53. Cf. Calame, *Chœurs* I, 305–23 and 341–50 on the political significance of both Helen and Menelaos' cult at Therapne and of the Hyakinthia festival celebrated at Amyklai; see also Brillante, *La leggenda eroica*, 87–145.

54. Cf. O. Regenbogen, *RE* Suppl. 8 (1956) 1019–24; L. Beschi and D. Musti, *Pausania. Guida della Grecia I. L'Attica* (Milan, 1982) XXIV-XXXV. Pausanias' book 4 on Messenia in general derives its information from the histories written after the liberation of Messenia in the fourth century (Rhianos and Myron); cf. L. Pearson, 'The Pseudo-History of Messenia and its Authors', *Historia*, *11* (1962) 397–426.

55. Paus. 2.18.6 (= Cinaeth. fr. 4 Kinkel), 3.13.8 (= Asius fr. 6 Kinkel = test. 7 Gentili/Prato). On these two indirect citations and the possible dates of these two poets, see G. L. Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry* (London, 1969) 40, 80f, 94–6. When introducing the Spartan genealogical narrative, Pausanias (3.1.1) simply speaks of an (oral?) Lakedaemonian tradition.

56. Tyrt. fr. 2.2–15 West = 1a.12–15 Gentili/Prato; Alcm. fr. 1.1–11 Page = 3.1–11 Calame and 7 P = 19 C; see also Alcm. fr. 2 P = 2 C; on the legendary tradition which connects the Spartan king list with the Herakleidai see Cartledge, *Sparta*, 53, 341–6.

57. On the double conquest of Messenia and the various military interventions of Sparta against Argos see, especially, G. L. Huxley, *Early Sparta* (London, 1962) 56–9, 68f, 83f; Cartledge, *Sparta*, *passim*; Hooker, *Spartans*, 106–14, 145–57.

58. Cf. Huxley, 'Herodotos on Myth', 5–16; on the origin of the Peloponnesian League see A. H. M. Jones, *Sparta* (Oxford, 1968) 44–7.

59. B. Sergent, 'La représentation spartiate de la royauté', *Rev. Hist. Rel.*, *189* (1976) 3–52 and 'Le partage du Péloponnèse entre les Héraclides', *Rev. Hist. Rel.*, *190* (1977) 121–36 and *191* (1978) 3–25.

60. Cf. A. J. Greimas and J. Courtès, *Sémiotique. Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage* (Paris, 1979) 29–33, 157–60, 380f; J. -C. Coquet, 'L'Ecole de Paris', in J. -C. Coquet (ed.), *Sémiotique. L'Ecole de Paris* (Paris, 1982) 5–64, esp. 48–52.

61. Cf. M. -J. Borel *et al.*, *Essai de logique naturelle* (Bern, 1983) 53–70 on the *processus de 'schématisation'*.

62. Cf. L. Gallo, 'La donna greca e la marginalità', *Quad. Urb. Cult. Class.*, *47* (1984) 7–51.

63. See Calame, 'Le processus symbolique', *Document de travail du Centro Internazionale di Semiotica e di Linguistica* (Urbino, 1983) 128–9.

9
Myths of Early Athens

Robert Parker

*In memory of T. C. W. Stinton**

In glamour and ancient renown, Athenian mythology can scarcely compete with several other regional mythologies of Greece. Few Athenian heroes appear in early sources, and perhaps the only ancient Attic *geste* of the first quality was that of Theseus with the Minotaur. Attic mythology has none the less a distinctive interest for the mythographer, for several reasons. Rare though Attic stories may be in Homer or Hesiod, in Apollodorus and Ovid they abound. In the fifth and fourth centuries Athens and Athenians increasingly dominated literary and artistic culture, while there emerged in Atthidography a distinctive literary genre specifically concerned with the country's antiquities, including its mythology. As a result many existing local stories were dignified with a place in high art and literature, and not a few others were told for the first time. Thus the development of Attic mythology is a notable instance of the 'invention of tradition'.[1] Most of these stories have public and sometimes political themes. While the myth of Oedipus, say, is only coincidentally Theban, the Attic myths are almost all intrinsically Attic, in that the city's origins and institutions form their subject. Only two cycles treat that most characteristic theme of Greek mythology as a whole, the tensions and traumas of domestic life.[2] Attic mythology is therefore a distinctively 'political mythology',[3] through which the Athenians forged a sense of their identity as a people. The quite extraordinary development that the figure of Theseus underwent in the fifth century is a glittering example of an 'invention of tradition' which was also the forging of a 'political myth'.[4]

A final attraction of Attic mythology is the opportunity it offers

of observing a set of myths in a specific social and historical context. A myth is an item of shared cultural property, and has no intrinsic or essential meaning. Even if one could find what Mr Casaubon[5] and so many others have sought, a 'Key to (all) Mythologies', it would only turn to reveal an empty room. To speak of a myth's 'meaning' is legitimate only as a shorthand way of referring to the sum of the qualities that cause people to listen to it with interest and remember it. And that is all that the interpreter needs to or can explain, the source of a myth's appeal for a particular society at a particular time. (This is not, of course, to deny that a myth may continue to appeal to many different societies for broadly the same reasons.) Myths ought therefore to be approached through a study of 'hearer/viewer response' and 'reception', if we may borrow and adapt these terms of contemporary literary theory.[6] Of course, we can almost never in the ancient world study the 'reception' of a myth with proper precision, and often we are reduced to guessing about possible responses from a mere summary of the plot. But the Attic myths are an unusually favourable case, because rich and diverse contemporary evidence is often available, from vase painting and sculpture as well as from literature.

In myths as in organisms, the capacity for change seems to be almost a condition of life. One of the striking characteristics of Greek mythology as a whole is the way in which it retained that life-giving mutability long after the introduction of writing.[7] Of the approaches to mythology that are familiar today, the one that seems most old-fashioned is in some respects the most soundly based theoretically: for the painstaking historical analysis of the variants and development of a myth does justice to this power of change, as well as being a kind of study of 'reception'. The weakness of that method, which received its classic expression in the work of Carl Robert,[8] was the lurking presumption that in mythology as in textual criticism the point of studying the variants is to get back to the uncorrupted original, where meaning resides. But it is obviously unsatisfactory to 'explain' the myth of Oedipus by reference to a (as it happens, hypothetical) ritual origin, an origin unknown to the millions of people who have heard the myth with fascination. There is perhaps no helpful discrimination to be drawn in terms of 'authenticity' between different variants of a myth or stages in its development, or between 'real myth' and

'literary myths' or the like. Certainly, very drastic alterations do take place in the character of the mythological tradition. Important variables include the social context in which myths are reproduced, the literary or artistic form in which they are embodied, the principles by which they are organised, the toleration of supernatural elements within them, the competition that they undergo from accounts of the past based on different principles, the esteem in which they are held, and, simply but crucially, the extent to which they are widely familiar. But it is always the same river that flows through this changing landscape. There are developments in the tradition but no breaks; no point can be located where myth ceases, as it were, to be itself.[9] Even the extensive effort by fourth-century writers to systematise and rationalise received mythology, which was doubtless the most significant single reshaping of the tradition, did not lack antecedents;[10] and in attempting to preserve the myths as history rather than jettison them as fable these writers perpetuated one of mythology's ancient functions, that of providing an account of the past. Perhaps we should consider the history of mythology not as a decline from myth into non-myth but as a succession of periods or styles, developing out of one another, as in art. That metaphor, however, does not remove but emphasises the need to distinguish between the products of different periods.

The period chosen for this essay is the second half of the fifth century, for which the evidence is most abundant. The stories will be presented according to their rough chronology in mythological time. It is unlikely, though, that many Athenians at this date thought of them in this way. Many people doubtless knew something of the order of the kings, but the important point about most of the stories was surely not their place in a chronological sequence. Who even now can say offhand whether Demeter or Dionysos arrived in Attica first? (There is an answer to that question; but one puzzles in vain whether the rape of Cephalus came before or after that of Orithyia.) The systematisation of the tradition was the work of the Atthidographers, beginning with Hellanicus at the end of the fifth century. They introduced new kings to the king-list,[11] to make the chronology of Attic myth match better with that of Greece as a whole, and must have been obliged to assign every floating story to a specific reign. In the fifth century there were already one or two works that grouped Attic

myths together,[12] but probably most Athenians learnt them not in that form, as a cycle, but one by one as they were portrayed in particular works of art or poems or told in relation to particular cults or shrines. What really mattered chronologically about the myths was that they described events of the 'generation of heroes' (Hdt. 3.122) and not of men.

Not every Athenian myth can be discussed in the space available. Since the later traditions, largely dominated by Theseus, have been much and well studied of late, we will concentrate on the earlier ones, those that fall in mythological time before the death of Erechtheus. The Eleusinian myth of Demeter's arrival and the largely apolitical myth of Cephalus and Procris are deliberately excluded; other omissions will probably be accidental.[13] With these preliminaries completed, Athenian history can commence.[14]

It begins, one might say, with the birth of Athena.[15] She was one of several Olympians whose birth was miraculous; this was a mark of their high destiny as well as a symptom of the unsettled conditions of a young world. She was born, without a mother, from Zeus' head; she leapt forth, fully mature in all but size and heavily armed, to the wonder and terror of the attendant gods. That much is common to virtually all the descriptions and representations of the birth. There is evidently a connection between Athena's strange origin and her strange nature. The goddess who 'loves din and war and battle' (Hes. *Theog.* 926) has wholly escaped from feminine influence and is in the most literal sense a 'father's child' (Aesch. *Eum.* 738; cf. Pearson on Soph. fr. 564). The weakness of infancy, when even men are womanly, is not for her; and there is a metallic brilliance about her epiphany appropriate to one who never lurked in 'the darkness of the womb' (Aesch. *Eum.* 665). As a female who 'sided with the male in everything (short of accepting marriage)' (Aesch. *Eum.* 737), the friendly helper of male heroes, she was the ideal patroness for patriarchal Athens. At the same time, her origin from the most dignified part, indeed almost the 'self' of Zeus, explains her unique and for Athenians most welcome closeness to the lord of the universe (e.g. Aesch. *Eum.* 826–8, 997–1102).[16] In many vase paintings, Hephaestus has helped the birth by cleaving Zeus' head with an axe (cf. Pind. *Ol.* 7.35–8) and is shown hurrying away, alarmed no doubt by the exuberant creature who has emerged. It was right that one god of crafts should assist at the birth of another,

and the Athenians, for whom the association of Athena and Hephaestus was particularly important, evidently relished the motif.[17]

