Apollo

Text je kapitolou z mé chystané knihy o řeckých bozích. Kapitola je dlouhá, pro potřebu zkoušky lze proto vynechat sekce „Patriarchy and its Limits“ (z té stačí si přečíst první odstavec o zabití Pýthóna) „Mediating Animals“ a „Apollo, kouroi and the shadow of Greekness“.

> I will remember and not forget far-shooting Apollo.
> Gods tremble as he approaches the home of Zeus:
> All rise from their seats as he draws near
> when he stretches his gleaming bow.
> Only Leto stays beside Zeus who delights in thunder.
> She unstrings Apollo's bow, closes his quiver,
> lifts the bow from his mighty shoulders,
> hangs it from a golden peg on a pillar near his father,
> leads him to his throne and bids him sit.
> His father hands him nectar in a golden cup,
> welcoming his dear son—then the other gods
> return to their seats. Queen Leto rejoices
> that she bore a strong son, an archer.

Thus begins the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (1–13), testifying to Apollo's importance and esteem. His epiphanies are so powerful that even the other Olympians stand back in awe. Apollo is the most important god of the younger Olympian generation, "one of the strongest gods of all" (*Il.* 19.413).

Apollo is more difficult to grasp than many other divinities. Like Athena, he does not have any domain that could at least superficially be seen as an epitome of his essence. He is active in many areas which are widely different and it is not easy to identify a consistent pattern behind them. His versatility is stressed by Callimachus (*Hymn to Apollo* 43–57):

> No one has as many skills as Apollo. That one has received the archer as his lot, and the singer (for to Apollo is entrusted the bow and song), and his are diviners and prophets. And from Phoebus doctors have learned the postponement of death. ... Effortlessly would the herd increase, and the nanny goats pastured with the sheep would not lack young, if Apollo cast his eyes upon them while they were grazing. ... Men lay out the foundations of cities following Phoebus. For Phoebus always takes pleasure in cities being built, and Phoebus himself weaves together foundations.

To this we may add that Apollo is also the protector of youths on the threshold of manhood, god of purification, and the leader of colonization. The connection between these functions is far from clear, and not even the Paris school has attempted to identify a single "mode of action" that would go across them all. If we want to see them as somehow interconnected, we will have to dig deeper for some more complex underlying structural patterns.

Most Greek of All the Gods

Though the internal coherence of Apollo in all his aspects is not easy to grasp, this does not mean that in modern times he would have been seen as incomprehensible. On the contrary, he is one of the popularly best known Greek gods and there is a long tradition of interpretations of the "Apollonian spirit" – the classic example being Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. For a long time, Apollo appeared to embody the lofty spirit of Hellenic culture. One of the first scholars to introduce this view was the 18th century German art historian Joachim Winckelmann, who regarded the statue of the "Apollo Belvedere" as the embodiment of Greek aesthetic perfection that transcended solid matter and drew the observer's attention into the realm of non-corporal ideas.[1] The conception of Apollo encapsulating the elevated excellence of Greek classicism became immensely influential, resonating with a number of artists and intellectuals, such as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.[2] It found its culmination in the impressive portrait of the god given by Walter Otto in 1929. Though selective and one-sided, Otto's interpretation has been influential even outside scholarly circles, and it will be useful to have a brief look at it. For Otto "Apollo is the most Greek of all the gods" (1954: 78–9):

> Although Dionysiac enthusiasm was once an important force there can nevertheless be no doubt that the Greek temper was inclined to subdue this and all other forms of intemperance, and that its great representatives unhesitatingly embraced the Apollonian spirit and nature. ... Apollo rejects whatever is too near – entanglement in things, the melting gaze. ... The sense of his manifestation is that it directs a man's attention not to the worth of his ego and the personal inwardness of his individual soul, but rather to what transcends the personal, to the unchangeable, to the eternal forms. ... In Apollo there greets us the spirit of clear-eyed cognition which confronts existence and the world with an unparalleled freedom – the truly Greek spirit which was destined to produce not only the arts but eventually even science. It was capable of looking upon the world and existence as form, with a glance free alike of greed and of yearning for redemption.

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1 North 2012: 99–110; Graf 2009: 172–6.

2 See Graf 2009:174.

How did Otto arrive at such a conception? For him, Apollo is characterized by "spiritual loftiness" which has a strong moral dimension. In the *Iliad* this is manifested in the "theomachy" scene, in which the gods protecting the Greeks stand face to face in combat with those helping the Trojans. Apollo is supposed to fight Poseidon, but he refuses to do so (*Il.* 21.462–7):

> Earthshaker, you'd hardly consider me sane if I
> Should do battle with you for the sake of ephemeral mortals,
> Poor wretches that flame with life for a little while
> Like flourishing leaves that draw their food from the earth,
> Then wither and die forever. Let us, then, cease
> This nonsense at once, and leave the fighting to men.

This shows Apollo as a champion of moderation, and at the same time a god of distance, transcending the transient world of mortal men. His moral stance is also manifested in his political involvement (Otto 1954: 71): he is "the founder of the ordinances which give human society its proper form. Upon his authority states establish their legal institutions. He shows colonists their way to the new homeland. He is the patron of young people entering into manhood." His art of prophecy shows his "knowledge of the true essence of things and their interrelationships" (*ibid.*: 72). He is a leader of the Muses, because – as Pindar knew already (*Pyth.* 1.1–12) – music effects moderation, introduces gentleness and restrains all that is wild. "That is why herds prosper when Apollo is their shepherd" (*ibid.*: 74). Yet, Apollo's music is not the intoxicating flute of Dionysos but the measured and precise rhythm of the lyre by which "the turbulent must be reduced to time and measure, opposites must be welded in harmony. This music is thus the great educator, the source and symbol of all order in the world and in the life of mankind. Apollo the musician is identical with the founder of ordinances, identical with him, who knows what is right, what is necessary, what is to be" (*ibid.*: 77).

Otto's picture of Apollo is not wrong as such. All the dimensions he stresses are certainly present in the symbolic complex of our god. Apollo did have a certain moral aspect, connected particularly with his Delphic oracle.[3] As the 6th century poet Alcaeus says (fr. 307c), it was "in order to speak to the Greeks as a prophet of justice (*dikē*) and due order (*themis*)" that Zeus sent Apollo to establish the Delphic shrine. According to Pindar (*Pyth.* 5.66–7), the god "puts into men's mind good governance (*eunomian*) free from strife", and *The Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (253, 293) describes Apollo's prophetic activity by the verb *themisteuein*, which means not only "to prophesy" but also "to lay down law and right", one of the functions of the Delphic oracle being to sanction laws and constitutions and provide them with sacred authority. Moreover, Apollo's 6th century Delphic temple is said to have been inscribed with various moral precepts associated with the tradition of the seven wise men, and though most of these were probably late literary fictions, at least the two best known ones – "Know Yourself" and "Nothing in Excess" – seem to be authentic. Their meaning amounted to much the same thing, the standard Greek interpretation of "Know Yourself" being "know that you are only a mortal, and recognize your limits". This is indeed a genuine Apollonian sentiment, going back to Homer's *Iliad* (5.440–2), where the god warns the raging Diomedes not to try "to equal the gods in spirit and valour, for the race of immortal gods is by no means the same as that of earth-treading men".

The Greek intellectual tradition made much of this side of the god. A good example are the ancient Platonists. Socrates in Plato's *Apology* (21a–23b) presented himself as a "servant" of the Delphic god who only interrogates the Athenians to understand what Apollo means by declaring him through the mouth of Pythia as the wisest of all men, though in fact Socrates did not regard himself as wise at all. It was only after interviewing a number of Athenians who at first sight seemed wiser but in the course of the interrogation turned out to know little that Socrates understood "that in fact the god is wise and that his oracular response meant that human wisdom is worth little or nothing. ... So even now I continue this investigation as the god bade me—and I go around seeking out anyone, citizen or stranger, whom I think wise. Then if I do not think he is, I come to the assistance of the god and show him that he is not wise" (23b). Socrates thus carries on the Delphic tradition which enjoins man to "know oneself" in the sense of realizing one's mortal limits.

In the *Phaedo* Plato develops this motif further, making Socrates claim that in actuality it is Apollo to whom he will go after his death, after having been purified of the body and attaining true knowledge (66d–67b; 85a–b). Plato himself was said to have been born on the same day as Apollo (7th Thargelion), and already on his funeral his nephew Speusippus made a speech in which he declared him to have been the god's son (Diogenes Laertius 3.2).[4] In the Platonic tradition the distant Apollo became a symbol of divine transcendence. The best testimony to this philosophical version of Apollonian spirituality is Plutarch, a Platonist who at the same time served as the god's priest in Delphi. In his dialogue on the mysterious

[3] See Guthrie 183–93, and much more critically Nilsson 1955: 647–52 and Davies 1997.

[4] For other Apollonian legends connected with Plato see Novotný 1977: 223–5. For a general ambitious attempt to trace the Apolline aspects of Plato's thought see Schefer 1996.

letter "E" inscribed on the wall of Apollo's Delphic temple Plutarch interprets the letter as the second person singular of the verb "to be". Apollo for him becomes the god of pure being and unity, whom man rightly greet with the words "you are", just as he greets each visitor to the temple the with the admonition "Know yourself": "for the former is pronounced in awe and reverence to the god as one who truly exists through all eternity, the latter is a reminder to mortal man of his nature and his weakness" (*Mor.* 394c).

All of this is a legitimate development of the symbolic complex we call Apollo – but it only works with one side of it. When looking carefully at ancient sources, it is easy to come up with a completely different picture of the god, one that shows Apollo as an arrogant fellow prone to violent outbursts of anger, a rebel who on several occasions had to be exiled, a precocious youth who at the same time is rather immature and mother-dependent, a dark god associated with death. It is only by taking these aspects into account as well that we may reach a balanced understanding of Apollo.

His Birth and First Deeds

Let us start with Apollo's birth. The mother of Apollo and Artemis was Leto (a daughter of the Titans Koios and Phoibe), whom Hesiod (*Th.* 918–20) counts as the sixth preliminary wife of Zeus, the last one before Hera – though most other sources with characteristic mythical synchrony take the two marriages as simultaneous. The birth was not easy: pregnant Leto travelled all over the Greek world but could not find a place to deliver, until she was received by the tiny islet of Delos. Most sources attribute these difficulties to the jealousy of Hera, who threatened all the lands that would dare to receive her husband's mistress. In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, however, the source of the fear is Apollo himself. When Leto tries to persuade Delos to accept her, the island does not feel worthy of accepting the mighty god (67–8): "for they say Apollo will be an extremely arrogant fellow, who will lord it mightily over gods and men". Apparently, it is for this reason that all the other lands "greatly trembled and feared" to receive the god (46–7).[5]

To designate Apollo, the arch-enemy of human hubris, as "an extremely arrogant fellow" might seem shocking, and some modern interpreters have made ingenious attempts at explaining the passage away.[6] Yet, it is in full accord with the god's mighty entrée at the beginning of the hymn that has been quoted above. It shows him as an extremely powerful being who is himself elevated above the rules he so strictly guards among humans. Moreover, there seem to be interesting theogonic implications involved. As Clay (1994) argues, Delos' words betray the fear that Apollo would become another rival to Zeus' rule. After all, he is the only divine son of Zeus forceful enough to assume the place of a new ruler. The god himself dispels this threat immediately on his birth, when in his first spoken sentence he promises to "proclaim to humans the unerring will of Zeus" (132). In many ways, though, the fear of Delos was justified. Apollo did become an arrogant fellow, as we can see for instance in the tragedies, where "he is an awful, horrible god who lacks all the measure generally attributed to his Delphic aspect".[7] However, he subsumed his arrogance under the will of Zeus, using it in support of his order.

An important element emphasized in all accounts of Apollo's birth is the original marginality and insignificance of the island that received him. An illuminating detail is found in the late version of Hyginus (*Fabulae* 140), who has Hera decree that Leto should not give birth in any place that was lit by the light of the sun. The problem was solved by Poseidon, who took Leto to Delos – called Ortygia at that time – and covered it with waves to hide it from the rays of the sun. In similar vein, Callimachus (*Hymn to Delos* 36–54) relates that originally the island was called Asteria and was not an island at all but Leto's sister, who changed into a rock when fleeing the amorous pursuit of Zeus, whereupon she fell into the sea and was floating around the Aegean; it was only when she received Apollo that she "planted the roots of her feet" and changed her name to Conspicuous (Dēlos), for she was no longer sailing about "inconspicuous" (*adēlos*). This agrees with the version of Pindar (fr. 33d), who specifies that on Leto's arrival "four upright columns with bases of adamant rose from their foundations in the earth and on their capitals held up the rock".

What emerges out of these stories is first of all a strong contrast of *darkness and light*. Apollo is born in a place hidden from the light of the sun, but immediately this spot becomes the brightest of all – "the far-shining star of the dark-blue earth", as the gods from their heavenly perspective call it according to Pindar (fr. 33c). There are other dark aspects to the god's birth, such as the fact that in order to escape Hera pregnant Leto changed into a she-wolf for the twelve days in which she travelled from the Hyperboreans to Delos.[8] This agrees with a number

[5] Cf. Miller 1986: 37.

[6] A good example is Miller 1986: 38–42, who argues at length that Apollo's hubristic arrogance is "no more than a theoretical possibility debarred from realization by the course of events".

[7] Bierl 1994: 81. See more on this below, p. ???.

[8] Aristotle, *Hist. Anim.* 580a17–9; Aelian, *De nat. an.* 10.26; 4.4.

of other connections of Apollo with wolves, such as his frequent epithet Lykeios, "Wolfish". That the bright god Apollo should be a Wolf-god seems surprising and we will say more on this below (p. ???). For now we may just note that the contrast is typical of Apollo, whose alternative name Phoibos has since antiquity been frequently interpreted as Bright one, and who from 5th century on was sometimes identified with Helios, but who in the *Iliad* (1.47) appears as a dark, vengeful god, arriving "like the night" to spread havoc among the Greeks. Apollo is a god of shining light indeed, but it is the contrast with darkness that makes this light so bright and makes the Apollonian wold so clearly formed. Phoibos has this darkness inside himself as well. He is able to pass between the dark and the bright and to make manifest what has previously been hidden in obscurity.

