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Myth and Ritual in Ancient Greece

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MYTH AND RITUAL IN ANCIENT GREECE:
OBSERVATIONS ON A DIFFICULT RELATIONSHIP
by
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From the middle of the 1960s, the study of Greek religion received new impulses through the work of Walter Burkert (1931-) and Jean-Pierre Vernant (1914-2007).[1] Whereas the first half of the twentieth century had studied Greek religion with the heuristic concepts 'fertility' and 'the apotropaic',[2] the new approach looked for inspiration to ethology, functionalism and structuralism, and it concentrated much of its attention on myth and ritual. In my contribution I want to show how these innovations have changed our ideas of Greek myth (§ 1), ritual (§ 2) and the relationship between myth and ritual (§ 3). I start every section with a short historical survey.

1. *Myth*[3]

The modern history of Greek mythology starts in 1724 with the publication of *De l'origine des fables* by the Frenchman Bernard de Fontenelle (1657-1757).[4] Where the seventeenth century

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[1] Burkert: L.J. Alderink, 'Greek Ritual and Mythology: The Work of Walter Burkert', *Religious Studies Review* 6 (1980) 1-13; W. Burkert, 'Burkert über Burkert', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 3.8.1988, 29-30; R.W. Cape, 'An Interview with Walter Burkert', *Favonius* 2 (1988) 41-52; L.J. Alderink, 'Walter Burkert and a Natural Theory of Religion', *Religion* 30 (2000) 211-27. Vernant: R. di Donato, 'Aspetti e momenti di un percorso intellettuale: Jean-Pierre Vernant', *Rivista Storica Italiana* 96 (1984) 680-95; A. Laks, 'Les origines de Jean-Pierre Vernant', *Critique* 612 (1998) 268-82; A. Paradiso, 'Jean-Pierre Vernant', *Belfagor* 56 (2001) 287-306.

[2] For the idea of the apotropaic see R. Schlesier, 'Apotropäisch', in H. Cancik *et al.* (eds.), *Handbuch religionswissenschaftlicher Grundbegriffe* II (Stuttgart, 1990) 41-5.

[3] For more detailed surveys see W. Burkert, 'Griechische Mythologie und die Geistesgeschichte der Moderne', *Entretiens Hardt* 26 (Geneva, 1980) 159-207; F. Graf, *Greek Mythology* (Baltimore and London, 1993) 9-56; C. Jamme, *Introduction à la philosophie du mythe, vol. 2: époque moderne et contemporaine* (Paris, 1995); F. Graf, 'Mythos. II', in *Der Neue Pauly* 15/1 (Stuttgart and Weimar, 2001) 643-48.

[4] *B. de Fontenelle. Oeuvres complètes* III, ed. A. Niderst (Paris, 1989) 197-202. For a good German

still approached myth as part of erudition, entertainment and etymologies but became increasingly sceptical of its value,[5] Fontenelle concentrated on myth itself. His essay contains the germs of modern research in at least four aspects: he claimed a kind of 'primitive' mentality; he inaugurated the comparative method by comparing the myth of Orpheus with that of the Inca Manco Capac;[6] he reflected on the transmission of myths, and he already recognised the fatal influence of literacy on the oral tradition. Fontenelle's learned compatriot Nicolas Fréret (1688-1749) added another, perhaps even more important aspect: mythology as expression of the culture, customs and social order of a specific community.[7]

As the title of Fontenelle's essay illustrates, eighteenth-century France called myth *fable*, and the same usage can be found in contemporary Germany.[8] It remained this way in France until well into the nineteenth century, whereas in nineteenth-century Germany myth could also be called *Sage*, as in the most popular German book on Greek mythology ever, Gustav Schwab's (1792-1850) *Die schönsten Sagen des klassischen Alterthums*.[9] Yet in 1783 something completely new had happened. In that year, Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812), professor of Greek at Göttingen,[10] introduced the term *mythus*,[11] and posited that myth

translation and an important study by W. Krauss, 'Fontenelle und die Aufklärung', see Fontenelle, *Philosophische Neuigkeiten für Leute von Welt und für Gelehrte*, ed. H. Bergmann (Leipzig, 1989) 228-42, 371-439, respectively. For a good introduction with an English translation see B. Feldman and R.D. Richardson, *The Rise of Modern Mythology (1680-1860)* (Bloomington and London, 1972) 7-18. For the study of myth in the eighteenth century see also H. Mockerl, *Poesie und Mythos* (Frankfurt, 1981); C. Grell and C. Michel (eds.), *Primitivisme et mythes des origines dans la France des Lumières, 1680-1820* (Paris, 1988).

[5] B Guthmüller, 'Mythologie I', in *Der Neue Pauly* 15/1, 611-32 at 627-30.

[6] For the Latin American parallels see now A. Monnier, 'L'Orphée des ethnologues', in Ph. Borgeaud (ed.), *Orphisme et Orphée en l'honneur de Jean Rudhart* (Geneva, 1991) 65-76.

[7] N. Fréret, 'Réflexions générales sur la nature de la religion des Grecs, et sur l'idée qu'on doit se former de leur mythologie', in *Histoire de l'académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 23 (1756) 17-26. For Fréret see R. Simon, *Nicolas Fréret, académicien* (Geneva, 1961); B. Barret-Kriegel, *Jean Mabillon* (Paris, 1988) 163-209, 277-82 (bibliography); C. Grell and C. Volpilhac-Auger (eds.), *Nicolas Fréret, légende et vérité* (Oxford, 1994).

[8] France: J. Starobinski, *Le remède dans le mal* (Paris, 1989) 233-62 ('Fable et mythologie au xviie et xviiie siècles'). Germany: see, for example, F. Schisling, *Die Hauptgötter der Fabel in Kupfern, mit ihrer Geschichte und ursprünglicher Bedeutung* (Vienna, 1793); C.T. Damm, *Götter-Lehre und Fabel-Geschichte der alten griechischen und römischen Welt* (Berlin, 1797²).

[9] G. Schwab, *Die schönsten Sagen des klassischen Alterthums*, 3 vols (Stuttgart, 1838-40), cf. the nicely illustrated B. Schillbach and E. Dambacher, *Gustav Schwab. 1792-1850. Aus seinem Leben und Schaffen = Marbacher Magazin* 61 (1992). Schwab's ever-lasting popularity is well illustrated by G. Schwab, *Sagen des klassischen Altertums*, gelesen von Hans Zischler, 2 CDs (Frankfurt, 2003).

[10] For Heyne see most recently U. Schindel, 'C.G. Heyne 25 September 1729 – 14 July 1812', in W.W. Briggs and W.M. Calder III (eds.), *Classical Scholarship. A Biographical Encyclopedia* (New

explained the admirable and frightening sides of nature. Moreover, like his friend Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803),[12] he departed from the presupposition that myth had a local origin and gave expression to the *Volksgeist*. [13] In subsequent works he went back ever further in time in his location of myth and eventually placed it in the primeval era before man could speak properly.[14]

This interest in the *Volksgeist* at that particular moment is hardly chance. It is exactly in these years that we see the rise of a number of German terms that give expression to an interest in foreign peoples. The term *Ethnographie* is found first in 1767, *Völkerkunde* in 1771, the Latin *ethnologia* in 1781, the German *Ethnologie* in 1787 and, last but not least, *Volkskunde* in 1782. Nearly all 'inventors' of these terms were Protestant, often former students of theology, and without exception they applied these terms to the peoples of antiquity or the non-German peoples around them. At the same time, they were associated in various ways with Göttingen, where Heyne was the head of the university library. This was the most important German library of his time, for which he bought many travel reports, if he had not already reviewed them in one