It is not clear whether certain more elaborate accounts, which set the birth in a broader mythological context, were well known at Athens. For Hesiod, it was associated with a threat to Zeus' newly established sovereignty, and with the power of *metis*, wiliness, 'cunning intelligence'. Metis (personified), Zeus' first wife, was to have borne first Athena, then a son mightier than its father. Zeus therefore swallowed her; Athena emerged from his head, the son remained unborn (Hes. *Theog.* 886–900; cf. 'Hes.' fr. 343).[18] The myth explained the unique resourcefulness of Zeus, who had assimilated Metis, and of Athena, whose mother she was. It also confirmed that there were to be no more revolutions in heaven. *Metis* was now under control, shared with the loving daughter, the father's child, but not with an independent threatening son. A further elaboration (already partially present in Hesiod *Theog.* 927–9; cf. fr. 343.1) made the birth part of a contest in asexual generation between Zeus and the jealous Hera. This ended in decisive humiliation for the woman, since Zeus without Hera could produce splendid Athena, Hera without Zeus merely crippled Hephaestus and the monster Typhoeus (*Hom. H. Ap.* 305–55). The respective role of the two parents in generation was long to be controversial in Greek thought, and the myth reads like a comic anticipation of Aristotle's doctrine that the child's form derives from the father, the mother providing merely the less honourable matter.[19] Thus Athena's lack of a mother became less a way of describing her unique nature than of making a point about the relation of the sexes. We do not know how many Athenians drew this conclusion from the myth, but Aeschylus' Apollo certainly does, in a famous passage in *Eumenides* (658–66).[20]

As it happens, there is more artistic than literary evidence for the myth's popularity at Athens, and so the nuances of its reception there remain uncertain. From about 570–530 it was a favourite subject for vase painters. It then declined in popularity and had almost disappeared by 460, but remained such a central Athenian myth that it could not be omitted from the Parthenon: in a somewhat rationalised iconography, with Athena standing beside Zeus rather than emerging from his head, it occupied the important east pediment.[21] The association between Athena and

Zeus was probably the most important single source of the myth's appeal for the Athenians. It meant that they too had contact along a chain of patronage with the ruler of the world. As we shall see, 'dearness to the gods' (*theophilia*) is a central concern of many of these myths,[22] and 'dearness to Zeus' is of course its most desirable form.

Athena took an active part in the War of the Gods and Giants, another Panhellenic myth that had been so thoroughly assimilated by the Athenians that it must be included here.[23] There are indeed hints of specific Athenian variants or offshoots,[24] among them one that cast Theseus' cousins the Pallantids as giants, but there is no doubt that the dominant version even in Athens was the Panhellenic one. The battle was portrayed on countless vases (from about 565), on the pediment of the sixth-century temple of Athena, and, in the Parthenon, both on the metopes and inside the shield of Pheidias' cult-statue. Above all, it was the traditional decoration of perhaps the most important symbolic object of Athenian religion, the robe offered to Athena every four years at the greater Panathenaea. The central significance of the myth must have been the same for the Athenians as for the Greeks at large. It told how Zeus had been confirmed in his sovereignty, how therefore the present world-order had been made secure, by a display of tempered force against enemies who were the embodiment of *hybris*, lawless violence. Unlike the earlier war against the Titans (with which, though, it had become confused by the time of Euripides), this was a collective act of all the Olympians, and one undertaken in defence of the existing order and not in rebellion against it. Such a myth of the establishment of divine and cosmic order was fit emblem for the Panathenaea, the great festival of social unity and order.[25]

There was particular significance for Athenians in the glorious part played by their own warrior-goddess, second only to that of Zeus himself. It established that she was, for all time to come, Athena Victory (Eur. *Ion* 1528–9). Though won in war, this title was equally appropriate to her as patroness of the sporting competitions of the Panathenaea: for Victory in whatever sphere derived from the same golden goddess. Perhaps in the fifth century victory over the giants came to be seen as a prefiguration of the Greeks' famous victories over the barbarians. That symbolism is certainly found in the hellenistic period; and already in the first

Pythian Ode of 470 (15–28, 71–5) Pindar pointedly juxtaposes Typhoeus, a Giant-like figure, with barbarian enemies. (It was even possible to deploy the imagery against other Greeks, if we accept that the hybristic giants of Pindar's eighth *Pythian* embody a victims' view of Athenian imperialism.)[26] At all events, Athena's triumph over Enceladus, laboriously woven on her robe every four years by the Athenian women, helped to guarantee the strength of their menfolk's spears.

From gods we turn to men. Whatever certain antiquarians might say, the general belief among Athenians was that their first king had been Cecrops.[27] Cecrops had no parents, but had emerged from the earth itself. No myth described the circumstances of this strange birth, but the most familiar fact about Cecrops was that he bore the mark of it in his 'double form': above the waist he was a man, below a curling snake (e.g. Eur. *Ion* 1163–4; Ar. *Vesp.* 438). Having emerged from the earth, he still in part resembled the creature that slips to and fro between the upper and lower worlds.

The next Attic king Erichthonius/Erechtheus was also earth-born, and vase painters often show Cecrops as a witness of his successor's birth.[28] The juxtaposition suggests that the two legends should be taken together, as a pair. Cecrops in these scenes always has his semi-serpentine form, whereas the baby is fully human. The effect of this contrasted juxtaposition of the two earth-born kings is twofold: on the one hand it emphasises the idea of autochthony, since the Athenian royal line proves to be earth-born twice over, while on the other differentiation and progress are revealed, with Cecrops representing an intermediate stage between wholly earthy and wholly human.[29] Upon Cecrops are unloaded all the sinister connotations of pre-human birth.

The birth of Erichthonius/Erechtheus is one of the earliest-attested Athenian legends. It is mentioned in a passage in the Catalogue of Ships in the *Iliad* which will surely go back at least to the sixth century, even if it is an 'Attic interpolation'.[30] The passage speaks of

> great-spirited Erechtheus, whom once Athena
> daughter of Zeus reared, but the grain-giving soil bore him,
> and Athena set him down in Athens, in her rich temple
> (2.547–9).

The future king is born from the ground, but taken at once by a goddess into her care. This central idea is illustrated on the fifth-century vases: a goddess emerges from the ground and hands to the waiting Athena a baby, which stretches eagerly to meet its new nurse. By the end of the sixth century the child had been given a father, Hephaestus, who is sometimes shown attending the birth. Hephaestus had been seeking to rape Athena but the virgin evaded him, his seed fell on the ground, and from it sprung Erichthonius/Erechtheus.[31] This story of amorous mischance suited the mythological Hephaestus, constantly subject to ludicrous indignities, but the substantial point of the invention was surely to put the proto-Athenian under the joint patronage of Athena and Hephaestus.

Erichthonius/Erechtheus has sometimes been identified as an instance of a figure characteristic of Minoan-Mycenaean religion, the 'divine child' growing up in the care of foster-nurses. But, however things may have been in early times, post-Mycenaean Greeks must surely have felt a difference between, say, baby Zeus, a god in exile, and baby Erechtheus, a child of the earth protected by a powerful goddess. All the Athenians accessible to us seem to have understood the birth of Erichthonius/Erechtheus as a myth of national origins. There was no separate tradition about the Athenians at large: the two earth-born kings are mythical representatives of the whole Athenian people in their claim to autochthony. Indeed in poetry (particularly) the Athenians were sometimes spoken of as actual descendants of their first kings, as 'Cecropids' or 'Erechtheids'.[32]

What then did this myth of national origins say? It put the proto-Athenian in the closest possible relation with Athena, while respecting her virginity; in its developed form it introduced Athena's regular associate Hephaestus as a kind of father for the child. Thus the Athenians were 'children of blessed gods' (Eur. *Med.* 825), living in 'a land most dear to the gods' (Aesch. *Eum.* 869). There was no more important guarantee of prosperity than this.[33] As 'children of Hephaestus' the Athenians were marked, intriguingly, as a technological people (Aesch. *Eum.* 13). One wonders whether that conception was more popular outside Attica or within it, and whether in Athens it was as dear to the knights, say, as to the potters.[34]

The myth also, of course, endorses the Athenians' claim to the prized 'autochthony'. Indeed it shows a lawyer's cunning in

insisting that the Athenians are 'born from the earth', while reserving their title as 'children of blessed gods'. In ordinary language 'autochthonous' meant little more than 'native' as opposed to 'immigrant': the myth interprets the idea of 'nativeness' with drastic if logical literalism, as physical birth from the native soil. The Athenians were probably correct in believing that they had occupied the same territory for longer than most of the Greek states around them. From this historical reality they created what every state requires, a myth to make its citizens glad that they were born in that state and no other. The ideal of autochthony was a form of collective snobbery. Athenians *en masse* were invited to despise other states (Dorians above all) just as an aristocrat might despise a metic. Athenians were, so to speak, the only authentic citizens of Greece, all other groups being mere immigrants, a motley rabble tainted with foreign blood.[35] No patriotic orator could neglect the theme, and many new twists were discovered: only the Athenians had a truly filial relation to their native land; they were juster than other Greeks, because they held their land by birthright and not seizure; they were even born egalitarians, being all sprung from the same earth.[36]

These hyper-patriotic interpretations are first attested in the 420s (Hdt. 7.161.3; Eur. *Erechtheus* fr. 50.6–13), at a time when anti-Dorian sentiment was no doubt particularly strong because of the Peloponnesian war (cf. Thuc. 6.77.1, with K. J. Dover's note). They are applied, then and later, to the general notion of Athenian autochthony, not to the particular myths of Cecrops and Erichthonius. We cannot strictly prove that these latter had originally been understood in the same way; they might in theory have been merely myths of origin, answering the question 'where do Athenians come from?', rather than myths of an origin superior to that other states. An increase in patriotic emphasis there no doubt was, in the heyday of the funeral orations; in all probability, though, some association between autochthony and 'true birth' (cf. Ar. *Vesp.* 1076) had always been present.

Erichthonius/Erechtheus' childhood did not pass off without incident. Athena hid the child in a chest with a snake or snakes to guard him, and gave the chest to the daughters of Cecrops, Pandrosus, Aglaurus and Herse, to keep, with instructions not to open it. But they did, and, terrified by the sight of the snakes, they hurled themselves from the Acropolis, where they lived, to their

death on the rocks below (Eur. *Ion* 21–4, 271–4). Most accounts add that one daughter, normally Pandrosus, remained obedient to Athena and escaped her sisters' fate.[37] As has long been recognised, this myth very probably has its origin in ritual performed by the Arrephoroi, young girls in the service of Athena who lived on the Acropolis for a period, at the end of which they made a ritual descent (perhaps from the Acropolis) carrying sacred objects, the nature of which they were forbidden to know.[38] But since the story, a popular one with vase painters (Eur. *Ion* 271), had clearly escaped from the narrow sacral context, we need to consider the source of its more general appeal.

