The Search for Immortality  
in Archaic Greek Myth

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Abstract

This thesis considers the development of the ideology of death articulated in myth and of theories concerning the possibility, in both mythical and 'secular' contexts, of attaining some form of immortality. It covers the archaic period, beginning after Homer and ending with Pindar, and examines an amalgam of (primarily) literary and iconographical evidence. However, this study will also take into account anthropological, archaeological, philosophical and other evidence, as well as related theories from other cultures, where such evidence sheds light on a particular problem.

The Homeric epics admit almost no possibility of immortality for mortals, and the possibility of retaining any significant consciousness of 'self' or personal identity after death and integration into the underworld is tailored to the poems rather than representative of any unified theory or belief. The poems of the Epic Cycle, while lacking Homer's strict emphasis on human mortality, nonetheless show little evidence of the range and diversity of types of immortality which develops in the archaic period. In the context of this development I discuss ways of defining death, such as the personification of Thanatos, forms of the 'good death', and definitions of mortality in terms of time and mutability vs. timelessness and stasis. Immortality is defined by the variants often associated with it (eg. agelessness, invulnerability) and their opposites. Mythical depictions of immortality show that the process of attaining it depends on materials which are themselves unattainable in most cases. A form of immortality, however, can be sought in fame, as the epinicians show.

Interwoven with theories of immortality is a nexus of mythmaking about an afterlife in which a significant consciousness of self and personal identity is retained, in the introduction and/or alteration of myths concerning Hades, Elysion, and the White Isle, and the mystery cults.
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Note on conventions

Abbreviations for the books to which frequent reference is made are given in the bibliography. Periodicals are cited according to the abbreviations used in the *L'Année Philologique*; any abbreviations not contained in those pages may be found in *AJA* 95 (1991) 4–16. But note the following:–

*JCS*  
*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*

*JMGS*  
*Journal of Modern Greek Studies*

References to the Greek poets are as follows: unless otherwise specified, for Sappho and Alkaios, see Voigt (references to Lobel and Page [LP] are given only when they differ from Voigt); for Alkman, Stesichoros and Ibykos see *PMGF*; for all other lyric poets see *PMG* (when a fragment is to be found in *SLG* it will be so specified); for Archilochos, Hipponax and Theognis, and for iambic and elegiac poetry see West². For Pindaric fragments see Maehler. Editions of Hesiod are: *Theogony*, West 1966; *Works and Days*, West 1978; fragments, MW.

In references to *LIMC*, I follow their own conventions: a reference marked with an asterisk * indicates an illustration in the relevant plate volume; a reference marked with a bullet " indicates a figure in the text volume. I have tried, for each work of art referred to, to give two or three references with good clear illustrations; in some cases, unfortunately, these are not available. References to illustrations at the end of the thesis are given in the footnotes in bold caps.
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DHB
Introduction

The longing not to die, the hunger for personal immortality, the effort by which we survive to persevere in our own being, this is the emotional basis for all knowledge and the intimate point of departure for all human philosophy.\(^1\)

This thesis found its beginnings in an interest, not originally in immortality, but in death. This is, of course, the flip side of the same coin, and my intention is to try and study the rim of the coin, so to speak: the area in which death and immortality meet and combine, where the mortal can take on aspects of divinity and the immortal can show a surprising degree of mortality. This interface is expressed most clearly and most often through myth. Within a mythical framework, where the impossible can be described as possible, the dialectic between mortal and immortal can be articulated in the greatest possible detail and variety.

Archaic Greek myths of immortalisation and apotheosis take several forms. These will be defined and discussed in later chapters, but here it would not be out of place to delimit more clearly the group of myths with which I am concerned. This thesis is based around those myths which describe the interaction between mortal and immortal, and the results of moving from one state of being to the other, or of combining the two. It is less concerned with the results of such changes in status, except insofar as they may shed light on the processes and on the motivations behind them. I hope to show that Rohde’s comment (which has hardly been challenged since) that ‘When a Greek says “immortal” he says “God”: they are interchangeable ideas’, is not in fact the case.\(^2\) There are two, at least partially separable, ideas being explored under these two headings. The first is ‘immortal’ in its most literal sense, the sense of living forever, of being ‘not mortal’. The second is that of being a god, with such added characteristics as unusual birth, swift rate of growth, agelessness, invulnerability, and various other superhuman strengths or abilities. Often the two concepts do not seem to be sharply distinguished, particularly as the same terminology is used in general reference to both; but the distinction between them, though subtle, is consistent. This distinction is marked out most clearly in the intermixing of mortal and divine, in those myths which deal with beings who are neither the one

\(^{1}\)Unamuno, *The Tragic Sense of Life*.

\(^{2}\)Rohde 1925: 254.
thing nor the other. It is used to articulate and explore a series of questions about the nature of mortality and immortality. My title refers to the ‘search for immortality’. This is not only a study of the structures and narratives surrounding attempts by mythical heroes to gain immortality, but also a study of some of the functions such myths served within Greek systems of belief.

The Homeric views of death and the afterlife admit almost no possibility of immortality, and no possibility of retaining any significant consciousness of ‘self’ or personal identity after death and integration into the underworld. The poems of the Epic Cycle, while apparently lacking Homer’s strict emphasis on human mortality, nonetheless show little evidence of the range and diversity of types of immortality current in the archaic period. This dissertation considers the ideology of death as it was articulated in myth by theories concerning the possibility, mythical or actual, of attaining some form of immortality. Its focus is on the development and use of myth, examined in an amalgam of (primarily) literary and iconographical evidence. However, this study will also take into account religious, anthropological, archaeological, philosophical and other evidence, as well as related theories from other cultures, where such evidence may shed light on a particular problem. Chronologically, it covers the archaic period, which I shall understand as beginning after Homer and ending with Pindar; however, much important evidence for this period, and particularly for its myths, comes from outside of these limits.

Chapter 1 fills in the background: it discusses Homer and the Epic Cycle in the context of theories of death and immortality, with particular interest in the question of why Homer tends to suppress any reference to myths of immortality, and why, conversely, the stories of the Epic Cycle adopt the other extreme and offer immortalising versions of stories which appear elsewhere without the immortality motif.

Chapters 2–4 offer a closer analysis of immortality motifs and stories in archaic myth. Chapter 2 considers myths concerned with the evasion of death, in which the hero or heroine is intending to evade an untimely death on a temporary basis, as opposed to aspiring to evade death forever. Along with this will be discussed ways in which death is defined: the character and iconography of Thanatos; forms of the ‘good death’; the definition of mortality in terms of time and mutability in contrast to timelessness and stasis. Chapter 3 defines immortality as opposed to the
variants often associated with it, such as agelessness and invulnerability. Chapter 4 discusses the ways in which immortality is achieved – ambrosia, drugs, fire, abduction, thunderbolts, transformations, divine parentage and catasterism – and the iconography used to illustrate it.

The last two chapters examine the ways in which the themes and myths appertaining to immortality, which were defined in earlier chapters, could be adapted and reshaped to fit the 'real-life' requirements of changing systems of belief in death and the afterlife. The emphasis is no longer on the moment of dying and ways of finding immortality in life, but on the perpetuation of some form of self-identity after death, after the separation of the individual from society. Chapter 5 discusses the application of such themes to the ritual surrounding the dead, to the related desire for memory-survival, and to hero-cult. Chapter 6 discusses the re-use of the theme of immortality outside of 'mainstream' mythic and religious belief, in the context of the Eleusinian Mysteries and Dionysiac cult in particular.

Defining myth

This is a perennial difficulty, and will continue to be so. Every definition of myth is dependent upon its context – the purpose for which it is being formed – and will be altered accordingly. The attempt which follows is no exception to this rule, and is intended primarily to establish a methodological framework within which the following study can take place.

A simple starting point is to state that myths are 'traditional tales'. Graf offers the important point that myth, although it tells a story, does not coincide with any literary genre; the myth of Agamemnon's death and Orestes' subsequent revenge, for example, appears in epic, choral lyric and the works of all three tragedians. Myths provide the plot – names, events, places and times – which can be adapted or can have 'extensions' added to it, but with the restriction that it must fit the structure of the inherited mythological framework. So Stesichoros can offer an apparent reversal of one myth – the Palinode presents us with Helen the virtuous wife in Egypt – but the heroine's involvement in the Trojan War must be accounted for in some other way, and the loose ends tied in. The same applies to 'new' stories; the system allows for the addition of stories such

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as Euripides’ Ion provided that they do not too blatantly contradict existing myths. There is usually an attempt, with a new version or a new myth, to define it as an essential part of the structure by presenting it as an adaptation or correction of the older version. The ‘traditional’ part of the definition, then, already poses a problem. Burkert points out that if a myth is to be defined as ‘traditional’, the question of the creation or origins of myth become irrelevant. Its status as a traditional tale can only be gained by transmission through generations, and is dependent upon its origins being forgotten. Clearly this makes the definition difficult to apply to Greek myth; what of those myths which (like the Palinode) appear in more than one version, of which the later contradicts the earlier? Some, indeed, are certainly not ‘traditional’; the myth of Theseus’ founding of the democracy is one example of a myth which gained currency as a response to the declining power of the aristocracy. Greek myth is open-ended; a traditional story can be re-told — or, indeed, invented. The poet, in offering his work as divinely inspired, gives it a ‘truth’ value as valid as that of earlier versions of the same story. He gives his composition a stamp of authenticity and in this way makes it into a ‘traditional’ tale from the moment he first presents it, new-minted, to his audience. He can also give his tale a patina of age, through the use of traditional themes and language.

It is this flexibility and readiness to adapt to changing circumstances which is essential to the survival of myth, as it enables myth to retain its importance and relevance to the society which it reflects, and reflects upon. And this brings us to the second important component of a definition of myth: its cultural relevance. Myth describes, defines and
interprets the nature of the cosmos, society and its rules, religion and the gods’ interactions with humans, death, and everything else for which such an explanation seems appropriate for any reason.\textsuperscript{12}

Provisionally, then, we will employ Burkert’s definition of myth: ‘a traditional tale with secondary, partial, reference to something of collective importance’.\textsuperscript{13} At the same time, we should bear in mind that ‘traditional’ does not necessarily imply old, and that the nature of the ‘collective importance’ can change – and it is not easy to judge in the first place.

These ‘traditional tales’, although not dependent on any genre, have been transmitted to us primarily in highly formalised literary genres. It was during the archaic period, on which this thesis focuses, that myth first began to be encapsulated in a written form. This meant that, for the first time, the tradition could be scrutinised and individual versions of it judged in comparison with each other. It also meant that other disciplines – history, philosophy, rhetoric – could be formed and recorded, and considered in relation to myth; it is towards the end of the archaic period, with Herodotos, that the word μύθος is first used in the sense of ‘implausible story’.\textsuperscript{14} By this time, too, the appeal to a divine authority, such as the Muses, has become less frequent, as the poet adopts a more secular role in society and becomes increasingly conscious of his own creativity.\textsuperscript{15} The development of myths into ‘fossilised’ texts, however, did not prevent the continuing process of adaptation of myths to fit changing cultural demands. Although some texts – notably Homer – did become the authoritative versions of particular myths, dissent from even the Homeric version was permissible, as can be seen again and again. A written text offering a version of a story, particularly in the context of a primarily oral tradition, fossilises that particular version of the myth as it

\textsuperscript{12}See Burkert 1996: 56–79 for the appropriateness of tales as a mechanism for making sense of the world: ‘The tale is the form through which complex experience becomes communicable’ (56).

\textsuperscript{13}Burkert 1979: 23; cf. Bremmer 1987:7, ‘traditional tales relevant to society’; and 1994: 57, ‘performances of traditional plots relevant to society’. This last definition is an attempt to take into account the element of performance, which meant a constant process of change and adaptation, and consequently implies the impossibility of formulating one authoritative version. It is true that ‘only after the introduction of literacy did myth become a “text”’; but this did not necessarily prevent it from being ‘myth’, or prevent the formulation of new versions.

\textsuperscript{14}Hdt. 2.23.1 (in reference to the existence of the river Okeanos), 2.45.1 (of the attempted sacrifice of Herakles by the Egyptians); Graf 1993a: 2. Note again that the word μύθος was not used in ancient Greece with the meaning that we are constructing here.

\textsuperscript{15}Bremmer 1987: 5; Calame 1995.
was at that particular moment. We can then study it as an image frozen in time, in the same way as a fossil is the fixed image of a species. But the species, or the myth, continues to evolve, to change and adapt to new conditions, and even to produce completely new forms in which the parent species can be recognised only with careful study.

So how do representations of myth in art fit into this definition? The problem of how art can form a narrative has been given increasing attention over recent years, from both scholars of art history (as the limitations imposed by the taxonomic approach of Beazley's lists are recognised) and by those studying myth (as the wider cultural significance of the conventions employed in the artistic depiction of myth come to be understood). Art as a medium for the retelling of a myth might seem to pose some of the same problems as the 'fossilising' of a myth in the form of a text. Both have the potential to form a canonical version and thereby undermine the flexibility essential to the functioning of the myth in society. With art, however, the danger is lessened, as it cannot present the myth in an entire and fixed form. It usually shows a single part of it, a snapshot of a particular incident, or a distillation of the whole myth in the form of a gathering of its chief characters. In the course of the archaic period, the vase-painters in particular became skilled at depicting impending disaster by showing the moment just before it happens: Aias placing his sword upright, his helmet watching behind him. Such a depiction 'describes' not only the pause before the action, but the action itself which will inevitably follow: the suicide. But the version, precisely because it calls forth the story in the mind of the viewer, is not canonical for any more than the basic narrative structure of the myth.

Myth and folktale

Another perennial problem is differentiating between myth and other types of traditional tales. Myth and folktale, legend and fable all borrow freely from each other, taking on each other's structures, characteristics


17Aias prepares for suicide: Boulogne 558, Attic black-figure amphora, c. 530 BC; ABV 145.18 (Exekias); Para 60; Add2 40; Schefold 1992: 281 pl. 338; LIMC Aias I 104*. 
and language, and are so thoroughly interwoven with each other that it is often impossible to distinguish them clearly. Moreover, in some cases there is little value in such a distinction, or in the attempt to create one. The dangers of such an approach can be clearly seen by a glance at the prologue of Graves' *Greek Myths*, in which 'true myth' is separated from twelve other types of narrative. In the context of ancient Greece, attempts at distinction between myth and legend in particular seem both impracticable and futile, based as they are on an attempt to ascribe some historical 'reality' to legend which is lacking in myth. A distinction between myth and folktale, however, may be more useful, although efforts to draw a dividing line between the two have been the cause of considerable controversy. Buxton makes the criticism that 'the folk' has its conceptual origin in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century European history, and it is questionable whether its extension to ancient Greece is viable. As Kirk points out, this does not justify the abolition of the word 'folktale'. It may be a misnomer, but it is a convenient term to describe the distinction, not so much between 'folk' and non-'folk', but between two differing types of 'traditional tale'. For there is a difference here; and it lies in the cultural centrality of myth. This centrality manifests itself in the performance element of myth. The performance of myth, with its cultural and societal significance, involves a certain public element, whether it is a poetic performance, the enactment of a ritual, or some other form of myth. Context is important; where was the tale told, and to whom? A public competition requires a different tale and a

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18Graves 1955: 12.  
20For example Thompson 1949 holds that myth is a branch of folklore, whereas Kirk 1970: 37 is more inclined to consider folklore as a branch of myth. Benedict 1933: 179 takes, perhaps, the easiest way out of the debate, in saying that 'for the purposes of study myth can never be divorced from folklore' (under which heading she includes folktale); 'the two are to be distinguished only by the fact that myths are tales of the supernatural world and share also therefore the characteristics of the religious complex'. Unfortunately as folktale also posits the existence of the supernatural world, and can even draw on 'religious' deities, this distinction will not stand.  
22Kirk 1970: 36, replying to the same objection by E. W. Count, 'Myth as World View' in S. Diamond (ed.), *Culture in History*, New York 1960. Count puts forward an argument for referring compendiously to 'myth-tales', on the grounds that 'folktale' is a nineteenth-century invention to explain the difference between 'popular peasant ballads' and aristocratic Greek epic myth. The term 'myth' is itself a modern construction; see Bremmer 1994: 56.  
different presentation from a poem recited to the local tyrant, or at a party of friends.24

Folktale, then, can be defined – in part – as ‘traditional tales’ which lack the wider cultural and religious ‘collective importance’ of myth; this is clear from the anonymity which is characteristic of the hero or heroine in folktale. Myth seeks to form a complete view of the world; each character has a detailed and usually extensive genealogy (although its details may vary from version to version) which establishes his or her place in a network of interrelated families.25 In folktale, on the other hand, no one has any detailed background. Characters are often named for their characteristics (‘Fair Brow’) or sometimes not named at all.26 In keeping with this, myth is firmly established in time and place. Kirk comments that it is often set in the ‘timeless past’, whereas folktales are set in historical time27; but in fact myth is not as loose in time as folktale is. The Greek mythology can be traced from the creation of the universe down to the end of the Trojan War and beyond, not in numbers of years but through the relationships between gods, people and places; it is almost possible to link up every mythical character into one vast web of relationships.28 Folktales, however, are not set so much in historical time but in an undefined time, which does not conform exactly to any historical period, but can be quite recent; so a gun might be found in folktale but would be anachronistic in myth. Each folktale, however, is set by itself, dependent on no other folktale – even when there are several surrounding one person, such as those concerning St. Peter or Buffalmacco, they are a series of separate and non-related episodes with no clear chronological or narrative link between them.29 They are often linked only by their portrayal of the character of the protagonist: Buffalmacco is a buffoon, and all his stories illustrate this same character trait in different ways. Myths, on the other hand, can be seen as part of a greater whole, a mythology. Even episodes such as the parerga of Herakles

25We should be wary, however, of ascribing to Greek myth a unity which it does not possess; Burkert 1991: 527.
26Two examples from many: Calvino 1982 no. 45, ‘Fair Brow’ (p. 138ff); no. 183, ‘The Two Cousins’ (p. 656ff). But see below, Ch. 5.3, on significant names in myth.
28This is true to the extent that in historical Greece families still traced descent from gods or heroes; for example, Plato’s mother was descended from Solon, Solon from Neleus, Neleus from Poseidon (Plut. Solon 1.2; Diog. Laert. 3.1; see Thomas 1989: 176–181).
usually have a clear place in a larger chronological, geographical and narrative framework. This can also be seen in the way in which the Greeks refer to their myths; mythical time is contrasted to 'what is more recent', 'what we are witnesses to', and so forth. But this contrast between recent history and ancient myths gives them an implicit historical value. Folktale does address issues central to human thought and existence, such as death, fate, good and evil. But it addresses them on a human and individual level. In contrast to a myth which might explain how death came to mankind, a folktale presents us with an explanation of how one person evaded death. Folktale is, perhaps, less concerned to explain the world, and is satisfied merely to comment on it.

In folktale 'one special ingredient requires emphasis, and that is the use of trickery and ingenuity'. Such elements in Greek mythology as Sisyphos' binding of Death, Perseus' use of his shield to avoid Medusa's petrifying gaze and Odysseus' beggar disguise all have parallels in folktale. Cunning trickster characters such as Odysseus and Sisyphos tend to attract folktale elements far more readily than their less flexibly minded colleagues. Allied with this is the use of magic devices and spells. Conversely, supernatural elements such as, for example, the ability to change shape at will, life-giving elixirs, the granting of wishes, to name but a few, which are generally the property of gods in myth, are far more common in folktale, and are cited as evidence for the integration of a folktale or folktale elements into myth. Such are Perseus' cap of invisibility and Odysseus' moly—two objects from folktale which, in myth, have come under the control of the gods. Similarly fairies, goblins,

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30Parker 1996: 226-7 with n. 34.
32Odysseus: see Page 1972. Sisyphos: see below, Chapter 2.2. For the characteristics of tricksters in general see Radin 1972.
33So in two variants of the same folktale, a certain effect or event might be brought about by magic in one variant and by the action of a deity in another, as such oral stories adapt themselves to social, cultural or religious change. For example Calvino 1982 no. 144, 'The Serpent King' (p508ff), where a maiden without hands is instructed by an old woman, who turns out to be the Madonna, to bathe her wrists in a particular fountain; she does so, and her hands grow back. Elsewhere the old woman might be a fairy or witch. Cf. no. 165, 'Jesus and St. Peter in Sicily' (p. 594ff.); Stith Thompson Index D2161.3.2, E782.1.
34Not uncommon in myth, but there it is usually an ability confined to the gods. For an exception, see Mestra, daughter of Erysichthon, who was cursed with hunger and sold her to buy food; she had been given the gift of shape-change by her lover Poseidon and kept escaping and returning to her father, who then sold her again. Here too the ability originally comes from the gods. For a full account see Ovid Met. 8.738ff., but the myth is older; Gantz 1993: 68.
35The few humans who possess such skills — e.g. Medea — are marginalised, portrayed as foreigners or in some other way cultural outsiders.
witches and ogres are the creatures of folktale\textsuperscript{36} – active and powerful supernatural beings which are not classed as gods – and they meddle in human affairs in much the same way as the gods in myth. However, they occupy the same world as humans do, whereas the gods have an abode of their own. Personifications tend to take a more active role in folktale than in myth, where they are often found passively watching over the action, as emblems rather than causes of what is taking place.\textsuperscript{37} In both myth and folktale, for example, the personification of Fate can be blamed for things going wrong, but in myth the misfortunes also have a human or 'natural' cause,\textsuperscript{38} whereas in folktale Fate herself can actively and physically intervene to create an event which would not naturally happen and which involves a course of action that the human concerned would not do, and may in fact try to prevent.\textsuperscript{39}

It is important to remember that none of these distinctions, however, can be held to be absolute. In the Greek mythological corpus, as in many other mythologies, the two have been integrated to the extent that there are few myths in which one can state categorically which elements belong to myth and which to folktale. What, then, is the point of attempting to make the distinction at all?

Folktale, arguably, can offer one type of cultural reading which myth, in the 'literarised' form in which so much of it has come down to us, does not. Folktale offers access to the grass-roots level of Greek culture which is denied us by the highly polished and aristocratically exclusive world of the epic poets.\textsuperscript{40} This aristocratic ideal made itself felt with such force through Homeric and other epic, and thence through other genres of poetry, that 'it succeeded, for centuries, in establishing itself as a normative model for upper-class aspiration, and in dominating the Greek educational system'.\textsuperscript{41} The result, as Griffiths points out, is that the jokes, songs, stories,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{36}For example, in the \textit{Odyssey}, Kirke, the Laestrygonians, the Lotos-Eaters, the Cyclops, etc; see Page 1972: 3–4. In myth such creatures are usually marginalised and regarded as something out of the ordinary; in folktale no one shows any surprise at manifestations of the supernatural in the form of witches, spells, monsters, or the like.
\item \textsuperscript{37}E.g. the wonderful collection of personified disasters with which the potters are threatened in \textit{Kaminos}; Hes. fr. 302 MW; see Griffiths 1995: 87f for translation and comments.
\item \textsuperscript{38}Cf. the 'double motivation' in the \textit{Iliad}; 'gods and men cause the same acts and impulses simultaneously and both can be held responsible' (Janko 1992: 4).
\item \textsuperscript{39}See for example Calvino 1982 no. 149, 'Misfortune' (p. 529ff), where the heroine's fate enters every house in which she finds shelter and totally wrecks everything in it.
\item \textsuperscript{40}Griffiths 1995: 86f.
\item \textsuperscript{41}Griffiths 1995: 86; he adds that the 'improving' role assigned by the Greeks to poetry also played its part in the suppression of such popular wisdom.
\end{itemize}
superstitions and beliefs which were part of the 'grubby reality' of everyday life are lost – for who would bother to record them? – except for those few rare occasions when they have percolated into the literary corpus. On some of these occasions, as I hope to show, these can be picked out again, to shed some light on a part of the culture otherwise lost to us.

Cultural comparisons

In studying the history of a species, it is important not only to consider its fossils, but also its living descendants, its contemporary relatives, and its ancestors, if such there be. Such comparisons are usually based on similarities between particular elements of differing species. Just as much can be learnt from species A, the modern descendants of an earlier species B, about what B was like, so modern cross-cultural comparisons can be of use in reconstructing ancient mythological structures and themes.

In some cases the value of such comparisons, with other historical societies as well as with modern ones, is self-evident. The mythologies of the Near East were an exceedingly rich source of motifs and structures for Greek mythology, and comparison with them is both valid and useful in explaining elements of the Greek myths which were not clear to us before. But even here, where the links between the different cultures are a matter of history and not only of speculation, the use of evidence is hazardous and a strict methodology is needed. So for example Burkert, discussing Greek 'borrowings' of Near Eastern words, points out that the Indo-Europeanists now rule almost unchallenged in this field: 'Even the remotest references – say, to Armenian or Lithuanian – are faithfully recorded; possible borrowings from the Semitic, however, are judged uninteresting and either discarded or mentioned only in passing, without adequate documentation'.

Among anthropologists, cross-cultural comparison is the subject of some controversy. While it is understood that cultures are not isolated entities and even quite diverse cultures can share elements of the same social and cultural structures, it is also clear that elements or motifs, which appear on the surface to have a marked affinity with each other, can, in fact, embody widely varying cultural symbols. A good example is that of grave-goods. Sometimes – but only sometimes – the presence of grave-goods can imply

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43On the influence of the Near East see especially Burkert 1992.
44Burkert 1992: 34–35; he offers several examples of this misjudgement.
a belief in an afterlife. At other times, however, they can be put in the
grade to demonstrate the deceased’s status or wealth, or to be rid of
something with particular emotional connotations, or simply ‘because it
was his’. Or they may not even belong to the deceased; the Nankanse of
Ghana do not place grave goods in the tomb to accompany the dead, but
objects are included if the soul of a living person becomes trapped in the
grade and the sexton is unable to get it out. As long as the living
person’s favourite articles remain in the grade, he or she will not die. In
such a case, the goods found may be socially inappropriate to the gender,
status etc. of the deceased.

A further problem is presented by methodology. Mark Golden
comments that, in the prevailing interpretative, post-structuralist climate,
anthropologists ‘regard facts themselves as suspect, as representations or
constructions of reality; they concern themselves mainly with trying to
describe particular cultures as objectively as possible and with observing
their own shortcomings in doing so.’ The underlying proposition might
be framed as follows: if one cannot securely construct even one cultural
‘reality’, how can one compare more than one? In addition, there is a
danger that, during the process of comparison, one culture will be
subordinated to the other. Dumont observes that there is a sense of
superiority ingrained in most cultures’ ways of regarding themselves,
which can be misleading to the anthropologist who studies them. This
tendency to mark one culture down as inferior in some way (often for
reasons not clearly defined) has been particularly problematic in regard to
comparisons drawn between ancient and modern Greece. In such
comparisons, modern Greece invariably gets the worst of it, and is depicted
as a kind of poor relation who has inherited a cultural wealth of a depth
and significance which she cannot comprehend. As Danforth comments,
‘The people of rural Greece have become nothing more than a blank
screen on which we can project our romantic fantasies of ancient Greek
life’.

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46Ucko 1969: 265 citing R. S. Rattray, The Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland I, Oxford 1932:
186.
47For another example of the recurrence of the same symbol, but with a wide diversity of
meaning, cf. Humphreys 1981a: 10 on associations between death and moving or still water.
Parallels should be drawn, not to replace the careful gathering and sifting of evidence, but to complement it, and supplement it. The scholar must be aware of the meaning of a certain structure or symbol in differing cultures, before he compares them. This, in the field of studies concerned with death, is particularly important.\footnote{See Whaley 1981, Ariès 1974, Humphreys 1981a.} Death, as Whaley reiterates, has dominated the human consciousness throughout human history.\footnote{Whaley 1981: 1–2.} The remarkable continuity of this preoccupation with death and related issues such as burial has meant that the subject is an enormously complex one, incorporating evidence which touches on every aspect of human life, culture and behaviour. And as the evidence, even within strictly limited areas of this vast field, is contradictory (not surprisingly, as death is and always has been very much an individual as well as a social phenomenon, which dichotomy is characterised by the extreme diversity of the emotions that it arouses) the difficulties of cross-cultural comparison are greatly increased. Yet another complication is added in this area by the collation of different disciplines which is often involved.\footnote{See Humphreys 1981a: 2–4.}

Why, then, if it is so fraught with problems, should it be attempted at all? The answer is, of course, that for all its limitations and problems, the insights gained can still be valuable.\footnote{See Golden 1992: 311–314; Burkert 1992 passim.} The publication (for example) of the Hittite Kingship in Heaven text in 1946, and the parallels between Kumarbi and Kronos which it demonstrated, opened up new areas of research in many fields, not least epic: 'Since then, Homeric epic can no longer be held to have existed in a vacuum'.\footnote{Burkert 1992: 5.} Similarly, Lord's studies of South Slav oral epic composition, however controversial, have dramatically altered our view of the Homeric poems.

In some cases, the comparison can be of use in a negative sense, in that it can be used to show that an assumption is not necessarily justified; this is the case as regards the Nankanse 'grave-goods' described above. Such comparisons are of use because they teach us to rethink concepts which we have held to be self-evident, and to realise afresh the extent to which our own culturally embedded preconceptions can influence our thinking.
Chapter 1

Heroes and epics

Man is a noble animal, splendid in ashes and pompous in the grave.\(^1\)

The intention of this chapter is to set out the themes of life, death and immortality as they are preserved in Homer and the Epic Cycle, and to illustrate some of the ways in which they differ from each other and from later tradition. There is no need to reiterate the importance of Homer to archaic and later Greece. The myths contained in the Epic Cycle, similarly, had a considerable impact on Greek life and thought.\(^2\) Although the Cyclic epics, in their written form, were later than Homer, and although they are fragmentary and of a lesser quality and Proklos' summaries may be corrupt, they are still an important source for the content of these myths, which were certainly familiar to Homer and his audience. This chapter will focus primarily on the *Iliad*, and secondarily on the *Odyssey* and the Cycle; and finally it will consider the way in which the Cycle marked the fate of one hero, Memnon, differently from other sources.

1.1 Death: the *Iliad*

The heart of the *Iliad* is death and immortality: the mortal destiny and the attempt to escape it. Death can be both a sign of defeat and a badge of victory; lack of it is a proof of the supremacy of the gods and yet its presence gives humanity a superiority, based on a moral seriousness stemming from their mortality, which the gods cannot achieve. As an abstraction, it can be accepted with equanimity as inevitable, and considered with resignation as a part of the life cycle, and yet the terror and horror it inspires are never hidden, and even the greatest warrior will flee from it.

In the *Iliad* the inevitability and permanence of death are strongly marked. The absolute certainty of death for humans is basic to the structure of the poem. The motif of 'all men must die' recurs constantly. It is emphasised by the huge number of nameless or almost unknown

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\(^1\)Sir Thomas Browne, *Hydrotaphia or Urne-Buriall*

\(^2\)For the Epic Cycle in general see especially Griffin 1977; Severyns 1928: Part 2 (161–425); Dihle 1994: 10; Davies 1989a; Barron and Easterling in *CHCL* I: 106–110.
Chapter 1: Homeric and Cyclic epics

characters who are introduced apparently solely so that they can die; 'few men with a life outside the scene of their death are slain in the Iliad'.

There is no escape from death in the Iliad; those who try to flee are rarely successful. There are six scenes depicting suppliants, and they all die.

The brevity of human life finds one of its most notable expressions in Glaukos' speech to Diomedes:

High-hearted son of Tydeus, why ask of my generation?
As is the generation of leaves, so is that of humanity.
The wind scatters the leaves on the ground, but the live timber burgeons with leaves again in the season of spring returning
So one generation of men will grow while another dies.

Death is an inescapable part of life. This inevitability is recognised by the mortals in the poem, and their attitude in general is one of resignation. Glaukos' words reflect the Iliad's recognition that death is universal to all mankind; there is no escape and there are no exceptions.

Taking this sweeping view as a background, Homer shows more concern with individual death and the reactions to it. When faced with imminent death a warrior will not infrequently lose his calmly resigned outlook and flee, or plead for his life. Only when an individual's death is imminent does it present itself as applicable to him personally: it is not only something which eventually happens to everyone, it is something which will happen, now, to the individual concerned. This refusal to accept death calmly often takes the form of an assertion of one's own individuality against the universal fate of mortals. A striking example of this reaction is Lykaon, whom Achilleus catches on the banks of the river Skamandros.

In his supplication, he cites the ransom which Achilleus

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3Hainsworth 1993 ad ll. 11.91-147.
4The exception to this rule is of course those who are helped or protected by the gods, as usually happens in the case of a limited number of leading heroes; for example Aineias and Aphrodite, 5.311ff; Aineias and Poseidon, 20.325ff; Apollo and Hektor, 20.443ff; Idaios and Hephaistos, 5.24ff; Agenor and Apollo, 21.596ff. See Fenik 1968: 36ff, 45ff.
5ll. 6.46ff, 10.372ff, 11.126ff, 16.330ff, 20.463ff, 21.27ff; see below.
6ll. 6.145-9; all quotations of Homer are from Lattimore's translations (Iliad, Chicago 1961; Odyssey, New York 1967).
7Sourvinou-Inwood (1981: 21) comments that these words 'are a striking acceptance of the discontinuity of the individual set against the continuity of the species which gives it some meaning; it is a perspective of the inevitable cycle of self-renewing life'. This would place the emphasis rather on the survival of the species than the death of the individual. However, in view of the context I think that an emphasis on perishing rather than regeneration is more likely; certainly this is how Simonides saw it (fr. 19 W). See Griffin 1980: 72.
8ll. 21.27ff. Suppliant scenes are usually brief, with the suppliant basing his plea upon what he thinks will have most effect on his opponent: the ransom. Lykaon does not include
has received for him earlier, describes his family – passing over his father Priam to dwell on his mother Laothoë and her family – dissociates himself from Hektor and the killing of Patroklos, and in general bases his pleas on the grounds of his individuality, on the fact that he is who he is. Although, ultimately, his plea fails, it come closer to success than that of any other suppliant in the Iliad. Achilleus in his reply cites his own parentage and his own unique prowess, as parallels to Lykaon’s, but negates these with a reiteration of the inevitability and universality of death, turning that motif to account both to express their common humanity and to dismiss Lykaon’s plea. His response shows that he himself, close to death, is aware of his own uniqueness as an individual, but he is also aware of his own death and accepts it; his resignation here stems from the same recognition of helplessness in the face of imminent death as Lykaon’s desperation.\(^9\)

Achilleus himself must flee death in the river Skamandros. Here he is rejecting, not death, but the nature of this particular death; it is \(\lambda\varepsilon\upsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\varepsilon\sigma\), wretched, not at all the glorious death he was promised.\(^10\) Achilleus has had the chance to choose his own death, as most mortals do not; he has chosen an early death in battle rather than death in old age at home. Achilleus is in a unique position. His mother is a goddess, and although he is not the only hero descended from a god or goddess, his supreme \(\acute{\alpha}\rho\varepsilon\tau\tau\eta\) and his knowledge of his own fate set him apart. He will become the supreme exemplar of the ‘ideal death’ of the warrior, and he knows it.\(^11\) Of all the warriors in the Iliad he seems closest to divine. He wears armour made by Hephaistos and drives immortal horses; at one point he has nectar and ambrosia dripped into his chest.\(^12\) Yet he must die. He is human in the one aspect of life which most counts.

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\(^9\)Cf. Hektor; he shows an awareness of his doom in Il. 6.447ff, but later refuses to accept it. At 16.851ff Patroklos prophesies his death and he rejects the prediction; even at the last he is not sure of death, 22.250ff.

\(^10\)Il. 21.273ff; this passage may in part be the origin of the misreading of the word as ‘watery’ (see EM 561.28 s.v. \(\lambda\varepsilon\upsilon\gamma\alpha\lambda\varepsilon\alpha\); cf. Soph. fr. 785 Radt).


\(^12\)Armour by Hephaistos: the first set was inherited from Peleus (17.194ff), then the replacement set was made in Book 18 (see Kakridis 1961; for Achilleus’ invulnerability, see below, Chapter 3.2). On the significance of the ‘arming motif’ in signalling a warrior’s doom see Armstrong 1958. His horses are immortal: their lineage is given at 16.145ff and at 17.426ff Zeus commiserates with them as they lament Patroklos. Athene (at the instigation of Zeus) distils nectar and ambrosia into his breast so that he has enough strength to fight (19.347ff).
The inevitability of death is also emphasised by the nature of the combat. Duels are short, usually only one or two strokes, and there are very few wounded; a blow will miss, or be deflected, or it will kill. It may not kill the moment it is struck; it may give time for the victim to say a few last words. But there are no disabled men in sight. The exception to this is the series of wounds inflicted on the Greek leaders in Book 11, a series designed to incapacitate the Greek force as a whole, as part of the effectiveness of the Trojan assault. Death may be painful but it is swift. Homer presents a remarkable variety of appalling wounds, but they are nearly all fatal; there are no warriors dying slowly over a period of time. This provides a much sharper contrast between life and death; there is no in-between state of lingering illness. Heroes usually either emerge unharmed from a fight or do not emerge at all. The illness of Philoktetes is mentioned — but in the context of the Catalogue of Ships, which has been shown to be a later addition. He is not mentioned elsewhere in the Iliad. Even the everlasting debility of Tithonos is glossed over in the Homeric poems. In comparison, Aineias is seriously wounded in Book 5, when a stone thrown by Diomedes smashes his hip, but Aphrodite and Apollo spirit him off the field and into Pergamos, where Artemis and Leto 'healed his wound and cared for him'. The broken thread of the narrative takes the emphasis even further away from the wounding and cure of Aineias, which is secondary to the fights with the gods taking place around it. He is back in the thick of the battle only two hundred lines after being carried out of it, and his friends do not even have time, in a war characterised by its long discourses, to ask him what has happened to him.

13For example, Sarpedon 16.490ff, Patroklos 16.843, Hektor 22.337. Compare the length of the duel between Achilleus and Mennon in Quintus Smyrnaeus Posthomerica 2.401–546.
14Agamemnon 11.251ff, Diomedes 11.375ff, Odysseus 11.434ff, Machaon 11.504ff, Eurypylus 11.581ff. The wounding of Machaon in particular acts as a trigger for the action; while Patroklos is tending him, Nestor suggests that he fight in Achilleus' armour (11.601ff).
16For Tithonos, see below, Chapter 3.2.i. He appears three times in Homeric epic: twice as 'haughty Tithonos' lying in bed beside Dawn (Od. 5.1, I. 11.1) and once in Aineias' genealogy as a son of Laomedon, with no further comment (I. 20.237). Here we are reminded that Tithonos is Priam's brother, and therefore is already getting to be old; in any case the mention of his name would be enough to remind the audience of the story attached to it. But the reference is very brief, and not specific.
17He is wounded and removed by Aphrodite, 2.302–318; and by Apollo, 2.343–346; who protects him and takes him to Pergamos where he is healed, 2.431–448; and sends him back into the battle, 2.512–518. Perhaps one of the main reasons for the episode is to emphasise that Aineias, out of all the Trojan heroes, is marked out for survival; cf. 20.300–339, when Poseidon rescues him (from Achilleus) because Zeus has intended him and his descendants to survive.
So his wounding is not only healed quickly, but also passed over in gaps between more important events.

Very few of those who are killed appear anywhere other than at the time of their deaths. The great heroes of the poem die only if the plot demands it; but the possibility that they might die at any moment is constantly there. Death is described in terms which leave no doubt that it is always present, always possible; the black ἀματοῖ stand around Sarpedon, ready to come at any time and in any form. The continuation of life in the future is spoken of in the constant awareness of the knowledge that there may not be any future for the individual concerned.

Warriors in the Iliad are constantly (although frequently they are unconscious of it) faced with the need to balance the value of life against the value of material possessions and the fame which is in part measured by them. Achilleus sees this clearly:

Of possessions
cattle and fat sheep are to be had for the lifting,
and tripods can be won, and the tawny high heads of horses,
but a man’s life cannot come back again, it cannot be lifted
nor captured again by force, once it has crossed the teeth’s barrier. 18

The other Iliadic hero who sees this with particular clarity is Sarpedon. In his famous speech to Glaukos he first invokes the good things of life – food and drink, wealth, honour from their people – then urges Glaukos on to risk death for glory, as death will come to them one way or another whether they fight or not:

But now, seeing that the spirits of death stand close about us in their thousands, no man can turn aside nor escape them let us go on and win glory for ourselves, or yield it to others. 19

It is precisely because death is inevitable that life is so precious; and perversely it is because death is inevitable that life must be risked ‘μάχην ἐς κυδάθειραν, ‘in the fighting where men win glory’, so that when death actually comes it will not eradicate every trace of the individual. 20 If they were immortal, they would not need to fight. Achilleus chose a short life with glory rather than a long life without, but his choice was made on the premise that death was inevitable; if he is bound to die he will at least be remembered. His words to Odysseus in the Odyssey do not show regret for

18 Iliad 9.405-409.
19 Iliad 12.326-328.
20 Iliad 12.325.
his choice, but he would still prefer to be alive.\textsuperscript{21} Life is short and sweet: this view is the flip side of the grim inevitability of death, and it is equally pervasive.\textsuperscript{22}

Death in the \textit{Iliad} takes place on the battlefield; in the \textit{Odyssey} it takes place in foreign and non-human lands. In both cases the good things in life, and indeed life itself, are represented by ‘home’ and ‘peace’.\textsuperscript{23} Thus Homer adds pathos to Andromache’s reaction to the death of Hektor by portraying her employed in preparing a hot bath for him; this is very much a task belonging to the home and to peacetime. Simone Weil comments, ‘Nearly all the \textit{Iliad} takes place far from hot baths.’\textsuperscript{24} But the audience is never allowed to forget for long that the hot baths exist in the background. Sarpedon’s list of pleasures are activities which he enjoys at his home, in Lykia, and which belong to peacetime. For the Trojans, ‘home’ is right at their backs; but they are distanced from it by the nights they spend camped on the plain, rather than retreating in behind the walls of their city. Thus Troy for them also is a symbol of safety and life. Had they retreated into the city on the second night, as Poulydamas advised, they would not have been so disastrously routed; by turning away from the city and staying on the site of the battle the whole of the Trojan army follows Hektor in his turning towards death.\textsuperscript{25} At the moments in the poem when death seems most prevalent, reminders of life appear; for example the little biographical cameos of the dead which are inserted now and again, or the description of the washing-pools as Hektor flees past them.\textsuperscript{26}

In the last moment of his life, then, a warrior who has never been mentioned before may suddenly become the focus of our attention and sympathy as he dies. Once he is dead, however, we lose sight of him again. The battle scenes at their bloodiest pile up corpses with appalling rapidity, as Homer emphasises the horrific force of war. The large number of corpses created in the process, however, do not (with a few exceptions) interest Homer. It is the moment of death, and the human reaction to it, which is of greater interest; the dead themselves are not important. Thus

\textsuperscript{21}\textit{Od.} 11.488-491.
\textsuperscript{22}Cf. Simonides fr. 19 W.
\textsuperscript{23}See \textit{Il.} 18.490ff: the two cities wrought by Hephaistos on Achilleus’ shield contrast war and peace.
\textsuperscript{24}Weil 1987: 153.
\textsuperscript{25}Poulydamas’ advice: \textit{Il.} 18.254ff. See Taplin 1992, especially Chapter 7, for ‘turnings toward death’ of both individuals and groups.
\textsuperscript{26}The washing-pools: \textit{Il.} 22.153. For the pathos of the vignettes of the dead, see Griffin 1980: Chapter 4.
the most frequent thing to happen to corpses is that they are ignored. When a warrior dies, his killer will sometimes (if he has the chance) attempt to strip him of his armour, either where he fell or by dragging him back behind his own lines. Alternatively if the slayer is killed in his turn, the dead man's friends will sometimes try and save his body. Often he is simply left to lie on the ground. In Book 7, there is a truce and all the dead of both sides are gathered up and cremated. Until this time, it is accepted that the living cannot do anything for the dead except lament them. Moreover, this truce is exceptional. It is a part of the horror of war that burial of the dead is impossible, and corpses are liable to be left for the birds and dogs. In spite of the strong emotions tied up in the proper burial of a corpse, the fact remains that most of the corpses in the Iliad were not so fortunate. They appear en masse from time to time, reminding us that the conflict consists of more than only the aristeiai which we have been shown. The Trojans meet in a clear place on the field 'on clean ground, where there showed a space not cumbered with corpses'. More graphically, in the bloody Book 11, Kebriones sends his chariot careering towards the fighting:

\[\text{trampling down dead men and shields, and the axle under the chariot was all splashed with blood and the rails which encircled the chariot, struck by flying drops from the feet of the horses...}\]

There are some corpses, however, which play a more significant part in the action of the Iliad, and continue to affect the actions of the living. If a great warrior falls, both sides may try to get possession of his body. The fights over the bodies of Sarpedon and Patroklos are among the most bitter in the whole poem; and the fate of Hektor's corpse has, of course, a huge impact on the action, taking much of the last two books to be resolved. The scene between Priam and Achilleus concerning the return of Hektor's corpse is the climax to the story of Achilleus. Only through this final renunciation of his vengeance on the body of his dead enemy can he regain the humanity which, in Books 21 and 22, he had almost lost. Respect for the dead is an essential part of the human world; and, indeed, of the divine. Without proper burial with appropriate rites and respect, the dead could not reach Hades. To be left unburied is to be cut off from rest after death, as the soul of Patroklos makes clear to Achilleus. It is a mark of Hektor's humanity that he promises burial to Aias before their

\[27\text{II. 8.491.}\]
\[28\text{II. 11.534-536.}\]
\[29\text{II. 23.71ff.}\]
single combat, and offers the same to Achilleus before the fight which will end in his death; and it is a mark of how far from humanity Achilleus has gone that he refuses it.

Homer's heroes frequently threaten to mistreat the bodies of their enemies, but, although maltreatment of a corpse is often threatened, it very rarely happens. When Achilleus carries out this threat, both the gods and Homer himself label his conduct as shameful, although in this case the shame is perhaps heightened by the extended duration of the abuse and the importance and piety of the dead man.

1.2 The gods: the Iliad

The bleakness of mortal life and death is emphasised by the frequent presence of the gods, and even by their occasional absences. The gods are never far away, whether watching from nearby or from Olympos, or participating to help a favourite or hinder an opponent. On the few occasions when they do turn away (as Zeus does at the beginning of Book 13) the emphasis remains; for the mortals in the poem there is no way out, no easy turning aside.

The gods in the Iliad have a two-sided nature. On one side they are infinitely superior to humans. They are immortal and they wield great power, and human concerns in comparison to the gods are of little account. They dignify the battle by deeming it worth watching; they glorify the hero by helping him. Without their help no hero can hope for complete success. It is dangerous to attack them; those who anger them will be made to regret it. The difference between gods and mortals is brought out with brutal clarity by Apollo’s words to Poseidon:

Shaker of the earth, you would have me be as one without prudence

if I am to fight even you for the sake of insignificant

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30 Mutilation of a corpse in the heat of battle, though rare, does happen; see Segal 1971a. Two examples: Peneleos carries his enemy’s head on his spear, stuck through the eye ‘like the head of a poppy’ (14.499). Agamemnon, who seems to specialise in grisly slayings, chops off Hippolochos’ head and arms and rolls his trunk along the ground (11.146f). Here he may have a motive for a more personal enmity, in that Hippolochos was the son of Antimachos who attempted to have Menelaos killed when on an embassy.


33 Willcock (1973: 4) makes this point with reference to Aias son of Telamon.

34 For example Bellerophon, 6.200ff; Dione’s threats concerning Diomedes, 5.406ff; Diomedes’ hesitation in attacking Ares until persuaded by Athene, 5.814ff. See Fenik 1968: 45f.
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mortal, who are as leaves are, and now flourish and grow warm with life, and feed on what the ground gives, but then again fade away and are dead. Therefore let us with all speed give up this quarrel and let the mortals fight their own battles.\textsuperscript{35}

The gods watch the battles of mortals out of interest, but all human struggles are not worthy of serious quarrelling among the gods. Their supremacy and immortality are a foil for the ephemeral and ultimately futile nature of human heroism. The gods cannot die, and Homer reminds us of this most pointedly at those times when a human seems most able to surpass the limits of his mortality and take on some of the power of the gods. This is, in particular, the special role of Apollo. In addition to the description of mortals offered to Poseidon given above, he taunts both Diomedes and Achilleus, at the moment when each is at the height of his \textit{aristeia}, reminding them sharply of their mortal limits, and it is he who strikes the blow which brings Patroklos down.\textsuperscript{36}

The other aspect of divine character which functions as a foil to human activity is their anthropomorphic nature. They are, in effect, reflections of the humans whom they watch; their range of passions, squabbles, intrigues and dealings, both with each other and with mortals, are often very human in motivation and character. But they are deprived of the one supremely human characteristic of mortality; so they do not have to deal with any of its consequences. If a god loses face, it does not matter; he is immortal, part of a select group, and need not fear that obscurity resulting from his loss of honour will deprive him of immortality. Thus Ares, having been wounded by Diomedes and told off by Zeus, is quickly healed and ‘rejoicing in the glory of his strength he sat down beside Kronion’.\textsuperscript{37} His defeat does not matter, as he will not die from it and has no need to fear loss of honour from it. In this way the moral choices of the gods are trivialised and their existence lacks seriousness.

This dual nature is inseparable. Their anthropomorphism, the pettiness of their arguments and their human passions and enmities, are emphasised, not mitigated, by their completely inhuman power. Their easy laughter and intermittent petty squabbles, as much as their great power and supremacy, serve as a sharp contrast to the often ineffective

\textsuperscript{35}I. 21.462-467.
\textsuperscript{36}Apollo repels Diomedes, 5.432ff; speaks to Poseidon, 21.462ff; strikes Patroklos, 16.787ff; taunts Achilleus, 22.7ff. See also Griffin's discussion of the uses of 'godlike' and related epithets, 1980: 82ff.
\textsuperscript{37}I. 5.906.
attempts of the mortals below them to control their fates. The fights between the gods in Book 21 show this contrast very clearly. The gods take sides in the mortal battle, but their quarrels are far from the grim mortal business of killing and dying. Zeus sits on Olympos and laughs; and indeed the contest is laughable. Yet in the middle of it comes Apollo's painfully accurate view of the insignificance of the human race. Humans are both less and more than the gods; less in power and knowledge, but redeemed by their higher moral standards, harder choices, and by the courage with which they face their mortality.

Mortal humour in battle is rather grimmer. There is a kind of black humour in the face of death, particularly prevalent in the midst of battle, most often visible in taunts. Poulydamas shouts over the fallen Prothoënor that the spear which killed him will be a crutch for him as he goes down to the house of Hades; and in a similar vein Deiphobos assigns to Hyperenor the role of escorting Asios to Hades. Aias son of Oileus, having killed Archelochos, taunts, not the dead man, but Poulydamas:

Think over this, Poulydamas, and answer me truly.

Is not this man's death against Prothoënor's a worthwhile exchange?

This black humour adds to the horror of death and slaughter rather than softening it. Although it is often only a variation on the death of one otherwise unheard-of, it does have a wider significance. Usually it is only those less sympathetic characters who indulge in this kind of humour. Particularly grim, therefore, is Patroklos' taunting of Kebriones as oyster-diver and acrobat, as he knocks the latter somersaulting out of his chariot. Such taunting is outside of Patroklos' usual personality. Briseis, mourning for him, sums up his character: 'You were kind always'. This taunt marks the crucial moment when we lose sympathy for him before his death. Our sympathy is transferred to Hektor, whose own death is brought before our eyes a moment later.

From the mortal point of view, the gods are omnipotent and omniscient but also arbitrary and unpredictable. Reverence must be shown to them as they will take offence when ignored even in small matters (as Apollo does

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38Ili. 21.462-467, quoted above.
40Ili. 16.739-750.
41Ili. 19.300.
42Ili. 16.800. Cf. the characterisation of Hektor as kind by Helen as she mourns for him (Ili. 24.774-775.)
when Teukros forgets to pray to him in the archery competition). But they frequently ignore prayers, and even the highest degree of piety is not certain to have any effect. Troy is Zeus' favourite city, because of its piety, and yet he consents to destroy it. On the other hand, a man favoured by the gods has a very powerful ally, both in war and also in lesser matters. Thus Athene trips Aias son of Oileus up in cattle-dung, so that Odysseus gains the victory in the running race.

It has been argued that the gods are usually personifications of psychological motivations, or externalised causes for unexpected events. It is true that very often an event or action which was unexpected or inexplicable was ascribed to the intervention of the gods; such as a bowstring breaking, a dropped whip, a change of intent, a foolish decision, sudden terror or panic in an army, or else sudden courage and ferocity; but the gods cannot always be described in terms of unexpected events or of human character. Athene actively intervenes to return Achilleus' spear to him during the last fight with Hektor. Lesky formulated the idea of 'overdetermination': 'gods and men cause the same actions and impulses simultaneously, and both can be held responsible'. Willcock suggests that the actions of the Iliadic gods, in their interactions with men, fall between two extremes: at one extreme a god may appear as little more than a figure of speech (as does Ares at 7.241); at the other he or she is a totally independent agent, regardless of his or her normal function (Poseidon's removal of Aineias at 20.325ff). In general the gods tend to appear in a guise between these two extremes; 'the god simultaneously retains his function and acts in some sense as an individual'. So when Athene returns Achilleus' spear to him during the duel with Hektor, she is acting both as an physical presence (returning his spear) and fulfilling her function (ensuring his victory). But she is only on his side because he

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44I. 23.774.
45Snell 1953: 29ff.
46Janko 1992: 3; cf. Lloyd-Jones 1971: 10; Griffin 1980: 144ff. Janko uses as example Athene's intervention between Achilleus and Agamemnon, commenting that 'objectified prudence might well persuade, but could not pull hair'. But although his point is well made, the example will not serve: as Alan Griffiths has pointed out to me, a sudden attack of prudence may well make one's head jerk back in the same way as having one's hair pulled from behind.
49Willcock 1970: 3. He describes the two extremes as 'the function without the god and the god without the function'.
is going to win anyway; Hector is a fighter of far less strength than Achilleus and it is clear that he will lose.\textsuperscript{50}

The gods are in theory subject to Zeus, and usually in practice as well, but his control over them is not absolute; they argue with him often and periodically flout his authority if they think they can get away with it. Hera might quake at Zeus' anger but his threats do not silence her for long, and she knows how to get what she wants, whether by deceit, or simply by asking, or by the rather grisly exchange of Troy for her three favourite cities.\textsuperscript{51} Thus although Zeus can assign his son Sarpedon glory, and prevent him from being killed earlier rather than later, he cannot forestall his death completely. 'Do it, then,' says Hera when Zeus raises the idea, 'but not all the rest of us gods shall approve you.'\textsuperscript{52} Clearly, as Taplin notes, there is more to this disapproval than simply an absence of praise.\textsuperscript{53} Moreover if Zeus saves his son all the other gods will want to save theirs also. Thus the gods keep checks on each other.

The only force to which the all gods are subject is fate. They cannot alter fate, although they wield a certain amount of control over the fates of humans. Although the implication is that Zeus could go against the decree of fate and rescue his son, in practice the gods do not go beyond what is fated any more than men do – though both come near to it on occasion. Fate is the one absolute which even the gods must obey.

