

PANDORA'S POETICS: EKPHRASIS IN THE ANCIENT EPIC

by

CHRISTINE LOREN ALBRIGHT

(Under the Direction of James H.S. McGregor)

ABSTRACT

Ekphrasis in epic poetry functions as a uterine body inside the larger masculine epic body; its extreme vividness and feminine form offer a pageant of alluring sexual power, seducing the audience into the universe of the poem. The rhetorical technique begins with the description of Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*, where it helps the oral poet accomplish the act of persuasion which occurs between poet and audience. The spiralling form of the ekphrasis offers its audience the irresistible possibility of pre-natal wholeness and divine communion: the scenes of the ekphrasis represent the cosmic whole of Minoan religious ritual, which generally focused on regeneration through the fertile feminine body and which specifically involved the Labyrinth dance. Hesiod, recognizing how ekphrasis functions in oral epic, uses the figure of Pandora as an illustration of ekphrasis in the *Theogony*, which is both a cosmogony about the physical universe and also a commentary on the epic body itself. As each successive epic poet uses ekphrasis more extensively in order to establish himself as an author, ekphrasis evolves until the boundary between it and the rest of the poem is eroded. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* serves as an example of ekphrasis in an evolved state; he applies the characteristics of ekphrasis to the whole of the poem. Ovid follows both Homer and Hesiod in presenting ekphrasis as

a pathway to divine truth, and he manipulates this aspect of ekphrasis in order to conceal the politically subversive statement which the *Metamorphoses* offers.

INDEX WORDS: Ekphrasis, Ecphrasis, Iliad, Homer, Hesiod, Theogony, Pandora, Achilles' shield, Ovid, Metamorphoses, Labyrinth, Poesis

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For Rocco
Decanus Animalium
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
CHAPTER	
One Introduction	1
Oral Poetry and Persuasion	8
Persuasion as Sexual Interaction	19
Masculinity	36
Femininity in Persuasion	41
Kosmos	48
Summary of Project	60
Two Gender, <i>Techne</i> , and the Sexuality of Ekphrasis in the <i>Iliad</i>	63
Masculine Sexual Power in the <i>Iliad</i>	74
Weaving and Sexual Union	85
Hephaistos and Daidala	97
Achilles' Shield as Cosmic Body	106
Hephaistos' Other Products as Feminine Constructions	121
Achilles' Shield as Feminine Body	135
The Circular Form: Shield, Dance, Bed, and Body	144
The Importance of Daidalos, Ariadne, and Knossos	158
Achilles' Shield as Kosmos of Ritual	179

Seeing the Shield	217
Conclusion.....	232
Three Poetic Cosmogony and the Feminine Body of Ekphrasis in Hesiod's	
<i>Theogony</i>	237
Sexual Fluids in Hesiod's Cosmogony	243
The Figure of Zeus	252
The Erotics of Inspiration.....	268
Pandora as Seductive Micro- <i>Kosmos</i> and Commentary on Ekphrasis.....	287
Conclusion.....	321
Four Purpureae Notae: The Transformation of Epic Ekphrasis in Ovid's	
<i>Metamorphoses</i>	324
Minerva and Arachne	339
Tereus, Procne, and Philomela	365
The <i>Metamorphoses</i> as Expanded Ekphrasis	392
Purpureae Notae	418
Pygmalion.....	430
Ovid's Own Commentary on the <i>Metamorphoses</i> in <i>Tristia</i> 1.7	434
Ekphrasis and Exile	437
Conclusion.....	456
Five Conclusion.....	460
BIBLIOGRAPHY	464
APPENDIX.....	495
One Minoan Religion.....	495

Chapter One: Introduction

The fifth-century C.E. Alexandrian lexicographer Hesychius defines the Greek term “ἐκφρασις” with the word “ἐπιθυμία,” which means “sexual desire” or “erotic longing.”¹ At first, his definition seems rather oddly eroticized; ekphrasis, after all, is a literary representation of art or artifact. It is a technique which begins with the Homeric description of Achilles’ shield in Book Eighteen of the *Iliad* and continues thereafter as a convention of poetry, especially of epic poetry. In its most basic sense, ekphrasis is the

¹ Hesychius, *Lexicon*. I have used the nineteenth-century edition of Hesychius by Moriz Wilhelm Constantin Schmidt (1858-1868). Liddell and Scott also offer “ἐπιθυμία” for Hesychius’ definition, following this early edition. Several months after writing the first draft of this introduction, I happened to look at Hesychius’ lexicon on the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) website, www.tlg.uci.edu, and was surprised to find “ἐπιμυσία” instead “ἐπιθυμία.” The Greek word “ἐπιμυσία” only occurs one other time in the entirety of the Greek corpus; it is used by sixth-century C.E. scholar Olympiodorus in his commentary on Plato’s *Gorgias*. It translates as “an exaggerated telling,” “something which follows a telling,” or “narrative upon a telling.” Neologisms are not infrequent during this late period, and “ἐπιμυσία” certainly would make sense as a definition. Still, the discrepancy was troubling to me. The TLG uses a later edition by Kurt Latte, who started work on a new edition of Hesychius before World War I but did not publish the first volume (alpha through delta) until 1953. His second volume (epsilon through omicron) was published posthumously in 1966 (Copenhagen, Denmark: Academie Royale des sciences et des lettres de Danemark). Latte gives “ἐπιμυσία” but cites “ἐπιθυμία” as the original term in the apparatus. Either a transposition occurred at some point which Latte discovered, or Latte thought that the more sexual term ἐπιθυμία had to be incorrect in the manuscript. There is only one manuscript (Venice, Marc. Gr. 622, 15th century), which is apparently quite corrupt. While a trip to Venice to look at the manuscript is definitely called for—and I do hope to investigate this issue further in the future—it is impossible at this time and beyond the scope of the present project. Again, while “ἐπιμυσία” makes sense, I believe that “ἐπιθυμία” is indeed the correct reading. Hesychius, who himself relied on earlier lexicographers, belongs to a tradition in which rhetoric and sexuality are intimately entwined, and he would have had access to many texts in which oratory and sexuality are conflated. Moreover, the ekphrastic speeches of the Second Sophistic, which would have been available to him, are often quite sexual in nature themselves, frequently featuring Eros as a figure. Latte undertook his edition of Hesychius at a time when scholars often did not focus on sexual references in classical texts. (Until the 1970s or so, many overt sexual passages in Greek texts were rendered in Latin or Italian in English translations, making them that much more inaccessible to students of classics, for example.). I believe Latte simply did not understand how an explicitly sexual term like “ἐπιθυμία” could be used as a definition for a rhetorical term. Much work has been done over the last thirty years on the importance of sexuality and gender in the ancient world, and the term “ἐπιθυμία” makes perfect sense if one understands how important sexual imagery is in ancient Greek literature, especially literature about political power, rhetoric, and public performance. Therefore, I have chosen to use “ἐπιθυμία” for the definition. Readers should note that, in general, for ease in reading, throughout this dissertation I have omitted footnotes which appear in the originals whenever I have quoted from secondary sources.

result of the Greek verb “ἐκφράζειν,” which means “to speak out fully” or “to describe or show completely.” Ekphrastic language is extremely detailed and hyper-expressive; it is so visual in nature that ekphrastic passages seem like images within a text rather than verbal compositions. Above all, then, ekphrasis is a demonstration of verbal skill, and, after Homer, it becomes a mark of poetic excellence. Poets such as Aeschylus, Euripides, Apollonius Rhodius, Theocritus, Catullus, Vergil, Ovid, Statius, Dante, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Shelley, Keats, Byron, Seamus Heaney, William Carlos Williams and Rainer Maria Rilke—to name just a few—use the technique. Some even refer to earlier ekphraseis in their own ekphrastic passages, pointing to the powerful allure of such narrative. Epic poets after Homer not only include ekphrasis but use it with increasing frequency and exaggerate its importance within the larger text. The technique also eventually finds its way into prose. It can be found in the early novels of Longus and Heliodorus, for example. During the Second Sophistic, it becomes a standard rhetorical exercise, as exemplified by Philostratus and Lucian. Indeed, while ekphrasis certainly evolves after its first appearance in the *Iliad*, all ekphrasis, to some degree at least, derives from the Homeric examples. In the oral culture of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, verbal skill is a mark of masculine aristocratic privilege, and, like all heroic traits, it stems from masculine sexual vigor. Hesychius’ colorful definition, then, is actually quite insightful and, in fact, explains why the technique is so compelling: in essence, ekphrasis is a pageant of sexual power.

Despite its long history as a literary technique, ekphrasis is somewhat difficult to define. When I began the current project, I had several clear examples of ekphrasis in mind, all of which are descriptions featuring internal narrative: the shield of Achilles in

the *Iliad*; Odysseus' pin in the *Odyssey*; Jason's cloak in the *Argonautica*; Catullus' description of the coverlet on the bed of Peleus and Thetis in poem 64; the pictures in the temple of Juno in Book One of the *Aeneid*, the cloak which Cloanthus wins in Book Five of the *Aeneid*, the bronze doors of the temple of Apollo at the beginning of Book Six of the *Aeneid*, Aeneas' shield in Book Eight; the tapestries of Minerva and Arachne at the beginning of Book Six of the *Metamorphoses*, for example. As I proceeded, however, my own idea of what counted as ekphrasis began to change. I eventually started to see some rather unorthodox passages such as Vergil's description of the underworld in Book Six of the *Aeneid* as examples of the technique, and I have even come to consider the entirety of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Dante's *Inferno* as ekphrastic. My expanding definition now finds company with Plato's discussion of beds in Book Ten of the *Republic*,² Wordsworth's *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*,³ T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*,⁴ any dream sequence in literature,⁵ and even a discussion of vacation photographs on a radio show.⁶ It seems that the term ekphrasis is rather elastic.

Scholars on the subject also seem to struggle when it comes to what exactly constitutes ekphrasis, and studies vary widely. Page DuBois in *History, Rhetorical Description and the Epic: From Homer to Spenser* defines it as, "the verbal description of a work of graphic art" and sees it as the point of intersection between historical text

² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecphrasis> accessed November 1, 2007.

³ The full title of this poem is *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798*. This poem is cited as an example of Romantic ekphrasis on <http://faculty.washington.edu/nh2/classes/330-05.htm> accessed November 1, 2007.

⁴ <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~clark9/ekphrasis/definition.htm> accessed November 4, 2007.

⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecphrasis> accessed November 1, 2007.

⁶ <http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/shelley/medusa/mitchell.html> accessed October 28, 2007.

and epic.⁷ Murray Krieger begins his book with, as an epigraph, a statement by Leo Spitzer about Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*:

It is first of all a description of an urn—that is, it belongs to the genre, known to Occidental literature from Homer and Theocritus to the Parnassians and Rilke, of the *ekphrasis*, the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art, which description implies, in the words of Théophile Gautier, “une transposition d’art,” the reproduction, through the medium of words, of sensuously perceptible *objets d’art* (“*ut pictura poesis*”).⁸

He spends a good part of his first chapter, however, explaining what ekphrasis is for purposes of his own project. He writes:

Let me at the outset define my sense of ekphrasis or rather, more broadly, set the limits on the ways I will suggest in which the term might be profitably used, although these limits will prove rather elastic since I intend to suggest an increasingly expansive reach for the verbal manifestations of the ekphrastic principle. I initiated this enquiry by accepting the narrow meaning given ekphrasis by Leo Spitzer (see the epigraph to my Foreword, above) as the name of a literary genre, or at least a topos, that attempts to imitate in words an object of the plastic arts. As the most commonly accepted use of the word, this remains the heart of the word's meaning for me. Ekphrasis, under this definition, clearly presupposes that one art, poetry, is defining its mission through its dependence on the mission of another art—painting, sculpture, or others....However, I came to feel free to play with the expansiveness of the meaning and application of ekphrasis in view of a fuller history of the term's usage.⁹

Later, he argues that ekphrasis “gives to the language art the extraordinary assignment of seeking to represent the literally unrepresentable”¹⁰ and that it has its roots in “the semiotic desire for the natural sign, the desire, that is, to have the world captured in the word...what, after Derrida, we have come to term the logocentric desire.”¹¹ Andrew

⁷ Page DuBois, *History, Rhetorical Description and the Epic: From Homer to Spenser* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982), 3.

⁸ Murray Krieger, *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xiii.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

Sprague Becker in *The Shield of Achilles and the Poetics of Ekphrasis* simply says that ekphrasis is a “description of a work of visual art” but also qualifies it as “a kind of *mise en abîme*.”¹² While all of these studies are interesting and offer important insights about ekphrasis, none of them succeeds in fully capturing ekphrasis as a genre, and all of them leave room for additional commentary. As Krieger in particular recognizes, the elusive nature of ekphrasis is part of why it is so intriguing.

