DRAKŌN

Drakōn

Dragon Myth and Serpent Cult in the Greek and Roman Worlds

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D.O.

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List of Abbreviations

ANET[3]	Pritchard 1969
ATU	Uther 2004 (i.e. 'Aarne-Thompson-Uther')
BMCC	*British Museum Catalogue of Coins*
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* 1893–
CPGL	Leutsch and Schneidewin 1839–51
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*
CTA	Herdner 1963
CTH	Laroche 1971
DA	Daremberg and Saglio 1877–1919
EMI	LiDonnici 1995
FGrH	Jacoby et al. 1923–
FHG	Müller 1878–85
HRR	Peter 1906–14
I.Asklepieion	Habicht 1969
I.Cret.	Guarducci 1935–50
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae* 1903–
IGRom	Cagnat et al. 1906–27
ILLRP	Degrassi 1957–63
ILS	Dessau 1892–1916
I.Magnesia	Kern 1900
I.Pergamon	Fränkel and Habicht 1890–1969
I.Smyrna	Petzl 1982–90
KTU	Dietrich, Loretz, and Sanmartín 1995
LGPN	Fraser et al. 1987–
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologie Classicae* 1981–99
LS	Lewis and Short 1879
LSJ	Liddell, Scott, and Jones 1968
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica* 1826–
ML	Meiggs and Lewis 1989
ML	Roscher 1884–1937*a*
NEB	*New English Bible* 1961
OLD	Glare 1982
OGIS	Dittenberger 1903–5
PG	Migne 1857–1904
PGM	Preisendanz and Henrichs 1973–4
PL	Migne 1884–1904

SGD	Jordan 1985
SH	Lloyd-Jones and Parsons 1983
SHA	Scriptores Historiae Augustae
SVF	von Arnim 1903–24
Syll.^{3}	Dittenberger 1915–24
ThesCRA	*Thesaurus cultus et rituum antiquorum* 2004–5
TrGF	Snell et al. 1971–2004

Introduction

At the heart of the St George's Day parades of yesteryear were the figures of St George, his damsel, and his dragon, the last typically represented by an elaborate hobby-horse brought out to perform year on year. The townspeople lining the streets, not least the children, had little time for the pious knight or the insipid princess. All the town's attention went to the dragon. As Richard Lane tells of Norwich's own Snap: 'Our legends are rich with stories of dragons capturing fair maidens, and the noble knights who rode to their rescue. In the end it was the dragon who was vanquished—the triumph of good over evil. Yet Snap was a dragon who in his way vanquished the people of Norwich by winning a place in their hearts.'[1] This nicely encapsulates the engaging paradox of the dragon, as true of antiquity as of medieval England: the ultimate terror, safely distanced from the real world both by its own death and by its confinement to the realm of fantasy, yet lives on to flourish as an object of fascination, indeed as an object of love.

It is without shame that I offer a world overburdened with books the following substantial study of the Graeco-Roman reflex of the dragon, the *drakōn* or *draco*. Weary readers are invited to consider: first, that almost every major myth cycle of the Graeco-Roman world featured a *drakōn* at its heart, including the sagas of Heracles, Jason, Perseus, Cadmus, and Odysseus; secondly, that the single most beloved and influential of the pagan gods from the late Classical period until Late Antiquity, Asclepius, was a *drakōn*; thirdly, that Graeco-Roman *drakōn*-slaying narratives lie directly at the root of the tradition of the saintly dragon-slaying narratives we still cherish; and, fourthly, that there has never been a substantial study of the *drakōn* as such in the Graeco-Roman world. Those that imagine that Fontenrose's *Python* or Watkins' *How to Kill a Dragon* fit the bill will be surprised by this last claim. But in fact these books, both more honoured, alas, on the shelf than in the hand, are concerned not with the Graeco-Roman *drakōn* itself, but with its pre-Greek archaeology, the first from the perspective of comparative myth, the second from that of comparative Indo-European poetics. My concern, by contrast, is not to speculate about what may have gone before, but to provide a descriptive handbook of what actually was, and a point of orientation within the rich fields of literary and iconographic evidence for the ancient *drakōn*.[2]

[1] Lane 1976: 5; cf. Simpson 1980: 93.

[2] Fontenrose 1959, Watkins 1995. Fontenrose attempts to reconstruct a narrative schema (laid out at 9–11) that underlies almost all Greek, Near-Eastern, and Indo-European narratives of fights against dragons and just about any other kind of monster. But the cost of inclusiveness is that the schema

WHAT WAS A *DRAKŌN*?

The focal subject matter of this book is not defined, as it is for Fontenrose and (more surprisingly) Watkins, by an etic 'dragon' concept arbitrarily imposed from without upon the literary and material remains of the Graeco-Roman world and others, or one that unravels at its edges into monstrous creatures wholly bereft of any serpentine elements or even into a hero's fully humanoid opponents. Rather, it is strongly defined by the Greek term *drakōn* (plural: *drakontes*; feminine variant *drakaina*) and its Latin derivative *draco* (plural: *dracones*).[3] These are the words our sources apply most typically, indeed overwhelmingly, to the creatures investigated here, as I have tried to make clear throughout by preserving it in my translations and paraphrases of them. Whatever else they were, *drakontes* were fundamentally large snakes. The term ostensibly spanned a broad semantic field. At the banal extreme, it could designate the large snakes of the real world. In this connection, there have been unsuccessful attempts to associate the term with a particular species of snake, be it a species recognized by the ancients or, a wholly different thing of course, one recognized by us moderns.[4] At the fantastical extreme the term was applied to snakes of supernatural size and nature, often compounded with human or other animal forms, and often credited with fire-breathing or other varieties of fieriness. But the two semantic poles were closer than they initially seem, for, up until the end of the fifth century BC at any rate, almost all uses of the term *drakōn* invite us to construe the creature so designated either as supernatural in itself or under the control of a supernatural power. Thus it describes, serpents of the great mythical battles apart: serpents identified, integrated, or associated with underworld

remains terribly loose and is compelled to admit a great many variants for each motif. The result is that it will ultimately accommodate just about any fight narrative of any kind. Nonetheless, the book remains a great achievement and constitutes an enormous feat in the collocation of evidence—scholarship's first and highest goal—and accordingly remains an invaluable resource. Watkins is critiqued below.

As one would expect, articles devoted to the *drakōn* in some of the standard encyclopaedias, notably Pottier 1877–1919 and Merkelbach 1959, are of some value. But the most useful work has often come in books on snakes more generally, or aspects thereof. Here honourable mentions go to Mähly 1867, Küster 1913, Mitropoulou 1977, Sancassano 1997*a*, Grabow 1998, Jacques 2002, 2007. Amongst shorter contributions on the subject Bodson 1978 and 1981 deserve mention, as does Sancassano 1997*b*, offering a doxography of modern scholarship on the subject. In recent years several important monographs on individual *drakōn* powers have appeared: Bonnechere 2003 on Trophonius, Gourmelen 2004 on Cecrops, Riethmüller 2005 on Asclepius, Lalonde 2006 on Zeus Meilichios, Sineux 2007 on Amphiaraus. Evans 1987 offers an impressively efficient and well informed summary of the dragon in the Western tradition more generally in 32 pages.

[3] The etymology of the word *drakōn*, ancient and modern, is discussed in Ch. 4.

[4] Gossen et al. 1921 s.v. *δράκων* and Gow and Scholfield 1953: 20, 179 identified *Python Sebae* as the realistic reflex of the *drakōn* on the basis of the (manifestly fabulous) descriptions of *drakontes* at Nicander *Theriaca* 438–57 (three rows of teeth) and Philumenus 30 (beards). Bodson 1981: 65–8 and Jacques 2002: 135–9 now identify the realistic reflex rather with snakes of the Elaphe or rat-snake genus. While snakes of this genus almost certainly supplied, or were prominent in supplying, the real-life *drakontes* found in Asclepian and related cults (Ch. 10), and thereby constituted the type of real *drakōn* most commonly and significantly encountered by individuals in the ancient world, it is nonetheless clear from the totality of sources reviewed in this book that the term also bore a much wider significance, and that it could be applied to large snakes of an infinite variety of genera, quite apart from mythical and fantastical ones.

powers; serpents participating in metamorphosis; serpents acting as guards on behalf of gods; serpents participating in omens and prophetic dreams; serpents of ritual function; and serpents, often fantastical in form, decorating arms. The only category of usage that may compromise this contention is the term's deployment in similes. These ostensibly describe the *Realien* of the natural world, and draw their force from the supposition that this is what they do. But it may nonetheless be noted that the reality they describe is a strangely heightened one, and one in which the animals are strongly anthropomorphized.[5] Whatever their

[5] The types of context in which the term δράκων and its female equivalent δράκαινα are deployed up until the end of the 5th century BC are as follows:

1. The serpents of the great mythical battles: e.g. Homer *Iliad* 6. 181–2, Hesiod *Theogony* 321–2 (Chimaera); Hesiod *Theogony* 825 (Typhon); Pisander *FGrH* 16 F8 = F dubia 3 Davies (not in West), Pherecydes F16b Fowler (Ladon); *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 300, Simonides F573 Campbell (original word?), Euripides *Phoenissae* 1245, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1234 (Delphic serpent); Bacchylides 9.13 (Serpent of Nemea); Pindar *Nemean* 1.40 (the serpent-pair sent against Heracliscus); Pindar *Pythian* 4. 242–6, Pherecydes F31 Fowler (original word?), Euripides *Medea* 480–2, *Hypsipyle* F I.ii.24 Bond, p. 26, Herodorus of Heracleia F52 Fowler (original word?) (Serpent of Colchis); Sophocles *Antigone* 126, 1125, Euripides *Phoenissae* 257, 657, 820, 931, 935, 941, 1011, 1062a, 1315, *Suppliants* 579, *Heracles* 253, *Bacchae* 539, 1026, and 1155, Hellanicus 4F1a and F51 Fowler, Androtion *FGrH* 324 F37 (Serpent of Ares); Critias *Pirithous* hypothesis at *TrGF* i. 171 (Cerberus or other underworld serpents?). Note also Aeschylus *Suppliants* 267 (a plague of monsters, δρακονθόμιλον . . . *συνοικίαν*, sent up by the Earth at Argos and destroyed by the seer Apis).
2. The serpents identified with, associated with, or integrated into underworld powers: Aeschylus *Choephoroe* 1050, *Eumenides* 128 (δράκαινα), Euripides *Orestes* 256, *Electra* 1256, 1345, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 286 (*drakaina*) (Erinyes); Sophocles F525 Pearson/*TrGF* (Hecate).
3. Serpents participating in metamorphosis: Homer *Iliad* 2. 308 (Aulis); Homer *Odyssey* 4. 457, Sophocles F150 Pearson/*TrGF* (Proteus); Epimenides F23 DK (Zeus); Sophocles *Trachiniae* 12 (Achelous); Euripides *Bacchae* 1018 (Dionysus); Euripides *Bacchae* 1330–1, 1358 (δράκαινα); Euripides F930 *TrGF* (Cadmus and Harmonia). For the relationship between metamorphosing forms and composite ones, see Frontisi-Ducroux 2001 and E. Aston 2011.
4. Serpents as servants of gods (beyond those of the great battles): Aeschylus *Philoctetes* F252 *TrGF* (Athene's shrine-guard, biter of Philoctetes); Pindar *Olympian* 6. 46–7 (serpent-pair sent by Apollo to rear baby Iamus); Euripides *Ion* 21–6 (serpent-pair set by Athene to guard baby Ericthonius); Euripides *Bacchae* 101 (serpents fashioned by Zeus into a garland for baby Dionysus).
5. Serpents participating in omens and prophetic dreams: Homer *Iliad* 2. 308 (Aulis, for Agamemnon); Homer *Iliad* 12. 200–7, 220 (for Hector); Steischorus F219 *PMG*/Campbell (for Clytemnestra), Aeschylus *Choephoroe* 527 (for Clytemnestra); Pindar *Olympian* 837–46 (for Troy).
6. Serpents decorating arms: Homer *Iliad* 11. 26 (Agamemnon's breastplate, 'portentous'); Homer *Iliad* 11. 39 (shield-strap with three-headed serpent, supporting Agamemnon's Gorgon shield); Heracles *Shield* 161–7 (the twelve animated serpent-heads of Heracles' shield blazon); Pindar *Pythian* 8. 46 (Amphiaraus' shield); Euripides *Phoenissae* 1134–8 (Amphiaraus' shield blazon: the serpents reach over city walls to devour children). Cf. golden serpent necklaces or bracelets fashioned to protect children: Alcman F1 lines 66–7 (Sparta); Euripides *Ion* 23, 1427 (Athens). Note also Sophocles F701 *TrGF* (serpent-pair decorating a herald's staff, compared to Hermes').
7. Serpents of religious function: Euripides *Bacchae* 768 (maenads); Aristophanes *Wealth* 732–41 (Asclepieion).
8. Serpents in similes: Homer *Iliad* 3. 33, 22. 93, Hesiod F70. 23 MW, Aeschylus *Choephoroe* 1047, *Leon* F123 *TrGF*, *Persians* 81–2, *Seven* 293, 381, 503, *Suppliants* 511, Euripides *Ion* 1263, *Orestes* 479–81, 1406, Hermippus Comicus *Athenas Gonai* F3.

particularities, *drakontes* were, nonetheless, a subset of the world of snakes, and the familiar range of snake terms is also regularly applied to creatures so designated in Greek and Latin: on the Greek side most typically *ophis*, on the Latin typically *anguis* or *serpens*.[6] It is noteworthy that the feminine variant *drakaina* should have been brought into existence, and that there was a propensity to apply the term metaphorically to women of cruelty. Female serpents offered the particularly terrible prospect of producing broods.[7]

So far as English-language terminology is concerned, our word 'dragon', in turn a derivative of Latin's *draco*, may be applied appropriately and unapologetically to the fantastical *drakontes* of enormous size, compound form, and much fire.[8] However, for practical purposes, the word 'serpent' offers a better general fit for *drakōn*'s full semantic field, embracing simultaneously for us as it does the connotation of the great dragon and that of the more modest real-world snake (though perhaps again with a certain portentousness). And so it is the latter that is most commonly pressed into service alongside the term *drakōn* itself in the following pages. We still, however, permit ourselves the indulgence of the word 'dragon' when speaking of comparative and sometimes of Christian material. The term 'anguiform' also appears frequently, and often as a substantive. I use it in a catholic sense to embrace not only entities that are indeed plainly and simply 'snake-shaped' (e.g. Ladon) but also entities that incorporate a snake shape amongst other shapes (e.g. Typhon), or are capable of manifesting themselves in the form of a snake amongst other forms (e.g. Asclepius). An 'anguipede' is the most typical variety of composite *drakōn*, a creature humanoid above the waist and serpent below it.

There are in fact clear some clear cases in which the terms δράκων and δρακαινίς are applied to banal creatures, but—the exception proving the rule—these are metaphorical applications of the terms to varieties of fish: Epicharmus F60 line 2 Kaibel, Hippocrates *On Diet* i–iv. 47.1, *De affectionibus interioribus* 21. 20, 22, 15, 30. 29 (δράκων); Ephippus Comicus F12 line 6 K-A (δρακαινίς). Bodson 1978: 72 n. 94, 1981: 63–4 n. 31 only recognizes the tendency to focus the term δράκων upon supernatural creatures as beginning with Aristotle.

[6] LSJ s.v. δράκων regard the term as simply interchangeable with ὄφις, but, the considerations above apart, I am aware of no instance in which δράκων can be demonstrated to describe a small snake. Bodson 1981: 63–4 is right, taking her lead from schol. Euripides *Orestes* 479, to understand δράκων as defining rather a subset of the creatures defined by ὄφις; cf. also Bile 2000.

[7] The term is extrapolated from δράκων according to the productive model found also, for example, in λέων and λέαινα ('lion', 'lioness'), and θεράπων and θεράπαινα ('servant', 'serving woman'); cf. Sancassano 1996: 53–6. Notable early uses: *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 300 (Delphic serpent); Aeschylus *Eumenides* 128, Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 286 (Erinyes); Euripides *Bacchae* 1358 (Harmonia). The metaphorical usage: Anaxilas Comicus F22 lines 1–6 K-A asserts that courtesans are less civilized even than an unapproachable *drakaina*, the Chimaera, Charybdis, Scylla, the Sphinx, the Hydra, a lioness, the Echidna, or the Harpies; Lycophron *Alexandra* twice uses the term *drakaina* as a metaphor for a cruel woman: 674 (Circe), 1114 (Clytemnestra).

[8] Though Bodson 1981: 64 n. 32 would not approve: 'La traduction "dragon" . . . doit . . . être définitivement abandonée, en raison des connotations fabuleuses que le terme possède dans les langues modernes, notamment sous l'influence de l'imagerie médiévale.' Some ancient *drakontes* of the composite variety could boast the legs we associate with medieval and more recent dragons (e.g. Chimaera, Cerberus; Ch. 2). Wings are admittedly less common, but they are sported on occasion, e.g. by Typhon (Ch. 2) and by the flying *drakontes* that draw Medea's chariot (Ch. 5).

THE SHAPE AND SCOPE OF THE BOOK

After brief review of the Minoan-Mycenean, Near-Eastern, Indo-European, and folkloric backgrounds, the first six chapters are devoted to the great *drakontes* of Graeco-Roman myth, killed, overwhelmed, or outwitted in battle by their humanoid opponents. The first trio of chapters reconstructs their myths and the stages of their development from the archaic period onwards on an individual basis, with each analysis preceded by an orienting summary of the myth's canonical version. Chapter 1 lays out the myths of the great *drakontes* of pure form, in approximate chronological order of their first attestation: the Hydra, slain by Heracles; Ladon the Serpent of the Hesperides, slain or outmanoeuvred by Heracles; the Delphic Serpent, known either as the female Delphyne or the male Python, slain by Apollo; the Serpent of Ares, slain by Cadmus; the Serpent of Nemea, slain, according to different traditions, by the various members of the Seven against Thebes; the Serpent of Colchis, slain or sent to sleep by Jason and Medea; the pair of serpents slain by the baby Heracles ('Heracliscus'); the Serpent of Thespiae, slain by Menestratus; and finally, a rather unique Roman example, the Serpent of the river Bagrada, slain by Regulus. Chapter 2 proceeds to look at the comparable set of battle myths for the great composite *drakontes,* and is loosely organized in accordance with the overall shapes and mythological affinities of the creatures in question. We begin with the anguipedes: Typhon, slain by Zeus; Echidna, slain by Argus; the Giants and Campe, slain by the gods; the Lamiae, slain by Coroebus and Eurybatus. We end it with a study of the *drakōn*-tailed quadrupeds: the Chimaera, slain by Bellerophon; Cerberus, mastered by Heracles; and Orthus, slain by Heracles. Somewhat anomalous in themselves, the Gorgons, amongst whom Medusa was slain by Perseus, offer a convenient bridge between these two groups by virtue of their strong thematic affinities with the Lamiae on the one hand and the Chimaera and its associates on the other. It will be seen that even the composite creatures in which the *drakōn* element is proportionately small, as in the cases of the Gorgons and the Chimaera, share the behaviours and narrative roles of the composite creatures with a larger *drakōn* element, and indeed of the pure *drakontes.* Chapter 3 turns to the *drakontes*' marine cousins, the *kētē* or 'sea serpents'. These present a methodological difficulty for us in so far as, despite their serpentine nature, the term *drakōn* is seldom applied to them. Nonetheless, they earn a place in this study by virtue of a series of specific points of correspondence with *drakontes* in their narrative roles. The key cases here are the highly similar ones of the *Kētos* of Troy, from which Heracles rescues Hesione, and the *Kētos* of Ethiopia, from which Perseus rescues Andromeda. These creatures are further bound in with the *drakontes* by virtue of two striking cross-over cases: that of Scylla, who seems to have morphed over the course of her tradition from a *drakōn* into a *kētos*; and that of the *drakōn*-pair sent against Laocoon, who contrive to combine, in their confused tradition, behaviours and narrative roles associated both with *drakontes* and with *kētē.*

The second trio of chapters studies the same group of myths from a series of thematic perspectives, and often draws more broadly upon ancient snake-lore in eludicidation. Chapter 4 broaches the major overarching themes: the genealogies that unite most of the *drakontes*, pure and composite, and indeed the *kētē* too, in a single family tree; the male and female naming patterns in which many of the

major *drakontes* participate; the curious beards and crests that decorate the heads even of the otherwise pure *drakontes*; the caves the *drakontes* typically inhabit, and their propensity for marking their landscapes with signs of their presence that endure even after their death; their particular association and indeed identification with springs and rivers; their role as guardians not only of such sources but also of treasures more generally, and again their direct identification with treasure; the various kinds of restitution that are made for the killing of the *drakontes*, and the ways in which they are enshrined in memory; and finally the vigorous meta-narrative theme of the rationalizing of the *drakōn* out of its own story. Chapter 5 turns briefly to the humanoids that repeatedly interact with *drakontes*, both fighting against them and indeed alongside them, as masters and mistresses of them. Amongst males Apollo and Heracles are noteworthy in this regard, but it is the females that stand out more, notably Athene and Medea. Consideration of the latter's relationship with the Colchis *drakōn* draws us into a discussion of the broader phenomenon of the *drakōn*-tending virgin. We close with a look at the mythical, or effectively mythical, races of the ancient world with special abilities to master serpents and other snakes, the Psylli of Libya, the Ophiogeneis of Parium, Phrygia, and Cyprus, and the Italian Marsi. Chapter 6 looks at the articulation of the battles themselves between man and *drakōn*. The battle narratives make appeal to an ideal schema, of which only limited parts are visible in individual tales, in which man and *drakōn* bring to their fights an elaborate set of symmetrical weapons. Man or god can bring one *drakōn* to fight another. He counters the *drakōn*'s fire (an imaginative development of the viper's burning venom) with manufactured fire of his own, thunderbolts, torches, and parching herbs, or by turning the *drakōn*'s own fire against it. He counters the *drakōn*'s pestilential, even Stygian, breath, deleterious both when blown out and sucked in, and so too the stench of its rotten corpse, with fumigations and even with his own breath. The *drakōn*'s venom, the product of the poisonous herbs it has eaten, is countered by the witch's manufactured poisons, and by natural human liquids, saliva and blood. The coils that are so characteristic of the *drakōn* are countered by the curving blade of the sickle and by magic circles. As the *drakōn* tries to cast sleep upon its human victims with its terrible gaze, man attempts magical means to cast sleep upon its own unsleeping eyes. There are elaborately reciprocal battles too in the registers of vision and sound.

The next quartet of chapters turns to the cults of *drakōn* heroes and gods. Chapter 7 considers the general associations of *drakontes* with the earth, the underworld, and underworld powers, notably Hecate and the Erinyes. Of particular interest is the propensity of the returning heroic dead to turn into the *drakontes* that move from beneath the earth to the surface and make themselves anew. Attica, ever proud of the autochthonous origins of its population, boasted a suite of foundational and protective anguiform heroes in Cecrops, Ericthonius, Cychreus and, as we contend, the lawgiver Draco. The following pair of chapters turns to the group of kindly anguiform deities that seemingly rises to prominence, at any rate qua anguiforms, and seemingly as a phalanx, in the late fifth century BC. Chapter 8 looks at the *drakōn* gods of wealth and good luck: Zeus Meilichios, whose serpent form is celebrated in some particularly fine iconography, Zeus Ktesios, Zeus Philios, and not least Agathos Daimon, who played such an important foundational role in Alexandria and who opens up the intriguing question of house snakes. Chapter 9

looks at *drakōn* gods of healing: the great Asclepius, who moves between his cult sites in the form of an enormous *drakōn*, and who famously carries a serpent-entwined staff when manifesting himself in his avuncular humanoid form; his daughter Hygieia, seemingly the inspiration for a number of Roman derivatives, and perhaps in origin a divine projection of the *drakōn*-tending virgin; the single-site gods Amphiaraus and Trophonius who shared much of Asclepius' iconography; and the 'New Asclepius' of second-century AD Asia Minor, the serpent Glycon, the subject of one of Lucian's engaging satires. The chapter closes with a study of the phenomenon of divine *drakōn*-sires, which seems to have been associated with Asclepius above all, and to a lesser extent with Zeus. Chapter 10 follows on closely by trying to make sense of the confusing traditions of the keeping and exploitation of actual snakes in some of the shrines of the anguiform gods. The evidence embraces two quite different practices: on the one hand the (probably fictitious) maintenance, typically by priestesses, of individual great unseen serpents, as in the cases of the Athenian *oikouros ophis*, Sosipolis in Elea, the Juno Sospita serpent at Lanuvium, and the serpent of Metelis in Egypt; and on the other the maintenance of colonies of real snakes, this being associated primarily, but not exclusively, with Asclepian sanctuaries. Such snakes will usually have lived, unconfined, in the sanctuaries' sacred groves, but will have been wrangled with baskets. The snakes could not have eaten the honey cakes that served as their symbolic food, and were probably maintained rather with eggs. As Asclepius' patients incubated, sanctuary staff, who may have included women, would have done the rounds with the snakes, applying their mouths to the body-parts affected, for a lick or a gentle bite. The variety most likely to have been exploited in this regard is the large but phlegmatic rat snake, the Four-lined snake. Some striking modern comparanda demonstrate the general viability of this sort of reconstruction.

The capstone Chapter 11 follows the Graeco-Roman tradition of *drakōn*-slaying stories on into the early centuries of hagiography, in which the story-types later to be associated with Saints George and Patrick were established, with consideration of the traditions relating to Saints Thomas, Philip, Silvester, Hilarion, Donatus, Victoria, Marcellus, Andrew, Caluppan, and Marina, amongst others. It is demonstrated that the hagiographical dragon-fight tradition, the roots of which are indirectly attested already by Lucian, remains strongly integrated with the pagan tradition of *drakōn*-slaying stories by virtue of its similar exploitation of the themes of the symmetrical battle. Some of the saintly narratives project themselves as campaign documents against the actual pagan cults of serpent deities, or even as historical documents of their heroic closure. But scrutiny shows that the relationship of the hagiographical narratives with the pagan cults upon which they focus is etiolated, in both historical and thematic terms. In so far as these narratives serve the purpose of conversion, they do so less through a negative response to the sorts of pagan cult laid out in Chapters 7–10 than through a positive, assimilating response to the sorts of pagan narrative laid out in Chapters 1–6.

SNAKES IN MINOAN AND MYCENEAN CULTURE

The remnants of the Minoan and Mycenean civilizations offer little by way of significant antecedent to the culture of the great *drakontes* that came to flourish in

the art and literature of Greece from *c.*700 BC. They have, of course, left us no narratives and there is little of use in the iconography.

As for the pre-Greek Minoan civilization, it is above all its 'Snake Goddess' figurines that call for attention. The famous pair of open-bodiced faience figurines of the neo-palatial period (*c.*1700–1450 BC) from the palace of Knossos is supplemented by a few post-palatial-period examples (after *c.*1450 BC). The famous pair was discovered by Sir Arthur Evans, along with other cultic objects, as part of a shrine-set sealed in a stone cist sunk into the floor of a room to the south of the Throne Room. The larger figure is preserved only from the waist up. A pair of spotted snakes swoop around her bodice. The tail of one begins in a loop over her right ear, then its body trails down the left side of her bodice to her midriff, where it knots its head with the tail of the second snake, the body of which climbs up the right side of her bodice, and disappears behind her neck, whilst its head finally peeps out over the top of her conical headdress. A third spotted snake winds up around her left arm, then meanders across her back and down her right arm, resting its head in her right hand. The smaller figure has lost her left arm and her head. In her outstretched right hand she brandishes a snake decorated in the fashion of a candy-cane; it is possible that she brandished a second snake similarly in her lost left hand. A further arm fragment from the cist with another undulating snake on it would appear to derive from a third figurine of a broadly similar type.[9]

Evans christened the larger figurine the 'Snake Goddess' and the smaller one the 'Snake Priestess', and since him it has been debated whether we do indeed have a goddess–priestess pair or indeed whether both figures alike represent priestesses in turn representing the goddess (as has been contended, for example, by Matz). But the former hypothesis is based upon nothing more than the relative size of the figures and upon assumptions that they were made from the first to form part of the same set and that (as sometimes in Classical art) divine figures were marked out as such by superhuman size. As to the latter hypothesis, it is difficult to imagine what trace of themselves the priestesses that supposedly intervene between the goddesses and the artefacts can be leaving upon the image. The simple assumption is that both figurines merely represent goddesses, whether the same one or different ones. Possibly, as Marinatos contends, the deity or deities concerned should be classed as a variety of the 'mistress-of-animals' goddess type familiar throughout the Near East, although it is hard to progress from such a classification to any firm understanding of the nature of her relationship with her snakes, or her broader functions. Evans had argued from the fact that the figurines were found in the palace that the snake goddesses were concerned with household protection (just as household-protecting serpents were subsequently to be found in the Classical era). But, as Marinatos observes, one cannot make a direct equation between a Minoan palace with its complex religious functions and a simple house.[10]

[9] Evidence and discussion laid out at N. Marinatos 1993: 148, 157–9, 222–3 (the post-palatial evidence from Gournia), 276–7, 279, 292, with figs. 140, 141, 227, Lapatin 2002 esp. 60–4 (disputing the genuineness of several supposed examples of Minoan snake goddesses, not least the 'Boston goddess'), Trčková-Flamee 2003 (speculative but noting, at 128, a possible antecedent figure from Koumase of the pre-palatial Early Minoan II period, 2900–2300 BC).

[10] A. Evans 1921–36: i. 500–4, iv. 152–60; Matz 1958; note also Nilsson 1949: 310–29 and Burkert 1985: 60 on the household snakes hypothesis.

The assumption that the figurines represent a goddess with protective or somehow friendly snakes has induced some to see the Minoan figurines as ancestors of the Athene Parthenos with her attendant snake (Chs. 5 and 10).[11] Otherwise, the figurines might be thought to exhibit superficial iconographic similarities with other characters familiar from the Classical age. As female figures brandishing snakes in their hands or around their arms, they resemble Erinyes and, to a lesser extent, maenads. In so far as the larger figure sports serpents knotting at her waist, and a further one peeping forward from the top of her head, she resembles a serpent-belted and serpent-tressed Gorgon. One might also note a coincidence between the figurines' rounded, nippled breasts and the staring, bulbous eyes of early Gorgons and *gorgoneia*.[12] Might there be any connection? It seems unlikely that the Classical figures should represent a continuity of myth or cult, however much mutated across the centuries and in the course of passing from the Minoan-language culture into the Greek one (Erinyes received cult, just about; maenads did not receive cult but performed in it; Gorgons had no cultic associations). We may note that nothing resembling a transitional figure-type can be found in the intervening Mycenaean art. But it is, of course, possible that a smattering of Minoan 'Snake Goddess' figurines were unearthed in the archaic age (it is not impossible that some should even have survived in shrines), and so it also remains possible that they should have had an impact on the developing iconography of the Classical figure types.[13]

Seemingly used in connection with the Snake Goddess cult, whatever it was, were the so-called 'snake tubes'. These ceramic cylinders decorated with relief snakes have been identified as cup-stands. When in use, the relief snake would have appeared to have been approaching the cup above for a drink. Minoan, Mycenean, and indeed Geometric Greece alike have also produced examples of ewers decorated with relief snakes that rear up to the mouth of the vessel, and which seem to have been used for offerings to the dead. In a fragment of a large Mycenean terracotta statuette (late Helladic IIIB, *c.*1200 BC), possibly a cult image, from the Laconian sanctuary of Amyclaean Apollo, a left hand, around which a snake winds, grasps the stem of a *kylix*. These objects seemingly build a bridge of some sort—perhaps again, admittedly, only at iconographic level—between the Minoan snake goddesses and the 'tippling serpents' of the Greek hero reliefs of the late sixth century onwards.[14]

As for Mycenean civilization in its own right, the most striking finds of interest come from Mycenae itself, where Taylour unearthed some delightful terracotta models of flat-coiling snakes, of up to about a foot in diameter. He found six examples (two complete) in the store-room of the Citadel House, and fragments including seven heads in a cache in the same building's temple-room (Fig. 0.1). As he notes, the latter seven heads are modelled in strikingly different ways: one flicks

[11] Nilsson 1967: 288–90, 347–9, 433–7, Picard 1948: 241–2, Lévêque 1973 and 1975: 37–8, 44–5, Mitropoulou 1977: 29 and 94, Bodson 1978: 71, 82–3, Gourmelen 2004: 343 (with further scholarship).

[12] On a possible Gorgon affinity, see Lapatin 2002: 77–8.

[13] Gill's 1963 study of the 'Minoan Dragon' has little of interest to offer us; I note only that the horse-like creature illustrated at pl. i.b *may* have a snake-head tail.

[14] See Coldstream 1968: 60, 1977: 117–18, Salapata 2006: 547–9, with a Mycenean ewer illustrated at fig. 9. The statuette fragment: Tod and Wace 1906: 244 no. 794.

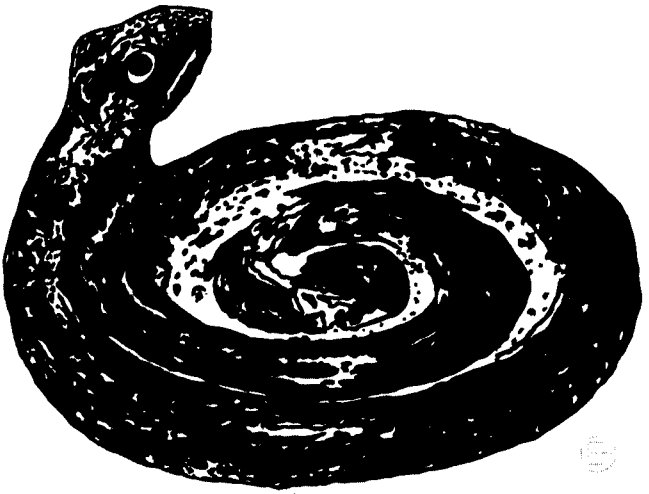


Fig. 0.1 Terracotta snake from the storeroom of the citadel house, Mycenae. Redrawn after Taylour 1969 pl. ix by Eriko Ogden.

out a tongue, another has a vulturine aspect, another a crocodilian one. The combination of temple and storeroom locations prompts us to wonder whether we have here the idols of a divine serpent with a brief, inter alia, to protect the household stores, a forerunner of Zeus Ktēsios, though it would seem impossible to establish continuity between the two (Ch. 8).[15] Otherwise, we need only note, first, that the Theban earth goddess Ma Ga once believed to have presided over a menagerie of sacred animals consisting of birds, dogs, mules, geese, and indeed snakes, to which offerings of barley were made, has proved to be chimerical;[16] and, secondly, that rumours of 'dragons' in Mycenean art have been greatly exaggerated.[17]

GRAECO-ROMAN *DRAKŌN*-SLAYING NARRATIVES AND THE CULTURES OF THE NEAR EAST

It is not the concern of this book to tarry, as others have, in the hinterlands of Graeco-Roman *drakōn*-slaying myth, but a few words may be said of them here. It is possible to contextualize Graeco-Roman *drakōn*-slaying myth in three

[15] Taylour 1969: 93 and plate ix, 1970: 272–3 and plate xxxix, d–e; cf. Šašel Kos 1991: 190.

[16] The key tablet is the *c.*1200 BC TH Gp 184, at Aravantinos et al. 2001–6: i. 76 (*e-pe-to-i* ~ *ἑρπετοῖς*). For the sacred snakes supposedly revealed, see Godart and Sacconi 1996: 108–10 (cf. Bonnechere 2003: 184, 303). For the claim debunked, see Neumann 2006 esp. 128–9 (no Ma Ga, no sacred animals, not even any snakes).

[17] Poursat's 1976 title 'dragons et crocodiles' cruelly deceives: the fantastical, griffin-like, four-legged creatures in question exhibit no connection whatsoever with *drakontes* or snakes, though they may exhibit some affinity with crocodiles.

broad ways. First, one can attempt to trace horizontal influences upon it from dragon-slaying myths of adjacent Near-Eastern cultures. Prominent advocates of this activity include Fontenrose, Walcot, Penglase, West, and Lane Fox.[18] Secondly, one can attempt to trace vertical influences upon it from its inheritance of Indo-European myth, as reconstructed from the dragon-slaying myths of other Indo-European speakers. Advocates of this approach include Siecke, Ivanov and Toporov, Watkins, and (again) West.[19] Thirdly, one can attempt to situate it within the cloud of international folktale. Advocates of this approach include Hansen and indeed the present author.[20] The cultures of concern to the Near-Eastern project are primarily those of Sumeria, Egypt, Babylon, Ugarit, the Hurrians, the Hittites, and the Jews.

The late-third-millennium BC Sumerian epic *Lugal-e* describes the attempt of Azag, a hardwood tree, child of heaven and earth, manifest as a venomous, hissing serpent, to seize the throne of the storm god Ninurta, who deploys winds and floods as weapons. In the course of their battle both of them set fire to the landscape. The correspondences with the *Theogony*'s description of Zeus' battle against Typhon are ostensible.[21]

The Hieratic-Egyptian Bremner-Rhind papyrus in the British Museum dates to *c.*310 BC but preserves, in indirect fashion, the tale of Ra's nightly victory over the serpent Apophis, thought to have been composed *c.*2000 BC. Ra is the sun-god, Apophis the embodiment of darkness and night. Apophis is 30 cubits long and his head is three cubits broad. He lives in a cave in the mountains of the West and as Ra's sun-barque approaches them on its daily course Apophis attacks it. The battle rages all night, with the god deploying spear, arrows, sword, flame and magical spells against the serpent, and eventually prevailing over him in the East. Ra cuts Apophis up and binds the parts beneath the earth, whereupon his barque rises again from that quarter.[22]

The fourth tablet of the Middle-Babylonian (early second-millenium BC) Akkadian *Enūma eliš* or *Epic of Creation* narrates the battle between Marduk and Tiamat, the female, serpentine, multi-headed embodiment of the sea and of chaos. As the battle is joined Marduk grasps in his hand a herb to counter Tiamat's venom. He encircles her with his net, drives an evil wind into her mouth which inflates her, and then shoots an arrow into her distended belly, popping her and splitting her down the middle. After destroying her and her monstrous associates, which include yet more anguiforms, he constructs heaven and earth from her body. Marduk's battle against Tiamat is illustrated on some

[18] Fontenrose 1959, Walcot 1966, Athenassakes 1988, Penglase 1994, M. L. West 1997, Lane Fox 2008.

[19] Siecke 1907, Ivanov and Toporov 1970, 1974, Watkins 1987, M. L. West 2007.

[20] Hansen 2002, Ogden 2008*a*.

[21] *Lugal-e*, esp. 168–297, with 176 for the hiss and 230 for the venom. For the text and French trans., see van Dijk 1983; for English trans. and discussion see Jacobsen 1987: 233–72. See also Fontenrose 1959: 147, 152, Penglase 1994: 193–5, M. L. West 1997: 301.

[22] P. Bremner-Rhind (reproduced in photographs at Budge 1910 pls. i–xix) xxvi–xxviii, with trans. at *ANET*[3] 6–7 (J. A. Wilson); discussion at Nagel 1929, Fontenrose 1959: 186–7, Wakeman 1973: 15–16, Brunner-Traut 1985. For the notion that the myth of the Delphic *drakōn* conforms to a similar pattern, in which a god associated with the sun overcomes a supposedly chthonic serpent, see Fontenrose 1959: 90–1, 121–45, 217–30, Kahil 1994: 610.

fine tenth- to seventh-century BC Neo-Babylonian cylinder-seals from Nimrud on which the god, brandishing a thunderbolt in each hand, leaps over the back of a long, rampant serpent.[23]

The story of Baal-Sapon's fight against Yam is preserved in a series of fourteenth-century cuneiform tablets unearthed at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) in 1929 and written in the local Canaanite language, accordingly known as Ugaritic, by a named scribe, Ilimilku. According to two principal tablets, El grants rule to Yam(m)(u), the principle of the sea, but Baal-Sapon (also known as Hadad), the storm-god, whom Yam seeks to make his slave, challenges him. Baal-Sapon defeats Yam with two throwing-clubs (i.e., it seems, thunderbolts) named 'Expeller' and 'Chaser', and made for him by the smith-god Kothar, which fly from his hands like eagles. He throws the first without effect, but the second strikes Yam on the head and brings him down, though he is left alive. References to this tale in further tablets associate the defeat of Yam with the slaying of a seven-headed serpent *Ltn*, a name which may be read as Litan or Lotan, and which evidently corresponds to the biblical Leviathan. The fragmentary nature of the tablets leaves it unclear whether Yam and Litan are one and the same, or are associates. Baal-Sapon then rules from a palace of silver, gold, and lapis lazuli built atop Mt. Sapuna above Ugarit (the Greek Mt. Kasios, the modern Jebel Aqra), also by Kothar. Baal-Sapon initially refuses to have windows built in the palace because of his continuing fear of Yam, but eventually concedes to have a single one, and through this he sends forth thunder.[24]

Cuneiform tablets of *c.*1250 BC preserve the Hittite priest Kella's aetiology of the *purulli* festival in two versions. The aetiology is the tale of the storm-god Tarhunna's (Tarhunta's) fight against the serpent Illuyanka(s) in Kiskilussa. Illuyanka's name in fact simply means 'Serpent', indeed it may be a description as opposed to a proper name. In both versions Illuyanka initially defeats Tarhunna. In the first version Tarhunna then prevails upon the goddess Inara to come to his aid. Inara seduces Illuyanka with her fine clothes and so draws him and his children forth from his lair. She then feeds them a banquet and inebriates them so that they are unwilling to return to their hole, perhaps because they are too fat to fit into it now. Inara has suborned the help of the mortal Hupasiya in return for sex, and he is now able to tie up Illuyanka with a rope, so that Tarhunna can kill him. In the second version Illuyanka steals Tarhunna's heart and eyes after

[23] The key passage is *Enūma eliš* tablet iv; for the text see Lambert and Parker 1966, with trans. at Dalley 2000: 228–77, superseding *ANET*[3] 60–72 (E. A. Speiser). Discussion at Fontenrose 1959: 148–64 (esp. 153 for Tiamat's likely serpent form), Walcot 1966: 27–54, M. L. West 1966: 244; 1997: 67–8, 147–8, 302, 379, 468, Littleton 1970: 109–15, Day 1977: 2, Wakeman 1973: 16–22, Batto 1992: 75–8, Penglase 1994: 103–6. Note also, more generally, van Buren 1946. For the cylinder-seals see the end of this section and Ch. 3. The newly discovered early Old Babylonian text, the *Song of Bazi*, refers obscurely to a sea-monster: for texts, transcriptions, translation, and commentary see George 2009: 1–15 (esp. pp. 8–9) with pls. 1–4.

[24] Baal and Yam: *KTU* 1. 1–2 (= *CTA* 1–2). Baal, Yam, and *Ltn*: *KTU* 1. 3 (= *CTA* 3) iii. 35–52 and 1. 5 (= *CTA* 5) i. 2–3. M. S. Smith 1994 offers a detailed edition; for English trans. see Coogan 1978, Gibson 1978, superseding *ANET*[3] 129–42 (H. L. Ginsberg); soundest is the French trans. of Caquot, Sznycer, and Herdner 1974. For discussions of the episode, see Gaster 1950: 114–244, Fontenrose 1959: 129–38, Wakeman 1973: 37–42, Otzen, Gottlieb, and Jeppesen 1980: 16–21, Bordreuil 1991, Batto 1992: 174–8, M. S. Smith 1994, M. L. West 1997: 84–8, Lane Fox 2008: 257–8.

defeating him. But Tarhunna then produces a son who marries Illuyanka's daughter, and he is able to retrieve his father's body-parts from his wife. Fully restored, Tarhunna then re-engages Illuyanka in battle and kills him, but also his own son too.[25] The battle is illustrated in a neo-Hittite relief of 1050–850 BC from Malatya, now in Ankara's Museum of Anatolian Civilizations.[26] In another fragmentary but evidently quite similar Hittite dragon-slaying myth inscribed at a similar point to the Illuyanka myth, this one derived from the Hurrians, the storm-god Teshub (Teššub) asks his sister Sauska (equivalent to Inara) to seduce the voracious sea-serpent Hedammu, sired by the underworld god Kumarbi with Sertapsuruhi, daughter of the sea-god. She bathes, perfumes, and adorns herself ('And (qualities which arouse) love ran after her like puppies,' Hoffner trans.) before going to Hedammu in his sea and beguiling him with, in turn, music, her naked body, a love-potion, and some beer. She allows Hedammu to make love to her before leading him out onto dry land. The finale is missing, but no doubt Hedammu was ambushed by Teshub once he had left the protection of the sea.[27]

The Zoroastrian sacred texts of the Iranian *Avesta* (c.1000–400 BC) feature two battles against the dragon Aži Dahāka, the first part of whose name is cognate with the Greek word *ophis*. Aži Dahāka is a creation of Angra Mainya, the world's Evil Principle. The first battle is against Atar, the Principle of Fire, created by Spenta Mainyu, the world's Good Principle. The two spirits are in competition for kingly splendour (*chvarenah*, the subsequent *farr*), and they fight for it using their proxy champions. Aži Dahāka first threatens to extinguish Atar, but Atar then threatens to send a stream of fire up through Aži Dahāka's anus and out of his three mouths. Intimidated, Aži Dahāka withdraws. The *Avesta* contains several similar references to Aži Dahāka's second battle, that in which he is overcome by the hero Thraētaona, although the actual fight itself is never narrated. These references repeatedly tell us that Aži Dahāka has three mouths, three heads, six eyes, and a thousand skills. Aži Dahāka offers sacrifices either to Ardvi Sura Anahita or to the Waters and to Vayu ('Storm-Wind'), the Divider of the Waters, in hopes of emptying the earth of men, but the deities prefer Thraētaona's sacrifices, as he prays rather to rid the world of Aži Dahāka and to liberate his two beautiful wives from him.[28] Middle Persian tradition offers further details on the defeat of Aži Dahāka, now known as Dahāg or Zohak (etc.), by Thraētaona, now known as Fredun (etc.), though it is unclear how many of these are ancient. Amongst these

[25] For the text see *CTH* 321 and Beckman 1982: 12–18; for trans. see Beckman 1982: 18–20 and Hoffner 1998: 11–14, superseding *ANET*[3] 125–6 (A. Götze). See the discussions cited in Ch. 2, in connection with Typhon.

[26] Illustrated at Fontenrose 1959: 123 fig. 16.

[27] *CTH* 348. For text-transcription and German trans. see Siegelova 1971: 38–71; for English trans. see Hoffner 1998: 51–5. Discussion at Wakeman 1973: 29–30, Penglase 1994: 189–90, M. L. West 1997: 104, 278–80, Haas 2006: 153–6, Lane Fox 2008: 301–4.

[28] For the *Avesta* (*Yasna*, *Yašts* and *Vidēvdat/Vendidād*) see Geldner 1886–96; for translations see Darmesteter and Mills 1880–7 (obsolete). Atar against Aži Dahāka: *Yašts* 19. 46–50. Thraētaona against Aži Dahāka: esp. *Yašts* 5. 28–35, 9. 13–15, 14. 40, 15. 18–25 (where the prayers are to Vayu), *Yasna* 9. 7–8, *Vidēvdat/Vendidād* 1. 17 (the latter two texts with confirmation that Thraētaona did indeed prevail in the battle). Discussion of Aži Dahāka at Fontenrose 1959: 209, Littleton 1970: 102–6, Boyce 1975: 97–100, Puhvel 1987: 110–11, Watkins 1995: 313–20, 464–8, M. L. West 2007: 259–60, 266–7.

details Thraētaona fights Aži Dahāka at the youthful age of 9, and when he strikes him, he releases a horde of harmful creatures from his body. He eventually binds him alive beneath Mt. Demavend.[29]

In the Hebrew Old Testament we meet the monstrous, cosmic sea-serpent Leviathan, the embodiment of chaos, who is believed to have been derived from the Canaanite Litan/Lotan.[30] Psalms (the tradition of which seems to have developed between *c.*1000 BC and *c.*500 BC) praises God for having cleft Leviathan the sea-monster in two, crushing his multiple heads and feeding him to sharks (or desert-dwellers). But Psalms also notes that he was in origin created by God (as are all things) to play in the sea. Isaiah (in the part of the book composed in the late eighth century BC) foretells God's destruction of Leviathan with his sword, describing Leviathan as a gliding and coiling serpent and a monster of the sea.[31] The same books tell also of God's defeat of Rahab, so as to dry up the waters of the great abyss. Psalms reminds God that he 'crush[ed] the monster Rahab with a mortal blow'. Isaiah (in the part of the book composed in the sixth century BC) reminds God that he 'hacked Rahab in pieces and ran the dragon through' and that he 'dried up the sea, the waters of the great abyss and made the ocean depths a path for the ransomed'. Job tells us of God that, 'With his strong arm he cleft the sea-monster, and struck down Rahab by his skill. At his breath the skies are clear, and his hand breaks the twisting/primeval sea-serpent.' Rahab is almost certainly a soubriquet for Leviathan.[32]

Much of the large scholarly literature that aspires to document the transfer of Near-Eastern myths to the Greeks is compromised by an unspoken assumption that prior to such a transfer the Greeks' own myth-world was a *tabula rasa*. The assumption needs only to be made explicit for its absurdity to be apparent. We must not confuse our lack of evidence about the Greeks' original myth-word with its existential status. One thing we can be sure of is that it will have had its own dragon-slaying myths, for they are universal. Any attempt, therefore, to demonstrate that a particular Greek *drakōn*-slaying myth was influenced in a substantial and significant fashion by a Near-Eastern one accordingly has much to do.

In fact the only Graeco-Roman *drakōn*-slaying myth that can seriously be argued to exhibit the influence of Near-Eastern antecedents is that of Typhon. As we will see, a plausible case can be made that this was shaped by the Canaanite-Ugaritic myth of Baal-Sapon against Yam and Litan and the Hittite myths of Tarhunna against Illuyanka and Teshub against Hedammu, the latter Hurrian-derived. This is because of the level of detailed correspondences that can be cited between the Near-Eastern and Greek narratives and because of the likelihood that the toponyms of the zone in which the Near-Eastern versions were developed,

[29] *Dēnkard* 7. 1. 26, *Bundahish* 29. 8–9.

[30] Discussion at Fontenrose 1959: 134, 209–10, Wakeman 1973: 62–8, Day 1977, Gordon 1980, Kloos 1986, Forsyth 1987, Batto 1992: 79–84.

[31] Psalms 74: 13–14 (cleaving of Leviathan), 104: 26 (creation of Leviathan), Isaiah 27: 1; cf. Job 3: 8. See Kittel, Elliger, and Rudolph 1997 for the text of this and other Old Testament passages, with *NEB* for translations.

[32] Psalms 89: 9–14, Isaiah 51: 9–10, Job 26: 5–14; cf. also 9: 5–14. See Wakeman 1973: 56–62, Day 1977 *passim*. Note also the passing reference to the sea-serpent and monster of the deep at Job 7: 12, though neither the name Leviathan nor the name Rahab is used. The fire-breathing monster elaborately but nonetheless obscurely described at Job 41: 1–34 may also be relevant here.

around the Jebel Aqra and across the gulf of Issus in Cilicia, are refracted in the Greek traditions (Ch. 2).

However, attention may be drawn to two cases in which Greek *drakōn*-slaying traditions do seem to have been influenced in part by means of radical reinterpretations of Near-Eastern iconography. We may invoke the model of the cult British stop-motion children's television series, *The Magic Roundabout*. Eric Thompson created this by watching the episodes of the French original, *Le Manège enchanté*, with the sound down, and spinning his own, whimsical narrations around the characters' ostensible actions, narrations that inevitably had little or no point of contact with the original stories. This model seems to describe well the relationship between images of Marduk attacking Tiamat on the Neo-Babylonian cylinder-seals from Nimrud and the earliest extant image of Perseus, Andromeda, and the *kētos* of Ethiopia. The constellation in the background of the original has become a pile of stones that Perseus launches at his monster (Ch. 3). It also seems to describe well the relationship between Mesopotamian images of Gilgamesh and Enkidu slaying the wild man Humbaba and early (though not the earliest) images of Perseus decapitating Medusa. The change in the monster's identity and indeed sex aside, Gilgamesh's turning away to take a weapon has been reinterpreted as an attempt to avoid looking at the monster. Meanwhile, it is possible that the notion that the decapitated Medusa gave birth to Pegasus derived from reinterpretations of images of the Mesopotamian demoness Lamashtu in her mistress-of-animals pose (Ch. 2). Less securely, it has been claimed that the anguipede type entered Greek mythology in the mid seventh century BC following the importation of deracinated images of the Mesopotamian healing god Ningizzida.[33]

GRAECO-ROMAN *DRAKŌN*-SLAYING NARRATIVES AND THE INDO-EUROPEAN INHERITANCE

Attempts to investigate the Near-Eastern and Indo-European backgrounds of *drakōn*-slaying narratives can look superficially similar with their broad-ranging collections of motif-sets, but their underlying projects and processes are somewhat different. Whereas the Near-Eastern project attempts to demonstrate horizontal influence upon Graeco-Roman *drakōn*-slaying narratives from the cultures adjacent to the Greeks, the Indo-European project attempts to demonstrate a vertical influence upon them from Greek culture's Indo-European inheritance, as reconstructed from Greek's sister languages and their related cultures. The cultures primarily in the frame here are those of the Hittites, India, Iran, Ireland, and Norse-Germanic culture. The Hittites and the Iranians, as Indo-European peoples

[33] Nigizzida: Vian 1952*a*: 12–13, 25–6, Ahlberg-Cornell 1984: 14, 17 and Gourmelen 2004: 46–7. There is no need to pursue claims of relationships between composite *drakontes* and Near-Eastern composite animal forms. Roes 1934, 1953 finds the origin of the Chimaera in composite-animal image-types from Louristan and Achaemenid Persia, Burkert 1983*b*: 52–3 in the image-types of Hittite composite animals ('two at least of three elements agree'); contra, Jacquemin 1986: 256. Kokkorou-Alewras 1990*a*: 41 suggests that early scenes of Heracles and the Hydra are influenced by 'earlier representations of analogous subjects in the East'.

living adjacently to or in some sort of contact with the Greeks, are exploited by both projects. Let us look briefly at some other narratives from the Indo-European set.

The Sanskrit *Rigveda*, perhaps composed between 1500 and 1000 BC, narrates the storm-god Indra's defeat of Vritra. Vritra is the firstborn of the serpents, and he encompasses and dams up the world's waters (his name signifies 'blockage', as the poem explicitly acknowledges). Indra smites him into pieces with a thunderbolt fashioned for him by Tvastar, so that his body comes to resemble a series of logged branches lying on the earth. By killing the serpent Indra releases the waters he controls, and they then rise to conceal his body beneath.[34]

The originally seventh- or eighth-century AD saga of Fergus mac Léti's killing of a terrible sea monster in Loch Rudraige (Dundrum Bay) is preserved in an eleventh-century Old Irish legal text. A leprechaun has given Fergus, the king of Ulster, the power to breathe underwater. Whilst swimming in the depths of the loch he encounters a monster, a *muirdris*, which inflates and deflates itself like a bellows. His terror at the sight leaves his face permanently disfigured, with his mouth twisted back to his occiput. Such disfigurement should debar him from the throne, but the wise men of Ulster want no other king, so they resolve to keep him and to prevent Fergus from discovering the blemish himself. To this end they arrange that he should never see a mirror and to keep the uncouth and the tactless from his presence. But seven years later Fergus beats his bondswoman, Dorn, for washing him too slowly, whereupon she taunts him with the truth. Fergus cuts her in two before returning to the loch. After a two-day fight he emerges with the monster's head, but then drops down dead. The loch remains red for a month.[35]

Norse and Germanic literature preserves a rich portfolio of dragon-fight narratives mostly from the thirteenth century onwards.[36] The earliest attestation of what would become Sigurd-Siegfried's famous slaying of the dragon Fafnir comes in a few lines of the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf*, currently believed to have been composed at some point between the eighth and tenth centuries AD, though here the slayer of the unnamed dragon is the man who will become Sigurd-Siegfried's father, Sigemund (Sigmund, Siegmund):[37] 'Great fame sprang up for Sigemund after the day of his death. For the doughty warrior had laid low the worm (*wyrm*), the guardian of the hoard . . . it fell to him that his sword transfixed the portentous

[34] The key passage of description is *Rigveda* 1. 32; cf. also 1. 52, 1. 80, 2. 11–12, 3. 32, 4. 18, 5. 32, 6. 17, 8. 96, 10. 113. For the text see Van Nooten and Holland 1994; for English trans., Arya and Joshi 2001, Brereton and Jamison forthcoming. Discussion at Fontenrose 1959: 194–209 (documenting many further Sanskrit sources), Wakeman 1973: 9–12, Watkins 1995: 298–300, 304–12, Cozad 2004: 13–22 (unpersuasively historicizing the myth to find in it a record of the Brahmins' assertion of their own religion over a previously established variety of serpent-worship), M. L. West 2007: 82, 255–7 (noting that the lightning confusingly associated with Vritra at *Rigveda* 1. 32 §13 is a mistaken transference from Indra's own armoury).

[35] *Echtra Fergusa mac Léti* 6–8; text, trans., and discussion at Binchy 1952.

[36] There are some three dozen dragon episodes in Old Icelandic literature alone: Boberg 1966: 38–9, with J. D. Evans 1985: 86. Some of the principal texts are conveniently catalogued at Rauer 2000: 194–8.

[37] For the text see Klaeber 1950, Wrenn and Bolton 1988, and Tripp 1991; for an admirably literal trans. see Porter 1991. For the date of *Beowulf*, see Bjork and Obermeier at Bjork and Niles 1996: 18–28 (8th–10th century AD), Rauer 2000: 18 (broadly likewise), North 2006 (the winter of 826–7, at Breedon on the Hill, by Abbot Eanmund [!]). For more general discussion see Tolkien 1936, Orchard 1995, Bjork and Niles 1996, North 2006.

worm, so that the noble iron stood in the wall. The dragon (*draca*) died in the killing. By valour the dread warrior enabled himself to acquire the treasure-hoard, as he wished. Wael's son loaded up his sea-going boat and carried the adornments in the bosom of his ship. The hot worm melted.'[38] The *Beowulf* poet self-consciously casts his own hero in the mould of Sigurd/Sigemund, sending him in his turn, now with his companion Wiglaf, similarly to defeat a flying, fire-breathing dragon that guards its treasure in a Roman-built barrow on a headland, from which a stream flows, heated to boiling by its fire. Beowulf himself does not survive the battle, in the course of which the dragon surrounds him with a ring of fire. The *Beowulf* dragon is often now referred to as a 'firedrake', this term conveniently translating the Anglo-Saxon *fyrdraca* and *līgdraca*.[39]

Beowulf aside, the earliest literary accounts of the Sigurd-Siegfried episode derive from Old Norse and German literature of the thirteenth century AD. Fafnir is now named, and his killer has indeed become Sigurd-Siegfried. The *c.*1200–70 AD Icelandic *Volsungasaga* tells how the Aesir-gods, Odin, Loki, and Hoenir, catch, kill, and flay Otr, the man-otter, only to be captured in turn and bound by his father Hreidmar and his brothers Regin and Fafnir when they lodge with them and unwisely show off their catch. The family demands an 'otter's ransom' of the gods, namely that they should fill Otr's flayed skin with gold, and cover it over with gold too. Loki accordingly raids the treasure of the dwarf-pike Andvari, even taking from him the one gold ring, Andvaranautr, that he tries to conceal and keep. As he takes it, Andvari utters a curse that will bring death to whoever owns the ring in the future. Although Odin aspires to keep the ring for himself, he must give it up to cover the final whisker of the stuffed otter. In due course the stronger and greedy Fafnir kills his father and deprives Regin of his share of the gold, taking it off into the wilderness of Gnita-Heath and becoming transformed into a great serpent and lying upon the gold, forever guarding it. Regin urges his foster-son Sigurd to kill Fafnir, encouraging him to the task by telling him that he is no bigger than a water-snake and by using his skills as a smith to reforge Sigurd's broken sword Gram for him; the sword is so strong and sharp that Sigurd can slice through an anvil with it. He advises him to dig a pit in the track by which the dragon comes down from his cave to the nearby river to drink, sit in it, and thrust the sword upwards into his heart as he crawls overhead. Although Regin runs off in fear prior to the encounter, Sigurd does as he has suggested, and as the dragon comes to drink, snorting out venom before him, thrusts the sword upwards into his 'shoulder'. The dying Fafnir makes a number of prophecies for Sigurd and tries to discourage him from taking his hoard of gold, telling him that it brings death to all that possess it. Regin now returns to Sigurd's side, drinks Fafnir's blood, which he knows will bestow on him the gift of prophecy, and asks him to roast Fafnir's heart for him. As he does so Sigurd tests the juices by dipping his finger in them

[38] *Beowulf* 884–97 (§13; Ogden trans.). For the text see Klaeber 1950, with Porter 1991 for a translation of the whole. Cf. Rauer 2000: 47–9 for the *Beowulf* poet's handling of this material. Wael's son: cf. 'Volsung'.

[39] *Beowulf* lines 2200–3182 (§§31–43), with *fyrdraca* at line 2689 and *līgdraca* at lines 2333, 3040. See Rauer 2000 for a masterly analysis of the Beowulf dragon story (with a helpful summary of the often puzzling narrative at 24–5), its relationship to medieval hagiography and much else besides. For treasure-guarding dragons in later British tradition, see Simpson 1980: 29–31.

and so also acquires the gift of prophecy, specifically the ability to understand the prophetic language of birds. At once he learns from the song of the nuthatches that Regin is planning to betray him, and so he draws Gram and cuts off Regin's head with it. He then rides to Fafnir's lair, where he finds its massive iron doors left open, to take his store of gold.[40] Broadly comparable accounts (albeit with dwarves and giants exchanging places) are offered by Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda*, compiled *c.* AD 1220 and the *c.* AD 1270 *Poetic Edda*. These texts imply, more strongly than does *Volsungasaga*, that Fafnir's transformation into a serpent is aided by his wearing of Hreidmar's Helm of Dread.[41] We can be sure that the tale had found the form it has in *Volsungasaga* and the *Eddas* by the period of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, for it is handsomely attested in this form on a series of four engraved Manx crosses from the Isle of Man, a strategic Viking base in those centuries. The crosses' scenes include Loki's killing of Otr, Sigurd (as opposed, already, to Sigemund, one assumes) transfixing Fafnir with a sword (Gram?) from a pit below, and Sigurd again roasting the dragon's heart and sucking his burnt finger, whilst a bird and Sigurd's horse (Grani?) stand by.[42]

The German and German-originating versions of the tale differ slightly. *Thidrekssaga* (*c.*1230–50 AD), an Old Norse saga based on lost German material, makes the two key brothers Regin and Mimir, with Regin rather becoming the dragon as a result of his devotion to sorcery (whether by his own design is not clear), and Mimir taking on the role of the smith. Mimir finds the child Sigurd being reared by a hind, and so makes him one of his apprentices, but Sigurd is too clumsy (he breaks anvils as he tries to forge metal) and bullies the other apprentices, so Mimir resolves to unburden himself of him by sending him into the forest to make charcoal, where he will meet Regin, the 'fire-dragon' (*linnormr*), whom Mimir has asked to destroy him. But Sigurd beats Regin to death with a massive fiery beam from his charcoal-burning. He decapitates the dragon (Regin, whether humanoid or dragon, must ever be decapitated, it seems) and stews it up for a meal. Sucking his fingers after scalding them in the soup, Sigurd learns from the birds that Mimir is plotting to kill him and so returns to kill him first, but not before he has given himself an impenetrable horny skin by smearing the dragon's sweat (the mansuscript reading) or blood (the editors' preference) all over himself, save for the one patch of his back he cannot reach. Mimir attempts but fails to buy his life from Sigurd by giving him the sword Gram and a special helmet, amongst

[40] *Volsungasaga* §§13–20; for the text see Olsen 1906–8, G. Jónsson 1954*b* (at i. 140–54), and Thorsson 1985; trans. in Byock 1990. Ploss 1966 is the standard discussion of the legend. We will not dilate here upon the theories that the figures of Sigurd and Fafnir originated respectively in the historical Arminius and the legions of Varus: see e.g. Höfler 1978 and, more generally, Wiegels and Woesler 1995.

[41] Snorri Sturluson *Prose Edda, Skáldskaparmál* §§46–7 ('Otter's Ransom' and 'Fafnir, Regin and Sigurd'); for the text see F. Jónsson 1931 (at 129–30) and Faulkes 1998; for trans. see Byock and Poole 2005: 95–8, §7 (this translation observes the traditional sectioning for the *Prose Edda*'s *Gylfaginning*, but not for its *Skáldskaparmál*). *Poetic Edda, Reginsmal*, and *Fafnismal*; cf. also *Gripisspa*; for the text and trans. see Dronke 1969–2010; for the text cf. also Neckel and Kuhn 1983: 165–6, 176–9, 180–8; for trans. cf. also Larrington 1996: 143–65. Note too the brief account of Sigurd and Fafnir in the story of Norna-Gest (*Nornagests Tháttr* §5) in the 14th-century AD *Book of Flatey* (*Flateyarbok*); for the text see Nordal et al. 1944–5: i. 387–91.

[42] Kermode 1907 nos. 119–22; cf. Ellis 1942, Margeson 1980, Sorrell 1994: 70–1.

other arms.[43] The early sixteenth-century German *Lied vom hürnen Seyfrid* (*Horn Siegfried Lay*) broadly aligns closely with *Thidrekssaga*. But here, after killing the principal dragon, Siegfried finds an enclosed valley full of many more dragons, snakes, and reptiles. He throws trees down and burns them all with fire from the charcoal burner. From the fire there oozes a molten horn substance which he touches. As it dries it turns his thumb to horn, and so he coats his whole body with it, apart from the part of his back he cannot reach.[44]

In the *Prose Edda* Snorri Sturluson further tells that the Midgard Serpent (Midgårdsormr, i.e. 'Mid-yard-worm') Serpent was the son of Loki. Odin cast it into the ocean that surrounds all the lands, where it grew to an enormous size and coiled around them, biting its tail. Utgarda-Loki (Udgårdsloke, i.e. 'Out-yard-Loki') tricked Thor into attempting to lift a portion of the serpent, disguised as merely a cat, off the ground in a trial of strength. Thor was able to compel the supposed cat to raise no more than a single paw. In anger at being tricked, Thor went out onto the ocean to fish for the serpent with the giant Hymir, using the head of a massive ox as bait. The serpent was hooked and Thor strained so hard to pull it up that his feet crashed through the bottom of his boat and he braced himself against the sea-floor. The serpent spewed out venom at him but Thor threw his hammer and struck off the serpent's head. At this point Snorri intervenes in his own narrative to deny the truth of it: the Midgard Serpent, he protests, lives still in the surrounding sea. At Ragnarok (the 'Twilight of the Gods') it will writhe in fury and attack the land, spewing venom again into air and sea. Thor will again fight the serpent, and kill it again, but he will also die himself from the venom it spits upon him.[45]

Other early Norse-Germanic dragon-slayings may be mentioned briefly. First, an Anglo-Saxon manuscript of the tenth or eleventh century uniquely preserves a 'Nine Herbs Charm' against diseases that incorporates a historiola, a cameo-narrative, of a primeval fight between Woden and a worm (*wyrm*) that is the origin of the world's diseases. The worm bites a person unnamed; Woden strikes it into

[43] *Thidrekssaga* §§163–7; for the text see Bertelsen 1905–11 and G. Jónsson 1954*a*; for trans., Haymes 1988. The *c.* AD 1200 Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*, which originated in Austria, refers to the dragon-episode only in passing, §§100, 899–904: we are told similarly that Siegfried has slain a dragon and bathed in its blood to make his skin so horny that no weapon can penetrate it. However, as he was bathing a leaf fell onto his back from a linden tree above, so that this spot alone remained vulnerable. Hagen tricks Siegfried's wife Krimhild into revealing the spot to him, so that he can treacherously slay him (for text see Reichert 2005; for trans., Hatto 1965: 28, 121). Two further 13th-century AD German accounts of Siegfried deserve mention. In the *Rosengarten zu Worms* (*Rose Garden of Worms*) §§329–33 we learn that Siegfried has killed a dragon on a rock, that he has been reared in a forge, and that his skin is horny (for text see Holz 1893; I know of no English trans.). In Albrecht von Scharfenberg's *Seifrid de Ardemont* §§18–32, in which Siegfried comes to the court of King Arthur, he also rescues a damsel from a dragon and there is a suggestion too of a reptile brood akin to that of the *Horn Siegfried Lay* (for text see Panzer 1902; I know of no English trans.; K. C. King 1958: 72–5 offers a convenient summary).

[44] *Horn Siegfried Lay* §§1–11; for text and discussion see K. C. King 1958; for a modern French trans. see Lecouteux 1995; I am aware of no trans. into English. More recently William Morris offered his own take on the tale of Sigurd in *Sigurd the Volsung* (1876; reprinted as Morris 1911: xii).

[45] Snorri Sturluson *Prose Edda*, *Gylfaginning* §§34, 46, 47, 48, 51, 53 (text at F. Jónsson 1931: 61–3, 72, 87, Faulkes 1998). The tale of the fishing expedition is told in shorter compass at *Poetic Edda*, *Hymiskvitha* 17–26 (text at Dronke 1969–2010: i. 22). Cf. Rauer 2000: 44–5, 160–1, 197–8.

nine parts with some twigs; and then, it seems, traps its venomous fangs in an apple.[46] Secondly, the historical but heavily mythologized Ragnarr Lodbrok ('Hairy Breeches') is pitted against a pair of serpents in Saxo Grammaticus' early thirteenth-century Latin *Gesta Danorum*. Herodd, king of the Swedes, finds a pair of baby vipers whilst out hunting and brings them home (oddly) for his daughter Thora to rear. She feeds them daily with an ox carcass. But when they are grown they blight the countryside with their breath. The king proclaims that he will give Thora in marriage to whoever can dispose of them. Ragnarr steps forward and devises a plan. He wraps himself up in heavy woollen clothing, and then bathes in freezing water to turn it to ice, so that it will serve to protect him against the serpents' bites. The two serpents attack him and pour their venom over him, but Ragnarr is at last able to drive his spear through their hearts. The king laughs at Ragnarr's bizarre clothing, giving him the nickname Hairy Breeches, and bestows his daughter upon him.[47] Thirdly, *Thidrekssaga* again tells the wonderful tale of Thidrek's and Fasold's rescue of Sistram from a flying dragon. The two heroes catch sight of this huge creature, with thick legs, long and sharp claws, and a large and terrible head as they emerge from a forest. The dragon is flying low, scraping its talons over the ground, weighed down by the half-swallowed Sistram still projecting from its mouth, arms and all. Thidrek and Fasold leap up to strike at the dragon's belly, but cannot penetrate its tough skin. Sistram advises them to seize his own sword from the dragon's mouth, which will be better able to penetrate it, but he also advises them to strike the dragon far down its belly, for fear they may otherwise harm his legs within its throat. Fasold takes the sword, and succeeds, with Thidrek, in bringing the dragon down, and Sistram is rescued.[48]

So, on the basis of these dragon-slaying myths in Indo-European cultures, can it be claimed that a similar myth flourished in the Proto-Indo-European culture (which was perhaps based on the Pontic steppe in the fourth millennium BC, and perhaps coincided with the Kurgan culture known from archaeology)? The demonstration of a word's presence (in duly modified form) in a range of its daughter-languages is (normally) sufficient to prove that it existed in Proto-Indo-European itself and that this is where the daughter-languages derived it from. But given, once again, the universality of dragon-slaying myths, the demonstration that a range of daughter-languages have such myths is not in itself sufficient to prove that Proto-Indo-European had one (although their very universality would in itself lead to that presumption) or that the daughter-languages' dragon-slaying myths are derived from it. To make the case one would need to find in the daughter-languages a specific set of shared sub-motifs or of shared and associated vocabulary. Watkins's project to reconstruct a poetic formula describing the slaying

[46] The text: Dobbie 1942: 119–21, 210. The interpretation of it: Watkins 1995: 424–8 (also reproducing the key portion).

[47] Saxo Grammaticus *Gesta Danorum* 9. 252–3, 262; for text see Olrik and Raeder 1931 (at i. 152–3), with trans. at Davidson and Fisher 1998: i. Subsequent Norse sources listed at Rauer 2000: 195.

[48] *Thidrekssaga* §105 (at G. Jónsson 1954*a*: i. 156–9). Thidrek is Dietrich of Bern (i.e. Verona), a distant refraction of Theodoric. Another battle with a flying dragon, victim in mouth, is to be found in *Erex saga*, of similar date, this interpolated into a translation of an Old French original: text at Blaisdell 1965: 48–51; trans. at J. D. Evans 1985: 93–4. A battle with yet another flying dragon is the principal subject of the *Horn Siegfried Lay*, §§160–79.

of a dragon in Proto-Indo-European, were it to succeed, would meet and indeed exceed both these requirements. Unfortunately, the reconstruction process for myth, narrative, or 'poetics' can seldom benefit from the scientific rigour available to pure linguistic reconstruction, and Watkins's unravelling claims fail to convince. The poetic phrase he attempts to reconstruct takes the abstract form, 'HERO SLAY SERPENT (with WEAPON/ COMPANION),' where the capitalized terms denote ideas rather than cognate words as such. The vagueness and plasticity of this phrase is self-evident from the first. But only in the case of the idea SLAY is it contended that there is a significant tendency for the daughter-languages to represent it with verb-forms derived from a particular root, the Proto-Indo-European **g^{w}hen*, and even here the rule is more honoured in the breach than the observance. It is noteworthy that the idea SERPENT does not constitute any kind of lexical fixed point: a wide variety of words and names occupies its supposed position in the derived languages, by no means all of them even relating to serpents. We must wonder whether Watkins ultimately establishes anything more than a reaffirmation of the relative success of the **g^{w}hen-*, 'slay', root in the Indo-European language family.[49]

A second caution relates to the portfolio of Norse-Germanic dragon-slaying narratives. These are normally thought to preserve a tradition that reaches far back into the past, and to preserve material from a Proto-Indo-European inheritance that might therefore be gainfully compared with Greek traditions in an attempt to divine the shape of common ancestor-narratives, their very richness and expansiveness making them particularly valuable in this regard.[50] However, it is a salutary fact that our earliest witness to a Norse-Germanic dragon-fight, *Beowulf*, with its passing reference to the Sigemund fight and its own, probably derivative, tale of the Firedrake, has been proved to be subject already to strong influence from the dragon-fight tradition in Latin hagiography.[51] The Norse-Germanic dragon may then be daughter rather than cousin to the Graeco-Roman dragon.

GRAECO-ROMAN *DRAKŌN*-SLAYING NARRATIVES AND INTERNATIONAL FOLKTALE

However, the ground tends to be cut away from under speculations about Indo-European genealogies and Near-Eastern intercultural exchanges by consideration of

[49] Watkins 1995: 297–468, with the supposed underlying formula laid out at 301–3, 325. Note p. 303: 'If it is once admitted that an Indo-European verb **g^{w}hen-* is the common ancestor of Greek *πεφν-*, *φον-*, Vedic *han-*, Avestan *jan-*, Hittite *kuen-*, and Germanic *ban-*, then the burden of proof is on the skeptic who would deny that the semantics of that verb, and its formulaic deployment in traditional literature, cannot be likewise inherited.' The closest we come to a productive phrase in the daughter languages that deploys a common PIE-derived term for serpent is in the correspondence between Sanskrit *áhann áhim* (*Rigveda* 1. 32. 1 etc., of Indra against Vritra) and Avestan *janat ažim* (*Avesta, Yasna* 9. 8 etc., of Thraētaona against Aži Dahāka); the most direct equivalent of these in Greek would be *ἔπεφνεν ὄφιν*, which (NB) is not attested. M. L. West 2007: 78–9 surprisingly endorses Watkins's lax attitude to lexical substitution.

[50] See in particular Watkins 1995: 414–38.

[51] Rauer 2000; cf. also Sorrell 1994.

the world of folktale. For it is likely that behind all the ancient—and medieval—dragon narratives we have mentioned so far there hummed the constant background noise of the already effectively universal dragon-related folktales documented in the standard collections.[52]

In the past notions have been entertained that the same tale-type could arise independently in diverse places, ages, and cultures ('polygenesis') either as a product of some sort of hard-wiring in the human mind or of the constant conditions and eternal verities of human life. But nowadays, in the light of studies of the migratory patterns displayed by folktales during the last two centuries (the only age for which the data exists to permit such studies), most folklorists hold that the link between examples of the same tale-type found remotely in time, place, and culture consists, rather less excitingly, in their common participation in a vigorous and virally reproducing and expanding tradition, principally oral in nature, and in most cases of great (though admittedly untrackable) antiquity ('monogenesis'). But given that dragon-related tale-types already flourished in antiquity (which is true also of many other tale-types from the standard folktale repertoire), then it may be assumed that the age in which these tales did the bulk of their spreading across humanity was considerably earlier than that of their earliest attestations, whenever and wherever these happen to be. The fundamental connections, therefore, between ancient exempla of dragon tales do not consist in their participation in a vertical genealogy in course of development through known antiquity, or in their participation in horizontal storytelling exchanges observable in known antiquity, but in the fact that they are all alike manifest efflorences of tale-types that are resident in a largely stable folk tradition that is, by the age of known antiquity, to all intents and purposes already universal, all-pervasive, and chronologically and geographically flat. William Hansen, the modern doyen of the study of the folktale in ancient context, appositely observes: 'Being a small sample of the whole, each record [sc. of any given folktale performance] must stand for hundreds of thousands of unrecorded tellings in the career of an oral tale. In any assemblage of narrations of the same tale type, whether recent or old or both, it is therefore safest to assume that the texts are independent realisations of the tradition, unless particular relationships can actually be demonstrated to be otherwise.'[53] The success of the folktale method is often remarkable given the precariousness of its intellectual foundations.

The roles played by dragons and serpents in the standard collections of international folktales do indeed shed great light on the ancient *drakōn* culture.[54] The most important tale-type associated with them is ATU 300, an elaborate version of the still familiar tale in which a king must give up his virgin daughter as a sacrifice to a dragon and so offers her hand in marriage to any hero

[52] For folktales in ancient context and the history of the study thereof, see Hansen 2002: 1–31 and G. Anderson 2000: 1–23, 2006 *passim*, esp. 1–89.

[53] Hansen 2002: 8.

[54] For dragons and serpents in folktale generally see ATU 300 and index s.vv. 'Adder', 'Dragon', 'Dragon's blood', 'Dragon-slayer', 'Dragons', 'Serpent', 'Snake', 'Snake-leaves', 'Snakebite', 'Snakes'; S. Thompson 1966 A531, B11, and index s.vv. 'Dragon' (etc.), 'Serpent' (etc.), 'Snake' (etc.); Röhrich 1981. British readers will find much of interest in Simpson 1980 (cf. also 1978).

that can deliver her from it. The type carries a coda episode in which the hero cuts off the dragon's head and then cuts out its tongue (or teeth or eyes) to keep; before he can claim his bride an impostor takes the dragon's discarded head to the king to do so, but the girl is restored to her rightful groom when he produces the tongue in turn. Versions of this tale-type are attested the world over. But it is best represented by Gottfried von Strassburg's *Tristan* of AD 1210. According to this, the country and people around Wexford are being burned up by a terrible fiery dragon. The king of Ireland promises his daughter Isolde to whoever can slay it. After a mighty fight in which the dragon eats half of his horse, Tristan tracks and kills the creature and cuts out its tongue, snapping the mouth back shut. He stumbles away from the scene but is temporarily overcome by exhaustion, the heat from the dragon, and the noxious fumes the tongue continues to exude. In the meantime the king's cowardly steward discovers the dragon's body, cuts off its head, and runs back claiming to have killed the dragon and demanding Isolde for his bride. Eventually there is a showdown at court in which the steward produces the head as evidence for his slaying but is confuted when Tristan produces the tongue. Tristan is awarded Isolde, and the steward is humiliated.[55] In its entirety, as reconstructed, this tale type best resembles the myth of Perseus, Andromeda, and the sea-monster amongst ancient myths, the more so the more one is prepared to allow that there may have been a kaleidoscoping and redistribution of the tale's motifs to other parts of the Perseus cycle, with the decapitation motif transferred to the also anguiform Medusa, the detachable-head-part-motif transferred to the Graeae's eye, and with Phineus in the role of the wicked competing suitor (Ch. 3).[56]

Some further strongly recurring folktale-types and motifs also resonate for the ancient *drakōn* culture laid out in this book. Two are of particular importance. First, serpents and dragons are frequently associated with the magical healing and reanimation of individuals. The ancient tales of Asclepius and Polyidus, taught by a pair of snakes how to reanimate by the laying on of a magical herb (Ch. 9), conform astoundingly well to two relevant folktale-types here, whilst the early-hagiographical tale of St Thomas (Ch. 11) conforms fully with that in which a serpent is compelled to suck its own venom out of a recent victim.[57] The drinking

[55] Gottfried von Strassburg *Tristan*, books 13–14, esp. 13 lines 8963–9092. For the text see Krohn 1980, with trans. at Hatto 1960. Gottfried's German account is derivative of French and ultimately Celtic forebears, and so excluded from the Norse-Germanic tales reviewed above. See further the international versions catalogued at ATU 300; cf. Röhrich 1981.

[56] For ATU 300 and its relation to the Perseus myth, see Hartland 1894–6: i. 20–1, iii. 32–3, 47–9, Bolte and Polívka 1913–32: i. 547–56 (parallels for no. 60 Grimm, *Die zwei Brüder*), Ranke 1934 (detailed and technical), S. Thompson 1946: 22–32 (summarizing Ranke), Dawkins 1955: 123–8 (a modern Greek folk-tale version of the St George story from Karpathos, with the decapitation and de-tonguing of a double-headed dragon), Milne 1956, Fontenrose 1959: 534–40 (on Sigurd traditions), L. Schmidt 1957, Liungman 1961: 38–47, Hetzner 1963: 12–21, Röhrich 1981, Alexiades 1982 (modern Greek tales), Egli 1982 (anthropologically slanted, but to be used with caution), Scherf 1982: 61–4, Ashliman 1987: 51–3 (English language tales), Pastré 1996, and especially Hansen 2002: 119–30. The clearest expression of the tale-type in extant ancient Greek literature is the tale of Alcathous' killing of the Cithaeronian lion at Dieuchidas of Megara, *FGrH* 485 F10 (4th cent. BC), and Pausanias 1. 41. Alcathous' enemies produce the lion's head, but Alcathous produces the tongue to win the hand of King Megareus' daughter. See further on this Ogden 2008*a*: 97–9.

[57] In general: ATU 160, 207C, 318. For Polyidus, cf. ATU 612, 672D. For St Thomas, cf. ATU 182.

or smearing-over of a serpent's blood, or the consumption of its organs, notably its heart and liver, can also confer healing upon humans,[58] or even what might be termed 'super-healing', the gift of supernatural powers. The tale-type of a man bathing in dragon's blood to become invincible extends beyond the Sigurd tradition.[59] Living serpents and their consumed parts alike can confer upon people the ability to understand the languages of animals, particularly that of birds, à la Sigurd again, and this corresponds in important ways with ancient traditions relating to Melampus and to Helenus and Cassandra (Ch. 3).[60] Secondly, serpents and dragons are frequently associated with the bestowal of wealth upon individuals, often through the mechanism of their golden crown or of a magic ring or stone.[61] Compatibly with this, we also find dragons and snakes acting as guardians of objects or individuals, and this corresponds well with the characteristics of ancient guardian *drakontes* of springs and treasures (Ch. 4).[62] More generally, the powers reviewed here map strikingly well onto the specialist functions of *drakōn* and *drakōn*-related deities in the ancient world, healing and prophecy (Asclepius et al., Ch. 9) and wealth- and luck-bringing (Zeus Meilichios et al., Ch. 8), and in so doing offer a powerful explanation of the origin of these deity-types. Also of interest is a tale-type in which a sorcerer expels snakes by charming the king or queen of the snakes, but is killed by it in the process. This is of particular relevance for the Lucianic tale we shall investigate at the close of the book (Ch. 11).[63]

A SOCIOBIOLOGICAL HYPOTHESIS

To turn from dragon narratives to the creatures themselves, Jones has recently argued a sociobiological hypothesis that human beings possess an 'instinct for dragons', that is, that the concept of the dragon is hard-wired into the human brain, a suggestion that might offer pause for thought given the universality of dragon-slaying narratives. He notes that African vervet monkeys give distinctive alarm calls in response to the approach of three types of predator, namely raptors (predatory birds), serpents, and cats. He imagines that the arboreal ancestors of human beings once had to be similarly wary before these three classes of creature, and that an instinct developed to help them in this, at some point between 23 and 5 million years ago. This instinct took the form of a ready-made image in the brain of a creature that, by way of convenient shorthand, constituted a composite of the three dangerous classes, in other words: a 'brain-dragon'. This instinctive image persists in the mind of all humans, though it no longer gives rise to anxiety, and accounts for the replication of dragon imagery across all human cultures. There are further ramifications for dragon myth and lore. Dragons are particularly

[58] ATU 305. [59] ATU 650C.

[60] ATU 670 (a living snake confers the ability to understand animal languages, especially that of birds), 672 (the ability conferred by the cooking of a serpent's crown), 673 (the ability conferred by the devouring of the flesh of the white serpent).

[61] ATU 156B*, 285A, 404, 411, 560, 672, 890A*.

[62] ATU 285, 404, 485, 551, 672C*, 672D. [63] ATU 672B*.

associated with water sources because it is at water holes that our ancestors would have been most exposed to attack. And young women are particularly prone to require rescuing from their clutches because women of childbearing age were critical to group survival and had to be protected at all costs. Whatever one may think of the biological and evolutionary aspects of this hypothesis, the collation of the historical and cultural data upon which it rests leaves much to be desired. Jones's 'brain-dragon' image as compounded from raptor, serpent, and cat appears to owe much to the contemporary Western stereotype of what one might term the 'medieval' dragon. His consequent hunt for images that salute this type across a range of historical human cultures lacks rigour. As for the Graeco-Roman material, let us note that the creatures the ancients knew as *drakontes* or *dracones* (no other creature from antiquity appears to be a candidate for an instantiation of Jones's 'brain-dragon') fit his type poorly. The unique tight correspondence I can find for it in the ancient evidence is the pair of winged serpents with lion-feet that draw a chariot for one of the gods (now lost) in the Aphrodisias Gigantomachy of *c.* AD 150.[64] The complex form of Typhon combines serpents, lion-heads, and wings, but only in conjunction with a great many other elements too (Ch. 2). The winged *drakontes* that occasionally draw Medea's flying Chariot of the Sun have no feline element (Ch. 5). The Chimaera combines lion with serpent but has no avian element (Ch. 2). We should not forget that for ancient *drakontes* the form of choice for composition was none other than the human one.[65]

[64] *LIMC* Gigantes 486; cf. Ch. 2.

[65] D. E. Jones 2000 *passim*, esp. 60–2. Cases have been made that the serpent-haired and sometimes winged Gorgons sported lion-faces in origin (Ch. 2), and that *kētē*, the marine cousins of *drakontes*, always wingless of course, similarly owed the shape of their heads in part to lions (Ch. 3).

1

Drakōn Fights: *Drakontes* Pure

We begin by surveying the principal mythical *drakōn*-fight narratives of the Graeco-Roman world. Most of these are attested already in the archaic age of Greece. In the first chapter we consider fights against *drakontes*-pure (pure, that is apart from the common additions, especially in iconography, of beards or crests). In the second we consider fights against creatures in which a *drakōn* element is compounded with others. A third chapter then looks at fights against the *drakontes*' marine cousins, *kētē* or 'sea-serpents'. This tripartite division reflects a concern to establish the fundamental integrity of the concept of the *drakōn* before looking at more complex cases: creatures, on the one hand, in which the *drakōn*-element must jostle with other forms; and creatures, on the other, that share some principal characteristics with their landlubber cousins, most obviously a serpentine form and a propensity to devour innocent humans, but to which the term *drakōn* is seldom applied.

A further organizational principle here is that of thematic subsidiarity. The focused treatments of individual myths in these first three chapters concentrate on the particularities of each myth and the problems specific to them. Treatment of the most important common or recurring themes between the different *drakōn*-fight narratives is deferred to the following trio of chapters on the great slain *drakontes* and their world, their human and divine *drakōn*-masters and the symmetrical nature of their battles.

THE HYDRA, SLAIN BY HERACLES

The myth of the Lernaean Hydra (Fig. 1.1) may be summarized thus in its canonical form: the massive, multiheaded serpent was the subject of the second labour imposed upon Heracles by Eurystheus at Hera's behest. She was born in the spring of Amymone and lived in the Lernaean marsh that proceeded from it. From here she would venture forth to plunder the local cattle. Heracles and his assistant Iolaus attacked the creature with a variety of weapons, including Heracles' traditional club, his arrows, and, most distinctively, his *harpē* or sickle-sword. But as each head was destroyed or lopped off, two or more new ones grew instantly in its place. Fire was the solution: either the pair drove the Hydra into a burning wood, or they seared her necks as they lopped off her heads. During the fight the Hydra was assisted by a giant crab that came out of

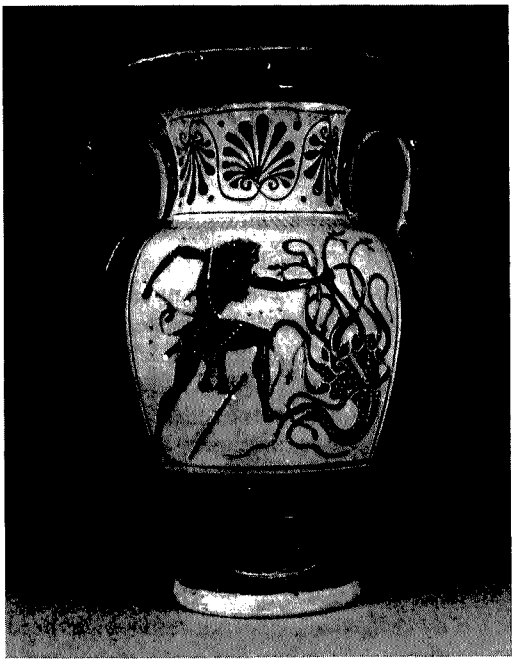


Fig. 1.1. Heracles fights the Hydra with his sickle-sword. Attic black-figure neck amphora, *c.*500–490 BC. Musée du Louvre F386 = *LIMC* Herakles 2003. © RMN / Hervé Lewandowski.

the Lerneaean marsh and pincered Heracles' foot; he crushed it, but Hera then translated it to the stars in gratitude. One of the Hydra's heads was immortal, and Heracles buried this under a rock on the road to Elaeus. He dipped his arrows in the serpent's venom for future use, though this was indirectly to lead to his own eventual demise.[1]

At the very start of the Hydra's extant tradition Hesiod and a pair of *c.*700 BC bronze fibulae between them already supply the bulk of what would become its canonical motifs. Hesiod's *Theogony* tells that the Hydra was the third offspring of Echidna by Typhon and summarizes her tale: 'In the third place again she bore the Lernaean Hydra of baleful mind, whom the white-armed goddess Hera reared, implacably angry as she was with mighty Heracles. And Heracles, the son of Zeus and also son of Amphitryon, slew her with pitiless bronze, alongside the war-loving Iolaus, at the devising of Athene, driver of the

[1] Principal texts: Hesiod *Theogony* 295–332; Euripides *Heracles* 419–24, 1274; Palaephatus 38; Diodorus 4. 11. 5–6; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2; Pausanias 2. 37. 4; Hyginus *Fabulae* 30. 3; Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 287, 575, 7. 658; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 25. 196–212; Lactantius Placidus on Statius *Thebaid* 1. 384–5, 2. 376–7; First Vatican Mythographer 1. 62; Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 237–64; Pediasimus *On the Twelve Labours of Heracles* 2 (in Wagner 1926). Principal iconography: *LIMC* Herakles 1697–1761, 1990–2092. Discussions: C. Robert 1920–6: ii. 444–7, Amandry 1952, Fontenrose 1959: 356–8, Tiverios 1978, Amandry and Amyx 1982, Venit 1989, Boardman 1990*a*, Kokkorou-Alewras 1990*a*, Gantz 1993: 384–6.

spoil.'[2] The fibulae portray Heracles in battle with a six-headed Hydra. His weapon is a sword. He is assisted by Iolaus, who wields a *harpē* against the monster. Beneath Heracles' legs is the crab that comes to the Hydra's aid.[3]

The Hydra's name—probably we ought to call her 'Hydra' *tout court*, without the definite artitcle—simply consists of the banal Greek word for 'water-snake'.[4] Consequently, ancient texts may feel less pressing need to apply the term *drakōn* to her than they do in the cases of the other super-serpents of myth, but the term is nonetheless applied to her directly by Sophocles, and indirectly by Euripides.[5] It is noteworthy that Sophocles should deploy the term *drakōn* rather than *drakaina*, not least in view of the fact that he casts her, in context, in the female role of 'begetting', albeit metaphorically: she is a begetter of venom rather than of offspring.

Multiheaded dragons are a productive motif of international folklore, with the numbers 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, and 12 being favoured for the heads.[6] How many heads did the Hydra have? The literary and iconographic traditions offer a wide range of numbers. Since the Hydra could replace old heads with multiple new ones—at any rate from the time of Euripides—logic requires that the creature boasted different numbers of heads at different times. It is theoretically possible that the serpent began life with a single head and acquired ever increasing numbers in the course of combats prior to her encounter with Heracles, but we hear nothing of such combats, and there is no compelling evidence for a single-headed Hydra in the mythical tradition proper at any point. Vases do sometimes give us Heracles facing a pure single-headed serpent (cf. Fig. 5.1), but there is no reason to identify these with the Hydra (Ch. 5). And the literary sources that do contemplate that the Hydra may have had only a single head are openly attempting to

[2] Hesiod *Theogony* 295–332, with 313–18 quoted. The Hydra is the daughter of Echidna also at Sophocles *Trachiniae* 1089–1100, and of Typhon also at Hyginus *Fabulae* 30. 3 and 151. 1. The genealogy is discussed in Ch. 4.

[3] *LIMC* Herakles 2019–20; cf. Gantz 1993: 384. Kokkorou-Alewras 1990*a*: 41 suggests that these scenes are influenced by 'earlier representations of analogous subjects in the East'.

[4] Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 287 (recycled at First Vatican Mythographer 1. 62) supplies an alternative Latin name for the Hydra, Excetra. This term also signifies 'snake' and may originate in a borrowing ultimately of the Greek term *echidna* via Etruscan: see *OLD*, LS s.v. Plautus *Casina* 644 and others after him apply the term to a malignant woman.

[5] Sophocles *Trachiniae* 834. At Euripides *Phoenissae* 1134–8 Adrastus' shield is described in these terms: 'Adrastus was at the seventh gate, his shield emblazoned with the image of a hundred vipers (*echidnai*). He had water-snakes (*hydrai*) on his left arm, a boast from the Argives. The *drakontes* were carrying off from the midst of the walls the children of the Cadmeians in their jaws.' Although one might imagine that the shield referred in some way to the Serpent of Nemea, in the slaying of which Adrastus had recently been involved, the Hydra is also evidently referenced too, and the scholia ad loc. take the shield to refer plainly and simply to her. They also assert that the Hydra was 'viper-headed', ἐχιδνοκέφαλος, though perhaps on no basis other than the Euripidean passage under exegesis, but note that the Hydra's heads are distinctively viperish in *LIMC* Herakles 2037 (*c.*480 BC). Such a shield might have been more appropriate to the vanquisher of the Hydra, and indeed Virgil seems to offer a corrective when he describes an image of Heracles bearing a shield emblazoned with the hundred-headed Hydra, *Aeneid* 7. 658. At Silius Italicus 2. 158–9 Theron, priest and temple-warden to Heracles, bears a hundred-headed Hydra blazon on his shield too. Compare also the shield-strap which holds Agamemnon's Gorgon-shield at Homer *Iliad* 11. 39: this is decorated with a *drakōn* that has three heads, turning in different directions, growing out of one neck.

[6] Thompson 1966: B11.2.3.

rationalize a fantastical creature into a more realistic and natural one. So it is that the second-century AD Heraclitus asserted in his *De incredibilibus* that the beast was single-headed, but was said to be multiheaded because accompanied by a massive brood.[7] Pausanias does the same when he observes that the seventh- or sixth-century BC Pisander of Camirus' *Heraclea* gave the Hydra 'many heads instead of just the one'. He is not telling us that the tradition prior to Pisander gave the serpent just one head, but rationalizing the myth for himself, much as he cites with approval Hecataeus' rationalization of Cerberus into a more realistic natural snake.[8]

The earliest literary source to number the Hydra's heads is Alcaeus (*c.*600 BC), and the number given is nine; this distinctive number was to prove a popular one throughout the literary and indeed the iconographic traditions (Fig. 1.1).[9] And so did other multiples of three: one of the *c.*700 BC fibulae gives the creature six heads,[10] whilst Servius gave her three.[11] A century after Alcaeus Simonides (*c.*500 BC) gave the Hydra the larger and rounded decimal number of fifty heads and similarly found many followers in subsequent tradition.[12] Almost a century later again Euripides raised the number to a hundred heads, and he too found many to support him amongst later writers.[13] Others were content to give the Hydra an unquantified 'many' heads.[14] There is a sense in which the Hydra's multiheadedness allies her with compound *drakontes*, even though she is made up purely of *drakōn* parts. However, despite all its fantastical aspects, it could be held that the Hydra did not cross the line into the realm of fantasy simply by virtue of being multiheaded, for two-headed snakes (the ophidian reflex of the Siamese-twins phenomenon) do exist in nature and are less rare and more viable than the two-headed offspring of other creatures.

It is conceivable that in the earliest tradition the Hydra did not have the ability to regrow her heads: the fact that she was an enormous venomous serpent with the initial advantage of multiple heads may well have been armoury enough. The earliest evidence we have for the notion that the Hydra regrew multiple heads, and

[7] Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 18 Hydra.

[8] Pausanias 2. 37. 4 (Pisander of Camirus *Heraclea* F2 West), 3. 25. 4 (Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F27).

[9] Literature: Alcaeus F443 Voigt, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2, Hyginus *Fabulae* 30. 3, Pediasimus *On the Twelve Labours of Heracles* 2, Servius on *Aeneid* 6. 575, 7. 658, *Suda* s.v. *Ὕδρα*, Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 240. Iconography: *LIMC* Herakles 2011 (the earliest, *c.*600 BC), 1992–3, 1998, 2003–4, 2012–13, 2016, 2021, 2038.

[10] *LIMC* Herakles 2019; so too *LIMC* Herakles 1991 (*c.*600–595 BC), 2006 (*c.*500–480 BC), 1745 (Augustan).

[11] Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 575. The 7th-century BC fragment *LIMC* Herakles 2032 offers three serpent-heads facing a male; *LIMC* ascribes to the Hydra—but Ladon?

[12] Simonides F569 *PMG*, Palaephatus 38, Vergil *Aeneid* 6. 576, Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 575, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 62, Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 251, 262.

[13] Euripides *Heracles* 1188 (*c.*414 BC), *Phoenissae* 1135 (*c.*410–417 BC), Diodorus 4. 11. 5, Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 658, Silius Italicus 2. 158, Seneca *Hercules Oetaeus* 1534–5 (cf. *Agamemnon* 835–6), Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 658 (misattributing the number to Simonides here; contrast the note on 6. 575). The number of a hundred heads had been associated with Typhon at Hesiod *Theogony* 823–7.

[14] Euripides *Heracles* 419–20 (*μυριόκρανον*), 1274, Virgil *Aeneid* 8. 300, Quintus Smyrnaeus 6. 212, *Palatine Anthology* 16. 92. 2. The limitations and temptations of iconography often give rise to anomalous numbers of heads: 11 (*LIMC* Herakles 2033, *c.*53–10 BC; 2047, 4th cent. BC), 10 (1990, *c.*600–590 BC), 8 (2007, *c.*550 BC; 2015, *c.*500–490 BC), 7 (1994, *c.*590–585 BC; 1995, *c.*585–575 BC; 2030, late 6th cent. BC; 2009, *c.*370–360 BC; 2043, *c.*250 BC; 2091, imperial), 6 (2037, *c.*480 BC).

with it the earliest evidence for the fire-based killing method associated with the phenomenon, comes in Euripides' *Heracles* of *c.*414 BC, where we are told that she was 'a double-headed growing-back dog' and that Heracles burned her to ashes.[15] The phrase should surely be construed as a hendiadys and to mean that the Hydra grows back two heads for each one lost.[16] Writing in the following century, the sceptical Palaephatus was content that the tradition he decried stipulated that the Hydra regrew two heads at a time, and Diodorus and Ovid agree.[17] But for Servius the Hydra regrew three heads for every one destroyed, a claim that perhaps salutes the notion (more intuitively than arithmetically) that the Hydra's heads should number a multiple of three.[18] For the *Suda* every lost head was replaced by 'several'.[19] The iconography of *c.*540–490 BC tells us something of which we hear no hint in the literary record, namely that the Hydra had a double or split tail (Fig. 1.1): perhaps this was emblematic of her ability to regenerate double heads (or perhaps it indicates that Heracles had contrived to chop off her tail, which then double-regenerated, like the heads).[20]

In a striking development in the imperial-period iconography of the Hydra, she is sometimes (but by no means universally) recast as a more Gorgon-like figure, with a single serpent body and a human female head, from which emanate serpent-locks, à la Medusa. Sometimes she is even given the entire (nude) torso of a woman too, to become an 'anguipede'.[21]

Both Heracles and the Hydra had their aides in the fight. Iolaus helps his uncle Heracles already in Hesiod and on one of the fibulae, and frequently thereafter in literature and iconography.[22] But Nicander anomalously gives the role of Heracles' aide rather to his brother Iphicles, Iolaus' father, a gesture that caused his ancient commentators some concern.[23] According to Apollodorus, Eurystheus refused to count the labour against Heracles' tally of ten because of the help he had received from Iolaus.[24]

The Hydra's ally, the crab, was evidently part of the story already from *c.*700 BC, appearing as it does on one of the early fibulae, and frequently in the Greek

[15] Euripides *Heracles* 419–24, 1274–5, *ἀμφίκρανον καὶ παλιμβλαστῆ κύνα.*

[16] But Bond 1981 ad loc. and Kovacs 1994–2002 translate 'whose many heads on all sides grow back again'.

[17] Palaephatus 38, Diodorus 4. 11. 5–6, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9. 62–81 9 (cf. *Heroides* 9. 95–6).

[18] Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 287; so too First Vatican Mythographer 1. 62, derived therefrom.

[19] *Suda* s.v. *Ὕδραν τέμνειν: πλείους.*

[20] *LIMC* Herakles 2013 (*c.*540–20 BC), 2016 (*c.*520–10 BC), 2015 (*c.*500–490 BC), 2003 (*c.*500–490 BC).

[21] *LIMC* Herakles 2079 (1st cent. AD), 2078 (*c.*75–110 AD; here the Hydra's severed head is particularly gorgonesque), 2064 (late Hadrianic), 1716 (torso; *c.*150–200 AD), 1730 (150–200 AD), 1732 (150–200 AD), 1739 (184–5 AD), 1724 (late 2nd cent. AD), 1718 (torso, *c.*200 AD), 2087 (age of Septimius Severus), 1742 (3rd cent. AD), 1721 (torso, 200–20 AD), 1717 (torso; mid 3rd cent. AD), 2061 (367–83 AD), 2060 (6th or 7th cent. AD), 2089 ('imperial'; speculation ad loc. that this image may be based on a Classical or Hellenistic original).

[22] Hesiod *Theogony* 313–18; so too Hellanicus F103 Fowler, Herodorus *FGrH* 31 F23, Palaephatus 38. Iconography: *LIMC* Herakles 2019, 2026 (*c.*700 BC), 2020 (*c.*700–65 BC). Iolaus' name in legend: *LIMC* Herakles 2015a = Iolaus 27 (*c.*550 BC). For Iolaus' relationship with Heracles, see J. N. Davidson 2007: 285–91.

[23] Nicander *Theriaca* 685–88, with schol. ad loc.

[24] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2.

iconography thereafter until the third century BC.[25] It is thought that the zodiac was only developed in Greece *c.*550 BC,[26] and so it is unlikely that its catasterism was also part of the tale at this stage. Compatibly, we first hear of the crab's catasterism by Hera in a fragment of the early fifth-century BC Panyassis. The wording of the fragment, which is relayed by the Eratosthenic *Catasterisms*, seems to suggest that the crab came to help the Hydra of its own accord because it saw that Heracles and his (plural) allies were already engaged in the fight against her and considered the battle uneven.[27] A Plato scholium explains the proverb, 'Against two not even Heracles' with citations of Hellanicus and Herodorus, both of whom wrote around the turn of the fifth to the fourth century BC: they seem to have explained rather that Hera sent the crab against Heracles when he was fighting alone against the Hydra, and it was for this reason that Heracles then called in Iolaus to help him, and this is the line followed by Palaephatus and Pediasimus.[28] For Apollodorus, however, Heracles called in Iolaus after he had already dispatched the crab by stamping on it.[29] Even so, the tradition seems broadly to agree, at any rate, that the crab's role in the myth is somehow to balance Iolaus in the fight. The crab's ultimate fate contrasts markedly with that of the Hydra, who, according to Virgil at any rate, was translated to Tartarus after death—there to administer punishment, one presumes, rather than to receive it.[30]

The traditions bearing upon the weaponry deployed by Heracles and Iolaus against the Hydra are rich and distinctive. In the course of the developing tale every conceivable weapon is utilized: sword, *harpē* (sickle), arrows, torch, club, and stones. The *Theogony* already specifies that Heracles and Iolaus slew the Hydra 'with pitiless bronze' and this is amplified by one of the *c.*700 BC fibulae, which shows Heracles wielding a sword and Iolaus wielding a *harpē*.[31] This is the earliest surviving example of the use of a *harpē* against an anguiform monster, and we may presume that it did indeed begin with the Hydra, to which it is peculiarly appropriate (Ch. 6). The configuration of Heracles with sword and Iolaus with *harpē* (curiously, given that the *harpē* is seemingly the more interesting weapon, though perhaps initially less heroic) is strongly observed in iconography down to the mid sixth century BC.[32] Heracles is first given the *harpē* to use himself on a vase of *c.*600–590 BC, and then again on a vase of *c.*550 BC, on both of which,

[25] *LIMC* Herakles 2019 (*c.*700 BC), 2020 (*c.*700–675 BC), 1991 (*c.*600–595 BC), 1994 (*c.*590–85 BC), 2024 (*c.*550–25 BC), 2000 (*c.*530 BC), 2002 (*c.*500 BC), 2015 (*c.*500–490 BC), 2037 (*c.*480 BC), 2055 (4th or 3rd cent. BC), 2041 (3rd cent. BC), 2048 (3rd or 2nd cent. BC), 2058 (Neronian: based on 4th-cent. BC original?)

[26] So Goold 1959: 11.

[27] Panyassis *Heraclea* F8 West = [Eratosthenes]*Catasterismi* 1; so too Seneca *Hercules Oetaeus* 67, Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 23. 1, schol. Aratus *Phaenomena* 147.

[28] Schol. Plat. *Phaedo* 89c, incorporating Hellanicus F103 Fowler and Herodorus F23 Fowler. Palaephatus 38, Pediasimus 2 (oddly, because he coincides closely with Apollodorus in other respects).

[29] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2.

[30] Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 576.

[31] Hesiod *Theogony* 316. *LIMC* Herakles 2019.

[32] *LIMC* Herakles 2019 (*c.*700 BC), 2020 (*c.*700–65 BC), 2025 (presumably; *c.*625–600 BC), 2054 (late 7th cent. BC), 2011 (*c.*600 BC), 1991 (*c.*600–595 BC), 1992 (*c.*590 BC), 1993 (perhaps; *c.*590–585 BC), 1994 (*c.*590–585 BC), 1995 (*c.*585–575 BC), 1997 (*c.*570 BC), 1998 (*c.*565–550 BC), 2024 (*c.*550–525 BC), 2013 (*c.*540–520 BC), 2033 (*c.*530–510 BC), 2073 (1st cent. BC), 2076 (1st cent. BC).

perhaps significantly, he fights the Hydra without Iolaus.[33] A vase of *c.*530 BC then has both Heracles and Iolaus using *harpai*,[34] and thereafter, from *c.*520 BC, the *harpē* migrates into Heracles' hand on a more permanent basis (Fig. 1.1).[35]

Although shown to be deploying his sword, Heracles retains his attribute bow or quiver in scenes of the Hydra fight from *c.*600 BC.[36] Then on a vase of *c.*585–575 BC we find him using his usual sword in the fight in progress, but wearing his bow and quiver whilst the Hydra is seen to have been pierced by arrows: a putative anterior episode to the traditional scene is constructed.[37] The lost Chest of Cypselus described by Pausanias and thought to have been made in the mid sixth century BC had the courage to depict Heracles in the act of shooting his arrows into the Hydra, and the scene first survives for us on a vase of *c.*520–500 BC.[38] Later literary sources tell that Heracles pelted the Hydra with arrows to draw her out of her lair.[39]

Heracles is first found using his own most traditional weapon of all, his club, against the Hydra on a vase of *c.*560–550 BC, and thereafter the popularity of this weapon in Hydra scenes grows steadily until reaching a crescendo in the imperial period.[40] This is the method given to him in Apollodorus' account.[41]

Fire is first found in use against the Hydra on vases of *c.*520–500 BC. On one vase Iolaus, using a *harpē* for the last time in the iconographic record, has a fire between his feet. On another he now holds the flaming torch that will become his usual attribute.[42] On a metope from the temple of Zeus at Olympia of 456 BC Heracles is depicted fighting the Hydra on his own, and this has licensed him to steal Iolaus' second specialist weapon too: he brandishes both *harpē* and torch

[33] *LIMC* Herakles 1990 = Athena 11 (*c.*600–590 BC) *LIMC* Herakles 2029 (*c.*550). On *LIMC* Herakles 2012 (*c.*550–525 BC) Iolaus wields a sword.

[34] *LIMC* Herakles 2000 (*c.*530 BC),

[35] *LIMC* Herakles 2001 (*c.*520 BC), 1999 (*c.*520–510 BC), 2034 (*c.*500 BC), 2003 (*c.*500–490 BC), 2003 (*c.*500–490 BC), 2022 (*c.*500–480 BC), 2006 (*c.*500–480 BC), 2037 (*c.*480 BC).

[36] *LIMC* Herakles 2011 (*c.*600 BC), 1992 (*c.*590 BC), 1996 (*c.*564–550 BC), 1998 (*c.*565–550 BC), 2007 (*c.*550), 2000 (*c.*530 BC), 2030 (late 6th cent. BC), 2017 (*c.*500 BC), 2005 (*c.*500–480 BC), 2055 (4th and 3rd cents. BC), 2958 (Neronian—based on a 4th-cent. BC original?). On *LIMC* Herakles 2003 (*c.*500–490 BC) the bow finds its way into Iolaus' hands.

[37] *LIMC* Herakles 1995 (*c.*585–575 BC).

[38] Pausanias 5. 17. 11 = *LIMC* Herakles 2031 (mid 6th cent. BC), 2036 (*c.*520–500 BC), 2082 (1st cent. BC).

[39] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2, Pediasimus 2; perhaps Virgil already knew this; at any rate his Heracles uses his bow against the Hydra, *Aeneid* 6. 803.

[40] *LIMC* Herakles 2021 (*c.*560–550 BC), 2045 (*c.*550 BC), 2016 (*c.*520–510 BC), 2036 (club rests on ground; *c.*520–500 BC), 2030 (late 6th cent. BC), 2002 (club on ground; *c.*500 BC), 2005 (*c.*500–480 BC), 2018 (club on ground; *c.*490 BC), 2037 (club on ground; *c.*480 BC), 2038 (*c.*470 BC), 2009 (*c.*370–360 BC), 2010 (*c.*370–350 BC), 2039 (4th cent. BC), 2055 (4th and 3rd cents. BC), 2053 (2nd cent. BC), 1745 (Augustan), 2091 (imperial; a bronze Heracles raises his club at his own priapic phallus, which terminates in seven serpent-heads), 2078 (*c.*75–110 BC), 2081 (1st cent. AD), 2082 (1st cent. AD), 1734 (*c.* AD 150), 1747 (2nd cent. AD), 1713 (*c.* AD 150–200), 1716 (*c.* AD 150–200), 1718 (*c.* AD 200), 1725 (early 3rd cent. AD), 1741 (3rd cent. AD), 1728 (*c.* AD 200–50), 1717 (mid 3rd cent. AD), 2084 (4th cent. AD), 1744 (6th cent. AD).

[41] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2.

[42] *LIMC* Herakles 2916 (*c.*520–510 BC), 2014 (*c.*520–500 BC), 2017 (*c.*500 BC), 2002 (*c.*500 BC), 2015 (*c.*500–490 BC), 2004 (*c.*500–490 BC), 2018 (*c.*490 BC), 2022 (*c.*500–480 BC), 2009 (*c.*370–360 BC), 2010 (*c.*370–350 BC; here he also has a sword); 2927 (3rd cent. BC; weapon may rather be an—archaizing—*harpē*).

against the monster.[43] The use of fire against the Hydra is first mentioned in the literary record in the works of Euripides. In the *Heracles* of *c.*414 BC we hear that, 'He burned to ashes (*exepurōsen*) the countless-headed many-voiced dog of Lerna, the Hydra, and used her venom to coat the arrows with which he slew the three-bodied herdsman of Erytheia [i.e. Geryon].'[44] In the *Ion* of around the same date the chorus admires a building decorated with an image of Heracles killing the Lernaean Hydra with golden *harpai* (a poetic plural, presumably), whilst nearby Iolaus lifts up a fiery torch.[45] In the latter case Euripides certainly envisages the chop-and-sear method.[46] In the former case Euripides may envisage that Heracles and Iolaus prevented the temporarily incapacitated Hydra from growing back her heads by setting fire to the surrounding wood.[47] Palaephatus' rationalized account may already imply a non-rationalized version in which Heracles shot flaming arrows at the Hydra; the motif becomes explicit in Apollodorus.[48] Quintus Smyrnaeus has Iolaus do the job of searing with a heated iron rather than a torch.[49]

An anomalous vase of the late sixth century BC pairs a scene of Heracles using his club against the Hydra with another in which he throws stones at her; this second scene may be influenced by the Cadmus tradition.[50]

The Hydra is eventually revenged upon Heracles: it is the unbearable agony of her burning venom, mixed in with the blood or semen of the centaur Nessus and smeared over his tunic by Deianeira, that compels him to suicide on the pyre on Mt. Oeta (Ch. 6).

LADON, SLAIN OR TRICKED BY HERACLES

The myth of the Serpent of the Hesperides (Figs. 1.2, 1.3) may be summarized thus in its canonical form: Earth sent up trees of golden apples to celebrate the marriage of Zeus and Hera. These were kept for Hera by the Hesperides, who guarded them together with a huge, unsleeping serpent, Ladon, in their paradisical garden, adjacent to Mt. Atlas, in the far west of Africa. Heracles was sent to fetch three of these apples as one of his final labours by Eurystheus. He acquired them either by clubbing Ladon to death; or by persuading Atlas to get them for him from the Hesperides; or by persuading the Hesperides directly to get them for him by drugging the serpent or distracting him with food.[51] The serpent is given the

[43] *LIMC* Herakles 2040 = 1705; but so too *LIMC* Herakles 2063 (Hadrianic).

[44] Euripides *Heracles* 419–24. For Nicander Heracles simply 'burned' (*ἐπυράκτεεν*) the Hydra, *Theriaca* 688. Cf. Gow and Scholfield 1953: 183.

[45] Euripides *Ion* 190–200.

[46] Subsequently found at Diodorus 4. 11. 5–6, *Suda* s.v. *Ὕδραν τέμνειν*.

[47] Which may be what Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2 imagined to have happened.

[48] Palaephatus 38; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2.

[49] Quintus Smyrnaeus 6. 212–19.

[50] *LIMC* Herakles 2030 (late 6th cent. BC).

[51] Principal texts: Hesiod *Theogony* 333–6; Pisander of Camirus *FGrH* 16 F8 = F dubia 3 Davies *apud* schol. Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396 (not in West); Panyassis F10 Davies = F15 West; Pherecydes FF16–17 Fowler; Sophocles *Trachiniae* 1089–1100; Euripides *Heracles* 394–400; Herodorus of Heracleia F14 Fowler; [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 3; Aratus *Phaenomena* 46; Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396–1407, 1433–5, with schol.; Euphorion F154 Powell = 148 Lightfoot; Agroetas *FGrH* 762 F3; Diodorus 4. 26; Virgil *Aeneid* 4. 480–6 with Servius on 484; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4. 643–8, 9. 188–90; Seneca *Hercules Furens* 530–2; Lucan 9. 360–7; Probus on Virgil *Georgics* 1. 205 and 244;

Fig. 1.2. Heracles with a two-headed Ladon, Serpent of the Hesperides, in his apple tree. Attic black-figure lekythos, *c.*500 BC. Formerly Berlin Staatliche Museen V.I. 3261 (lost in the war) = *LIMC* Herakles 2692. © bpk / Antikensammlung, SMB / Johannes Laurentius.

distinctive name Ladon only in a single line of Apollonius (derivative commentaries aside), and so it may not have been generally accepted in antiquity; nonetheless, we will employ it by default for convenience.[52]

Ladon first appears in the literary record in Hesiod's *Theogony*, in a fashion in which we will never see him again: 'Ceto had sex with Phorcys and bore her youngest child, a terrible snake (*ophis*), which guards the all-gold apples within his

Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 11; Pausanias 6. 19. 8; Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 20; Hyginus *Fabulae* praef. 39, 30.12, 151, *Tabula Albani* = *FGrH* 40 F1c (Antonine?), *Astronomica* 2. 3, 2. 6; Quintus Smyrnaeus 6. 256–9; schol. Germanicus *Aratea* p. 117 Breysig; Solinus 24. 4–5; Lactantius Placidus on Statius *Thebaid* 2. 280–1; First Vatican Mythographer 1. 38; Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 358–95; Pediasimus 11. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Atlas 13, Herakles 1697–761, 2676–787, Hesperides, Hesperie, Ladon I (there is much overlap between these catalogues). Discussions: C. Robert 1920–6: ii. 488–98, Scherling 1924, Brommer 1942, Matthews 1974: 66–71, Brazda 1977: 89–132; Schauenberg 1981*b*, Boardman 1990*a*, *b*, Kokkorou-Alewras 1990*b*, McPhee 1990, 1992, Gantz 1993: 25, 412, Sancassano 1997*a*: 3–6.

[52] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396, whence it is referenced only in Apollonius' own scholia and in Probus' commentary on Virgil *Georgics* 1. 205 and 224. The form of the name will be discussed in Ch. 4.

Fig. 1.3. Ladon in his apple tree, fed from a *phialē* by the Hesperides. Campanian red-figure hydria, *c.*350–340 BC. Private Collection = *LIMC* Ladon i 8. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

great coils in its lair in the dark earth.'[53] There is no mention of Heracles, and Hesiod seems to view the serpent as living still and as still in possession of his apples.[54] The impression is given of a Fafnir-like serpent, eternally guarding his own treasure in his cave.[55] Here Ladon is described only as an *ophis*, but for Sophocles and Euripides he is a *drakōn*, and he may well have been so described by the seventh- or sixth-century BC Pisander of Camirus and then by Pherecydes, if the fragments upon which we depend reflect the term they originally used.[56] We know that Ladon had found his canonical context and tale by *c.*550 BC. This is the date from which the first images of him survive, with him already in his tree

[53] Hesiod *Theogony* 333–6.

[54] Cf. McPhee 1992: 176.

[55] *Volsungasaga* §§13–20 etc.; see Introduction.

[56] Pisander of Camirus *FGrH* 16 F8 = F dubia 3 Davies, Pherecydes F16b Fowler (some manuscripts), Sophocles *Trachiniae* 1100, Euripides *Heracles* 398; note also Herodorus of Heracleia F14 Fowler (5th or 4th cent. BC). Amongst other early literary sources Eumelus *Titanomachy* F9 West (perhaps also *c.*550 BC), *apud* Philodemus *On Piety* B 5731 Obbink, may have mentioned the serpent as a guardian of apples. Philodemus implies that Eumelus' *Titanomachy* identified a guardian for the golden apples distinct from the Harpies, whom Acusilaus F20 Fowler and Epimenides 68 B9 DK had in the 6th century BC (interestingly) identified as their guardian, with the latter equating them with the Hesperides themselves, but the Philodemus fragment breaks off before it can identify the alternative guardian. Panyassis *Heraclea* F15 West (*c.*500 BC) did mention the serpent, but we do not know in what context: possibly as an unsleeping guardian with unclosing eyes. The fragment is preserved at Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 6. 1, which also incorporates [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 3, but it is unclear how much of the information Hyginus conveys derives from Panyassis: most of what he says describes the star-picture of Heracles wrestling with the *draco* of the Hesperides in the stars, which Zeus designed in admiration of their battle, and this would appear Eratosthenic.

(discussed below), and it is also the date of a cedarwood statue group made for the Epidamnian treasury at Olympia by Theocles son of Hegylus and described for us by Pausanias. The group included Heracles, the Hesperides, and 'the *drakōn* coiling round the apple tree'.[57]

Various genealogies are supplied for Ladon. Hesiod, as we have seen, makes him the son of Ceto, the archetypal sea-monster, and of Phorcys. Pherecydes rather made him son of the other great serpent-progenitor-pair, Typhon and Echidna.[58] Between them Pisander of Camirus made his *drakōn* the son of Earth and Apollonius presumably subscribed to the same view in describing him as 'chthonic' (*chthonios ophis*).[59]

Against whom, and on behalf of whom, if not himself, did Ladon guard the apples in his tree? Pherecydes, the first extant literary source to put Ladon in the tree, told that the golden apples were sent up by Earth either in land or in sea (!) as wedding gifts for Hera. Hera delighted in them and asked Earth to grow them in her own garden beside Atlas. But since Atlas' daughters picked the apples too often, she installed the chthonic *drakōn* there to guard them.[60] In context these daughters can only be the Hesperides, who are indeed sometimes identified as daughters of Atlas, and who were, as we will see, strangely ambivalent characters.[61] The Eratosthenic *Catasterisms* recycles Pherecydes' account but also supplies another, in which Hera appointed the serpent to guard the golden apples precisely because she knew that Heracles would one day come to take them.[62] We may wonder whether there lies behind this tale a simpler one in which the serpent had once simply guarded the apples for another mother figure, his own, the Earth that produced them, much as Python guarded the Delphic oracle for his mother Earth. Some later traditions suggest that the apples simply belonged to the Hesperides themselves, and that they and Ladon collaborated in watching over them. This becomes explicit with the second-century AD paradoxographer Heraclitus,[63] but may well be implicit in Apollonius' suggestion that the Hesperides lamented over Heracles' slaughter

[57] Theocles group: Pausanias 6. 19. 2 = *LIMC* Hesperides 64. No doubt Ladon adopted a similar configuration in his appearance on the famous chest of Cypselus, a product of the same period: Pausanias 5. 17–19 = *LIMC* Herakles 1697.

[58] Pherecydes 16b Fowler; so too Hyginus *Fabulae* praef. 39, 30. 12, 151, Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 363. Schol. Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396 misattributes the notion that Typhon was the serpent's father to Hesiod. McPhee 1992: 176 wonders whether Hesiod did indeed give the serpent this father (contradicting the *Theogony*) in an otherwise unattested text.

[59] Pisander of Camirus *FGrH* 16 F8; Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1398 (cf. 1434, φρουρὸν ὄφιν, 'guardian snake').

[60] Pherecydes F16c Fowler. Silius Italicus can, accordingly, refer to Ladon simply as 'the snake of Juno' (*Iunonius anguis*), *Punica* 6. 184. Also in this tradition are Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 11 (Earth sends up the apples as a gift for Zeus on his wedding day); Asclepiades of Mendes *FGrH* 617 F1 (Earth sends up the apples as a gift for both on their wedding day); Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 361–2, Pediasimus 11 (a gift from Hera to Zeus on their wedding day). The Hesperides and the Atlas mountains were traditionally located in the far west of north Africa. Anomalously, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 11, Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 360, 375, 380–1 and Pediasimus 11 locate them in the far north, the land of the Hyperboreans; discussion at Kokkorou-Alewras 1990*b*: 100 (useful) and McPhee 1990: 395–6.

[61] Atlantides and Hesperides are identified at Diodorus 4. 27. 2, Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 4. 484, schol. Euripides *Hippolytus* 742, schol. Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1399 and First Vatican Mythographer 1. 38.

[62] [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 4.

[63] Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 20.

of the *drakōn* (as opposed to merely the theft of the apples).[64] Lucan and Apollodorus present the Hesperides and the serpent as guarding the garden side by side.[65] Ovid gives the orchard wholly over to Atlas himself: it is for him that the huge *draco* protects the apples, since he has been forewarned that a son of Jupiter (whom he mistakenly identifies as Perseus) will one day steal them.[66]

Ladon possessed several qualities to fit him for guardianship. First, he was often, in his earlier representations, attributed with multiple heads, permitting him to watch in different directions. The extant images of him from *c.*550–400 BC depict him variously with one, two, or three heads, but thereafter he is reduced to just the one in his iconography.[67] Pherecydes gives him a hundred heads and all sorts of voices, in the manner of his father Typhon, no doubt, and this detail is repeated by Apollodorus.[68] Secondly, we are repeatedly told that he never closed his eyes and was unsleeping, a notion that may have originated with Panyassis. In reality, of course, no snake can close its eyes, but the degree of emphasis with which this point is made in Ladon's case is still significant in the context of ancient *drakōn*-lore.[69] Thirdly, Apollodorus gives us an immortal serpent as opposed to a sleepless one.

In those versions of the tale in which Heracles killed Ladon, how did he do so? Sophocles and Euripides speak of Heracles' killing of the *drakōn*, but say nothing of the method. Herodorus of Heraclea is the first literary source to specify the weapon, and it is Heracles' favoured club.[70] It may be intimated that Heracles

[64] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396–1407.

[65] Lucan 9. 360–7; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 11; and so too Pediasimus 11.

[66] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4. 643–8. A rather different but evidently old tradition, in which the *drakōn* did not directly feature, held that the golden apples were kept by the Hesperides for Aphrodite, and that she gave some of them to Hippomenes to help him seduce Atlanta: Hesiod *Catalogue of Women* F76 MW, schol. Theocritus 3. 40, Servius on *Aeneid* 3. 113, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 39.

[67] We are not told how many heads he had in the Theocles group or on the Chest of Cypselus. One head: Grabow 1998 K86 (*c.*550–500 BC), *LIMC* Herakles 2716 (black-figure lekythos, *c.*500 BC); another early example of a one-headed Ladon is *LIMC* Herakles 2681 = Ladon i. 1 (pointed amphora, *c.*480–70 BC). Two heads: *LIMC* Herakles 2692 (black-figure vase, *c.*500 BC; Gantz 1993: 412 knows of a similar pot in a private collection in Mainz); further two-headed Ladons from the 5th century BC are to be found at *LIMC* Herakles 2714 = Hesperides 24 (coin of Cyrene, *c.*500 BC, Ladon i. 12 (Campanian red-figure neck-amphora, 450–30 BC), 15 (sardonyx scarab, 450–400 BC). Three heads: *LIMC* Atlas 8 = Herakles 1702/2680 (a three-headed Ladon as part of a Heracles Dodecathlos set by the Cleophrades painter, red-figure volute crater, *c.*490 BC—NB this is not the Hydra, which is given its own separate scene); further three-headed Ladons from the 5th century BC are to be found at *LIMC* Ladon i. 13 (red-figure hydria, *c.*450 BC), 16 (Etruscan bronze mirror, 450–25 BC). As to possible earlier traces of Ladon in extant art, in Ch. 5 we will consider but be inclined to reject the possibility that he appears in three-headed guise on the marvellous Caeretan hydria, *LIMC* Medeia 2, of *c.*660–40 BC. We need not be detained by the speculation that finds his tail on a *c.*560 BC ceramic fragment, *LIMC* Herakles 2733. Discussion of Ladon's iconography at Brommer 1942, Schauenberg 1981*b*, Boardman 1990*a*, 1990*b*, Kokkorou-Alewras 1990*b*, McPhee 1990, 1992, Gantz 1993: 25, 412.

[68] Pherecydes 16b Fowler, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 11; so too Pediasimus 11.

[69] The key text is Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 6. 1, citing [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 3 and Panyassis F15 West (on the last of which see Matthews 1974: 66–71). So too Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9. 188–90, Seneca *Hercules Furens* 530–2, Lucan 9. 360–7, Solinus 24. 4, Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 4. 484, schol. Germanicus *Aratea* p.118 Breysig, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 38, Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 363.

[70] Sophocles *Trachiniae* 1089–100, Euripides *Heracles* 394–9, Herodorus of Heracleia *FGrH* 31 F24b.

used his club against Ladon from as early as the *c.*540 BC bronze shield-band relief on which Heracles holds the apples together with a snake-headed club.[71] Heracles frequently brandishes his club in Ladon's vicinity in the iconography from 500 BC onwards.[72] In the star-picture recorded by the Eratosthenic *Catasterisms* and Hyginus Heracles tries to force down the right side of Ladon's rampant neck with his left foot, whilst raising his right hand to strike him with his club.[73]

Apollonius gives us a vignette of the aftermath of the fight. The breathless body of the serpent lies quivering beside the apple-tree stump, Heracles evidently having cut the tree down. His body is covered in putrid (*pythomenoisin*) wounds dealt by Heracles' arrows, tipped with the Hydra's venom. Here the serpent's death has been strongly assimilated to that of the Delphic serpents: we have the motif of its body transfixed by many arrows, the rotting of its flesh and even the deployment of the term *pythein* used so significantly by the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* in its description of the Delphic *drakaina*.[74] This is perhaps less a case of cross-fertilization between traditions than a case of Apollonius ostentatiously alluding to the Delphic material.[75]

In Roman art Heracles sometimes throttles Ladon.[76] It also likes to show us the dead Ladon in the aftermath of the battle. Sometimes his body is shown transfixed by arrows, compatibly with Apollonius.[77] In other scenes he merely hangs lifelessly in his tree, the victim, we infer, of either a clubbing or a throttling.[78]

The fight between Heracles and Ladon, translated as it was to the stars as the constellation of Draco, became a commonplace of the star-picture tradition. It is first mentioned in passing by Aratus.[79] There is dispute as to which of the gods engineered the catasterization. The Eratosthenic *Catasterisms* and Hyginus both offer competing versions in which the catasterization was engineered either by Hera or by Zeus.[80]

The motif of an immortal Ladon must normally have travelled with the notion that Heracles prevailed upon the ever naughty Hesperides to get the apples for him. A tradition of this sort was known from the time of Pherecydes, according to whom Heracles prevailed upon Atlas to get them and he in turn asked the Hesperides for them.[81] But the iconographic tradition that emerged in the fourth

[71] *LIMC* Herakles 2682 = Atlas 3.

[72] *LIMC* Herakles 1702 (early 5th cent. BC), 1741, 1744, 1745, 2694, 2700 (*c.*510 BC, apple tree but without actual Ladon), 2701, 2703, 2707a, 2717, 2719, 2722, 2725, 2726, 2730, 2752, 2753, 2767, 2770, 2785, Hesperides 7 (= Herakles 2701, 470–60), 19, 29, 56, 58, Hesperie 1 (if relevant), Ladon i. 2, 4, 5, 15, 16, 20, 24, 26–8.

[73] [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 3–4; Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 3 and 2. 6.

[74] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396–407.

[75] The Delphic connection was not lost on the scholiast that comments (on 4. 1405): 'Whence also the "Pythia" from the fact that the *drakōn* rotted there.'

[76] *LIMC* Ladon i. 28.

[77] *LIMC* Ladon i. 25, 26, 29.

[78] *LIMC* Ladon i. 20–2, 30–1.

[79] Aratus *Phaenomena* 46.

[80] [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 3 (Hera) and 1. 4 (Zeus), Hyginus *Astromomica* 2. 3 (Hera), 2. 6 (Zeus).

[81] Pherecydes F17 Fowler, Adesp. F655 *TrGF* (a satyr-play of unknown date), Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 11, Pediasimus 11.

century elided Atlas' role and had Heracles prevailing upon the Hesperides directly. In images from 380–360 BC onwards we find one Hesperid feeding the snake whilst another of them picks apples from the other side of the tree: a deception of some sort seems clear.[82] There are also images that explain that this trick was performed for the benefit of Heracles. On an early fourth-century image a Hesperid presents Heracles with a bough of golden apples.[83] On an image of *c.*350–330 BC, a similar Hesperid presents Heracles with a similar bough (this one containing precisely three apples), whilst on the other side of the tree another Hesperid feeds Ladon from a bowl.[84] On an image of *c.*350 BC Heracles stands by as a pair of Hesperides perform their usual two-hander trick, evidently expecting to receive the fruit they win in this way.[85] In two images of *c.*340 BC a Hesperid feeds Ladon from a bowl on one side of the tree whilst Heracles himself picks apples from the other.[86] It has often been speculated that a version of the Hesperides story flourished in which one of the Hesperides fell in love with Heracles and so consented to get some of the apples for him:[87] On some of the vases one in particular of the Hesperides seems to be attracted to Heracles,[88] and in some of them *erōtes* attend the scene.[89] A passing reference in Seneca's *Hercules Furens* suggests that the Hesperid concerned was cheated in her love: 'Let [Heracles] deceive the sisters and bring back the apples, when the *draco* set to guard the valuable apples has given his ever-wakeful eyes to sleep.'[90]

The notion that the Hesperides should have drugged Ladon to sleep in the fashion of the witch Medea and the Colchis *drakōn* eventually finds expression in a famous speech of Dido in the *Aeneid.* The vignette she constructs of a Massylian witch, supposedly of her acquaintance, incorporates puzzling details: 'Near the boundary of Ocean and the setting sun is the most remote land of the Ethiopians, where greatest Atlas twists on his shoulder the sphere that is set with blazing stars. From this region a priestess of Massylian race has been pointed out to me, the guardian of the temple of the Hesperides. She used to give its meals to the *draco,* and she looked after the sacred boughs on the tree, sprinkling moist honey and sleepy poppy.'[91] So the portrait seems initially to be of a woman who, like the Hesperides, feeds and tends the serpent. The honey may or may not be appropriate:

[82] *LIMC* Hesperides 2, 3 (380–360 BC), 4, 36, 63, Ladon i. 9; cf. also *LIMC* Hesperides 7, 28 (?), 41, Ladon i. 6.

[83] *LIMC* Herakles 2719.

[84] *LIMC* Herakles 2726.

[85] *LIMC* Hesperides 36; cf. 30, Herakles 2703, 2707a, 2717.

[86] *LIMC* Hesperides 38, 62. It is possible that the Antonine *Tabula Albana* (*FGrH* 40, C.ii.11–12) also knew a similar version. Its fragmentary text seems to talk of a Heracles deceiving the *drakōn* itself (*δράκοντα λαθών*), perhaps in secretly filching apples whilst the Hesperides fed him? Cf. McPhee 1992: 176–7.

[87] C. Robert 1920–6: ii. 492–3, Brommer 1942: 492–3, H. A. Thompson 1949: 250–1, Schauenburg 1981: 480, Kokkorou-Alewras 1990: 110, McPhee 1990: 405.

[88] *LIMC* Hesperides 26 (410 BC), 29–31, 33–5.

[89] *LIMC* Hesperides 30–2 (370–360 BC), 34–5.

[90] Seneca *Hercules Furens* 530–2. Heracles' deception of the Hesperides to get the apples would function as a nice alternative to his deception of Atlas to get the apples (Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 11).

[91] Virgil *Aeneid* 4. 480–6.

it is the traditional sweetening or sweetness-saluting food given, in cakes, to the kindly anguiform gods.[92] But the sleepy poppy seems out of place, and an inappropriate gift for an ideally fierce guardian. Why would one be giving this to a guardian one wished to remain alert, and a guardian who was in any case unsleeping?

DELPHYNE AND PYTHON, SLAIN BY APOLLO

The Delphic *drakōn* came, curiously, in female and male variants, with differing tales initially attached to each (Figs. 1.4, 1.5). In the female version of the tale, the *drakaina*, eventually known as Delphyne, makes depredations on the local population. Apollo arrives as a cleansing hero to kill her with his poison arrows and to deliver the local population and its herds from her terrors. In the male version, the baby Apollo transfixes the *drakōn* Python with multiple arrows from his bow: (1) in revenge for Python's recent harassing of Apollo's pregnant mother Leto; or (2) to deliver the local population from his depredations; or (3) to enable Apollo to seize control of the oracle that he guards or controls. Both male and female versions agree that the rotting (*pythesthai*) of the serpent's huge carcass then bestows the byname Pytho on Delphi.[93]

[92] e.g. the Athenian *oikouros ophis:* Herodotus 8. 41, Hesychius s.v. *οἰκουρὸν ὄφιν*. Trophonius: Aristophanes *Clouds* 508 (with schol.), Pausanias 9. 40.

[93] Principal texts: *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 244–306 (esp. 300–6), 352–73; Simonides F573 *PMG*/Campbell = Julian *Letters* 24; Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1234–82, *Phoenissae* 232, with schol. ad loc.; Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F31b = Strabo C422–3; Aristoxenus of Tarentum F80 Wehrli = [Plutarch] *Moralia* 1136c; Clearchus of Soli F64 Wehrli = Athenaeus 701b; Leandrius of Miletus *FGrH* 492 F14 = schol. Apollonius Rhodius 2. 705–12; Callimachus *Hymns* 2. 97–104, 4. 84–93, F643 Pfeiffer; Apollonius *Argonautica* 2. 711–13; Aristonous 1. 15, 27–8 Powell; Anaxandrides of Delphi *FGrH* 404 F5 = schol. Euripides *Alcestis* 1; Lycophron *Alexandra* 202–4, with schol. vet. on 200, Tzetzes on 207; *Cyzicene Epigram, Palatine Anthology* 3. 6; Colin 1909–13 (*Fouilles de Delphes* iii. 2) no. 137 lines 21–4, no. 138 lines 25–30; Varro *De Lingua Latina* 7. 17; Propertius 4. 6. 35–6; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 434–60; Lucan 5. 79–85, 6. 407–9; Pliny *Natural History* 34. 59; Statius *Thebaid* 1. 562–71, 711–12, 5. 531–3, 6. 8–9, 355–9, 7. 96, 349–50, 11. 12–13; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 4. 1, 1. 6. 3; Plutarch *Moralia* 293c, 294f, 365a, 414a, 417f–418b, 421c, 945b, 988a; Pausanias 2. 7. 7, 2. 30. 3, 10. 6. 5–7; Lucian *Dialogues in the Sea* 9, *Astrology* 23; Hyginus *Fabulae* 53. 2, 140; Dionysius Periegetes 441–5, with Eustathius on 441; Aelian *Varia Historia* 3. 1, *Nature of Animals* 11. 2; Menander Rhetor *Peri Epideiktikon* 3. 17 pp. 441–2 Spengel; Porphyry *Life of Pythagoras* 16; Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 1. 1, p. 2 P, 2. 18, p. 15 P, 2. 34, p. 29 P; Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 3. 73, 92, 360; Libanius *Narrationes* 25, Orosius 6. 15; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 9. 457–72, 13. 28; Claudian *Poems* 1. 188–9 (*Panegyricus*), 2 (*In Rufinum* preface); Macrobius 1. 17. 50–63; Lactantius Placidus on Statius *Thebaid* 5. 531–3 and *Achilleid* 206–7; Sidonius Apollinaris *Carmina* 2. 152–5; Hesychius *s.v. Δελφύς*, *s.v. Τοξίου βουνός*; Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 8. 11. 54, Olympiodorus on *Phaedo* pp. 201, 240 Norvin; First Vatican Mythographer 1. 37, 2. 12; *Suda* s.v. *Δελφοί*, s.v. *Πύθωνος*; *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *Πυθώ*; schol. Homer *Iliad* 9. 405; Hypotheses to Pindar *Pythians*, a, c; Apostolius 15. 10; schol. Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 3. 10, schol. Lucan 3. 177, 5. 79, 5. 81, 6. 407, *Anecdota graeca* at Bachmann 1828: ii. 351. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Apollon 39f, 39n, 79, 81a, 200i, 215, 209, 222, 224, 238, 261a, 371, 373, 602, 993–1002, Apollon/Aplu 10–11, Apollon/Apollo 38–40a, 52, 54l, 56a, 61k, 197, 356, 375a, 482, 499a, 519, 551, Python 1–7. Discussions: Schreiber 1879, Turk 1884–1937, Fontenrose 1959, Geisau 1963, Kahil 1966, 1994, Bömer 1969–86: i. 138–45 (on 1. 438–51), Lambrinudakis and Palagia 1984: 301–3, Sourvinou-Inwood 1987, Gantz 1993: 38, 88–9, Watkins 1995: 461–2, Gourmelen 2004: 377–80.

Fig. 1.4. Python challenges Leto, with babies Apollo and Artemis, between his cave and a spring. Lost Apulian red-figure neck amphora, early 4th century BC. *LIMC* Apollo 995. Drawing by J. H. W. Tischbein at Hamilton and Tischbein 1791–5: iii fig. 4.

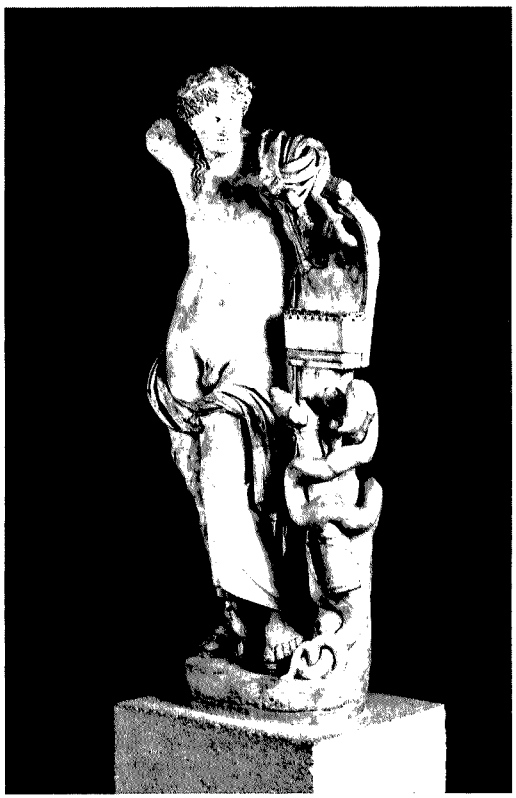


Fig. 1.5. Apollo Citharoedus with Python. Marble statue, Cyrene, 2nd century BC. British Museum BM 1380. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

In the earliest literary text to tell the story, the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the relevant 'Pythian' portion of which is thought to have been composed shortly after 590 BC, the (unnamed) serpent is female, a *drakaina*, and emphatically characterized as such by being cast as the former nurse of Typhon.[94] A (we presume) adolescent Apollo travels alone, looking for somewhere to found his oracular temple, and settles upon Delphi (Crisa). But when the temple is complete he encounters the *drakaina*, who is projected as a typical *drakōn*-predator that has been making depredations upon a local population and its herds ('slender-footed sheep'). Apollo accordingly slays her in the fashion of a typical *drakōn*-slayer, with bow and poisoned arrow. Delphi acquires the byname Pytho from the rotting of her carcass. It is weakly implied that the *drakaina* has a lair in the region, presumably a cave of some sort, in which she has reared Typhon, and that this lair is adjacent to the Castalian spring, beside which Apollo kills her. The subsequent tradition has little interest in developing the *drakaina* variant, with the exception of two minor glosses. Plutarch tells that the oracle was once desolate and occupied by a fierce *drakaina* that fought Apollo. It was not the *drakaina* that had made the oracle desolate, but rather the desolation that had attracted the *drakaina*.[95] Apollodorus tells that, when Typhon had stolen Zeus' sinews, he wrapped them in a bearskin and concealed them in the Corycian cave, setting the *drakaina* Delphyne as guard over them (which Corycian cave: that in Cilicia or that on Parnassus?).[96] However, the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* was to fire a vigorous debate, perhaps initiated by playful Hellenistic poets, as to whether the Delphic serpent was a male Delphynes or female Delphyne, and this debate seems to have become something of a mytheme in its own right. Both Callimachus and the third-century BC historian Meandrius (or Leandrius) of Miletus, if the seemingly confused scholia to Apollonius of Rhodes can be trusted, referred both to a male Delphynes and a female Delphyne (or Delphyna).[97] Apollonius himself found a suitably playful way to remain learnedly agnostic: the creature his beardless Apollo kills is referred to only in the ambiguous accusative form, *Delphynēn . . . pelōrion*, 'the monster Delphyne(s)'.[98] The second-century AD Dionysius Periegetes was then to speak of a *drakōn* Delphyne, attaching the female proper name to the masculine or common-gendered word.[99] And the seventh-century AD John of Antioch was to record an ancient debate as to

[94] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 244–306 (esp. 300–6), 352–73; cf. Fontenrose 1959: 14; for the dating of the 'Pythian' portion of the hymn, see M. L. West 2003*b*: 10.

[95] Plutarch *Moralia* 414a, 988a. It is not clear how this should be integrated with Plutarch's discussions of Python elsewhere.

[96] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3; see Fontenrose 1959: 13–14, 94, 407–12.

[97] Callimachus F643 Pfeiffer, Leandrius of Miletus *FGrH* 492. At Callimachus *Hymns* 2. 100–1 and 4. 90–4 we are given an unnamed male *drakōn*. Cf. Fontenrose 1959: 14–15 n. 4.

[98] Apollonius *Argonautica* 2. 705–7. This same trick seems to have been played by later poets too: Helios, as cited at Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 207, Δελφίνην . . . πελώριον; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 13. 28, Δελφύνην δ' ἐδάμασσε . . . Ἀπόλλων. Fontenrose 1959: 14–15 n. 4 conjectures that it was an ambiguous form of this sort that initially gave rise to debates over the sex of the Delphic serpent in the first place; this seems unlikely, given the long history of both the *drakaina* and the male Python in the tradition before our first attestation of either 'Delphyne' or 'Delphynes'.

[99] Dionysius Periegetes 441–5, with Eustathius ad loc.; cf. Fontenrose 1959: 14–15 n. 4.

whether the Pythian festival celebrated a male *drakōn* Delphynes or a heroine Delphyne.[100]

The male-counterpart *drakōn* Python first appears in the literary record in a fragment of Simonides, *c.*500 BC.[101] Simonides seems to have made wordplay between Apollo's established epithet *hekatos*, 'far-shooting', and *hekaton*, 'hundred', to suggest that Apollo fired a hundred arrows into Python.[102] We have no indication of Apollo's age or surroundings in the fragment as it survives. However, the canonical vignette, with Apollo as a babe in his mother Leto's arms shooting a (male) *drakōn*, was probably already in place by the late sixth century, the age of some fragmentary Etruscan terracotta acroteria from Veii, which include a woman carrying a male child and possibly a serpent, though the original relationship between the two figures is unknown.[103] It was certainly in place by *c.*470–60 BC, as we learn from a white-ground lekythos of this age.[104] In his *Iphigenia in Tauris* of before 412 BC Euripides then supplies a full literary account of the story. Leto brings her two babies to Delphi, where the *drakōn* (unnamed) tends the oracle. Apollo kills the *drakōn* from his mother's arms and takes over the oracle from him.[105] In the early third century BC Clearchus of Soli and Callimachus find in the tale of Apollo killing the male *drakōn* from his mother's arms the origin of the ceremonial cry *hiē hiē paiēon*, supposedly a corruption of a phrase signifying 'fire, fire [sc. your arrow], child' or 'fire, fire [sc. your arrow], strike [sc. the serpent]'.[106] By the time of Ovid at least the two story-threads seem to have become fully merged: he gives us an adolescent Apollo firing a thousand arrows into a male Python, who is at once guardian of the oracle and a marauder of the local area.[107]

The male and female variants of the tradition exhibit a further point of contact from an earlier stage in that a mother-and-son pair lurks behind them both. Python was a son of Earth, on whose behalf he guarded the oracle, at least from the time of Euripides' description of him as a 'huge monster of the Earth', and it is likely that Pindar knew the same before this.[108] Ovid graphically projects the

[100] John of Antioch *FHG* iv. p. 539 F1. The masculine term Delphynes is found also at Hesychius s.v. *Δελφύς*, schol. Euripides *Phoenissae* 232–3 (*δράκοντος τοῦ Δελφύνου*), *Suda* s.v. *Δελφοί* (*τὸν Δελφύνην δράκοντα*), Apostolius 15. 10

[101] Simonides F573 *PMG*/Campbell = Julian *Letters* 24.

[102] The natural reading of the fragment (*apud* Julian *Letters* 24, p. 236 Bidez-Cumont) implies that the name 'Python' did indeed appear already in Simonides: Fontenrose 1959: 15. However some, e.g. Allen, Halliday, and Sikes 1936: 246 and Kahil 1994: 609 contend that it made its first appearance only in the overtly rationalizing work of Ephorus.

[103] *LIMC* Apollo/Aplu 10 = Leto/Letun 1 = Python 6; cf. Pallottino 1950, Gantz 1993: 88 with n. 40.

[104] *LIMC* Apollon 993 = Leto 29a = Python 3; cf. also Leto 29b. An Etruscan mirror from Cerveteri of the second half of the 5th century BC shows both baby Apollo and baby Artemis, let down from their mother's arms, holding their bows up to shoot a rearing Python: *LIMC* Apollon/Aplu 11 = Artemis/Artumes 51 = Leto/Letun 2 = Python 5. A coin of Croton of 420–380 BC shows a baby Apollo firing his bow at Python from behind the tripod: *LIMC* Python 4.

[105] Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1234–57.

[106] Clearchus of Soli F64 Wehrli = Athenaeus 701b–f; Callimachus *Hymns* 2. 97–104 and 4. 84–93, F643 Pf.; cf. also Aristonous lines 17–24 Powell (= Colin 1909–13 no. 191). The notion that Apollo killed Python as a babe in arms is also found in Lucan 5. 79–81.

[107] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 434–60.

[108] Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1247; so too Hyginus *Fabulae* 140, Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 8. 11. 54. At Pindar F55 SM Earth wants Apollo thrown down into Tartarus as punishment for seizing the oracle by force.

serpent as an appropriately misshapen product of a sole-parent Earth.[109] Delphyne, meanwhile, was, as we have seen, the foster-mother of the serpent Typhon, and her name actually signifies 'Womb'. Typhon's name, meanwhile, exhibits a metathetical relationship with that of Python (see further Ch. 4 for both these points).

Python and Delphyne seem to have had different, gender-specific forms. The male Python is only ever represented, rationalizing narratives aside, as a pure *drakōn*, in literature and art alike. Given his prominence in the literary record, he is bafflingly under-represented on vases.[110] However, he came to flourish, strangely redivivus, as a stock attribute in the iconography of Apollo in the imperial period. In particular, he is often to be found integrated into the vertical supports for Apollo's statues of this period, most typically winding around a tripod, tree-trunk, or pillar, as in the case of the British Museum's Apollo Citharoedus of Cyrene (Fig. 1.5).[111] Of Delphyne, who might in theory be iconographically identifiable, if by no other means, by an association with an *adolescent* Apollo, no images are known whatsoever. But in the literary record Apollodorus makes it clear that she was an anguipede in combining the terms *drakaina* and *hēmithēr . . . korē*, 'half-beast girl', in description of her.[112] Accordingly, she not only resembles in form another slain *drakaina* associated with Delphi, Lamia (Ch. 2), but also conforms with what may be recognized to be the standard early configuration for *drakainai*, this being found also in the early traditions relating to Echidna (Ch. 2), Scylla (Ch. 3), and Hecate (Ch. 7). More specific morphological details are few and far between. Euripides describes the *drakōn* as 'mottled-backed, dark-eyed'.[113] Statius' dark-blue Python mysteriously turns green within little more than a hundred lines; when he tells us that the serpent gaped 'with triple-cleft mouth/face (*ore trisulco*)' he presumably means to tell us that it had a traditional threefold (as opposed to fourfold) tongue.[114]

In literature the Delphic serpent is typically portrayed as of unimaginably vast size. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* describes the *drakaina* as 'fat and huge', Callimachus speaks of Python 'wreath[ing] snowy Parnassus with nine coils',

[109] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 434–40; cf. Hyginus *Fabulae* 140. For the relationship between female monogenesis and deformity, cf. the traditions relating to Typhon and Hephaestus discussed in Ch. 2.

[110] We have only: *LIMC* Python 1 (early 4th cent. BC; a superb image, but the vase is, alas, lost) and 3 (*c.*470 BC; where Python's serpent form is indisputable but nonetheless strangely difficult to construe). *LIMC* Python 2 (= Apollon 998) is mistakenly taken to represent Python; in fact it represents Lamia (Ch. 2).

[111] It is difficult to pin down the origin of this conceit: although it can be associated with pose-types known or believed to derive from the late Classical period, pose-types and their vertical supports were evidently interchangeable. See *LIMC* Apollo 39f, 39n (Praxiteles' Lycian Apollo, mid 4th cent. BC), 79 (Leochares' Apollo Belvedere, *c.*350–300 BC), 200i, 222 (the Apollo Citharoedus of Cyrene, pose based on a *c.*150–100 BC original), 224, 238, 261a, 602, Apollon/Apollo 38 (pose based on mid 5th-cent. BC type?), 39, 40a, 52 (pose possibly based on a 4th-cent. BC original), 541 (Praxiteles again), 56a (Leochares again), 61k. Note also *LIMC* Apollon/Apollo 551, a badly worn imperial-period relief from Bordeaux that appears to show Python as a massive serpent arching around behind Apollo with his lyre. For the deployment of Python in this way as a symbol of Apollo's divinatory art, see Lambrinudakis and Palagia 1984: 230–1.

[112] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3; see Fontenrose 1959: 13–14, 94.

[113] Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1245.

[114] Statius *Thebaid* 1. 563 (blue), 565 (tongue), 711 (green).

whilst Ovid's Python similarly covered a vast expanse of mountain, and 'occupied so many acres with his pestilential belly'. Statius' Python 'embraced Delphi with seven black loops and grated the old oaks with his scales and at the same time', and when unravelled in death extended 'over a hundred acres of Cirrhaean territory'. Menander Rhetor tells that Python occupied Mt. Parnassus so completely that no part of the mountain could be seen beneath his coils. From the peak he would lift his head up into the ether. He would drain entire rivers when he drank, and devour entire herds when he ate. For Isidore of Seville the serpent's vast bulk was more terrifying than its venom.[115] In art, as is always the case with *drakontes* and *kētē*, Python's size varies greatly. He is seemingly shown at his largest on an early lekythos, *c.*470 BC, though the image is frankly difficult to decipher,[116] and then on a lost Apulian amphora of the earlier fourth century, on which his rampant head reaches almost to the height of the standing Leto's (Fig. 1.4).[117]

What was the *drakōn*'s relationship with the oracle? It was usually held that the oracle had actually belonged to Python's mother, Earth, that it was operated on her behalf by her daughter Themis (presumably anticipating the Pythia's role) and guarded by her son Python. Such a notion is implicit in Pindar and explicit in Euripides, Ovid, and Apollodorus.[118] A late-Hellenistic relief cup from Pergamum may show us Python with his mother or his sister at the oracle. Python is rampant beside the tripod, whilst a seated female figure offers him an egg with her left hand. She may represent Earth or Themis, or even, in a kaleidoscoping of the usual chronology, the Pythia.[119] But there were alternative traditions. The other images simply show Apollo shooting Python, without any female associate of the latter's in the offing, and may thereby imply that Python operated the oracle simply for himself. Hyginus in due course presents Python as the sole owner and operator of the oracle.[120] The older scholia to the *Alexandra* assert that Cronus was the *promantis*, 'prior-prophet', at Delphi, whilst the *drakōn* was the *hysteromantis*, 'after-prophet'.[121] Another tradition combines Python and Themis but pits them against each other: Menander Rhetor tells that Python effectively closed down the oracle of Themis by marauding and rendering it inaccessible to people.[122] As for the *drakaina*, Plutarch holds, as we have seen, that she took over the oracle for herself upon finding it desolate.[123]

[115] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 302; Callimachus *Hymn* 4. 93 (cf. the Cyzicene epigram, *Palatine Anthology* 3. 6); Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 459–60; Statius *Thebaid* 1. 568–9; Menander Rhetor *Peri Epideiktikōn* 3. 17 pp. 441–2 Spengel; Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 8. 11. 54.

[116] *LIMC* Apollon 993 = Leto 29a = Python 3

[117] *LIMC* Apollon 995 = Leto 31 = Python 1.

[118] Pindar F55 SM, Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1234–82, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 434–60, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 4. 1. The notion found at Pausanias 10. 6. 6 and Aelian *Varia Historia* 3. 1 that Python guarded the oracle simply for Earth may represent a simplification rather than a variant of this tradition. Aeschylus *Eumenides* 1–8, however, does indeed offer an idiosyncratic variant of this tradition in telling that Earth gave the oracle to her daughter Themis, Themis gave it to her sister Phoebe, and Phoebe gave it to her grandson Apollo; cf. Gantz 1993: 88–9.

[119] *LIMC* Apollon 999, with Lambrinudakis and Palagia 1984 ad loc. (preferring Earth). For the curious conjoining of Python with Pythia, cf. Lucian *On Astrology* 23.

[120] Thus Hyginus *Fabulae* 140.

[121] Lycophron *Alexandra* 202–4, with schol. vet. 200.

[122] Menander Rhetor *Peri Epideiktikōn* 3. 17 pp. 441–2 Spengel.

[123] Plutarch *Moralia* 414a, 988a.

Only in some curious later attested traditions are we shown Python directly engaged in the prophetic process. In Lucian's *Astrology* a pre-Apolline (?) Pythian priestess is inspired by a *drakōn* that speaks under her tripod and (no doubt for the sake of the dialogue's immediate concerns) shares some sort of bond with the *drakōn* in the stars.[124] We have noted Python's general tendency to coil around Apollo's tripod in his imperial statuary, a pose Nonnus reflects in speaking, oddly, of a serpent coiling around the tripod of a now Apolline Pythia (a maenad snatches it up to tie into her hair).[125] The notion that Python had once wound around the Pythia's tripod is probably implicit too in the tradition that the tripod of the Apolline Pythia was draped with the dead Python's skin, or that it held his bones and teeth.[126] The *Suda* speaks of women inspired to predict the future by the breath/spirit (*pneuma*) of a prophetic demon named Python and imagining themselves impregnated (metaphorically or literally?—Ch. 9) by their assocation with him.[127] In the first instance the lexicographer is speaking, despite appearances, not of the Delphic serpent but of 'ventriloquist' demons, known as *pythōnes* or *engastrimythoi.*[128] Even so, the association of Python with breath intrigues. Lucian and the *Suda* together suggest a notion that just as it was sometimes believed that the Pythia was inspired by inhaling gaseous vapours from a chasm in the earth below her tripod, so it could also be believed that she was once inspired by the breath of the serpent as it coiled beneath her tripod.[129] As we will see in Chapter 6, *drakontes* were held to possess breath of extraordinary pungency, and their breath could on occasion be compared with the exhalations of mephitic underworld passages.

The tradition was uncertain as to whether the *drakōn* inhabited the oracular chasm itself, or dwelled in a separate cave on Parnassus. When Apollodorus tells us that the *drakōn* guarded the oracle and its chasm, he may suggest that the serpent dwelt in a cave at the site of the oracle. But when the chorus of Euripides' *Phoenissae* refer to 'the divine cave of the *drakōn*' in apostrophizing Parnassus they suggest that its cave was separate and distinct from the oracle. The scholia would subsequently assert, in elucidation, that one could see the cave of 'Delphynes' under Parnassus.[130] The early fourth-century BC image of a rampant Python defying Leto with her babes in arms suggests that the *drakōn* had to divide

[124] Lucian *On Astrology* 23.

[125] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 9. 547–72.

[126] Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 3. 92, 260; cf. Ch. 4 for the *omphalos* as Python's tomb. The paradoxical and provocative *Wonders beyond Thule* of Antonius Diogenes (summarized at Porphyry *Life of Pythagoras* 16; cf. Stephens and Winkler 1995: 136–7) contrived to claim that Python had rather slain Apollo and that the tripod was the god's tomb. It was also claimed that Apollo was the son of Silenus, and that the tripod took its name from the fact that Apollo was lamented by the daughters of Triopas. Fontenrose 1959: 86–9, 381 is surely unjustified in using this text as the basis for the reconstruction of a genuine myth according to which Apollo was first killed by Python and restored to life by lamentation before going on to kill Python in turn.

[127] *Suda* s.v. *Πύθωνος*; for the inspirational force of the Pythia as a *pneuma* see also Plutarch *Moralia* 438b.

[128] As is clear on comparison of *Suda* s.v. *ἐγγαστρίμυθος*. For ventriloquist demons see further Aristophanes *Wasps* 1015–22 with schol. and Plato *Sophist* 252c with schol.; cf. Ogden 2009*a*: 30–2.

[129] For the gaseous emanations see above all Plutarch *Moralia* 432d–435d (*On oracles becoming obsolete*). Oddly, some have recently been taking the notion seriously again: De Boer and Hale 2001.

[130] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 4. 1; Euripides *Phoenissae* 232, with schol. ad loc.

his attention between two sites: he stands directly before and guards a cave entrance; but the tall pile of rocks behind Leto resembles the established iconographic signifier for a spring of the sort inhabited and guarded by a serpent (Fig. 1.4; see Ch. 4). The oracle could have been associated with either one of them.[131] Another view again is indicated by the notion that the wooden hut (*skēnē*) that the Delphians erected and burned at their Septerion festival represented Python's original nest.[132]

What were the circumstances of the clash between Apollo and the male *drakōn*? The tradition seems to know of three broad variants, attested in the following order. First, Apollo gratuitously killed Python in order to take control of his oracle. Euripides may already imply this, and the notion becomes explicit in one of Callimachus' versions and in the accounts of others after him. It is credited to the 'Theologians of Delphi' by Plutarch.[133] Secondly, Python made gratuitous depredations on the local population, and Apollo took on the role of cleansing hero. This notion is found explicitly in Ovid and Menander Rhetor, but must already underlie the rationalized Ephoran account, which presents the human Python-Drakon as a brigand terrorizing the local community, and Apollo's killing of him as an act of cleansing popular with them (as in the case of the *Homeric Hymn*'s *drakaina*).[134] Thirdly, Python, spurred on by Hera, gratuitously attacked Leto and her twin babies and paid the price for doing so. This version is first found in Clearchus, and frequently thereafter.[135] A *Cyzicene Epigram* of 159 BC seems to imply (the language it uses is a little obscure) that Python more particularly aspired to rape Leto.[136] Hyginus takes the chain of causation further back. Python's prophetic abilities allowed him to understand that he was destined to be killed by the offspring of Leto, and for that reason he harried her in her pregnancy, but she was saved by Zeus, who ordered the North Wind to carry her off to Ortygia-Delos and into the care of Poseidon. Apollo, born on Delos, came of his own accord to Delphi four days later and killed Python (evidently attaining adolescence almost instantaneously).[137] Macrobius' Python actually attacks the cradles of Leto's babies.[138]

How did the *drakōn* die? We are given a striking vignette of the death of the female serpent in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo.* Apollo shoots her with his poison

[131] *LIMC* Apollon 995 = Leto 31 = Python 1. *LIMC* Apollon 993 = Leto 29a = Python 3 (*c.*475–50 BC) also seems to show Apollo as babe in arms shooting Python before his cave.

[132] Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F31b = Strabo C422–3, Plutarch *Moralia* 418a.

[133] Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1234–57, Callimachus *Hymns* 4. 84–93, 2nd-century BC inscribed hymn from the Athenian treasury at Delphi at Colin 1909–13 no. 137 lines 21–4, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 4. 1, Plutarch *Moralia* 417f, Orosius 6. 15.

[134] Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F31b, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 434–60, Menander Rhetor *Peri Epideiktikōn* 3. 17 pp. 441–2 Spengel.

[135] Clearchus of Soli F64 Wehrli; Callimachus *Hymns* 2. 97–104 (a distinct version from that of *Hymn* 4), Lucan 5. 79–85 (where the child Apollo only discovers the oracle in the aftermath of the killing), Pausanias 10. 6. 6 (rationalized), Lucian *Dialogues in the Sea* 9, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 37, schol. Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 3. 10 (cf. 4. 3), Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 207 (citing Helios).

[136] *Cyzicene Epigram Palatine Anthology* 3. 6. All depends on the meaning of κυλάω here; cf. LSJ s. v. The lost relief to which the description corresponded is catalogued as *LIMC* Apollon 996.

[137] Hyginus *Fabulae* 140; cf. 53. 2.

[138] Macrobius 1. 17. 50–2.

arrows: 'And she, rent by harsh agonies lay gasping badly and rolling over the place. There was a loud and terrible cry. She writhed back and forth, again and again, through the wood, and she gave up her life, breathing it forth in the form of blood.'[139] Compatibly, the dominant image of the death of Python is that of his gargantuan carcass transfixed by numerous arrows. He was so portrayed in a bronze sculptural group by the early fifth-century BC sculptor Pythagoras of Rhegium, as Pliny tells.[140] On a later fifth-century Etruscan mirror baby Apollo shoots an arrow directly into Python's mouth.[141] Pythagoras' may have been the image Callimachus had in mind when, in his second *Hymn*, he told Apollo, 'You slew him, shooting one swift arrow after another, and the people shouted out "*Hiē hiē paiēon*, fire (*hiei*) an arrow."'[142] For Ovid, Apollo slew the serpent by weighing him down with a thousand arrows.[143] The actual spot of Python's death was disputed. Hesychius places it at Nape ('Vale') in Delphi, but others put it much further afield, at Tempe, at the temple of Ptoan Apollo at Tegyra in Boeotia, or at Gryneia in Aeolis.[144]

THE SERPENT OF ARES, SLAIN BY CADMUS

The canonical version of the myth of the Serpent of Ares (Figs. 1.6, 4.1) may be summarized as follows. Phoenician Cadmus came to Greece in search of his sister Europa, abducted by Zeus. But Apollo instructed Cadmus to follow a heifer and found a city wherever it threw itself down to rest, and it did so at the future site of Thebes. Cadmus wished to sacrifice the cow to Athene, and sent men to draw water from the adjacent spring. The spring was guarded by a serpent set at its post by Ares, which killed the men, and Cadmus duly killed it in revenge either with a rock, which he either dashed against the serpent's head or threw at it, or with his sword. Following Athene's advice, he sowed the serpent's teeth in the ground and the Spartoi ('Sown Men') or indeed a crop of Giants sprang up, plant-like, from them. Cadmus was afraid and threw stones amongst them, whereupon they attacked each other until only five remained. To make restitution for the killing of the serpent, Cadmus was indentured to Ares for eight years. Zeus gave Harmonia, daughter of Ares and Aphrodite, to Cadmus as wife, and she bore him four daughters and a son. Later Cadmus and Harmonia moved to Illyria, where they became king and queen

[139] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 3. 358–62.

[140] Pliny *Natural History* 34. 59 = *LIMC* Apollon 1002. *LIMC* Apollon 997, an imperial-period marble tripod stand originally from Nablus (Neapolis) and now in the Istanbul archaeological museum depicts Leto standing with her grown twins and Python, his head hanging down and transfixed by a single arrow.

[141] *LIMC* Apollon/Aplu 11 = Artemis/Artumes 51 = Leto/Letun 2 = Python 5.

[142] Callimachus *Hymns* 2. 97–104. Cf. the two late 2nd-century BC inscribed hymns from the Athenian treasury at Delphi, Colin 1909–13 no. 137 lines 21–4 ('how you took the prophetic tripod which the hostile *drakōn* guarded, when you penetrated its coiling, spiralling form with your darts, until the beast, emitting many harsh hissings finally gave up its life'), no. 138 lines 25–30 (the phrases 'you slew with arrows' and 'a hissing' survive).

[143] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 457–60. For Lucan 5. 79–85 the child Apollo unravelled Python with arrows. For Statius *Thebaid* 1. 567 Apollo 'spent all his arrows on numerous wounds'. Cf. also Hyginus *Fabulae* 140, Menander Rhetor *Peri Epideiktikōn* 3. 17 pp. 441–2 Spengel, First Vatican Mythographer 2. 12.

[144] Hesychius s.v. *Τοξίου βουνός*; Plutarch *Moralia* 293c (Tempe), *Pelopidas* 16 (Tegyra), Servius on Virgil *Eclogues* 6. 72 (Gryneia).

Fig. 1.6. Cadmus slays the Serpent of Ares with a rock. Red-figure Paestan crater, *c.*330 BC. Musée du Louvre, Collection Durand 1825 K33. © RMN / Hervé Lewandowski.

of the Encheleis, whom they led into battle both against other Illyrian tribes and indeed against Greeks, and even against Delphi itself, before dying and being translated to Elysium. At some point in the course of their Illyrian period, Cadmus and Harmonia were themselves both transformed into serpents.[145]

The marriage between Cadmus and Harmonia is the earliest-attested part of this myth complex, being found already in the *Theogony*.[146] Stesichorus' reference in the earlier sixth century to Athene sowing the serpent's teeth entails the

[145] Principal texts: Stesichorus F195 *PMG/Campbell*; Pherecydes FF22ab, 88 Fowler; Euripides *Phoenissae* 238, 638–48, 657–75, 818–21, 931–41, 1010–11, 1060–6, 1315, (all with scholl.), *Bacchae* 1330–9, 1355–60, F930 (?); Hellanicus FF1a, 51, 96, Fowler; Palaephatus 3–4; Apollonius *Argonautica* 3. 1176–90; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 28–98 (the most expansive account); Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 4. 1–2, 3. 5. 4; [Plutarch] *On Rivers* 2. 1; Hyginus *Fabulae* 6, 148, 178, 274. 4; Pausanias 9. 10. 5, Philostratus *Imagines* 1. 18, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 2. 669–78, 4. 348–463 (a good account of the fight), 5. 121–89, 44. 107–18, 46. 364–7; Photius *Lexicon* and *Suda* s.v. *Καδμεία νίκη*; schol. Pindar *Pythian* 3. 88–91; First Vatican Mythographer 2. 48–9. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Harmonia 1–7, Hesperie 1, Kadmos i. 7–47, Vian 1963 pls. i–xii. Discussions: C. Robert 1920–6: i. 100–14, Fontenrose 1959: 306–20, Vian 1963: 76–176, E. Vermeule 1971, Servais-Soyez 1981, Burn 1985, Collinge 1988, Paribeni 1988, Tiverios 1990, Gantz 1993: 469–70, Gourmelen 2004: 381–400.

[146] Hesiod *Theogony* 933–7.

existence of some sort of serpent-slaying story at least.[147] The earliest extant image of Cadmus' serpent-slaying is probably the particularly fine but unfortunately damaged one found on a white-ground bowl by the Sotades Painter, dated to 470–50 BC. Here the slayer confronts a serpent coiling amid the greenery of a raised rock, which may well represent a spring. The figure of the slayer anticipates later ones of Cadmus in slaying mode, both in his overall configuration (his right hand is drawn back behind is body to launch what seems to be an elongated stone at the serpent) and in the pointed cap he wears. However, he also appears to brandish a club in his left hand, a weapon otherwise unassociated with Cadmus, and suggestive rather of Heracles.[148] We have only a snapshot-fragment of Pherecydes' *c.*454 BC account of the serpent-slaying, but this tells us that Pherecydes, anomalously in relation to the bulk of the subsequent tradition, with its rock, had Cadmus kill the serpent with a sword.[149] The earliest indisputable images of Cadmus' fight against the serpent are found on a pair of vases of *c.*450–40 BC, roughly contemporary with Pherecydes therefore, and interestingly one of these gives him, like Pherecydes, a sword to brandish against the serpent, the other the rock that was to be the more usual weapon.[150] The earliest rounded accounts of Cadmus' killing of the Serpent of Ares are those of Euripides' *Phoenissae* of 409 BC and of Hellanicus, who wrote at some point towards the end of the fifth century.[151] Despite this slow start, the Serpent of Ares is the single creature to which the term *drakōn* is most consistently and frequently applied in all extant Greek literature up to the end of the fifth century BC (often in connection with its teeth and the Spartoi).[152]

[147] Stesiochorus F195 *PMG/Campbell.*

[148] *LIMC* Kadmos i 13 = Archemoros 11 = Nemea 13 = Hesperie 1, with the discussions ad locc., and principally Tiverios 1990: 877. The number of *LIMC* entries between which the image is shared testifies to the confusion and lack of consensus in the interpretation of it. For later images of Cadmus of similar configuration, see *LIMC* Kadmos i 23–6. It is not completely inconceivable that the image should represent Heracles, for he is found in other images fighting serpents that cannot be identified with his named and more established anguiform adversaries: see *LIMC* Herakles 2820–33, with Boardman 1990*b*. Pache 2004: 115–17 unpersuasively argues that the cup portrays the slaying of the Nemean serpent.

[149] Pherecydes F88 Fowler; cf. also FF22ab Fowler. Cadmus kills the *drakōn* with a rock at Hellanicus F96 Fowler, Euripides *Phoenissae* 663, 1060–5, schol. Euripides *Phoenissae* 662, 1062, Hyginus *Fabulae* 178, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4. 408–20 (Cadmus deals the decisive blow with a rock but finishes the serpent off with a knife); cf. Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 59–94 (Cadmus throws a rock at the serpent to little effect and eventually kills it by pinning it to a tree with his spear).

[150] Rock: *LIMC* Harmonia 1 = Kadmos i 15. Sword: *LIMC* Kadmos i 14 (sword; cf. 29, 37, if relevant).

[151] Euripides *Phoenissae* 238, 638–48, 657–75, 818–21, 931–41, 1010–11, 1060–66, 1315; Hellanicus FF1a, 51, 96 Fowler.

[152] Pherecydes F88 Fowler may be the earliest such text (though we may not be able to trust the phraseology). Sophocles applies the term to the serpent twice in the *Antigone*: 126, where the Theban army as a whole is referred to metonymically as a *drakōn*, the Theban people supposedly being descended from the Cadmean *drakōn*; and 1125, where the point is made more directly. Euripides applies the term to the Cadmean *drakōn* no less than eight times in his *Phoenissae*: 657, 820, 931, 935, 941, 1011, 1062a, 1315. Elsewhere Euripides five times refers to the Thebans as descended from the Cadmeian *drakōn*: *Bacchae* 539, 1026, and 1155 (the first and last of which refer to Pentheus specifically), *Suppliants* 579, and *Heracles* 253. The historian Hellanicus, one of the first prose authors to employ the term *drakōn* in any context, applies it to the Cadmean *drakōn* twice: F1a and F51 Fowler. Note also (the 4th-cent. BC) Androtion *FGrH* 324 F37.

The serpent was brother (half, at any rate) to Harmonia. According to Palaephatus, Apollodorus, and Hyginus the serpent was itself the child of Ares, as was she.[153] Who was its mother? Euripides applies the epithet *gēgenēs* to it, which may imply that its mother was Earth, Ge, though the epithet need only be intended more loosely, or to evoke more indirectly the earth-born Spartoi, sown from the serpent's teeth.[154] A scholium to Sophocles' *Antigone* recognizes Ares as the serpent's father and preserves the unique information that the serpent's mother was one Tilphōssa Erinys. Erinyes certainly exhibit serpent affinities of their own (Ch. 7); it is less clear that the name Tilphōssa is in itself also suggestive of a serpent.[155]

The visualization of the creature and its slaying is highly conservative. It is never spoken of or illustrated as anything other than a single-bodied massive snake, with or without beard and crest. Numbers of vases show the serpent in one of two noteworthy configurations. In some, beginning either from *c.*470–50 BC (if we count the white-ground bowl mentioned above)[156] or from *c.*400 BC, it lurks beside a growth of vegetation or a loose pile of rocks, both indicative of its spring (and perhaps too the source of the rock Cadmus throws at it; Fig. 1.f).[157] In others, beginning *c.*440 BC, it arches up from behind and over a female figure that constitutes the embodiment of its spring (Ch. 4, with Fig. 4.1).[158] Cadmus typically approaches spring and *drakōn* with one hand drawn back to launch the rock furnished by Athene, and his hydria in his other hand.[159] Sometimes he brandishes a club (perhaps) or a sword instead of a rock, as we have seen. Sometimes he carries a spear or a pair of them, from *c.*400 BC.[160] On one burlesque vase of *c.*420–400 BC an ithyphallic Cadmus appears to brandish rather a whip.[161] The only literary sources to offer portraits of the serpent of any distinctiveness are Ovid and Nonnus. Ovid's cave-dwelling serpent is swollen with venom and can kill with its toxic breath alone; it boasts a golden crest, eyes that flash with fire, three tongues, and triple rows of teeth, and its scales form a metallic blue-black hide.[162] Nonnus' *drakōn* has a shaggy crest and a spangled back (*aiolonōtos*). It kills several of Cadmus' men by biting them on the chest, in the liver, in the eye, and on the foot. Its green, frothing venom shoots to its victim's brain, which instantly melts and pours out down his nostrils. It attempts to bring Cadmus down by coiling around his legs.[163]

[153] Palaephatus 3, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 4. 1, Hyginus *Fabulae* 178. However Diodorus, in a typically rationalizing account, denies that Harmonia was the daughter of Ares.

[154] Euripides *Phoenissae* 931.

[155] Schol. Sophocles *Antigone* 126: ἐγεγόνει ὁ δράκων ἐξ Ἄρεως καὶ Τιλφώσσης Ἐρινύος. Tilphōssa: *pace* Fontenrose 1959: 308.

[156] *LIMC* Kadmos i 13 = Archemoros 11 = Nemea 13 = Hesperie 1.