So it is that a hero has only two chances at any form of immortality: through fame, or through his descendants. His lineage is part of who he is, and his descendants will carry on that lineage. Unlike the other suppliants, who base their pleas on the ransom that would be given for them, Lykaon's argument centres on his family; he bases his plea on who he is as well as what he is worth.\textsuperscript{54} Family is important. Glaukos, after evoking the ephemeral nature of human life, goes on to describe his

\textsuperscript{50}Willcock 1970: 7. He characterises Athene's main function as 'winning, success, and characteristically Greek success' (5). Hektor himself has, at one point, recognised that his defeat is inevitable; see II. 6.447–465.
\textsuperscript{51}By deceit, 14.153ff; by asking, 5.755ff; by exchange, 4.50ff.
\textsuperscript{52}Sarpedon almost killed, 5.662; Hera's disapproval, 16.443. The same formula is used at Zeus' hesitation at the death of Hektor, 22.181, and the destruction of Troy, 4.29.
\textsuperscript{53}Taplin 1992: 132.
\textsuperscript{54}For Lykaon see above. Adrestos is killed by Agamemnon and Menelaos, 6.46ff; Menelaos almost spares him, but is reminded by his brother of the wrongs he has suffered from the Trojans; he strikes Adrestos and Agamemnon spares him. Dolon is killed by Odysseus and Diomedes during their night foray, 10.372ff; Diomedes observes that if released he will only fight or spy on them another day. The sons of Antimachos are killed by Agamemnon, 11.126ff; in their case, the mention of their father's name is their undoing. In all three of these scenes the formula used is the same. Of the others, Kleoboulos, killed by Odysseus, 16.330ff, and Tros, killed by Achilleus at 20.463ff, never even get a chance to speak.
ancestry in considerable detail, finishing proudly, ‘Such is my generation and the blood I claim to be born from’: all this is part of him and makes him who he is. Warriors taunt and enrage each other by boasting of their own ancestors’ prowess or by comparing their opponent’s prowess unfavourably with that of his forebears. The same invidious comparisons may be used to spur on their compatriots; Agamemnon criticises Diomedes in relation to his father Tydeus. A hero is defined not only by his own behaviour but by that of his ancestors and kin, and his own reputation will also reflect on his family and his descendants. Hektor’s fury at Paris stems partially from the disgrace he is bringing on the whole family; Patroklos criticises Achilleus, asking ‘What other man born hereafter shall be advantaged unless you beat aside from the Argives this shameful destruction?’ The warriors in the *Iliad* gain fame not only for their own sakes but also to set a standard for their descendants and to give them prestige. Their descendants are part of their immortality.

In turn, their descendants keep their fame alive. For those who receive a proper burial, their grave-mound forms a tangible focus for their fame, and help to ensure their survival in memory, particularly in the memory of their kin. ‘The mentality here is that one’s memory will survive within the (stable) community with the grave serving as a focus.’ Hektor neatly reverses this; he will return his opponent’s body for burial so that passing ships looking at the tomb of his enemy will say,

‘This is the mound of a man who died long ago in battle, who was one of the bravest, and glorious Hektor killed him.’

So will he speak one day, and my glory will not be forgotten.

In fact, insulting implications on the level of his opponent’s fame aside, Hektor is more likely to be remembered here than his opponent; this is his community. This case is an unusual one, as Troy will be destroyed; and both Greeks and Trojans will have to rely on passers-by to continue the memory associated with the tomb. Clearly this is one reason why death in one’s own land would be preferable; in a foreign land, away from familial and community ties, there is less likelihood of being remembered. A

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55 ταύτης τοις γενεσίς τε καὶ αὐτῶν ἐξχωμαί εἶναι, *II*. 6.211.
56 *II*. 4.370ff.
57 *II*. 16.31–32.
59 *II*. 7.89–91. It is somewhat ironic that this challenge should first be taken up by Menelaos, who is not noted for being the bravest, and then by Aias, whose fate is to be buried on the shore — but he will not die in battle, and he will in fact almost defeat Hektor in this duel.
mound containing the bones of Hektor, or of Achilleus and Patroklos, would be in little danger of being forgotten; but the dead collected in Book 7 and buried in a common grave would not be remembered for so long. The tomb of Ilos, a former king of Troy, occurs as a landmark for the Trojans four times. Nestor says of the mark which Achilleus selects for the chariot-race that it may be the grave of someone long dead; it is probable that a Trojan would have known its exact history.

The hero is cremated with all his weapons, and a *sema* raised over his bones, to show following generations that here is a man who has fought well and died honourably. This is how Achilleus is buried, and how Patroklos will be buried. This is also, as Heubeck points out, what Elpenor is asking of Odysseus: a tomb to act as a focus for his memory. In his case, however, he has no great deeds to celebrate, and must settle for the oar with which he used to row.

Glaukos' speech illustrates clearly the contrast between the ultimate futility and brevity of human life as a whole and the individual's struggle to carve out a destiny beyond the average, to gain lasting fame and thus a place in the memory of mankind. The emphasis laid on the inevitability and finality of death underscores the difficulty as well as the importance of trying to gain immortality through fame.

The Homeric hero accepts death in the abstract, as well as expressing his right as a particular individual to struggle against it. He is aware that shirking or flight is cowardly and therefore shameful. Aias spurs on the

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60II. 10.415, Hektor and the Trojan chiefs hold conference there; 11.369ff, Paris leans on it to shoot Diomedes; 11.166, it marks the midpoint of the field as the Trojans flee past it; and at 24.239 Hermes meets Priam there.

61II. 23.331. Cf. Il. 2.813–814: 'This men call the Hill of the Thicket, but the immortal gods have named it the burial mound of dancing Myrine'. Just as Trojan local knowledge and memory goes further than Achaian, so that of the gods goes further than that of mortals.

62Achilleus: Od. 24.80–85; Patroklos has a temporary *sema* built over him until Achilleus should die, at which point 'the Achaians can make it broad and high — such of you Achaians as may be left to survive me here by the benched ships, after I am gone.' Il. 23.243–248.

63Heubeck and Hoekstra 1989: 82 ad Od. 11.74–78.

64Od. 11.77–78.

65van Wees has argued persuasively that *everyone* — the point is laboured by the Aiantes [12.265ff] — is free both to fight and to refrain from it.' (1988: 14). He argues that *βασιλησ* receive honours from their country in return for prowess in the forefront of battle (18ff) but that in fact any man can fight in the thick of things or withdraw from the fighting if he likes. Certainly there is a small group of powerful aristocrats who do most of the fighting, and are clearly the bravest. However he does not seem to give sufficient weight to the moral consequences of 'shirking' (136): even if it is over to an individual warrior how often and how much to fight, a certain amount of disgrace clings to those who consistently shirk the fighting, particularly if they are of high status. See Hektor's abuse of Paris, 6.326ff, 520ff.
Argives by urging them to dread what will be said of them by others if they flee. He who flees is likely to lose not only his glory but his life; most who flee are killed by their opponents and at one point Hektor declares death as the penalty for cowardice. Moreover a warrior is more likely to die in a panic rout than he is if he stands firm, as Aias points out. Odysseus clearly illustrates the contrast between glory and cowardice:

Yet still, why does the heart within me debate on these things?
Since I know that it is the cowards who walk out of the fighting,
but if one is to win honour in battle, he must by all means stand his ground strongly, whether he be struck or strike down another.

Hainsworth comments, "The monologue "Shall I stand and fight or withdraw?" is a type-scene and therefore the hero always resolves to stand his ground". The pursuit of glory is dangerous; but the life of a coward is worse than death. Achilleus' choice reflects a similar belief. He will die but will attain κλέος ἄφθιτον.

The key word here is ἄφθιτον. In the world of the Iliad, fame is the hero's only chance of immortality. He cannot be made a god; there is no White Isle for Achilleus or divine nepotism for Menelaos. Even Herakles is in the underworld. The Iliad is relentless in its reminders of mortality; there is no return nor escape. Hence the struggle to rise beyond this mortality is particularly fierce. Achilleus' choice is not simply between long life and swift death; it is between the permanent death of obscurity and the fame which is the only form of immortality attainable by mortals. The hero's immortality lies in the preservation of his name and fame in story and particularly in song, and the effectiveness of this form of immortality is brought to our attention every time we read the Iliad.

1.3 Immortality: the Odyssey

The Iliad does not admit the possibility of any exceptions to the rule of 'all men must die', because it derives much of its effect from the necessity of death. In the Odyssey, similarly, Odysseus' companions all must die, so that in the end he can arrive home on his own, the sole survivor after all

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66 Aias 15.560ff; Hektor 15.348ff, cf. also Agamemnon at 2.393, Nestor at 2.425ff.
67 ll. 11.408ff.
68 Hainsworth 1993 ad 11.403. Cf. 21.553-70, 22.98-130; the exception is Menelaos, 17.90-105.
69 Herakles: ll. 18.117. See below, Chapter 1.3.
his heroic adventures. The character of Odysseus is that of the folktale hero who loses all his companions and must undergo various trials, to be answered by cunning or strength or both, to return home. In most of Odysseus' more closely folktale-related adventures, as told to the Phaiakians in Books 9-12, he acts alone, even if his companions are with him. He faces Kirke alone, persuades Polyphemos to get drunk without a word in support from his crew, and is the only one to hear the Sirens' song. He is also the only one to resist the fatal temptation to eat Helios' cattle. It is a frequent characteristic of the folktale hero that, even if he has his brothers or other companions with him, he has most of his adventures when they are asleep or absent.\textsuperscript{70} This is less often a characteristic of epic, when heroes can band together for expeditions such as the Trojan War, the expedition of the Seven against Thebes, and the voyage of the Argonauts.

The \textit{Odyssey} has a strong folktale element, and this is particularly true of the stories which Odysseus tells the Phaiakians. Odysseus' tale is riddled with motifs, situations and characters from folktale: giants, monsters, ogres, witches, magic herbs and far distant lands.\textsuperscript{71} Here, too, is the origin of Helen's wish, echoed by Penelope, to be carried off by the whirlwind, a method of travel which does actually occur in folktales as a means of getting to places which would otherwise be inaccessible.\textsuperscript{72} It is not only death that is implied here. The whirlwind in folktale carries the hero to a land far from all that he or she knows. Penelope's desire is to be carried to the lands from which Odysseus is attempting to return, the lands at the edge of the world where reality becomes slightly blurred and the possibility of immortality exists -- and this, too, is implicit in the way in which Penelope phrases her desire, for the usual fate of those snatched up and whirled away through the air by gods or winds is not death but a form of immortality, the equivalent for women of the rape of youths by Zeus or Eos.\textsuperscript{73} Here is that fusion of death and immortality which shows these opposites not to be as far removed from each other as they might seem. However, as Page points out, care is taken by the poet in blending his more incredible tales with the 'historical' character given to the \textit{Odyssey}. Such

\textsuperscript{70}One example of many: Calvino 1982 no. 100, 'The Neapolitan Soldier' (p. 366ff.). The hero slays a giant and three witches, breaks the spell on the princess in her castle 100 miles away, and returns before his companions wake up.

\textsuperscript{71}Page 1972: 3ff.

\textsuperscript{72}Helen: \textit{Il.} 6. 345; Penelope: \textit{Od.} 20.61f.

\textsuperscript{73}Vermeule 1979: 167-169. Cf. \textit{H. Aph.} 207-208; Zeus send the whirlwind to carry off Ganymede.
magical or unbelievable moments are passed over as lightly as possible. Homer mitigates the effect of the supernatural by giving it little weight in comparison to the actions and reactions of his characters; he also gives it less weight by putting things into the mouths of his characters when he himself does not wish to vouch for their truth.

The traces of immortality in the *Odyssey* are presented in this way. Although, as has often been noted, the *Odyssey* is more lenient than the *Iliad* when it comes to letting in fantastic elements, nonetheless it is still very careful not to let them take over. Immortality, too, is a folktale motif and as such it is kept to a minimum. Theoretically, however, it is possible for a mortal to become immortal in the *Odyssey*. Kalypso twice says that she would have made Odysseus immortal. Menelaos tells Telemachos that Proteus has told him that he will not die in Argos, but will be taken to the Elysian Field for being Zeus’ son-in-law, in which case (one would assume) Helen will also. And Herakles, according to Odysseus, is now to be found not only in Hades (as in the *Iliad*) but also on Olympos. The immortalisation of a human is presented at second- or even third-hand; it takes on a quality of hearsay, something which is not stated but only reported. It lacks the authority of the poet’s own direct words. Even those who speak of bestowing immortality do so in terms which make the possibility seem more remote. Kalypso first tells Hermes that she ‘had hopes’ that she could make Odysseus immortal. Later she tells Odysseus himself that if he knew what was in store for him, ‘you would stay here with me and be the lord of this household and be an immortal’. The two conditional verbs, added to the fact that he has been staying with her for seven years, in which time she has not made him immortal, combine to give the impression of a fond hope which not only will not, but could not ever be realised. This impression is strengthened by the juxtaposition of the wish and Kalypso’s complaint about the gods who are always resentful of those mortal men

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74 Page 1972: 57 gives the example of Kirke’s enchantment of the crew, when the actual spell (and the removal of it) are described as briefly as possible.
75 Aristotle fr. 163 Rose (= Σ T in *II.* 19); see Griffin 1977: 40 with n. 13.
76 *Od.* 5.135–136, 208–209; cf. 23.335–336. On the possible use of ambrosia to make him immortal, see below, Chapter 4.3.
77 *Od.* 4.561–570; see Dawe 1993 ad 561–569 for the possibility of interpolation in this passage.
79 *Od.* 5.135–136.
80 *Od.* 5.208–209.
whom goddesses choose as their 'lawful husbands'. Nonetheless, in the end Kalypso's speech to Hermes shows resignation, as she yields to the will of Zeus:

"But since there is no way for another god to elude the purpose of aegis-bearing Zeus or bring it to nothing, let him go, let him go, if he himself is asking after this and desires it, out on the barren sea...

... I will freely give him my counsel and hold back nothing, so that all without harm he can come back to his own country." 

She did not really expect to be allowed to keep Odysseus with her, and to make him immortal. She wished to make him a god; the phrase 'immortal and ageless, ἀθάνατον καὶ ἀγήρων, is elsewhere used only of the gods themselves. In the Iliad, such a possibility is not hinted at; even in the more permissive world of the Odyssey it can only be mentioned, not acted upon.

The second example of immortalisation, that of Menelaos, has less of this quality of impossibility about it. The question of family descent comes into play: Menelaos himself can claim only distant descent from the gods, but Helen is the daughter of Zeus. However, Proteus is not describing the immortality of the kind which Kalypso would like to bestow upon Odysseus. Helen and Menelaos are to be conveyed to the Elysian Field, which is described in terms which make it very clear that it is a paradise for mortals which is being offered, not any kind of equivalence with the gods. It is described as the place 'where there is made the easiest life for mortals', and the West Wind blows 'for the refreshment of mortals'.

The emphasis on mortals and the absence of any mention of the gods in this short description shows that for Menelaos and Helen to be transported here is not in any way transgressive of the boundaries between human and divine existence. This is one further variation on the theme of special honours offered to the gods' favourites; Menelaos is διότρεφης, favoured

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81 Od. 5.118ff. On the jealousy of the gods where this kind of relationship is concerned, see Heubeck et al. 1988: 266, ad 5.120.
82 Od. 5. 137–144.
83 Od. 5.136. Elsewhere in the Odyssey it is used of Kalypso (5.218); of the gold and silver dogs made by Hephaistos to watch over Alkinoos' door (7.94); and twice more of Kalypso's desire to make Odysseus immortal (7.257, 23.336). cf. Iliad 2.447 (Athena's aegis); 12.323 (Sarpedon on the gods); 17.444 (Achilles' horses); 8.539 (Hektor, on the night before he dies, delights in his triumph and wishes he were immortal).
84 Menelaos, like Helen, is descended from Zeus; his father Atreus is the son of Pelops, son of Tantalos, son of Zeus. However, his descent from Zeus is several generations distant. Helen, as the daughter of Zeus, has a far more immediate claim.
85 Od. 4.565, 568.
by Zeus. It also means that, although Menelaos has missed out on the violent death which is usual for heroes, his passing will not be completely ordinary and unremarkable.\textsuperscript{86}

The third example of immortality which the \textit{Odyssey} offers is the case of Herakles. In the \textit{Iliad}, Achilleus compares Herakles' fate with his own:

\begin{quote}
For not even the strength of Herakles fled away from destruction, although he was dearest of all to lord Zeus, son of Kronos, but his fate beat him under, and the wearisome anger of Hera.\textsuperscript{87}
\end{quote}

This must imply that Herakles is dead in Hades, or there would be no point in the comparison which Achilleus is making with his own fate.\textsuperscript{88}

The \textit{Odyssey}, however, presents him in both places:

\begin{quote}
After him I was aware of powerful Herakles; his image, that is, but he himself among the immortal gods enjoys their festivals, married to sweet-stepping Hebe, child of great Zeus and Hera of the golden sandals. All around him was a clamour of the dead as of birds scattering scared in every direction; but he came on, like dark night . . .\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

Lines 602-604 were recognised as interpolations even in antiquity; and it seems out of place for Herakles' \textit{εἰδωλος} to be in Hades lamenting his former life while he himself is living the life of the blessed gods on Olympos.\textsuperscript{90} As Gantz points out, we would not expect such an \textit{εἰδωλος} to possess the mind and intelligence - the \textit{φρήν} and \textit{νόος} - of the living man; rather we would expect these attributes to belong to that part of Herakles, 'he himself' (\textit{αὐτός}), who is on Olympos.\textsuperscript{91} Nothing we have met elsewhere indicates that a mind can be in two places at once in this

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\textsuperscript{86} A similar motivation may lie behind the strange circumstances surrounding Odysseus' death, \textit{Od}. 11.134–136; see also Dawe 1993 ad 134–135. For the violence of heroic death, see Brellich 1958: 88ff.

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{II}. 18.117–119.

\textsuperscript{88} Gantz 1993: 460; he makes the further point that it is unlikely that Homer is making an innovation here, as Achilleus would then have stressed the point more in case we drew the wrong conclusions from his silence.

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Od}. 11.601–606.

\textsuperscript{90} These lines were regarded by ancient scholars as an interpolation by Onomakritos in the 6th century BC, but see Apthorp 1980: 26; Heubeck and Hoekstra 1989: 114 ad 601–27. Even if the lines are a late interpolation, the story of Herakles' immortality is in existence by the beginning of the 6th century, as is shown by an unpublished Orientalising krater showing Herakles and Hebe in a chariot flanked by other gods (Samos, excavation depository, no number; from Samos, 7th century BC; \textit{LIMC} Herakles 3330); cf. a Middle Corinthian aryballos showing the couple escorted by Apollo and the Muses and welcomed by the Charites, Athena and Aphrodite, with Zeus, Hera and Hermes to one side (Rome, Villa Giulia, no number; early 6th century BC, from Vulci, Necr. dell'Osteria; \textit{LIMC} Herakles 3331\textsuperscript{c}). See below, Chapter 4.5.

\textsuperscript{91} Gantz 1993: 406.
way; rather, elsewhere the invariable rule is that the εἴδωλον cannot enter Hades until the physical body is dead and burnt, and once in, it cannot get out again.92

However, there are exceptions to the rule. In the Odyssey, Odysseus is saved from drowning by Ino Leukothea:

The daughter of Kadmos, sweet-stepping Ino called Leukothea, saw him. She had once been one who spoke as a mortal, but now in the gulfs of the sea she holds degree as a goddess.93

Similarly in the Iliad Aineias, reciting his genealogy to Achilleus, describes the sons of Tros:

Ilos and Assarakos and godlike Ganymedes who was the loveliest born of the race of mortals, and therefore the gods caught him away to themselves, to be Zeus’ wine-pourer, for the sake of his beauty, so he might be among the immortals.94

These two are both from previous generations of heroes; they are peripheral to the action, yet it would not be easy to leave them out altogether. The omission of Ganymede’s immortal status, especially, would cause a conspicuous gap in Aineias’ genealogy. Moreover, the existence of such an example in the past of the Iliad acts as a foil to the present, grimmer age, in which the divide between heroes and gods is greater, and the gods will aid their favourites only to the extent of postponing their deaths if the timing is wrong – not of preventing them altogether.95

1.4 Memnon and the Epic Cycle

The texts of the Cyclic epics are later than Homer. In this thesis I follow West’s dating for Homer; he dates the Iliad to 670–640 BC ‘with perhaps a preference for the decade 660–650’; the Odyssey presumably falls into approximately the same timespan.96 For the Epic Cycle, I follow Griffin

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92 Heubeck and Hoekstra 1989 ad Od. 11.601–27, who also make the point that elsewhere in Homer, Hebe is unmarried.
93 Od. 5.333–335.
94 Il. 20.232–235.
95 For myths which present interactions between humans and gods as suffering a constant slow decline, see below, Chapter 3.2.i.
96 West 1995: 218; he suggests that ‘most of those who subscribe to an eighth-century dating do so because most other people do’ (203). See Janko 1982 for the more traditional mid-eighth-century dating; on p. 200 he gives a table summarising the dates for Homer and the Hymns.
and Lesky in placing them 'in general in the late seventh century'.

However, this dating applies to the written texts, and the poems and - most importantly - the myths are older. It is a central tenet of oral poetry theory that the poems are not fixed; however much the poets may believe them to stay the same, they are fluid, altering to fit changes in situation. In assuming influence between the Cyclic epics and the Homeric epics, it should be remembered that the existence of the myths in an oral tradition for a considerable time before they were written down must inevitably have led to a great deal of mixing of characters, motifs and situations between them. The action of the Iliad takes place on the plain before Troy, and within the walls of Troy, over a space of about fifty days in the ninth year of the Trojan War. Nonetheless it covers a much wider span. It also constantly extends beyond its own borders showing or implying knowledge of other times, events, places and people, both past and future, whose existence is woven into the fabric of the epic. The Odyssey similarly refers to myths outside of its central theme. The epics were not self-contained units; they drew upon a wide and flexible tapestry of myth, and to speak of them in terms of original and imitation is misleading, for they are a part of the same fluid and variable tradition.

The Epic Cycle presents us with a very different and far less austere world in comparison to Homer. In the Epic Cycle, immortality is easier to attain. Memnon is immortalised and Achilleus taken to the White Isle in

97 Griffin 1977: 39 n. 9; Lesky 1966: 82. Cf. Davies 1989: 4, dating 'most' Cyclic epics to the second half of the sixth century; in contrast Jouan 1980 dates them variously from c. 700 BC (the Aithiopis) to c. 645 BC (the Nostoi). Severyns 1928: 313 places the Aithiopis as early as the eighth century, adding that it was written to follow the Iliad.


99 This is particularly worth keeping in mind in discussion of the Aithiopis and the Iliad. Concerning these two epics, neoanalysts argue that the story of Hektor's slaying of Patroklos and Achilleus' subsequent slaying of Hektor in the Iliad are based on a similar structure involving Antilochos — Memnon — Achilleus in the Aithiopis. Kullmann 1984 offers a good summary of the question of neoanalysis from the neoanalysts' point of view; see Page 1961 and 1963 for the other side of the argument. Edwards points out that the neoanalytical approach 'has tended to overlook the fundamental distinction between a specific text and the oral narrative tradition upon which that text is based' (Edwards 1985: 219f; cf. Willcock 1983: 485 n. 8, who, however, contends that most neoanalysts prefer to 'take the more natural view' and argue on the basis of the mythological material contained in the Aithiopis rather than the poem itself). As far as the Antilochos/Patroklos question is concerned, I would follow Willcock (1973: 8) in concluding that the two stories 'present in the Iliad what would in textual criticism be called a contaminated tradition. Each has affected the other. They co-exist. Neither is by now the absolute model.'

100 Kullmann 1984: 310 argues that the 'core' of the Aithiopis must be pre-Homeric, and the Iliad is an 'imitation' of it. It does not seem to me that enough remains of the Aithiopis to enable us to draw such a sweeping conclusion, and I am not convinced that later details of the Antilochos story necessarily stem from the Aithiopis.
the *Aithiopis*. Kastor and Polydeukes have a form of immortality on alternate days in the *Kypria*, and Artemis not only removes Iphigeneia to Tauris, substituting a stag on the altar, but bestows immortality on her as well. Tydeus nearly receives immortality from Athene in the *Thebais*, and Penelope, Telemachos and Telegonos are all made immortal at the end of the *Telegony*.

Jasper Griffin comments, ‘The very different procedure of the Epic Cycle [from the *Iliad*] indicates profoundly different attitudes to the fundamental nature of life and death, and consequently to human heroism and the relation of men to the gods.’ However, although it is now clear what the Epic Cycle is not, it is less clear what it is. The remaining fragments and Proklos’ summaries are so short and frequently so uninformative that it is difficult to speak in any detail about the view of life and death which the Cycle presented – if, indeed, the different epics of the Cycle, composed by different poets at different times, showed continuity of thought. In fact it seems, to judge by the remaining fragments and more particularly by Proklos’ summaries, that the Cyclic epics were consistent in their liking for the fantastic. Jasper Griffin has illustrated the many areas in which the Epic Cycle differs from Homer. He is at pains to emphasise ‘the uniqueness of Homer’ by comparison with the Epic Cycle. However, a little further consideration brings out the fact that the Cyclic epics differ in their emphasis on the fantastic and non-human, not only from Homer, but from much other early literature.

The tendency of the Epic Cycle to adjust the boundaries between living and dead, mortals and immortals, is particularly prevalent in those epics which deal with the Trojan War, the events which led up to it, and its aftermath. In these epics we find the immortalisations of Iphigeneia and the Dioskouroi (the *Kypria*), Memnon (*Aithiopis*), and, right at the end,

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102 Dioskouroi: *Kypria* fr. 8 Bernabé (= Clem. Alex. Protr. 2.30.5); Iphigeneia: *Kypria* Arg. vv. 45–49 Bernabé (= Prokl. Chrest. 141–143 Severyns); see Gantz 1993: 582–588.
103 Tydeus: *Thebais* fr. 9 Bernabé; Telemachos, Penelope, Telegonos: *Telegony* Arg. 1 vv. 18–20 Bernabé (= Prokl. Chrest. 329 Severyns). I am doubtful of the authenticity of this last, rather wholesale example of Cyclic immortalising; ‘Que d’invraisemblances! que de mauvais goût!’ as Severyns puts it (1928: 410); cf. Severyns 1938: 90 where he describes it as ‘à la fois romanesque et ridicule’.
104 Griffin 1977: 43.
105 Some allowance should be made for Proklos’ interest in fantastic and superhuman elements, which would cause him to include details such as immortalisations and transformations in his summaries when less fantastic material might be passed over. In spite of this, the concentration of such material in his summaries and in the remaining fragments, few though they are, still make the differences between the Cycle and Homer very clear. See Griffin 1977: 40–41.
106 Griffin 1977.
Penelope, Telegonos, and Telemachos (Telegony). We also find Achilleus' afterlife on the White Island (Aithiopis), and two appearances of his ghost (Ilias Mikra, Nostoi).

Many of these motifs appear first here (which does not mean that they did not exist previously), and some of them appear only here. It is impossible, now, to tell whether the Cyclic poets invented many of these fantastic elements, or whether they were already inherent in the mythical corpus. Since an immortalised hero is largely inactive, from one point of view it makes little difference to the myth whether he dies or is made immortal; either way he will be out of the sphere of action of his fellow humans. Any immortalised human does very little when he has been immortalised. His adventuring days may be said to be over, and he will no longer be doing any deeds fit to have stories told or poems sung about them. However, to say that it does not matter whether he dies or simply disappears from the story into a higher level of existence depends on a particular understanding of the importance of death in shaping the hero's life, and also in shaping the audience's expectations. It may not make any difference to the story itself; the hero will still strive for great deeds and risk danger and pain because he thinks he is going to die. But if the audience knows that he will actually be immortalised, they may be forgiven for losing some of their sympathy for him. The knowledge of inescapable death is the key to Homer; but the Epic Cycle is more concerned with finding a happy ending.

Memnon is one of those heroes whose immortalisation is mentioned only in the Cycle. He is an interesting figure, as his story is preserved in the early literary sources only in fragments and summaries; yet the primary source, the Aithiopis, was a very popular story, and Memnon himself an attractive figure, as the large number of artistic representations make clear. He is one of the last two Trojan hopes, the other being Penthesileia. Proklos, in his summary of the Aithiopis, relates that Memnon came to help the Trojans, and Thetis told her son τὰ κατὰ τὸν Μέμνονα. In the subsequent battle Antilochos was slain by Memnon.

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107 The obvious exception to this is those heroes who are immortalised and then become the subject of hero-cult; for these see below, Chapter 5.5.

108 In speaking of Homer's superiority to the Epic Cycle it is important to remember that the Cycle, whatever its literary merits, was still very influential. Schefold observes that 'The large number of late archaic representations of scenes from the Aithiopis suggests that this was an epic poem every bit as popular as the Iliad' (Schefold 1992: 267).

109 Whatever τὰ κατὰ τὸν Μέμνονα were, they were clearly well enough known not to require further explanation to those reading Proklos' summary. Kullmann (1984: 310) argues that what Thetis tells Achilleus in the Aithiopis is parallel to her warning to him about
Then Achilleus killed Memnon; and Eos begged immortality (ἀθανασία) from Zeus and gave it to him.

The story follows much the same lines in all later sources. But there is one difference: the motif of immortality does not appear in any other surviving literary source which deals with the story of Memnon before the Roman period. Memnon is mentioned in Book 4 of the Odyssey, described as 'the glorious son of the shining Dawn', as the slayer of Antilochos. So far the tradition follows the Aithiopis, but it says nothing of Memnon's final fate, although Homer would be unlikely to mention Memnon's immortalisation whether it was known to him or not. Later sources, both literary and artistic, seem rather to deny the tradition. Strabo mentions a dithyramb Memnon by Simonides, in which Memnon was 'said to have been buried near Paltus in Syria by the river Badas'. Pindar mentions the death of Memnon on three occasions, and each of them makes it clear that it is Memnon's death, and not his immortalisation, that he is envisaging. However, as he is praising Achilleus at the time, we would not expect Memnon's immortality to appear in this context in any case. Later again, Aischylos presented a trilogy, in the second play of which (according to Plutarch) he adapted Homer's kerostasia between Achilleus and Hektor into a psychostasia between Achilleus and Memnon. None of the testimonia, however, mention the outcome of the weighing. This would seem to count against Memnon, as it difficult to envisage a scenario in which Memnon's death was depicted by such an effective metaphor, and was then completely reversed. Moreover, Pollux says that Eos came by means of the geranos to fetch the body of her son; he does not give any name for the play in which this happened, but it excludes the possibility of immortality for Memnon.
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in that particular case. Even Apollodoros, who tends to mention any tradition of immortality, is silent on the matter.

The artistic tradition does nothing to support Memnon’s immortality. Instead, like the literary tradition, it tends in the other direction and in various ways it is made clear that the Memnon portrayed by the artists was thought to die. The iconography of Memnon’s story can be divided into four main categories:

1. Memnon takes leave of Eos and Tithonos
2. Memnon is fully armed, with Ethiopian entourage
3. Memnon fights Achilleus; sometimes the psychostasia is shown
4. Eos removes the dead body of Memnon and mourns him

The second schema says nothing about Memnon’s death one way or the other, but in what follows I will set the iconography of the other three categories in its wider context and try to show that Memnon, in the variant of the story adapted by the artistic tradition, died and was not immortalised.

The first group of vases shows Memnon taking leave of Eos (and sometimes also Tithonos). Scenes showing departing warriors are common in Greek art. Such scenes often show the warrior pouring a libation before departure, or else in the actual moment of stepping into his chariot. There are a huge number of generic scenes in which the warriors are given no names and no distinguishing features, and these are not meant to refer to any particular myth. Some, however, can be classified as depictions of a particular hero or myth, by inscriptions or iconography. For some heroes, the motif became a standard part of their iconography, as

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116 On the depiction of scenes from the epics, see Cook 1983, who finds that in general ‘artists did not make much use of poetry and that, anyhow for the Iliad and the Odyssey, they were indifferent to the high spots of the epics’ (1983: 5). Although they draw extensively upon the myths from which the epics are drawn, they are rarely concerned with showing the exact detail of a particular scene from a particular epic. See also Schefold 1972.
117 See Wrede 1916. In some cases the dividing line between generic scene and specific myth is very thin; e.g. Berge describes a red-figure bell krater on which (unusually) the departing warrior is sitting down (Chicago, University of Chicago 1922.2197, c. 450 BC, from Capua; *ARV* 2 610.21: Manner of the Niobid Painter; *Add* 2 268; Moon and Berge 1979: 208–210 (no. 117) with pll.). Beazley describes it as ‘warrior at home’ (*loc. cit.*) and as ‘libation before departure’ (*CB* II: 78) but Berge suggests that it is ‘probably a god or hero, possibly Achilles’ (Moon and Berge 1979: 210). For a different problem, see a vase on which the warrior is named but nothing further is known of him: Skeparnos, holding a cup while Nike pours for him, with Oineus standing to the right watching, on an Attic red-figure pelike (Rome, Vatican, Mus. Greg. Etr. H 522, c. 440 BC, from Vulci; *ARV* 2 1045.4 [Lykaon Painter]; *LIMC* Skeparnos 1*).
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is the case for the arming of Hektor, and the departure of Amphiaraos.¹¹⁸ For others it occurs more rarely; the arming of Achilleus is common, but only a single vase shows his departure from Skyros.¹¹⁹

One feature is characteristic of such scenes: the heroes involved do not return to the homes from which they are sent off with such loving care.¹²⁰ Schefold comments that such departure scenes ‘provide a fine opportunity to convey a sense of the looming threat of war and to contrast with it the noble character of the departing warriors’. They are in keeping with the Greek fondness for expressing the emotional depth of a calamity by depicting the moment before it happens. The scene gains added effect if the viewer knows that the hero will not come back, whether the hero himself is ignorant of his fate, or in full knowledge of it but going nonetheless, as do Achilleus and Amphiaraos. These scenes can be compared with similar scenes on Attic white-ground lekythoi, with the grave stele as a backdrop; on such vases the warrior represents the dead man, saying farewell to his wife as he departs this life.¹²¹ The hero is usually given centre place in the scene, and, especially in the early archaic

¹¹⁸ Hektor: see LIMC Hektor 12–22, Andromache I 4–13; Schefold 1992: 220–222. The sympathy inspired by Hektor’s leave-taking from Andromache is beautifully evoked on a Chalkidian krater on which the tenderness with which Andromache bids farewell to her husband is contrasted with Helen’s scorn as she turns away from Paris (Würzburg, Martin von Wagner Mus. L 160, 530–520 BC; LIMC Andromache 4, Alexandros 68*; Rumpf Chalk. Vas. 13 no. 14 pll. 31–34; Schefold 1992: 220–221 pl. 271). Amphiaraos: LIMC Amphiaraos 7–25; see Schefold 1993: 283–285. The fact that Amphiaraos does attain a degree of immortality does not alter the feeling of doom inspired by many of the vases, which concentrate on his betrayal from Eriphyle and his prophecy of death for the Seven. Pindar is the first surviving source to mention his immortality (at Pyth. 8.38ff he prophesies to the Epigoni) and also the first to mention his disappearance into the ground (Nem. 9.25–27, 10.8–9); so in the Thebais, he may have simply died. However, even if he was going forth to attain some form of immortality, the doom-ridden atmosphere of his departure scenes is not altered; either way he will not be returning home. In this case immortality is, at the most, second best. Compare the vases depicting the arming of the Seven, in which Amphiaraos may be recognised by the chariot which will be swallowed with him, and once by his priestly robe: Tiverios 1981: 155–156; the robe is shown on a red-figure hydria by one of the earlier mannerists: Basle, Coll. Borowski, c. 470 BC (not in Beazley); Tiverios 1981 pl. 44.1–2; Boardman 1976: 16 pl 3. 3–4; Richter 1970: 331ff. (with pll. 79–82a) describes it as ‘the long chiton of the charioteers’. See also the discussion in Boardman 1992.

¹¹⁹ FIG. 3: Boston, MFA 33.56; Attic red-figure volute krater, c. 450 BC; ARV² 600.12 (Niobid Painter); Simon 1963: 57–59 pl. 11.7; LIMC Achilleus 176*. For scenes featuring the arming of Achilleus, see Schefold 1992: 214–219.

¹²⁰ There are exceptions, but their number is relatively small. Five vases show Neoptolomos’ departure from Skyros (LIMC 10–14) although his departure is shadowed by his father’s fate; ten show Bellerophon leaving Proitos (LIMC Proitos 1–10) although here again this departure is made sinister by the letter, which is usually in plain sight on vases showing this scene. Vases showing Theseus taking leave of Aigeus (LIMC Theseus 163–171) reverse the usual implication: Theseus will return, but Aigeus will die first.

¹²¹ For example FIG. 1: Athens, NM 1818; Attic white-ground lekythos; c. 440 BC, from Eretria; ARV² 998.161 (Achilles Painter); AHS 186–187.
period, he is often larger than everyone else in the field. On some of
the vases which show Amphiaraos, the artist throws his fate into relief by
placing Eriphyle in the field, the only one who is not pleading with
Amphiaraos to stay; on one vase the artist has even shown her holding
the infamous necklace. The painter has emphasised the doom-ridden
atmosphere, including in the scene lizards, a snake and a scorpion (all ill-
omened) as well as the seer Halimedes, clutching his head in despair. A
quieter, more subtle foreboding hangs over the depiction of Achilleus'
parting from Deidameia; the two look gravely at each other, as they
formalise their marriage and bid each other farewell at the same time.

A similar mood of foreboding is present on one of the vases showing
Memnon's departure from his family. Eos stands at the left, pouring
into the phiale which Memnon holds out, her free hand lifted in a gesture
of concern. His face obscured by his helmet, he is almost hidden behind
the great round shield with its crouching lion device, which dominates
the centre of the scene. Behind him sits his aged father Tithonos, leaning
on his staff; in contrast to his age is the youth of Memnon's wife, who
stands beside his chair, her hand upraised in a gesture of dismay which
mirrors that of Eos. The second group of vases shows the fight between Memnon and
Achilleus. This was by far the most popular of the scenes showing
Memnon. The fight with Achilleus follows the standard pattern for such
fights; Memnon is almost invariably placed on the right side, and
Achilleus on the left (superior) side. The goddesses Eos and Thetis are

\[\text{Footnotes:}\]
122 Schefold 1992: 214 gives the example of Achilleus arming in the presence of Peleus,
Thetis and Neoptolemos, on a black-figure plate by Lydos (Athens, NM 507, c. 560 BC; \textit{ABV}
112.56; \textit{Para} 44; \textit{Add}^2 31; Schefold 1992: 214–215 pl. 267).
123 \textbf{FIG. 2:} Once Berlin, Staatl. Mus. F 1655, now lost; Corinthian column krater, c. 560 BC;
125 \textbf{FIG. 3:} Simon 1963: 59; for the vase see above, n. 119. Here she holds his helmet and
spear for him; compare her calm demeanour on this vase with the description in Statius'
\textit{Achilleis} (1.927ff).
126 \textbf{FIG. 4:} Attic red-figure stamnos, Brussels, Mus. Roy. R 284 (formerly Mannheim, Reiss-
Mus. Cg 59); c. 460 BC, from Petrignano, near Castiglione del Lago; \textit{ARV}^2 493.1; \textit{Add}^2 249
(Painter of Brussels R 284); Schefold 1980 pll. 84.1–4,85.5–6.
127 For the raised hand cf. Munich, Antikenslg. 2415, an Attic red-figure stamnos; c. 440–430
BC, from Vulci; \textit{ARV}^2 1143.2 (Kleophon Painter); \textit{Para} 455; \textit{Add}^2 334; \textit{CVA} Munich 5 pl.
256.1, 257–258; \textit{LIMC} Hektor 27*; departure of a warrior (Hektor?); the woman standing
behind him (Hekabe?) lifts her hand in the same gesture as that of Eos.
128 For lists and discussion of the vases showing the fight and the \textit{psychostasia} see CB ii
14–19; \textit{LIMC} Memnon 14–60; van Essen 1964.
129 For the significance of left and right (the 'principe de dexteralité'), see de la Coste-
Messelière 1944–45: 20–21.
usually shown behind their sons; in fact their presence is enough to establish this interpretation of the scene as probable, on a vase which does not bear inscriptions. On some vases Athene replaces Thetis, further emphasising Achilles' success; Memnon has no such powerful patron. In keeping with the epic tradition, Antilochos is sometimes depicted fallen between the heroes' feet. In many of the vases, Memnon is already falling back, fleeing or faltering, as Achilles raises his spear for the final thrust.

Several vases show the *psychostasia*. Usually it is Hermes who holds the scales, and weighs the *psychai* of the two fighting warriors, as they themselves fight nearby; sometimes their mothers watch anxiously or supplicate Zeus. The *psychostasia*, effective image though it is, is less helpful in determining Memnon's fate than the *principe de dexteralité* mentioned above and the vases which show him falling back. This does not preclude the immortalisation of Memnon as mentioned in the *Aithiopis*; at the most it shows that the vase-painters had more interest in showing his death than the immortalisation which followed it. But the bias in the Memnon scenes toward scenes which imply his death is significant.

The last group of vases shows Eos removing the dead body of Memnon and mourning him. This schema, most of all, assumes the death of Memnon and not his immortalisation; there would be no need for Eos to bear him away if he were immortal. On a black-figure lekythos in Gela, his countrymen lift him, as the Achaisans lift the body of Patroklos on the fine calyx-krater in Agrigento. Some vases show Hypnos and Thanatos

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130 Athene replaces Thetis: for example Boston, MFA 97.368, Attic red-figure calyx krater; c. 490-480 BC, from Vulci; *ARV*² 290.1 (Tyszkiewicz Painter); *Para* 355; *Add*² 210; CB ii 13ff, pl. 25-26 with suppl. pl. 13.1.
131 For example Florence, Mus. Arch. 4210, Chalkidian black-figure amphora fr; c. 530 BC, Chalkidian Inscription Painter; *Rumpf ChalkVas* pl. 1; CB II 15; *LIMC* Memnon 35. This is one of the few vases showing Memnon (and Eos) on the left.
132 For example London, BM E 67, Attic red-figure cup; c. 490-480 BC, from Vulci; *ARV*² 386.3 (Castelgiorgio Painter); *LIMC* Memnon 53*.
133 For discussion of this theme, and its relation to and difference from the Homeric *kerostasia*, see Peifer 1989: 33–57; Dietrich 1965: 294ff; Dietrich 1964. For the vases see *LIMC* Memnon 14–25, Eos 293–299 with comm.
134 The body of Memnon lifted by Ethiopians: Attic black-figure lekythos, Gela, Mus. 41; c. 490 BC; *ABL* 264.37 (Emporion Painter); *CVA* Gela 3 pl. 23 (2400) 1–4; *LIMC* Memnon 61. The body of Patroklos lifted by hoplites: Attic red-figure calyx krater, Agrigento, Mus. Region. C. 156; from Pezzino, c. 500 BC; *ARV*² 32.2 (Pezzino Group), *Para* 324, *Add*² 157; Schefold 1992: 254–255 pl. 309; *Veder Greco* no. 72; Peifer 1989: no. 116, pl. 8; for the interpretation as Patroklos see Arias 1969: 196ff.
lifting him, as they lift the body of Sarpedon. But most often it is Eos herself who raises her son and carries him away. Unlike those vases in which Eos carries off her young lovers, Memnon is limp, his eyes closed in death; and he is often larger and heavier than they are. On some vases he seems too heavy to lift; his body is awkward, unlike those of the graceful young men whom she can lift as if they weighed nothing. On the cup by Douris, Eos struggles to raise her dead son; it seems that his dead weight will be too much for her. The Terpaulos Painter has shown Eos trying to raise him, but the uncomfortable position he is in — his head fallen back, his arms at odd angles, his knee bent under him — shows a clumsiness that has nothing to do with life.

Once Eos has lifted her son, as she carries him away, he seems easier to cope with. The initial effort of lifting him accomplished, she can carry him away as lightly as she carries one of her lovers. It seems that the passage through the air makes him smaller and lighter, as the two traditions become conflated.

There is one vase usually placed in this category which does not belong there. It is a black-figure olpe in Hamburg, dating from c. 500 BC, and it shows a winged goddess trying to carry a warrior off towards the right. He is alive still; his eye is wide open, he grasps his shield and spear still, and his foot touches the ground; he is facing to the left, and it looks as though he is not willing to be carried off. The goddess, if such she is, herself looks back behind her as if watching for pursuit.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{135}}\text{For example Athens, NM 505, Attic black-figure cup; first quarter of the fifth century BC, from Velanidze; ABV 564.580 (Haimon Group); Add\textsuperscript{2} 136; Shapiro 1993: 138 fig. 91 (no. 69); LIMC Memnon 69, Eos 320. On this vase Memnon is identified by inscription, as Sarpedon is on Euphronios' krater (Fig. 8: New York, MMA 1972.11.10, c. 515 BC; Simon and Hirmer 1981 pll. 102–103; Scheefold 1992: 249–250 pl. 303; van Bothmer 1972: no. 18).}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{136}}\text{FIG. 5: Paris, Louvre G 115, Attic red-figure cup; c. 485–480 BC, from S. Maria Capua Vetere; ARV\textsuperscript{2} 434,74 (Douris); Para 375; Add\textsuperscript{2} 237; Scheefold 1989: 254 pl 228; LIMC Eos 324*. This impression of weight and awkwardness can be seen on the krater by the Eucharides Painter showing Hypnos and Thanatos laying down the body of Sarpedon; Attic red-figure calyx krater, Paris, Louvre G 163; from Cerveteri, 480–470 BC; ARV\textsuperscript{2} 227.12 (Eucharides Painter); Para 347; Add\textsuperscript{2} 99; Peifer 1989: 227–229, 338, no. 143; von Bothmer 1987: 9 fig. 5.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{137}}\text{Attic red-figure lekythos, Geneva, Mus. 21132; 490–480 BC (Terpaulos Painter); LIMC Eos 323*, Memnon 76*; Peifer 1989: 203, 337, no. 124.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{138}}\text{For example London, BM 1910.4–15.2, Six technique lekythos; first quarter of the fifth century BC; ABL 236.80 (Diosphos Painter); LIMC Eos 331*.}\]


\[\text{\textsuperscript{140}}\text{The unidentified Flügelfrau appears frequently in the archaic period, particularly in cup tondos; Brijder 1983: 116–118; Shapiro 1993: 53–55. Iris is certainly winged in archaic}\]
It is now generally agreed that this olpe does not show the removal of the dead Memnon; the warrior is very much alive. Moreover he is still fully armed, whereas Memnon is always naked. Nor is it likely to depict the immortalisation of Memnon. We might argue that the immortality of Memnon from the *Aithiopis*, in any case a folktale motif ('and he lived happily ever after') continued to appear in an oral context, although it does not show in the literature. However, the split between the oral and literary traditions is not so great that a variant of this kind is likely to vanish altogether and only appear on one vase. More to the point, immortality is unlikely to be depicted in this way; the warrior seems rather too reluctant. Peifer suggests that this vase shows a conflation of two themes: the removal of Memnon's body, and the abduction scenes.

This series of vases culminates in the beautiful vase by the Painter of the Vatican Mourner. Three possible interpretations have been suggested for this vase: Eos and Memnon, Oinone and Paris, or Europa and Sarpedon. I will take the last first, as it is the least likely. Simon argues that the female figure has no wings, and therefore cannot be Eos. However, as Schefold points out, Europa does not figure in other pictorial art, as are Nike, Eris and Harpies, Keres and Erinyes. However, it is not easy to tell who is who.

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141 Weiss 1986: 783 suggests that its likeness to other vases showing Eos and Memnon's body argues for this interpretation (see *LIMC* Eos 317, 318*). But on both of these vases Memnon is clearly dead. The same applies to Peters' comparison with the black-figure olpe in Paris, Cab. Méd. 260; from Camiros, late sixth century BC; *ABV* 378.253, 451.15 (Leagros Group: Painter of Louvre F161); *Add* 100, 114; *LIMC* Athene 61*; Peters 1971: 106-108 with fig. 6; Vermeule 1979: 176 fig. 28.

142 For the iconography of immortality, see below, Chapter 4.2.

143 Peifer 1989: 201-202. On the relationships between winged deities, love and death, see Vermeule 1979 Chapter V. Vermeule 1979: 169-170; fig 21 shows a harpy in bird form cradling the soul of a dead man (sic; probably a woman) on a Lycian marble relief from the north side of the Harpy Tomb at Xanthos, London BM 287 (Pryce 1928: pll 21-22; see Vermeule 1979: 248 n. 36 for bibliography). Pryce 1928: 122ff describes them rather as Sirens. On the south side the figures carried cling to their bearers, as Eos' lovers do. But their iconography and context marks these out as the dead.

144 For the interpretation as Eos and Memnon, see Schefold 1981: 307ff; Schefold 1992: 271 fig. 328; Boardman *ABFV* 62-63, fig. 134; Charbonneaux et al. *Archaic* 99, fig. 109. Paris and Oinone: Zahn 1983: 590-592, figs. 5-6. Europa and Sarpedon: Simon and Hirmer 1976: 88, pl. 77. Beazley declines to commit himself, commenting that the couple may be Eos and Memnon, 'but the names matter little: it is some unhappy mother of a noble son; in a single Homeric word, ἤσπασιστοκλείον' (*ABS* 21; Thetis uses the word of herself, *II*. 18.54).

145 Simon and Hirmer 1976: 88. This objection is also raised by Zahn 1983: 590 in support of her hypothesis that the female figure is Oinone.
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representations of the rescue of her son.\textsuperscript{147} Nor is there any reason why Europa and Sarpedon should be in a wood.\textsuperscript{148} Finally, as regards the wings, there are other representations of Eos without them; she often lacks them in those very scenes in which she is present at the fight between Achilleus and her son.\textsuperscript{149} She is shown with wings when she is carrying her son, but then she needs them to spirit his body away from the battlefield; moreover, the conflation of the scenes of Eos carrying Memnon with those showing the winged Eos carrying her lovers has already been noted.

The hypothesis that the vase shows Oinone and Paris is based upon the story told by Parthenios (who attributes it to Kephalon and Nikandros) that Oinone, Paris' first wife, foretold that he would be wounded by the Greeks and only she could heal him; when the time came, and he was struck by Philoktetes' arrows, he sent a messenger to her, but Oinone refused to heal him, advising him to go instead to Helen whom he had preferred over her. She had a change of heart, but too late; Paris was already dead, and in her despair she killed herself.\textsuperscript{150} But there are problems in ascribing this myth to the vase. First is the dating of the story. The union of Paris and Oinone, if not the rest of the story, was known as early as Hellanikos, and may date back to the Archaic period when this vase was painted, but it is certainly not the version told by the \textit{Ilias Mikra}, in which Paris dies on the battlefield, and, as Gantz puts it, 'the tale as a whole has an obvious overlay of Hellenistic romanticism'.\textsuperscript{151} Second is, again, the setting in the wood. Oinone's home was on Mt. Ida, so the woodland setting might be explained; but if Paris is so ill that he cannot come himself, surely he is most likely to be lying in Troy itself as he awaits the reply to his request.

Memnon is the third possibility. Schefold points out that the woodland setting suits Eos as a nature-goddess.\textsuperscript{152} Further to this, I would add that on one vase which shows Eos laying Memnon down, she is depicted

\textsuperscript{147}Schefold 1992: 334 n. 553a. Sarpedon is usually shown carried away by Hypnus and Thanatos; see below, Chapter 2.1; von Bothmer 1981.

\textsuperscript{148}In the \textit{Iliad} Zeus orders Apollo to have Hypnus and Thanatos lay him down 'within the rich countryside of broad Lykia' (II. 16.673, 683)

\textsuperscript{149}See for example Boston, MFA 97.368, Attic red-figure calyx krater, early fifth century BC; ARV\textsuperscript{2} 290.1 (Tyszkievicz Painter); Vermeule 1979: 160 fig. 13.

\textsuperscript{150}Parthenios 4 = \textit{FGrHist} 45 F 2; cf. much the same story in Konon, \textit{FGrHist} 26 F 1.23.

\textsuperscript{151}Gantz 1993: 639. Hellanikos (\textit{FGrHist} 4 F 29) describes Oinone sending her son by Paris to Troy, and his death at his father's hands. See \textit{Ilias Mikra} Arg. 1 vv. 8–9 Bernabé for Paris' death in battle.

\textsuperscript{152}Schefold 1992: 271.
against a background of trees. She has taken him away from the battlefield, laid aside his armour and tended his body, and now she will begin his last rites. Her lack of wings, here as in the battle in which her son dies, emphasises her lack of power in the face of human mortality, against which all her divine gifts cannot help.

Memnon poses the final challenge to the Greek side. He is the last, and perhaps the greatest, hero whom Achilleus must kill before Troy can be sacked. He shares many traits with Achilleus; both have armour made by Hephaistos, both are the sons of a goddess and a mortal. The emphasis in these depictions is on Memnon as the son of a goddess; he is a dangerous threat to the Achaians more because he is Eos' son than because he is from the land of the Ethiopians. It is possible that the myths of the 'long-lived' Ethiopians might have influenced the story of Memnon to the extent that this characteristic longevity was extended into immortality. As the son of two immortals (although Tithonos' immortality is of doubtful status) his claim to immortality does have a certain validity, especially as his mother claims it on his behalf. However, as the son of the dawn-goddess Eos, he is intimately connected with death. Eos is the goddess who brings the dawn, and marks the end of a funeral:

At the time when the dawn star passes across earth, harbinger of light, and after him dawn of the saffron mantle is scattered across the sea, the fire died down and the flames were over.

Eos frees the soul of the dead to travel on to the next world. Behind her numerous abductions of youths is a mythological motivation for the belief

153Paris, Louvre CA 1812, Attic black-figure skyphos, c. 500 BC; LIMC Eos 317; ABL 253.7 (Hermes Painter); Ure 1955: 94–95, pl. 7.1, 7.4 (Sub-Krokotos Group); Eos lays Memnon down, with Tithonos present standing at right; between them is the tree. Cf. a similar scene, with a background of leaves and without Tithonos, on Bochum, Ruhr-Universität S494, c. 500–490 BC; LIMC Eos 318*.

154The still-life formed by the armour adds to the poignancy of the scene; cf. Aias' armour on the famous amphora by Exekias: Boulogne 558, c. 530 BC; ABV 145.18; Para 60; Add2 40; Schefold 1992: 281 pl. 338; LIMC Aias I 104*. Memnon is conventionally shown naked in the depictions of him being carried by Eos, but this is probably due to conflation with the conventions of Eos and her lovers, as well as to a desire to emphasise the pathos of the hero's death. Sarpedon, when he is carried away, can be depicted either armoured or naked; and in Etruscan and South Italian art Memnon also can be shown in armour. E.g. Cleveland Mus. of Art 52.259, Etruscan bronze mirror, c. 470–460 BC; de Puma 1983: 292–293, figs. 2–3; LIMC Eos/Thesan 37; see also Taranto, Mus. Naz., early Apulian volute krater; from Rutigliano (T24), c. 430–420 BC; RVAp 435.12A (Painter of the Berlin Dancer); Lo Porto 1977: 741–2 pl. 113; LIMC Eos 325*; Eos lifts her dead son while in the centre Achilleus is crowned by Nike.

155See below, Chapter 3.2.i.

156Humans who claim immortality for themselves are never successful; see below, Chapter 4.1.

in her aid in the removal of the soul to the next world.\textsuperscript{158} Those whom she takes are immortal in the sense that the dead are immortal; they are out of the human sphere, they are no longer able to die, and so they are no longer, in the strict sense, mortal. In view of this Memnon’s immortality takes on another aspect; he too, as the son of the goddess who releases soul from body, will undergo this process, and she will carry him, as she carries the dead, out of this world.

\textsuperscript{158}Vermeule quotes Herakleitos the allegorist: ‘When a young man well-born and beautiful should die, they euphemistically describe the dawn funeral procession as the snatching [ἀφαγγέω] by Day [Ηυέρῃ] not of a dead man, but through erotic desire for the one who was snatched. Following Homer they say this.’ Vermeule 1979: 163 = F. Buffière, Héraclite, Allégories d’Homère (1962) 72 no. 68; for the fusion of Hemera with Eos see Vermeule 1979: 247 n. 28.
Chapter 2

Escaping death

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.
I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.¹

In a study which focuses on immortality and eternity, I wish at this point to devote some attention to death and time. The first part of this chapter makes a distinction between the search for immortality and the attempt to evade death. There is a wide difference (albeit not always immediately clear) between an attempt to gain the ability to live forever and and an attempt merely to postpone death for a little while, while accepting it in the end. The heroes of the stories dealing with the latter theme are usually those, such as Sisyphos, who are threatened with an early death – the imminent loss of the greater part of their lifespan – and whose intention is to postpone death until the end of their natural lifespan. It is this category which will be considered in the first part of this chapter, with particular reference to the story of Sisyphos.

The second focus of this chapter is time. Time alters in the world of the dead in several ways, and the latter part of this chapter is given to a discussion of the notions of time and timelessness, and how these are used to differentiate between the living, the dead, and the immortal. Most importantly, action and inaction, characterising the living and the dead, are described in terms of the concept of time.

2.1 Sisyphos and Thanatos

In narrative terms, this difference between seeking immortality and escaping death is usually articulated by a different direction of movement.

