Hera

Text je kapitolou z mé chystané knihy o řeckých bozích. Kapitola je dlouhá, pro potřebu zkoušky lze proto vynechat sekce „Marriage, Sovereignty and Reconciliation“, „Territorial Sovereignty: The Case of Argos“, „Sovereignty and International Exchange: The Case of Samos“, „Sovereignty and Marriage Exchange“ a „Hera and the Crisis of Sovereignty and Legitimacy“.

> I sing of gold-enthroned Hera, daughter of Rhea,
> statuesque divine queen,
> sister and glorious wife of loud-rumbling Zeus.
> All the blessed gods in high Olympos
> stand in awe and honour her equally with thunder-loving Zeus.

Thus runs the short *Homeric Hymn to Hera*, expressing the honourable status of the grand wife of Zeus, who alone of all the gods may bear the epithet Basileia, "Queen". Her royal dignity shines out of her typical visual representations, which usually portray her as a mature noble lady of severe beauty. Her typical attributes are the high crown (*polos*) and a sceptre, symbols of royalty. Hera is the embodiment of sovereignty. She "shares Zeus' throne" (Pind., *Nem.* 11.2) and is "the queen of the gods" (*Nem.* 1.39). Not only does she personify the cosmic sovereign rule of Zeus, she can also bestow sovereignty on humans: in the judgement of Paris she offers to make him the king of all men. She is thus one of the most political divinities, frequently playing the part of a divine patron of cities or territories.

Hera's royal power stems primarily from the fact that she is the wife of Zeus. "I cannot, of course, refuse you," says Aphrodite to her in *Il.* 14.212–13, "since you sleep close in the arms of Zeus, our greatest and best." When Euripides wishes to portray Hera as offering royalty to Paris, he says that she came boasting of "sharing the royal bed of king Zeus" (*IA* 1305–6), i.e. she committed herself "to promising something that she does not strictly speaking possess but in which she shares through her union with Zeus" (Vernant 1982: 63). In Homer Hera is typically referred to as Zeus' "bed-fellow", *parakoitis*.[1] Yet, this is not to say that she would be somehow secondary to her husband. As the *Homeric Hymn* stresses, the gods "honour her equally with thunder-loving Zeus", and he in turn is frequently designated as "the husband of Hera" (*posis Hērēs*).[2] It is for this reason that she is not just Zeus' wife but his sister as well. The standard Homeric formula "sister and wife" (*Il.* 16.432, 18.356) thus expresses a fundamental tension within the divine marriage: Hera both is and is not Zeus' equal, she derives her dignity from him as well as from her own descent. She expresses this well herself in the *Iliad* (4.58–61): "I too am divine and from the same stock as yourself. For in two respects I am the most honoured daughter of Kronos, Crooked in counsel: in that I am the eldest and in that I am also your wife, you being King of all the immortals." As Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti comment (2009: 102), "this parity of status lies at the heart of the relationship between Hera and Zeus, and it is this that is the crux of both their complicity and their conflicts".

The second significant epithet – and one that is also exclusive to Hera[3] – is Teleia, an adjective derived from *telos*, "aim, fulfilment". In case of women, this fulfilment consisted in marriage, and Teleia thus primarily means "Married", but also "Fulfilled" or "Fulfilling", i.e. helping girls to complete their journey to adulthood. If we were to name one area that could most of all be considered as Hera's particular domain, it would certainly be marriage. It reappears in a number of her epithets, such as Zygia, ("Marriage Yoker"), Gamostolos ("Preparing Weddings"), Nympheuomenē ("Bride") or Gamēlia ("Wedding Hera"). As Aristophanes puts it (*Thesm.* 973), Hera "guards the keys of marriage". Zeus may help his wife and be also worshipped as Teleios, but his role in this area is secondary: an Athenian calendar records a sacrifice during the "Wedding" month of Gamēliōn to Zeus Hēraios, "Hera's Zeus" (Sokolowski 1969, No. 1). If in the realm of sovereignty Hera derives her power from her husband, in the area of weddings it is the other way round.

This is not to say, however, that the association with marriage in itself would give us an adequate answer to the question of Hera's essence. Marriage was the concern of most Greek goddesses. Plutarch (*Mor.* 264b) names Zeus Teleios, Hera Teleia, Aphrodite, Peitho and Artemis as wedding divinities, but not even this list is exhaustive.[4] The key question is, therefore, in what capacity Hera supervises marriage. To answer it, we will have to review the myths and rites of Hera that deal with this subject. As with most gods, we will see that the answer is far from straightforward: it is particularly the dark sides of cultural institutions that require divine protection, and marriage is no exception.

---

1 E.g. Hom., *Il.* 4.60, 18.184, 18.365, 21.479.

2 E.g. Hom., *Il.* 7.411; 10.5, 10.329, 13.154; 16.88. In Hes., *Th.*. 928, Hera also calls Zeus her "bed-fellow" (*parakoitis*), but she does so in anger and the label is probably meant to be slightly derogatory.

3 For the exclusivity of the epithets Basileia and Teleia see Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 105–7.

4 Cf. Detienne 1991: 96: "One should also add, besides the nymphs and Demeter, the Charites, Hermes and the Moirai."

Childless Marriage

The marriage of Zeus and Hera is a marriage *par excellence*, yet it is also highly atypical, in many regards looking like a caricature. To start with, it is a marriage that is virtually childless. Hera only has two proper children with Zeus, neither of them of much importance: Eileithyia and Hebe. Both are strictly functional deities which are rather one-dimensional and seem like extensions of Hera herself. Eileithyia is a goddess of childbirth, through which marriage was fulfilled. Hebe in Greek means "flower of youth" and represents an archetypal bride, i.e. a maiden aspect of Hera herself as the goddess of weddings.

Besides these, Hera is the mother of Ares, but though both Homer (*Il.* 5.896) and Hesiod (*Th.* 923) designate Zeus as his father, Ovid (*Fasti* 5.193–260) preserves an alternative account in which Hera begot Ares by herself: when Zeus gave birth to Athena out of his head, Hera got angry with him and went to complain to Okeanos; on the way she met the flower goddess Flora, received from her a magical flower whose touch made any female pregnant, and on touching it conceived Ares. Ovid's story has no parallel in Greek sources and might seem as a late invention. Yet there are Greek local references in his account. Flora herself says she was originally called Chloris in Greek (5.195–6), which recalls Pausanias's (2.21–2) mention of an Argive sanctuary of Leto in which there was a statue of Chloris, and right next to it a sanctuary of Hera Antheia, "Flowery". It is likely, therefore, that Ovid is adapting a lost Argive myth.[5] Even more importantly, a story of this kind is in accord with the fact that even in the *Iliad* Zeus dissociates himself from Ares and sees him as chiefly a son of Hera, calling him "the most despicable god on Olympos", one who is always "eager for strife and fighting and war" and has "the same overbearing spirit, hard and unyielding" as his mother Hera (*Il.* 5.890–3). From this perspective, Ovid's story is no more than an amplification of an ancient symbolic pattern that allies Ares with his mother while minimizing the relationship with his father. Hand in hand with this goes Ares's generally low standing among the Olympians: as a god of battle-frenzy he never matched his brothers and sisters in cultic importance, and he was depicted in myths in various humiliating situations, such as when Athena beat him in the theomachy (*Il.* 21.391–414), when the sons of Aloeus imprisoned him in a bronze jar for thirteen months (*Il.* 5.384–91), or when on two occasions he was defeated by Herakles (Hesiod, *Sc.* 357–67, 424–66).

[5] See in detail Porte 1983. Cf. the late story preserved by the *Vatican Mythographers* 1.201 that even Hebe was conceived by Hera alone when she ate a lettuce.

The same pattern applies even more strongly to Hephaistos. He too appears to be presented by Homer as a son of Hera and Zeus (*Il.* 1.578; *Od.* 8.312), but Hesiod (*Th.* 927–8) and most later authors make him a son of Hera alone, who once again begot him in response to the birth of Athena out of Zeus' head. The birth was not very successful, though: Hephaistos was skilled in crafts, but he was born lame and ugly. According to Homer, Hera was so ashamed of his deformity that she threw him out of Olympos to the sea (*Il.* 18.395–7; cf. *Hom. Hymn Ap.* 316–8). Interestingly, the scholium to *Il.* 14.296 preserves a version in which Hephaistos appears as a son of Zeus and Hera, but is conceived during their first secret intercourse behind the backs of their parents; to cover this, Hera pretends to have begotten Hephaistos by herself. All of these stories circle around one and the same symbolic pattern, which is the same as that we have traced for Ares: the god is mainly a son of Hera, his relation to Zeus being weak, illegitimate, or altogether absent. The outcome is once again a subordinate position in the Olympian hierarchy. The limping god became a figure of fun and the gods laugh at him as he clumsily serves them at the table (*Il.* 1.597–600) or as he shows them his wife Aphrodite caught in a net in the arms of Ares (*Od.* 8.326).

What all these stories tell us is that begetting children does not pertain to the marriage of Zeus and Hera, taking place at its fringes only and causing troubles. In this regard, their marriage contradicted the standard meaning of human marriages. For the Greeks, the aim of marriage was to beget legitimate children. As pseudo-Demosthenes puts it, "we have courtesans (*hetairai*) for pleasure, concubines to take care of our day-to-day bodily needs, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to act as faithful guardians of our household" (*In Neaer.* 122). With Zeus and Hera the situation is quite the opposite: they do engage in passionate lovemaking sometimes (as in *Il.* 14.294–353), but only for pleasure, as ordinary men did with the courtesans. It is with other goddesses and women that Zeus begets his true descendants.

How come the marriage of Zeus and Hera inverts the standard rules? There are various possible answers to this question and we will have a look at some of them in the last section of this chapter ("Hera the Mother"). For the moment, I will just present one such answer which emerges if we examine the part Hera's marriage plays in the complicated network of relationships in the Greek theogony. We have seen already that in Hesiod's version the origin of the gods first happened according to a dark monotonous pattern: the divine couple has a son, the father fears the son will be more powerful than him and tries to get rid of him; the son rebels in turn, dethrones the father and takes his place; tqqhe pattern then repeats again. Zeus, too, has become king by having deposed his father, and he is

thus in the same danger. As Hesiod tells us (*Th.* 886–98), Zeus took Metis (Intelligence) as his first wife, but it was destined that she would first give birth to a powerful daughter, "and then to a son, a king of gods and of men, possessing a very violent heart". If this prophecy came true, Zeus would be overthrown and the cosmos would not reach the desired stability. To prevent this, Zeus decides to swallow Metis, who is already pregnant with the daughter. The daughter – Athena – is eventually born out of Zeus' head, but the son is not conceived at all.

Subsequently, Zeus begets various deities with several other goddesses (*Th.* 901–20):

1) Themis, who gave birth to the Horai (Seasons), Eunomia (Lawfulness), Dike (Justice), Eirene (Peace), and the Moirai (Fates);
2) Eurynome, who bore him the Graces, Aglaia (Splendour), Euphrosyne (Joy) and Thalia (Good Cheer);
3) Demeter, who bore Persephone;
4) Mnemosyne, who gave birth to the Muses;
5) Leto, who brought forth Apollo and Artemis.
6) "Last of all he made Hera his vigorous wife; and she, mingling in love with the king of gods and of men, gave birth to Hebe and Ares and Eileithyia" (*Th.* 921–3).

Most of these children of Zeus are rather gentle females, many of them functioning as "allegorical emblems of his regime" (Clay 2003: 29). The only powerful son, Apollo, is neutralized by the gentleness of his mother Leto (cf. below, p. ???). The function of the marriage with Hera, his "very last" (*loisthotatēn* – 921) wife, is *to seal this stable state for ever*, ensuring that no subsequent heir proper is born who might endanger the father.[6] It is for this reason that the marriage produces no powerful children. Hephaistos was a harmless clown, and when at one point he did dare to defend Hera against Zeus' attack, the father of the gods just threw him by the foot from Olympos (*Il.* 1.590–4). And while Ares may seem as a strong warrior, his martial fury is of limited effect and he is depicted in the *Iliad* as weak and cowardly, being even wounded by a mortal, Diomedes (5.855–61).

Still, while Zeus needs to stabilize his rule, he also needs to propagate his regime further, to disseminate the cosmic order he has established. For this reason he needs to beget as much progeny as possible – but to do so in a way that would not give rise to a legitimate successor. It follows that his sons and daughters need to be illegitimate. Hera is usually portrayed as bitterly persecuting these illegitimate children, but we will see below that her hatred of them is in fact ambivalent, and instead of really harming them it acts as the driving force of their destiny that frequently allows them to fully develop their heroic potential.

Intimate Enemy

The virtual childlessness may be an anomaly, but it is certainly not the most conspicuous transgressive aspect of the marriage of Hera and Zeus. Far more disturbing is the way in which Hera behaves towards her husband. While the ideal Greek wife should have been quiet and submissive, Hera is the very opposite of this. She is jealous, quarrelsome, spiteful, disagreeable, distrustful. She keeps on putting obstacles in Zeus' way and plotting against him. As Zeus himself puts it, "she is constantly making reproaches in the presence of the other immortals" (*Il.* 1.520–1) and "I am quite used to her opposition in everything I say do" (*Il.* 8.407–8).

The *Iliad* offers countless examples of this, showing Hera as a shrewd manipulator who shamelessly lies to Zeus, emotionally blackmails him, butters him up and pretends to be a humble wife, only to start thwarting his plans again the next minute.[7] Zeus in turn reacts like an aggressive macho, threatening with physical violence, and sometimes actually having recourse to it, such as in *Il.* 15.18–24, where he reminds her how he had once "hung her from Olympos with anvils tied to her feet". In Zeus' defence it needs to be added that he sometimes does have good reasons for his aggressive behaviour, for quite often Hera does not stay content with words but actively sabotages his plans. In the *Iliad* she does so in a relatively harmless manner, trying to help the Greeks even when Zeus does not want to. At other times, however, she opts for a more destructive strategy, demolishing what Zeus creates – typically by harming his illegitimate children.