Another important theme that stands out in the stories is that of *laying foundations*. Again, this is presented in sharp contrast: originally Delos is as rootless as can be, floating around aimlessly, but in the end it is founded in the firmest way possible, on pillars with bases of adamant, the hardest mythical material there is. In this way Apollo appears as a deity who can provide firm foundations even in situations that seem extremely fragile. This is the subject of the second part of the *Homeric Hymn*, which tells of Apollo's journey in quest of a place where he might find his oracular sanctuary. We see the god wandering around the Greek world in its still wild and uninhabited form. Apollo seems to be rambling, but it is clear he is doing this as a kind of cosmogonic act: building his own roads, laying out sites, carving out territories – in a word, organizing and orienting the space by naming the sites to be inhabited and defining the paths that would connect them.[9] That this activity is essentially Apollonian can be seen from the fact that it repeats an analogous journey traversed by his pregnant mother, to whose description Callimachus in the *Hymn to Delos* devotes more than a hundred verses. All this is in harmony with a number of Apollo's political functions that will be discussed below, most notably his leading role in Greek colonization, which must have been experienced precisely as a pioneering journey through wilderness, the newly established colonies resembling fragile islands of civilization amidst dark and hostile surroundings.

Patriarchy and its Limits

After his exploratory journey through primitive wilderness, Apollo finally arrived at Delphi, where he decided to set up the most important oracle in the ancient Greek world. Concerning its establishment there were several ancient accounts, most of which insisted that Apollo took the oracle over from its previous owners. The details vary from source to source, but all versions include Gaia or Themis, or both (some include Leto's mother Phoibe, Poseidon, Dionysos, Night, or Python).[10] In contrast to this, the *Homeric Hymn* presents Apollo as establishing the shrine all by himself from scratch. The only power he encountered at Delphi was an evil dragon guarding the place whom he had to kill. It was after the dragon's body, which dark Earth and Helios made rot away, that the god gave to Delphi its poetic name Pytho, "Rottington" (*Hom. Hymn Ap.* 363–72).

Incompatible as the *Homeric Hymn* may seem with the more usual stories of taking the oracle over from previous owners, on closer look structural similarities start to emerge. Particularly important is the fact that whereas from the 4th century on the Delphic dragon is usually male and named Python, in the *Hymn* it is female, called Delphyne by Hellenistic authors. Moreover, the *Hymn* devotes full fifty verses (305–55) to explaining that the dragon nursed Typhon after Hera had given birth to him when she was angry at Zeus for his begetting Athena all by himself. We have seen (p. ???) that in giving birth to Typhon Hera followed the disruptive female tradition of Gaia. By placing the dragoness in the same tradition, the *Hymn* presents Apollo as a defender of the order of Zeus and an enemy of those primordial female powers that threaten dissolve it. All versions of the takeover of Delphi thus see the oracle as originally connected with ancient female powers, but while most sources picture these powers as neutral or even beneficent, the *Hymn* stresses their negative aspect and lets Apollo stand out as a patriarchal hero. Apollo's relation to ancient powerful females is clearly a complicated one, and it will be useful to have a closer look at it.

Similar variations of the basic pattern emerge if we examine more closely some of the myths that speak of the oracle's previous owners. The earliest preserved account comes from the *Eumenides* (1–8), where Aeschylus presents the line of ownership Gaia – Themis – Phoibe – Apollo, stressing that the goddesses gave the oracle "willingly". In saying this, however, he is already alluding to an alternative account, in which the god got hold of the oracle "by force" (*Eum.* 5). As the scholium on the passage explains, this was the version of Pindar, according to whom "Apollo seized Pytho by force, hence Gaia wanted him cast into Tartaros". This is further elaborated by Euripides (*Iph. Taur.* 1259–80), who narrates that when Apollo took the oracle from Themis, her mother Gaia begot dreams which were revealing future to mankind, in this way depriving Delphi of their clients. Alarmed Apollo hurried to Olympus, "coiled his boyish arm around Zeus'

[9] Cf. in detail Detienne (1998), ch. 1, summarized in Detienne (1999): 142–5.

[10] For details see Sourvinou-Inwood (1990).

throne" and begged for help. Zeus complied, with one shake of his locks depriving dreams of their truthfulness. The original female owners are thus no less hostile here than in the *Homeric Hymn*. The main difference lies in Apollo' reaction: whereas the *Hymn* depicts him as a valiant defender of patriarchy, in Euripides Apollo represents a much more onesided version of the Olympian patriarchal order that risks being rather fragile – though of course this risk is always overcome in the end thanks to Zeus, who is firmly in control even vis-à-vis the ancient feminine powers.

The precarious side of Apollo's patriarchal stance comes out particularly in tragedies – most famously in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*. When Orestes kills his mother Klytaimestra in revenge for her murder of his father Agamemnon, Apollo stands firmly on his side against the Erinyes, who defend the right of the mother. The Erinyes embody the "ancient laws" (*Eum.* 778) of blind retaliation, which in the play are associated with the dark, the chthonic and the feminine. Apollo represents the "younger gods" (*Eum.* 162, 778), who are distinctly patriarchal and who help to institute more subtle judicial procedures. In this regard, Apollo has frequently been seen as a champion of the new moral order who "ventures not merely to purify the matricide but, in the name of a higher justice, to defend the deed, which he himself enjoins, against the frightful cry of vengeance" (Otto 1954: 70). This is in full harmony with the way Apollo is presented in the *Homeric Hymn* – but it is just one side of the picture. A closer look at the *Oresteia* shows that the part played by Apollo is rather controversial. First of all, the god appears to be no less vindictive than the Erinyes: when he orders Orestes to murder his mother, he does so in a manner which has little resemblance to "higher justice", threatening the youth with an impressive list of horrors that wait for him if Agamemnon remains unrevenged (*Cho.* 269–96). As Bierl comments (1994: 91), "the passage shows that Apollo cannot deny his 'female side' and that the horrible and the uncivilized belong to him as an integral part of his ambivalence".

Apollo's behaviour is no less ambivalent in the *Eumenides*. The purification he gives to Orestes at the Delphic shrine turns out to be insufficient to rid him of the Erinyes. At the court he does present himself as a defender of a higher moral order standing in opposition to the blind vengeance of the Erinyes, but this position only strengthens the fruitless antagonism between the two sides of dispute, and leads nowhere. His famous arrogant speech that minimizes the role of woman in procreation (*Eum.* 657–66) is no less one-sided than the desperate defence of Klytaimestra by the Erinyes. "Apollo is seen as the pettifogging lawyer who represents only one party" (Bierl 1994: 87). It is only the intervention of Athena that saves the situation by finding a compromise by which the position of Apollo is "superseded but not fully denied" (Zeitlin 1978: 167). Athena manages to do so because in her androgyny she can represent patriarchy while herself displaying motherly features. "Mother is denied but not denied" (*ibid.*: 172), the old gods are integrated in the new order. Apollo does represent this new order in pure form, but he stands for its confrontational and presumptuous side. It is no wonder that the *Homeric Hymn* described him as "an extremely arrogant fellow" (67).

Apollo's ambivalent position may perhaps become a bit clearer if we look at it from the theogonic perspective. As we have seen several times already, in Hesiod's *Theogony* the most difficult task for Zeus was to stabilize his rule without being betrayed by the feminine deities and overthrown by his son. To ensure this he takes care to beget his offspring in various ways that prevent this. In particular, he refrains from having proper children with Hera, choosing various less dangerous partners instead. This solution only works partially: it is never entirely possible for Zeus' children to dissociate themselves from Hera, and in most myths she acts as their evil stepmother. This is just what we see in the myth of Apollo's birth, which, as Froma Zeitlin notes (2002: 202), follows "a typical pattern of Greek myth that insists on creating a tension between two opposing maternal figures, one positive and one negative". Leto, despite her Titanic origins is the most positive maternal figure imaginable, "the kindliest one in all Olympus", as Hesiod calls her (*Th.* 408). She is thus clearly dissociated from the ambivalent figures of Gaia and Hera, guaranteeing that her son "will prove no threat to his father's hegemony" and will "support the subordination of female to male" (Zeitlin 2002: 206). The negative mother, on the other hand, is represented by several figures: by Hera and her hatred of Leto, by the Delphic dragoness (who in turn is associated with Hera through her nursing of Typhon), by Themis and Gaia (who begot Typhon in Hesiod's version – *Th.* 821), as well as by the Erinyes (repeatedly described in the *Eumenides* as children of the Night, who also sometimes featured among the previous owners of Delphi). In myths Apollo is confronted with these motherly figures in different ways that map his ambivalent position towards them. That the good and the bad mothers should be seen as complementary is clear from the figure of Themis, who in the *Homeric Hymn* (124) acts as Apollo's loving nurse but who in Euripides (*Iph. Taur.* 1259–80) belongs among his opponents.

Fascinating in this regard is Apollo's relation to his mother Leto. He is deeply devoted to her and passionately defends her honour, punishing all those who insult her, such as the giant Tityos, who attempted to rape her, or the bragging Niobe, who boasted to have fourteen children whereas Leto only had two. While stories of this kind appear innocent, in other cases the devotion starts to resemble dependence, and the god behaves as a true mummy's boy. We have seen this in

the striking opening scene of the *Homeric Hymn*, in which Apollo frightens all the gods until his mother "unstrings his bow", "leads him to his throne and bids him sit" – surely a remarkable behaviour for a god who in the *Eumenides* insists that "the so-called 'mother' is not the parent of the child" (658). In the same vein Apollonius of Rhodes stresses that it is only his mother who may strike his youthful locks which are never to be cut (*Arg.* 2.708–10). And while in the *Homeric Hymn* he is presented as highly precocious, shaking off his swaddling clothes immediately on being fed, and setting out to kill the Delphic dragon straightaway, Euripides provides a more disturbing version of the same event, claiming that the new-born Apollo was carried to Delphi by his mother and shot the dragon from her arms (*Iph. Taur.* 1250–2). In light of this, Apollo's reluctance to leave the dark womb of Leto, who "for nine days and nine nights was pierced by unexpected labour pains" (*Hom. Hymn Ap.* 91–2), should perhaps not just be attributed to external circumstances but be understood as a powerful image of the god's attachment to his mother.[11] Unsettling as these images are, they are complementary to Apollo's relation to the dark maternal figures, which oscillates between arrogant enmity and childish weakness, but which in the end manages to achieve a relatively stable equilibrium.

What are we to make of this paradoxical picture of the god?[12] In his fascinating but controversial attempt to adapt psychoanalysis to the socio-political world of Classical Greece Philip Slater (1968: 137–60) attempted to read it as a symbolic expression of psychological tensions produced by the Greek family. A Greek wife was cut off from the ties with her mother and siblings, who were her real family, and lived among strangers with a husband whom in most cases she did not love and to whom she was rather in the position of a younger sister entrusted in his care against his will. According to Slater, she must have felt resentment against the male world, but as she could not rebel against her husband directly, it was her son towards whom her destructive unconscious impulses were redirected. At the same time, she saw him as "an idealized replacement of her husband, fantasying that 'her little man' would grow up to be the perfect hero and take care of his mother all of her days" (Slater 1974: 23). As a result, the son – who spent most of his childhood in the company of his mother (the father being typically out of the house) – grew narcissistic, having little self-confidence and being extremely concerned about how others view him. "He will feel that if he is not a great hero he is nothing, and pride and prestige become more important than love" (*ibid.*: 24). It is no wonder, then, that the Greek males were so competitive, so much concerned with the physical beauty of the male body, and so much focused on honour, which – as Aristotle put it (*Eth. Nic.* 1096b27) – they pursued "in order to assure themselves of their worth".

Slater's account is methodologically debatable, depending on anachronistic evidence from modern families,[13] but it seems apposite in some regards. It is true that the Greeks were not just a culture of males, but more specifically of young males dreading old age, and that the competitiveness and love of honour that Greek culture and society was built upon must have created a number of unconscious tensions. To read Apollo as a symbolic image capturing these tensions is an attractive possibility which makes it less surprising to see the god as both heroic and mother-dependent, both arrogant and vulnerable, both precocious and immature.[14] Yet, while a number of real Greek men may have actually had the kind of mother complex Slater describes, and while the mythical portraits of Apollo may reflect some of this, we certainly cannot see the god as a mirror image of Greek males and their psychological problems. As we have seen in the "Introduction" (p. ???), Greek gods are not persons whose behaviour should be read in terms of human psychology, and though they do reflect various psychological states of the Greeks, they cannot be understood as mirror images of psychological processes but rather as a sophisticated cultural reaction to them. In this regard, Apollo may be seen as a symbolic complex the Greek culture produced to counterbalance its internal tensions. His ambivalent behaviour towards maternal figures should first and foremost be understood as a reaction to tensions in the Greek patriarchal system of classification, which insisted on the subordinate position of the female, but which in effect had to face a number of situations in which this one-sided image was difficult to maintain. Apollo expresses these difficulties, but he also manages to overcome them by uniting all the contraries in his divine personality. In this way he allowed the Greeks to entrust their unconscious tensions to him, so to speak, guaranteeing that he would bear their weight in a glorious manner.

One might object that some of the above-presented images are far too contrary to be seen as idyllically united in Apollo's mythic personality. To this we may reply that it is vital to distinguish between the mythological image of a god

[11] At the same time, however, we learn from the scholium to Callimachus' *Hymn to Delos* 251 that "Apollo was born in the seventh month", i.e. his birth was both delayed and premature.

[12] Tento a půlka dalšího odstavce bude ve skutečnosti posléze v Introduction.

[13] For detailed but constructive critique see Foley (1975).