¹T. S. Eliot, Four Quartets: Burnt Norton, stanza II.
The seeker for immortality moves upwards from Earth (as the realm of mortals) to Olympos or to the heavens, whereas the other moves between Earth (as the realm of the living) and the realm of the dead. The seeker for immortality attempts to move above his own level; his physical movement reflects an ideological one. In those cases in which a god abducts someone or elevates them to immortality, the abductee is often described as being lifted from Earth, as opposed to the movement downwards on the part of the god when he (or she) is merely dallying with a mortal on earth.

The evader of death is a more complex figure. The best illustration is Sisyphos, who escaped death not once but twice. Pherekydes is the first to tell the whole story. Sisyphos incurs Zeus’ anger, and Zeus sends Thanatos to him; but Sisyphos manages to bind him, and no one can die until Ares releases him and hands Sisyphos over. Sisyphos is then taken down to the underworld, but has instructed his wife Merope not to give him the customary rites, and is able to persuade Hades to send him up to reprove her – and once back in Korinth, there he stays until he dies of old age. At this point he goes back down to Hades and is set to rolling his rock.

Prevention of, or escape from, death does not necessarily imply immortality, merely a postponement of mortality. If this process were to continue indefinitely, the result would be immortality; but the evaders of death seem not to be seeking this. They are often those threatened with untimely death who are trying to live out the natural span of their life: Orpheus desires to reclaim Eurydike, Sisyphos to continue his life as it was before he angered Zeus; Herakles rescues Alkestis from the need to die young in Admetos’ place, not from the need to die at all. Theseus is rescued from the underworld by Herakles, but will return there when he dies; in this case their exit from the underworld reflects Herakles’ conquest of death rather than Theseus’. Death can be escaped either by an attempt to stay on the same level – that is, to stay on earth and not go below it to Hades, as in Sisyphos’ first attempt – or by an attempt to return to that level from a lower level: to rise from Hades, as in Sisyphos’ second escape.

[^2]: The story of Sisyphos is testified from an early date; he is already rolling his rock in the Odyssey (11.593–600); Alkaios refers to his near-escape from death (fr. 38 V); and his persuasion of Persephone is known to Theognis (702–712). He is also mentioned in the Iliad but only as a component in Glaukos’ family history (6.153–155).

[^3]: Pherekydes, FGrHist 3 F 119.

[^4]: The story was also the subject of at least one play by Aischylos, Sisyphos Drapeles or Sisyphos Petrokylistes, on which see Gantz 1993: 174, Radt 337–341 ad Aisch. fr. 225–234.
attempt, and as in attempts to rescue someone else from death, as Orpheus does Eurydice, and as Herakles does Theseus. Such attempts are usually destined to failure because they are attempts to resist change, which is essential to mortal life, and – in effect – to alter the past by cancelling out an event which took place in it and which is adversely affecting the present. So Sisyphos wishes to create a present which echoes the past, before the time when he offended Zeus and Zeus sentenced him to death. Likewise Orpheus wishes to alter the present so that Eurydike is not dead. Sisyphos does not wish to be immortal. He only wants to live as long as possible – as long, that is, as *humanly* possible; as long as possible given the fact that he is mortal – and to evade Zeus’ attempt to inflict an untimely death upon him. It is notable that Sisyphos’ original crime is not in any way related to the seeking ofimmortality; rather he has tattled of Zeus’ latest love affair to the girl’s father.\(^5\) Certainly this is not an offence which comes into the thunderbolt-worthy category. But this kind of loose tongue must be discouraged; Zeus, therefore, ‘sends Death to him’ (ἐπιπέμπει οὖν αὐτῷ τὸν Θάνατον).\(^6\)

This is a very unusual way for a man to die in Greek myth. In general, if he is dead, it is for a good reason, such as the fact that he has a sword run through him, or that he has just been torn to pieces by dogs or Bacchae. The personification of death, Thanatos, is a peaceable being and is not given to killing. He is most frequently depicted standing on the sidelines, while some other carries out the actual slaying. There is an important distinction to be made here; Thanatos is the personification of the *result* of a killing, not of the agent. In myth the cause of death is an action on the part of some other member of the deceased’s world, not on the part of a personified abstraction. ‘Pale Death kicks with impartial foot at the hovels of the poor and the towers of kings’; but, in Greece at any rate, the poor and the kings must die first.\(^7\) Even when the gods strike, they do so by physical means: a thunderbolt, the plague borne on Apollo’s arrows, even

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\(^5\)The gods dislike having their affairs spoken of, and frequently the objects of their desires are compelled to hide the affair and the results; for example Kreousa in Eur. *Ion* vv. 1543f, 1601ff; Aineias in *H.Aph.* 281ff. Askalaphos was another tattler; he told Hades that he had seen Persephone swallow the pomegranate seeds, and Demeter turned him into an owl (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.5.3, 2.5.12).
\(^6\)Pherékydes, *FGrHist* 3 F 119.
\(^7\)Horace Ode 1.4.13f: ‘pallida Mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas 1 regumque turris’. Mors here shows an un-Greek level of activity, *pace* Nisbet and Hubbard 1970: 67 on v. 13 (‘The personification is Greek; cf. the opening scene of the *Alkestis*’). On Thanatos in the *Alkestis* see below. This personification, as is not infrequent in Roman poetry, is so energetic as to be verging on direct action; cf. Virgil’s description of Palinurus’ death at the hands of Sleep, here clearly deputising for his brother Death (5.854–60).
the transformation of Aktaion. All of these things are part of the physical human world and all of these deaths can be understood in physical terms; for each of them a clear cause of death is indicated, which follows the laws of the natural world. Personified abstractions must also follow natural laws. Moreover, Greek myths are usually very specific, and tend not only to state that A killed B but also how, when, where and with what he did it. The deaths of heroes and the deaths which they deal out to others are an important component of myth and are usually described carefully. Death in myth is formalised, and often follows highly structured patterns. The unusually proactive nature of the Thanatos who tries to seize Sisyphos probably illustrates an origin in folktale; personifications are able to play a more active part in folktale than in myth.

This non-proactive nature of Thanatos can be seen in the iconography. Before the fifth century he is always depicted in the company of Hypnos, usually bearing the dead Sarpedon from the battlefield. In some of these vases the two are indistinguishable, but in several they can be told apart because of colouring or physical detail. There are two exceptions in archaic art. The first, and probably the earliest, depiction of the brothers was on the Chest of Kypselos, and showed Night holding Hypnos and

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8From an understanding of these patterns it is possible (for example) to point to the death of Deianeira in Sophokles' Trachiniai and state that it is atypical of women's suicides, as she stabs herself in place of the more usual poison or hanging (Loraux 1987: 14). See Fenik 1968 on death in the Iliad; Brelich 1958: 80–90 on the death of the hero in general; Fraenkel 1932 on suicide.

9See above, Introduction; cf. the figure of Death in Calvino 1982 no. 27, 'The Land Where One Never Dies' (p. 77ff), and in no. 200, 'Jump Into My Sack' (p. 708ff) in both of which Death takes an active role in ensuring that the hero actually dies.

10The scene is from Iliad 16.663–683. E.g. the superb red-figure calyx krater by Euphronios (FIG. 8: New York, MMA 1972.11.10, c. 515 BC; Simon and Hirmer 1981 pl. 102–103; Scheffold 1992: 249–250 pl. 303; van Bothmer 1972: no. 18). Alan Griffiths pointed out to me that Hypnos and Thanatos, on this vase as elsewhere, are in armour because they are simultaneously the divine twins and two mortal comrades of the dead man (the 'double motivation' principle). On the thematic relationship between Hypnos and Thanatos see Stafford 1991–3: 116–118 (although she is apparently unaware of the five vases depicting Thanatos, on which see below).

11At the beginning of the sixth century, for the first time, Hypnos is portrayed as dark, Thanatos white-skinned, and this becomes common (e.g. FIG. 9: the Attic white-ground lekythos in London, BM D 58, c. 450 BC; ARV² 1228.12 (Thanatos Painter); Para 466; Add² 351; Simon and Hirmer 1981: pl. 204; Charbonneaux et al. Classical 267 fig. 304) The opposite colouring never appears. Cf. however Paus. 5.18.1, who seems to describe black Thanatos and white Hypnos on the Chest of Kypselos, but as he stresses that their appearance is typical it is more likely that there is some textual error here, and that the two were their usual colours (see Shapiro 1993: 132). From the late fifth century, Thanatos is often older than his twin; Hypnos remains an unbearded youth, but Thanatos is not only bearded but given long (and often unkempt) hair. These differences have been described in detail by Shapiro 1993: 132ff, especially 143–145; Bažant 1990; Mainoldi 1987. Note the contrast with Horace's 'pallida Mors' mentioned above.
Chapter 2: Escaping death

Thanatos as children, one in each arm. The second exception is a portrayal on a cup in Athens of the pair bearing Memnon, probably the result of the painter’s conflation of the Sarpedon scene with the scene showing Eos mourning her son. In the classical period a similar scene is found on white-ground funerary lekythoi; the pair are illustrated carrying various mortals of both sexes. There are no inscriptions to identify them, and their identity is known only from their similarity to the Sarpedon scenes. The care with which they handle the bodies in these paintings is matched by the usual depiction in tragedy of Thanatos as ‘a good daemon who takes care of the deceased’.

Thanatos by himself is far rarer. On the five surviving vases on which he is depicted without his brother, he still does not take any active part in the slaying. All of these are later than the series showing Hypnos and Thanatos lifting Sarpedon; all date to the second half of the fifth century. The first, a vase in the British Museum, dates to c. 450 BC and depicts a myth unknown in literature. It shows Thanatos, human-sized, darkly-bearded and winged, gently lifting the victim of Ixion. It is unknown who the victim is, but from the gouts of blood on the altar and the sword in Ixion’s hand, it is clear that his death was caused by Ixion, and not by any direct intervention on the part of Thanatos.

Of the other four vases, two depict Thanatos as a tiny winged figure present at the death of Talos. The first is a volute krater showing the Dioskouroi restraining Talos as Jason, under Medea’s direction, removes

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12 Paus. 5.18.1; Shapiro 1993:132 dates this to the early 6th century BC, and Bažant 1990: 904 (LIMC Thanatos 1) to the mid 6th century BC. The earliest Sarpedon scene dates to c. 520 BC (red-figure cup by Euphronios, once Dallas, Hunt Collection; Add 2 404; Shapiro 1993: 246 no. 66 fig. 87; LIMC Thanatos 2, Sarpedon 3*).
13 Athens NM 505, Attic black-figure cup; early 5th century BC, from Velanideza; ABV 564.580: Haimon Group; see Shapiro 1993:138 no. 69 fig. 91; LIMC Thanatos 13*.
15 Shapiro (1993: 132) suggests that ‘the deliberate omission of Thanatos may have been motivated in part by the same superstitious caution that sometimes prevented mention of his name’. He cites Eukleides of Megara, who refers to Hypnos by name and to Thanatos as ‘the other one’ (Stob. Ecl. 3.6.63).
16FIG. 10: Red-figure kantharos, London, B. M. E155, c. 450 BC, side B (side A shows Ixion about to be tied to the wheel); ARV 2 832.37 (Amphitrite Painter), 1672; Para 492; Add 2 295; LIMC Thanatos 15*; for discussion of the subject of side B, see especially Simon 1955; Schefold 1981: 154–155, figs. 204–205; Shapiro 1993: 159–160. Simon 1955: 25–26 suggests that a metope showing a man fighting a snake from the south side of the Heraion of Foce del Sele (now in Paestum, Mus. Naz.; c. 550 BC; Simon 1955: 25 fig. 14; Zancani Montuoro and Zanotti Bianco vol. 2 plll. 88–89) may show the same scene; but for dissenting views see Van Keuren 1989: 123–129 following Zancani Montuoro and Zanotti Bianco who suggest that it is a depiction of Orestes and an Erinys.
the nail in his ankle with a sort of chisel; Thanatos, again bearded, kneels at Talos' heel, apparently indicating the vulnerable point, but again it is not he but Jason who is actually doing the deed.\textsuperscript{18} The second, a calyx krater fragment in Spina, has a similar composition to the first. On this vase Thanatos is simply standing below the giant (who is already collapsing and being supported by the Dioskouroi) with his arms outstretched.\textsuperscript{19} The similarity of the two vases, in spite of variations in composition and in detail, leaves no doubt that this also is Thanatos (and not Eros, as was originally supposed).\textsuperscript{20} In both of these the tiny size of the personification underlines his lack of ability to physically inflict death.

The last two vases are white-ground lekythoi. These two are in some ways the most interesting, as they illustrate perfectly the ambivalence with which Thanatos was regarded in popular culture.\textsuperscript{21} One, in Hawaii, shows a young warrior following Thanatos with his left arm extended. Thanatos is here presented as small and winged.\textsuperscript{22} The second, in Paris, shows Thanatos, hook-nosed, scowling and ugly, pursuing a frightened woman, who flees towards Hermes for sanctuary.\textsuperscript{23} This is the only vase which shows Thanatos apparently actively pursuing someone. His likeness to illustrations of Charon here is very clear; he is even dressed similarly.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{18}FIG. 11: Red-figure column krater, Benevento, Museo del Sannio, 440–430 BC; not known to Beazley (unattributed; compared to the Orpheus Painter); Shapiro 1993: 160 fig. 124; see Robertson 1977. On invulnerability see below, Chapter 3.2.iii. C.f. a similar figure of Thanatos swooping down above the dead Mennon as Eos lifts him on an early Apulian volute krater: Taranto, Mus. Naz.; from Rutigliano (T24), c. 430–420 BC; \textit{ARV}^2 435.12A (Painter of the Berlin Dancer); Lo Porto 1977: 741–2 pl. 113; \textit{LIMC} Eos 325*.

\textsuperscript{19}FIG. 12: Red-figure kalyx krater frr., Ferrara inv. 3092; from Spina, end of the fifth century BC; \textit{ARV}^2 1340 (near the Talos Painter); \textit{Add}^2 367; Shapiro 1993: 161 fig. 125; Berti and Guzzo 1993: 112 fig. 94. For the identification as Talos, cf. the very similar 'Ruvo krater': Ruvo, Mus. Jatta J 1501; Attic red-figure, from Ruvo, c. 400 BC; \textit{ARV}^2 1338.1 (Talos Painter); \textit{Para} 481; \textit{Add}^2 366.7; \textit{LIMC} Talos I 4*; Charbonneau et al. \textit{Classical} 278 fig. 318.

\textsuperscript{20}Thanatos is standing next to a woman variously identified as Aphrodite or the local personification of Crete; if the former, he was thought to be not Thanatos but Eros. However, it is hard to imagine what Aphrodite would be doing in such a scene. In any case, although he has no beard in this case, his disordered hair marks him out as Thanatos; Eros' hair is never this unkempt.

\textsuperscript{21}Bążant 1990: 907.

\textsuperscript{22}White-ground lekythos, Hawaii, Honolulu Academy of Arts 2893; from Gela, c. 450 BC; \textit{LIMC} Thanatos 26 (no illustration: unpublished).

\textsuperscript{23}FIG. 13: White-ground lekythos, Paris, Louvre CA 1264; late 5th century BC, from a woman's grave in Attica; \textit{ARV}^2 1384.19 (Group R); \textit{Add}^2 372; Shapiro 1993: 164 pll. 127–128.

\textsuperscript{24}The rarity of such a depiction is not surprising, considering the funerary function of such lekythoi. Cf. e.g. Charon on an Attic white-ground lekythos from Athens, by the same painter (Munich Antikenslg. 2777 [J 209], third quarter of the 5th century BC; \textit{ARV}^2 1228.11 (Thanatos Painter); \textit{Add}^2 174; \textit{LIMC} Charon I 10*). Charon has a rough, wrinkled face with bulging eyes and a scraggly beard; but he is disagreeable rather than actively frightening. For discussion of the iconography of Charon, see Sourvinou-Inwood 1986: 221f.
This depiction may be partially a result of the increasing identification of the two with each other. But the literary view of Thanatos, as a helper and escort after death, a healer of pain or even (as on the Hawaii lekythos) as the personification of a desirable death, persists at the same time, and the iconography utilised on the Paris lekythos is different. Thanatos on the Paris lekythos, like Thanatos in the Alkestis, is ‘not represented as a majestic infernal Power but an ogreish creature from popular mythology’. In this role, however, he has if anything more power than his aristocratic, idealised and more polite equivalent. The Paris lekythos, then, reflects the sub-literary, folktale view of Thanatos as a being to be feared, and as a being capable of inflicting death without the help of any other external agent.

2.2 Sisyphos in Hades

That Thanatos himself comes to kill Sisyphos is an important component in Pherekydes’ version of the myth; it means that before Sisyphos dies he can meet up with Thanatos and bind him. A similar motif, though in a different variant, is evident in the myth of Alkestis and Herakles – another myth with strong folktale elements. Here it is not Alkestis herself who fights with Thanatos, but Herakles – but there is no mention in any of the sources of the way in which she dies, nor of the way in which Admetos is intended to die. Clearly, this is one of those questions which is not meant to be asked; for there is no answer. The manner of her death is only important in that it must be reversible, and leave no mark on her – for it would be hard to believe in a woman who has come back to life in spite of a wound or some such. Alkestis, having agreed to take Admetos’ place, simply fails to continue living.

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25 In tragedy, death is often regarded as a release from sorrows: Hippolytos begs to be released from life, ‘and let death come to heal me’ (μεθετέ με τάλανα, ίκαί μοι θάνατος παίδαν ἔλθοι’), Eur. Hipp. 1372–1373. Cf. also Aisch. fr. 255 Radt. In the archaic period too this view of death can be found: cf. e.g. Sappho frs. 94, 95 V; Mimnermos frs. 1, 2 W.

26 Dale 1954: 54.


28 A possible sixth depiction of Thanatos is a column drum with marble relief from the Artemision at Ephesus (FIG 14: London, BM 1206, c. 350 BC; LIMC Thanatos 31*; Robertson HGA 407–409 pll. 131a-b) which shows a winged figure with a sword (Thanatos?) leading
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The core of the Sisyphos myth is, of course, that although Thanatos can be tied (and death thereby postponed) it can never be held indefinitely: death is inevitable. Sisyphos gets the better of death not once but twice; the first time by trapping it on earth, the second by escaping Hades. He escapes Hades by persuading Persephone to release him, on the grounds that his wife Merope, as instructed, has not performed the proper rites: τὰ νεομιμέα μὴ πέμπειν εἰς Ἀιδοῦ. But in the end, although he succeeds in living out his natural span of life, he pays for it in the underworld. His punishment fits the crime. His evasion of death has been articulated by movement up and down between the upper world of the living and the lower world of the dead. Just as he himself has moved down to Hades and back up to earth and the world of the living, this up-down movement is reiterated by the stone which moves up and down the hill. Moreover, Sisyphos, using his cunning, had to expend mental effort, probably to trap death and certainly to escape Hades; but his movement from the world of the living down to the world of the dead required no effort, but was a natural progression. Similarly the stone is rolled with great effort up the hill and rolls naturally, by itself, down again. Each time Sisyphos gets it to the top, just when success is in sight, he loses it again; an endless repetition of his evasions of death. His mental effort is now counterbalanced by physical effort, and also negated by it; while he is kept busy rolling his rock, he cannot pause to think up further escapes; he is caught in a situation in which there is nothing for his cunning to work on. In his perpetual motion he attains that kind of pointless and continual movement characteristic of the Homeric dead. The very uselessness of his efforts emphasises the inescapable nature of the death which has, in the end, trapped him.

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29 Contrast the binding and holding of Ares by Otos and Ephialtes in a bronze jar for 13 months; he would have perished had Hermes not stolen him away (II. 5.385-391).
30 Pherekydes, FGrHist 3 F 119; in later versions of the story the ‘due of the dead’ is burial; but this could not have been the case in earlier versions, as Sourvinou-Inwood points out (1986: 51) because without burial Sisyphos could not have been admitted to Hades, and would not therefore be in a position to persuade Persephone to let him get out again. However, like the original problem of Death causing death, this assumes a logic which, although it may be expected from myth, might not necessarily follow in folktale.
31 Sourvinou-Inwood 1986: 52. Graves (1955: 219 n. 2) suggests that this movement reflects the rising and setting of the sun, also a symbol of life and death.
33 The iconography of Sisyphos, not surprisingly, concentrated on the rock-rolling; there are no depictions of the events which led up to it. However, there is a metope from Heraion I.
Sisyphos brings about the second evasion of death, the escape from Hades, by his deceitful cunning. The manner in which he first traps death is not so clear; Pherekydes tells only the result, not the process. However, it seems likely that this was brought about not solely by violence, as Sourvinou-Inwood suggests, but also by cunning. Intelligence of this order is Sisyphos' stock-in-trade, and it would be uncharacteristic for him to resort to violence alone. Cunning, and the application of it to transgressing forbidden borders, runs in Sisyphos' family; his brother Salmoneus attempts to usurp Zeus' privileges and is struck down by a thunderbolt for his pains. Moreover, death is rather less readily conquered by violence. Herakles is the exception that proves the rule; his wrestling with Thanatos is representative of the immortality which he will eventually gain. In his case the defeat of death is, in the end, permanent. Moreover it would be very uncharacteristic of Herakles to prefer cunning to violence in attacking any enemy. Sisyphos, on the other hand, bears a strong resemblance to the trickster figures of other cultures. Such figures are 'moral examples reaffirming the rules of society by showing what happens when social prescriptions are not obeyed; at the
same time they give expression to men's darkest desires and anti-social feelings. The kind of deceit practised by trickster figures is very similar to that practised by Sisyphos here: Kerényi describes the Winnebago trickster figure as 'the spirit of disorder, the enemy of boundaries'. This is precisely the role which Sisyphos enacts in this myth; he transgresses the boundaries between Hades and the world of the living, and in so doing he is placing a fundamental part of the whole cosmic order in jeopardy. Ironically, it is Zeus who makes this possible; he himself bends the rules in consigning Sisyphos to Hades for what was, after all, a relatively minor fault. It is Zeus' action which places Sisyphos in a position to transgress the boundaries in the way he does, trapping death so that not only does he himself not die, but no one else does either. The lines between life and death are fixed, and for even the greatest of the gods to tamper with them is dangerous.

The human fascination with death must stem largely from its universality and from its incomprehensibility. All mortals must face it, and there is no way of knowing what is beyond it. Any consideration of death, therefore, must be one-sided. Humphreys points out that death is almost inevitably considered as something which happens to others. This must be not only because of the human tendency to avoid thinking that something unpleasant might befall oneself, but also because, throughout life, it is something which happens to others, and by the time

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38 Kerényi 1972: 185, cf. Radin 1972: 132-146. Sisyphos may also have a similarity to the trickster in that trickster cycles finish with Trickster doing away with things which are hindrances to mankind, before he ascends into heaven. He is a culture-deity; his task (which he often forgets) is to help in taming the world and making it livable. Sisyphos, similarly, has a role as a culture-hero; he is the founder of the city of Korinth, and its king.
40 Alan Griffiths has suggested to me that a bell-krater in Würzburg (Martin-von-Wagner Museum H 5982, c. 390–380 BC; E. Simon, 'Sisyphos auf einem Glockenkrater des Meleagermalers', AA 1994/1: 23–32) may depict a variant of the myth, perhaps a satyr-play, in which Sisyphos does in fact escape death; he is shown about to step into a well leading down to the underworld, watched by Poseidon (patron god of Korinth), Minos, Rhadamanthys and Hades (with cornucopia). Behind Hades stands Pan, and there are four goats in the foreground. Three of these are dark, but the fourth, grazing near the centre of the vase on a herb growing at the base of the well into which Sisyphos is stepping, is white. This may represent a moment when Sisyphos, carrying an empty cornucopia, showing that his time has run out, has been sentenced to his perpetual rock-rolling and about to descend to the underworld forever. He then sees the goat in the foreground, eating a life-giving herb — hence its change from dark to white. (The herb which gives immortality is well documented in ancient literature, and will be discussed in the next chapter.) Sisyphos, already younger again — his hair is gold — is pointing towards the goat, and his judges are turning towards each other in consternation as they perceive that he may escape yet again.
it happens to oneself it is too late to comment on it. 'Death is not an event in life; we do not live to experience death'.\textsuperscript{42} It is only the living in this world who are concerned with death.

The appropriateness of Sisyphos' ultimate fate fits the strong archaic belief that a man's death is part of his life, and should fit it. The life of an individual can be fully assessed only after his death; for the Greeks, the manner of one's death, and even more importantly the manner in which one receives it is of crucial importance in judging a life. 'Call no man happy until he is dead'; this is a reflection not only on the instability of life but also on the importance of death before one is to consider a life in its totality. It is the living who must make such an evaluation, who must, ultimately, deliver judgement on the dead.

Vernant has shown that death in Homer has two faces. The first is the heroic ideal of the young warrior dying in battle, 'a model of "excellence" for the living', kept alive in the social memory, as an embodiment of "worldly" values of strength, beauty, youth and ardour', an absolute and imperishable standard in which these values can be rooted and preserved from the decay which attends everything mortal. The second is the 'monstrous mask of Gorgo' which brings green fear upon Odysseus, or rather 'the monstrous otherness that can be glimpsed through it . . . the dead gathering together in their own land, the swarming, indistinct mass of them, the innumerable crowd of shades who are no longer anybody and whose huge, confused inaudible clamour has no longer anything human about it.'\textsuperscript{43} The first 'face', by using death as the ultimate standard by which an ideal life is measured, civilises it and robs it of much of its terror; it is no longer an inescapable evil, but a gateway to a form of immortality through memory-survival. The second 'face' serves to define the ideal by opposing it. Without a terrifying and horrible form of death, to embody all that is unthinkable in death, all that mankind dreads in it, the heroic ideal would be meaningless.\textsuperscript{44}

This contrast illustrates clearly that the worst of death, for Homer, is the lack of personal identity, in the assimilation of the thinking and feeling individual into such an undifferentiating and oblivious unity.

It is this stark contrast, between the glory of the hero's death and the oblivion of the underworld, which forms the background for the changing views of death and dying which emerged throughout the archaic period.

\textsuperscript{42}Wittgenstein, \textit{Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus} 6.4.3.1.1.
\textsuperscript{43}Vernant 1981: 290.
\textsuperscript{44}Vernant 1981: 291.
The heroic ideal relied on a foundation of a strict and narrow code of honour, and although it was tenacious, it was also not universal. It is also an aristocratic concept; the ability – and indeed the necessity – for the ordinary man to live up to it was not assumed. In Homer, and in Greek myth in general, noble birth was a prerequisite for noble behaviour. Thersites’ behaviour shows his low birth and breeding. However, in the archaic period even those from an aristocratic background are seen to be casting doubts upon it – most famously, perhaps, Archilochos, creating a persona who throws away his shield (and honour) to save his life.

Griffiths points out that ‘iambic poetry evolved as a kind of implicit riposte to the epic’; it reflects the values of the ‘subculture’, the non-literary, non-aristocratic material which is now mostly lost, simply because it was never written down. It was from this irreverently non-literary background – certainly in existence before Archilochos, even though no earlier fragments remain – that the alternatives to the epic tradition emerged. The fearfulness of death is implicit in the traces remaining of this sub-culture. Death is to be fled; glory is not worth dying for. Death is inevitable; while the folktales buried in myths such as that of Sisyphos record that a hero can briefly escape it, the operative word is ‘briefly’. Thus, it would appear, only the face of the Gorgon is left, with no redeeming features at all.

This contrast between Vernant’s two ‘faces’ is a contrast between immortality and oblivion, insofar as the only escape from the face of the Gorgon is to achieve a form of immortality through the fame of one’s deeds; as long as a hero’s name is kept alive and the songs about him are still sung, he will not be swallowed up and lost forever in the oblivion of Hades.

2.3 Death and time

Humans are defined and their lives dominated by their mortality. They are subject to time, and they change with its passing. This cannot be said of either the gods or the dead, for both of whom time has no personal meaning and brings no personal change. Yet it is the dead whose existence

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45 Il. 2.210ff.
46 Archilochos fr. 5 W; cf. Alkaios fr. 401B V (428 LP); Anakreon fr. 381b PMG; Horace Ode 2.7.9–10.
48 See below, Chapter 5.2.
comes closest to being truly timeless. Immortals are not completely independent of time.

Time is signified by change. In the natural world it is evinced by the alternation of day and night and the passing of the seasons. It is by measuring, naming and predicting these that mankind extends some control over time. But the most personal measure of time for mortals is the aging of the body – as Mimnermos makes very clear. For the gods, time is open-ended; they are subject to it only in the limited sense that they are born and grow to adulthood – and it should be noted that they frequently grow at unusual speed, and thus very swiftly pass through the stage in which time has any hold on them. The gods, then, have a beginning in time – a point in time before which they did not exist – but no end. Their immortality might best be described as an infinite postponement of aging and death; the point at which they cease growing and start postponing, so to speak, differs according to their personality. The younger generation of gods are younger not only in fact but in aspect; Apollo is the kouros, and Hermes is sometimes also shown without a beard. Artemis is the kourê. Zeus on the other hand is a patriarch, older, bearded, and yet still in the prime of life. Nereus is eternally old; Ganymede has been made immortal at the age of being just a boy. In that they do have specific ages, they are, perhaps, not so much ageless as unaging. This is an important distinction. At this point they, like the dead, have lost the relationship with time to which mortals are subject; like the dead they are fixed, unchanging, in stasis. But they are not without age, in the way that the dead are. The dead are often portrayed in the late archaic period as tiny human-shaped figures without features – as souls, without bodies. Age is corporeal and cannot exist in the absence of a body upon which to make itself visible. The dead slough off age in the underworld; this is why the question of what age the dead ought to be in

49Mimnermos frr. 1, 2, 5, etc. W; for other references to old age see Allen 1993: 32.
50H. Delian Ap. vv. 123ff, H. Hermes vv. 17ff. Earlier races of humans, according to Hesiod, also grew at odd rates; see the myth of the Five Ages, especially the first and second races (Hes. WD. 109–134).
51As Alan Griffiths has suggested to me.
52Clay 1981: 112.
53E.g. a host of psychai hover about as Hermes guides a woman onto Charon’s boat, on FIG. 16: a white-ground lekythos in Athens, NM 1926, 450–440 BC; ARV² 846.193 (Sabouroff Painter); Para 423; Add² 145; Peifer 1989 fig. 11, K 67; Vermeule 1979: 9 fig. 4; Reizler 1914 pl. 44, 44a.
the afterlife does not arise in Greek sources. The Greek dead are truly ageless, for in their afterlife age is disregarded.

In contrast age is an inherent part of the way in which the gods are portrayed, and cannot be disregarded. Although they operate outside of the temporal stream in which mankind must work — so much so indeed that they can manipulate the natural progression of time for their own ends, as does Zeus for Alkmene — they still notice, and are in some ways affected by the passing of time. Apollo in the *Iliad* may dismiss mortals as not worthy of serious concern, but the fact remains that they are the main source of interest and entertainment for the gods, who spend a great deal of their time helping them, hindering them, raping them, changing them into various flora and fauna and generally meddling in their affairs in every way that occurs to them. The death of a protégé or of a mortal son or daughter must cause the god or goddess grief. To this extent, the passing of time affects them: they measure time by its effect on mortals, as is clear from Aphrodite's words to Aineias:

‘Yet if you could live on such as now you are in look and form, and be called my husband, sorrow would not then enfold my careful heart.

But as it is, harsh old age will soon enshroud you —

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54The passage in the *Odyssey* describing the dead, in which it appears that they stay the same age — and remain in the same state — as they are when they die, is intended to emphasise the horror of the world which Odysseus is entering (as is clear from vv. 42–43), should not be taken as a programmatic statement about the ages of the dead; *Od*. 11.38–41.

55Apparent exceptions to the depiction of the soul as a dragonfly-like winged thing which has lost its corporeal characteristics fall into two groups. First, warriors who fall in battle are sometimes shown with their souls — armed and armoured — above them; similarly the ghost of Elpenor is shown as a normal-sized human being (see for example the little winged warrior hovering above the body of Patroklos: Attic red-figure calyx krater, Agrigento, Mus. Region. C. 1956; from Pezzino, c. 500 BC; *ARV*² 32.2 (Pezzino Group), *Para* 324, *Add*² 157; Schefold 1992: 254–255 pl. 309; *Veder Greco* no. 72; Peifer 1989: no. 116, pl. 8 For Elpenor appearing to Odysseus see Boston, MFA 34.79, red-figure pelike, c. 440 BC; *ARV*² 1045.2 (Lykaon Painter), *Para* 444; Vermeule 1979: frontispiece, Peifer 1989 no. 61 pl. 5. The second group are the dead shown on white-ground lekythoi, on their way to Hades, or sitting at their tombs (FIG. 17: white-ground lekythos, 440–430 BC, Munich, Mus. Ant. 2797; Hermes waits for a woman departing to the underworld; Beazley *AWL* 17–18 pll. 1–2 (Phiale Painter); *AHS* XLI-XLII; Charbonneaux et al. *Classical* 263 pll. 299–300). In both cases, however, the dead are still in the world of the living; they have not been fully integrated into Hades yet, and are, in some sense, still tied to their bodies; the depiction of these souls accordingly reflects this link to their former corporeal selves. It may also reflect the fact that they are specific rather than generic dead; this is certainly the case in vase-paintings such as the Nekuia krater, New York, MMA 08.258.21, Attic red-figure calyx krater; c. 450–440 BC; *ARV*² 1086.1 (Nekuia Painter); Richter and Hall 1936: 168–171 plll. 135–137; McNiven 1989: pl. IIIc–d.

56Il. 21.462. The left wall of the Tomba dell’Orco II in Tarquinia seems to reflect a similar principle; between the full-size named dead (Agamemnon, Téiresias, Aias) is a small red tree full of tiny dark figures, ‘perhaps eidola’ (Steingräber 1966: 330–331 fig. 253, pl. 130).
ruthless age which stands someday at the side of every man, deadly, wearying, dreaded even by the gods'.

Elena Cassin has shown that in Mesopotamian myth, although the gods can be killed, they do not die. Apsû, Tiamat and Kingu are all killed but they do not die in the sense that the verb for the death of living things, mâtu, is not used. Instead, they ‘acquire a new form and structure by being put to death’. So in Enûma eliš, Apsû becomes the dwelling place of his conqueror Ea and Marduk will fashion heaven and earth from the body of Tiamat and mankind from the blood of her consort Kingu. The same might be said of the myth of Ouranos. In Greek mythology, the gods cannot be killed, even to the extent that the Mesopotamian deities can. The great exception is Typhoeus, who stands in a somewhat similar relation to Zeus as Tiamat does to Marduk. He, too, is built into a new form in the world; Zeus imprisons him under Aitna. So the Greek gods can be displaced and they can be injured.

Although Ouranos is not killed, his castration, in part, serves a similar purpose. In many cultures the primary difference – and in some almost the only difference – between the living and the dead is that the dead do not reproduce. Fertility is an essential aspect of life. Death implies stasis, lack of aging, lack of change, sterility. The sterility of the dead can be contrasted with the very high level of fertility of the gods in their relationships with mortals. Almost inevitably, if a god lies with a mortal woman, she bears his child; similarly, in the rather rarer liaisons between man and goddess, the goddess conceives. This can sometimes, however, be at the price of the man’s virility, as is shown by Anchises’ appalled reaction when Aphrodite reveals her identity: ‘I beseech you, leave me not to lead a palsied life among men, but have pity on me, for he who lies with a deathless goddess is no hale man afterwards’. He is afraid that she will sink him below the level of mortals, by robbing him of one form of immortality: his ability to get children and continue his line. He is afraid that she will, in effect, make him less than a man, closer to death than

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59 Apsû: Enûma eliš Tablet I, vv. 61ff (ANET p. 61ff); Tiamat: Tablet IV, vv.103–104 (killed), 135–140 (rebuilt; ANET p. 67); Kingu: Tablet VI, vv. 31–33 (ANET p. 68).
60 Pindar Ol. 4.6–7; but cf. Hes. Th. 821ff, in which Typhoeus is cast into Tartaros; and Pindar Py. 1.15ff, which places him in both areas. See Gantz 1993: 48–50.
61 H. Aph. 188–190. Cf. Kreousa, who cannot bear Xouthos’ children since her rape by Apollo: Eur. Ion 355–356; also Odysseus, who is warned by Hermes that Kirke could make him ‘weak and unmanned’ if he did not make her swear not to harm him before she slept with him (Od. 10.299–301).
other men. So too Ouranos' castration: he is a god, and cannot die, but his role as a functioning, active deity comes to an end, and he recedes and simply becomes the heavens. His life force is disseminated in a new form: the blood shed in his castration, falling on Gaia, causes her to bear the Erinyes, Gigantes and Melian Nymphai, while Aphrodite arises from the foam which froths around his genitals when they are thrown into the sea.62

This alteration of state is part of the chaos preceding the final establishment of law and order; the 'deaths' of the gods who are 'killed' act as a catalyst in establishing the cosmos, and the order which controls it. They also take place before the creation of mankind. Here, too, the gods are not subject to time in their 'deaths'; they all die by violence, there is no aging. Their lives do have a beginning and an end, but there is no way of measuring the space of time which passes in between, as there is for mortals. In such a cosmogony, time, before the creation of humanity, does not exist in the same (measureable) sense in which it exists afterwards.

For the living, then, their individual concept of time has definite limits, a beginning and an end, while for the gods it has only a beginning. For the dead, however, time has no relevance. In life the passing of time is to be dreaded; in death the lack of it. Time cannot affect the dead, or even be felt by them; in Hades there is neither day nor night, nor any other indicator of the passing of time, and even in Elysion seasons are blurred and the measured passage of time which marks the mortal world is altered – thus depriving even the fortunate among the dead of an awareness of the passing of time.63 Time belongs solely to the world of the living. This is also indicated by the belief common to many cultures that the dead do not reproduce, nor do they usually age, even in those afterlifes in which the world of the dead is the same as, or similar to, the world of the living. One exception to this rule is the afterlife of the Eddystone Islanders, who

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62Hes. Th. 154ff. Homer's version is different; see Gantz 1993:10–12.
63Od. 4.561–569, lack of snow or rain; Hes. WD 156–173, earth produces food three times a year. These are meant not only as specific meteorological and numerical details, but as an evocation of unending plenty, unenlivened by the irregularities in seasons and weather which attend the sowing and harvesting by the living. See also Pindar Ol. 2.61–63, where the dead in Elysion dwell 'with equal nights | and equal days | possessing the sun forever'; Woodbury 1966 argues that this phrase implies a perpetual equinox, in which the evenness of their nights and days are contrasted to the 'confused and indeterminate' combination of night and day which the living must suffer (see esp. pp. 601ff.)
believe that the dead go to another island, and live an exact replica of the 
life they have left; they fight, farm, fish and, remarkably, even die.\textsuperscript{64}

The last act which mortals undertake which is related to time, before 
they slip into the timeless underworld, is that of dying. What constitutes 
the 'right' time to die? The archaic poets were well aware of the 
uncertainty of death; one could not chose one's time of death, but some 
deaths were more appropriate than others. One 'good death' from Homer 
onwards, as we have seen, is the death of the young warrior at the height 
of his beauty and strength. Such a death shows the youth's potential and a 
great deal of its appeal lies in its pathos. Equally important, however, is 
the fact that the young man dies at a moment in his life when he is at his 
best, at a moment which he could not hope to surpass. It also gains 
honour from its violence, by which it is equated with the death of a hero. 
That this was not only a Homeric view of death, but was a part of the 
nexus of attitudes to death current in the archaic period is shown by the 
common theme of praising just such a death in epitaphs.\textsuperscript{65}

This is contrasted unfavourably with the death of an old man in battle.\textsuperscript{66} 
At what point, then, does a man become too old to die well in battle? 
Presumably he is too old for his death to conform to the ideal when, in his 
death, all is not 'πάντα καλά', and he does not look beautiful in death. 
This, though, would appear to be the province only of the young. An 
older man may not be able to die in beauty, but he can acquit himself well 
in battle and die with dignity. The catch is, of course, that this ideal death 
cannot be sought, and in fact it is hard to see in some cases how it might 
come about. One finds it hard to envisage the hero capable of defeating 
Herakles or Achilleus in battle. Achilleus has killed his worthiest 
opponent; and Herakles has killed all of his opponents. Paradoxically, the 
greater a hero is, the less likely he is to meet this heroic death on the 
battlefield. However, it is equally unthinkable that a great hero should 
fade into old age. So in effect Herakles, Achilleus and their like must die

\textsuperscript{64}Rivers 1926: 48. Exactly what happens to them after they die for the second time 
unfortunately does not seem to be clear to the islanders themselves (and perhaps is not even 
seen as important). It should also be said that this is only one of several possible varied 
and contradictory afterlifes. Cf. the short story 'The North London Book of the Dead', in 
The Quantity Theory of Insanity by Will Self (Penguin 1992), in which 'when you die you 
move to another part of London where you resume pretty much the same kind of life you had 
before you died' (p. 11). Cf. also Lucian VH 2.5-29.

\textsuperscript{65}Lattimore 1964: 237–240. Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 170–172 points out that such praise 
forms one of a range of different types of praise designed to propagate a good reputation for 
the deceased. The archaic poets have also frequently used this theme; cf. for example 
Mimnermos fr. 14 W, Anakreon I FGE.

\textsuperscript{66}In Priam's famous appeal to Hektor, ll. 22.71–76; cf. Tyrtaios fr. 10 W.
either by treachery or at the hands of the gods, as there is no one else great enough to kill them.

The idealised Homeric death of the young man, then, is the province of a rare few. But death, as a key to the evaluation of a life, does not lose all its value if the man is older or if he does not die in battle. The archaic period, the 'age of experiment' in social and political constructs, was an age of experiment also in terms of ideology and intellect.\(^\text{67}\) The archaic period allowed a greater leniency in its definitions and expectations where values such as youth, beauty, courage and virtue, were concerned.

The role of the gods in the definition of the right time to die is not as great as one might expect. In general if they choose a time for a man to die it can only be defined as the 'right time' in a strictly negative sense, as in: you have offended me, you must die now. Death conferred as an honour or a reward for piety is far rarer; the kind of death conferred upon Kleobis and Biton, or upon Baucis and Philemon, or even upon Oidipous at Kolonos, has no archaic equivalent.\(^\text{68}\)

The gods are more often found in Homer working towards postponing the deaths of their favourites - seeking to avert any kind of death rather than to cause the right one. In the Iliad, Apollo does this for Agenor, Poseidon for Aineias, and Zeus considers saving both Sarpedon and Hektor, although he is dissuaded in both cases - an interesting situation, as in saving their lives he would be denying them the 'ideal death' which is their best chance of immortality.\(^\text{69}\) The other action that the gods can take for their favourites is to tend the bodies of the dead. They can interfere to ensure that a dead hero will look like a dead hero, his youthful beauty unimpaired by the corruption which follows death, most commonly by anointing him with ambrosia, and will receive fitting rites and burial.\(^\text{70}\)


\(^{\text{68}}\)Kleobis and Biton: Hdt. 1.31; but see the archaic kouroi at Delphi which may be depictions of the two: Delphi Mus. 467.1524 (statues), 980.4672 (bases), c. 590 BC; LIMC Biton et Kleobis 10* categorises them as 'identificazione dubbia' and briefly discusses the inscriptions. Baucis and Philemon: Ovid Met. 8.618ff. Sophokles may have initiated the Kolonos variant of Oidipous' death in the OC; in the Hesiodic Ehoiai (fr. 193 MW) he seems to have died in Thebes, and the same may be true of the puzzling reference in II. 23.677ff. Euripides in the Phoinissai and Sophokles in the OC are the first known to remove him from Thebes.


\(^{\text{70}}\)Apollo and Hektor, II. 24.18–21, and Aphrodite, II. 23.184–191; Thetis and Patroklos, II. 19.28–39.
Outside of battle, for the young the worst fate is to die before they have had a chance to live life: the girl who dies unmarried, or the young man who dies full of promise before his potential can be realised. In the classical period, these dead will be classed as σωροι, and their ghosts are considered particularly likely to be restless.\(^7\)

Homer, while disparaging the death of the old man in battle, does not give anything to replace it. If he should not die in battle, where, when and how should he die? Homer makes it clear that he should not die in battle, in the sack of his city, nor in poverty from hard toil, nor without sons to succeed him.\(^7\) The Greeks believed that a life was not complete and could not be evaluated until his death; how might the old man die so that his death befits his life and provides an appropriate capstone to it?

The exact term of a man's life was a subject of debate. Mimnermos wished to die at sixty, before old age caught up with him.\(^7\) Solon, however, advised him to aim rather to die at eighty.\(^7\) The ages suggested by Mimnermos and Solon are certainly not suitable for one who is going to come to a violent or untimely end; rather, these are an attempt to define the length of a 'natural' span of life. Such a dichotomy, between the 'ideal' death of the younger warrior and the 'natural' death of the older man, is common to many cultures.\(^7\) So what does a 'natural' death consist of? Strabo mentions a Kean law that anyone over 60 should drink hemlock, 'in order that the food might be sufficient for the rest'.\(^7\) Although in the context this is clearly a fantasy, the age suggested fits with the idea that there might be a 'good' age for one to peacefully give up one's life. In such a case the suicide would not be subject to the ambivalent status held by other suicides; rather, the death would be seen as a

\(^7\)Compare the Mesopotamian etlu (Cassin 1981: 321–322). Christianity tends towards the opposite view: the Victorians believed that those who died young had the advantage, as they were innocent and had no time to become 'old in sin'. A similar belief can in fact be found for the Greeks; there was little pollution attached to infant deaths, as they had not been in the world for long enough to make a mark on it, or to be marked by it. See Garland 1985: 80.


\(^7\)Mimnermos fr. 6 W.

\(^7\)Solon fr. 20 W.

\(^7\)On the 'natural' death see especially Ariès 1972: Chapter 1 \textit{passim}; in his view such a concept reflects a lack of fear of death in the culture concerned. Death may be regarded with hatred but it is accepted and not marginalised. This is set in opposition to the 20th-century marginalisation of death and of the dying, which Ariès believes to stem from a fear of death not present in the earlier case.

\(^7\)Strabo 10.5.6.

\(^7\)Rohde 1925: 187–188 n. 33.
'natural' (or at least fitting) end, as it put a stop to a long life when it was no longer useful and before it became burdensome. Embodied in the concept of the 'natural death' is the advantage of time; the deceased can arrange his death, put his affairs in order, read out his will and bid farewell to his relatives and friends. Such a death is representative of a different set of values from the 'ideal death' discussed above. It is worth noting that the various forms of the 'ideal death' are all specific about factors which alter the external view of the deceased – physical looks and 'worldly' values such as courage – but vague about prosaic details such as age and legal status. Mythologised death emphasises such heroic details – ἀρετή of various kinds – but pays little attention to those factors which, ironically, are the more important in the 'real' world, such as the deceased’s heirs, will, and funerary expenses. Such details are more important to one who has affairs to set in order. They reflect a more prosaically down-to-earth view of death, and one which is far less concerned with appearances. Time is also more important to the old than the young (and more likely to be available); death on the battlefield overtakes the young man at once, whereas ideally the old man should be able to make sure than everything is in order before he leaves his life; a reflection, perhaps, of both the proverbial impatience of youth and the greater press of business on the older man. Though, presumably, this will be lessened if he has sons. Ideally, however, he must die while he still has all his faculties and is capable of making a dignified exit. It is the nature of old age not to be in haste; its dignity is dependent on leisure. An old Kabyle woman told Bourdieu that in the old days 'death came slowly, it could take a night and a day or two nights and a day. . . Everyone had time to see them one last time; the relatives were given time to assemble and to prepare the burial. They would give alms to make the dying easier; they would give the community a tree . . . The key here, surely, is dignity; a man is too old to die in battle when he is beyond his best strength, and too old to live longer when he cannot die with dignity, when he will not be missed, when he is no longer of service to his community or of importance to his family.

It is important to remember in this context that death is not always instantaneous; the process of dying can be a long one, and it is not easy to say at what point it begins, or to isolate the moment of death. Humphreys gives a broad definition of dying: 'The process of dying, in its widest sense,
stretches from the decision that a person is "dying" (as opposed to being temporarily unconscious, or seriously ill, but with chances of recovery) to the complete cessation of all social actions directed towards their remains, tomb, monument or other relics representing them. This is, indeed, a very wide sense, but the point is well made that our sharp distinction between life and death is not universal. In some cultures, attention is paid to the tomb or monument even for years after the person is dead, that is, after the soul is completely integrated into the afterlife, and the corpse has reached a stable state. The mourner has been reintegrated into the community; but he or she may still visit and care for the deceased's grave. At the other end of the process, cultures can define the process of dying in different ways.

Many cultures have traditional ways in which 'the status of dying person may be claimed and that of living social actor renounced'. In the case of the Kabyle woman, 'death "always struck them through their speech": first they became dumb'. The Jew turns his face to the wall, away from the living, to pray. The Nuer summons all his family and close kin to his death-bed. The Greek also summoned his kin, read his will, and settled the arrangements for his funeral and for the payment of his debts.

In such cases, the individual must be able in some way to recognise the approach of death and act accordingly. How is this judgement made, and how long is the process of dying expected to take? In the case of the Kean law outlined above, the process of dying – and therefore the length of time which it should take – is under the control of the dying person. This kind of leisurely process of dying a willing death at the most appropriate moment, however, represents another idealised form of death. In practice an old man is just as likely as a young one to die suddenly, although the cause may be different. Sisyphos represents the Greek view of the 'right'

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80 Humphreys 1981b: 263.
81 Humphreys 1981b: 264.
82 Bourdieu 1977: 166.
83 Evans-Pritchard 1956: 144.
84 Humphreys 1980: 119. See Sokrates' last words: 'Krito, we owe a cock to Asklepios; see to it.' (Plato _Phaedo_ 115b-c). Most 1993: 106ff. argues that the words are spoken in reference to the illness of Plato mentioned at 59b5–10; Sokrates, speaking as he dies (after having taken the hemlock) experiences a moment of clairvoyancy (cf. for example Hektor's words in _Iliad_ 22.355–360) and knows that Plato will recover.
85 Rivers (1926: 41–43) describes the Melanesian distinction between _mate_ and _toa_. The category 'mate' includes not only the dead but also those who are very sick or very aged; these may be judged to be 'dead' and buried accordingly while, by our standards, they are still alive. 'Toa', correspondingly, means only those who are alive and healthy and not too old.
time to die taken to extremes. He escapes death twice, only to die peacefully in his bed in the end.
Chapter 3

Defining immortality

Some people look for immortality through their fame, some through their kids. I want to be immortal by not dying.¹

3.1 Defining immortality

The most basic definition of immortality, and of the divine, is eternal life. However, this is very incomplete. Our understanding of the immortality of the gods also encompasses eternal youth, or at least the ability to become no older.² It may also include a measure of invulnerability: an immortal cannot die. Even if he or she can be hurt, in time any wound will heal again. And it is often associated with divine powers, to help or hinder. The quality of the gods’ immortality can be defined by ‘taking to an extreme all the qualities and bodily values that are present in humans in a form that is always diminished, derivative, faltering, and precarious’.³ Every human good is only the shadow of its divine equivalent, and for each human ill, there is an equivalent divine lack of it; for death, immortality; for debility, eternal health and strength; for old age, eternal vigour; for hard toil, a life of ease.⁴ Immortality is not one unified and complete whole. The complete and pure immortality which belonged to the gods did not consist solely of the ability to live forever. In this chapter I will discuss the distinction between immortality as a whole and these component parts of it, and consider the consequences for those mortals who acquire such variants. As a test case, one example of limited immortality, the three-bodied Geryon, will be considered at greater length, with particular reference to Stesichoros’ portrayal of him in the Geryoneis.

Every human, in theory, has the potential for immortality, but no human has any control over the process of acquiring it. It is merely a

¹Woody Allen.
²See above, Chapter 2.3.
⁴Even ‘old’ gods do not lack strength and vigour, as is clear in the case of Nereus; see his wrestling with Menelaos at Od. 4.414–424, 454–461.
matter of chance, of finding the right herb, as the fisherman Glaukos did.\textsuperscript{5} In practice such potential is rarely fulfilled. Moreover, the realisation of this potential carries no guarantee of permanency. In other words, even an immortal, in some circumstances, can be killed.\textsuperscript{6} Immortality does not confer an inability to die; it does not even, necessarily, confer the qualities which may help to fend off death, such as invulnerability, supernatural power, and so forth. Immortality does not equal divinity, which is composed of immortality in combination with other superhuman attributes, powers and abilities.

Immortality is antithetical to humanity and the acquisition and possession of it by mortals are transgressive activities. Variants and dilute forms of immortality are found in borderline situations where boundaries between human and god are blurred, and are often attributes of creatures neither wholly mortal nor wholly divine. Descendants of a variety of gods, demigods and monsters, such beings live often at the limits of the world, in wild countries or at its furthermost limits where civilisation has not reached. The further out a land or race or individual was to be found from the civilised Greek centre of the world, the stranger it would be, often in its tendency to acquire mythical attributes as well as in physical form and cultural characteristics. Such creatures and races include the divinely favoured Hyperboreans in the north and the long-lived Ethiopians in the south and east, as well as individuals such as Aiolos and his children, Circe and the Graiai. Centaurs and satyrs live on the borders in another sense, on the border between the city and the wild which surrounds it. Geographically speaking, they are not as far removed, yet they still occupy a different and less civilised world than the ideal of the polis. Such liminal figures are not mortal; yet they are not gods or goddesses either. They occupy an imprecise no-man’s-land between the two, possessing something less than Olympian power and immortality, and yet not subject to human death and decay. They sometimes have a limited form of immortality (or merely a longer lifespan than usual, like the Nymphai) and occasionally some of the attributes that go with it.\textsuperscript{7}

\textsuperscript{5}Mentioned by both Pindar and Aischylos, according to Pausanias 9.22.7; nothing survives of Pindar’s account, but see Aisch. Glaukos Pontios, frr. 25c-34 Radt.
\textsuperscript{6}See above, Chapter 2.3.
\textsuperscript{7}For the lifespan of the Nymphai see Hesiod fr. 304 MW: they live ten times the lifespan of the phoenix, which lives nine times that of the raven, which lives ten times that of the deer, which lives three times that of the crow, which lives nine times that of mankind. In contrast, Aphrodite tells Aineias that they live as long as their trees do (H. Aph. 256–275).
Through these creatures, different aspects of immortality and death, the mortal state and the immortal one, could be articulated and explored. There are no guarantees of immortality for such creatures; even if one or both parents are immortal, their offspring are still vulnerable to death.®

In keeping with the topographical distance kept by such beings, the search for immortality often takes the hero beyond the borders of the known world, and this transgression of geographical boundaries becomes a symbol, or substitute for the transgression of boundaries between human and divine, or living and dead. Odysseus must go to the ends of the earth to meet the dead Teiresias, and later oracles of the dead, while not geographically quite as remote, were nonetheless often set on a geological border between the surface of the earth and subterranean caves.® In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Gilgamesh must go beyond the borders of his mortal lands in order to find the herb which bestows life. There, having travelled under the mountains and over the sea, he meets Utnapishtim, who has gained immortality during the flood which was so great that it destroyed and confused all geographical boundaries; it is this elimination of the separate spheres of mortal and immortal which facilitated Utnapishtim’s own immortalisation. In folktales, the hero or heroine must travel east of the sun, west of the moon, or to the ends of the earth, in search of the water of life. Frequently, in myth as well as in folktale, such a journey involves crossing the sea. This chartless and incalculable element, in the sense of vast distance which it gives, emphasises the transgressive nature of such a voyage.® Alternatively the object of the search may be found in the possession of, or only with the assistance of, a witch or wizard, a person outside of normal societal restraints and limits.®

Within the human sphere, immortality is similarly marginalised. It is offered to those who are dying (Tydeus, Herakles) or have just been born (Demophon). The myths which depict partial forms of immortality or the combination of mortal and immortal traits are myths of transgression.

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®As will be seen in the case of Geryon; cf. particularly other descendants of Phorkys and Keto: the deaths of the Chimaira (killed by Bellerophon), Echidna (by Argos; see Apollod. *Bibl* 2.1.2), Medusa (by Perseus), Orthos (by Herakles), the Sphinx (committed suicide).

™On *νεκρομαντεία* and entrances to Hades, see Rohde 1925: 186f. n. 23.

®Gilgamesh must cross a sea which only Shamash has crossed before; *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Tab. X, col. ii, vv. 20–26. Odysseus, on his voyage to the house of Hades, crosses Okeanos; *Od*. 10.505–512.