[157] *LIMC* Harmonia 2–7, Kadmos i 20–7.

[158] *LIMC* Harmonia 1, 3–4, Kadmos i 9, 18.

[159] *LIMC* Harmonia 1, 4–5, 7, Hesperie 1, Kadmos i 15, 21; cf. Kadmos i 31.

[160] *LIMC* Harmonia 3, 4, 7, Kadmos i 9, 23, 26.

[161] *LIMC* Kadmos i 20; however, Tiverios 1990 ad loc. reads the weapon rather as a spiral sword.

[162] Fontenrose 1959: 311 suggests that Ovid's three tongues and a triple row of teeth may salute the notion that the serpent had heads in other accounts. The serpent coils in its cave in *LIMC* Kadmos i 21 (*c.*375 BC, unillustrated).

[163] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4. 356–420.

The dénouement of Cadmus' story is as mysterious as it is compelling. In Euripides' *Bacchae* Dionysus tells Cadmus that he and his wife will be turned into *drakontes*, that they will together drive a chariot drawn by calves, to lead barbarians. They will sack many cities with an unnumbered army, but make a wretched return home for themselves when they raid the oracle of Apollo. Ares will, however, save them both and establish a life for them in the Land of the Blessed.[164] The only direct description of the transformation is that offered by Philostratus as a decorative detail in an ecphrasis of a painting of the climactic scene in the *Bacchae*: 'And there [sc. on Cithaeron] are Harmonia and Cadmus, but they are not as they were. For they are becoming serpents up to their thighs and they are already covered in scales. Gone are their feet, gone are their buttocks, and the transformation of their form is creeping up their bodies. They are astonished and embrace each other as if trying to hold onto what remains of their bodies, so as not to be deprived of them.'[165] The configuration described here is that of anguipedes: is this in fact their final form, or will the scales continue their progress up their bodies to transform them into pure *drakontes*? A Euripidean fragment from an unknown play seemingly described a transformation in similar terms: 'Alas, half of me becomes a *drakōn*, child. Embrace what is left of your father!' Perhaps the speaker was Cadmus, as Seaford conjectures.[166]

Philostratus has to locate the transformation in Thebes to meet the demands of the foreshortened narrative required by ecphrasis, but Euripides and the other literary sources, all awkwardly allusive, appear to be compatible with the following sequence of events: Cadmus and Harmonia are exiled to Illyria where they involve themselves in a war between the tribes, becoming king and queen of the Encheleis (the 'Eel people') in the process. At that point they are both (appropriately for context) transformed into serpents,[167] and they then undertake the expedition leading the Encheleis against Greece in their calf-drawn chariot.[168] Back in Illyria they undergo a second transformation at the point of death, now into stone serpents,[169] and these stone serpents are considered to be the markers of their

[164] Euripides *Bacchae* 1330–9; cf. also 1355–60 (*drakōn*, *drakaina*). Dodds 1960 on the 1330–9 passage well describes this prediction as 'bizarre'; cf. Buxton 2008: 59–63. Note also the disembodied voice making a similar prediction at Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 98: 'You too will be gazed at in the form of a serpent.'

[165] Philostratus *Imagines* 1. 8.

[166] Euripides F930 *TrGF*. Seaford 1996 on 1330–2. For the potential origin of another of Philostratus' vignettes in a lost tragedy of Euripides, see Ogden 2008*a*: 85–7.

[167] Hyginus *Fabulae* 6: 'were turned into snakes in the region of Illyria'. Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 5. 4: 'Cadmus left Thebes with Harmonia and went to the Encheleis. The Illyrians were making war on them, but the god prophesied that they would beat them if they had Cadmus and Harmonia as their leaders. The Encheleis were persuaded and so made them their leaders against the Illyrians, and conquered them. Cadmus became king of the Illyrians. After this Cadmus turned into a serpent (*drakōn*), together with Harmonia, and was sent by Zeus to the Elysian field.'

[168] Herodotus 5. 61, 9. 43, publishing *c.*425 BC, knew that the Encheleis had sacked Delphi; cf. Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F103.

[169] This final transformation is anticipated at Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 5. 121–5, 44. 107–18 and 46. 364–7. In the middle passage Cadmus and Harmonia's eventual fate 'at the mouth of the Illyrian sea' is foreshadowed during their Theban days (cf. Philostratus?) when a pair of gentle serpents (*meilichios*, *drakōn*) coil around the heads of Cadmus and Harmonia, 'spitting friendly venom' (!) and are then turned to stone garlands by Zeus.

tombs at the mouth of the Illyrian gulf.[170] But their souls, anguiform still, are translated to the Elysian plane.[171] It is noteworthy and indeed puzzling that there are no known iconographic representations of Cadmus and Harmonia in serpent form,[172] though we do have representations of a *humanoid* Cadmus and Harmonia riding in their calf-drawn chariot—and so presumably leading the Illyrians against Greece—in black-figure vases of the 510–490 BC period.[173] Šašel Kos and others have historicized the traditions of the anguiform Cadmus and Harmonia in Illyria, to find in them the refractions of a local serpent cult. She contends that this cult is attested again by a Severan-period altar from Skopje carrying a Latin dedication by the slave Epitynchanus to 'Jupiter and Juno and Dracco and Draccena and Alexander'. This seems something of a stretch. We will return to this inscription, as mysterious as it is fascinating, in Chapter 9.[174]

What is the motivation for the serpent-transformation? Nonnus implies that Cadmus' transformation resulted, appropriately enough, from an anguished curse made by Ares as Cadmus slew his *drakōn*.[175] However, he also implies, and the First Vatican Mythographer is more explicit about this, that Harmonia was rather transformed by virtue of the power of her golden necklace. This was made by Hephaestus and given to her by Aphrodite on her wedding day; it took the form of an *amphisbaena*, a double-headed snake, devouring an eagle from both sides.[176] We shall return to the relationship between the Serpent of Ares and Cadmus' own serpent-transformation in Chapter 4, where we will also give further consideration

[170] [Scylax] *Periplus* 24 (4th cent. BC) speaks of 'the [sc. anguiform?] stones (*lithoi*) of Cadmus and Harmonia' at the Rhizous river in Illyria (Bocche di Cattaro). Callimachus F11 Pfeiffer seems to have told that Harmonia's tomb on the Illyrian coast was graced by a stone snake, *ophis*, but the reading is uncertain. Eratosthenes *apud* Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. *Δυρράχιον* knew that Cadmus and Harmonia had been buried in the region of Durrachium, and that their tombs (i.e. the prominent stone serpents?) could be seen in his own day adjacently to the rivers Drilon and Aoos (Drim and Vijöse). Apollonius Rhodius *Argonautica* 4.516–18 (with schol. ad loc.) locates Harmonia's tomb by 'the Illyrian river.' Phylarchus *FGrH* 81 F39 refers to a monument to or tomb of Cadmus and Harmonia near Illyrian Cylices.

[171] The garbled Pindar scholia to *Pythian* 3.88–91 probably reflect an account (the traditions of the poets and the mythographers are cited) compatible with this: 'they took up residence on the Elysian plane on a chariot of serpents' (*κατῳκησαν ἐν τῷ Ἠλυσίῳ πεδίῳ ἐπὶ δρακόντων ἅρματος*). However, this phrase as it stands ought rather to indicate that Cadmus travelled on a chariot drawn *by* serpents (as Medea did), much as another late source tells us that they rode 'on a yoke of oxen' (*Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *Βουθόη*: *ἐπὶ βοῶν ζεύγους*). It is not clear what we should make of Conon's assertion (Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 186 §37) that Cadmus and Harmonia were transformed rather into lions. I can see nothing in any of these traditions to justify the belief of Dodds 1960 on Euripides *Bacchae* 1330–9 and Gourmelen 2004: 393–400 that Cadmus and Harmonia functioned as *oikouroi opheis* for Thebes (cf. Ch. 10 for the Athenian *oikouros ophis*).

[172] *Pace* Tiverios 1990 at *LIMC* Kadmos i 47, Philostratus *Imagines* 1. 18 need not have been based on any actual iconographic tradition.

[173] *LIMC* Harmonia 9 = Kadmos i 45, Harmonia 10 = Kadmos i 44. This may already salute the folk-etymology that derived the name of the city of Bouthoë, modern Budua in Montenegro, from *bou-*, 'ox': *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *Βουθόη*: 'An Illyrian city. It has been said that Cadmus founded the city after leaving Thebes and quickly arriving amongst the Illyrians on a yoke of oxen.'

[174] Beaumont 1936: 196–7 and Dodds 1960 on *Bacchae* 1330–9, Šašel Kos 1991 (with text of the inscription at 187). Dracco and Draccena correspond to the Greek words (names) *drakōn* and *drakaina*.

[175] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4. 416–20.

[176] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 5. 135–89, First Vatican Mythographer 2. 49.

to the significance of the spring of Dirce guarded by the *drakōn*, and to the significance of Cadmus' use of a rock to kill it.

THE SERPENT OF NEMEA, SLAIN BY THE SEVEN AGAINST THEBES

The myth of the slaying of the *drakōn* of Nemea (Fig. 1.7), which formed an aetiology for the Nemean games, may be summarized thus in its canonical form: Hypsipyle, daughter of king Thoas of Lemnos, gave hospitality to Jason as he passed through in his quest for the golden fleece, conceiving two sons by him, another Thoas and a Euneus, whom Jason took off with him as he headed on for Colchis. After the Argonauts' departure Hypsipyle was captured by pirates and sold into slavery to Lycurgus (or Lycus, Euphetes), king of Nemea and priest of Nemean Zeus. He and his wife Eurydice (or Nemea, Creusa) had a precious late-born son, Opheltes. Lycurgus asked Delphi how best to protect his son and was told that he should not be put down on the ground before he could walk. The couple entrusted him to Hypsipyle as nurse. As the Seven against Thebes were passing through Nemea en route to their goal, and found themselves thirsty or in need of water for sacrifice, they met Hypsipyle with her charge and asked her if she could get them water. She agreed to get them some from the spring of Langia, putting the baby down in the parsley as she did so, whereupon he was killed by the serpent, itself sacred to Zeus, that guarded the spring. The serpent either killed him deliberately, by devouring, envenoming, or constricting him, or accidentally, with a flick of its tail. In its turn the serpent was killed by Amphiaraus or Adrastus or Hippomedon and Capaneus. Eurydice attempted to kill Hypsipyle in revenge for the death of her son, but she was saved either by Adrastus or by her own

Fig. 1.7. The Serpent of Nemea devours the child Opheltes-Archemorus as he makes appeal to his nurse Hypsipyle. Red-figure Paestan crater, fragment, *c.*360 BC. Bari Museum 3581 = *LIMC* Archemorus 2. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

rediscovered sons, Thoas and Euneus. Adrastus organized a different form of restitution: he established the Nemean Games in memory of the dead child, with victory wreaths made of parsley. The Seven themselves took the victories in the various competitions of the initial meeting. The seer Amphiaraus renamed the dead boy Archemorus, 'Beginning of death', because he foresaw that his death was the first of the many the Seven would encounter in the course of their Theban venture.[177]

The topography of the Opheltes episode is easy to relate to the archaeological discoveries in the vale of Nemea, amongst which feature, the (Hellenistic) stadium apart,[178] the temple of Zeus together with its adjacent cypress grove,[179] the enclosure surrounding the tomb of Opheltes-Archemorus and its attendant altars,[180] and a vigorous spring, channelled through rock-cut tunnels to bath-houses, which must surely be Langia.[181]

The Nemean Games commenced in 573 BC and this, presumably, constitutes the *terminus post quem* for the development of the Opheltes-Archemorus story.[182] It had evidently achieved its familiar form by the point, somewhere between 500 and 450 BC, when Bacchylides spoke of the picked men of the Argives competing in honour of Archemorus, whom an enormous yellow-glancing (i.e. fiery-eyed?) *drakōn* slew as he slept, in a portent of the coming death.[183] Two lacunose fragments of Euripides' *Hypsipyle* of *c.*410–407 BC cast flickering light on the encounter with the *drakōn* in that play. The first, from an establishing scene, explains that a *drakōn* of fierce gaze and shaking crest lives adjacently to

[177] Principal texts: Bacchylides *Epinicians* 9. 10–14; Euripides *Hypsipyle* FF752–69 *TrGF*, esp. F754a *TrGF* = F18 *Bond*, F757 *TrGF* = F60 Bond; Palatine Anthology 3. 10 (Cyzicene), 9. 357; Statius *Thebaid* 4. 642–5. 753 esp. 5. 505–87, with Lactantius Placidus ad locc., esp. on 4. 717; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 6. 4; Pausanias 2. 15. 2–3; Hyginus *Fabulae* 74, 273. 6; Servius on Virgil *Eclogues* 6. 68, schol. Pindar Nemeans 8. 85 and hypotheses 1–5; schol. Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 2. 34. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Archemoros *passim*, Hypsipyle i 2–9, Nemea 13–15, Septem 12–20; Simon 1979: 38–44 figs. 5–12; Cockle 1987 pl. i; Miller 1990: 27–9 figs. 7–8; Doffey 1992, Pache 2004: 116–34 figs. 19–37. Discussions: C. Robert 1920–6: iii. 933–6, Bond 1963, Simon 1979, Pülhorn 1984, Cockle 1987, E. Vermeule 1987: 141, Miller 1990, Gantz 1993: 345–6, 511, Krauskopf 1994, Boulotis 1997, Collard, Cropp, and Gilbert 2004: 169–258, Pache 2004: 95–134.

[178] Miller 1990:171–91, 2001.

[179] Pausanias 2. 15. 2–3; Miller 1990: 157–9, Birge, Kraynak, and Miller 1992: 85–98,

[180] Pausanias 2. 15. 2–3; Miller 1990: 104–10 and figs. 34–6, 2002.

[181] Miller 1990: 110–17, 179, with figs. 37–8. Birge, Kraynak, and Miller 1992: 220–32 with figs. 313, 315–16.

[182] We cannot know whether the episode was to be found in the Greek *Thebaid*, which might (or might not) have been composed after 573 BC: M. L. West 2003*b*: 7, Collard, Cropp, and Gilbert 2004: 177. The earliest temple of Zeus at Nemea seems, compatibly, to have derived from the mid 6th century BC: Miller 1990: 58–62, 131–2.

[183] Bacchylides *Epinicians* 9. 10–14: *ξανθοδερκής . . . δράκων ὑπέροπλος . . . cῶμα μέλλοντος φόνου.* I read *ἀωτεύοντα* and construe it to mean 'sleep'; discussion at Cairns 1998 and at Pache 2004: 98–9 (the latter highly speculative). For the significance of the name Archemorus, see also Euripides Hypsipyle F757 *TrGF*, schol. Pindar *Nemeans* hypothesis 3, schol. Clement *Protrepticus* 2. 34. Other early allusions to ancillary parts of the tale (but not the serpent itself) may or may not antedate Bacchylides' lines. Simonides F553 *PMG*/Campbell = Athenaeus 396e: 'They wept for the milk-sucking child of Eurydice, breathing out his sweet soul' (Pache 2004: 96, again speculatively, contends that this phraseology means that Simonides' serpent constricted Opheltes). Pindar *Nemeans* 8. 50–1 and 10. 28 tells that Adrastus established the Games before going on to fight the Cadmeians. Aeschylus' *Nemea* F149a *TrGF* tells told that the Nemean Games were held for Archemorus the son of Nemea.

and guards a shaded spring. In the second Amphiaraus defends Hypsipyle before Eurydice. He tells how he asked her to guide him to water for sacrifice, how the *drakōn* attacked Opheltes and embraced him in its coils, and how he killed it with the cast of a javelin. He asks to be allowed to bury the body, and declares that (presumably in conjunction with the burial) he will initiate games that will perpetuate his memory.[184] The only expansive literary account of the *drakōn*-slaying to survive is that of Statius. His enormous serpent kills Opheltes unknowingly with a swish of its tail, leaving a broken and bloody body behind it. Hippomedon and Capaneus, summoned by Hypsipyle's wail of grief, attack the creature: the rock cast against it by Hippomedon (à la Cadmus) is ineffectual, but Capaneus is able to drive his spear into its mouth; it cuts out the serpent's tongue and smashes through its brain and crest.[185] The instability in the tradition's identification of the serpent's slayers is curious; and indeed Apollodorus makes Adrastus the serpent's killer.[186]

It is only in the mid fourth century BC that the Nemean serpent enters the iconographic record, but the earliest image, that found on a *c.*360 BC red-figure Paestan bowl in Bari, is eloquent, for all its fragmentary nature (Fig. 1.7). Here a superb, large-eyed serpent (without crest or beard) coils up over an altar and takes the entirety of baby Opheltes' right arm into its mouth. The baby kneels on the ground, legs splayed, and raises his free left arm in a plea for help to his nurse Hypsipyle, the bottom of whose dress we can see.[187] The baby's configuration closely resembles that in which he is represented in a small Hellenistic bronze votive discovered at the site of Nemea itself: he kneels and raises an arm in alarm, but this time his right one. Although the votive was discovered in a disturbed archaeological context, it almost certainly originated in the enclosure (*peribolos*) of Opheltes.[188] The splayed-kneeling posture with a single arm raised over the head is strongly reminiscent of the canonical depiction of the Heracliscus, baby Heracles, as he grapples with the two serpents sent to kill him, though in the case of Heracles the arm is raised not in alarm or appeal but in the course of grappling with one of the snakes, which is thus lifted aloft. The relatively prolific Heracles images of this type precede this first Opheltes image by over a century,[189] and we

[184] F754a *TrGF* = F18 Bond (with Bond 1963: 97–8); F757 *TrGF* = F60 Bond. For a general reconstruction of the play's action, see Bond 1963: 7–20; he holds that schol. Pindar *Nemeans* hypothesis 2 preserves something close to a summary of it. For the play's date see Collard and Gilbert 2004: 183.

[185] Statius *Thebaid* 5. 505–606.

[186] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 6. 4.

[187] *LIMC* Archemoros 2 = Hypsipyle i 2; cf. also Simon 1979: 37–9 (with a good illustration in fig. 6), Pache 2004: 117–18.

[188] Nemea Museum BR671 = Miller 1990: 27–8 and fig. 7 = Pache 2004: 135 fig. 37. Note also the undated terracotta, Nemea Museum TC 117 = Miller 1990: 29 and fig. 8, 2002: 242 fig. 4 = Pache 2004: 135 fig. 36, discovered in the *periobolos* of Opheltes. According to Miller (followed by Pache), this represents a seated baby boy holding a mask to his face 'in a gesture of chthonic significance'. I suspect that this statuette has been misinterpreted, and that it represents a crude version of the image presented in the Hellenistic statuette. The boy does not wear a mask, but his face has been crudely modelled. The raised right arm does not hold the supposed mask up, but calls for help. It is unfortunate that the *LIMC* entry on Archemorus was not able to include these items. Also found in the *peribolos* was a damaged statuette of a woman (Hypsipyle? Eurydice?) clutching a child to her bosom, Nemea Museum SS 3.

[189] The key examples (with dates supplied here for the earlier pieces) are: *LIMC* Herakles 1600, 1606, 1608, 1624–7, 1638, 1650 = Alkmene 8 (*c.*480 BC), 1651 (*c.*475 BC), Alkmene 11 (*c.*460–450 BC).

can only conclude, with Woodford, that Opheltes borrowed this aspect of his pose from him, a small dignity in death.[190]

An Apulian volute crater from Ruvo of *c.*350 BC by the Lycurgus Painter, in the Hermitage, gives us a somewhat adolescent-looking Opheltes, supine in death, with a distraught Hypsipyle running to him, whilst the serpent, crested, coils round a tree growing from a pile of loose stones, indicative of the spring. It is attacked by warriors from either side, one brandishing a sword, the other a spear—Hippomedon and Capaneus perhaps—whilst two further warrior-figures, perhaps Adrastus and Amphiaraus, direct the attack from the sidelines.[191] Some fine imperial-period relief sarcophagi depict Opheltes in the constricting clutches of the serpent. On one of these, a *c.*160 AD Attic sarcophagus in Corinth, Opheltes is portrayed again in a configuration strongly reminiscent of the Paestan bowl. He kneels on the ground, his legs splayed in identical fashion, and raises his right arm in alarm before the feet of Hypsipyle, as a more modestly sized serpent coils around his left arm and his neck. A warrior runs to the rescue with his sword.[192] In two further sarcophagus reliefs, one a particularly fine example of the early Antonine era, the serpent grips Opheltes' central torso in its coils and lifts him, upside down, fully off the ground. His two arms hang down in such a way as to recall the more conventional raised-arm gesture of the upright Opheltes. In the fine relief the serpent is attacked by two warriors, both brandishing spears, whilst a distraught Hypsipyle (or Eurydice), her hair loose and rent in mourning, looks on.[193]

In the iconography the serpent is never portrayed as anything other than a single-bodied snake of huge size, with or without crest and beard.[194] Statius is the only literary source to give us a detailed description of the creature. It has a bluish fire in its eyes, its mouth foams with a green venom. Like Ovid's Serpent of Ares, it has three tongues and three rows of teeth, and a crest rising from a golden forehead. In a cryptic comment Lucian suggests that the pantomimes of the high Roman empire liked to act out 'the Nemean story, that of Hypsipyle and Archemorus'. Did the serpent appear on stage and, if so, in what form?[195]

[190] Woodford 1988: 832.

[191] *LIMC* Archemoros 8 = Hypsipyle i 3 = Nemea 14 = Septem 13. In *LIMC* Archemoros 9 = Septem 15 the seated Hypsipyle (or Eurydice) laments the dead Opheltes on her lap, flanked by a pair of warriors who comfort her or reason with her.

[192] *LIMC* Archemorus 7 = Adrastos 14. Compare also the somewhat damaged tomb relief *LIMC* Archemoros 6 = Hypsipyle i 8 = Septem 20, of *c.* AD 150–60 , in which Opheltes again kneels in splayed fashion, though he does not raise an arm. Most of the constricting serpent is lost, but enough survives to indicate that it was of substantial size. A warrior attacks the serpent with his sword from behind the boy.

[193] *LIMC* Archemoros 4a = Hypsipyle i 4 = Septem 17 (late Flavian; a better reproduction at Pache 2004: 125 fig. 25) and Archemoros 5 = Hypsipyle i 6 = Septem 18 (Antonine). Note also the early imperial red jasper intaglio, *LIMC* Archemoros 1, in which a serpent entwines a boy whose body it holds horizontally. Again, the boy projects one arm forwards in his constricted state. Note further the Flavian fresco from Herculaneum *LIMC* Archemoros 3 = Septem 16 = Simon 1979: 39 fig. 6, though given its damaged state it is difficult to determine the configuration of Opheltes. Under Hadrian, Lucius Verus, Caracalla, and Julia Domna (2nd–3rd cent. AD) Argos and Corinth issued coins featuring Opheltes in the grip of the serpent, with Hypsipyle standing beside, and similar imagery is also found on a 4th-century AD Roman contorniate, *LIMC* Hypsipyle 11–12, Pache 2004: 128 figs. 28–31.

[194] *LIMC* Archemoros 1–7 (incorporating Hypsipyle i 2, 4–8, Septem 12, 16–20).

[195] Lucian *On Dance* 44.

The slaying of the Nemean serpent was closely aligned with the slaying of the Nemean Lion by Heracles, that distinguished slayer of other anguiform creatures. Indeed Servius was familiar with the notion that the games were founded rather as a response to Heracles' killing of the lion.[196] Nothing tells us that the Nemean Lion was in any way anguiform in itself, though it was, as Hesiod tells, the offspring of the anguipede Echidna and the serpent-tailed dog Orthus, who was in turn the offspring of the same Echidna and the anguipede Typhon, and brother to the serpent-bedecked Cerberus.[197] Interestingly, the first-century AD (?) Alexander of Myndus told that Heracles deployed a pet earthborn *drakōn* of his own in his fight against the Nemean Lion.[198]

THE SERPENT OF COLCHIS, SLAIN OR TRICKED BY JASON AND MEDEA

The reconstruction of the earlier version of the myth of the Colchis *drakōn* (Figs. 1.8, 5.2) must remain conjectural. Probably, Aeetes set the taking of the fleece from the *drakōn* that guarded it as a trial for Jason. Jason faced the *drakōn* alone, but was impregnated against it by the invincibility lotion of Aeetes' daughter Medea. Thus, although the *drakōn* was able to swallow him, it could not devour him, and had to regurgitate him, whereupon he was able to kill it by a means not revealed. In the later, canonical, version Jason stole the fleece rather behind Aeetes' back and with the more hands-on help of Medea, who now deployed her drugs to send the unsleeping *drakōn* to sleep, and in some cases then to be slain.[199]

The earliest certain evidence for the Colchis *drakōn* is also the most magnificent, the Duris cup of *c.*480–470 BC, on which Jason's upper body (he is named) projects from the mouth of a superbly detailed *drakōn*; the fleece hangs in a tree behind and Athene looks on (Fig. 1.8).[200] However, a series of similar images,

[196] Servius on Virgil *Georgics* 3. 19. The case that this connection was already being made in the 3rd century BC, on the basis of Callimachus' *Victory of Berenice* (published at Parsons and Kassel 1977) and Euphorion F84 Powell = 107 Lightfoot (= Plutarch *Moralia* 677a), is dismissed by Miller 1990: 25, Maehler 1997: 143–5, Pache 2004: 199, 201. Schol. Pindar *Nemeans* hypotheses 4–5 attempt to arbitrate between the two traditions by giving Heracles the role of reformer of the already-established games.

[197] Hesiod *Theogony* 306–32; the Nemean Lion is vaguely associated with serpents at Pausanias 1. 27. 9.

[198] Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 190, 147b 22–8.

[199] Principal texts: Pindar *Pythian* 4. 242–50; Pherecydes F31 Fowler; Euripides *Medea* 480–2, *Hypsipyle* F752f *TrGF* lines19–25 (F I.ii.24 Bond, p. 26); *Naupactica* FF6, 8 West; Herodorus FF52–4 Fowler; Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 4. 123–66; Diodorus Siculus 4. 48; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7. 149–58; Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 8. 54–121; Martial 12. 53; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 9. 23; Hyginus *Fabulae* 22; *Orphic Argonautica* 887–1021. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Argonautai 20–1, Iason 22–54, Medeia 2–4. Discussions: Heydemann 1886, Jessen 1914, C. Robert 1920–6: iii. 794–6, Séchan 1927, Lesky 1931, Simon 1954, Zinserling-Paul 1979, Vojatzi 1982: 87–94, C. King 1983, Braswell 1988: 6–23, Neils 1990, M. Schmidt 1992, Gantz 1993: 358–60, Clauss and Johnston 1997, Isler-Kerényi 2000, Mastronarde 2002: 47.

[200] *LIMC* Iason 32.

Fig. 1.8. The Serpent of Colchis disgorges an indigestible Jason before the golden fleece. Athene attends. The Duris Cup, Attic red-figure cylix, *c.*480–470 BC. Vatican, Museo Gregoriano 16545 = *LIMC* Iason 32. © Vatican Museums and Galleries, Vatican City, and the Bridgeman Art Library, London.

albeit without name or fleece, may illustrate the same scene, the earliest of these being a Corinthian pair of the late seventh century BC.[201] The scene corresponds to nothing in the preserved literary record for the myth, but offers two possibilities for reading. One is that the *drakōn* contrived to swallow or half-swallow Jason before he fought his way out of its mouth again, or was disgorged by it for some other reason. The other is that Jason deliberately fed himself to the massive *drakōn* in order to kill it by hacking his way out of it from within, as Heracles did with the *kētos* of Troy.[202] The former alternative should be preferred: Jason's weaponless, unresisting, and possibly bedraggled state suggests that he has already been fully swallowed, and that he is now on his way back out of the *drakōn*'s mouth.[203]

The *drakōn* enters the extant literary record, quite strikingly, with Pindar's fourth *Pythian* of 462 BC:

[201] *LIMC* Iason 30–1 (Corinthian, late 7th cent. BC), 33–5. It is claimed that Jason can be seen to be holding the fleece in no. 34, an Etruscan bronze handle of the early 5th century BC, but it is not evident to this author.

[202] For sources see Ch. 3.

[203] Cf. Neils 1990: 632, Gantz 1993: 359. The cup has given rise to unnecessary speculation beyond this. Simon 1954: 119 has argued that Jason, at Athene's behest, has cut off the *drakōn* 's tongue to prevent it swallowing him (but why, and where is the tongue?). Meyer 1980: 81 has argued that the *drakōn* has killed Jason, and that Athene is drawing him out of its mouth to restore him to life (on the basis of what evidence?).

Immediately Aeetes, the amazing son of Helios, told him of the shining skin and the place in which the sacrificial knives of Phrixus stretched it out. But that was a labour that he did not expect him to complete. For it lay in a copse, adjacently to the aggressive jaws of a *drakōn*, which surpassed in breadth and length a fifty-oared ship, fashioned by the blows of iron tools . . . with devices he slew the grey-eyed dappled-backed snake (*ophis*), Arcesilaus, and he stole away Medea with her co-operation, Medea the slayer of Pelias.

(Pindar *Pythian* 4. 242–50)

There is no direct connection of Medea with the *drakōn* here, but the mention of 'devices' (*technais*) may suggest that Jason was still benefiting in this battle from the effects of the invincibility lotion that, Pindar has just told us, Medea had given him immediately before the trial of the fiery bulls.[204] Does the Duris cup, accordingly, show us a *drakōn* disgorging a Jason rendered indigestible by an invincibility lotion?[205]

Other fifth-century BC evidence helps to build a compatible picture of a narrative in which Medea does not yet herself engage directly with the *drakōn*. Roughly contemporary with Pindar is an Attic column-crater of *c.*470–460 BC on which Jason filches the fleece from underneath a rather small serpent; his attendant is Athene, not Medea.[206] A fragment of Pherecydes (*c.*454 BC) reports only that the *drakōn* was killed by Jason.[207] Fragments of the *Naupactica* and Herodorus of Heracleia indicate that they told a tale in which Jason seized the fleece alone and brought it back to Aeetes. The king then invited the Argonauts to a dinner at which he planned to kill them treacherously. But Aphrodite intervened to help them. She inspired Aeetes with desire for his wife Eurylyte, so that he made love to her and then fell asleep, allowing the Argonauts to escape. Medea fled with the Argonauts, bringing the fleece from the palace.[208]

In Euripides' *Medea* of 431 BC Medea protests, 'And I killed the *drakōn* that kept safe the all-golden fleece, embracing it in the many folds of its coils, unsleeping ever, and I held up for you the light of deliverance.'[209] This claim, which we may or may not be supposed to believe in context, may have constituted the basis for her more direct involvement in the *drakōn* episode in the subsequent tradition.

The canonical tale, in which Medea directly aids Jason by drugging the *drakōn* to sleep in the tree in which it hangs alongside the fleece it guards first emerges on

[204] Pindar *Pythian* 4. 213–29; so too Apollonius *Argonautica* 3. 1026–62, 1191–267.

[205] It is a remote possibility that Mimnermus F11 West (*c.*632–629 BC), 'Jason alone would never have brought back the great fleece from Aea . . . ', refers to help given to Jason by Medea. But we cannot be sure Mimnermus even knows of the *drakōn*. The implied help could have been offered in relation to the fiery bulls (cf. Pindar), or to the earthborn men or to the fetching of the fleece from Aeetes' palace (cf. *Naupactica* and Herodorus, below). It could have come rather from the other Argonauts, or from a goddess, Hera (Homer *Odyssey* 12. 72), Athene (*LIMC* Iason 32 and 36) or Aphrodite (*Naupactica* FF6, 8 West; Herodorus F54 Fowler). Cf. Gerber 1999 ad loc.

[206] *LIMC* Iason 36; see C. King 1983, with pl. 55 fig. 2, and Neils 1990 ad loc. for a parody of this scene on a column-crater in Bologna (Museo Civico Archeologico 190) in which a satyr takes on Jason's role; a lost satyr play may be alluded to.

[207] Pherecydes F31 Fowler

[208] *Naupactica* FF6, 8 West; Herodorus FF52–4 Fowler.

[209] Euripides *Medea* 480–2.

the literary side with Apollonius' *Argonautica* (*c.*270–245 BC).[210] It may, possibly, be attested on the iconographic side already from *c.*415 BC, at which point an Apulian volute crater shows Medea standing behind Jason with her box of herbs as, with sword drawn, he attempts to pull the fleece out from underneath the *drakōn*.[211] However, since Medea stands behind Jason the illustration may rather belong to the older version and tell us merely that Medea has used her drugs to render Jason invincible before he faces the *drakōn*. We are on firmer ground with a Lucanian hydria of *c.*380–360 BC, on which Medea sits adjacently to the snake and its tree holding a *phialē* (shallow cup), from which we are to infer the serpent has drunk,[212] and so too with an Apulian bell crater of *c.*360 BC, on which a heavily orientalized Medea holds her box of drugs whilst reaching out to the serpent's head.[213] As we have seen, the motif of sleep-casting seems to have originated elsewhere in the Colchis saga, the fifth-century *Naupactica* telling that Aphrodite inspired Aeetes with desire for his wife Eurylyte so that he would have sex with her and then fall asleep, thus allowing the Argonauts to escape with Medea and with the fleece.[214]

How is the sleep cast upon the serpent? In most of the images Medea feeds it drugs, presumably in liquid form, from a *phialē* (these first from *c.*380–360 BC, as we have seen),[215] though in some she seems to hold out a herb in leaf or sprig form, sometimes taken from a box of drugs, either to feed it directly to the snake or to use it to sprinkle a drug over its eyes (these first from *c.*360 BC).[216] The latter technique was popular in the literary tradition.

[210] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 128; and so too Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7. 149–58, Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 8. 69–121, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 9. 23, Hyginus *Fabulae* 22, *Orphic Argonautica* 887–933. However, Diodorus 4. 48 continues to maintain that the serpent, though unsleeping, was killed.

[211] *LIMC* Iason 37.

[212] *LIMC* Iason 40, with drawing at Gaggadis-Robin 2000: 317 fig. 10. The reasons for thinking that this image represents Medea, the Colchis *drakōn*, and Jason as opposed to a Hesperid, Ladon, and Heracles are, first, that the winged figure on the left must be an Argonaut Boread and, secondly, that the lady with the *phialē* appears to be sporting an 'oriental' headdress. Indeed the image is, in these essentials, broadly parallel to the fine *LIMC* Iason 39 (with drawing at Gaggadis-Robin 2000: 317 fig. 11, *c.*350 BC), on which the *drakōn* coils in its tree below the fleece whilst it is attacked by Argonauts from all sides, amongst whom Jason, Heracles, and the winged Boread Calais are named (cf. *LIMC* Iason 42). Medea, also named, has taken a herb from the massive box or chest she carries, and she is either feeding it to the serpent or sprinkling its eyes with it.

[213] *LIMC* Iason 38. Further 4th-century BC images of this type, in which Medea is evidently drugging the serpent, are catalogued at *LIMC* Iason 39, 41–2 (no. 42, a Paestan volute crater of *c.*320–310 BC and our Fig. 5.3, is particularly striking).

[214] *Naupactica* FF6 and 8 West. However, one consideration may make us wonder whether the *Naupactica*'s narrative did not itself represent an early but short-lived variation of a prior motif of the casting of sleep upon the *drakōn*. This is the fact that sleep-casting was so peculiarly appropriate to a battle against serpents. We have mentioned its role in the Ladon episode above and will return to the motif again in Ch. 6. In the Latin tradition, the ability of the Marsi and Psylli to cast sleep upon their snakes was celebrated precisely because, it was held, snakes (and not just supernatural guardian *drakontes*) were naturally unsleeping; see further Ch. 5.

[215] *LIMC* Iason 40 (*c.*380–360 BC), 42–3, 46, 47b. At *LIMC* Iason 44 (a Roman sarcophagus) Medea feeds an apple to the snake in what appears to be a bizarre piece of contamination from the world of the Hesperides.

[216] *LIMC* Iason 38 (*c.*360 BC), 39, 41. If my reading, above, of *LIMC* Iason 37 (the *c.*415 BC Apulian vase on which Medea stands behind Jason with her box of herbs) is rejected, then it would presumably

Apollonius' Medea casts sleep first by uttering a verbal spell, invoking Sleep personified and Hecate, underworld mistress, then by singing incantations whilst sprinkling the serpent's eyes with a potage infused with unmixed drugs by means of a fresh-cut sprig of juniper, and thirdly by continuing to smear its sleeping head with the liquid until Jason has secured the fleece. Ovid's Jason himself sprinkles the *draco* with 'a herb of Lethaean juice', supplied by Medea, whilst repeating a spell thrice over. Valerius Flaccus' Medea shakes about a 'Lethean bough', and she too invokes Sleep with Tartarean spells in a barbarian metre. She asks him to take on a form closely resembling that of his twin brother Death and to quit everyone else on the earth to enter the serpent in his totality.[217] At the other end of the tradition, the hardly canonical *Orphic Argonautica* brings Medea to the *drakōn* with Jason, but her role is then almost entirely usurped by the poem's favoured Orpheus. Medea has picked baneful roots, we are told, but the function of these seems to be no more than to give her courage to face the beast. It is Orpheus himself who casts sleep on the *drakōn* by singing to his lyre (cf. Ch. 2 for Orpheus' calming of Cerberus with his lyre). Again, Sleep personified is invoked to come and do the job of lulling the serpent to sleep.

The narrative convergence of the Colchis-*drakōn* tale with the Ladon tale is tight. In both cases an unsleeping serpent lives in a tree where it coils around and guards a golden treasure. These treasures could be curiously identified with each other under the term *mēla*, which could equally signify 'apples' or 'flocks', and the ancient rationalizers of myth made much of this (Ch. 4).[218] In both cases the serpent is tended by and enjoys a special relationship with one or more young virgins. In both cases, according to some variants, the treasure is stolen by a visiting man whilst the serpent is drugged or distracted with food by its virgin mistress, who has fallen in love with him,[219] and who will eventually be betrayed by him.[220]

As we have seen, Ladon is first found coiling around his apple tree from *c.*550 BC. Images of the Colchis *drakōn* in his oak tree survive first from *c.*380–360 BC, though a fragment of Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, written between 411 and 406 BC, already refers to 'the sacred golden-fleece skin that the eye of the *drakōn* guards around its oak'.[221] In this respect, the line of influence between the two iconographic traditions is clear. Also from *c.*500 BC we have Hesperides reaching out to

count here also, even though no leaf is visible. In *LIMC* Iason 45 (a 4th- or 5th-cent. BC limestone Coptic relief) Medea uses both a sprig and a conical cup.

[217] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 145–66, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7. 149–58, Valerius Flaccus 8. 69–121. Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 9. 23 and Hyginus *Fabulae* 22 merely mention briefly that Medea used drugs to induce the *drakōn* to sleep.

[218] The words are identical down to the level of accent: μῆλα. The connection is explicitly made at Agroetas *FGrH* 762 F3 (3rd or 2nd cent. BC), Diodorus 4. 26, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 38. Cf. Fontenrose 1959: 345–6.

[219] Medea falls in love with Jason: Pindar *Pythians* 4. 213–23, etc.

[220] Euripides *Medea passim*, etc.

[221] *LIMC* Iason 40. The Colchis *drakōn* sits on obscure objects on two earlier vases, which may, just, be supposed to represent parts of trees: *LIMC* Iason 36 (*c.*460–469 BC) and *LIMC* Iason 37 (*c.*415 BC), or may otherwise represent rock-faces or ledges. Euripides *Hypsipyle* F752f lines 19–25 *TrGF* (F I.ii.24 Bond). The fleece-tree is referred to as an oak also at Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 124 and *Orphic Argonautica* 925, 991.

Ladon with their hands, but it is only from *c.*380–360 BC that we find the Hesperides identifiably feeding things to him, foodstuffs from their hand or a drink from a *phialē*,[222] and this is the same period in which we first find Medea definitely feeding things to the Colchis *drakōn*, as we have seen. So it is possible, and actually not at all improbable, that the motif of the drugged or distracted *drakōn* passed into the Hesperides myth from the Colchis one. Medea's general and ancient association with drugs aside,[223] we have seen that the motif of sleep-casting was most probably initially to be found in a different part of the Colchis story: it seems to have travelled, therefore, from Aphrodite upon Aeetes to Medea upon the Colchis *drakōn* to the Hesperides upon Ladon. And so we must conclude that the 380–360 BC period witnessed a curious two-way contamination between the iconographies of Medea and the Hesperides.[224] (The image of a woman feeding a serpent from a *phialē* is in itself, however, likely to have derived from a third iconographical tradition, as we shall see in Chs. 5 and 9.)

Finally, a bizarre coda to the tale, which presumes that the Colchis *drakōn* survived its encounter with Jason. The late fourth-century to early third-century BC historians Lycus of Rhegium and Timaeus of Tauromenium told that Diomede came to 'Phaeacis' in Italy, i.e. presumably, the Diomedis Campi in the land of the Daunii, where he slew the *drakōn* of Colchis. It seems that the *drakōn* must have attacked him, because it is explained that it mistook his golden shield (the spoils of Glaucus) for the golden fleece. Proud of his achievement, Diomede decorated the plain of Phaeacis with statues of himself made from the stones from the wall of Troy that he had been using as ballast in his ship. When Daunus subsequently killed him, he threw these statues into the sea, whereupon the waves first carried them away before washing them back onto their bases. Leaving all other questions aside, how did the *drakōn* contrive to find its way from Colchis to southern Italy? Was it scouring the world for the lost fleece?[225]

THE SERPENT-PAIR SLAIN BY BABY HERACLES

In the canonical version of this myth, Alcmene, wife of Amphitryon, has given birth to the twins Heracles and Iphicles. The former has been sired by Zeus, masquerading as her husband. The jealous Hera sends a pair of *drakontes* to kill baby Heracles ('Heracliscus') in his shield-cradle, but he throttles them both with his bare hands.[226]

[222] e.g. *LIMC* Herakles 2716 (hand, *c.*500 BC), Hesperides 3 (bowl, *c.*380–360 BC).

[223] For the earliest traces of this association, see *LIMC* Medeia 1 (the rejuvenating cauldron, *c.*630 BC), Homer *Iliad* 11. 738–41 ('Agamede'), *Nostoi* F6 West (*c.*550 BC?).

[224] The potentially intriguing claim that a vase of *c.*410 BC depicts Medea, in oriental dress and toting her characteristic box of drugs, in the garden of the Hesperides may be dismissed. We may well have Medea, but there is no ground for seeing Hesperides in the two attributeless female figures that flank her. There are no apples here, no tree, and no Ladon: *LIMC* Medeia 70, with commentary ad loc.

[225] Timaeus *FGrH* 566 F53 = Lycus *FGrH* 570 F3 = Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 615.

[226] Principal texts: Pindar *Nemean* 1. 33–59, *Paean* 20, Pherecydes F69ab Fowler (cf. F13a–c Fowler), Euripides *Heracles* 1266–8, Theocritus *Idylls* 24. 10–33, 56–9, 82–100, Plautus *Amphitryo* 1091–124, Diodorus Siculus 4. 10. 1, Virgil *Aeneid* 8. 287–9, Pliny *Natural History* 35. 63, Apollodorus

In the literary record the tale first appears, already in glorious detail, in Pindar's first *Nemean*, composed soon after 476 BC. Here, as soon as Heracles and his twin brother Iphicles are born and put into swaddling clothes, Hera sends two huge *drakontes* (the terms *ophies* and *knōdala* are also used), which dart into his home through the opened gates. Heracles grabs them in his two hands and throttles them, to the relief and delight of his parents.[227] Pindar asserts that the tale is already an old one, but the coincidence that it first appears in the iconographic record at about the time suggests rather that it is a new one, possibly even Pindar's own.[228]

The only significant variation from the Pindaric narrative, which was to remain canonical, comes soon afterwards in Pherecydes (*c.*454 BC). Here Amphitryon knows that one of the twins was sired by himself, and one by Zeus, and so himself puts huge *drakontes* in the boys' bed so as to determine which child is his own (Iphicles, who flees) and which is Zeus' (Heracles, who stands and fights).[229] This tale vaguely anticipates subsequent notions about the Psylli, who were to employ serpents, albeit in a rather different fashion, to test the bloodlines of their babies (Ch. 5).

In Theocritus' account of the episode (*c.*270s BC) Hera's *drakontes* (the terms *pelōra* and again *knōdala* are also used) are lavishly described: they have dark blue coils, flash fire from their eyes and spit venom. Heracles, alerted by Iphicles, grabs them by their venomous throats. They attempt still to coil round him and constrict him, but are compelled, in agony, to release him. Heracles delightedly exhibits the choked creatures to his father Amphitryon. Tiresias then advises that the serpents' bodies be burned on wild wood in the middle of the night, at the time they had tried to kill Heracles. The following morning a serving woman is to take the ashes out to a precipice over a river and cast them beyond the city's borders, returning without looking behind her. The house is then to be fumigated with sulphur and sprinkled with salt dissolved in water by means of a garlanded branch. A male pig is to be sacrificed to Zeus.[230] These elaborate purification rituals deploy the imagery of the *teras* (deformed birth), not least in the motifs of burning on wild wood and expulsion beyond the borders.[231]

Plautus' comedy *Amphitryo*, written *c.*200 BC and remodelling an unknown Greek original, gives the maid Bromia the job of narrating the attack. The serpents (*angues*) here are much more elaborate creatures. They are crested, and possibly even winged, since they are able to fly down (*devolant*) into the atrium rain-pool

Bibliotheca 2. 4. 8, Martial 14. 177, Pausanias 1. 24. 2, Hyginus *Fabulae* 30, Cassius Dio 73. 7, Philostratus *Imagines* 5. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Alkmene 8–16, Herakles 1598–664. Discussions: C. Robert 1920–6: ii. 619–21, Brendel 1932, Gross 1973, Karwiese 1980, Woodford 1983, 1988.

[227] Pindar *Nemean* 1. 33–59. Pindar seems to have told the tale in quite a similar fashion also in the fragmentary *Paean* 20, where the term *ophies* is used again. Homer *Iliad* 19. 95–133 knows that Hera had tricked Zeus in an attempt to transfer Heracles' destined greatness to Eurystheus prior to his birth, but it says nothing of Hera's attempt to kill the baby Heracles once born.

[228] It is found first in *LIMC* Herakles 1650, estimated at *c.*480 BC.

[229] Pherecydes F69ab Fowler.

[230] Theocritus *Idylls* 24. 10–33, 56–9, 82–100.

[231] For the burning of *terata* see Diodorus 32. 10, Phlegon of Tralles *Mirabilia* 2, Phrynichus Arabicus *Praeparatio Sophistica* 15. 23 de Borries ('Things that were *teras*-like in nature they burned on wild wood'); cf. Ogden 1997: 9–23.

(though the *drakontes* of Medea's Chariot of the Sun do not always need wings to fly: Ch. 5). They scan around, detect the twins' cradles and shoot towards them. Bromia tries to pull the cradles away from them, but the snakes now attack her. Then one of the boys jumps out his cradle, heads straight for the serpents, grabs one in each hand and kills them, presumably by throttling. As he does so Zeus' voice booms down from heaven as he proclaims himself to be Heracles' father, with Iphicles belonging rather to Amphitryon.[232]

In iconography baby Heracles is typically shown throttling a serpent with each hand: sometimes we are given this tight scene alone, sometimes the camera pans out to give us Iphicles too, as well as Amphitryon, Alcmene, nursemaids, and Athene, the last ever the attendant of *drakōn*-slayers (Ch. 5).[233] The baby is most often, and distinctively, portrayed as adopting a semi-splayed kneeling posture as he grapples with the serpents. Often too he raises one arm above his head, either to hold a still active serpent away from himself, or in a gesture of triumph over a now dead one, a configuration which, as we have seen, was adapted for the subsequently developed imagery of Opheltes.[234] Of all the Heracles images, perhaps the most anomalous and striking is a second-century AD Roman marble in which baby Heracles, with a full head of hair, sits on the floor, casually holding down upon it the neck of a gasping serpent in his left hand. With his right hand he raises the other serpent by the neck to his face. He seems to hold it gently, not to squeeze it. The eyes of child and serpent meet, and both pairs of eyes appear to express curiosity and, strangely, a certain wisdom and tenderness.[235]

THE SERPENT OF THESPIAE, SLAIN BY MENESTRATUS

Pausanias is our unique source for this myth, though we may presume that it is at least Hellenistic in origin. He tells how a *drakōn* was once devastating the city of Thespiae in Boeotia. The god (presumably Apollo) commanded that the beast should be placated by the sacrifice to it of an ephebe chosen by lot each year. When the lot fell upon Cleostratus, his lover Menestratus had a bronze breastplate made covered with fishhooks and, wearing this, fed himself to the *drakōn*. He killed it, but died himself in the process. His deed was remembered by the Thespians in a bronze statue of Zeus the Saviour.[236]

[232] Plautus *Amphitryo* 1091–1124.

[233] *LIMC* Herakles 1650–64. For Athene, who goes unmentioned in the literary sources, see the early Attic group scenes at *LIMC* Herakles 1650–3. Woodford 1988: 831 interprets her inclusion in these as a gesture of local patriotism, but this is not necessary. She is also found in the Roman *LIMC* 1655.

[234] Thus, especially (with dates supplied here for the earlier pieces) *LIMC* Herakles 1598 (*c.*370 BC), 1600, 1602, 1606–8, 1613, 1619 (*c.*440 BC), 1621 (405 BC onwards), 1624–8, 1638, 1650 (= Alkmene 8, *c.*480 BC), 1651 (*c.*475 BC), 1663 (450 BC onwards), Alkmene 11 (*c.*460–50 BC). Woodford 1988: 832 contends that this posture helped both convey the fact that as a newborn baby Heracles was too young to stand and at the same time 'convey an impression of great vigour and energy'.

[235] *LIMC* Herakles 1634.

[236] Pausanias 9. 26. 7–8.

It is a pity indeed not to have access to more of the tradition behind this intriguing story. We can only suppose that the bronze of Zeus' statue was somehow felt to salute the distinctive bronze armour Menestratus had worn. Beyond this, we can offer three broad contextualizations for the tale. First, it resembles Antoninus Liberalis' (Nicander's) tale of Eurybatus' killing of Lamia-Sybaris at Delphi (Ch. 2). In both tales the community has selected a youth by lot to feed to a serpent to placate it, and his lover equips himself and substitutes himself for the victim to kill the monster, though Eurybatus survives.[237] Secondly, it resembles the tales of the *kētē* of Troy and Ethiopia in which Heracles and Perseus rescue innocent sacrificial victims selected by lot, Hesione and Andromeda respectively, from the monsters by feeding themselves to them and hacking their way out from inside (Ch. 3). Thirdly, the distinctive motif of hooked or bladed armour is widespread in international dragon-slaying tales. It is found, for instance, in Ferdowsi's Middle Persian *Shahnameh* (c.1000 AD), in which Esfandyar kills a dragon by having his carpenters build him a special chariot covered over by a box from which swords project and allowing the dragon to suck it into its gullet; he emerges from its mouth and hacks into its brain as it chokes.[238] In British legend the Blacksmith of Kirkudbright defeated the White Snake of Mote Hill by designing for himself a suit of armour with retractable spikes and feeding himself to the dragon before activating them. He then tore himself out of the dragon's belly by rolling about in it for three days.[239]

THE SERPENT OF THE RIVER BAGRADA, SLAIN BY REGULUS

Indigenous Roman myth was surprisingly short of *draco*-slaying tales, but it did have one to cherish: this was the slaying of the massive serpent of the river Bagrada (Medjerda) in Africa by Atilius Regulus and his troops during the First Punic War.[240] Cassius Dio, writing in Greek, terms the creature in question a *drakōn*, though the Latin sources consistently refer to it rather as a *serpens*. The first author known to have mentioned the Bagrada serpent is Q. Aelius Tubero, who wrote in the mid first century BC and whose account is summarized by Gellius. He told how Regulus and his army battled long and hard against the serpent (*serpens*) whilst encamped at the river, and that they eventually overcame

[237] Antoninus Liberalis *Metamorphoses* 8. Celoria 1992: 128, Hansen 2002: 128–30 for the comparison between these two episodes.

[238] *Shahnameh* V1591–4. For the text see Khaleghi-Motlagh 1988–, with translation at Warner and Warner 1912: v. 125–8 (omitted from Davis 2006); Ingersoll 1928: 40–1. Simpson 1980: 109.

[239] Lang 1885: 258; cf. Simpson 1980: 73–4.

[240] Principal texts: Q. Aelius Tubero *HRR* F8 (at i. 308–12; = Aulus Gellius 7. 3), Livy *Periocha* 18, Valerius Maximus 1. 8 ext. 19, Seneca *Letters* 82. 24, Pliny *Natural History* 8. 36–7, Silius Italicus 6. 140–293, Florus 1. 18, Cassius Dio F42. 23 = Zonaras ii. p. 209 Dindorf (*drakōn*), Arnobius *Adversus Nationes* 7. 46, Orosius 4. 8. 10–15. There are no known illustrations of the episode, but see Fantar 1986 for images of the river personified. Discussions: Basset 1955, Spaltenstein 1986 on Silius Italicus 6. 140–293, Stothers 2004 (the last well-informed but implausibly literalist).

it with ballistas and catapults. Its skin, 120 feet long, was then sent to Rome.[241] Valerius Maximus summarizes Livy's lost account, which seems to have aligned closely with Tubero's. He adds the details that the serpent was of such a size that it prevented Regulus' army from using the river, snatched many soldiers up in its mouth and crushed many with the coils of its tail. The river was left so polluted by the serpent's blood and the region was rendered so pestilent by the gases from its corpse that Regulus had to relocate his camp.[242] The most imaginative and expansive account of the fight to survive is that Silius Italicus puts into the mouth of Marus in his *Punica*. Silius' serpent devours lions and herds that come to drink at its river. The soldier Avens flees in fear into a hollow oak trunk, which the serpent snatches up and overturns before devouring him. It is killed when Regulus lodges his spear in its forehead and his men are able to damage its spine with a ballista bolt.[243]

One of the most intriguing aspects of the tale is its determined modernity and its feinting towards realism. It is projected not into a nebulous mythical age, but into the hard historical one of a specific year, 256/5 BC, in a closely documented war. The use of ballistas, torsion catapults, and falarica-missiles also serves to bring the story out of any mythical Never-Never-Land and situate it in the real world. Indeed, one senses that the story serves, in part, to celebrate the technology, much as modern fantasy movies do when they despatch their rampaging monsters with the latest military hardware.[244] However, Silius' *Punica*, as an epic in the traditional style, works hard to remythologize the episode. Accordingly the serpent is knowingly compared with those of the Giants, and with the Hydra and Ladon,[245] and richly imbued with underworld imagery (Ch. 6).

CONCLUSION

These, then, are the principal Graeco-Roman *drakōn*-fight traditions involving *drakontes* of pure form. In the next chapter we will turn to the principal *drakōn*-fight traditions involving *drakontes* of composite form. The distinction between these two categories of *drakōn* is helpful in allowing us to establish the integrity and importance of the phenomenon of the fighting *drakōn* in Graeco-Roman myth, but there is no categorical distinction between the types of battle in which pure and composite *drakontes* engage, as we shall now see.

[241] Q. Aelius Tubero *HRR* F8 *apud* Aulus Gellius 7. 3; for Tubero see Klebs 1894.

[242] Valerius Maximus 1. 8 ext. 19. The summary at Livy *Periocha* 18 is more lapidary. Pliny *Natural History* 8. 36–7 and Aulus Gellius 7. 3 (after Tubero) agree that the serpent was 120 feet long. Silius Italicus 6. 153 gives it a hundred ells (*ulnae*), i.e., presumably, cubits, which is to say 150 feet. Arnobius *Adversus Nationes* 7. 46 also asserts its vastness.

[243] Silius Italicus 6. 156–9 (lions), 191–9 (Avens), 247–51 (spear), 269–73 (ballista); for a literary discussion of Silius' narrative, see Basset 1955.

[244] This full range of weapons is supplied at Silius Italicus 6. 211–15, 271–4, 279–82.

[245] Silius Italicus 6. 181–4.

2

Drakōn Fights: *Drakontes* Composite

We turn now to composite creatures, in which a *drakōn* element is compounded with one or more other forms. Other studies of ancient dragons have proceeded on a partly intuitive basis, giving central places in their discussions and their motival schemes to monsters with no *drakōn* element whatosever, whilst excluding from them monsters with explicit yet seemingly minor *drakōn* elements. This study, by contrast, seeks not to focus only on creatures that do indeed incorporate a *drakōn* element, but to pursue all the significant examples of such creatures, however small that element may actually be. We begin by considering the anguipede *drakontes*, those basically made up of a humanoid upper body and a serpent-shaped lower body, Typhon, Echidna, the Giants, Campe, and Lamia. The myths of Lamia (or the *lamiai*) have much in common with those of snake-locked Medusa, to whom we turn next, and she in turn has much in common with the snake-tailed Chimaera, treatment of whom follows, the latter two seemingly merging into the Gorgon–Aegis creature. We close with consideration of another snake-tailed and more generally snake-adorned tetrapod, Cerberus. There is no categorical distinction in form between these composite *drakontes* and the pure ones of Chapter 1. On the one hand the most famous *drakōn* of them all, the Hydra with her many heads, is a composite creature too in comparison to those that normally exist in the real world, even if she is made up purely of *drakōn* material. On the other hand ancient artists often felt the need to distinguish their great pure *drakontes*, size apart, with a beard or crest alien to the physiology of the common-or-garden snake. And no doubt the composite forms of this chapter's *drakontes* performed a similar function: to be signifiers of a terrible other-worldly monstrousness. It may initially appear that, in giving serious consideration to creatures with no more than a *drakōn* tail, we are pursuing the ancient concept of the *drakōn* fruitlessly or perhaps even misleadingly into a vanishing penumbra. But this will prove to be far from the case, for it will be seen that the creatures within whose physiques the *drakōn* element is proportionately small nonetheless display behaviours that are centrally characteristic of *drakontes* more generally, that they fully earn their place in this study and indeed that they require a place in any study of *drakontes* that aspires to be comprehensive or synoptic.

TYPHON, DEFEATED BY ZEUS

Of all ancient *drakontes*, composite or pure, Typhon (Fig. 2.1) is the one celebrated most extensively in surviving texts, whilst his coverage in extant iconography is poor. His myth may be summarized in its canonical forms as follows. The hundred-headed, multiform, predominantly anguiform, monster was produced either by Earth and Tartarus amongst the Arimoi in southern Anatolia, so that he could overthrow Zeus in revenge for the fate of the Titans or the Giants, or by Hera in a parthenogenetic competition with Zeus, after he had produced the perfect Athene and she had, hitherto, only been able to produce the lame Hephaestus in turn. Hera's Typhon was nursed by the Delphic *drakaina*. Typhon attacked heaven and initiated a battle of cosmic proportions with Zeus, in which both projected fire and drove winds at each other. Typhon temporarily gained the upper hand when he succeeded in cutting Zeus' sinews from him, but Zeus was able to recover them when Pan (with the help of Hermes) stole them back from Typhon, or tricked Typhon into emerging from his lair and leaving them unguarded, either with an invitation to a feast or (with the help of Cadmus) with music. Zeus eventually defeated Typhon with his thunderbolts, cast him back down into Tartarus, and imprisoned him under Sicilian Etna, whence he

Fig. 2.1. Zeus blasts the anguipede Typhon with a thunderbolt. Chalcidian hydria, c.540–530 BC. Munich Antikensammlung 596 = *LIMC* Typhon 14. © Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München. *Photo*: Renate Kühling.

continued to blast forth fire and produce harmful winds. Typhon was the progenitor, with his fellow anguipede Echidna, of a host of other anguiform monsters (Ch. 4).[1]

Typhon's physical form differs between its representations in literature and iconography to a greater degree than those of his fellow *drakontes*. This is chiefly because literary descriptions of Typhon's form, appropriately for a cosmically proportioned monster, claim for him characteristics that are near physical impossibilities, and which are certainly inexpressible in two-dimensional art.[2]

The earliest certainly identifiable image of Typhon is dated to *c.*640–25 BC,[3] and his iconographic hey-day extended from this point on into the sixth century BC, during which he decorated vases and bronze shield-band reliefs. He is typically found either alone or paired with an appropriately thunderbolt-wielding Zeus. He is shown as an anguipede, with either a single serpent tail or two serpent-tails intertwining their coils. He has two large, prominent wings, occasionally four. His upper torso is that of a male humanoid; he sports a fine beard, and often appears, curiously, to smile benignly (Fig. 2.1).[4] Some variants find ways to endow him with full serpents or serpent heads. A *c.*600–570 BC anguipede Typhon holds a

[1] Principal texts: Homer *Iliad* 2. 781–3 (with schol.); Hesiod *Theogony* 295–307 (including description of Echidna), 820–80, [Hesiod] *Shield* 32, *Homeric Hymn* [3] *to Apollo* 300–73; Stesichorus F239 *PMG*/Campbell; Acusilaus of Argos FF12–14 Fowler; Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F300 (= Herodotus 2. 134); Epimenides *FGrH* 457 F8 = DK 3B8; Pindar *Pythian* 8. 15–16, *Olympian* 4. 6–7, FF91–3 SM; Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 353–74 (with schol.), *Seven* 496–1, 508–25, *Suppliants* 559–60; Pherecydes FF7, 16b, 54 Fowler; Aristophanes *Clouds* 336; Euripides *Heracles* 1271–2; Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 F87 = DK 1. B.12, *apud* Damascius *de principiis* 123 (rejected by Fowler and Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1983: 22 and 25); Xanthus of Sardis *FGrH* 765 FF4a–b; Plato *Phaedrus* 230a, with schol.; Eudoxus of Cnidus FF284a–b Lasserre; Callimachus *Aetia* F1.35–6 Pf.; Nicander *apud* Antoninus Liberalis *Metamorphoses* 28; Diodorus 1. 21, 5. 71. 2; Virgil *Aeneid* 8. 298–9; Nigidius Figulus F98 Swoboda; Strabo C248, 578, 626–8, 750–1, 803; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 302–4, 5. 319–58, *Fasti* 4. 491–4; Pomponius Mela 1. 76; Manilius 2. 874–80, 4. 579–82, 800–1; Seneca *Hercules Oetaeus* 1733–5, *Thyestes* 806–9, [Seneca] *Octavia* 238–9; Lucan 4. 595, 6. 90–2; Pliny *Natural History* 2. 91; Valerius Flaccus 2. 23–33, 3. 130–2; Dio Chrysostom 1. 67, 4. 236–8; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3, 3. 5. 8; Pausanias 6. 3. 12, 8. 29. 3–4; Lucian *On Sacrifices* 14; Oppian *Halieutica* 3. 16–25 (with schol.); Hyginus *Fabulae* praef. 39, 67. 4, 151–2, *Astronomica* 2. 28, 30; Philostratus *Imagines* 2. 17. 5; Quintus Smyrnaeus 6. 261–8; Ampelius 2. 10; Julian *Peri Basileias* 7. 1; Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 9. 712, Solinus 38. 7–8, Pausanias of Antioch *FHG* iv. pp. 467–8 (F3) = John Malalas p. 38 Dindorf; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1–2 *passim*; Sidonius Apollinaris *Carmina* 6. 27, 15. 19; Hesychius s.v. *Τυφώ*; Lactantius Placidus on *Thebaid* 2. 595–6; Damascius *de principiis* 123 = DK 1 B 12; Olympiodorus on *Phaedo* pp. 201, 240 Norvin; schol. Pindar *Pythians* 1. 31, *Olympians* 4. 12; schol. Euripides *Phoenissae* 1020; *Suda* s.vv. *Ἀλίπλαγκτος*, *Τυφών*, *Τυφῶνος*, *Τυφῶνος πολυπλοκώτερον*, *Τυφώς*, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.vv. *τετύφωμαι*, *Τυφών*, *Τυφῶνος*, *Τυφώς*, *Τυφωεύς*; First Vatican Mythographer 1. 11, 1. 85. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Typhon. Discussions: J. Schmidt 1884–1937, Holland 1900, Teipel 1922, Porzig 1930, Sieppel 1939, Vian 1951: 9–12, 1952*a*: 9–19, 1960, Worms 1953, Fontenrose 1959: 70–93, Walcot 1966: 9–26, M. L.West 1966: 379–97 (on 820–80), 1997: 300–4, Detienne and Vernant 1978: 107–30, Burkert 1979: 5–10, 1992: 94–5, Beckman 1982, Ballabriga 1990, Höckmann 1991, Blaise 1992, Gantz 1993: 48–51, Penglase 1994: 191–6, Watkins 1995: 448–63, Touchefeu-Meynier and Krauskopf 1997, Sancassano 1997*a*: 77–96.

[2] For Typhon's cosmic proportions see e.g. Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3 (quoted below) and Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 163–4, 173–5, 203. And indeed, he could also be identified with a comet: Manilius 4. 579–82, Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 3. 130–2, Pliny *Natural History* 2. 91.

[3] *LIMC* Typhon 1. Highly insecure hypotheses find Typhon represented in the form of a centaur in battle with Zeus in *LIMC* Typhon 27 of *c.*750 BC and *LIMC* Typhon 22 of *c.*680 BC.

[4] *LIMC* Typhon 1–28.

separate serpent of some length in each hand.[5] A sixth-century BC shield-band relief from Olympia gives him a pair of relatively small serpents twining around his waist, as sometimes found in early Gorgon images.[6] A Laconian cup of *c.*560–550 BC, the name vase of the Typhon painter, seems to offer a satyr-Typhon meld. The head is satyr-like, with beard, snub nose, and animalian pointed ears. The wingless torso is covered in scales (serpentine or piscine) and splits into two fish-tails, from the end of each of which projects a serpent head. Serpent-heads project from the top of his body in place of arms, and others spread from his waist, à la Gorgon again. Fourteen lesser serpent-heads sprout from the sides of his fish-tails. And between the thigh-like fish-tails descends a further, central serpent-head, drawn in such a way as to be suggestive of an appropriately satyric phallus. In giving its subject a full total of twenty heads, nineteen of them serpentine, this image comes closer to the literary portraits of Typhon than any other image.[7] If an image on an Etruscan hydria of *c.*520–510 BC does indeed represent Typhon raising a rock aloft, it gives him four anguipede legs, each terminating in a rampant serpent-head (it also gives him an additional two tiny pairs of wings in addition to his main set).[8] The latest identifiable image of Typhon is that found on a late fourth-century BC Apulian vase. This shows a wingless Typhon raising a rock whilst pursued by a thunderbolt-wielding Zeus in a chariot, accompanied by Hermes. Above him a puff-cheeked wind blows.[9]

Let us turn to the literary representations of Typhon. According to Hesiod, 'He accomplished his deeds by the might of his hands. And the feet of the powerful god did not grow tired. From his shoulders grew a hundred heads of a snake, a terrible *drakōn*, and these flickered with dark tongues.'[10] A hundred was to become the canonical number for his heads.[11] More summary descriptions of his form tend to concentrate on his serpent elements. Thus Aeschylus speaks of an image of Typhon forming a blazon on Hippomedon's shield, and seems to imply that Typhon's coiling snakes filled up the circular area of the shield,[12] whilst Plato

[5] *LIMC* Typhon 11.

[6] *LIMC* Typhon 17.

[7] *LIMC* Typhon 23 = Pipili 1987 no. 193 (fig. 102); cf. Pipili 1987: 69–70.

[8] *LIMC* Typhon 30. It remains possible that the famous, fascinating, but mysterious three-bodied figure from the pediment of the Old Temple of Athene on the Athenian Acropolis (*c.*560–550 BC), *LIMC* Typhon 28, is indeed Typhon. This figure has three archaicly smiling bearded heads, three torsos, and three entwining serpent tails. A late-7th to early-6th BC vase gives us two Typhons superimposed upon each other, with their two serpent-tales similarly intertwining, *LIMC* Typhon 10; this seemingly offers a precedent for a multi-bodied Typhon. And then Euripides *Heracles* 1271–2 speaks of 'three-bodied Typhons'. However, Mitropoulou 1977: 23 reads the figure rather as Nereus.

[9] *LIMC* Typhon 15 = Gigantes 402; Touchefeu-Meynier 1997 ad loc. compares the Apollodoran description of the fight.

[10] Hesiod *Theogony* 823–7.

[11] Pindar *Pythians* 1. 15–28, 4. 6–7, *Olympians* 4. 6–7 (but fifty heads at F93 SM); Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 353–74; Aristophanes *Clouds* 336; Hyginus *Fabulae* 152; Oppian *Halieutica* 3. 16–25.

[12] Aeschylus *Seven* 491–6 and 511. The image-shape may broadly have resembled that of the Typhon on the Laconian cup just discussed, *LIMC* Typhon 23 = Pipili 1987 no. 193 (fig. 102), which also fills a circle. Cf. Euripides *Phoenissae* 1134–8 where Adrastus' shield is emblazoned with the image of a hundred (seemingly connected) vipers (*echidnai*), reaching over the walls of Thebes and devouring its children.

could invoke Typhon as a shorthand image for convolutedness.[13] Nonnus' various references to Typhon's form may or may not be compatible with each other, but the serpentine elements clearly predominate still: *inter alia*, he is an anguipede,[14] and the terms *drakōn*, 'viper', 'horned serpent', and 'water-snake' are applied to his parts, the first repeatedly.[15]

Apollodorus describes Typhon thus:

> He had the mixed form of man and beast. In size and power he surpassed all the creatures Earth produced. As far down as the thighs he consisted of a huge man-shaped bulk, so big that he surpassed all the mountains, and his head often touched the stars. He had hands which stretched on the one side towards the west and on the other towards the east, and from these extended the heads of a hundred *drakontes*. Below his thighs he had massive coils of vipers. Their coils stretched up towards his head and emitted a loud hiss. His body was covered in wings. Rough hair blew in the wind from his head and his cheeks. Fire could be seen in his eyes.[16]

This makes sense of the earlier claims of Nicander that Typhon had many hands and Ovid that he had a hundred hands (the canonical number of his serpent heads), as well as of the subsequent claim of Hyginus that, 'A hundred *drakōn*-heads emerged from his shoulders.'[17] Nonnus, engaging in one-upmanship, gives him two hundred hands.[18]

However, the Hesiodic assertions that, on the one hand, Typhon had a hundred heads and that, on the other, he emitted all sorts of animal cries, those of bull, lion, and puppy, led later sources, Nonnus and the scholia to Aeschylus and Plato, to infer that his heads belonged not just to snakes but to a range of different animals. The different animal-heads of Nonnus' Typhon (no total is given) all utter a terrible war-cry together. *Drakontes* that are somehow congenitally fused (*symphyees*) with him hang their heads down over his leopard-heads, lick the manes of his lion-heads, and mingle their venom with the foam spewed by his boar-heads, whilst their tails coil around the horns of his bull-heads. We infer, from his cacophony of mixed voices, that his heads also include those of wolves and dogs. But he has a central, tawny human face too, the one by means of which he converses with Cadmus. However, the hair on his human and animal heads consists, à la Medusa, of venom-dripping vipers.[19]

In different ways, the production of Typhon is projected as the second act in a challenge to the authority of Zeus by a major female power. According to the *Theogony*, Typhon's birth mother was Earth (with Tartarus the sire), and she

[13] Plato *Phaedrus* 230a. Cf. also Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 23–33 (Typhon churns the sea with his snakes as he is buried—by Neptune—under Etna).

[14] Nonnus *Dionysiaca*.

[15] General: e.g. 1. 187 ('a twisted host of darting snakes'). *Drakōn*: Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1–2 *passim*. Vipers: 1. 173, 218, 2. 141, 243, 383, 415–16 (his feet). Horned serpent: 1. 1193–4. Water-snake: 2. 142. Anguipede: 1. 184, 2. 30, 36.

[16] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3.

[17] Nicander *apud* Antoninus Liberalis 28, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 302–4, Hyginus *Fabulae* 152.

[18] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 297, 2. 343 (he will need to make more thunderbolts for all these hands), 621.

[19] Hesiod *Theogony* 830–5; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 125, 154–62, 1. 173 (viper hair: *echidnokomōn*), 2. 32 (viper-hair), 2. 148, 2. 244–56, 2. 605–19); schol. Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 351; schol. Plato *Phaedrus* 230a, Lactantius Placidus on *Thebaid* 2. 595–6.

produced him in revenge against Zeus for his destruction of Typhon's half-brothers (born of Uranus), the Titans, whom he had already thrown into Tartarus.[20] Later sources, from Euripides onwards, tend to merge Typhon with those other sons of Earth, the Giants, and even with the Titans themselves. At least from the fourth century BC, as we will see, the Giants could also be conceptualized as anguipedes.[21]

But according to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* Hera was rather his mother and he was significantly fatherless, for Hera bore him in a monogenesis competition with her husband Zeus. Zeus was able to produce on his own the perfect Athene, but Hera could do no better than to produce monsters: first the lame Hephaestus, whom she hurled to earth from heaven in disgust; and secondly then the monstrous Typhon.[22] Art suggests a stronger congruence between the imperfect, monstrous forms of Hera's two sons than literature does, for in return-to-Olympus scenes Hephaestus is often depicted with severely twisted feet, which accordingly recall Typhon's anguipede form.[23] An ancient variant of Hephaestus' myth, already in the *Iliad*, tells that he was lamed rather when Zeus hurled him from heaven for helping Hera against him.[24] And in this he parallels Typhon again, who, the *Theogony* tells, crashes to earth lamed when overcome by Zeus, and is then hurled down again into Tartarus.[25] In his final confinement too Typhon is associated with Hephaestus: the *Theogony* compares him to the tin melted in the mountains under the guidance of Hephaestus, whilst, according to Pindar, he 'sends up the most terrible fountains of Hephaestus'.[26] But Aeschylus and Nicander co-opt Hephaestus to serve as guard over Typhon and as confiner of him at this point, setting his anvils over him and working his metals on top of his body.'[27] The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* also gives Typhon a third mother-figure in the suitable form of the fostering Delphic *drakaina*.[28]

Zeus' battle against Typhon is first narrated expansively, and most influentially, in the Hesiodic *Theogony*, where his battle with Zeus is represented as something of an elemental conflict between the volcanic fire that shoots up from the earth

[20] Hesiod *Theogony* 617–822; see also schol. Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 351.

[21] Euripides *Heracles* 1271–3 (three-bodied Typhons associated with Giants; cf. Touchefeu-Meynier and Krauskopf 1997: 147–8). Callimachus *Aetia* F1.35–6 Pf. (Zeus places Sicily on top of the Giant Enceladus); Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5. 346–58 (Typhon as a Giant under Sicily); Hesychius s.v. *Τύφω*: *ἐνὶ τῶν γιγάντων*; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 176, 220, 244, 263, 271, 291, 299, 415, 521, 2. 32, 141, 250, 256, 368, 380, 427, 448, 521, 542 (Typhon as a Giant), 2. 230 (as a Titan, implicitly; cf. 2. 340, 567, 591, where Typhon expresses the aim of restoring the Titans to heaven); schol. Homer *Iliad* 2. 793 presents Typhon as produced by Earth and Hera in cahoots in revenge for the killing of the Giants (as opposed to the Titans).

[22] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 311–18.

[23] See *LIMC* Hephaistos nos. 21 (?), 43 (?), 103a, 117 (?), 129, 142, 157d, Hephaistos/Sethlans 18a; Carpenter 1986: 13–29, with pls. 4–6. For the myth see Alcaeus F349 *PMG*/Campbell and Pausanias 1. 20. 3: Dionysus made Hephaestus drunk and had him carried back to Olympus in a revel. Discussion at Ogden 1997: 35–7, with further references.

[24] Homer *Iliad* 1. 1590–4, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 3. 5.

[25] Hesiod *Theogony* 839–43, 868.

[26] Hesiod *Theogony* 861–7; Pindar *Pythians* 1.2 5–6; cf. schol. Pindar *Olympians* 4. 12.

[27] Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 368–9, with schol. 351; Nicander *apud* Antoninus Liberalis 28.

[28] *Homeric Hymn (3) to Apollo* 300–6; so too Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3.

and the lightning fire that shoots down from the sky.[29] Epimenides, writing *c.*500 BC, seems to have told the story of the battle in initially more human terms: 'In Epimenides Typhon came up to attack Zeus' palace whilst he was asleep. He seized control of the gates and got inside. But Zeus ran to the defence and, seeing the palace seized, is said to have killed him with a thunderbolt.'[30] But aspects of Epimenides' narrative may have been very ancient. The *Theogony* may be implicitly criticizing and correcting an already existing narrative in which Typhon caught Zeus sleeping when it says that Zeus 'quickly perceived' that he was under attack, whilst Aeschylus is surely doing the same in telling us that Zeus responded to Typhon's attack with his 'unsleeping dart' (ἄγρυπνον βέλος).[31]

Zeus seems to have acquired Pan as a helper from an early stage. The *Titanomachy* attributed to Eumelus (mid sixth century BC?) told that Zeus blasted Typhon with a thunderbolt after deceiving him with the help of Pan. Typhon was lurking in his pit and refusing to expose himself, so Pan invited him to dinner, brought him out from the depths of the earth and led him to the shore of the sea, where Zeus destroyed him with his thunderbolts.[32] Building on this, Oppian tells how Pan tricked Typhon into leaving his broad pit of Tartarus to go to the seashore for a fish dinner. Whilst he was there, exposed, Zeus rained thunderbolts and rocks down upon him, with the result that the yellow banks of seashores still blush red with his gore.[33] According to Apollodorus, Typhon stripped out Zeus' sinews and carried him to the Corycian cave in Cilicia, where he set his foster-mother, the *drakaina* Delphyne, to guard the sinews concealed in a bearskin. But Zeus was then restored to completeness by Hermes and his son (Aigi)pan, and continued the pursuit of Typhon. As he chased Typhon across Thracian Haemus he blasted the mountain, whereupon blood (*haima*) gushed forth, giving it its name.[34] According to the *Suda*, Pan captured Typhon in a net.[35]

Pan features too in the most extended and elaborate narrative of the course of Typhon's battle with Zeus to survive from antiquity, that of Nonnus (*c.* AD 430). The conflict begins when Zeus conceals his thunderbolts in an underground cavern whilst seducing Plouto, daughter of Cronus, to sire Tantalus. The thunderbolts heat the rock and water around them, causing smoke and steam to rise up through the Mygdonian gorge in Macedonia, thus betraying their presence. Typhon's mother, the Earth, advises him to steal the thunderbolts for himself. Typhon hides the weapons afresh in another cave (not necessarily his own). He then proceeds, in a truly cosmic battle, to attack heaven in the form of the constellations, from land and from sea.[36] At some point, Typhon succeeds in making off with Zeus' sinews, which fall to the ground in the course of his battle with him.[37] Zeus conspires with Pan and Cadmus, and to this end they disguise

[29] Hesiod *Theogony* 820–8, 854–80.

[30] Epimenides *FGrH* 457 F8 = DK 3 B 8.

[31] Hesiod *Theogony* 838, Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 360.

[32] Seeming fragment *apud* schol. Oppian *Halieutica* 3. 16, but the text does not appear in the collections of Davies or West.

[33] Oppian *Halieutica* 3. 16–25, with scholl. ad 24–5.

[34] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3.

[35] *Suda* s.v. Ἀλίπλαγκτος.

[36] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 145–293.

[37] As entailed by Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 510–12.

Cadmus as a shepherd, so that he can bewitch Typhon by playing the panpipes. Duly enchanted by the pipes, Typhon leaves the thunderbolts in a cave for his mother, Earth, to guard, and follows the music to find Cadmus. He challenges him to a friendly musical competition, Cadmus' panpipes against his own thunder, and promises that he will take him with him to heaven when he conquers it, giving him his choice of goddess for a bride—any except Hera, whom he will take himself. Cadmus tells Typhon that if he likes the pipes, he will love to hear him play a victory hymn for him on his lyre, provided that he can string it with Zeus' sinews, so Typhon gives them to him, and Cadmus conceals them in turn in a cave of his own, whilst continuing to distract Typhon with pipe music.[38] In the meantime, Zeus secretly steals back his thunderbolts from the cave in which Typhon has hidden them. In his anger Typhon's lion heads devour lions, bear heads bears, and serpent heads serpents, whilst his higher heads devour the birds from the air. He lays waste to the entire world, destroying its fertility. In the course of the battle, Zeus uses a combination of ice and fiery thunderbolts against Typhon, cutting off some of Typhon's hands with sharp showers of hail, and deploying thunderbolts to shear off his animal heads and shrivel up his serpent heads. Zeus finally buries Typhon under Sicily, and constructs a cenotaph with the legend, 'This is the tomb of earthborn Typhon, whom the ethereal fire burned up when he lashed the ether with rocks.' Zeus rewards Cadmus with Harmonia as promised. This narrative gives a strong impression of assimilation between Zeus' thunderbolts and his sinews.[39]

Of all Greek *drakontes*, Typhon is the one for whom the strongest case for specific Near Eastern influence has been mounted. It is now usually held that the myth of Zeus' battle with Typhon effectively originated in an *interpretatio Graeca* of a mythical battle between a storm god and a sea-serpent that had been located since the age of the Hurrians on ancient Syria's (modern Turkey's) towering Mt. Kasios, now the Jebel Aqra, over the summit of which thunderbolts continue to flash. For the Hurrians, who had known the mountain as Hazzi (probably the origin of the Greek name Kasios), the storm-god in question had been Teshub, and the dragon Hedammu. For the Hittites he had been Tarhunna, and the dragon Illuyanka. For the Canaanites, for whom the mountain was Sapuna, the storm-god in question had been Baal-Sapon, and he had been victorious over Yam and Litan/Lotan, the biblical Leviathan, the sea-serpents that were embodiments of chaos (all these tales are laid out in the Introduction).[40]

That said, the Augustan Strabo is the earliest Greek text explicitly to locate the battle between Zeus and Typhon near Mt. Kasios (he identifies Typhon with the Orontes river that flows beneath the mountain), before Apollodorus then

[38] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 362–534; cf. 2. 316–33, 581–6 also for Typhon's ambition to marry Hera, principally as a symbol of his supplanting of Zeus.

[39] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 2. 1–19, 42–236 (esp. 42–52), 425–30, 508–64, 620–30, 663–6. Nonnus knows that Typhon spouts up 'the hot steam of the fiery thunderbolt' also at Lydian Statala, the modern Adali-Karata, *Dionysiaca* 13. 496; cf. Lane Fox 2008: 305–6.

[40] The case laid out here is adumbrated at M. L. West 1997: 303–4, and argued in expansive detail by Lane Fox 2008: 255–73; cf. also Vian 1960. The myths of Teshub's battle against Hedammu, Tarhunna's against Illuyanka, and Baal-Sapon's against Yam and Litan/Lotan are discussed in the Introduction.

explicitly names the mountain itself as the location of the battle.[41] However, the earliest Greek sources locate Typhon and his battle across the gulf of Issus from Mt. Kasios in Cilicia. The *Iliad* speaks of Zeus lashing the earth with his thunderbolts around Typhon in the land of the 'Arimoi' (a process evidently continuing beyond the victory).[42] Hesiod has Typhon's consort Echidna dwell in the land of 'Arima'.[43] Lane Fox has made a strong case for 'Arima' refracting the Hittite Cilician toponym Erimma, and for both names in turn belonging to the pair of great Cilician ravines with caverns leading to an underground river and now known to the Turks as 'Heaven and Hell'.[44] Cilicia itself is first named in connection with Typhon by Pindar, who places his birth there.[45] Then in the fourth century BC Callisthenes identified the Arimoi people and the 'Arima mountains' with the area of the Cilician Calycadnus river, the Corycian cave, and the promontory of Sarpedon.[46] But from the fifth century BC the location of the actual battle and of Typhon's place of eventual burial were already moving much further afield. As for the place of burial, Pindar has Typhon finally buried under Etna in Sicily and Cumae and Pithecussae in Campania. Strabo has a learned and reasonable explanation of Pindar's thinking: he contends that not only was the Phlegraean Fields area, the region of Cumae and Pithecussae (and, of course, Vesuvius), volcanic, but so too was the entire Italian coast south of that point and down to Sicily, and that Typhon was stretched out for the entirety of this distance beneath the surface of the earth. The notion that Typhon was buried under Etna became understandably popular with Latin writers.[47] The location of the battle itself was also pushed

[41] Strabo C750–1; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3.

[42] Homer *Iliad* 2. 781–3.

[43] Hesiod *Theogony* 304–7.

[44] Lane Fox 2008: 304–18. But it is the Hittite toponym Arimatta, which was located north-west of Cilicia in the region of Iconium (Konya), that has received more attention in these debates: see e.g. Watkins 1995: 450. M. L. West 1997: 301 n. 70 prefers to follow one of Strabo's speculations at C626–7 and derive the term rather from 'Aramaeans', but see Lane Fox 2008: 307.

[45] Pindar *Pythians* 1. 15–28, 8. 15–16, F92 SM; so too Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 40, 55, 258–9, 321, 2. 35, 633 (Nonnus roots Typhon's story in Cilicia, though his wide-ranging battle with Zeus takes him as far as Mygdonia in Macedonia, 1. 145–53.).

[46] Callisthenes *FGrH* 124 F33, *apud* Strabo C626–7. Ampelius 2. 10 presumably envisages Cilicia too when locating Typhon's birth in the Taurus mountains. Schol. Homer *Iliad* 2. 793 preserves an Orphic theogony that locates Typhon's birth in Arima, and has him produced from two (!) eggs smeared in Cronus' semen and buried in the earth by Hera; cf. Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 1983: 59–60 no. 52 and Gantz 1993: 51. For Nonnus Typhon had an initial bloodstained lair in Cilician Arima (*Dionysiaca* 1. 140). But his expansive narrative refers to a number of further caves, and it is not clear how many of these are to be identified with Typhon's home cave: that in which Zeus hides his thunderbolts (1. 145–53) ought to be a different one; that in which Typhon, having stolen the thunderbolts, hides them in turn, may well be his home cave and is presumably the same as the one in which he subsequently leaves them for his mother, Earth, to guard (1. 163, 409–26); that in which he hides Zeus' sinews may again be his home cave (1. 486–534); and that in which Cadmus in turn conceals Zeus' sinews is presumably a different one again (1. 486–534).

[47] Pindar *Pythians* 1. 15–28 (Cumae, Etna), *Olympians* 4. 6–7 (with scholl. ad loc.), F92 SM (Pithecussae, Etna), F93 SM; cf. also schol. Pindar *Olympians* 1. 31 and 4. 12. Other sources agree that Typhon was buried under Etna and/or Pithecussae: Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 353–74, with schol. 351; Pherecydes F54 Fowler; Nicander *apud* Antoninus Liberalis 28, Strabo C248, C626–7 (suggesting that *arimoi* is the Etruscan word for the 'monkeys', the *pithēkoi*, that gave the island of Pithecussae its Greek name; cf. Lane Fox 2008: 315–17), Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5. 346–58, *Fasti* 4. 491–4; Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 23–33; Manilius 2. 874–80; Seneca *Thyestes* 806–9 (where the

west into Asia Minor, principally, it seems, so as to identify it with the Lydian–Maeonian Catacaumene, the 'Burnt Land', that could also be seen as adjacent to Mysia and Phrygia. Thus Xanthus of Lydia more simply told that the battle with Typhon took place in Mysia, where a king Arimos and the people of the Arimoi lived, and that the Catacaumene, was so called because of the fiery battle; Diodorus located it rather in adjacent Phrygia.[48]

Of the three antecedent myths mentioned in association with Mt. Kasios, it is the Hittite tale of Illuyanka and Tarhunna, laid out in its two versions in the Introduction, that seems to exhibit the closest fit with the Typhon myth:[49]

- Tarhunna, the storm god ~ Zeus, with his thunderbolts (Hesiod, etc.)
- Illuyanka, 'Dragon' ~ anguiform Typhon (Hesiod, etc.)
- Illuyanka's lair ~ Typhon's cave/Tartarus (*Titanomachy* [?], Apollodorus, Nonnus)
- Kiskilussa ~ Cilicia, *Korykion antron* (Corycian cave), *Sikelia* (Sicily), (Pindar, Aeschylus, etc.)
- The goddess Inara lures Illuyanka from his lair with a deceitful feast ~ the gods Pan and Hermes lure Typhon from his lair with a deceitful feast (*Titanomachy* [?], Apollodorus, Oppian, Nonnus)
- Inara employs a mortal helper against Illuyanka in Hupasiya ~ Hermes employs a mortal helper against Typhon in Cadmus (Nonnus)
- Illuyanka renders the storm-god Tarhunna incapacitated by removing his heart and eyes ~ Typhon renders Zeus incapacitated by removing his sinews (Apollodorus, Nonnus)
- Illuyanka stores the removed body-parts in his house ~ Typhon stores the removed body-parts in a cave (Apollodorus, Nonnus)
- Illuyanka is finally bound ~ Zeus 'lashes' Typhon (Homer, Hesiod, *Homeric Hymn*) and 'binds' him under Etna (Pindar)[50]

mountain that Typhon may have thrown himself off is presumably Etna); Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3; Hyginus *Fabulae* 152; Philostratus *Imagines* 2. 17. 5; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 2. 620–30; schol. Euripides *Phoenissae* 1020; First Vatican Mythographer 1. 85. See Gantz 1993: 49 for the significance of Vesuvius. Schol. Plato *Phaedrus* 230a actually has Typhon being born in Sicily, but this probably represents confusion rather than tradition.

[48] Xanthus of Sardis *FGrH* 765 F4a and b; cf. Strabo C626–7 (Lydia, Mysia), incorporating Demetrius of Scepsis F39 Gaede (Mysia). Diodorus 5. 71.2: *ὅτε δή φασιν αὐτὸν καὶ τοὺς γίγαντας ἀνελεῖν, ἐν μὲν Κρήτῃ τοὺς περὶ Μύλινον, κατὰ δὲ τὴν Φρυγίαν τοὺς περὶ Τυφῶνα. Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *Τυφώς* takes the battle to the Caucasus.

[49] For the Typhon myth in relation to the Hittite myth of Illuyanka and Tarhunna, see Porzig 1930, Gaster 1950: 245–69, Fontenrose 1959: 70–6, 121–5, Vian 1960, Walcot 1966: 9–15, 25–6, M. L. West 1966: 391–2, 1997: 300–4, 2007: 247, Littleton 1970: 93–7, Wakeman 1973: 45–7, Burkert 1979: 7–9, 1992: 94–5, Beckman 1982, Ballabriga 1990, Blaise 1992, Penglase 1994: 192–5, Watkins 1995: 448–62, Haas 2006: 97–103, Lane Fox 2008: 299–300, 304–15.

[50] For Watkins 1995: 453–9 the Hittite narrative's assertion that Illuyanka was bound with a cord, *ishimanta* (cognate with Greek *ἱμάς*, 'thong'), encouraged, in the process of the direct transmission of the myth between the two languages, the use of similar-sounding (but only accidentally cognate) terms in the derived Greek tale of Typhon. This is why the verb *ἱμάσσω* is used frequently in the earlier versions of the Typhon story, albeit with the differentiated meaning of 'lash': above all Hesiod *Theogony* 857 (Zeus lashes Typhon); so too Homer *Iliad* 2. 782, *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 340.

It is a curiosity that the Greek narratives that chime most strikingly with the Hittite are the late ones, Apollodorus, Oppian, and Nonnus. But these later texts surely do derive much from earlier ones. The scholium to Oppian cites the *Titanomachy* (genuinely?), and Apollodorus may derive his material from a source of some antiquity.[51]

The tradition of the battle between Zeus and Typhon exhibits a general similarity with some other Near-Eastern myths.[52] It bears comparison with two myths of Ninurta. The first is that of the late-third-millennium Sumerian poem *Lugal-e*, in which the hissing sea-monster Azag-Labbu, born of Earth and Heaven, attempts to seize the throne of Ninurta who, qua storm-god, deploys winds and floods against his opponents, whilst both of them set fire to the landscape (Introduction).[53] The second is that of the Akkadian epic *Anzu*, first attested in the early second millennium BC, although the monster in question is not a dragon of any sort. Here Ninurta (Ningirsu) faces Anzu, the child of earth and flood-waters, born in a mountain. Anzu takes the form of a huge bird, a lion-headed eagle, and he provokes whirlwinds by flapping his wings. He is also, somehow, identified with the mountain in which he is born. Anzu attempts to seize Enlil's power whilst he takes a bath, by stealing the Tablet of Destinies. But Ninurta, again a master of storms, summons together seven winds against him. He eventually kills Anzu by shooting an arrow into his mountain and flaying him with his floods.[54] The Typhon tradition also bears comparison with the tale of Marduk's battle against Tiamat in the Akkadian epic *Enūma eliš* (Introduction), this story also being first attested in the early second millenium BC and thought to be derivative of the Anzu story. Here too the storm-god deploys winds against a sea-monster.[55]

From at least the time of Hecataeus, the Greeks syncretized Typhon with the Egyptian Seth, the great opponent of Osiris. No doubt Diodorus' tale of Osiris and Typhon preserves something of what Hecataeus had said. This identification persisted to the end of antiquity, and came to thrive above all in the Greek Magical Papyri and the curse tablets of late antiquity.[56]

Prior to this the figure of Typhon had already become the plaything of the Orphic tradition of symbolic but obscurantist theogonies. The first Orphic reflex of Typhon was Ophiōn or Ophioneus, who had a consort in Eurynome. The couple was known already to Pherecydes of Syrus in the sixth century BC, and Apollonius of Rhodes puts a song about them into Orpheus' mouth.[57] Most of our

[51] Though M. L. West 1997: 304 guesses Hellenistic.

[52] The case is laid out at M. L. West 1997: 300–4.

[53] For details of the text, see Introduction.

[54] For the *Anzu* texts see principally Hruška 1975 (with further items at Dalley 2000: 226) and, for translation, Dalley 2000: 203–27.

[55] Cf. M. L. West 1966: 302, 379.

[56] Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F300; so too Pindar F91 SM, Herodotus 2. 144, Strabo C803, Plutarch *Isis and Osiris*, *Moralia* esp. 355f, 361d, 363de, 367ab, 374c, 376f–377a. Diodorus 1. 21. The Greek Magical Papyri: see *PGM* vol. iii (the unpublished index volume, held in photocopy by major libraries) Register vi s.vv. *Σήθ*, *Τυφών*. Curse tablets: above all those collected in Wünsch 1898.

[57] Principal texts: Pherecydes of Syros FF73, 78–80 Schibli, Apollonius *Argonautica* 1. 496–511, Lycophron *Alexandra* 1191–7, with scholl. at 1191, 1196, Philo of Byblos *apud* Eusebius *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1. 10. 50, Lucian *Podagra* 99–105, Maximus of Tyre *Philosophoumena* 4. 4. 5–8, Origen

sources for them confine themselves to noting that Ophion once ruled heaven, whilst Eurynome once ruled the sea, but that they were confronted by Cronus and Rhea respectively, who threw them down into Tartarus and took their places. Ophion's names signify 'snake' (cf. *ophis*), and Origen comes close to asserting explicitly that his form was indeed serpentine.[58] What was the form of Eurynome? Pausanias knew of a goddess Eurynome worshipped in Phigalia. Was she the same one? Whilst she was considered, unpromisingly, an aspect of Artemis, she was also, more promisingly, a daughter of Ocean and in form a maiden above and a fish below.[59] We are reminded of Typhon's traditional consort Echidna, of whom more anon, a maiden above and a serpent below. But perhaps Typhon's Eurynome was even a pure serpent in form. That might explain Nonnus' apparent confusion of her with Harmonia.[60] Pherecydes of Syrus told how Ophion and Cronus drew up armies against each other in their battle to possess heaven, and agreed that the loser would be the one that first fell into the Ocean.[61] A scholium to the *Iliad* knows a variant according to which Ophion was rather the leader of a group of Giants who attempted to overthrow the rule of Zeus in Tartessos on the bounds of Ocean. Zeus defeated them and cast them into Erebus, where he made his father Cronus their king. But upon Ophion himself he placed a mountain subsequently to be called Ophonion (cf. Etna, etc., on Typhon). It seems that, like Typhon too, Ophion was a progenitor, since Philo of Byblos refers to his 'Ophionidae'. Lucian's claim that Gout was Ophion's first child was presumably not canonical.[62]

The second Orphic Typhon-reflex was Chronus, a creature whose name signifies 'Time' but also seeks to identify him, kaleidoscopically, with Cronus. Athenagoras describes Chronus as a *drakōn* with the head of a lion attached to it, and between the heads of *drakōn* and lion the face of a 'god', i.e. presumably a humanoid one. Damascius in turn describes Chronus as a *drakōn* with the heads of a bull and a lion attached to it, the face of a god 'in the middle', and with wings on his shoulders. Damascius attributes an account of this Chronus to a Hieronymus and a Hellanicus, probably the mid-third-century BC Peripatetic Hieronymus of Rhodes and the second-century BC (?) Hellanicus of Tarsus respectively. Like Typhon and Ophion Chronus too was a significant progenitor, producing a great egg from the shell of which the fabric of the known world came to be made, and from which emerged the next monstrous generation. The egg was produced either parthenogenetically, as Athenagoras implies, or, as Damascius tells, in conjunction with the female entities Ananke (Necessity), who was of the

Contra Celsum 6. 42–3, [Clement of Rome] *Recognitions* 10. 23, Nonnus 2. 572–4, 8. 158–61 (Harmonia), schol. Homer *Iliad* 8. 479, First Vatican Mythographer 3. 1. 1. Discussion: Fontenrose 1959: 230–9, Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 1983: 66–70, Schibli 1990: 78–103.

[58] Origen *Contra Celsum* 6. 43, incorporating Pherecydes of Syros F73 Schibli.

[59] Pausanias 8. 41.

[60] Nonnus 8. 158–61, with Rose at Rouse, Rose, and Lind 1940–2 ad loc.

[61] Origen *Contra Celsum* 6. 42, incorporating Pherecydes of Syros F79 Schibli.

[62] *Pace* Fontenrose 1959: 231, it does not seem particularly fruitful to align the Ophionidae with the Ophiogeneis.

same form, and the bodiless (or double-bodied) Adrasteia (Nemesis). Ananke would seem to evoke Typhon's consort Echidna.[63]

The third Orphic Typhon-reflex was Zeus-Sabazius. According to the Orphic Zagreus myth as first adumbrated for us by Athenagoras, writing between 176 and 180 AD, Zeus-Sabazius pursued his own mother Rhea-Demeter. To evade his advances she transformed herself into a female serpent, a *drakaina*, whereupon Zeus-Sabazius then transformed himself into a male serpent, a *drakōn*, and had sex with her in a 'knot of Heracles', as symbolized by Hermes' caduceus. Persephone was the fruit of this union. Zeus-Sabazius then raped Persephone too, again in the form of a *drakōn*, and thus sired Dionysus-Zagreus in the form of a bull.[64] A case can be made for taking the motif of Zeus Sabazius' siring in *drakōn*-form back to the late fourth century BC: the Superstitious Man of Theophrastus' *Characters* (319 BC) invokes Sabazius if he sees even a gentle *pareias* snake in the house; and Demosthenes seems be referring to the rites of Sabazius in *On the Crown* (330 BC) when he speaks of Aeschines participating in orgiastic rites with his mother, in which *pareias* snakes are squeezed and lifted over the head to cries of *euoi saboi*.[65] This myth too gives us a serpent progenitor-couple, and kaleidoscopes the motifs of the canonical Typhon myth still further in contriving to identify the Typhon-figure with Zeus himself.[66]

ECHIDNA, SLAIN BY ARGUS

Typhon's consort, Echidna ('Viper'),[67] is described briefly in the *Theogony*: above she is a fair-cheeked maiden with a darting glance; below she is a terrible, flashing-

[63] Principal texts: Athenagoras *Legatio* 18; Damascius *De Principiis* 123, i p. 318 Ruelle. Discussion: Kirk, Raven, and Schofield 1983: 22–8, 56–60 (25 for Hellanicus of Tarsus), M. L. West 1983: 189–202, Ahbel-Rappe 2010: 498–9 (499 for Hieronymus of Rhodes). Pherecydes of Syros FF14, 60, 65–6. Schibli had already known a Chronus too, and had made him one of the three founding principles of the universe, alongside Zas (Zeus) and Chthonie. But there is no indication in the surviving fragments that he was a *drakōn* for him. The brief Typhon narrative at schol. Homer *Iliad* 2. 793 combines elements of a canonical account of the myth with imagery derived from the Chronus tradition, with Typhon being born from two (!) eggs produced by *Cronus*.

[64] Athenagoras *Legatio* 20; details are added by Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 2. 16 p. 14, Potter, Arnobius *Against the Heathens* 5. 20–1, and Firmicus Maternus 10; cf. also Nonnnus *Dionysiaca* 5. 562–9, 6. 155–68. The age of Athenagoras is also the point at which snakes first enter Sabazius' iconography: *LIMC* Sabazios nos. 4 and 9; cf. Gicheva 1997. In the former image, an undated Roman stele from Manisa (1st–3rd cent. AD?), a snake scuttles along under the legs of the horses pulling Sabazius' chariot, whilst an attendant holds a caduceus. In the latter, a bust of the god of the 2nd century AD, the god holds, *inter alia*, a branch around which a snake entwines.

[65] Theophrastus *Characters* 16; Demosthenes 18. 259–60. Other elements of the Zagreus myth can be taken back considerably earlier: *Alcmeonis* F3 West (6th or 5th cent. BC) = *Etymologiocum Gudianum* s.v. *Ζαγρεύς*; Pindar F133.1 Snell-Mähler (early 5th cent. BC) = Plato *Meno* 81b; cf. also the Derveni Papyrus (*c.*330 BC), at Kouremenos, Parassoglou, and Tsantsanoglou 2006. Further sources are collected at Kern 1922 nos. 210–35. See Fauth 1967: 2270–1, Burkert 1985: 297–8, Brouwer 1989: 340–4, Gantz 1993: 118–19 and, more generally, Vermaseren and Lane 1983–9.

[66] However, Zeus is not formally attested as identified with Sabazius prior to an inscription of Attalus III of 135/4 BC: Dittenberger 1903–5 no. 331 = Welles 1934 no. 67 = *I. Pergamon* no. 248; cf. E. V. Hansen 1971: 190 and 441.

[67] Principal texts: Hesiod *Theogony* 295–327, Hipponax F79 West line 11, Epimenides *FGrH* 457 F5, Acusilaus F13 Fowler, Bacchylides 5. 60–2, Pherecydes FF7, 16b Fowler, Sophocles *Trachiniae*

skinned, and raw-flesh-devouring serpent. She is immortal and lives in a cave in the earth beneath the Arimoi. The description of her as raw-flesh-eating may suggest that her serpent half culminates in a serpent-head, like the Lamia of Dio Chrysostom (below). She bears to Typhon a host of mainly anguiform monsters: Orthus, Cerberus, Hydra, Chimaera, Sphinx and the Nemean Lion.[68] Only Aristophanes develops the details of her form, when his Aeacus tells Dionysus, masquerading as Heracles, that she will tear his innards apart: he asserts that she has a hundred heads (à la Typhon), presumably snake heads again, and presumably, therefore, branching from her bottom half. But this exuberant description need not relate strongly to canon.[69] Despite Hesiod's assertion of her immortality, Apollodorus tells that she was slain in her sleep by the all-seeing Argus.[70] Whilst there are frequent further mentions of her in the pagan literary tradition, it is only in the role of genealogical link, most commonly that of progenitrix of other anguiform monsters (see Ch. 4). She is, however, strikingly refracted in Herodotus' Scythian Echidna, a 'half-maiden, a double-formed *echidna*'. Herodotus, attributing the tale to 'Pontic Greeks', tells how Heracles was driving the cattle of Geryon through the future Scythia, but lay down for a nap under his lionskin. As he slept, his mares were spirited away by Echidna, a creature who was a girl above and a snake (*ophis*) below. She refused to return them to Heracles until he had sex with her. Heracles duly did this, but she delayed the return of the horses for some time, so that Heracles would continue with his lovemaking. When she had conceived three sons, she restored the horses to him. She then asked Heracles what she must do with the sons when they were grown: should she keep them there in the country she ruled, or should she send them on to him? Heracles gave her one of his bows and his belt, which had a golden vessel attached to its clasp. He told her to let the son that was able to bend his bow as he did, and that put on his belt, remain in her land, but to send the others away. Only her youngest son, Scythes, was able to bend the bow, and he remained in the land and inherited her kingdom, becoming the founder and eponym of the Scythians. And because of him the Scythians of Herodotus' own day, supposedly, continued to carry vessels on their belts.[71] Like the Hesiodic Echidna, this one too is first and foremost a progenetrix. And the Hesiodic is gloriously reborn in the *Acts of Philip*,

1097–9, Euripides *Phoenissae* 1020, Callimachus F515 Pfeiffer, Lycophron *Alexandra* 1353–4, Virgil *Ciris* 67, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 1 .2, 2. 3. 1, 2. 5. 1, 2. 5. 10–11, 3. 5. 8, *Epitome* 1. 1, Hyginus *Fabulae* preface and 151, Pausanias 3. 18. 10, 8. 18. 1. Iconography: *LIMC* Echidna (no certain example survives, though Pausanias 3. 18. 10 tells us that images of her were made). Discussions: Küster 1913: 86–92, M. L. West 1966 on lines 306–7,Visintin 1977, Lambrinudakis 1986, Sancassano 1997*b*: 60–3.

[68] Hesiod *Theogony* 295–327; cf. West 1966 ad loc.

[69] Aristophanes *Frogs* 473–4. Typhon: Hesiod *Theogony* 825.

[70] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 1. 2; for Argus see Ch. 6.

[71] Herodotus 4. 8–10. See Visintin 2000, Ustinova 2005, and Asheri, Lloyd, and Corcella 2007 ad loc. (pp. 577–9), Ogden 2011*a*: 146–50. Asheri, Lloyd, and Corcella take this to be an essentially Greek tale customized with local Scythian colour, whereas Ustinova 2005 argues for a Central Asian origin, prefiguring as it does Ferdowsi's tale of Rostam and Tamineh: *Shahnameh* V. 434–42, translated at Warner and Warner 1912: ii. 120–6 and Davis 2006: 187–9. See also Ogden 2011*a*: 146–50 for comparison of this tale with the Alexander tradition's tale of Alexander's encounter with the Amazon queen Thalestris (Diodorus 17. 77. 1–3, Strabo C505, Justin 2. 4. 33, 12. 3. 5–7, 9, 42. 3. 7, Curtius 6. 5. 24–32, Plutarch *Alexander* 46, Orosius 3. 18. 5).

where this archetypal 'mother of snakes' becomes the saint's principal adversary and indeed nemesis, and is cast into a hole in the earth (Ch. 11). Whilst antiquity knew of other male anguipedes (Typhon, the Giants, Cecrops), there was perhaps a particular tendency for female anguiforms to be conceptualized specifically in this way: with Echidna we should compare, Lamia aside, Delphyne (Ch. 1), Hecate (Ch. 7), and Scylla (Ch. 3).[72]

GIANTS, SLAIN BY THE GODS

The myth of the Giants' doomed battle against the gods, the 'Gigantomachy', may be summarized as follows. Resentful of the fate of the Titans and fertilized by Uranus, Earth gave birth to the Giants at Phlegra or Pallene. They were huge and invincible, and had *drakontes* for feet. They assaulted heaven with rocks and burning tree trunks. The gods possessed an oracle that the Giants could only be overcome by a mortal, and called in Heracles to help them. All the gods engaged individual Giants in battle, with Athene throwing Sicily on top of Enceladus as he fled, and Poseidon throwing Nisyrum, the adjunct to Cos, on top of Polybotes. Zeus destroyed most of them with his thunderbolts, with Heracles finishing them off with his arrows. Earth, angrier still, now produced Typhon . . .[73]

It is difficult to reconstruct the Giants' mythical tradition, since the extant literary sources for it, which effectively begin with the *Theogony*'s observation that they were sired in Earth by the drops of blood that fell upon her when Zeus castrated Uranus, typically refer to the Gigantomachy glancingly or focus only upon monomachies within it.[74] No synoptic account survives prior to that of Diodorus of the first century BC; our summary is based directly on Apollodorus', which may, however, derive from a fourth-century BC model.[75]

By contrast the theme of the Gigantomachy flourished in art from the mid sixth century BC until the end of the imperial age: over six hundred images of it survive.[76] It is in the iconographic record of the fourth century BC that the Giants first acquire their serpent feet: thereafter serpent feet become more common in their representation throughout the Hellenistic period, with some particularly fine examples on the frieze of the Great Altar of Pergamum,[77] until they become all but universal in the imperial period, and indeed the principal means of identifying

[72] Cf. Visintin 1977.

[73] Principal (synoptic) texts: Diodorus 3. 70. 3–6 (= Dionysius Scytobrachion *FGrH* 32 F85), 71. 2–6; Horace *Odes* 3. 4. 49–80; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 151–62; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 1–3; Claudian 53 Hall (*Gigantomachia*); Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 63. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Gigantes, Vian 1951. Discussions: Vian 1951, 1952*a*, 1952*b*, Picard 1953, Dörig and Gigon 1961, Hardie 1986: 85–156, Vian and Moore 1988, Gantz 1993: 445–54.

[74] Hesiod *Theogony* 183–6. The *Odyssey*'s Giants stand a little outside the remainder of the tradition, in so far as they are here ethnologized into a wild, arrogant, and doomed race, formerly presided over by a king Eurymedon (7. 56–60). However, they are explicitly compared to the rock-throwing Laestrygonians (10. 120–2) and possibly also to the monstrous Cyclopes (7. 205–6); cf. Gantz 1993: i. 445–6.

[75] The complex and centrifugal literary sources for the Giants tradition are listed and reviewed at Vian and Moore 1988: 191–6.

[76] *LIMC* Gigantes offers no fewer than 613 entries.

[77] *LIMC* Gigantes 24.

Giants as such in more isolated depictions.[78] (Prior to this, and otherwise, Giants are often distinguished by nudity or the wearing of animal skins, or by their weapons of choice, rocks and logs.)[79]

The earliest anguipede Giant is to be found on a red-figure vase of *c.*400–375 BC, in a battle with Dionysus, and already he is fully in the form that will be the most typical for the remainder of antiquity: his two legs each merge into serpents and end in serpent-heads.[80] Thereafter, anguiform Giants are occasionally found in other configurations too:[81]

- With a single or double serpent-tail proper (i.e. no serpent heads on the end), from the fourth century BC.[82]
- With each of their two serpent legs bifurcating to end in a total of four serpent heads, from the third century BC.[83]
- With two fish-tails, from the third century BC (for which see Ch. 3).[84]
- With serpents sprouting from the hips or the shoulders, from the third century BC.[85]
- With serpents mixed into their hair, from *c.* AD 150.[86]

The proliferation of the Giants' iconography allows us to tell beyond doubt that it was in Magna Graecia that the anguipede variant was first developed: it is from here that all fourth-century BC examples of anguipede Giants derive.[87] We are also able to tell that the Giants took their anguipede form over quite directly from their half-brother Typhon, with whom they are so closely assimilated in narrative as monstrous children produced by Earth in a spirit of revenge, with the mission to attack and overthrow the gods in heaven, and whose fate they share, blasted by thunderbolts and, in Enceladus' case, buried under Sicily. In archaic iconography Typhon was normally depicted as multiply anguipede, as we have seen, and had long been a popular figure on Etruscan pots from the sixth century BC.[88] It was no doubt due to the influence of Typhon too that anguipede Giants were also sometimes given wings, first in the later fourth century.[89] In some puzzling

[78] A deracinated use of Giants that became particularly popular in the imperial period was their deployment as 'atlantes', roof supports, actual or decorative, male equivalents of caryatids: *LIMC* Gigantes 590–607; cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 269–70.

[79] Cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 251–2, 254.

[80] *LIMC* Gigantes 389; cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 253. Mention of the Giants' serpent elements does not manifest itself directly in the literary record actually until the 3rd century BC (if we discount speculation about Apollodorus' source): Naevius F4 Strzelecki refers to *bicorpores Gigantes*; on the Greek side we have to wait for Diodorus 1. 26, *polysōmatoi*. At the end of antiquity Claudian's *Gigantomachia* makes repeated reference to the Giants' serpents, lines 8, 80–1, 111–13.

[81] Cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 253.

[82] e.g. *LIMC* Gigantes 402.

[83] e.g. *LIMC* Gigantes 91, 492–3.

[84] e.g. *LIMC* Gigantes 433–5, 593–4.

[85] e.g. *LIMC* Gigantes 61.

[86] e.g. *LIMC* Gigantes 486. Cf. Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 18, where the Giants are *drakontokomoi*.

[87] *LIMC* Gigantes 58–60, 77–8, 389, 398, 400–2; cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 253.

[88] Cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 253. The confusion between Typhon and Giant seems to be particularly marked in the case of the later 4th-century BC Apulian crater, *LIMC* Gigantes 398.

[89] e.g. *LIMC* Gigantes 24, 26, 58, 60–1, 483; cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 253.

imperial images anguipede Giants appear to wield Zeus' thunderbolt. This notion too may have been influenced by the myth of Typhon, who succeeded in stealing Zeus' thunderbolts from him.[90]

Although it is the fourth century BC that sees the arrival of anguipede Giants, serpents or serpent imagery had been commonly associated with both sides of the Gigantomachy since long before this, and more particularly with that of the gods. In early art serpents are sometimes exclusively associated with the gods' side, and particularly with Dionysus and Athene. A serpent fights alongside Dionysus on scenes from *c.*550 BC,[91] whilst serpents fight alongside Athene in various configurations, either as part of her aegis or in the form of an independent assistant, from the late sixth century BC until the early second century BC (see further Ch. 5, with Fig. 5.1).[92] But before this already, in one of the very earliest representations of the Gigantomachy, a black-figure vase of *c.*575–550 BC, Zeus fights against his Giants with an aegis-shield fringed with serpents, whilst a serpent seemingly leaps out against Poseidon from the centre of the shield of the Giant, Polybotes, he is fighting with a trident.[93] On an Athenian red-figure vase of *c.*410–400 by the Aristophanes painter, both Ares and two of the Giants display serpents on their shields.[94] The notion that the Gigantomachy was a battle of serpent against serpent (cf. Ch. 6) came to flourish in particular after the development of the anguipede Giants, with serpents continuing to fight on the side of the gods against them in their new form. The point is made most clearly on a pair of third-century BC Apulian ceramic medallions. On one of these Athene, wearing the aegis with gorgoneion, attacks a humanoid Giant whilst her assistant serpent attacks his leg. On the paired medallion, Athene fights an anguipede Giant, from whose hips a further range of serpents springs (he is also winged).[95] A fragmentary Gigantomachy

[90] e.g. *LIMC* Gigantes 505 (AD 189); cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 254.

[91] On a series of Athenian images of the 550–420 BC period, mainly red-figure vases, Dionysus attacks a Giant with the aid of a serpent and sometimes also lions, panthers, or dogs. In a particularly fine image of *c.*480 BC Dionysus attacks the Giant with a panther and a huge bearded serpent, which coils around the Giant. On a vase of *c.*430–20 BC, Dionysus attacks a Giant with the aid of a pair of serpents: *LIMC* Gigantes 18 (Parthenon metope), 153, 171 (550–525 BC), 193, 310, 324, 332, 368, 369 (the fine image), 371, 373–7, 382 (the serpent pair). Cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 261.

[92] *LIMC* Gigantes 343 (late 6th-cent. Athenian red-figure vase: Athene attacks a Giant wearing the aegis elaborately fringed with serpents, and with a large serpent blazon on her shield), 415 (Etruscan vase, *c.*500–475 BC; Athene fights a Giant with an aegis-shield fringed with serpents; cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 255), 311–12 (Athenian red-figure vases, *c.*460–450 BC; Athene attacks a giant in the company of 'her' serpent), 425, 428 (Etruscan vases of *c.*460 BC and 4th or 3rd cent. BC respectively; Athene fights a Giant with a serpent); 24 (the Great Altar of Pergamum frieze of the early 2nd cent. BC; the latest scene in which Athene is aided by a serpent).

[93] *LIMC* Gigantes 170; for the earliest Gigantomachy scenes, cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 251.

[94] *LIMC* Gigantes 318. The reconstruction of the west pediment of the Alcmaeonid temple of Apollo at Delphi, *c.*500 BC, at *LIMC* Gigantes 3 offers an independent serpent filling the left corner of the pediment, either attacking or supporting the adjacent Giant.

[95] *LIMC* Gigantes 61 h; cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 255–6. Note also *LIMC* Gigantes 45 (a fragment of a late 4th-cent. BC South Italian relief vase; Heracles fights a fully humanoid Giant, whose knee is being bitten by a serpent, possibly that of Athene; cf. Vian and Moore 1988 ad loc.), 90 (Augustan intaglio thought to be modelled after a 4th-cent. BC original; a serpent attacks the right leg of a sole Giant), 28 (west frieze of the Lagina Hecateion, of the late 2nd-cent. BC; a figure possibly to be identified as a Moira attacks a Giant with the aid of a serpent; cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 263). On *LIMC* Gigantes 24 (frieze of the Great Altar of Pergamum of the early 2nd-cent. BC) Zeus is protected by an aegis of

frieze from Aphrodisias of *c.* AD 150 is of particular interest for its orgy of serpent forms. All the giants are anguipede, and one also has serpent-hair. One of the Giants flees a pair of horned serpents, who may have drawn a chariot (Athene's?). We have the fragments also of another chariot that was drawn by winged serpents with lion-feet: this chariot may have borne Dionysus or Cybele.[96] Around the same time Hyginus notes the belief that the Giants had thrown an independent serpent at Athene, which she then catasterized as the constellation of Draco.[97]

In the second and third centuries AD Mithraic art also appropriated the imagery of the Gigantomachy, in particular the battle between Zeus and an anguipede Giant, to stand for the battle between Ahura-Mazda and the evil Ahriman (sponsor, in Avestan myth, as we saw, of Aži Dahāka: Introduction). Several surviving Mithrea are decorated with such scenes in fresco.[98]

Given the rich anguiform imagery attaching to both Typhon and the Giants, one might have expected that the first in Earth's series of heaven-assaulting monsters, the Titans, would also have been imbued with serpent imagery, but there is no indication of this in the literary sources and, in marked contrast to their Giant brothers, they are wholly absent from the iconographic record.[99] The closest we come to a *drakōn* in some sort of association with the Titans is in the case of Campe.[100] Apollodorus, seemingly recycling the Eumelian *Titanomachy*, uniquely tells us that in the battle of Zeus against the Titans he released the Cyclopes, who had been hurled down into Tartarus, to help him with the thunderbolts they manufactured (cf. the role of Heracles in the *Gigantomachy*), and that he did so by slaying their female guard, Campe. We are told nothing yet of her shape, but her implied underground life and her role as a guardian (cf. Ch. 4) suggest she may already have been conceived of as a *drakaina*. Subsequently Diodorus (after Dionysius Scytobrachion) tells that Campe was an earthborn monster that terrorized the Libyan city of Zabirna (one thinks here of the Libyan Lamia) and was slain by Dionysus in some sort of loose association with the Titanomachy. The god raised a great mound over the body to his own glory. It is not until Nonnus that we get a full-blown physical description of her, and she is indeed now an anguiform and reminiscent of Typhon in shape: she is of vast size; her principal head and torso are those of a woman, with the scales of a *kētos* from the chest down; her hair consists of venomous *drakontes*; her legs consist of a thousand coiling vipers; fifty animal heads project from around her neck, including those of lions, boars, and dogs, inviting comparison with both the Sphinx and Scylla; her

menacing serpents as he fights. Also in this scene a goddess fights the Giants armed with a hydria around which a serpent coils; perhaps she is Styx with her water of mortality (Apuleius *Metamorphoses*, cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 267–8). The frieze also bestows other animal parts upon some of its anguipede Giants, giving one bull horns and another a lion head: we think of the later sources for Typhon, which give him the heads of these animals *inter alia*: see above).

[96] *LIMC* Gigantes 486; cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 262.

[97] Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 3.

[98] *LIMC* Gigantes 507–20, 552–4.

[99] Principal texts: *Iliad* 8. 477–81, 14. 203–4, 274, 15. 224–5, Hesiod *Theogony* 133–6, 617–735, Eumelus *Titanomachy* (fragments), Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 2. 1 (= Eumelus *Titanomachy* F6 West). Their absence from the iconographic record: Bažant 1997.

[100] Texts: Diodorus 3. 72, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 2. 1 = Eumelus *Titanomachy* F6 West, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 18. 236–67. Discussion: Fontenrose 1959: 243–4, Mayor 2000*b*: 150–1.

arms end in curving talons; a scorpion-tail arches over her head; she is a 'black-winged nymph of Tartarus' and rouses storms with her wings; she shoots fire from her eyes. She is a mistress of earth, air, and sea. Zeus destroys her with his thunderbolt. What does her name mean? The Greek texts, as edited, supply her name with a paroxytone accent, and as a word (*κάμπη*) this signifies caterpillar or silkworm. Its oxytone homonym (*καμπή*) signifies primarily the winding of a river, and thereafter any form of flexion or curve.[101] Both are appropriate to an anguiform monster.

More loosely allied with the Titans and the Giants was Brychon. For Lycophron he was an 'ox-horned river' and servant of 'the earthborn'; he enriched the fields of Pallene, site of the Giants' revolt, with his waters. But Ovid, our principal source, describes him as bull in front and a serpent (*serpens*) behind. He explains that he was kept by Styx in a grove surrounded by a threefold wall. An oracle told that he that burned Brychon's innards was destined to conquer the gods. The 'Titan' Briareus slew him with an adamantine axe and was about to put his innards in the flames when they were snatched from his hand by a hawk sent by Zeus. However, his form as described by Ovid remains suggestive of the iconography of a river god, as Fontenrose noted. Similarly Achelous' front half could combine humanoid with bovine characteristics (including horns), whilst his back half could consist of a serpentine-piscine tail, as on a fine *c.*520–510 BC stamnos from Cerveteri.[102]

LAMIAI, SLAIN BY COROEBUS AND OTHERS

'Lamia' (Fig. 2.2) sometimes functions as a proper name for an individual monster and sometimes as a generic term for a class of ghostly, vampiric, or bestial creatures. In some of the narratives associated with the name or the term it is clear that we are dealing with composite *drakontes*, and serpentine elements can be associated with them even when the overall form of the creature remains obscure.[103]

[101] LSJ s.vv.

[102] Texts: Lycophron *Alexandra* 1404–8 (Tzetzes is strangely silent), Ovid *Fasti* 3. 792–808. Discussion: Fontenrose 1959: 245–7. The Cerveteri stamnos: *LIMC* Acheloos 245; cf. Ch. 4. *Suda* s.v. *Βροῦχος* glosses the seemingly related name with the paroxytone *κάμπη* (in Adler's edition); perhaps we should read rather the oxytone *καμπή*.

[103] Principal texts for Lamiai in general (excluding the two Delphic narratives immediately discussed): Stesichorus F220 PMG/Campbell, Aristophanes *Wasps* 1035, repeated verbatim at *Peace* 758 (with scholl.), Euripides F472m *TrGF* (= 922 Nauck), Duris of Samos *FGrH* 76 F35, Diodorus 20. 41. 3–6, Horace *Ars Poetica* 340, Dio Chrysostom *Oration* 5, Plutarch *On Curiosity* 2, *Moralia* 515f–516a, Heraclitus *De Incredibilibus* 34 Lamia, Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 1. 17, Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 4. 25, Hesychius s.v. *Lamia*, Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 8. 11. 102, schol. Aelius Aristides p. 102 Jebb, *Suda* s.v. *Mormō*, schol. Pausanias 1. 1. 2, schol. Theocritus 15. 40. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Herakles 2834–7, Lamia 1–3. However, I do not believe that any of the images collected here can be related to Lamiai with any degree of probability (cf. Boardman 1992: 189, 'There are no certain representations'; Burkert 1992: 82, 'there is no undisputed Greek representation of her') and I take no account of them in what follows. I contend below that we do indeed have a secure ancient image of a Lamia, but that we must look for it elsewhere. Discussions: Rohde 1925: 590–3, Fontenrose 1959: 44–5, 100–4, 119–20, 1968: 81–3, E. Vermeule 1977, Scobie 1983: 21–30, Boardman 1992, Burkert 1992: 82–7, Leinweber 1994, Johnston 1999: 161–99 (with care), W. F. Hansen 2002: 128–30, Resnick and Kitchell 2007, Felton 2012.

Fig. 2.2. The anguipede Lamia with Apollo at Delphi. Apollo sits on the omphalos, behind the tripod, bow in hand. Attic white-ground lekythos, *c.*475–450 BC. Musée du Louvre CA1915 = LIMC Apollon 998. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

Let us begin with two similar narratives with strong Delphic associations, and first the myth of the monster challenged and slain by Coroebus of Argos. She is only explicitly named a *lamia* by the ninth–eleventh century AD First Vatican Mythographer, whilst earlier Greek sources term her a *poinē* ('punishment', 'vengeance') or a *kēr* ('death-demon'), but, as we will see, her identification as a *lamia* is undoubtedly accurate and ancient. Pausanias, and perhaps others too, found the story carved in elegiac verses on the tomb of Coroebus in the Megarian agora, and illustrated with an image on top of the tomb of Coroebus killing the monster. The earliest literary source to mention the tale is Callimachus. Apollo seduces and impregnates Psamathe the daughter of Crotopus of Argos. In fear of detection by her father Crotopus, Psamathe exposes her baby, Linus, in his sheep-pens, whereupon it is torn apart by his sheepdogs. In grief she reveals what has happened, and her implacable father executes her. Apollo then sends the *lamia-poinē-kēr* to wreak vengeance for the child and its mother, and she seizes babies from their mothers' breasts and devours them. The youth Coroebus slays the monster with his sword, and the Argive people then mangle her with staves and knock her teeth out. Thereupon Apollo sends a second bane upon Argos, a plague that can only be averted by the sacrifice of the monster's killer. Coroebus accordingly travels to Delphi and nobly offers to sacrifice himself to Apollo; but the god is charmed by him and so spares him. However, he is forbidden to return to Argos

and given the task of founding a new city: he is to carry a tripod out of the Delphic sanctuary until he drops it, and found the city at that spot. The city duly founded is that of Tripodiskoi, Little Tripods, in the Megarid. Meanwhile, the Argives name a month 'Sheep month' (*Arneios*) in memory of the sheep-pens in which Linus died, and initiate an annual 'Sheep festival' that includes an expiatory sacrifice of stray dogs to Apollo.[104] The tale is told most expansively and engagingly by Statius, who describes the monster, which he does not name, in some detail. She has the face and bosom of a girl, but she is an anguipede and, in addition, a single, hissing snake-head rises from her brow and divides it. She has two hooked claws and nails like iron with which she is still skewering her latest baby victims when Coroebus encounters her.[105]

It has escaped notice that a unique but fine illustration of this myth survives on a *c.*470–460 BC white-ground lekythos, which, incidentally, pushes the earliest attestation of the myth back by two centuries (Fig. 2.2). Apollo sits with his *drakōn*-slaying and plague-sending bow on his *omphalos*, in front of which stands a tripod, which not only signifies the location of Delphi, as does the *omphalos*, but also anticipates the foundation of Tripodiskoi. In attendance stands an anguipede, from the top of whose humanoid head grows a serpent-head, and who reaches forwards with two large claw-like hands. The match with Statius' description is exquisite.[106]

The second Delphic narrative consists of a tale taken over by Antoninus Liberalis from the second-century BC *Heteroioumena* of Nicander.[107] According to this a monster called Lamia or Sybaris would venture out of her cave on

[104] Callimachus *Aitia* F26–31e Pf., with diegesis (does the παιδοφόνῳ of F26 define Crotopus or the *lamia*?); Conon *FGrH* 26 F1.xix (Photius cod. 186); Ovid *Ibis* 573–6 with schol.; Statius *Thebaid* 1. 557–668 with Lactantius Placidus on 1. 570; *Palatine Anthology* 7. 154 (*kēr*); Pausanias 1. 43. 7–8 (*poinē*), 2. 19. 8 First Vatican Mythographer 2. 66 (*lamia*; Crotopus kills his seduced daughter because she is a Vestal Virgin!). Discussion at Fontenrose 1959: 104–5, 115. For the *kēr* as a demon of death: Homer *Iliad* 18. 535–8 (= [Hesiod] *Shield* 156–60), *Odyssey* 14. 207–8, [Hesiod] *Shield* 248–63.

[105] Statius *Thebaid* 1. 599–600 (*aeternum stridens a uertice surgit | et ferrugineam frontem discriminat anguis*), 601–2 (*squalida passu | inlabi*) 610–11 (*unca manus . . . ferratique ungues*). The scholia to Ovid *Ibis* 573–6 quite compatibly describe this *pestis* both as 'a monster with a serpentine *body* but human face' and as a monster with a serpentine *head* but a human face'.

[106] *LIMC* Apollon 998 = Python 2. The figure, subject of a special study at Kahil 1966, has been misidentified as Python, though there is no other indication (rationalizations aside) that Python was ever conceived of as anything other than a pure serpent, as indeed he is represented in other images of the same age: *LIMC* Apollon 993 = Leto 29a = Python 3 (470 BC); *LIMC* Apollon 994 (*c.*475–450 BC, fragmentary); Pliny *Natural History* 34. 59 = *LIMC* Apollon 1002 (early 5th-cent. BC bronze of Python by Pythagoras of Rhegium). Nor should he be found in the company of an adult Apollo (the statuary aside), since the latter slew him when a babe in arms. Lambrinudakis and Palagia 1984: 103 (ad loc.) identify the serpent projecting from the head as an Egyptian-style uraeus headdress! One might sooner think of the snake that peeps over the top of the hat of the larger of Evans' two Minoan snake goddess figurines from Knossos (Introduction).

[107] Antoninus Liberalis *Metamorphoses* 8. Nicander: so following the text of Cazzaniga 1962. It is not clear why Celoria 1992: 58 (without explanation, 128) rather attributes the tale to Boeus' Ὀρνιθογονία, seemingly reduplicating the ascriptional note at the head preceding story, no. 7. 105. Rohde 1925: 153–4, Fontenrose 1959: 105, and Celoria 1992: 128 note some of the structural correspondences (there is more to be said) between this tale and that of Euthymus of Locri and the Demon of Temesa at Pausanias 6. 6. 7–11.

Mt. Cirphis near Crisa to attack the Delphians and their flocks. Apollo told the Delphians they could deliver themselves from the monster by exposing a citizen lad to it. The lot fell upon the fair Alcyoneus. Eurybatus caught sight of him as he was being led off to his doom and fell in love. So he substituted himself for the boy, taking on his sacrificial garlands, overwhelmed the monster and threw her down the mountain. The wounded creature disappeared and a spring, which the locals called Sybaris, appeared in her place, and it was after this that the city of Sybaris in Magna Graecia was in due course named. Antoninus says nothing of the form of Lamia-Sybaris, but the tight correspondence his narrative exhibits with Pausanias' homoerotic tale of Menestratus, Cleostratus, and the Thespiae *drakōn* (Ch. 1) encourages us to think that she is a *drakōn*. And the thematic correspondences between the Eurybatus tale and the Coroebus tale are also striking: both feature, *drakōn* aside: Apollo; sheep; a youth offering himself in sacrifice (cf. Menestratus again); a homoerotic motivation (in the case of Coroebus, this seems latent in Apollo's response to the lad); and a resulting foundation, be it of festival or city.

The Lamia of the second Delphic tale here had a taste for attractive young men, and this motif is key to a fascinating pair of accounts of *lamiai* from the Second Sophistic. Dio Chrysostom tells some ostentatiously fantastical stories about another group of female devourers of young men based in Libya, and this last fact tells us that he too is talking of *lamiai*, even though he does not explicitly use the term, for both the archetypal Lamia and *lamiai* in general were strongly associated with Libya.[108] Dio's *lamai* are double-headed. At one end they sport the face and naked bosom of a beautiful woman; at the other the neck and head of a terrible serpent (the terms *ophis* and *drakōn* are used); they also have beastlike claws in which they seize their prey. They are, therefore, remarkably similar to the Lamias of Statius and the Apollo vase, with the difference that the serpent head has been transferred from the top of the humanoid head to the bottom of the anguipede tail. These *lamiai* lure young men towards them by exhibiting their nude-woman part to them whilst concealing their serpent part; when they are close enough, they seize them with their beastlike hands and the serpent-head wheels round to envenom their bodies (with a toxin strong enough to kill others by external contact alone) before devouring them.[109]

Philostratus tells us of a more elaborately deceptive *lamia* (the term is explicitly used) who attempted to ensnare a victim in Corinth.[110] She is described as a *phasma*, which suggests that she is seen as a kind of ghost rather than a wild

[108] For the fabled Libyan origin of Lamia/*lamiai* see Euripides F472m *TrGF* (= 922 Nauck), Duris of Samos *FGrH* 76 F17, Diodorus 20. 41. 3–6 (incorporating the Euripides fragment), schol. Aristophanes *Peace* 758, schol. Aristides p. 102 Jebb, Hesychius s.v. *Λάμια*.

[109] Dio Chrysostom *Orations* 5 *passim*, esp. 12–15, 24–7. Here the *lamia* is turned into one of Libya's zoological curiosities, just as the Gorgon is at Athenaeus 221, citing Alexander of Myndus (a lethal variety of sheep). For the notion that the terrible snakes of Libya possessed a virulent venom poison that could travel merely by external contact, cf. Lucan 9. 828–33. Here Murrus spears a basilisk as he marches, and its disintegrating poison shoots up the shaft of the spear and directly into his arm, which he has to lop off with his free hand as the venom continues to travel up it, in order to preserve the rest of his body. Dio's creatures exhibit a broadly similar modus operandi to that of the seductive but terrible vine women at Lucian *True History* 1. 8.

[110] Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 4. 25.

animal.[111] We are told that she manifested herself in the form of a beautiful, gentle and rich Phoenician woman in order to seduce and devour Menippus, an attractive young man and one of the pupils of the sage Apollonius of Tyana. She lured him with song, special wine, and her exclusive attention. Despite Apollonius' warnings, Menippus determined to marry her. At the wedding itself, quickly arranged, Apollonius revealed the woman's gold, finery, and servants to be mere illusion and unmasked her for what she was: a *lamia* or an *empousa*, a female creature that craves human flesh for both sex and food alike, and uses sex to ensnare young men to feed upon. He made her confess that it had been her plan to feed Menippus fat with pleasures so that she could eat him. This *lamia*'s weapons would seem to be more sophisticated than the others'. She possesses the power to beguile ordinary men not only in relation to her own form but also in relation to exterior objects. But what is her default form? Philostratus does tell us, though our overfamiliarity with a modern English metaphor may cause us to miss it: Apollonius warns Menippus, 'You are a beautiful man, and you are pursued by beautiful women, but you are warming a snake (*ophis*) on your bosom, and it is a snake that warms you.' As a man-eating ghost with a serpentine nature, one might readily compare this *lamia* to the modern vampires of the post-Stoker tradition, they too being man-eating and shape-shifting dead, and equipped with animalian fangs even when in human form. The confusing and difficult evidence for the shape-shifting *empousai*, the alternative term Apollonius supplies for his *lamia*, may conceal the fact that they were, according to some and at certain times, also anguipedes. Ancient folk etymologies of the term at any rate explained that it signified 'single-footed'.[112] Plutarch seemingly identifies the term *empousa* with *poinē*.[113]

So far we have taken a fairly narrow path through the disparate and difficult evidence for *lamiai*. Much of the remaining evidence focuses on the role of a seemingly archetypal Lamia as a monster that specializes in devouring not handsome young men but babies (cf., strikingly, Coroebus' *lamia*) and

[111] Lamia is also described as a ghost (*phasma*) at Hesychius s.v. *Λάμια* (recycled at schol. Pausanias 1. 1. 3) and schol. Aelius Aristides p. 102 Jebb. In this regard she parallels Gello, a ghost that kills children from envy, having died a virgin: Zenobius 3. 3; for more on Lamia's ghostly affinities see Ogden 2008*b*: 162–4.

[112] Schol. Aristophanes *Frogs* 293, *διὰ τὸ ἑνὶ ποδὶ κεχρῆσθαι*; so too *Suda* and *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *ἔμπουσα*. These sources also declare that an *empousa* is a demonic apparition visited upon people by Hecate, or actually a manifestation of Hecate herself. Hecate does indeed manifest herself as anguipede on occasion (Ch. 7). Aristophanes *Frogs* 293–5 may already entail that the *empousa* was an anguipede: Dionysus' question as to whether she possesses a 'bronze leg' may evoke the notion of a metallic serpent-tail (cf. also Sophocles *Electra* 491, where an Erinys is 'bronze-footed', noted by Dover 1993 ad loc.). The hypothesis is not compromised by Heracles' response to the effect that she does but that she also has a second leg of dung: the leg of dung is evidently metaphorical, and the suggestion that the *empousa* should have a second leg may in itself be a paradoxical joke in context. On *empousai* more generally see Aristophanes *Frogs* 288–95 with schol., Plutarch *Moralia* 1101c, Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 2. 4. One wonders whether a different and most peculiar claim that *empousai* were 'ass-legged' (schol. Aristophanes, *Suda*, *Etymologicum Magnum*) originated in the Near Eastern iconography of the demoness Lamashtu being carried away by asses (for which see below).

[113] Plutarch *Moralia* 1101c.

consequently as a bogey (*mormolykeion*) for children.[114] Whilst we are repeatedly reassured that she is monstrous, we are given no hard details of the nature of her monstrosity beyond the detachability of her eyes. Even so, a serpentine quality often seems to lurk. First, we hear initially of a (single) Lamia from Stesichorus, who made her the mother of the serpentine Scylla (Ch. 3).[115] Secondly, Aristophanes makes two references to Lamia (one repeated), the common notion behind which is that she emits a terrible stench. In the *Wasps* and the *Peace* a torrent of abuse directed at Cleon includes a sequence of three terms, the smell of a seal, the unwashed testicles of Lamia, and the anus of a camel.[116] Here Aristophanes' desire to produce a surreally extreme image for a bad smell induces him, in a contrived and ostentatious paradox, to change Lamia's sex.[117] A little later in the same play we have passing mention of Lamia farting upon being captured.[118] In the *Metamorphoses* Apuleius describes the witches Meroe and Panthia as *lamiae* in connection with their soaking of their victim Aristomenes in their foul urine.[119] The emission of a foul stench is something, as we will see, particularly characteristic of *drakontes* (Ch. 6), and indeed Dio seems to link the stench of his Libyan *lamiai* specifically to their anguiform nature. Thirdly, one of the most distinctive characteristics of the archetypal Lamia was that she could remove her eyes and keep them in a vessel. The once beautiful Lamia had been loved by Zeus. The envious Hera punished her by killing her children (hence Lamia's own envious predations on the children of others) and by denying her the ability to achieve the sleep in which she might find relief from her grief. Zeus mitigated her condition by bestowing upon her the ability to remove her eyes.[120] The inability to sleep is a

[114] Duris *FGrH* 76 F35 (child-devourer), Diodorus 20. 41. 3–6 (rationalized; child-devourer and bogey), Horace *Ars poetica* 340 (child-devourer), Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 34 Lamia (rationalized; devourer of humans in general), Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 8. 11. 102 (child-devourer and bogey), schol. Aristophanes *Peace* 758 (child-devourer and bogey), schol. Aristophanes *Knights* 693 (bogey), schol. Theocritus (rationalized; child-devourer), schol. Aelius Aristides p. 102 Jebb (child-devourer and bogey), *Suda* s.v. *Μορμώ* (bogey). Scholia to Aristophanes *Peace* 758 and to Theocritus 15. 40 also make a connection between Lamia and the suitably human-devouring Laestrygonians of the Homeric *Odyssey* (the women of whom, be it noted, were particularly horrible, *Odyssey* 10. 113), on the basis that their city was founded by one Lamos (*Odyssey* 10. 81). Lamia is also compared to a number of other child-devouring or -killing female monsters also deployed as bogeys: Empousa: Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 4. 25 (as above; *empousai* identified with *lamiai*), Plutarch *Moralia* 1101c (Empousa as bogey); Mormo: Strabo C19, *Suda* s.v. *Μορμώ* (identification of Mormo[lyke] with Lamia), schol. Aelius Aristides p. 102 Jebb (likewise); Gello: schol. Theocritus *Idylls* 15. 40 (explicit identification of Gello with Lamia), Zenobius 3. 3 (Gello as bogey); Karko: Hesychius s.v. *Καρκώ* (identification of Karko with Lamia). Gorgo(n): Strabo C19 (bogey; with loose identification with Lamia).

[115] Stesichorus F220 *PMG*/Campbell (cf. schol. Homer *Odyssey* 12. 124. 3).

[116] Aristophanes *Wasps* 1035, repeated verbatim at *Peace* 758 (the schol. ad loc. recognizes the significance of smell here).

[117] Schol. Aristophanes *Peace* 758 notes that Lamia is always female. MacDowell 1971 and Henderson 1998 on *Wasps* 1035 humourlessly infer that the Lamia must have been hermaphroditic.

[118] Aristophanes *Wasps* 1077.

[119] Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 1. 17.

[120] Duris of Samos *FGrH* 76 F35, Diodorus 20. 41. 3–6, Plutarch *On Curiosity* 2 = *Moralia* 515f–516a, Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 34 Lamia (who says, perhaps in simplification, that Hera tore Lamia's eyes out), schol. Aristophanes *Peace* 758, schol. Aelius Aristides p. 102 Jebb. Duris and Heraclitus emphasize the fact that, detachable eyes apart, Lamia became deformed through grief: this probably derives from a rationalization of an original notion that Lamia could shape-shift, as found in the Aristophanes scholium.

characteristic associated above all with snakes, which cannot in reality close their eyes, and *drakontes* (Ch. 6). As a female creature characterized by biting and detachable eyes she more specifically resembles the Gorgons' full sisters, the Graeae, who also have their own serpentine affinities.

As a female child-devouring monster, Lamia is often held to have originated in the Mesopotamian child-attacking demoness Lamashtu (discussed anon). The relationship between Lamashtu's imagery, in which she is shown clutching snakes, and the early Greek imagery of anguiform Gorgons may imply that a serpentine element had been intregral to the Greek Lamia's nature from the first.

MEDUSA, SLAIN BY PERSEUS

The well-attested myth of Perseus' slaying of Medusa (Fig. 2.3) may be summarized as follows in its canonical form. The three serpent-locked Gorgons, Medusa, Stheno, and Euryale, inhabit remote Libya. Their gaze or the sight of them turns humans and animals to stone. Perseus is charged by Polydectes, the wicked king of his adopted homeland of Seriphos, with fetching him the head of the mortal Gorgon Medusa, a mission from which he is not expected to return. Perseus is helped by Hermes, Athene, and Hephaestus with advice on how to find and kill Medusa, and with gifts of vital equipment for his task. He receives other items of equipment from the Water Nymphs. Altogether this equipment comprises: winged sandals to fly to the Gorgons' never-never-land; the Cap of Hades that renders him invisible; a mirror or mirror-shield to guide him to Medusa without him having to look directly at her; the *harpē*, the curving sickle-sword especially suited to the killing of serpentine monsters; and the *kibisis*, a special toxic-container bag in which to carry away Medusa's head. The Gorgons are guarded by their full sisters the Graeae, who share a single tooth and a single eye between them. Perseus disarms them by stealing their eye. He duly finds the Gorgons in their sleep and decapitates Medusa whilst averting his gaze. Chrysaor and the winged horse Pegasus are born from her severed neck. The remaining Gorgon pair, both immortal, pursue him, but he outruns them in his flying sandals or evades their sight with the Cap of Hades. After his adventure with Andromeda and the sea-monster, in some accounts of which he deploys Medusa's head against it (Ch. 3), he returns to Seriphos and deploys the head against Polydectes and much of the island.[121]

[121] Principal texts: Hesiod *Theogony* 270–94, [Hesiod] *Shield* 216–36; *Cypria* F30.1 West = Herodian *On Peculiar Words* 9; Stesichorus F227 Campbell; Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F22; Pindar *Pythians* 10. 29–48, 12. 6–26; Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 792–809, *Phorcides* FF261–2 vi *TrGF*; Pherecydes F11 Fowler; Herodotus 2. 91. 2–5; Euripides *Electra* 458–61, *Ion* 997–1017, *Archelaus* F228a *TrGF*; Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusae* 1098–104; Polyidus F837 Campbell; Palaephatus 31; [Eratosthenes], *Catasterismi* 1. 22; Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 15139–17; Lycophron *Alexandra* 834–46; Nicander *Alexipharmaka* 98–105; Diodorus 3. 52. 4–55. 3; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4. 607–5. 268, 6. 119–20; Strabo C19; Lucan 9. 619–99; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 2. 7, 2. 4. 1–5, 2. 7. 3, 3. 10. 3; [Plutarch] *On Rivers* 18. 6 (citing the undatable Ctesias of Ephesus); Hyginus *Fabulae* 64, 151, *De astronomia* 2. 12; Pausanias 1. 21. 3, 1. 22. 6–7, 1. 23. 7, 2. 20. 7, 2. 21. 5–7, 2. 27. 2, 3. 17. 3, 3. 18. 11, 4. 2. 4, 8. 47. 5, 9. 34. 2; Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 1, 9, 13; Lucian *Philopseudes* 22, *Dialogues in the Sea* 14, *Alexander* 11, *De*

Gorgoneia, the representations of the Gorgon's disembodied, full-frontal, viewer-challenging face that flourished throughout ancient art (not least on shields, acroteria, and antefixes) and had a wide range of apotropaic functions, often feel semi-independent of the Perseus–Medusa narrative that supposedly explained their origin, and indeed they may have had separate roots, but even so both seem to have come into existence at roughly the same time. *Gorgoneia* are first attested in the artistic record from *c.*675 BC, and soon evolve into a canonical 'lion mask type'. They typically have bulging, staring eyes. Their mouths form rictus grins with fangs and tusks projecting up and down, and a lolling tongue protrudes from them. Their hair forms serpentine curls, with actual snakes becoming apparent by the end of the seventh century.[122]

The Perseus–Medusa story is first found in the iconographic record on two pots dated to *c.*675–650 BC. On the first, a Boeotian relief *pithos*, Perseus, equipped with *kibisis* and sword, decapitates a Medusa in the form of a female centaur, whilst looking away from her (no snakes are in evidence). On the second, a Proto-Attic amphora, Perseus flees two striding, wasp-bodied, cauldron-headed Gorgon sisters, leaving behind the rotund, decapitated corpse of Medusa, whilst Athene interposes herself to protect him from his pursuers. In these images the faces of Medusa and the Gorgons are shown frontally, which in itself strongly identifies them with *gorgoneia*, and in the second snakes project from their heads and necks.[123] Thereafter, and into the fifth century BC, representations of full-body Gorgons typically give them 'lion-mask' gorgoneion-style faces, snakes around their heads, necks, or waists (to form belts), and they are often winged (Fig. 2.3). The Perseus–Medusa tale is first found in the literary record, already in well-developed form, in Hesiod's *Theogony*, traditionally dated to *c.*700–650 BC: here we have Medusa being

domo (On the Hall) 22, 25, *How to Write History* 1; Ardemidorus *Oneirocritica* 4. 63; Zenobius *Centuriae* 1. 41; Athenaeus 211; Philostratus *Imagines* 1. 29; Schol. Germanicus *Aratus* 82, 147; Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 289; Lactantius Placidus *Narrationes* 4. 20, 5. 1–2; [Libanius] *Narrationes* 35–6; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 25. 31–65, 80–8, 30. 264–77, 31. 8–25, 47. 534–66; Fulgentius *Mitologiae* 1. 21; John Malalas *Chronicle* pp. 34–9 Dindorf; John of Antioch F1.8 (*FHG* iv. p. 539), F6.18 (*FHG* iv. p. 544); Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. *Μυκῆναι*; First Vatican Mythographer 2. 28–9 Zorzetti, Second 134–6, Third 14. 1–3; *Suda* s.v. *μονοκρήπιδι*; George Cedrenus 1. 39–41; Tzetzes et al. on Lycophron *Alexandra* 17, 836, 838, 842–3, 846; schol. Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1091. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Gorgo, Gorgones; Gorgones (in Etruria); Gorgones Romanae; Perseus; note also Woodward 1937, Schauenberg 1960. Discussions: Glotz 1877–1919*a*, 1877–1919*b*, Roscher 1884–937*c*, Furtwängler 1886–90, Kuhnert 1897–1909, Ziegler 1912, C. Robert 1920–6: i, 222–45, Blinkenberg 1924, S. Marinatos 1927–8, Krappe 1933, Hampe 1935–6, Besig 1937, Caterall 1937, Woodward 1937, Will 1947, Langlotz 1951, 1960, Howe 1952, 1953, 1954, Yalouris 1953, Croon 1955, Riccioni 1960, Schauenberg 1960, Goldman 1961, Feldman 1965, Sparkes 1968, Von Steuben 1968: 13–17, Zinserling-Paul 1979, Karagiorga 1970, Phinney 1971, Floren 1977, Belson 1980, Hughes and Fernandez Bernades 1981, Halm-Tisserant 1986, Napier 1986, Krauskopf 1988, Krauskopf and Dahlinger 1988, Paoletti 1988, Schefold and Jung 1988, Vernant and Ducroux 1988, J. E. M. Dillon 1990, Jameson 1990, Roccos 1994, Wilk 2000. A more expansive account of the material discussed in this section may be found in Ogden 2008*a*: esp. 34–66.

[122] *LIMC* Gorgo 1969. For the rare and challenging nature of the frontal face in two-dimensional Greek art, see Vernant and Ducroux 1988, Frontisi-Ducroux 1989, 1993, 1995, Vernant 1991: 111–38. For the apotropaic function of gorgoneia, see Roscher 1879: 46–63, Harrison 1903: 183–97, Feldman 1965, Benoit 1969, Vernant and Ducroux 1988: 191–2, Frontisi-Ducroux 1989: 159, J. E. M. Dillon 1990: 75–81, Carpenter 1991: 105, Wilk 2000: 151–81, Mack 2002: 572–4, 585, 592.

[123] *LIMC* Perseus no. 117, *LIMC* Perseus no. 151 = Grabow 1998 K2.

Fig. 2.3. Perseus turns away as he decapitates a monstrous Medusa. Hermes attends. Attic black-figure olpe, *c.*550 BC. British Museum B471 = *LIMC* Perseus 113. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

decapitated by Perseus as the sole mortal Gorgon, the births of Chrysaor and Pegasus, and an association with the Graeae.[124]

Whether the Perseus–Medusa tale originated in a desire to give an aetiology for *gorgoneia* or not, it is possible that the story as developed was indirectly inspired by Near-Eastern iconography. In a Perseus scene-type first attested from *c.*550 BC (though possibly older), we find a front-facing, round headed, grinning-grimacing Medusa, her legs in the kneeling-running configuration, flanked by Perseus and Athene, with Perseus decapitating her as he turns his

[124] Hesiod *Theogony* 270–83. Both *gorgoneia*, together with the Gorgon-head they represent, and Perseus appear in the roughly contemporary Homeric poems, but the Perseus–Medusa story does not: *Iliad* 5. 741–2, 8. 348–9, 11. 36–7, 14. 319–20 (Perseus), *Odyssey* 11. 633–5.

head away.[125] The configuration appears to be derivative of Mesopotamian depictions of the very different tale of Gilgamesh and Enkidu slaying the wild man Humbaba. In these the hero can turn away to look for a helping goddess to pass him a weapon. The similarity suggests that the core of the Medusa myth, consisting of her petrifying gaze and her slaughter, originated precisely in a radical reinterpretation of what was happening in the Mesopotamian vignette.[126] The notion that Medusa gave birth to Pegasus and Chrysaor upon her decapitation may derive in part from reinterpretations of Mesopotamian images of the child-devouring demoness Lamashtu, who, as we have seen, was otherwise brought into Greek culture in her own right as Lamia. The serpent-waisted and -necked Medusa of the famous pediment of the temple of Artemis in Corfu of *c.*590 BC, who is flanked in 'Mistress of Animals' fashion by a rampant Pegasus and an up-reaching Chrysaor, and then by lions, exhibits strong affinities in content and composition with Lamashtu images. Lamashtu is often portrayed as lion-headed, clutching a snake in each hand (as we noted above), with a rampant animal on either side, again in the so-called 'Mistress-of-Animals' configuration; she rides on an ass (whose function is to carry her away to where she can do no harm). One particular image of her from Carchemish strikingly resembles the Corfu pediment in its overall arrangement.[127]

When did the Gorgons first acquire their *drakontes*? If the snake-clutching Lamashtu was a foundational influence upon the development of the Gorgons, then they were presumably there, in some form, from the start. The earliest evidence for them is again the *c.*675–650 BC Proto-Attic amphora just mentioned, on which the cauldron-headed Gorgons have snakes projecting from their heads and necks.[128] This antedates the earliest appearance of snakes on extant *gorgoneia*; they appear on these, as we have also noted, by the end of the seventh century. The first formal appearance of the Gorgons' snakes on the literary side is later still, in the mid sixth-century BC Hesiodic *Shield*, where pairs of *drakontes* (the dual form *drakonte* is used) are said to twine around the waists of the pursuing Stheno and

[125] *LIMC* Perseus nos. 113, 120–2.

[126] The Medusa scene-type: *LIMC* Perseus 113, 120–2. For the Near Eastern background to the Gorgon see primarily Burkert 1987: 26–33, 1992: 82–7, and also the discussions at Hopkins 1934, 1961, Howe 1952: 72–6, 1954: 217–18, Croon 1955: 12–13, Schauenburg 1960: 34–5, 134, Barnett 1960, Riccioni 1960: 135–43, Goldman 1961, Boardman 1968: 37–9, Napier 1986: 83–134, Krauskopf and Dahlinger 1988: 317, D. R. West 1995: 142–50, M. L. West 1997: 453–5, Wilk 2000: 64–5. Gilgamesh's fight against Humbaba in the Akkadian (originally Sumerian) *Epic of Gilgamesh*, tablets iii–v (esp. v), the effective origins of which seem to lie in the late third millennium BC, can only really be counted as a dragon-fight according to the extremely lax definitional criteria applied by Fontenrose 1959: 167–8. For all that the monster's utterance is said to be fire and his breath death, the epic's description of Humbaba and his iconography make it clear that he was fundamentally a monstrous giant in form. For the Gilgamesh texts, see George 2003; for English trans. see George 1999 and Dalley 2000: 39–153, superseding *ANET*[3] 72–99 (E. A. Speiser).

[127] *LIMC* Gorgo 289. For Gorgon imagery of the Mistress-of-Animals type, see Frothingham 1911, S. Marinatos 1927–8, Howe 1952: 47–66, 1954: 215, Kantor 1962, Karagiorga 1970, Phinney 1971, Vernant 1991: 115–16, D. R. West 1995: 151–4. For Lamashtu in general and her relationship to Lamia, see Farber 1983 and Burkert 1992: 82–7, 197 n. 3, D. R. West 1995 esp. 292–303. The Carchemish Lamashtu: illustrated at Burkert 1992: 84 fig. 5. As Burkert notes, Gello may similarly have originated in the Mesopotamian Gallu.

[128] *LIMC* Perseus no. 151.

Euryale: the arrangement is evidently that found in the snake-belt of the Medusa of the *c.*590 BC Corfu pediment.[129] However, long before this a *gorgoneion* and a *drakōn* are brought into close proximity with each other in the *Iliad*: Agamemnon's *gorgoneion*-decorated shield is supported by a strap itself decorated with a three-headed *drakōn*.[130]

A new development commences with the age of Pindar at the beginning of the fifth century BC: Medusa's snakes are more consistently identified with her hair, whilst her face becomes no longer that of a leering *gorgoneion*, but that of a beautiful young woman.[131] From this point too the Gorgons of Perseus scenes in art are increasingly represented as beautiful young women and no longer displayed with an ugly full face, and by the fourth century this has become the normal mode of their representation. The date at which the beautiful-face-with-serpent-hair configuration gravitates to detached *gorgoneia* remains uncertain: the earliest example is the 'Medusa Rondanini' but it is disputed whether this is a product of the mid fifth century or the early Hellenistic period.[132] The *Theogony*'s account of the Gorgons' birth from Ceto and Phorcys assumes that they were all alike, Medusa included, monstrous from birth (Ch. 4). But the development of the beautiful Medusa required a new origin story, and this is first attested in Ovid. He tells us that Medusa had once been a normal girl distinguished by her beautiful hair, whom Poseidon raped in the temple of Athene. The goddess punished the girl for the violation by turning her hair to snakes (we may compare, broadly, Apollo Thymbraeus' punishment of Laocoon for having sex in his temple by sending serpents against his children: Ch. 3). This tale has no account to offer of the origins or nature of Medusa's sisters Stheno and Euryale.[133] In a further variant of it Servius tells rather that Medusa, rendered proud by Poseidon's attention, boasted that her hair was more beautiful than that of Athene, with the result that the goddess turned it to snakes in envy[134] (this myth resembles that in which Hera punishes the Libyan Lamia, loved by Zeus, by depriving her of her ability to sleep: see above).[135] In another extension of the Medusa myth it came to be held, from the time of Apollonius, that the terrible snakes of Libya had been created by the drops of blood that fell from Medusa's head as Perseus first flew off with it. The conceit is developed in glorious detail by Lucan.[136]

To what extent might the Gorgons' power to petrify have been connected with their *drakōn* element? Surely a great deal. As we shall see in Chapter 6, the terrible

[129] [Hesiod] *Shield* 216–37; *LIMC* Gorgo no. 289.

[130] Homer *Iliad* 11. 39.

[131] Pindar *Pythian* 10. 46–8 (498 BC): 'a head of *drakontes*'; cf. Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 799, the Gorgons are '*drakōn*-locked', δρακοντόμαλλοι). Pindar *Pythians* 12. 6–26 (490 BC): 'the head of fair-cheeked Medusa'.

[132] For the development of the beautiful Gorgon in art, see Krauskopf and Dahlinger 1988: 324–5. The Medusa Rondanini: *LIMC* Gorgones Romanae no. 25; cf. Phinney 1971: 452–3, Belson 1980.

[133] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4. 794–803, 6. 119–20.

[134] Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 289; cf. Second Vatican Mythographer 135, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 838.

[135] Lamia and Gorgon are loosely associated with each other at Strabo C19.

[136] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1513–17, and *Foundation of Alexandria* F4 Powell; Lucan 9. 619–839, on which see Raschle 2001. At Euripides *Ion* 1015 (cf. 1263) Creusa had deployed a poison made from drips of blood from the cut neck of the 'chthonic Gorgon', for which see the Chimaera section below.

power of *drakontes*' gaze was a major focus of the lore about them. Already in the *Iliad* the *gorgoneion* on Agamemnon's shield with its fearful look (*blosyrōpis*), its terrible gaze (*deinon derkomenē*) and its accompanying strap embellished with a three-headed *drakōn*, seems to derive from the same thought-world as the *drakōn* that appears in a later simile and is said to 'have a dreadful gaze' (*smerdaleon . . . dedorken*).[137] At the other end of antiquity Nonnus was to claim that the green, foaming venom of the Serpent of Ares could freeze a victim's body as hard as iron.[138]

Initially the Gorgons' home was located in wholly mythical never-never lands at the extremes of all four points of the compass, some of them simultaneously.[139] But from the earlier fifth century BC they began to be settled in what was to become their canonical home of Libya, a land they shared with Lamia and *lamiai*.[140]

The Graeae, similarly outwitted by Perseus, were full sisters to the Gorgons, daughters, like them, of Phorcys and Ceto, and were their neighbours and guardians in Libya. They famously shared a single eye and tooth between them. From the time of their first appearance, in the *Theogony*, they are variously portrayed as two or, like the Gorgons, three in number, as the old women their name implies them to be, or even as young women with grey hair, and on one occasion even as 'swan shaped'. In the mere half-dozen extant artistic representations of them (from *c.*460 BC onwards) they appear in the form of ordinary women, their blindness indicated discreetly by closed eyes alone.[141] As female creatures with a detachable eye and based in Libya (at any rate from the time of Aeschylus' *Phorcides*), they also resemble the anguiform Lamia and *lamias* we have just discussed, who, as we have noted, themselves exhibit affinities with the Gorgons in turn. Given these contexts, we can only presume that the latent threat of the Graeae is that they will bite their victim with their tooth, no doubt to terrible effect, once identified with their watchful eye. No source comes close to suggesting

[137] Homer *Iliad* 11. 36, 37, 22. 95.

[138] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4. 382–4.

[139] Hesiod *Theogony* 270–94 (far west, beyond Ocean, adjacently to Night); *Cypria* F30.1 West (mythical island of Sarpedon in Ocean; cf. Pherecydes F11 Fowler, Palaephatus 31, *Suda* s.v. *Σαρπηδονία ἀκτή*); Pindar *Pythians* 10. 29–48 (far north, adjacently to the mythical Hyperboreans; cf. Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 11); Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 790–809 (far north, on the mythical plains of Cisthene, adjacently to the mythical Arimaspians, cf. Cratinus *Seriphians* F309 K-A; far east, beyond the eastern bound of Ocean; far south, adjacent to the Ethiopians).

[140] Implicit at Aeschylus *Phorcides* F262 i–v *TrGF* (the neighbouring Graeae live beside the Tritonian lake); first explicit at Herodotus 2. 91; Pausanias 3. 17. 3 may indicate that they were located in Libya already in *c.*500 BC, the date of the temple of Athene Chalkioikos at Sparta.

[141] The earlier sources for the Graeae; Hesiod *Theogony* 270–94 (two women, beautiful but born grey, daughters, like the Gorgons, of Phorcys and Ceto); Aeschylus *Phorcides* F262 (two old women, with single tooth and eye, based in Libya, guardians of the Gorgons; 490s or 460s BC), *Prometheus Bound* 794–6 (three long-lived swan-shaped, *κυκνόμορφοι*, girls with a single tooth and eye), Pherecydes F11 Fowler (three women with single tooth and eye). Discussion at Gantz 1993: 305–6. For the Graeae in art, see Kanellopoulou 1988, Oakley 1988, and more generally W. Drexler and Rapp 1886–90 and Mack 2002: 590. Given the affinities between the two groups of women it is not surprising that Palaephatus and the rationalizing tradition after him should radically conflate them: Palaephatus 31, Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 289; First Vatican Mythographer 2. 28 Zorzetti, Second 134–6, Third 14. 1–3, Scholiast Germanicus *Aratea* 82, 147 Breysig.

that the Graeae had an anguiform element, but in Greek snake-lore a terrible eye was as characteristic of a *drakōn* as was its terrible bite (Ch. 6).

A vestigially attested tradition brings Perseus into contact with yet another serpent-related semi-divine female trio: the Hesperides, tenders of Ladon. A vase of *c.*340–330 BC shows a hero who appears to be Perseus with three Hesperides together with Ladon in his apple-tree.[142] According to the scholia to Apollonius at any rate the Hesperides too were full sisters with the Gorgons, the Graeae, and indeed their own Ladon, as similarly born of Phorcys and Ceto.[143] Hesiod had already associated the Hesperides with the Gorgons and Graeae in telling us that these two groups live 'beyond glorious Ocean at the edge of the world near Night, where the shrill-voiced Hesperides dwell', whilst the paradoxographer Heraclitus was subsequently to make a full identification between the Hesperides and the Graeae.[144]

These three female groups encountered by Perseus exhibit differing levels of integration with serpents. The Gorgons incorporate serpent heads in their own bodies, either in their hair or around their necks or waists. The Graeae manipulate body-parts characteristic of serpents. If the Hesperides are fully separate in body from the serpent they work alongside, nonetheless their association with these other female groups may yet imply that they enjoy an underlying bond with it (see further Ch. 6).[145]

THE CHIMAERA, SLAIN BY BELLEROPHON

The Chimaera's story (Fig. 2.4) is found fully formed already in the *Iliad* and the Hesiodic texts and little of substance was added to it thereafter. Bellerophon, a wandering exile after murder, is purified by king Proetus in Argos. Proetus' wife, Anteia/Sthenoboea, falls in love with Bellerophon, but is rebuffed when she attempts to seduce him. Scorned, she tells her husband that he has rather attempted to seduce or rape her. Declining to kill a guest-friend directly, he sends Bellerophon on to his in-law Iobates, king of Lycia, with a sealed letter that will

[142] *LIMC* Hesperides 62; Schauenburg 1960: 88–9 and pl. 35.2. In the literary tradition, the closest Perseus comes to the Hesperides is his encounter with their brother Atlas: Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 879. The Hesperides are three in number at Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396–449, but four at Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 11.

[143] Schol. Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1399. The other parentages attributed to the Hesperides are as follows. Night (alone): Hesiod *Theogony* 215–16. Night and Erebos: Cicero *Nature of the Gods* 3, 44, Hyginus *Fabulae*, praef. 1. Atlas: Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 4. 484, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 38, Third Vatican Mythographer 13. 5. Atlas and Hesperis: Diodorus 4. 27. 2–1. Hesperus: Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 4. 484. Zeus and Themis: Pherecydes F16d Fowler, schol. Euripides *Hippolytus* 742. See Fontenrose 1959: 345–6, McPhee 1990: 394–5, Gantz 1993: 6–7. Ladon as son of Phorcys and Ceto: Hesiod *Theogony* 333–6, Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396–8, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4. 647.

[144] Hesiod *Theogony* 275. Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 13 (perhaps an interpolation).

[145] Cf. Ogden 2008*a*: 56–60. There is nothing upon which to base a case that the fourth group encountered by Perseus, the Water Nymphs, sometimes three in number, sometimes two, had any serpentine affinities, but cf. Ch. 5 for the relationship between the serpent of the river Bagrada and its naiads.

Fig. 2.4. The Chimaera. The *drakōn*-tail attacks the goat-head. Etruscan bronze, late 4th century BC. Florence, Museo Archeologico Nazionale 1 = *LIMC* Chimaira (in Etruria) 11. © Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence and the Bridgeman Art Library, London.

tell Iobates to kill him. But having hosted him before reading the message, and so having become his guest-friend too, Iobates similarly declines to kill Bellerophon directly. Instead, he sets him three supposedly impossible and fatal tasks, in all of which Bellerophon succeeds with the help of Pegasus, whom he has been taught to bridle by Athene. One of these tasks is to defeat the Chimaera, reared by one Amisodarus of Lycia. This monster has the head and body of a lion, with a *drakōn* for her tail, and the head of a goat (*chimaira*) growing from the middle of her back, whence her name. She breathes fire and has been ravaging the Cragus and Anticragus region of Lycia. Bellerophon spears her from the back of Pegasus. Finally recognizing that Bellerophon is of divine descent, Proetus gives him his daughter Philonoe in marriage and half his kingdom.[146]

So far as the remainder of the earlier tradition is concerned, let us confine ourselves to noting that a fragment of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* links Bellerophon's slaying of the Chimaera directly to the daughter of Iobates and therefore seems to make appeal to the familiar traditional narrative type in which the hero gets the girl in exchange for killing the dragon (cf. Perseus and

[146] Principal texts: Homer *Iliad* 6. 154–93, 16. 328–9; Hesiod *Theogony* 295–332, *Ehoiai* 43a.81–8 M–W; *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 367–8; Pindar *Olympians* 13. 60–6, and 84–90; Euripides *Stheneboea* T iia hypothesis, FF665a, 669 *TrGF*, *Electra* 473–5, *Ion* 201–4; Asclepiades *FGrH* 12 F12; Nymphis of Heraclea *FGrH* 432 F13; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9. 646–8; Strabo C665; Pliny *Natural History* 2. 236; Plutarch *Moralia* 247f–248d; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 9. 3, 2. 3. 1–2; Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 15; Hyginus *Fabulae* 57, *Astronomica* 2. 18; Pausanias 2. 4. 1–2; Zenobius *Centuriae.* 2. 87; schol. Homer *Iliad* 6. 181 and 183a; First Vatican Mythographer 1. 72; Tzetzes, schol. Lycophron *Alexandra* 17, *Chiliades* 7. 149 (lines 802–73). Principal iconography: *LIMC* Chimaira, Chimaira in Etruria, Pegasos 152–235. Discussions: C. Robert 1920–6: i. 179–85, Roes 1934, 1953, Amandry 1948, Dunbabin 1951–3, Schmitt 1966, Burkert 1983*b*: 52–3, Jacquemin 1986, Krauskopf 1986, Gantz 1993: 23 and 312–16, Lochin 1994, Collard, Cropp, and Lee 1995: 79–83, W. F. Hansen 2002: 341.

Andromeda).[147] As for the later sources, the various rationalizations of the myth recorded by Plutarch presume that the standard version presented the Chimaera as a typical marauding *drakōn*. *Inter alia*, Plutarch cites the third-century BC Nymphis of Heraclea, who rationalized the Chimaera into a wild boar that laid waste to the animals and crops of the people of Lycian Xanthus, below Cragus.[148] This notion becomes explicit in Apollodorus, who tells that the Chimaera proper laid waste to the land and ravaged the cattle.[149]

The iconographic evidence for the Chimaera is plentiful, but on the whole similarly conservative.[150] She is typically depicted just as Homer describes her, with a lion body, the tail of which is formed by a serpent, and with a goat's head projecting from the middle of the lion's back, and in this way already from the earlier seventh century BC (it is impossible to give priority to the literary or the iconographic tradition in this regard).[151] On a *c.*610 BC black-figure Attic crater fragment the Chimaera has a particularly complex form: lion and goat face outwards from a central body, each with its own pair of forelegs, in the fashion of Dr Doolittle's Push-me-pull-you, whilst a massive serpent grows out from underneath the torso, emerging between the goat's hooves and lifting it off the ground as it coils.[152] We can see in this image the origins of the tendency, starting from around this point, to allow the goat a pair of forelegs even when it is otherwise reduced to the usual head emerging from the lion's back.[153] On a sixth-century Cretan pinax, the serpent is represented almost as a separate entity coiling on the Chimaera's back, with a tail of its own.[154] On a relief terracotta from Melos of *c.*470–460 BC the Chimaera is accompanied in her fight against Pegasus by an additional serpent: this balances the tail-serpent in the composition, but its main function seems to be to serve as a functional support for Pegasus' front hooves.[155] On an Apulian lekane of *c.*330 BC we find a highly anomalous Chimaera in which the anguiform element is strongly enhanced, with no sign of

[147] [Hesiod] *Ehoiai* 43a lines 81–8 M-W. We do not find her name, Philonoe, until Tzetzes.

[148] Plutarch *Moralia* 247f–248d, including Nymphis of Heraclea *FGrH* 432 F13. For the Cragus-Anticragus region (the western edge of the Lycian peninsula) as being the particular haunt of the Chimaera, see further Euripides *Sthenoboea* F669 *TrGF* (though Euripides oddly transferred the Iobates figure himself from Lycia to Caria, according to *Sthenoboea* T iia Hypothesis), Strabo C665, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9. 646–8, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 71 (where Mt. Gargarus evidently represents a corruption of Cragus) and cf. Plutarch *Moralia* 247f–248d (home of the Nymphis fragment) more generally.

[149] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 3. 2. Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 18 compatibly tells that the Chimaera was laying waste to the fields of Lycia with its flame and the First Vatican Mythographer 1. 71 tells that she laid waste to the territory around Mt Gargarus.

[150] The catalogues at *LIMC* Chimaira, Chimaira (in Etruria) and Pegasos list some 300 images in total (though there are some overlaps).

[151] The earliest images, from the first half or middle of the 7th century BC are: *LIMC* Chimaira 15–16, 27, 55, 64, 72, 75, Chimaira (in Etruria) 1–4, 6, 8, 42–4, 64, Pegasos 152, 212–13, 218, 229. This is the form in which the Chimaera appears in the superb late 4th-century BC Etruscan bronze from Arezzo, *LIMC* Chimaira (in Etruria) 11 (our Fig. 2.4): the serpent bites onto one of the goat's horns.

[152] *LIMC* Pegasos 190.

[153] e.g. *LIMC* Chimaira 57, 80–3, 86–7, 89, 91, 93, 94, 97, Chimaira (in Etruria) 37–9, 75, Pegasos 200, 228.

[154] *LIMC* Chimaira 4.

[155] *LIMC* Pegasos 160.

the goat element at all: a maneless lion, almost resembling a domestic cat, merges into a large serpent-tail just after its forelegs, to make a feline equivalent of an anguipede.[156] The graceful Pegasus was an even more popular figure in his own right in iconography than the Chimaera, so it is not surprising that there survive a great many illustrations of the fight, and many of these are particularly fine.[157] Sometimes the hybrid Pegasus is shown facing and artfully balancing the hybrid Chimaera in composition,[158] and sometimes even with no Bellerophon to be seen.[159] Given the relatively small physical proportion of *drakōn* in the Chimaera's physiology, one might have hesitated to classify her even as a 'composite *drakōn*' were it not for the fact that already from Homer onwards such great emphasis is laid upon her terrible fire-breathing, a quality that can only derive from her *drakōn* element (see Ch. 6).

The sources make it clear that the Chimaera was a female monster, and none more so than the *Iliad*. For the three challenges set for Bellerophon all have a distinctively female significance. The Amazons speak for themselves, but the Solymi, though male, we learn from Herodotus to have belonged to a matrilineal (or actually matriarchal?) society.[160] Anteia herself could be regarded as a further female opponent. And then from Plutarch we learn of a parallel myth in which Bellerophon attempts to destroy Lycia by praying to Poseidon and leading the salt sea over its fields. But he and his sea are driven back by the women of the land who confront them by raising their dresses and exhibiting their genitals: fertility repulses sterility. In the aftermath the Lycians establish a matrilineal (or again actually matriarchal?) society.[161] The issue of gender accordingly impacts upon the Chimaera's iconography. Her usually maned lion-head can sometimes pointedly become that of a maneless lioness, from the sixth century onwards, and Euripides and others indeed maintain that her head is specifically that of a lioness.[162] But then on some later fourth-century BC Apulian pots five full udders hang down below a fully maned Chimaera.[163] The udders not only characterize her as female, but draw attention to one of the most terrible aspects of female *drakontes*: their capacity to produce a vast brood.[164] A late sixth-century BC Attic

[156] *LIMC* Pegasos 155.

[157] *LIMC* Pegasos 152–238 (152 is *c.*660 BC). He was also, seemingly, a much more ancient figure. Winged horses appear already in Mycenean iconography, and there are oriental precedents: Lochin 1994: 229.

[158] e.g. *LIMC* Pegasos 209 (*c.*550–40 BC), 212 (*c.*670 BC), 213 (*c.*660 BC), 223 (6th cent. BC).

[159] *LIMC* Pegasos 25 (late 4th cent. BC).

[160] Herodotus 1. 173.

[161] Plutarch *Moralia* 248ab.

[162] e.g. *LIMC* Chimaira 4 (6th-cent. BC Cretan pinax), 80, Pegasos 155; however, Jacquemin would see these rather as attempts to represent a panther rather than a lioness. Euripides *Electra* 473–5, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9. 646–8, schol. Homer *Iliad* 6. 181.

[163] *LIMC* Chimaira 108 and Pegasos 154a.

[164] Not that we know her to have done so. One way of construing the syntax at Hesiod *Theogony* 326–32 has her mate with Orthus to produce further leonine forms in the Phix (Sphinx) and the Nemean Lion; cf. M. L. West 1966: 256 and Gantz 1993: 23. Just as the Chimaera has a *drakōn* tail, in a unique source, schol. Euripides *Phoenissae* 1760, the Sphinx is given the tail of a *drakaina* (*τὴν οὐρὰν ἔχουσα δρακαίνης*); cf. Fontenrose 1959: 308–9.

cup goes the other way, perhaps in jest: on this a full-maned Chimaera has his (?) serpent-tail seemingly replaced by a backwards-projecting phallus.[165]

There was little variation in the means by which Bellerophon was held to have killed the Chimaera. In art, already from *c.*660 BC, he is typically shown hovering over the Chimaera on Pegasus (who sometimes holds the monster down with his hooves) and thrusting his spear down into her back.[166] The arrangement anticipates and indeed directly influenced (via derivative late-antique images of Christian riders) the configuration in which St George slays his dragon in medieval and Renaissance art.[167] Bellerophon is sometimes shown driving his spear into a different part of the Chimaera, and on occasion is seen to use a sword.[168] Apollodorus tells that Bellerophon 'shot' the Chimaera from Pegasus' back.[169] Tzetzes, presumably depending upon an ancient source but one alas unidentifiable, adds the most colourful detail that Bellerophon killed the Chimaera by tipping his spear with lead and then thrusting it into her fire-breathing mouth (which one?). The lead then melted, killing her. The particular interest of Tzetzes' version lies in the fact that it potentially represents the sole pagan example of a productive story-type in which a *drakōn* is killed by being fed substances, melting or molten metals or combustible oils or fats, that turn its own fire against it (see further Chs. 6 and 11).[170]

The Chimaera had a close cousin in a monster known both as the Gorgon and as the Aegis. Euripides' *Ion*, written shortly before 412 BC, speaks of the Earth sending up an ally for her Giant sons at Phlegra in the form of a 'Gorgon' that Athene then slew in one-to-one combat, and the skin of which she then took to wear on her breast as the familiar aegis or 'goatskin'.[171] The aegis is the same as that made from the head of the Medusa, but the monster in this story is evidently not simply equivalent to Medusa or her Gorgon sisters. Diodorus, recyling the second-century BC Dionysius Scytobrachion, tells that the Aegis was born (again) of Earth and projected a terrible flame from its mouth. It first appeared in Phrygia and left its mark upon the region of it known as 'Burnt Phrygia' (Phrygia

[165] *LIMC* Chimaira 81 (*c.*550–525 BC). On other vases too it can seem that the serpent-tail has been attracted towards the phallic: e.g. *LIMC* Chimaira 56 (*c.*600–575 BC).

[166] *LIMC* Pegasos 152 (*c.*660 BC), 153–9, 161–4, 167–9, 173–4, 180–1, 183, 186–92, 195, 197, 200–12, 213 (*c.*660 BC), 217, 221.

[167] For the late-antique Christian rider, see e.g. Michel 2001 no. 450.

