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# The Sea as a Two-Way Passage between Life and Death in Greek Mythology

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# The Sea as a Two-Way Passage between Life and Death in Greek Mythology

by

**Marie-Claire Anne Beaulieu, B.A. M.A.**

**Dissertation**

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# The Sea as a Two-Way Passage between
# Life and Death in Greek Mythology

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The sea has two major roles in Greek mythology. It is associated with the voyage into Hades, and as the primordial water, Oceanus, it represents vitality and even eternal life. Until now, scholars have viewed these two aspects as fundamentally antinomic. I propose to treat them as complementary to show that the sea is an intermediary locus between the earth and the Underworld that allows initiatory passages to adulthood, heroization, and divinization by symbolic death and return to life.

For women, immersion, just like a nuptial bath, is a one-way, irrevocable transformation from *parthenos* to *gynê* that separates them forever from their families. In myths such as those of Danae and Auge, girls find a husband and a new community in foreign lands as well as a new identity as queens after having been exposed on the sea by their families. The chest in which they are shut with their illegitimate children conveys the double meaning of the myth: it saves the heroines' lives, but it was also used as a bier in Antiquity. Conversely, girls such as Britomartis leap into the sea to get away from

their lovers. Their immersion is an escape from the power of Eros, an anti-initiation into adulthood. This denial of Eros is also present in Sappho's leap at Leucas. The poet escapes Eros and enters Hades by leaping down the cliff and she returns to the earth free from passion.

For adolescent men, immersion into the sea is a two-way passage accomplished under no compulsion. Taras' and Theseus' passage in the sea results in their recognition as the sons of gods. They return to their communities as fully integrated leaders.

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# The Sea as a Two-Way Passage between Life and Death in Greek Mythology

## Introduction

Greek literature often represents the sea as a dangerous path of communication between distant lands. To the ancients, though crossing the sea by sailing could be profitable, it involved numerous risks including shipwreck and death away from home. For sailors who suffered the misfortune of dying at sea, entry into Hades was prohibited because their bodies did not receive the requisite funerary rites.[1] Nevertheless, some mariners did return from their adventures at sea with wealth and wondrous tales of distant lands. Some even survived shipwreck and came home after their near brush with death. Thus, the sea is associated in ancient thought with a vast array of hazards, though it was often a profitable and necessary passage between lands.

In this study, I will demonstrate that such a conception of the sea is operative throughout Greek myth, where it functions primarily as a passage between life and death. In order to foreground the role of the sea in the Greeks' understanding of the transformation of life into death and mortality into divinity, my study will center around immersion myths. The research presented here will facilitate a comprehensive understanding of these myths and the significance of the sea to Greek metaphorical thought. The meaning of the sea to an ancient maritime society is self-evident and can be expressed in practical terms, as a vector of commerce or military engagement between neighboring lands. Such pragmatic concerns yield, on a metaphorical level, a conception of the sea as a passage between the sensible world and the imagined world beyond it.

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[1] Hes. *Op.* 618-694; Pl. *Grg.* 511c-512c. Cf. the condemnation of the generals at Arginusae for not recovering the bodies of the dead: Arist. *Ath.Pol.* XXXIV; Xen. *Hell.* I 7, 1-34; *Mem.* I 1, 18; Pl. *Ap.* 32b; Diod.Sic. XIII 97-100. See Radermacher, 1949, Georgoudi, 1988, Goyens-Slezakowa, 1990-1991.

Immersion in the sea is used in myth to represent life-changing transitions such as marriage and the passage to adulthood. Myth allegorizes these transitions, with typical exaggeration, into a passage from life to death and back by an immersion in the sea which completely transforms the protagonists. Some of the myths which I will analyze are the stories of Danae (marriage), Britomartis (failed marriage), and Theseus (male coming-of-age).

The symbolism of sea-water plays an important role in these myths. As Jean Rudhardt has pointed out in his influential study, *Le thème de l'eau primordiale dans la mythologie grecque* (Bern, 1971), sea-water represents a source of life, fertility, and vitality, and is a powerful agent of purification. The primordial water which flows in the cosmic river Oceanus is even associated with ambrosia, the liquor that preserves the immortality of the gods. Rudhardt has emphasized the role of the sea in the main Greek cosmogonies, Homeric,[2] Hesiodic, and Orphic.[3] He stresses that in these three cosmogonies, the sea is the first element from which all gods and creatures spring. Rudhardt's remarks are useful in analyzing immersion myths, since the protagonists of these myths are always revitalized and transformed by their passage in the sea, and many even acquire eternal life.

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[2] For a discussion of the role of water in the Homeric cosmogony which follows Rudhardt's general views, see Dietz, 1997, *passim*.

[3] Earlier scholarship on the sea in Greek mythology and culture includes Klement, 1898, Usener, 1899, and Lesky, 1957. These works amount to little more than a collection (albeit extensive) of the ancient sources relating to water and the sea.

The mythical Oceanus, from which all other rivers spring and fill the sea, lies at the very edge of the world and encircles the earth.[4] Beyond this river are found the Isles of the Blessed and other islands on which gods live, such as that of the Hesperides. Pindar and Euripides note that sailing on or beyond Oceanus is forbidden to mortals; they can only do so once they are dead.[5] Therefore, Oceanus functions as the boundary between the worlds of men and gods, as well as between life and death. By association with the Titan from which they flow, the sea and all rivers retain the same symbolic function: they constitute the limit of the world of humans, and the underwater realm is restricted to the gods and the dead. Many characters who have experienced an immersion, such as Ino and Theseus, find themselves in the company of the gods[6] and funerary iconography often uses marine themes to describe the passage to the afterlife.[7] Mythical immersions into the sea thus represent an incursion beyond the boundaries normally allotted to mortals and put them in contact with the gods as well as with death.

By crossing the frontier represented by the sea, the protagonists of immersion myths undergo a symbolic death that allows them to enter in contact with the divine. As a result of this symbolic death and subsequent return to life, youths become adults and return to their communities as leaders.[8] As Paolo Scarpi has pointed out, Odysseus' homeward journey was a model for the initiation of ephebes through symbolic death at sea.[9] The hero, lost at sea for ten years, is presumed dead. In his voyage on the sea, he encounters gods and monsters, and even comes into contact with spectres from the

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[4] See Nesselrath, 2005.

[5] Pind. *Ol*. III 43-45; *Nem*. III 20-23; *Isthm*. IV 11-13; Eur. *Hipp*. 742-750. See Segal, 1965, 133.

[6] Ino: Pind. *Pyth.* XI 2; *Ol.* II 28-30; Eur. *Med.* 1282-1289; Ov. *Fasti* VI 481-562. Theseus: Bacchyl. XVII 90-132.

[7] Wrede, 1973, *passim*.

[8] See also Gallini, 1963, Segal, 1965, Buxton, 1992, and Duchêne, 1992, who have all insisted on the function of the sea in mythology as a boundary and on its important role in myths of coming-of-age.

[9] Scarpi, 1988, *passim*.

Underworld. He is thus symbolically dead. Odysseus' return to land in Ithaca is a return to life. He takes control of his household and kingdom again and regains his place as leader of the community. Since Odysseus was often used as a model for the education of youths, his adventures at sea can be interpreted as an allegory for coming-of-age, a model for youths to follow.

Similarly, René Ginouvès finds that immersion into water is at the core of many mystery cults and mantic rites.[10] The purity that immersion bestows on the participants allows them to enter into contact with the divine. Ginouvès was inspired by István Borzsák's 1951 article, wherein the latter points out that the initiates of mystery cults are "born a second time", as in the notable cases of the Dionysiac and Eleusinian mysteries.[11] Borzsák compares this rebirth to the common pattern in which a mythical character obtains a new life and a new name after an immersion. Examples include Melicertes who becomes the hero Palaemon, and Hylas who is divinized after his leap into the Nymph's spring. Through symbolic death, the myths allegorize the transformation undergone by humans at crucial transitional moments in their lives.

Two animals repeatedly appear in immersion myths: dolphins and aquatic birds. These animals master many different elements: the dolphin lives in the sea, but jumps freely above the water and is a playful companion to men. Aquatic birds can swim on the waves and dive underneath as well as fly in the sky and nest on earth. Because they can transition between different elements, these animals represent metaphoric transitions between worlds: life and death, human and divine. For instance, youths who undergo the trials of coming-of-age, such as Theseus and Enalos, are guided by dolphins in their journey under the sea. Arion, who barely escapes death at the hands of the Corinthian pirates, is brought back to safety by a dolphin. Ino, after her leap into the sea and divinization, acquires the shape of a marine duck, the shearwater. Alcyone, who undergoes a similar transition through the sea but does not become a goddess, is metamorphosed into a kingfisher.

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[10] Ginouvès, 1962, esp. 299, 327-337, 375-390, 416-417.

[11] Borzsák, 1951, *passim*.

The appearance of these animals in myths is gender-specific: we will see that aquatic birds are mostly associated with females in mythology and funerary iconography, while dolphins are only associated with males, particularly ephebes, in mythology and funerary iconography. The reasons for this specificity are still unclear, but probably relate to the erotic connotations of both animals. Aquatic birds appear in domestic and erotic scenes as lover's gifts and women's pets, while dolphins are said to fall in love with boys in many folkloric tales. Thus, the animals may represent the erotic characteristics of males and females, respectively, and represent them as they transition to a different status through the sea. Dolphins may also be connected with young males because of the cult of Apollo Delphinios, which was especially practiced by ephebes. The dolphin perhaps represents the god's agency in ephebic transitions.

In agreement with the scholars mentioned above, I view the function of the sea in Greek myth and cult as a boundary between men and gods as well as between life and death. I therefore reject Gustave Glotz's interpretation of immersion myths as ordeals.[12] In his influential 1904 study *L'ordalie dans la Grèce primitive*, Glotz has argued that both mythical and ritual immersion in the sea is a trial destined to leave the ultimate fate of a condemned individual up to the gods. For him, immersion is a judicial process in which the innocence of a person is proven by his or her miraculous survival of a deadly experience. However, although the procedure of trial by ordeal is well attested in the Middle Ages, and Glotz refers to this evidence frequently throughout his book, it has not been convincingly proven to have existed in ancient Greece.[13] Also, this interpretation disregards the symbolism of the sea and water in Greek culture and narrowly focuses on the result of the immersion without considering the transformative effects of the process on the protagonists.

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[12] Glotz, 1904[1979]. Glotz was followed by many scholars among whom most recently are Briquel, 1985, and Piettre, 2005.

In my study, I will use an eclectic approach that combines elements from structuralism, functionalism, and the myth-ritual school. I follow the structuralist procedure of isolating and comparing underlying mythical patterns from a synchronic point of view. It is also important to account for the evolution of myths through time and space, as one myth did not carry the same significance to a Greek audience from one period to the next. Therefore, whenever our sources permit it, I will combine synchronic analysis of the myths with a diachronic perspective in order to highlight the development and evolution of each individual myth's significance. I will track the chronological evolution of each myth by comparing the earlier sources with the later ones. We will see that certain elements of a myth which are specially emphasized at an early period tend to fall into the background at a later time. For instance, in the myth of Danae, her illegitimate pregnancy and exposure at sea by her father are emphasized in literary and iconographical sources in the fifth century, while in the Hellenistic period and later the myth is increasingly represented in erotic contexts to illustrate Zeus' adventures with mortal women. Despite these breaks in time and space, I will identify some overarching patterns of significance that are always associated with a myth, such as Danae's transition from the status of *parthenos* to that of *gynê*. Thus in myth, whereas some meanings are added and others become outdated throughout the centuries and in accordance with the author's intentions—all variations which are important in interpreting our sources—it is possible to identify some permanent and significant structures in each story.

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[13] Michael Gagarin 1989 [1986], 29 note 34 argues against the existence of such trials in the Greek world, especially trial by combat.

From functionalism I adopt the idea that there exist permanent social structures in each society that subsume the individual and last beyond human life-span. These structures are interdependent and function together in view of a common purpose. In this context, myth, like religion, is an expression of social cohesion. It represents the basic groups of society and their functional interactions (e.g. men and women in myths about marriage and procreation). However, as with structuralism, it is important to nuance this approach with a parallel diachronic analysis, because societies evolve over time. The interaction between their basic groups therefore evolves too, and the balance of power and influence changes.

Lastly, my study is also influenced by the myth-ritual school. Unlike early proponents of this approach, I do not believe that ritual gave rise to myth.[14] Rather, following Walter Burkert, I believe that myth and ritual share common paradigms but are independent. In cases where they converge, they reinforce each other, with the myth giving the ritual a divine status and the ritual giving the myth the quality of being rooted in actual practice.[15] Thus, it is necessary to analyze myth and ritual jointly in order to discover their respective significance, but one must remain aware of the fundamental differences in nature and evolution that exist between them.

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[14] Harrison, 1991[1903], 163.

[15] Burkert, 1979, xi-xii.

I will begin my dissertation with a study of the symbolism of the sea and water in Greek culture (Chapter 1). In this chapter, I explore the web of significance attached to the sea as a boundary between the worlds of gods and men as well as between life and death. To illustrate my interpretation, I analyze the myth of Glaucus of Anthedon in detail. This Boeotian fisherman inadvertently ate an herb of immortality, became mad, and threw himself into the sea where he became a divine merman with oracular powers. Glaucus' passage to the world of the gods is illustrated in marine terms: he abandons the earth for the sea, that is, the land of men for the realm of the gods and is metamorphosed into a half-man, half-fish creature.

In Chapter 2, I study the significance of the sea as a locus of symbolic death in myths such as the story of Danae, where young nubile women are exposed on the sea. I argue that the myth represents the transition of girls from one *kyrios* (the father) to another (the husband) at the time of marriage. The period between these two phases of stability is represented by the exposure at sea, where the girls are adrift and at risk of dying, and corresponds to the fact that marriage was often compared to the death of the bride in Greek literature and culture.

In Chapter 3, I examine myths in which maidens leap into the sea to avoid intercourse with a suitor, as in the case of Britomartis. I argue that these myths represent the opposite of the transition to married status and adulthood seen in Chapter 2. By leaping into the sea, Britomartis and other maidens ensure that they will keep their virginity forever. However, by refusing to integrate into the community through marriage, they set themselves apart from other women, a fact that is represented in the myths by their acquisition of a heroic or divine status. These maidens are frequently associated with aquatic birds. Some, like Asteria, are metamorphosed into these birds, while others, like Aphaia, receive them as cultic dedications. Because of the strong erotic connotation of aquatic birds in relation to women and because the birds are masters of many elements, and thereby become symbols of transition, I argue that this association represents the failed erotic potential of the maidens and their transition to the sea, away from the human sphere.

In Chapter 4, I study dolphin-rider myths. I show that the dolphin was strongly associated with the passage between life and death in Greek culture. Therefore, in these myths the dolphin represents the symbolic death and/or passage to the afterlife of Arion, Hesiod, and Melicertes. In these cases, the dolphin represents the passage of the protagonists through death. For Hesiod and Melicertes, this transition leads to burial and hero-cult. For Arion, it leads back to life. Other dolphin-rider myths such as those of Theseus and Enalos represent the symbolic death of ephebes during the trials they undergo before their reintegration into the community as adults. These youths ride dolphins as a sign of their symbolic transition between life and death, and back. Conversely, many folkloric stories, such as that of the famous dolphin of Iasos told by Pliny,[16] present ephebes who die while riding a dolphin. These stories represent a failed coming-of-age, a transition to adulthood cut short by untimely death. Lastly, I will examine dolphin-rider stories connected to colonization under the guidance of Apollo, as in the case of Taras/Phalanthos and Icadios. I will demonstrate that these stories are closely linked to the influence of Delphi in colonization.

Finally, in Chapter 5, I study the complex myth of Ino-Leucothea. This myth, which greatly evolved through the centuries, combines many elements studied elsewhere in this dissertation. Ino leaps into the sea and is transformed into the goddess Leucothea. Her leap therefore represents her transition between the human and divine worlds. In the process, she acquires the shape of a shearwater, a marine duck that can swim underwater and that is elsewhere seen in connection with women in erotic scenes. This new shape underscores Ino's transition and her feminity. In a version of the myth that became popular after Euripides represented it on the stage, Ino is also the nurse of the baby Dionysus. For this reason, her leap can be read as a passage into the Dionysiac sphere: she was widely recognized as the first Bacchant, and her leap is often attributed to Dionysiac frenzy.

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[16] Pliny IX 27.

The Dionysiac associations of the sea are manifold and complex and cannot be treated at length in this dissertation. In the Appendix, I offer some avenues for future research on this topic by presenting a reading of the myth of the Tyrrhenian pirates. I argue that the pirates are transformed into dolphins by Dionysus not as a punishment, but as a sign of the pirates' integration into the Dionysiac universe, where they become the god's servants and companions. I also offer an interpretation of a group of fifth-century Attic and Etruscan vases which depict revelers being transformed into dolphins. I argue that this metamorphosis, like that of the Tyrrhenian pirates, represents the revelers' temporary passage into the divine world of Dionysus through their enjoyment of the symposium.

# Chapter 1. Oceanus and the Symbolism of Water in Greek Mythology

Greek religion never constituted a uniform set of beliefs. The Greek pantheon and the cult rendered to its gods varied widely among the different city-states, and it further varied in time, some gods and cults becoming more prominent and others obsolete throughout the centuries. Likewise, the Greek conception of the universe and its creation varied greatly in time and space. However, as Jean Rudhardt has pointed out, water divinities always played an important and consistent role in all the major Greek cosmogonies from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period.[1] In this chapter, I will argue that cosmogonies reflect, with the typical exaggeration of myth,[2] the qualities and beliefs attached to water in Greek religion.

In Greek cosmogonic myths—as told in the Homeric and Hesiodic poems as well as in other later sources—the primordial water is first and foremost a passage, a means of transition from one place to another. Pontus represents the sea as a navigable path, albeit a difficult one,[3] while Oceanus encircles the earth and thus marks the boundary between the world of the living and that of the dead. In this pre-Olympian conception, Oceanus is the gateway to a region of plenty where gods live and where humans spend the afterlife. Therefore, the primordial water in Greek cosmogonies marks the boundary between distant countries, life and death, and between men and gods.

In this chapter, in order to provide the background for the detailed mythological analyses that will follow, I explore the significance of water in cosmogonic myths, using mostly Archaic and early Classical sources since they are the most explicit on the question. I study Oceanus in depth because this complex mythical figure reflects the multi-layered conception of water in early Greek culture. Then, I will examine rituals related to water including nuptial baths and the ritual cleansing of the initiates at Eleusis, and draw parallels between the rituals and the mythological conceptions of Oceanus. Lastly, I study the myth of Glaucus of Anthedon in detail. This Boeotian fisherman acquires immortality by fortuitously eating a magical plant, leaping into the sea, and becoming a divine merman. I will argue that this myth foregrounds many of the characteristics of water studied in this chapter: transition, purification, symbolic death, and revitalization.

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[1] Rudhardt, 1971, *passim*.

[2] Bremmer, 1984, 272-275; Dowden, 1989, 37.

[3] Chantraine, *s.v.* Pontus: “considéré en principe comme une voie de passage, d’ailleurs difficile”.

## Pontus

The sea is called by several names in ancient Greek: πόντος, Ὠκεανός, θάλασσα and ἅλς. Among these names, only Pontus and Oceanus were personified as water divinities. As for ἅλς and θάλασσα, the more generic names of the sea in Greek, they are never personified; they represent saltwater[4] and the sea as a large expanse of water,[5] respectively.

Jean Rudhardt has pointed out that Pontus, borne parthenogenically by Gaia, is associated with danger in the Hesiodic poems. Pontus' water is salty and bitter, he is agitated by violent storms,[6] and he fathers some monstrous creatures such as Phorcys, Thaumas, Eurybie and Kêto, as well as the benevolent shape-shifting Nereus.[7] It is not surprising that Hesiod insists on this aspect of the sea, because the danger of seafaring is an important theme throughout the Hesiodic corpus, especially the *Works and Days*. The etymology of his name reinforces these characteristics of Pontus. According to Pierre Chantraine, πόντος, which derives from the Indo-European root *pent-, refers to a passageway from one shore to another, but one that is difficult to cross.[8] Indeed, the Indo-Iranian cognates of the word, for instance Sanskrit *pántāḥ*, designate a path strewn with obstacles.

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[4] Chantraine, 1968, *s.v.* Hals: "vieux nom-racine du sel".

[5] Chantraine, 1968, *s.v.* Thalassa: "terme à la fois le plus usuel et le plus obscur".

[6] Hes. *Theog*. 131-132.

[7] Hes. *Theog*. 233-239. See also: Hyg. *Fab*. pr.7; Apollod. I 2, 6; Schol. Ap.Rhod. *Arg*. I 1165.

These characteristics of Pontus appear in the Homeric poems. In these epics, Pontus designates the sea, sometimes in a generic manner, as in ἵκηαι γαίης καὶ πόντοιο,[9] but often also as a path of communication between countries (νῆας ἐΰσσέλμους περάαν ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον)[10] and one that is particularly difficult or dangerous to cross (πόντον ἐπ’ ἀτρύγετον κακὰ πάσχειν οὐδ’ ἀλάλησθαι).[11] Thus, Pontus represents the danger inherent to sea-voyage, the elemental force of the sea as an obstacle between faraway lands, but also a path, a means of communication.

### Oceanus

Oceanus is a far more complex character than Pontus because he unites three closely related but different concepts in Greek mythology and literature. First, he is a Titan, son of Gaia and Uranus, and a river that encircles the earth. Second, he is a body of water identified with the Atlantic Ocean. Third, he is an anthropomorphic river-god depicted as an old man with horns and a snake-tail. Unfortunately, the etymology of

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[8] Chantraine, 1968, *s.v.* Pontus; also Watkins, 1985, *sv*. *pent-.

[9] *Il*. VIII 478-479.

[10] *Il*. II 613.

[11] *Od*. II 370.

Ὠκεανός remains obscure and cannot help us in understanding the significance of his character in Greek mythology.[12]

## Oceanus: Titan

As a mythical character, Oceanus is a Titan, described as a large river encircling the earth, the son of Gaia and Uranus.[13] He appears as such mainly in the Homeric and Hesiodic poems, but also in Classical tragedy and in the works of a few later mythographers and lexicographers. Oceanus' offspring with his sister Tethys are the Oceanides and all the rivers and springs of the earth, even those that flow underground such as Styx.[14] Therefore, all waters, except rainwater, come from Oceanus and are in contact with him, inasmuch as they all spring from him and ultimately flow into the sea. In some cosmogonies, especially the one implicit in the *Iliad*, Oceanus is even described as the origin of all creatures and gods.[15]

Luscious vegetation grows on the shores of Oceanus and its humid breezes give Golden Age luxuriance to the Elysian Fields,[16] the Garden of the Hesperides, the Isles of the Blessed, and the land of the Hyperboreans. Ambrosia, the liquor that preserves the immortality of the gods,[17] comes from Oceanus' waters.[18] The moon, the stars, the sun, and the dawn bathe in Oceanus every day to regenerate their brilliance, which gives a role of cosmic importance to the Titan.[19] A late Orphic Hymn even calls Oceanus θεῶν ἅγνισμα μέγιστον.[20]

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[12] Chantraine, 1968, *s.v.* Oceanus. The word appears to be non-Greek.

[13] Hes. *Theog*. 133; *Il*. XVIII 607-608; *Scut*. 314; Aesch. *Prom*. 136-143; fr. 74, 3 (Radt); Apollod. I 1, 3; Diod.Sic. V 66. Acheloos

[14] Hes. *Theog*., 361, 368, 789.

[15] In the *Iliad*, Oceanus is called "father of all" by Hera: *Il*. XIV 200-201; 244-246; 301-302. Cf. Thales, DK 11, A1; 11A, 12-13; *Orph.Fr*., 15, 16, 25, 107 (Kern).

[16] *Od*. IV 568.

[17] The word ἀμβροσία itself, according to Chantraine, 1968, *s.v.* βροτός designates an immortal substance, the food of the gods.

[18] Doves bring ambrosia to Zeus from Oceanus: *Od*. XII 62; Moero fr. 1 (Powell)=Ath. 410e and 491b-c. Hyg. *Fab*. 182 and 192: Ambrosia is a daughter of Oceanus. On certain coins of the Roman imperial period (Cook, 1940, III, 980 for sources) Oceanus is represented with the ἀμβροσίαι πέτραι from which ambrosia flows. To rejuvenate Aeson, Medea puts sand washed in Oceanus in her potion: Ov. *Met*. VII 267. On the connections between ambrosia and Oceanus, see Rudhardt, 1971, 84 and 95-97.

Oceanus' flow is powerful and eddies with deep whirlpools.[21] It is unclear where this river of cosmic proportions springs from,[22] but the Hesiodic and the Homeric poems tell us that Oceanus constantly flows back on himself in an eternal circuit; indeed, one of his most common Homeric epithets is ἀψόρροος.[23] Despite this circular configuration, Oceanus is situated in the extreme West, the land of the setting sun, which is also the direction of the land of the dead. Beyond Oceanus lie Hades, the Isles of the Blessed and various islands on which gods reside such as the Garden of the Hesperides.[24]

Thus, in early Greek literature, sailing beyond Oceanus is equivalent to descending into Hades, or dying. Odysseus has to cross Oceanus to reach Hades,[25] the dead suitors follow Hermes above the waters of Oceanus,[26] as do Heracles to reach the Island of the Hesperides[27] and Perseus who defeats the Gorgons and the Graiae, the granddaughters of Pontus and Gaia.[28] This voyage brings the heroes to the land of the dead and back and so symbolizes their victory over mortality.[29]

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[19] Dawn: *Od*. XXIII 347; Mimn. XI 4 (West)$^{2}$. The Moon: *h.Sel*. 7-8. The Sun: *h.Herm*. 68-69; *h.Hel*. 15-16; Stes. 8, 1-3 (PMG). The star Arcturus: Hes. *Op*. 566.

[20] *Orph*. 83 (Quandt).

[21] Ὠκεανὸν βαθυδίνην: Hes. *Theog*. 133; *Op*. 171; βαθυρρόου Ὠκεανοῖο: *Il*. VII 422; *Od*. XI 13, *h.Herm*. 185; ποταμοῖο μέγα σθένος Ὠκεανοῖο: *Il*. XVIII 607; βαθυρρείταο μέγα σθένος Ὠκεανοῖο: *Il*. XXI 195.

[22] Hes. *Theog*. 281-283 mentions that the horse Pegasus was born near the sources of Oceanus, but does not specify their location. Likewise, Pind. fr. 30 (Snell-Maehler$^{4}$): the Moirai gather their horses near the sources of Oceanus.

[23] E.g. Hes. *Theog*. 776; *Il*. XVIII 399; *Od*. XX 65. L.G. Pocock, 1962, 1, has interpreted this epithet as referring to the reverse tidal currents flowing westwards from Gibraltar.

[24] *Od*. XI 639; XXIV 11; Hes. *Theog*. 215, 275, 518; Apollod. II 5, 11.

[24] Hes. *Theog*. 274-279.

[25] *Od*. XI 639. See Nesselrath, 2005, 156-157, for comments on the direction of Odysseus' voyages.

[26] *Od*. XXIV 11.

[27] Hes. *Theog*. 215, 275, 518; Apolld. II 5, 11.

From this description of Oceanus, we gather that the Titan, in early Greek literature and in some later authors, represents a primordial divinity from which all waters flow and to which all return.[30] Life, in the form of vegetal luxuriance and divine immortality (ambrosia) comes from his waters.[31] However, Oceanus also represents death, since he stands at the boundary of the earth and Hades, between the land of the living and that of the dead.[32]

## Oceanus and the Atlantic Ocean: Geography and Mythology

Oceanus retained a liminal character in the late Archaic and Classical periods, inasmuch as he remained the imaginary boundary between the land of the living and that of the dead. However, some new geographical conceptions became mixed in with the mythological image of Oceanus, and the Titan became identified with the Atlantic Ocean. Thus the Pillars of Heracles, or Straits of Gibraltar, became the entrance to Oceanus and to the land of the dead.

Pindar identifies the Pillars of Heracles with the entrance into the mythical Oceanus. The poet indicates twice that it is forbidden for men to go any further than the straits.[33] In his fourth *Isthmian Ode*, Pindar says that the glory of the Cleonymides, Melissos' family, will reach the Pillars of Heracles, the limit of the human world.[34] Euripides, in the *Hippolytus*, echoes this conception of Oceanus. The chorus sings:

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[28] Hes. *Theog*. 274-279.

[29] Many centuries later, Hesychius glosses the phrase Ὠκεάνοιο Πόρον as “the air in which the souls of the dying fly away”. This gloss is difficult to interpret, but in my opinion, it signifies that the lexicographer imagines the souls of the dying flying above Oceanus, as if on a pathway, to reach their final destination in Hades.

[30] For this reason, Raymond Bloch, 1985, 133 has compared Oceanus to the Irish god Nechtan, who is the master of a well whence all rivers flow and return.

[31] Dietz, 1997, *passim*.

[32] The figure of Acheloos, in the Archaic period, competed with Oceanus as a cosmic stream encircling the earth. It rapidly gave way to the more popular Titan but retained a cult, especially at Dodona. See D’Alessio, 2004, *passim*; Isler, 1970, 109-120.

> Ἑσπερίδων δ' ἐπὶ μηλόσπορον ἀκτὰν ἀνύσαιμι τᾶν ἀοιδῶν, ἵν' ὁ πορφυρέας ποντομέδων λίμνας ναύταις οὐκέθ' ὁδὸν νέμει, σεμνὸν τέρμονα κυρῶν οὐρανοῦ, τὸν Ἄτλας ἔχει, κρῆναί τ' ἀμβρόσιαι χέονται Ζηνὸς παρὰ κοίταις, ἵν' ὀλβιόδωρος αὔξει ζαθέα χθὼν εὐδαιμονίαν θεοῖς.[35]

For the tragedian too, the Pillars of Heracles are the entrance to the mythical Oceanus, forbidden to sailors, where the Islands of the Hesperides lie and where the sea and the sky meet.

Besides this mythico-geographical representation of Oceanus appears the staunchly realistic conception of Herodotus. The historian denies the existence of a continuous body of water encircling the earth against other geographers such as Hecataeus of Miletus.[36] He also questions the existence of the Hyperboreans.[37] Later geographers and travelers such as Pytheas and Posidonius also shared this view.[38] As for Aristotle, he refers to the Atlantic Ocean as the Outer Sea (ἡ ἔξω θάλαττα), to distinguish it from the Mediterranean.[39]

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[33] Pind. *Ol.* III 43-45; *Nem.* III 20-23.

[34] Pind. *Isthm.* IV 11-13.

[35] Eur. *Hipp.* 742-750. See Segal, 1965, 133.

[36] Hdt. II 23; IV 8, 36, 45. See Nesselrath, 2005, 154.

[37] Hdt. IV 36. Romm, 1989, passim, argues that Herodotus leaves the question of the Hyperboreans' existence open. On the origin of the name of the Hyperboreans, see: Harmatta, 1955-1956, *passim*.

[38] See Nesselrath, 2005, 154, with bibliography.

[39] Arist. *Mete.* I 13, 350a22; II 5, 362b18-30. Exloration of the Atlantic started in the archaic period, and was done especially by Phocaeans, who sailed to Tartessos for precious metals and tin. After Phocaea's resources were exhausted by the Persian Wars, Massilia, its daughter colony, took up the exploration of the Atlantic. See Roller, 2006, 1-21 for a list and a discussion of sources.

## Oceanus: Anthropomorphic River-God

While some realistic geographical conceptions of Oceanus were developed in the early Classical period, new iconographical representations of him surfaced at the same time that kept this primordial river a mythological character but gave him an anthropomorphic form. On black and red-figure pottery, Oceanus is represented as an old bearded man, sometimes with a bull's head or horns, as is common for river-gods, or with crab claws on his head and shells in his beard.[40] Sometimes the god also appears as an old man with a snake-like lower body.[41] This depiction of the Titan became more and more popular in the Hellenistic period, until it commonly adorned mosaics, fountains, and even the coinage of certain cities in the Roman period.[42] This anthropomorphic form allegorizes the sea.

## Oceanus and the Old Men of the Sea

The depiction of Oceanus as an old man and his representation with hippalektryones and other such marine creatures sometimes makes him hardly distinguishable from Triton, Poseidon, Acheloos, Nereus, and Proteus, whose iconography is remarkably similar.[43]

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[40] Eur. *Or*. 1377-1378: Ὠκεανὸς ταυρόκρανος. On the iconography of Oceanus see: Rudhardt, 1971, 77; Foucher, 1975, *passim*; Paulian, 1975, *passim*; Tölle-Kastenbein, 1992, 447-454; Dietz, 1997, 35-43.

[41] -*CVA* 350099, Athenian black-figure *dinos*, ca. 600 BC, London, British Museum, 1971.11-1.1. Wedding of Peleus and Thetis. Various divinities, identified by inscriptions, among whom Oceanus with a snake body.

[42] See Foucher, 1975, Brommer, 1971.

[43] When they are not identified by inscriptions, these gods are virtually indistinguishable. Examples of ambiguous representations include:

-*CVA*, 4390, Athenian black-figure cup, Etruria, sixth cent. BC, Paris, Musee du Louvre, F145. Poseidon or Nereus riding a hippocamp.

-Athenian black-figure cup, sixth cent. BC, Como, Museo Archeologico, 19, *CVA*, 1789: Triton between draped men holding dolphins (Nereus and Poseidon?), Nereids.

-Athenian black-figure *lekythos* from Tarentum, New Haven (CT), Yale University, 1913.112, *CVA* 8833: Poseidon or Oceanus on hippalektryon;

These gods, particularly Proteus and Nereus, besides their iconographical representations, also have in common with Oceanus that they are Old Men of the Sea.[44] These old men have seen the world since its very inception, and therefore know everything, even the most secret abysses of the sea. Among them, Oceanus was born from the first cosmic entities, Gaia and Uranus. The commentator Heraclitus, writing about the Homeric poems in the first century A.D., thought that Oceanus contained the essence of all things, and that he therefore gave rise to Proteus, a god who could take any shape and knew everything.[45] Because of this special knowledge and experience, the Old Men of the Sea have oracular powers and are able to direct men on the mysterious sea, which is their most frequent role in Greek mythology.[46] They are also wise and give advice in times of need, as the character of Oceanus in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* shows.[47]

Nereus and Proteus are shape-shifters, which is a special characteristic of sea-gods (we can also add Thetis to this group, who is not an old man but has oracular powers and is a shape-shifter).[48] Shape-shifting can be connected with the power of sea-water to change objects by erosion and by encouraging the growth of shells, corals, and

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-Athenian black-figure *kyathos*, Lugano, Private: XXXX11675, *CVA* 11675: Poseidon or Oceanus on hippalektryon;

-Athenian red-figure *hydria*, ca. 400 BC, New York (NY), Metropolitan Museum, 21.88.162, *CVA* 11677: Poseidon or Oceanus on hippalektryon. Doerig, 1983, believes that these vases represent Oceanus because of the hippalektryon.