®See for example the role of Medea — witch, barbarian and female — in securing the golden fleece for Jason. In Greek myth this is a role often played by the gods.
They serve to define normal patterns of limitations and transgressions by illustrating the boundaries between living and dying, human and divine.

3.2 Limited forms of immortality

i. Ageing and agelessness: Tithonos

The best-known myth illustrating limited immortality is the story of Tithonos and Eos. The first mention of Tithonos' old age, and the fullest account of it, are to be found in the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, in which, unwilling to see her lover grow old, Eos begged Zeus for the gift of immortality to bestow upon him, and this was granted. Unfortunately she forgot to ask for eternal youth; Tithonos lived forever, but grew older and older, until finally the goddess shut him away in a room where he lies strengthless and his voice flows on inaudibly.\(^\text{12}\) Tithonos is a link between the human and divine spheres in the most literal sense. He combines the most distinctive and defining characteristics of each – the old age which is part of mortality, the eternal life which is part of immortality. Unfortunately these characteristics are diametrically opposed, and the result is disastrous.

The gift of a variant form of immortality necessitates that the receiver should adapt himself or herself to it – and not expect the process of adaptation to be the other way around. The gifts of the gods cannot be rescinded by the god, refused by the recipient, or altered by either, as is vividly made clear in the story of Tithonos.\(^\text{13}\) He cannot die, nor be given his youth back.

Although partial forms of immortality such as this are mediators between the extremes of mortal and immortal, these myths are intended not to show a link between the two states, but to show that such a combination is not beneficial, but harmful. In the end, the mediation does not create a balance between these two oppositions. Rather, the mediating factor often precipitates the character's eventual downfall, or places him or

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\(^{12}\) H. Aph. 218–38. Sappho mentions him (fr. 58 LP) as does Mimnermos (fr. 4 W); both refer to his perpetual old age. Hesiod mentions him only as Eos' lover and the father of her two sons, Memnon and Emathion (Th. 984–85). On old age in lyric poetry, see Bertman 1989.

\(^{13}\) For non-returnable gifts of the gods see Athena's words to Chariklo in Kallimachos Hymn 5.121–129, after Chariklo's son has been struck blind for involuntarily seeing the goddess bathing; Athena almost apologises, and offers the gift of prophecy in compensation (the story is first in Pherekydes, FGrHist 3 F 92). The only exception I am aware of is Midas.
her in a worse position than he or she would otherwise be. Tithonos' ever-ageing immortality unquestionably mediates between human and divine. But, given that the transformation into the *tettix* belongs to a later version of the story, such a variant form of immortality cannot be said to reconcile the two worlds by bringing them closer.\(^{14}\) Rather it serves to emphasise the distance between them by showing that any attempt to combine the two in such a way is too transgressive of human/divine boundaries to be successful. The integration of the human element of ageing makes the great gift of immortality into the worst of misfortunes.\(^{15}\)

Mortality and immortality, however, are not so completely antithetical that they can never be reconciled. The myth of the Dioskouroi presents just such a reconciliation.\(^{16}\) But the two states cannot exist simultaneously: the Dioskouroi are immortal on one day and mortal on the next, never both concurrently. They must put off immortality before entering Hades; with a few special exceptions such as Hermes, immortals cannot enter the world of the dead. To this extent the two spheres are truly irreconcilable: an individual cannot partake of both, or of the attributes peculiar to each, at one and the same time without disaster, as happens in the case of Tithonos.

The myth of Tithonos acts as both mediation and warning. Tainted with mortality as it is, Tithonos' immortality does combine characteristics of both the human and divine states. The theme of selection as the beloved of a divinity indicates that Tithonos is singled out for a special favour which raises him above the level of other mortals; Aphrodite makes this clear to Aineias even as she warns him of the hazards of the role.\(^{17}\) However, Tithonos' position is complicated by those of Eos' attributes which connect her to death and funerals. Tithonos is thus linked not only to a divinity but to death.\(^{18}\) In a similar way unmarried maidens who die

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\(^{14}\) The transformation into a *tettix* is first recorded in the fifth century BC by Hellanikos (*FGrHist* 4 F 140 = Σ AB Gen. II Hom. II. Γ 151) who says that the goddess turned him into a *tettix* because of his long life. The story only recurs in later sources; e.g. Σ II. 11.1 = Hieronymus Phil. fr. 15 Wehrli = Erbse III: 123; Tithonos himself requested immortality and then, realising his mistake, asked for death; Eos was unable to grant this, so turned him into a *tettix* so that she could still hear his voice. See King 1989.

\(^{15}\) The same combination is found in Ovid's account of the Sibyl at Cumae (*Met.* 14.101-153). Apollo offered her gifts if she would sleep with him; she pointed to a heap of dust and asked for one year of life for each grain. He granted the gift, and offered her youth as well if she would yield, but she was *vana* and refused (138; cf. the *νηρήν* Eos, *H. Aph.* 223). Contrast the Graiai who are old, but unageing; their old age has stabilised, rather than being the continual process of debilitation that Tithonos' and the Sibyl's are.

\(^{16}\) The Dioskouroi will be further discussed below.

\(^{17}\) *H. Aph.* 218-238.

\(^{18}\) See Vermeule 1979: 164-165.
young are sometimes described as ‘the bride of Hades’. Tithonos’ immortality condemns him to a long extension of the old age which is normally a harbinger of death. Like one dead, he is unable to move or lift his limbs (οὐδὲ τι κινήσαι μελέων δύνατ’ οὐδ’ ἀναείραι), and he has no strength. He lies supine upon his bed as if laid out for burial. His weakness and lack of vitality remind us of the strengthless dead encountered by Odysseus in *Odyssey* Book 11. Their inhuman clamour which, like Tithonos’ ceaseless babbling, has lost all meaning and become a senseless parody of human communication, is a sign of their movement beyond the borders of the human and divine spheres, the denizens of which are characterised by their ability to communicate with each other and to use language clearly. The dead are insensible of themselves and of others; Tithonos’ old age has led him into senility, of which his ceaseless babbling is the outward sign, and is therefore also no longer aware of the external world. Unlike the dead in Hades, however, he is caught on the borders of death. But he is unable to complete the final transition from life into death; he cannot separate soul from body. His immortality is an eternity of dying, in which death comes to be seen as desirable but unattainable. He is therefore the embodiment of the opposite view to that which holds out the promise of immortality as a desirable but unattainable alternative to life.

Like Sisyphos, Tithonos is caught in the grip of an unfinished action: he is unable to complete his life by achieving death. Immortality for the gods is an infinite postponement, not only of death, but also of ageing. Tithonos has only the former characteristic and not the latter. He and Sisyphos are alike in that they are both continually approaching death, which continually recedes from them. Their eternal pain is described in terms of those mortal troubles which are ended by death. In Sisyphos’

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21 Cf. the Sibyl in Petronius *Satyr.* 48.8: ‘... For I myself saw the Sibyl at Cumae with my own eyes, and when some boys asked her, “Σιβυλλα, τι θελεις;” she replied, “ἄτροβανείν θελω.”’ The Sibyl and Tithonos share the same enforced immobility. The Sibyl shut in her bottle, ‘in ampulla pendere’, and Tithonos is shut in his chamber; both are also physically confined by their old age, which makes them unable to move, and of which their narrow spatial boundaries are an outward sign. Cf. Ares imprisoned in the bronze jar by Otos and Ephialtes, equally immobile and in rare danger of death.
22 E.g. Hes. *WD* 174–181: mortals never stop labouring by day and perishing by night, and the race will be destroyed by Zeus when ‘they come to have grey hair on their temples at birth’. The degeneration of the race is shown by their premature aging; an increasing proportion of their life is spent in the toils of old age. Contrast in particular the silver race, who have one hundred years of childhood. ‘That they remained youthful for nearly
case it is symbolised by eternal and vain labour, which makes him unable ever to rest. As we have seen, this continual prolonging of the toil which is emblematic of human life represents a continual failure to reach that rest which is death and which is here shown as desirable. Toil and labour are a part of human life and are ultimately only ended by death. So the rest which Sisyphos craves can only be attained in death. Paradoxically, since he is already in Hades, he is among the dead; but the pointless and ceaseless motion which characterise Sisyphos are diametrically opposite to the stillness of death. In Tithonos’ case he must endure the hardship of old age, also without reprieve; it presses hard upon him and saps his strength.23 Although among the immortals, his immobility mimics death. These antitheses, stillness in the midst of motion and motion in the midst of stillness, are common to those punished by the gods; Ixion’s constant whirling follows the pattern set by Sisyphos, a continual and futile motion in the still world of the dead, as does the Danaids’ task. In contrast, in the world of the living which is characterised by action, Atlas is held immobile by the weight on his shoulders. These forms of toil and suffering both represent a view of immortality as the postponement of death, and therefore of eternity as the postponement of the completion of an action, the action of living. But they express this postponement in different ways. The myth of Sisyphos, as Sourvinou-Inwood pointed out, defines eternity in terms of a repetitive cyclical action which is never completed.24 Although the action had a beginning, it has no end, but constantly leads back into itself. Eternity is seen as a loop of time, repeated over and over again. It is this concept of eternity which feeds into the description of animals which shed their skins, such as crickets, lobsters, snakes and geckos, as immortal. The process of shedding their skins rejuvenates them, giving them back their past youth and enabling them once more to live through into old age and repeat the process. This cycle can then be carried on indefinitely. Theophrastos describes this process as ‘shedding old age’, ἐκθέωσθαι το γηρασ.;25 Life is completed by death: in

all their lives was evidently part of the traditional myth, and originally represented a blessing; Hesiod has lost the sense of this, giving them a long childhood instead of a long ἂγαθ’ (West 1978: 184 on Hes. WD 130).

25 Theophrastos fr. 367 Fortenbaugh = Athen. Deip. 3.65 105D, of lobsters, crayfish and shrimps; cf. fr. 362B = Apuleius Apol. 51, of geckos. Cf. McCartney 1929: 176 for an American Indian woman’s comment that ‘Indians don’t die... They shed their skins like snakes and we burn up the old skins so that they can be used again.’ Cf. also Kallim. Aitia fr. 1.31–36 Pf.
this kind of cycle, it is the process of living which is left incomplete. For Tithonos, however, eternity is described in terms of one continuous process carried on long past the time when it has ceased to have any meaning and should have come to an end. It is not an infinite repetition of an action, but an infinite extension of it. Both desire to complete their action and find rest in death; Sisyphos constantly approaches it only to lose it at the last minute, and Tithonos is constantly on the verge of it, in the sense that his old age should lead to death, but he is also far from it in the sense that he can never die.

ii. Shared immortality: The Dioskouroi

The parentage of the Dioskouroi is a complex question. Their mother is always Leda, but as far as their father is concerned there are three possibilities. First, they are both sons of Zeus. Second, they are both sons of Tyndareos. Third, Polydeuces is a son of the former and Kastor of the latter. Their earliest appearance is in the Iliad, where their father is not mentioned, where they are (implicitly) described as dead. Their shared immortality first appears in the Odyssey, although they are said to be the sons of Tyndareos: ‘the life-giving earth holds both of them, yet ... they live still every other day; on the next day they are dead’. However, they are also established as sons of Zeus early in the tradition. The Kypria had the story of their dual immortality, and also spelt out that Kastor was the mortal twin and Polydeuces the immortal one. It may also have been the first source for the split parentage, although this is not mentioned in the surviving fragments. If so, then it would be the same version of the story as that given by Pindar, who tells us unequivocally that Kastor was the son of Tyndareos and Polydeuces was the son of Zeus. This gives the pattern which is most commonly followed in the

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26 Hes, Ehoiai fr. 24 MW; Hom. H. 17 and 33; Alkaios fr. 34a LP; Kypria fr. 9 Bernabé. For fuller discussion of their parentage see Gantz 1993: 321–323.
27 Od. 11.298–300.
28 Pindar Nem. 10.80–82.
29 Ili 3.243–244: ‘the teeming earth lay already upon them 1 away in Lakedaimon’. The context – Helen is trying to descry her brothers among the Greeks – makes it probable that the Dioskouroi are here dead.
30 Od. 11.301–304. Gantz suggests that the passage may spring from a desire to correct the Iliad (in which they are never explicitly said to be dead) without openly contradicting it (Gantz 1993: 323).
31 Hes, Ehoiai fr. 24 MW; Hom. H. 17 and 33; Alkaios 34a LP.
32 Kypria fr. 8 Bernabé; Proklos' summary also gives the story (fr. 1 Bernabé).
33 Pindar Nem. 10.80–82
later sources and also offers most comprehensible motivation for the twins' odd immortality.

Whatever their parentage, their immortality poses problems. One would not expect to find Polydeuces immortal even though Zeus is his father. He is the son of a mortal woman and as such should not be immortal by nature. After all, even Herakles was born mortal. But this is not an invariable rule. Nonetheless one would expect the same rule to apply to both: if both twins are sons of Zeus, then both should be immortal. It is possible that Zeus offered Polydeuces immortality after his brother's death, and he was not immortal to begin with. This would fit better into the version in which both are sons of Zeus: the loss of one of his sons could upset him enough for him to wish to offer immortality to the remaining one.

The next problem is the nature and timing of their immortality. The twins spent alternate days alive and dead. This begs the question as to whether they were immortal together on alternate days – i.e., both alive one day and both dead on the next – or whether one was immortal on the day when the other was dead, and they merely passed each other on the threshold between life and death, in the same way as Hesiod's Day and Night greet each other in passing, but cannot be in the same place at the same time. The literary tradition offers no clues and could be read either way. The only author to resolve this problem clearly is Lucian, who presents a dialogue in which Apollo complains to Hermes that he cannot tell the Dioskouroi apart as they both look exactly the same and only one of them is ever around at a time. This could, of course, be Lucian's own innovation or misreading of earlier evidence. As Apollo points out, to see each other for only a few seconds in passing would seem a little unfair to

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34Compare Danaë's son Perseus, Europa's sons Kadmos and Sarpedon (although the latter's mother varies), Io's son Epaphos, Dia's son Peirithoos, Aigina's son Aiakos and Antiope's sons Zethos and Amphion. His only immortal sons by mortal women are Dionysos – whose immortality is probably due to the exceptional circumstances of his birth – Europa's son Rhadamanthys, and Alkmena's son Herakles, whose immortality is an exceptional gift. However, Helen is also sometimes immortal.

35Consider Dionysos and Semele, although the circumstances of Dionysos' birth may have contributed. Helen also appears to have some claims to immortality even as early as *Odyssey* 4.563-569, where Menelaos is told that he will become immortal by virtue of being Zeus' son-in-law.

36This issue of their mythography is separate from their portrayal in hero-cult, in which they are gods and are almost invariably shown together.

37*Od.* 11.301-304; Proklos' summary of the *Kypria*; Pindar *Nem.* 10.55ff, *Pyth.* 11.61-64; Alkman fr. 7 *PMGF* probably also mentioned it.

38*Hes.* *Th.* 748-750.

the Dioskouroi, as Polydeukes gave up his immortality since he did not wish to live without his brother.

However, it seems likely that the Dioskouroi could not be in the same place at the same time. I have already mentioned, in connection with Tithonos, the impossibility of simultaneous coexistence of the divine and the mortal. In Tithonos the combination means that the negative aspects of both are prevalent. The immortality possessed by the Dioskouroi, although inconvenient, is positive. They do not combine, in one body, both death and immortality. The Dioskouroi exchange their immortality for death, and their death for immortality, but never possess both at once. The immortal cannot enter Hades, and the dead cannot leave it; so it is logical that they should swap one’s death for the other’s immortality at the borderline. The kind of immortality enjoyed by the Dioskouroi has a remarkably physical aspect; there is just enough of it for one immortal, or two half-immortals, and although it can be shared it cannot make both of the twins fully immortal. Immortality cannot be increased; one is offered only just enough of it. It can be moved around, but it cannot be stretched to cover more than one person. The twins’ immortality is a zero-sum game: what one gains, the other must lose. This idea of transferable immortality is seen again in the myth of Tydeus who begs that Athene give ‘his’ portion of immortality, of which he has proved himself undeserving, to his son Diomedes; also in the myth of Cheiron’s death, when he transfers his immortality to either Prometheus or Herakles.\(^{40}\) Given this inflexible nature, it is more likely that the brothers alternate with each other, swapping their immortality from one to the other. It is less likely that they could be in the same place at the same time and that their shared immortality could average out over time, although this possibility is increased by the very short duration of their stay in each place.

This material aspect of immortality may also explain how the twins became immortal in the first place. As noted above, Zeus’ parentage should not have been enough by itself to give them immortality. However, if they are both sons of Zeus, then they each have a half-share of immortality. This is not enough to outweigh the mortal taint, but between them they have a sufficient ‘portion’ of immortality to enable one man to be immortal. Shared, this means that the two can each be

\(^{40}\)Tydeus and Diomedes: Thebais fr. 9 no. 3 Bernabé = Σ Pindar Nem. 10.12b. Cheiron and Prometheus or (more likely) Herakles: Apollod. Bibl. 2.5.4, 2.5.11; see Robertson 1951.
immortal for half of the time. This does not, of course, stand up if they are of mortal of half-mortal parentage. However, describing them as ‘Tyndaridai’ does not necessarily imply that Tyndareus was more than their foster-father, as can be seen in the Homeric Hymns addressed to them. In both of these, although they are described as ‘Tyndaridai’, they are stated to be sons of Zeus.

Another problem is geography. As we have seen, the Odyssey places them permanently in the underworld, while in the Iliad they are under the earth in Lakedaimon. Alkman may also place them permanently underground, at the site of their cult in Therapnai. Pindar says that the day of death is spent underground at Therapnai and the day of immortality is spent on Olympos at the side of Zeus. No other early sources name any place. None of these versions agree with depictions of the Dioskouroi on vase-paintings, in which they are commonly portrayed — together — with Leda or Tyndareos or both. Therapnai is a plausible site for such a meeting, but underground is not. Perhaps they are envisaged as meeting their parents on earth for a fleeting moment as one passes up to Olympos and the other underground. But Exekias’ amphora in particular has an air of homecoming which is difficult to explain in this context, not only in the welcoming gestures of Leda and Tyndareos, but also in the detail of the slave bringing out a stool.

The immortality of the Dioskouroi is unusual in its dependence on time. Unlike most immortality, it is measured in terms of time. The gods are largely independent of time, although they must have a sense of its passing, for without this there could be no sense of immortality. They themselves are outside of time but, unlike the dead, time does have meaning for them. For the Dioskouroi, however, immortality is not completely separate from time. They will live forever, as do true immortals; but in the shorter term they must consider their immortality in terms of the passing of individual days and nights and the alternation of life and death. Their immortality and death are articulated by a pendulum-like swing between extremes, a controlled and steady

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41 H. Hymn 17 and 33.  
42 Iliad 3.243-244. The Odyssey gives no place, but Odysseus is not in Lakedaimon.  
43 Alkman fr. 7 PMGF places them in Therapnai with Menelaos and possibly Helen; Σ Eur. Tro. 210 (2.353 Schw) says that Alkman said they dwelt under the earth at Therapnai.  
45 See Hermay 1978.  
46 FIG. 18: Rome, Vatican, Mus. Greg. Etr. 344, Attic black-figure amphora; from Vulci, c. 540 BC; ABV 145.13, 686 (Exekias); Para 60; Add2 40; AHS pl. 63.
movement back and forth between life and death. Their life-death exchange resembles the recurring loop in which Sisyphos is caught, continuing in an unending circle, and the whirling of Ixion on his wheel. But it is marked by neither the unceasing and pointless motion of Sisyphos' toil nor the stillness of Tithonos; the Dioskouroi are free to partake in deliberate and purposeful action which is the province only of the living. It is this freedom to act which makes the difference between a successful variant and a failed one.

One other detail must be noted. In Pindar's account of the fight with the sons of Aphareus, Idas and Lynkeus hurl their father's tombstone against Polydeukes' chest, 'but they neither crushed him nor made him give ground'. Polydeukes, it seems, has a measure of another divine attribute: invulnerability.

iii. Invulnerability

Invulnerability need not be defined in terms of immortality. Taken in isolation, it consists only of the prevention of wounds, in which case it will not prevent death by age or illness. In a wider context, as a component of immortality, it is part of a defence against death in all its forms. The Sumerians drew a fundamental distinction between death which comes naturally to mankind at the end of his days, and violent death from which not even the gods were necessarily exempt. A similar dichotomy seems to be operating here. As the agelessness of the gods is a defence against old age and the death which ensues from it, invulnerability is a defence against the violent death to which heroes are prone. Its effectiveness as such a defence, however, is ambivalent. The gods in the Iliad are clearly not invulnerable, but the extent to which their vulnerability is a Homeric invention is doubtful. Elsewhere, the gods do not normally need invulnerability, as no one is likely to get close enough to wound them anyway; and such wounds as they do sustain are always at the hand of another god or (if at the hand of a mortal) instigated by a god.

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47 Pindar Nem. 10.68–69.
49 Two gods are wounded by Diomedes in the Iliad: Aphrodite (5.334) and Ares (5.855). Dione adds to the list: Hera and Hades were both struck by the arrows of Herakles (Iliad 5.392–400). Ouranos is not invulnerable; but outside of Homer, the younger generations of gods do not seem to get wounded. Cheiron, when scratched by one of Herakles' arrows, is consumed with agony but he cannot die, although he wishes to, until he gives up his immortality.
Invulnerability occupies the same liminal space as the other variants of immortality under consideration. It is characteristic of semi-divine creatures, and a few selected heroes, and is not found explicitly stated as an attribute of any god. However, it is not particularly effective. Every creature primarily characterised by invulnerability dies violently.

Invulnerability is most often found as a gift bestowed upon mortals. On occasion it may be part of the individual’s nature; the Nemean Lion is an example of such a creature, and Talos, made of bronze, is also naturally invulnerable. In the almost identical stories of Nisos and Pterelaos we find a form of conditional invulnerability. They both have the same story: the king, or his city, is safe as long as the gold or purple lock of hair in his head remains there. In both cases his daughter falls in love with the enemy and cuts off the hair, therefore completing the destruction of the king and his city. Frazer classes this with the folktale motif of the ‘external soul’, in which a character cannot be killed unless his life, which is hidden outside of his body, is attacked. The same motif is found in the story of Meleager’s half-burnt brand; he will live – that is, he cannot be killed – until the brand is burnt. Perhaps Achilleus’ puzzlingly vulnerable ankle could be explained in this context: the vulnerability of the ankle precedes the reasons which the later sources give for it, but this kind of folktale motif, in which a hero’s life is stored in an unexpected place, could be behind the fact that Achilleus can be killed by being shot there.

Kaineus is a more complex character. She enters the scene as Kainis, daughter of Elatos, king of the Lapiths. Poseidon rapes her and then offers her anything she desires. Her request is twofold: she wishes to be made a man and invulnerable. Both of these wishes are granted. But Kaineus is present at the fight between the Lapiths and the Centaurs at Peirithoos’ wedding and several centaurs, using rocks and branches, hammer him

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50 But see Katast. 13, in which Amaltheia’s goat, by which Zeus was nursed, has an invulnerable skin, which Zeus can use to protect himself in his battle with the Titans; cf. Hyg. Astr. 2.13.4 who draws the (obvious) link with Zeus’ aigis.
51 Nisos, king of Megara, first appears in Aisch. Choë. 613–622, in a brief and elliptical description which indicates that the myth was already familiar. It does not resurface until Roman times. Whether the lock of hair guards the city only, or the king’s life as well, is not clear until Ovid’s version, in which Nisos does not die when the city falls (Met. 8.6–151). The story of Pterelaos’ golden lock first appears in Apollod. Bibl. 2.4.5–8, and follows the same lines, but here the origin of the lock is given: Poseidon gives it to him to make him immortal.
52 Frazer 1911–1915 part XI vol. 7ii: 103ff. gives examples. Cf. for example the Argo’s passage between the Clashing Rocks (Ap. Rhod. Arg. 2.561–602). The Argonauts send a dove through first to see if the passage is safe; the dove loses a few tailfeathers only, and when the Argo follows she loses part of the sternpost.
into the ground. This was a popular theme in vase-painting; the hero is usually shown already in the ground up to his waist, with two or three centaurs bashing him further into the ground. Although he is usually shown armed with sword and shield, two early examples show him armed with two swords: being invulnerable, he does not need a shield. According to Akousilaos, he then dies, presumably smothered; at any rate he does not come up again. Intriguingly, Akousilaos is the only author who feels it necessary to point out that Kaineus dies. Although the implication is there in other sources, Akousilaos' mention brings up the possibility that in another version, Kaineus does not die; rather he stays pinned under the earth, like the last head of the Hydra.

For a hero, invulnerability is the sign of the ultimate warrior. The more skilled a warrior, the more likely he is to come out of battle unscathed; he creates his own invulnerability and the legend forms around it. Achilleus and Aias are examples of this. When Achilleus' vulnerable heel first developed and why an arrow in his heel should kill him are controversial points. The first author to speak of the vulnerable foot is Statius, but he is clearly drawing on an established tradition. Achilleus is at least wounded in the foot early in the tradition; four vases show Achilleus shot with an arrow, or about to be so, in the foot. Although it is impossible to tell

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53 Hes. Ehoiai fr. 87 MW. No reason is given, but Gantz offers the likely supposition that she does not wish to repeat her unfortunate experience with other males (1993: 281). Kaineus appears at Iliad 1.263 but nothing of his story is told there. According to Akousilaos (2 F 22 = P. Oxy. XIII 1611 fr. 1 col. II 38) along with the invulnerability he also becomes very strong and becomes king of the Lapiths, but in some way angers the gods, who send the Centaurs against him. However, this tradition becomes assimilated into the battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs at Peirithoos' wedding fairly early; see Gantz loc. cit..

54 Beazley 1939: 7–8. The two depictions are FIG. 19: Olympia, Mus. BE 11a, a bronze plaque dating from the mid. 7th century BC; (Beazley 1951: 8 fig. 6; LIMC Kaineus 61*; Laufer 1985 pl. 1); and FIG. 20: an Etruscan black-figure stamnos in Vienna, Kunsthist. Mus. IV 1477, from Cerveteri, from c. 600 BC (EVP 16.3: Kaineus Painter; Beazley 1949–51: 7 fig. 5; LIMC Kaineus 63*; Laufer 1985 pl. 22).

55 Although if this were the case the Lapiths should have dug him up again after the battle.

56 Stat. Achilleis 1.133–134. Apollod. Ecl. 5.3 has Achilleus struck in the ankle, and presumably dying of it; he may he drawing on the Aithiopis (see Gantz 1993: 625 ff for discussion).

57 The earliest is FIG. 21: a protocorinthian lekythos, dating to c. 680–670 BC (Athens, Nat. Mus [no number], from Perachora; Schefold 1964: 43 fig. 14, LIMC Achilleus 848*) showing Achilleus with an arrow arching towards his shin. A Chalkidian amphora (FIG. 22) shows him dead with arrows in his back and ankle (once Pembroke-Hope coll., c. 540 BC; Schefold 1992: fig. 297). FIG. 23: Copenhagen NM 14066 shows Paris taking careful aim at his thigh ('Pontic' amphora, c. 540 BC; Hampe and Simon 1964: 47–52 pl. 19). And an Attic red-figure pelike (FIG. 24) depicts Achilleus, Paris and Apollo (Bochum Ruhr-Univ., Antikenmus. S 1060; c. 460 BC; K. Roth-Rubi, Palladion, AntK 1976: cat. no. 34 (Niobid P); LIMC Alexandros 92*). Burgess 1995 suggests that the invulnerability is Hellenistic and
whether the wound is fatal, it seems to have been significant. As far as Aias is concerned, the _Iliad_ excludes any possibility of his immortality, and Aischylos is the first literary source, in which someone, probably Athene shows Aias where he is vulnerable. The scene is repeated on an Etruscan mirror. There is also likely evidence on an early Corinthian column krater, on which Aias has committed suicide, but the tip of his sword has split and bent back.

However, an invulnerable hero is something of a contradiction in terms. He derives his heroism from his courage in battle and in facing death. This is a part of his _arete_. This is why the gods are not heroes. But if a hero knows he cannot be killed because he is invulnerable, his courage cannot be as great as that of the hero who risks his life every time he fights. Most Greek heroes die by violence, because a violent death has more pathos and heroism than a non-violent one. Even Theseus, who reaches old age, meets his end by being pushed off a rock into the sea. And there is another problem: how is an invulnerable hero to be killed?

The obvious answer to both problems is that the hero must have a vulnerable point. Aias was made invulnerable by being wrapped in Herakles’ lionskin, but his ribs or collarbone are vulnerable where the quiver touched them. Kyknos can be strangled. Achilleus has his heel or ankle, and Talos, too, has a vulnerable ankle, where the pin is located which holds the ichor in his body. Inevitably, this weak point is exploited and the invulnerable is proved to be vulnerable. Even in the cases when a being has no flaw in his invulnerable skin, he is still susceptible to some form of death which does not break that skin, such as strangling (as in the case of the Nemean Lion) or smothering (as in the case of Kaineus).

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the earlier wounding designed to hamper the ‘swift-footed’ Achilleus; see also Lacroix 1987; Kakridis 1961; Berthold 1911: 35–43.

58II. 23.820–823; Aisch. fr. 83 Radt. Cf. the ambiguous Pindar _Isth_. 6.42–49 in which Herakles prays that Aias should be ‘unbreakable in body’ like the skin of the Nemean lion. See further Berthold 1911: 6–16. For the bent sword cf. a black-figure amphora in Rome, depicting Herakles’ fight with the Nemean Lion; below the struggling pair lies Herakles’ bent and useless sword (Rome, VG 50406 (M472), 510–500 BC; _ABV_ 521: near Painter of Boulogne 441; _Para_ 127; _Add_ 291; Schefold 1992 fig. 114; _LIMC_ Herakles 1882*).

59FIG. 26: Boston, MFA 99.494, Etruscan mirror, early 4th century BC; von Mach 1900: 93ff; Comstock and Vermeule 1971: 264–5, cat. no. 381.

60FIG. 25: Paris, Louvre E 635, from Caere; c. 600 BC; Schefold 1964: 78a.

61Lykopron 455–461.

62Ovid _Met_. 12.72–144. Kyknos’ invulnerability is a later addition to his story. In the _Kypria_ Achilleus kills him with no mention of anything unusual, and likewise in Pindar _Olymp_. 2.82, _Isth_. 5.39; the first certain reference to his invulnerability is Arist. _Rhet._ 2.22.12, but cf. Soph. _Poimenes_ fr. 500 Radt, in which ‘neither bronze nor iron takes hold of [someone’s] flesh’.
3.3 Geryon and the *Geryoneis*

Creatures such as the Nemean Lion, which have a partial or variant form of immortality, often appear in legends only so that they can die, slain by some hero fulfilling a task assigned to him, or in search of glory, or simply on his way to somewhere else. Their partial immortality does not really protect them; it makes them harder to kill and therefore a greater challenge.

The figure of Geryon in archaic myth fulfills exactly this function. The only myth concerning him is the one in which he is killed by Herakles, and his cattle are stolen, to fulfill Herakles' tenth labour. His earliest appearance in surviving literature is in Hesiod's *Theogony*. The longest passage sums up his story in a few succinct and compressed lines:

> And Chrysaor begat Geryon, with a triple head,  
> after mingling with Kallirhoe Ocean's daughter.  
> Mighty Herakles stripped him of life and limb  
> by his shambling cattle in sea-circled Erytheia  
> the day he drove those broadfaced cattle away  
> to holy Tiryns, crossing the ford of Ocean  
> and killing Orthos and the herdsman Eurytion  
> in that hazy stead beyond glorious Ocean.

In spite of the brevity of this account, however, all the essentials of the story are here: Geryon's parentage, his three heads, the island of Erytheia, the presence (and death) of the herdsman Eurytion and the dog Orthos, the theft of the cattle and the death of Geryon. The important elements in the myth are already established at this point, and the myth itself was obviously firmly enconced in the oral tradition before Hesiod set it down.

No other pre-Stesichorean version of the story survives. The most complete version of the myth which survives is that in Apollodoros. This adds one more important detail: Herakles' arrival on Erytheia in a golden cup belonging to Helios. Apollodoros also adds some intriguing geographical details. Herakles, having reached Erytheia (which Apollodoros places at Gadira) lodged on Mt Abas, and the fight took place beside the river Anthemous. This very specific set of names is unusual,

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65 Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.10.  
66 Cf. Pherekydes *FGrHist* 3 F 18a.
and it would be interesting to know where these place names came from. Neither of them appears elsewhere, and they may have originated with Stesichoros, as might also Menoites, the herdsman of Hades.

Until recently very little was known of Stesichorus' own poem. However, in 1967 P. Oxy. 2617, a papyrus in a very fragmentary state, was published. This manuscript in its present form consists of some 78 scraps. Many are too small to tell us anything very much, but some are larger, and adding these to the fragments from PMG (frr. 181-186) it is possible to work out the general framework of the story, although the order of the fragments, the characters involved, and the details of the events are still debatable, to say the least. If length may be used as a guide, this was the most comprehensive treatment of the myth in antiquity, appropriate to a poet whom [Longinus] described as 'Ομηρικότατος, and whose style Gentili aptly calls 'epico-lyric'. The poem seems to have been popular, and there is a considerable increase in the number of vases showing the battle between Herakles and Geryon from the middle to the end of the sixth century, mostly Attic black-figure.

The story is here outlined in brief, as far as it can be reconstructed, although the order of the fragments is not certain, and then consider the

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67 The river Anthemous is mentioned also in Tzetzes (Schol. on Lycophron 652) but he probably derived it from Apollodoros.
68 Editio princeps: Lobel 1967. Later editions: see Stes. frr. S7–S87 in Page SLG (see also Page 1973); Campbell Greek Lyric vol. 3: Davies PMGF.
69 The poem was at least 1300 lines long, as is known from a stichometric letter in fr. 7 col. ii (S27). Page estimates its total length at perhaps about 1560 lines for the Geryon story, with a possibility of quite a lot more if it went on to describe the 'diverse adventures' which befell Herakles on his way home. The question of whether the number in the margin of: Oxy. 2617.7 (S27) refers to the number of lines in the poem or in the whole roll is debated. Lobel comments, 'this is in [sic] the numeration of lines in the roll, and we do not know how many pieces the roll may have contained' (Lobel 1967: 1). Page assumes that this marks the number of lines in the poem, not the roll (Page 1973: 147), and in his table he offers a plan in which the poem was 1560 lines long, and stretches over 52 columns, at the point at which Geryon dies, and then other 'diverse adventures' of Herakles on his return journey are described (p. 148). I think it probable that the numeration applies to both poem and papyrus; certainly the poem was of considerable length, and it seems likely that it would have been the only piece on the papyrus. The average length of a papyrus roll was 30 sheets, or perhaps around 1400 lines, depending, obviously, on the width of the columns. The Geryones' columns are narrow, so Page's 1560 lines could fit, but without leaving much space for more. The poem could have occupied more than one roll; but the papyrus fragments could not.
70 [Longinus], De sublimitate 13.3; Gentili 1988: 122. This was echoed by Quintilian, who comments that Stesichoros sustained with his lyre the burden of epic themes ('epici carminis onera lyra sustinetem') but adds rather dampingly that he 'redundat atque effunditur' (10.1.62).
fragments in more detail. The beginning and the end of the tale are completely lost; the central part, the death of Geryon, is the most complete. Herakles comes to Erytheia, possibly in the cup of Helios (S17). He kills Orthos (Geryon's dog) and Eurytion (Geryon's herdsman) and drives away the cattle. Someone tells Geryon what has happened and tries to persuade him not to face Herakles; this might be Menoites, the herdsman of Hades, as in Apollodoros (S9, S10, S11). But Geryon is determined to fight (S11). His mother Kallirhoe takes over the pleading (S12-S13) but Geryon is obdurate. The gods meet in council; Athene reminds Poseidon of his promise not to protect Geryon (S14). Herakles kills Geryon (S15-S16), returns to Tartessos and restores the bowl to the Sun (S17) and possibly goes on to further adventures as he returns with the cattle, perhaps including the meeting with Pholos (S19).

It is clear from the surviving fragments that in Stesichoros' poem the protagonist is not Herakles but Geryon. It has already been noted that in Apollodoros, Hesiod, and others, the story of Geryon is portrayed as one episode in the story of Herakles. In the Geryoneis, however, it is Geryon's thoughts and actions which are the primary focus, as far as this is possible for a character who dies half way through the poem, and he is transformed from a triple-bodied monster into a tragic hero. Stesichoros in this poem sets out to overturn the usual convention of civilising hero Herakles vs. savage monster. It becomes increasingly clear throughout the poem that Geryon is being portrayed as a hero, whereas Herakles' ethics seem doubtful, to say the least.

The sympathetic portrayal is particularly evident in the long fr. S11, in which Geryon debates whether or not he should fight Herakles. Geryon presents his dilemma in terms of whether or not he is immortal. To find out whether Geryon can be termed immortal in any sense, however, it is necessary to consider his own ancestry. Chrysaor is certainly immortal (vv. 3-4) and Kallirhoe probably so. It is something of a puzzle to know

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72 Also his first cousin; Hes. Th. 309.
73 Barrett suggests that in S9 Menoites is describing Herakles, and in S10 he is urging Geryon not to forget his parents (Page 1973: 139).
74 Gentili 1988: 122 places this fragment earlier in the poem, before Herakles' arrival on Erytheia; but following Barrett's suggestion (Page 1973: 146) and placing it 'just before the final conflict between Herakles and Geryon' must have added to the sense of impending doom established during Geryon's conversations with Menoites and his parents.
75 The cattle are more important to the myth than might seem the case in the poem. Cattle-stealing was a popular pastime and Herakles has considerable difficulties in getting them home; Fontenrose 1959: 338 counts 'at least' 21 bandits who try to steal them en route. For Herakles' connection with herdsmen cf. Burkert 1979: 84–85, 1973 passim.
how exactly they should produce a son who might be mortal. Geryon’s grandparents may provide a clue to this: Kallirhoe is the daughter of Okeanos, but Chrysaor, along with Pegasos, sprang from the severed neck of Medusa when Perseus cut off her head. So Geryon’s paternal grandmother, was just such a creature as he is himself; a monstrous form, which, whether mortal or not, was certainly able to be killed. Medusa’s death may well have been mentioned in the poem. In fr. 183, a scholiast to Apollonius of Rhodes comments that Stesichoros in the Geryoneis mentions an Atlantic island called Sarpedonia. Robertson assigns this name to a digression on Geryon’s ancestry, as the author of the Kypria says that the Gorgons dwelt on Sarpedon. So it is possible that the death of Medusa was referred to in the poem, reminding the audience of the mortality of her descendant Geryon.

Until the incursion of Herakles, Geryon’s immortality was not relevant; some sort of immortality must have been his in any case, as several factors show. First, simple genealogy makes it at least possible that his lifespan had already been longer than human. His father Chrysaor sprang from the slain Medusa. Medusa was slain by Perseus, who was Herakles’ great-grandfather; there is therefore a generation’s gap between them, long enough for two of Geryon’s bodies to start showing signs of age! Such a situation, however, never arises in myth; in this case other factors also make it impossible, most importantly the location of Geryon’s home. He lives in the far west, beyond Okeanos. Only the immortals and the dead live here. Beyond Okeanos normal rules of lifespan tend not to apply any more. Geryon can live out his timeless existence, beyond the edges of the human world where time matters, in complete peace until he is interrupted by Herakles.

The text of fr. 811 is fragmentary but much of it can be reconstructed, with a fair amount of confidence that the sense is correct even if the text is doubtful. The second part of his argument is clearer than the first: if Geryon is mortal, it is better for him to fight and die than to disgrace his

76 Hes. Th. 288; Chrysaor: Th. 280f. Medusa is one of the progeny of Phorkys and Keto, who are without exception monstrous. They are an odd mixture of immortals and mortals, the latter being mostly hero-fodder. See West 1966 ad Th. 270-336.
77 Kypria fr. 24 Bernabé; Robertson 1969: 216.
78 See Gantz 1993: 817 (Table 14) or Schefold 1993: 346 for Herakles’ genealogy. It is possible that Chrysaor, being himself immortal, fathered Geryon at a time which would put him in his prime just as Herakles came to kill him. Moreover, Greek mythical genealogies are notoriously inaccurate as far as chronology is concerned; so it is best not to build too much on this.
79 See Vermeule 1979: 141-143.
family. But the first half is open to several possible interpretations. There are three main possibilities.

1. The first is that adopted by Campbell, who supplements as follows: ‘if I am by birth immortal and ageless, so that I shall share in life on Olympos, then it is better [to endure?] the reproaches . . . and . . . to watch my cattle being driven off far from my stalls’.80 In short, discretion is the better part of valour. This is also Barrett’s view, although he is not happy with it.81 In this case, Geryon would of course lose the cattle, which is an argument against supplementing the text in this way. But the main problem with this supplement is the implication of cowardice. Page comments, ‘The man who says that, if mortal, he prefers death to disgrace, is not likely to say that, if immortal, he prefers disgrace to death’.82 However, we have seen that the gods do not follow the same codes of honour as men do.83 A god, who is going to live for all eternity, can shrug off disgrace in the eyes of a mere mortal, even if the mortal is Herakles.

2. Page himself favours the second possibility; he suggests that the argument runs, ‘whether I am immortal or not I must not avoid battle with Herakles. If I am immortal, so much the better; he cannot kill me. If I am not, then I would rather die with honour than survive without.’84 But there is a problem here too. The distinction between mortal and immortal is not as sharp as this solution would need it to be; Geryon could still be killed, even if he is in some sense immortal. Page’s suggestion implies that immortality confers or includes invulnerability. This is not the case. Immortality implies the potential to live forever but it does not imply that one cannot be killed or wounded. Geryon, if he is immortal, may be subject to that kind of limited immortality, which will guard him against ordinary wear and tear in his far-off homeland but is not able to protect him from direct attack. Vermeule suggests that ‘had he been undisturbed by a mortal cattle-raider in a lion’s skin, he would have lived

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80 Campbell 1982–1992 vol 3: 66–69. It is worth noting that even if he is immortal Geryon is unlikely to ‘share in life on Olympos’; he is more likely to go on quietly tending his cattle. West’s translation, ‘fit to live in Olympos’ (1993: 88), is preferable; it refers to Geryon’s possible status as an immortal rather than to his dwelling place.

81 Page (1973: 150) says that Barrett ‘would much prefer to accept’ a translation along the lines of ‘if I am immortal, so much the better; he cannot kill me’.

82 Page 1973: 150.

83 See above, Chapter 1; the gods, whose honour is not dependent on their actions, as they are part of a group which is so select that nothing can really damage their prestige, do not need to live up to human standards of honour or morality. Paradoxically, of course, an immortal inheritance is regarded as something to be proud of and to live up to.

peacefully and enduringly outside the borders of the mortal world'. He is not a god in the sense that the Olympians are; he is a kind of quasi-immortal, his exact status uncertain. Kirke, particularly after she has been stripped of her powers by moly, is a closer parallel; consider her fear when Odysseus threatens her at *Odyssey* 10.336ff.

Given this potential for death, Geryon may well prefer to abandon his cattle to the son of Zeus, and escape with his own life, knowing that he is immortal and therefore part of a select group to whom mortal concepts of honour are largely irrelevant. If one is a god, then one has such unassailable status that a little cowardice does not even dent it; as witness Ares' ignominious defeat in the *Iliad*. Thus Page's objection, that Geryon's heroism if he is mortal is inconsistent with his cowardice if he is immortal, is not entirely valid. Immortality carries with it a different moral standard. If this is Stesichoros' point, then he is making it less subtly than Homer, who never states outright that immortality places its possessor, in this sense, beyond reproach.

However, owing to the two-edged way in which the Greeks viewed their gods, it is not impossible that Geryon could be determined to avoid reproach whether mortal or immortal. Humans judge the immortals by human moral standards, and Ares does (for the short period of about 16 lines, when he speaks to Zeus) feel that his dignity has been slighted by his defeat at the hands of a mere mortal. Moreover Geryon does not know whether he is immortal or not. 'ai μὲν . . . αἱ δέ', he says; 'if I am immortal . . . if I am mortal'. But he fights anyway. He is persuading his interlocutor that, whatever his status, he must fight. So the result, whichever alternative is valid, must be the same: that he will fight.

In spite of his violent death, there is also a pattern of continuity. Geryon's monstrous aspect, as well as his violent death, have leapt one generation; his parents live peacefully and appear to be physically normal—at any rate there is nothing to show otherwise. But in Geryon, the monstrous physical qualities of his ancestors—especially Medusa, but also Phorkys and Keto—come to the fore again. Geryon, however, is proud of his parentage and determined to live up to his immortal inheritance:

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85Vermeule 1979: 143.
86Il. 5.850ff.; see above, Chapter 1.2.
87Il. 5.872ff.
88Phorkys and Keto are both associated with marine monsters: Keto by her name, Phorkys as a form of the ὄλιος γέρων, like Proteus with his seals; see West 1966 ad Hes. *Th.* 270–336.
now's the finest time to face my destiny
[and save you] and all our kin
from disgrace with men of the future [who tell]
of the son of Chrysaor . . .

3. Given that Geryon, even if immortal, may not be invulnerable to
death, it seems that West’s translation (the third possibility) has much to
be said for it.

Perhaps my [lineage makes me immortal, un]ageing,
[fit to live] in Olympos:
if so, better [to fight and avoid] reproach
[than to look on while the cattle]
[are pl]undered from my [stalls].

The problem with this pair of alternatives is that they sound very similar.
'If I am immortal I should fight to avoid dishonour, if I am mortal I
should meet my destiny to avoid dishonour to my family.' There is very
little contrast between these, aside from the slightly odd (and presumably
unintentional) implication that for an immortal only his own honour
matters, and not that of his family. The structure 'on the one hand, if I am
immortal, then . . .; on the other hand, if I am mortal, then . . .' seems to
call for at least some contrast between the two possibilities.

Maltomini draws a parallel between this scene and the Homeric scenes
in which a hero, caught in a tricky situation, tries to decide whether to
retreat or stand and fight. This parallel, however, is of limited use, as
Maltomini himself points out. Accepting the third possibility, as
Maltomini does, invalidates the comparison: there is no question of
retreat, and the choice turns not on any evaluation of the current
situation, but on the nature of the protagonist, which is impossible to
evaluate. 'In questa formulazione ciascuna delle due apodosi è inaugurata
da un 'segnale' di scelta (11 κρέσσον, 20 καὶ[λλιόν) e la decisione è quindi
abolita come momento distinto.'

This is why there is only a slight difference between the two clauses.
Geryon’s weighing of the alternatives is not intended to help him decide
on a course of action. He has already decided; his two alternatives are
designed to persuade others that the course on which he is determined is
the right one. The apodoses of his two possibilities are not alternatives to

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89West 1993: 88.
91Maltomini 1984: 67f: 'se sono immortale meglio combattere ed evitare il disonore, se sono
mortale molto meglio affrontare il destino e non gettare ignominia sulla mia stirpe'.
each other. Rather, he is presenting the answers to the two questions, ‘What would be the best course of action if I am immortal, and what would it be if I am mortal?’ The two comparatives (κρέσσον, κτάλλιόν) show this; it is better, it is nobler, to fight than to suffer disgrace, which one would either have to live with forever (if one were immortal) or hand on to one’s family (if one were mortal). The two alternatives sound similar because they are similar. In the end, Geryon’s status as mortal or immortal makes no difference; either way he will fight and die to protect his honour. He is not choosing; he is justifying.

The other problem with this fragment is the question of whom Geryon addresses here. Ὅπιος ἅπα (v. 16) shows that the interlocutor is male. Eurytion is dead; this leaves a choice of Geryon’s father, or Menoites (as in Apollodoros). The name of Menoites is not found anywhere in the Stesichorean fragments, but it is a very likely hypothesis; the narrative calls for an outsider, a messenger who can tell Geryon what has happened to his cattle, his herdsman, and his dog, describe Herakles to him (S9, if Barrett’s supposition is correct) and remind him of his family (S10). This speech set the scene, opened the way for Geryon to give his reasons for facing death, and with the reminder of his parents, prepared the audience for the entrance of Kallirhoe later (S12, S13). As far as S11 is concerned, it is perhaps a little in favour of Menoites that he appears in Apollodoros and Chrysaor does not; on the other hand, Kallirhoe certainly appears in the Geryoneis, so Chrysaor may plausibly do so also. However, although there are precedents for the motif of the concerned father who tries to prevent his son from engaging in a fight which he is likely to lose – as Priam does Hektor, for example – the motif of the mourning mother is far more common. Menoites’ presence, though his name is nowhere

92 West 1993: 88 translates v. 16 as ‘... if, dear father ...

93 That the interlocutor is Herakles is the view formerly held by Gentilli (1973: 301; cf. Gentilli 1988: 273 n. 20 where he decides in favour of Menoites). Certainly there would be a wonderful tragic irony in this speech if Geryon is discussing his own possible immortality with the hero who is not only about to decisively resolve the question once and for all by killing him, but also is destined to become immortal himself. But the content and tone of this fragment imply that Geryon is trying to persuade his interlocutor that it is best for him, Geryon, to fight, rather than play the coward. It seems unlikely that he should need to persuade Herakles of this; the image of Herakles trying to persuade Geryon (or anyone) not to fight seems out of character. There is also the question of when this conversation is to take place, as Herakles attacks from ambush.

94 For the similarity of Kallirhoe’s speech to that of Hekabe to Hektor at Iliad 22.79–91, see below; the rest of the scene might, but need not, be modelled on that in the Iliad, in which case Chrysaor may have appeared. Cf. Thetis, II. 1.413–418, etc. The classic type on vases is Eos, present at the fight between Achilleus and her son Memnon, or removing the body; see above, Chapter 1.4.
Chapter 3: Defining immortality

mentioned, is almost certain; it is difficult to imagine who else would be reminding Geryon of his parents (S10), and Geryon’s speech would make a fitting response to such a reminder.

In S12 and S13 Geryon’s mother Kallirhoe begs him not to fight. She reminds him of when he was a small child, and she gave him her breast. The scene is very similar to Hekabe’s plea to Hektor in the Iliad:

Hektor, my child, look upon these tears and obey, and take pity on me, if ever I gave you the breast to quiet your sorrow. . .

The mother mourning for her dead son is a frequent motif in art, and although there are no vases which show Kallirhoe mourning for her son, she is often present while he is fighting. Stesichoros’ use of this motif further underlines Geryon’s humanity, and his similarity to Hektor. It also further emphasises that his death is imminent. By this time, even given the fragmentary nature of the papyrus, Stesichoros’ treatment of Geryon is clear. Geryon does not appear to have any of the monstrous nature which one might expect from his shape, nor does he have any of the power and authority one might expect from an immortal; he seems mortal, and more importantly than that, he seems human. During these conversations with friend and parents, his six legs and three heads seem irrelevant, and he is portrayed as a tragic hero, vulnerable and doomed.

The next scene emphasises this. The presence of a god at the side of a hero in the Iliad brings success; and when the god absents himself, as Apollo is depicted on some vases leaving Hector at the moment of his death, this absention leaves the hero without the support he needs, and shows that death is near. Geryon is the grandson of Poseidon. He is also the hero of this poem, and on both these counts it seems that he should have some claim to divine aid. However, as is clear from the Iliad, divine descent is not enough. Poseidon is apparently intending to come to his side as he fights:

Then did pale-eyed Athene
speak to her stern-hearted uncle
Poseidon, god of horse-ways:

95 II. 22.82–83.
96 See Shapiro 1991. Kallirhoe present during Geryon’s fight: see for example Berkeley, Lowie Mus. 8.3851, a black-figure neck amphora (c. 525–500 BC, from Italy: ABV 283.11; LIMC Herakles 2489* / Eurytion II 41*; CVA University of California 1 (USA 5) pls. 20.1; 21.1a; Brize 1980, 61.137 no. 40); also Munich, Antikensgl. 8704 (2620 WAF, J337); red-figure cup from Vulci; Para 379 (Euphronios); Add 2 153; LIMC Herakles 2501*. That she is never shown mourning him, as he is never shown dead, is probably due in part to the difficulties in depicting the three-bodied corpse. For the possibility that the woman on the vases may be Erytheia rather than Kallirhoe, see Robertson 1969: 215–218.
'Remember the promise you made,
[and do not seek to save] Geryones from death.'\(^{97}\)
Athene's speech is unclear, but it seems likely that she is reminding Poseidon of an earlier promise.\(^{98}\)

Thus by the time the fight between Geryon and Herakles takes place, the result (for the poem’s audience, if not for Geryon himself) is a foregone conclusion. The only question is how Herakles will kill his formidable opponent. In the lengthy fragment S14, one of Geryon’s heads is killed by an arrow dipped in the blood of the Hydra. This is usually assumed to be the first head. The fragment relates that Herakles attacks λάθραι (S15 v. 8), perhaps δολίως (v. 3), from the side, or sideways (εὐράξει, v. 10).\(^{99}\) But this does not necessarily mean ‘from ambush’; λάθραι can mean nothing more than ‘stealthily’, ‘with guile’. Megakleides says that Stesichoros was the first to present Herakles in the character of a bandit, travelling about alone with club and lionskin and bow.\(^{100}\) That the portrayal of Herakles in the Geryoneis presented him in this way seems beyond doubt. There is no sign that any companions accompanied him in the poem; indeed, in the vase-paintings only one of them shows him with any companion.\(^{101}\) The shift in Geryon’s character from monster to hero has necessitated a shift in Herakles’ character also, away from the way in which he is usually portrayed in this myth; rather than being a civilising force, he is the one who is using less honourable ways of fighting. So the most common

\(^{97}\) S14 vv. 3–8.
\(^{98}\) \(\text{γώριοναν θανάτου,}\) Barrett’s suggestion; cf. Page 1973: 150. The choice of Áthíne to help Herakles is significant; Willcock characterises Athene’s main function in the Iliad as ‘winning, success, and characteristically Greek success.’ (1970: 5) She is often found on vases backing Herakles up throughout his labours, and she is also one of his most frequent sponsors for his entrance to Olympos. There are strong signs that Herakles will win, just as there are signs that Geryon will lose. The scene is reminiscent of those in the Iliad in which Zeus contemplates saving Sarpedon and Hektor. In this context, the choice of Poseidon to help Geryon is not without irony, as he constantly gets the worst of it in his contests with Athena.

\(^{99}\) S15 v. 3 \(\text{καινον ων}\) De Martino 1982a: 59 δολίως; Musso 1969: 73 δόλος, δόλιος.
\(^{100}\) Stes. fr 229 PMG. This may not be true; cf. Tsitsibakou-Vasalos 1990: 11 n. 15. But whether Stesichoros was the first or not to employ this characterisation, it is the one he uses here. The earliest depiction of Herakles in a lion-skin does show the fight with Geryon, and dates from the fourth quarter of the seventh century (FIG. 27: Samos, Vathy Mus. B 2518, from the Heraion; bronze relief on horse’s pectoral; LIMC Herakles 2476° / Geryoneus 8*; Brize 1985: 53–89 pll. 15–20).
\(^{101}\) A red-figure cup from Vulci (Munich, Antikenslg. 8704 [2620 WAF, J337]; Para 379; Add 2 153; LIMC Herakles 2501*), signed by Euphronios, shows Herakles and Geryon fighting, with the dead Orthos between them, a distressed woman (Kallirhoe?) behind Geryon and Athene behind Herakles. Behind Athene is Iolaos; behind him Eurytion has collapsed under the handle of the cup. On the other side are the cattle, guarded by three warriors; this may be an episode from Herakles’ return journey. Cf. Robertson 1969: 210–11, 219.
reconstruction of this poem is that Herakles attacked Geryon, initially, from ambush, threw a rock at one of his heads, thereby dislodging his helmet, which fell to the ground, and followed up this advantage by shooting an arrow into that forehead. If κεφ[α]λαί refers to the head of the arrow, it is a particularly strong metaphor; the personification of the arrow would give it an effect almost of malevolence, certainly of unstopability, which culminates in the brutally realistic description of the death of Geryon's head. It is this moment in the fight which forms the stock iconography on the vase-paintings. Geryon fights on, but one of his heads (usually the first, the closest to the viewer) has already fallen, and is often seen with an arrow in it. On the left, Herakles wields a club or sword, or, less often, has his bow in hand for the next shot.

The arrow, however, presents another problem. The text describes its envenomed head in graphic detail, then says, 'σιγάτ' ὑ' ἑπικλοπάδαν [ἐνέρεσε μετώποιω'. Scholars have come up with two ways of translating this, and both are problematic.