The term ekphrasis itself first appears in the Greek rhetorical handbooks of the Roman period. These ancient rhetoricians define ekphrasis widely and use the term for any detailed description. Aelius Theon’s handbook, the earliest, probably dates to the first century C.E., and the definitions in the three other extant handbooks echo his language. He writes that ekphrasis is “λόγος περιηγηματικός, ἐναργῶς ὑπ’ ὅψιν ἄγων τὸ δηλούμενον” (a descriptive account, bringing that which is being revealed before the sight).¹³ The second-century C.E. rhetorician Hermogenes writes, “Ἐκφράσις ἐστὶ λόγος περιηγηματικός, ὡς φασιν, ἐναργῆς καὶ ὑπ’ ὅψιν ἄγων τὸ δηλούμενον” (*Prog.*, 10) (Ekphrasis is a descriptive account, as they say, vivid and bringing that which is being revealed before the sight). He also says, “Γίνονται δὲ ἐκφράσεις προσώπων τε καὶ πραγμάτων καὶ κατῶν καὶ τόπων καὶ χρόνων καὶ πολλῶν ἐτέρων” (*Prog.*, 10) (There are ekphraseis of appearances and objects and places and time periods and many other things). Hermogenes offers as examples the expected passages of the Homeric poems but also especially vivid scenes in Thucydides’ history. Aphthonius, whose handbook dates to the fourth or fifth century C.E., offers, “Ἐκφράσις ἐστὶ λόγος περιηγηματικός ὑπ’ ὅψιν ἄγων

¹² Andrew Sprague Becker, *The Shield of Achilles and the Poetics of Ekphrasis* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1995), 2-4.

¹³ Cited *ibid.*, 24-25. Before reading Becker’s book, I had encountered the statements of Hermogenes and Aphthonius, but I am indebted to Becker for the references to the two other handbooks. Becker discusses the presentation of ekphrasis in the rhetorical handbooks extensively in Chapter Two of his book (23-40).

ἐναργῶς τὸ δηλούμενον” (*Prog.*, 12) (Ekphrasis is a descriptive account bringing that which is being revealed vividly before the sight). The latest of the handbooks is that of Nikolaus of Myra and dates to the fifth century C.E. He defines ekphrasis as, “λόγος ἀφηγηματικός...ὅπ’ ὅψιν ἐναργῶς ἄγων τὸ δηλούμενον” (a narrative account...bringing that which is being revealed before the sight).¹⁴ Thus, although all of these authors define ekphrasis as much more than just poetic description of artwork, all of them focus on the vivid nature of the technique and, most notably, that it brings its subject before the eyes of its audience. The rhetorical handbooks often use “ἐνάργεια” (vividness) and “σαφήνεια” (clearness, plainness, the truth) when describing ekphrasis,¹⁵ thus echoing the secondary definition which Hesychius offers in his lexicon: “λόγος ἐναργής” (a vivid narrative).

Indeed, the strikingly visual nature of ekphrasis is really what characterizes the technique, and the project at hand largely focuses on this aspect. I have chosen to look at ekphrasis as a convention of epic poetry, and, in this capacity, I see it, in its most basic form, as a verbal description of graphic art which exhibits internal narrative. However, I am also interested in ekphrasis as a rhetorical device, and, following Murray Krieger’s example above, I will ultimately violate the limits of my own simple definition. All ekphrasis exhibits qualities which harken back to the original Greek examples, but epic poets after Homer manipulate the characteristics of the technique in order to achieve poetic distinction. They stretch its boundaries, experiment with its enormous potential, and, ultimately, use ekphrasis as a secondary medium for poetic expression. Thus, ekphrasis becomes more difficult to define as it develops diachronically. Ekphrasis evolves significantly after its earliest appearances, and this project aims to trace that

¹⁴ Cited *ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

evolution in epic poetry, focusing on Homer, Hesiod and Ovid with a brief discussion of Dante in the conclusion. For me, the evasive quality of ekphrasis is part of its attraction, and, as I argue in this project, this quality stems from the inherent sexuality of the technique.

James A.W. Heffernan, in his book *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*, goes even further. He discusses the shortcomings of earlier definitions, specifically arguing, for example, that Krieger's view of ekphrasis is far too broad. He himself offers that "ekphrasis is the verbal representation of visual representation."¹⁶ Most importantly, he argues that the technique as a genre is gendered—that it is, in fact, feminine; for him, "...ekphrasis is dynamic and obstetric; it typically delivers *from* the pregnant moment of visual art its embryonic narrative impulse, and thus makes explicit the story that visual art tells only by implication."¹⁷ He writes:

Ekphrasis, then, is a literary mode that turns on the antagonism—the commonly gendered antagonism—between verbal and visual representation. Since this contest is fought on the field of language itself, it would be grossly unequal but for one thing: ekphrasis commonly reveals a profound ambivalence towards visual art, a fusion of iconophilia and iconophobia, of veneration and anxiety. To represent a painting or sculpted figure in words is to evoke its power—the power to fix, excite, amaze, entrance, disturb, or intimidate the viewer—even as language strives to keep that power under control.¹⁸

I agree with Heffernan that ekphrasis is feminine and that it is "dynamic and obstetric."¹⁹

In his study, he does not consider the general importance of gender and sexuality in ancient rhetoric, however, and his examination is limited because of it. Ekphrasis is both

¹⁶ James A.W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

a product of the ancient world and, specifically, a product of the performative culture at work in the archaic epics.²⁰ In short, I argue that the technique emanates from a culture in which rhetorical ability and sexual power are intimately linked and evolves from there. Heffernan seeks to introduce readers to the technique as a genre, not to offer a detailed study of archaic Greek language and culture. Still, it is precisely in the earliest examples that evidence for the gendered nature of ekphrasis is found. To a certain degree, then, the present project is a response to his work.

Oral Poetry and Persuasion

In the oral culture of archaic Greek epic, poetry and rhetoric are so closely related that it is difficult to see them as independent pursuits.²¹ Both poets and men who deliver public speeches offer verbal performances before gathered audiences. Both arenas are competitive venues for men to demonstrate masculine prowess. In fact, the close relationship between oral poetry and oratory may be seen in the prologue to Hesiod's *Theogony*, where the poet explains that the Muses help both kings and poets.²² The goddesses turn ordinary men into poets by inspiring them with their breath, and they pour dew on the tongues of kings so that they will be persuasive in their assemblies. Ekphrasis functions in some interstitial space between poetry and rhetoric; it functions as a demonstration of poetic skill at the same time that it serves as a rhetorical device. In the

²⁰ For a discussion of the relationship between eighth-century B.C.E. Greek culture and the world which is apparent in the Homeric epics, see M.I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (New York: Viking Press, 1954; New York: The New York Review of Books, 2002).

²¹ By "archaic" Greek literature, I mean the period from Homer through the lyric poets of the sixth-century B.C.E.. Thus, I basically am following Timothy Gantz' parameters in *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources*, Vol. 1 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), xvii. Gantz extends the period through Aeschylus, however.

²² This prologue will be discussed extensively in Chapter Three.

archaic Greek world, rhetorical success is a form of masculine dominance. When Odysseus beats Thersites with the speaker's *skeptron* (which is a symbol of masculine political power) in Book Two of the *Iliad*, for example, he is publicly demonstrating that Thersites, because he is low-born and not a member of the elite *aristoi*, cannot compete orally with the men who speak in assembly. In the end, ekphrasis operates as part of the rhetorical interaction between poet and audience.

In the Homeric world, the mark of a superior poet is the ability to enrapture an audience with vivid song—to make listeners lose themselves in the telling. In Book Eight of the *Odyssey*, Odysseus listens to Demodokos, the Phaiakian bard, sing about the Trojan War, sobbing under his mantle because of the vividness of the account. He praises Demodokos by saying that he sings about the adventures of the Achaeans as if he had been there himself or had heard about them from someone who was present (8.486-491). Similarly, in the *Theogony*, Hesiod, also of the eighth century B.C.E., tells his audience:

εἰ γὰρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδέϊ θυμῷ
 ἄζηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὸς
 Μουσάων θεράπων κλεῖα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων
 ὑμνήσει μάκαράς τε θεοὺς οἳ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν,
 αἰψ' ὃ γε δυσφροσυνέων ἐπιλήθεται οὐδέ τι κηδέων
 μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων. (98-103)

(If someone, holding fresh grief in his heart, aggrieved, dreads his heavy heart, but a singer, a servant of the Muses, hymns the glory of ancient men and the gods who hold Mount Olympus, straightway the mournful man forgets, and does not remember his care. The gift of the gods diverts his mind quickly.)

Skilled poets make what is not real seem real; they make their own stories preferable to reality. Indeed, after Odysseus, who is an especially skilled storyteller, tells the Phaiakians about his own adventures in the underworld, Alkinoos praises his account first

by saying that Odysseus does not seem like someone who is lying and secondly by explicitly comparing him to a singer (11.362-369). As Homer tells his audience, the Phaiakians are held in thrall, stricken to silence, listening to Odysseus (13.1-3). What matters to the Phaiakians is that Odysseus has made his account seem true and, because of the vividness of his storytelling, thus captivated them. In fact, the effect that a talented singer has on his audience is remarkably similar to the effect of the drug which Helen adds to the wine when Telemachus visits Menelaos in Book Four of the *Odyssey*.

Ἐνθ' αὖ' ἄλλ' ἐνόησ' Ἑλένη Διὸς ἐκγεγαυῖα·
 αὐτίκ' ἄρ' ἐς οἶνον βάλε φάρμακον, ἔνθεν ἔπινον,
 νηπενθές τ' ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἀπάντων.
 ὃς τὸ καταβρόῃειεν, ἐπεὶ κρητῆρι μιγείη,
 οὐ κεν ἐγήμερίος γε βάλοι κατὰ δάκρυ παρειῶν,
 οὐδ' εἴ οἱ κατατεθναίῃ μήτηρ τε πατήρ τε,
 οὐδ' εἴ οἱ προπάροιθεν ἀδελφεὸν ἢ φίλον υἱὸν
 χαλκῷ δηϊόφεν, ὃ δ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ὄρῳτο. (4.219-226)

(Then Helen, born of Zeus, thought of the next thing. Right away she put a drug into the wine from which they were drinking, free of sorrow and without gall, which would cause one to forget all sorrows. Whoever should drink it, once it was mixed in the krater, for that day would shed no tear, not if his mother and father died, not if men killed his brother or his dear son with bronze with him there, and he saw it with his eyes.)

Helen, who herself is so beautiful that she makes men abandon all reason, seeks to make the uncomfortable visit with Telemachus less awkward. Her drug makes men forget their sorrows just as Hesiod's poet makes men forget their cares.

Homer at times uses the verb “θέλγειν” (to charm, to beguile) and its cognates in describing the action of a skilled poet. For example, in Book One of the *Odyssey*, Penelope descends from her chamber and tells Phemios, the singer who performs for the suitors at Odysseus' palace, to stop singing about the exploits of the Trojan war heroes, which for her are painful to hear. She says: “Φήμει, πολλὰ γὰρ ἄλλα βροτῶν θελκτήρια οἶδας, ἔργ' ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, τά τε κλείουσιν ἀοιδοί” (1.337-338) (Phemios, you know

many other charming stories for mortals, the deeds of men and gods, which singers celebrate). She calls the stories of the singer “*ῥαλκτῆρια*” (charming). The verb suggests action which enchants and deceives, and it is used with some frequency to indicate the action of magic or a drug. For example, in Book Twenty-One of the *Iliad*, Achilles uses the verb when, in battle with the river Skamandros he fears that the river will kill him, he says that his mother deceived him when she said that Apollo’s arrows would kill him: “*ἀλλὰ φίλη μήτηρ, ἣ με ψεύδεσσιν ἔθελγεν*” (21.276) (But my dear mother, who beguiled me with falsehoods). Here, Achilles believes that his mother has persuaded him by means of falsehoods to believe something which is not true.²³ Later in that book, Homer uses the verb to describe how Apollo tricks Achilles into chasing him by likening himself to Agenor: “*δόλῳ δ’ ἄρ’ ἔθελγεν Ἀπόλλων, ὥς αἰεὶ ἔλποιτο κινήσεσθαι ποσὶν οἴσι*” (21.604-605) (Apollo beguiled him with the trick, so that he hoped always with his feet to catch up with him). In the account of Odysseus’ visit with Circe in Book Ten of the *Odyssey*, Homer uses the verb to describe Circe’s potions and spells, which overpower their victims. (10. 291, 10. 318, and 10.326) When Zeus conjures up a duststorm against the ships of the Achaians in Book Twelve of the *Iliad*, Homer says: “*αὐτὰρ Ἀχαιῶν θέλγε νόον, Τρωσὶν δὲ καὶ Ἑκτορι κῦδος ὅπαζε*” (12.254-255) (But he beguiled the minds of the Achaians, and he granted glory to the Trojans and to Hektor). Zeus uses the storm to distract the minds of the Achaians so that the Trojans may push forward. The verb indicates a temporary hijacking of one’s mental power. When it is used for singers, it suggests that good poets distract and overpower the minds of their audiences in the same

²³ It is worth noting here that, when the Muses visit Hesiod as he tends his sheep on Mount Helikon, they say that they know how to relate “*ψεύδεα*” which seem like true accounts. See Chapter Three for a discussion of the term.

way a god deceives by changing his appearance or a drug works to manipulate one's mind.