[14] These paradoxes were aptly expressed in a Czech production of the *Oresteia* in 2007, in which Apollo appeared as a golden-haired Elvis Presley character in a glittering cat-suit. See http://depresivnideti.eu/minulost/noci-na-nadrazi/orestea/ [visited 17 August 2017].

and his cultic worship. As we have seen many times already, myths frequently depict extremes, and in this regard are remarkably prone to psychoanalytical readings which see them as symbolic expressions of the repressed. A completely different picture is to be found in cults, however, which are much more positive, presenting all the transgressive features of the divinity as being closely, though somewhat mysteriously allied with its normative aspects, supporting them and endowing them with power. This is just what we see in case of Apollo. Whereas myths sometimes present him as switching between extremes, in cult these are shown as integrated. It is significant that in the *Eumenides* the idyllic account of Apollo's peaceful takeover of the Delphic shrine, which so much contrasts with his behaviour in the rest of the play, is put in the mouth of his priestess Pythia, who in the prologue represents his cultic aspect. In the Delphic cult Apollo worked in intimate cooperation with the same female chthonic powers he so passionately fought in myths. Gaia had a shrine south of his temple since the 5th century. Pythia herself was on a famous red-figure cup from the second half of the 5th century by the Codrus Painter identified with Themis, another of the previous owners.[15] And last but not least, the evil Python had his grave in Apollo's temple, in some accounts right under the prophetic tripod.[16] In this way Apollo was able both to express the tensions inherent in the Greek classification system and to integrate them in a multifaceted cultic symbolic complex in which contradictory powers worked together in harmony.

The Bow and the Lyre

"The lyre and the curved bow shall ever be dear to me, and I will proclaim to humans the unerring will of Zeus." These are the first words that the god utters after his birth in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (131–2). The lyre and the bow were the most typical attributes of Apollo, articulating a tension within his divine personality. This can clearly be seen from the god's two contrasting epiphanies on the Olympus. We have already quoted the first one from the very beginning of the *Hymn*, in which Apollo appears with his bow as a forceful divinity that frightens even the Olympians. The second one in verses 182–206 presents him as arriving at the house of the gods in fragrant clothes as a musician. "At once the gods heed the lyre and song, the Muses respond as one", and all the younger divinities start to dance, the elders watching and rejoicing in their hearts. The contrast could not be bigger. Yet there is a streak of darkness even in this passage, for the content of the song turns out to be "the gods' undying gifts and the sufferings that the deathless gods inflict on human folk, who live witless and helpless, unable to find a cure for death or defense against old age" (190–3). Music may create harmony and unity, but it also reminds us of the huge distance between gods and men, in this way referring to the bow.

The bow is an attribute that Apollo shares with his sister Artemis. In both cases, it is a powerful symbol of distance. A common epithet of Apollo in Homer is *hekatēbolos*, "striking from afar". Whereas Artemis embodies the distance between nature and culture, Apollo's distance is rather that between the gods and men, and he is quick to punish any instances of hubris, such as that of boastful Niobe. In this case, as in many others, the divine twins were shooting together, but in a gendered way, Artemis killing females, Apollo males. While the bow of Artemis is that of a hunter, the bow of Apollo is rather that of the warrior: in the *Iliad* he supervises the archery of several Trojan heroes and it will be him who will guide the hand of Paris when he kills Achilles (*Il.* 22.359–60). In Greek fighting, though, the bow was looked upon with suspicion, its stealthiness seemed unworthy of a true warrior, who proudly faces his opponent face to face. It is precisely this stealthiness that characterizes Apollo: his arrows appear unexpectedly from a far-away unseen source, and in *Il.* 1.43–53 they are an apt image for an epidemic of plague that strikes the Greek army suddenly and terribly. Yet, Apollonian death has its gentle and welcome aspect as well, for the god's arrows may come quickly and painlessly. Thus for Homer (*Od.* 15.408–11), the ideal death is that which comes from no disease, but "when folks grow old, Apollo and Artemis come to town with their silver bows and shoot them dead with their gentle arrows".

The lyre expresses the mellow side of Apollo and shows him as the founder of culture. For archaic Greeks music was not just entertainment. It was the mark of civilization, a cultural activity par excellence. When Homer wants to contrast a happy and an unhappy city, he depicts the latter in the middle of war, while the former as filled with music, dance and festivities (*Il.* 18.490–7). Songs and dances turn the citizens into a coordinated harmonious body sharing the same rhythm. Choral dancing was mainly a prerogative of young men and girls, for whom it was an important step on their way to maturity, teaching them to collaborate and display their readiness for marriage. It is not surprising, therefore, that it is the eternal youth Apollo who – together with Artemis – presides over these choral dances. At the same time, dancing was a symbol of divine bliss. When Pindar describes the blessedness of the holy race of the Hyperboreans, who live without sickness, toil, and battle, and in whose land Apollo spends every winter, he

[15] Antikensammlung Berlin, F2538; Beazley Archive No. 217214.

[16] For references see Parke – Wormell (1954: 14, note 17).

stresses that everywhere among them "choruses of maidens, sounds of lyres, and pipes' shrill notes are stirring" (*Pyth.* 10.38–9). By making music and dancing, therefore, humans are for a moment able to experience something of divine blessedness. As Plato says (*Laws* 653d), it was as a compensation for human suffering that the gods "gave us the Muses, with Apollo their leader, and Dionysus; by having these gods to share their holidays, men were to be made whole again, and thanks to them, we find refreshment in the celebration of these festivals". It is important in this connection that festivals were also short periods of peace that temporarily halted the almost permanent wars between Greek cities in the archaic and classical period. As Pindar puts it (*Pyth.* 1.1–12), Apollo's lyre quenches "even the warring thunderbolt of ever flowing fire; and the eagle sleeps on the scepter of Zeus, ... even powerful Ares puts aside his sharp-pointed spears and delights his heart in sleep".

At first sight, the lyre may seem to be the direct opposite of the bow, but the Greeks themselves already saw them as interconnected. When Odysseus first holds his old bow in his hand after so many years, Homer uses a musical image (*Od.* 21.404–11):

> Like a musician stretching a string
> Over a new peg on his lyre, and making
> The twisted sheep-gut fast at either end,
> Odysseus strung the great bow. Lifting it up,
> He plucked the string, and it sang beautifully.

Just as the bow can sing, the lyre may resemble a bow that sends the song from afar towards its target. Pindar speaks of the "arrows" of Apollo's lyre that lull all the deities to sleep (*Pyth.* 1.11), and he exhorts himself at the beginning of the 9th *Olympian ode* (9.5–12): "but now, from the far-shooting bows of the Muses shoot a volley of arrows such as these ... at the sacred hilltop of Elis, ... and cast a sweet winged arrow at Pytho. You will surely take up no words that fall to the ground." We are reminded here that Apollonian music is not just a matter of harmony but also of poetic inspiration, for the lyre playing was accompanied by the poet's song, which was also coming from afar, bringing messages from the Muses and their leader Apollo, aiming them at the listeners and attempting to strike the right cord that would resonate among them. In this regard, music is closely allied with the third area that Apollo in the *Homeric Hymn* proclaims to be his own, that of prophecy.

However, Apollonian music can also have its deadly aspects. After the above-quoted praise of the pacifying qualities of Apollo's lyre Pindar hastens to add that "those creatures for whom Zeus has no love are terrified when they hear the song of the Muses" (*Pyth.* 1.13–4), giving Typhon as an example. In addition, there was an interesting tradition about the origin of the paian, a specific Apollonian song characterized by its refrain *iē paiān*. According to Callimachus (*Hymn to Apollo* 97–104), it originated when the god was about to shoot Python and the locals encouraged him by shouting "shoot, Paian" (*hīe Paiēon*), using Apollo's epithet that stresses mainly his healing aspect. In this way the paian gets a cosmic dimension, recalling the god's primordial battle and evoking his terrifying power. Paians were frequently sung in before various risky undertakings, such as setting sail or starting battle, when they evoked Apollo as the Averter of Evil and asked him for salvation. Alternatively, they could be sung on festive occasions and thank the god for salvation already provided.[17] In paians, Apollo's frightening and idyllic aspects were united.

The terrifying side of Apollonian music comes out strikingly in the myth of Marsyas, a Phyrygian Satyr who learned to play the flute so well that he challenged Apollo to a musical competition. The god won, and to punish Marsyas for his arrogance he flayed him alive. The contest rests on an opposition between nature and culture. Not only is Marsyas a Satyr, who mixes human and animal features, but the flute was an ecstatic, Dionysian instrument that was frequently seen as opposed to the quiet harmony of the lyre (though more so from the 5th century on). Through Apollo the culture is victorious – but this victory is at the same time depicted as something inherently violent, and even brutal. It seems thus that the harmony Apollo institutes of necessity casts a shadow, that there is something deadly in it as well – a motif that we will meet again when we have a look at the god's love affairs. It is this that seems to be the ultimate ground of what Heraclitus (fr. 51) called the "harmony of opposite tensions" of the bow and the lyre.

The bow, the lyre and prophecy share the common theme of distance and various ways of mediating it. The bow emphasizes the distance between gods and men, and mediates it by death – which is frightening but may also be quick, gentle, and liberating. The poet's song attempts to bridge this distance by offering insight into the divine world and at the same time transporting the audience towards it. Yet, the content of the songs reminds us that this unity can only be temporary, and even the inspired insight is far from certain, for as we learn from Hesiod (*Th.* 27–8), while the Muses do reveal divine truth, sometimes they also tell lies, in this way again combining proximity with a distancing element. Prophecy

[17] Cf. in detail Rutherford 2001; Graf 2009: 41–5.

resembles music in that it joins the two realms of reality by making divine will manifest in the human world, thus allowing to place human decisions on firmer foundations. Yet even here the opposite distancing movement is present as well, for the prophetic utterances tend to be oblique and ambiguous, combining certainty with unpredictability.

Hapless Lover

The same combination of proximity and distance, of romantic beauty and death, comes out in Apollo's love affairs, which are remarkably tragic.[18] In some cases Apollo falls in love with a mortal boy, who shares the affection but meets tragic end. The best known example is Hyakinthos (son of the Spartan king Amyklas), whom the god killed by mistake when throwing the discus – in some accounts this happened due to the blowing of Zephyros, the West Wind, who also fell in love with the boy and was jealous of Apollo. From the blood of the youth the god made the hyacinth – a flower blooming shortly in early spring, around the time the west wind starts to blow and Apollo returns from his winter retreat among the Hyperboreans. Equally sad was the end of Kyparissos, to whom Apollo gave a tame stag, but the boy accidentally killed it with his hunting spear, and was so engulfed by the subsequent grief that he prayed to the gods to enable him to mourn forever – which they granted him by transforming him into a cypress, a tree associated with graveyards. In both cases, the mortal youth perishes by getting too close to the god, but is compensated by reaching a new state of being in which mortality and immortality are combined: the irreversible linear death of humans is exchanged for the cyclic death and rebirth of plants. In case of Hyakinthos this goes hand in hand with his heroic cult at Sparta, where he is worshipped together with Apollo as his dark double during the Hyakinthia festival, which was gloomy and mournful in its first part devoted to the hero but cheerful and celebratory in the second part dedicated to the god.[19]

At other times Apollo tries his luck with females but is unsuccessful. The nymph Daphne, daughter of the Thessalian river Peneios (or in one version also of Amyklas, and thus a sister of Hyakinthos), refused his wooing straightaway and desperately tried to run from him; as it was becoming obvious that he would catch and rape her, she prayed to her father, who transformed her into a laurel tree, which subsequently became sacred to Apollo. The story repeats the fate of Leto's sister Asteria, who in her desperate attempt to flee Zeus changed into a rock and eventually became Delos, Apollo's birthplace. Clearly, the god has this kind of erotic failure encoded already in his birth. The result is a similar combination of immortality and death as in the cases of Hyakinthos and Kyparissos. Kassandra, the daughter of Priam, the king of Troy, at first appeared willing to accept the god as a lover, but after she had received the gift of prophecy from him, she refused to yield, and was punished by the fact that no one believed her true predictions. In this way Kassandra could herself experience the Apolline mixture of proximity and distance: her prophecies were constant desperate attempts at overcoming the distance between gods and men, but the disbelief was permanently frustrating the effort and recreating the distance.

Apollo was seemingly more successful with Koronis, who became his mistress and conceived a son to him, the god of healing Asklepios; but while still pregnant, she deceived the god with a mortal, in some accounts even marrying him. The enraged god sent Artemis to kill Koronis, or shot her himself, but as he saw her body on the funeral pyre, he took pity for the unborn child, took it out of the womb and gave it to the centaur Cheiron to rear. The motif of deception with a mortal reappears in the story of the Aitolian princess Marpessa: her mortal lover Idas even challenged the god with a bow, but Zeus intervened and let the girl make her own choice; she chose Idas, fearing that Apollo would abandon her when she grew old. Apolline perfection was too much to bear for mortals, and when they could they chose to avoid it.

The few cases in which Apollo succeeded as a lover were of a clearly genealogical character, and even here the god retained his distance, though this time by his own choice. The most elaborate example is that of Kyrene, an Artemis-like nymph from Thessaly, whom the god abducted to Libya and made her the first queen of the town that was named after her. Pindar, who tells the story in detail (*Pyth.* 9.4–70) even speaks of their marriage, but apparently it was a one-sided one: Apollo did not settle with Kyrene, and left her to rule the city by herself, taking their a son, the rustic god Aristaios, from her and entrusting him to Earth or to Cheiron to rear him.

We may note that the stories bear some similarity to the myths of the unfortunate followers of Artemis (see above, p. ???), which suggests initiations as one of their possible levels of meaning, to which we shall return below. They invert the basic pattern, though. In case of Artemis it is humans who long for the goddess; with Apollo it is the god who longs for the mortals. When the companions of Artemis fail to retain their purity, the goddess is either angry or indifferent (as with Hippolytus, for whom in the version of Euripides she claims not to be allowed to shed any tears – *Hipp.* 1396). When Apollo fails to fulfil his

[18] Cf. in detail Hard 2004: 149–50, 152–6, 571.

[19] See in detail Pettersson 1992: 9–41. Cf. below, p. ???.

desire, he may also be angry, but his basic passion is desperation and the feeling tragic loss. The Artemis stories testify to the goddess' detachment: mortals attempt to be like her, but fail. The Apollo stories show a mixture of distance and closeness: the god does try to get near mortals, but the nearness turns out unbearable for them, leaving Apollo lonely and distant, and showing the Apollonian ideal as essentially unattainable.