1. The first is to take ὑ γε, indicating the subject, to refer to Herakles, and to say, 'Silently he (Herakles) thrust it into his (Geryon's) forehead'. This possibility is taken up by Lobel (and also by Barrett). Page points out a couple of problems with this.

   i. The subject of the verb is more likely to be the arrow (which has been the subject of the previous sentence) than Herakles. Page says, 'the stress in the present sentence falls initially on σιγάτι and ἐπικλοπάδαν. ὑ γε, placed between these words, implies a continuation, not a change, of subject; it is not enough to carry us back to a subject now remote by at least half a dozen lines'. This is certainly debateable, however, and seems to me to depend largely on what was in those missing lines. If ὑ γε does apply to Herakles, this could be (exempli gratia) a kind of ring composition; '[he shot him in the forehead with the arrow; the arrow] bearing on its head a charge of horrid death... In silence and stealth he drove it in his brow'.

102 The subject of S15 col. ii has been much debated. Lobel (1967: 6) comments on v. 3 that 'κεφ[α]λαί looks possible, but I do not now that it is wanted'. It seems most likely that κεφ[α]λαί must refer to the head of the arrow; Lobel adds that he is 'fairly confident that what is referred to here is one of the arrows of Herakles "befouled with the blood and... gall of the... Hydra"' (citing Apollodoros Bibliotheca 2.5.2). Barrett and Page both consider κεφ[α]λαί to be used figuratively of the head of the arrow (Page 1973: 152).

Tsitisbakou-Vasalos, however, argues (1990: 15) that κεφαλή is always used of animate objects - people, deities, animals - and never of inanimate objects such as arrows except at Iliad 11.72 (ὦ θας τ' ὑπύλη κεφαλάς ἔχειν). But I do not find its use here impossible; such a bold image is fitting to the context.

103 See Brize 1980; LIMC s.v. Geryoneus.

104 Page 1973 152.
ii. This is a very odd verb to choose for describing the movement of an arrow from a bow into a man's forehead. The verb ἐπιθείην or ἐνεπιθείην, in the sense of 'thrust', 'push', 'shove', is not apt for an arrow shot from a bow. Elsewhere it is used of fingers, teeth, or the stake that Odysseus drove into the Cyclops' eye.

2. The other possibility, followed by Page, is to take the arrow, rather than Herakles as the subject, so that the verb is used intransitively here; 'silently the arrow thrust into his forehead'. The problem here is that neither ἐπιθείην nor ἐνεπιθείην is used intransitively with the dative anywhere else at all. As usual, it is preferable if possible to find a solution which does not reflect badly on the grammatical skill and accuracy of the poet. Alan Griffiths has pointed out that the only way, really, in which this verb could make any sense in this context is if Herakles is literally thrusting the arrow into Geryon's forehead – not shooting it from a bow, but shoving it in with his hand. The immediate question is why Herakles would stab his enemy with an arrow rather than a sword.

The beginning of the fragment, with its remarkably emphatic and vivid description of the Hydra's poisonous blood on the arrowhead, provides a clue to this. Herakles is using the arrow because of the Hydra's blood on the tip. Herakles' poisoned arrows turned up again and again in the myths; in association with Deianeira and Nessos, with Philoktetes, with the centaurs Pholos and Cheiron. Moreover, Euripides makes a definite association between the Hydra's blood on the arrows and Geryon's death.

The question of Geryon's mortality has already been discussed; it is only in this fight that Geryon can find out whether he actually is immortal or not. The answer is clear from the end result; he is able to be killed. But, as Griffiths points out, that does not mean that he is completely mortal; he could be partially immortal, and therefore partially invulnerable. This kind of partial immortality finds precedents in both Geryon's own ancestry

\(\text{Fingers: Hp. Art 34; teeth: Opp. hal. 2.574, 266, kyn. 2.258, Q. S. 11.205; stake: Od. 9.382f.}\)

\(\text{Alan Griffiths, private communication, December 1994; publication forthcoming. The following theory, concerning the immortality (and invulnerability) of Geryon's third head, is his work.}\)

\(\text{I think it likely that these last were mentioned in the poem; there is a fragment (SI9) in which Herakles 'took the goblet, a three-flagon measure, that Pholos had mixed and served him, and drank with application'. This adventure was usually one of the parerga attached to the fourth Labour, to get the Erymanthian Boar. Here it may have been part of a reminiscence designed to emphasise the efficacy of the Hydra's poison, which killed both Pholos and Cheiron.}\)

\(\text{Eur. Her. 419ff.}\)
and Herakles’ other adventures. The Hydra had nine mortal heads and one immortal one, which could not be killed and finally had to be buried under a rock to get rid of it; the Nemean Lion had an invulnerable skin, and had to be strangled, then skinned with its own claws; Antaios could not be killed as long as he touched the earth. All these monsters gave Herakles an unpleasant surprise in the middle of a fight and caused him to adopt unconventional methods of fighting; so it is entirely probable that Geryon was capable of doing the same. In Geryon’s own ancestry, Medusa was mortal – at any rate, she could be killed – whereas her two sisters were immortal. It is twice said of Gilgamesh in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* that ‘two thirds of him is god, one third of him is human’.\(^\text{109}\) The god in him outweighs the human; yet he dies. The fight may, then, have finished along these lines: Herakles, having killed off two bodies, suddenly found that the third was still fighting, his sword or club had no power to harm it, and nothing that he could do was having the slightest effect. Accordingly he reached over his shoulder to his quiver, took out one of his arrows smeared with immortal poison, and thrust it into his enemy’s face. The Hydra’s blood has already proved its worth on immortals by killing Cheiron\(^\text{110}\); and Geryon dies.\(^\text{111}\)

This leaves the question of whether this is a possible action in the context. From the Homeric epics onwards, there are certain conventions in fight scenes. One of these is that the movement in a fight is always from farther away to nearer; a warrior might throw a spear or a stone or shoot an arrow, then go in to the attack with his sword. But having once attacked with a weapon such as sword or club which is used in close combat, he will never return to a long-distance weapon such as the bow or spear – until he has conquered his enemy and moved on to the next one. So Herakles may have initiated the combat by throwing rocks and shooting arrows, but once he has struck a blow with his club or sword he will not revert to his bow. However a long-distance weapon might be

\(^\text{109}\)Tablet I.ii.1, Tablet IX.ii.16.

\(^\text{110}\)Cheiron was the son of Kronos and Phillyra (cf. Pherekydes, FGrH 3F50) and was immortal (Soph. Tr. 714–15; Apollodoros 2.5.4.) Herakles accidentally wounded him with one of the poisoned arrows; being immortal, he could not die, but chose to give up his immortality to Prometheus (or possibly Herakles himself; cf. Gantz 1993 147) rather than live forever in pain.

\(^\text{111}\)The emphasis laid on Geryon’s mortality earlier in the poem seems to me to back up Griffiths’ hypothesis. None of the characters within the poem, with the exception of Poseidon and Athena (so far as can be told) are certain about Geryon’s mortality. To Steichoros’ audience, however, Geryon’s doom is clearly signposted; they therefore suffer the same jolt of surprise as Herakles, the same reversal of expectations, when the fight which has been going so smoothly suddenly becomes a seemingly impossible proposition.
used in an unconventional way as a weapon in a close fight. Griffiths cites Diodorus Siculus, describing a fight between Alexander and the Persian satrap Spithrobates. Alexander, when his lance snapped against the satrap’s cuirass, drove the broken end into his adversary’s face: 

This is prose not poetry; nonetheless, it is worth noting here that the verb is the same as in Stesichoros. In fact the passages are strikingly similar, not least in the use of a long-distance weapon in close combat and in an unusual fashion. So the hypothesis that Herakles is thrusting his arrow into Geryon’s face by hand is far from unlikely.

Further to this hypothesis, I would add, in view of the antithetical nature of mortality and immortality discussed above, that Geryon is able to combine the mortal with the divine in this way only because of the nature of his body. He is triple-bodied. Moreover, each body functions, to a degree, as a separate entity; this is clear from the depictions in art in which, with one or even two bodies dead, he continues to fight nonetheless with those which are still alive. The death of one body does not interfere with the other two. It does not even seem to hamper him by its weight; it merely hangs ignored. In this sense, Geryon is not truly one entity; he is three entities joined at the waist. Of the examples cited above, the Hydra, similarly, has only one head, on one of ten snake-bodies, which is immortal. The Nemean Lion, on the other hand, is not immortal; it is only invulnerable. Only Gilgamesh is explicitly said to contain both mortality and immortality; and, as a non-Greek hero, he must be considered to be the exception which proves the rule.

The gory realism of the description of Geryon’s death is succeeded by the contrastingly gentle simile:

Geryon bent his neck aslant

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112Diod. Sic. 17.20.4-5.
113One objection to Griffiths’ theory may be that this seems rather a short number of lines in which to dispose of the first two heads — for this theory must apply to the third head in order to make any dramatic sense at all — particularly considering the length of the poem. It does seem from what is left of Stesichorus’ work that he placed considerable emphasis on his characters’ reactions to events, and perhaps not as much on the events themselves. If this was the case, then a quick fight could add to the effect of the tragic hero, as in Homer when the characters speak at great length then kill each other in a line or two. Moreover, there is the entire epode here and half of the following strophe in which Herakles can pick off Geryon’s heads at his ease.
114Cf. the giant in Monty Python’s Quest for the Holy Grail, whose three bodies are certainly not of one mind; they begin to argue and end up killing each other.
115A close analogy would be Siamese twins; but Geryon’s three bodies do share one mind. One wonders whether, had the third and immortal body in survived, it would have been able to continue living, truly immortal.
even as a poppy whose delicate structure
decays, and its petals soon fall.\textsuperscript{116}

In a scene of violence and death, the pathos of this is notable. It is
reminiscent of, and almost certainly derived from, the poppy image
applied to the dying Gorgythion in \textit{Iliad} 8.306-308:

He bent drooping to one side, as a garden poppy
bends beneath the weight of its yield and the rains of springtime;
so his head bent slack to one side beneath the helm's weight.

Maingon comments that 'Stesichorus' application of the simile is the
more appropriate of a dying creature . . . the loss of petals represents the
destruction of the form of the moment, the visible, tangible flower'\textsuperscript{117}.

Certainly Stesichorus' purpose in the simile differs from Homer's. The
death of Gorgythion is brief and accidental (Teukros was aiming his arrow
at Hektor) and he does not appear elsewhere in the \textit{Iliad}. The simile
serves as do the brief genealogical cameos in the \textit{Iliad}; it marks Gorgythion
out for a short moment as an individual and arouses pity. But it is only a
short moment; in the next line he is dead and is never heard of again.

Stesichoros, on the other hand, extends the simile, which he is applying,
not to an anonymous nobody, but to his protagonist. Moreover, he kills
off the poppy as well as the warrior, thus heightening the effect of the
comparison. The simile, the end of Geryon's physical death, is the
culmination of a long orchestrated movement towards his death. Geryon
has been doomed from the beginning of the poem; the mood has become
darker and darker, until finally at the moment when he dies the mood is
shifted from one of impending doom to one of pity by this surprisingly
delicate simile.

The other fragment which speaks of his death is the rather puzzling
fragment S21:

\begin{verbatim}
(a) (b)
[ ιν \muεν[ ] . . . \nuες οκυπετα[ \\
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{116} Fr. S 15 col. ii vv. 14–16.

\textsuperscript{117} Maingon 1980: 106. She adds, 'Moreover, it seems likely that the poet had the intention
of striking a parallel between the loss of the multiple heads of the monster and the petals
falling from the stem of the flower, however bizarre the image may appear to our taste'.

There is nothing to show that Stesichoros intends to carry the simile further; it is possible
but seems somewhat unlikely, as it seems to be the head of the flower itself, and not just the
petals, which is compared to the head of Geryon. As the head of the poppy droops as it
dies (incidentally losing its petals), so does Geryon's head droop. The image evokes pity
for Geryon's death, which a 'bizarre' image of a 'grotesque mountain of a monster' (103)
would not. Maingon does not appear to give sufficient weight to the sympathetic portrayal
of Geryon as hero.
Chapter 3: Defining immortality

It was at first uncertain what these verses could speak of; Lobel commented that 'there is nothing, that I see, to guide one's choice among the alternative possibilities of articulation and supplementation', and Page called it 'one substantial fragment which awaits an ingenious interpreter'. This it seems to have found in Lerza, who suggests that this refers to the moment in which Geryon dies. The winged things of line 1 are thus daimonic signifiers of fate and death, probably either *moirai* or *keres*, hovering over Geryon as Herakles kills him: 'non è l'uomo che agisce: è solo uno strumento nelle mani della divinità'. She suggests a tentative reconstruction as follows:

καὶ τὰῦν μὲν δαίμονες ὡκυπέτας
ρά γε πτερόν ἀλέθρον ἔχοισαι

This is a persuasive hypothesis for several reasons. It fits well with the Homeric tone of the poem, especially of the death scenes; Lerza points out the similarity of her supplemented text with *Iliad* 16.788-793, the moment when Apollo comes up to Patroklos and strikes (πλήξει) him in the back, robbing him of his helmet (τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ μὲν κρατός κυνέην βάλε, cf S15 v. 14) and of his strength. By evoking the deaths of heroes in the *Iliad*, Stesichoros places further emphasis on Geryon's doom as well as on his status as hero. This may also explain the presence of Hermes on some of the vases; perhaps he is there to escort Geryon to Hades.

3.4 Geryon and Humbaba

Humbaba/Huwawa in the Gilgamesh myths played such a similar role to that of Geryon that it seems likely that they were related. In the literary texts Huwawa has become simply a very difficult adversary - hero-fodder - as has Geryon, but he also originally seems to have played a wider role.

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118Lobel 1967: 3; Page 1973: 154
119Lerza 1978: 86. Cf. the *keres* which stand around Sarpedon at *Iliad* 12.326-27:

 νῦν δ' ἐμπές γὰρ κῆρες ἐφεστάσαις θανάτοιο
 μυρῆι, ἃς οὐκ ἔστι φυγεῖν βροτὸν οὐδ' ὑπαλύξαι.

120Lerza 1979: 43

121For example Delos Mus. 547, Attic black-figure lekythos from the Heraion, end 6th cent. BC; *ABV* 379.274 (Leagros Group); *Para* 168.1; Brize 1980: 138 no. 47; *LIMC* Herakles 2470*. 
They share several characteristics; the remoteness of their dwellings, the importance of what they guard, their formidable physical characteristics – in place of Geryon's three bodies, Humbaba's 'roaring is the flood-storm, | His mouth is fire, | His breath is death!' \(^{122}\) Geryon may also have a link with Humbaba/Huwawa's sacred forest. The Souda mysteriously mentions \( \Upsilon \nu \rho \upsilon \nu \varphi \varepsilon \iota \delta \varepsilon \rho \alpha \) and Philostratos describes 'trees of Geryon' on his burial mound: 'they were a cross between the pitch tree and the pine, and formed a third species; and blood dripped from their bark'. \(^{123}\)

There are, basically, two versions of the myth of Gilgamesh and Huwawa: the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh* which is pulled together into a 'standard' version made from scattered fragments; and the Sumerian *Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living* from which the Humbaba episode in the Babylonian version probably derived. There are also some Old Babylonian tablets, written in Akkadian, which are in some places close to the standard version (and in others very different). \(^{124}\) The characterisation of Gilgamesh varies widely throughout these; but in the Huwawa/Humbaba episode, Gilgamesh and Enkidu are clearly the heroes in all versions. Yet the character of Huwawa is not without sympathy:

`Huwawa, (his) teeth shook,
He warded off Gilgamesh:
'O Utu I would say a word:
In the "land" thou didst give birth to me, thou dost rear me."
He adjured Gilgamesh by the life of heaven, life of earth, life of the nether world,
Took him by the hand, brought him to . . .
Then did the heart of Gilgamesh take pity on the . . .\(^{125}\)

This is an interesting inversion of the motif of the pleading mother noted earlier. Huwawa has no parents in whose name he can plead, or who can intercede for him. He pleads by life itself, rather than by the mother who gave him life. The possibility of sympathy inherent in the character of

\(^{122}\) *Epic of Gilgamesh* Tablet III col. 3 vv. 18–20 *ANET* 79.

\(^{123}\) Suidas 253; Philostr. *Apollonios of Tyana* 5.5; cf. Paus. 1.35.8, 'Geryon[\'s body] was in Cadiz, where they have no tomb, but a tree that takes different shapes'.

\(^{124}\) Cf. Dalley 1988: 41–7 for a summary of the different versions. Translations here are by J. B. Pritchard, taken from *ANET: Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living*; 47–50; *Epic of Gilgamesh*, with *ANET Suppl.* 503[67]–507[71] (additions to Tablets V–VIII and X). References are to the 'standard version' of the *Epic of Gilgamesh* unless otherwise specified.

\(^{125}\) *Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living* vv. 146–153.
Huwawa is similar to that inherent in Geryon: both are cast as doomed, although they do not know it; and in both cases they are the victims of an outsider who has come in to remove what is rightfully theirs. Gilgamesh and Herakles really have no rights in the case, save that of force. Moreover their motives are similar. Gilgamesh tells his mother, the goddess Ninsun, that he wishes to ‘banish from the land all evil, hateful to Shamash’. This, however, is what he says in trying to enlist the aid of the gods, and having attained his aim he does not mention it again. His decision is primarily motivated by the desire to carry out some deed to win fame; an aristeia, in fact, in search of kleos and the immortality which his name will have as a result.

‘Should I fall, I shall have made me a name:
"Gilgamesh" – they will say – "against fierce Huwawa
Has fallen!"’

Herakles is there under Eurystheus’ orders, but he too will gain fame from this exploit; and he too hopes for profit for it in the form of the cattle. In both cases the booty – the cedars of Lebanon, the cattle of Geryon – are famous, and they are also a motive for the expedition; and both heroes take their loot home by sea. But the main incentive is glory. Both Gilgamesh and Herakles are setting out to attack a monster, a superhuman being with strength or weapons or powers beyond that of mortals. Both, therefore, arm themselves with more than mortal weapons; Herakles takes the arrows dipped in the poison of the Hydra’s immortal blood, Gilgamesh and Enkidu arm themselves with weapons ‘each laden with ten talents’. They know in advance what they will be dealing with, and they are well prepared.

In the details of the journey there are also points of similarity. Both heroes require the help of the Sun to reach their destinations. Gilgamesh and Enkidu are encouraged and actively helped by Shamash, and Herakles needs Helios’ cup to cross the sea. Geryon lives on Erytheia, in the west, at the limit of the human ken; Humbaba also lives by the sea in the far west, in Lebanon.

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126Tablet III.i.19. Dalley (1989: 127 n. 28) comments that ‘all evil’ is the name of a demon; it is not mentioned again in the Huwawa episode.
127Tablet III.iv.13ff; compare Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living vv. 5–7 = vv.31–33. Here the appeal is directly to the god Utu.
128Table III.v.36.
129Table V.i; compare Utu’s help in Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living vv. 34ff.
130Compare Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living, where Huwawa lives probably in Dilmun in southwest Persia (Kramer 1947: 30, cf. BASOR 96 (1944) 18–28; but cf. Pritchard,
On a wider scale, perhaps the most important resemblance is thematic. The whole of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* centres on the question of Gilgamesh's desire for immortality. He seeks it through fame, through the doing of great deeds; but the death of Enkidu brings home to him the realisation that fame is not enough, one must still die. It is the sight of the death of his friend from sickness that drives home to him the fact of his own mortality. Like Herakles, he is the son of a mortal and an immortal. Like Herakles he has a chance of immortality; but where Herakles has it thrust upon him, Gilgamesh seeks it, and loses it. Humbaba/Huwawa represents Gilgamesh's first attempt at overcoming death and the obscurity which follows it.
Chapter 4

How to become immortal

Take three pounds of genuine cinnabar and one pound of white honey. Mix them. Dry the mixture in the sun. Then roast it over a fire until it can be shaped into pills. Take ten pills the size of a hemp seed every morning. Inside of a year, white hair will turn black, decayed teeth will grow again, and the body will become sleek and glistening. If an old man takes this medicine for a long period of time, he will develop into a young man. The one who takes it constantly will enjoy eternal life, and will not die.

4.1 Introduction: those who seek, those who are sought after

This Chinese recipe, written down by the Taoist Ko Hung in circa 400 AD, has the advantage of being clear, specific, and easy to follow, made from ingredients that are readily available. Of course, there is a catch: Ko Hung adds that ‘those who seek immortality must set their minds on the accumulation of merits and the accomplishment of good work . . . If good deeds are not sufficiently accumulated, taking the elixir of immortality will be no help.’ Nonetheless, the clarity of the recipe emphasises the Taoist belief that immortality is available. Not so the Greek concept of immortality. The Greeks themselves never seem certain what it is, nor how it may be obtained. Immortality is even defined in negative terms; the gods are *a-thanatoi, not* subject to death, *a-mbrotai, non-* mortal. As Vernant puts it, those beings whose bodies and lives possess complete positivity – without lack or defect – are defined through negation and absence. Rather than mortals being defined by the negation of immortality, the gods are defined by the negation of mortality.

However, this is not nearly such a paradox as it might seem; in fact, it is what one would expect. The gods are defined by their difference from humans because they are defined from a human perspective. Humans are

1Ko Hung, *Nei P'ien 7*, from Campbell 1962-1976 vol. 2 p. 437. As the modern meaning of cinnabar is mercuric sulphide (HgS) it is unlikely to have quite the effect described here. However, the now obsolete meaning ‘dragon’s blood’ is attested in Pliny: ‘Cinambre, which is the mixed blood of their fel dragons and mighty elephants’ (Pliny 2.532, tr. Holland 1601). Alternatively it may simply be ‘the red resinous juice of a tree’; see *OED* s.v. ‘cinnabar’.

2Ibid. 6.5b, 3.10a-b.

the standard, the norm, against which all other beings are measured and found to be greater or lesser. It has been shown in Chapter 3 that the Greeks defined types and degrees of immortality by the ways in which those who possessed it differed from humans. However, there are also attempts to reverse this norm and to postulate a viewpoint which considers human mortality from the outside, as it would seem to the gods. It is this viewpoint which results in the bluntly realistic description of mankind by Apollo in the *Iliad* and by Aphrodite’s bleak view in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*. Yet these blunt, belittling, ‘realistic’ descriptions of the lot of mankind are deceptive. This is the view of the gods, as mortals see it; but it is far from being mortals’ view of themselves.

The question of the exact process by which immortality is bestowed in the mythology of the archaic period is a complicated one. In the Homeric poems, immortality is for the gods; mortals cannot obtain it at all. Even Herakles is in the underworld among the dead; Odysseus meets him there. In the *Iliad* there is no mention or chance of immortality for mortals; the whole work is focused on the brevity of human life and the inevitability of their death. It is left to the *Odyssey* to be more lenient; Kalypso offers Odysseus immortality (although it is clear from the context that he is wise to turn it down) and Menelaus is destined not to die, but, through a sort of divine nepotism, to be conveyed to the Elysian Field at the edge of the world, by virtue of being Zeus’ son-in-law. In neither case, however, is there any clue to how this change in state, from mortal to immortal, is to be accomplished.

The scarcity in Homer of mortals who become immortal does not reflect a scarcity of myths concerned with this theme. Homer tends in any case to suppress the supernatural element in the myths, as comparison with the Epic Cycle will show, and, particularly as far as the *Iliad* is concerned, it is not in his interest for there to be any possibility of escaping death. Unfortunately, of the other sources contemporary with Homer, only enough survives to show that they were probably very different. The Epic Cycle is riddled with immortalisations; but any attempt to work out the details founders on the fact that the epics are preserved in extremely brief

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4 *I. 21.462ff* (see above, Chapter 1.2); *H. Aph.* 244 ff (Aphrodite tells Aineias that ‘harsh old age will soon enshroud you’ and describes their recent intercourse as ‘my miserable and dreadful madness’).
5 *Od.* 11.601–606; vv. 602–604 are commonly held to be an interpolation, and will be further discussed below.
6 *Odyssey* 4.561.
7 Griffin 1977: 40–42.
and possibly corrupt summaries. Throughout the archaic period, there are tantalisingly brief and fragmentary mentions of myths which survive only in later sources, sometimes in a very different form. Art can sometimes be used to fill in these gaps. An example of this is the myth of Bellerophon. Homer's version, as recited by Bellerophon's descendant Glaukos, leaves out all mention of Pegasos and sums up Bellerophon's attempt to gain immortality by riding Pegasos to Olympos, and his subsequent fall, in the brief lines,

'But after Bellerophontes was hated by all the immortals,
he wandered alone about the plain of Aleios, eating
his heart out, skulking aside from the trodden track of humanity.'

But Pegasos is already connected with Bellerophon in the fight with the Chimaera by the time the Theogony was composed. The earliest written source for the story of the flight and the fall is Pindar's Isthmian 7, dating from 454 BC:

'... winged Pegasos shook from his back
Bellerophon, his rider, striving
to enter the dwellings of the sky
and join Zeus' company.'

Yet Homer's lines may be understood to presuppose this fate, and there is a probable depiction of it on a Cretan relief amphora of the early seventh century. In many cases the archaic references are even slighter and the more complete sources even later. One thing, however, is common to both early and late sources: they are all very vague on the problem of how immortality could be conferred or obtained.

There was a popular archaic topos that immortality was impossible to obtain at all. Pindar states categorically that 'man is too short (βροχευς) to reach the bronze-paved home of the gods'. In spite of this pessimism, archaic myth was much occupied with devising ways of spanning the gap between humans and gods. Very few mortals, in fact, actually succeed in

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8 According to Proklos' summaries, Iphigeneia is immortalised in the Kypria, and in the Aithiopis Eos gains immortality for Memnon and Achilleus is spirited away to the White Isle - although whether or not this is immortality is unclear. In the Telegony Telemachos, Telegonos and Penelope all become immortal. See above, Chapter 1.4.
10 Hes. Th. 319–325.
12 FIG. 28: Louvre CA 4532, Cretan relief pithos, c. 675 BC; Demargne 1972: 45 fig. 9; Vermeule 1979: 128 fig. 1.
13 Pindar Isth. 7.42; cf. for example Simonides fr. 522 PMG; Alkaios fr. 38A V; Ibykos fr. 313 PMGF.
breaking the barrier between themselves and the gods, or at any rate in
getting any good from the breakage; but many make the attempt.

The Greeks often described the spheres of mortals, immortals and the
dead in physical terms: Earth, Olympos and Hades. But the dividing lines
between these are not as clear as they might seem from this concrete
image. Immortality can be found not only in those who dwell above the
world, but also in those who dwell at the ends of it; the Hesperides, the
Hyperboreans and the Ethiopians are all immortal or at least μακρόβιοι.14
If one can get far enough out of the human world its rules do not apply.
In practice, however, no mortals achieve or even attempt to gain
immortality in this way. These lands are as hazardous to reach as
Olympos; the only mortals who get there are heroes on their way to or
from somewhere else, or seeking something which can only be found
there.

The rules forbidding such boundaries to be crossed are frequently bent,
and almost impossible to pin down, depending as they do on an extremely
variable combination of mortal motivation and divine sanction.15 Thus
Herakles can wrestle with Thanatos and reclaim Alkestis; but Orpheus
loses Eurydike, and Asklepios, when he reclaims a person from Hades, is
struck down by a thunderbolt. It would seem that each case is judged on
its own merits. Nonetheless there are some ground rules. I have already
noted that a distinction can be drawn between those who try to escape
death, and those who have a chance at immortality.16 In narrative terms,
generally speaking, the first group move between earth and Hades, while
the second move between earth and Olympos. Among this latter group, a
further distinction is possible, between those mortals who attempt to gain
immortality and those on whom an immortal attempts to bestow
immortality.

Type 1. A mortal seeks immortality

14The Hesperides live in the West 'beyond famed Okeanos' (Hes. T.h. 215-216; see above,
Chapter 3.3 for Geryon, who also lives in the West); the Hyperboreans, as their name
indicates, live in the far north; and the Ethiopians are usually placed in the East (see West
ad Hes. T.h. 985); but Herodotos places them in the south-west (4.197) and Homer divides
them into two, placing one group at the sunrise and one at the sunset (Od. 1.22-26). The
word μακρόβιος is first applied to the Ethiopians by Herodotos (Hdt. 3.21, 3.23, 3.114; see
Last 1923 for the suggestion that the word originally meant 'having a long bow' (from the
Homeric βιός, rather than βιός), which meaning was lost before Herodotos' time.
15The theme of the council of the gods, coming together to fix the conditions of entry to
Olympos, is a common Roman satiric motif; e.g. Seneca Apocolocyntosis 8-11, Lucian Deorum
concilium, Ovid Met. 394-543; cf. Eden's introduction to Seneca Apocolocyntosis (Cambridge
16See Chapter 2.
In this type of myth the mortal himself acts to remedy his position and seeks immortality. He can do this either by physically ascending Olympos, as Bellerophon does, or by seeking to accede to divinity in some other way, as Salmoneus does. Either attempt is inevitably doomed to failure eventually, and usually the mortal in question never even gets close. Immortality may be directly spoken of or it may simply be the aim which underlies the quest. A search like Bellerophon’s for equality with the gods is a search for immortality. The kind of hybris which wishes to raise itself to Olympos is a desire not merely to live with the gods but to share in their powers. Without exception heroes in this group fail and are punished – often by the loss of the life which they sought to augment; they have their human fallibility and mortality brought forcibly home to them by being consigned precipitately to Hades. No matter how great a hero is, and how much in favour with the gods he may be, the attempt to make himself, uninvited, one of their number constitutes a crime which immediately makes him unacceptable. Therefore, any mortal who makes the attempt is destined to fail, simply because of the attempt itself.

The method with the lowest success rate (and highest penalties) is to make a direct assault on Olympos, as typified by the myth of Bellerophon, or that of the Aloadai, Otos and Ephialtes, who planned to pile Pelion on Ossa and climb them, but were killed by Apollo at the tender age of nine. The shortcut generally gives the opposite effect to that desired. The hero usually dies and is punished in Hades for good measure. Tantalos, for all that the traditions concerning him are variable, also fits into this group.

Type 2. A god(dess) attempts to confer immortality upon a mortal

Where a direct assault on Olympos will fail, being abducted may succeed. In these myths, immortality is unsought, usually conferred as a result of either personal affection (e.g. Tydeus and Athene, or Eos and Tithonos) or as a mark of gratitude for some favour offered (e.g. Demeter and Demophon). Usually the object of the offer loses it through his or her own stupidity, sometimes through the stupidity or ignorance of another.

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17 Ascent to Olympos prompted by pride: Pindar Isth. 7.43–48; Asklepiades 12 F 13. Alternatively he goes to complain to them of the lack of divine justice: Eur. fr. 286 N2.

18 Od. 11.305–320.

19 The largest group of immortality myths is that which deals with this theme; for example the myths of Tydeus and Athene; Athene and Diomedes; Demeter and Demophon; Thetis and Achilleus; Zeus and Ganymede; Zeus and Herakles; Zeus and Semele; Selene, Zeus and Endymion; Eos and Tithonos; Eos and Kleitos; Eos and Kephalos.
In some cases the gift actually takes effect, as in the case of Tithonos; but then it is flawed. In this case it is Eos herself who is foolish (νηρόν).\textsuperscript{20}

Although in the archaic period there is very little interest in this theme on the part of the vase-painters, the abductions of Ganymede by Zeus and of various youths, especially Tithonos, by Eos become common during the fifth century. Depictions of Zeus and Eos pursuing their (frequently reluctant) paramours, along with other divine intrigues and abductions, become a favourite theme.\textsuperscript{21} The moment shown is most commonly the end of the pursuit, the moment at which the deity seizes the object of his or her attention. Less often the god or goddess is seen carrying away the mortal cradled in his or her arms. The question of how the mortal is to gain immortality, once having been brought to Olympus, is not addressed, and probably not asked. It is the love and the pursuit, not the result, which is the concern of the painters.

In general only Zeus is consistently able to bestow immortality effectively, as he does on Ganymede, Herakles, Semele and possibly Endymion.\textsuperscript{22} To be deserving of immortality, the favoured one must be superior in some way to the normal run of humankind. He or she must possess exceptional ἀρετή in one form or another. This ἀρετή need not necessarily be heroic; Ganymede’s ἀρετή lies in his beauty. In these cases, immortality was offered because of the god’s or goddess’ affection for some quality beyond the normal state of mankind. When Tydeus is mortally wounded in the battle of the Seven against Thebes, Athena, who loves him, asks Zeus for immortality for him. Zeus gives it to her, and she is bringing it to Tydeus, but in the meantime one of his companions has given him the head of his enemy Melanippos, and when Athena comes

\textsuperscript{20}H. Aph. 223; compare the implied foolishness of Anchises, who lies with Aphrodite ὀνομάζοντας ὑπὲρ αἰσθήσεως, and his fear that this will unman him (H. Aph. 167, 187–190). Ignorance is no excuse.

\textsuperscript{21}Compare for example the pursuit of a woman or women by Apollo, \textit{LIMC} Apollon 1085–1094. Zeus is always depicted in human form on the vases; depictions of Ganymede with a swan appear only c. 360–300 BC, on South Italian vases (\textit{LIMC} Ganymedes 84–91) and the eagle, similarly, first appears in the fourth century BC (\textit{LIMC} Ganymedes 92–266, most of which are Roman). Leda’s swan also only becomes common in the mid fourth century, although it is shown on a single vase dating to c. 400 BC (La Canée, Mus. \textit{II} 297, red-figure askos fragment; \textit{LIMC} Leda 1* [not in \textit{AR} V²]). Ruth Leader has suggested to me that nude women were not shown in plastic art until Hellenistic times, and the absence of god-as-animal scenes may be in part due to this; certainly most such scenes show the mortal naked.

\textsuperscript{22}Exceptions to this are Athene’s successful bestowal of immortality on Diomedes, although this could only happen after she had tried and failed to make his father immortal, and Eos’ bestowal of immortality on Kleitos and Kephalos, although perhaps the most spectacular failure is also hers, in the person of Tithonos. (Eos’ lovers are slightly problematic, and will be further discussed below.)
back she finds him sucking out the brains. Not surprisingly, she is revolted and retracts the gift. Thus in this myth it is not necessary to spell out that Tydeus was unusually brave or heroic. Most versions do not say why Athene was bringing immortality to Tydeus in particular. It is understood that he must be exceptional; if he were not, she would not ask Zeus for immortality on his behalf. So she loves him for those attributes in him which are least human and most godlike. To lose this chance of immortality he does more than simply sink to the level of his fellow humans; he places himself lower than the beasts, for not even animals eat their own kind. The act of cannibalism is a transgression of both divine and human law. Mankind is balanced between the gods and the beasts, and can go either way. Ch. Sourvinou-Inwood suggests that ‘men’s proper place is between animals and gods; when they come too close to the gods they can and do drift to the other pole of bestiality, and this endangers the cosmic order’. I think it probable, however, that the drift towards bestiality is, rather, a way of restoring the balance; the pendulum, having swung too far towards divinity, must swing in the other direction before it can balance again. Humans show a tendency, when singled out for an exceptional honour of this kind, to react by treating it as a kind of carte blanche to commit whatever act of hubris first occurs to them. The myth of Tantalos shows the same pattern.

The exact nature of Tantalos’ transgression varies. According to one version of the myth, he served up his son Pelops to the gods, to see if they could tell what they were eating. Tantalos, here, has already been admitted to some unusual degree of familiarity with the gods, if he is dining with them. According to the Nostoi, also, the gods allowed him to feast with them, and Zeus, in one of those fits of mad generosity which have dogged kings and gods since the beginning of time, promised him whatever he asked for. Tantalos requested to be allowed to live the same life as the gods forever. Zeus, appalled, fulfilled his wish but suspended a rock over his head so that he would not dare to reach for any of the things

23Beazley 1947: 4f lists and quotes all the sources.
24In the Iliad the horror of war is emphasised by the abnormal lack of proper burial, i.e. by the fact that the bodies of the dead are left for the birds, dogs, and fish; the mention of cannibalism is reserved as the worst horror (Griffin 1980: 22f) since it puts the cannibal on a par with those animals – or rather below, since he is rational and should know better.
26The first evidence for this story is Pindar’s denial of it in Olympian 1.25-27; from similarly glancing references in Euripides, it is clear that the story was already well known (Eur. IT 386–388, Helen 388–389).
spread out before him. Pindar presents Tantalos as immortal, and changes the details of his misdeemeanour (he steals nektar and ambrosia to share with his friends), and possibly offers a different version of the punishment (the boulder is still above him, or perhaps on top of him, and is now 'a fourth affliction among three others' – about which we know nothing). The common factors are the offer of hospitality from, or friendship with, the gods, which is then abused, and the subsequent tantalising punishment. Friendship with the gods has, again, the effect of bringing out the worst in men. Pindar lessens Tantalos' crime in that he does away with the cannibalism, by which Tantalos sought to bring the gods down to his level, but the breach of hospitality, which is after all the key idea in this myth, is still there. The bestowal of immortality on Tantalos, and (implied) on Pelops, broadens the focus of the myth from a comparatively simple (but still serious) breach of hospitality to a breach between the barriers which separate men from gods. Tantalos is still trying to level men and gods, to lessen the distance between them, but in Pindar's version he is attempting to raise men up rather than bringing the gods down.

Humans, then, are not cut out for immortality. This holds true for all of these myths; a hero may try to reach beyond the lot of ordinary men but not beyond the limits allotted to mankind. This is further shown by the fact that immortality makes for a fairly inert life for an active hero; no apotheosised mortal hero does much of interest after his apotheosis. The hero's raison d'etre is movement and activity. He may become a patron god, as do the Dioskouroi; he may be appealed to in moments of stress; but in comparison to his life as a mortal, and indeed to the eventful lives of the Olympians, he leads a very inactive life. It is the fact that mortals are subject to death and pain which gives heroic deeds their worth.

The myths in which Demeter or Thetis try to immortalise a child are a little different, and will be further discussed below. Concerning these myths it need only be noted now that the attempts fail; like the other myths in this section, they are myths reinforcing the basic impossibility of

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27 Nostoi fr. 4 Bernabé.
28 Pindar Ol. 1.55ff. The rock appears often (for example Alkman 79, Alkaios 365 LP, Pherekydes 3 F 58) and was proverbial (cf. Archilochos 91 W, Pindar Isth. 8.9–10). For a more detailed look at the different variants, see Gantz 1993: 531–536; Sourvinou-Inwood 1986.
29 Cf. Parmenides' perfect reality, single, unchangeable, 'like the bulk of a well-rounded sphere' (Parmenides Truth fr. 8.43; see Gallop 1984: 19–21 for discussion). The importance of activity to the hero is the basis of N. Kazantzakis' Odysseus, in which Odysseus, bored with a quiet life on Ithaca after all his travels, sets off again.
gaining immortality, all the more emphatically as the goddesses' plans fail because of human stupidity or because the children are not strong enough. In the Greek myths, humans are unable to gain immortality because they do not deserve it.

Direct ascension, then, works only if the mortal is chosen by a god. But even this can be disastrous. Tithonos is a good example of immortality gone wrong, and in broader terms, to be carried off by Eos implies death rather than immortality. Vermeule points out that Greek funerals ended at dawn, and it was natural to express this in mythological terms, as Eos the dawn goddess carrying off the dead, and to impute to her the motive of sexual attraction. There is an interesting similarity between the vases portraying Eos carrying off various youths, and vases such as the olpe in Paris showing Athena carrying the body of a dead warrior. Even when the abduction is successful, as in the case of Zeus and Ganymede, we still do not know, once they get to Olympos, what they are given to make them immortal. In later sources immortality is conceived of as a drink; this may be the idea behind Apollodoros' version of the myth of Tydeus. This myth is found in a multitude of sources but none of these are specific about how one might become immortal. Apollodoros comes closest in saying that it is a φάρμακον, a drug, but this is not very helpful.

4.2 The iconography of immortality

The lack of precision in the sources is just as evident in the art. In the case of the myth of Tydeus, the painter has evaded the question entirely by depicting immortality as a young girl. The motif survives on only two Greek vases: on the lost Rosi krater and on a vase fragment in New York. She is named on the New York vase: ΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΑ. That alone indicates that she is probably not part of the epic tradition, as the word is
not found anywhere in the surviving epic corpus. She is more likely to be the result of a painter’s innovation, perhaps the result of frustration at trying to envisage what exactly it was that Athene was bringing. Vermeule comments that the Athenians are, as often, confusing their organs of pleasure. But this is not another case of immortality by rape, or by sex. Presumably, Athanasia is not the direct agent of Tydeus’ immortality, but a personification of the projected result of Athene’s action. She will not cause immortality: she is in the painting only to show what should happen to Tydeus. Like Thanatos, Athanasia is in myth a personification of result, not of agent.

There may be one more depiction of Athanasia as a girl. The context is the same: the myth of Tydeus. It is a depiction on an Etruscan mirror; here Athene (or rather Menvra) is leading a young girl by the hand, and also holding a flower, ‘a greeting in Greek fashion’, as Beazley describes it.

The difficulty in portraying something as subtle and invisible as immortality is clear from the series of vases showing the apotheosis of the Dioskouroi, or the moment at which they make the transition from heaven to Hades or vice versa. One vase worthy of consideration in this context is the famous amphora by Exekias in the Vatican. There has been a great deal of argument over this vase, concerning whether the Dioskouroi are coming or going, or one coming and the other going, and if the latter, which is which. It is accepted that the twin with the horse is Kastor and the other is the boxer Polydeuces. This must portray, rather than the daily transition, the moment at which the Dioskouroi return to their parents immediately after Kastor’s death and apotheosis. It is notable that Kastor is the focus of attention, with his father watching him from one side and his mother extending the flower in greeting from the

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34 As Beazley 1947: 7 pointed out, the word ἀθανασία will not fit into hexameter verse; Alan Griffiths tells me, however, that it appears twice in the Sibyline Oracles, scanned.
35 Shapiro 1993: 34.
37 See above, Chapter 2.1.
38 FIG. 33: Paris, Cab. Méd. 1289; Gerhard ES pl. 146; Beazley 1947: 6-7, fig. 3.
40 FIG. 18: Rome, Vatican, Mus. Greg. Etr. 344, Attic black-figure amphora, c. 540 BC; A B V 145.13, 686 (Exekias); Para 60; Ad d 40; AHS pl. 63.
41 Hermery 1978: 58 lists briefly the differing views.
42 Hermery 1978: 61. For the ‘alternating immortality’ of the Dioskouroi, see above, Chapter 3.2.ii.
other; Polydeukes, in contrast, is off to one side, ignored by all but the dog. It is Kastor who has just come back from the dead; he is the one whom his parents thought they had lost, and who will now partake in a shared immortality.

Of other vases classified by Hermary as the same type, none are so striking and most are not so clearly depictions of the apotheosis or exchange. However, another motif occurring on some vases in this series which may indicate immortality was pointed out to me by Alan Griffiths, and is best illustrated by an amphora by Psiax. Here again Kastor and Polydeukes are greeting their parents. This time both are carrying spears. The twin at the back has them over his shoulder but the one in front carries them in an unusual position, with the spear heads pointing downwards. This could be an indication of their different natures; one immortal, the other mortal; one with his spears pointing up towards the heavens, the other down towards Hades. There is no indication on this vase of who is who.

A likely parallel to the inverted spears on the Psiax amphora can be found on an Attic black-figure 'yoyo', showing the rape of the Leukippidai. On this vase we know which twin is which, as Kastor has his name inscribed. So it is clear that Kastor's spears point upwards, Polydeukes' downwards. Kastor's spears indicate the immortality he has gained, Polydeukes' the sacrifice he has made. However, an objection might be made that this episode is rather remote from the apotheosis. But it is this incident which marks the beginning of the rivalry between the twins and Idas and Lynkeus, which eventually leads to the fight in which Kastor was killed. The link between the rape of the Leukippidai and the fight is made explicit on the only vase to depict the fight between the twins and their cousins, a red-figure Apulian lekythos. In this case the subject

43FIG. 34: Brescia, Mus. Civico, Attic black-figure amphora; from Vulci, 520–510 BC; AB V 292.1 (Psiax); Para 127; Add 76; LIMC Dioskouroi 183.*

44The direction in which a spear is pointing is not always easy to establish, as painters were sometimes in the habit of depicting the saurotēr, the point on the butt end of the spear, which was driven into the ground to hold it upright, and it is not always clear which end is which. The same holds true for a spear which extends into, or stops just short of, a border or decorative frieze. Nonetheless, on this vase at least the spears are clearly drawn.

45FIG. 35: Athens, Nat. Mus. 2350, Attic white-ground 'bobbin', from Attica, mid. fifth century; ARV² 775.3 (Sotheby P.); Add d² 76; Wehgartner 1983: 156 no. 1, pl. 52.2; LIMC Dioskouroi 196.*

46Richmond, Virginia, Mus. 80.162, 350–340 BC; RVAp Suppl. 1 84.281c (Underworld P.); Mayo 1982: 128–132, no. 50 with cover and frontispiece. The Leukippidai are being carried off by the Dioskouroi by chariot, to either side of the central scene, which shows Lykeus
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is particularly appropriate to the funerary context implied by the shape of the vase; the death of the Dioskouroi implies their immortality and offers a hope of resurrection to the deceased.47

Another depiction of immortality can be seen in portrayals of Herakles. Herakles’ apotheosis is usually depicted in narrative form; he is shown entering Olympos, or consortig with the gods. Such illustrations do not utilise any particular symbol or ingredient to signal Herakles’ immortalisation; the procession itself is the signal, a pictorial representation of the transgressive movement from earth to Olympos. However, one vase painting of the fight against Geryon, influenced by this underlying theme of the fight against death, offers a more concrete symbol. On a Chalkidian amphora in the British Museum, Athene stands, as she often does, behind Herakles, lending him support by her presence, but here she is also holding a cup.48 Athene offering a cup to Herakles (the ‘regaling motif’) occurs some 20 times in Greek vase-painting.49 Boardman comments that such scenes show ‘that Herakles at least approaches the status of Athene as a divinity’.50 It must be a little more complicated than that, as Herakles is not a divinity on the vase which shows Geryon, nor on the vases which show Athene holding a jug as Herakles fights the Hydra.51 The Chalkidian amphora is also the only

dead and Kastor wounded. Idas, standing on the grave monument in the centre, hefts the stele in order to throw it at Polydeukes (cf. Pind. Nem. 10.60ff), who threatens him with a sword. Above Idas a thunderbolt streaks down, sent by Zeus intervening on behalf of his son(s). Above a thunderbolt streaks down, sent by Zeus intervening on behalf of his son(s).

47 The only other depiction I have found with reversed spears is the much-discussed obverse of the Niobid Painter’s name-vase; FIG. 36: Paris, Louvre G 341, Attic red-figure calyx krater from Orvieto, 460-450 BC; ARTV 2 601.22 (Niobid P.); Para 395; Add 2 266; Simon 1963 pl. 8. For the various interpretations see Simon 1963: 61–62, with additional bibliography in McNiven 1989: 192 n.8; for further discussion of the subject see below, Chapter 6.3. The twins are above the handles, but this time we can tell them apart: Kastor with his horse and the boxer Polydeuces. Here again, it is Kastor’s spear which points upwards and Polydeuces’ downwards. On this vase, however, the issue is confused by the fact that Polydeuces is not the only warrior to hold his spear point downwards. The three heroes with pairs of upward-pointing spears are Theseus, with his hugely long spears by which he is pulling himself up, Kastor, and the figure in the petasos and cloak which McNiven has identified with Oidipous, who is holding his own spear in his left hand and reaching out to take one resting against a rock with his right. It seems unlikely that the Niobid Painter had the same theme in mind, especially as Athene, who is certainly immortal, is holding her spear point downwards.

48 FIG. 37: London, BM B 155, Chalkidian amphora from Cerveteri, 540–530 BC; Brize 1980 134.11, pl. 3.2.

49 See LIMC Herakles 3156–3178.

50 LIMC Herakles (vol V.1), comm. on IX. E (Herakles with Athena): p. 152

51 Six vases show this theme. Athene usually carries a small jug: Corinthian aryballos once in Breslau (from Aigina; c. 600–595; Amandry and Amyx 1982 no. 4; Payne 1931: 127 fig. 45a; Boardman 1982 no. 1); Paris CA 3004: middle Corinthian kotylos (c. 580–570; Amandry
vase to show Geryon on the point of being completely killed; one of his bodies has fallen forwards, one has slumped back, and Herakles is in the act of stabbing the remaining one through the base of the throat. So at the precise moment when Herakles conquers death, Athene is waiting with the cup to re-emphasise that Herakles himself will become immortal.

The cup motif is repeated several times, especially with Athene offering it to Herakles.\(^{52}\) It appears in an Etruscan relief, as well as on Attic vases.\(^{53}\) The earliest example dates to c. 500 BC.\(^{54}\) A later amphora by the Berlin Painter shows Athene on one side, holding out a small jug, and Herakles on the other side holding out a kantharos; this arrangement – huge cup and small jug – is typical.\(^{55}\) With one exception, we are always shown Herakles and Athena; the exception being the myth of Tydeus. In this relief Athene holds the remnants of a cup or jug in her hand, while Tydeus below her sinks his teeth into Melanippos' head, without even bothering to remove it from the body first.\(^{56}\) The appositeness of the jug image here, where the story demands that immortality be depicted as something portable, is obvious. It is usually described as the 'libation motif', a vague but not unsuitable description; for it is by means of a libation that one attracts the attention of the gods. Here it is Herakles who is on the receiving end of the libation.

The vases which show Herakles fighting the Hydra play a similar role. Amyx has suggested that its purpose is to refresh Herakles after the Labour, but, as Boardman points out, it does not look as if it contains very much.\(^{57}\) Boardman suggests that the jug is there to collect the blood of the

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\(^{52}\) LIMC Athena 181*, 182*, 184* (archaic), 187* (classical); see Beazley 1961:56–58. There are also three bronze statuettes of the goddess with a cup (LIMC Athena 185*, 190*).

\(^{53}\) Etruscan relief showing Herakles seated with Athena standing offering him a cup; from the files of Alan Griffiths, provenance unknown.

\(^{54}\) FIG. 39: London, BM 1902.12–18.3, Attic black-figure skyphos, c. 500 BC; ABL 249.9 (Theseus Painter); LIMC Athena 181*; Boardman AFBV fig. 246.

\(^{55}\) FIG. 40: Basle Antikenmuseum Kä. 418 (BS 456), Attic red-figure belly amphora, c. 490–480 BC; AR V 1634.1 bis (Berlin P.); Para 342; Add 2 190; Beazley 1961. I am grateful to Judy Deuling for bringing this to my notice.

\(^{56}\) FIG. 41: Rome, Villa Giulia, relief from Etruscan temple at Pyrgi; EAA Suppl. 1: pl. facing 848, s. v. 'Tideo'.

\(^{57}\) Amyx 1983: 46; Boardman 1982: 238. Boardman compares the jug with a gem showing a
Hydra so that Herakles can dip his arrows into it. This is possible, although the narrow-mouthed jug which Athene is holding does not seem ideal for such a purpose, and in fact in the aryballos from Basle it does not look as if Herakles’ arrow-heads would fit into it. Also, on some of the vases the snake is biting Herakles’ shoulder, which makes a reminder of how deadly its poison is seem a little out of place. I think it likely, as the fight with the Hydra was another symbolic fight with death, that the jug here plays the same role as it does on the vase showing Geryon; like the similarly tiny jugs in the ‘regaling motif’ on Greek vases, it is filled with the potent draught of immortality.

It is evident from this survey that immortality is not very frequently depicted, and also that when a painter does wish to illustrate it, he has no clear description or preset iconographical type which he can use. Once a type has been coined – a young girl for Tydeus, spears for the Dioskouroi, a cup for Herakles – it may be accepted as a type for that particular myth, but there is no universal way of portraying immortality.

4.3 Eat me, drink me, wear me: pharmaka, herbs, nektar and ambrosia

The cup motif is the least abstract of the iconographic motifs, implying as it does a real physical act, the act of drinking. This motif also appears in the literary sources. Apollodoros describes immortality as a φάρμακον, a drug.60 If it is a drink or food, what is it? There are several alternatives. There is the strange ‘everliving undying grass’ tasted by the fisherman Glaukos of Anthedon, who saw one of his dead fish land on it and come back to life. It made him immortal; he became a sea-god.61 A slightly different herb is found in the story of another Glaukos, a young Cretan prince, son of Minos and Pasiphaë. Glaukos drowned in a jar of honey, a rather unusual death; honey was used in embalming, and also sometimes credited with the preserving properties of ambrosia. His father Minos, after the seer Polyidos had found the body, shut him into the tomb with it. Polyidos killed a snake there, but its mate brought it back to life by touching it with a certain herb. When they had gone, Polyidos used the

larger jug or water-jar carried to Herakles by a woman after the fight with the Nemean Lion (cf. Boardman, Greek Gems and Finger Rings, London 1970, pl. 846).

58The aryballos once in Breslau; Paris CA 3004 (?); once Rome Market.

59For immortality as food or drink, see Chapter 4.3.

60Apollodoros 3.6.8.

herb to bring Glaukos back to life. Such a life-giving herb, often found where least expected, is common to many cultures, and is usually lost or given away or searched for but never found. Gilgamesh crosses the world for it and is bringing it back to his city of Uruk when a snake steals it from him. The long journey which he must undertake to get it in the first place is a common motif; in Greek myth one can compare, in particular, the journey of Herakles to get the apples of the Hesperides. Medea must use something like it in her witch’s brew to restore to Aison his lost youth, or to rejuvenate an old ram to trick the daughters of Pelias. Here the knowledge is not lost but secret, a strange barbarian wisdom with which Greeks will tamper to their peril. Medea’s success lures the Peliades to kill their father; as good Greeks, they should have known better than to toy with foreign magic.

There is also the possibility that Herakles’ drink is the drink of the gods. This immediately gives rise to a number of problems. Is it nectar or ambrosia? The most common assumption in later sources is that ambrosia is the food of the gods, and nectar their drink. This is also probably the case in Odyssey 5.93f, where Hermes eats and drinks the ambrosia and nectar which Kalypso puts before him. But in the Iliad Homer offers us a different view. Thetis is preserving Patroklos’ body: ‘through the nostrils of Patroklos she dripped ambrosia and red nectar, so that his flesh might not spoil’. If they are to be dripped (στάζει), it

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62This was the subject of three lost plays: Aischylos’ Kressai, Sophokles’ Manteis, and Euripides Polyidos (Gantz 1993: 270f.); a more complete version is to be found in Palaiphatos 26 (Myth. Gr. 3.2).

63The herb which restores the dead to life is a common folktales motif; however, it is rather rare in Greek myth. See Calvino 1980: no 143, ‘Beauty with the Seven Dresses’, p. 506 for a very similar motif to the Glaukos/Polyidos story. Endymion, remarkably, has the opposite, a potion which will bestow death: Hes. fr. 245 MW (Schol. Ap. Rhod. Δ58 [p. 264.8 Wendel]).

64The apples are nowhere specifically stated in any literary source to cause immortality; but see the depiction of Herakles arriving on Olympos holding an apple in his hand and greeting Zeus, with Athena, Hera, Poseidon, Iris and Dionysos (?) in attendance; the identification of the apple as being from the garden of the Hesperides is made certain by the presence of the tree (with a snake coiled around it) and a Hesperid, her hand raised either in greeting to Herakles or in astonishment at his exploits (Peredolskaya 1967: 111). The vase is FIG. 42: St. Petersburg, Hermitage Mus. 640, Attic red-figure stamnos, c. 470 BC; AR W 639.56 (Providence F.); Add 274; Peredolskaya 1967: 111-112, pi. 86. Cf. the apples of youth in Norse legend, without which the gods will grow old and die.

65In Hindu mythology also immortality (amrita) was portrayed as a liquid; on the instructions of Vishnu, the gods cast ‘various herbs’ into ‘the sea of milk’ and churned it up, until, after various other things, ‘came forth Dhanwantari, the gods’ physician. High in his hand he bore the cup of nectar – life giving draught – longed for by gods and demons.’ (Dowson 1913, s. v. amrita).