[168] An early Etruscan vase of *c.*675–650 BC (*LIMC* Chimaira [in Etruria] 55) shows a standing Bellerophon (without Pegasus) driving a spear into the Chimaera's rear (there has been no attempt to characterize the Chimaera's tail as a serpent on this vase, but the drawing is quite crude). On a 6th-century BC Laconian cup (*LIMC* Pegasos 223) Pegasus and the Chimaera rear up in balance against each other, forming a sort of archway; Bellerophon, crouching underneath, drives his spear into the Chimaera's stomach. On the relief terracotta from Melos of *c.*470–460 BC (*LIMC* Pegasos 160a) a wingless Pegasus strides over the ground beside the Chimaera, which Bellerophon attacks rather with his sword. A fine black-figure amphora of *c.*530 BC (*LIMC* Pegasos 228) exhibits a surprising meld with the Hydra's iconography: here a classic and particularly fine Chimaera is faced by Iolaus wielding his sickle and Heracles (or is it after all Bellerophon?) wielding his club.

[169] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 3. 2.

[170] Tzetzes, schol. Lycophron *Alexandra* 17. A possible indicator of the currency of this version in the early Hellenistic period is Palaephatus' rationalized version of the story in which Bellerophon destroys the Chimaera, now a mountain, with fire (28). Theopompus *FGrH* 115 F412 (Dritter Teil B Texte p. 742) is, alas, spurious.

[171] Euripides *Ion* 987–96; Hyginus *De Astronomica* 2. 12 subsequently cites Euhemerus for the notion that the 'Gorgon' was killed directly by Athene. Cf. Gantz 1993: 448.

Catacaumene). It then marauded its way through the Taurus, India, Lebanon, Egypt and Libya, and 'Ceraunia'. Here Athene killed it with a combination of cleverness, strength, and courage (we are not told the specific means), and fastened its hide around her breast, where it became her aegis. The Earth, in anger, now sent up the Giants to challenge the gods.[172]

The points of similarity between the Gorgon-Aegis and the Chimaera are manifest: a goat-derived name (Aegis is derived from *aix, aigos* 'goat'); terrible fire-breathing; an origin in Asia Minor; the opposition of Athene. The Gorgon-Aegis' form goes undescribed, but we may infer that it resembled the Chimaera's: at least we can be sure that it incorporated the elements of goat, because of its name, and *drakōn*, because of its fire-breathing. But the tradition ostensibly aspires to be an aetiology of the familiar aegis as a whole, i.e. both of the goatskin apron and of the *gorgoneion* attached to it. Given that *gorgoneia* soon came to resemble 'lion-masks' after their inception in *c.*675 BC, as we have seen, we may hypothesize that the Gorgon-Aegis was indeed constructed from precisely the same three creatures from which the Chimaera was constructed. We may even possess an image of the beast. A pot of *c.*410 BC shows Athene, resting on her spear, standing over a (dead or dying?) beast fully resembling the Chimaera, with Bellerophon nowhere to be seen. The implication is surely that Athene has just killed the beast herself with her spear. Furthermore, Athene wears a particularly prominent aegis: the painter clearly wants to draw attention to it with its enlarged Gorgon-head. We appear to have here a compressed narrative, in which the painter means to tell us that the Gorgon-Aegis Athene has just killed will become the aegis she is wearing. The date of the pot is intriguingly close to that of the *Ion*.[173]

Let us return to the Chimaera and confess that, with her central goat-head, she is more ridiculous than terrible. Her ridiculousness no doubt accounts for her popularity in art, but how did a supposedly terrible monster ever achieve such a form? Attempts to find her origin in image-types from Near-Eastern art have not been successful.[174] Usener made the reasonable conjecture that the creature acquired her improbable goat-head through a misinterpretation or reinterpretation of her name, which would initially have signified something quite different.[175] But the Gorgon-Aegis myth, though only attested from *c.*412 BC and vestigially thereafter, may offer another solution: that the Chimaera too first came into existence as an aetiology of Athene's goat-lion-serpent-derived aegis. Perhaps Bellerophon once gave the Chimaera's hide to his patroness Athene just as Perseus gave Medusa's head to his patroness Athene.[176] Whatever her origin and however ridiculous she was, the Chimaera, perhaps alongside Gorgon-Aegis, served to confer respectability on the association between *drakontes* and goats. So much

[172] Diodorus 3. 70. 3–6 = Dionysius Scytobrachion *FGrH* 32 F8. Discussion at Fontenrose 1959: 244–5.

[173] *LIMC* Pegasos 232; Lochin 1994 ad loc. simply takes the beast to be the Chimaera.

[174] See the attempts by Roes 1934, 1953 to relate the Chimaera to image-types from Louristan and Achaemenid Persia and Burkert 1983*b*: 52 to relate her to late Hittite image-types; contra, Jacquemin 1986: 256.

[175] Usener 1903: 171; cf. M. L. West 1966: 255.

[176] For the strong affinities between Bellerophon and Perseus more generally, see Ogden 2008*a*: 60–2.

so, that Plutarch was able to affirm that the body of Python was buried by a son named Aix.[177]

CERBERUS, MASTERED BY HERACLES

The myth and lore of Cerberus (Fig. 2.5) in its canonical form may be summarized as follows. Cerberus is a multi-headed anguiform dog, son of Typhon and Echidna, and seemingly reared by them in the underworld. He serves Hades and Persephone as warder of souls, ensuring that no ghosts escape back into the world of the living. Eurystheus, king of Tiryns, dispatches Heracles in a final labour to fetch Cerberus from the underworld for him, confident that Heracles cannot return from this mission (cf. Polydectes, Perseus, and the Medusa mission; Iobates, Bellerophon, and the Chimaera mission). Heracles is able to make his descent fortified or made wise by initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries. At the palace of Hades he receives help and guidance from Athene and Hermes. He is able to take control of Cerberus either by defeating Hades in battle or by defeating the dog himself after striking a bargain with Hades. In literature Hades bids him master the dog without weapons, so he has to subdue him by throttling him, though in art he often uses his club. Heracles places a chain round the neck of the subdued Cerberus and leads him in docile condition out through the underworld. As a chink of daylight becomes visible as they near the exit, Cerberus is overcome with fear and strains against the leash. Upon exit, most traditionally at Heracleia Pontica, Cerberus sprinkles the local flora with slaver or vomit, turning it into the poisonous aconite. Heracles parades Cerberus through Greece and brings him back to Eurystheus' Tiryns, terrifying him with the beast before duly returning the dog to the underworld.[178]

[177] Plutarch *Moralia* 293c (*Greek Questions* 12). Since Python was the ancestor of the serpents that inhabited the temple of Apollo in Epirus (Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 2), were they descended through Aix? Note also the Krios ('Ram') named as the father of a Python humanized into one Pythes at Pausanias 10. 6. 6; cf. Fontenrose 1959: 20.

[178] Principal texts: Homer *Iliad* 5. 395–7, 8. 362–9 (with scholl.), *Odyssey* 11. 623–6; Hesiod *Theogony* 306–18, 767–74; Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F27; Pindar FF249a–b, 346 SM; Bacchylides 5. 56–62; Sophocles *Trachiniae* 1089–100; Euripides *Heracles* 23–5, 610–19, 1276–8, 1386–7; Critias *TrGF* 43 F1; Aristophanes *Frogs* 142 (with Tzetzes), 465–78; Acusilaus of Argos F13 Fowler; Xenophon Anabasis 6. 2. 2; Philochorus *FGrH* 323 F18a–b; Callimachus F515 Pf.; Euphorion 24 Powell = 28 Lightfoot, F37 P = 41a L, F51 P = 71 L; Diodorus 4. 25. 1, 4. 26. 1, 14. 31. 3; Horace *Odes* 2. 13. 33–5, 2. 19. 29–32, 3. 11. 15–20; Virgil *Georgics* 4. 483, *Aeneid* 6. 417–25; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4. 449–51, 7. 404–19; Pomponius Mela 1. 92; Seneca *Agamemnon* 859–62, *Hercules Furens* 46–62, 662–96, 782–829; Plutarch *Theseus* 31. 4; Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 27, 33; Hyginus *Fabulae* 30. 13, 151; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 12; Pausanias 2. 31. 2, 2. 35. 10, 3. 18. 13, 3. 25. 5–6, 5. 26.7, 8. 18. 3, 9. 34. 5; Arrian *FGrH* 156 F76a; Lucian *Cataplus* 28, *Menippus* 10, 14, *Dialogues of the Dead* 4, *Podagra* 302; Dionysius Periegetes 787–92 (with schol. and Eustathius); Quintus Smyrnaeus 6. 261–8; Nonnus Abbas *Scholia Mythologica* 4. 51 Nimmo Smith; Tzetzes schol. on Lycophron 699, *Chiliades* 2. 36. 391–413; Pediasimus 12; schol. Hesiod *Theogony* 311; First Vatican Mythographer 1. 91, Third 6. 22. Principal Iconography: *LIMC* Herakles 1697–761 (Herakles Dodekathlos), 2553–675 (Herakles and Kerberos [Labour xi]). Discussions: Hartwig 1893, Bloomfield 1905, C. Robert 1920–6: ii. 483–8, Eitrem 1921, Schlerath 1954, N. Robertson 1980, Smallwood 1990, Lincoln 1991: 96–106, Gantz 1993: 22–3, Sancassano 1997*a*: 67–9.

Fig. 2.5. Heracles presents Cerberus to the terrified Eurystheus, who attempts to hide in a pot. Caeretan black-figure hydria, *c.*530–520 BC. Musée du Louvre E701 = *LIMC* Herakles 2616. © RMN / Droits réservés.

The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* both refer to Heracles' labour to fetch Cerberus as a commonplace. Whilst neither of them explicitly names the dog, the former perhaps puns on 'Cerberus' in the phrase *ex Erebeus*, 'from Erebus'.[179] The *Theogony*, however, provides him with his name, a genealogy, and a well-established role in the underworld.[180] The attempts to establish an Indo-European heritage for Cerberus' name have been intriguing, but not yet successful.[181]

What was Cerberus' form? The early literary sources give him vast numbers of heads. The *Theogony* describes him as 'raw-flesh-eating, resistless, indescribable, the bronze-voiced dog of Hades, with fifty heads, shameless and strong', whilst Pindar gives him a hundred heads.[182] By default we would presume that these are all dog-heads. But authors of the Classical age and after almost always give him

[179] Homer *Iliad* 8. 367–8, *Odyssey* 11. 623–6; Pausanias 3. 25. 4 makes a point of Homer's failure to name the dog.

[180] Hesiod *Theogony* 306–18.

[181] The theory that Greek *Kerberos* is related to the Sanskrit term *śabála*, 'spotted', which *Rigveda* 10. 14. 10–12 applies to the two dogs of Yama that guard the path to the afterworld, is articulated in its most comprehensive form at Mayrhofer 1956–76: i. 175 and iii. 297–8, and dismissed at Frisk 1950–62 and Chantraine 2009 s.v. *Κέρβερος*, Schlerath 1954 and Lincoln 1991: 96. Lincoln's own attempt (96–106) to relate the name to that of *Garmr*, Norse mythology's hound of Hel (*Poetic Edda, Voluspá* 44, etc.) founders on the fact, *inter alia*, that he must ultimately derive the two names from *different* Indo-European roots, *Kerberos* from **ker-*, *Garmr* from **gher-*.

[182] Pindar F249a/b SM: *ἑκατογκεφάλας*. Unfortunately nothing bearing upon the hound survives of Pindar's dithyramb *Heracles* or *Cerberus, for the Thebans*. Pindar F346 seems to narrate a descent of Heracles into the underworld during which he encounters Meleager. Did this poem mention Cerberus? It was in the course of his descent for Cerberus that Heracles encountered Meleager according to Bacchylides 5, especially 56–62. Nor, regrettably, can we know anything of what was said of Cerberus in the earlier 6th-century BC Stesichorus' poem *Cerberus*, F206 *PMG*/Campbell.

just three dog-heads.[183] This is no doubt under the impact of his representation in iconographic tradition, in which he first appears for us *c.*590 BC, before experiencing a particular burst of popularity in the late sixth century. In this he is never given more than three dog-heads: as with Typhon, the artists could not aspire to portray such large numbers of heads proper. In one of his first two appearances, that on a lost kotyle from Argos (*c.*590–580 BC), and occasionally thereafter, he is just single-headed.[184] It took a talented artist to show the viewer all three of the dog's heads with the creature, as usual, in profile. He is first found in clear three-headed form on the tondo of a fine Laconian cup of *c.*560–550 BC.[185] One spectacular and appropriately famous vase, a Caeretan hydria of *c.*530–520 BC, shows Heracles attempting to introduce Cerberus to a terrified Eurystheus as he hides in a *pithos*: here the artist has made use of three colours to differentiate Cerberus' three heads clearly (Fig. 2.5).[186] A talented Apulian painter of *c.*350–325 BC was able to represent Cerberus' three heads by portraying him in a sophisticated three-quarter pose.[187] But most commonly only two heads are visible (first from *c.*540–530 BC): do such images salute or establish a tradition of a two-headed Cerberus, or are we to imagine a third head concealed behind the two that can be seen?[188]

Cerberus' size and ostensible breed varies: though he can have a massive body, he is never taller (when on all fours) than Heracles or other human figures, and most often he is about waist-high. In later statuary his size and bearing are often reduced to those of an unthreatening household pet. In one group he resembles a dachshund.[189]

Cerberus had a serpentine element from the beginning of his iconographic tradition. In the lost Argive kotyle of *c.*590–580 BC again, snakes sprouted from his body and (single) dog-head.[190] The most snake-intensive of all Cerberi is that of the *c.*560–550 BC Laconian cup tondo: three rows of serpents sprout up and down along the length of his body, fringe his heads, and grow from the top of his heads too.[191] In a vase of *c.*540–530 BC these pullulating serpents have been reduced to

[183] Sophocles *Trachiniae* 1089–1100; Euripides *Heracles* 23–5 (three-bodied), 610–19, 1276–8 (three-headed); Horace *Odes* 2. 13. 33–5, 2. 19. 29–32, 3. 11. 15–20; Virgil *Georgics* 4. 483, *Aeneid* 6. 417–25; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4. 449–51; Seneca *Agamemnon* 859–62, *Hercules Furens* 46–62, 782–829 (but only one head at *Hercules Furens* 782–829); Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 12 (recycled at schol. Homer *Il.* 8. 368 and Pediasimos 12). It is conceivable that Cerberus was attributed with either ten or twelve mouths (δεκάστομος or δω]δεκάστομος) and therefore, presumably, heads in an anonymous tragedy on the theme of Heracles on Oeta, of which a 2nd-century BC papyrus fragment survives, *P.Oxy.* 2454 lines 25–6.

[184] The lost kotyle from Argos: *LIMC* Herakles 2553 (*c.*590–580 BC); note also the relief *pithos* fragment 2621 (*c.*590–570 BC), in which Heracles leads along a Cerberus who seems to have a single leonine head with an open-mouthed snake coiling over his back).

[185] *LIMC* Herakles 2605 = Pipili 1987 fig. 8.

[186] *LIMC* Herakles 2616 (530–520 BC).

[187] *LIMC* Herakles 2571 (350–325 BC); further three-headed images 1712 = 2573, 1734, 1742, 1744, 2615, 2618, 2646, 2575, 2663, 2664.

[188] *LIMC* Herakles 2554, 2556, 2557, 2560, 2562, 2568, 2569, 2577, 2578, 2579, 2581 (*c.*540–530 BC), 2586, 2588, 2595, 2596, 2600, 2603, 2604, 2613, 2614.

[189] *LIMC* Herakles 2637.

[190] *LIMC* Herakles 2553; cf. 2621.

[191] *LIMC* Herakles 2605 = Pipili 1987 fig. 8; cf. also 2606 (mid 6th cent. BC), 2610, 2611.

an almost symbolic pair of tiny question-mark-shaped serpents sprouting from each of his two heads.[192] The Caeretan Eurystheus vase of 530–520 BC gives Cerberus a row of tiny snakes coiling the length of his heads, back, and front paws: it is not completely clear that they are physically attached to him (Fig. 2.5).[193] But most commonly Cerberus' serpentine aspect is conveyed through a Chimaera-like serpent-tail: this is found first in the Laconian cup of *c.*560–550 BC.[194] A vase of *c.*510–500 BC appears to give him a double-headed serpent-tail to match his two (visible) dog-heads.[195] A series of vases of *c.*510–480 BC show a serpentless Cerberus emerging from the palace of Hades to meet Heracles accompanied by a separate large serpent.[196] Have the artists here differentiated the dog's canine and anguiform qualities? It is possible that such images represent an attempt rather to salute Hecataeus' rationalization of Cerberus into a giant venomous serpent (*ophis, drakōn*) that was reared at Tainaron. The best *floruit* we can give for Hecataeus is 500–494 BC, the dates of the Ionian revolt in which he played a part.[197]

Hecataeus' speculations represent the formal entry of the serpent-related Cerberus into the literary tradition, though a serpent element is already strongly implied, of course, by Hesiod's affiliation of Cerberus to the great *drakontes* Typhon and Echidna. The third-century BC Euphorion describes him as having a tail that consists of multiple snakes that hang down beneath his shaggy belly and then lick him over his flanks. His eyes flash with fires that resemble lightning and the fires that flash forth from Hephaestus' metalworking and from Etna (the last is particularly appropriate for a son of Typhon).[198] Horace's Cerberus interestingly has one hundred snake-heads, black ears, and a 'three-tongued mouth that emits a foul breath and swims in gore'.[199] This looks like an attempt to reconcile the hundred heads *tout court* of the Pindaric Cerberus with the iconographic tradition that gives Cerberus three dog-heads and unnumbered bristling snakes.[200] Seneca and Lucan give Cerberus a lion-like mane of snakes around his neck(s), with Seneca also giving him a serpent-tail.[201]

The notion that Cerberus had an anguiform nature is integral to the ancillary myth that made him the creator of the poisonous aconite. As Heracles dragged him out into unaccustomed daylight through a cave beside Heracleia Pontica's

[192] *LIMC* Herakles 2581; we have the same phenomenon in *LIMC* Herakles 2554 (*c.*525–10 BC), where it is, however, paired with a serpent-tail.

[193] *LIMC* Herakles 2616; cf. 2586 (*c.*510–500 BC), where, tail apart, Cerberus just has serpents sprouting from his four paws.

[194] *LIMC* Herakles 2554, 2560, 2571, 2579, 2588, 2595, 2600, 2603, 2604 (*c.*530–525 BC), 2605 (the Laconian cup; *c.*560–550 BC), 2614, 2628

[195] *LIMC* Herakles 2586.

[196] *LIMC* Herakles 2562, 2563, 2565; cf. Smallwood 1990: 98.

[197] Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F27 *apud* Pausanias 3. 25; cf. also schol. Hesiod *Theogony* 311: 'Some said that Cerberus was a *drakōn*, others a dog.' Hecataeus in the Ionian Revolt: Herodotus 5. 36, 125.

[198] Euphorion F51 Powell = 71 Lightfoot.

[199] Horace *Odes* 2. 13. 33–5, 2. 19. 29–32, 3. 11. 15–20.

[200] In partly similar fashion Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 393–4 gives Cerberus fifty heads in all, three of them dog, a serpent-head tail, and 'the heads of other animals of all kinds along his back'.

[201] Seneca *Hercules Furens* 782–829; Lucan 6. 664–5. Bristling snakes and snake tails also at Virgil *Georgics* 4. 483, *Aeneid* 6 .417–25; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 12 (recycled at schol. Homer *Iliad* 8. 368 and Pediasimus 12; a snake-tail here too).

own Acheron river the dog slavered or vomited gall in terror. The liquid fell upon a harmless plant and transformed it into the poisonous herb. The myth is first attested implicitly in Euphorion. But it may conceivably already have underlain the naming of the city Heracleia at its foundation in *c.*560 BC. At any rate it was probably fully developed by the time that Xenophon told that Heracles descended for Cerberus through a cave in the adjacent Acherusian Chersonese, and when Theophrastus noted that the aconite grew best and in the greatest profusion in Heracleia Pontica. In the *Hercules Furens* Seneca (bringing Cerberus out rather through Tainaron) offers a touching portrait of the dog as faithfully subdued and submissive before his new master as he is led along: he lowers his ears and his muzzle, and follows Heracles with his serpent-tail swinging and beating his sides. But when he catches his first glimpse of daylight, the terror restores his courage and spirit, and he drags Heracles himself back by the chain. Heracles redoubles his efforts and eventually brings him out, whereupon the dog screws his eyes tight shut to keep out the light, and, touchingly again, even hides his head in Heracles' shadow. The slaver that is characteristic of dogs must, one would assume, have dripped from Cerberus' dog-heads, as must the vomited gall, but the poisonous nature of these substances can only result from his serpentine element (just as the Chimaera's fiery breath must originate in its serpent element, though not necessarily breathed out through her serpent head). Eustathius' commentary on Dionysius Periegetes, perhaps reflecting some Classical material, simplifies the logic: the venom rather dripped directly from the mouths of the vipers (*echidnai*) that grew out of Cerberus' head.[202]

Occasionally Cerberus' head is shown in leonine form, in both Greek and Roman art: he is represented in this way on the other of his two earliest images, a fragmentary relief *pithos* from Crete, *c.*590–570 BC.[203] In this respect, and with his serpent-tail, he comes to resemble the Chimaera.[204] This leonine head also provides a context for the mane of serpents he acquires in Roman poetry, a mane that also salutes the Gorgons.

What was Cerberus' function? Hesiod gives a clear statement of his role in containing the ghosts within the underworld: 'He fawns and wags his tail and waggles both ears at those who are coming in, but he does not allow them to come out again, rather he keeps watch and he eats whomever he catches going outside the gates of strong Hades and dread Persephone.'[205] Seneca's Cerberus has

[202] Xenophon *Anabasis* 6. 2. 2, Theophrastus *Historia Plantarum* 9. 16. 4–7 (cf. Strabo C543, Arrian *FGrH* 156 F76a); Herodorus of Heracleia *FGrH* 31 F31 (vomit), Euphorion *Xenios* F37 Powell = 41a Lightfoot (vomit); Nicander *Alexipharmaka* 13–15 (with schol. 13b: vomit); Diodorus 14. 31. 3; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7. 404–19 (slaver); Pomponius Mela 1. 92; Seneca *Agamemnon* 859–6, *Hercules Furens* 46–62, 807–29 (slaver); Dionysius Periegetes 787–92 (with schol. and Eustathius ad loc.; slaver in all, from the snake-heads in the last), First Vatican Mythographer 1. 57 (slaver). At *Hercules Furens* 46–62 Seneca inverts the traditional conceit, having the sun grow pale and the daylight shrink back at the sight of Cerberus as he emerges from the underworld. For the date of Heracleia's foundation see Burstein 1976: 16 and for the underworld entrance there see Ogden 2001: 29–34.

[203] *LIMC* Herakles 2621. On 2640, a Roman sarcophagus of *c.* AD 150–75, Cerberus' leonine head matches that which hangs down from Heracles' lionskin.

[204] We recall that the fundamentally leonine Sphinx too could, on one occasion, exhibit a serpent-tail: schol. Euripides *Phoenissae* 1760.

[205] Hesiod *Theogony* 767–74, recycled at Tzetzes schol. on Lycophron *Alexandra* 699.

super-sensitive hearing, with his ears attuned so that he can hear even the silent ghosts as they try to flee.[206] So too Quintus Smyrnaeus has Cerberus 'penning back the crowd of the dead in the murky pit, at the baleful gates of Hades of the many laments'.[207] To this extent, the dog might be considered a friend and succour to the living. Virgil's *Aeneid* anomalously within the tradition gives us a Cerberus who guards the underworld against intrusion from without. As Aeneas and the Sibyl pass before his cave on their way into the underworld, the Sibyl feeds Cerberus a pellet made of honey and drugged meal: shades here of Medea and the Hesperides drugging their *drakōn* charges.[208] Aristophanes implies that Cerberus had many allied hounds in his task of guarding the underworld: his Aeacus, Cerberus' wrangler, refers to 'the circling dogs of the Cocytus'.[209]

What sanction does Cerberus deploy against the dead to hold them back? As Eustathius was wryly to observe, they cannot die twice (so Heracles uncharacteristically did the world a disservice in bringing Cerberus from the realm in which he was harmless into the sphere of the living, where he was indeed a threat and furthermore produced the aconite).[210] It is noteworthy that no one is ever said to have been eaten by Cerberus in his canonical form. When Philochorus has him eat Pirithous, this is in the radically anomalous context of a rationalization of the tale of Theseus' and Pirithous' descent to the underworld. Hades is brought to the surface and transformed into Aidoneus, a mortal king of the Molossians with an exceptionally large mortal dog, to whom he feeds the living Pirithous for attempting to rape his mortal wife Persephone.[211] Lucian might suggest that Cerberus was at least capable of inflicting pain on the dead. His Cerberus nips at Socrates to speed him on in his descent to the underworld (his feet are slowed by paralysing hemlock and a fear of death that exposes the hypocrisy of his philosophy). Lucian's underworld judge Rhadamanthys contemplates throwing the tyrant Megapenthes before Cerberus for punishment, as an alternative to throwing him into Pyriphlegethon, the river of fire. And devouring by Cerberus is listed more generally as one of the punishments of Tartarus. However, Lucian's underpinning transformation of Cerberus from guard to agent of punishment is also radically anomalous, and no doubt his presentation of the dog is framed precisely to point up the paradox at the heart of his canonical conceptualization, with a satirical awareness in line with his frequent debunkings of the entire traditional apparatus of the underworld and afterlife.[212]

What does Hesiod mean when he describes Cerberus as 'raw-flesh-eating' (*ōmēstēs*)?[213] Perhaps little: it may just be a generic epithet suitable to any dog. Or perhaps it derives from a forgotten conceptualization of Cerberus, one in which he was a death-demon encountered at the point of transition between life and death, who metaphorically devoured the flesh of a dead body as it rots, and

[206] Seneca *Hercules Furens* 782–829.

[207] Quintus Smyrnaeus 6. 261–8.

[208] Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 417–25. The contrarian nature of this passage is damagingly misunderstood at Graf and Johnston 2007: 112.

[209] Aristophanes *Frogs* 465–78.

[210] Eustathius on Dionysius Periegetes 791.

[211] Philochorus *FGrH* 323 FF18a–b; cf. Tzetzes on Aristophanes *Frogs* 142a, *Chiliades* 2. 36. 408–12.

[212] Lucian *Dialogues of the Dead* 4, *Cataplus* 28, *Menippus* 14.

[213] Hesiod *Theogony* 311.

derived his canine form from the dogs that do in actuality eat exposed dead bodies (as famously, already, in the fourth line of the *Iliad*).[214] Here, we may loosely associate the paradoxographer Heraclitus' rationalizing explanation of Perseus' 'dogskin cap (*kunē*) of Hades': 'The dogskin cap of Hades is the end point at which the dead person departing becomes invisible.'[215]

Each stage of Heracles' mission to fetch up Cerberus acquired a degree of elaboration in the tradition. Eurystheus is the imposer of the task already in the *Iliad* and consistently thereafter.[216] Diodorus and Apollodorus tell that Heracles prepared himself for the journey by initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries; according to the former, Musaeus, the amanuensis of Orpheus, presided over the initiation.[217] Such initiation may have served to give Heracles advance knowledge of the topography of the underworld and its horrors,[218] but it may also have given Heracles more specifically the knowledge he needed to restrain and calm Cerberus. A calyx crater from Tarentum of *c.*350–300 BC shows a young man conducted to the boundary of Hades, symbolized by a herm statue: Orpheus stands by, and offers him his lyre whilst restraining Cerberus.[219] Lucian's Menippus calms an excited Cerberus by touching the Orphic lyre he has taken down with him.[220]

Heracles is said to have made his descent through the underworld entrance at Tainaron. The notion is found first, implicitly, in the rationalized account of Hecataeus.[221] Xenophon uniquely suggests that he descended through Heracleia, a place more usually associated only with his point of return, as we have seen.[222]

How did Heracles get Cerberus? There were two broad traditions: either Heracles had to fight Hades for him, or Hades gave Heracles Cerberus to take away on condition that he could first master him.[223] Homer knew the tradition that Heracles fought Hades, with the *Iliad* telling that Heracles had contrived to shoot an arrow through Hades' shoulder 'in Pylos / at the Gate [sc. of the

[214] Homer *Iliad* 1. 3–4: *πολλὰς δ' ἰφθίμους ψυχὰς Ἄϊδι προΐαψεν ἡρώων, αὐτοὺς δὲ ἑλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν*. This seems to be the understanding of M. L. West 1966: 370.

[215] Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 27: *ἔστι δὲ κυνῆ Ἄϊδος τὸ τέλος εἰς ὃ ἀπελθὼν ὁ τετελευτηκὼς ἀόρατος γίνεται*.

[216] Homer *Iliad* 8. 362–9; so too Homer *Odyssey* 11. 623–6, Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F27, Euripides *Heracles* 610–19, 1276–8, 1386–7, *Pirithous* F591 *TrGF*, Critias 43 F1 *TrGF*.

[217] Diodorus 4. 25. 1, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 12 (and thereafter schol. Homer *Iliad* 8. 368, Pediasimus 12), Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 397. The contention of Smallwood 1990: 86 (cf. 96) that a connection between Heracles' Cerberus mission and his initiation is already made at Aristophanes *Frogs* 465–9 and 503–18 is unintelligible.

[218] Cf. Origen *Contra Celsum* 4. 10.

[219] BM F270; cf. M. L. West 1983: 25, 30–2 and pl. 3, Ogden 2001: 125–7.

[220] Lucian *Menippus* 10.

[221] Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F27 = Pausanias 3. 25. 4 (rationalized), Euripides *Heracles* 23–5, Seneca *Hercules Furens* 662–96, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 12. For Tainaron see Ogden 2001: 34–42.

[222] Xenophon *Anabasis* 6. 2. 2.

[223] However, according to Aristophanes *Frogs* 465–78, Aeacus, the canonical doorkeeper of the underworld, was, understandably, the guardian of Cerberus, and he accordingly feels particular resentment towards Heracles. Such a notion may have underpinned a fragment from one of Critias' tragedies, *TrGF* 43 F1, in which Heracles discusses with Aeacus the fact that he has been sent by Eurystheus to fetch back Cerberus.

underworld]'.[224] Hades or Persephone or both figure strongly in the iconographic tradition of Heracles' descent.[225] On one of the two earliest Cerberus vases, the *c.*590–580 BC lost kotyle from Argos, Heracles is shown attacking Hades with a stone.[226] But after this we see no more of the battle between these two. In a variant of this version known to Diodorus, Heracles enjoyed good relations with Persephone, who of her own accord gave him a pre-bound Cerberus to bring away.[227] This variant may also underlie Amphitryon's stichomythic question to Heracles in Euripides' *Heracles*: 'Did you get control of him with a fight or by gift of the goddess?'[228]

As for the fight with Cerberus himself, there were two variants as to the condition Hades imposed upon Heracles for it. Either he had to master Cerberus without the use of iron, or he had to do it without any weapons at all. The no-iron condition becomes explicit only in a scholium to the *Iliad*, which explains that Heracles used his lion-skin in place of his shield and tipped his arrows with stone heads.[229] But the fundamental notion may well be old. From *c.*560 BC the iconography typically shows Heracles beating or threatening Cerberus with his familiar wooden club.[230] Seneca's Hades and Persephone then sit on their thrones to observe a contest in which Heracles beats Cerberus into submission with his club whilst protecting himself with his lion-skin, and they then bid him take the dog.[231] The no-weapons (*tout court*) condition first becomes explicit in Apollodorus, who tells that Heracles therefore choked the dog at its necks until it bowed to his will, though its snake-tail kept biting him in the meantime. Sophocles, whose Heracles apostrophizes his hands in connection with this conquest of Cerberus, may already have had the notion, whilst Aristophanes' Heracles runs Cerberus out of the underworld in a stranglehold.[232] Heracles' mastery of Cerberus is, however, often symbolized by his chaining of the dog. In iconography, from *c.*560 BC, we sometimes see that Heracles has chained all three of his necks, sometimes just the central one.[233] Of course no ordinary chain would do for this purpose, and Ovid and Seneca duly tell us that Heracles dragged Cerberus struggling out of the underworld with chains made of adamant (a threefold one, in

[224] Homer *Iliad* 5. 395–7, ἐν Πύλῳ with schol. and Kirk 1990 ad loc.; cf. Homer *Iliad* 8. 367–8, where Hades is himself described as πυλάρταο, 'gate-warden'. Panyassis F26 West also spoke of 'Eleian Hades' being shot by Heracles.

[225] Either or both are to be found at *LIMC* Herakles 2553, 2558, 2559, 2561, 2562, 2563, 2564, 2565, 2566, 2567, 2570, 2574, 2582, 2592–603, 2608, 2614.

[226] *LIMC* Herakles 2553.

[227] Diodorus 4. 26. 1.

[228] Euripides *Heracles* 612.

[229] Schol. *Iliad* 5. 395–7.

[230] *LIMC* Herakles 2556 (possibly), 2571, 2576 (*c.*560 BC), 2578, 2588, 2595, 2600, 2604, 2605 = Pipili 1987 fig. 8 (*c.*560–550 BC), 2664.

[231] Seneca *Hercules Furens* 782–829; cf. Quintus Smyrnaeus 6. 261–8 (presumably blows of the club).

[232] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 12; Sophocles *Trachiniae* 1089–100; Aristophanes *Frogs* 465–78; Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 404–6 (where, as Heracles grips Cerberus by the neck, he is bitten by his serpent tail and the other animal heads along his back).

[233] *LIMC* Herakles 1705, 1706, 1742, 2554, 2556, 2557, 2562, 2564, 2565, 2568, 2570, 2574, 2576 (*c.*560 BC), 2578, 2579, 2581, 2582, 2590, 2591, 2595, 2597, 2601, 2603, 2604–6, (2605 = Pipili 1987 fig. 8 is *c.*560–550 BC) 2609, 2611, 2613–15, 2717, 2628, 2631–67.

the latter case).[234] From the late sixth century the iconography sometimes gives us Heracles petting a now docile Cerberus.[235] Two vases show him offering the gentle dog a morsel of food.[236] The unheroic thought occurs, in the light of the drugged sop of Virgil's Sibyl, that Heracles' morsel too may have been drugged, to serve as an ironless weapon.[237]

An *Iliad* scholium may seek to reconcile both broad versions here. It tells that Hades told Heracles he could take Cerberus if he could master him without iron, but then reneged on the deal when he did so, with the result that Heracles shot him with one of his stone-tipped arrows.[238]

The tradition as to where Heracles brought Cerberus out of the underworld was much more complex than that of the place of his descent:[239]

- In the seventh century BC Alcman referred to a Phrygian, 'Cerbesian tune' (*melos Kerbēsion*). Strabo suggests that this tune derived its name from the 'Cerbesian chasm' (*bothynos . . . Kerbēsios*) and the local Cerbesians of Phrygian Hierapolis, i.e. from the well known mephitic entrance to the underworld there. There seems to lurk here, and possibly already in Alcman, a folk-etymology associating *Kerbēsios* with *Kerberos*. This in turn implies a tradition that Cerberus was brought up at Hierapolis.[240]
- The most vigorous strand of the tradition, originating at some point between the sixth and second centuries BC, had Cerberus brought up through the underworld entrance at Heracleia Pontica, where he produced the aconite with his slaver or vomit, as we have seen.
- Hecataeus seems to have rationalized an existing tradition that contended that Heracles both descended and indeed returned through Tainaron; this tradition remains unrationalized in Seneca.[241]
- There may have been a claim that Heracles brought Cerberus out of the underworld at the site of the Acheron oracle of the dead in Thesprotia. Coins of nearby Elea struck *c.*370–330 BC BC portray the dog.[242] The Homeric account of Odysseus' descent to the underworld (the *Necyia*) seems to reflect the topography of the Acheron oracle. Aristarchus and Crates wished to emend the 'Cimmerians' that Homer says lived beside his underworld entrance to 'Cerberians'.[243]
- Apollodorus, Pausanias, and Tzetzes tell that Heracles brought Cerberus up rather at Troezen, Pausanias making it clear that this variant was associated

[234] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7. 404–19, Seneca *Hercules Furens* 46–62, 807–29, *Agamemnon* 859–62.

[235] *LIMC* Herakles 2554 (*c.*525–510 BC), 2556.

[236] *LIMC* Herakles 2614 (*c.*520 BC; however, Smallwood 1990 ad loc. guesses that the object is rather a charm), *LIMC* Herakles 2568 (early 5th cent. BC).

[237] Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 417–25.

[238] Schol. *Iliad* 5. 395–7.

[239] For some of the reasons for this, see Ogden 2010.

[240] Alcman F126 *PMG*/Campbell, *apud* Strabo C580.

[241] Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F27 = Pausanias 3. 25. 4; Seneca *Hercules Furens* 807–29 (cf. also *Agamemnon* 85–62).

[242] Dakaris 1993: 31.

[243] Homer *Odyssey* 11. 14, with schol. and Eustathius ad loc. See Ogden 2001: 43–4.

with the altars of the underworld gods in the temple of Artemis Saviour there.[244]

- Pausanias also notes the claim that Heracles brought Cerberus up through the chasm sacred to Clymenus (Hades) at Hermione.[245] In Euripides' *Heracles* Heracles has temporarily left Cerberus in Hermione: 'a grove of Chthonia and the city of Hermion keep him'.[246] It is not implied here that Heracles had dragged him up at Hermione, merely that it was a suitable place, with its underworld connections, in which to keep Cerberus comfortable. There may, nonetheless, lurk an allusion to an already existing notion that for some Hermione had been the exit point.
- Pausanias notes a further claim that Heracles had brought Cerberus out of the underworld on Mt. Laphystion in Boeotia, subsequently the site of a shrine to Heracles Charops.[247]
- The twelfth-century AD *Etymologicum Magnum* notes that one explanation for the name of Emeia near Mycenae is that Cerberus vomited (*ēmesen*) there after coming up from Hades. This explanation self-evidently piggy-backs on the Heraclea tradition.

Occasional images, the first from of *c.*500–475 BC but otherwise of the imperial period, show Heracles leading Cerberus out of the underworld itself (though we cannot of course tell at what site), represented either by a cave mouth or a pair of double doors.[248]

From wherever he dragged Cerberus up, Heracles seems to have paraded the dog triumphantly through Greece on his way back to Tiryns, the sojourn at Hermione aside. Euphorion tells how Heracles is marvelled at by the fearful women of barley-rich Midea, together with their children.[249] Seneca's Hera complains that Heracles is leading the dark dog arrogantly and exultantly through the cities of Greece, and his Theseus explains that Heracles is greeted on his return from the underworld with Cerberus by laurel-wreathed crowds singing his praise.[250]

Of Cerberus' arrival in Mycenae we hear little. In a tragic fragment of Critias Heracles tells Aeacus that although Eurystheus had commanded him to bring Cerberus 'alive' to the gates of Mycenae (had he said he would look down on the dog from the walls?), he had no wish to set eyes on the dog, but had imposed the labour in the confidence that Heracles would not be able to complete it.[251]

[244] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 12, Pausanias 2. 31. 2, Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 407.

[245] Pausanias 2. 35. 10.

[246] Euripides *Heracles* 610–19.

[247] Pausanias 9. 34. 5.

[248] *LIMC* Herakles 2578 (*c.*500–475 BC; Heracles leads Cerberus out of cave by his chain; cf. 2591). Roman art, cave mouth: *LIMC* Herakles 2623–4, 2634, 2643, 2650, 2655–6, 2659, 2662–3; cf. Smallwood 1990: 100. Roman art, double doors: *LIMC* Herakles 2648–9. Presumably these caves do represent the entrance to the underworld, though we may note that according to Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 417–25 Cerberus sleeps (bulkily) in a cave within the underworld itself, on the inner bank of the Styx; this evidently serves as his kennel.

[249] Euphorion F51 Powell = 71 Lightfoot.

[250] Seneca *Hercules Furens* 46–62, 807–29.

[251] Critias *TrGF* 43 F1; cf. Hyginus *Fabulae* 30. 13.

A similar notion seems to underpin the wonderful *c.*530–520 BC vase mentioned above in which a terrified Eurystheus hides from the three-coloured Cerberus in a *pithos*-jar (Fig. 2.5).[252] The tradition takes relatively little interest in Cerberus' return to the underworld thereafter. Apollodorus asserts, in lapidary fashion, that Heracles did indeed finally take him back. Hesychius, however, tells that, 'In Argos slaves that are being freed drink from the spring of Cynadra, because it was by this route that Cerberus escaped and got his freedom.' Hesychius seems to mean that Cerberus got back into the underworld through the spring itself, the name of which was perhaps folk-etymologized as 'Dog-water'.[253]

A tale uniquely (and vestigially) recorded by the sixth-century AD Nonnus Abbas has Heracles descending to seize Persephone for Pirithous and then actually killing Cerberus as he ascends back out of the underworld (the point, of course, at which Cerberus would first oppose him).[254]

Closely related to Cerberus is the dog Orth(r)us (the orthography is unstable).[255] The *Theogony* makes him full brother to Cerberus as the child similarly of Typhon and Echidna. It was Orthus' destiny likewise to be a guard-dog, and he took oversight of the cattle of Geryon, the three-bodied son of Chrysaor, son of Medusa. He was accordingly killed by Heracles, his brother's tamer, as he stole the cattle in another of his labours. In art Orthus is always shown in association with his master, sometimes supine in death. Like Cerberus, Orthus is usually depicted with multiple heads, first and most typically with two, from *c.*625 BC (the same considerations may apply as for Cerberus: we may sometimes be expected to imagine a third head concealed behind the visible pair). From the mid sixth century he is sometimes shown single-headed, and a unique vase of *c.*500–475 explicitly gives him the full Cerberan three.[256] Like Cerberus too he could on occasion boast a *drakōn* element, although this was confined, à la Chimaera, to his tail. This becomes manifest in his iconography between mid sixth century and the early fifth century BC.[257] Hesiod tells us that Orthus mated with his own mother Echidna to produce the Sphinx. Given her pedigree, one would have expected the Sphinx to exhibit much more of the *drakōn*

[252] *LIMC* Herakles 2616.

[253] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 12; Hesychius s.v. ἐλεύθερον ὕδωρ; cf. Eitrem 1921: 28. Smallwood 1990: 98 thinks *LIMC* Herakles 2617 may show the hero in the act of returning Cerberus to the underworld.

[254] Nonnus Abbas *Scholia Mythologica* 4. 51 Nimmo Smith.

[255] Principal texts: Hesiod *Theogony* 287–94, 306–9, 326–7; Stesichorus S7–87 SLG/Campbell (with Page 1973), Pindar *Isthmian* 1. 13–15, with schol.; Palaephatus 39, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 10, Quintus Smyrnaeus 6. 252–4, Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 662, 8. 300, schol. Plato *Timaeus* 24e, Pediasimus 10, 26. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Orthros I, Geryoneus 8, 16, Discussions: Page 1973, Woodford 1994.

[256] Two heads: *LIMC* Orthros I 6–20, 25 (the earliest is no. 19 = Geryoneus 8, *c.*625–600 BC; the latest derives from the late 4th cent. BC); we first learn of his two heads in the literary record only with Apollodorus. One head: *LIMC* Orthros I 1–5, 22–3 (mid 6th to early 5th cent. BC). Three heads: *LIMC* Orthros I 21 (*c.*500–475 BC).

[257] He sports a snake tail on *LIMC* Orthros I 6 (mid 6th cent. BC), 14 (*c.*510 BC), 20 (late 6th cent. BC), 21 (*c.*500–475 BC), 25 (fragment resembling no. 14). But he sports a clear dog-tail on *LIMC* Orthros I 1, 3, 10, 12, 19 (*c.*625–600 BC), 23.

element than she does. A lone late source tells us that she had a *drakōn* tail, taking after her father.[258]

CONCLUSION

Few would contest the appropriateness of describing the anguipede Typhon, Echidna, or Giants as *drakontes* or composite *drakontes* and bracketing them together with the pure *drakontes* examined in Chapter 1, given that around 50 per cent of their bulk is made up of *drakōn*. And let us not forget that the anguipede *drakaina* Delphyne is the mythological alternative to the pure *drakōn* Python. But some might initially baulk at classifying those creatures, only a small proportion of whose physique consists of a *drakōn* element, in the same group. However, the title of such creatures to be considered here is bolstered by the fashion in which their *drakōn* element makes its presence felt emphatically in their modus operandi and in the narratives associated with them. Medusa has only hair of *drakontes*, but her signal ability to petrify with her gaze is almost certainly to be related to the notoriously terrible gaze of *drakontes* and snakes. The Chimaera has only a *drakōn* tail, but this is certainly responsible for the fiery breath so fundamental to her story. Cerberus has only a *drakōn* tail and a covering of small *drakontes* over his body, but we cannot doubt that it is they that render his saliva (or vomit) toxic, allowing for his fabled creation of the aconite. It is striking too that the myths of the composite *drakontes* are bound together in a mesh of shared but diverse themes above and beyond those of their composite shapes: Typhon, the Giants, and Campe are alike children of Earth; Typhon, the Chimaera, and Gorgon-Aegis share a devotion to fire and to the burning of the Catacaumene; Campe shares a Libyan base with Lamia, the Gorgons, and the Graeae; Lamia shares detachable eyes with the Graeae; the Gorgons, the Chimaera, and Cerberus alike are triadic monsters (three sisters, three constituent animals, three heads) after whom a hero is sent (Perseus, Bellerophon, Heracles) in the expectation that he will die; Medusa oddly merges into the Chimaera in the intermediate figure of Gorgon-Aegis; Medusa's head drips blood to produce venomous snakes, whilst Cerberus drips slaver to produce poisonous plants.

[258] The Sphinx's *drakōn* tail: schol. Euripides *Phoenissae* 1760.

3

Fights with *Kētē*, Sea-Serpents

DRAKONTES AND *KĒTĒ*

As noted in the Introduction, this study of ancient dragons distinguishes itself from others in striving to confine itself to *drakontes*-pure and to monsters that incorporate a *drakōn* element, large or small.[1] Given this task, our most difficult methodological challenge is presented by the sea creatures defined by the term *kētos* (plural *kētē*; Latin *cetus, pistrix, belua*). Just as the term *drakōn* could apply equally to the actual large snakes of the real world, and to the fantastical dragons of myth, so the term *kētos* could apply equally to the actual massive denizens of the deep, principally whales, and to the fantastical predatory sea-serpents of myth. Whilst a whale does not much resemble a snake, and whilst, strikingly, the ancients hardly ever deployed the term *drakōn* or its derivatives in connection with sea-serpents,[2] the fantastical reflexes of the *drakōn* and the *kētos* were so conceptually close in the Greek and Roman imagination that a study of the former cannot be complete without attention to the latter.

Kētē appear widely in Greek art, from *c.*650 BC onwards, in decorative scenes (where they sometimes provide mounts for Nereids) as well as in illustrations of the stories of Hesione and Andromeda.[3] In their canonical form they have a body that is fundamentally serpentine, and with a single exception this is true of all their manifestations in archaic art.[4] Their heads, with long muzzle and upturned snout, most often recall, to our eyes, those of dogs (sometimes those of boars or even horses), but they are thought to have originated in those of lions (crocodile snouts may also have exerted an impact). *Kētē* often have forearms and these too, compatibly, resemble a lion's forelegs. They often have long, hare-like ears, horns or tusks, bristles, spiny crests running the length of their bodies and, appropriately to the sea, fish-tails and fins or flippers.[5] For us the difference in form between actual whales and the *kētē* of Greek art (which preserves nothing resembling a significantly realistic representation of a whale) is considerable, but it

[1] Much of the material in this section of the chapter, together with those devoted to Hesione and Andromeda, builds upon Ogden 2008*a*: 67–99.

[2] The *kētos* of Joppa is indirectly compared to a *draco* at Ovid *Metamophoses* 4. 715.

[3] See *LIMC* Ketos, and the images cited below in connection with Hesione, Andromeda, and Scylla. *Kētē* as mount for Nereids: e.g. *LIMC* Ketos 30–4; cf. Boardman 1997: 733–5.

[4] *LIMC* Ketos 18.

[5] For the canonical form of the *kētos* in art see Shepard 1940: esp. 28–30, E. Vermeule 1979: 179–209, and above all Boardman 1987: esp. 74, 78, 1997 esp. 731–5, and Papadopoulos and Ruscillo 2002: esp. 216–22.

probably seemed less so to the ancients, relatively few of whom, sailor or landlubber, will have had the chance to inspect the fully intact body of a whale, dead or alive. Such information as was available will have been in the form of no doubt often severely disfigured beached carcasses. All the larger species of whale, including the largest variety of all, the blue whale, visited and continue to visit Greek waters. Among these, it is sperm whales that are particularly prone to beaching. No doubt the 30-cubit-long Porphyrios, the 'Purple boy' that Procopius tells us terrorized the Byzantine coast for fifty years in the sixth century AD until he became beached, belonged to this variety. And a beaching probably explains too how the scapula of a fin whale, the world's second largest variety, came to be deposited in an Athenian well *c.*850 BC.[6]

In summary, and in part anticipating the following discussions, the overlaps and coincidences between *drakontes* and *kētē* in the Greek and Roman imaginations are:

- *Kētē*, in literature and art alike, whilst typically culminating in a fish-tail, are, as we have just noted, fundamentally serpentine in body. They also frequently exhibit secondary characteristics associated with *drakontes*: in art, forked tongues and beards and, in literature, fiery, flashing eyes,[7] and triple rows of teeth.[8]
- Most of the great *drakontes* of Greek myth are descended from the archetypal sea monster Ceto in the influential genealogy of Hesiod's *Theogony* (Ch. 4).[9]
- Some mythical traditions appear, in different ways, to assimilate *kētē* and *drakontes*. First, Scylla remarkably seems to have mutated over the course of her tradition from a slightly composite *drakōn* into a more heavily composite *kētos*. Secondly, the puzzling behaviour of the *drakōn*-pair of the myth of Laocoon can only be understood as a fusion between the behaviours normally associated with *kētē* and with *drakontes*-proper. Thirdly, in art, the normally anguipede Giants occasionally have their snake feet replaced by a *kētos*' fish-tail, as on some 3rd- and 2nd-century BC Etruscan vases, where we find one in battle with Athene, another with Poseidon.[10]
- The tales of the slayings of the great mythical *kētē* of Troy and Ethiopia, by Heracles and Perseus respectively, strongly resemble in their structures and

[6] For ancient encounters with whales, see Boardman 1987, 1997, and Papadopoulos and Ruscillo 2002: esp. 199–201, 206, 216. Porphyrios: Procopius *Wars* 7. 29. 9–16.

[7] Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 497–505 gives the *kētos* of Troy flashing eyes. For the flashing eyes of *drakontes* see Ch. 6. The Hellenistic Dionysius of Samos *FGrH* 15 F2 gives the cross-over Scylla fiery eyes (*pyroeideis*).

[8] Triple rows of teeth are possessed alike by the *kētos* of Troy (Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 497–505), the Serpent of Ares (Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 34) and by the cross-over Scylla (Homer *Odyssey* 12. 91).

[9] Hesiod *Theogony* 270–336.

[10] *LIMC* Gigantes 433 (2nd cent. BC; Poseidon), 435 (3rd cent. BC; Athene); see also 434. On a bronze greave of *c.*340 BC, *LIMC* Gigantes 72, Poseidon strikes a Giant whilst a *kētos* swims beneath. It is perhaps less significant that Nonnus' Campe should combine both *drakōn* and *kētos* elements in her form, with hair and legs consisting of the former and torso consisting of the latter, given that she also incorporates a dizzying variety of other animals too, including lions, boars, dogs, and scorpions (*Dionysiaca* 18. 236–67).

themes those of the slayings of the mythical *drakontes*, not least the ones defeated by Menestratus and Eurybatus (Ch. 2).

- The great mythical *kētē* of Troy and Ethiopia are, furthermore, slain by heroes who specialize in slaying *drakontes*: Heracles is slayer of the Hydra, Ladon and the serpent-pair sent against him by Hera, amongst others; Perseus is the slayer of Medusa (Ch. 5).
- The *harpē* (sickle-sword), the weapon ideally designed for use against anguiform monsters (Ch. 6), is also deployed by Perseus against his *kētos*, and possibly too by Heracles against his.[11]
- The recurring threat that the great mythical *drakontes* might pollute their local communities with their gargantuan rotting carcasses, associated with the Delphic *drakōn* and others, is surely a notion originating in the actual experiences of beached whale (i.e. *kētos*) carcasses (Ch. 6). And we should bear in mind that whale skeletons, with their narrow skulls, look rather more serpentine than living whales do too. Pausanias reports that a huge bone of a *kētos* was kept in the stoa of Asclepius' Sicyonian sanctuary. Did the dedicators think the great *drakōn* god an appropriate keeper?[12]
- Both *drakontes* and *kētē* can be referred to as 'dogs': so Euripides twice of the Hydra,[13] and Lycophron twice of the *kētos* of Troy.[14] In any case, the composite *drakōn* Cerberus and the composite *kētos* Scylla both explicitly incorporate heavy canine elements. We have noted the dog-like heads typical of *kētē* in art.

THE *KĒTOS* OF TROY, SLAIN BY HERACLES

In its canonical form, the myth of Heracles, Hesione and the *kētos* (Figs. 3.1, 3.2, 3.3) may be summarized as follows, in an account that draws heavily on an important fragment of Hellanicus, as well as Diodorus and Tzetzes. Apollo and Poseidon helped Laomedon build the walls of Troy, but Laomedon cheated them of the pay he had promised them. In revenge Apollo sent a pestilence against Troy, whilst Poseidon sent a flood and a *kētos* against it. Apollo instructed Laomedon to placate the creature by putting out the virgin daughters of the noble Trojans for it to eat, and many were cast before it. Eventually he was compelled to set out his own daughter Hesione for the monster, either by the chance of the lot or under noble or popular pressure. She was duly laid out for the monster in royal dress, chained to a rock beside the sea. A desperate Laomedon now offered his immortal horses as reward to anyone that could slay the *kētos* for him. Heracles took up the challenge, and managed to get himself inside the creature, either by luring the creature to insert its head through the entrance of a defensive bulwark, or by

[11] If *LIMC* Ketos 26 = Perseus 188 = Herakles 2844 does indeed represent Heracles.

[12] Pausanias 2. 10. 2.

[13] Euripides *Heracles* 420, 1274.

[14] Lycophron *Alexandra* 34, 471. Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 843 then applies the term 'sea dog' also to the *kētos* of Ethiopia/Joppa.

donning Hesione's dress and substituting himself for her. He remained inside it for three days and killed it by attacking its liver or its flanks from within, but when he emerged the creature's digestive juices had dissolved his hair. Laomedon then cheated Heracles too of his reward, deceitfully fobbing him off with mere mortal horses. In revenge Heracles sacked Troy, killing Laomedon and all his children except for Hesione and Podarces. Hesione he gave as a prize to his champion soldier Telamon, and she became mother to Teucer by him. Hesione redeemed (*epriato*) Podarces from Heracles at the cost of her mirror or veil, and as a consequence he was renamed Priam, destined to preside over Troy in the era of the Trojan war.[15]

The tale evidently has much in common with that of Perseus, Andromeda, and the *kētos* of Ethiopia, to which we will shortly turn. At the heart of both tales is a central vignette in which an innocent virgin is tied to a rock as a sacrifice for a *kētos*, which is then destroyed by a visiting hero. But the Heracles tale is likely to have been fully developed already by the time of the *Iliad*, a century or so before our earliest attestation of the Perseus tale, and it may therefore have constituted a model for it. Whilst the poem does not mention Hesione herself, it does allude to Athene and the Trojans building a wall for Heracles to hide behind when the *kētos* chased him from the shore to the plain.[16]

How was the *kētos* of Troy conceptualized? Its serpentine aspect could on occasion be emphasized. The earliest image of it is found on a Corinthian column-crater of *c.*575–550 BC (Fig. 3.1). Here Heracles has dismounted from his chariot, driven by Iolaus, and strides towards the *kētos*, seemingly firing three arrows at once from his bow at it. Hesione stands in advance of him before the *kētos*, pelting it with round stones of different colours. Of the *kētos* itself we see only an odd, elongated white head, strongly serpentine in shape, with a large eye, long rows of teeth, and a lolling tongue. Arrows and stones cling to it.[17] Also of interest is a black-figure cup of *c.*520 BC. Here a full-bodied and again particularly serpentine *kētos* gapes before Heracles, who grabs its tongue by the root, seemingly in preparation for reaping it with his *harpē*.[18] A fragment of a *c.*360–350 BC

[15] Principal texts: Homer *Iliad* 20. 145–8 (cf. 5. 638–51, 7. 452–3, 21. 441–57), Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 F26b (= Fowler; = schol. Homer *Iliad* 20. 145), Palaephatus 37, Lycophron *Alexandra* 31–6, 470–8 with Tzetzes ad locc., Diodorus 4. 32, 42, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 11. 199–215, Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 451–578 (the most expansive account), Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 9, 2. 6. 4, Hyginus *Fabulae* 31, 89, Philostratus *Imagines* 12, Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 1. 550, 5. 30, 8. 157, First Vatican Mythographer 2. 34–5, Second 220, Coluccio Salutati *De Laboribus Herculis* 3. 16. Principal images: *LIMC* Hesione, Ketos. Discussions: Drexler 1886–90, Schmidt 1907: 3–12, C. Robert 1920–6: ii. 549–58, Weicker 1912, Brommer 1955, Milne 1956, Fontenrose 1959: 347–50, Lesky 1967, Burck 1976, Gantz 1993: 400–2, 442–4, Oakley 1997, the last with further bibliography. Ahlberg-Cornell 1984, despite its title, addresses not Heracles' encounter with the *kētos* of Troy but his many wrestling matches against the *Meermänner* Triton, Nereus, and the Halios Geron.

[16] Homer *Iliad* 20. 145–8. Heracles is not usually said to feel any attraction towards Hesione: his motivation is always rather the horses, so as to justify his consequent sack of Troy. However, Diodorus 4. 42 may mildly indicate an attraction towards Heracles on Hesione's part, and eventually the First Vatican Mythographer 2. 34 does have Heracles demanding the hand of Hesione as opposed to the horses in reward.

[17] *LIMC* Hesione 3.

[18] *LIMC* Hesione 4 = Ketos 25; cf. Alexiades 1982: 51–3, Boardman 1987: 80, Papadopoulos and Ruscillo 2002: 216–17.

Fig. 3.1. *Heracles and Hesione fire arrows and throw rocks at the Kētos of Troy, as it rides inshore on a tsunami wave. Corinthian black-figure column-crater, c.560 BC. Boston MFA 63.420 = LIMC Hesione 3.* © Boston MFA.

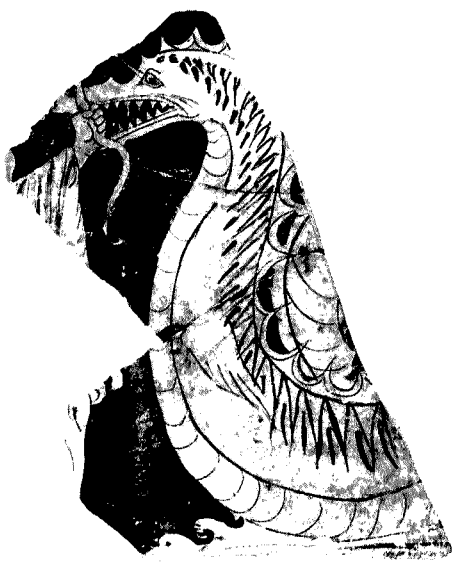


Fig.3.2. Heracles challenges the Kētos of Troy with his bow. Campanian red-figure calyx-crater, fragment, *c.*360–350 BC. Munich, Antikensammlungen 8724 = *LIMC* Hesione 5. © Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München.

Photo: Renate Kühling.

Campanian red-figure calyx crater preserves the front part of a sinuous *kētos* riding over the waves and confronted by Heracles' bow (Fig. 3.2).[19] So far as the literary sources are concerned, Valerius Flaccus is the only text to give us any detailed physical description of the *kētos*. His craggy-backed monster has eyes that flash, triple rows of teeth, and a thousand spreading coils that return over the sea it has already traversed, all of which terms are thoroughly characteristic of *drakontes*.[20] Philostratus' *kētos* has glaring eyes beneath an overhanging, spiny brow, a sharp snout with three rows of teeth, some of which are barbed, others of which project like fangs. Its evidently serpentine body projects from the sea at different points, like a series of islands, in classic Loch Ness monster style, and it has a tail with which it can throw the sea aloft.[21]

Laomedon's punishments always seem to take the form of the tight triad of infertility, flood, and *kētos*, but the tradition articulates the relationships between them in different ways. Hellanicus tells that the *kētos* itself destroyed both the people of Troy and the fruits of the land. The Lycophronian *Alexandra* explains that it achieved the latter by belching waves of brine over the land. Diodorus has the fruits of the land destroyed rather by an infertility or pestilence (*loimos*) sent by Apollo (a metaphorical wave, perhaps, but at any rate a most familiar form of vengeance for this god), with the people simultaneously devoured by the *kētos* come ashore. Ovid and Valerius Flaccus neaten the process: for the former the floods, for the latter, the infertility, comes first, and the *kētos* is then sent only to devour the sacrificial virgins that must be offered in order to remove the initial blight. Apollodorus gives us Apollo's infertility in combination with Poseidon's flood, and this flood carries the *kētos* onto the land, where it then devours people.[22] The earliest of these literary sources gives us a flood inside a *kētos*, the last a *kētos* inside a flood, but this latter articulation is actually already to be found in the earliest extant illustration of the Hesione episode, that of the *c.*575–550 BC Corinthian column-crater just mentioned (Fig. 3.1). Here the head of the *kētos* emerges from the midst of a vertical strip of dark paint, pointed at the top and inclining forwards. This is evidently intended to represent the monster ducking forward out of a surging wave of the flood that Poseidon has sent against Troy, as becomes clear when we compare the waves drawn beneath the breast of the Hesione *kētos* on the Campanian fragment of *c.*360–350 BC[23] and those drawn beneath the head of the *kētos* on the earliest vase to illustrate the parallel Andromeda episode (Fig. 3.4, *c.*575–550 BC).[24]

[19] *LIMC* Hesione 5.

[20] Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 497–505.

[21] Philostratus *Imagines* 12. Coleman 1983 unpersuasively views Manilius' description for a largely realistic one of an actual whale of the mystoceti class.

[22] Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 F26b; Lycophron *Alexandra* 470–8 (cf. Tzetzes ad loc.); Diodorus 4. 42 (so too First Vatican Mythographer 2. 34); Ovid *Metamorphoses* 11. 199–215 (seemingly followed by Servius at Virgil *Aeneid* 8. 157, though not elsewhere); Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 451–578. The Vatican Mythographers (First 2. 34–5, Second 220) seemingly suggest that plural *kētē* were sent against the city, but perhaps they are attempting to convey no more than a plurality of *kētos*-attacks.

[23] *LIMC* Hesione 5 (our Fig. 3.2).

[24] Discussion at Boardman 1987: 77, 1997: 732, 2002: 36–8, Mayor 2000*a*, 2000*b*: 158–62, Papadopoulos and Ruscillo 2002: 219. The Andromeda vase: *LIMC* Andromeda i no. 1. Conventional wisdom has read the dark strip of paint to indicate that the monster is emerging from a cave and being

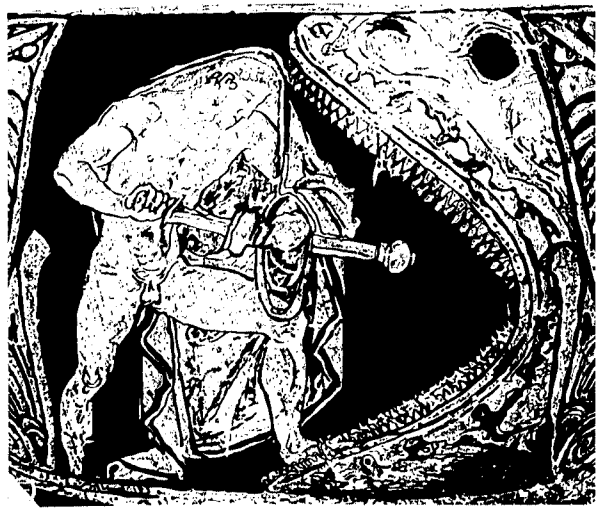


Fig. 3.3. Heracles disguises himself as the sacrificial Hesione to enter the mouth of the Kētos of Troy and kill it from within. Red-figure column-crater, *c.*350–325 BC. Perugia, Museo Nazionale = *LIMC* Hesione 6. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

The method Heracles uses to kill the *kētos* is of some interest. While some sources say nothing of it, or have Heracles killing it by an unimaginative combination of arrows, club, and rocks,[25] others have him finding a way to get inside the monster to kill it from within. And for this two methods are reported. According to the first, Heracles hid himself behind a defensive bulwark with a narrow entrance into which the *kētos* had to poke its head to get at him. The method is first explained by Hellanicus, but may well be implied already in the Homeric reference to Heracles' bulwark. Hellanicus proceeds to tell us that Heracles hacked his way out through the creature's flanks.[26] In the second method Heracles rather substitutes himself for Hesione as sacrifice, taking over her dress, so that the monster gobbles him down of its own accord. This method is first found on a fourth-century BC Etruscan red-figure crater, the name vase of the Hesione Painter (Fig. 3.3). Here a veiled Heracles strides into the gaping mouth of a jag-

driven back into it by Heracles and Hesione. But no such lair is referred to or is really compatible with the literary sources. One might preferably suggest that the scene of the image is the inside of the defensive bulwark, into which the *kētos* is peeping through its narrow entrance. But it is a difficulty for both these hypotheses that the *kētos*' head appears to float in space, disconnected from any body. With a consideration of this sort in mind, Mayor, followed by Boardman, reads the admittedly skeletal-looking *kētos*-head as a fossil skull, and sees the dark strip of paint as representing a rock face from which the fossil is projecting. She can even identify the fossil as belonging to a giant Miocene giraffe ('Samotherium'). The artist, she holds, is attempting to mount a sophisticated palaeontological argument, and to explain the monstrous fossil skulls he saw around him by associating them from the sort of mythical *kētos* faced by Heracles and Hesione.

[25] So Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 451–578; for the bow cf. *LIMC* Hesione 5 (our Fig. 3.2).

[26] Homer *Iliad* 20. 145–8; Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 F26b.

toothed but otherwise rather piscine *kētos* (only the head is shown) whilst unsheathing a sword.[27] It is then alluded to by the Lycophronian *Alexandra*, where we are told, metaphorically, that the monster draws into its throat a scorpion instead of the woodpecker it was expecting. The *Alexandra* also explains that Heracles then destroyed the creature by hacking at its liver, and that when he emerged from its belly his hair fell out, dissolved by its digestive juices.[28] The latter method especially puts us in mind of Menestratus of Thespiae, who substituted himself for the boy-sacrifice put out for the local *drakōn*, put on special clothing for the encounter, in his case a suit of hooks, and fed himself to the beast, losing his life, not just his hair, in the process. It is also strikingly similar to the Orkney folk-tale of Assipattle and the Stoor Worm, in which the hero sails into the sea-monster's mouth and down its gullet in a boat, and digs a hole in its liver into which he inserts a bucket-load of burning peat, winning the king's daughter Gem-de-Lovely in the process.[29]

THE *KĒTOS* OF ETHIOPIA, SLAIN BY PERSEUS

The myth of Perseus, Andromeda and the *kētos* of Ethiopia (Figs. 3.4, 3.5) may be summarized as follows, in an account that adheres closely to that of Apollodorus, itself almost certainly derived from that of the fifth-century BC Pherecydes. Cassiepeia, wife of king Cepheus of Ethiopia, boasts that her beauty is superior to that of the Nereids, whereupon they prevail upon Poseidon to send a flood and a *kētos* against Cepheus' land. Ammon prophesies that the land will be delivered from these attacks if Cepheus' daughter Andromeda is given to the *kētos* to eat, and Cepheus is accordingly compelled by his own people to give her to the monster. She is tied to a rock beside the sea for it, but Perseus, flying overhead on his winged sandals after decapitating Medusa, espies her from above and falls in love with her. He offers to kill the monster for Cepheus, if he will give him Andromeda's hand in marriage. Cepheus agrees. Perseus kills the monster by pelting it with rocks, or with his *harpē*, or by petrifying it with the Gorgon's head. Before he can leave with his bride, Perseus is challenged for her hand by Phineus, brother of Cepheus, to whom she has formerly been betrothed. Perseus petrifies him. The principal players in the tale, Perseus, Andromeda, Cepheus, Cassiepeia, and the *kētos* itself, are eventually catasterized (translated into constellations) by the gods.[30]

[27] *LIMC* Hesione no. 6; cf. Papadopoulos and Ruscillo 2002: 218.

[28] Lycophron *Alexandra* 31–6, 470–8, 951–5.

[29] For the text of the folk-tale see Marwick 1974: 139–44 and Simpson 1980: 137–41, with discussion at 78–9.

[30] Principal texts: Hesiod *Catalogue of Women* F135 MW; Pherecydes F12 Fowler; Herodotus 7. 61; Sophocles *Andromeda* F126–36 Pearson/*TrGF* (with arguments); Euripides *Andromeda* FF114–56 *TrGF*, *Archelaus* F228a *TrGF*; Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusae* 1009–135; Hellanicus *FGrH* 4 F59; Herodorus *FGrH* 31 F1; [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 15, 16, 17, 36; Lycophron *Alexandra* 834–46 (with Tzetzes on 836–9); Nicander *Alexipharmaka* 98–105; Livius Andronicus *Andromeda* (fragments); Ennius *Andromeda* (fragments); Accius *Andromeda* (fragments); Philodemus *Greek Anthology* 5. 132; Conon *FGrH* 26 F1; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4. 663–5. 268; Strabo C42–3, 75; Manilius 5. 504–634,

The earliest evidence for the story of Andromeda and the *kētos* is the Corinthian black-figure amphora of *c.*575–550 BC we mentioned in connection with the first Hesione vase, and it is clear from this that the basics of the canonical tale have already been established (Fig. 3.4).[31] The labelled figures of the *kētos*, Perseus, and Andromeda run left to right. As on the Hesione vase the *kētos*, of which we see only its massive head, curiously resembling that of a friendly Alsatian, is shown to be advancing inland together with the sea, represented by the rudimentary waves sketched beneath it. Perseus, his legs astride, launches round rocks at it with both hands, one to the fore and one behind, from a pile between his feet. He wears winged sandals and the *kibisis* hangs handbag-like from his outstretched arm: the episode is, then, from the first a coda to the Medusa story. Andromeda stands behind Perseus looking on. Her figure is partly lost, but the awkward arrangement of her arms suggests that they are tied.[32] Whilst the attempt to derive the Andromeda myth from the Canaanite-Ugaritic myth of Baal, Astarte, and Yam, has not been successful,[33] the potential impact of Near-Eastern iconography upon it, specifically in relation to this Corinthian image, deserves attention. A series of Neo-Assyrian cylinder-seals (10th- to 7th-century BC) from Nimrud show the god Marduk attacking the massive sea-serpent Tiamat. Marduk's limbs form a similar configuration to Perseus' on the Corinthian vase, although he is thrusting a sword forward towards the serpent with the hand in front, rather than throwing a stone with the hand behind. A helper stands behind him, as Andromeda stands behind Perseus. Between the two of them a constellation is represented by a series of dots, one of which hovers just above the god's rear hand, almost as if it is a stone he is about to throw. It seems that the constellation has been misinterpreted (or reinterpreted) by the tradition in which the Greek painter works and so has been translated into Perseus' stones. In other representations of the fight between Marduk and Tiamat, we may note, the god uses a sickle against the serpent-monster, the weapon that will become very much Perseus' own. Compelling as

834–46; Pomponius Mela 1. 11; Pliny *Natural History* 5. 69, 6. 182, 9. 11; Josephus *Jewish Wars* 3. 420; Antiphilus *Greek Anthology* 16. 147; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 4. 3; Hyginus *Fabulae* 64, *Astronomica* 2. 9–11, 31; Achilles Tatius 3. 6. 3–3. 7. 9; Pausanias 4. 35. 9; Lucian *Dialogues in the Sea* 14, *On the Hall* (*De Domo*) 22, 25, *How to Write History* 1; Philostratus *Imagines* 1. 29; scholia on Germanicus *Aratus* pp. 77–8, 98, 137–9, 173 Breysig; Heliodorus *Ethiopica* 4. 8, 10. 6, 10. 14; Lactantius Placidus *Narrationes* 4. 19, 5. 1; [Libanius] *Narrationes* 35–6; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 25. 123–42, 30. 264–77, 31. 8–25; John Malalas pp. 34–9 Dindorf; John of Antioch F6.18 (*FHG* iv. p. 544); First Vatican Mythographer 1. 72; George Cedrenus 1. 39–41. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Andromeda i, Perseus. Discussions: Roscher 1884–1937*b*, Glotz 1877–1919*b*, Wernicke 1894, Kuhnert 1897–1909, C. Robert 1920–6: ii. 222–45, Caterall 1937, Woodward 1937, Rathmann 1938, Langlotz 1951, Brommer 1955, Schauenberg 1960, 1981*a*, Hetzner 1963, K. M. Phillips 1968, Burck 1976, Alexiades 1982, Boardman 1987, 1997, Schefold and Jung 1988, J. E. M. Dillon 1990, Klimek-Winter 1993, Roccos 1994, Balty 1997, Ogden 2008*a*: 67–99.

[31] *LIMC* Andromeda i 1.

[32] Schauenberg 1960: 56 disputes that Andromeda's hands are tied.

[33] The case is made by Fontenrose 1959: 275–306, 390, 467; Morenz 1962, Burkert 1983*a*: 211, 1987: 28, 1992: 85, Schefold 1992: 90. It is founded upon the Astarte Papyrus of the eighteenth or nineteenth dynasty, *c.*1550–1200 BC, an Egyptian account of the Canaanite myth, in which Yam demands the sacrifice to himself of Astarte, the goddess of love, who may then serve as a prototype for Andromeda (trans. at *ANET*[3] 17–18, J. A. Wilson). However, the theory depends upon the untenable premise that the Andromeda tale was originally located in Phoenician Joppa, whereas it is in fact associated with Persia and Ethiopia long before its arrival there: see below.

Fig. 3.4. Perseus delivers a bound Andromeda from the Kētos of Ethiopia, as it rides in on the waves. He pelts it with rocks, whist retaining the head of the Gorgon in the *kibisis* on his arm. Corinthian black-figure amphora, *c.*575–550 BC. Berlin, Staatliche Museen F1652 = *LIMC* Andromeda i. 1 = Perseus 187. Redrawn by the author.

these correspondences are, what is borrowed here is the image-type, not the tale to which it corresponds. That said, the association of a constellation—for all that it is misconstrued or, again, reinterpreted, on the Corinthian vase—with a potential model for the representation of Andromeda's story is suggestive, given the catasterization for which the principal characters of the Perseus-and-Andromeda tale are destined.[34]

The extant literary record lags far behind. We know that the marriage of Perseus and Andromeda at least was mentioned in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, perhaps roughly contemporary with the vase. It is probable that Apollodorus' Ethiopian-set summary of the episode derives from that of Pherecydes (*c.*454 BC), but the earliest texts we know for sure to have mentioned the *kētos* are the *Andromeda* tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides.[35] The former play probably coincided with the flurry of Andromeda scenes on vases of *c.*450–440 BC, in which black-African servants, indicating an Ethiopian setting again, escort an Andromeda in oriental dress to her place of sacrifice, or Andromeda hangs bound between two posts (Fig. 3.5).[36] The play ended by looking forward to the catasterization of the principals.[37] Euripides' *Andromeda* of 412 BC is known principally from the

[34] A fine example is British Museum, AN 89589; illustrations at Fontenrose 1959 fig. 18 (opposite p. 148), Burkert 1987: 28, 33. Marduk uses a sickle against Tiamat: Hopkins 1934: 348.

[35] [Hesiod] *Catalogue of Women* F135 MW; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 4. 3; Sophocles *Andromeda* F126–36 Pearson/*TrGF* (with arguments); Euripides *Andromeda* F114–56 *TrGF*; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 4. 3.

[36] *LIMC* Andromeda i 2–6. Sophocles *Andromeda* F128a *TrGF* speaks of 'the unfortunate woman being hung out'. For Sophocles' *Andromeda* and its iconography see Petersen 1915: 606–17, Pearson 1917 and *TrGF* ad loc., Howe 1952: 218–27, Schauenberg 1960: 97–103, 1967*b*, K. M. Phillips 1968, J. E. M. Dillon 1990: 206, Klimek-Winter 1993: 23–54, Roccos 1994: 346, Balty 1997, Collard et al. 2004: 137, 147, Godard and De Caro 2007: 164–5 (no. 43).

[37] [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 16 and 36.

Fig. 3.5. Andromeda is pinned out for the Kētos of Ethiopia between posts in the Sophoclean configuration. Perseus, wielding his *harpē*, comes to her defence as the *kētos* attacks. Campanian bell-crater, *c.*375–350 BC. James Logie Memorial Collection inv. 41/57. © James Logie Memorial Collection and the University of Canterbury, Christchurch.

extended parody of it in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* of 411 BC. It too was set in Ethiopia. The fragments indicate that it featured an erotically charged encounter between Perseus and the bound Andromeda, with Perseus appealing to Eros to help him defeat the monster, since he had inspired him with love for the girl.[38] Some vases from *c.*400 BC onwards show Andromeda tied to the rock-arch entrance to a cave, and these seem to reflect the Euripidean Andromeda, who also had a conversation with the 'Echo' that dwelled in the cave behind her.[39] The earliest of these, a red-figure crater, is held to illustrate Euripides' play more

[38] Euripides *Andromeda* FF114–56 *TrGF*; Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusae* 1009–135. For reconstructions see E. Müller 1907, Howe 1952: 253–80, J. E. M. Dillon 1990: 226–31, Von Bubel 1991, Kilmek-Winter 1993: 55–315, Austin and Olson 2004: pp. lxii–lxiii, Collard, Cropp, and Gilbert 2004: 133–68, Wright 2005: 121–2. For the play's Ethiopian setting (which some have curiously doubted: e.g. Wright 2005: 129) see F147 *TrGF*, schol. Germanicus *Aratus* p. 77 Breysig and Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazusae* 1098 (parodying the play); note also Andromeda's Ethiopian context at Euripides *Archelaus* F228a *TrGF*. Our best synoptic view of the play and its action may be afforded by the ecphrasis at Philostratus *Imagines* 1. 29, several details of which seem to correspond tellingly with the fragments. Note also Antiphilus *Greek Anthology* 16. 147: 'the competiton set by Eros is the *kētos*'. Eros does indeed come to Perseus' aid on a fine Apulian *loutrophoros*-vase of *c.*350–340 BC, *LIMC* Perseus 189 = Godart and De Caro 2007: 190–1 no. 52, where he rides the *kētos* whilst Perseus grapples with it from the front (erotes or 'putti' are often found riding *kētē* more generally in decorative scenes, alongside the Nereids we have already mentioned: Boardman 1997: 731, 735–6). For eroticized depictions of the tied Andromeda in Greek and Roman art, see in particular *LIMC* Andromeda i 22–3, 32, 157, 53, 55, 75, 146a, 152. For the (almost sado-masochistic) equivalent in literature, see Manilius *Astronomica* 5. 542–73 (+514).

[39] The earliest is *LIMC* Andromeda i 8. See Klimek-Winter 1993: 108–18 and Collard, Cropp, and Gilbert 2004: 139–40. *Contra*, M. Phillips 1968.

closely than others. On this Andromeda is bound to a rock, surrounded by the figures of Perseus, Cepheus, Aphrodite, Hermes, and a woman who may represent either the chorus or Cassiepeia.[40] This play too anticipated the catasterizations.[41]

Ethiopia (which for the ancients stretched into the extreme west, and for Euripides had an Atlantic coast)[42] remained the principal location for the action throughout the Classical tradition, whilst Andromeda herself remained resolutely white.[43] But several variant locations for it were also found: Herodotus placed Andromeda in Persia, Perseus thereby (via his son by Andromeda, Perses) leaving his name to the land.[44] Second in prominence to Ethiopia was Joppa (Jaffa/Tel Aviv) first identified as Andromeda's home in the *Periplus* attributed to Scylax, composed in the late fourth century BC, perhaps partly on the basis of its name's similarity to that of Ethiopia (*Aith-iopē*, *Iopē*). The city avidly embraced the legacy and found one, if not two, sets of *kētos* bones to exhibit.[45] In the earlier first-century BC Philodemus contrived to transfer Andromeda to India.[46]

We have to wait for the Latin tradition for literary descriptions of the *kētos*. Ennius' *Andromeda* belonged to the later third or earlier second century BC. The fragments tell us that the sea monster 'was clothed in rugged rock, its scales rough with barnacles'.[47] The fullest set of literary indications of the form of Andromeda's *kētos* is found in Ovid's description. From this we learn that the *kētos* is again covered in barnacles, that it has a shoulder, which implies a forearm or a substantial fore-fin of some sort, and a fish-tail.[48] Manilius' description of his monster focuses on its massive coils, which cover the entire sea. It is able to propel itself high into the air, serpent-like, by rising up on these coils to bring the attack to Perseus as he flies across the sky.[49] Achilles Tatius describes his painted *kētos*

[40] See Klimek-Winter 1993: 108–18 and Collard, Cropp, and Gilbert 2004: 139–40. M. Phillips 1968 rather sees the development of the rock-arch iconography as originating in Italian vase painting, but he seems to underestimate the significance of Euripides' Echo.

[41] [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 17 (cf. 1. 15); cf. Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 11, Germanicus *Aratus* pp. 77–8, 98, 137–9, 173 Breysig.

[42] Euripides *Andromeda* F145 *TrGF*. For the western Ethiopians, see Homer *Odyssey* 1. 23–4, Palaephatus 31; cf. Klimek-Winter 1993: 258. These Ethiopians are appropriately close, therefore, to the home of the Gorgons from which Perseus arrives, which, according to some, from Hesiod *Theogony* 260–6 onwards, was located in the extreme west, the land of Night, adjacent to that of the Hesperides.

[43] For the action's Ethiopian location see [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 15, Deinias *FGrH* 306 F7, Strabo C42–3, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4. 669, Pliny *Natural History* 6. 182, Antiphilus at *Greek Anthology* 16. 147, Lucian *Dialogues in the Sea* 14, *On the Hall* 22, Philostratus *Imagines* 1. 29 (noting the paradox of Andromeda's whiteness), Heliodorus 4. 8. For the possibility that Andromeda's whiteness in the context of a black population was taken to be indicative of her illegitimacy, see Euripides *Andromeda* F141 *TrGF* (on which Collard, Cropp, and Gilbert 2004: 165 are unpersuasive) and Heliodorus 4. 8, with discussion at Ogden 2008*a*: 82–7.

[44] Herodotus 7. 61, 150.

[45] [Scylax] *Periplus* 104, Conon *FGrH* 26 F1, Pomponius Mela 1. 11, Pliny *Natural History* 9. 11. Pausanias 2. 10. 2 records that the the skull of a *kētos* was kept in the sanctuary of Asclepius in Sicyon. Did it derive from a whale or something else?

[46] Philodemus at *Greek Anthology* 5. 132; cf. Philostratus *Imagines* 1. 29.

[47] Ennius F4 at Ribbeck[3] i. pp. 30–2 = Warmington i. pp. 254–61.

[48] Ovid *Metamophoses* 4. 706–34.

[49] Manilius *Astronomica* 5. 584–5, 595–7.

thus: 'But the shadow of its body had been painted beneath the salty water, the ridges of its scales, the curves of its neck, its crest of spines, the coils of its tail. Its jaw was massive and long. It gaped open all the way down to the join of the shoulders, and then immediately came its belly.'[50]

The *kētos*' size is variously represented. The *c.*575–550 BC Corinthian amphora gives us only its head, but this is of a gratifyingly monstrous size, and belongs to an animal well capable of devouring the humans before it in a few bites.[51] But the artists of the imperial period seem to have felt on the one hand that it was important to show the *kētos* in full body, but on the other that it was a rather less interesting subject than the erotic encounter between Perseus and Andromeda. In consequence, they often represent it as a ridiculously tiny figure, even in foreground: it is reduced largely to the role of motif or attribute.[52] By contrast, the authors of the same age go to the other extreme and take advantage of the relative freedom of their medium (cf. our observations on literary descriptions of the Hydra and Typhon above) to describe monsters so vast that they could hardly be represented iconographically. Manilius' *kētos* is able to cover the entire sea with its body, dead or alive, and to vomit spray over the stars themselves.[53]

Perseus is credited with the deployment of a number of methods to kill the *kētos*. On the *c.*575–550 BC Corinthian amphora, as we have seen, he merely pelts it with rocks.[54] This is the method used by Hesione in the earliest image of her encounter with her own *kētos* on the Corinthian column-crater of similar date (whilst Heracles shoots arrows).[55] Perseus first deploys his *harpē* against his *kētos* either on a Caeretan hydria of *c.*520–510 BC (if it is he, as opposed to Heracles, that is portrayed here),[56] or otherwise on Italian vases of 350–340 BC[57] and a fragment of an Etruscan vase also of the fourth century BC. This last also represents the earliest evidence for Perseus' deployment of the obvious super-weapon he had to hand, the Gorgon's head, against the *kētos*: he threatens the *kētos* with the *harpē* in his right hand whilst swinging the Gorgon head in his left.[58] His use of the Gorgon-head against the *kētos* is prominent in imperial-period Greek accounts of the episode.[59] A third-century AD mosaic from Coimbria shows Perseus facing a *kētos* of the pathetic variety found in imperial art with the Gorgon head in his right hand and a spear in his left. The artist uses the opportunity afforded by colour

[50] Achilles Tatius 3. 6–7.

[51] *LIMC* Andromeda i 1. Compatibly with this, the Lycophronian *kētos* was large enough for Perseus to enter its mouth whole, *Alexandra* 834–46.

[52] e.g. *LIMC* Andromeda i 69, 73, 75, 84, 86, 89, 91.

[53] Manilius *Astronomica* 5. 504–634, 834–46.

[54] *LIMC* Andromeda i 1. [55] *LIMC* Hesione 3.

[56] *LIMC* Ketos 26 = Perseus no. 188 = Herakles 2844. For the Caeretan *hydria* see Boardman 1987: 80, 1997 ad loc., Papadopoulos and Ruscillo 2002: 218.

[57] *LIMC* Perseus 189–90.

[58] *LIMC* Perseus 192. J. E. M. Dillon 1990: 134 is therefore wrong to date the notion that the sea monster should have been fossilized only from the 1st century AD. Perseus deploys his *harpē* against the *kētos* also in the accounts of Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4. 691–734 and Manilius *Astronomica* 5. 834–46. Milne's 1956: 301 notion, that Perseus had attacked the *kētos* with spears on (lost) 5th-century BC Attic vases is speculative.

[59] Conon *FGrH* 26 F1 at Photius *Bibliotheca* no. 186 (rationalized), Antiphilus at *Greek Anthology* 16. 147, Achilles Tatius 3. 6. 3–3. 7. 9, Lucian *On the Hall* 22, *Dialogues in the Sea* 14, [Libanius] *Narrationes* 35, at viii p. 55 Forster, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 30. 264–77, 31. 8–25.

to show us that the fore part of the creature has already been petrified.[60] The Lycophronian *Alexandra* uniquely tells that Perseus killed the creature by wrecking its liver, which indicates that he credits him with precisely the same killing method he also attributes to Heracles with the *kētos* of Troy. One wonders how widespread this variant was: in his commentary on the text Tzetzes accuses the author of a drunken (!) confusion with the Hesione tradition.[61]

We may readily perceive an affinity between Perseus' two great serpentine foes, against both of whom he deploys his *harpē*. Already in the *Theogony* the Gorgons are the children of the archetypal *kētos*, Ceto (i.e. Kētō, simply the word turned into a female name). Indeed Pliny ostensibly makes a full identification between Andromeda's *kētos* and the mother of the Gorgons by giving it this same proper name.[62] Artists strived to combine *kētē* with Gorgons from an early stage. Of three sixth-century images we find, in the first, a gorgoneion with a *kētos* on its forehead,[63] in the second, a headless Gorgon whose arms consist of a pair of *kētē* and, in the third, the upper body of a Gorgon mounted on the neck of a *kētos*.[64] It is a curiosity that the names of Medusa and Andromeda are both built on the same verbal element, *med-*, 'rule'.[65]

SCYLLA, SLAIN BY HERACLES AND CHALLENGED BY ODYSSEUS

Scylla (Fig. 3.6) is never described as a *kētos* or as a *drakōn* or *drakaina*; she is always defined by her own proper name. But her form, particularly as represented in art, where she boasts one or more spiny, serpentine fish-tails, is manifestly that of a composite *kētos*. However, careful consideration of her description in Homer suggests that she may in origin have been more of a *drakōn* after all.

Her canonical story may be summarized as follows. She was either born as a serpentine monster from other monsters, or she was initially a fair nymph transformed by the maleficent drugs of her love-rival Circe. Taking up residence in a cave on a high crag on the Rhegium side of the Straits of Messina, opposite the whirlpool Charybdis on the Sicilian side, she snatched six sailors with each of her heads from every boat that sailed by. She was killed by Heracles, but restored to life by her father Phorcys, with fire, somehow. And so it is that she lived on to attack Odysseus and his crew.[66]

[60] *LIMC* Perseus 194.

[61] Lycophron *Alexandra* 834–42, with Tzetzes ad loc.

[62] Hesiod *Theogony* 270–6; Pliny *Natural History* 5. 69.

[63] *LIMC* Ketos 12, 19, 350.

[64] The parallelism between Perseus' two monster fights: cf. Wilk 2000: 26–7. For the possibility that the Gorgons could be conceived of as sea-nymphs, see Krauskopf and Dahlinger 1988: 286. The identity between Andromeda's *kētos* and Ceto mother of the Gorgons is sponsored by Mack 2002: 588, 601 n. 23. For Ceto herself as a sea monster in art, see Boardman 1987: 78, Papadopoulos and Ruscillo 2002: 207.

[65] Cf. Ogden 2008*a*: 59–60.

[66] Principal texts: Homer *Odyssey* 12. 73–126, 234–62 (with Eustathius ad loc., esp. on 12. 85, p. 1714, and with scholl. on 12. 85, 89, 124), Hesiod F262 MW, Stesichorus F220 *PMG*/Campbell,

Fig. 3.6. Scylla. Red-figure Boeotian bell-crater, fragment, *c.*430 BC. Musée du Louvre CA 1341 = *LIMC* Scylla i 69. © RMN / Hervé Lewandowski.

The earliest Scylla narrative, and the fullest, is that of the *Odyssey*. From her cave high in a crag towering over the strait, Scylla, whose default diet is that of the dolphins and the 'dog-fish' (*kynes*: sharks?) below, remorselessly seizes six sailors from each passing vessel, one with each of her six heads. This fate duly befalls Odysseus' crew, as he follows Circe's advice and navigates closer to Scylla's side so as to avoid the total destruction Charybdis offers his vessel. The Homeric narrative is remarkably cinematic at this point: Odysseus turns around from his anxious surveillance of Charybdis to see the feet and arms of his crewmen hanging in the air as they are hoisted out of his boat by Scylla. There is no indication here that Scylla had ever been anything other than the monster she is.[67]

Acusilaus F42 Fowler, Anaxilas *Neottis* F22 K-A, Palaephatus 20, Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 825–31 (with scholl.), 922–3, Semos *FGrH* 396 F22, Lycophron *Alexandra* 44–9, 648–51 (with schol. on 45–6), Dionysius of Samos *FGrH* 15 F2; Virgil *Aeneid* 3. 420–32, 6. 286, Propertius 4. 4. 39–40, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 13. 898–14. 74, Apollodorus *Epitome* 7. 20–1, Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 2, Hyginus *Fabulae* 125. 14, 151, praef. 39, 199, Themistius *Orations* 22. 279b–d, Servius on Virgil 3. 420, *Aeneid* Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 2. 12. 6, schol. Plato *Republic* 588c. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Skylla i. Discussions: Waser 1894, J. Schmidt 1913, Shepard 1940: 43–8, 75–8, Boosen 1986: 5–63, Andreae and Conticello 1987, Buitron-Oliver 1992: 136–53, Gantz 1993: 258, 731–3, Jentel 1997, Andreae 1999.

[67] Homer *Odyssey* 12. 73–126, 234–62. The action is first explicitly located at the straits of Messina at Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 825–31; thereafter Lycophron *Alexandra* 44–9, 64851, with schol. 456 (specifying the Rhegium side), Virgil *Aeneid* 3. 420–32.

The second major limb of her tradition, which made her a humanoid nymph transformed into a monstrous shape by Circe in the context of their rivalry for the love of Glaucus, is first attested in the third century BC. Athenaeus tells that a poetess of this age, Hedyle of Samos, composed a poem called *Scylla* in which Glaucus was in love with her.[68] The full tale is first preserved at length by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* of AD 8. According to this the Triton-formed sea-god Glaucus falls in love with the fair maiden Scylla, but she scorns his advances. Glaucus turns to Circe and implores her to use her love magic to win Scylla for him, but as he makes his request Circe herself falls in love with him and resolves to remove her rival for Glaucus' affections with a far different sort of magic. She sprinkles deleterious drugs in the inlet bay where Scylla is wont to come and bathe. When she has waded in up to her waist, she sees herself transformed into a mass of barking dogs and flees back to the land before the remainder of her is changed too. It is, accordingly, out of revenge towards Circe that Scylla devours the crew of Circe's favourite Odysseus. Ovid finishes his tale with the information that Scylla was then subject to a further, final transformation, for which he gives no context: into a rock, which continues to constitute a hazard for sailors in the strait (cf. the *kētos* of Ethiopia, transformed into a rock by Perseus with the Gorgon-head).[69] We cannot doubt that this episode was initially developed as an aetiology for the canonical form that had been developed for Scylla in art from the mid fifth century BC (Fig. 3.6). The scholia to the *Alexandra* and to Virgil know several variant accounts of the transformation episode: Glaucus' advances were spurned by Scylla, so that he asked Circe to transform her; Poseidon's advances were spurned by her, with the result that he transformed her himself; Scylla did indeed sleep with Poseidon, whereupon Amphitrite became envious and poisoned the waters of a spring in which Scylla washed. The last variant seems to bring us particularly close to the tradition that Athene turned Medusa's hair to snakes after she slept with Poseidon.[70]

Our first trace of the third limb to the Scylla tradition comes with the second-century BC *Alexandra*. This alludes to Heracles killing Scylla, described both as a dog and as a bull-slaying lioness, and to her father restoring her to life by burning her flesh with torches. The older scholia to the text and those to Homer, who cite the Hellenistic Dionysius of Samos, amplify this. They tell that Scylla had devoured some of the cattle (hence 'bull-slaying') that Heracles was driving after taking them from Geryon, and that he had in turn destroyed her (the tale resembles that of Heracles' encounter with Cacus and, more to the point, that of

[68] Athenaeus 297b; cf. *SH* no. 456.

[69] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 13. 898–14. 74. For the rock see also Sallust *apud* Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 3. 420. This tradition had already been artfully appealed to by Propertius in a poem published soon after 16 BC, 4. 4. 39–40: 'What surprise is it if Scylla raged against her father's hair, and her white loins were transformed into fierce dogs?' Propertius knowingly conflates our Scylla with Scylla the daughter of Nisus, who betrayed her city of Megara by cutting a lock of her father's hair: for the story see Aeschylus *Choephoroe* 613–22, [Virgil] *Ciris*, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 8. 6–151, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 15. 8, Pausanias 1. 19. 4, 2. 34. 7, Hyginus *Fabulae* 198, 242, schol. Euripides *Hippolytus* 1200, schol. Lycophron *Alexandra* 650; for the artful confusion between the two Scyllas in other Latin poets, see [Virgil] *Ciris* 54–91, Virgil *Eclogues* 6. 74–7, Ovid *Ars Amatoria* 1. 331–2. Discussion at Gantz 1993: 257–8.

[70] Servius on Virgil *Eclogues* 6. 74, *Aeneid* 3. 420, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 45–6.

his encounter with Herodotus' Scythian Echidna). But her father, Phorcys, had then restored her to life either by warming her body with torches or actually by burning it with them, and so calling back her soul from Hades. Perhaps the odd revivification story was developed to resolve the paradox of Scylla being slain by the (inevitable) Heracles and yet somehow still being alive to challenge the Odysseus of a later generation.[71]

Scylla enters the iconographic record only in the mid fifth century BC. From this point images of her are copious though relatively conservative, with some very fine individual examples. She is a (usually nude) maiden down to the waist. Thereafter she has the long, coiling, serpentine fish-tail of a *kētos*, or a pair of these, or on one late occasion three, often with rows of fins or spines along the top. Between one and three dog-heads, often with accompanying sets of forelegs, project in front from roughly the point of the join (compositions including six dog-heads, which the Homeric poems might have invited, would have been difficult). In some of the earlier examples of Scylla's iconography dogs sprout from her shoulders rather than her midriff. She is often shown brandishing a rudder, a trident, a sword (oddly), or a rock.[72] In five fourth-century BC images from southern Italy her two piscine tails end in *kētos*-heads.[73] We may note also that a small group of images of Scylla from third-century BC southern Italy bestows upon her a pair of wings à la Typhon.[74]

But it is clear that the Scylla of the *Odyssey* has a rather different form, number of heads aside.[75] Indeed there is much about Homer's description to suggest that Scylla is closer to a *drakōn* than to a *kētos*. Let us note first that, although overlooking and fishing in the sea, Homer's Scylla is emphatically land-based, dwelling in a cave on a high crag: in this regard she strongly resembles the great *drakontes* Ladon, Python, Typhon, the Serpent of Ares, and Lamia-Sybaris (Ch. 4).[76] His physical description of her focuses upon the inordinately long necks behind each of her six heads. She sits in her cave so high in its crag that an arrow cannot be shot up to it. From there she is able to let her heads down on

[71] Lycophron *Alexandra* 44–9, 648–51, with scholl. at 45–6 schol. Homer *Odyssey* 12. 85, incorporating Dionysius of Samos *FGrH* 15 F12. The Cacus and Scythian Echidna comparisons: Fontenrose 1959: 97.

[72] *LIMC* Skylla i *passim*. Fifth-century BC examples are nos. 2–3, 8–9, 12–13, 19, 69, 75; amongst these the single-tailed variety predominates. Dogs-sprouting-from-shoulders type: nos. 1–4, 'type A' for Jentel 1997: 1145. Three tails: no. 34 (*c.* AD 139). It is the canonical Scylla of iconography that is described by Virgil *Aeneid* 3. 420–32: above the waist she is a fair-breasted maiden, below it a vast *pistrix*, with dolphin-tails and wolves jutting forth from her belly. It is unclear which of these components Virgil imagines he is omitting when he refers vaguely to *Scyllae biformes* at 6. 286. See also Themistius *Orationes* 22. 279b–d and schol. Plato *Republic* 588c for literary descriptions of Scylla as she is known from the iconography.

[73] *LIMC* Skylla i 22 (Tarentine mirror), 50ab, 70ab (Apulian gourds), with Jentel 1997 ad locc. and Ustinova 2005: 198 n. 76, both of whom misleadingly, for our purposes, describe the heads as those of 'dragons'.

[74] *LIMC* Skylla i 73b, 76, 81. It is unclear whether there are any (or ever were any) representations of Scylla as a maiden before her transformation. Two possible examples may be modern forgeries: *LIMC* Skylla i 83–4.

[75] The point is made clearly and incisively by Themistius *Orationes* 22. 279b–d.

[76] The Hellenistic Dionysius of Samos *FGrH* 15 F12 was to say, intriguingly, that her body was fused with the rock of the cave in which she dwelled.

their necks to snatch up sailors from vessels passing below. In this she is explicitly compared to a fisherman letting down his line (we are reminded of the huge Laestrygones who literally fish Odysseus' men from the tops of their crags).[77] Homer further tells that the part of Scylla that is visible makes up only half her length, so we must assume that an equally elongated body lies behind these necks. There is no indication of any upright maiden-torso with a seventh head. So far, in overall configuration, her body would appear to be strongly anguiform, and it is noteworthy that a scholium explicitly compares her form as described in the *Odyssey* to that of the Hydra.[78] Let us recall that the earliest extant images of the Hydra, two bronze fibulas of *c.*700 BC, give her precisely six heads, and already have her assisted by the crab, which ought to be indicative of a marine context.[79] Homer does not tell us that Scylla's heads are those of dogs. The only formal detail we are given of them is that they contain three rows of teeth each. From the point of view of the subsequent tradition, this would become characteristic of *kētē* or *drakontes* alike: they are sported, for example, both by the *kētos* of Troy[80] and by the Serpent of Ares.[81] So far, Homer's Scylla seems to resemble a *drakōn* primarily, rather than a *kētos*. The impression is further enhanced by Palaephatus' summary of what he takes to be the canonical version of her myth, in which he gives her the body of a snake (*ophis*),[82] and by Dionysius of Samos' observation that she had the fiery (*pyroeideis*) eyes characteristic of *drakontes* (Ch. 6).[83] But Homer's Scylla cannot, after all, have been a pure (if multiple) *drakōn* in form, for we are also told that she had twelve feet (*podes*). These are described as *aōroi*, the meaning of which adjective remains obscure to us in this context, as it evidently was to the ancient scholars who tried to explain it.[84] The coupling of twelve legs with six heads may indicate that the legs were thought of as somehow associated in pairs with each of her heads. At any rate, the artists seem subsequently to have taken their cue from such a supposition.

Scylla no doubt acquired her dog-heads in the later tradition because Homer describes her cry as being only as loud as that of a newborn puppy (*skylax*). The description is awkwardly inappropriate for such a terrible monster, and of this the poet seems self-consciously aware, but his primary purpose in making the claim is to suggest an etymology for her name. In fact, if derived from any Greek word, her name would more reasonably be associated with the verb *skyllō*, which, in its first attested usage, in Aeschylus, describes the action of fish in tearing at dead bodies: what better name for a voracious predator that fed itself from the sea?[85] As we have seen, from the mid fifth century BC the artists followed the cue they thought

[77] Homer *Odyssey* 10. 124.

[78] Schol. Homer *Odyssey* 12. 89.

[79] *LIMC* Herakles 2019–20.

[80] Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 497–505.

[81] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 34.

[82] Palaephatus 20.

[83] Dionysius of Samos *FGrH* 15 F12.

[84] Schol. Homer *Odyssey* 12. 89 offers the following explanations, some with (unpersuasive) etymological justifications: 'coiling', 'spiralling', 'octopus-like', 'without bones and joints', 'insubstantial', 'weak', 'stiff', 'immobile', 'of varying lengths', 'fore-', 'resistless', 'cruel', 'wild'. See Heubeck and Hoekstra 1989 ad loc. and Chantraine 2009 s.v. ἄωροι. Beekes 2010 s.v. ἄωροι ventures 'unsleeping' (after van Windekens), which is arbitrary, but would suit a creature akin to a *drakōn* (Ch. 6).

[85] Aeschylus *Persians* 577. More generally, the term signifies 'to vex'. Cf. Frisk 1960–72 s.v. σκύλαξ.

they found here in Homer to give Scylla dog-heads, but now in conjunction with *kētos* tails. In due course Scylla could be described as 'dog' *tout court*, as in a fragment of the fourth-century comic poet Anaxilas.[86] Perhaps, later again, it was the model of Scylla that persuaded the Lycophronian *Alexandra* to refer twice to the pure *kētos* of Troy as a dog.[87]

Scylla's genealogy was contentious from an early stage, though all claims made about her origin presuppose that she was born in monstrous form from the first.[88] In line with the progression we have noted between Scylla's representation in Homer and her first appearances in art, the earlier genealogies seek to relate her to a *drakōn*, whereas the later ones build connections to the sea for her, and so suggest rather that she is a *kētos*. Homer mentions a mother only, one Crataeis, a name signifying, undiagnostically, 'Powerful'.[89] But three archaic fragments give her anguiforms for mother: Stesichorus assigns the role to Lamia, whilst the Hesiodic *Great Ehoeae* and Acusilaus of Argos (the latter writing supposedly before the Persian wars) assign it to Hecate, with the *Great Ehoeae* identifying Phorbas as father and Acusilaus Phorcys. Both these mothers seem to anticipate Scylla's canonical form in the subsequent iconographic tradition. As we have seen, Lamia was typically visualized as an anguipede, a maiden above and a serpent below, and the same was also true of Hecate. But the latter also, according to the earliest extant image of her (*c.*470 BC), had additional dog-heads projecting in front from approximately the point of the join (Ch. 7): the congruence with the canonical Scylla of art is striking.[90] Whilst Ascuilaus' father Phorcys seems to bring us back to the sea, we should not forget that for the *Theogony* Phorcys and Ceto are the ultimate progenitors of the great *drakontes*.[91] Hellenistic authors seek to make accommodations with the earlier conflicting claims, whilst feeling it important to maintain Scylla's link to the sea. Apollonius accepts from Acusilaus that Scylla's parents were Phorcys and Hecate, but diplomatically resolves the conflict with Homer by making Crataeis a byname of Hecate.[92] The antiquarian Semus of Delos (*c.*200 BC) resolved the conflict in a different way. He identified Crataeis as Scylla's mother, but then made Hecate into Crataeis' mother in turn, with another sea-god, Triton, as her father (and with the cipher-figure Deimos,

[86] Anaxilas *Neottis* F22 K-A (*apud* Athenaeus 558a–e) compares a range of Athenian courtesans to various mythological monsters. Here Scylla is a 'dog of the sea' (*ποντία κύων*); no doubt she is so represented in part because from the time of Homer onwards *kyōn* had also signified 'shameless woman' (e.g. *Iliad* 6. 355, 356). Scylla is also described here as three-headed. The latter detail is unique in literature (though not, as we have seen, iconography); it is perhaps determined by Anaxilas' comparison of Scylla to one Nannion, who has strangled two of her lovers and is on the look-out for a third.

[87] Lycophron *Alexandra* 31–6, 470–8.

[88] Cf. Gantz 1993: 731–2.

[89] Homer *Odyssey* 12. 134–6; cf. J. Schmidt 1913: 648–50.

[90] Stesichorus F220 *PMG*/Campbell (he seemingly offered her a father too, but the text is unfortunately corrupt at the key point: it may have been Poseidon); Hesiod F262 MW; Acusilaus F42 Fowler. For Lamia and her form see Ch. 2. The early image of Hecate: *LIMC* Erinys 7 = Hekate 95; as with Scylla, perhaps, the sound of Hecate's dogs precedes her: Lucian *Philopseudes* 22, 24; see further Ch. 7. Schol. Homer *Odyssey* 12. 124 tells that (otherwise undefined) *magoi* too called Scylla's mother Hecate; what use *magoi* had for Scylla in their lore is unclear.

[91] Hesiod *Theogony* 270–336.

[92] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 825–31.

'Terror', being given the role of Scylla's own father).[93] Apollodorus gives Scylla Crataeis for mother and Phorcus (a variant of Phorcys) for father but, à la Apollonius, offers a byname for him. The manuscripts' 'Trienus' is thought to be a corruption, most probably of 'Triton', but possibly of 'Typhon'.[94] The latter possibility is given credibility by Hyginus, who on three occasions derives Scylla from the most famous and established pair of *drakōn*-progenitors, Typhon and Echidna (themselves the children of Phorcys and Ceto).[95] The canonical Scylla could also be said to resemble both Typhon and Echidna in form: the former with his humanoid upper body, his bottom half of countless *drakōn*-tails, his additional animal heads, and his wings; the latter with her beautiful-nymph upper body and her anguipede bottom half.[96]

THE *DRAKONTES* SENT AGAINST LAOCOON

In contrast to all the other *drakontes* and *kētē* considered so far, the *drakontes* sent against Laocoon and his children (Fig. 3.7) are neither slain nor overwhelmed, but they are at least, like the others, marauders against humans. They are of interest for several reasons, not the least being the fact that they operate in a pair (like the *drakontes* sent against baby Heracles) and the light they shed on the cult of Apollo Thymbraeus. But their prime interest lies in the fact that they are shown to behave in a most peculiar way, swimming over the sea to attack Laocoon. This, together with other inconsistencies in the Laocoon tradition, alerts us to the fact that the canonical Laocoon tale is the result of a somewhat awkward amalgam of a traditional-style *kētos*-attack narrative with not one but two types of traditional *drakōn*-narrative. Each of these three narrative types can be associated with one of the three deities variously said to lie behind the attack.

The canonical variants of the Laocoon myth may be summarized as follows. Laocoon is Troy's priest of Thymbraean Apollo, but he is chosen by lot to act as the (wanting) priest of Poseidon when the Trojans finally decide to sacrifice again to the god, after the wooden horse deceives them into thinking that the Greeks have abandoned Troy. Laocoon warns the Trojans that the wooden horse is a trick, whereupon a pair of *drakontes* come breasting their way across the sea from an island off the coast of Troy, either from Calydnae or from Tenedos, where the Greek fleet is hiding. They devour one of Laocoon's children, Thymbraeus and Antiphas, or both of them, or one of them and Laocoon himself, or all three together. They have been sent either by Apollo or Athene, or possibly Poseidon. After eating, they are transformed into humans with the names Porcis (or Porces or Porceus, 'Net-Fisherman') and Chariboea ('Graceful Ox'), or they disappear into Apollo's temple, or they enter Athene's temple, attach themselves to her statue and become one with it, or they disappear into the earth. Aeneas takes

[93] Semos of Delos *FGrH* 396 F22.

[94] Apollodorus *Epitome* 7. 20–1; a third possibility is 'Tyrrhenus', i.e. 'Italian', appropriately enough.

[95] Hyginus *Fabulae* 125. 14, 151, Praef. 199. On a fourth occasion, Praef. 39, he gives her completely different parents, the Giant Pallas and the river Styx.

[96] For the form of Echidna, see Hesiod *Theogony* 295–305.

Fig. 3.7. The pair of serpents coils around the statue of Apollo Thymbraeus, leaving the half-eaten remains of Laocoon's children beneath. Antiope attacks the snakes with an axe. Laocoon grieves. Apollo, in person, attends. Lucanian bell-crater, *c.*430–425 BC. *LIMC* Laokoon 1. © Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig inv. Lu 70.

Photo: Andreas Voegelin.

Laocoon's death as a portent of doom for Troy, and abandons the city with his retinue.[97]

The earliest source known to have referred to the tale is the perhaps early seventh-century Arctinus in his *Iliou Persis*. Proclus' summary of this poem tells that as the Trojans were prematurely celebrating the departure of the Greeks two *drakontes* appeared and killed Laocoon and one of his two sons, a bad portent that persuaded Aeneas and his retinue to slip off to Ida.[98] Three substantial literary accounts of the episode survive from later in the ancient world: those of Virgil, Petronius, and Quintus Smyrnaeus, with Petronius' being a piece of doggerel

[97] Principal texts: Arctinus *Iliou Persis*, as summarized by Proclus *Chrestomathia*; Bacchylides F9 SM; Sophocles *Laocoon* FF370–7 *TrGF*; hexameter fragment by —*kandros*, almost certainly Nicander, quoted in a commentary to an unknown tragedy in a 1st-century BC papyrus, *P.Oxy.* 2812 = Adepsota F721 *TrGF*; Euphorion F70 Powell = 95 Lightfoot; Lycophron *Alexandra* 347; Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 199–231; Petronius 89; Pliny *Natural History* 36. 37; Apollodorus *Epitome* 5. 17; Hyginus *Fabulae* 135; Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1. 48. 2; Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 449–97; Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 201; Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 344–7. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Laokoon. Discussions: Kleinknecht 1944, Knox 1950, Simon 1984, 1992, Himmelmann 1991, Gantz 1993: 646–9. The claim of Mitropoulou 1977: 47 that the *drakōn*-pair are Erinyes is without merit.

[98] Proclus *Chrestomathia*, summary of Arctinus *Iliou Persis*. One of the most variable elements in the tradition is the question of whom the serpents actually did kill: Laocoon himself and one of his sons (Arctinus as cited, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 344–7); Laocoon's two sons (Sophocles *Laocoon* F373 *TrGF*, Apollodorus *Epitome* 5. 17, Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 449–97); a single son of Laocoon (Nicander [?] at Adepsota F721 *TrGF*); Laocoon himself and both of his sons (Euphorion F70 Powell = 95 Lightfoot, Petronius 89, Hyginus *Fabulae* 135, from the last of whom alone we learn that the sons were named Antiphas and Thymbraeus, with the latter name, of course, signifying a connection to Apollo Thymbraeus; cf. Kruse 1937*b*).

contrived for satirical effect: with a cloying excess of pathos, it is told how each child tries to fight off the serpent attacking his twin as he himself is devoured.[99]

For all that these serpents swim over the sea, and according to an anonymous tragic fragment were even reared in it,[100] they are never described as *kētē*. The Greek sources repeatedly, from Arctinus onwards, describe them as *drakontes*.[101] The Latin sources, compatibly, repeatedly apply the equivalent term *dracones* to them,[102] whilst the more generic snake-terms *angues* and *serpentes* are also used.[103] Despite the fame of the baroque *avant-la-lettre* Vatican Laocoon statue-group, with its miniaturized-adult children,[104] the appearances of his story in the iconographic record are infrequent: *LIMC* can list only nine entries, and in all cases the serpents, as in the case of the Vatican group (which, it should be noted, is partly restored) are emphatically *drakontes* in form. The earliest image is on a South Italian bell-crater of *c.*430–425 BC, and here the *drakontes* are of traditional type with distinctively long beards (Fig. 3.7).[105] On a fragment from another South Italian vase, of *c.*380–370 BC, we can see just one of the *drakōn* heads, and it is crested.[106] And the literary descriptions are those of traditional *drakontes*. Virgil and Petronius give them blood-red crests, fiery eyes, and black venom.[107] This red crest, in conjunction with the way in which Virgil seemingly describes the serpents as coiling vertically, Catherine-wheel-like, as they pass over the sea, suggests that he has in mind *drakontes* of precisely similar configuration to that found, rampant, coiling vertically and with striking red crest and beard, on the most magnificent vase image to survive of the Serpent of Ares (Fig. 1.6).[108] When Quintus Smyrnaeus describes the two *drakontes* as 'of the brood of Typhon' he seemingly relates them, directly or indirectly, to the other great marauding *drakontes* of Greek myth.[109]

We shall proceed by looking at the elements of this narrative complex that belong to each of the three deities in question, beginning with what might be termed 'Apollo's story'. The temple of Apollo Thymbraeus, Strabo tells us, stood

[99] Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 199–231, Petronius *Satyricon* 89, Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 447–97.

[100] Adespota F721 *TrGF*, on the basis of the oddly reconstructed ὁ Θυμβρα[ῖος τοὺς] ἄλε ἔθρεψε δράκοντας . . .

[101] Arctinus *Iliou Persis*, as summarized by Proclus *Chrestomathia*, Adespota F721 *TrGF*, Apollodorus *Epitome* 5. 17, Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 449–97.

[102] Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 225, Pliny *Natural History* 36. 37, Hyginus *Fabulae* 135, Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 201 (incorporating Euphorion F70 Powell = 95 Lightfoot).

[103] *Angues*: Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 204 (*immensis orbibus angues*; cf. the wordplay at 211, *visu exsangues*), Petronius 89. *Serpentes*: Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 214, Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 201 (incorporating Bacchylides F9 SM.).

[104] Pliny *Natural History* 36. 37 tells that the Vatican group graced the palace of the emperor Titus, and was the work of a trio of Rhodian sculptors, Hagesander, Polydorus, and Athenodorus. Simon 1984 accepts that the Vatican group is indeed the genuine item as Pliny asserts. Others consider it to be an early-imperial copy of a mid-Hellenistic bronze original, whilst Himmelmann 1991 dissociates it from the piece discussed by Pliny altogether. Note also the discussions collected in Althaus 1968. For the group's artistic reception in the modern period, see Andreae 1989.

[105] *LIMC* Laokoon 1. [106] *LIMC* Laokoon 2.

[107] Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 206–7 (blood-red crests), 210 (fiery eyes: *ardentisque oculos suffecti sanguine et igni*), 221 (black venom), Petronius 89 (crests, shining eyes).

[108] *LIMC* Kadmos i 25.

[109] Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 451–2.

50 stades from Troy at the confluence of the rivers Thymbraeus and Scamander.[110] It is he that is identified as the sender of the snakes according to Apollodorus and Hyginus, and this notion was probably present and prominent in the literary tradition already from the age of our earliest source, Arctinus' *Iliou Persis*: he describes the killing as a portent (*teras*), which is suggestive of Apollo. Euphorion seemingly tells that Laocoon was punished for having defiled a statue of this god, whose priest he was, by having sex with his wife Antiope in front of it. Bacchylides may already have had the same story, since he had cause to mention Laocoon's wife in connection with the coming of the serpents. Although Quintus Smyrnaeus' serpents are sent by Athene, they disappear, after their work, into a sanctuary of Apollo on the Trojan acropolis (but obviously this shrine cannot be identified with that of Thymbraean Apollo's sanctuary on the Trojan plain). At the end of the tradition Tzetzes knew—interestingly—that the serpents devoured the sons of Laocoon actually in the temple of Thymbraean Apollo itself.[111]

The earliest iconographic evidence for Laocoon, that of the two vases from South Italy, also ties him and his serpent-fate to Thymbraean Apollo and his temple. On the first, the bell-crater of *c.*430–425 BC, the two long-bearded serpents encircle a cult statue of Apollo Thymbraeus, at the foot of which rest the delightfully dismembered body-parts of a single child. The statue is approached by an axe-wielding woman, evidently Lacoon's wife Antiope, and Laocoon himself, clutching his head in grief. Behind them Apollo in person, armed with bow, watches impassively (Fig. 3.7).[112] On the second, the fragment of *c.*380–370 BC, the snakes again entwine the statue of Apollo Thymbraeus, one of them munching winningly on an arm, whilst two feet await its attention.[113]

Excursus 1: Thymbraean Apollo, a forgotten serpent-god

Thymbraean Apollo was indeed a wholly appropriate sender of the serpents, for miraculous serpents dwelled in his temple, as is attested by two further traditions, those pertaining to the transformation of Helenus and Cassandra into prophets and those pertaining to the death of Troilus.

As to the first of these traditions, Tzetzes and the Homeric scholiasts report that the twins Helenus and Cassandra were as babes somehow left overnight in the temple of Apollo Thymbraeus, whereupon a pair of *drakontes* licked out their ears and so gave them the gift of prophecy.[114] Let us note at once that, in common with

[110] Strabo C598; cf. Hesychius and Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. *Θύμβρα*, Eustathius on Homer *Iliad* 3. 104, from whom we learn that in Roman times the river Thymbraeus was held to have given its name to the river of the new Troy, Rome, the Tiber (Thymbris). See Kruse 1937*a*.

[111] Apollodorus *Epitome* 5. 17; Hyginus *Fabulae* 135; Arctinus *Iliou Persis*, as summarized by Proclus *Chrestomathia*; Euphorion F70 Powell = 95 Lightfoot; Bacchylides F9 SM; Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 480–2; Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 344–7. We may note also that at Statius *Thebaid* 1. 643 Corroebus addresses Delphic Apollo as 'Thymbraean' after having killed the anguiform Lamia that god had sent against Argos.

[112] *LIMC* Laokoon 1.

[113] *LIMC* Laokoon 2; cf. Gantz 1993: 648–9.

[114] Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* introduction (partly rationalized); scholl. Homer *Iliad* 6. 76a (*drakontes*), 7. 44.

the Laocoon tale, we find here again both twins and, in Tzetzes' version at any rate, a pair of snakes. The implication is that the friendly snakes in question are resident in Thymbraean Apollo's sanctuary. The extant sources for this particular myth are late, to be sure, but the general notion that serpents should be able to bestow prophecy upon humans by cleaning out their ears was certainly an old one. It was associated with Melampus, who was also under the protection of Apollo, from as early as the Hesiodic *Great Ehoeae*. This tells how Melampus reared the orphaned children of a *drakōn*, and how in gratitude they licked out his ears and similarly bestowed the gift of prophecy upon him. Apollodorus specifies that the snakes more particularly gave him the power to understand the language of birds.[115] There are no extant images, sadly, linking Melampus with his snakes and his birds, but a case has recently been made that serpent-and-bird groups on two vase images of the seer Amphiaraus are intended, *inter alia*, to remind the viewer of the prophetic powers he derived from his grandfather Melampus.[116] Pliny aligns the Melampus tradition, quite appropriately, with the lore, productive in antiquity and beyond, that told that one could acquire the ability to understand the language of birds by devouring certain varieties of snake or certain parts of snakes.[117] Philostratus knew of Arabs that came to understand the twittering of birds by devouring the hearts or livers of *drakontes*.[118] We are compellingly close in theme here to one of the most famous episodes of Norse-Germanic mythology. As we learn from *Völsungasaga* and *Thidreksaga*, when Sigurd/Siegfried had killed the dragon Fafnir, he burned his finger on Fafnir's heart whilst roasting it, and as he sucked the burn ingested some of his blood. This instantly conferred upon him the ability to understand birdsong, and the birds at once told him that Regin was planning to kill him, enabling Sigurd to save his life by striking first. Sigurd proceeded to make himself invulnerable by bathing in Fafnir's blood, and giving himself a horny skin (Introduction).[119] In Grimms' Fairy Tale of *The White Snake*

[115] Hesiod F261 M.-W. = schol. Apollonius Rhodius 1. 118–21 (*drakōn*); Pliny *Natural History* 10. 137 (*dracones*); Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 9. 11, Porphyry *Abstinence* 3. 3. Eustathius on Homer *Odyssey* 11. 292 tells that Melampus was able to understand the speech of all irrational animals, and in particular that he was able to save himself from a collapsing roof when the woodworms told him they had eaten a roof-beam through. For Melampus in general see Jost 1992. For the general principle of serpents bestowing understanding of the language of animals by washing out human ears, see Porphyry *De abstinentia* 3. 4.

[116] *LIMC* Amphiaraos 7 = Sineux 2007 fig. 1 (Corinthian crater, *c.*570 BC, formerly in Berlin, but now lost; the image is indistinct in both representations: one must rely on the verbal description of it at Krauskopf 1981: 694), *LIMC* Amphiaraos 37 = Sineux 2007 fig. 5 (Attic black-figure lekythos, *c.*475–450 BC; only the birds are visible in the image reproduced by Sineux). Discussion at Sineux 2007: 40–1, 64–5. A bird also overflies Amphiaraus' chariot in *LIMC* Amphiaraos 17 (*c.*550–535 BC). For the relationship between Melampus and Amphiaraus see Homer *Odyssey* 15. 225–55.

[117] Pliny *Natural History* 10. 137 (by eating serpents born of mixed bird blood). The notion is credited to (ps.-)Democritus.

[118] Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 1. 20. The suggestion that one could eat the liver instead of the heart may derive from a partial rationalization based upon that organ's central role in ancient hieroscopy.

[119] *Völsungasaga* cc. 18–19 (13th cent. AD; for English trans., Byock 1990: 63–6), *Prose Edda, Skaldskaparmal* c. 40 (13th cent. AD; for English trans., Byock and Poole 2005: 97–8), *Thidrekssaga* c. 166 (13th cent. AD; for English trans., Haymes 1988: 107–8); cf. also, for the killing and the horny skin, but not the birds and the prophetic power, *Nieblungenlied* stanzas 100, 899–904 (13th cent. AD; for

a servant eats a mysterious dead white snake and this imparts to him the ability to understand the language of animals.[120]

The literary record, which begins with Ibycus or possibly with the *Cypria*, leaves us frustratingly under-informed about the second of these traditions, that of the death of Troilus. It seems that Troilus, nominally son of Priam but actually Thymbraean Apollo's son by Hecabe, was a beautiful youth with whom Achilles fell in love. However, it was divinely decreed that Troy could not fall whilst he lived, so Achilles lay in ambush for him at his father Thymbraean Apollo's sanctuary as he exercised his horses on the Trojan plain. He fled for refuge into the sanctuary but Achilles killed him there on the altar. In revenge, Apollo designed that Achilles should meet his own death in the same place, and he did so when he was himself ambushed in turn in the sanctuary, as he came there to marry Polyxena in secret, and was shot by Paris. Ajax recovered the body, and when Troy was duly taken Polyxena was sacrificed over Achilles' tomb.[121] But the tale was enormously popular in art from *c.*620 BC, with Troilus typically shown as a boy or youth riding his horse.[122] In illustrations of the tale provided by two Laconian cups (one now lost) of *c.*560 BC, Achilles waits to ambush Troilus, spear poised, in front of the temple. In both scenes serpents emerge from the temple in Achilles' direction. On one we have a pair of serpents, one of which rears up towards Achilles to challenge him, and the other of which slithers between his feet.[123] On the other, a fragment by the Rider painter, we just see the head of an elaborate serpent slithering between Achilles' feet; it may or may not once have

English trans., Hatto 1960: 28, 121), *Horn Siegfried Lay* stanzas 1–11 (16th cent. AD; no known English trans.).

[120] Grimm 1986 no. 17 = ATU 673; many further comparanda at Frazer 1888.

[121] For the literary sources see Ibycus 282B Campbell (scholia to Ibycus), Proclus *Cypria* argument 11 (supplemented from Apollodorus *Epitome* 3. 33) and F25 West, Phrynichus F13 *TrGF*, Sophocles *Troilus* FF618–35 *TrGF*, Euripides *Rhesus* 507–9 with scholl., Lycophron *Alexandra* 269, 307–13 (where, interestingly, the besotted Achilles is himself described as a *drakōn*), 323, with Tzetzes ad locc. (the fullest and plainest account of the tale), Plautus *Bacchides* 953–5, Virgil *Aeneid* 1. 474–8, with Servius ad loc., Statius *Silvae* 2. 6. 32–3, Apollodorus *Epitome* 3. 32–3 (thought to derive from the *Cypria*, and sometimes inserted even at the relevant point of the Proclus summary), Dio Chrysostom 11. 77–8, 91, Dictys Cretensis *FGrH* 49 F7a, Philostratus *Heroicus* 51, John Malalas *Chronicle* 109–10, schol. Homer *Iliad* 4. 897, 24. 257, schol. Euripides *Hecabe* 41, schol. Euripides *Troades* 16, Eustathius on Homer *Iliad* 3. 104, 24. 251, First Vatican Mythographer 3. 8. 1. See the convenient reconstruction of the myth at Gantz 1993: 597–603. Euripides seems to refract the ambushes of Troilus and of Achilles himself in the sanctuary in the *Rhesus* passage cited, where Hector notes that Odysseus likes to lie in ambush near the altar of Thymbraean Apollo.

[122] For the myth in art, see *LIMC* Achilleus 206–88 (no. 253 of *c.*620 BC) and *LIMC* Troilos. Discussion at Kossatz-Deissman 1997.

[123] *LIMC* Achilleus 261 = Pipili 1987: 28 fig. 42 = Villa Giulia 106349. The buildings in these scenes are often described by the art historians as 'fountain houses', presumably because of the snakes associated with them (cf. Pipili 1987: 29; for the association of snakes with fountain-houses elsewhere in art, see e.g. *LIMC* Herakles 2823 and, for their broader association with water sources in general in Greek culture, Ch. 4), but there is no compelling architectural reason for such an identification. The literary sources are at least clear that the killing took place on the altar of the temple of Thymbraean Apollo: Apollodorus *Epitome* 3. 33, Lycophron *Alexandra* 307–13 with Tzetzes ad loc., schol. Ibycus at Ibycus F282B Campbell, schol. Homer *Iliad* 4. 897, 24. 257. Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 199–231 and Petronius 89 have Laocoon and sons attacked by the *drakontes* 'amid altars'. Note, however, Sophocles *Troilus* F621 *TrGF*, 'We are going to the flowing waters and the springs.'

Fig. 3.8. Achilles is challenged by a pair of serpents at the temple of Apollo Thymbraeus, as he lies in ambush for Troilus. Laconian cup, *c.*560 BC. Musée du Louvre E669 = *LIMC* Achilleus 257. © RMN / Hervé Lewandowski.

had a partner.[124] A third, well-known, Laconian cup of similar date in the Louvre, often implausibly associated with Cadmus, almost certainly represents the same scene; in this a large snake winds around the column of the temple and challenges Achilles, and he challenges it back with his spear, whilst a slightly smaller serpent climbs up the back wall of the building (Fig. 3.8).[125] Do these pairs of serpents make appeal to the serpent-pair that had cleaned the ears of Helenus and Cassandra? We may note that birds too proliferate on all three of these vases. It is difficult not to take this combination as making appeal to the link between serpentine aural cleansing and the prophetic ability to understand birdsong, though the extant literary tradition does not, admittedly, connect the prophetic abilities of Helenus and Cassandra with birdsong as it does in the case of Melampus.[126]

A pair of serpents licks the twins Helenus and Cassandra in the temple of Apollo Thymbraeus; another pair graces Achilles' ambush of Troilus at the temple

[124] *LIMC* Achilleus 264 = Pipili 1987: 28 fig. 43 = DAI Athens negative no. Samos 1600.

[125] Louvre E669 = *LIMC* Achilleus 257 = Gorgones 167 = Kadmos i 11. Gantz 1993: 470, 600 opts for Cadmus. Mitropoulou 1977: 205 holds that the figure represents Troilus himself killing a snake prior to being killed by Achilles (!)

[126] A fourth Laconian cup of the same age again, Grabow 1998 K76, borrows some of the imagery from these scenes. A komast (drunken reveller), cup in hand, dances before a similar temple within which a (single) fine, bearded snake stands rampant. A single bird stands on the roof, whilst two further birds stand decoratively beneath the floor-line. An elaborate lyre lies on the ground behind the komast, and appears again between the two decorative birds, possibly thereby making appeal to their song.

of Apollo Thymbraeus; another pair devours Laocoon and his twin sons, by some accounts in the temple of Apollo Thymbraeus. The same pair, are we to think, or is it more simply that Apollo Thymbraeus' unnumbered serpents like to operate, where possible, in pairs, and, indeed, to interact with human pairs? Even if the Apollo Thymbraeus material is confined to the realm of the imagination, it nonetheless shows the Greeks cherishing the notion of temple snakes already by *c.*560 BC (the date of the Troilus images), a century or so before our first evidence for the actual practice of keeping temple snakes, which comes in connection with the great temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus. Since it is unlikely that the practice should have developed out of a fantasy, we may conjecture that the practice of keeping temple snakes was already established by this point. And here it may be noteworthy that the Epidaurus Asclepieion is thought to have developed out of the healing shrine of an Apollo, Apollo Maleatas, which is first attested *c.*500 BC (see further Chs. 9–10).

Of contextual interest is the well-known myth of the prophet Tiresias, found first in the fragmentary Hesiodic *Melampodia*, a poem primarily devoted to the expoloits of Melampus (did his own snakes feature?). According to this Tiresias was transformed into a woman after striking a pair of copulating snakes with his staff; seven years later he was transformed back into a man upon repetition of the action. He was thereby able to resolve the argument between Zeus and Hera as to whether men or women enjoyed sex more by telling them that women enjoyed sex nine times as much as men. Hera, losing the argument, blinded him in anger, but Zeus compensated for this blindness with the gift of prophecy. The route is an indirect one, but once again an encounter with a snake-pair leads eventually to prophetic powers. Apollodorus separately tells that Tiresias was given the ability to understand the speech of birds when Athene washed out his ears (by what means?)[127]

Two passages from Pindar's *Olympians* are also of contextual interest. In the sixth *Olympian* of 472 or 468 BC Pindar associates Apollo (not specifically designated as Thymbraean in this context) with a further pair of child-tending serpents in connection with the future prophet Iamus, 'Healing'. He tells how Apollo impregnated the Arcadian Evadne. She gave birth to Iamus and exposed the child, but Apollo sent a pair of 'grey-eyed' *drakontes* to nurture it with 'the venom of bees'.[128] In the eighth *Olympian* of 460 BC, Pindar tells that after the wall of Troy had been built by Apollo, Poseidon, and Aeacus, three evidently huge *drakontes* tried to jump up onto it at the part made by Aeacus. Two fell down and died in terror, but the third managed to get up, with a shout. Apollo then predicted that Aeacus' offspring would take the city at this point (where it was the work of a mere mortal) in the first and the fourth generations (i.e. Heracles

[127] Hesiod *Melampodia* FF275–6 M.-W., Clitarchus *FGrH* 137 F37, Dicaearchus F37 Wehrli, Callimachus F576 Pfeiffer, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 316–38, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 6. 7, Hyginus *Fabulae* 75, Phlegon *Mirabilia* 4 (including a non-Wehrli fragment of Clearchus), Antoninus Liberalis *Metamorphoses* 17, Lactantius Placidus on Statius *Thebaid* 2. 95, Fulgentius *Mithologiae* 2. 8, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 6, Eustathius on Homer *Odyssey* 10. 492 (p. 1665), schol. Homer *Odyssey* 10. 494, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 683. Cf. also Porphyry *Abstinence* 3. 3, where it is said that Teiresias understood the language of animals more generally. Discussion at Krappe 1928, Brisson 1976 (reproducing all texts), Forbes Irving 1990: 162–70, Gantz 1993: 528–30.

[128] Pindar *Olympians* 6. 46–7.

and the Greeks of the Trojan War). One is tempted to think that these snakes hailed from the adjacent temple of Apollo Thymbraeus, for all that they operate as a trio rather than a pair.[129]

Laocoon resumed

There are two elements of the Laocoon tale that can be aligned only with Apollo Thymbraeus amongst our three gods: the motif of prophecy and the motif of the serpent pair. It is likely that in an original tale Laocoon violated the sanctuary over which he was priest and was punished, plainly and simply, by the snakes that lived in and indeed guarded the temple: why had Apollo needed to bring in additional serpents from elsewhere? Already in antiquity this was often forgotten—though Tzetzes may preserve a trace of the notion in asserting that Laocoon's children were devoured within the temple of Thymbraean Apollo—and so the Laocoon narrative was pulled into different shapes to reflect, if only partially, other logics.

We turn now to what may be termed 'Poseidon's story'. The impact of an ideal Poseidon-centred narrative can be felt in several ways on the Laocoon tradition. Servius seems to know of versions of the tale in which Poseidon sent the serpents. For Euphorion, Virgil, and Petronius, Laocoon was serving as makeshift priest of Poseidon at the point at which he was attacked (the latter two make no mention of Apollo): in comparing Laocoon's screams to those of a bull fleeing from an interrupted sacrifice, Virgil seems to tell us that Laocoon has himself become a sacrifice to Poseidon, and Petronius proceeds to assert explicitly that he has been transformed from priest to sacrifice. Before both, Poseidon may have been the focus of Sophocles' *Laocoon*, the fragments of which preserve an address to Poseidon as ruling over promontories and grey waters from high cliffs. It would have been spectacularly disrespectful and uncollegiate of Apollo to kill a man engaged in sacrificing to another and indeed a senior god: the context of the killing in itself invites us to accept that Poseidon authorized it. Why should Poseidon demand the punishment or sacrifice of Laocoon and his children? Perhaps in recompense: as Euphorion tells, Laocoon has been chosen by lot (itself, we may note, a sacrificial motif: cf. the tales of the *kētos* of Troy, the *drakōn* of Thespiae and Lamia-Sybaris) to be a replacement priest for the god after his last priest had been stoned to death by the Trojans. This they had done because Poseidon had allowed the Greeks to cross over the sea to Troy, and they had deprived the god of cult for the subsequent ten years for which the war had endured.[130]

In the context of Greek myth the notion of serpents, *drakontes*, swimming over sea is an unexpected one, and it manifestly belongs rather with *kētē* of the sort that swim over the sea to devour victims on the shore, as in the cases of those of Troy and Ethiopia.[131] The case of the *kētos* of Troy is peculiarly apposite to that of Laocoon's *drakontes*: first, the two focal men have remarkably similar and

[129] Pindar *Olympians* 8. 37–46; discussion at Sancassano 1997*a*: 111–16.

[130] Sophocles *Laocoon* F371 *TrGF*; Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 201, with Servius ad loc., incorporating Euphorion F70 Powell = 95 Lightfoot; Petronius *Satyricon* 89.

[131] Philostratus *Apollonius* 3. 8, however, knows that the marvellous *drakontes* of India can swim out into the Red Sea (i.e. the Indian Ocean); cf. Ch. 4.

similarly structured names, *Lao-med-ōn*, *Lao-ko-ōn*, signifying respectively 'Ruler of the people' and 'Heeder of the people'; secondly, the punishment in both cases is directed against the man's children, Hesione in the former case; thirdly, in both cases the serpentine monsters involved cross the sea to attack the plain of Troy. We may note that the two episodes are closely aligned with each other in a first-century AD (or before) commentary on an unidentified tragedy.[132] Servius, citing 'others', links Laocoon's fate to Laomedon in a more direct way by explaining that there had been no priest of Poseidon at Troy since the time of Laomedon's insult to him (long before the commencement of the Trojan war, therefore).[133] The path by which the *kētos*-of-Troy narrative came to influence an Apollo-centred Laocoon narrative was no doubt smoothed by the tradition that Apollo and Poseidon had collaborated in the building of the wall of Troy.[134] As we have seen, Apollo deployed his snakes at that point to create an omen for the two falls of Troy. And having been defrauded by Laomedon alongside Poseidon, he sent a pestilence upon Troy in parallel to Poseidon's *kētos*.[135] Quintus Smyrnaeus' description of the *drakontes*' home, as a cave beneath a high crag on the islands of Calydnae, reminds us strongly of the *Odyssey*'s description of the home of the Scylla, who, as we have seen, was a creature similarly poised between the identities of *kētos* and *drakōn*.[136]

One may well imagine, then, that the canonical Laocoon narrative we possess is a melding of an ideal narrative in which Laocoon is punished simply by the serpents of Thymbraean Apollo's own temple and an ideal narrative in which he is punished by a Poseidon-style *kētos* from the sea. But the canonical narrative is subject to further pressures too: we turn to 'Athene's story'. An Athene-centred narrative also makes its impact upon the Laocoon tradition. Late in that tradition Quintus Smyrnaeus explicitly asserts that it was she that sent the serpents against Laocoon.[137] Before him Virgil had strongly implied the same in having the serpents, once they had finished their work, seek refuge in Athene's temple at the height of the Trojan acropolis and nestle under her feet and under the circle of her shield, i.e. those of her cult statue within. This is in part an indirect appeal to the fifth-century-style iconography of Laocoon in which the serpent pair are shown coiling around the statue of Thymbraean Apollo (Fig. 3.7).[138] But it is also, surprisingly, an allusion to the famous Parthenos statue with its *oikouros ophis*, its 'temple-guarding' serpent nestling under the circle of Athene's shield (if that is indeed what it is: see Chs. 7, 10). Virgil seems to imply, therefore, that the serpents were turned to stone (bronze, gold and ivory, etc.) and incorporated within the goddess' Trojan statue.[139] Quintus agrees to some extent with Virgil in bringing the serpents back to a temple after their attack, albeit Apollo's in his case, and this attack too is memorialized in a permanent monument, presumably a pair

[132] *P.Oxy.* 2812 = Adespota F721 *TrGF*.

[133] Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 201.

[134] Homer *Iliad* 7. 452–3, 21. 441–57, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 11. 199–215, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 34, Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 491–2, Apollodorus Bibliotheca 2. 5. 9, Hyginus *Fabulae* 89, Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 1. 550, 8. 157, First Vatican Mythographer, 2. 34–5.

[135] Pindar *Olympian* 8. 37–46.

[136] Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 449–97. Scylla: Homer *Odyssey* 12. 73–126.

[137] Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 447–55, 473–80.

[138] *LIMC* Laokoon 1–2. [139] Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 199–231.

of votive model snakes, though this one seemingly made by human hand. Under these circumstances it is hardly meaningful now for Laocoon to have been guilty of sacrilege towards Apollo Thymbraeus. Virgil offers another explanation of his sacrilege, though ostensibly a bogus one: the deceived Trojans take the death of Laocoon and his two sons to indicate that Laocoon committed sacrilege when he hurled a spear into the side of the wooden horse, presumed to be a votive offering.[140] Hyginus is emphatic that this is a bogus reason, the conjecture of the Trojans ignorant of Laocoon's defiance of Apollo or at any rate of its significance, but for Tzetzes in his commentary on the *Alexandra*, this explanation has become the genuine one.[141]

Virgil may well have transferred the sponsorship of the snakes to Athene for his own reasons: he lays emphasis upon her role, as patroness of crafts, in the manufacturing of the horse Laocoon attacks. But the roots of her involvement may actually be very much older. Key here is an Attic lekythos of *c.*500 BC on which we find Ajax the Less raping Cassandra, as he famously did, before the palladium-style Trojan cult-statue of Athene. As he assaults Cassandra, Ajax is attacked by a large serpent, identical in configuration to the one featured in the blazon of the Athene-statue's shield.[142] What we probably have here is Athene supported by a serpent of the kind that fights alongside her (in addition to the aegis she wears) in archaic illustrations of the Gigantomachy (Chs. 2 and 5). But at any rate we have Athene, in Troy, punishing, with a serpent, a man who is attempting to violate the sanctity of her temple by having sex before her cult image: the parallelism with the punishment meted out by Apollo to Laocoon for a similar dereliction is clear, and this surely licenses Athene's entry into the Laocoon tradition (and incidentally Quintus Smyrnaeus implies that Laocoon forced his wife, just as Ajax did Cassandra).

Athene's entry may have been further smoothed by interference from the myth of Philoctetes, the soldier abandoned on an island by the Greeks during the Trojan War because they could not endure his cries of pain from the snake-bite he had received to the foot. According to the *Cypria* he received this bite on Tenedos, the very starting-point for Laocoon's *drakontes* so far as Virgil and others are concerned, perhaps in part in tribute to the Philoctetes myth. Apollodorus tells that he received the bite, on Tenedos, when he was sacrificing to Apollo, and a water-snake emerged from underneath the altar to do the deed. In Sophocles' *Philoctetes* of 409 BC Philoctetes was rather bitten on the island of Chryse by the 'secret, house-guarding snake guardian' (*kryphios oikourōn ophis, phylax*) of the unhidden precinct (*sēkos*) of the goddess also called Chryse. The variant was older than the play, however, because it already appears on pots of *c.*460–450 BC. The 'house-guarding snake' of a goddess puts us in mind of Athene Parthenos again, and scholiastic sources, including Tzetzes, going somewhat further than Sophocles, assert that 'Chryse' was none other than a byname for Athene, and that Philoctetes was bitten whilst cleaning off the buried altar of that goddess. Appian identified Chryse as a small desert island near Lemnos. One

[140] Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 199–231. [141] Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 344–7.

[142] *LIMC* Erechtheus 47 = Aias II 42 (with drawing) = Grabow 1998 K92 (with murky photograph), with Kron 1988 ad loc.; cf. Harrison 1889: 221–2.

could find there: 'an altar of Philoctetes and a bronze snake (*chalkous ophis*) and a bow and breastplate bound with fillets, a memorial of his sufferings'. The Greek leaves it unclear whether the memorial consisted of the breastplate alone or the whole assemblage mentioned; in the latter case, we may be reminded of the model snakes left behind after the Laocoon episode according to Virgil and Quintus Smyrnaeus. By the time of Pausanias this island of Chryse had been overwhelmed by the sea. Tzetzes supplies another interesting take on the Chryse tale, to the effect that Chryse was a nymph who fell in love with Philoctetes, but that he spurned her advances and so she set a snake upon him to bite him. In a version preserved by Hyginus (who, as often, appears to be summarizing the plot of a tragedy) and the scholia to Sophocles, Philoctetes was bitten by a snake actually on Lemnos itself as he was attempting to raise an altar to Heracles on the shore, and this snake was sent by Hera in revenge for the fact that Philoctetes had dared build the funeral pyre for Heracles. Servius and the First Vatican Mythographer make Philoctetes' snakebite an indirect one: he wounds himself when he accidentally drops one of his own Hydra-poisoned arrows, inherited from Heracles at the pyre, on his foot.[143] The offending snake is variously described, in chronological order, as a *hydros* (water-snake),[144] a *drakōn*, an *echidna* (viper),[145] and a *chelydros* (amphibious snake).[146] The second matches the serpents of the Laocoon tradition. The first and the fourth interestingly, in the light of the Laocoon tradition, suggest a snake with a connection to water. The third is appropriate to the savage pain of Philoctetes' wound.

If the contradictions at the heart of the Laocoon myth originated in variant-sponsorship by competing political or cultural interest groups, the contexts of this are lost to us, though we may suspect that Classical-Athenian self-aggrandisement may partly explain Athene's prominence. But what we do have before us, and can document satisfactorily, is a battle between traditional narrative shapes associated with the different divine personnel.

Excursus 2: Child and drakōn

Greek myth pullulates with narratives embracing serpent and child, with one or the other often featuring in pairs, and with the attack–protect axis in play. Thus on the attack side:

[143] Principal texts: Homer *Iliad* 2. 721–5; Proclus *Cypria* arg. 9; Aeschylus *Philoctetes* FF249–7 *TrGF*; Sophocles *Philoctetes* 263–70, 1326–8 with scholl.; Euripides *Philoctetes* FF787–800 *TrGF*; Dio Chrysostom 52, 59; Apollodorus *Epitome* 3. 27; Appian *Mithridatic Wars* 77; Pausanias 8. 33. 4; Hyginus *Fabulae* 102; Philostratus *Imagines* 17; Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 3. 402; First Vatican Mythographer 1. 59; schol. Homer *Iliad* 2. 722; Eustathius on Homer *Iliad* 2. 724, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 911–12. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Philoktetes (the pots of *c*.460–50 BC: 12–14). Discussions: C. Robert 1920–6: ii, 1207–18, Gantz 1993: 589–90, Pipili 1994, E. Müller 1997. The detail in Virgil, Petronius, and Apollodorus that Laocoon's *drakontes* came from Tenedos may well salute the Philoctetes myth, but it also constitutes a specific omen, for the Greek fleet, having withdrawn after leaving the wooden horse, was lurking at the island, a metaphorical *drakōn* waiting to cross back to the coast of Troy: Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 21, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 344–7.

[144] Homer *Iliad* 2. 721–5, Apollodorus *Epitome* 3. 27, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 911.

[145] Sophocles *Philoctetes* 263–70, Euripides *Philoctetes* F789b (2) *TrGF*.

[146] Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 911.

- The twin baby pair Heracles and Iphicles are attacked by a pair of *drakontes*: the babies kill the serpents (Ch. 1).
- The two sons of Laocoon, seemingly twins again, are similarly attacked by a pair of *drakontes*: the serpents kill the children.
- The twin babies Apollo and Artemis are attacked by a single *drakōn*, Python at Delphi: the babies kill the serpent (Ch. 1).
- Archemorus-Opheltes is attacked by a single *drakōn* at Nemea: the serpent kills the baby, though it is then in turn killed by others (Ch. 1).

On the protect side:

- The twin Dioscuri were often manifest at Sparta as a serpent pair (Ch. 7).
- Apollo Thymbraeus' own serpent pair not only guards but endows the twin-baby pair of Helenus and Cassandra with prophecy when left in his temple.
- A serpent pair (usually, but sometimes just one) is set by Athene to guard Ericthonius in his chest (Ch. 7). Alternatively Ericthonius may, according to other understandings of his myth, have transformed himself from baby to serpent to protect himself in his chest (Ch. 7 again).
- At Ophiteia a serpent protects a baby in its cot from a wolf attack, though it is then killed by the baby's father who fails to understand what it has done (Ch. 4).
- Sosipolis transforms himself from baby, laid out before an army, into a serpent from which the attacking soldiers flee in terror (Ch. 5).

If there is a common origin for such myths, or a common meaning or anxiety underlying them, these lie deeply buried.

CONCLUSION

The history of the great slain *drakontes* and that of the great *kētē* of myth are indissociable. The two creature-types share a serpentine form and further physical characteristics. The stories of the *kētē* of Troy and Ethiopia are strongly congruent in structure and theme with those of the *drakontes*. The stories of Scylla and the *drakōn*-pair sent against Laocoon merge *drakōn* and *kētos* in different ways. Scylla encompasses both creature-types in her own form, seemingly gravitating away from *drakōn* and towards *kētos* over time. The *drakōn*-pair sent against Laocoon combine in their actions the behaviours typical of both *drakontes* and *kētē*. With this chapter we have completed our discrete reviews of the principal *drakōn*-slaying myths. The following three chapters turn to consideration of the broader themes that overarch this set of narratives, and in these we will feel fully justified in considering alongside the stories of the *drakontes* those also of their marine cousins.

4

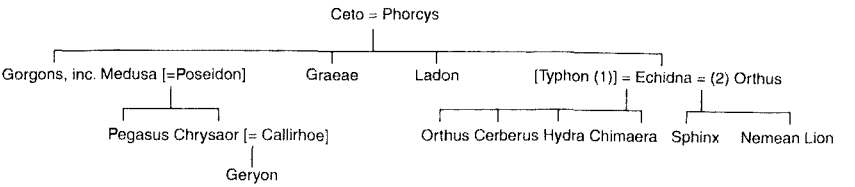
The World of the Slain *Drakontes*

The first three chapters have reviewed the ancient world's principal *drakōn*-slaying narratives. The next three will draw out some of the themes that bind them, and will address the more specialized themes of *drakōn*-masters (and mistresses) and the symmetries constructed between weaponries deployed by the *drakontes* and their humanoid opponents in the fight narratives. But first this chapter addresses the basics of the *drakontes*' world: their genealogical relationships with each other; the patterns in the names they are given; their curious beards and crests; their landscapes and habitats, with particular reference to their attachments to water-sources and their identifications with them; their role as guardians, not least of treasure, and (again) their identification with it; the memorialization of their slaying and its foundational significance. The chapter concludes with consideration of what might be termed a 'meta-narrative' theme that binds the great *drakōn*-slaying traditions, the paradoxical one of the rationalizing of the *drakōn* out of its own tale.

DRAKŌN GENEALOGIES

The great slain *drakontes* of Greek myth are conceptually united not only by the term used to describe them and by the structural similarities between the narratives in which they appear, but also by the notion that they were all closely related to each other. Already in the *Theogony* we are given a genealogy that embraces most of the principal *drakontes*, pure and composite. Hesiod's phraseology, with a number of (perhaps wilfully) vague 'and she's picking up after descending lines and excursuses have been pursued, leaves it impossible to reconstruct his family tree with certainty. According to West's understanding, the sea-creatures Ceto and Phorcys are the first generation and the ultimate ancestors of all. They produce, for the second generation, the Graeae (whose indirect serpent affinities we have discussed), the Gorgons, Echidna, and Ladon. For the third generation the Gorgon Medusa produces (by Poseidon) Pegasus and Chrysaor, whilst the anguipede Echidna produces Orthus, Cerberus, and Hydra by Typhon (who is not here given a parentage of his own). For the fourth generation Chrysaor sires the three-bodied Geryon (by Callirhoe), whilst the Hydra produces (by sire unknown, if there was one) the Chimaera. For the fifth generation Chimaera produces, by her uncle Orthus, the Sphinx and the Nemean Lion. The most likely alternative to this reconstruction, and the one favoured by the present author, identifies Echidna

Table 4.1 The Hesiodic genealogy of the great *drakontes*



as the mother of the Chimaera (as opposed to the Hydra) and of the Sphinx and the Nemean Lion (as opposed to the Chimaera), to produce a much flatter tree in which Echidna becomes even more fecund. She is now mother to Orthus, Cerberus, Hydra by Typhon, the Chimaera by father unstated (by default we may guess Typhon again), and then the Sphinx and the Nemean Lion by her own son Orthus (see Table 4.1). West touchingly finds the mother–son incest and the inconstancy of Echidna towards Typhon entailed by this alternative to constitute improprieties to which our monsters could not stoop ('unnecessary and unparalleled behaviour'). The 'and she's, problematic and otherwise, at any rate serve to highlight the primacy of the female monsters in the generation of further ones: as ever, their fecundity renders them a greater threat than their male counterparts.[1]

The tradition after Hesiod, which culminates in Apollodorus and Hyginus, sought to flatten and simplify the genealogy even beyond this, whilst also expanding it, concentrating almost all the monsters together as the immediate children of Typhon and Echidna. Thus Apollodorus makes Typhon and Echidna parents not only to the Nemean Lion, Orthus, the Chimaera, and the Sphinx, but also to her Hesiodic brother Ladon, as well as to a creature unmentioned by Hesiod, the Sow of Crommyon.[2] From Hesiod Hyginus' Typhon and Echidna retain as children Cerberus and Hydra and (probably) the Chimaera and the Sphinx too. Then from amongst Echidna's Hesiodic siblings Ladon and 'Gorgon' again become their children, as do two monsters unmentioned by Hesiod, the Colchis *drakōn* and Scylla.[3] In the meantime, the pair had also acquired another

[1] Hesiod *Theogony* 270–336. The notion that the Sphinx was the child of Echidna by Typhon (as opposed to Orthus) may already be latent at Hesiod *Shield* 32–3, where we are told that Zeus travelled from Typhaonion to Phikion (Hesiodic poetry uses the term 'Phix' for the Sphinx, cf. *Theogony* 326). The problematic 'and she's occur at lines 295, 319, and 326, with the latter two being particularly tricky. See M. L. West 1966 ad locc., with the stemma at p. 244, Gantz 1993: 22, Sancassano 1997*a*: 54–7. Geneaological lists were not the only ones to unite the great *drakontes* of myth: at Seneca *Medea* 694–704, for example, in assembling serpents in order to extract their venom to manufacture the ultimate poison with which she will imbue Glauce's robe, Medea summons to her the constellation of Draco itself, alongside Python, the Hydra, and the Colchis serpent.

[2] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 3. 1 (Chimaera), 2. 5. 1 (Nemean Lion, but only Typhon named), 2. 5. 10 (Orthus), 2. 5. 11 (Ladon), 3. 5. 8 (Sphinx), *Epitome* 1. 1 (Sow).

[3] Hyginus *Fabulae* preface, 67. 4, 151. However, in a single complication, it becomes clear at 151 that 'Gorgon' is not equivalent to but actually the mother of Medusa. Prior to Hyginus, Echidna had been made the mother of Ladon by Pherecydes F16b Fowler; of the Sphinx by Euripides *Phoenissae* 1020 (with schol. ad loc. and at 1760, where the Sphinx is said to have had the tail of a *drakaina*) and this is a good first attempt. Please coule we make the descending lines align none neatly with the signs asare? At bottom night please can we shift "SAphinx" are or two spaces left, "NeceniLion" are or two Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 5. 8; of Scylla by Virgil *Ciris* 67.

monstrous child, according to Acusilaus and Pherecydes, in the form of the eagle that devoured Prometheus' liver.[4]

It is curious that Typhon's own genealogy should be external to this bloodline. In fact he had more than four mothers or quasi-mothers of his own: Earth (Hesiod and his followers),[5] Hera (*Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, Stesichorus),[6] Tartara, the female counterpart of Tartarus (Hyginus)[7] and, as a foster-mother, the Delphic *drakaina* subsequently known as Delphyne (*Homeric Hymn to Apollo*).[8] Hesiod and Hyginus name Tartarus as Typhon's father, but, as we have seen, it is integral to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*'s version of his story that he should have been produced by a mother alone without a father: once again, the mothers are always more interesting and important where *drakontes* are concerned.[9]

It is not surprising that Typhon was often cast, in a general way, as the progenitor of all the world's snakes. A fragment of Acusilaus of Argos tells that all biting creatures (its context in a scholium to Nicander's *Theriaca* suggests that snakes are specifically intended) were derived from the blood of Typhon.[10] For Quintus Smyrnaeus the serpent pair sent against Laocoon were of the 'brood of Typhon' (*genethlēs / Typhōnos*): this too probably makes appeal to the general notion that all serpents were ultimately descended from Typhon, though it may seek to assert that they were, like so many of the other great *drakontes* of myth, his direct offspring.[11] Another of the figures in the Hesiodic genealogy could also be seen as ultimately responsible for a large number of the world's snakes. Apollonius of Rhodes in both the *Argonautica* and his lost *Foundation of Alexandria* told that the terrible snakes of Libya (and perhaps even of the entire world) derived rather from the drips of blood from Medusa's decapitated head as Perseus flew over the land with it.[12]

[4] Acusilaus of Argos F13 Fowler, Pherecydes F7 Fowler. Echidna (no mention of Typhon) is also said to be the mother of an unnamed 'double-formed' son, presumably an anguipede à la Cecrops, at Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 18. 273–7.

[5] Earth as Typhon's mother: Hesiod *Theogony* 821–2, Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 353, *Seven* 522–3 (*χθονίου δαίμονος*), both with scholl., Nicander *apud* Antoninus Liberalis 28, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5. 357–8 (Typhon was sent up from the lowest part of the earth), Manilius 2. 876–80, [Seneca] *Octavia* 238–9, Lucan 4. 595, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3, Julian *Peri basileias* 7. 1, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 154–5, 275, 417, 2. 264, 541, 555, 637–43, 34. 183, schol. Plato *Phaedrus* 230a, schol. Homer *Iliad* 2. 793.

[6] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 300–6, 353–4; Stesichorus F239 *PMG*/Campbell. But for the *Homeric Hymn* Earth still enjoys a special role in the conception process: Hera makes appeal to Earth as well as to Heaven and the Titan gods who lived under the Earth about great Tartarus. Then, she lashes the Earth with her hand and 'Earth that bears life was moved' (334–42). In the Orphic treatment of the myth preserved at schol. Homer *Iliad* 2. 793, Earth is rather Typhon's mother with Cronus as his father, with Hera as a facilitator of the gestation, burying in Earth two eggs Cronus had given her smeared with his semen.

[7] Hyginus *Fabulae* 152.

[8] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 300–55.

[9] Hesiod *Theogony* 821–2, Hyginus *Fabulae* 152; *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 300–55.

[10] Acusilaus of Argos F14 Fowler (*apud* schol. Nicander *Theriaca* 11).

[11] Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 444–97, esp. 451–23.

[12] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1513–17 and *Foundation of Alexandria* F4 Powell, Lucan 9. 619–839. The *Argonautica* and Lucan speak only of the snakes of Africa, but the *Foundation* fragment ostensibly speaks of the snakes of the whole world. However, the scholium that preserves it (to Nicander *Theriaca*

CHOOSING A NAME FOR YOUR *DRAKŌN*

No formula accounts for all the names attached to the great mythical *drakontes* (far less to those in receipt of cult), but three partial patterns emerge. First, and most interestingly, the names of male *drakontes* tend to conform to the pattern: syllable + *ων*.[13]

Python

The name of the (male) Delphic *drakōn* , *Πῡ́θων* (gen. *-ωνος*) is first attested, as it seems, in a fragment of Simonides (*c.*500 BC),[14] but its existence is already implied by the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*'s vigorous folk-etymological wordplay between forms of *πῡ́θω*, 'rot' and *Πῡθώ*, 'Pytho', the byname of Delphi.[15] Fontenrose argued that the Delphic *drakaina*'s foster-child Typhon was originally one and the same with the Delphic *drakōn*. In this context the name 'Typhon' was metathesized into 'Python' out of a desire to assimilate the *drakōn*'s name to that of *Πυθώ* or to *πῡ́θω*.[16] The difficulty with this etymological contention, as with others involving the name-form 'Typhon', is that it appears to be a relatively late, albeit ultimately triumphant, variant of that *drakōn*'s name, and its first extant attestation is surely subsequent to the indirect attestation of 'Python' in the *Homeric Hymn* and indeed may well be subsequent to its first direct attestation in Simonides.[17] Watkins contends rather that the name *Πῡ́θων* is ultimately cognate with that of the Sanskrit sea-serpent *Ahi Budhnya* (cf. *ὄφις*, *πυθμήν*), the 'serpent of the abyss'.[18] If he were to be right, then the tradition of a *drakōn* named Python (or something close to that) would have to be truly ancient within the Greek tradition, indeed would have to go back all the way into the Indo-European age. And we would then have to conclude that Delphi took its byname of Pytho from the *drakōn*, as opposed to vice versa.

11), may merely be carrying the implication across carelessly from its preceding discussion of Acusilaus F14 Fowler.

[13] With regret I must abandon for this section my usual practice of relegating Greek font to footnotes.

[14] Simonides F573 *PMG*/Campbell, though not in *ipsissima verba*.

[15] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 363–74. Perhaps we should read the *Homeric Hymn*'s combination of a *drakaina* with an emphatic assertion of the 'rotting' etymology for Pytho as agonistic in tone and pitched against an already well-established story in which Pytho took its name more simply from the male *drakōn* Python. For the 'rotting' folk-etymology see also Plutarch *Moralia* 294f, Pausanias 10. 6. 5–6, Macrobius 1. 17. 50–2, *Suda* s.v. *Δελφοί*, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *Πυθώ*, Apostolius 15. 10 ; cf. Fontenrose 1959: 13, 16, Chantraine 2009 s.v. *Πυθώ*.

[16] Fontenrose 1959: 91–3; cf. Geisau 1963: 609–10.

[17] One might have thought that the Greeks would have been keen to relate both the names Pytho and Python to *πυνθάνομαι*, 'enquire, learn', and related terms, but the connection only surfaces late in the tradition, with the 12-century AD *Etymologicum Magnum* suggesting a relationship with *πεύθεσθαι* as a secondary alternative to the *πῡ́θω* (etc.) derivation.

[18] Watkins 1995: 461–2, noting that the terms *Πῡ́θων* and *ὄφις* are brought into close association at Callimachus *Hymn* 2. 100–1.

Typhon

Typhon's name is found in a dizzying array of variants from the *Iliad* onwards, with case-forms derived or derivable from the nominatives *Τῡφωεύς* and *Τῡφάων*, these being attested prior to the fifth century, and from *Τυφώς* and *Τῡφῶν*, these being attested from the fifth century onwards.[19] The upsilon of the first syllable is short in the earlier trisyllabic nominatives but long in the later disyllabic ones. By the end of the fifth century BC *Τυφῶν* (gen. *Τυφῶνος*) had become the normal form of the name in prose and presumably, therefore, common parlance. The nominative form *Τυφῶν* itself is first directly attested in Herodotus (*c.*425 BC). Its existence may already be implied by the use of the accusative form *Τυφῶνα*, the first datable example of which is to be found in Aeschylus' *Seven* of 467 BC, though Pindar may have used it before this date. However, it should be borne in mind that when Pindar or Aeschylus need a nominative form, they are only found turning to *Τυφώς*, which is metrically equivalent to *Τυφῶν*.

Given the chronological distribution of these forms, theories about the derivation of the name based upon the assumption that the nominative *Τυφῶν* is the primary form seem ill-founded. So it is with four contentions: Worms's that Typhon was in origin a wind or 'typhoon' god, a meaning first associated with the forms *Τυφῶν* and *Τυφώς* in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*;[20] Watkins' that the name

[19] The following list records in rough chronological order the forms of Typhon's name attested before the end of the 5th century BC. It does not include forms found in book fragments (e.g. those of the early Greek mythographers, for which see R. L. Fowler 2000 index s.v *Τυφῶν* [*Τυφώς*]), because we cannot be sure that they preserve their original authors' orthography.

Τυφωεῖ (dat.)	Homer *Iliad* 2. 782
Τυφωέος (gen.)	Homer *Iliad* 2. 783
Τυφάονα (acc.)	Hesiod *Theogony* 306
Τυφωέα (acc.)	Hesiod *Theogony* 821
Τυφωέος (gen.)	Hesiod *Theogony* 869
(*Τυφαόνιον*)	Hesiod *Shield* 32
Τυφάονα (acc.)	*Homeric Hymns* 3. 306
Τυφάονα (acc.)	*Homeric Hymns* 3. 352
Τυφωεύς (nom.)	*Homeric Hymns* 3. 367
Τυφῶνα (acc.)	Pindar F93 SM (*c.*500–446 BC)
Τυφώς (nom.)	*Pythians* 1. 16 (470 BC)
Τυφῶ (gen.)	Sophocles F1104 (467–406 BC)
Τυφῶν' (*-α*) (acc.)	Aeschylus *Seven* 511 (467 BC)
Τυφῶ (gen.)	Aeschylus *Seven* 517 (467 BC)
Τυφῶ (gen.)	Aeschylus *Suppliants* 560 (466/463 BC)
Τυφῶ (gen.)	Aeschylus *Agamemnon* (458 BC) 656
Τυφῶνα (acc.)	Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 354 (after 458 BC?)
Τυφώς (nom.)	Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 370 (after 458 BC?)
Τυφῶνος (gen.)	Pindar *Olympians* 4. 7 (452 BC)
Τυφώς (nom.)	Pindar *Pythians* 8. 16 (446 BC)
Τυφῶνα (acc.)	Herodotus 2. 144 (*c.*425 BC; = Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F300)
Τυφῶν (nom.)	Herodotus 2. 156 (*c.*425 BC)
Τυφῶνας (acc. plu.)	Euripides *Heracles* 1271–2 (*c.*416 BC).

[20] Worms 1953, dismissed by M. L. West 1966: 381, Chantraine 2009 s.v. *Τῡφωεύς*.

is derived from an IE root signifying 'abyss' of the shape **dhubh-n-*;[21] West's that the name is derived from the Ugaritic god Baal's byname Sapōn, found in connection with his cult at Mt. Kasios, where he was held to have overcome Litan (Introduction; Ch. 2);[22] and Lane Fox's that it is derived from the participle *τῡ́φων, τῡ́φοντος*, 'smoking', 'burning' (intrans. or trans.).[23] It seems much more likely that *Τυφῶν* is the form being gravitated towards rather than away from, and we have a ready explanation as to why this should be so: the desire to assimilate this *drakōn*'s name to the name-shape of other *drakontes*, perhaps Python in particular. But one may at least concede to Lane Fox that the verb *τῡ́φω*, which fits Typhon's nature and condition in both life and death so perfectly, may well also have exercised a pull on the developing shape of the name.

Ladon

The only significant attestation of *Λᾰ́δων* as the name of the Serpent of the Hesperides is found in a single line of Apollonius' *Argonautica*.[24] A scholium to the line preserves the accusative form *Λάδωνα*, which confirms that the name's declension-style is exactly comparable to those of *Πύθων* and *Τυφῶν*. And this is further confirmed by the fact that the same name, with the same declension-style, is otherwise found rather more commonly attached to an Arcadian river.[25]

Glycon

Alexander of Abonouteichos' 'New Asclepius' *drakōn* (Ch. 9) had a name with a similar shape too: *Γλῠ́κων (-ωνος)*.[26] The serpent's name is not attested in a metrical context, so we cannot be completely sure that the upsilon of the first syllable was short (in contrast to the first syllables of the three names discussed above). However, the upsilon of the *γλυκ-*, 'sweet', root, upon which the name was based, is otherwise always short, and indeed the form *γλύκων (-ωνος)* itself was in

[21] Watkins 1995: 460–3. For Watkins 'Typhon' derives, like 'Python', from an Indo-European root signifying 'abyss'. Indeed he holds that the two roots in question, metathetically related to each other already in Indo-European, **bhudh-n-* (for *pyth-*) and **dhubh-n-* (for *typh-*) were effectively doublets.

[22] M. L. West 1997: 303. West acknowledges the difficulty that the name Sapōn seems to conform better (though still poorly) with the later-attested form of Typhon's name. But his notion depends too on the further difficult hypothesis that Sapōn was in origin the name of the monster Ba'al fought and confined under his mountain, which was then transferred to the victorious god himself as an epithet.

[23] Lane Fox 2008: 314 (also dismissing the West theory). But if this were indeed the origin of the name, why would the participial-style declension in *-ων, -οντος* have been substituted with one in *-ῶν, -ῶνος*?

[24] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396. The name is only found otherwise in connection with the Serpent of the Hesperides at Probus on Virgil *Georgics* 1. 205 and 244.

[25] Hesiod *Theogony* 344, Antimachus F34 Wyss, Callimachus *Hymn to Zeus* 18, Clearchus Wehrli F104, Palaephatus 49, Eratosthenes F6 Powell, Lycophron *Alexandra* 1041, Posidonius *FGrH* 87 F53, Strabo C60, 389, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 81, Dio Chrysostom *Orations* 33. 25. Cf. Ganschnow 1992.

[26] The nominative and vocative forms are found at Lucian *Alexander* 18, 39, 40, 43, the genitive form at 38, 43, 55, 58, and the genitive is also found at *IGRom* iv. 1498 lines 8–9 (Miletos, the son of the Paphlagonian Glycon). The name is found only in the nominative on the Glycon coins.

existence long before Alexander: Aristophanes uses it for an endearing but patronizing address, 'sweet one' or 'you dear silly creature', whilst Hephaestion records the doubtless fictitious tradition that the glyconic metre was invented by one Glycon.[27]

Drakon

It will not have escaped notice that the nominative forms of the above four names resemble in their structure the term δρᾰ́κων itself, although they do not share the remainder of its declension-style (gen. δράκοντος). It is likely that Δρᾰ́κων sometimes served as the proper name for some individual *drakontes*, along the lines of 'Hydra' and 'Echidna', of which more anon, rather than as a mere tool of description for them. A scholium to Apollonius cites Pherecydes on Ladon. According to some manuscripts of the scholium, ἐφύλασσεν αὐτὰ δράκων ὁ Τυφῶνος καὶ Ἐχίδνης. It is difficult to avoid construing δράκων as a proper name here: 'there guarded them [sc. the golden apples] Drakon, the son of Typhon and Echidna'.[28] The serpent-slaying narratives' descriptive term δρᾰ́κων repeatedly becomes the proper name Drakon in the work of the rationalizing mythographers, where, however, it ceases to signify an actual sepent, as we shall see below. This rationalizing glide may have been encouraged if it was felt that Drakon already served, on occasion, as a proper name for *drakontes*.

Drakainai

Secondly, the names of female *drakontes* tend to be descriptive of their constituent snakes or of the other creatures from which they are compounded, or to salute a toponym. Hydra is plainly and simply 'Water-snake', Echidna 'Viper', and Chimaera 'Goat'. The name Aegis is derived from another term for 'goat' (αἴξ, αἰγός), though not directly equivalent to it. Scylla's name, as we have seen, probably did not originate in the term for 'puppy', σκύλαξ, but it remains significant that the *Odyssey* should already be proposing this folk etymology for it. Lamia, as we have seen, was effectively a generic name for a monster type (probably derived from *Lamashtu*), and the same could be contended for Gorgo(n).[29]

As for names saluting toponyms, with Callimachus we find the arrival of the name Delphyne in the tradition (together with a male derivative Delphynes) for the Delphic serpent.[30] This should probably be explained in part as a back-formation from the name of Delphi itself, perhaps on the perceived model of

[27] Aristophanes *Ecclesiazusae* 985 (the winning translations are LSJ's); Hephaestion *Encheiridion* p. 32; cf. Frisk 1960–72, Chantraine 2009 s.v. γλυκύς.

[28] Pherecydes 16b Fowler, *apud* schol. Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396. The other MSS read ὄφις instead of δράκων, but the same considerations apply: 'Ophis, the son of Typhon . . .'

[29] The names of the individual Gorgons, however, are unremarkable in significance: Medusa, 'Ruler'; Stheno, 'Strength'; Euryale, 'Wide-leaper' (after the kneeling-running pose of early full-figure Gorgons).

[30] Callimachus F643 Pfeiffer.

Python and Pytho. But to justify the presence of the upsilon in the stem-extension here we must look to the influence of another variant of the name preserved by Hesychius, 'Delphys', which he glosses 'Womb, and the *drakōn* in Delphi'.[31] 'Womb' certainly makes a good name for a female serpent that carries the ultimate threat of producing a vast brood of her kind, and the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* makes the Delphic *drakaina* foster-mother to one other terrible serpent at any rate, Typhon, as we have seen.[32] Antoninus Liberalis, our unique source for Lamia-Sybaris, leaves us with the strong impression that the name Sybaris is a back-formation from the names of the spring and the city that were supposedly named for her.[33]

BEARDS AND CRESTS

One of the most striking and puzzling recurring features of the representation of serpents (pure or composite) in Greek art is the fact that they are often given beards and crests. It will be helpful, if we are to understand their significance, to begin with an overview of their occurrence in the iconographic record, albeit one that must remain tentative and provisional. No corpus of bearded- or crested-serpent images has been assembled (it would be an immense task indeed), nor do the image catalogues upon which we perforce depend note the presence of beards or crests systematically. In the case of beards on pots it can, in any case, be difficult to decide whether a vestigial line descending from a serpent's head represents a gaping lower jaw, a lolling tongue, or a beard. The haste of the artist, flaking paint, and the fuzzy, monochrome murk beloved of the standard catalogues all conspire against us.

Serpents first began to acquire beards in the seventh century BC, but it remains unclear precisely when. One of the earliest images of the Gorgons in full body is found on a proto-Attic amphora of Eleusis of *c.*670 BC. Some of the serpents that project from the cauldron-like heads of these wasp-bodied creatures seemingly sport vestigial beards. However, it is a further complication that the heads themselves of the serpents in question appear to have been assimilated to lions: do the beards, if such they are, belong to the projections qua snakes or qua lions?[34] We are on firmer ground with a fragment of *c.*625 BC, where a large serpent with a small but clear beard rears up between the heads of two grazing horses.[35] Another early example may be found on a Corinthian alabastron of the last quarter of the seventh century. This carries the badly preserved image of a gigantic rampant serpent swallowing (or disgorging) a man backwards, most probably Jason. A projection beneath the serpent's chin may or may not represent a beard.[36]

[31] Hesychius s.v. *Δελφύς*. The nu in the stem-extension is justifiable with reference to the adjectival form *Δελφίνιος*.

[32] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 300–55.

[33] Antoninus Liberalis *Metamorphoses* 8 (based on the *Heteroioumena* of Nicander).

[34] *LIMC* Perseus 151 = Grabow 1998 K2.

[35] Grabow 1998 K12. [36] *LIMC* Iason 30.

But it was the early sixth century that witnessed the great explosion in the attaching of beards to serpents, and this was to persist into the fourth century. As for the great *drakontes* of myth, the Gorgons' snakes (if the wasp-bodied Gorgons are disqualified) can carry beards from at least *c.*590 BC;[37] the Chimaera's serpent-tail from the earlier sixth century;[38] Typhon's snakes,[39] the anonymous serpents killed by Heracles,[40] and the serpents of Apollo Thymbraeus,[41] all from *c.*560 BC (whilst those specifically sent against Laocoon are found bearded from 430–425 BC: Fig. 3.7);[42] the snakes of Athena's aegis from *c.*560 BC;[43] Cerberus' snakes from 560–550 BC;[44] Ladon from 550–500 BC;[45] the Hydra from the mid sixth century BC;[46] the serpents of Medea's chariot from *c.*530 BC;[47] the serpent Athena launches against Ajax the Less from 500–480 BC;[48] the Colchis *drakōn* (if the alabastron is to be disqualified) from 480–470 BC;[49] the serpents of Triptolemus' chariot from *c.*470 BC;[50] the serpents carried by Erinyes from 460–450 BC;[51] the serpents carried by a maenad (closely similar to an Erinys in configuration) from *c.*450 BC;[52] the Serpent of Ares, probably, from *c.*450 BC;[53] Python from the earlier fourth century BC.[54]

As for the benign serpent gods that came to prominence in the fifth century BC and to flourish in the fourth (Chs. 8 and 9), Zeus Meilichios often sports a beard in

[37] *LIMC* Gorgo, Gorgones 289 (the serpents on the belt of the Corfu-pediment Gorgon, *c.*590 BC), 315 (large separate serpent accompanying a running Gorgon, 575–550 BC), Grabow 1998 K171 (570–560 BC), *LIMC* Gorgo, Gorgones 293 (= Perseus 113; Medusa's belt snakes and head snakes, 550–540 BC), 46 (550–525 BC), 67b (*c.*500 BC), 247 (running Gorgon clutching separate bearded snake, *c.*480 BC).

[38] *LIMC* Chimaira (in Etruria) 37a (600–550 BC), Grabow 1998 K207a (580–570 BC), *LIMC* Chimaira 3 (*c.*550 BC), 25 (*c.*550–525 BC), 87 (*c.*550–525 BC), Pegasos 200 (550 BC), 209 (550–540 BC), Chimaira (in Etruria) 35 (530–510 BC), 36 (late 6th cent. BC), 39 (*c.*500 BC). Note also Pipili 1987: 18–21, nos. 57–8 and figs. 29–30.

[39] *LIMC* Typhon 23 = Pipili 1987 no. 193 and fig. 102 = Grabow 1998 K185 (560–550 BC).

[40] *LIMC* Herakles 2822 (560–550 BC), 2829 (*c.*450 BC).

[41] Pipili 1987 no. 85 and fig. 43 = Grabow 1998 K73 (*c.*560 BC), no. 141 and fig. 77 = Grabow 1998 K75 (550–540 BC).

[42] *LIMC* Laokoon 1 (430–425 BC).

[43] Grabow 1998 K143 (560), K145 (snakes on shield and aegis alike 550 BC).

[44] Pipili 1987:5–6 no. 12 and fig. 8 (the snake-tail at any rate seems to be bearded 560–550 BC), *LIMC* Herakles 2595 (520–510 BC), 2603 (*c.*500 BC).

[45] Grabow 1998 K86 (550–500 BC), *LIMC* Herakles 2692 (*c.*500 BC), Ladon i 1 (480–470 BC), Herakles 2701 (= Hesperides 7; 470–60 BC), Herakles (Dodekathlos) 1702 (early 5th cent. BC), Ladon i 12 (450–430 BC), 2 (380–360 BC), Hesperides 29 (380–360 BC), 1 Herakles (Dodekathlos) 742 (?; mosaic, 3rd cent. AD).

[46] *LIMC* Herakles, 1991 (*c.*600–595 BC), 2007 (*c.*550 BC), 2012 (550–525 BC), 2013 (540–520 BC), 2033 (530–510 BC), 2016 (520–510 BC), 2003 (500–490 BC), 2015 (500–490 BC), 2038 (470 BC), Herakles (Dodekathlos) 1702 (early 5th cent. BC).