That the divine prototype of all human marriages should look like this has understandably fascinated modern scholars. A number of them tried to explain the anomaly by claiming that originally Hera had been an independent matriarchal goddess who was eventually forced into a marriage with the patriarchal god.[8] Yet, as we have seen in the Introduction (p. ???), historical speculations of this kind are tricky and frequently tell us more about modern ideological fantasies (such as that of the "matriarchate") than about facts of the past. Since already on the Mycenaean tablet Tn 316 from Pylos Hera shares a sanctuary with Zeus, it is clear that the divine pair has a long history indeed. It seems wiser, therefore, to take their marriage as given and ask about the meaning its conflicting character might have had for the Greeks of the archaic and classical period.

6 Cf. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 63, 332; Loraux 1992: 40–1; Redfield 2003: 19–20.

7 The best example of all of these strategies in a single passage is Hom, *Il.* 1.539–69.

8 Thus e.g. Cook 1906, or more recently O'Brien 1993.

A clue might once again be found in the theogony. In Hesiod's version there was from the beginning a substantial difference between the part played by males and by females. The male god is a ruler who tries to safeguard his position, only to be eventually overthrown by his son. The goddesses collaborate with these sons against the oppression of their husbands, and they survive the coup themselves: Gaia, and to a lesser extent Rheia, were still worshipped in classical times.[9] Hera is another goddess in this female line, but her situation is more complicated: "She knows that Zeus has put an end to the complicity between mothers and their younger sons and that no son of hers has been born more royal than his father, no son to whom she might lend a helping hand" (Loraux 1992: 41). Hera reacts by regressing to the most ancient stage, in which Gaia started to produce by parthenogenesis: if Zeus does not give her a mighty son, she can give birth to one on her own. She tries this with both Hephaistos and Ares, but neither of these births is a success.

Yet, this is not to say that Hera is just a weaker version of Gaia. While from one perspective her parthenogenetic childbearing appears as a series of failures, from another it may be read as a *transformation* of Gaia's feminine energy. This is particularly clear from her last and most astonishing attempt at engendering a worthy son – an offspring no less formidable than the monstrous Typhon, the most dangerous enemy Zeus ever had. We have seen already that according to Hesiod Typhon was begotten by Gaia (*Th.* 821; cf. above, p. ???). *The Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, however, tells a different story. When Zeus bore Athena, Hera saw this as an assault on her dignity and complained to the gods (311–30):

> Hear me, all you gods and goddesses,
> how cloud-wrangling Zeus begins to dishonour me
> first, although he made me his trustworthy wife.
> Now apart from me, he bore owl-eyed Athena
> whom he sets above all the blessed gods –
> but my lame-footed son Hephaistos,
> whom I bore, was born a weakling among all the gods. ...
> How dare you bear owl-eyed Athena on your own?
> Could not I have borne her? I was still called yours
> among the immortals who live in wide heaven.
> Watch out that I do not devise some evil in return.
> I will scheme to bear a child who will rule the immortal gods.
> I, at least, will not shame our holy marriage,
> but I will not approach your bed. Away, far away
> from you, I will still count among the undying gods!

Hera then "stormed from the gods" and prayed to Gaia, Uranos and the Titans to grant her "a child apart from Zeus, in no way weaker in strength than he, a child greater than Zeus by as much as Zeus is greater than Kronos" (337–9). Gaia answered by shifting, and Hera knew that her prayer would be fulfilled (343–52):

> Potom až do té chvíle, kdy rok se již dovršil celý,
> k Diovi důmyslnému ni na lůžko nevstoupla nikdy
> Héra vznešených zraků, ni na křeslo zdobené skvostně,
> na němž po jeho boku, své rozvážné smýšlejíc rady,
> sedávala vždy dřív; jen v chrámech modliteb plných
> trvala neustále a ze svých se těšila žertev.
> Když pak se naplňoval již dnů a měsíců počet ...
> zrodila nikterak bohům ni lidem podobnou stvůru,
> hrozného Tyfaóna, tu krutou pro lidi trýzeň.

The complicity between Hera and Gaia is clearly expressed in the *Hymn*: it is Gaia to whom Hera prays, and who answers the prayer. But as Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti point out (2016: 95), there is also a significant difference: while both Gaia and Rheia are "truly maternal goddesses" who turn against their husbands to protect their children, Hera begets Typhon "in order to defend her proper status, to take revenge for being harmed in her rank and her prerogatives". In other words, Hera's aim is not really to overthrow Zeus but solely to ensure that within the order he has established her place is fully respected.

This is important in view of the fact that in Hesiod's *Theogony* it is precisely the right division of honours (*timai*) that allows Zeus to establish his new order of things. Already during the titanomachy Zeus managed to secure crucial allies among divinities of the previous generation by declaring that "whoever of the gods would fight together with him against the Titans, him he would not strip of his privileges, but that everyone would have the honour he had had before among the immortal gods; and that whoever had been without honour and without privilege because of Kronos, him he would raise to honour and privileges, as is established right" (392–6). Zeus kept his word, and as soon as he became the king of the gods, "he divided their honours well for them" (885). As Arthur [Katz] has shown, the *Theogony* may be read as a system of exchanges in which direct vengeance is gradually replaced by "successively higher degrees of sublimation and symbolization" (1982: 64), culminating with "the emergence of symbolic

[9] See Munn 2006: 32–3; Both Gaia and Rheia were sometimes identified with the Mother of the Gods, which had a cult of her own (*ibid.* 56 and 61; Robertson 1996).

exchange and balanced reciprocity" that characterizes "Zeus' rule as the reign of justice" (*ibid.*: 73). The exchange of proper honours for loyalty to the new establishment was crucial in this regard – and even more so in case of females (such as Styx or Hekate, *Th.* 383–453), who had been the chief initiators of rebellion from the very start, and whose dangerous power thus Zeus needed to transform through positive reciprocity. It is fully in accord with this that Hera so passionately fights for her prerogatives, i.e. for the honours that the female powers have received in the new order. In other words, while Hera seemingly gives birth to Typhon so as to overthrow Zeus, on closer look she does so in order to defend the system of reciprocity on which Zeus' rule is based.

That Hera does not really want to put an end to Zeus' rule comes out clearly from a version of the story that we find in a scholium to *Il*. 2.783, in which Gaia complains to Hera that Zeus has killed the Giants, her sons; Hera tell this to Kronos, who gives her two eggs rubbed with his sperm and tells her to bury them so that a divine being might be born out of them "who would dethrone Zeus"; "being angry" she does so, but as soon as the monster is born, "she makes it up with Zeus, tells him everything, and he kills Typhon by his thunderbolt". The motivations of the three divinities in this version are telling: motherly Gaia wants to punish the death of her children, while despotic Kronos wishes to get revenge for being dethroned. For Hera the text just says that she acts as she does on account of "being angry", i.e. she is apparently having one of her recurrent fits of anger against her husband and wants to teach him a lesson. As we will see below, it is a standard pattern that Hera falls out with Zeus only to be eventually reconciled with him again. This is just what we see here: Typhon is an expression of her anger, but once he is born, she immediately changes her mind and makes sure that Zeus is able to defeat him.

While Hera does hark back to the ancient female powers, therefore, she transforms the direction of this chaotic feminine energy: instead of striving to overthrow Zeus, she uses it to test his strength. The point is well summarized by Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti (2016: 96):

> If the intergenerational conflict in which the mother unites with the son against the father ... vanishes from the divine family with the disappearance of the figure of the heir, the conflict as such is not driven out altogether, but it transforms. More precisely, it changes its strategy and turns from the verticality of the lineage into the horizontality of the couple. In effect, the strife 'stabilizes' into a permanent dynamic between the two sovereign spouses, a dynamic that is disruptive but necessary.

To understand this dynamic, it is useful to compare once again the part played by females and by males in the theogony. In Hesiod, the task of Gaia was to set things in motion, to generate. Uranos, on the other hand, tried to impede this motion, to keep the progeny inside Gaia's womb. His effort aimed at stability, but it was too violent and unrealistic, trying to get rid of motion altogether. In effect, Gaia found a way round his resistance and helped to depose him. Gaia thus stands for flexibility, growth, development, motion, generation – factors which are crucial for the correct functioning of the world, but which are also highly dangerous, threatening to upset the world's order. It is symptomatic that the castration of Uranos resulted not only in the happy emergence of the new generation of the gods but also in the birth of the Giants, powers of chaos opposing the future Olympians, and of the Erinyes, dark maternal powers of blind vengeance. The aim of the theogony is thus to integrate this dangerous feminine element of Gaia, to make use of its positive qualities while keeping its disruptive aspects at bay. This is just what happens between Hera and Zeus. Hera is herself firmly integrated in the new order: she is Zeus' wife, and it is from him that she derives her honour and legitimacy. But she is also an heir of Gaia, and is embodying all the features of Gaia's feminine energy that can possibly be incorporated into Zeus's order. Her begetting of Typhon can thus be seen as the ultimate test of the order's stability. Once Zeus succeeds in this test, Hera can mitigate her chaotic tendencies and transform them into the shrewd tricks of Zeus' wife, who keeps on manipulating, deluding and seducing her husband, acting as his "intimate enemy" (as Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti repeatedly call her).

A similar sublimation is taking place on Zeus' side. As Arthur [Katz] pointed out (1982: 78), Zeus escapes the cycle of dethronement "not by resisting it, but by assimilating it in its entirety and controlling it." A good example of this is his swallowing of Metis, which synthesizes the strategies of the earlier two stages: "For, like Uranos, Zeus suppresses the child in the mother's womb; and, like Kronos, he swallows the child itself" (*ibid.*: 77). In effect, Zeus "embodies the tensions and struggles of the succession-myth while at the same time transcending them" (*ibid.*: 78). His marriage with Hera may be seen as part of the same pattern: instead of dispensing with fights with dark feminine powers altogether, he integrates these fights in his marriage, thus setting clear limits to them. His marriage thus serves as a paradigm of the cosmic order: it is dramatic and full of conflict, but in the end it endures.

What the theogony teaches us is that order cannot be maintained solely by restriction and force. Reality is too complex and fluid, and it is only by taking this fluidity into account and leaving enough room for it that Zeus can truly achieve a

stable arrangement of things. In other words, it is precisely because he has such a defiant wife that Zeus is able to control the world. The marriage of Zeus and Hera functions as a barrier against chaos because it not only wards it off but is at the same time able to integrate it in the form of an ever-present tension. Zeus and Hera argue all the time, sometimes even to the point of breaking up (as we shall see soon), but eventually all ends well and their marriage lasts. In this way the king of the gods demonstrates his ability to keep the right balance between order and chaos that every functional arrangement of reality requires for its stability.

To explain the same thing from a modern scholarly perspective, we might say that myths of this kind are reactions to tensions created by the Greek patriarchal order of classification. As most traditional cultures, the Greeks generally placed women on the side of *nature*, which is opposed to *culture* represented by men. Hesiod's *Theogony*, in which order is only established when men finally manage to control their women, is a good example. A classic philosophical expression of the same basic conception is Aristotle's theory of sexual reproduction, in which the female supplies passive *matter*, while the male is likened to an artisan actively shaping the matter and providing it with *form*.[10] As modern feminist psychoanalytic scholars have pointed out, such a one-sided picture was only possible at the cost of repressing the alternatives, which gave rise to dark fantasies concerning the feminine. "Woman is cast as Freud's 'dark continent', as the abyss of death, as the devouring mother. ... Woman becomes the repository for all the fears engendered by the force of life: loss of control, loss of self, loss of boundaries, loss of meaning" (Decker 2016: 755). Myths provide a cultural vent for such fantasies, envisaging various dangerous monsters linked to the goddesses and transgressing the conventional classification of categories. Typhon, with his "hundred heads of a snake ... sending forth all kinds of inconceivable sounds" (Hes., *Th.* 825–30), is a case in point: whether begotten by Gaia or Hera, he is always engendered parthenogenetically, representing that aspect of the feminine principle which resisted by the stabilizing action of the male god. It is symptomatic that in Aristotle's biology monsters originate whenever the male form completely fails to gain mastery over the feminine matter.[11]

Yet this is just one part of the picture. While Hera's monstrous and chaotic features do give vent to the shadow of the patriarchal order, Hera's task as a goddess is not just to express this shadow but to transform it into positive power that may in turn be used to support the very order she seems to disrupt. Narratively, this is clear from the fact that most of her unruly actions result from her feeling of being slighted on her prerogatives, and are thus a way of fighting for the very same honour (*timē*) that Zeus has made one of the cornerstones of his newly established system of symbolic exchange. Paradoxical as this is, we will see soon that the point of many of Hera's rituals is precisely to transform her anger into creative energy that may reinvigorate her sovereign marriage.

The Cycle of Break-Up and Reconciliation

Further light on the paradoxical nature of Hera's marriage with Zeus may be thrown by the myths and cults that specifically focused on this subject. Most of the myths tell us how the divine pair got together and had their first intercourse. The claim to this memorable event was made by a number of cities and regions such as Naxos, Samos, Euboia, Argolis or Mt. Kithairon.[12] In myths the intercourse was depicted as an intimate sexual union, but at the same time it was conceptualized as the first wedding intercourse. This is particularly obvious on iconographic depictions – the best known examples being the Parthenon Frieze at Athens and the metopes from Hera's temple at Selinus – which show Hera as a bride lifting her veil for Zeus.[13] A number of cities had some kind of festival in which this first intercourse was celebrated. At Athens, for instance, it was called Hieros Gamos, "Sacred Marriage", taking place on the 27th Gamelion – the "Wedding" month (January/February), during which the Athenians tended to organize most of their weddings. There were public sacrifices on this day, but the heart of the celebration seems to have been domestic, comparable perhaps to a wedding anniversary of all married couples at once; the details elude us, however.[14]

The motif of the first intercourse was so strong in the relation between Hera and Zeus that even the subsequent sexual life of the gods seems to have been seen as repeating the first coitus. This was possible because Hera was permanently renewing her virginity: the Argives claimed that once a year she bathed in the Kanathos spring near Nauplia, and in this way recovered her maidenhood – an event the locals celebrated ritually in "mysteries in honour of Hera" (Paus. 2.38.2–3). Thanks to this, Zeus could deprive her of her virginity over and over again. That this was not just a local specialty is clear from the *Iliad* 14.294–296, where Hera seduces Zeus, and immediately he was overwhelmed by love "as on that day

10 See e.g. Arist., *Gen. An.* 730b9–23, 738b20–27. Cf. Bianchi 2014: 2.

11 See Arist., *Gen. An.* 767b3–15, with comments by Bianchi 2014: 37–9.

12 For a complete survey see Cook 1940: 1025–65.

13 A detailed review of representations of the sacred marriage of Zeus and Hera is given by Avagianou 1991: 75–106.

14 See Salviat 1964; Avagianou 1991: 27–36; Clark 1998: 15–18; Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 188–94.

when first they went to bed and made love together, without their dear parents' knowledge". Even an intercourse taking place long after their wedding is thus automatically associated with their very first union. For Zeus and Hera, there is no such thing as routine sex.