66I. 19.26, 38f; Aphrodite similarly anoints Hektor’s body with ambrosial oil, 21.185ff.
sounds as if they both must be liquid. Alkman, on the other hand, says that the gods eat nektar. Onians suggests that it is ‘fat or oil that might be eaten as we “eat” oil, soup, or butter’, but this is misleading. The confusion in the sources cannot be so simply resolved. I think that the reason for this confusion is that for Homer, as for the Greeks in the archaic period, ambrosia and nektar are described as ‘food’ and ‘drink’ primarily as a matter of convenience; the simplest way to think of them was as a complementary pair analogous to ‘food and drink’. Ibykos’ comment that honey has one-ninth the sweetness of ambrosia does not mean that honey is the mortal equivalent, only that ambrosia is very sweet. It is only later that scholars such as Aristarchos become concerned with the solidity or otherwise of the substance. The archaic period is very vague about its consistency. Ambrosia is particularly prone to this; at one moment it is food, at the next it is an embalming agent for corpses or an oil for a goddess’ personal adornment. The most important point about ambrosia is that it is nothing to do with mortals; it is the property of the gods, who have nothing to do with anything perishable. They have ichor where humans have blood. They accept only the smoke of a sacrifice, while humans consume the substance. And if ambrosia and nektar are their divine food and drink, then these too must be imperishable. In the Homeric Hymns, ‘ambrosial’ is sometimes simply a synonym for ‘divine’ or ‘heavenly’. True, in the Iliad Athena drips it into Achilleus’ chest to give him strength when he is refusing to eat. But Achilleus is surely the exception that proves the rule; he is the son of a goddess, a great hero, and marked out for death so absolutely that there is no question of the ambrosia having any immortalising effect on him. Its use here is a sign of the gods’ esteem for him and for Thetis. Here, then, it is not the stuff of immortality, nor is it deadly to mortals. Although its use by the gods and its use in embalming the dead show that it has preserving qualities, its imperishability does not necessarily imply that it will make the living immortal.

67 Alkman fr. 42 PMG.
68 Onians 1951: 293.
69 Ibykos fr. 325 PMG.
71 For example H. Dion. 1 14, H. Dem. 40-41 (of Zeus’ hair); H. Hermes 229 (of Maia); H. Dion. 7 37 (of the scent of wine); H. Artemis 27 18 (of voices). In the Hymn to Demeter this use is avoided, presumably to avoid confusion.
72 I. 19.352ff
However, this may be another example of Homeric avoidance of the immortality motif. In the *Hymn to Demeter*, a definite link is drawn between immortality and ambrosia. Demeter, in her search for Persephone, has reached Eleusis and is staying in the house of Metaneira, as nurse to Metaneira's son Demophon. She shows her gratitude by attempting to make Demophon immortal by anointing him with ambrosia by day and hiding him in the heart of the fire by night. Unfortunately Metaneira interrupts her, and the immortalising process cannot be completed. Apollodoros records a similar myth concerning Thetis and Achilleus.⁷³

For Pindar, nectar and ambrosia can be immortalising substances, without the aid of fire.⁷⁴ But the context in which he places this assertion makes it unreliable; in his version of the myth of Tantalos, elements of the earlier myth (in which Pelops was cooked and Demeter ate his shoulder) are still present, making it clear that he is creating a new variant of the myth.⁷⁵ Nonetheless he is almost certainly drawing on an older tradition here, in which ambrosia could immortalise, although he might well be applying it to a new myth.

In the context of these later assertions of the immortalising properties of nectar and ambrosia, Homer's vagueness on the subject takes on a new aspect. One wonders how the immortalisations in the Epic Cycle were accomplished. It is more than likely that Homer is downplaying the powers of ambrosia; it retains traces of its powers in its preservative qualities. More relevant, although more perplexing, is the curious behaviour of Zeus' doves in the *Odyssey*:

> The blessed gods call these rocks the Rovers. By this way not even any flying thing, not even the tremulous doves, which carry ambrosia to Zeus the father, can pass through, but every time the sheer rock catches away one even of these; but the Father then adds another to keep the number

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⁷⁴Pindar *Ol.* 1. 9ff.

⁷⁵Gantz 1993: 532; Pindar notes the ivory shoulder and Pelops' emergence from the cauldron in order to discredit them (*Ol.* 1.23ff).
This passage has been a thorn in the side of scholiasts and commentators almost as soon as it was first recorded. The myth most likely to be referred to here is that of Zeus in his infancy on Kreté, when he was nourished with ambrosia by doves, who brought it from Okeanos. It is not clear whence the ambrosia is coming to Zeus on Kreté either, although it is at least more logical for supplies of it to be lacking on Kreté than on Olympos. As we have seen, it is not unusual for the herb or elixir which gives life or bestows immortality to be found at the ends of the world, and frequently one must cross oceans and risk dangers to reach it. The route taken by the doves reflects both of these attributes; but the difference is that they travel this way as a daily routine. The source of the ambrosia, at the edge of the world, beyond the sphere of mortals, is congruent with this folktales pattern. In particular, its apparent topographical proximity to the world of the dead is striking. Odysseus will meet the doves on his way out to the land of the Kimerians and to Hades, as they fly in from the source of the ambrosia to Olympos: that is, from the edge of the world to its centre, while Odysseus is moving, more or less, from the centre to the edge; in order to reach his destination, he must cross the stream of Okeanos. The link between death and immortality is always close; here is a new way of depicting that proximity.

What is this ambrosia? We have said that the 'water of life' at the end of the world is a common folktales motif; but in this case it might be possible to be more specific. Alan Griffiths tells me that there is a folktales on Kreté that somewhere among the many mountain springs is one that

76Od. 12.61–66.
77Dawe 1993: 473 ad 62–64 (‘Why does Father Zeus have to import his ambrosia in this exceptional manner? We have never heard of ambrosia supplies on Olympos being threatened’); Eustathios vol. 2 p. 11 vv. 12ff notes that Alexander the Great also took an interest in this passage.
78Moero fr. 1 Powell. Dawe poses the question, ‘Why is Zeus specifically called first Father Zeus and then just Father, in a place where his sons and daughters are not in evidence?’ This seems especially daunting if it occurs in the context of a myth where Zeus is in fact an infant, and not near the stage of being anyone’s father at all; but a look at the use of the epithet ‘Father Zeus’ in Homer shows clearly that it frequently appears without any particular appropriateness to its context; see Dee 1994: 73–76 for a list of occurences of the epithet in Homer.
79Lawson 1964: 282 relates a modern Greek folktales in which the hero travels to the end of the world to fetch the water of life.
80Rebecca Flemming tells me that in Roman medical texts the word comes to be used for a kind of panacea; Galen offers a recipe: Galen, Περὶ συνθέως φαρμακῶν 544 (vol. 13 p. 64 Kühn). Cf. Athen. 473c.
confers immortality. Moero, who offers an eagle rather than doves—altogether a more appropriate bird for such a journey—describes the eagle as drawing it from the rock. West takes note of the folktale that whoever drinks from the Arcadian Styx on the right day of the year may attain immortality; it is τὸ ἀθάνατο νεφό, the modern equivalent of ἀφθίτον ὑδωρ, and it is guarded by Lamia, who strikes it from the rock with a hammer. Certainly in later times the water of Styx was regarded as an elixir of life, as the story of Thetis and Achilleus gives proof.

### 4.4 Fire, water, lightning

As the myth of Demeter and Demophon shows, fire has a purificatory significance. Parker comments that 'the element was in itself always bright, never stained, and through the hearth and sacrifice it had powerful sacral associations'. The theme of putting children on the fire has been connected to rites common to many countries in which a newborn child is carried around the hearth, or passed across it or through the smoke, in order to protect it from evil spirits or give it strength. The latter function is to be seen in the Thetis myth; according to a second version of the myth, Achilleus was her seventh son, and she tested each of them by throwing them into boiling water or fire to see if they were merely mortal, in the hope that the immortal part of them would survive and the mortal part be burned up. Six perished this way, but Peleus saved Achilleus. This may be compared with the third (and much later) version of the myth in which she dipped Achilleus into the river Styx. The Styx was referred to as ἀφθίτος, unwithering. Here again there is a conflation of the two purifying elements, water and fire.

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81 Alan Griffiths, personal communication, 2 August 1996.
82 Both eagles and doves were sacred to Zeus; for the possible association of doves with the oracular shrine of Zeus at Dodona, see Cook 1903: 185f.
83 West 1966: 377–378 ad 805, on Στυγὸς ἀφθίτον ὑδωρ; cf. 389, 397 Στὺξ ἀφθίτος.
84 See below, section 4.4.
86 For examples cf. Frazer 1921 vol. II Appendix 1 (pp. 311–17); Halliday 1911; cf. also Richardson 1974: 231–236 (on vv. 231–55).
87 Cf. Frazer 1946 vol. II: 69 n.4 on Ap. Bibli. 3.13.6. It is worth noting that Demeter's attempt continues over a period of time; the child has time to adjust to its changing state. Thetis, in this second version, is simply testing to see whether the child is already sufficiently immortal to survive the burning away of its mortal parts.
88 Statius Ach. 1.268ff.
89 Styx as ἀφθίτος, Hes. Th. 389, 397, 805; as elixir of life, cf. West ad Th. 805; Demeter swears by the Styx that she would have made Demophon immortal, H. Dem. 259ff. But this is probably nothing more than the standard oath of the gods (see Hes. Th. 397–401. For
In the second version, Thetis is not putting the child in the fire to make it immortal from a mortal state. Rather, she expects the child to have a sufficient portion of immortality, if it has any at all, for it to survive the burning off of its mortal nature. In the first version of the myth, the ambrosia confers immortality, while the fire burns away the child’s mortal parts.90 ‘Fire destroys the material part of sacrifices, it purifies all things that are brought near it, releasing them from the bonds of matter and in virtue of the purity of its nature, making them meet for communion with the gods.’91

It is unwise, though, to interrupt this process. In Apollodoros’ version of the Demeter myth, the child dies; in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, although it lives, it is doomed to mortality. However, although the attempt at immortalising Demophon has failed, in the Hymn Demeter promises to establish a festival in Demophon’s honour when he dies.92 He may not be immortal but he will still be honoured and remembered.

Catasterism is another kind of compromise. This must be considered a fairly monotonous and inactive kind of immortality, as one simply circles the sky forever, but it is better than nothing. It is difficult to decide how early catasterism appears; the constellations and attendant myths are documented in detail in works such as Hyginus’ De Astronomia and Pseudo-Eratosthenes’ Catasterismi, but early evidence is scarce. However, catasterism was in place as a means of bestowing limited immortality from an early date; Orion, for example, appears as a constellation in the Iliad and as a hunter in the underworld in the Odyssey.93

It can also be a rather wholesale form of immortality; not only Perseus and Andromeda are there, but also both of Andromeda’s parents and the sea-monster for good measure. Schefold points out that the constellations are concealing an Oriental cosmic myth, adopted and adapted by the Greeks into their own mythology as a heroic legend.94 Catasterism is often

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the curious fact that, in practice, only goddesses actually swear by Styx in early epic, see Griffiths 1989: 74 n. 23).

90Demophon is a completely mortal child and cannot be expected to have any stronger than usual streak of latent immortality, as Thetis’ children might; hence the ambrosia is needed. Whether the ambrosia actually bestows immortality as something completely foreign, or whether the child (and, by extension, mankind) has some spark of divinity on which the ambrosia acts as a catalyst, is unclear; on the whole the latter seems more likely.

91Jamblichos, De Mysteriis v. 12; cf. Archilochos fr. 9 W vv.10–11.

92H. Dem. 283ff.

93II. 18.486, Od. 11.572–575.

utilised to mark one particular deed or episode, rather than all the deeds of a particular hero; thus the dragon which curled around the tree of the Hesperides, and which Herakles killed, is a constellation, and Zeus added a shadowy image of Herakles next to it to make certain his deed was remembered: 'Αξιον ὁ Ζεύς κρίνας τὸν ἄθλον μνήμης ἐν τοῖς ἀστροις ἔθηκε τὸ ἑδωλον'. This ἑδωλον seems very similar to the one encountered by Odysseus in the underworld, an ἑδωλον of the hero who was on Olympos. It may even have been inspired by that reference; Herakles himself may be on Olympos, but there are shadowy copies of himself in any other place where he may be expected to exist. Many of the constellations, then, are set as cautionary tales. Kassiopeia, who 'on account of her impiety, as the sky turns, seems to be carried along on her back', is catasterised, but so also is the sea-monster which, because of her boasting, almost swallowed her daughter. Again, in some variations of the story of Orion, Zeus made the hero into a constellation at the request of Artemis, but placed the scorpion at his heels as a reminder of his boasting.

Many of the constellations have more than one interpretation; it seems most likely that the names were constant but it was much debated which dolphin, which arrow, which nymph who had been turned into which bear, had been placed in the skies. Myths were frequently adapted slightly to fit a character into a constellation, and in at least one case (that of Orion and the Pleiades) the arrangement of the constellations has given rise to a new myth; it seems most likely that the myth concerning Orion's pursuit of the Pleiades was derived from the fact that the constellation Orion follows the Pleiades in the sky.

The myth of the Pleiades also tells something about the state of existence of a person catasterised as a star. Aeschylus says of the Pleiades that they still mourn for their father Atlas even as stars (fr 312 R). And, trying to account for the lost or dimmer Pleiad, we are told that Merope is dimmer because she married a mortal, or that it is Elektra who is dimmer, because she became the mother of Dardanos and she is lamenting the loss

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95 Ps.-Erat. Katast. 4.  
96 Od.11.601ff; see below, Chapter 4.5.  
97 Hes. Erga 619–20, although this may be no more than a conceit; Hes. fr. 148 MW; scholiast A on Il. 18.486, which implies that their catasterism may have occurred as early as the Epic Cycle; Hyg. Poet. Astr. II.21.  
98 Hellanikos 4 F 19; Katast. 23.
of Troy. So clearly those who have been catasterised retain the ability to think and feel.

Fire is found again in connection with immortality in the case of the enelusioi: those struck by lightning. Death by thunderbolt, which was originally a punishment, can be another form of immortality. The connection between being struck by a thunderbolt and becoming immortal is a rather complex one. Death by lightning strike marked out an individual as exceptional (though not immortal) from an early stage. The close equivalence of lightning with Zeus shows the god in his most fearsome aspect; it illustrates that area of his interaction with human beings where his strength is most direct, obvious and impressive. Being on the receiving end of Zeus' lightning is certainly a sure way to die, but the death cannot be regarded as ordinary. The rarity with which lightning actually hits someone, the exceedingly slim chance that it should be this one particular individual who is marked out in this way, and the forceful impression of the presence of the god, all combine to make this not only an exceptional death, but also an exceptional honour.

However, the lightning bolt makes its appearance in myth originally as an exceptional punishment. It is used on Asklepios, who raised the dead, and Salmoneus, who pretended to be the god of thunder and lightning himself, and had his subjects worship him as such. These are punishments for those who tried to cross the divides between death, life and immortality in a way unacceptable to the systems of the gods, examples to discourage others. In the case of Asklepios, the seriousness of the crime is exacerbated by the fact that he had the ability, potentially, to do it again and again, thus irrevocably breaching the wall between living and dead. To make an attempt to bring the dead back to life once may be unorthodox but poses little threat to the established order, especially since it is likely to fail anyway; Orpheus does not succeed in retrieving Eurydike, but he is not punished for the attempt; he is not trying to make her immortal, and he is unlikely to make any such attempt again. But Asklepios not only tries but succeeds, in some versions only once but in others with several dead. In one version the body he brings back to life is

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100 Asklepios: Hes. Ehoiai fr. 51 MW; Stesichoros fr. 194 PMG; Akousilaos 2 F 18; Pheresydes 3 F 35; Pindar Pyth. 3.55–58 all agree that he was struck by lightning. Salmoneus: Hes. Ehoiai fr. 15, 30 MW; Soph. fr. 10c Radt (Athena refers to 'wide-roarers'); Eur. fr. 19 N² (Salmoneus hurls fire); Apollod. Bibl. 1.9.7.
Hippolytos son of Theseus. This too would be more serious, as Hippolytos is dead because Theseus called down the curse of Poseidon on his head; Asklepios is therefore acting in direct contravention of the intention of the god.

Kapaneus' crime is more straightforward; he boasted that not even Zeus' bolt would stop him from ascending the walls of Thebes:

\[ \ldots \text{τοσοῦν' ἐκόμπασε,} \]

\[ \muηδ' ἀν τὸ σεμνὸν πῦρ νῦν ἑἰργαθεῖν Δίος \]

\[ τὸ μὴ οὐ κατ' ἀκρῶν περγάμων ἐλεῖν πόλιν. \]

He also is placing himself on a level with the gods, in portraying himself as a man so powerful that not even Zeus himself can stop him; the arrogance of his boast thereby raises his ascent of the walls of the city to the equivalent of an ascent of Olympus. It is clear from Euripides' *Suppliants* that even though Kapaneus is not deified, his death is nonetheless marked out as exceptional; he is a ἱερὸς νεκρός, and his tomb is also sacred. The idea of the lightning-strike as sanctifying or especially honouring the dead was already current at this time; these references are the earliest evidence for this belief.

The link between the thunderbolt and apotheosis, however, arises somewhat later. Given the cathartic role of fire, it is logical, if somewhat ironic, for the thunderbolt to acquire an immortalising effect. Lightning, the purest form of fire, sent spectacularly and untameably straight from the god, has a purificatory and sanctifying effect beyond anything which any fire kindled by humans could achieve. Hence the corpse and/or the ground where the bolt struck come to be regarded as sanctified. Burkert has drawn a connection between τὸ ἐνθλοῦσιν (a place struck by lightning) and Ἡλύσιον (πεδίον). He notes that 'der vom Blitz Erschlagene ist nicht tot wie die anderen Toten, eine besondere Kraft ist in ihn eingegangen, er ist in ein höheres Dasein entrückt'. The ἐνθλοῦσιν was deemed to be sacred to Zeus Kataibates, Zeus 'who makes to descend' his thunderbolt.

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101 Stesichoros fr. 194 PMG says he raised Kapaneus and Lykourgos. According to Pherekydes he raised 'those dying at Delphi' (3 F 35). Pindar does not specify, but says only that his motive was money (Pyth. 3.55-58). Raising Hippolytos from the dead: Ps.-Erat. Katast. 6; Hyg. Fab. 49; Apollod. Bibl. 3.10.3-4. Cf. Edelstein 1945: 37ff.

102 Eur. Pho. 1174-6; not so much a boast as a direct challenge.

103 Eur. Suppl. 935, 981.

104 The διὸβλητος must be buried where he was struck, and not moved to another place: Artem. Oneirocr. 95.6, Pliny N H 2.145; Plutarch, going a step further, said that the corpse is incorruptible, and that birds and dogs will not touch it: Plut. Symp. 4.2.3 (p. 665B).

105 Burkert 1961: 211

106 Cook 1925: 15; he adds that, although this is the name 'by the universal testimony of
Such places were ἀδυτα καὶ ἄβατα, not to be entered or trodden on. The sacredness of lightning, and of the body or ground struck by it, however, appears earlier and more certainly than apotheosis by lightning. Of the heroes who owe their apotheosis to a lightning-bolt, some are not originally struck by lightning at all (such as Herakles), some are struck as a punishment and this only later is tied in to their apotheosis (such as Asklepios and – by accident rather than punishment – Semele); and some are punished by a lightning bolt and not apotheosised at all (Bellerophon, Salmoneus). Some are even apotheosised posthumously; the graves of Euripides and Lykourgos are struck by lightning and they are both then decreed to have been deified. Amphiaraos, too, has lightning involved in his death, or rather disappearance. The earliest source for his disappearance is Pindar, who tells us that he was sent underground so that he might not be killed by Periklymenos, and that Zeus split the ground with his thunderbolt, thereby extending its sanctifying effect over the hero as well as giving him a crater to drive into. Pindar also demonstrates his immortality by having him prophesy to the Epigonoi.

The use of the thunderbolt as a punishment makes it evident that originally the recipient of the thunderbolt was not divine, merely dead. This must have been the case in the earliest versions of the myths. It is unlikely that Apollo would have become so furious over the death of Asklepios if he had known that his son would be apotheosised as a result. The same can be said of Zeus and Semele; Zeus is less likely to have tried to talk her out of her decision (or, as Ovid has it, to equip himself with his lightest thunderbolts in the hope that they will do her less harm) if she were consequently to be made immortal. In some later versions, in fact, Semele's apotheosis takes place at Dionysos' request some time after her death, and is therefore separated from the thunderbolt. In the earliest

grammarians and lexicographers’, it should be Zeus 'who descends' himself in the form of a thunderbolt.

107 EM 341.5ff; cf. Hesych. s.v. ἐνηλύσια.
108 Plut. Lyk. 31.
109 Pindar Nem. 9.25–27, 10.8–9. A black-figure lekythos showing the scene dates from about the same time as Nem. 9 (FIG. 44: Athens Nat. Mus. 1125, from Eretria, second quarter of the fifth century BC; ABL 172.266 XVII no. 3 pl. 50.3 (Beldam Painter); LIMC Amphiaraos 37*. Cf. the fate of Oidipous in Soph. OC.
110 Pindar Pyth. 8.38ff.
111 Ovid Met. 3.303ff.
112 Paus. 2.31.2; Ap. Bibl. 3.5.3. It is not clearly stated in the sources that Semele’s apotheosis was actually considered to be due to the thunderbolt; but it is the most probable assumption. Hes. Th. says only that both now are gods (942); Pindar mentions her twice as a goddess (Olym. 2.25ff; Pyth. 11.1) but says nothing about the process by which she becomes
forms of these myths those struck did not get anything except perhaps a rather more notable death.\footnote{In Roman times there are a couple of instances where the thunderbolt is disappearing from the picture; Apollodoros, describing Herakles' apotheosis, says that when he was on the pyre a passing thundercloud lifted him to heaven (Bibl. 2.7.7). Similarly, Al-Biruni quotes Galen: 'It is generally known that Asklepios was raised to the angels in a column of fire, the like of which is also related with regard to Dionysos, Herakles, and others, who laboured for the benefit of mankind. People say that God did thus with them in order to destroy the mortal and earthly part of them by the fire, and afterwards to attract to himself the immortal part of them, and to raise their souls to heaven' (Galen ap. Al-Biruni trans. E. C. Sachau, 1888: ii. 168). In such cases the plain lightning seems to be too ordinary (!) and has therefore been replaced by something more spectacular; cf. Livy's description of Romulus' disappearance (1.16).}

Klearchos' story of the Tarentines again shows this conflation of honour and punishment.\footnote{Klearchos fr. 9 (FGH ii Müller p. 306f. = Ath. 12.23 Kaibel)} The Tarentines were killed as a result of the outrages they committed on the people of Karbina; all the offenders were struck by lightning. Accordingly in Tarentum the people erected \textit{stelai} in front of their doors – one for each who did not return – and on the anniversary offered sacrifices to Zeus Kataibates. The lack of mourning and of traditional offerings for the dead argues again that this death was regarded as an honour rather than a catastrophe, and yet it was clearly a punishment. This is also the only example I have found of this kind of mass thunderbolting; usually only one individual at a time is struck.

4.5 Herakles fights death

Many of the episodes in the Herakles myths, such as that of Kerberos and the fight with Thanatos, are representative of a fight against death. The Geryon story discussed above, like others of this series, shows elements of the quest for immortality, or water of life, common in folktale: the quest, imposed for or on behalf of another, through dangers, often over sea, to find the object and kill the monster which guards it. It includes also the helper or companion figure with special powers, abilities or knowledge prevalent in folktale, in the form of Athene, who is to be found backing Herakles up in many of his labours.

The myth of Geryon, then, is one of a group of Herakles myths connected with death; the journey to the Underworld to fetch Kerberos, the fight with Thanatos to retrieve Alkestis, and the fight with Hades, and

one. In Eur. \textit{Bacchae} there is room to doubt that she is immortal; the most Euripides says is that she shares Dionysos' cult (998ff). However, cf. Dodds 1960: 62–64 on Semele as an earth goddess fertilised by the rain which accompanies the lightning 'so that Semele perishes and Dionysos is born. But Semele does not stay dead'.

\footnote{In Roman times there are a couple of instances where the thunderbolt is disappearing from the picture; Apollodoros, describing Herakles' apotheosis, says that when he was on the pyre a passing thundercloud lifted him to heaven (Bibl. 2.7.7). Similarly, Al-Biruni quotes Galen: 'It is generally known that Asklepios was raised to the angels in a column of fire, the like of which is also related with regard to Dionysos, Herakles, and others, who laboured for the benefit of mankind. People say that God did thus with them in order to destroy the mortal and earthly part of them by the fire, and afterwards to attract to himself the immortal part of them, and to raise their souls to heaven' (Galen ap. Al-Biruni trans. E. C. Sachau, 1888: ii. 168). In such cases the plain lightning seems to be too ordinary (!) and has therefore been replaced by something more spectacular; cf. Livy's description of Romulus' disappearance (1.16).}
the quest for the apples of the Hesperides are probably the most obvious ones. The theme is particularly prevalent in the Labours: the theft of Geryon’s cattle and the visit to the underworld to fetch Kerberos are both Labours. In addition, the visit to the Hesperides may be connected, and the fight with Thanatos for Alkestis is a parergon attached to the ninth Labour, the quest for Diomedes’ horses. The fight with the snaky Hydra with its chthonic associations may also be part of this group.\footnote{The association of snakes with the dead: Burkert 1985: 195} Fontenrose finds that the theme is a very common one. ‘There is something distinctive about Herakles; he is specifically cast as the conqueror of death; it is Thanatos that he meets again and again under many names and forms . . . the original and typical Herakles legend, reflected in every legend of the cycle, is the hero’s combat with and victory over the death lord himself.’\footnote{Fontenrose 1959: 358.} This is a far remove from the Stesichorean Geryon, who must himself struggle with death in the form of Herakles.

Connected with the hero’s fights against avatars of death are themes such as his marriage to Hebe (‘youth’) and his fight with Geras (‘old age’), which show that Herakles, unlike the unfortunate Tithonos, gains not only immortality but the other attributes associated with it, such as eternal youth.\footnote{Hebe was a minor deity in her own right before Herakles’ apotheosis was established in myth; she appears in the Iliad pouring nektar (4.2ff.), bathing Ares (5.905), and helping Hera hitch her chariot (5.722); her only appearance in the Odyssey is in the interpolated lines describing Herakles’ apotheosis. Gantz 1993: 82 suggests that originally ‘her presence on Olympos was what kept the gods from ageing’, but she might rather simply have been the outward symbol of their immortality, rather than the cause of it. Either role would fit her part in the Herakles myth. See further Gantz 1993: 81–82, 460–463; LIMC vol. V s.v. ‘Hebe’, vol. VI s.v. ‘Herakles’ no. 3295ff.} Geras is not personified anywhere in the literary sources, except in the unrelated passage in the Theogony, when ‘cursed Old Age’ appears as a son of Night.\footnote{Hes. Th. 224–225.} The fight with Geras is depicted on a series of five Attic vases; and no other trace of the myth survives.\footnote{See LIMC s.v. ‘Geras’; Shapiro 1993: 89–94, nos. 34–38; Beazley 1949–51; Brommer 1952; Giglioli 1953; Hafner 1958; Smith 1883.} The vases are of three types. Two show Herakles in pursuit of Geras who is fleeing; on both of these Geras is the same size as Herakles and seems fairly agile, and on one of them his name is inscribed.\footnote{Herakles pursues Geras: FIG. 45, London, BM E290, red-figure Nolan amphora; c. 470 BC; inscribed \textup{Γ \Pi Ρ \AiZ}; ARV² 653.1 (Charmides Painter); \textit{Add}² 276; LIMC Geras 1*; Brommer 1952: 63–64 fig. 2; Shapiro 1993: no. 37 fig. 45. Also Oxford 1943.79, red-figure skyphos ffr.; 450–440 BC; ARV² 889.160 (Pentesileaia Painter); Para 428; Add² 302; LIMC Geras 2*;}

\footnote{\textcopyright{} 1985 Oxford University Press. Used by permission of Oxford University Press, Inc.; all rights reserved.}
Geras; on both he holds Geras’ head down and threatens him, on one with a club, on the other apparently with his fist.\footnote{Herakles attacks with a club: Paris, Louvre G234, red-figure pelike; c. 480 BC; inscribed \textit{ΓΗΡΑΣΕ}; \textit{ARV²} 286.16 (Geras Painter); \textit{Add} 209; \textit{LIMC} Geras 4*; Shapiro 1993: no. 35 fig. 44; Brommer 1952: 62 fig. 1. Herakles threatens with his fist: Adolfseck, Schloss Fasanerie 12, black-figure lekythos; 490-480 BC; \textit{ABV} 491.60 (Class of Athens 581); \textit{Para} 223; \textit{Add} 122; \textit{LIMC} Geras 3*; \textit{CVA} Schloss Fasanerie 1 pl. 13.4–6; Shapiro 1993: no. 34 fig. 43. The same scene may be depicted on shieldbands from Olympia and Perachora: Brommer 1952: figs. 3–7.} On both of these Geras is small, old and feeble, and on one of them he supports himself with a stick. The fifth vase, and the most puzzling, shows Geras, thin, hunchbacked, bald, leaning on his stick, while opposite him Herakles leans upon his club; each is gesturing with one hand and they are involved in an animated conversation.\footnote{Herakles and Geras talk: \textit{FIG. 46}, Rome, Villa Giulia 48238; red-figure pelike; c. 480 BC; \textit{ARV²} 284.1 (Matsch Painter); \textit{Add} 208; \textit{LIMC} Geras 5*; \textit{CVA} Villa Giulia 4 pl. 22; Shapiro 1993: no. 36 fig. 47.} The vase-painter has added \textit{ΚΛΑΥΣΕΙ}, ‘you will weep’, coming from the mouth of Herakles. The problem then becomes one of assessing the best order in which to place these vases. It is generally agreed that the pursuit and the threatening are likely to be consecutive.\footnote{Shapiro’s suggestion (1993: 92) that the alteration in Geras’ iconography in the threatening scenes, which are later in date, may indicate the existence of more than one version of the story, seems to me possible but unlikely. The change may be due to the exigencies of portraying a running Geras who looks as if he might be able to escape Herakles. Also, like Nereus, his appearance of frail age may be deceptive. Folktales of the sort of old age can appear to be weak while actually possessing great strength; in an Icelandic tale the thunder-god Thor is tricked into wrestling Elli (‘old woman’), and, much to his surprise, is unable to move her.} What is not clear is whether the conversation comes first or last. The word of threat would certainly seem to suggest the former.\footnote{Hafner 1948 argues that the amicable atmosphere of the conversation makes it more likely than that there is no fight looming. He reconstructs it as a kind of comic burlesque: Herakles menaces Geras, but Geras is spared thanks to a timely remark. \textit{Nonnos} \textit{Narrationes} 39 (p. 375 Westermann); but the story is probably earlier: see Gantz 441f.).} Moreover it is more likely, as this myth is clearly part of the group in which Herakles conquers death, that the end of the story would be defeat for Geras rather than an amicable chat.

Linked to the theme of Herakles vs. death is a series of stories dealing with his conflicts with various gods. Of particular interest is a brief account of a fight with Hades in which Hades is wounded and flees:

Shapiro 1993: no. 38 fig. 46; Beazley 1949–51: 18–19.

\footnote{Herakles attacks with a club: Paris, Louvre G234, red-figure pelike; c. 480 BC; inscribed \textit{ΓΗΡΑΣΕ}; \textit{ARV²} 286.16 (Geras Painter); \textit{Add} 209; \textit{LIMC} Geras 4*; Shapiro 1993: no. 35 fig. 44; Brommer 1952: 62 fig. 1. Herakles threatens with his fist: Adolfseck, Schloss Fasanerie 12, black-figure lekythos; 490–480 BC; \textit{ABV} 491.60 (Class of Athens 581); \textit{Para} 223; \textit{Add} 122; \textit{LIMC} Geras 3*; \textit{CVA} Schloss Fasanerie 1 pl. 13.4–6; Shapiro 1993: no. 34 fig. 43. The same scene may be depicted on shieldbands from Olympia and Perachora: Brommer 1952: figs. 3–7.}
Hades the gigantic had to endure with the rest the flying arrow when this self-same man, the son of Zeus of the aegis, struck him among the dead men at Pylos and gave him to agony.\textsuperscript{125} Hades then flees to Olympos and is heales by Paiëon. No further information about the wounding of Hades is forthcoming, and Willcock suggests that Homer may have invented the whole thing.\textsuperscript{126} However, it does seem that something happened at Pylos: Pindar mentions a fight at Pylos against Poseidon, and possibly also against Apollo and Hades, although the references may be to three separate fights.\textsuperscript{127} According to Panyasis, Hera too is wounded at Pylos; apparently he described Herakles as fighting with both Hera and Hades, although whether simultaneously or not is open to doubt.\textsuperscript{128} Another possibility is offered by a Homeric scholiast, who takes 'Pylai' as equivalent to 'pylai', that is, the gates of Hades, and who relates the fight to the removal of Kerberos.\textsuperscript{129} This receives some support from a Corinthian vase, which showed two of the exploits of Heracles: the fight with the Hydra, and the visit to Hades to fetch Kerberos.\textsuperscript{130} The latter scene shows Herakles threatening Hades with a stone in his raised left hand. Hades is fleeing to the left; between the two stands a woman, probably Persephone, who has just got up from her throne, and behind Herakles is Hermes, catching hold of the hero's arm to restrain him. To the far right Kerberos heads away from them, towards the door. The presence of the rock in Herakles' hand is interesting, as he is also armed with bow and quiver, and in the literary sources, where a weapon is specified, Hades is wounded with an arrow.

The evidence, then, is confused and contradictory. However, two conclusions may be drawn. First, there was a conflict between Hades and Herakles. Other gods may have been included, although, given the way in which Homer structures his narrative, and the emphatic objections raised by the Pindaric scholiast, this seems doubtful. Second, Herakles was not, to all appearances, punished. This is remarkable, all the more so as it is hard to imagine that any god would have backed him up in a fight against

\textsuperscript{125}Il. 5.395–397. See Gantz 1993: 454–456 (from which much of the following is drawn) for a more detailed examination of the various gods wounded at various places called Pylos.

\textsuperscript{126}Willcock 1964: 145.

\textsuperscript{127}Pindar Ol. 9.28–35. \textit{S Ol}. 9.43 suggests that the three references are to the fight with Apollo over the tripod, Poseidon's defense of Pylos in Messenia, and the fight with Hades over Kerberos.

\textsuperscript{128}Panyasis frr. 24 and 25 Bernabé.

\textsuperscript{129}Σ \textit{A II}. 5.397; Σ \textit{bT II}. 5.395; see also the Pindaric scholia mentioned above.

\textsuperscript{130}FIG. 47: Corinthian kotyle, lost; c. 600–590 BC; Amyx \textit{CVP} 185.2: Pholoe Painter; for the one surviving drawing see Payne \textit{Necrocorinthia} 127 fig. 45c.
Hades – unless, perhaps, the occasion was the fetching of Kerberos. In this case, as all the Labours were ultimately undertaken at the instigation of Zeus, Herakles’ audacity may be more comprehensible. Again, however, underlying the fight is the theme of the conquering of death.

To add to this chaos of fragmented myths, Herakles’ apotheosis is without doubt (and not surprisingly) the most complicated of the lot. His position is also unique as the only major Greek hero to actually achieve full immortality. He first appears in the literary tradition in Homer, dead in Hades – the lines assigning him to Olympos were recognised as later interpolations even in antiquity. He then appears in a dubious state in Hesiod. In the *Theogony*, at the corrupt end of the poem, he is on Olympos. In the sixth-century *Ehoiai* he is dead from Deianeira’s poisoned robe, but in another part of the poem he is, again, on Olympos. So it seems that the apotheosis and marriage to Hebe were established sometime in the sixth century. Art, here, can help only slightly; the earliest depiction of his apotheosis dates from the second quarter of the 6th century.

Farnell points out that these interpolations, whether valid or not, do not betray the slightest allusion to the death on the pyre. No justification of any kind is given for Herakles’ apotheosis, and there is no mention of the funeral pyre. The first literary allusion to the pyre is in Aischylos’ lost *Herakleidai*, which seems to describe some of Herakles’ children building it. The first full account is in Sophocles’ *Trachiniae*, written perhaps c. 430 BC. However, Herodotos, describing Trachis and its environs, refers

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133 Hes. *Ehoiai* frs. 25. 26–33; 229. 6–13 MW.
134 **FIG. 48:** London BM B 379, Attic black-figure Siana cup; from Siana, c. 570–560 BC; *ABV* 60.20 (manner of the C Painter); *Para* 26; *Add* 16 shows Herakles’ entry on foot to Olympos. Hera and Zeus sit facing Herakles who is accompanied by Hermes, Athene, Artemis and Ares; behind Zeus facing Hera is a young woman (Hebe?). *LIMC* Herakles 2847*. Another cup, dating to c. 550 BC, shows Athene rushing up to Zeus on his throne, dragging a slightly hesitant Herakles by the wrist (**FIG. 49:** London BM B424, Attic black-figure cup, from Vulci; *ABV* 168: Phiynos Painter; *Para* 70; *Add* 48; *LIMC* Herakles 2849/Athena 429*). Gantz comments that ‘the freshness of the notion that a mortal could become equal to the gods seems very much present’ (1993:462).
135 Farnell 1921: 171. He suggests that Herakles’ apotheosis in this context may have been connected instead with the collection of the apples of the Hesperides, on which see above, Chapter 4.3, on **FIG. 42**.
136 Aisch. *Herakleidai*. fr. 73b Radt; the fragment may refer to Mt Oita, if we adopt Srebny’s Οἴνης ἐν at v. 3.
137 Soph. *Trach.* 1193–1202. This includes Philoktetes’ role in collecting Herakles’ bow at the pyre. We know, from *Il.* 2.724–5 and from Proklos’ summary of the *Ilias Mikra* (fr. 1 Bernabé) that Philoktetes’ presence at Troy is essential to the Greeks’ victory there, but
in passing to 'the Dyras [river], which, according to the legend, burst from the ground to help Herakles when he was burning'. By this time, therefore, not only was the apotheosis connected with the pyre, but also Mt Oita was already established as the site of Herakles' immolation, and well enough established for a casual reference to be clear.

Art takes us back a little earlier. Between c. 470 and 450 BC there are three scenes of the pyre on Attic vases. The first, a fragmentary bell krater in the Villa Giulia, shows Herakles lying on the pyre, possibly Philoktetes, and a woman with a hydria. The second, a psykter in New York, shows Herakles reclining on a pyre offering the bow and arrows to Philoktetes. The third is a fragment in St. Petersburg, showing Herakles kneeling on the pyre. Boardman points out that the difference in poses makes it unlikely that there is any common original. Moreover Herakles was the most frequently portrayed of all Greek heroes; Boardman offers the statistic that, of all sixth-century Attic black figure vases, down to 510 BC, 44% show Herakles. So if the pyre motif had been established earlier, we might have expected to see some sign of it.

Later the scene does develop into a common type. Herakles is shown as a young man; the pyre has rejuvenated him as well as immortalising him. He leaves behind him in the pyre his muscle-corselet. Herakles almost never wears a muscle-corselet – after all, he has an invulnerable lion-skin – but it makes a very effective image for the husk of mortality which he discards.

So artistic and literary evidence give a terminus ante quem of c. 460 BC for the story of the pyre. But we can go back further. The site of an early
cult of Herakles has been excavated on Mt Oita, with sherds inscribed with Herakles’ name, and bronze statuettes of him, dating possibly from c. 600 BC. But there is also a Geometric bronze horse here; so the beginnings of cult here date from long before 600 BC. This prompts the possibility that the cult gave rise to the myth of the pyre. Stinton persuasively suggests that Herakles took over the cult in the form of a hero-cult, and that the spectacular rite fed back into the myth the heroic act of self-immolation. Such self-immolation, Stinton continues, has several functions: Herakles avoids the shame of meeting death at the hands of a woman; he dies a fittingly violent death; he is invulnerable to the extent that normal means cannot kill him; and ‘only fire will free him from the clinging robe and from the agony which in itself is shameful’. These last two reasons are the two which are most likely to lead to the introduction of a thunderbolt into Herakles’ apotheosis. Ordinary fire might kill and purify the hero, but a bolt from above will be more effective, more dramatic, and do him greater honour – especially as Herakles is Zeus’ son. However, all the evidence appears to indicate that Herakles did not get his father’s help until well after his apotheosis from the pyre was established.

4.6 Conclusion

There is, then, a noticeable double standard operating when the Greeks consider the attainment or possession of immortality, and this is visible in lyric poetry as well as in epic. Immortality (as possessed by the gods) includes, as well as eternal life and youth, vast power, and a lack of constraint by human codes of honour and shame. But mortality can bestow a dignity, wisdom, courage, heroism, and interest to which immortality cannot aspire. The gods may live forever, and be (in theory) happy and carefree (although in practice they share the mortal tendency towards stress, grief, and quarrels) but nonetheless their lot is not entirely to be envied. For, without mortals, the gods are nothing. Their ancestors led busy lives fighting each other, but the Olympians live in peace, and peace is boring. They lead an essentially monotonous existence in their

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145Stinton 1987: 3; cf. p. 12 n. 27 for bibliography.
147Heroes die violent deaths; cf. Brelich 1958: 88ff: ‘certo è che ben pochi eroi muoiono di morte naturale, mentre incalcolabile è il numero di quegli eroi che muoiono uccisi.’
148Here again we are reminded of Cheiron, who was also poisoned by the blood of the Hydra, and needed a special dispensation from Zeus to be allowed to die.
splendid isolation, and spice is added to their dull lives by their interest and interference in mortal affairs. In spite of Pindar's comment that 'ο χάλκεος ούρανός ού ποτ' ὁμβατός αὐτῶι' (Pythian 10.27), the traffic up and down the ladder between heaven and earth in Greek mythology is a particularly heavy one. Moreover their immortality allows them, on occasion, to behave in ways which would sink them below mortal reproach, were they not so far beyond it. In the Iliad, when Diomedes wounds the gods, they complain bitterly, whereas mortal heroes, when hurt, grit their teeth and endure, or taunt the enemy. 'The Greeks persisted in the arrogant feeling that the world of immortals was totally absorbed in man, that they were jealous of his beauty and his wit, envious of his happiness, and deprived of something which only man could supply to complement the life of the god.'

That the Greeks were uncertain about exactly what immortality was is clear from the sources. Vermeule comments, 'that such a drug [as immortality] was once popularly thought to exist is suggested by the number of Greek poets who insist that it does not'. Ibycus says, 'οὐκ ἔστιν ἀπορθιμένοις ζωᾶς ἔτι φάρμακον εὑρεῖν' 'the dead cannot now find a herb of life'. Its current non-existence and its past existence are both essential to its fascination. Its very unattainability makes it desirable and leads to the insistence that it has been attainable in the mythical past and therefore might become attainable again. But in what form? As has been seen, the portrayal of immortality on vases skirted the issue by personifying it, or symbolising it; alternatively, it is portrayed as an unspecified drink. The Greek tendency not to distinguish between tangible and intangible is also evident. Thus fire, which has a physical reality and burns what is physically present, is found in the children-on-the-fire myths burning away, not the physical body, but the intangible mortality. The substances which confer immortality are in every case material substances: food, drink, fire, water can all be seen and felt. However, in practice substance becomes shadow. In myth immortality is primarily associated with something untouchable – fire, lightning – some substance which mortals cannot handle; or else with some mythological substance, such as nectar, ambrosia, or the waters of Styx. One or both of these, presumably, gave rise to the cup motif in the iconography. But any of these forms are inherently dangerous. The ingredients of immortality are

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149 Vermeule 1979: 144.
150 Vermeule 1979: 133; cf. Archilochus fr. 7.6 W, Sappho fr. 27 V.
151 Ibycus fr. 313 PMGF.
Chapter 4: How to become immortal

m aterials which mankind, for whatever reason, could not normally touch. The whole question of immortality depended upon defining something which the Greeks themselves felt could be defined only by its absence.

Many cultures have stories in which humans, as a species, have a chance at immortality and lose it through their own carelessness, laziness or stupidity. Such stories often look back to a mythical ideal age, when all mankind had immortality, or death had not yet been introduced into the world. The foolish, lazy, or ignorant protagonist is referred to in general terms: 'the old woman', 'the dog'. In contrast to this, for the Greeks mortality is part of the human condition from the moment of creation and they do not, as a race, have a chance of immortality.153 It is individual immortality which interests them; the protagonists of the myths discussed in this chapter are accredited heroes, each with his own reason for making the attempt and with his own way of doing it, rather than anonymous characters representative of the whole human race.

The inevitability of death is not only a defining characteristic of mankind, but in fact a positive trait. Greek poets, however negatively they may write about death, do not express any wish or desire for personal immortality in a literal sense. Rather, they stress its impossibility, using the myths as cautionary tales, and they lay emphasis on its negative aspects. It is this inaccessibility, as much as the blissfulness of life among the gods and its contrast with the grey and insubstantial underworld which is the ultimate fate of mortals, which sets the gods apart and lends immortality part of its fascination.

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152Davies 1987. A rare Greek example is the story in Nikander Theriaca 343–358; although Aelian NA 6.51 says that the story was also used by Ibykos (fr. 342 PMG) and Sophokles (fr. 362 Radt). Zeus gave mortals youthfulness, but in their foolishness they entrusted the load to an ass who, being thirsty, asked a snake for help; the snake took the ass's thirst (which is why its bite imparts thirst) but also took the ass's burden, youthfulness (which is why it sheds its skin). 'The explanations of how mankind came to forfeit immortality often included some such foil figure from the animal world who gains at man's expense.' (Davies 1987: 67)

153Perhaps the nearest they come is in Hesiod's story of the five races: the men of the golden age are immortal (WD 109–120). But they are not ordinary human beings, and they do not lose immortality.
Chapter 5

The immortal dead

εἰμὶ νεκρός· νεκρός δὲ κόπρος, γῆ δ' ἡ κόπρος ἐστίν·
εἰ δ' ἡ γῆ θεός ἐστ', οὐ νεκρός, ἄλλα θεός.1

'Do you ever think of yourself as actually dead, lying in a box with a lid on it? . . . I mean one thinks of it like being alive in a box, one keeps forgetting to take into account the fact that one is dead . . . which should make a difference . . . shouldn't it? I mean, you'd never know you were in a box, would you? It would be just like being asleep in a box. Not that I'd like to sleep in a box, mind you, not without any air - you'd wake up dead, for a start and then where would you be? Apart from inside a box . . . Even taking into account the fact that you're dead, really . . . ask yourself, if I asked you straight off - I'm going to stuff you in this box now, would you rather be alive or dead? Naturally, you'd rather be alive. Life in a box is better than no life at all.'2

5.1 Introduction

For the Greek dead, death was not necessarily the end. The dead possessed a wide variety of ways in which they could reach out from beyond the grave to influence the lives of the living for good or ill, or simply to ensure that they were not forgotten.3 In the absence of any possibility of that immortality which consists of living the life of the blessed forever, the Greeks, like Rosencrantz, might well feel that any kind of continuation of life was better than none. The desire for immortality is a part of human nature; even after the deceased's body has been 'stuffed in a box', or the equivalent, a part of his life, in the form of soul, memory or name, can go on.

This chapter discusses the last two of these options.4 In the early archaic period, there was an upsurge of interest in the 'heroic' past and the acts of

1[Epicharmos] fr. 64 DK.
2Rosencrantz in Tom Stoppard, Rosencrantz and Guildernstern are Dead, Act II.
3Such an ability was not confined to men, although in death, as in life, women's role tended to be subordinate. However, some did make their presences felt posthumously; e.g. the Erinyes of Eriphyle and Klytemnestra.
4The possibility of the survival of one's soul after death - usually in some form of afterlife, or through the theories of reincarnation developed by such as Pythagoras - lies outside of
mythical ancestors, particularly as embodied in epic. This resulted in a common literary and mythical topos in which a mythical 'golden age' in the past, in which humans were capable of greater things than their weaker descendants, was contrasted to the present. A part of this topos was the fiction that, in the past age, immortality had been attainable; the heroes of the past may not have been immortalised often, but the chance had been there. This was contrasted with the present duller age, in which immortality was unattainable. The interest which this possibility of immortality evoked is evinced in the continuing fascination shown throughout the archaic period in the no-man's-land between life and death. It is these myths which become integrated into the concept of memory-survival — 'survival of one's social persona in the collective memory of the community' — which is acknowledged to be the closest approach for mortals to that immortality which is not attainable outside of myth. The desire for some lesser, personalised form of immortality — for one's bloodline to continue through sons, or for one's name to survive in memory, or simply for one's grave not to be neglected — are all variations on this theme. Such a memorial need not be a physical monument; it may take the form of the continuation of one's name, through familial descent, or the less easily accessible but more individualised form of fame (κλέος) gained through excellence (ἀρετή). Such ἀρετή is evinced especially — but not exclusively — through physical prowess, either in sports or acts of bravery, and commemorated through praise-poetry, and presumably also simply through repetition of one's exploits until they entered the realm of common knowledge and even folktale. Commonly, however, such memory-survival was focused on the grave. This is reflected in the increasing use of epitaphs on grave monuments, and in the increasingly detailed and personal information which was recorded on them. In and before the early archaic period, however, before writing

the scope of this study, although Chapter 6 will discuss some particular aspects of these beliefs.

5 On the spread of epic and its influence on the establishment of hero-cult see especially Farnell 1921: 284, 340-342; Coldstream 1976: 14-16; Kearns 1989: 104–110 (Attic heroes). For a partial criticism of this theory see Whitley 1988: 173–174. However, Rohde, citing the survivals of ancestor-cult in Homer, pointed out that hero-cult did not originate after, or out of, the Homeric poems (Rohde 1925: 10ff.). Parker 1996: 33–40 gives a brief but useful survey of the varying evidence for early hero-cult and the different ways in which it has been interpreted.


7 For the supplanting of heroic ἀρετή by sporting ἀρετή, see below, section 5.2.; see also Nagy 1990: 199–214 on Findar's links between contemporary athetes and past heroes.
became a common skill, grave-markers gave little information about the deceased. Perhaps the dead might have something of his or her own placed over the grave to remind the living of who was there, like Elpenor’s oar, but if so no evidence survives. Such articles may, in any case, be more likely to be placed inside the grave. Graves did not need to be marked to propagate remembrance; ‘the mentality here is that one’s memory will survive within the (stable) community with the grave serving as a focus’. It is this kind of memory-survival which forms a basis for hero-cult; but where – and why – does the leap come from remembrance of an ancestor, friend or community notable to worship of the dead man or woman as something akin to a god?

In this chapter, I will discuss ‘memory-survival’, and in particular the ways in which the living utilised motifs and themes appertaining to the mythical hypothesis of a possible immortality for mortals, in order to focus on particular aspects of their dead, both real – contemporary or historical – and mythical. Such a focus both enabled them to keep the memory of their dead alive, and offered them the potential for a future in which their memory would be propagated in the same way. The particular aspect of memory-survival on which this chapter will focus is the way in which myths were adapted to interpret and redefine the ritual, cult and belief surrounding the dead. The chapter discusses those mortals who rise above mortality and yet are bound to it; they constitute a category with a problematic status, between gods and mortals, the divine and the dead, and partake of both groups. It is through myth that these contradictions are mediated. In regard to these mythologised dead, I will first consider the historical, ‘recently’ dead, in two contexts: first, the fostering of their fame through mythical models in praise-poetry, taking Pindar’s Pythian Ode 10 as an example; and second, the ways in which naming was used to foster memory of the dead and his deeds, and the continuation of his line, both in myth and actuality. Then I will discuss the ‘ancient’ dead, both mythical and historical, and the ambivalent status of those beings who occupy the spheres of both the living and the dead: first, the ambivalent status of the mythical sphinx, and second, the use of myth to mediate a similar ambivalence in hero-cult.

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8 Elpenor’s oar: see Od. 11.77–78. On writing on grave-monuments see Lattimore 1942: 15; the earliest verse epitaphs found date from the 7th century BC; cf. also Bowra 1960: 203ff.
9 The principles involved in the placement of grave-goods, however, are notoriously unclear; see Kurtz and Boardman 1971: 206; Morris 1992: 104–106; above, Introduction.
5.2 Fame and memory

In the ideology of epic, the hero’s immortality, articulated through his fame, relies not only on his tomb itself but on his survival in the collective memory of his own community and even (depending on the extent of his fame and status) of other communities. By themselves, great deeds and a noble tomb are not sufficient to ensure that the hero or heroine’s fame will become immortal, unless their memory-survival is consolidated in some way. Prowess must be transmuted through the medium of song or story (or both) into a lasting and durable focus for memory. This memory-survival is propagated as the hero’s fame is spread by the songs of Homeric bards such as Demodokos and Phemios. But the way in which the hero is portrayed (or indeed whether he is portrayed at all) is not within his control; it is entirely the choice of the bard. If the deed is worthy of memory, the poet will sing of it, thus ensuring that the doer’s name will be remembered. In the long term, fame by itself is not enough; the help of the Muses is required to convert fame into memory. As long as one’s name is still spoken, and one’s actions are talked of, one is remembered and has not slipped entirely into oblivion. But the desire for glory and fame also reflects a wish to be honoured now, not only in the future. It is a desire for a good life, not only for a memorable death.

Forms of praise-poetry such as the enkomion and the epinikion offer a more individual and specific form of memory-survival, and one which is rather more under the control of the subject of the song; he commissions it and the poet sings with the aim of praising and pleasing him. The epinikion shows a close interweaving of the patron’s fame, the poet’s skill and the god’s will. The fame of both poet and patron is confirmed, but at the same time as the patron is compared to the gods, through the use of myths, in the excellence of his achievements, it is made clear that mankind can never equal the immortals. The gods decide the fate of man; any fortune an individual may gain stems from them, or from luck, or, in some other way, from something which is not purely the individual’s
skill - although that also is important. Pindar makes it clear that it is a virtue to admit that one has limits, to accept them and live within them even as one strives to pass them. The victor is praised both for the attempt to go beyond the limits which most mortals cannot pass, and for his humility in staying within the limits ordained by the gods for mortals; and the poet must establish appropriate limits to his praise, so as not to incur envy. He must tread carefully the line beyond which heroic achievement becomes transgression.

What he can do, however, is to surpass the achievements of his ancestors. Praise-poetry commonly sets up a mythical heroic model, into which the subject of the poem, the laudandus, can be fitted; often the myth in question is that of his ancestor or a hero from his land. Ultimately, the purpose of the epinikion, in its employment of mythical models, is to establish a paradigmatic framework based upon myth within which the subject of the poem can be established as an equal to his heroic forebear, and therefore worthy of equal fame and immortality. But as well as augmenting the fame of his patron, the poet augments his own fame. The glory of the patron, which the poet praises and shares in, exalts both, beyond a level which would be possible for either alone. The poet uses the gift of song, which he has received from the gods, to raise his patron to the level of the gods; and in extolling his patron, he demonstrates his own skill and shares in his patron’s glory.

Such a transmutation of deeds into fame, through the medium of poetry, often draws upon myth as a paradigm through which the achiever’s deeds can be placed in a framework in which the kind of

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13 See for example Archilochos fr. 16 W (that whatever a man gets comes from luck and destiny) and fr. 17 W (that everything comes to men from human work and effort). One must work to achieve anything; but in the end it is down to the gods (fr. 111, 130 W). Cf. also Bakchylides 3.21ff, 4.18ff, 9.88ff, 14.1ff, etc.
15 Poetic immortality does not, of course, have to be based on another’s achievements; there are also private claims to the immortality of one’s verse, sometimes expressed simply as a claim that the poet will be remembered (e.g. Sappho fr. 147 V). Sappho in fr. 65 V seems to be claiming that the fame of her verses will be remembered even in Acheron. By contrast she emphasises strongly that an ‘απαθευτον γυναικα’ will be utterly forgotten, even in Hades (fr. 55 V) - while in so saying, she ironically immortalises her opponent in verse. Theognis at 237-54 says he has given Kyrnos fame, both in Greece and elsewhere, as a gift of friendship. Here, rather than basing his own and his subject’s fame on his praise of his subject’s achievements, he bases their combined fame solely on the fame of his verses, which are written (in circular fashion) about the fame of his verses and the immortality they will bestow on their ungrateful subject, Kyrnos. Such claims, however, although they may use epic language and imagery, rarely use a mythological framework in the way in which the epinikia do.
immortality for which he is striving is placed within his reach. Likening the achiever to a hero of myth raises his status and the value of his achievement to something beyond the abilities of the ordinary run of mortal men – which indeed is the case, if the man in question is a winner in the games, or even (as in the case of Hieron of Syracuse, for example) just the man who has put up the money for someone else to win in the games. These are deeds which most men, who are not swift enough, strong enough, skilled enough, or rich enough, are unable to emulate. But the poet's achievement lies in making this deed not merely exceptional, but unique. In the mythological past from which the poet draws his material, no two of the feats of the heroes of myth are the same; each monster or adversary has some distinctive characteristic which sets him, her or it apart and makes the hero’s task uniquely difficult, each journey over land or sea has its own dangers which are different from all others, each hero’s life and death is distinct. One can describe the life of a hero and know that it can not be mistaken for the life of any other hero. It is this individuality which the achiever must try for, and which the poet must emphasise in his song. In this way the feat is portrayed as a deed worthy of the achiever’s mythical ancestors and therefore worthy of being remembered in the way that their deeds are.

