, 47
 Olympia, 63, 66, 67, 74, 83, 90, 126, 142, 147, 151, 152, 162, 175, 185, 213, 356; Olympic Games, 185
 Olympos, 1, 74, 84, 111, 125, 132, 135, 158, 165, 170, 204, 260, 280, 282, 286, 302, 355; 45
 omphalos, 176, 193
 Onchestos, 75, 138
 onion, 220
 Opus, 326
 oracle, 28, 29, 30, 46, 52, 63, 85, 86, 91, 92, 93, 95, 98, 102, 128, 160, 167, 191, 201, 211, 214, 216, 218, 248, 249, 250, 274, 286, 296, 298, 300, 304, 306, 323, 328, 334, 339, 340, 355
 Orchomenos, 138, 141, 234, 252, 263
 order, rule, law, 34
 Ormenion, 184
 Oropos, 300
orphone, 281
 Ortygia, 108
 Otranto, 326
 owl, 181, 265
 paean, 226, 262
 Paestum, 131, 198
 Pagasai, 157, 247, 252, 272
palamai, 328
 Palladion, 356, 357, 359
 Pallene, 171, 210, 225
 Palestine, 52
 Panathenaia, 213, 240
 Pangaion, Mt., 285
 panther-skin, 249
 Paphlagonia, 267
 Paphos, 193
 Parnassos, Mt., 77, 78, 262, 287, 334
 Parnes, Mt., 226
 Paros, 227
 Parthenion, Mt., 117, 146, 337, 338, 339
 Parthenon, 212 (temple), 329 (women's quarters)

- Patara, 340
pegē, 80
 Peitene, 80
 Peirithoidai, deme of, 237
 Pelion, Mt., 149, 196, 237, 248, 252, 263, 309, 310, 311
 Pellana, 106, 107
pelagones, 29
 Peloponnesos, 5, 17, 57, 62, 66, 68, 71, 74, 83, 85, 129, 151, 154, 159, 164, 178, 184, 205, 217, 247, 282, 302
pelos, 309
 Pencios, 152
penelope, 321
 Pentelikoi, 225
penthos, 352
 Pephnos, 107
 Pergamon, 341
 Perkote, 256
peramos, 315
 Perscia, 55
 petrification, 53, 54
 Phaistos, 35, 360
 Phaleron, 234
 phallos, phallic, 26, 126, 295
 Pharos, 360
 Pharsalos, 314
 Phasis, 251, 262, 264, 267, 268
 Pheneos, 190
 Pherai, 155, 250
 Phikion, Mt., 97, 98
 Phlegraean Fields, 171
 Phlegyes, 28
 Phlius, 75
 Phoenicia, 27, 40, 88, 125, 360
 Phokis, 28, 38, 92, 95, 110, 334
 Pholoe, 67, 149
 Phrygia, Phrygian, 18, 58, 196, 315, 337; place on Mt. Oita, 202
 Phthia, 310, 311, 312, 314, 318, 343, 344, 349
 Phylake, 344, 346
 Pieria, 280
philas, *see* head-covering
 pines, 252
 Pisa, 62, 67, 69, 89, 90, 94, 236
 Pithekusai, 195
 Plakos, 349
 Planktai, 252, 269
 plants, 17, 42, 70, 220
 Plegades, 252
 Pleuron, 106, 115, 120, 198
 Pnyx, 242
 Po, 269
 poison, 145, 150, 201, 202, 224
 Polion, 57
politai, 240
 pomegranate, 16
 Pontinos, Mt., 143
 Pontos Euxeinus, 159, 355
 poplar, black, 176; white, 185
 Potniai, 78, 92, 95, 154
 Prasiai, 255, 291
 pregnancy, 70, 78, 80, 131, 315, 329
primai, 161
 primeval man, 29, 30, 40, 43, 57, 76, 140, 141, 209, 210; primeval woman, 35, 40, 106, 113, 308
pronymphios hynnos, 56
 prophet, *see* seer
 Propontis, 69, 256
 prototype, 1
 Psophis, 149
psychostasia, 353
 Ptelea, 291
 Pteleon, 291
 purification, 81, 82, 165, 178, 187, 190, 203, 223, 269, 352
 Pylas, 8, 9, 74, 164, 165, 168, 178, 190, 247, 253, 328, 360
 pyre, 15, 187, 196, 202, 203, 205, 297, 301, 342, 351, 354; 44
 rain, 42
 ram, *see* sheep; ram-marriage, 86
 reaping-hook, *see* sickle
 Red Sea, 173
 Reggio (Calabria), 170
 Rhamnus, 235, 238
 Rhegion, 170
rhēgnynai, 170

- Rhipaian Mountains, 174
 Rhodanos, 269
 Rhone, 269
rhytor toxon, 188
 ring, 229
 ritual, 4, 15, 127, 204, 273, 285, 295