The fact that Hera and Zeus are celebrating their marriage all over again is tied to the fascinating complementary motif of the divine pair constantly *breaking up*. We have already seen an instance of this in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, where Hera begot Typhon while being at odds with her husband: "for a complete year she never came to the bed of cunning Zeus, nor ever to her finely worked throne as before" (343–5). Homer alludes to this recurrent behaviour of hers in *Il.* 8.477–81, where Zeus tells his wife that he does not care how angry she gets, nor how far away she goes in her sulking: "Go to the bottom of earth and sea for all I care, down where Iapetos and Kronos sit in the depths of gloomy Tartarus, unrelieved by light from the Sun-god Hyperion and unrefreshed by any breeze that blows!" That Hera should chose Tartaros as the place for her sulking is a sign that the break up is of cosmic dimensions indeed.

Before giving birth to Ares, Hera similarly goes to complain of Zeus to Okeanos (Ovid, *Fasti* 5.233), another liminal place of cosmic scale. Now, Okeanos is interesting in that it is also a place where Hera was raised (*Il.* 14.201–3) and where she and Zeus first made love behind the backs of their parents (schol. *Il.* 14.296). In other words, it is a place associated both with the beginning of Hera's marriage and with its temporal break-up. This ties well with *Il.*14.205–7, where in her attempt to seduce Zeus Hera pretends to go to Okeanos and his wife Tethys to "put an end to their incessant quarrelling, for truly now it has been a long time since they went to bed and made love, since each avoids the other and both hearts seethe with bitter resentment". While this is a lie fabricated to deceive Zeus, it echoes the motif of divine separation and making up again that Hera knew only too well from her own marriage – a pattern the ancient listeners no doubt would have recognized.[15]

The cycle of break-up and reconciliation was not just a subject of myths but of Hera's cults as well. The best example is Stymphalos in Arcadia, where according to Pausanias (8.22.2) Hera was raised in her childhood by a certain Temenos, who subsequently established three sanctuaries of her and gave her three cultic titles: "he called her Girl (*Pais*) when she was still a virgin; when she married Zeus he called her Fulfilled (*Teleia*); but when for some reason she quarrelled with Zeus and came back to Stymphalos, he called her Separated (*Chēra*)". The three epithets correspond to the three stages through which Hera is constantly passing. Stymphalos here plays the same part as Okeanos: it is a place of Hera's childhood, but also the place she chooses for her sulking – in this way returning to the childhood stage, ready to start the cycle anew.

Pausanias tells us nothing of the cults pertaining to the three sanctuaries, which probably no longer existed by his time. Luckily, we learn more from his description of the Boiotian Daidala festival in honour of Hera Teleia, which elaborates the same theme (9.3.1–2):

> Héra se jednou rozhněvala pro nějakou příčinu na Dia a odstěhovala se na Euboiu. Zeus ji nedokázal přemluvit, a tak prý se odebral k tehdejšímu vládci v Platajích Kithairónovi. Nebylo totiž nad něho chytřejšího. Ten tedy boha vybídne, aby vezl na voze taženém spřežením býků zahalenou sochu vyrobenou ze dřeva a aby říkal, že veze Asópovu Plataiu. Zeus vykonal vše podle Kithairónovy rady. To se ihned Héra dozvěděla a vzápětí také přišla. Jakmile se přiblížila k povozu a strhla roucho ze sochy, poznala svůj omyl, vždyť místo nevěsty nalezla dřevěnou sochu. I smířila se s Diem. Pro toto usmíření vykonávají slavnost nazvanou Daidala, poněvadž staří říkali dřevěným sochám *daidala*.

Since Pausanias tells the myth to explain why the Plataians worship Hera under the epithet Nympheuomenē, "Bride", it is clear that at the end Hera symbolically takes the bride's place herself. This is confirmed by another version of the myth given by Plutarch (fr. 157), which says that after the reconciliation Hera with much joy and laughter "herself led the bridal procession" (though she still later burned the image out of jealousy). While the myth does not directly put Hera in the bride's place, it lets her join the game and walk in the marriage procession side by side with the fake bride.

Interestingly enough, Plutarch (fr. 157) also tells a completely different aetiological myth of the Daidala, in which Zeus abducts still virginal Hera from Euboia, where she was raised, and takes her to a cave on Mt. Kithairon to have his first intercourse with her; when Hera's nurse comes looking for her, Kithairon assures her that Hera is not inside and that Zeus is making love to Leto; as a sign of gratitude Hera later allowed Leto to share her altar and temple with her. At first sight this is a completely different story that is hard to square with the first one. Yet, reading the stories structurally, we may in fact see them as complementary: the theme is break-up and reconciliation which allows Zeus and Hera to celebrate their *hieros gamos* once again. The first intercourse takes place in secret – a standard motif we have already seen in *Il.* 14.296, where Hera and Zeus first made love "without their dear parents' knowledge". The secrecy secludes the intercourse

[15] Thus Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 242–3.

form the visible social system, making it a liminal event, taking place in a liminal cave, and it is precisely this liminality that functions as a bridge with Hera's sulking, which has no less liminal features. Another link is Euboia, which in the first myth serves as a place of Hera's retreat, while in the second one is a place of her childhood, playing thus a similar double part as we have seen in the case of Okeanos and Stymphalos.[16] The final structural link with the first myth is the presence of Leto and the surprisingly friendly gesture towards her. Leto is the fifth wife of Zeus (*Th.* 918–20) whom on other occasions Hera persecutes bitterly, and she thus associates Hera's rival Plataia. In this case, however, Hera and Leto are reconciled, which in turn serves as a reference to the theme of reconciliation from the first myth.

The Daidala festival itself, as described by Pausanias (9.3.3–9), had two versions. At the Little Daidala, celebrated once every six or so years (not even Pausanias was sure), a wooden image of a woman called Daidale was made from a large oak tree chosen from a sacred grove. After some fourteen cycles of the Little Daidala there followed the Great Daidala, a large festival involving all the important cities of Boiotia. Each of them received one Daidale – fourteen altogether – and they drove them together on wagons in a huge marriage procession from the Asopos river up to the summit of Mt. Kithairon, where they burnt the wooden images together with sacrificial victims (a cow to Hera and a bull to Zeus from each of the cities).

The festival is a complex one and has received a number of interpretations.[17] The most conspicuous level of its meaning is political, and I will return to it below. For the moment it is worth observing that the ritual condenses several symbolic patterns that at first sight appear as contradictory: it is a glorious re-enactment of the sacred marriage, but at the same time a sort of expiatory sacrifice: the animal victims are burned completely together with the images, as was common it sacrifices offered to chthonic deities to appease them. It also resembles a scapegoat ritual: the wooden images are a symbol of the strife between Zeus and Hera, embodying all the conflicts of the Boiotians as well as of the cosmos at large. Yet, instead of being driven out beyond the boundary of the territory, as is the case with standard scapegoat rituals (cf. below, p. ???), the images are carried towards Mt. Kithairon, the sacred centre of Boiotia, where their negative energy it transformed into positive power by being burned.[18] It is this transformation that unites the expiatory aspect of the rite with the celebratory one, making the Daidala a rite of renewal.

The Dangers of Marriage

The Daidala allow us to link the marriage of Hera and Zeus to the cosmic and theogonic themes we have followed above, helping us understand the relation between Hera's love and hatred of Zeus. We can see that the hatred smoothly transforms into passion, which in turn reinvigorates the original union. It is this transformation that Hera specializes in, and it is this that explains why it is precisely by constantly quarrelling with Zeus that she ultimately helps to uphold his order. At the same time, we have seen in case of Athens that the *hieros gamos* served as a template of ordinary marriages, and we may ask what part the cycle of break-up and reconciliation played here.

One thing the cycle implies is that Hera is not a goddess of marriage in the sense of a permanent state but rather in the sense of the *transformations* that this state implies. Clearly, Hera protects marriage by guarding its *boundaries*: both the initial boundary that a maiden has to pass to become a married woman and the final boundary that threatens to dissolve the marriage. Unfortunately, we know nothing about the situations in which women sacrificed to Hera the Separated, but we do hear of interesting rituals related to the first boundary. The scholium to *Il.* 14.296, for instance, reports that "Zeus secretly deprived Hera of her virginity on Samos, and for this reason the Samians in imitation of the goddess as part of the rites of betrothal let the brides sleep with their bridegrooms in secret, and only then openly celebrate the wedding". The secret prenuptial intercourse apparently emphasized the dangerous liminal nature of the transition into marriage.

Even more intriguing is another custom reported by the same scholium. It relates to the myth in which Zeus and Hera secretly unite and conceive Hephaistos behind the backs of their step-parents Okeanos and Tethys:

[16] To which we may add the testimony of scholium on Ar., *Pax* 1126, which names Euboia as the place of the first intercourse of Zeus and Hera.

[17] Cf. Chaniotis 2002 for their overview; sadly, many of these interpretations are based on one-sided readings that fail to see the complete cycle of break-up and re-marriage. The best account of the Daidala with regard to this cycle is Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 109–19.

[18] The closest modern European parallel are some of the rites of seasonal renewal in which Death is carried out of the village to be burned or drowned: here too we see a rite which has destruction as its main theme but whose atmosphere is in fact joyful an reinvigorating (an answer to Parker's complaint [2011: 221] that "the theme 'prosperity restored' seems to be missing" in the Daidala). In some nineteenth-century Czech Easter versions of this rite the Death figure was clothed in bridal dress which was stripped off it just before the burning and put on a young maiden who was then triumphantly led back to the village (Frolcová 2001: 38). That the Daidala were also a spring festival is argued by Inversen (2007: 393–4) on the basis of Thuc. 3.65.2 and 2.4.2.

> But when after Kronos's imprisonment in Tartaros Okeanos and Tethys gave Hera to Zeus, they did so believing she was a virgin. Accordingly, when she gave birth to Hephaistos, she pretended that she conceived him without an intercourse, and she gave him to Kedalion of Naxos to teach him smith's art. For this reason even now the Naxians commemorate this event by letting the bride sleep also with a boy with both parents living.

The same custom is reported by Callimachus (*Aet.*, fr. 75), who also relates it to Hera, though he refrains from telling the myth. The ritual use of a prepubescent boy with both parent living (*pais amphithalēs*) was common in Greece: "such a child served as an index of one's household's good fortune and (so it was hoped) an omen for another's."[19] During weddings such a boy had several ritual duties, such as giving out bread at the banquet and accompanying the procession of bride and groom. According to Pollux (*Onom.* 3.39–40) it was a frequent Greek custom for a bride to spend the night before wedding with a little boy in the house of the bridegroom and for a bridegroom with a little girl in the house of the father-in-law. It is not clear, though, why the boy's nocturnal presence should be seen as commemorating the secret intercourse of Hera and Zeus. The practice has sometimes been interpreted as a fertility rite to assure the birth of a healthy son,[20] but this fails to provide a satisfactory relation to the myth. Since the myth is about Hera pretending to give birth to Hephaistos by herself, it seems rather that the small boy was meant to convey the image of innocence, to cover up for the drama of defloration, in this way echoing Hera's own pretence from the myth. Rites such as these attest to the notion of wedding as a transition fraught with danger. On the one hand, this danger is neutralized by making ritual use of a boy in whom sexuality has not yet awakened, and who is thus immune to its perils.[21] On the other hand, the danger can only be turned into a blessing by appealing to Hera in her ability to transform strife into marital passion.

Why is the transition into marriage dangerous? It is not difficult to see why it must have been daunting for the bride, who was to leave the friendly house of her father and be transferred to a different family in company of a husband whom she did not really know.[22] But the danger was no smaller for the groom, who was leading to his house a woman from another family over whom he would only have partial control. As Redfield has shown (2003: 27–81, 117–18), the Greek patriarchal marriage contained an inherent contradiction. On the one hand, the bride resembled a passive commodity that is exchanged between her father and her future husband. Yet while becoming a member of her husband's house, she also remained a part of her old family, retaining a close relation to her father and brothers who could defend her should they suspect her husband is not treating her right. Marriage was thus "a relation between two patrilines. The bride is the symbol and the vehicle of a connection between families. It is this connection that confers on her status and dignity" (*ibid.*: 43). But it is the very same connection that makes her potentially dangerous for her husband.

It is precisely this contradiction between submission and parity of status that characterizes the marriage of Zeus and Hera, who is both his wife and his first-born sister, i.e. both subordinate to him and his equal. Hera is able to take brilliant advantage of this, as skilful Greek wives no doubt were too. Unlike in human marriages, however, in Hera's case the contradiction is projected onto one and the same patriline, which allows to turn it into a self-enclosed cycle: whereas in real life too strong a conflict would lead to divorce and the wife's return to her father (which in most cases would be irreversible), Hera has no other patriline to return to, and the crisis thus only leads to a temporary dissolution followed by renewal.

In Greek wedding ritual the subordination was symbolized by the *anakalyptēria*, the bride's lifting of her veil during the wedding party, a gesture analogous to the "I do" formula in our weddings. This was the most critical point of marriage: the bride surrendered herself to the groom, but by this very act of consent confirmed her freedom – for it was only a free woman, i.e. one backed by her free male kinsmen, that was "sexually unavailable except by marriage" (*ibid.*: 34). The tension between freedom and surrender is brilliantly captured by the already mentioned metope from Hera's temple at Selinus, where Hera is lifting her veil, while Zeus holds her by the wrist – another standard wedding gesture that the groom used to lead to bride to his house, signifying his mastery over her. Zeus' gesture is one of domination, yet he actually looks as the weaker of the pair, sitting on the bed and being overpowered by the beauty of his bride. It is the standing Hera who through her gesture of giving in calmly dominates the scene.