Pure God Exiled From Heaven

The killing of Kyrene brings us to another theme that is recurrent in myths of Apollo. While at first sight the god seems tranquil and detached, a surprising number of myths show him as suddenly succumbing to outbursts of anger resulting in murder, usually in consequence of his wounded pride. Sometimes, as in the case of Marsyas, these are even followed by acts of savagery. There is something dark and aggressive behind Apollo's calm face. In a way this is true of most gods, as we have seen, killing being a symbolic expression of their transgressivity. Apollo, however, is special even among the gods: he is the only one of them whose transgressions are repeatedly recognized as such and punished by Zeus. His typical punishment is exile, which is so much tied with him that Aeschylus (*Suppl.* 214) without any word of explanation may evoke him with striking ambivalence as "pure (*hagnos*) Apollo, god exiled from heaven".

The best known of Apollo's exiles is connected with his son Asklepios, the healing god, who became so skilful in his medical art that he started to revive the dead, whereupon Zeus killed him with his thunderbolt. This made Apollo so angry that he slew the Kyklopes who had fashioned the thunderbolt for Zeus, i.e. he directed his rebellion "against Zeus's primary weapons, the undisputed source of his authority" (Zeitlin 2002: 212). "Zeus wanted to throw him to Tartarus, but at the intervention of Leto he ordered him to serve as a serf to a man for a year" (Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 3.10.4). Accordingly, Apollo spent a year herding cattle for king Admetos in Thessaly.[20] A more shocking humiliation is hard to imagine: the god who reminds mortals of the huge distance between them and the gods becomes himself the servant of a mortal, as if in a curious suspension of immortality. It is not by chance that Apollo's exile is located in Thessaly, which was seen by the central Greeks "as a world in flux, one not yet put in order and, thus, a meaningless fairyland. ... In this land everything shifts, nothing is exactly as we expect it, and the border between men and gods is at times still permeable. Gods are not always godlike and men are given the chance to avoid death" (Mili 2015: 295).

Another exile of Apollo is mentioned in the *Iliad* 21.441–57, where Poseidon recalls how together with Apollo he served Laomedon for a year, himself building the walls of Troy, Apollo tending cattle. It is not clear what offence the two gods had committed, but many scholars[21] relate this to the striking passage in *Il.* 1.396–406, where Achilles remembers how Poseidon with the help of Hera and a third deity attempted to bind Zeus, and were it not for the help of Thetis, he would have been defeated. The third deity is named "Pallas Athena" in most manuscripts, but as we learn from a scholium on the passage, already the Hellenistic scholar Zenodotus defended the reading "Phoibos Apollo" instead – which makes sense in relation both to the god's Trojan exile and to his structurally similar attack on the sovereignty of Zeus in case of the Kyklopes.

The god's most interesting exile, however, is connected with the killing of the Delphic dragon. While the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* presents it as altogether beneficial, a number of later sources tell us that Zeus considered the killing a murder and sent Apollo to exile to the Thessalian valley of Tempe. Plutarch (*Mor.* 293c) even says that the god "fled" to Tempe "in need of purification, though others say that he pursued the wounded Python, who was flying along the way which they now call Sacred; Apollo followed him and just missed his death: he found him just dead of his wound and buried by his son, whose name was Aix (Goat)." The sacred road to Tempe is thus a polluted road marked with the dragon's blood. After receiving his purification Apollo "made himself a wreath from the laurel of Tempe and taking a branch of this same laurel with his right hand he returned to Delphi and took over the oracle" (Aelian, *Var. Hist.* 3.1). This mythical event was repeated in Delphi every eight years at the Septerion festival, performed shortly before the Pythian games. Its details are described by Plutarch (*Mor.* 293c, 418a–b). It started by the construction of a wooden hut in the Delphic sanctuary, representing Python's palace. A band of youths of noble birth with lighted torches then led a young boy with both parents living to the hut in silence, they set fire to it, overturned a table within it, and flied without looking back. Then they went to Tempe, where the boy imitated Apollo's servitude, underwent a purification rite, offered a lavish sacrifice and was crowned "with wreaths woven from the same laurel from which the god originally wove his own wreath" (Aelian, *Var. Hist.* 3.1). Afterwards they returned gloriously to Delphi by a different route, receiving honour along the way "equal to that accorded to the delegation bringing the sacred offerings from the Hyperboreans to the same god" on Delos (*ibid.*). It is this laurel brought from Tempe that was used for making the

[20] The story goes back to Hesiod (fr. 54 Merkelbach – West); cf. Euripides, *Alcestis* 1–7.

[21] See in detail Lang 1983.

wreaths given to victors in the Pythian games – which were themselves regarded as funeral games for Python.

That a god should be polluted by killing an evil dragon might seem surprising, yet it makes good sense in case of Apollo, who is able to grant purifications precisely because he underwent one himself. Nor is the Septerion festival our only testimony. Credit for the god's purification for killing Python was also claimed by Crete and by Argos.[22] An interesting tradition is reported by Pausanias (2.7.7–8) from Sikyon, where Apollo tried to obtain purification together with his sister Artemis, "but at the place which even now is called Fear (Phobos) dread came upon them, and they changed course and went to Crete to be purified by Karmanor". In consequence Sikyon was stricken with plague, and seers advised that the citizens must propitiate Apollo and Artemis. This they did by sending seven boys and seven girls as suppliants to the river Sythas. The deities were persuaded by them, returned to the city, "and the place that they reached first is the sanctuary of Persuasion (Peitho)". These mythical events were re-enacted during a festival of Apollo in which boys and girls go to the Sythas, and then carry the effigies of the divinities into the sanctuary of Peitho and from there back to the temple of Apollo.

The basic pattern is similar here to the Septerion, but with slight shifts. Instead of a place of murder we have a place of dread evoked by the murder. Once again Apollo has to flee to a faraway otherworldly place (Crete having such connotations no less than Thessaly) to be purified there. What the Sikyonian version particularly stresses is the importance of the god's return, which is healing and reinvigorating for the community, but which cannot be taken for granted and requires regular ritual persuasion. The ritual as such is much more simple than the Septerion: the journey to the other world is here enacted symbolically only by a descent to the river, which amounts to symbolic death and "clearly has an initiatory sense" (Calame 1997: 110). In this case, though, just as in the case of the Septerion, the initiatory pattern seems to be a means rather than the end: the aim is not to initiate the youths but to use their initiatory behaviour as a symbol of renewal of the community. It is possible, as Calame speculates (*ibid.*), that at the river the young people "performed a rite aimed at expiating the death of Python and propitiating the epidemic which symbolized the death of the adolescents." The most fascinating feature of the Sikyonian version is the "dread" (*deima*) that the divinities are seized by. It confirms that the pollution is to be taken seriously – it permeates the whole of the god's being. Apollo in this way becomes assimilated to Orestes, who is depicted in various mythic and ritual traditions precisely as mentally haunted by his crime.[23]

The rituals associated with Apollo's flight and purification are important for us in that they highlight the cyclic nature of the god's exile. From the perspective of the Greek ritual cycle Apollo is a god who regularly goes away to another world, but then gloriously returns again full of strength and purity. This is a motif that reappears in connection with the god's periodical visits to the land of the Hyperboreans in the far North, an otherworldly place which ordinary humans can reach "neither by ships nor on foot" (Pindar, *Pyth.* 10.29–30). Apollo spent there each winter to return at the beginning of Spring (in his absence the ruler of Delphi was Dionysos – Plutarch, *Mor.* 388e–389c). At first sight, this may seem as completely unrelated to Apollo's exiles, for the land of the Hyperboreans, as we have seen (p. ???), was regarded as a paradisiacal place in which Golden Age rules for ever. Yet we know already that the Golden Age for the Greeks had two aspects, being both idyllic and savage, and though most references to the Hyperboreans are solely in the idyllic mode, there are some indications pointing towards the other pole as well. Particularly interesting in this regard is the story which Apollonius of Rhodes (*Argonautica* IV 611–17) attributes to the Celts, that after slaying the Kyklopes Apollo was banished by Zeus not to Thessaly but to the Hyperboreans, and the tears he shed there became drops of amber. In the same vein, in the pseudo-Eratosthenic *Catasterismi* (29) we learn that the Arrow constellation is the arrow with which Apollo killed the Kyklopes and which he then hid in the land of the Hyperboreans but retrieved it after his Thessalian purification; the arrow was then transported back by Demeter Fruit-Bringer (Karopophoros), and would eventually be set among the stars by Apollo. Marginal as these tradition are, they attest to a structural homology between Apollo's exiles and his regular sojourn among the Hyperboreans. Apollo is a god who has something distinctly otherworldly in his essence, and who is able to mediate between these dangerous and powerful Other Worlds and the moderate world of humans. The part played by Demeter Fruit-Bringer confirms that it was particularly the reinvigorating returns that were crucial. The arrow that originally was a polluted instrument of the god's transgression is in the course of his exile transformed into a vehicle of life-giving power.

[22] Argos: Statius, *Thebaid* 1.562–71; Crete: Pausanias 2.7.7; 2.30.3, 10.6.6; according to the scholia to Pindar, *Pyth.* (hypothesis c), Apollo was first purified in Crete by Chrysothemis and from there went to Tempe.

[23] See Detienne 1998: 202–8.

Mediating Animals

Further interesting implications of Apollo's ability to mediate between this world and the other world emerge if we have a look at the god's animals. His typical companion was the raven, the most common prophetic bird,[24] acting as the god's messenger, and in one case reporting "unseen deeds" (Hesiod, fr. 60) even to Apollo himself, namely when he told him about the infidelity of Koronis, whereupon the god in anger turned his feathers from white to black. The raven thus mediates between the seen and the unseen, between the light and the dark. Strictly speaking we would expect the god of prophecy to know about Koronis even without his messenger, but by introducing the raven as a mediator (and an alter ego of the god) the myth is able to bring out the contrast between the dark and the manifest that we have seen to be a crucial part of Apollo's essence. At the same time it gives us another opportunity to catch a glimpse of the anger that hides behind Apollo's tranquil face.

Much more symbolically rich is another sacred bird of Apollo, the swan.[25] As Callimachus tells us (*Hymn to Delos* 249–52), when Delos accepted Leto, swans, the "most melodious of all winged creatures", circled seven times around the island and accompanied the god's birth with song. Swans were associated with the Hyperboreans, in whose land they take part in rituals, singing sacred melodies together with human singers (Aelian, *De nat. an.* 11.1). According to Alcaeus (fr. 307c = Himerius, *Or.* 48.10–11), Zeus equipped Apollo on his birth with a chariot of swans and sent him to Delphi, but Apollo chose to fly to the land of the Hyperboreans instead, spending a year there. It was only when the Delphians performed a midsummer invocation rite in which a chorus of unmarried youths stood around the tripod and sang a paian that the god ordered his swans to fly him to the Delphic sanctuary. Once again we see the Apollonian cycle of departing and coming, and the necessity to persuade the god to return from his exile, though this time the myth connects two different festivals: the annual celebration of Apollo's return the Hyperboreans in the month of Bysios (around February), and the god's return from Tempe celebrated every eight years at the Septerion in midsummer.[26] The swans as migratory birds were aptly associated with this cycle, though in their actual migrations they inverted it, leaving Greece each spring to spend the warm part of the year in the North – exchanging places with Apollo, who was returning from the Hyperboreans as they were flying off to them.

Swans were proverbially beautiful singers, whose "swan song" was particularly associated with death. As Plato puts it (*Phaedo* 84e–85a), "they sing before, too, but when they realize that they must die they sing most and most beautifully, as they rejoice that they are about to depart to join the god whose servants they are". In this way, Apollo himself is associated with the realm of the dead – though in this case it is a surprisingly cheerful place to which Socrates and the swans look forward. Apollo's nether world seems to be related to the inaccessible land of the Hyperboreans, which sometimes functions as a sort of isle of the blessed: e.g. Bacchylides (*Epinic.* 3.53–62) tells how Apollo releases the good king Kroisos from the burning pyre, transferring him to the Hyperboreans in reward for his piety. The swan thus acts as a mediator between this world and the other world, life and death, the lyre and the bow.

The association of the swan with death, and sometimes with music, reappears in a number of mythic characters called Kyknos, Swan. The best known Kyknos figure is the king of the Ligurians in northern Europe "beyond the Celtic kingdoms" (Paus. 10.30.3), a superb musician who had been a friend of Phaethon (or in some accounts his lover) and lamented his death so much that Apollo took pity on him and turned him into a swan. The basic pattern is the same as in the story of Kyparissos, combining proximity and distance, love and death. The additional swan element here is the importance of music and the association with the far North. A much more disturbing Kyknos character was a son of Ares in Pagasai in east central Greece, who waylaid the pilgrims to Delphi, and "cut off their heads so that he might build a temple to Apollo out of their skulls" (schol. on Pindar, *Ol.* 10.15). He is eventually killed by Heracles – who on another occasion is an adversary of Apollo himself, trying to wrestle the Delphic tripod from him. Kyknos appears here both as an enemy of Apollo and as his ally. The god himself openly opposes him (even ordering to destroy his tomb, as we learn from the Hesiodic *Shield* 478), but Kyknos himself is a kind of priest of Apollo, "a darker side to Apollo himself",[27] who – as we shall see below, was himself symbolically associated with human sacrifices.

Dark undertones are even more obvious in another animal associated with Apollo, the wolf. In many places the god was worshiped under the epithet Lykeios, "Wolfish", and while some ancient and modern scholars attempted to interpret it as derived from Lykia, a country in Asia Minor in which Leto had an

[24] Cf. Aelian, *De nat. an.* 1.48; Dillon 2017: 147.

[25] Cf. in detail Ahl 1982; Krappe 1942.

[26] For these dates see Fontenrose 1959: 460.