York and London, 1990) 176-82; M. Vöhler, 'Christian Gottlob Heyne und das Studium des Altertums in Deutschland', in G.W. Most (ed.), *Disciplining Classics - Altertumswissenschaft als Beruf* (Göttingen, 2002) 39-54; S. Fornaro, *I Greci senza lumi. L'antropologia della Grecia antica in Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729-1812) e nel suo tempo* = Nachr. Ak. Wiss. Göttingen, I. Philol.–Hist. Kl. 2004, Nr. 5; M. Heidenreich, *Christian Gottlob Heyne und die alte Geschichte* (Munich and Leipzig, 2006). For his bibliography see now F.-A. Haase, *Christian Gottlob Heyne (1729 - 1812). Bibliographie zu Leben und Werk. Gedruckte Veröffentlichungen. Zeitgenössische Schriften zu seiner Rezeption. Forschungsliteratur* (Heidelberg, 2002).
[11] C.G. Heyne, *Apollodori bibliothecae libri tres et fragmenta* (Göttingen, 1783) xxix: '*fabulas seu quo vocabulo lubentius utor, mythos*'.
[12] For Herder and myth see V. Verra, *Mito, revelazione e filosofia in J.G. Herder e nel suo tempo* (Milaan, 1966); U. Faust, *Mythologien und Religionen des Ostens bei Johann Gottfried Herder* (Münster, 1977).
[13] E.-A. Horstmann, 'Mythologie und Altertumswissenschaft. Der Mythosbegriff bei Christian Gottlob Heyne', *Arch. f. Begriffsgesch.* 16 (1972) 60-85; G. Chiarini, 'Ch.G. Heyne e gli inizi dello studio scientifico della mythologia', *Lares* 55 (1989) 317-31 and, especially, F. Graf, 'Die Entstehung des Mythosbegriffs bei Christian Gottlob Heyne', in idem (ed.), *Mythos in mythenloser Gesellschaft. Das Paradigma Roms* (Stuttgart, 1993) 284-94. Heyne had been influenced by Vico in his younger years, cf. G. D'Alessandro, 'Studi e ricerche: Vico e Heyne: percorsi di una recezione', *Giornale critico della filosofia Italiana* 19 (1999) 372-98 and 'L'influenza di Vico in Heyne e nella scuola storico-mitologica di Gottinga', in G. Cacciatore *et al.* (eds.), *La filosofia pratica tra metafisica ed antropologia nell'età di Wolff e Vico* (Naples, 1999) 157-204.
[14] C.G. Heyne, '*Sermonis mythici sive symbolici interpretatio ad causas et rationes ductasque inde regulas revocata*', in *Commentationes Societatis Regiae Scientiarum Gottingensis recentiores*, nov. ser. 16 (1807) 285-323 at 290: '*mythi proprio nomine tantum sunt vetustissimarum aetatum a necessitate et egestate sermonis prognati*'.

of his many contributions to the *Göttingischen Gelehrten Anzeigen*.[15] From 1772, Herder also came regularly to Göttingen to work in the library and in this way developed his friendship with Heyne.[16] The Russian exploration of Siberia, in which German scholars played an important role, and the German *Kleinstaaterei* stimulated this interest in other peoples.[17] Interest in myth as prehistory, then, can hardly be separated from the process of nation- and state-building that accelerated considerably at the end of the eighteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, these ideas of Heyne – myth as history, as product of a specific people, as explanation of nature – would dominate the field of mythological studies: the first two aspects mainly in the thought of Carl Otfried Müller (1797-1840) and the third in that of Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900). In 1825, Carl Otfried Müller published a study of Greek mythology with the programmatic, Kantian title *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie*. Following Herder, he stressed that myth was the reflection of the national (= tribal) identity ('Mythos als Stammsage') and of different historical periods.[18] Thus the myths of Demeter belonged to the world of the prehistoric peasants, whereas those of Zeus and the Olympians were typical of the feudal, Homeric way of life. Müller's interest was mainly historical with little attention to the intellectual content of myth. For him, myth was primarily an important instrument to penetrate the darkness of Greek tribal prehistory. This interest was shared by his contemporaries, and in Germany Müller's influence would last well until the end of the nineteenth century.[19]

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[15] G. Jefcoate, 'Christian Gottlob Heyne and the University Library at Göttingen as "Universalbibliothek" of the Eighteenth Century', *Library History* 14 (1998) 111-16.

[16] R. Smend, *Bibel Theologie Universität* (Göttingen, 1997) 108-34 ('Herder und Göttingen'); J. Stagl, 'Rationalism and Irrationalism in Early German Ethnology. The Controversy between Schlözer and Herder, 1772-73', *Anthropos* 93 (1998) 521-36 at 516-25.

[17] H.F. Vermeulen, 'Ethnographie und Ethnologie in Mittel- und Osteuropa. Völker-Beschreibung und Völkerkunde in Russland, Deutschland und Österreich (1740-1845)', in E. Donnert (ed.), *Europa in der Frühen Neuzeit* VI (Keulen, 2002) 387-409.

[18] He was followed by another Müller, cf. Heinrich Dietrich Müller (1823-1893), *Mythologie der griechischen Stämme*, 2 vols (Göttingen, 1857-1869). For a critical discussion of the Müllers and others of their ilk see O. Gruppe, *Die griechischen Culte und Mythen in ihren Beziehungen zu den orientalischen Religionen* I [no more appeared] (Leipzig, 1887) 139-51. The interest in the tribal origin of Greek myth has made a comeback in the stimulating study of K. Dowden, *Death of the Maiden* (London, 1989).

[19] On Müller see most recently A. Momigliano, *Settimo contributo alla storia degli studi classci e del mondo antico* (Rome, 1984) 271-86; W. Unte, 'Karl Otfried Müller', in Briggs and Calder, *Classical Scholarship*, 310-20; W. Unte and H. Rohlfing, *Quellen für eine Biographie Karl Otfried Müllers (1797-1840)* (Hildesheim, 1997); W.M. Calder III en R. Schlesier (eds.), *Zwischen Rationalismus und*

In England, interest focused less on the prehistory of Greece and more on classical Greece itself as the cradle of civilisation.[20] Increasing colonial expansion made the relationship between the white, 'civilised' race and the coloured 'savages' more and more problematic, and the industrial revolution had greatly enlarged the contrast between modern urban life and that of the peasants and the Celtic periphery. It is against this background that we have to locate the success of Friedrich Max Müller, whose editorship of the *Rig-Veda* had led to a university career in Oxford. Max Müller had joined the boisterous choir of searchers for the origin of civilisation by propagating the (Indo-European) 'Aryans' as the primitive ancestors of the so civilised Western Europeans. Using etymologies, especially, he reconstructed an 'Aryan' culture and mythology that was built on the natural phenomena, in particular the 'solar drama'. Max Müller's theories gained in credibility through the fact that nature allegory does indeed occupy a prominent place in the *Veda*, and contemporary philology had succeeded in proving that Greek Zeus (Sanskrit: Dyaus) was based on the root **dyu*, 'to shine'.[21] However, the newer insights in comparative linguistics of the so-called *Junggrammatiker* (after 1878), who strongly stressed the regularities of sound shifts, demolished the foundation of many of the etymologies of Max Müller and his followers.[22] Moreover, Max Müller had stretched his allegorising of nature to such an extent that he even explained Achilles and Siegfried as representations of the sun. This absurdity let one of his more positivistic critcs observe that mythology evidently was no more than 'highly figurative conversation about the weather'.[23]

Yet the association between mythology and nature remained popular until the 1960s. The reason for this stagnation is not easy to explain but probably should be connected with the rise of Malinowskian functionalism.[24] This put an end to the evolutionistic approach in

Romantik. Karl Otfried Müller und die antike Kultur (Hildesheim, 1998); W.M. Calder III *et al.*, *Teaching the English Wissenschaft. The Letters of Sir George Cornewall Lewis to Karl Otfried Müller (1828-1839)* (Hildesheim, 2002).

[20] R. Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford, 1980); F.M. Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (New Haven and London, 1981).

[21] On Müller see now G.W. Stocking Jr, *Victorian Anthropolgy* (New York and London, 1987) 56-62; H.-J. Klimkeit, 'Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900)', in A. Michaels (ed.), *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft* (Munich, 1997) 28-40, and the monumental study of L.P. van den Bosch, *Friedrich Max Müller* (Leiden, 2002).