 rocks, stones, 60, 76, 78, 79, 99, 103, 169, 211, 214, 218, 219, 220, 221, 239, 245, 252, 256, 260, 261, 264, 269, 271, 284, 325
 Roman, Romans, Rome, 169, 245, 288, 308
 Sacred Way, 223
 sacrifice, 4, 16, 17, 29, 37, 43, 59, 66, 67, 70, 71, 73, 76, 81, 86, 87, 101, 102, 114, 118, 126, 128, 133, 140, 141, 142, 159, 163, 167, 185, 196, 202, 206, 215, 216, 223, 224, 226, 227, 228, 231, 234, 245, 248, 251, 261, 262, 267, 268, 273, 275, 281, 283, 302, 304, 305, 306, 310, 311, 312, 326, 332, 333, 335, 341, 342, 343, 344, 346, 348, 351, 354, 358, 360
 saffron, 267
 saga, 6, 13
 Salamis, 116, 160, 221, 228, 290, 310, 315, 323, 325, 354
 Salmona, 69
 Samos, 116
 Samothrace, 19, 20, 26, 27, 28, 31, 35, 256, 285
 sanctuary, of Achilles, 355; of Amazons, 242; of Amphiaraios, 300; of Aphrodite, 233, 243, 244, 275; of Apollo, 35, 98, 148, 190, 224, 286, 348, 358; of Ares, 87; of Artemis, 141, 238, 243, 244, 268, 303, 333, 342; of Asklepios, 341; of Athene, 211, 213, 217, 271, 337, 358; of Demeter, 88; of Dionysos, 56, 233, 286, 345; of Hekate, 275; of Helen, 111, 126; of Hera, 44, 67, 131, 139, 162, 182, 198, 203, 275, 277, 307; of Herakles, 137, 183, 196; of Hippodameia, 68; of Hippolytos, 245; of the Kabeiroi, 19, 35; of Memnon, 353; of Orpheus, 286; of Poseidon, 63, 277; of Tantalos, 57; of Zeus, 65, 66, 142
 sandal, *see monosandalos*, shoe
 Sangarios, 193, 315, 352
 Santorin, 272
 Sardes, 192
 Sardinia, 137, 138, 205
 Saronic Gulf, 76, 244
 sceptre, 62, 68, 250, 302, 303, 307
 scorpions, 292
 Scythia, Scythians, 161, 169, 173, 174, 188
 sea, sea-god, 16, 50, 72, 78, 79, 83, 85, 86, 94, 107, 112, 176, 216, 221, 227, 228, 229, 244, 260, 271, 272, 286, 289, 290, 309, 315, 317, 325, 339, 354, 358, 360; 23; sea-monster, 52, 160, 161; 7, 31; Black Sea, 151, 159, 242, 243, 251, 260, 303, 355
 seal, 310
 seer, seercraft, 70, 81, 82, 99, 101, 258, 260, 297, 299, 300, 342, 344; *see also* soothsayer
 Sele (Silarus), river, 131, 312
 Sepias Akte, 312
 Seriphos, Seriphians, 47, 48, 50, 53, 54
 serpent, *see* snake
 sheep, lamb, ram, 16, 65, 67, 73, 85, 86, 87, 112, 125, 141, 142, 162, 163, 247, 274, 303, 304, 306, 344, 348, 354; 13
 shield, 45, 51, 164, 168, 324, 325, 329
 shoe, one shoe, winged shoe, 49, 50, 51, 53, 192, 218, 219, 224, 248, 249, 274; *see also monosandalos*
 Sicily, 110, 170, 269
 sickle, sickle-shaped, 144, 161, 196, 269
 Sigeion, Cape, 354
 Sikyon, 36, 94, 126, 127, 196, 306
 silver, 102, 184, 261, 264, 271, 312, 342, 343, 350, 361

- sin, 59, 60, 66, 187-92, 232, 325, 332
 Sinope, 262
 Sipylos, 57, 58, 60, 64
 Skaian Gate, 348, 353, 357
 Skamandros, river, 314, 359
 Skarphe, 104
 sky, *see* heaven
 Skyros, 245, 246, 329, 356
 sleep, 162, 163; *see also* dream
 smith, 222, 223
 Smyrna, 57, 285
 snake, serpent, 16, 19, 29, 30, 31, 33, 82, 88, 90, 97, 100, 101, 107, 134, 140, 143-5, 148, 155, 165, 172, 173, 174, 176, 178, 180, 182, 193, 198, 209, 212, 213, 214, 221, 239, 251, 264, 266, 270, 272, 277, 282, 292, 299, 312, 326, 339, 342, 343; 19; snake-marriage, 155
 Solymoi, 83
 song, 88, 98, 158, 175, 196, 269, 279, 280, 282, 286, 289