[44] S.B. Luce, 1922, *passim*, studying the representations of Heracles fighting a sea-monster (a myth for which we do not have a literary record) has argued that Triton and Nereus are in fact the same character because they are two manifestations of the Old Man of the Sea. Gudrun Ahlberg-Cornell, 1984, esp. 102-103, has followed these conclusions and provided a more detailed analysis of the motif. For the Oriental counterparts (and perhaps models?) of the Old Man of the Sea and sea-monsters in general, see Shepard, 1940, *passim*. On the iconography of Acheloos, most of the time represented as a bull or as an old man with horns, see Isler, 1970 (with a comprehensive catalog).

[45] Heraclit. *All*. 64-67; Rudhardt, 1971, 21-23.

[46] Vernant, 1979, 29-50; Bloch, 1985, 127.

[47] Doerig, 1983, 147.

[48] For Thetis' shape-shifting see Apollod. III 5, 1; Ov. *Met*. XI 218-264.

other marine life. For instance, Plato, in a famous passage of the *Republic*, which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, describes the changes undergone by Glaucus of Anthedon, so dramatic that it is impossible to tell that he had been a man before.[49] We can also think of Odysseus who, after his shipwreck and his long exposure to salt-water, lands on the shores of the Phaeacians and scares the maidens with his raw skin damaged by sea-water: σμερδαλέος δ’ αὐτῇσι φάνη κεκακωμένος ἅλμῃ.[50] Thus, the shape-shifting powers of the Old Men of the Sea represent the transformative powers of the sea, which changes the color, texture, and, in the case of Glaucus, the very nature of those who fall into its brine. It also represents the simple fact that the sea changes shape and color constantly. The omniscience of the Old Men of the Sea represents the mysteries hidden in the abysses of the sea: these deities, because they reside beneath the waves, possess knowledge unattainable to humans and deliver it in the form of oracles. For Heraclitus, as we have seen, this omniscience came from the fact that the Old Men of the Sea were primordial divinites who has seen the world since its inception and therefore knew everything.

To summarize this section, Oceanus constitutes a threefold concept in Greek mythology and literature that greatly evolved from its earliest appearance in Homer and Hesiod to the Roman period. First, in the Homeric and Hesiodic cosmogonies, Oceanus is a Titan, the father of all rivers and the origin of all underground water. His stream marks the boundary between the earth and Hades, between the land of the living and that of the dead. In fact, the description of death as a sea-voyage is a common metaphor throughout antiquity. For this reason, it is forbidden for living humans to sail on Oceanus. Second,

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[49] Pl. *Rep*. 611d. See Piettre, 2002, *passim*.

[50] *Od*. VI 137.

Oceanus is a geographical concept identified in the early Classical period with the Atlantic Ocean, the Outer Sea, as opposed to the more familiar Mediterranean. The mysterious waters lying beyond the Pillars of Heracles remained, for Pindar, the entrance to the world of the dead, while Herodotus and Aristotle pragmatically thought of a wide expanse of water. Lastly, Oceanus was an anthropomorphic god depicted from the Classical period onwards as an old man with horns and sometimes a snake-like lower body, a representation that likened him to other Old Men of the Sea such as Proteus and Nereus.

These overlapping aspects of Oceanus changed greatly over time. Despite this constant evolution, two main features consistently characterize Oceanus throughout the centuries. First, he is a locus of transition between life and death or between far away lands (in which case he is similar to Pontus). Second, he is associated with mysteries unknowable to ordinary mortals, most notably the afterlife and immortality. This second characteristic is no doubt related to the fact that the deep sea conceals an invisible world. It is literally a different universe into which humans cannot penetrate. Therefore, gods are imagined living there, and the ultimate secret from which men are prevented, immortality, also resides in the waters of Oceanus, or beyond them, where ambrosia comes from. In the following pages, I will argue that these important features of the primordial water reflect the religious and mythological significance of sea-water in Greek culture.

The characteristics of the mythical Oceanus are shared by the sea and rivers in Greek mythology and literature. On a mythological level, these connections are warranted by the identification of Oceanus as the father of all rivers and origin of all water, except rainwater. At a more pragmatic level, the sea and rivers, because of their depth and their intimate connection with the ground were imagined to be in association with the world of the dead and the gods.

Perhaps for these reasons, mythology draws little distinction between immersions into salt and freshwater. This is especially true of later myths such as that of Cycnus. In this myth, the protagonist is metamorphosed into a swan after leaping into a lake.[51] The leap and its result closely mirror those of myths in which the protagonists leap in the sea. It may be that in later times, the idea of a descent underwater became more important in the myths than the nature of the body of water involved.

In ritual, fresh and salt water are distinguished, but they serve similar purposes, which are all related to purification. Individuals always purify themselves with fresh water before entering temples, in nuptial baths, as well as after murder, childbirth, and after incurring other types of pollution.[52] As for salt water, it is used to purify houses after a death.[53] Many sources also attest that the sea could purify any pollution without ever being polluted.[54] Both salt and freshwater could cure madness.[55] Lastly, both salt and freshwater were used for rituals involving the washing of statues, sometimes for the same gods in different locations.[56]

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[51] Ant.Lib. XII (quoting Nicander); Ov. *Met.* VII 371-379.

[52] Ginouvès, 1962, 234-319.

[53] Moulinier, 1952: 80.

[54] Aesch. *Pers.* 578; Eur. *I.T.* 1193; Hipp. *Morb.Sacr.* I; *Etym.Magn.* 127, 13.

[55] Madness cured in the sea: Ar. *Vesp*. 118 with scholia; Iamb. *Myst.* III 10; Ov. *Met.* XV 325. See: Gallini, 1963, 74-75. In Sophocles' *Ajax* 654-656, the hero bathes by the sea to purify himself from his imaginary crimes as well as to get rid of his madness: See: Ginouvès, 1962, 372. Madness cured in freshwater: Ov. *Met.* XV 317-335 (a list of springs and lakes that cure or provoke madness); Paus. VIII 19, 2-3 (a drink from the spring Alyssos ("Curer of Madness") in Arcadia could cure a man rendered mad or wounded by an enraged dog); Schol. *Od.* III 489; Ps.-Plut. *DeFluv.* XIX 2 (a drink from the river Alpheios, or a plant growing in it, was said to cure rage, the "sacred disease", as well as other mental afflictions). The Proetids are cured from their madness by immersion into a spring: see Dowden, 1989, 75-86.

[56] Statue of Hera bathed in the sea at Samos: Ath. XV 672c. In her mystery cult at Nauplia, it was said that Hera bathed every year in the spring Canathos to recover her virginity: Paus. II 38, 2-3. The *xoana* of

Thus, both myth and ritual show only superficial differences between salt- and freshwater. Therefore, in this dissertation, I will analyze myths of immersion into the sea and freshwater side by side. While I recognize the difference that the Greeks saw between the two types of water, especially in ritual contexts, this difference does not affect the significance of the myths that I study.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will study the connection of the sea and rivers with the underground and Hades in order to show the intimate links between the deep sea and the deep earth, two realms forbidden to humans. These connections make the sea and rivers a privileged locus for transition, a characteristic that is reflected in many ritual uses of water, especially fresh water. By virtue of their connections with Hades, the sea, rivers, and underground water help to achieve some difficult transitions in the lives of humans which require a symbolic death such as coming-of-age and marriage. I will conclude with an analysis of the myth of Glaucus of Anthedon, a story that combines many aspects of water and sea-water studied in this chapter: transition away from the earth, metamorphosis, acquisition of eternal life, and acquisition of divine knowledge in the form of oracular powers.

## Sea- and Freshwater in Ritual: A Symbol of Death and Transition

The infernal connections of the sea and rivers, coupled with the important links between underground water and cleanliness, vitality, and fertility, are underscored in ritual, where sea and underground water are used for ceremonies connected to important

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Artemis and Athena were bathed in a lake at Ancyra: *Anal.Boll.* XXII, 1903, p. 320-328. The *xoanon* of Athena was bathed in the sea at Athens for the Plynteria (Phot. and Suda *s.v.* Hoi Nomophylakes; *IG* II$^2$, 1006, 1). The statue and chariot of Athena were washed in the river Inachos at Argos (Call. *Lav.Pall. passim*). See Ginouvès, 1962, 283-298; Kahil, 1994, *passim*.

transitions, whether real or symbolic. These ceremonies include mainly marriage, in which the bride undergoes a symbolic death, rites of coming-of-age for boys, and mystery initiations, as in the case of Eleusis. In these rituals, especially in the case of marriage rites, the difference between salt and freshwater is significant, while in myth, it is not, as mentioned earlier.

Young women's transition into adulthood was effected by their marriage and the birth of their first child which transformed the maidens into women.[57] The nuptial ceremonies, after the official engagement, began with a bath. Young brides, and sometimes grooms too,[58] bathed in the water of specific rivers and springs, sometimes located in caves, before their wedding to purify themselves and to take in the fertility of water.[59] In myth, this conception of water is reflected by having a spring flow on the island of the Hesperides just in front of the nuptial chamber of Zeus and Hera, thereby ensuring the fertility and purity of the divine couple.[60]

Euripides, in *Hecuba*, provides us with an example of the failed conferral of fertility to a young bride. The mourning Trojan queen has to bathe her dead virgin daughter Polyxena with salt water, because the Greeks will not allow her otherwise.[61] In a pathetic scene which strongly connects Polyxena's death with her missed wedding, Hecuba washes her daughter's body with salt water, thereby stressing the eternal sterility of this young woman and her untimely passing away.

The nuptial bath, especially in rivers, was also thought to take away the virginity of the bride and to prepare her for motherhood. This conception is motivated by the fact that rivers and many water deities are male and are perceived as deflowering the brides.[62] The Pseudo-Aeschines even mentions that Trojan brides bathed in the Scamander before their nuptials to offer their virginity to the river.[63] These beliefs are reflected in Achilles Tatius, who tells us of a virginity test in the water of an underground spring.[64] At Nauplia, Hera was said to renew her virginity every year in the spring Canathos in connection with her local mystery cult.[65] Perhaps this bath began the annual reenactment of Hera's annual sacred marriage to Zeus by making her a young bride again, who performs the nuptial bath as a virgin to finally consummate her marriage with her husband? As Aphrodite Avagianou has put it: "*Hera's bath in Kanathos accomplished the passage from goddess-wife to goddess-virgin before her new marriage.*"[66]

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[57] Dowden, 1989, 1-3.

[58] Aesch. *Prom*. 552-559; Eur. *Phoen*. 347-348 with schol.: Polynices, because he got married in a foreign city, did not accomplish the customary rite of bathing in the Theban Ismenos.

[59] Ginouvès, 1962, 265-282.

[60] Eur. *Hipp*. 741-751.

[61] Eur. *Hec*. 609-614. See Serghidou, 1991, 78.

The symbolic deflowering of the bride by underground water also has an important connection with symbolic death. It has long been recognized that marriage in Greece was closely related to funeral ceremonies. In fact, the bride was perceived as dying to her childhood self, which is why she consecrated her toys and a lock of her hair to the goddess of transitions, Artemis, or to goddesses of marriage such as Hera, the Nymphs, and others.[67] A good expression of this complex symbolism is found on *loutrophroi*, vessels used to carry water for the nuptial bath, which frequently represent funeral scenes.[68] *Loutrophoroi* were also used as grave-markers for those who died unmarried, thereby stressing that they died before making this transition.[69] At Locri Epizephyri, there was a cult of Persephone as protectress of marriage. On the plaques dedicated by brides in the sanctuary, marriage was associated with the rape of the goddess by Hades and her chthonic journey to his realm.[70] Thus, the contact of the bride with underground water, sometimes in caves[71] or in the underground chamber underneath a Nymphaeum,[72] symbolized her death to her childhood, her *katabasis* underground (just like Persephone's) and her *anabasis* and marriage represented her rebirth as a woman.

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[62] Dowden, 1989, 123.
[63] Ps-Aeschin. *Ep.* 10, 3-8; Gallini, 1963, 81.
[64] Ach. Tat. VIII 13-14.
[65] Paus. II 38, 2-3.
[66] Avagianou, 1991, 40.
[67] Seaford, 1987, 108 note 25; Redfield, 1982, 190-191. In Classical Sparta, the long hair of the bride was completely cropped, if we believe Plutarch's account (*Lyc.* XV 3).
[68] Redfield, 1982, 189-190; Vial and Vérilhac, 1985; Avagianou, 1991; Oakley and Sinos, 1993; Rehm, 1994.

Lastly, the mystery cult of Demeter made use of the chthonian associations of the sea to represent the symbolic death of the initiates. During the Greater Mysteries of Eleusis, the initiates bathed in the sea to purify themselves and their offerings (piglets) before the ceremony.[73] The ritual immersion in the sea was held on 16 Boedromion, on the second day of the Greater Mysteries, under the supervision of the hierophants. The *mystai* all ran together into the sea shouting ἅλαδε μύσται! In the Roman period, the hierophants of Eleusis also received a new name, and they inscribed their birth names on tablets which they cast into the sea so as to be rid of their old identity and assume completely that of a hierophant.[74] This change of name underscores the purpose of the ritual: the initiates died to their old selves, and acquired a new identity after their rebirth.[75] As René Ginouvès has put it: "*[Le rite] n'implique-t-il pas davantage une sorte de consécration, le passage d'un état à un état supérieur, et ne devrait-on pas admettre qu'il débarrasse l'individu de ses souillures, mais qu'aussi il le dépouille de sa vieille personnalité?*"[76]

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[69] Dem. 44, 18; Phot. *s.v.* Loutra; Hesych. *s.v.* Loutrophoros; Suda *s.v.* Loutrophoros; Poll. VIII 66. See Dillon, 2002, 220.

[70] Prückner, 1968, 68-84; Sourvinou-Inwood, 1978, 104.

[71] At Athens, water for the nuptial bath came from the source Callirhoe, flowing in a cave at the basis of the Acropolis: Thuc. II 15; *Etym.Magn. s.v.* Enneakrounos Krênê; Poll. III 43; Phot. *s.v.* Loutra. See Ginouvès, 1962, 267-268.

[72] Marchetti, 1995, 217-248, esp. 236-237 (κατάβασις of brides to underground spring), and 241 (Danae's underground prison is compared to a Nymphaeum because it is fecundated by the golden rain).

[73] *IG* $1^2$, 94 (5th cent. BC); Aeschin. *Ctes.* 130 with scholia; Plut. *Phoc.* 28; Hesych. *sv.* Rhotioi; *Etym.Magn. s.v.* Hiera Hodos. See Ginouvès, 1962, 376.

[74] *IG* $II^2$ 3811; Gallini, 1963, 64-65; Ginouvès, 1962, 379. According to Ginouvès, this rite may be a remnant of an older immersion ritual reserved to the priestly class of Eleusis.

The rite also recalls the legend of Eumolpos, the mythical founder of the Eleusinian mysteries. As a child, this son of Poseidon was cast into the sea by his mother Chione in fear of her father's reaction at her pregnancy. Poseidon received Eumolpos in the sea and brought him to Ethiopia to be reared by the blessed people of this land. After many adventures, the grown-up Eumolpos came to Eleusis and founded the Mysteries.[77] As a third century AD inscription from the Athenian Acropolis states, Eumolpos was the illustrious father who could go under the sea without dying (lines 9-10):

> Νῦν ἤδη παῖδες κλυτὸν οὔνομα πατρὸς ἀρίστου
> Φαίνομεν ὃ ζωὸς κρύψεν ἅλος πε[λάγει].[78]

The examples presented in this section show that the sea and rivers were perceived as having a direct connection with the Underworld in Greek culture. One could reach Hades by navigating on the sea and Oceanus, but also by performing a *katabasis* into the water and under the sea-bed. Jean Rudhardt writes: "*Océanos est la limite entre le visible et l'invisible, entre le ciel et le monde souterrain.*"[79] I would add that the sea, springs, and rivers also function in this way, and mark the boundary between the earth and Hades.

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[75] This change of name and aggregation into a community by means of an immersion into water has been likened to the Christian ritual of baptism. See Borzsák, 1951, *passim*,

[76] Ginouvès, 1962, 380.

[77] Apollod. III 15, 4; Eur. fr. 349 Nauck$^2$; Skyphos of Hieron, Beazley, *AVP* p. 301 no. 3: shows Eumolpus, Poseidon, Dionysus, and Amphitrite.

[78] IG II$^2$ 3811.

[79] Rudhardt, 1971, 91.

## Glaucus of Anthedon

The ancient and popular story of Glaucus of Anthedon well illustrates the functions of water in Greek mythology, as well as its connections with death, transformation, and divine knowledge.

Five characters in Greek mythology are named Glaucus: the fisherman of Anthedon, the son of Sisyphus (Glaucus of Potniae), the son of Minos, the son of Hippolochos (Glaucus the Lycian), and the lesser known son of Antenor. The myths surrounding the first three involve death and rebirth, striving for a change of status, and the use of a magic plant. These elements and the identical names have led to a certain degree of confusion in the ancient sources and to an effort towards the reconciliation of the three myths by modern scholars. However, despite some important points of concordance, the myths of Glaucus of Anthedon, of Potniae, and the son of Minos have a different significance and present three rather different aspects of the human condition and destiny. Glaucus of Anthedon is an example of a fortuitous encounter with the divine leading to a definitive passage to divinity through water. Glaucus of Potniae, the son of Sisyphus, is punished for his misdeeds and devoured by his own horses.[80] He represents divine chastisement. Glaucus son of Minos is brought back from the dead by the seer Polyidos, and learns the art of divination from him.[81] The myth thus represents contact with death, rebirth, and the acquisition of divine knowledge, all characteristic which bring the child closer to the fisherman of Anthedon, although the circumstances of the myths are very different. Among the three Glauci, only the fisherman of Anthedon is divinized and is reborn to a new life, represented by his leap into the sea and metamorphosis into a merman with oracular powers.

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[80] Schol Eur. *Or*. 318; Strab. IX 2, 24; Ael. *N.A*. XV 25; Schol. Verg. *Georg*. III 267; Paus. VI 20, 19. For an analysis of the biological and psychological origins of myths concerning man-eating horses, see Devereux, 1975, *passim*. Kurtz, 1975, *passim*, analyzes the iconography of the man-eating horse in relation to the myth of Heracles and the horses of Diomedes. On this topic, see also *LIMC*, *s.v.* Abderos. For an analysis of the significance of the horse in funerary icongraphy see Malten, 1914, *passim*.

[81] Apollod. III 1, 3; 3, 1; III 17, 1-21; Tzetz. to Lyc. 811; Palaeph. *Incr*. 27; Hyg. *Fab*. 136; *Astr*. II 14, 5; Ath. II 51d; Schol. Pind. *Pyth*. III 96; Apostol. V 48; Sotades bowl in the British Museum: Polyidos and Glaucus in the tomb, Polyidos is aiming his staff at one of the snakes (Athenian whiteware, 5th cent. BC, British Museum D5). See Muellner, 1998, 30 for a photograph (also photographed in *LIMC*, *s.v.* Glaucus II no.1).

Glaucus of Anthedon was a fisherman who, having caught some fish, placed them on the grass by a fountain to wash them only to find that they had been revived.[82] Concluding that the herb on which the fish were lying was magical, Glaucus ate it and was made immortal. However, the gods drove him mad and he threw himself into the sea where he was metamorphosed into a half-man, half-fish creature of terrible aspect; in fact, he was sometimes called a beast.[83] Glaucus became an oracular divinity wandering in the sea. In some sources, he only predicts disasters,[84] while in others his oracles are helpful to sailors and men in general.[85] In the scholia to Plato's *Republic*, Glaucus leaps into the sea because he cannot prove his immortality to anyone or show them the fountain from which he drank to become immortal.[86] In yet other sources, Glaucus attains immortality by eating the magic plant, but he keeps growing older and eventually throws himself into the sea.[87] Many lucky or unlucky erotic adventures are credited to him and Nonnos makes him a part of Dionysus' marine entourage.[88]

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[82] Our sources on Glaucus of Anthedon are: *Od*. IV 365; Pind. *Pyth*. IV 20; Pl. *Rep*. X 611e-612a; Schol. Pl. *Rep*. 611d (Glaucus drinks from a fountain of immortality); Aesch. *Glaucus Pontios*, 26-35, Nauck$^2$ (Glaucus is an immortal merman who wanders in the sea after eating a plant of immortality); Eur. *Or*. 362; Schol. Eur. *Or*. 364 (Glaucus became an immortal merman after eating a magic plant; he gives oracles to sailors); Ps.-Arist. *Const. Delos* (p. 465 Rose)= Ath. VII, 296c (Glaucus settled in Delos with the Nereids and gives oracles to those who desire them); Ap.Rhod. I 1310-1329; Schol. Ap. Rhod. II 767 (Glaucus is an oracular marine divinity); Verg. *Aen*. VI 36; Servius to Verg. *Georg*. I 427 (Glaucus is the father of the Sibyl of Cumae); Ov. *Met*. VII 232-233; XIII 898-968, XIV 1-74 (lengthy description of Glaucus' leap in the sea after eating a plant of immortality); Paus. IX 22, 6-7 (Glaucus is an oracular divinity); Plut. *Cic*. 3; Diod.Sic. IV 486 (Glaucus prophesizes for the Argonauts); Tzetzes ad Lyc. 754; Palaephat. *Incr*. II 23 (Glaucus became immortal after eating a plant of immortality); Ath. VII 296a-297c (various traditions about Glaucus, notably his love for Melicertes and Ariadne); Nonn. V 356; XLIII 75 and 115(Glaucus fights in Dionysus' army); Apostol. VII 58 (II p. 409 Leutsch-Schneidewin); comic allusions to Glaucus: Eub. fr. 18-19 (Kock); Antiph. fr. 76 *PCG* II; Anaxil. fr. 7 *PCG* II; Macr. *Sat*. VI 5, 13; Philostr. *Im*. II 5; Claudian. X 158; See *LIMC*, *s.v*. Glaucus for representations.

[83] Aesch. fr. 57 (Mette): ἀνθρωποειδὲς θηρίον; Pl. *Rep*. X 611d: παντὶ μᾶλλον θηρίῳ ἐοικέναι.

[84] Schol. Pl. *Rep*. 611d; Nausicrates in Ath. VII 296a.

[85] Eur. *Or*. 362-366; Scholia Eur. *Or*. 364; Arist. *Constit. Delos* (p. 465 Rose) = Ath. VII 296c; Verg. *Aen*. VI 36; Paus. IX 22, 6-7; Diod. Sic. IV 48; Nicander in Ath. VII 296f (Apollo taught Glaucus mantic).

[86] Schol. Pl. *Rep*. X 611d.

Glaucus' acquisition of immortality is the result of eating a magical plant growing near a spring[89] or drinking from the spring itself[90] and leaping into the sea. All these elements recall the epic of Gilgamesh, in which the hero finds the plant of immortality after a descent underwater.[91] What is particular about the myth of Glaucus is that immortality is a fortuitous discovery for the fisherman. Greek mythology is replete with similar stories in which mortals unwittingly see the gods[92] such as those of Actaeon, [93] Tiresias,[94] and Haliacmon,[95] or, what is worse, make use of divine privileges, such as Tantalus stealing the gods' nectar and ambrosia[96] and Maeander distributing the sacred objects of Cybele to his army

Glaucus' leap into the sea cleanses him. As early as Aeschylus' satyric drama *Glaucus of the Sea*,[97] Glaucus is represented as being purified of his mortal elements by his jump into the sea: καλοῖσι λουτροῖς ἐκλελουμένος δέμας.[98] Ovid has also provided a version of this purification in which Tethys and Oceanus receive the fisherman and transform him into a god.[99] Such a metamorphosis recalls those of Ino[100] and Helle,[101] who are purified of their mortality by the Nereids and received under the sea by Poseidon. This purification can also be compared to that of Oedipus, who purifies himself in the running waters of a stream before disappearing in the company of an unknown god and becoming a beneficial hero to the city of Athens in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*.[102] Glaucus' leap into the sea removes the mortal elements in him and prepares him to be in the company of the gods.

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[87] Scholia Eur. *Or*. 364; Tzetzes ad Lyc. 754; Schol. Ap.Rhod. *Arg*. II 767.

[88] Nonn. V 356; XLIII 75, 115.

[89] On the plant of immortality, see Deforge, 1983, 33-39. Deforge connects the plant with Cretan myths of cures and purifications by plants. However, the connection of Glaucus of Anthedon with Crete is far from certain. The shrine of Glaucus on Crete described by Winnington-Ingram, 1959 actually presents very little to argue for the cult of this god on the island. See also Callaghan, 1976, *passim*.

[90] Schol. Pl. *Rep*. 611d.

[91] Deforge, 1983, 36.

[92] *Il*. XX 131; Eur. *Ion* 1550-1551 ; Pl. *Soph*. 254a.

[93] Hes. *Theog*. 977; Eur. *Bacch*. 337–40; Call. *Lav.Pall*. 109; Ov. *Met*. III 138; Apollod. III 4, 4; Hyg. *Fab*. 181; Paus. I, 44, 8; IX 2, 3; Diod.Sic. IV 81, 4; Stat. *Theb*. IV 573; Fulg. *Myth*., III 3 Nonn. V 288; V 333, XXXII 226; XXXVII 176.

[94] Call. *Lav.Pall*. 59-102.

[95] Ps.-Plut. *DeFluv*. XVIII, 1.

[96] Pind. *Ol*. I 64. See Deforge, 1983, 34-35.

[97] Quoted in the scholia to Pind. *Pyth*. I 79; Aesch. fr. 64 (Mette). Deforge, 1983, 25 note 2, compares this purification in distant waters to that of Orestes in Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, which is accomplished by traveling.

[98] Aesch. fr. 32 Nauck$^2$.

Despite his association with marine gods and oracular powers, the exact condition of Glaucus in the divine world is not clear in the sources. A few texts call him θέος,[103] but most refer to him as δαίμων.[104] What is clear is that he finds himself in an intermediary position between men and gods: he was a mortal man living on earth, yet he is transformed into an immortal sea-beast. His oracular powers also make him a mediator between men and gods, as he announces the divine intentions to mortals. As a god, he has many successful erotic adventures with mortals, and was even thought to have fathered an important family of athletes in Carystus.[105]

Renée Piettre has stressed the unhappy character of Glaucus' life in the sea, arguing that evils befell him as a punishment for desiring immortality. She writes that it is "*une immortalité manquée*", "*partielle*".[106] She bases her interpretation on a scholion to

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[99] Ov., *Met*., XIII 949-955. See Deforge, 1983, 24-25.
[100] Ov. *Met*. IV 532-542; *Etym.Magn. s.v.* Athamantion; Luc. *DMar*. 9; Ael.Arist. *Or*. III 26.
[101] Luc. *DMar*. 9; Val.Flacc. II 587-591; Eratosth. *Cat*. I 19; Ov. *Fasti* III 871-874; Hyg. *Astr*. II 20, 1.
[102] Soph. *O.C.* 1626-1665.
[103] Schol. Ap.Rhod. II 767; Ath. XV 679a; Eur. *Or*. 314; Ov. *Met*. XIII 936; Servius to Verg. *Aen*. V 823; Lact.Plac. to Stat. *Theb*. VII 335; Servius to Verg, *Georg*. I 437 (numen). See Piettre, 2002, 146 note 36.
[104] Schol Pl. *Rep*. 611d; Paus. IX 22, 4; Possis of Magnesia in Ath. VII 296c-d; Schol. Ap. Rhod. I 1310.
[105] Paus. VI 10, 1-3. Glaucus is frequently a successful lover: Aeschylus derided him for his sexual adventures, and in the *Hymn to Glaucus* of Euanthes, he made love to Ariadne after her abandonment by Theseus and carried Syme out to an island to live with him in Mnaseas' *European Stories* (Ath. VII 296b-c).
[106] Piettre, 2002, 147, 149.

Plato's *Republic*[107] (and more loosely on a quote from Nausicrates in Athenaeus)[108] that affirms that Glaucus, one night out of every year, comes near to shore and predicts disasters to sailors that they then try to avert by fasting. He accompanies his threatening prophecies with lamentations about his immortality. Piettre also emphasizes the stories about Glaucus' ever-aging body,[109] which reminds us of the rash acquisition of immortality in the stories of Tithonos and Endymion.[110] Lastly, Piettre insists on Glaucus' eternal wandering and his unhappy love for Skylla and Ariadne, in which he is thwarted by his own repulsiveness and by Dionysus, respectively.

While it is true that two of our sources describe Glaucus' leap into the sea and metamorphosis as a punishment for eating the herb of immortality,[111] Piettre's interpretation does not take into account the positive side of Glaucus' story, his purifying divinization and his acquisition of oracular powers. Furthermore, some of the negative elements stressed by Piettre can be explained by other factors than the legend itself. For instance, Glaucus' old age is appropriate to his new functions as an oracular marine deity.[112] As we have seen, he was also somewhat confused with Nereus,[113] the Old Man of the Sea, to the point of being called ἅλιος γέρων himself, becoming one of the many such old men in the sea. Glaucus' love affairs are only unsuccessful in later sources.[114] This is easily explained by the influence of Hellenistic poetry, always attracted to the pathetic aspect of unrequited love especially when it involves monsters. Theocritus' poem on Polyphemus and Galatea thus certainly had an influence on the story of Glaucus and Skylla.[115] Ovid, in book XIII of the *Metamorphoses*, even recounts the story of Polyphemus and Galatea as an introduction to the story of Glaucus and Scylla.[116] As for Ariadne, Theolytos of Methymna described the scene of Dionysus' victory over Glaucus in his *Bacchics*.[117] The scene was probably imitated from satyric drama, always strongly imprinted with Dionysiac themes and glorifying the god, thus giving Glaucus the pathetic role of the defeated suitor bound with vines by Dionysus' servants.

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[107] Schol. Pl. *Rep*. X 611d.

[108] Ath. VII, 296a. According to Nausicrates, Glaucus predicts evils to men.

[109] Schol. Eur. *Or*. 364.

[110] Piettre, 2002, 144.

[111] Nicander in Ath. VII 295f; Alexander Aetolus in Ath. VII 296e.

[112] Détienne, $1979^3$, 29-50.

[113] Nicander in Ath. VII 296f says that Nereus fell in love with Glaucus. Schol. Ap.Rhod. *Arg*. II 767: Glaucus is known as the "Old Man of the Sea" in Spain.

[114] Hedylos of Samos in Ath. VII 297a; Ov. *Met*. XIII 904-965.

By fortuitously transgressing the boundaries of the human and divine worlds, Glaucus was initiated into divinity and gained oracular powers, but lost his human aspect and the community of other men. The myth thus emphasizes the ambivalence of the human condition: mortality and a restricted knowledge plague men, but attaining immortality and divine knowledge is dangerous for them and not part of their destiny.

It is interesting to consider Plato's description of Glaucus from this point of view: the philosopher used the fisherman of Anthedon to represent the decay of the soul, rendered completely unrecognizable by a long sojourn in the "sea" of wicked desires and bodily needs. However, instead of presenting a pessimistic view of human destiny, Plato wished to show that it is in fact possible to cast off the burden of the sensible world to recover the initial purity of the soul. This reversal would have been quite surprising to the philosopher's audience, but would have provided a powerful image. Indeed, the point of the myth of Glaucus was that the fisherman never returns to earth. His condition has irrevocably changed, and he has become immortal by leaping into the sea and undergoing a complete transformation, both psychological and physical.

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[115] Theoc. *Id*. XI.

[116] Ov. *Met*. XIII 904-965.

[117] Ath. VII 296a.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the mythical conception of the primordial water in Greek culture through the figures of Pontus and Oceanus. We have seen that these Titans, especially Oceanus, represent the boundary of the human world as well as the cleansing, fertilizing and revitalizing powers of water. These characteristics are parallel with the ritual conception and uses of the sea and underground water. In ritual, especially for nuptial baths and initiation at Eleusis, immersion into the sea or rivers represents a symbolic death, purification, transformation, and return to life. Lastly, through the analysis of the myth of Glaucus of Anthedon, we have seen how the beliefs attached to water are used in myth to represent transition to divinity, metamorphosis, and the acquisition of divine knowledge. In the next chapter, I will explore how the beliefs attached to water are used to represent the transition between the status of *parthenos* and *gynê* in Greek mythology.

# Chapter 2. The Exposure of Adolescent Women at Sea: Separation, Symbolic Death, and Marriage

Danae, Auge, and Rhoio are young unmarried mothers who are expelled from their families by their fathers and exposed at sea, often in chests. I argue that the sea-journey, in these myths, is a metaphor for the separation from the family and symbolic death that occurred to girls at the time of marriage. The sea-journey, by depicting the maidens floating helplessly without direction, represents their lack of a *kyrios*: they are not attached to their fathers anymore and not yet under the authority of a husband.

These maidens' sea-voyage is also significant in the larger context of Greek hero myths. Indeed, heroes and their mothers are frequently displaced from their cities of origin. Part of the heroes' trials is to return to their homeland to be recognized by their fathers and recover their rightful throne. However, the motif of a mother's sea-journey only occurs when she is unmarried. In cases where the mother is married or still in her father's house, the journey is accomplished by land (cf. Theseus and Aethra, Heracles and Alcmene). Therefore, the sea-journey is strongly connected with the idea of being unmarried and with the process of acquiring a husband and a new home.

Considering the associations of the sea with Hades studied in the introductory chapter and the familiar image of the sea-journey of the dead to Hades, these sea-voyages can be interpreted as a symbolic passage into the afterlife. However, the exposure, far from resulting in death or disappearance, results in the reappearance of the girls in a different country where they marry the local king and raise their sons. This passage allows the maiden heroines to become women and represents the acquisition of a new house, community, and identity for the girls upon their marriage.

The groundwork for this study has been done by Pierre Brulé, Ken Dowden, Alain Moreau, and Matthew Dillon, who have examined myths and rituals related to female coming-of-age.[1] These scholars have greatly contributed to our understanding of female transition to adulthood by shedding light on many aspects of wedding ceremonies as well as on the symbolic death undergone by young girls at the time of marriage. I will therefore apply their conclusions to the myths at hand, which they do not treat at length, in order to shed light on the significance of the motif of exposure at sea in the context of female transition to adulthood.

My argument rests in great part on the identification of the young women in our myths as maidens (παρθένοι) although they are already mothers. Much has been written about the Greek concept of virginity in recent years, notably by Giulia Sissa, Ann Hanson, and Leena Viitaniemi.[2] These scholars have established that, in cases where unmarried girls give birth, they are still considered maidens because they have not performed the rites of marriage and therefore remain under the authority of their fathers. *Partheneia* is therefore a biological and a social concept. Both kinds of transition, physical loss of virginity and marriage, must be accomplished by a *parthenos* for her to become a *gynê*. Giulia Sissa, after conducting a study of the words παρθενεία and παρθένος in Greek, concludes:

> *Making love outside the marriage bed, before a marriage has taken place in front of witnesses at the "nymphic table", did not result in any change in the name by*

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[1] Brulé, 1987, Dowden, 1989, Moreau, 1999, Dillon, 2002.
[2] Sissa, 1990; Hanson, 1990; Viitaniemi, 1998.

> *which a young girl was called. She became a woman (gynê) only in matrimony, as the gynê of her husband.*[3]

Drawing upon these observations, I will suggest a new interpretation of Danae, Auge, Rhoio, and Phronime's mythical sea-journey that transforms them from outcasts into queens, from suffering *parthenoi* into glorious *gynaikes* and mothers of heroes. I will start by analyzing these narratives as succession myths, in which a king attempts to prevent the birth of a stronger heir that will replace him. Then, I will explore the significance of the girls' sea-journey as a voyage into Hades, and the significance of the chest as a substitute for a bier. Lastly, I will consider the girls' rescue from the sea as their transition to the status of *gynê* and as the result of an Underworld journey.