[27] Ahl 1982: 386, note 49. Cf. Farnell 1896–: IV.273, who speculates about an original Swan character, "a shadowy sacerdotal figure of the north Greek or 'Hyperborean' Apolline worship, who dies in the service of his god" and whose original significance is later mirrored in the actions and sufferings of various mythical Kyknos figures.

important sanctuary, the connection of Apollo with wolves is too strong to be just secondary. As we might expect, the general image of the wolf in antiquity was that of a cruel, predatory enemy.[28] Why then would Apollo be associated with this animal? The ancients sometimes interpreted this by regarding Apollo as a "wolf-slaying" god (Sophocles, *El.* 6), an explanation eagerly embraced by a number of older scholars who refused to take the god's dark side seriously and saw him as a protector of flocks.[29] Apollo did have pastoral aspects indeed: in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* he possesses a large herd of cattle, during his exile in the Tempe Valley he herded the cattle of Admetos, and he was sometimes worshipped under the epithet Nomios, "Herdsman".[30] But to interpret his connection of wolves solely in this negative manner would be to ignore a much larger number of the sources in which the god's association with wolves is positive and has nothing to do with a pastoral function. As the scholiast on Sophocles (*El.* 6) remarks, while some say Apollo kills wolves as a divinity of flocks, "others explain that the animal is holy to him in the same way as deer are to Artemis, which is why the wolf appears on Argive coins". There are stories in which the wolf acts on behalf of the god (e.g. killing a temple thief in Delphi – Pausanias 10.14.7) or in which Apollo himself turns into a wolf (e.g. when mating with Kyrene or when killing the malevolent Telchines).[31] Clearly, Apollo is the lord of wolves, and that he sometimes kills them is no less surprising than that Artemis sometimes hunts the deer she protects.

One of the most important cults of Apollo Lykeios was in Argos, where the wolf even appeared as a symbol on coinage. His sanctuary was founded by Danaos, the mythical king of Argos, grandson of Io, an Argive mistress of Zeus who incited the anger of Hera and fled to Egypt. When Danaos returned to Argos and demanded the ancestral kingship, a wolf attacked a herd of oxen and killed the largest bull. This was taken as an omen predicting Danaos' victory – "since both he and the wolf were strangers and were attacking the natives" (Plutarch, *Pyrrhus* 32.5). In effect, Danaos attacked the city and was victorious, or in the version of Pausanias (2.19.3) was freely given the kingship by the Argives. Since Danaos believed it was Apollo who sent the wolf, he founded a sanctuary for him. Apollo's "patronage of the wolf is here set into a social frame of reference; he is the patron of an outcast from society, the enemy or the outlaw".[32]

We know already that Apollo himself was repeatedly in the position of an outcast, and it seems likely that this was one of the connections between him and the wolf. According to a Delphic tradition, after the god had killed Python it was a wolf that first brought him a laurel twig from the valley of Tempe (Servius, *Aen.* 4.377). We have seen that Apollo's return from his exile in Tempe symbolized the inflow of power which was dangerous and polluting in itself but which the god managed to turn into a source of new life. The wolf seems to be an appropriate symbol of such ambivalent power. As Gershenson speculates (1991: 128), Apollo, like the wolf, is "the messenger, the fearsome being that passes the boundary between the known and the unknown, the manifest and the hidden. ... The wolf represents the realm of the hidden; for unlike man, ... he has licence to enter the realm beyond the boundary, and pass into the realm of the unseen and return to the light once again from there." It is interesting in light of his hypothesis that according to Aelian (*De nat. an.* 10.26), the wolf can see at night even when there is no moon, "which is why this time of the night is called Wolf's Light, for it is only the wolf that in times like this has been given light by Nature". Once again we see the contrast between darkness and light which we have observed as typical of Apollo.

The last important animal of Apollo, the dolphin, runs a more cheerful note. At first sight, the dolphin is the very opposite of the wolf, "a benevolent creature that could help men overcome the dangers of the sea", was "thought to guide ships and announce storms", and was even believed to share "men's taste for entertainment and music" and to seek "friendship with humans for no advantage" (Beaulieu 2016: 119). The dolphin is a fish that regularly emerges from the sea to breathe, and thus it appears "as if he were relaying messages from under the sea" (Gershenson 1991: 64). In a number of stories analyzed by Beaulieu the sea appears more specifically as the realm of the dead and the gods. A good example is the singer Arion (Herodotus 1.23–4), who was robbed by the crew of his ship, and when he realized that he was going to die, he asked that he may get dressed in his stage regalia as his funeral attire and may sing his own funeral song, a hymn to Apollo, just as swans do before their death. Once he did so, he leapt into the sea, only to be rescued by a dolphin. This is a story of death and rebirth, in which the dolphin acts as a psychopomp. At the same time, Plutarch (*Mor.* 161e–162a) interprets his experience as an encounter with the gods, whose favourite Arion turned out to be and to whose providence he testified. On other occasions the hero of the story is drowned indeed, but a dolphin takes his body ashore so that it may be buried. Again this is seen as a sign of divine intervention and the outcome is a heroic cult of the dead man. An example is the poet Hesiod,

[28] See Buxton 1990: 61.
[29] Thus e.g. Nilsson 1955: 536–8.
[30] For details see e.g. Farnell 1896–: IV.123.
[31] Both stories in Servius, on Virgil, *Aeneid* IV.377.
[32] Gershenson 1991: 9. Cf. Buxton 1990: 63–4.

who was killed and thrown into the sea, but whose body was brought to the shore by a dolphin. On being discovered by locals his body was at first buried in a secret location near the place of his death, but eventually was ordered by Apollo to be exhumed, transferred to Orchomenus and be reburied in the marketplace in the same tomb as the founder of the city Minyas.

The dolphin is particularly connected with various transitions that involve death and rebirth. He appears in a number of stories connected with colonization, which include a dangerous journey across the sea in which one of the colonists is shipwrecked and rescued by a dolphin. An example is the founder of Taras, named either Taras or Phalanthos, who later regularly appears on Tarentine coins riding a dolphin, and whose story "legitimizes Tarentum as a city founded with divine purpose and divine help" (Beaulieu 2016: 138). Apollo himself in the *Homeric Hymn* changed into a dolphin when founding Delphi: after killing the dragoness he chose a band of Cretan sailors as his future temple servants, jumped on their ship – "a huge and terrible monster" (401) – and navigated them towards the site of the sanctuary as its colonists. "Apollo's dolphin form represents the exchange between men and gods, as the dolphin was thought to be able to cross between the mortal and immortal realms" (Beaulieu 2016: 140).

Another transition with which the dolphin was associated was that between adolescence and adulthood. "Many dolphin stories of the Hellenistic and Roman periods present dolphin-riding ephebes whose transition to adulthood is cut short by death" (*ibid.*: 142), such as the story of Hermias, with whom a dolphin was in love but accidentally killed him with its dorsal fin when playing together. The pattern is the same as that of Hyakinthos: tragic death of a youth is here a symbol of the liminal transition between stages of life in which one's adolescent identity has to be sacrificed and left behind. It is not surprising that, as we shall see below, it was particularly under his epithet Delphinios that Apollo supervised the ephebic transition into adulthood (though the epithet as such probably had no connection with dolphins whatsoever – Graf 1979: 5–7).

Purifying God

It is time now to turn fully to some of Apollo's cultic aspects. One of the most important ritual functions of Apollo is purificatory and harm-averting. A number of scholars today agree that the name Phoibos means "Pure" rather than "Bright".[33] The nature of Apollonian purification comes out best in his epithets Apotropaios and Alexikakos, both with the same meaning "Averter of evil". As these names suggest, Apollo's purificatory task is to guard the boundary between the inside and the outside, "to keep the pure in the inner circle pure", dispelling "the impure to the outer world where it belongs" (Versnel 1994: 299). The god manifests this ability on a number of different levels.[34] In relation to human bodies, he is worshipped in a number of places as "Doctor", Iatros, and Healer (Oulios). Healing was also associated with his epithet Paian/Paiōn/Paiēōn. In epic poems Paiēōn is sometimes treated almost as an independent deity, such as in Hesiod's fr. 257, in which "Paiēōn himself, who knows the remedies of all" is clearly distinguished from "Apollo Phoibos" and his ability to "rescue from death". Historically this may be correct, for the name Paiawn – unlike that of Apollo – is indeed attested in Mycenaean texts, which may mean that it was originally an independent healing deity that only transformed into Apollo at later time. In any case, while the epic Paiēōn was a healer of individuals by means of herbs and drugs, "Apollo's role had been always, above all, to turn his bow against the onset of those collective plagues which he could also send" (Parker 2005: 412–3). It was only his son Asclepius who from the 5th century on became a patron of individual healing, with sanctuaries functioning as sacred sanatoriums.

It is probably also due to his harm-averting skills that Apollo guarantees the prosperity of cattle and crops. His cultic epithet Smintheus in Chryse, though possibly pre-Greek, was commonly understood as Lord of Mice. It is already mentioned by Homer (*Il.* 1.39), and the scholium on the passage explains that once upon a time Apollo got angry with one of his priests and sent mice on Chryse, which ate nearly all crops; it was only when he was placated by a friend of the priest that the god shot the mice with his bow, and was subsequently worshipped as Smintheus. In the same vein the god is worshipped on Rhodes as "Mildew Apollo", Erythibios (Strabo 13.1.64), and in Athens as "Locust Apollo", Parnopios, "because once when locusts were devastating the land the god said that he would drive them from Attica" (Pausanias 1.24.8). While epithets of this kind are frequently translated as "slayer of mice/locusts", it is clear that Apollo is not just the enemy of these pests but their lord as well: he is able to both send them and drive them away. In one story the mice appear in Chryse as helpers, eating through the strings of the bows of the enemy (Clement Alex., *Protr.* 2.39.7).

Apollo's crops-protecting function is particularly obvious in one of his most important festivals celebrated by all the Ionians, the Thargelia.[35] The first-fruit festival was celebrated in the month of Thargelion in early summer, when the

[33] See Chantraine 1968–80: 1216–17; Pettersson 1992: 23.

[34] See in detail Graf 2009: 79–91; Farnell 1896–: IV.408–11.

[35] See in detail Bremmer 1983; Hughes 1991: 139–65; Parker 2005: 481–3.

crops were grown but not yet fully ripe, and its purpose was to purify the city before harvest. It consisted of two contrasting parts. The first day, 6th Thargelion, was focused on two "scapegoats", called *pharmakoi*, the masculine form of the word *pharmakon*, "medicine, drug, poison". They were two men "of very low origin, poor and useless" or "maltreated by nature, such as mutilated or limping",[36] who had been fed with dried figs, cakes and cheese, and then on the 6th Thargelion were adorned with a necklace of figs – one with black figs representing men, the other with white figs representing women –, and led through the city in a procession with flute music. They were beaten with the squill and with twigs of wild fig tree. The procession then left the town though a special gate and made a circle around the city. Finally the *pharmakoi* were chased over the border.

The Thargelia were just one type of a scapegoat ritual that the Greeks performed. A similar expulsion of the *pharmakoi* could be organized ad hoc in reaction to some extraordinary circumstances, such as plague. In some cases we have reports of scapegoats being killed, but these are no doubt mythical exaggerations. While the ritual was meant to associate human sacrifice on the symbolic level, the Greeks took care not to perform it literally. This is particularly obvious in the related Apollonian scapegoat ritual in Leukas, in which a criminal was thrown from a cliff to the sea in an act symbolically evoking killing, but at the same time "birds were attached to him capable of reducing with their flight the force of the leap, and below many men would wait in a circle in small boats and take him up and ... remove him safely beyond the borders" (Strabo 10.2.9). On the narrative level the scapegoat pattern sometimes appears in a more idealized version in which the sacrificed person is a noble member of the community who willingly offers to die for the city – such as the beautiful youth Kratinos, who is said to have volunteered to die for Athens to expiate some ancient pollution identified by the seer Epimenides when he purified the city in the 6th century BC.[37] In order to rid the city of its pollution the scapegoat has to embody the community in some way. In ritual this happens symbolically only: the *pharmakos* is a marginal person of no importance, but he is fed by the state – an honour normally reserved for very important people – and is led in procession in fine clothes.

Strangely primitive as rites of this kind may appear, they make good sense in relation to the social structure of the Greek polis. The polis was a social unit with a clear external boundary which was not easy to penetrate: there was a huge difference between citizens and noncitizens, citizen rights were granted only to those born within the community (in classical Athens both parents had to be citizens), and one of the worst punishments was exile, which implied the loss of civic rights. Now, as the anthropologist Mary Douglas has shown (1996: 110–25), the way societies with sharp external boundaries deal with crises depends greatly on their internal structure. Societies with a clear internal system of specialized roles and a hierarchy of social positions react to misfortune by interpreting it as a result of a deviation from these roles and using it as an opportunity to reinforce the system, frequently having recourse to theological arguments: the gods or ancestors are angry with humans who do not play their social parts properly. However, where no such system of roles exists, the social body is perceived as a pure homogenous unit. Accordingly, when a crisis occurs, it is seen as a stain polluting this unit, and care is taken to localize this pollution and expel it. Small primitive societies often resort to accusations of witchcraft in these situations, labelling a member of the community as internally corrupt and driving him or her out. It is this kind of social structure that in a more complex form we find in the Greek polis as well, for though the polis did have a sophisticated system of civic institutions, in essence it was as community of relatively equal citizens who ruled the city-state together. It is not surprising therefore that when a crisis occurred, the tendency was to see it as an opportunity to purify the civic body by exiling those who were identified as causing discord. The best-known institutionalized version of this pattern is the Athenian ostracism, an institution that allowed the Athenian assembly once a year to exile for ten years a politician who was thought to be a threat to the state (the verdict being considered valid if the total number of votes cast was at least 6,000). The symbolic symmetry between ostracism and the *pharmakos* rites has been pointed out by Vernant (1990: 133–5).

A fascinating transformation of this pattern can be detected in Plato's philosophy. As Plato records in the *Phaedo* (57a–c), Socrates was sentenced to death one day after the Athenians consecrated a boat that was sent to Delos each year in fulfilment of ancient vows that Theseus made to Apollo before sailing with seven girls and seven boys to Minoan Crete. While Plato does not give any precise date, it is likely that this consecration happened on the sixth of Munychion, when according to Plutarch (*Theseus* 18.2) Theseus' ship set out, its departure being celebrated on this day still in Plutarch's times.[38] During the sailing of the ship, Plato goes on, it was a law to keep the city pure and not to kill anyone, which is

[36] Scholia on Aristophanes, *Equites* 1136 and *Ranae* 733, and on Aeschylus, *Septem* 680.