[47] *LIMC* Medeia 3 = Grabow 1998 K24 (530 BC); the reasons for associating the serpents framing Medea's named head with her chariot are discussed in the following chapter.

[48] *LIMC* Erechtheus 47 = Aias ii 42 (with drawing) = Grabow 1998 K92 (500–480 BC).

[49] *LIMC* Iason 32 (the Duris cup; 480–470 BC), 36 (470–460 BC), 37 (*c.*415 BC), 38 (*c.*360 BC).

[50] *LIMC* Triptolemos 91 (470 BC), 41 (1st cent. AD).

[51] *LIMC* Erinys 1 = Grabow 1998 K110 (460–450 BC).

[52] *LIMC* Maenades 27 (450 BC), 36 (= *LIMC* Dionysus 311; 500–480 BC).

[53] Hesperie 1 (if this does indeed represent Cadmus with the Theban serpent; 460–450 BC), Harmonia 1(*c.*440 BC), Kadmos i 18 (?; 420–410 BC), 20 (420–400 BC), Harmonia 4 (late 4th cent. AD).

[54] *LIMC* Apollon 995 (400–350 BC).

his Attic reliefs,[55] as does the Agathos Daimon serpent from the time of his rise to prominence in the early third century BC onwards.[56] These were gods of wealth and good luck. While the serpent-avatars of the healing gods Asclepius and Hygieia seldom seem to wear beards in iconography (as opposed to literature), that of Amphiaraus may do so in the celebrated Archinus relief of the early fourth century BC,[57] and in the second century AD the 'New Asclepius' Glycon certainly does so, complementing his long, Pythagorean hair.[58]

Bearded serpents are found in other iconographic contexts too, particularly in the sixth century again. On pots they are often found in the company of eagles or other birds, where they are suggestive of omens and prophecies, from *c.*590 BC.[59] From *c.*570 BC they can be found lurking in temples, like the serpents of Apollo Thymbraeus, again often in the company of birds.[60] From *c.*550 BC they are found in association with heroes' tombs (cf. Ch. 7).[61] From *c.*540 BC bearded serpents can accompany humanoid heroes on their reliefs, as in the celebrated Chrysapha relief of that date.[62] And a bearded snake can be found amongst Thetis' animal transformations, from *c.*520 BC.[63]

Kētē too, the marine cousins of the *drakontes*, can sometimes sport beards. These again are not always easy to identify, since *kētē* often have heads that are generally shaggy anyway, but clear examples of beards are found worn by the Ketos of Ethiopia at any rate from the fourth century BC.[64]

The serpent-crest appears in iconography only in the course of the fourth century BC and is found almost exclusively in combination with a beard, which it balances.[65] So it is with the serpents that draw Medea's chariot,

[55] Mitropoulou 1977: 112 no 1 (fig. 48a), 115–16 no. 6 (fig. 49), 117–18 no. 8 (fig. 51), 119–20 no. 10 (fig. 52), 119–20 no. 11 (fig. 53), 125–6 no. 17 (fig. 56; perhaps the earliest, being dated to the earlier 4th cent. BC), 142–3 no. 33a (fig. 67).

[56] *LIMC* Agathodaimon 3 (Hellenistic), Mitropoulou 1977: 165 no. 9 (fig. 84) (late Hellenistic), *LIMC* Agathodaimon 7, 8 (Pompeii), Lar, Lares 39, 63, 67 (Pompeii), Agathodaimon 13, 17, 20, 29 (imperial).

[57] *LIMC* Amphiaraos 63 (400–350 BC).

[58] Coin at Petsalis Diomidis 2010: 32 fig. ii (age of Antoninus Pius).

[59] Grabow 1998 K38 (590 BC) offers an eagle with a bearded snake in its mouth, saluting the famous omen at Homer *Iliad* 12. 200–7, 220 (cf. Aristophanes *Knights* 197–210, Plato *Ion* 539c). Eagles and bearded snakes also at Pipili 1987: no. 131 and fig. 70 (*c.*570 BC), Grabow 1998 K70 (*c.*560 BC), K49 (500–490 BC). Eagles and other birds at Grabow 1998 K58 (Amphiaraus; 570–60 BC).

[60] Note in particular Grabow 1998 K76 = Pipili 1987 no. 208 and fig. 107 (570–60 BC), on which a primitive komast dances before a temple within which coils a bearded snake, K91 (520–500 BC) and K94 (bearded snake before an altar in a temple; 480–470 BC).

[61] Grabow 1998 K29 (*c.*550 BC), K96b (550–525 BC).

[62] Staatliches Museum, Berlin 731 = Mitropoulou 1977: 85 no. 9; illustration at Schouten 1967: 34 fig. 9.

[63] Grabow 1998 K148 (520–510 BC), K149 (500–475 BC). Other noteworthy beards from Grabow's collection: K62 (a fragment declaring itself painted by Sophilos; 590–580 BC), K68 = Pipili no. 89 and fig. 47 (a bearded snake bites the Cyclops in the forehead as Odysseus' men drive the stake into his eye, seemingly as a metaphor for the burning pain; 570–560 BC), K138 (a Delphic protome, 550–500 BC), K130 (a shield blazon, *c.*500 BC).

[64] *LIMC* Perseus 192 (Etruscan; 4th cent. BC), Andromeda i 38 (possibly also with crest; Pompeii), 55 (4th cent. AD). For beards on other *kētē*, see e.g. *LIMC* Ketos 39 (2nd–1st cent. BC), 34 (2nd cent. AD).

[65] One of the crudely drawn serpents on Grabow 1998 K106 (575–550 BC) might initially appear to sport both beard and crest with its cross-shaped head. But probably the three projections are intended to represent upper jaw, lower jaw, and beard respectively.

from *c.*400 BC;[66] the serpents of Apollo Thymbraeus sent against Laocoon from 380–370 BC;[67] the Serpent of Ares from 360–350 BC;[68] Ladon from *c.*350 BC;[69] the Serpent of Nemea from *c.*350 BC;[70] Giants from 350–325 BC;[71] the Chimaera's tail from perhaps the mid fourth century BC;[72] and the Colchis *drakōn* from perhaps the mid fourth century.[73] The only image I am aware of in which a serpent is found crested but unbearded is one of Ladon of *c.*350 BC.[74]

Literary references to serpent beards, from which we might have hoped to derive a sense of their meaning, are few and only emerge after their great age in the iconography is past. The early third-century BC Posidippus of Pella composed an epigram on a stone that supposedly originated in the head of a well-bearded (*eupōgōn*) *drakōn*. The *c.*200 BC Nicander's description of the *drakōn* reared by Paeon (Asclepius) on Pelion gives it a yellow (*choloibaphos*) beard. In his *On Venomous Creatures and the Antidotes to Them* the second-century AD Philumenus presents the *drakōn* as an actual snake species prolific in Ethiopia and Lycia: 'under their chin they have a certain out-growth, which they call a beard'. In the third century AD Philostratus speaks of the marvellous jewel-headed *drakontes* of India that have golden scales and curly golden beards. In the third century AD too Aelian compares the beards of creatures he terms *kynoprosōpoi*, 'dog-faces' that live in the desert between Egypt and Ethiopia (perhaps mandrills), to those of *drakontes*. For the third- or fourth-century Quintus Smyrnaeus the pair of *drakontes* sent against Laocoon both sport shaggy (*blosyros*) jaws. Finally, Nonnus mentions *drakōn* beards twice. He tells that when Zeus transformed himself into a *drakōn* in order to sire Zagreus on Persephone he shook his shaggy chin. Was this a reminiscence of the humanoid Zeus' beard? And he tells that Dionysus discovered wine when he saw a *drakōn* sucking the juice from broken grapes on the vine: the juice dribbled and reddened its beard.[75]

Paradoxically, serpent-crests find mention in the literary record before beards do and indeed (just) before their own first appearance in the extant iconographic record. Euripides' Theban *drakōn* is 'purple-crested' already in the *Phoenissae* of

[66] *LIMC* Medeia 35 (400 BC), 36 (400 BC), 39 (350–300 BC), 46 (125–50 AD).

[67] *LIMC* Laokoon 2 (380–370 BC). Although only the crest of a single serpent is visible on this fragment, the underside of the serpent's chin is obscured by the disembodied arm it carries in its mouth.

[68] *LIMC* Kadmos i 23 (360–350 BC), 25 (= Harmonia 5 = our fig. 1.6; *c.*330 BC), 36 (3rd cent. BC), 37 (3rd or 2nd cent. BC), 31a (AD 238–43).

[69] *LIMC* Hesperides 2 (350 BC), Herakles 2726 (350–330 BC).

[70] *LIMC* Septem 13 = Archemoros 8 (350 BC). It is accordingly by chance alone that the earliest image of the Nemean serpent to survive with beard alone is as late as early imperial *LIMC* Archemoros 1.

[71] *LIMC* Gigantes 400 (350–325 BC).

[72] *LIMC* Chimaira 108 (4th cent. BC), Pegasos 154a (330 BC).

[73] *LIMC* Iason 41 (4th cent. BC)

[74] *LIMC* Hesperides 36 (350 BC). A crest but no beard is visible in the image of the Serpent of Ares on the 3rd-cent. AD coin at *LIMC* Kadmos i 31d, but a beard is indeed visible on the all but identical 31a, revealing its absence on 31d to be attributable merely to oversimplification.

[75] Posidippus of Pella *Greek Anthology* Appendix 3.79 Cougny = Posidippus 15 Austin-Bastianini; Nicander *Theriaca* 443–4; Philumenus *On Venomous Creatures and the Antidotes to Them* 30 (δράκων); Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 3. 8; Aelian *Nature of Animals* 10. 25, 11. 26 (the programmatic statement); Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 462, 492; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 6. 156–60, 12. 319–23. Sauvage 1975: 244 makes the bizarre claim that serpent beards are absent from ancient literature.

410–409 BC. Euripides' play is no doubt saluted in the bright red beard and crest given to the Serpent of Ares in the finest extant image of it, a vase of *c.*330 BC (Fig. 1.6). The Nemean *drakōn* of Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, written around the same time, *c.*410–407 BC, also had a crest to shake. The pair of serpents sent against the baby Heracles never, as it happens, exhibit beards or crests in the extant iconographic record, but Plautus explicitly gives them crests in the *Amphitryo* of *c.*200 BC, which remodels an unknown Greek original. The Latin epicists enjoy their crests: Virgil salutes those of the serpents sent against Laocoon, whose crests exceed the height of the waves around them as they travel rampant over the sea; Ovid's Colchis *draco* is 'remarkable for its crest'; Valerius Flaccus' Colchis *draco* shakes thunderbolts from its crest, which sinks down when it is induced to fall asleep. Statius' Serpent of Ares sports a splendid but cruel crest from its gilded forehead. The crest of Silius' Bagrada *draco* exceeds the height of the tree-tops of the grove in which it lives. In later Greek literature Philostratus knows that his bearded *drakontes* of India also sport red crests from which fire flashes forth brighter than a torch. And the Philostratus of the *Imagines* gives crests again to the serpent pair sent against baby Heracles. Around the same time, Aelian also refers to the crest of the *drakōn*. Finally, Nonnus gives the Serpent of Ares a rough crest of hair.[76]

So what, finally, might the beard have signified? Aelian gives us antiquity's single programmatic statement for the significance of *drakontes*' beards. He grasps for the obvious and asserts simply that it is an emblem of maleness, possibly of male pride: 'Nature seems to prefer the male amongst unreasoning animals too. For the male *drakōn* has his crest and beard, the cock has his crest and wattles, the stag his horns, the lion his mane and the cicada his song.' Bodson largely agrees, reading the beard as a symbol of the serpent's fecundity and virile maturity.[77] The iconographic evidence of Aelian's own age could be seen to lend some support to this reading. The prolific imperial-age images of Agathos Daimon/Sarapis with his consort Agathe-Tyche/Isis-Thermouthis give the former a beard that they withhold from the latter, and so seem to use the beard as differentiator of sex.[78] But such a reading does not appear sustainable for the earlier iconography. First, the distinctively female Hydra,[79] as we have seen, often sports beards from all her heads, whilst the distinctively female Chimaera often sports a beard from her serpent-tail (as well as, be it noted, a mane from her lion's head).[80] Secondly, as we

[76] Euripides *Phoenissae* 820, *φοινικολόφοιο* (cf. *LIMC* Kadmos i 25 = Harmonia 5; cf. also the bright red crest and beard given to Ladon on the *c.*350–340 BC *LIMC* Hesperides 5a, superbly illustrated at Godart and De Caro 2007: 178–9, no. 48), *Hypsipyle* F754a *TrGF* = F18 Bond (cf. also Tiiia *TrGF*); Plautus *Amphitryo* 1108; Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 206–7; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7. 150; Valerius Flaccus 8. 61, 88; Statius *Thebaid* 5. 510–11; Silius Italicus 6. 221–2; Philostratus *Imagines* 5; Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 26; Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4. 365.

[77] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 26; Bodson 1978: 72–4; cf. also Gourmelen 2004: 386–8, who seeks to expand the beard's symbolism beyond this to include the dispensation of riches, but this is based on the misapprehension that the beard's association with the Zeus Meilichios serpent is far more unique than it in fact is.

[78] *LIMC* Agathodaimon 13, 17, 20; cf. *LIMC* Tritpolemos 48a, a Hadrianic coin upon which Triptolemus' two serpents are assimilated to Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche.

[79] Note esp. Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 25. 203.

[80] The point exercised Euripides *Electra* 473–5 and schol. Homer *Iliad* 6. 181, both of which affirm that the Chimaera had the head rather of a *lioness*.

have seen, *drakontes* frequently operate in pairs. Whenever the sex of a pair of *drakontes* is commented on in literature, they are said to be a male and a female. So it is with the serpents deriving from the male Cadmus and the female Harmonia; with the serpent pair that attacks Laocoon, subsequently transformed into humans, the male Porcis and the female Chariboea; with Asclepius and Hygieia (Ch. 9); with Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche (Ch. 8); and with the coupling serpents that cause Tiresias to change sex (Ch. 3). Yet we often find beards attached to both members of a serpent pair, which again implies that beards can be sported by female serpents. Thus, as we have seen, the pair of serpents sent against Laocoon are both bearded on a vase of *c.*430–425 BC.[81] Quintus Smyrnaeus, as we have seen too, gives beards to both members of the male–female pair sent against Laocoon. Since the presence of crests implies that of beards, it is relevant too that Plautus and Philostratus, as we have seen, give crests to both of the serpent pair sent against baby Heracles.[82]

Harrison contended that the beards signified the anthropomorphic nature of the serpents to which they were attached. Her view is somewhat skewed by her immediate focus, which is upon the bearded serpents of the archaic Laconian grave reliefs (Ch. 7), which, with justice, she reads to embody the spirits of dead men.[83] But other scholars, building on her work, Küster, Gow, and Grabow, have come closer to the best view.[84] It is safe to say that no beard is found attached to a serpent we otherwise have a strong reason to imagine represents nothing more than a common-or-garden snake. The sporters of beards are always such as the great *drakontes* considered in the first three chapters, or otherwise are serpents ostensibly acting in a divine, heroized, or supernatural context. Bearing in mind our observations in the Introduction on the use of the term *drakōn*, we might say that a beard, when applied, distinguishes a *drakōn* from a common-or-garden *ophis*. This is not to say that its use was mandatory: we have plenty of fine, supernatural *drakontes* without beards.

Where did the beard imagery originate? The difficulty we ourselves experience in deciphering images of crudely drawn serpent heads may offer a clue: does a head of three projections depict an upper jaw, tongue, and lower jaw, or an upper jaw, lower jaw, and beard? Does a vertical projection from the end of a lower jaw

[81] *LIMC* Laokoon 1; cf. also the fine *c.*560–550 BC vase Pipili 1987 no. 141 (fig. 77), showing Achilles before the temple of Apollo Thymbraeus, on which both snakes sport beards. Of the pair of snakes on the Erichthonius Painter's pelike, *LIMC* Aglauros 18 = Athena 480 = Erechtheus 36 = Cook 1914–40: iii. pl. xxix = Reeder 1995*b* no. 69, the one on the left-hand side displays a beard, whereas no beard can be seen on the one on the right, but this is a rule-proving exception, because the right-hand snake has its back to us, and so obscures its beard with its body; the image, with its implications for beards, is misread at Cook 1914–40: 764 n. 6.

[82] Note also the 4th-cent. BC relief fragment from Sardis, in which a pair of bearded serpents, possibly representing Zeus Meilichios and his female consort (Ch. 8) face each other across a round object, perhaps a *phialē*: Sardis Museum 70.7; Mitropoulou 1977: 142–3 no. 33a and fig. 67.

[83] Harrison 1922: 326–8.

[84] Küster 1913: 76 n. 2, Gow 1954: 198 n. 2, Grabow 1998: 18–19. Gow flirts with but rejects the notion that the beard may have originated in the under-chin markings of an actual snake variety found in the Near East, *Coluber jugularis*. He is concerned that the bearded snakes shown carried by maenads (as e.g. in *LIMC* Charis II 1 [*c.*520–510 BC], Maenades 27 [450 BC] and 36 [*c.*500–480 BC]) are not supernatural, but why should they not be so, particularly as Dionysus himself and satyrs also regularly appear with them?

signify a lolling tongue or a beard? It is quite possible that the custom of giving serpents beards originated in the Greeks' own misreadings of the cruder among their existing images. If we must have a more purposeful origin, then Mitropoulou may be right to look to Egyptian iconography, where the beard serves as an attachable symbol of royalty or divinity for men, women (e.g. Hatshepsut), children (e.g. Tutankhamun) and animals, including serpents, alike.[85] The appeal of such an origin is that the significance of the Egyptian beard seems to match the significance I hypothesize for the Greek serpent beard rather well. But if we then ask why serpents alone in Greek art should have acquired an Egyptian beard, perhaps we have to turn back to something like my first explanation.

And what of the origin of the crest? The iconographic record suggests that it originated as an artistic caprice to balance the beard. If there was any immediate inspiration, perhaps it was (unlikely as it may seem) the cock: cocks' wattles are answered and balanced by their crest above, and in the archaic period at any rate, from *c.*550 BC, they had often been paired with serpents on vases.[86] Aelian, as we have seen, makes an explicit comparison between the crest and wattle of the cock and the crest and beard of the *drakōn*.[87] We may also wish to note a black-figure vase of 540–530 BC with a fine illustration of a hoplite helmet on which a vertically rippling snake is used to raise the crest from the crown.[88]

CAVES AND *DRAKŌN*-SCAPES

In the modern West we are familiar with the idea that a dragon should live in a cave. The notion was already embraced in antiquity, with the cave serving the function of a snake's hole writ large, and as an eloquent symbol of their bond with the earth (for which see Ch. 7). Hesiod's Ceto bore the Echidna in a cave, and the Echidna then came to live in a cave of her own (perhaps the same one) under a hollow rock at Arima. His Ladon guarded his golden apples 'in his lair in the dark earth'. Pots of *c.*475–450 and 400–350 BC show Python before a cave entrance (Fig. 1.4), and references are made to his cave (seemingly different ones) by Euripides and Apollodorus. In the Eumelian *Titanomachy* Typhon seems to have lurked in a pit. The Typhon of Pindar was reared in the 'much named' Cilician cave. The Typhon of Apollodorus and Nonnus used the Corycian Cave in Cilicia and perhaps a number of other caves too as places of concealment, alongside the *drakaina* Delphyne (Ch. 2). Nicander told that Lamia-Sybaris dwelled in a huge cave on Mt. Crisa. Ovid's Serpent of Ares lived in the cave that housed the spring of Dirce it guarded. Silius Italicus' Bagrada serpent inhabited a cave resembling an entrance to the underworld (Ch. 6). Scylla, who, as we have seen, is a monster stranded between *kētos* and *drakōn* in her conceptualization, inhabited a cave high on a sea-cliff at Rhegium, according to Homer.

[85] Mitropoulou 1977: 88–94 (with discussion also of the role of the beard in other Near Eastern cultures).

[86] Grabow 1998: 46–58, with K27–35.

[87] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 26.

[88] Grabow 1998 K133.

And the serpents sent against Laocoon, who also share characteristics of both *kētos* and *drakōn*, are said by Quintus Smyrnaeus to have been reared in a very similar cave in the islands of Calydnae. When there work is done, they disappear back into the earth. One would not have expected the pure *kētē* to have inhabited caves (land caves at any rate). Even so, a cave featured prominently in the Andromeda tradition, with the girl, from Euripides' *Andromeda* onwards, in art and literature, conventionally pinned across the entrance to a sea-cliff cave for the *kētos* to devour (Fig. 3.5). However, there is no explicit indication that this land cave is the *kētos*' home. The fragments of Accius' second-century (or early first-century) BC *Andromeda* may, nonetheless, suggest some sort of lair, cave or otherwise: they describe a precinct (of some sort) fenced around with the bones of the sea monster's former victims and rank with the remains of their decaying flesh.[89]

But the *drakontes* of myth were often identified with broader landscapes too. The greatest (but not the only) memorials to them, and the greatest testimonies to their existence, lay in the fabric of the land they had once inhabited, or indeed continued to inhabit, and even in that of the universe.[90] As we have seen (Ch. 2), Zeus' battle against Typhon may have originated ultimately in a reading of the thunderstorms over Mt. Kasios: the continuing storms may have been supposed to remember the primordial battle. From the time of Homer Typhon may have been projected as a sometime inhabitant of the cavernous 'Heaven and Hell' ravines (Arima?) in Cilicia. From the time of Xanthus of Lydia the devastation of the great fire-battle was read out of the 'burnt' landscape of the Catacaumene. But Typhon's most striking and continuing impact upon the world's landscapes, from the time of Pindar onwards, was over in the west. He lay under Etna and the Phlegraean fields, whence he continued to breathe forth his fire in the form of

[89] Ceto and Echidna: Hesiod *Theogony* 295–305. Ladon: Hesiod *Theogony* 333–6. Python: *LIMC* Apollon 993 = Leto 29a = Python 3 (*c.*475–450 BC), *LIMC* Apollon 995 = Leto 31 = Python 1 (*c.*400–350 BC); Euripides *Phoenissae* 232, with schol. ad loc.; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 4. 1. Typhon: fragment of the Eumelian *Titanomachy* at schol. Oppian *Halieutica* 3. 16 (if genuine); Pindar *Pythian* 1. 17; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 145–53, 163, 409–26; according to Solinus 38. 7–8 the Corycian cave was Typhon's home. Lamia-Sybaris: Antoninus Liberalis *Metamorphoses* 8 (after Nicander). Serpent of Ares: Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 28–38. Bagrada serpent: Silius Italicus *Punica* 6. 146–50, 174–80, 283–5 and cf. 275–6. Scylla: Homer *Odyssey* 12. 80–1. Laocoon: Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 449–53, 480. Andromeda: Euripides *Andromeda* FF114, 118, 125, 127 *TrGF*; *LIMC* Andromeda i 8, etc.; Accius *Andromeda* F10 (at Ribbeck[3] i pp. 172–4 = Warmington ii. 346–53). For the Latin Andromeda tragedies see Klimek-Winter 1993: 317–75.

Is there any trace of a cave-lair for Python in the literary tradition? Fontenrose 1959: 408–12 precariously contends that the Corycian cave on Parnassus, some seven miles from the Delphic oracle, was named after Typhon's Corycian cave in Cilicia; that the battle between Apollo and the Delphic *drakōn* was located at this cave, which accordingly constituted the *drakōn*'s lair, this on the basis that Apollonius *Argonautica* 2. 705–12 has the Corycian nymphs, daughters of Pleistos, crying *hiēie* as Apollo fought the *drakōn*; and that the Parnassian cave was also the original site of the Delphic oracle. He might also have observed that, according to Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3, when Typhon had stolen Zeus' sinews, he wrapped them in a bearskin and concealed them in the Corycian cave and set the *drakaina* Delphyne as a guard over them.

[90] Cf. Buxton 2009: 191–209 for the 'aetiology of landscape' with reference to the human figures of Greek myth.

volcanic lava and fumeroles—or did these fires represent rather the action of Zeus' thunderbolts, as they continued to devour his vast body? Typhon left a permanent mark on other landscapes with the blood that spilled from him. Oppian tells that the yellow banks of seashores continue to blush red with his gore,[91] whilst Apollonius explains that the Thracian Mount Haemus took its name from the blood (*haima*) of Typhon that gushed forth there when Zeus blasted him.[92]

Similarly, there was a strong tendency, partly rationalizing, to locate the Chimaera in a fiery mountain in Lycia. Since Euripides' day the Chimaera was associated with beast-ridden Cragus in particular. Ctesias spoke of the mountain issuing forth an inextinguishable fire. For the arch-rationalizer Palaephatus the Chimaera was a steep-sided Lycian volcano, with a lion living on its front slope and a *drakōn* on its rear slope; Bellerophon killed the beasts by setting the mountain ablaze. For Strabo she was one of the complex mountain's gorges. For Pliny, she was a fire-spewing volcano pure and simple, active day and night.[93] This notion was already familiar to Ovid, who phrased himself carefully to leave it initially ambiguous as to whether his Chimaera was the traditional monster, blowing fire from her central goat-head, or a volcano, blowing fire from its summit: 'By now Byblis had left Cragus and Limyre and the waves of the Xanthus, and the ridge at which the Chimaera had fire in its middle part, the breast and face of a lioness, and the tail of serpent.'[94] There is an implicit suggestion here, scholarly rationalizing aside, that the creature has either been merged into the landscape she once roamed, or has been memorialized in it. Plutarch too tells that the Chimaera was a mountain, but he finds her fire in a different way. The mountain was sheer-sided, and the sheer side reflected the blazing sun onto the crops of the Lycians below, burning them up. Bellerophon destroyed this side of the mountain so as to deliver the crops.[95]

Pausanias uniquely tells how Amphicleia in Phocis had once been called Ophiteia ('Snake City'). One of the city's luminaries had concealed his child from his enemies in a pot. The child was attacked by a wolf, but it was warded off by a *drakōn* that coiled around the pot. The father, unaware of what had taken place, threw a javelin at the serpent, killing it, but accidentally killing his child also. On learning the full details, he made a common pyre for child and snake, with both alike, we are to assume, becoming protective heroes for the city. The city itself, Pausanias tells, was said still in his day to resemble the blazing pyre.[96] The

[91] Oppian *Halieutica* 3. 16–25, with scholl. ad 24–5.

[92] Apllodorus Bibliotheca 1. 6. 3.

[93] Euripides *Sthenoboea* F669 *TrGF*; Ctesias F45 Lenfant = Antigonus of Carystus 166; Palaephatus 28 (cf. Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 288, with communities of lions, goats, and snakes on the mountain's three zones); Strabo C665; Pliny *Natural History* 2. 236. Typhon and Chimaera are brought together at *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 367–8.

[94] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9. 646–8. Cf. schol. Homer *Iliad* 6. 181: 'And some say that there is a mountain in Lycia called Chimaera. This blows up fire from its central point, and there are many beasts around its peaks'; First Vatican Mythographer 1. 72: 'Some say the Chimaera is not a creature, but a mountain in Lycia which rears lions and goats in some parts, burns in other parts, and in other parts again is full of serpents. Bellerophon rendered it habitable, wherefore he is said to have slain the Chimaera.'

[95] Plutarch *Moralia* 248c; cf. the anonymous *Περὶ Μπέτων* 7–8.

[96] Pausanias 10. 33. 9–11. The myth seems to be a kaleidoscoped variant of the famous folk-tale ATU 178a ('The Innocent Dog'), in which a man kills his own faithful dog upon finding it with bloodied mouth and assuming that it has killed his baby, only subsequently to discover that the dog has

Serpent of Ares also contrived to leave some '*drakōn* crags' behind it, evidently a local landmark for the Thebans.[97] Menander Rhetor tells that Python occupied Mt. Parnassus so completely that no part of the mountain could be seen beneath his coils: from the peak he would lift his head up into the ether; he would drain entire rivers when it drank, and devour entire herds when he ate.[98] There may, perhaps, lurk here an implicit identification between Python and the mountain he once occupied. One thinks of the Scottish folk-tale of the dragon of Cnoc-na-Cnoimh destroyed by Hector Gunn: the traces of its coils, constricting as it died, spiral still around the hill on which it was killed.[99]

And the traces of the great sea-monsters and their battles too could be found to linger on in coastal landscapes. The tradition that Perseus used the Gorgon head to transform at least part of his *kētos*' vast bulk into rock suggests that the creature was preserved in a coastal feature.[100] We are only told of such a feature (by Lucian) in connection with the Ethiopian version of the story.[101] It is less clear that the people of Hellenistic and Roman Joppa (Jaffa) made a similar boast. Perhaps they thought they had a better prize in the sets of *kētos*-bones they were able to display, from at least 58 BC.[102] But by the AD 70s they were pointing to the marks left on their sea-cliffs by Andromeda's chains.[103] Similarly, Ovid concludes his tale of Scylla with the information that she was subject to a further, final transformation, for which he gives no context: into a rock, which continues to constitute a hazard for sailors in the strait.[104]

On a grander scale still, the constellation of Draco was taken to recall various *drakōn* fights. The sixth-century BC Epimenides told that when Zeus was attacked by Cronus, he hid by transforming himself into a *drakōn*, and his nurses into bears, and subsequently celebrated this by installing the adjacent constellations of Draco and the Bears in the heavens. According to the Eratosthenic *Catasterisms* and Hyginus, it was rather the battle between Heracles and Ladon that was translated to the stars, with the latter becoming the constellation Draco. Hyginus notes that others again held that the serpent in question was thrown at Athene by the Giants in the war between the gods and the Giants, and that it was she that then catasterized it.[105] And it was known at some point before the mid fifth century BC that not just the *kētos* of the Andromeda episode but all its major

rather protected the child by devouring the snake that had attacked it. Note also the parallels adduced by Frazer 1898 ad loc. For the motif of the concealment of a baby from his father's enemies in a pot; cf. baby Cypselus' concealment in a ceramic beehive at Herodotus 5. 92.

[97] Euripides *Phoenissae* 1315: κρηνῶν ἐκ δρακοντείων.

[98] Menander Rhetor *Peri Epideiktikōn* 3. 17 pp. 441–2 Spengel.

[99] Robertson 1961: 131–2; Simpson 1980: 78, 80. The Japanese of the Yayoi period (*c.*400 BC–AD 200) frequently found the shape of a conically coiled snake in their mountains: Yoshino 2001: 86.

[100] *LIMC* Perseus 192, 194. Conon *FGrH* 26 F1 at Photius *Bibliotheca* no. 186 (rationalized), Antiphilus at *Greek Anthology* 16. 147, Achilles Tatius 3. 6. 3–3. 7. 9, Lucian *On the Hall* 22, *Dialogues in the Sea* 14, [Libanius] *Narrationes* 35, at viii p. 55 Forster, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 30. 264–77, 31. 8–25.

[101] Lucian *On the Hall* 22.

[102] Pomponius Mela 1. 11; Pliny *Natural History* 9. 22; cf. Ogden 2008*a*: 116–18.

[103] Josephus *Jewish War* 3. 420; Pliny *Natural History* 5. 69.

[104] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 14. 72–4. Similarly schol. Lycophron *Alexandra* 45–6 makes Scylla a promontory near Rhegium, beneath which there are many vast caves in which sea-creatures live. When boats are smashed on the rocks or broken up by Charybdis, these creatures eat the men.

[105] Epimenides F23 DK; [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 3–4; Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 3, 2. 6.

players too had been translated to the heavens, in somewhat obscure circumstances.[106]

THE *DRAKŌN* SOURCE

Of all natural phenomena, it was with water sources, rivers, and particularly springs, that the great *drakontes* were most frequently associated. This association had a currency beyond the Graeco-Roman tradition. In ancient India, for example, Indra's killing of Vritra released the waters he controlled (Introduction), whilst the Nagas (divine cobras) were worshipped as water-spirits, and often held to live in lakes. And it was at the headwaters of a river that the Japanese hero Susanoo delivered the princess Kushi-nada-hime from an eight-headed dragon, slaying it by getting it drunk on eight-times concentrated sake.[107]

For the Greeks and Romans rivers, with their inherently serpentine courses, and *drakontes* offered ready metaphors for each other: Hesiodic poetry already compares, from the one side, the constellation of Draco to a flowing river and, from the other, the river Cephisus to a *drakōn* as it winds through Orchomenos. As we have seen (Ch. 2), the very name of the *drakōn* Campe, associate of the Titans, may, depending upon its accentuation, have signified the winding of a river. Ovid's Serpent of Ares surges forward in attack with the huge force of a river (*amnis*), whilst Valerius Flaccus' Colchis *draco* weakens like the backwards-flowing Po, the Nile as it divides into its delta and the Alpheus as it meets the sea, under the power of Medea's sleep-casting spell.[108] Unsurprisingly, the great river god Achelous could on occasion manifest himself in serpent form.[109] But the relationships between the great *drakontes* and rivers could go far beyond metaphor. In the early Hellenistic era, as we will see (Ch. 8), Typhon came to be identified strongly with the Orontes and Agathos Daimon with one or more branches of the Nile. The serpent faced by Regulus in Africa was named for

[106] [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 15–17, 22, 36 (referring to Aeschylus' *Phorcides* and Sophocles' *Andromeda*, the latter of *c.*450 BC); see also Aratus *Phaenomena* 248–53, 484, 685, 711, Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 9–12, 31, schol. Germanicus *Aratea* pp. 77–8, 82–3, 98, 137–9, 147, 173 Breysig. Cf. Ogden 2008*a*: 74–7.

[107] Vritra: *Rigveda* 1. 32. Nagas: Vogel 1926: 123, 136 (Chanda the Naga-raja makes his lake boil in anger at the birds that roost over it and defecate into it), 220, 235, 243–7 and Bloss 1973. Susanoo: the myth is translated at W. G. Aston 1896: i. 52–3. The motif of the dragon's water in folk-tale: Frazer 1898 on Pausanias 9. 10. 5 (v. 44–5, adducing many cross-cultural examples), 1911–15: i. 2, 156, Röhrich 1981: 791–2.

[108] Hesiod F70 line 23 (Cephisus), F293 MW (*Astrologia/Astronomia*) = Servius on Virgil *Georgics* 1. 244–5 ('de Dracone'); Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 77–80, Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 8. 89–91. Cf. Küster 1913: 153–7.

[109] In battling Heracles for Deianeira Achelous manifested himself in humanoid, bull, and serpent forms: Sophocles *Trachiniae* 6–27, 503–30, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 8. 879–9. 92 esp. 62–81 (*dracones*), Strabo C458 (explicitly comparing Achelous' serpentine manifestation to his river-course). On a fine red-figure stamnos of *c.*520–510 BC from Cerveteri, *LIMC* Acheloos 245, the god has a humanoid upper body, an extensive serpentine-piscine tail, and bull-horns, whilst on an Etruscan bronze mirror of *c.*400 BC, *LIMC* Acheloos 78, a winged Achelous sports a double serpentine tail. See Isler 1981, who describes these tails ad locc. as 'Triton-' and 'fish-tails'; cf. also Brewster 1997: 9–14.

the river by which it lived and at which it was defeated, the Tunisian river Bagrada (Medjerda). For Silius the serpent had been the servant (*famulus*) of the river's naiad sisters, and the river had nurtured it in its warm water. Perhaps the serpent had actually been born in and of the water (cf. Pausanias' claim that the Hesiodic Echidna had been born of the river Styx). The naiads were accordingly to take revenge for the killing by ensuring the destruction of Regulus' army, and they, or perhaps the river itself, made vocal lament for the serpent's death: 'A bellow burst forth from the sad river and mutterings poured forth from the lowest depths . . . the riverbanks gave forth a tearful howl.'[110] The collocation of water-source, nymphs, and *draco* is intriguingly found again in an imperial-period dedication from the Numidian spa Ad Aquas Flavianas (Henchir Hammam) by the tribune and municipal curator Abidius Bassus, 'To the numinous presence of the nymphs and to the *draco*.' Hyginus tells that Heracles killed a snake (*anguis*) beside the river Sagaris in Lydia, the banks of which it had been stripping of grain (more on this below).[111]

The association between serpents and springs is neatly made by the tradition that the island of Tenos had once had two alternative names, Ophioussa, 'Snakeland', and Hydroessa, 'Watered', the latter, as Aristotle explained, because of its many springs.[112] The relationship is enshrined also in a relatively early Aesopic tale, in which an ass exchanges mankind's eternal youth for a sip from a water-hole guarded by a dipsad, so bestowing upon snake-kind the ability to slough.[113] In the great *drakōn*-fight narratives, in which the *drakōn* must of course always be killed or at any rate overcome, the *drakōn* is often cast as a guardian of a spring. In so far as the spring is projected as a spring in fact, the *drakōn* protects its waters from being drunk; in so far as it is projected as a woman or a naiad, the *drakōn* more intelligibly protects her from sexual violation. But there is, again, also a tendency for the *drakōn* to be itself fully identified with the spring. Spring and *drakōn* alike are often further associated with trees: these could both mark the origin point of a source and (as an alternative to a cave) offer a home to a snake. We shall consider in turn the cases of the Serpent of Ares killed by Cadmus, the Serpent of Nemea killed by Adrastus, the Hydra killed by Heracles and the Python killed by Apollo. But the most striking example is that of Nicander's Lamia-Sybaris: when Eurybatus threw her off Mt. Crisa she was transformed into the spring that took her name, Sybaris, as she dashed against the rocks below.[114]

In Euripides' *Phoenissae* of 409 BC Tiresias describes the Serpent of Ares as 'overseer to the spring of Dirce', whilst the Chorus observes, 'There was the guardian, the bloody, savage-minded *drakōn* of Ares, watching over the flowing,

[110] Silius Italicus 6. 283–90. For Valerius Maximus 1. 8 ext. 19 the *draco*'s decomposing carcass contaminated the river to such an extent that it compelled Regulus to move camp; cf. Pliny *Natural History* 8. 36–7, Florus 1. 18, Aulus Gellius 7. 3 Echidna and the Styx: Pausanias 8. 18. 1; but according to Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 1. 2 she was rather the daughter of Earth.

[111] Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 14; cf. Fontenrose 1959: 107–10.

[112] Aristotle F595 Rose, *apud* Pliny *Natural History* 4. 65–6 and Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. *Τῆνος*.

[113] Aesop 458 Perry, at Sophocles *Kóphoi Satyroi* F362 Pearson/*TrGF*, Nicander *Theriaca* 343–58, Aelian *Nature of Animals* 6. 51; discussion at Deonna 1956.

[114] Antoninus Liberalis *Metamorphoses* 8 (after Nicander).

fertile waters, its glancing pupils roaming in all directions.'[115] This guardian status is repeatedly advertised in subsequent literature.[116] Ovid's elaborate description of the water-fetching episode tells us that the spring was located actually within the arch-entranced cave that constituted the *draco*'s lair.[117] The ps.-Plutarchian *On Rivers* too fully indicates the intimacy of the relationship between the serpent and the spring: 'Cadmus shot the spring-guarding *drakōn* and, finding the water, as it were, poisoned by the killing, he went around the country seeking for another spring.'[118] On vases springs are typically represented by trees (or other greenery) or by conical piles of stones, and the spring of Dirce is sometimes so represented in scenes of Cadmus and the *drakōn* from *c.*470 BC. The particularly fine Paestan vase of *c.*330 BC that we have had cause to mention before brings serpent, tree, and conical pile together nicely (Fig. 1.6).[119]

A scholium to the *Phoenissae* stipulates that the serpent guards the spring to the end that no one should draw water from it, but even so we are not told why this should be.[120] The iconography may help. On a series of vases beginning *c.*450 BC the serpent towers protectively over a seated female figure: this is surely the spring again, personified or embodied in a naiad.[121] On other vases, a broadly similar seated female figure, not quite so intimately associated with the serpent, is labelled 'Thebe'.[122] Thebe, we know from Pindar, was not just a personification of the future city, but also a personification of its spring.[123] If the spring is projected as a woman, then we may conclude that the serpent is protecting her—as a woman—from sexual violation, the metaphorical equivalent of drinking from a virgin spring. Perhaps the serpent is preserving Dirce-Thebe for the sexual attentions of Ares in due course. In the light of all this, one of the Dirce-Thebe vases, a

[115] Euripides *Phoenissae* 658–61 (δράκων, φύλαξ, ἐπισκοπῶν), 932 (Δίρκης ναμάτων ἐπίσκοπος). For the Serpent of Ares and its spring, see in particular Vian 1963: 104–9.

[116] e.g. Hellanicus F51 Fowler, Apollonius *Argonautica* 3. 1176–90.

[117] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 28–38.

[118] [Plutarch] *On Rivers* 2. 1, τὸν κρηνοφύλακα δράκοντα (he eventually alights on the Corycian spring as a substitute); so too Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 4. 1, Pausanias 9. 10. 1, 9. 10. 5, Hyginus *Fabulae* 6, 178, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4. 398–9 (the *drakōn* is the φυλάκτωρ of Dirce; cf. 4. 356 and 5. 4, where Dirce is δρακοντοβότος, '*drakōn*-nurturing'), Photius *Lexicon* and *Suda* s.v. Καδμεία νίκη; cf. Fontenrose 1959: 311. For the corruption of the source by the killing of its serpent, cf. the case of the Bagrada serpent above.

[119] *LIMC* Kadmos i 13 (= Archemoros 11 = Hesperie 1), 15, 17, 19–25 (15 = Harmonia 1; 17 = Harmonia 4; 19 = Harmonia 2; 23 = Harmonia 6; 24 = Harmonia 7; 25 = Harmonia 5 = Vian 1963 pl. ix, the Paestan vase).

[120] Schol. Euripides *Phoenissae* 657; cf. also 238. See Gantz 1993: 469–70.

[121] *LIMC* Kadmos i 9 = Harmonia 3, Kadmos i 14, Kadmos i 15 = Harmonia 1, Kadmos i 16, Kadmos i 17 = Harmonia 4, Kadmos i 18 (= our Fig. 4.1), Vian 1963 pl. x no. 1.

[122] *LIMC* Kadmos i 19 (of *c.*420–415 BC) and 24 (of *c.*340–335 BC).

[123] Pindar *Olympian* 6. 85–6 (spring), *Isthmian* 8. 5a–20 (city). However, it is a curiosity that on one vase, *LIMC* Kadmos i 23 (*c.*360–350 BC), the seated female figure labelled Thebe is differentiated from another female figure identified by the generic legend *krēnaiē*, 'spring-woman', who peeps out on the action from behind a rock, where she stands alongside the river Ismenos in the form of an elderly man, also identified by a legend. Even so Paribeni 1988 *passim* seems to perpetrate a gross error in identifying these seated female figures systematically as Harmonia, who has no direct role in Cadmus' encounter with the *drakōn* at the spring; the basis for this identification seems to be the fact that on the calyx crater *LIMC* Kadmos i 15 (= Harmonia 1) the seated figure is adjacent to Harmonia's father Ares. The interpretation of Tiverios 1990 ad loc. is strongly to be preferred, as indeed is the case with all images held in common between the two articles.

Fig. 4.1. The spring of Dirce, personified, offers to fill Cadmus' water-jar, but her guard, the Serpent of Ares, prepares to attack. Red-figure hydria, c.420–410 BC. Musée du Louvre M 12 = N 3325 = MN 714 = *LIMC* Kadmos i 18. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

*c.*420–410 BC hydria in the Louvre, makes particularly interesting reading. For here Dirce-Thebe seems to welcome Cadmus, to beckon him to approach, and to offer to fill his hydria for him (Fig. 4.1). Is she making a forlorn attempt to evade her serpent guard? Or is she knowingly and maliciously leading him into a trap, in close cahoots with her serpent guard?[124] We are reminded of Dio Chrysostom's wonderful *lamiai*, who ensnare their young male victims by flaunting their seductive nude-woman end, only for their concealed serpent-end to wheel round and devour the men when they approach.[125]

The Serpent of Nemea was also tightly associated with a spring, no doubt the vigorous spring still to be found at the site, latterly the supplier of its bath-houses.[126] The closely associated phrases of a discontinuous fragment of Euripides' *Hypsipyle* of *c.*410–407 BC already seem to tell us that the serpent is the spring's guardian: 'a fountain is shaded . . . a *drakōn* living nearby to it . . . with fierce gaze . . . shaking its crest, fear of which . . . shepherds when quietly in . . . to do . . . to a woman everything happens . . . has come . . . not . . . a guard'.[127] Hyginus eventually tells us plainly that the serpent was indeed the spring's guardian

[124] The spring—as Dirce—was created from a mortal woman, who had been, it must be said, no retiring virgin in life. She was the wife of Lycus and tormentor of Antiope. Eventually she sought to drag her to death in a Bacchic revel, but Antiope was saved by her sons Amphion and Zethus, who then tied Dirce by her hair to a bull, which trampled her to death. She became a spring either when Dionysus transformed her dead body into one, or when Amphion and Zethus flung it into a pre-existing one. See Hyginus *Fabulae* 7–8 (8 summarizing Euripides' *Antiope*), Pausanias 9. 25. 3, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 5. 5. The death of Dirce was a popular subject in ancient art (see *LIMC* Dirke *passim*, with Heger 1986), and is the subject of the famous 'Farnese bull' statue group in Naples, *LIMC* Dirke 7.

[125] Dio Chrysostom *Orations* 5 *passim*, esp. 12–15, 24–7; see Ch. 2.

[126] Miller 1990: 110–17, 179, with figs. 37–8.

[127] F754a *TrGF* = F18 Bond; cf. also Tiia *TrGF*.

(*custos*).[128] In the meantime, a *c.*350 BC Apulian volute crater from Ruvo by the Lycurgus Painter and now in the Hermitage also strongly suggests a role of guardianship. Here the serpent, attacked by a pair of warriors (Hippomedon and Capaneus?) coils around the base of a tree which grows out of the shallow conical pile of rocks indicative of a spring.[129] We may note too a Cyzicene epigram of 159 BC that seems to tie the serpent tightly to the spring by describing it almost oxymoronically as an earthborn watersnake (*hydros*).[130] Statius vouchsafes the information that the spring was presided over by and named for a nymph, Langia: was the serpent protecting her chastity too?[131]

The Hydra was tightly associated with the spring of Amymone and the Lernaean marsh to which it gave rise.[132] This becomes explicit in the literary record only with Apollodorus and Pausanias, but then no general summary account of the Hydra episode survives from before their era. The former tells that the Hydra was reared in the swamp (*helos*) of Lerna, and that she had her lair (*phōleos*) beside the springs (*pēgai*) of Amymone. The latter tells that a plane tree grew at the spring (*pēgē*) of Amymone, and that the Hydra was reared under it. This detail may, however, derive from Pisander of Camirus, who wrote in the seventh or sixth century BC, and whom Pausanias cites shortly after supplying it.[133]

On the iconographic side the association may have been made explicit already on the lost mid-sixth-century BC Chest of Cypselus, given that Pausanias decribes its relevant panel in these terms: 'Athene stands beside Heracles as he shoots the Hydra, the beast in [*sic*] the river Amymone.'[134] Trees are only found four times in the *c.*160 Hydra images catalogued by *LIMC*, but it is conceivable that, on the occasions on which they are found, from *c.*520 BC onwards, they are indicative of the spring (or otherwise of the wood into which Heracles and Iolaus drive the serpent, or from which they take their brands).[135] However, the Hydra's most characteristic configuration in art, from *c.*590 BC onwards, with a thick, more or

[128] Hyginus *Fabulae* 74.

[129] *LIMC* Archemoros 8 = Hypsipyle 3 = Nemea 14 = Septem 13. Pache 2004: 119–20, 131–3 misunderstands the broader context of spring representations in serpent-slaying scenes.

[130] *Palatine Anthology* 3. 10.

[131] Statius *Thebaid* 4. 717, 775. In Statius' wider narrative, *Thebaid* 4. 680–843, Dionysus has stopped up all the surrounding water supplies in an attempt to delay the progress of the Seven towards his beloved Thebes. Their demands, accordingly, are for water for drinking, not for use in sacrifice. Langia is presented as a torrential river into which chariots can be driven, and which can sweep men away—for dramatic effect, no doubt.

[132] For the identity between the spring and the marsh, see Strabo C371. Propertius 2. 26. 45–50 explicitly locates the spring of Amymone within the Lernaean marsh. Hyginus *Fabulae* 30. 3 and 151. 1 refers to 'the Lernaean spring'.

[133] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2. Pausanias 2. 37. 4, incoporating Pisander of Camirus *Heraclea* F2 West; M. L. West 2003*a* ad loc. takes the detail to derive from Pisander. Note also the slightly oddly phrased scholium to Euripides *Phoenissae* 1137: *ἐν Λέρνῃ γὰρ τῇ Ἀργείᾳ κρήνη ἀνεφύη ἡ ὕδρα*. At the end of antiquity Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 25. 196–212 was to note that Heracles liberated the spring (*pēgē*) from the Hydra.

[134] Pausanias 5. 17. 11, *τὸ ἐν τῷ ποταμῷ Ἀμυμώνῃ*.

[135] *LIMC* Herakles 2036 (*c.*520–500 BC), 2030 (late 6th cent. BC), 1705 = 2040 (metope from the temple of Zeus at Olympia, 456 BC), 2053 (2nd cent. BC). The tradition that Heracles killed the Hydra by driving her into a blazing wood becomes completely explicit only at Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2, but it almost certainly underlies Euripides *Heracles* 421 (cf. Bond 1981 ad loc.), Palaephatus 38, and Nicander *Theriaca* 685–8. The number of Hydra images catalogued by *LIMC*: 65 under *LIMC*

less upright body from which many thin necks sprout in all directions, is itself strongly dendritic (cf. Fig. 1.1), as Ovid subsequently observed.[136] On a fourth-century BC vase the Hydra is shown in conjunction with a building that may be intended to represent a fountain-house.[137] Otherwise unidentifiable female figures appear in a number of Hydra-slaying images from *c.*550 BC, and in one of these images, of *c.*500–480 BC, the figure attempts to prevent Iolaus from attacking the Hydra. Kokkorou-Alewras identifies these figures as 'Lerna', a name justified by no legend; she may rather be the embodiment of the spring Amymone.[138]

There is nothing in our evidence to suggest directly that the Hydra might have been protecting the chastity of a naiad Amymone, but the spring's origin story in association with the Danaid girl Amymone makes appeal to remarkably similar themes. The story was seemingly known to Pindar, Aeschylus and Pherecydes, and is found in the iconographic record from *c.*470 BC, but for full narratives of it we rely on later writers. Amymone was sent from Argos to fetch water by her father and was seduced or raped by Poseidon as she went. The fruit of the union was Nauplius, a name also resonant for the local topography. For some the spring was created when, in fear or surprise, Amymone dropped the golden vessel she had brought (Propertius: *urna*; Philostratus: *kalpis*) in which to take the water, and it struck the rock and released the source. For others it was created when Poseidon stuck his trident in the ground, so releasing its threefold streams, and providing Amymone with the water she sought, as payment for the sex. A sometime refinement of the tale, perhaps originating in Aeschylus' satyr-play *Amymone*, holds that Amymone initially encountered a satyr who tried to rape her, whereupon she called in Poseidon to protect her from him, the god driving him off by launching his trident at him, and so striking the ground with it.[139] The name shared between girl and spring suggests that the two, somehow, became identified with each other, and we are licensed to imagine that the Hydra did, accordingly, protect her chastity for Poseidon, as it saved the waters from being drunk.

The source of Amymone, bursting forth in multiple streams, puts us in mind not only of the physical configuration of the trident that creates it, but more

Herakles, Dodekathlos (1697–1761), and 103 under *LIMC* Herakles, Hydra (1990–2092), with some overlaps.

[136] This configuration is found already in *LIMC* Hydra 1992 of 590 BC. Ovid *Metamophoses* 9. 73, *ramosam natis e caede colubris.*

[137] *LIMC* Herakles 2010 (*c.*370–350 BC); if not a fountain-house, then a temple.

[138] *LIMC* Herakles 2029 (*c.*550 BC), 2006 (the female figure restrains Iolaus; *c.*500–480 BC), 2009 (*c.*370–360 BC), 2010 (*c.*370–350 BC).

[139] Rounded tales at Propertius 2. 26. 45–50 (trident and golden vessel), Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 1. 4 (satyr, trident implied), Lucian *Dialogues in the Sea* 8 (trident), Hyginus *Fabulae* 169, 169a (satyr, trident, three streams), Philostratus *Imagines* 1. 8 (golden vessel, mentioned twice, with particular emphasis), First Vatican Mythographer 1. 45, Second Vatican Mythographer 200. The earlier sources: Pindar *Pythian* 9. 112–14, Aeschylus *Amymone* FF13–15 *TrGF*, Euripides *Phoenissae* 185–9. For the iconography of Amymone see *LIMC* Amymone, with Simon 1981 and Gantz 1993: 207–8. The earliest image, if it does indeed represent Amymone, is *LIMC* Amymone 85, on which Poseidon accosts a girl with a hydria, *c.*470 BC; otherwise we have a flurry of images of the scene from *c.*460 BC: *LIMC* Amymone 1, 17–19, 86. Amymone with the satyr: *LIMC* Amymone 12–16. Note that *LIMC* Archemoros 8 (*c.*350 BC) shows Hypsipyle dropping her *hydria* as she discovers Opheltes-Archemorus being devoured by the serpent.

particularly of the Hydra that came to protect it, with its multiple necks springing forth from its central body, and typically, as we have seen, in multiples of three (Ch. 1). There is a significant degree, then, to which spring and serpent are identified. And we can take the identification further. Propertius, in partly obscure lines, suggests that one of Amymone's streams flowed forth though the golden vessel Amymone dropped.[140] This curious detail must, in some way, correspond with Aristonicus of Tarentum's information that the Hydra's middle head—its immortal one, according to Apollodorus—was golden.[141] Clearly there was a notion that the Hydra's central head had somehow originated in the water-pot, and that it was in its whole an embodiment of the spring itself. I hesitate to suggest that the tradition may be making wordplay between *Hydra* and *hydria* ('water-pot'), since the latter term does not actually feature in any of the relevant literary sources, though a conscious linking of the terms may have underpinned a lost vase of *c.*565–550 BC, on which Heracles' battle with the Hydra was attended by Athene holding a hydria.[142] However, a three-way identification between spring, girl, and serpent may be implied by Lucian, who repeatedly describes Amymone as she goes to fetch her water with the term *hydrophoros* and its cognates: 'water-bearing'? 'Hydra-bearing'?[143] The motifs of this tradition have a kaleidoscopic relationship with those of the traditions relating to the head of the Gorgon. Apollodorus tells that since the middle of the Hydra's nine heads was immortal, and could not be destroyed, so Heracles hacked it off and buried it under a heavy rock on the road that led to Elaeus. Similarly Pausanias tells us that Medusa's still-active and still-dangerous (if not exactly immortal) head was buried under a heap of earth in Argos—presumably for protective purposes.[144] Apollodorus further tells of a special talisman that protected the city of Tegea: 'Heracles received from Athena a lock of the Gorgon in a bronze water-jar (*hydria*) and gave it to Sterope the daughter of Cepheus and told her that if an army attacked, she should hold the lock up three times from the city walls without looking forwards herself, and she would thus rout the enemy.'[145] A lock of the Gorgon's hair is, presumably, precisely a serpent-head, and here too we find it associated with a metal water-jar.

By the time of the rationalizing late Latin tradition, the Hydra has become fully identified with its spring: Servius and others tell that the Hydra was an imaginative elaboration of a spring that burst forth to deluge a local city with its torrential waters; every time Heracles tried to stop up one of its channels, i.e. cut off one of its heads, many more burst forth; eventually he dried it up by setting fire to its surrounding environment.[146]

[140] Propertius 2. 26. 45–50.

[141] Aristonicus of Tarentum *apud* Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 190 (Ptolemy son of Hephaestion/Ptolemy Chennos), 147b22–8. Aristonicus can be dated only by the *terminus ante* constituted by Ptolemy Chennos himself, whose floruit coincided either with the Neronian-Flavian one (AD 54–96) or the Trajanic-Hadrianic one (AD 98–138): see *Suda* s.v. *Ἐπαφρόδιτος* and s.v. *Πτολεμαῖος* respectively. Immortality of the middle head: Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2; cf. Pediasimus 2. See further below, on treasure.

[142] *LIMC* Herakles 1996.

[143] Lucian *Dialogues in the Sea* 8.

[144] Pausanias 2. 21. 5–7.

[145] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 7. 3; cf. also Pausanias 8. 47. 5. Discussion at Ogden 2008*a*: 104–5.

[146] Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 287, Lactantius Placidus on Statius *Thebaid* 1. 384, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 62.

The potential associations of the Delphic *drakōn* (in its various manifestations) with water-sources are more numerous but more slight. In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* we learn that the baby Apollo killed the Delphic *drakaina* at a 'sweetly flowing spring', i.e. Castalia.[147] However, whilst Castalia is occasionally mentioned in subsequent literature indirectly in connection with Apollo's battle against the Delphic *drakōn*, now become Python,[148] it is never suggested that the serpent guards the spring as such, as opposed to the oracle.[149] Did the Delphic *drakōn* have any special bond with the spring-nymph Telphusa? The case is tenuous. When, in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, Apollo is initially minded to found his temple at the spring, its nymph persuades him rather to move on to the different location of Crisa, thus sending Apollo into the path of the serpent. Apollo retrospectively takes this for a deliberate and malicious act of deception, and punishes the nymph by burying her in rock. On the one hand the tale may suggest a bond between Telphusa and the serpent, as they work in cahoots, and here we may bear in mind the malicious reading of the Dirce-Thebe vase discussed above; on the other it seems to make the point quite emphatically that their homes are in distinct locations.[150] A third candidate for the Delphic *drakōn*'s privileged water source is the river Pleistos, into which Castalia flows. The river is seemingly connected with Python by Callimachus: 'the great snake . . . that beast of dreadful jaw, slithering down from Pleistos, wreathes snowy Parnassus with nine coils'.[151]

There is some indication of a spring in association with Python in his iconography: an Attic lekythos of *c.*470 BC shows baby Apollo shooting Python from his mother's arms: Python, crudely drawn in this, his earliest extant image, coils round the *omphalos* before a cave entrance (?) and adjacently to a tree.[152] The lost Apulian amphora of the earlier fourth century BC, preserved in a drawing, showed a rearing Python confronting Leto, her two babies in her arms, before two piled-stone structures (Fig. 1.4). That on the left, immediately behind Python, forms an archway and therefore represents his cave-lair. That on the right, an independent cone, surely represents a spring.[153] Of great interest, for all its lateness, is a coin of Trajan Decius (*c.*AD 249–51), on which Apollo shoots at a rampant Python who stands before a pile of rocks, out of which grows a tree, and on top of which sits a naiad. Lambrinudakis and Palagia think they can detect water flowing over the top of the pile of rocks on which the nymph sits.[154]

[147] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 300–6. Fontenrose 1959: 372 identifies the *Homeric Hymn*'s spring rather with Telphusa.

[148] Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1234–57, esp. 1256, certainly implies that the spring in question is Castalia, but admittedly he has the rather distinct Python tale in view. Note also Statius *Thebaid* 1. 562–71. Fontenrose 1959: 547 n. 3 is misleading in this regard.

[149] The serpent explicitly guards the oracle at Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 4. 1, Aelian *Varia Historia* 3. 1, hypothesis Pindar *Pythians* c. Kahil 1966: 488 and 1994: 610 however does regard the serpent as guardian of the spring.

[150] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 242–76, 375–87; cf. Fontenrose 1959: 308, 366–74, 546–7, all highly speculative, and contending that Telphusa was herself also a serpent: the strongest reason for supposing that this may have been the case is the fact that a scholium to Sophocles *Antigone* 126 states that the Serpent of Ares killed by Cadmus was born of one Tilphōssa Erinys.

[151] Callimachus *Hymns* 4. 84–93.

[152] *LIMC* Apollon 993 = Leto 29a = Python 3.

[153] *LIMC* Apollon 995 = Leto 31 = Python 1.

[154] *LIMC* Apollon 1001c, with Lambrinudakis and Palagia 1984 ad loc.

Also worthy of note here is one of the miracle inscriptions from the Asclepieion of Lebena in Crete, dating to the first or second century BC. It praises Asclepius for having manifested himself to guide his worshippers in bringing water to his sanctuary. First he discovered some springs for them, and helped his worshippers locate them in the waking world by sending a divine snake (*theion ophin*) to guide them to them.[155]

TREASURE WITHOUT, TREASURE WITHIN

Drakontes were held to make outstanding natural guardians, and of far more than the springs just considered. The sacred snake of the Athenian acropolis acquired the epithet 'house-watcher' (*oik-ouros ophis*), whilst Apollonius of Rhodes gave the epithet 'fore-watcher' (*phr-ouros ophis*) to Ladon, and Euphorion gave him the epithet 'garden-watcher' (*kēp-ouros*).[156] Late antique scholars, making explicit an association that had been implicit since the time of Homer, etymologized the word *drakōn* with reference to *derkomai* (aorist participle: *drakōn*), 'see', 'look at', 'flash a look', thereby making the *drakōn* a 'starer' in origin and by definition; most modern scholars believe they were in point of fact right, though the present one remains doubtful.[157] Festus accordingly told that serpents were great guardians of things, including treasure, because constantly watchful and awake; Artemidorus told that in dreams the *drakōn* signified, inter alia, 'wealth and money on account of the fact that it is set upon treasuries

[155] *Inscriptiones Creticae* i.17 no. 21(= *SGDI* 5088 = R. Herzog 1931: 53 [WLeb 4] = T791 Edelstein). For the importance of water-sources in sanctuaries of Asclepius see Cole 1988.

[156] Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 758–9; Apollonius *Argonautica* 1434; Euphorion F154 Powell = 148 Lightfoot.

[157] With δράκων, δράκοντος, compare δέρκομαι's zero-grade aorist participle δρακών, δρακόντος, though note the difference in accentuation. Ancient scholars on the etymology: Festus *De verborum significatu* 67 M, 110 M, Porphyry *De abstinentia* 3. 8, Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1. 20. 1–4, schol. Aristophanes *Wealth* 733, *Etymologicum Gudianum*, *Etymologicum Parvum*, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. δράκων; cf. also Cornutus *Theologiae Graecae compendium* 33 and Eusebius *Praeparatio evangelica* 3. 11. 26. The etymology is surely implicit already at Homer *Iliad* 22. 93–5 (δράκων . . . εμερδαλέον δὲ δέδορκεν); cf. also Homer *Iliad* 11. 36–9 (Agamemnon's Gorgon shield, δεινὸν δερκομένη, has a δράκων strap); Hesiod *Theogony* 825–8 (the terms δράκοντος and δερκομένοιο indirectly associated in a description of Typhon). The etymology is approved by Küster 1913: 57–8, Prévot 1935: 233–55, Röhrich 1981: 789, Bodson 1978: 72, 1981: 63–8 (drawing attention to the relatively prominent eyes of the four-lined snake she wishes to identify with the δράκων), Evans 1987: 29, Sancassano 1996: 56–62, Bile 2000: 124–6, Jacques 2002: 137, Gourmelen 2004: 108 n. 141, Chantraine 2009 s.v. δέρκομαι, and Beekes 2010 s.v. δράκων; LSJ s.v. δράκων regard it as probable; Frisk 1960–72 s.v. δράκων is sceptical. The *Etymologicum Gudianum* and the *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. ὄφις, seemingly building on notions about δέρκομαι, similarly derive ὄφις from the familiar *op-* root denoting vision: παρὰ τὸ ὅπτω, ὀπτικὸν γὰρ τὸ ζῷον. It is possible that ὄφις is in actuality etymologically related to ἔχις, 'viper' (cf. Echidna), though the case is not a simple one. Discussion at Chantraine 2009 and Beekes 2010 s.v. ὄφις. Sancassano 1996 makes a number of points in relation to this material. In particular, she notes that the accentual differentiation between δράκων and δρακών disappears in the shared genitive plural form, δρακόντων (56–7), and suggests that the term δράκων may have developed as a euphemistic, kenning replacement for an original term that had become taboo as a result of fear of or reverence for the creature, comparing it with the Latin *serpens*, in origin the present participle of *serpo*, 'crawl' (57–62).

(*thēsauroi*)'; and Macrobius told that the serpent was continuously watchful like the sun, which was why they were entrusted with the guarding of inner sancta (*adyta*), oracles, and treasuries. The commonplace of the treasure-guarding *drakōn* is celebrated in another Aesopic fable, first attested by the Augustan Phaedrus, but probably far more ancient, which at first seems to mock the notion as absurd before giving it a grim justification. A fox digging its hole uncovers a *draco* in the furthest recess of its hidden treasury (*thesauri*). The fox apologizes for the disturbance but asks the serpent what it profits from its guarding. Nothing, the serpent declares, but the task is imposed upon it by Zeus. The fox concludes that the serpent and human misers alike are born under angry gods. The commonplace was noted too by Philostratus, when speaking of an imaginary gold-guarding *drakōn* which he compares to the Colchis *drakōn*, Ladon and even the *drakōn* of the Athenian Acropolis, which remains there for its love of the golden cicadas the Athenians wear in their hair: 'for this creature is said to be keen on gold, and to love and hug close whatever golden thing it sees'.[158]

Ladon and the Colchis *drakōn* resemble each other strongly in their canonical representations: they both typically hang in a tree (which in the case of other great *drakontes* might have symbolized a spring) to guard a golden treasure that also hangs there and is definable by the term *mēlon*, 'apple' or 'sheep' (Ch. 5). But let us not forget Hesiod's unique, tantalizing image of Ladon sitting, Fafnir-like, on his golden apples in his hole deep in the earth.[159]

The notion that serpents should be natural guardians of treasure and treasuries also found practical expression in the sanctuaries of Asclepius and other anguiform gods. A fragmentary epigram inscribed on a statue base of the third or second century BC at Epidaurus declares: 'His fatherland [i.e. Sicyon or the Achaean League] set up this *drakōn*, the monstrous father of the hero Aratus, to be a guardian of possessions.'[160] This *drakōn* statue evidently guarded the temple treasury. *Drakontes* often seem to have decorated offertories (these too called *thēsauroi*) in such shrines too. From the temple of Asclepius and Hygieia at Ptolemais in Egypt there survives the heavy black granite lid of a round receptacle, now in the Cairo Museum. The upper part of the lid consists of a rampant serpent, and in the centre of its coils is a worn coin-slot 4 cm in width (Fig. 4.2).[161] From the Sarapeum on Delos hails a round offertory of white marble on a rectangular base. A bronze ornament, inevitably a *drakōn*, was once attached to it. Below its coin-slot an inscription, dated by its letter forms to the late third or early second century BC, tells that the box was dedicated by Ctesias of Tenos, at

[158] Festus *De verborum significatu* 67 M, 110 M; Artemidorus *Oneirocritica* 2. 13 (cf. Herzog 1907: 213); Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1. 20. 1–4; Phaedrus 4. 21 (no. 518 Perry; cf. Thompson 1966 B11.6.2); Philostratus *Imagines* 2. 17. 6 (cf. Thudycides 1. 6 for the cicadas).

[159] Hesiod *Theogony* 333–6. Fafnir: see Introduction. The treasure-guarding dragon in folk-tale more generally: Röhrich 1981: 79–4.

[160] *IG* iv^2 622 (R. Herzog 1931: 37 [W71]): [*Ἥρως*] *Ἀράτοιο πελώριον ὧ*[*δε τοκῆα*] / [*εἶσε δράκοντα πατρὶς καδ*]*εμώα κτεάνων*. Arbitrary though Herzog's supplements may initially seem, the 'monstrous' thing associated with Aratus surely can only be his *drakōn*-sire, known from Pausanias 2. 10. 3, 4. 14; cf. Ch. 9.

[161] Edgar 1902–3: 140, with figure, R. Herzog 1907: 212–13 with pl. 1.3, Nilsson 1947: 305, Riethmüller 2005: i. 239, ii. 403. Mitropoulou 1977: 196–7 no. 5 with fig. 104 is evidently the same object, but here it is described simply as a bronze votive.

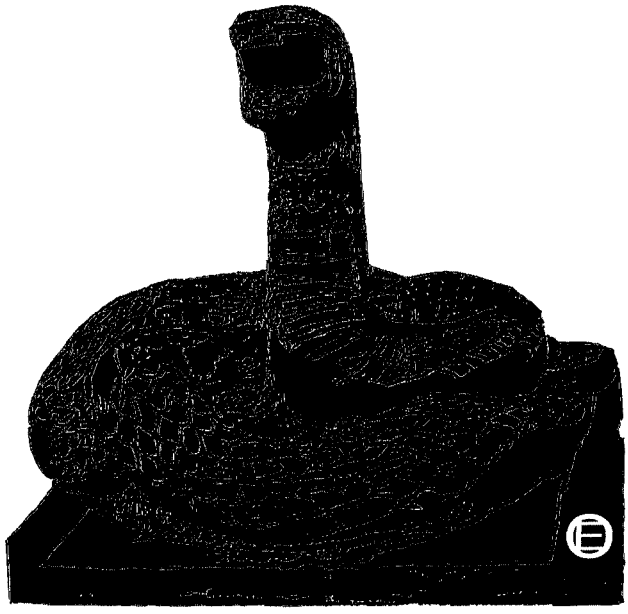


Fig. 4.2. Black granite offertory lid in the form of a snake from the Asclepieion at Ptolemais. There is a central coin slot. Cairo Museum. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

Sarapis' behest, to Sarapis himself, Isis and Anubis, and then reads: 'Don't be shocked when you look at me, visitor, even though I look fierce. For by day and all night long I guard this sacred offertory I have coiled around, since I am unsleeping. But be joyful and put whatever you would like in your heart through my mouth and into my capacious body.'[162]

Inasmuch as *drakontes* were ideal guardians of wealth, so they were ideal disbursers of it. The late fifth century saw the rise of a group of wealth- and plenty-bestowing anguiform deities, such as Zeus Meilichios, Zeus Ktesios, and Agathos Daimon, who will form the subject of Chapter 8. Even Asclepius, an anguiform god concerned with healing rather than the bestowal of wealth, was credited with a special ability to locate treasure. One of the (4th-cent. BC) Epidaurian miracle inscriptions reworks a well-worn ancient folk-tale: a man buries a treasure only to die before he can reveal its location to his wife. She incubates with Asclepius, and the god tells her how to find it: she must watch for the noon

[162] *IG* xi.4, 1247; *hēmerios*, 'by day', immediately succeeding and standing in contrast to *gorgos*, 'fierce,' is suggestive of *hēmeros*, 'tame', 'gentle'. See Ch. 8 for the anguiform manifestations of Sarapis and Isis. Also from Delos, from before the porticus of Philippus, hails a small cylindrical marble offertory, published at Hatzfeld 1912: 201–2 with fig. 1. It was dedicated by Varius in around 100 BC, to a god unspecified. Two snakes are carved on its convex top, and a bronze caduceus is attached to the slot between them. A collection box for Hermes, he of the caduceus, or perhaps for Agathos Daimon, who was also associated with it (see Ch. 8)? See Nilsson 1947: 305–7 for these and other items of interest.

shadow cast by the head of a stone lion near their home in the month of Thargelion, and dig beneath.[163]

But there was also a notion that *drakontes* could incorporate treasure in their own body. The Greeks and Romans were familiar with the widespread folk belief that certain serpents at any rate contained precious jewels in their heads.[164] This is attested for the Greeks first by the early Hellenistic Posidippus, whose epigram on a white-flecked intaglio engraved with the image of a chariot observes that, 'the well-bearded head of a serpent once contained this stone'.[165] Pliny and Solinus preserve the third-century BC Sotacus' account of the *dracontias* stone. The snake's brain crystallizes into the stone upon death, but if the snake knows it is about to die, it resentfully prevents the transformation. So hunters lull the serpent to sleep by scattering soporific drugs before its hole, and then lop its head off to secure the stone. It is transparent and unworkable. The kings of the orient are particularly keen on the stones, and Sotacus claimed to have seen an example owned by one such.[166] Philostratus locates the hunt in India. The *drakontes* in question have golden scales and beards and their bodies accordingly rustle like bronze as they burrow. The hunters, he maintains, cast not drugs before their holes but red cloths embroidered with spells in gold. The stones come in every colour, and have the power of the ring of Gyges: i.e. they confer invisibility on their wearer.[167] Lucan probably has a similar phenomenon in mind when he refers to, amongst the Thessalian witch Erictho's outlandish magical ingredients, the 'viper born in the Red Sea [i.e. the Indian Ocean], guardian (*custos*) of a precious pearl'.[168] It is just conceivable that these ideas have been shaped by contact with actual Indian beliefs about wealth-bringing Naga-rajas (cobra-kings): these were held to carry a jewel in their hoods, and to live in the jewelled underwater kingdom of Nagaloka.[169]

The great *drakontes* were sometimes thought to incorporate gold in their own bodies. Such a notion may underlie the frequent descriptions of their scales,

[163] *EMI* no. (C) 46; the fragmentary *EMI* no. (C) 63 also evidently spoke of the recovery of some gold. For the folk-tale type in the ancient and early medieval periods, see Herodotus 5. 92 (Periander and Melissa); *Apophthegmata Sancti Macarii, PG* 34. 244–5 (St Macarius); Rufinus *Ecclesiastical History* 10. 5, Socrates *Ecclesiastical History* 1. 12, Sozomenos *Ecclesiastical History* 1. 11. 4–5, Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 256 (= *PG* 104, 112, summarizing the anonymous *Acts of Metrophanes and Alexander*, 7th cent. AD?) (St Spyridon); Augustine *De cura pro mortuis gerenda* 13 (Milanese tale); Talmud Berachot 18b (Zeeraj). In all of these the dead person's ghost is called up to reveal the location of the treasure. R. Herzog 1931: 114–23 has broader sets of international parallels.

[164] See Henkin 1943 and, for the wider folk belief, S. Thompson 1966: B11.2.14 (dragons with jewels in the head, with Irish exempla), B101.7, B108.2 (snakes with jewels in the head).

[165] Posidippus at *Greek Anthology* Appendix 3. 79 = Posidippus no. 15 Austin-Bastianini.

[166] Pliny *Natural History* 37. 158, Solinus *De Mirabilius Mundi* 30. 16–18; cf. also *Cyranides* 4. 65 (*περὶ ὕδρου*), Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 16. 14. 7.

[167] Philostratus *Apollonius* 3. 8. Gow 1954: 198 n. 2 notes that Philostratus' description of the stone suggests an opal, though opals do not occur in India, where his tale is set. Ring of Gyges: Plato *Republic* 359d–360b, 612b. Aelian *Nature of Animals* 6. 33 also attributes the Egyptians with spells (*ἐπαοιδαί*) to draw snakes from their holes.

[168] Lucan 6. 677–8.

[169] Vogel 1926: 25–30, 148, 173–4, 198. Note in particular the 1st–5th-century AD story of the Naga-raja Campeyya at *Campeyya Jataka* 455–6; cf. Vogel 1926: 21–2, Cozad 2004: 96–104.

foreheads, or crests as 'golden';[170] indeed Philostratus appropriately makes his imaginary *drakōn*'s golden colour the cause of its own love of gold.[171] Sometimes, it seems, gold was imagined to reside, like the jewels, in the *drakōn*'s head, and perhaps a golden crest could be emblematic of this. Already from the mid fifth century BC in the iconography of Ladon his relatively slender body and often bulbous head can appear to merge with the apple tree around which he coils, with his body resembling the branches and his head the golden apples, and this effect can be magnified, of course, when the serpent is depicted as multi-headed.[172] As we have seen, Aristonicus of Tarentum, writing prior to the first- or second-century AD Ptolemy Chennos, maintained that the Hydra's middle head was golden, and there may have been a tradition that this originated in the golden water-pot dropped by Amymone.[173]

We may be able to reconstruct a belief that the Serpent of Ares also contained or was comprised of metal. On the one hand, Cadmus is said to have been the discoverer of both gold and bronze, and, compatibly with the latter, to have been the first to use a helmet and shield against the Greeks in battle;[174] on the other, the canonical version of his myth has him killing the serpent (and similarly the earthborn men that sprang from its teeth) with stones (Ch. 1).[175] Might we infer that, having necessarily killed the serpent with a stone in a pre-metal world, Cadmus discovered gold or bronze in the carcass, and was then able to exploit the latter in war? In addition to giving the Serpent of Ares a golden crest, Ovid compares its weapon-repelling scales to a cuirass (*lorica*): does the comparison knowingly anticipate the arms into which the serpent's body will subsequently be turned?[176] The parallel of Horn Siegfried, who gives himself an invincible horny skin by smearing the blood of the slain dragon Fafnir over himself, or else a substance that oozes from the immolated carcasses of a serpent host, presses itself upon us (Introduction). And was the serpent's metal transmitted to the serpent's

[170] *LIMC* Herakles 2726 (Apulian vase, 350–330 BC, Ladon's golden scales); Virgil *Aeneid* 5. 87 (the Anchises serpent's golden scales); Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 32 (Serpent of Ares' golden crest), 15. 669 (Asclepius serpent's golden crest), Statius *Thebaid* 5. 510–11 (Serpent of Nemea's golden forehead or probably crest), Philostratus *Imagines* 5 (golden and purple scales of the *drakontes* sent against baby Heracles), Orphic *Argonautica* 929 (Colchis *drakōn*'s golden scales).

[171] Philostratus *Imagines* 2. 17. 6.

[172] See in particular *LIMC* Ladon i 12 (450–430 BC), where a two-headed serpent seems to merge fully with its tree; *LIMC* Ladon i 13 (c.450 BC), where a three-headed serpent mimics the spreading branches of the tree in which it sits; *LIMC* Hesperides 3 (380–360 BC), where the single-headed serpent's coils are closely aligned with the branches that spilt from the tree's trunk; *LIMC* Herakles 2695 (4th cent. BC), where on a relief vase it is strangely difficult to distinguish Ladon's head from the surrounding apples.

[173] Aristonicus of Tarentum *FGrH* 57 F1 *apud* Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 190 (Ptolemy son of Hephaestion/ Ptolemy Chennos), 147b22–8.

[174] Conon *FGrH* 26 F1, xxxvii (arms); Pliny *Natural History* 7. 197 (Cadmus discovered mining and the smelting of gold at Mt. Pangaeus); Hyginus *Fabulae* 274. 4 (bronze).

[175] Cadmus kills a serpent with rock: references in Ch. 1. Cadmus makes the Spartoi kill each other by throwing a stone amongst them: e.g. Pherecydes 22a Fowler, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4. 421–63. Cadmus was also credited with the invention of quarrying: Pliny *Natural History* 7. 195.

[176] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 32, 63.

children, the Spartoi, via the sowing of its teeth? Is this why they sprang up ready-armed?[177]

AFTER THE SLAYING: RESTITUTION, MEMORIALIZATION, AND NEW BEGINNINGS

The great *drakōn*-slaying stories could serve as vehicles of explanation for the cults, institutions, and the cities the Greeks found around them: the *drakōn* was gone, but now there was something else in its place, a memorial or an act of compensation with continuing significance. We have already considered the memorialization of *drakontes* in the features of the landscape they once inhabited.

The killing of the Delphic *drakōn* was elaborately memorialized, and in at least five ways. First, in the tomb established for him. Varro told that the *omphalos*, at the heart of Delphi and indeed the world, was considered to be Python's tomb.[178] The tradition probably goes back at least to the mid fourth century BC, since a coin of 346–339 BC shows the serpent coiling around it.[179] A Pompeian mural in the House of the Vettii subsequently depicts Apollo celebrating his victory whilst Python's carcass drapes over the *omphalos*.[180] The tripod too could be associated with the serpent's body. Hyginus tells that having killed Python, Apollo deposited the serpent's bones in his temple in a tripod cauldron—which we are presumably to understand as the Pythia's tripod.[181] Dionysius Periegetes speaks of the coil of the '*drakōn*' Delphyne leaning against the god's tripod, whilst a series of ancient scholars explain that the tripod was draped in the Python's hide.[182] As we have noted, the living Python was commonly depicted as winding around Apollo's tripod in the god's imperial iconography.[183]

[177] Pherecydes 22a Fowler (ὡπλισμένοι), Hellanicus F1a Fowler (ἔνοπλοι), Euripides *Phoenissae* 671 (πάνοπλον), 939 (χρυσοπήληκα), Heraclitus *De incredilibus* 19 (ἔνοπλοι).

[178] Varro *De lingua Latina* 7. 17; so too Hesychius s.v. *Τοξίου βουνός*. Cf. Harrison 1899: 225–51 and Fontenrose 1959: 377, who guesses that the *omphalos* was intended to represent a Mycenean beehive tomb.

[179] *BMCC* Central Greece, Delphi no. 30, p. 29 and pl. 4.20; cf. Fontenrose 1959: 617. A Pompeian mural subsequently shows a superb Python coiling around the *omphalos*: *LIMC* Apollon/Apollo 356.

[180] *LIMC* Apollon/Apollo 356 = Python 7.

[181] Hyginus *Fabulae* 140; so too Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 3. 360.

[182] Dionysius Periegetes 441–5. Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 3. 92, 6. 347, Lactanitus Placidus on Statius *Thebaid* 1. 509, Eustathius on Dionysius Periegetes 441, Third Vatican Mythographer 8. 5. On some Crotoniate staters of 420–380 BC the tripod separates the living Python from the baby Apollo, who aims his bow at him: *LIMC* Apollon 1000 = Python 4. A late-Hellenistic relief cup from Pergamum also depicts Python rearing up beside the tripod; there are traces of a male figure, probably Apollo shooting him with his bow: *LIMC* Apollon 999. Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 9. 257–60 speaks of the snake being coiled around the tripod. Rival traditions of at least similar antiquity curiously made the *omphalos* or again the tripod the place rather of Dionysus' burial after his slaying at Delphi by Perseus. The *omphalos* itself as the tomb of Dionysus: Tatian *Oration against the Greeks* 8. 4. Perseus kills Dionysus at Delphi and buries him beside the tripod: Dinarchus of Delos *FGrH* 399 F1a–d (4th cent. BC); Philochorus *FGrH* 328 F7b = John Malalas pp. 44–5 Dindorf; Plutarch *Moralia* 365a; schol. Aratus *Phaenomena* p. 108 Martini, Salmanticensis 233. Discussion at Fontenrose 1959: 374–6 and Ogden 2008*a*: 28–32.

[183] For Python winding around the tripod see *LIMC* Apollo 39f, 39n, 209, Apollon/Apollo 197, 375a, 482, 519. Note also *LIMC* Apollo 499a, an imperial-period glass cameo with a frontally facing Python sitting in the tripod.

Secondly, there was the Septerion festival and its re-enactment of the killing of Python. Delphi's puzzling eight-yearly Septerion festival seems to have constituted, for some at any rate, a memorialization of the killing of Python—and perhaps, therefore, some sort of compensation for it. The words devoted to this festival by Plutarch, who was himself a priest at Delphi, should carry weight. He explains that the festival is a re-enactment of the god's battle against Python and the following flight and chase to Tempe after the battle, where he found Python dead.[184] Plutarch elsewhere mentions in connection with this festival a round structure erected at Delphi every eight years that, he suggests, did not represent, as some believed, the nest-like den of the *drakōn*, but rather 'the primitive circular house of an ancient king'.[185] This structure is evidently to be identified with the *skēnē*, 'tent' or 'hut', of the brigand Python, with the byname of Drakon, that Strabo, quoting Ephorus, tells us the Delphians burned 'still now, to make remembrance of what happened at that time'. One thinks of Bonfire Night. It is not clear whether the 'still now' belonged to Ephorus, writing in the fourth century, or to Strabo, writing at the turn of the era. Ephorus' brigand Python-Drakon, Plutarch's ancient king, and Pausanias' plundering Pythes, son of the Euboean king Krios, would seem to have been parallel humanoid rationalizations of the serpent Python. Presumably what the rationalizers held to be the house of the king, the non-rationalizers held to be the nest of the serpent.[186]

Thirdly, there was the establishment of the Pythian Games. It may be implicit in Ovid's account of Apollo's killing of Python that he established the Pythian Games as a sort of recompense for it: 'The games were called Pythian, after the name of the defeated serpent . . .'.[187] For Hyginus the Pythian games were instituted by Apollo specifically as funeral games (*ludos funebres*) for Python.[188] For Clement of Alexandria the Pythian *drakōn* received worship and the Pythian festival itself was a festival for the snake (*ophis*). But the latter was certainly a festival for Apollo, and Clement appears to be refocusing the festival and its worship around the serpent to make them more gratifyingly oppositional for Christianity.[189] For the seventh-century AD John of Antioch the games were instituted in memory either of the *drakōn* Delphynes or an ancient heroine Delphyne.[190]

Fourthly, the killing of the Delphic *drakōn* was memorialized in song at the Pythian Games. The Pythian festival incorporated a musical competition in the 'Pythian measure (*nomos*)', a measure principally for the *aulos* (double oboe) that represented Apollo's battle with the *drakōn*. A laurel crown was offered as a prize. Strabo, Pollux, and the Pindar scholia give us three different examples of the measure. All are divided into five movements, which can themselves be subdivided in turn, and these movements represent the different stages of the battle

[184] Plutarch *Moralia* 293c (*Greek Questions* 12). For a reconstruction of the Septerion festival see Nilsson 1906: 150–9, Halliday 1928: 65–73, Fontenrose 1959: 453–5, Defradas 1972: 97–101.

[185] Plutarch *Moralia* 418a.

[186] Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F31b = Strabo C422–3; Plutarch *Moralia* 418a; Pausanias 10. 6. 5–7.

[187] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 446–7; cf. Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 8. 11. 54, where, however it is said that the games celebrate the victory over the serpent named Python.

[188] Hyginus *Fabulae* 140.

[189] Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 2. 34, p. 29P.

[190] John of Antioch *FHG* iv. p. 539 F1.20.

narrative. Despite their differences, there are strong parallels in themes and sequencing between the three examples, and they allow us to get a rough idea of the sort of narrative portrayed: prominent amongst the movements' themes were: the initial battle; Apollo's challenge to the *drakōn*, or abuse of him; the principal battle; Apollo's victory celebration; the *drakōn*'s hissing and death.[191] An unforced reading of Pollux suggests that the example he supplies is that of Sacadas, though he does not explicitly say so.[192] Sacadas was the victor in the competition in the first three newly quadrennial Pythian festivals, namely in 586, 582, and 578 BC.[193] If the measure is indeed his, then it constitutes importantly early evidence for the Delphic serpent (only the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* might be earlier). Also, a number of myths and legends gathered around the singing of direct laments for the *drakōn*. Aristoxenus, writing in the fourth century BC, told that the Phrygian Olympus, the legendary pupil of Marsyas, was the first to play the dirge (*thrēnos* or *epikēdion*) for Python on the flute in Lydian fashion.[194] The first- or second-century AD Ptolemy Chennos told how, in what was evidently an aetiology of the foundation of the Pythian Games, Hermes and Aphrodite had wrestled whilst Apollo himself was singing an *epitaphion* (funeral hymn) for Python. Aphrodite won and received Apollo's lyre as a prize, which she then gave to Alexander-Paris.[195] Clement of Alexandria transmits a pagan tale. A festival was being held for the dead *drakōn* at Delphi, and the Locrian Eunomus ('He of good measure') was singing either a hymn for the serpent or a dirge for it in competition and accompanying himself on his *kithara* in the heat of the day, whilst the cicadas were singing under the leaves in the mountains. One of the *kithara*'s strings broke, whereupon a cicada perched upon its yoke and chirruped, making good the failed string. Eunomus and his competitor were rewarded with bronze statues at Delphi.[196]

And fifthly, as we have seen, Delphi's byname was held in the tradition already found in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* to have derived from and so to encapsulate the rotting of the *drakōn* 's gargantuan carcass.[197]

These memorializations cast the *drakōn* in the role of a slain hero. Accordingly, they are accompanied by an equally elaborate set of traditions relating to Apollo's purification and personal restitution for the killing. The strongest traditions located the purification in Thessaly. The third-century BC Aristonous told that Apollo was purified in Tempe by the will of Zeus. The significance of Tempe was presumably either that, as Lucan tells, this was where the serpent had first come to light, or more probably that, as Plutarch tells, this was where Apollo came upon

[191] Strabo C421–2 (the Pythian *nomos* of Timosthenes, admiral of Ptolemy Philadelphus); Pollux *Onomasticon* 4. 78–9, 4. 84; hypothesis Pindar *Pythians* a. Cf. Fontenrose 1959: 156–8, Furley and Bremer 2001: i. 91–7, 334–6.

[192] Compare Pollux *Onomasticon* 4. 78–9 with 4. 84.

[193] Pausanias 2. 22. 8, 10. 7. 4, Pollux *Onomasticon* 4. 78; cf. also [Plutarch] *On Music* 1134a–c, 1135c, However, Fontenrose 1959: 456, 458 would prefer to see the example preserved by the Pindaric hypothesis as the oldest, in view of the feature it makes of Dionysus

[194] Aristoxenus F80 Wehrli = [Plutarch] *Moralia* (*On Music*) 1136c. Olympus as pupil of Marsyas: *Suda* s.v. *Ξυναυλίαν περθήσομεν*.

[195] Ptolemy Chennnos *apud* Photius cod. 190, at p. 153a Bekker.

[196] Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 1. 1, p. 2P.

[197] Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1. 17. 50.

the body of the dead Python, after he had fled wounded from Delphi.[198] The third–second-century BC Anaxandrides of Delphi told that Apollo became a servant (sc. to the Thessalian Admetus of Pherae) in compensation for killing the Delphic *drakōn*.[199] But other places too claimed the credit for the purification: Argos, Sicyon, and even Crete.[200] All these traditions seem to speak of an Apollo who is of at least adolescent age, though the predominant traditions of the killing itself present him as a babe in arms at the time (Ch. 1).

Acts of purification, restitution, and memorialization were similarly needed after Cadmus' slaying of the Serpent of Ares. The god demanded compensation for the killing of his son and so Cadmus was indentured to him for eight years (much as Apollo had to become indentured to Admetus similarly for eight years after killing Python). According to Euripides at any rate, some sort of cult was established in honour of the serpent: his Menoeceus affirms that he will sacrifice himself by casting himself down into the deep dark (i.e. cave-like?) precinct (*sēkos*) of the *drakōn*.[201] Strikingly, the dead serpent was replaced in various ways with new serpents. To begin with, Ares or Athene or Cadmus at the behest of one of them replaces the slain serpent by producing a new generation, the Spartoi, from its teeth; though Cadmus goes on to destroy these too, and by the parallel gesture of throwing a stone again.[202] Whilst not physically described, these men would seem to have retained some vestige of their serpent parent (consideration of their arms aside): the five survivors were Oudaios and Chthonios, both of whose names signify 'Of the Earth', Pelor(os), 'Monster', Hyperenor (os), 'Overbearing', and, most interestingly, their chief Echion(os), 'Viper-man' (*echis*: viper).[203] So Cadmus must eventually make good the loss by becoming a serpent himself, along with his wife Harmonia. Nonnus makes Cadmus' transformation into a *drakōn* the result of a curse made by Ares in anger for his killing

[198] Aristonous 1. 17–24 Powell; Lucan 6. 407–9, Plutarch *Moralia* 293c (*Greek Questions* 12); cf. also Plutarch *Moralia* 421c, Aelian *Varia historia* 3. 1. Discussion at Rohde 1925: 180–1.

[199] Anaxandrides of Delphi *FGrH* 404 F5 = Schol. Euripides *Alcestis* 1.

[200] Argos: Statius *Thebaid* 1. 562–71 (Apollo purified by king Crotopus). Sicyon: Pausanias 2. 7. 7–8 (both Apollo and Artemis purified in Sicyon, and a cult of Peitho was founded there; that both Apollo and Artemis should have required purification chimes in with a later 5th-century BC Etruscan mirror from Cerveteri, *LIMC* Apollon/Aplu 11 = Artemis/Artumes 51 = Leto/Letun 2 = Python 5, which has both baby Apollo and baby Artemis shooting at a rampant Python). Crete: Pausanias 2. 7. 8, 2. 30. 3, 10. 6. 6 (by Carmanor), hypothesis Pindar *Pythians* c (by Chrysothemis); note also *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 388–530, according to which Apollo chose some Cretan sailors en route to Pylos to be his first priests and brought them to Delphi in the form of a dolphin, *delphis*.

[201] Euripides *Phoenissae* 1006–12; cf. 1315. See Vian 1963: 116–18.

[202] Stesiochorus F195 *PMG/Campbell* (Athene), Pherecydes F22a–b Fowler (Cadmus, at the behest of Ares and Athene), Euripides *Heracles* 252–3 (Ares), Hellanicus F1a Fowler (Ares, Cadmus) F51 (Athene, Cadmus), Apollonius *Argonautica* 3. 1176–90 (Cadmus), Diodorus 19. 53. 4–5 (Cadmus, implicit), Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 102–5 (Athene, Cadmus), Statius *Thebaid* 4. 434–5 (Cadmus), Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 4. 1 (Athene, Cadmus), Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 19 (Cadmus, implicit), Hyginus *Fabulae* 178 (Athene, Cadmus), Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4. 401–5, schol. Euripides *Phoenissae* 1062 (Athene, Cadmus).

[203] Pherecydes 22a Fowler; Hellanicus F1a Fowler, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 4. 1, Hyginus *Fabulae* 178, schol. Euripides *Phoenissae* 934. Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4. 401–5, 421–63 has Cadmus produce (anguiform?) Giants by sowing the teeth. Discussion at Fontenrose 1959: 307, 311–12, Gantz 1993: 469–70.

of the Theban serpent.[204] And there was, perhaps, a third replacement: the Euripides scholia assert that Ares inflicted the *drakaina*-tailed Sphinx with her deadly riddles upon Thebes in lieu of the killed serpent.[205]

The themes of restitution feature heavily in the tales of the Serpent of Nemea. The principal act of recompense here is made not for the serpent, but for his killed by it, Opheltes-Archemorus. An elaborate tomb and cyclical games are established in his honour.[206] The prophecy to which the boy's death prompts Amphiaraus, that the Seven are now themselves doomed, and his renaming of him 'Beginning of Doom' suggest, at first sight, that the Seven will expiate his death with their own.[207] But this would be curious, because only by some stretch of the imagination can the Seven be said to have been responsible for the boy's death.[208] Perhaps Opheltes-Archemorus' death had originally entailed their doom because it obliged them to kill the serpent in revenge, and it was rather this act that sealed their fate, as Zeus sought revenge on behalf of his serpent, much as Ares had needed revenge for Cadmus' killing of his serpent. And perhaps some did hold that the games were instituted in the serpent's honour, à la Delphi, rather than the boy's. This sort of thinking seems to have underlain the imperial-period claim that the games were founded as a response rather to Heracles' killing of the Nemean Lion, which maps onto the death of the serpent rather better than it does onto the death of the boy.[209] If Amphiaraus' final transformation into a sometime anguiform deity (Ch. 9) was ever held to have constituted a restitution for the slain Serpent of Nemea, as Cadmus' transformation may have done for his killing of the Serpent of Ares, no ancient source affirms it.

In somewhat kaleidoscoped fashion, the motifs of the Nemean story reappear in Statius' tale of Lamia-Poene-Ker: Psamathe is seduced by Apollo beside the stream of Nemea; the baby Linus is left on the ground and torn apart by animals (dogs); a predatory, baby-killing serpent is killed; the god Apollo first demands the life of the serpent's killer, Coroebus, in restitution, but commutes the penalty to an instruction to found a city, Tripodiskoi; a festival is established, this one too in memory of the dead boy rather than the serpent.[210]

[204] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4. 416–20.

[205] Schol. Euripides *Phoenissae* 1064 ('Ares sent the Sphinx because he was angry at the murder of the *drakōn* '), 1760 (the sole source for the Sphinx's *drakaina*-tail). Cf. Fontenrose 1959: 308.

[206] Note in particular Aeschylus *Nemea* F149a *TrGF*, Clement *Protrepticus* 2. 34, schol. Pindar *Nemeans* 8. 85 and hypotheses 1–5. Servius on Virgil *Eclogues* 6. 68 explains that victors were crowned with parsley in the Nemean games in memory of Archemorus, either because the serpent killed him in it or because, as a low-growing plant, it signified the early grief for his life cut short. For the association of parsley with death see Plutarch *Timoleon* 26; cf. Pache 2004: 198–9, with further references.

[207] Bacchylides 9. 14 ('a portent of coming death'), Euripides Hypsipyle F757 *TrGF*, Statius Thebaid 5. 733–53, schol. Pindar *Nemeans* hypotheses 1, 3, schol. Clement *Protrepticus* 2. 34.

[208] Schol. Pindar *Nemeans* hypothesis 4 does, however, say that the Seven felt themselves responsible for Opheltes-Archemorus' death, since they had asked Hypsipyle to fetch the water for them.

[209] Virgil *Georgics* 3. 19 with schol. ad loc. In the imperial period too Opheltes-Archemorus had to jostle for his place as the honorand of the Nemean games with others. Aelian *Varia historia* 4. 5 uniquely insists that it was in honour of his grandfather Pronex that the games were initially established. Schol. Pindar *Nemeans* hypothesis 3 reports the tradition that they were held in honour of Talaos, the nephew of Adrastus. Cf. Simon 1979: 31.

[210] Statius *Thebaid* 1. 557–668.

Even the killing of the Bagrada serpent required restitution. Silius tells that its associated naiads were to exact their revenge on Regulus, as we have seen.[211] And the creature was memorialized too. Its 120-foot skin was brought to Rome and displayed in a temple until the Numantine war (i.e. 133 BC), along with its jaws.[212]

The killing of *drakontes* was often memorialized not merely in the foundation of games or festivals, but actually in the foundation of cities.[213] Cadmus' foundation of Thebes was not a direct result of his killing of the Serpent of Ares, but the killing of the serpent was tightly bound up with it, since the serpent was the guardian of the spring that occupied the future site of the city. Coroebus' killing of Lamia-Poene-Ker led more directly to the foundation of Tripodiskoi. The link between Eurybatus' killing of Lamia-Sybaris is etiolated, but nonetheless explicit: the city of Sybaris was named for the spring into which the slain serpent was transformed.[214] In the case of Thebes and Sybaris city-foundations are associated with the killing of a serpent closely identified with a water-source. In Chapter 8 we will consider two further city-foundation myths of precisely this sort from the beginning of the Hellenistic period, those of Alexandria and Antioch.

'THERE WAS A MAN CALLED DRAKŌN . . .': THE SLAIN *DRAKONTES* IN THE AGE OF REASON

From the time at least of Hecataeus in the early fifth century BC the Greeks and subsequently the Romans embarked upon a vigorous programme of the rationalization of their more outlandish myths. The greatest—or most notorious—contribution to this field of endeavour was that of Aristotle's pupil Palaephatus, who begins his treatise by enunciating the methodologically rigorous principle that the world's phenomena are unchanging, so that only those that exist in the present may be permitted to have existed in the past. The great *drakontes* above all are in the cross-hairs here. The methods employed by Palaephatus and his fellow rationalizers to subtract them and other fantastical phenomena from myth and to account for their erroneous presence in it are rather less rigorous, however, and as arbitrary as they are unimaginatively repetitive.[215]

Possibly the earliest variety of *drakōn*-rationalization, though not the variety first formally attested, lay in their identification with distinctive natural features. Indeed some *drakōn* myths may have originated in part as aetiologies of such features: we think of Etna's Typhonian fire, of the arid, Chimaera-blasted Anatolian landscapes, and of the passing boats smashed by the rock of the Scylla-promontory, discussed above. Other *drakontes* could be found origins in

[211] Silius Italicus 6. 286–90.

[212] Valerius Maximus 1. 8 ext. 19 (cf. Livy *Periocha* 18), Pliny *Natural History* 8. 36–7, Aulus Gellius 7. 3.

[213] Cf. Trumpf 1958, Gourmelen 2004: 371–93.

[214] Antoninus Liberalis *Metamorphoses* 8.

[215] Palaephatus preface. For Palaephatus see, above all, Stern 2000 and Hawes 2011. Wagner 1905 offers a brief survey of rationalized *drakontes*.

more banal natural phenomena. As we have seen, Servius and others in the late Latin tradition tell that the Hydra was the name given to a spring, the gushing waters of which ravaged an adjacent city.[216] The fourth-century AD Solinus finds the origin of the Serpent of the Hesperides in the sinuous form of a meandering sea-inlet seen from afar, an explanation perhaps influenced in part by the fact that the serpent's name, Ladon, was shared by an Arcadian river.[217]

Another technique of *drakōn*-rationalization was to reduce the fantastical composite *drakōn* to a more regular animal. The early fifth-century Hecataeus contended that Cerberus was in origin a terrible but ultimately simple snake reared at Tainaron, and that it acquired the title of 'the hound of Hades' because anyone it bit was bound to die at once because of its venom.[218] Another rationalization of Cerberus of equal antiquity may lurk behind the view recorded by Hyginus that the constellation Ophiuchus (Snake-holder) represents Heracles in the act of killing the snake (*anguis*) of the river Sagaris in Lydia after it had killed many men and plundered the riverbank of crops, this being one of the tasks Heracles performed whilst in servitude to Omphale. Some have held that Hyginus' tale derives from Panyassis' *Heraclea*.[219] At any rate, what Hyginus conveys seems to be a garbled reference to the Sangarius river, which was in fact not in Lydia but in northern Phrygia, near Heraclea Pontica. The tale therefore comes to look like a rationalization (though hardly the most realistic one) of the Cerberus myth in one of its most famous reflexes. The conceit that the snake should have been stripping the riverbank of its crops—uncharacteristic behaviour for any sort of serpent, actual or fantastical, to say the least, although a serpent's pestilential breath might be held to wither plants—is accordingly a refraction of the claim that Cerberus vitiated with his slaver or vomit the aconite plant that grew around Heraclea and which had supposedly been the erstwhile food of choice for the indigenous Cimmerians.[220] It is interesting that Hecataeus and Panyassis apparently considered Cerberus closer in spirit to a serpent than to a dog. By contrast, later rationalizers, such as Palaephatus and Philochorus, do indeed prefer to turn him into a simple, if large, dog, with the latter making him the property of one Aidoneus (i.e. Hades), king of the Molossians.[221] The paradoxographer Heraclitus, thought to have written around the second century AD, similarly kept Cerberus as a simple dog, but also sought to explain his fabled three-headed nature: 'He had two puppies. Since they always walked alongside their father he seemed to

[216] Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 287, Lactantius Placidus on Statius *Thebaid* 384–5, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 62.

[217] Solinus 24. 4.

[218] Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 F27 *apud* Pausanias 3. 25. 4. In the immediately following passage, Pausanias refers back to the Hecataean Cerberus as a δράκων.

[219] Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 14 = Panyassis F. dubia 5 Davies = F33 (doubtful) Matthews (not in West). Discussion at Matthews 1974: 144–5, Boardman 1990*b*: 119. Hyginus has recently cited Panyassis at *Astronomica* 2. 6 (= Panyassis F15 West), and we know the poet took Heracles to Lydia (F23 West). The task goes unmentioned in other summaries of Heracles' tasks for Omphale, as at Diodorus 4. 31, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 6. 2–3; cf. Fontenrose 1959: 107–10.

[220] The clue is provided by Eustathius on Dionysius Periegetes 79, where the river Sangarius, Cerberus, the aconite, and the Cimmerians are all brought together.

[221] Palaephatus 39 (cf. the anonymous *Peri Apistōn* 5); Philochorus *FGrH* 323 FF18a–b (a = Plutarch *Theseus* 35. 1–3; cf. also 31. 4).

have three heads.'[222] The third-century BC Nymphis of Heraclea, rather weakly, it may be thought, rationalized the Chimaera into a wild boar that interfered with the crops and livestock of the Xanthians (who lived below Cragus).[223] The first-century AD Alexander of Myndus found the origin of the Gorgons in a terrifying variety of Libyan sheep.[224] Heraclitus was content to leave the Serpent of Ares slain by Cadmus as a *drakōn*, but evidently just one of a common or garden variety, and it was denied its miraculous teeth.[225]

Perhaps the most popular technique was to rationalize *drakontes* into men with the personal name Drakon. Thus Palaephatus tells that the Phoenician Cadmus arrived at Thebes to find it under the control of king Drakon, the son of Ares, who, as befitted a king, possessed some elephant 'teeth' (tusks). Cadmus killed him and ruled in his place, whilst Drakon's men made off to different parts of Greece with the tusks to become 'scattered' (*spartoi*) before returning to fight him.[226] One Dercylus, who wrote prior to Plutarch, compatibly told that Drakon was a king of Thebes, that Cadmus killed him, and married his daughter Harmonia.[227] Ephorus found the origin of Python in a difficult man also known, again, as Drakon. Apollo shot him, whereupon the Delphians shouted out 'Hie Paian' and burned his hut down.[228] In this case the rationalization into a man was perhaps smoothed by the fact that Delphic *drakōn* had a certain number of humanoid counterparts from an early stage, such as Tityus and Phorbas.[229] Palaephaetus finds a human doctor called Drakon behind the marvellous serpent-pair that taught Polyidus the art of revivification with herbs (for which see Ch. 9).[230] After the third- or second-century BC Agroetas had told that Ladon's 'golden apples' were in fact beautiful flocks of sheep that were looked after by a fierce shepherd who was called a *drakōn* metaphorically because of his wildness,[231] Dionysius Scytobrachion, whose account is preserved by Diodorus, found the origin of Ladon more directly in a shepherd named Drakon who would kill those that tried to steal his beautiful golden flocks.[232] The paradoxographer Heraclitus similarly found Ladon's origin in a man called Drakon: 'There was a man Drakōn, who accumulated a lot of gold from keeping trees. Some distinguished women tried to ensnare him, and, binding

[222] Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 33 (cf. 21). His date: Stern 2003: 53–4, Hawes 2011: 90.

[223] Nymphis of Heraclea *FGrH* 432 F13.

[224] Alexander of Myndus *apud* Athenaeus 211: so terrible, in fact, that this can barely count as rationalization. For all the rationalizations of the Medusa myth, see Ogden 2008*a*: 121–5.

[225] Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 19 Spartoi; cf. Diodorus 19. 53. 4–5, after Dionysius Scytobrachion, without mention, however of any *drakōn*.

[226] Palaephatus 3. For Palaephatus see above all Stern 2000, Hawes 2011.

[227] Dercyllus *FGrH* 288 F4.

[228] Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F31b (at Strabo C422–3); cf. Pownall 2006. See also Plutarch *Moralia* 418a.

[229] For Homer Tityus was punished in the underworld for attempting to rape Leto at Panopeus, as she travelled to Pytho (*Odyssey* 11. 576–81; cf. 7. 321–4). In later sources, e.g. Apollonius *Argonautica* 1. 759–62, Tityus is typically shot down by Apollo with his bow. The *c*.600 BC *Aethiopis*, F4 West, knew that Phorbas the boxer forced passers-by to box with him and killed them, until Apollo took him on and killed him in turn. Fontenrose 1959: 13–69 assembles a great many comparanda of this sort for the Delphic *drakōn* and his tales, some more compelling than others.

[230] Palaephatus 26.

[231] Agroetas *FGrH* 762 F3; cf. Diodorus 4. 26, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 38.

[232] Diodorus 4. 26; cf. Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 4. 484, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 38, Tzetzes *Chiliades* 2. 36. 378–80.

his soul with erotic desire they kept him henceforth as a servant and keeper of the garden.'[233] The mysterious serpent-sire of Alexander the Great was also to get similar rationalizing treatment. Ptolemy Chennos contended that 'Alexander's father was not Philip, but a person of the name of Drakon, an Arcadian by birth, from whom there actually developed the myth about the serpent (*drakōn*).'[234] Stephanus of Byzantium preserves a rationalized account of the *drakōn*-hero Cychreus (Ch. 7): he originated in a man nicknamed (for a change) *Ophis* ('Snake'), because of the roughness of his ways.[235]

Palaephatus finds the origins of Hesione's *kētos* in a great and powerful king who subdued the cities of the Asian seaboard with his large fleet and demanded tribute variously of horses, oxen, or virgins from them, before disembarking for a land battle in which he was killed by Heracles. He was called Kētōn, but the barbarians called him Kētos.[236] One wonders why Palaephatus needed recourse to the form Kētōn at all here: why could the king not simply have been called Kētos from the start? Perhaps because of the immense influence already exerted over the rationalizing tradition by the 'man called Drak-ōn'.

The personal name of any monstrous *drakōn* could similarly be transferred to a human figure. For Plutarch the Chimaera originated in a pillaging pirate fleet under the command of one Chimarrhus.[237] This sort of notion may go back beyond Euripides, who seems to make a sly allusion to it in a fragment of his *Sthenoboea*: 'Nearby to this is the location of beast-ridden Cragus, roaring with a terrible and deep-rumbling wave, where the <way?> is watched over by pirates.'[238] It seems unlikely, however, that Euripides himself rationalized the monstrous Chimaera out of the action of his play. The hypothesis suggests that Bellerophon did indeed defeat the traditional creature in traditional fashion in the course of it.[239] For Palaephatus Medusa was a queen (her name did, conveniently, signify 'Ruler') slain by Perseus, an Argive pirate, so that he could steal her golden statue of Athene, itself named 'Gorgon'.[240] For Dionysius Scytobrachion (in Diodorus), the Gorgons were a wild Amazon-like race of Libyan warrior women.[241] Pausanias finds the origin of Python in a Euboean brigand prince who attacked Apollo's Delphic sanctuary and was slain by him; he may imply that his personal name was Python or Pythes.[242] The paradoxographer Heraclitus likes to find the origin of female monsters in human women of the same name, sharing the thinking of Anaxilas' famous comic fragment in which he compares a series of great courtesans to mythical monsters.[243] His Medusa was a courtesan so beautiful that she stopped men in their tracks, metaphorically turning them to stone, but she wasted

[233] Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 20.
[234] Ptolemy Chennos *apud* Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 190 (148a).
[235] Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. *Κυχρεῖος πάγος*.
[236] Palaephatus 37.
[237] Plutarch *Moralia* 247f–248a.
[238] Euripides *Sthenoboea* F669 *TrGF*.
[239] Euripides *Sthenoboea* hypothesis Tiia.
[240] Palaephatus 31; cf., broadly, Fulgentius *Mitologiae* 1. 21 (after one Theocnidus). Here the queen makes herself rich through agriculture, and she derives her title 'Gorgon' from her farmers (*geōrgoi*).
[241] Diodorus 3. 52. 4–55. 3; cf. Pausanias 2. 21. 5–7.
[242] Pausanias 10. 6. 5–7; cf., perhaps, hypothesis Pindar *Pythians* a.
[243] Anaxilas *Neottis* F22 K-A.

away in love for Perseus, and so came to resemble rather a horse (i.e. Pegasus).[244] His Scylla was a beautiful island-dwelling courtesan who kept gluttonous (*laimous*) and shameless (*kynōdeis*: literally 'doglike') parasites, with whom she used to devour visitors.[245] His Chimaera too was a human woman, not explicitly a courtesan, in whose company we meet an old friend: 'She had in service two brothers by the name of Leōn (Lion) and Drakon. Since she violated her oath and killed guest-friends she was slain by Bellerophon.'[246] A tradition recorded by John of Antioch that claimed the Pythian games were held in honour of a heroine Delphyne may, thereby, have turned the Delphic *drakaina* into a human woman of that name.[247]

The *drakōn*'s personal name could also be transferred to a place. According to Palaephatus, 'Hydra' was the name of a fort in the Argolid controlled by one king Lernos, and manned initially by fifty archers. For every archer Heracles killed with his fiery arrows, two more stood forward in his place, but he eventually burned it down.[248] Palaephatus uses a related technique in locating the origin of the notion that Cerberus had three heads in the fact that the dog hailed from the city of *Tricarenia*, 'Three-Heads'.[249]

Hostile ships offered a ready explanation for the origin of *kētē* (we have already encountered Kētōn's fleet), and these could similarly take on the monster's name or title. For Palaephatus Scylla was in reality a pirate-ship so named because it had a figure of the monster on its prow.[250] Conon, writing at the turn of the era, found the origin of Andromeda's *kētos* in a ship named Kētos 'either because it resembled the creature or by chance'. Phoenix attempted to snatch the girl in the ship, but Perseus, sailing past, intervened, seized the girl, sank the ship and slew its crew, 'who were all but turned to stone with amazement'.[251] The transformation of the sea-serpent into a ship is less arbitrary than may at first appear, since ancient ships often used *kētos*-heads as battering rams from the later archaic period onwards.[252] And indeed Palaephatus and Conon explicitly decorate their ships in this way. Both are touchingly unaware of the infinite logical

[244] Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 1. The notion of Medusa's metaphorically petrifying beauty was a popular one that need not have started with Heraclitus. It may already underlie Manilius *On Astronomy* 5. 570. See also Pausanias 2. 21. 5–7, Septimius Serenus F25 Büchner John of Antioch *FHG* iv. p. 539 F1.8, schol. Germanicus *Aratus* p. 147 Breysig, First Vatican Mythographer 2. 28. Lucian *Portraits* 1 gives the conceit a salacious twist: a woman whose beauty inspires an erection must be a Gorgon turning men to stone. As for Medusa's transformation into a horse, we should recall that one of the earliest images of her, *LIMC* Perseus 117, portrays her as a centaur (Ch. 2).

[245] Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 2; the use of the word *laimous* may suggest awareness of the Stesichoran tradition that Scylla was the daughter of Lamia. A similar account at Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 2. 12. 6.

[246] Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 15.

[247] Delphyne: John of Antioch *FHG* iv. p. 539 F1.20 (7th cent. AD).

[248] Palaephatus 38; the fort was given succour by Carian mercenaries under the command of one Carcinus, 'Crab'.

[249] Palaephatus 39.

[250] Palaephatus 20. Stern 2000 ad loc. takes the figurehead to be in the form of a dog. There is no warrant in the text for this, but one sympathizes with Stern in grappling with the logical conundrum to which it gives rise.

[251] Conon *FGrH* 26 F1, *apud* Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 186. Discussion at Ogden 2008*a*: 125–6.

[252] For *kētos*-ships see Boardman 1987: 81, 1997: 734–5, with illustrations at *LIMC* Ketos 46–50.

regression into which they plunge themselves: in the world of never-existent and not-yet-imagined *kētē*, whence did one find the image of one with which to decorate one's ship? Ships could even offer explanations for land-based *drakontes*. Plutarch tells that the flagship of his pirate-captain Chimarrhus ('Goat'), origin of the Chimaera, had a lion figurehead and a serpent on its stern.[253]

An initially surprising aspect of the later rationalizers' work is their explanation of *drakontes* or associated fantastical phenomena with reference to the culture of magic that flourished in their day: less rationalization, one might think, than a modernization of irrationality. But since the culture of magic (successful or otherwise) was indeed a phenomenon and a prominent one of the present, Palaephatus' fundamental principle perhaps remained intact. As we have seen, magic is integral to Heraclitus' rationalization of Ladon: the Hesperides made the tree-keeper Drakon their servant by the exercise of erotic magic.[254] The anonymous *Peri Apistōn* turns the golden fleece into a vellum manual of alchemy with instructions for the manufacture of gold.[255] John Malalas preserves a striking rationalization of Medusa's head, perhaps derived from Pausanias of Antioch: Perseus slaughters an evidently harmless Libyan girl named Medusa so that he can consecrate her skull (*skyphos*) by mysterious rites so as to make a magical weapon out of it.[256]

Out of the rationalizing tradition grew symbological and fully allegorizing ones. This tendency, often latent in even the crudest rationalizations, may also have taken the *drakontes*' relationships with their landscapes as its starting-point. The Scylla-rationalization offered by the scholia to the Lycophronian *Alexandra* verge on allegoresis. As Heracles sailed past the Scylla promontory he lost some of his cattle (presumably by shipwreck), so he cleaned the channel up by certain devices, that is to say, he 'killed' Scylla. But 'Phorcys', which is to say the sea, who was 'father' to this promontory, rendered the channel treacherous again with 'torches', that is to say, over time, which is measured by the movements of the sun.[257]

Much of the extant literary tradition for the Attica-founding anguipede Cecrops (Ch. 7) is symbological. His familiar and perhaps quite early epithet *diphyēs* ('of two natures') licensed the reading of his combined man-*drakōn* form as significant of something rather different.[258] Demosthenes claims that, 'The Cecropidae knew that the founder of their race was said to be part *drakōn*,

[253] Plutarch *Moralia* 247f–248a.

[254] Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 20.

[255] *Περὶ Ἀπίστων* 3; cf. John of Antioch *FHG* iv. p. 548 F15.3, *Suda* s.v. δέρας.

[256] John Malalas pp. 35–9 Dindorf; cf. John of Antioch *FHG* iv. pp. 539–44. FF1. 8, 6. 10, 6. 18; [Lucian] *Philopatris* 9; George Cedrenus 1. 30–41. The Greek Magical Papyri do indeed preserve a recipe for the manufacture of a magical tool from a skull (*skyphos*), albeit not a destructive one: *PGM* IV. 2006–125. Discussion at Ogden 2008*a*: 111–12.

[257] Schol. Lycophron *Alexandra* 45–6.

[258] Herodotus 4. 9 was already applying the term to the identically anguipede Scythian Echidna, and he may well have taken it over from an already established tradition of applying it to Cecrops. Pace Gourmelen 2004: 31–8, 43–4.

part man, on the basis that he resembled a man in his reason and a *drakōn* in his might.'[259] Aristotle's pupil Clearchus explained that, 'At Athens Cecrops first yoked one woman to one man. Previously sexual relations had been held in common. This is why some decided to call him *diphyēs*, since previously men did not know their father because of the multitude of candidates.'[260] Clearchus' explanation makes Cecrops founder not merely of the physical city of Athens, but also, via the invention of marriage, of the order of its citizenship, and its descent group. These were matters of particular anxiety and concern in Classical Athens.[261] Philochorus, however, who has much to say of Cecrops' founding and lawmaking roles, claimed that Cecrops was *diphyēs* either because of the length of his body or because he was originally Egyptian and so knew two languages.[262] Plutarch opines that 'the ancients called Cecrops *diphyēs*, not, as some say, because from being a good king he became a fierce and *drakōn*-like tyrant, but for the opposite reason, because he was originally twisted (*skolios*) and fearsome, but later on ruled gently and humanely'.[263] The tradition of ancient scholarship represented in the scholia to Aristophanes and the *Suda* recycles Philochorus and Clearchus, adding two further explanations of his *diphyēs* form: that he discovered many laws (*nomoi*) for men, and led them from wildness to gentleness; and, more surprisingly, that he embodied the marriage he invented by being a man above and not a snake but a woman below.[264]

Herodorus of Heracleia, perhaps writing *c.*400 BC, may have produced an early allegorical reading of the Ladon episode. According to this, the serpent symbolized bitter desire, whilst Heracles' club, with which he overcame it, symbolized philosophy, and the lion pelt that protected him symbolized thought. The three golden apples he thus secured symbolized the three virtues of not being angry, not being greedy, and not being devoted to pleasure.[265]

Macrobius offers a number of rationalizing, allegorizing, meteorological, and cosmogonic readings of the myth of the Delphic *drakōn*, the most interesting of which he takes from the second-century BC Stoic Antipater. When the earth was

[259] Demosthenes *Funeral Oration* 30: ἤδεσαν Κέκροπίδαι τὸν ἑαυτῶν ἀρχηγὸν τὰ μὲν ὡς ἔστιν δράκων, τὰ δ' ὡς ἔστιν ἄνθρωπος λεγόμενον, οὐκ ἄλλοθέν ποθεν ἢ τῷ τὴν εὐνοιαν αὐτοῦ προσομοιοῦν ἀνθρώπῳ, τὴν ἀλκὴν δὲ δράκοντι.

[260] Clearchus of Soli F73 Wehrli apud Athenaeus 555d: ἐν δὲ Ἀθήναις πρῶτος Κέκροψ μίαν ἑνὶ ἔζευξεν, ἀνέδην τὸ πρότερον οὐσῶν τῶν συνόδων καὶ κοινογαμίων ὄντων. διὸ καὶ ἔδοξέ τισιν διφυὴς νομισθῆναι, οὐκ εἰδότων τὸν πρότερον διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τὸν πατέρα. Cf. Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 41. 383–4.

[261] Discussion at Ogden 1996: 32–216 esp. 180–8, Gourmelen 2004: 100–5.

[262] Philochorus *FGrH* 328 F93–8 (*diphyēs* at 96). In addition to Jacoby's commentary ad loc., see also now Harding 2008: 22–3 and 191–5. Discussion at Gourmelen 2004: 109–12, Harding 2008: 151. For the initially curious Egyptian and large-body claims, see also Diodorus 1. 28, schol. Aristophanes *Wealth* 773 = Suda *s.v. Κέκροψ*, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 110–11. In the latter case no doubt the thinking is that, if Cecrops could not, rationally, have sprung from the earth, but nonetheless contrived to arrive in Attica with all his wisdom, then he must have done so from the civilization that, since Herodotus, had known to be so much older than Greek civilization, and had been the fount of its culture.

[263] Plutarch *Moralia* 551ef.

[264] The *Suda* s.vv. *Κέκροψ*, *Προμηθεύς* and schol. Aristophanes *Wealth* 773. Gourmelen 2004: 43 cites the former of these explanations with approval.

[265] Herodorus of Heracleia F14 Fowler. But it is difficult to know how much of this Herodorus was actually responsible for. Elaborate allegoresis of this kind admittedly has a late feel.

still moist, vapours rose from it and, becoming heated as they rose, rolled back down upon the earth, forming spirals in the course. These vapours corrupted everything in the way that the combination of heat and moisture does. But eventually the vapour was dried up by the rays of the sun, which fell upon it like arrows: so it was that Apollo, the sun, killed the serpent, the coiling and corrupting vapour, with his arrows.[266] Tzetzes too preserves readings of the *drakōn* myths in this vein. According to his reading of the Gorgon myth, air (Athene) causes sun (Perseus) to evaporate (decapitate) the finest, air-like elements (Medusa) of the sea, but the sun is unable to evaporate the sea's heavier, stable elements (the immortal Stheno and Euryale). Of the water that is evaporated, the heavier part 'streams' (*pēgazein*) back down to earth again as rain (Pegasus), whilst the lighter part remains aloft as shiny ether (the 'golden-sworded' Chrysaor). As for the Ladon myth, the Hesperides represent the seasons, the apples the stars, and the *drakōn* is the water horizon, from which the stars rise up brightly after bathing.[267]

For itself, the Latin tradition preferred to find in its *draco* myths encapsulations of moral rather than scientific truths. The fourth-century AD Servius maintains that Cerberus, as the devourer of all bodies, stood for the earth, and that his name accordingly derives from the supposed Greek *creo-boros*, 'flesh eater'; Heracles' victory over him accordingly symbolized the hero's mastery over all earthly vices and desires.[268] Fulgentius (*c.* AD 500?) then allegorizes Cerberus' three heads as symbolic either of the origins of human envy in 'nature,' 'cause', and 'accident,' or of the three stages of human life, childhood, youth, and old age. Fulgentius is ready with moralizing allegories for the other great *drakontes* too. For him the Gorgons are symbolic of the three varieties of terror. Stheno, named, *lucus a non lucendo*, from the Greek *asthenia*, 'weakness', represents the terror that weakens the mind. Euryale, the first part of her name genuinely signifying 'breadth', represents the terror that occupies the full breadth of the mind. Medusa represents the terror that clouds mind and vision, her name supposedly derivative of the Greek *mē idousa*, 'not seeing'. Perseus, representing virtue or courage, abetted by Athene, representing wisdom, overcomes theses terrors. He turns his face away as he strikes, because virtue cannot contemplate terror. The Chimaera is an allegory of love. Her name supposedly derives from the Greek *kym-erōn*, signifying 'wave of love', whilst her three heads represent the three stages of love. When love first comes it makes a lethal attack like a lion. The she-goat represents the lust of the central phase. The serpent represents the eventual shock of remorse and the poison of sin. The Python is an allegory of false belief (cf. *pithos*), which is slain by Apollo, i.e. the sun, because false belief is crushed like a serpent in true light. Building on the Anaxilan tradition, he makes his Scylla an allegory of a lustful prostitute, her loins full of dogs and wolves.[269]

[266] Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1. 17. 50–63, incorporating Antipater Stoicus F46 Arnim *SVF*.

[267] Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 17 (Gorgons), *Chiliades* 2. 36. 361–85 (Ladon).

[268] Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 395.

[269] Fulgentius *Mitologiae* 1. 6 (Cerberus), 1. 17 (Python), 1. 21 (Gorgons; cf. First Vatican Mythographer 2. 28; discussion at Ogden 2008*a*: 132–3) 2. 9 (Scylla), 3. 1 (Chimaera). The Third Vatican Mythographer 6. 22, building on the Cerberus traditions in both Servius and Fulgentius, contends that Cerberus' three heads symbolize the three varieties of hatred men experience, or the three continents of

'The man called Drakon' is found in rationalized accounts of the Chimaera, Ladon, Python, the Serpent of Ares, Polyidus' snake and Alexander's father, and may even have exerted an influence on the rationalization of Hesione's *kētos* too. Given this, it behoves us to scrutinize hard stories attaching elsewhere in ancient tradition to men called Drakon, and not least to the Drakon who was, like the anguipede Cecrops, one of the great lawgivers of Athens. We shall return to him in Chapter 7.

CONCLUSION

Such are the major recurring themes in the stories of the great *drakontes* and their representations. In the next chapter we shall give consideration to the humanoids, man and god, that grapple with them, before returning, in Chapter 6, to the *drakontes* themselves for consideration of the complex set of symmetrical themes that bind them with their humanoid adversaries in the narratives and images of the battles between them.

Europe, Asia, and Africa, the earths of which swallow human bodies to send souls to Tartarus. The nice point is also made that the three brothers Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades all possess trifurcated totems: respectively, a three-branched thunderbolt, a trident, and Cerberus.

5

Masters and Mistresses of *Drakontes*

Some gods and heroes are repeatedly associated with *drakontes* and may be considered '*drakōn*-masters' or '*drakōn*-mistresses'. Males and females alike are both aligned against and aligned with *drakontes*, the former perhaps more often against, the latter perhaps more often with.

DRAKŌN-MASTERS: APOLLO, HERACLES, AND OTHERS

Amongst the gods Apollo perhaps has the strongest claim to be regarded as a *drakōn*-master. He is of course the destroyer of the Delphic serpent. But he also sponsors and presides over serpents in his shrine on the plain Troy, in his Thymbraean aspect, and in his shrine in Epirus. The Thymbraean serpents include the aggressive ones sent against Laocoon, and these may be compared with the Lamia-Poene-Ker creature Delphic Apollo sends against Argos.[1]

Amongst the heroes four in particular, Perseus, Jason, Cadmus, and above all Heracles, may be regarded as serial *drakōn*-slayers, with the latter two also being aligned more positively with *drakontes* at times. Both of Perseus' great slayings are broadly serpent-related, those of the Gorgon Medusa (Ch. 2) and the *kētos* of Ethiopia (Ch. 3). And we have made the case that the Graeae, the full sisters of the Gorgons also bettered by Perseus, exhibited anguiform affinities of their own (Ch. 2). In the course of his elaborate quest-journey Jason must do battle with the Spartoi, the warriors sown from the Serpent of Ares' teeth, with the Colchis *drakōn* (Ch. 1), and (for Apollonius of Rhodes at any rate, paying tribute to the *Odyssey*) with the *kētos* Scylla (Ch. 3). Cadmus slays the Serpent of Ares, as well as the other half of its Spartoi offspring, who themselves also exhibited an anguiform aspect, to judge from the name of Echion(os), 'Viper-man' (Chs. 1 and 4). A tradition attested only in Nonnus further makes of Cadmus an ally of Zeus in his battle against Typhon (Ch. 2). But Cadmus is himself aligned with serpents in his own final transformation into a *drakōn* (Ch. 1). Cadmus should be compared with Amphiaraus. According to the fragmentary account of the Nemean myth

[1] Sources for Python in Ch. 1, Lamia-Poene-Ker in Ch. 2, the serpents of Thymbraean Apollo in Ch. 3. Statius *Thebaid* 1. 557–668 brings these three phenomena together. His Delphic Apollo sends the Lamia-Poene-Ker creature against Argos immediately after killing Python, and then when Coroebus has killed this in turn he addresses Apollo as 'Thymbraean' (643). Apollo in Epirus: Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 2.

that survives from Euripides' *Hypsipyle* (*c.*410–405 BC) it was he in particular amongst the Seven that was responsible for the killing of the Nemean *drakōn*.[2] But by 420 BC at least he had been established as an anguiform healing deity at Oropus (Ch. 9). The Salaminian hero Cychreus is similarly both the slayer of a *drakōn* and himself a *drakōn* (Ch. 7).

The ubiquitous Heracles is unsurprisingly associated with a fair number of serpent-slayings and -masterings: famously, he slays the serpent-pair sent against him as a baby by Hera, the Hydra, Ladon (Ch. 1), Orthus (Ch. 2), and the *kētos* of Troy (Ch. 3); he masters Cerberus by force and the Scythian Echidna by sex (Ch. 2), and he gets the better of Achelous in serpentine form (Ch. 4). Baby Heracles' killing of Hera's serpent-pair prompts Theocritus' Tiresias to artful prophecy, which finds in the burning of the serpents' bodies upon a purificatory pyre an anticipation of Heracles' own eventual death on the Trachis pyre. The ring-composition is all the neater when we recall that Heracles is indirectly, but surely, compelled to the Trachis pyre by the venom of another of his serpent opponents, the Hydra.[3]

What makes Heracles a *drakōn*-master more than anything, however, are the indications of multiple further battles against serpents. We also hear of battles seemingly with a variety of 'Typhons'. In Euripides' *Heracles* the hero speaks of slaying 'three-bodied Typhons'.[4] The fourth-century BC Eudoxus of Cnidus offered an aetiology for the Phoenician practice of sacrificing quails to Heracles. He explained that their Tyrian Heracles (i.e. Melqart), son of Zeus and Asteria (i.e. Astarte?) was travelling through Libya when he was slain by Typhon. 'Iolaus' (corresponding to an unidentifiable Phoenician figure) did everything he could to bring him back to life again, eventually succeeding by roasting a quail, a thing in which Heracles had rejoiced whilst living, and applying it to his nose.[5] For Nicander Heracles was one of the Olympians Typhon chased to Egypt, where he transformed himself into a fawn for protection.[6] The episode of Heracles' battle against the snake (*anguis*) of the river Sagaris, reported by Hyginus and perhaps derived from Panyassis, is probably at base a rationalization of the Cerberus myth, though it has come close to establishing a separate identity of its own (Ch. 4).

A series of vase images shows Heracles killing otherwise unidentifiable single-headed serpents, some of which seem to depict specific stories, others of which may be effectively generic (Fig. 5.1).[7] Three are of particular interest. One is a fine

[2] F757 *TrGF* = F60 Bond. Date of the *Hypsipyle*: Collard, Cropp, and Gilbert 2004: 183. In later accounts, as we have seen, it is rather Amphiaraus' companions that kill the Nemean *drakōn*: Hyginus *Fabulae* 74, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 6. 4, Statius *Thebaid* 5. 558; cf. Sineux 2007: 56–7.

[3] Theocritus 24 esp. 83–4.

[4] Euripides *Heracles* 1271–2, resumed at Virgil *Aeneid* 8. 298–9 and Plutarch *Moralia* 341e; cf. Bond 1981 ad loc.

[5] Eudoxus F284a and b Lasserre.

[6] Nicander *apud* Antoninus Liberalis 28.

[7] *LIMC* Erechtheus 40 (= Aglauros 24), Herakles 2820–33. Boardman 1990*b*: 119 wonders whether some of these serpents should be identified as Periclymenus, on the basis of Hesiod F33a MW and Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 9. 9, but this is highly unlikely. We learn from these texts that Heracles slew Periclymenus along with the other sons of Neleus, even though he had the ability to transform himself into an eagle, an ant, a bee, and a snake (δεινὸς ὄφις καὶ ἀμείλιχος, Hesiod) or into a lion, a snake (ὄφις) and a bee (Apollodorus). Both narratives seem far removed from a *drakōn* fight, though they may hint at a tale akin to that of Heracles' battle with Achelous, and we may note that Athene herself, the great

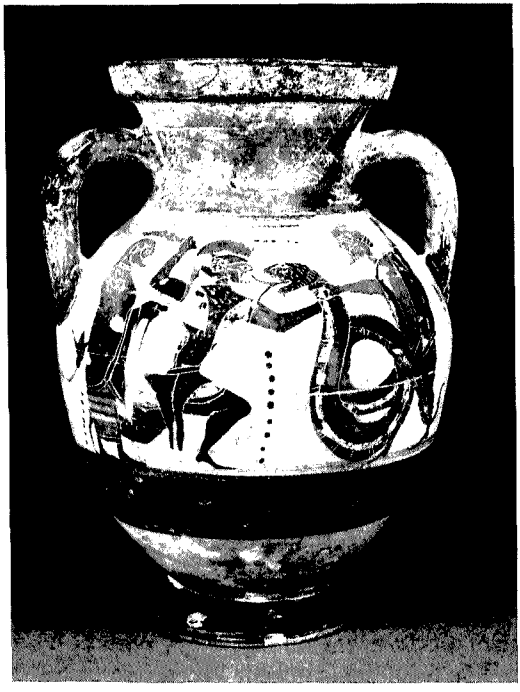


Fig. 5.1. Unidentifiable hero (Heracles?—cf. *LIMC* Herakles 2822) fights a rather splendid *drakōn*. Euboean amphora, *c.*560–550 BC. Musée du Louvre, E707. © RMN / Hervé Lewandowski.

black-figure neck-amphora of *c.*560–550 BC on which Heracles attacks a huge rampant serpent with a sword whilst another warrior attacks it from behind with a club. The deployment of a warrior pair is perhaps influenced by images of Heracles' battle against the Hydra with the help of Iolaus.[8] An Attic hydria of *c.*520 BC carries a fine but puzzling image: a woman draws water into a hydria at a fountain-house with a lion-spout. Over her head coils a single-bodied serpent, which Heracles, dressed in his lion-skin, seizes from behind her.[9] More puzzling still is an image on an Attic red-figure vase of *c.*450–440 BC. This is usually taken to show a child's disembodied head sitting on an altar guarded by a pair of rampant serpents, one on either side. The left-hand serpent is throttled by an adult Heracles with one hand, whilst he brandishes his *harpē* (sickle) in the other. Athene holds out her hand to the right-hand serpent, whilst fleeing from it, as does a girl before her. But the supposed altar might equally well be read as a basket (*kistē*) out of which an intact child rises up, along with the snakes (which otherwise have to be read as oddly tailless

directress of *drakōn* fights, orchestrates Heracles' defeat of Periclymenus and arms him with his bow in the Hesiod fragment.

[8] *LIMC* Herakles 2822.

[9] *LIMC* Herakles 2823.

too). The object's cross-hatched decoration is certainly evocative of a basket; perhaps its carved moldings belong to an elaborate wooden frame. The necks of the serpent pair are also drawn in such a way as to suggest that they might belong to a single double-headed serpent. The scene seems to be a caprice merging the tale of Ericthonius (basket, baby, serpent-pair, Athene, fleeing Cecropid: Ch. 7), with that of baby Heracles (serpent-pair, Heracles throttles) and that of the Hydra (adult Heracles with *harpē*, multiheaded serpent, Athene); perhaps Laocoon is in there too (serpent-pair, dismembered child, altar, Athene).[10]

But Heracles has serpents fighting on his side too. The Hesiodic *Shield* tells that Heracles' shield was decorated with twelve terrifying snake-heads that would gnash their teeth when Heracles fought.[11] It might be thought that the mastered Cerberus fights on Heracles' side when he terrifies the hero's tormentor Eurystheus into hiding in a *pithos* on the Caeretan hydria of *c.*530–520 BC.[12] More compellingly, the first-century AD (?) Alexander of Myndus told that 'an earth-born *drakōn* fought alongside Heracles against the Nemean Lion. This *drakōn* had been reared by Heracles and accompanied him to Thebes and remained in Aulis. And this was the *drakōn* that ate the sparrow's nestlings and was turned to stone.'[13]

DRAKŌN-MISTRESSES: 1. ATHENE

Among goddesses Athene is a mistress of serpents.[14] She is repeatedly found fighting both directly and indirectly against them and deploying them in her own battles against others. With her own hand Athene fights the Gorgon,[15] the Aegis,[16] and the anguipede giants.[17] More often she supports heroes as they battle against various anguiforms. In rough order of attestation, these are: Perseus, as he slays

[10] Louvre CA 1853 = *LIMC* Erechtheus 40 = Aglauros 24 = Brulé 1987: 75 fig. 16.

[11] [Hesiod] *Shield* 161–7, employing both *ophis* and *drakōn*.

[12] *LIMC* Herakles 2616.

[13] Alexander of Myndus *FGrH* 25 F5 *apud* Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 190, 147b22–8 (in the resumé of Ptolemy Chennos). For *drakontes* turning to stone, cf. the cases of Cadmus and Harmonia ([Scylax] *Periplus* 24, Callimachus F11 Pfeiffer; Ch. 1) and the serpent-pair sent against Laocoon (Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 22–7; Ch. 3). Like Cerberus, the Nemean Lion was itself the scion of anguiforms (Hesiod *Theogony* 270–336 esp. 327), though it is never attributed with anguiform features of its own.

[14] See Küster 1913: 116–17, Cook 1914–40: iii. 764–76, Mitropoulou 1977: 31–4. Indeed Athene is presented in the so-called 'mistress of animals' pose with a rampant serpent on either side of her in a mid 7th-century BC terracotta plaque from Athens, *LIMC* Athena 27.

[15] Euripides *Ion* 987–96; Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 12 (citing Euhemerus).

[16] Diodorus 3. 70. 3–6, incorporating the early Hellenistic Dionysius Scytobrachion *FGrH* 32 F8. In *LIMC* Pegasos 232 (*c.*410 BC) Athene stands over a (dead or dying?) beast resembling the Chimaera, resting on her spear. Lochin 1994 ad loc. takes the beast to be in fact the Chimaera. But given that Bellerophon is nowhere to be seen, we may wonder whether the scene rather illustrates Athene's own direct killing of the Chimaera-like Aegis, a subject otherwise unattested in art.

[17] Athene fights the Giants, alongside the other gods, from the 6th century BC onwards, though anguipede forms begin to appear amongst them only from the 4th century BC, the first being found at *LIMC* Gigantes 389 of *c.*400–375 BC: see *LIMC* Gigantes *passim* with Vian and Moore 1988 esp. 253, 235–6.

the serpent-locked Medusa;[18] Heracles, as he slays the Hydra,[19] seizes Cerberus from the underworld,[20] and defeats the *kētos* of Troy;[21] Cadmus, as he slays the Serpent of Ares at the site of Thebes;[22] Bellerophon, as he slays the Chimaera;[23] baby Heracles, as he throttles the pair of *drakontes* sent against him by Hera;[24] and finally Jason, as he slays the Colchian *drakōn*.[25]

But many are the snakes that succour Athene in her fights: thus the snakes on the aegis she wears, or on the Gorgon-head incorporated into it;[26] the serpent shield-blazons[27] and the independent snakes that fight alongside her in Gigantomachies (Fig. 5.2);[28] the snake that guards her shrine on Chryse;[29] the pair of snakes that (according to Virgil at any rate) she sends against Laocoon and his children;[30] the snake that attacks Ajax the Less as he attempts to rape Cassandra before her statue.[31] In art Athene can sometimes be attended by serpents that do

[18] Pindar *Pythians* 10. 29–48, 12. 6–26, Aeschylus *Phorcides* F261 *TrGF*, Pherecydes F11 Fowler, Lucan 9. 666–70, Servius on *Aeneid* 6. 289; *LIMC* Perseus no. 113, 120–2, 132, 151 (675–50 BC), 314, Gorgo 314 (590 BC). Hermes often helps here too.

[19] Hesiod *Theogony* 313–18, Hyginus *Fabulae* 30. 3, Pausanias 5. 17. 11; *LIMC* Herakles 1991 (*c.*600–595), 1990 (= Athena 11; *c.*600–590 BC), 1992 (*c.*590 BC), 1995 (*c.*585–575 BC), 1996 (565–550 BC), 2029 (possibly; *c.*550), 2000 (*c.*530 BC), 1999 (*c.*520–510 BC), 2002 (*c.*500 BC), 2003–4 (*c.*500–490 BC), 2005–6, 2008 (*c.*500–480 BC), 2010 (*c.*370–350 BC).

[20] Homer *Iliad* 8. 367–8, *Odyssey* 11. 623–6. In the latter text Hermes helps too: cf. Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 12. Both gods are pervasive figures in the iconography of the underworld, from *c.*540 BC onwards: Athene: *LIMC* Herakles 2554, 2556, 2559, 2560, 2562, 2564, 2570, 2575, 2581 (*c.*540–530 BC), 2582, 2584, 2585, 2587–90, 2592–5, 2597, 2599–602, 2608, 2611–12, 2614–15; Hermes: 2555, 2556, 2557, 2558, 2559, 2563, 2565, 2566, 2568, 2571, 2581–8 (2581 is *c.*540–530 BC), 2590, 2592–603, 2605 = Pipili 1987 fig. 8, 2606–12. 2614, 2617, 2643.

[21] Homer *Iliad* 20. 14–8, Hellanicus F26b Fowler (Athene builds Heracles' bulwark for him).

[22] Stesichorus F195 *PMG/Campbell*; Pherecydes 22ab Fowler, Euripides *Phoenissae* 638–48 (with schol.), Hellanicus F51ab Fowler, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 4. 1; *LIMC* Harmonia 1 (*c.*440 BC), 3, Kadmos i 7–9 (of which no. 8 is *c.*440–30 BC), 15 (= Harmonia 1), 16 (*c.*440–435 BC), 19, 21, 23 26a, 35.

[23] Athene teaches Bellerophon mastery of the bridle, so that he can tame Pegasus and deploy him in the battle: Pindar *Olympian* 13. 60–90, esp. 63–6 and 84–90, *Isthmian* 7. 44–7, Pausanias 2. 4. 1–2.

[24] *LIMC* Herakles 1650–3 (of which 1650 is *c.*480 BC); cf. also the Roman 1655.

[25] *LIMC* Iason 32 (*c.*480–470 BC, the Duris cup) and 36.

[26] Athene wears the aegis already at Homer *Iliad* 5. 741–2. In some early depictions of it serpents are seen to project in all directions from the whole of Athene's body: see the remarkable Attic black-figure vase *LIMC* Athena 485 = Grabow 1998 K143, of *c.*560 BC; note also *LIMC* Athena 119 (*c.*550 BC), 120–1, 138 (bronze statuette, *c.*580–560 BC), 171, 182, 195, 371, 387–9, 429 (*c.*550–530 BC), 451–2, 472, 487, 493, 500a, 504 (four huge arm-like serpents project from Athene's body, *c.*560 BC), 506, 512 (six huge arm-like serpents project from Athene's body, *c.*475–450 BC), 543, 579, Athena/Minerva 169a, Paridis iudicium 1–2, 14, 34, 36. Cf. Bodson 1988–95: 50–62 (a detailed discussion), Grabow 1998: 203–6. Note also that Athene can give out locks from it to protect her favoured heroes, as she did to Heracles: Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 7. 3.

[27] *LIMC* Athena 273 (a bearded snake projects from the centre of Athene's shield, Attic, *c.*560–530 BC), Gigantes 343 (Attic, late 6th century BC).

[28] *LIMC* Gigantes 311–12 (Attic, *c.*460–450 BC), *LIMC* Gigantes 425 (Etruscan, *c.*460 BC) 428 (Etruscan, 4th–3rd cent. BC) 24 (Great Altar of Pergamum, early 2nd cent. BC). According to Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 3 some had told that the *drakōn* in the skies (otherwise identified as Ladon) was that sent by Athene against the Giants, and then translated to the stars by her.

[29] Sophocles *Philoctetes* 1326–8 (cf. 263–70), with schol. Homer *Iliad* 2. 722, Eustathius on Homer *Iliad* 2. 274, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 911.

[30] Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 199–231 (with Servius ad loc.); so too Quintus Smyrnaeus 12. 444–97.

[31] *LIMC* Erechtheus 47 = Aias II 42 (*c.*500 BC); the attacking snake mirrors precisely the one emblazoned on the cult statue's (the palladion's) shield; cf. Kron 1988 ad loc. See also Grabow 1998

Fig. 5.2. Athena battles against the Giants in her snaky aegis, whilst an independent serpent fights alongside her (top centre). Attic red-figure calyx-crater, *c.*450 BC. *LIMC* Gigantes 312. © Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig inv. Lu 51.
Photo: Andreas Voegelin.

not otherwise involve themselves in the action afoot. In a fine red-figure image from *c.*440 BC she rides to the judgement of Paris in a chariot the bodywork of which is made up of two huge serpents sweeping over the wheels.[32] A standing Athene attends another scene with Paris and Helen on a fourth-century gilded aryballos. Behind her there rises up the neck and head of a massive rampant serpent, to above her own height.[33] On a Campanian *lekanis* of *c.*325 BC Athene is attended by a serpent in a rape-of-Persephone scene.[34]

At Athens Athene is aligned with or presides over quite a group of serpents: Cecrops, the anguipede founder-king; Ericthonius from whom the Athenians derived their descent, variously held to have been a full serpent, an anguipede, or a humanoid watched over by a serpent-pair; the *oikouros ophis*, the city's

K145 for an amphora (*c.*550 BC) illustrated with a palladion-style Athene displaying a similar serpent blazon on her shield.

[32] *LIMC* Paridis iudicium 40; cf. Pottier 1877–1919: 410, with fig. 2581, Cook 1914–40: iii, 769 with fig. 566.

[33] *LIMC* Athena 411 = Paridis Iudicium 40; cf. Cook 1914–40: iii. 770 with fig. 567, Harrison 1922: 306 with fig. 83.

[34] *LIMC* Erechtheus 47a (with Kron 1988 ad loc.) = Artemis 1288 = Hades 91.

guardian-serpent that supposedly lived in the Erectheum; and, less directly, Cychreus, the anguiform hero of Salamis (Chs. 7, 9, 10).

DRAKŌN-MISTRESSES: 2. MEDEA AND OTHERS

By the end of antiquity, the heroine Medea's tradition had made her a veritable mistress of *drakontes*, with the abilities to control them and destroy them alike.[35] To take her ultimate biography in the sequential order of its canonical episodes:

1. She provides Jason with an invincibility lotion against the earthborn warriors Aeetes sows from the teeth of the Serpent of Ares slain by Cadmus.
2. She lulls to sleep or kills the unsleeping Serpent of Colchis that guards the golden fleece.
3. She deploys her drugs to conjure up phantom *drakontes* for Pelias.
4. She summons together snakes and serpents of all kinds, common or garden, cosmic and mythical, in order to milk them of their venom to manufacture the burning poison for Glauce's wedding dress.
5. She escapes from Corinth after the murder of her children in a chariot drawn by a pair of flying *drakontes*.
6. She visits the Marsi in Italy and teaches them how to control and destroy snakes, becoming recognized as their goddess Angitia.
7. She hurls the plague of snakes afflicting Absoris into the tomb of Apsyrtus and confines them there.

Let us examine the order and manner of Medea's acquisition of *drakōn*- and snake-episodes, and consider the context and significance of these acquisitions. Most of the key evidence is iconographic.[36]

The *drakōn* chariot

The earliest association we can make between Medea and serpents falls in c.530 BC. This is the date of a series of four distinctive Attic lekythoi, one of which is inscribed with the name 'Medeia' (we would not have identified her otherwise). They are decorated with a female bust in profile situated between a pair of gaping, bearded serpents.[37] If these are to be related to any other known part of the Medea

[35] This section builds on Ogden forthcoming *a*, to which it owes much.

[36] For general discussions of the Medea tradition, in literature and iconography, see Heydemann 1986, Jessen 1914, Séchan 1927, Lesky 1931, Simon 1954, Tupet 1976, Zinserling-Paul 1979, Meyer 1980, Belloni 1981, Braswell 1988: 6–23, Vojatzi 1982, Neils 1990, Parry 1992, M. Schmidt 1992, Gantz 1993: 358–73, Halm-Tisserant 1993, Moreau 1994, Clauss and Johnston 1997 (disappointing), Corti 1998, Gentili and Perusino 2000, Moreau and Turpin 2000: ii. 245–333 (especially Gaggadis-Robin 2000), Mastronarde 2002: 44–57, Griffiths 2006, Ogden 2008*b*: 27–38, 2009*a*: 78–93, 312–15 and index s.v. 'Medea'.

[37] *LIMC* Medeia 3–6, with M. Schmidt 1992 ad loc.; Beazley's doubts about the genuineness of the legend have been resolved by chemical tests.

tradition, then it must surely be to the pair of flying serpents that drew the chariot in which she escaped from Corinth, who are otherwise first securely attested *c.*400 BC, again on vases. It is noteworthy that a depiction of this scene on a vase of *c.*330 BC from Apulian Canosa shows the chariot head-on with Medea accordingly standing between a pair of rearing serpents that face inwards towards her, in a broadly similar configuration.[38] For this reason, I am inclined to believe that the *c.*530 BC images do indeed salute the chariot episode.[39]

But if we dissociate the lekythoi from the chariot episode,[40] we have little left against which to contextualize them. To turn to the Minoan snake-goddess figurines, each of which holds out a serpent to either side of her in both hands (Introduction), would be to contract a severe case of *obscurum per obscurius.* Whilst some sort of etiolated connection at the level of iconographic borrowing cannot finally be ruled out here, rather stronger iconographic links seem to obtain between these mysterious figurines and another group of personalities from Archaic and Classical myth, the Erinyes, who were often depicted, from *c.*460 BC onwards, as running in pursuit of their victims with a serpent in each hand.[41]

From *c.*400 BC a series of fine Lucanian and Apulian vases exhibit Medea's chariot and its serpents in all their glory, in a range of different configurations.[42] One of the first of these vases relates very tightly to the conclusion of Euripides' *Medea*, with a grief-stricken Creon reaching out to a melted Glauce, who sprawls on the ground, and so it seems to have the play specifically in mind.[43] The serpents on these vases are wingless, but the artists have nonetheless made it clear that they are drawing the chariot through the air, and so somehow possess a magical ability to fly. This was not good enough for a Faliscan artist of the second half of the fourth century BC, who felt the need to give his own serpents wings. Their elaborate beards and long crests combine with these wings to give them the surprising but unintimidating appearance of chickens.[44] The serpents retained their wings but managed to become intimidating again in a series of second-century AD Roman sarcophagus reliefs, many of these too of good quality.[45] Another interesting variation to note is that found on an Etruscan vase of the

[38] *LIMC* Medeia 29.

[39] Cf. Mastronarde 2002: 377–8 on line 1317.

[40] As Gantz 1993: 360, for instance, wishes to do.

[41] Thus *LIMC* Erinys 1 (the earliest, 460–450 BC), 11, 12, 18, 27–30, 34–7, 38, 39, 41, 42, 48, 50–1, 52, 55, 58, 64, 67–9, 70, 73–4, 80, 96–7, 105, 107, 108, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119. See Sarian 1986.

[42] *LIMC* Iason 70 = Medeia 35 (*c.*400 BC), Iason 71 (*c.*400 BC), Iason 72, Iason 73 = Medeia 37, Medeia 29, 36 (*c.*400 BC), 38. Of these, no. 36, in which Medea's chariot is set against the sun's blazing disk, is of outstanding quality and rightly famous. See Neils 1990 and M. Schmidt 1992 ad locc.

[43] *LIMC* Iason 70 = Medeia 35 (*c.*400 BC); cf. Neils 1990 ad loc.

[44] *LIMC* Medeia 39. Did Medea's serpents acquire their wings under the influence of Herodotus' winged serpents of Egypt, 2. 75, for which cf. Mayor 2000*b*: 135–6?

[45] *LIMC* Medeia 46, 51, 53, 55, 57, 58, 62, 63; cf. also the less fine 3rd-century AD provincial relief, no. 66. See Neils 1990 and M. Schmidt 1992 ad locc. Valerius Flaccus explicitly gives the serpents of Medea's chariot wings at *Argonautica* 5. 453. Is it possible that the serpent pair sent against baby Heracles could also be conceptualized as winged on occasion? Plautus *Amphitryo* 1091–124 speaks of them flying down (*devolant*) into the *impluvium* of Amphitryon's house, though of course Medea's case demonstrates that *drakontes* did not need wings to fly.

first half of the third century BC, on which Medea's chariot is drawn by a four-team of serpents.[46]

It has been speculated, not least in view of the vase that salutes the denouement of Euripides' *Medea* so closely, that the earliest images of Medea's chariot, in appearing from *c.*400 BC onwards, may all have been inspired by that play's stagecraft. In the text itself Medea is said to appear in her 'chariot of the Sun', in which she will escape from Corinth, and context certainly suggests that it is a flying chariot, though there is no explicit mention of serpents in connection with it.[47] The presence of actually winged *drakontes* is, however, asserted by the Hypothesis, for what that is worth (the detail of the wings may be suspicious given their absence from the iconographic record prior to the second half of the fourth century BC),[48] and the serpents may indeed have appeared on stage, if not in the original 431 BC performance, then in a distinctive restaging of the play prior to *c.*400 BC.

If it were indeed only in 431 or 400 BC that Medea first acquired her serpent chariot, then we might look to other influences upon the motif, and these again fall mainly in the iconographic register. The serpent pair that powers or escorts the flying chariot that Demeter gave to Triptolemus enters the iconographic record on Attic vases from *c.*480 BC, and Mastronarde, for example, does indeed find a line of influence to Medea's chariot from here.[49] In the Triptolemus scenes a serpent pair flanks his chariot's wheels. A fragment of Sophocles' *Triptolemus* of *c.*468 BC describes the arrangement well: 'a pair of serpents (*drakonte*) that has taken hold of the axle in their coils'.[50] This imagery presumably influenced the *c.*440 BC Judgement-of-Paris Athene image mentioned above, in which Athene rides in a chariot the bodywork of which is made up of two massive serpents that sweep over the wheels.[51] For both Triptolemus and Athene, the serpents are associated with the body of the chariot, as opposed to drawing it from the front, as in Medea's case, though we must nonetheless concede that these images do present us with a similar impression to those of Medea's chariot, especially in the case of the Athene image, where the charioteer is female. Even so, the justification for adapting Medea's chariot in the light of such imagery could presumably only have been that she had already developed a compelling association with *drakontes* in another part of her tradition.

The most distinctive mention of the serpent-chariot in subsequent literature comes in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where Medea rides the chariot in search of the rejuvenating drugs she will need to restore Aeson to youth. The scent of the plants, once collected, causes the serpents to slough off their old skins and become young again.[52] An intriguing by-tradition of that of the serpent-chariot told that Medea

[46] *LIMC* Medeia 41.

[47] Euripides *Medea* 1321. By coincidence (no more, presumably), in Indian mythology it is the Naga Padmanabha that draws the chariot of the sun god; cf. Vogel 1926: 84–7.

[48] The Hypothesis is reproduced at Page 1938: 1–2: *ἅρματος δρακόντων πτερωτῶν*.

[49] The earliest image is *LIMC* Triptolemos 87 = Demeter 344 of *c.*480 BC. For examples from the period *c.*470–450 BC, see *LIMC* Triptolemos 91, 100, 105, 111, 114, 116. General discussion at Hayashi 1992 and G. Schwartz 1987 (note in her catalogue V58, 60, 94, 125, 129, 135, 143, R9, T1), 1997, esp. 66. The line of influence: Mastronarde 2002: 377–8 on line 1317 (unaware, however, of the importantly intervening Athene image).

[50] Sophocles F596 *TrGF*; the play is dated by Pliny *Natural History* 18. 65.

[51] *LIMC* Paridis iudicium 40.

[52] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7. 179–237, esp. 236–7.

threw a box of her magical drugs out of it as she flew over Thessaly: this sowed the land with noxious and magical plants and gave rise to the famous culture of Thessalian witchcraft.[53]

The Colchis *drakōn*: Medea and the culture of *drakōn*-tending virgins

The next *drakōn*-episode Medea acquired, according to the record, was the iconic one of the Colchis *drakōn*. In Chapter 1 we saw that she had acquired this association certainly from 431 BC, the date of Euripides' *Medea*, but probably also from at least 480–470 BC, if we have interpreted the significance of the Duris cup aright. We saw too how the conceptualization of her interaction with the *drakōn* converged, especially at iconographic level, with that of the Hesperides' interaction with their *drakōn*, Ladon. In Chapter 2 we argued that the Hesperides may have had something of the serpent in their own nature in view of their alignment with both the Gorgons and the Graeae in the Perseus tradition. Might the same have been true of Medea? In any case the motif of the young woman feeding a serpent from a *phialē*, found in Medea's case from *c.*380–360 BC (Fig. 5.3), is difficult to dissociate, in the early fourth century BC, from the iconography of Hygieia. Hygieia had come to prominence in the late fifth century BC alongside a phalanx of other benign anguiform or serpent-related deities devoted to wealth or health, the most prominent of which was of course her father and companion Asclepius.[54] In the case of Hygieia's iconography there is no doubt that woman and serpent are, at one level, identical with each other (Ch. 9).

The *drakōn*-tending virgin is a phenomenon of Graeco-Roman culture less well advertised than it might be.[55] Hygieia (and so too subsequently her Roman counterparts, Salus and Valetudo), the never-married daughter of Asclepius, must be assumed to be a virgin as she feeds her serpent from her *phialē*. The role of the Hesperides as *drakōn*-tending virgins, whether dutiful or deceitful ones, is self-evident. Virgil does not tell us whether the Massylian witch he aligns with them is also a virgin.

Medea herself is of course a virgin until seduced by Jason. Certainly by the time of Valerius Flaccus it has become clear that the Colchis *drakōn* is Medea's special pet. He first introduces Medea by describing her as a princess who calls forth her *draco* from inner recesses (*adyta*) with food and incantation, and plies it with honey (sc. cakes) darkened with exotic poisons (*venena*). The last no doubt salutes the commonplace that serpents nurture their venom by feeding on poisonous

[53] Schol. Aristophanes *Clouds* 749a. Similarly, when Perseus had flown over Libya with the newly severed Gorgon's head, the drops of blood that dripped from it onto the earth gave rise to the terrible snakes of Libya. The tale is first found in Apollonius (*Argonautica* 4. 1513–17), but it is developed with particular relish by Lucan, who prefaces his extended treatment of these snakes with an account of their genesis (9. 619–99).

[54] The earliest recoverable image of Hygieia with her *phialē* is indicated by *LIMC* Hygieia 5 = Asklepios 98, thought to be a copy of a 5th-century BC original.

[55] Deonna 1949 and Pailler 1997 grope towards the subject.

Fig. 5.3. Medea drugs the Serpent of Colchis from her *phialē*, whilst Jason filches the golden fleece. Red-figure volute crater, *c.*320–310 BC. Naples Museo Nazionale 82126 (H3248) = *LIMC* Iason 42. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

herbs, though it also anticipates Medea's drugging of the serpent for Jason. Medea tells Jason, 'I am the only one that he looks upon with fear. He has the habit of calling me by choice and he asks me for food with a fawning (*blanda*) tongue.' She implies that the serpent trusts her: 'What trick do you fear whilst I am standing by you? I myself will look after the grove for a brief while. In the meantime you lay aside your long toil.' When she has finally put her 'dear' *draco* to sleep, she throws herself upon it and embraces it:

> and [she] wept for herself and her nursling to whom she was being so cruel. "This was not how you looked when late at night I brought you offerings and feasts, nor was I like this when I put honey cakes in your gaping mouth and faithfully nourished you with my poisons. How heavy your bulk as you lie! How slowly you breathe as you lie there motionless! At least, unfortunate one, I have not killed you! Alas, you are destined to experience a cruel daylight! Soon you will see no fleece, no shining offering under your shade. So withdraw, and pass your old age in other groves, and forget me, I beg you."

How long Medea had been imagined to have this special relationship with the Colchis *drakōn* prior to Valerius Flaccus is unclear, but it is probably implied by the serpent's willingness to take food from her hand, as it is first seen to do on the pots of *c.*380–360 BC.[56]

[56] Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 1. 60–3, 8. 62–3, 77–8, 93–103.

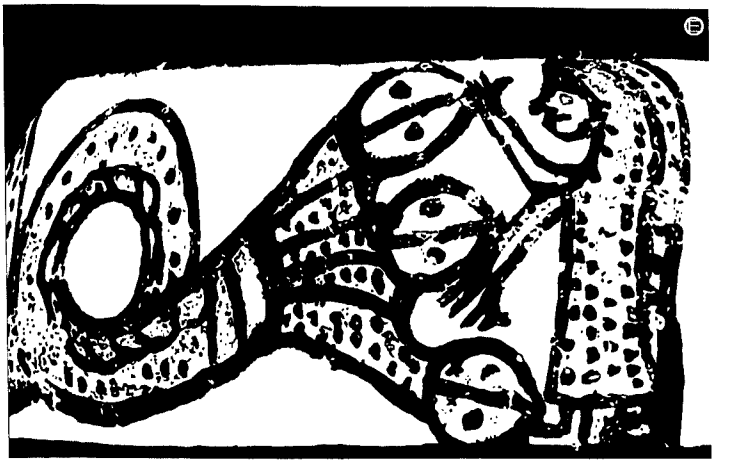


Fig. 5.4. A woman (a *drakōn*-tending virgin?) tends a three-headed serpent. Caeretan red-on-white-style amphora, *c.*660–640 BC. Amsterdam, Allard-Pierson Collection 10.188 = *LIMC* Medeia 2. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

A marvellous Caeretan hydria of *c.*660–640 BC (Fig. 5.4) has sometimes been thought to represent a very early image of Medea tending a three-headed Colchis *drakōn*.[57] Strong considerations, however, tell against such an identification: there is no sign of the fleece, the Colchis *drakōn* is never otherwise depicted as three-headed, and Medea has no involvement with the Colchis *drakōn* in the next group of secure iconographic sources for it, beginning with the Duris cup.[58] There is a greater degree of likelihood that the woman is a Hesperid, tending Ladon, given that Ladon is three-headed in some of his earliest secure extant images, and that Hesperides are otherwise securely found tending Ladon from *c.*500 BC, long before Medea is otherwise first found tending the Colchis *drakōn*, *c.*380–360 BC, as we have seen. But, given that there are no apples on view either, and that the woman is singular, it is likeliest of all that the image represents some other *drakōn* and some other woman, perhaps a forgotten archetype underlying subsequent notions about the Hesperides and Medea alike, or even a generic *drakōn*-tending virgin.

Hygieia, the Hesperides, and Medea belong to the realm of myth, but slightly more tangible *drakōn*-tending virgins are found, it seems, in association with cult. Herodotus implies that the *oikouros ophis* of the Athenian acropolis, which famously went off its honey cakes to foretell the Persian sack of the city, was fed and tended by the priestess of Athene Polias (Ch. 10).[59] It has usually been

[57] *LIMC* Medeia 2; cf. M. Schmidt 1992 ad loc.

[58] But on the positive side, we do know that Medea had entered the iconographic tradition by *c.*630 BC, the date of a magnificent Etruscan *olpē* on which Medea, labelled with an Etruscan variant of her name, 'Metaia', wielding a spoon or a wand, boils up Jason in her cauldron to rejuvenate him as the Argonauts, misunderstanding the situation, come running to help, the ship's sail under their arms: *LIMC* Medeia 1.

[59] Herodotus 8. 41.

contended that this priestess had to be chaste whilst in office, though not actually virgin.[60]

Aelian speaks of a sanctuary of Apollo in Epirus full of snakes, the pets of the god, sprung from Python at Delphi. They are fed *meiligmata* ('appeasements') by a virgin priestess. If they take the food eagerly, a year of health and prosperity is predicted. But if they scare her and refuse the food, then they predict the reverse.[61] This raises the issue of whether a significant connection was ever made in ancient thought between the Delphic Python and the virgin or chaste Pythian priestesses. The closest we come is the time-kaleidoscoping astrological fantasy of Lucian's (noted in Ch. 2) in which the Pythian priestess, who of course belongs to the post-Python, Apolline phase of the oracle, is inspired by a *drakōn* that speaks under her tripod and shares some sort of bond with the *drakōn* in the stars.[62]

Pausanias tells of the cult of Sosipolis on Mt. Cronius near Elea and its foundation myth. The serpent-god's name or title appropriately signifies 'City-saviour' and, with equal appropriateness, is pleasingly sibilant. According to the myth, when the Eleans had once faced the Arcadians in battle, a mysterious woman, evidently Eileithyia, goddess of childbirth, came to their generals with a baby at her breast and told them that a dream had told her to give the baby to them to fight alongside them. They duly laid it before the army. As the Arcadians attacked, the baby transformed itself into a *drakōn* and threw them into disarray, before disappearing into the earth. The Eleans built this *daimōn* a sanctuary at the point he entered the earth, naming him Sosipolis and saw fit to worship the beneficent Eileithyia beside him too. Their common temple had an outer sanctum for Eileithyia and an inner one for Sosipolis. The priestess of Sosipolis (and, seemingly, Eileithyia too) was an old woman who kept chaste. She alone could enter Sosipolis' sanctum, and she did so, wearing a white veil, to take the god bathing water and honey-cakes.[63]

The rites of the Classical Athenian Thesmophoria festival constitute a more difficult case. Our principal source for them is a deeply confused scholium to Lucian, perhaps based on the work of a first-century BC grammarian, Didymus. It seems that women throw piglets, cakes made in the shapes of *drakontes* and phalluses, and pine-branches down into the so-called *megara*, underground chasms, of Demeter and Kore. This is in honour of Eubuleus. The piglets and the cakes are largely, but not wholly, devoured by the *drakontes* that live within the chasms. Later on, women who have kept themselves pure (*kathareusai*, i.e.

[60] But doubt now on this score from B. Jordan 1979: 31, Pailler 1997: 539 and M. Dillon 2002: 78. Plutarch *Themistocles* 10 implies rather that the *oikouros ophis* was looked after by undefined 'priests', but his testimony may not be worth much: it is not clear that his own version of the story is ultimately underpinned by anything other than Herodotus.

[61] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 2.

[62] Lucian *On Astrology* 23.

[63] Pausanias 6. 20. 2–6. Pausanias also tells that dedications of incense were made to Sosipolis, but no libations of wine, and that great oaths were sworn by him. Discussion at C. Robert 1893, Frazer 1898 on 6. 20. 2, J. Schmidt 1929, Mitropoulou 1977: 62–3. The notion, originating with Robert, that this Sosipolis was an aspect of Zeus, is insufficiently grounded: it depends upon appeal to the Zeus Sosipolis of Magnesia (Strabo C642) and to the temple's location on a hill named for Cronus. The site of the temple has been identified: it is small, just 2.74 × 2.84 m: see Papachatzis 1963–74 ad loc. and Maddoli, Nafissi, and Saladino 1999 ad loc. (pp. 331–6).

inter alia, abstained from sex) for three days, descend into the chasms making a rattling noise before which the *drakontes* withdraw. They retrieve what little is left of the food and bring it up. Accordingly, they are called 'balers of bilge' (*antlētriai*). The remains are laid on altars, whence they are taken to be mixed with seeds to ensure a good harvest. Here we have temporarily chaste women indirectly associated with the feeding of snakes at least. The women that threw the food down in the first place were probably all those participating in the festival, as opposed to just the 'balers of bilge': this wider group would have included women other than virgins—Callimachus actually asserts that virgins were banned from pariticipation, though Lucian subsequently places a virgin bride at the festival—but they too may, again, have been temporarily chaste.[64]

Rome and Italy also offer some examples of the phenomenon of the *drakōn*-tending virgin at the levels of both myth (or what is effectively myth) and cult. As to the former, the last of the great Classical *drakōn*-slaying myths was that of the massive *draco* of the river Bagrada slain by Regulus, as we have seen (Ch. 1). According to Silius, this *draco* too has its own group of virgins, the Naiad sisters that live in the river it guards, of whom it is said to be the servant (*famulus*). Regulus' prophets warn him that he will be pursued by the sisters' anger for killing the creature.[65]

As to the latter, an unexpected antiquarian note of Propertius tells us of a rite practiced in Lanuvium. Here virgins, who must watch their step, carry titbits in baskets down a sacred and 'blind' descent for an ancient *draco*. If they have kept themselves chaste, they return to the arms of their parents, and the farmers shout 'the year will be fertile'.[66] In the early third century AD Aelian gives us another account of the rite, which he accidentally transfers to Lavinium. He locates it at a sanctuary of 'Argive Hera'. He tells that on appointed days blindfolded virgins carry barley cakes in their hands into the sanctuary's thick-wooded grove and that they are drawn through it to the *draco*'s lair by its breath. The *draco* can detect whether they are virgin or not, and eats the cakes only of those that are, leaving the others for the ants to crumble. The girl whose cake is not eaten is disgraced and punished (though not, as one reading of Propertius might imply, devoured by the snake).[67] This rite is rendered somewhat more tangible for us by coins. The reverses of coins of L. Procilius of 80 BC depict Juno Sospita (for it is she) together with a snake, as subsequently do coins of Antoninus Pius of AD 140–3.[68] More intriguingly, the obverses of coins minted in 64 and 54 BC by L. Roscius Fabatus

[64] Schol. Lucian *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 2. Virgins at the festival: Lucian *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 2. 1 *contra* Callimachus F63 Pfeiffer. Discussion at Küster 1913: 141–2, Deubner 1932: 50–60, Brumfield 1981: 73–9 (with trans. of the scholium at 73–4), Burkert 1985: 242–6, M. Dillon 2002: 114, Parker 2005: 221–2.

[65] Silius Italicus *Punica* 6. 140–293, esp. 286–90. Cf. Statius *Thebaid* 5. 580–2, where the serpent of Nemea is mourned in death by the nymphs that had been wont to sprinkle it with spring flowers.

[66] Propertius 4. 8. 2–14.

[67] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 16. The notion that a snake might be used to test chastity should be compared with Lucan's information that the Psylli used snakebites to test the legitimacy of their children: 9. 890–937.

[68] Procilius: Sydenham 1952: 126 nos. 771–2, with pl. 22; cf. Pohlkamp 1983: 77 n. 162. Antoninus Pius: *LIMC* Iuno 26.

Fig. 5.5. A veiled virgin feeds the sacred snake of Juno Sospita with honey-cakes from the fold of her dress. Reverse, coin of L. Roscius Fabatus of 64 BC, Sydenham 1952: 152 no. 915 and pl. 25. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

display the head of Juno Sospita whilst their reverses show a girl feeding a rampant snake (Fig. 5.5). She holds her dress out in front to make a cradle, and the cake or cakes, we may assume, rest in the fold.[69] Plutarch recycles what is evidently an aetiological tale for the rite from the Hellenistic historian Pythocles of Samos: as the Carthaginians and Siceliots formed the alliance that would result in the First Punic War (264 BC), the general Metellus neglected to sacrifice to Vesta, who accordingly sent a hostile wind against his ships. He could only calm the wind (à la Agamemnon) by the sacrifice to Vesta of his daughter. As he brought the girl forth to kill, Vesta took pity upon her, substituted a heifer for her, and spirited her away to Lanuvium to become the priestess of the *drakōn* worshipped there.[70] A cult of some sort for Vesta herself at Lanuvium is attested in the age of this Metellus by the discovery there of an earlier-third-century BC cup bearing the archaic Latin legend *Vestai pocolo*, 'cup for Vesta'.[71] As we shall see, Christian tradition was to take up this Lanuvium cult, confuse it (designedly or otherwise) with that of the Vestal Virgins in Rome, and build an elaborate saintly dragon-fight narrative upon it (Ch. 11). With Ladon and the Colchis *drakōn*, the seduction of the virgin entails a loss of golden treasure; at Lanuvium, the seduction of the virgin entails a loss of the year's fertility.

[69] Douglas 1913: 63 fig. 2.3 (with further references at 70 and a general review of the cult's iconography), Sydenham 1952: 152 no. 915 with pl. 25; Pohlkamp 1983: 77 n. 163, with related examples.

[70] Plutarch *Parallela minora* 14 (*Moralia* 309a–b) = Pythocles of Samos *FHG* iv. p. 488 F1. The genuineness of the *Parallela minora* is doubted for (inconclusive) stylistic reasons, but it is not thought to have been composed far distantly from Plutarch's era. The name of Lanuvium is corrupt in the MSS, but the restoration can hardly be doubted. Cf. Pailler 1997: 517–20. When Propertius talks of his 'blind' (*caeco*) descent at Lanuvium he may at one level be paying tribute to the association of the Caecilii Metelli with the cult.

[71] *CIL* i^2 452 = *ILS* ii. 1, 2968 = Ernout 1957 no. 111; cf. Pailler 1997: 517.

Defence against the warriors sown from the teeth of the Serpent of Ares

Jason faced the ordeal of the earthborn men sown with the teeth of the Serpent of Ares slain by Cadmus already in the mid-sixth-century BC (?) Eumelus. The relevant fragment is preserved by a scholium to Apollonius, and the defective frame in which the scholium sets the fragment may imply that Medea had some involvement with the episode, but this is too precarious to build anything on.[72] Medea must surely have established an association with the serpent's teeth and the earthborn warriors by 462 BC, when Pindar tells of the invincibility lotion she prepared to protect Jason from the fiery bulls. Pindar does not specify what Jason was sowing in the field he ploughed with them, but it is hard to imagine it was anything else than the serpent's teeth.[73] The connection between Medea's lotion and the defence of Jason against the earthborn becomes fully explicit for us finally in Apollonius' *Argonautica*.[74] Apollonius is followed in this by Valerius Flaccus and Apollodorus.[75] Valerius Flaccus also has Medea use her magic much more directly against the earthborn: Jason throws into their midst not a stone but his helmet, which Medea has imbued with her magical drugs.[76]

The phantom serpents of Artemis

Diodorus' expansive account of Medea's adventures is derived from the rationalizing work of the second-century BC Dionysius Scytobrachion. In a unique episode of this, as part of her elaborate deception of Pelias, Medea uses her drugs to conjure up phantoms (*eidōla*) of *drakontes*, which, she claims, have drawn Artemis through the air in her chariot to Pelias from the Hyperboreans. Clearly this salutes the theme of Medea's own serpent-chariot.[77]

Medea becomes Angitia of the Marsi

The famously snake-bursting Marsi, of whom more anon, lived beside Lake Fucinus, where the sanctuary of their special goddess, Angitia, was located. She is attested in local inscriptions from as early as the fourth century BC, and these may also suggest that, snakes aside, the goddess took an interest in general matters of fertility.[78] The Latin tradition knew from an early stage that Angitia was a daughter of Colchian Aeetes, but it debated as to whether she was a third

[72] Eumelus F 21 West = schol. Apollonius *Argonautica* 3. 1354.

[73] Pindar *Pythian* 4. 213–29.

[74] Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 3. 401–21, 1026–62, 1176–224, 1246–67.

[75] Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 7. 355–643, with 607–43 for the fight itself; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 9. 23.

[76] Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 7. 46–72, 631–4 (including the dubious line 636; the dubious status of this line does not, however compromise the general sense of the passage), 8. 106–8.

[77] Diodorus 4. 51.

[78] Lake Fucinus: Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 759–60; the sanctuary has been excavated. The earliest inscription to name her: *CIL* i^2 5 = *ILLRP* 7 = Vetter 1953 no. 228a (Luco). Some inscriptions suggest that there

daughter in her own right, or to be identified with Medea or even Circe. The late-second-century BC historian Gnaeus Gellius made her an independent daughter who taught the Marsi how to heal disease and was consequently held to be a goddess, whilst the son of her sister Medea ruled over them.[79] This awkward arrangement perhaps represents an attempt to reconcile an already established tradition that Angitia had originated actually in the figure of Medea herself, a tradition that only becomes fully explicit for us with Servius, who tells that Medea came to the Marrubians (i.e. the Marsi, whose capital was at Marruvium), and taught them remedies against serpents, and how to torture (*angerent*) them, wherefore they called her Angitia (cf., more pertinently, *anguis*, 'snake').[80] Between Gnaeus Gellius and Servius, the identification of Medea with Angitia may be latent too in Ovid's assertion that Medea herself had the power to split snakes apart with her incantations.[81] The tradition attested from the time of Pliny that Circe was rather the mother of the race probably entails a third notion that Angitia had originated rather in her.[82]

The collection of venoms for magical potions

In Seneca's *Medea* the witch is portrayed as summoning together snakes so as to be able to collect their venom in order to manufacture the burning poison with which she will imbue Glauce's wedding dress. But then she decides that common-or-garden earthly snakes are insufficient for her task, and that she must draw also on the venoms of cosmic and mythical serpents. She turns, therefore, to the serpent gripped by Ophiuchus, to Python, to the Hydra, and of course to her own Serpent of Colchis.[83] It is quite natural that Medea should have manufactured the burning poison for the dress from the venom of fantastical *drakontes*. From its first appearance in Euripides' *Medea*[84] the burning-dress the witch gives to Glauce is a calque upon the burning tunic Deianeira had given to Heracles, and in that too the active ingredient had been the Hydra's venom, suffused into the tunic in the blood or semen of Nessus (for which see Ch. 6).

may have been a plurality of Angitias: *CIL* ix 3074 (Solmona), 3885 (Luco); cf. also 3515. Discussion at Letta 1972: 53–9, 61–3, Dench 1995: 159–60, 163–4 (the latter with further epigraphic evidence).

[79] Gnaeus Gellius F9 *HRR*, *apud* Solinus 2. 27–30 (4th cent. AD).

[80] Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 750; cf. Letta 1972: 56. For further discussion of the etymology of the name Angitia, see Festus p. 26 L, with Tupet 1976: 198.

[81] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7. 203; cf. also *Ars amatoria* 2. 101–2. Admittedly, other witches could be attributed with similar snake-splitting abilities in the Latin poetic tradition, as with the Thessalians at Lucan 6. 488–91; cf. Ch. 6 on this text.