## Conflicts of Generations: Preventing the Birth of a Stronger Successor

The myths of Danae, Auge, and other young mothers' transition to the status of *gynê* have a long history in Greek literature and art. The myth of Danae is already alluded to in the *Iliad* and, by the Classical period, it was widely represented in Athenian vase-painting and in Athenian tragedy.[4] Throughout the centuries, the story remained remarkably consistent, with only one alternate version in which Danae washes ashore in Italy instead of Seriphos.[5] The similar myths of Auge[6] and Aerope[7] also flourished in the

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[3] Sissa, 1990, 78.

[4] *Il.* XIV 319 and schol.; Simonides, fr. 543 (Page); Pherecydes *Fr.Hist.Gr.* 3F10=Schol. Ap.Rhod. IV 1091(violence threathened from Polydectes); Eur. *Danae* (Nauck 316-330); Soph. *Danae* (Nauck 168-177); Hyg. *Fab.* 63; 155; 224; Ov. *Met.* IV 611-V 249 (Danae's fate on Seriphos not mentioned); Apollod. II 4, 1; Schol. Lyk. *Al.* 838. About the rich iconography of this myth, see Oakley, 1982; Lissarrague, 1996; *LIMC s.v.* Danae (Jean-Jacques Maffre). There are 29 known representations of the myth in vase-paintings, all fifth-century Athenian red-figure vases.

[5] Danae washes ashore in Italy, marries the local king Pilumnus and founds Ardea with him: Serv. to Verg. *Aen.* VII 372; Pliny *N.H.* III 9, 56.

[6] *Pap.Oxy*. XI 1359=Hes. *fr.* 165 Merkelbach-West; Hecataios of Miletus *Fr.Hist.Gr.* I F29 a-b; Alcid. fr. 14-16 Radermacher (marries Teuthras, Telephos is raised by Priam in Troy); Eur. *Auge*, *Telephos* (265-281, 696-727, Nauck$^2$); Soph. *Aleads*, *Mysians* (74-96 and 375-391, Nauck$^2$); Eubulus *Auge CAF* II 170 fr. 15 (Kock); Telephos is exposed on a mountain and suckled by a deer; Auge is exposed in a chest and

Classical period. The story of Phronime is known only through Herodotus' detailed account and a notice in the Suda.[8] Myths that follow a similar pattern, such as those of Rhoio,[9] Theaneira,[10] and an alternate version of the story of Semele[11] were developed in the Hellenistic period, probably under the influence of their earlier counterparts.[12] This chapter will mainly focus on fifth-century sources, since this is the period in which our myths were most popular and therefore probably carried the most significance.[13]

The beginning of Danae's and Auge's tribulations is their fathers' interdiction to ever become pregnant. Acrisius shuts Danae in a bronze underground chamber to avoid the realization of an oracle according to which his grandson would kill him. Aleus consecrates Auge to the service of Athena Alea in Tegea to prevent her future son from killing his uncles, the Aleads.[14] This office, as Dowden has shown, makes Auge not only a perpetual virgin, but a perpetual child.[15] Virgin priestesses, because they embody the

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marries Teuthras, king of Mysia: Apollod. II 7, 4; III 9, 1; Paus. VIII 4, 8-9; VIII 48, 7; X 28, 8; Strab. XIII 1, 69; Diod.Sic. IV 33, 7-12; Hyg. *Fab.* 99, 100, 101, 162, 252; Sen. *H.O.* 366-368; Stat. *Sil.* III 1, 39-42; Schol.Lyk. *Al.*, 206 (Teuthras treats Auge like a daugther). Representations of the myth are found on a few vases, reliefs, mosaics, coins, and statues from the fourth century BC down to the Antonine Period; see *LIMC s.v.* Auge (Christa Bauchhenss-Thüriedl).

[7] Soph. *Aj.* 1297 and schol.; Eur. *Or.* 16-17; *Cretans* (460-470, Nauck$^2$); Apollod. III 2, 1; *Epit.* II 7, 10; Hyg. *Fab.* 86; Paus. II 18, 2; Ov. *Trist.* II 391; Schol. *Il.* I 7; Serv. to Verg. *Aen.* I 458. The similar story of Clymene is only attested later, in Apollod. II 1, 5; III 2, 1.

[8] Hdt. IV 154; Suda *s.v* Battos.

[9] Parth. *Erot.* 1; Diod. V 62, 1-2; *Cypria* (Kinkel), p. 29 fr. 17; Schol. Lyc. 570, 580; Tz. *Chil.* VI 976-982.

[10] Lyk. 467 and schol. 467-469; Istros (3rd cent. B.C.) *Fr.Hist.Gr.* 334 F 57.

[11] Paus. III 24, 3.

[12] Larson, 1995, 95.

[13] See Lucas, 1993, for an analysis of the evolution of the myth of Danae, and a listing of all the treatments of the myth (often only a title) in comedy and tragedy. According to this scholar, at least fifteen comedies, tragedies, and satyr-plays were written about Danae in the fifth century BC.

[14] Similarly, Catreus was warned by an oracle that he would die by the hand of one of his children. Fearing their father, his son and one of his daughters left Crete immediately, while Catreus gave his two other daughters, Aerope and Clymene, to Nauplios to be sold as slaves. In another version, Catreus gave Aerope to Nauplios because she had intercourse with a slave. Nauplios, instead of drowning her as her father requested, brings her to Argos, where she marries Plisthenes or Atreus, and gives birth to Agamemnon and Menelaus: Soph. *Aj.* 1297 and schol.; Eur. *Or.* 16-17; *Cretans* (460-470, Nauck$^2$); Apollod. III 2, 1; *Epit.* II 7, 10; Hyg. *Fab.* 86; Paus. II 18, 2; Ov. *Trist.* II 391; Schol. *Il.* I 7; Servius to Verg. *Aen.* I 458.

[15] Dowden, 1989, 130-133.

condition of the girls who undergo the coming-of-age rites at the sanctuary, are never to become adult, child-bearing women.

Acrisius and Aleus’ behavior recalls the well-known succession myths concerning Uranus, Cronus, and Zeus. As the masters of their kingdom, they protect their throne by preventing the birth of a stronger successor. For the young women, the myths correspond to the period of their girlhood in which they belong to their fathers’ household. Their virginity is the token of their faithfulness to the family and of their potential value as pledges of alliance with other families.[16] Their fathers transgress the natural order by refusing to let them marry and are later punished, like Cronus and Uranus for their transgressions.

Shutting Danae in an underground chamber suggests that, for Acrisius, she is already dead. She will never emerge to the light of day again; her old nurse is her companion in this shadowy existence in a surrogate Hades. The chorus of Sophocles’ *Antigone*, comparing Antigone’s punishment to that of Danae, calls the chamber a “nuptial-tomb”:

> ἔτλα καὶ Δανάας οὐράνιον φῶς
> ἀλλάξαι δέμας ἐν χαλκοδέτοις αὐλαῖς·
> κρυπτομένα δ’ ἐν τυμβή-
> ρει θαλάμῳ κατεζεύχθη·[17]

The result of this treatment is that both Antigone and Danae are destined to become the “Brides of Hades”, as Sophocles’ heroine claims,[18] and to forego human marriage. The purpose of leaving food with them and in Danae’s case, a nurse, is to avoid directly killing them while removing them from the family and the community.[19] The service to Athena fulfills the same function for Auge.[20]

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[16] Sébillotte-Cuchet, 145-146; Hoffmann, 1992, 161.
[17] Soph. *Ant.* 944-948. On this passage, see Lissarrague, 1996, 106-107.
[18] Soph. *Ant.* 816.

But unlike Antigone, Danae does not die in her prison. Avoiding the dismal fate prepared for her by Acrisius, she consummates a divine union with Zeus. In a scene that was represented with an increasing degree of eroticism through the centuries,[21] Zeus enters Danae's chamber in the shape of a golden rain and impregnates her. Patrick Marchetti has compared this portion of the myth to a nuptial bath in a Nyphaeum, as discussed in Chapter 1: Danae, like a dead girl in her underground chamber, comes into contact with fertilizing water that will make her a mother. Danae, symbolically dead in her Underworld chamber, encounters a deflowering and "watery" male power, Zeus in the shape of a golden rain, and she acquires womanly fertility.[22]

Besides deflowering Danae and activating her fertility, the purpose of Zeus' intervention in the myth is also to destroy Acrisius' plans and to show the power of divine destiny against human designs.[23] The chorus of Sophocles' *Antigone* comments:

> καίτοι καὶ γενεᾷ τίμιος, ὦ παῖ παῖ,
> καὶ Ζηνὸς ταμιεύεσκε γονὰς χρυσορύτους.
> ἀλλ' ἁ μοιριδία τις δύνασις δεινά·
> οὔτ' ἄν νιν ὄλβος οὔτ' Ἄρης,
> οὐ πύργος, οὐχ ἁλίκτυποι
> κελαιναὶ νᾶες ἐκφύγοιεν.[24]

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[19] Glotz 1979 [1904], 96-103 (with sources), has argued that immurement was a form of trial in mythical as well as "historical" instances. If the victim survives the ordeal, which is why some food is left in the chamber, she is proven innocent. Glotz seems to take these myths as proof that immurement was actually practiced in the ancient world. There are no such historical or archaeological attestations. Immurement, like human sacrifice, had a purely symbolic value and its reality belonged to a distant, mythical past (see Bonnechere, 1994, 311-313). Furthermore, Glotz fails to recognize the symbolism of the underground chamber as a substitute for Hades, and therefore the overall significance of these myths.

[20] Another similar story is that of Astyages' efforts to prevent the birth of Cyrus, first giving Mandane in marriage to a Persian, and then ordering one of his herdsmen to expose her child: Hdt. I 107-113.

[21] Lissarrague, 1996, 108. Seaford, 1987, 120, points out the associations in Greek literature between rain and semen.

[22] Marchetti, 1995, 241.

[23] The shape taken by Zeus was cynically interpreted by certain authors as a sign of Danae's (and women's) venality: *Aesopica*, *Prov.* 3 (Perry); Martial, XIV 174; Lissarrague, 1996, 126.

And we may add that destiny (μοιριδία), the natural order of things, is for young women to marry and bear children.

Auge becomes pregnant despite Aleus' efforts. The young priestess is raped by the drunken Heracles during the hero's sojourn in Tegea (in one version, when she went to fetch water at a well). This story indicates the vulnerability of a young girl outside her father's household, where she can be the prey of male desire. Both Danae and Auge thus realize their destiny as women, which is to bear children that will renew and replace the older generation represented by Acrisius and Aleus.

## Exposure at Sea in a Chest

Once they become mothers, Danae and Auge constitute an imminent threat for their fathers, who fear to see the oracle's predictions confirmed. Acrisius and Aleus therefore place their daughters in chests and cast them into the sea. Auge gives birth to Telephus before she is set adrift at sea, and leaves the baby on Mount Parthenion, "Virgin Mountain",[25] while Danae is exposed at sea with the baby Perseus. Staphylos and Cadmos, refusing to believe that their daughters were impregnated by gods, inflict the same punishment on Rhoio[26] and Semele.[27] For Staphylos and Cadmos, exposure on the

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[24] Soph. *Ant*. 949-954.

[25] Alcid. fr. 14-16 Radermacher; Eur. *Auge*, *Telephos* (265-281, 696-727, Nauck$^2$); Soph. *Aleads*, *Mysians* (74-96 and 375-391, Nauck$^2$); Apollod. II 7, 4; III 9, 1; *Ant.Pal.* III 2; Paus. VIII 4, 8-9; VIII 48, 7; X 28, 8; Strab. XII 8, 2; XIII, 1, 69; Diod.Sic. IV 33, 7-12; Hyg. *Fab*., 99, 100, 101, 162, 252; Schol.Lyk. *Al.* 206; schol. Pind. *Ol.* III 52a; IX 108a.

[26] Parth. *Erot*. 1; Diod. V 62, 1-2; *Cypria* (Kinkel), p. 29 fr. 17; Schol. Lyk. *Al.* 570, 580; Tz. *Chil*. VI 976-982.

[27] Paus. III 24, 3, says that this story only told in Prasiae contradicts all the rest of Greece. According to the people of Prasie (or Brasiae), Cadmos put Semele and the infant Dionysus in a chest and they washed up in this small Laconian town. Semele was dead, so the inhabitants buried her and raised her child with the help of Ino who had wandered there from Boeotia.

sea is a way to dispose of their deflowered daughters and illegitimate grandchildren.[28] The exposure at sea in a chest, since it leaves the girls a chance to survive, just like the underground chamber for Danae and the service of Athena for Auge, effectively removes the young mothers from the family without their fathers incurring the pollution of murder.[29]

But the exposure at sea and the subsequent rescue and marriage of the young mothers have a deeper significance. When considered in view of the Greek marriage rites, the myths may be understood to correspond to the symbolic death of the bride and her permanent separation from her father's house upon her wedding, the *ekdosis*, followed by her rebirth as a wife in her husband's house, the *gamos*.

In the Classical period at Athens, the time and place in which our myths were most popular, wedding ceremonies were celebrated in three parts, each subdivided into various phases: *egguê*, the betrothal of a virgin daughter by her father or *kyrios*; *ekdosis*, the transfer of the bride from her father's house to her husband's; and *gamos*, the consummation of the marriage on the wedding night.[30] The wedding procession took place at night, and many participants, especially the mother of the bride, carried torches.[31]

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[28] Lucas, 1993, 43, mentions a fragment of a fifth-century white-ground *lekythos* (*LIMC*, *s.v.* Acrisius, 10, Jean-Jacques Maffre) on which the king (identified by an inscription) sits in a mourning pose (recalling other white-ground *lekythoi* on which visitors mourn at a grave) on a monument identified by the inscription as Perseus' tomb. According to Maffre, this curious monument could be a representation of Danae's prison, which, of his own admission, does not explain the label "Perseus", or it could be a cenotaph elevated by Acrisius after the exposure of his daughter and grandson at sea. Whatever the case may be, this vase-painting underscores the fact that Danae, for her father, is dead.

[29] Glotz, 1979 [1904], 16, followed by Piettre, 2005, 87, saw another method of trial in this exposure at sea. However, it is clear from the myths themselves that the exposure is not a trial, but a sentence.

[30] Rehm, 1994, 11-42, with bibliography. Marriage rites varied in other cities, the most extreme example being Classical Sparta, in which marriages seem to have consisted in a symbolic abduction of the bride. However, our sources for this ritual are much later than its actual practice and we have no contemporary evidence such as vase-paintings. See Ball, 1989, 78-79.

[31] Eur. *I.A.* 732-736; *Med.* 1027; *Hel.* 722-725; Schol. Eur. *Tr.* 315; Diod.Sic. XIII 84=Timaeus *Fr.Hist.Gr.* 566 F 26; *ARV* 1317 1 (Paral. 478); *ABV* 687, 23; 296, 1; *ARV*$^2$ 1282, 1. See Avagianou, 1991, 11 note 52.

The bride was completely passive during the procession, being carried in a cart or led by the wrist by her husband.[32]

As we have seen in Chapter 1, in Greek wedding ceremonies, the bride was thought to undergo a symbolic death. The nuptial bath, among other purposes, served this function. The wedding procession also participated in the semantic nexus of death and rebirth. Indeed, this phase of the wedding ceremony was perceived by the ancients as closely related to funeral ceremonies, especially the *ekphora*, the funeral procession to the burial place. Both processions took place in the dark, in the evening for the wedding procession and just before dawn for the funeral, and both involved an irrevocable farewell to a family member and a permanent change of residence.[33] In our myths, the wedding procession corresponds to the sea-voyage of the young mothers, who have no house anymore, are at risk of drowning in the sea (substituted for Hades and darkness) and are completely passive, carried in a floating chest that they cannot steer in any way.

Exposure at sea in a chest also represents the symbolic death of the bride at the time of marriage.[34] Floating on the sea recalls the familiar image of the sea-voyage to the afterlife in Charon's skiff or in other boats.[35] On a red-figure Attic *lekythos*, Danae and the little Perseus are shown floating in a chest with sea-birds flying above them.[36] The sea-birds stress the connection of the chest scene with death, because flocks of flying birds are a common feature of funerary iconography.[37] Vermeule has pointed out that these birds may represent the voyage of the soul away from the earth.[38] As we will see in Chapter 3, birds, especially aquatic ones, have strong ties with the passage into the afterlife in Greek folklore and mythology, and they were also particularly connected with women and female deities.

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[32] Rehm, 1994, 14. Earlier black-figure representations show the heroic chariot, the ideal marriage vehicle, but a cart was most probably used in reality, when economic and practical circumstances afforded it. Later red-figure representations show more realistic wedding processions on foot.

[33] Widows and repudiated women returned to their fathers' households: see Cox, 1998, 20 and 143. However, wedding ceremonies represent the marriage as irrevocable.

[34] For the funerary significance of the iconography of the myth of Danae, see Junker, 2002, esp. 16-19.

[35] Garland, 1985, 49-50.

[36] Red-figure Athenian *lekythos*, 475-425 BC, Providence (RI), Rhode Island School of Design, 25.084, *CVA* 208348.

The chest itself also stresses the connection of the myth with death, because it is a substitute for a bier. François Lissarrague comments: "*Le coffre prend des allures de cercueil*".[39] In fact, chests (*larnakes*) were generally used to keep food, clothing, and valuables. However, they were also frequently used as coffins, cinerary urns, or receptacles to expose children along with other containers such as *aggoi*, *kalpidai*, *teuchê*, *chytrai*, *skaphai*, and *ostraka*.[40] Pierre Brulé has stressed the ambiguity of these containers: they are essential to life, because they keep food and clothing, but they also evoke death, because they can be used as coffins and cinerary urns.[41]

This functional ambiguity of the chest and of other such containers is amplified in myth where *living* adult or adolescents, and not only the dead babies are shut in a chest. Such characters are always in an intermediary situation between life and death. This is the case with Thoas, the mythical king of Lemnos. According to Apollonius Rhodius, Thoas escaped the maddened Lemnian women by being hidden in a chest by his daughter Hypsipyle. He floated on the sea in the chest and was rescued by fishermen who brought him to shore on an island.[42] There, Thoas consorted with the local nymph and fathered the hero Sikinos, who eventually gave his name to the island. In another version of the story, Thoas is hidden in a box by Hypsipyle, but the box is cast into the sea by the Lemnian women and the king dies.[43] Both versions show the ambiguity of being shut alive in a box: the primary purpose of the trick is to hide a person, but its result can be life or death. In Danae's case, the purpose of the chest is to expel her from Argos unnoticed and to commit her and her child to death. However, the experience, in the end, makes the maiden Danae a woman, the glorious mother of a hero and, in certain versions of the story, the wife of a king.[44] For this reason, Pierre Brulé has insisted on the transformation operated by the chest on mythical characters, noting that the passage in the chest marks the beginning of a new life in a new country.[45]

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[37] Funerary rites and mourning take place while birds fly overhead: Athenian black-figure plaque, Tübingen, Antikensammlung des archäologischen Instituts, 2, 60, pl.(2145) 44.1; Athenian black-figure plaque, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 27.146, *CVA* 3748.
[38] Vermeule, 1979, 8-9.
[39] Lissarrague, 1996, 110.
[40] *Il.* XXIV 795; Ant.Lib. XXXIII 3; Thuc. II 34; *Ant.Gr.* VII 478; IX 278; Suda *s.v.* Larnax; see Glotz, 1979 [1904], 16. See Brulé, 1987, 125 for a table of other receptacles used in this way.
[41] Brulé, 1987, 125.

To summarize this section, the exposure of young women at sea in a chest is meant to remove the threat posed by their offspring and to prevent the guilt of murder from falling upon their fathers. On a metaphorical level, the exposure at sea in a chest underscores the fact that the women undergo a symbolic death as a prelude to their rebirth and marriage. This narrative pattern reflects the symbolic death and carrying away of the bride in fifth-century Athenian marriage ceremonies. The chest itself, by its ambiguous connection with both life and death, represents the young woman's liminal situation.

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[42] Ap.Rhod. I 620-623. See Glotz, 1979 [1904], 24 and note 1. It is most probably this scene (apparently, the story was known before the time of Apollonius) that is represented on the Athenian red-figure cup in Berlin on which a richly clothed old man with a crown and scepter comes out of a *larnax* (Athenian red-figure cup from Chiusi, 500-450 BC, Berlin, Antikensammlung, F2300).

[43] Apollod. I 9, 17 and III 6, 4; Hypoth. Pind. *Nem.* I.

[44] Hyg. *Fab.* 63; 155; 224.

[45] Brulé, 1987, 134.

The story of Phronime, although it does not involve a chest, is comparable in structure and significance to those of the other maidens discussed in this chapter.[46] In the Cyreneans' account of the foundation of their city, Etearchos, king of Oaxos in Crete, orders the Theraean trader Themison under oath to cast his daughter Phronime into the sea. The young woman, because of the slander of her stepmother, was suspected of lechery. Themison avoids the murder by tying ropes around the girl's waist and drawing her up after having lowered her into the sea from his ship. This trick appears as an example, frequent in Herodotus, of a clever act. Themison finds a way of respecting his oath to Etearchus while avoiding murder.

Phronime's departure from Crete is definitive. Slandered by her stepmother (a typical motif in Greek literature) and expelled by her father, she follows Themison to Thera where she becomes the concubine of the rich Polymnestus and gives birth to Battus, the divinely appointed founder of Cyrene.[47] Like Danae, Auge, and Rhoio, she leaves her father's house, comes close to death, crosses the sea, and finally marries. She becomes a woman and the mother of a hero. The same happens to Aerope, who, expelled by Catreus and given over to Nauplios to be drowned, is taken to Argos where she marries Plisthenes (or Atreus).[48]

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[46] Hdt. IV 154; Suda *s.v.* Battos.

[47] For a historiographical analysis of this passage, see Osborne, 2002, 504-508.

[48] Soph. *Aj.* 1297 with schol.; Eur. *Or*. 16; Apollod. III 2, 1; *Ep*. II 7, 10; Hyg. *Fab*. 86; Ov. *Trist*. II 391; Paus. II 18, 2; Serv. to Verg. *Aen*. I 458; Schol. *Il*. I 7. See also the story of Tennes and Hemithea, which follows the same pattern as that of Phronime. These twins were put in a *larnax* by their father Cycnus, king of Colonai in the Troad, after their stepmother falsely accused Tennes of having raped her, while she was really in love with him but could not seduce him. The chest landed in the island of Leukophrys, where Tennes soon became king and renamed the island Tenedos after himself. When Cycnus learned the truth about his wife's calumny, he had her buried alive: Heraclides Ponticus, fr. VII (*FGH*, II 213 Müller); Conon *Fr.Gr.Hist.* 26F28; Paus. X 14, 2; schol. Lyk. *Al.* 232; Apollod. *Ep.* III 24-25; Diod.Sic. V 83, 4-5; Plut. *Quaest.Gr.* 28, 297d-f; Schol. *Il.* I 38b; Steph.Byz. *s.v.* Tenedos. See Glotz, 1979 [1904], 23.

The departure of these young women from their fathers' houses is definitive: the sea separates them from their home cities and families and they live their adult lives in a foreign country. This separation echoes the ritual gesture, in Boeotian marriage rites, of burning the axle of the marriage cart to stress that the bride will never go back to her father's house.[49] The transition from maiden to woman is irreversible, and therefore the myths show a situation of no return, with the wide expanse of the sea between the bride and her father's house. The myth illustrates the ideal consequences of marriage: in actuality, a woman could eventually go back to her father's house if she became a widow or was repudiated.[50]

## Marriage and Integration into the Community

After successfully crossing the sea and undergoing a symbolic death, the maidens are ready to marry. They have left their family and community behind and are no longer under their fathers' authority. They are ready to pass under their husbands' authority and become women.

Danae, Auge, and Rhoio's chests wash up on foreign shores and reveal their cargo to the amazement of the locals.[51] This scene of the myth of Danae is represented on at least three red-figure vases from the mid-fifth century BC.[52] The fisherman who finds her, named Dictys "Net", is shown waving his arms and smiling in surprise at Danae and Perseus. Auge is shown coming out of her chest on a bronze coin of Marcus Aurelius found in Elaia (harbor of Pergamum).[53] These extraordinary brides are taken in by the local kings, who make them queens and take their sons as stepchildren.

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[49] Plut. *Quaest.Rom*. 27, 271 d-e.

[50] See note 33.

[51] The Hellenistic myth of Theaneira also belongs to this group, although no father and no chest are involved. Theaneira, a Trojan woman, was given to Telamon by Heracles after he overtook the city. She jumped from the ship that was taking her to Greece and swam to Miletus, where king Arion married her and raised her son by Telamon, the hero Trambelos. See Lyk. *Al*. 467 and schol. 467-469; Istros (3rd cent. B.C.) *Fr.Hist.Gr*. 334 F 57.

[52] Oakley, 1982.

The theme of finding unexpected objects and persons on the sea-shore or caught in fishing nets is common in Greek literature. It represents the sea as a corridor of communication through which people and objects travel from afar. It highlights the fact that people and objects can get lost forever at sea, but can also come to shore unexpectedly, just like the famous ring of Polycrates in Herodotus.[54] Finding someone or something in the sea has a strong connotation of luck, of a godsend. Statues of gods are sometimes found in the sea and held in high honor.[55] In Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, Daphnis finds a purse filled with money lying near the carcass of a dolphin on the seashore that allows him to buy Chloe back from the pirates.[56] In Plautus' *Rudens*, a slave finds money on a beach that he hopes will allow him to buy his freedom.[57]

For the kings who find young women, this adventure could be interpreted as a sign of luck or destiny, although the sources do not present their point of view. The women have no dowry, no family, and a son, but the kings fall in love with them and the young mothers readily accept to marry them, except for Danae who wishes to remain faithful to her divine lover. Polydectes threatens her with violence until she is rescued, years later, by the grown-up Perseus.[58]

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[53] *LIMC*, s.v. Auge, no. 26 (Christa Bauchhenss-Thüriedl).

[54] Hdt. III 41-42. In this case, the return of the ring is a divine signal to Polycrates that he cannot avoid his fate.

[55] E.g. Paus. X 19, 2.

[56] Longus III 27, 4, where the dolphin here participates in the connotation of luck in the passage. See: Andreae, 1986, and Chapter 3 in this dissertation for a further discussion of the significance of the dolphin in Greek culture.

[57] Plaut. *Rud*. 906-937.

[58] In our sources about Danae, the only exception is Hyg. *Fab.* 63; 155; 224, in which Danae readily marries Polydectes upon her arrival on Seriphos.

As James Redfield has observed, in the rites of marriage, the bride goes directly and passively from her father's authority to her husband's, from one *kyrios* to another.[59] In our myths, the young women are subject to their fathers' absolute authority; they protest but feebly (as for instance Danae on a vase-painting depicting her internment in the chest)[60] and once at sea, they are left to float helplessly on the waves. As soon as they land, their future husbands take charge of their destiny. This feature of the myths reflects the father's agency in what regards his daughter's marriage. She is his to bestow on the groom of his choice, therefore providing useful alliances for the family. Conversely, if she loses her virginity or presents a threat to the family, it is the father's responsibility and prerogative to expel her.

The young women's survival of their journey at sea is much more than just a happy ending. It represents their preparation for marriage and the ultimate achievement of a woman's life. It also follows the usual mythical pattern of exposure in mythology, in which the exposed persons do not die but survive and later claim what was denied to them, a marriage in this case, or a family and ancestry in the case of infant sons and daughters.

## Conclusion

The myths studied in this chapter form a complex web centered on the coming-of-age of young women. The rejection of maidens, who are also mothers, by their families and their sea-voyage represent the symbolic death of brides upon their marriage. Floating in the chest represents death and internment in a bier, but it also prevents drowning and getting lost in the sea. The women get very close to death, but do not fall into it and are able to return to the land of the living, although not in their fatherland because they are now married women. In chapter 2, we will see that myths in which such a flotation device is absent, girls who plunge into the sea such as Britomartis, never come back to land, but are transformed into marine divinities and keep their virginity forever instead of becoming *gynaikes*.

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[59] Redfield, 1982, 184.

[60] Attic red-figure krater, ca. 480 BC, Leningrad, Ermitage, Б 1602; *LIMC*, *s.v.* Danae, 48, Akrisios, 3; Lissarrague, 1996, fig. 12 A-B.

# Chapter 3. Artemis, the Maidens, and the Leucadian Leap:

## Erotic and Anti-Erotic Leaps into the Sea

We have seen in Chapter 2 that crossing the sea represents a symbolic death and rebirth which allows *parthenoi* to reach adulthood and become *gynaikes*. In the present chapter, we will examine myths such as those of Britomartis, Asteria, Parthenos, Molpadia, and Aphaia in which maidens leap into the sea precisely to avoid transitioning to adulthood. In these myths, male lovers doggedly pursue the maidens and cause them to leap into the sea, frenzied by their fear of their suitors. Once in the water, the girls become heroines or goddesses and receive a cult. Their descent underwater therefore represents not only their death, but also their transformation and rebirth. Instead of traveling on the sea to a distant land to become *gynaikes*, the maidens remain in the deep water forever and preserve their *partheneia*. Hallowed by their death on the brink of marriage, they become heroines who will be worshipped by women in conjunction with Artemis, sometimes in childbirth as in the case of Parthenos, and especially by brides before their wedding, as in the case of Aphaia.

These maidens are frequently associated with birds, especially aquatic species: either the myths present them being metamorphosed into these birds, as in the case of Asteria, or they are honored by women with dedications of bird figurines, as in the case of Aphaia. Exploring the iconography and mythological appearances of aquatic birds, as well as their use as dedications, we will see that they represent the crossing of the soul to Hades. Furthermore, aquatic birds are particularly connected with women, since they frequently appear in domestic and erotic scenes as pets and lovers' gifts, and since they are mostly dedicated to virgin female divinities such as Athena, Artemis, and Aphaia.

Thus the metamorphosis of maidens into aquatic birds, in conjunction with their leap into the sea, represents their transition away from the earth and their unrealized erotic potential.

The famous Leucadian leap, allegedly performed by the lovesick Sappho, has also often been associated with unrealized erotic potential because it cured unrequited passion. However, our sources describe the leap both as a cure for love and as the representation of the feeling of falling in love. Therefore, the leap is strongly connected to erotic feelings, but not to a particular result, and I will analyze it from this point of view.

The Leucadian leap can also be interpreted as a depiction of the soul subjected to violent erotic feelings. The violence of these feelings is described in our texts by the frenzy and madness of the characters who accomplish the leap. The excitement and fear provoked by the action of diving from a tall cliff represent the turmoil of the character's emotions, and the leap into the sea represents the transition accomplished from ordinary reason to erotic madness or, conversely, the return to reason from such a state. It is a symbolic death that permits passage to a different state of consciousness. Thus, the Leucadian leap resembles the desperate dash into the sea of frenzied maidens: under the pressure of violent erotic or anti-erotic feelings, the characters accomplish a crashing descent into a watery Hades that permits their complete transition and transformation.

## Erotic Pursuit and Marriage

Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood and Ken Dowden studied love pursuits in Greek mythology and vase painting.[1] They found that the motif of the love-pursuit, particularly popular in the fifth century, was interpreted by contemporary Greek viewers as indicating marriage, sometimes group marriage. Sourvinou-Inwood has established that the ephebe pursuing a maiden on a series of fifth-century Athenian vessels represents the desire and "capture" of a bride by a young man, who can sometimes be identified as Theseus, the archetypal Athenian youth. She points out that often, as in the works of the Niobid painter, the motif is juxtaposed on the vase with the socialized version of the pursuit, an actual wedding scene.[2] She also compares the paintings with depictions of Peleus' pursuit of Thetis, which is iconographically and semantically very similar and is famously concluded by a marriage.[3] Furthermore, Sourvinou-Inwood stresses the connections of male coming-of-age with hunting and racing, as well as the common metaphor according to which unmarried girls are wild animals: to marry is to catch and tame a young girl who then becomes a bride.[4]

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[1] Sourvinou-Inwood, 1987, *passim*; Dowden, 1989, esp. 71-96.

Ken Dowden has reached similar conclusions with his analysis of the myth of the Proetids. Although this myth has undergone many transformations through the centuries, its main traits remained constant. The Proetids, maiden daughters of a king or city-founder of the Argolid, incur Hera's wrath[5] and become mad. The maidens, whose number varies, start roaming the countryside in the belief that they have become cows. The seer Melampous, after some negotiation with their father, agrees to cure them. To do so, he pursues them, sometimes accompanied by a band of youths who perform a wild dance. One of the girls, Iphinoe, dies of exhaustion in the process, but the others are finally caught and purified in a local spring or river. As part of his reward, Melampous marries one of the maidens, and in some accounts, his brother Bias marries another one.

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[2] Sourvinou-Inwood, 1987, 147-149.

[3] Sourvinou-Inwood, 1987, 134-135.

[4] Sourvinou-Inwood, 1987, 138.

[5] In one version, the Proetids incur Dionysus' wrath, by contamination with the myth of the Argive Women. See Dowden, 1989, 75-76.

As Dowden has shown, this complex myth, associated with no less complex and poorly attested local rituals, incorporates many common elements of female coming-of-age stories. First, the maidens roam in the countryside, outside their father's house. This, in conjunction with their belief in their own transformation into cows, represents their wild nature as unmarried females. Second, Melampous' chase, concluded by a marriage, recalls the iconographical motif studied by Sourvinou-Inwood: the pursuit of the females by the males, in Dowden's own words "*indicates group-marriage*".[6] Thus, the myth is a model for the interaction of young males and females, two groups that are destined to unite, the males subordinating the females. Third, the purification of the Proetids in a spring or river recalls the nuptial bath, which prepares *parthenoi* to welcome their new husbands and become *gynaikes*. The purification of the Proetids in (underground) water tames their virginal animal nature and makes them marriageable. Lastly, the death of one of the sisters, Iphinoe, and her subsequent worship by brides in various locations recall the "Bride of Hades" motif. Iphinoe dies before reaching marriage, and like Persephone, who literally marries Hades, she becomes a protectress of marriage and young girls in transition towards this stage of their life. Dowden also adduces the example of other erotic pursuits that do not lead to a cult, such as the story of Daphne.[7] The maiden, by refusing Apollo's advances and marriage, excludes herself from the human community, and her metamorphosis represents this exclusion. The story is therefore a metaphor for young girls' fear of coming-of-age as well as an etiological legend.

Sourvinou-Inwood and Dowden's findings shed light on the myths that occupy us in the present chapter. In both these scholars' work, we find the idea that maidens flee in frenzy (cf. the Proetids' madness) from males and from marriage. They have to be caught for the union to take place and for their status to change from *parthenos* to *gynê*. This is precisely what happens in our myths, except that no marriage takes place: the maidens leap into the sea and disappear from the earth, refusing to make the transition to adulthood. Most of our sources for the stories are late, and therefore often integrate elements of other myths.

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[6] Dowden, 1989, 86.
[7] Dowden, 1989, 177.