It is for this reason that myth of Zeus and Hera sometimes thematize not just their marriage but also their courtship. Courtship presupposes equality, it is a social technique that "softens boundaries and mediates oppositions" (Redfield 2003: 74), implying free consent on the part of the woman. Since Hera embodies the fullest measure of bridal autonomy imaginable, it is not surprising that, as we learn from Callimachus (*Aet.*, fr. 48), "Zeus courted her for three hundred years".

---

19 Golden 1990: 30. Cf. Garland 2013: 218–19.

20 Thus e.g. Stuart 1911, Oakley and Sinos 1994: 20.

21 Thus already Bonner 1911.

22 Cf. the poignant reflection of this in Sophocles, fr. 583.

What his courtship might have looked like is illustrated by the following myth from Hermione, a coastal town in Argolis (schol. Theocrit. 15.64):

> Aristoklés ve svém spise o hermionských svatyních vypráví o sňatku Dia a Héry. Podle tohoto příběhu Zeus Héru spatřil stranou od ostatních bohů a hned přemýšlel, jak by se s ní spojil. Jelikož chtěl být nenápadný a nechtěl, aby jej viděla, proměnil se v kukačku a posadil se na pahorek, který se tehdy nazýval Thornax, zatímco nyní se mu říká Kokkyx (Kukačka). Zároveň s tím pak Zeus toho dne udělal hroznou zimu. Héra se procházela, došla samotná až na onen pahorek, a tam se posadila na místě, kde se dnes nachází svatyně Héry s přídomkem Dospělá (Teleiá). Jakmile ji kukaččí sameček spatřil, přilétl k ní, sedl si jí na kolena a pak se třásl zimou a byl celý promrzlý. Héra se při pohledu na něj slitovala a zavinula jej pod svůj šat. V ten okamžik na sebe ovšem Zeus vzal svou pravou podobu a Héry se zmocnil. Ta ovšem soulož odmítala s poukazem na svou matku, a tak jí Zeus musel slíbit, že si ji vezme za manželku. A Argejští, kteří Héru uctívají nejvíce ze všech Řeků, mají sochu Héry, jež sedí v chrámu na trůnu, v ruce má žezlo a na žezle sedí kukačka.

At first sight Zeus' courtship, with its animal disguise well-known from his other love affairs, might seem to resemble rape: he took Hera by surprise and "got hold of her". Yet the surprise is followed by Hera's reasoned reference to the fact that they were born of the same mother, which expressed Hera's autonomy and made her Zeus' equal. Zeus has to promise to turn the sibling relation into a marital one in which Hera would willingly submit to him and yet retain her autonomy, while at the same time participating in his rule. The transformation into a charming little cuckoo seems to serve as a sort of joking trick parallel to that with the false bride at Plataia. It shows wedlock as a paradoxical connection of two powers which are attracted to and repelled from each other in equal degree. The joke is a way to bypass the resistance and open way for a transition to the state of marriage.

The same tension between force, deceit and consent runs through most of the other stories depicting the quarrelsome marriage of Zeus and Hera. Zeus' universe is based upon consent, the divinities that support him do so in exchange for proper honours rendered to them. Yet such a consent is not easy to maintain. This is particularly true when it comes to females, who are supposed to accept their subordinate position, and to be able to find power and dignity precisely in this voluntary subordination. Hera is a condensed expression of this, offering as much resistance as possible and manifesting the tensions that Zeus' patriarchal order creates. In the end, whoever, she consents, and through the cycle of marriage and separation re-enacts this consent over and over again, reconfirming the stability of Zeus' rule.

Marriage, Sovereignty and Reconciliation

Marriage was not just a matter of domestic life, however. For the Greeks it was a crucial institution on which society and culture were based, and it served as a metaphor for various areas of social life, including politics. In Hera's symbolic network this is expressed through the close link between marriage and sovereignty: it was thanks to being Zeus' wife that she was the queen of the gods. Let us have a look, therefore, what this implied in some of her cults.

We will start with Olympia, where we find one of the most important sanctuaries of the Greek world. The Panhellenic sanctuary as such was dedicated to Zeus and was the place of the Olympic games, celebrated in his honour from the eight century BC. But Hera was present with her husband, and in fact her temple, the Heraion, built around 600 BC, is older than that of Zeus, which was only constructed towards the half of the fifth century. While some scholars believe the Heraion originally belonged to Zeus and was only reassigned to his wife after the construction of Zeus' new fifth-century temple,[23] we will see in the next section that Hera's temples generally were one of the oldest, and it is well possible therefore that even in a sanctuary of Zeus it seemed appropriate to build a residence for his wife first, for it was she who guarded the house and stayed inside it while Zeus was busy outside supervising the games.

In any case, the theme of marriage was prominent at Olympia from the start. The founding myth of the sanctuary was about Hippodameia, the daughter of king Oinomaos of Pisa (a town close to the sanctuary), who tried to prevent her from marrying by announcing that he will only give her to the man who would beat him in a chariot race – but should the suitor lose, the king would have the right to kill him. Since Oinomaos received from his father Ares a pair of immortal horses, the death of potential suitors was more or less inevitable. It was only Pelops who managed to defeat Oinomaos, either by receiving an even stronger pair of horses from Poseidon, or by bribing Oinomaos's charioteer Myrtilos to remove the linchpins from his master's wheel-axels, in this way causing the crash of Oinomaos's chariot and his death. Pelops thus won both the bride and the kingship. Indeed, he became the most important king of all, receiving from Zeus a sceptre made by Hephaistos for Zeus himself; later on this sceptre was passed on via Atreus and Thyestes to Agamemnon, the leader of the Greeks at Troy (*Il.* 2.100–8). Pelops is thus a kind of Zeus' double on earth: his heroic precinct lay right next to Zeus' temple (Paus. 5.13.1) and "before sacrificing to Zeus, the Eleians sacrificed to Pelops" (schol. Pind., *Ol.* 1.149a). By analogy, Hippodameia is a

[23] The arguments pro and contra are reviewed by Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 179–83.

heroic double of Hera: while seemingly passive and waiting in the background, she is in fact crucial for her husband's sovereignty.

To commemorate his victory, Pelops instituted chariot-racing at the Olympic games, while Hippodameia established female foot races at the Heraia festival, described in detail by Pausanias (5.16). It was organized once every four years by a college of sixteen women, but the contestants were all young virgins, divided into three age groups. In archaic and classical Greece female sport was reserved for unmarried girls (cf. Kyle 2014). The mythical prototype was Atalanta, a devotee of Artemis, who refused to marry, challenging suitors to a running contest instead (see below, p. ???). Hippodameia too started as a virgin of this kind – her name means "Tamer of Horses", associating the standard poetic image of virgins as wild horses to be tamed by marriage,[24] but in the end she was tamed herself and instituted the Heraia "as a thank-offering to Hera for her marriage with Pelops" (Paus. 5.16.4). As the contestants were maidens, but the contest was organized by married women, it was clearly a transition from virginity to the fulfilment of marriage that was celebrated at the Heraia. In this regard, the girls' participation in the ritual races for Hera may be seen as a rite preparing the girls for marriage.

Yet the number of participating girls must have been limited, and it is clear that the initiatory function of the rite cannot have been the primary one. The girls were exemplary, taking part in the races on behalf of the entire community. Since the Heraia were also an occasion for weaving and presenting a new *peplos* for Hera, the basic meaning seems to be that of renewal. The *peplos* was woven by the sixteen married women, i.e. it expressed the "fulfilled" status of Hera the Married which was periodically reconfirmed. This renewal had important political implications, as we learn from a second aetiological myth mentioned by Pausanias (5.16.5–6):

> They say that when Damophon was a tyrant of Pisa, he did many terrible things to the Eleians. But when he died, the people of Pisa claimed they had no share in Damophon's crimes as a people, and the Eleians too were quite happy to dismiss their charges against them. Accordingly, since at that time there were still sixteen inhabited cities in Elis, they chose a woman of the most venerable age and the most distinguished position and reputation from each of the cities to settle their disputes for them. ... The women from these cities reconciled the Pisaians and the Eleians. Later on they were put in charge of organizing the Heraia and weaving the robe for Hera.

[24] See in detail Calame 1997: 237–43.

The exact historical events behind this are far from clear. Ancient historians generally speak of long-term conflicts between the towns of Pisa and Elis for the control of Olympia as well as the entire region of Elis. In the seventh century the Pisaians were supposed to be allied with the Messenians, while the Eleians with the Spartans. Pausanias himself (6.22.3) dates Damophon to the 580s, and the reconciliation would thus happen shortly after this time. Its effect would only be temporary, though, for it was not until 471 BC that the Eleians should finally have unified the region by conquering Pisa and building the new temple of Zeus from its spoils (5.10.2). The historicity of these events is doubtful, however, and a number of modern scholars believe the notion of archaic Pisa as an independent city might have been a narrative invented in response to internal conflicts in the region of Elis in the fourth century.[25]

Be that as it may, it is clear that the huge area of Elis comprised a number of towns frequently in conflict with one another and that stories of these conflicts were an expression of Eleian identity. From this perspective, the myth of the establishment of the Heraia is interesting in that it makes the goddess an agent of reconciliation and a patron of Eleian territorial unity. As Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti point out (2016: 177–8), there is a telling contrast between the Panhellenic masculine games of Zeus, oriented towards the external world, and the local feminine games of Hera, turned towards the inside world of Elis and allowing to overcome its internal disputes. This corresponds to the difference between the local princess Hippodameia and the Panhellenic hero Pelops, the ancestor of the Peloponnesians. Marriage thus appears as a symbol of unity and resolution of conflicts which applies to politics no less than to domestic life. Marriage is an institution allowing to mediate differences – and when the differences are too big, Hera has to be called for help, for it is her dramatic marriage with Zeus that *a fortiori* shows even the biggest conflicts to be reconcilable.

The sixteen women from different Eleian towns remind us of the fourteen wooden images at the Daidala, each representing one town of Boiotia. We have already noted that the Great Daidala were mainly of political significance, and it is worth looking at this aspect closer.[26] Pausanias (9.3.5) claims the cycle of the Great Daidala corresponded to the length of the period during which the Plataians were in exile and the festival could be held. This is referring to the dramatic events of the beginning of the Peloponnesian war in 427 BC, when the Spartan and the Thebans captured Plataia – the only city of Boiotia which was not a member of the

[25] For a review of the history of Elis and its modern interpretations see Bourke 2018.

[26] See in detail Inversen 2007, whose historical reconstruction I follow.

Boiotian Confederacy and was allied with Athens – and the Plataians went to exile. One year later the Thebans levelled the town to the ground, but they built a new temple for Hera instead (Thuc. 3.68.3) – clearly in celebration of the recovered unity of the Boiotians. It was apparently also the Thebans who commissioned the statue of Hera the Bride which according to Pausanias was made by Kallimachos, a sculptor flourishing in late 5th century. It seems therefore that the Thebans related the renewal of Boiotian unity to the myth of reconciliation between Zeus and Hera.

The Plataians could return from their exile after the Peace of Antalkidas in 387, but in 373 the Thebans destroyed the city again, and it was only in 338, after the Thebans had been defeated by Philip II of Macedon, that Plataia was re-established. The Plataians seem to have celebrated their return at the Heraion: Pausanias describes another statue of Hera Teleia made by Praxiteles, who was active ca. 380–330 BC and who as an Athenian was unlikely to have been hired by the Thebans. It must have been the Plataians, therefore, who commissioned the statue either during their first return from exile or after 338 "to stress the wholeness of the city" (Inversen 2007: 411) and a reassembly of its inhabitants.

Once the Plataians were back, it was the Thebans that experienced a downfall. After their defeat they tried to revolt against the Macedonians in 335, but were crushed by Alexander the Great, who decided to destroy the city, divide its land among other Boiotian cities and sell all the Thebans to slavery. Thebes was re-established in 315 BC by Alexander's successor Kassandros. The Thebans returned, but we may imagine that the old wounds on all sides would have been deep indeed – requiring a goddess to heal them through her festival (Paus. 9.3.6): "When Kassandros, the son of Antipater, resettled Plataia, the Thebans too [i.e. just like Hera and Zeus] wished to be reconciled with the Plataians and to take part in the common assembly and send a sacrifice to the Daidala." The pattern of the break-up and reconciliation of Hera's marriage thus served as a strong template to be used in a variety of political crises. It allowed the Boiotians to burn down all their resentments and re-establish their territorial unity under the sovereign guidance of Hera.

Territorial Sovereignty: The Case of Argos

Hera's ability to mediate differences and unite towns around a territory is an example of the important part she played in Greek political life. While Zeus is a Panhellenic god, protecting all the cities to an equal degree and never favouring any one of them, Hera is the very opposite of this, frequently functioning as a patron of particular cities and territories. In the *Iliad* (4.52) she names Argos, Sparta and Mykenai as her most favourite cities, but there were many more. Indeed, if Zeus was a divine sovereign on the cosmic level, on the level of local politics it was rather his wife who embodied sovereignty.

Perhaps the best sign of this was her "unique connection with the temple: the earliest and most important temples are dedicated to her" (Burkert 1985: 131). The origin of Greek temples was closely connected with the rise of the polis. As Coldstream puts it (1985: 68–9),

> the building of a freestanding temple was one of the first corporate enterprises of the emergent city-state. ... The corporate effort which had once gone into the building of palaces and royal tombs for Mycenaean kings was now diverted to the service of the gods, the supreme protectors of the polis; and a god's house must at least be worthy of a king. Thus the acropolis of Tiryns, which had once been the seat of a Mycenaean monarch, had by the eighth century been set apart for the worship of the patron deity, Hera; her temple was actually built upon the ruins of the Mycenaean palace, making use of its solid stone foundations.

A temple was thus a manifestation of sovereignty par excellence. In the Greek egalitarian world this sovereignty was strictly speaking in the hands of the gods, but they gladly let the humans have a share in it.