In Book Seventeen of the *Odyssey*, the swineherd Eumaios reports to Penelope that the stranger has been telling him stories about his travels for three days. Eumaios compares the stranger, who of course is Odysseus in disguise, to a singer:

ὥς δ' ὅτ' αἰοιδὸν ἀνὴρ ποτιδέσκεται, ὅς τε θεῶν ἔξ
 ἀείδῃ δεδαῶς ἔπε' ἱμερόεντα βροτοῖσι,
 τοῦ δ' ἄμστον μεμάασιν ἀκουέμεν, ὅππότε' ἀείδῃ.
 ὥς ἐμὲ κείνους ἔδελγε παρήμενος ἐν μεγάροισι.
 (17. 518-521)

(Just as when a man looks at a singer, who has learned from the gods the desire-inducing words he sings for mortals, and they listen to him insatiably, eager to hear, whenever he sings. So that man beguiled me sitting with me in the halls.)

In this passage, Eumaios calls a singer's words "*ἱμερόεντα*." The adjective is related to the Greek word "*ἵμερος*" (longing, desire) and means "desire-producing" or "charged with yearning." It is a sexual word, and its personification Himeros is one of Aphrodite's attendants in Hesiod. Thus, the singer uses sexually stimulating words to enchant and engender sexual desire in his audience. The verb "*ἔλγειν*" is even used explicitly for the effect of sexual desire later in Book Eighteen, when Penelope shows herself to the suitors. Athena makes Penelope more beautiful while she sleeps for the specific purpose of stirring the passion of the suitors, and, when Penelope descends from her chamber, Homer says:

ἢ δ' ὅτε δὴ μνηστῆρας ἀφίκετο δῖα γυναικῶν,
 στῆ ῥα παρὰ σταθμὸν τέγεος πύκα ποιητοῖο
 ἄντα παρειάων σχομένη λιπαρὰ κρήδεμνα·
 ἀμφίπολος δ' ἄρα οἱ κεδνὴ ἐκάτερθε παρέστη.
 τῶν δ' αὐτοῦ λῦτο γούνατ', ἔρω δ' ἄρα θυμὸν ἔδελχθεν,
 πάντες δ' ἠρέσαντο παρὰ λεχέεσσι κλιθῆναι. (18.208-213)

(When she came to the suitors, shining among women, she stood by a pillar, supporting the close-joined roof, holding her shining veil before her face. A loyal female attendant stood beside her on either side. Their knees gave way, and their hearts were charmed by *eros*, and all of them prayed that they would lie beside her in bed.)

The suitors are enchanted because the force of *eros* has overpowered their brains. The effect which a skilled singer has on his audience, then, is likened to the act of seduction. The singer creates a song so vivid and beautiful that it dominates the minds of those in his audience in the same way *eros* overpowers the mind.

The verb *τέρπειν* (to cheer, delight, gladden) is also used with some frequency in archaic poetry to indicate the effect of a singer. When Odysseus, Ajax, and Phoenix approach Achilles in Book Nine of the *Iliad* (9.182-191), Achilles is singing to himself while playing a particularly well-wrought lyre. Homer uses the verb several times in the passage for the pleasure Achilles takes in his own singing. In Book One of the *Odyssey*, when Telemachos rebukes his mother for telling the singer Phemios to stop singing, he says:

μηῆτερ ἐμή, τί τ' ἄρα φρονέεις ἐρίηρον ἀοιδὸν
τέρπειν ὅππῃ οἱ νόος ὀρνυται; οὐ νύ τ' ἀοιδοὶ
αἵτιοι, ἀλλὰ ποδὶ Ζεὺς αἴτιος, ὅς τε δίδωσιν
ἀνδράσιν ἀλφειστῆσιν ὅπως ἐθέλῃσιν ἐκάστω.
τούτῳ δ' οὐ νέμεις Δαναῶν κακὸν οἶτον αἰεῖδεν·
τὴν γὰρ ἀοιδὴν μᾶλλον ἐπικλείουσ' ἄνδρωποι,
ἢ τις ἀκούοντεσσι νεωτάτῃ ἀμφιπέλῃται. (1.346-353)

(My mother, why do you begrudge that the worthy singer delights himself however his mind inspires him? It is not the singers who are to blame, but it is no doubt Zeus who is to blame, who gives to men who labor for bread—to each one—however he is minded. There is nothing wrong with his singing the sad fate of the Danaans. For men give more praise to that song which is the newest to come round to those listening.)

A few lines later, he tells the suitors to be quiet as well:

Μητρὸς ἐμῆς μνηστῆρες, ὑπέρβιον ὕβριν ἔχοντες,
νῦν μὲν δαινύμενοι τερπώμεθα, μηδὲ βοητὺς

ἔστω, ἐπεὶ τό γε καλὸν ἀκουέμεν ἐστὶν ἀοιδοῦ
 τοιοῦδ' οἷος ὅδ' ἐστί, θεοῖς ἐναλίγκιος αὐδῆν.
 (1.368-371)

(You suitors of my mother, acting with overbearing hubris, now, dining, let us take delight, and let there be no yelling, since it is a good thing to listen to a singer such as this, who is like the gods in his voice.)

Here, the verb is used for both the pleasure a singer provides and the pleasure of the feast.

Later, in Book Eight, it indicates the delight of Demodokos' singing:

Ταῦτ' ἄρ' ἀοιδὸς ᾄδειε περικλυτός· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
 πορφύρεον μέγα φᾶρος ἑλὼν χειρὶ στιβαρῇσι
 καὶ κεφαλῇς εἵρυσσε, κάλυψε δὲ καλὰ πρόσωπα·
 αἶδετο γὰρ Φαίηκας ὑπ' ὀφρύσι δάκρυα λείβων.
 ἦ τοι ὅτε λήξειεν ἀείδων θεῖος ἀοιδός,
 δάκρυ' ὁμορξάμενος κεφαλῇς ἄπο φᾶρος ἔλεσκε
 καὶ δέπας ἀμφικύπελλον ἑλὼν σπείσασκε θεοῖσιν·
 αὐτὰρ ὅτ' ἄψ' ἄρχοιτο καὶ ὀτρύνειαν ἀείδειν
 Φαίηκων οἱ ἄριστοι, ἐπεὶ τέρποντ' ἐπέεσιν,
 ἄψ' Ὀδυσσεὺς κατὰ κῆρτα καλυψάμενος γοάασκεν.
 (8.83-92)

(The very famous singer sang such things. But Odysseus, taking in his large hands his great purple mantle, covered his head and his his fine face. For he was ashamed before the Phaiakians at tears running down from his eyes. Whenever the godlike singer would pause in his singing, he would take the mantle from his head, wiping away his tears, and taking a double-handled cup would pour libations to the gods. But whenever the greatest among the Phaiakians would call upon him to sing and he would begin again, since they delighted in his words, then Odysseus, covering his head, would mourn deeply.)

Again, Demodokos sings so well and with such vividness that Odysseus is moved to tears, as if he is reliving the fighting around Troy. The poet specifically points out that the Phaiakians delight in the words of the singer.

The related noun “τέρψις” (delight, pleasure) is used explicitly with “ἀοιδῆς” (singer) by Hesiod at *Theogony* 917 stating how the Muses love feasts and the pleasure of a singer. Like “θέλγειν,” “τέρπειν” is also used for the pleasure of sexual intercourse. For

example, in Book Fourteen of the *Iliad*, the poet uses the verb to indicate the pleasure Zeus will enjoy in sleeping with Hera:

Ἥρῃ, κείσσε μὲν ἔσσι καὶ ὕστερον ὀρμηθῆναι,
 νῶϊ δ' ἄγ' ἐν φιλότῃ τραπεύομεν εὐνηθέντε.
 οὐ γάρ πώ ποτέ μ' ὦδε θεῶς ἔρος οὐδὲ γυναικὸς
 θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι περιπροχυθεὶς ἐδάμασσεν,
 οὐδ' ὅπ' ἤρασάμην Ἴξιονίης ἀλόχοιο,
 ἢ τέκε Πειπίθου, θεόφιν μῆστωρ' ἀνάλαυτον·
 οὐδ' ὅτε περ Δανάης καλλισφύρου Ἀκρисиῶννης,
 ἢ τέκε Περσῆα, πάντων ἀριδείκετον ἀνδρῶν·
 οὐδ' ὅτε Φοίνικος κούρης τηλεκλειτοῖο,
 ἢ τέκε μοι Μίνων τε καὶ ἀντίθεον Ῥαδάμανθυν·
 οὐδ' ὅτε περ Σεμέλης οὐδ' Ἀλκμήνης ἐνὶ Θήβῃ,
 ἢ ῥ' Ἡρακλῆα κρατερόφρονα γείνατο παῖδα·
 ἢ δὲ Διώνυσον Σεμέλῃ τέκε, χάσμα βροτοῖσιν·
 οὐδ' ὅτε Δήμητρος καλλιπλοκάμοιο ἀνάσσης,
 οὐδ' ὅπ' ἄντε Λητοῦς ἐρικυδέος, οὐδὲ σεῦ αὐτῆς,
 ὥς σέο νῦν ἔραμαι καὶ με γλυκὺς ἥμερος αἶρεϊ. (14.313-329)

(Hera, it will be fitting to go to that place later, but let us two from the marriage bed take our delight²⁴ in lovemaking. For never before has erotic desire for a goddess or mortal woman subdued me, melted the heart in my breast, as now; not when I had sex with the wife of Ixion, who bore me Peirithoos, equal to the gods in counsel; not when I had sex with beautiful-stepping Danae daughter of Akrisios, who bore me Perseus, conspicuous among all men; not when I had sex with the daughter of far-famed Phoinix, who bore me Minos and godlike Rhadamanthys; not when I loved Semele or Alcmene in Thebes, who gave birth to my son strong-hearted Heracles. Semele bore Dionysus, pleasure for mortals. Not when I loved lovely-haired queen Demeter; nor when I bedded radiant Leto; not even you yourself before; as now I want you sexually and sweet desire seizes me.)

Again, the pleasure which a singer gives to his audience is similar to the pleasure of sexual intercourse. It is worth noting that in this episode Hera has made herself especially appealing to Zeus by bathing, anointing herself with ambrosia, combing and

²⁴ Some translators (Lattimore for example) interpret *τραπεύομεν* as a form of the verb *τρέπω* (to turn). Both Liddell and Scott and Richard John Cunliffe, in *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (London: Blackie and Son Limited, 1924; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 378, include this form as an epic form of *τέρπειν*.

curling her hair, and adorning herself with beautiful garments. In fact, when Zeus first sees Hera after her special toilet, he is completely captivated:

Ἥρην δὲ κραιπνῶς προσεβήσετο Γάργαρον ἄκρον
 Ἴδης ὑψηλῆς· ἶδε δὲ νεφεληγερέτα Ζεύς.
 ὥς δ' ἶδεν, ὥς μιν ἔρωσ' πυκινὰς φρένας ἀμφεκάλυψεν,
 οἷον ὅτε πρῶτόν περ ἐμισγέσθην φιλότῃτι,
 εἰς εὐνὴν φοιτῶντε, φίλους λήθοντε τοκῆας.
 (14.292-296)

(But swift-footed Hera went from to the top of Gargaros of towering Ida; cloud-gathering Zeus saw her, and when he saw her, thick erotic desire enclouded his wits, as when they first mingled in love, going to bed together, escaping the notice of their dear parents.)

Her enhanced appearance stuns him, and the force of *eros* covers up his “φρένας,” which is the area of the body where wits and reason exist. In other words, Hera’s appearance is so alluring that Zeus loses his sense of purpose and forgets the war; he only desires the pleasure of sex with her.²⁵ The word *τέρπειν* is also used in the *Odyssey* when Odysseus and Penelope are finally reunited to describe their lovemaking:

Τὼ δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν φιλότῃτος ἐταρπήτην ἐρατεινῆς,
 τερπέσθην μύθοισι, πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἐνέποντε...(23.300-301)

(But when they had delighted in lovely lovemaking, they delighted in words, and told their stories to each other...)

This passage is important because it underscores the fact that *τέρπειν* is used both for the pleasure of sex and for the pleasure of listening to words. In other words, the act of listening is explicitly eroticized. The words of a skilled singer are seductive in the same way that beauty is seductive, and they provide a pleasure which is similar to sex.

²⁵ The use of the word *ἀμφεκάλυψεν* brings to mind Hesiod’s description of the Muses’ manner of inspiring poets in the prologue to the *Theogony*. He describes them setting out at night, veiled in a mist: “ἔνθεν ἀπορνούμεναι, κεκαλυμμέναι ἥερι πολλῷ, ἐννύχαια στεῖχον περικαλλέα ὅσσαν ἰεῖσαι...” (9-10) Both accounts include the verb *καλύπτω* (to cover up, conceal). Chapter Three includes an extensive discussion of the erotic nature of the Muses and the sexuality of their relationship with poets in Hesiod’s poems.