## Britomartis, Dictynna, and Aphaia

The legend of Britomartis' leap and her association with Artemis were known as early as Pindar. Our earliest mentions of her (which actually call her Dictynna) make her a hunting companion of Artemis.[8] The earliest full account of the story is found in Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis*.[9] According to this poet, Minos, distraught by love for the nymph, pursued her over the mountains of Crete for nine months.[10] The location of the chase, in the craggy Cretan mountains, stresses the wild nature of Britomartis and her association with Artemis. When she found herself cornered, Britomartis threw herself into the sea[11] and fell into some fishing nets which saved her life. The Cretans then called her Dictynna and they established a sacrifice to her on the hill from which she leapt, which they called Dictaeon (or Dictynnaion). They also called Artemis Dictynna in honor of her companion Britomartis, and eventually identified the nymph and the goddess.[12] In

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[8] Pind. fr. 357 Snell-Maehler=Plut.*Soll.An*. 965c; Eur. *I.T.* 127; *Hipp*. 146, 1130; Ar. *Vesp*. 368; *Ran*. 1359; Schol. Ar. *Ran*. 1356.

[9] Call. *Hymn.Dian.* 189-205; Strab. X 4, 12-13; Dion.Calliph. 122-129 (Müller); Scyl. 47, 17 (Müller); Nonn. XXXIII, 333-343; schol. Eur. *Hipp*. 146 and 1130; Philostr. V.A. VIII 30, 17; *Ant.Pal*. XVI 258.

[10] Call. *Hymn.Dian.* 190.

[11] Call. *Hymn.Dian.* 195.

[12] Corn. *N.D.* 71, 8 (Lang); Plut. *Soll.An*. 984a; Dion.Byz. 56, 1 (Güngerich); Hesych. *s.v.* Britomartis; *Etym.Magn*. *s.v.* Britomartis; Poll. 5, 13.When Artemis became associated with Hekate, Dictynna was also

Pausanias' version, the nymph Britomartis, daughter of Zeus, leaps into the sea to escape the pursuit of Minos and falls into fishing nets.[13] She is then transformed into a goddess by Artemis, and is revered on Crete as well as on Aegina under the name Aphaia "She who disappears".[14]

According to Antoninus Liberalis, Britomartis was a daughter of Zeus who traveled to various places in the Greek world; she was recognized as a goddess in Cephallenia.[15] When she came to Crete, Minos fell in love with her and pursued her. Britomartis took refuge with some fishermen who hid her in their nets. She then left for Aegina with the fisherman Andromedes. When the latter tried to lay hands on her, she jumped away from the boat and took refuge in a sacred grove where her temple now stands and she disappeared (κἀνταῦθα ἐγένετο ἀφανής).[16] Her statue later appeared in the temple of Artemis. The Aeginetans gave her the name of Aphaia, consecrated the spot where she disappeared, and offered sacrifices to her as to a goddess.

Thus Britomartis remains a virgin forever and stays in the domain of Artemis. She is even identified with the goddess on Crete and Aegina. Her leap into the sea, which is sometimes followed by her disappearance and sometimes replaced by it, except in Antoninus Liberalis where she is already a goddess, represents her transition away from the earth and the human sphere. By refusing marriage, she refuses to integrate the human

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identified with this goddess. See Schol. Ar. *Ran*. 1356-1359; *Orph.Hymn*. 36, 3(Quandt); Schol. Eur. *Hipp*. 146.

[13] Paus. II 30, 3; III 14, 2; VIII 2, 4; IX 40, 3.

[14] Hesych. *s.v*. Aphaia, identifies Artemis, Dictynna, and Aphaia.

[15] Ant.Lib. XL. Diod.Sic. V 76, 3-4, declares it incredible that a goddess would seek protection with mortal fishermen, especially being the daughter of mighty Zeus. He adds that it would be unfair to think that Minos would have committed the outrage of laying hands on a goddess, he who was praised by all for the justice of his lifestyle.

[16] Ant.Lib. XL, 4.

community and passes into Artemis' wild kingdom forever. She becomes part of the invisible world of the gods.

Antoninus Liberalis' information concerning Britomartis' disappearance in a sacred grove, although it is very late, is interesting. Pierre Bonnechere has written that the alsos is "*a natural manifestation of a median place between two worlds*".[17] He points out that various other mythological characters, most famously Oedipus at the end of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, disappear in sacred groves and enter the world of the gods. Thus, in Antoninus Liberalis' version, Britomartis' transition to divinity is accomplished in a location especially favorable to such exchanges between the divine and human worlds.

## Boline

Pausanias tells the story of Boline, a girl from Achaia who was pursued by Apollo and leapt into the sea.[18] By the grace of the god, who perhaps felt remorse, she became immortal (ἀθάνατον γενέσθαι χάριτι τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος). A river and a town of Achaia were then named respectively Bolinaios and Bolina after her. The memory of the girl survived her sad fate while Boline herself enjoyed the eternal life of the gods. For her as well as for Britomartis, leaping into the sea represents death and rebirth as an immortal. Boline's untimely death as a maiden, on the brink of marriage, is compensated and hallowed by her acquisition of eternal life in the sea, where she remains a maiden forever. Interestingly, neither Boline nor Britomartis become associated with the sea as such. Their leap into the water simply represents a transition away from the earth into the mysterious abysses where gods live. In these myths, the sea is a crossroads between worlds. The fear of falling into the waves from a cliff represents a *parthenos'* fear of losing her virginity and becoming a different person, a *gynê*.

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[17] Bonnechere, 2007, 26.

[18] Paus. VII 23, 4.

## Apriate

In the case of Apriate, the only source we have, Parthenius (quoting Euphorion of Thrace) does not tell us her final destiny.[19] Apriate was a girl from Lesbos. Trambelos son of Telamon fell in love with her, but she did not respond to his advances. Trambelos then resolved to take her by force. As she resisted desperately, Trambelos became angry and threw her into the sea, where she died. According to Parthenius, some authors report that Trambelos then followed the girl down into the sea and met his end there. However, Parthenius goes on to tell the more famous end of the story which has Trambelos punished by the gods: Achilles came to raid Lesbos and killed him. Before he died, Trambelos revealed his identity to the hero, who recognized him as his cousin and built a *heroon* for him.

Apriate is the only one of the innocent victims of love who really dies, and, as far as we know, is not remembered otherwise than by the story reported by Parthenius. She does not give rise to an etiological legend or give her name to the body of water she falls into. In fact, the story is subordinate to the legend of Trambelos and his mother Theianeira, which goes at least as far back as Lykophron. Theianeira was a Trojan woman given as a captive to Telamon when Heracles took the city. Pregnant, she escaped to Miletus where king Arion welcomed her, made her his wife, and raised Trambelos as his son. This narrative recalls the stories of Danae and Auge analyzed in Chapter 2.

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[19] Parth. 26. Cf. Euph. fr. 415, 13 (Lloyd-Jones-Parsons, *Supplementum Hellenisticum*, 1983).

Apriate, whose story follows the "Britomartis" pattern, is not even mentioned in the sources about Theianeira, except for Parthenius.[20] The variant according to which Trambelos jumped into the sea after Apriate because he felt remorse seems to be patterned after other similar stories such as the legends of Cycnus and Aesacus.[21]

## Parthenos and Molpadia

Parthenos and Molpadia were the daughters of Staphylos and the sisters of Rhoio.[22] Rhoio, as we have seen in Chapter 2, was made pregnant by Apollo, was cast out on the sea in a chest by her father, and landed on Delos, where she and her baby Anios found safety. Parthenos and Molpadia fell asleep while they were guarding Staphylos' wine. Swine came in and broke the vessels containing the precious newly discovered beverage. When they realized what had happened, Parthenos and Molpadia, terrified at the thought of their father's anger, fled towards the sea and threw themselves into the water from high rocks. Apollo, out of respect for Rhoio, established heroic cults in honor of her sisters. Parthenos received a cult in Boubastos on the Chersonese, while Molpadia took the name of Hemithea and received a cult in Kastabos (Caria). Her temple became famous and was richly adorned with dedications, so much so that not only the locals but also foreigners came to worship there. The reason for her popularity was that she helped all humanity: she cured the sick and helped women in labor. Her temple was so revered that, according to Diodorus, when the Persians invaded Greece, it was the only sacred precinct that they did not plunder. [23]

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[20] Lyc. 457; Tz. *Ad. Lyc*. 467; Eust. *Il*. vol. I, p. 536, 31 (van der Valk); Parth. 26.

[21] Cycnus: see chapter 1 note 51. Aesacus: Ov. *Met.* XI 749-795; Serv. to Verg. *Aen.* IV 254; Lyc. 223-224 with schol. See also Apollod. III 12, 5, who notes that Aesacus was turned into a bird when his wife Asterope died.

[21] Serv. to Verg. *Aen*. V 128.

[22] Diod.Sic. V 62-63.

Parthenos and Molpadia do not become heroines in the context of an erotic pursuit. Rather than being threatened by men who want to become their husbands and *kyrioi*, they are threatened by their father, who already has authority over them. The aspect of sexual initiation is thus absent from this story. Nevertheless, the destiny of the sisters conforms to the usual fate of maidens who die before attaining the status of *gynê*. As their names indicate, they remain virgins forever (cf. Parthenos) and enter the world of the gods (cf. Hemithea). Furthermore, Hemithea is known for her benevolence towards the living, especially the sick and women in labor. Such functions are common, paradoxically, for maidens who die before attaining adulthood, as in the cases of Iphinoe and Persephone. Thus, for Parthenos and Molpadia, the sea is a road towards a new life away from their father's authority, as it is for their sister Rhoio. However, unlike Rhoio, they do not undergo a symbolic death in the sea, but rather, a real one which leads them to divinity. They leave their father's household forever, but do not enter a new one as wives; instead, they acquire power as eternal virgins, independent of any male authority. Their passage in the sea seals their eternal separation from their family and the human world and permits their entrance into divinity.

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[23] Parthenius, 1 gives a very different version of the story. Lyrkos of Nicainetos had no children with his wife. He therefore went to the oracle at Didyma to inquire how he might beget offspring. The oracle responded that he would have a child with the first woman he encountered on his way home. On his return journey, he was Staphylos' guest in Boubastos. Staphylos was aware of the oracle delivered to Lyrkos, and he desired grandchildren. Therefore, he gave his guest much wine and gave him his daughter Hemithea. Lyrkos was angry when he discovered the plot, but nevertheless gave his belt to Hemithea as a future token of recognition for the child. Years later Basilos, son of Hemithea, came to Lyrkos in Nicainetos and was recognized as his son and ruled his father's kingdom.

## Birds, Maidens, and Female Divinities

Three stories of pursued women leaping into the sea involve a final metamorphosis into birds, especially aquatic ones. These are the stories of Alcyone, Ino, and Asteria. In order to understand the full implications of these metamorphoses, it is necessary to first examine the significance of birds, and especially aquatic birds in Greek mythology, as well as their relation to erotic scenes, women, and virgin goddesses.

Ken Dowden, analyzing the Arcadian myth of the Stymphalian Birds killed by Heracles, remarks that these birds were said to be maidens with long birds' legs.[24] Fleeing a troop of wolves, they came to live at the sanctuary of Artemis in a deep forest near a lake. Knowing that "wolves" in Arcadian myth and ritual symbolizes young men undergoing rites of passage to adulthood, Dowden compares this myth to that of the Proetids: a group of maidens flees from a group of young men. The location of the myth, in the wilds of Arcadia near the sanctuary of Artemis, reinforces this interpretation by stressing the wild nature of the maidens and their connection with the patron goddess of young girls. Furthermore, as Dowden notes, iconography often associates domestic and erotic scenes with long legged aquatic birds such as cranes and herons, as well as stouter ducks: the animals appear as pets on women's laps or as lover's gifts.[25]

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[24] Dowden, 1989, 180-181.

[25] E.g. -Athenian red-figure pyxis, 5th cent. BC, Jena, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, XXXX46958, *CVA* 46958: youth pursuing a woman, other women, one feeding a heron.
-Athenian red-figure hydria, 5th cent. BC, London, British Museum, 83.11-24.26, *CVA*, 205651: domestic scene, women, one seated, one with mirror, alabastra suspended, heron.
-Athenian red-figure cup, late 5th cent. BC, Luzern, Market, Ars Antiqua, XXXX0.992, *CVA*, 200992: erotic scene, youth embracing a girl; beside them, a crane. Inscription: Επιδρομος καλος.
-Apulian red-figure bell krater, date unknown, Verona, Museo Civico, 171, *CVA*, 9006243: seated woman with mirror, standing nude youth holding duck.

Penelope herself, Dowden continues, is named after a duck, the πηνέλοψ (a wild duck or goose)[26] because she was saved from death by this bird when her parents threw her into the sea to avenge the death of Palamedes, who was killed by Odysseus.[27] Thus, the woman who later becomes the object of the suitor's desire is also a duck, and her name strengthens her character as a seductress.

Aquatic birds were further associated with females, particularly virgins, in cult. As Elinor Bevan has pointed out, dedications of aquatic bird figurines, eagles, and other birds of prey were common in many sanctuaries. However, despite the affinities of many male gods with birds, such as Apollo (swans), and Zeus (eagles), these figurines were dedicated in greater numbers to virgin female deities such as Athena, Aphaia, and Artemis, while other animal figurines such as horses were scarce in their sanctuaries.[28] By comparison, in the sanctuaries of male deities such as Zeus and Apollo, the dedication of horses far outnumbered birds, aquatic or otherwise. For ease of consultation, I have plotted Bevan's data in a table:[29]

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[26] D'Arcy Thompson, *s.v.* Penelops, p. 248-249. Thompson's *Glossary of Greek Birds* is the authority on ancient ornithology. For updated Latin nomenclature, see Arnott, 2007.

[27] Eusth. *Od*. I p. 65, 36; Schol. *Od*. IV 797; Schol. Lyc. 791 (in this version Penelope is still a girl and it is unclear why she is thrown into the sea by her parents).

[28] Bevan, 1989, *passim*.

[29] Bevan, 1989, 163-165. The finds included are mostly Geometric, Archaic, and Classical. Bevan does not identify any significant chronological patterns. Bevan notes the preponderance of birds to horses at Tegea, Kalapodi, the Argive Heraion, Samos, the sanctuary of Athena at Philia, and at the sanctuary of Aphaia on Aegina, although the overall number of dedications is smaller. She does not provide the specific figures.

| | Pherai (Artemis?) | Sparta (Artemis) | Lindos (Athena) | Ephesos (Artemis) | Perachora (Hera) | Olympia (Zeus) | Delphi (Apollo) | Dodona (Zeus) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Birds | 150 | 150 | 240 Mostly hawks and eagles | 60 hawks | Mostly birds of prey, but small size is difficult to interpret | 50 | | |
| Water Birds | Mostly water-birds | ca. 40 | | 3 ducks | | 20 | 21 | 1 |
| Horses | 19 | 13 | Less than 30 | Almost none | | 1600 | 50 | 4 |
| Total Animal Figurines | | | | | | | 300 | 60 |

Analyzing this data, Bevan concluded that aquatic birds were connected with fertility and that they came to be associated with male divinities, Apollo in particular, by association with older female cults (for instance, a hypothical pre-Apollinian cult of Leto on Delos). There is no evidence for a direct connection between aquatic birds and fertility. The only conclusion that can be made safely from this data is that female divinities received more bird dedications, in particular aquatic birds, than male ones. In conjunction with the myth of the Stymphalian birds and the iconographical sources discussed above, we can say that there existed a cultural metaphor in ancient Greece that associated females, and particularly maidens and virgin goddesses, with birds, especially aquatic species.

## Aquatic Birds, Death, and the Passage to the Afterlife

Besides their connection with women and maidens, aquatic birds were also strongly connected with funerary contexts in ancient Greece as early as the Archaic period. As Pierre Bonnechere has pointed out, aquatic birds are found under the funerary bed on the Dipylon amphora.[30] On an Attic geometric krater depicting a funerary procession, the birds appear among the mourners and on the funerary chariot.[31] On a large series of Attic white-ground *lekythoi*, ducks appear as funerary offerings or are held by the dead embarking in Charon's boat.[32] On many other vases, cranes and herons attend while mourners honor a funerary stele.[33]

Aquatic birds, particularly swans, are also associated with the voyage to the afterlife. Plato describes them as having knowledge of the time of their death, and as singing most beautifully at this occasion.[34] A fifth-century *lekythos* shows Apollo (or Hyacinthus) riding a swan over the sea while two dolphins jump in the waves.[35] This scene probably represents Apollo's annual voyage to the land of the Hyperboreans; Dionysus took over the sanctuary of Delphi during his absence.[36] The Hyperboreans were imagined to live in the far North, separated from other men by the Riphaean Mountains. Their piety had made them favorites of the gods,[37] particularly Apollo. The Hyperboreans did not know war or conflicts of any kind, and they lived in groves and forests where they worshipped the gods dutifully. The Hyperboreans were favored by the blessings of a good climate, abundant sources of food, and eternal happiness.[38] In fact, the description of their constant happiness closely mirrors the description of life in the Islands of the Blessed.[39] Their segregation at the very ends of the earth, beyond Oceanus, also recalls these islands, as well as their communality with the gods. Thus Apollo rides a swan to go to a country beyond the borders of the world, beyond the boundary of death.

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[30] Ca. 760-750 BC, National Archaeological Museum, Athens, 804.

[31] Attic Geometric krater by the Hirschfeld Painter, 750 - 735 BC, Athens, National Archaeological Museum, 990.

[32] E.g. -Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, 41.133 (a naked woman offers a duck at a gravesite while a draped youth stands by the stele); Athens, National Museum, 1769, Beazley ARV$^2$, 1232.9 (a woman and a youth holding a bird cage are near a stele); Paris, Louvre, MNB 1729, Beazley ARV$^2$, 1374.2 (two youths at a stele, one with lyre the other with spears and bird); Reading University, 33.IV.3, *CVA* 14339 (a woman holding a bird embarks in Charon's boat).

The *CVA* lists 24 fifth-century white-ground *lekythoi* depicting funerary scenes in which birds or ducks are offered at a tomb or brought by the dead into Charon's boat, and there are no doubt many others.

[33] E.g. Athenian red-figure, white ground *lekythos*, 5th cent. BC, Basel, Market, H.A.C., Kunstwerke der Antike, XXXX29862, *CVA* 29862: funerary scene. Woman with basket and alabastron at tomb, heron attending.

[34] Plato, *Phaedo*, 84e-85b. On the origin and evolution of this tradition, see Arnott, 1977, *passim*.

[35] Steinhart, 1993, *passim*.

[36] Alcaeus, fr. 1-4 (Bergk); Nonn. XXXVIII 302. See Ahl, 1982, *passim*, who interprets Apollo's voyage to the land of the Hyperboreans and the migrations of the swans as a representation of the circling year, a cycle of life and death. However, as Ahl notices, the life-cycle of swans in reversed: they leave for the North in springtime, and come back to Greece in the fall.

[37] They are called ἱερᾶι γενεᾶι by Pind. *Pyth.* X, 43. Brown, 1992, 98 remarks that the Hyperboreans' situation implies that happiness can be attained by mortals by good conduct, which is unusual in Pindar's poetry. The poet generally represents felicity as a divine gift. On the Hyperboreans, see Desautels, 1971 and Dion, 1976.

Likewise, marine birds, perhaps shearwaters,[40] are said to inhabit the sacred island of Leuke[41] at the mouth of the Black Sea and to be the keepers of Achilles' tomb.[42] This island, the "White Island", got its name from the large flocks of white sea-birds that inhabited it.[43] The soul of Achilles, along with the ghosts of other famous warriors such as Ajax and mythological characters such as Helen and Iphigeneia, inhabited the island.[44] Passing Leuke by day, sailors heard the clash of weapons, and by night, they heard the sounds of joyful banqueting.[45] Achilles even appeared to sailors as a ghost[46] and delivered oracles.[47] The "bird island" of Leuke is therefore outside of the normal human realm, beyond the boundaries of death, just like the land of the Hyperboreans which Apollo reaches by riding a swan.

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[38] Aesch. *Ch.* 372-374; Diod.Sic. II 47 (quoting Hecataeus of Abdera).
[39] *Od.* IV 563-568.
[40] Thompson, 1936, *s.v.* Aithyia.
[41] The island is sacred to Achilles: Eur. *Andr*. 1262 with schol.; Scyl. 68, 14; Ptol.*Geog*. III 10, 9; Paus. III 19, 11; Procl. *Chr*. 200; St.Byz. *Ethn*. 152, 10; Tz. *Chil*. XI 396.
[42] Antig. *Mir*. 122, 1; Arr. *Peripl.M.Eux*. 21, 1-4.
[43] Eur. *I.T.* 434-438; *Et.Gen*. *s.v.* Leukê; *Etym.Magn*. *s.v.* Leukê; Tz. to Lyc. 186; schol. Pind. *Nem*. IV, 79a-b.
[44] Helen, Ajax, Antilochus, and Patroclus: Paus. III 19, 11; Medea: Apollod. *Epit*. 5, 5a; Iphigeneia: Ant.Lib. XXVII, 4; Eust. *Dion.Per*. 306, 19; 541, 13; schol. Eur. *Andr*. 1262; schol. Pind. *Nem*. IV, 79a-b.
[45] Philostr. *Her*. 746, 10.
[46] Achilles appeared as a ghost: schol. Pind. *Nem*. IV, 79a-b.
[47] Max.Tyr. IX 7 (Hobein).

According to a famous legend, the companions of Diomedes were transformed into birds upon their return from Troy. They inhabited a desolate island off the coast of Apulia and cared for the tomb of their leader.[48] These birds, identified with the shearwaters that inhabit the Italian coast, were particularly loud at night, and their cries resembled wailing. For this reason, Turkish observers called these birds "souls of the damned".[49] Marine birds also tended to the tomb of Memnon, located on the shore of the Hellespont.[50] These birds, called Μέμνονος ὀρνίθες, "Birds of Memnon" or ἀντίψυχοι, "Soul-Attendants",[51] were in fact Memnon's metamorphosed companions, who flocked there to honor their leader.

The annual migrations of most aquatic birds may also have heightened their symbolic significance as world-crossers. Both Herodotus and Aristotle (although the philosopher makes some important mistakes) knew of bird migration.[52] Birds' disappearance during part of the year and reappearance could have been interpreted as the sign of their having gone beyond the human realm, especially in the case of birds that migrate northwards, like the swan, and were believed to go to the land of the Hyperboreans.

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[48] Pliny, X 126-127.

[49] Thompson, 1918, 88-91. See also Fowler, 1918, 67.

[50] Strab. XV 3, 2 (location of the tomb). Paus. X 31, 6; Pliny X 74; Ael. V 1; Solin. 40; Ov. *Am*. I 13, 3-4; *Met*. XIII 607; Quint.Smyrn. II 645; Dion. *Av*. I 8; Isid. XII 7; Myth.Vat. I 139.

[51] Thompson, 1936, 200, *s.v.* Memnon, believes these birds to be imaginary, but created from the real habits and appearance of the ruff, a large marine bird similar to the heron.

[52] Hdt. II 22; Arist. 600a10; Pliny, X 70; Claudian, *Eutr*. I 118. Aristotle affirms that the swallow migrates in winter, but he also says that some individuals hibernate in Greece and lose most of their body weight and feathers to the harsh conditions. He adds that the stork, blackbird, turtle dove, lark, thrush, and starling do the same, while the kite and the owl hide, but only for a few days.

## Alcyone and Ceyx, the Kingfishers

Alcyone and Ceyx were known for the tender love that united them. In fact, in Apollodorus, Zeus has to punish their *hybris* by turning them into kingfishers because they were so happy together that they compared themselves to Zeus and Hera.[53] The most common story about them is that after the death of Ceyx in a shipwreck, Alcyone threw herself into the sea.[54] The gods pitied them and turned them both into kingfishers (Ceyx was brought back to life). They enjoyed seven days of calm at sea in the winter called the "days of the Halcyons" during which they raised their young on floating nests.

Alcyone's leap into the sea constitutes a passage away from the earth and the human sphere. It also brings about her complete transformation: she abandons her human shape for that of a bird, and she lives on the sea, between the earth, sky, and water. This intermediary situation well describes what Alcyone and Ceyx have become: not humans anymore, not gods, not dead, and not alive. By the pity of the gods[55] the couple is allowed to live its love story, but must do so away from the earth, and not quite in the company of the gods.

Besides transforming Alcyone, her leap into the sea also has important erotic implications. We have seen that in cases such as that of Britomartis, a leap into the sea represents the refusal of eroticism. In Alcyone's case, the leap represents the opposite: it assuages her passion and allows her to pursue her love for Ceyx. But Alcyone, unlike Britomartis, is not a maiden: she is a married woman who has accepted and desires intercourse with her husband. Therefore, despite the important differences between Britomartis and Alcyone, their leaps into the sea have an important erotic connotation and serve the same function. By a definitive passage out of the human realm, both Alcyone and Britomartis attain peace from erotic distress. Indeed, as Alcman and Simonides put it, Alcyone as a kingfisher is “free of cares”.[56]

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[53] Apollod. I 7, 4.

[54] Ov. *Met.* XI 410-748; Hyg. *Fab.* LXV; Ps.-Luc. *Halc.* 1-2; *Il.* IX 562-563 with schol.

[55] Hyg. *Fab.* LXV; Ov. *Met.* 741-742; Ps.-Luc. *Halc.* 1-2.

## Asteria, the Quail

The fate of Asteria is similar to that of Britomartis and other maidens pursued by their lovers. This daughter of Coeos and Phoebe, and therefore sister of Leto, was relentlessly pursued by Zeus. To avoid intercourse with the god, she transformed herself into a quail and leapt into the sea.[57] In Servius’ version, she prayed to the gods in her terror and was transformed into a quail.[58] In Hyginus’ version, Zeus transforms her into a quail and throws her into the sea because she resists his advances.[59] For Callimachus, Asteria (The Star) leapt from heaven in the shape of a star, fleeing Zeus, and became a floating island.[60] In all versions, Asteria finally becomes the sacred island of Delos after having abandoned her bird shape.

The quail (often confused or identified with the partridge) frequently appears in domestic scenes in association with women,[61] and was a common love-present.[62] The famous sixth-century headless Kore of Miletus holds a quail in her arms as a pet or perhaps as a sign of her blooming erotic potential.[63] Asteria’s leap and metamorphosis into a quail therefore represents her refusal of marriage and probably also her unrealized erotic potential.

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[56] Alc. fr. 26 PMG; Simon. fr. 3 PMG. According to Thompson, 1936, 49-51, the kingfisher was a solar bird associated with the vernal equinox. In fact, the Pleiades were often called “The Halcyons” and rose in conjunction with the sun at the spring equinox, which is precisely the time of the “days of the Halcyons”. However, these astral connections are independent from the story of Alcyone and Ceyx.

[57] Apollod. I 2, 4.

[58] Serv. to Verg. *Aen*. III 73.

[59] Hyg. *Fab*. LIII.

[60] Call. *hymn.Ap.* 36-40.

[61] E.g. Ar. *Pax*, 789; Plut. *Alcib.* 10.

[62] Ar. *Av*. 707; Pl. *Lys*. 211 E; Ant.Pal. XII 44 (Glaucus); Dio.Chrys. 46.

[63] Berlin, Pergamon Museum, 1791.

However, one question remains: since the quail is not a marine bird, why does it appear in this myth? In fact, the quail is commonly seen above the sea and on islands in Greece, since it accomplishes a yearly migration from Europe to Africa in the fall, and comes back in the months of April and May. Pliny even notes that the exhausted birds often landed on ships in great numbers to rest from their flight.[64] Thus the quail, despite the fact that it is a land bird, plays the role of a sea-bird in this myth. Furthermore, considering Asteria's final metamorphosis into the floating island of Delos, the myth as a whole has an important marine connection.

### Ino-Leucothea: the Shearwater[65]

Ino's leap into the sea and her metamorphosis constitute an important part of her myth in all our sources about her, starting with the *Odyssey*, although the exact reasons for her leap vary. In most cases, she is pursued by her furious or mad husband Athamas. In other instances, she is herself mad, either by the will of Hera or because of Bacchic frenzy, and throws herself off a cliff.

After her leap and transformation into the goddess Leucothea, Ino acquires the shape of a marine duck, the *byssa*[66] or *aithyia*,[67] which is identified as the great shearwater.[68] She appears to Odysseus in this form when the hero, tossed about in a storm at sea, is about to die.[69] She gives her veil to Odysseus which allows him to land safely on the Phaecians' shores. Ino, a former human who now lives in the sea as a goddess, appears to the mortal Odysseus who is between life and death: Ino's leap into the sea and deification have given her power over the intermediary state of sailors who drown at sea. She can rescue them from the sea, having herself made this passage. For this reason, mariners prayed to Leucothea for a safe landing at the beginning of journeys and for their salvation from shipwreck while at sea.[70] The *aithyia* itself was also associated with shipwreck, and poets make reference to this bird as being the only witness of the sad fate of mariners who drown at sea.[71] The erotic aspect is absent from Ino's leap and metamorphosis. The myth focuses on her new character as mistress of the intermediary world of the sea, between life and death. This aspect of her myth may have influenced her cult, especially her association with the Samothracian mysteries, in which she was revered as a divinity of salvation.[72] In other locations, she was an oracular divinity, which emphasizes her intermediary status between men and gods.[73]

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[64] Pliny, X 33; cf. *Psalms* 78:26-30; 105:39-42; *Numbers* 11:31-33; *Exodus* 16:13.

[65] For a full discussion of the complex myth of Ino and its sources, see chapter 5.

[66] Ant.Lib. XV.

[67] *Od.* V 337.

[68] Thompson, 1936, s.v. Byssa and Aithyia. In Ov. *Met.* IV 550-562, the Theban companions of Ino who run to the promontory where she threw herself into the sea are turned into stone and into sea-birds. Athena was also associated with the shearwater, and worshipped as Athena Aithyia near Megara: Paus. I 5, 3; I 41,

## The Leucadian Leap

So far in this chapter, we have traced the evolution and significance of a complex erotic metaphor connected with mythical leaps into the sea. The myth of the Leucadian leap underwent similar changes. In our earliest sources, it represents the feeling of falling

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6; Lyc. 359; Hesych. *s.v en d'aithyia*. See Thompson, 1936, 27-29. Unfortunately, we have no details about this cult or its significance. Athena also appears as an owl and as a vulture (φήνη: *Od*. III 371-2) in other contexts.

[69] *Od*. V 333-355.

[70] E.g. *IG* III 368.

[71] Ant.Pal. VII 285 (Glaucus of Nicopolis); VII 295 (Leonidas of Tarentum); VII 374 (Marcus Argentarius); Call. *Epigr*. 58 (Pfeiffer).

[72] Schol. Ap.Rhod., *Arg*., I 917; Schol. *Il*., XXIV 78; see Krauskopf, 1981, 144.

[73] See chapter 5, page 123.

in love while maddened and intoxicated by passion. In the Hellenistic period the leap became a cure for love, most famously for Sappho. Thus, transformations related to eroticism (falling in love, curing love) remained at the core of this myth while its surface meaning changed drastically.

The Leucadian Leap, allegedgly performed by lovers on the island of Cephallenia, is not attested historically. According to Strabo,[74] a *pharmakos* was thrown down the cliff annually, but this ritual, if it really existed, is unrelated to the lovers' leap discussed in this chapter. [75]

## Early Sources: Euripides and the *Anacreonta*

The two early sources that we have about the Leucadian leap, a passage of Euripides' *Cyclops* and a fragment of the *Anacreonta*, both associate the leap with madness, drunkenness, and love. These works, especially the anacreontic poem, describe a jump *into* love. In Euripides' *Cyclops*, 164-174, Silenus tells Odysseus that he would rather drink wine, jump from the Leucadian rock, and then make love, than pay attention to his master's commands.

> δράσω τάδ', ὀλίγον φροντίσας γε δεσποτῶν.
> ὡς ἐκπιών γ' ἂν κύλικα μαινοίμην μίαν,
> πάντων Κυκλώπων ἀντιδοὺς βοσκήματα
> ῥίψας τ' ἐς ἅλμην Λευκάδος πέτρας ἄπο
> ἅπαξ μεθυσθεὶς καταβαλών τε τὰς ὀφρῦς.
> ὡς ὅς γε πίνων μὴ γέγηθε μαίνεται·
> ἵν' ἔστι τουτί τ' ὀρθὸν ἐξανιστάναι
> μαστοῦ τε δραγμὸς καὶ †παρεσκευασμένου†
> ψαῦσαι χεροῖν λειμῶνος ὀρχηστύς θ' ἅμα
> κακῶν τε λῆστις. εἶτ' ἐγὼ οὐ κυνήσομαι
> τοιόνδε πῶμα, τὴν Κύκλωπος ἀμαθίαν
> κλαίειν κελεύων καὶ τὸν ὀφθαλμὸν μέσον; (ed. Diggle 1984)

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[74] Strab. X 2, 9.

[75] See Bremmer, 1983, *passim*; Bonnechere, 1994, 301-302.

In the *Anacreonta*, 31 (*PMG*) a symposiast exclaims:

> ἀρθεὶς δηὖτ’ ἀπὸ Λευκάδος
> πέτρης ἐς πολιὸν κῦμα κολυμβῶ μεθύων ἔρωτι.

In both these passages, love is compared and associated with the feeling of being beside oneself, as if mad or drunk (or both). The leap symbolizes the protagonist’s entrance into a world different from the ordinary in which perceptions are skewed by the overwhelming feeling of being in love.

## Later Sources: Strabo, Ovid, and the Lexicographers

All later sources describe the Leucadian leap as a cure for unrequited love. The most famous example is that of Sappho who leaps down the cliff to forget her love for the beautiful and indifferent Phaon. Our earliest source for this story is Menander, whose comedy *Leucadia* is quoted by Strabo.[76]

> Ἔχει δὲ τὸ τοῦ Λευκάτα Ἀπόλλωνος ἱερὸν καὶ τὸ ἅλμα τὸ τοὺς ἔρωτας παύειν πεπιστευμένον· οὗ δὴ λέγεται πρώτη Σαπφώ ὥς φησιν ὁ Μένανδρος τὸν ὑπέρκομπον θηρῶσα Φάων’ οἰστρῶντι πόθῳ ῥῖψαι πέτρας ἀπὸ τηλεφανοῦς ἅλμα κατ’ εὐχὴν σήν, δέσποτ’ ἄναξ. ὁ μὲν οὖν Μένανδρος πρώτην ἁλέσθαι λέγει τὴν Σαπφώ, οἱ δ’ ἔτι ἀρχαιολογικώτεροι Κέφαλόν φασιν ἐρασθέντα Πτερέλα τὸν Δηιονέως.

The mythographer Ptolemaios Chennos (ca. 100 BC), includes Sappho’s leap in a long list of other love-cures effected at Leucas.[77] Furthermore, he records the following etiological legend, which for him explains the properties of the leap. After the death of Adonis, Aphrodite searched for the youth and went to the temple of Apollo Erithios in Cypriote Argos. She consulted Apollo, who brought her to Leucas and instructed her to dive off the cliff. After doing so, Aphrodite's love for Adonis ceased, and she asked Apollo the reason for this relief. The god answered that Leucas is the place where Zeus sits when he wants to be relieved of his love for Hera.

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[76] Strab. X 2, 9.

[77] In Phot. 190 p. 153a (Bekker). Another etiological legend, only reported in Serv. to Verg. *Aen.* III 279, has the boy Leucas flee from Apollo’s advances, and finally throw himself into the sea. This legend was probably created late, in imitation of the famous stories of Britomartis and others, and in disregard of the other Leucadian legends. See Hubaux, 1923, 27.