An example of this can be seen in Pindar’s *Pythian Ode* 10. The ode was composed in 498 BC, for Hippokleas son of Phrikias, of Pelinna, who had won the double race for boys. It was commissioned by Thorax of Larissa, the chief town in Thessaly, and not far from Pelinna. In the ode Pindar deploys his myths and heroes in such a way as to reflect glory on to the man who commissioned the ode as well as the boy who earned it and his father, who had also been a victor in the games.

Pindar opens, therefore, by connecting Thessaly the blest and happy Lakedaimon through their common ancestor, Herakles, also the ancestor of Thorax. In the next two stanzas the athletic feats of the father and son are extolled. Then comes the transition to the myth:

The bronze sky is beyond

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17 Burnett 1985: 66 comments on Hieron’s victory in 468 BC in the four-horse chariot race that he ‘only paid the bills’. For Hieron’s victory see especially Bakchylides’ Ode 5, in which Hieron’s gold is emphasised as a focal point and becomes a symbol of Hieron’s victory and power, his piety to the gods, their generosity to him, and above all of his incorruptible fame; see especially Lefkowitz 1969, Steffen 1961, Stern 1967.
18 Thorax and his brothers were descendants of Aleuas (see v. 5), descendant of Herakles. Nisetich 1980: 213 gives the genealogy.
his reach forever, but he has found
all the happiness
our mortal race can come to.
For neither on shipboard
neither by any journey made on foot
would you ever discover
the miraculous way to the Hyperboreans.
With them Perseus, lord of the people, once feasted,
entering their houses.19

Here the mythical model that Pindar constructs seems at first to be a
negative one, first building up and emphasising the impossibility of
finding the Hyperboreans and then suddenly, without preamble,
introducing a hero who not only found them but feasted with them. As
the poet proceeds with the description, the land of the Hyperboreans
unfolds along the lines of the Islands of the Blessed. They live constantly
feasting and singing; 'the cup of age and sickness I has not been poured for
them'; they are subject to neither toil nor war and they live 'escaping the
rigid rule of Nemesis'.

This last line is controversial. Köhnken argues that it means that the
Hyperboreans were in fact immortal; they have fled Nemesis, which is
here equivalent to death.20 Against this, Kirkwood suggests that the aorist
φυγόντες can have causative force, and would mean 'because they have
avoided Nemesis'.21 In other words, the Hyperboreans live the life of the
blessed because they have escaped Nemesis. This seems to me a less likely
hypothesis, as the comment that they have fled or escaped Nemesis seems
to imply that at some point she was a threat to them in some way.
Moreover the context here would imply that death is what is meant. The
Hyperboreans, as is clear from their name, dwell in the far north.
Moreover it seems that already in Hesiod they are leading a blessed
existence, divinely favoured.22 It has been noted that the further out from
the normative Greek centre of the world a race lives, the more likely they
are to develop non-human characteristics, which can include unusually
just or exceptionally long lives.23 In this context, when it has just been
made clear that immortality of this type is the one thing which Hippokleas

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19v. 27–32; Nisetich's translation. Perseus, of course, did not go on shipboard or by foot; he
could fly.
21Kirkwood 1982: 242 on v. 44.
22Hes. fr. 150 v. 20 ff. MW.
23See above, Chapter 3.1.
cannot achieve – 'The bronze sky is forever beyond his reach' – to effect the sharpest possible contrast, the poet introduces the immortal Hyperboreans.24

However, the Hyperboreans constitute a comparison as well as a contrast. The Hyperboreans are portrayed as living in a state of continual celebration, with song, dance, and revelry. The young victor, in addition, has caused this kind of celebration by his triumph. And it is just this state which Pindar creates through his verse. But the revelry of the Hyperboreans, although perpetual, is mythical, a part of a world inaccessible to mortals, and the celebrations for Hippokleas' victory, although real and immediate, will soon be over. It is only the celebration evoked in Pindar's poem, mediating between the short actuality and the eternal myth, which will not only continue forever, but will also remain accessible to humanity, a part of the real world. Present time becomes an extension of mythical past time, which is supplemented by a realm in which time is suspended altogether.25

The presence of Perseus, although he is not the main focus, constitutes part of this comparison. In structural terms, the mentions of Perseus' visit are part of the ring-composition of the poem, of which the description of the Hyperboreans forms the centre. Perseus, however, serves not only as a way of leading into and out of this description. He, too, is an ancestor of the sons of Aleuas; and with the implicit reminder of their existence, the transition between the world of mortals and that of the mythical immortals is smoothed and made to seem slight. Thorax and his brothers exist in actuality; so therefore must their ancestor Perseus; so therefore must the Hyperboreans, whom he visited. So mythical and actual are drawn closer through the mediation of Perseus, who belongs to both worlds. Perseus lived and died; he is part of the real world. Yet, by the 'fact' of his visit to the Hyperboreans, he is also proof of the existence of the mythical and of immortality. He is the key to the mythical framework in which the immortal fame of Hippokleas' deed is embodied. The poem links the mythical and the actual in such a way that the fame of

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24 This is not a new step, but the emphasis on their actual immortality is rare, although certainly the Hyperboreans are portrayed as divinely favoured before this time. On one other occasion their immortality is implied: in Bakchylides Ode 3.58–62 Kroisos and his daughters are carried there by Apollo 'because of all mortals he had sent up the largest gifts to divine Pytho'. However, perhaps because they only ever appear on the periphery of myth – Pythian 10 is in fact the longest reference to them – any other references to their immortality, if they existed, have been lost.

25 See above, Chapter 2.3. Alan Griffiths tells me that, for both a physicist and a mystic, this is the definition of eternity.
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Hippokleas’ achievement, and the rejoicing which accompanies it, transmuted through song, are made as everlasting as the blessed life of the Hyperboreans.

5.3 Names and naming

Jesper Svenbro describes two ways in which the Greeks could achieve immortality: through generation (γένεσις) or through renown (κλήσις). He illustrates this distinction by the examples of the heroes Anchises and Achilleus. Achilleus wins his fame through his own actions and through to nature of his death. His immortality, and the κλῆς of his life and death – and name – are ensured because of his actions during his life. Anchises, on the other hand, ensures his fame, and the memory-survival of his name, through the begetting of Aineias and the race of descendants who will ensure the continuation of the race of Dardanos, a line which the gods intend should not die out. The certainty of Anchises’ immortality lies in the single act of his begetting of Aineias. The continuation of his line will ensure the continuation not only of his own flesh and blood but also of the memory of his name itself.

In the historical context, this preservation of names can be even more pronounced; the Athenian tradition of giving one’s father’s name to one’s firstborn son is well known. There are other traditions of ‘linked names’. In some families the same names, not in any particular order, appear again and again; the family of Hagnias of Erkhia contained three men of that name as well as five named Dromeas and four named Diokles. Alternatively there are many examples of names which share

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28 The importance of the male offspring, as opposed to the female, in continuing the line of descent is underlined by the disregard of Aphrodite, as mother, in the passage from the Iliad. Even in H. Aph., Aphrodite emphasises Anchises’ role: ‘you shall have a dear son...’ (οἱ δ’ ἐγὼν φίλος υἱὸς, v. 196).
29 Remarkably close to this Greek model is the Nuer concept of immortality through sons; their customs of marriage ensure that ‘in theory at any rate... each man has at least one son and through this son his name is forever a link in a line of descent’. The dead man’s memory-survival is thus ensured by the recitation of his descent-line, and at his funeral it is emphasised that he is not completely finished, as ‘his children will carry on his name’ (Evans-Pritchard 1956: 163).
30 Golden 1986: 259–260; the pattern is not invariable, or even particularly reliable; the names commonly appear elsewhere in families, and other patterns can also be found. See Thompson 1974.
31 Davies 1971 no. 126; Golden 1986: 257. The practice also appears in myth, although it is rare; for example Glaukos is the great-grandson of Glaukos (Il. 6.152–155, 196–197, 206).
only one element, as is the case with Kallikrates’ sons Kalliphanes, Kallisthenes and Kallistratos.\textsuperscript{32}

Such a continual recycling of names is indicative of a strong identification of self with \textit{gonos}. Underlying the re-use of one’s father’s name for one’s son, and one’s own name for one’s grandson, is the assurance that the memory-survival of the individual is less important than the survival of his family. In a family in which the male descent line rotated the same two names, or even several names, from one generation to the next, it would not be easy to isolate a specific ancestor, when even the patronymic may be the same, and several members of a family may bear the same name at the same time. In such a case the names are not signifiers of the qualities of a particular individual. In fact such names, and such repetition, would tend towards the opposite effect; the identity of the individual is submerged within the continuing litany of repeated names which signify his \textit{gonos}.\textsuperscript{33} But the names themselves, with their strong connections to the family to which they belong, become signifiers of the glorious past of that family and their long descent, as well as an expression of its identity and its hopes for continuation into the future. The continual repetition of the names evokes a sense of history and of an extensive and distinguished past. At the same time the cyclical nature of the repetition creates a sense of timelessness, giving the impression that the family will last indefinitely, Andokides following Leogoras following Andokides, tracing their descent through the most important branch of the family, from eldest son to eldest son, seemingly forever.\textsuperscript{34} And with each repetition the power of the names as signifiers is increased, as the weight of memory of ancestral acts and identities becomes greater. Such reappropriation of names has the function, like the appeal to ancestral deeds, of reaching back into the past and linking the current bearer of the name with (possibly) more illustrious ancestors.

Names could also be used as signifiers of individual identity. Often a son or daughter will bear a name which is suggestive of the actions or qualities of his or her father.\textsuperscript{35} This occurs in both mythical and historical contexts; for example Odysseus’ son Telemachos, Hektor’s son Astyanax

\textsuperscript{32}Davies 1971 no. 9576; Golden 1986: 257.
\textsuperscript{33}Contrast the beliefs of the Urubu Indians (Huxley 1956: 119–120) who connect the re-use of names with reincarnation; a dead man’s descendant, named after him, is considered to be a reincarnation of him. In such a case his own personality is maintained, reborn into his descendant.
\textsuperscript{34}Davies 1971 no. 828.
\textsuperscript{35}Sulzberger 1926, Svenbro 1993: 64–79.
and Aias' son Eurysakes all bear names which refer to their fathers' roles rather than to their own. In some cases in epic, the child is actually given, as name, an epithet which has been applied to its father; Odysseus' second son by Penelope is called Ptoliporthe. This retrospective use of epithets seems to have an exactly opposite purpose to the systems of naming outlined above; the emphasis appears to be on the individual's fame and memory-survival rather than on the continuation of his line. But in fact the two cannot be distinguished so sharply. The hero's deeds reflect glory onto his whole line, which gains κλέος from the hero's own κλέος. So the memory of his deeds, kept alive in the names of his offspring, not only reflect glory back on to him but also preserve the memory of his glory for the greater glory of his family to come. In some cases the two systems of naming are found together. Such is the case with the family of Themistokles. Themistokles named his eldest son Neokles, after the boy's paternal grandfather. Other children's names, however, refer to episodes in their father's life: Archeptolis, Mnesiptolema, Nikomache and Asia. Such names are not given lightly; Plutarch comments that Adeimantos must have distinguished himself at Artemision (pace Herodotos) or he would not have dared to have named his children as he did: Nausinike, Akrothinion, Alexibia and Aristeus. Children, then, do not only constitute the keepers of their father's immortality in the sense of perpetuating his bloodline; they also perpetuate his memory.

5.4 Sphinxes and graves

It is a belief so common as to be a cliché that the gods are not only believed to bring release from affliction, but also held responsible for causing the affliction in the first place. 'The Lord gave, and the Lord

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36Eustathius Comm. ad Od. 1.1479.56 Stallbaum: Telemachos 'has grown while his father has been fighting far away'; II. 6.403: Astyanax is so named 'since Hektor alone saved Ilion'; for Aias' wide shield see II. 7.219, for Eurysakes see Soph. Aias 574–576. Further examples: Sulzberger 1926 has amassed a huge number; Svenbro 1993: 68–75 discusses some of the most interesting.
37Plut. Them. 32.1–3, 1.1; see Svenbro 1993: 77; Davies 1971 no. 6669.
hath taken away.'

A similarly contradictory function has been shown to exist in the characterisation of Thanatos, who embodies and controls both death as an evil and death as a release from the evils of life, particularly from old age. Such an ambivalence is also found in other figures set at the boundaries of death. The ambivalence of such figures is articulated in such a way that they, and implicitly the forces of mortality over which they exert a measure of control, are brought within the sphere of influence of humanity. In the case of the individual making an approach to such chthonic powers, this means that, even while the inevitable comparison with such a force makes him (or her) aware of his powerless and mortal state, he is nonetheless provided with the security of a measure of control or at least influence over such powers. In this way, the process of making immortality accessible in a diluted or incomplete form is paralleled by a similar process of 'taming' death.

An example of such ambivalence is the role of the sphinx in myth, art and funerary art. The sphinx in myth is a death-demon *par excellence*; she is most famously found outside of Thebes, slaying those who fail to answer her riddle. She – for from the archaic period onwards, she is predominantly female – appears on Protocorinthian vases, often marching in a file with lions and panthers. She may, perhaps, be known by the company she keeps on these vases. Later again, the association with death becomes more certain: she can be found looking on at scenes of battle or death, as is the case on a Corinthian krater, on which two sphinxes flank a duel between two warriors over a dead body. It has been suggested that she is here the death-demon who will snatch the soul of the dead. A similar interpretation can be offered for the architectural relief from Mycenae, dating from c. 630 BC, on which two sphinxes stand over a man's dead body. Gantz suggests that this is also probably the first

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41Job 1: 21.
42See above, chapter 2.1.
43For the Sphinx in archaic and classical art, see especially Moret 1984, *LIMC* s.v. Sphinx (forthcoming, Supplement); on tomb stelai, Richter 1961.
44The male sphinx, although rare, does appear. See Simon 1967: 277–79 for a possible depiction of one as an embodiment of Death on a metope from Heraion I at Foce del Sele (Fig. 15: Paestum, Mus. Naz., no number, c. 550 BC; Schefold 1992: pl. 85; *LIMC* Sisyphos I 26*). For a more certain representation in somewhat different circumstances, see Boardman 1970.
45Naples, Mus. Naz. 80995 (H. 683), Corinthian column-krater, from Nola; Amyx *CVP* 191.8 (Samos Painter); Gerhard *AV* pl. 220.
46See Roscher, s. v. 'Sphinx', vol. 4: 1394.
evidence for her fondness for young men. There follows a series of vases showing the pursuit (and often capture) of men or boys. This is the beginning of the development of one part of her archaic and classical personality.

The other attribute which comes across in both literature and iconography is her knowledge, manifested in the riddle which she asks Oidipous. Her question, with its emphasis on the way in which men walk, is particularly (but not exclusively) appropriate to him. It is also appropriate to the sphinx's own affiliation with human mortality. With her riddle about human life and her sexual appetite, she is akin to those females, like the Sirens, who tempt or seduce men to their deaths. Her singing also places her in the same class as the sirens, who have knowledge of 'everything that happens over all the generous earth', with which they tempt Odysseus. The sphinx is the παπαίος κυών, 'carrying her tuneful hunting in her talons'. She, too, has a store of wisdom, dangerous knowledge to tempt the Thebans to their deaths.

The development of the protective aspect of her character is harder to establish. Vermeule suggests that the sphinx's appearance on a sarcophagus from Tanagra, with one paw raised to touch the column of the 'house' which is depicted on the outside of the sarcophagus, may indicate this function; the formalised gesture is one of protective care.

49 The earliest is a black-figure Siana cup, Syracuse 25.418, c. 570–560 BC; ABV 53.49: C Painter; Para 23; Schefold 1964: 29; see Moret 1984 no. 1, pl. 2. See Moret 1984 nos. 2–27, pls. 3–16 for other examples.
50 The riddle which she poses to the Thebans is the only evidence of this kind of knowledge. But it seems improbable that the Theban sphinx was credited with an intelligence and knowledge not at least latent in other sphinxes. For the wisdom of sphinxes and sirens see Vermeule 1979: 171. See also the series of vase-paintings in which a sphinx, seated on a column, addresses one or more men, usually young; see Moret 1984 nos. 28–66, pl. 17–37. In a few of these vases one or more of the youths shows alarm, but for the most part they are simply sitting listening. Contrast Edmunds 1981: 11–12, who suggests that the story of the Theban sphinx is a combination of two folktale motifs: (1) the hero answers questions to win his bride; (2) the hero slays a monster to free his bride.
51 Vermeule 1979: 171. For a further example of the sexuality that is fatal to the chosen victim, compare Ishtar in the Epic of Gilgamesh, who tries to tempt Gilgamesh to become her lover; he replies with a long list of the unhappy fates of those who have fulfilled this role before him, and wisely – although not tactfully – declines any entanglement. Cf. Eos and the Harpies, both of whom snatch young men. Moret denies the existence of any erotic element in the sphinx’s pursuit in the archaic period, saying that scenes of erotic pursuit first appear in the classical period (Moret 1984: 11 with n. 4). The iconography, however, speaks against him; see especially the series of sixth-century sealstones given in Moret 1984: pl. 11 with p. 16 n. 2.
52 Od. 12.191.
53 Soph. OT 391, Eur, El. 472.
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echoed by the human on the other side of the column. The sphinx who will escort the dead also protects the house, and on another coffin she sits to guard it in the classic position of the archaic tomb-sphinx. These two examples are (so far as I can find) unique. In any case, if the protective function can be seen here, it appears to be lost during the Dark Ages, as the sphinx emerges into the Geometric period with the darker side of her personality to the fore.

Her protective role, although apparently lost in the vase iconography, survives in other contexts. Throughout the 6th century BC, the sphinx is commonly found throughout Attica, perched outside temples, as is the sphinx at Delphi, or on the top of funerary stelai. Her role, as far as the funerary context is concerned, is clarified by an inscription found on the base of an archaic stele from Thessaly:

O sphinx, dog of Hades, whom do you... watch over, sitting [on guard over] the dead?

'From this evidence,' Richter concludes, 'one may assume that the function of a sphinx on the early gravestones was an eminently appropriate one - not hostile, not predatory, but one of a friendly guardian.' She is the protector of the tomb, either from human transgressors and tomb-robbers, or in an apotropaic sense. The latter is, on the whole, more likely; she is the most apt guardian, because of her position on the borders between life and death, because also of her knowledge of mortality shown through her riddle, and her power over human life, to watch over the dead and see that they come to no harm, like the sirens on the Harpy Tomb at Xanthos, cradling the dead gently on their way to the next world. Such beneficent aspects of characters

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55 Vermeule 1979: 69.
56 The sphinx at Delphi: Delphi Mus., c. 560–550 BC, given by the Naxians and placed on a pillar outside the temple of Ge and the Muses (Fouilles de Delphes vol. 4 fasc. 1: 41 ff., plls. V, VI, VIa with comm.). Similar sphinxes existed at Aphaia and Delos. Funerary sphinxes: catalogued and illustrated by Richter 1961. The earliest dates to c. 600 BC, and comes from an Attic gravestone now in New York (MMA 24.97.87, seated sphinx on a cavetto capital; Richter 1961: 10, figs. 1–7). Throughout the sixth century the form becomes less solidly immobile and more naturalistic, and crouches rather than sits; see for example a sphinx in Boston who looks as if she is about to take wing (Boston, MFA 40.576, c. 535–530 BC; said to have been found in Attica; Richter 1961: 29, figs. 110–114).
57 Richter 1961: 6; see Beazley 1946: 49f; Peek 1938: 476.
59 The Lycian marble relief from the north side of the Harpy Tomb at Xanthos shows a harpy in bird form cradling the soul of the dead; BM 287 (Pryce 1928: plll 21–22; Vermeule 1979: 169–170; see Vermeule 1979: 248 n. 36 for bibliography). Pryce 1928: 122ff describes them rather as Sirens.
dealing in death might be put down to an understanding of and sympathy for human mortality, stemming from the identification of such beings with death, Thanatos. The archaic sphinx embodies the two sides of death; she is a symbol of the terrible swift death which snatches a man unexpectedly from among his fellows, but she also takes care of his body and his grave. Moreover, the sphinx herself is mortal, and might have some sympathy with a fate which will ultimately be her own.

5.5 Heroes and hero-cults

i. The hero in myth and folktale

A similar ambivalence, albeit on a more complex scale, is to be seen in hero-cult. The form and functions of hero-cult vary considerably from region to region, and the exact nature of the hero is also subject to variation. Not infrequently, it is difficult to assess the extent to which the Greeks themselves differentiated between the hero (ἥρως) and the god (θεός) – and, of course, the dead, as the heroic cult was primarily linked to the grave. Emily Kearns quotes Lucian’s confused Cynic Melanippos, ‘But in the name of prophecy, what is a hero? Because I haven’t a clue.’60 In regard to Trophonios’ reply, ‘a sort of compound (σύνθετον) between human being and god’, Kearns points out that most modern scholars have ended up with answers which, although varying widely, echo the terms used by Trophonios.61 Snodgrass offers a working definition: a hero is a person ‘who was once alive but has been heroised only through death; who is honoured by sacrifice and cult, specially at his grave where his power is felt to be located; and whose repute and influence are normally confined to the region near the grave, which is a fixed dwelling-place after death’.62

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60 Kearns 1989: 1; Lucian Dial. mort. 340.
61 Kearns 1989: 1; see Snodgrass 1988:20; Nock 1986: 593; Dietrich 1965: 31. To discuss this controversial and complicated area in any sort of detail would take rather more space than is available here. Inevitably much of what follows must be couched in general terms, but the lack of emphasis on variations between cults and between regions should not be taken for a lack of awareness that such differences exist – only a lack of space in which to discuss them.
62 Snodgrass 1988: 20. The word ‘hero’ – ἥρως ὁ can have two meanings; see Rohde 1925: 117–118; West 1978: 370–373; Snodgrass 1988: 20ff. The use outlined above is not, of course, the way in which the word is used in Homer and Hesiod, where it is a kind of title, used most often, but not exclusively, of the nobility.
The grave at which a hero was worshipped was, of course, not necessarily his own. The names of the great epic heroes were often attached to pre-existing sites and rediscovered tombs. There was a cult of Agamemnon at Mycenae; and – puzzlingly – no less than five cult sites connected with Oidipous, two of which were Attic, both alleged to be sites at which he was buried. Because the hero is usually (unlike most immortals or semi-immortals) bound to his grave or the site of his cult, it is easier for an already existing site to be (re-)discovered and utilised. The impressiveness of such monuments as (for example) the Mycenean tholos tombs implies just such an important life and death as myth depicts for the Greek hero. Snodgrass suggests that a prerequisite for a tumulus or other such monument to become part of a cult, the identity of its original ‘owner’ must first be lost. Only then is it free to be appropriated for a hero; an essential part of the cult is the conviction that this is the true burial site of the hero in question. In the absence of any written sign or marker to show the identity of the deceased, pre-Dark Age tombs were ignored or simply forgotten. The living community is drawing, not on the reality, but on their communal ‘memory’ of a heroic past and their perception of the present as a time in some way inferior in comparison.

Nor was the site itself the only thing which the hero could expropriate; cults such as that of Herakles on Mt Oita are often the result of superimposing the worship of a hero on an already existing ritual.

Common as sites dedicated to the cult of heroes from epic may be, however, they were far from the only ones, or even the most frequent, to be honoured in this way. Many sites honoured heroes whose names and

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63 This is the case in those Mycenean tombs which had offerings left in them in the Geometric period (see Hägg 1987, Whitley 1988, Coldstream 1976). Those leaving the offerings did not know the identity of those who had been buried there, as is clear by the lack of continuity of cult: ‘between the last funerals in the 12th century and the earliest offerings in the 8th century there is a considerable time-lapse which has yielded no finds whatsoever in connection with the tombs’ (Hägg 1987:93).

64 Agamemnon: Coldstream 1976: 10; Hägg 1987: 96–98. There may also have been a cult of Helen and Menelaos at Sparta; Catling 1976–77: 24ff (esp. 36–37, seventh- and sixth-century dedications inscribed to Helen, figs. 25–29); but see de Polignac 1984: 130–131 n. 12 for an argument that these attributions, as well as that of the Agamemneion and the Cave of Odysseus on Ithaka, are mistaken. Oidipous: cult and burial at Thebes; burial and cult in the sanctuary of Demeter at Eleonos; cult of the Erinyes of Laios and Oidipous at Sparta; and in Attica, contradictory traditions of his gravesite place it both under the Areopagos and at Kolonos; see Kearns 1989: 50–51, 208–209.


67 Cf. the myth of the Five Ages in Hesiod for a literary version of the same deterioration: Hes. WD 106–201 with West’s comm. (West 1978: 172ff).

68 See above, Chapter 4.5.
stories were only known locally. Similarly, cult might be offered to the eponymous hero of a place. The tie between hero and community ensured that localised cults such as these flourished; a hero-cult could develop around a man (or woman) who was only known locally and celebrated locally. Nor did all heroes have their origins in myth; cult was also given to historical figures.

If an existence in myth was not the key, what, then, were the prerequisites for becoming a subject of hero-cult? Stories were generated around the lives and deaths of historical figures who became the subject of hero-cult, reflecting their (partially) divine status. Such stories, in order to raise their subjects to a more than mortal status, re-used and adapted the stories and themes which collected around mythical heroes. As a part of this process, equivalencies were drawn between mythical and contemporary attributes. One of the more important of these is that between mythical heroic feats and historical athletics. The heroes of epic myth are often found in athletic contests (the funeral games for Patroklos, for example) but their fame, and their claim to hero-cult, does not stem from their skill in the games; they are known rather for their skill in war or monster-slaying. Among historical figures, however, in place of the killing of these mythical monsters, other feats of individual strength, skill and ἀντίξει are celebrated. Athletic prowess and fame come to replace the heroic monster-slaying of myth. Physical excellence, which could not, in a contemporary context, be judged by the killing of monsters or enemies, is given a showcase in athletic contests. Athletics, in fact, become the historical equivalent of heroic feats, a form of κλέος accessible to contemporary historical figures, and heroes are often drawn from the ranks of athletes who have won victories in the Games. Such athletes become modern myths, the ‘present’ incarnations of heroic glory and fame which were once the province only of the heroes of epic and ‘ancient’ myth. Fontenrose, in a study of four hero-athletes, has shown how this process is constructed. The four stories follow a common pattern. In

69Kearns 1989: 139–207 (Appendix 1: Catalogue of Attic Heroes) gives a good idea of the enormous number of heroes who were offered cult in Attica; a large number of these make no appearance in myth (at least, not in surviving sources) outside of the ambit of their cult.
70See Fontenrose 1968.
71Heroes and games: e.g. the funeral games for Patroklos, II. 23.257–897; Odysseus excels in hurling the discus, Od. 8.186–198.
72Fontenrose 1968: 83.
73Fontenrose 1968: 76–79. His four heroes are: Kleomedes of Astypalaia, Euthykes of Lokri, Oibotas of Dyme, Theagenes of Thasos; see 73–76 for summaries of their stories and discussion of sources.
each, the athlete shows unusual prowess, but is slighted in some way, and
takes it out on his fellow-citizens, who (at the advice of Delphi) heroise
him. Among the other common features are others which we have met
before: divine parentage or patronage; an unusual death, or an epiphany.
The process of building the stories onto a readily recognisable heroic
framework means that the audience can easily comprehend the athlete’s
life in heroic terms.

In addition to this there is another characteristic which is common to
both mythological hero and heroised athlete: wrath. Not all heroes were
beneficent to the communities in which they resided; stories such as that
of the Hero at Temesa serve as paradigms for the darker side of the heroic
power.74 The Hero was a member of Odysseus’ crew; while at Temesa he
raped a girl, and the Temesans stoned him to death. The Hero wrought
havoc until the Temesans, at the instigation of the Delphic Oracle,
established a cult and gave him their most beautiful girl to wife every year.
One year Euthymos came, saw the girl, fell in love, wrestled with the Hero
and drove him away; the Hero dived under the sea and Euthymos
married the girl – and later was himself heroised. Importantly, however,
in all such stories the hero in question is, at the end of the tale, neutralised
or placated in some way, and thereby integrated into the society to which
he had been causing harm.75 The same applies to Fontenrose’s four
athlete-heroes; at the end of the tale each is pacified and their destructive
side has been neutralised. The wrath of mythical heroes can follow a
similar pattern of great deeds, offense, damage inflicted upon others of the
same community, reconciliation; Achilleus in the Iliad is a textbook
example.

In the story of the hero at Temesa, who was vanquished by Euthymos,
who later, by his unusual death, became a hero himself, it is not the first,
destructive hero who is the primary focus of the story, but Euthymos.
Clearly the myth has been adapted from folktale; Euthymos fits the
folktale pattern of the hero who slays the sorcerer (characterised by his
destructiveness) and wins the girl.76 The hero who causes all the trouble,

74 Pausanias 6.6.7–10.
75 The same principle can apply to groups of dead as well as individuals; Alan Griffiths
has drawn my attention to Herodotos’ story of the Phokaians enslaved in battle who were
stoned to death by the Agyllans; subsequently every living thing which passed by the spot
was struck by disease, until at the instigation of the Delphic Oracle they formed the
custom of holding a funeral ceremony with games in honour of the dead (Hdt. 1.167).
76 The pattern is further emphasised by the Hero’s namelessness and by the descriptive
character of Euthymos’ name; on the significance of names in folktale, see Introduction.
however, is not just a monster from folktale; his antisocial behaviour is the direct result of the offences done against him by the townspeople. He is emblematic of the destructiveness which may be expected if the proper cult of a hero is neglected. The fact that the townspeople did not know of his status as hero, and were acting out of an understandable desire for revenge the initial wrong which he had done them, does not alter the case; as so often in Greek myth, ignorance is not an excuse. The hero is a hero and therefore must be propitiated with cult, and the story serves as a warning: any hero might act this way, as indeed may any god, whose cult is neglected. The form of the revenge taken by the neglected hero always involves an unselective and usually widespread act of destruction which affects, not only the offender or offenders, but the whole community. This reflects the fact that the hero’s role relates to the whole community, rather than to the individual, even though he might be occasionally swayed by individual requests; therefore, when offended, he will take revenge indiscriminately on any or all members of that community, as if he had no power to distinguish between the individuals of whom the community consists.\(^\text{77}\)

Stories attached to hero-cult also frequently employ the conventions attached to heroic death. Heroes in myth, whether the subjects of cult or not, die violent deaths. Heroes to whom cult is offered also often have violent or unusual deaths attributed to them. Sometimes the key is not their death but their (re)appearance; heroes such as Echetlaios, Phylakos and Oibotas return from the dead to help their countrymen in battle. Alternatively they simply ‘disappear’. Euthymos simply disappeared at the end of his life, as also did Aristeas and Kleomedes – although it is worth noting that Aristeas died (or apparently died) first.\(^\text{78}\) This is a kind of reversed epiphany, the sort of thing to be expected from a god rather than a mortal; rather than appearing, the hero inexplicably disappears. This reflects the idea of the ‘natural’ death, the peaceful and painless death after a long life, relatively rare among heroes of myth, which is here offered as an equivalent to the ‘ideal’ (violent) death of the warrior. Such a disappearance seals the vanisher’s status as heroic: the inhabitants of the

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\(^{77}\) Pausanias adds (6.6.11) a description of the Hero in a painting, which gives him the name Lykas, but Pausanias himself does not use this name when he relates the story.

\(^{78}\) Euthymos: Paus. 6.6.10: ‘I have even heard it said that he reached the furthest point of old age and escaped death and departed from the world of mankind in a different way’.

Aristeas: Hdt. 4.14; in this case the altar is established in the name of Apollo, and it is at Aristeas’ own demand, after his third disappearance. Kleomedes: Paus. 6.9.6–8.
town in which he disappears are then told to offer him cult. Hero-cult is based at the site of the hero’s grave. In the case of a disappearance, there is no grave, and the cult is established near the place where the hero was last seen. Paradoxically, his disappearance from a place seals his attachment to it. A death similarly linked with the divine is that by lightning-bolt: Plutarch tells us that Euripides’ and Lykourgos’ graves were struck by lightning and they were both decreed to have been deified. Here the ‘punishment’ element of death by lightning has been eliminated, and the thunderbolt signifies only apotheosis.

ii. The hero in life and death

Like the sphinx, and like many of the mythical heroes discussed above, the hero to whom a cult is dedicated occupies a liminal position between worlds; he is placed, mythologically as well as in terms of ritual and religion, on the borderline. Indeed, in Lucian’s dialogue, Trophonios appears to be in both places at once. Melanippos, having established that the hero is ‘something neither man nor god, but both at once’, demands of Trophonios, ‘Well, then, where has your divine half gone at present?’ On being told that it is prophesying in Boiotia, the Cynic replies, ‘I don’t know what you mean, Trophonios – but I can see quite clearly that all of you is dead’. The hero exists in a limbo between the world of the dead, in which he belongs by virtue of being himself dead, and the world of the living, in which he has influence and power, and he is bound to both worlds by the existence of his grave-site or bones or other relic.

This liminal status, reflected in ritual, means that the gifts offered to him are often chthonic – black animals instead of white, the head held down instead of tilted back, the need for purification afterwards rather than beforehand, and so forth – but not inevitably; sometimes he is the recipient of offerings given to him as one of the dead, sometimes offerings take the form given to the Olympian gods. This confusion in the hero’s

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79Plut. Lyk. 31; for lightning as a method of apotheosis, see above, Chapter 4.4.
80This liminal status can be extended to topography; he (or more rarely she) often has his shrine on the borders of city territory. The reasons for establishment of hero-cults on the borders of a territory, particularly at vulnerable points, are in part political; see especially Whitley 1988, Snodgrass 1988. But even the politics of territorial and cultural appropriation could not place a hero-cult in a place to which it was not suited; and the nature of the hero makes him particularly appropriate for this role.
81Lucian, Dial. mort. 340.
82See Burkert 1985: 199-200 for the division between ‘Olympian’ and ‘chthonic’ and the differing requirements of sacrifice and ritual in each group; Parker 1983: 39 with n. 25 for
status derives in part simply from the fact that he was once mortal, and is
don't, strictly speaking, mortal any longer. In part, too, the type of sacrifice
must depend upon the individual hero’s circumstances. Therefore
Herakles (for example) can be worshipped as a (chthonic) hero in some
areas and as a god in others; since he was mortal he is a hero and receives
hero-cult, but since he was apotheosised he is also a god, and is able to
receive divine cult as well.

It might be argued that the hero gains his special status by virtue of
having escaped the world of the dead. That is, although he ought to be in
Hades, he has returned to (or failed to leave) the world of the living,
demonstrating an ability to cross the divide between the living and the
dead which weakens the corresponding divide between mortal and
immortal, and allows him, to a degree, to cross that as well. But there are
problems with this argument. The hero is bound, in the world of the
living, to his grave or grave-site, or more specifically to the whereabouts of
his bones. His cult takes place at his tomb, and he is not able to exert
influence for any great distance beyond it. So he is, in effect, still bound
to the underworld, the world of the dead, in that his tomb is a part of that
world, or at least an entrance to it. Heroes to whom cult is addressed have
passed through exactly the kind of transition described by Pseudo-
Epicharmos in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter; their
primary and most important status was, and remains, as a dead man; the
divinity which they possess arises out of this.

The hero’s ambiguous status confers upon him a unique willingness to
use his abilities on behalf of humanity. Farnell has defined seven groups
of heroes; but whatever interest heroes may hold as ‘faded gods’ to
modern scholars, to the Greeks the most important thing about the hero
of cult was that, whatever the precise nature of the status he might hold
now, he had once been mortal. The vital factor is that these heroes were
once men and women; they are, whether mythical or genealogical
ancestors or historical figures, a sort of cultural or community ancestor,
and therefore they are often more intimately part of the community than

purification. See also Rohde 1925: 116f for the view, in accordance with the literary
evidence, that a neat divide can be made between the rituals concerned with the two groups
- the chthonic (including heroes) and the Olympian. This view will not, however, stand up
in the light of the archaeological - and particularly epigraphical - evidence, which
shows a plethora of examples of heroes whose cults are celebrated with ‘Olympian’ ritual;
see especially Nock 1986; also Van Straten 1995: 37, and (on altar types) 165–167.
84 Farnell 1921.
the gods are. The myths attached to their heroisation reflect this close link, and in this they differ from epic and mythical apotheosised heroes, whose myths (at least in their earlier forms) often do not attach them as closely to specific sites. However, the myth and the cult can and often do feed into each other, until it is difficult to tell whether the site of the cult influenced the development of the myth, or the myth propagated the establishment of the cult.85

Another attribute of the hero, by which he is affiliated to the immortals rather than to the dead, is the nature of those actions in which he is able to become engaged. On the whole, he is far more active than the hero (in the Homeric sense of the word) who has undergone apotheosis and become divine, such as the mythically apotheosised Herakles or the Dioskouroi. In such cases, the hero of cult is more active than one might assume from only knowing of his myth. In the case of the Dioskouroi in particular, they are often shown together in art, whereas according to their myth they should have been separate; they are known and called upon as helpful to sailors, whereas according to their myth, after apotheosis, they have no duties or obligations. Hero-cults can also reflect enmities and friendships carried over from the hero’s life. Nonetheless there is a limit to this kind of activity. The hero cannot be proactive; that is, he cannot form a new relationship. He must draw upon the network of friends, enemies, families and obligations established during his life. So the timelessness and inactivity characteristic of the dead bind the heroes also.86 Such relationships may alter; so Odysseus, who stole the Palladion from Troy when he was alive, is to be found guarding it after his death.87 This is not entirely surprising; he is, after all, guarding it for the Greek side, and in accordance with an oracle given when he was still alive. A more striking shift can be found in the remarkable ritual shared between the cults of Amphion and Zethos in Thebes, and Antiope and Phokos at Tithorea in Phokis, in which the Tithoreans attempt to steal Theban earth to place upon their monument, and the Thebans try to stop them.88 Antiope is the mother of Amphion and Zethos, and so such hostility is rather

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85See above, Chapter 4.5 (on Herakles); Chapter 3.2.ii (on the Dioskouroi).
86See above, Chapter 2.3.
87Kearns 1992: 94.
inexplicable; one might have expected a fight between the brothers and their stepmother Dirke.89

The hero, then, receives cult as one whose status is ambivalent between the worlds of the living and the dead. It is precisely this ambivalence, in fact, which gives his cult its importance; he belongs neither to the one world nor to the other, and the only other beings capable of moving between more than one sphere of existence are the immortals.90 Even the gods, however, have no right of entry to the second of the hero's two worlds. The exceptions are, of course, the chthonian gods, the deities of the underworld – most notably Hades, Persephone and Hekate – and Hermes, who has the ability to move between the two worlds.91 The frequent similarity between hero-cult and chthonic ritual has already been noted; but the hero is potentially more active in the world of the living than are the dead. Because of his position in limbo, he can draw upon the characteristic traits of both worlds. He can be called into the world of the living and appear there in the form of the ghostly dead. He can offer the living knowledge, in the form of oracles, of the future; like the gods, he is able to see beyond the limits of the timestream to which mortals are subject. In contrast, as Nock points out, 'gods of the dead as such received little formal worship. They might inspire fear and aversion, but with the exception of the Erinyes and sometimes Hekate, they did not harm the living.'92 The hero, in contrast, has a considerable bent towards destruction if he feels slighted.93 If he is deprived of his due, he will take revenge.

The benefits accruing to hero and his worshipper from such a cult are to a degree similar. Both gain an increase in status; both are bound closer to the community of which both are a part; both are reminded of their mortality (the hero by the nature of the offerings and cult given to him, the worshipper by the action of propitiation, worship, or request of one who is more powerful than he).

In spite of the difficulties of definition posed by the variations in types of immortality in myth, and by the wide range of qualities and characteristics

89Keams 1992: 97. The death of Dirke at the hands of her stepsons was more popular on South Italian vases than Greek ones; see for example Melbourne, Geddes Coll. A5:4, Apulian calyx-krater, Underworld Painter, Trendall RVSIS pl. 211.
90For the implications of movement between the worlds of mortals, immortals and the dead, see above, Chapter 4.1.
91For such gods see below, Chapter 6.3.
92Nock 1986: 592; see also his Appendix 3, pp. 599–601.
93Rohde 1925: 134–136; Farnell 1921.
of the heroes of hero-cult, some distinctions may be drawn between the two groups. The immortality enjoyed by the hero to whom a cult is dedicated does not necessarily conform to the characteristics of the immortality attained by Herakles and offered by the gods to numerous other mythical heroes. In some cases (as in the Dioskouroi) the form of immortality which is implied by their cult and shown in their iconography actually contradicts the form of immortality which they attain in myth. The primary difference is that the hero of hero-cult draws his power, and the degree of immortality which he possesses with it, from the underworld; he is a hero and the object of cult because he is dead. The heroes immortalised in myth, discussed elsewhere in this thesis, are not dead, and do not necessarily have any particular powers; they are given their immortality from the gods, and then adopt an inactive life and are rarely heard from again.
Chapter 6

Afterlifes: Demeter, Kore, Hermes, Dionysos

Immortals are mortal, mortals immortal,
living the others' death, dead in the others' life.¹

'Who knows if death be life, and life be death,' -
And breath be mutton broth, and sleep a sheepskin?²

6.1 Introduction

Few areas of Greek belief are as difficult to assess as beliefs concerning the afterlife. From the topographical details of Hades to the reincarnation of the soul, almost every aspect of eschatological belief is open to debate. The problem becomes all the more acute when the beliefs under consideration are those of the mystery cults, as the evidence is so contradictory, and the recycling of pre-used material in a new context is so common – and, like Dionysos’ comment quoted above, often leads (in modern minds) only to confusion. This section aims to consider how myths and texts employed within Eleusinian, Orphic and Dionysiac contexts adopted and adapted motifs linked with immortality from the ‘mainstream’ Greek corpus and utilised these (whether deliberately or not) in eschatological texts to reinforce the initiates’ perception of their lives and of the fate of their souls in the afterlife as superior and in some way partaking in the divine.

It has been shown that immortality in the Archaic period was conceived of in a physical and concrete way, but that the physical aspect of objects or substances which conferred immortality was offset by a process of making immortality inaccessible.³ The result is to make immortality both theoretically tangible and actually abstract. The range of motifs utilised to this end are, at one and the same time, real and concrete objects and uncontrollable or unattainable materials. The Orphic and Dionysiac eschatologies similarly exploited the tension between theoretically tangible objects and their actual intangibility. However, rather than subjecting a tangible substance (food, drink) to a mythologising process which ends in

¹Herakleitos fr. B 62.
²Ar. Frogs 1477-1478.
³See above, Chapter 4.6.
its becoming a non-physical substance with no existence in the real world (nektar, ambrosia), the process is reversed. The intangible substance which is the source of apotheosis is rendered accessible to the initiate, who, by a process of projecting him- or herself onto a mythical persona, can lay claim to the apotheosis (or its equivalent) signified by the mythical object. In short, he or she can move beyond what would normally constitute the limits of the human sphere, by assimilation into the mythical world where such limits (although they may still exist) can be overcome. Such an assimilation takes place by the adaptation of mythic motifs to the initiate’s own circumstances. In what follows I consider some of the ways in which mystery cults utilised myths to ratify their views of the human fate after death, and the ways in which ‘mainstream’ myths and mythic motifs were adapted to provide a sound aetiological base for cult practice and belief. I will look first at the Homeric Hymn to Demeter and its relationship to Eleusinian eschatology, then at Orphic and Dionysiac eschatologies and their use of myth.

6.2 The Homeric Hymn to Demeter and the Eleusinian Mysteries

We have seen that the attempt on the part of mortals to gain immortality, or the attempt on the part of immortals to bestow it, are transgressive actions which endanger the boundaries between humanity and divinity, living and dead.4 It is this transgressive aspect which causes the failure of such attempts. Yet within the framework of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter it is this transgression which motivates the establishment of the mysteries. The eschatological aspect of the mysteries, as well as their establishment, are based on, and initiated by, Demeter’s approach to the experience of the human condition of loss of a loved one (which prompts her to attempt the immortalisation of Demophon) and Persephone’s approach to the experience of death.

As they are goddesses, Persephone cannot die, and Demeter cannot lose her irrevocably to death, in the sense that a human parent can lose a human child. But Demeter’s experience of loss is as close as an immortal can get. Persephone actually lives the theme of the ‘marriage with death’ which is found on later gravestones and in tragedy.5 Persephone is held in Hades, in the world of death; she is isolated, unable to contact her

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4See above, Chapter 4.1.
mother in any way. To all intents and purposes, she is lost to the world of the Olympians, her family. She cannot leave Hades, and, as it is the world of the dead, they cannot enter it. In the version of the myth presented by the Hymn, no god can enter Hades. Demeter and her daughter are therefore completely cut off from each other.

That the break is absolute is made clear by Demeter’s actions. She begins by searching for her daughter:

> Sharp grief seized her heart, and she tore the veil on her ambrosial hair with her own hands.
> She cast a dark cloak on her shoulders and sped like a bird over dry land and sea, searching.

As powerful a goddess as she is, she is unable to find any trace of Persephone. However, after Hekate and Helios between them have told her where her daughter is, Demeter gives up her search; she knows that there is no longer any purpose in pursuing it, as her daughter is inaccessible. Accordingly, for the whole central part of the poem from vv. 90 to 302, it seems that she is on a tangential course of action that bears no relation to her daughter’s return.

Demeter’s descent to earth, her disguise and her assimilation into a mortal family, reflect the human process of grieving. Like a human mourner, she is cut off from the community in which she belongs by the intensity of her grief and her identification with her lost relative. The closest she can come to her daughter’s ‘death’ is the renunciation of her own divine status. She appears not only as a mortal but as an old woman;

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6Foley 1994: 88. For gods’ avoidance of death, see (for example) Eur. Alc. 22ff. Apollo departs the house before Alkestis dies; Eur. Hipp. 1437, Artemis must leave her favourite Hippolytos as his death draws near. See Foley 1994:88 n. 25, however, for later versions in which Demeter does go down to Hades’ realm in search of her daughter. Servius on Virgil Georg. 1.39 has Demeter go down because Persephone does not wish to come up.

7H. Dem. 40-44.

8 For the rite of passage which a human mourner goes through, see Morris 1987: 32ff. The emphasis laid upon the waywardness of the gods, when Metaneira welcomes her (216–217: ‘we mortals bear perforce what the gods send us, though we be grieved; for a yoke is set on our necks’; cf. her daughters’ comments at 147–148), is also an appropriate consolation to her as one who has suffered some unhappiness – although there is a certain irony in this as well. This may be a conventional opening gambit for those who have had bad luck (see Richardson 1974 ad loc.), but it is notable that both the daughters and Metaneira use it, and at some length. It is familiar wisdom to humans, but surely the emphasis laid upon it here stresses that it is not a familiar theme to Demeter – she is, after all, a goddess, and the motif gains ironic effect both from our knowledge of this and of the fact that Demeter is indeed helpless against the will of a god – in this case, Zeus.
she sheds one of the most important attributes of the gods, their agelessness and vitality, and makes herself seem old and infirm, like a very old woman cut off from childbirth and the gifts of garland-loving Aphrodite.\(^9\)

She cannot take on mortality, but she takes on its aspect. Then, having made herself as near mortal as a goddess can get, she attempts to do the reverse and to make Demophon immortal.

The attempt to make Demophon immortal is thus balanced by her attempt to suppress her own immortal status. Both of these actions are in direct opposition to the laws which govern the universe and keep divine order. Since Demeter, by her own choice, seems to be diminishing in power, the effect is of a transference of her immortality to Demophon. It is possible (as we have seen in the cases of the Dioskouroi and of Herakles and Cheiron) to shift one portion of immortality from one entity to another. But, although these are immortals, they are not of the same status; Demeter is a goddess, not just a semi-divine being but an Olympian with all the additional power and prestige which that implies. The size of the divide is emphasised by its topographical distance. Cheiron and Polydeukes were both creatures of the Earth; they dwelt in the mortal sphere, although not mortal themselves. But Demeter’s rightful place is on Olympos, and the gap between herself and Demophon is too large to admit of any transference of immortality. However successfully the process seems to be going, it is inevitably doomed to failure, because it trangresses against the order of the universe.

Demophon is to become a substitute: a young god to compensate for Demeter’s lost daughter. When Demeter took over his care, ‘he grew like a divinity’ on the divine diet which she gave him; his parents wondered ‘as he grew miraculously fast; he was like the gods’.\(^10\) The gods grow with the same miraculous speed.\(^11\) However, by this action she would rob Metaneira of her son as surely as Hades has robbed Demeter herself of her daughter; she would remove the only son, the ‘late-born child, much prayed for and cherished’ to another sphere, and his parents would lose him.\(^12\) Death is signified by the breaking of family ties; the breaking of the link between Demeter and Persephone has led Demeter to break her ties to her wider family – the Olympians – and will now lead her to disrupt the

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\(^{10}\)H. Dem. 235, 241.
\(^{11}\)Cf. H. Delian Apollo 123ff, H. Hermes 17ff; see above, Chapter 2.3.
\(^{12}\)H. Dem. 165.
mortal family into which she has been integrated. So Persephone's movement towards death, and Demeter's own movement towards mortality, would be countered by Demophon's movement away from mortality; but the effect of such a movement would still be the destruction of the family unit. At this point Metaneira intervenes. In the Hymn to Demeter, the result of this intervention is beneficial; Metaneira does not 'lose' her child, and Demeter, in revealing herself, is forced to enter on the course of action which will bring her to return to her proper place, and which will restore her daughter to her. The action of immortalising Demophon is an inversion of the rape of Persephone, which also runs contrary to the order of the universe; a divinity cannot enter the underworld - with the exception of Hermes. Just as Demeter's action is an attempt to compensate for Hades' action, so the failure of her attempt initiates the failure of his. Both, however, will compromise; Demeter cannot immortalise Demophon, but he will be honoured, and she will get her daughter back; Hades cannot keep Persephone permanently in the underworld, but she will stay for a part of the year.

In other versions of the myth, however, the ties are irreversibly broken; sometimes Demophon dies when Metaneira intervenes, and sometimes Persephone is less reluctant to stay in Hades - in one version, in fact, she refuses to leave. The Hymn, by allowing that the family unit will not be irretrievably shattered, gives a motivation to the founding of the mysteries which would not otherwise be there: Demeter's meeting with Kore at Eleusis is the mythical disguise of what happened at the mysteries. According to Apollodoros, 'the mystes sees Kore, who is called up by the hierophant by strokes of a gong; as the underworld opens up, terror gives way to the joy of reunion'.

The relationship between the Hymn and the Eleusinian mysteries is controversial. The Demophon episode in particular offers problems. The chance of immortality which Demeter offers to Demophon has been likened to the promises of a better afterlife which the mysteries offered to their initiates. However, there are problems with this. The

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13 See below, Chapter 6.3.
14 Servius on Virgil Georg. 1.39.
16 FGrHist 244 F 10; Burkert 1985: 288; 1983: 286.
17 See Clinton 1992 for the view that the Homeric Hymn to Demeter does not relate to the Eleusian Mysteries, but to the Thesmophoria; for a review see Hamilton 1993.
18 Picard 1933.
immortality which Demophon is offered is not related to the afterlife. The substitute offered him when the attempt fails is of 'unfailing honour forever' (τιμή δ' ἀφθινος) and the establishment of the Βαλληντός – a ritual mock battle in honour of Demophon – neither of which imply anything about Demophon's fate after death. Certainly Demophon himself is left literally inconsolable at the loss of Demeter's nursing – with its consequent loss of immortality. In fact, the story follows the lines of the common motif of the loss of immortality for mankind through the stupidity of one individual. Its most important element is the failure of immortality for Demophon, which does not seem a suitable model for the Eleusinian afterlife. Hippolytus gives the information, culled from a Gnostic writer of the 'Snake Sect', that at the climax of the rite 'the hierophant, at night at Eleusis, celebrating the great and unspeakable mysteries beneath a great fire (ὑπὸ πολλῶν πυρῶν), cries aloud, saying: 'The Lady has borne a sacred son, Brimo has borne Brimos'. Picard has suggested that this reflects the Demophon episode, and that the immortalisation of Demophon, hidden πυρὶ ἐν πολλῶν, signified the immortalisation of the initiate. However, this is not tenable; the 'great fire' is likely to represent a blaze of torches, not an equivalent to the fire at Metaneira's hearth. The mysteries show humans how to gain the favour of the goddesses, by the appropriate rites and sacrifices, as Keleos, Metaneira, and the Eleusinians do in the Hymn.

The Demophon episode, however, does provide the crucial motivation for Demeter to move back towards her own sphere. She leaves the house of mortals, shedding her disguise and her assumed old age, and takes up residence in her temple. It is only at this point, as she moves back towards her own kind and as she assumes her powers again in order to cause the famine, that she is able to compel Zeus to return Persephone to her, and then give the Eleusinians their cult. What is found in the rites is

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20 H. Dem. 263–267; see Richardson 1974: 245ff ad 265–7. In those versions of the myth in which Demophon dies, the Βαλληντός may reflect his status as the same kind of child-hero in whose honour other Greek games were celebrated (e.g. Archemoros, Melikertes).

21 See Davies 1987.

22 Hippol. Ref. 5.8.40, 39; tr. from Burkert 1987: 91.

23 H. Dem. 248.

24 Richardson 1974: 26–29, 233. The Demophon story may be reflected in the preliminary ritual to the rite rather than in the central mysteries. This is more probable, as one would otherwise expect it to have been blanketed by the absolute secrecy which surrounds the central mysteries. A more probable hypothesis is that the child is Ploutos; see Richardson 1974: 318.

25 H. Dem. 292–304; cf. 188–211.
testimony to the identification of the 'holy child' with the great light which blazed out at the climax of the mysteries. This blaze of light, traditionally part of the epiphany of a deity, is contrasted with the darkness of ignorance which is the normal state of mankind, and which lost Demophon his chance of immortality in the Hymn. The Demophon story, then, demonstrates not the immortalisation of the initiate but the darkness of human ignorance; but it also shows that it can be ameliorated. The darkness is also the grief of Demeter, when she wrapped herself in mortal disguise and mourned her daughter, and the light is the return of the lost Persephone and the joy of reunion; loss and the return to life, the death of the initiate and the passage to a better world. Demeter's power can be used for good or evil, death by famine or salvation by immortalising; the mysteries celebrate the fact that she will choose to use her power, as will her daughter, to benefit mankind.

6.3 Dionysos and Hermes

The essential background for an understanding of the Dionysiac and Orphic eschatologies lies in the 'traditional' or 'mainstream' Greek concepts of the afterlife. These have been extensively discussed elsewhere, and there is no need to reiterate in detail here. Archaic myths in which mortals seek to escape death, and those dealing with the so-called 'Harrowing of Hell', have been discussed above. A category of boundary-crossing which has not been considered, however, is that group of myths dealing with gods who may enter Hades.

Gods and goddesses, as a general rule, may not enter Hades. This is nowhere specifically stated, but it is implicit in the repeated assertions that death is hated by even the gods, and in myths such as that of Demeter and Persephone. It is also clear from vase-paintings. No gods except Hades, Persephone and Hermes are ever seen in the underworld. Athene has been considered to be an exception to this rule, on the grounds that she is often shown accompanying Herakles on the twelfth Labour, to fetch

26 Richardson 1974: 28; Pindar Ol. 2.53ff. As Richardson points out, this passage may reflect other beliefs, but even so the symbolism could be derived from this source.
27 Epiphany: H. Dem. 276; see Richardson 1974: 252 on vv. 275ff.
29 Rohde 1925 passim, especially chapters 1–2; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995: 10–107, 303–361; Brandon 1967: 76–97; Vermeule 1979 passim.
30 See above, Chapter 2.1–2.
Kerberos from Hades. Simon suggests that she does not, in fact, enter Hades; since Kerberos guards the gateway, Athena need not enter further in than this. Against this argument, McNiven offers an early vase on which she stands with Hades and Persephone under their roof (probably that of the gate, rather than of the palace) while Herakles and Kerberos are outside. However, a look at the vase shows that she is not inside the gate, she is outside it, with Herakles and Kerberos: her head is outlined against the outside of the roof. She has gone just as far as she can, and no further. McNiven also cites her complaint in the *Iliad* when Zeus will not allow her to enter the battle, that Herakles would never 'have got clear of the steep-dripping Stygian water' without her help. However, he is perhaps reading too much into the text: the topography of Hades is notoriously difficult to pin down.