It is based upon two popular narrative motifs, the 'disobeyed command' and 'good and bad sisters'. Into this frame it fits characters who were of intrinsic interest to Athenians: Aglaurus and Pandrosus (though not Herse) were prominent figures in cult, and, like so many heroes of Athens' earliest myths, had precincts on or near the Acropolis. Indeed the story to some extent explains familiar topographical facts, since the survivor Pandrosus had her precinct on the heights of the Acropolis, while that of Aglaurus who leapt to her death was on the slopes below it.[39] Even more interesting than the sisters perhaps was the snake associated with the young Erichthonius/Erechtheus: for the most famous inhabitant of the Acropolis was the sacred snake that lived, very suitably, in the precinct of Erichthonius/Erechtheus, and was believed to guard the city (Hdt. 8.41) just as its mythical predecessor had guarded the wonder-child. Is it coincidence that a recently discovered vase which portrays this myth introduces the figure of *Soteria*, 'safety, salvation'? Possibly the myth evoked indirectly quite powerful feelings about the safety of the city.[40] And whether or not this public association was present, it certainly established a link between Erichthonius/Erechtheus, the exemplary proto-Athenian, the nursling of Athena, and any Athenian woman's own child: for Athenian women put gold amulets in the form of snakes around their own babies, 'observing the custom of their forefathers and of earth-born Erichthonius' (Eur. *Ion* 20–6, 1427–9).

Apollodorus introduces a detail absent from other accounts. Athena was rearing Erichthonius in secret from the gods because she hoped to make him immortal; and that, it seems, was why she hid him in a box and entrusted him to the Cecropids (*Bibl.* 3.14.6). Presumably the girls' meddling spoilt the goddess's plans. This is a

motif more familiar from the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, where Demeter's attempt to immortalise the Eleusinian prince Demophon fails through human weakness (226–74). It perhaps better suits the Eleusinian context, since the story of immortality (inevitably) lost seems there to prepare for a second best, the institution of Mysteries that help mortals to secure a better lot in the afterlife (*Hymn* 270–4, 470–82). In relation to the bright hope of early Athens, by contrast, the tragic note jars. It may none the less have been heard by some; there is no way of telling when the assimilation of Erichthonius to Demophon may have first occurred.[41]

In one respect, there was something unsatisfactory about the myth even in its familiar form. In cult Aglaurus was patroness of the ephebes, the city's future warriors, and yet the myth showed her first disobedient, then panic-stricken. The anomaly was removed in a probably fourth-century version by a characteristic procedure of adaptation and conflation.[42] In this account Aglaurus did indeed hurl herself to her death from the Acropolis — but in response to an oracle declaring that the war against Eleusis would only end when an Athenian sacrificed himself for the city. The motif of a saving sacrificial death is obviously borrowed from the older Athenian legends of the daughters of Leos and Erechtheus; with the help of it, the patroness of the ephebes became a true model for them to follow.

As the most prominent female Athenians of the earliest times, the daughters of Cecrops were credited with descendants.[43] In particular, one of them, variously identified, was seduced by Hermes and gave birth to Keryx, founding father of the Eleusinian family of the Kerykes. This simple and appropriate aetiological tradition is doubtless ancient, but there is as yet no trace in classical sources of the complex story of greed, erotic intrigue and jealousy that was later spun out of it.[44]

About the doings of Cecrops himself there is little to be said. When in the fourth century the Atthidographers constructed a systematic account of the growth of civilisation in Attica, he became a key figure who introduced the first basic institutions of a way of life removed from barbarism. He brought the Attic people together into the first twelve townships and established the earliest Athenian rituals, those that were conducted in the innocent ancient way without blood sacrifice and that honoured the old gods who ruled before Zeus. Cecrops is seen, as it were, as Kronos to

Erichthonius/Erechtheus' Zeus, and his reign takes on certain tinges of the golden age. He was eventually credited with the foundation of many institutions, including that of marriage. A kind of mythographic imagination was, certainly, still at work in shaping the image of Cecrops as a 'culture hero'; but there is no trace of this conception in the fifth century, and even in the fourth century perhaps not before Philochorus.[45]

In the early tradition the one great event of his reign was the contest of Athena and Poseidon for Attica. This was the subject of the west pediment of the Parthenon,[46] and very appropriately, since two familiar sights of the Acropolis were the central items of evidence in the gods' dispute. Poseidon asserted his claim to the land by striking the rock with his trident and bringing forth a salt spring, the famous 'sea' of the Erechtheum; Athena planted the first of all olive-trees, that which still grew in the fifth century in the Pandroseum. One picture of the scene even emphasises these local associations by introducing the sacred snake of the Erechtheum.[47] For want of an early narrative account, several details are obscure. Cecrops was certainly involved in the dispute, either as actual judge, appointed 'because of his virtue', or as a witness, the judges being the twelve gods.[48] In late versions the land was to belong to the god who could offer the greater benefits to Attica. Accordingly, they caused their respective symbols, the olive-tree and the 'sea' (or a horse), to spring from the ground during the actual trial. It looks as if in the classical legend the issue was merely one of priority.[49] Immediately on arrival in Attica, Poseidon brought forth the sea, and Athena planted the olive, as ways of staking their respective claims to the land. A quarrel ensued, during which Poseidon possibly threatened the sacred olive with his trident, and Zeus possibly hurled a thunderbolt to separate the disputants.[50] In the ensuing trial, both gods appealed to the tokens as 'evidence' of their prior claim (Hdt. 8.55). Athena prevailed, strangely to our ears, because she had called Cecrops to witness her act of planting, while Poseidon who had in fact arrived first lacked witnesses (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.1).[51] Enraged at the verdict, Poseidon began to flood the Thriasian plain, until ordered by Zeus to desist (Apollod.; Hyg. *Fab.* 164).[52]

Several features of this myth are clear. It explains Athena's primacy in the city's pantheon, brings drama to the familiar monuments of the Acropolis, and depicts the origin of one of

Attica's most characteristic products and most venerable religious symbols:[53] for, whatever the goddess's exact motives may have been, it was a great moment when Athena 'revealed the first shoot of the grey olive, a heavenly crown and a glory for bright Athens' (Eur. *Tro.* 802; cf. *Ion* 1433). If an attack on the olive-tree by Poseidon was indeed stayed by the thunderbolt, that would be a further most apposite detail, since Athenians apparently believed that Zeus wielded his thunderbolt in defence of the sacred olives of Attica (Soph. *OC* 705 with schol.). And this is pre-eminently another myth that illustrates Athens' dearness to the gods. 'All men should praise our land . . . first and above all because it is dear to the gods. The quarrel and trial of the gods who disputed for it bear witness to what I say. Ought not a land which gods commended to be praised by all mortals?' (Pl. *Menex.* 237c–d). It was a high tribute, too, to Cecrops' qualities that he was permitted to judge between the gods (Xen. *Mem.* iii.5.10).

But the myth perhaps has another and less comfortable aspect. It is one of a group of myths that describe the disputes of gods for particular territories. In these stories, the victor is the city's chief god, while the loser is always Poseidon, except in Sicily where it is Hephaestus.[54] The loser too is commonly worshipped by the community in question, but he is not just their second most important god. Poseidon is the most fearsome of the Olympians, the sender of storms and earthquakes, and Hephaestus in Sicily had his home in the volcano Etna. There is an implicit connection between the terrifying powers of the god, and his anger at defeat; the myth explains the uncomfortable presence within the state of a dangerous god. In Attica, as we have already noted, the resentful Poseidon threatened floods, while in Argos he took an opposite revenge and left the great plain waterless (Paus. 2.15.5). This Poseidon is the malevolent god of the *Odyssey*; there too, of course, he is opposed to Athena.

It has recently been suggested that our myth was first invented in or near the 470s, as a way of acknowledging mythologically through the figure of Poseidon the new importance of sea-power in Athenian life.[55] That suggestion fits ill with the analysis just given, which was based on the broader type to which the Attic myth belongs; for angry Poseidon might be more likely to thwart than to favour Athenian endeavours at sea. That consideration, though, is decisive only for those who put their faith in the fixed meaning of

a myth, rather than in its historically varying meanings. The Athenians could have adopted the old mythical pattern but chosen to stress within it Poseidon's interest in Attica rather than his lasting resentment. Certainly, we find later in Plutarch and Aristides the conception of a sporting Poseidon who bears no grudge for defeat (Plut. *Quaest. Conv.* 741a; Aristid. *Panath.* 41 Lenz-Behr). Poseidon could have been appeased and brought round to favour Athens much like the Eumenides of Aeschylus. This is a case where we must practise the art of not knowing. The evidence is just not available that would have shown how the Athenians responded to Poseidon's role in the myth.[56] The related problem of the myth's date of introduction is similarly insoluble.

Cecrops' only son Erysichthon 'died childless', apparently before his father (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.14.2). He was remembered as little more than a name, and as (presumably) eponym of the historical Athenian *genos* of the Erysichthonidai. The few traditions about him almost all relate to Delos, and were probably for the most part invented by the propagandist Phanodemus in the fourth century, to prove the antiquity of Athens' interest in that island.[57] Erysichthon being dead, Erichthonius/Erechtheus probably succeeded Cecrops. (In the fourth-century king-lists, two shadowy kings intruded between them, Cranaus and Amphictyon. Both had been known as names in the fifth century, but there is no indication that they already had a fixed place in the royal genealogy.)[58] There was no tradition either about the old king's death or about his successor's title to the throne. Such lacunae are wholly characteristic of this early Attic mythology, which had never been put into order in a continuous poetic narrative but existed in fragments associated with particular monuments and cults. Indeed, for Plato, Cecrops, Erechtheus, Erichthonius and Erysichthon are all figures 'whose names have been preserved without their deeds' (*Criti.* 110a). Of Erichthonius/Erechtheus in particular one might say that '*magni stat nominis umbra*'. His pre-eminent role in early Athenian cult is clear from Homer (*Il.* 2.547–51; *Od.* 7.81), and he continued to have great genealogical importance,[59] but in the fifth century only one heroic deed was recorded of him. Before mentioning that, though, we must touch on the issue of his double name.

In sources of the fifth century and earlier, Erechtheus is much the commoner form. Erichthonius is not securely attested until

about 440/30. According to a tradition first found at the same time, they were distinct figures, Erichthonius being the father or grandfather of Erechtheus.[60] Their deeds too are to some extent distinguished: Erichthonius is never credited with Erechtheus' war against Eleusis, or with his children, while it is he and not Erechtheus who in fourth-century sources founds the Panathenaea. But one crucial myth is shared between the two. In Homer the earth-born nursling of Athena is Erechtheus (*Il.* 2.547–8); on vase paintings, in *Ion* (267–70) and in most later sources Erichthonius supplants him, though the older tradition still lingers on in Herodotus (8.55). It has often been inferred that Erechtheus and Erichthonius were simply alternative forms of the same name, and that the single figure with two names came to be divided into two figures. The actual development was perhaps more complex,[61] but it certainly seems to be true that we are dealing with joint-heirs to a single mythological inheritance. Erichthonius has no substantial myths of his own, but borrows and usurps from Erechtheus. Erechtheus indeed is forced to yield up his childhood to the older man. This is, of course, another indication of the fragmentation of these traditions, which work with isolated incidents rather than a continuous conception of a whole heroic career.