In the Homeric epics, the words of skilled speakers and poets are described with words which suggest physical, visible beauty. For example, when Odysseus is with the Phaiakians and one of the young men insults him by suggesting that he does not look like an athlete, Odysseus replies:

*ξεῖν', οὐ καλὸν ἔειπες· ἀτασθάλῳ ἀνδρὶ ἔοικας.
οὕτως οὐ πάντεσσι θεοὶ χαρίεντα διδοῦσιν
ἀνδράσιν, οὔτε φωνὴν οὔτ' ἄρ' φρένας οὔτ' ἀγορητύν.
ἄλλος μὲν γὰρ εἶδος ἀκινδύντερος πέλει ἀνὴρ,
ἀλλὰ θεὸς μορφὴν ἔπεισι στέφει, οἳ δέ τ' ἐς αὐτὸν
τερπόμενοι λεύσσουσιν· ὁ δ' ἀσφαλέως ἀγορεύει
αἰδοῖ μειλιχίῃ, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγρομένοισιν,
ἐρχόμενον δ' ἀνὰ ἄστρ' ἰδοῖ θεὸν ὥς εἰσοροῶσιν,
ἄλλος δ' αὖ εἶδος μὲν ἀλίγκιος ἀθανάτοισιν,
ἀλλ' οὔ οἱ χάρις ἀμφιπεριστέφεται ἐπέεσσιν,
ὥς καὶ σοὶ εἶδος μὲν ἀριπρεπέες, οὐδὲ κεν ἄλλως
οὔδ' ἔθ' ἔτι τεύξειε, νόον δ' ἀποφώλιός ἐστι.
ὦρινάς μοι θυμὸν ἐνὶ στήθεσσι φίλοισιν
εἰπὼν οὐ κατὰ κόσμον· (8.166-179)*

(Friend, you did not speak well; you seem like a reckless man. Thus the gods do not give to all men gracefulness, neither in stature nor in wits nor in oratory. For one man turns out to be less remarkable for physical beauty but the god puts beautiful form on his words, and men delight in looking upon him. He speaks in the assembly without fault and with sweet modesty, and he very much stands out among those gathered and for those who look upon him as a god as he goes along in the city. But another man is like the immortals in his physical beauty, but no grace adorns his words—as for you the physical appearance is readily apparent and so a god would not judge otherwise, but you are worthless when it comes to your brains—you have stirred the anger deep in my dear breast by speaking in such a disorderly manner.)

Odysseus cleverly puts his challenger in his place by suggesting that the young man is good-looking but a clumsy speaker. In explaining that the gods often bestow the gift of clever speech upon those who are not-so-good-looking, Odysseus says that a god encircles such a man's "μορφὴν" (form, shape, appearance, especially of humans) with words and that those words delight (τέρπειν) those who look upon him. Odysseus concedes that the young man is indeed beautiful in appearance but that no grace (χάρις)

adorns his words. Finally, he says that the young man has spoken “οὐ κατὰ κόσμον” (not according to order). In this passage, Odysseus conflates clever words with physical appearance and implies that they are adornments like garlands, beautiful garments, or jewelry. In other words, clever words enhance physical appearance in the same way Hera’s toilet enhances hers.

Later, when Odysseus is telling the story of his adventures to the Phaiakians, Alkinoos says:

*ὦ Ὀδυσσεῦ, τὸ μὲν οὐ τί σ’ εἶσκομεν εἰσορόωντες
ἡπεροπῆά τ’ ἔμεν καὶ ἐπὶ κλοπον, οἶά τε πολλοὺς
βόσκει γαῖα μέλαινα πολυσπερέας ἀνθρώπους
ψεύδεά τ’ ἀστύνοντας, ὅθεν κέ τις οὐδ’ ἴδοιτο·
σοὶ δ’ ἐπὶ μὲν μορφῇ ἐπέων, ἔνι δὲ φρένες ἐσθλαί,
μῦθον δ’ ὥς ὅτ’ ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας,
πάντων Ἀργείων σέο τ’ αὐτοῦ κήδεα λυγρά. (11.363-369)*

(Oh, Odysseus, as we look upon you we do not liken you to a lying or thievish man, the sort of men whom the black earth breeds, who wander widely making up falsehoods, from which no one can learn anything. There is a beautiful appearance to your words, and you have excellent wits, and expertly, just as a singer, you have told your account of your and all of the Argives’ pitiful hardships.)

Here, Alkinoos compares Odysseus to a singer and praises him for telling his story expertly and explicitly states that they who are looking at him do not imagine that he is lying. Thus, the visual connection between singer and audience is apparent. More important, though, is Alkinoos’ statement that there is *μορφῇ ἐπέων* (a beauty, a shape of words) to Odysseus’ account. Odysseus’ compelling words have appearance just as does a good-looking person. His words are embodied, and they are visibly beautiful.

It is difficult today to reproduce the effect of oral poetry on an audience, but one modern equivalent might be the effect of a good film. During particularly action-packed or exciting scenes, viewers will often sit forward in their seats, feeling the urgency of the

action. Often, viewers feel their own hearts beating rapidly as the suspense mounts. Viewers who watch horror films delight in being scared by the sudden appearances of a killer or ghost, and often scream loudly when surprised as if they themselves are in danger. Romantic scenes can be titillating for audiences, and steamy ones are frequently sexually arousing. Thus, audiences do not simply watch films; they participate in the artificial world which a film constructs. Viewers lose their sense of self when watching—a situation which is revealed whenever one suddenly becomes aware of sitting in a movie theater watching a movie after temporarily “forgetting” oneself in the world of the film. Film is primarily a visual medium and certainly produces this sense more easily than an oral performance, but the effect is what ancient singers strive to bring about in their audiences. They attempt to make their listeners forget themselves in the alternative universe of their song; they strive to convince their listeners to forfeit their own self-awareness and identity in order to participate in the action of the song as when Odysseus cries at Demodokos’ song in Book Eight. The interaction between oral poet and audience is, at its core, about persuasion and delight, and ekphrasis should be examined specifically with this interaction in mind. Ekphrasis resides at the intersection of oral poetry, persuasion, and sexual delight.

Persuasion as Sexual Interaction

To fast forward to the classical period, scholarship has clearly demonstrated the Athenian political behavior is expressed in sexual terms.²⁶ In classical Athens, verbal

²⁶ See, for example, Christine Albright, *Eros in Thucydides* (M.A. thesis, University of Georgia, 1992); Victoria Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins; The Erotics of Democracy in Classical Athens* (Princeton:

persuasion was an especially important part of political power, for political success there was tied to the ability to verbally express oneself in the *ekklesia*. Writing certainly was used for political administration, but, in general, the culture of Athens was still largely oral. In Athenian literature, therefore, political persuasion is often presented as an exercise of verbal seduction. In fact, the verb “πειθεῖν” is used throughout Greek literature to mean both “to persuade” and “to seduce,” and many Athenian authors exploit the double-meaning of the verb to comment on the nature of politics. Persuasion is a mark of democratic civilization and is often opposed to force, which in Athens is associated with the hubristic behavior of tyrants and barbarians. R.G.A. Buxton, in *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy: A Study of Peitho*, offers, as he calls it, “a three-fold analogy: Greeks: barbarians::mankind: beasts::peitho [(persuasion)]:bia [(force)].”²⁷

The rhetorical model which is most at work in Athenian literature is the male homosexual relationship between “ἐραστής” (lover: the older man) and “ἐρώμενος” (the one who is loved: the youth). This relationship was almost institutionalized in Athens, and served as an integral part of the Athenian democracy, a political system in which the appearance of masculinity was hyper-important. Athenian men, though they were greatly outnumbered by others living in Athens—women, slaves, children, foreigners, for example—were at the top of the Athenian socio-political pyramid, and they were

Princeton University Press, 2002); Andrew Scholtz, *Erastes tou demou: Erotic Imagery in Political Contexts in Thucydides and Aristophanes* (Ph.D. diss. Yale University, 1997); David Cohen, “Law, Society and Homosexuality in Classical Athens” *Past and Present*, 117 (1987): 3-21; David Cohen, *Law, Sexuality and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Sara Monson, “Citizen as Erastes: Erotic Imagery and the Idea of Reciprocity in the Periclean Funeral Oration.” *Political Theory* 22: 253-76; Eva Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985).

²⁷ R.G.A. Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy: A Study of Peitho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 62. As he says on 31, “...*peitho* is the seductive persuasion which may have been what induced Helen to go off with Paris. Yet it is also the power used and the effect produced in oratory in contexts which we would regard as non-erotic—but to the Greeks *all peitho* was ‘seductive.’ *Peitho* is a continuum within which divine and secular, erotic and non-erotic come together.”

expected to perform in a dominant position in all interactions including sexual interactions except with each other, in which case they had to mind the equal masculine status of their fellow citizens. Sexual relationships among those in the elite sphere of the male Athenian citizen focused on persuasion; while an Athenian man could force his wife and slaves to gratify his sexual appetite, he had to rely on persuasion, or rather seduction, in sexual relationships with Athenian youths. Vase paintings show men offering gifts to potential ἐρώμενοι, who always face their seducers as equals, trying to convince the youths to yield to their sexual advances. Laws against hubris made it illegal for men to force themselves on Athenian youths. Athenian society maintained strict prescriptions for sexual behavior between Athenian men and their young lovers. Though it no doubt happened with some frequency, bodily penetration of any kind was prohibited; penetration was considered emasculating and thus threatening to the political legitimacy of the youths, who would one day become adult Athenian citizens.²⁸ Athenian men who allowed themselves to be sexually penetrated—and thus assumed the position of women and slaves—even risked formal disenfranchisement from the Athenian assembly.²⁹ Thus,

²⁸ See K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 103: “There seems to be little doubt that in Greek eyes the male who breaks the ‘rules’ of legitimate eros detaches himself from the ranks of male citizenry and classifies himself with women and foreigners; the prostitute is assumed to have broken the rules because his economic dependence on clients forces him to do what they want him to do; and, conversely, any male believed to have done whatever his senior homosexual partner(s) wanted him to do is assumed to have prostituted himself.” Sexual penetration of an Athenian youth was actually considered an act of hubris against his political persona. Thucydides himself uses the Greek verb ὑβρίζειν (to commit hubris against) to describe what must be rape several times in his history. For example, at 8.74.3, Thucydides writes that during the Reign of Terror by the Four Hundred in Athens, ...καὶ ὅτι αὐτῶν καὶ παῖδες ὑβρίζονται... (...that women and children were being violated). For a discussion of the nature of hubris, see Cohen, “Law, Society, and Homosexuality in Classical Athens,” 7. “First of all, it must be emphasized the the noun ‘hubris’ and the verb ‘hubrizein’ have a strong sexual connotation. Many authors, for example, refer to captive women and children taken off to suffer hubris. (Thucydides 8.74; Plato *Laws* 874c; Herodotus 3.80, 4.114; Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1373a35; Demosthenes 19, 309)...According to Aristotle, however, hubris is any behavior which dishonors and shames the victim for the pleasure or gratification of the offender (*Rhetoric* 1378b).” For a general discussion of hubris, see Douglas M. MacDowell, “Hybris in Athens,” *Greece & Rome* 23 (1976): 14-31.

²⁹ See, for example, Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*.

while Athenian men enjoyed a pronounced dominance over women, slaves, children and foreigners, they only assumed a temporary, slightly more masculine position over their “*ἐρώμενοι*.”

Thucydides uses a sexual model for political power in his history of the Peloponnesian War which illustrates the importance of persuasion in the democracy. In Book Two of the history, Pericles makes a speech to the Athenian citizenry in honor of those who have died in battle while fighting for the city, describing how every citizen should act towards the city. He writes that every citizen should, “... τὴν τῆς πόλεως δύναμιν καθ’ ἡμέραν ἔργῳ θεωμένους καὶ ἐραστὰς γιγνομένους αὐτῆς...” (2.43.1) (revere the power of the city every day and become her lovers). At this moment, Pericles uses the term “*ἐραστής*” which means “lover” and which is commonly used to signify the older man in a typical, idealized Athenian male homosexual relationship.³⁰ Thucydides fully develops his erotic political theme in Book Six, in his narrative about the assassination of Hipparchus, the brother of the Athenian tyrant Hippias, by Harmodius and Aristogeiton, two male lovers.³¹ Once again, Thucydides uses the term “*ἐραστής*” to describe both Aristogeiton, Harmodius’s older lover, and Hipparchus, who attempts to make Harmodius his own “*ἐρώμενος*” (beloved). Thucydides writes:

γεγμένον δὲ Ἀρμόδιου ὥρα ἡλικίας λαμπροῦ Ἀριστογείτων, ἀνὴρ τῶν ἀστῶν, μέσος πολίτης, ἐραστής ὃν εἶξεν αὐτόν. πειραθεῖς δὲ ὁ Ἀρμόδιος ὑπὸ Ἰππάρχου τοῦ Πεισιστράτου καὶ οὐ πεισθεὶς καταγορεύει τῷ Ἀριστογείτονι. ὁ δὲ ἐρωτικῶς

³⁰ For a general examination of Athenian male homosexuality, see Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*. Also see David M. Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990); *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* eds. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990); and Bruce S. Thornton, *Eros: The Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1997). Thornton argues that most modern work on ancient sexuality privileges male homosexuality when most ancient texts seem to treat the practice at least as abnormal if not reprehensible.