[82] Pliny *Natural History* 7. 15, 25. 11; so too Aulus Gellius 16. 11. 1, Solinus 2. 27; cf. Letta 1972: 53–4. Silius Italicus 8. 495–9, knowingly perhaps, keeps his options open and will say only that Angitia, 'the daughter of Aeetes', was the first to teach the Marsi how to blunt the viper's poison with herbs and incantations, and how to tame venomous animals by touching them.

[83] Seneca *Medea* 684–705; discussion at Nussbaum 1997: 234–40.

[84] Euripides *Medea* 780–9, 1136–230.

Absoris and Apsyrtus

We depend upon the second-century AD Hyginus uniquely for the tradition of Medea's control of the serpents of Absoris: 'Medea yoked her *drakontes* and returned to Colchis from Athens. In the course of her journey she came to Absoris, where her brother Apsyrtus was buried. The locals there were overwhelmed by a multitude of snakes. Answering their plea, Medea collected them together and hurled them into her brother's tomb. They remain there to this day, but if any of them leaves the tomb, it pays its debt to nature.'[85] The plague of snakes may be read, at some level, as a manifestation of the dead Apsyrtus, given that the heroic dead often manifested themselves in the form of individual snakes at any rate, as famously in the case of Virgil's Anchises (Ch. 7).[86] More germanely, in Seneca's *Medea*, Medea is herself confronted by the ghost of Apsyrtus accompanied by Furies seemingly brandishing a huge snake, whereupon she sacrifices her children to the ghost.[87] The Absoris snake-plague may perhaps, consequently, be read as an expression of the murdered Apsyrtus's anger and distress, whilst Medea's confinement of the snakes to his tomb may accordingly be read as a sort of ghost-confining measure, in parallel with the tradition that Medea and Jason subjected Apsyrtus' body (and thereby ghost) to a hobbling *maschalismos* or 'armpitting'.[88]

SNAKE-MASTER RACES

Ancient tradition knew of three fantastical races or family-groups of snake-masters (*snake*-masters, rather than *drakōn*-masters specifically), and these were often mentioned in the same breath: the Psylli of the Libyan Syrtes, the Ophiogeneis of Parium, Cyprus, and Phrygia, and the Marsi of Marruvium.[89] Presumably one important influence on such fantasies was the work of the actual snake-charmers abroad in the ancient world. We hear less of these than we might have expected, but Plato found them familiar enough in his own day to make passing reference to them twice, and in so doing to let us know that *kēlēsis* was the established Greek term for their activities: 'The craft of the sorcerers of vipers and poisonous spiders and scorpions and other creatures is "charming" (*kēlēsis*)'; 'Thrasymachus seems to me . . . to have been charmed by you (*kēlēthēnai*) like a snake.' In both cases Plato uses the image of snake-charming as a comparison for verbal persuasion, which may imply that incantation lay at the heart of the technique.[90]

[85] Hyginus *Fabulae* 26. [86] Virgil *Aeneid* 5. 95–6. [87] Seneca *Medea* 958–77.

[88] As at Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 477; cf. *Suda* s.v. *μασχαλίσθηναι*.

[89] Varro *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* 1. 2. 1, Strabo C588, Pliny *Natural History* 28. 30.

[90] Plato *Euthydemus* 290a: *ἡ μὲν* [sc. *τέχνη*] *γὰρ τῶν ἐπῳδῶν ἐχεών τε καὶ φαλαγγίων καὶ σκορπίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων θηρίων τε καὶ νόσων κήλησίς ἐστιν . . .*; *Republic* 358b: *Θρασύμαχος γάρ μοι φαίνεται . . . ὑπὸ σοῦ ὥσπερ ὄφις κεκηλῆθαι . . . .*' Cf. Bonner 1906: 301.

Psylli

The Psylli were mentioned first by Hecataeus (whose 'Psyllic Gulf' was doubtless related to the Syrtes), whilst for Herodotus they were an already long-vanished race, who had been buried in desert sands when they made war on the South Wind.[91] But for the authors of the third century BC and onwards they were alive again, and from this point they were defined by their relationship with snakes, and not least the notoriously terrible ones of their own land of Libya.[92] The third-century BC paradoxographer Antigonus knew that the Psylli could not feel snakebites.[93] Callias, the author of a multi-volume work on the Syracusan tyrant Agathocles (d. 289 BC), knew that a Psyllus could cure a snakebite in its early stages by spitting on it and 'bewitching' (*kategoēteuse*) it with saliva, in its middle stages by swilling water in his mouth, spitting it out and giving it to the victim to drink, and in its late stages by lying down naked with the victim and rubbing skin against skin.[94] The second-century BC Agatharchides of Cnidus maintained, in indirect response to Herodotus, that the Psylli had been brought to the brink of extinction not by the South Wind but by the neighbouring Nasamones, and that the race had then been repopulated by its straggling survivors. Agatharchides knew that the Psylli derived their name from a king Psyllus, whose tomb was situated in the Greater Syrtes, that they could not feel the bites or stings of deadly snakes or scorpions, that their blood was fatal to snakes, and that their very touch or odour inflicted an enervating drowsiness on the creatures, as if it were a sleep-inducing drug (a great achievement, since it was normally held in antiquity that snakes, which cannot close their eyes, were by nature unsleeping). He knew too that the Psylli subjected their children to a trial of legitimacy (more strictly a trial of Psyllus-paternity) by throwing them into a chest of snakes; the snakes wilted away before the child of Psyllus-blood, instead of attacking him.[95] These themes are frequently resumed and sometimes finessed in the later Greek and especially the Latin traditions, with particularly elaborate contributions from Lucan in the context of his description of Cato's march through Libya and Silius as he describes the backgrounds of several of the Carthaginian Hannibal's local allies.[96] Amongst

[91] Hecataeus *FGrH* 1 FF331–2; Herodotus 4. 173, whose material is resumed at Aulus Gellius 16. 11. 3. For the Psylli in general see (the inaccurate) O. Phillips 1995.

[92] In this same century, Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1513–17 and *Foundation of Alexandria* F4 Powell derives the terrible snakes of Libya from the drips of blood from Medusa's decapitated head as Perseus flew over the land with it; cf. also Lucan 9. 619–839.

[93] Antigonus *Collection of Miraculous Stories* 16b.

[94] Callias of Syracuse *FGrH* 564 F3 *apud* Aelian *Nature of Animals* 16. 28, who also cites Nicander F32 Gow and Scholfield, for the last method.

[95] Agatharchides of Cnidus *FGrH* 86 F21a (= Pliny *Natural History* 7. 14), F21b (= Aelian *Nature of Animals* 16. 27; the more extensive treatment of the Psylli at 1. 57 evidently derives from the same source). The full extent of Agatharchides' material on the Psylli is apparently unknown to Phillips, who proclaims (1995) that the Psylli's famous legitimacy-test is found first in Varro. The notion of paternity-testing with snakes originated in a variant of the myth of baby Heracles. According to the version at Pherecydes F69 Fowler (*apud* Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 4. 8), Amphitryon wished to know which of the twins Heracles and Iphicles had been sired by him and which by Zeus, and so he cast *drakontes* into their bed. When Iphicles fled whilst Heracles stood his ground, he knew that the former was his own.

[96] Varro *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum* 1. 2. 1 (legitimacy test); Cinna F10 Courtney *apud* Aulus Gellius 9. 12. 12 ('Punic' Psylli render asps drowsy); Strabo C814–15 (Psylli resistant to

later novelties is the more explicit assertion that the Psylli were sorcerers.[97] Cassius Dio makes an important logical clarification in relation to the legitimacy test: only men can be Psylli, not women, so the test cannot produce a false positive on the basis of blood inherited from the mother.[98] Pliny (on occasion) and Pausanias speak of Psylli almost in the way that imperial texts speak of 'Chaldaeans', that is as denoting groups of technical specialists abroad and perhaps itinerant in the Roman empire with little ostensible connection to the place indicated by the ethnic used to designate them. Pliny tells that Psylli had imported pests from all countries into Italy, to profit from them, but had failed to be able to keep their scorpions alive, save in Sicily.[99] He seems to say too that the Psylli tested themselves against poisonous toads which they first irritated by warming them in pans; this is suggestive of some sort of travelling show.[100] Pausanias tells that the Psylli found it easier to cure men bitten on Helicon because the roots and herbs the snakes ate there were less poisonous than elsewhere.[101]

Ophiogeneis

We know of three groups of people termed Ophiogeneis, 'Snakeborn'.[102] Strabo speaks of a group in Parium on the Hellespont:

> Here, they preserve the myth that Ophiogeneis have a kinship with serpents. They say that the males of the Ophiogeneis cure those who are bitten by vipers [*echiodēktoi*] by continuously massaging them, like sorcerers [*epōidoi*], first bringing the discoloration across into themselves and then putting a stop to the inflammation and the pain. They tell the myth that the founder of the race transformed into a human hero from having been a snake. Perhaps he was one of the Psylli of Libya. His power endured amongst his descendants for a time. (Strabo C588)[103]

snakebites); Celsus *On Medicine* 5. 27 (Psylli suck out venom); Lucan 9. 890–937 (the Psylli's voice has the power of a drug over a snake; they are protected by their blood; their legitimacy test; their circular fumigation techniques; their spittle contains the venom within the wound, or they will suck it out, and can tell from the taste of the venom what variety of snake has inflicted the bite); Pliny *Natural History* 8. 93 (snakes repelled by the scent of the Psylli), 21. 78 (Psylli resistant to snakebites), 28. 30 (Psylli suck out venom); Silius Italicus 1. 411–13 (Athyr, a Psyllus-like ally of Hannibal, disarms serpents of their poison; sends them to sleep with his touch; performs the legitimacy test), 3. 300–2 (the Marmaridae, Psyllus-like allies of Hannibal, make snakes forget their poison with their incantations, and relax them by their touch), 5. 352–5 (another Psyllus-like ally of Hannibal, Synalus of the Garamantes, neighbours of Cyrenaica, send snakes to sleep by touching them); Plutarch *Cato Minor* 56 (the Psylli suck out the poison and bewitch the snakes with incantations); Cassius Dio 51. 14 (Psylli cannot feel snakebites; they can suck out venom; the legitimacy test, in which the snakes fall asleep when they crawl under the child's clothes); Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. *Ψύλλοι* (Psylli's immunity to snakebites).

[97] e.g. Hesychius s.v. *Ψυλλικὸς γόης: ὁ τῶν Ψύλλων. οἱ δὲ Ψύλλοι ἔθνος Λιβύης.*

[98] Cassius Dio 51. 14.

[99] Pliny *Natural History* 11. 89. This is curious: 37. 54 (on the effects of Sicilian stones, especially the achate, on scorpions might have led us to expect the opposite.

[100] Pliny *Natural History* 25. 123; however, the text seems to be corrupt.

[101] Pausanias 9. 28. 1.

[102] Discussion at Küster 1913: 102–4, Fontenrose 1959: 120, L. Robert 1980: 408.

[103] For the possibility that the snakes of these Ophiogeneis found their way onto the coinage of Parium, see Imhoof-Blumer 1911 and L. Robert 1980: 408 n. 60.

Pliny knew of a group of Ophiogeneis living in Cyprus of whose bodies serpents were frightened. He compares them to the Marsi and Psylli (again) in this regard, like whom they could cure snakebites with a mere touch or suck. But Pliny conceives this group as a family (*familia*) rather than as a race. He tells of an ambassador of the family, Euagon, who came to Rome only to be thrown by the consuls into a great pot of snakes so that they could test his powers. The snakes merely licked him all over (cf. the legitimacy test of the Psylli). Pliny notes that not only the saliva of this family (in common with that of the Marsi and the Psylli) but also their sweat had medicinal properties, that is, against snakebites. Perhaps it was this unique sweat that caused them to emit a virulent smell—itself a characteristic of snakes and *drakontes*—in the spring. Pliny also suggests that this miraculous family may have died out (*si modo adhuc durat*): as with the Psylli, their survival-status was at issue.[104]

A third group, it seems, is attested by a brief note in Aelian's *Nature of Animals* composed in the early third century AD: 'As Halia the daughter of Sybaris was passing into a grove of Artemis (the grove was in Phrygia) a divine snake manifested itself before her, enormous to see, and it had sex with her. And from this derived the so-called Ophiogeneis of the first generation.' Could Aelian be referring to the Parium Ophiogeneis of Strabo? This is unlikely. Although it had once been regarded as part of Hellespontine Phrygia, in Aelian's day Parium belonged to Bithynia, and the origin myth does not match Strabo's. It has been suggested that the name Halia, which might be construed as 'woman of the sea' should indicate that the action takes place somewhere on the Phrygian seaboard. It has also been suggested that the name should rather be read as Alia, and that the woman should be understood to be the eponym of a city of that name in central Phrygia. Both are possible.[105] But it is also possible that Aelian has in mind a people supposedly living in or around Phrygian Hierapolis, and that these are subsequently refracted in the Ophianoi of Hierapolis (Ophiorhyme) in the *Acts of Philip* (Ch. 11).

It is a curiosity that the Ophiogeneis should be antithetical to snakes and yet born of them. But the paradox can be resolved if we bear in mind the ideal symmetricality to which ancient *drakōn*-fights tend (Chs. 6 and 11): it stands to reason, therefore, that those best equipped to fight serpents should be those that partake of their nature. The notion that people should be descended from snakes was hardly unique to the Ophiogeneis. It lies at the heart of the ancient Theban myth (and indeed its Colchian offshoot) of the Spartoi, the men sown from the teeth of the Serpent of Ares. And it lies behind the notion that great individuals, such as Aristomenes, Scipio, Aratus, Augustus, and not least Alexander the Great, should have been sired by snakes in congress with their mothers (Ch. 9). As we shall see, Alexander's serpent-heritage may, according to one tradition, have similarly equipped him to deliver Alexandria from the menace of snakes (Ch. 8).

[104] Pliny *Natural History* 28. 30–1.

[105] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 12. 39; discussion at Fontenrose 1959: 120.

Marsi

We have already encountered the Marsi of Marruvium beside Lake Fucinus, the worshippers of the serpent-related goddess Angitia.[106] They were most famous for their ability to split snakes apart or burst them open with their incantations.[107] Servius' notion that they tortured snakes, alluded to above, should not be taken seriously: it is adduced only in the course of a desperate folk etymology attempting to derive the name of Angitia from *angere*, 'torture'.[108] No doubt the idea that snakes could be burst originated in their slough, although Horace and Ovid, with their own logic, localize the bursting in, respectively, their heads and their jaws.[109] We are also told that the Marsi could, with their incantations, draw snakes forth from their holes, stop them in their tracks, send them to sleep, and blunt their venom; herbs could also be deployed for the last of these ends. They could tame venomous snakes just by touching them. And they could cure snakebites merely by touch or by sucking the venom out, or again with incantation and the application of plant juices.[110] This brings them firmly into the realm of the Psylli and the Ophiogeneis. They seem particularly close to them too in Aulus Gellius' observation that the Marsi must be of pure blood to exercise their powers against snakes.[111] Our sources say little of the Marsi's purpose in all this, though one might imagine that it was fundamentally a religious one. Galen, however, who claims to have had conversations with Marsi in Rome, suggests that they hunted snakes to eat them, detailing their butchery methods.[112] Eustathius was to claim that the Romans had the Marsi collect vipers from which to prepare a theriac (antidote to venom).[113] In a rare appearance for the Marsi upon the supposedly historical stage, the *Historia Augusta* reports that Elagabalus was said to have had 'priests of the Marsian race' collect snakes (*serpentes*) and pour them out into Rome suddenly before dawn when people were gathering in throngs for the

[106] For the Marsi in general see Letta 1972 esp. 139–45, Piccalugia 1976, Tupet 1976: 187–98, Dench 1995: 159–66, O. Phillips 1995.

[107] Lucilius *Book* 20 F7 Charpin (575–6 Marx), Virgil *Eclogues* 8. 70–1, Horace *Epodes* 17. 29, Ovid *Amores* 2. 1. 23–8, *Metamorphoses* 7. 203, *De medicamine faciei femineae* 39, [Quintilian] *Declamationes maiores* 10. 15.

[108] Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 750.

[109] Horace *Epodes* 17. 29; Ovid *Amores* 2. 1. 25, *Metamorphoses* 7. 203.

[110] Tibullus 1. 8. 20 (snakes stopped in tracks by incantation, though the Marsi are not explicitly named), Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 750–60 (Marsi cast sleep on snakes by incantation and touch; possible intimation that they can cure snakebites with herbs), Pliny *Natural History* 7. 15 (Marsi are naturally proof against snakes, like the Psylli), 25. 11 (Marsi cast sleep on snakes), 28. 19 (Marsi burst snakes and summon them in the dead of night), 28. 30 (Marsi cure snakebites by touch or sucking), Silius Italicus 8. 495–99 (sleep-casting; venom blunted with herbs and incantation), Aulus Gellius 16. 11. 1–2 (Marsi can cast sleep on snakes and cure snakebites by incantation or plant juices, so long as their blood remains pure; but context suggests confusion with Psylli), Augustine *De Genesi ad literam* 11. 28. 35 ('Serpents are thought to hear and understand the words of the Marsi, with the result that they usually leap forth from their hiding-places when they perform an incantation . . .'; cf. Eugippus *Excerpta ex operibus sancti Augustini* 35. 11), Avitus of Vienne *De spiritalis historiae gestis* 2. 303–13 (venom blunted by incantation; an important text discussed in the next chapter).

[111] Aulus Gellius 16. 11. 1–2.

[112] Galen xi p. 143 and xii pp. 316–17 Kühn.

[113] Eustathius on Dionysius Periegetes 376: *ἐκ τούτων οἱ Ῥωμαῖοι τάσσουσι ἐχιδνολογεῖν τινας εἰς κατασκευὴν θηριακῆς.*

games, with the result that many were hurt both by snakebites and in the crush to flee.[114] Letta makes the intriguing suggestion that behind Lycophron's remodelling of their Lake Fucinus into Lake Phorce lurks a notion that the Marsi were somehow connected with Phorcys, the great progenitor of *drakontes* in Hesiod's genealogy (Ch. 4).[115]

Thessalian witches

It seems that it was usually only the males of the above races or groups that possessed special powers in relation to snakes. Strabo specifies that it is only the males amongst the Ophiogeneis of Parium that possess the power to cure snakebites, whilst Dio explains that the all-important Psyllus blood is passed down only in the male line.[116] If we look for a race amongst whom it is the women that possess special powers against snakes, then it is the Thessalians, famed for their witches, that offer the best candidate. In a text to which we shall return in the next chapter Lucan explains that, 'For them [Thessalian witches] the snake unravels its chilly coils and stretches out in the frosty field. Vipers in their knots are split apart and reassembled. The serpent falls dead when blown upon with human poison.'[117] And as we will see, the ps.-Aristotelian *Mirabilia* has a rich but confused tale in which a Thessalian woman, presumably a witch, does battle against a terrible sacred snake or *hieros ophis* by means of a magic circle of drugs and an incantation.[118]

CONCLUSION

Amongst the individuals and groups reviewed here, it is above all Athene, who brings *drakontes* to fight *drakontes*, and the Ophiogeneis, whose ability to resist snakes lies in their own snake nature, that introduce us to the great system of symmetry that obtains in ancient narratives of and lore about battles between *drakontes* and their human or humanoid opponents. We are now in a position to consider this symmetry in its own right, and it duly forms the subject of our next chapter.

[114] SHA *Elagabalus* 23. 1.
[115] Lycophron *Alexandra* 1274, perhaps ultimately derivative of Timaeus; Letta 1972: 56–9.
[116] Strabo C588; Cassius Dio 51. 14.
[117] Lucan 6. 488–91.
[118] [Aristotle] *Mirabilia* 845b.

6

The Symmetrical Battle between *Drakōn* and Slayer

Already in earliest Greek tradition fights and other varieties of interaction between man and *drakōn* are articulated in a strikingly symmetrical fashion. One thinks at once of the pair of *drakontes* sent against the twins Heracles and Iphicles or that sent against the twin sons of Laocoon (Chs. 1 and 3). One thinks also of the curious tendency of ancient narratives to find a balance between the adjutant figures Iolaus and the crab in Heracles' battle against the Hydra (Ch. 1). But it is above all in the field of the weaponry deployed between man and *drakōn* that symmetries are constructed, both within individual narratives and at the broader level of lore and culture.[1]

DRAKŌN AGAINST *DRAKŌN*

In general the best way to fight a *drakōn* was to resemble one oneself, or to be aligned with other *drakontes*. In the previous chapter we observed that the various groups of Ophiogeneis, 'Snakeborn', were best equipped to fight snakes and their works precisely because they partook of their nature. We also saw that, amongst the gods, the most dogged fighter against anguiforms is the goddess that most consistently fights alongside them too, Athene. Valerius Flaccus makes a nice point: 'Typhoeus, claiming too soon that the kingdoms of the sky and the stars were captured, grieved to find Bacchus before the battle line and Pallas Athene, first of the gods, and the virgin's snakes opposed to him.'[2] And so does the late-antique Claudian: he has Athene deploying her Gorgon-head to freeze the serpent-legs of the giant Palleneus into stone, whilst simultaneously slaying his humanoid part with a sword.[3] The humanoid can fight the humanoid, but the anguiform is best fought by the anguiform. According to some accounts from the fourth century BC onwards, Athene's protégé Perseus, a good pupil, deployed the snaky head of the Gorgon in his fight against the serpentine *kētos* of Ethiopia (Ch. 3).

[1] For incunabular notions about the symmetrical battle discussed here and again in Ch. 11, see Ogden 2007*a*: 79–86.

[2] Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 4. 236–8.

[3] Claudian 52. 104–13 (*Gigantomachia*).

When Athene dons the aegis she could be thought to take on the attributes of the anguiform monster of which it is the trophy. There was more than one sense in which a victor over a *drakōn* could be regarded as becoming a *drakōn* himself. Cadmus, the victor over the Serpent of Ares at the site of Thebes and, according to Nonnus, a better of Zeus in his battle against Typhon, was subsequently transformed into a *drakōn* in turn, alongside his wife Harmonia (Ch. 2). In the course of his elaborate and expansive account of Zeus' battle against Typhon, which, as we shall see, exploits a great many forms of symmetry, Nonnus reminds us that Cadmus is destined to become a serpent himself when Zeus offers and then gives him Harmonia as a bride in return for his help, the bride with whom he will share his serpent form.[4] He anticipates Cadmus' transformation again in the course of his description of his battle against the Serpent of Ares. Indeed, he implies that the transformation will be due to Ares' curse for the killing of his serpent.[5]

Virgil gives us Heracles with a hundred-headed Hydra emblazoned upon his shield.[6] The shield that celebrates the former victory over the *drakōn* transforms its bearer into a metaphorical *drakōn* in turn. The point is made by the case of Adrastus. The killer of the Nemean *drakōn* that had devoured Opheltes-Archemorus (Ch. 1)[7] was subsequently to be seen, according to Euripides' *Phoenissae*, at the siege of Thebes toting a shield emblazoned with a hundred serpents in the act of carrying Theban children off in their jaws from the city's walls.[8] The serpents, described by the terms *drakontes*, *hydrai*, and *echidnai*, are surely to be construed as belonging to a single, hundred-headed, Hydra-like monster, as in the case of Heracles' shield. The notion of serpents carrying children off is particularly resonant for the Archemorus episode, even if the serpent-design is more appropriate to the immediate metaphorical context, and serves to link Adrastus' former deed with his current one. Adrastus and the Seven over whom he presides have in a sense become the Nemean serpent they have slain.

Nonnus' account of the battle against Typhon works hard to find further *drakōn* opponents for the monster. As he attacks the heavens, some of his serpent heads, in direct fashion, attack the serpent-related constellations, Draco itself, and Ophiuchus. Ophiuchus throws his 'fire-reared' (because astral?) vipers like javelins at Typhon.[9] Amongst Typhon's other heads, leopards, lions, boars, bulls, dogs and wolves are mentioned, and he attacks the constellations which

[4] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 396–9, 2. 663–6. Additionally, Zeus gives Cadmus advice for a smooth life, and this is suffused with serpent imagery: 2. 669–79, he advises him not to offend Dircaean Ares (i.e. by killing the Serpent of Ares at the site of Thebes, as he is destined to do); he is to sacrifice to the constellation of Draco, holding a piece of snake-stone (*ophitēs*), and also call upon Olympian Ophiuchus, 'Snake-holder', whilst burning the horn of an Illyrian deer. In snake-lore snake-stone cures snake bites (*Orphic Lithica* 338–73 on *ophiētis*; cf. 461–6 on *ophitēs*), whilst burning deer-horn repels snakes (see below).

[5] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 5. 135–89. He adjacently dilates at length upon the golden necklace Aphrodite gives to Harmonia as a wedding gift, a necklace in the form of a double-headed serpent.

[6] Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 658.

[7] Note in particular Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 6. 4.

[8] Euripides *Phoenissae* 1134–8.

[9] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 189, 252–3 (Drakōn), 199–200 (Ophiuchus), 244–9 (viper-javelins).

themselves include many animals forms, or make appeal to animals in their names, dogs, bears, bulls, horses, goats, fish, rams, swans.[10] Nonnus sometimes draws particular attention to the symmetricality of the fight in these cases too. Thus Orion's dog attacks Typhon's beast-heads. Typhon's horned heads attack another astral body, the horned moon, and he also throws bulls he has wrenched from the plough at her. One of his horned serpents (*drakōn . . . kerastēs*) attacks the horns of the Bull. In due course, Typhon threatens to replace the signs of the Zodiac with his own animal heads.[11] Similar conceits had probably been deployed already in Nicander's description of Typhon's battle against the gods, and this in turn may have gone back in its essentials to Pindar. Nicander's Typhon seems to have borne an array of animal heads that accordingly produced a range of terrifying animal noises. He chased the Olympian gods to Egypt, where they all transformed themselves into different animals in order to hide from him: 'But they, advisedly, all escaped by changing their appearances into those of animals. Apollo became a hawk, Hermes an ibis, Ares a scaly fish, Artemis a cat, Dionysus came to resemble a goat, Heracles a fawn, Hephaestus an ox, Leto a shrew, and the rest of the gods changed their appearance as each happened to do so.'[12] There is surely a latent reciprocity here. The tale serves, of course, as an aetiology of the animal-headed gods of Egypt.

The Romans too thought one should send a serpent to fight a serpent. Why should the fabulous tale of the Bagrada *draco*, first attested in the mid first century BC (Ch. 1), have been attached to the historical Regulus, of all the Roman generals who might be presumed to have come into contact with the terrible snakes of Africa? Perhaps because his name, signifying 'little king', can be read as a direct translation of *basiliskos*, the name of a terrible serpent found already in the Hippocratic writings and the Septuagint, and the term that ultimately gives us 'basilisk'.[13] Lucan memorably describes Murrus' encounter with a Libyan *basiliscus*: he idly drives his spear into the snake and its venom shoots up the shaft and into his hand, rotting it as it travels, and he can only save himself by hacking off his arm at the shoulder with his own sword.[14] And Pliny knows of a case in which a basilisk was speared by a knight in similar fashion: the venom killed not only the man himself but also the horse on which he was sitting.[15] Indeed in later Latin, from the fifth century AD on, *regulus* is attested as a translation of *basiliskos*. With a similar logic, a British folk-tale was to send Billy Biter to fight the Dragon of Filey.[16]

[10] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 154–257, 2. 244–56.

[11] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 213–23 (horns), 1. 236–9 (Orion), 1. 1193–4 (horned serpent, Bull), 2. 281–9 (Zodiac).

[12] Nicander *apud* Antoninus Liberalis 28; cf. Pindar F91 SM (the gods change themselves into animals when chased by Typhon). So too Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5. 319–31, Ampelius 2. 10, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3, Lucian *On Sacrifices* 14, Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 28, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 140–5, Suda s.v. *Τυφώς*, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 11. Cf. Fontenrose 1959: 75.

[13] LSJ s.v.

[14] Lucan 9. 828–33. See Gow and Scholfield 1953: 178 and Jacques 2002: 130–2.

[15] Pliny *Natural History* 8. 78.

[16] Text at Tongue 1967.

FIRE

The *drakōn*'s venom is fiery, and its staring, unclosing, unsleeping eyes are often said to flash fire from themselves. In the earliest texts *drakontes* are also said to breathe fire—Homer's Chimaera is already fire-breathing—though this particular motif subsequently becomes less common than those familiar with the fire-breathing dragons of the medieval world and indeed contemporary Western culture may imagine, with the *drakontes*' breath being attributed by preference with a different range of destructive properties.[17] The *drakontes*' opponents have recourse to various varieties of fire in their battle against them.

Zeus and Typhon

In the earliest expansive account of a *drakōn* fight, Hesiod's narrative of Zeus' battle with Typhon, the parallelism and reciprocity of fire imagery are striking. It is, at one level, a mirror-battle between the two most terrifying varieties of elemental fire: the fire of lightning, which shoots from heaven to earth, and the fire of the volcano, which shoots from earth to heaven.

Hesiod tells of Typhon that, 'Fire flashed forth from the eyes under the brows of his awesome [sc. serpent] heads. And from all his heads as he gazed (*derkomenoio*) fire burned.'[18] Zeus answers fire with fire, in the form of his thunderbolt, and Hesiod makes the parallelism quite explicit:

> The heat that they both generated took hold of the dark blue sea, the heat of the thunder and the lightning, and of the fire from the monster, and of the burning winds and the burning thunderbolt. The entire earth boiled, and so did the fire and the sea . . . When Zeus had raised high his might and taken up his weapons, thunder, lightning and the flashing thunderbolt, he struck him, leaping from Olympus. And he burned all the heads of the terrible monster on all sides.[19]

Even in his final state of burial, Typhon continues to send forth flame:

> A flame flashed forth from that lord, smitten and struck with the thunderbolt in the obscure dells of the craggy mountain. The massive Earth was burned over a wide expanse by an awesome vapour (*atmē*), and it melted like tin when smelted by strong craftsmen in well-drilled crucibles, or iron, which is the strongest substance. It is subdued in the dells of a mountain with burning fire, and it melts in the divine Earth by the hands of Hephaestus. In this way then the earth melted in the gleam of flashing fire.[20]

After Hesiod the Aeschylean *Prometheus Bound* too is pointed about the reciprocity of fire-weaponry between Typhon and Zeus. Now fierce lightning flashes from Typhon's eyes (Zeus' distinctive fiery weapon has become his), and it is said that the buried Typhon will send forth rivers of fire, and he will boil up in anger with hot missiles of a monstrous, 'fire-breathing' (*pyrpnoos*) storm. Zeus, on the other hand, destroys Typhon by dashing down a 'fire-breathing' (*ekpneōn*

[17] Homer *Iliad* 6. 180: δεινὸν ἀποπνείουσα πυρὸς μένος αἰθομένοιο.
[18] Hesiod *Theogony* 826–8.
[19] Hesiod *Theogony* 844–7, 853–6.
[20] Hesiod *Theogony* 859–68; cf. M. L. West 1966 ad loc.

phloga) thunderbolt upon him and burning him up to an ember.[21] This fiery reciprocity is even more explicit in Aeschylus' *Seven*, when Eteocles describes Hippomedon and Hyperbius squaring up to one another in battle: 'For enemy man will stand against man, and they will bring together enemy gods on their shields. For the one of them [Hippomedon] has fire-breathing (*pyrpnoos*) Typhon, but on Hyperbius' shield sits firm father Zeus, a burning missile in his hand. And no one has ever yet seen Zeus conquered. Such then are the divine supports on either side.'[22] The Typhon on Hippomedon's shield is further described as 'sending forth black smoke through his fire-breathing (*pyrpnoos*, yet again) mouth, shimmering sister of flame'.[23]

Hesiod had left it creatively unclear whether the fire Typhon continues to emit from beneath the earth is his own or is a remnant of that with which he was blasted by Zeus. Both possibilities were exploited to the full in subsequent tradition. Pindar seems to hold that the fire Typhon sends up, which for him is the fire of Etna and 'Cyme' (i.e. Cumae, i.e. Vesuvius), is his own: 'That reptile (*herpeton*) sends up the most terrible fountains of Hephaestus, a wonderful portent to look upon, and an amazing thing to hear of from eyewitnesses.'[24] Ovid agrees in the *Metamorphoses* that the fire Typhon sends up is his own: 'Lying supine under Etna Typhoeus throws up sands and fiercely vomits flame from his mouth.' And in the *Fasti* he has Typhon 'breathing out' his fire from beneath Etna, as does Philostratus.[25]

But others saw the smoky and volcanic lands that had hosted the battle as continuing to smoulder rather from the thunderbolts. For Xanthus of Lydia the volcanic Lydian Catacaumene, the 'Burnt Land', was burned up by the thunderbolts Zeus had hurled down on Typhon.[26] Later, Apollodorus and Hyginus were to see Etna's blasts of fire as a remnant of the thunderbolts Zeus had hurled upon him.[27] Accordingly, Typhon himself was often portrayed as being burned up, and Plato could even invoke him as a shorthand image for this.[28] When Valerius Flaccus has Typhon 'vomiting forth sacred [*or* accursed] flames from his breast' as he was pursued, he is presumably thinking of the thunderbolt wound Zeus has inflicted upon him rather than his own fire, though the latter may be ironically saluted.[29] Others again thought the fires of Etna at any rate derived from Hephaestus' anvil, a further burden loaded on top of the monster.[30]

Some later takes on the great fire-battle may be noticed briefly. Latin poetry exploits both Typhon and Zeus as icons of fieriness in the context of their fight. Ovid presents Zeus as toning down his level of fieriness from that used against Typhon

[21] Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 353–74; note also schol. on 351 for the fire flashing from Typhon's eyes and Zeus' thunderbolt.

[22] Aeschylus *Seven* 509–13.

[23] Aeschylus *Seven* 493–4; so too 511, with πυρπνόον again.

[24] Pindar *Pythians* 1. 25–6.

[25] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5. 352–3, *Fasti* 4. 491–4; Philostratus *Imagines* 2. 17. 5.

[26] Xanthus of Sardis *FGrH* 765 F4a and b.

[27] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3, Hyginus *Fabulae* 152.

[28] Plato *Phaedrus* 230a.

[29] Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 25. Hyginus *Fabulae* 152 has Zeus striking Typhon's breast with a thunderbolt.

[30] Antoninus Liberalis 28, quoting Nicander.

in order to appear before Semele.[31] Seneca notes that even Typhon would have groaned if placed on the pyre of Heracles.[32] Apollodorus (presumably building on others gone before) enhances Typhon's fiery armoury: 'Fire could be seen in his eyes. Such was Typhon in form and size when he attacked heaven by setting fire to rocks and throwing them at it, with much hissing and bellowing. He belched forth a great rainstorm of fire from his mouth.' Zeus, as ever, responds in kind with thunderbolts.[33] In Nonnus' *Dioynisaca* Typhon steals Zeus' own thunderbolts (cf. the *Prometheus Bound*), and uses them against heaven, albeit ineffectively because of his inexperience. Nonnus marks the symmetry by describing Typhon himself as he attempts to hurl the thunderbolts as a 'spurious Zeus' (*Zeus nothos*). Zeus then invokes Eros on the basis that he is a fiery god (people burn with desire) to help him recover his fiery thunderbolts from Typhon by attacking him with fire.[34] At the very end of the ancient tradition the *Etymologicum Magnum*, with Christian colouring but aptly nonetheless, offers the lapidary description of Typhon as 'a fiery demon'.[35]

The *drakōn* deploys fire against man: 1. Fiery venom

The fieriness of *drakontes* and other snakes in the earlier classical tradition is founded in a metaphorical reading of the effects of their venom: it is this that burns. Thus the Nemean *drakōn* overcome by Hippomedon and Capaneus in Statius' *Thebaid*: 'rages with the fire of parching venom'.[36] The association of fire-imagery with snake-venom more generally was widespread, and Nicander commonly describes snakebites as fiery, particularly those of vipers.[37] But amongst non-*drakōn* snakes fieriness was associated above all with the Libyan dipsad, the name of which signified, appropriately enough, 'thirst-inducing'. Nicander tells that the dipsad inflames the hearts of its victims, who then drink water maniacally until their navels burst.[38] The poet Lucan offers us a memorably over-the-top description of the effects of this snake's bite: Aulus is eaten from within by a devouring fire, attempts to drink the sea dry to quench his thirst, and finally dies when he opens his veins so as to be able to drink his own blood.[39] Lucian discusses the dipsad at some length in his *prolalia* named for them, *The Dipsads*, where he too describes this snake's terrible bite explicitly in terms of fire: 'It burns and corrupts and sets alight, and people scream out as if lying on a pyre.'[40]

[31] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 302–4.

[32] Seneca *Hercules Oetaeus* 1733–5.

[33] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3.

[34] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 154–62, 294–320 (*Zeus nothos*: 295), 398–405.

[35] *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *Τυφῶνος*: *Πυρώδους δαίμονος*.

[36] Statius *Thebaid* 5. 521, *siccique . . . furit igne veneni*.

[37] Nicander *Theriaca* 245 (*πυρπολέουσα*) and 364 (*πυρπολέοντα*). For a modern, technical but nonetheless accessible study of the world of venomous snakes, particularly vipers, and the effects of their venoms, see Thorpe, Wüster, and Malhorta 1997.

[38] Nicander *Theriaca* 334–58 (*ἐμφλέγεται*, 338); cf. 125. See Gow and Scholfield 1953: 176 and Jacques 2002: 118–20.

[39] Lucan 9. 734–60; *ignis edax* at 742.

[40] Lucian *Dipsads* 4, *ἐκκαίει, σήπει, πίμπρασθαι ποιεῖ*.

We should note that the association of fieriness with snake-venom was more widely familiar in the Near East. The Egyptians conceptualized the poison-spitting cobra as actually spitting fire.[41] The fiery serpents (the Hebrew term is *saraph*) sent by God upon the Israelites in the desert are well known. God instructed Moses to heal their victims by having them look upon a bronze replica of one of the snakes.[42]

The *drakōn* deploys fire against man: 2. Fiery breath

We have seen how Typhon was presented as a breather of fire (*pyrpnoos*) from the age of Aeschylus onwards. But of all ancient *drakontes* it was the Chimaera, who shared with a Typhon a base in Asia Minor, that was most strongly and repeatedly associated with fire-breathing, perhaps because Homer had already drawn explicit attention to it in his brief description of the creature, repeated verbatim in the *Theogony*.[43] Indeed an allusive Euripidean chorus can identify the Chimaera simply by the phrase 'fire-breathing (*pyrpnoos*) lioness'.[44] A fragment of the same poet's *Sthenoboea* preserves a vivid vignette from Bellerophon's narrative of his fight: 'I strike to wound the Chimaera in the throat, and a corn-ear-tip of fire blasts me and blackens the downy wing of Pegasus here.'[45] For Lysias 'guarding against the fire of the Chimaera' was already a proverbial way to describe the exercise of foresight.[46] A famous fragment of the fourth-century comic poet Anaxilas compares the courtesan Plangon to the Chimaera because she sets foreigners alight with desire.[47] And Pliny's identification of the Chimaera with a volcano that burns with an undying flame day and night also serves to make fire-breathing central to the creature's nature and *raison d'être*.[48]

We cannot doubt that it is by virtue of her *drakōn* element that the Chimaera has the capacity to breathe fire. The tradition as to which of her heads actually breathed forth the fire was a confused one. The Homeric syntax is ambiguous: it may specify that the goat-head alone is the one that breathes the fire, or it may mean that the Chimaera as a whole breathes fire, leaving the emitting head(s) unspecified. Certainly some came to understand it the former way. A damaged

[41] Szpakowska 2001, 2003: 170–1. Cobras so conceived played an important role in protecting the living from the dead and from demons: they are well known in the form of the uraeus, and clay models of them were set up around beds to protect sleepers from nightmares.

[42] Numbers 21: 1–9. The 'fiery serpents' phrase derives from the familiar King James version. The New English Bible offers merely 'poisonous,' but the Hebrew term is significant for snakes and fire alike.

[43] Homer *Iliad* 6. 181–2 = Hesiod *Theogony* 323–4. Hesiod's editors suspect the Homeric couplet to be an interpolation. Note also [Hesiod] *Ehoiai* 43a lines 81–8 MW (we can be reasonably sure that the Chimaera was 'fire-breathing' here even though the word 'fire' alone survives in the papyrus fragment) and Pindar *Olympians* 13. 90. Typhon and the Chimaera are paired at *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 367–8.

[44] Euripides *Electra* 473–5; but the reference to her χαλαί, 'hooves', does give us a clue that the creature is more than pure lion.

[45] Euripides *Sthenoboea* F665a *TrGF*. Photius s.v. ἀθήρ explains that the metaphor πυρὸς δ' ἀθήρ should be read in this way; cf. Collard, Cropp, and Lee 1995 ad loc.

[46] Lysias F439 Carey *apud* Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 17.

[47] Anaxilas *Neottis* F22 K-A, *apud* Athenaeus 558a–e.

[48] Pliny *Natural History* 2. 236.

vase of *c.*600–575 BC seems to show the Chimaera's goat-head breathing forth fire; it is unclear whether the flame that extends also from the lion's mouth is a continuation of the goat's flame or a separate one.[49] Thereafter fourth-century iconography sometimes confines spouting fire to the goat's mouth.[50] Ovid declares that 'the Chimaera had fire in its middle part', and Apollodorus and Zenobius agree.[51] A scholiast to Homer insists that the Chimaera blew her fire rather through her lion-mouth. This offers a kind of logic, given that the lion-head was the front one, but the scholiast undermines his case by then comparing the Chimaera with a mountain in Lycia that blows up fire from its central point, a comparison (or identification) evidently developed to explain the fire-breathing of the middle head, the goat's.[52] Why give the fire to the goat? Perhaps to render the Chimaera's one seemingly harmless, if not actually risible, head, more terrible. It is curious that the *drakōn*-head should be the one head not identified in the tradition as the unique fire-breather. However, it does get to breathe fire alongside the other two in the variant that has the creature breathe fire from all three heads. This variant may already have been known to Euripides; it was at any rate known to Hyginus, who has the Chimaera breathe forth fire from her 'threefold mouth'.[53]

Other *drakontes* too could be described as fire-breathing. Euripides' Orestes speaks of a pursuing Erinys as a '*drakaina* (she-*drakōn*) of Hades' and as 'breathing fire and slaughter from her tunic', whilst a fellow *drakaina*-Erinys is said to have a mouth of terrible vipers (*echidnai*).[54] As we have seen, Statius tells of his Nemean *drakōn* that 'plants are stricken by its hot breaths.'[55] We come close to fire-breathing too in the case of Silius' Bagrada *draco*, which 'hissed forth Stygian heats from its smoking mouth, as well as flashing terrible fire from its eyes.'[56]

The drakōn deploys fire against man: 3. Fiery eyes

Drakontes and monstrous snakes are often said to flash fire from their eyes. This is part of a wider complex of thought about the perils of the *drakōn*'s gaze, which we will investigate in its own right shortly. In the *Theogony* Hesiod tells of

[49] *LIMC* Chimaira 21, discussed by Amandry 1948, amongst some other dubious cases.

[50] *LIMC* Chimaira 108, Pegasos 193. In the 3rd century AD *LIMC* Pegasos 169 the flames come from the lion's mouth. It is not clear to me whether the lion-head in *LIMC* Pegasos 213 of *c.*660 BC is already spouting flame.

[51] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9. 646–8, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 3. 1 (cf. 1. 9. 3), Zenobius *Centuriae* 2. 87 (2nd cent. AD).

[52] Schol. Homer *Iliad* 6. 181. Flames come from the lion's mouth also in the 3rd century AD mosaic *LIMC* Pegasos 169. It is not clear to me whether the lion-head of the Chimaera on the *c.*660 BC proto-Corinthian aryballos *LIMC* Pegasos 213 is already spouting flame.

[53] Euripides *Ion* 201–4: *τὰν πῦρ πνέουσαν ἐναίρει τρισώματον ἀλκάν* ('[Bellerophon] slays the fire-breathing three-bodied force'); Hyginus *Fabulae* 57.

[54] Euripides *IT* 285–94.

[55] Statius *Thebaid* 5. 527, *percussae calidis adflatibus herbae.*

[56] Silius Italicus 6. 219–20. Note also that its voracious appetite and impetuous gobbling give it a dyspeptic heartburn (162, *feruenti concepta incendia pastu*), and that it rushes to the attack with 'ardour' (251, *ardor*).

Typhon that, 'Fire flashed forth from the eyes under the brows of his awesome [sc. serpent] heads. And from all his heads as he gazed (*derkomenoio*) fire burned.'[57] Bacchylides describes the Nemean *drakōn* slain by Adrastus as *xanthoderkēs*, which some have taken to signify 'fiery-eyed'.[58] Euripides' Ion refers to his mother Creusa as a viper (*echidna*) and then immediately as a *drakōn* with a murderous look that consists of a flame of fire.[59] The same poet's Tyndareus refers to Orestes as a mother-killing *drakōn*, dripping unhealthy lightning flashes.[60] The pair of snakes sent to attack baby Heracles in Theocritus' idyll *Heracliscus* are said to shoot fire from their eyes and accordingly fill the house with light until they are killed.[61] Euphorion offers a particularly striking description of the fire that flashes forth from Cerberus' eyes: it resembles lightning, the fire that flashes forth from Hephaestus' hammer and tongs, the fire, that is, that flashes forth from Etna.[62] In telling that Scylla had fiery eyes (*pyroeideis*) the Hellenistic Dionysius of Samos helps to bind her into the *drakōn* paradigm.[63] We meet a 30-cubit fiery-eyed (*omma pyrōpon*) constrictor in Diodorus' extended description of the snake hunt in Egypt under Ptolemy II. By way of coda Diodorus notes with approbation Ethiopian tales of snakes that will eat oxen and other creatures of similar size. They even attack elephants by blinding them with the lightning-flashes from their eyes.[64] The fire that flashes from the *draco*'s eyes becomes a commonplace for the Latin poets: Ovid gives it to the Serpent of Ares and even to Asclepius, when he manifests himself in *draco* form;[65] Valerius Flaccus gives it to the Colchis *draco* (its star-like eyes are so fiery that they stand out from the distance as flames amid the clouds);[66] Statius gives it to the Serpent of Nemea (its fire is blue);[67] and Silius Italicus gives it to the Bagrada serpent.[68] Intriguingly, a fiery flash is sometimes said to come also from a serpent's crest: Valerius Flaccus' Colchis *drakōn* shakes forth thunderbolts from its crest;[69] Philostratus' Indian *drakontes* (they of the snake-stones: Ch. 4) have red crests from which fire flashes forth brighter than a torch.[70]

Man deploys fire against the *drakōn*

We have seen Zeus deploy his fiery thunderbolt against Typhon. Fire was instrumental too in Heracles' killing of the Hydra, but the various accounts of the myth

[57] Hesiod *Theogony* 826–8. [58] Bacchylides 9. 13; cf. LSJ s.v.

[59] Euripides *Ion* 1262–5. She is also compared to the Gorgon whose snake-venom she had tried to use against Ion.

[60] Euripides *Orestes* 479–81.

[61] Theocritus 24. 18–19 (*ἀπ' ὀφθαλμῶν κακὸν πῦρ/ ἐρχομένοις λάμπεσκε*), 22, 46; a different interpretation at Gow 1952 ad loc.

[62] Euphorion F51 Powell = 71 Lightfoot.

[63] Dionysius of Samos *FGrH* 15 F12.

[64] Diodorus 3. 36–7: *διὰ δὲ τοῦ πυρωποῦ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν ἀστραπῆ παραπλησίας τὰς λαμπηδόνας προβάλλοντας ἀποτυφλοῦν τὴν ὅρασιν*; cf. Gow and Scholfield 1953: 179.

[65] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 33 (*igne micant oculi*), 15. 674.

[66] Valerius Flaccus 8. 60 (cf. 87).

[67] Statius *Thebaid* 5. 508. [68] Silius Italicus 6. 220.

[69] Valerius Flaccus 8. 61.

[70] Philostratus *Apollonius* 3. 8. Euripides contrives to displace Ladon's fieriness into his back, applying the epithet *πυρσόνωτος* ('fiery-backed') to him, *Heracles* 397.

put the fire to use in different ways. In the best-known version Heracles has Iolaus use a torch to sear the Hydra's necks as he lops off her heads, as she will otherwise grow two more for each one lost.[71] The brief notice of the deed in Euripides' *Heracles*, where we are told that he 'burned' the creature 'to ashes' suggests a more extensive use of fire, and anticipates Apollodorus' account, where we learn that Heracles launched fiery arrows on the Hydra, and Iolaus (it seems) drove her into a blazing wood.[72] We may compare the *drakōn*, ostensibly of the historical era, that Aelian tells lived in a thickly wooded grove beside Mt. Pelinnaeon on Chios: no one dared look upon it whilst it lived, but it was eventually destroyed by an accidental forest fire, whereupon the charred bones it left behind revealed its massive size.[73] Statius seems to imbue the dead Hydra with the ambiguities of the fires of the buried Typhon: '... where the Lernaean marsh is and the burned up Hydra makes the guilty depths warm ...'. Are the depths warmed by its venom still, or by the continuing effects of the thorough burning Heracles and Iolaus had meted out to it?[74]

As the Hydra's venom burned when it was inflicted upon man, so it too had to be resisted with fire. When, according to Nicander and his scholiast, Iphicles (an alternate to Iolaus) was wounded by a smear of the Hydra's own, doubtless venom-imbued, blood, Asclepius healed the wound by applying some Phlegyeian cure-all to it, which had the effect of 'warming' the wound.[75] And when Heracles was smeared with the Hydra's venom, with which the tunic given him by his wife Deianeira had been imbued, the only way he could achieve release was by throwing himself onto a pyre, at the cost, of course, of his own life. This was a late revenge for the Hydra, although the more immediate revenge belonged to the centaur Nessus. Heracles had shot him with an arrow dipped in the Hydra's venom as he had tried to rape Deianeira. As he died he advised Deianeira to take up some of his spilled blood, or his prematurely spilled semen, and impregnate one of Heracles' tunics with it so as to have a tool with which she might win back his love, should she ever need to do so. The Hydra's venom was transferred to the garment in these liquids. The extant tradition suggests only deceitful revenge on the part of the dying Nessus, but it is conceivable that in other tellings a chastened centaur had been trying to compensate Deianeira with a kindness: had the burning power of the Hydra's venom not been excessive, it might well have served just to warm Heracles up with love.[76]

[71] Diodorus 4. 11. 5–6.

[72] Euripides *Heracles* 421 (ἐξεπύρωσεν), with Bond 1981 ad loc. (and cf. *Ion* 190–200); cf. Nicander *Theriaca* 688 (ἐπυράκτεεν), with Gow and Scholfield 1953: 183. Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2: this elliptical account may imply rather that Iolaus set fire to the wood so as to have a source of burning brands with which to sear the creature.

[73] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 16. 39; cf. Mayor 2000*b*: 136–7.

[74] Statius *Thebaid* 2. 377.

[75] Nicander *Theriaca* 685–8, with schol. on 687.

[76] Sophocles *Trachiniae*, especially 531–87, 672–718, 750–93, 831–8, 1191–214, Euripides *Heracles* 419–24, Diodorus 4.36 and 38, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 9. 229–72, Seneca *Hercules Oetaeus* 1481–757, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 7. 7, Lucian *Hermotimus* 7, Hyginus *Fabulae* 36, First Vatican Mythographer 1. 58. For Heracles' use of the Hydra's venom for his arrows, see Stesichorus *Geryoneis* F15 SLG/Campell, Diodorus 4. 11. 5–6, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2, Pausanias 2. 37. 4 (possibly from Pisander of Camirus' 7th- or 6th-cent. BC *Heraclea*), Hyginus *Fabulae* 30. 3, Pediasimus 2. Cf.

A fragmentary *Paean* (?) of Pindar's seems to say that baby Heracles twisted a flash of light from his eyes against the *drakōn*-pair sent against him by Hera.[77] In Theocritus' subsequent *Heracliscus*, as we have seen, these serpents themselves flashed fire from their eyes against Heracles, so the gesture was tightly reciprocal, for Theocritus' readers if not before. And in the *Heracliscus* too Tiresias gives directions that the snakes, admittedly after Heracles has already throttled them, are to be burned on wild wood and their ashes cast over a cliff and beyond the borders, in a typical gesture of scapegoat-style purification.[78]

The ps.-Aristotelian *Mirabilia*, a text incorporating material originating up until perhaps the second century AD, preserves an important narrative of the battle of a Thessalian woman, evidently one of that land's celebrated witches, against a terrible 'sacred snake' (*hieros ophis*) to which we will have cause to return more than once in the remainder of this chapter:

> In Thessaly they say that the sacred snake kills all, not just if it bites them, but even if it just touches them. Therefore, whenever it appears and they hear its voice (and it appears only rarely), the snakes and the vipers and all the other beasts flee. In size it is not great but moderate. They say that once in Tenos, the city in Thessaly,[79] a sacred snake was killed by a woman. The killing took place in the following fashion. The woman drew a circle, laid down herbs (*pharmaka*) and entered the circle, together with her son. Then she imitated the voice of the creature. The creature sang in response and approached. As it sang, the woman fell asleep, and then it came closer still, with the result that she was not able to resist sleep. Her son lying beside her roused her by pummelling her at her own bidding, for she had explained to him that if she fell asleep, both she herself and he would perish. But, she explained, if she compelled the beast and drew it on, they would be delivered from it. And when the beast came into the circle, it was immediately drained of moisture. ([Aristotle] *Mirabilia* 845b)

To understand the tale fully, one has to supply a suppressed premise, namely that the woman must keep singing in order to compel the snake into the deadly herb-barrier; otherwise, it can leap over it to kill her.[80] There is no fire in sight here, but the mysterious magical drying-up of the snake deploys the action of fire. Perhaps the model of desiccating slugs and snails with a sprinkling of salt is in view.

Man could also use fire against *drakontes* by in a sense turning the *drakōn*'s own fire against it. According to Tzetzes, whose account presumably depends upon an (unidentifiable) ancient source, Bellerophon killed the Chimaera by tipping a spear with lead and then thrusting it into its fire-breathing mouth (the mouth in question is unspecified). The lead then melted, killing the creature.[81] As we have seen, this motif may underlie the fourth-century BC Palaephatus' rationalized version of the Chimaera story in which Bellerophon destroys the volcano Mt. Chimaera by setting fire to it.[82]

Fontenrose 1959: 356–8. For Deianeira's love magic gone wrong, the magical thinking underpinning it, and its reverberations in the classical tradition, see Ogden 2009*a*: nos. 76–81.

[77] Pindar *Paeans* 20; cf. Rutherford 2001: 401.

[78] Theocritus 24. 88–100; cf. L. Müller 1932: 49 (where the citation should be corrected).

[79] There is no Tenos in Thessaly: the mistake is explained in Ch. 11.

[80] Comparison of the Friedlach folk-tale discussed in Ch. 11 makes the point.

[81] Tzetzes, schol. Lycophron *Alexandra* 17.

[82] Palaephatus 28.

Successful battlers against *drakontes* can, appropriately, be described as metaphorically fiery. When Silius Italicus' Regulus launched himself against the Bagrada serpent, 'he was fiery (*igneus*) for fights, war, battles and the enemy, and he burned (*flagrabat*) with a great love of daring'. Remarkably too the horses of Regulus' army ranged against the serpent are described as breathing fire from their noses (*omnis . . . equus . . . expirat naribus ignes*).[83]

Fire could also be deployed more indirectly against *drakontes* in the course of fumigating against them, which brings us to the battle of airs.

AIR AND BREATH

The *drakōn* breathes out

We have already spoken of the *drakōn*'s fiery breath. But, more often than fiery, the *drakōn*'s breath was conceptualized as poisonous and pestilential, and indeed the *drakōn*'s poisonousness was celebrated less often in the context of its biting and envenoming than in the context of its blowing out of noxious and destructive fumes that could kill in their own right, and its corrupting of the air with these.[84]

Hesiod describes Typhon as a 'monster of hurricanes and winds' (*pelōrou prēstērōn anemōn te*).[85] He tells of the terrible scorching vapour (*atmē*) that accompanies Zeus' burial of him (probably deriving from Typhon himself, though possibly from Zeus' thunderbolts). Even after confinement Typhon continues to produce bad air: 'From Typhon is the wet might of the blowing winds, except for Notus (South Wind), Boreas (North Wind) and brightening Zephyr (West Wind). For these are of the race of the gods, and they are a boon to mortals.'[86] A late-fourth-century Apulian vase portrays a puff-cheeked wind blowing over Typhon's head as he fights Zeus.[87] Indeed Typhon's name became synonymous with destructive hurricanes—'typhoons'—to such an extent that already from the age of Aeschylus it could be used banally to denote them.[88] Amongst the other great *drakontes* of myth, Hyginus tells that the Lernean Hydra 'had such power in her venom that she could kill men just by breathing on them. And if anyone passed by

[83] Silius Italicus 6. 209, 230–2.

[84] If this notion has any basis in the observable behaviour of actual snakes, it may perhaps derive from the cobra's habit of spitting its venom.

[85] Hesiod *Theogony* 845–6. It is difficult to construe the text in such a way as to agree with M. L. West 1966 on line 846 and 1997: 300 that these winds are Zeus' weapons as opposed to Typhon's. In later Greek, intriguingly, the term *prēstēr* came to signify a variety of venomous snake: Dioscurides 4. 37, Philumenus 19, Aelian *Nature of Animals* 6. 51.

[86] Hesiod *Theogony* 861–2, 869–71 (cf. also schol. Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 351).

[87] *LIMC* Typhon 15 = Gigantes 402.

[88] Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 656; cf. also Aristophanes *Clouds* 336 and the summative *Suda* s.vv. *Τυφών*, *Τυφώς* and *Etymologicum Magnum* s.vv *τετύφωμα*, *Τυφών*, *Τυφῶνος*, *Τυφώς*, *Τυφωεύς* (specifying also that Typhonian winds could destroy ships and also inflict madness on those upon whom they fall). For Typhon as a wind god see Worms 1953, importantly qualified by M. L. West 1966: 381.

her whilst she was asleep, he would breathe in her tracks and perish in an even greater torment.'[89] Horace's Cerberus has a 'three-tongued mouth that emits a foul breath and swims in gore'.[90]

Analogies could be constructed between the *drakōn*'s corrupting airs and its coiling form. When Apollonius tells that the Colchis *drakōn*'s unnumbered coils rose ever upwards like rings of smoke, it is intimated that an unpleasant fug emanated from the creature.[91] The second-century BC Stoic Antipater of Tarsus, as we have seen, read the myth of Apollo's killing of the Python as an allegory of the sun's drying out of the rolling, corrupting vapours that rose from the moist earth.[92]

In these regards, the great *drakontes* conformed with broader serpent lore. Philo of Byblos tells that one Tauthos (a Phoenicianized Thoth) held the nature of *drakontes* and snakes to be divine, that they were the most breathy (*pneumatikōtaton*) of all reptiles, and fiery too.[93] Aelian knows of Libyan asps that could blind by breath alone.[94]

Sometimes we are told that snakes exude a terrible smell, without this being directly attributed to their breath. According to Pliny, the dreadful basilisk could kill with its smell alone, and thereby put even other snakes to flight before itself.[95] Dio Chrysostom tells how a king of Libya had attempted to exterminate all the *lamiai* of his land. His army tracked them by their serpentine trails and the awful smell issuing from their lairs.[96] Pausanias tells that the river Anigrus got its terrible smell from the fact that in its water Pylenor washed off the wound that he had received from Heracles' arrow, tipped with the Hydra's venom.[97]

The *drakōn's* breath and the mephitic emanations of the underworld

The next chapter investigates the general associations *drakontes* enjoyed with the underworld. One facet of this is that the deadly fumes they pumped out into the air invited comparison with *aornoi*, the supposedly 'birdless' entrances to the underworld, in the forms of both lakes and caves, that emitted such noxious mephitic gases that they killed the birds that flew over, or deterred them from doing so.

The term and the notion of the *aornos* originated in a folk etymology of the Hellenized version of the name of Lake Avernus in Campania, the famous oracle of the dead and entrance to the underworld. *Aornos* was analysed to derive from an alpha-privative and *ornis*, 'bird', and so read to signify 'birdless'. The sulphurous fumaroles of the Phlegraean ('Fiery') Fields that surrounded the lake then

[89] Hyginus *Fabulae* 30. 3. [90] Horace *Odes* 3. 11. 15–20.
[91] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 129. 39–44.
[92] Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1. 17. 50–63, incorporating Antipater Stoicus F46 Arnim *SVF*.
[93] Philo of Byblos *FGrH* 790 F4 = Eusebius *Praeparatio evangelica* 1. 10. 53.
[94] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 6. 38.
[95] Pliny *Natural History* 29. 66; cf. Aelian *Nature of Animals* 2. 7.
[96] Dio Chrysostom 5. 11. [97] Pausanias 5. 5. 10.

offered a convenient explanation as to how it could deter birds or kill those that overflew it.[98] The earliest trace of this etymology is probably to be found in a Sophoclean fragment describing an Italian oracle of the dead (*nekuomanteion*) as 'birdless' (*aornos*),[99] whilst its most famous occurrence is found in Virgil's description of the underworld entrance there: 'There was a cave, deep and huge with yawning gape, rocky, protected by a black lake and the darkness of woods, over which no birds could make journey on the wing without harm. Such was the exhalation that poured forth from the black jaws (*fauces*) and was borne to the curving heavens above. [Whence the Greeks called the place *Aornos*].'[100] From Avernus the term *aornos* was extended to other lake-entrances to the underworld, and thence again to cave-entrances to the underworld, mephitic or otherwise.[101]

Silius' Bagrada serpent lives in a dismally dark cave explicitly compared to an underworld entrance. It twists below the earth from a Styx-like grove unpenetrated by the sun. As the serpent breathes forth its terrible blasts from the cave, the sound of Cerberus' howling can be heard within it, and the shades seem to be coming out of the underworld.[102] Ovid draws a direct analogy between the Serpent of Ares' actual maw and an underworld entrance belching out its fatal fumes: it has a 'breath of poison fatal with the corruption' (*adflatu funesti tabe veneni*) which, 'emanating black from its Stygian mouth, infects the corrupted airs' (*quique halitus exit/ ore niger Stygio, vitiatas inficit auras*).[103] We can see that Virgil's description of Avernus with its 'black jaws' already salutes the affinity between the *drakōn* and the *aornos* from the other side.

And birds too could make distinctive victims of the *drakontes* and their deadly breath. Silius' Bagrada serpent emits pungent exhalations that suffocate birds in the sky that then drop for it to devour.[104] In an intriguing variation of this, Lucan's Medusa could drop birds out of the sky by petrifying them.[105] Perhaps it was this relationship between *drakontes* and birds that explains a story Pliny tells of the Triumvir Lepidus. Whilst being lodged in a house in a wooded grove by the local magistrates of an unnamed place, he was kept awake at night by the birds. So to

[98] Ironically, the lake's Italic name signified precisely the opposite, 'place of birds': it is built on the root found in Latin *av-is*, 'bird', with the productive suffix *-ernus* common in Italic place-names (*Falernus, Liternum, Privernum, Salernum, Tifernum* etc.) cf. R. G. Austin 1977 on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 239 and Castagnoli 1977: 47.

[99] Sophocles F748 *TrGF*/Pearson. See Ogden 2001: 25–8, 61–74.

[100] Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 237–42. The square-bracketed text may be an interpolation.

[101] *Aornos* lakes: Ampsanctus (Cicero *On Divination* 1. 36, Pliny *Natural History* 2. 208, Servius on *Aeneid* 7. 563), the Acherusian lake (Pliny *Natural History* 4. 1, Pausanias 9. 30. 6, Hyginus *Fabulae* 88), Tartessos (Scholiast Aristophanes *Frogs* 475), Babylon (Python *TrGF* 91 F1, *Agen*, with Snell 1976: 99–117; cf. Lucian *Menippus* 9), Sarmatians (Heraclides Ponticus F128ab Wehrli). *Aornos* caves: Thymbria (Strabo C636), Hierapolis (Strabo C629–30, Cassius Dio 68. 27, Damascius *Life of Isidore* at Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 242 §13; cf. Ch. 11), Potniai (Pausanias 9. 8. 3. Statius *Thebaid* 2. 32–57), Indian Aornos (Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 2. 10). For these and further examples, see Ogden 2001: 25–7, 45, 62, 2010 esp. 104–17.

[102] Silius Italicus 6. 146–50, 174–80. On the Silius text generally see Basset 1955 and Spaltenstein 1986 ad loc. After Virgil and Lucan, it is wholly appropriate that such underworld imagery should appear in the sixth book.

[103] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 28–98, with 49 and 75–6 for the poisonous breath.

[104] Silius Italicus 6. 157–9. The connection is noted by Spaltenstein 1986 on 6. 146.

[105] Lucan 9. 649–53.

give him peace in the following nights they surrounded the wood with a long parchment upon which they had drawn a *draco*.[106] We shall pursue the analogy of *drakontes* with *aornoi* further when we come to consider the effects of their sucking.

The fumes of the rotting *drakōn*

The fumes of the *drakōn*'s rotting carcass offer an equal threat to mankind. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* already tells that Pytho was so named for the rotting (*pythein*) of the *drakaina* Delphyne's corpse after she had been slain by Apollo, and Plutarch tells that one explanation for the name of the 'Ozolian' (i.e. 'Smelly' or 'Mephitic') Locrians was that the body of Python had been beached on their shore and rotted there.[107] Livy's lost account of the 120-foot corpse of the Bagrada serpent told that it polluted the air so badly that it forced the Romans to move camp and that the gore that seeped out of it polluted the river that the serpent had been guarding.[108]

The concern over the polluting stench to which the rotting carcass of the *drakontes* gives rise may stem in part from what were taken to be encounters with actual dead *drakontes* or *kētē*. On numerous occasions in more recent times the badly decomposed and accordingly disfigured bodies of massive sea creatures have been washed up on shores, to be identified in the first instance as dragons or sea-serpents, and in the fullness of time as whales or large sharks.[109] Before the modern age seaboard communities would seldom have had the resources to dispose of the bodies of large whales before they began to stink. Worse, the build-up of decomposition gases within sperm whales' bodies can result in them exploding and delivering their stench and indeed their gore yet further afield. There have been striking recent examples of the phenomenon. In 1970 when the locals of Florence, Oregon, attempted to dispose of a sperm whale carcass by dynamiting it, they contrived to ignite its gases to produce an explosion many times greater than they had expected. In 2004 a sperm whale carcass exploded spontaneously from the back of a lorry in the streets of Tainan, Taiwan, as it was being transported to the local university, projecting its bowels far and wide. The chief response to both incidents, footage of which currently abounds on the internet, was amusement, but it would not always have been so. The contemporary report of a sperm whale beached at Berckhey in Holland in 1598 tells how all at once its bowels similarly burst out and infected the air so badly that the stench brought disease and in some cases death upon those that had come to inspect the

[106] Pliny *Natural History* 38. 121; cf. Merkelbach 1959: 237.

[107] *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 300–6, 352–73; so too Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 59–60, Pausanias 10. 6. 5–6, Macrobius 1. 17. 50–1, hypothesis Pindar *Pythians* c, *Suda* s.v. *Δελφοί*, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *Πυθώ*, Apostolius 15. 10; cf. Fontenrose 1959: 13. Plutarch *Moralia* 294f. See Fontenrose 1959: 13–14.

[108] Summarized at Valerius Maximus 1. 8 ext. 19. Lucan 6. 90–2 makes a comparison for the stench emanating from the bodies of rotting horses: 'with such an exhalation . . . the caverns of death-bringing Typhon breathe out raging heat'.

[109] See Simpson 1980: 16–18.

creature: an exaggeration no doubt, but one of the sort the ancients would have been equally capable of making.[110]

The two conceptualizations of the bad air that snakes can produce, by breathing out venomous airs and by rotting, are melded by Apollonius. When flies hover over the putrid (*pythomenoisin*) wounds of his slain Ladon, they shrivel and drop: but is it from the pungency of the serpent's rotting flesh in its own right, or because those wounds have been created, as Apollonius tells us, by arrows dipped in the Hydra's venom?[111] Julius Africanus, a Christian writer working with pagan material, makes a similar meld in a recipe for poisoning the air for military purposes. One is to seal a Thessalian *thrissos*-snake (said to be similar to a *drakontis*) and a *leōn*-snake into a watertight pot and expose it to the sunshine. The snakes kill each other and the sun rots them. The pot is then to be opened in such a way that the breeze carries the smell to one's antagonists. It will drop a horse . . . or a bird from the sky.[112]

The *drakōn* sucks in (and the underworld again)

It is not surprising that *drakontes* should be credited also with an inverse power of breath too, the ability to suck prodigiously: this follows naturally from the fashion in which snakes can be observed swallowing their prey whole. The elder Pliny mentions massive Indian serpents that can suck down deer and bulls whole. He also knows of an individual Italian *boa* (a term he derives from the fact that this snake's preferred food was the milk of a cow, *bos*, suckled from the teat) that had more modestly swallowed a child whole on the Vatican. But the motif is most often associated with the devouring of birds, which brings us back again to the realm of the *aornos*. Pliny again knows of serpents around the Rhyndacus river in Pontus that can suck birds out of the air, however high and fast they are flying.[113] The poet Lucan describes his African *dracones* as constrictors that suck down air and take in birds with it.[114] Aelian speaks of an interesting variation on this technique in his own account of the terrible *drakontes* of the river Rhyndacus. They support themselves on their coils, raise their necks aloft into the sky, and breathe out a breath that actively attracts birds into their mouths and which is said to operate like the *iynx*-wheel used in the magic of erotic attraction.[115] In this respect too we find another striking parallel with the actions of underworld entrances and *aornoi*. Seneca, in perhaps the single most evocative description of an underworld entrance extant in Classical literature, speaks, in the voice of Theseus, of a downward wind that draws people into the Tainaron cave mouth, and this resembles the remorseless

[110] Oregon: Linnman 2003. Berckhey: Schama 1987: 130.

[111] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396–407.

[112] Julius Africanus *Kestoi* 7. 3. However, other recipes comprising the stewing, in various ways, of a snake in a pot could produce a rather more wholesome eye-salve: Pliny *Natural History* 29. 119–22.

[113] Pliny *Natural History* 8. 36–7. Megasthenes is cited for India, Metrodorus for the Rhyndacus.

[114] Lucan 9. 727–33.

[115] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 2. 21. Aelian reconfigures these themes at 6. 33, where he tells us that the Egyptians have spells both to draw birds down from the sky and to lure snakes out of their holes. For the *iynx*-wheel see Pindar *Pythian* 4. 211–50, Theocritus *Idyll* 2, etc., with Ogden 2009*a*: 240–2.

waves of the sea that drive ships on.[116] Pausanias also speaks of a wind or torrent that sucks consulters into the underworld cave of Trophonius.[117] Most relevantly, Philostratus' description of the workings of the cleft on the Indian Aornos suggests a similar mode of action: it 'draws' the birds in.[118] In an example of serpent-sucking strongly reminiscent of Seneca's notion of Tainaron, yet rather less terrible, Aelian tells us that the sacred *drakōn* of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium (Ch. 5) drew the blindfolded virgins that carried offerings to it through its grove into its deep underground lair by the power of its breath.[119]

The use of airs against the *drakōn*

Man could in turn deploy air against the *drakōn* by fumigation. In Theocritus' *Heracliscus*, Tiresias gives directions that the house in which Hera's *drakōn* pair attacked Heracles should be purified with sulphur.[120] This is retrospective, but we soon learn that the technique could be used prospectively also. Nicander's *Theriaca* offers a list of no less than twelve pungent substances that can be burned to fumigate against snakes, beginning with the horn of a stag and the stone of Gagai (lignite), and indeed including sulphur.[121] Virgil knew that *chelydri* (water snakes) could be banished by burning cedar or Syrian gum.[122] Pliny knew that snakes could be averted by the burning stag-horn again, juniper, and, according to the Mages, the fat of the hyena.[123] Lucan's Psylli similarly protect Cato's African camp from the terrible snakes of Africa by carrying a number of burning substances around its perimeter, once again including stag-horn.[124] A scholium to Apollonius offers a distinctive rationalization of the effectiveness of fumigation against snakes: as narrow creatures, they have only a narrow passage for breathing and smelling, and so choke easily when confronted with the pungent smell of burning stag-horn.[125]

The use of breath blown out against the *drakōn*

The *Prometheus Bound* describes the thunderbolt Zeus uses against Typhon as itself '*breathing* fire'.[126] The most decisive statement about the use of human breath against *drakontes* is found in Lucan: 'For Thessalian witches the snake

[116] Seneca *Hercules furens* 662–96. [117] Pausanias 9. 39.

[118] Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 2. 10: ἐπιςπώμενον.

[119] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 16. [120] Theocritus 24. 88–100.

[121] Nicander *Theriaca* 35–56, with stag's horn and lignite at 36–7, and sulphur at 43. See Gow and Scholfield 1953: 170 and Jacques 2002: 81–4, the latter citing many parallels from the ancient iological literature. The 10th-century AD *Geoponica* 13. 8. 2, 13. 8. 8, 15. 1. 32, and 18. 2. 4 also offers these three substances, amongst others.

[122] Virgil *Georgics* 3. 414–15.

[123] Pliny *Natural History* 8. 118, 24. 54, 28. 100.

[124] Lucan 9. 915–21 (*ultima castrorum medicatus circumit ignis*, 915). The burning of powdered deer horn is recommended as a fumigation against snakes also at Aelian *Nature of Animals* 2. 9.

[125] Schol. Apollonius Rhodius 2. 130–1a, διὰ τὸ στενόπορον εἶναι αὐτῶν τὴν ὄςφρηςιν (applied first to bees, and then to snakes). It is because of their narrow throats too that snakes have the habit of standing upright as they eat, so that gravity can help their food down: Aelian *Nature of Animals* 6. 18.

[126] Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 361.

unravels its chilly coils and stretches out in the frosty field. Vipers in their knots are split apart and reassembled. The serpent falls dead when blown upon with human poison.'[127] Pliny tells that, whereas elephants suck snakes up with their trunks, the breath of deer (ever the bane of snakes, it seems), presumably when blown out, actually burns them up.[128] The loadstone or 'iron stone' (*lithos sidēritis* or *sidēritēs*), discussed in the various *Lithica*, repels snakes if worn as an amulet, and cures snakebites if ground up and spread over them. Intriguingly, this stone is also said to *breathe* (we will meet further varieties of stones and earth with snake-repellent properties in Ch. 8).[129]

The use of breath sucked in against the *drakōn*

As we have seen, Pliny tells us that elephants, in contrast to deer, deploy their breath to suck snakes up their trunks.[130] The elephant's trunk might be thought to be particularly well adapted to the task of sucking snakes up, but Pliny elsewhere attributes to deer too the ability to suck resisting snakes out of their holes with their nostrils.[131] This notion probably already underlies Nicander's *Theriaca*, where we are told that Red and Roe Deer particularly hate snakes and trample them underfoot and that to this end they 'track them down with the terrible breath of their nostril'.[132] For Aelian, just as his Rhyndacus snakes attract birds into their mouths with a *iynx*-like breath, so too his deer draw snakes to themselves with their *iynx*-like breath, by blowing out hard. As their breath draws the snakes to peep out of their holes, the deer gobble them down.[133] Humans too deployed sucking breath against snakes, or at least against their venom. It was a commonplace that the Psylli had the ability to suck the venom out of bite-wounds.[134]

JUICES: VENOM, *PHARMAKA*, SALIVA, AND BLOOD

The *drakōn's* venom and poisonous herbs

The peril constituted by the *drakōn*'s venom is self-evident, and it lies squarely behind the notions of its fieriness and destructive breath considered so far.

[127] Lucan 6. 488–91: *humano . . . adflata veneno.*

[128] Pliny *Natural History* 11. 279: *elephantorum anima serpentes extrahit, cervorum urit.*

[129] *Orphic Kerugmata* 16 (for the breathing), *Orphic Lithica* 357–97, 418–60, Damigeron-Evax 16, and Pliny *Natural History* 37. 58, 176, 182.

[130] Pliny *Natural History* 11. 279.

[131] Pliny *Natural History* 8. 118: *vestigant* [sc. *cervi*] *cavernas nariumque spiritu extrahunt renitentes.* These and the following texts are thought by Jacques 2002: 94 and to derive ultimately from Theophrastus *περὶ δακετῶν* (his F6 thereof). Cf. also Oppian *Halieutica* 2. 289–94 and [Oppian] *Cynegetica* 2. 238–41.

[132] Nicander *Theriaca* 141–4: *cμερδαλέῃ μυκτῆρος ἐπισπέρχοντες ἀϋτμῇ.*

[133] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 2. 9 and 8. 6. Snake-fed deer is one of the Thessalian witch Erictho's magical ingredients at Lucan 6. 673.

[134] Celsus *On Medicine* 5. 27, Pliny *Natural History* 28. 30 (Marsi and Ophiogeneis of Cyprus, as well as the Psylli), Lucan 9. 922–37, Plutarch *Cato Minor* 56, Cassius Dio 51. 14.

Sometimes we are told that the venom is created from the *drakōn*'s pasturing on poisonous herbs. The notion is implicit in the *Iliad*, which speaks of a snake in the mountains that waits for a man in its lair: it has fed on poisonous herbs (*kaka pharmaka*), anger has entered it, and it gives out a terrible look.[135] The notion finally becomes explicit in Aelian, who explains that the snake deliberately feeds itself on deadly herbs in preparation for ambushing man or beast.[136] In the meantime, Valerius Flaccus implies that the Colchis *draco* developed its venom from Medea feeding it on her own *venena*—magical drugs or poisons.[137]

The use of poison, saliva, sweat, and blood against the *drakōn*

Man (or god) can answer the *drakōn*'s venom with venom itself, or with manufactured liquids of a similar nature, i.e. poisons, or, in a greater degree of symmetry, with his own bodily fluids.

Apollonius' Heracles kills Ladon with arrows tipped with the Hydra's venom.[138] The affinity between venom and the poisonous herbs of which it was the product meant that such herbs were also fit to be deployed against the *drakontes*. According to the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the arrows Apollo used against the Delphic *drakaina* were poison.[139] The ps.-Aristotelian Thessalian witch destroys her *hieros ophis* opponent by compelling it into a bed of her malign herbs.[140] Medea uses sleep-inducing (if not actually lethal) herbs against the Colchis *drakōn*. In art, from the mid fourth century onwards, she is normally shown administering these in liquid form, giving them to the serpent to drink from a *phialē*. Their first mention in extant literature comes in Apollonius' *Argonautica*, where Medea sprinkles the *drakōn*'s eyes with a herb-infused liquid.[141] Virgil intimates that the Marsi can counteract the venom of a snakebite with herbs, and Gellius asserts explicitly that they can do it with plant juices.[142]

Just as human breath, potentially poisonous to snakes, corresponds to their own pestilential breath, so human spittle can correspond to the venom deployed and sometimes spat by snakes. Pliny notes that snakes are repelled by ordinary human saliva, particularly that of a man under fast. Indeed, a snake spat upon flees as if scalded (so here again is fire), and is killed instantly should it swallow the saliva. One has only to spit in their mouths to burst them open. He further notes that the saliva of the Ophiogeneis of Cyprus, like that of the Marsi and the Psylli, and their sweat too, could have medicinal properties, presumably against snake bites. Perhaps it was this unique sweat that caused them to emit a virulent smell (akin to that of the serpent from which they were born?) in the spring.[143]

[135] Homer *Iliad* 22. 93–4, with Richardson 1993 ad loc. Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 471 imitates with his own snake 'fed on poisionous herbs' (*coluber mala gramina pastus*). Cf. also Pliny *Natural History* 8. 139.

[136] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 6. 4.

[137] Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 8. 97.

[138] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1396–407.

[139] *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* 3. 357.

[140] [Aristotle] *Mirabilia* 845b.

[141] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 145–66; so too Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7. 149–58, Valerius Flaccus 8. 83–7, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 9. 23, Hyginus *Fabulae* 22.

[142] Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 757–8, Aulus Gellius 16. 11. 1–2.

[143] Pliny *Natural History* 7. 14–15 (the effects of saliva; reworked by Aulus Gellius 16. 1), 28. 7 (quoting Opilius on the bursting), 28. 30–1 (Psylli). When experimenters spat into the mouths of vipers

Saliva could be used against snakebites too. As we have seen, Aelian cites one (third-century BC ?) Callias for the knowledge that a Psyllus could cure a snakebite in its early stages by spitting on it and 'bewitching' (*kategoēteuse*) it with saliva, in its middle stages by swilling water in his mouth, spitting it out, and giving it to the victim to drink, and in its late stages by lying down naked with the victim and rubbing skin against skin.[144] Lucan tells how the Psylli cure a man of a snakebite by marking off the area around the wound with their saliva. This serves to confine the venom within the zone demarcated. If the venom does not then come out of the wound in response to an incantation, the Psyllus licks it out of the wound and then spits it out.[145]

Thompson's standard catalogue of folk-tale motifs recognizes the use of saliva to kill a dragon, citing as its type case a marvellous anecdote of the fourteenth-century Jean Gobi. This tells how a bishop destroyed a cruel dragon that was eating man and beast alike. He told the locals to fast (cf. Pliny) and pray, and then after ten days of this he had them all spit in a bowl. He then used the spittle to draw a circle around the dragon, and this killed it.[146]

Another human liquid, blood, could have a similar effect on snakes. As we have seen, the second-century BC Agatharchides of Cnidus told that the blood of the African Psylli was fatally poisonous to serpents, which were repelled even by its odour (cf. fumigation). The phenomenon allowed the Psylli to test the bloodline of their newborn by having snakes bite them.[147]

COIL, CIRCLE, AND CURVE

The coiling of the *drakontes*

It goes without saying that a *drakōn*'s coils are central to its nature. They are also, of course, weapons, though we perhaps hear of ancient *drakontes* constricting less often than we might have imagined. The most striking example is perhaps to be found in the iconography of the Serpent of Nemea's killing of Opheltes-Archemorus (Ch. 1).

Curving weapons

The ancient *drakōn*-slaying narratives, in all their variants, cumulatively give us *drakontes* slain by just about every type of weapon one could think of (the Serpent

in 17th-century AD France, the saliva proved, unsurprisingly, to have little effect upon the animals: Charas 1672: 114; cf. Tupet 1976: 192, O. Phillips 1995: 397–8.

[144] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 16. 28; cf. 1. 57. This Callias wrote a multi-volume work on the Syracusan tyrant Agathocles who died in 289 BC.

[145] Lucan 9. 922–37.

[146] Jean Gobi (Johannes Gobii Junior) *Scala coeli* no. 13; text at de Polo de Beaulieu 1991: 170, with German trans. at Wesselski 1909: 171 no. 136. S. Thompson 1966: D1402.14.

[147] Agatharchides of Cnidus *FGrH* 86 F21. Pliny *Natural History* 7. 14–15, Lucan 9. 890–937, Aelian *Nature of Animals* 1. 57 and 16. 27–8 all recycle Agatharchides' notice, the first adding that the Marsi possessed similar powers.

of Ares alone was said to have been killed, variously, with stone, sword, spear, and arrow),[148] but in the pagan world at any rate the *drakōn*-slayers' weapon of choice was the *harpē*, the sickle, or the sickle-sword.[149] This weapon reflected the *drakōn*'s sinuous nature in its own form. But it was in any case a weapon particularly well adapted for slicing through the neck of a rampant serpent. Its suitability is nowhere clearer than in ancient illustrations of Heracles confronting the Hydra with his *harpē*, where, with all its necks raised, the monster often strikingly resembles a field of grain ripe for the harvest. It can also resemble a branching tree, from which one might also aspire to reap fruit with a sickle (Fig. 1.1).[150] Perhaps it was for the fight against this *drakōn* specifically that the *harpē* was first deployed in Greek tradition. The earliest attestation of the use of this weapon against any *drakōn* comes on a pair of bronze fibulae of *c.*700 and 700–675 BC in which Heracles' helper Iolaus deploys it against the creature, whilst Heracles himself uses a sword.[151] The *harpē* Heracles used against the Hydra was not only analogized with its coils: Quintus Smyrnaeus analogizes it with the *drakōn*'s fangs in describing it as 'curve-toothed'.[152]

But the *drakōn*-slayer who came to be associated with the *harpē* above all was Perseus, and indeed it ultimately came to serve as his icon or symbol.[153] We first find him wielding the *harpē* in the art of the late sixth century BC.[154] In earlier iconography it takes the form of a simple short sickle,[155] but in later images, from the early fourth century BC onwards, it can become a complex combination of sword and sickle, with both blades sprouting, often somewhat awkwardly and uselessly, from a single handle.[156] The imagery of the reaping and harvesting of snakes is explicitly and repeatedly deployed by Nonnus in his references to Perseus' killing of Medusa.[157] Evidently, the sickle remained an appropriate device to use against anguiform monsters even when it was not a question simply of reaping off their snaky bits. Perseus does not give Medusa a haircut, but severs her humanoid neck.[158] So too Perseus deploys his sickle against the *kētos* of Ethiopia, although he could hardly have aspired to amputate any (external) part of this massive creature with it (Ch. 3).

Of particular interest for matters of symmetry is the role of the *harpē* in Zeus' battle against Typhon, as told by Apollodorus. He uniquely tells us that Zeus used an adamantine *harpē* against Typhon, in addition to his thunderbolts. But Typhon, though wounded, managed to constrict Zeus in his coils (most

[148] Stone: Euripides *Phoenissae* 1060–5 (with schol. at 662, 934), Hellanicus F96 Fowler, Hyginus *Fabulae* 178 (cf. Statius *Thebaid* 5. 505–78 for the failed use of a rock against the Serpent of Nemea). Sword: Pherecydes F88 Fowler. Spear: Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 50–94. Arrow: [Plutarch] *On Rivers* 2. 1.

[149] See L. Schmidt 1958, Boardman 1968: 39, and Jameson 1990: 28.

[150] See esp. *LIMC* Herakles 2003–4, 2012, 2016.

[151] *LIMC* Herakles 2019–20. [152] Quintus Smyrnaeus 6. 212–19.

[153] For the sickle in Perseus' (and Heracles') iconography see Milne 1956: 301, Roccos 1994*a*: 347.

[154] *LIMC* Perseus 114, 124, and 188. Perseus' sickle first appears in the literary tradition with Aeschylus *Phorcides* F262 i *TrGF*.

[155] e.g. *LIMC* Perseus 91.

[156] e.g. *LIMC* Perseus 68; cf. the description at Achilles Tatius 3. 6–7.

[157] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 30. 277 and 47. 608, 'the reaper of Medusa', and, more elaborately, 25. 40–4, 31. 17–21.

[158] Although in her earlier iconography a pair of snakes often grows from Medusa's neck itself, as on the Corfu pediment, *LIMC* Gorgo 289; cf. also Perseus nos. 69, 113.

appropriately), take the *harpē* from him, and then use it against him in turn. There is a striking symmetry here already, but more is to come. In deploying the *harpē* against Zeus Typhon brings him into a physical state curiously parallel to his own: he uses it to strip the sinews out of Zeus' arms and legs, presumably rendering his limbs as twisting as his own anguiform members.[159]

Of course the vast majority of weapons brought by pagan heroes to their *drakōn*-fights, the *harpē* not least, were metal ones in whole or part. The stone with which Cadmus traditionally killed the Serpent of Ares is a rule-proving exception, since the battle took place before the discovery of metal, and may indeed have led to its discovery (Ch. 4). We may, then, find a further degree of symmetry in the frequent descriptions of *drakontes*' own skins as metallic, though such a thing is hardly inappropriate to snakes. We have already reviewed some descriptions of the great *drakontes* as golden (Ch. 4 again). To these we may add descriptions of them as bronze. Euripides describes the Delphic *drakōn* as 'the mottled-backed dark-eyed *drakōn*, covered in bronze'.[160] Apollodorus gives the Gorgons bronze hands (in addition to golden wings),[161] and Philostratus' Indian *drakontes* make the sound of rasping bronze as they burrow.[162] The minor tradition that makes one of the Hydra's heads golden renders Euripides' claim that Heracles attacked it with a golden *harpē* particularly interesting.[163]

Circles of purification and protection

Circular acts of purification were common in ancient ritual. Columella, Pliny, and others advise that one should send menstruating women in various states of undress around the perimeters of farms to rid them of worms, caterpillars, and beetles.[164] We have already mentioned the circular purification that Lucan's Psylli made around Cato's camp against the terrible snakes of Libya.[165] Later we shall consider an intriguing Christian tradition, perhaps with some pagan roots, that Alexander protected his new city of Alexandria from venomous snakes by sprinkling the snake-repellent remains of the prophet Jeremiah in a circle around

[159] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 6. 3. Fontenrose 1959: 74 and 75–6 regards Apollodorus' tale as reflecting an older version of the myth than Hesiod's, with Hesiod omitting the temporary defeat and maiming of Zeus as inconsistent with his power and majesty.

[160] Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1234–57.

[161] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 4. 2.

[162] Philostratus *Apollonius* 3. 8.

[163] Aristonicus of Tarentum *apud* Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 190 (Ptolemy son of Hephaestion/Ptolemy Chennos), 147b22–8; Euripides *Ion* 192 (the plural is poetic).

[164] e.g. Columella 10. 357–68 (three times specified), Pliny *Natural History* 17. 266, 28. 78, Aelian *History of Animals* 6. 36. See Deubner 1913 (who mistakenly held that in such purification contexts περιελθεῖν and similar words meant 'walk in amongst' as opposed to 'walk around'), Maass 1913: 70–2, Hopfner 1921–4: i sect. 706, L. Müller 1932: 49–52 (making a strong case against Deubner), Pax 1957. Pliny's tale of Lepidus in the wood (*Natural History* 38. 121, mentioned above) gives us a curious example of a circular image of *draco* being deployed by man as a protective circle against another pest, in this case birds. The notion that one could destroy venomous creatures by drawing a circle around them flourished in medieval times: e.g. Jean Gobi apart, the Old Norwegian *Konungsskuggsjá* or *Speculum regale* p. 88 Einersen; cf. Krappe 1941: 232.

[165] Lucan 9. 915–21.

it (Ch. 8). The most graphic pagan example of the use of a circle against a snake, and one that rather anticipates Jean Gobi's circle of saliva, is that offered by the ps.-Aristotelian *Mirabilia*'s account of the Thessalian witch's battle against the *hieros ophis* quoted above, where the woman compels her serpent enemy into a ring of lethal herbs she has sprinkled around herself.[166] And the symmetrical battle could be fought with circles at the level of the venom too. Whereas the *Mirabilia* tells that the *hieros ophis* caused a circle of mortification around the wound it inflicted,[167] Lucan tells, as we have seen, that when the Psylli are tending a snakebite, they mark off an area around the wound with their saliva.[168]

GAZE, WAKEFULNESS, AND SLEEP-CASTING

The *drakōn's* terrible gaze, and the Gorgons

We have noted the copious evidence for the conceptualization of the *drakōn*'s eyes as fiery. We have noted too that the derivation of *drakōn* from *derkomai*, 'look' was popular with the ancients (Ch. 4). Their acceptance of it suggests that they considered that a terrible look was integral to the creature's nature. Of the great *drakontes* of myth, this was never truer than of the Gorgons. When the *Iliad* invokes the folk etymology in connection with a Gorgon (*deinon derkomenē*), it tells us, conversely, that it is from their serpent-element that they derive their dreadful power.[169]

The Gorgons sometimes killed plainly and simply with their gaze, as if some sort of death-ray, but it is also clear that at other times the killing occurred rather when their victim looked upon their face—or was it actually into their eyes? This ambiguity was resident in the ancient tradition from an early stage, and actually became celebrated in the knowing literature of the imperial age.[170] And this ambiguity established, if not a symmetrical battle between the Gorgons or the gorgoneion and their opponents, then at any rate a sort of broader reciprocity between them. Thus perhaps already the *Iliad*'s *deinon derkomenē*, but certainly the conceit that Perseus wore a cap of invisibility to attack Medusa (first found in the Hesiodic *Shield* of the mid sixth century BC)[171] and the conceit that he attacked her whilst she was asleep (first found in Aeschylus' *Phorcides*)[172] suggest that opponents were killed when Medusa looked at them. But the conceit that Perseus should have killed Medusa whilst turning back from her (found first on a Boeotian relief *pithos* of *c.*675–650 BC)[173] and the conceit that he should have killed her whilst finding his way with a mirror or reflecting shield (first found in

[166] [Aristotle] *Mirabilia* 845b.

[167] Aristotle *History of Animals* 607a: *ὅ τι δ' ἂν δάκῃ, εὐθὺς σήπεται τὸ κύκλῳ.*

[168] Lucan 9. 922–37. [169] Homer *Iliad* 11. 37; cf. 22. 95.

[170] Thus Lucan employs both models in tight association. Man-looks-at-Gorgon: Lucan 9. 636–41, 652–3, 9. 666–70. Gorgon-looks-at-man: 9. 649–53. Further examples at Ogden 2008*a*: 50–2.

[171] Hesiod *Shield* 227. [172] Aeschylus *Phorcides* F262 i, iv *TrGF*.

[173] *LIMC* Perseus 117.

Pherecydes)[174] suggest that opponents were killed rather when they themselves looked upon Medusa. Of the two models of action, the second one, that of man-looks-at-Gorgon, is the slightly more prominent one in the tradition, eventually coming into its own in spectacular fashion in John Malalas's account of Perseus' final moments, when he fails to petrify Cepheus with the gorgoneion because of the latter's blindness.[175] As for the modalities of the petrification, it was initially imagined that victims were turned into rough boulders. Fifth-century BC images of the transformation of Polydectes depict him being covered in a rough stone that grows up around him, appropriately, from the ground.[176] The Lycophronian *Alexandra* similarly sees the petrification as taking place from the ground upwards, but understands the process to result in a statue that preserves the living detail.[177] For Ovid too the Gorgons create detail-perfect statues, but the process of petrification is seen rather as resulting from a gradual freezing into stone of a person's figure as a whole.[178] In the broader field of fantastical snakes, a lethal gaze was also attributed to the basilisk, which could kill men just by looking at them.[179]

Nonnus alone, at the end of antiquity, offers a form of defence against the Gorgon's gaze. It is a diamond amulet that Dionysus lifts before his face as Perseus brandishes the gorgoneion against him. And here a parallelism is achieved, for Nonnus explains that the diamond protects against the 'flash' or 'gleam' (*selas*) of the Gorgon's face. Whilst we may well expect the gorgoneion's serpent-locks to flash fire from their eyes, the notion that its face should gleam (other than by metonomy) is unexpected. But it is of course precisely what we would expect a diamond amulet to be doing.[180]

Man casts sleep upon the *drakōn* (and the problem of Argus)

Since snakes cannot close their eyes, the ancients held *drakontes* to be unsleeping and ever watchful, and so to make the most ideal guardians, be it of springs, treasure, or anything else (Ch. 4). Lucan scrupulously notes that even when Medusa's humanoid body falls asleep, the serpents that form the locks of her hair stand alert ('back-combed') and on guard.[181] This special ability on the *drakontes*' part invited a targeted response from their human opponents, which was, if not always symmetrical, then at least complementary. Symmetrical enough, however, is the 'unsleeping dart' that the Aeschylean Zeus directs against Typhon.[182] More often we hear rather of the deployment of complementary

[174] Pherecydes F11 Fowler. We might have expected Perseus to use a mirror or reflecting shield simply to deflect Medusa's ocular death-ray back upon her, but we do not hear of this. A folk-tale of Saffron Waldon tells of a local knight who defeated a cockatrice (the gaze of which is similarly fatal) by facing it in a suit of armour made from glass mirrors: Beddington and Christy 1937: 115–16, Simpson 1980: 40–1.

[175] John Malalas p. 39 Dindorf. [176] *LIMC* Polydektes nos. 7–8.

[177] Lycophron *Alexandra* 834–46; cf. Tzetzes on 844.

[178] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5. 244–35; cf. also 4. 780–91, and Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 47. 560–3. For the petrifaction process see also Schauenburg 1960 pls. 37–8; cf. Frontisi-Ducroux 1993, Roccos 1994*b*. For Ovid's statues see Hardie 2002: 178–80.

[179] Pliny *Natural History* 29. 66. [180] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 47. 590–606, with *selas* at 593.

[181] Lucan 9. 671–4. [182] Aeschylus *Prometheus Bound* 360: ἄγρυπνον βέλος.

magical techniques for the seemingly impossible task of casting sleep upon serpents incapable of sleep. In Chapter 1 we reviewed the techniques that Medea deployed to cast sleep upon the unsleeping Colchis *drakōn* in art and the literary tradition: she deployed an incantation and either fed it drugs in liquid form from a *phialē*, or she sprinkled the drugs over its eyes using a sprig whilst invoking Sleep in prayer. In the late *Orphic Argonautica* Orpheus sung the serpent to sleep with his lyre. We also reviewed the evidence for the less explicit tradition that the Hesperides similarly used drugs to cast sleep upon their unsleeping Ladon.

It has sometimes been suspected that Argus was a *drakōn* in origin, although there is no direct assertion of this in the extant tradition. Argus is an exceptional guard because of the number of his eyes. From Hesiod onwards he is variously given between 3 and 10,000. Their arrangement around his head to give him 360-degree vision, brings him the epithet, from Aeschylus onwards, 'all-seeing'. He is also said either to be sleepless or to be able to sleep with some of his eyes whilst remaining awake with others. When Hera wishes to keep Io, transformed into a cow, from Zeus' attentions, she gives her into the guardianship of the ever-watchful Argus, but Hermes is able to slay him at Zeus' behest by lulling him to sleep with pan-pipes, whereupon Hera memorializes his eyes by transforming him in death into the peacock. Argus' ever-vigilant qualities clearly align him with *drakontes* of the Ladon and Colchis type, as indeed does the manner of his lulling to sleep. Other facets of Argus also seem reminiscent of *drakontes*. He is sometimes said to have been earthborn and, whilst some accounts have him killed with a stone, Ovid's Hermes slays him with the *harpē* beloved of *drakōn*-slayers, whilst Lucan tells that Hermes used the very *harpē* he subsequently passed on to Perseus to use in his anguiform-slayings.[183] Pausanias Grammaticus derives Argus' name from *argēs*, 'snake', and is thus able to make a little more sense (but by no means complete sense) of the form of Hermes' famous Homeric epithet *argeï-phontēs*, traditionally construed as 'slayer of Argus'.[184] Apollodorus tells that Argus was himself the slayer of a sleeping serpent, Echidna: does this reflect some ancient doublet of the Hermes tale, with roles reversed?[185]

[183] Homer *Odyssey* 1. 38, 5. 43, Hesiod FF126, 294 MW (four eyes, which look in both directions, and is unsleeping), Acusilaus F27 Fowler (earthborn), Bacchylides 19. 15–36 (unsleeping eyes look in all directions; earthborn; killed with stone), Aeschylus *Suppliants* 290–307 (Argus all-seeing, πανόπτης, earthborn), *Prometheus* 566–75, 677–82 (Argus has 10,000 eyes), with scholl., Pherecydes F66 Fowler (has an eye in back of head and is sleepless), Sophocles *Inachus* F281a (πανόπτης), Euripides *Phoenissae* 1113–18 (πανόπτης; some eyes look east, whilst others look west, and they sleep alternately), with schol., Dionysius of Samos *FGrH* 15 F1 (Argus wears an ox-hide around himself covered in eyes), Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 623–41, 664–88, 714–27 (has a hundred star-like eyes, pointing in all directions, two of which rest in turn; Hermes charms them all to sleep with his panpipes, and slays him with the *harpē*; Hera transforms him into the peacock), Lucan 9. 659–70, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 1. 2–3 (πανόπτης, eyes all over his body, killed with a stone), Hyginus *Fabulae* 145 (eyes shine in all directions), Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 790 (πανόπτης, earthborn, peacock), First Vatican Mythographer 1. 18 (a hundred eyes, peacock). In iconography Argus is shown as a humanoid with eyes all over his body: *LIMC* Io i. 4 (*c.*480 BC), 7, 11, 13. Watkins 1995: 313, 316, 383–4 loosely compares Argus with the Persian dragon Aži Dahāka of the 'six eyes and thousand skills' (for which see Introduction).

[184] ἀργεϊφόντης is first found at Homer *Odyssey* 1. 38. Pausanias Grammaticus F65; cf. Davis 1953. M. L. West 2007: 82, however, prefers to think that the epithet's first element signifies some kind of dog.

[185] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 1. 2–3.

The canonical snake-mastering races also knew of magical ways to cast sleep on snakes. The Marsi are typically held to have done this with incantations and herbs, and to have derived this ability from Medea's sister Circe, or from their goddess Angitia, identified with Medea.[186] The Psylli and their affiliates are, by contrast, typically held to have done it with their personal smell or their touch.[187] As we have seen (Ch. 4), the Indian hunters of the marvellous *dracontias* stone lulled their serpent quarry to sleep either by scattering soporific drugs before them, or by throwing down a red cloth embroidered with spells in gold.[188]

The *drakōn* casts sleep upon man

But some serpents at any rate could turn the tables on man and rather cast sleep on their human victims. The ps.-Aristotelian *Mirabilia* tells how the *hieros ophis* almost succeeded in casting sleep with its song upon the Thessalian woman attempting to kill it.[189] When Nonnus' Zeus transforms himself into a *drakōn* to sire Zagreus on Persephone, he casts sleep on the similarly shaped *drakōn* guards of Persephone's chamber door to get past them.[190] Adherents of the view that the serpent's constant gaze is inherently hypnotic[191] might be surprised to find that the gaze itself does not appear to have been explicitly credited with sleep-inducing power in antiquity: a pity—the notion of a serpent's eyes constantly repelling sleep and throwing it back into the eyes of those they met would be an attractive one.

SOUND, INCANTATION, AND SILENCE

The terrible sound of the *drakōn*

Attention is often drawn to the terrible hiss made by a *drakōn* or a snake. Apollonius' Colchis *drakōn* emits a hiss so loud that it shakes the surrounding area. According to the *Orphic Argonautica*, at its hiss, 'The boundless ether resounded. The trees cracked, shaken from the bottom of their roots. The shaded grove cried out.'[192] And just as we are told that the basilisk could kill with a mere

[186] Tibullus 1. 8. 20 (incantations), Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 750–60 (incantations, touch), Pliny *Natural History* 25. 11 (Circe), Aulus Gellius 16. 11. 1–2 (incantations, plant juices, Circe), Silius Italicus 8. 495–99 (herbs, incantations, herbs, Angitia).

[187] Agatharchides of Cnidus F21a–b (smell, touch), Cassius Dio 51. 14 (touch), Cinna F10 Courtney (method unspecified), Silius Italicus *Punica* 1. 411–13, 3. 300–2, 5. 352–5 (Hannibal's North African allies, touch).

[188] Sotacus *apud* Pliny *Natural History* 37. 158 and Solinus *De mirabilius mundi* 30. 16–18; Philostratus *Apollonius* 3. 8.

[189] [Aristotle] *Mirabilia* 845b.

[190] Nonnus Dionysiaca 6. 160–1.

[191] e.g. Chantraine, 2009 s.v. δέρκομαι.

[192] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 129–38; *Orphic Argonautica* 995–7.

glance, and merely with its smell, so we are told that it could kill also merely with the sound of its hiss.[193]

There are hints in the tradition that Medusa's two Gorgon sisters, Stheno and Euryale, perhaps the latter in particular, could kill with their terrible voices, in an auditory parallel to their deadly gaze. The Hesiodic *Shield*, in describing the pair chasing Perseus after his decapitation of Medusa, describes them not only as giving out wild stares but as gnashing their teeth and creating 'a great ringing, sharp and shrill' as they fly. Pindar speaks of 'the destructive lamentation' of the pursuing sisters and 'the noisy grief emanating from the swift jaws of Euryale'. The *Perseis* of Ctesias of Ephesus told that Mycene (*Mukēnai*) was named for the bellow (*mukēma*) that the two sisters gave forth there in their anguish at having to give up the pursuit of Perseus. And Nonnus' Athene draws an explicit parallel between the threat of the stone-transforming eye of Stheno and that of the invincible bellowing throat of Euryale.[194]

Sound against the *drakōn*

Sometimes a parallelism is drawn between the dreadful sound produced by the *drakōn* and that produced by their humanoid opponent. Hesiod succeeds magnificently in conveying the dreadfulness of the sounds Typhon could make:

> And there were voices in all his terrible [sc. serpent] heads that sent forth every kind of unspeakable sound. Sometimes they spoke in such a way that the gods could understand, and at other times they spoke with the voice of a loud-bellowing bull, unrestrainable in might, proud in voice, at other times again with the voice of a lion with shameless heart. At other times his voice resembled that of puppies, a wonder to hear, at other times again he would hiss, and the high mountains would reverberate.[195]

But Hesiod then sets the noise Zeus was able to produce in direct opposition to this:

> He thundered hard and loud and the earth resounded round about in terrible fashion, and so did the broad heaven above and the sea and the streams of Ocean and Tartarus beneath the earth. Great Olympus quaked beneath the immortal feet of the lord as he roused himself. And the earth groaned in response.[196]

For Nonnus Typhon's mixed animal heads all raised a terrible cacophonous war-cry together, whilst his serpent-heads more specifically did this with a hiss. On the other side, these noises were met by a seven-mouthed cry from the Pleiades and by

[193] Lucan 9. 724–6 (the terrible hiss); Aelian *Nature of Animals* 2. 7 (even other snakes flee before the hiss of the basilisk); Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 12. 4. 9 (basilisk kills with hiss alone: *sibilus idem est qui et regulus. sibilo enim occidit, antequam mordeat vel exurat*).

[194] [Hesiod] *Shield* 231–5 (cf. Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 4. 2, where the Gorgons are described as heavily metallic creatures, with golden wings and bronze hands); Pindar *Pythian* 12. 6–26 (cf. Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 838), Ctesias *Perseis* apud [Plutarch] *On Rivers* 18. 6 (composed, accordingly at some point before *c.* AD 100); Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 30. 264–7 (cf. 25. 58, 'Euryale's bellow'). See Roscher 1879: 85–99.

[195] Hesiod *Theogony* 829–35. It is a curiosity, but Hesiod does indeed seem to suggest that Typhon's hundred heads were entirely snake, and yet that they were able to emit a cacophony of cries from animals of different sorts. Cf. M. L. West 1966 on lines 831–5, Gantz 1993: 845.

[196] Hesiod Theogony 839–43.

others from the planets.[197] A nicely symmetrical case is presented also by Silius' Bagrada serpent. Its terrible hissing 'filled the entire grove' and drowned out its victims' cries for help, but the serpent was then in turn alarmed by the army's trumpets.[198]

Incantations against the *drakōn*

Incantations against *drakontes* and other terrible snakes were attributed with four discrete effects.[199] First, the accounts of Medea's casting of sleep upon the Colchis *drakōn*, beginning with Apollonius', tell that she used incantations to do so, alongside her drugs.[200] As we have seen, the *Orphic Argonautica*'s Orpheus usurps Medea's role in this and sings the *drakōn* to sleep to the accompaniment of his lyre, but without need for drugs.[201] Secondly, the second-century BC Lucilius is the first to mention the technique of using incantations to burst snakes open. He already associates it with the Marsi, as was to become usual.[202] The Greek Magical Papyri were subsequently to offer the opportunity to burst snakes to all: 'If you wish to kill a snake, say, "Stop, because you are Aphyphis [= Apophis]", and, taking up a green palm-branch and holding it by its heart [i.e. the end of the branch], split it into two, saying the name [sc. of the god that will be revealed] seven times over, and at once the snake will be split or burst open.'[203] Thirdly, incantations could be deployed to summon forth a single snake or to summon together a host or plague of snakes. So it is that Seneca's Medea is shown to summon together a host of snakes, which duly abandon their holes, with an incantation they are stunned to hear. She goes on to summon also a list of mythical serpents in addition, with the purpose of using their venom to make the fiery wedding dress for Glauce.[204] Hyginus' Medea also deploys a magical voice in summoning together the plague of snakes that afflicted Absoris prior to confining them within Apsyrtus' tomb (Ch. 5).[205] The ps.-Aristotelian *Mirabilia*'s Thessalian witch uses an incantation to summon the individual *hieros ophis* to its death.[206] Philostratus speaks of the Indian snake-stone hunters summoning (presumably individual) snakes from their holes with an incantation before

[197] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 1. 156–7, 240–3 (Pleiades), 267–8 (hiss of the serpent heads), 2. 246–56, 368–70.

[198] Silius Italicus 6. 189–90, 216–19.

[199] The earliest testimony to the use of incantations against snakes is that implicit in Plato's use of the *kēlēsis* metaphor, discussed in Ch. 5.

[200] Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 145–66 (*θελγόμενος*); Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7. 149–58.

[201] *Orphic Argonautica* 1001–19.

[202] Lucilius Book 20 F7 Charpin (575–6 Marx) *iam disrumpetur medius, iam, ut Marsus colubras disrumpit cantu, venas cum extenderit omnis.* See also Tibullus 1. 8. 20, Virgil *Eclogues* 8. 70, Ovid *Amores* 2. 1. 23–8, *Metamorphoses* 7. 203 (Medea), [Quintilian] *Declamationes maiores* 10. 15; and cf. Pliny *Natural History* 7. 15 and Aulus Gellius 16. 11. 1–2.

[203] *PGM* XIII 260–4; cf. Preisendanz and Henrichs 1973–4 ad loc. For Aphyphis Apophis, see Introduction.

[204] Seneca *Medea* 684–705.

[205] Hyginus *Fabulae* 26.

[206] [Aristotle] *Mirabilia* 845b. But the Tyrolean folk-tales considered in Ch. 11 invite us to imagine that versions of this tale may also have existed in which multiple snakes were summoned.

casting sleep upon them.[207] This leads us to the fourth application of incantations against snakes, devenoming. Silius Italicus tells how the Psyllus-like Marmaridae could make snakes forget their poison with their incantations.[208] Lucan's Psylli similarly use incantations to summon snake-venom itself forth from the wound. If the venom is slow to 'heed' (*tardius audit*) and continues to resist, then it must be licked out more directly, with the taste of the venom then telling the Psyllus what variety of snake it was that inflicted the wound.[209] Aulus Gellius refers to a ps.-Democritan work that contended that flute music could, comparably, be used to cure viper bites.[210]

The *drakōn's* incantations against man

Once again we turn to the marvellous tale preserved by the ps.-Aristotelian *Mirabilia*. Here we find not only a striking example of a snake, surprisingly, using an incantation against its human opponent, but also a crisp statement of the symmetricality of the battle between them in this respect: 'Then she imitated the voice of the creature [sc. the *hieros ophis*]. The creature sang in response (*antaidein*) and approached. As it sang, the woman fell asleep, and then it came closer still, with the result that she was not able to resist sleep.'[211] In an all-too allusive reference to the work of the Marsi Pliny notes that they can burst snakes (*serpentes*) by incantation, but that snakes possess one piece of cleverness: they can counteract the spell. The word he uses for this counteraction is *recanere*, of which the normal meaning would be 'sing in return', i.e. 'make a responding incantation'.[212]

Silent incantations and self-deafening *drakontes*

A brief excursus in the fifth-century AD Avitus of Vienne's Latin hexameter retelling of the Genesis story notes the peculiarly fatal threats that deaf or deafened snakes can constitute to charmers (of course, in reality all snakes are deaf):

> This is how the Marsi achieve what they do, in the sin for which they win praise, when, with their silent skill, they draw fierce *dracones* forth from their hiding places and often bid them join battle with themselves [i.e. with the Marsi charmers]. Then, as each one perceives that the water-snake is heavy with war, or recognises that the ears of the hardened asp are shut, he rattles within himself the arms of the secret incantation. At once, at the cajoling word, their poisons grow weak. Soon the harmless serpent is taken in the hand quite safely, and the bite alone, not the venom in the snake, is cause for fear. Sometimes the charmer [*incantans*] dies, if a deaf snake scorns the clever mutterings of the charmer [? – *adiutoris*].
>
> (Avitus of Vienne *De spiritalis historiae gestis* 2. 303–13)

[207] Philostratus *Apollonius* 3. 8. The ancient world knew of other ways of summoning snakes too. Phylarchus *FGrH* 81 F27 (= Aelian *Nature of Animals* 17. 5) knew that the Egyptians could summon their tame Agathos Daimon snakes by snapping their fingers; cf. Fraser 1972: i. 209–10, ii. 165.

[208] Silius Italicus *Punica* 3. 300–2. [209] Lucan 9. 922–37.

[210] Aulus Gellius 4. 13. 3. [211] [Aristotle] *Mirabilia* 845b.

[212] Given the *Mirabilia* comparison, there is no need for LS and *OLD* s.v. *recinō* to propose here the weaker translation 'remove (an effect) by magical means'.

This confusing discussion makes much of sound, the avoidance of sound, and silence: both incantations used by the charmer, that to draw out the snakes and that to reduce their venom, appear to be either silent or at any rate muttered, and yet they are generally effective. Somehow or other, hearing snakes can shut their ears to the silent incantations and yet they remain subject to at least the second of them. But a snake that is truly deaf can clearly be drawn by the first incantation whilst remaining immune to the second. This discussion appears to be underpinned by two intelligible notions. First, that it is in general precisely the sound of charmer's incantations that renders snakes subject. In the context of this tenet, a particular threat is afforded by snakes that either happen to be deaf or have the ability to close their ears. The second, and responding, notion is that a deaf or self-deafened snake can in turn be charmed by a special kind of incantation that is in itself silent, and thereby bypasses the snake's aural apparatus: another nice symmetry. What is Avitus' source material here? A discussion of the Marsi of this sort has a pagan feel (not least in view of Pliny's words on their snake-victims' responding incantations), and Wood accordingly posits a pagan source. However, Avitus' thinking may also have been shaped in part by Psalms, which speaks of the deaf asp that stops up its ears and will not heed the charmer, however skilful his spells may be.[213]

ELEMENTS OF THE SYMMETRICAL BATTLE IN OTHER CULTURES: THE NAGAS

Graeco-Roman *drakōn*-fight myths are distinctive for embracing a broad and complex set of motifs of symmetricality, but what might be considered the primary and central symmetrical motif, that of fire against fire, does have a purchase in the serpent lore of other cultures. It is found in several of the Near-Eastern and Indo-European dragon-fight narratives reviewed in the Introduction, and it features strikingly also in the Indian traditions of the Nagas, the divine cobras. Sacred texts often represent the Nagas' venom directly as fire, and they are often portrayed as sending forth fire on their breath, which can pollute the air, or with their vision.[214] The *Adi Parvan* of the *Mahabharata*, composed between *c.*300 BC and AD 300 , tells of King Janamejaya's use of fire to destroy the Nagas in a fashion strikingly reminiscent of the ps.-Aristotelian tale of the Thessalian witch and of Jerome's tale of St Hilarion, to be considered in Ch. 11. The Naga-raja (Naga King) Takshaka disguises himself as a worm and conceals himself in the apple that King Parikshit of Hastinapura is eating. As Parikshit uncovers the worm, Takshaka reverts to his true form, bites the king, and destroys both him and his house in a blaze of fire. Parikshit's son Janamejaya vows to take revenge on Takshaka and the entire Naga race. His Brahmins tell him of a rite that will compel Takshaka to throw himself into a fire, the *Sarpa-sattra* or 'Serpent

[213] Avitus' pagan source: Wood 2001: 267–9 esp. 268 n. 32. Psalms 58: 4–5. For Avitus' work in general, see Shanzer and Wood 2002.

[214] Vogel 1926: 15–17 (with numerous references from the 1st- to 5th-cent. AD Jākatas), 35, 133, 137, 139–40, 152–3, 155, 167, 177.

sacrifice'. They don black robes, mark off a sacrificial area, utter mantras, perform their rites, and kindle a fire. All the world's serpents are drawn to it and compelled to hurl themselves into the flames. They are of all colours, some are a mile long, and some the size of elephants. Millions are destroyed in this way. Takshaka himself is about to be drawn into the flames when the youth Astika, who has won Janamejaya's admiration, intervenes and, cashing in the boon that Janamejaya has granted him, asks him to bring an end to the sacrifice.[215] The *Mahavagga*, the Pali Buddhist text of the first century AD, tells the story of Buddha's strikingly symmetrical fire-battle with Canda, the Naga-raja of Uruvela. The Buddha spends the night in a monastery at Uruvela near Benares, and chooses to sleep in the house where the sacred fire, essential to Buddhist practice, is maintained, even though this house is occupied by a Canda, a fanged snake with a terrible poison. When the Naga sees that the Buddha has entered, he becomes angry and produces a cloud of smoke. In response the Buddha produces a cloud of smoke too. Then the Naga sends forth fire, i.e. his venom, and so does the Buddha, in his case 'a fiery purification of his own bodily substances', overcoming (though not killing) the Naga. He throws the Naga into his alms bowl and displays him to the monks.[216]

CONCLUSION

The *drakōn* represents the ultimate threat as its external weaponry renders it all but impregnable. We occasionally hear of lateral-thinking heroes defeating their foe by attacking it from within: so it is that we have the traditions of Heracles and Perseus feeding themselves to their respective *kētē* (Ch. 3), the tradition of Jason feeding himself to the Colchis *drakōn*, perhaps (Ch. 1), and the tradition of Bellerophon ramming his spear down the Chimaera's throat to turn its own fire against it (Ch. 2). The only logical alternative to this perilous course of action is to counter the *drakōn* with weapons and techniques that mirror its own as closely as possible. For this reason one even, on occasion, takes one *drakōn* to fight another. As the *drakōn* bites, so it must be bitten. As the *drakōn* is fiery (its staring eyes flash, and its venom burns), so must it be fought with various forms of fire. As the *drakōn* inflicts sleep, so it must be fought with sleep-casting. As the *drakōn* is venomous, so it must be fought with poisonous drugs. As the *drakōn* belches forth noxious, poisonous gases, so must it be fought with various forms of purified air, or with human breath. As the *drakōn* spews or injects liquid venom from its mouth, so must it be fought with human spittle, or with another precious liquid of the human body, blood. As the *drakōn* utters a terrible hiss or a hypnotic singing, so it must be fought with incantations. As the *drakōn* is a creature of coils and

[215] *Adi Parvan* §§49–58. For the text see Sukthankar et al. 1933–66, with trans. at van Buitenen 1977. Discussion at Vogel 1926: 69, 89, 108–10, 203–7, Cozad 2004: 49–80; see also Sinha 1979: 19, 23–7, 67–9. Note too the Pali Buddhist tradition of Svagata's battle with the Naga of the Mango Ferry, in which both emit flames at each other: *Suttavibhanga* rule 51; cf. Vogel 1926: 111–12.

[216] *Mahavagga* 1. 15. 1–5. Text at Moonesinghe and Hewavitarne 1958, with translation at Davids and Oldenberg 1881: 118–20. Cf. Cozad 2004: 86–8.

curves, so it must be fought with magic circles and curving weapons. In many texts and images these responding weapons are dissociated from each other, but in significant numbers they are brought tightly together. These motifs originate in pagan *drakōn* fights, but, as we shall see in the final chapter, they persist emphatically into Christian *drakōn*-fight narratives.

7

Drakontes, Earth, and the Dead

The following four chapters turn to the *drakontes* of cult. In Chapter 8 we shall look at the benign *drakontes* that bestowed wealth and good luck, and in Chapters 9 and much of 10 the benign *drakontes* that bestowed health. But first, and by way of preparation, we must establish that strong triangular association between the *drakōn*, the earth, and the dead that obtained throughout antiquity. Heroes revisit the world of the living from under the earth in which they are buried in the form of the creature that divides its life between the earth and the surface, and which ever renews its own life by sloughing. And anguiform heroes can feel and act upon a protective bond with the particular land in which they lie or live, be it the limited extent of their own tomb or the broader expanse of an island or a civic territory.

DRAKONTES, EARTH, AND THE UNDERWORLD

We have seen in Chapter 4 the tendency to house the great *drakontes* of myth in caves and to identify them with the physical features of the landscape they once inhabited. Snakes and *drakontes* were often regarded as emanating from the earth and retaining a special bond with it. When interpreting an omen Herodotus' Telmessians were to declare, 'the snake (*ophis*) to be the child of the earth',[1] whilst centuries later Artemidorus was to observe that 'the *drakōn* itself is of the earth and makes its life within it'.[2]

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the great *drakontes* of myth were often projected as the children of Earth (when not of each other).[3] Typhon's relationship with the Earth is celebrated in many ways. Earth is his mother already in Hesiod, whilst Tartarus, 'Hell', the deepest place within the earth, is his father (Ch. 4). And just as Typhon emanates from the earth, so he returns to it and continues to live on in it: Hesiod and Pindar tell that Zeus hurled Typhon back into Tartarus.[4] Manilius makes the nice point that Zeus drove Typhon back into his mother's womb with his thunderbolts.[5] If he were able to tear himself up from

[1] Herodotus 1. 78. 3. Cf. Bodson 1978: 70.

[2] Artemidorus *Oneirocritica* 2. 13; cf. Aelian *Nature of Animals* 2. 21 (the earth of Ethiopia is the mother of the greatest *drakontes*).

[3] Cf. Küster 1913: 85–100, 121–4, with care.

[4] Hesiod *Theogony* 868; so too Pindar *Pythians* 1. 15–28.

[5] Manilius 2. 876–80.

his grave, according to Ovid, he would leave a broad, gaping hole through which daylight would flood in and terrify the shades of the dead.[6] And before his imprisonment he constantly maintains his relationship with his mother through repeated exploitation of her caves (Ch. 2). Nonnus has a striking vignette of Typhon taking a rest: he lays himself out across his mother Earth, and she opens up her yawning cave-lairs for his viper-heads to glide into.[7] Earth is also given as mother to: Ladon;[8] the (eventually) anguiform 'earthborn' (*gēgeneis*) Giants, whom she accompanies in their iconography from the sixth century BC;[9] Python;[10] the Serpent of Ares and, separately and unsurprisingly, the Spartoi that sprung from its teeth when they were sown;[11] the 'Gorgon' slain by Athene;[12] the Aegis slain by Athene;[13] Campe;[14] the Nemean Serpent;[15] and the pet *drakōn* Heracles deployed against the Nemean Lion.[16]

It follows that the underworld should have been well populated with serpents. Cerberus' own anguiform aspect aside, he can be found accompanied by a separate large serpent on vases of the *c.*510–480 BC period.[17] Ixion, one of the *grands criminels* subject to eternal punishment in the underworld, was canonically tied to a fiery wheel. In art his wheel is sometimes shown as fringed not with flames but with snakeheads seemingly imitating flames (a nice example of the identification of serpents with fire).[18] In Critias' lost tragedy *Pirithous* it seems that Pirithous was bound to a rock seat and guarded by 'the gapes of *drakontes*'.[19] Aristophanes may have been parodying Critias when his Heracles tells Dionysus that as he descends he will encounter 'tens of thousands of snakes (*opheis*) and strange looking beasts'.[20] In an underworld scene of *c.*325–300 BC, on a vase from Cerveteri, Orpheus sits to play his lyre framed by the mirroring figures of an Erinys and the sharp-faced Etruscan death-demon Charun (a reflex of Charon),

[6] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 5. 346–58. [7] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 2. 237–43.

[8] Pisander of Camirus *FGrH* 16 F8; Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 1398. Earth also sent up the apples he famously guards: Pherecydes FF16–17 Fowler.

[9] For the application of the term *gēgeneis* to the Giants, see e.g. Euripides *Ion* 987, 1529, etc. For the iconography, see e.g. *LIMC* Gigantes 2, 105–6, 110 (all 6th cent. BC), 24 (the Pergamum frieze, where, as often, Earth emerges from the ground raising her arms in supplication to the gods on her children's behalf); cf. Vian and Moore 1988: 254, with further references, and Gantz 1993: i. 451.

[10] Pindar F55 SM, Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1247, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 438–40, Hyginus *Fabulae* 140, Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 8. 11. 54.

[11] Euripides *Phoenissae* 931, with schol. (for the Spartoi). *Contra*, schol. Sophocles *Antigone* 126 (mother of Serpent is Tilphossa Erinys).

[12] Euripides *Ion* 987–96.

[13] Diodorus 3. 70. 3–6 = Dionysius Scytobrachion *FGrH* 32 F8.

[14] Diodorus 5. 71. 2–6. [15] Statius *Thebaid* 5. 505.

[16] Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 190, 147b22–8.

[17] *LIMC* Herakles 2562, 2563, 2565.

[18] Unfortunately this type is not represented in *LIMC* Ixion. The catalogue does record two images of a type in which Ixion is bound to his wheel with snakes, *LIMC* Ixion 15 (*c.*330–310 BC) and 18, but again better, Classical-period examples do exist. The notion of the serpent-wheel surfaces only in literature with the First Vatican Mythographer, 1. 14. See Simon 1955, Lochin 1990.

[19] Critias *Pirithous* hypothesis at *TrGF* i. 171: αὐτὸς μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ πέτρας ἀκινήτωι καθέδραι πεδηθεὶς δρακόντων ἐφρουρεῖτο χάσμασιν. It could, however, have been that 'the gapes of *drakontes*' were those of Cerberus' integral serpents.

[20] Aristophanes *Frogs* 143; not the least of the snakes that inhabit Aristophanes' underworld is the hundred-headed Echidna, *Frogs* 465–74.

both of whom menace him with large snakes that wind around their upraised arms.[21] In a rare image of her in the form of humanoid goddess, the Styx fights amongst the other gods in the north frieze of the Pergamene Gigantomachy: she carries a hydria of her water around which a serpent coils.[22] When Horace's witches Canidia and Sagana dig a trough and call up ghosts, 'serpents and underworld dogs' are to be seen wandering about.[23] In Apuleius' tale of Cupid and Psyche, *dracones* haunt the banks of the Styx.[24]

The Greeks' heroes were powerful dead men housed, normally, in the earth, though they yet lived on and on occasion returned to the world of the living and interacted with it. It is not surprising, therefore, that they should often have been held to adopt the form of serpents.[25] The nature of the relationship between the dead man, his body, and his soul with the ensuing serpent is often left vague, but Pliny and others tell that the putrefying marrow of a dead man's spine could transform itself into a snake. This was why, according to Plutarch, the ancients had associated heroes with snakes. Aelian maintains, a view evidently not universally held, that such a transformation only occurred in the cases of the corpses of the wicked.[26]

Such serpents of the dead often (but not always) seem to have taken a particular interest in protecting the body or the tomb, or in enacting vengeance on behalf of the dead man or his loved ones. Vases offer striking evidence here. On a wonderful Tyrrhenian amphora of *c.*575–550 BC a gigantic bearded serpent rises from the barrow of Amphiaraus and over the dead body of Eriphyle to threaten her son and murderer Alcmaeon with bared fangs, as he departs in a chariot.[27] On a black-figure hydria of *c.*510 BC we are given an x-ray view of Patroclus' tomb: a snake coils within the white structure, whilst a tiny, winged, humanoid ghost hovers above it.[28] A number of vases give us such x-ray views of hero-tombs (shown white) with their serpents (shown black) within, and on a *prothesis* vase one such serpent is accompanied inside its tomb by no less than four humanoid ghosts

[21] *LIMC* Charu(n) 101 = Erinys 18; cf. also *LIMC* Charu(n) 10 (2nd cent. BC). In *LIMC* Charu(n) 112 (3rd cent. BC), perhaps a caprice, Charun is given a Giant-style double-anguipede lower half.

[22] *LIMC* Styx 7 (where, however, the image is labelled 'uncertain'); Vian and Moore 1988: 267–8.

[23] Horace *Satires* 1. 8. 34–5.

[24] Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 6. 14.

[25] Cf. Harrison 1899, 1912: 290–1, 1922: 232–9, 325–31, Küster 1913: 62–72, Mitropoulou 1977: 15–18. Yoshino 2001: 85 contends that an association between (dead) ancestors and snakes, which she finds to have originated in Egypt, has been known practically the whole world over, an association sustained by three considerations: (1) the snake's phallic shape is held to be symbolic of male fertility and life; (2) the snake's way of killing its prey instantaneously is symbolic of power; (3) the snake's slough is symbolic of immortality (I thank Prof. Akiko Moroo of Chiba University of Commerce for this reference).

[26] Pliny *Natural History* 10. 188, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15. 389–90, Plutarch *Cleomenes* 39, Aelian *Nature of Animals* 1. 51, Origen *Contra Celsum* 4. 57; cf. Küster 1913 62–5, who derives the notion from corpse maggots. Palmer 1976: 77–8 reports a folk-tale recorded as recently as 1968 at Norton Fitzwarren in Somerset that tells that a local dragon was spontaneously generated from a pile of dead bodies after an ancient battle; cf. Simpson 1980: 38, 50–1.

[27] *LIMC* Erinys 84 = Alkmaion 3 (where illustrated) = Grabow 1998 K103. Discussion at Küster 1913: 70–2, Harrison 1922: 236–7 (with fig. 55 and importantly superseding Harrison 1899: 214–15, also with illustration: an Erinys), Sarian 1986: 841 (a funerary demon connected with the spirit of the dead), Gantz 1993: 526 and 679 (a tomb-guardian). Note also *LIMC* Alkmaion 9.

[28] *LIMC* Achilleus 586.

(why four-to-one?).[29] On each of a pair of late sixth-century Athenian black-figure lekythoi by the Cactus Painter two massive serpents pursue a youth from their barrow (why two?), seemingly in protection of it.[30]

To turn to literary sources, Diogenes Laertius, citing second- and first-century BC sources, tells how Heraclides of Pontus aspired to be believed to have joined the gods after his death, and so ordered those loyal to him to replace his corpse surreptitiously with his pet *drakōn* as he was being carried out to burial. The serpent then obligingly crawled out before the assembled mourners.[31] Virgil's account of the manifestation of a snake (*anguis, serpens*) at the tomb of Anchises is well known: Aeneas wonders whether it is the *genius loci* (for which see the following chapter) or the servant of his father.[32] Pliny knew that Scipio Africanus' estate at Liternum featured a cave in which there lived a *draco* that guarded his ghost.[33] Plutarch tells that as the body of Cleomenes III of Sparta hung on public display in Alexandria after his suicide a huge *drakōn* manifested itself and coiled around his head, keeping the birds away. Ptolemy Philopator panicked at this, and the women of Alexandria followed his lead, making offerings to Cleomenes and declaring him a hero and a son of gods.[34] Porphyry knew that as Plotinus was on the point of dying a *drakōn* passed under his bed and ducked into a hole in the wall.[35] We almost certainly see a refraction of the pagan serpent that emerges from the body of a hero in the early third-century AD *Acts of John*. Here the wicked Callimachus has bribed the steward Fortunatus to let him into the tomb of the newly dead Drusiana, so that he can have sex with her corpse. But as he strips the corpse in preparation a huge and terrible snake emerges 'from somewhere', kills Fortunatus with a single bite and sits upon Callimachus until the forces of righteousness arrive in the form of John and his brethren (the tale is discussed further in Ch. 11).[36]

We have already considered, in the case of the tomb of Apsyrtus at Absoris the possibility that an angry hero might transform himself actually into a plague of snakes (Ch. 5).[37] A similar notion may or may not underlie Pliny's claim that Pherecydes of Syros died when a host of serpents (*serpentes*) burst out of his body.[38]

Artemidorus ends his list of the things that snakes can symbolize in dreams with 'heroes and elsewhere tells that to dream of men turning into *drakontes* signifies heroes, whilst to dream of women turning into *drakontes* signifies

[29] Mitropoulou 1977: 48 (b), illustrated at Harrison 1899: 219 fig. 4, 1912: 291 fig. 77. Further examples of x-ray views of serpents within tombs (without ghosts): Grabow 1998 K96a–b (cf. Harrison 1899: 214) and Naples Museum 111609, illustrated at Harrison 1899: 229, 1912: 402). Discussion at Grabow 1998: 147–70.

[30] Grabow 1998 K104–5; cf. Harrison 1899: 214, 1912: 404 with (fig. 115), Gantz 1993: 679. At the other end of antiquity the *Orphic Argonautica* 929–4 gives the Colchis serpent a surprising job in addition to guarding the fleece: it tends the tomb of 'Zeus of the earth (*chamaizēlos*)' in its grove.

[31] Diogenes Laertius 5. 89–90 = Heraclides of Pontus F16 Wehrli, incorporating fragments of Demetrius of Magnesia (1st cent. BC) and Hippobotus (*c.*200 BC).

[32] Virgil *Aeneid* 5. 84–96.

[33] Pliny *Natural History* 16. 234.

[34] Plutarch *Agis and Cleomenes* 60.

[35] Porphyry *Life of Plotinus* 2.

[36] *Acts of John* 71.

[37] Hyginus *Fabulae* 26.

[38] Pliny *Natural History* 7. 172.

heroines.[39] Compatibly with this, Stesichorus' Clytemnestra had dreamed of the Agamemnon she had murdered in the form of a *drakōn* with a bloodied head, out of which emerged the avenging Orestes.[40]

A snake frequently appears in Greek hero-reliefs, where it serves as the symbol or the avatar of the hero. Three varieties of these reliefs, which, stone or terracotta, would have been dedicated in temples or heroa, are of interest. In the earliest and basic variety, which endures from *c.*540 BC until the third century BC, the hero sits enthroned or stands, and in either configuration can be paired with a heroine. Seated heroes (and heroines) are often approached by worshippers, with offerings or hands raised in greeting. Standing heroes can be portrayed as warriors, with helmet, shields, or spears. A serpent will sometimes just attend the scene, coiling behind the throne(s), for example, but more often the hero or the heroine feed the serpent from a *kantharos*, in what must be considered a form of auto-libation. This variety originated in Sparta, from where sixth-century examples are copious, whence it spread to other parts of the Peloponnese, to Sparta's colony Tarentum, and also to Attica, where a few examples have been found.[41] The earliest example, a relief of *c.*540 BC from Laconian Chrysapha, is also the finest: worshippers bear offerings (including a cock and possibly an egg) to a gigantic hero and heroine enthroned together, whilst a commensurately gigantic, bearded, and carefully detailed serpent coils from underneath the throne, up over its back and around its top. Though still some way from it, the serpent is presumably heading for a drink from the large *kantharos* the hero holds.[42] The alignment of the serpent with the hero's spine is suggestive in view of the considerations above. The role of this sort of image in the development of the iconography of Asclepius and Hygieia is clear (Fig. 7.1).

A second variety of hero-relief, that of the riding hero, seems to have incorporated snakes from the early fifth century BC, the first datable example with a snake hailing from Corinth. The general type originated in Sparta, again, in the mid seventh century BC, whence it came to spread across the entire Greek and Roman world, enjoying a particular popularity in the second and third centuries AD. The type was well loved in Thrace, where it perhaps had a resonance for indigenous deities. The iconographic catalogue *LIMC* records 640 examples of the general type, of which perhaps a third incorporate snakes. In the snake-reliefs the hero rides whilst the snake coils along beneath his horse or, more often, winds around

[39] Artemidorus *Oneirocritica* 2. 13 (list), 4. 79 (heroes and heroines). The complete list, in order: king (because of its power); time (because of its length and its shedding of its slough to become young again); wealth and possessions (because it lies guard over treasures); Zeus; Sabazius; Helius; Demeter; Kore; Hecate; Asclepius; heroes. Note also schol. Aristophanes *Wealth* 733 (*drakontes* commonly the attributes of heroes, especially Asclepius) and Photius *Lexicon* s.v. ἥρως ποικίλος (variegated snakes are termed 'heroes'; cf. Mitropoulou 1977: 55, confusing Photius with Plotinus).

[40] Steischorus F219 *PMG*/Campbell (from his *Oresteia*?). However in a similar prophetic dream for Clytemnestra at Aeschylus *Choephoroe* 527 the *drakōn* dreamed of represents rather Orestes.

[41] Partial lists and discussions of the relevant items at Seiffert 1911, Küster 1913: 74–85, Mitropoulou 1977: 52–4, 63–6, 82–7, Sergent 1978: 11–16, Hibler 1993, Salapata 1993, 1997, 2006 (with further lists noted at 541 n. 1), Schuller 2004. Note also Wide 1909.

[42] Berlin Pergamon Museum no. 731 = Harrison 1912: 309 fig. 88 = Mitropoulou 1977: 85 (9) = Schouten 1967: 34 fig. 9 = *ThesCRA* 3.d no. 100 = Salapata 2006 fig. 3. However Salapata 2006: 542–7 contends that in this early example the serpent is not yet fully associated with the *kantharos*, and that what would become the familiar motif of the 'tippling serpent' has yet to be developed.

Fig. 7.1. A Spartan hero and heroine, shown in massive size, receive offerings from the living, whilst attended by a large snake. Laconian relief from Chrysapha, *c.*540 BC. Berlin, Pergamon Museum no. 731. © bpk / Antikensammlung, SMB / Jürgen Liepe.

an adjacent tree. Sometimes the horseback hero feeds it from a *phialē*. Sometimes the hero rather stands beside his mount, and sometimes heroines stand by too. Often there are adoring worshippers, and altars, and sometimes the serpent eats from the altar, either stretching up from the ground or down from its tree.[43] One noteworthy development of this variety of hero relief was the military demi-god Heron, who came to flourish in reliefs and wall paintings in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. His cult spread there certainly from the first century BC and may have originated with the Ptolemies' Thracian mercenaries. He is typically shown carrying a spear whilst feeding a serpent that hangs, treeless, in mid-air, sometimes looping.[44]

A third variety of hero-relief in which snakes sometimes appeared was that of the 'Totenmahl' scenes, 'hero feasts' or 'funeral banquets.' These originated in the

[43] *LIMC* Heros Equitans *passim*, esp. 3, 6, 34, 35, 41, 104–8, 113–126 *bis*, 145, 148–54, 166–85, 204–13, 215, 231–2, 240–9, 254, 324, 329, 331, 344, 347, 351, 356, 377, 380, 383, 391, 467–84, 486, 493, 556, 576, 639, and items catalogued at Mitropoulou 1977: 53–4, 66–78. Discussion at Cermanovic-Kuzmanovic et al. 1992. The earliest example of the general type is *LIMC* Heros Equitans 214, from the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia at Sparta. Cermanovic-Kuzmanovic et al. 1992: 1068 identify the 4th century BC *LIMC* Heros Equitans 104, from Corinth, as the earliest datable snake example, but the substantial remains of a large snake can surely be seen winding beneath the horse of the seemingly early 5th-century BC relief from Eltynia near Cnossus, *LIMC* Heros Equitans 215 (cf. 70).

[44] *LIMC* Heron, with Will 1990. His earliest datable image derives from 67 BC, *LIMC* Heron 7.

later fifth century BC and endured into the imperial period, and are found all across the Greek world. A divine banquet is held in honour of the heroized dead man; the snake coils under the food-table or, rampant, approaches the dead man as he reclines, or, as in the riding hero images, reaches out to him from an adjacent tree.[45]

From the archaic period onwards at Sparta, one pair of heroes in particular was associated with serpents in iconography, the Dioscuri, Castor and Polydeuces, who protected the house, those at sea, and those in war.[46] In one archaic relief serpents frame a representation of the humanoid pair;[47] in another the pair stand beneath a pediment decorated with a pair of serpents and the egg from which the boys themselves had hatched.[48] A fifth-century image of their abstract symbol, the H-shaped *dokana*, is decorated with a pair of snakes.[49] An early fourth-century relief salutes the early hero-heroine reliefs in its composition: one youth sits to feed a (single) serpent from a *kantharos*; the other stands behind.[50] From the fourth century BC also we find the Dioscuri's serpents coiling around vases adjacent to their human figures.[51] Hence the serpent coiling around a vase could become in itself a shorthand symbol for the Dioscuri, as on some Laconian coins.[52] The Dioscuri's symbolism is neatly and conveniently brought together in the second-century BC Argenidas relief. Here we have the two humanoid Dioscuri, with two sets of *dokana*, and between these two groups two amphoras, from one of which a (single) serpent hangs and drinks; there is also a ship's prow (reflecting their protection of sailors) and an altar with a boar-relief. Their worshipper Argenidas holds out his hand in the act of dedication.[53] Some interesting serpent-related images of the Dioscuri hail from outside Sparta too. A relief in the Izmir (Smyrna) Museum of the later fourth century BC shows each of the Dioscuri holding a horse by the reins and accompanied by an attendant. Between them is a column, from which serpents project to either side, towards their humanoid counterparts. The image salutes the riding-hero type; the Dioscuri were, after all, famous horsemen.[54] A Hellenistic seal from Nea Paphos shows the two caps (*piloi*) of the Dioscuri, with their stars above. Between them a serpent coils on an altar. Hermary suggests that the serpent is Agathos Daimon, with good reason when we compare the configuration of his Delos relief. However, we cannot but

[45] Küster 1913: 81–2, Harrison 1912: 307–16, with figs. 87, 89, 92, 1922: 348–52 with figs. 102–4, Thönges-Stringaris 1965, Mitropoulou 1976: 83–145, Will 1990, van Straten 1995: 92–100, Schmitt-Pantel et al. 2004, with *ThesCRA* 3.d no. 107.

[46] See the items catalogued at Mitropoulou 1977: 65–71, and more generally Hermary 1986; cf. also Küster 1913: 77–9, Bodson 1978: 84.

[47] Mitropoulou 1977: 57 (5); cf. Mitropoulou 1977: 55 (1), also archaic, but we cannot be completely sure from this relief in itself whether the two snakes represent the Dioscuri; and the late Hellenistic Mitropoulou 1977: 58–60 (8) and fig. 18, a relief fragment upon which a single Dioscurus survives, to be accompanied by a serpent snaking up the adjacent frame of the image.

[48] Mitropoulou 1977: 57–8 (6).

[49] Mitropoulou 1977: 55–6 (2) = Harrison 1912: 305 fig. 85.

[50] Mitropoulou 1977: 56–7 (3).

[51] As on Mitropoulou 1977: 58–9 (7) and fig. 17.

[52] Thus Mitropoulou 1977: 71 (10–11).

[53] Mitropoulou 1977: 57 (4); *LIMC* Dioskouroi 122 = Harrison 1912: 305 fig. 84.

[54] Mitropoulou 1977: 60–1 (9) and fig. 19.

feel the impact of the Dioscuri's own sometimes single serpent here, when we compare it, for example, with the Argenidas relief.[55]

THE ERINYES AND HECATE

Snakes were associated with other denizens of the underworld that were also ready to leave it on occasion to intervene in the world of the living: the Erinyes and Hecate, perhaps once closely related to each other. The Erinyes (Eumenides, Semnai, Furiae, 'Furies'), were very ancient deities in origin, appearing already in the Linear B tablets from Cnossus, where a singular Erinys (*e-ri-nu*) receives cult offerings.[56] Usually three in number, they enacted vengeance, particularly that of the dead, and particularly that of those killed by kin, as is clear not only from their celebrated role in Aeschylus' *Eumenides* but already from passing references to them in Homer's *Iliad* and in Hesiod. Accordingly they exhibit a close affinity with the dead heroes that manifest themselves in the form of serpents, although the precise nature of this relationship is controversial, and must remain obscure.[57]

Homer and Hesiod tell us nothing about the form of the Erinyes, but Aeschylus, in his *Oresteia* trilogy of 458 BC, and then Euripides have much to say. Since it is possible that all images of the Erinyes subsequent to the *Oresteia* are influenced by it, the one certainly identifiable prior image, on a black-figure lekythos of *c.*470 BC, assumes a particular importance (Fig. 7.2).[58] Here they are portrayed as three

[55] *LIMC* Dioskouroi 246; Hermary 1986 ad loc.

[56] KN Fp 1, 8; cf. also KN Fs 390. In the historical period cults for them are perhaps most strikingly attested at Argos, where we find a series of votive reliefs to the 'Eumenides' beginning in the 4th century BC: *LIMC* Erinys 112–19; cf. Mitropoulou 1977: 43–4, Henrichs 1994.

[57] On the Erinyes in general see Harrison 1899, 1922: 213–56, Mitropoulou 1977: 43–4, Junge 1983, Brown 1984, Sarian 1986, Henrichs 1994, Lloyd-Jones 1990, Sancassano 1997*a*: 159–86. Linear B: KN Fp 1, 8; cf. also KN Fs 390; in the historical period cults for them are perhaps most strikingly attested at Argos, where we find a series of votive reliefs to the 'Eumenides' beginning in the 4th century BC, *LIMC* Erinys 112–19.The Erinyes' connection with the underworld: Homer *Iliad* 19. 259–60; cf. Aeschylus *Eumenides* 264–8. Family vengeance: Homer *Iliad* 9. 453–6, 571–2, 15. 204, 21. 412–14. According to Hesiod *Theogony* 183–5, 472, they were born from the blood of the mutilated Uranus, and they are his avengers in the first instance; this makes them close relations of the Giants, who were also born from his blood (Aeschylus *Eumenides* 416, however, makes them daughters of Night). They are also, from the first, protectors of oaths: at Homer *Iliad* 19. 259–60 they are specifically said to punish the foresworn beneath the earth; at Hesiod *Works and Days* 803–4 they attend the birth of Oath (*Horkos*) from Strife (*Eris*); cf. Gantz 1993: 13–14.

[58] *LIMC* Erinys 7 = Hekate 95. The branches are presumably symbolic of an association with fertility: cf. Harrison 1899: 217, 1912: 281, Sarian 1986: 840–1. There have been speculative attempts to identify Erinyes in the iconographic record prior to 470 BC. An archaic terracotta from Athens, *LIMC* Athena 27, offers a figure with raised arms flanked by serpents; as Sarian 1986: 841 notes, the correspondence with the Erinyes' known iconography is too weak to justify the identification. Metopes from the mid 6th century BC Foce del Sele may illustrate, albeit in an unconventional way, scenes from the Agamemnon-Clytemnestra-Orestes story. In one of them a snake has coiled itself around a man who draws his sword to strike at it. Some have found this to be an Erinys attacking Orestes; cf. Gantz 1993: 679. A scarab from the late 6th century BC, *LIMC* Erinys 5, offers a female figure with wings and short chiton running and holding a serpent, but this may be a Gorgon rather than an Erinys. The same considerations apply to a black-figure vase in the Museo Gregoriano noted by Harrison 1899: 219–20

Fig. 7.2. An anguipede Hecate's two dog-heads tear a soul apart between them. Three Erinyes, with branch-like projections, attend. Attic black-figure lekythos, *c.*470 BC. Athens National Museum 19765 = *LIMC* Hekate 95 = Erinys 7. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

humanoid maidens with vine (?) branches seemingly growing out of their bodies. Serpents already lurk, indirectly at any rate. On the one hand there is a serpent-like quality to the branches. On the other, they are accompanied by a marvellous Hecate, also appearing in her first identifiable image, consisting of a pair of dog-heads in front, a maiden in the middle and a massive coiling serpent in the rear (the overall configuration is similar to Scylla's canonical form). Her dogs are devouring a tiny dead man or ghost between them, each pulling on an arm. Traces of the Erinyes' association with such a Hecate linger on in both Aeschylus and Euripides, with, serpent imagery aside, the former calling them 'dogs like Hecate' and the latter calling them 'dog-faced'.[59] Hecate's striking act of devouring may also find a milder reflection on the second iconographic document of the Erinyes to survive, another Attic lekythos, this one dated to *c.*460–450 BC and therefore of the Aeschylean era or possibly post-Aeschylean. Here an elegant winged Erinys runs, holding her serpent-entwined arms out in front of her, with a third serpent coiling around her head. The vase's legend has been read as *estheton* and construed as a dual imperative addressed by the humanoid maiden to the pair of serpents she holds out before her, 'Devour!'[60]

with fig. 5: on this a winged, front-facing, gorgon-like (but snakeless) female figure knee-runs whilst a serpent vigorously coils along below. This too is probably a deconstructed Gorgon. The most intriguing prospect of early Erinyes is offered by a black-figure cylix in the Munich Alte Pinakothek with a striking vineyard scene: Harrison 1899: 216–17 with fig. 2, 1912: 280 fig. 71. Four anguipede women tend and promote vines: two gather grapes in a basket, another holds a cup and the last plays the symposiac *aulos*, whilst on the other side of the cup the vines are eaten by naughty goats. The vines look very similar to those that grow from the Erinyes themselves on the Hecate vase.

[59] Aeschylus *Choephoroe* 924, Euripides *Orestes* 260.

[60] *LIMC* Erinys 1; discussion at Sarian 1986: 841. One might rather have expected ἐσθίετον.

For the remainder of antiquity the iconography of the Erinyes was to retain serpents in the two places of the *estheton* lekythos, either together or separately.[61] We find images with them in the hair alone from *c.*440 BC,[62] and in the hands or on the arms alone from *c.*400 BC.[63] Sometimes Erinys and serpent can be dissociated. On a second-century BC alabaster urn from Volterra a humanoid Erinys attacks Orestes, who has fled to an altar, whilst a large snake speeds towards it.[64] Like the *estheton* lekythos too, most of the subsequent iconographic tradition gives the Erinyes wings.[65] These signified their speed as they relentlessly pursued their victims, and indeed Euripides describes them as 'running, wing-bearing' (*dromades pterophoroi*).[66] But their speed was also commonly indicated in art by short tunics and running shoes or hunting boots, this already from *c.*450 BC.[67] From the middle of the fourth century BC the iconographic tradition begins to bestow weapons on the Erinyes in addition to their serpents. From *c.*370 BC we find swords,[68] from *c.*360–350 BC we find their weapon of choice, torches (fiery like venom?),[69] from the same date spears,[70] and from *c.*340 BC whips.[71] An Etruscan bronze mirror of *c.*380 BC gives an Erinys an intriguing but unconventional weapon: it gives her, self-reflexively, a bronze mirror of her own, in which she shows Orestes the face of Clytemnestra.[72]

For both Aeschylus and Euripides, the Erinyes are strongly serpent-associated or are indeed she-serpents themselves. In Aeschylus' *Eumenides* the word *drakainē*, 'she-serpent', is applied directly to them.[73] In the *Choephoroe* it is said rather that their bodies are thickly entwined with *drakontes*.[74] At other points in both plays they are compared to Gorgons, which may imply snake-hair or snakes

[61] Serpents both in the hair and in the hand/around the arm: *LIMC* Erinys 1 (460–450 BC), 11, 12, 27, 37, 38, 39, 41, 42, 50, 52 (250–240 BC; and also on the shoulders), 55, 58 (350–325 BC; a single large serpent winds around up the body and around the head), 64, 69, 70, 74, 97, 105, 107, 108.

[62] Serpents in hair: *LIMC* Erinys 4, 9, 20, 21, 43 (440–430 BC), 45, 49, 57, 59, 61, 63, 85, 86, 90 (5th-cent. AD MS illumination; an illustration of the *Aeneid* 6. 494–9, 548–56), 99, 104.

[63] Serpents in hand or around arm: *LIMC* Erinys 6 (an impressive Campanian bronze, *c.*400 BC), 18, 28–9, 30, 34, 35, 36 (*c.* AD 150; particularly large serpent), 48, 51, 67, 68, 73, 80 (*c.* AD 150; serpent winds around the Erinys' torch), 96, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119.

[64] *LIMC* Erinys 31.

[65] Wings: *LIMC* Erinys 1 (460–450 BC), 6, 11, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22–3, 25, 30, 32–3, 34, 37, 38, 42, 43, 44, 47, 52, 53, 54, 55, 58, 59, 60, 61, 65, 70, 74, 82, 83, 87, 89, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 98, 100, 101, 102, 105, 106, 106a, 107, 108, 111. Again, it is unclear whether *LIMC* Erinys 5 (late 6th cent. BC) is relevant.

[66] Euripides *Orestes* 316; cf. Gantz 1993: 15 for the notion that pursuit might itself have been in origin the Erinyes' principal mode of torment.

[67] Short chitons and/or running shoes/boots: *LIMC* Erinys 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12a, 15, 16, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28–9, 30, 31, 32–3, 41 (*c.*450 BC), 42, 43, 44, 50, 51, 52, 56, 57, 59, 61, 63, 65, 69, 70, 72, 73, 74, 78, 79, 82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 89, 92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 99, 100, 101, 102, 104, 107, 108, 109, 111. Again, it is unclear whether *LIMC* Erinys 5 (late 6th cent. BC) is relevant.

[68] Swords: *LIMC* Erinys 13 (*c.*370 BC), 14, 15, 25, 26, 30, 34, 79, 106. For discussion of the Erinyes' various weapons see Sarian 1986: 841–2.

[69] Torches: *LIMC* Erinys 4, 9 (360–350 BC), 10, 11, 19, 23, 26, 31, 32–3, 35, 45, 55, 57, 58, 61, 66, 71, 72, 80, 82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 90, 92, 94, 95, 99, 100, 102, 103, 107, 108, 109, 111.

[70] Spears: *LIMC* Erinys 10, 11, 21, 55 (*c.*360–350 BC), 56, 85, 86, 104, 106, 108.

[71] Whips: *LIMC* Erinys 11 (*c.*340), 12a, 36, 80, 89.

[72] *LIMC* Erinys 68.

[73] Aeschylus *Eumenides* 128; cf. Harrison 1899: 213.

[74] Aeschylus *Choephoroe* 1049–50.

in the hair.[75] In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris* Orestes sees an Erinys as a (singular) she-serpent of Hades (*Haidou drakaina*) that wishes to kill him. She has (plural) mouths of terrible vipers (*echidnai*) that breathe both fire and murder-blood.[76] In the *Orestes* the Erinyes are bloody-faced *drakontōdeis korai*, 'serpent-like maidens'.[77] In his *Electra* we hear that Athene will ward off the Erinyes, with their *drakontes*, from Orestes, and that they have snakes twining around their arms (*cheirodrakontes*).[78] Euripides engaged in subtle disputes with Aeschylus on some of the Erinyes' other attributes. Whereas Aeschylus had said that they were 'wingless, black and abominable',[79] Euripides explicitly gave them wings (no doubt reflecting an older tradition, literary or iconographic, against which Aeschylus is reacting in curiously asserting the negative term 'wingless').[80] And whereas Aeschylus had explained the Erinyes' blackness through their clothing,[81] Euripides rather gave them black skins.[82] Their best-known descriptions in the ancient tradition are probably those offered by Virgil in the *Aeneid*. Here Tisiphone carries a whip in her right hand and a serpent in her left; Allecto is explicitly compared to a Gorgon and carries venomous snakes in her hair, one of which she detaches and throws upon or even into Amata in order to madden her and to sow discord; and the twin Dirae, borne by Night together with the third Fury Megaera, are winged and bound with the coils of serpents.[83] This is the first time the Erinyes' personal names appear in the extant literary tradition, but Apollodorus subsequently confirms them as canonical.[84]

Harrison sees the traditional form of the Erinyes as evolving out of a combination of the tomb-serpent and the tiny winged ghosts that accompany them in or at their tombs on the archaic pots discussed above. Her inference is then that the tomb-serpents are themselves Erinyes in their original form. She surely has a case to be answered, but her view has not found favour with more recent scholars.[85]

Let us return to Hecate.[86] Her association with the dead-avenging Erinyes on the *c.*470 BC lekythos (Fig. 7.2) makes sense in the light of the mages' explanation—according to Hippocrates—of the terrors of the night as 'the attacks of

[75] Aeschylus *Eumenides* 46–56 (Harpies too), *Choephoroe* 1048. Cf. Sarian 1986: 840.

[76] Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 285–90.

[77] Euripides *Orestes* 256.

[78] Euripides *Electra* 1256, 1345.

[79] Aeschylus *Eumenides* 51–2.

[80] Euripides *Iphigenia in Tauris* 285–90, *Orestes* 316.

[81] Aeschylus *Eumenides* 352, *Choephororoe* 1049; cf. also *Agamemnon* 462, *Seven* 972.

[82] Euripides *Electra* 1345, *Orestes* 321.

[83] Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 555–672, 7. 323–72, 12. 845–8.

[84] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 1. 4; cf. the important cautions at Gantz 1993: 15.

[85] Harrison 1899: 214–17. Note Aeschylus *Seven* 978–9, where 'shade of Oedipus' is in direct apposition to 'black Erinys': *πότνιά τ' Οἰδίπου σκιά, | μέλαιν' Ἐρινύς*. For Harrison the Museo Gregoriano vase (discussed in note above) represents a key transitional phase in the amalgamation. Harrison's view was taken by Küster 1913: 62–72, but has been opposed by Sarian 1986: 840–1 (who regards the Erinyes' serpents more loosely as symbolic of the chthonic and, like their branches, of fertility) and Gantz 1993: 526, 679.

[86] For Hecate in general see Heckenbach 1912, Küster 1913: 112–15, Kraus 1960, Nouveau-Piobb 1961, Boedeker 1983, Johnston 1990 (with care), D. R. West 1995: 189–92 (highly speculative), Sarian 1992, Sauzeau 2000, Lautwein 2009.

Hecate and the onslaughts of heroes'.[87] Her anguiform nature is noticed again in a limited but nonetheless striking series of images and texts from the Classical period onwards, and in these it sometimes appears that she retains a tight association both with the Erinyes and with the underworld: an Aristophanes fragment speaks of 'Hecate of the earth (*chthonia*) rolling coils of snakes' whilst a Sophocles fragment describes her as 'garlanded with oak and the twisted coils of savage *drakontes*'.[88] Aristophanes' words suggest an anguipede, like the Hecate of the lekythos. Sophocles' combination of serpent and plant is also generally suggestive of that image with its associated branching Erinyes, whilst his specification of *drakontes* in the hair assimilates Hecate to images of the Erinyes of the *estheton*-lekythos type.

A first-century AD lead prayer for justice from the Athenian Agora assigns thieves to the attention of a range of underworld powers, Pluto, Hermes, the Moirai, Persephone, and the Erinyes, but principally to Hecate, described as 'three-faced'. She is addressed as 'eater of the things the gods demand' and asked to 'chop out the hearts of the thieves or the thief', which again puts us in mind of the soul-devouring Hecate of the lekythos. The text is accompanied by characters and a drawing of a six-armed Hecate (doubtless she is three-bodied too, though the central portion of the image is hard to construe). The upper pair of arms hold torches aloft; the middle pair brandish whips; the bottom pair consist of snakes with tongues protruding.[89]

In Lucian's second-century AD *Philopseudes* we meet a Hecate of a form seemingly quite similar again to the lekythos image, for all its satirically exaggerated nature. Eucrates tells how he encountered Hecate one day in the woods: 'I saw a fearsome woman approaching me, almost half a stadium's length high. In her left hand she held a torch and in her right a sword twenty cubits long. Below the waist she had snake-foot; above it she resembled a Gorgon, so far as concerns the look in her eyes and her terrible appearance, I mean. Instead of hair, writhing snakes fell down in curls around her neck, and some of them coiled over her shoulders.' He goes on to explain that the goddess' dogs, by whose barking her arrival was anticipated, were 'taller than Indian elephants . . . similarly black and shaggy, with dirty, matted hair'. Eucrates was able to avert the visitation with a magic ring. As he activated it, 'Hecate stamped on the ground with her snake-foot and created a huge chasm, as deep as Tartarus. Presently, she jumped into it and was gone.' Eucrates was then able to peer into the underworld before the chasm closed behind her.[90] The detail of the single serpent-tail matches strikingly with the Hecate of the lekythos. The narrative leaves it unclear whether Hecate's dogs are attached to her, again as on the lekythos, but the possibility remains open. Lucian does not give us a direct indication of Hecate's purpose in this manifestation,

[87] Hippocrates *On the Sacred Disease* 1. 38: Ἑκάτης φασὶν εἶναι ἐπιβολὰς καὶ ἡρώων ἐφόδους.

[88] Aristophanes F515 K-A; Sophocles F535 *TrGF*: στεφανωσαμένη δρυΐ καὶ πλεκταῖς ὠμῶν σπείραισι δρακόντων.

[89] *SEG* xxx no. 326 (with important emendations from Jordan) = *SGD* no. 21 = Gager 1992 no. 84, with illustration at p. 181. See the discussions at Elderkin 1937, B. R. Jordan 1980, and Gager 1992 ad loc.

[90] Lucian *Philopseudes* 22, 24, with discussion at Ogden 2007: 161–70. Note also the combination of the motifs of a terrifying approach of Hecate and the opening up of the underworld at Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 255–62.

but her explicit association with the underworld suggests once more that she is concerned here above all with the punishment of souls. A tradition of ancient scholarship represents Hecate in similar form: it tells that she sends apparitions of anguipede *empousai* upon people but also that these *empousai* may be Hecate herself (cf. Ch. 2).[91]

Finally, some imperial-period statuettes show a triple-bodied Hecate in the round. In a bronze statuette one of her three humanoid figures brandishes a serpent, whilst the other two are distinguished by a crescent-moon and flower.[92] In a Poros statuette from Athens of the second or third century AD one of the three figures holds a coiling serpent in her left hand (the right hand, which may similarly have held another coiling serpent, is lost). Another of the figures holds a long torch in each hand. Two dogs and a rectangular altar lie on the ground between them. Furthermore, all three figures have late-Gorgon-style large rounded heads, reminding us of Lucian's description of his Hecate's head, though their locks are not obviously serpentine.[93] In two similar bronzes of the second century AD, two of the three figures have serpents coiling in or over their arms, whilst the third holds two short torches.[94]

ANGUIFORM HEROES OF ATTICA

Attica boasted no less than three anguiform heroes whose serpent or part-serpent form expressed their special, protective connection with their land. We have no comparable set of evidence for other states, though one might imagine that the Dioscuri played a similar role in Sparta.

Cecrops (and Draco)

The myths of Cecrops, Erectheus, and Ericthonius are heavily dittographic. They are expressed in their most continuous form in Apollodorus' summary, which also supplies us with the earliest unrationalized account of Cecrops to survive.[95]

[91] Schol. Aristophanes *Frogs* 293, *Suda*, and *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. ἔμπουσα.

[92] *LIMC* Hekate 152. [93] *LIMC* Hekate 166.

[94] *LIMC* Hekate 157–8. In addition to the cases laid out here, a Hecate also appears on undated *cistophoroi* from Ephesus alongside a tangle of snakes, but it does not seem that these snakes are directly related to her: *LIMC* Hekate 86. And the same is probably true of the late-imperial green jasper magical gem on the reverse of which Hecate is paired with the Ouroboros serpent: *LIMC* Hekate 301; on the broadly comparable gems at 302 and 304 Hecate and Ouroboros appear on different sides of the stones. Another doubtful representation, from the Izmir Archaeological Museum, which may incorporate a serpent (as well as a dog) is described and illustrated at Mitropoulou 1977: 29–31 with fig. 7.

[95] Principal sources: Herodotus 7. 44, Aristophanes *Wasps* 438, *Wealth* 773 with schol., Eupolis *Kolakes* F159 K-A, Euripides *Ion* 1163–5, 'Antiochus-Pherecydes' *FGrH* 333 F1, Thucydides 2. 15, Xenophon *Memorabilia* 3. 5. 10, Philochorus *FGrH* 328 F93–8, Clearchus of Soli F73 Wehrli (*apud* Athenaeus 555d), Hermippus of Smyrna F82 Wehrli = *FGrH* 1026 F3, Callimachus *Iambi* 4 F194 line 68 Pf., Marmor Parium (264–263 BC) *FGrH* 239 A1, Lycophron *Alexandra* 110–11, with Tzetzes ad loc., Varro *apud* Augustine *City of God* 18. 9, Diodorus 1. 28. 7, Cicero *Laws* 2. 63, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 2. 555, Pliny *Natural History* 7. 194, Plutarch *Moralia* 551ef, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 14–15, Tacitus

According to this, Cecrops was born of Earth, and was an anguipede with a body combined from man and *drakōn*.[96] He was the first king of Attica, naming the place Cecropia after himself. He aided Athene in winning the role of patron for the city by bearing witness to the fact that she had planted the olive first. He married Agraulus and had from her a son Erisycthon and daughters (another) Agraulus, Herse, and Pandrosus. Scholars, most recently Gourmelen, have conventionally accepted that Cecrops' anguiform nature symbolized his connection with the earth.[97]

The earliest point to which Cecrops can be pinned down in any shape or form is the period just prior to the Persian invasion, the invasion itself being the terminus ante for the construction of his Cecropeion.[98] Kasper-Butz, Krauskopf, and Knittlmayer may well be right to find the immediate cause of his manifestation in the record in Cleisthenes' elevation of him to the role of one of the ten new tribal heroes of Attica in 508/7 BC.[99] In his iconographic tradition, from this point until it peters out in the mid fourth century, Cecrops is usually found either in the form of a simple anguipede,[100] or as fully humanoid,[101] and in both cases

Annals 11. 14. 2, Hyginus *Fabulae* 48, 158, Pausanias 1. 5. 3, 8. 2. 2–3, Antoninus Liberalis *Metamorphoses* 6, Justin 2. 6. 7, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 41. 58–64, Hesychius s.vv. *Δράκαυλος*, *ἐν δ' Αἴθυια* (the younger Cecrops?), Georgius Harmatolus *Chronicon* 1. 30 (9th cent. AD), *Suda* s.vv. *Δράκαυλος*, *Κέκροψ*, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *ἐπακρία χώρα*. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Kekrops, Kron 1976: 259–2, Gourmelen 2004: 457–66, Discussions: C. Robert 1920–6: i. 137–40, Kron 1976: 84–103, Kearns 1989: 80–91, 110–12, 175–6, Parker 1990, Kasper-Butz, Krauskopf, and Knittlmayer 1992, Gantz 1993: 223–9, Bollansée 1999: 121–4, Gourmelen 2004, Ustinova 2005: 75.

[96] Cecrops' autochthony: Hermippus of Smyrna F82 Wehrli = *FGrH* 1026 F3 (*γηγενής*), Lycophron *Alexandra* 111 (*γηγενής*), Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 14 (*αὐτόχθων*), Hyginus *Fabulae* 48 (a son of Terra), Antoninus Liberalis *Metamorphoses* 6 (*αὐτόχθων*), Eusebius *Praeparatio evangelica* 10. 9. 9. Hyginus *Fabulae* 158 makes Cecrops a son of Vulcan/Hephaestus, no doubt in confusion with Ericthonius; cf. Gourmelen 2004: 123–4.

[97] Gourmelen 2004: 24–31, 44–5, 47–8.

[98] It is mentioned already in *IG* i^3 4B 10. The Erectheum account's inscription locates the Cecropion of its day in the south-west corner of this temple: *IG* i^3 474 lines 56–63. 'Antiochus-Pherecydes' *FGrH* 333 F1 knew of a grave of Cecrops on the acropolis. Discussion at Kron 1976: 87–9, Gourmelen 2004: 293–5.

[99] Kasper-Butz, Krauskopf, and Knittlmayer 1992: 1089–90. It is remotely possible that Cecrops is to be found in a bearded and possibly sceptred figure on a fragment of a kotyle crater by Sophilos of *c.*580 BC, *LIMC* Kekrops 4 (= Gourmelen 2004: fig. 1; cf. Kasper-Butz, Krauskopf, and Knittlmayer 1992: 1090), but this must remain conjectural. In any case, we can tell nothing significant of his form here, since the lower part of his body is missing.

[100] Anguipede: *LIMC* Kekrops 6 (= Gourmelen 2004: fig. 9, 490–480 BC—but see below), 10 (= Gourmelen 2004: fig. 12; *c.*460 BC), 16 (= Gourmelen 2004: fig. 16; 460–450 BC), 28 (Parthenon: 447–431 BC), 7 (= Gourmelen 2004: fig. 10; 440–430 BC), 1 (= Gourmelen 2004: fig. 15; 430–420 BC), 2 (425–400 BC), 3, 8, 9 (8, 9 = Gourmelen 2004: figs.11, 14; late 5th cent. BC), 24–5 (*c.*400 BC), 34 (mid 4th cent. BC). *LIMC* Kekrops 35 is a fragment of a marble relief from the Acropolis of 412–411 BC, which some have thought to represent Cecrops with a serpent: Kasper-Butz, Krauskopf, and Knittlmayer 1992 ad loc. is sceptical. Both Kasper-Butz, Krauskopf, and Knittlmayer 1992 (*LIMC* Kekrops) and Gourmelen 2004: 312–14 catalogue Cecrops images employing his humanoid vs. anguiform shape as a principal criterion of distinction.

[101] Humanoid: *LIMC* Kekrops 13 = Gourmelen 2004: fig. 5, 23 (*c.*480 BC), 21, 30 (480–470 BC), 22 (*c.*470 BC), 17–20 (470–460 BC), 31 (Parthenon: 447–431 BC), 29, 33 (430–420 BC), 37 (410–409 BC), 40 (400–475 BC), 14 (390–380 BC), 38 (398–397 BC), 36 (377–376 BC), 39 (375–374 BC), 26–7 (mid 4th cent. BC).

normally with his familiar beard, sceptre, and tunic or cloak. His anguipede form may have been determined in part by a folk-etymological reading of his name, *kerkos* (*sic*) signifying 'tail'.[102] Cecrops' earliest extant representation is probably that of a lekythos dated to 490–480 BC, and this is anomalous in contrast to the subsequent record. Here a bearded and sceptred Cecrops has his familiar serpent-tail, but it curls up behind him and then divides into two. Kasper-Butts, Krauskoopf, and Knittlmayer read this as an attempt to represent (Giant-style) serpent-legs.[103] This seems unlikely, given that the two tails point vertically upwards. But an attempt to represent a fish-tail may be a possibility. One of the comic poet Eupolis' characters observed in 421 BC that, 'and they say that Cecrops had the upper part of a man, down as far as his buttocks, and the lower parts of a tuna'.[104] On a stater of Cyzicus, dated to the second half of the fifth century BC, a naked and clearly anguipede Cecrops (if it is he) holds an olive branch and hovers over a tuna fish.[105] There is enough here to make us contemplate that Cecrops may on occasion have been regarded as sharing his physiology with a tuna as opposed to a serpent. We are reminded again of the general kinship between *drakontes* and *kētē*.[106]

To a large extent, the form in which Cecrops is represented iconographically depends upon the scene-type in which he is shown.[107] He is always an anguipede when he attends the birth of Ericthonius (from *c.*490 to the later fifth century BC; Fig. 7.3), and he is an anguipede too in a unique 460–450 BC scene in which he appears to make a libation to Nike, and again in a unique mid fourth-century BC relief in which he is approached by a line of worshippers alongside Athene (one wonders whether his configuration here was not influenced by the votive reliefs in which worshippers approached Zeus Meilichios, which flourished at this date).[108] He is always humanoid when in the role of a tribal hero (480–420 BC), or when he attends the punishment of his daughters (480–380 BC), Boreas' pursuit of Oreithyia (480–470 BC), or Hermes' pursuit of one of his daughters (470–460 BC), and he is humanoid too in a unique scene with Bouzyges (430–420 BC).[109] However, he is shown in both forms in scenes of the dispute between Athene

[102] Frisk 1960–72 and Chantraine 2009 s.v. *Κέκροψ*, Gourmelen 2004: 63–7, 359–62. Gourmelen 2004: 351–66 further relates the name to the cicada-clips (*τέττιγγες*) that Thucydides 1. 6 (cf. also Philostratus *Imagines* 2. 17. 6) tells us the Athenians once wore in their hair, given that the term *κερκώπη* is aligned with *τέττιγξ* at Aristophanes F53 K-A (= Athenaeus 133b).

[103] *LIMC* Kekrops 6 = Erechtheus 1 = Ge 13 = Gourmelen 2004: fig. 9, with Kasper-Butts, Krauskopf, and Knittlmayer 1992: 1085 ad loc.

[104] Eupolis *Kolakes* F159 K-A. Gourmelen 2004: 42 is inclined to believe that the significance of this is nothing more than an attempt to pour derision on the illustrious hero.

[105] *LIMC* Kekrops 11 = Erechtheus 24.

[106] Kron 1988 on *LIMC* Erechtheus 1 describes the tail in passing as a 'fish-tail'.

[107] A partly similar analysis to that found in this paragraph at Gourmelen 2004: 317–21.

[108] Birth of Ericthonius: *LIMC* Kekrops 6–11 (7–10 = Gourmelen 2004: figs. 10–12, 14); discussion at Gourmelen 2004: 131–5, 198–207. Nike: *LIMC* Kekrops 16 = Gourmelen 2004: fig. 16. Line of worshippers: *LIMC* Kekrops 34.

[109] Tribal hero: *LIMC* Kekrops 30–3. Punishment of daughters: *LIMC* Kekrops 13 (= Gourmelen 2004: fig. 5), 14. Boreas' pursuit of Oreithyia: *LIMC* Kekrops 21–2. Hermes' pursuit of his daughters: *LIMC* Kekrops 17–20; discussion at Gourmelen 2004: 163–9. Bouzyges: *LIMC* Kekrops 29; discussion at Gourmelen 2004: 239–45.

Fig. 7.3. The anguipede Cecrops attends the birth of Ericthonius. Attic red-figure bowl, *c.*440–430 BC. Berlin Staatliche Museen F2537 = *LIMC* Kekrops 7. © bpk / Antikensammlung, SMB / Ingrid Geske-Heiden.

and Poseidon for the patronage of Attica: anguipede in scenes of *c.*400 BC,[110] humanoid in scenes from the mid fourth century.[111] One might propose that his earthborn quality was of more pressing significance in the birth-of-Ericthonius scenes and the Athene-Poseidon scenes, and that he is shown as an anguipede in these scenes for that reason.[112]

When shown as an anguipede, Cecrops more often than not also carries a *phialē* (in addition to his sceptre). Only in the earliest extant of such scenes, that of *c.*460–450 BC, does he appear to be making an offering with it to someone else, Nike.[113] Otherwise, from *c.*430–420 onwards, the *phialē* seems to function as his own attribute, and we are compelled to think of Hygieia, ever offering her *phialē* to herself in the form of her serpent counterpart, and attested as doing so from just around the same time (Ch. 9).[114]

Several doublets were developed for Cecrops. We learn of younger kings of Attica also called Cecrops, one the son of Erectheus, the other the son of Pandion, though we hear nothing of their form.[115] Antoninus Liberalis knows of one Periphas, an autochthonous king of Attica prior even to Cecrops, who was

[110] *LIMC* Kekrops 24–5. [111] *LIMC* Kekrops 26–7.

[112] Cf. Kasper-Butz, Krauskopf, and Knittlmayer 1992: 1090.

[113] *LIMC* Kekrops 16 = Gourmelen 2004: fig. 16.

[114] *LIMC* Kekrops 16 (460–50 BC; Nike), 1 (430–420 BC), 9 (later 5th cent. BC; Athene rather seems to libate to Cecrops), 11 (later 5th cent. BC), 34 (mid 4th cent. BC; Cecrops holds the *phialē* but is approached by mortal worshippers).

[115] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 15 (son of Erectheus); Pausanias 9. 33 (son of Pandion); cf. Gourmelen 2004: 67–75.

worshipped as Zeus in several guises, including that of the (anguiform) Zeus Meilichios. Zeus-proper transformed him into his sceptre-bearing eagle.[116] But the most interesting case is that of Draco. The ostensibly historical record famously names him as the first lawgiver of Athens: he is given a floruit in the 39th Olympiad, 624–621 BC, and attributed most frequently with a law against homicide, but also with a law against idleness, and indeed an entire constitution.[117] His role as Athens' first lawgiver is one he shares precisely with Cecrops.[118] Draco's name consists simply of our familiar Greek word for serpent, *Drakōn, -ontos*: he is indeed yet another 'man called *Drakōn*'.[119] Whilst some have doubted Draco's reality for their own historical reasons or because of their own presumptions about the evolution of Athenian law,[120] his remarkable correspondence with Cecrops has been overlooked. We must conclude either that Draco represents an early stage in the rationalization of Cecrops, or that he represents a historical figure so heavily assimilated to Cecrops in tradition as to have lost all traces of his original identity. It is interesting for both Cecrops and Draco alike that Python should have been regarded as the guardian of the shrine of Themis, 'Law' at Delphi.[121]

Ericthonius

Ericthonius and Erectheus, like Cecrops, foundational kings of Attica, are complexly intertwined figures, with the latter becoming the patron-hero of one of the ten Cleisthenic tribes. It is beyond the scope of the current work to investigate

[116] Antoninus Liberalis 6; cf. Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1159 (unpersuasive), Gourmelen 2004: 93–7.

[117] Principal sources: Cratinus F300 K-A, ML 86 lines 4–6 = *IG* i^3 104 (decree of 409 BC referring to the homicide law), Lysias F40b Carey, Andocides 1. 83 (quoting decree of 403 BC), Xenophon *Oeconomicus* 14. 4, Aristotle *Politics* 1274b, *Rhetoric* 1400b, [Aristotle] *Ath. Pol.* 4. 1, 7. 1, 41. 2 (clear statements of Draco's role as the first writer of laws for Athens; his homicide law and his constitution), Demosthenes 23. 51 (homicide law), 47. 71, Demades F23 de Falco, Plutarch *Solon* 17 (homicide law), Tatian *Against the Hellenes* 41, Pausanias 9. 36, Clement of Alexandria *Stromateis* 1. 80. 1, Pollux *Onomasticon* 8. 42, 8. 125, 9. 61. Discussions: Ruschenbusch 1960, Stroud 1968, Gagarin 1981, Rhodes 1981: 109–18, Carawan 1998.

[118] For Cecrops as Athens' first lawmaker see Hermippus of Smyrna F82 Wehrli = *FGrH* 1026 F3, Philochorus *FGrH* 328 F93–8, Xenophon *Memorabilia* 3. 5. 10, Callimachus *Iambi* 4 F194 line 68 Pf., Pausanias 8. 2. 2–3, *Suda* s.vv. *Κέκροψ*, *Προμηθεύς*, schol. Aristophanes *Wealth* 773. Discussion at Gourmelen 2004: 239–45, Harding 2008: 194.

[119] And the ancients were able to read his name in this way for themselves: Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1400b records a *bon mot* by Herodicus (or Prodicus) to the effect that his laws belonged not to a human Draco but to an actual *drakōn*, in view of their harshness. Note also the famous quip of Demades (F23 de Falco) that Draco wrote his laws in blood. We do know of historical individuals with the name *Drakōn* in the ancient Greek world, most famously in the family of Hippocrates, where, however, the name is evidently given in tribute to the family's patron deity Asclepius. See the various volumes of *LGPN* s.v.