Similar love-stories appear in the works of the poets Moschus and Posidippus in connection with leaps into the sea. Posidippus writes (fr. 19, 7-8 Austin-Bastianini):

> οὐκ ἄν μιν Πολύφημος ἐβάστασε, σὺν Γαλατείαι
> πυκνὰ κολυμβήσας αἰπολικὸς δύσερως·

Polyphemos, a terrestrial and ugly Cyclops, burns with desire for the beautiful Nereid Galateia who rejects his love. His leap into the sea represents the violence of his feelings as much as the pathos of his situation. Moschus (fr. 3 Gow) narrates the happier story of Alpheius and Arethusa. For love of the beautiful Nymph of the Sicilian spring, the Peloponnesian river Alpheius dives under the sea without mixing its waters with salt, and finally arrives in Sicily to bring gifts to his beloved:

> Ἀλφειὸς μετὰ Πῖσαν ἐπὴν κατὰ πόντον ὁδεύῃ,
> ἔρχεται εἰς Ἀρέθοισαν ἄγων κοτινηφόρον ὕδωρ,
> ἕδνα φέρων καλὰ φύλλα καὶ ἄνθεα καὶ κόνιν ἱράν,
> καὶ βαθὺς ἐμβαίνει τοῖς κύμασι τὰν δὲ θάλασσαν
> νέρθεν ὑποτροχάει, κοὐ μίγνυται ὕδασιν ὕδωρ,
> ἁ δ' οὐκ οἶδε θάλασσα διερχομένω ποταμοῖο.
> κῶρος δεινοθέτας κακομάχανος αἰνὰ διδάσκων
> καὶ ποταμὸν διὰ φίλτρον Ἔρως ἐδίδαξε κολυμβῆν.

As Moschus says, Eros teaches the river to dive, meaning that he dives into the sea for love. Although unrelated to the Leucadian leap as such, these stories attest the importance of the leap into the sea as an erotic motif.

## The Leucadian Leap as a Transforming Psychological Journey

Despite its complex evolution, the main characteristic of the Leucadian leap remain constant from the earliest to the latest sources. The leap brings about a profound transformation in the diver, one that changes his or her state of consciousness, from sanity to drunkenness and love-madness (Cyclops, Anacreonta), or from madness to sanity (Sappho and others). This is how the Roman poet Ovid understood the Leucadian leap. In the *Heroides*, XV, he develops the story of Sappho's leap at Leucas and mentions other such leaps not attested elsewhere, such as the leap of Deucalion who was in love with Pyrrha.[78] Sappho describes herself as running madly about in search of Phaon (139-140): *illuc mentis inops, ut quam furialis Enyo attigit, in collo crine iacente feror.* Then, on the advice of a Nymph, she goes to Leucas to put an end to her torments by leaping from the cliff. She hopes not to die from the jump, but indicates that anything is better than her present misery (175-176): *ibimus, o nymphe, monstrataque saxa petemus; sit procul insano victus amore timor. quidquid erit, melius quam nunc erit.*

Ovid insists on the presence and help of Eros and Apollo at Leucas, but gives no indication that the leap represents a passage to another world. For him, it is simply a means to stop a vexing passion: *Tu quoque, mollis Amor, pinnas suppone cadenti, ne sim Leucadiae mortua crimen aquae. Inde chelyn Phoebo, communia munera, ponam, et sub ea versus unus et alter erunt: "grata lyram posui tibi, Phoebe, poetria Sappho: convenit illa mihi, convenit illa tibi"*(180-185). There was indeed a temple of Apollo at Leucas, where, according to Aelian, a leap was performed every year in honor of the god.[79] Unfortunately, Aelian does not specify the purpose of this leap: perhaps he is referring to the expulsion of the scapegoat discussed by Strabo. In fact, Strabo, immediately after his mention of Sappho's leap at Leucas, describes the Leucadian scapegoat ritual: perhaps for these late authors, the two instances were somewhat confused. In any case, what seems certain is that both types of Leucadian leap, the one for love and the scapegoat one, were felt to be connected with Apollo, and, in the first case, also with Eros.

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[78] Ov. *Her.* XV, 169-170.
[79] Ael. *N.A.* XI 8.

## Conclusion

A leap into the sea, in an erotic context, is a metaphor for the violent feelings of desire and fear. The sea itself and the final physical or psychological transformation of the protagonists represent the transition accomplished by the protagonist.

In this perspective, metamorphoses into rivers or aquatic birds are particularly significant. Their definitiveness symbolizes the final passage of the protagonists away from the human sphere and their complete transformation. Furthermore, as we have seen, aquatic birds are strongly linked to women and to the voyage into the afterlife. Thus, a female's metamorphosis into an aquatic bird after a leap into the sea carries the idea of her voyage to Hades, of her new intermediary station between life and death, as well as the issues related to her feminity in the myth.

# Chapter 4. Dolphin Riders

Dolphin-rider tales are among the most enigmatic immersion myths. What is the significance of the stories of Arion, Enalos, Hesiod, Melicertes, Theseus, Taras, Icadios, and Coeranos, who dive, are cast into the sea, or are shipwrecked and rescued by a dolphin? Clara Gallini, followed by many scholars, has insisted on the fabulous aspect of the dolphin-rider motif, arguing that such a miraculous salvation portends heroization, as in the cases of Hesiod and Melicertes who are both paid heroic honors after a dolphin brings their bodies back to shore.[1]

However, heroic honors are not granted to all protagonists of these myths, as for instance in the cases of Arion, Enalos, and Coeranos. Furthermore, the ages of the protagonists differ widely—Melicertes is a child, Enalos, Theseus, Taras, and Icadios are adolescents, while Arion and Coeranos are grown men and Hesiod has already reached old age. The contexts of the myths also differ widely—Melicertes and Hesiod are dead when they are cast into the sea, Taras, Icadios, and Coeranos are shipwrecked, while Arion is threatened by pirates and Theseus leaps to prove that he is the son of Poseidon. The ultimate consequences of the immersion also differ. Arion returns to land and punishes his aggressors, and Coeranos obtains a marvelous funeral due to his good deeds. Theseus, Enalos, Taras, and Icadios reach adulthood, and the two latter become the *oikistai* of Tarentum and Delphi.

In order to account for these important differences in the myths and to provide an interpretation of the dolphin-rider motif, I will take as my starting point the only common denominator among the myths, the dolphin itself. Drawing upon literary and iconographical evidence, I will show that the dolphin had a special status among animals in Greek thought that made it an intermediary between animals and humans, as well as between gods and men.

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[1] Gallini, 1963, *passim*.

The dolphin displays surprising human-like characteristics and behaviors, such as care for its young and care for the dead that separate it from the rest of the animal world and bring it closer to men. Furthermore, the dolphin's playful jumps above the water and deep plunges into the invisible depths of the sea emphasize its intermediary nature: in an instant, the dolphin can pass from the marine abysses into the realm of humans. As we will see, it engages in close relationships with humans, becoming tame and friendly. Considering the symbolism of the sea as a surrogate Hades studied in Chapter 1, the dolphin is therefore also a mediator between the world of life and the world of death, between the world of the gods and the world of humans.

For these reasons, I argue that the dolphin-rider motif represents a passage between life and death, and sometimes back, which allows the protagonists of the myths to accomplish crucial transitions in their lives. These transitions, such as Theseus and Enalos' passage from boyhood to adulthood, or Hesiod and Melicertes' acquisition of a heroic status, require the complete transformation, and therefore, symbolic death, of the protagonists. Riding the dolphin ably represents this metamorphosis, because it is a symbolic crossing between life and death.

I will first give an overview of our sources about the dolphin in order to explain the animal's connections with death and the passage to the afterlife. Then, I will examine dolphin-rider myths, paying particular attention to the eschatological significance of the dolphin's intervention. Finally, I will study the elusive figure of Apollo Delphinios and the role of this god in male rites of passage. We will see that his cult may be connected to the dolphin-rider myths concerning ephebes, since Apollo Delphinios presided over male coming-of-age. This may be the reason why dolphin-rider myths always concern male protagonists, while immersion myths regarding females tend to be associated with aquatic birds, as we saw in the previous chapter.

## The Dolphin and Death in Greek Iconography and Literature

The dolphin appears on a number of Mycenaean artifacts such as swords and jewelry.[2] In the absence of a literary record, however (the dolphin does not appear in the Mycenaean tablets), it is difficult to interpret the religious significance of these objects. A similar situation exists for the Minoan representations of the dolphin that have been variously interpreted as cults of an early Apollo Delphinios and instances of totemism, but without any certitude.[3] Nanno Marinatos has proposed that the dolphin, in Minoan art, represents power, since it is depicted as a predator, even attacking land animals such as goats.[4] Marinatos also notes the close association between dolphins and the priesthood, especially priestesses, as well as with marine birds in Minoan art. Considering that we do not know the function of the figures which Marinatos identifies as priests and priestesses, it is difficult to follow her wholeheartedly. However, if she is right, the dolphin may have had a much more complex significance than simply a symbol of power in Minoan religion.

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[2] Deonna, 1922, *passim* analyzes the funerary connotation of an ostrich egg decorated with golden dolphins found in a Mycenean tomb.
[3] Morgan, 1988, 34-63 analyzes the iconography of the dolphin in Minoan art.
[4] Marinatos, 1993, 131-132 and 156-157.

In the Homeric and Hesiodic poems, the wild nature of the dolphin is emphasized. In the Hesiodic *Shield of Heracles*, the dolphin is a voracious marine monster that scares fish away.[5] In the *Iliad*, Achilles dispatching scores of Trojan warriors to Hades is compared to a dolphin gorging on fish in the sea.[6] In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the god under his dolphin shape is πέλωρ, an enormous monster that frightens the Cretan sailors.[7] In these poems, the dolphin is called a κῆτος and is grouped with seals and whales; it is a marine beast.[8]

In Pindar and Euripides the dolphin, while still described as voracious, is credited with extraordinary intelligence and a taste for music that associates it with the Muses and the gods in general.[9] In particular, the dolphin is said to like the music of the pipes.[10] Pindar compliments the gracefulness of the dolphin and compares the jumper Melissos to this animal[11] and Euripides writes that the animal's leaps resemble choral dances.[12] The dolphin, while still considered by these authors to belong to the category of wild animals, is thus singled out for its remarkable human features such as the love of music and the ability to "dance". It becomes less of a beast and more of a man, a special animal with an intermediary status.

A well-established tradition which emphasizes the dolphin's special status also connects it with luck. Euripides affirms that dolphins accompanying a boat were a sign of luck and calm journey at sea.[13] Aristophanes, in the *Frogs*, says that omens about the outcome of a sea-journey were taken from the dolphins' leaps near the ship.[14] The animal is much more than an ordinary marine beast: it brings good fortune to men, can give omens, and therefore has a connection to the divine as well as to humans.

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[5] *Scut*. 211-213.

[6] *Il*. XXI 22-26.

[7] *Hom.Hymn.Ap*., 401: πέλωρ μέγα τε δεινόν.

[8] *Od*. XII 96-97; See also Archil. fr. 122 (West). Cf. Opp. *Hal*. II 551.

[9] Pind. *Nem.* VI 64; *Pyth*. II 51; Eur. *El*. 435; *Hel*. 1454-1456; Ael. *N.A*. XI 12 and XII 6; Plut. *Soll.An*. 977f; Ant.Kar. C60; Opp. *Hal*. II 628; Pliny *N.H*. IX 33.

[10] Pind. fr. 125, 69-71 (Bowie); Ar. *Ran*. 1345; Eratosth. *Catast*. I 31, 21; *Ant.Pal*. VII 214, 3; Plut. *Conv*. 162f; *Soll.An*. 984b; Ael. *N.A*. XII 45; Solin. XII 6.

[11] Pind. *Pyth*. IV 17; *Nem*. VI 64-66.

[12] Eur. *Hel*. 1454-1456.

Hellenistic and later naturalists stressed the remarkable qualities of the dolphin. They were impressed by its swiftness,[15] but above all, by its human-like behavior such as the protection of its young and cooperation with fellow dolphins in situations of danger.[16] Several authors even call the dolphin "King of the Sea".[17] These writers report at length about dolphins helping sailors by indicating the future direction of the wind and by alerting them to incoming storms,[18] as well as helping fishermen in their trade,[19] and becoming tame.[20] Plutarch writes that the dolphin is the only animal that seeks friendship with men for no advantage, a disinterested attitude which is pleasing to the gods.[21] For this reason, Athenaeus, Oppian, Aelian, and Plutarch consider the animal sacred and write that it cannot be hunted or eaten.[22] According to these authors, only the barbarous Thracians, who do not respect the sacred rules of the Greeks, ate the dolphin and made oil with its fat.[23] However, Pliny and other writers report some medicinal uses of the dolphin's body in Greece and Rome[24] and archaeologists have found that dolphin flesh was consumed pickled in Classical Athens and later.[25] It may be that the sacredness of the animal declared by Plutarch and other writers concerned only the theoretical level and ignored actual practice.

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[13] Eur. *Hel.* 1454-1456.

[14] Ar. *Ran*. 1317-1319, with schol. See Dover, 1997, *ad loc.* for the interpretation of the line as "omen" from dolphins' leaps.

[15] Pliny, *N.H.* IX 20; *Ael. N.A.* XII 12; Opp. *Hal*. II 533; Isid. *Orig*. XII 6, 11.

[16] The dolphin's love for its young: Ael. *N.A*. I 18; X 8; Opp. *Hal*. I 647; V 526. Cooperation among dolphins: Pliny *N.H*. IX 27-33; Arist. *H.A*. 631a9.

[17] Opp. *Hal*. II 539; Ael. *N.A*. XV 17; Aesopica, fab. 251 (Halm).

[18] Artem. II 16, 110; Isid. *Orig*. XVII 6, 11; Lucan, *B.C.* V 552.

[19] Pliny *N.A*. IX 29; Ael. *N.A*. II 8; Opp. *Hal*. V 416.

[20] Arist. *H.A*. IX 631a8; Pliny *N.H*. IX 28 (quoting Theophrastus); Paus. III 25, 7.

[21] Plut. *Soll.An*. 984 c-d.

[22] Ath. VII 282e; Opp. *Hal*. V 416; Plut. *Conv*. 163a; Ael. *N.A*. XI 12.

[23] Opp. *Hal*. V 519; Ael. *N.A*. I 18. Xen, *An*. V 4, 28 reports that the Mossynoecians, a tribe living on the southern shore of the Euxine, ate the dolphin and used its fat for oil, but he does not comment on this treatment of dolphins.

The dolphin's care for the dead, its own and human, attracted much attention from ancient naturalists and poets: in fact, they attribute human beliefs and customs about burial to the dolphin. Aristotle and his school, amidst some carefully recorded biological information about the animal,[26] note that dolphins carry their fellows ashore when they die so that they may not be devoured by fish.[27] Aelian, following Aristotle, affirms that dolphins bring human bodies that they find in the sea to shore.[28] Epigrams collected in the *Palatine Anthology* present dolphins lamenting over their own death or pushing themselves on shore to request burial when they die.[29] Just like men, dolphins are represented in these epigrams as dreading the loss of their bodies in the sea. These observations recall ancient Greek beliefs about burial, which stated that one's body must be buried on land and the proper rites administered for the soul of the deceased to be able to enter Hades.[30] These authors thus attributed typical Greek religious beliefs to the dolphin, and in fact presented the animal as a man concerned with his passage to the afterlife.

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[24] Dolphin flesh is hard: Gal. *Alim.Facult*. VI 728; *Loc.Affect*. VIII 183; Ael. *N.A*. XVI 18. Those suffering from dropsy drink dolphin oil with wine: Pliny *N.H*. XXXII 117. Those suffering from asphyxia attacks are treated with smoking dolphin fat: Pliny *N.H.* XXXII 129. Those affected by malaria are helped by eating dolphin liver: Pliny *N.H*. XXXII 113. Dolphin ashes cure leprosy and rashes: Pliny *N.H*. XXXII 83. Burnt dolphin teeth cure toothaches: Pliny *N.H*. XXXII 137.

[25] Papadopoulos and Ruscillo, 2002, 200, n. 48; Pritchett and Pippin, 1956, 202-3, n. 192 (with literary sources); Papadopoulos and Paspalas, 1999, 177, n. 82.

[26] Aristotle is the first Greek author to classify the dolphin among mammals and not fish: Arist. *H.A.* 489a34 (the dolphin is viviparous); 489b2 (the dolphin is classified among whales); 516b11 (the dolphin has bones); *H.A.* 504b21(the dolphin is a mammalian), Opp. *Hal*. I 660, Pliny *N.H.* IX 21; Ael. *N.A*. X 8.

[27] Arist. *H.A*. 631a.

[28] Ael. *N.A*., XII 6; Pliny *N.H*. IX 33.

[29] *A.P*. VII 214 (Archias), 215 (Anyte), 216 (Antipater).

[30] E.g. *Il.* XXIII, 70-76. See Vermeule, 1979, 2-8; Garland, 1985, 101-103.

Stobaeus quotes a curious passage attributed to Hermes Trismegistus in which it is said that the just become eagles among birds, lions among quadrupeds, dragons among reptiles, and dolphins among marine creatures, because dolphins "*sympathize with those who fall into the sea, and they carry those who still breathe to land, and they do not touch the dead although they are the most voracious of sea animals*".[31] This affirmation brings together the two most important characteristics of the dolphin: it is a marine beast, yet it cares for humans, rescuing the living and respecting the dead. Unlike fish, it refrains from eating the bodies of the dead, because this would constitute a desecration and prevent the proper administration of burial rites.

Many stories emphasize the dolphin's habit of rescuing men at sea and its concern for burial. An Aesopic fable relates that a dolphin once saw a shipwrecked boat.[32] As was its habit, it went to seek the sailors to take them to shore. Finding a monkey on board, and mistaking it for a man, the dolphin took it on its back. On the way to shore, the dolphin asked the monkey if he was from Athens and knew Piraeus. The monkey replied that he was an Athenian of noble birth and that Piraeus was his best friend. The dolphin, disgusted by such obvious lies, drowned him immediately. One of the manuscripts transmits the following morale with this fable: "men who do not know the truth and believe they can deceive others come to a bad end." The moralist interpreted the fable as an exhortation not to lie, which is certainly a valid reading. But besides the moral aspect of the fable, I find interesting that the dolphin is represented as having the habit of rescuing men at sea. This was therefore a well established folkloric notion for the audience of the fabulist. Furthermore, the dolphin will not rescue any living creature: it only wants to save men. When it realizes the true identity of the monkey, an animal thought in Greece to be an ugly, counterfeit man,[33] it immediately drowns it. Therefore, in the fable, the dolphin is not simply a good animal that will rescue other creatures in danger: it is specifically associated with men, and men only.[34]

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[31] My translation. Stob. I 49, 44, 321 (Hense-Wachsmuth).

[32] *Aesop.* 75 (Hausrath and Hunger). Perhaps related is the story according to which the dolphin, as king of the sea, gorges on θαλάττηι πίθηκος when it is sick to cure itself, just like the lion, as king of the land, eats monkeys when it is sick: Ael. *N.A.* XV 17.

The story of Coeranos presents similar qualities of the dolphin.[35] This Milesian merchant once saw a dolphin trapped in a fishing-net. Outraged, he bought the dolphin from the fisherman and set it free. Later, when his ship was sinking, he alone of the passengers was rescued by dolphins. When he died of old age in Miletus, a school of dolphins followed his funerary procession along the harbor. Not only the animal he had saved, but all its fellow dolphins repaid Coeranos his kindness. The story highlights many qualities of the dolphin, namely, its love for men, its pity for shipwrecked sailors, and its respect for the divine law of burial. In this story, the dolphin acts as a man, displays feelings of gratitude, sadness at the loss of a friend, and follows the civilized custom of honoring the dead with a funerary procession.[36]

Lastly, a curious tradition has a dolphin rescue the baby Telemachus when he fell into the sea. In gratitude, his father Odysseus adopted the dolphin as his shield-device.[37]

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[33] E.g. Sim. 7, 69; Ar. *Ach*. 120; *Eq*. 887.

[34] There are many modern documented occurrences of dolphins rescuing men at sea, especially from shark attacks: e.g. New Standard 7/26/96 (Associated Press, Cairo, Egypt), “Dolphins save swimmer from shark”. However, there are also documented occurrences of dolphins rescuing whales from a dire situation: e.g. CNN 03/12/08 (Associated Press, Wellington, New Zealand), “Dolphin rescues stranded whales”.

[35] Ath. XIII 606d-e; Ael. *N.A*. VIII 3; Plut. *Soll.An*. 985a-c; Opp. *Hal*. II 533.

[36] Cf. Plut. *Soll.An*. 985b: dolphins attend the burning of a fellow dolphin’ body.

[37] Plut. *Soll.An*. 985b= Stesich. fr. 48 Page (70 Bergk); Lyc. *Al*. 658 with schol. (Odysseus δελφινόσημος); Euphorion fr. 67 Powell.

Cecil Bowra considers that this story is a late invention by contamination with other such tales.[38] This is certainly the case, but the story may nevertheless have a deeper meaning. Indeed, Léon Lacroix has proposed that the story represents Odysseus' destiny: in his homeward journey, he goes through the sea and barely escapes death. After this initiatory near-death experience, he finally reaches his home in Ithaca.[39] Telemachus' rescue may therefore be an allegory for his father's life, invented late to illustrate the hero's extraordinary destiny.

From all this material, we conclude that the dolphin held a special status among animals in Greek thought. It is voracious and has a beastly aspect, but loves music, brings luck to men, and cares for the dead. It is an intermediary between animals and men, a marine beast with human-like tastes and concerns. Furthermore, the dolphin likes to leap above the waves, and thus bridges between two elements, the deep sea and the air. By becoming tame an engaging in friendship with men, it also bridges between the world of men and the marine abysses.

## The Dolphin in Connection with Funerary Themes in Iconography and Myth

The intermediary status of the dolphin is manifest in iconography and myth, where the animal is the agent and vehicle of men's passage to the afterlife. There, the various qualities of the dolphin observed by naturalists and poets are played out to form an eschatological allegory. The passage to the afterlife is compared to a voyage at sea accompanied and helped along by a marine beast which is nevertheless friendly to humans and shows concern for the customs of burial.

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[38] Bowra, 1963, 132.
[39] Lacroix, 1958, 95.

One late fifth century Boeotian *lekythos* probably represents a dolphin in connection with a funerary theme.[40] On this small oil-bottle, two winged boys, Erotes[41] or souls of the dead,[42] one playing the lyre, ride a dolphin. The connections between the lyre and funerary themes have long been shown. In fact, many literary accounts, starting with Pindar, speak of the dead playing the lyre in Hades.[43] A series of at least thirty white-ground Attic *lekythoi* also shows lyres on funerary monuments, or the dead playing the lyre on their monuments while mourners wail over them.[44] Remains of a lyre (fragments of a tortoise shell and metallic parts) were found in the Tomb of the Diver in Tarquinia, and many Classical funerary monuments include representations of lyres.[45] Therefore, because of the winged boys, the dolphin, and the lyre, it is very probable that this *lekythos* constitutes our first preserved Boeotian (and continental Greek) representation of a dolphin in an eschatological context. The scene probably depicts the sea-voyage of souls or Erotes into Hades, already playing the lyre of the happy deceased, accompanied by a dolphin that ensures their safe crossing to the land of the dead.

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[40] Red figure *lekythos*, from Boeotia, 430-420 BC, Berlin Staatliches Museum, Inv. VI 3247.

[41] Erotes would not be out of place, since they appear in funerary contexts even at this early period (although they are most common in these contexts in the Roman period). E.g. Athenian red-figure pelike, second half of fifth cent.BC, London, British Museum, BME 395, *CVA* 1773 (Eros with a youth at a stele); Athenian red-figure white-ground *lekythos*, mid-fifth cent. BC, Marseille, Musée Borély, XXXX14890, *CVA*, 14890 (tomb, Eros, woman). For the psychopompic functions of Eros at Rome, see L'Orange, 1962, *passim*; Cumont, 1942, 337-350. For the iconographical motif of Eros on the dolphin, see Reho-Bumbalova, 1981, *passim*.

[42] Souls were commonly represented as winged in this period. See Vermeule, 1979, 8-11.

[43] Pind. fr. 129 (Schröder)=Thrènes, 1, Puech=Plut. *Cons.Ap.* 35f; Pl. *Ap.* 41a; *R.* II 363c Verg. *Aen.* VI 645-655; Luc. *V.H.* II 15; *A.P.* VII 25; Cumont, 1942, 294-350.

[44] Delatte, 1913, 318-322.

[45] Hoffmann, 2003, *passim*.

## Arion

The story of Arion, which first appears in Herodotus, was one of the most famous dolphin-rider stories of Antiquity.[46] Arion of Methymna, who dwelled in Corinth, was the best singer of his time.[47] After having spent some time in Tarentum, he hired a Corinthian ship to return home. On the way, the crew conspired to kill him and take his valuable belongings. They offered Arion a choice: either to kill himself, after which the crew would bury him on land, or to leap into the sea immediately and forego burial. Seeing that he was going to die, Arion requested to sing and play the lyre one last time dressed in his stage regalia. The crew accepted, and Arion sang a hymn to Apollo, the Orthian Nome.[48] He then leapt into the sea. Immediately, a dolphin took him on its back and carried him to Taenarum where the singer landed safely. He then made his way to Corinth and the pirates were punished for their outrageous treatment of Arion at the court of Periander. Later, Arion dedicated a small statue of a man riding a dolphin at Taenarum.[49]

The part of Herodotus' account that interests me the most is the choice offered to Arion by the crew. I want to stress the important funerary connections of the passage.

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[46] Main sources: Hdt. I 24-25; Plut. *Conv*. 161b-f. Full bibliography in: Klement, 1898; Bowra, 1963; Giangrande, 1974; Brussich, 1976; Burkert, 1983, 196-204; Vignolo-Munson, 1986; Hooker, 1989.
Hellanic. *Fr.Gr.Hist*. 4 Fr 86=Schol. Ar. *Av*. 1403, writing some 15 years before Herodotus, was aware of some traditions regarding Arion, but our fragments do not mention his adventure with the dolphin. Arion *floruit*: 617 BC (Eus. Chron. *Ol*. 40); 628/5: Suda *s.v.* Arion; 664/1: Solin. VII 6 (Mommsen). On Arion's chronology, see Schamp, 1976, 104.

[47] Arion is credited with various musical innovations. He was the first to perform dithyrambs: Hdt. I 23. Arion was the first to produce choral poetry: Pind. *Ol*. XIII 18-19 with schol.; Hellanic. *FrHistGr*, 4 F 86; Arist. fr. 677 (Rose); Schol. Pl. *R*. 394c =Procl., Chrest, 320a31; Dikaiarchos, fr. 75 W; Tzetzes schol. to Lyc. 39 (Scheer). See Zimmermann, 2000, 16.

[48] Later writers did not all agree that Arion sang the Orthian Nome. Only the schol. to Clem.Al. *Prot*. I 3, 3, 11 concur with Hdt. and say that Arion sang the Orthian Nome. Plut. *Conv*. 161c (Arion sang the Pythian Nome). For many, Arion did not sing an Apollinian hymn, but a funerary dirge, a detail which greatly changes the religious meaning of the story: Aulus Gellius XVI 19, 12-13, 16 (Arion sang a consolatory hymn: *carmen casus illius sui consolabile*); Tzetzes, *Chil*. I 17, 403 (Arion sang a funerary hymn: μέλος ἐπιθανάτιον).

[49] Hdt. I 24; *A.P.*, XVI 276 (Bianor); Apd. III 25, 7; Serv. to Verg. *Buc*. VIII 55. Pausanias IX 30, 3 mentions a statue of Arion on the dolphin in a cave on Mount Helicon.

Arion chooses to leap into the sea and not be buried rather than to be killed by the crew. He therefore leaps directly into death and oblivion, while playing the lyre. This detail, as discussed earlier in this chapter, recalls literary and iconographical depictions of the dead playing the lyre in Hades. Arion is thus accomplishing a *katabasis* with a funerary and eschatological symbol in hand.

The dolphin's marvelous intervention reverses Arion's fortune. Herodotus describes it as θῶμα μέγιστον, "a very fantastic occurrence". The event is in fact wonderful: Arion, preparing for death, looking like a soul departing for Hades with a lyre in hand, returns to earth. The dolphin thus carries the singer through a transition between life and death and back, and protects him from death and oblivion in the sea. The dolphin is appropriate for this role: as we have seen, the animal is a mediator between the earth and the sea, as well as between life and death.

Arion's landing at Taenarum confirms my interpretation.[50] This promontory was widely believed in Antiquity to be an entrance to the Underworld.[51] Taenarum is in fact one of the many locations from which Heracles enters Hades to fetch Cerberus,[52] as well as Theseus and Peirithous who descended to Hades in their quest for Persephone.[53] There was also an oracle of the dead in a cave near the sanctuary of Poseidon.[54] Thus, after his *katabasis* in the water, Arion returns to life by performing an *anabasis* out of the sea as well as out of the infernal door at Taenarum.

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[50] Bianor, *A.P.* IX 308 says that Arion landed at the Isthmus. This information perhaps comes from a contamination with the myth of Melicertes.

[51] Pind. *Pyth*. IV 43 with schol.; Ar. *Ran*. 187; Schol. Ar. *Ach*. 509; Men. fr. 842 (Kock); Pom.Mela II 51; Hor. *Carm*. I 34, 10 with schol.; Sen. *Tr*. 402; Lucan IX 36; Stat. *Theb*. I 96; II 48; Apul. *Met*. VI 18, 20; *Orph.Arg*. 1369; Serv. to Verg. *Georg*. IV 466; Tzet. to Lyc. *Al*. 90; Suda *s.v.* Tainaron; Solin. 7, 8.

[52] Eur. *Her*. 23; Paus. III 25, 5; Palaeph. *Incr*. 39; Tzet. *Chil*. II 36, 398.

[53] Ap.Rhod. I 102 with schol; Hyg. *Fab*. 79; *Orph.Arg*. 41; Verg. *Georg*. IV 467; Ov. *Met*. X 13; Sen. *H.F.* 587; *H.O.* 1061.

[54] Pomp.Mel. II 45; Strab. VIII 363; Paus. III 25, 4. See Ogden, 2001, *passim*.

Plutarch’s account also stresses the eschatological aspects of Arion’s adventure.[55] The philosopher compares Arion to swans, who sing most beautifully when they are about to die,[56] and says that the singer prayed to the marine gods for salvation.[57] Plutarch insists on the fact that Arion’s body does not go completely under: πρὶν δ΄ὅλον καταδῦναι τὸ σῶμα δελφίνων ὑποδραμόντων ἀναφέροιτο.[58] A complete and deadly immersion is thus avoided, and the dolphin ensures Arion’s safe return to land after a close encounter with death.[59]

After his leap, once he is on the dolphin’s back, Arion does not conceive so much fear of death or desire to live as pride for his salvation, since it made him appear as a favorite of the gods and since he would also gain a sure opinion about the gods: μήτε τοσοῦτον ἔφη δέους πρὸς θάνατον αὐτῷ μήτ’ ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ ζῆν ὅσον φιλοτιμίας ἐγγενέσθαι πρὸς τὴν σωτηρίαν, ὡς θεοφιλὴς ἀνὴρ φανείη καὶ λάβοι περὶ θεῶν δόξαν βέβαιον.[60] Therefore, for Plutarch, Arion’s rescue by the dolphin is a contact with the divine, a way of ascertaining the fact that the gods intervene on behalf of mortals caught in dire situations.

For Plutarch, unlike for Herodotus (who rather emphasizes the wonderful aspects of the story), the story serves to illustrate the divine justice that “s*ees all things done on*

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[55] Plut. Conv. 161b-162b.
[56] Pl. *Phd*. 84e-85a.
[57] Plut. *Conv*. 161d.
[58] Plut. *Conv*. 161c.
[59] The story of Arion is therefore comparable to the myths studied in Chapter 2, where *parthenoi* went through a symbolic death in a chest, a subsitute for a coffin, which eventually carried them to safety. Here, Arion is carried through a symbolic death by an animal strongly tied to death (the dolphin) that eventually carries him to shore. The main differences between the myths are that only females are involved in *larnax* myths, while only males are involved in dolphin myths. Also, the myths studied in Chapter 2 have an important connection with coming-of-age which is absent from the story of Arion.
[60] Plut. *Conv*. 161e.

*land and on the sea*”,[61] and does not let a bad deed go unpunished. Plutarch also stresses that the helmsman of the ship warns Arion of the crew’s intentions. He does not participate in the attack on the singer and covers his face when his comrades are about to kill Arion.[62] This detail, absent from Herodotus’ account, shows Plutarch’s concern for justice in distinguishing the guilty from the innocent and adds a dramatic element to the narrative. Thus, from Herodotus to Plutarch, the significance of the Arion story evolved greatly, from a marvelous feat to a tale illustrating divine justice.

This aspect of Arion’s adventure is comparable to that of Thespesios which Plutarch recounts in *The Belated Vengeance of the Gods*. Thespesios, an inhabitant of Soli in Cilicia, was a wicked man and a spendthrift. One day, he asked the oracle of Amphilochos if he would always lead his life that way. The oracle answered that the situation would get much better after his death. Some time later, Thespesios fell from a height and incurred a light concussion that left him unconscious. After three days, believing him dead, his family was about to bury him when he woke up. From then onwards, Thespesios’ character changed completely and he became the most honest and just man of the town. When his amazed friends asked him the reason for this transformation, he said that when he fell, he felt “like a pilot thrown into deep water”.[63] He then visited a land where he encountered the souls of the dead, some of his parents, and saw the chasm of Lethe into which the dead fly. Thespesios’ experience, as Jean Hubaux has shown, therefore amounts to a *katabasis* through water (the sensation of falling into deep water) which brings him to death and back to life again.[64] Thespesios, like Arion, brings back extraordinary knowledge from his journey beyond the boundaries normally assigned to mortals.

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[61] Plut. *Conv*. 161f.
[62] Plut. *Conv*. 161d.
[63] Κυβερνήτης ἐκ πλοίου ἀπορριφθείς: Plut. *Ser.Num.Vin*. 563e.
[64] Hubaux, 1934, *passim*.

Scholars have proposed many interpretations of the story of Arion. Vivienne Gray and Christian Steures have stressed the significance of Arion's itinerary, from Tarentum to Taenarum. For Vivienne Gray, Arion's itinerary, from a city whose poliad divinity was Poseidon, to this god's shrine at Taenarum, is appropriate, and shows that this god was the one who saved Arion.[65] More importantly, Gray believes that the story of Arion is meant to mirror that of Alyattes, in which it is embedded, and to show that both Arion and the Lydian king relied on the gods to save them when their lives were threatened.[66] This interpretation is interesting and has the merit of integrating the Arion story in the larger frame of the *Histories*.[67] Furthermore, Gray's reading of the narrative comes very close to Plutarch's religious interpretation in which the gods are agents of justice and salvation. Also, the role of Poseidon that Gray stresses is certainly important. Although the god has no direct agency in the narrative, Arion's *katabasis* and return to life is accomplished through Poseidon's realm, the deep sea and the deep earth (the chthonian shrine at Taenarum).[68]

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[65] Gray, 2001, 14. She points out that the hymn of the pseudo-Arion credits Poseidon with the rescue: Ael. *N.A*. XII 45. Bowra, 1963, 122-124, considers this hymn inauthentic because it exhibits linguistic characteristics typical of the fifth cent. BC, and Arion would have lived almost two centuries earlier if he was Periander's contemporary. However, it has never been ascertained that Arion was in fact a historical figure, and so Bowra's objection is misguided. The hymn, composed by an unknown poet, was attributed to the mythical singer Arion, and therefore cannot be "inauthentic".