Erichthonius' only independent action was to found the Panathenaea, and to make certain inventions associated with the festival. These are fourth-century traditions, and must derive from Erichthonius' by then canonical status as nursling of the goddess whom the great festival honoured.[62] Erechtheus' great exploit was the war against Eumolpus and his Eleusinian or Thracian allies. It was to become the first of what one might call the 'four labours of the Athenians'. This canon was established by the speakers of the public funeral orations that were so distinctive a vehicle of Athenian ideology from about the middle of the fifth century. From the wide existing range of Athenian myths, some of them concerned with individual and domestic life, they selected four that could be reshaped as paradigms of a distinctively Athenian blend of righteousness and valour in the communal enterprise of warfare. Two of the chosen myths celebrated the Athenian heroism that had always in the last resort proved sufficient to repel the threatening incursions of barbarians. Two presented Athens as the common refuge of the oppressed, the state that had both the will and the power to stand up for sacred rights. Characteristically, it

was a new social institution, the public funeral, that stimulated this new development in mythology.[63]

Our first knowledge of the myth comes, appropriately, from Euripides' *Erechtheus*, a work deeply imbued with the patriotic values of the funeral speeches. It was almost certainly produced while work was at progress on the new Erechtheum, the foundation myth of which it told. Eumolpus was the son of Poseidon and of Chione, a Thracian princess who, at least in later tradition, was born of an Athenian mother. After many adventures, he led an army of Thracians into Attica to help the Eleusinians in a war against Athens. He hoped to install his father Poseidon on the Acropolis in place of Athena, and so reverse the unjust outcome of the famous dispute. Erechtheus consulted Delphi, and was told that victory would be his if he sacrificed one of his daughters before the battle. With the consent of his wife Praxithea he did this, and two further daughters sacrificed themselves voluntarily. Erechtheus duly killed Eumolpus and expelled the Thracians, but at the moment of victory vengeful Poseidon slew him in turn, or persuaded Zeus to do so. On Athena's orders Erechtheus is now worshipped in a fine temple on the Acropolis, bearing the name 'Erechtheus-Poseidon', 'because of him who killed him'. His daughters too receive cult at the place of their death, particularly when invasion threatens, while Praxithea was chosen by the goddess herself to become the first priestess of Athena Polias. And a descendant of Eumolpus in perhaps the fifth generation, again called Eumolpus, founded the Mysteries at Eleusis. Such in outline seems to have been the plot of Euripides' play.[64] The prologue was probably spoken by Poseidon, the exodos by Athena, so that as in *Hippolytus* the two competing gods ringed the human action of the play.

We have, then, a story of a threatening barbarian invasion that could only be checked by a king's willingness to subordinate his dearest personal interests to the public good. (In later allusions it is the king's attitude rather than that of his wife or hapless daughters that is stressed.) A leader's daughter-sacrifice had been an abomination for Aeschylus, but the theme is here suffused in a warm patriotic glow, and the horror is mitigated as often in Euripides by the victims' ready submission to their fate.[65] There was, of course, an example in all this for every citizen. On the divine level the war was a re-enactment of the old quarrel between

Athena and Poseidon, in yet more threatening terms; for the ever-dangerous god was now aligned with a barbarian horde. In the event Athens remained a Greek and not a barbarian city, Athens and not Poseidonia; and from this victory emerged a whole series of the city's cults, including several of the most celebrated. The play showed the religious order of the city created or confirmed by the patriotism of the citizens.

How much of this complex of motifs antedated Euripides? There are no certain earlier allusions; but passing references in almost contemporary works that are unlikely to be dependent on *Erechtheus* suggest that several features of Euripides' myth — the Eleusinian war, the maiden sacrifice, the destruction of Erechtheus through Poseidon — were already familiar.[66] One feature that is not attested before Euripides is Eumolpus' Thracian origin. It is thoroughly unexpected, since Eumolpus is evidently the eponym of the Eleusinian priestly *genos* of the Eumolpids, and duly appears as a respectable Eleusinian prince in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (154). His descent from Poseidon, too, well suits an Eleusinian, since the god was worshipped there under the title 'father' (Paus. 1.38.6). Euripides' version retains the association with Eleusis, but reserves the foundation of the Mysteries for a second Eumolpus five generations later; by then, no doubt, the Thracian blood would have been diluted to an acceptable level.[67] There has clearly been an innovation here at some date; but it is hard to believe that Euripides had no semblance of authority for changing a war against Eleusinians into a war against Thracians, and so transforming one of the most honoured religious families of all Greece into descendants of a barbarian war-lord. It was probably the prestige at Eleusis of Thracian Orpheus that first made Eumolpus into a Thracian,[68] that Orpheus who himself came to be seen as founder of the Mysteries. But Thrace in Athenian mythology had a double significance. It was the home of Orpheus and thus a source of religious revelation, but it was also the first fully barbarian land abutting the Greek mainland. Eumolpus probably became a Thracian because of the first set of associations, only to be transformed by the patriotic tradition into the scapegrace embodiment of the second. There is some evidence that perhaps points to an earlier independent tradition of a war between Erechtheus and the Thracians.[69] If one existed, it will have eased the transformation of an Atheno-Eleusinian into an Atheno-Thracian conflict. At all

events, the fourth-century tradition had almost forgotten that this war had anything to do with Eleusis, and remembered it only as the prototype of the Persian wars, the first incursion of barbarian arms into Greece (e.g. Dem. 60.8).

Probably, therefore, the earlier myth used similar motifs in describing a conflict between Athens and Eleusis. (How far the process of transformation had gone before Euripides we cannot say.) Since Poseidon was a prominent Eleusinian god, the divine conflict would have been appropriate in this version too. It used to be thought that the myth in this form reflected an actual historical conflict; but the archaeological support for that view has collapsed, with the demonstration that the supposedly 'archaic' defensive wall between Athens and Eleusis belongs to the fourth century.[70] There is no independent evidence to suggest that Eleusis was incorporated into the Athenian state later than other of the 'cities' of Attica, or with any more difficulty. The area in which the relation of Eleusis to Athens was unique was, of course, that of religion. The myth emphasises this special relationship by a technique of contrast (since the war led to peace). Pausanias' account perhaps suggests the spirit, at least, of the original denouement: 'They settled the war on the terms that the Eleusinians should be subject to the Athenians in other respects but should conduct the ceremonies themselves.' (1.38.3). The myth of the war was also no doubt very closely associated with the several rituals that involved processions from Athens to Eleusis (or vice versa), or places *en route*; most particularly, at the Skirophoria, the priest of Poseidon/Erechtheus and the priestess of Athena Polias, in this context a most significant combination, walked out westwards to Skiron, the spot where according to one tradition the decisive battle occurred.[71] The old myth probably dramatised such local (though by no means trivial) themes and concerns; but the struggle between neighbouring Attic communities that it portrayed could be seen as disreputable, and it had to give way to the great saga of the barbarian repelled.

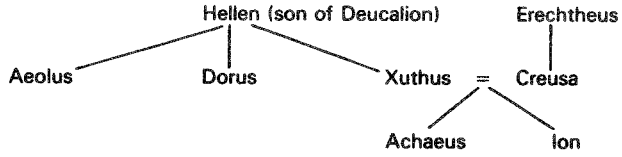
Erechtheus had several further daughters. One was Orithyia, the bride of Boreas the North Wind. Whether the bearer of such a name ('she who races in the mountains'?)[72] had always been a royal princess must be doubtful, but that is how the only myth we know portrays her. Orithyia was not the only girl to have been swept away by a storm (cf. Hom. *Od.* 20.66–78), and at one level

the myth expresses the frightening power of a force of nature. But Boreas was a god as well as a wind, and it also illustrates the 'rough favour' (Aesch. *Ag.* 182–3) of the Olympians in their dealings with mortals. The rape of mortal by god has two aspects. On the one hand it is a frightening and irresistible incursion, a seigneurial act of power; but it is also a contact of rare intimacy between the two worlds, which gives the victim's family and community almost unique claims upon the condescending god. This is a theme upon which, in a different context, Euripides plays poignantly in one of his loveliest choral odes (*Troades* 820–58). Appropriately, therefore, the rape often takes place amid an assemblage of early Attic heroes; Cecrops and his three daughters as well as Erechtheus are all present and named, in defiance of chronology, on an amphora by the Orithyia painter, and Athena, too, often watches the scene without obvious disapproval. Boreas was rough and alien enough (witness the vase paintings), but he knew how to be grateful, as the help he gave against the Mede in 492 and again in 480 well showed, when the Athenians accepted the advice of an oracle (Hdt. 7.189) to 'call on their son-in-law' for aid. (The Athenians at large are conceived, revealingly, as sharing in relationships contracted by Erechtheus). This display of divine gratitude in a crisis was the source of the myth's great popularity in the fifth century. The many vase paintings, the monumental sculptures, the play by Aeschylus, the new temple of Orithyia by the Ilissus all served to remind the Athenians of how they overcame the Mede through the help of friends in high places.[73] When they decorated their temple of Apollo on Delos with two scenes of Athenians raped by immortals, they were proclaiming to the world the gods' great love for Athens.[74]

Orithyia's marriage was not without issue; and some of her children, Zetes and Calais and Cleopatra, wife of Phineus, were to achieve fame in the mythological world. Through them Attica acquired a rather distant connection with the glamorous Argonautic expedition. The origin of this association is uncertain, but it was certainly known to Sophocles: the chorus in *Antigone* ponder the melancholy fate that befell Cleopatra, daughter of a god and grand-daughter of an Athenian though she was (966–87).[75]

Another daughter of Erechtheus made an influential marriage in the early time, when mankind had only existed for three generations and was still being divided into its racial groups. We

encounter here a central concern of Greek political mythology, the genealogical relations of peoples. In this case, a controversy about the origins and thus the obligations of the Ionians is fought out through the person of the hero Ion. A recently published fragment of the Hesiodic *Catalogue*[76] has confirmed that the following stemma is ancient:



So juxtaposed, Ion and Achaeus are evidently patrons of Achaea in the northwest Peloponnese, which was recognised by the nine Ionian cities of Asia Minor as their homeland and according to tradition had once been called Ionia (Diod. Sic. 15.49.1). Numerous sources duly associate the heroes with this region, from Herodotus (7.94) onwards. But Athens too claimed to be 'the most ancient land of Ionia' (Solon fr. 4a.2 West), and her status as such is recognised in the choice of an Athenian mother (a daughter of Erechtheus, naturally) for Ion. Pseudo-Hesiod's genealogy is perhaps a compromise between two beliefs or claims about the site of the true primeval Ionia. Certainly Ion himself is connected by Herodotos with Athens (8.44) as well as with Achaea, and is repeatedly forced to migrate physically from the one place to the other in more elaborate later accounts.[77]

Thus Athenians of the fifth century inherited a tradition which associated Ion with Athens, but a little precariously, through his mother only. It was therefore a problem to explain how he had achieved such prominence at Athens that the four Attic tribes were named after his sons (Hdt. 5.66; Eur. *Ion* 1575–81), as in terms of mythological genealogy they necessarily were: for these tribe names were also found in Ionia proper, and so were a prime part of that heritage of Ion which was transmitted through Athens to the broader Ionic world.[78] The best that could be done was to say that Ion was summoned to serve as 'general' in a dangerous war (Erechtheus' against the Thracians, when it is identified), and owed his influence to military success.[79] An exception had of course to be made here, in Ion's favour, to the normal mythological

rule that kings are their own generals. It was perhaps Euripides in *Ion* who first adopted the radical solution of eliminating the boy's foreign father in favour of Apollo.[80] As Ion was now of pure Athenian blood (with a dash of ichor), he became a fit heir to the throne of Erechtheus (*Ion* 1573–4). Euripides duly installs him there,[81] in defiance of tradition, and without explaining how the throne passed back from Ion's line to Erechtheus' normal successor, Pandion. Athens' relations with her Ionian allies were at this date crucial for her very survival (cf. *Ion* 1584–5), and it was not inopportune to place the Ionians' ancestor at the very centre of primitive Athenian society.[82] Nor will Athenians have resented the notion that after conceiving Ion by a god, Creusa went on to bear Dorus and Achaeus to a mortal (*Ion* 1589–94): Ion's uncle Dorus was thus reduced to his younger half-brother, born of inferior and, to boot, half-Athenian stock. But Euripides' innovation (if such indeed it was) was too bold to be taken up by the subsequent tradition, and Ion remained a general and an immigrant. And this was, perhaps, not an inappropriate expression of the Athenians' own sense of their Ionian identity. An Athenian was of course an Ionian, and at certain times it was important to insist on the point; but in general being an Ionian was very much secondary to the central business of being an Athenian.