[22] E. Einhauser, *Die Junggrammatiker. Ein Problem für die Sprachwissenschaftsgeschichts-schreibung* (Trier, 1989).

[23] L.R. Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* I (Oxford, 1896) 9.

[24] On Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942) and his influence see most recently E. Gellner, *Language*

anthropology and thus to the widespread interest in the interpretation of Greek mythology as an early stage of Western civilisation; the First World War was a watershed as in so may other areas of Western European life. At the same time, the comparative approach to Greek mythology also gradually disappeared from fashion due to the influence of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1848-1931), the scholar who dominated the classical world from 1900 to 1930 and who disliked all interpretations that were not grounded in Greece itself.[25] We may perhaps even say that a generation that has no interest in comparative approaches is not interested in mythology either.

What has the revival of interest in Greek mythology in the 1960s contributed to a better understanding of Greek myth? I would like to note the following points:

1. Myth is part of a cultural tradition, but many Greek myths are relatively late, since only a few can be proved to go back to Indo-European times.[26] Moreover, history and anthropology have gradually realised that many traditions are often not old but recent inventions.[27] Myth has *to look* old rather than *to be* old. It could hardly be otherwise, as the public performance of myths presupposed their acceptability. In other words, myths had to be continuously adapted to new social and political circumstances: Greek mythology was basically an open-ended, ever changing system.[28]

2. In addition to being or looking traditional, myth also had to be told or sung in different communities or in front of varying audiences. This suggests that myth could cross national and cultural borders. And indeed, the studies of Walter Burkert and Martin West have shown that from the eighth century BC onwards Greece derived a number of myths and mythical themes from the Ancient Near East, the best known perhaps being the myth of Kronos and the Titans (§ 3) and the myth of the Flood.[29]

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and solitude: Wittgenstein, Malinowski, and the Habsburg dilemma (Cambridge, 1998); M.W. Young, *Malinowski: odyssey of an anthropologist, 1884-1920* (New Haven and London, 2004).

[25] For Wilamowitz's ideas on Greek religion see A. Henrichs, 'Der "Der Glaube der Hellenen": Religionsgeschichte als Glaubensbekenntnis und Kulturkritik', in W.M. Calder III *et al.* (eds.), *Wilamowitz nach 50 Jahren* (Darmstadt, 1985) 263-305.

[26] See the discussion in Bremmer, *Greek Religion* (Oxford, 2003³) 57.

[27] See the still inspiring studies by E. Hobsbawn and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

[28] For a full discussion see Bremmer, 'What is a Greek Myth?', in Bremmer, *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London, 1988²) 1-9.

[29] Burkert: *The Orientalizing Revolution* (Cambridge Mass., 1992); *Kleine Schriften II: Orientalia* (Göttingen, 2003) and *Die Griechen und der Orient* (Munich, 2003). M.L. West: *The East Face of*

3. Myth has an explanatory and normative function. It is in this area that the school of Jean-Pierre Vernant, especially, has reached many interesting results. Greek myths illustrate the limits of acceptable male and female behaviour, such as the disastrous consequences of Helen's leaving of her husband for Paris or Heracles' bringing a concubine into his and Deianira's home. But it is not just men and women that are the subject of myth's reflection. Myth can also illustrate what values were attached to animals, plants or youths,[30] or to rivers and mountains.[31] Myth can even show how cities schemed to make themselves more important by 'hijacking' Hellenic myths (§ 3) or how dynasties tried to shore up their crumbling positions.[32]

4. Myth is not a repository of long-time history. Recent investigations have demonstrated that oral tradition remembers events only for a short period of time.[33] This does not mean that myth stood outside history. On the contrary, myth is the product of a specific person, time and place, even though we often can no longer reconstruct the circumstances of its production, performance and transmission. Yet this does not mean that myth is the one-to-one reflection of a certain community. Myth can present an idealised image, but it can also falsify reality. It can represent or misrepresent the views of certain social classes and serve to legitimate certain claims. In short, there is no direct line from myth to reality or from myth to ritual, as we will see momentarily.

2. *Ritual*

In a stimulating study Claude Calame has challenged the appropriateness of the concept of

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Helikon (Oxford 1997), to be read with the observations by K. Dowden, 'West on the East: Martin West's *East Face of Helicon* and its forerunners', *J. Hell. Stud.* 121 (2001) 167-75 and N. Wasserman, *Scripta Classica Israelitica* 20 (2001) 261-7. Flood: Bremmer, 'Near Eastern and Native Traditions in Apollodorus' Account of the Flood', in F. García Martínez and G. Luttikhuizen (eds.), *Interpretations of the Flood* (Leiden, 1998) 39-55.

[30] Animals: R. Buxton, 'Wolves and Werewolves in Greek Thought', in Bremmer, *Interpretations of Greek Mythology*, 60-79. Plants: M. Detienne, *Les jardins d'Adonis* (Paris, 1972). Youths: P. Vidal-Naquet, *Le chasseur noir* (Paris, 1983²).

[31] For these and other areas of Greek life see K. Dowden, *The Uses of Greek Mythology* (London and New York, 1992); R. Buxton, *Imaginary Greece* (Cambridge, 1994).

[32] See, for example, Bremmer, 'Myth and History in the Foundation of Cyrene', in P. Azara *et al.* (eds.), *Mites de fundació de ciutats al món antic (Mesopotàmia, Grècia i Roma)* (Barcelona, 2001) 155-63; L. Gasperini, 'Cultos de héroes fundadores: Batos en Oriente, Taras en Occidente', *Gerión* 16 (1998) 143-60.

[33] For Greece see R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition & Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge, 1989).

'ritual' for ancient Greece. As he rightly points out, the Greeks did not have one specific term for our 'ritual'. In Homer we already find the term *heortê*, although this does not include wedding and funeral rites, and somewhat later we find terms like *dromenon, teletê* and *mustêrion*, although these are all used in different contexts. In short, the Greeks lacked the equivalent of our 'ritual'.[34] However, also the modern concept of ritual is not very old, since interest in ritual started to rise in Western Europe only in the 1870s with the appearance of the books by Wilhelm Mannhardt (1831-1880) on the peasant customs of Western Europe.[35] Within a few decades this interest superseded the attention to myth in the study of ancient and modern religons, and it transformed the meaning of the term 'ritual' itself.[36] Whereas the earlier nineteenth century used ritual in the meaning of liturgy for a religious service, around 1890 ritual acquired the meaning of 'script for behaviour'. We can now also better trace the genealogy of this phenomenon, which becomes manifest for us in England in 1888. That is when Paper 2 of the Cambridge Classical Tripos carried the title 'Mythology and Ritual' and asked 'How far is it possible to distinguish between the religious rituals of the Homeric poems, and those of historical Greece?'[37] In the next two years there appeared three books by authors who were all connected to the University of Cambridge: Robertson Smith's *Lectures on the religion of the Semites* (1889), Frazer's *Golden Bough* (1890) and Jane Harrison's *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens* (1890). It now seems reasonably clear that Jane Harrison (1850-1928)[38] depended on William Robertson Smith (1846-1894),[39] who in turn was

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[34] C. Calame, '"Mythe" et "rite" en Grèce: des catégories indigènes?', *Kernos* 4 (1991), 179-204 at 196-204.

[35] W. Mannhardt, *Wald- und Feldkulte*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1875-77), cf. T. Tybjerg, 'Wilhelm Mannhardt - A Pioneer in the Study of Rituals', in T. Ahlbäck (ed.), *The problem of Ritual* (Stockholm, 1993) 27-37; H. Kippenberg, *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age* (Princeton and Oxford, 2002) 81-7.

[36] For a full discussion of the development of the term 'ritual' see my ''Religion', 'Ritual' and the Opposition 'Sacred vs. Profane': Notes Towards a Terminological 'Genealogy',' in F. Graf (ed.), *Ansichten griechischer Rituale. Festschrift für Walter Burkert* (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1998) 9-32 at 14-24; see also T. Assad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore and London, 1993) 55-79 (1988[1]); B. Boudewijnse, 'The conceptualization of ritual. A history of its problematic aspects', *Jaarboek voor Liturgie-onderzoek* 11 (1995) 31-56 and 'British Roots of the Concept of Ritual', in A.L. Molendijk and P. Pels (eds.), *Religion in the Making. The Emergence of the Sciences of Religion* (Leiden, 1998) 277-95.