[37] Neanthes FGrHist 84 F 16 (= Athenaeus 602c–d); Diogenes Laert. 1.110. As Hughes notes (1991: 155–6), the story is clearly a fiction, and even the purification of Athens by Epimenides is of doubtful historicity.

[38] On this date, as well as the date of Socrates' death cf. in detail Farnell 1896–: IV.278, White 2000: 155–156.

why Socrates had to wait for a long time before the ship returned and his execution could take place. This is confirmed by Xenophon (*Mem.* 4.8.2), who adds that the trip took 30 days this time. This means that Socrates probably died on 6th Thargelion – the same day on which he is said to have been born and "on which the Athenians purify the city and the Delians claim Artemis to have been born" (Diogenes Laertius 2.44). In other words, Socrates himself is presented by Plato as a *pharmakos* (White 2000: 157): "Notoriously unattractive and of very modest means, the aging Socrates ironically received in prison the sentence he proposed at his trial, free meals for life (*Ap.* 366). On the day the city expelled its designated *pharmakoi*, he too departed after downing what the dialogue calls a *pharmakon* in its opening sentence (*Phd.* 57a2) and repeatedly thereafter (63e1, 116c3 and d8, 117a6 and e6)."

It is not difficult to see the execution of Socrates as a variation on the scapegoat pattern, a desperate attempt of the Athenians after the lost Peloponnesian war and the breakdown of their empire to purify themselves of their wounds by laying them on the shoulders of someone who was popularly associated with introducing strange novelties and "corrupting the youth". In the *Phaedo*, however, Plato takes care to reinterpret the entire situation. For him, the execution of Socrates actually allowed him to achieve a higher form of purification, that in which the soul is cleansed from the body and achieves the transcendent state in which it will contemplate truth in its purity (67a–b) and be in company of the gods (81a). In this way Socrates as the true servant of Apollo (85b) manages to turn the scapegoat pattern into rite of passage that does not just expel the anomalous element but transforms it into a new type of order. At the same time it endows Socrates with sacred power and allows him to become the founding hero of Greek philosophy.

This positive turn hidden in the *pharmakos* rite is not just Plato's invention. While the expulsion pattern is crucial for understanding Apollonian purification, it only represents one half of it: the one which the god himself embodies by his mythical exiles. Yet the exile is always limited, at the end of it Apollo returns, shining with his renewed purity. The same thing happens in the Thargelia on the 7th Thargelion, Apollo's birthday, which was the main day of the festival.[39] Here – similarly to the Hyakinthia – the atmosphere changed entirely, and the rite became a celebration of renewal and plenty. There was a first-fruit offering to Apollo called *thargēlos*, consisting in a pot full of a pulp cooked from the first, immature ears of corn, together with the first bread made from the harvest. This offering was displayed and carried in a procession for the Sun and the Seasons (Hōrai). There was a competition of choruses, five of men, five of boys, singing hymns. Most importantly, it was probably on this day that new fire arrived from the sacred hearth at Delphi and was used to rekindle the public hearth of Hestia in the council-house from which then the temples as well as the private households got their own new fire – a practice common throughout the Greek world (Delos being another possible source of fire for cities in and around the Aegean).

Extinguishing old fires and rekindling them from the sacred fire of Apollo was a powerful symbol of renewal, of injecting new life force into the city. It corresponds to the god's glorious return from his exile, showing that Apollonian purification did not just consist in expelling the impure but even more significantly in cleansing the expelled element and transforming it into a source of new power which may subsequently be reincorporated in the community. It illustrates a more general principle that has been observed throughout the world, namely a paradoxical connection between the polluted and the sacred – both being often designated by the same word (such as the Latin *sacer*, meaning both "sacred" and "accursed") or by two cognate terms (such as the Greek *hagios*, "pure, holy", and *agos*, "pollution"). As Mary Douglas (2002) has classically shown, what connects the two concepts is their anomalousness: both the polluted and the sacred transgress standard categories of the classification system, the difference being that the former does so in a destructive way, while the latter in a manner that is constructive and capable of upholding the very categories that it transcends. Since, as we have seen many times, it is an inevitable feature of every classification system that it is limited and keeps on generating tensions and struggling with anomalies, it is one of the crucial functions of religion that it allows to deal with this problem by not just expelling the impure but more importantly by being able to transform it into the sacred and use it to support the human order. Apollo is a god who specializes in precisely this, taking upon himself all the impurities and using his repeated exiles as opportunities for transforming the polluted into the pure and reintroducing it into the polis.[40]

Leader of Colonization

The pattern of purification we have just analyzed reappears in another important domain of Apollo: his supervision of colonization. Through his Delphic oracle the god approved of all major colonial ventures that the Greeks undertook from the

[39] Cf. Parker 1983: 25–26; 2005: 203–5; Jim 2014: 102–103.

[40] The symbolic pattern as such is transcultural – cf. Jesus Christ and ability to redeem the sins of men by taking them upon himself and purify them through his self-sacrifice.

8th to 6th centuries around the Mediterranean. Indeed, in most colonial narratives Apollo did not just sanction the expeditions, he enjoined them himself. As Dougherty (1993) has shown, many ancient foundation stories of colonies follow the same pattern. (a) It starts with a civic crisis: drought and famine, overpopulation and shortage of land, natural disaster, civic strife. (b) Desperate citizens consult the Delphic oracle and are told by Apollo to remedy the situation by sending out a colonizing mission. (c) The mission is successful: a colony is founded and the leading colonists measures out portions of land and distributes them to the other members of the expedition. He has brought with him fire from the public hearth fire in his home city and he now uses it to establish a new hearth fire in the colony. (d) Upon the death of the leading colonist he is buried in the agora and worshiped as the city's founding hero. It is only now that the settlement is truly transformed from a colony to an independent city-state.

Most of these stories are not to be taken as historical records but as narratives which tell us more about how the Greeks constructed their memory of the past rather than the actual realia of archaic colonization. A number of colonies seem to have originated as settlements of individual adventurers and disconnected groups from various cities in pursuit of gain, and it was only in retrospect that they were represented as arising in the above-described manner.[41] Still, it is likely that at least in some cases colonization was indeed a solution to some kind of civic crisis. And what is more important, even if many colonies originated as informal trade settlements, it was precisely by inventing these foundation stories that these communities at one point attempted to legitimate themselves as regular city-states. In other words, the stories tell us a lot about the Greek conception of what it means to establish a polis. Just as the Thargelia, they stress the conception of a polis as a pure unified body of citizens in which internal conflicts have to be solved by identifying the source of impurity and expelling it. In the second stage, the task of Apollo is to transform this expelled element into something that eventually may become the foundation of some new type or civic order. Whereas in the Thargelia this transformation happens as part of a cycle of renewal of one and the same community, in colonization it resembles rather a rite of passage, the renewal amounting to the establishment of a new community.

As Dougherty stresses (1993: 17), the colonial narratives have a strong tendency "to personalize public action", and the original crisis is thus frequently represented by "an individual's personal, often physical, trauma". A good example is the story of Battos, from the island of Thera, who went to Delphi to ask about his speech defect, but instead of receiving medicinal advice was told to colonize Libya. He ignored the command, but "things started to go badly for him personally and for Thera in general" (Herodotus 4.156), and another delegation was dispatched to Delphi to ask for a solution. The Pythia replied they should help Battos to establish a colony in Libya. This they did, and Battos eventually founded the city of Kyrene. Then one day as he was passing through the Libyan desert, he saw a lion, cried in terror, and in this way cured his voice (Pausanias 10.15). Colonization is thus presented as a kind of Apollonian healing, which cures both the sick individual and the community. Interestingly enough, in Pindar's version (*Pyth.* 5.57–9), Battos encountered several lions and his stammer was not cured on this occasion but rather frightened the beasts and made them run away, i.e. what formerly appeared as defect in the new colonized place turns out to be the hero's strength.

The same pattern stands out even more strikingly in a number of stories in which the motivation for colonial expulsion is murder committed by the leading colonist in his original polis. The best example is Syracuse, one of the richest colonies, which was said to have been founded by Archias of Corinth after he had unintentionally killed his lover Aktaion; in consequence of this Corinth was beset by plague, and when desperate citizens consulted the Delphic oracle, they were told that Poseidon was angry with them for having left Aktaion's death unpunished. "When Archias learned these things, being one of those consulting the oracle, he decided of his own free will not to return to Corinth; instead he sailed to Sicily and founded the colony of Syracuse" (Plutarch, *Mor.* 773b). That the colonies should have chosen murderers as their founding heroes might come as a surprise, but as Dougherty shows (1993: 31–41), it makes sense when read from the perspective of the Apollonian pattern. Murder is a prototypical cause of pollution that needs to be purified by Phoibos. Even more than in the case of physical sickness it concerns both the killer and the entire community, which is in danger of being defiled by him. Once again, the best method of purification consists in expelling the culprit. This is done under the auspices of Apollo, who takes care that the pollution is not only removed but may even be transformed into positive potency – a transformation the god himself underwent after killing Python. The polluted colonist is buried in the newly established city and is worshiped as its founder, who precisely on account of his transgression acts as a source of power.

The polluted status of the colonists is suggested in other ways. In a number of stories, for instance, the colonists are unsuccessful at first and try to return to their home polis, but are not allowed to. Thus when Battos and his crew tried to return to Thera after their first failure to establish a colony in Libya, the Therans

[41] Cf. Osborne 1998; Redfield 2003: 254–6.

"shot at them every time their boats got close to shore and told them to sail back to Libya" (Herodotus 4.156). As Dougherty comments (1993: 36), colonization follows the pattern of rites of passage, and once the colonists cross the boundaries and enter the liminal zone, "they become dangerous or polluted in the eyes of society". In a much more direct manner, Plato mentions colonization explicitly in his discussion of the necessity to "purge" unhealthy elements from the society: the poor citizens who in times of shortage of food of food threaten to attack the property of the privileged "are to be regarded as a disease that has developed in the body politic, and in the friendliest possible way they should be (as it will tactfully be put) 'transferred to a colony'" (*Laws* 736a).

A fascinating variant of the pollution pattern is found in a number of stories which connect colonization with the practice of *dekateusis*, i.e. vowing a tithe of the citizens to Apollo in times of crisis.[42] The men who are consecrated in this way, becoming the god's sacred possession, are subsequently sent by him on a colonizing mission. The best known example is the foundation of Rhegium "by the Chalcidians who, in accordance with an oracle, were dedicated, one man out of every ten Chalcidians, to Apollo, because of a failure of crops, but later on emigrated to this place from Delphi, taking with them still others from their home" (Strabo 6.1.6). The historicity of these stories is doubtful, but they are important in that they attest to the above-described connection between the polluted and the sacred. The colonists are expelled in reaction to misfortune, but by being consecrated to Apollo, they are transformed into sacred servants of the god, ready to invest the god's power into the foundation of a new city.

Colonization helps us see what it meant for the Greeks to establish a polis and what part Apollo played in this risky task. It is a crucial property of a firm foundation that it sets the limits of the social unit in question but at the same time takes care that these limits will not be questioned and transgressed. Purification offers an ingenious way of achieving this. To purify a polluted person means to separate him from society, turn him into a liminal being, and then effect a second, reintegrative separation that marks a clear boundary between his former polluted state and the new state of acceptance by the community. It is this second boundary that is capable of firmly founding the new social unit, the pollution acting as a protection zone imbued with sacred power and guaranteeing the stability of the newly founded boundary. Apollo is a god who helped the Greeks to achieve this, being a purifier and a founder at the same time, and it is in this way that he provided the Greek world with stable form and measure.

[42] See in detail Versnel 1994: 304–9; Detienne 1998: 216–27.

Founding the Polis

Apollo's crucial part in the foundation of colonies is related to his importance for the rise and subsistence of the polis in general. When Greek city states started to emerge in the 8th century, Apollo, together with Athena (closely followed by Hera and Artemis), was one of the first deities to whom sanctuaries were built, and who were thus perceived as important for stabilizing the newly established polis formations.[43] We have seen already that Apollo was particularly good at laying foundations, an ability no doubt sorely needed at a time when the city states were still recent and fragile. It was frequently a sanctuary of Apollo that contained the laws, decrees, and treaties of a city, sometimes even inscribed on the temple walls.[44] "The early laws displayed in sanctuaries or inscribed on temple walls shared common characteristics because they were written to resolve conflicts. The privileged location demonstrated that such laws derived their authority from the god himself." (Cole 2004: 73). The same kind of support was provided by the Delphic oracle, which "was consulted by communities in times of local disaster or political strain and in times of political innovation, when new cities were being settled or new cults established" (*ibid.*: 72). The function of the oracle was not to predict future but to provide divine sanction for potentially divisive political decisions, typically by answering simple yes-or-no questions.

Apollo's sanctuaries were frequently close to the agora, as in Argos (Apollo Lykeios), Athens (Apollo Patrōios) or Miletos (Apollo Delphinios). But many were also suburban or altogether remote. Indeed, it was precisely the remote sanctuaries that were the most important ones, such as the sacred island of Delos, or the oracles of Delphi, Didyma in Asia Minor, and the Ptoion in Boiotia, which "provided neutral locations and uncontested spaces that furthered the communication required to standardize procedures of negotiation" (*ibid.*: 72). The location of Apollo's sanctuaries thus mirrors the combination of distance and proximity that we have seen in his myths. It is telling that the most remote of these sanctuaries, Delphi, situated on the steep lower slopes of Mt. Parnassos, far from civilization, was at the same time seen as the sacred centre of the earth, whose "navel" (*omphalos*) was located in the temple of Apollo. Since the polis depended on the consensus of autonomous in individuals who were supposed to be equal to one another, and since the same equality in theory applied to the relations between the individual poleis, the only central source of authority that could unite all the negotiating parties was one located far away on a neutral

[43] See de Polignac 1995: 21–6; Detienne 1998: 126–31; Cole 2004: 21.