³¹ Until somewhat recently, this narrative at 6.54-59 has been considered by most scholars to be a digression from the primary text. See Albright, *Eros in Thucydides* for an extensive discussion of the significance of this narrative in the history and Thucydides’s sexual model in general.

περιαλγήσας καὶ φοβηθεὶς τὴν Ἱππάρχου δύναμιν μὴ βίᾳ προσαγάγηται αὐτόν, ἐπιβουλεύει εὐθὺς ὥς ἀπὸ τῆς ὑπαρχούσης ἀξιώσεως κατὰλυσιν τῇ τυραννίδι.
(6.54.2-3)

(While Harmodius was radiant in his youth, Aristogeiton who was a citizen of the middle class, held him, being his lover. Harmodius, when Hipparchus, son of Peisistratus, made an attempt to seduce him but did not persuade him, told everything to Aristogeiton. The lover, being very much troubled and fearing the power of Hipparchus—that he might lead Harmodius away by force—immediately planned an overthrow of the tyranny, as best he could from his present position.)

Thucydides uses “πειροθεῖς” (a participle of “πειροῖν,” “to make an attempt on”) to describe Hipparchus’s action towards Harmodius. Indeed, “πειροῖν” is frequently used in Greek literature to indicate the action of a seducer on the seduced. Thucydides describes Harmodius as “οὐ πεισθεῖς” (not persuaded), a negated participle of the verb “πείθειν” (to persuade, to seduce). Thucydides’ use of “πειροῖν” and “πείθειν” in the Harmodius and Aristogeiton story colors the interpretation of these two verbs for the entire history. Both verbs are used with frequency throughout the work to describe political situations, but they are most frequently used in Book Six, where they are likely to be read in terms of the erotic narrative about the tyrannicides.

Thucydides uses “πειροῖν” to describe Alcibiades’s action on the people in a speech made by Nicias, Alcibiades political and rhetorical opponent, in which Nicias argues that the Athenians should not sail to Sicily (6.38.2). In this passage, Nicias’s use of the verb suggests that Alcibiades and his political allies make attempts at seducing the Athenian populace by delivering pleasurable but false speeches which manipulate the people into trusting them. Thucydides uses “πείθειν” to describe Alcibiades’ rhetorical action at 6.17.1, where Alcibiades, speaking in favor of the Sicilian expedition, says that the Peloponnesians had been persuaded by him before, trusting in his words and passionate

spirit.³² Thucydides, we see, uses the same words to describe both the action of a lover on a youth he is trying to seduce and the action of a speaker on his audience in a political assembly, thereby suggesting that a speaker attempts to seduce his audience when he speaks. The model is certainly at work when Thucydides writes that, after Alcibiades addresses the *ekklesia*, the Athenians were overcome by “ἔρωζ ἐκπλεῦσαι” (6.24.3) (an erotic longing to sail). Alcibiades’ persuasive speech brings about erotic desire in his audience, then. Thucydides also uses such words as “ἐπιθυμία,” (erotic desire) “ἐπιθυμέω,” (to desire erotically) and “ὀργή” (sexual passion) throughout his history to describe political action and political speech.

Thucydides uses his erotic model for the relationship of a citizen to his city to explicate the successes and failures of the major political figures in the history. Political leaders are expected to follow Pericles’s advice in Book Two and become lovers for the city of Athens; in other words, they are expected to treat their fellow citizens according to the accepted Athenian standards for the sexual behavior of “ἔρασταί.” Thus, characters in the history who lead the Athenians in the dominant role of political “ἔρασταί” but never attempt to dominate their fellow citizens by force in the manner of the tyrannical Hipparchus are successful leaders while those who appear to dominate the Athenians in a tyrannical manner are regarded with suspicion and fail to achieve success politically. Pericles serves as Thucydides’s example of the ideal political “ἔραστής.” Alcibiades, by contrast, is ultimately unsuccessful because he is unpredictable and ruled by passion. Although he does manage to seduce his fellow citizens into following his lead many

³² Here, Alcibiades uses the word *ὀργή* (passion), which can mean “anger,” “passion,” or even “madness.” It is often used to indicate erotic passion, however. Thucydides therefore suggests that Alcibiades is persuasive because he infuses his speeches with erotic passion. It is interesting to note at this point that Aristotle discusses the use of passion as a vehicle for persuasion in the *Rhetoric*.

times, the populace eventually interprets his behavior as a violation of the sexual code for “ἐρασταί.” The Athenians believe that the mutilation of the Herms, which takes place the night before they are to set sail for Sicily, is a symbolic emasculation of their political power as Athenian male citizens.³³ The Athenians associated the mutilation with Alcibiades and, because they were already suspicious of his immoderate, unrestrained behavior, turned on him.³⁴ Thus, Thucydides presents masculinity as something that can be threatened and is to be guarded as part of Athenian citizenship.

Fifth-century tragic authors also often treat persuasion as a sexual interaction. In Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, Klytaimnestra successfully persuades her husband against his will to step on rich, purple tapestries. She greets him in front of the palace upon his arrival and has her servants throw purple tapestries on the ground for him. He is reluctant to step on them, and he says to her:

Λήδας γένεθλον, δωμάτων ἐμῶν φύλαξ,
 ἀπουσία μὲν εἶπας εἰκότως ἐμῇ:
 μακρὰν γὰρ ἐξέτεινας: ἀλλ’ ἐναισίμως
 αἰνεῖν, παρ’ ἄλλων χρὴ τόδ’ ἔρχεσθαι γέρας:
 καὶ τᾶλλα μὴ γυναικὸς* ἐν τρόποις* ἐμῇ*
 ἄβρυνε*, μηδὲ βαρβάρου φωτὸς δίκην
 χαμαιπετές βόαμα προσχάνης ἐμοί,
 μηδ’ εἵμασι στρώσασ’ ἐπίφθορον πόρον
 τίθει: θεοὺς τοι τοῖσδε τιμαλφεῖν χρεῶν:
 ἐν ποικίλοις δὲ θνητὸν ὄντα κάλλεσιν
 βαίνειν ἐμοὶ μὲν οὐδαμῶς ἄνευ φόβου.
 λέγω κατ’ ἀνδρα, μὴ θεόν, σέβειν ἐμέ. (914-925)

(Daughter of Leda, guardian of my home, you have welcomed me fittingly. You extended it out far. But it is proper for others to speak thus, the privilege belongs to others, not you. But, do not, in the ways of women, make me delicate, nor as if I were some barbarian cry out to me with loud strains, nor, strewing the ground with garments, inflict my path

³³ The Herms were ithyphallic statues of the god Hermes which stood at crossroads, doorways, and in public places and which functioned as apotropaic symbols as well as symbols of each citizen’s individual power in the democracy. The phalloi of the Herms were lopped off, and the act was seen as political rape.

³⁴ For a complete discussion of the scholarship about the mutilation of the Athenian Herms, see Albright, *Eros in Thucydides*, Chapter Two.

with jealousy. It is right to worship the gods in such ways. In no way is it possible for me to walk on these beautiful embroidered things without fear. I say to reverence me as a man, not a god.)

Agamemnon is not only afraid of committing hubris by acting like a god; he is afraid he will appear effeminate by wallowing in luxury like a Persian king. Klytaimestra is the better speaker and wins with an effective combination of logic and seduction. He removes his sandals and steps on the tapestries saying: “ἐπεὶ δ’ ἀκούειν σοῦ κατέστραμμαι τάδε, εἴμ’ ἐς δόμων μέλαθρα πορφύρας πατῶν” (956-7) (Since to hear you I am crushed thus, I go into the house treading purple textiles...). By winning the verbal *agon*, Klytaimestra establishes herself as the dominant speaker, and, since rhetorical ability is a skill men exhibit in the political arena, she shows herself to be more masculine than her husband. Indeed, her masculinity is reinforced throughout the text. The chorus several times states that she speaks like a man, and she herself at 1405 draws a compelling comparison between herself and other women, saying to the chorus: “πειρᾶσαδέ μου γυναικὸς ὡς ἀφράσμονος” (you make an attempt on me as as if I were a senseless woman).³⁵ Furthermore, her lover Aegisthus is presented as her “wife” in that he is living at her palace (normally marriage would be patrilocal), and the chorus berates him for being a woman: “γύναι, σὺ τοὺς ἦγοντας ἐκ μάκης μένων οἴκουρός εὐνὴν ἀνδρὸς αἰσχύνων ἅμα ἀνδρὶ στρατηγῷ τόνδ’ ἐβούλευσας μόρον;” (1625-7) (A woman, you, away from the war, stayed here in the house, shaming the bed of the lord, plotting destruction for the warlike lord?) The symbolic emasculation of Agamemnon allows Klytaimestra to cast him in the role of

³⁵ Cf. the use of the verb *πειρᾶν* (to make an attempt on, to try) to Thucydides’ use in his history. Klytaimestra assumes that the chorus is challenging her sexually dominant status in not believing her.

prey while casting herself as hunter: she stabs him while he is naked in the bath. In the end, the hero is penetrated by his wife, and his emasculation is complete.³⁶

A similar symbolic emasculation through persuasion occurs in Euripides' *Bacchae* in the scene in which Dionysus convinces Pentheus to dress like a woman in order to see what the women of Thebes are up to on Cithaeron. Previously in the play, Pentheus has commented on Dionysus's bisexual, androgynous appearance. Dionysus has soft skin, long, flowing hair and a decidedly effeminate manner, and Pentheus is disgusted by his cousin's rejection of what he considers masculine. Dionysus understands that Pentheus is intrigued by the activities of the women and uses his understanding to his advantage in his verbal competition with Pentheus. Pentheus at first is horrified at the suggestion that he put on a dress, but Dionysus eventually seduces him into changing his mind by playing to that part of Pentheus which is aroused by the possibility that the women of Thebes are engaging in orgies on the mountain. Like Agamemnon, Pentheus loses the rhetorical contest, which is effeminizing in the eyes of an Athenian audience, although his total emasculation occurs when he dons the costume. He becomes possessed by the god and, for all purposes, becomes a woman; he prances about, asks the god to check his hem, and worries about his hair. In the end, of course, he loses all control and is ripped apart by his mother and her sisters, who think he is a mountain lion.

³⁶Aeschylus's *Oresteia* may also be read as a cosmogony. Through the trilogy, Aeschylus presents the same movement from feminine power and all it suggests (dark, blood-sucking, chthonic Erinyes; powerful female characters; natural relationships like that between mother and child; chaotic systems of justice which are based on vengeance, etc.) to masculine power and all it suggests (Apollo; powerful male characters; cultural relationships like that between husband and wife; orderly systems of justice based on law courts established by a civic authority, etc.). Aeschylus presents this metamorphosis as a good thing; for his audience, the transfer would have occurred during the process of synoikism.

The comedies of Aristophanes frequently present speech as a sexually charged medium. In *Lysistrata*, the women of Athens join with Spartan women to convince their husbands to end the Peloponnesian War by going on a sex-strike. Through the course of the play, women use their sexual allure to try to get their husbands to give in to their demands. For example, the young wife Myrrhine drives her sex-starved husband Kinesias to the point of exasperation when she attempts to secure his promise that he will vote to end the war with her provocative movements and alluring words, exemplifying the connection between persuasion and seduction. In taking an oath (which itself pokes fun at the Athenian Ephebeia) to refrain from sex until the men give in, the women call upon “*Δέσποινα Πειθοῖ*” (203) (Queen Persuasion). In *Assemblywomen*, Athenian women disguise themselves as men in order to infiltrate the *ekklesia*. Praxagora leads the women and coaches them on how to speak convincingly for political ends:

Γυνή Α

καὶ πῶς γυναικῶν θηλύφρων ξυνουσία
δημηγορήσει;

Πραξάγορα

πολὺ μὲν οὖν ἄριστα που.
λέγουσι γὰρ καὶ τῶν νεανίσκων ὅσοι
πλείστα σποδοῦνται, δεινोटάτους εἶναι λέγειν:
ἡμῖν δ' ὑπάρχει τοῦτο κατὰ τύχην τινά. (110-114)

(First Woman:

How will a group of women with female wits address the demos?

Praxagora:

Much better, that's how! For they say that those among the young men who have been reamed the most are the best at public speaking! And by luck that's what we're suited for.)

Thus, Praxagora believes that sexuality affects oration in the assembly. In preparing for the assembly, Praxagora and another woman have the following exchange:

Γυνή Α

τί δ' ἦν Νεοκλείδης ὁ γλάμων σε λοιδορῇ;

Πραξάγορα

τούτῳ μὲν εἶπον ἐς κυνὸς πυγὴν ὀράν.