[37] M. Beard, *The Invention of Jane Harrison* (Cambridge Mass., 2000) 125-7.

[38] On Harrison see most recently M. Demoor, 'Portret van de antropologe als een jonge vrouw: Jane Ellen Harrisons recensies voor The Athenaeum', *Tijdschrift voor geschiedenis* 112 (1999) 191-201; M. Beard, *Invention of Jane Harrison*, to be read with the review of W.M. Calder III, *Gnomon* 75

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influenced by James George Frazer (1854-1941),[40] who had been one of the examiners of the Tripos (cf. above).[41] Yet it is also clear that in this respect Robertson Smith eventually proved to be the most important scholar, since his writings influenced Freud as well as Durkheim and his group.[42]

The Cambridge group also influenced the influential German historian of religion Hermann Usener (1834-1905) and his son-in-law Albrecht Dieterich (1866-1908).[43] Through them, the interest in ritual and agrarian customs became the most important keys in unlocking the secrets of Greek ritual in Germany. This replacement of myth by ritual was consolidated by Martin P. Nilsson (1874-1967), a Swedish farmer's son, who had been strongly influenced by Mannhardt. His erudition and longevity (an often neglected factor in the history of scholarship) consolidated the long neglect of myth, and he canonised the agrarian interpretation of ritual in

(2003) 187-189; U. Brunotte, 'Das Ritual als Medium "göttlicher Gemeinschaft". Die Entdeckung des Sozialen bei Robertson Smith und Jane Ellen Harrison', in E. Fischer-Lichte (ed.), *Wahrnehmung und Medialität* (Tübingen and Basel, 2001) 85-102; R. Ackerman, 'Jane Ellen Harrison: By Myth Begotten', *Religion* 31 (2001) 67-74; A. Robinson, *The Life and Work of Jane Ellen Harrison* (Oxford, 2002), cf. the review by R. Ackerman, *Religion* 33 (2003) 95-???.
[39] See most recently W. Johnstone (ed.), *William Robertson Smith. Essays in Reassessment* (Sheffield, 1995); H.G. Kippenberg, 'William Robertson Smith (1846-1894)', in Michaels, *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft*, 60-76. For his influence on Harrison see Bremmer, 'Gerardus van der Leeuw and Jane Ellen Harrison', in H.G. Kippenberg and B. Luchesi (eds.), *Religionswissenschaft und Kulturkritik* (Marburg, 1991) 237-41 at 238; R. Schlesier, *Kulte, Mythen und Gelehrte. Anthropologie der Antike seit 1800* (Frankfurt, 1994) 147f.
[40] For Frazer see most recently R. Ackerman, *J.G. Frazer: his life and work*, Cambridge, 1987; G. Lienhardt, 'Frazer's Anthropology: Science and Sensibility', *J. Anthrop. Soc. Oxford* 24 (1993) 1-12; G.W. Stocking, *After Tylor* (Madison, 1995) 126-51; Bremmer, 'James George Frazer en The Golden Bough', *Hermeneus* 68 (1996) 212-21; H. Wissman, 'James George Frazer (1854-1941)', in Michaels, *Klassiker der Religionswissenschaft*, 76-89; F. Rosa, 'À Frazer ce qui est de Frazer', *Archives européennes de sociologie* 38 (1997) 301-10; G.W. Stocking, *Delimiting Anthropology* (Madison, 2001) 147-61 ('Outcast from the Islands: Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, and Modern Anthropology').
[41] For a full discussion of the development of the term 'ritual' see Bremmer, ''Religion', 'Ritual' and the Opposition 'Sacred vs. Profane',' 14-24.
[42] Bremmer, ''Religion', 'Ritual' and the Opposition 'Sacred vs. Profane',' 19; G. Booth, 'The Fruits of Sacrifice: Sigmund Freud and William Robertson Smith', *The Expository Times* 113 (2002) 258-63; H. Kippenberg, *Discovering Religious History in the Modern Age* (Princeton, 2002) 143-45.
[43] A. Wessels, *Ursprungszauber: zur Rezeption von Hermann Useners Lehre von der religiösen Begriffsbildung* (Berlin and New York, 2003) 7-95 at 83-5. For Usener see also Briggs and Calder, *Classical Scholarship*, 462-78 (Bremmer); D. Ehlers (ed.), *Hermann Diels, Hermann Usener, Eduard Zeller: Briefwechsel,* 2 vols (Berlin, 1992). For Dieterich see the biography by R. Wünsch in A. Dieterich, *Kleine Schriften* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1911) ix-xlii; F. Pfister, 'Albrecht Dieterichs Wirken in der Religionswissenschaft', *Arch. Rel. Wiss.* 35 (1938) 180-5; H.D. Betz, *The "Mithras" Liturgy* (Tübingen, 2003) 14-26; Wessels, *Ursprungszauber*, 96-128.

his *Handbuch der griechischen Religion* (1944[1], 1967[3]), the authoritative handbook of Greek religion in the middle of the twentieth century.[44]

A new beginning was made only in the early 1970s with Walter Burkert's *Homo necans* (1972), a study that was so innovative that no classical journal dared to review the first German edition. In the course of this and other studies Burkert has analysed a great number of rituals with a structuralist and functionalist approach. He has convincingly demonstrated that most Greek rituals work with certain oppositions, such as light/dark, day/night, joy/sadness, kosmos/chaos, man/woman and, if less convincingly, that all focus on sacrifice. Burkert's most brilliant pupil, Fritz Graf (1944-), largely followed this structuralist approach in his study of the cults of Northen Ionia, but his main key is the concept of the 'Ausnahmeritual', highlighting the way in which, in many Greek rituals, the social and religious norms are temporarily *reversed*. Unlike Burkert, and undoubtedly in reaction to him, he allows sacrifice virtually no role in his analyses.[45]

In a separate contribution, Burkert himself has also discussed the nature and goals of ritual.[46] In a Durkheimian key he sees the goal of rituals in their integrating effects. Its role, according to Burkert, is especially demonstrative: ritual is 'action redirected for demonstration'. It is instructive that he also points to the interest of ethology. For example, the phallic presentation of apes in order to demonstrate their manliness is reflected in the statues of Hermes with an erected penis at borders, just like sacrifical libation eventually derives from animal acts to demarcate territories. However helpful the first example may be, it is clear that ethology is not a key that unlocks many ritual doors. It is even less suitable to help to understand larger rituals, although Burkert has also tried to apply his insights to such elaborate rituals like initiation by the introduction of the notion of 'program of action' (§ 3).

In his analysis of ritual Burkert displays a certain one-sidedness, as was the case in his analysis of myth. Ritual is richer than just being 'demonstrative'. It has psychological, sociological and even legal aspects. On top of that, ritual does not always serve to promote the integration of a community. On the contrary, it is precisely the 'rites of reversal' that can result

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[44] Nilsson: Briggs and Calder, *Classical Scholarship*, 335-40 (J. Mejer).
[45] F. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte* (Rome, 1985), which is, with Burkert's *Homo necans*, the best study of Greek rituals.
[46] W. Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1979) 35-58.

in rebellion and revolution, as ancient and modern times frequently have demonstrated.[47] And as is the case with Burkert's discussion of myth, one can also note in his discussion of ritual a certain preference for origins and the traditional. Yet it also pays to look at the other side of the coin. As we have to reconstruct ancient rituals nearly always on the basis of fragmentary data, which usually derive from varying times and places, we create the illusion of ritual being something unchangable. However, rituals too continuously have to adapt to the changing circumstances of their performance. To obtain the legitimating effects of tradition, ritual has to look traditional, but it need not necessarily be so.