[120] e.g. Beloch 1912–27: i. 2, 358–62.

[121] If one accepts the standard historicizing supposition, as e.g. at Hammond 1959: 156, that Draco's famous homicide law was designed to bring an end to the blood-feuds ensuing from the Cylonian affair a decade before (Herodotus 5. 71, Thucydides 1. 126), then one may also wish to contemplate the cult of Zeus Meilichios in Argos, where the serpent god was honoured for bringing a blood-feud to an end (Pausanias 2. 20. 1–2).

the full extent of their involvement in the developing ideology of Athenian autochthony and festival practice. Suffice it to say here that we will not demur from the generally accepted view that a single figure, whom Homer indicates to have been called Erectheus, was at an early stage differentiated into two distinct but still related figures, 'post-split'-Erectheus and Ericthonius.[122] It is to the Ericthonius figure that the principal serpent-interest attaches.[123]

Our earliest coherent account of the birth of Ericthonius and the Cecropid punishment, the key part of his myth for our purposes, is that of the fourth- or third-century BC Amelesagoras, as preserved by Antigonus of Carystus. He tells that Hephaestus attempted to rape Athene but that his sperm fell on the ground. The earth produced Ericthonius as a result, and Athene reared him. She put him in a basket (*kistē*) and gave him to the Cecropids to mind until she should return, telling them not to look inside. But Agraulus and Pandrosus opened the box and saw two *drakontes* beside Ericthonius.[124] Apollodorus' account follows roughly the same course, but differs in detail. According to him, Hephaestus fell in love with Athene when she came to him for arms and he tried to rape her. She was able to escape, since he was lame, and his seed fell on her leg. She wiped it off with wool (*eri-on*) in disgust and threw it on the ground (i.e. *chthōn*). Eri-cthon-ius was produced from this. Athene reared him in secret from the other gods, as she wished to make him immortal. She hid him in a basket (*kistē*) and gave it to Pandrosus, forbidding her to open it. But Pandrosus' sisters opened it in curiosity and found a (single) *drakōn* coiling around the baby. Some say they were destroyed by the *drakōn*, others that Athene punished them with madness so that they threw themselves from the Acropolis. Ericthonius in due course became king of Athens.[125] (In fact the first element of Ericthonius' name derives from the intensive *eri-*, and his name actually signifies 'very chthonic'.)[126]

There were four traditions in all about the contents of the basket. In the first Ericthonius was a humanoid baby guarded by a pair of *drakontes*. This is first

[122] Homer *Iliad* 2. 547, *Odyssey* 7. 81. 'Ericthonius' seemingly appeared in the early epic *Danais*, in which he is already said to have appeared from the ground: F2 West.

[123] Principal texts (for the Ericthonius story; sources bearing principally on Erectheus are omitted): *Danais* F2 West, Sophocles F643 *TrGF* (*apud* Hesychius s.v. *Δράκαυλος*), Euripides *Ion* 16–28, 267–82, 1427–32, Amelesagoras *FGrH* 330 F1 = Antigonus of Carystus *Mirabilia* 12, Eratosthenes *Catasterismi*; 13, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 2. 552–64, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 14. 6, Pausanias 1. 18. 2, 1. 24. 5–7, Hyginus *Fabulae* 166, *Astronomica* 2. 13, Lactantius *Divinae Institutiones* 1. 17, schol. Germanicus *Aratea* pp. 394–5 Eyssenhardt, Servius on Virgil *Georgics* 3. 113, Augustine *City of God* 18. 12, Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 41. 58–64, Fulgentius *Mitologiae* 2. 11, First Vatican Mythographer 2. 26, Second Vatican Mythographer 48, schol. Plato *Timaeus* 23e, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 111, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *Ἐρεχθεύς*. Powell 1906: 56–86 offers a convenient repertorium. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Erechtheus, Kron 1976: 249–59. Discussions: Powell 1906, Cook 1914–40: iii. 181–8, 218–23, 237–61, M. Fowler 1943, Burkert 1966, 1983*a*: 150–4, Kron 1976: 32–83, 1981, 1988, Mitropoulou 1977: 25–6, N. Robertson 1983, 1985, Brulé 1987: 13–79, Kearns 1989: 110–15, 160–1, Parker 1990, Blake Tyrell 1991: 133–51, Gantz 1993: 233–7, Loraux 1993, Reeder 1995*b*, Shapiro 1995, Gourmelen 2004 esp. 329–40, Sourvinou-Inwood 2011: 24–134.

[124] Amelesagoras *FGrH* 330 F1; in addition to Jacoby's commentary ad loc., see also Harding 2008: 28–9 and 199–202. The intriguing Hesychius s.v. *Δράκαυλος*, incorporating Sophocles F643 *TrGF*, seemingly implies that in his *Tympanistai* the poet named one of the Cecropids *Drakaulos* (cf. *Agraulos*) on the basis that Athene put the *drakōn* to live (*aulisai*) with the girls.

[125] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 14. 6.

[126] Bodson 1978: 80–1.

found on a British Museum pelike of 440–430 BC (baby Ericthonius in a round basket is watched over by a pair of snakes, with Athene standing by),[127] then in Euripides' *Ion* and then in Amelesagoras, as noted.[128] It is possible that Phylarchus was influenced by the Ericthonian double-guardian-*drakontes* tradition when he said that there were two *oikouroi opheis* (Ch. 10).[129] In the second tradition, Ericthonius was himself a pure *drakōn*. This also seems to be hinted at already in the *Ion*. The play twice mentions a custom according to which, as it seems, it was the practice for the 'Erectheid' Athenians to dress their babies in a pair of golden serpents. First we are told that such dressing preserves the 'custom . . . of the earthborn (*gēgenēs*) Ericthonius', which is compatible with the play's earlier assertion that a humanoid baby was guarded by a pair of *drakontes*. But then we are told, seemingly, that the golden snakes are themselves 'imitations of ancient Ericthonius'.[130] It emerges in later sources too, being found in Hyginus' *Astronomica* (*Ericthonius anguis*), Pausanias' conjecture that the serpent of Phidias' Athene Parthenos statue 'could be Ericthonius' and, seemingly, in Philostratus' curious assertion that Athene once bore a *drakōn* to the Athenians.[131] In the third tradition, Ericthonius was a humanoid baby guarded by a single *drakōn*. In literature the single guardian-snake is first mentioned in Ovid and then Probus, Apollodorus, as noted, and Augustine. Probus observes that some hold that the constellation of Draco is the serpent that Athene set to guard Ericthonius, subsequently catasterized by her.[132] In the fourth tradition, not attested before the second century AD, but vigorously thereafter, Ericthonius was an anguipede like Cecrops.[133]

[127] *LIMC* Aglauros 18 = Athena 480 = Erechtheus 36 = Reeder 1995b no. 69; cf. Kron 1988: 946. *LIMC* Erechtheus 31 = Erysichthon II 2 (*c.*390–380 BC) gives us a Cecropid sitting with a closed round basket of the same sort; for interesting observations on the patterning of this basket and that of the fragment *LIMC* Erechtheus 30, see Oakley 1982. *LIMC* Erechtheus 45 is misleadingly headed 'Erichthonius between snakes?', for, as the commentary ad loc. makes clear, the image in question is one of those in which a head of Medea (identified in the legend!) appears between two snakes.

[128] Euripides *Ion* 16928, Amelesagoras *FGrH* 330 F1.

[129] Phylarchus *FGrH* 81 F72 = Photius *Lexicon* s.v. *oikouros ophis*; cf. Gourmelen 2004: 342.

[130] Euripides *Ion* 1427–31, *Ἐριχθωνίου γε τοῦ πάλαι μιμήματα*. Discussion at Bodson 1978: 79–80, Gourmelen 2004: 125–41. These references leave it unclear as to whether the pairs of serpents are worn, somehow connected, in the form of a single necklace or in the form of a pair of separate bracelets. The former possibility is encouraged by the fact that Ion's mother, Creusa, is said to keep her deleterious drugs in a 'golden necklace' (998–1015), the latter by the discoveries of serpent-bracelets found in some children's graves in the Ceramicus (Gourmelen 2004: 341, with evidence). At 1261–5 Creusa is accused, in her cruelty but with evident dramatic irony, of herself being the child of a viper (*echidna*) or a *drakōn*.

[131] Pausanias 1. 18. 2, 1. 24. 5–7 (*LIMC* Erechtheus 46), Philostratus *Apollonius* 7. 24; Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 13.

[132] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 2. 561; Probus on Virgil *Georgics* 1. 244; Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 14. 6; Augustine *City of God* 18. 12 repeats Apollodorus' detail of the (single) serpent coiling around the baby.

[133] Hyginus *Fabulae* 166 (*inferiorem partem draconis habuit*), *Astronomica* 2. 13 Servius on Virgil *Georgics* 3. 113 (*puer draconteis pedibus*), Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 41. 58–64 ('Erectheus' described as an anguipede and explicitly paralleled with Cecrops in this), Fulgentius *Mitologiae* 2. 11 (where the phrase *cum draconteis pedibus* is excised as an interpolation by Helm), First Vatican Mythographer 2. 26 (*draconteis pedibus*), schol. Plato *Timaeus* 23e (δρακοντόπους), *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v *Ἐρεχθεύς* (δρακοντόπους). Kron 1988: 925, 947 considers that the late tradition has simply confused Ericthonius with Cecrops.

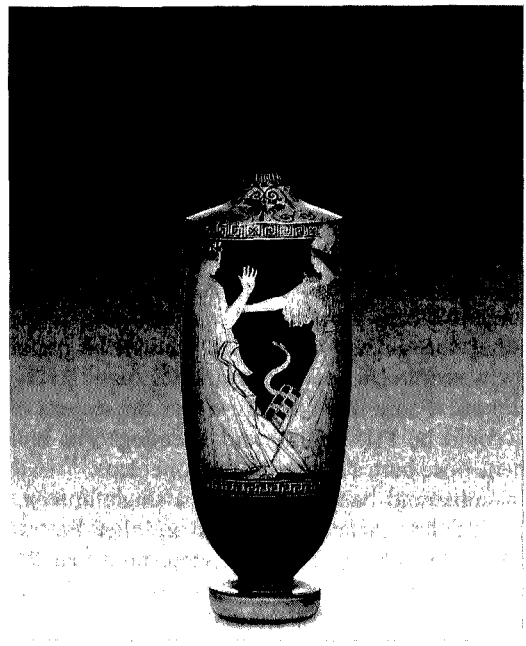


Fig. 7.4. A serpent-guard of Ericthonius, or perhaps Ericthonius himself in the form of a serpent, emerges from his chest to pursue an inquisitive Cecropid, restrained by Athene. Attic red-figure lekythos, *c.*470–450 BC. *LIMC* Aglauros 19. © Antikenmuseum Basel und Sammlung Ludwig inv. BS 404.

Photo: Andreas Voegelin.

On an Attic red-figure vase of *c.*480 BC the Cecropids are chased by a superb bearded serpent.[134] We may compare the particularly fine Cecropid punishment scene of *c.*430 BC that shows a single, keen serpent emerging from the thrown-down basket to commence its pursuit of a fleeing Cecropid (Fig. 7.4).[135] Is the serpent in these cases already to be read as the pure-*drakōn* Ericthonius himself, or as a sole *drakōn*-guardian for the unseen but humanoid Ericthonius? Given that one would have expected painters to include the all-important Ericthonius in some form in such scenes, and given that the sole-*drakōn*-guardian variant is not otherwise attested before Ovid, the presumption should be that they do indeed represent a pure-*drakōn* Ericthonius.[136] Indeed the notion of a sole *drakōn*-guardian should probably be understood as derivative of the pure-*drakōn* Ericthonius variant, in which, inevitably, there was a single *drakōn* as opposed to two. The pure-*drakōn* Ericthonius may appear in later art too. A third-century AD Roman relief of Hephaestus' pursuit of Athene places a serpent on the ground beneath the

[134] *LIMC* Kekrops 13 = Aglauros, Herse, Pandrosos 15 = Erysichthon ii 1 = Gourmelen 2004: fig. 5.

[135] As in the case of *LIMC* Aglauros 19 = Reeder 1995*b* no. 66 (*c.*430 BC); discussion at Oakley 1982: 222. A late 5th-century BC loutrophoros fragment, *LIMC* Erechtheus 32, preserves baby Ericthonius and a single rampant snake, though it may once have had a partner.

[136] Bodson 1978: 81–3 holds that Ericthonius was originally a pure *drakōn* in form.

pursuing Hephaestus' outstretched arm, the gesture of which it mirrors in its rampant state. This seems to be a proleptic image of the Ericthonius about to be sired.[137]

Scenes of Ericthonius' actual birth, in which he is handed up to Athene by Ge as she emerges from the ground, are first attested from *c.*500 BC. In these he is always in the form of a humanoid baby, never a serpent.[138] Perhaps there was a sometime notion that baby Ericthonius transformed himself into a serpent once enclosed inside the chest. We recall that the beneficent figure of Sosipolis signally transformed himself from a baby into a serpent in plain view (Ch. 5).[139]

The Atthidographer Androtion explained *Erectheus'* earthborn status in a rather different and seemingly less patriotic way: he was one of the Theban Spartoi, sown from the teeth of the Serpent of Ares.[140] But at any rate this explanation could easily account for an anguiform nature.

Cychreus

The curious Cychreus appears in three guises: as the keeper of a destructive *drakōn*, as a *drakōn* himself, and as the slayer of a *drakōn*.[141] In combining the latter two qualities he somewhat resembles Cadmus.[142]

The earliest datable text of any substance to bear on Cychreus is a Hesiodic fragment preserved by Strabo. This tells that Cychreus reared the 'Cychreides snake (*ophis*)' that destroyed the island of Salamis and was expelled by Eurylochus, whereupon Demeter received it at Eleusis where it became her servant (*amphípolos*). Hesiod may already have told, as Strabo does, that Cychreia was a former name for Salamis as a whole.[143] This is a puzzling text. Since 'Cychreides' means 'son of Cychreus,' it is tempting to think that the snake so named was precisely that, though Strabo's phraseology seems odd if that was in fact the case. Stephanus of Byzantium subsequently preserves a rationalized account of

[137] *LIMC* Erechtheus 28, with Kron 1988 ad loc. The image reconfigures many of the elements found in a mid fourth-century BC illustration of the competition between Athene and Poseidon in which a serpent crawls up Athene's olive tree (*LIMC* Kekrops 26 = Aglauros, Herse, Pandrosos 38 = Athena 453 = Attike 2 = Gourmelen 2004: fig. 8). However this serpent is more likely to be the *oikouros ophis* (for which see Ch. 10), since it supposedly dwelled in the Erectheum alongside the sacred olive. For Gourmelen 2004: 346–7 the distinction is a false one, for he holds that Ericthonius and the *oikouros ophis* were one and the same.

[138] *LIMC* Erechtheus 1–27. There may be a trace of snake on the damaged birth scene at *LIMC* Erechtheus 22 (*c.*470 BC). If so, it may have coiled round the trunk of Athene's olive tree, visible in the background, and therefore have represented the *oikouros ophis*; see Kron 1988: 945–6 and ad loc.

[139] Pausanias 6. 20.

[140] Androtion *FGrH* 324 F37 = Tzetzes Schol. on Lycophron *Alexandra* 495.

[141] Principal texts: Hesiod F226 MW, Euphorion F30 Powell = 32 Lightfoot, Lycophron *Alexandra* 110–14, Diodorus 4. 72. 4, Strabo C393, Plutarch *Solon* 9, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 12. 7, Pausanias 1. 36. 1, Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. *Κυχρεῖος πάγος*, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 110, 175, 451, Eustathius *Commentary on Dionysius Periegetes* 506–7 (at C. F. W. Müller 1855–82: ii. 314). Discussions: Harrison 1912: 286–8, Delcourt 1955, Kearns 1989: 180, Gourmelen 2004: 401–3.

[142] As noted by Vian 1963: 123 and Gourmelen 2004: 401–3.

[143] Hesiod F226 Merkelbach/West, *apud* Strabo C393. See Delcourt 1955: 134 for Demeter's receipt of the serpent.

Cychreus with some affinities to the Hesiodic material. He explains that the hill of Cychreus in Salamis (and also the island itself, in its byname of Cychreia) was named for a man, Cychreus, who was called a snake (*ophis*) because of the roughness of his ways. Again he destroyed the land, Eurylochus drove him out, and he became an attendant to Demeter at Eleusis. In strongly resembling the rationalizations of *drakōn*-myths considered above (Ch. 4) this account implies the existence of an earlier tale in which Cychreus himself was plainly and simply a snake. In assimilating Cychreus to the brigand Sciron with whom his tradition often pairs him, the account reminds us also of the rationalization of the Delphic Python into a local brigand, Pythes.[144]

Compatibly with this, the second-century AD Pausanias gives us a tale that does indeed make Cychreus himself into a serpent. After mentioning Themistocles' victory trophy for the Battle of Salamis on the island, he notes, 'And there is a sanctuary of Cychreus. It is said that a *drakōn* appeared amongst (*en*) the ships when the Athenians were fighting their sea battle against the Persians. The god prophesied to the Athenians that the hero was Cychreus.'[145] Despite its late attestation, one imagines that this tale was attached to a sanctuary founded shortly after the battle of Salamis in 480 BC, and therefore that it probably originated at that time and was sponsored by Themistocles.[146] This raises an intriguing possibility when we bear in mind Plutarch's account of the disappearance of the *oikouros ophis* (which will be discussed in its own right in Ch. 10). He tells that Themistocles explained the disappearance by contending that the goddess had abandoned the city as she guided the Athenians towards the sea, before going on to speak of the famous 'wooden walls' oracle.[147] An underlying tale seems to lurk here in which there was some sort of correspondence between the *drakōn* that disappeared from the doomed Acropolis and the one that appeared amongst the ships at Salamis, all in validation of Themistocles' strategy. An image of Cychreus may survive in relation to the Salamis episode. Imperial-period Athenian coins

[144] Stephanus of Byzantium *s.v.* *Κυχρεῖος πάγος*. The brigand notion is repeated (amongst other material) at Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 451 and Eustathius *Commentary on Dionysius Periegetes* 507. Cychreus is associated directly or indirectly with Sciron via Athene Sciras, the Scirophoria and cape Sciradion. The brigand Sciron, son-in-law to Cychreus, inhabited the Scironian rocks on the Megarian coast opposite Salamis. He compelled passers-by to wash his feet on his cliff-top, and as they did so he kicked them over the side into the sea below, where they were devoured by a giant turtle, or a monster called Chelone, the Turtle. His reign of terror ended when Theseus picked him up by his feet and threw him into the sea in turn. See: Bacchylides 18. 24–5, Diodorus Siculus 4. 59. 4), Strabo C393, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 7. 443–7, Plutarch *Theseus* 10, Apollodorus *Epitome* 3. 12. 6 (*ὑπερμεγέθει χελώνῃ*), Pausanias 1. 44. 6–9, Hyginus *Fabulae* 38, schol. Euripides *Andromache* 687, schol. Euripides *Hippolytus* 979, schol. Lucian *Jupiter Tragoedus* 21, *Suda*, and Photius s.v. *Κίρος*, Lactantius Placidus on Statius *Thebaid* 1. 333, First Vatican Mythographer 2. 65 and Second Vatican Mythographer 150, Eustathius *Commentary on Dionysius Periegetes* 507. Pythes: Pausanias 10. 6. 5–7.

[145] Pausanias 1. 36. 1.

[146] Gourmelen 2004: 401 suggests that Aeschylus' reference to 'Cychrean shores' at *Persae* 570 already expresses awareness of this tale; perhaps so, though it is also possible that 'Cychrean' was already being used as a mere soubriquet for 'Salaminian': cf. Euphorion F30 Powell = 32 Lightfoot ('as Euphorion says in his *Hippomedon*: for such was/is Cychreus in sandy Salamis'), Strabo C393 ('Cychreia' as a soubriquet for Salamis), Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. *Κυχρεῖος πάγος*, incorporating Sophocles *Teucer* F579 Pearson/*TGrF*, Eustathius *Commentary on Dionysius Periegetes* 506–7. cf. Delcourt 1955: 138.

[147] Plutarch *Themistocles* 10.

still celebrate Themistocles' victory: they show a prow carrying a trophy-monument, sometimes also a soldier, accompanied by an Athenian owl and a serpent.[148] In Pausanias' tale at any rate Cychreus appears as a protective hero for the land of Salamis. He is cast in this light too in Plutarch's *Solon*, where Solon is told that, to capture Salamis from the Megarians, he must sacrifice to two heroes who once lived on Salamis and are now buried there, Cychreus and Periphemus.[149]

The second-century BC Lycophronian *Alexandra* refers to Salamis, with characteristic obscurity, as 'the *drakōn*'s island of Acte, the sceptred land of the double-formed (*diphyēs*) earthborn one.' The author curiously merges Cychreus with Cecrops, as Tzetzes partly understood.[150] This may license the apparent but admittedly awkward merging between Cychreus and the *oikouros ophis* in the Themistocles tradition. The identification of Cychreus with Cecrops may also hint that Cychreus too was capable of manifesting himself as an anguipede.

A fragment of the third-century BC Euphorion preserved by Tzetzes offers a tale in which Cychreus, far from being a *drakōn*, was a *drakōn*-slayer. The son of Poseidon and Salamis, he killed a *drakōn* and (presumably thereby) acquired the kingship of Salamis.[151] This version is subsequently adopted by Diodorus, who speaks of Cychreus killing a snake (*ophis*) of overweening size that was destroying the locals, and also by Apollodorus.[152]

Lysander

The imagery of Athens' patron serpents may, intriguingly, have been appropriated by Sparta and turned against her. A series of coins bearing, on the obverse, fine images of baby Heracles throttling the pair of serpents sent against him by Hera (see Ch. 1) with the legend *CYN* (for *cυμμαχία*, 'alliance'?) and, on the reverse, the various emblems of the cities of Byzantium, Cyzicus, Lampsacus, Ephesus, Samos, Iasus, Cnidus, and Rhodes, has been associated with the rebel alliance assembled against the Athenian empire by Lysander in 405–404 BC. If correctly, then the figure of Heracles may salute Lysander's Heraclid ancestry, and the *drakontes* the various protective *drakontes* of Athens. This chimes in with the fourth-century Ion of Samos' Delphic epigram: 'Lysander dedicated his own image upon this monument, when he destroyed the power of the *Cecropids*, conquering them with swift ships, garlanding unsacked Sparta, the acropolis of Greece, his homeland of beautiful dances.' But Athens, it seems, contrived to reappropriate her *drakontes* in due course, if only after Lysander's death. For Plutarch twice tells that Lysander was given an oracle bidding him beware the 'sounding hoplite and the tricky *drakōn*, son of the earth, coming after'. Whether the oracle originated with Lysander or with Athens, the description of the *drakōn*

[148] I. N. Svoronos 1923 pl. 19 nos. 1–31; cf. Delcourt 1955: 136–7.

[149] Plutarch *Solon* 9; cf. Delcourt 1955: 130–1.

[150] Lycophron *Alexandra* 110–14, with Tzetzes on 110–11 and 451; cf. Delcourt 1955: 137.

[151] Euphorion F30 Powell = 32 Lightfoot = Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 110; cf. also the commentaries on lines 175 and 451, where Tzetzes (again after Euphorion?) tells us that Cychreus also had the byname Anaxiphos, perhaps construable as 'Up-Sword': did he kill the snake with a sword?

[152] Diodorus 4. 72. 4 (*ὄφιν ὑπερφυῆ τὸ μέγεθος*), Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 12. 7.

as 'son of earth' seems particularly suggestive of Athens' anguiform heroes. The oracle was supposedly fulfilled when Lysander was killed beside a sounding stream near Haliartus called Hoplite, by one Neochorus, who bore a *drakōn* blazon on his shield (cf. Ch. 6 for the partial identification of warriors with their *drakōn* blazons).[153]

CONCLUSION

A three-way bond obtained between the *drakōn*, the earth, and the dead, the heroic dead in particular. Attica, always proud of the supposedly autochthonous origin of its people, contrived to celebrate no less than three anguiform heroes in Cecrops, Ericthonius, and Cychreus, and probably a fourth one too lurks behind the traditions relating to the lawgiver Dracon. Quite compatible with the profiles of this variety of protective anguiform hero are the profiles of the benignly protective anguiform gods that seemingly rose together at the end of the fifth century BC, those who presided over a family's wealth and plenty and those who presided over health. It is to these that the next three chapters are principally devoted.

[153] See Karwiese 1980 esp. 14–15, with the coins illustrated at pl. 2. Lysander as a Heraclid: Plutarch *Lysander* 2. 1. Ion's epigram at Diehl 1949–52: i. 87. The oracle at Plutarch *Lysander* 29, *Moralia* 408a–b.

8

Drakōn Gods of Wealth and Good Luck

In this and the following chapter we turn to the well-defined syndrome of the kindly anguiform deities of Greece and Rome, first the sponsors of wealth and good luck, then the sponsors of health. No extant ancient text can be said to explain lucidly and authoritatively the general relationship between the anguiform gods and their serpent imagery (whether they appear simply in the form of a serpent or in human form accompanied by a serpent) or, where relevant, their sacred serpents. But if we imagine that we have been deprived of valuable explanatory keys in the course of the random destruction of Classical literature, we almost certainly delude ourselves. For, images aside, vast numbers of extant texts of all kinds do indeed speak of the anguiforms and their serpents, and so we must assume that whatever the ancients did say to themselves, they also say to us. If ambiguities and ambivalences remain, as they surely do, then they are themselves significant: they testify to decisions the ancients refused to take, differentiations they declined to make, and to the embrace of an open and expansive field of symbolism.[1]

THE 420s BC AND THE RISE OF THE ANGUIFORMS

Whilst most of the anguiform gods are attested prior to the 420s BC, some of them long prior, they seemingly only emerge *as anguiforms* in our evidence in the last quarter of the fifth century BC, and in something of a phalanx as such, as Table 8.1, anticipating the discussions below, indicates.

Does this emergence genuinely reflect a rapid and productive religious revolution in the 420s, or is it a function of the sort of evidence available to us? On the literary side, it is true that we only have fully extant Aristophanes plays from 425 BC (*Acharnians*), but we have many comic fragments of older vintage, and there is no obvious reason the anguiform nature of these deities should not have been alluded to in the other and earlier genres of literature that have cause to mention

[1] A vestigial attempt to articulate the problem of the relationship between the serpent and the god is made by Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 94–5, who ask in connection with Zeus Meilichios whether his serpents are his avatars or familiars. Both concepts can be useful, but it is curious that Jameson et al. exclude without pause the notion that the serpent might simply be the god, evidently preferring to find the god's true form manifest exclusively in his relatively rare humanoid representations.

Table 8.1. *The anguiform gods and their first attestation*

Deity	First attestation as anguiform or *drakōn*-related	First general attestation
Trophonius	423 BC (Aristophanes *Clouds*) or earlier (Cratinus, before 422 BC)	6th cent. BC (*Homeric Hymn to Apollo*); *c.*560 BC, as oracular god (Herodotus)
Asclepius	*c.*420 BC (Telemachus inscription, Istanbul relief)	7th cent. BC (Homer)
Hygieia	*c.*420 BC (Istanbul relief)	before 460 BC (Micythus statue)?
Amphiaraus	414 BC (Aristophanes *Amphiaraus*)	*c.*600 BC (Stesichorus, Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*); *c.*560 BC, as oracular god (Herodotus)
Zeus Meilichios	*c.*400 BC (Attic reliefs); possibly earlier within 6th–5th cent. BC (Pellana snake)	possibly 632 BC (Thucydides); certainly late 6th cent. BC (Selinus)
Zeus Philios	early 4th cent. BC (Attic reliefs)	early 4th cent. BC (Lysicrates, Polyclitus)
Agathos Daimon	perhaps later 4th cent. (implicit in Attic reliefs); certainly *c.*300 BC (Alexandrian foundation myth)	424 BC (Aristophanes *Knights*)
Zeus Ktēsios	3rd century BC (Thespiae relief)	466 or 463 BC (Aeschylus *Suppliants*)

them anyway, such as Homeric, Hesiodic, and lyric texts. On the iconographic side there is no reason occasional anguiform-god reliefs should not have survived from before the 420s BC, had they been made in the first place. So we must conclude that even if the anguiform nature of these deities was known prior to the 420s BC, as in some cases it probably was, nonetheless this decade witnessed an upsurge and expansion in their active representation as anguiform. In the all-important Attica this may have been associated with the more general upsurge in popularity and visibility at least of Asclepius, imported into the city in 422 BC, and of Amphiaraus, for whom a smart new sanctuary was developed on a greenfield site on the Attic-Boeotian border in *c.*420 BC.

ZEUS MEILICHIOS

Thucydides refers to Zeus Meilichios' Athenian festival, the Diasia, as being celebrated already in 632 BC at the time of Cylon's attempted coup, perhaps erroneously.[2] He was certainly flourishing by the end of the sixth century BC, when his name was inscribed on boundary stones at Selinus and Croton, aniconic

[2] Thucydides 1. 126. 6. Note the late 2nd-century BC Apollonius of Acharnae's distinction between the Diasia and the festival of Meilichios, *FGrH* 365 F5. Principal texts and epigraphy: Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 81–91. Principal iconography: Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1091–160, Mitropoulou 1977: 112–55, Lalonde 2006. Discussions: Foucart 1883, Höfer and Drexler 1894–7, Küster 1913: 104–7, Harrison 1912: 325–31, 1922: 13–28, Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1091–160, Sjövall 1931: 75–84, Deubner 1932: 155–8, Pfister 1932, Nilsson 1938: 162–5, 1967–74: i. 411–14, Picard 1942–3, Manni Piraino 1970, Graf 1974, Mitropoulou 1977: 112–55, Vetters 1978, Schachter 1981–94: iii. 96, 123, 152, Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 81–103, 132–41, Scullion 1994, Bonnechere 2003: 323–4, Parker

representations of the god.[3] He seems to have been worshipped primarily in sacred spaces set aside for him, which could be indicated by such stones or by inscriptions on bedrock.[4] Only from the third century BC do we begin to hear of the more elaborate shrines or temples for him that the term Meilichi(ei)on seems to imply.[5]

The earliest evidence to bear upon the god's form derives from the late fifth century BC and from the first salutes his serpent affinities. Pausanias' refers in passing to a seated humanoid statue of him at Argos made by Polyclitus, whose floruit was *c.*460–410 BC. Burton and others have found the work illustrated in a series of Roman coins with a seated Zeus holding a *phialē*. The *phialē* invites the supposition that a serpent lurked to drink from it, whether or not actually illustrated in the statue, on the analogy of the iconography of the Spartan hero reliefs (Ch. 7) and of Asclepius and Hygieia (Ch. 9). And in this case the statue would broadly have anticipated the images from the following century of a seated humanoid Zeus Meilichios with a *phialē* or indeed with a serpent coiling alongside his throne.[6] More direct early evidence for Zeus Meilichios' serpent affinities is offered by a pair of small bronze votive snakes from Achaean Pellana, one of which is inscribed with the phrase, 'I am sacred to the Mellichios at Pellana.' Unfortunately, the snakes cannot be dated in themselves more precisely than to the sixth or fifth centuries BC. Given the want of evidence for Zeus Meilichios' serpent affinities prior to the Polyclitan image, or otherwise *c.*400 BC, a date close to the end of the period seems likeliest.[7]

With the arrival of the fourth century BC comes an avalanche of glorious iconographic evidence for the anguiform Zeus Meilichios, the most important of it from Attica. The Attic material across the board suggests that the god was imagined primarily in the form of a serpent (Fig. 8.1) and simultaneously but secondarily in humanoid form. From the Piraeus shrine near Zea and Mounychia hail a series of ten votive relief stelae or fragments thereof, all from the fourth century BC, bar one from the third. Eight of these depict a giant, rampant, coiling, kindly serpent, resplendent with beard and crest, whilst carrying an inscription that supplies the dedication to Zeus Meilichios and the names of the dedicators, who are themselves sometimes also illustrated in the act of approaching and

2005: 424–5, Riethmüller 2005: ii. 26–8, 31, 35, Lalonde 2006 (NB 103–20 for a most helpful catalogue of the Athenian evidence), Larson 2007: 21–3.

[3] Sixth-century stones from Selinus: Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 90 Selinous (a)–(c) (references in this form refer to the catalogue of Zeus Meilichios testimonia at Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 81–91); see pls. 10–11 for images of the stones.

[4] Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 93–4 and Lalonde *passim*.

[5] Meilichion, Orchomenus, late 3rd century BC: *CIG* I no. 1568 = *Syll.*[3] no. 994 = Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 84 Orchomenos. Temple of Zeus Meilichios (in Oscan inscription, *Iúveís Meeíkiieís*) Pompeii, *c.*200 BC: Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1158 n. 7 = Buck 1904: 239–40 no. 3. Temple shared with Enodia (Hecate), Larisa, 2nd century AD: *IG* ix.2 578; Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1115, Mitropoulou 1977: 151, Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 85 Larisa. Lato (Crete), imperial period: *I. Cret.* I. xvi 29. 3–5. Meilichieion, Alaisa (Halaesa, Sicily), Hellenistic: Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1158 = *CIG* iii no. 5594.

[6] Pausanias 2. 20. 1–2; cf. Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1143, Burton 2010.

[7] The inscribed snake: Antiquarium Berlin 30021; Neugebauer 1922: 76 no. 25; Mitropoulou 1977: 148 no. 41; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Achaia. The uninscribed snake: Olympia Museum 1986; Mitropoulou 1977: 148 no. 42.

worshipping the serpent.[8] The vignette of the giant, rampant, coiling, kindly serpent manifesting himself in this fashion before his worshippers strongly anticipates Ovid's description of the gracious manifestation of Asclepius in serpent form before the Roman ambassadors at Epidaurus (Ch. 9).[9] Two other votive reliefs from the Piraeus give us Zeus Meilichios in the form of a seated, bearded man. The men hold a *phialē* in one hand (cf. the Polyclitan statue), and a cornucopia or a sceptre in the other, and are approached by a group of worshippers.[10] The agora yields a similar pattern of evidence. In seven relief stelae of the fourth to the second centuries BC the god is shown as a giant serpent, bearded, rampant and coiling.[11] In a single relief dating from *c.*325–300 BC, he is shown

[8] Conforming to this broad pattern are:

1. A bearded snake in a simple, elegant coil, 'Heraclides (?), to the god', earlier 4th century BC; Athens, National Museum 1434; *IG* ii^2 4621; Harrison 1922: 20 fig. 4; Mitropoulou 1977: 125–6 no. 17 and fig. 56; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 after t *bis*; Lalonde 2006: 115–16 (ZM? 37). Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 83 suggest the image may rather represent Zeus Philios, for no good reason I can divine.
2. A snake, no inscription preserved; *IG* ii^2 4622; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 after t *bis*. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 83 again suggest the image may rather represent Zeus Philios.
3. A well-preserved elaborately coiling bearded snake, 'To Zeus Meilichios', 4th century BC; Staatliche Museum, Berlin 722; *IG* ii^2 4620 = 4847; Harrison 1922: 18 fig.1; Cook 1914–40: ii. 1108 fig. 944; Mitropoulou 1977: 129 no. 21; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (t = t *bis*); Lalonde 2006: 115 (ZM35); Larson 2007: 23 fig. 2.2.
4. A woman and two men worshippers approach a giant snake, no inscription, but found alongside the above, 4th century BC; Berlin, Staatliche Museum 723; Harrison 1922: 19 fig. 2; Mitropoulou 1977: 129–30; Lalonde 2006: 116 (ZM?39).
5. A fragment of a rippling snake: 'Hedistion to Zeus Milichios', 4th century BC; *IG* ii^2 4617; Mitropoulou 1977: 127–8 no. 19 and fig. 57; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (q).
6. A large snake on a low platform, to whom a small worshipper offers a *phialē* or cake, 'Asclepiades son of Asclepiodorus to Zeus Meilichios', 4th century BC; Paris, Louvre 1430; *IG* ii^2 4619; Mitropoulou 1977: 128–9 no. 20 and fig. 58; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (s); Lalonde 2006: 115 (ZM34).
7. A snake approached by a male worshipper with outstretched hand, 'To . . . Meilichios', 3rd century BC; Mitropoulou 1977: 130–1 no. 23 and fig. 59.
8. An elongated snake stretches from below ground level upwards between two worshippers (one male, one female?) and over their heads, no inscription, earlier 3rd century BC; Athens, National Museum 2770; Mitropoulou 1977: 138–9 no. 30 and fig. 63.

[9] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15. 622–744.

[10] Thus:

1. Seated, bearded man holds horn and *phialē*, approached by six worshippers, including a boy holding a pig, '. . . tobole to Zeus Milichios'; *IG* ii^2 4569; Cook 1914–40: ii. 1106 fig. 943; Mitropoulou 1977: 124 no. 15; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (p); Lalonde 2006: 114 (ZM31).
2. Seated, bearded man holds sceptre and *phialē*, approached by man, woman, and boy worshippers, 'Aristarche to Zeus Milichios'; *IG* ii^2 4618; Cook 1914–40: ii. 1106 fig. 942; Mitropoulou 1977: 126–7 no. 18; Jameson Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (r); Lalonde 2006: 114 (ZM33).

[11] Thus:

1. Traces of a coiled snake, '. . . ios to Zeus Milichios', 4th century BC; Agora Museum I 2778; Mitropoulou 1977: 118–19 no. 9; Lalonde 2006: 105 (ZM7).

rather as a seated, bearded man holding a staff and approached by a lone worshipper; here however, an attendant snake coils elaborately beneath his throne to remind us of his other form.[12] Seven further relief-stelae images of Zeus Meilichios derive from other or from unknown find-spots in Athens and Attica and are thought to date to the fourth or third centuries BC, and the balance of their evidence is the same once again. Five conform to the broad pattern of a giant, bearded, rampant, coiling, snake approached by worshippers.[13] Of particular interest is an unpublished and undated relief from Sounion with an inscription to Zeus Meilichios illustrated with a pair of snakes.[14] A single fourth-century BC

2. A man worships a giant bearded snake, 'Olympus to Zeus Milichios', *c.*330 BC; Agora Museum I 2201; Raubitschek 1943: 49–50 no. 9; Mitropoulou 1977: 115–16 no. 6 and fig. 49; Jameson, Jordan and Kotansky 1993 Attica (h) and pl. 9; Lalonde 2006: 104 (ZM3) and fig. 28.
3. A man and a woman worship a (lost) snake, 'Aristo... and Philaco dedicated this to Zeus Mylichios', 3rd century BC; Agora Museum I 3688; *SEG* 21.790 = 51.10; Mitropoulou 1977: 116–17 no. 7 and fig. 50; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (i).
4. (Lost) people worship a snake, 'Theod... to Zeus Milichios', 2nd century BC; *SEG* 12. 167; Meritt 1952: 377–8 no. 33; Mitropoulou 1977: 117–18 no. 8 and fig. 51; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (j); Lalonde 2006: 104–5 (ZM4).
5. A fragment with the head of a bearded snake, no preserved inscription, ascribed to Zeus Meilichios in the light of the find-spot; Agora Museum S 1238; Mitropoulou 1977: 119–20 no. 10 and fig. 52; Lalonde 2006: 105 (ZM?8).
6. A fragment with a bearded, coiled snake, no preserved inscription, ascribed to Zeus Meilichios in the light of the find-spot; Agora Museum S 1285; Mitropoulou 1977: 119–20 no. 11 and fig. 53; Lalonde 2006: 106 (ZM?9).
7. A fragment with the central part of coiled snake, no preserved inscription, ascribed to Zeus Meilichios in the light of the find-spot; Agora Museum S 1514; Mitropoulou 1977: 119–21 no. 11a and fig. 53a; Lalonde 2006: 106 (ZM?10).

Lalonde 2006 contends that the bulk of the agora stelai derive from a shrine of Zeus Meilichios on the Hill of the Nymphs; the shrine is only tied to (any kind of) Zeus by a pair of rock-cut boundary inscriptions, 'boundary of Zeus'.

[12] Agora Museum S 593; Mitropoulou 1977: 121–2 no. 12 and fig. 54; Lalonde 2006: 106 (ZM?11). Were it not for the find-spot, we would think the subject Asclepius.

[13] Thus:

1. Large upward coiling snake approached by a male worshipper, no preserved inscription, mid 4th century BC, Athens; Athens, National Museum 2369; Mitropoulou 1977: 140–1 no. 32 and fig. 65.
2. Three people worship giant, bearded, upward coiling snake, a superb image, 'Aristomenes to Zeus Milichios', late 4th century BC, Attica; Athens, National Museum 3329; Mitropoulou 1977: 112–13 no. 1 and fig. 48a; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (n); Lalonde 2006: 119 (ZM50).
3. Very large coiling snake approached by two worshippers, no preserved inscription, late 4th century BC Attica (?); Athens, National Museum (serial no. unknown); Mitropoulou 1977: 139–41 no. 31 and fig. 64.
4. Upward coiling bearded snake, 'Hedea to Zeus Milichios', 4th century BC, Athens, shrine of Nymphe, south side of the Acropolis; *SEG* 17.87; Daux 1958: 366–7; Meliades 1958: 9; Mitropoulou 1977: 13 no. 2; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (m); Lalonde 2006: 107 (ZM13).
5. Snake approached by two female worshippers, 'Cratesion to Meilichios', date unstated, Athens, south of the Olympieion; Mitropoulou 1977: 115 no. 5; Lalonde 2006: 111 (ZM24).

[14] Welter 1925: 314; Mitropoulou 1977: 123–4 no. 14; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (u); Riethmüller 2005: ii. 40; Lalonde 2006: 119 (ZM?52). The relief is probably in Athens, National Museum.

Fig. 8.1. Zeus Meilichios is approached by grateful devotees.

Inscription: 'Aristomenes to Zeus Meilichios'. Attic, relief stele, late 4th century BC, Attica; Athens, National Museum 3329. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

relief from Amaroussion, with traces of a Zeus Meilichios inscription, gives us rather just a seated, bearded man with a staff approached by worshipper.[15]

The most important set of Zeus Meilichios images to survive from outside Attica hail from the Trophonion at Lebadeia, and date from *c.*225–170 BC. The set consists of five cippi or small oblong pillars that were subsequently built into the Byzantine walls around the spring of Hercyna. They all carry dedications by named individuals to Zeus Meilichios, though his name appears in different variants: Meilichios *tout court*, Zeus Meilichios, Daimōn Milichios, and Dēmōn Meilichios (twice). The structure of the pillars, with their *omphalos*-tops, salutes aniconic Meilichios stones but is also strongly phallic. Two of the pillars carry the side-projections typical of herms and are decorated with images of (unerect) male

[15] Athens, National Museum 2356; Mitropoulou 1977: 122–13 no. 13 and fig. 55.

genitals, pubic hair and all. On another two of the pillars a small snake winds in place of the genitals. At some level, it seems, serpent is being aligned with phallus.[16] The anguiform Zeus Meilichios was also known elsewhere in third-century BC Boeotia, Anthedon: a relief stele dedicated to him there is decorated with an image of a coiled serpent *tout court*.[17]

Brief mention may be made of some important fourth- or third-century BC Zeus Meilichios reliefs from further afield. Important examples from Ephesus and Corfu show a humanoid and Asclepian Zeus Meilichios attended by snakes. In the Ephesian relief we find a seated, bearded man with staff, before whom stands a rampant snake. Both face a worshipper whose arm alone survives but whose legend continues to read, 'Demagorais daughter of Hestiaios to Zeus Milichios'.[18] In the Corfu relief (possibly Attic in origin) a humanoid god sits on rock flanked by a pair of snakes, and is approached by a lady worshipper, with the legend 'Hegeso to Zeus Meilichios'.[19] From Cos hails an anomalous sole-shaped relief without inscription. In the lower of its two registers we have the familiar image of rampant snake approached by a worshipper. The snake's head penetrates into the upper register, which appears to show a hero banquet.[20]

There was ever a strong tendency for anguiform gods to manifest themselves in male–female pairs: Asclepius with his daughter Hygieia, Trophonius with Hercyna, Agathos Daimon with Agathe Tyche, and possibly Cadmus with his Harmonia.[21] Zeus Meilichios too occasionally found himself on the one hand in a serpent pair and on the other with a female partner, though we cannot formally marry these two fields of evidence.[22] The unpublished relief from Sounion carries a dedication to Zeus Meilichios and the image of a pair of serpents. The Corfu relief gives us a humanoid Zeus Meilichios flanked by a pair of snakes.[23] Two unillustrated fourth-century BC votive plaques from Thespiae in Boeotia record

[16] Chaeronea Museum nos. 12–13, 15–16, 36; Jannoray 1940–1: 49–51 inv. 7, 12, 15–16 and figs. 5. 1–5. 4; Mitropoulou 1977: 142–7 nos. 24, 35–8 and figs. 68–72; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Lebadeia (a–e). Cf. the inscribed 'Zeus Milichios' herm from Tegea, Mitropoulou 1977: 147 no. 40. Discussion also at Bonnechere 2003: 323–4.

[17] Coiled snake, 'Apollonios son of Caphisodotos to Zeus Meilichios', 3rd century BC; Jardé and Laurent 1902: 324–5 no. 15; Mitropoulou 1977: 146 no. 39; Schachter 1981–94: iii. 96 n. 1; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Anthedon. There hails also from Anthedon a large marble *perirhanterion* with a snake engraved on the inside, accompanied by another figure. Lukouri-Tolia 1986 identifies the serpent as Zeus Meilichios, with the other figure perhaps as Demeter; cf. Schachter 1981–94: iii. 96 n. 1; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 85. This seems tenuous.

[18] Ephesus Museum (serial no. unknown); Mitropoulou 1977: 140–2 no. 33 and fig. 66; cf. Vetters 1978.

[19] Plassart 1926: 424 no. 3; Hausmann 1960: 94 fig. 57; Mitropoulou 1977: 136–7 no. 27; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Kerkyra.

[20] Cos Museum 12; Mitropoulou 1977: 137–8 no. 29 and fig. 62. Mitropoulou develops a series of weakly founded speculations about the significance of the upper register, amongst the diners of which she identifies Zeus (*tout court*) and Cybele.

[21] Elean Sosipolis too may have had a female associate in Eileithyia, with whom he shared his temple, though she can hardly have been a serpent (Pausanias 6. 20. 2–60; cf. Ch. 5).

[22] Cf. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 97.

[23] Note also the 4th-century BC relief fragment from Sardis in which a pair of bearded serpents face each other across a *phialē* (?): Sardis Museum 70.7; Mitropoulou 1977: 140–3 no. 33a and fig. 67.

dedications to 'Zeus Milichios and Miliche'.[24] A small unillustrated votive altar dedicated in the first century AD at Hierapytna in Crete pairs Zeus Meilichios with Hera Meilichia.[25]

A sometime family man himself, Zeus Meilichios specialized in bringing wealth and plenty to families. The cornucopia his humanoid manifestation holds in one of the Attic reliefs tells that he is a god that bestows wealth upon the household on the model of Zeus Ktēsios ('of Property', of whom more anon).[26] And when Xenophon acquired some money he found the appropriate response was to make sacrifice to Zeus Meilichios 'in the ancestral fashion'.[27] The reliefs often seem to speak of the domestic context of the benefits he bestows.[28] Amongst the fourth-century BC Piraeus dedications one relief shows a group of six worshippers, including a boy holding a pig, approaching a humanoid Zeus Meilichios. This no doubt represents a family group. The donors include a woman whose name ends in -tobole, surely the woman of the group.[29] In another of them a woman and two men worshippers approach a giant, rampant, coiling snake.[30] In a third a humanoid Zeus Meilichios is approached by worshippers consisting of a man, a woman, and a boy. The woman is surely the donor, who identifies herself as Aristarche.[31] In a fourth uninscribed stele the giant snake rises up between a pair of worshippers who seem to be a man and a woman.[32] And more generally the number of named women donors, -tobole and Aristarche aside, in relief dedications to Zeus Meilichios is striking.[33] In line with the impression created by these

[24] *IG* vii. 1814, Plassart 1926: 422 no. 43 = Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Thespiai a–b; cf. Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1151, Mitropoulou 1977: 151–2, Schachter 1981–94: iii. 152. Cook implausibly connects Zeus Meilichios' cult at Thespiae, for which this is the sole evidence, with the tale of Menestratus and the *drakōn*.

[25] *I.Cret.* iii.14; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Hierapytna; Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1157, Mitropoulou 1977: 154.

[26] *IG* ii^2 4569; Cook ii. 2, 1105, Mitropoulou 1977: 124 no. 15; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (p).

[27] Xenophon *Anabasis* 7. 8. 1–6; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 92, 95. The promotion of a household's fertility might be considered part and parcel of its general protection and the promotion of its wealth, but there is no categorical evidence for Zeus Meilichios as a fertility god as such. The case for this depends principally on the contention that his sacred stones were generally intended to be phallic, but there is little reason for thinking this beyond the case of the Lebadeia set; cf. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 99–100.

[28] Cf. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 93, Lalonde 2006: 55–62.

[29] *IG* ii^2 4569; Cook 1914–40: ii. 1105–6 fig. 943 (drawing), Mitropoulou 1977: 124 no. 15; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (p).

[30] Berlin, Staatliche Museum 723; Mitropoulou 1977: 129–30 no. 22.

[31] *IG* ii^2 4618; Cook 1914–40: ii, 1106 fig. 942 (drawing); Mitropoulou 1977: 126–7 no. 18; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotanksy 1993 Attica (Lp).

[32] Athens, National Museum 2770; Mitropoulou 1977: 138–9 no. 30 and fig. 63.

[33] Hedistion (4th cent. BC, Piraeus): *IG* ii^2 4617; Mitropoulou 1977: 127–8 no. 19 and fig. 57; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotanksy 1993 Attica (q); Lalonde 2006: 114 (ZM32). Hedea (4th or 3rd cent. BC, the shrine of Nymphe in Athens; any relation to Hedistion?): *SEG* 17.87; Daux 1958: 366–7; Meliades 1958: 9; Mitropoulou 1977: 13 no. 2; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (m). Aristo . . . and Philaco (3rd cent. BC, Athenian agora; a man and a woman worship a giant snake): Agora Museum i 3688; *SEG* 21.790 = 51.10; Mitropoulou 1977: 116–17 no. 7 and fig. 50; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Attica (i); Lalonde 2006: 105 (ZM5) and fig. 30. Cratesion (undated stele from south of the Olympieion; two women worship a giant snake): Mitropoulou 1977: 115 no. 5. Demagorais, daughter of Hestiaios (late 4th cent. BC, Ephesus): Ephesus Museum (serial no. unknown);

reliefs, Zeus Meilichios' Attic festival, the Diasia, which was held at Agrae, seems to have been a large and joyous festival for family and kin. Thucydides tells us that the Diasia was a festival the Athenians held for Zeus Meilichios, that it was the biggest of their festivals to take place outside the city, and that many people en masse made sacrifices at it.[34] In the *Clouds* Strepsiades mentions that he cooked a haggis at the Diasia for his relatives, and bought a toy cart for his baby son Pheidippides at it.[35] Compatibly, Plutarch and Lucian tell that the festival was a populous, splendid, entertaining, and enjoyable one.[36] Ancient scholarship preserves a tradition that the festival's sacrifices were conducted with a certain gloominess. Scullion has recently dismissed this as erroneous, though it remains conceivable that the sacrifice itself was symbolically differentiated from the remainder of the festival around it in this way.[37]

Zeus Meilichios could also patronize wider kinship groups and indeed pseudo-kinship ones. In fifth-century BC Megara the tribe of the *Pamphyloi* erected a boundary marker 'of Pamphylian Zeus Meilichios'.[38] The Attic *genos* of the Phytalidai had an altar of Zeus Meilichios near the river Cephisus.[39] Attic demes include in their fifth- and fourth-century BC sacrificial calendars offerings to Zeus Meilichios at his Diasia festival.[40] The bronze snake that declares 'I am sacred to the Mellichios at Pellana' may suggest its god protects the town as a whole. A third-century rock-cut inscription from Thera proclaims the location of the 'Zeus Meilichios of Polyxenus and his people'.[41] Jameson et al. conjecture that references to Zeus Meilichios in the *c.*475 BC sacred law of Selinus are to stones set up to him in gentilicial precincts: 'the Zeus Meilichios in Myskos' [sc. precinct]' and 'the Zeus Meilichios in Euthydamos' [sc. precinct]'.[42] A contemporary

Mitropoulou 1977: 140–2 no. 33 and fig. 66. Hegeso (4th or 3rd cent. BC, Corfu): Plassart 1926: 424 no. 3; Hausmann 1960: 94 fig. 57; Mitropoulou 1977: 136–7 no. 27; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Kerkyra; Lalonde 2006: 119 (ZM51). Hermaeus (and) Aristoclia (3rd cent. BC, Trophonion): Chaeronea Museum 13; Jannoray 1940–1: 49–51 inv. 7 and fig. 1.5; Mitropoulou 1977: 142–5 no. 35 and fig. 69; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Lebadeia (b). Phillo (3rd cent. BC, Trophonion): Chaeronea Museum 12; Jannoray 1940–1: 49–51 inv. 12 and fig. 5.2; Mitropoulou 1977: 142 no. 24 and fig. 68; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993 Lebadeia (c). Cf. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 199: 93 for women in non-relief dedications.

[34] Thucydides 1. 126. 6; cf. Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1141, Simon 1983: 12–15, Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 81, 92; Scullion 2007: 190–3.

[35] Aristophanes *Clouds* 408–9 and 864; cf. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 83.

[36] Plutarch *Moralia* 477d; Lucian *Timon* 7.

[37] Hesychius s.v. *Διάσια*, schol. Lucian *Icaromenippus* 24, *Timarchus* 7, 14. The key terms are *σκυθρωπός* and *στυγνότης*. Discussion at Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1138, Scullion 2007: 190–3. Cf. Ch. 9 for the possibility that visits to the laughter-killing Trophonius were similarly framed by visits to his more joyful cousin Agathos Daimon.

[38] Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 84 (with text), 92.

[39] Pausanias 1. 37 .4; cf. Plutarch *Theseus* 12. 1; see Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 82, 92.

[40] *SEG* 33.147 (Thoricus, later 5th cent. BC); *LSCG* 18 = *SEG* 2.541 (Erchia, mid 4th cent. BC); Jameson, Jordan, and Kotanksy 1993: 92.

[41] *Ζεὺς Μηλίχιος τῶν περὶ Πολύξενον*: *IG* xii.3 1316; Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1156; Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 86, 92.

[42] *Selinus Lex Sacra* A9, A17; cf. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 93. Note also the 6th-cent. BC aniconic stone from Selinus that proclaims, 'I am (the) Milichios of Lyciscus': Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 90, Selinous (c); cf. 101.

inscription from the same city intriguingly proclaims, 'The Milichios of the phratry [*patria*] of the daughters of Hermias and the daughters of Eucles'.[43]

Zeus Meilichios was also a bringer of purification. This role is evident in the sacred law of Selinus, in which, as part of a seemingly general process of purification, he receives the sacrifice of a full-grown sheep alongside Zeus Eumenes and the Eumenides and also of a ram. He may also be the Zeus (without epithet) who receives a piglet sacrifice as part of the process of purification after a specific killing by an individual.[44] This role also emerges from two notes in Pausanias: Theseus received purification after the killing of Sinis at the ancient altar of Zeus Meilichios belonging to the Phytalidai in Attica;[45] and after the Argives had shed the blood of their relatives they attained purification principally by dedicating a statue to Zeus Meilichios.[46] Of particular interest here is Zeus Meilichios' association with the *Dios kōidion*. This was the technical term for the fleece of a sheep sacrificed to Zeus Meilichios (or to the closely allied Zeus Ktēsios). The sources for it, all lexicographical or scholiastic, tell us enigmatically that the fleece was addressed as 'Zeus', that it was used (in unspecified fashion) in the Scirophoria and by the Eleusinian Daidouchos (Torch-bearer), and that it was put under the feet of the polluted in order to purify them. The fleece was also carried in the *Pompaia* festival in the month of Maimakterion, which was associated with the disposal of pollution at crossroads.[47] The use the Eleusinian Daidouchos would have had for *Dios kōidia* is partly explained by the fact that Eleusinian initiates were purified for their initiation whilst sitting on fleeces: in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Demeter sits upon a fleece in an aetiology of the mysteries, whilst on the Lovatelli urn and the Torre Nova sarcophagus Heracles is shown undergoing his Eleusinian initiation whilst similarly sitting on a fleece.[48] The evidence for the *Dios kōidion* does not, admittedly, make appeal to Zeus Meilichios specifically in his anguiform aspect. But the association of an anguiform god with a fleece is suggestive. People consulted Amphiaraus by sacrificing a sheep to him and sleeping on its fleece;[49] the sheep sacrifice was the most important of those made to Trophonius too, though we hear nothing of the use of the fleece;[50] and we find the distinctive collocation of an anguiform god with a fleece and dream-sending also in the *Alexander Romance*'s tale of Nectanebo's seduction of Olympias.[51]

[43] Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 90 (Selinous f), 93, 97–8.

[44] *Lex sacra* A 8–9, B5; cf. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 52–3, 57–8, 114.

[45] Pausanias 1. 37. 4; the same tale at Plutarch *Theseus* 12, with purification and propitiatory sacrifice, but without mention of Zeus Meilichios.

[46] Pausanias 2. 20. 1–2.

[47] *Suda*, Hesychius and *Suda* s.v. *Διὸς κῴδιον*, Eustathius on Homer *Odyssey* 22. 481, 1934–45, *Anecdota Bekker* i. p. 7. 15–20 and p. 242. 26–8. Note also Hesychius s.v. *μαιμάκτης*: *μειλίχιος*, *καθάρσιος*. See Cook 1914–40: i. 411–18, Harrison 1922: 23–8, Deubner 1932: 157–8, Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 83, 95.

[48] *Homeric Hymn* (2) *to Demeter* 195–8. Lovatelli urn: Museo Nazionale delle Terme, Rome. Torre Nova sarcophagus: Palazzo Borghese, Rome. Cf. Ogden 2001: 126–67.

[49] Pausanias 1. 34.

[50] Pausanias 9. 39.

[51] *Alexander Romance* A 1. 4–7 ~ Armenian §§6–13 Wolohojian.

The epithet *meilichios*, 'gentle', belongs to a family of words associated particularly with propitiation and appeasement from the age of Homer onwards.[52] In a myth preserved by Pausanias, when Dionysus delivered the Patraeans of their obligation to make annual human sacrifice to their local river, which had hitherto threatened sterility should they default, the river changed its name from *A-meilichios*, 'Not-*meilichios*', to *Meilichios*.[53] The word-family is often used in connection with anguiform deities or their avatars. Thus the food-offerings made to the snakes kept in Apollo's precinct in Epirus, to ensure prosperity for the following year, were defined by the cognate term *meiligmata* ('appeasements'), as Aelian tells.[54] Accordingly, the term *meilichios* denotes a (serpent) deity who is either already appeased or who is easily appeased by those inclined to attempt it. The Greeks themselves folk-etymologized the term *meilichios* to derive it from *meli*, 'honey' and *meilia*, 'figs'.[55] In other words, they likened its essential quality to sweetness. We can at once understand the significance of the name Alexander of Abonouteichos gave to his divine serpent, 'Glycon', 'Sweetie' (Chs. 4 and 9). We can also understand the significance of the honeycakes given to the sacred snakes in the Trophonion and other shrines (Ch. 10).

But we should reject the modern notion that the epithet *meilichios* is 'propitiatory' in the sense of a sweet name given to an entity fundamentally terrible by nature in order to encourage it to behave sweetly, as in the naming of the notoriously inhospitable Black Sea 'Euxine', 'Kind to Visitors'.[56] The ancient testimony doggedly recycled in favour of this contention is a passage from Plutarch's *On Superstition* that self-evidently assumes the opposite view. Plutarch mocks the Superstitious Man who lives in fear of all the gods, from whom, unlike the slave of a fierce master, he has no hope of escape: 'Nor is it possible for the man who fears his ancestral and family gods to find a god whom he will not fear, this man who shudders before the saviour gods, who trembles and dreads the *meilichioi* gods from whom we ask for wealth, peace, harmony and the best achievements in word and deed.'[57] Plutarch certainly had Zeus Meilichios primarily in mind here since the bestowal of wealth, peace, and harmony was characteristic of him and the bearing of the *meilichios* epithet by other gods is only vestigially attested.[58] His point is clear: only an obsessively superstitious idiot could live in

[52] With μειλίχιος and μείλιχος compare μείλιγμα, μείλιχμα and μειλίσσω, the last of which, as Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 91 note, is already used of the appeasement of the dead at Homer *Iliad* 7. 140. Cf. also Nilsson 1938: 721.

[53] Pausanias 7. 19. 4–7. 20. 2.

[54] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 2.

[55] See Chantraine 1937–8, 2009 s.v. μείλια, Frisk 1960–72 and Beekes 2010 s.v. μείλιχος and Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 91, Lalonde 45. *Meilichos* and *meli* may indeed ultimately be related. See also Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1092–3, 1103–4, who also draws in the 'figgy' Phytalid *genos*, according to whose myth Theseus was purified for murder at their altar of Zeus Meilichios (Pausanias 1. 37).

[56] *Pace* Küster 1913: 106, Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1111, Burkert 1985: 201, Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 91–2, Dowden 2006: 65–6, Burton 2010: 1 and, to a lesser extent, Larson 2007: 213 (a well-nuanced summary).

[57] Plutarch *Moralia* 166e (*On Superstition*).

[58] As noted by Pfister 1932 and Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 91–2. Pausanias 10. 38. 8 mentions that Myonia in Locris has grove and altar of *Theoi Meilichioi*, to whom sacrifices are offered

fear of gods that are manifestly gentle, and by whom wealth, peace, harmony, and success are disbursed. There is nothing here, or indeed in any of the other evidence bearing upon him, to suggest that Zeus Meilichios is anything other than plainly and simply 'gentle', and 'gentle' without any propitiatory or ironic twist of thought.[59]

The Macedonian tale of Pindus, as preserved by Aelian, seems to offer a charter myth for Zeus Meilichios' disposition and provinces, or at any rate for those of a remarkably similar serpent deity. The vigorous and beautiful Pindus fears the envy and plots of his three lesser brothers. So he leaves his father's kingdom to make a life for himself in the adjacent country. As he hunts some fawns they disappear into a deep ravine. He is about to follow them into it when he is warned by a mysterious voice, 'Touch not the fawns.' He heeds it but returns the next day to investigate, whereupon he encounters a massive *drakōn*, rampant with his head and neck taller than a man, but nonetheless trailing the greater part of his body on the ground. Though terrified, he appeases the serpent by offering it the birds that he has caught that day, and the serpent departs leaving him unharmed. Thereafter Pindus regularly visits the serpent when he hunts and gives it the first fruits of the chase each time. And as he does so his hunting becomes more and more fruitful, and he enjoys an abundance. And at the same time his beauty enslaves all women to it, even married ones, and wins the admiration of men. But his brothers' enmity increases, and so they ambush him and kill him by a river. The serpent hears his dying cry, rushes to the scene and crushes the three brothers to death. It then mounts guard over Pindus' body until his relatives come to collect it for burial. The river, by which Pindus is then buried, takes his name. Aelian does not tell us explicitly that the serpent is Zeus Meilichios, but its actions closely reflect the god's established concerns: it bestows wealth and good fortune, and it purifies the death of Pindus by disposing of his wicked brothers and enabling the due obsequies. When Aelian speaks of the critical episode in which Pindus 'appeases' the serpent with his hunting spoils, the verb used is the one cognate with *meilichios*, *meilichtheis*, though the term could well have been applied equally to other serpent deities.[60] The myth admittedly shows Zeus Meilichios, or a Zeus-Meilichios-like deity, in an act of killing, but it is hardly a killing to render him terrible: those

at night, with the meat having to be consumed before sunrise. But in any case, these may be no other than Zeus Meilichios and a female consort.

[59] The contention of Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 92, 140–1 (building on Foucart 1883 and *pace* Harrison 1922: 18–19) that the Meilichios name originally derived from that of the terrible Phoenician Moloch (Molek) is unpersuasive. There is no trace whatsover in Zeus Meilichios' cult of the most salient and notorious feature of Moloch's, child sacrifice. Their observation that the cults for both gods erected 'simple stelai associated with the spirits of the gentilicial group or ancestors' reads tenuously on the Greek side. They further contend, awkwardly, that the Phoenician origin of Zeus Meilichios' cult was effectively forgotten, only for the god then to be partially re-identified with Moloch in Selinus when it fell under Carthaginian control in the fourth century BC. The case for this depends upon a deracinated and undated miniature altar at the Getty 'of evident Selinuntine origin', one potential reading of the Punic inscription on which is 'servant of Moloch'. Whatever the case for associating the object with Selinus, and whatever it actually says, there seems to be no basis for associating it with the sanctuary of Zeus Meilichios there in particular.

[60] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 5. 562–9 and 6. 155–68 describes Zeus Sabazius (for whom see Ch. 9) as a *meilichos . . . drakōn* in the act of seducing his daughter Persephone.

killed are exceptionally wicked, and they are killed in the interests of a good man that has established a pious relationship with him.[61]

THE RIVALS OF ZEUS MEILICHIOS: ZEUS KTĒSIOS AND ZEUS PHILIOS

The sole evidence for the anguiform manifestation of Zeus Ktēsios, 'Zeus of Possessions', is a third-century BC stele from Thespiae in Boeotia that displays a coiling snake with the legend, 'Of Zeus Ktēsios'.[62] When shown in humanoid form, Zeus Ktēsios can hold a cornucopia, as, on one occasion, does Zeus Meilichios.[63]

Indeed he seems to have had a broadly similar profile to Zeus Meilichios. Like him he is a protector and promoter of the household's wealth and possessions. Aeschylus observes that, 'When possessions are ransacked from houses, others may be got by the grace of Zeus Ktēsios.'[64] When his Cassandra arrives as a new slave in Agamemnon's house, Clytemnestra tells her to stand beside the altar of Zeus Ktēsios, evidently implying that, as a new member—or perhaps possession—of the household, she was to come under his protection.[65] Isaeus maintains that Ciron was strict in sacrificing to the god: he would admit no one to the sacrifice from outside his own family, not even his slaves, and at this sacrifice he prayed for his family's health (*hygieia*) and prosperity (*ktēsis agathē*).[66] Isaeus' immediate agenda here, together with the Aeschylean evidence, suggests that the household slaves normally were included in such sacrifices. And on occasion too friends could even be present: according to Antiphon's tale of the concubine of Philoneos, it was at a dinner in Philoneos' house in the Piraeus where sacrifice was made to Zeus Ktēsios that Philoneos and his friend were poisoned.[67] Plutarch associates him with Zeus Epikarpios ('Fruitful') and Zeus Charidotes ('Gracious').[68] Zeus Ktēsios seems to have been particularly concerned with the protection of

[61] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 10. 48. Hammond at Hammond and Griffith 1979: 31–8, esp. 36, guesses that Aelian derived the tale ultimately from the 3rd-century BC (?) *Makedonika* of Theagenes. Cf. the tale preserved by Conon at Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 186 §22 (134a). A Cretan youth is given a baby *drakōn* by his lover. He rears it and tends it until the *drakōn* increases in size and frightens the locals. They then compel the lad to put the creature out in the wilderness, and he does so, with much weeping. Later the boy is attacked by brigands when out hunting. He calls for help and the *drakōn*, recognizing his voice, destroys the brigands, constricting each of them.

[62] Thebes Museum 330 = Nilsson 1908: 279 = Harrison 1912: 297 fig. 79 = Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1061 fig. 914 = Mitropoulou 1977: 96 and fig. 38. Discussions: Nilsson 1908, 1932, 1938, 1967–74: i. 403–6, Harrison 1912: 297–303, Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1059–68, 1125, and fig. 914, Sjövall 1931: 53–74, Mitropoulou 1977: 95–6.

[63] Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 94. The Doric equivalent of Zeus Ktēsios was Zeus Pasios (πᾶcιc, 'acquisition', 'possession'). He is vestigially attested at Aegina (a stone with an archaic inscription, 'Of Zeus Pasios and Soter'; Peek 1934: 43–4 no. 6), Cos (4th or 3rd cent. BC, *Syll.*[3] 1106 line 148), and Tegea (a 3rd-cent. BC herm, 'Of Zeus Pasios'; Romaios 1911: 152 and fig. 7). See Nilsson 1938: 162. We are told nothing of this god's form.

[64] Aeschylus *Suppliants* 444–5.

[65] Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1038.

[66] Isaeus 8. 16.

[67] Antiphon 1. 16–18.

[68] Plutarch *Moralia* 1048c.

storerooms, in which an image of him (in what form we are not told) was kept, possibly in a ritually decorated *kadiskos* or drinking cup.[69] On occasion his fundamental concern for the household could extend to other (pseudo-)kinship groups: Classical-period inscriptions from the Thesmophorion in Thasos show Zeus Ktēsios, amongst other divinities, being worshipped by *patrai* (phratries).[70] And, as with Zeus Meilichios too, sheep sacrificed to Zeus Ktēsios could produce *Dios kōidia*.[71]

Zeus Ktēsios could seemingly be assimilated to other anguiform deities too, Asclepius, Agathos Daimon, and Agathe Tyche.[72] We have seen that Isaeus' Ciron prayed for health (*hygieia*) from him, thereby assimilating him to Asclepius.[73] An imperial-period dedication from the temple of Zeus in Panamara is addressed, '. . . and to the domestic (*enoikidioi*) gods, Zeus Ktēsios and Tyche and Asclepius'.[74] An imperial-period dedication from Teos declares that it belongs to 'Zeus Ktēsios, Capitoline Zeus, Rome, Agathos Daimon'.[75]

Zeus Philios, 'Zeus of Love, Friendship', is first attested in the early fourth-century BC: this is when Lysicrates made a dedication to him near the Athenian Acropolis and Polyclitus of Argos made a cult statue for his temple in the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Megalopolis.[76] His cult was to endure into the Roman period.[77] The god enjoyed a particular flurry of popularity in votive reliefs in later fourth-century BC Attica. Two stelae of this age from the Piraeus display serpents accompanied by fragmentary dedications to the god.[78] But in other Attic reliefs he is portrayed as humanoid, an enthroned, avuncular, bearded man approached by his worshippers. One of the humanoid reliefs, again preserved only fragmentarily, carries the inscription: '*Eranistai* [sc. members of a dining club] dedicated to Zeus Philios in the archonship of Hegesias [sc. 324–322 BC].' The god's concern for the dining club suggests that his province is the banquet, and perhaps in particular the sharing of food with friends beyond the immediate family group. A fragment of the third-century BC comic poet Diodorus of Sinope suggests the same: a parasite claims that his interloping art was invented by

[69] Haropcration s.v. *Κτησίου Διός*, incorporating Hyperides F9 Jensen and Menander *Pseudheracles* F410 KA, *Suda* s.v. *Κτησίου Διός*. Ritual decoration of pot: Aristophanes *Wealth* 1197 with schol., Athenaeus 473b, incorporating Anticlides *FGrH* 140 F22/ Autoclides *FGrH* 353 F1.

[70] Reproduced at Rolley 1965, to which add *IG* xii *Suppl.* 407; cf. Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 115.

[71] *Suda* s.v. *Διὸς κῴδιον*. [72] See Nilsson 1908: 280. [73] Isaeus 8. 16.

[74] Cousin and Deschamps 1888: 269 no. 54; cf. Nilsson 1908: 280, Harrison 1912: 298, Mitropoulou 1977: 96–7.

[75] *CIG* 3074.

[76] Athens: *IG* ii^2 4555; cf. Mitropoulou 1977: 110–11. Megalopolis: Pausanias 8. 31. 4. Discussions: Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1160–210, Sjövall 1931: 75–84, Nilsson 1932, Mitropoulou 1977: 97–112.

[77] In Roman Athens his priest had a reserved seat in the theatre, *IG* ii^2 5066. The cult is also attested in imperial times at, amongst other places, Megalopolis, where Pausanias implies the cult endured into his own day, and Pergamon, where it was celebrated on coins of Marcus Aurelius and Antonius Pius (Mitropoulou 1977: 111–12).

[78] Piraeus Museum (nos. unknown) = *IG* ii^2 4625 = Mitropoulou 1977: 101–2 nos. 4–5. It is possible that two further uninscribed snake reliefs, *IG* ii^2 4621 and 4622, also represent Zeus Philios (they will otherwise represent Zeus Meilichios); so Jameson, Jordan, and Kotansky 1993: 83.

Zeus Philios, who, as the greatest of the gods, enters houses without making a distinction between poor ones and rich ones, so long as he sees a loaded table within.[79] From the image on the *Eranistai* relief is preserved: the bottom of an enthroned figure, holding a sceptre and a bowl; a piglet approaching him, a sacrifice brought by the grateful worshippers who would have followed behind; behind the pig an altar; beneath the throne an eagle.[80] Pausanias tells us that Polyclitus made a statue of this god too, and his description of the statue sounds broadly congruent with the *Eranistai* relief: it showed a humanoid figure, seated, wearing buskins, and holding a cup in one hand (again, was there a snake to drink from it?) and a thyrsus with an eagle perching on it in the other.[81] The coincidence between the *Eranistai* relief and the Thespian relief of Agathos Daimon (discussed below) is yet more striking, and the fact that the dedication is made by a dining club will also speak of the proximity between the two deities.[82] A more elaborate Attic relief, dated to c.347 BC, is headed with the dedication, 'Aristomache, Olympiodorus, Theoris dedicated to Zeus Epiteleios Philios and to Philia the mother of the god and to Tyche Agathe the wife of the god'. To the right of the image a large bearded male, Zeus Philios, reclines on a bed holding a cornucopia and a 'mesomphalos' (centrally bossed) *phialē*. A large female figure sits on the bed facing him, evidently his consort Agathe Tyche (Philia remains unillustrated). From the left approach three worshippers, female, male, and female, evidently Aristomache, Olympiodorus, and Theoris in order and presumably in portrait. Between the two groups, closer to the worshippers in size, is a naked wine-bearer.[83] The pairing of Zeus Philios with Agathe Tyche again assimilates him strikingly with Agathos Daimon. The cornucopia assimilates him both to Zeus Ktēsios again and indeed to Zeus Meilichios.[84]

[79] Diodorus of Sinope F2 K-A *apud* Athenaeus 239a–f. In this regard he may have resembled the Zeus Xenios ('of Guests')' for whom a table was named in the common dining halls of Crete: Pyrgion (undatable) *FGrH* 467 F1 *apud* Athenaeus 143e–f.

[80] Athens EM 8738 = *IG* ii^2 2935 = Mitropoulou 1977: 99–100 no. 1 and fig. 39. Two further late 4th-century BC Attic named dedications to Zeus Philios (alone) show him as the enthroned, avuncular, bearded humanoid: Athens, National Museum 1405 (now Piraeus Museum 1405) = *IG* ii^2 4623 = Mitropoulou 1977: 101 no. 3; and Piraeus Museum 51 = *IG* ii^2 4624 = Mitropoulou 1977: 100 no. 2 and fig. 40.

[81] Pausanias 8. 31. 4.

[82] This eagle is found sitting beneath thrones on six further similar reliefs, two of them from outside Athens, one from Tegea, and one from Nauplion, which are better preserved but without (surviving) inscriptions: Mitropoulou 1977: 103–10 nos. 7–12 and figs. 43–8. Mitropoulou holds, accordingly, that all of these reliefs too were intended to depict Zeus Philios, but the fact that the eagle can also belong to Agathos Daimon (see below) frustrates the hypothesis.

[83] Copenhagen Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek 1558 = *IG* ii^2 4627 = Harrison 1912: 312 fig. 90, 1922: 355 fig. 106, Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1162 fig. 970 = Mitropoulou 1977: 102–3 no. 6 and fig. 42. Although it has been contended that the large female figure beside Zeus Philios is his mother Philia, Mitropoulou 1977: 111 is surely right to suggest that it should rather be his consort with whom he is shown, i.e. Tyche Agathe. Zeus Philios is also paired with Agathe Tyche in a 3rd-century BC inscription from Erythrai published at L. Robert 1933.

[84] Pausanias 8. 31. 4.

AGATHOS DAIMON

Although he had been known in the old Greek world for at least a century beforehand, it was with the foundation of Alexandria at the end of the fourth century BC that Agathos Daimon came to greatness. This is the point at which it is most convenient to begin his story; the problematic evidence for his earlier manifestations will then be considered retrospectively.

The Alexandrian foundation myth

The anguiform deities of the Greek world tended to have little by way of myth, but Agathos Daimon did at least enjoy a starring role in the foundation myth of Alexandria preserved by the *Alexander Romance* (the A text of which dates to *c.* AD 300).[85] According to this, Alexander's architects marked out the projected city to extend between the rivers 'Serpent' (*Drakōn*) and 'Agathodaimon'[86] (the latter in fact being the name given to the Canopic branch of the Nile in several inscriptions and in *Geography* of Claudius Ptolemy).[87] Then:

> They began to build Alexandria from the Middle Plain and so the place took on the additional name of 'Beginning', on account of the fact that the building of the city had begun from that point. A *drakōn* which was in the habit of presenting itself to people in the area kept frightening the workmen, and they would break off their work upon the creature's arrival. News of this was given to Alexander. He gave the order that on the following day the serpent should be killed wherever it was caught. On receipt of this permission, they got the better of the beast when it presented itself at the place now called the Stoa and killed it. Alexander gave the order that it should have a precinct there, and buried the serpent. And he gave the command that the neighborhood should be garlanded in memory of the sighting of Agathos Daimon. He commanded that the soil from the digging of the foundations should all be deposited in one particular place, and even up until this day a large hill is there to be seen, called the 'Dung Heap'. When he had laid the foundations for most of the city and measured it out, he inscribed five letters, alpha, beta, gamma, delta, epsilon: alpha for 'Alexander', Beta for 'king', gamma for 'scion', delta for 'of Zeus' and epsilon for 'founded this unforgettable city.' Beasts of burden and mules were at work. When the foundations of the heroon (hero-shrine) had been laid down <he set it [i.e. the stele on which he had inscribed the letters] on a pillar>.[88] There leaped out from it a large host

[85] Dunand 1981: 281 accordingly goes too far in asserting that Agathos Daimon had no mythology. For discussion of Agathos Daimon in general see Harrison 1912: 277–316, Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1125–9, Ganschinietz/Ganszyniec 1918 and 1919, Jakobsson 1925 esp.151–75, Rohde 1925: 207–8 n. 133, Tarn 1928, Taylor 1930, Visser 1938: 5–8, 65–6, Nilsson 1967–74: ii. 213–18, A. Bernand 1970: i. 82–99, Fraser 1972: i. 209–11, with associated notes, Quaegebeur 1975: 170–6 and *passim*, Mitropoulou 1977: 155–68, Dunand 1969, 1981, with bibliography, Pietrzykowski 1978, le Roy 1981, Sfameni Gasparro 1997, Hillard 1998, 2010, Jouanno 2002: 75–6, 105–8, Stoneman 2007: 532–4, 2008: 56–8. Parts of the following treatment owe much to Ogden 2011*a*: 34–9, 90–5, 2011*b*, 2012, forthcoming *b–d*.

[86] *Alexander Romance* 1. 31. 7 (A).

[87] See *OGIS* no. 672, with further references ad loc.; Claudius Ptolemy *Geography* 4. 5.

[88] The Greek A MS is both lacunary and corrupt at this point, and this material is supplied from the Armenian trans. (itself translated into English at Wolohojian 1969), which together with A makes up the *α* recension of the *Romance*. For the Greek phrase that survives in A, '+ *ἐπὶ ἓν ἐπιστύλιον . . .*' (as printed by Kroll 1926 and Stoneman 2007), I would conjecture, on the basis of the Armenian, '*ἐπέθηκεν*

<of snakes>, and, crawling off, they ran into the four [?] houses that were already there. Alexander, who was still present, founded the city and the heroon itself on the 25th Tybi. From that point the doorkeepers admitted these snakes (*opheis*) to the houses as Agathoi Daimones. These snakes are not venomous, but they do ward off those snakes that do seem to be venomous, and sacrifices are given to the hero himself <, as snake-born>. They garland their beasts of burden and give them a holiday since they helped in the foundation of the city by carrying loads. Alexander ordered that the guardians of the houses be given wheat. They took it and milled it and made porridge [?] and gave it to the snakes in the houses. The Alexandrians preserve this custom until today. On the 25th of Tybi they garland their beasts of burden, make sacrifice to the Agathoi Daimones that look after their houses and make them gifts of porridge.

(*Alexander Romance* 1. 32. 5–13 A ~ Armenian §§ 86–8)

The host of Agathoi Daimones snakes that emerges from the inscribed tablet in the heroon of Agathos Daimon somehow constitutes the great *drakōn* redivivus. And this, after all, is what a hero is: an entity that though dead contrives in some sense to live on and to continue to exert influence upon the world. Two examples of the Greek belief that snakes could be produced from the bodies of heroes (Ch. 7) are particularly apposite: that of Apsyrtus in Absoris, where, as it seems, a single body produced a host of snakes,[89] and that of Cleomenes III in Alexandria itself, during the reign of Ptolemy Philopator. The serpent that manifested itself to protect the latter's body no doubt panicked the Alexandrians not least because they had the model of their own Agathos Daimon before their eyes.[90]

The public and private cults of Agathos Daimon at Alexandria

The *Alexander Romance* implies the establishment both of a civic cult for a singular Agathos Daimon as special protector of Alexandria, and of private cults for plural Agathoi Daimones as protectors of individual homes within the city. It seems that both forms of cult had become established in Alexandria by the end of the third century BC, and we may conjecture that the foundation myth had similarly been developed by this point.[91]

The public cult of Agathos Daimon can almost certainly be taken back to the 320–300 BC period under Ptolemy Soter himself. To this period is assigned the original of the Alexander Aegiochus ('Aegis-bearing') statue-type that represented Alexander in his role as founder of the city and, it seems, decorated Alexander's tomb in Alexandria.[92] In this statue Alexander wore an aegis decorated with a small gorgoneion or Gorgon-head; in his right hand he held a spear; in his left a

ἐπὶ στυλίου', 'he set on a pillar'. The β recension has a slightly more elaborate tale: when the gatehouse to the shrine was being built, a huge, ancient tablet full of letters fell out of it, and it was out of this that the snakes emerged. Presumably the notion was that a piece of ancient Egyptian masonry was being reused. But this tablet full of letters would seem to be a doublet of the tablet that Alexander himself has just inscribed with his own five letters.

[89] Hyginus *Fabulae* 26. [90] Plutarch *Agis and Cleomenes* 60.

[91] There is no question of the prominence of the cult of Agathos Daimon in the imperial period, when it came to rival or even outstrip that of Sarapis himself: see Fraser 1972: i. 209, ii. 356–7 n. 164, with many further references.

[92] Stewart 1993: 246–53, 421–2, with figs. 82–3.

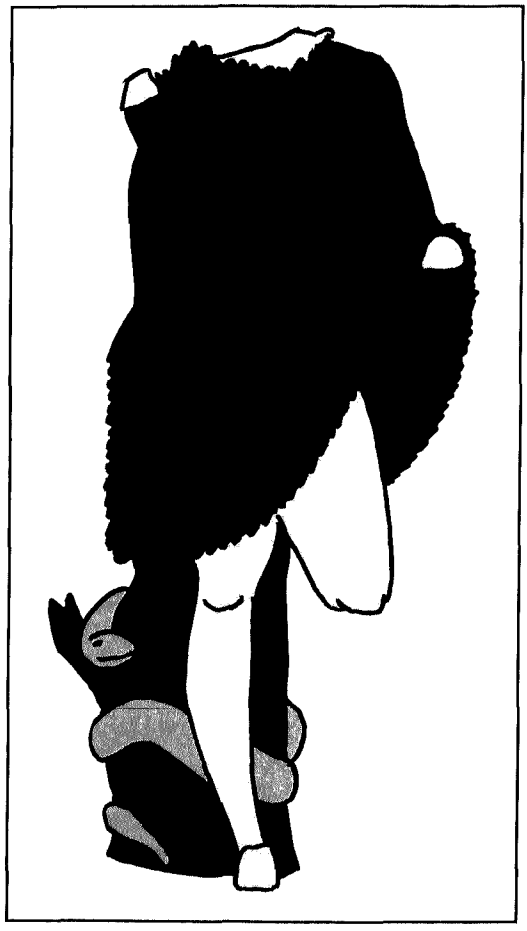


Fig. 8.2. Fragmentary Alexander Aegiochus statuette. Agathos Daimon winds around the tree-trunk support. Louvre, Collection Lambros-Dattari. Redrawn by the author.

palladion, a small statuette of the goddess Athene. The statue is attested by some eighteen copies in various states of repair, statues, statuettes, and cameos, all, where provenance is known, deriving from Egypt. In two severely damaged statuette copies, one now in the Louvre (Collection Lambros-Dattari: Fig. 8.2), the other in the new Museo Bíblico y Oriental in León, Alexander's leg is supported by a tree-trunk around which a serpent winds: evidently Agathos Daimon.[93] Despite its vestigial attestation, the serpent presumably did feature in the original. This is further suggested by the Aegiochus' allusions to Phidias' Athene Parthenos, allusions supported by the featured palladion: the Parthenos statue too wore the aegis and held a spear and a female statuette, in this case of

[93] For the Louvre copy see Schwarzenberg 1976: 235 with fig. 8, Stewart 1993: 247, Stoneman 2007: 533. I thank Professor Victor Alonso Troncoso for drawing the Museo Bíblico y Oriental copy to my attention.

Nike, Victory.[94] And nestling under the Parthenos' shield was Athene's magnificent serpent, be it the anguiform Ericthonius or, more probably, the *oikouros ophis*, the 'house-guarding snake', the protective spirit of the city of Athens, much as Agathos Daimon was the protective spirit of the city of Alexandria (see Chs. 5, 7, and 10).

The building of the Agathos Daimon heroon may be dimly refracted in the first- to second-century AD Philo of Byblos' assertion that the ancient Egyptians 'built temples and consecrated the first elements associated with snakes in *adyta*'.[95] A series of Alexandrian coins of the Hadrianic and Antonine periods show what appears to have been a monumental altar enclosed in an elaborate colonnaded structure. On a sub-series the Agathos Daimon serpent stands to the left of the structure, wearing a pshent (the Egyptian double-crown), and his consort the Agathe-Tyche serpent stands to the right. This structure is normally taken to represent Agathos Daimon's own altar.[96] Ammianus Marcellinus preserves a vignette from what we may conjecture to have been the last days of the heroon. His unsympathetic bishop Georgius arrogantly threatens the magnificent temple to the '*Genius* of the city', scoffing, 'How long will this tomb stand?' As we shall see, the term *genius* was frequently associated with Agathoi Daimones in the Latin of Ammianus' age.[97] The Agathos Daimon serpent's protecting presence across the city may have been conveyed by such things as the fine but now headless 30-cm. high grey-granite sculpture of a coiling serpent Goddio found on the sea-bed of Alexandria's harbour.[98]

The public Agathos Daimon cult is clearly reflected in the famous *Oracle of the Potter*, probably third-century BC in origin but perhaps second, a unique piece of native-Egyptian-derived propaganda against the Macedonian regime, originally composed in Demotic but surviving only (in its principal form) in Greek. This prophesies that Agathos Daimon will abandon the city that is currently being built, Alexandria, for the native-Egyptian city of Memphis. In other words, it seems, Alexandria will be deprived of its protecting deity and fall.[99] According to Cassius Dio, the portents that followed the fall of Alexandria to Octavian included the manifestation of a huge serpent with a loud hiss: Agathos Daimon on his way out, or perhaps threatening to leave?[100]

[94] Cf. Stewart 1993: 248–50.

[95] Philo of Byblos *FGrH* 790 F4 (*apud* Eusebius *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1. 10. 53).

[96] Thus Vogt 1924: 106, Handler 1971: 68–9, with pl. 12 figs. 18–21 for the coins. Saunders 2006: 78 contends that the Agathos Daimon heroon and the mysterious tomb of Alexander were one and the same, and that these coins therefore preserve images of the lost tomb.

[97] Ammianus Marcellinus 22. 16. 15. See Fraser 1972: ii. 356–7 n. 164 and Saunders 2006: 100–1.

[98] Goddio 1998: 180–2, with photo 84. Bernand and Goddio 2002: 116 are quite confident that the subject is Agathodaimon.

[99] *P.Oxy.* 2332 lines 51–3: *κατά τε ὁ ἀγαθὸς / δαίμων καταλείψει τὴν κτιζομένην πόλειν καὶ ἀ/πελεύσεται εἰς τὴν θεοτόκον Μέμφειν καὶ ἐξερημώσηται.* For this text, see Tarn 1928: 215, Fraser 1972: i. 683–4. Hillard 1998, 2010 dates the oracle rather to the late first century BC, and associates the snake's abandonment of Alexandria with Octavian's defeat of Antony. Cf. Kipling's tale 'Letting the Jungle In' (1895), where Mowgli and his animals destroy a wicked village and its people flee: 'Who could fight, they said, against the Jungle, or the Gods of the Jungle, when the very village cobra had left his hole in the platform under the peepul-tree?' I thank Prof. Elizabeth Baynham for drawing my attention to this.

[100] Cassius Dio 51. 17. 4–5: *καί τις δράκων ὑπερμεγέθης ἐξαίφνης σφίσιν ὀφθεὶς ἀμήχανον ὅσον ἐξεσύρισε.*

Agathos Daimon almost certainly came to be identified with the Ptolemaic kings themselves. The pshent that Agathos Daimon sports in his Graeco-Egyptian iconography, all post-Ptolemaic, alas, indicates that he had been considered the guarantor, possibly even the incarnation, of the royal function, as indeed does his frequent identification with Sarapis.[101] Agathos Daimon's native-Egyptian counterpart, Šaï (of whom more anon), is found identified with the kings in Egyptian-language evidence from the reigns of Ptolemies III, IV, IX, and XII.[102] And the Greek title bestowed upon Nero in an official circular giving notice of his accession and in an inscription adjacent to the Sphinx, 'Agathos Daimon (Good Demon) of the Known World', almost certainly harks back to Ptolemaic usage.[103] On second-century AD coins from Roman Egypt the anguiform Agathos Daimon is winningly shown riding a horse in rampant form. This image resembles those of the emperors themselves upon galloping horses, and so presumably expresses a continuing identification of the emperor with Agathos Daimon.[104]

The private, house-based cults of Agathoi Daimones implied by the *Alexander Romance* are already reflected in a fragment of Phylarchus, whose history finished in 219 BC with the death of Cleomenes III of Sparta. He supplies glorious details of the techniques used to summon the snakes, who make impeccable dinner-guests, to their food:

> In his twelfth book Phylarchus says as follows about the asps (*aspides*) of Egypt. He tells that they are strongly honoured, and as a result of this honour they become very gentle and tame. They are reared alongside children and do them no harm. When called they slither out of their holes and come. Calling them consists of clicking the fingers. The Egyptians lay out gifts of guest-friendship for them. For whenever they have finished their meal they moisten barley in wine and honey and lay it out on the table on which they happen to have been dining. Then clicking their fingers they call their 'guests'. And they present themselves as if by prior arrangement. Rampant around the table, they leave the rest of their coils on the floor, but lift up their heads and lick at the food. Slowly and bit by bit they take their fill of the barley, and eat it all up. If some need presses upon the Egyptians in the course of the night they click their fingers again. This noise gives them the signal to retreat and withdraw. Accordingly, they understand the difference in the sound and why this is done, and immediately retreat and disappear, sliding back into their nests and holes. A man who has risen does not tread on any of them or even meet them. (Phylarchus *FGrH* 81 F27 = Aelian *Nature of animals* 17. 5)[105]

We shall return to this fragment in Chapter 10. In another, related fragment Phylarchus tells that one such entertained snake (*aspis*), on discovering that one of its own young had killed the son of its host, killed its errant offspring and never

[101] So Dunand 1981: 282. The monuments in which Agathos Daimon is portrayed with the head of Sarapis, all apparently deriving from the Roman period, are catalogued at Pietrzykowski 1978: 960–1.

[102] Evidence and discussion at Quaegebeur 1975: 111–13.

[103] *P. Oxy.* 1021 lines 8–10 (17 Nov., AD 54) and *OGIS* ii. 666 lines 3–4: ἀγαθὸς δαίμων τῆς οἰκουμένης; cf. Dunand 1969: 30, 37, Quaegebeur 1975: 113, 170. A coin of Nero gives the emperor's portrait on the obverse and Agathos Daimon on the reverse, with the legend νέος ἀγαθὸς δαίμων, 'New Agathos Daimon': see Head 1911: 720, Harrison 1912: 277, Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1128, Ganschinietz 1918: 47–8.

[104] *LIMC* Agathodaimon 32, 34; cf. Dunand 1969: 31.

[105] Aelian's description of the offerings made to the Egyptian Metelis serpent at *Nature of Animals* 11. 17 will also be discussed in Ch. 10.

again returned to its host's house.[106] For Phylarchus, in contrast to the *Alexander Romance*, the Agathoi Daimones of private cults could indeed be venomous, albeit rarely dangerous, and this accords with the note on the *agathodaimōn* snake by the second-century AD medical writer Aelius Promotus. Though venomous, it attacks neither people nor other animals, save rarely in self-defence, whereupon the venom can be counteracted by rinsing the wound with warm brine and applying a salve mixed from unslaked lime and olive oil. This snake is a cubit long, its back is the colour of black-ash pigment, with scale-like markings, and its belly is whitish.[107] Plutarch offers us the charming vignette of two Egyptian neighbours arguing about a snake (*ophis*) that had crawled into the road: 'Both were calling it *Agathos Daimon*, and each of them was claiming the right to keep it as his own.'[108] The fourth- or fifth-century AD *Historia Augusta* tells that the emperor Elagabalus kept at Rome some Egyptian *dracunculi* ('serpent-lets') of the sort that the natives of that land called *agathodaemones*, presumably after having imported them.[109]

Drakōn-slaying and the foundation of the royal capitals

The first part of the *Romance* narrative casts Alexander as a *drakōn*-slayer, but as a *drakōn*-slaying story fit for Alexander it is less than satisfactory: the serpent in question appears to be more of a nuisance than an ultimate peril; the hero of the story does not even encounter it in person, but almost superciliously delegates the task to an unnamed group of builders. Alexander had to wait until the δ recension of the *Alexander Romance*, known to us only from the seventh-century AD Syriac translation of a Greek original, to get the full-blown *drakōn*-fight that was his due.[110] Nonetheless, in context the tale of the slaying of the Agathos Daimon serpent, emphatically identified with not one but two branches of the Nile, Agathodaimon and Drakon, strongly salutes Greek traditions that derive foundations of cities from the slaying of a *drakōn* which is tightly associated with a water-source. The key examples here are those of Cadmus' slaying of the Serpent of Ares at the spring of Dirce prior to the foundation of Thebes and Eurybatus' slaying of Lamia-Sybaris, prior to her transformation into a spring and the foundation of the city named for her (Ch. 4).[111] One wonders whether Ptolemy projected Alexandria in any way as a compensatory foundation for Alexander's destruction of

[106] Phylarchus *FGrH* 81 F28 = Pliny *Natural History* 10. 208. Cf. Aelian *Nature of Animals* 12. 32, where the poisonous snakes of India are said to shun one of their fellows if he bites a man.

[107] Aelius Promotus *Περὶ τῶν ἰοβόλων θηρίων καὶ δηλητηρίων φαρμάκων* 25.

[108] Plutarch *Moralia* 755e.

[109] SHA *Elagabalus* 28. 1: *Aegyptios dracunculos Romae habuit, quos illi agathodaemonas vocant.*

[110] *Syriac Alexander Romance* 3. 7. For text and trans. see Budge 1889, with trans. of the relevant portion at 102–3. This was then taken up into the *c.* AD 1000 version of the *Romance* in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, C1331–4; Khaleghi-Motlagh 1988– will be the standard edition of this text when complete. Translation at D. Davis 2006: 506–8 and Warner and Warner 1912: vi. 148–53. See Ogden 2012.

[111] Euripides *Phoenissae* 1006–12 (cf. 1315) speaks of a cult for the Serpent of Ares at Thebes, with its *sēkos*. Such a cult, even if itself only fictive, helps to build a bridge between the slain serpents of myth and the worshipped serpents of cult, as, from the other side, does the slaying-myth of Agathos Daimon.

Thebes.[112] It has also been contended, uncompellingly, that the Agathos-Daimon myth spoke to a native-Egyptian audience in a broadly similar way by saluting Egyptian myths of dynastic establishments, as instantiated in the tale of Ammon-Ra's killing of the Apophis-serpent or in Horus' killing of Seth-Typhon, the latter of which took place in the Memphite temple in which the pharaohs were crowned, according to Nigidius Figulus.[113]

As the Ptolemies were constructing a foundation myth for Alexandria around the Agathos Daimon serpent and its river, the Seleucids were doing something similar for their own major city foundations. As we have seen (Introduction, Ch. 2), the myth of Zeus' battle with the primeval *drakōn* Typhon, in which he destroyed him with his thunderbolts, effectively originated in an *interpretatio Graeca* of a mythical battle between a storm god and a dragon that had been located since the age of the Hurrians on ancient Syria's (modern Turkey's) towering Mt. Kasios, now the Jebel Aqra. At some point in the Hellenistic era the river Orontes, the great waterway that flowed beneath Kasios and effectively linked the two new cities of Antioch and Seleuceia-in-Pieria, was identified with the *drakōn*. The Augustan Strabo preserves the tale that the Orontes' riverbed was created when Zeus hurled his thunderbolts down on Typhon. As Typhon fled he cut the highly serpentine riverbed with his writhing coils, before releasing its source into it as he finally dived down into the earth. The river initially took Typhon's name for its own. The Christian chronographer John Malalas, writing in the fifth or sixth century AD, was to tell that the river actually had four names in all: Orontes, Drakon, Typhon, and Ophites, the last again signifying 'Snake River'.[114]

The fourth-century AD Pausanias of Antioch records a tale about Perseus and the Orontes in which the hero typologically re-enacts his father Zeus' battle against Typhon. The river, at this point called the Drakon, floods disastrously, and Perseus advises the local Iopolitans to pray. In answer to their prayers a ball of fire comes down from heaven which dries up the flood. Like his father Zeus before him, Perseus, famous destroyer of anguiform monsters (the Gorgons, the Andromeda *kētos*), fights the *drakōn*-river with fire from the sky. Perseus then founds the sanctuary 'Of the Immortal Fire' for the Iopolitans, before taking some of the heavenly fire back to the Persia named for him and teaching the Persians to revere it, appointing trustworthy men to tend the flame, to whom he gives the name 'magi': in other words, he founds the Zoroastrian religion.[115]

The foundations of Antioch and Seleuceia-in-Pieria were associated, indirectly at any rate, with these great dragon-slayings by a myth fashioned for Seleucus, which identified him in turn typologically with Zeus and Perseus in his acts of

[112] For what it is worth (not much), *Suda* s.v. *Ἀγαθοῦ Δαίμονος* mentions, without elaboration, that Agathos Daimon had a heroon in Thebes.

[113] This is the case made by Merkelbach 1977: 36–8. Apophis: *P. Bremner-Rhind*, reproduced in photographs at Budge 1910 pls. i–xix; trans. at *ANET*[3] 6–7. Seth-Typhon: Nigidius Figulus p. 123, 8 Swoboda.

[114] Strabo C750–1; cf. Pausanias (Periegetes) 8. 29, John Malalas Chronicle 197 Dindorf.

[115] Pausanias of Antioch *FHG* iv. pp. 467–8, F3 = John Malalas *Chronicle* 37–8 Dindorf. In other contexts the Greeks could employ Agathos Daimon as the *interpretatio Graeca* of the Zoroastrian 'Good Principle', Spenta Mainyu, or even of Ahura Mazda himself: Diodorus 1. 94; cf. Ganschinietz 1918: 39.

foundation. Malalas tells how, as Seleucus is sacrificing to Zeus on Mt. Kasios and enquiring where he should found his city, the god's own eagle seizes part of the sacrifice and drops it in Pieria, where Seleucus accordingly goes on to found the first of the two cities. He gives thanks for the foundation by sacrificing to Zeus Keraunios ('of the Thunderbolt') in the sanctuary founded by Perseus. He then sacrifices to Zeus again at nearby Antigoneia to enquire whether he should adopt Antigonus' city and rename it or found a new one elsewhere. Again an eagle seizes meat from the altar and drops it on Mt. Silpios. As Malalas tells us, Seleucus chooses the exact site for his new city, Antioch, beside the great Drakon river, now the Orontes, in such a way as to avoid the torrents that come down from the mountain.[116] The fourth-century AD Libanius had already made it clear that the meat seized by the Antioch eagle took the form, specifically, of flaming ox-thighs.[117] The symbolic equivalence of the flaming ox-thigh and the thunderbolt is made clear in Syrian coinage of the imperial period, long after the disappearance of the Seleucids, where highly similar series of reverses issued under Marcus Aurelius show eagles bearing either lightning bolts or ox-thighs in parallel configurations.[118] In his founding of Seleuceia and Antioch, therefore, Seleucus is projected as a third conqueror of the Drakon river. He metaphorically masters it with his pair of city foundations, but he also gets the better of it by avoiding the paths of its torrents. And though he does not himself deploy thunderbolts or heavenly balls of fire directly against the river, he is guided to his mastering foundations by Zeus, who drops thunderbolt-like flaming ox-thighs from the sky, in a reminiscence of the weapons he had himself used in his primeval battle.

Seleucus proceeded to encounter another *drakōn* more directly in the course of his foundational activities, one that helped guide him to the site of his sanctuary of Apollo in the grove of Daphne, some four miles to the west of Antioch. As Seleucus was hunting there, Libanius again tells, his horse's hoof turned up a golden arrow-head, engraved 'of Phoebus'. As he lifted it, a rampant and hissing *drakōn* launched itself at him. But as it drew close, its countenance changed to one of mildness (*hēmeron*), and then it vanished. Seleucus took this for an omen, and had the sanctuary laid out in the place at once. The *drakōn* was evidently Apollo himself, or his avatar, content to find that his grove and his treasure alike were in appropriate hands.[119]

Alexander, Jeremiah, the argolaoi, and the Snake-born

A Christian tradition of the third century AD preserves, awkwardly, a tale partly parallel to the *Romance*'s narrative:

Jeremiah was of Anathoth, and he died in Daphnae in Egypt when he was stoned to death by the local people. He was laid to rest in the region of the Pharaoh's palace, because the

[116] John Malalas *Chronicle* 198–200 Dindorf.

[117] Libanius *Orations* 11. 85–8 (Förster i. 2 pp. 464–5): on this fascinating oration see Downey 1959.

[118] Dieudonné 1929 with pl. ii (iv). Note esp. 16 (eagle with thigh) and 18 (eagle with thunderbolt). For Seleucid foundation myths, see Downey 1961: 29–32, Ogden 2011*a*: 89–102, 2011*b*.

[119] Libanius *Orations* 11. 95–8.

Egyptians held him in honour, since he had done them good service. For he prayed for them, and the asps left them alone, as did the creatures of the waters, which the Egyptians call *menephōth* and the Greeks call crocodiles, which were killing them. The prophet prayed and the race of asps was averted from that land, as were the attacks of the creatures from the river. Even to this day the faithful pray in the place he lay, and by taking earth from the site of his tumulus they heal bites inflicted upon people, and many avert even the creatures in the water. We heard from some old men, descendants of Antigonus and Ptolemy, that Alexander the Macedonian visited the tomb of the prophet and learned the mysteries pertaining to him. He transferred his remains to Alexandria, and arranged them, with all due honour, in a circle. The race of asps was thus averted from that land, as similarly were the creatures from the river. And thus he threw in [sc. inside the circle] the snakes called *argolaoi*, that is 'snake-fighters' [*ophiomachoi*], which he had brought from Peloponnesian Argos, whence they are called *argolaoi*, that is, 'right-hand-side men [*dexioi*] of Argos'. The sound they make is very sweet and of all good omen. ([Epiphanius] *De vita prophetarum et obitu* first recension p. 9, Schermann ~ second recension pp. 61–2, Schermann ~ *Chronicon Paschale* p. 293 Dindorf)[120]

The final sentences appear to mean that Alexander took Jeremiah's deterrent remains from Daphnae and arranged them in a circle around the city of Alexandria. Snakes (and crocodiles) outside the circle were thus prevented from entering it. He then threw his other-snake-fighting *argolaoi* snakes inside the circle, where they will presumably have destroyed the other snakes marooned inside it, and taken their place. Alexander may have made the circle by distributing the prophet's limbs, but we should almost certainly think rather of him sprinkling the remains in the form of a fine line of cremation ash. This would then align neatly with the tradition, first found in Strabo, that Alexander had initially marked out the circle of Alexandria for his architects by sprinkling a line of barley meal that was then devoured by birds, in an act of good omen.[121]

Like the *Romance*'s narrative, this one accounts for the arrival in Alexandria, alongside Alexander, of a host of good snakes that ward off bad snakes. The good snakes were evidently conceived on the model of the gentle *pareias*, the variety of snake typically kept in Greek sanctuaries (Ch. 10). In a *bon mot* Hyperides compared polticians in their different kinds to snakes: all snakes were hated, but amongst them it was the vipers that did harm to men, whereas *pareias* snakes actually ate vipers. In due course a scholium to Aristophanes was to make the

[120] The ps.-Epiphanian narrative (briefly mentioned at Stoneman 1994, 2007: 533, 2008: 57) survives in two recensions of its own (for which see Schermann 1907), but is reflected, in on the whole better, though not perfect, condition, in the 7th cent. AD *Chronicon Paschale*. The three texts differ from each other only by variation in omission. The translation given here merges the three accounts to produce an intelligible text. *Suda* s.v. ἀργόλαι (*sic*) gives an account of the story syncopated to the point of unintelligibility, but has the virtue of preserving an arbitrary folk etymology of the term *argolaoi*, 'left-hand-men (*laioi*) of Argos', which provides the key to the baffling etymology of *argolaoi* supplied in the Epiphanian tradition. A redactor evidently found the negative connotations of the left-hand side unsatisfactory for such good snakes, and so corrected the explanation to invoke rather the positive connotations of the right-hand side, throwing the verbal baby out with the bathwater in the process. The term *dexioi* also carries the particular connotation of good omen and so justifies the contention that the *argolaoi* snakes have good-omened voices. From the perspective of genuine etymology, the Epiphanian term *argolaoi* ought actually to mean 'peoples (*laoi*) of Argos' or 'shining peoples'. The *Suda*'s form *argolai* is more simply and directly construable as 'Argives' *tout court*: cf. e.g. Euripides, FF41, 630 *TrGF*.

[121] Strabo C792, Plutarch *Alexander* 26.

identification complete and assert that the *pareias* was found in Alexandria.[122] And indeed the notion that Alexander should have transported snakes from Argos to Alexandria is reminiscent of the practice of Asclepian cult transfer (Ch. 9), a practice that probably typically used snakes of the *pareias* variety. No doubt the tale seeks thereby to bestow a religious legitimacy on the foundation of the city.

Given that the motif of snake-transfer from Argos salutes the claim of Alexander's family, the Argeads, and thereby that of the Ptolemies too, to derive their own stock ultimately from Argos, it is likely that this element of the tale at least originated with the Ptolemaic dynasty and its promoters.[123] A Ptolemaic hand seems to lurk distantly too behind the motif of the transfer of Jeremiah's body from the land of Egypt proper to Alexandria: it evidently functions, at one level, as a typological justification for Ptolemy Soter's own transfer of Alexander's body from Memphis to Alexandria. But if the tale was Ptolemaic in origin, the magical body in question cannot in origin have been Jeremiah's (and the motif of martyrdom attached to it is in any case distinctly Christian).

Jeremiah, as the tale gives him to us, was evidently a St Patrick *avant-la-lettre*, and he is associated with the phenomenon known to folklorists (in consequence of St Patrick) as 'Irish earth',[124] that of the soil of a certain place being repellent to certain venomous or pestilential creatures, which is well attested elsewhere in Graeco-Roman culture, at least from the age of the elder Pliny in the first century AD onwards: the earth of Crete was fatal to venomous snakes, that of the island of Astypalaea and of the Balearic island of Ebusus (Ibiza) drove snakes away, whilst that of the Tunisian island of Galata drove away scorpions; Sicilian achate stones cured wounds inflicted by spiders and scorpions, whilst Sicilian stones in general deprived scorpions of their venom; Lemnian earth had cured Philoctetes' famous snakebite, could do the same for others too, and could even function as an emetic for those who had swallowed poisons.[125] Much closer to home, Aelian preserves an interesting aetiology for the plant *helenion* that has all the appearance of being Alexandrian in origin. After the Egyptian king Thonis attempted to force himself upon the refugee Helen, his queen Polydamna, the 'all-conquering' witch, sent her off, in their common interest, to live on the then snake-infested island of Pharos, giving her a herb to protect her from the snakes. Helen planted it, and in time it covered the island, producing seeds the snakes could not abide and so rendering it free of them.[126] The Jeremiah tale also salutes a familiar motif of snake-control

[122] Hyperides F80 Jensen = Harpocration s.v. *Παρεῖαι ὄφεις*; cf. Photius *Lexicon* s.v. *ὄφεις παρείας*. Schol. Aristophanes *Wealth* 690. The modern variety to which the ancient Greek *pareias* seems to correspond best, the Four-lined snake, is not found in Egypt.

[123] Curtius 9. 8. 22, Pausanias 1. 6. 2, 1. 6. 8, *Alexander Romance* 3. 32 (A); unpublished Ptolemaic inscription at Errington 1990: 265 n. 6 (*Ἡρακλείδας Ἀργεάδας*).

[124] See Krappe 1941 and 1947 with a great many parallels. See Ch. 11 for St Patrick.

[125] Pliny *Natural History* 3. 78 (Ebusus; so too Pomponius Mela 2. 7), 5. 7 (Galata), 37. 54 (Sicily, including the achate), Dioscorides 5. 113 (Lemnian earth an emetic for poisons), Galen *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus* xii. 169 Kühn (Lemnian earth cures poisonous snakebites in general), Philostratus *Heroicus* 6. 2 (Lemnian earth cures Philoctetes), Aelian *Nature of Animals* 5. 2 (Crete), 5. 8 (Astypalaea). See Hasluck 1909–10 and Krappe 1941: 233–4.

[126] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 9. 21; cf. Homer *Odyssey* 4. 219–34 for Helen, Thonis, Polydamna, and the latter's herbs, both healing and deleterious. I thank Professor Alonso Troncoso for bringing this text to my attention.

stories, that of the deployment of a 'magic circle' against them, as in the ps.-Aristotelian tale of the Thessalian witch's battle against the *hieros ophis*, the sacred snake, *inter alia* (Ch. 6).[127]

In casting Alexander in the role of an expert in counteracting the threat of snakes, the Epiphanian narrative enables us to make sense of an initially puzzling non sequitur in the *Romance* narrative: 'These snakes are not poisonous, but they do ward off those snakes that do seem to be poisonous, and sacrifices are given to the hero himself [sc. Alexander] <, as snake-born.>'[128] The phrase 'as snake-born' does not exist in the A, the sole and lacunose Greek manuscript of the *Romance*'s α recension, but is restored from the fuller Armenian translation. The standard term for 'snake-born' in Greek is *ophiogenēs*, and Kroll's (and subsequently Stoneman's) proposed restitution of *hōs ophiogenei* is accordingly all but inevitable.[129] As we have seen (Ch. 5), the race of Aelian's Phrygian Ophiogeneis was founded when Halia was impregnated by a gigantic snake, in a myth strikingly similar to that of the siring of Alexander upon Olympias, whilst Strabo's Ophiogeneis of Parium and Pliny's Ophiogeneis of Cyprus had the power to repel, respectively, snake venom and snakes themselves.[130] Strabo's and Pliny's reports enshrine the conceit that Ophiogeneis are to be born of snakes and yet antithetical to them. Since those best equipped to fight serpents are those that partake of their nature (cf. the considerations on symmetricality laid out in Ch. 6), it makes perfect sense that Alexander should have been worshipped as snake-born precisely in the context of his dismissal of snakes. As we have also seen, the ancient notices on the Ophiogeneis often align them with the snake-proof and snake-repelling Psylli of the Libyan Syrtes. The Psylli are credited with the 'magic circle' technique for snake-banishing similar to that attributed to Alexander in the Epiphanian tale.[131] Agatharchides of Cnidus told that the Psylli derived their name from a king Psyllus, whose tomb was situated in the Greater Syrtes.[132] It is tempting to suppose that the race derived not only its name but also its defining qualities from this king (much as the Phrygian Ophiogeneis derived their qualities from a single individual), and to compare Psyllus' tomb with that of Jeremiah in the Epiphanian tale. Were the ideas attaching to Jeremiah and to Alexander derived ultimately from the lore of the Psylli? Or was the lore of the Psylli rather derived

[127] [Aristotle] *Mirabilia* 845b; cf. Lucan 9. 915–37, Lucian *Philopseudes* 11–13.

[128] It is not immediately clear in context whether the 'hero' concerned is Agathos Daimon, whose heroization has just been described, or Alexander himself. But the primary reference must indeed be to Alexander. On the one hand, only in the most curious and restricted circumstances is it meaningful to describe a serpent, such as Agathos Daimon, as 'serpent-born'. On the other, Alexander was famously serpent-born, with Plutarch and others preserving the myth of him being sired upon Olympias by a gigantic snake (Ch. 9). Taylor 1930: 376–7 held that there is here a deliberate attempt to merge the two heroes, in line with her wider contention that Agathos Daimon was directly identified with Alexander. Cf. also Saunders 2006: 78.

[129] *Alexander Romance* 1. 32. 11 (A): *καὶ θυσία τελεῖται αὐτῷ τῷ ἥρωι <ὡς ὀφιογενεῖ>*, as reconstituted by Kroll 1926 and accepted by Stoneman 2007. The Armenian translation: §87 Wolohojian. However, Taylor 1930: 376–7 would prefer the Armenian *višap* to reflect the term *drakōn* rather than the term *ophis* in the original Greek.

[130] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 12. 39, Strabo C588, Pliny *Natural History* 28. 30–1.

[131] Lucan 9. 890–937.

[132] Agatharchides *FGrH* 86 F21a = Pliny *Natural History* 7. 14. There is a passing reference to this originating Psyllus (without mention of his tomb) also at Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. *Ψύλλοι*.

from the serpent mythology generated in early Alexandria? It may be significant here that the Psylli only acquire their snakes in the literary record in the course of the third century BC. In due course the Psylli were introduced in their own right into the mythology of the fall of the Ptolemaic dynasty. Suetonius and Dio tell us that Octavian called in Psylli in an attempt to revive Cleopatra from her asp-bite, but that it was too late, for she was already dead.[133]

Agathos Daimon before Alexandria: 1. His identification with Šaï

When did Agathos Daimon become a serpent? There is no direct evidence for his serpent form prior to the foundation of Alexandria, but the evidence for his identification with the native-Egyptian anguiform god of destiny, Šaï (Psais), emerges soon afterwards.[134] This has led to the *communis opinio* that it was Šaï that gave his serpent form to Agathos Daimon, and that Agathos Daimon accordingly only acquired his serpent form after his arrival in Alexandria.[135] But here it will be contended that Agathos Daimon was indeed already displaying his salient Alexandrian characteristics before arrival in the city and that he was indeed a serpent before Alexandria, with the corollary that Šaï was selected to function as his *interpretatio Aegyptia* not least for that reason.

The identification between Agathos Daimon and Šaï had certainly been achieved by the time Manetho compiled his *History of Egypt* during the earlier part of the rule of the second Ptolemy, Philadelphus (r. 282–46 BC). A fragment of the *History* incorporates the principal Egyptian gods, some under their *interpretatio-Graeca* names, into a mythical First Dynasty of pharaohs, and Agathos Daimon is already amongst them, in second place, no less: Hephaestus, Agathos Daimon, Helios, Cronus, Osiris and Isis, Typhon, Horus, Ares, Anubis, Heracles, Apollo, Ammon, Tithoes, Sosos, Zeus.[136] And, as we have seen, the originally native-Egyptian *Oracle of the Potter,* composed at some point over the following century, fully embraces the identification of Agathos Daimon with Šaï, anticipating liberation in his abandonment of Alexandria for Memphis.[137] Just possibly, the identification had taken place already towards the beginning of Soter's reign. The tomb of Petosiris, of 'the end of the fourth century [BC]', casts Šaï as a local protective deity, a role that might already demonstrate an attraction towards Agathos Daimon's concern for individual houses and households, found already in the old Greek evidence.[138] In due course, as Agathos Daimon was identified with Šaï, so his consort Agathe Tyche was similarly identified with Šaï's native-Egyptian serpent consort Renenwetet (Renenet).[139] But the

[133] Suetonius *Augustus* 17, Cassius Dio 51. 14.

[134] For Šaï see Bonnet 1952: 671–4, Quaegebeur 1975: 130–2, 170–6, 217–23, Dunand 1981: 277, 281, Koenen 1983: 148–9, Stoneman 2007: 532–3.

[135] e.g. Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1127, Graf 2000.

[136] Manetho *FGrH* 609 F3; cf. Quaegebeur 1975: 174–5, Dunand 1969: 37, 1981: 277.

[137] *P.Oxy.* 2332 lines 51–3; cf. Quaegebeur 1975: 170–6 and *passim.*

[138] Quaegebeur 1975: 160–6, 171–2.

[139] Fraser 1972: i. 211 and ii. 359, Quaegebeur 1975 esp. 152–4, 173–4, Dunand 1981: 281.

contention that the pair of talking *drakontes* Soter designed in his own account of Alexander's campaign to deliver the king and his army from the Libyan desert already represent Šaï and Renenwetet (irrespective of whether or not they also represent Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche) is speculative (see further Ch. 9).[140]

Agathos Daimon before Alexandria: 2. The literary sources

What can we know of Agathos Daimon before Alexandria? Literary and iconographic evidence must be considered, as must, given his emphatic association with house snakes in Alexandria, the evidence for any culture of house snakes in the old Greek world. These three fields prove hard to marry with each other, but collectively construct a profile of Agathos Daimon recognizably anticipatory of his Alexandrian form.

The only literary evidence for Agathos Daimon that indisputably derives from the age before Alexandria is a series of brief allusions in Aristophanes and other fifth- and fourth-century BC comedians, all of which relate to a custom of giving dinner guests a cup of unmixed wine at the end of a meal, from which they pour a libation, declaring it to be 'Of Agathos Daimon!'[141] Many of the relevant comic fragments are preserved by Athenaeus, who plausibly elucidates them with a quotation from Ptolemy's contemporary, Theophrastus: 'The unmixed wine given after the dinner they call the toast of Agathos Daimon. They only take a little of it, as reminding themselves of its strength, with a little sip, and of the god's gift. They give it after satiety, so that the quantity drunk may be very small. And after doing obeisance three times, they take it from the table, so that in making supplication to the god, they may not do anything unseemly or have any strong desire to drink.'[142] Athenaeus aligns with these texts also the *c.*200 BC words of Philochorus devoted not to Agathos Daimon but to Agathos Theos, 'Good God': 'The rule was made that after the food just enough unmixed wine should be offered to all to be a taste and a flavour of the power of Agathos Theos, but that the rest of the wine should be mixed. This is why the [sc. water-] nymphs were called the nurses of Dionysus.'[143] Athenaeus is surely right to assume the identity of Agathos Daimon and Agathos Theos, and indeed we find drinking vessels

[140] Ptolemy *FGrH* 138 F8 *apud* Arrian *Anabasis* 3. 3. 4–6. So Roussel 1916: 91 and Eggermont 1975: 113–16 and possibly Dunand 1981: 277.

[141] Aristophanes *Knights* 85–6, 106, *Peace* 300, *Wasps* 525 (with schol.); Theopompus Comicus F99 K-A (*apud* schol. Aristophanes *Wasps* 525b); Nicostratus F19 K-A, Xenarchus F2 K-A, Eriphus F4 K-A (all *apud* Athenaeus 692f–693e); Aristophanes aside, all these fragments derive from the 4th century BC. Ganschinietz 1918: 44 sees the genitive as in origin an absolute, exclamatory one. The cognate Homeric phrase δαῖτ' ἀγαθήν (Homer *Iliad* 23. 810) suggests that the name may have been intrinsically linked with the feast in origin; cf. Harrison 1912: 280.

[142] Theophrastus F72 Fortenbaugh. See also *Suda* s.v. Ἀγαθοῦ Δαίμονος. Theophrastus' words explain Aristotle's use of the term *agathodaimonistai* to mean 'those who only drink small amounts' at *Eudemian Ethics* 1233b, the word being so glossed at Hesychius s.v. ἀγαθοδαιμονισταί; cf. Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1129.

[143] Philochorus *FGrH* 328 F5a. Perhaps it was on the basis of some such saying that a doctor Philonides (*apud* Athenaeus 675b) and Diodorus 4. 3. 4 were subsequently to identify Agathos Daimon with Dionysus; Rohde 1925: 207 n. 133 dismisses the identification out of hand.

inscribed, seemingly in parallel, 'Of Agathos Daimon' and 'Of Agathos Theos'.[144] At the end of the first century AD Plutarch was still associating Agathos Daimon specifically with wine. He twice mentions a new-wine festival in his home town of Chaeronea, the 'Day of Agathos Daimon', which he says is equivalent to the Attic Pithoigia ('Jar-Opening') festival.[145]

Can we detect anything before Alexandria of the house- and household-wealth-protecting roles of Agathos Daimon or Agathoi Daimones in that city? His association with a drink taken after a dinner party situates him in a domestic context at any rate, and the timing of his special ritual at the end of the meal matches the timing of the Alexandrians' offerings to their Agathoi Daimones. We have a much stronger projection of Agathos Daimon in the role of a general god of luck and with a special affinity for private houses in the pre-Ptolemaic era in Plutarch's brief note to the effect that Timoleon dedicated his house at Syracuse to the god in celebration of his good luck, if this can be accepted as a genuine historical report.[146] The notion of Agathos Daimon as a protector of households and their produce admittedly emerges in the literary sources just prior to Plutarch. The Neronian-era Stoic Cornutus offers a part-rationalizing and part-syncretizing interpretation of the god explicitly built on such an idea:

> Agathos Daimon similarly symbolises the universe, itself also laden with fruits, or the principle of reason that presides over it, inasmuch as he divides and distributes due shares as a good distributor. He is a champion and preserver of household property, by virtue of preserving his own house in good condition and offering himself as an example to others. The horn of Amaltheia [sc. the cornucopia, the horn of plenty] is his special attribute, in which there grow at once all the things that grow in their individual seasons . . .[147]

And similarly the third-century AD Porphyry was to speak in part-rationalizing fashion of Agathoi Daimones as being the progeny of the universal soul that exercise a benign care over animals and fruits and also over the weather and seasons, so that they can flourish.[148]

Agathos Daimon before Alexandria: 3. The iconographic sources

Some hold that we find Agathos Daimon represented as a serpent in a single pre-Ptolemaic (or effectively pre-Ptolemaic) image, the 'fourth-century' relief from Boeotian Eteonos, now in Berlin: a man leading a small boy by the hand offers a

[144] Ganschinietz 1918: 38 rejected the identification but it is accepted by Harrison 1912: 286, Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1129 (with the vase evidence), Mitropoulou 1977: 174, Dunand 1981: 280. Athenaeus adjacently supplies an unattributed story about one of the Syracusan tyrants named Dionysius. In order to steal a golden table from a temple of Asclepius, he drank the unmixed wine of Agathos Daimon and then 'ordered the table to be taken away', the drinking of Agathos Daimon's wine normally signifying the end of the meal and the removal of the tables upon which it had been served. Cicero *Nature of the Gods* 3. 84 has a more general story in which Dionysius stole the silver tables inscribed *bonorum deorum*, a term that seems closer to Agathos Theos.

[145] Plutarch *Moralia* 655e, 735d. See Dunand 1969: 45, 1981: 277.

[146] Plutarch *Moralia* 542e: *καὶ τὴν οἰκίαν Ἀγαθῷ Δαίμονι καθιερώσας.*

[147] Cornutus *Theologiae Graecae Compendium* pp. 51–2 Lang.

[148] Porphyry *On Abstinence* 2. 38; cf. also 2. 53.

cake to a large bearded serpent that emerges from a cave.[149] But the image does not carry the god's name, and the serpent could as well be Zeus Meilichios or one of the other anguiform manifestations of Zeus.

A unique 'fourth-century BC' votive relief from Mytilene (now in the Samos Museum) is perhaps the best candidate for a pre-Ptolemaic image of Agathos Daimon in serpent form, though the case is far from secure. A rampant snake coils upon a rock and is approached by three adoring male worshippers. Against the rock lies a caduceus, with its own entwining-snakes motif. The caduceus, which properly belongs to Hermes, is one of a range of attributes given to the serpentine Agathos Daimon on the coinage of Roman Egypt from the reign of Nero onwards. This represents quite a chronological and cultural gap, so we may be dealing here with coincidence rather than continuity. But in the Greek Magical Papyri, also from Roman Egypt (the papyri in question are fourth- to fifth-century AD, but reflect a tradition ultimately Hellenistic in origin), we find Agathos Daimon being explicitly associated with Hermes, and that too in his ancient traditional role as a bringer of luck and wealth, the role that indeed brings him so close to Agathos Daimon's central province. Thus, in a spell to be uttered by the magician as a herb is picked, he is to declare, 'I am Hermes. I take you with Agathe Tyche and Agathos Daimon both at a good hour and on a good day that is efficacious for all things.' And in a love spell the magician is again to declare, 'I know you, Hermes, and you me. I am you and you I. Do everything for me, and may you incline to me together with Agathe Tyche and Agathos Daimon.'[150] And a note in Hesychius may imply that Hermes could play the same role as Agathos Daimon in being toasted at the end of a meal.[151]

The earliest certain representation of Agathos Daimon as a serpent from the old Greek world is, alas, post-Ptolemaic in both date and conception (Fig. 8.3). It is also the finest extant image of him to survive from antiquity. It takes the form of a Hellenistic relief from a private house (cf. Timoleon?) on Delos. A huge bearded serpent coils over a draped altar flanked by two humanoid figures who wear Sarapian calathos-headdresses and who seemingly merge Isis and Agathe Tyche on the one hand and Sarapis and Agathos Daimon on the other. In other words, Agathos Daimon appears simultaneously in two guises (as indeed Asclepius and Hygieia do regularly). Both humanoid figures hold the cornucopias particularly associated with Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche. The male figure also holds a *phialē*, for his own serpent no doubt (as Hygieia again regularly does), though the

[149] *LIMC* Agathodaimon no. 6 = Harrison 1912: 283 fig. 73 = Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1152 fig. 967 = Mitropoulou 1977: 135 no. 25. Dunand (*LIMC* ad loc.) and Harrison take this to be Agathos Daimon. Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1151–2 and Mitropoulou prefer Zeus Meilichios, and the superficial resemblance of this relief, cave aside, to the 4th-century BC Attic Zeus Meilichios reliefs is indeed strong.

[150] Mytilene relief: Mitropoulou 1977: 178–80 with fig. 92. Coins: *LIMC* Agathodaimon nos. 31, 35. See Dunand 1969: 36, 1981: 281. *PGM* IV. 2999–3000 (4th cent. AD, reflecting a 2nd-cent. original), VIII. 49–52 (4th–5th cent. AD). Agathos Daimon is associated with Hermes also in the *Hermetic Corpus* (10. 23, and 12. 1) where he takes on the role of Nous ('Mind') to instruct Hermes. There has been a tendency to connect the Roman-Egyptian Agathos Daimon's caduceus with Hermes rather in his chthonic, psychopomp aspect, and so to hariolate for Agathos Daimon a funerary role in that land: Dunand 1969: 36 and 1981: 281, Mitropoulou 1977: 155.

[151] Hesychius s.v. *Ἑρμῆς*; cf. Ganschinietz 1918: 43.

Fig. 8.3. Agathos Daimon coils on his draped altar. He is attended by Isis-Agathe Tyche and Sarapis-Agathos Daimon (i.e. himself in humanoid form). Domestic relief from Delos, Hellenistic. Delos Museum, *LIMC* Agathodaimon 3. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

serpent does not appear to be taking much interest in it.[152] Some context for the image is offered by a late-third-century BC domestically flavoured inscription also from Delos. This records a dedication by one 'Athenion son of Hephaestion, Macedonian, and his wife Myrtis, to Agathos Daimon, in accordance with the god's instruction'.[153] We find a simplified version of the Delos image also in a rather crude late Hellenistic relief in the Syracuse Museum from Akrai. This shows an anguiform Agathos Daimon coiling around a lighted altar accompanied by a humanoid Agathe Tyche, who holds a cornucopia and now also the *phialē*. The simply drawn serpent is not only bearded but sports something on the top of his head that seems to resemble the Egyptian Agathos Daimon's pshent rather more than a crest.[154]

[152] *LIMC* Agathodaimon no. 3 = Mitropoulou 1977: 164–5 no. 8; cf. Bulard 1907 (with fig. 24), Picard 1944–5: 265–8 (with fig. 14; did the relief originate in the nearby Dionysiac Stibadeion?), Fraser 1972: ii. 356–7 n. 164 and Dunand 1981: 278, 280.

[153] *IG* xi.4 no. 1273; cf. Fraser 1972: i. 210–11, ii. 358.

[154] Syracuse Museum 36968 = Mitropoulou 1977: 165 no. 9 and fig. 84. Note also Mitropoulou 1977: 166 no. 13 (no illustration): 'Agathe Tyche reclining on a couch holding a horn of plenty offering libation to a snake'. At any rate, Graf 2000: 319 is slapdash to assert that Agathos Daimon was never

There are in fact only two certainly pre-Ptolemaic images of Agathos Daimon extant, and these both represent him in humanoid form. First, a relief of the late fourth century found to the east of the Parthenon is dedicated to 'Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche'. Below the inscription a male bearded figure holds a cornucopia and is accompanied actually by two female figures.[155] Secondly, a broken relief from Thespiae of the last quarter of the fourth century BC carries the dedication 'Hagestrotos, Timokrateia, Ptoilleia, Empedonika, to Agathos Daimon' and shows a bearded, avuncular, seated figure being approached by two worshippers. He holds a cornucopia and an eagle sits beneath his throne.[156] The first of these reliefs leads us to the presumption that Agathos Daimon was humanoid in form too in the pair of statues of *Bonus Eventus* and *Bona Fortuna* that Pliny tells us were made by Praxiteles (fl. *c.*375–30 BC) and that could in his day be seen on the Roman Capitol.[157] And all three of these images, in pairing Agathos Daimon with Agathe Tyche, seemingly bestow upon the god a wider province, namely that of good fortune in general, than is evident from the literary sources of the same age.

Despite the complete absence of serpent imagery here, these two reliefs paradoxically constitute the strongest indication we have that Agathos Daimon was nonetheless on occasion conceptualized as a serpent in the pre-Ptolemaic Greek world. This is because the syndrome of these humanoid reliefs corresponds so closely with those of the later-fourth-century BC humanoid reliefs of Zeus Meilichios, Zeus Ktēsios, and above all Zeus Philios, all of whom, as we have seen, enjoyed parallel iconographic careers as serpents. Two of the images of Zeus Philios discussed above are of particular interest here: the *c.*347 BC Aristomache relief in which Zeus Philios is given both Agathos Daimon's traditional cornucopia and his traditional consort Agathe Tyche,[158] and the 324–322 BC *Eranistai* relief, the remains of which preserve an eagle sitting beneath the throne, which coincides so well in this respect with the Thespian relief of Agathos Daimon.[159]

represented as a serpent in the Greek world. Agathos Daimon may also have been represented aniconically on occasion, as was Zeus Meilichios. A stele with a coned top thought to be 'later than the fourth century AD' from Tegea carries the inscription 'Daimon Agathos': *LIMC* Agathodaimon 1 = Mitropoulou 1977: 163–4 no. 7 and fig. 83; cf. Dunand 1981: 280.

[155] *LIMC* Agathodaimon 4 = Mitropoulou 1977: 159–60 no. 1 and fig. 79. There is insufficient evidence to associate Mitropoulou 1977: 159–61 no. 2 and fig. 80 with Agathos Daimon.

[156] *IG* vii. 1815 = *LIMC* Agathodaimon 2 = Mitropoulou 1977: 16192 no. 3 and fig. 81. Other humanoid statues and reliefs, none of them inscribed, and none of them earlier than the late 4th century BC, have also been advanced as possible representations of Agathos Daimon. Chief among these is a marble statue from Kallion, now in the Delphi Museum and dated to the 3rd century BC, of a standing, avuncular, bearded man with a cornucopia: Delphi Museum 11424 = *LIMC* Agathodaimon 5a. For other possible contenders, see Mitropoulou 1977: 169–70 no. 1 with fig. 85, 16–71 no. 2 with fig. 86, 169–71 no. 3 with fig. 87 (all late 4th cent. BC).

[157] Pliny *Natural History* 36. 23; Mitropoulou 1977: 166. Pliny *Natural History* 34. 77 also mentions a bronze Bonus Eventus at Rome by Euphranor, in which the god holds a *patera* (*phialē*) in his right hand and a corn-ear and poppies in his left hand; this last would seem to correspond with Roman images of the god as a standing youth: cf. Harrison 1912: 303 fig. 82 (blue-glass cameo plaque in the British Museum inscribed 'Bonus Eventus') and Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1126–7 with further coin images.

[158] Copenhagen Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek 1558 = *IG* ii^2 4627 = Harrison 1912: 312 fig. 90, 1922: 355 fig. 106, Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1162 fig. 970 = Mitropoulou 1977: 102–3 no. 6 and fig. 42. Zeus Philios is also found paired with Agathe Tyche in the Erythrai inscription, L. Robert 1933.

[159] Athens EM 8738 = *IG* ii^2 2935 = Mitropoulou 1977: 99–100 no. 1 and fig. 39. For the particular relevance of the iconography of Zeus Philios to Agathos Daimon cf., broadly, Dunand 1981: 280.

Unfortunately, we know nothing about the early representation of Agathos Theos. Although he is known from Tegean inscriptions from the fourth century BC (until the first),[160] we are given no indication of his form until the second or third century AD, the date of an illustrated and inscribed stele in the Epidaurus Museum, if indeed it can be assumed to bear upon the same, continuous entity. The stele is dedicated by one Tiberius Claudius Xenocles, who had served as a 'firebearer', and carries the legend 'of Agathos Theos'. A seated, front-facing bearded man is shown, holding a sceptre and a cornucopia. Across his lap winds a serpent.[161]

Agathos Daimon before Alexandria: 4. The evidence for house-protecting snakes

So we can contemplate the possibility that Agathos Daimon could have a special relationship with individual houses and households before he came to Egypt and we can be reasonably confident that he was already conceptualized as, *inter alia*, a serpent. But the aspect of his Alexandrian manifestation that it is hardest to find anticipated in the evidence for old Greece is the culture of keeping actual 'house snakes'. In many snake-rich countries, including those of contemporary Europe, India, and the Far East, we find the initially surprising phenomenon of the 'house snake', that is to say, a local snake that is encouraged to make its home in or near a house so that it will consume and deter rats and mice. Such snakes are regarded, more generally, as bringers of good fortune, and to kill one is to invite the opposite. They are greeted and, symbolically at any rate, fed.[162] A house-snake culture of this sort would certainly have fitted comfortably into the Greeks' traditional ways of thinking about *drakontes*, to the formation of which, indeed, it could even have contributed: it would have chimed well with the notion of the *drakōn* as enjoying a special bond with the earth, with the notion that the *drakōn*

[160] Mitropoulou 1977: 174–6 nos. 2–3; there is little firm basis upon which to associate the Tegean herm, Mitropoulou no. 4, which carries a snake-image without inscription, with this or any other god.

[161] *IG* iv^2 406 = *LIMC* Agathodaimon 44 = Mitropoulou 1977: 174–5 no. 1 and fig. 89 = Harrison 1912: 285 fig. 75. We cannot know the date of the temple of Agathos Theos on the road from Mainalos to Megalopolis mentioned at Pausanias 8. 36. 5.

[162] Modern Greece: B. Schmidt 1871: 184–7, Lawson 1910: 260, Bolte and Polívka 1913–32: ii. 459–65, Nilsson 1938: 162–3, 1949: 325, Spyridakis 1958–9, Blum and Blum 1970: 125–6 (nos. 11–13), Bodson 1978: 76–7. Here house snakes crawl propitiously over grain piles or sit on olive-oil barrels, and are given bread and milk (which they cannot consume). They can be known as νοικοκύρης (master of the house) or τοπάκας (power of the place) and greeted with such phrases as *νὰ ὁ νοικοκύρης, νὰ ὁ φύλακας, νὰ τὸ στοιχειὸ τοῦ σπιτιοῦ μας*. Leopard snakes more specifically are known as ὄφις ὁ οἰκιακός or σπιτόφιδο. Sweden: Nilsson 1938: 162–3, 1940: 71–3, 1949: 326. Nilsson knew Swedish farmers whose cowsheds were crowded with snakes that brought luck to the cattle, and which were supposedly fed (appropriately) with milk. They were known by the terms *tomtorm* (luck-worm) or *gårdsorm* (yard-worm). India: Vogel 1926: 5, 19–20. Here it is believed that each house has a tutelary serpent, known as a Vāstu-Sarpa. A snake that enters the house is held to represent the soul of a dead ancestor; it is fed and given sacrifice. Japan: K.-D. Schulz 1996 pl. 51c, with caption. Korea: Hahn 1969, K.-D. Schulz 1996: 67; here *Elaphe schrencki anomala* is held to embody a house spirit and never killed. Elsewhere: Nilsson 1949: 325 also has notes on Albania, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Italian Calabria, Lithuania. Again the recurring themes are of a small, luck-bringing snake that lives in the walls of the house, is supposedly fed on milk, and is killed to disastrous effect.

was the best and most vigilant of guardians (Ch. 4), and with the notion that heroes might protect their special part of the earth, their tombs, in the form of a *drakōn* (Ch. 7).

The pre-Alexandrian evidence for house snakes in the Greek world begins, such as it is, with the *oikouros ophis* that Herodotus tells lived on the Athenian Acropolis, abandoning it in anticipation of the Persian invasion of 479 BC.[163] This bore a title that declared it to be a 'house-guardian snake'. Even if the house in question is that of a god rather than of a family, and even if the snake did not exist, the existence of the title itself presumably attests the concept. In Sophocles' *Philoctetes* of 409 we are told that Philoctetes received his notorious viper-bite to the foot because he approached 'the secret house-guarding snake', the guardian of the goddess Chryse, that guarded her unhidden precinct. This snake, guardian again of a god's house, looks like a derivative of the Acropolis' guardian, not least in view of the fact that ancient commentators indentified Chryse with Athene, as we have seen (Ch. 3).[164] Theophrastus' *Characters* is thought closely datable to 319 BC, and so coincides well with the early days of Ptolemy's Alexandria.[165] When its Superstitious Man finds snakes in his house, he calls upon Sabazius if it is a *pareias* snake and founds a heroon if it is of the 'sacred' (*hieros*) variety. In context these must be absurd overreactions, but the appropriate reaction they exceed may have been the greeting and honouring of a house snake.[166] (There is, I suppose, a remote possibility that Ptolemy had already established the *heroon* cult of Agathos Daimon in Alexandria in 319 BC—the Alexander Aegiochus statue type, which first attests it, may, as we have seen, have been developed as early as 320 BC—and that Theophrastus is satyrically alluding in timely fashion to the new Agathos Daimon cult here.)

We only begin to get plainer evidence for house snakes in the imperial period, and this first on the Roman side. Pliny asserts that 'the Aesculapian snake (*anguis Aesculapius*) was brought to Rome from Epidaurus and is commonly kept in houses'.[167] The identification of house snakes with the snake that embodied Asclepius as he came to the city is curious, but as with the Agathoi Daimones house snakes of Alexandria, perhaps the actual snakes kept were held somehow to be latter-day embodiments of the single great serpent of the originating story. It is only in the second century AD onwards that we seem to get relatively firm evidence for house snakes on the Greek side. From this point we have Pollux's note on the *ophis orophias*, the supposed '(under)-roof snake', which Hesychius subsequently

[163] Herodotus 8. 41; cf. also Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 758–9. Further discussion in Ch. 10.

[164] Sophocles *Philoctetes* 1326–8 *κρύφιος οἰκουρῶν ὄφις*. Commentators: Schol. Homer *Iliad* 2. 722, Eustathius on Homer *Iliad* 2. 274, Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* 911.

[165] Based on the content of the gossip about Polyperchon and Cassander in *Characters* 8; see Rusten, Cunningham, and Knox 1993: 8–11.

[166] Theophrastus *Characters* 16. 4. It seems unlikely that the snake described as *hieros* here should be identified with the ps.-Aristotelian *hieros ophis* discussed in Ch. 6, *pace* Diggle 2004 ad loc.

[167] Pliny *Natural History* 29. 72; see Ch. 9. Suetonius *Tiberius* 72 tells that Tiberius had a pet *draco* he used to feed from his own hand; whether this should be seen as a house-snake, however, is unclear, since he took it with him from Capri on an abortive visit to Rome, turning back when he found that it had been devoured by ants.

describes as 'a snake of the variety that lives in the house'.[168] The fundamentally antiquarian tradition of ancient scholarship may well, however, preserve material from Classical Greece.

And it is from the second century AD that we at last find explicit Greek evidence for the linking of the term Agathos Daimōn itself to a house snake. Lucian describes the elderly second-century AD Cynic Demonax eating and sleeping in whichever house he happened to be passing without invitation, with the occupants regarding his visits as divine epiphanies, 'as if an *agathos daimōn* had come into their house'.[169] The ever-Classicizing Lucian's imagery may well reflect that of the Classical or at any rate the early Hellenistic age. Such a possibility is strongly supported by the similarly Classicizing fourth-century AD Julian's claim that the Greeks used to inscribe over the gateways to their houses a welcoming message to another famous Cynic, the fourth-century BC Crates, 'Entrance for Crates, Agathos Daimon',[170] as well as by the fragment, discussed above, of the third-century BC comic poet Diodorus of Sinope in which a parasite who visits houses without invitation to devour their food boldly compares himself to the allied Zeus Philios.[171]

The three fields of evidence considered here collectively suggest that the pre-Alexandrian Agathos Daimon had much in common with the post-Alexandrian one, and that, in particular, he was already a snake.

Agathos Daimon in Roman Egypt

The vast majority of our extant images of Agathos Daimon derive from Roman Egypt. Alexandrian coins give the clearest indication of his high age: he is prominent on them between the reigns of Nero and Gallienus (AD 54–268), and experiences particular popularity in the Antonine period (AD 138–93).[172]

In the bulk of his extant images, mainly reliefs and terracottas, and some coins, he is paired with Agathe Tyche, and the pair is assimilated also to Sarapis and Isis-Thermouthis.[173] Agathos Daimon/Sarapis takes the form of a generic serpent, sports a beard, and wears a pshent (double crown), whereas Agathe Tyche/Isis-Thermouthis takes the form of a uraeus or puffed-out cobra and wears the Isiac crown. The pair rear up from the ground and face each other, their coils forming a modern infinity-symbol shape below (a configuration also used for Glycon, who likewise flourished in the Antonine age). Agathos Daimon/Sarapis more commonly appears on the right-hand side, but the rule is not absolute.[174] In the

[168] Pollux 7. 120, *στεγάζειν, ἐρέπτειν, τέγος προτέγιον, ὄροφον παρωροφίδα, ὅθεν καὶ ὀροφίας ὄφις.* Hesychius s.v. *ὀροφίας· ὄφις τῶν κατ' οἰκίαν.* Photius s.v. *Ὄφις ὀροφίας: λέγεται οὕτως.* Discussion at Sancassano 1996: 51–2.

[169] Lucian *Demonax* 63.

[170] Julian *Orations* 6. 17. The *Suda* s.v. *Κράτης* tells of Crates' habit of fearlessly entering the houses of anyone he chose, to earn the nickname 'Door-opener'. Cf. Ganschinietz 1918: 39–40.

[171] Diodorus of Sinope F2 K-A *apud* Athenaeus 239a–f.

[172] Dunand 1969: 10, 1981: 281.

[173] Fraser 1972: i. 211, Mitropoulou 1977: 79–81, Dunand 1981: 281–2, Clerc and Leclant 1994: 687.

[174] *LIMC* Agathodaimon 10, 12–22, 35 (coins, Hadrian to Otacilia Severa), 38; Dunand 1969 *passim* and 1981: 281.

principal variation of this style, the two serpents bear human faces or heads. Agathos Daimon/Sarapis' face is recognizably that of Sarapis, and in these cases he wears Sarapis' calathos rather than the pshent. Agathe Tyche/Isis-Thermouthis is sometimes humanoid down as far as the breasts or waist, resembling a female anguipede of the old Greek Echidna style. A humanoid Harpocrates stands between them.[175] Occasionally the Agathos Daimon–Agathe Tyche pair is replaced by a pair, seemingly, of Agathoi Daimones: whether these really are supposed to represent two male Agathoi Daimones as opposed to the familiar male–female pair in more simplified and symmetrical form is unclear to the present author.[176]

Sometimes Agathos Daimon/Sarapis does appear alone in one of these guises, occasionally in reliefs or terracottas, but more often so in the more restrictive media of intaglios or coins.[177] The restricted space of coins does not prevent him, however, from being decorated with a range of attributes on them.[178] On some he is winged,[179] on others, as we have seen, he rides a galloping horse.[180] On others again he holds in his coils corn-ears, poppies, palm fronds, torches, sistrums, cudgels or, as we have also seen, a caduceus.[181] The wheat-ears, poppies, and cudgels seem indicative of Agathos Daimon's role as a promoter of agrarian fertility.[182]

Agathos Daimon is often identified at this point also with the Egyptian Cneph(is), Cnoubis, Cnouphi, or Chnoum. This is found in an alternative version of the *Oracle of the Potter*,[183] in the first- to second-century AD Philo of Byblos,[184] in a series of Graeco-Egyptian magical intaglios dated approximately to the third century AD,[185] and in a third- to fourth-century AD spell for a favour charm in the Greek Magical Papyri in which the enactor is to claim to know that 'Cnouphi' is one of the secret names of Agathos Daimon.[186] In the hymns of Isidorus at

[175] Thus *LIMC* Agathodaimon 27, 28 (lamp inscribed Ἀγαθοδαίμονος), 38, 39 (humanoid Isis-Thermouthis?), 41, 53.

[176] Thus *LIMC* Agathodaimon 42: a pair of uncrowned Agathoi Daimones surround a bust of Sarapis.

[177] Reliefs: Agathos Daimon appears alone in *LIMC* Agathodaimon 11 and 23. In the former he bears a thyrsus and caduceus. Terracotta: *LIMC* Agathodaimon 40 (with cudgel and poppies). Intaglios: *LIMC* Agathodaimon 24–6. In 26 Agathos Daimon offers his traditional-styled head to a double-headed figure, the other head being Thoth's ibis. The figure has crocodile feet. The reverse carries the inscription 'Chnoubis' (cf. 'Chnoum'), which may represent an Egyptianizing name for Agathos Daimon. Coins: *LIMC* Agathodaimon 29 (Domitian to Gallianus).

[178] See generally Dunand 1969: 25–30.

[179] *LIMC* Agathodaimon 30.

[180] *LIMC* Agathodaimon 32, 34.

[181] *LIMC* Agathodaimon 31, 33, 35, 36. These details are laid out systematically by Dunand in relation to the different imperial reigns at 1969: 26–30.

[182] Cf. Dunand 1969: 35, 41.

[183] *P. Rainer* G 19813.

[184] Philo of Byblos *FGrH* 790 F4 *apud* Eusebius *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1. 10. 49–50.

[185] e.g. Michel 2001 nos. 304–38 (esp. no. 313). But on some intaglios the serpent seems primarily identifiable as Agathos Daimon *tout court*: e.g. Michel 2001 no. 39 (1st cent. BC), showing a human-headed, split-tailed (cf. Glycon) serpent with poppies in his coils.

[186] *PGM* VII. 1023. Note also Michael Italikos (12th cent. AD) at Cranmer *Anecdota Oxoniensia* iii. 171: 'Cnouphis, the Egyptians' Agathos Daimon'. See Ganschinietz 1918: 51–3, Höpfner 1921–4, ii. 1 § 133, Dunand 1981: 277.

Madinet Madi Agathos Daimon is identified, in his role as protector and disburser of riches (*ploutodotēs*), with the crocodile god Soconopis.[187]

The frequency of Agathos Daimon's appearances in the Greek Magical Papyri of the second to fifth century AD is indeed testimony to his currency in Roman Egypt (though the culture the papyri reflect has Hellenistic roots).[188] Only occasionally is his *drakōn* form explicitly saluted here.[189] It is in the nature of these texts that he is identified with a broad range of other deities of a mostly quite abstract nature. Recurring addresses to him that describe him as processing through the heavens, with the earth flourishing, plants becoming fruitful, and animals procreating at his will, seem to describe a deity that Cornutus and indeed his own emperor Nero, with his desire for universal rule, might have recognized.[190] So too, perhaps, the claim that the positive effluxes of stars, demons and fates are his.[191] But he also retains his other, older roles: as a bringer of general good luck, more specifically as a promoter of trade success, and as a power with a connection to a specific place.[192]

A note on Sarapis and his own anguiform affinities is apt. Prior to his identification with Agathos Daimon, Sarapis may have been identified rather with an anguiform Asclepius.[193] Tacitus and Plutarch tell that the Sarapis cult was initiated in Alexandria when the god appeared to Ptolemy Soter in a dream and asked him to bring his statue from Sinope. The chronographers date the arrival of the statue between 286 and 278 BC (but note that Soter died in 282 BC).[194] According to Plutarch, Soter's advisers Timotheus and Manetho told him, upon the statue's arrival, that it represented Ploutōn (i.e. Hades), because accompanied by Cerberus and a *drakōn*.[195] Tacitus notes that others judged the god to be Asclepius, and it must be admitted that the combination of dog and serpent as attributes speaks loudly of this god too, and reminds us in particular of the great cult image of Asclepius at Epidaurus made by Thrasymedes of Paros in the later fourth century BC, which Pausanias tells us was accompanied by a dog and a *drakōn*.[196] And Sarapis seems to have offered healing through incubation during his earliest days

[187] Text at Vogliano 1936 and Vanderlip 1972, §§ ii. 9–10, iv. 23–4; cf. Vanderlip 1972: 38. Bernand 1969: 631–52; Dunand 1969: 9–10, 1981: 277.

[188] For lists of his appearances in the *PGM* with and without Agathe Tyche, see *PGM* index vol. Reg. iv p. 213 (where available) and Bonnechere 2003: 234 n. 42. Discussion at Ganschinietz 1918: 55–7.

[189] Thus *PGM* IV. 995 and *PGM* IV. 2427–9, where a *drakōn* that performs part of a complex magical model for acquiring business is to be inscribed with the name 'Agathos Daimon'. There are identifications with other deities at e.g. *PGM* I. 27, IV. 1710–11.

[190] *PGM* IV. 1607–18, VII. 492–3, XII. 134–5, 242, XIII. 770–2, XXI. 6–8, XXXVI. 217–17.

[191] *PGM* XII. 254–5, XIII. 780–3, XXI. 15–16.

[192] Good luck: *PGM* IV. 2427–9, 2999–3000, 3162–8, VII. 1023, VIII. 49–52, LXI. 7–8. Trade success: *PGM* XII. 104–5. Specific place: *PGM* VII. 506–7, XII. 104–5.

[193] Fraser 1972: i. 207, 256–7. For the cult of Sarapis see Fraser 1960, 1967, Hornbostel 1973, Castiglione 1978, Tinh 1983, Clerc and Leclant 1994.

[194] Fraser 1972: i. 247. It is difficult to know what to do with the problematic claim Arrian ascribes to the *Ephemerides*, to the effect that Sarapis had had a temple in Babylon into which he had declined to receive Alexander just before he died: *Anabasis* 7. 26. 2; cf. Plutarch *Alexander* 76. Fraser 1967, 1972: i. 249 and Eggermont 1975: 112–13 find retrospective tampering with the *Ephemerides* here. Bosworth 1971: 118–20 and 1988: 167–70 finds a cult of Osiris-Apis established by Egyptian expatriates.

[195] Plutarch *Isis and Osiris*, *Moralia* 361–2; Tacitus *Histories* 4. 83–4. Cerberus sits beside Sarapis in some of his surviving iconography: *LIMC* Sarapis nos. 1–3, 5–6, 8a, 8c, 9–12, 14, 127–8, 135, 154a, 198.

[196] Pausanias 2. 27. 2; cf. Fraser 1972: i. 247.

in the city. According to Diogenes Laertius, Sarapis restored Demetrius of Phaleron's sight to him when he lost it in Alexandria. Demetrius accordingly composed paeans to him every day. This must relate to the period between 307 BC, when Demetrius was expelled from Athens, and 282 BC, when Philadelphus succeeded his father to the throne and expelled Demetrius from Alexandria for opposing his succession.[197] According to Artemidorus, Demetrius composed five books on Sarapis' incubation cures.[198]

Protective images

It seems to have been held that images of Agathoi Daimones could in themselves exercise a protective function for a house. In the murals of Pompeii frozen in AD 79 pairs of strongly Egyptianized, symmetrical Agathoi Daimones, in which both are bearded and wear the pshent (double crown), appear several times. One image derives from the temple of Isis, and in this the serpents face each other across a *cista mystica* (mystic basket) emblazoned with a crescent moon. In a second the pair face each other in a verdant field across an altar on which sit an egg and a pine-cone. In a third the pair face each other around a male form, whilst a humanoid Isis-Fortuna stands to the right.[199] These images of serpents strongly resemble those in other Pompeian (and Herculanean) murals drawn beneath images of the traditional Roman household-protecting gods, the Lares. In these, typically, pairs of symmetrical serpents, sometimes with beards and crests, face each other in a verdant field across an altar on which lies an egg or eggs and other fruits. Sometimes we just have a single serpent in a verdant field facing its altar.[200] The identification between the two groups of serpents is almost complete.[201] The Lares themselves were ancestral spirits, as is well known. Perhaps the snakes that accompanied them were—now at last—also so conceived.[202] In the *Aeneid* Virgil famously speaks of the spirit of Anchises inhabiting the site of his tomb in the form of a snake as a *genius loci*. His fourth-century AD commentator Servius notes ad loc. that 'no place is without its *genius*, and this is commonly manifest in the

[197] Diogenes Laertius 5. 78–9 = Hermippus F69 Wehrli. An early Ptolemaic-period dedication in thanks for healing at the Memphite Serapeum suggests that the god was established in this role from an early stage in Memphis too: see Fraser 1972: i. 256–7, ii, 402 n. 498 (with the text).

[198] Diogenes Laertius 5. 76 = Demetrius of Phaleron F68 Wehrli; Artemidorus *Oneirocritica* 2. 44 = Demetrius of Phaleron F99 Wehrli; cf. Fraser 1972: i. 257.

[199] *LIMC* Agathodaimon 7–9, with Dunand 1981 ad loc.

[200] Pairs of serpents *LIMC* Lar, Lares 33 (Herculaneum, verdant field), 37 (altar, two eggs), 38 (altar), 63 (altar), 65 (altar), 68 (altar, verdant field), 70 (altar, fruits, and eggs), 71 (altar, leafy branches), 72 (altar, eggs), 74 (altar, verdant field). Single serpents: 34, 35 (altar, verdant field), 36 (altar, field of roses, river god), 39 (altar), 64 (altar, river god), 67 (altar, verdant field), 69 (altar), 75, 76 (coiling around an altar), 78 (altar), 79, 80 (altar), 81 (Rome, 1st cent. AD relief, serpent coils around altar).

[201] The lapidary and somewhat dismissive assertion of Tinh 1992: 212 that the Lares-accompanying serpents are *genii loci* seems inadequate.

[202] The notion that Agathos Daimon was in origin the ghost of a family ancestor is signally absent from the early sources for him, but it was once firmly held: thus Harrison 1912: 276–316 (esp. 294–7), Cook 1914–40: ii. 2, 1125 and Rohde 1925: 207–8 n. 133; due scepticism from Fraser 1972: ii. 357 n. 164.

form of a snake', whilst he elsewhere notes that *genii* is the Roman term for Agathoi Daimones, and that they 'rejoice in houses'.[203] On this basis, it is possible that the image of Agathos Daimon on the Delos relief also served to protect the house in which it was located. Robert speculates that an 82-cm high, now headless, bronze model of a coiling serpent found in a niche in an imperial-period house in Ephesus may also have served a similar house-protecting function. The serpent would reach as much as 7 m in length if uncoiled.[204]

CONCLUSION

We have considered here the first group of the benign anguiform deities that rose at the end of the fifth century BC, those that concerned themselves with the promotion of wealth and good luck, most importantly the kindly, not at all threatening Zeus Meilichios, whose massive serpent form is celebrated in some particularly fine iconography, and Agathos Daimon, who, building on his established profile in the later Classical Greek world, came to play such an important foundational role at Alexandria. The frequency of Agathos Daimon's appearances on the coins and intaglios and in the papyri of Roman Egypt, and (relatively so, at any rate) on the walls of Pompeii is testimony to the pervasive and highly visible presence of this god in the pagan world into which Christianity emerged. Here was a prominent serpent deity in which the Christians could find the Devil manifest, as they could too in the even more prominent Asclepius, to whom we turn next.

[203] Virgil *Aeneid* 5. 84, with Servius ad loc.: *nullus locus sine genio est qui per anguem plerumque ostenditur.* Servius on Virgil *Georgics* 3. 417: *gaudet tectis ut sunt ἀγαθοὶ δαίμονες quos Latini genios vocant.* Ganschinietz 1918: 46–7 collates evidence for the use of δαίμονος ἀγαθοῦ + gen. or δαιμόνων ἀγαθῶν + gen. functioning as the Greek trans. of Latin *Dis Manibus* + gen. For *genii* see Hild 1877–1919, Otto 1910, Rose 1923, Latte 1967: 103–7. A female *genius* is a *iuno*: [Tibullus] 3. 12. 1, Seneca *Letters* 110. 1, Petronius 25. 4, Pliny *Natural History* 2. 16, *CIL* 11. 944.

[204] L. Robert 1989.

9

Drakōn Gods of Healing

The gods of good luck and plenty were not the only ones to be conceptualized and represented as *drakontes* from the late fifth century onwards. So too were the major healing gods, as well as certain other gods with cults influenced by them. In this chapter we consider the conceptualization and representation of these gods in their own right, before turning, in the following chapter, to the question of the actual sacred snakes associated with them.

ASCLEPIUS

Asclepius' *drakōn*-affinities first become manifest for us only with the late-comer god's migration to Athens in 420 BC and his simultaneous emergence into the extant iconographic record.[1] When one reads the tales of his miraculous cures or

[1] Principal texts and inscriptions: collected in exemplary fashion by Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: i. The later fourth-century BC Epidaurian miracle inscriptions (*EMI*): *IG* iv^2 nos. 121–4, Herzog 1931, Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: i. T423, LiDonnici 1995. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Asklepios (almost 400 items), Schouten 1967, Mitropoulou 1977: 183–97, Schnalke and Selheim 1990. Discussions: in addition to the items so far named, see Hausmann 1948, R. Herzog 1950, Taffin 1960, Burford 1969, Solimano 1976, van Straten 1976, Gočeva 1984, Holtzmann 1984, Aleshire 1989, 1991, Krug 1993: 120–87, Dillon 1994, E. Aston 2004, Riethmüller 2005 (a most impressive catalogue, inter alia, of the god's some 900 shrines), Dignas 2007, Melfi 2007, Wickkiser 2008, Petsalis-Diomidis 2010.

The fact that Asclepius only becomes manifest as a *drakōn* in the late 5th century BC, fully within the historical and documented period of Greek culture, and that too in conjunction with the rise of the other anguiform deities discussed in this chapter and the last, is sufficient to silence claims that he is a derivative of the Sumerian-Akkadian god of healing Nigizzida, sometimes associated with staff and an upwards-corkscrewing serpent, and sometimes himself an anguipede, as contended by De Waele 1927: 43, 95 and Schouten 1967: 38–9, with fig. 10. Nor can Asclepius have anything to do with Moses' brass serpent, as contended by Vernes 1918, de Waele 1927, and Schouten 1967: 100. The 6th- or 5th-century BC Numbers 21: 4–9 tells us that Moses put a brass serpent on a pole to cure snakebites after God sent a plague of venomous serpents upon the Israelites: it was sufficient merely to look upon the snake to be healed. According to 2 Kings 18: 4, the brass serpent was subsequently worshipped by the Israelites, and they gave it the name Nehushtan. It was destroyed as idolatrous by Hezekiah in the 8th century BC. Schouten notes that it is curious that Moses himself had not seen the brass serpent this way, given his own recent campaign against the golden calf, Exodus 32: 19. At any rate it is self-evident that the brass serpent is deployed not because the serpent is emblematic of healing, but because there is a specific need to heal snakebites: fire is fought with fire.

Asclepius' relatively late acquisition of his anguiform affinities also frustrates attempts to derive his name from ἀσκάλαβος, supposedly denoting some kind of snake, as by Prellwitz 1905: ii. 58, Fick 1901,

contemplates his iconography, one is often unclear about the relationship between the *drakōn* and the god: embodiment, avatar, pet, symbol? But the one context in which it is clear that an Asclepian serpent directly embodies the god himself is in the myths of his cult transfers, in which he travels from Epidaurus to this new cult site in serpent form.[2] It is initially puzzling that, in some of these accounts, the god should appear to migrate from Epidaurus to his new site and yet, somehow, also remain resident in Epidaurus and indeed all the other sites to which he had already migrated. The Roman tradition was particularly concerned by this. Julian bravely attempted to encapsulate the phenomenon, albeit in a language shaped to please a Christian audience: 'This god, having made his journey to the earth from heaven, manifested himself at Epidaurus in single shape (*henoeidōs*) in the form of a man, but multiplying himself (*plēthuomenos*) from there he stretched his delivering right hand out over all the earth with his journeys. He went to Pergamum, Ionia, to Tarentum after this, and later he went to Rome. He went to Cos and from there to Aegae . . .'.[3]

The sources for Asclepius' journey from Epidaurus to Rome in the form of serpent in 292–1 BC are exceptionally rich, and so offer a convenient model for understanding earlier cult-transfer narratives. Ovid tells the story at length in his *Metamorphoses*. Rome is afflicted with a pestilence in the face of which a delegation is sent to Delphi. Apollo refers them on to his son in Epidaurus, and the delegation accordingly asks the elders of Epidaurus to give them the god. The elders hesitate as to whether they should give him up, some considering that they should not compromise the monopoly that brings them wealth. But overnight Asclepius manifests himself to the Romans in their dreams in his humanoid form, with serpent staff. He tells them that he will indeed come to Rome, and asks them to look at the snake (*serpens*) on his staff, for he will transform himself into it, but in a much larger size, as befits a celestial body. The next morning the elders meet in the temple and pray to the god, asking him to reveal where he wishes to live. All of a sudden, he appears before them in the form of a huge, golden, crested, hissing serpent. The entire temple shakes with his arrival. He rears aloft and looks about the temple with fiery eyes. All quake in terror, but the priest recognizes the god and hails him. The god nods at the assembled people, and hisses again, reassuring them of his favour (*adnuit . . rata pignora*). He then glides down the temple steps, and looks back for one last time at his ancient altars. He makes his way through the city and down to the harbour, where he boards the Romans' ship, which sinks low in the water under his weight. The overjoyed Romans make sacrifice and cast off for home. The serpent watches the waters from the stern. In rough seas, the ship is forced to put in at Antium, whereupon the serpent glides from the deck to receive hospitality in his father Apollo's temple on the shore. When the sea has calmed down, the serpent glides back from the temple and across the sand, mounting the ship by its rudder, and rests again on its stern. As the ship sails

and Schouten 1967: 39; cf. Riethmüller 2005: i. 34. The theory of Grégoire, Goussens, and Mathieu 1949 that Asclepius was in origin not a snake god but a mole god may or may not be correct, but certainly deserves more respect than it has received.

[2] Cf. Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 230–1, Riethmüller 2005: i. 233–6, 239 ('Filialgründung').

[3] Julian *Against the Galileans* 200a–b.

up the Tiber it is greeted by happy crowds on the banks. As it enters Rome the god rests his head atop the mast, looking from side to side to find a suitable place to live. He disembarks onto the Tiber island, resumes his heavenly form (i.e. disappears) and begins to bring good health to the city.[4]

Amongst variant versions in other authors, Valerius Maximus explains that the god was rarely seen in epiphany as a serpent, but never without great benefit when he was. His serpent-god goes about Epidaurus for three days, gliding gracefully and with gentle eyes, before boarding the ship and settling in or around the on-deck tent of Ogulnius, the head of the Roman embassy. At Antium the serpent visits rather a temple of Asclepius, winds itself round a palm tree before the temple and remains there for a further three days. When the Romans put in at Rome the serpent swims from the Tiber bank across to the island, upon which a waiting temple has already been dedicated for it. Later on, as we shall see, Glycon, 'the New Asclepius', similarly came to a shrine in Abonouteichos that was already being built in anticipation of his arrival.[5] Medallions of the age of Antoninus Pius show the serpent arriving in Rome on its ship.[6]

In the earlier first century BC, in commemoration of the arrival, the Tiber Island's natural resemblance to a ship was enhanced by the construction of a stone prow, over which a humanoid Asclepius, with staff and snake, peered in relief. The defaced remains of this are visible still. An Egyptian obelisk placed at the centre of the island recalled the all-important mast upon which the serpent had rested its head.[7]

Explicit mention of a serpent has disappeared from the earliest documented case of Asclepius' cult transfer, that from Epidaurus to his new shrine on the side of the Athenian acropolis, via Zea and the Eleusinion, in 420 BC. The traces in a fragment of the early fourth-century BC inscription of Telemachus that had once been read as *drakonta*, 'serpent', are now read as *diakono(u)s*, 'temple servants'. Even so, we can hardly doubt, in the light of the evidence for other cult transfers, that the god the inscription tells us Telemachus brought to his new home on the side of the Acropolis in his chariot accompanied by Hygieia was manifest in the form of a snake.[8] Zea and the Eleusinion should be understood as hosting-stages, like Antium in the Roman case. Recent scholarship has dismissed the tradition of

[4] Livy *Periocha* 11, 29. 11. 1, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 15. 622–744, Valerius Maximus 1. 8. 2, Pliny *Natural History* 29. 72, Q. Serenus Sammonicus *Liber Medicinalis* prooemium 6–8 ('you who once made for the Tarpeian rock and the glorious temples, covered in the gentle skin of a *draco*, banishing foul diseases through your divine presence'), Lactantius *Divinae Institutiones* 2. 7. 13, 2. 16. 11, Arnobius *Against the Gentiles* 7. 44–8, [Aurelius Victor] *De Viris Illustribus* 22. 1–3, Orosius *Histories against the Pagans* 3. 22. 5, Claudian *On the Consulship of Stilicho* 3. 171–3, Augustine *City of God* 3. 17, Sidonius Apollinaris *Letters* 1. 17. 12, *Latin Anthology* 1. 2. 719e. 3–4 (T614; 'his father Asclepius, who once turned into a snake [*anguem*] and entered the high-built temple of Rome on the Palatine'). The Livian summary locates the arrival of Asclepius in 292 BC, but Ovid *Fasti* 1. 290–4 (T855) specifies that the Tiber Island temple was dedicated on 1 January 291 BC. See Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 252–4, Riethmüller 2005: i. 86, 233–6, ii. 431.

[5] Lucian *Alexander* 10–14.

[6] Riethmüller 2005: i. 235.

[7] See Besnier 1902, Schouten 1967: 18–20, Riethmüller 2005: i. 235–6; Schnalke and Selheim 1990: 24 offer a line-drawn reconstruction of the Tiber Island in its ship form.

[8] For the text of the monument see now Clinton at *SEG* 47. 232 and Wickkiser 2008: 67–70, superseding *IG* ii^2 4960a, *Syll.*^{3} 88, Herzog 1931: 38 (W72), T720 Edelstein, Beschi 1969. For a

a third hosting-stage, first found in Plutarch, to the effect that the tragedian Sophocles, who wrote a paean to Asclepius, hosted the god in his own house when he first came to Athens and for that reason was heroized after his death and given the epithet Dexion, 'Receiver'.[9]

The later fourth-century BC Epidaurian miracle inscriptions record the introduction of Asclepius' cult to the city of Halieis. Thersander of Halieis performed a seemingly fruitless incubation in the sanctuary and duly returned home. But, it transpired, a serpent of the sanctuary had climbed aboard his cart and travelled home with him wrapped around the axle, whereupon it dismounted and healed him. The people of Halieis were anxious about whether they should take the snake back to Epidaurus, and so consulted Delphi. They were told rather that they should keep the snake and found their own sanctuary of Asclepius around it.[10]

Pausanias reports myths of the foundation of three Asclepius cults by means of the transfer of serpents from Epidaurus. He tells that the Sicyonians claimed in relation to their Asclepieion that 'the god was brought to them from Epidaurus in the form of a *drakōn* on a mule wagon, and that the woman who brought him was Nicagora of Sicyon, mother of Agasicles and wife of Echetimus'. The sanctuary (if not necessarily its mythology) dated from the early fifth century BC.[11] Pausanias also tells how not merely the Asclepieion of Epidaurus Limera but actually the city itself was founded by Argolid-Epidaurians whilst going on state business 'to Asclepius' in Cos and escorting a *drakōn* from their home shrine. Putting in at the future site, they had dreams that told them to settle there, whilst the *drakōn* escaped from the ship and disappeared into the ground near the seashore. Thucydides tells us that Epidaurus Limera was in existence by 424 BC, but the fact that the Coan cult was not developed until the third century BC suggests that the myth is a rather later construction. However, it seems odd that the Epidaurians should have been escorting a snake to Cos if the god was already, as the narrative tells, established there. Perhaps the notion underlying Pausanias' story is that the Coans had, like the Romans in the Valerius Maximus version, already built a temple in anticipation of receiving the god.[12] And Pausanias again tells how one Archias, cured in Epidaurus, 'escorted the god to Pergamum' (where the god's cult originated in the second quarter of the third century BC). He does not explicitly tell us that the god was in the form of a serpent, though he uses the same word for the escorting, *epagomai*, as he does in his tale of Epidaurus Limera.[13]

reconstruction of the monument see *LIMC* Asklepios 394, Wickkiser 2008: 69, Riethmüller 2005: i. 241–50; cf. also Stafford 2005: 125–6.

[9] Plutarch *Numa* 4, *Moralia* 1103b, Philostratus *Imagines* 13, *Etymologicum magnum* s.v. Δεξίων. See Parker 1996: 184–5 (accepting the story as preserved), Riethmüller 2005: i. 248–9, 273–8 (partial scepticism), Wickkiser 2008: 66–7 (full scepticism). Sophocles' paean to Asclepius: *IG* ii^2 4510 = *SEG* 28. 225 (a 3rd cent. AD inscription).

[10] *EMI* (B) 33; cf. Riethmüller 2005: i. 110, 233, ii. 99.

[11] Pausanias 2. 10. 2–3; Riethmüller 2005: ii. 63–8.

[12] Pausanias 3. 23. 6–7 = Herzog 1931: 39 (W74); Thucydides 4. 56; cf. (but *pace*) Riethmüller 2005: i. 140, 209, 233, 380, ii. 119–20.

[13] Pausanias 2. 26. 8 = Herzog 1931: 38 (W73); cf. Riethmüller 2005: i. 334–59, ii. 362–4.

The Rome and Epidaurus Limera narratives provide a model for the reconstruction of the foundation myth of the Asclepieion at Lebena in Crete (the shrine was developed in the fifth or fourth century BC) from the fragments of one of its second- or first-century BC miracle inscriptions: '*drakōn* on the stern-cable . . . beside the helmsman . . . they put into . . . the *drakōn* along the stern-cable . . . to Lebena before . . . with silence and sweet . . . the quay . . . the *drakōn* . . . from the sea and entered . . . the lodgings that already existed in the . . . the altars of Hermes. . . . they took rest . . . '. The ship had presumably come from the Asclepieion at Balagrae in Cyrenaica, since Pausanias tells us that the Lebena Asclepieion was founded from that one, which had in turn been founded from Epidaurus. (The Abonouteichos shrine of Glycon, the New Asclepius, was similarly to be founded not directly from Epidaurus but from the temple of Asclepius in Chalcedon.)[14] The temple of Hermes seems to have been a hosting-stage.[15] Coins of both Lesbos and Nicomedia display a serpent on a ship, seemingly making appeal to a similar seaborne-serpent foundation legend for their own Asclepieia.[16]

Riethmüller holds that emphasis is laid upon the various vehicles (chariot, wagon, ship) in the narratives of Asclepius' 'Übertragungsritus' to allow the god to be seen to express his desire to move to a new cult centre by boarding a transport destined for it.[17] Telemachus' chariot is of particular interest. Wickkiser compares the famous Herodotean episode in which Athene, as embodied in Phye, escorted Pisistratus up to the Athenian acropolis in a chariot to infer that the goddess was sending her special vehicle to receive and welcome the god (as well she might, if his daughter Hygieia had originated in an aspect of herself).[18] But we might also point to the more general affinity between serpents and chariots: as we have seen, the anguiform Cadmus and Harmonia rode in a chariot to lead the charge against the Greeks, whilst serpents themselves powered the chariots of Triptolemus, Athene herself, and Medea.

Turning now to the god's iconography, the earliest image to associate Asclepius or his constant companion, his daughter Hygieia ('Health'), with a serpent, and possibly the only one from the fifth century BC to do so, is one recoverable from a pyramidal relief now in Istanbul, held to be a provincial copy of a late fifth-century BC Attic original. Asclepius and Hygieia sit together. He holds a staff, which is serpentless but decorated with a pinecone (?). Hygieia holds out a bowl in two hands from which a serpent coiling around a candelabra (?) drinks, whilst Asclepius looks on with interest.[19] One can see how the serpent will migrate easily from the candelabra to Asclepius' staff, but in this image its primary connection must rather be with Hygieia.

[14] Lucian *Alexander* 10; at 43 Glycon anticipates his own migration to a further cult site, Bactra, after 1003 years in Abonouteichos.

[15] *IC* I.xvii 10 A; Pausanias 2. 26. 9; cf. Herzog 1931: 51, Guarducci 1934, 1935–50 ad loc., Riethmüller 2005: i. 326–34, ii. 344.

[16] Riethmüller 2005: ii. 361 (Lesbos), 371 (Nicomedia).

[17] Riethmüller 2005: i. 236.

[18] Herodotus 1. 60; Wickkiser 2008: 103–4.

[19] *LIMC* Asklepios 98, with Holtzmann 1984 ad loc. The other extant images of Asclepius *LIMC* ascribes, directly or indirectly, to the 5th century BC are 102, 105, 230, 395.

By the end of the fourth century BC all four of Asclepius' canonical serpent-avatar (etc.) image types had become established, though it is not possible to establish a sure chronology for the development of the types within the century:[20]

1. A seated or reclining Asclepius feeds his serpent from a *phialē*.[21] To this type belonged the Epidaurian cult image of Asclepius described by Pausanias: 'The statue of Asclepius is half the size of that of Olympian Zeus at Athens, and is chryselephantine. Its inscription reveals that its sculptor was Thrasymedes of Paros, the son of Arignotus. He sits on a throne holding a staff, he holds one of his hands over the head of his *drakōn*, and a dog has been made, lying by his side.'[22] The statue was soon reflected in trihemidrachms minted by Epidaurus in the second half of the fourth century: a seated Asclepius holds his staff in one hand and holds the other over a rampant serpent; under his chair lies a dog.[23]
2. A serpent coils under Asclepius' throne as he either sits among fellow healing gods or greets worshippers or petitioners. This type is found in a series of Athenian reliefs, principally from the Asclepieion.[24]
3. Asclepius stands with serpent coiling around his staff, his best-known and most enduring pose.[25] As Statius was to say, 'the gentle god rests upon the health-bringing snake'.[26]
4. A standing Asclepius is accompanied by a serpent. This type too is found in reliefs from the Athenian Asclepieion. In one of these the serpent is so enormous, that, despite its many coils, its rampant head reaches up to precisely the height of the humanoid Asclepius', just breaking the upper frame as his does. It is possible too that there has been an attempt to reflect the patterning of the serpent's coils in the folds of the humanoid Asclepius' robe. The message of equivalence seems clear.[27]

[20] Indeed so important is snake iconography to Asclepius that it is often used as a key factor in detecting his cult sites: Riethmüller 2005: i. 57, 62, 64, 66, 75.

[21] *LIMC* Asklepios 40 (coins of Tricca, *c.*400–344 BC: Asclepius holds out a bird [cock?] over the head of his rampant serpent), 41 (Boeotian crater, *c.*400 BC: a reclining Asclepius holds out a cup to a large, spotted serpent, rampant and coiling), 42 (fine relief in Pentelic marble, now in Venice, 4th cent. BC?), 52 (coins of Tricca, *c.*400–344 BC), 68 (4th-cent. BC relief from Athenian Asclepieion).

[22] Pausanias 2. 27. 2. For the significance of the dog, cf. the Epidaurian version of Asclepius' birth myth Pausanias records at 2. 26. 4–8. Dogs healed alongside snakes in the Epidaurian sanctuary, as we shall see in the next chapter.

[23] *LIMC* Asklepios 84, with Holzmann 1984 ad loc. Discussion at Riethmüller 2005: i. 306–7. This pose seems to be adopted in part by Asclepius' father Apollo on a coin of Zacynthus from the 371–335 BC period, on which the god rests his hand on the head of a rampant serpent: *LIMC* Apollon 373.