 soothsayer, soothsaying, 35, 92, 99, 101, 116, 167, 247, 253, 261, 266, 316, 332, 355
 Sparta, Spartan, 8, 16, 33, 35, 55, 105-12, 138, 170, 184, 190, 205, 215, 224, 235, 238, 307, 321, 326, 335, 338, 360
 spear, 82, 99, 111, 119, 286, 291, 292, 323, 329, 356, 358
 sphaira, 217
 Sphairia, 217
 Sphettos, 225
 spindle, spinning, distaff, 77, 193, 231, 356
 spring, 29, 34, 36, 37, 44, 49, 55, 76, 80, 100, 106, 113, 143, 144, 157, 174, 194, 197, 206, 211, 214, 256, 257, 270, 276, 298, 316, 338, 342; *see also* fountains
 stallion, *see* horse; stallion-wedding, 70, 86, 236
 stapyle, 114
 star, constellation, heavenly body, 53, 59, 111, 193, 198, 203, 204, 216, 230, 232, 245, 252, 264, 266, 286, 304
 steer, bull, ox, 4, 25, 38, 39, 42, 70, 80, 82, 125, 158-9, 181, 195, 198, 224, 226, 227, 228, 230, 231, 232, 244, 265, 267, 268, 321, 344, 358; 50; bull-wedding, 25, 26
 Stoa Poikile, 242
 stone, stoning, 30, 33, 38, 52, 54, 57, 60, 61, 78, 79, 111, 169, 171, 178, 179, 180, 181, 193, 210, 218, 219, 220, 232, 256, 265, 271, 276, 279, 282, 286, 300, 324, 325, 329, 342, 348; *see also* petrification
 strings, string-music, 135, 318
 Strophades, 259
 Strymon, 284, 290
 Symphalos, 150-1, 179, 262; Stryphalian birds, 30
 Styx, 179, 318
 sun, 38, 50, 54, 61, 100, 102, 151, 230, 231, 250, 251, 258, 273, 276, 277, 285, 304, 305; sun-god, *see* Helios; sun-child, sun-boy, 54, 89; sun's car, sun's cup, 168, 172, 174, 273; 36
 Sunion, Cape, 235
 swallow, 287, 288, 289
 swamp, 113, 117, 144, 148, 150-1, 179, 323
 swan, 106, 157, 158, 290, 297, 348
 swine, sow, farrow, 220, 225, 269
 swing, 245
 sword, 30, 51, 90, 134, 141, 164, 179, 180, 198, 200, 218, 219, 224, 232, 233, 259, 359
 Sylus, 195
 Symplegades, 253, 269
 synoikia, *synoikismos*, 209, 240
 Syttis, 270
 Tainaron, 178, 179, 239, 253, 282
 talents, 58
 Tangiers, 167
 Tantalos (urn), 57
 Tantalos (mountain), 58

- Taphians, 129, 130, 131
 Tartessos, 167, 168, 172
 Tauric peninsula, 333, 335, 355; *see also* Crimea
 Taygetos, 106, 111, 146, 148
 Tegea, 338, 302, 306, 337, 338
teireia, 99
 Teleboans, 129, 130, 131
teletr, 345
telos, 43
 temple, *see* sanctuary
 temple-burning, 35
 Tempe, Vale of, 282
 Tenedos, 347, 358
 Teneros, 35
 Teumessos, 130, 291
 Thasos, 27, 125
 Thebe, 349
 Thebes, Egyptian, 353
 Thebes, Thebans, 5, 8, 14, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 29, 31, 33, 34-39, 40, 46, 54, 57, 68, 69, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 102, 104, 105, 116, 125, 128-39, 140, 185, 186, 187, 191, 205, 227, 241, 245, 264, 274, 279, 285, 287, 288, 294-301, 302, 309, 322; Seven against, 3, 4, 5, 119, 294-301, 322
 theft, robbery, 77, 96, 109, 131, 189, 190, 191, 195, 336, 344, 357, 361
 Themiskyra, 161, 241
 Thera, 272
 Therapne, 111, 327
 Thermodon, 159, 161, 262
 Thermopylai, 194
 Theseion, 215, 242, 246
 Theseis, 219
 Thespias, 136, 138
 Thesprotians, 239
 Thessaly, 54, 67, 69, 71, 74, 81, 85, 116, 139, 149, 155, 157, 184, 188, 235, 237, 247, 250, 252, 263, 282, 309, 310, 317, 343
 Thestia, 106
 Thetideion, 314
 Thorikos, 291