3. *Myth and ritual*

The rise of interest in myth and ritual in the second half of the nineteenth century naturally also posed the question of their relationship. At first, myth was primary, but the new interest in ritual swung the scales and ritual soon obtained the upper hand.[48] The most influential figure in this respect was perhaps Jane Harrison, who focussed more than Robertson Smith and Frazer on Greek religion. In her *Themis* (1912) she postulated three possibilities, which can be summarized as follows:

      1. Myth arises from ritual

      2. Myth is the scenario of a dramatic ritual

      3. Myth and ritual arise *pari passu*.[49]

Let us look at all three possibilities:

(1) The first was espoused, especially, by the so-called Cambridge ritualists.[50] As the classical establishment lost its interest in the irrational sides of Greek ritual after the First World War and began to find the comparisons with 'primitive' peoples less and less acceptable, this approach no longer found many adherents. In fact, there are very few myths that reflect ritual on a one-to-

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[47] See the examples in J.N. Bremmer and N.M. Horsfall, *Roman Myth and Mythography* (London, 1987) 86f.

[48] See the excellent survey by H.S. Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion* II: *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual* (Leiden, 1993) 15-88, to which I am indebted; add now W. Burkert, 'Mythos and Ritual: im Wechselwind der Moderne', in H.F.J. Horstmannshoff *et al.* (eds.), *Kykeon. Studies in honor of H. S. Versnel* (Leiden, 2002) 1-22.

[49] Versnel, *Inconsistencies*, 23-29.

[50] For this group of scholars see most recently W.M. Calder III (ed.), *The Cambridge Ritualists Reconsidered* (Atlanta, 1991); R.A. Segal (ed.), *The Myth and Ritual Theory* (Oxford, 1998); F.J. Korom, 'Ritualistische Theorie', in R.W. Brednich (ed.), *Enzyklopädie des Märchens* 11 (Berlin and

one basis, and it is indeed hard to see what such an identical mirroring would actually add. This should not exclude the possibility that myth sometimes reflects part of the ritual. For example, it is very clear that when Demeter asks for a drink of meal, water and mint in the *Hymn to Demeter* (206-10), this obviously reflects the Eleusinian *kykeôn*, the drink with which the Eleusinian initiates ended their fasting.

The concentration on the immediate relationship between myth and ritual obscures the fact that myths were sometimes combined with rituals that, originally, had no connection with them whatsoever. A good example is the myth of Iphigeneia. Originally, Greek myth told that Iphigeneia had been sacrificed in Aulis. However, the small hamlet of Brauron in Attica 'hijacked' the myth and adapted it to its local ritual. It told that Agamemnon had sacrificed his daughter in Brauron and that she had been replaced by a bear not a deer. Evidently, Brauron had adapted the myth to local circumstances where smaller girls acted out a ritual in which they were called 'bears' and priests officiated with bear masks.[51] Such appropriations of pan-hellenic myths for local rituals were not unusual and deserve more attention than they have received so far.[52]

(2) The idea of the myth as a scenario for the ritual was expecially prominent in the so-called *Myth and Ritual School*, a movement that was popular from the 1930s until the 1960s and that concentrated on mythical and ritual patterns in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament. The members of this 'school' mainly came from England (Samuel Henry Hooke [1874-1968], Edwin Oliver James [1886-1972]) and Scandinavia (Ivan Engnell [1906-1964], Geo Widengren [1907-1995]), and saw myth and ritual as a tangled ball. The title of the relevant section of one of Widengren's books is a good illustration of this vision: 'Der Mythus als Ritualtext'. This close association went so far that the 'school' even thought that a no longer attested ritual could be reconstructed from the corresponding myth.[53] Unfortunately, it can easily be demonstrated that this is not the case, as I will illustrate with two myths, those of the Cretan Leukippos and of

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New York, 2004) 724-31.

[51] See J.N. Bremmer, 'Sacrificing a Child in Ancient Greece: the case of Iphigeneia', in E. Noort and E.J.C. Tigchelaar (eds.), *The Sacrifice of Isaac* (Leiden, 2001) 21-43; G. Ekroth, 'Inventing Iphigeneia? On Euripides and the Cultic Construction of Brauron', *Kernos* 16 (2003) 59-118.

[52] For other examples see F. Graf, 'Das Götterbildnis aus dem Taurerland', *Antike Welt* 10 (1979) 33-41; A. Lardinois, 'Greek Myths for Athenian Rituals', *GRBS* 33 (1992) 313-27.

[53] G. Widengren, *Religionsphänomenologie* (Berlin, 1969) 150-7.

the Lemnian women, of which the last one will bring us to our third possibility.[54]

Let us start with the Cretan myth. In the city of Phaistos, Lampros ordered his pregnant wife, Galateia, to expose her child if it was a daughter. However, when she gave birth to a daughter, she pitied the baby, raised him as a boy and called him Leukippos. When the 'boy' matured, his mother feared discovery of her deceit and went to the temple of Leto. Here she begged the goddess to transform the girl into a real boy. The goddes gave in and, as our source concludes, the people of Phaistos still 'sacrifice to Leto Phytia, who caused male genitals to sprout on the girl. And they call the festival Ekdysia (literally "Undressing"), as 'the girl' put off the *peplos*. And it is customary at the wedding to lie next to the statue of Leukippos.'

Our source is the prose paraphrase by Antoninus Liberalis (17) of Nicander's *Metamorphoses* (fr. 45 Gow-Schofield). Nicander most likely worked in the middle of the third century BC and his information therefore will go back to at least early Hellenistic times, if not earlier.[55] Ovid told the same myth in his *Metamorphoses* (9.666-797), but he changed the names of the parents, substituted Isis for Leto and concentrated on the psychological factors.[56] His version, then, is much further removed from the institutional realities of Phaestos than Nicander's version and as such an excellent illustration of the fluidity of myth.

The myth of Leukippos has fascinated historians of Greek religion for a long time, and about a century ago Nilsson called it already 'eines der schwierigsten Kapitel der griechischen Religionsgeschichte'.[57] Recent studies waver between an initiatory and a fertility interpretation.[58] The latter takes its point of departure in the concluding notice that it is customary in Phaestos to lie down in front of the statue of Leukippos before marriage. However, the text clearly distinguishes between the first part that connects the myth to a festival and the

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[54] See the detailed discussion by Versnel, *Inconsistencies*, 32-7.

[55] For Nicander's date see now A. Cameron, *Callimachus and His Critics* (Princeton, 1995) 300; M. Fantuzzi, 'Nikandros [4]', *Der Neue Pauly* 8 (2000) 898-900. For the place of the myth in Nicander's poem see A. Cameron, *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* (New York, 2004) 300f.

[56] D.Z. Nikitas, 'Zur Leukipposgeschichte', *Hellenica* 33 (1981) 14-29; much better, F. Graf, 'Ovide, les Métamorphoses et la veracité du mythe', in C. Calame (ed.), *Métamorphoses du mythe en Grèce antique* (Geneva, 1988) 57-70 at 58-61.

[57] M.P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste* (Leipzig, 1906) 370.

[58] K. Dowden, *Death and the Maiden* (London and New York, 1989) 62-68; D. Leitao, 'The Perils of Leukippos: Initiatory Transvestism and Male Gender Ideology in the Ekdusia at Phaistos', *Class. Ant.* 14 (1995) 130-63 and 'Leukippos', *Der Neue Pauly* 7 (1999) 105-6; K. Waldner, *Geburt und Hochzeit des Kriegers* (Berlin and New York, 2000) 222-42; K. Sporn, *Heiligtümer und Kulte Kretas in klassischer und hellenistischer Zeit* (Heidelberg, 2002) 200f.

second part that connects Leukippos to a pre-marital ritual. That is why we start with the initiatory approach. There can indeed be little doubt that the myth reflects an initiatory theme. In Crete, Leto was strongly connected with the community as a whole, and she had even given her name to an island, a city, a quarter of Gortyn and a phyle.[59] Her epithet Phytia, which closely resembles that of Poseidon Phytalmios who was connected to the growing up of boys, suggests that she was connected with the growing up of the youths.[60] Yet the myth is also connected with a festival, namely the Ekdysia. When and why did this festival take place?