The building of temples was but the most prominent manifestation of a larger trend to establish clearly defined sanctuaries. While numerous cult places already existed during the Dark Ages, it was in the eighth century that they became much more visible and formalized and that their number sharply increased – a phenomenon that is usually seen as connected with the rise of the polis. Interestingly, it was particularly the extra-urban sanctuaries, located in the country several kilometres from the nearest town, that originated earlier and were the most important ones. An influential interpretation of François de Polignac explains this surprising phenomenon by seeing such sanctuaries as places of *mediation*. The sanctuaries originated in a world similar to that depicted in the *Odyssey*, a society dominated by a warrior aristocracy established around local chiefs (*basileis*) and their households, each of them using the exchange of gifts "to maintain the links of hospitality and the network of kinship and marriage alliances that constituted the bases of his power and prestige" (Polignac 1995: 7). It was probably due to large population growth, followed by shortage of land, that in the eighth century this old model of organization got increasingly inefficient and forced more and more chiefs "to work together, surrendering some powers they had previously exercised within their villages in return for a share in broader powers in a larger territory" (Morris 2009: 71). Extra-urban sanctuaries seem to

have played a crucial part in this process in that they provided a shared neutral spot at which aristocrats from different towns of the region or representatives of different groups within a single polis could meet, share sacrificial meal, strengthen the networks of alliance and compete by offering votive gifts that preserved the glory of the dedicator.

In his first formulation of his thesis Polignac emphasized the fact that "the sanctuary was often situated *right on a threshold to the territory*", thus helping to delimit and protect "the land controlled by the community upon which the sanctuary depended" (1995: 33). In his more recent papers Polignac has seen this as the second stage of a slower process. At first the sanctuaries functioned as meeting points shared by all, their frontier location being rather a mark of their neutrality and openness to communities from both sides of the border. It was only in the period around 600 BC or later that "powerful cities were taking control of external sanctuaries and transforming them into manifestations of their influence, wealth and prestige. These changes modified both the internal organization of the sanctuaries and their territorial orientations, through the creation of sacred ways and processions between city and sanctuary" (Polignac 2009: 437–8). In this way the *mediation* was transformed into *sovereignty*.

The extra-urban sanctuaries were dedicated to different divinities, but the most prominent ones were Hera, Apollo and Artemis, each adding a specific twist to the mediating function just described. For Hera, the classic example is her most famous sanctuary, situated at Prosymna on the north-eastern fringes of the fertile plain of the Argolis, in-between the towns of Argos, Mykenai, Tiryns and Nauplia. As Polignac puts it (1995: 37), "it has the air of a central spot, a meeting place for the entire region. Its position made it the ideal place for the demonstrations of ritualized competition (including sacrifices and offerings that vied in lavishness)" – allowing the local aristocrats to compete for the very honour (*timē*) that mythical Hera is so intent upon.

But while apparently neutral at first, the sanctuary's central position made it a dominating place from the start. "This was the cult site of a sovereign Hera, mistress of the plain of Argolis, which was spread out at her feet" (*ibid.:* 52). This sovereign aspect was emphasized architecturally: when around 700 BC a monumental terrace for the first temple was constructed, it was made of "Cyclopean" blocks of stone in imitation of Bronze Age buildings (of which both Mykenai and Tiryns offered several examples). In this way, the sanctuary was symbolically linked to the glorious heritage of the mythical past, when Mykenai were the power centre of the Greek world. It was thus ideally predisposed for being transformed into a symbol of sovereignty over the entire Argive plain. This transformation happened in the middle of the fifth century, when Argos conquered Mykenai and Tiryns and took hold of the entire plain. To symbolically confirm this change, the Argives completely remodelled the Heraion and its festivals and made it seem as traditionally closely linked to Argos – indeed, the very embodiment of its identity and its rule over the Argolis. It was probably only at this stage that a new Sacred Way connecting the Heraion with Argos was built and that the Hekatombaia games were instituted (Hall 1995: 611–2). Most of what we know of the rituals connected with the Heraion relates to this Argos-dominated stage of the cult.

Hera's patronage over the Argive plane was not just static but was articulated through a dynamic ritual pattern. At its heart we find once again the cycle of break-up and reconciliation, though this time the details are rather blurred.[27] We have seen already that the Argolis too claimed to have been the place of the first intercourse between Hera and Zeus and that the goddess was renewing her virginity every year in a spring near Nauplia. It follows that Hera and Zeus must have been celebrating their marriage all over again. We do not hear of any break-up of Hera's marriage, which is probably due to this part of the cycle being secret: Pausanias (2.38.2–3) says the re-virginization was celebrated in "mysteries in honour of Hera" and he mentions further secret rites near the Heraion at the stream Eleutherion, "Water of Freedom" (2.17.1), which might perhaps have freed the goddess from the marital yoke.[28] In the same passage Pausanias mentions that Hera was raised nearby, and we have seen that it is precisely the places of her childhood to which Hera tends to retreat in her sulking. Be that as it may, the cycle makes sense even without its disruptive part being spelled out explicitly.

The cycle apparently had an agricultural dimension as well. We have seen that Zeus seduced Argive Hera in the form of a cuckoo. The cuckoo is a bird that lays eggs in other birds' nests,[29] just like Zeus, but it is also a bird that was seen as a herald of spring and of the seasonal rainstorms that allow spring ploughing.[30] As Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti point out (2016: 132), this is the time of the year when the earth is covered with flowers, which on the level of the human cycle corresponds to the "flower of youth" (*hēbē*) when "youths and maidens reach sexual maturity and the full potentiality of their youthful strength". This is in

---

27 See in detail Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 123–41.

28 Nilsson (1906: 45) already saw these rites as analogous to the Nauplia bathing, speculating that a statue of Hera might have been bathed in the stream. For Nilsson the bath was prenuptial, but in Hera's cycle the postnuptial and prenuptial coalesce.

29 A fact known already to Arist., *Hist. an.* 563b29–32.

30 See Hes., *Op.* 486–9, and the comments of Hannah 2005: 22.

harmony with the fact that Hebe was Hera's daughter and that Hera herself was worshipped in the town of Argos as Antheia, "Flowery" (Paus. 2.22.1). Hera's connection with flowers is beautifully captured in the *Iliad* in her *hieros gamos* with Zeus (14.346–9): "Kronos's son Zeus caught his wife in his arms, and under them sacred earth made tender new grass grow up, and dewy clover, crocus, and hyacinth, thick and softly luxuriant, holding them up off the ground."

The symbolic correlation between the human and the agricultural cycle is well expressed in an explanation that the *Etymologicum Magnum* provides for Hera's Argive epithet Zeuxidia, "Yoker":

> They say that when Apis moved from Argos to Egypt, he sent oxen to the king of Argos and taught the locals the art of sowing. After having yoked the oxen for seeding, the king dedicated a sanctuary of Hera. And when the stalks of corn started to flower and bloom, he called them 'flowers of Hera'.

The same wagon drawn by oxen, the lexicon adds, was used by the Argives in the marriage procession, when "after sunset the bride is carried from the house of her father to that of her groom". We know from Herodotus (1.31) that during the Hekatombaia, the main festival of Argive Hera, the priestess was supposed to ride from Argos to the Heraion on a wagon drawn by oxen. It appears, therefore, that the festival was a celebration of Hera's marriage as well as of the flowery season of the agricultural year.

All of this ties well with Hera's close association with cattle. Her standard epic epithet was *boōpis*, "cow-eyed", and the hill just behind the Argive Heraion was called Euboia, "Rich in Cattle". One of the main myths related to the Heraion was that of Io, an Argive princess and a priestess of Hera, with whom Zeus fell in love, causing the jealousy of his wife. As a result, Io was transformed into a cow and was bound to an olive tree and guarded by Argos Panoptēs, "All-Seeing". After Hermes killed him on the order of Zeus, Hera changed the strategy and instead of confining Io to one place sent a gadfly against her that kept her wandering in constant movement around the world, until she found rest in Egypt, where she resumed human form and gave birth to Zeus's son Epaphos, the grand grandfather of Danaos.

The transformation of a maiden into a cow and her exile to far-away places has the ring of an initiation myth, reminding us of Athenian girls playing bears for Artemis at Brauron.[31] While this does not mean that we should postulate some kind of initiation rite at the Heraion, as Dowden does (1989: 134–5), it does rhyme with the symbolic focus of the Hekatombaia on marriage as the yoking of young girls. Since Io was a priestess, the procession at the Hekatombaia with the priestess drawn by oxen seems to represent Io's reintegration – which implies that the priestess "previously left that shrine in an act of 'dissolution'" (Burkert 1983: 166), one that corresponds to Hera's break-up. Burkert speculates (*ibid.*: 164–8) that the dissolution might have been related to the killing of Argos, an eponym of the city and a divine shepherd whose death would signify a dispersion of the flock.

On the male side, the "flower of youth" was manifested by youthful warrior strength: the youths considered most pure were allowed to carry shields in the procession, and in the athletic contests that followed the prize was again a bronze shield.[32] The shield symbolizes the ability of youths to defend the Argive territory, and it is thus again linked to Hera as a guarantor of sovereignty. As Hyginus reports (*Fab.* 170), originally this was a shield that Danaos consecrated to Hera. When he died, the throne was inherited by Lynkeus (the only son of Aigyptos not killed by the Danaids), who in joy gave the shield to his son Abas, at the same time establishing the contests at the Heraion. The shield thus symbolizes the moment of crisis and renewal in generational succession: "A new king following the old, a shield transferred from father to son", all of this "under the power of Argive Hera" (Burkert 1983: 164).

The evidence is too fragmentary to allow us to reconstruct the full symbolic network of Hera's Argive cult, but even the isolated bits we have presented are enough to give us a rough idea of its basic themes. We can see a symbolic homology between marriage and agriculture. The marriage is preceded by a crisis: the herdsman is dead, stability breaks down, the cow is let loose wandering in faraway regions, Hera regresses to an untamed virginal state, the seeds die in earth after having been sown. Pausanias (2.17.4) mentions that Hera's statue had a pomegranate in her hand the story of which is "somewhat of a holy mystery"; we are reminded of the myth of Persephone, in which the pomegranate symbolizes both her unbreakable marriage bond with Hades and the cycle of death and rebirth (see below, p. ???). In the end, however, there comes reintegration: the procession with the priestess drawn by oxen is both a marriage procession and a celebration of the blooming of crops.

At the same time, the procession amounts to a symbolic re-appropriation of the territory: it "can be seen as a collective sacred ploughing, in which the processional route represents a symbolic furrow leading from the dwelling place of human beings, in the centre, to the dwelling place of the deity on the edge of the

[31] See below, p. ???. For Io as an initiation myth cf. Dowden 1989: ???, Katz 1999.

[32] For the scattered sources see Nilsson 1906: 45–6.

plain now taken over by agricultural civilization" (Polignac 1995: 42). The protection is symbolized by the shields carried by the youths, who correspond to freshly blooming flowers and are themselves protected by the goddess famous for her ability to fight for her matrimonial rights. It seems to be precisely the protection, rather than fertility, that constitutes Hera's relation to agriculture and care for the young ones. "As an extension of the protection that she affords to the earth and its products, the great matrimonial goddess watches over not so much the birth of beings as their growth; she is even more concerned to preserve the household than to ensure the fertility of marriage" (*ibid.*). We will see some interesting implications of this below (section "Hera the Mother").

Sovereignty and International Exchange: The Case of Samos

A different type of sovereignty can be seen in another famous cult of Hera, which was located on the Ionian island of Samos, close to the coast of Asia Minor.[33] The Samian sanctuary boasted of one of the earliest temples in the Greek world: built in the eighth century, it was the first temple to establish the canonical length of a hundred feet, often followed later. In the sixth century it was replaced by another temple that Herodotus (3.60) calls the biggest one he has ever seen. The reasons for such an astonishing development of the sanctuary, however, are quite different from those we have traced in Argos. Unlike the Argive plane, Samos only supported one polis, and there was thus no need to mediate between different local communities. Instead, the mediation was on an international scale. Since the eighth century the island was a flourishing maritime state and one of the leading commercial centres of Greece, trading with populations all around the eastern Mediterranean.

The mediating part of the Heraion is clear from the fact that the majority of archaic votive offerings found in the sanctuary were imported, including numerous objects from Egypt and the Near East. As Polignac warns (1994: 7), we should not "confuse the origin of objects and the origin of those who dedicated them to the divinity"; rather the offerings should be seen as at the end of a complex chain of exchanges involving "Phoenicians, Cypriots, Samians, and other Greeks travelling across the Aegean". What matters is that Samos functioned as a maritime crossroads at which various routes of exchange intersected. The Heraion provided a space that allowed to integrate these exchanges and transform them into a symbol of sovereignty. "In some ways Hera at Samos can be seen to reign over maritime space and Aegean relations in the same manner that Hera at Prosymna protects the Argive plain and the relations which unite its communities" (*ibid.*).

The international focus of the sanctuary is also clear from the fact that it was situated in the country close to the shore, six kilometres from the town of Samos, and originally it was oriented towards the sea. It was only in late seventh century that it was reoriented towards the town and was connected to it by the "Sacred Way", whose construction required a rerouting of a branch of the river Imbrassos.[34] This was a change analogous to that we have seen the Argive Heraion to have gone though in the fifth century: it completed the transformation from mediation to sovereignty by which the sanctuary was fully appropriated by the polis. Unlike in the Argive case, though, the Samian transformation was not absolute and the sanctuary retained its international openness.

To the Samians, the Heraion was a central point of their political identity, and the sanctuary functioned both as a cosmopolitan space of exchange and as a local centre of worship. This comes out clearly in its foundation myths. According to Pausanias (7.4.4), the sanctuary was founded by the Argonauts, who had brought the cultic statue of Hera from Argos; at the same time, however, "the Samians themselves believe that the goddess was begotten on the island by the river Imbrassos under a chaste tree (*lygos*)" which grew on the spot still in Pausanias's time. Contradictory as these stories seem, they are to be read together, expressing both the local character of the Heraion and its link with international maritime routes (the Argonauts being the heroes of seafaring par excellence).