Erechtheus was succeeded by . . . . But we must leave the Athenians as Bacchylides portrays them in his eighteenth ode, Waiting for Theseus.[83]

Notes

*Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood and I join in paying tribute to a fine scholar and mythographer, whose generosity towards other scholars in time and ideas always seemed to have no limits.

1. Cf. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983). The gradual emergence in literature of Attic myths is surveyed by E. Ermatinger, *Die attische Autochthonensage bis auf Euripides* (Berlin, 1897) 1–36.
2. Cephalus and Procris; Procne, Philomela and Tereus.
3. Cf. H. Tudor, *Political Myth* (London, 1972).
4. See, e.g., W. R. Connor, 'Theseus in Classical Athens', in A. G. Ward *et al.*, *The Quest for Theseus* (London, 1970) 143–74; F. Graf, *Griechische Mythologie* (Munich and Zurich, 1985) 130–5.
5. In George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch*.
6. See, e.g., T. Eagleton, *Literary Theory* (Oxford, 1983) Ch. 2.
7. Cf. Detienne, *Invention*, Ch. 2.

H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*, London: Methuen, 1928, s. 236–266 (zkráceno; kde to lze, uvádím jména v českém přepisu)

Théseus

King Pandíón, Erechtheus' grandson, was driven out of his kingdom by the sons of Metíón and took refuge in Megara [v Megarách], where four sons were born to him, Aigeus, Pallás, Nísos and Lykos. After his death these reconquered Attica, of which Aigeus became king, not greatly to the content of his brothers. He was without children, and on consulting Delfy was given a mysterious-sounding oracle, the interpretation of which was that he was to touch no woman until he returned home. However, the wording puzzled him, and he went to consult Pittheus, king of Troizen and son of Pelops. Pittheus saw what was meant, made Aigeus drunk, and introduced him to his daughter Aithra. So runs the common story, but almost as common is the tale that Poseidon was Aithra's lover. The probable solution is that Aigeus, the eponym of the Aegean Sea, is none other than a local form of Poseidon himself. At all events, Aigeus left behind him at Troizen [v Troizéně] a sword and a pair of sandals, which he put under a great rock, and bade Aithra send him the son he was confident that she would bear, as soon as he was old enough to shift the rock and get these tokens of his father."

A child was born, and named Théseus. On reaching young manhood, he fulfilled his father's behest, but refused to take the easy sea route to Athens, insisting on going by land, because that offered more prospect of adventures. Hence he met and conquered the brigand Perifétés, surnamed Korynétés or the Club-man, near Epidauros; he took his club and henceforth used it (one of the many traits in his legend manifestly imitated from Héraklés). Next came the turn of Sinis, surnamed Pityokamptés, or Pine-bender, because he used to tie those whom he caught to two pine-trees, bent to the ground, and let them fly up, tearing the victim in two. Théseus gave him the same death. After staying to hunt and kill the Grey Sow of Krommyón, he entered the Megarid, where he met another brigand, Skeirón, who used to compel passers-by to wash his feet, and as they did so, kick them into the sea. Flinging him from a cliff, he next encountered, at Eleusis, a formidable wrestler, one Kerkyón of Arkadia, whom also he overcame and killed. Next, as he approached Athens, he met Damastés, otherwise Prokrústés (the Stretcher), whose notion of humour was to lay all comers on a bed and then lop them or rack them out to make them fit it. Théseus meted out the same measure to him, and without further adventures arrived in Athens.

Here Médeia, who had taken refuge with Aigeus, prepared a cup of poison for him, pointing him out to Aigeus as a likely pretender to the throne. But Aigeus recognized his son in the nick of time and dashed the poison away; Médeia took refuge in flight, and her son Médos became the eponym of the Médes, after murdering, with the aid of his mother, Persés son of Helios.

Athens was just then in a state of turmoil, as Pallás and his strong sons were plotting against Aigeus. Théseus, however, met and overthrew them. He next hunted and caught the Marathonian bull (the one Heraklés had brought from Crete—another contact between the two heroes) and sacrificed it to Apollo.

Now came a more serious and dangerous contest. Mínós had reduced Athens to the position of a tributary state, under hard terms. His son Androgeós had been murdered in Attica, and he prepared an expedition against it. Athens made terms with Mínós; a yearly tribute of seven youths and seven maidens was to be sent, whom he shut up in the Labyrinth, to lose their way and die of hunger, or be killed and eaten by the Mínótauros. Théseus volunteered to be one of the number. On the way to Crete, Mínós insulted one of the virgins, and Théseus interfered. Mínós bragged of his sonship to Zeus, who in response to his prayer thundered out of a clear sky. Théseus, to counter this, jumped overboard at Mínós' challenge and brought back, by the help of Amfitríté, a gold ring which Mínós threw overboard. Reaching Crete, he met Ariadné, daughter of Mínós, who fell in love with him and provided him with a clue of thread by the help of which he could find his way out of the Labyrinth; he met and killed the Mínótaur, found his way back by following the clue, which he had fastened near the entrance, and sailed away in safety, taking with him his fellow-victims and Ariadné. Why Mínós did not pursue was a question which exercised some of the ancients. In any case, Théseus got safely away, and sailed as far as Naxos, where, according to the usual form of the story, he treacherously left Ariadné behind; Deserted, Ariadné was found by Dionysos, who wedded her. A number of rites observed in historical Athens were popularly supposed to commemorate incidents in this adventure.

Théseus, on starting, had promised that if he returned safely he would change the black sails of the ship which bore the human tribute for white ones. But he forgot to do this, and Aigeus, seeing the black-sailed vessel approach, naturally thought that his son had perished, and so flung himself into the sea and was

drowned. Théseus was now king, and instituted reforms, the most notable being the *synoikismos,* or union of the scattered Attic communities into one political centre, Athens. Here we touch sober history; such a union certainly did take place, and likely enough as the result of the constructive policy of some early statesman or statesmen, not by mere spontaneous development. He soon had to face a serious war; the Amazons (provoked, in some accounts, by Théseus, who had joined in Héraklés' campaign against them) invaded Attica, but were defeated, and their leader, Hippolyté or Antiopé, became his wife. They had a son Hippolytos, who is the chief figure of a tragic story.

After the death of the boy's mother, Théseus married again, this time Ariadné's sister Faidra. She fell passionately in love with her stepson, and in the absence of Théseus, at last let him know of her affection. He repulsed her, and she hanged herself, first writing a letter incriminating him. Théseus, returning, read the letter and cursed his son; now Poseidón had granted him three wishes, and the curse was one of them. Hippolytos, therefore, as he drove away from his father, who had banished him, was met by a huge sea-monster which frightened his horses; they bolted, threw him from the chariot, and dragged him to death. Too late, Théseus perceived his error.

Mapa Théseových prací.

Théseus was credited, like Héraklés, with several amatory adventures, for example, with the daughters of all or most of the brigands whom he killed on his way to Athens. This is but one of the many resemblances between the legends of the two heroes, largely due, no doubt, to deliberate imitation by Attic saga-men of the better known tale.

Théseus is represented as having been the constant friend of Héraklés, whom he sheltered after the killing of Megara and her children. In the end, he left Athens in consequence of rebellions against him, took refuge in Skyros, and was there murdered by Lykomédés, or died by accident.

Théseovy práce na atické červenofigurové číši (440 př. n. l.). Seshora doprava: Kerkyón, Prokrústés, Skeirón, marathónský býk, Sinis, krommyonská svině.

ports to be more rational; it has a different purpose—namely, to illustrate unforeseeable change in human affairs. Around a historical event, the capture of the Lydian king by the Persians in the summer of 547 B.C., have grown up two stories, the exact details of which are beyond our grasp. The stories became traditional: even before Bacchylides wrote his poetic account of the event, an Attic painter had represented the king offering a libation to Zeus. That was the myth as Bacchylides knew it (fig. 6).

If no line was drawn between myth and history, myth remained adaptable to new conditions, so long as it retained its vitality. The myths that dealt with Theseus's visit to Delos were created to legitimate Athenian claims to the island (see Chapter 5). Our authorities for myths about Theseus as an Attic hero are relatively numerous and illustrate how myth was changed to meet the requirements of the day.

Theseus and Athens

In the archaic period Theseus was one hero among others, and some of his adventures were narrated quite often.[12] He is mentioned several times in the Homeric poems. Nestor tells how Theseus fought beside Perithous against the Centaurs (*Iliad* 1.263–70). Odysseus says that he saw Ariadne, Minos's daughter, in the underworld; Theseus, he continues, wanted to bring her from Crete to Athens, but Artemis, at the recommendation of Dionysus, killed the girl on the island of Dia (*Odyssey* 11.321–25). That presupposes the Minotaur adventure. Odysseus would have seen Theseus and Perithous, too, during his visit in Hades, had he stayed there longer (*Odyssey* 11.631). The mention of Theseus and Perithous presupposes the tale according to which the two heroes descended into the lower world to abduct Persephone, the queen of that realm, but were detained there and punished for the attempt. In another Homeric passage Theseus's mother Aethra is listed among the maidservants of Helen (*Iliad* 3.144). That presupposes the tale of Theseus's abduction of Helen, according to which Helen's brothers, the Dioscuri, later came to their sister's rescue and not only freed her but also carried off Theseus's mother, who had been keeping Helen hidden.

The abduction of women and the slaying of monsters: these are the deeds of the Homeric Theseus, and these are also the deeds of Theseus as he is represented again and again in early lyric poetry and in archaic art. The oldest surviving depiction of the slaying of the Minotaur is Corinthian and dates from the seventh century. There is nothing specifically Athenian about Theseus here.