 Thrace, Thracian(s), 19, 27, 28, 154-8, 163, 192, 215, 216, 254, 257, 280, 281, 282, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 289, 290, 347, 348; 64
 throne, 250
 thunder, 74, 103, 283
thymra, 348
 Thynians, 257
 Thynias, 261, 262, 271
thysia, 4
 Tibarenians, 262
 Tiber, 71, 169
 Timavus, 147
 Tingis, 167
 Tiryns, 44, 45, 54, 62, 74, 81, 82, 83, 128, 129, 133, 139, 140, 143, 154, 160, 179, 182, 185, 189, 190, 201, 295
 Tithorea, Tithoreians, 38, 88
 Tmolos, 58, 192
 towns, foundation of, 5, 29, 38, 54, 55, 57, 71, 74, 85, 106, 141, 156, 191, 247, 356; *see also* foundation
 Trachis, 184, 188, 200, 202
tragodia, tragedy, 17, 18, 32
 tree, 38, 61, 148, 174, 176, 185, 270, 279, 280, 342, 344
 Tremiti, le isole, 323
 Tretos, 140
 triad, trio, 35, 296; *see also* number, '3'
 trident, 44, 82, 211, 214; 23
 Trikorythos, 302
 Trinakria, 269
 triple body, 164, 168
 tripod, 136, 148, 190, 191; 42
trizeleus, 131
 Trionis, Lake, 51, 270, 271
 Troizen, 181, 217, 218, 225, 243, 244, 245, 277, 323
 Trojan War, 3, 74, 160, 161, 162, 254, 285, 296, 301, 302, 308-18, 319-30, 331, 337, 341, 342, 347-61; 1
 Troy, 58, 111, 160, 161, 162, 183, 203, 238, 241, 308-18, 319-30, 340, 343, 344, 345

- trumpet, 56
 turtle, tortoise, 220; 49
 twins, 34, 36, 37, 40, 45, 69, 70, 71,
 72, 74, 105, 106, 107, 109, 111,
 131, 133, 134, 137, 146, 184, 187,
 247, 253, 259, 308
 Tyrians, 125
 Tyrrhenia, Tyrrhenian Sea, 169, 269,
 361
 underground, 15, 46, 102, 111, 113,
 150, 152, 214, 230, 233, 250, 260,
 267, 288, 345
 Underworld, 1, 4, 9, 14, 15, 16, 17,
 18, 19, 33, 43, 48, 56, 61, 74, 76,
 78, 88, 97, 101, 102, 103, 113, 120,
 121, 126, 132, 141, 143, 148, 151,
 153, 154, 156, 160, 172, 176, 177-
 82, 183, 186, 189, 197, 198, 201,
 204, 216, 219, 220, 222, 223, 226,
 232, 235, 236, 238, 239, 240, 245,
 248, 252, 254, 258, 260, 265, 267,
 272, 273, 277, 279, 281, 282, 283,
 284, 285, 288, 291, 297, 298, 305,
 310, 320, 325, 327, 345, 352, 355,
 360; 2, 11
 Veneti, 147
 vine, wine-grapes, 17, 88, 114, 195,
 196, 257, 340, 341
 vineyard, 75, 116, 195, 199
 vintage, 116
 Violet, 188
 Vitalia, 170
 vitulus, 170
 vixen, *see* fox
 Volo, 247
 war-god, *see* Ares
 water, waters, 42, 43, 44, 55, 61, 71,
 72, 93, 114, 143, 172, 173, 200,
 211, 212, 257, 272, 276, 282, 290,
 312, 318
 weasel, 132
 wheel, 282
 willow, 176
 wind, 69, 85, 112, 154, 174, 290
 wine, 12, 63, 102, 113, 114, 115, 149,
 155, 176, 196, 236, 255, 285, 313,
 354; wine-god, *see* Dionysos
 wings, winged, 80, 83, 97, 98, 107,
 112, 163, 164, 171, 259, 290, 352
 winnowing-basket, 346
 wolf, 36, 42, 77, 147, 261, 329
 world, space of, 60
 wound, wounded, invulnerability, 44,
 54, 116, 150, 158, 164, 165, 180,
 200, 238, 299, 300, 318, 324, 326,
 340, 341, 343, 356
 wreath, wreathing, crown, garland,
 142, 176, 185, 210, 227, 229, 231;
 54
 wrestling, 135, 141, 156, 163, 166,
 167, 170, 172, 179, 222, 232, 310,
 311, 312
 Xanthos, horse, 313; river, 314
 yarn, ball of, 231
 Zodiac, 143, 145, 198; *see also* star



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