Γυνή Α

τί δ' ἦν ὑποκρούουσίν σε;

Πραξάγορα

προσκινήσομαι

ἅτ' οὐκ ἄπειρος οὔσα πολλῶν κρουμάτων.(254-256)

(First Woman:

What if Neocledes the Squinter interrupts you?

Praxagora:

I will tell him to go look up a dog's ass!

First Woman:

What if they try to bang you?

Praxagora:

I'll gyrate them right back, since I'm not unskilled at many thrusts.)

Praxagora intends to convince the *ekklesia* to hand control of the polis over to Athenian women, and she plays with the meaning of “ὑποκρούειν” (to beat, to assault sexually) in describing her speaking strategy. The women persuade the others at the assembly to vote their way, and, once they have control of the polis, they propose to force men to have sex with old, ugly women before young, pretty ones. In *Women at the Thesmophoria*, Euripides and a kinsman of Euripides attempt to persuade Agathon, who is portrayed as an effeminate coward, to sneak into the Thesmophoria, a festival open only to women, to find out what the women are saying about Euripides. They have the following exchange:

Ἀγάθων

μή νυν ἐλπίσης τὸ σὸν κακὸν

ἡμᾶς ὑφέξειν. καὶ γὰρ ἂν μαινοίμεθ' ἄν.

ἀλλ' αὐτὸς ὅ γε σὸν ἐστὶν οἰκείως φέρε.

τὰς συμφορὰς γὰρ οὐχὶ τοῖς τεχνάσμασιν

φέρειν δίκαιον ἀλλὰ τοῖς παθήμασιν.

Μνησίλοχος

καὶ μὴν οὐ γ' ὦ κατάπυγον εὐρύπρωκτος εἶ

οὐ τοῖς λόγοισιν ἀλλὰ τοῖς παθήμασιν.

Εὐριπίδης

τί δ' ἔστιν ὅτι δέδοικας ἐλθεῖν αὐτόσε;

Ἀγάθων

κάκιον ἀπολοίμην ἂν ἢ σύ.

Εὐριπίδης

πῶς;

Ἀγάθων

ὅπως;
δοκῶν γυναικῶν ἔργα νυκτερείσια
κλέπτειν ὑφαρπάζειν τε θήλειαν Κύπριν. (196-205)

(Agathon:

Do not hope that I'll make trouble for you! For I'd have to be crazy. You yourself should take care of your own business. For it's right to bear misfortune not with contrivances but with passive suffering.

Kinsman:

Certainly, you faggot, you got your gaping asshole not by word but by passive suffering.

Euripides:

Why is it so scary to go to that place?

Agathon:

I would perish more horribly than you!

Euripides:

Why?

Agathon:

Why? Because I'd seem to be stealing the nighttime activities of women and making off with female Kypris.)

The entire episode is sexualized, and Euripides keeps hinting that, because Agathon often submits to passive anal intercourse, he should easily be persuaded by Euripides' request that he infiltrate the Thesmophoria. In the play, the women meet at the Pnyx for the festival, which is the meeting place of the Athenian *ekklesia*; in the play, the women hold their own assembly to indict Euripides, at times mimicking the wording of actual political edicts.³⁷ Verbal persuasion and sexual intercourse are once again conflated.

Thus, in the typical Athenian rhetorical model, the orator brings about sexual desire in his audience when he speaks by means of seductive delivery. Having rendered his listeners open to and desirous of his advances, he penetrates the minds of his listeners with his words, convincing them to adopt his agenda over their own. The successful orator assumes a sexually dominant and slightly more masculine status over those whom

³⁷ *Three Plays by Aristophanes: Staging Women*, trans. Jeffrey Henderson (New York: Routledge, 1996): 93. "An inscription shows that on the only attested occasion when the Athenian assembly met during the Thesmophoria, it met in the theater, not on the Pnyx—presumably because the women were meeting there."

he persuades, although, as Thucydides demonstrates, the successful orator must be careful not to appear undemocratic by speaking too forcefully and seeming to force his opinion upon his listeners. Orators play up to their audiences, coaxing the minds of their listeners with attractive words, appealing to them, and arousing their desire to be persuaded. As Victoria Wohl puts it in discussing Aristophanes' more explicit models, "the orator's every word of flattery is a blowjob."³⁸

The orator's interaction with his audience is not the only element of rhetoric which is explicitly sexualized in Athenian literature; the speech itself is often evaluated as a sexual organ. Plato's *Phaedrus* is helpful here. Plato describes a dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus on the subject of erotic love. Socrates meets Phaedrus, who has just come from hearing the famous orator Lysias give a speech about love, and accompanies him on a walk outside the city. The setting, which is described in detail, is romantic and fertile. The scene is set for seduction, and the dialogue is charged with sexual innuendo. Socrates repeatedly asks Phaedrus to recite Lysias' speech for him, and Phaedrus playfully refuses. The two men flirt with each other, and Socrates several times refers to his own "passionate desire" to hear the speech. They walk along the banks of the Ilissus, and, finally, reclining together under a tree, Socrates persuades Phaedrus into reciting the speech for him. Throughout the dialogue, speech is conflated with masculine sexuality. For example, Plato writes:

ΦΑΙ. Οὕτωςι τοίνυν ποιήσω. τῷ ὄντι γάρ, ὦ Σώκρατες, παντὸς μᾶλλον τὰ γε ῥήματα οὐκ ἐξέμαθον· τὴν μέντοι διάνοιαν σχεδὸν ἀπάντων, οἷς ἔφη διαφέρειν τὰ τοῦ ἐρῶντος ἢ τὰ τοῦ μή, ἐν κεφαλαίοις ἕκαστον ἐφεξῆς δίδειμι, ἀρξάμενος ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου.

³⁸ Wohl, *Love Among the Ruins*, 85.

ΣΩ. Δείξας γε πρῶντον, ὃ φιλότης, τί ἄρα ἐν τῇ ἀριστερᾷ ἔχεις ὑπὸ τῷ ἱματίῳ· τοπάζω γάρ σε ἔχειν τὸν λόγον αὐτόν. εἰ δὲ τοῦτό ἐστιν, οὕτως δὲ διανοοῦ περὶ ἐμοῦ, ὥς ἐγὼ σε πάνυ μὲν φιλῶ, παρόντος δὲ καὶ Λυσίου, ἐμαυτὸν σοι ἐμμελετᾶν παρέχειν οὐ πάνυ δέδοκται. ἀλλ' ἴθι, δείκνυε. (228d)

(Phaedrus: Well, this is what I will do. I did not learn the speech word for word by heart, Socrates, but I will run through point by point from the beginning the sense of nearly all that Lysias said about the superiority of the man not in love to the man in love.

Socrates: Yes, but first, my love, what are you holding in your left hand under your cloak? I think that you have the actual speech. If this is the case, consider this with regard to me, that I love you very much, but, since Lysias is here, it is not right for you to practice on me. Come on, show me.)

Socrates feels sexual longing to hear the speech about love, and he seduces Phaedrus into reciting it. Plato presents the speech itself as a phallus, thereby conflating rhetoric and persuasion with sex. This exchange between Socrates and Phaedrus exemplifies the classical Athenian rhetorical model, which is erotic in nature and necessarily masculine. Thus, the orator seduces and mentally penetrates by means of the phallic speech.

While, as stated above, most scholarship about the sexuality of politics and persuasion has focused on classical Athenian literature, the origins of the Athenian tendency to see rhetoric in sexual terms are apparent in the Homeric epics.³⁹ Homeric culture is driven by competition, and heroic contests serve as public celebrations of masculinity. Heroic pursuits include military combat and athletic contests, but heroes

³⁹Peter Toohey, "Epic and Rhetoric," in *Persuasion: Greek Rhetoric in Action* ed. Ian Worthington (London: Routledge, 1994), 153. Toohey writes: "The topic, in a sense, is a bogus one—speech-making and persuasion in Homer and Apollonius. There are speakers and speeches enough in Greek epic, but, at least in Homer and Apollonius, there is little recognizable rhetorical elaboration of the classical kind. This, of course, is understandable in the case of Homer: he was writing before rhetoric was invented..." Toohey goes on to show that Homeric speeches do have regular structure and do indeed exhibit elements later seen in classical rhetoric, but his initial statement is important because of its supposition that little importance is placed on rhetoric and persuasion in the Homeric epics. The art of persuasion is absolutely at work in the Homeric world and in the oral culture from which the epics stem; it is intimately tied to the art of poetry, however, and is for this reason difficult to examine as an independent pursuit. Odysseus, for example, is both an excellent speech-maker and an excellent poet.

also compete by exhibiting verbal prowess. Whenever men gather together, they necessarily strive to establish their relative status among those gathered—a characteristic of heroic society which is captured by the Homeric word “ἄγών,” which indicates both “an assembly of men” and “a contest.” In the classical Athenian assembly every male citizen has the right to speak, but in Homeric society only members of the elite class of heroes may speak publicly, a social understanding which is evident when Odysseus beats the low-born, ugly Thersites with the *skeptron* in Book Two of the *Iliad*. Often heroes distinguish themselves by showing their skill in multiple areas; even Achilles, who is idealized for his fierceness in battle, also sings and plays the lyre in the *Iliad*, for example. Both endeavors are opportunities for Achilles to show that he has “ἀρετή,” which is best translated “manly heroic excellence.” When Odysseus is insulted publicly by a younger Phaiakian man in Book Eight of the *Odyssey*, he not only shows his superior masculinity by picking up a discus and throwing it farther than any of the Phaiakians but also by verbally putting the man in his place. Alkinoos, the Phaiakian king, specifically tells Odysseus that he has just demonstrated that he has “ἀρετή.”

Odysseus, in fact, perhaps best exemplifies the multi-faceted nature of “ἀρετή” in the heroic world. Not only is he an outstanding warrior on the battlefield, but he also excels in athletic contests, delivers winning speeches in assemblies, and composes and sings poetry like an expert. All of these activities require that he use his masculine power, and each pursuit is necessarily a sexual competition. Odysseus’ masculinity allows him to triumph in physical competition and in manipulating language. In physical competition, a hero strives to show that he is superior in masculine power to his opponents, but, in verbal competition, a hero’s demonstration of masculine power occurs

on two levels. The hero not only contends with others to deliver the most persuasive speech or the most eloquent performance but also must contend with language itself, wrestling with the structure of language to force inchoate thoughts into communicable ideas. Even in the Homeric poems the Greek verb *πείθειν* means both “to persuade verbally” and “to seduce sexually.” It is worth noting here that Odysseus also successfully seduces women; in fact, in his sexual encounters Odysseus frequently performs so well that even goddesses request that he remain with them. Odysseus’ masculinity is part of his every heroic pursuit, and it very much informs his most notable characteristic, his ability to make even false stories seem true—in other words, his ability to accomplish persuasion. Thus success in any heroic endeavor stems from the corporeal essence of masculinity.

That this is so in verbal arenas is perhaps best illustrated in Book Three of the *Iliad*. While Helen, Priam and Antenor watch the war from the walls of Troy, Antenor describes Odysseus’ earlier attempt to persuade the Trojans to turn over Helen and thus avoid battle. Antenor describes Odysseus’ speech as a fluid ejaculation of manliness:

ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ μύθους καὶ μήδεα πᾶσιν ὕφαινον,
 ἥτοι μὲν Μενέλαος ἐπιτροχάδην ἀγόρευε,
 παῦρα μὲν, ἀλλὰ μάλα λιγέως, ἐπεὶ οὐ πολὺμυθος
 οὐδ’ ἀφαμαρτοεπής· ἧ καὶ γένει ὕστερος ἦεν.
 ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ πολύμητις ἀναΐξειεν Ὀδυσσεύς,
 στάσκειν, ὑπαὶ δὲ ἴδεσκε κατα χθονὸς ὅμματα πῆξας,
 σκῆπτρον δ’ οὔτε ὀπίσω οὔτε προπρηνὲς ἐνώμα,
 ἀλλ’ ἀστεμφὲς ἔχεσκειν, αἰδοῖ φωτὶ ἐοικώς·
 φαίης κε ζᾶκοτόν τε τιν’ ἔμμεναι ἄφρονά τ’ αὐτῶς.
 ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ ὅπα τε μεγάλην ἐκ στήθεος εἶη
 καὶ ἔπεα νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότα χειμερίησιν,
 οὐκ ἂν ἔπειτ’ Ὀδυσῆϊ γ’ ἐρίσσειε βροτὸς ἄλλος·
 (212-223)

(But when they wove their speeches and their cunning schemes for everyone, Menelaos spoke quickly, in few words, but very clearly, since he was not a long-winded man nor someone who rambles on and on. In

truth, he even was a young man. But when resourceful Odysseus rose up, he kept standing there, and kept looking at the ground having fixed his eyes downward, and, like an inexperienced man, he neither gestured with the *skeptron* back and forth, but he kept holding it still. You would say that he was a wrathful man and thus without brains. But when he emitted his great voice from his chest, and the words which were like a wintry snowstorm, then no mortal would go up against Odysseus.)