As it happens, we are quite well informed about Cretan education. At the age of seventeen, boys left their parental home to join an *agela*, the Cretan initiatory band. Until that moment the boys were called 'obscure ones' (*skotioi*), as they still lived in the women's quarters. Once they had joined the *agela*, they could wear only one dress, summer and winter alike.[61] Apparently, each year of their three-year initiatory period in the *agela* had a different name, as in Dreros and other cities they were called *panazôstoi*, *azôstoi* and *ekdyomenoi* before they were declared adult.[62] Now the first two terms mean 'completely without a girdle' and 'without a girdle',[63] and clearly signify the first two years, whereas the *ekdyomenoi* were the last-year cohort that stood on the brink of adulthood.[64] As *ekdyô* is often associated with the stripping of clothes and the 'graduation' festival in Lyttus was called Periblêmaia or 'Feast of putting on clothes',[65] the Ekdysia referred most likely to the festival where the novices stripped off their one dress before entering into their final stage of initiation. As the boys collectively married after their leaving of the *agela*,[66] the wedding ritual naturally followed upon the

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[59] Sporn, *Heiligtümer und Kulte Kretas*, 330f.

[60] For the connection of Poseidon Phytalmios and Leto with initiation see Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 105, 208.

[61] Seventeen: Hsch. ɨ 5702. *Skotioi*: *IC* IV (Gortyn).372.10; Ar. Byz. fr. 233B Slater; Schol. E. *Alc.* 989; Hsch. ɨ 5701; C.J. Ruijgh, *L'element achéen dans la langue épique* (Diss. Amsterdam, 1957) 108. One dress: Aristotle F 374.14 Rose.

[62] *Panazôstoi*: *Ins. Cret.* I.ix (Dreros).1 A.11f. *Azôstoi*: *I. Cret.* I.ix (Dreros).I.D 140-1, cf. Hsch. *a* 1487, 3682 Latte. *Ekdyomenoi*: *Ins. Cret.* I.ix (Dreros).1.99-100; I.xix (Malla).1.17-8; II.v (Axos).24.7, 9; IV (Gortyn).16.2.

[63] For the wearing of a girdle by the Cretan adult males see E. Schwyzer, *Kleine Schriften* (Innsbruck, 1983) 810-16 (not always persuasive).

[64] A. Chaniotis, *Die Verträge zwischen kretischen Poleis in der hellenistischen Zeit* (Stuttgart, 1996) 199.

[65] *Ins. Cret.* I.xix (Malla).1.21; for Cretan 'graduation' festivals see A. Brelich, *Paides e parthenoi* (Rome, 1969) 199-201; Chaniotis, *Verträge*, 124-6.

[66] Ephoros *FGrH* 70 F 149 (= Strabo 10.4.20).

transition into male adulthood.

Yet the myth does not reflect Cretan reality and Crete's historical initiation in every detail. It mentions Leukippos only but neglects the fellow members of his *agela*. Moreover, even if boys grew slower in olden times,[67] their male genitals must have been long present before they got married. The explanation of the myth of the change of clothes cannot be true either, since the 'girl' was already raised like a boy and thus cannot have taken off a *peplos*, a woman's piece of cloth. In fact, there is not a single Cretan source that mentions initiatory transvestism, although this occurs in the myth of Leukippos and Daphe,[68] and is well attested as a part of Greek male initiation.[69] It therefore looks very much as if Nicander already presented a version of the myth that was rather far removed from Cretan initiatory ritual and was probably influenced by Greek myths about other Leukippoi – if Antoninus Liberalis did not make some mistakes in summarising his source. Without further information, it is impossible to reconstruct the concomitant festival in a more satisfactory manner. In any case, it is clear that in this case there is no straight line from the myth to the ritual.

This is also apparent in our second example. In 1970, Burkert published an innovative study of a ritual that was celebrated yearly on Lemnos and that clearly reflects a New Year festival.[70] Each year the Lemnians extinguished their fires during nine days. During this period, they sacrificed to the chthonic gods, and women chewed garlic to keep their men away. After the fire-less period, a ship arrived from Delos to kindle new fire and thus to restore the normal social order. According to the corresponding myth, Aphrodite had penalised the Lemnian women so that they developed a foul smell. Understandably, their husbands looked therefore to their Thracian slave-girls for sexual comfort. In reaction, the women murdered their husbands except for the king, who could escape with the help of his daughter Hypsipyle. This celibate

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[67] See the fascinating studies of H. Moller, 'The Accelerated Development of Youth: Beard Growth as a Biological Marker', *Comp. Studies Soc. and Hist*. 29 (1980) 748-762 and 'Voice Change in Human Biological Development', *J. Interdisc. Hist.* 16 (1985-6) 239-253.

[68] Paus. 8.20.2-4; Parthenius 15 (with Lightfoot *ad loc*.); Dowden, *Death and the Maiden*, 66. For the other Leukippoi see V. Lamprinoudakis *et al*., 'Leukippos I-III', *LIMC* VIII.1 (1997) 775-7.

[69] Bremmer, 'Transvestite Dionysos', *The Bucknell Review* 43 (1999) 183-200; F. Gherchanoc, 'Les atours féminins des hommes: quelques représentations du masculin-féminin dans le monde grec antique. Entre initiation, ruse, séduction et grotesque, surpuissance et déchéance', *Revue Historique* 127 (2003) 739-90.

[70] W. Burkert, 'Jason, Hypsipyle and New Fire at Lemnos: A Study in Myth and Ritual', *CQ* 20 (1970), 1-16, reprinted with a few addenda in R. Buxton, *Oxford Readings in Greek Religion* (Oxford, 2000) 227-49; German translation in W. Burkert, *Wilder Ursprung* (Berlin, 1990) 60-76.

period lasted until the Argonauts landed on Lemnos on their return from capturing the Golden Fleece. They were much welcomed by the women in a rather licentious festival and thus the normal sexual (and social!) order was restored again.[71]

When we now look at the relation between this myth and ritual, we see that the myth once again concentrates on one aspect of the ritual only, viz. the separation of the women from the men. In fact, the fire that was perhaps the focus of the ritual is not mentioned in the myth at all! Evidently, the Lemnians thought the relationship with their women a much more intriguing, if not threatening, theme. The conclusion must therefore be that in this case myth is not the 'plot' of the ritual, as Burkert suggests, since the myth leaves out an important part of the ritual. Moreover, the myth strongly exaggerates: in the ritual the women keep their males at a distance by their foul smell, but in the myth they murder them.

Although Burkert points to the close relationship between myth and ritual in this complex, he suggests that the question regarding the priority 'transcends philology, since both myth and ritual were established well before the invention of writing'.[72] This is indeed the case, but we are not talking here about primeval times but about the historical period. And in the eigth century BC when the myth must have originated – the *Iliad* (VII.467-9; XXIII.747) already knows Euneos, the son of Jason and Hypsipyle – Lemnos was populated by non-Greek speaking inhabitants, the *barbarophônoi* Sintians (*Od*. 8.294), who will not have learned their New Year rituals from the Greeks. On the other hand, the myth of Jason and his Argonauts is typically Greek. It is thus reasonable to conclude that the ritual was already practised before it was associated with the myth of the Argonauts.[73]

(3) In a later study Burkert returned to the problem of the relationship between myth and ritual with a much more provocative answer. His new position can perhaps be best illustrated by his study of a type of story that is analysed by Vladimir Propp in his well-known study of the

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[71] For such licentious festivals see now my 'Anaphe, Aeschrology and Apollo Aigletes', in A. Harder and M. Cuypers (eds.), *Beginning from Apollo* (Leuven, 2005).

[72] Burkert, 'Jason', 14 = Buxton, *Oxford Readings*, 245. The same point was already made, more or less, by K.O. Müller, *Prolegomena zu einer wissenschaftlichen Mythologie* (Göttingen 1825), 257: 'Beide (myths and symbols) müssen gleich von Anfang an mit dem Götterglauben da gewesen sein … So ist in seinem Entstehen schon der Cultus mit dem Mythus aufs innigste verbunden'.