[44] For numerous examples see Scafuro 2013.

ground. "On the Greek mainland, the sacred center of each polis was linked by roads to the sacred center of each local, ex-urban sanctuary and ultimately to Delphi itself, the center of all. Myths of Delphic stability reflected confidence in a coherent network connecting all communities to a recognized center, with each polis organized around a ritual space that provided the point from which the distance to a central place in the outside world was measured" (*ibid.*: 76). By traversing this network of sacred roads back and forth, the polis communities were repeating the periodical departures and returns of the god himself.

It was not just through sanctuaries, though, that Apollo helped to guard the polis. Under various epithets he was seen as the guardian of its borders. He was frequently invoked as Guardian of the Gate (Propylaios), of the Door (Thyraios), of the Street (Agyieus), or simply as Protector (Prostatērios, lit. "standing before").[45] To some extent all of these functions were closely related to that of the Averter of Evil (Alexikakos), which has been discussed above (p. ???). In some cases, however, there were specific political connotations. It was Apollo Prostatērios (together with Artemis Boulaia), for instance, to whom at Athens "sacrifices were made 'before the assemblies' by the serving prytaneis, as we learn from 'prytany inscriptions' stretching over several centuries" (Parker 2005: 404). We also know of another interesting ritual before the start of the Athenian assembly, one in which a special priest called "peristiarch" sacrificed young piglets, cut off their testicles, and carried them around the meeting area, sprinkling the boundary with their blood in order to purify it.[46] We do not know to which god the sacrifice was made, but Detienne (1998: 132) argues that it must also have been Apollo, who is famous for this kind of blood purifications. By making this sacrifice to him, the Athenians "give back to him what is his, at the limit of the practices that he institutes" (*ibid.*: 133).

Interesting dimensions can also be discovered in the worship of "Street" Apollo (Agyieus). He was represented by a pillar that stood in front of each house, was decorated with branches of laurel or myrtle, and received offerings of incense or oil. On the basic level he once again functioned as the Averter of Evil protecting the house. Yet it is telling that his epithet associates him with the public street rather than the house he is supposed to protect. As Farnell notes (1896–: IV.152), it is "characteristic of the god that he does not cross the threshold of the private house, ... his functions are public". Moreover, *agyia* (derived from *agō*, "to lead") was not just a city street but a road in general. It is with these connotations in mind that Kassandra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (1086–7) reproaches the Agyieus pillar standing in front of the palace: "Lord of Roads (*Agyiate*), my destroyer, what road is this down which you have led me!" We may recall the pathways that Apollo is cutting through the uninhabited terrain in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (above, p. ???) and that in historical times constituted the network of roads connecting city centres with the remote sacred centre of Delphi, their pavement reminding the traveller of the firm foundation that Apollo is able to provide.

Farnell (1896–: IV.150) sees the Agyieus as reflecting the Dorian conquest, "when the god – or the priest bearing his emblem – marched at the head of the immigrant tribe down its perilous path of conquest" to be later "gratefully remembered by the erection of the Agyieus". Historically this is doubtful, but as a modern mythical image it does indeed fit it with some other elements in the cult of Apollo, which sometimes do associate the god with the Dorian conquest. Among the Dorians, the most important festival of Apollo was the Karneia, a name derived from the Dorian word *karnos*, "ram". The best-documented version is the Spartan one, for which Pausanias (3.13.3–4) tells us the aetiological myths. In the first one, Karnos was an aboriginal seer whom the invading Dorians killed, for which Apollo punished them by pestilence; the Karneia was then established to appease the god's anger. In the second story, Karneios was an aboriginal deity worshipped in the house of the seer Krios (Ram), who betrayed the Achaians and told the Dorians how to capture Sparta. The stories seem contradictory, but their symbolic pattern is the same: the conquest is always depicted as generating guilt to be expiated, the focus is always a seer who is seen as ambivalent: in the first story he represented both the aboriginal population to be conquered and the god the conquerors worshipped; in the second he betrayed the city, but by doing so became a founding hero of the Dorian establishment. The seer thus acts as a mediator between the natives and the invaders. The same is true of Apollo, who is portrayed as an indigenous Achaian deity offended by the conquest, but who also seems to be the leader of the Dorians: he was iconographically represented as a ram, a leader of the flock, and the theme of leadership was so important for the festival that it was sometimes referred to by the alternative name Agētoria, Festival of Leadership.[47] In Sparta this was tied with a highly militaristic atmosphere: during the festival the Spartans dined in tents "on the command of a herald", doing this as "an imitation of military training".[48]

[45] For details see e.g. Farnell 1896–: IV.371–2; Detienne 1998: 124–6; ???Faraone 1992: 8–9; ???Graf 1985: 173–6.

[46] Aeschines 1.23; schol. on Aristophanes, *Ach.* 44.

[47] Hesychius, *s.v. agētēs*; Pettersson 1992: 63; Malkin 1994: 151–6.

[48] Demetrius of Skepsis, quoted by Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 141e–f.

One of the main themes of the Karneia appears to be the fragility of political foundations, which are seen as generating guilt, but also as an opportunity to turn the guilt into power be expiating it. In the Spartan case, the foundation was connected with the Dorian conquest, but it is questionable whether this should be read literally (and whether there ever was a Dorian invasion on the Peloponnese).[49] It is symptomatic that Pausanias (3.13.5) also tells a third aetiological myth, in which the Greeks besieging Troy cut down wood from a grove of cornel trees (*kraneia*) sacred to Apollo in order to build the wooden horse; by doing so they made the god angry and had to propitiate him by instituting the Karneia. Once more we see the theme of guilt-ridden conquest, but this time on a Panhellenic scale independent of the Dorian invasion. Apollo is again the god of the conquered population (in the *Iliad* he is the main protector of Troy), who is ritually converted into the patron of the invaders. Indeed, the symbolic pattern bears some similarity to that we have seen above in the cult of Apollo Lykeios in Argos, where Danaos was depicted as lonely wolfish invader refounding of the city (p. ???). It seems, therefore, that the invasion pattern is first and foremost a part of Apollo's symbolic complex whose relation to historical events is secondary. Invasion may be read as an image that points to the nonobvious nature of all claims to domination over a territory. In myths such claims are depicted as violent and generating pollution. The task of Apollo it to turn this pollution into protecting power, just as we have seen it in the establishment of colonies.

At the Spartan Karneia, besides singing, dancing and banqueting in tents, the most noteworthy rite consisted in a race during which young men called *staphylodromoi*, "grape-runners", pursued a man adorned with woolen filets, who was running and praying for the well-being of the city; "should they catch him, they expected good thing for the city, but should they not, the contrary".[50] As Pettersson notes (1992: 70), the rite is an inversion of the scapegoat expulsion: in the latter the main ritual actor represents the bad luck of the community to be driven away, though at first he is treated nicely, in the former he stands for the good luck to be seized, though at first he is hunted like a criminal. By being adorned with woolen filets, the pursued man resembles a sacrificial ram; in the end, however, a real ram is killed instead.[51] "Moreover, the purpose of pursuing him was to foresee the city's well-being; in other words, the race was a form of augury", which makes it possible "to interpret the chased man as a seer" (*ibid.*). The original mythical seer Ram – "unreliable but indispensable" (*ibid.*: 71) –, who was closely allied with Apollo but became a source of guilt, it thus here replaced by a ritual seer–ram, who may be seen as a transformed version of the ambivalent Apollonian power: he is chased like an animal but in the end represents good luck. Just as the foundation of Sparta is fragile, requiring Apollo's support, so is the future good luck elusive, though with the god's help it may be seized. Whereas in the Thargelia the Apollonian pattern of danger to be turned into power is projected in time and space, the scapegoat being driven out of the city's territory to be replaced by sacred fire arriving from Delphi on the next day, in the Karneia it is condensed in one and the same action, the danger of the past being ritually pursued as the power of the future.

Initiation and Male Societies

An important social function of Apollo that has been particularly favourite with scholars in recent decades is his patronage of youths about to be integrated in the adult community. Apollo himself is a prototypical ephebe, always depicted as a beautiful youth on the verge of manhood but not yet a man. "Never so much as a beard has come to Phoebus' girlish cheeks", as Callimachus says in the *Hymn to Apollo* 37. Like human youths, he likes to engage in dancing and singing. Many of the myths of Apollo can easily be read as initiation stories. His unfortunate love affairs, for instance, often feature the death of the god's mortal double, a youth on the verge of adulthood, whose fate resembles that of the maiden companions of Artemis. In these cases, death can be understood symbolically as the loss of one's adolescent self once the boy turns into a man. In the story of Kyrene, on the other hand, it is Apollo himself who acts like an initiand, venturing into wilderness to capture an untamed bride in the mountains and civilize her by marriage – though unlike a real ephebe, Apollo refuses to settle himself, remaining liminal for ever. In similar vein, his killing of Python followed by and exile and triumphant return may be seen as classic initiation scenario.

Apollo's capacity to turn boys into men is best attested on the Panhellenic level. According to Hesiod (*Th.* 346–8) the water nymphs "together with lord Apollo and the rivers, raise boys so that they become men on the earth". Similarly, Homer speaks of Telemachos having become a man like his father "by the grace of Apollo" (*Od.* 19.86). Reaching adulthood was ritually marked by cutting the boy's hair, which in some cases was done in the name of Apollo – who in the archaic period was himself typically depicted with long hair pertaining to youths. The "ostentatious man" in the *Characters* of Theophrastus (21.3) "takes his son to

[49] E.g. Pettersson is convinced that the (1992: 106–9) that the Dorian invasion was a myth invented in the 9th century by the ruling elite to justify its political hegemony in parts of the Peloponnese.

[50] *Glossae rhetoricae* in Bekker, *Anecdota Graeca* I 305, *s.v. staphylodromoi.*

[51] Cf. Burkert 1985: 235.

Delphi for his ritual haircut", in this regard following the mythical example of Theseus who did the same thing (Plutarch, *Thes.* 5.1–2). Yet, the actual ritual reality was far more complex than that: the haircut could be done in the name of a wide variety of gods or heroes, and Apollo appears in this connection far less frequently than we might expect.[52] At Athens, for example, youths around the age of 16 cut their hair during the Apaturia festival, and by doing so became members of their phratry, which guaranteed their citizen rights. Sadly, Apollo is never mentioned on this occasion, the divine patrons of the Apaturia being Zeus Phratrios and Athena Phratria.

More promising is the evidence from Delphi, where the Dorian Apellaia festival had a function quite similar to the Ionian Apatouria, being a gathering of a phratry during which new members were introduced into the community: newly born children, married wives, and ephebes. The festival was dedicated to Apollo, Poseidon Fratrios and Zeus Patrōios. Apollo would thus appear as a supervisor of ephebic integration into the adult community. It was chiefly on the basis of the Delphic Apellaia that Walter Burkert (1975) formulated his influential hypothesis that the name Apollōn, which in the Doric dialect sometimes appears in the form Apellōn, is linguistically connected with the name of the Dorian month Apellaios, which gave name to the Apellaia festival, and with the word *apellai* that in some cities designated an assembly of the people. Apollo would thus originally be a god of the assembly. This would not only fit in well with his political importance but it would also illuminate his ephebic features. By acting as a guardian of the external boundary of the citizen community Apollo would ensure that nothing impure penetrates in. He would do so by establishing a liminal protection zone that all the new members of the community have to pass through.

Such a theory would certainly make good sense in relation to other aspects of Apollo, such as his patronage of colonization which, as we have seen, in Greek eyes followed the pattern of rites of passage, the colonists being expelled from their previous social group in a manner reminiscent of initiands, the only difference lying in the manner of reintegration: "The former were expected to found a new independent community, the latter to be re-integrated into an existing society" (Versnel 1994: 316). An interesting variant of this pattern was applied to the legal process of enfranchising a slave.[53] As a number of Delphic inscriptions testify, a slave who had saved enough money to buy his own freedom in many cases did not hand the money over to his master but to the temple of Apollo; it was then the god himself who bought the slave from his master, the slave becoming his sacred property – just like the colonists in stories of *dekateusis* (above, p. ???). Once the transaction was over, the god set the slave free. In this way Apollo not only acted as a legal representative of the slave (who had no rights of property himself), but even more importantly allowed to mediate his passage between two radically different social states and helped to integrate him into the community of free men. It is a similar service that he would perform for the ephebes.

When surveying the cults of Apollo, we do indeed find some signs of his ephebic involvement, though most of them rather indirect. At Athens, for instance, it was in the temple of Apollo Delphinios that oaths concerning legitimacy were sworn before arbitrators,[54] i.e. he seems to have been connected with the integration of youths into the official adult community of the polis. In myth the temple is repeatedly connected with Theseus, who is a model youth on a journey towards adulthood. It was in this temple that he made a supplicatory offering to Apollo before embarking on the dangerous voyage to Crete with seven youths and seven girls. It was here his father Aigeus on the advice of Medea tried to poison him, though in the last minute the true identity of Theseus came out and Aigeus managed to knock the poisoned drink out of Medea's hand. And it was in front of the temple that Theseus was mocked for his girlish appearance, to which he responded by lifting two bulls and throwing them over the rooftop.[55] As Parker comments (2005: 436): "This then was the place where youths revealed who they were, and what." Still, we know of no ritual of Apollo Delphinios that would specifically deal with ephebes. The bull episode was sometimes enacted ritually at various festivals during which ephebes lifted up oxen before sacrifice, but none of them specifically Apollonian.[56] What is most striking is that Delphinios, as well as any other form of Apollo, is missing on the list of seventeen gods by which Athenian ephebes had to swear.[57]

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52 For the full variety of ritual haircut options cf. Leitao 2003.

53 See in detail Farnell 1896–: IV.177–9.

54 Ps.-Demosthenes, *Contra Boeotum* 11; Isaeus, *Pro Euphileto* 9. Another Athenian cult concerned with legitimacy was that of "Ancestral" Apollo (Patrōios), with one of whose shrines every candidate for an archonship had to be affiliated to be eligible (Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 55.3).