In the last quarter of the sixth century, there was a startling change in the iconography of the hero. Attic vase paintings showing Theseus suddenly begin to appear, and in the metopes on the treasury of the Athenians at Delphi (ca. 500 B.C.) Theseus's exploits are juxtaposed with those of Heracles. Significantly, there are no scandalous abductions of women here, no battles with half-human monsters; instead, Theseus is represented as, above all, a civilizer, who made the road from Troezen to Athens safe for travelers. He is shown clearing the road of all sorts of bandits—among these were Sciron, who hurled wayfarers over a cliff; Sinis, who tore them to pieces by fastening them to young pine trees, which he bent to the ground and then released; Procrustes, who forced them to fit into his bed by stretching them or lopping off their extremities; and Cercyon, a powerful wrestler who crushed his victims (Plutarch, *Theseus* 8–11). Apparently, Theseus's civilizing feats were meant to contrast with Heracles' encounters with wild animals and monsters from foreign lands. Theseus's popularity among the Athenians seems to have reached its peak when, in 476 B.C., the hero's bones were unearthed on the island of Scyros and returned to Athens by Cimon, the son of the Miltiades who led the Athenians to victory at Marathon (Plutarch, *Theseus* 36.1–3; *Cimon* 8.5–7). Theseus was even said to have intervened personally on behalf of the Athenians at Marathon (Plutarch, *Theseus* 35.8).

Theseus's popularity as the slayer of villains on the road from Troezen probably stemmed from an epic poem, the *Theseid*. Composed, at the latest, in the last quarter of the sixth century, the purpose of the poem was to make Theseus into an Athenian hero. There was much to recommend Theseus, whose exploits had been widely known from the time of Homer—at all events, Theseus was a much more attractive nominee for the role than Menestheus, Athens's rather pale representative at Troy (*Iliad* 2.552).

Whether the *Theseid* was written at the suggestion of Peisistratus, the Athenian tyrant, or Cleisthenes, the founder of the Athenian democracy, is a matter of dispute and, in any case, of little importance here. The important point is that, for political reasons, certain episodes in Theseus's mythical career were developed into an epic poem representing the Athenian self-concept.[13]

For the Athenians, Theseus was not, like other heroes, just a doer of prodigious deeds; he was one of their early kings. His adventures vexed the Greeks of later times, in particular the fourth-century Atthidographers. These writers of early Attic history attempted quite recklessly to rationalize the tale, so popular in the archaic period, of Theseus's struggle with the Minotaur. The monster was explained away as a real person, Taurus, an officer of Minos, conquered by Theseus in a sea battle (Demon, *FGrH* 327 F 5) or in single combat (Philochorus, *FGrH* 328 F 17). Cleidemus understood Theseus's Cretan adventure as an invasion, with Athenian support, by Cretan exiles whose purpose was to overthrow the tyrant Minos (*FGrH* 323 F 17). Theseus, thus demythologized and historicized, could no longer be represented as a slayer of monsters.

The *Theseid* may have initiated this rationalizing trend by portraying Theseus as the unifier of Attica and therefore the founder of the Athenian state. The inhabitants of Attica, it was said, once lived in scattered villages, without a common political identity. Under Theseus, they were incorporated into the Athenian polis, with a common political center in the city of Athens. Posterity considered this act of unification, known as synoecism, Theseus's greatest accomplishment. It was celebrated at the Synoecia, a festival that was thought to have been instituted by Theseus.[14] The festival took place on the sixteenth day of Hecatombaeon, the first month in the Attic calendar, immediately after the appearance of the full moon. Various rituals of dissolution and renewal marked Hecatombaeon as the first month of the new year. At the Synoecia, too, a strange sacrificial ritual took place. The participants, instead of roasting the meat communally in accordance with normal practice, brought it home raw: in this way, the Athenians enacted the dissolution of their political unity, which was followed by a fresh start. The myth, according to which the Athenians first lived in scattered villages and then were united under Theseus, traces just this sequence of events, expressed in the code of political action. Here myth and ritual did not necessarily preserve the memory of an actual synoecism from the early history of Attica—even the scholar who asserts that a myth is "a tale that rests on a historical basis" must allow that this synoecism was probably the result not of a single act but of a "long and gradual developmental process."[15] Thus, all that is left of the myth is the basic notion that a great city arose as a result of the unification of several towns; such a synoecism is plausible, whether it is historical or not.

Even more important was the late sixth-century transformation of Theseus from a folktale hero into a quasi-historical politician acting with absolute authority. Extreme democrats of the fourth century (who had a forerunner in Euripides) went so far as to make the king abdicate and introduce the democracy. Theophrastus, a student of Aristotle, even credits Theseus with the invention of ostracism, the vote by potsherd, which was fundamental to the Athenian democracy—undoubtedly with a polemical and antidemocratic purpose, for he goes on to say that the first victim of ostracism was none other than its inventor. Theophrastus's teacher, with greater historical plausibility, says

that ostracism was introduced by Cleisthenes, ascribing to Theseus a constitution that "deviated somewhat from monarchy" (*The Constitution of the Athenians* 41.2). By contrast, Thucydides represented him as an absolute monarch who possessed enough power to divest the individual villages of their sovereignty and thus to pave the way for the synoecism (2.15). Plutarch imagined that Theseus went from one aristocratic power center to the next promoting his idea; while the commoners followed him enthusiastically, the nobles did so only with reluctance, in view of his dynastic power (*Theseus* 24.1–2).

To be sure, not every one of these details is the stuff of which traditional tales are made, but the starting point—the notion that Theseus was an Attic king—certainly is, and it is on this notion that the later additions are based. The Theseus myth is presented in a form that every Greek could understand as history. The conception of myth as history goes back at least to the latter part of the sixth century, unless one assigns an even earlier date to the etiology of the Synoecia.

Myth as History

The conception of myth as history—to sum up the results of our survey—was not a late occurrence; nor was it an indication that myth had become an empty shell, as some evolutionists, unable to see the development of Greek thought as anything but the triumph of *logos* over *mythos*, have been far too ready to assume. In fact, myth, especially heroic myth, was regarded as history throughout antiquity. One of the reasons for this attitude was that, in the archaic period, heroic myth took the fixed form of epic poetry, particularly the Homeric poems. Even in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* the mythical universe is structured in accordance with chronological—"historical"—criteria. This quasi-historical perspective is consistent with the Homeric tendency toward realism: the realistic Homeric narrator shuns the fantastic and the fabulous (Chapter 3).

Realism, which has been disparaged as the mark of an unimaginative mind (G. S. Kirk) but also extolled as characteristically indicative of, and rooted in, a pristinely anthropomorphic universe (B. Vickers, rightly and convincingly), is a distinctive feature of Greek mythical narration in general.[16] Monsters, when they appear, are surprisingly tame. Perhaps the most complicated one is the chimaera ("in front a lion, in the middle a goat, in back a snake") or Hesiod's Typhon, with its various animal heads. More common are animals such as those against which Heracles fights: a lion with skin that resists iron; a bull and a boar, both unusually large and savage creatures; man-eating horses; a hind with golden antlers. Particularly spectacular are Cerberus with his three heads and the Hydra with its four serpentine necks. Most of the figures of Greek myth, however, are human, and so are their actions, which include not only murder, rape, and cannibalism but also love, friendship, and marriage. Attic vase painting is also of a preeminently anthropomorphic character: monsters are rare (among Heracles' labors, the struggle with the lion is depicted most often; among those of Theseus the struggle with the Minotaur, another not less than extravagantly fantastic monster). Vases usually show men and women, and we cannot always be sure, in the absence of inscriptions, whether a scene is from myth or everyday life. Is the parting warrior in every case Hector, the dead man over whose corpse others are fighting always Achilles? The human and indeed the humane qualities of myth have made epic and tragic poetry the loftiest achievements of both Greek and other literatures; these qualities explain the immense impact that Greek myth has had, from antiquity to the present day.

Myth in the Greek City: The Athenian Politics of Myth[1]

Let us construct a fiction: a city has been founded, a group of citizens settled on its territory. What is now the most urgent task for the wise legislator? To set up laws, no doubt? If he takes Plato for a guide, he will start not by creating laws but by forging myths.

He will persuade the citizens "that in reality they were formed and raised in the womb of the earth, they themselves as well as their weapons and the rest of their equipment. And that, when they were entirely formed, the earth, their mother, delivered them, and now they should regard the earth that they inhabit as their mother and their nurse, and they ought to defend her against any attack and regard the other citizens as their brothers, who like them came out of the womb of the earth" (Plato, *The Republic*, 414 d–e). Forging myths: if we are to believe Plato, this is the first thing to be attended to by the founder of a city (but the Sophist Critias, a "tyrant" of Athens and relative of the philosopher, was saying the same thing when he founded the political order on the fear of the gods, the clever invention of a wise man; Critias, fr. 25 Diels-Kranz). We should take the philosopher in the *Republic* seriously when he hastens, once the foundations of the imaginary city are laid, to submit the mythopoetic activity to the all-powerful authority of an official censor (337 b–c): "bad" myths must immediately be replaced by good ones, "noble lies" destined for the civic body, because all Greek cities, even imaginary ones, live on myths.

Dispensing with the fiction of the first inventor and with the problematical side of the noble lie, let us return to "reality", to truly existing Greek cities, with their own history and political life: myth is there, too; it is always there, an ancient history inscribed in the civic space, repeated in daily practice and in the most circumstantial decisions, retelling the origins of the polis (the Greek city-state) or founding its present. We shall attempt to discern this multiform presence within one city, the prestigious, if not the privileged, exemplar of the Greek politics of myth.

Let there be a city: Athens. A territory and men. A community of citizens, with their wives (who are entitled to the name of Athenians, but not that of citizens) and two categories of noncitizens (metics and slaves). An intense civil life, a dynamic foreign policy, dominated by the imperialist search for power even more than by the desire for expansion. At Athens, as in other Greek cities, myths speak of necessarily brilliant beginnings, and the legendary deeds of national heroes are recounted as a series of exploits in which the citizens can see a prefiguration of their own collective enterprises.

[1] Zkrácená a mírně upravená verze stati Nicole Loraux z *Mythologies*, vol. I., s. 340–346.

The Social Function of Myth: Athenian Autochthony

As a discourse on the origin and the ordering of the human cosmos, myth narrates to the city the coming of culture; in every Athenian it nourishes the representation of Athens that is appropriate both for oneself and for others: that of a polis "beloved of the gods" and by origin doubly anchored in a close relationship with the divine. The quarrel of Athena and Poseidon is evidence of this relationship, and the circumstances which presided over the birth of Erichthonius are evidence that, as "sons of the blessed gods, who came out of a sacred ground and never knew conquest, the descendants of Erechtheus were prosperous at all times" (Euripides, *Medea*, 824–28). The mythic origins of masculine democracy, the legendary war against the Amazons who tried to imitate men and who turned out to be women after all when danger arose (Lysias, *Epitaphios*, 4–5), inaugurate the civic order of men as opposed to women, the passive "half" of the city. The story of the Amazons is doubly exemplary as it also tells the victory of civilization over barbarity, of the polis over strangers: at the Stoa Poikilé (painted portico) where citizens can contemplate the great deeds of Athens painted on the walls, legend and history are neighbours, and "on the middle wall are the Athenians and Theseus fighting with the Amazons, then come the Greeks, masters of Troy ... and at the end of the painting are those who fought at Marathon" (Pausanias, 1.15.2).