The main annual festival of Hera on Samos was called the Tonaia, "Binding". Its foundation myth (preserved by Athen., *Deipn.* 15.672a–674b) tells how Admete, daughter of Eurystheus, escaped from Argos to Samos, where as a result of a vision of Hera she decided to become her priestess in a sanctuary previously founded by the Nymphs and the Leleges, a pre-Greek primitive tribe. The Argives, furious at her escape, bribed Tyrrhenian pirates to steal the cult statue of Hera, believing the Samians would punish Admete for this. The pirates landed at the "port of Hera" and easily stole the statue, for the temple had no doors. But when they attempted to sail away, the boat would not move. The pirates saw this as a prodigy and left the statue with food offerings on the beach, where it was discovered by the Karians (another non-Greek people), who bound it to a chaste tree (*lygos*), superstitiously believing the goddess had escaped from the temple by herself. It was in this bound state that Admete with the Samians found the statue

[33] For its archaeology see Kyrieleis 1993; Baumbach 2004: 147–74. For an interpretation of the cult see Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 141–159.

[34] Kyrieleis 1993: 103; Scott 2015: 230.

the next day, loosened it, washed it and brought it back to the temple. "For this reason ever since that day the statue is once a year taken to the shore and purified and cakes are presented to it. And this festival is called Tonaia." It is possible that at some point the statue was also bound by the chaste tree, but Athenaeus does not mention it; he does state, though, that the Karians were ordered by an oracle to wear wreaths made of chaste tree during the festival, and that in actuality it was the regular participants who wore them (thus playing the part of the Karians), only the personnel of the sanctuary wearing wreaths of laurel.

At first sight such a rite seems entirely different from the cults of Hera we have analysed so far, showing no apparent connection with weddings. Its main theme is a temporary dissolution of order and it subsequent restoration. Yet, the Hellenistic Samian poet Nicaenetus speaks of songs celebrating "the glorious bride of Zeus" during the festival (Athen., *Deipn.* 15.673c) and Varro claims that "the statue of Hera is adorned in the manner of a bride and her annual rites are celebrated in the form of a marriage" (Lactant., *Div. inst.* 1.17.8). While we cannot be sure Varro is referring to the same festival,[35] marriage symbolism can actually be detected in the Tonaia myth. Admete means "Untamed", associating a virgin not yet yoked into marriage (cf. Hippodameia above, p. ???). Hera herself was said to have been born on Samos under a chaste tree and "Samos was originally called Virgin Island (Parthenie), because Hera lived there when she was a virgin".[36] We thus meet once again the motif of a place of Hera's birth and her maidenhood. The chaste tree, or *vitex agnus castus* (*lygos*), reinforces the symbolism, for it was a plant famous for its anti-aphrodisiacal effects (see below, p. ???). By being bound to it once a year Hera symbolically resumed her virginity. The circumstances were characterized by chaos and disruption, which corresponds to the stage of Hera's separation from Zeus and her retreat to various liminal places of her birth. At the same time, however, the binding also implies *taming* the goddess and preparing her for marriage. The march with the statue back to the Heraion, which must have taken place after the purification, can be seen as a marriage procession that would restore Hera to her fulfilled status of a wife.

It might be objected that despite these symbolic elements the marriage motif is never openly articulated in the rite or the myth, and that the bridegroom in particular is remarkably invisible. We have seen that the first intercourse of Zeus and Hera was indeed associated with Samos and it is likely that the marriage motif was echoed in various choral songs accompanying the festival (as we can see from the fragment of Nicaenetus), but it needs to be admitted that apparently it was not very prominent. To comprehend this, we need to bear in mind the essentially condensed nature of symbolic images, which function as structural matrices relatable to various levels of human experience (cf. above, p. ???). From this perspective, Hera's cycle of break-up and reconciliation was a structural pattern that could be expressed through various symbolic codes. Given Samos's position of a maritime crossroads, it is understandable that in this case the basic images chosen for expressing Hera's pattern were taken from international sea trade rather than domestic life and that the marital code only played a secondary part. Just as in marriage the bride comes from outside to become the mistress of the house, Hera's cult was seen as involving a mediation between Greeks and non-Greeks or between different Greek groups – such as the Argives, who in the myth were depicted as enemies, but who had in fact supplied the first priestess and through the Argonauts even the cultic statue. The image of the temple having no doors expresses its openness to exchanges with the outside world. At the same time, however, the myth combines this openness with stability: the temple welcomes the Tyrrhenians, but when they attempt to sail away with Hera's statue, their ship cannot move. The openness is thus shown as dangerous, but in the end – thanks to the goddess – as reinvigorating: the energy released by the crisis is transformed into the stabilizing power of renewal, and Hera is bound to the very tree under which she was born.

A conspicuous feature of the myths of the Heraion is the presence of so many non-Greek peoples: Leleges, Tyrrhenians, Karians. To a certain extent they function as images of the Other: the Tyrrhenians are criminal pirates, the Karians simple-minded primitives evoking a time before the rise of culture. Yet, there is more to this. As Sweeney shows (2013: 202), while the best-known Greek models of ethnicity defined the Greeks in sharp opposition to the barbarians, the Ionians, being situated at an interface between Europe and Asia, opted for a more balanced approach, rejecting the polarised model "in favour of plurality, complexity and ambiguity". The Samian foundation myth is a good example. A sixth-century BC genealogy of Asius of Samos (preserved by Paus. 7.4.1), derived the Samians from Astypalaia (the daughter of Phoinix, sister of Europe), who slept with Poseidon and begot Ankaios, king of the Leleges; he in turn married Samia, daughter of the river Maiandros, from which union Samos was born. Samos thus originated at the intersection of many different elements. Phoinix is a king of Phoenicia (present Lebanon), and while one of his daughters gave name to Europe, the Samians descended from her sister Astypalaia, which made the island "not quite European.

[35] Some scholars believe the *hieros gamos* was celebrated at a different festival; cf. the detailed discussion in Avagianou 1991: 46–58.

[36] Schol. Dionys. Per. 534; cf. Varo cited by Lactant., *Div. inst.* 1.17.8.

Asius seems to suggest that it is certainly very close to being European, but also that it is proud of being something a little different" (*ibid.*: 93). This is also clear from the presence of the river Maiandros, which flew from Anatolia to the western coast, acting "throughout antiquity as a grand highway – a literal channel of communication" (*ibid.*). Poseidon stands for another communication channel, that through the sea. At the same time, the *movement* implied in Maiandros and Poseidon is contrasted by the *stability* of Astypalaia, whose name "Ancient City" connotes an ancient acropolis settlement. But the river and the sea are also forces of nature, which in turn are more stable than social structures and imply a kind of autochthony in the midst of social migrations, i.e. they comprise in themselves both movement and stability.

We have seen the same combination in the Heraion myths, where watery beings played a crucial part. The Nymphs and the river Imbrassos made the goddess and her sanctuary autochthonous and rooted in nature. The sea implied international exchange but was counterbalanced by Hera's firm refusal to move from the island. Interestingly, Samos's father Ankaios was also one of the Argonauts (Ap. Rhod. 1.185–9), which resonates with the myth of the Argonauts establishing the Heraion and shows it as containing within itself the same opposition: while portraying the Samian cult of Hera as a imported by seafaring, it also presents it as a homecoming, one of the seafarers being a Samian native.

But it was not just a focus on autochthony and rootedness in local forces of nature that provided for stability. The stability of nature was complemented by Samian eagerness for culturally shaping the landscape by means of monumental engineering (already praised by Herodotus 3.60). The best example is Hera's monumental stone temple, which gave the cult of the goddess a firm foundation. Its building symbolized the aspect of stability and sovereignty, which would complement that of movement and mediation. Indeed, since it was no doubt financed by the income from international sea trade, it demonstrated the ability of the goddess to transform movement into a driving force of stability, just as on other occasions she was able to transform her anger into the power of reconciliation. The Samian Heraion is thus both stable and open to movement, both aboriginal and imported, both natural and cultural, both non-Greek and Greek. In the end, however, Hera manages to integrate all these contradictions and unite them in her majestic sovereignty.

It is worth noting in this connection that the miracle of Greek economic and socio-cultural development that started in the eight century was due mainly to a combination of intensive agriculture on the one hand (allowed by the rise of the polis capable of permanently protecting the territory), and international sea trade around the Mediterranean on the other: "Intensive agriculture produced the commodities whose value was enhanced through international exchange, and the new wealth so generated was reinvested in intensive agriculture through extensions of Greek agricultural settlement" (Redfield 2003: 183). It was thus based precisely on a mutually supportive combination of stability and movement and on the ability to turn the latter into a motor of the former despite the inevitable tensions between them. The complex of structural themes we have traced on Samos, therefore, seems to be of much more general importance. It shows Hera as one of the patrons of the Greek miracle, a goddess associated both with the protection of agricultural territory (favouring fertile plains as places of her sanctuaries, such as in Olympia, Argolis or on Samos) and with international trade. Her task was to assure the Greeks that, risky as such a combination may seem,[37] it is not only viable but may in fact become a basis of sovereignty of the polis, symbolized by the monumental temple.

Sovereignty and Marriage Exchange

The polarity of the temple and the sea is typical of other cults of Hera as well and is mirrored in votive offerings. Among her favourite offerings in eighth to sixth centuries BC were terracotta models of houses.[38] Many scholars regard them as temple models, but as Polignac argues (1997: 113–15), it is likely that some of them are simply human houses, symbolizing "the more fundamental part of Hera in the protection of domestic universe and preservation of the household (*oikos*)". In contrast to them stand models of ships, also found in a number of Hera's sanctuaries (particularly those laying close to the sea).[39] Polignac interprets them as standing for masculine "movement of the journey" opposed to feminine "stability of the home" (*ibid.*: 116), and relates them to the fact that a great part of Hera's archaic votives not just in the seaside sanctuaries but even in Argos were of external origin, i.e. they served as memorials of a chain of exchanges with other regions that the local aristocrats engaged in to arrange alliances, thus securing their domestic position.

It is likely that in some cases these alliances were confirmed by marriage, which in most societies represents one of the basic forms of inter-group exchanges. This helps us understand why it is Hera, the goddess of marriage, who supervises these exchanges and who has the ability to transform their movement into the

[37] Cf. Hesiod's mistrust of sea trade in *Op.* 633–62 and his idealization of self-subsistent farming without the need to "travel on ships" (236–7). Cf. van Wees 2013: 457–60.

[38] Polignac 1997: 113–14; Baumbach 2004: 32–3 (Perachora), 89–90 (Argos), 160 (Samos).

[39] Polignac 1997: 115; Baumbach 2004: 40 (Perachora), 67 (Tiryns), 96 (Argos), 163–6 (Samos).

stability of sovereignty. The bride is "an exogenous element" (*ibid.*: 118), coming from the groom's house from the outside. Yet, after being integrated in the new household the situation turns around: the exogenous wife becomes the head and the guardian of the house, while the endogenous husband actually spends most of his time outside. It is this paradox that lies at the heart of Hera's symbolic complex, and it helps us understand why it is really Hera rather than Zeus who was cultically connected with the theme of sovereignty. The fact that in myths she seems to be constantly putting Zeus' rule to test rather than supporting it testifies to numerous tensions the aristocratic marriage exchanges must have created.

"We marry our enemies", runs a proverb recorded by anthropologists in many tribal societies (Fox 1967: 178). The Argives reflected on this by means of their foundation myth of the fifty daughters of Danaos, who on the order of their father tried to evade marriage with their cousins, the fifty sons of Aigyptos, by fleeing from Egypt to Argos, and when even this did not help, they murdered their grooms on the wedding night – with the exception of Hypermnestra, who fell in love with her groom Lynkeus. Clearly, exchange with far-away countries and the dangers of marriage were themes that resonated with the competing aristocrats of the archaic period, though in myth these themes appear with much greater ambivalence than they would in real life. The Danaids themselves are of Argive descent through Io, but they arrive as strangers from Egypt. Aeschylus calls them *astoxenoi*, "citizen-strangers" (*Supp.* 356): they are "both Greek and barbarian. They belong in the city yet remain foreign to it", this being "an excellent metaphor for the ambiguities of women's social status in the community" (Zeitlin 1995: 125). In similar vein, the sons of Aigyptos are for the Danaids as well as for the Argives "both blood kin and enemies" (*Supp.* 225). Just as on Samos, the Argive myth condenses in one image the endogenous and the exogenous, the aboriginal and the imported, the Greek and the non-Greek. The clash of these contraries leads to a crisis, but, as on Samos, a way out is discovered in the end. It is symbolic that the Danaid Hypermnestra, who by her disobedience allowed the continuation of the Argive Inachid dynasty (Aesch., *PV* 869), became a priestess at the Argive Heraion. She thus followed in the footsteps of her ancestress Io (also a priestess of Hera, during her wanderings turned into "Hera's mainad" – *Supp.* 564), completing her journey and transforming international movement back into stability. Even her murderous sisters were eventually purified and allowed to remarry (Apollod., *Bibl.* 2.1.5). Herodotus (2.171) attributes to the Danaids the establishment of the Thesmophoria, the most important fertility rite in the Greek world (cf. below, ???), which is in harmony with the above-mentioned myth of the introduction of corn into Argos from Egypt. The incorporation of dangerous brides into the city of Argos thus leads to fertility and is seen as a culture-producing factor.

With this in mind we may return to the theogonic and cosmological conceptions of the male and the female implied in the conflicting marriage of Zeus and Hera. We have seen that Hesiod basically situated females on the side of nature, while males on that of culture. Yet, the picture is in fact far more complex. In Hesiod mankind originally consisted just of males, and it was only in revenge for Prometheus's theft of fire that Zeus initiated the creation of the first woman, Pandora. As Vernant has shown (1982: 168–85), her creation is highly ambivalent: on the one hand it caused the end of the Golden Age, when men lived in a blessed natural state without toil, scarcity and disease; on the other hand it meant the origin of marriage and agriculture, i.e. two institutions that for the Greeks were the epitome of civilization. Moreover, far from being a creature of nature, Pandora herself is a fully artificial creation, moulded from clay and adorned by the gods like a shop window mannequin. It is this paradoxical reversal that "is critical for Hesiod's well-known misogyny. For him women are on the side of culture, in fact of luxury, which is an excess of culture; they are deceitful, greedy, expensive; they distract men from their work, ... and consume the resources of that work, thereby making it harder" (Redfield 2003: 23). Yet, they are a necessary evil, for without them a man would not have a legitimate heir (Hes., *Th.* 602–7).