[66] Gray, 2001, 17.

[67] Likewise, Stewart Flory, 1978, 411 has sought to illuminate the ties of the Arion story with the larger Herodotean narrative. He proposes that the Arion story represents a celebration of a brave gesture and contempt for danger, a motif that he deems constant in Herodotus, and compares with the deaths of Prexaspes and Boges (Hdt. III 75), and with the composed attitude of the Spartans before the battle of Thermopylae.

[68] On the sanctuary at Taenarum, see Cummer 1978, *passim*; Günther, 1988, *passim*; Mylonopoulos, 2003 (comprehensive archaeological, historical, and religious study of the sanctuary).

Christian Steures has focused on Arion's dedication of a man riding a dolphin in Poseidon's shrine at Taenarum.[69] According to this scholar, the small statue was in fact a tripod *appliqué* representing Taras that Arion won in a poetical contest in Tarentum. Steures writes that the dedication served a number of purposes: it honored Tarentum, where Arion started his journey, with the dedication of its emblem (cf. coins of Tarentum with dolphin-rider); it honored the god Poseidon who had granted him a safe voyage twice and saved him from the pirates; it honored the god with an image of his son, the hero Taras; it honored Sparta, in whose territory Taenarum is located, with the image of its colony, Tarentum; lastly, it honored Alcman, the Spartan poet, who was reputedly Arion's teacher.[70] This interpretation is highly speculative: no sources attest to Arion winning any contest in Tarentum (although it is probable), and his ties with Sparta are even more tenuous. However, Steures' reading has the merit of placing the story in its geo-political context, between Tarentum and Sparta. We can add to Steures' geo-political considerations the fact that Taenarum was a place of asylum and salvation for helots and slaves: it is therefore appropriate that Arion lands in such a location after his encounter with the pirates, because one of the shrine's purposes is precisely to protect lives from the oppression and aggression of stronger persons.

Besides Poseidon, the gods Apollo and Dionysus also have a place in this complex and polysemic narrative. Karl Klement has stressed the importance of Apollo in the story, because of this god's epiclesis as Delphinios and because of Arion's choice of hymn.[71] However, although the exact character and attributes of Apollo Delphinios are still unclear, it seems that this god was above all connected with the ceremonies surrounding the coming of age of boys, a category to which Arion does not belong.[72] Nevertheless, Arion does play the lyre, an instrument connected with deat, as we have seen, and also particularly connected with Apollo. Perhaps this is a sign of Arion's inspired state at the time of his leap, which carries him through a *katabasis* and back to earth. The lyre is also connected with Hermes, its inventor, who is a god of *katabasis* and passage between worlds.[73] Thus, both these gods participate in Arion's Underworld journey.

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[69] Steures, 1999, *passim*.
[70] Suda *s.v.* Arion.
[71] Klement, 1898, 6. See also Rabinovitch, 1947, 26, note 40.

Deborah Lyons has stressed the connections of the Arion story with Dionysus.[74] She argues that the passage of Herodotus contains a hidden pun destined to recall the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*, in the word Methymnaios, the ethnic name of Arion and an epithet of Dionysus. Furthermore, according to Lyons, the reaction of the Tyrrhenian pirates at Dionysus' divine manifestations on the ship, surprise, described by the word ἐκπληγέντες,[75] is exactly echoed in Herodotus. However, the correspondence between the two uses of this word is purely fortuitous, since no other lexical parallel strengthens the association between the two texts. As for the epithet μεθυμναῖος, "the drunken one"[76] it was already confused by many writers in antiquity with the ethnic μηθυμναῖος "from Methymna".[77] It is also a rare epithet for Dionysus. Therefore, it is impossible to make an argument based on the use of this adjective. Nevertheless, Dionysus does have his place in the Arion story: as we will see in the next chapter, Dionysus presides over transitions between life and death which often occur through water and in which dolphins play an important role.[78] Thus, Arion's transition from life to death and back can be interpreted as Dionysiac, especially considering the important teachings of Dionysiac cult concerning life after death.

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[72] Graf, 1979, 22.
[73] *h.Merc*. 25-64.
[74] Deborah Lyons, "Arion and Dionysus Methymnaios: a Reading of Herodotus 1.23-24", Annual Meeting of the APA, San Diego, Jan. 4-7, 2007.
[75] *h.Bacch*. 50.
[76] Dionysus Μεθυμναῖος: Plut. *Quaes.Conv*. 648e; Ath. VII 64, 39; Call. *Suppl.Hell*. 276, 9 (Lloyd-Jones); Eust. to *Od*. I 134, 13; Schol. to Hes. *O.D.* 20. Dionysus Μηθυμναῖος: Hesych. *s.v.* Mêthymnaios.
[77] Μηθυμναῖος as ethnic: Thuc. III 2, 3; Hdt. I 151; Xen. *Hel.* I 6, 14; Strab. XIII 1, 21, etc. Μεθυμναίος as ethnic: Ath. *Epit*. II 2, 67; Diod.Sic. XIV 94, 4; μεθυμναῖος: Diod.Sic. XV 37, 3; Ael.*Her*. 81, 4; Suda *s.v.* Methymnaios.

To sum up, the story of Arion is a complex and polysemic one. It centers on the singer's transition between life and death and back, but also has many other religious and geo-political meanings. Furthermore, it occupies an important place in the Herodotean narrative which highlights the significance of the Alyattes story in book 1.

## Hesiod

The poet Hesiod went to Chalcis for the funeral games of Amphidamas, at which he competed against Homer and won the prize, a tripod.[79] After his victory, he traveled to Delphi, where the Pythia warned him to avoid the temple of Nemean Zeus, because he would die there. Misunderstanding the oracle, a *topos* in Greek literature, Hesiod avoided Nemea and traveled to Locris or Naupactus. There, he was unjustly accused of having seduced the daughter of his host (or to have helped the seducer) and was killed by her brothers near a local sanctuary of Nemeian Zeus. The brothers threw his body into the sea, where it was picked up by a dolphin and brought back to shore during a festival of Poseidon or Ariadne and was buried with honor by the locals.[80] The murderers took flight to sea, but Zeus killed them with a lightning bolt.[81] In another version of the story,

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[78] Daraki, 1982, 3.

[79] Paus. IX 38, 3-4; *Certamen* 224-236 (Allen); Plut. *Soll.An*. 969e, 984d; *Conv*. 162d-e; Poll. V 42; *Suda*, *s.v*. Hesiodos 9-11; Thuc. III 96, 1; Tzetzes, *Vita Hes*. 34-40 (Merkelbach-West).

[80] Festival of Ariadne: *Certamen* 224-236. Festival of Poseidon: Plut. *Conv*. 162d-e. Buried in Naupactus: Paus. IX 38, 3-4. In Locrian Oinoe: *Certamen* 224-236. In Oineon near Naupactus: Thuc. III 2, 3. Buried in a secret location near the Nemeion: Plut. *Conv*. 162e.

[81] *Certamen* 238-240 (Allen). In Tz. *Vita Hes*. 34-40, the murderers are shipwrecked.

Hesiod's dog betrays them to the townspeople by its insistent barking, and they are punished.[82]

However, the life of Hesiod does not end with his burial. The figure of Hesiod, because of the panhellenic diffusion of his poetry from the Archaic period onwards, was extremely popular throughout antiquity. As I have shown elsewhere,[83] he was honored or associated with a cult in various locations in Greece, among which are the shrine of the Muses on Helicon and the Boeotian town of Orchomenos.[84] A large number of epigrams were also composed in his honor, many of which are preserved in the *Palatine Anthology*.[85] The story of his rescue by dolphins is especially meaningful: these animals, respectful of the gods, mindful of justice, and music lovers, do not allow the body of one of Greece's most famous poets to be lost forever in the sea. His tomb will become the focal point for his worship as a chthonian hero, and his memory will live on. As a man with a special connection with the divine, he will also become a protective figure for the cities that receive his sepulture. Furthermore, the dolphins ensure Hesiod's successful transition between life and death by bringing his body to shore for burial, thus enabling the poet's entrance into Hades. It is interesting that the dolphins bring the body to shore during a festival of Poseidon[86] or Ariadne.[87] Here, as in the story of Arion, we have an indicator, albeit tenuous, that Hesiod's journey through the deep sea to the deep earth to become a hero was accomplished under the protection of Poseidon and Dionysus. As we have seen, both gods are strongly tied to the sea as a locus for transition from life to death, Poseidon because of his chthonian connections and Dionysus because he presides over such transitions, especially when they are accomplished through water.

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[82] Poll. V 42 and Plut. *Soll.An*. 969e, 984d.

[83] See Beaulieu, 2004, *passim*.

[84] Ps.Arist. *Orch.Pol*. fr. 565 (Rose)=Tzetzes, *Vita Hes.* 42-44 (Merkelbach-West); *Certamen* 247-253 (Allen); *A.P.* VII 54.

[85] *A.P.* II 12; VII 52; VII 55; IX 24; IX 64. For an analysis of these epigrams and further parallels, see Argoud, 1996, *passim*, and West, 1984, *passim*.

[86] See Nilsson, 1995[1906], 84, for the Rhia as a festival of Poseidon. Plut. *Conv*. 162e. Paus. IX 31, 5 also mentions that the murderers paid the price of their crime on the person of Hesiod to Poseidon.

[87] *Certamen*, 234 (Allen).

## Melicertes

The myth of Melicertes-Palaemon is ancient and intricate. Ino, the mother of Melicertes, carries him with her as she leaps into the sea, in some versions after boiling him in a cauldron.[88] She becomes the goddess Leucothea and continues to live in the sea in the company of the Nereids. Melicertes, however, is irremediably dead. A dolphin picks him up and brings him to the Isthmus, where he is buried with honor by the local king, Sisyphus. Sisyphus even makes him, along with Poseidon, the tutelary divinity of the Isthmian Games and institutes sacrifices in his honor under the name of Palaemon.[89]

The dolphin constitutes an important symbolic element of Melicertes' passage to the afterlife. It carries the dead child out of the sea and oblivion to a proper burial site where his soul will be placated for his untimely death. The dolphin is therefore the agent of Melicertes' final transition to his tomb and heroic afterlife. The chthonian aspect of the story is important: just like Arion and Hesiod, Melicertes accomplishes his voyage to the afterlife from the deep sea to the deep earth. Both are part of Poseidon's realm, a god with whom Melicertes is associated at the Isthmus: the Palaemonion was in fact located within the Poseidonion, and both the hero and the god presided over the Isthmian Games.[90]

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[88] For a full discussion of the myth of Ino, see Chapter 5.

[89] Apd. III 4, 3; Arg. Pind. *Isth*. IV; Call. fr. 91 (Pfeiffer); Eur. *Med*. 1284 with schol.; Hellanic. *Fr.Gr.Hist*. 4F165; Musaios *FrHistGr*. 455F1; Arist. fr. 637 (Rose); Hyg. *Fab*. 2, 4; Ov. *Fasti* VI 485; *Met*. IV 506-542; Paus. I 44, 8-11; II 1, 3-8; Plut. *Quaes.Rom*. 16; *Quaest.Conv*. 677b; Paus. II 1, 7; Ael.Aristid. *Or*. III 25, 13; 27, 29; 28, 13; Luc. *D.Mar*. 8; Schol. to *Od*. V 334; Schol. Ap.Rhod. III 1240; Servius to Verg. *Aen*. V 241; Tzetzes to Lyc. *Al*. 21, 107, 229. For a complete analysis of these sources and their relation to those regarding Ino, see Chapter 5. Furthermore, a fragment of Pindar mentions Melicertes, as well as a passage of Euripides: Pind. fr. *Isthm*. 5-6 (Snell-Maehler); Eur. *Med*. 1284.

The cult of Melicertes-Palaemon at the Isthmus stressed the chthonian character of this child hero.[91] The Palaemonion was a tholos,[92] a circular temple, which is usually connected with chthonian divinities and often conceals a crypt.[93] A crypt, which could be flooded by a set of water-conduits, did indeed exist underneath the Palaemonion.[94] Palaemon was said to be hidden in the crypt.[95] Athletes descended there to swear an oath to Palaemon before the Games.[96] The athletes, by swearing their oath, entered a sacred compact with the dead child Palaemon.[97]

We also know that bulls were sacrificed to Palaemon by athletes on the night before the Games started and were thrown into a pit (βόθρος).[98] These sacrifices are described by authors as having orgiastic characteristics and were accompanied by a funeral lament: θρήνῳ εἴκασται τελεστικῷ τε καὶ ἐνθέῳ.[99] The ceremony as a whole was thus stronlgy chthonic. It is also reported that sacrifices of children were dedicated to Palaemon on the island of Tenedos, but no archaeological evidence has been found to confirm these literary testimonies.[100]

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[90] Paus. II 1, 7 also describes a frieze in the Poseidonion representing Poseidon, Amphitrite, and Melicertes.

[91] It is unclear exactly when this cult originated: Pindar (fr. *Isthm*. 5-6 Snell-Maehler) mentions Melicertes' burial at the Isthmus, but no conclusive evidence of a pre-Roman cult has been found after comprehensive excavations on the site (Will, 1955; Hawthorne, 1958; Koester, 1990; Piérart, 1998; Seelinger, 1998). Rather, all the structures related to the cult of Palaemon date from the Roman period, despite Rupp's claim to the contrary. (Rupp, 1979, *passim*). Gebhard and Dickie, 1999 admit to the inexistence of archaeological evidence, but nevertheless postulate that the cult of Palaemon at the Isthmus must be Archaic or Classical because of its mention in Pindar and other early authors.

[92] This tholos was represented on the second and third centuries A.D. coinage of Corinth: Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner, 1964 [1885-1887], pl. B (Corinth 1), nos.XI, XII, XIII (silver coins of Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, and Caracalla).

[93] Will, 1955, 172 note 1; Marchetti, 1998, 359.

[94] Piérart, 1998, 101; Marchetti, 1998, 359.

[95] Paus. II 2, 1: ἔνθα δὴ τὸν Παλαίμονα κεκρύφθαι φασίν.

[96] Ael.Aristid. *Or*. III 25, 13; 27, 29; 28, 13; Burkert, 1983 [1972], 198.

[97] The myths and cults of the child-heroes Opheltes and Pelops, who presided over the Nemean and Olympic games respectively, share many aspects with that of Palaemon, notably the cauldron (Pelops) and the chtonian aspect (Opheltes dies from a snake bite). On these heroes, see Pache 135-180.

[98] Pind. *Nem*. VI 40; Plut. *Thes*. 25; Philostr. *Im*. II 16; Liban. *Or*. XIV 5, 67. Some coins of Corinth show a bull being led to the Palaemonion: Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner, 1964 [1885-1887], pl. B (Corinth 1), nos. XI and XIII. See: Burkert, 1983 [1972], 197.

[99] Philostr. *Her*. 740, 17 (Olearius); Plut. *Thes*, 25 (compares the nocturnal sacrifices for Palaemon to Mysteries); Stat. *Theb*. VI 10-14 (insists on the "dark" character of the cult of Palaemon and the dirges

In later sources, especially in the Roman period, Melicertes becomes associated with Dionysus and Dionysiac symbols. This association may have occurred under the influence of the growing connections between Ino-Leucothea and the same god during the Hellenistic and Roman periods.[101] Pausanias insists on the family connections between Melicertes and Dionysus: the child is Dionysus' nephew since Ino, the sister of Semele, is his mother.[102] Furthermore, after Semele's death, Ino became Dionysus' nurse, and as we will see in Chapter 5, an important version of her myth describes her as the first Bacchant. Melicertes and the myths surrounding his family are therefore strongly connected to the Dionysiac sphere.

However, it seems that Melicertes was associated with Dionysus in his own right at the Isthmus, with little or no explicit connection with Ino. Some coins represented the child riding a dolphin while holding a *thyrsus*.[103] The pine tree was also associated with Melicertes as well as with Dionysus at Isthmia. Dionysus' connections with this tree are well known, especially because *thyrsoi* are made of pine-wood and adorned with pine

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sung in his honor). See Bonnet, 1986, 57. Gunnel Ekroth, 2002, 124-125, has shown that the sacrifices for Palaemon constitute the only osteologically demonstrated case of a holocaust for a Greek hero. According to her, this ritual was archaizing rather than truly archaic, chosen in the Roman period to appear more ancient than it really was.

[100] Two sources (Lyc. *Al.* 229 with schol. and Call. fr. 91 Pfeiffer) mention that sacrifices of infants were offered to Palaemon on Tenedos but were abolished when the descendants of Orestes colonized the island. No archeological proof of these sacrifices has been found and scholars doubt the authenticity of this information. See Bonnechere, 1994, 241 note 55.

[101] See Chapter 5 for the diachronic development of the myth of Ino.

[102] Paus. I 44, 7-9; Seelinger, 1998, 278.

[103] At least one example with Palaemon holding a thyrsus: Amandry, 1988, 63-64; 176-180; pl. XLVIII, D i-ii; Will, 1955, 179 n. 3.

cones.[104] As for Melicertes-Palaemon, pine trees stood in the Poseidonion near his shrine, and one grew near Melicertes' altar.[105] Many coins also show the child with a dolphin and a pine tree.[106] Lastly, the sacrifice of a black bull to Melicertes can be associated with Poseidon, as Philostratus does,[107] but can also be associated with Dionysus' taurine manifestations.[108]

The strong connection between Melicertes and Dionysus in the Isthmian context, in my opinion, is probably due to the fact that both go through death: Dionysus was famously killed by the Titans and brought back to life; Melicertes was dead, but survived as a hero living in the Underworld. Furthermore, Philostratus compares the nocturnal ceremonies for Palaemon at the Isthmus to mysteries (ὄργια): perhaps a strong similitude was felt between the rites dedicated to Dionysus and those of Palaemon.[109] Lastly, as mentioned before in relation to Arion, Dionysus presided over passages between the worlds of life and death through water. Such a passage is exactly what Melicertes-Palaemon accomplished with the help of the dolphin. Thus, the characters of Melicertes and Dionysus correspond on many levels, and were certainly understood that way at the Isthmus in the Roman period, as shown on the coinage.

To sum up, Melicertes-Palaemon constitutes a complex child-hero figure associated with Poseidon as well as with Dionysus at the Isthmus. The core of his worship was that he was a child who died too soon and whose spirit needed to be placated. However, through the centuries and in the rich religious context of Isthmia, his myth and cult took on many more layers of significance.

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[104] Dolley, 1893, 109; Jeanmaire, 1951, 16-17.

[105] Pine trees in the sanctuary at Isthmia: Strab. VIII 6, 22; Paus. II 1, 7. A pine tree on the shore of the Isthmus near the altar of Melicertes: Paus. II, 1, 3.

[106] Pine tree on coinage above Melicertes and dolphin: Imhoof-Blumer and Gardner, 1964 [1885-1887], pl. B (Corinth 1), nos. I and II (silver coins of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus); see Seelinger, 1998, 279. Pine tree and dolphin: II 1, 7; Plut. *Qu.Conv*. V 3, 1 explains that the pine tree is associated both to Poseidon and Dionysus because it is used in ship-building as well as in wine-making.

[107] Philostr. *Imag.* II 16.

[108] Will, 1955, 217.

[109] Philostr. *Her*. 740, 17 (Olearius); Plut. *Thes*. 25.

## The Coming of Age of Dolphin-Riders

We have just seen that the dolphin acts as an agent of transition between life and death, and sometimes back, in funerary iconography and in immersion myths. Its function is to save men from death at sea and oblivion by the foregoing of funerary rites. In these contexts, the intervention of the dolphin allows men to attain the afterlife in Hades or to continue their life on earth. The dolphin plays a similar role in myths of coming of age where young boys make the transition between adolescence and adulthood.

This transition is delicate: the boys must triumph over some life-threatening challenges to attain adulthood and to be recognized as fully integrated adult members of the community. Often, the challenges involve a close encounter with death, as in the cases of Theseus and Enalos, who dive into the deep sea in the course of their coming-of-age. Both youths are guided in this experience by dolphins that ensure their safe passage through the sea and back to earth as well as through death and back to life.

Conversely, a series of Hellenistic and Roman folk-tales present young boys who do not accomplish their coming-of-age. These boys befriend dolphins; unfortunately, they die playing with the dolphins in the sea or from other causes, to the great distress of the animals that often wash themselves ashore to die with their comrades. These stories are metaphors for a failed coming-of-age, which happens when a boy dies before reaching adulthood. The death of the dolphins along with the boys underscore that the animals have not guided their protégés successfully through the passage between adolescence and adulthood.

## Enalos and Theseus: Myths of Coming-of-Age

The myth of Enalos concerns the coming-of-age of this young Lesbian hero. Two Hellenistic historians, Anticleides of Athens and Myrsilos of Lesbos, quoted by Plutarch and Athenaeus respectively, recount the foundation and colonization of Lesbos.[110] According to these authors, whose accounts differ on several points, a Delphic oracle ordered the colonists to sacrifice a bull to Poseidon and a virgin to Amphitrite by casting them into the sea off a promontory called Mesogeion. According to Myrsilos, who gives the most detailed account, there were eight chiefs for the expedition to Lesbos. Since one of them, Echelaos, was still an unmarried youth, the seven others cast lots to decide whose daughter would be sacrificed, and the lot befell Smintheus. A young and noble member of the expedition, Enalos, was in love with the girl and when she was cast into the sea, he jumped and clasped her in his arms. Both disappeared into the sea. Later, Enalos reappeared in Lesbos and said that the couple had been rescued by a dolphin and brought safely to shore. When an enormous wave threatened the island and all the inhabitants were terrified, Enalos went to the sanctuary of Poseidon escorted by a troop of octopuses to propitiate the god. According to Anticleides, Smintheus' daughter remained in the sea to live with the Nereids. As for Enalos, he visited the underwater abode of the gods and fed the horses of Poseidon. An enormous wave finally washed the young man back to shore on Lesbos with a beautiful golden cup in hand.

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[110] Myrsil. *Fr.Gr.Hist*. 477F14= Plut. *Soll.An*. 984e; Anticlid. *Fr.Hist.Gr*. 140F4=Ath. XI 15, 466 c-d; Plut. *Conv*. 162c-f; 163a-d.

Anticleides' expression ὑπὸ κύματος αὐτους ἀμφοτέρους κρυφθέντας ἀφανεῖς γενέσθαι suggests not only that the young couple is feared dead, but also, that they disappear from this world to enter a different one, where the Nereids live, as the remainder of his narrative shows.

Enalos' young lover leaves the narrative quickly. She disappears forever and does not marry Enalos, but like Britomartis, Helle, and other young virgins who die before their marriage, she goes on to live with the gods. The Underworld connotations attached to the sea in the story make her a true "Bride of Hades", as the famous motif goes.[111] She has been deprived of her entrance into adulthood, but will go on to live with the gods.

As for Enalos, he reappears after his descent into death. The narrative focuses on his marvelous return, a fact that underscores the significance of the myth as a story of male coming-of-age.[112] Enalos reappears with a proof of his visit to the unknown abysses of the sea, the golden cup. He then becomes a favorite of Poseidon, as the story of the octopuses' escort shows. Through his symbolic death and reappearance on earth, the young man acquires the status of favorite of a god. Thus the story, although it is embedded in the foundation of Lesbos, concerns the passage of the adolescent Enalos to adulthood through symbolic death.

Myrsilos and Anticleides' accounts differ on an important point: the intervention of the dolphin. According to Myrsilos, the young couple does not descend underwater. Rather, they are picked up by a dolphin and brought to shore immediately. In Anticleides' account, from which the dolphin is absent, Enalos and his lover accomplish a complete descent to the bottom of the sea, a *katabasis*, from which the youth returns with a tangible proof of the marvels he has seen underwater. Instead of a dolphin, an enormous wave brings him ashore. While the overall significance of the stories remains the same, we notice that riding the dolphin functions as a substitute for a full *katabasis*, and achieves the same result for Enalos.

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[111] Bonnechere, 1994, 174.

[112] Bonnechere, 1994, 128-130, 164-180.

The story of Enalos' symbolic death in the sea and marvelous reappearance is analogous to that of Theseus as told by Bacchylides.[113] The young Theseus, on his way to Crete, defends the virgin Eriboia from Minos' advances. The Cretan king responds by boasting that he is the son of Zeus. At his prayer, the sky god sends a thunderbolt to confirm his son's claim. Then, Minos challenges Theseus to prove his descent from Poseidon by fetching his ring at the bottom of the sea. The young man, thus challenged, immediately dives into the sea to the great distress of his Athenian companions who begin to cry for their leader. Once underwater, Theseus is brought by dolphins to Poseidon's palace. There, Amphitrite and the Nereids clothe him with a purple cloak and Amphitrite gives him a garland of roses, her own wedding-present from Aphrodite. The youth then reappears (φάνη: cf. the disappearance of Enalos and his lover, ἀφανεῖς) to the astonishment of all. In this version, Theseus is the son of Poseidon, and not of Aigeus. As noted by many scholars, the myth of Theseus is a complex one which greatly evolved through the centuries, but always centered on coming-of-age: Theseus is the archetype and model of the Athenian ephebe.[114] By his triumph over a series of trials, he establishes his worth and, once a recognized adult, becomes king of Athens.

The story of Theseus' descent under the sea is well attested in the fifth century. We have Bacchylides' account and three vase-paintings representing Theseus, carried by a Triton instead of dolphins, receiving gifts from Amphitrite.[115] Pausanias also describes a fresco by Micon, a fifth-century Athenian painter, displayed at the Athenian Theseion depicting the scene.[116]

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[113] Bacchyl. XVII 90-132.

[114] Wide, 1898; Dugas, 1943; Brommer, 1982; Calame, 1996a.

Theseus' descent to the bottom of the sea guided by dolphins (or Tritons) is, as in Enalos' case, a symbolic death and *katabasis* followed by an astonishing reappearance with tokens of the gods' favor. He represents the young man who is ready to undertake his adult life with the paternal recognition and to replace his parent at the head of the family. The story therefore is an episode of coming of age. The dolphin acts as a guide through Theseus' trial and ensures that he finds his way to his father's palace and does not get lost in the sea. The animal thus participates in Theseus' successful recognition by his father and passage to adulthood through a symbolic death at sea. An amphora by the Bowdoin-Athena Painter shows an ephebe riding a dolphin with an offering in hand.[117] In view of the mythical evidence just discussed, could this painting symbolize the journey of young men accomplishing rites of coming-of-age?

## Tame Dolphins and Boys: Failed Coming-of-Age

Many tales circulated during the Hellenistic and Roman period about dolphins becoming tame, developing close relationships with boys, and being inconsolable at their death. These stories always involve ephebes, teenage boys who are just about to enter adulthood but have not yet done so and die before their coming-of-age can be accomplished.

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[115] *LIMC*, *s.v.* Theseus, 219-227. Kerenyi, 1997[1954], 229.

[116] Paus. I 17, 2-6.

[117] Attic red-figure amphora, Nicholson Museum, Sydney, Inv. 70.02.

The most famous of these tales is certainly the dolphin-story from Iasos in Caria. A dolphin was tamed and struck a particular friendship with a beautiful ephebe.[118] In fact, Aelian writes that the dolphin was in love with the boy. One day, while they were playing as accustomed, the dolphin accidentally killed the boy with its dorsal fin. Overcome by sadness, the animal brought the boy's body to shore and washed itself up beside him to die.

Another popular story, told by Pliny, tells how a tame dolphin brought a boy to school every day from Baiae to Puteoli and back.[119] When the boy fell ill and died, the dolphin washed itself ashore to mourn his comrade and finally died. Many other stories that follow a similar pattern were said to have taken place in Alexandria,[120] Hippo Diarrhytus (=Bizerte in modern Tunisia),[121] Libya,[122] Ios,[123] Amphilochos (Cilicia),[124] Achaea,[125] and Poroselene (a small island off the coast of Asia Minor).[126]

Hans-Peter Isler has compared the tales to the common Hellenistic and Roman motif of Eros as a dolphin-rider, and has interpreted the folktales as an offshoot of iconography.[127] Many have also tried to prove the reliability of these ancient tales by adducing modern examples of tame dolphins letting children ride their backs.[128] However, much more than erotic themes, death is at the heart of these stories. The dolphin mourns for the boys and accompanies them into death. In these stories the dolphin is therefore a metaphor for the failed coming-of-age of the boys. Since the boys have not accomplished their transition to adulthood, their dolphin, who is the symbolic vehicle of this transition, dies with them.

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[118] Arist. *H.A.* 631a; Pliny IX 27; Plut. *Soll.An.* 985a-b; Ael. *N.A.* VI 15; Poll. IX 84; Antig.Car. *Mir.* LV (60); Ath. XIII 85; Tz. *Chil.* IV 10-20; Solin. XII 10. Between 280 and 190 BC, Iasos minted coins representing Hermias: silver drachms and smaller bronze coins with a laureate head of Apollo and (reverse), a youth swimming with a dolphin (BMC 1-3, 6-11). Another type has the same youth with dolphin and (reverse) a lyre with a laurel wreath. See Zeuner, 1963, 101.

[119] Pliny *N.H.* IX 25; Ael. *N.A.* VI 15; Gellius, VI 8; Tz. *Chil.* IV 23; Solin. XII 7.

[120] Ael. *N.A.* VI 15; Tz. *Chil.* IV 21.

[121] Pliny *N.H.* IX 26; Pliny Min. IX 33 (Keil); Solin. XII 9.

[122] Opp. *Hal.* V 453-457; Tzetzes *Chil.* IV 9.

[123] Ael. *N.A.* II 6.

[124] Pliny *N.H.* IX 28.

[125] Philo Jud. *Alex. PG* II, VII, p. 132, 67.

[126] Ael. *N.A.* II 6; Opp. *Hal.* V 458-518; Paus. III 25, 7; Tzetzes *Chil.* IV 1-8.

[127] Isler, 1985, *passim*.

[128] Montgomery, 1966; Higham, 1960; Jacques, 1965; Miller, 1966.

### Taras, Phalanthos, Icadios: *Oikistai* and Dolphin-Riders

Many dolphin-rider myths are connected with Delphi and colonization: this is the case with the myths of Icadios, Taras, and Phalanthos. I will show that riding the dolphin, for these *oikistai*, represents a miraculous salvation that gives them the favor of the gods and a heroic status and also gives them the authority to establish a new colony or sanctuary. The archetype of these myths is the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, in which the god himself under a dolphin shape leads his future priests to the site of Delphi and directs the foundation of the sanctuary. The founder, like the adolescent, is an isolated character: he heads a small detachment from a city, and his role is to guide the group in this difficult transition. The association of the *oikistes* with the dolphin is therefore appropriate, because it underscores the transitional and risky nature of the establishment of a new city.

The traditions concerning Taras and Phalanthos are deeply intertwined; in fact, the ancients themselves were unable to distinguish the heroes clearly. It is therefore important to examine the various traditions related to these heroes before attempting an interpretation of the myths.

According to Pausanias, Taras was the son of Poseidon and a nymph of Southern Italy, Satyria, and he gave his name to the city of Tarentum.[129] The founder of the city was a Spartan by birth, Phalanthos, who came to Italy as the leader of the Partheniai on the orders of the Delphic oracle.[130] He was shipwrecked in the Crisaian Bay and rescued by a dolphin that brought him to the site of the future Tarentum.[131] However, according to Servius, Taras was the *oikistes* of the city and the leader of the Spartan Partheniai, but Phalanthos later took over and ensured the development of Tarentum.[132] A curious tradition reported by Probus makes the son of Taras (or perhaps Taras himself, the text is unclear) the *oikistes* of the city, a young man who was shipwrecked and brought to Italy by a dolphin.[133]

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[129] Paus. X 10, 8.

The coinage of Tarentum only adds to the confusion: from the Classical period onwards, it represented a man riding a dolphin with a snake or sometimes a trident in hand. It is unclear exactly who these coins depict, Taras or Phalanthos. Aristotle affirms that the dolphin-rider on the city's staters is Taras, because of the legend ΤΑΡΑΣ minted on the coins themselves.[134] However, it seems more probable that the legend refers to the city and not to the hero, as is usual on coinage. Since the literary sources are irreconcilable, it is impossible to decide in favor of one or the other hero, and the arguments advanced by various scholars have not settled the question.[135]

The problem is further complicated by Pausanias' description of a fifth-century ex-voto set up at Delphi by the Tarentines to commemorate their victory over the Peucetians.[136] The group included the dead enemy king, a few Tarentine knights and warriors, Taras, Phalanthos the Lacedaemonian, and near Phalanthos (οὐ πόρρω), a dolphin. Scholars have used this last fact to argue that the dolphin-rider on the coinage of Tarentum is Phalanthos. However, the hero is *near* the dolphin, and not *on* it.

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[130] Paus. X 10, 8-10; Diod.Sic. VIII 20-21: the Pythia validates Phalanthos' leadership and indicates Tarentum as a destination for the expedition; Strab. VI 3, 2: same information as Diodorus.

[131] Paus. X 13, 10.

[132] Servius to Verg. *Aen*. III 551; to *Georg*. IV 125; Hesych. *s.v*. Taras.

[133] Servius to Verg. *Georg*. II 197.

[134] Arist. fr. 590 Rose. Coins: *LIMC*, *s.v*. Phalanthos, 2-28.

[135] Phalanthos: Studniczka, 1890, 175. Dumont, 1975, 71 connects Apollo with Phalanthos, and Taras with Poseidon, and says that the latter overcame the former in the fifth century. Malkin, 1987, 219-220 deems the question unanswerable for lack of evidence.

[136] Paus. X 13, 10. Pausanias attributes the statue to the fifth-century sculptors Onatas of Aigina and Kalynthos.

The best solution has been offered by Léon Lacroix, who argues that the dolphin on the sculpture described by Pausanias simply represents the city of Tarentum in this Delphic offering, just as, for instance, the celery represents Selinous in the Delphic offering from this city.[137] Lacroix further points out that the legends about the shipwrecked *oikistes*, whether he is Taras or Phalanthos, seems to have been fabricated at Delphi itself to explain the presence of the dolphin on the Tarentine offering.[138] It is noteworthy that Pausanias narrates Phalanthos' shipwreck and rescue by a dolphin *after* describing the sculpture; he would have heard the story as an explanation for the monument.

Such a legend would have been at home at Delphi by analogy with the myth of foundation recounted in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, in which the Cretan sailors are brought to Delphi by Apollo in the guise of a dolphin to establish the sanctuary.[139] In this myth, the role of the god in his dolphin form is to guide his future priests to the site of Delphi so that they can establish the sanctuary. Likewise, in the myths of Taras and Phalanthos, the role of the dolphin is to carry the *oikistai* to the location of their new city. The dolphin points the founders to the divinely intended site of the foundation. The animal carries the colonists through the delicate period in which they are formally separated from their city of origin but do not yet belong to a new establishment, and brings them safely to their final destination, which was chosen by the divinity.

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[137] Lacroix, 1954, 14-23.