Celebrated in word and image, evoked in official speeches, represented in tragic theatre, illustrated many times over on vases and temple pediments, myth runs the great risk, having undergone this treatment, of dwindling away into conventional scenes and rhetorical commonplaces. Its polysemy, reinforced by tragedy, shines forth, by contrast, when it penetrates the prosaic speech of politics. In the domain of political representations, however, it does gain by being a necessary mediation between the Athenians and Athens.

To distinguish the multiple functions assumed by myth and the many levels of social experience it takes charge of, one example will suffice: that of Athenian autochthony. It is true that official religion keeps to the strictest orthodoxy as far as the birth of Erichthonius is concerned. When the tragedians extend the name of Erechtheids to the entirety of the civic body, they make the Athenians both native sons and divine offshoots. But, as though the story of Erichthonius were too well known to be repeated once again, the official orators, those who recite the funeral oration to the glory of citizens fallen in combat, in general avoid mentioning the national hero and the divine couple who presided over his birth; instead, they attribute the privilege of autochthony collectively to all men of Athens. It is not surprising that this generalized autochthony becomes an essential element of the ideology of Athenian democracy: not only does it serve to justify Athenian practice in war – the Athenians are champions of right by virtue of their status as legitimate

sons of the soil of the fatherland (Lysias, *Epitaphios*, 17) – but the orators go so far as to derive democracy from autochthony or, to use Platonic terminology, to derive political equality (*isonomiá*) from the equality of origin (*isogoniá*; see Plato *Menexenus*, 239 a). Thus law (*nomos*) finds its basis in nature (*fysis*), and the power of the demos thereby gains its certificates of nobility: endowed collectively with good birth, autochthonous citizens are all equal because they are all noble. One more step and the speeches will contrast Athens with all other cities, anomalous groupings of intruders settling in as metics on foreign soil.

Has the myth been lost by the wayside? To answer yes would be to forget that in the time of the religious calendar as in the space of civic life, in daily life as in the festivals of the collectivity, every Athenian is frequently reminded of the myth of Erichthonius: on the Acropolis and in the celebration of the Panathenaea, in tragic or comic theatre, in the workshop of the potter whose vases repeat ad infinitum Ge's holding out the child to Athena. And even if a surfeit of eloquence does weaken the myth, it is worth wagering that the Athenian audience took it upon itself to refer the general propositions of discourse to the living context of myth.

Myths therefore do not die because they are politicized. How could they, when it is they that tell the city its identity, establishing the origin of the name of Athens or presiding over the education of the defenders of the territory of the fatherland? Thus it is that in instituting in 508 B.C. the ten tribes which were from thenceforth to constitute the politico-military officers of Athenian life, Kleisthenes placed them under the patronage of the ten national heroes, the ten Eponymous Ones, who include, not surprisingly, Kekrops, Erechtheus, and Aigeus, and whose exploits the citizens are invited to repeat in an ever-renewed imitation (see Demosthenes, *Epitaphios*, 27–31).

Between the gods and the heroes, between the original kinship which unites them collectively to Athena and the classificatory kinship which distributes them into ten tribes, Athenians had no lack of models, inscribed in civic time and space, to encourage them to root their actions in myth.

Theseus

In the face of other cities, each polis brandishes its own myths and heroes: thus Theseus owes his remarkably good fortune to the fact that the Peisistratids sought to counter the Peloponnesians through their hero Heracles. The history of the hero gives both prefiguration and legitimacy to all territorial expansion: if Theseus chooses to travel from Troezen to Athens by the most dangerous route, via Megara and Eleusis, it will provide him with the opportunity to conquer the enemies of civilization; it is also the case that Athens, after the event or in anticipation, wants to legitimate the conquest of these cities, a conquest that may be insecure or merely desired. If the hero, on his way from Crete to Athens, stops at Delos to dance there, this dance will be a fitting celebration of the victory over the Minotaur, but it also has its function in the city of Peisistratos, for it provides a kind of filigree of justification for his ambitions for the Aegean Sea.

More complex, but just as real, is the incidence of myth and heroic legend in internal political life: here, the vacillation between the then and the now is constant. The present remodels the legendary past, and at the beginning of the fifth century, in a city definitively rid of tyrants, the visual representations of Theseus on Attic vases suddenly start to reproduce the attitudes of the Tyrannoctones (murderers of the tyrant), as immortalized by two illustrious sculptors for the edification of the people. Likewise, the Periclean law on citizenship, around 450 B.C., may have given a resurgence of authority to the myth of autochthony. Inversely, the present can be made into an imitation of the legendary past: thus, when Kimon repatriates the "ashes of Theseus" from Skyros in order to install them ceremoniously in the heart of the polis, at the foot of the Acropolis and near the Agora, it simply means that Kimon, the politician who wants to be a second Theseus, slips himself adroitly into the figure of the hero.

A strange destiny, that of Theseus in the democratic city. The tyrants had exalted Theseus, but Kleisthenes' reform removed him from view and thus put him at a distance from the Eponymous Ones, of whom, by contrast, his father Aegeus was a member. The aristocratic reaction following the Persian wars again made him a dominant figure, the very incarnation of Athenian greatness: did he not fight at Marathon on the side of the Athenians? Of course he will be eclipsed again when democracy is strengthened: his connections with Peisistratos and then with Kimon are certainly true enough to make him suspect. From the end of the fifth century, however, he is no longer contested and gradually assumes, in the tragic theatre and under the influence of moderate politicians, a new and final shape: that of the democratic king, the ancestor who, back at the time of origin, gave power to the people, or the less compromising figure of the founder of the constitution of the ancestors. Who could any longer disentangle legend and history?

Thus, perpetually reactualized, the telling of far-off deeds weighs on the actions of the present, whether by inspiring them directly or by playing the role of an interpretive model to be projected onto the action, for the benefit of the actors of history. To characterize this overlapping of repetition and event, we may perhaps contend, in parody of Claude Levi-Strauss ("The Structure of Myths," in *Structural Anthropology*), that nothing more closely resembles ideology than myth, when it becomes political. Or we can simply observe that there is no "noble lie" in which the liar is not himself implicated, all the more when the narrator is confounded with the public, when the polis narrates stories to its citizens.

Arrhéforie[1]

Vztah přírody a kultury není třeba řešit jen v souvislosti s různými biologickými danostmi, ale také ve spojitosti s hranicemi a statutem všech socio-politických uspořádání jako takových. Toto téma dobře ilustrují Arrhéforie, tajuplný athénský svátek, jehož jediný úplnější popis podává Pausaniás (*Cesta po Řecku* I 27.3, př. H. Businská):

> Nedaleko chrámu Athény zvané Polias bydlí dvě dívky, jimž Athéňané říkají arrhéforoi. Tyto tráví nějakou dobu v blízkosti bohyně, ale když nadejde chvíle slavnosti, konají v noci toto: položí si na hlavy věci, které jim vydá Athénina kněžka, ale jak ona sama, jež ty věci vydává, neví, co jim dává, tak i ony nositelky nemají o tom potuchy. V městě pak je ohrazená prostora nedaleko chrámu Afrodíty v Zahradách a jí vede přirozená podzemní chodba; tamtudy dívky sestupují a zde také odkládají to, co nesou, něco jiného pak, zahaleného, vynášejí zase ven. Potom je ihned propouštějí a místo nich odvádějí na akropoli jiné dívky.

Jak vyplývá z dalších pramenů, obřad se prováděl každý rok v létě. Jelikož nové adeptky byly přiváděny ihned po propuštění starých, musely zjevně Athéně sloužit celý rok. Byly ve věku mezi sedmi a jedenácti lety a pro svou funkci byly slavnostně vybírány jedním z nejvyšších athénských úředníků. Během roku měly i různé další úkoly a pomáhaly mj. s tkaním posvátného *peplu*, který byl Athéně přinášen při Velkých Panathénajích.[2]

Samy o sobě jsou Arrhéforie obtížně srozumitelné, badatelé si však záhy povšimli, že zajímavým způsobem reagují na klasický mýtus o počátcích Athén. U nich nacházíme hned dva pozoruhodné hrdiny. Prvním z nich je král Kekrops, který se narodil ze země za blíže nejasných okolností a od pasu dolů měl hadí tělo. Druhým je Erichthonios, jehož zrození bylo ještě zajímavější. Jeho otcem byl bůh Héfaistos, který kdysi zatoužil po Athéně a snažil se jí zmocnit – ta však jeho útok odrazila a on jí pouze ejakuloval na stehno. Athéna sperma setřela chomáčkem vlny a hodila jej na zem. Tím Zemi oplodnila a po čase se z ní narodil Erichthonios. Athéna si jej od Země vzala na výchovu a hned po narození jej zavřela do košíku a dala hlídat třem Kekropovým dcerám, jimž přísně zakázala košík otevřít. Dívky nicméně přemohla zvědavost, dvě z nich neposlechly a košík otevřely. Naskytl se jim hrozivý pohled, který různí autoři popisují různě: vedle nemluvněte měly spatřit velkého hada či dva hady, nebo snad měl mít hadí nohy Erichthonios sám. Dívky při pohledu do košíku zešílely a vrhly se dolů z útesů Akropole.[3]

Je zřejmé, že příběh o Erichthoniovi je mytickou předlohou Arrhéforií a můžeme jej číst jako jejich *aition*, byť jen provizorní a neúplné (chybí příběh o ustavení rituálu). Ve vztahu mezi mýtem a rituálem se rýsuje standardní aitiologický vzorec. Na počátku stojí provinění, k němuž dochází v prvotní době. Příběh o ustavení Arrhéforií se nám nedochoval, rituál sám nás však nenechává na pochybách, že se původní tragickou událost snaží napodobovat, činí tak ovšem nedoslovně a snaží se napravit, co se v mýtu pokazilo. V mýtu dívky končí smrtí, v rituálu však svou zvědavost překonají a košíky neotevřou. Rituál zjevně mytický archetyp napodobuje proto, aby jej opravil, a zabránil tak jeho opakování.

Jaký je smysl Arrhéforií? Na tuto otázku neexistuje jednoznačná odpověď, neboť každý rituál je ze své povahy mnohovýznamový. Jeden z možných významů nicméně naznačuje mýtus, který je standardně chápán jako reakce na problém athénské *autochthonie*.[4] Athéňané byli mezi Řeky výjimeční tím, že se jako jedni z mála měli zrodit ze své vlastní země. Zatímco jiné obce si v mýtech vyprávěly o tom, jak jejich dávní předkové své území dobyli, Athéňané trvali na tom, že na své půdě žili odedávna a měli k němu přirozenou vazbu.[5] Nikdy odnikud nepřišli a už jejich předkové – Kekrops a Erichthonios – se zrodili ze země. Netřeba zdůrazňovat, že tento mýtus měl obrovský ideologický význam. Když v 5. století Athéňané ve svém impériu ovládali všechny iónské obce na ostrovech a v Malé Asii, opírali svou nadvládu mj. právě o svou autochthonii, která z nich měla činit mateřskou obec nadřazenou všem ostatním iónským komunitám.