The Trojans and Greeks in this passage are competing in the arena of speech, and the image of Odysseus here is one of power. The Trojans underestimate his masculinity because he seems like someone who does not know how to handle the “*σκῆπτρον*” (speaker’s staff). Men take up the “*σκῆπτρον*” when speaking before the assembly in order to demonstrate their superior masculine status in society.⁴⁰ The staff indicates the right to speak. Phallic in form, it is necessarily tied up with masculine political power. It is Odysseus’ actual speech which establishes his superiority in this instance; the sceptre is a physical manifestation of that inward grace and power. Antenor describes Odysseus’ words “*νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότα χειμερίησιν*” (222) (like a winter snowstorm). These three words offer a strikingly visual image of the words coming out of Odysseus’ mouth as a powerful storm of white fluffy material. In other words, his speech actually looks like semen.⁴¹ Because Odysseus demonstrates such rhetorical “*ἀρετή*,” no other man will compete with him.⁴² Whereas Athenian men strive to avoid any appearance of force lest they seem undemocratic, the Homeric heroes are not shy about showing force. In many

⁴⁰ See Chapter Two.

⁴¹ Lindsay Lock tells me that snow is sometimes used as a euphemism for semen in popular music, as in the song “Communist’s Daughter” by the band Neutral Milk Hotel. In the song, the line “semen stains the mountain tops” is repeated several times and refers to semen on breasts. In general, the lyrics conflate sexual encounters with elements of the environment.

⁴² It is interesting that Odysseus’ speech is ultimately unsuccessful; he fails to persuade the Trojans to give Helen back. It may be that he has crossed boundaries by speaking so forcefully to the Trojans and thus offended them, or it may be, as I believe, that Helen’s beauty is so compelling that it is emasculating and renders performances of masculine excellence through speech useless.

ways, Homeric society is driven by raw masculine force, and Odysseus exhibits his powerful masculinity when he speaks.

Masculinity

In the ancient world, gender is fluid in nature and is based on levels of masculinity, which can be gained or, more frequently, lost through various activities. Thomas Laqueur has shown, in *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, that until the Enlightenment ideas about gender were based on a single-sex model.⁴³ Women's bodies were considered antitheses of men's bodies, and, because they were inversions of the male form, women's bodies were less desirable. Masculinity is treated by many ancient authors as a state brought about by an actual liquid: the Greek fluid of masculinity is "μένος."⁴⁴ In Greek texts, "μένος" makes men sexually dominant, physically strong, mentally sharp, courageous, and skilled as warriors. The word has a wide range of translations, and it is used extensively by Homer. It can indicate "strength" or "force" as well as "life-force" or "spirit." It is used to describe the vigor of living things and also at times the force of inanimate objects, and it can indicate both physical and spiritual power.⁴⁵ For example, at *Iliad* 2.387, Homer uses the word to signify

⁴³ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

⁴⁴ The fluid of masculinity is "virtus" in Roman literature. The medical texts of the Roman period largely follow the Hippocratic school, so ideas about the nature of gender are similar.

⁴⁵ Liddell and Scott offer for comparison the Sanskrit word "manas," which they define as "spirit" or "passion." The word does seem to derive from an Indo-European root, but, according to Jared Klein, the concept was probably one of "mental determination" or "strength of mind." In a recent conversation, Klein has suggested that the Indo-European root is closely tied to "κράτος," which, according to Emile Benveniste, in *Indo-European Language and Society* (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1969): 357-367, actually signifies "superiority" rather than "physical strength" or "spiritual force." Klein

courage or the fury of men in battle in the phrase “*μένος ἀνδρῶν*” (the battle-spirit of men), but later at 5.506 he uses the phrase “*μένος χειρῶν*” (strength of the hands) to indicate physical strength. At 5.296, Homer, describing the death of Pandaros, uses it as a synonym for “life” or “life-blood:” “*λύθη ψυχὴ τε μένος τε*” (both his spirit and his life were released). Here “*μένος*” is used as a synonym for blood, a fluid which is necessary for life, strength, and vigor. Although “*μένος*” can signify all of the above, in general it is the fluid which allows men to achieve “*ἀρετή*.”

Anne Giacomelli has shown that “*μένος*” is the Greek fluid of manhood and masculine power and that semen, the most obvious fluid which only men produce, is a common physical manifestation of “*μένος*.”⁴⁶ That semen is “*μένος*” and is responsible for masculine power is seen in descriptions of sexual activity in early Greek literature. For example, in the *Odyssey* itself, Homer treats sexual intercourse in the same way when describing Odysseus’s encounter with Circe. When Circe invites him to bed, Odysseus makes her swear an oath that she is not intending to emasculate him (10.337-344).⁴⁷ In the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, which roughly dates to the late eighth century B.C.E.,⁴⁸ Zeus makes Aphrodite fall in love with Anchises, and Aphrodite deceives him into sleeping with her by posing as a beautiful maiden. When Anchises wakes up to discover that the maiden is Aphrodite, he is terrified that the encounter will leave him impotent. He supplicates the goddess and begs her not to leave him “*ἄμενηνός*” (188) (without *μένος*, unmanned). As he says to her: “...οὐ βιοθάλμιος ἀνὴρ γίγνεται, ὅς τε θεαῖς εὐνάζεται

and Liddell and Scott link *μένος* to *μαίνομαι*, a verb which means “to rage” or “to be driven mad” and which seems to retain some of the mental element of the Indo-European root.

⁴⁶ Anne Giacomelli, “Aphrodite and After,” *Phoenix* 34 (1980): 16.

⁴⁷ Homer uses the word *ἀνήνορα* (unmanned) to indicate the potential state of emasculation.

⁴⁸ *The Homeric Hymns*, trans. Apostolos N. Athanassakis, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004): 81.

ἀθανάτησι” (189-190) (...the man who sleeps with immortal goddesses becomes no powerful man).

Support for this interpretation appears in later Greek medical texts. In many Hippocratic writings, men are described as hot and dry by nature while women are cold and moist.⁴⁹ According to the texts, during heterosexual intercourse, a man loses his moisture to the woman, whose body is “sponge-like” and needs the moisture to survive. In *Diseases of Women*, the Hippocratic writer refers to the transfer of fluid as “irrigation,” and he enumerates in details the many physical symptoms with which the unirrigated woman will be afflicted.⁵⁰ While women constantly need to replenish the moisture they lose every month in the form of blood by irrigating their wombs with semen, men on the other hand are hot and dry and, even though this state seems to be ideal compared to the soggy state of women, thus are always in danger of losing too much moisture through sex. Loss of semen can result in the man becoming enervated and effeminate, and men who have too much sex even risk dying. Men must therefore carefully control sexual desire and behavior to maintain their masculine status and stay healthy. In general, then,

⁴⁹ It is worth noting here that, as Buxton argues in *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy*, 18-24, persuasion is often an important dynamic in the work of Greek medical writers and other texts about medicine and doctors.

⁵⁰ Hippocrates, *Diseases of Women I and II*, and *Epistulae*. For two excellent analyses of the nature of heterosexual sex according to the Hippocratic writers, see Anne Carson, “Putting Her in Her Place: Women, Dirt, and Desire,” in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* eds. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: 1990): 135-169 and Ann Ellis Hanson, “The Medical Writer’s Woman,” in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* eds. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: 1990): 309-338. Carson writes, 140-142: “Hesiod describes a midsummer scene where artichokes bloom, crickets pour forth song after song, goats are rich and fat, wine is perfect, and ‘women are at their most wanton, while men are completely enfeebled’...the physics of the situation: men are parched to impotence by the heat; women seem to somehow thrive in it...Hesiod, in the midst of giving advice on choosing a wife, abandons metaphors of weather and identifies the withering factor as sexual power itself. The voracious woman, by her unending sexual demands, ‘roasts her man’ in the unquenchable fire of her appetite, drains his manly strength and delivers him to the ‘raw old age’ of premature impotence...The Greek poets find sexuality in women a fearsome thing; it threatens the very essence of a man’s manliness.” Also see Lesley Ann Dean-Jones, *Women’s Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

the medical texts support the common literary characterizations of women as tricky and unpredictable, always scheming to satisfy their insatiable lust and either by stealing or scheming away a man's "μένος".

Phaedra in Euripides' *Hippolytus* is an excellent example here. In the play, Aphrodite punishes Hippolytus for his lack of reverence towards her by causing his stepmother Phaedra to fall in love with him. Filled with shame because she lusts after her own stepson, Phaedra resolves to die rather than reveal her love. When the audience first meets her, she is wasting away, enervated, sick with fever, and delirious. She rants:

*αἰαῖ·
 πῶς ἂν δροσερᾷς ἀπὸ κρηνίδος
 καθαρῶν ὑδάτων πῶμ' ἀρυσάιμαν,
 ὑπὸ τ' αἰγείροις ἔν τε κομήτῃ
 λειμῶνι κλιθεῖσ' ἀναπαυσαίμαν;
 ...
 πέμπετέ μ' εἰς ὄρος· εἴμι πρὸς ὕλαν
 καὶ παρὰ πεύκας, ἵνα θεροφόνοι
 στείβουσι κύνες
 βαλῖαις ἐλάφοις ἐγχρημπτόμεναι.
 πρὸς θεῶν, ἔραμαι κυσὶ θωύξαι
 καὶ παρὰ χαίταν ξανθὰν ῥῖψαι
 θεσσαλὸν ὄρπακ', ἐπίλογχον ἔχουσ'
 ἐν χειρὶ βέλος. (208-222)*

(Oh, how can I draw from the dewy spring a drink of fresh water, how can I rest lying in the long-grassed meadow?

...

Send me to the mountain! I will go to the woods and to the fir trees, where the hunting dogs trailing swift stags sets upon them. By god, I long to bark with the dogs and to cast the Thessalian spear by my blond hair, holding the barbed spear in my hand...)

Phaedra's symptoms follow the Hippocratic description of what happens when women do not receive the irrigation they require. Phaedra longs to go to the mountain and hunt with the hounds because Hippolytus is to be found there, and the dewey springs with which she wishes to quench her thirst are Hippolytus' own. Phaedra's nurse eventually

discovers her secret and comes up with a treacherous plan to help ease her mistress' suffering. Hippolytus is horrified when the nurse proposes that he sleep with Phaedra and delivers a scathing speech against the treacherous nature of women. Phaedra's bodily suffering together with her wounded pride cause her to take her own life—again echoing the Hippocratic texts by hanging herself and dying by suffocation—and deviously leaving a note behind which says falsely that Hippolytus raped her.

Foucault's work on the concept of “σωφροσύνη” (self mastery, self control, moderation) is helpful here. In *The Use of Pleasure*, Foucault, who often uses medical texts as evidence, writes:

What was affirmed through this concept of mastery as active freedom was the “virile” character of moderation. Just as in the household it was the man who ruled, and in the city it was right that only men should exercise power, and not slaves, children, or women, so each man was supposed to make his manly qualities prevail within himself. Self-mastery was a way of being a man with respect to oneself; that is, a way of commanding what needed commanding, of coercing what was not capable of self-direction, of imposing principles of reason on what was wanting in reason; in short, it was a way of being active in relation to what was by nature passive and ought to remain so. In this ethics of men made for men, the development of the self as an ethical subject consisted in setting up a structure of virility that related oneself to oneself. It was by being a man with respect to oneself that one would be able to control and master the manly activity that one directed towards others in sexual practice....In the use of male pleasures, one had to be virile with regard to oneself, just as one was masculine in one's social role. In the full meaning of the word, moderation was a man's virtue.⁵¹

Foucault notes that women can sometimes exhibit self-control, and he offers Ischomachus's wife in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* as an example of a woman who

⁵¹ Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure* in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 2* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1985): 82-83.

displays the virile quality.⁵² Still, he argues that self-control is primarily a masculine trait. While in Hippocratic thinking men must work to keep themselves healthy by controlling desire and regulating their sexual appetites, women cannot exercise “σωφροσύνη” because they necessarily are driven by their biological needs to sexual excess. As Foucault discusses, “σωφροσύνη” is necessary for both political power and philosophical success.⁵³ (It is worth noting that therefore women for the most part are excluded from the political arena and also philosophical success because of their biology.) Socrates’s argument in the *Gorgias* that rhetoric is dangerous when the rhetor is without moral goodness and an understanding of wisdom and of what is good seems to illustrate Foucault’s point well. According to Socrates, such a rhetoric exercises no moderation and panders to his audience’s desire for pleasure, potentially leading his audience to reckless pursuits.⁵⁴

Femininity in Persuasion

In Hesiod’s *Theogony*, there is a general progression from feminine power to masculine power, and this progression parallels a transfer from “χάος” (chaos) to “κόσμος.” A state of “κόσμος” is achieved only after the masculine sky-god Zeus assumes the supreme position among the gods and manages to appropriate feminine procreative power. In the poem, feminine power is associated with disorder, darkness, trickiness, unpredictability, the chthonic sphere, and nature; female characters are tricky and

⁵² Ibid., 83. One could argue, of course, that Ischomachus’s wife exercises manly moderation precisely because she is constructed within the dialogue through the discourse of men. Ischomachus masculinizes his entire household, presenting it (as Sheila Murnaghan has argued) as a perfectly ordered Athenian trireme.