[138] Lacroix, 1954, 20.

[139] An alternate version (Servius to Verg. *Aen*. III 332; Testament of Epicteta: *IG* XII 3, 330. *Etym.Magn*. *s.v.* Eikadios) has a young man, Icadius, son of Apollo and the Nymph Lycia, set out for Italy from his native country; He is shipwrecked on the way and brought to Delphi by a dolphin. In memory of his animal rescuer, he names the sanctuary which he founds there "Delphi".

The dolphin plays a similar role in an anecdote recounted by Plutarch and Tacitus.[140] Ptolemy Soter once had a dream in which he saw a god enjoining him to bring his statue to Alexandria. With the help of Egyptian and Greek priests, Ptolemy discovered that this god was Sarapis, or Pluto, and that his statue was in Sinope. He therefore duly sent two envoys, Soteles and Dionysius, to fetch the statue. However, during their voyage, their ship was blown off course near Cape Malea. Despite all their efforts, they could not steer in the right direction. Then a dolphin appeared (προφανέντα) by the prow, as if by divine epiphany, and led them to Cirrha. After their safe landing, the Delphic oracle let them know that they should take only the statue of Pluto to Alexandria and leave that of Persephone in Sinope. In this story, the dolphin plays the role of guide and ensures that the divine will is executed, as in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* and in the stories of Taras and Phalanthos. In fact, Philippe Montbrun has recently called the dolphins of Apollo “*les flèches vivantes du dieu*”.[141] He argues that, like oracles, arrows attain their target while swerving (the ambiguity of oracles); likewise, dolphins rescue men blown off course and indicate them the will of Apollo.

It has been suggested that these myths illustrate the divine personality of Apollo Delphinios as the patron of colonization and foundations.[142] It cannot be denied that Apollo, under his various epicleses and especially through the Delphic oracle, was strongly connected with colonization.[143] His cult as Delphinios was spread widely around the Mediterranean,[144] and he was perhaps also connected with sailing.[145] However, as Delphinios, Apollo seems to have been rather worshipped in two main aspects: first, as a patron of the central institutions of the polis, especially the justice system;[146] second, as the protector of ephebes.[147]

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[140] Plut. *Soll.An*. 984a-b; *Is.Os*., 361f; Tac. *Hist*. IV 83-84.
[141] Monbrun, 2007, 216-243.
[142] Bourboulis, 1949, 61.
[143] Malkin 1987, 17-28.

This second aspect of Apollo Delphinios interests me particularly because of the coming-of-age myths studied in this chapter. Delphinios is deeply involved in the legend of Theseus, who is an archetype of the *kouros* attaining adulthood. Theseus dedicates the Marathonian Bull to Delphinios in his temple;[148] he was acquitted from the justified murders of Sinis and Procrustes in the Delphinion;[149] in a version where Theseus is the son of Aegeus, he is recognized by his father on the site of the future Delphinion;[150] when leaving for Crete, Theseus sacrifices to Delphinios, which became the *aition* for a later annual ritual in Athens.[151] Furthermore, contests of ephebes were held in honor of Delphinios at Aigina[152] and Miletos.[153] An epigram of Rhianos preserved in the *Greek Anthology* attests to the functions of Delphinios as protector of *kouroi*:

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[144] Bourboulis, 1949, 13-17: collection of inscriptions which attest to the existence of temples of Apollo Delphinios, festivals, names of months, and theophoric names in Crete, Thera, Aigina, Sparta, Attica, Chalcis, Delphi, Miletos, Erythrae, Chios, Heracleia on Latmos, Massalia, and Olbia. On these cults, see Lifshitz, 1966 and Graf, 1979.

[145] Various festivals of Delphinios were held at the opening of the sailing season, especially in Athens on 6 Mounichion: see Bourboulis, 1949, 62-69 for a full discussion of the question. The aition of this festival is Theseus' offering to Delphinios before leaving for Crete (Plut. *Thes*. 18). However, Fritz Graf, 1979, 6-7 has pointed out various problems with the view of Delphinios as a protector of navigation, mainly questions related to the calendars of the many cities that worshipped Delphinios.

[146] Murder cases which were considered justified were tried in the Delphinion at Athens: And. I 78; Demosth. *Aristoc*. 74 with schol.; *Contra Boeot*. 11; Aristot. *Ath.Pol*. 57, 3; Is. *Euphil*. 9; Ael. *V.H*. V 15; Phot. II 535, 22 (Bekker); Poll. VIII 119 (Bethe); Harpocr. *s.v*. Delphinion; Suda *s.v*. Epi Delphinô and *s.v*. Ephetai; *Anecd. Graecae* I 255, 19, 311 Bekker. Delphinios is not connected to justice in any other city than Athens.

[147] Graf, 1979, *passim*. For a complete catalogue of literary and epigraphical sources (with texts) about Apollo Delphinios, see Bourboulis, 1949, 9-18.

[148] Plut. *Thes*. 14, 1.

[149] Paus. I 28, 10; Poll. VIII 119-120 (Bethe).

[150] Plut. *Thes*. 12, 6.

[151] Plut. *Thes*. 18, 1; Paus. I 19, 1.

[152] Schol. Pind. *Ol*. XIII 155; Schol. *Pyth*. VIII 88.

Παῖς Ἀσκληπιάδεω καλῷ καλὸν εἵσατο Φοίβῳ
Γόργος ἀφ’ ἱμερτᾶς τοῦτο γέρας κεφαλᾶς.
Φοῖβε, σὺ δ’ ἵλαος, Δελφίνιε, κοῦρον ἀέξοις
εὔμοιρον λευκὴν ἄχρις ἐφ’ ἡλικίην.

In this epigram, perhaps a fictive dedication, Gorgos son of Asclepiados dedicates his hair to Apollo Delphinios. The young man prays that the god will take pity on him and permit him to prosper and reach old age. Thus, the epigram presents Apollo as the patron of young men who have not yet reached adulthood. The favor of the god allows them to go through this precarious period and to become adults.

The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* itself presents Delphinios as a *kouros* in transition towards adulthood.[154] Sylvie Vilatte has recently proposed that Apollo’s disguise as a dolphin in the Hymn marks his transition from boy to man. Indeed, just before he appears to the Cretans, Apollo establishes his rights to the site of Delphi by killing Pytho and punishing Telphousa. In his dolphin form, he acquires authority, and gives orders to the frightened Cretans. Afterwards, when he changes form again, he assumes a divine glow, and then the shape of an adult man (ἀνέρι εἰδόμενος).[155] Thus the god himself is represented in the *Hymn* as making the transition to adulthood while in a dolphin disguise.

Apollo Delphinios’ functions as the protector of *kouroi* is important for the interpretation of dolphin-rider myths. First, some of these myths, like those of Theseus and Taras, and the tales about the death of young dolphin-riders, are directly concerned with the passage of ephebes into adulthood. Thus the myths, which are tied to Apollo in other ways as well, allude to the cult of Apollo Delphinios. Second, all dolphin-rider

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[153] Dittenberger, *Syll*. I$^3$ 57 (Miletos, 450 BC).
[154] Other accounts of this myth, which all follow the Homeric Hymn to Apollo closely: *Etym.Magn*. *s.v*. Delphinios; schol. to Arat. *Phaenom*. 315; Plut. *Soll.An*. 984a; Tz. to Lyc. 208.
[155] *h.Ap*. 449.

myths concern males; only female deities such as Thetis, the Nereids, and Aphrodite ever ride dolphins, in contexts completely different from those of our myths.[156] Thus, the gender of the protagonists of dolphin-rider myths is determined by the ties of Delphinios with men, especially *kouroi*.[157]

## Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that the dolphin is an intermediary creature on many counts. First, it is a wild animal, yet it behaves like a human in that it likes music, cares for its young, and cares for the dead. Second, its lively bounds between the sea and air make it a mediator between these two elements. On a metaphorical level, where the sea is a means of transition to Hades, the dolphin therefore appears capable of crossing between life and death, and back. These characteristics of the dolphin are exploited in funerary iconography, where the dolphin often appears in contexts of transition between life and death. In mythology, the animal appears as the protagonists' guide and vehicle in their transition between life and death, and back, as in the cases of Arion, Hesiod, Melicertes, and others. Lastly, when it appears in connection with Delphi and colonization, the dolphin represents the divine will, guiding the *oikistai* to their appointed destination.

Knowing that this complex web of significance is attached to the dolphin, we cannot any longer consider its representation in the plastic arts as meaningless. Many dolphin representations will remain impossible to interpret because they have no context and no accompanying literary record. This is the case with coins of Sinope and other cities of the Black Sea,[158] which represents an eagle clutching a dolphin in its claws, and with the coins of Syracuse which represent Arethusa surrounded by dolphins.[159] In many cases, for lack of a better explanation, scholars have simply interpreted the dolphins as representing the sea, as in the case of the famous *hydria* on which Apollo flies above the sea on a winged tripod between two leaping dolphins.[160]

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[156] The Nereids and Thetis most frequently ride dolphins when bringing his new armor to Achilles: see Eichler, 1964, *passim*. Aphrodite/Venus appears with a dolphin in Roman contexts to emphasize her birth from the sea: Pirenne-Delforge, 1994, 417.

[157] The only counter-example is the Byzantine novel of Eustathius Macrembolites, *Hysmines and Hysmine*, VII 12, 2-15 (Marcovich). The maiden Hysmine is offered to Poseidon to appease a storm at sea. The immediate calm that follows her sacrifice indicates the acceptance of the offering by the god. Hysmine is later rescued by a dolphin under the guidance of Eros. This story thus combines two mythical patterns: virgin sacrifice and dolphin rescue. The confusion in the genders is no doubt due to the very late date of the novel, when the motif was no longer understood as a symbol of male coming-of-age.

However, in every case where it is appropriate, we should remember the important mythological and eschatological functions of the dolphin. Pierre Somville wrote, "*Les dauphins ne symbolisent pas la mer, ce n'est qu'un accident, mais bien la présence divine*".[161] I think this affirmation is basically correct, but should be refined; dolphins do not represent the divine presence, but rather, a *medium of passage* to the world of the gods, or to the afterlife.

This consideration opens many avenues for interpretation, notably in Dionysiac contexts. The dolphin appears frequently in the company of revelers, Maenads, and Satyrs, as well as with Dionysus himself. In this context, the dolphin represents the passage into the divine Dionysiac world afforded to revelers through their worship of the god. As these questions are complex, given the nature of Dionysiac worship and the many social and religious aspects of the symposium, I have chosen to present this material in an appendix, which offers a survey of the significance of the dolphin in

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[158] E.g. Zeuner, 1963, pl. IX no. 8: silver drachma of Sinope, ca. 400 BC. Reverse: eagle clutching a dolphin, legend ΣΙΝΩ. Obverse: head of a Nymph. See Hind, 1976, *passim*; Lacroix, 1958, 108-110.

[159] Lacroix, 1958, 111.

[160] Athenian red-figure hydria by the Berlin Painter found in Vulci, 525-475 BC, Rome, Museo Gregoriano Etrusco Vaticano, 16568, CVA, 201984.

[161] Somville, 1984, 7.

Dionysiac contexts but does not provide a detailed account of the multi-layered symbolism of the symposium.

In the next chapter, I will explore the myth of Ino. We will see that this complex story evolved from a typical “stepmother” narrative into a Dionysiac myth. However, despite the profound changes it has undergone through the centuries, Ino’s leap into the sea and her subsequent transformation always remained at the core of the myth.

# Chapter 5. The Myth of Ino

One of the most famous myths involving a leap into the sea is that of Ino-Leucothea. It is already attested in the *Odyssey* and was retold until Late Antiquity. Through so many centuries, the significance of the myth evolved greatly, but Ino's leap into the sea always remained at its core.[1] There are two major narratives about Ino. The earlier one makes her a jealous stepmother who plots the death of her stepchildren, Phrixos and Helle, and throws herself into the sea. The more recent one makes her the nurse of Dionysus.[2] Hera, jealous of Zeus' affair with Semele, inflicts madness on Ino who jumps into the sea with her son Melicertes. In both cases, Ino becomes the marine goddess Leucothea and lives in the sea with the Nereids.

Despite the major differences between these two versions, both narratives focus on Ino's leap into the sea as the climactic event of the myth. I argue that her leap represents a symbolic death and an encounter with the divine in which, by virtue of the vital force contained in sea-water, Ino is regenerated and transformed.

As a goddesss, Ino/Leucothea was thought to be a benevolent deity who helped sailors in distress. She delivered oracles by induction and incubation, and two inscriptions from the Roman period mention the attainment of eternal life by participation in her mysteries. She also played a role in the Great Mysteries of Samothrace. She was perceived as a former mortal who understood and sympathized with men's woes.

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[1] For analysis of the different versions, see: Farnell, 1916; Meautis, 1930; Fontenrose, 1948; Will, 1955, Krauskopf, 1981; Bonnechere, 1994, 96-107; Koch-Piettre 2005.

[2] For a discussion of the connections between Dionysus and the leap into the sea, see the Appendix.

I will start by examining the sources for the two versions of the myth of Ino. Then, I will examine parallels that allow interpreting her leap into the sea as an encounter with the divine and a revelation, such as the stories of Glaucos and Thespesios.

## Ino, Stepmother and Destroyer of Grain

In the *Odyssey*, Ino appears to Odysseus in the shape of a shearwater (αἴθυια)[3] and gives him her veil which allows him to reach the island of the Phaeacians safely.[4] The poem specifies that Ino, daughter of Cadmos, takes pity on Odysseus because she has been a mortal before becoming a goddess. However, the circumstances of this transformation are not stated.[5] A badly mutilated fragment of Alcman also mentions ʼΙνω σαλασσομέδοισα without providing any further information.[6]

Some Archaic and Classical sources give us more details. Pindar, Pherecydes, Hippias, Herodotus, Sophocles, and Palaephatus (who seems to be drawing from them) as well as two red-figure vase-paintings present Ino as a jealous stepmother.[7] As the second wife of Athamas, king of Boeotia, she wants to have the children of Nephele, Athamas' first wife, killed.[8] Alternatively, in some sources, she plans the killing because she is in love with Phrixos.[9] She persuades the women of Thebes to parch the grain for the next year. When the crop fails, she contrives for the messengers sent to Delphi to come back with an oracle saying that Phrixos, son of Nephele, must be sacrificed.[10] Nephele sends a golden ram to Thebes to rescue her children, Phrixos and Helle. The children are brought to Colchis where Phrixos is taken in and honored by Aeetes, who gives him his daugther in marriage in exchange for the sacrifice of the golden ram to Zeus. However, on the way to Colchis, Helle falls from the ram to her death and gives her name to the Hellespont. Ino finally jumps into the sea where she becomes the goddess Leucothea. No mention is made of her sons Melicertes and Learchus in these sources, who become important in later accounts. These sources also do not mention Ino's reasons for leaping, a significant detail which I will discuss in the following pages.

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[3] See above Chapter 3, p. 69-70.

[4] *Od.* V 333-355.

[5] Fontenrose, 1948, 144, thought that the Eidothea who appears to Menelaus in *Od*. IV 363-446 was perhaps the same goddess as Ino-Leucothea. However, she is the daughter of Proteus, not of Cadmos.

[6] Alcman, fr. 50 (Page, PMG).

[7] Pind. *Pyth.* IV, 160-164; Pherecydes, *Fr.Gr.Hist*. 3F98; Soph. *Athamas*, Nauck$^2$ fr. 1-9; Hippias, *Fr.Gr.Hist*. 6F11; Hdt. VII 197; Palaeph. 30; amphora from Capua, Naples, Museo Nazionale 270, *CVA* 215349; Pelike in Munich, 2335, *ARV*$^2$ 1161, 1. On these vases, Ino furiously pursues Phrixos with an axe but the youth is making his escape on the golden ram.

[8] According to Hdt. VII 197, Athamas plots the death of Phrixos with Ino.

[9] Pind., fr. 49 Snell-Maehler; Pherecydes, 3F98; Soph. *Athamas* (according to schol. Ar. *Nub*. 257); Hippias, 6F11.

In this early version, Ino represents a dangerous enemy for the community. She ruins the harvest because of her jealousy and she plans to kill royal children. Her departure through a leap into the sea is a welcome relief for the Thebans. Her love for Phrixos and subsequent vengeance, mentioned by some sources as the cause for the parching of the grain, adds to this picture the odiousness of incestuous lust and the selfishness of Ino's vengeance.

According to Pierre Bonnechere, this version of the myth of Ino belongs to the category of regeneration and initiation myths.[11] Phrixos, a young unmarried man, is about to be sacrificed, and thus comes very close to death, before he is taken to Colchis where he sacrifices the golden ram, thereby entering the community of grown men, and marries the daughter of Aeetes. The royal lineage and the future of the community are preserved, and Ino, who threatened the harvest, departs from Thebes. The continuity of the human and natural cycles is ensured. In some sources, the sons of Phrixos return to Boeotia to reclaim their lost kingdom, emphasizing the recovery of the community from this experience.[12]

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[10] Pherecydes, in Scholia Vetera to Pind. *Pyth.* IV 288; Pherecydes, in Eratosth. *Catast.* I 19; Pherecydes, in Hyg. *Astr.* II 20; Schol. *Il.* VII 86; Apoll., I 9, 1; Menecrates of Tyre in Zen. IV 38; Ov. *Fasti* III 851-876; Hyg. *Fab.* II; Paus. I 44, 7; IX 34, 5-8; Arg. Ap.Rhod.; Schol. Ar. *Nub.* 257. According to Eratosthenes, Hesiod talked about this story in his poetry. According to Ov. *Fasti* VI 551-562, Ino plotted to have the grain parched because Athamas had lain with one of the maidservants. Different versions of this last story are mentioned by Plut. *Quaest.Rom.* 267D, and Stephanus *s.v.* halos (Theon).

[11] Bonnechere, 1994, 96-107.

## Ino and Dionysus: Euripides and the Post-Euripidean versions

In the Classical period, a new version of the narrative surfaced which became by far the most popular. Our earliest sources are Euripides' *Medea* and the fragments of his *Ino*, as well as iconographical evidence from the fifth century.[13] In this version, Ino's role as the nurse of Dionysus is the cause of her trials and of the death of her children.[14]

Ino, daughter of Cadmus and sister of Semele, nurses Dionysus along with her own children Learchus and Melicertes after the death of the god's mother.[15] Hera sends Ino and Athamas madness as punishment for nourishing the offspring of Zeus' lover. Athamas kills Learchus, mistaking the child for a deer, and Ino, clasping Melicertes in her arms, leaps into the sea.[16] In several sources, Ino, in her madness, kills Melicertes and sometimes Learchus by boiling them in a cauldron, and then leaps into the sea.[17] As a result, she becomes immortal.[18] She takes the new name of Leucothea and joins the company of the Nereids.[19] Some late sources even mention that she is loved by Poseidon under the sea.[20]

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[12] Paus. IX 34, 8. See also: Schol. Ap.Rhod. I 185; II 1122.

[13] Eur. *Med.* 1282-1289; *Ino* fr. 398-427 Nauck$^2$; See: LIMC, *s.v.* Ino, nos. D 10-11-12 (Anne Nercessian): Red-figure amphora by Hermonax from Locris, Athens, coll. A. Kyrou (ca. 460 BC); fragment of a relief bowl (2nd cent. BC); Etruscan stamnos, Rome, Villa Giulia, 2350. For an analysis of the various representations of Ino and Athamas raising Dionysus, see Oakley, 1982.

[14] Hyg. *Fab.* 4, affirms that Euripides, in his lost tragedy *Ino*, told the story of Ino's cunning trick to kill the children of Themisto. However, August Nauck expresses doubts as to the validity of this claim. See: Nauck-Snell, 1964$^2$, 482.

[15] Apollod. III 4, 3; Plut. *Quaest.Rom*. 267e; *Am.Prolis* 492d; Lucian, *Dial.Mar.* IX 1; Ov. *Fasti* VI 485-488; Hyg. *Fab.* II.

[16] Eur. *Med.* 1282-1289 with Schol. 1284; Apollod. I 9, 2; III 4, 3; Ov. *Met.* IV 416-562; *Fasti* VI 485-500; Callistr. XIV; Servius to Verg. *Aen.* V 241; Lact. to Stat. *Theb.* I 12; VII 421; *Etym.Magn. s.v.* Athamantion; Schol. *Od.* V 334; Schol. Luc. *Dial.Mar*. 9, 1; Arg. I, 3, 4 to Pind. *Isthm.* (Drachmann); Eusth. to *Il.* VII 86 p. 667; Hyg. *Fab.* II, IV; Tztetzes to Lyk. *Al.* 229; Vat. Myth. II 79. Many representations of Ino leaping into the sea with Melicertes are known: see *LIMC*, *s.v.* Ino.

[17] Aesch. fr. 1-2, Nauck$^2$; Apollod. III, 4, 3; Nonn. X 45-107; Ov. *Met.* IV 481-542; Tz. to Lyc. 229.

Another tradition, only reported by Hyginus and Nonnos of Panopolis, combines the "vengeance of the stepmother" narrative with the Dionysiac story.[21] Ino leaves Thebes to participate as a Bacchant in the Dionysiac festival on Parnassus. After she has been gone for a long time, Athamas, believing she is dead, marries Themisto and has children with her. Ino later returns to the palace in disguise and is hired as a servant. Themisto, wanting to kill the children of Ino, asks the false servant to dress them in dark clothes while her own are dressed in white. Ino swaps the clothing and Themisto kills her own children. Realizing her crime, she kills herself; Ino leaps into the sea with Melicertes in fear of Athamas' vengeance.

In this late version, Ino is a *kourotrophos* and a bacchant. As the first bacchant, Ino inaugurates a cult for which she will be credited in Roman times: some Theban women, allegedly her descendants, were brought to Magnesia in the Hellenistic period with the consent of the Delphic oracle to celebrate Dionysiac *orgia*.[22] By this period, the Dionysiac character of the myth of Ino has completely taken over its other aspects.[23]

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[18] Ov. *Met.* IV 532-542; *Etym. Magn. s.v.* Athamantion.

[19] Pind. *Pyth*. XI, 2; *Ol*. II 28-30; Eur. *Med*. 1282-1289; Ov. *Fasti* VI 481-562; Sen. *Oed*, 444-448; Luc. *Dial.Mar*. 9; Callistr. *Imag*. XIV; Tz. to Lyc. 229; Nonn. IX 243-X 137; Arg. A and D to Pind. *Isthm*. (Drachmann).

[20] Lucian, *Dial.Mar*. 9; Ael.Arist. *Or*. III 26.

[21] Hyg. *Fab*. II and IV (Ino Euripidis); Nonn. IX 302-X 137.

[22] Burkert, 1987, 34. Kern, *Inschriften von Magnesia*, 215a. See Henrichs, 1978, 123-143 for an analysis of the inscription and Ino as the archetypal Maenad.

[23] Joseph Fontenrose, 1948, 145 has argued that Ino's relationship to Dionysus is ambiguous. In mythical accounts, she nurses the little god while in Euripides' *Bacchae* she rejects him and is punished by madness. Fontenrose here disregards Euripides' intentions in the *Bacchae* which are to represent the whole city of Thebes raving with Dionysiac madness especially the family of Cadmos. The chronological inconsistency that makes Ino nurse Dionysus in *Ino* and reject him in the *Bacchae* is not uncommon in Greek mythology. Fontenrose also suggests that the leap into the sea did not belong to the earliest core of the myth of Ino.

## Ino’s Intentions: the Significance of her Leap into the Sea

In both versions of her myth, the “stepmother” and the Dionysiac narratives, Ino’s leap into the sea is at the core of the story and introduces her transformation into a goddess. The violence of the leap is important: it is a symbolic death representing the soul’s change of nature, while the body is lost in the sea or transformed. Indeed, as a result of the leap, the divers become heroes or even immortal gods. As a representation of her transformation from mortal to immortal, Ino becomes a marine duck, a shape which, as we have seen in Chapter 3, underscores her new intermediary status between men and gods because marine birds live in three different elements, air, water, and earth.

As a result of her leap and transformation, Ino acquires divine knowledge in the form of oracular powers. Her symbolic death brings her into the world of the gods where she finds super-human knowledge. There are many parallels in Greek mythology and religion for the acquisition of such knowledge through symbolic death and transformation: the myth of Glaucus of Anthedon, studied in Chapter 1; the story of Thespesios mentioned in Chapter 4; and the revelations made to pilgrims at the oracle of Trophonios in Lebadeia. All these characters acquired super-human knowledge through a symbolic death.

The pilgrims at Lebadeia underwent symbolic death not by a leap, but by a *katabasis*. After undergoing many days of purifications and preparations, the consultants were brought to the *adyton* of Trophonios and went down a narrow passage with the help of a ladder. Once underground, they lay down and engaged their feet in a crevice through which they were then pulled ὥσπερ ποταμῶν ὁ μέγιστος καὶ ὠκύτατος συνδεθέντα ὑπὸ

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Rather, he says that “*her story had its roots in the Dionysiac frenzy of the early Bacchantes*.” However, the leap and transformation into Leucothea are present in our earliest sources while the Dionysiac variant appears only in the Classical period and afterwards.

δίνης ἀποκρύψειεν ἄνθρωπον.[24] They felt drawn in by the eddy of a powerful river. They then received the oracle from Trophonios and returned to the surface through the entrance where they came in. They felt confused, terrified, oblivious to themselves and their surroundings, and had to be carried away by the priest and by their friends. These sat the consultants on the throne of Mnemosyne and asked them to recount what they saw. [25] As time passed, the consultants' terror vanished and as a result they recovered the faculty of laughing. As a result of this symbolic death, the pilgrims acquired a glimpse of divine knowledge. However, the price to pay is high: one has to undergo the terror of visiting the Underworld and coming into contact with a dead hero.

To sum up, by her leap into the sea, Ino accomplishes a soul journey which takes her away from the human sphere and transforms her into a goddess. As a result, she acquires the oracular powers characteristic of sea-divinities. Her transformation into a goddess is complete, and her departure from the world of humans is definitive.

## The Cult of Ino-Leucothea: A Syncretism of All Versions of the Myth

Ino's transformation from mortal to goddess and her prophetic knowledge were the most important aspects of her complex cult personality. She was known for her benevolence towards sailors in distress and delivered oracles in many locations. These functions underscore her intermediary status between gods and humans, because she lends divine assistance to mortals and reveals divine knowledge to them. In certain locations, as in Samothrace, she was even associated with mystery cults in which the initiates underwent a symbolic death and rebirth, thereby imitating Leucothea herself.

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[24] Paus. IX 39, 11. See Bonnechere, 2003, 162.

[25] See Hubaux, 1934, for a useful comparison with the story of Palinurus in Verg. *Aen*. V 832-871, and other parallels.

Ino-Leucothea's cult was firmly rooted in continental Greece, especially in Boeotia, Thessaly, Messenia, and Laconia. We have a single attestation of the cult of Ino/Leucothea in the Hellenistic period,[26] and a great many from the Roman period.[27] However, the study of this cult is complicated by the worship, on Rhodes and in the Eastern Aegean, of other marine divinities named Leucothea with no connection to the daughter of Cadmos.[28]

Ino's leap into the sea was commemorated in Megara where she had a heroic shrine and a temple on a cliff by the sea at the specific location where she was said to have come ashore.[29] Pausanias notes that of all the Greeks, the Megarians were the only ones to claim that Ino washed ashore in their city. However, he also records that in Korone on the Western side of the Messenian gulf, there was a sacred place (χωρίον) of Leucothea where she was said to have set foot on land once she was already a goddess.[30] The Thebans also offered sacrifice to Ino-Leucothea and they sang a funeral dirge for her, a cult which emphasizes her double nature as a goddess and a human.[31] This ambiguity prompted Xenophanes to write angrily that if the Thebans considered her a goddess, they should not mourn, since gods do not die, and if they considered her a human, they should not sacrifice.[32]

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[26] Votive marble stele from Larissa, Volos Mus. E 543-404, 3rd cent. BC. See *LIMC*, *s.v.* Ino, A1.

[27] On the cults of Ino/Leucothea, see: Koch-Piettre, 2005, 78; Krauskopf, 1981; Will, 1952, 167; Fontenrose, 1948; Meautis, 1930; Farnell, 1916; *RE*, *s.v.* Leucothea, (Eitrem). Many inscriptions from the 1st century AD confirm the identity of Ino and Leucothea: Bonnet, 1986, 65.

[28] A certain Halia/Leucothea was worshipped in Rhodes, according to Diod.Sic. V 55, 4-7. According to Hesych. *s.v. Leucotheai*, all marine goddesses are called Λευκοθέαι. In the *Etym.Magn*. *s.v.* Leucotheai, we find that the historian Myrsilos of Lesbos applied the name Leucothea to all Nereids. Epigraphical evidence attests that many cities of the Eastern Aegean (Lampsakos, Chios, Teos, Knidos, and the whole coast of Asia Minor) had a month Leukatheon, but it is impossible to discover whether or not it was related to Ino or to some other deity. See Krauskopf, 1981, 144 for sources and discussion and *RE*, *s.v.* Leucothea, col. 2295-2296 (Eitrem). A votive stele from Pherai is dedicated to the Λευκαθέαι: *IG* IX 2, 422 (unknown date).

[29] Paus. I 42, 8; I 44. 11; Plut. *Quaest.Conv*. 675e.

[30] Paus. IV 34, 4.

[31] Plut. *Apophth.Lac*. 228e. There was also a cult of Ino-Leucothea in Chaironea about which we do not know any details: Plut. *Quaest.Rom*. 267d.

As a marine goddess, Ino-Leucothea was known for her benevolence towards sailors in distress, as her encounter with Odysseus in the *Odyssey* shows, and a votive inscription from the theater of Athens calling her the Saviour, the Harbour-Goddess.[33] The scholiast of Apollonius' *Argonautica* mentions that Ino-Leucothea became associated with the Samothracian Mysteries, in which her *kredemnon* (veil) was a symbol of salvation, just as it was to Odysseus.[34] The initiates called *kredemnon* the strip of purple cloth in which they wrapped their chests.[35] Thus, the life of Ino as a mortal had been such that she was thought, as the goddess Leucothea, to be able to provide help to humans.

At Rome, Ino and her son Melicertes were identified with the gods Mater Matuta and Portunus who ensured a safe return to the harbor for sailors.[36] This identification is interesting, because it stresses both the marine nature of Ino and her role as *kourotrophos*. In fact, Leucothea's motherly and nurturing aspect as *kourotrophos* was important in her cult. Athletic contests of ephebes were held in her honor at Miletus[37] She was frequently associated with her son Melicertes on Corinthian coinage,[38] and in Thessaly she was worshipped as the nurse of Dionysus.[39]

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[32] Xen. in Arist. *Rh*. 1440b5; cf. Plut. *Apophth.Lac*. 228e.

[33] *IG* III 368, unknown date. Gelzer called it "antiqua", but Eitrem in *RE s.v.* Leucothea, col. 2294, affirms that it dates from the Roman period. See Farnell, 1916, 38.

[34] Schol. Ap.Rhod. I 917; Schol. *Il*. XXIV 78; Krauskopf, 1981, 144.

[35] Meautis, 1930, 335-338 lists coins representing Ino-Leucothea adorned with a *kredemnon*. According to Clem.Al. *Protr*. IV 57, the presence of a *kredemnon* allows the identification of the representations of Leucothea.

[36] Cic. *Tusc*. I XII 28; *Nat.Deor*. III 15, 39; Hyg. *Fab*. 2.

[37] Conon 33. Krauskopf, 1981, 144 note 29.

Beside this important marine and kourotrophic aspect, Ino/Leucothea was also worshipped as an oracular deity. She may even have had an oracle by incubation in Thalamai.[40] At Magnesia on the Maeander, Ino-Leucothea had an oracular cult in which she was associated with Dionysus and the Maenads.[41] In Epidauros Limera, Ino-Leucothea had a sacred lake through which she delivered oracles.[42] In this Laconian town, Ino-Leucothea was therefore worshipped as a chthonian divinity. As Jennifer Larson notes, the lake at Epidauros Limera was probably thought to connect to the Underworld.[43] This cult may be connected with the curse tablet found at Panticapea on the Black Sea which associated Hermes, Hekate, Pluto, Persephone, and Λευκοθέα χθονία.[44] However, considering the many Leucotheai worshipped in the Eastern part of the Mediterranean, it is unclear whether the table refers to the daughter of Cadmos or not.

Because of Ino-Leucothea's leap into the sea and subsequent deification, her cult was strongly connected with death and rebirth. Considering the associations of water with the Underworld studied in this dissertation, these different facets of the goddess, marine, chthonic, and kourotrophic, are strikingly compatible. However, as far as we know, no cult of Ino-Leucothea combined all three.

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[38] Meautis, 1930, 335.

[39] *SEG* 26, 1976/77, no. 683: a dedication to Ino from Melitaia in Thessaly (2nd half/late 3rd century AD, mentions that Ino was the nurse of Dionysus). Pausanias, III 24, 4, mentions that the people of Brasiai in Laconia showed the grotto where Ino hid the baby Dionysus.

[40] Paus. III 26, 1. The oracle belonged to Ino or Pasiphae. Since a votive inscription to Pasiphae was found there, Krauskopf, 1981, 145, considers it very unlikely that Ino was worshipped there. Plut. *Agis* 9; *Cleom*. 7; Cic. *De Div*. I 43, 96; Ptol. III 16, 22: the oracle only belonged to Pasiphae.

[41] Krauskopf, 1981, 144 note 27. This city also had a month Leukatheon: Kern, *Inschriften von Magnesia*, nr. 89.

[42] Paus. III 23, 8. It was considered a favorable sign if the cakes offered to the goddess sank into the water.

[43] Larson, 1995, 125.

[44] Farnell, 1916, Leucothea, 37. See Pharmakowsky, 1907, 126-127 for the full text of the inscription.

Ino-Leucothea presided over death and rebirth in a cauldron of immortality in cults of the Roman period. Libanios mentions a mystery cult of Ino that was active in his time,[45] and two inscriptions attest to the "apotheosis" of worshippers in the cauldron used at the festival of Ino.[46]

These mystery cults were strongly associated with the second version of the myth of Ino, the Dionysiac narrative. Several sources (none earlier than Apollodorus) mention that Ino, and in one case Athamas, boils her children in a cauldron.[47] The cauldron only appears in sources where Ino is the nurse of Dionysus, though not in all of them. This fact shows a connection of Ino-Leucothea's cult with the death and rebirth of Dionysus himself, as well as with the afterlife and rebirth after death promised to Dionysiac initiates.

In Greek mythology, the cauldron is associated with regeneration, resurrection, and immortality. Most famously, Medea uses it to rejuvenate Aeson,[48] and the dismembered children Pelops and Dionysus are made whole again in cauldrons. However, the cauldron is also the instrument of the death of many children who are served cooked as a horrible vengeance on their fathers. This is the case of Itys, Pelops, and others.[49] Thus, the cauldron is an instrument of death, but also of rebirth. Through a passage in the cauldron, Ino-Leucothea's worshippers undergo a similar transformation to that of the goddess, a symbolic death and rebirth.

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[45] Lib. *Or.* XIV 65 (The orator mentions the ἀπόρρητα of Ino and her son Melicertes along with the Mysteries of the Cabeiroi and those of Demeter).

[46] *OGIS* 611=*SEG* 7, 241; *IGRR* III 1075.