[73] For the myth of the Lemnian women see also R.P. Martin, 'Fire on the mountain. Lysistrata and the Lemnian women', *Class. Ant*. 6 (1987) 77-105; F. Schimann, 'Feuer auf Lemnos. Feuer und Furie in den Argonautika des Valerius Flaccus', in T. Baier and F. Schimann (eds.), *Fabrica. Studien zur antiken Literatur und ihrer Rezeption* (Leipzig, 1997) 103-28.

morphology of the folktale.[74] Burkert summarizes this story as follows: 'there is an instruction, a task to go in search of something (something lost) and to get it, the hero gathers relevant information, decides to set out upon the quest, starts on his way, meets with others, either helpers or enemies, there is a change of scenery, the object is found and taken possession of by force or cunning, it is brought back, the hero being chased by the adversary, success is there, the hero comes off triumphant.' According to Burkert, we can summarize this scheme in one verb, 'to get', and find here a 'program of action' based on biological drives but translated into a story. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is the same scheme that we find in nature when a rat starts his search for food and escapes capture by cats or humans (the monsters of the fairy tales!).[75]

Burkert has applied the same sociobiological approach to a type of myth that he calls 'the girl's tragedy', found in the myths of maidens like Io, Danaë and Kallisto. All these myths display the same plot: (1) the maiden leaves home and hearth, (2) she withdraws into an isolated place, be it a sanctuary or the wilderness, (3) she is raped or seduced by a god, (4) she has to undergo a series of tribulations, (5) she gives birth to a son and is rescued from her misery. Burkert argues that this pattern 'can be interpreted as reflecting initiation rituals; but these, in turn, are demonstrative accentuations of biologically programmed crises, menstruation, defloration, pregnancy, and birth ...The roots of the tales go back to verbalized action, whether ritualized or not'. As myth and ritual go back to the same 'action programs' they cannot be reduced to one another but originate, at least according to Burkert, *pari passu*, the third possibility of Jane Harrison.[76]

This new approach of Burkert has not attracted many followers, but H.S. Versnel (1936-) has applied these insights and developed them further in a critique of my analysis of the adventures of Odysseus. In this study I (1944-) proposed to recognise an initatory scheme in the adventures of a young prince who leaves home, wanders around, is humiliated, experiences

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[74] V.J. Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin, 1973[2]). On Propp's ideas about the structure of the fairytale see most recently E. Kafalenos, 'Functions after Propp: Words to Talk about How We Read Narrative', *Poetics Today* 18 (1997) 469-494; A. Dundes, 'Binary opposition in myth: the Propp/Lévi-Strauss debate in retrospect', *Western Folklore* 56 (1997) 39-50.
[75] Burkert, *Structure and History*, 14-8 (Propp) en 56-8 (myth and ritual). I quote the summary by Versnel, *Inconsistencies*, 76f.
[76] Burkert, *Structure and History*, 6-7, 57. For a more detailed discussion of what I call the 'mother's tragedy' see my observations in Bremmer and Horsfall, *Roman Myth and Mythography*, 26-30.

cannibalism (the Cyclops!), but eventually overcomes his adversaries and becomes king.[77] In addition to the justified criticism that I perhaps applied the initiatory scheme somewhat too hastily,[78] Versnel observes that, instead of initiation, other scholars have seen the reflection of a New Year festival in the same adventures. As he argues, these differences fit the pattern that some scholars see a relationship between rites of initiation and New Year festivals, whereas others claim certain elements – status reversal, anarchy, the Flood, cannibalism – either for initiation or for New Year festivals only. Like Burkert, Versnel tries to explain these circumstances by a sociobiological approach. According to him, initiation and the New Year display the same structure, Van Gennep's well known triad of *rite de séparation*, *rite de marge* and *rite d'aggrégation*, and these resemblances explain the frequent claims of similarity between rites of initiation and New year festival. Moreover, thus still Versnel, initiation and New Year are transitional moments that are experienced by human society as a 'primal crisis'. Consequently, these rituals and their corresponding myths have been structured according to the biological 'program of action' that Propp found in the fairy tales: departure/crisis/battle/danger/triumph/return. Myths and rituals of initiation and New Year festivals both reflect 'the biological-cultural program of action, which may have been carried over into both complexes and which, *independently* (Versnel's italics), has become the material from which dreams, fairy tales and myths of a certain type have been fashioned'. Versnel, then, fully agrees with Harrison and Burkert that some myths and ritual arose *pari passu*.[79]

This new approach of Burkert and Versnel has hardly received any critical reaction. It is as if nobody dares to enter a field that indeed is covered with all kinds of methodological landmines. The most important objections that can be made are, in my opinion, twofold. Firstly, there is in these views an insufficient distinction between nature and culture and secondly, in the case of Versnel, an insufficient distinction between structural analogy and temporal synchrony. To start with the first point, there can be no doubt that the acquisition of food is of life importance for animals, but this daily activity does not have the same symbolic meanings and overtones as rites of initiation and New Year festivals. Moreover, contrary to what Versnel suggests, initiation and New Year are not 'primal crises', but differ considerably from society to

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[77] See my 'Heroes, Rituals and the Trojan War', *Studi Storico-Religiosi* 2 (1978) 5-38.
[78] For criticisms of the application of the concept of initiation to antiquity see now D. Dodd and C. Faraone (eds.), *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives* (London and New York, 2003).
[79] Versnel, *Inconsistencies*, 87.

society, usually have different actors and even play no role at all in many societies. In fact, these rituals are not the consequence of a 'crisis', but it is tribal and national cultures that create a 'crisis' to integrate new members into society (initiation), to mark the arrival of the new harvest or to signify a change in the course of the sun/moon (New Year). Last but not least, the verb 'to get' is a rather reductionist simplification of the often highly symbolic rituals of initiation and New Year.[80]

A second important problem is the lack of conceptual clarity in distinguishing between structural/affective analogy and temporal synchrony. During the Greek Kronia festival, slaves and masters feasted on equal footing, and masters sometimes even served their slaves. Versnel has argued that the myth and ritual in this complex, in which he finds a combination of positive (extreme relaxation, abundance, etc.) and negative elements (homicide, human sacrifice, etc.), correspond in 'structure and atmosphere' in such a manner that 'both "symbolic processes deal with the same type of experience in the same affective mode", and this "*pari passu*".'[81] Yet it is not a new insight that myth and ritual correspond in the same affective mode. This was already seen by Heyne and Carl Otfried Müller, and has been argued again, more recently, by Fritz Graf.[82] The real problem is whether it can be shown that Kronos and the Kronia originated together.

At this point the attentive reader of Versnel is in for a surprise. He notices that Versnel takes all passages about the myth and cult of Kronos together without any differentiation in time and place. Moreover, Versnel also states that Kronion, the month in which the Kronia were celebrated, was 'quite common', but does not say anything about the time of its origin. Despite his far-ranging claims about a *pari passu* development of myth and ritual in this complex, Versnel does not begin to demonstrate that the Kronia festival originated at exactly the same time as the myth of Kronos.

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[80] Thus C. Auffarth, *Der drohende Untergang. "Schöpfung" in Mythus und Ritual im Alten Orient und in Griechenland* (Berlin and New York, 1991) 581, who rightly observes that this reductionist program does not reflect the 'historisch-induktive Methode' of Burkert's ritual analyses in his books and articles (p. 576).

[81] Versnel, 'Gelijke monniken, gelijke kappen: myth and ritual, oud en nieuw', *Lampas* 17 (1984) 194-246 = 'What's Sauce for the Goose is Sauce for the Gander: Myth and Ritual, Old and New', in L. Edmunds (ed.), *Approaches to Greek Myth* (Baltimore and London, 1990) 25-90 = *Inconsistencies*, 89-135 (Kronos and the Kronia), 147 (quote).