We can see, therefore, that the Greek conception of women is highly ambivalent: they are both natural and hyper-cultural. The key to this paradox lies in marriage, which allows biological reproduction but which is also a result of *exchange* between two patrilinies, and thus a highly cultural institution, distinguishing humans from animals. As Redfield puts it (*ibid.*), "the fertility of the woman links her to nature, but marriage-exchange situates her in culture". We have seen already that it was due to her constant link to the original family that the wife was seen as potentially dangerous. Yet it was this same link that allowed to turn mere biological reproduction into the cultural begetting of legitimate heirs. The wife thus both jeopardized the sovereignty of the household and helped to ensure it. Indeed, it was her who ruled the house and who would eventually in the role of a mother-in-law warrant that its rules are also internalized by the bride of her son. To quote Redfield once again (2003: 26):

> Women ... have a typical role as mediators; men make the rules and women figure out how to make them livable. Yet women also assert and enforce the rules; Dike and Eunomia are maidens. Hera, not Zeus, is the personification of sovereignty. ... [W]omen may be in some respects a problem to civil society, but from another point of view they will turn out to be critical to the maintenance of a civil order.

It is this paradox that is reflected in the Argive myths of Io and the Danaids, as well as in aetiological stories of Hera's cult of the Samos, which thematize both the culture-producing aspect of exchange and its dangers. Above all, however, it helps us understand why Hera may act both as an intimate enemy of Zeus and as a dignified queen safeguarding the order he has established. Her divine example assured the Greeks that with her help mediation may indeed become the very cornerstone of sovereignty.

Hera the Mother: Probation and Legitimation

To complete our account of Hera, let us at the end return to the theme with which we have started, that of Hera's marriage with Zeus being virtually childless. As Burkert remarks (1985: 133): "One feature strangely missing from the portrait of Hera is motherhood. ... Never is Hera invoked as mother, and never is she represented as a mother with a child." Yet Alcaeus calls her "the genetrix of all" (*pantōn genethla* – fr. 129.7), and she does control childbirth through Eileithyia, and sometimes even by direct intervention, as when she personally postpones the birth of Herakles, delivering Eurystheus instead (*Il.* 19.114–9). In the *Iliad* she boasts of having nursed Thetis (*Il.* 24.59–60) and in Hesiod she appears as a nurse of the Nemeian lion and the Lernaian Hydra (*Th.* 326–32, 313–8). And while it is true that she is not normally depicted as a mother, there are depictions of her nursing a child in her sanctuaries at Paestum.[40] Dozens of votive figurines of women nursing children have also been found in other sanctuaries of Hera, testifying to the fact that she was seen as a protectress of children.[41] It is no wonder, then, that she has been repeatedly associated by historians of religion with the great mother goddesses of the Aegean[42] – though in fact even the most passionate defenders of Hera's link with these prehistoric goddesses usually admit that the typical image we get in Greek sources is quite unmotherly.[43] Hera is not a mother, but has the air of one.

The solution to the paradox is twofold. First of all, it reflects the difference between myth and ritual. While mythical images are frequently harsh and extreme, showing the shadow of the divinity in question, in ritual this shadow has already been transformed into positive energy, and the god is ready to help with the same activities that he or she makes so complicated in myths. Second, the paradox relates to the complex nature of motherhood. As we have seen in the Introduction (p. ???), most goddesses, including the virginal ones (Artemis and Athena) in fact appear as mothers of some sort, and it is important to distinguish between different types of motherhood. In fact, since one of the functions of the goddesses is to guard the boundaries of classification categories, most of them never appear as mothers pure and simple but are one-sided and extreme in their motherly behaviour. Hera is a case in point: she certainly does not act as a straightforward mother lovingly nursing her children, but she frequently plays the part of a *stepmother*. In most myths this stepmother is evil, persecuting the illegitimate descendants of Zeus. Yet, a close analysis will shows that Hera's behaviour towards Zeus' offspring is in fact ambivalent and has a positive side as well.

Hera's ambivalence towards Zeus' illegitimate children can best be demonstrated on the hero who was maltreated by her most of all: Herakles.[44] As we learn from Homer (*Il.* 19.96–133), his troubles began even before his birth. Zeus begot him with the mortal woman Alkmene, and on the day of his supposed birth announced to all the gods that today Eileithyia would bring forth to the light a man of his own blood "who shall rule over all of his neighbours". When Hera heard this, she made Zeus "swear an unbreakable oath" that this would indeed happen, and once he swore, she personally flew over to Argos to speed up the birth of Eurystheus, Zeus' great-grandson who was due two months later, temporarily preventing Eileithyia from delivering Herakles. Thus it happened that the mighty Herakles was bound to serve the weakling Eurystheus, who became the king of Mykenai. Hera keeps on harassing him all his life. Already when he was eight or ten months old she sent two huge snakes to attack him – but the little hero choked them to death with his tiny hands.[45] It was she who reared the Nemeian lion and the Lernaian Hydra that Herakles had to fight as part of the twelve labours (Hesiod, *Th.* 326–32, 313–8). And most of all, it was she who sent madness upon him and made him kill his wife and children, as Euripides shows in his *Herakles*.

Yet the relation between Hera and Herakles is far more complex. To start with, Herakles is called after her: "The Glory of Hera". While this might be explained by the fact that it is precisely through the trials sent by Hera that Herakles proves his heroic glory,[46] there are actually some indications of a more

40 See Miller Ammerman 2007, who shows, however, that it was "the native Italic population that first emphasized the character of kourotrophos for this goddess" (149).

41 See Price 1978: 144–6 (Argos); Baumbach 2004: 21–2 (Perachora), 83 (Argos), 156 (Samos).

42 Thus e.g. Lévêque and Séchan 1990: 175, 184–5; Simon 1987: 160–1.

43 Cf. e.g. O'Brien 1993: 66–9.

44 Cf. in detail Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 264–77.

45 Pind., *Nem.* 1.33–72; Theoc., *Id.* 24.1–102; Apollod., *Bibl.* 2.4.8.

46 According to Pindar (fr. 301 Bowra = Probus on Verg., *Ecl.* 7.61), Herakles was first called Alkides, and it was only once he became famous thanks to Hera's harassment that he was renamed.

positive relation between the hero and the goddess. Occasionally, for instance, he acts as her defender, such as when he shot the Giant Porphyrion who attacked Hera in the battle of gods and the Giants (Apollod., *Bibl.* 1.6.2), or when he protected her from an attack of the Silenoi.[47] Even more importantly, their positive bond comes out in several cults: in Sparta he was said to have founded a shrine of Hera Aigofagos, "Goat Eater" (Paus. 3.15.9), and on the island of Kos he shared a sanctuary with Hebe and Hera, at which weddings were celebrated.[48] Moreover, while Hera was hostile towards Herakles during his life, Hesiod already stresses that her attitude changed once he died and was raised to Olympos (fr. 22.30–3): "Previously the goddess, white-armed Hera, hated him more than any of the blessed gods and any mortal human beings, but now she loves him, and honours him beyond the other immortals". It is for this reason that he was given Hera's daughter Hebe in marriage.

Most interesting, however, are several myths that suggest Hera's maternal relation to Herakles. First of all, when he was still an infant Hera was tricked into suckling him. According to Eratosthenes (*Cat.* 44), Hermes took the baby to Olympos and applied him to Hera's breast while she was asleep, "for it was not possible for the sons of Zeus to have a share in honour of the sky unless they suckled Hera's breast"; when Hera became aware of this, she tore him off, the spilt milk creating the Milky Way. In the version of Diodorus (4.9.6–7), his mother Alkmene was afraid of Hera's jealousy and decided to expose the baby; just then Hera and Athena happened to walk by, wondered how big the infant was, and Athena persuaded Hera that she suckle him – but he sucked so hard that it hurt and Hera tore him off. In this way, Herakles received godlike strength from his archenemy, who for a short moment appeared as his divine mother – but at the same time as his enemy whose breast he hurt.[49] The same motif reappears in a striking scene from the very end of his life: once he is divinized and raised to Olympos, "Zeus persuaded Hera to adopt him as her own son" by means of a rite in which she "got into her bed, drew Herakles close to her body, and then let him fall through her clothes to the ground in imitation of genuine birth" (Diod. Sic. 4.39.2). Three Etruscan mirrors from the 4th–3rd century BC captured the final stage of this moment of reunion, depicting adult Herakles (bearded on one of the mirrors) suckling Hera's breast.[50]

That the ambivalent pattern we have just traced is indeed an integral part of Hera's symbolic complex is confirmed by the fact that in a slightly weaker version it repeats in her relation with Hephaistos. We have seen already that in Hesiod's version (*Th.* 927–9) Hera bore him all by herself when she was furious with Zeus for his giving birth to Athena. Hesiod presents his birth as a success and calls him "famous Hephaistos, expert with his skilled hands beyond all of the descendants of Uranos". In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (316–8), however, the birth is a disappointment: he is born lame, "a weakling among all the gods", and his mother throws him into the sea, as she also does in the *Iliad* (18.395–7). The two images – one of glory, the other of shame – are complementary and express Hera's ambivalence towards her son, whom she both loves and is ashamed of. In the *Iliad*, for instance, the relation between them is most of the time that between a devoted son and a loving mother: she delights in his skilful artworks and supports him in the theomachy, he in turn tries to defend her against an attack of Zeus.[51] Yet Homer also mentions how Hera threw him out of Olympos after his birth (*Il.* 18.395–7). Both images are combined in a story in which Hephaistos takes revenge for being thrown down by his mother and sends her as a gift a golden chair with invisible fetters by which Hera is bound fast; the gods then desperately try to persuade Hephaistos to release her, and it is only when Dionysus makes him drunk that he agrees and is transported to Olympos on a donkey – a favourite scene depicted on a number of archaic vases.[52] The conflict thus leads to reconciliation, just as that between Hera and Herakles, or indeed that between Hera and Zeus. The binding is reminiscent of the Tonaia, representing a crisis which is necessary for the reconciliation that follows.

What is the meaning of this pattern? Philip Slater in his psychoanalytic analysis read it as an image of the ambivalent relation of Greek mothers towards their sons, whom they saw as idealized replacements of their ever absent

Similarly, in *Nem.* 1.36–72 Pindar interprets the little hero's killing of the snakes as a sign of his heroic glory leading to divinization. According to Diod. Sic. (4.9.5), even the deception of Hera that made Herakles a servant of Eurystheus was actually planned by Zeus, who wished to immortalize his son and knew that without him performing the twelve labours this would not be possible.

47 This episode is only preserved iconographically on the metopes of the 6th century BC temple of Hera at Foce del Sele, as well as on a 480 BC Attic red-figured kylix by Brygos (British Museum E 65, No. 1873,0820.376).

48 Sokolowski 1969, No. 177.

49 That the hurt is a significant part of the image can be seen from a parallel story in *Il.* 5.392–4 in which Herakles wounded Hera in the right breast in fight.

50 Cook 1940: 89–94. Cf. Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 272–7, who stress the general popularity of kourotrophic images on the Italic peninsula; the central Greeks, on the other hand, preferred Herakles's marriage to Hera's daughter Hebe as a symbolic expression of his adoption into the Olympian family.

51 Hom., *Il.* 1.571–96; 14.166–8, 238–41; 21.228–384.

52 The first full version of the story is only found in Pausanias (1.20.3), but fragments of it appear already in Alcaeus, fr. 349.

husbands, but against whom at the same time they unconsciously redirected their resentment against the male world. According to Slater (1968: 343), "the positive and negative versions of the Hera-Herakles relationship were retained together because it made sense to the Greeks for a maternal figure to use a male both as an extension of herself and as an object of persecution". It cannot be denied that Hera's ambivalent behaviour towards her sons does make sense in light of this theory, but though a number of Greek mothers may have harboured such unconscious sentiments, for a student of culture it is more relevant to relate the pattern to the Greek system of classification rather than the hypothetical emotional depths of individuals.

From this perspective, the myths in question may again be read as an imaginative reaction to the subordinate position of the feminine within the patriarchal order, and to the tension which this entails. Motherhood is seen as particularly dangerous in this respect, for it is precisely in their "strange chromatic capacity to make one person into two" (Redfield 2003: 25–6) that women most of all seem to embody the volatility and indefiniteness that the patriarchal system projects onto them. It is no doubt on account of their capacity to give birth that women are in so many culture classified on the side of nature. And while this capacity is considered crucial, it is at the same time mysterious and potentially dangerous, easily giving rise to mythical fantasies of motherhood as something uncanny and a source of anxiety. It was as mothers caring for their sons that both Gaia and Rheia initiated the overthrow of their husbands.

For the Greeks, one such fantasy was that of a mother killing the son as a substitute for the husband. The classic example is Medeia, a heroine who is not only a prime example of the "we marry our enemies" motif, but who was moreover closely associated with the Corinthian sanctuary of Hera Akraia at Perachora: in Euripides's *Medea* (1378–83) she deposits the dead children there and predicts the rise of their cult, in other versions she leaves them in the sanctuary alive and they are killed by the Corinthians.[53] The dead children were propitiated in an annual cult in which seven boys and girls had to cut their hair and live for a year in Hera's sanctuary, dressed in black (Paus. 2.3.7). It is clear, therefore, that the danger of losing one's children is a theme pertaining to Hera's symbolic complex. The myths of the sons of the goddess play with this danger and search for ways to deal with it.