[24] Athenian Asclepieion: *LIMC* Asklepios 86 (*c.*400 BC), 88 (*c.*400 BC), 63 (*c.*350 BC), 65 (*c.*350 BC), 71 (*c.*350 BC), 201 (mid 4th cent. BC), 67 (4th cent. BC), 92 (late 4th cent. BC). Athenian Acropolis: *LIMC* Asklepios 87 (earlier 4th cent. BC).

[25] Reliefs from the Athenian Asclepieion: *LIMC* Asklepios 107 (*c.*350 BC), 344 (earlier 4th cent. BC). Statues from 4th century BC: *LIMC* Asklepios 377 (early 4th cent. BC), 322 (*c.*350–300 BC?), 234 (*c.*320 BC), 250, 362 (4th cent. BC), 318 (4th cent. BC?). The key details of staff and serpent are typically lost to the ravages of time in these examples, but the statue-type is identifiable by comparison with later examples. For Asclepius' serpent-staff see De Waele 1927: 91–7.

[26] Statius *Silvae* 3. 4. 25: *salutifero mitis deus incubat angui.*

[27] Athens, National Museum 1407; *LIMC* Asklepios 202; Mitropoulou 1977: 124–5 no. 16; Schnalke and Selheim 1990: 64 (unpersuasively reading the serpent as Zeus Meilichios) with fig. 29 (*c.*350 BC). See also *LIMC* Asklepios 203 (4th cent. BC: the serpent remains coiling under the god's relinquished throne, as in type 2).

Fig. 9.1. Asclepius and Hygieia feed their massive serpent avatars from egg *phialai*. Relief dedicated by C. Pupius Firminus; *c.* AD 144. Musée du Louvre MA 602 = *LIMC* Asklepios 252. © Musée du Louvre, Dist. RMN / Stéphane Maréchalle.

It is from the imperial period that the vast majority of extant Asclepius images, typically of type (3), derive, though most are difficult to date within that period with any great precision. Perhaps the finest of all ancient Asclepian serpent images is the votive relief now in the Louvre dedicated in 144 AD by one C. Pupius Firminus, treasurer of the guild of bakers (Fig. 9.1). In the centre stand images of a proud Asclepius and Hygieia, each holding out a bowl to feed a massive and beautifully wrought serpent by their side; though multiply coiling, these responding snakes reach up to the shoulders of their humanoid counterparts.[28] In Asclepius and Hygieia we (ultimately) seem to have a male–female *drakōn*-pair to be aligned with those of Cadmus and Harmonia, Porcis and Chariboea (the serpents sent against Laocoon), Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche, and Sarapis and Isis.

For all his serpent affinities, the Greeks and Romans were clear that Asclepius was the gentlest, most reasonable, and most demotic of gods. One can well understand the discomfort he caused the Christians. Demosthenes, we are told, used to accent the god's name *Asclépios* (as opposed to *Asclepiós*) in order to emphasize his gentle (*ēpios*) quality.[29] Aelius Aristides, in his encomium of the well in the Pergamene Asclepieion, refers to Asclepius as 'gentlest and most loving

[28] *LIMC* Asklepios 252. From the high Roman empire too we have medallions of Marcus Aurelius and coins of Caracalla, *LIMC* Asklepios 9 and 13, that give us a young beardless Asclepius standing in his *naiskos* with his serpent-entwined staff, but then, one on either side of him, stand a further two rampant serpents, perhaps the same Asclepius–Hygieia avatar pair.

[29] Cornutus *Theologiae Graecae compendium* 33, Plutarch *Lives of the Ten Orators* 845b, Herodian *De prosodia catholica* 5 p. 123 Lentz, Porphyry *Homeric Questions α* 68, Eudocia Augusta *Violarium* 11, schol. Homer *Iliad* 4. 195, Eustathius on Homer *Iliad* 4. 202, on *Odyssey* 2. 319, schol. Lycophron *Alexandra* 1054, *Etymologicum Gudianum* s.v. Ἀσκληπιός, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. ἀσκελές, *Suda* s.v. Ἀσκληπιάδης (T276). See Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 80–3.

of mankind' of the gods (*praotatos te kai philanthrōpotatos*).[30] And such a character is strongly conveyed in practice by the later fourth-century BC Epidaurian miracle inscriptions: here he is ever a gentle, merciful, and good-humoured god, always ready to answer a sincere petition.[31] He cures a child for the price of his toy dice, and laughs with him.[32] A man who comes only for relief of his headaches is not only cured in his sleep but also taught a *pancration*-move at the same time that allows him to go on and win the Nemean games.[33] He is not too proud to mend even a broken cup.[34] The god is happy to stretch the definition of healing rather further than this too in finding lost items and people, including a boy who has contrived to swim into a cave accessible only underwater.[35] He is ready to cure even those who initially disbelieve in or actually scoff at his powers, though he then exacts a moderate additional compensation for doing so: one man is asked to dedicate a silver pig, another is required henceforth to bear the name Apistos, 'Unbeliever'.[36] Those who try to cheat him of his modest reward receive only provisional or jocular punishments: the affliction is temporarily restored; a tattoo is mysteriously drawn; a fishmonger's stocks are cooked with a thunderbolt—small prices indeed to pay for sacrilege.[37]Asclepius and his serpents are said to manifest themselves in a terrifying and horrifying form only in a pseudonymous letter of Hippocrates. But the text emphasizes the anomaly of this, and the end is again a good one, with the physician being introduced to Truth.[38]

HYGIEIA AND HER ROMAN DERIVATIVES

If Asclepius had little by way of mythical narrative, his familiar companion in iconography, his daughter Hygieia, 'Health', was wholly devoid of it, as indeed she was of any independent cult. We know her only through her iconography as a young woman with her serpent avatar (etc.).[39] Most of the Hygieia image types in

[30] Aelius Aristides *Orations* 39. See Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 113.

[31] See Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 113, Bodson 1978: 86. It may (or may not) be that the god expresses anger in *EMI* no. 35, but if he does so, it is all in aid of the healing.

[32] *EMI* no. 8. [33] *EMI* no. 29. [34] *EMI* no. 10.

[35] *EMI* no. 24; for Ascelpius' occasional broader interests in divination, cf. Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1. 20. 1–4; see Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 104–5.

[36] *EMI* nos. 3, 4, 36 (the last fragmentary).

[37] *EMI* nos. 6–7, 22, 47 (though the interpretation of this damaged text is contentious and uncertain).

[38] Hippocrates *Letters* 15. 9.

[39] No texts of significance bear upon Hygieia in relation to her serpent. Principal images: *LIMC* Asklepios, Hygieia, Salus, Valetudo, Sobel 1990 plates 1–20. Discussions: Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 87–90, Holtzmann 1984, Mitopoulou 1977: 184–91, 1984, Marwood 1988, Croissant 1990, Sobel 1990, Saladino 1994, 1997, Stafford 2000: 147–71, 2005. Stafford 2007: 80–1 notes that Hygieia is the earliest personification in the Greek religious tradition to carry an identifying attribute (i.e. her snake); before her, representations of abstraction-deities had only been identifiable as such when accompanied by their name in legend. Hygieia never appears on her own in cultic contexts, but she can occasionally be found in the company of gods other than Asclepius: Amphiaraus at Oropus in the early 4th cent. BC (Pausanias 1. 34. 3), and Dionysus and Tyche in a statue group of unknown date at Thespiae (9. 26. 8). She seems to have contributed much to Hercyna, the companion of Trophonius (Pausanias 9. 39; see further below).

which she is directly associated with a serpent of her own (as opposed to with a serpent that belongs to a partnered Asclepius) are already established by the end of the fourth century BC. This list categorizes the image types found by the end of that century:

1. A standing Hygieia holds a serpent and feeds it from a *phialē*.[40]
2. A serpent coils at the feet of a standing Hygieia.[41]
3. Hygieia leans against a column supporting a votive relief, around the base of which a serpent coils.[42]
4. Hygieia leans on a tree in the branches of which a serpent coils.[43]
5. A serpent coils beneath the throne of a seated Hygieia.[44]
6. A seated Hygieia feeds her serpent from a *phialē*.[45]

The pyramidal Istanbul relief discussed above, which reflects a lost image of the fifth century BC, raises the possibility that Hygieia had her serpent before Asclepius himself had his, and that Asclepius in effect took it over from her.[46] It is noteworthy that in one of the earliest images of Asclepius alone with a serpent, his interaction with it is strongly Hygieian: he gives it a drink from his *kantharos* as he reclines.[47]

What were the origins of the Hygieia figure? We can point to three, of different sorts. First, in name and province she may have originated in an independent goddess. Dedications by potters suggest that a cult of Athene Hygieia existed on the Athenian Acropolis already from the end of the sixth century BC. In *c.*430 BC Pyrrhus made a bronze statue of Athene Hygieia for the Athenian Acropolis, the base and legend of which survive; it may have been dedicated by Pericles.[48] Did Athene Hygieia have any association with a serpent? Athene more generally had a great affinity for them, as we have seen (Ch. 5). In Athens she surrounded herself with a suite of anguiform heroes and Phidias' Athene Parthenos statue was, like the Asclepian Hygieia that was to emerge, accompanied by a large and kindly serpent (Ch. 8). Pausanias also mentions a statue of an independent Hygieia made

[40] *LIMC* Hygieia 48 (votive relief, Athens, early 4th cent. BC), 84 (naiskos relief, lost).

[41] *LIMC* Hygieia 36 = Asklepios 73 (last quarter of 4th cent. BC).

[42] *LIMC* Hygieia 29 = Asklepios 76 (votive relief, Athens, earlier 4th cent. BC), 30 (votive relief, Athens, late 4th cent. BC).

[43] *LIMC* Hygieia 34 = Asklepios 96 (votive relief, Athens, after 350 BC).

[44] *LIMC* Hygieia 20 (statue, Athens, *c.*370 BC).

[45] *LIMC* Hygieia 14 (coin of Priansos, Crete, 4th cent. BC), 133 (terracotta relief, Sparta, 4th cent. BC).

[46] *LIMC* Hygieia 5 = Asklepios 98. In other images of Hygieia extant from the 5th cent. BC, *LIMC* Hygieia 1–3, 7, 53, 103, 137–8, 219 (if they do indeed represent her: Croissant 1990: 569), she is shown without a serpent.

[47] *LIMC* Asklepios 41 (crater, Athens, *c.*400).

[48] The base: Croissant 1990: 554. Plutarch *Pericles* 13 makes it a dedication of the statesman. Cf. Schouten 1967: 57–64, Croissant 1990: 554, Stafford 2005: 124. A late and no doubt discontinuous identification of Athene and Hygieia is to be found in the relief on a Hadrianic candelabra, *LIMC* Athena/Minerva 100, on which Athene, Hygieia-like, feeds a serpent from a *phialē*.

by Dionysius of Argos and dedicated at Olympia by one Micythus before 460 BC.[49] Secondly, her principal iconographic motif of feeding a serpent from a vessel seems to have been derivative, ultimately, of the tradition of archaic Spartan hero reliefs, in which, as we have seen, humanoid heroes feed their serpent avatars from a *kantharos* (Ch. 7). It may be significant here that Asclepius himself, as we have just noted, feeds his serpent from a *kantharos* in one of his earliest extant images.[50] Thirdly, at the symbolic level, Hygieia probably represented a divine projection of the sacred-serpent-tending and -wrangling girls or women that served the Asclepieia, including the Athenian one, to whom we will turn our attention in the next chapter.

Hygieia's imagery had a vigorous impact upon that of Roman and Italian goddesses. The Roman goddess Salus had had an independent existence before being absorbed by Hygieia.[51] Representing the health and safety of the state rather than that of any individual in it, she had had a temple of her own, a thing Hygieia-proper never did, on the Quirinal from 302 BC.[52] But by the time that she is first iconographically attested, on a coin of 49 BC, her imagery has become wholly derivative of Hygieia's and continues to be so until it tails off towards the end of the third century AD. Indeed the coin declares its subject, a standing female figure holding (and feeding?) a serpent, to be at once 'Salus' and 'Valetudo', the latter a more direct translation of 'Hygieia'.[53] Salus' extant iconography is in fact almost entirely confined to coins (or rather images without the legend *Salus* cannot be differentiated from those representing Hygieia proper).[54] Sometimes Salus sits and feeds her serpent from her *phialē* as it coils on her lap; sometimes she stands to feed a rampant serpent seemingly hanging in mid-air; sometimes she holds her serpent across the front of her chest as she feeds it; sometimes the serpent appears at least to coil around her back as it feeds; sometimes it coils around an adjacent tree or pillar to take its food from her, seated or standing.[55]

The imagery too of Bona Dea, 'Good Goddess', protectress of the Roman state, was strongly derivative of Hygieia's, as indeed were aspects of her identity.[56] As Plutarch observes, 'a sacred *drakōn* is established beside the goddess'.[57] She is

[49] Pausanias 5. 26. 2–3 = *LIMC* Hygieia 226; note also the early statue of Hygieia at Titane near Sicyon mentioned at Pausanias 2. 11. 6 = *LIMC* Hygieia 227, where, however, she is Asclepius' company.

[50] *LIMC* Asklepios 41 (crater, Athens, *c.*400).

[51] Principal iconography: *LIMC* Salus. Discussions: Le Glay 1982, Marwood 1988, Saladino 1994.

[52] Saladino 1994: 656. However, as Saladino observes, under the empire she did come to be identified with the health and safety of the emperor in particular.

[53] *LIMC* Salus 2 = Hygieia 39 = Valetudo 1. Valetudo had only a vestigial existence as a goddess in her own right in the Roman world. There is nothing more to say of her serpent associations. See Saladino 1997, *pace* whom, I can discern no trace of a serpent on *LIMC* Valetudo 2.

[54] The exceptional non-coin images of Salus are the reliefs *LIMC* Salus 59 and 65 (no serpent in either case).

[55] *LIMC* Salus *passim*.

[56] Principal texts: collected in Brouwer 1989. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Bona Dea, Brouwer 1989. Discussions: Greifenhagen 1954, Latte 1967: 228–31, Parra and Settis 1986, Brouwer 1989, esp. 340–8 for her serpentine affinities.

[57] Plutarch *Caesar* 9: *ἱερὸς δράκων παρακαθίδρυται τῇ θεῷ*. Brouwer1989: 341, 343 reads the phrase more literally, and more closely with Plutarch's foregoing reference to the goddess' festival, to infer that an actual sacred snake was symbolically set beside the statue of the goddess in her festivals.

typically depicted as a seated matronly figure feeding a serpent from a *phialē* in her right hand whilst holding a cornucopia in her left, although in many of the surviving statuettes the serpent has been broken away.[58] One imperial-period dedication to her is decorated with a single snake, another with a perky pair, facing each other across an altar.[59] A lost statue base was inscribed to *Bonae Deae Hygiae*.[60] From Mauretania comes a dedication restored in the form *Deae [Bonae V]alteudini Sanc(tae)*.[61] Inscriptions thank her for healing eyes and more generally for *salus*.[62] Macrobius tells that her priestesses made medicines from the herbs that grew in her temple.[63] But in name the goddess is redolent rather of another Greek anguiform goddess, Agathē Tychē, 'Good Fortune', consort of Agathos Daimon, 'Good Daemon', as is particularly apparent when Plutarch interprets her name as *theos . . . Agathē* (cf. also *Agathos Theos*).[64] And indeed the perky pair of snakes on the votive inscription resemble the Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche pair.[65] Macrobius further associates Bona Dea with a host of other serpent-affiliated goddesses. He notes that some identify her with Juno; others, he tells, identify her with Hecate; others identify her with Persephone or Semele, or claim that her father, Faunus, transformed himself into a serpent and had sex with her; others again identify her with Medea, and this he justifies with reference to the healing herbs that grow in her temple. The claim relating to Juno makes sense in the light of the cult of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium (Chs. 5, 10, 11). The claim relating to Hecate makes sense in terms of the goddess's sometime anguiform nature (Ch. 7). The claims relating to Faunus, Semele, and Persephone resemble the myths of Dionysus-Zagreus (Ch. 2 and below).[66] The claim relating to Medea makes sense in terms of the heroine's many serpent associations, and not least in terms of the latter's identification with Angitia, goddess of the snake-manipulating Marsi, who also seems to have been represented as a seated goddess feeding her snake from a *phialē* (Ch. 5). The iconography of Bona Dea in turn seems to have influenced a unique image of Vesta dedicated in around the AD 140s by

[58] The most helpful images are therefore Brouwer 1989 pls. xxviii–xxxi T i 81 (= *LIMC* Bona Dea 1, a Claudian-era relief altar), xxxviii T i no. 121 (= *LIMC* Bona Dea 15, bronze statuette of standing figure, Trajanic?), xlii T i 126 (= *LIMC* Bona Dea 7, marble statuette of the Antonine period, with a loop of the serpent visible adjacent to the goddess' right arm), lii T i no. 136 (= *LIMC* no. 3, marble statuette found at Nîmes in 1622, but now lost); cf. Parra and Settis 1986, Brouwer 1989: 89, 122, 127, 137–8, 340.

[59] Brouwer 1989: 15–16 T i no. 2 (imperial, one snake, unillustrated), T i 3 = pl. i no. 3 (Augustan).

[60] Brouwer 1989 T i 21; cf. Greifenhagen 1967: 18, Pohlkamp 1983: 21. Note also Brouwer 1989 T i 20, an inscribed altar dedicated to Bona Dea by a woman herself named Antonia Hygia; discussion at Brouwer 1989: 346–7.

[61] Brouwer 1989 T i 141.

[62] Brouwer 1989 TT i 13 (eyesight), 44 (= *ILS* 3513 = *CIL* vi. 68, early imperial; Felix Asinianus thanks the goddess for the restitution of his eyesight), 90 (*salus*), 138 (*salus*).

[63] Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1. 12. 20–9 = source ii 67 Brouwer; cf. Brouwer 1989: 341, 346.

[64] Plutarch *Caesar* 9 (= Brouwer 1989 T ii 49); cf. Latte 1967: 228

[65] Brouwer 1989 T i 3 = pl. i no. 3 (Augustan), with discussion at 344. He detects a beard and crest (pshent?) on the right-hand serpent of the pair (not visible in his photograph) and accordingly compares the pair to those of the Pompeian murals.

[66] Plutarch *Caesar* 9 makes a similar association, describing Bona Dea as, according to some, the bride of Faunus and, according to others, the unspoken one (*arrhētos*) of the mothers of Dionysus (i.e. Persephone), 'wherefore the women decorate the ceiling with vine tendrils when they celebrate her festival and a sacred serpent is established beside the goddess in accordance with the myth'. See Brouwer 1989: 340–4, 348.

C. Firminus Pupius in which the seated goddess holds an egg sucked by a serpent that rises up from underneath her throne (see further Ch. 11).[67]

AMPHIARAUS AND TROPHONIUS

Amphiaraus was an incubatory healing god in the mould of Asclepius.[68] His sanctuary at Oropus on the Attic-Boeotian border (long a source of contention between the two regions) was developed in lavish fashion seemingly on a green-field site from *c.*420 BC, roughly contemporaneously, it seems, with the importation of Asclepius himself into Athens.[69] However, Herodotus indicates that his oracle was in operation long prior to 420, somewhere near to or far from its subsequent site, in recording the consultations of it by Croesus in *c.*560 BC and Mys in 480 BC.[70] Neither Croesus' nor Mys' consultation was on a matter of healing, and so it may be that Amphiaraus did not come to specialize in that field or to bear a general resemblance to Asclepius until after the *c.*420 BC development, and indeed he continued to prophesy also on non-healing topics after it. However, Mys was already incubating, and Asclepius himself was prepared to give oracles other than on the subject of healing at Epidaurus.[71]

The evidence that Amphiaraus, himself the slayer of the Nemean *drakōn* according to Euripides' *Hypsipyle*,[72] possessed anguiform affinities in his Oropan period is limited but clear. Aristophanes' *Amphiaraus* of 414 BC attests that snakes were deployed in the sanctuary as part of the healing process from its earliest period,[73] and the practice is illustrated in the superb fourth-century BC votive relief of Archinus, in which, it seems, the god is manifest, in the act of healing, in both humanoid and serpent form (Ch. 10).[74] Otherwise, finds from the Oropan sanctuary depict Amphiarus with a serpent-staff in full Asclepian style from at least the fourth century BC onwards.[75] A double-sided relief also of the fourth-century BC is

[67] *LIMC* Vesta no. 30 (with Fisher-Hansen 1990 ad loc.) = *CIL* i, 787 (*Vestae sacrum/ C. Pupius Firminus et/ Mudasena trophime*); cf. Reidinger 1958: 1755, Greifenhagen 1967, Pohlkamp 1983: 20–2, 25–6.

[68] Principal texts (of relevance here): Aristophanes *Amphiaraus* F28 K-A; Euripides *Suppliants* 925–7, *Hypsipyle* F757 *TrGF* = F60 Bond; Strabo C414; Statius Thebaid 7. 794–823; Pausanias 1. 34. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Amphiaraos, Petrakos 1968 pls. 1–63, Sineux 2007: 245–60. Discussions: Krauskopf 1981, Coulton 1968, Petrakos 1968, Schachter 1981–94: i. 19–26, Roesch 1984, Ogden 2001: 85–91, Sineux 2007.

[69] And note that Asclepius' supposed host in Athens, Sophocles, wrote an *Amphiaraus*, FF 113–21 *TrGF*; the miserable fragments tell us nothing.

[70] Herodotus 1. 46, 49, 52, 92, 8. 134. [71] Cf. Schachter 1981–94: i. 22–3.

[72] Euripides *Hypsipyle* F757 *TrGF* = F60 Bond. See Chs. 1 and 5.

[73] Aristophanes *Amphiaraus* F28 K-A.

[74] Athens, National Museum no. 3369 = *IG* ii^2 4394, illustrated at Schouten 1967: 54, van Straten 1976: 98, Neumann 1979 pl. 28, Schnalke and Selheim 1990 fig. 10, Dignas 2007: 171, Sineux 2007 fig. 17.

[75] Fourth-century BC statuette: *LIMC* Amphiaraos 54 (the staff itself is also lost, but a trace of a serpent's coil remains visible); cf. also 55. Undated terracotta relief: Petrakos 1968: 125 no. 31 with pl. 48 γ, Mitropoulou 1977: 201. See Sineux 2007: 208.

illustrated with a rampant serpent on one side and what is thought to be a serpent-head on the other.[76] A Roman-period statue-base from Megara carrying a dedication to Amphiaraus is decorated with an independent serpent-staff.[77]

The case for the pre-Oropan Amphiaraus possessing anguiform affinities is more tenuous. One remote indication that Amphiaraus did already have snake associations prior to 420 BC lies in Strabo's claim that the shrine's prior site had had the name of Knōpia, which the etymologists have dubiously read to mean 'place of snakes'.[78] On the Tyrrhenian amphora of *c.*575–550 BC discussed in Ch. 7 Amphiaraus emerges from his barrow in the form of a gigantic snake to threaten Alcmaeon with bared fangs as he departs in a chariot after the murder of Eriphyle.[79] While there is (now) little doubt that the serpent is Amphiaraus, he need only be shown in the form of a serpent in the way that any hero might be on the vases of this period, rather than because he has special serpent associations as such. A Corinthian crater of *c.*570 BC, formerly in Berlin but now lost, portrayed the departure of Amphiaraus for the campaign against Thebes.[80] Two separate zones of the field were decorated with a host of animals: beneath Amphiarus' legs as he mounted his chariot were a scorpion, a lizard, a hedgehog, and a hare. In front of his horses were a serpent and bird. All these animals may owe their presence here to an association with divination. The serpent and the bird in particular, being grouped separately from the other animals, may be intended to evoke the means by which Amphiaraus' ancestor Melampus acquired the gift of divination (Ch. 3), and thereby signal Amphiaraus' divinatory capacity.[81] Rather more suggestive in this regard is an Attic black-figure lekythos of *c.*475–450 BC depicting Amphiaraus' entry into the earth, into which he sinks in his chariot. Overhead fly birds with serpents in their beaks.[82]

Trophonius' incubation shrine in the Hercyna valley at Lebadeia in Boeotia was often compared to that of Amphiaraus.[83] It is first attested in the sixth century BC.[84] But it should be noted that, in marked contrast to Amphiaraus and indeed

[76] Petrakos 1968: 123 no. 23 with pl. 42 γ, Mitropoulou 1977: 201.

[77] Mitropoulou 1977: 199–201, with fig. 107.

[78] Strabo C404. Frisk 1960–72, Chantraine 2009, and Beekes 2010 s.v. *κνώψ*; Schachter 1981–94: i. 23, Ogden 2001: 85.

[79] *LIMC* Erinys 84 = Alkmaion 3 (where illustrated) = Grabow 1998 K103.

[80] *LIMC* Amphiaraos 7 = Sineux 2007 fig. 1. The image is indistinct in both representations: one must rely on the verbal description of it at Krauskopf 1981: 694.

[81] So Sineux 2007: 40–1, 65.

[82] *LIMC* Amphiaraos 37 = Sineux 2007 fig. 5 (the birds only visible in the image reproduced by Sineux), with discussion at Sineux 2007: 64–5. Sineux also suggests, intriguingly, that the bird-serpent pair symbolizes Amphiaraus' transition from the aerial world to the subterranean world. Another possibility is that it may symbolize his ability, henceforth, to straddle the two worlds as a hero caught between life and death. A bird also overflies Amphiaraus' chariot in *LIMC* Amphiaraos 17 (*c.*550–535 BC).

[83] e.g. Pausanias 1. 34, Cicero *De natura deorum* 3. 49, Aristides 38. 21, Origen *Contra Celsum* 3. 34, 7. 35.

[84] Texts and inscriptions: catalogued exhaustively at Schachter 1981–94: iii. 66–89, but accompanied by eccentric interpretation. Discussions: C. Robert 1920–6: i. 133–5, Dossin 1921, Radke 1939, Brelich 1958: 52–9, Schachter 1967 and 1981–94: iii. 66–89, Clark 1968, Waszink 1968, Vallas and Pharaklas 1969, Hani 1975, Roesch 1976, Levin 1989: 1637–42, Bonnechère and Bonnechère 1989, Ogden 2001: 80–6, Bonnechère 1990, 2003, Ustinova 2009: 90–6 and the commentaries on Pausanias 9.

Asclepius, there is no reason to think that Trophonius specialized in healing. There is no sign of the healing-related votives that feature so prominently in the Asclepieia and the Amphiaraeon.[85]

The crude remains of Trophonius' oracular cavern visible today derive from a third-century AD restoration after, it is thought, the original had been lost to an earthquake. The century before this Pausanias had given an expansive account of the consultation procedure, which fits the remains well enough. After preparatory rituals, the consulter dresses in a linen tunic and heavy boots and advances to the oracle's entrance in its sacred grove. This takes the form of a circular white stone platform surrounding an access-hole to a vertical, kiln-shaped shaft of around 8 cubits deep and 4 cubits wide. He descends the shaft on a narrow removable ladder. Where the sides meet the base of the shaft is a further small opening of two hand-spans' breadth. The consulter enters into the *adyton* through this, boots first and cakes in hand, and somehow he is sucked within. After an incubatory encounter with the god (perhaps aided by sensory deprivation), the consulter returns to the surface by the same route. The consulter, who has, temporarily at any rate, lost the ability to laugh, is seated on the throne of Memory by the shrine's priests and made to relate—to remember—his experiences.[86]

A strong tradition, beginning with Aristophanes and Cratinus and discussed in the following chapter, speaks of the presence of snakes inside Trophonius' cavern. But to what extent was Trophonius himself anguiform? Late sources imply that Trophonius was plainly and simply a snake.[87] Pollux makes Trophonius himself the recipient of the honey cakes that were, both at this shrine and elsewhere, the characteristic gifts for sacred snakes.[88] A scholium to Aristophanes asserts that, 'In Lebadeia there is a temple of Trophonius, where it was a snake (*ophis*) that did the prophesying.'[89] And the *Suda* makes plural snakes (presumably two: see below) the agents of prophecy before asserting the general principle that the honey-cake was a gift for the dead.[90] It is possible, however, that the scholium and the *Suda* have latched onto an erroneous tradition that understood the

39 by Frazer 1898, Papachatzis 1963–74 (with diagram of oracle, but the inner hole is surely drawn too big) and Moggi and Osanna 2010. The earliest sources: *Homeric Hymn* (3) *to Apollo* 295–7, *Telegonia* argument (Proclus *Chrestomathy*) at M. L. West 2003*a*: 166–7, Hesiod F245 MW (a new discovery, only in 1990 edn., on p. 190a). The daedalic cult image Pausanias mentions (9. 39) would not have been made after the 6th century BC, and Herodotus' tales of the consultations of the oracle by Croesus in *c.*560 BC (1. 46) and Mys in 479 BC (8. 134) may be true. However, the tale of Aristomenes' supposedly 7th-century BC consultation of the oracle at Pausanias 4. 16 and 9. 39 is presumably a myth. See Schachter 1981–94: iii. 75–6, 80, Ogden 2001: 81, 2003 esp. 80–6, 177–83, Ustinova 2009: 91.

[85] Schachter 1981–94: iii. 72.

[86] Pausanias 9. 39. Papachatzis 1963–74 on Pausanias 9. 39 offers a convenient diagram of oracle structure described by Pausanias. Also important for the experience of consultation are Plutarch *Moralia* 590–2 (consultation by Timarchus) and Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 8. 19 (his descent in defiance of the priests). Sensory deprivation: Ustinova 2009: 90–6.

[87] Note Schachter's uncertainty, 1981–94: iii. 70: 'they [Trophonius and Amphiaraus] were connected, if not actually identified, with snakes'.

[88] Pollux *Onomasticon* 6. 76.

[89] Schol. Aristophanes *Clouds* 508d: *ἐν Λεβαδείᾳ ἱερόν ἐστι Τροφωνίου, ὅπου ὄφις ἦν ὁ μαντευόμενος.*

[90] *Suda* s.v. *μελιτοῦτται: μάζα μέλιτι δεδευμένη, ἣν ἔφερον, ὡς ἐδόκουν, τοῖς ὄφεσι τοῖς ἐν Τροφωνίου μαντευομένοις . . . ἰστέον, ὅτι ἡ μελιτοῦττα ἐδίδοτο τοῖς νεκροῖς.*

divination method at Lebadeia on the model of the *oikouros ophis* and the Juno Sospita serpent, where the snake prophesied by accepting or rejecting its honey-cake (Ch. 10).

We are on slightly firmer ground with Trophonius' iconography. Pausanias tells that the principal cult image of Trophonius in his temple at Lebadeia was made by the fourth-century Praxiteles and resembled an image of Asclepius. We may infer, then, that Trophonius bore a serpent-staff in this statue.[91] He further tells that in the source-cave of the river Hercyna there was a pair of male and female standing statues with *drakōn*-staffs (he gives no indication of their age). Although one might imagine, he observes, that they represented Asclepius and Hygieia, they probably represented rather Trophonius and Hercyna, 'since they consider *drakontes* not to be more sacred to Asclepius than to Trophonius'.[92] There is in fact an extant example of the image-pair Pausanias describes here: a statuette-group of the Antonine period (close in time, then, to Pausanias) depicts male and female figures standing side-by-side and both alike holding *drakōn*-staffs in their left hands, with the female resting her right hand on the male's shoulder.[93] A Hellenistic initiation relief with twelve figures found in the river Hercyna may also show us the pair. It is thought to derive from the sanctuary of Demeter Europa associated with the Trophonion.[94] Of the central pair of figures the sixth is a female and the seventh a male. There is broad, but not universal, agreement that the male is Trophonius. He is bearded and wears a himation that leaves his breast bare. With his right hand he pats the head of a rampant serpent. In his left he holds a cornucopia, which another rampant serpent rears up to reach.[95] Bonnechere proposes that the female figure, who, holding a pair of torches, has commonly been identified as Hecate, should be read rather as Hercyna. She would certainly belong in such a relief, not only as Trophonius' companion, but also in view of the fact that Persephone, daughter of Demeter (mother and daughter take first and second positions in the relief), discovered the spring of Hercyna when chasing a goose that had escaped from her friend of the same name.[96]

Serpent-pairs recur insistently in connection with Trophonius. We have seen his own anguiform pairing with Hercyna, and the rampant pair that accompany him in the Demeter relief. Another pair of serpents appears too in the legend of the discovery of his oracular chamber by Saon of Acraephnium: descending into the chamber, he encountered a pair of *drakontes*, but he gave them honey cakes and was left unharmed.[97] The custom of Trophonius' consulters descending with

[91] Pausanias 9. 39. [92] Pausanias 9. 39; cf. Schachter 1981–94: iii. 85.

[93] *LIMC* Hygieia 45 = Asklepios 149; neither of the *LIMC* commentaries ad locc. recognize the possibility that we have Trophonius and Hercyna here.

[94] Athens, National Museum 3942 = *LIMC* Hekate 271 = Hercyna 4 (also illustrated at Bonnechere 2003: 409 fig. 16a–c). For the potential importance of Demeter in the remoter history of Trophonius' cult, see Schachter 1981–94: iii. 70.

[95] See Pipili 1990 on *LIMC* Hercyna 4 and Bonnechere 2003: 317–22, with a helpful table of scholarly identifications for the figures at 320. Other suggestions for the seventh figure have included Cabirios (accompanied by Cadmus and Harmonia transformed into serpents), Zeus Meilichios, Hades, Asclepius, and Agathos Daimon.

[96] Bonnechere 2003: 321; Pausanias 9. 39.

[97] Schol. Aristophanes *Clouds* 508a; cf. Pausanias 9. 40.

a honey-cake in each hand (for which see Ch. 10) also suggests the expectation that a pair of *drakontes* lurked within. And his sanctuary was home to yet another serpent pair. Pausanias tells that consulters began the ritual process of their consultation by lodging for an established number of days in the house/chamber (*oikēma*) of Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche, whilst undergoing purification, bathing in the river Hercyna, and seeking indication of Trophonius' favour through sacrifices, particularly those of rams. After their terrifying ordeals were over, they were carried back to the same house to recuperate.[98] As we have noted, one who had consulted Trophonius lost, if only temporarily, the ability to laugh. Indeed a well-worn proverb asserted of a morose individual that 'he has consulted the oracle of Trophonius'.[99] In one of the Greek Magical Papyri, thought to be a copy of a second-century AD original, roughly contemporary, therefore, with Pausanias, Agathos Daimon is described as *hilaros*, 'joyful', and as causing plants to fruit with his laughter. Bonnechere cleverly notes that this may well have a bearing on Agathos Daimon's role at Lebadeia, the sojourns with the god of laughter framing and contrasting with the visit to the laughterless Trophonius.[100] Was there any sense in which all these serpent pairs were at some level identified with each other?[101]

The earliest evidence for any kind of serpent-association on Trophonius' part, as we noted, comes with Aristophanes' *Clouds* of 423 and an undatable fragment of Cratinus, who died between 423 and 421 BC. Nothing ultimately obstructs the hypothesis that, however long he had been in existence, Trophonius first acquired his serpent affinities in the 420s in the general upsurge of the anguiforms that saw Asclepius come to Athens and Amphiaraus get his smart new sanctuary at Oropus.

GLYCON

Our principal source for the cult of Glycon, the 'New Asclepius' (Fig. 9.2), established by the prophet Alexander of Abonouteichos in the middle of the second century AD, is Lucian's engagingly scurrilous narrative of the prophet's rise in his *Alexander* or *False Prophet*, composed in the early AD 180s.[102]

[98] Pausanias 9. 39; discussion at Bonnechere 2003: 8, 206, 230, 233–5.

[99] Pausanias 9. 39, Plutarch *Proverbs* 1. 51, Diogenianus 1. 8, Zenobius 3. 61, Athenaeus 614b (incorporating Semos *FGrH* 396 F10; cf. Schachter 1981–94: iii. 81), Gregory of Nazianz *Carmina*, *PG* 38. 512–13 (citing Cosmas), Nonnus *PG* 36. 1069, *Suda* s.v. *Τροφωνίου κατὰ γῆς παίγνια*, Gregory of Cyprus 2. 24, Apostolius 6. 82, and scholl. Aristophanes *Clouds* 506–8.

[100] *PGM* IV. 1607–15; Bonnechere 2003: 266 n. 60.

[101] Mitropoulou 1977: 79 thinks that Trophonius is himself a manifestation of Agathos Daimon on the basis of his anguiform qualities.

[102] Principal text: Lucian *Alexander*. As to its date of composition, §48 indicates that Marcus Aurelius has died; cf. Victor 1997: 19. Principal iconography: *LIMC* Glycon, Mitropoulou 1977: 188–200, L. Robert 1980, 1981, Victor 1997 (plates at rear), Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 14–35. Discussions: Weinreich 1921, Cumont 1922, Caster 1938, Eitrem 1947: 73–86, Bordenache-Battaglia 1964, 1988, Robinson 1979: 57–61, L. Robert 1980: 393–421, 1981, Hall 1981: 207–12, Branham 1984 and 1989: 181–210, Jones 1986: 133–48, Lane Fox 1986: 241–50, Anderson 1994*a*: 1435–7 and 1994*b*, Victor 1997, Chaniotis 2002, Robiano 2003, Riethmüller 2005: ii. 372–3, 396, Ogden 2009*b* (to which

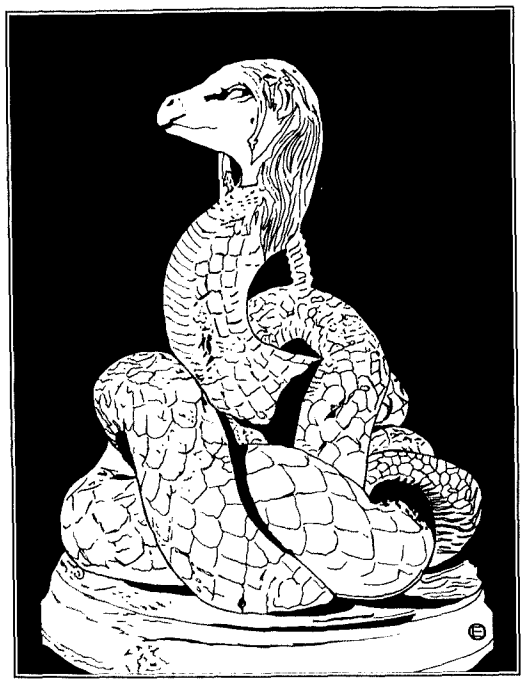


Fig. 9.2. Glycon. Marble statue, Constanta, *Muzeul de Istorie Nationala si Arheologie 2003* = *LIMC* Glykon 1. Redrawn by Eriko Ogden.

According to this,[103] Alexander hatched a massive public confidence trick in his home town of Abonouteichos in Paphlagonia. He first prepared the way for it by burying some bronze tablets of his own manufacture in the Chalcedon Asclepieion. These carried the prediction that Asclepius and his father Apollo would shortly move to Pontus and take up residence in Abonouteichos. They were soon discovered, and the excited Abonouteichans voted at once to erect a temple to receive the gods and started work on its foundations. Back in Abonouteichos Alexander established himself as the new god's chosen prophet by disseminating further bogus oracles, and lived up to the part by the affectation of the long unkempt hair of the Pythagorean sage and by delivering frenzied prophecies whilst foaming at the mouth, with the aid of soapwort.[104]

the following owes much), Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 14–66, Stoneman 2011: 166–70. For Glycon as the 'New Asclepius' see Lucian *Alexander* 43 (*Ἀσκληπιὸς νέος*; cf. also 14, *ἀτρεγέννητον Ἀσκληπιόν*) and the coins of Abonouteichos cited at Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 32–3 bearing the legend 'New Asclepius Glycon' (*νέος Ἀσκληπιὸς Γλύκων*). A century before coins had given Nero the title 'New Agathos Daimon' (*νέος Ἀγαθὸς Δαίμων*: Head 1911: 720). It may be noted not only that these two titles resemble each other in signification, but also that they are strikingly homophonous.

[103] The following summary is based principally upon Lucian *Alexander* 6–18 and 26.

[104] Alexander's Neo-Pythagoreanism, including an interest in the great Pythagoras and in reincarnation: Lucian *Alexander* 4, 33–4, 40. Alexander had a golden thigh (40), together with a matching

He then emptied out a goose egg and sealed it back together using white wax and white lead, with a newborn snake inside. By night he concealed it in a muddy pool in the foundations of the new temple. The next morning he leapt forth into the city's marketplace, frenziedly hailed the city as blessed for being on the point of receiving the manifestation of the god, ran to the temple site and scooped around in the mud until he dredged up the egg, breaking it in his hand to reveal the young snake, to the amazement of the bystanders, who raised a shout, welcomed the god, called the city blessed, and cried out prayers for riches and health. Meanwhile, Alexander carried the snake off home, and refused to emerge for several days whilst the frantic crowds pressed around and the rumours of his achievement spread and grew.

Alexander now brought out a device he had prepared earlier. This consisted of a massive, beautiful, tame, adult *drakōn* acquired from Pella, and a puppet snake-head made of linen, with a strongly humanoid appearance.[105] It could be made to open and shut its mouth through the action of horse hairs, and horse hairs also controlled a forked black tongue that could thus be made to dart out of its mouth. He took a seat on a couch, dressed himself in divine style and took the snake to his bosom. He wound the snake round his neck, letting its long body hang down onto his lap and the floor below. The snake's real head he tucked away into his armpit. He arranged the puppet head in such a way that it projected from the side of his beard, as if belonging with the body of the real snake. The couch was located in a small and dimly lit room, with entrance and exit opposite. And now the crowds, who had worked themselves up into a delirium of expectation, were let into the room. They were amazed to find the tiny snake grown so huge in the space of a few days, to be so domesticated and so humanoid. But before they could have the opportunity to scrutinize it properly, they were hustled out of the exit by the continuous press of the crowds behind them. Alexander went on to mount this display repeatedly, and particularly on those occasions when there were rich men in town. He decided that the new Asclepius should be called Glycon, and manufactured an oracle to establish this. Glycon's fame soon spread through the neighbouring regions of Bithynia, Galatia, and Thrace. In the wake of this came a burgeoning industry in the manufacture of painted plaques of Glycon, and statuettes of him in bronze and silver.

In due course Alexander contrived another wonder for Glycon. He enabled him to give voice by sewing together a long tube from a series of cranes' windpipes. He fed the tube into the puppet head, and then out through the wall behind him, from behind which an assistant spoke down it. These most special oracles are not given to any Tom, Dick, or Harry, but only to the wealthiest and most generous clients.

Despite Lucian's attempts to undermine Alexander's reputation, by word and by practical jokes,[106] the Glycon cult he established survived his death and

golden loincloth (13), in tribute to Pythagoras' own fabled golden thigh (Aristotle F191 Rose = Apollonius *Historiae Mirabiles* 6; Porphyry *Life of Pythagoras* 28); cf. Victor 1997: 44.

[105] Mayor 2000: 235 considers Glycon in the context of ancient composite-monster hoaxes.

[106] For the latter see Lucian *Alexander* 53–4. Note also 51, where the figure of the Syrian may also represent Lucian himself (cf. *The Twice Accused* and *Syrian Goddess* 1). For Lucian's habit of discomfiting charlatans with practical jokes compare the *Commentary on* [Hippocrates] *Epidemics* 2.

flourished in the Black Sea region and the Balkans for more than a century afterwards. We hear little more of it in literary texts, but it is well represented in epigraphy, on commemorative coins, in a range of bronze figurines of Glycon, and not least in a particularly fine marble portrait of him found in Romanian Constanza, the ancient Tomi (Fig. 9.2).[107] The chronological indicators in Lucian's texts, together with the coins, suggest that the cult was first established *c.*140–5 BC, and rose to particular prominence in the 160s.[108] The marble and the bronzes, the latter of which are akin no doubt to those referred to by Lucian and will have served as votives, protective amulets, and perhaps even souvenirs, portray Glycon as a rampant snake with semi-humanoid face and human hair, compatibly with Lucian's description of the god.[109] They also tell us things Lucian does not, namely that Glycon wore his hair long in the Pythagorean fashion of his sponsor, that he boasted prominent humanoid ears with which to heed his petitioners, and a final tail that was either bifurcated, trifurcated, or leonine.[110]

The name of Glycon, 'Sweetie', was a particularly appropriate one. As we have seen, it accords perfectly with the most traditional name-shape for a great male *drakōn* (Ch. 4). And in saluting sweetness, it makes appeal directly to the honey-cakes that were traditionally given to sacred snakes (Ch. 10) and indirectly to the gentle and easily propitiated nature of a serpent god (Ch. 8). If we trust Lucian, Glycon was properly addressed as 'king' and 'master'.[111]

What is the significance of Lucian's memorable vignette of Alexander's stage pose with Glycon wrapped around him, the pose in which he supposedly admitted pilgrims to his presence?[112] Interesting light is shed on the question by an Alexander Severus-age coin of Ionopolis, the new name, 'City of the Ionians', Alexander persuaded the emperor to bestow upon Abonouteichos, at some point between 161 and 169 AD, and origin of the modern name Inéboli (Fig. 9.3).[113] A massive serpent sporting long Pythagorean hair (but curiously no beard) coils

6. 9, an originally Greek text only extant in Arabic (Strohmaier 1976: 118–19 provides a German trans.); Macleod 1979, 1994: 1383 and Hall 1981: 4–6, 436–40.

[107] For the coins, bronzes and marble see *LIMC* Glycon, Mitropoulou 1977: 188–200, L. Robert 1980, 1981, Victor 1997 (plates at back), Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 14–41; cf. also Riethmüller 2005: ii. 373, 396. On the under-warranted assumption that the Tomi marble was a supposedly life-size cult statue, Bordenache-Battaglia 1988: 283 calculates that the marvellous snake was 4.6 metres long!

[108] Chronological indicators for Alexander's activities are found at Lucian *Alexander* 25, 27, 30, 43, 48, 57; cf. Victor 1997: 1, 6–7 and ad locc.

[109] For the possibility that small portable bronzes (cf. Lucian *Alexander* 18) of Glycon, such as the fine 6-cm statuette from Athens, served as pilgrimage souvenirs, see Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 15; as protective amulets, see L. Robert 1981: 513–30.

[110] Asclepius enjoyed the epithet ἐπήκοος, 'heedful', in his Asclepieion at Pergamum: *I.Asklepieion* 99; cf. Victor 1997: 2.

[111] Lucian *Philopseudes* 40 (βασιλεύς) and 43 (δεσπότης).

[112] The notion that Alexander was in some way adopting the imagery of initiates into the cult of Sabazius, who supposedly 'passed snakes through their breasts' (Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 1. 2. 16), need not detain us; cf. Caster 1938: 15, Victor 1997: 136.

[113] Bibliothèque national de France, Cabinet de Médailles, Waddington Collection 142, reproduced at L. Robert 1980: 400–2 (with discussion) and at Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 33–4 fig. 13 (a clearer image, with discussion). Alexander secures the name-change for Abonouteichos: Lucian *Alexander* 58; cf. L. Robert 1980: 408–14; Victor 1997: 1, Ogden 2008*a*: 120–1. Unfortunately, none of the coins Lucian himself speaks of here has survived: these displayed on one side Glycon and on the other a portrait of Alexander himself, bearing attributes of both Asclepius and Perseus.

Fig. 9.3. Ionopolis, personified, winds Glycon around herself as Alexander of Abonouteichos did. Coin of Ionopolis/Abonouteichos, AD 222–35. Bibliothèque national de France, Cabinet de Médailles, Waddington Collection 142. © Bibliothèque national de France.

behind the neck of a seated figure and drinks from a bowl the figure holds out, arm extended. The serpent is surely Glycon but, despite what some have thought, the seated figure is not Alexander, for she is female.[114] She is rather the city of Ionopolis personified, taking Alexander's part in his famous tableau (one difference to be noted from the Lucianic configuration is that the serpent passes behind the neck rather than under the chin of his beardless humanoid companion). However, the image also conforms, broadly, with familiar image-types of Salus on coin reverses from throughout the period of the Roman empire. As we have seen, some of these appear to show Salus feeding a serpent that coils around her back from a bowl. Of great interest is a type minted under Septimius Severus during the AD 204–10 period, shortly subsequent to Alexander's age therefore, but no doubt based upon an established iconographic model where the serpent coils on the lap of Salus to take its food. Here the overall image configuration is remarkably congruent with that of the Ionopolis coin, not least in so far as the serpent faces away in the same direction as Salus, as opposed to towards her as it more usually does.[115] All this may imply that Lucian's vignette is essentially fabricated, a fantasy based not on any pose adopted by the historical Alexander, but merely upon a feverishly imaginative reading of and extrapolation from images of the sort found in the Ionopolis coin-type, which was not in itself particularly remarkable. But more probably it implies that in adopting his pose the historical Alexander knowingly saluted the established iconography of healing deities, as well he might.

The trick by which Alexander allows Glycon to speak, with the manufactured snake head, crane's windpipe, and concealed assistant, bears a striking resemblance to a pagan necromantic trick supposedly exposed by the second- to third-century AD Christian apologist Hippolytus in his *Refutations*. He tells how pagan magicians model a human skull from an ox's cawl, and fasten it together with wax and gypsum. It is similarly given voice by an accomplice who speaks from a

[114] *Pace* Bordenache-Battaglia 1964. Glycon does have a beard on the coin reproduced at Petsalis Diomidis 2010: 32 fig. ii (age of Antoninus Pius).

[115] See *LIMC* Salus *passim*. The serpent-on-lap type: Mattingly 1923 pl. 53 figs. 4, 12, 17. The example given in illustration at *LIMC* Salus 22 is a poor one.

concealed position down a crane's windpipe fed into it. The magician then makes the skull disappear by surrounding it with incense burners, which melt the wax and so dissolve the model.[116] The Lucian and Hippolytus passages seem to derive from a common tradition of fraud-exposure or at any rate of conjuring-trick explanation, but what lies behind the trick in Alexander's case we cannot know. Has Lucian foisted the trick upon Alexander to enhance his portrayal of the prophet's fraudulence? Or did Alexander indeed employ such a trick by way of a sacred effect?

In the Tomi marble, the statuettes, and the coin portraits that portray him in the configuration of a rampant, human-headed serpent, rising up from supporting coils to the left and the right, Glycon is very much at home amidst the iconography, flourishing in his own age, of Sarapis-Agathos Daimon (Ch. 8). Of particular interest is a sardonyx magical intaglio of the first century BC in the British Museum inscribed with a portrait of the latter, for here he, like Glycon, sports a bifurcated tail.[117] And like Agathos Daimon and Sarapis, Glycon may on occasion have had a female consort. We have already mentioned the slave Epitynchanus' Severan-period Latin altar-dedication from Skopje addressed to *Iovi et Iunoni et Dracconi et Draccenae et Alexandro*, 'Jupiter and Juno and Dracco and Draccena and Alexander'. If this does relate to Glycon, which is far from certain, it is curious that he has not been accorded his personal name. An alternative theory that the Alexander of this inscription is Alexander the Great gives rise to more problems than it solves.[118]

DRAKŌN SIRES: ASCLEPIUS AND ZEUS

We have already encountered the Phrygian Ophiogeneis, who originated, according to myth, when a divine snake had sex with Halia in a grove of Artemis (Ch. 5).[119] From the later fourth century BC onwards there developed in the Graeco-Roman world a healthy tradition of *drakōn*-siring tales attaching to great leaders of one sort or another.[120] The *drakōn*-sires were most typically either identified as Asclepius or assimilated to him. The mechanics of his serpent-siring, or at any rate one view of them, is conveyed by one of the later

[116] Hippolytus *Refutations* 4. 41; cf. Ganschinietz 1913, Ogden 2001: 210–11. For conjuring tricks as opposed to magic proper in the ancient world see Dickie 2007.

[117] Michel 2001 no. 39.

[118] *CIL* iii. 8283. Discussion at Cumont 1905:1635, Šašel Kos 1991 esp. 187, Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 44. The case for this inscription honouring Glycon and Alexander of Abonouteichos may or may not be compromised by the existence of a Greek rock-cut dedication from nearby Pretvarje of the 1st century BC, some two centuries prior to Glycon's birth, therefore, which accompanies an image of a snake rising over a *phialē* with an egg: 'Tiberius Claudius Rufus, pretorian veteran, makes this gift to the esteemed Drakōn'; text at Šašel Kos 1991: 186. These are two examples from a small group of mysterious *Draco*-dedications found across the Roman empire, for other examples of which see Šašel Kos 1991: 188 n. 23; there is no *prima facie* case, the Illyrian examples aside, for any of them addressing the same specific deity or power.

[119] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 12. 39.

[120] German has a fine word for the phenomenon: *Schlangenzeugung*.

fourth-century BC aretalogies from the Epidaurian Asclepieion, to which we will return: 'Nicasibula of Messene performed an incubation to enquire about children, and saw a dream. The god appeared to come to her with a serpent [*drakōn*] slithering behind him, and she had sex with it. And as a result of this two male children were born to her within a year.'[121] The serpent, irrespective of its great size, seemingly slithers phallus-like into its chosen woman partner. (The Graeco-Roman world drew analogies between serpents and phalluses less often than some moderns might be inclined to imagine.)[122]

But serpent-sires could also be identified with Zeus, appropriately enough for their ruler-progeny, and indeed Zeus was eventually to be found as a serpent-sire in a more abstractly mythical register in the Orphic Zagreus myth first attested (indirectly) in the late classical period, in which Zeus-Sabazius in the form of a *drakōn* had sex with his own mother Rhea-Demeter in the form of a *drakaina*, to produce Persephone, with whom Zeus-Sabazius then copulated in turn, again as a *drakōn*, to produce Dionysus-Zagreus (Ch. 2).

Alexander the Great (tradition originating 336–323 BC?)[123]

Plutarch, writing *c.* AD 100, famously preserves the myth of Alexander the Great's siring by a *drakōn*:

And once too a *drakōn* was seen stretched out beside Olympias' body as she slept . . . he avoided her company out of religious scruple since she was having congress with a higher power . . . Anyway, after the manifestation Philip sent Chaeron of Megalopolis to Delphi,

[121] *EMI* (B) 42. A serpent facilitates the subsequent birth of five children in *EMI* (B) 39 by lying over the patient Agameda's womb; it does not seem that the children were born as quintuplets, and the serpent does not therefore seem to be credited with direct siring. Cf. *EMI* (B) 31 where the god in humanoid form facilitates a pregnancy for Andromache explicitly attributed to a human father, Arybbas (the Molossian king?).

[122] Rare examples include:

1. Archaic iconography occasionally substitutes the Chimaera's snake-tail with a phallus: *LIMC* Chimaira 56 (*c.*600–575 BC), 81 (*c.*550–525 BC).
2. Similarly, the *c.*560–550 BC Laconian name vase of the Typhon painter, *LIMC* Typhon 23 = Pipili 1987 no. 193 and fig. 102 (discussed in Ch. 2), clearly positions one of Typhon's many serpent-heads as a (satyriasic) phallus for him.
3. Schol. Lucian *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 2 records that women made cakes in the shapes of *drakontes* and phalluses at the Athenian Thesmophoria.
4. At Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 758–9 (411 BC) a sex-starved woman holed up on the Athenian Acropolis complains that she can no longer sleep after catching sight of the *oikouros ophis*; cf. Henderson 1991: 127.
5. The group of Hellenistic cippi named for Zeus Meilichios from the Trophonion at Lebadeia (discussed in Ch. 8) alternate images of serpents with those of (unerect) male genitals.
6. In some imperial bronzes, e.g. *LIMC* Herakles 2091, Heracles raises his club against his own phallus, which terminates, Hydra-like, in seven serpent heads.

Uncompelling discussions at Küster 1913: 150–1, Bodson 1978: 70.

[123] For more comprehensive arguments and evidence on this topic, see Ogden 2009*c*, 2009*d*, 2011*a*: 7–56. Asirvatham 2001 offers rather less discussion of the issues that concern us here than her title promises.

and they say that he brought an oracle from the god that bade him sacrifice to Ammon and honour this god most of all. And it said that he would lose the eye that he had applied to the hinge-gap in the door when he saw the god sleeping with his wife in the form of a *drakōn*. And Olympias, as Eratosthenes says, sending Alexander forth to his campaign and telling him alone the secret of the way in which he was sired, told him to have a mind worthy of his birth. Others say that she distanced herself from the notion and said, 'Will Alexander not stop slandering me before Hera?'

(Plutarch *Alexander* 2–3, incorporating Eratosthenes *FGrH* 241 F28)

The earliest sources to refer to the tale of Alexander's *drakōn*-siring occur some three centuries after the lifetime of Alexander in the Latin tradition, headed by Cicero's *On Divination*, which he composed in late 45 and early 44 BC, prior to the assassination of Caesar, before lightly revising it in the immediate aftermath of that event.[124] But we can be reasonably confident that the tradition was current already either in Alexander's own lifetime or at least very shortly after it.

First, in the same chapters Plutarch links this birth-myth with two alternative ones that can, it seems, be associated with the age of Alexander himself. The myth that Alexander was sired by a thunderbolt seems to salute the king's own iconography. Almost immediately upon accession he began to decorate some of his coin reverses with the striking iconic image of an eagle perching on a horizontal thunderbolt.[125] The myth that Alexander was sired by a signet ring emblazoned with a lion-seal is recorded also by Tertullian who, importantly, attributes it to Ephorus, who is normally held to have finished writing by 330 BC.[126]

Secondly, it is probable that the vignette Plutarch preserves from Eratosthenes (*c.*285–194 BC) in the passage quoted referred specifically to his serpent-sire as opposed to Alexander's other birth-myths.[127] Immediate context aside, we may note that when the ghost of Silius Italicus' Pomponia tells Scipio that he is serpent-sired (of which more anon), the information is similarly presented as the final revelation from mother to son of a long-kept secret.[128]

Thirdly, the cumulative evidence for the early Alexander tradition's interest in marvellous *drakontes* is striking, particularly for those parts of the tradition associable with Ptolemy and Alexandria. We have already noted much of it:

1. Ptolemy developed the cult of Agathos Daimon already in the *c.*320–300 BC period, in tight association with the Alexander cult in Alexandria (Ch. 8).[129]

[124] The principal sources: Cicero *On Divination* 2. 135, Livy 26. 19. 7–8, Trogus as reflected in Justin 11. 11. 2–5, Plutarch *Alexander* 2–3, Ptolemy son of Hephaistion at Photius *Library* no. 190 (148a; Ptolemy wrote either in the Neronian-Flavian or the Trajanic-Hadrianic one: *Suda* s.v. *Ἐπαφρόδιτος* and s.v. *Πτολεμαῖος* respectively), Aulus Gellius 6. 1. 1. Composition date of *On Divination*: Pease 1920: 13–15, 588, Wardle 2006: 37–43. By the mid 4th century AD the tradition had become so well entrenched that Alexander could be addressed with the epithet *drakontiadēs*, 'serpent-son': Gregory of Nazianz *Carmina* 1. 2. 15. 91–2 at *PG* 37, 773.

[125] Morkholm 1991 figs. 5–6 (cf. also fig. 202), Le Rider 1996 pl. 9, nos. 10, 11, and 12.

[126] Tertullian *De anima* 46, incorporating Ephorus *FGrH* 70 F217. Ephorus' *terminus ante*: Barber 1935: 12–13.

[127] Stoneman 2008: 7.

[128] Silius Italicus *Punica* 13. 636: *quando aperire datur nobis, nunc denique disce.* 'Learn it at last, now that I am permitted to reveal it.'

[129] *Alexander Romance* 1. 32. 5–7 and 10–13 (A; Armenian §§ 86–8 Wolohojian).

2. Clitarchus recorded the tale of the *drakōn* that appeared to Alexander in a dream and showed him how to heal the wounded Ptolemy at Harmatelia (see below).[130] Clitarchus is held to have written soon after 310 BC. Cicero identifies this serpent directly with Alexander's siring serpent.[131]
3. In a well-known passage, Arrian gives us an intriguing insight into Ptolemy's own account of Alexander's march to Siwah. Whilst all others, he tells us, Aristobulus included, had told that Alexander's army had been rescued from the Libyan desert by a pair of crows, Ptolemy had given instead a pair of talking serpents (cf. Ch. 8).[132] It is usually believed that Ptolemy compiled his history towards the end of his reign (d. 283 BC).[133]
4. Writing by 309 BC at the latest, Alexander's 'Chief helmsman of the fantastic', Onesicritus of Astypalaea, had told that Indian king Abisares had regaled Alexander with tales of his pair of gigantic *drakontes*, one 140 cubits, the other 80 cubits in length.[134]

Where Plutarch or other ancient sources suggest an identity for Alexander's serpent sire, they point to Zeus or Ammon.[135] But it is inconceivable that Ammon as the Greeks knew him should have sired in the form of a serpent in any original version of the story: he was a ram-god, not a serpent-god, for the Greeks, a fact made emphatically clear from Herodotus onwards, and a fact the *Alexander Romance* acknowledges in its awkward and unresolved combination of ram imagery and serpent imagery in its account of the impregnation of Olympias.[136] No doubt Ammon was grafted onto the serpent-siring tale in order to accommodate it with the tradition that Ammon claimed Alexander as his own son at Siwah.[137] A non-Ammonian Zeus makes a better candidate for the sire. The association of the kings of Macedon in general with Zeus was ancient and august.[138] Zeus lurks behind Alexander's other birth myths: it is he that wields

[130] Diodorus 17. 103. 4–8 and Curtius 9. 8. 22–8, the coincidence of whom entails that Clitarchus is their source.

[131] Cicero *On Divination* 2. 135.

[132] Arrian *Anabasis* 3. 3. 4–6, incorporating Ptolemy *FGrH* 138 F8, Aristobulus *FGrH* 139 F14. Arrian's observation is borne out by the remnants of it that survive to us. All the other sources give us crows, with the serpents being preferred only here, in association with Ptolemy's version. Strabo C814 = Callisthenes *FGrH* 124 F14, Diodorus 17. 49. 5, Curtius 4. 7. 15, Plutarch *Alexander* 27, *Itinerarium* 21 (crows, but acknowledging the variant of serpents).

[133] See Roisman 1984.

[134] Onesicritus of Astypalaea *FGrH* 134 16a–c.

[135] Trogus as reflected in Justin 11. 11. 2–5, Plutarch *Alexander* 2–3, Pausanias 4. 14. 7, Lucian *Dialogues of the Dead* 13. The exception is the rationalizing Ptolemy son of Hephaistion at Photius *Library* no. 190 (148a), who finds a man called Drakon lurking behind the tale of the *drakōn* sire.

[136] Herodotus 2. 42, with Lloyd 1975–88: ii. 192–5, Ephippus *FGrH* 126 F5 = Athenaeus 537e, *Alexander Romance* 1. 8–10, 30 (A). For Ammon's ram-related iconography see *LIMC* Ammon *passim*. Ammon has a serpent body at *LIMC* Ammon no. 150 alone, this because he is here merged with the anguiform Sarapis. Hellenistic images of Alexander, including some made just a few years after his death, give him ram's horns in his capacity as Ammon's son, but never the attributes of a snake: Stewart 1993 figs. 77–9, 101–3, 117–18.

[137] Callisthenes *FGrH* 124 F14 = Strabo C814, Diodorus 17. 51, Trogus at Justin 11. 11. 7–13, Curtius 4. 7. 8, 25–7, Plutarch *Alexander* 27, Arrian *Anabasis* 3. 3. 4–6, incorporating Ptolemy *FGrH* 138 F8 and Aristobulus *FGrH* 139 F14.

[138] Evidence collected at Le Bohec 2002.

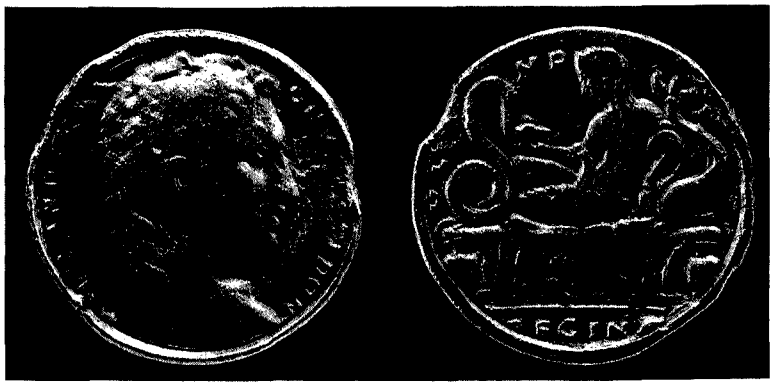


Fig. 9.4. Olympias abed with the serpent-sire of Alexander the Great. Roman contorniate, 4th century AD. British Museum R4803. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

the thunderbolt, and it is he that sired Heracles, the referent of the signet-ring's (sc. Nemean) lion motif. If we look for a particular aspect of Zeus to credit with the siring, then the obvious candidate is Zeus Meilichios, the most prominent of the anguiform Zeuses, a god possibly grounded adjacently to the Macedonian Pindus in myth (Ch. 8), and a god known to have received cult in Macedon, subsequently at any rate.[139]

But Alexander's sire was seemingly also, in later tradition, assimilated to Asclepius. The Harmatelia serpent with which Cicero identifies the siring serpent, has strongly Asclepian overtones, and indeed its tale seems to salute directly an aetiological myth of Asclepius' own discovery of herbal medicine and association with serpents, as we shall see.

How was Alexander's serpent-siring visualized? Olympias' congress with the serpent finds marvellous illustration on third-century AD Macedonian coins and on fourth-century AD Roman contorniates. On the latter Olympias is sometimes conveniently labelled 'Olympias Regina', and typically shown reclining on a couch with a dolphin-headrest whilst feeding or perhaps petting the head of a large serpent rearing up in S-formation (Fig. 9.4).[140] Additionally, the *Alexander Romance* tells how, in an episode subsequent to the act of siring, the serpent (in context a transformed Nectanebo) ostentatiously coils himself up upon Olympias' knee in order to trick a sceptical Philip into accepting the reality of the divine siring: 'he reared himself up and placed his chin upon her hand, then he flipped his whole body into her lap and kissed her with his forked tongue'.[141] This episode is illustrated in the late-antique Baalbek mosaic of the *Romance*, where indeed the

[139] A dedication by Philip V to Zeus Meilichios at Pella: Gauthier and Hatzopoulos 1993: 146 n. 3; Le Bohec 2002: 47. A substantial fragment of a colossal marble serpent statue found in a deposit in the antechamber of Temple H in the Eucleia sanctuary at Vergina (Aegae), dating to some point before the mid 2nd century BC, may well derive from an anguiform statue of Zeus Meilichios: so Saatsoglou-Paliadeli 1991: 12–21, 2000: 390–1.

[140] Discussed at Ross 1963: 17–21 with pl. 6a, Yalouris et al. 1980: 116, C. Vermeule 1982, Stewart 2003: 62–5, and above all Carney 2006: 122–3 and Dahmen 2006: 140–1, 154.

[141] *Alexander Romance* 1.10.

figure of the serpent, though partly lost, evidently sat in Olympias' lap.[142] All this imagery emphatically recalls that of Hygieia or Salus feeding their avatar-serpents, and so again brings us back to the Asclepian realm.[143] Indeed, in later versions of the *Alexander Romance*, when Philip sees Nectanebo pretending to be Ammon in the shape of a giant serpent, he does not know which god he is supposed to have seen, and speculates that it might be Ammon, Apollo, or Asclepius.[144] Is it pure coincidence that, in one of the few contemporary references to the historical Olympias, a speech in defence of Euxenippus delivered in the early 320s BC, Hypereides refers to her dedication of a *phialē* to the statue of Hygieia on the Athenian acropolis?[145]

Aristomenes of Messene (tradition originating in the late fourth century BC? Late third century BC?)

There was some dispute as to the identity of the father of Aristomenes of Messene, the legendary leader of the Second Messenian War. Pausanias notes that most of the Greeks identified him as one Pyrrhus, whilst he himself knows him to have been one Nicomedes. This dispute no doubt related solely to the identity of his earthly father. For the Messenians, as Pausanias explains, 'hold that his birth was rather splendid, for they say that a *daimōn* or a god took on the form of a *drakōn* and had sex with his mother Nicoteleia. I am aware that the Macedonians have said similar things in the case of Olympias and the Sicyonians in the case of Aristodama, but these differ to the following extent. For the Messenians do not make of Aristomenes a son of Heracles or Zeus as the Macedonians make Alexander the son of Ammon and the Sicyonians make Aratus the son of Asclepius.'[146] We know that Aristomenes' mother Nicoteleia featured in Rhianus of Bene's (i.e. Lebena's) late third-century BC epic devoted to the hero, the *Messeniaca*, and it is likely, accordingly, that the serpent-siring featured in that poem.[147] Is Pausanias right in his claim that Aristomenes' serpent-sire was unidentified? Such a claim could perhaps be justified by the proliferation throughout Laconia and the southern Peloponnese from the sixth century BC onwards of a wide range of mostly legendless hero images incorporating snakes (Ch. 7). Little art of any kind survives from Messenia itself prior to its liberation in 369 BC, but striking among such material as does survive are the terracotta plaques of the seventh to

[142] See Chéhab 1957 with reproductions at pls. 22–5, Ross 1963: 3–5 with reproductions at pl. 1 a and b.

[143] The misdirection occasioned by a Hellenistic marble relief from Palatitsa in Macedonia, now in the Louvre (Louvre M.A. 2550), is instructive. Here a large serpent coils on the lap of a seated, fully clothed female figure (both are headless). The Macedonian context of the find led Simon to suppose (1957: 25–6, with photograph at pl. 10.1) that it constitutes an early illustration of Olympias with her serpent. But the fragment unquestionably depicts Hygieia with her avatar, as would never have been doubted had it been found in any other context: compare e.g. the Roman-period statues and statuettes at *LIMC* Hygieia 89–10.

[144] *Alexander Romance* 1. 10 (L; 4th–7th cent. AD).

[145] Hyperides 4. 19; discussion at Carney 2006: 95–6.

[146] Pausanias 4. 14. 7.

[147] Rhianus *FGrH* 265 F39 / F50 Powell; cf. Ogden 2003: 161.

fourth century BC from the sanctuary of Demeter and the Dioscuri at Ithome, amongst which images pairing hoplite with snake are prominent.[148] But there is reason too for thinking that Aristomenes' father had once been recognized as Asclepius. The image that is most suggestive for Aristomenes' serpent-siring is a third-century BC stone relief from the Messene Asclepieion. In this a warrior with a round shield faces a woman across an altar, onto which he pours a libation. A snake twists through the air between them. One can well imagine how images of this sort could have been reinterpreted to represent Aristomenes with his famous talismanic shield, his mother and his serpent-sire. In this case the snake would, inescapably and despite Pausanias, have borne the identity of Asclepius.[149] Let us turn again to the late fourth-century BC Epidaurian miracle inscription with which we began this section: Asclepius sires a pair of sons with a Messenian woman named Nicasibula. Might this refer not to the historical era but to the legendary one, and to Asclepius' siring of Aristomenes and an otherwise unknown brother with his Messenian mother under an earlier form of her name? Unlike 'Nicoteleia', 'Nicasibula' would not have fitted into one of Rhianus' hexameters. If this is indeed to what the inscription refers, it offers a relatively early piece of evidence within the extant Aristomenes tradition.[150] Pausanias partly compares Aristomenes to Alexander in the manner of his serpent-conception. No doubt the Messenians did the same: a pair of second-century AD statue-bases built into a Christian basilica in Messene named their subjects as 'Aristomenes' and 'Alexander'.[151]

Aratus of Sicyon (tradition originating in the late third century BC?)

We have already noted the fragmentary epigram inscribed on an Epidaurian statue base of the third or second century BC that once supported a treasury-guarding serpent: 'His fatherland [i.e. Sicyon or the Achaean League] set up this serpent, the monstrous father of the hero Aratus [271–213 BC], to be a guardian of possessions' (Ch. 4).[152] After reporting Asclepius' arrival in Sicyon in the form of a serpent on Nicagora's mule wagon, Pausanias notes that in his Sicyonian temple, 'there are small images suspended from the roof. They say that the woman on the *drakōn* is Aristodama the mother of Aratus, and they hold that Aratus is the son of Asclepius.'[153] It is hard to envisage the configuration of the mobile of the woman *on* the *drakōn*. If the image were supposed to depict the act of siring, one might

[148] Themelis 1998 esp. 165–8; cf. Ogden 2003: 137–8.

[149] Themelis 2000: 50 (illustration), 52 (description). For the Messene Asclepieion, see Riethmüller 2005: ii. 156–67. If Rhianus did speak of Aristomenes' serpent-siring, might he have drawn inspiration also from the prominence of serpents in the important Asclepieion of his home town of Lebena (for which see above and Ch. 10)? For Aristomenes' talismanic shield, see Pausanias 4. 15. 5, 4. 16. 4–7, 4. 18. 4–9, Polyaenus 2. 31. 2–3, with Ogden 2003: 59–88.

[150] *EMI* (B) 42. For the Aristomenes tradition see Ogden 2003: 177–99: the only certain extant mention of Aristomenes prior to this inscription is Callisthenes *FGrH* 124 F23 (before 336 BC).

[151] Themelis 2000: 28–32; cf. Ogden 2003: 39–40.

[152] *IG* iv^2 622 (R. Herzog 1931: 37 [W71]): [*Ἴρους*] *Ἀράτοιο πελώριον ὦ*|*δε τοκῆα*]| [*εἶσε δράκοντα πατρὶς καδ*]*εμόνα κτεάνων*.

[153] Pausanias 2. 10. 3, *ἐπὶ τῷ δράκοντι*; cf. 4. 14. 7.

rather have expected the *drakōn* to be *on* the woman. Herzog supposes that Aratus was sired by Asclepius when his mother Aristodama incubated at Epidaurus for childlessness, and that either Sicyon or the Achaean League subsequently honoured Aratus after his death in 212 BC by setting up a statue of his serpent father to guard the Epidaurian sanctuary's treasury.[154] But it seems equally likely that Aristodama might have incubated in her local Sicyonian sanctuary of Asclepius which had existed since the fifth century,[155] where her mobile was to hang, with the Sicyonians thinking it appropriate to honour Aratus additionally at the more prominent and well visited mother-sanctuary at Epidaurus.

Octavian-Augustus (tradition originating c.40 BC?)

The notion that Octavian-Augustus was sired by a serpent was no doubt inspired by and modelled on the Alexander myth. Suetonius cites the *Theologoumena* of Asclepiades of Mendes, who is thought to have been Augustus' contemporary:

> Atia came in the middle of the night for a solemn rite of Apollo. She had her litter set down in the temple and fell asleep, the other matrons sleeping likewise. A *draco* suddenly crawled in up to her and exited a little later. When she woke up, she purified herself as she would after the embrace of her husband. And at once there manifested itself on her body a mark resembling a painted *draco*, and she could never expunge it. The eventual result was that she forever kept away from the public baths. Augustus was born in the tenth month and was regarded as the son of Apollo for this reason.
>
> (Suetonius *Augustus* 94 = Asclepiades of Mendes *FGrH* 617 F2)[156]

The Latin is discreet, but seems to want to tell us that the serpent physically entered Atia, as in the case of Nicasibula. Some have held that Atia's impregnation is portrayed on the multiply mysterious and controversial Portland Vase (which may not even be an ancient artefact). According to this interpretation, Atia is the reclining female figure. To the left Apollo in human form reaches out to her from his temple and clasps her hand. Apollo again, now in serpent form, or an anguiform avatar of the god, rises over Atia's breast from her loosely draped lap, as if to kiss her, whilst Cupid hovers overhead with his bow. To the right Romulus looks on approvingly. The possibility is intriguing, but should not detain us further, given all the uncertainties that hang over the vase, and given also the fact that the anguiform's head is closer in configuration to the *kētos*- or sea-serpent-type than to the *drakōn*- or serpent-type one might have expected to find in such a scene.[157]

[154] R. Herzog 1931: 37, 42–3, 74.

[155] For the sanctuary see Riethmüller 2005: ii. 63–8; cf. i. 233.

[156] *draconem repente irrepsisse ad eam pauloque post egressum.* Jacoby 1923– ad loc. assigns Asclepiades to the 1st century BC and 1st century AD. All this material is recycled at Cassius Dio 45. 1. 2–3. The tale seems to be vaguely alluded to also at *Epigrammata Bobiensia* (text at Speyer 1963) 39, Domitius Marsus on Atia the mother of Augustus: 'I am called fortunate before all other women, whether, as a mortal woman, I gave birth to a mortal or a god.' Discussion of the Augustan birth-myth at Kienast 1982: 218–19 n. 54.

[157] The case is put principally by Simon 1957, and most recently by Brooks 2004: 213–19; other views at Haynes 1975 and Walker 2004.

For all that the siring god here is Apollo and that he is known to have had his own temple snakes in myth at Troy and in reality in Epirus, the circumstances of the siring, a night-time sleep in a temple, whether a formal incubation or not, are strongly suggestive of his son Asclepius. It is not surprising, therefore, that the fifth-century AD poet Sidonius Apollinaris should assert, in confused fashion, that Augustus was sired both by Phoebus Apollo and by Asclepius, saluting the Alexander paradigm too as he does so: 'Alexander the Great and Augustus too are held to have been sired by a serpent god and to have shared Phoebus and Jupiter between themselves. For one of these sought his father at Cinyphian Syrtes [i.e. Siwah], whilst the other delighted in the fact that he was held to be born of Phoebus because of his mother's marks, and he boasted about the Epidaurian signs of the Paeonian *drakōn*.'[158]

When did Octavian-Augustus first make the claim? The historians currently hold that Octavian only started claiming divine parentage of any sort after Actium in 31 BC.[159] However, Cassius Dio, writing in the early third century AD, makes Atia's claim that Octavian had been sired by Apollo in the form of a serpent the reason that Caesar actually chose to adopt Octavian in the first place. If we were to take this seriously, then Octavian's claim to his serpent sire would have preceded the adoption, which took place in September 45 BC. But no doubt it is a retro-jection. Nonetheless, Octavian is seemingly attested as identifying himself strongly with Apollo already in the early Second-Triumviral period. Suetonius preserves a report of a notorious and indulgent banquet Octavian held in which he dressed himself up as Apollo, and which drew the scorn of Antony and others. The banquet is said to have been particularly outrageous as held during the general famine imposed on Italy by Sextus Pompey's blockade. The blockade-context locates it at some point in the period 43–36 BC, with *c.*40 BC offering the best occasion.[160] Of course these charades, while certainly good evidence for Octa-vian's growing affinity with Apollo, do not directly entail that he was already making his claim to actual filiation by this point.[161]

Scipio Africanus (tradition originating c.40 BC?)

The tradition that Scipio Africanus was serpent-sired is first attested by two Latin authors cited by Gellius. Julius Hyginus wrote in the Augustan age, but Caius Oppius is believed to have composed his biography of Scipio a little earlier, in the age of the Second Triumvirate:[162]

> That which has been written in Greek history of Olympias, the wife of king Philip and mother of Alexander, has similarly been handed down in tradition in relation to the mother of the first Publius Scipio to acquire the surname Africanus. For both Gaius Oppius and

[158] Sidonius Apolloniaris *Carmina* 2. 121–6.

[159] Kienast 1982: 376, Chaniotis 2005: 443.

[160] Suetonius *Augustus* 70; cf. Powell 2008: 74. The blockade began with the proscriptions in 43 BC, and ended with the battle of Naulochus in 36.

[161] I thank Anton Powell for his advice on this matter.

[162] Discussion of the Scipio serpent-siring tradition at Walbank 1967, with earlier bibliography on the issue at 54. Julius Hyginus: P. L. Schmidt 2005. Oppius: Fündling 2000.

Julius Hyginus, and others who have written of the life and achievements of Africanus, relate that his mother had long been held barren. They say too that Scipio, to whom she was married, had given up hope of children. But subsequently, when she was lying down alone and had fallen asleep in her bedroom in the absence of her husband, a huge snake (*anguis*) was suddenly seen lying by her side in the bed. The people that saw it were terrified and shouted out, whereupon it slipped away and they were unable to find it. Publius Scipio himself referred the matter to the soothsayers and they, after making sacrifice, replied that children would be born to him. And indeed a few days after that snake was seen in the bed, his wife began to perceive the signs and feelings of pregnancy. In the tenth month thereafter she gave birth and that Publius Scipio was born who defeated Hannibal and the Carthaginians in Africa in the Second Punic War. But he too was believed to be a man of divine excellence because of his achievements rather more than because of that portent. (Aulus Gellius 6. 1. 1)

The context of barrenness again invites us to think of Asclepius in view of the Epidaurian miracle inscriptions, for all that there is no formal incubation. But the remainder of the tradition, which begins with Livy's third decad, written in the years after 19 BC, affirms that Scipio's sire was in fact Jupiter, in whose temple on the Capitol Scipio used to sit alone before performing any business.[163] The tale is intriguingly elaborated by Silius Italicus in his *Punica*, published *c.* AD 100, to which we have already referred. When Scipio encounters the ghost of his mother, she reveals to him the truth of his birth: she was resting apart from her husband at midday (a popular time for the manifestation of demons), when she awoke to find herself, amidst brilliant light, in the embrace of Jupiter in the form of a scaly serpent that dragged its coils after it. Having conceived Scipio thus, she died in parturition.[164] It is possible that the myth of Scipio's serpent-siring was developed by or for Octavian-Augustus in the Second Triumviral period.[165] One could well understand how this new king might wish to sweeten the precedents of Alexander and other Greek leaders with that of a more reassuringly Roman hero for some sectors of his audience. Scipio was credited not only with coming from a snake, but also returning to one. As we have noted, Pliny knew that his estate at Liternum featured a cave where a snake guarded his ghost (Ch. 7).[166]

Nero (tradition originating AD 54–68?)

The Augustan and Scipionic tales spawned a notable tribute to themselves. Tacitus reports in the *Annals*, published *c.* AD 120, the tradition that guardian *dracones*

[163] Livy 26. 19. 7–8; cf. Valerius Maximus 1. 2. 1, Cassius Dio 16. 57. 39. Dating of Livy's third decad: Fusillo and Schmidt 2005: 750.

[164] Silius Italicus 13. 634–49; cf. A. R. Anderson 1928: 35–6. For the manifestation of demons at midday, see J. Drexler 1890–7, Callois 1937, and, more generally, Blum and Blum 1970: 331–2. At 15. 139–48 Scipio is directed to take up a command in Spain by the appearance in the sky of a massive golden serpent heading westwards, whilst Jupiter thunders approvingly.

[165] Before this, in the mid 2nd century BC, Polybius 10. 2. 6–7 (cf. 10. 5. 8 and 10. 9. 2) already knew that Scipio had been the recipient of divine favour, describing him as *theios*, 'divine'. This is probably not enough, in itself, to take us all the way to the snake, though Walbank 1967: 61–9 thought it might.

[166] Pliny *Natural History* 16. 234.

were found in the baby Nero's bedroom. The emperor himself had demurred, maintaining that only a single serpent had been seen.[167] Suetonius, writing around the same time, tells a slightly different tale: Messalina sent assassins to kill the baby Nero, whom she regarded as a threat to the succession of her son Britannicus; the assassins were frightened away by a (single) serpent (*draco*) that shot out from beneath the baby's pillow. Suetonius adds that the truth behind this tale was that a piece of slough was found beside his pillow. His mother Agrippina enclosed this in a protective golden bracelet for him, which Nero then wore until the memory of his mother became hateful.[168] Building on this, Cassius Dio subsequently records that the slough was actually found around Nero's neck, and that the seers divined from this that he would receive strength from an old man.[169] The Neronian tradition seems to have had a retroactive effect on the Scipionic one: the late-antique *On the Great Men of the City of Rome* pseudonymously attributed to Aurelius Victor tells that Scipio's serpent-sire was discovered coiling around him though doing him no harm.[170]

Alexander of Abonouteichos and the children of Glycon (tradition originating *c.* AD 140?)

An inscription of Caesarea Troketta in Lydia from shortly after AD 160 identifies a priest of Apollo Soter as 'Miletos, son of the Paphlagonian Glycon'. Perhaps this man's mother had, in barrenness, performed incubations in Glycon's Abonouteichos sanctuary.[171] Lucian's sarcastic reading of the phenomenon of Glycon's siring career is that it was rather Alexander of Abonouteichos himself that seduced wives and fathered children with them, leaving their gullible husbands to boast of it:

> He was always making a mockery of fools in this fashion, both corrupting women all over the place and sleeping with boys. For each man it was a great thing and something to be prayed for, that he should turn his gaze upon his wife. If he should also consider her worthy of a kiss, each man thought that all Agathe Tyche would stream into his house. And many women even boasted that they had conceived children by him, and their husbands bore witness to the effect that they were speaking the truth. (Lucian *Alexander* 42)

There is further serpent imagery here: as we have seen, Agathe Tyche was the anguiform consort of the anguiform Agathos Daimon, who was so welcomed when he slithered into private houses to bring them good fortune (see Ch. 8). This brief passage corresponds strikingly with the narrative in the α-recension of the *Alexander Romance* of the wicked Nectanebo's deceitful seduction of Olympias. He releases a tame snake into her bedroom, but as she prepares expectantly for

[167] Tacitus *Annals* 11. 11. [168] Suetonius *Nero* 6. 4.

[169] Cassius Dio 61. 2. 4. Cf. Plutarch *Crassus* 8 where it is told that when the adult Spartacus was first brought to Rome, a snake was found coiling around his face as he slept. His wife, a Thracian maenad and prophetess, said that it foretold great power and success.

[170] [Aurelius Victor] *De viris illustribus urbis Romanae* 49. 1.

[171] *IGRom* iv. 1498; cf. L. Robert 1980: 405–8, Bordenache-Battaglia 1988: 279, Victor 1997: 12–13, C. P. Jones 1998, Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 43–4.

divine congress, he then takes its place.[172] The magician Nectanebo subsequently, as we have seen, transforms himself into a snake in order to persuade the initially sceptical Philip that his wife's mysterious pregnancy is indeed divine. The account concludes, 'Philip held himself blessed henceforth for this reason that he was destined to be called the father of divine seed.'[173] The α-recension is normally dated to around AD 300, but the *Romance*'s roots stretch back into the third century BC. It seems probable that Lucian is alluding to it here, as it permits him a shorthand articulation of Alexander of Abonouteichos' charlatanry.[174]

Lucian also seems to tell us, in subtle fashion, that Alexander of Abonouteichos claimed himself to have been sired by a god manifest in the form of a snake: he put it about that he was sired with his mother by the healing hero Podalirius, himself a son of Asclepius.[175] One imagines that, like his fellow healing deities Asclepius and Glycon, Podalirius adopted serpent form to sire, and this is probably implied by Lucian's scoffing observation that, 'Podalirius was so wanton and woman-obsessed by nature that he was carried by his erection (*styesthai*) from Tricca as far as Paphlagonia and Alexander's mother.'[176] The image of the sex-obsessed hero trailing after his own erect member, charging ahead with a mind of its own, initially seems arbitrary, though admittedly memorable. The image becomes less arbitrary if we see it as a debunking representation of the form in which Asclepius typically travels between his cult sites, that of a rampant serpent.

Galerius (tradition originating in AD 305–11?)

The claim to serpent-siring is telegraphically attested by Aurelius Victor as having been made by the later Roman emperor Galerius (r. AD 305–11): 'He arrogantly dared to assert that his mother had conceived him after the embrace of a *draco*, in the fashion of Olympias, who gave birth to Alexander the Great.' It is interesting that Alexander, still, rather than Augustus, should be cited here as the model.[177]

Coda: the *drakōn* in love

None of these tales, bald as they are, speak of romantic love between the *drakōn* and its woman mate, but the notion could be entertained. Aelian preserves a tale in which love rather than procreation takes centre stage. In Israel a massive *drakōn* fell in love with a beautiful girl. It used to visit her and sleep with her

[172] *Alexander Romance* 1.7 (A), but this episode is better preserved in the Armenian translation, §13 Wolohojian.

[173] *Alexander Romance* 1. 8–10 (A).

[174] For the dating of the *Alexander Romance* in its various recensions, see Stoneman 1996: 601–9, 2007: pp. lxxiii–lxxxiii, 2008: 230–2, Jouanno 2002: 26–8. Lucian's *Alexander* makes ironic allusions to the canonical life of Alexander the Great throughout: Ogden 2009*b*.

[175] Lucian *Alexander* 11, 39. The ancient testimonia for Podalirius are collected at Edelstein and Edelstein 1945 TT197–216.

[176] Lucian *Alexander* 11.

[177] Aurelius Victor *Epitome de Caesaribus* 40. 17; cf. Walbank 1967: 54.

like an ardent lover. She went away for a month in hopes that it would forget its ardour, but when she returned it was all the keener, and it encircled her and gently lashed her legs with its tail, as if in anger.[178] Aelian also preserves a tale from Hegemon's *Dardanica* (perhaps of the third century BC) of a *drakōn* that fell in love with a boy, Aleuas of Thessaly. It would kiss his hair and lick around his face and clean it with its tongue, and bring him gifts from its hunting activities (as typical of pederastic courtship).[179] These tales belong to a common type, the most familiar examples of which are those of the goose of Aegium that fell in love with Amphilochus of Olenus and the ram that fell in love with Glauce, lyre-player to Ptolemy Philadelphus.[180]

CONCLUSION: WHY WERE THE HEALING GODS *DRAKONTES*?

The question does not admit of a definitive or reductive answer, nor should we expect it to do so: the importance of Asclepius and the other healing gods entailed that they should be enmeshed in a complex of competing and even contradictory symbolism. Accordingly, their serpent form must be contextualized in ancient Greek culture and understood in a number of different ways.

First, from the archaic period onwards dead but returning heroes were often embodied in serpents, as we have seen in Chapter 7: the serpent that enters the earth and returns from it offers a ready metaphor for them.[181] Asclepius' principal myths enshrine the theme of return from the dead three times over, for Asclepius himself and for his patients: as a baby Asclepius is recovered for life when Apollo snatches him from the womb of his dead mother Coronis as she burns on the pyre;[182] Asclepius devotes his own life to the reanimation of the dead, but is himself struck dead for doing this by Zeus' thunderbolt;[183] he is then restored to

[178] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 6. 17. [179] Aelian *Nature on Animals* 8. 11.

[180] Aelian *Nature on Animals* 1. 6, 5. 29 (including Theophrastus F567b Fortenbaugh), 8. 11. Pliny *Natural History* 10. 51, 207, Plutarch *Moralia* 972f.

[181] Cf. Salapata 2006: 556.

[182] Pindar *Pythian* 3. 24–53, Ovid *Metamorphoses* 2. 531–632, Pausanias 2. 26. 4–8.

[183] Hesiod F51 MW, Stesichorus F194 *PMG*/Campbell, *Naupactica* F10 West, Panyassis F5 West, Acusilaus F18 Fowler, Pindar *Pythian* 3. 24–53, Aeschylus *Agamemnon* 1019–24, Pherecydes F35 Fowler, Euripides *Alcestis* 1–7, 122–9, Amelesagoras *FGrH* 331 F3, Andron *FGrH* 10 F17, Plato *Republic* 408bc, Phylarchus *FGrH* 81 F18, Staphylus *FGrH* 269 F3, Telesarchus *FGrH* 309 F2, Polyanthus/Polyarchus of Cyrene *FGrH* 37 F1, Virgil *Aeneid* 7. 765–73, Propertius 2. 1. 57–62, Ovid *Fasti* 6. 743–62, *Metamorphoses* 16. 531–6, Pliny *Natural History* 29. 1. 3, Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 10. 3, Justin Martyr *Apology* 22. 6, *Dialogus* 69. 3, Marcianus Aristides *Apologia* 10. 5–6, Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 26, Lucian *On Dancing* 45, Hyginus *Fabulae* 49, Q. Serenus Sammonicus *Liber medicinalis* prooemium 1–10, Sextus Empiricus *Adversus mathematicos* 1. 260–2, Tertullian *Apologeticus* 14. 5–6, Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 2. 30. 1, Origen *Contra Celsum* 3. 23, Lactantius *Divinae institutiones* 1. 17. 15, Firmicus Maternus *De errore profanarum religionum* 12. 8, Ambrose of Milan *On Virgins* 3. 176. 7, Libanius *Orations* 13. 42, 20. 8, Ausonius *Opuscula* 16 p. 197, Lactantius Placidus on Statius *Thebaid* 5. 434, 6. 353, Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 6. 398, Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* 4. 3. 1–2, schol. Pindar *Pythian* 3. 96, schol. Euripides *Alcestis* 1, schol. Apollonius *Argonautica* 4. 611–17, schol. Lucian *Zeus Confuted* 8, *S. Ignatii martyrium Romanum* 3. 2.

life a second time through catasterization as Ophiuchus, the 'Snake-holder'.[184] Amphiaraus and Trophonius seem rather to have been caught between life and death in curious ways. Amphiaraus was swallowed by the earth, chariot and all, at either Harma ('Chariot') near Thebes, or Oropus, and so entered the underworld bypassing death. Like Asclepius, he rose up from the earth again to become a god, at the site of his sacred spring within his Oropan sanctuary.[185] One of Trophonius' myths told that he had constructed the descent-chamber for his oracle, retreated into it and prophesied there until he died of hunger, whereupon a *daimonion* inhabiting the place continued to give out prophecies. Another told that he had fled into his hole and died there after being chased for the robbery of the treasury that he had constructed with Agamedes for Hyrieus or Augeias.[186] Whilst we are not explicitly told that Trophonius rose from the dead, as did Asclepius and Amphiaraus, it may have been that he was considered 'half-dead' (*hēmithnēs*). This is what Strepsiades, in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, fears will become of him if he enters Socrates' school, as he compares it to Trophonius's hole.[187]

Secondly, the serpent's slough offered a ready figure for medical renewal, a notion made explicit by the second-century BC Apollodorus of Athens and found frequently in later Greek writers.[188] An Aesopic tale found first in Sophocles tells how a *dipsas* snake acquired eternal Youth from men. Men loaded Youth onto the back of an ass. The ass, struggling under the load, came to a spring and asked its guardian snake for a drink of water. The snake gave the water in exchange for the ass's load, and henceforth snakes can ever put off their 'old age' (*gēras*), as the Greeks termed their slough.[189]

Thirdly, the healing function sits comfortably alongside the serpent's other well-established functions in antiquity: those of watching, guarding, and protecting, particularly in relation to the household. Nilsson and Schouten see the Asclepian snake as originating in the culture of house snakes and the divinities built out of them (Ch. 8).[190] Cornutus explains that the *drakōn* is the symbol of the attentiveness necessary for medical care, whilst Festus tells that the Roman

[184] [Eratosthenes] *Catasterismi* 1. 6, Hyginus *Fabulae* 251. 2, *Astronomica* 2. 14, schol. Germanicus *Aratea* 71, Servius on Virgil *Aeneid* 11. 259, Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1. 20. 1–4, John Lydus *De Mensibus* 4. 142, Cosmas on Gregory of Nazianz *Carmen* 52. Further sources for Asclepius' more general deification at Edelstein and Edelstein 1945 TT129, 236–65.

[185] Euripides *Suppliants* 925–7 (bypassing death), Strabo C399 (swallowed at Oropus), Statius *Thebaid* 7. 816–23 (graphic description of the chariot-swallowing), Pausanias 1. 34 (Amphiaraus swallowed at Harma, rises at the Oropan spring).

[186] Scholl. Aristophanes *Clouds* 506–8; Proclus *Chrestomathia*, argument to *Telegonia* (at M. L. West 2003*a*: 166–9).

[187] Aristophanes *Clouds* 504.

[188] Apollodorus of Athens, *FGrH* 244 F138a. So too Cornutus *Theologiae Graecae compendium* 33, Artemidorus *Oneirocritica* 2. 13 (inexplicit), eusebius *Praeparatio evangelica* 3. 11. 26, Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1. 20. 1–4 (also comparing the *draco* to the sun, which returns each day from the profoundest depths to its midday height, its 'youth'), Theodoret *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 8. 23, Cosmas on Gregory of Nazianz *Carmen* 52, schol. Aristophanes *Wealth* 733. See Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 228–9, Schouten 1967: 40, Bodson 1978: 87.

[189] Aesop 458 Perry, at Sophocles *Kōphoi Satyroi* F362 Pearson/*TrGF*, Nicander *Theriaca* 343–58, Aelian *Nature of Animals* 6. 51.

[190] Nilsson 1967–74: i. 402–6, Schouten 1967: 35–7.

Asclepieion was under the guardianship of a *draco* because this is the most vigilant of all animals, and sick people require vigilant care.[191] This way of thinking was no doubt already established when Horace invoked the sharp-sightedness of the *serpens Epidaurius* as a commonplace.[192]

Fourthly and connectedly, we may wish to give particular attention to serpents' established function as guardians of springs (Ch. 4), for springs were often held to be fundamental to the Asclepieia. Vitruvius is emphatic that temples of Ascelpius, Hygieia and other healing deities should be founded in places that are naturally healthy and furnished with suitable springs: the sick heal more quickly when transferred from pestilential places to healthy ones and they drink healthy water there.[193] Festus asserts that the sick of Asclepieia are helped by the doctors primarily with water.[194] In the Athenian Asclepieion the spring of Halirrhotios was accessed within a circular chamber cut into the rock of the side of the acropolis directly from the *abaton*.[195] A remarkable inscription from the Lebena sanctuary in Crete records how father and son temple wardens were guided by divine snakes sent by Asclepius to springs and streams so that they could bring water to the sanctuary (see further Ch. 10).[196] Pausanias tells that the chryselephantine statue of Asclepius at Epidaurus stood directly over a well (*phrear*),[197] and that the sanctuary of Asclepius near Pellene was furnished with copious supplies of water, with the image of Asclepius standing beside the largest of the springs.[198] At Pergamum the sacred spring was located prominently at the centre of the sanctuary's court. Aelius Artistides penned a lengthy encomium to it, 'On the Well in the Asclepieion', as well as a panegyric, 'On the Water in Pergamum'.[199] As we have seen, the site at which Amphiaraus rose up at Oropus became his shrine's sacred spring, whilst the spring of Hercyna became Trophonius' consort at Lebadeia.

Fifthly, biting snakes were sometimes used in archaic art to express a pain experienced. A black-figure vase of *c.*570–560 BC shows Odysseus and his men driving the fired stake into the eye of the Cyclops. Over the men's heads there stretches, in parallel with their stake, a sinuous serpent that bites the Cyclops in the forehead just above the eye. A black-figure vase of *c.*565–550 BC shows Atlas struggling to keep heaven—in the form of a great Sisyphean rock decorated with stars—on his shoulder with one hand whilst with the other he clutches at the pain in his lower back; a winding, rampant serpent strikes at the same spot.[200] If a

[191] Festus *De verborum significatu* 67 M, 110 M. Schol. Aristophanes *Wealth* 733 seems to grope towards the same notion. See Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 228.

[192] Horace *Satires* 1. 3. 26–7; cf. Bodson 1978: 87, 1981: 68.

[193] Vitruvius *On Architecture* 1. 2. 7.

[194] Festus *De verborum significatu* 110 M. See Holtzmann 1984: 865, LiDonnici 1995: 8–9, 13.

[195] See plans at Schnalke and Selheim 1990: 18, Riethmüller 2005: i. 252–3. In Amphiaraus' shrine at Oropus the spring stood adjacently to the temple and its altar: see plan at Schnalke and Selheim 1990: 25.

[196] *Inscriptiones Creticae* i. xvii no. 21 = *SGDI* 5088 = R. Herzog 1931: 53 (WLeb 4) = T791 Edelstein.

[197] Pausanias 5. 11. 11. [198] Pausanias 7. 27. 11.

[199] See plan at Schnalke and Selheim 1990: 23; Aelius Aristides *Orations* 39, 53.

[200] *LIMC* Atlas 1; cf. Grabow 1998: 97–100, with pls. 14–15, figs. 68–9. Cf. *LIMC* Sisyphos i 27 (Etruscan).

snakebite could be deployed as emblematic of pain in general (and what could be better chosen to do so?), then a snake could also be emblematic of the fight against pain in general, on the fighting-fire-with-fire principle. In a conceit that unifies the serpent's toxic and healing qualities, Apollodorus tells that Asclepius had from Athene the blood that flowed from the veins of the dying Gorgon. That from the left side was destructive of men, that from the right preserved them, and it was this that he used to raise the dead.[201] Such ideas found practical expression in medicine. Snake flesh was considered an antidote against snake venom (i.e. to constitute a 'theriac') and against poison in general. Adder flesh was included by Andromachus in the revised version of the *antidotum Mithridaticum* he devised for Nero.[202] Pliny was able to assert, beyond this, that the snake's body offered a versatile range of healing preparations, which was why it was sacred to Asclepius.[203] Galen discusses cures effected by viper flesh at length, and notes one of the Pergamene Asclepius' incubation cures in which a rich man was told to drink and anoint himself with a drug made from vipers.[204] Once again we find serpents in symmetrical battles (cf. Ch. 6).[205]

Sixthly, the Greeks had aetiological tales to explain the serpent's association with healing. One is uninformatively hinted at by Nicander: Paeon (Asclepius), he tells, once reared a *drakōn*, seemingly an archetypal one, in the vale of Pelethronium on Pelion.[206] More intriguingly, Asclepius was credited with the reanimation of the Cretan Glaucus from at least the time of the fifth-century BC Amelesagoras. According to the full account found in Hyginus, Asclepius was confined with the dead Glaucus in his tomb by his father Minos and compelled to heal him. A snake crawled in and up his staff, and Asclepius killed it, beating it repeatedly with the staff. Then a second snake entered, carrying a herb in its mouth, which it laid on the dead snake, whereupon it was restored to life and both fled the tomb.[207] We might at first feel that this tale, intriguing though it is, has little explanatory power for Asclepius' association with serpents. For one thing, it is an alternative to the almost identical tale of Polyidus' revivification of the same Glaucus after he had fallen in a pot of honey, which was being told as early as

[201] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 10. 3.

[202] Galen *De antidotis* 1. 6; cf. Pliny *Natural History* 29. 24; cf. Schouten 1967: 107–16.

[203] Pliny *Natural History* 29. 72. Cf. also (e.g.) 30. 85 (the fabulous amphisbaena worn as an amulet against disease), 30. 91 (the magi avert epilepsy with a *draco*-tale amulet), 30. 106 (snake slough cures erysipelas), 30. 129 (a snake-slough amulet eases childbirth). In the European folk-tale tradition, the blood of a dragon's heart is often held to function as an exceptional remedy: no. 305 ATU.

[204] Galen *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus libri xi* at xi–xii pp. 311–23, esp. 315, Kühn. Modern Greek folk-tales have tuberculosis patients being cured by drinking the white vomit of a snake that has drunk an excess of milk: Blum and Blum 1970 nos. 15–16.

[205] Some comparanda: in India the Nagas' (cobra-kings') actual venom was believed to have curative properties, especially against other forms of poison, and especially that of plants (see Vogel 1926: 17–18), whilst for the Jews Moses fought snakebites with a brass snake-effigy on a pole (Numbers 21: 4).

[206] Nicander *Theriaca* 438–40, with schol. (TT697–8); cf. Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 228.

[207] Amelesagoras *FGrH* 330 F3 *apud* Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 10. 3 and schol. Euripides *Alcestis* 1. Hyginus *Astronomica* 2. 14; cf. *Fabulae* 49. 1. Cf. also Ovid *Fasti* 6. 749–54, Propertius 2. 1. 61 (*Cressis herbis*), schol. Pindar *Pythian* 3. 96). Eusebius *Praeparatio Evangelica* 3. 11. 26 explains that the snake itself is medical expert, knowing both a drug for returning to life and another for keen sight. See Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 228.

Euripides' tragedy *Polyidus*.[208] For another, its motifs can be paralleled from elsewhere in Graeco-Roman culture. The snake that brings a healing herb in its mouth and demonstrates its power is found in the Clitarchan tale of the dream at Harmatelia that allowed Alexander to cure Ptolemy as he ailed from the wound of an arrow tipped with snake venom.[209] The laying-on of herbs to reanimate is found in Apuleius' tale of the Egyptian priest Zatchlas' reanimation of Thelyphron.[210] But its explanatory power becomes much greater when we consider that the tale belongs to a folk-tale type with almost universal coverage, 'The Three Snake-Leaves' (no. 612 ATU), in which a doting husband entombed with his dead wife observes a snake reanimate its dead mate with three leaves and so does the same for his wife (who then proceeds, alas, to kill him in league with her lover).[211] The association between serpents and healing probably had deep folkloric roots in Greek culture.

Seventhly, and relatedly, it remains possible, though undemonstrable, that the practice of asking actual snakes to lick the sick had ancient roots in Greek folk medicine, and that the serpent gods of healing functioned as divine hypostases of these actual snakes, to which we now turn.

[208] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 3. 3. 1–2, Hyginus *Fabulae* 136; cf. Euripides *Polyidus* FF634–45a *TrGF*. The tale gave rise to the proverb 'Glaucus drank honey and rose again,' Apostolius 5. 48 *CPG*; cf. Ogden 2001: 59.

[209] Diodorus 17. 103. 4–8, Curtius 9. 8. 22; see also Cicero *On Divination* 2. 135. Strabo C723 has a rationalized version of the tale, whilst the accounts of Justin 12. 10. 2–3 and Orosius 3. 19. 11 elide the identity of the revealing agent.

[210] Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 2. 21–30, esp. 28.

[211] The tale-type exposes the archaeology of Apuleius' Thelyphron narrative, which has redistributed its motifs, for it too includes a cheating wife, with her lover, killing her husband, the sealing of a living person in a chamber with a dead one, and that chamber's penetration by a creature. The creature in this case is a weasel, but its hypnotic, sleep-casting stare might be that of a *drakōn*. Cf. ATU 672D, in which a farmer falls into a pit in which there are serpents. He sees one licking a white stone. He imitates it and remains alive without food and drink. Eventually he is rescued from the pit by another serpent, a large one. Note too the traditional aetiology of the Nagapanchami festival in Bombay (Vogel 1926: 277–8), in which a Nagina (female Naga), taking pity on a Brahmin's daughter, tells her how to restore to life the family that she herself, the snake, has just killed, by sprinkling nectar on them (cf. Glaucus' honey).

10

A Day in the Life of a Sacred Snake

Did the Greeks and Romans keep or deploy actual snakes in the sanctuaries of their serpent-related gods? The evidence bearing on the question is admittedly confusing, and can prompt one to wonder whether the sanctuary snakes of ancient Greece belonged in their entirety to the realm of dreams and fantasy. However, when considered properly, the evidence for the presence of snakes in some sanctuaries at least is compelling, and the comparative evidence of modern religious cultures renders it easy to accept. A certain degree of confusion can be removed if we accept that, alongside the culture of maintaining numbers of actual snakes openly in some sanctuaries, there was a parallel culture in other sanctuaries of supposedly maintaining, in a similar fashion, a (usually) individual serpent that was never (normally) seen. We shall look at the latter phenomenon first, before turning, secondly, to the evidence for more tangible snakes in ancient sanctuaries. Thirdly, we will ask a number of questions about the modes of their maintenance and deployment. Fourthly, we will ask which varieties of snake, as recognized by modern herpetology, may have been so kept or deployed: the Four-lined snake will be of particular interest. And finally we will look briefly at some comparative material.

THE GREAT UNSEEN AND THE *OIKOUROS OPHIS*

The notion of a (usually) individual snake maintained in a sanctuary but never (normally) seen is most clearly expressed by Aelian. He tells us of a sacred *drakōn* kept in a tower in Metelis in Egypt. Every day the serpent's attendants leave a bowl of barley, milk, and honey on a table for it, and withdraw behind closed doors to allow it to eat, never setting eyes upon it. Curiosity once got the better of one of its servants. He opened the doors to see it, whereupon the serpent became angry and withdrew, but inflicted madness, dumbness, and eventually death upon the man.[1] Does the tale report a historical episode and demonstrate that there was indeed an

[1] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 17; cf. 11. 32 where the ghost of a sacred asp harries a farmer who has accidentally chopped it in half with his spade (the farmer is delivered by Sarapis) and Lucian *Philopseudes* 20, where the animated statue of Pellichus punishes a thief with a madness that similarly culminates in death.

actual snake at the heart of the cult? Or does it rather serve as a dynamic warning: See what will happen to you if you try to look for the snake (that isn't actually there)! The latter, surely. We may compare Aelian's account, derived from Phylarchus, of Egyptian, i.e. Alexandrian, householders feeding their domestic Agathoi Daimones snakes, quoted in Ch. 8. This seems to imply, on close reading, that the householders never encounter their guest-friend snakes, not only, as is explicitly stated, when they rise in the night, whereupon the snakes withdraw before the clicking of the householders' fingers, but at any time at all. The snakes seem to be summoned at the point at which the householders, having finished their meal, retire to bed, and they are imagined to do their feeding over the course of the night whilst the householders are safely out of the way. These Agathoi Daimones snakes are evidently plural, though it may be held that each household just had an individual one to itself.[2]

A broadly similar model to the Metelis arrangement also underlies Aelian's more verifiable account of the serpent of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium (discussed in Ch. 5). Aelian specifies that the snake's hole is situated within a sacred grove, and that virgin girls carry barley cakes to it whilst blindfolded, guided by the serpent's breath. The snake refuses to touch the food brought by the unchaste girls, and it is crumbled and carried out of the grove by cleansing ants; the unchaste girls are duly punished (cf. the legitimacy- or bloodline-testing snakes of the Psylli). The notion that the girls should be unable to see as they carry the food to the serpent is already implicit in Propertius' rather earlier account of the same rite: he describes the descent that they must make to the serpent as being 'blind' and urges them to be careful of their journey in apostrophe. If they prove to have kept themselves chaste, the year will be fertile. The Late-Republican coins of Fabatus that illustrate the girls holding out cakes in the cradle-like folds of their dresses for the rampant serpent to eat appear to show them wearing heavy veils before their faces, which might be supposed to be opaque.[3]

Pausanias' account of the cult of the Sosipolis *drakōn* in Elea also seems to conform to this pattern (Ch. 5 again). The *drakōn* shares a common temple with Eileithyia. The public outer sanctum was hers, but the private inner sanctum was his. Only his priestess, an old woman that kept chaste, was permitted to enter, and she had to wear a white veil wrapped over her head and face, Pausanias is careful to specify, to take in his bathing water and honey-barley cakes.[4]

This model also seems to fit Athens' famous but problematic *oikouros ophis* (an *oikouros drakōn* for Eustathius), the snake that supposedly guarded a temple on

[2] Phylarchus *FGrH* 81 F27 = Aelian *Nature of Animals* 17. 5.

[3] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 16; Propertius 4. 8. 2–14; see Ch. 5 for the coins, and Ch. 11 for an interesting Christian development of the theme of the blindfolded girl (*De promissionibus*, *PL* 51, p. 835). Aelian *Nature of Animals* 16. 39 may provide us with a further refraction of the phenomenon of an individual great unseen *drakōn*. He tells how, purportedly in the historical era, a great *drakōn* lived in the woods beside Mt. Pelinnaeon on Chios. Its presence was revealed by its hiss, but local farmers and herdsmen, in terror, refused ever to look upon it. Its true size was eventually revealed, however, when it was destroyed in an accidental forest fire and its massive bones were left exposed for inspection. Mayor 2000: 136–7 historicizes this tale, and finds it to offer evidence for the ancient discovery of the bones of a prehistoric behemoth.

[4] Pausanias 6. 20. 2–6.

the Athenian acropolis, probably the Erectheum, in its old and new forms.[5] The first and key text is that of Herodotus:

> They [the Athenians] made haste to put these [sc. households] out of harm's way both because they wished to comply with the oracle[6] and indeed not least because of the following reason. The Athenians say that a large snake (*ophis*) dwells as a guardian of the Acropolis in the shrine. This they say, and indeed they maintain the practice of laying out monthly offerings for it on the basis of its existence. These monthly offerings consist of a honey cake. This honey cake hitherto was ever devoured, but at that point it was untouched. When the priestess had indicated this, the Athenians abandoned their city even more keenly, on the basis that the goddess [i.e. Athene Polias] too had left the Acropolis.[7] When they had got everything out, they sailed to the fleet. (Herodotus 8. 41)

For all the speculation about whether the *oikouros ophis* was identified with Ericthonius (see Ch. 7) this passage suggests that it was identified rather with Athene herself.[8]

Again we have a single snake fed, apparently, by a priestess, which prophesies an unwelcome future when it refuses food. Herodotus' sceptical mode of expression seems to imply either that the snake is never seen, at least by the public, or indeed that it does not exist.[9] The notion that the snake is unseen may draw support from our second source for the *oikouros ophis*, Aristophanes *Lysistrata* of 411 BC: here a woman guarding the acropolis complains that she cannot sleep after having seen the *oikouros ophis*; one joke here seems to depend upon the similarity between snake and phallus for the woman in her sex-starved condition (cf. Ch. 10); but another may depend upon her claim to have seen a creature the audience knew could never be seen.[10]

[5] Discussion at Mitropoulou 1977: 49–50, Bodson 1978: 78–9, 1988–95, Pailler 1997: 535–49, Gourmelen 2004: 342–8. Hesychius and Photius *Lexicon* s.v. *οἰκουρὸν ὄφιν* and Eustathius on Homer *Odyssey* 1. 357 make it the guardian snake or *drakōn* 'of Polias', whose shrine was located in the Erectheum. Perhaps schol. Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 759, *τὸν ἱερὸν δράκοντα τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς, τὸν φύλακα τοῦ ναοῦ*, could also bear this interpretation.

[6] Given at Herodotus 7. 140. 2, 141. 4.

[7] Compare the fantasies about Agathos Daimon's abandonment of a doomed Alexandria discussed in Ch. 8. For further examples of the abandonment of doomed cities by their gods, see Aeschylus *Seven* 304–5, Euripides *Troades* 25, Virgil *Aeneid* 2. 351, Horace *Odes* 2. 1. 25, Tacitus *Histories* 5. 13, *Alexander Romance* 1. 3 (A); cf. How and Wells 1912 ad loc.

[8] Cf. Mitropoulou 1977: 50.

[9] Cf. How and Wells 1912 ad loc. Sourvinou-Inwood 2011: 54: 'since that snake was not real . . .'; but alas her claim is not argued further. An account of the same episode is found, with a Themistoclean twist, at Plutarch *Themistocles* 10 (cf. Ch. 7): 'Themistocles took as a sign the business about the *drakōn*, which seems to have disappeared from the/its precinct (*sēkos*) in those days. Finding that the choice offerings (*aparchai*) made to it on a daily basis were untouched, the priests announced this to the many.' Nothing Plutarch says bears upon the question of whether the snake is seen or not, but he gives no indication that it may not have existed, whilst offering some potentially interesting variant details about the snake and its maintenance. However, we cannot be sure that his words are ultimately based upon anything other than variation of Herodotus'. On the relationship between Herodotus and Plutarch here, see Bodson 1978: 78–9, Marr 1998 ad loc. Photius s.v. *οἰκουρὸν ὄφιν* reads as follows: *τὸν τῆς Ἰολαΐδος φύλακα· καὶ Ἡρόδοτος. Φύλαρχος δὲ αὐτοῦ δύο.* The text seems to be corrupt and it remains unclear what claim is being attributed to Phylarchus (*FGrH* 81 F72). On the basis that Phylarchus was claiming that there were (at some point?) two *oikouroi opheis*, Gourmelen hypothesizes a tradition contaminated by that of Ericthonius' serpent pair.

[10] Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 758–9: *ἐξ οὗ τὸν ὄφιν εἶδον τὸν οἰκουρόν ποτε.*

How long did the *oikouros ophis* maintain its place on the Acropolis, actual or virtual? In the third century AD Philostratus speaks of, for what it is worth, 'the *drakōn* of Athene which still now lives on the Acropolis', though what the 'now' of this Second Sophistic text might be remains unclear.[11] One would like to know the antiquity of the modern Greek folk belief that a giant guardian snake of 15–20 feet in length has lived amongst the stones of the Propylaea for centuries.[12]

The rites of the Classical Athenian Thesmophoria may have embraced plural unseen *drakontes*. As we saw in Chapter 5, the snakes that inhabited Demeter's *megara* withdrew before the rattling sound made by the 'bilgers' as they entered to retrieve the remains of the piglets thrown in (cf. the Agathoi Daimones snakes withdrawing before the householders' clicking fingers).[13]

It is not inconceivable that there were actual serpents at the hearts of (some of) these cults, for all Herodotus' hesitancy, and for all the questions begged about the practicalities of the husbandry of a serpent one may never look upon. But the important thing is to recognize that 'the unseen *drakōn*' was a distinctive cult type, whether or not it deployed an actual snake, and not to permit the necessarily ambivalent evidence for it to compromise the evidence for the public maintenance of actual snakes in Asclepian and related sanctuaries.[14] As we have seen (Chs. 4, 6) *drakontes* tended to attract vision-related lore: it is an intriguing notion that the ever-seeing should also be the never-seen.

EVIDENCE FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF SACRED SNAKES IN ASCLEPIAN AND RELATED SANCTUARIES

Asclepieion at Epidaurus

Our richest evidence bears upon the great Asclepieion at Epidaurus, even though we have to wait until Pausanias for more-or-less explicit literary testimony to the presence of actual snakes in the sanctuary. Pausanias has been talking about the Epidaurian Asclepius sanctuary, and most immediately the temple of Apollo Maleatas on the hill above it:

> The *drakontes*, both the rest of them and the kind inclining towards a more yellow (*xanthoteron*) colour, are held to be sacred to Asclepius, and with men they are tame (*hēmeroi*). The land of the Epidaurians alone supports them. I find the same thing to have come about in other lands too. Libya alone supports land crocodiles, not shorter than two cubits. From India alone are brought the birds called parrots, amongst other animals. The Epidaurians say that the big snakes that extend to more than thirty cubits, such as occur amongst the Indians and in Libya are another kind of animal (*genos*) and not *drakontes*.
>
> (Pausanias 2. 28. 1)[15]

[11] Philostratus *Imagines* 2. 17. 6.

[12] Blum and Blum 1970: 127 (18).

[13] Schol. Lucian *Dialogues of the Courtesans* 2.

[14] R. Herzog 1907: 207 believed that if Asclepian sanctuaries ever kept sacred snakes, these were nonetheless never visible to their publics, except in dreams.

[15] Cf. Bodson 1981: 71–2, with discussion of textual issues.

As it stands the text might be taken to imply that the serpents are associated particularly with Apollo Maleatas, but their introduction does seem abrupt, and it has been suspected either that the beginning of this passage is corrupt or that a sentence has dropped out.

The sanctuary's famous miracle inscriptions were set up in the later fourth century BC, but seemingly collate individual private votive narratives dedicated in the sanctuary prior to that point, perhaps over the previous century or so.[16] Some of these explicitly confine the healing role of snakes to the realm of dream and so can hardly be taken as direct evidence for the presence and deployment of actual snakes in the sanctuary. Thus Cleimenes of Argos, in a fragmentary entry, is reported to have been cured of a disability when he saw a night-time vision (*opsis*) of a snake coiling around his body.[17] Agameda of Cos incubated for children, saw a vision of a snake lying over her womb, and subsequently gave birth to five.[18] Nicasibula of Messene incubated for the same reason and saw a vision of Asclepius who brought his serpent with him. She had sex with it and produced two boys within a year (see Ch. 9).[19] But other entries seem to speak about the action of serpents in the real world. One tells how a dumb girl was frightened by the sight of a serpent crawling away from one of the trees in the 'grove' as she entered the sanctuary, shouted for her mother, and thereafter regained the power of speech.[20] Two further entries seem actually to contrast interactions with snakes with visions. First, the entry recording the introduction of Asclepius' cult to the city of Halieis tells how Thersander first performed incubation in the Epidaurian sanctuary, though failed to see a vision (*opsis*), before discovering that a serpent of the sanctuary (*drakōn, ophis*) had travelled home with him wrapped around the axle of his cart. This narrative does seem very concrete, and the phrase 'a serpent of the sanctuary' seems unprovocatively matter of fact.[21] Secondly, we are told of an unnamed man whose toe was cured by a serpent (*drakōn*):

> A man had his toe cured by a snake (*ophis*). This man was in a bad way, with a nasty ulcer on his toe. During the day he was carried out by the attendants and seated on a bench. Sleep took hold of him, and during this sleep a serpent (*drakōn*) came out of the *abaton* and cured his toe with its tongue (*tai glōssai*), and after doing this went back into the *abaton*. When he woke from his sleep and was well, he said he had seen a vision (*opsis*), and that he had seen a young man of beautiful form sprinkle a drug over his toe. (*EMI* (A) 17)

Here the encounter with the beautiful young man is emphatically ascribed to the dream world, whilst the improbable action of the snake is, by contrast, located in the real world. The beautiful young man (*neaniskos*), we can hardly doubt, is Asclepius himself. Although more familiar in his senior, bearded form, the god

[16] For editions of and commentaries upon the text of the inscriptions, see R. Herzog 1931, LiDonnici 1995; for translations of the inscriptions into English, Edelstein and Edelstein 1945 no. 423, LiDonnici 1995. For the dating of the inscriptions: LiDonnici 1995: 17, 76–82. For the notion that the inscriptions collate previous individual private votive narratives, see LiDonnici 1995: 40, 43–5, 50–1, who speculates that some of them may have originated on wooden plaques illustrated with the animals in question (snake, dog, goose), or even upon votive models of the animals.

[17] *EMI* (B) 37. [18] *EMI* (B) 39.

[19] *EMI* (B) 42. [20] *EMI* (C) 44.

[21] *EMI* (B) 33: *δράκων δέ τις τῶν ἱαρῶν*. Riethmüller 2005: i. 230–40 sees a genuine role for actual sanctuary snakes in the Epidaurian 'Translationsritus' or 'Übertragungsritus.'

does appear as a beardless young man already in the art of, probably, the fourth century BC, and certainly that of the third century BC.[22] The strictly coordinated parallelism between the dream action of the young Asclepius and the supposedly real-world-action of the serpent speaks for a strong identification between the sanctuary serpent and the god. We shall come to similar conclusions when we consider the implications of the Archinus relief for the conceptualization of Amphiaraus.

But we should take cautionary note of a further fragmentary entry, which warns us both that not all dream-world actions may be declared as such, and that one did not need to be one of Asclepius' established sanctuary snakes for the god to work through one. This entry tells how Melissa had a tumour cured by a viper (*echis*). It seems that the viper had been sleeping amidst the baggage she brought with her to the sanctuary on her mule cart and somehow got into her bed when it was unloaded by the slaves. It opened the tumour on her hand for her, and thereafter she became well. This snake was evidently not a hallowed denizen of the shrine, but an (initially) common snake brought into it from outside. Nor would we have expected the established sanctuary snakes to include vipers. Although the entry does not speak of dreams and works hard to justify the events narrated in terms of real-world action, one is left wondering whether the key act of the biting did not after all take place in a dream given both its improbability and the fact that it seems to have happened to Melissa whilst she was in bed.[23]

Asclepieion at Athens

In Aristophanes' *Wealth* of 388 BC, the slave Carion tells how Wealth personified is cured of his blindness by incubating in the Athenian Asclepieion. Carion, incubating beside him, notices that an old-lady incubator is keeping a pot of porridge beside her, and, inspired by the shrine's pilfering priest, decides to help himself to it. As he does so, he accidentally rouses her, and she puts out her hand to the pot, so he hisses like a *pareias* snake and bites her hand, which she then quickly retracts, wrapping herself up in her blanket and farting with fear. Later, Asclepius himself emerges from his temple and comes to Wealth, summoning a pair of serpents after him to help him treat him. Of this more anon, but for all its disinclination to distinguish between the waking world and the dream world, this narrative seems to presume that one would find actual serpents in the Athenian Asclepieion.[24]

[22] *LIMC* Asklepios 20 (Tegean relief, 4th or 3rd cent. BC); cf. 40 (coin of Tricca, *c.*400–344 BC, but not certainly representing Asclepius). For the manifestation of a beautiful young man to a sick man in a dreamlike state, see also Lucian *Philopseudes* 25.

[23] *EMI* (C) 45; cf. also *EMI* (C) 58, with a mention of a *drakōn*, but too fragmentary to be useful.

[24] Aristophanes *Wealth* 633–747, esp. 687–95, 727–41. Roos 1960 offers a detailed discussion of this passage. Parker 1996: 181 wondered whether the Asclepieion in question was the one in the Piraeus rather than the one on the Acropolis, on the basis of the reference to 'sea' at 656–8, but Riethmüller 2005: ii. 25 remains confident in the Acropolis.

Asclepieion on Cos

The documentation of the presence of actual snakes in the Coan Asclepieion depends upon the interpretation of one of the last lines of Herodas' fourth *Mimiamb*. This follows the visit of two ladies and their maids to an Asclepieion, probably the Coan one, since the second *Mimiamb* is located on the island, and it bequeaths us perhaps our best single insight into the daily life of any ancient Greek temple.[25] At the end of the poem Cynno tells her maid Coccale to cut a leg from the bird they have sacrificed and give it as payment or tip to the genial temple-warden with whom they have been speaking. She then tells her: 'Put the liquid meal (*pelanos*) into the serpent's (*drakōn*) hole (*trōglē*),[26] in holy fashion.'[27] The natural implication of this is that one or more actual snakes live in a hole somewhere in the sanctuary, and that the snake or snakes are given a bit of sacred food there. But the interpretation that has become the most conventional since Herzog advanced it in 1907 and Nilsson reformulated it in 1947 is that Cynno is referring to the dropping of a coin into an offertory box decorated with the image of a serpent in a terminology that preserves a discontinued practice.[28] The case for reading the reference as primarily to an offertory is solid. The offertory (*thēsauros*) decorated with a serpent was a common phenomenon in the shrines of anguiform gods, as we have seen (Ch. 4), and as it happens an offertory in the form of a chest made of marble slabs was discovered, by Herzog himself, sunk into the floor inside temple B in the Coan Asclepieion.[29] And the term *pelanos* was indeed sometimes transferred from the meal-paste offering it literally denoted to a small coin given in a sacred context.[30] But what of Herzog's inference that the usage preserves a lost practice? If this were correct, Herodas would still be able to offer us some evidence, admittedly indirect, for the presence of snakes in this or other sanctuaries at an earlier stage. However, on the one hand the inference does seem naively historicizing and, on the other, the foundation of the Coan Asclepieion, the earliest buildings of which derive from the early third century BC, can hardly

[25] Further considerations, for and against the Coan setting, at Zanker 2009: 106. Daily life: Dignas 2007.

[26] Typically a mouse-hole (LSJ).

[27] Herodas *Mimiambs* 4. 90–1 (T482 Edelstein).

[28] Thus R. Herzog 1907, Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 104, Nilsson 1947: 304–5, Amandry 1950: 86–103, Cunningham 1971 ad loc., and at Rusten, Cunningham, and Knox 1993: 265, Sineux 2004: 34 and 2007: 152 n. 128 (who seems, mistakenly, to take *trōglē* to refer to the serpents jaws—'gueule'—and suppose that the mouth of a serpent model or image served as the coin-slot for the offertory box); Dignas 2007: 169, Zanker 2009: 106, 119–21. But the line is taken at face value by Headlam and Knox 1922 ad loc. and Mastromarco 1984: 45.

[29] See R. Herzog 1907: 207–19 and Nilsson 1947: 304. The chest's lid consists of a heavy slab (2.15 × 1.35 m) with a hole for coins in the centre. So far as I can ascertain, no image of a snake is known to have been associated with it. A Coan decree of *c.*260–250 BC prescribes for the building of a *thesauros*, and for the careful and strictly supervised process of its opening twice a year: R. Herzog 1907: 208–9, 1928: 37 no. 14 and Nilsson 1947: 304–5. The ground-plan of the temple, offertory box and all, is reproduced at Riethmüller 2005: i. 211 and Zanker 2009: 121 fig. 2.

[30] *Suda* s.v. *πέλανος*: 'the obol given as pay to a diviner'; cf. Hesychius s.v. *πέλανον*. Such a usage seems to underlie the term's deployment in a Delphic inscription of the 5th or 4th century BC: R. Herzog 1907: 210 = Schwyzer 1923 no. 322. Of particular relevance here is an Argive inscription of the 3rd century BC, which refers to the preparation of 'a closed *thesauros* for *pelanoi*': Schwyzer 1923 no. 89.12. R. Herzog 1907: 209–12 has further examples.

have preceded Herodas' *Mimiamb*, datable to 280–265 BC, by more than a few years, so there can have been little time for any practice initiated at Cos at any rate to fall obsolete and to be discontinued.[31] Unfortunately, then, Herodas cannot be pressed to prove the presence of actual snakes in the Coan sanctuary either in his own day or before.

Asclepieion at Lebena (Crete)

Several fragments survive from a set of miracle inscriptions from the stoa (presumably the *abaton*, the incubation dormitory) of Asclepius' Lebena sanctuary. These date from the second or first century BC, are broadly comparable to those from Epidaurus, and some of them mention snakes.[32] We have already considered the one seemingly recording the cult-transfer effected by a snake that sat on a stern-cable (Ch. 9). Some fragments refer to are illustrated with *drakontes*.[33] But only one text can help us with the question of actual snakes in the Lebena sanctuary, the Sosus inscription already mentioned in Chapter 4:

> Asclepius, first to my father Sosus you showed with good omens the way to bring water to your temple, manifesting yourself in his sleep, whilst in the waking world sending (*penpsas*) him a divine snake (*theion ophin*), a great wonder to all mortals, to guide the way. You appeared to [sc. my father] the son of Aristonymus, when, god-fearing in all things, he went as temple-warden to the temple at your behest. Now again you manifested yourself to Soarchus, his most glorious son. In just the same way you guided the holy temple-warden forty-seven years later so that he might fill the failing springs of his father from a stream. Paean, may these things please you, and may you exalt his house and his great city of Gortyn forever.
>
> (*Inscriptiones Creticae* i. xvii no. 21 [= *SGDI* 5088 = Herzog 1931: 53 (WLeb 4) = T791 Edelstein])

Presumably Sosus and Sosarchus were led by their snakes to the concealed sources from the sanctuary over which they presided, and this may imply that they were sanctuary snakes. But how strongly are we to read *penpsas* ('sending')? Does it imply that the guiding snakes were exceptional, and not themselves regular denizens of the sanctuary?

Asclepieion at Titane

In speaking of the Asclepieion at Titane near Sicyon, Pausanias observes, in the course of general description of the sanctuary, that: 'They [sc. people in general or the temple wardens?] refuse to go inside (*esienai*) to the sacred serpents (*tous drakontes . . . tous hierous*) because of fear. They put food (*trophē*) down for them before the entrance (*esodou*) and do not involve themselves to any further degree.'

[31] Foundation of the Asclepieion: Riethmüller 2005: i. 211. Date of *Mimiamb* 4: Rusten, Cunningham, and Knox 1993: 202.

[32] For the texts see *IC* i. xvii. Discussion at R. Herzog 1931: 51–4, Guarducci 1934, LiDonnici 1995: 46–9.

[33] *Inscriptiones Creticae* i. xvii nos. 11a (mentioning a *drakōn*) and no. 37 (illustrated with a pair of snakes).

This elliptical assertion raises many questions, and the general response of fear to Asclepian snakes is surprising. We may be tempted to think of a never-seen snake community. However, on balance Pausanias does appear to endorse the snakes' existence.[34]

Asclepieion at Alexandria

Aelian tells us that in the age of Philadelphus two *drakontes* were brought from Ethiopia to Alexandria, of 14 and 13 cubits, and then that in the age of Euergetes three more were brought, of 9, 7, and 6 cubits. They were kept with all care in the Alexandrian Asclepieion.[35] Here we have seemingly clear evidence for actual serpents being kept in an Asclepieion, whatever we think of the description of their size. What is not clear is whether they were accommodated alongside an existing collection of sacred snakes or enjoyed exclusive quarters.

Temple of Asclepius-Eshmun at Nora (Capo di Pula) in Sardinia

In 1956 Pesce published two remarkable terracotta statuettes from the temple of Asclepius-Eshmun at Nora (Capo di Pula) in Sardinia. They ostensibly depict two youths, sleeping on their backs, with long serpents winding around them, ankle to neck: incubating boys, attended by snakes in their sleep, like Archinus at Oropus? No doubt many other interpretations are possible.[36]

The New Asclepius at Abonouteichos: Glycon

Lucian's *Alexander* leaves us with some striking vignettes of the mid second-century AD 'false prophet' Alexander of Abonouteichos manipulating his real, large, and tame snake, winding it around his body and giving it a false, semi-humanoid puppet-head, to create his prophetic, talking New Asclepius, Glycon. Clearly this was no ordinary sanctuary serpent, though it is gratifying to have such a strong (if problematic) assertion of the presence of an actual serpent at the heart of an Asclepian cult. Sadly, despite the striking vignettes, we can press from the essay nothing of the circumstances in which the Glycon snake was kept. We are told only retrospectively, as Alexander produced it before an audience for the first time, that he had reared it at home.[37] Lucian's ostensible claim that Alexander had acquired the snake from Pella, where large, tamed snakes were commonly kept by

[34] Pausanias 2. 11. 8.

[35] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 16. 39. Diodorus 3. 36–7 tells in great detail how in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus ambitious hunters contrived to capture a single snake supposedly of 30 cubits in length, and clearly characterized as a constrictor. They presented it to Ptolemy, who rewarded them for it, kept it, and tamed it. Diodorus' account is derivative of the second-century BC Agatharchides of Cnidus' *On the Red Sea*, Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 250: see the parallel texts at Müller 1855–82: i. 162–4. Discussion at Bodson 1980, 2003.

[36] Pesce 1956–7; cf. Riethmüller 2005: ii. 442.

[37] Lucian *Alexander* 12 (cf. 7). The vignettes: 13–18, 26. 'New Asclepius': 43.

the women there, à la Olympias, may not be taken at face value: the motif is primarily conditioned by Lucian's project in the *Alexander* to construct an elaborate set of comparisons and contrasts between his false prophet and his namesake Alexander the Great.[38]

Akin to Asclepius: 1. Amphiaraus at Oropus

The evidence for actual snakes in the Oropan sanctuary of Amphiaraus depends upon a single fragment of Aristophanes' *Amphiaraus* of 414 BC perserved by Pollux. The play probably centred around an incubation, which may have been for impotence.[39] Pollux tells us that baskets (*kistai*) had been used by druggists (*pharmakopōloi*) in antiquity, and quotes three lines of the play to justify the claim: 'And the snakes [*opheis*] that you send against [*or*: let loose upon (*epipempeis*)] people—get them sealed up in a basket and stop being a druggist.'[40] The insulting lines may have been addressed to one of Amphiaraus' priests or representatives, but they were probably addressed to the god himself, acting in the fashion of one of his minions.[41] *Epipempō* is a term particularly associated with divine action.[42] And it does appear that Amphiaraus appeared onstage as a character in the play, addressing Iaso as his daughter (and thereby virtually identifying himself with Asclepius).[43] The parallelism between snake-application and being a druggist also finds representation in the Archinus relief, one of the most important and intriguing documents of the Oropus cult, in one register of which a humanoid Amphiaraus tends to Archinus' shoulder, probably with a herbal application, in another of which a serpent licks or bites his shoulder as he lies abed.[44]

Akin to Asclepius: 2. Trophonius at Lebadeia

A two-word fragment of the comic poet Cratinus' *Trophonius, pareiai opheis*, '*pareias*-snakes' seems to tell us, in conjunction with Aristophanes' words on the Athenian Asclepieion considered above, and a passage of Aelian we shall

[38] The Glycon snake from Pella: Lucian *Alexander* 6–8, saluting Plutarch *Alexander* 2 *vel sim.* Lucian's explicit comparison between the false prophet and the king: *Alexander* 1; cf. also 17, 21. The false prophet's technique for displaying Glycon at *Alexander* 16 mimics that used to display the body of the king to his army: *Liber de Morte* 104–5; cf. also Justin 12. 15, Curtius 10. 5. 1, Plutarch *Alexander* 76, Arrian *Anabasis* 7. 26. The squabble for control of the prophet's oracle after his death is projected as 'funeral games' at *Alexander* 60 (ἐπιτάφιον . . . καὶ ἀγῶνα) on the model of the wars of the Successors: Arrian *Anabasis* 7. 26. 2, μέγαν ἐπιτάφιον ἀγῶνα. Discussion at Asirvatham 2001: 102 and Ogden 2009*b*; *pace* Mortensen 1997: 76–83 and Carney 2006: 179 n. 46.

[39] Aristophanes *Amphiaraus* F29 K-A may suggest this.

[40] Aristophanes *Amphiaraus* F28 K-A.

[41] As is assumed by Kassel and Austin ad loc.

[42] A word especially associated with the action of gods, according to LSJ s.v.

[43] Aristophanes *Amphiaraus* F21 K-A; cf. Sineux 2007: 201.

[44] It is possible that the play made much of the snake imagery appropriate to its subject. We learn also that at some point Aristophanes made a twist on the (rather winning) established proverbial saying 'more naked than slough', saying rather 'blinder than slough', *Amphiaraus* F33ab K-A.

consider shortly, that sacred snakes lived in Trophonius' Lebadeia sanctuary.[45] A range of sources tells us that consulters took cakes with them down into Trophonius' crypt, and first Aristophanes' *Clouds*, originally of 423 BC. Here Strepsiades compares his imminent entry into Socrates' school to a descent into Trophonius' cave: 'Before I enter, give me a honey-cake [*melitoutta*] in my two hands, as I fear to descend inside, just as if descending into Trophonius.'[46] Philostratus, finally, explains the rationale: consulters, he explains, descended to Trophonius 'taking honey-cakes [*melitouttai*] in their hands, appeasing foods [*meiligmata*] for the reptiles that attack/accost them as they go down.'[47] An Aristophanes scholium, already noted in Chapter 9, uniquely appears to claim that an actual snake of the shrine delivered prophecies: 'In Lebadeia there is a temple of Trophonius, where it was a snake [*ophis*] that did the prophesying. And the locals used to throw flat-cakes [*plakountes*] drenched in honey.' If the second sentence is intended to be explanatory of the first, the scholiast may have in mind, probably erroneously, a phenomenon akin to that of the *oikouros ophis* or the Juno Sospita serpent, which prophesied by refusing their cakes. Or the claim may be no more than a garbling of the notion that Trophonius himself was an anguiform deity.[48]

Apollo in Epirus

Asclepius' father Apollo too had snakes in some of his sanctuaries. We have noted that the mythical traditions attaching to Apollo Thymbraeus ostensibly associate the notion of sanctuary snakes with this god already from the middle of the sixth century BC (Ch. 3). And we have noted that Pausanias *may* make an association between the Epidaurian sanctuary snakes and the temple of Apollo Maleatas there in particular. One of the most striking accounts of sanctuary serpents of any kind is found in Aelian's description of a sanctuary of Apollo in Epirus:

> The Epirotes and anyone who happens to be visiting their country have a special sacrifice to Apollo, and for him they conduct a very large, august and splendid festival on one particular day of the year. There is a grove [*alsos*] consecrated to the god and it has a precinct wall around it, and within it are *drakontes*, and these are the *athurma* ['pets', 'playthings', 'delights', 'ornaments'] of the god. Now the priestess, a virgin woman, attends the grove alone, and brings food for the snakes. They are said by the Epirotes to be descendants of Python in Delphi. If the snakes look gently upon the priestess as she approaches and take the food readily, then people agree that they are predicting abundance and a year without sickness. But if they terrify her and do not take the appeasing foods [*meiligmata*] she extends to them, then the serpents predict the opposite of what I just said, and that is what the Epirotes anticipate will happen.
>
> (Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 2)[49]

[45] Cratinus F241 K-A. The play is undated. The distinguished Cratinus died between 423 and 421 BC, but we could have here the work of Cratinus the Younger (see K-A ad loc.). Cf. Aristophanes *Wealth* 690, Aelian *Nature of Animals* 8. 12.

[46] Aristophanes *Clouds* 506–8; we shall consider the further sources below.

[47] Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 8. 19.

[48] Schol. Aristophanes *Clouds* 508d.

[49] Cf. Harrison 1899: 222, Bodson 1978: 71, 90.

On the face of it this gives us emphatic evidence for a group of sacred serpents in the high imperial age at any rate, even if one could wish for a clearer indication of the location of the precinct within Epirus. There are, however, potential difficulties with the central vignette of the priestess feeding the serpents, as we will see. We note here a range of themes in common with Libanius' subsequent tale of Seleucus' foundation of the santuary of Apollo at Antioch's Daphne: there too we have a sacred snake inhabiting a grove (*alsos*) and bestowing a good omen with a mild look (Ch. 8).[50]

But, interestingly, Apollo seems to have taken a quite different attitude towards the presence of snakes in his sanctuary at Clarus:

> It is in the land of Clarus above all that the Clarians and the entire Greek race worship the son of Zeus and Leto [sc. Apollo]. Therefore, its territory is untrodden by poisonous beasts and is anathema to them, both because of the will of the god and because in any case the beasts are terrified of him since he knows how to save lives and because he is the father of Asclepius the saviour and the enemy of diseases. Nicander is my witness. He says: 'No viper [*echis*] or hateful spiders or deep-striking scorpion lives in the groves of Clarus, since Apollo covered its deep glen in ash trees and rid its grassy floor of biting beasts.'[51]
>
> (Aelian *Nature of Animals* 10. 49, incorporating Nicander F31 Gow and Scholfield)

The term 'viper' seems to be deployed metonymically here, the broader context suggesting that all snakes alike were banished from Clarus. The folk concept of 'Irish earth' lurks, the notion that certain kinds of soil were poisonous to serpents and curative of snakebites, famously associated with that of Ireland after the work of St Patrick, but already well established in antiquity (as we have seen in Ch. 8).

Asclepieion at Rome

Moving on to Roman and Italian cults, the case for actual snakes in the Roman Asclepieion depends principally upon the interpretation of Festus:

> A temple to Asclepius was built on the [sc. Tiber] island because it is with water that the sick are helped above all by doctors. And they said that a *draco* had a similarly protective function[52] because it is the most vigilant/wakeful of animals. This is why it is best suited to watching over the health of a sick person. Dogs are employed in his temple because the god was nurtured by the teats of a dog. (Festus p. 110 M)

Riethmüller reads Festus' words to assert that actual sacred snakes were deployed in the Asclepieion. But his use of the singular *draco* and of (unintroduced) reported statement may well stand in contrast to his following direct statement that dogs (plural) are used in it. Accordingly *draco* may refer to the idealized serpent-attribute and imagery of Asclepius rather than to any actual snakes.[53] It is difficult to know what to make too of Pliny's assertion that 'the Aesculapian snake [*anguis Aesculapius*] was brought [*advectus*] to Rome from Epidaurus and is kept

[50] Libanius *Orations* 11. 95–8.

[51] R. Herzog 1931: 86.

[52] However, Edelstein and Edelstein 1945 no. 691 translate this phrase rather, 'The serpent is the guard of this temple because . . .'

[53] Riethmüller 2005: i. 239.

by ordinary people [*vulgo*] in their houses'.[54] At any rate, Pliny does not speak of snakes in the sanctuary itself. In speaking of snakes in private houses, he seems to have a phenomenon akin to that of the Alexandrian Agathos Daimon in mind.

The sanctuary of Bona Dea at Rome

A reported discussion in Macrobius uniquely alludes to a claim that there were serpents in Bona Dea's temple, which is unlikely to have survived into the author's day: '[and it is adduced in evidence that] serpents appear [*appareant*] in her temple, neither frightening people nor themselves being frightened, in phlegmatic fashion'. Is *appareant* weak, 'are to be found', and telling us that there were indeed actual snakes in the sanctuary, or strong, 'manifest themselves', and speaking rather of miraculous epiphanies? The former is admittedly easier.[55]

The sanctuary of Angitia at Lake Fucinus?

We may suspect that sacred snakes were associated with the sanctuary and grove of Angitia, principal goddess of the famously snake-charming and snake-bursting Marsi, which stood beside the erstwhile Lake Fucinus, but there is no direct evidence for this. The Marsi are credited in the Latin tradition with the practice of charming snakes to sleep, particularly by touching them, and also, rather more so, with the practice of splitting them with incantations (Ch. 5). The former may be compatible with the keeping of sacred snakes (in India snake-charmers, whilst not religious officers, often provide and wrangle snakes for religious activities involving them), but the latter hardly seems so, fantastical though it may be.

GROVES AND BASKETS: WHERE DID SACRED SNAKES LIVE?

If a snake is to live in captivity, it must be kept warm. The recommended temperature for a modern terrarium for the keeping of the snake variety most likely to have been deployed at Epidaurus and elsewhere, the Four-lined snake, is 25–8 °C by day and 18–20 °C by night.[56] This effectively means that the snakes could not have been normally kept in a fully enclosed chamber unless, as seems unlikely, it was heated. So ancient sources' assertions that sacred snakes of one

[54] Pliny *Natural History* 29. 72.

[55] Macrobius *Saturnalia* 1. 12. 25 = source ii 67 Brouwer: *serpentesque in templo eius nec terrentes nec timentes indifferenter appareant*. Brouwer 1989 ad loc. (p. 224) translates: 'and that there are serpents living in her temple which, indifferent to their surroundings, neither cause nor feel fear', which begs a number of questions. In Ch. 9 we dismissed his notion that Plutarch speaks of the deployment of actual sacred snakes in connection with the cult statue of the goddess at her festival.

[56] K.-D. Schulz 1996: 210. Bodson 1984 ('Living reptiles in captivity: A historical survey from the origins . . .') is less helpful than one might have hoped.

sort or another lived in dark caverns, as in the cases of the Juno Sospita *drakōn* and the snakes of Trophonius, must be taken with a pinch of salt. They certainly cannot have been confined permanently to such places. This puts paid to the most famous urban myth of Classical scholarship, namely the notion that the Epidaurian sacred snakes were kept in the puzzling maze-like foundations of the *Tholos* or *Thymele*, which may have been accessible through a trapdoor in the platform. The *Tholos* may nonetheless have had a connection of some sort with snakes: Riethmüller rightly observes that the egg-*phialai* with which its metopes are decorated are particularly associated with the feeding of snakes in iconography. From here he proceeds, less securely, to the supposition that the maze was a symbolic (only) home for snakes, with egg-offerings being deposited through the trapdoor into a hole below for the non-existent snakes to eat.[57]

It is easier to suppose that sacred snakes were not normally confined, and that they had the free run of sanctuaries, whilst being based primarily in groves within them. The grove, *alsos*, described by Aelian for the sacred snakes of Apollo in Epirus sounds ideal: it is surrounded by a precinct wall, where the priestess brings them food. Thus the snakes are able to look after themselves in a fairly natural environment, and to bask for warmth as they desire. The wall would have to have been very high and very sheer if it was to have confined the snakes, but it probably retained its snakes by means of incentives rather than barriers. If it was a rough-built stone wall, it would have suited Four-lined snakes at any rate particularly well: they like to live in holes in such walls and, indeed, to keep the same home and territory.

Pausanias tells that the snakes of the Asclepieion at Titane live in a space that people do not enter into (*esienai*), and that people lay down food before its entrance (*pro tēs esodou*). His broader description of the sanctuary makes it clear that the sanctuary as a whole is not out-of-bounds to people, nor is the main temple itself, so the space in question is presumably within the sanctuary but distinct from the temple.[58] But even if people are afraid to enter the space, the implication of laying down food for the snakes *before* the entrance is that the entrance is permanently or at any rate often open, and that the snakes are not therefore confined. Again we should think of a space surrounded by a precinct wall—inevitably, another grove, and presumably, since no one enters it, an inviolate one. It is inappropriate to think of some darkened building, as Riethmüller appears to do in speaking of a 'Schlangenhaus'.[59]

[57] The visible remains of the *Tholos* derive principally from its 4th century BC rebuilding, though it is possible that the innermost rings of this maze derive from the 5th or even 6th century BC. See Holwerda 1904 (snake-maze hypothesis), Kerényi 1959: 102–5, Roux 1961: 187–200 (dismisses the snake-maze hypothesis), Bodson 1978: 87 (sceptical about the hypothesis), Tomlinson 1983: 60–6 (especially for the trapdoor; dismisses the hypothesis), Rüttimann 1986: 23–5, LiDonnici 1995: 6–7, Riethmüller 2005: i. 218–24 (with ii. pls. 11.2–13.1 for the maze and 13.2 and 14.1 for the egg-*phialai* metopes), Pedley 2006: 32 (clinging still to the hypothesis), Schulz and Wickkiser 2010 (deeming the snake-hypothesis unworthy of mention, and contending that the maze-structure was designed as a sound-box for musical performances in honour of the god). See below for images of snakes being fed from egg-*phialai*.

[58] For the site of Titane, around the hill of Agios Tryphon, see Lolos 2005. The remains of the Asclepieion (if correctly identified) are too meagre to bear upon our questions.

[59] Riethmüller 2005: i. 133, 135, ii. 68; cf. i. 365.

We seemingly find Asclepius' sacred snakes living in a grove in Epidaurus. The dumb girl of the miracle inscriptions is cured when she sees a snake 'crawling away from one of the trees in the *alsos*'.[60] This suggests that there were trees in one or more zones of the sanctuary, and that snakes were permitted or encouraged to live wild amongst them. Again they need not have been confined, and Pausanias' observation that 'the land of the Epidaurians alone supports Asclepius' sacred serpents' (at any rate those of Epidaurus), might suggest that their distribution was conceptualized as extending beyond any immediate borders of the sanctuary.[61]

More generally, snakes sometimes hang in trees in the iconography of Asclepius. A votive relief of the later fourth century BC from Athens gives us a seated Asclepius sitting in the foreground whilst in the background Hygieia stretches out her arm towards a tree and indeed leans upon it, and her (or their) serpent coils in its branches.[62]

Aelian's expansive description of the site of the Juno Sospita rite at Lanuvium locates the *drakōn*'s hole (*phōleos*) within a large and thickly wooded grove (*alsos*). Whereas Propertius tells that the girls take the food down into the hole to the snake and put the cakes directly into his mouth, Aelian rather implies that they leave it in the grove itself. Whether this particular unseen serpent existed or not, Aelian may tell us something of value for the husbandry of sacred snakes that did indeed exist.[63]

The association between supernatural, if not always sacred, serpents and groves (as indeed with the springs that fed the groves) was well established in Greek myth. The Serpent of Ares killed by Cadmus lived in a cave in the middle of an inviolate wood.[64] The Serpent of Nemea lived in a grove there.[65] The Hydra was reared under a plane tree that grew at the Amymone sping,[66] and Heracles killed

[60] *EMI* (C) 44. Given context, it matters little here whether the term *alsos* denotes a specific clump of trees within the sanctuary or the sanctuary as a whole. Pausanias applies the term *alsos* to large sanctuary complexes, including the Epidaurian one itself, as well as simple groves of trees: 2. 27. 1–6 (Epidaurus), 5. 10. 1 (Olympia; *altis* is a dialectal equivalent of *alsos*), 9. 39 (Trophonius); cf. Schachter 1981–94: iii. 72 n. 6 (important) and LiDonnici 1995 on *EMI* no. 44. See also Bonnechere 2003 esp. 221–31 and 2007 on the significance of the *alsos* for mantic shrines.

[61] Pausanias 2. 28. 1.

[62] *LIMC* Hygieia 34 = Asklepios 96. A striking but uninscribed early 4th-century BC votive relief plaque from the Chalcidice, Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek inv. no. 233a (illustrated at Schnalke and Selheim 1990: 62 fig. 14), resembles the Athenian relief in its disposition of figures. Four men carry another man on a stretcher and a sixth man stands by. Above is a tree in the branches of which a snake hangs. The sixth man and one of the stretcher-bearers hurl rocks at the snake, whilst the sick man raises himself from his stretcher and points to it or perhaps even reaches out towards it: he alone recognizes it to be a beneficent manifestation or avatar of a healing god, no doubt Asclepius, and checks his companions. The events portrayed ought not to have taken place within a healing sanctuary (although they might have been dreamed in one), for in such a context the identity and purpose of the snake could not have been misunderstood. The snake of the Athenian relief in its tree here bears a general similarity too to the (rather chubby) snake that hangs in a tree in the background of a 2nd-century BC grave-relief for a doctor from Pergamum, Berlin, Pergamonmuseum, inv. no. 152 (illustrated and Schnalke and Selheim 1990: 66, fig. 32).

[63] Propertius 4. 8. 2–14; Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 16.

[64] Ovid *Metamorphoses* 3. 28: *silva vetus stabat nulla violata securi.*

[65] Statius *Thebaid* 5. 505–78: *nemoris sacer horror Achaei.*

[66] Pisander of Camirus *Heraclea* F3 Davies/F2 West (7th/6th cent. BC) at Pausanias 2. 37. 4.

her by driving her into an adjacent wood, to which he had set light.[67] More closely associated with groves still are Ladon, the *drakōn* of the Hesperides, who in art always hangs in his tree to guard the golden apples from *c.*550 BC onwards, and the Colchis *drakōn*, who similarly hangs in his tree to guard the golden fleece from at least the early fourth century BC (see Ch. 1 for both). The late-antique (fourth-century AD?) *Orphic Argonautica*'s description of the Colchis *drakōn*'s grove is of particular interest: it sits in its tree in the midst of a grove surrounded by a fifty-four-foot high wall embellished by iron towers and no less than seven parapets, with three bronze gates. This was certainly a grove Aeetes wanted no one to enter, nor indeed did he want the serpent to leave it.[68]

If the sacred snakes lived in groves, those that were called upon to do healing work would normally have done it, no doubt with human help, in the incubation dormitory. This is the implication of Carion's ruse in the *Wealth*, where he pretends to be a *pareias*-snake amongst the sleepers.[69] Amongst the Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions the ulcerous-toe entry narrates an anomalous case: the patient had, for reasons unexplained, been carried out of the dormitory (*abaton*). And so it was that the sacred snake came out of the dormitory to treat him, and returned to it again when done.[70]

The fragment of Aristophanes' *Amphiaraus* gives us a tantalizing clue as to another viable variety of accommodation for sacred snakes: baskets. We have only to think of Indian snake-charmers to realize that keeping snakes in baskets is both viable and convenient. It is conceivable that baskets could on occasion have served as a permanent home for some sacred snakes: one could keep the snake warm by keeping the basket indoors near a fire or by leaving it out in a sunny spot. But perhaps they more often served as temporary homes for snakes gathered for use from inside or outside the sanctuary. The *Amphiaraus* fragment suggests that the snakes were brought to the patient in baskets, alongside any herbal remedies, and taken away from them again in the same way after their work. An Attic black-figure oinoche of 480–470 BC may already depict a snake-basket in a sanctuary context. A bearded serpent, travelling left to right, winds its way around an Aeolic column. To the right flames emerge from a bowl-shaped altar, the serpent's destination. To the left is a more mysterious object, seemingly resembling a round, open mystic basket or *kistē*, from the top of which the beardless head of a second serpent emerges, and upon which a pair of doves perches. Given the

[67] Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 2. 5. 2 (1st/2nd cent. AD).

[68] *Orphic Argonautica* 887–933. Ovid *Fasti* 3. 792–808 had similarly told that Styx kept Brychon the bull-serpent in a grove surrounded by a threefold wall.

[69] Aristophanes *Wealth* 687–95. The exact location of his incubation is not made clear, but it is evidently in a place outside the temple, though seemingly within sight of it (733, 740–1). When Asclepius himself then comes to tend to his patients, he calls his *drakōn*-pair out of the temple after him, and when they have done their work, they, god and snakes alike, and presumably the remainder of Asclepius' retinue too, disappear back into the temple (727–41). Probably the emergence of the *drakōn*-pair from the temple here is primarily symbolic: they are the god's attendants, and so must live with him in his temple.

[70] *EMI* (A) 17. For the *abaton* see LiDonnici 1995 ad loc., with 12–14, 19. The motif of the snake emerging from a building, doing its healing work and then returning into it, matches the action of Asclepius' *drakōn*-pair in the *Wealth*.

combination of temple, serpent-pair, and birds, one is put strongly in mind of the images of the serpents of Apollo Thymbraeus.[71]

We may look for support to the maenads and bacchants that famously handled serpents during their revels.[72] These serpents were not, it seems, just picked off mountainsides at random during the worshippers' transports, but escorted to the revels in baskets (it all sounds quite civilized). First, a fragment of a Homeric cup of the late third or early second century BC is thought to show a scene of maenads. One kneels on the ground to open the lid of a chest or basket, and two snakes peep out of it.[73] Secondly, the prolific cistophoric coins minted first by Eumenes II in *c.*170 BC are emblazoned with a *kistē*, into which a single serpent crawls, of from which it emerges, or around which a serpent-pair coil.[74] Thirdly, Plutarch tells of Olympias' supposed Bacchic activities that, 'She brought along huge tame snakes for the groups of worshippers, and they often used to peep out of the ivy and the mystic winnowing baskets [*mystika likna*] and coil around the women's bacchic wands and garlands and terrify the men.'[75] A winnowing-basket proper, being broad and open, is not an obviously good place to store a snake, but perhaps the term *liknon* is used loosely; at any rate it is applied to a cradle in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*.[76] Fourthly, something Bacchic may lurk somewhere behind Epiphanius' wonderful AD 374–7 description of the anti-eucharist supposedly performed by the Ophites, those devotees of the Serpent of Eden and indeed all things serpentine. He tells that they have a real snake that they keep in a chest, a *kistē*. They spread their bread out on a table and bring the snake forth; the snake confers holy status upon the bread by coiling over it. They then break the sanctified bread, eat it, and kiss the snake, as well they might (see the next chapter).[77]

[71] Staatliche Museen zu Berlin inv. no. F1929 = Grabow 1998 K 94. Grabow 1998: 142–6 reads the left-hand object rather as a 'monolithic fire-altar'.

[72] The general evidence for this is more limited than one might imagine. Maenads brandish snakes or wear them in their hair on Attic and Etruscan vases from the later 6th and 5th century BC: *LIMC* Mainades 7 (the famous and beautiful Brygos cup, on which a maenad wears a serpent as a headband), 27 (snakes coil round arms, as with Erinyes), 35 (late 6th cent. BC, Attic; snake in hand), 36 (snake around arm), 38 (snake around arm), 39 (snakes in hand), 62 (520–510 BC, Attic; snake in hand, encouraged to bite an attacking satyr?), 71 (snake in hand, again as weapon?), 116 (late 6th cent. BC, Etruscan; snake in hand, and on the ground beside), Charis II 1 (maenad named Charis, chased by Satyr, with pair of bearded snakes in hands). On the literary side, see Euripides *Bacchae* 697–8, 767–8 (cf. 101–3 and perhaps 1018), Demosthenes *De corona* 260 (*τοὺς ὄφεις τοὺς παρείας θλίβων*; though this relates in the first instance to the rites of Sabazius), Horace *Odes* 2. 19. 19–20 (maenads' hair tied up with vipers, harmlessly), Plutarch *Alexander* 2, Lucian *Alexander* 6–8 (the women of Pella, like Olympias, keep snakes, which, *inter alia*, they feed from the breast, though no specific reference to maenads here), Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 2. 16 (Sabazius), Arnobius *Against the Pagans* 5. 21 (Sabazius again; *pace* Dodds 1951: 281 n. 42, the *aureus coluber* that is handled is surely not a snake-effigy in gold, but a live snake of yellow colour, perhaps a *parcias*). The supposition of Maxwell-Stuart 1971: 437–9 that maenads wore fawnskins to protect them from their snakes is received with due scepticism at Seaford 1996 on line 24. Discussion of the iconography at Edwards 1960, Krauskopf, Simon, and Simon 1997; cf., more generally, Küster 1913: 118–19, Dodds 1951: 275–6, 281, Schauenburg 1953: 65–6, Fontenrose 1959: 378, Mitropoulou 1977: 41–3.

[73] *LIMC* Mainades 51.

[74] Kleiner and Noe 1977, with 16–18 for their start-date and a wealth of illustrations at pls. i–xxxviii.

[75] Plutarch *Alexander* 2.

[76] *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* 21, 150.

[77] Epiphanius *Panarion* (*Against the Heretics*) 2. 57–8 (37).

We should note too that one of antiquity's most famous snakes was escorted to its task in a basket. The snake that killed Cleopatra is said, by Plutarch's first and favoured account of her death, to have been brought into her in a *kistē*, which in turn contained a pot (*angeion*) of figs, topped with fig leaves, underneath which the asp was hiding.[78]

Finally, let us return to the ever-problematic *oikouros ophis*, if it did indeed exist. A number of sources seem to claim, as we have seen, that it lived in the Erectheum. As to the form of its more immediate accommodation, we are given little clue. When Plutarch refers to it living in a *sēkos*, this could mean, for all it is worth, some sort of animal pen, but it need mean nothing more specific than 'sanctuary'.[79] It is difficult to imagine a grove on the summit even of the pre-480 BC Acropolis. Perhaps we should think of a basket. On the Ericthonius Painter's pelike, Ericthonius' container, around which two serpents coil, is not the usual rectangular box, but a large, round object resembling a hat-box, and cross-hatching is visible on the interior of the box's fallen lid: it is evidently to be read as a basket.[80] Is this a hint as to the sort of basket the *oikouros ophis* may have been kept in? Or does it rather just salute the baskets of the Arrhephoria?

HONEY-CAKES AND EGGS: FEEDING TIME

Our sources apply a wide variety of terms to the food given to sacred snakes, whether of the single-and-unseen or the mass-and-public variety, but for the most part they overlap tightly to tell us that the snakes were characteristically fed on honey-cakes. *Melitoutta*, 'honey-cake', is first applied by Herodotus to the monthly offering given to the *oikouros ophis*.[81] It is subsequently, from Aristophanes onwards, applied to the cakes given to Trophonius' snakes.[82] Pausanias and the scholia to Aristophanes preserve versions of an aetiology for the significance of honey in connection with the latter: Trophonius' oracle was discovered, after direction from the Pythia, when Saon of Acraephnium noticed a swarm of bees flying into a chasm in the ground. When the first man descended he discovered a pair of *drakontes* within and gave them honey-cakes (*melitouttai*), and was not harmed (this explains why consulters go down with *two* cakes, one in each

[78] Plutarch *Antony* 85–6; in one of his alternative accounts the snake was concealed rather in a *hydria*.

[79] Plutarch *Themistocles* 10. At Sophocles *Philoctetes* 1326–8 the *sēkos* in which the guardian snake of Chryse lives is clearly the sanctuary that it guards rather than its own immediate pen: 'You suffer from this affliction as a result of divine fortune, because you approached the guardian (φύλακος) of Chryse, who guards (φυλάσσει) the unhidden precinct (σηκόν), the secret house-guarding snake (κρύφιος οἰκουρῶν ὄφις). Cf. Bodson 1978: 78.

[80] *LIMC* Aglauros 18 = Athena 480 = Erechtheus 36 = Reeder 1995*b* no. 69.

[81] Herodotus 8. 41, Hesychius s.v. οἰκουρὸν ὄφιν.

[82] Aristophanes *Clouds* 508, Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 8. 19, Pollux *Onomasticon* 6. 76 (μελιτοῦττα μὲν Τροφωνίῳ ὡς ἀρεστήρ, καὶ ὑγίεια ὁμοίως· καὶ γὰρ ὑγίεια μάζης τι εἶδος), *Suda* s.v. μελιτοῦττα; for Trophonius' cakes in general, see Deubner 1900: 43, Bonnechere 2003: 230.

hand).[83] The term most commonly found applied to the cakes given to sacred snakes is *maza*, which in itself signifies 'barley cake'. It is frequently applied by later sources to the cakes given to Trophonius' snakes,[84] and Aelian applies it to the cakes given to the Juno Sospita serpent.[85] But it is clear that the *mazai* in question often, if not always, incorporated honey, and were therefore fully equivalent to *melitouttai*. Pausanias tells that both Trophonius' snakes and Sosipolis were given *mazai* kneaded with honey.[86] Sometimes the same dish could be offered in more liquid form. Aelian tells that the Metelis *drakōn* was given barley drenched in milk and honey, whilst the Agathoi Daimones welcomed into Egyptian homes were given barley soaked in wine and honey.[87] Such a liquid offering could be described as a *pelanos*, the term Herodas metaphorically applies to the donation given to the snake-shaped offertory in the Coan Asclepieion. Philostratus glosses *melitoutta* (in connection with Trophonius) with the term *meiligmata* ('appeasing foods'), and this in turn is the term his contemporary Aelian applies to the food given to the snakes of Apollo in Epirus.[88] The *meilich*-root, found most obviously in the name of Zeus Meilichios, is one that, as we have seen (Ch. 8), is particularly associated in nouns, adjectives, and verbs with the appeasement of anguiforms, and it was folk-etymologized by the Greeks themselves, unsurprisingly, with reference to *meli* ('honey') and another paradigmatically sweet food, *meilia* ('figs').[89]

The great *drakontes* of myth too were often fed honey. When Pindar tells us that Apollo reared his baby son Iamus, 'Healing', through the agency of a pair of *drakontes*, and that these fed him on 'the venom of bees', we are no doubt to understand that they were sharing their own favoured food with him.[90] Virgil's Massylian witch feeds Ladon with moist honey and sleepy poppy.[91] The notion that may go back as far as *c.*470–460 BC, if a woman named Melissa ('Bee') on an

[83] Pausanias 9. 40; Schol. Aristophanes *Clouds* 508a. The discovery of the chasm in this way resembles the discovery of the Delphic oracle by a shepherd when he fell into it, as told at Plutarch *On Oracles Becoming Obsolete* 433c–d, 435d. Schachter 1981–94: iii. 76–7 regards the tale as a late concoction. See Bonnechere 2003: 228–30 for the nourishing role of bees.

[84] Lucian *Dialogues of the Dead* 10, Maximus of Tyre 8. 2, Hesychius s.v. μαγίδες, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. μαγίς, scholl. Aristophanes *Clouds* 508a–d, *Suda* s.v. μελιτοῦττα, Apostolius 17. 30 *CPG*. We are also given a dizzying array of further equivalent terms for the cakes given to Trophonius' snakes. *Plakountes* (sing. *plakous*), 'flat-cakes': schol. Aristophanes *Clouds* 508a–d. *Magides* (sing. *magis*), 'cakes': Hesychius s.v. μαγίδες, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. μαγίς ('μάζαι, τουτέστιν ἄρτοι οὓς καταφέρουσιν οἱ εἰς Τροφωνίου κατιόντες'). *Hygieiai* ('healths'): Pollux *Onomasticon* 6. 76. *Popana* ('round cakes'): schol. Aristophanes *Clouds* 508d. *Boes* (sing. *bous*), 'oxen': *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. βοῦν ('an "ox" is also a kind of flat-cake given to those descending to Trophonius', because those who descend into his crypt hear mooings').

[85] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 16.

[86] Pausanias 6. 20. 2–6, 9. 39. 11.

[87] Metelis: Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 17. Agathoi Daimones: 17. 5 = Phylarchus *FGrH* 81 F27); cf. *Alexander Romance* 1. 32. 5–13 (A).

[88] Philostratus *Life of Apollonius* 8. 19; Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 2.

[89] The sources occasionally also apply various neutral terms to the food given to sacred snakes, of which we can make little: Propertius 4. 8. 7, 11 (*pabula*, 'food', *escae*, 'scraps', of the Juno Sospita serpent); Pausanias 2. 11. 8 (*trophē*, 'food', of Titane); Plutarch *Themistocles* 10 (*aparchai*, 'first-fruit offerings', of the *oikouros ophis*, but perhaps in any case based on no more than an idle *variatio* of Herodotus).

[90] Pindar *Olympians* 6. 38–48 (ἰᾷ μελισσᾶν); cf. also Pausanias 6. 2. 5. See Bodson 1978: 91–2.

[91] Virgil *Aeneid* 4. 480–6.

Attic cup is indeed a Hesperid.[92] Valerius Flaccus' Medea feeds the Colchis *drakōn* on honey-cakes and (venom-developing) poisons.[93]

But this is one of those rare and alarming points at which we reach the limits of philology, and with a juddering halt. For snakes—and certainly Four-lined snakes—do not and cannot eat honey or meal.[94] Snakes can only eat living (or recently dead) creatures, including eggs, all of which, of course, they swallow whole. The gift of honey-cakes to the snakes was then primarily symbolic: it either sweetens the potentially aggressive serpent, or it acknowledges the paradoxical sweetness latent within divine serpents of this sort.[95]

The foods that could in fact be eaten by Four-lined snakes are mice and other small rodents, birds, lizards, other snakes, large insects, and eggs. If any snakes were kept in permanent captivity, presumably in baskets, then food would have to have been provided for them. The most conveniently accessible viable food would have been eggs. This brings out the significance of Nicander's observation that the *drakōn* reared by Paeon (Asclepius) in the vale of Pelethronium on Pelion, seemingly an archetype sacred snake, went after bird eggs.[96] The importance of eggs for sacred snakes is more often recognized in iconography. Several times from the fourth century onwards we find snakes being fed from egg-*phialai* in Asclepian contexts (we have seen that they formed the decorative motifs on the metopes of the *Tholos* at Epidaurus).[97] From the imperial period we also find a pair of statues of Asclepius and Hygieia offering eggs directly to their serpents without a *phialē*.[98] What else might captive snakes have been fed upon? Chicks might have been bred for the purpose; it is less easy to imagine that mice would have been. No doubt any stray lizard found on a wall could have been popped into the basket. But it should be borne in mind that snakes can be enormously fussy and unpredictable eaters even in the best conditions of captivity. Those that lived freely in groves could presumably have fended for themselves from nature's bounty.

The question presses itself upon us: what became of all the honey-cakes, on the assumption that they were indeed left out for the snakes? Aelian on Lanuvium: 'The ants crumble up the cake of the girl who has lost her virginity into tiny bits, so that they can carry it away more easily, and then they carry it out of the grove,

[92] *LIMC* Hesperides 75; cf. McPhee 1990 ad loc. and 406.

[93] Valerius Flaccus 8. 97.

[94] It is striking that this point has failed to arouse scholarly curiosity, signally that of Schachter 1981–94: iii. 81, Ustinova 2009: 92. Harrison 1922: 348–9, and Salapata 2006: 553 address a few unpersuasive words to the issue.

[95] It is generally contended, however, that *melitouttai* were given to snakes because honey was symbolic of the underworld, as by Rohde 1925: 244 n. 6, Mitropoulou 1977: 49, Bodson 1978: 79.

[96] Nicander *Theriaca* 438–97, with schol. ad loc.

[97] For images of snakes being fed eggs from egg-*phialai*, see Riethmüller 2005: ii pls. 14. 4 (= *LIMC* Asklepios 41 = Hygieia 7, *c.*400 BC; snake fed from cup, whilst a woman offers an egg-*phialē* to a *humanoid* Hygieia and further egg-*phialai* decorate the background), 15. 1 (round relief altar from Pergamene Asclepieion, Hellenistic; snakes eat from egg-*phialai*), 15. 2 (= *LIMC* Asklepios 252 = our fig. 9. 1, AD 144 , the C. Pupius Firminus relief: Asclepius and Hygieia feed massive serpents from egg-*phialai*:), ii. p. 431 (Antonine relief altar from the Tiber Island Asclepieion; snakes and eggs), *LIMC* Hygieia 111 (imperial bronze statuette; Hygieia feeds her [now lost] snake from an egg-*phialē*).

[98] Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 27–8 figs. 9–10 (a statue group from Cos, *c.* AD 150–200); cf. also Šašel Kos 1991: 186–7 (association between serpents and eggs in imperial-period iconography from Illyria).

cleaning the place.'[99] The cakes are left, in other words, for insects to eat. But the cakes will generally have attracted the attention equally of larger creatures, such as mice and birds, the latter perhaps additionally attracted too by insects mired in the honey. It is possible that the cakes were designed to have this specific function: to attract choice, fresh, and suitable food into the sacred snakes' grove. And what better way to encourage the snakes to keep the grove as their home than with a constant supply of such delights? These considerations lead to paradoxical conclusions in the case of the *oikouros ophis*. If the honey-cakes were left untouched, this ought to have suggested not the absence of any snake but the absence of mice and birds: one might imagine such a thing to have signalled the arrival rather than the departure of a snake. But, more seriously, it is easy to believe that the supply of mice and birds on the Acropolis was a plentiful one, given all the sacrificial cakes that must have been carried up there. One wonders whether Lucian's memorable description of chryselephantine statues being disgusting tangles of mouse-nests behind their gold and ivory plating bore upon the Athene Parthenos in particular.[100]

THE SPECIFIC ROLE OF THE SNAKES IN HEALING

The occasional fortuitous piece of shock therapy aside,[101] the normal method by which snakes made their contribution to the healing of the sick in the healing sanctuaries was by licking or biting the affected part of their body.[102] Three pieces of evidence, an inscription, a votive relief, and a comic narrative, represent the act of healing in terms of a pair of parallel operations, although a vitally important third parallel operation is implicit too: on the one hand, in the dream world, the healing god makes an epiphany and lays a herbal application upon the affected body part (first operation); on the other, in the waking world, a sacred serpent licks or bites that same part (second operation); but the god's dream-work evidently mirrors directly the waking-world healing labours of the temple staff (third operation). In the Epidaurian ulcerous-toe miracle (quoted above) the sleeping patient dreams that the young Asclepius in epiphany tends his toe with a herbal application whilst a snake comes from the *abaton* to lick it.[103] The fourth-century BC votive relief of Archinus from the sanctuary of Amphiaraus at Oropus functions as a visual counterpart to the ulcerous-toe narrative. In the foreground a larger-than-life-sized Amphiaraus in epiphany, strongly Asclepian with beard and (serpentless) staff, tends the right shoulder of the standing Archinus with a herbal application (or just possibly with an incision). In the middle ground a snake rears up from behind Archinus, who lies abed, to lick or bite his shoulder. In the

[99] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 16.

[100] Lucian *Tragic Zeus* 8. For the notion that the cakes given to the *oikouros ophis* might have been eaten by mice, see Jennison 1937: 20.

[101] *EMI* (C) 44: the dumb girl again.

[102] Discussion of licking serpents at Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 167, Bodson 1978: 87–8.

[103] *EMI* (A) 17.

background stands, self-reflexively, the votive relief itself, on its pedestal, and by its side Archinus himself for a third time, gratefully dedicating it and raising his hand in prayer. The pair of (human) eyes hovering over the frame indicates that the foreground image represents the vision seen in incubation. Once again the dream-vision of the humanoid god is made directly parallel with the snake's action.[104] Aristophanes does not distinguish between the waking and sleeping realms in Carion's account of his experiences in the Athenian Asclepieion, but even so there is a certain parallelism between the action attributed to the humanoid Asclepius and that attributed to his serpents. Carion sees the humanoid Asclepius enter the dormitory, accompanied by his daughters, Iaso and Panacea, and by an assistant. He does his rounds, very much in the style of one of his own temple staff, examining and ministering to the sick with his herbs. When he comes to Wealth, he wipes his eyes with a clean cloth, and Panacea wraps his whole head in a purple cloth. Asclepius then makes a calling noise, whereupon a pair of oversized serpents (*drakonte*) dart out of the temple. They quietly slither beneath the purple cloth and lick around Wealth's eyes (*perieleichon*). Shortly thereafter Wealth stands up with his vision restored, and the god and his snakes disappear back into the temple.[105] What is the purpose of the purple cloth? Is it medicinal? Does it serve to guide the snakes to Wealth's eyes? Or is it to prevent Wealth setting eyes (after the curing lick, at any rate) upon the snakes? Might it have been usual for healing snakes to do their work unseen by the patients?

We have noted that it is unclear whether Archinus' snake licks or bites. Whilst it initially appears to clamp its jaws around Archinus' shoulder for a bite, it could be that the seeming lower jaw is in fact a beard.[106] But the bite of a sanctuary serpent was probably recognized as healing too. Nicander's description of the *drakōn* reared by Paeon (Asclepius) in the vale of Pelethronium on Pelion seems to offer an aetiology for the curative biting of sanctuary snakes, for he tells that it bit humans as gently as a mouse.[107] A biting cure is found also in the Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions, where an admittedly anomalous viper bites open Melissa's tumour.[108]

The healing licking of the sanctuary snakes can be contextualized. It should be compared with the 'super-healing' licking of mythical *drakontes*: that applied by the serpent-pair of Apollo Thymbraeus to the ears of Helenus and Cassandra, and that applied by the orphan snakes to the ears of Melampus, in both cases to bestow the gift of prophecy.[109] We find the notion that a snake's licking can be cleansing and sometimes, perhaps, purifying in a religious sense elsewhere in Greek

[104] Athens, National Museum no. 3369 = *IG* ii^2 4394, illustrated at Schouten 1967: 54, van Straten 1976: 98, Neumann 1979: 51 fig. 28, Schnalke and Selheim 1990 fig. 10, Dignas 2007: 171, Sineux 2007 fig. 17. Discussion at R. Herzog 1931: 88–91, Sineux 2007: 203–6 (with 204 n. 57 for the significance of the eyes; others have, less convincingly, read them as apotropaic).

[105] Aristophanes *Wealth* 727–41. The noise Asclepius makes to call the snakes is described by the term *poppuzō*, which LSJ plausibly suggest defined a smacking of the lips or a clucking. It seems to have been used especially in calling to horses.

[106] Krauskopf 1981: 702 ad loc. (licking); Sineux 2007: 204 (biting).

[107] Nicander *Theriaca* 438–97, with schol ad loc.; cf. Riethmüller 2005: i. 47, 104, ii. 309.

[108] *EMI* (C) 45.

[109] Helenus and Cassandra: Tzetzes on Lycophron *Alexandra* introduction, scholl. Homer *Iliad* 6. 76a, 7. 44. Melampus: Apollodorus *Bibliotheca* 1. 9. 11. See Ch. 3 for both.

thought. Aelian tells that the serpent that fell in love with the Thessalian Aleuas would kiss him and lick and wash his face.[110] In Euripides' *Bacchae* the maenads' snakes wash their blood-stains from their cheeks (NB: *parēidōn*, which must, in context, be evocative of *pareias*).[111]

In practice, when the sanctuary snakes licked or bit the key parts of the patients, they must have been helped on their way towards the target zone by sanctuary staff. The fragment of Aristophanes' *Amphiaraus* that, as I conjecture, is addressed to Amphiaraus himself, 'and the snakes that you let loose upon [*or*: send against (*epipempeis*)] people—get them sealed up in a basket and stop being a druggist' might, at one level, convey an image of one of Amphiaraus' vicars on earth holding the snake up to a patient's affected part and encouraging it to lick or bite. Note that the parallelism between snake-application and drug-application is latent in these words too.[112]

In an article published in *The Lancet* Angeletti et al. start from the ulcerous-toe miracle and the Archinus relief to contend, on the basis of experiments, that the saliva of certain non-venomous snakes, in particular the Four-lined snake, contains epidermal growth factors (EGFs) that are effective in stimulating the healing of the skin (it is also proposed, with an eye to the two cures effected by dog-licking at Epidaurus, that canine saliva may have a similar effect).[113] But in practice how easy is it to persuade a live snake to disgorge its saliva over a wound?