[82] Graf: *Nordionische Kulte*, 5; 'Entstehung des Mythosbegriffs', 293 (Heyne), and 'Karl Otfried Müller: *Eleusinien* (1848)', in Calder and Schlesier, *Zwischen Rationalismus und Romantik*, 217-38

However, we are now in a better position to solve this problem. In 1983 a Hurrian-Hittite bilingual (*ca.* 1400 BC) was found in Hattuša with an *Epic of Release*, that is, the release of slaves and the remission of debts, such as we know from the Hebrew Jubilee festival (*Leviticus* 25). The bilingual does not mention the ritual itself, but it does supply the accompanying myth. In this myth the highest god of heaven, Tessub, meets with the Sun goddess of the Earth, Allani, for a meal in which the 'primeval gods', who had been banished to the underworld, also participate; they even sit at the right hand of Tessub. The celebration of the temporary suspension of the cosmic order surely accompanied the temporary suspension of the social order on earth. In other words, the myth with the 'primeval gods' will have been associated with a ritual of reversal between masters and slaves or the free and prisoners of war.[83]

Originally, the Kronia were celebrated only in a small group of places: Samos, Kolophon and a few neighbouring islands and cities, from where the festival came to Athens.[84] Yet the mention of the city of Ebla in the Hurrian/Hittite epic shows that the 'ritual of reversal' had originated in Northern Syria. This means that the Kronia came from the same area as the ritual of the scapegoat, which eventually also arrived in exactly the same area as the Kronia, as we can see from the mention of this ritual in Hipponax of Kolophon.[85] We cannot be certain when these rituals were imported, but it seems reasonable to think of the seventh century when Lydia had expanded to the borders of Northern Syria and thus

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at 228.

[83] See now E. Neu, *Das hurritische Epos der Freilassung* I (Wiesbaden, 1996); S. de Martino, 'Il "canto della liberazione": composizione letteraria bilingue hurrico-ittita sulla distruzione di Ebla', *Parola del Passato* 55 (2000) 269-320; Burkert, *Kleine Schriften* II, 154-71 (first published in 1993); G. Wilhelm, 'D Epische Texte', in O. Kaiser (ed.), *Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, Ergänzungslieferung* (Gütersloh, 2001) 82-91 (German translation). Kronos/Titans: Bremmer, 'Remember the Titans!', in C. Auffarth and L. Stuckenbruck (eds.), *The Myth of the Fallen Angels* (Leiden, 2004) 35-61.

[84] Bremmer, 'Remember the Titans!', 43f.

[85] For the Eblaite origin of the scapegoat ritual see I. Zatelli, 'The Origin of the Biblical Scapegoat Ritual: The Evidence of Two Eblaite Texts', *Vetus Testamentum* 48 (1998) 254-63; V. Haas, 'Betrachtungen zur Traditionsgeschichte hethitischer Rituale am Beispiel des "Sündenbock"-Motivs', in G. Beckman *et al.* (eds.), *Hittite Studies in Honor of Harry A. Hoffner Jr. on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Winona Lake, 2003) 131-41. For the scapegoat ritual itself see Bremmer 'Scapegoat Rituals in Ancient Greece', in Buxton, *Oxford Readings*, 271-93 and 'The Scapegoat between Hittites, Greeks, Israelites and Christians', in R. Albertz (ed.), *Kult, Konflikt und Versöhnung* (Münster, 2001) 175-86.

connected that area with Ionia.[86]

In Greece the Hurrian/Hittite complex recurs in the ritual of the Kronia. Yet, originally, the myth of Kronos did not focus on the good life we see in the Kronia ritual. This is only a later development that starts in Hesiod, who made Kronos into the ruler of the Golden Age (*Erga* 111) and king of the Isles of the Blest (*Erga* 173a-e).[87] This means that the associations of Kronos with human sacrifice, as attested in Crete and (former) Phoenician/Punic areas, do not derive from the ritual or the later myth but derive from the Succession myth.[88] Moreover, even in the case of rituals of human sacrifice we have to differentiate. In the Cretan myth and ritual of the Kouretes an initiatory background is visible.[89] On the other hand, the myths and rituals in the (former) Phoenician/Punic areas are clearly re-interpretations of those of the Phoenician/Punic god El.[90] In other words, these rituals have been associated with Kronos only in later times. Moreover, the lugubrious associations in ritual do no include the happy ones and *vice versa*. I conclude therefore that Versnel has neglected to take basic chronological facts into account and has not proved the existence of a *pari passu* myth and ritual.

This vain search for such a *pari passu* myth and ritual also deflects attention from the specific differences between the two categories. As the myth of the Lemnian women

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[86] For the importance of Lydia in transmitting Northern Syrian influence see now P. Högemann, 'Das ionische Griechentum und seine altanatolische Umwelt im Spiegel Homers', in M. Witte and S. Alkier (eds.), *Die Griechen und der Vordere Orient* (Freiburg and Göttingen, 2003) 1-24 at 16-20 ('Kanaanisierung').

[87] Burkert, *Kleine Schriften* II, 156: 'Damit gewinnt der Begriff einer Epoche "unter Kronos" Valenzen, die aus dem Sukzessionsmythos nicht zu entnehmen sind'.

[88] The myth has often been discussed: see most recently, with bibliography, A. Bernabé, 'Hittites and Greeks. Mythical Influences and Methological Considerations', in R. Rollinger and C. Ulf (eds.), *Griechische Archaik. Interne Entwicklungen – Externe Impulse* (Berlin, 2004) 291-310 at 298-307.

[89] Istros *FGrH* 334 F 48; Eus. *Praep. Ev.* 4.16.7, cf. Graf, *Nordionische Kulte*, 417.

[90] Kleitarchos *FGrH* 137 F 9; Diod. Sic. 5.66.5, 13.86.3; 20.14.6; Curt. Ruf. 4.3.23; Plut. *M.* 171C, 552A, 942C; Tert. *Apol.* 9.2; Porph. *Abst.* 2.27; more recently, S. Moscati and S. Ribichini, *Il sacrificio dei bambini: un aggiornamento* (Rome, 1991); S. Brown, *Late Carthaginian Child Sacrifice and Sacrificial Monuments in Their Mediterranean Context* (Sheffield, 1992); J.-M. Poinsotte, 'Le témoignage de Tertullien sur les sacrifices d'enfants à Carthage (Apol., 9, 2-6) est-il crédible?', *Lalies* 16 (1996) 29-33; K. Koch, 'Molek astral', in A. Lange *et al.* (eds.), *Mythos im Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt* (Berlin and New York, 1999) 29-50; C. Grottanelli, 'Ideologie del sacrificio umano: Roma e Cartagine', *Arch. f. Religionsgesch.* 1 (1999) 41-59; F. Ruggiero, 'La testimonianza di Tertulliano, *Apologeticum* 9, 2-4 sul sacrificio del bambini nell'ambito del culto di Saturno', *Annali di Storia dell' Esegesi* 18 (2001) 307-33; W. Bühler, 'Drei Paroemiographia', *Eikasmos* 14 (2003) 185-96 at 193-6; J. Lightfoot, *Lucian, On the Syrian Goddess* (Oxford, 2003)

demonstrates, myth can exaggerate and picture as permanent what is only symbolic and temporary in ritual. The same myth also demonstrates that myth concentrates on striking details and the atmosphere of the ritual, not the whole of the ritual complex. The difference between myth and ritual is also illustrated by the myth of the Kronia where the status reversal between slaves and masters is not mentioned at all. Finally, whereas ritual is relatively fixed over longer periods of time, myth is much more fluid. Even if the plot remains relatively unchanged, every new performance can introduce new accents and innovations to a much larger degree than in ritual: narrativity has of course much more possibilities for variety than reality. There is, then, no fixed rule for the relationship between myth and ritual. All cases have to be judged on their own. And even so, we often lack sufficient information for a detailed study. The investigation into myth and ritual must always to some extent grope in the dark.[91]

523-8.

[91] This is the expanded and updated version of my 'Mythe en rite in het oude Griekenland: een overzicht van recente ontwikkelingen', *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 46 (1992) 265-276. Ken Dowden kindly corrected my English.