In case of Hephaistos, the danger is opposed by the god's skilful art which rehabilitates him in the eyes of his mother and makes her desist from her murderous attempts. Since skilful art implies intelligence and the mastery of form over matter, it stands firmly on the side of culture against the dark forces of nature that made Hera beget him. Hephaistos's artful defence is so successful that it even allows him to bind Hera, i.e. to fix the dangerous power of the mother and make it immobile. Yet the myths with their implicit holism clearly recognize that this is no solution, for it just replaces one extreme with another (in this regard it is analogous to the initial binding of Io by Hera). The way out is found thanks to Dionysos, who makes Hephaistos drunk and turns him into a clown. Indeed, it is precisely this clowning that allows to neutralize the tension between the god and his mother and turn it into positive power, symbolized by the unquenchable laughter in which the gods burst out (*Il.* 1.599; *Od.* 8.326). By playing the role of buffoon, Hephaistos demonstrates that his blacksmith's craft, while capable of great deeds, cannot cause any harm (cf. Slater 1968: 194–5).

In case of Herakles the solution is slightly different. Herakles is the very opposite of Hephaistos, being the strongest hero of all who accomplishes great deeds not by artful skill but by the sheer power of his hands. The pattern of his relation to Hera is one of permanent action and reaction: the goddess keeps on sending various dangers in his way, while he keeps on defeating them. In this regard he resembles his father Zeus, who is also capable of warding off all of Hera's attacks. The monstrous female power that Hera sends in his way is thus turned into a driving force that helps Herakles achieve a number of glorious civilizing task in the service of the cosmic order. Unlike the civilized skill of Hephaistos, though, the brute physical power of Herakles is uncultured, and as such might in itself be rather dangerous. The danger is neutralized by a self-abasing strategy which in some respects resembles the clowning of Hephaistos but takes a different track: his extreme heroic activity constantly turns into humiliating passivity. While the strongest hero of all, he keeps on serving others, often performing dirty work (e.g. cleaning the Augeian stables) and experiencing disgrace (e.g. when Eurystheus only communicates with him through the herald Kopreus, "Dung-man"). His own force occasionally turns against him, as when he kill his wife and children in madness, or when he succumbs to various outbursts of rage ending in murder, which have to be paid for by enslavement.[54] Herakles thus "oscillates continuously between the superhuman and the subhuman,

[53] For the sources see Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 216–21; Johnston 1997.

[54] It was as a punishment for killing his wife and children that Herakles had to serve Eurystheus, and as a compensation for killing Iphitos that he was sold into slavery and bought by Omphale, who required him to wear a female dress and do women's work. See Hard 2004: 253, 273–4. For a list of Herakles's killings in his fits of rage see Slater 1968: 368–9.

violently tossed from one to the other by a force which outdoes him" (Loraux 1991: 182). It is this oscillation that guarantees his ultimate harmlessness.

While a number of the these points are inspired by Philip Slater's analysis, I differ from him in one crucial regard, namely in that I do not see them as pathological. It is true that to some extent Hephaistos's clowning as well as Herakles's oscillations between the superhuman and the subhuman may seem as desperate strategies that lead nowhere. Yet this is just one part of the picture, that which expresses the "shadow" of the Greek classification system. Ultimately, however, both Hephaistos and Herakles manage to transform this shadow into positive power. Hephaistos is firmly integrated in the Olympian world, and even Herakles, after all his ups and downs, is ultimately divinized. What we see in both cases is the same pattern of love and hate we have traced in Hera's marriage Zeus, towards whom she acts both as a loving wife and as his most intimate enemy. The case of Herakles differs of course from that of Zeus or Hephaistos in that the pattern is projected on a time axis: during his mortal life he is persecuted by the goddess and it is only after his final divinization that his positive filial relationship with her comes to light. Yet, the temporal dimension of myths must not be taken literally: in actuality all the episodes are valid at once. Hera both harasses Herakles and is the source of his strength (as we can see from the suckling episode).

Hera's motherhood is thus defined by a creative tension between two complementary poles. In most myths she embodies the shadow of motherhood, acting as the evil step-mother of Zeus' illegitimate children. But this dark motherhood is eventually transformed into a different, positive type of motherhood, in which Hera plays the role of an *adoptive mother* who acts as a source of *legitimation*. This is what we see in the case of Herakles, where the adoption happens explicitly. A slightly less literal variant of the same pattern reappears in the story of Dionysos, another of Zeus' sons persecuted by Hera: after he managed to bring the drunk Hephaistos to Olympos so that Hera could be released from the chair-trap, she rewarded him by persuading the other gods to admit Dionysus to Olympos as one of the Twelve,[55] in this way becoming his protectress. It is this protecting care of hers that she exercises towards a number of human heroes, behaving as their god-mother, so to speak. The classic examples are Iason and the Argonauts or the Greek warriors at Troy. As Zeus says to her in *Il.* 18.358–9: "Truly the long-haired Achaeans must be your very own children!"

Yet, Hera's protection is not that of straightforward care and help, but frequently rather that of testing the strength of her protégées – of "probation and legitimation", as Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti repeatedly call it. Hephaistos and Dionysos have to prove they really belong among the Olympians, Herakles has to demonstrate he really is the greatest hero of all. Even with Iason, whom Hera openly supports from the start, the basic pattern is in the end quite similar: according to Pindar (*Pyth.* 4.184–7) Hera enkindled in the Argonauts "that all-persuasive, sweet longing for the ship Argo, so that no one might be left behind to remain with his mother and coddle a life without risk, but rather, even if it meant death, to gain the most noble remedy for his own achievement", i.e. fame. As Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti comment (2016: 81), "Hera loves to construe her protégées as her adversaries, and she behaves to them now as a 'nurse', anxious to push them towards the full development of their potentialities, now as a kind of 'anti-nurse', preparing for them the harshest trials". From this perspective, Herakles, who received more ordeals from her than any other hero, truly deserves his name of "Hera's Glory", becoming "on earth the male heir that Zeus could not have in heaven" (Redfield 2003: 24). It is noteworthy in this regard that as most scholars agree, the name Hēra is probably a feminine of *hērōs*, "hero" (whatever the original meaning of these words), which makes the goddess a protectress of heroes par excellence.

Significantly, Hera's close association with Eileithyia also points in this direction. As Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti argue (2016: 70–4), Eileithyia was not just responsible for childbirth but for the subsequent destiny of the child up to the moment of maturity. Offerings to her are occasionally made by parents on behalf of children years after their birth,[56] and Pindar (*Nem.* 3–4) claims that without her we would not have her sister Hebe, i.e. it seems Eileithyia is bringing the child up to the stage of *hēbē*. Moreover, she is "enthroned beside the deep-thinking Moirai" (Pind., *Nem.* 1), clearly because it was at the moment of one's birth that everyone received his fate from them (Hom., *Il.* 6.488–9). We have seen an instance of this in case of Herakles, whose fate Hera managed to twist precisely by changing the moment of his birth. The triad Hera–Eileithyia–Hebe thus comprises the entire journey towards the fulfilment (*telos*) of adulthood, which in case of girls consisted in marriage, while in case of boys in attaining the height of their bodily strength. It was his marriage with Hebe that symbolically sealed the integration of Herakles in the Olympian family, a moment that among mortals would correspond to the adult integration into the household. The kourotrophic figurines discovered in

[55] Alc., fr. 349; Lib., *Progymn.* 2.7.3. On Lesbos, Dionysos was worshipped as part of a trinity with Zeus and Hera (Sapho, fr. 17; Alc., fr. 129). Cf. in detail Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 277–95.

[56] Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2016: 73; Parker 2005: 428.

some of Hera's sanctuaries suggest that she was seen as a goddess protecting children and leading them through the risky terrain of childhood mortality towards the full realization of their youthful potential. The fact that in myths it is Hera herself who frequently embodies these risks suggests that her protection worked homoeopathically: "Cultically, she helped to protect against the forces that brought pregnancy and childhood to unhappy ends; mythically, she was represented as one of them herself" (Johnston 1997: 60).

The Corinthian cult of Medeia's children mentioned above (p. ???) is a good example: in myth they died, in cult their death was imitated by seven youths and seven maidens who survived and reached adulthood. In one version of her myth Medeia was courted by Zeus but refused him out of respect for Hera, who in turn promised to make her children immortal (schol. Pind., *Ol.* 13.74); it was with this hope in mind that Medeia put her children in Hera's sanctuary (Paus. 2.3.11), where they eventually died. The combination of death and the promise of immortality recalls the myth of Herakles, as well as the story of Kleobis and Biton, two youths at the peak of their strength, who pulled their mother, an Argive priestess of Hera, in wagon during a procession to the Heraion when the oxen had not come back from the fields in time; after their thankful mother prayed to Hera for the best reward a man can get, the goddess granted them painless death in their sleep (Hdt. 1.31). Paradoxical as this may seem, the story needs to be read as a myth that symbolically expresses Hera's concern with the "flower of youth" (*hēbē*) and the full development of one's youthful strength. Though dead, Kleobis and Biton were made immortal through their fame (the Corinthians set up their statues at Delphi), serving as an example of fulfilment (*telos*) for others to imitate. By the same token, Hera did keep her promise to Medeia and made her children immortal through their cult. Their task was no doubt protective, helping the real children reach the *telos* they themselves had been denied.

Hera and the Crisis of Sovereignty and Legitimacy

While ordinary worshippers apparently addressed Hera with the hope of securing protection for their children, it was not just reaching maturity in the biological sense that the goddess supervised. As Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti point out (2016: 313–30), some of the myths are specifically concerned with *sovereignty* and *legitimacy* – or rather with their crisis. Pindar (*Pyth.* 4.156–67), for instance, makes Pelias swear that should Iason manage to bring back the golden fleece, a talisman of royalty, he will make way for the "flower of youth" and hand over to him the rule over Iolkos that rightfully belongs to him. Pindar does not tell us what happened after Iason's return, but none of the versions of the myth we have are optimistic: they all agree that when Iason brings the fleece thanks to his empowering but dangerous marriage with Medeia, he does not get the kingship, and after contriving the murder of Pelias he leaves Iolkos for ever. As most heroic stories, even that of Iason ends by asking questions rather than providing the answers.

The crisis of sovereignty is even bigger in the myth of Oidipus, in which Hera, too, plays a part: it was she who sent the Sphinx to trouble the Thebans (Apollod., *Bibl.* 3.5.8). The Sphinx devoured mainly youths on their way to adulthood, and modern interpreters have long recognized in her a dark double of Iokasta (and of Hera herself, we may add): her name, "Strangler", suggests the stifling motherly embrace preventing a youth from reaching manhood.[57] A local Theban myth reported by Pausanias (9.26.4) made her specifically a guardian of *legitimate succession*: she was testing the sons Laios had with concubines, and "when they could not answer, she punished them with death, since their claim to the lineage and the throne was not rightful". Oidipus passed the test and proceeded to claim the throne to which he was a legitimate heir, gaining it by means of a marriage with the queen. Yet this classic Heraian motif (cf. Pelops and Hippodameia) was realized in a perverted way, the queen being his mother.

Whereas the myths of Herakles, Hephaistos and Dionysos show us the pattern of probation and legitimation in its ideal, happy ending form, the myths of Iason and Oidipus map the potential conflicts and tensions that the marriage–legitimation–sovereignty complex entails. Iason's marriage with Medeia allows him to get the golden fleece, but in the end it proves too intense to bear – it is only Zeus who has the strength to deal with a wife of such power. The Oidipus myth reflects the opposite problem, that of giving up on the exogamy and keeping the power solely in one family. Natural as such a solution might seem in the mythical framework of hereditary kingship, in the world of the polis, based on reciprocal exchanges and the division of power, it was undesirable, amounting to tyranny.[58] Hera's probation through the Sphinx thus serves to discredit the attempt to escape the network of exogamous marriage exchange.

In one version of the myth Hera sent the Sphinx to punish Laios for his pederastic abduction of Chrysippos, and when Laios was about to leave for Delphi to ask Apollo for help, Teiresias vainly urged him to sacrifice to Hera Gamostolos instead (schol. Eur., *Phoen.* 1760). It is interesting that in some respects Laios

[57] See e.g. T. Turner 1969: 46–7; Caldwell 1990: 353, 372. For the Sphinx devouring mainly youths see Gantz 1993: 495–7.

[58] On Oidipus and tyranny see Vernant 1990b; for the portrayal of endogamy as dangerous for the polis in Athenian tragedies see Seaford 2012: 131–4, 149–57, 318–21.

resembles Zeus: like him he kidnaps a young homosexual lover, and like him he attempts not to beget a heir with his wife on account of a prophecy that the son would destroy him. Yet, what works for Zeus does not work for mortals. It is only the gods who may reach stability by resisting change and playing the same role over and over again; men are bound to proceed in time from one role to another. It is this that the riddle of the Sphinx and the story of Oidipus points out (Vernant 1990b: 216):

> How can man be a part of what is the same, be firmly rooted in it, if he becomes "other" three times in the course of his existence? ... How can the attributes and functions of king, father, husband, grandfather; and son remain intact, unchanging, when they are successively assumed by other persons and when a single person must become in turn son, father, husband, grandfather; young prince, and old king? Then again, what are the necessary conditions for a son to follow straight in the wake of his father so as to take his place, sufficiently like his procreator for that place to remain somehow the same, yet sufficiently distinct from him for the replacement of the one by the other not to lead to chaotic confusion?

Hera's specific answer to these questions lies in the dangerous exogamous marriage exchange conceived as a paradoxical principle of stability. It is only by taking the risk of accepting an exogenous bride into one's household that the young man can become a legitimate successor to his father while remaining "sufficiently distinct from him". And what is more, it is by giving up a part of one's own autonomy and opening up to the exchange of brides with other patrilines that one's household can have share in that transcendent organisation called the polis, through which a man can participate in sovereignty.

Hera's probations, which drive the heroes out of their homes "so that no one might be left behind to remain with his mother and coddle a life without risk" (Pind., *Pyth.* 4.185–6), can in this light be read as a variant of the pattern of movement as a precondition of stability that we have traced for her cult on Samos. Just as heroes could only reach fulfilment by going out on a Hera-sent quest, even so the Samians (and the archaic Greeks in general) could boast of sovereignty precisely because they were so open to exchanges with the outside world, and the households could remain sovereign only if they surrendered a part of their independence in return for the cooperation and exchange of women with other households in the same polis. Hera's function was to guarantee that the tension between movement and stability is manageable and can even be transformed into the energy that started the Greek socio-cultural miracle and kept it going for so long.