Autochthonie byla pro Athéňany klíčová, zároveň však šlo o představu více než nepřirozenou. Autochthonie předpokládá, že lidé vyrostli ze země na způsob rostlin, a tedy mají ke svému území přirozený vztah. Ve skutečnosti ale lidé vždy své území ovládají kulturně – neexistuje země, která by někomu přirozeně patřila. Řekové sami tento fakt uznávali a byli si na určité rovině svého uvažování vždy vědomi historické kontingence všech územních nároků.[6] Přesto Athéňané trvali na tom, že sami jsou se svou půdou spjati přirozeně a neoddělitelně. Proč to? Odpověď souvisí se statutem všech socio-politických uspořádání (jichž jsou územní nároky jen jednou podmnožinou). Ani ta nejsou nikdy „přirozená“, a stojí naopak k přírodě v mnoha ohledech v protikladu. Řekové sami mezi kulturním a přirozeným dobře rozlišovali, pyšnili se svými sociálními a politickými institucemi a zakládali si na tom, že jsou nad přírodní stav povzneseni. Vedle toho ovšem věděli, že mají-li socio-politické formy dlouhodobě přetrvat a nerozplynout se v nikdy

---

[1] Text je upravenou částí článku Radka Chlupa „*Illud tempus* v řeckém rituálu” publikovaného v *Religiu* 15 (2007): 185–21.

[2] Viz *Etymologicum Magnum* 149.14, 149.19, 362.39; Harpokratión, heslo *arrhéforein*.

[3] Mýtus líčí celá řada autorů, viz např. Apollodóros, *Bibliotheca* III 14.

[4] Tak např. Nicole Loraux, *The Children of Athena: Athenian Ideas about Citizenship and the Division between the Sexes*, tr. by C. Levine, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, *passim*; Eric Csapo, *Theories of Mythology*, Malden: Blackwell, 2005, s. 238–244; *The Locrian Maidens: Love and Death in Greek Italy*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003, s. 118–127.

[5] Tento nárok je zčásti oprávněný, neboť Athény se jako jedna z mála obcí na konci mykénské doby úplně nezhroutily a nepodlehly dokonce ani invazi Dórů ve 12.–11. století př. n. l., před níž ostatní Iónové utekli na ostrovy a do Malé Asie. Tato historická fakta jsou ovšem jen podkladem pro mýtus o autochthonii, nikoli jeho smyslem, který souvisí spíše s konstruováním athénské identity v archaické a klasické době.

[6] Pěknou ukázku nabízí Thúkýdidés IV 97–98: Když při válce s Boióťany v roce 424 Athéňané obsadili Apollónovu boiótskou svatyni Délion a opevnili se v ní, Boióťané je obvinili z bezbožnosti. Athéňané odvětili, že se na posvátném okrsku nijak neprohřešili: je pravda, že jej obsadili, ale to je přeci přirozené, že v důsledku válek a politických sporů občas svatyně mění vlastníky. „Vždyť i Boióťané a většina ostatních, kteří obsadili nějakou zemi, když z ní vyhnali násilím dosavadní obyvatele, vnikli nejprve jako nepřátelé do cizích svatyň a nyní je mají jako vlastní majetek“ (98.3, př. V. Bahník).

nekončících sporech konkrétních jedinců, musí si vždy činit nárok na to, že nejsou jen nahodilým historickým produktem či výsledkem racionální dohody. Jinými slovy, musí se prezentovat jako kulturní i přirozené zároveň.

U kořenů athénské *polis* tak stojí paradox: obec je kulturním výtvorem, na určité rovině se ale musí tvářit, že není jen arbitrárním lidským konstruktem, nýbrž je dána od přirozenosti.[7] Aby se Athéňané s tímto paradoxem vyrovnali, musí nalézt střední člen, který kulturu s přírodou propojí, ale přitom mezi nimi vytvoří jasnou hranici. Jako ideální prostředník se opět nabízí mýtus. Ten poukazuje k jiné rovině skutečnosti, pro niž zákon sporu neplatí a která překračuje běžné lidské kategorie. Mýtus o Erichthoniovi je toho pěknou ukázkou. Erichthonios je zakladatelem athénského kulturního řádu, ale zároveň sám nepatří ani do sféry kultury, ani do sféry přírody. Příznačné je již jeho zrození, které je sexuální i asexuální zároveň: k ejakulaci dojde, k pohlavnímu styku nikoli. Asexuálně se ostatně zrodili i jeho „rodiče“: Athénu porodil Zeus ze své hlavy, Héfaista pak v reakci na to počala Héra na truc samoplozením. Snad proto je na Erichthoniovi něco děsivého, co Kekropovy dcery vyděsilo k smrti. Motiv hadů naznačuje, že jeho děsivost souvisí s nemístným míšením lidského a zvířecího, civilizovaného a chthonického. Erichthonios je tvorem liminálním, který právě díky tomu umožňuje překlenout nepřeklenutelné.[8]

Sféru přírody reprezentují v mýtu Kekropovy dcery. V řeckém pojetí spadaly dívky od první menstruace až do chvíle svatby do sféry Artemidy, bohyně divoké, „panenské“ přírody. Zosobňovaly nevinnost mládí a Zlatý věk a Řekové je s oblibou nechávali tančit sborové tance při různých svátcích.[9] Zároveň v sobě ale měly přírodní divokost a nezkrotnost (proto byly v některých attických kultech Artemidy asociovány s medvědicí).[10] V mýtech končí Artemidiny příznivkyně zpravidla špatně: chtějí si uchovat svou panenskost, ale nevyhnutelně se v samém květu svého mládí stávají terčem lidského či božského svůdce a za konfrontaci s mužskou sexualitou zaplatí smrtí. V praxi tento mytický motiv často souvisel s přechodem dívek do „kulturního“ stavu manželství, na jehož prahu musely nechat zemřít svou „přírodní“, panenskou identitu. Smrt krásné dívky ve věku na vdávání byla působivým obrazem, který mezi kulturou a přírodou vytyčoval jasnou hranici (podobně jako ji vytyčovaly všechny ostatní výše probírané mytické krize). V reálném životě dívky onu hranici pochopitelně s pomocí patřičných rituálů dokázaly překročit a smutnému údělu mytických panen se vyhnout, ale mýtus jim neustále připomínal, o jak zásadní přechod se jedná.[11]

V tomto smyslu můžeme i smrt Kekropových dcer chápat jako nutný konec přírodní, „panenské“ fáze v athénských dějinách. Arrhéforie tuto zlomovou událost napodobují, ale činí tak již z pozice kultury, a proto se původní selhání dívek snaží napravit. V mýtu jsou Kekropovy dcery v pubertálním věku, v němž by měly náležet Artemidě,[12] v rituálu jsou však ve věku 7–11 let, tj. v období, kdy ještě jejich sexualita není probuzena a jsou služebnicemi asexuální Athény. Tajuplné košíky, které dívky v noci nesou tam a zpátky, evokovaly oproti tomu již v antice sexuální představy[13] a není možná náhodou, že cíl jejich cesty je nedaleko od chrámu Afrodíty. „Dívky tak opakují dvojakost mýtu, podle nějž je původ Athéňanů sexuální i asexuální.“[14] Oproti svým mytickým předchůdkyním navíc dokáží překonat svou zvědavost, čímž naleznou kultivovanější a méně drastický způsob, jak ztvárnit vítězství kultury nad přírodou. „Jejich služba je obětí, neboť vyžaduje překonání nějakého přirozeného pudu – v tomto případě pudu zvědavosti, který v sexualitě dětí hraje tak velkou roli. Dívky si od Kekropových dcer vzaly patřičné ponaučení a v počátcích Athén se nehodlají příliš šťourat.“[15]

Arrhéforie nás díky tomu všemu upozorňují na další klíčovou dimenzi mýtu a rituálu. Mýtus vypovídá o počátcích a kořenech. Nikoli ve smyslu časovém, nýbrž metafyzickém. Mýtus vypráví o tom, co stojí za horizontem našeho světa, ale oč se náš svět vždy nutně opírá. Proč všechny kulturní světy potřebují mytické zakotvení? Protože každé socio-kulturní uspořádání je svévolným konstruktem, který je nepřirozený, ale přitom se bez vztahu k přírodě neobejde. Díky tomu stojí u kořenů každého socio-kulturního řádu paradox. Mýtus je jedním z mála médií, které paradox dokáží vstřebat a konstruktivně s ním pracovat. Athénský mýtus o autochthonii je toho jen jednou ukázkou a odráží obecnější fakt, že nejzazší kořeny sociálních a politických řádů jsou vždy tajuplné a monstrózní. Athéňané to přiznávají, k monstrózním kořenům své identity se hlásí, ale zároveň učiní klíčový rituální krok: rozhodnou se je zbytečně nezkoumat a nechat je za hranicemi. Dívky při Arrhéforiích nesou tajemný zdroj athénské moci v košíku, ale odolají pokušení a nepodívají se do něj. Tajemství prvotního času tak může zůstat tajemstvím a zachová si svou sílu. Tytéž dívky pak pomáhají s tkaním *peplu*, který je přímo esencí athénského socio-politického řádu. Dívky jsou tak rituálním pojítkem mezi tajemným počátečním chaosem, který je záměrně ponechán pod pokličkou, a velkolepou oslavou řádu, jak ji zosobňují Panathénaje a jejich *peplos*.

---

[7] Ne náhodou převládá i v naší současné civilizaci názor, že základní principy, o něž se opírá (např. rovnost všech lidí či existence lidských práv), jsou přirozené, a tedy platné i mimo rámec západního světa.

[8] Srov. John Peradotto, „Oedipus and Erichthonius: Some Observations on Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Order“, *Arethusa* 10 (1977): 85–101.

[9] Viz Redfield, *The Locrian Maidens*, s. 113–114.

[10] Viz J.-P. Vernant, „The Figure and Functions of Artemis in Myth and Cult“, in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. by F. I. Zeitlin, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1991, s. 195–206, zejm. s. 200.

[11] Viz Redfield, *The Locrian Maidens*, s. 111–118.

[12] Jejich adolescence je patrná nejen z četných vázových maleb, ale i z toho, že u Eurípida sborově tančí na Akropoli (*Ión* 495–502).

[13] Podle scholia k Lúkiánovi (276.13, ed. Rabe) byly obsahem košíků modely hadů a pohlavních údů vyrobené z těsta. Není jistě důvod tomuto údaji věřit (Pausaniás zdůrazňuje, že ani samy kněžky netušily, co dívky nesou), ale je dokladem sexuálních asociací, které nošení probouzelo.

[14] Redfield, *The Locrian Maidens*, s. 123.

[15] *Ibid.*, s. 126.