55 Plutarch, *Theseus* 18 and 12; Pausanias 1.19.1.

56 See van Straten 1995: 109–13; ephebic involvement is only attested by a Hellenistic inscription, but cf. Euripides, *Helena* 1561–2, where a bull is lifted "on the shoulders of youths in the Greek manner".

57 For its text see Lycurgus, *Oratio in Leocratem* 77. One might of course argue that "Apollo makes youths grow all the way from infancy up to manhood" and thus "they need not approach him specially, because he has long been their protector" (Parker 2005: 436).

The cult of Apollo Delphinios was even more important in some other cities.[58] At Miletos he was served by a group of six adult men called Molpoi, "singers-dancers", their leader being at the same time the political head of the city. The Delphinion was the most important political sanctuary in Miletos, it functioned as a state archive, housing various treaties or state decrees. Just as in Athens, the sanctuary was connected with rights of citizenship – any disputes in this matter had to be examined by the Molpoi. The Delphinion was equally important on Crete. At Knossos and at Dreros it again served as a state archive. At Hyrtakina state guests dined at the common hearth in the Delphinion. Even some modest ephebic connections appear: at Dreros Apollo Delphinios is mentioned along with other main civic gods in the ephebic oath, and the Cretan poet Rhianus (fr. 68) places under the protection of Delphinios a youth who has dedicated his hair to him. Still, the main concern of Delphinios was clearly the political community of adult men.

Apollo Delphinios is missing among the Dorians on the Peloponnese and in Northwest Greece, but other forms of Apollo played a similar political function here. At Sparta Apollo the Ram was strongly associated with military leadership. The ram is "the leader of the flock", and it is tempting to relate this to flocks of youths as well – symbolism "well present in Spartan and Cretan society where the adolescents were organized in *agelai*, 'herds'" (Graf 2009: 117); yet no ancient source makes this connection. At Argos, the chief city god was Apollo Lykeios; it was in his sanctuary in the agora that crucial decrees and treaties were displayed. In Aeschylus (*Suppl.* 686–7) a chorus of the daughters of Danaos prays "that Lykeios be kind to all the young folks", and one of the votive offerings in his temple was a statue of a man carrying a bull (Pausanias 2.19.3), which reminds us of Theseus and the bull-lifting of Athenian ephebes – though at Argos no doubt the main association was with the bull defeated by the wolf (above, p. ???). Here, too, scholars speculate about Apollo the Wolf as a patron of ephebes, who under his supervision temporarily turned into wolf-men, living in the wilderness and serving as guardians of the borders before their integration into the adult community.[59] But again, there is no sign of this in ancient sources. Apollo Lykeios also had a sanctuary at Athens, but not even here do we hear of any ephebic involvement: the Lykeion served as the main training ground for the cavalry and hoplites, as well as for athletes, i.e. Apollo Lykeios was "the god of the adult males, hoplites who have passed their tests and have been fully accepted, ... the god of the initiated, not the initiants" (Jameson 2014: 58). His wolfish nature was rather seen as a source of warrior power, such as when the chorus in Aeschylus prays to him "You too, Wolfish Lord, prove wolfish to the enemy army" (*Sept.* 145–6).

To conclude, while ephebic associations frequently pop up in myths and images connected with Apollo, in his actual cults we find him associated with the political world of male adults and their various groups rather than with ephebes. Even Graf, who has done more than others for elucidating the initiation features of Apollo, in the end admits that "Apollo Delphinios is actually in most cases only connected with the last step of the initiation, the final acceptance of the youth in the society of men; he is not a general protector of ephebes" (1979: 18). It is interesting in this regard that the Athenian Delphinion also served as a homicide court for cases in which the killer argued to have acted lawfully (Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 57.3), i.e. the god was able to purify the polluted individual and reintegrate him into the community. In myth this is again connected with Theseus, who was acquitted at this court for his killing of the rebellious Pallantides (Pausanias 1.28.10). For Theseus this was one of the daring feats he performed on his ephebic journey to adulthood, but in this case the subject is rather the integration of the outsider hero into the polis (it was on account of his not being born in Athens that the Pallantides rebelled), legitimizing his claim to the throne and making sure that the impure stays outside and only the pure gets in. The main theme of the Delphinion thus seems to be legitimacy and the protection of the outer boundaries of the community.

It is possible, of course, that in more ancient tribal times there existed full initiation rites under Apollo's patronage, which were transformed with the rise and development of the polis. But it is equally possible that that Apollo had been a god of adults from the beginning and that his own ephebic character had always been just a symbolic way to give weight to the boundary of the adult group he was protecting. The initiation pattern of separation – liminality – reintegration is a powerful symbolic image that is fascinating in itself and on this account may be used for a variety of purposes, many of them quite unconnected with actual rites of passage, or connected with them only as a mental template.

A good example of this kind of symbolic polysemy is the Spartan Hyakinthia, a festival in honour of the dead Hyakinthos. Just like the Thargelia, it was gloomy and mournful on the first day but turned celebratory on the second, with choruses or boys and girls singing and dancing. As we have seen, the myth of a youth dying on the threshold of maturity follows a typical initiation pattern, and there can be little doubt that for the youths who danced in choruses during the festival

[58] See in detail Graf 1979; 2009: 110–1; Gorman 2001: 94–5, 168–71.

[59] Thus Versnel 1994: 315–6, and cautiously Jameson 2014: 57.

this was one the many steps in the system of Spartan education that helped to turn them into true adults. The message which it transmitted, however, was periodically received by all the Spartans attending, and in this regard the main function of the rite was not to initiate the young but to use them as representatives of the periodically renewed forces of city. The symbolic message itself seems to have been connected with the Spartans' relation to their land. The Spartans saw themselves as descendants of Dorian conquerors, and as such they had no indigenous claim to the land. The myth of Hyakinthos offered a symbolic solution to this problem: he allowed the Spartans to establish a link with the land by having died into it and being worshiped at his grave. It is significant that the Hyakinthia was celebrated at Amyklai, one of the five villages of which Sparta consisted, and one that was special in that it was seen as inhabited by the original Achaians even after the Dorian conquest, who were overcome and incorporated only at a later time. Thanks to this, Amyklai was an ideal place for establishing a connection to the Spartan soil. The layout of the Amyklaion sanctuary symbolized this nicely: in its centre Hyakinthos lay buried under an altar from which there rose an image of Apollo in the form of a tall bronze pillar equipped with helmeted head and arms holding bow and spear (Pausanias 3.19.1). While the pillar stood for Apollo's majestic claim to this place, the grave of the god's mortal double represented the deep roots of which this claim grew out.[60] It is on account of this connection to the soil that the festival was linked to the vegetation cycle as well, being a lamentation of death and celebration of renewal. The renewal, however, was not just of the plants but of the entire polis as it reproduced and its norms were passed on from one generation to the next under the auspices of Apollo.[61]

Apollo, *kouroi* and the shadow of Greekness

We have started this chapter with the influential conception of Apollo as the "most Greek of all the gods". The subsequent sections have shown this traditional picture as one-sided, but they have not altogether negated it. Apollo is perhaps indeed a god who made the Greek miracle possible, as Otto believed. But if we are to accept this statement, we should read it in a more complex way. Apollo did not just embody the positive values that defined the Greek spirit. He also helped to deal with the shadow this spirit necessarily cast. The stress on lucidity and clarity of forms, the awareness of the fleetingness of individual things combined with the desire to transcend it by achieving something glorious that will be remembered by future generations, the spirit of perfection – all of these were fundamental values for the Greeks. Yet, while we may perhaps regard them as parts of the essence of Greekness, it would be naive to think that they represented the entire reality of the Greek world. What they expressed was an ideal that the Greeks used not just to aspire to but also to shield themselves from various conflicts that formed the inevitable shadow of this glorious vision. The fundamental part of Apollo in this consisted in the fact that he was both able to embody the ideal and to deal with the tensions it produced.

We may perhaps illustrate some of this if we have a look at one type of archaic statues that is closely associated with the Apollonian ideal: the naked, striding youths which in modern times have been dubbed *kouroi*. In the 6th century these were omnipresent in the Greek world. They were used either as tomb markers or as votive gifts. 19th century scholars frequently saw them as depicting Apollo, for they exactly corresponded to his iconographic type, and were sometimes discovered in his shrines. Contemporary scholarship mostly rejects this theory and agrees that the statues represent a human youth at the peak of his bodily powers. In the eyes of the Greeks, this was the most glorious time of human life, one that will only be followed by sad decline. As the 7th-century poet Mimnermus puts it (fr. 2):

> Who are we? Like the leaves that bloom in flowery springtime, when they grow quickly in the rays of the sun, like them we enjoy the blossoms of youth (*hēbē*) for a short time, not knowing what good or bad things the gods have in store for us. But black Spirits of Death (Kēres) stand by, one has prepared for us the future of grievous old age, the other that of Death. The fruit of our youth ripens quickly, and lasts for only as long as the sunlight in the afternoon. But once this glorious time is over, it is better to be dead than alive. For many are the sorrows that spread in our heart.

The *kouroi* express this peak time (*hēbē*) of human life – but by doing so they also foreshadow the downfall that will follow. The spirit of the *kouroi* is perhaps best expressed in the classic story of Kleobis and Biton (Herodotus 1.31), two Argive youths on the top of their strength, who helped their mother, a priestess of Hera, when during a festival of the goddess she needed to ride in a procession in a wagon pulled by oxen. As the oxen had not come back from the fields in time, the brothers pulled the wagon themselves all the way to the Heraion (5 miles). After having been congratulated by everybody on their strength, their mother prayed to Hera that she grant them the best thing a man can get – whereupon the youths went to sleep in the temple and never rose again. The Argives celebrated their glorious end by dedicating at Delphi two statues of them. The statues were no

[60] For this interpretation of the Hyakinthia see Redfield 2003: 295–301.

[61] Cf. de Polignac 1995: 44–5.

doubt of the *kouroi* type, and while the priestess' prayer was addressed to Hera, the god who shot them with his gentle arrows was surely Apollo, who specialized in quick and painless deaths of this type. The Apollonian connection is clear from Plutarch (*Mor.* 108f–109a), who tells this story hand in hand with the legend of Trophonios and Agamedes, the mythical builders of the Delphic temple of Apollo, who on finishing the construction asked the god for their reward – which he gave them by letting them die in their sleep.

Stories as these help us see the fragile side of the Greek miracle, and it is probably in this light that the *kouroi* too are to be read. They stood for the brilliant image with which the Greek nobility identified. When functioning as a grave monument, the *kouros* was an ideal double of the deceased, representing him not in his individuality but as a timeless, typical member of a homogenous group. In addition to this, the *kouroi* were characterized by their detachment. As Stewart puts it (1997: 66), "though you cannot help looking at the statue, ... it simply ignores you. ... Though *in* this world, it is not entirely *of* it, and repels any direct advance." There was something transcendent about the *kouroi*, they shared with Apollo his distance that allows to erase the individual in favour of general forms – manifested in the statue by its slightly geometrical form. Yet this is not the say that all the *kouroi* were identical. As Stewart emphasizes (*ibid.*: 65), each *kouros* tried to be special, "hence its manifold variations of anatomy, physiognomy, and coiffure". The contrast between sameness and difference built "a tension into the image from the beginning, a tension that is often mistakenly articulated as archaic 'schematization' versus incipient 'naturalism'" (*ibid.*).

It is this tension that in Stewart's eyes signals a warning: though expressing something perfect and eternal, "the *kouros* evidently required continual supplementation and adjustment. Clearly, no single example was felt to be definitive" (*ibid.*: 67). Together with the obsessiveness with which the Greeks erected the *kouroi* this suggests that the ideal order "that the *kouros* so confidently bodied was far from universally manifest, but also that men felt considerable anxiety about whether it existed at all, or if it did, what it consisted of" (*ibid.*: 68). Greek poets reflected on this at least partly when they bemoaned the essential fragility and fleetingness of human beauty and strength – which in their accounts seem remarkably similar to Delos, a tiny island of light in the middle of a turbulent sea. Stewart relates these sentiments to the inherent instability of the Greek nobility in the sixth century, when numerous conflicts raged both between the "haves" and "have-nots" as well as between the nobles themselves, in many cases resulting in coups and tyrannies. In this light, the *kouros*, "far from being a simple expression of the solidarity and success of a securely entrenched aristocracy, ... was a creature born of rapture and anxiety. ... To meet the rising clamor for social justice (*dikē*), it created the seductive illusion of a stable, elitist social order" (p. 70).

Apollo seems to have played a similar part in the Greek cultural system, but unlike the *kouroi*, which onesidedly expressed the archaic aristocratic ideal (and thus ceased to be produced once the archaic epoch drew to a close), he was a more complex figure, embodying not just the ideal but its concomitant tensions as well. On the one hand he helped the Greek nobility to experience just the kind of eternal perfection that shone out of the *kouroi*. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* gives as an impressive picture of this when describing the Delia festival celebrated by all the Ionians on Delos (147–155),

> where the Ionians, in trailing robes, gather
> with their children and respected wives.
> They please you when they hold their contests,
> remembering you with boxing matches, dance, and song.
> One would say they are immortal, forever unaging,
> if one came upon them, thronged together.
> Seeing the grace of them all, one would delight
> at the sight of men and well-dressed women,
> swift ships and the Ionians' many possessions.

On the other hand, it was Apollo himself who constantly reminded the Greeks of their mortal transience and of the distance between gods and men. And what is more important, he himself displayed many dark and dangerous features that seemingly contradicted the idyllic image. His harmonious lyre went hand in hand with his deadly bow. His youthful strength and perfection easily turned into arrogance. His elevated calmness was interrupted by outbursts of anger resulting from his hurt pride. His sense of order and harmony at times gave way to savage violence. His masculine self-confidence was undermined by signs of mother-dependence. Most of his loves ended by the death of his sweethearts. As all the other gods, however, Apollo was able to contain all these tensions. Indeed, he was able to make use of them, in the course of his festivals turning the dark side into a strength that he used to support the positive ideals. In this regard, the punishments and purifications he went through in myths, and required humans to repeat in their rites, on the most general level perhaps actually were designed to keep the Greek miracle going despite all the strains that it generated.