More problematic is the depiction of Athena in the notorious painting on the obverse of the Niobid Painter's name-vase. The vase is problematic in that about half of the heroes are not securely identifiable, and therefore neither is the scene. McNiven has argued persuasively that it shows Odysseus' journey to the underworld. If this is the case, then it would seem that Athene is, for once, undeniably in the underworld, as McNiven argues. But in fact she is, once again, deliberately placed on the threshold, as a closer look at the vase will show. The key lies with the warrior half-hidden behind the rock at the top left, with his back turned. McNiven identifies this man as one of Odysseus' crew, isolated from the

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31McNiven 1989: 195–196. Robertson, discussing the Niobid Krater (see below) also objects that Athena should not enter Hades, but then adds that she has already come down in many archaic vase-paintings, with Herakles, to fetch Kerberos (1992: 182).

32Simon 1963: 46f. Cf. for example Hes. *Th.* 769–772, in which Kerberos welcomes and fawns upon all those who go in, but refuses to let them out again.

33Altenburg 233, Attic red-figure cup; early fifth century; *ARV* 2 137.1: Aktorione Painter; CVA Altenburg 2 pl. 67.2.


35FIG. 36: Paris, Louvre G 341, Attic red-figure calyx krater from Orvieto, 460–450 BC; *ARV* 2 601.22 (Niobid Painter); *Para* 395; *Add* 2 266; McNiven 1969 pl. 2a; Simon 1963 pl. 8.

36McNiven 1989. His identifications are as follows, from left to right: Polydeukes at far left; Aias, with his back turned to the rest of the scene; Eurylochos (?) behind the hill; Athene; Achilleus, in armour; Herakles; below him Theseus reclining and Peirithoos seated; Patroklos, nude; Odysseus wearing a petasos; Kastor with the horse. Contrast Simon 1963 (expanding on Six 1919: 133) whose suggestion that this vase depicts Herakles' rescue of Theseus from Hades is widely accepted; cf. Barron 1972: 42–43, Robertson 1992: 181–182, both of whom agree with Simon's interpretation of the scene. Simon suggests that the vase is a copy of a mural on the wall of the Heroon of Theseus and Peirithoos at Kolonos Hippios, but Barron's argument that it decorated one wall of the Theseion in Athens is far more convincing (Barron 1972: 43–44; Six 1919 made the same proposition, albeit on far more slender evidence).
rest because he is neither dead nor a hero under divine protection. The crew of the hero’s ship assisted him with the sacrifices at the pit, but did not accompany him further. Moreover, it is clear that there is some confusion in the text as to whether the dead came to Odysseus at the pit, or Odysseus went to the dead in Hades; although it seems at first that he will stay by the pit, later he is found to be wandering among those, such as Tantalos and Sisyphos, who are clearly unable to come to him. This confusion, or conflation, of scenes is echoed on this vase. Some – Herakles, Achilleus – come up to meet him; the same clearly cannot be said of Theseus and Peirithoos, unable to pull away from the rocks. Odysseus stands with one foot on higher ground, in a position which denotes the attention he is paying to the famous dead around him. Athene stands watching over him – stands at the entrance to Hades, next to the rock, behind which stands Odysseus’ crew-member, illustrating by his presence where the way out is to be found. This vase, then, cannot be taken as evidence for Athene’s ability to enter the underworld. She can come no further than the threshold; and to judge by her complaints to Zeus, that is more than far enough.

The most important of those figures who can go back and forth is that of Hermes. He is the only god who not only can freely enter both Hades and Olympos, but also frequently does so. One of his functions is to act as psychopompos, the escort of the dead. This function appears first at the (possibly interpolated) end of the Odyssey, as he brings the dead suitors down to the underworld. However, he does not reappear in the role until Aischylos. So whether this role was a new departure on the part of the poet of the Odyssey, or an inherent part of his character before that, is not clear. Certainly he has access to the underworld, though not necessarily as an escorter of dead souls, from a fairly early date. In the Odyssey he is also named as one of the two gods who helped Herakles to descend into the house of Hades in search of Kerberos; the other is Athene. This is more a part of his function as messenger or escort of the gods; as such, by definition, he can go anywhere. But he is specifically designated as the gods’ messenger to Hades at the end of the Homeric

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39Od. 24.1-10; for the possibility that it is an interpolation, see Russo et al. 1992: 356–358.
41Od. 11.625–626; cf. Soph. Aias 831–832.
Hymn to Hermes. It is probably in this role as psychopompos that he appears on the krater in New York, as the central figure supervising the disposal of the body of Sarpedon by Hypnos and Thanatos. As Gantz points out, since Hypnos and Thanatos are here disposing of the body, it must be that Hermes is responsible for the psyche, so this too reflects his role of psychopompos. This is also seen in the kerostasia depicted in the vase-paintings showing the fight between Achilleus and Memnon, where Hermes holds the scales. And he is frequently seen escorting or awaiting the dead soul on Attic white-ground funerary lekythoi. It is not until the fifth century that this function of the god became common, as the transition between life and death became more elaborate, reflecting an increased level of anxiety about individual death and transition to the underworld. This same anxiety encouraged the development of eschatologies, such as the Dionysiac and Eleusinian ones, which gave more weight to individual afterlife.

Hermes is ubiquitous on Greek vases; he appears overseeing every aspect of Greek mythical existence. Siebert notes the special familiarity which exists between Dionysos and Hermes in artistic representations; 'l’un et l’autre dieux «extérieurs», amis de la vie et de la joie de vivre'. The Dionysiac side of Hermes' nature, as Siebert points out, is superbly illustrated by the Berlin Painter’s name vase, which shows Hermes and Silenos. He also commonly accompanies Dionysos in the thiasos,

42H. Hermes 572.
44Gantz 1993: 108.
45Kerostasia: for example London, BM B639, Attic black-figure lekythos; from Capua, 500-490 B.C.; ABL 227-28 pl. 36.1 (Sappho Painter); CB 45 no. 3; Rome, Villa Giulia 57912, Attic red-figure cup; from Cerveteri, 520-510 B.C.; AR V2 72.24 (Epiketos); CB 45 no. 5; LIMC Achilleus 804*; Boston, MFA 10.177, Attic red-figure stamnos; from Cumae, c. 480; AR V2 518.1 (Syracuse Painter); CB 44-46 pl. 83; LIMC Achilleus 800*.
46Attic white-ground lekythos: for example Berlin, Charlottenburg F2455, Athens, early third quarter of the fifth century; AR V2 846.196 (Sabouroff Painter), Para 323, Add2 145; LIMC Charon I 7a*; Munich, Antikenlsg. 2777 (J 209), Athens, third quarter of the fifth century; AR V2 1228.11 (Thanatos Painter), Add2 174; LIMC Charon I 10*; Munich, Mus. Ant. Kl. 2797, Oropos, 440-430 B.C.; AR V2 1022.138 (Phiale Painter), Para 441; Simon and Hirmer 1981 pll. XLVI, XLVII.
48Siebert 1990: 373.
49Berlin, Staatl. Mus. F2160, Attic red-figure amphora; from Vulci, c. 490 B.C.; AR V2 196.1 (Berlin Painter; ‘Hermes and a saty'); Simon and Hirmer 1981 pl. 136-139; LIMC Hermes 656 bis*; Beazley 1930: pll. 1-3, 22.2. Hermes holds a kantharos in his left hand, and an oinochoe in his right; in front of him stands Silenos (?) with a lyre.
especially in black-figure ware. His affiliation with Dionysos is not surprising; these two deities, more than any others, are concerned with the 'other', with the aspects of life and human nature which fall outside of, or are antithetical to, the normal functioning of society. Dionysos is the god who takes men and women out of themselves, out of their normal lives and identities, patron of wine, theatre and madness. His festivals are all concerned with a dissolution or inversion of social order. The Agronia reverses male and female roles; the Anthesteria calls forth the dead; the two Naxian Ariadne festivals were celebrated, one with revelry, the other with lamentation. The key word is 'normal'; both of these gods transgress such norms. Hermes, as a god whose function is the passage across boundaries and limits, mortal and immortal as well as geographical, is also the god of those things which cross such limits – including chance – and of those humans who venture, or live, outside of them; thieves, and also merchants and messengers, who spend time outside of the physical, cultural and societal limits which define the norms of any given society. Hence he is often seen aiding or simply escorting those heroes who must move out of the Greek centre of the world and into the unpredictable foreign lands around it. And both have chthonic aspects; both exert a measure of control over the borders between life and death. Hermes escorts the dead to the underworld, and is one of only a handful of gods who can enter there. Dionysos' link to death runs as a dark undercurrent through his rituals and myths. The frenzy which the god evokes often ends in bloodshed in the myths which elaborate his rituals. The daughters of Minyas in Orchomenos, Agaue and Pentheus in Thebes, Ikarios to whom the god first gave the secret of wine: all of these meet their deaths through the madness which Dionysos causes and symbolises. Moreover, he is the god of epiphany par excellence, the god who arrives from foreign lands, blurring the borders between the known and the unfamiliar. This link with the unknown and ability to invert normality are applied also in an eschatological context; there is no greater unknown nor more powerful inversion than death, and Dionysos' control over such reversals and limits is extended to include a measure of control over death.

50 LIMC 650-655; other gods are to be found in the thiasos also, but not as often.
52 He is seen particularly often with Herakles and Theseus; LIMC Hermes 481-492 (Perseus); 497-568 (Herakles).
Archaic vase iconography also shows the link, through the use of the frontal face. In the archaic period, the frontal face is to be found only rarely, and when it does occur it is striking, with a tendency to catch the eye of the viewer, even if the frontally-faced figure does not happen to be one who would normally be a primary focus. Korshak describes the frontal face as 'a kind of reminder of the outer edges of experience where the idea of the willed intelligent act loses significance, and nature takes controlling hold'. She divides such depictions into two groups – one group is of combat victims and losing athletes; the other is of satyrs, komasts and symposiasts – and the link which she finds between them is the face of the Gorgon, the only being who always appears frontally. The frontal face in the archaic period, however, can be traced back to the frontally-faced panthers, owls, lions and sirens; precisely those beings, in fact, which were associated with death in Minoan and Mycenean artistic contexts. The connection with death persists in the frontal faces of dying warriors, as well as in the face of the Gorgon. What the dying warrior has in common with the drunken komast is a state of being: they share a loss of control, a loss of self-identity and a loss of consciousness of the surrounding world. Death – or rather, not death itself but the moment of dying, the borderline between life and death – and drunkenness can be described using the same terms. And this lack of control, this failure of one's normal capacity to comprehend the character of the physical world, is very much the province of Dionysos.

It is this tenuous link between the liminality which is a characteristic of Dionysos and the liminality which appertains to death which emerges as a far stronger link in the context of Dionysiac eschatology. 'Now you have died and now you have come into being, o thrice happy one, on this same day', say the gold leaves from Pelinna; 'Tell Persephone that Bakkhios himself has set you free'. At some point, then, Dionysos' role has

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54 For example Eurytion fallen behind Herakles and Geryon as they fight: Attic black-figure amphora, London, BM B 194, from Vulci, 540–535 BC; ABV 136.56 (Group E); Para 55; Korshak 1987: cat. no. FF144, fig. 27.
55 Korshak 1987: 43.
56 Korshak 1987: 43; the Gorgon is 'connected with the satyr-group through the image of the mask, and with the victim-group through the representation of defeat'.
58 E.g. 'limb-loosening', LSJ s.v. λυσίμελής (also applied to other control-eroding influences such as sleep and love).
shifted. In the gold leaves, he appears as a source of hope for an afterlife. Dionysos who, in his festivals, sets his followers free of the need to obey social order, here is seen as the god who releases the devotees of the Dionysiac mysteries from the need to follow the cosmic order of life to death.

The role that the god is called upon to play in this context is not completely new; his apparent shift in function is the result of a shift in focus onto one aspect of his personality. Bremmer sums up Dionysos’ position in Greek society: ‘society cannot live without a temporary relaxation of the social order, but order has to be restored’. The brief release from societal constraint makes those same constraints all the more effective when they are reapplied, as is clear (for example) from the story of Pentheus, which expresses in mythical form the same belief that underlies the Dionysiac festivals. So the focus of the more ‘conventional’ depiction (if such a word may be used of such a god) of Dionysos is on the restoration of order as much as on the necessity of disorder. The focus of the Orphic depiction of Dionysos, as far as it can be reconstructed, is on the release from limits – ‘Διόνυσος Αυτος’ – rather than on the ultimate strengthening of them, and the context has shifted from societal restrictions to the restriction of mortality. In the eschatology described on the gold leaves, the hint of freedom from such mortality which is barely visible in the character of the ‘conventional’ Dionysos is brought out into the open and expressed through two of the most prominent aspects of his ‘conventional’ personality: his role as liberator and his articulation of liminal situations.

6.4 Dionysiacs and Orphics

i. Texts: gold leaves, bone tablets

Before considering Dionysos’ role in Orphic eschatology, a brief definition of my use of the word ‘Orphic’, and an even briefer summary of evidence for eschatology, is in order. As West notes, it is impossible to speak of ‘the Orphics’ in any general way; ‘it is a fallacy to suppose that all “Orphic” poems and rituals are related to each other or that they are all to be interpreted as different manifestations of a single religious

\[^{1}\text{Bremmer 1994: 20.}\]
\[^{2}\text{Olympiodoros OF 232.}\]
movement.\(^3\) Dionysiac mysteries are better documented – although much the same caveats apply – and lately a great deal of progress has been made in understanding their eschatology, as new evidence comes to light, and especially since the discovery of the gold leaves from Hipponion and Pelinna and the Olbian bone tablets. However the relationship between the two is still far from clear, to say the least.

The group of three bone tablets discovered at Olbia in 1951 (and finally published in 1978) have demonstrated that Dionysiac and Orphic cult were related, here at least, if not elsewhere, and that this link extends into the field of eschatology.\(^4\) As West points out, the tablets offer two alternatives.\(^5\) Either death is regarded as a transition between two lives, or mortal life is itself a transition, a kind of death, between two stages of a higher state of existence. Whatever else they did or did not hold in common, then, both Orphism and Dionysiac mysteries offered a hope of another life to come, and the beliefs were similar enough for the two cults to become assimilated in at least one cult centre.

Much of our knowledge of Dionysiac eschatology is derived from the gold lamellae found throughout Magna Graecia, and mostly dated to the fourth to second centuries B.C. Zuntz divided them principally into three groups, and these categories are still largely followed.\(^6\) Group A tablets are

\(^3\)West 1983: 3. He adds, 'As for “Orphism”, the only definite meaning that can be given to the term is “the fashion for claiming Orpheus as an authority”. The history of Orphism is the history of that fashion.'

\(^4\)FIG. 53. They read as follows:

3. Dio(nysos) © — Truth. — (illegible word) . . . soul. — A.

Translation by West 1983: 17; see 17–19 for text and comment. See also West 1982. Such bone tablets have been found in numbers in Olbia, but are often blank.


\(^6\)Zuntz 1971: 277–393; Cole 1980: 223–224. The table at the end of this chapter summarises the contents of the Group A and B lamellae; for details of burial types and metre, see the table in Graf 1993: 257–258, on which mine is loosely based. I follow Graf in marking with an asterisk (*) those tablets not numbered in Zuntz 1971, which is still the most recent and complete edition and commentary. For the tablets published since then see as follows: B*9, from Thessaly, now in the Getty Museum: Merkelbach 1977; B*10, from Hipponion: Cole 1980 (text and discussion; see 223 n. 3 for further bibliography); Zuntz 1976; between the groups, from Pelinna: Graf 1993; Segal 1990; Luppe 1989; Merkelbach 1989; Gigante 1990. In addition Catling 1988–89: 93 reports, in a brief list of finds from cist graves in a hellenistic cemetery at Sourada in Lesbos, ‘an inscribed gold sheet with an Orphic text’ (no further detail given). Finally, and most recently, two leaves from Pella: Dickie 1995. See Janko 1984 for an attempt to create an archetype of the leaves. The third type comprises only one tablet, C. The text inscribed on it is not directly related to the others, although it was found at Thurii folded around the text A4. Zuntz notes that ‘a text more corrupt than this will not easily be found’ (1971: 345); it seems to contain an invocation Demeter by Kore, after her abduction. Zuntz suggests (353) that, if this is the case, then the dead man with
mostly written in the first person, and give the words spoken by the soul as it arrives in the underworld.\(^7\) ‘Direction, comfort, and a strengthening for the departing soul; this is the essence of these documents.’\(^6\) Group B is more explicit than Group A in its differentiation between an enjoyable and an unpleasant underworld, although Group A does not exclude this possibility; in fact it is implied by the soul’s appeal to Persephone. The B texts, rather than setting out the soul’s claim to admittance (as the A texts do), consist of instructions to the dead, in the second person singular, as to how to reach their goal, to which the soul responds in the first person. There are also two gold leaves made in the shape of ivy leaves, both found at Pelinna, which bridge the gap between the two groups, and are composed of both instruction to the soul and acclamation. Like the Hipponion tablet, they have explicitly Dionysiac terminology; this much is clear, although their meaning is not.

The religious context (or contexts) into which these lamellae should be placed was much debated. Appearing as they did when the tendency was to call everything Orphic, this was their first designation; subsequently Zuntz argued persuasively for their being Pythagorean.\(^9\) Subsequent publication of the tablet from Hipponion linked the series to Dionysiac mysteries.\(^10\) Then the evidence of the three bone tablets from Olbia linked Dionysiac rites to the Orphies. It is possible that it was only in Olbia that the two came to be integrated so closely; but it seems more probable that

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whom it was buried is ‘finding the divine type of his fate in the horror of Kore’s descent’; like Kore, he hopes to be returned to life – cf. the promise of apotheosis on A4. See Zuntz 1971: 344–354 for text and discussion.

\(^7\)Group A comprises five lamellae; four are from Thurii, and date from the fourth century B.C., but A5 is a late (and degenerate) copy from Rome from the second century A.D. A1, A2, and A3 are closely interrelated; A4 differs but follows the same theme. Group B is larger and more diffuse, and has of late received more attention, as recent finds fit into this group. It consists of ten lamellae. B1 and B2 contain basically the same text, although with considerable variations in detail. B3-B8 are all identical (scribal errors aside), a distillation of the same text’s most essential lines; B9 is the same, with the addition of an extra line from B1. B*10, the leaf from Hipponion, is similar in content to B1 and B2, but two extra lines are added on to the end of it, promising the bearer that he (or she) will tread the path with the other μυσται and βαχχοι.

\(^6\)Zuntz 1971: 335.


\(^10\)That the Hipponion tablet is related to Dionysiac mysteries was not immediately accepted by all scholars. Zuntz (1976: 147–48) maintained that the Hipponion tablet, as well as those lamellae published earlier (see 1971: 338–39, 364–67, 383–85), was neither Orphic nor Dionysiac, but Pythagorean, and that the last two lines were an idiosyncratic addition reflecting the owner’s personal religious beliefs. West (1975: 234–235) suggested that the tablet had nothing to do with Dionysos on the grounds that the term βαχχος may not be associated with the god until the fourth century. Cole gives a summary of different views on the tablets and a refutation of West (1980: 226–231).
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they were linked, or at least that they shared similar beliefs, elsewhere. The gold lamellae from Pelinna, combining as they do the terminology of Dionysiac cult with elements of Orphic eschatology, and containing verses and motifs from both A and B texts, increase the probability that such a combination of Dionysiac and Orphic was found throughout the Greek world.11 In what follows, I will be using the terms 'Dionysiac' and 'Orphic' interchangeably, not because I think they are the same, but because I think, in this area at least, they are indistinguishable.

ii. Myth: Dionysos, soot and lightning

Dionysos

The chthonic Dionysos' links with the underworld and Orphic eschatology are emphasised through changes in his relationships with other divinities, as described in Orphic theogonies; in particular by the depiction of the god as son of Persephone (or Kore). The myth of Dionysos, as it was told in the Rhapsodic Theogony, and earlier in the (lost) Eudeman Theogony, runs as follows.12 Dionysos is the son of Zeus by his daughter Kore, whom he mated in the form of a snake. He is guarded by the dancing Kouretes, as Zeus was, and when he is five years of age Zeus sets him on the throne and declares him to be the new king. But the Titans whiten their faces with gypsum and tempt the young god away with a mirror, the apples of the Hesperides, a ball, a bull-roarer, and various other things.13 They then cut him into seven pieces which they boil, roast, and eat.14 Athena, however, saves the still living heart and

11Segal 1990: 412.
12West 1983: 140; see 68-75 for a brief summary of the various Orphic theogonies and a reconstruction of their contents. He dates the Eudeman Theogony to the last third of the fifth century BC(West 1983: 174). The myth itself may be older. See West 1983: 74 for source-references. Linforth 1941: 356-357 comments on this myth that it has attracted a disproportionate share of attention, and that it is only one of many myths which the Orphies used, adopted, adapted or invented. It should not, he complains, be regarded as 'the very core and centre of Orphic doctrine'. In what follows, it should be remembered that it is not the only myth reflected in this eschatology. However, the fact remains that it derives particular interest from its content, for it includes an anthropogony, which is not only rare among Orphic texts but also in the context of Greek mythology as a whole. For evidence on Greek anthropogonies: see West 1983: 165 n. 88; Zuntz 365.
13West 1983: 155-159 discusses the various articles and concludes that, while they are all linked with Dionysiac ritual, they are a miscellany of sacred objects and have no one common role in the ritual.
14On the significance of boiling before roasting see Detienne 1979: Ch. 4, who argues that the reversal of the usual order (which is roasting then boiling) lies at the heart of a myth designed to prevent the continual oscillation of Dionysos between the two poles of savagery.
takes it to Zeus. The gods mourn. Zeus blasts the Titans with a thunderbolt, and mankind is created from the residual soot contained in the smoke. The remains of Dionysos are buried at Delphi by Apollo, and a new Dionysos is created from the heart.15

The Orphic version of the myth, in which only Dionysos is named, is not easy to date.16 There is no indisputable pre-Hellenistic evidence for it. But there are a series of more or less persuasive hints and possibilities.17 The earliest (and perhaps the most likely) is the mention in a fragment of a threnos by Pindar of Persephone's demand for requital of her 'ancient grief'; this is very likely to refer to the death of her son Dionysos.18 If so, it means that the myth was well known enough at the time, at least to the person for whom the poem was intended, for such an oblique mention to be sufficient – or alternatively that the myth was given in the poem.

Kore, in this myth, is placed in the same situation as Demeter was in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter discussed above. Here it is Kore who loses her child to death, and must mourn for him. Kore's response to the death of her son is lost; but we might tentatively draw the conclusion that her place in the eschatological framework of Orphism, like that of Demeter in the eschatology of the Eleusinian Mysteries, stems from her approach to the human experience of loss. According to the texts on the gold leaves, an approach to her was apparently best made through an appeal to her grief at the loss of her son. This is the nature of the appeal found in the leaves

and 'paradise regained'. As the victim of a monstrous crime, Dionysos is 'abducted' from the former pole, and recreated as the sovereign of the gods, charged with inaugurating a new reign of unity. West 1983: 160–161 argues rather that the boiling signifies regeneration (cf. Cook 1925: i.210 ff; Frazer 1921 i.121–3 on Apollod. Bibl 1.9.27) and the roasting reflects sacrificial practice.

15On the Hellenistic, non-Orphic variant in which the scattered limbs of Dionysos are gathered together by Rhea or Demeter, see West 1983: 141.

16Kallimachos gives the name Zagreus for the Dionysos who is son of Zeus and Persephone; the re-created god receives a new name (fr. 43.117 Pf.; the apparatus notes the story of Zeus' rape of Persephone, which may have appeared in this context). The name Zagreus was probably not used in the Orphic context, and certainly does not appear anywhere in the surviving texts (see Linforth 1941: 311, West 1983: 153). In fragments from tragedies by Aischylos, Zagreus seems rather to be a denizen of the underworld, possibly the son of Hades or even Hades himself; it seems that Zagreus was originally a chthonic god, and became assimilated into the myth through an association with the chthonic Dionysos.

17See Burkert 1985: 298.

18Pindar fr. 133.1 M; see Rose 1943, with discussion in Linforth 1941: 348–350. There are difficulties about this interpretation. There is no other early evidence which would imply that the myth was well enough known for such a brief allusion to be understood. Burkert suggests, however, that the silence in the sources is due to the deliberate concealment of the myth as a doctrine of mysteries; 'the obligation to secrecy will have been made more compelling because of the uneasiness of speaking in the light of day about the death of a god' (Burkert 1985: 298). Considering that the same myth also spoke of incest, and the sacrificial cooking of a divinity, such uneasiness is understandable.
from Pelinna quoted above: ‘Tell Persephone that Bakkhios himself has set you free’.\textsuperscript{19} A fourth-century BC gold leaf found at Pella, in the shape of a myrtle-leaf, makes a more direct (and brief) appeal to her:

\textit{ΦΕΡϹΕΦΟΝΗΙ}
\textit{ΠΟϹΕΙΔΙΠΠΙΟϹ ΜΥϹΤΗϹ}
\textit{ΕΥϹΕΒΗϹ}\textsuperscript{20}

Here ‘Περσέφονη’ is in the dative not to imply a dedication, but to catch her attention; it ‘means something like “Tell Persephone” or “This is for Persephone’s attention”’.\textsuperscript{21} Poseidippos then gives his name, states his case, and requests his reward; he is a υστης, and in return for the appropriate rites offered to Dionysos – and presumably to Persephone herself – he requests to be honoured with entry to the privileged part of the underworld to which only initiates have entry. As in the context of the Eleusinian mysteries, Persephone holds the power over the destiny of a human soul, to save or condemn.\textsuperscript{22} In the \textit{Hymn}, it is given to her by Hades, and appears to be hers exclusively; in the lamellae, Dionysos can affect her verdict.

\textbf{Soot}

Proklos accounts for the origin of mankind by saying that man is created from the soot deposited from the smoke of the burnt Titans.\textsuperscript{23} Such an anthropogony is in keeping with myths common the world over, in which mankind is created from a base or inanimate substance, to which the gods must add the final contribution which gives life.\textsuperscript{24} More

\textsuperscript{19}Graf 1993: 241.
\textsuperscript{20}Dickie 1995. For the possibility that this Poseidippos is the same as Poseidippos the epigrammatist (cf. \textit{SH} 705.21–23, in which he hopes to follow the mystic way to Rhadamanthos) see Dickie 1995: 83f.
\textsuperscript{21}Dickie 1995: 82, drawing a comparison with the Pelinna leaves. For the importance of the myrtle see Dickie 1995: 85–86; it is, as he puts it, ‘the plant that provides the wreath \textit{par excellence} for initiates in the mysteries’.
\textsuperscript{23}Fr. 220 Kern, cf. frr. 140, 224 Kern. Olympiodoros produces from this myth the conclusion that mankind therefore in part consists of Dionysos as well as of the Titans, because the Titans have eaten Dionysos' flesh (\textit{In Phaedonem} 1.3, 5, fr. 220 Kern). Many scholars (as West 1983: 164f points out; see also Linforth 1941: 317–331, 359f) have treated this as an essential and early part of the anthropogony, rather than the Neoplatonist interpretation which it is. In any case, it is precisely that divine spark of Dionysos that humanity is meant to have inherited that remained in his palpitating heart, and that allowed the god to be recreated.
\textsuperscript{24}In the Australian myths of the Dreamtime, mankind is made from stone; in the Norse myths, from the ash and the elm; in the Book of Genesis, from the dust of the earth (Genesis II.7). In all of these myths the gods breathe life into them.
specifically it is similar to the Near Eastern myths in which a god is slain and mankind formed from his body. The spark which separates mankind from the inanimate matter from which he was formed, the spark of life and intelligence, comes from the divine. Unfortunately very few traces of Greek anthropogonies survive, but traces of this mixture of divine life and earth are clear in myths of the births of deities from blood spilt by wounded or slain gods, such as the birth of Aphrodite from the testicles of Ouranos and the births of Chrysaor and Pegasos from the decapitated Medusa. In the Dionysos myth, the substance from which mortals spring is soot rather than blood, as the thunderbolt has left nothing but smoke. However, it is possible that the myth in which mankind sprang from the blood of the Titans, or the Giants, in their battle against the gods, is considerably earlier than the surviving sources in which it is found; as West points out, the version in which mankind comes from the blood of the gods must be the older, as the point of the myth originally depended on the fertilisation of the earth by a divine life-substance. It is likely, in keeping with other Greek myths of divine genesis, that in this version mankind was not deliberately created, but simply sent up by the earth when the soot fell on it, without any outside help from Zeus or any other god, in the same way as Aphrodite rose from the foam. Another version gives a different view: Zeus created mankind as the third race, after the golden race created by Phanes and the silver race under Kronos, in a motif taken from Hesiod.

In the Greek myths, the reason for the creation of mankind is lost. In the Near Eastern myths, the gods are motivated by the desire to have some lesser beings to do their work for them. This is unlikely to have been the original motivation in the Orphic anthropogony, because it is clear from the form of this myth that the creation of mankind was secondary to the re-creation of Dionysos. This differs from many anthropogonies in which the creation of mankind is the central and most important theme of the myth, or at least a significant part of the process of creation (Enûma elis).

In the epic Atrahasis the gods in assembly select Geshtu-e, 'a god who had intelligence', and the mother-goddess Mami mixes his flesh and blood with clay and forms mankind with the help of Ea (Atrahasis Tablet I.iv, in Dalley 1989: 15); in Enûma elis Ea and Marduk form mankind from the blood of Kingu (Enûma elis Tablet VI 31–38, ANET 68). Kingu's death is particularly close in that he was the consort of Tiamat and he is specifically selected for death because he incited the other gods to revolt.

See West 1983: 165–166.

West 1983: 246. For the impossibility of a god's dying completely, and the usual pattern of sublimation of the life force into another form, see above, Chapter 2.3; Cassin 1981.

Fr. 140 Kern; Hes. WD 109 ff.
the Bible); in the myth of Dionysos it seems almost to be tacked on as an afterthought. The myth explains why we are as we are, rather than why we were created. In other words, myths such as the Near Eastern ones outlined above explain how the gods came to the decision to create mankind, and give the specific reason they had for doing so. The Orphic anthropogony, on the other hand, explains why mankind are sinful creatures, and must use Dionysos’ rites to achieve salvation.

Lightning

The use of soot from the scorched Titans, however, adds another dimension to the eschatological beliefs. Even before the publication in 1974 of the gold leaf from Hipponion, which proved the link between Dionysiac rites and the gold lamellae, the lightning referred to in the Group A tablets was linked with the death of the Titans by Zeus’ thunderbolt. The motif appears on the first three Group A lamellae, on all of which the dead makes the claim to have been killed by lightning. As all three of these lamellae were found close to the hands of three bodies buried in the same tomb, Zuntz concluded that ‘we had better take him at his word: those buried with these particular tablets had been killed by lightning . . . It is perfectly natural to assume that this tumulus, the Timpone Piccolo, was erected over the grave of a person killed by lightning and thereby sanctified – and that two others who, later, found their death in the same way were buried in this most appropriate place.’ However, although it is impossible now to evaluate the frequency of such a death, it is reasonable to consider three in the same place within such a short space of each other as unlikely.

The alternative, that the claim was based upon the Titans’ death, was denied by Zuntz on the grounds that it is unlikely that Persephone would look kindly upon a soul presenting itself to be, in some sense, a Titan, and therefore a perpetrator of her ‘ancient grief’, the loss of her son. This explanation, however, does come nearer to the mark than that of Zuntz. Examination of the mythical topos of the δοκιμασμένος showed that, although originally the use of the thunderbolt against a hero was exclusively a

30 A1.4; cf. A2.5, A3.5. For the confusion over ἀλλὰ . . . καὶ on A1 and έτε . . . έτε on A2-3, see Zuntz 1971: 312–317.
punishment, by the time the gold lamellae were written its potential for apotheosis was well ingrained in the mythical tradition. The gold lamellae evoke both aspects of the lightning motif. The mortal is made from the stuff of the Titans who were punished for their great crime by being killed with the thunderbolt. However, the thunderbolt not only punishes but purifies. The place struck by it becomes sanctified. 'Pure of pure ones I come', the soul asserts on all three lamellae, and on A2 and A3 adds that it has paid the penalty for injustice. Even if the gold lamellae is not linked to the myth of Dionysos and the Titans, the thunderbolt has some point; the mortal may be made, ultimately, from the bodies of the Titans, but he has paid for his crime and is purified.

But there does not seem to be any reason to deny a link between the lightning-strike on the lamellae and that which scorched the Titans. The mortal, then, lays claim to the lightning bolt on two grounds. First, it killed his ancestors the Titans. So he, in claiming the bolt for himself, is not so much presenting himself as a Titan (pace Harrison) as demonstrating his acceptance of his inheritance and proving that he has paid for his ancestral crime. The bolt purifies the soul of that crime and makes it fit for a higher afterlife. Secondly, the soul is claiming its divine inheritance; the lightning has burnt away the mortal part of him and left only the immortal part which came from the Titans. Here the difference between A1 and A2-A3 comes into play. According to the lamella A1, the dead man is even fit to become a god himself: 'Blessed and fortunate, you will be a god instead of a mortal', he is told by the χθονίων βοσίληα. If this is a literal apotheosis, it is unprecedented. Yet on A2 and A3, the soul approaches much more humbly, as a suppliant, and requests only to be sent to the seats of the blessed, 'εδρας ες ευσαγέων'. It is likely that this contrast can be explained by appeal to the doctrine of reincarnation found in (for example) Pindar. In Olympian 2, written for Theron of Akragas, and in some of the fragments from threnoi, Pindar shows a view of the afterlife which can be matched closely to the tablets. The body is mortal, but at death the soul survives. The soul travels to the underworld, and is there judged. There the good enjoy an easy existence, and 'the others l

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33When purification was required, sharp-smelling substances were often added to the fire. An example is sulphur, described by Homer as 'the cure for evils' (Od. 22.480–81). Parker adds that 'its dry acrid smoke was symbolically fit to combat the damp rottenness of impurity' (Parker 1983: 227–228).
36Pindar fr. 131 M.
go through pain not to be looked at'. After nine years, Persephone sends it back to the upper world; such souls become kings, strong men and wise men. The soul must keep free from injustice and repeat this cycle three times, then it can travel

Zeus' road to the tower of Kronos,
where ocean-born breezes blow around
the isles of the blest...

There it will meet other heroes (Peleus, Kadmos, Achilleus are mentioned, the second in deference to Theron his descendant). Here the discrepancy between A1's strong claim to have escaped the painful cycle, arrived at the victor's crown and fled into the bosom of the Lady, and the more tentative and supplicating attitude of A2 and A3. A1 has reached the last stage, has left the cycle of reincarnation, and is heading for the isles of the blest; the other two have completed one life, but still must return to the mortal world.

6.4 Conclusion

Neither the doctrines of the Orphies nor those of the mystery cults allowed immortality in the form that 'mainstream' myth defined it. Both, however, utilised or reversed mythical themes and motifs to offer their initiates a chance at a special afterlife, whose distinguishing features as Pindar outlines them are very similar to the abode of the gods described by Homer. In this paradiasiacal place they are to live forever free of care and toil, in every respect like the gods.

Zuntz states that 'it is axiomatic that no Greek cult of any kind ever aimed to achieve identity of god and worshipper, alive or dead . . . Where the belief in a higher life after death was held, the dead has been thought of as "being with the gods", even as "god" - but never as identified with one of the known gods.' This is the case in the description of the afterlife of the initiates also; it is like Olympos but only in the sense that all Greek

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37Pindar OI. 2.57-67.
38Pindar fr. 133 M.
39Pindar OI. 2. 64-66; cf. fr. 129 M.
40Pindar OI. 2. 78-79.
41Cf. v. 1 of the Pelinna tablets: 'Now you have died and now you have come into being, o thrice happy one, on this same day.'
42Od. 6.42-46 (Olympos); 4.561-569 (Elysion); cf. Pind. Olymp. 2.61ff.
43Zuntz 1971: 325.
utopias tend to resemble each other, as there are some basic components common to all of them. These include freedom from toil and disease, fine weather, plentiful and good food and drink, and so forth. Here we see, not an identification with any specific god or even with any group of gods such as the Olympians, but with the life of the gods in general. The point of the similarity between Pindar and Homer is not specifically that the mortals are living in a place like Olympos, but rather that they are living the life of the gods, free from all cares including the memory of earth.

The completeness of this separation from the world of the living, which they have left behind, differentiates them not only from the gods themselves but also from the immortalised heroes of hero-cult, in the sense that both of these latter groups are still attached to the world of mortals. The gods have the power to move between Olympos and earth and meddle in the lives of humans; heroes are bound to their cult sites, and can also be called upon to help or interfere in the affairs of the living. But initiates, owing to the nature of their afterlife, lose this capability of returning to take any further interest in the doings of their descendants, relatives and friends upon earth. They have cast off such ties and such doings are no longer of relevance to them.

\[^{44} Od. 9.109; 7.112ff; Hes. WD 117ff; cf. Lucian V H 2.13.\]
\[^{45} Compare Achilleus' concern over Neoptolemos, II. 11.491ff; Agamemnon's over Orestes, 11. 457ff.\]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Siglum/Origin</th>
<th>Divinities</th>
<th>Form</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group A</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A1: Thurii</td>
<td>Queen, Eukles, Euboleus</td>
<td>Claim to purity; lightning; leaving the cycle; kid into milk. Reward: god instead of man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fourth BC</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A2: Thurii</td>
<td>Phersephoneia, Eukles, Euboleus</td>
<td>Claim to purity; lightning; paid the penalty; asks to be let into the seats of the blessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fourth BC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A3: Thurii</td>
<td>Phersephoneia, Eukles, Euboleus</td>
<td>Claim to purity; lightning; paid the penalty; asks to be let into the seats of the blessed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fourth BC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A4: Thurii</td>
<td>Phersephoneia</td>
<td>Suffered things not suffered before; kid into milk. Reward: god instead of man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fourth BC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A5: Rome</td>
<td>Queen, Eukles, Euboleus</td>
<td>Claim to purity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second AD</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reward: will be goddess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B1: Petelia</td>
<td><em>phulakes</em>, Mnemosyne, Ge</td>
<td>Two springs; white cypress; guardians; son of Earth and starry Heaven; follow heroes (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fourth BC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2: Pharsalus</td>
<td><em>phulakes</em>, Mnemosyne, Ge</td>
<td>Two springs; white cypress; guardians; son of Earth and starry Heaven; 'name is Asterios'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fourth BC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B3: Eleutherna</td>
<td>Ge</td>
<td>Drink from fountain at right; son of Earth and starry Heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>second BC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B4: Eleutherna</td>
<td>Ge</td>
<td>Drink from fountain at right; son of Earth and starry Heaven</td>
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<tr>
<td>second BC</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B5: Eleutherna</td>
<td>Ge</td>
<td>Drink from fountain at right; son of Earth and starry Heaven</td>
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<tr>
<td>second BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>B6: Mylopetra</td>
<td>Ge</td>
<td>Drink from fountain at right; son of Earth and starry Heaven</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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B7: Stathatos Ge
second century BC
Drink from fountain at right;
son of Earth and starry Heaven

B8: Stathatos Ge
second century BC
Drink from fountain at right;
son of Earth and starry Heaven

*B9: Thessaly Ge
fourth century BC
Drink from fountain at right;
son of Earth and starry Heaven

*B10: Hipponion Mnemosyne,
end of fifth cent. BC phulakes, bakchoi
Two springs; guardians; white cypress; son of
Earth, starry Heaven; follow mystai/bakkhoi

Between the Groups

P 1–2: Pelinna Persephone,
end of fourth cent. BC Bakchios
Died and born; Bakkhos freed you;
bull, ram into milk; wine as fortunate honour

Pella Persephone
Description as μύστης
The philosopher Thales believed that there was no difference between life and death. 'Well,' someone asked him, 'why aren't you dead then?' 'Because,' Thales replied, 'there is no difference.'

Concluding remarks

Life and death might not have been considered to be quite as closely identified for most Greeks as Thales would have liked them to believe, but I hope that this survey has shown death and immortality to be more closely interwoven than they first seem. The perpetual life which is immortality is defined, in various ways, by its affinity to death. Both are characterised by an existence outside of human limits. They are placed, geographically, temporally and culturally, beyond the borders of human experience. It is impossible for the living to experience death or to fully comprehend it, as is illustrated by Rosencrantz’s dialectical circling at the opening of Chapter 5. In the same way, it is impossible to comprehend immortality. Greek myth depicts the immortality of the gods as (basically) the same life as the life of mortals, perpetuated forever. But those myths dealing with immortalisation explore a wide diversity of combinations of the divine and those who will die. These show a more inventive interest in what constitutes immortality than do the myths describing the gods. It is in the former myths, rather than the latter, that definitions of immortality are formed and the boundaries of life and death are explored.

Chronologically, the shift in beliefs and theories concerning mortals made immortal is difficult to pin down. We have seen that there are already traces of immortalising myths in Homer. But it is also apparent that many of the myths which articulate most clearly the definitional problems of the mortal/immortal dichotomy are post-Homeric; for example the myths of Herakles, Tithonos and the Dioskouroi. Myths dealing with the evasion of death, however, or with challenges to the power or lifestyle of the gods, are present in Homer, although sometimes suppressed (as is the myth of Bellerophon). This tendency to suppress immortalising elements is only partially mitigated by the shift from the death-centred world of the Iliad to the folktale world of the Odyssey. Throughout the archaic period, however, as the interest in and dissemination of such myths widens, the opportunities for mortals to become immortal correspondingly multiply. The hellenistic period, and

1Diodorus Siculus 1.17
even the classical period, offer much easier access to Olympos than the archaic period. Nonetheless, archaic heroes cross the border between life and death remarkably often, although that between mortal and immortal is harder to pass.

Another feature of these myths, which becomes particularly prevalent towards the end of the archaic period, is their increasingly frequent application to personalities other than mythical heroes. This is clear in hero-cult; more and more commonly the heroes to whom cult is offered include non-mythical personalities, particularly those (such as athletes) whose lives lend themselves to re-interpretation in mythical terms. The shift towards making immortality more accessible extends beyond the borders of myth, and becomes linked with the attempt to define some form of continued life or soul-survival after death. But this attempt still relies on the establishment of a mythical context to lend it authority. The complex network of ideas represented by this group of myths is well suited to this, as it offers a language in which new theories can be readily propounded and easily comprehended.

What is being tested in these myths is not only the possibility of transgression over mortal limits, but also the divine legality, so to speak. It is interesting that the gods do not, in Greek myth, begrudge immortality to mankind. No impression is given that it is within the power of the gods to bestow immortality on mankind as a whole, but that they are deliberately withholding it. If anything, the situation is reversed; the gods are not able to save even favourites from death. On the exceptional occasions when immortality is offered to those individuals who are thought to be able to live up to it, almost inevitably the result is that they immediately prove themselves unworthy of the gift. If anyone begrudges immortality to mankind, it is one of mankind itself.

In keeping with this lack of possessiveness on the part of the gods, the Greeks lacked a mythological schema in which mankind is intended to be immortal and has lost its chance. Galen offers the theory that the gods intended the human race to be immortal, but the material available to them for the construction of mankind was of such a kind that immortality was impossible.² The origin of this story is uncertain, but the attitude of the gods is substantially the same as in archaic Greece; they would offer mankind immortality if they could, but, given the material they have to work with, it is not possible.

²Galen, De Usu Partium Book 14.2 (Kühn vol. 4.143).
What, then, if not the gods, prevents humanity from attaining immortality? Their own wilful foolishness has already been mentioned. But, as has repeatedly become clear throughout this thesis, the attainment of immortality by mortals not only transgresses topographical and other boundaries but also threatens the order of the universe, because if a human can become immortal, then the wall between life and death is threatened. This is the rationale (for example) behind both the use of immortalising symbols in Dionysiac cult and the boundary-spanning ambivalence of hero-cult; immortalising myths are used by the living to create a bridge between themselves, the dead (whom they will eventually become) and the immortals (whom they would like to become).

The confusion apparent in the myths as regards the fate of those swept up by Eos or the whirlwind, or (like Amphiaraos) vanishing into the earth, reflects this same blurring of the distinction between death and immortality. Those left behind, who suddenly find themselves bereft, cannot tell to what fate their loved ones have been taken. To the family of the abducted one, he might as well be dead, whatever his actual situation.3 To them, death and immortality are very close; they must mourn for the lost one in either case.

Herakles, the one exception who does truly become an immortal - and an immortal without let or hindrance - is the exception that proves the rule. He is immortalisation personified, the proof that it is possible; he is therefore a symbol of the contradiction which stems from the combination of the certainty that immortality is unobtainable and the insistence that immortality is within reach. Herakles is the mediator of these oppositions in that he is the embodiment of contradiction, all things to all men; he is the son of a god, powerful, undefeated, sexually potent, and yet he is the madman and the man enslaved to a woman. He is also the hero who, after a lifetime of hard toil (much of it in the service of others) and after a distinctive and horrible death, was rewarded with a place among the gods. He is the ultimate hope of mankind that they may aspire to the same state.

3See Tros' reaction to the abduction of Ganymede, H. Aph. 206–211; Demeter's grief at the loss of Persephone, above, Chapter 6.2.
1. Departing warrior.
Athens, NM 1818, Attic white-ground lekythos, c. 440 BC, from Eretria
ARV^2 998.161: Achilles Painter
Illustration from AHS 186-187.
2. Departure of Amphiaraos.
Once Berlin, Staatl. Mus. F 1655, now lost; Corinthian column krater, c. 560 BC
Illustration from Schefold 1993: 282 pl. 300.

3. Departure of Achilleus.
Boston, MFA 33.56; Attic red-figure volute krater, c. 450 BC; ARV² 600.12: Niobid Painter
Illustration from Simon 1963: 57–59 pl. 11.7.
4. Departure of Memnon.
Brussels, Mus. Roy. R284 (formerly Mannheim, Reiss-Mus. Cg 59), Attic red-figure stamnos, c. 460 BC, from Petrignano near Castiglione del Lago; ARV² 493.1: near Hermonax; Add² 249
Illustration from Schefold 1980 pl. 85.5.
5. Eos takes up the body of Memnon.
Paris, Louvre G 115, Attic red-figure cup; c. 485–480 BC, from S. Maria Capua Vetere
ARV² 434.74; Douris; Para 375; Add² 237
Illustration from Schefold 1989: 254 pl 228.
6. Winged goddess and warrior.
Hamburg, Mus. KG 1983.274; Attic black-figure olpe, c. 500 BC
Illustration from Peters 1971 fig. 2.
7. Eos mourns Memnon.
Rome, Vatican 530; Attic black-figure amphora, c. 530 BC
ABV 140.1: Painter of the Vatican Mourner, Para 58, Add^ 38
Illustration from Vatican Collections no. 102.
8. Hypnos and Thanatos lift the body of Sarpedon.
New York, MMA 1972.11.10, Attic red-figure krater, c. 515 BC; Add² 404: Euphronios
Illustration from Museum.
9. Hypnos and Thanatos lift a body.
London, BM D 58,
Attic white-ground lekythos,
c. 450 BC, from Ampelokepoi;
ARV² 1228.12: Thanatos Painter
Illustration from Charbonneaux et al. Classical pl. 304.
10. Thanatos lifts the body of Ixion’s victim. London, BM E 155, Attic red-figure kantharos, c. 450 BC; \textit{ARV}^2\,832.37: Amphitrite Painter, 1672; \textit{Para} 492; \textit{Add}^2\,295 Illustration from Simon 1955 fig. 1.
11. Death of Talos.
Benevento, Museo del Sannio,
Attic red-figure column krater,
440–430 BC: from Montesarchio
Illustration from Lesky 1973:
116–117 pll. 1–2.
12. Death of Talos.
Ferrara inv. 3092,
Attic red-figure kalyx krater fr.,
end of the 5th century BC,
from Spina;
ARV² 1340; Aad² 367
Illustration from Berti and Guzzo 1993: 112 fig. 94.
13. Thanatos pursues a woman.  
Paris, Louvre 1264,  
Attic white-ground lekythos,  
late 5th century BC;  
ARV² 1384.19; Group R.  
Illustrations from:  
(right) AWL pl. 50.2.  
(below) Buschor 1939: 7 fig. 2.
15. Sisyphos rolls his rock.
Metope from Heraion I at Foce del Sele (no number), 550–540 BC
Illustration from Simon 1967: 277 fig. 1.
16. A host of *psychai* hover about as Hermes guides a woman onto Charon’s boat.

Athens, NM 1926, Attic white-ground lekythos, 450–440 BC; *ARV*² 846.193: Sabouroff Painter; *Para* 423; *Add*² 145

Illustration from Reizler 1914 pl. 44a.
17. Hermes awaits a woman at her gravestone, to escort her to Hades. Munich, Mus. Ant., Attic white-ground lekythos, 440–430 BC, from Oropos; *ARV²* 1022.138: Phiale Painter; *Para* 441; *Add²* 316
Illustration from Charbonneaux et al. *Classical* pll. 299–300.
Rome, Vatican, Mus. Greg. Etr. 344, Attic black-figure amphora, c. 540 BC; 
ABV 145.13, 686: Exekias; Para 66; Add 40
Illustration from Museum.
Olympia BE 11a, bronze relief, c. 620 BC, from Olympia
Illustration from Beazley 1939: fig. 6.

20. Kaineus and Centaurs.
Kunsth. Mus. IV 1477, Etruscan black-figure stamnos, from Cerveteri, c. 600 BC
EVP 16.3: Kaineus Painter
Illustration from Beazley 1939: fig. 5.
Athens (no number), protocorinthian lekythos, c. 680-670 BC, from Perachora
Illustration from Schefold 1964: fig. 14.

22. Achilleus dead with arrows in back and ankle.
Once Pembroke-Hope coll., Chalkidian amphora, c. 540 BC
Illustration from Rumpf Chalk Vas pl. 12.
23. Paris takes aim at Achilleus’ leg.
Copenhagen NM 14066, ‘Pontic’ amphora, c. 540 BC
Illustration from Hampe and Simon 1964 pi. 19.

Bochum Ruhr-Univ., Antikenmus. S 1060,
Attic red-figure pelike, c. 460 BC: Niobid Painter
Illustration from Lacroix 1987 fig. 5.
25. Aias' suicide.
Louvre E 635,
early Corinthian column krater,
c. 600 BC, from Caere
Illustration from Schefold 1993 fig. 368.

26. Athene shows Aias the vulnerable spot.
Boston 99.494, Etruscan mirror,
early 4th cent. BC
Illustration from von Mach 1900.
27. Herakles fights Geryon.
Samos, Vathy Mus. B 2518; bronze relief on horse's pectoral, 700–675 BC.
Illustrations from: (above) Schefold 1993 fig. 92b;
(below) LIMC Herakles 2476°.
Louvre CA 4532, Cretan relief amphora, c. 675 BC
Illustration from Demargne 1972: 45 fig. 9.

29. Eos abducts Tithonos.
St. Petersburg, Hermitage 682, Attic red-figure rhyton, c. 480–470 BC
ARV² 391; Painter of London D15
Illustration from Peredolskaya 1967 pl. 48.
30. Athene carries away a dead warrior.
Paris, Cab. Méd. 260, Attic black-figure olpe, c. 520-500 BC; ABV 378.253: Leagros Group
Illustration from Peters 1971 fig. 6.
31. Athene takes Athanasia from Tydeus (the 'Rosi krater').
Attic red-figure bell krater, once in Rome Market, c. 450 BC; ARV² 1073.4: Eupolis Painter
Illustration from Beazley 1947: 1 fig. 1.
32. Athene leads Athansia (inscr.) away from Tydeus.
Illustration from Richter and Hall 1936 no. 136, pl. 138.
33. Athene and Athanasia (?)  
Etruscan mirror, Paris, Cab. Méd. 1289; second quarter of the 5th century BC, from Etruria.  
Illustration from Beazley 1947: 6 fig. 3.
34. Homecoming of the Dioskouroi.
Brescia, Mus. Romano, Attic red-figure amphora, 520–510 BC; ARV² 292.1: Psiax
Illustration from Hermary 1978: 57 fig. 7.
35. Rape of the Leukippidai.
Athens, Mus. Nat. 2350, Attic black-figure 'bobbin', from Attica, mid. fifth century
_AVR_ 775.3: Sotheby Painter
Illustration from Wehgartner 1983: 156 no. 1, pl. 52.2.
36. Nekyia.
Paris, Louvre G 341, Attic red-figure calyx krater from Orvieto, 460-450 BC; ARV² 601.22: Niobid Painter
Illustration from Simon 1963 pl. 8.
37. Herakles fights Geryon.
London, BM B 155, Chalkidian amphora, 540-530 BC, from Cerveteri
Illustration from Museum.
38. Herakles fights the Hydra.
Basel, Antikenmus. BS 425, middle Corinthian aryballos, c. 590 BC.
Illustration from Schefold 1993 fig. 360.
39. Athene pours for Herakles.
London, BM 1902.12-18.3, Attic black-figure skyphos; ABL 249.9: Theseus Painter
Illustration from Boardman A BF V fig. 246.
40. Athene.
Basle Antikenmuseum Kä. 418 (BS 456), Attic red-figure belly amphora, c. 490–480 BC
_ArV^2 1634.1 bis_: Berlin Painter
Illustration from Beazley 1961 facing p. 54.
41. Athene carries immortality to Tydeus.  
Rome, Villa Giulia, relief from pediment of Etruscan temple at Pyrgi  
Illustration from Pallottino 1971 pl. 85.
42. Herakles on Olympos holding an apple in his hand
St. Petersburg, Hermitage Mus. 640, Attic red-figure stamnos, c. 470 BC
*AR V*2 639,56: Providence Painter
Illustration from Peredolskaya 1967 pl. 86.
43. Immortalisation of Ares.
Etruscan ciste from Palestrina. Illustration from Marx 1885: 169.

44. Amphiaraos swallowed up by the earth.
Athens Nat. Mus. 1125, Attic black-figure lekythos, from Eretria, second quarter of the fifth century BC; ABL 172.266: Beldam Painter
Illustration from LIMC Amphiaraos 37*.
45. Herakles pursues Geras.
London, BM E 290; red-figure Nolan amphora, c. 470 BC.
*ARV*² 653.1: Charmides Painter; *Add*² 276
Illustration from *LIMC Geras 1*.

46. Herakles chatting to Geras.
Rome, Villa Giulia 48238; Attic red-figure pelike, c. 480 BC.
*ARV*² 284.1: Matsch Painter; *Add*² 209
Illustration from *LIMC Geras 5*. 
47. Herakles fights the Hydra and threatens Hades.

Corinthian kotyle, lost; c. 600–590 BC; Amyx CVP 185.2: Pholoe Painter

Illustration from Payne NC 127 fig. 45c.
48. Herakles' entry on foot to Olympus.
London BM B 379, Attic black-figure cup, c. 570–560 BC
ABV 60.20: manner of the C Painter
Illustration from LIMC Herakles 2847*.

49. Athene leads Herakles up to Zeus on his throne.
London BM B424, Attic black-figure cup; c. 550 BC; from Vulci;
ABV 168: Phrynos Painter
Illustration from ICS.
50. Herakles on the pyre.
Rome, Villa Giulia 11688; Attic red-figure bell krater Fr, c. 460 B. C.; ARV² 498: Conca Painter
Illustration from Clairmont 1953 pl. 45.
51. Herakles on the pyre.
New York, Private, Attic red-figure psykter, 460–450 BC
Illustration from Guy 1983.
52. Herakles leaves the pyre.
Munich Antikenslg. 2360; Attic red-figure pelike, c. 420-400 BC.
ARV² 1186.30; Kadmos Painter; Add² 341
Illustration from CVA Munich 2 pl. 81.1.
53. Bone tablets from Olbia.
Illustration from West 1982.

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