[47] Apollod. III 3, 4; Tz. to Lyc. 229; Arg. A and D to Pind. *Isthm.* (Drachmann); schol. to Luc. *Dial. Mar.* 9, 1; Nonn. IX 243-X 137 (Athamas).

[48] Ov. *Met.* 267.

[49] For a full discussion and a catalogue of sources on the motif of children boiled in cauldrons in Greek mythology, see Halm-Tisserant, 1993 and Laurens 1984 (who does not discuss the myth if Ino).

## Conclusion

To sum up, Ino, both in her role as the stepmother of Phrixos and Helle and in her role as nurse of Dionysus, attains divinity through a leap into the sea. The violence of her dash into the sea represents the sudden and complete transformation of her soul, which passes from the human to the divine realm. She acquires divine knowledge in the form of oracular powers. In her myth as in her cult, Ino-Leucothea is therefore a figure of transition, a goddess who can help sailors to traverse the perils of the sea and initiates to go through a symbolic death and rebirth.

# Conclusion

The analysis of immersion myths in this dissertation reveals that in Greek mythology the sea is a transitional element between the earth and Hades. The water itself, by virtue of its association with the mythical Oceanus, represents death, but also purity, vitality, and renewal. This conception of the sea is the metaphorical counterpart of its practical conception as a dangerous but necessary path of communication between distant lands. As we have seen, sailing was a profitable activity but it involved numerous risks. Worst of all was death at sea, which prevents the administration of funerary rites and entrance into Hades. Thus, as necessary as the sea was for transport, commerce, and warfare, nonetheless it was dreaded for religious reasons. In the metaphorical language of myth, these positive and negative qualities, result in the conception of the sea as a locus for transition between life and death. It is an abyss in which humans disappear but in which they can also be revitalized and transformed and even acquire the eternal life of the gods.

In my treatment of the relevant myths I have detailed how each has evolved through the centuries and taken on new aspects. Yet, despite the evolution of the myths, I have also stressed that the sea remains the operative element in each myth as it provides a locus for transition and transformation, in particular between childhood and adulthood and between mortality and divinity. My study therefore offers a comprehensive examination of immersion myths which foregrounds the properties of the sea in Greek thought from a synchronic point of view while paying attention to issues of chronology and evolution.

The myth of Glaucus the fisherman, discussed in Chapter 1, vividly illustrates the transformative properties of the sea. Glaucus, who was made immortal by inadvertently eating a magic plant, leaps into the sea and becomes a divine merman endowed with oracular powers. His leap and metamorphosis represent a definitive transition away from the world of humans, and his oracular powers represent the fact that he now has access to the knowledge of the gods, which is unattainable in the human realm. We have seen that Classical sources insist on Glaucus' transformation from human to god, and from a terrestial to a marine nature. Plato uses the myth for his own philosophical purposes to illustrate the condition of the soul when it is vitiated by contact with the body. The body affects the soul in the way the sea affects Glaucus' body, growing shells and seaweeds on him until he is no longer recognizable. In later sources, Glaucus is mostly depicted as an unlucky lover, a monstrous merman in love with the beautiful Ariadne and the nymph Scylla. There, his transformation is his plight, an ugliness which keeps him away from the objects of his desire. Throughout this evolution, the myth reminds us that transcending human destiny and acquiring immortality and oracular powers, the privilege of the gods, is unattainable by men and would cause a complete and permanent transformation.

We have seen in Chapter 2 that Danae's exposure at sea in a chest, return to land, and subsequent marriage mirrors the symbolism of wedding ceremonies wherein the bride undergoes a symbolic death as she transitions from the house of her father to that of her husband. In fifth-century sources, Danae's relationship with her father Acrisios is emphasized to show how the prophecy regarding Perseus threatens his grandfather's household. The myth focuses on family relationships and on Danae's passage to the status of *gynê* despite her father's opposition. In later sources, the myth of Danae focuses increasingly on the erotic aspect of her adventure with Zeus.

Conversely, we have seen in Chapter 3 that the leap and deification of virgins such as Britomartis underscores their rejection of marriage and integration into the community. By spurning their suitors, they set themselves apart from other women. The myths allegorize this separation as a departure from the earth. This mythical pattern was reused in later myths as material for etiologies as in the Pseudo-Plutarch's treatise *On Rivers*. In this treatise, we find little trace of the important social significance of the motif of a pursued virgin's leap into the sea. In fact, the treatise often features males performing such a leap. The treatise focuses on explaining the names of rivers by the sad fall of a youth or maiden into their waters.

Similarly, in Chapter 4, we have seen that in the case of Theseus and other ephebes who undergo the trials associated with coming-of-age, the immersion into the sea constitutes a symbolic death and return which marks the end (i.e. death) of childhood and the beginning of adulthood. These myths were mostly popular in the Archaic and Classical periods and coincided with political myths involving the foundation or early history of important cities such as Athens and Cyrene. The dissemination of such myths was especially crucial under the city-state political system of these periods in which each city needs to claim a mythology of its own and a glorious founder. The lesser importance of these male coming-of-age myths in later centuries can be explained in part by the new political realities of the Hellenistic and Roman periods.

In Chapter 5, I have discussed the complex myth of Ino-Leucothea. This myth evolved from an agricultural myth and a generic narrative of the "jealous stepmother" type into a Dionysiac myth in which Ino becomes the first Bacchant. Throughout the centuries, Ino's leap into the sea and transformation into a marine deity always remained at the core of the myth, marking the fact that the sea represents a boundary between the world of humans and that of the gods. For Ino, crossing this boundary signifies her death, but she is later reborn as an immortal sea-goddess.

Men and women's transitions, especially coming-of-age, have a different significance in Greek society. While women's transitions are meant to prepare them to be mothers and wives who submit to their husbands' authority and are confined to the household, men's transitions are meant to prepare them to enter public life and to act as leaders in their communities. To represent these important differences, mythology uses a distinct set of symbols for men and women's transitions. Women, especially virgins like Aphaia and Asteria who leave the earth for the sea in their refusal of marriage, are often associated with aquatic birds. Aquatic birds represent women's erotic potential. They are frequently found on vase-paintings which depict domestic or erotic scenes as lovers' gifts or women's pets. They are also offered to female divinities with greater frequency than other animal representations. Besides their association with women, aquatic birds, by virtue of their mastery of the sky, the earth, and the sea represent the transition between different phases of existence, especially between life and death. These erotic and funerary connections, when applied to the myths of Ino, Asteria, and Alcyone, underscore these characters' erotic potential and feminity, as well as their transcendence of life and death. Further research on this topic will help refine this interpretation, especially when more data is collected concerning dedications of birds in the sanctuaries of female divinities. Also, a systematic study of the species of birds that occur in myth and cult should help us understand more precisely the semantic range of various aquatic birds such as the swan and the duck, and passerines and pigeons, which also appear in Classical funerary iconography, not only in connection with women but also with children.[1]

Dolphin-riding frequently represents the transitions of men and ephebes. The dolphin is a special animal with a human-like character, and has strong ties with death and the passage to the afterlife. Riding a dolphin represents a crossing between the realm of life and death. Occasionally, the dolphin brings the protagonists back to life. Such is the case with Theseus who visits the underwater realm of Poseidon under the guidance of dolphins and resurfaces as the acknowledged son of the god. Sometimes, however, the dolphin also represents the protagonist's final transition to death, as in the case of the folktales about boys riding dolphins and dying in the process that were studied in Chapter 4. As explained in that chapter, the specific connection of dolphins with males, and especially ephebes, may be related to the cult of Apollo Delphinios, which was chiefly practiced by ephebes. However, more research and new studies of the sanctuaries and cult of Apollo Delphinios are needed to confirm and refine this hypothesis.

My study of immersion myths provides a new appreciation for the central function of the sea in these myths as well as a deeper understanding of the overall significance of the individual stories. By detailing the function of dolphins and aquatic birds, this study introduces new avenues for research on the questions of animal representation in mythology and metamorphosis. It also contributes to the complex questions of divinization and heroization in Greek mythology and religion, two processes not yet adequately understood by scholars. Finally, my study constitutes a basis for research on the significance of water in a broader context, where many analogous situations arise, particularly in the comparative study of the mythologies of various Indo-European cultures. Similarly, many Near-Eastern myths, such as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the *Enûma Eliš* portray aspects of water that have clear relations to Greek myth and that have already been shown to have influenced the development of the Hellenic material.[2] Expanded research in these areas, for which the present study provides a framework, will continue to shed light on the significance of the sea in Greek myth.

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[1] E.g Grave stele of Timarete, Athens, ca. 430-400, British Museum, London: a female figure holds out a bird over a baby who appears to be reaching for it; Grave stele of Philokles, son of Dikaios, Athens, ca. 430 BC, National Archaeological Museum, Athens: the relief depicts a man handing a bird to a boy; Grave stele of Antioches of Cnidus, Piraeus, ca. 400-375 BC, Louvre, Paris: the relief depicts a man handing something, possibly a bird, to a young boy; Attic white-ground *lekythos*, 450-400 BC, National Archaeological Museum Athens, no. 1814: a child sits on a rock between Charon in his boat and a woman holding a bird. See Rühfel, 1984 for further examples.

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[2] See for instance West, 1997.

## Appendix. Dionysus, the Tyrrhenian Pirates, and the Dolphins

The metamorphosis of the Tyrrhenian pirates, who try to rob and kill the young Dionysus, is radical: they are transformed into dolphins. I argue that this metamorphosis of the body represents the alteration of the soul, a change from the ordinary human mind to the unrestricted happiness and knowledge of the world beyond that is characteristic of Dionysus' followers. Similar symbolism can be observed on archaic Etruscan, Attic, and Boeotian sympotic vessels showing revelers riding dolphins or being transformed into these marine mammals. In Chapter 4, I have shown that dolphins serve as mediators between worlds. It is therefore fitting that they should appear in these images as representatives of the new status of the comasts who accomplish a transition between the everyday world to that of Dionysus.

It is significant that the comasts' transformation should be accomplished through watery ways and that they should become marine creatures. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the sea frequently represents the entrance into the Underworld and is a locus of regeneration because its waters ultimately come from Oceanus.[1] It is thus an intermediary place between the earth and the world of the dead. Maria Daraki writes:

> La mer et certains lacs et marais font la transition entre le monde des vivants et l'espace souterrain. Dans certaines conditions rituelles précises, le vin a la même fonction *[e.g. at the Pithoigia]*. Dionysos l'Humide (Hyes) règne sur une voie à double sens qui se prête à des passages circulaires. Elle franchit sans cesse une barrière qui arrête les autres dieux et fait de Dionysos un dieu à part qui semble avoir échappé à la répartition « euclidienne » des territoires divins.[2]

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[1] Rudhardt, 1971, 83-84.
[2] Daraki, 1982, 3. Cf. Maas, 1888.

Dionysus himself was said to return from the Underworld every year through the reputedly bottomless lake of Lerna.[3] He was also worshipped as Limnaios during the Athenian Anthesteria,[4] and Aristophanes has parodied his *katabasis* through a marsh in *The Frogs*. Several Greek cities celebrated festivals in which the god was represented arriving in a boat.[5] We can also think of the fight between Dionysus and a Triton at Tanagra and the ritual cry of the women at Elis calling Dionysus out of the sea in the shape of a bull. Lastly, the child Dionysus was said to have been put in a chest by Semele and to have washed up in Prasiae.[6] The little god dove into the sea to flee from the furious pursuit of Lycurgus and took refuge under the water with Thetis in the *Iliad*.[7] All these instances show Dionysus transitioning from one element to the other, from the divine world to the human realm, and vice-versa, through water. Lastly, the symposium itself is often compared to a sailing ship.[8]

I will examine the story of the metamorphosis of the Tyrrhenian pirates starting from their leap into the sea. I argue that their immersion into water and subsequent metamorphosis represent their regeneration and disappearance into the world of Dionysus. This transformation serves to show Dionysus' power over passages between worlds through water. In sympotic imagery, revelers are taken into the fantastic world of

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[3] Dionysus plunged into this lake in order to fetch Semele from the Underworld: Hes. *Th.* 940-2; Diod.Sic. IV 25, 4; Apollod. III 5, 3; Paus. II 31, 2; II 37, 5; Plut. *Is.et Os.* 364e-f; *Ser.Num.Vind.* 566 A; Poll. IV 86-87; Bonnechere, 1994, 203 and notes.

[4] Daraki, 1982, 14-15; Burkert, 1983 [1972], 215. The exact location of the temple of Dionysus *en Limnais* is not known but its existence is well attested: Ath. II 465a; Thuc. II 15, 4; Is. 8, 35; Demosth. LIX 76; Philoch. *Fr.Hist.Gr.* 328 F 229; Call. fr. 305 (Pfeiffer); Schol. Ar. *Ran.* 216; Steph.Byz. *sv Limnai*; Philostr. V.A. III 14. There was also a temple of Dionysus near a marsh in Sparta (Strab. VIII 5, 1) and perhaps in Sicyon (Paus. II 7, 6). See also Hesych. *s.v. Limnagenes*. Pausanias does not mention the Athenian shrine of Dionysus *en Limnais*. For him, the oldest Athenian shrine of this god is the one at the theater of Dionysus (Paus. I 20, 3).

[5] Burkert, 1983 [1972], 200-201; Bonnechere, 1994, 202 and notes.

[6] Paus. III 24, 3.

[7] *Il.* VI 123-143.

[8] Bacci and Lentini, 1994, *passim*; Slater, 1976, *passim*; Davies, 1978, *passim*; Calame, 1981, *passim*; Daraki, 1982, *passim*; Descoeudres, 2000, 332.

Dionysus in much the same way, and are represented as dolphin-men, showing that drunkenness is also a path to the Dionysiac universe.

## The Metamorphosis of the Tyrrhenian Pirates

The story of the Tyrrhenian pirates' encounter with Dionysus goes as far back as the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus* and Pindar.[9] Euripides used the myth in his *Cyclops* and Aglaosthenes recounted it in his *Naxiaca*.[10] In the Hellenistic period and later, the myth became quite popular and appears in many Greek and Roman sources.[11] Few certain iconographic sources exist: according to Jean-Paul Descoeudres, there are only six, none of which is earlier than the fourth century BC.[12] The famous cup of Exekias, despite its tempting likeness to the story (vines grow from the mast of Dionysus' boat), shows no definite link with the pirates' transformation.[13] The story is that some marauding Tyrrhenian pirates take the young Dionysus on their ship, planning to rob and kill him. However, the god makes a display of his power by transforming himself into a roaring lion and a bull and causing ivy and vines to grow on the mast of the ship. Terrified, the pirates jump into the sea and are metamorphosed into dolphins, except the pious helmsman who refuses to participate in the attack. The incident usually occurs on a ship, except on the frieze of the choregic monument of Lysicrates that depicts the fight between Dionysus’ retinue of Satyrs and the pirates as a land battle.

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[9] Pind fr. 267 Snell-Maehler$^4$ (1989).

[10] Aglaosthenes *Fr.Hist.Gr*. 499 F3; see Gras, 1985, 584.

[11] Ov. *Met*. III 532, 605-691; Apollod. III 5, 3 (III 37-38); Hyg. *Fab*., 134; *Astr*. II 17; Serv. to Verg. *Aen*. I 67; Opp. *Hal*. I 646; Longus, IV 3, 2; Sen. *Oed*. 449; *Ag*, 451; Nonn. XLV 103-169; Phld. *Piet*. col. 35; Prop. III 17, 25; *Ant. Pal*. IX 82; IX 524; Val.Flacc. I 130; Stat. *Ach*. I 56; Luc. *d.Mar*. VIII 1; *Salt*. XXII; Aristid. *Or*. 41(4), 8, p. 332K; Antip.Thess. XV (Gow-P); Porph. *Abst*. III 16; Philostr. *Im*. I 19, 5.

[12] Descoeudres, 2000, 334 note 40: 1-Frieze of the choregic monument of Lysicrates, Athens, 335-4 BC; 2-Fragment of a Tarentine funerary relief, Musée National, end of IVth cent. BC; 3- Fragment of a funerary relief, probably from Tarentum, end of IVth cent. BC, private collection; 4-Lid of a Roman sarcophagus, Musée de Philippeville, first half of IIIrd cent.AD; 5-Mosaic, Musée du Bardo, Tunis, inv. 2884, from a house in Dougga; 6-Relief *amphoriskos* from Tunisia, private collection, end third-beginning of fourth cent.AD. To this list must be added an Italian plate from the beginning of the fourth cent.BC thought to represent the Hymn. See: Ambrosini, 2000, fig 28; Jolivet, 1985, 64, fig. 5.

[13] Munich, Antikensammlungen, 2044. Furthermore, Dionysus appears with dolphins and marine monsters on many coins and vases without any identifiable link with the Tyrrhenian pirates: *kylix* of Makron, Berlin, Antiquarium II, no. 2290 (Dionysus' cloak is decorated with dolphins); relief of Hadrianic period, *LIMC*, III 558 no. 237 (Dionysus and dolphins); *LIMC*, *s.v.* Dionysus, III 1 p. 461 no. 437 (Dionysus carried by a marine monster); Pomponius Porphyrio in his *Commentaries on the Satires of Horace* II 8, 15 writes: "*Institutum tradit Varro ut delphini circa Liberum pinguerentur*". However, Varro made this comment in the context of a discussion about the fact that Chian wine must be mixed with sea-water. Thus, it has little to do with our myth, but rather, it is an image to describe how well salt water and "Dionysus", wine, mix together.

The state of mind of the pirates is described in the texts by the words οἱ δ’ εἰς πρύμνην ἐφόβηθεν, ἀμφὶ κυβερνήτην δὲ σαόφρονα θυμὸν ἔχοντα ἔσταν ἄρ’ ἐκπληγέντες (*h.Bacch.* 48-50), *sive hoc insania fecit sive timor* (Ov. *Met.* III, 670), οἱ δὲ ἐμμανεῖς γενόμενοι κατὰ τῆς θαλάττης ἔφυγον καὶ ἐγένοντο δελφῖνες (Apollod. III 5, 3), *terrore se illi in fluctus dedere praecipites* (Serv. to Verg. *Aen.* I 67), Τυρσηνοὶ δ’ ἰάχησαν, ἐβακχεύοντο δὲ λύσσῃ εἰς φόβον οἰστρηθέντες (Nonn. XLV 152-153). Fear turns the pirates mad and they jump into the sea where they are metamorphosed into dolphins by Dionysus.

Hyginus says that the Hellenistic poet Aglaosthenes in his *Naxiaca* recounted that Dionysus, perceiving the intentions of the pirates, commanded his retinue to dance in Bacchic fashion. Seized by the desire to dance, the pirates fell into the sea in their revelry and were transformed into dolphins.[14] Two of our later sources (Apollodoros and Nonnos) also describe the pirates as mad with Dionysiac frenzy. The first of these authors says that the pirates are affected by *mania* from seeing ivy and vines grow on the ship and hearing the sound of flutes. The second says that they were turned mad by Bacchic frenzy. These passages are interesting because they depict the pirates not as terrified, but as participating in a Bacchic dance. In these versions, the myth illustrates the power of Dionysus to transform men through revelry and bring them into his world.

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[14] Hyg. *Astr.* II 17, 2= Aglaosthenes, *Fr.Hist.Gr.* 499 F3: “*Quod Liber suspicatus, comites suos iubet symphoniam canere; quo sonitu inaudito Tyrrheni cum usque adeo delectarentur, ut etiam in saltationibus essent occupati cupiditate, se in mare inscii proiecerunt et ibi delphini sunt facti*”.

The pirates' metamorphosis into dolphins is significant. As we have seen in the previous chapter, dolphins are mediators between the animal and human worlds, as well as between gods and men, as well as life and death.[15] Therefore, the metamorphosis symbolizes the pirates' new intermediary status and their passage away from the human sphere.[16] Furthermore, in sympotic imagery, dolphins appear as the playful companions of Dionysus, Satyrs, and revelers.[17] Therefore, by the power of the god, the pirates who oppose him are metamorphosed into his followers. This metamorphosis is not a reward, despite the positive qualities associated with the dolphin, but rather a display of the god's power over humans.

This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that Dionysus is often surrounded by other intermediary creatures that inhabit a fantastic world: Satyrs, Maenads, mules, Tritons, and panthers. Satyrs are part horse, part men; mules are part donkey, part horse; Tritons are part men, part fish; Maenads are women entranced by Dionysiac frenzy, their personalities completely transformed by their close contact with the god;[18] and panthers were thought to be an amalgam of many beasts.[19] Thus, Dionysus lives in a universe of hybrid animals in-between humans and gods, real creatures and imaginary ones. The pirates, in their new dolphin shape, take part in this intermediary world.

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[15] Piettre, 1996, 34-35 affirms that their previous lives as humans accounts for the intermediary character of dolphins. However, this information only appears in late sources and is probably derived from the legend of the Tyrrhenian pirates, as attested in Luc. *d.Mar*. VIII 1; *Salt.* XXII and Porph. *Abst*. III 16.

[16] Warland, 1996, 148.

[17] On a Corinthian *kylix*, a comast gives a *rhyton* to a dolphin (Paris, Musée du Louvre, MNC 674). On another Attic *kylix* in the Louvre, satyrs and dolphins are revelers (Beazley, *ABV*, 635, no. 34); on an Attic-style black-figure *krater* in the Louvre, (CVA France, 19, Louvre 12, pl. 160, 580-570 BC) is a depiction of a symposium with dolphins and marine birds. The literary sources include Aristox. in Ath. XIV 11; Eur. *Cycl*. 503-6; Choirilos of Samos, fr. 9 (Kinkel). See Davies, 1978, 76-77.

[18] Dodds, 1951, 270-282.

[19] Ar.Byz. *Hist.An.Epit.* II 281; Keller, 1909, vol. I, 64.

Renée Piettre has stressed that all these dionysiac creatures are characterized by an uncontrolled and constantly unfulfilled sexuality.[20] Satyrs pursue Nymphs that escape them, Maenads were accused of sexual misconduct during Dionysiac festivals, and mules are sterile, and therefore ridiculous in their sexual desire. Two Roman sources even credit the pirates with attempting to rape the young Dionysus.[21] Such an uncontrolled outburst of sexual lust, according to Piettre, places the pirates in the group of Dionysiac beasts, on a par with mules, Satyrs, and other sexually unrestrained creatures.[22] However, this characteristic does not apply to panthers, dolphins, or Tritons. Piettre's argument that the erotic connotations of dolphin love stories with boys account for the sexual side of their personality is far from convincing: even if dolphins are frequently portrayed carrying Eros and beautiful young boys and loving them, their love is very different from the brutish and bestial desire of mules and Satyrs. On the whole, I think Piettre is right in pointing out the important sexual aspect of the Dionysiac world, but it does not apply to all the characters and animals involved, especially not to dolphins.

To summarize this section, the metamorphosis of the Tyrrhenian pirates represents their passage away from the human world and entrance into the Dionysiac realm on two levels. First, their leap into the sea, terrified by the god, ably illustrates that passage, especially by comparison with many other leaps previously discussed. Second, their metamorphosis into dolphins emphasizes their new status, in between humans and animals, gods and men, life and death, because that is precisely the status of the dolphin.

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[20] Piettre, 1996, *passim*.

[21] Hyg. *Fab*. 134; Serv. to Verg. *Aen*. I 67.

[22] See Piettre, 1996, 32.

Dionysiac *Mischwesen* and dolphin-riders on sympotic vases

Revelers undergo a similar metamorphosis to that of the pirates on a number of sympotic vessels from Etruria and Athens. These vases from the 6th-5th centuries BC show dolphin-men *Mischwesen*. For instance, a famous Athenian black-figure cup shows a dolphin with arms playing the pipes between another smaller dolphin and a fish. A frieze of ivy decorates the interior rim of the cup, informing us that this is a Dionysiac image and not just "fantasy", as some scholars thought.[23] Another black-figure cup (ca. 540 BC) from Asia Minor (exact provenance unknown) depicts a warrior surrounded by a double frieze of transforming dolphins among which some still have human body parts.[24] Lastly, a *hydria* shows six men in the process of being transformed into dolphins on its main panel.[25] Five of them have traded their human heads, torsos, and arms for dolphin heads and flukes, while the last one has a dolphin tail in place of legs. At the far left, a branch of ivy indicates the action of Dionysus. The shoulder of the vase shows a Triton (perhaps Glaucus)[26] holding a dolphin in one hand and a fish in the other.

Jean-Paul Descoeudres has proposed that these vases metaphorically represent the transformation operated on men by Dionysus at the symposium.[27] Indeed, there is no indication that these paintings show the transformation of the Tyrrhenian pirates; however, their sympotic context is clear. The vases illustrate how wine and Dionysiac frenzy take men into the universe of the god, much in the way that Aglaosthenes described the fall into the sea of the Tyrrhenian pirates. Thus, the paintings have a sympotic as well as a religious meaning.

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[23] Spivey and Rasmussen, 1986, 6.

[24] From a private collection. See Descoeudres, 2000, 332 and note 33 for full bibliography.

[25] Etruscan Black-figure *hydria* (ca. 500 BC), The Toledo Museum of Art, 82.154; *CVA*, The Toledo Museum of Art, 2, 1984, pl. 90.

[26] See Descoeudres, 2000, 330. He argues that the representation of the Triton's genitals, according to him obvious on the painting, confirm that the man represented is of a modest social condition, and thus probably is Glaucus. However, this is a rather small clue to identifying the figure, and since no other element on the vase allows for certain identification, I am of the opinion that this is a generic Triton. Furthermore, Marie-Odile Jentel notes in the *LIMC*, *s.v.* Glaucus that only a few certain representations of the marine deity Glaucus exist. Most of the time, experts have to conclude that the possible "Glaucus" is a Triton, Nereus, or some other marine creature.

[27] Descoeudres, 2000, 332.

Another group of vases representing dolphins and *Mischwesen* from the same regions and the same period are ambiguous: it is unclear whether they have a Dionysiac and religious significance like the previous group, or if they represent dramatic performances. A Pontic amphora from Cerverteri (end of the fifth century BC) attributed to the Paris painter represents three men with dolphin tails and human bodies and legs pursuing four women.[28] The other figures on the vase include a lion, a panther, and two roosters. The skyphos of Boston represents six warriors mounted on dolphins riding towards a piper.[29] On the other side, six smaller warriors are riding on ostriches also towards a piper and another smaller masked figure. A frieze of ivy decorates the upper lip of the cup. A cup in the Louvre shows seven armed dolphin riders and a piper with big ivy leaves among them.[30] A *lekythos* in the Kerameikos Museum in Athens has a warrior riding a dolphin on the one side, while a piper and a frieze of ivy decorate the other side.[31] The *psykter* of Oltos shows six hoplites riding dolphins.[32] In front of each rider's mouth runs the retrograde inscription ΕΠΙΔΕΛΦΙΝΟΣ. Lastly, a small terracotta statuette from Tanagra dating back to the end of the sixth century BC represents a warrior on a dolphin.[33] These artifacts, especially the vases, have been thought to represent a dramatic performance because of the presence of pipers on the illustrations and because all the vases come from Athens and date from roughly the same period.[34] The play represented would have been an entirely lost comedy or satyr-play,[35] although some scholars have argued for tragedy or dithyramb.[36]

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[28] *CVA* Museo Capitolini, 2, 1965, pl. 33.

[29] Athenian black-figure skyphos, 550-500 BC, Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 20, 18, *CVA* 4090.

[30] Paris, Musée du Louvre, CA 1924.

[31] Athens, Kerameikos Museum (Brommer, 1942: fig. 5).

[32] See Sifakis, 1967. Now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1989.281.69). According to Beazley (*ARV*$^2$, 1622), since there is no piper on this vase, it need not be connected with performance.

[33] Brommer, 1942, fig. 9.

In the present state of our knowledge, it is difficult to decide whether these vases represent dramatic performances or not. It is quite possible that they do, but no definite proof of it can be found, especially considering the absence of a literary record. For my part, I think it is interesting to find dolphins, dolphin-riders, pipers, and other Dionysiac symbols on these vases. The same connection appears on many other vases from the same regions and period, where dolphins participate in Dionysiac revelry along with men.[37]

Thus, the fantasy of the symposium has a rich significance in Etruscan, Boeotian, and Athenian imagery: through the enjoyment of Dionysus' wine and revelry, drinkers are taken into the god's universe where phantasmagoria and divine knowledge are one. Riding on a dolphin in the sea is a powerful metaphor to convey the idea that revelers at the symposium are carried away into the Dionysiac universe.[38] The same idea, despite the absence of the dolphin, is found in the common metaphor comparing the symposium to a ship at sea: the revelers sail away into the world of the god, beyond the boundaries of their everyday human world.[39] The metaphor of the ship at sea has many other meanings in Greek literature, notably companionship and statesmanship.[40] These other meanings may color the significance of the ship metaphor in a Dionysiac setting. However, more work will be needed in the future to explain the exact relationship between these different contexts.

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[34] See Brommer, 1942, *passim*. Also Stebbins, 1929, 102; Bielefeld, 1946-1947, *passim*; Ambrosini, 1999-2000, *passim*.

[35] Bérard, 1974, 95-96 indicates that not only comedies and satyr-plays used actors in costumes and masks: so did orgies and initiations. However, there are no arguments to prove that such scenes are represented on the vases in question.

[36] Bielefeld, 1946, argues that the characters have a serious attitude and that they are not wearing masks. According to him, the play may have represented the myth of Phalantos.

[37] Attic black-figure *lekythos*, Davies 1978, fig 9=Ambrosini, 2000, fig 29; Corinthian *kotyle*, Davies, 1978, fig 8 note 37= Corinth, VII, II (1975) 115, An 86, C-62-449, pl. 66: a satyr pours wine from an oinochoe for a dolphin-rider. Attic *kylix*, Paris, Musée du Louvre, G92, CVA 201118= Davies 1978, 78, fig. 10: satyrs riding amphorae, playing with wineskins.

[38] Dolphins and dolphin-riders are fairly common as shield devices on black-figure Attic pottery and, to a lesser extent, in Attic red-figure pottery. They are seen on the shields of various warriors and gods, among which Achilles, Athena, Poseidon, and Apollo. It is difficult to see much significance in the emblem, considering that all these divinities are also commonly seen, at the same period, using a variety of other shield devices including wolves, bulls, owls, *gorgoneia*, etc. On Panathenaic amphorae, the dolphin appears as the shield device of Athena, and a transforming dolphin-man is even found on Athena's shield on one such amphora. Unfortunately, the significance of the emblem in this context is entirely lost to us. For a catalog of dolphin shield-devices, see Chase, 1902, 103-104.

## Youths and Eros Riding Dolphins in Dionysiac Contexts

A large group of vases, mostly red-figure *kylikes*, represent youths riding dolphins accompanied by Dionysiac symbols such as ivy, *askoi*, and *kantharoi*.[41] Laura Ambrosini has studied these vases in detail. For her, they represent a typically Etruscan and Faliscan allusion to the afterlife in a Dionysiac context. She compares the vases to satyrs and warriors riding dolphins on Etruscan scarabs[42] and to Etruscan *psychompopoi*.[43]

Ambrosini may be a little too categorical in her interpretation of the vases. However, considering the significance of the dolphin as mediator between worlds and its particular connection with ephebes studied in Chapter 4, I think that her reading of the vases is probably valid. The youths are not necessarily transitioning from life to death: they may be passing to adulthood, as in the myths we have seen, or into the Dionysiac universe through the symposium, as on the *Mischwesen* vases.

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[39] For a complete study of this metaphor in a Dionysiac context, see Slater, 1976, *passim*.

[40] E.g. Thgn. 667-682, Pl. *Rep*. VI 6, 488d.

[41] Vases and bibliography detailed in Ambrosini, 1999-2000, *passim*, and Ambrosini, 2001, *passim*.

[42] Ambrosini, 1999-2000, 259.

[43] Ambrosini, 1999-2000, 269-270.

Ambrosini compares the “dolphin-rider youths” to the common motif of Eros riding a dolphin. This motif appears in vase-painting as early as the sixth century BC in Etruria, Athens, and Boeotia.[44] The winged god was represented on funerary monuments and vases accompanying souls to the Underworld.[45] This imagery became extremely popular in the Hellenistic period and rapidly spread beyond the borders of Etruria, Attica, and Boeotia. However, its religious and Dionysiac significance was reinterpreted as erotic following the general trend of the time towards love poetry and imagery. This is how Eros appears riding a dolphin in Hellenistic love-poetry[46] and on mosaics, vases, and other artifacts not connected to any eschatological context.[47]

Thus, the “Dionysiac dolphin-rider youth” motif finds a good parallel in the “Eros as dolphin-rider” motif because both represent a transition. However, the Eros motif is not clearly connected with a Dionysiac context, but rather, especially in the Archaic and Classical period, with the passage to the afterlife. Therefore, both motifs represent a transition with the symbol of a dolphin-rider, but they have different connotations.

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[44] Ambrosini, 1999-2000, fig. 30; list of the red-figure representations of Eros on a dolphin from the sixth to the fourth cent. BC with bibliography: Isler, 1985, 74. On two of these representations Eros plays the pipes, on one the lyre.

[45] Pl. *Phdr*. 248b; *Crit*. 116e; see L’Orange, 1962.

[46] Anacr. *PMG*, III, 55(51); Mosch. 2, 119 (Gow); *Ant.Pal.* XVI 207. See Reho-Bumbalova, 1981, 91. According to Vermeule, 1979, 204, an early association between Eros and the sea in poetry is found in the *Theognid*. 237-254 (Theognis’ lover Kyrnos will fly over the sea with wings).

[47] Cupids frequently ride dolphins in Roman art: Toynbee, 1973, 207; painting from Herculaneum in *RPGR*, 172, no.3 (Galatea’s message to Polyphemus delivered by a dolphin); two Cupids riding dolphins on a mosaic from Vila del Nilo at Lepcis Magna: Toynbee, 1973, p 207; Cupid on a dolphin in a palace at Chichester: Toynbee, 1973, p 207; Cupid on a dolphin on the Peleus and Thetis sarcophagus Toynbee, 1973, p 207. Eros on a dolphin is one of the most common devices in Hellenistic art. It is on coins from Paestum, Nikomedia, Perinthus, Deultum, Lampsakos, Tarente. See also: Bruneau and Ducat, 1983, 155, pl. 16, 1 (house of the dolphins in Delos).

## Conclusion

Riding a dolphin in a Dionysiac context symbolizes a transition to the world of the god. The fantasy, drunkenness, and abandon of the symposium open this gateway to the divine world. Likewise, the leap into the sea of the Tyrrhenian pirates and the *Mischwesen* imagery on Etruscan, Attic, and Boeotian vase-painting of the Archaic and Classical periods show the profound transformation undergone by the followers of Dionysus. The metamorphosis of their bodies into marine animals represents the transformation of their very nature. They are no longer human, but belong to the world of the god who rules over passages between the earth and the sea surrounded by hybrid creatures.

This short appendix can only provide some avenues for thought and future research on the significance of marine themes in Dionysiac contexts. I intend to pursue the question of the ship metaphor in order to discover the connections it may have with political and social metaphors involving a ship. Also, I intend to explore further the fantastic imagery of the symposium as an expression of relief from the pressures of everyday life. I will research how marine imagery participates in the idea of leaving an ordinary space to enter an extraordinary one without leaving one's town, friends, and neighbours, and while maintaining the social and economic relationships associated with them.

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