The actions of snakes confined to the dream world in the Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions need not, with one potential exception, be far out of line with the actions of those ostensibly in the waking world, and may offer further models for the action of waking-world snakes. Sometimes the dream-world snakes make a more gentle form of contact. So far as can be told, the Cleimenes entry speaks of a dream-snake merely winding itself around part of his body.[114] The snake Agameda sees as she incubates for children merely lies on top of her belly or womb.[115] It seems to have been thought, in this connection, that a snake's external slime also had healing properties. Thus Sidonius Apollinaris: 'The Epidaurian snake (*anguis*) hangs around the well-shaped tripod, exuding a sacred slime (*virus*) the length of his health-giving neck.'[116] The potential exception is the snake Nicasibula sees when she too incubates for children, which actually has sex with her (*syngenesthai*).[117] At first sight this seems on the one hand to belong to the realm

[110] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 8. 11. [111] Euripides *Bacchae* 698, 767–8.

[112] Aristophanes *Amphiaraus* F28 K-A.

[113] Angeletti et al. 1992. For cures by dog-licking in the waking world at Epidaurus see *EMI* (A) 20 and (B) 26. The benefit attributed to snakes could also be attributed to dogs by virtue of the fact that a dog featured at the heart of Asclepius' Epidaurian birth myth, and that snake and dog were combined in Thrasymedes' later 4th-century BC cult image (Pausanias 2. 26–7). We hear of dogs also in the Athenian Asclepieion (Plutarch *Moralia* 969e, 790a, Aelian *Nature of Animals* 7. 13, a delightful tale) and the Roman one (Festus p. 110 M), though these are not explicitly attributed with saliva-healing. For sacred dogs in general see Scholz 1937: 12–13, 23, Riethmüller 2005: i. 239–40. It is harder to understand how, in *EMI* (B) 43, a goose was able to cure gout with a peck to the foot, but see Bonnechere 2003: 301–2 with n. 29 for a ventured explanation.

[114] *EMI* (B) 37. [115] *EMI* (B) 39.

[116] Sidonius Apollinaris *Carmina* 22. 79–80.

[117] *EMI* (B) 42. Cf. Marinus *Life of Proclus* 30, where Marinus tells elliptically of an epiphany of Asclepius: when Proclus was 'between sleep and wakefulness' (not, it appears, in the context of a formal

of fantasy, whilst on the other to offer a mechanical explanation of a sort as to how an anguiform Asclepius was able to sire a series of historical and quasi-historical figures (see Ch. 9).[118] But perhaps we should compare again the super-healing action of Apollo Thymbraeus' snake-pair: by licking the ears of Helenus and Cassandra in order to give them an exceptional variety of healing, they seemingly act to remove a blockage. Was Nicasibula's barrenness understood in a similar way as deriving from a kind of blockage of the womb, and was it removed by an internal licking?

WRANGLERS

The evidence considered in Chapter 5 suggests that, much as the great *drakontes* of myth were typically fed by virgin girls (Ladon, the Colchis *drakōn*), the sacred *drakontes* of sanctuaries were brought their cakes either by virgins or by celibate older women, and this applies to single unseen *drakontes* and plural public ones alike: Herodotus implies that the *oikouros ophis* was given its cakes by the (celibate?) priestess of Athene Polias;[119] virgins took cakes to the unseen Juno Sospita serpent, and were tested in their virginity in so doing;[120] a celibate older priestess brought cakes for Sosipolis;[121] and the snakes of Apollo's sanctuary in Epirus were brought their appeasing foods by a virgin priestess.[122] We are put in mind of the virgin Hygieia herself, eternally feeding her serpent avatar from her *phialē*. No doubt this benign but colourless goddess served both as model for and as divine projection of these snake-feeding girls and women. But perhaps the giving of the cakes was not always such a specialized activity. The copious sources bearing upon Trophonius' snakes assert that cakes were taken down to them by their consulters.[123] Who were the mysterious 'they' that laid out food before the

incubation), he saw a *drakōn* coiling around his head, and this led to an alleviation of the paralysis that originated there.

[118] The assertion that Nicasibula's two boys (who, as LiDonnici 1995 notes, must, in context, have been twins) were born within a year may favour the latter possibility; by contrast no such claim could be made for Agameda's children, since they are five in number (if they were quintuplets, we would surely have been told so).

[119] Herodotus 8. 41. Plutarch *Themistocles* 10 replaces Herodotus' reference to the Athene Polias priestess with a vague reference to unspecified priests: 'the priests announced this to the many'. This is probably just a random *variatio* of Herodotus' priestess, perhaps inspired in part by the supreme board of Delphic priests with which Plutarch himself would have been so familiar.

[120] Propertius 4. 8. 2–14, Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 16.

[121] Pausanias 6. 20. 2–6.

[122] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 11. 2.

[123] Hesychius s.v. *μαγίδες*: . . . *καὶ μᾶζαι, ἃς κατα φέρουειν οἱ εἰς Τροφωνίου κατιόντες*; *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *μαγίς*: *μάζαι, τουτέστιν ἄρτοι οὕς καταφέρουειν οἱ εἰς Τροφωνίου κατιόντες*; and s.v. *βοῦν*: *Ἔστι βοῦς καὶ εἶδος πλακοῦντος διδομένου τοῖς εἰς Τροφωνίου καταβαίνουσι, διότι οἱ καταβαίνοντες εἰς τὸ ἄδυτον μυκηθμῶν αἰσθάνονται.* In the light of these texts, the seeming reference to 'locals' throwing in cakes at schol. Aristophanes *Clouds* 508d, *οἱ κατοικοῦντες πλακοῦντας ἔβαλλον μέλιτι δεδευμένους*, probably derives from scribal error.

sacred snakes' entrance at Titane?[124] If anyone gave the snakes any food they could actually eat directly, we are told nothing of them.

Our most vivid access to those whose concern it was to apply sacred snakes to patients in healing sanctuaries comes through (quasi-) dream narratives in which the gods themselves are projected, seemingly, into the roles of their own temple staff. We have already noted Aristophanes' *Amphiaraus* fragment, in which, apparently, Amphiaraus himself, to some disapproval, takes on the role of one of his own healers and in this role applies drugs and snakes alike to his patients.[125] In his *Wealth* Carion describes a team of healers with differentiated roles. Asclepius himself does the rounds of his patients accompanied by an assistant and by his daughters Iaso and Panacaea. The assistant carries a box of herbs and a pestle and mortar with which he makes them into preparations. We are told how he makes a stinging preparation of garlic, fig-juice, squill, and vinegar which he then uses as a poultice for Neoclides' eyes (a joke is then made at this politician's expense). When the group comes to blind Wealth Panacea wraps his head in a purple cloth, whilst Asclepius calls forth his two serpents from his temple and has them duck under the cloth to apply their licking action to his eyes, as we have seen. Then the party, serpents and all, returns within the temple.[126] One can well imagine that Aristophanes' fast-paced and selective narrative has distributed two stages of a healing process for blindness between Neoclides and Wealth, and that in practice each individual blind incubant could expect both the herbal poultice and the snake-licking. The late-Hellenistic 'Democritus novella' in the pseudonymous *Letters of Hippocrates* (as mentioned in Ch. 10) includes an account of a (non-incubatory) dream of Asclepius supposedly experienced by the physician that has something in common with the *Wealth* narrative. Asclepius manifests himself in human form, though not in the gentle (*meilichos*) and mild mien of his statues, but a vigorous and frightening one. Huge *drakontes* (number unspecified) follow him, hissing, as do companions with boxes of drugs. Asclepius takes Hippocrates' hand and reassures him that he does not need his help. Rather, he introduces him to the goddess Truth, telling him that she will guide him.[127] If we put these two vignettes together, we might imagine that nightly rounds were made of the incubants by a team led by a priest in the role taken on here by Asclepius. He would be accompanied by specialist medical assistants who would apply their herbal preparations as appropriate, and by others who would (then?) apply the snakes. The intriguing implication of the Aristophanes passage is that the snake wranglers would naturally, like Iaso and Panacea, have been girls or women (it is Panacea that prepares Wealth for the action of the snakes). And it is noteworthy that the ps.-Hippocratic passage also culminates in Asclepius' introduction of a female figure to the sleeping Hippocrates, even though she is not directly associated with the snakes. This fits nicely with the evidence for the prominence of girls or women amongst the (supposed) feeders of the snakes, and indeed with the broader association in Greek culture between females and snake-handling, as in the cases of maenads or Erinyes.

[124] Pausanias 2. 11. 8.
[125] Aristophanes *Amphiaraus* F28 K-A.
[126] Aristophanes *Wealth* 695–747.
[127] Hippocrates *Letters* 15; for text and trans. see W. D. Smith 1990: 68–71.

THE VARIETIES

It is possible that any kind of snake, in the right circumstances, could be considered a sacred snake of a certain god. The massive snakes deposited in the Alexandrian Asclepieion were presumably pythons or boas and can hardly have belonged to the same variety of snakes as found in the Asclepieia of old Greece. And who is to say that the viper that bit Melissa in Epidaurus, if it did indeed belong to the real world, was not *ipso facto* a sacred snake as it acted? But what varieties of snakes might most typically have served as sacred snakes in the sanctuaries of the old Greek world?

Neither the copious extant iconography of Asclepius and similar gods (Ch. 9), nor the numerous snake-models in bronze, gold, and terracotta that have been found in their sanctuaries, so far as they might be relevant, offer significant help in pinning down the variety of the sacred snakes: the images are too generic.[128] We must turn to the literature, which indicates that sacred snakes most typically belonged to the anciently recognized variety *pareias*.

As we have seen, when Aristophanes' Carion needs to imitate a sacred snake, he hisses and grabs a pot of porridge like a *pareias . . . ophis*, which implies that the *pareias* was the normal variety of sacred snake in the Athenian Asclepieion.[129] In conjunction with this the two-word fragment of Cratinus' *Trophonius*, *pareiai opheis*, seems to tell us that this was the variety of the sacred snake that lived in his Lebadeia sanctuary.[130] Later on, Aelian ascribes Asclepius' sacred snakes in general to the *pareias* variety, presumably with Epidaurus primarily in mind. He tells that, 'It has a red (*pyrrhos*) skin and is keen of sight. It has a broad mouth yet it is not dangerous but rather gentle when it bites. That is why the first people to establish these things dedicated it to the most human-loving of the gods and named it the 'servant (*therapōn*) of Asclepius.'[131] When Aelian speaks explicitly of the sacred serpents of Epidaurus, in the passage quoted above, he does so without using the term *pareias*, though he seems to have it in mind. He tells that the

[128] We have the following finds of or records of snake models from Asclepieia. Athens: numerous snake-model dedications are recorded in inventories of the Athenian Asclepieion published between 329/328 and 244/243 BC, for which see Aleshire 1989: iii. 16 (*ophidion* on a plaque, dedicated by one Meletos), iv. 60 (*ophidion*), iv. 106 (*ophidion*), iv. 116 (*ophidion*), v. 76 (four *drakontia*), v. 135 (*drakontion*), v. 160 (*drakontion*), v. 127 (*drakōn*). *Drakontion* signifies 'serpent-bangle' at Lucian *Amores* 41. We may get an idea of what they may have looked like from Berlin Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz inv. 1963.5, a superb golden serpent-bangle of the 4th century BC from northern Greece; illustration at Bodson 1981 fig. 1; cf. also the images at Cook 1914–40: iii. 765–6. Cf. more generally, Martha 1880 nos. 182–4 (Attic terracottas). Epidaurus: Riethmüller 2005: i. 158 (bronze, 5th cent. BC). Gela: Riethmüller 2005: ii. 418 (bronze). Geloi: Riethmüller 2005: ii. 419 (bronze). Lissos: Riethmüller 2005: ii. 345 (gold). Pergamum: Berlin, Antikenmuseum, inv. no. 31394, Riethmüller 2005: ii. 364, Schnalke and Selheim 1990: 72, fig. 41 (bronze, 2nd cent. BC, 17 cm, with inscribed plaque, 'Eutychis in thanks for dream-healing'); Grumach 1965: 176–7 and pl. 1, Habicht 1969: 156 no. 160b and pl. 32, Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 274 fig. 83 (massive bronze snake with an undecipherable punched inscription); Habicht 1969: 108–9 no. 71 and pl. 29 (bronze dedication plaque marking the gift by Attalus I of a *drakōn* greeting Asclepius and Hygieia, in thanks for his delivery from many perils). Note also from the sanctuary of Amphiaraus at Oropus: *IG* vii. 303 = Petrakos 1968: 188–93 no. 45 line 70 (recording dedication of a snake, *ophidion*, 5 drachmas in weight, *c.*200 BC).

[129] Aristophanes *Wealth* 690.

[130] Cratinus F241 K-A: *παρεῖαι ὄφεις*.

[131] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 8. 12.

serpents sacred to Asclepius at Epidaurus were apparently drawn from more than one tame (*hēmeroi*) and presumably non-venomous variety, but that there was amongst these varieties a 'yellow' (*xanthoteron*) one that was particularly favoured. He also tells that the snakes in question could be purported to belong to the largest varieties in the Greek world. Other countries might have bigger snakes, but in that case they were not proper *drakontes*, as Asclepius' snakes importantly were.[132] When Nicander describes the archetypal sacred *drakōn* reared by Paeon (Asclepius) in the vale of Pelethronium on Pelion he gives it the *pareias*' gentleness, telling that it bites humans as gently as a mouse, but its form is in part at least a fantastical one: it is green (*chloaōn*) and blue (*kuanos*), sports three rows of teeth, has eyes deep under shaggy brows and a yellow (*choloibaphos*) beard.[133]

Further sources tell us that the *pareias* variety provided snakes for the other two chief sacred contexts too, orgiastic rites and the house. As to the former, Demosthenes' *On the Crown* claims that Aeschines participated in Sabazian rites with his mother in which *pareias* snakes were squeezed and lifted over the head,[134] whilst a scholium to the *Wealth* declares that it was the snake used in Bacchic rites.[135] In declaring that the *pareias* was also found in Alexandria, the same scholium seems to tell us, tendentiously, that the Alexandrian Agathoi Daimones were *pareiai* (cf. Ch. 8); but some equivalent Greek house snakes may well have belonged to the variety.[136] These cultures of the orgiastic rites and the house are linked, albeit in a puzzling fashion, by Theophrastus' 'Superstitious man', who calls upon Sabazius when finding a snake in the house, 'even' a *pareias*.[137] The 'even' at any rate confirms the snake's gentleness.

A tight lexicographical tradition reaffirms the disinclination of the *pareias* to bite men and derives the snake's name from its propensity to inflate its 'cheeks' (*pareiai*).[138] Modern etymologists concur in the derivation.[139]

So what, in modern terms, was the *pareias*? We must begin with a caveat. First, we have no reason to suppose that ancient Greek or Roman snake taxonomies should map in any direct or easy way onto modern ones (with the general exception, perhaps, of the more distinctive viper group). The range of variation in size, colour, and patterning within each snake species is often considerably greater than that between species. The ancients took no interest in the key modern diagnostic tool for distinction between genera and species, scutellation (scale patterns). And even now doubt can remain about the actual relationships between subspecies at any rate. Those of us who had naively trusted our scientist colleagues

[132] Pausanias 2. 28. 1. It is not easy to have confidence in eighteenth-century AD reports of distinctive yellow snakes in Epidaurus, as reported at Bodson 1981: 76.

[133] Nicander *Theriaca* 438–97.

[134] Demosthenes 18. 259–61.

[135] Schol. Aristophanes *Wealth* 690. Photius *Lexicon* s.v. *ὄφεις παρείας* speaks more vaguely of their use in the mysteries.

[136] Cf. also Harpocration *s.v. παρεῖαι ὄφεις* and Photius *Lexicon* s.v. *ὄφεις παρείας* where *pareiai* eat vipers, a characteristic of the Agathoi Daimones.

[137] Theophrastus *Characters* 16. 4.

[138] Harpocration s.v. *Παρεῖαι ὄφεις*, Hesychius s.v. *παρεῖαι ὄφεις*, Photius *Lexicon* s.v. *ὄφεις παρείας*, Schol. Aristophanes *Wealth* 690.

[139] Frisk 1960–72, Chantraine 2009, Beekes 2010 s.v. *παρειαί*.

when they told us that the taxonomic project of old-school biology was complete are quickly undeceived when we turn to the herpetological handbooks.

Amongst the snakes resident in Greece today, the best candidates to have been identified as the *pareias* and to have been the principal suppliers of sacred snakes of Asclepius and others are those of the genus *Elaphe* or 'rat snake', of which Greece knows three species. But, not least in view of Pausanias' emphasis on the length of the Epidaurian snakes, attention should also be given to some of the other longer varieties.

Elaphe longissima or the Aesculapian snake[140] exhibits a colour range from yellow, through yellowish brown, greyish-brown and olive, to dark brown. It has four dark stripes down its back, which are often indistinct (they tend to be more distinct in the Italian subspecies *Elaphe longissima romana* than on the subspecies found in Greece and elsewhere, *Elaphe longissima longissima*) and a faint yellowish blotch on either side of the nape of its neck. They can reach up to 225 cm in length, but most remain under 140 cm. They like to live in moist and sunny areas with brush vegetation, and have a particular fondness for drystone walls and for hiding under loose stones on the ground. In farmed areas, they are often found in sheds and cellars. They often climb trees and should be considered 'semi-arboreal': they climb either to find birds—occasionally eggs—to eat, or to escape from danger. They will also climb up the rough walls of houses. Their principal diet consists of rodents, but they will also take, birds and eggs apart, bats and lizards; they constrict their victims. If threatened, the snake will form itself into an S-shape on the ground and inflate its body slightly before biting; it vibrates its tail and evacuates the foul contents of its cloacal glands. Wild specimens can be tamed. Today the snake is found throughout the Greek mainland, but in the Peloponnese only in Messenia.[141]

Elaphe quatuorlineata or the Four-lined snake ranges in colour from straw-yellow to dark brown. Four prominent dark lines run the length of its body. It can measure as much as 260 cm, but usually reaches a length between 100 and 160 cm. It likes to hide in piles of stone, drystone walls, and bushes, and to occupy the same hiding place for many weeks on end. It is a skilled climber. It remains motionless when under threat, but if molested hisses loudly whilst attempting escape. It inflates its body whilst flattening its head. It is capable of administering a strong bite, but it is relatively easy to tame, becoming initially timid in captivity. This is the serpent that principally features each year in the Italian Cucullo festival, of which more anon, and footage of this demonstrates how remarkably phlegmatic and calm even newly captured individuals are, and even whilst being roughly handled. Their natural prey is mice (and rats) and young rabbits, and less often bats, birds, and lizards. Some populations exploit their tree-climbing abilities to specialize in taking eggs. The principal subspecies, the *Elaphe quatuorlineata quatuorlineata*, is widespread throughout the Greek mainland, including the Peloponnese, and many islands, as well as central and southern Italy and Sicily. A smaller subspecies, *Elaphe quatuorlineata muenteri* or the Cyclades

[140] It has also been known as *coluber aesculapii* and *coluber longissimus*. For the history of the use and application of the name 'Aesculapian snake' in the modern era see Bodson 1981: 73.

[141] Schulz 1996: 159–68; cf. also Arnold and Ovenden 2002: 214–15.

four-lined snake is found in some of the Cyclades islands and grows only up to 130 cm.[142]

Elaphe situla, or the Leopard snake, is rather smaller, with adults reaching lengths of only between 70 and 100 cm. Its colour ranges from yellowish grey, through light or dark grey, to a light brown with a reddish tinge. It goes through a striped phase in which it has two longitudinal reddish stripes, which are sometimes bordered with black. It is widespread on the Greek mainland and islands, in southern Italy and in Western Turkey. It likes to live in stone rubble heaps and thick vegetation, and is fond of wild gardens, overgrown ruins, cemeteries, and, again, drystone walls. It is generally terrestrial. When cornered it inflates its body, forms an S-shape with it, lashes its tail and bites viciously. It eats small rodents and, less often, birds, eggs, or insects. It is difficult to keep.[143]

Let us turn now to some of the longer snake varieties of modern Greece outside the rat-snake genus. *Malpolon monspessulanus* or the Montpellier snake can grow up to 240 cm, though often reaches a lesser length. It is varied in its colouring: grey, red-brownish, olive or blackish, but has a yellowish belly. It is particularly distinctive for its large, staring eyes, which are accentuated by strong brows. It prefers to lie out in the open. It can swim, waterproofing itself with a nasal secretion. It eats principally lizards, though also other snakes and small mammals, less often birds. It is very aggressive, and it is venomous, though it can rarely envenom humans because it needs to secure a tight biting grip before doing so. However, humans suffer no lasting harm from the venom when it is injected. It is known in Macedonia and on a few Greek islands, though not in central Greece.[144]

Coluber caspius or the Large whip snake can reach 250 cm, though it usually remains below 200 cm. It is yellow-brown or olive-brown or reddish and has a yellow-orange-red belly. It has prominent eyes. It lives in the open but likes drystone walls. It eats mainly small mammals and lizards, sometimes smaller snakes and birds. It is swift and highly aggressive, and bites fiercely when handled. It can jump a metre to make an attack. It climbs trees to a height of between five and seven metres. It is not found in southern Greece, but is present on many Aegean islands.[145]

Natrix natrix or the Grass snake can reach up to 200 cm, though it usually remains below 120 cm. The body is a variable olive-grey, greenish, olive-brown or steel grey, but many have a black-bordered yellow (sometimes white, orange or red) collar behind the head. It lives on the Greek mainland and many Aegean islands. It usually lives near water and can be very frequent near rivers. If disturbed it strikes with its mouth closed and rarely bites. It often feigns death. When handled it often voids the foul contents of its cloacal glands. It eats principally frogs and toads, sometimes newts and fish, also small mammals, nestling birds, small snakes, and slugs.[146]

The claims of the Four-lined snake, *Elaphe quatuorlineata*, to have been (most frequently identified as) the *pareias* and the snake most favoured by sanctuaries,

[142] Schulz 1996: 209–18; cf. also Arnold and Ovenden 2002: 211–13.
[143] Schulz 1996: 241–6; cf. also Arnold and Ovenden 2002: 211.
[144] Arnold and Ovenden 2002: 202–4.
[145] Arnold and Ovenden 2002: 209.
[146] Arnold and Ovenden 2002: 216–18.

where they were perhaps joined on occasion by Aesculapian snakes, and just possibly by Montpellier snakes and Large whip snakes, are as follows:

1. Modern distribution. Modern distributions of snake varieties need not map perfectly onto their ancient distributions, but if we do invoke modern distribution as a criterion, then we are compelled to dissociate the Aesculapian snake completely from the key site of Epidaurus, since it does not occur there, being found only in Messenia in the Peloponnese. But the Four-lined snake, which is widely distributed across the Peloponnese as a whole, makes a much better candidate for a native resident of Epidaurus. On the same criterion we would also have to discount the Montpellier snake and the Large whip snake, neither of which occurs in the Peloponnese.
2. Cheeks. Of the snakes under consideration, it is the Four-lined snake that can best be said, as the *pareias* is said to do, to inflate its 'cheeks', since it has a line-free yellowish blotch on either side of its neck behind its eyes which it inflates and flattens when threatened (cf. the cobra's famous display).[147] Bodson and Gourmelen imagine that they can find the characteristics of the Four-lined snake, which they take to have been the *pareias*, in the serpent in the reproductions of Phidias' Athene Polias statue (the *oikouros ophis*?), pointing to the seeming inflation of the cheeks.[148] Still, it is perhaps curious that Four-lined snakes should anciently have been named for their cheek gesture, rather than for their usually distinctive four lines, as reflected in their modern name.[149]
3. Coloration. In comparing ancient varieties with modern, we should not give undue weight to issues of supposed colour. On the one hand, all the modern varieties in the frame are found in a range of colorations falling somewhere along the yellow–brown–grey–green continuum, with the coloration of each individual at any given time being determined by a range of factors—genetics, age, sex, period since last slough and biotope—and so none can be completely excluded from identity with the *pareias* on this basis alone.[150] On the other hand, ancient Greek colour terms are all but impossible to map onto modern Western ones. If we take Pausanias' notion that the principal variety of sacred snakes tended towards yellowness seriously in our own terms, then we might note again the Four-lined snake's yellowish cheek blotches. We may also note that Nicander's scholiast explains that the yellow beard the poet attributes to the Pelion *drakōn* is really a way of speaking about the yellow underside of the serpent's jaw. This is probably just an act

[147] However, the other *Elaphe* snakes do similar things to a certain extent, and the Aesculapian snake also has a lighter blotch behind the eyes. It is on the basis of the cheek-inflation that francophone scholars have tended to identify the *pareias* with the Four-lined snake: Bodson 1978: 75–6, 1981: 69–76, 1988–95: iii. 48; Gourmelen 2004: 347 and Sineux 2007: 202 follow. Germanophone scholars have preferred to identify it rather with the Aesculapian snake: R. Herzog 1931: 87–8, Riethmüller 2005: i. 133, 239, 323.

[148] Bodson 1988–95: 46–50, Gourmelen 2004: 347–8.

[149] Bodson 1981: 75–6 notes that some snake images on geometric vases may have sought to reference the Four-lined snake with what is for us its most distinctive feature, with back-stripes clearly marked.

[150] Cf. Bodson 1981: 75 (referring to the *Elaphe* genus snakes only).

of ad-hoc rationalization, but the rat snakes in general do indeed tend to boast yellowish underbellies.[151]

4. Length. Pausanias seemingly implies that the serpents of Asclepius at Epidaurus are amongst the longest, at any rate in Greece. And whilst the iconography of Asclepius' snakes is idealized and subscribes to a venerable tradition of *drakōn* representation, it does at least convey the impression that his snakes were of considerable length. The Aesculapian snake and in particular the Four-lined snake are indeed amongst the longest varieties in Greece. The Montpellier snake and Large whip snake are obviously competitors in this regard. The Leopard snake has the slightest title to consideration here.[152]
5. Disposition. The review of ancient evidence above suggests that sacred snakes, in a healing environment at any rate, were asked to strike a fine balance between a placid nature and a willingness to bite when called upon to do so. At one extreme, the habitual aggression of the Montpellier snake, the Large whip snake, and the Leopard snake, and the venomous nature of the Montpellier snake, even if it can cause little trouble to humans, would seem to count against them. At the other extreme, the Grass snake rarely bites. In the middle, it is the two larger rat snakes that have the most appropriate dispositions. When wild Aesculapian snakes or Four-lined snakes are handled they do indeed tend to bite, albeit if harmlessly, though they soon become tamed in captivity. Of the two, Schulz notes that the Four-lined snake makes a much better candidate for Asclepian snake-handling as it is rather more placid than the Aesculapian.[153]
6. Toilet habits. In contrast to the Four-lined snake, the Aesculapian snake and the Grass snake tend to void the foul-smelling contents of their cloacal glands when handled, and this may make them less suitable than the Four-lined snake, at any rate in their wild form, for healing work.
7. Stare. Given the ancient notion that Asclepius' affinity with serpents was determined by the fact that they were watchful, as doctors needed to be (Ch. 9), and the frequent use of the term *drakōn* in association with Asclepius and his snakes, a term that ancient etymologists, largely with the support of modern ones, derived from *derkomai*, 'look', it is worth noting that the rat snakes do indeed possess large and distinctive eyes.[154] However, we should note that the eyes of the Montpellier snake are more distinctive yet, being sited as they are under heavily pronounced brows. One may wonder whether this feature of this variety of snake did not influence the representation of the distinctively browed snake on the Archinus relief. Nicander gives his *drakōn* of Pelion 'shaggy brows', though the Montpellier snake's brows are, of course, hairless.
8. Trees. Asclepius is sometimes depicted with his snake hanging in a tree, as we have seen, and in one of the Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions a little girl is

[151] Schol. Nicander *Theriaca* 438 (T698 Edelstein).
[152] Cf. Bodson 1981: 75. [153] Schulz 1996: 67.
[154] A point made much of by Bodson 1981: 66–8.

cured by a snake that approaches her from a group of trees (though not necessarily having descended one).[155] This might point to the Aesculapian snake, the Four-lined snake, or indeed the Large whip snake. But then, does Asclepius' serpent hang in trees in its iconography because his sacred serpents did so, or because they tended to live amongst trees in sacred groves and their iconography made appeal to the traditional representation of Ladon? (The Colchis *drakōn* only finds its tree after Asclepius' snakes do.)

9. Slime and snake-eating. Finally, however, two points in favour of the Montpellier snake. First, in the admittedly unlikely event that Sidonius Apollinaris speaks knowingly and significantly of an Epidaurian snake covered in slime, he may thereby salute the Montpellier snake, which exudes a secretion from its nose with which it is able to waterproof its body.[156] Secondly, Harpocration and Photius claim that the *pareias* snake eats vipers. Neither Four-lined snakes nor Aesculapian snakes eat other snakes, but Montpellier snakes and Large whip snakes do.[157]

MODERN COMPARANDA

Perusal of some contemporary comparanda for the deployment of actual snakes in sacred contexts helps us to imagine some aspects of the ancient culture of sacred snakes.

Greece: Markopoulo

It is difficult to penetrate behind old myth and modern tourist disinformation to know exactly what goes on or has in the past gone on around the Church of the Theotókos, the Mother of God, in the small town of Markopoulo on Cephalonia. The local contention is that a variety of small and harmless snake, unique to the island and bearing the sign of the cross on its head, manifests itself in the vicinity of the church as 15 August, the day of the festival of the Dormition of the Virgin, approaches. These snakes are known as *fidakia tis Panagias*, 'the Virgin's snakes', or the *ayiofida tou Markopoulou*, 'the sacred snakes of Markopoulo'. They are gathered up, taken into the church and deposited adjacently to the silver icon of the Panagia Fidoussa or Fidiotissa ('Virgin of the Snakes'), whereupon they crawl all over it and over the others on the walls. They are handled by the faithful, who typically have them wrap themselves around their arms, à la Erinyes and maenads, and thus receive a blessing from the Virgin. After the festival they are returned to the wild. The non-appearance of the snakes in any given year is taken as a portent of disaster: and so it was that they did not appear in 1940, prior to the German invasion of Greece, or in 1953, which brought the earthquake that flattened the

[155] *EMI* (C) 44.
[156] Sidonius Apollinaris *Carmina* 22. 79–80.
[157] Harpocration s.v. παρεῖαι ὄφεις and Photius *Lexicon* s.v. ὄφεις παρείας.

village, including the church, which had to be rebuilt (it is claimed that prior to the earthquake the snakes used to manifest themselves in the church of their own accord, crawling out of the foundations of its bell-tower). This notion nicely parallels the traditions relating to the ancient Athenian *oikouros ophis* and its prediction, by disappearing, of the sack of Athens by the Persians—too nicely, perhaps. Motorists who accidentally run over one of the snakes are visited by the Virgin in their sleep and asked to return the snake to her, whereupon they deposit in her church a silver- or gold-plated image of a snake. The phenomenon has its own aetiological myth. When, in 1705, the church, then part of a convent, was threatened with a raid by the pirates of Barbarossa, the nuns prayed to God, who filled the church with these snakes to frighten off the pirates (in a variant he turned the nuns themselves into snakes). Despite local claims that the snake variety concerned is a unique one (cf. Pausanias on Epidaurus), photographs and internet video footage of the festival confirm herpetologists' sober observations that the beast in question is none other than *Telescopus fallax*, the Cat snake, a smallish (usually up to 75 cm) blotched animal. Although venomous, they are not dangerous to humans, whom they can hardly envenom, their mouths being too small to permit them the necessary grip.[158]

Italy: Cucullo

The Serpari festival takes place on the first Thursday of May in the town of Cucullo (Cocullo) in Abruzzo. Prior to the festival snakes are collected from the local area in a snake-catching competition for the local *serpari*, snake-wranglers, the winner receiving a prize. The festival participants then drape the snakes over the statue of the tenth-century AD St Dominic (San Domenico Abate), which is carried through the streets to his chapel, and pray to be kept free of snakebites. St Dominic himself is held to have survived a venomous snakebite and to have charmed away the area's poisonous snakes. After the festival the snakes are returned to the wild, and the shepherds know that it is safe henceforth to take their flocks out into the hills. Photographs and internet video footage confirm that the snakes in question are principally the Four-lined snake and, probably to a lesser extent, the Aesculapian snake (in its *Elaphe longissima romana* subspecies). As we have noted, the footage also reveals the remarkable calmness of these just-captured snakes. The festival is held by some to constitute a Christian continuation of the local Marsi's worship of their snake goddess Angitia (for whom see Ch. 5; the Marsi's ancient centre was Marruvium on the eastern shore of the former lake Fucinus in Abruzzo).[159]

[158] Thus Arnold and Ovenden 2002: 225 (with pl. 47); Bodson 1978: 76–7 (with pls. between 74 and 75) guesses rather that the snakes in question are small Leopard snakes, *Elaphe situla*. For the mythologies surrounding the festival, see Loukatos 1950: 151–9 and Kriss and Kriss-Heinrich 1955: 102–6 (with pls. 84–5).

[159] Ashby 1929, Letta 1972: 145, Dench 1995: 160–1, Schulz 1996: 67. The last has a fine photograph at pl. 55c, clearly showing the statue draped with Four-lined snakes. Arnold and Ovenden 2002: 215 are perhaps wrong to suggest that the more prominent role goes to the Aesculapian snake. As to the possibility of cultural continuity with the Marsi, Dench remains sceptical, suggesting rather a self-conscious revival.

Japan: Shirohebi

Elaphe climacophora, or the Japanese rat-snake, is found throughout the main islands of Japan, where its local name is 'aodaisho'. This gentle snake, which normally reaches to between 120 and 160 cm (specimens of up to 230 cm have been found) is actively encouraged by the Japanese people because it devours mice and rats. Albino individuals (with white skin and pink eyes; in herpetological terms, a leucistic 'phase') sometimes occur, and a remarkable breeding population of albinos has long been naturally established near the city of Iwakuni in the Yamaguchi prefecture on the western tip of Honshu. These are now protected by the government. The albino aodaisho is venerated in Shinto religion as a bringer of wealth and good fortune, with Shirohebi, 'White Snake', serving as its proper name. The god has many shrines, of which the Hebi-ishi or 'Snake-stone' shrine at Aso in Kumamoto prefecture may be taken as an example. This small, beautifully situated shrine is approached between white stone pillars around which magnificent dragon-like serpents coil. The modest shrine building houses a fine cult painting of the god, in which he is represented as a massive, coiling serpent rampant to human (or indeed divine) height, carrying a golden ball in his mouth. He here bears a striking resemblance to the ancient images of Zeus Meilichios, who had a similar concern for his petitioners' wealth. Adjacent to the building is an open-air offering place, which includes stone images of the god, and a terrarium in which the god himself, manifest in the form of not one but two albino aodaisho snakes, lives (Figs. 10.1, 10.2). In such shrines generally the priest will on occasion take the god from the terrarium and lay him upon the wallets of his grateful petitioners, thus guaranteeing their prosperity. In summer months, when the press of petitioners can become trying for the god, he can be known to evacuate his cloacal glands in the process.[160]

India: The Nagas again

Nagas, cobra-gods, are worshipped throughout India and in the south above all, where their temples are decorated with thousands of votive stone cobras, and where they are in receipt of elaborate festivals. A rich attendant mythology offers much of comparative interest for the Graeco-Roman *drakōn*. But for all the thousands of images of cobras to be found in Naga temples, the ritual keeping of actual cobras in shrines seems to be a relatively restricted activity. In 1926 Vogel reported on a shrine in Gujarat built for a cobra that was killed and then reappeared alive, with further attendant cobras. The cobra itself was kept in a chimney-like structure alongside a red-daubed stone said to resemble the hood of a cobra, which was to be the principal object of worship. Those who vowed to visit the shrine were cured of pains, not necessarily just snakebites.[161] Naga Pancami is a July-August festival devoted to the Nagas in Benares (Varanasi). It is focused

[160] Opler 1945, Mishima et al. 1976–7, 1977, Schulz 1996: 95–8; the description of the Aso shrine is from personal observation.

[161] Vogel 1926: 269–70.

Fig. 10.1. The offering-place and the terrarium at Hebi-ishi Jinja, Aso, Kumamoto prefecture, Kyushu, Japan. Photograph © Mr Daisuke Kinoshita.

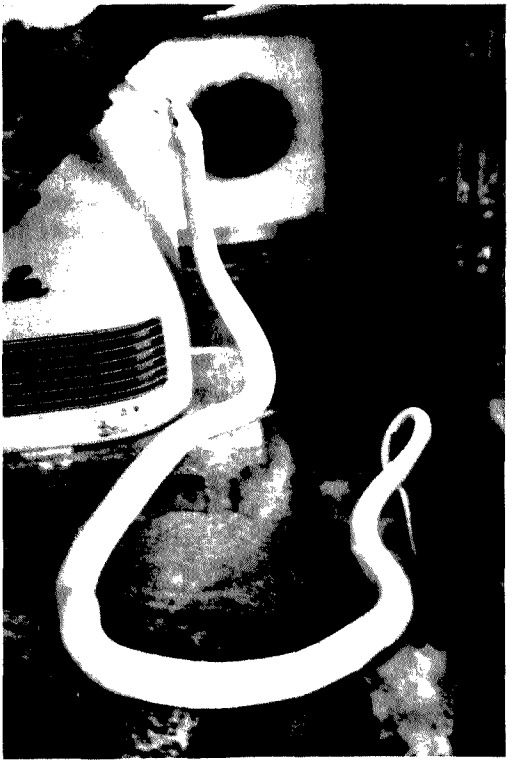


Fig. 10.2. Inside the terrarium at Hebi-ishi Jinja: the god incarnate. Photograph © Mr Daisuke Kinoshita.

upon a deep and dark pool, which is held to connect with the underwater world of the Nagas, Nagaloka. Thousands bathe in the pool, and the Nagas are asked to confer fertility and wealth. At one point during this festival people, chiefly women, go out to anthills or places where Nagas are supposed to reside and make offerings to snakes produced by snake-charmers. These consist chiefly of milk, edibles, and flowers, which are dropped onto the cobras' heads.[162]

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to draw hard and fast conclusions, but I believe the following characterizes the lives and deployments of actual snakes in ancient sanctuaries. Probably any snake could be or become a sacred snake in the right context, but those actively cultivated as such are likely in the first instance to have been rat snakes, the Four-lined snake and, perhaps to a lesser extent, the Aesculapian snake. In some shrines the sacred snakes would have been based in a sacred grove, though permitted to roam freely. Their interest in retaining the grove as their home would have been fostered both by the conditions of the grove, its trees and perhaps its perimeter wall, and in particular by the maintenance of a constant supply of choice food attracted to the grove by the honey-cakes left there as offerings. In healing sanctuaries, as evening drew on, sanctuary staff, perhaps often women, would come to the grove to gather up some of the snakes in baskets, and they would then be taken to the incubation dormitories, where, after herbal remedies had been applied, they would be encouraged to lick or bite the patients' affected parts. It is possible that some shrines topped up their supplies of sacred snakes by bringing in suitable individuals found in the environs. We think here of the snake-collecting competitions at Cucullo. The snakes of smaller shrines perhaps had to spend more of their lives confined to baskets.

[162] Vogel 1926: 275–80, Cozad 2004: 2. No doubt Kipling had customs of this sort in mind when writing in his tale 'The King's Ankus' of White Hood, the ancient cobra that continues to guard the treasure of a long-lost Indian city, who had been fed on warm milk (1895). I thank Prof. Elizabeth Baynham for this reference.

11

The Birth of the Christian Dragon

We close our study of Greek and Roman *drakontes* with an inquiry into their relationship with those of the Christian narratives of saintly dragon-slayings of the late antique and early medieval worlds.[1] This hagiographical tradition was eventually to reach its apogee in the tale of St George's battle against his dragon, a tale that has in turn done more than any other to shape notions of dragons and dragon-fights in the West ever since. First we shall ask whether, for all that they are underpinned by a new and extraneous ideology, the early hagiographic dragon-fight narratives can properly be considered the direct heirs of our pagan *drakōn*-fight narratives. The answer is an emphatic yes, and the justification for this is their deployment, with only minor modifications, of the stock-in-trade of the symmetrical-battle motifs of pagan *drakōn*-fight narratives investigated in Chapter 6. Given this, and given the fact that some of the hagiographical narratives purport to report the historical closing-down of pagan serpent cults, we can conclude that these narratives seized upon the pagan tradition of narratives of the slayings of bad *drakontes* in order to use it, most economically, as a campaign-tool against the good *drakontes* of pagan serpent cults, or at any rate against the general notion of them. Whilst it can be shown, unsurprisingly no doubt, that the Christians did historically campaign against individual pagan serpent cults, those featured in the hagiographical narratives turn out, when scrutinized, to be historicized rather than historical, and indeed the stuff of evanescent fantasy. This suggests that any success such narratives enjoyed in recruiting people to their cause or confirming them in it probably owed more to their positive and assimilating response to pagan *drakōn*-slaying narratives than it did to their negative response to actual pagan serpent cults.

THE BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

The serpents to which the Old Testament (which the Greeks encountered in the form of the Septuagint translation, from which we shall quote), New Testament and their Apocrypha give special attention are clearly aligned with evil and in opposition to God.[2] The opening chapters of Genesis establish the programme for

[1] With regret I have not been able to see Mayer 1890 or Rohner 1995 on this subject.

[2] For list and general discussion, see Foerster, Grether, and Fichtner 1957: 571–2.

humankind's relationships with both. Here God has forbidden man to eat the fruit of the tree in the centre of the Garden of Eden and told him that he will die if he does, but the snake (*ophis*), 'the cleverest of all the beasts on the earth that the Lord God had made', persuades woman to do so, telling her that it will make her godlike and enable her to know good from evil. And so God curses the snake and compels him to crawl on his belly and to eat dust forevermore, and he ordains that the serpent's brood will henceforth live in a perpetual state of enmity with woman's brood, mankind: 'Man will be wary of your head, and you will be wary of his heel.'[3] Programmatic too are the Old Testament's accounts of God's battles against the great chaotic sea-monsters Leviathan and Rahab (discussed in the Introduction). The names Leviathan and Rahab were, it should be noted, eliminated in the Septuagint's rendering, with the monsters being defined simply by the terms *drakōn*, most commonly, and then *kētos* and *ophis*.[4]

The Septuagint's own tiny apocryphal book Bel and the Dragon survives in the form of two Greek translations from a lost Aramaic original composed in the late second century BC. It tells a pair of tales in which Daniel deflates false gods worshipped by the Babylonians under the Persian king Cyrus. In the second tale Daniel declares that he will kill the *drakōn* that Cyrus and his people worship without a knife or a staff: 'And Daniel took pitch and fat and hair and boiled them until they congealed. He then made cakes (*mazai*) and gave them into the mouth of the *drakōn*. Upon eating them the *drakōn* burst open. And Daniel said, "Behold the object of your worship!" ' The Babylonians accordingly throw Daniel into the famous lions' den. The central vignette is a representative of a widespread folk-tale motif, often a humorous one, in which a hero feeds a dragon burning, molten, combustible, or simply glutinous materials that 'fight fire with fire' and cause it to overheat (we have noted a similar tale of Tzetzes in connection with the Chimaera: Ch. 2).[5] But the motif of *mazai* specifically makes appeal to the well-entrenched Greek custom of feeding honey-barley cakes to sacred serpents (Ch. 10). And so the original Aramaic text must itself have emanated from a strongly Hellenized milieu.[6]

[3] Genesis 2: 15–18, 3: 13–15; for the dust cf. Isaiah 65: 25, Micah 7: 17.

[4] *Drakōn* for Leviathan: Psalms 73: 13–14, 103: 25–6, Isaiah 27: 1 (*drakōn ophis*); cf. Job 7: 12, 40: 25–6. *Kētos* for Leviathan: Job 3: 8. *Drakōn* for Rahab: Job 9: 13, 26: 12–13. *Kētos* for Rahab: Job 9: 13, 26: 12–13. Sometimes the Septuagint eliminates the Hebrew Bible's references to these monsters completely, e.g. Septuagint Psalms 88: 10–11 (= Hebrew Bible 89: 9–10) and Septuagint Isaiah 51: 9–10.

[5] LXX, Bel and the Dragon (Theodotion version) §§23–30. For other examples of the motif see e.g. Alexander's killing of a dragon near Indian Prasiake (*Syriac Alexander Romance* 3. 7 at Budge 1889: 102–3; Syriac, 7th cent. AD); Ardeshir kills the Worm of Haftvad (*Deeds of Ardeshir* §§6-8 Āntiā / §§7–9 Grenet; Middle Persian, 8th cent. AD); Krakus kills Smok Wawelski, the Dragon of Kraków (Wincenty Kadłubek *Chronica seu originale regum et principum Poloniae*, at *Monumenta Poloniae historica* [Bielowski 1864–93] ii. 256–7; Latin, AD 1190–1208); Assipattle kills the Stoor Worm (traditional Orkney tale recorded at Marwick 1974: 139–44 and Simpson 1980: 137–41, who discusses many similar tales too). It is curious that this motif did not find its way into Thompson's index: the closest we appear to come is S. Thompson 1966 A2468.3 ('Why dragon dies by means of fire') and B11.21.1 ('Dragon cannot be killed with weapons'). It is conceivable, however, that many of the known tales to include the motif, including even Tzetzes' Chimaera tale (on Lycophron *Alexandra* 17), are directly or indirectly derivative of the Septuagint tale.

[6] The agreement of the two Greek translations on the details of the cakes and indeed all else precludes the hypothesis that the Aramaic narrative has been substantially reworked for a Hellenic audience only in the process of translation.

The hagiographical dragon-fights were to offer their saints a convenient shorthand means by which to establish their religious heritage, prestige, and faith and of course to convert the onlookers. The most immediate theological underpinning for this lies in three New Testament passages. First, in Luke, Jesus tells his disciples 'Lo, I have given you the ability to trample on snakes (*opheis*) and scorpions, and against all the enemy's power, and he can harm you in no way.'[7] Secondly, in Acts, Paul is attacked by a viper (*echidna*) in Malta. It latches onto his hand as he is moving a pile of dry sticks onto a pyre. He shakes it off into the pyre and shows the onlookers that he suffers no inflammation or any harm from the bite. They are amazed and proclaim him a god. In short compass the triumph of God and of good over evil is demonstrated, and the onlookers converted.[8] Thirdly, Revelation prophesies, with expansive but obscurantist symbolism, St Michael's defeat of Satan embodied in the form of a great red *drakōn* with seven heads that in turn sport seven crowns, and ten horns. The *drakōn* initially stands poised in the heavens to devour the child of a female figure about to give birth, but the child is snatched up by God, whilst the woman flees on the wings of an eagle to a place of refuge in the desert. Michael and his angels make war on the *drakōn* and his angels, and the latter are cast down to earth, where the *drakōn* continues to pursue the woman by belching forth waters to carry her away (a reminiscence of Leviathan and Rahab), but the earth opens up to drain them. Michael eventually casts the Satan-*drakōn*, 'the ancient snake [*ophis*]' into the abyss, sealing him into it for a thousand years with a key and a chain.[9]

Amongst the New Testament Apocrypha the ('Infancy') *Gospel of Thomas* also made a significant impact on the hagiographical tradition, as we shall see. This text is usually believed to have taken shape in the early second century AD. It tells briefly how the young Jesus was gathering firewood one day (cf. Paul in Malta) with his brother Jacob. Jacob was bitten on the hand by a viper (*echidna*), and came to the point of death. Jesus healed the wound instantaneously by blowing upon it (*katephusēse*), whilst the snake simultaneously burst.[10]

THE SAINTLY *DRAKŌN*-SLAYERS OF THE EARLY HAGIOGRAPHICAL TRADITION

Given the (most surprising) lack of any systematic collection of the dragon-slaying narratives of the Graeco-Roman hagiographical tradition, our first task is to gather and summarize the principal examples. The following review, organized in chronological order of first attestation, aspires to be reasonably full up until the end of the sixth century AD. Thereafter we shall note just a few striking examples en route to the first appearances of the famous tales attaching to St Patrick and

[7] Luke 10: 19; cf. Mark 16: 18. For general discussions of the terms δράκων and ὄφις in the New Testament, see Foerster 1935 and Foerster, Grether, and Fichtner 1957.

[8] Acts 28: 3–6.

[9] Revelation 12, 20: 1–3 (further monstrous beasts intervene). Discussion of the complex symbolism and its origins at Batto 1992: 174–8, Koch 2004; see also Beaude 2000.

[10] *Gospel of Thomas* 16: 1–2 (A); text at Tischendorf 1876: 147.

St George.[11] No apology is offered for the expansiveness of the summaries laid out here: the inaccessibility of the source-texts is equalled by the charm of the tales they preserve. The earliest saintly dragon-slaying proper is the early third-century AD tale of Thomas, but worthy of honourable mention are two earlier narratives in which saints encounter dragons in dreams.

First, in one of the curious visions of the Greek *Shepherd of Hermas* of *c.* AD 110–50 God decides to test Hermas' faith as he walks alone. He is made to see a cloud of dust rising, from which emerges, as he gets closer to it, an enormous beast resembling a sea-monster (*kētos*) charging towards him. It is a hundred feet long, its head resembles a pot and fiery locusts shoot forth from its mouth. Hermas remembers his faith and gives himself up to the beast's onset, but it merely lies calmly on the ground and lets its tongue loll, so that he can just walk past it. As he does so he sees that it has four colours on its head, black, fire-and-blood, gold, and white (no doubt this is why the sea-monster's head has been oddly compared to a pot). He subsequently encounters a vision of a heavenly virgin who informs him that because of his faith God had sent an angel called Thegri to shut the monster's mouth, and explains the symbolism of the colours to him.[12] The obscurantist symbolism of the monster's form is reminiscent of Revelation. It is striking that the word *kētos* should be applied in this way to what is ostensibly a purely land-based anguiform. Secondly, St Perpetua recorded a vision she had experienced in her prison diary in AD 203. She had seen a bronze ladder leading up to heaven, but at its foot lay an enormous *drakōn* that attacked those that tried to ascend it and deterred them from doing so. Perpetua summoned her faith and declared that the *drakōn* would not harm her in the name of Jesus Christ. At this the *drakōn* was cowed, and meekly stuck its head out underneath the first rung of the ladder, for Perpetua to use as the first step on her way up.[13] The vision as a whole salutes the Jacob's Ladder of Genesis, whilst Perpetua's first step salutes the Lukan exhortation to trample upon serpents.[14]

Thomas (c. AD 220–40)

The *Acts of Thomas* is usually dated to the AD 220s or 230s on internal evidence.[15] It is normally held that the text was composed initially in Syriac, but in the highly

[11] As an indication of the size of the task, at least fifty are known on the Latin side alone from between the 4th and the 12th century AD. For a partial but most helpful catalogue of such narratives, those with a bearing on the *Beowulf* dragon-fight, see Rauer 2000: 174–93, with discussion at 52–86 (and a justifiable lament for the lack of a systematic and comprehensive catalogue at 52–3). Note also, mainly for later tales, E. C. Brewer 1897: 110–17, Loomis 1948: 65, 179.

[12] *Shepherd of Hermas* vision 4. For text see Whittaker 1967; for trans. Ehrman 2003; for discussion Lipsett 2011.

[13] *Martyrdom of SS. Perpetua and Felicity* 4. 3–9. The text, for which see Bastiaensen et al. 1987 and Amat 1996, survives in Latin and Greek, with the former thought to be the original; for trans. see Musurillo 1972: 106–31; for discussion see Bremmer 2012 and Heffernan 2012.

[14] Jacob's Ladder: Genesis 28: 10–12. Godding 2000: 145–6 rather compares the Serpent of Eden and the Revelation Dragon; cf. 153–5 for further dream-visions of the Devil in the form of a dragon in late-antique literature.

[15] Bremmer 2001*b*: 77 (with earlier scholarship), 2001*c*: 153. For the text, Klijn 1962.

Hellenized context of the city of Edessa (now in Eastern Turkey), where, according to fourth-century AD sources, the apostle Thomas' tomb was located.[16] It tells how Thomas comes across the body of a handsome youth, whereupon he is confronted by a large black *drakōn*, which beats the ground with its head and tail. Without threatening Thomas, the serpent (which can speak) immediately owns up to having killed the youth, and explains that it killed him because it found him fornicating with a beautiful woman with whom it had itself fallen in love, and that too on the Sabbath. It confesses that it is kin with the Devil and takes responsibility for the corruption of Eve (identifying itself, accordingly, with the Serpent of Eden), the enslavement of Israel, and the crucifixion of Christ. Thomas compels the serpent to suck its own venom out of the young man, and so restore him to life. The serpent is destroyed by the venom in the process: it swells up and bursts, and a great chasm opens up in the earth to swallow it.[17] The coordination of the revivification of the serpent's last young victim with the destruction of the serpent itself, and that too by bursting, is strongly reminiscent of the *Gospel of Thomas* episode discussed above. The serpent's claim that it too was in love with the woman is intriguing, not least when we recall (the roughly contemporary) Aelian's tale of the *drakōn* that fell in love with a woman (see Ch. 9).[18]

Philip (mid to late fourth century AD)

The three recensions of the apocryphal *Acts* of the apostle Philip and the closely related *Martyrion of Philip* (which helps us to understand what has been lost from the incomplete closing chapters of the *Acts*) preserve the richest and most expansive of all early hagiographical dragon-fights.[19] The texts are now thought to have originated in the mid to late fourth century AD in a Phrygian Encratite community close to Phrygian Hierapolis (the modern Pamukkale), the scene of Philip's martyrdom, tomb, and cult.[20]

[16] Ephraem Syrus *Carmina Nisibena* 42; Egeria *Itinerarium* 17. 1, 19. 3; Segal 1970: 35, 66, 174–6 and Bremmer 2001*b*: 74–6, the latter again with earlier scholarship.

[17] *Acts of Thomas* 30–3 (third act) at Lipsius and Bonnet 1891–1903: ii. 2, pp. 147–50. For English trans., see M. R. James 1924: 364–438 (based on the better preserved Greek version, albeit with some attention to the Syriac). For discussion see Quasten 1949–60: i. 139–40, Segal 1970: 166, Layton 1987: 364, Attridge 1990, Drijvers 1998, Trevijano 1992, Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 65–6, Bremmer 2001*b*: 78, Godding 2000: 148–9 (describing Thomas's dragon as 'the first flesh and blood dragon' in the Christian tradition), Adamik 2001, and Klijn 2001: 4 ('We have to conclude that the work was written in a bilingual environment').

[18] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 6. 17.

[19] For the reconstructed text of the *Acts of Philip* and the *Martyrion of Philip* see Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1999: i; citations are from this edition, which bases its text of the *Acts* on a superior manuscript discoverered on Athos in 1974, and thereby supersedes the edition of Lipsius and Bonnet 1891–1903: ii. 2, pp. 36–89. Discussion of the various MSS and their relationships at Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 23–5, 1999: i. pp. xiii–xxx, 1999: ii. 3–4, 20–2. For a trans. of both *Acts* and *Martyrion* into French, see Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996, 1999: i. For an account of the obsolete Lipsius and Bonnet edition of the *Acts* and *Martyrion* in English, part summary, part elliptical trans., see M. R. James 1924: 439–53 and Elliot 1993: 515–18.

[20] Date: Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 14–15, 1999: ii. 431, 438. Encratite background: Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 16, 24–30, 1999: ii. 13–16, 429–31, 438–9, 469–20. See also Slater 1999: 297–306, Rutherford 2007: 453.

The *Acts* and *Martyrion* tell how Jesus sends Philip against the city of the Ophianoi, 'Snake-people'.[21] The city's name is expressed both as Ophiorhyme and as Opheorhymos, the former of which the *Acts* also uses to designate a street, presumably the main one, within the city, and the latter of which it etymologizes to mean 'street of snakes'.[22] The *Martyrion* explicitly identifies Ophiorhyme with Hierapolis, even linking the names together.[23] The people there worship the 'Echidna [i.e. Viper], mother of snakes [*opheis*]'[24] and other snakes too, abasing themselves before idols of them.[25] The city is approached through a region described as 'the desert of she-serpents [*drakainai*]' and 'the mountain of the she-serpent [*drakaina*], mother of snakes [*opheis*]'.[26]

In the ninth act Philip makes his way into this desert, augmented by a colourful team consisting of Bartholomew and Mariamne, who, as an Encratite nun *avant la lettre*, dresses as a man,[27] and a leopard and a goat both endowed by God with human consciousness and speech.[28] As they approach the land they meet a terrible *drakōn* in the desert. It is over a hundred cubits long, fiery, and shrouded in a wind of black smoke (*gnophos, gnophōdēs*), and it is attended by a host of snakes and the offspring of snakes. Philip and his team sprinkle holy water into the air in the shape of a cross to dispel the smoke and pray to God, 'You bedew every pyre and you bridle darkness and you cast the bit onto the mouth of the *drakōn*, you nullified his anger . . . ' Lightning comes down from heaven, blinds the dragon and the snakes that depend upon it, and pulverizes their eggs.[29]

In the eleventh act, the beginning of which is lost, Philip and his team come to a mass of rocks under which live fifty demon-snakes (*daimones, opheis*) and a *drakōn* that presides over them. His very approach compels them to speak out

[21] *Acts of Philip* 8.15 (G). See Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 178, 1999: i. 310, ii. 296–9 for a comparison of the mission to that upon which Christ sends John against the temple of Artemis in Ephesus at *Acts of John* 18. 37–45.

[22] Ophiorhyme: *Acts of Philip* 14. 2 (A) (*τῇ ῥύμῃ τῇ καλουμένῃ Ὀφιορύμῃ*; cf. Acts of the Apostles 9:11, 'the street [*ῥύμη*] called Straight'), *Martyrion* 2 (A), 7 (V), 24 (V), 42 (V). Opheorhymos, *περίπατος τῶν ὄφεων*: *Acts of Philip* 8. 4 (G). Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1999: ii. 297, 522–4 make various attempts to analyse the name Ophiorhyme. It might also be construed to signify 'snake attack', given that 'rush' or 'charge' is the primary meaning of *rhymē* and the assertion at *Shepherd of Hermas* vision 4 that its creature 'came on with such a rush' (*οὕτω δὲ ἤρχετο τὸ θηρίον ῥοίζῳ*). Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 66, 1999: ii. 330–2 hold that the *Acts of Philip* was influenced by the *Shepherd of Hermas* at least in its description of the desert dragon, with its smoky cloud.

[23] *Martyrion of Philip* 2 (A), 7 (V), 24 (V), 42 (V). For the identification of Philip's Hierapolis with the famous Phrygian Hierapolis, see Weber 1910: 203–4, Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 69–72, 1999: i. 244, ii. 17–20, 374, 520–45, Rutherford 2007: 453–4.

[24] *Acts of Philip* 8. 4 (G): *τῇ μητρὶ τῶν ὄφεων τῇ ἔχιδνῃ*.

[25] *Martyrion of Philip* 7 (V): *ἐκ τῶν παλαιῶν χρόνων σέβειν αὐτοὺς τοὺς ὄφεις καὶ τὴν ἔχιδναν, ὃν καὶ εἰκόνας στήσαντες προσεκύνουν*.

[26] *Acts of Philip* 8.16 (V) (*τὴν ἔρημον τῶν δρακαινῶν*), 8.17 (V) (*τοῦ ὄρους τῆς δρακαίνης μητρὸς τῶν ὄφεων*).

[27] For Mariamne's refraction of the Encratites, who abominated all aspects of the female, see *Acts of Philip* 8. 4 (G) with Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 178, 1999: ii. 312–17.

[28] For the initial encounter with the leopard and the goat, in which the former had attempted to eat the latter, see *Acts of Philip* 8. 16–21 (V); cf. Isaiah 11: 6: 'the leopard will lie down with the kid'. Discussion of these animal characters and their millenarian significance at Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 55–62, 1999: ii. 300–5.

[29] *Acts of Philip* 9 (V).

and confess their nature and origin, on the model of an exorcism, and their origin is, oddly, in the serpents created by Pharaoh's sorcerers from their staffs, which were gobbled up by the serpent Moses created from his own staff in Exodus. Philip forces them out from underneath the rocks by invoking the name of Jesus, again in the fashion of an exorcism, and when they emerge they are found to be sixty cubits long each, with heads of ten cubits. They then call forth their master *drakōn*, who turns out to be one hundred cubits long. He is as black as soot, though also resembling fire. His head resembles the pinnacle of a mountain, and he has a beard of twenty cubits. He spits fire and spews out venom in a raging torrent. This *drakōn* identifies himself with Satan and his acts and explains that his nature and that of his fellow demon-snakes is misty and dark (*zopheros*, *gnophōdēs*), that their father is Darkness (*Skotos*) and their mother Blackness (*Melania*): this blackness is appropriate to fiery dragons and indeed to demons alike. He addresses Philip as a 'son of thunder' and asks him why he is so keen to destroy him, like the *drakōn* in the desert (thereby saluting the doublet relationship between the two episodes). He begs Philip to spare them and offers to build him a church on the spot within six days. Philip consents and transforms the serpents into human shape so that they can do the work. Their humanized forms continue to exhibit their blackness, amongst other characteristics, whilst the *drakōn* himself is now described as blacker than an Ethiopian. When they have completed the church, collecting fifty columns (one each, no doubt) for the task, they disappear to a place where Philip will never see them again.[30]

In the thirteenth act the team arrives at the city, where they find in advance of the gate seven of the citizens, each of whom carries a prophetic snake (*ophis*) upon his shoulder. They test visitors by releasing their snakes against them: if the serpent declines to bite the visitor, this shows that they share in their abomination, and are acceptable; but if the snake does bite the visitor, this reveals him to be an enemy and he is not allowed past. However, before Philip their snakes bow their heads and bite their own tongues; the party is taken for Echidna-worshippers and allowed through. This seems broadly reminiscent of the traditions of the Psylli and their legitimacy test, and also of the test to which the Ophiogenes Euagon was subject (Ch. 5). The team then faces a further trial at the gate itself: this is guarded by two further *drakontes*, one on each side. These are in the habit of blinding unwelcome visitors by blowing into their eyes. Philip embarks upon a staring competition with them, and they see the ray of light of the monad that shines in his eyes. After an hour, they turn their heads away and die.[31]

[30] *Acts of Philip* 11 (A). The staffs of Moses and Pharaoh's magicians: Exodus 4: 3–4, 7: 9–12, 7: 15. For the traditional blackness and smokiness of demons in the Greek world see Lucian *Philopseudes* 16, 30–1, Pausanias 6. 6. 7–11, *PGM* VII. 348–58; cf. Winkler 1980. Note also the demon that manifests itself in the form of an Egyptian in the medieval tale of St Narcissus, discussed below.

[31] *Acts of Philip* 13. 1–3 (A). As we have seen (Ch. 6), Aelian *Nature of Animals* 6. 38 knew of Libyan asps that could blind by breath alone. Closer to Hierapolis, [Aristotle] *Mirabilia* 845a17 = Theophrastus *περὶ δακετῶν* F6 (at Jacques 2002: 276) tells of a white bear of the adjacent Mysia that blasts a flame from its mouth to blind its hunters and their dogs. The attempts of Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1999: ii. 375–6 to find behind this gate guarded by *drakontes* a Hierapolitan 'gate of Cybele' are unpersuasive.

Once inside the city Philip and his aides preach against the Serpent of Eden, 'the snake, the wicked *drakōn*, the instigator of destruction and death for the soul'.[32] They establish themselves in an abandoned medical dispensary (*iatreion*), where they set up a clinic for the bodies and souls alike of the Ophianoi.[33] Amongst other healing miracles, Philip cures the eyes of Stachys, chief priest of the Echidna, who had been blinded forty years before by liquid from serpent eggs, and he does so by rubbing the saliva of the virgin Mariamne into his eyes. Stachys is converted.[34] Mariamne herself cures Nicanora of the long-standing pain of serpent bites (since she is an outsider by birth, a Syrian, the creatures have allowed her no immunity), and converts her too. Nicanora is the wife of the proconsul that rules the city, Tyrannognophos, 'Tyrant of Darkness'. She now accordingly refuses to have sex with him, and so he has Philip and his team imprisoned in the Echidna's sanctuary, stripped, and tortured as sorcerers, with Philip himself being suspended upside down.[35] Philip utters a Hebrew spell, whereupon, 'And lo the abyss was suddenly opened up, and there was swallowed into the hole the place in which the proconsul was sitting, and the entire temple, and the Echidna which they worshipped, and many crowds and the priests of the Echidna, some 7,000 men, not counting the women and the children. But the place where the apostles remained was unshaken. And the proconsul was swallowed down into the abyss.'[36] Jesus, manifest, gently rebukes Philip for his wrathfulness, before restoring all to the surface (the people duly repent), save for the proconsul, the priests, and the Echidna herself.[37] Philip eventually dies from his sufferings[38] and a chapel is built at the site of his martyrdom.[39]

This is a confusing and repetitive narrative sequence, but it is at any rate clear that the three super-*drakontes*, the desert *drakōn*, the *drakōn* of the rocks, and the worshipped Echidna, are in part identified with each other and in part are

[32] *Martyrion of Philip* 3–6 (V): *ὁ ὄφις ὁ πονηρὸς δράκων ὁ ἀρχέκακος νόμην ἀπωλείας καὶ θανάτου τῇ ψυχῇ*. Cf. Genesis 3: 1–7. See Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 64–5 for the more general reflection of biblical dragons in the Philip material, including Leviathan, Behemoth, and the dragon of the Apocalypse.

[33] *Acts of Philip* 13.4 (A). Perhaps this anticipates a healing cult subsequently established at Hierapolis in connection with Philip. The archaeological remains of a grand martyrium-mausoleum of the late 4th or 5th century AD survive at Hierapolis. In default of associated epigraphy, it is assumed that it covers Philip's tomb. It has been suggested that it also offered shelter to pilgrims performing healing incubations. See Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 78–80, 1999: ii. 540–2, 545, both with ground-plan.

[34] *Acts of Philip* 14. 2, 7 (A) (the latter text damaged), *Martyrion of Philip* 22 (A). For Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier1996: 209 n. 46, 1999: ii. 396–402 Stachys, as the chief priest of the Echidna, whom they identify with Cybele, must accordingly be the chief of her eunuch priests, the Galli—this despite the fact that he has sons!

[35] *Martyrion of Philip* = 7–23 (V). 'Tyrannognophos': *Acts of Philip* 15. 1, 6–7 (A), *Martyrion of Philip* 14–17, 27–8, 32 (V).

[36] *Martyrion of Philip* 26–8 (V). We meet another female *drakōn* already in the underworld at *Acts of Philip* 1. 5 (A). This 'woman whose appearance resembled a *drakōn*' has hands that send forth flickering tongues resembling those of asps and drives souls of the mockers of the faithful towards a fiery chasm with a fiery whip. As an instrument of Satan (again) the figure at once urges the souls on to their sin and at the same time punishes them for it.

[37] *Martyrion of Philip* 28–32 (V).

[38] *Martyrion of Philip* 39 (V).

[39] *Martyrion of Philip* 36 (V).

doublets of each other.[40] All are, furthermore, clearly identified with the Serpent of Eden, itself defined as a *drakōn*.[41]

We are subsequently given a second, briefer account of Philip's encounter with a single dragon in Scythia in the sixth-century AD *Historia apostolica* pseudonymously ascribed to Abdias. After preaching in Scythia for twenty-two years, Philip is arrested, brought before a statue of Mars, and compelled to make sacrifice, but in the meantime a huge *draco* emerges from underneath the base of the statue and bites and kills the son of the priest looking after the sacrificial fire together with two tribunes. And all present are brought to death's door by its noxious breath. Philip tells them that the dead can be resuscitated and that they can all recover their health if they cast down the statue and replace it with a cross. They agree, and Philip orders the *draco* to leave for the wilderness and live apart from men in the name of Jesus Christ, which it does at speed. Philip restores the dead to life and the sick to health, and he himself is now worshipped as a god.[42]

Silvester (late fourth century AD)

In his letter to his wife, written *c.* AD 207, Tertullian mysteriously associates the Vestals with a *draco*. He makes light of a Christian woman's sacrifice in remaining celibate after widowhood, since even pagans, he notes, can manage it in the service of their own Satan: 'For at Rome, the women that deal with that apparently inextinguishable fire and tend omens of their own punishment and that serpent [*draco*] too, are appointed on the basis of virginity.'[43] In the late fourth or early fifth century AD Paulinus of Nola was to write scathingly on the same phenomenon in a poem of satirical invective: 'I hear that those who are called the virgins of Vesta carry meals for a *draco* every five years. However, this *draco* either does not exist or if it does exist it is the Devil himself, that former hostile tempter of the human race, and they worship him, who now trembles weakly before the name of Christ and confesses all his deeds.'[44] The dragon that Paulinus felt able to overcome by argument and faith, others, writing around the same time, preferred to overcome in narrative.

The historical St Silvester was a prodigious nonentity. Despite becoming Pope in AD 314, a mere year after the Edict of Milan, and enjoying twenty-one long years in office under Constantine, whom he predeceased by two years, he contrived to leave no impact on the historical record proper other than the dates of his tenure. The hagiographical Silvester, however, is a more satisfactorily robust

[40] Discussion at Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1999: ii. 326–8, 343–4.

[41] For the biblical resonances see esp. *Martyrion of Philip* 5 (V), with Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 61–2, 64–5 and Rutherford 2007: 454. For the sequences as doublets: Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 63.

[42] [Abdias] *Historia apostolica* at Fabricius 1719: ii. 402–742, pp. 738–40. The motif of the revivification of the dead is also found in the version of the Philip story recounted by Jacobus de Voragine, *Golden Legend* no. 65 (12th cent. AD), for text of which see Graesse 1850.

[43] Tertullian *Ad uxorem* 1. 6. 3: *Romae quidem quae ignis illius inextinguibilis imaginem tractant, auspicia poenae suae cum ipso dracone curantes, de uirginitate censentur.* Cf. Pohlkamp 1983: 14–15.

[44] Paulinus of Nola *Carmen ultimum* 5. 143–8 = *CSEL* 30, 334–5; text reproduced also at Pohlkamp 1983: 14–15.

figure, presiding, *inter alia*, over the emperor's conversion, with all that that entailed, and over the defeat of the Vestals' dragon. A first recension of the Latin *Acts of Silvester*, 'A (1)', known as the *Actus Silvestri*, was composed at some point in the late fourth century, whilst a second recension, 'B (1)', known as the *Vita Silvestri*, was composed at the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries.[45] According to the A (1) recension the Roman people are imperilled by the breath of an angry *draco* that lives at the bottom of a descent. The Vestal Virgins had formerly taken wheat cakes down to it every Kalends, but since the city has accepted Christian law, the dragon has been given nothing and is now showing its displeasure. The pagan priests make appeal to Constantine to allow them to feed it again, for the sake of the citizens' health.[46] The B (1) recension tells that the *draco* in question lives in the Tarpeian hill beneath the Capitol. It had been fed by mages and 'profane virgins' (they are not explicitly identified as Vestals), who had descended on a monthly basis down 365 steps, as if to Hell, to give the dragon propitiatory offerings. The dragon now unexpectedly rises up to the top of its hole and corrupts the air with its breath, which results in the deaths of many, children in particular. The pagans challenge Silvester to prevent the dragon from killing people in the name of his God and Christ so that they may believe in them. Silvester duly ordains a three-day fast and prayer-session for the faithful with a view to bringing an end to the pestilence. On the third day he experiences a vision of the apostle Peter, who gives him instructions. Following these, he prays with chosen presbyters and deacons before the entrance to the dragon's lair. They then make their descent, undeterred by the warnings of the pagans with them, and find bronze doors with rings at the bottom. These Silvester binds shut with a chain and lock brought for the purpose, invoking the names of Jesus and of Peter, and he then buries the key. As the years pass and there is no recurrence of the afflicting breath, the dragon's former servants prostrate themselves before Silvester and come to Christ.[47] If Silvester's method of dealing with the dragon of Rome seems in some ways underwhelming, it draws its force from the appeal it makes to St Michael's similar sealing of the Revelation dragon into the abyss with lock and chain.[48]

In the recension of the *Acts of Silvester* reproduced by Mombritius Silvester rather binds the dragon's mouth shut, whilst in the tale supplied by the seventh-century Aldhelm in both the prose and poetic versions of his *De virginitate*, the

[45] So Pohlkamp 1983: 5, 10–20, 31–44, Pailler 1997: 559–68 and Canella 2006: 34–46. Before Pohlkamp's careful work on the tradition and its recensions a range of different origin-dates was proposed: Duchesne 1897: 30–6 (5th–6th cent. AD), Loenertz 1975 (mid 5th cent. AD), Leclerq 1948: 2683–5 (late 5th cent. AD).

[46] *Actus Silvestri* = recension A (1), text reproduced at Pohlkamp 1983: 11.

[47] *Vita Silvestri* = recension B (1) at Duchesne 1897: 31–2. Pohlkamp's trailed critical edition of the *Acts* has, alas, never appeared; cf. Canella 2006: pp. xv–xix. For discussion of the episode, see Pohlkamp 1977–99, 1983, Godding 2000: 151, MacMullen 2003: 477. The central argument of Duchesne 1897 is rendered obsolete by the fact that the Vesta variant is after all to be found in MS tradition of the *Actus Silvestri*. For the *Acts of Silvester* more generally, see now the impressive Canella 2006, who, however, is more concerned with the text's theological content and has little to say of our serpent (cf. 11).

[48] Revelation 20: 1–3.

saint encloses the dragon's neck in a tight collar.[49] Either way, the dragon's flames and its pestilential breath are appropriately confined within its own body. A ninth-century AD inscription in the church of S. Maria Maggiore in Rome continues to explain a vignette in a fresco now lost, the earliest known illustration of the episode: 'This is where St Silvester binds the *draco* by the mouth.'[50]

Silvester had to compete from an early stage for the credit of having overcome the Dragon of Rome, and not only with those who, like Paulinus of Nola, believed the dragon had never existed in the first place. An anonymous Latin text written in Africa in the fifth century AD, *De promissionibus*, tells again of a dragon hidden at the bottom of a deep dark cave in Rome. This dragon was a mechanical one with gemstone eyes and a sword projecting from its mouth to serve as its tongue. Virgins would be sent down the stairs to it each year, carrying offerings for it, as they believed, but it was they themselves that were the offering: as they descended they would impale themselves on the sword in the dark. In the age of Stilicho (the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries, therefore) a monk, otherwise unidentified, felt his way carefully down the stairs and was able to smash the device up without impaling himself.[51]

A ninth-century AD life of (the sixth-century) Gildas credits rather its own saint with the defeat of the dragon, though it relocates the main action outside the city. Gildas, we are told, heard that the Roman citizens were gravely ill, and that many had died because of the pestilential breath (*flatus*) of a *draco* that was lurking in a cave in some mountain. At daybreak Gildas secretly left his lodgings and climbed the mountain, staff in hand. Coming to the mouth of the cave he saw the dragon and commanded it to die immediately in the name of Jesus Christ. It obligingly dropped dead and the Romans were delivered of their pestilence.[52] An eleventh-century life of Gildas was subsequently to relocate this saint's dragon, more conservatively, back beneath the Tarpeian rock.[53]

The twelfth-century *Mirabilia urbis Romae* in some confusion identifies the cavern of the dragon associated with the Vestals with the Lacus Curtius, adjacent to the temple of Vesta. A certain noble soldier, the *Mirabilia* explains, followed an oracle of the gods and threw himself into the hole to stop the fumes belching forth, with the result that the hole duly closed up after him. But the vignette of a hole in the earth closing up at any rate accords well with the fates of Thomas's dragon and Philip's Echidna.[54] The first three tales here all share the motif of the dragon's eventual confinement, dead or alive, beneath the earth.

[49] *Acts of Silvester* at Mombritius 1910: ii. 529; Aldhelm *De virginitate* poetic version at Ehwald 1919: 376 lines 545–56 and prose version at Ehwald 1919: 257–8.

[50] *Ubi sanctus Silvester ore ligat draconem*. Cf. Wilpert 1916: 333; Pohlkamp 1983: 49.

[51] *De promissionibus*, *PL* 51, p. 835; cf. Pohlkamp 1983: 16.

[52] *Vita i S. Gildae* at *MGH* Auctores Antiquissimi 13. 1, 95.

[53] *Vita ii S. Gildae* at *Catalogus* 1889–92: ii. 184; cf. Rauer 2000: 179.

[54] *Mirabilia urbis Romanae* 24 at Valentini and Zuchetti 1946 (text also at Duchesne 1897: 15–16 and Pohlkamp 1983: 66–7 n. 61). For the original version of the Lacus Curtius myth see Livy 7. 6.

Hilarion (AD 396 or before)

Jerome composed his Latin *Life of St Hilarion* at some point before AD 396. He tells, briefly, how the fourth-century AD Hilarion was lodging in Epidaurus in Dalmatia, when his sleep was disturbed by a massive *draco* that was laying waste to the entire province, inhaling by the power of its breath not only the flocks and the herds, but also the farmers and shepherds. The *draco* belonged to the variety known as *boa* precisely because they were so large that they devoured oxen (*boves*). Hilarion had a pyre prepared, prayed to Christ, summoned the *draco*, commanded it to mount the pile of wood, and set fire to it, with the local people looking on. Jerome notes that the tale was still told throughout Epidaurus in his own day: mothers told it to their children so that it would be handed down to posterity.[55] Much as the central vignette of the Silvester tale salutes Revelation, the central vignette of the Hilarion tale may salute Acts, where Paul shakes the viper from his hand into a pyre.[56] The seventh-century Aldhelm's versions of the tale follow closely along the same lines. He applies quite a variety of terms to the creature: *draco*, *boa*, *gypsa*, *chelydrus*, *basiliscus*, and gives us the additional information that the creature had a black throat from which it delivered pestilential blasts.[57]

Bartholomew's vision of Beliar (4th century AD?)

The *Questions of Bartholomew*, extant in recensions in its original Greek, in Latin, and Slavonic, is probably to be identified with the *Gospel of Bartholomew* mentioned by Jerome, and if so must have originated in or before the fourth century AD. The fourth book of this text recounts a series of eschatological questions posed by Bartholomew to the resurrected Jesus. In response to his request to see the enemy of mankind, Jesus opens the earth with a quake and reveals Satan in the form of Beliar, the '*drakōn* of the abyss'. This massive, one-winged creature has a face that consists of a fiery thunderbolt, whilst malodorous smoke emanates from his nostrils. Beliar claims to have been fashioned by God from a handful of fire. (The term for 'handful' is *drax*, with root *drak-*; there is evidently an attempt to folk-etymologize the term *drakōn* here.) This reflex of the Revelation Dragon is escorted forth, under Michael's supervision, by 660 angels, whilst bound in fiery chains. The fight against Beliar and the victory over him have already been achieved. Following the Lukan exhortation to trample on serpents, Jesus invites the terrified Bartholomew to tread on Beliar's neck. The terrified Bartholomew asks Jesus for the hem of his garment, seemingly to protect him in some way as he approaches the dragon, though Jesus refuses it. Treading on

[55] Jerome *Life of St. Hilarion the Hermit* 39, *PL* 23, 50. For the text see now Leclerc, Morales, and de Vogüé 2007.

[56] Acts 28: 3–6.

[57] Aldhelm *De virginitate* poetic version at Ehwald 1919: 387 lines 808–11, prose version at Ehwald 1919: 266–7.

Beliar's neck nonetheless, Bartholomew compels him to make revelations, eventually sending him back to Hell when done.[58]

Ammon (late fourth–early fifth century AD)

Tyrannius Rufinus of Aquileia (d. AD 410) tells in Latin how the late fourth-century AD Egyptian desert-hermit Ammon is approached by the local population to deal with a ravaging dragon (*draco*). The locals bring with them a shepherd's son whose body has been caused to swell up by the dragon's breath alone. Ammon restores the boy's health by anointing him with oil, before taking himself off to the dragon's cave, kneeling before it and praying. The dragon rushes to the attack, blasting foul air, hissing and screeching, but Ammon's prayers burst the dragon open in the middle, and it belches forth its venom. The corpse in turn gives rise to an unbearable stench, which the locals deal with by heaping sand over it. Once again we note the coordination of the revivification of a boy with the defeat of a dragon, as in the tales of the infant Jesus and Thomas and the *Historia apostolica* version of the Philip tale. Rufinus precedes his tale of Ammon's deed with a narrative of another, abortive dragon-fight. A mixed group of Christian brothers and the faithless comes across the trail of a massive *draco* in the desert. The brothers are eager to follow the trail and, by way of demonstration for the faithless, destroy the dragon by the power of their faith, as they have done other snakes, buoyed up by the Lukan exhortation to trample upon serpents. The faithless, in their terror, beg the brothers not to do this, but one of the brothers in his eagerness runs off and soon finds the dragon's cave, whereupon he calls to the rest to come and watch him destroy it. However, they are then joined by another brother, who advises the faithless not to go and watch, because they would not be able to endure the sight of the creature, especially as they are not used to such things. He has seen it himself, and it is at least fifteen cubits long. He also dissuades the keen brother from continuing with the destruction of the dragon, and brings him back to join the group.[59] What is striking, given this text's relative earliness in the tradition of hagiographical dragon-fights, is the extent to which the Christian slaying of dragons by faith is presented as a well-established, familiar, almost recreational activity. This indicates the extent of the pre-fifth-century dragon-slaying literature that has been lost to us.

Donatus (440s AD)

Sozomen wrote his Greek *Ecclesiastical History* in the 440s AD. Here, in brief compass, he tells of the destruction of a *drakōn* at Chamaegephyrae in Epirus by Donatus the bishop of Euroea during the reign of Gratian (r. 375–83 AD). This dragon, like Hilarion's, snatches up sheep, goats, oxen, and humans. Donatus approaches the

[58] *Questions of Bartholomew* 4. 7–60 (physical description of Beliar at §§12–13; trampling on neck at §§15, 17, 22; hem of Jesus' garment at §§18–20; handful of fire at §28; *βύθιε δράκον* at §46; return to Hell at §60). Dating the text: Jerome *Commentary on Matthew*, Prol.; cf. Quasten 1949–60: i. 127.

[59] Tyrannius Rufinus of Aquileia *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 8 (Ammonas), *PL* 21, 420–2; for the text and discussion see Festugière 1961, 1964. The Lukan exhortation: Luke 10: 19.

creature unarmed. When it raises his head to attack him he makes the sign of the cross in the air before its face and spits into its mouth, killing it instantly. The locals need eight yoke-pair of oxen to drag the carcass out of harm's way, so that they can burn it before it befouls the air by rotting and renders it pestilential.[60]

Victoria (fifth or sixth century AD)

The fifth- or sixth-century Latin *Passion of St Victoria* tells how an evil *draco* is killing the people of Tribulanum (in Italy) and their cattle alike with the blasts of its evil breath (*flatus*). The inhabitants are abandoning town. Victoria, who is living nearby in exile from Rome, tells Tribulanum's kindly mayor, Domicianus, that the city will be delivered of the dragon if he and his people abandon the worship of idols. Domicianus in return promises to make the entire city Christian if Victoria will dispose of the dragon. Those that have abandoned the city in fear return to it to watch Victoria at work. After prayer and the reassurance of secret support from an angel, Victoria presents herself at the mouth of the dragon's cave at dawn, loudly orders it out in the name of Jesus, again in the fashion of an exorcism, and sends it off into the wilderness where no men live or have interests. The dragon speeds off as if being thrashed by whips. No hint of its smell remains, nor any visible trace of it. She then summons the local virgins and with them founds a nunnery in the vacated cave.[61] The seventh-century Aldhelm's accounts follow the lines of the *Passion* closely, and again the same five terms are applied to the dragon as to Hilarion's creature. Particular emphasis is laid upon the fieriness of the dragon's corrupting breath, and its propensity to kill children. And here the townspeople are more specifically bound to abandon their Lupercalias and promiscuous sex.[62] The Victoria tales make an interesting counterpoint to the Silvester tales. In both cases the dragons lurk in caves or cave-like places and in both cases these caves are frequented by troupes of virgin priestesses. In the Silvester tales these are the pagan attendants of the dragon; in the Victoria tales these are the Christian nuns that usurp the dragon's lodgings.

Marcellus of Paris and Hilary of Poitiers (sixth century AD)

Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers, composed his Latin life of St Marcellus of Paris in the third quarter of the sixth century AD. He tells how, after the profitless funeral of a high-born adulteress, an enormous *draco*, identified with the Devil that had first led her into temptation, began to visit her tomb to devour

[60] Sozomen *Ecclesiastical History* 7. 26. 1–4 at Bidez and Hansen 1960: 341 and *PG* 67. 2, 1497–1500. The same tale is recycled more briefly and without any additional content in the 6th or 7th century AD Isidore of Seville's *Chronicle* 107 (*draconem ingentem*), at *MGH Auctores antiquissimi* xi. 2 p. 470 (Mommsen) and *PL* 83, 1051. Here Donatus' floruit is coordinated rather with the reigns of Arcadius (r. 383–408) and Honorius (r. 393–423).

[61] *The Passion of St Victoria* at Delehaye et al. 1883: 158–9.

[62] Aldhelm *De virginitate* poetic version at Ehwald 1919: 450–1, lines 2385–415, and prose version at Ehwald 1919: 308–9. Discussion at Sorrell 1994: 60–8.

her body and, in due course, itself became a metaphorical tomb to her. One day, after it had burst loudly out of her tomb proper, the serpent was confronted by Marcellus. He prayed, whereupon the serpent begged for forgiveness, inclining its head and making blandishing gestures with its tail. But Marcellus struck it on the head three times with his crosier, put his handkerchief around its neck to make a sort of short leash for it, and dragged it out in plain view before an assembled throng of locals. (It is noteworthy here that the Latin versions of the *Questions of Bartholomew* make the hem of Jesus' robe for which Bartholomew asks in protection against the dragon Beliar into a handkerchief.)[63] He then paraded the beast around for three miles before commanding it to go off and live in the desert or plunge into the sea. It was never seen again.[64] This tale seems to come close to the ancient notion that serpents could be born out of the bodies of the dead (Ch. 7). In his *Life of Hilary* Venantius also tells how St Hilary of Poitiers rendered the snake-infested island of Gallinaria (the modern Gallinara, near Andora) habitable. As he disembarked onto it the snakes fled before him in terror at the very sight of him. He then planted his crosier in the earth, thus confining the snakes to that part of the island beyond it.[65]

Andrew (late sixth century AD)

In his late sixth-century Latin *Life of Andrew* Gregory of Tours tells how the apostle Andrew is appealed to by a woman to come and deal with a fifty-cubit-long serpent (*serpens*) laying waste to the local part of Macedonia. As Andrew approaches the beast charges, rampant, at him, but he simply commands it to die, in words that identify it with the Serpent of Eden. It accordingly roars, coils around a tree, and dies indeed, vomiting out a stream of venom. But Andrew then comes across the body of a boy the dragon had killed, with his parents weeping over him. At Andrew's direction a female adherent approaches the body and tells the boy to rise up unharmed in the name of Jesus, which he duly does.[66] This tale clearly has much in common with the infant-Jesus tale, the Thomas tale, the

[63] *Questions of Bartholomew* 4. 18–20 (Latin).

[64] Venantius Fortunatus *Vita S. Marcelli Pariensis episcopi* 10, *MGH Auctores antiquissimi* iv. 2, 53–4 = *PL* 88, 547–50. The miracle is referred to also by Gregory of Tours, *Gloria confessorum* 87, at *MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* i. 2 p. 804. Discussion at Le Goff 1980: 155–88 (very rich), Pohlkamp 1983: 47–8, Sorrell 1994: 64–7, Godding 2000: 151. As to the notion that the Devil should devour the flesh of his own in the form of a serpent, cf. The early 6th-century AD *Life of Caesarius of Arles* by Cyprian of Toulon et al. (9, at *MGH Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum* iii. p. 460), where we are told that when Caesarius fled the monastery of Lérins and turned to profane studies, he fell asleep with a book and dreamed that a serpent was winding around and devouring the arm in which he was holding the volume.

[65] Venantius Fortunatus *Vita S. Hilarii* 35–9, *MGH Auctores antiquissimi* iv. 2, 5.

[66] Gregory of Tours *Life of Andrew* 19, *MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* i. 2, 821–46 at 827 Prieur 1989: 564–651 at 613. For discussion see Prieur 1989, 1995, Bremmer 2000. The tale was recycled almost immediately into the ps.-Abdian *Historia apostolica*: [Abdias] *Historia apostolica* at Fabricius 1719: ii. 402–742, pp. 483–4.

Ammon tale, and the *Historia apostolica* version of the Philip tale, in all of which a boy recently killed (or all but killed) by the serpent is revivified.[67]

Caluppan (late sixth century AD)

In his *Book of the Life of the Fathers*, composed over the decade leading up to AD 592,[68] Gregory of Tours recounts a dragon adventure for the sixth-century St Caluppan of Auvergne too. Caluppan made for himself a hermit's cell and chapel in an inaccessible cleft in the rock near Cantal. As he attempted to pray there serpents would throw themselves down upon his head and wrap themselves around his neck at the instigation of the Devil, though they held no terror for him. However, one day, two massive *dracones* entered his chapel, the first of them rearing up and thrusting its face into the saint's. Caluppan was frozen in terror, but eventually, by making a silent inward prayer, was able to liberate his right hand sufficiently to make the sign of the cross in the air before his own face and then again before the serpent's, and his voice sufficiently to command the serpent, which he compared to the Serpent of Eden and other biblical snakes, to abase itself before the sign and depart, which it duly did. But he now found that the second serpent had in the meantime wrapped itself around his legs. This serpent too he addressed as Satan and ordered out of his cell in the name of Jesus. It likewise departed, but as it went it paused on the threshold of the little chamber and 'emitted a loud noise through its lower part, and filled the room up with such a stench, that it could be believed to be nothing other than the Devil'. But after that day Caluppan was plagued by no more snakes or dragons. This tale in some ways inverts the central vignette of the Victoria narrative: whereas she had ousted a dragon from its cave, here the dragons attempt to evict Caluppan from his.[69]

Florentius (593 AD)

In his *Dialogues* of 593 AD Gregory the Great briefly tells how St Florentius, abbot of Valcastoria some half a century previously, had been approached by a visiting deacon in his cell. As the deacon came close he saw that the whole place around was full of snakes. He begged Florentius to make a prayer, which he duly did, raising his eyes and his hands to God and asking him to remove the plague of snakes. As he spoke, all the snakes were killed by thunder (presumably, more specifically, by a thunderbolt). Florentius then asked God who was to remove all

[67] For further hagiographical dragon-slaying tales in which a victim is revivified, see *Vita S. Germani*, *Acta sanctorum* May i. 265 (St Germanus, undatable), *Vita S. Petroci antiquior* at Grosjean 1956*a*: 493–4 (St Petroc, undatable), *Vita S. Petroci* at Grosjean 1956*b*: 157–8 (St Petroc, 14th cent. AD or before). Cf. Rauer 2000: 73, who also compares narratives in which people made ill by the dragon's breath are cured when the dragon is killed.

[68] E. James 1991: xii.

[69] *Liber vitae patrum* 11. 1, *MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* i. 2, 259–60 = *PL* 71, 1059–60. For trans. see E. James 1991 (with p. xii for the date of the text). Discussion of the episode at Godding 2000: 155–7.

the dead snakes. In immediate response a flock of birds arrived, equal in number to the dead snakes, and each of them carried away one of the carcasses.[70]

The MacMullen hypothesis and its limitations

MacMullen surprisingly contends that the Christian dragon as we know it was only invented *c.* AD 400. The claim is part of a larger, ostentatiously rearguard argument to reassert and to chart the development of 'Medieval superstition'. Prior to *c.* AD 400, he holds, dragons, pagan or Christian, were firmly confined to the realms of myth and fantasy, but 'Then around the turn of the fifth century they appear as facts. They are encountered in real life by real Christian heroes.' The contention presents obvious difficulties, not the least of which is the fact that the third-century *Acts of Thomas* already contains what must be considered a full-blown 'medieval dragon' according to any definition, not to mention the most complex and elaborate dragon-fights of the fourth-century *Acts of Philip*. Perhaps *c.* AD 400 matches the generation-point of the tale of Silvester's dragon-fight adventure—yet here MacMullen insists on the story's roots being traceable already in Tertullian, some two hundred years earlier! But a more general problem for a case of this sort is the fact that, as we saw in the Introduction, the ancients never had made any sustainable, definitional, or categorical distinction between their fantastical *drakontes* and the large snakes of the real world. Nor is it easy to see how the claim that the pagans did not believe in the actuality of even their most fantastic dragons, whether mythical or edge-of-the-world, can be maintained. Nor, indeed, is it self-evident that all hagiographers intended their dragon tales to be read fully literally: elaborate identifications of dragons with the Devil himself can suggest otherwise.[71]

ONWARDS TO ST PATRICK AND ST GEORGE

Let us look briefly ahead to the first manifestations of the famous snake and dragon tales attaching to St Patrick and St George, both of which are formally attested for the first time only in the twelfth century AD. In the meantime many further hagiographical dragon-slaying tales were composed, and brief mention may be made of four of the most interesting of them.

First, the seventh- or eighth-century *Vita i S. Samsonis* records three largely doublet dragon-fights for the fifth- to sixth-century St Samson of Dol (in Brittany). In the first, located at Tricurius (Trigg, in Cornwall), an evil serpent (*serpens*) is ravaging two districts. Samson is guided to the cave by a boy he has just restored to life (although this boy has not been killed by the dragon, we sense that the combined motif of the reanimation of the boy that has been the dragon's last victim and the slaying of the dragon found in the Thomas, Ammon, and other

[70] Gregory the Great *Dialogues* 3. 15. 11–12; text at De Vogüé and Antin 1979: 320–3.
[71] MacMullen 2003: 476–7.

tales lurks in the archaeology of this narrative). Samson challenges the dragon there, whereupon it attempts to turn round and gnaw its own tail (cf. the self-abuse of Thomas' dragon). He then loops his belt around its neck (cf. Bartholomew, Marcellus), leads it out, and hurls it over a precipice. He orders his monks to build a monastery near the cave to preserve the memory of the miracle, whilst he turns the vacated cave into a temporary hermitage in which to fast and pray (cf. Victoria). In the second, located in Brittany, at the behest of King Childebert, Samson again approaches the cave of a dragon laying waste to the area. He performs an overnight vigil before the entrance, fasting and praying, then summons the dragon forth, loops his cloak around its neck and then commands it to cross the Seine and remain beneath a certain rock. With the help of the king, he builds a magnificent monastery in the place. In the briefly reported third, located near his monastery at what would become Saint-Samson-sur-Risle in Brittany, we are told that he dragged this dragon along too and threw it into the sea to its death.[72] The ninth-century *Vita ii S. Samsonis* contrives to inflate these tales into a sequence of four doublet dragon-fights, whilst kaleidoscoping the constituent motifs. One striking addition is an emphasis upon the fieriness of the dragons, which are tracked down by the fiery trails they leave as they travel, or by their smoke. One has a fiery head from which it vomits venom as it dies.[73]

Secondly, the *c.* AD 770 *Conversion and Passion of St Afra* tells how, in Augusta (Augsburg) during the Persecution of Diocletian (AD 303–11) Narcissus, Bishop of Gerundum (in Spain), redeemed Afra's soul from a demon that manifested himself in the form of a disfigured Egyptian by promising another in its place. Once the demon had sworn to destroy any substitute soul Narcissus should name, the bishop gave him that of one of his own friends and colleagues, a *draco* that had been occupying a spring in the Julian Alps and had been preventing the approach of any, human or animal, to it by its lethal breath (*flatus*). Unable to escape his oath, the demon regretfully killed the dragon, and so the spring was liberated.[74]

Thirdly, in AD 784 Paul the Deacon published an account of a miracle performed by Clement of Metz at the city for which he was named, supposedly in the first century AD. When Clement came to the city to preach and to put an end to its idolatry, he found his access to it blocked by a cloud of venomous breath produced by a mass of serpents (*serpentes*) that was occupying the amphitheatre outside its walls. This was, furthermore, destroying men, horses, oxen, sheep, and other animals of the region, and leaving many others sick. The latter he healed with the best of medicines, conversion. Then, after due prayers, Clement and his men entered the amphitheatre's vaults 'to fight the ancient serpent, that is, the Devil'. As they heard him approaching the serpents rushed from the vaults of the amphitheatre in their competitive eagerness to devour him. Clement made the sign of the cross and rushed to join battle. At once they laid down their rampant, swelling necks. He took off his scarf and tied it round the neck of the largest of the serpents (cf. Bartholomew, Marcellus, Samson) and led it, with the townsfolk watching, to the nearby river Seille. He then commanded it, in the name of the

[72] *Vita i S. Samsonis* 1. 49–50, 58, 59; for the text (and French trans.) see Flobert 1997.

[73] *Vita ii S. Samsonis*, *Acta Bollandiana* 6, 98–100, 109–11, 128–30, 144–5 = Rauer 2000: 150–9.

[74] *Conversio et passio ii S. Afrae*, *MGH, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* iii. 41–64 at 60, §§6–7 (= *PL* 142, 593–8).

Trinity, to cross the river with the entirety of its venomous entourage and to go and live in the wilderness. It departed at once, with its fellows. Clement duly made a home for himself and a chapel in the vacated vaults. So effective was Clement's act of cleansing, that serpents, even worms, were henceforth hardly ever found in the amphitheatre. The legend gave rise to the custom, first attested in the twelfth century AD, of the carrying of a dragon effigy in the city's Rogation Day processions, and such effigies are now carried again in Metz's carnivals. Since the sixteenth century (at least) the beast has been known by variations of the name 'Graouilly'.[75]

Fourthly, the ninth-century AD Greek *Acts of Marina* tells of the martyrdom of the fictional St Marina of (Pisidian) Antioch. Olybrius the Governor of the East (*praeses orientis*) falls in love with the Christian virgin and declares that he will marry her if she gives up her faith. Upon her refusal, he has her thrown into prison and tortured. Whilst confined she prays to God to let her see her great opponent, the Devil. The first form in which he appears to her is that of a gigantic *drakōn*, emerging from a corner of her cell. It has a crest and beard of gold, eyes like pearls and silver, and a tongue like a sword (cf. the mechanical version of the Dragon of Rome). Its teeth flash with lightning, whilst smoke and fire issue from its nostrils. Its neck is ringed with snakes and, interestingly, it also has at least one pair of feet. It runs around Marina in a circle with its sword-tongue unsheathed, and its hissing brings about a terrible stench in the gaol. Marina prays to God for deliverance, and makes the sign of the cross on her forehead and over her whole body. The angry *drakōn* rests its head upon her shoulder, loops its tongue down under her feet and hoists her into its mouth. As her hands continue to make the sign of the cross, Christ precedes her into the creature's belly and splits it in two. Marina emerges unharmed, and proceeds to face the Devil again, manifest now in another form.[76]

St Patrick

In the opening chapter of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (completed *c.* AD 731) we are told that no reptiles live in Ireland or indeed can live in Ireland (we considered the Classical antecedents to this 'Irish Earth' theme in Ch. 8). If they are carried there from Britain, as they often are, they die as soon as they encounter the scent of the land. And, conversely, the island's products are effective against poison. If a person bitten by a snake drinks scrapings from leaves of books brought in from the country mixed into water, he is cured and his swelling subsides.[77] Bede does not tell us how Ireland came into this condition, though it is possible that he already knew that it was the work of St Patrick or other saints. As we have seen, two centuries previously Venantius Fortunatus'

[75] Paul the Deacon (Paulus Diaconus, Paulus Warnefridus), *Gesta episcoporum Mettensium*, *PL* 95, 709–22 at 711–13. The text is reproduced at *MGH Scriptores* x. 531–51, but the serpent-fight is disappointingly omitted. For discussion of the legend and its afterlife see the articles by Chazan (esp.), Michaux, Goetz, and Wagner collected at Privat 2000: 17–98.

[76] Text at Usener 1886: 15–46, with the dragon-fight at 24–7.

[77] Bede *Ecclesiatical History of the English People* 1. 1.

St Hilary had been able to pen up the snakes of the island of Gallinaria into one portion of it, and just half a century later Paul the Deacon was associating the serpent-free amphitheatre of Metz with the miraculous serpent-expulsion of a Saint Clement.

We first hear explicitly of the legend of St Patrick's expulsion of the reptiles in Gerald of Wales' *Topography of Ireland*, completed in AD 1187. Some suppose, he says, in what he calls a blandishing fiction, that St Patrick and Ireland's other saints cleared the land of its venomous creatures. This implies that St Patrick was foremost amongst Irish saints credited with this achievement, but not the only one. It also implies that the legend was already widespread and well established in Gerald's own day. No doubt he found it in 'the ancient books of the saints of Ireland' to which he refers in the course of his discussion, which otherwise builds on Bede's themes, the venerable scholar's own discussion being directly cited. Gerald adds that if merchants accidentally bring toads across from England in their holds and throw them out onto the land, they burst. When Irish soil is sprinkled in the gardens of other countries, venomous reptiles are driven away. He tells that a snake once crept into the mouth of a boy from the northern borders of England, and started gnawing away at his insides. The boy was finally delivered of the snake when he travelled to Ireland, drank the water and voided it.[78]

The earliest extant narrative proper of the legend derives from just a few years later. It is found in the *Life of St Patrick* of Jocelin of Furness, whose floruit was the first decade of the thirteenth century. This tells how Patrick raised his staff and, with the help of an angel and the hand of Jesus, assembled together all the poisonous creatures of Ireland. He then compelled them to flee to the high promontory of Croagh (subsequently Croagh Patrick) in County Mayo and from there he cast them down into the sea.[79] The tale's international fame is founded, as with that of St George, upon the (fleeting) reference to it in the AD 1263–7 *Golden Legend* of Jacobus de Voragine.[80]

St George

St George supposedly lived in the third century AD and his wider legend goes back to the sixth century, but his association with the dragon is not attested until the twelfth-century Greek version of the *Miracula Sancti Georgii*, by which time other Christian saints had already been slaying dragons for some nine hundred years. It has, however, been precariously suggested that George's dragon may have been known in some form as early as the sixth century AD on the basis that a document of that age, the so-called *Decretal of Gelasius I*, already condemns the legend of St

[78] Gerald of Wales *Topographia Hibernica* 1. 28. For text see J. S. Brewer, Dimock, and Warner 1861–91: v. 62 (Dimock).

[79] Jocelin of Furness *Life of St Patrick*, *Acta sanctorum*, March ii. 574 §§169–70; English trans. at Swift 1809: 186–8.

[80] Jacobus de Voragine *Golden Legend* 50. For the St Patrick tradition see Bieler 1949 and Kenney 1968. For the broader motif of saints getting rid of plagues of pests, see Krappe 1941 and 1947.

George as apocryphal.[81] With greater certainty we can affirm that what was to become the canonical iconography of St George's dragon-fight, that in which the horseback saint spears the supine dragon below, predates any attested part of the saint's legend: it is, for example, prefigured in a striking haematite intaglio in the British Museum dated to the fifth century AD.[82]

The *Miracula Sancti Georgii* tells that the fair city of Lasia was presided over by an idolatrous king, Selbius, whom God decided to punish. He caused an evil *drakōn* to be born in the adjacent lake, and it ate anyone who came to fetch water. The king's armies were useless against it. The king and his people decided to placate the dragon by offering it a child, and the lot fell upon the king's own daughter (who in later versions acquires the name Sabra). She was duly decked out in purple and linen, gold and pearls, and sent off to the monster by her tearful father, whose attempts to redeem her life from his people with gold and silver came to nothing. George, en route back to his home of Cappadocia, encountered the girl as she sat waiting to be devoured by the dragon, and asked her the reason for her tears. On hearing the story, George prayed to God for help in subjecting the dragon and ran to meet it whilst making the sign of the cross. The dragon fell at his feet. George fitted the girl's belt and her horse's bridle to the dragon and gave it over to the girl to lead back to the city. Overcoming their initial fear of the creature, the king and his people loudly declared their faith in the Christian God, whereupon George killed the dragon with his sword, and handed the girl over to the king. George summoned the Archbishop of Alexandria to baptize the king and his people. They built a church in George's name, in which George called forth a sacred spring.[83]

A number of motifs here chime well with the earlier hagiographical tradition: the prayer, the sign of the cross in the air, and the yoking of the dragon with the princess' girdle, the last of which recalls Bartholomew's frustrated request for Jesus' hem, Marcellus' yoking of his dragon with his handkerchief, Samson's yoking of his dragons with his belt and cloak, and Clement of Metz's yoking of his dragon with his scarf. But other motifs seem to reach back further into the Classical past. The dragon's association with a water-source has deep roots in the Classical tradition, as we have seen, but it had already been appropriated into the hagiographical tradition prior to the St George narrative: it is found, for instance, in the Narcissus narrative. But the central story, in which a king must

[81] *Decretal of Gelasius I* at von Dobschütz 1912: 84; cf. Merkelbach 1959: 245–6, Godding 2000: 151–2.

[82] Michel 2001: i. 279–80 no. 450, with ii. colour pl. vi and monochrome pl. 67. And this in turn is prefigured by an AD 353 medallion of Constantine II, on which the emperor, with an imperial raised hand (but no weapon in it), rides a horse that rears up over a serpent below: the legend is *debellator hostium*, 'vanquisher of enemies': Merkelbach 1959: 244, with illustration. Note also an imperial period Egyptian relief architectural fragment in the Louvre (inv. X5130), in which a falcon-headed Horus dressed in Roman style and riding a horse spears a crocodile between the horse's legs: Brunner-Traut 1985, with fig. 3. As we saw in Ch. 2, the general configuration ultimately goes back to very ancient images of Bellerophon.

[83] *Codex Romanus Angelicus* 46, §12, reproduced at Aufhauser 1911: 52–69. Discussion at Baring Gould 1869: 266–316, Hartland 1894–6: iii. 38–47, Fontenrose 1959: 515–21, Fischer 1975– , Hansen 2002: 119–30, Ogden 2008*a*: 136–8. For a modern Greek folk-tale version of the St George story from Karpathos that conforms closely to the ATU 300 tale-type (decapitation, de-tonguing) that we have argued to underlie the Perseus saga (Ch. 3), see Dawkins 1955: 123–8.

put out his daughter for the dragon to eat, and she is rescued by a passing hero that slays the dragon is strongly reminiscent of the Perseus–Andromeda and Heracles–Hesione traditions in particular. It is actually the Hesione story that offers the single best overall fit, incorporating as it does the motifs of the king forced into the sacrifice of his own daughter by a rebellious populace and the continent hero's refusal to take the rescued virgin to wife.[84] Some hold, nonetheless, that it is the Perseus tradition that constitutes its direct ancestor. In the wider text St George's legend is chiefly centred in Palestine, with Joppa as well as neighbouring Lydda and Tyre being featured. The site of the dragon-slaying itself, Lasia, is seemingly a fictional city with a speaking name, 'Rough place'. In later redactions of the text it too is explicitly located in Palestine, though it is less clear where the *Miracula Sancti Georgii* author imagined it to be.[85] The version of George's slaying of the dragon that was to become the canonical one in the Latin West was again that of Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*, in which the dragon-slaying is located rather in Libya.[86] The most expansive and elaborate account of St George and his dragon-fight in English literature, albeit one much transformed, is that of Spenser's *Faire Queene*, in the near 500 lines of which St George, initially in the guise of the Redcrosse Knight, fights a fiery dragon the size of a mountain over three days.[87]

THE SYMMETRICAL BATTLE REDUX

The dragon-fight narratives of early hagiography naturally and ostentatiously present biblical texts as their primary point of reference. The authors or their featured saints repeatedly compare their dragon opponents to the Serpent of Eden (Thomas, Philip, Andrew) or directly to the Devil himself (Thomas, Philip, Caluppan). Even the serpent-staffs of Pharaoh's sorcerers can be pressed into service (Philip again). Silvester deals with the dragon of Rome after the fashion of St Michael's treatment of the Revelation dragon; Hilarion perhaps deals with his Dalmatian dragon on the model of Paul's treatment of the Maltese viper.

The weapons most prominently deployed against the dragons in these narratives are distinctive of the new religion: prayer and faith, with the episodes serving primarily, their entertainment value aside, as demonstrations of the power of the latter (this is made particularly clear in the abortive dragon-fight narrated by Rufinus of Aquileia). In contrast to the pagan narratives, the hagiographical dragons are not always destroyed. Sometimes they are merely sent off into the wilderness, like the expelled demons to which they are assimilated, and indeed exorcistic techniques are employed against them too. Philip's serpents of the rocks

[84] Note esp. Lycophron *Alexandra* 31–6 and 470–8, 951–7, with scholl., Valerius Flaccus *Argonautica* 2. 451–578.

[85] For the problem of Lasia see Aufhauser 1911: 74–6.

[86] Jacobus de Voragine *Golden Legend* 58, reproduced at Graesse 1850 and Aufhauser 1911: 202–6, with translation in Ryan 1993. For the St George tradition in Western literature and art, see the beautifully illustrated Didi-Huberman, Garbetta, and Morgaine 1994, and also Castellana 2000.

[87] Spenser *Fairie Queene* 1. 11.

and the dragons of Victoria, Caluppan, Marcellus, and Clement of Metz all survive under such circumstances (although the dragon of Silvester also survives, its underground confinement should be compared rather with the dooms of the Thomas dragon and Philip's Echidna, both of which are swallowed up into the underworld).

Nonetheless, the ancestry, at general level, of pagan dragon-fight narratives to the hagiographical ones is demonstrated most fully by the fact that the two groups give us similar complex series of symmetrical motifs in their battles (cf. Ch. 6).[88]

The exchange of fire

Like pagan *drakontes*, Christian ones too can be exceptionally fiery. The creature of the *Shepherd of Hermas* shoots fiery locusts from its mouth. In the *Acts of Philip* the desert dragon is apparently blackened on its back by its own fire, and its belly consists of embers of bronze and sparks of fire. The dragon of the rocks spits fire whilst spewing out a raging torrent of venom, and his whole body resembles fire, whilst also being as black as soot. Beliar's face consists of a fiery thunderbolt. Marina's dragon breathes fire from its nostrils whilst flashing lightning from its teeth. The seventh-century poetic version of Aldhelm's *De virginitate* speaks of the dragon of Rome faced by Silvester breathing forth a death-bringing flame from its crypt. The same text describes the flames of Victoria's dragon, with which it kills people directly, as emanating from its stomach. The ninth-century *Vita ii* of Samson is particularly emphatic about its fire imagery: the four dragons that Samson fights sequentially in this text are said to leave a burning trail as they travel, and smoke rises up from their fiery heads.

The Christian slayers use fire against the dragon in a number of ways. In the *Acts of Philip* the apostle asks God to direct lightning at the desert dragon and the snakes that accompany it, and to direct the sun's rays into the snakes' holes so as to destroy their eggs. The dragon of the rocks subsequently addresses Philip in turn as 'son of thunder'.[89] Zeus' battle against Typhon does not seem so far away. Florentius deploys a thunderbolt, as it seems, against his plague of snakes. Hilarion directly burns his dragon on a pyre, whilst Donatus similarly uses a pyre to burn the carcass of the dragon he has killed, thus saluting the Classical notion that the *drakōn*'s carcass represents a continuing pestilential threat. The pyres of Hilarion and Donatus make us wonder whether the slightly curious pyre-imagery in Philip's prayer over the desert dragon may, additionally, salute a variant in which he too had deployed a pyre against his troublesome snakes. We

[88] Occasionally too the narratives make direct appeal to pagan serpent lore. Sozomen's Donatus tale (*Ecclesiastical History* 7. 26. 1–4 at Bidez and Hansen 1960: 341 and *PG* 67. 2, 1497–1500) for example, compares the dragon of Epirus in size to the snakes said to be associated with the Indians (for which see Ch. 10).

[89] Fire imagery proliferates in the extensive Philip narrative. It is to be found in the 'light of the monad' in Philip's eyes with which he defeats the gate-guarding *drakontes*. It continues in his adventures in the city of Ophiorhyme, when e.g. upon being stripped, Mariamne becomes engulfed in a protective fiery cloud: *Martyrion* 20 (V).

might also note here the fifth-century AD *Gospel (Questions) of Bartholomew*: the defeated Beliar is kept bound in fiery chains.

As we noted before, the notion of the symmetrical deployment of fire in dragon-fights has a purchase that extends beyond Graeco-Roman culture (it is prominent, for example, in ancient Indian culture), and so the shared presence of this reciprocal motif alone should not be considered probative. It may be, more particularly, that the motif of the symmetrical use of fire is already present in the Bible, or at any rate in the Old Testament Apocrypha and the New Testament. The motif probably lurks already behind the Septuagint's Bel and the Dragon, in which Daniel feeds the dragon cakes made of pitch, fat, and hair that turn its own fire against it. The motif may also lurk behind Acts' tale of Paul shaking a viper off his hand into a pyre. Here a particular awareness of symmetry is suggested by the observation of the Maltese locals that Paul's hand does not become 'inflamed' as a result of the viper bite.[90] Both of these episodes may well be derivative of classical culture in the first place (as we have already noted in the case of Bel and the Dragon). Nonetheless, the motif of the symmetrical use of fire does become probative when considered as part of the wider system of reciprocal motifs shared by pagan and hagiographical narratives, to which we now turn.

The exchange of liquids: Venom and saliva

We have a fine example of a serpent's own venom being turned against itself in a sort of symmetry in the Thomas tale. Thomas compels his dragon to suck the venom out of the wound it has inflicted, so that it ingests it itself and dies in turn. When Donatus spits into his Epirus dragon's mouth and kills it, the gesture would seem to have two resonances. Probably, at a basic level, Donatus is to be regarded as quenching the dragon's fire, which is in a sense its essence, and so killing it in that way. But at another level he makes appeal to the pagan traditions about the poisonous and indeed scalding nature of human saliva for snakes. This episode then seems to offer us another example of the use of fire against the dragon. Compatibly, in the *Acts of Philip*, Philip heals Stachys, who has been blinded—his eyes 'inflamed'—by the liquid from serpent eggs, by rubbing the saliva of his holy virgin assistant Mariamne into them. (One must concede a degree of double determination here, however, given that Jesus himself had cured the blind by putting spittle into their eyes.)[91]

The exchange of breath and air

The *kētos* of the *Shepherd of Hermas* travels in a cloud, which is presumably the product of its breath. The motif of bad air is strikingly apparent in the *Acts of Philip*, in which the desert dragon carries around a great and dark (*gnophōdēs*)

[90] Acts 28: 3–6: *πίμπρασθαι*.

[91] Mark 8: 23; John 9: 6; cf. Mark 7: 32–7, where Jesus cures a speech impediment by (as it seems) putting his own spittle on the patient's tongue. Cf. Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1999: ii. 404.

wind, as a sort of aura. Indeed the dragon is itself a sort of embodiment of this foul wind, as a 'very great and dark *drakōn*' (*gnophōdēs drakōn megistos*).[92] The dragons that guard the gates to Ophiorhyme are in the habit of blinding people that try to pass through by blowing into their eyes. In the Ps.-Abdian version of Philip's life the single dragon he encounters there breathes out a noxious breath that brings all around it to death's door. The *Acts of Silvester* makes the crisis that necessitates Silvester's action against the Roman dragon the point at which the dragon, displeased at the cessation of its pagan offerings, starts to breathe out a noxious breath that imperils the citizens; people, especially children, die in great numbers (one thinks of the malaria emanating from the Pomptine Marshes of old, which similarly impacted disproportionately upon the young).[93] The dragon destroyed by Rufinus' Ammon breathes foul blasts from its mouth which are in themselves able to swell the limbs of the young shepherd boy. The *Gospel of Bartholomew*'s cosmic Beliar breathes a stinking smoke from his nostrils.[94] The *Passion of St Victoria* speaks of the harmful blasts (*flatus*) of her dragon, which were killing men and cattle alike. The *Acts of Marina* repeatedly emphasizes the stench of the dragon sent against her: since the stench is coordinated with its hissing, we must assume that its breath is again the cause.

And this motif continues to flourish after the sixth century too. Whereas the poetic version of Aldhelm's seventh-century *De virginitate* speaks of the dragon of Rome faced by Silvester breathing forth a death-bringing flame from its crypt, the corresponding prose version speaks of a pestilential breath in such a way as to highlight its poisonousness rather than its fieriness: a tight collar is, as we have seen, the solution. Aldhelm also ascribes poisonous pestilential blasts to Hilarion's dragon (prose version), and to Victoria's dragon (both versions; in the poetic version they are combined with fire). The cloud of pestilence caused by the venomous breath of the snakes gathered in the amphitheatre in the eighth-century AD account of Clement of Metz's dragon-fight is described at length and in detail. The smokiness of the four dragons fought by Samson in his ninth-century *Vita ii* may be thought of as infecting the air, although the point is not made explicitly. Both the ninth- and eleventh-century lives of Gildas make the production of a lethal pestilential breath from its cave the sole complaint against his Roman dragon. St George's dragon pollutes the air with its breath in Jacobus de Voragine's influential thirteenth-century account.[95] The motif of the dragon's poisonous breath was to flourish, beyond hagiography, in the folklore of modern Europe, not least that of Britain.[96]

[92] Note also that the dragon of the Shepherd of Hermas emerges from a cloud, although this is specifically explained as the dust-cloud it has whipped up.

[93] Vitruvius 1. 4, Martial 10. 62, Juvenal 9. 16–17, etc.; cf. W. H. S. Jones 1907: 69–75.

[94] *Gospel of Bartholomew* 4. 12–13. Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 65 see more than a coincidence between this Gospel's description of Beliar and the *Acts of Philip*'s description of the desert dragon: both emit fire and breathe smoke, and Bartholomew accompanies Philip as he encounters his desert dragon.

[95] Jacobus de Voragine *Golden Legend* 58.

[96] Amongst British dragon legends of more recent centuries, themselves evidently inspired by the hagiographical tradition, albeit at some remove, poisonous breath is associated with the Stoor Dragon (which could wither crops with its breath alone), and the dragons of Deerhurst (which could poison people with its breath alone), Aller (which breathed poison), Sexhow (which did the same), and

But the prize for the most striking production of a bad air by any dragon, pagan or Christian, must go to the second of the dragons faced by the late sixth-century AD Gregory of Tours' Caluppan, which, as it departs, breaks wind into his cell, releasing a smell that only the Devil himself could produce. At one level, no doubt, humour is intended. At another, the notion that dragons corrupt the surrounding air is taken to its logical conclusion. But at a third level this narrative is more respectful of natural history than is most of the ancient dragon tradition. For while snakes can hardly corrupt the air with their venom, as they are so often represented as doing, even relatively friendly and tractable snakes of the *Elaphe* genus can, as we saw in Chapter 10, produce an oppressive and malodorous pong (a natural defence, of course) by voiding their cloacal glands. This particular motif too found its way into British folklore. In the humorous and scatological ballad of the Wantley Dragon the creature's foul smell is associated with its excrement, which it projects into the face of its opponent, the knight More.[97]

The strong connection between the dragon's breath and the fumes that emanate from the underworld that obtains in pagan literature persists in Christian. The *Acts of Silvester* explicitly compare the 365 steps down which one must descend to the Dragon of Rome, problematic for its noxious breath, to a descent into Hell. The twelfth-century AD *Mirabilia urbis Romae* was to make the point even more emphatically: the place where the dragon lived, the text reports, is now plainly and simply called 'Hell' (*Infernus*) because of the fumes it used to belch forth. Other hagiographical dragons live, more generally, in caves. This is explicit in the cases of the dragon in Rufinus' tale of the Christian brothers, Victoria's dragon (in the *Passion* and both Aldhelm versions), in which the cave of the dismissed dragon actually becomes Victoria's nunnery, and in the later tales of Gildas and Samson. It is perhaps implied also for the dragon of the rocks of the *Acts of Philip*. Silvester's dragon apart, Thomas's dragon, Philip's Echidna, and the second dragon of Samson's *Vita i* all end up confined within the ground, almost as if this is a natural home for them.

Like pagan dragons, Christian ones can also use a sucking breath deleteriously. In the Hilarion tale (the Jerome and Aldhelm prose versions) the giant *boa* dragon uses its breath to suck its victims down and to devour them, farmers, shepherds, and even oxen.

And Christian dragons too produce problematic carcasses. In Rufinus' Ammon tale the locals have to heap desert sand over the dragon's carcass to combat its stench. In the Donatus tales (both Sozomen's and Isidore's) the dragon's gargantuan rotting corpse is hauled off for burning by eight yoke-pairs of oxen before it can constitute a health hazard. In the *Golden Legend* version of St George's fight with the dragon, the dead beast is carted off to a remote field by four teams of oxen.[98] The rotting Python lies close at hand. The

Sockburn (the breath of which rendered it impossible to approach and kill). See Simpson 1980 esp. 32, 37, 59–62 and 78, 89, 137–41 for sources and discussion. In Italy the dragon of Sant' Arcangelo filled the region with its pestiferous breath until slain by Prince Colonna of Stigliano: Levi 1947: 110–11. See below for the pestiferous breath produced by snake-plagues in the Tyrol.

[97] The ballad is reproduced at Simpson 1980: 135.

[98] The disposal of the potentially pestilential carcass of the dragon became a productive motif: cf. Aufhauser 1911: 211–12 (motif no. 64). Another example: the dragon killed by the archangel Michael

marvellous vignette in which St Florentius prevails upon God to send a flock of birds to carry away the carcasses of the plague of snakes he has just killed is only intelligible on the understanding that their rotting carcasses are going to pollute the atmosphere, and that they constitute a mass so great as to be unmanageable for the locals.

Christian slayers in turn use breath and good air against the dragon. In the *Gospel of Thomas* the young Jesus destroys the viper that bites Jacob by blowing onto the wound it has dealt him (*katephysēse*). When Thomas kills his dragon by compelling it to ingest its own poison, the dragon is imagined to be killed at one level by over-inflation (*physētheis*).[99] In the *Acts of Philip* Philip and his associates purify the air made dark by the cloud of smoke that accompanies his desert-dragon by shaking holy water into it in the shape of the cross. By making the sign of the cross in the air, Donatus replaces his dragon's bad air with good air. Most striking of all is the prayer Marina makes against her dragon: 'Lord, chase this wicked wolf and mad dog and its stench away from me. And let the sweetness and goodness of your holy spirit/breath (*pneuma*) come to me.' Here the dragon's breath is directly contrasted with and opposed by the explicitly sweet breath that is the Holy Spirit.

The exchange of gaze and vision

The theme of the dragon's terrible gaze, and that of human gaze deployed symmetrically against it, recurs in the *Acts of Philip*. The apostle embarks upon a staring competition with the two dragons that guard the gates of Ophiorhyme. They see the ray of light of the monad that shines in his eyes. After an hour, they turn their heads away and die. Also noteworthy here is the habit of these two serpents of blinding those that try to enter the gate, albeit by blowing into their eyes. And Stachys has been blinded by liquid from serpents' eggs. Caluppan apparently finds himself, like Philip, face-to-face with the first of the two dragons he encounters, as it rears up rampant to meet him. He finds himself frozen in terror, his limbs bound—or perhaps we are to consider the freezing a more direct effect of the serpent's hypnotic stare.

in the 9th- or 10th-century AD *Homiliary of Saint-Père* has to be hewn into twelve sections and carted to the sea by oxen to preserve the people and the cattle from its stench (text at Cross 1986: 33–4; reprinted at Rauer 2000: 158–60). The motif also spread to post-hagiographical literature of various kinds. The 8th- to 10th-century AD *Beowulf* has its Geats shove the body of the dead Firedrake over a cliff wall into the sea, although its potential to pollute is not explicitly supplied as the reason for this (3131–3; cf. Rauer 2000: 52–86 for the text's hagiographical background and 119–23 for the motif itself). The Byzantine Epic *Digenis Akritis* is probably a 12th-century AD product in the form it has come down to us, though it reflects the world of the Euphrates frontier of the 9th or 10th century AD (Jeffreys 1998: pp. xvii, xli). At the Grottaferrata version 6. 42–85 and 98 Digenis slays a massive coiling dragon which sends forth flame and thunderbolts from three heads by cutting off all the heads in a single blow. He then summons servants to carry the body away at once.

[99] *Acts of Thomas* 33: *ὁ δὲ δράκων φυσηθεὶς ἐλάκησεν καὶ ἀπέθανεν.*

The exchange of sound and silence

Powerful words are important on the saints' side in almost all the tales under consideration here, both in the form of ubiquitous prayers to God, implicit or explicit, and in that of the demands made directly of the serpents themselves to die or depart, such as are found in the tales of Thomas, Philip, Hilarion, Victoria, Andrew, Caluppan, Marcellus, and Clement. In the *Acts of Philip* Philip subjects the demon-assimilated dragon of the rocks to a virtual exorcism, whilst he is said to deploy a Hebrew spell against the Echidna herself. Aldhelm's poetic version of the Victoria tale explicitly asserts that the dragon was compelled by the power of Victoria's speech itself. As early as Psalms the Judaeo-Christian tradition had known of the deaf asp that stops up its ears and will not listen to the charmer, however skilful his spells may be, as we have seen (Ch. 6).[100] We perhaps see an intimation of Marsi's deployment of silent incantations against their tricky deaf or deafened adversaries in Caluppan's silent inner prayer against the first of the dragons he faces in his rocky cell.

Asymmetry: 1. Circularity vs. perpendicularity

There is the one signal respect in which the hagiographical battles fail to match the symmetries of their pagan counterparts. The hagiographical dragons continue to coil just as their pagan forebears do, but it is striking that the saints, in contrast to their forebears, do not deploy curves and circles against them. The closest we come to such a thing is in the Samson tradition, when, in terror before the saint, the dragons form themselves into circles to gnaw their own tails. Why should the saints make little use of the circle? My best guess is that the imagery of the circle and the curve is trumped, on the human side, by that of the linearity and perpendicularity of the ultimate Christian symbol, the cross, the sign of which Philip and Caluppan make in the air against the serpents they face (against the desert dragon, in Philip's case). The point is perhaps best made in the case of St Marina. Whilst her dragon is said to run around her in a circle as it initially threatens her, she contrives to burst it open by crossing herself as she is swallowed by it.[101]

Asymmetry: 2. The burgeoning brood

Finally, the Christian tradition makes much of a dreadful capacity on the serpents' part to which man can offer no directly symmetrical counterpart: that of reproducing

[100] Psalms 58: 4–5. For further biblical references to snake-charming, see Jeremiah 8: 17 (God threatens plagues of venomous, biting serpents that will be resistant to charming), Mark 16: 18 (snake-handling), and Ecclesiastes 10: 11 (if the snake bites the charmer before it is charmed, the charmer makes no profit).

[101] However, we note that in the ps.-Epiphanian Christian tradition of the 3rd century AD, discussed in Ch. 8, the snake-deterrent remains of Jeremiah were arranged by Alexander (who hardly knew the cross) in a circle around the city of Alexandria to protect it.

rapidly and prolifically. This notion is only vestigially present in pagan narratives of the sort reviewed in Chapter 6. One might see an indirect salute to it in the Hydra's ability to replace every lopped head instantaneously with two more. At any rate the second-century AD rationalizer Heraclitus speculates precisely that this imagery symbolized the fact that the troublesome snake in question had had many young that accompanied her and aided their mother in destroying her attackers.[102] And we may think again of the plague of snakes that Medea hurled into the tomb of Apsyrtus at Absoris.[103] Turning to the hagiography, the Philip narrative strongly implies that its dragons preside over a burgeoning brood of snakes. The Echidna is defined on first mention as 'mother of the snakes', with the implication that this is a respect in which she is problematic. The desert dragon is then said to be accompanied by 'a multitude of snakes and their young', and attention is drawn also to God's destruction of the snakes' eggs waiting to hatch in their holes. The notion seems to lurk here that, apart from other difficulties the dragon may be causing, it has been in some way responsible for a sudden and troublesome plague of snakes, and that it presides over them. St Caluppan is clearly afflicted by a brood of snakes that has got out of control, a brood presided over by not one but two larger and more terrible dragons (mummy and daddy?). Florentius' snake-plague speaks for itself. As we learn towards the end of the Clement of Metz narrative, the amphitheatre full of snakes with which he has to contend is presided over by a single snake more monstrous than all the others. Later on again, the notion of an uncontrollable brood clearly underlies the St Patrick tradition.

LUCIAN AND THE ORIGINS OF THE HAGIOGRAPHICAL *DRAKŌN*-SLAYING TRADITION

Lucian's *Philopseudes* gives us a series of parodic tales of the magical and the marvellous, including the original version of the *Sorcerer's Apprentice* tale. The first tale in its series, told by the Platonist Ion and mocked by the sceptical Tychiades, is a *drakōn*-slaying story that, despite its parodic nature, is of a peculiar richness for matters of the symmetry of battle. Here a viper has bitten Midas, a valued farm slave, on the toe as he dressed vines. Its venom has caused his body to rot and he is on the point of death. The master calls in a Chaldaean-Babylonian wizard, who draws the venom out of the wound by tying a piece chipped from a virgin's tombstone to the toe (a means of bringing the power of her restless ghost to bear),[104] and by making an incantation over it. Midas is cured instantaneously,

[102] Heraclitus *De incredibilibus* 18 Hydra.

[103] Hyginus *Fabulae* 26. [Aristotle] *Mirabilia* 832a is sensitive to the tendency of snakes to breed and swarm: it notes that Thessaly depends upon its stork population to control its snakes, so that the penalty for killing a stork there is equivalent to that for killing a man. And it reports that at one time Lacedaimon was afflicted at once with a famine and a plague of snakes (were the two related?), so that the Spartans turned to the remedy of eating the snakes, with the result that the Pythia termed them *ophiodeiroi* ('serpent-throated').

[104] Cf. Philip's use of the living virgin Marianne's saliva to cure Stachys' serpent-inflicted blindness at *Acts of Philip* 14. 2, 7 (A).

jumps to his feet, and carries his own stretcher home. The Chaldaean then makes a purificatory circle around the farm with a sulphur-fumigation, and summons all the farm's venomous creatures before him (à la St Patrick), common snakes, asps, vipers, horned snakes, darting snakes, common toads, and *physaloi*, the name of the last indicating a poisonous creature that somehow blows out (*physaō*): they may be puff-adders or they may be puff-toads, which were held to be poisonous.[105] The Chaldaean knows that one snake is missing, and sends the youngest of those present to fetch a big old *drakōn*. The *drakōn* has failed to respond to the summons because, the narrator explains, it is either too decrepit or it is deaf. The Chaldaean then blows over all the creatures (*enephysēse*, *physēmati*), and they explode in flame.[106]

To return to the familiar themes of the symmetry of battle, here we have the *drakōn* and its associates employing against man a no doubt fiery venom, and this is answered doubly by the Chaldaean's burning of sulphur and by his own fiery breath. That the *drakōn* and its associates deploy bad air is indicated by the presence amongst them of the 'puffing' *physaloi*, whatever they are precisely. This is doubly answered by the Chaldaean's sulphurous fumigation and, again, by his projection of his fiery breath against them. There is evidently a battle of sound and silence here too. The Chaldaean uses his voice against the snakes both in making his incantation and in making his summons. The *drakōn*'s deafness, parodically associated with senescence and decreptitude (all the funnier given that snakes were held able ever to rejuvenate themselves by sloughing), would in a non-parodic context have been a token of its terrible ability to resist incantation.[107] And the Chaldaean deploys a circle of purification against the snakes too.

But this narrative is also important for other reasons, because although around half a century earlier than our earliest extant hagiographical dragon-slaying narrative (Thomas), it is almost certainly parodying an already established tradition of Christian narratives. I make this claim on the basis of three of its motifs in particular. The first is the healed Midas' carrying home his own stretcher: 'Midas himself picked up the stretcher on which he had been brought and went off straight back to the farm.' This motif, which graphically conveys the speed and completeness of the recovery, is well-known from the descriptions of Jesus' miraculous healings in all four of the Gospels, but is not found previously in a pagan context.[108]

[105] *Physaloi* are poisonous at any rate at Lucian *Dipsads* 3. For poisonous puff-toads see Aelian *Nature of Animals* 17. 12; cf. 9. 11.

[106] Lucian *Philopseudes* 11–13. For the *Philopseudes* in general and this tale in particular see L. Müller 1932, J. Schwartz 1951, Albini 1993, Ebner et al. 2001, Ogden 2007*a*.

[107] Rejuvenation through sloughing: Aesop no. 458 Perry; see Ch. 4. Tychiades' mocking question of Ion as to whether the old *drakōn* used a walking stick may similarly make appeal to the sinister notion that an ancient (and all the more terrible for it) serpent might manifest itself for deceitful purposes as a decrepit, stick-carrying old man, precisely as we find at Apuleius *Metamorphoses* 8. 19–21 (a narrative which may, just, derive from Lucian too, if he is to be identified with the 'Lucius of Patras' that Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 128 names as the author of the *Onos*, the model for the *Metamorphoses*, though the episode does not appear in the extant summary of the *Onos* transmitted with Lucian's œuvre).

[108] Matthew 9: 6–7, Mark 2: 9 and 11–12, Luke 5: 24–5, John 5: 8–9; with discussion at Betz 1962: 158. Thiessen 1990: 57–89 reviews the healing motifs of New Testament narratives more generally. However, most of Lucian's commentators have held that he is not alluding to the New Testament here

The second is the configuration of the threat as a large *drakōn* presiding over a host of smaller snakes, which we find in the tales of Philip's desert dragon and dragon of the rocks and the Caluppan tale (and then subsequently also in the Clement of Metz tale), though, again, not in any significant way in any previous pagan narrative. We may note too that in the tale of Philip's dragon of the rocks and then again in that of Clement the broader brood of snakes is encountered in advance of the presiding *drakōn*. And as in the Lucian tale, Philip's dragon of the rocks is summoned late to his presence by the lesser snakes.

The third is the motif of the coordinated revivification of the serpent's most recent victim, which we find already in the tale of the young Jesus in the *Gospel of Thomas*, then in the tales of Thomas himself, Ammon, and Andrew, and it surely lurks behind the adjacent motif of the resuscitated boy in the Samson tradition too,[109] but again not in any other pagan antecedent. As to the *Gospel of Thomas*, we may also note the verbal parallelism between its description of Jesus' blowing upon Jacob's wound (*kat-ephysēse*), with the effect of destroying the viper (*echidna*) that had dealt it, and Lucian's description of the Chaldaean's blowing upon the reptile host (*en-ephysēse*) subsequent to the bite dealt to Midas by the viper (*echidna*), and so destroying them all.

Here it is worth drawing attention also to another early hagiographical narrative involving a snake. The text in question is the early third-century AD *Acts of John*.[110] John and his brethren come to Ephesus and lodge in the house of Andronicus and his beautiful wife Drusiana, who has given up sex for the sake of godliness. Here a certain Callimachus develops an obsession with Drusiana and sends her billets doux, in response to which she develops a fever, takes to her bed, and prays to God to die, since she has become an obstacle to virtue in another. And die she does. But this is not the end of Callimachus' passion, and he bribes Andronicus' steward, Fortunatus, who has the keys to Drusiana's tomb, to open it up so that he can have sex with the corpse. He begins to strip the body in preparation, but as he gets down to her last undergarment, a huge, terrible venomous snake (*ophis*) appears 'from somewhere' (*pothen*) and kills Fortunatus with a single bite. It then coils around Callimachus' feet whilst 'blowing out in terrible fashion' (*deinōs apophysōn*), brings him down, sits upon his body and goes to sleep on top of him. At the same time a beautiful young man manifests himself, whom Callimachus recognizes to be an angel. The angel covers Drusiana's body again with his cloak, and flashes sparks of light from his eyes into Drusiana's. He turns to Callimachus and tells him to die so that he may live. When John, Andronicus, and the brethren arrive at the tomb, this is the scene that confronts them. The angel explains that he has come to rescue Drusiana's body from its impending shame and then ascends into Heaven. John orders the serpent to get off Callimachus, since he is destined for conversion, and brings Callimachus to his

but rather drawing upon a motif from a common Hellenistic tradition of healing narratives: Reitzenstein 1906: 3, Weinreich 1909: 174, L. Müller 1932: 41, Koeffler 1949: 165, J. Schwartz 1951: 42, Albini 1993: 96 n. 24, Ebner et al. 2001: 167–82, esp. 167–71, and Wälchli 2003: 148 n. 232.

[109] At *Vita i Samsonis* 1. 48–50 Samson revives the boy after he has died in a riding accident; but it is the revived boy that leads him to the dragon's lair, which suggests he has encountered it before.

[110] So Bremmer 2001c: 153; For broader discussion of the *Acts of John*, see Junod and Kaestli 1988 and Bremmer 1996.

feet. Callimachus begs to be admitted to the Christian fold. John proceeds to raise Drusiana from death (she may return to life now that she no longer constitutes a temptation for Callimachus), and she in turn raises Fortunatus from death, despite his dubious entitlement to such a privilege. But the raised Fortunatus remains unconverted and accordingly dies again, once and for all, a few days later from the 'blackness' (*melania*) resulting from the serpent's bite. One of the brethren finds him with the blackness spreading over him, and dead because it had reached his heart. John concludes that the Devil has taken his own child.[111]

For all that this tale is not a dragon-slaying tale proper, it sheds important light on the Lucian tale in so far as it combines, as the Thomas tale does, the motifs of dragon, of blowing out, and of revivification. Given Callimachus' metaphorical death and rebirth in Christ, his assertion that he almost died during the serpent's attack, and the emphasis upon John's raising of Callimachus to his feet after the serpent attack, one wonders whether there does not lurk behind our narrative a simpler one, perhaps without the Fortunatus figure, in which it was more simply Callimachus himself that was killed by the serpent and resurrected by John. But the John tale in one respect corresponds more closely with the Lucian tale than the Thomas tale does, and this is in the attention given to the decay of Fortunatus' body. Lucian describes the way the viper's poison affects Midas thus: 'Then we saw Midas himself being carried in on a stretcher by his fellow slaves, his whole body swollen and livid (*pelidnos*). He was clammy all over, and he was only just still breathing.'[112] It is rather easier to suppose that the Thomas tale and the John tale reflect a story-type already well established in Christian narrative culture at the time that Lucian wrote, than that they both separately spun their narratives out of Lucian's.

Additionally, we may take note of another of the parodic stories in the *Philopseudes* collection, that in which Eucrates averts a manifestation of a massive anguipede Hecate by turning the bevel of his magical ring (acquired from an Arab) to the inside of his hand. The earth opens up, revealing the underworld beneath, whereupon Hecate plunges down into it, with the earth closing up again after her. This final motif aligns strongly with that of the final fates of Thomas's dragon and Philip's Echidna, amongst others, both of which the earth opens up to swallow. Has Lucian displaced a motif from one of his traditional tales into another? We know that he does this elsewhere in the *Philopseudes*.[113] Lucian's Hecate episode also exhibits affinities with that of the dragon of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, given that Hecate is presented as an attacking apparition, and the aversion of the attack results in eschatological revelation.

We should note how tightly the Lucian tales, the Thomas tale, and the John tale cohere in time and place. Although we do not know exactly when Lucian wrote the *Philopseudes*, or where, in the course of his long wanderings that took in at least Athens, Rome, Gaul, and Egypt, we can say that he is likely to have produced it in the 170s and possibly as late as the early 180s, and we can say that he was a

[111] *Acts of John* 62–86; for text see Lipsius and Bonnet 1891–1903: ii. 1, 515–25. The terms used to describe the creature: ὄφις, 71, 86; ὄφις παμμεγέθης, 73; βοβόλον ἑρπετόν, 75; δεινόν . . . ζῷον, 76. δεινῶς ἀπαφυσῶν: 71. μελανία: 86.

[112] Lucian *Philopseudes* 11.

[113] Lucian *Philopseudes* 22–4. Motival displacement in the *Philopseudes*: Ogden 2007*a*: 241.

native of Syrian (now Turkish) Samosata.[114] It is thought, as we have seen, that the *Acts of Thomas* were written in the 220s or the 230s in Edessa, some twenty-five miles from Samosata as the crow flies, and that the *Acts of John* were written in the same city at some point in the first half of the third century AD.[115] In the *Philopseudes* tale, therefore, we seem to have the earliest witness, for all that it is a parodic and indirect one, to the story-type that was to have such a *grande fortune* in the hagiographical tradition.[116]

TYROLEAN TALES

Many of the motifs of both pagan and early hagiographical dragon-fights alike intriguingly re-emerge in a folk-tale type attested across a swathe of Europe, principally in the German-speaking lands and their immediate neighbours.[117] Some fine examples of it were collected in the Tyrol in the nineteenth century. A tale from Steeg tells of a sorcerer that once lived there. He promised to free the mountain woods of snakes, whose number had increased in a terrifying fashion. He went up onto the mountain, made a great pyre, then read spells from an old book. After a while, snakes shot out from here and there and plunged into the fire. Eventually there shot out a snow-white queen-snake, with a little golden crown on her head, her appearance preceded by shrill singing. For all that the sorcerer had warned the villagers of the dangers of such a snake, she leaped and pierced him through, so that he fell down as dead as a door-nail.[118] A tale from Friedlach, partly reminiscent of the Pied Piper story, tells how it too was beset by a rapidly burgeoning brood of snakes, to the extent that they started to enter the houses, crawl onto tables, and eat the food from under people's noses. Nothing worked against them: prayers, fire, or poison. The villagers were preparing to up sticks and abandon their home, when an Italian stranger named Fridelo presented himself to them, and promised to rid them of the snakes so long as no one had seen a white queen-snake amongst them. Since none had done so, he proceeded. He had brushwood collected into a wide circle around an old oak on a hill, took up position in the tree and had the wood kindled. He then began to play a lovely tune

[114] Ogden 2007*a*: 3–4. [115] So Bremmer 2001*c*: 153.

[116] One might be tempted to find Judaeao-Christian imagery in the Chaldaean's fiery breath too. On the one hand it might salute the punitive fiery breath of Jehovah, repeatedly mentioned in both Old and New Testaments: Isaiah 30: 33, 'Long ago was Topheth made ready, made deep and broad, its fire-pit a blazing mass of logs, and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone blazing in it' (New English Bible); Job 4: 9, 'They perish at the blast of God and are shrivelled by the breath of his nostrils' (NEB); 2 Thessalonians 2: 8, 'And then that lawless man will be revealed, whom the Lord will destroy with the breath of his mouth'; cf. also Samuel 22: 16, Psalms 18: 15. However, we cannot categorically separate this motif from the pagan heritage, which had known of the fiery winds used by Zeus against Typhon as early as Hesiod (Ch. 2).

[117] ATU no. 672B*. Discussion of the type at Röhrich 1976: 195–209, 321–2.

[118] The text: Zingerle 1850: 181–2 no. 302; trans. at Ogden 2007*a*: 88. For the significance of the queen's whiteness, not a motif known from Graeco-Roman antiquity, see Ch. 3 (on the Grimm Brothers' *The White Snake*). The vignette of the snakes' destruction is strikingly similar to that of King Janamejaya's *Sarpa-sattra*, for which see Ch. 6. For the serpent killing its victim in the fashion of a javelin, cf. Lucan 9. 822–7.

on a small flute, whereupon hundreds of snakes were drawn to the pyre from everywhere, houses, rocks, and ravines. They attempted to leap across the fiery circle, but in vain, and they all perished in the flames. The locals, standing on adjacent hills, thought Fridelo had achieved his victory as they peered through the smoke and steam that rose from the pyre, and they began to shout for joy. But then a singing sound heralded the approach of the white queen with her terrible coils after all. She was able to leap across the pyre and kill Fridelo, though dying herself too in the flames. The community honoured their saviour by naming their village for him (Friedlach, supposedly originally Vridelosaich, 'Fridelo's-oak') and instituting an annual snake-mass in expiation of his soul.[119]

Here we have familiar motifs: the burgeoning brood; a more terrible serpent-leader presiding over the brood; the deployment of poison against the snakes; the deployment of fire against them, most remarkably in the shape of the pyre onto which the snakes are summoned (cf. Hilarion); the production of ultimately deleterious, if not in themselves noxious, fumes by the snakes in death; the production of destructive breath by the sorcerer in the blowing of the flute; the battle of sound and silence, with the sorcerer bewitching the snake with his incantation and the snake bewitching him in turn with its singing, or deafening itself to the sorcerer's incantation or music with its own singing or by taking advantage of the crowd's obscuring cheer; the use of a circle against the snakes, within which the sorcerer takes up his position. And all these motifs are explicit or strongly implicit in Lucian's tale of the Chaldaean snake-blaster. Lucianists have made the connection and debated whether the motif of the final death of the sorcerer was an ancient one, or an innovation subsequent to antiquity.[120] However, many of the Tyrolean motifs are explicit too in the ps.-Aristotelian tale of the Thessalian witch's battle against the *hieros ophis* snake discussed in Chapter 6: there the witch takes up position within a circle of herbs into which she attempts to charm the snake by imitating its own singing voice. When it arrives the snake in turn tries to use its singing against her, to put her to sleep. But as she succeeds in drawing the snake across the circle of herbs it is dried up (the motifs of poison and fire together here). Although she survives, the prospect of her imminent death, should she fall asleep and thereby allow the snake to leap over the circle of herbs and onto her, is strongly advertised. Even the notion that the *hieros ophis* snake presided over a plague of other snakes may lurk. The tale as told is located in Tenos in Thessaly, but there never was a Tenos in Thessaly. No doubt the role of the witch in the story has led the *Mirabilia* or its source to detach it from the familiar island of Tenos and attach it rather to the Thessaly that was famous for witches. The genuine Aristotle knew that the actual Tenos had once been named Ophioessa, 'Snake-land'.[121]

[119] Text: Pehr 1913: 37, no. 18; translation at Ogden 2007*a*: 88–9. A subtype of the Pied Piper tale, Christiansen 1958 no. 3060, actually concerns snakes as opposed to rats; cf. G. Anderson 2000: 133–4.

[120] Cf. Radermacher 1905: 315–16, 1909: 676–7, and 1927: 7–9, Müller 1932: 43–7, and Ogden 2007*a*: 88–93.

[121] Aristotle F595 Rose, *apud* Pliny *Natural History* 4. 65–6 and Stephanus of Byzantium s.v. Τῆνος. Aristotle explains that the island of Tenos was once called *Hydroessa*, 'Watered', because of its many streams, whilst others say that its old name is Ophioussa. Discussion at Krappe 1947: 323.

EARLY HAGIOGRAPHY AND THE CLOSURE OF PAGAN SERPENT CULTS

What is the relationship between early hagiographical dragon-fights and the closing down, actual or aspirational, of pagan serpent cults? On the face of it the narratives of Philip (the Hierapolitan one) and Silvester purport to document such closures. In the Hierapolitan narrative Philip devotes himself to ending the worship of the Echidna that presides over a whole serpent society at Ophiorhyme-Hierapolis. Silvester locks in a dragon that is pumping out evil fumes because it has been deprived of its pagan cult in Rome. In other narratives the mastery of a serpent seems to stand, if in part for the abolition of a serpent cult, nonetheless also for the abolition of pagan cults more broadly, as when Victoria assures the people of Tribulanum that their dragon will be easier to deal with if they cease from the worship of pagan gods in general. So too in the subsequent Clement of Metz narrative, where the saint's fight against the dragon and its snakes is aligned in a generalized way with his attempt to put an end to idolatry, and conversion serves as a cure for the serpent-induced sickness. The serpent that Philip confronts in the Scythian version of his tale emerges from the base of a statue of Mars. The presumption probably ought to be that this serpent is an appropriately Satanized version of the never-anguiform Mars, rather than a simple representative of a pagan serpent cult as such. But the imagery itself is indeed that of a pagan serpent cult. The *De viris illustribus* pseudonymously ascribed to Aurelius Victor describes the great Epidaurian serpent that the abassador Ogulnius will take to Rome as gliding out to greet him from underneath the base of Asclepius' (humanoid) cult statue. One wonders whether the Hilarion story found its origin in the place-name of Dalmatian Epidaurus, evocative as it was of Asclepius' Peloponnesian home.[122]

The roots of the hagiographical dragon-slaying tradition lie, we have contended, in the second century AD. The Christians of this era would certainly have been confronted with the manifestations of pagan serpent cults at every turn. Snake-incorporating hero reliefs (Ch. 7), positively thriving in the second and third centuries AD, would have been a familiar sight in heroa and temples of all sorts. The forms of Agathos Daimon and Agathe Tyche, whose images were so common and prominent in the Pompeian houses of AD 79 (Ch. 8), no doubt continued to grace the majority of fine houses across the empire. More prominent still was Asclepius (Ch. 9). It was in the second century AD that his cult reached its zenith, with most of his 900 (known) shrines flourishing in this century.[123] And they flourished not least in Asia Minor, the crucible of Christianity, where the malingering and garrulous Aelius Aristides expansively documented the acme of the great Asclepieion of Pergamum in his *Sacred Tales*, proclaiming its god 'the one' (*heis*).[124] It was from second-century AD Asia Minor too that the cult of Glycon, the New Asclepius, spread to all the lands around the Black Sea (Ch. 9). No group of pagan gods or powers could have been better designed to invite

[122] [Aurelius Victor] *De viris illustribus* 22. 1–3.

[123] The shrines are catalogued in the monumental Riethmüller 2005.

[124] For the *Sacred Tales* see Behr 1968 and Petsalis-Diomidis 2010. *Heis*: *Sacred Tales* 4. 50; cf. Belayche 2010: 162–3.

antagonism from Christians. On the one hand, in their serpent forms, they were the very embodiments of the Devil. On the other, in their welcomingness, their kindliness, their devotion to the wellbeing of families and to the healing of the sick, they occupied precisely the religious territory to which Christ aspired. As for Asclepius himself, the monotheistic responses he encouraged in his adoring pagan followers aside, there stood out amongst the exiguous mythology associated with him the facts that he was the son of a god (Apollo, with whom he maintained a close association) and a mortal woman; that he had specialized in miraculous healing, not least the revival of the dead; and that he had himself once been killed before somehow mysteriously rising again: all grist to the mill of the narcissism of small differences.[125]

The Christians of the second century AD were already actively targeting and campaigning against the Asclepian cults. An indirect but most important testimony to this is provided by Lucian again in his *Alexander*, written in or after 181 AD. Lucian's attack on Alexander and the New Asclepius Glycon, who, like old Asclepius and Jesus, healed the sick and raised the dead,[126] is a vicious one by his own standards, and in making the attack he presents himself more explicitly than anywhere else in his extant corpus as an advocate and defender of Epicurean rationality.[127] This is supposedly in response to Alexander's own vocal campaign against Epicureans, which had included the burning of Epicurus' books. However, on two limited but significant occasions, Lucian notes that Alexander's hostility to the Epicureans was matched by his hostility towards Christians: Pontus, Alexander declared, was full of the godless and Christians, who had the temerity to blaspheme about him in the worst of terms. And the mystery rites he set up began with a proclamation banishing 'The godless and the Christian and the Epicurean.'[128] Why these cul-de-sac references to the Christians? Surely because it was they that were at the forefront of the campaign against Alexander and Glycon, and famously so (and note that Alexander gave them priority over Epicureans in his proclamation of banishment). If their role in Lucian's account of the cult has been restricted to these two passing mentions, it is presumably because he prefers to articulate his own opposition to Alexander in terms of a traditional pagan intellectual apparatus. Despite this, it is an intriguing possibility that Lucian has taken over a piece of Christian imagery in describing Alexander's death: does his description of Alexander's festering leg teeming with maggots salute the maggot-devoured death God visits upon Herod in Acts?[129] And the campaigns went on. In AD 331 Constantine ordered the temple of Asclepius at Aegae in Cilicia to be razed to the ground, on the grounds that the demon that appeared by night to those sleeping in his temple was drawing people away from the true Saviour and into

[125] Cf. Rengstorf 1953. [126] Lucian *Alexander* 24.

[127] For Lucian's explicit alignment with the Epicureans in the *Alexander* see esp. 1, 17, 25, 44–7, 61; cf. Caster 1937: 84–106, Branham 1984 esp. 150–62, 197–200, Victor 1997: 14–15, Ogden 2007*a*: 18–21.

[128] Lucian *Alexander* 25, 38; cf. Victor 1997 ad locc. For a review of Lucian's explicit references to Christians see Betz 1961: 5–13.

[129] Lucian *Alexander* 59, σκωλήκων ζέσας; Acts 12: 23, σκωληκόβρωτος. The argument is L. Robert's, 1980: 420. Poetic justice too, we may think, for the sponsor of a fraudulent worm.

deception. The last inscription from Epidaurus, dated to AD 355, accordingly commiserates with the Asclepius of Aegae for the destruction of his temple.[130]

On occasion we may detect the imagery of the Asclepian cults in particular refracted in the hagiographical narratives. When Thomas' dragon heals its own victim by sucking at the wound, we seem to have a subversion of the healing lick of the Asclepian sacred snake (Ch. 10). And similarly when Philip cures serpent-inflicted blindness by rubbing the saliva of the holy virgin Mariamne into his patient's eyes, we seem to have an ostentatious inversion of the healing use of the sacred snakes' saliva.[131] The gate-wardens of Ophiorhyme faced by Philip may recall the imagery of Hygieia and Salus and more immediately of Alexander of Abonouteichos and Glycon in carrying snakes on their shoulders.

But the Christian response to Asclepius was not always simply one of attack. On occasion theologians could attempt rather to appropriate him.[132] The second-century AD Justin Martyr stands out amongst the early fathers for his willingness to take a conciliatory attitude towards the apparatus of paganism, the better to expound and justify the tenets of Christian faith. He acknowledges Asclepius' emphatic resemblance to Jesus in respect of healing the lame and the paralytic and of resurrecting the dead.[133] By way of attack he contends that the explanation for the similarity is that the Devil created Asclepius as a raiser of the dead and healer of diseases specifically in imitation of the prophecies of Christ.[134] But by way of appropriation he exploits the similarity to explain to pagans that there is nothing strange or surprising in the Christian notion that Jesus was a great healer who died and ascended to heaven, for Asclepius had done just the same.[135] There were appropriations at cultic level too. Healing incubation cults in general were appropriated by Christian saints (though the best-documented examples of direct usurpations concern powers other than Asclepius),[136] whilst the Asclepian culture

[130] Eusebius of Caesarea *Life of Constantine* 3. 56, Sozomen *Ecclesiastical History* 2. 5, Zonaras *Epitome historiarum* 12c–d (an interesting aftermath); *IG* iv^2 1 no. 438. Cf. Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 256, Schouten 1967: 69.

[131] Cf. Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1999: ii. 394, 397, 401, 404, 535–8. However, these scholars prefer to read the text as presenting rather an inversion of the work of Cybele's healing Galli, for whom cf. Strabo C629–30 and Damascius *Life of Isidore apud* Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 242 §13.

[132] See L. Herzog 1950: 797–8 for Christian arguments against Asclepius, together with the generous selections of Christian texts incorporated into Edelstein and Edelstein 1945.

[133] Justin Martyr *Apology* 22. 6.

[134] Justin Martyr *Apology* 54. 10, *Dialogus* 69. 3.

[135] Justin Martyr *Apology* 21. 1–2. The corollary of this was that late pagans could in turn adopt Christianized language in order to defend Asclepius, as in Julian *Against the Galileans* 200ab, for which see Ch. 9.

[136] The most striking example of the direct usurpation of a pagan healing incubation cult by a Christian one is that of Sarpedon (his oracle had been known to Diodorus, 30. 10) by that of Thecla in Isaurian Seleuceia. According to the 5th-century AD *Life* of the supposedly 1st-century AD Thecla penned by her devotee Basil of Seleuceia, Thecla closed down Sarpedon's promontory-based incubation cult and silenced it forever (*Life of Thecla* 1. 28 Dagron). She did not then die, but, like Amphiaraus before her, was swallowed directly by the earth (2. 1), and thereafter offered incubation cures of her own in the church dedicated to her (e.g. 2. 7, 2. 34, 2. 39, 2. 41). Similarly, the healing incubation cult of the Dioscuri at Byzantium (schol. Persius 2. 56, Hesychius Illustrius *Patria Constantinopoleos* 15 Preger) was supplanted by that of Cosmas and Damian (Gregory of Tours, *Liber in gloria martyrum beatorum* 97, at *MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* i. 2 pp. 553–4). Discussion at Deubner 1900: 56–109, 1907, Hamilton 1906: 109–71, Delehaye 1955: 143–6, Bonnechere 2007: 40.

of aretalogy as found in the Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions was ultimately absorbed into the Christian tradition of miracle-celebration.[137] The formerly clean-shaven Christ is even thought to have acquired the beard of his canonical iconography from Asclepius in the fourth century. Tellingly, a second-century AD head of Asclepius was discovered in a palaeo-Christian basilica in Gerasa (Jordan).[138]

Let us look now in more detail at the two more expansive narratives that purport to report the closure of pagan serpent cults, those of Silvester and Philip. We will see that the cults they feature are a long way from any specific historical pagan serpent cults, and conclude that their primary interest lies rather in the assimilation of pagan *drakōn*-slaying myth.

The case of Silvester

The pagan cult closed down in the Silvester tale resembles nothing we know of in pagan Rome, but it strongly resembles the cult of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium (for which see Chs. 5 and 10), and we cannot doubt that it is this cult that, somehow or other, lies behind the Christian traditions. As we have seen, Propertius and Aelian (along with images on the coins of L. Rosicus Fabatus) tell that blindfolded virgins at Lanuvium used to take offerings for a ravenous snake down into a deep cavern, and that it would snatch tit-bits from their hands. The snake's acceptance was proof of the girls' virginity. Aelian interestingly notes that the girls were guided or drawn into the *drakōn*'s lair by its breath. The *De promissionibus* variant of the Silvester tale, with its mechanical dragon and anonymous monk hero, seems particularly to evoke the Juno Sospita cult in so far as it presents us with a vignette of virgins descending to the dragon with their (supposed) offerings whilst significantly blinded by the absolute darkness.

The pagan cult would seem to have been a going concern still in AD 140–3, at which point Antoninus Pius minted coins with the legends of the sort IUNONI SISPITAE and images of Juno advancing with spear and oblong shield, a rampant, coiling snake at her feet.[139] Aelian, writing in the early third century AD, still presents his account as of a contemporary cult and a going concern, whether rightly or wrongly. At any rate, already by this time, it seems, Christian fantasy had transferred this cult to, or had invented another one on the model of it for, a more famous set of Virgins, the Vestals at the heart of Rome. For, as we saw above, Tertullian was associating the Vestals, in their famous role as guardians of the sacred flame, with 'that *draco*' by *c.* AD 207. No doubt the Christians found profit in associating the virgins of the more central and prominent pagan cult with a

[137] The early 7th-century AD (?) *Encomium of Miracles of the Holy Martyr St Therapon* includes an aretological list of that saint's achievements through incubation healing that is strikingly reminiscent of the *EMI*. For the text see Deubner 1900: 113–34; note especially §§15–22. Discussion: Deubner 1900: 103–9, Hamilton 1906: 128–34, Rüttimann 1986, and Dillon 1994: 258–9.

[138] On the assimilation generally see Edelstein and Edelstein 1945: ii. 108–9, 132–8, 255, Rengstorf 1953, Schouten 1967: 70, Becher 1970: 29–55, Holtzmann 1984: 865, 896–7. The Gerasa Asclepius/Jesus: *LIMC* Asklepios 352.

[139] *LIMC* Iuno 26.

creature identifiable with the Devil. The starting point for the transfer was probably the fact that Vesta had an association with the Lanuvium cult and in particular with an aetiology of it (see Ch. 5).[140] Only a single, quite anomalous piece of pagan evidence brings the Vestal Virgins in Rome together with a serpent. It is the relief of Vesta herself from her temple dedicated by C. Pupius Firminus, in which the seated goddess holds an egg sucked by a serpent that rises up from underneath her throne.[141] The easiest way to contextualize this image is with reference to the cult of that other famous Roman goddess, Bona Dea, over whose principal festival the Vestals presided.[142] As we have seen, Bona Dea was regularly depicted as a seated goddess feeding a snake from a bowl, an image-type derivative of Hygieia's, and on occasion she was fully identified with this goddess as Bona Dea Hygia (Ch. 9).[143] But perhaps the most powerful explanation for the serpent's presence in this Vesta image lies in the identity of its dedicator. For C. Pupius Firminus, treasurer of the guild of bakers, was also the dedicator, in AD 144, of the finest and most striking image of Asclepian serpents to survive from antiquity, the Louvre relief in which the humanoid Asclepius and Hygieia feed massive attendant serpents from their bowls (Fig. 9.1; see Ch. 9).[144] The commissioner of this relief, it is clear, loved his snakes, and was perhaps readier than most to insert them into iconographic contexts in which they did not strictly belong.

But anyway, what we appear to have in the case of the Silvester narrative is a tale that is indeed rooted, ultimately, in a historical pagan serpent cult, but only in the most etiolated of fashions, and separated from it by an enormous amount of intervening fantasy, including, curiously, a transfer of location. Can the narrative be related in any way to the historical closing down of either cult? We can say nothing of the historical fate of the Lanuvium cult, since we hear no more of it after Aelian, if indeed it continued even in his time. The Vestals' cult was only finally closed down (along with many others) by Theodosius in AD 389–91, long after the age of the historical Silvester, though at a point perhaps suggestively close to that of the initial composition of the *Acts of Silvester*: was a typological precedent sought for the contemporary act of closure?[145]

[140] Plutarch *Parallela minora* 14 (*Moralia* 309a–b) = Pythocles of Samos *FHG* iv. p. 488 F1; *CIL* i^2 452 = *ILS* ii. 1, 2968 = Ernout 1957 no. 111.

[141] *LIMC* Vesta no. 30 (with Fisher-Hansen 1990 ad loc.) = *CIL* i. 787 (*Vestae sacrum/ C. Pupius Firminus et/ Mudasena trophime*); cf. Santinelli 1902: 266–9, Reidinger 1958: 1755, Greifenhagen 1967, Pohlkamp 1983: 20–2, 25–6, Pailler 1997: 521, 562.

[142] Cicero *Ad Atticum* 1. 13. 3, *De haruspicum responsis* 37, Plutarch *Cicero* 19–20, Cassius Dio 37. 35, 37. 45. See Brouwer 1989: 256, 361–9, 418, Fisher-Hansen 1990: 420, Wildfang 2006: 31–2. On the Claudian-era relief altar cited in Ch. 9, Brouwer 1989 pls. xxviii–xxxi T i 81 = *LIMC* Bona Dea 1, Bona Dea is paired with an almost identical, though snakeless, image of Vesta.

[143] Pohlkamp 1983: 22, 25–6 suggests that the notion that the placation of the serpent should lead specifically to the *salus* (health and safety) of Rome in *Acts of Silvester* recension A (1) may salute the role of Vesta as a goddess of health, or indicate a role for the closely allied Bona Dea Hygia in the archaeology of the story; cf. also 75–6 n. 152 for the tendency of Renaissance commentators to identify Silvester's serpent with Asclepius.

[144] *LIMC* Asklepios 252.

[145] Chronological confusion at MacMullen 2003: 477: 'after the Vestals had become a thing of the pagan past, their act and its explanation lived on in a confused memory by oral transmission until it was picked up by someone able to adapt it to an official church teaching: that paganism even in its darkest lairs could be confronted by a Christian hero and subdued.'

The case of Philip

We would be able to tie another hagiographic dragon-slaying to an actual pagan serpent cult if Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier, building on the work of others, are correct in their contentions that Philip's Echidna is a refraction of Cybele-Atargatis, patron goddess of Hierapolis, and that she had a strong connection with serpents in her own right. As the Scythian Philip tale indicates, it is theoretically possible that a dragon could stand for any pagan god, whether they had significant serpent affinities of their own or not, and on this basis we can no more disprove than prove that the Echidna stands for Cybele-Atargatis. But the positive indications that she does so are weak. The only consideration of any significance is the parallelism between Cybele's generally recognized role as 'Mother of the Gods' and the *Acts of Philip*'s presentation of the Echidna as 'the mother of snakes'. Van Berg's *Corpus cultus deae Syriae* and Lightfoot's detailed work on Lucian's *On the Syrian Goddess* have given us an expansive and sophisticated understanding of the Hierapolitan Cybele-Atargatis and her iconography. They show us that fish (though not sea-monsterish or serpentine ones) and, more prominently, lions played a substantial role in her iconography, but we are left with no room to intrude snakes into it.[146] We may, just possibly, catch a glimpse of an early stage in the genesis of the tradition of Philip's Echidna, and this at any rate seems to have little to do with Cybele-Atargatis. We know from Eusebius and Philip of Side that St Philip and the miracles performed by his daughters were already being spoken of by Papias, Bishop of Hierapolis, who wrote prior to the middle of the second century AD. Philip of Side interestingly mentions a report Papias had received from the daughters of St Philip of a miracle performed by one Barsabas, also known as Justus: upon being put to the test by the infidels he had drunk 'the venom of a viper' (*ion echidnēs*), remaining unharmed.[147]

It is hard, then, to detect a pagan cult, if there was one, directly behind the Philip traditions. But it is rather easier to find pagan myths lurking behind them, for they have the look of being Christianizations of a group of established pagan *drakōn* tales already localized in and around Hierapolis.

First, the name Echidna, 'Viper', had been borne by the anguipede consort of the also anguiform Typhon since the time of Hesiod's *Theogony*, as we have seen (Ch. 2). In this poem she is given two characteristics with an emphatic resonance for Philip's adventure. In the first place, she lives in a 'cave, down below, underneath the hollow rock, far from the immortal gods and mortal men, where the gods ordained that she should make her glorious home' (Aristophanes

[146] Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 55–62, 1999: ii. 18–19, 304–12, 375–7, 396–402, 531–8 (building on the work of Weber 1910: 211–12 and Graillot 1912: 397, and followed now by Rutherford 2007: 454). Their attempts to link Cybele's lions with the leopard that falls in with Philip alongside the goat also remain unpersuasive. The goat they derive from the attribute of Cybele's companion Attis, as at Pausanias 7. 17. 10; Arnobius *Against the Gentiles* 5. 6. For Hierapolis' Cybele-Atargatis see van Berg 1972 and Lightfoot 2003: 1–85, esp. 19–34, 61–5. It is noteworthy that the latter exhaustive study sees no cause to mention the *Acts of Philip*, the Echidna, dragons, or snakes in connection with the goddess.

[147] Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3. 39; Philip of Side *Ecclesiastical History* exc. 6 (p. 170 De Boor); see Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 17–22, 1999: ii. 374–5 (where the key Philip of Side text is reproduced), 441–7.

subsequently makes her a denizen of the underworld itself).[148] Philip's *drakōn* of the rocks lives beneath a great pile of rocks, whilst his Echidna is eventually swallowed by the earth at the behest of God. In the second place, Hesiod's Echidna is signally the mother of a monstrous serpent brood, a conceit strongly embraced and elaborated by the Classical tradition (see Ch. 4).[149] Philip's Echidna is introduced precisely as 'the mother of snakes' (Hesiod's Echidna is surely a far better comparandum for this term that Cybele-Atargatis), whilst the desert *drakōn* encountered by Philip is presented as presiding over a brood of lesser snakes, eggs and all.[150] Furthemore, Xanthus of Lydia located the battle between Zeus and the Hesiodic Echidna's husband Typhon in Mysia and the Lydian-Maeonian Catacaumene, the Burnt Land, just fifty kilometres north of Phrygian Hierapolis.[151] Diodorus located the fight actually in Phrygia itself.[152] It was of course Typhon's usual fate to be buried deep underground by Zeus at the culmination of this battle, typically under Etna in Sicily, as already found in Pindar. Again we think of the ultimate fate of Philip's Echidna here, and of the initial confinement of his *drakōn* of the rocks.[153] Local tales may, accordingly, have sited both the cave of the Hesiodic Echidna and Zeus' battle with her husband Typhon in the region of Hierapolis. If one wished to find a subterranean cave in which to locate a *drakōn* in Hierapolis itself, one lay ready to hand in the mysterious chasm for which it was famous, the Ploutonion, 'Place of Pluto'. This is described in some detail by Strabo and Damascius, amongst others. It was most remarked for the fact that its hot waters belched forth mephitic gases that killed all who entered the cave (except for Cybele's galli-priests).[154] As we have seen, the belching forth of noxious gases was a distinctive feature of ancient *drakontes*, and they were on occasion compared to underworld entrances in this regard (Ch. 6; above). And the motif of the belching forth of noxious airs is strikingly associated with Philip's desert *drakōn*. Perhaps it was imagined that the Ploutonion's fumes were ultimately emitted by a *drakōn* within, much as it was imagined that the *drakōn* of Rome emitted fumes from within its subterranean hole. (If one wished, similarly, to site Philip's adventure with the *drakōn* of the rocks within the topography of Hierapolis, one could point to the remarkable hanging terraces of the thermal, travertine formations outside the city.)[155]

[148] Hesiod *Theogony* 295–30; Aristophanes *Frogs* 473. For the identification of Philip's Echidna with the Hesiodic one see Küster 1913: 87–92.

[149] Hesiod *Theogony* 306–32.

[150] It is curious that Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 66–72 should make so much of the localization of Typhon in areas of Asia Minor around Hierapolis, and yet say nothing of his mother the Echidna, who seemingly matches the Echidna of the *Acts of Philip* so well—perhaps because they are so keen on tying her rather to Cybele.

[151] Xanthus of Lydia (Sardis) *FGrH* 765 F4a and b. This is not the place to return to the problem of Arima: see Ch. 2.

[152] Diodorus 5. 71. 2: *ὅτε δή φασιν αὐτὸν καὶ τοὺς γίγαντας ἀνελεῖν, ἐν μὲν Κρήτῃ τοὺς περὶ Μύλαντον, κατὰ δὲ τὴν Φρυγίαν τοὺς περὶ Τυφῶνα.*

[153] Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 64 and 1999: ii. 332–5 discuss the Typhonian imagery associated with the desert and rock-pile dragons encountered in the *Acts of Philip* and are keen to link these dragons with local volcanic phenomena.

[154] Strabo C629–30 and Damascius *Life of Isidore* at Photius *Bibliotheca* cod. 242 §13. Cf. Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 71–5, 1999: ii. 533–5.

[155] Cf. Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 70–2, 1991: ii. 526–7; they do not, however, make this specific connection to the second dragon adventure.

Secondly, and curiously, it seems that a version of the Delphic *drakōn*-slaying myth was also somehow localized around Hierapolis. Two Hierapolitan medallions, one from the reign of Marcus Aurelius, the other from the reign of Elagabalus, show Apollo shooting a rampant snake with an arrow.[156] An oracle text of the second century AD, seemingly of Clarian Apollo, and possibly also of the age of Marcus Aurelius, has Apollo refer to 'the sacred earth being angry about the one my arrows slaughtered', possibly with a local significance. Earth was of course the mother of Apollo's *drakōn*-victim in the Delphic myth.[157] It may or may not be significant that Nonnus uniquely applies the soubriquet 'Cirrhaean Echidna' to the Delphic *drakōn*.[158]

Thirdly, Aelian tells, as we have seen (Ch. 5), that one of the races of the Ophiogeneis was created when a divine snake had sex with Halia the daughter of Sybaris in a grove in Phrygia.[159] Might the Ophiogeneis have mutated into Philip's Ophianoi? One of the signal characteristics of the races of Ophiogeneis is that they are completely resistant to snakebites. Such a notion seems to underpin the test to which the Ophianoi gate-wardens of Hierapolis-Ophiorhyme subject their visitors, to see whether they are friend or foe, that of releasing their snakes against them.

In the light of this, the Philip narratives seem to be rather more concerned with the Christian appropriation and accommodation of the pagans' own myths of the slaying of bad *drakontes* than they are with a Christian assault upon the cults of the pagans' good *drakontes*.

But the pagans were not the only people the Christians of the fourth century AD had to contend with. The name Ophianoi seems, as we have noted, to be reminiscent of the Ophiogeneis of pagan tradition at one level, but it also carried a more immediate and direct significance of its own in the fourth century AD. In the third century AD Clement of Alexandria and Origen had applied the very term Ophianoi to a Gnostic sect reviled by the Christians, including, it would seem, those of Encratite persuasion, the sect more familiarly known as 'Ophitai' or 'Naassenes'. In his *Stromateis* of *c.* AD 200–2 Clement of Alexandria notes in passing that the Ophianoi are a heretical sect named for the thing they honour, i.e. snakes (*opheis*).[160] In the *Contra Celsum* of AD 248 Origen, in disgruntlement with Celsus for wrapping up Christians and Ophianoi together in his abuse, contends that these Ophianoi, whose sect was established by one Euphrates, take up the cause of the Serpent of Eden on the basis that he gave useful knowledge—*gnōsis*—to Adam and Eve, and that they are accordingly as hostile to Jesus as Celsus is himself. Indeed they make a curse against God for his treatment of the serpent a

[156] *LIMC* Apollon 1001a (the Marcus Aurelius medallion); cf. also Svoronos 1907: 219 (no. 390) with pl. iv. 23, Weber 1910 esp. 178, 201–22, Fontenrose 1959: 95–6, Amsler, Bovon, and Bouvier 1996: 75–6, 1999: ii. 539–40, Rutherford 2007: 453.

[157] Merkelbach and Stauber 1996 no. 4; cf. Lloyd-Jones and West 1966, Parke 1985: 153–5, Rutherford 2007: 449–53 (with text). The oracle was inscribed on a block subsequently reused in the foundations of the 3rd-century AD temple of Apollo at Hierapolis.

[158] Nonnus *Dionysiaca* 4. 318; cf. Fontenrose 1959: 79, 96.

[159] Aelian *Nature of Animals* 12. 39.

[160] Clement of Alexandria *Stromateis* 7. 17. 108. 2. For the Ophites in general see Gianotto 1992, Logan 2006 esp. 40–6, with bibliography. For collections of key sources for them in translation, see Hendry 1971: 75–100 and Foerster 1972: i. 84–99.

prerequisite for entry into their community.[161] Irenaeus had recorded the sect's cosmogonic myth in *c.* AD 180. This culminated in the birth of Ophiomorphos ('Snake-form'), identified both with the all-important Serpent of Eden and also with the sea-serpent Leviathan, who encircled the earth and controlled it.[162] In his *Panarion* of AD 374–7 Epiphanius told that the Ophites performed their Eucharist by releasing a snake from a chest onto an altar table so that it coiled over, thereby blessing, the bread that the faithful then ate.[163] Whatever the truth behind Christian writers' notions of the Ophites (and Celsus was no doubt right at least in part in so far as some of them would have seen themselves as Christians), these writers perceived them as espousing a sort of inverted Christianity. One can well understand why the composers of the *Acts of Philip* and the *Martyrion of Philip* should have considered the Ophites, their god and all, worth taking on, and why they should set them up for defeat and conversion. The *Martyrion of Philip* does indeed present its Ophianoi as espousing an inverted Christianity: it tells how their newborn children are taken to the Echidna's sanctuary where she licks them. By this sign the children are dedicated to the Echidna. This is clearly presented as an anti-baptism, and contrasted with the true baptisms Philip performs in the city during his visit (which then, owing now to the power of the sign of the cross, continue to preserve the children from snakebites).[164]

If the complex and symbolically noisy tales of the Philip texts document the closing down of any historical pagan cult, serpent-related or otherwise, at Hierapolis, by him or any successor prior to the age in which they were composed, it is hard to see it now. If the narrative has any actual cult in its sights, it is more likely to have been that of what might be termed the 'real enemy', the Gnostics next door.

CONCLUSION

The tradition of early hagiographical dragon-slaying narratives was established before the end of the second century AD, as is indirectly but nonetheless strongly attested by Lucian's tale of the Chaldaean snake-blaster. The tradition is shown to be the direct heir of the pagan *drakōn*-slaying tradition above all by its narratives' continuation of the motifs of the symmetrical battle. The hagiographical narratives embrace a generalized fantasy about the closing-down of pagan serpent cults, amongst pagan cults in general, but relate in only the most tenuous of ways to any actual pagan serpent cults. In so far as the hagiographical tradition of

[161] Origen *Contra Celsum* 6. 28; cf. also 3. 13, 6. 24, 6. 30, 7. 40. For the significance in Ophite thought of the knowledge imparted by the Serpent of Eden, see also Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1. 30. 7.

[162] Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 1. 23–8, with (for ascription of the myth to the Ophitai) Theodoret *Haereticarum fabularum compendium*, *PL* 83. 364–8. Cf. also Origen *Contra Celsum* 6. 24 and 30 (with reference to the diagram that illustrated the cosmic myth).

[163] Epiphanius *Panarion* (*Against the Heretics*) 2. 57–8 (37). It would be good to know whether any of the so-called Ophites had a conciliatory attitude to the kindly serpent gods of the pagans, who were themselves sometimes inclined to coil over altar tables: one thinks in particular of the superb Hellenistic Agathos Daimon relief from Delos, *LIMC* Agathodaimon no. 3.

[164] *Martyrion of Philip* 2 (A).

dragon-slaying narratives spoke, in its earlier centuries, to pagans, it did so less by negative attacks upon their actual serpent gods, and more through the positive appropriation and assimilation of their own long-established *drakōn*-slaying story-types.

There is no need to mourn the slain dragon: after all, he never did exist . . . in the real world. But he did exist, indeed thrive, in the world of stories, and he continues to do so as vigorously as ever he did, whenever his compelling tale is retold.

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