⁵³ Ibid., 63-64 and 78-93.

⁵⁴ Plato, *Gorgias*, especially 507-510.

underhanded. Masculine power is associated with light, the ouranic sphere, culture, civilization, and order. When Zeus eats his first wife, Metis, and later gives birth to Athena out of his head, he stops Metis from producing a son who will usurp his power and so remains in power as king of the gods. Although Zeus thwarts the threat of feminine power, he does not stamp out the feminine forces altogether. Metis, in fact, stays in Zeus' belly and advises him on important matters. In the end, Zeus' masculine body controls Metis' feminine power by enveloping it and checking it, and he uses her knowledge to his own advantage. Zeus becomes king of the gods after the other gods and goddesses urge him to assume that position, and, unlike his predecessors Ouranos and Kronos who act like thugs, Zeus metes out power to the other gods. Hesiod portrays Zeus as an Iron Age *basileus*, and, thus, Zeus rules in the divine sphere primarily by persuasion and only uses force when necessary. Zeus' persuasiveness is due to his ability to control the powerful feminine force inside his body.

Even in the especially misogynistic classical Athenian culture, authors seem to recognize that the masculinity of successful speech includes some feminine element. Aristotle, for example, attempts to categorize and define the elements of rhetoric in *Ars Rhetorica*, and, in discussing the "body" of that text, he repeatedly refers to the "*ἄρξεσθαι*" of an effective speech. Aristotle's rhetorical "body" is, of course, a masculine body which in turn shows its own manly excellence. Still, he also points to the importance of *ethos* and *pathos*, two qualities which are difficult even for him to define. As George Kennedy writes in discussing Aristotle's use of the term "body" for persuasion, "Though Aristotle does not say so, one might speculate that the soul, or life, of persuasion comes

from ethical and emotional qualities.”⁵⁵ Ethos and Pathos defy description because they are largely undefinable. Femininity is associated with nature, chaos, disorder, unpredictability, darkness, and trickiness in Greek culture. The qualities of Ethos and Pathos are feminine elements of speech because they are unpredictable and difficult-to-capture. As Aristotle recognizes, however, they are highly effective.

In the *Agamemnon*, when Agamemnon tells Klytaimestra not to make him soft or delicate “γυναικὸς ἐν τρόποις” (in the ways of women), Agamemnon refers to her persuasive tactics. In the end, she wins the argument and proves that she is the better speaker. Klytaimestra’s ability to persuade is primarily due to her masculine power to command language and to compete in a verbal *agon*, but it also stems from her seductive feminine tactics. She entices Agamemnon onto the tapestries, plays up to his huge ego, and responds to his every protest with just the right statement. She seduces him into surrendering to her will.

In Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, Hippolytus is a devout follower of the virgin goddess Artemis and ignores Aphrodite. At the beginning of the play, he declares that he will never marry, and Aphrodite punishes the family for Hippolytus’ offense by compelling Phaedra, his stepmother, to fall in love with him. When Phaedra’s nurse suggests he sleep with Phaedra, he reacts with vehement disgust and delivers a tirade against women. He thus actively shuns feminine sexuality and understands little about it. When Phaedra kills herself and leaves behind a note in which she accuses Hippolytus of raping her, Hippolytus is unable to persuade Theseus that he is innocent of the crime even though he has the truth on his side. Hippolytus, as he himself says in his speech to Theseus, is

⁵⁵ Kennedy’s footnote in his translation of Book One. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric; A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 30 note 10.

skilled in the masculine pursuit of rhetoric. Still, he cannot persuade his father of the truth because he understands nothing about feminine seduction; he lacks that essential element of persuasion. Yet Phaedra's letter does persuade the old man.

In Eurpides' *Medea*, Medea is portrayed as a woman who is almost mad with passionate hatred for Jason after he discards her for the Corinthian princess Glauke. The fact that she is female and not Greek puts her at a rhetorical disadvantage in the eyes of the play's Athenian audience, yet, like Klytaimestra, she is by far the better speaker in her interactions with men. When Creon visits her to announce her exile, she easily persuades him to allow her to remain in Corinth for one more day, ultimately appealing to him as a mother concerned for her children. When she begs him to allow her to stay on in Corinth, he even states, “λόγους ἀναλοῖς· οὐ γὰρ ἂν πείσαις ποτὲ” (325) (You squander your words; for you will never persuade me). At first, Creon greets her as a formidable opponent and even says that he fears her, but, when she acts like a helpless, pitiful woman, he give in to her wishes. After the visit, Medea says to the chorus: “δοκεῖς γὰρ ἂν με τόνδε θωπεῦσαι ποτε, εἰ μή τι κερδαίνουσιν ἢ τεχνωμένην;” (368-369) (Does it seem to you that I would play up to that man ever, if I would not accomplish some goal or wile?). In her verbal battles with Jason, she often refers to his lack of manliness, verbally emasculating him and creating a masculine appearance for herself. Jason in turn repeatedly refers to Medea's temper and passion, which are feminine traits. When Aegeus arrives, Medea also easily persuades him to accept her into his house in Athens by manipulating his pity for her and promising to help him beget children. Of course, in the myth, she herself eventually marries Aegeus. She also makes him swear an oath that he will not go back on his word, thereby exhibiting masculine logic and strategy.

Clearly, Medea's skill in persuading is due both to a masculine ability to think logically and a feminine ability to manipulate emotions.

While Odysseus—perhaps the most persuasive figure in all of classical literature—exudes masculine sexual energy, he also has a notable feminine quality. A common epithet for the hero is “πολύμητις,” which is usually translated as “resourceful” or “of many counsels” but which essentially means “having a great deal of *metis*.” In *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture*, Detienne and Vernant offer an excellent description of *metis*:

Metis itself is the power of cunning and deceit. It operates through disguise. In order to dupe its victim it assumes a form which masks, instead of revealing, its true being. In *metis* appearance and reality no longer correspond to one another but stand in contrast, producing an effect of illusion, *apate*, which beguiles the adversary into error and leaves him as bemused by his defeat as by the spells of a magician...These features...take on their full significance when they are compared to the behavior of Odysseus, the *polymetis* one, the very embodiment of cunning. Consider the most subtle and most dangerous orator of Greece preparing, before the assembled Trojans, to weave the glittering web of his words: there he is, standing awkwardly with his eyes fixed on the ground, not raising his head; he holds the staff quite still as if he did not know what to do with it. He looks like a tongue-tied yokel or even a witless man (*aphrona*). At the moment when he is about to speak the master of tricks, the magician of words pretends to have lost his tongue, as if he were unskilled in the rudiments of oratory (*aidrei photi eoikos*). Such is the duplicity of *metis* which, giving itself out to be other than it is, is like those misleading objects, the powers of deception which Homer refers to as *dolos*; the Trojan Horse, the bed of love with its magic bonds, the fishing bait are all traps which conceal their inner deceit beneath a reassuring or seductive exterior.⁵⁶

In the Greek pantheon, *metis* is personified as the goddess Metis, who is Zeus' first wife. As a feminine form of intelligence, then, *metis* is chaotic and unpredictable in nature, difficult to understand, and enveloped in darkness. As mentioned above, in the

⁵⁶ Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture* trans. Janet Lloyd (Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978), 21-23.

Theogony, Zeus eats her and, keeping her inside his body, uses her cunning. Zeus, like Odysseus, uses this feminine force for both persuasion and seduction. Zeus, after all, seduces many, many goddesses and mortal women, often doing whatever the situation demands to secure his sexual prize including changing into animals and pretending to be a mortal husband. Thus, the ability to persuade verbally is due not only to masculine power but also to feminine cunning; in fact, it stems from the ability to use the hot, ordering force of masculinity to harness feminine sexual power.

Hesiod, who belongs to the same oral tradition as Homer, refers to the goddess Peitho in both the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*.⁵⁷ In the *Theogony*, Hesiod counts the goddess among the many Okeanids, the daughters of Okeanos and Tethys, and he says that all of their daughters act with Apollo, the god of music and poetry, to serve men. The poet uses the Greek verb “*κουργίζειν*” in this passage, which signifies that the Okeanids act as do young maidens serving their new husbands. Persuasion and poetic ability are thus both sexualized here. In the *Works and Days*, Peitho works along with Aphrodite herself and her attendant Graces to make Pandora a sexually tempting snare for mankind. Later, Sappho actually assumes the goddess is a daughter of Aphrodite.⁵⁸ The goddess appears not only as an epithet for Aphrodite on Athenian vases but also in general as an ancillary figure to Aphrodite Pandemos.⁵⁹ Pausanias (5.11.8) writes that, on the base of the statue of Zeus at Olympia, a relief depicted the birth of Aphrodite, and both Eros and Peitho attended the goddess.⁶⁰ Pausanias (1.43.6) also describes a shrine

⁵⁷ Although, as Buxton argues, it is always difficult to separate Peitho and peitho, as the ancients did not use capitalization. Context sometimes makes it clear that the term refers to the goddess rather than the act, but it often is unclear which is intended. Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy*, 30.

⁵⁸ Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 104.

⁵⁹ Pausanias 1.22.3 and Isocrates 15.249.

⁶⁰ Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy*, 30-31.

to Aphrodite in Megara in which statues were dedicated to Aphrodite Praxis (Aphrodite of Sexual Action), Peitho, Paregoros (Coaxing), Eros, Himeros (Desire), and Pothos (Yearning).⁶¹ Peitho, then, exists early on as a sexualized personification of verbal influence, and it is significant that she is female rather than male.

Homer does not specifically mention the deity Peitho, but the verb appears all over his epics, often in expressly sexual situations. Buxton sees the seduction of Zeus by Hera in Book Fourteen of the *Iliad* as evidence for Peitho's work:

There are no explicit allusions to the goddess Peitho in Homer; although the verbal form *πείθειν* occurs numerous times, the noun is absent. However, the power, if not the word, is certainly present, especially in the 'Deception of Zeus' in the *Iliad*. This part of the story is highly relevant to the erotic role elsewhere attributed to explicitly to Peitho, since the plot is dealing with the role of seductiveness in marriage. In order to deflect her husband's attention from warfare, Hera gets from Aphrodite the magic girdle in which all the charms of sexual allurements reside:

ἔνθ' ἔνι μὲν φιλότῃς, ἐν δ' ἱμερος, ἐν δ' ὀαριστὺς
 πάρφασις, ἥ τ' ἔκλεψε νόον πύκα περ φρονεόντων. (Il.
 14.216-17)

...in it is delight, desire and whispered enticement,
 which steals away the mind of even the wise.

πάρφασις is here practically synonymous with *πείθω*.⁶²

Words are often presented as charming or bewitching, especially when they are the words which singers produce. In Book One of the *Odyssey*, the poet tells his audience that Kalypso tries to convince Odysseus to stay with her as her husband. Homer says that, “αἰεὶ δὲ μαλακοῖσι καὶ αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισι θέλγει, ὅπως Ἰθάκης ἐπιλήσεται...”⁶³ (1.56-57) (She always charms him with soft and coaxing words, so that he would forget Ithaka...) Kalypso, who has been sleeping with Odysseus at this point for some time, uses her

⁶¹ Ibid., 32.

⁶² Ibid., 36.

⁶³ Cf. Ibid., 52.

sexual intimacy and soft, whispered words to persuade Odysseus to give in to her desires. Like Hera's perfume, garments and freshly coiffed hair in *Iliad* Fourteen, Kalypso's speech "ῥέλγει" (beguiles, charms), distracting her audience into forgetting immediate reality. Thus, Kalypso's attempt to persuade Odysseus stay with her as her sexual partner is much like the action of a singer.

The archaic poet seeks to persuade those listening to yield to the world he creates in song just as the fifth-century Athenian orator seeks to convince those sitting in the assembly of his argument, and the archaic poet's act of persuasion is an erotic endeavor as is political oratory in Athens. Thus, ekphrasis develops as a rhetorical element in this sexualized interaction. The most important aspect of the ancient origin of ekphrasis, however, is that it derives from a culture in which rhetorical ability is evaluated in bodily terms. From its earliest appearances, ekphrasis is presented quite explicitly as something which is corporeal in nature. Like any successful political speech in classical Athens, the larger body of archaic epic is infused with masculine sexuality and is presented in terms which reflect the masculine body. Ekphrasis exists within this masculine body of epic as a separate but complete feminine body. The epic, then, represents a combination of masculine and feminine power, and ekphrasis functions in the poem just as Metis functions inside Zeus.

Kosmos

In its most basic sense, the Greek word "κόσμος" signifies "order," although the word is used for "adornment," "ornament," "decorum," and, in the fifth century B.C.E.

and later,⁶⁴ “world-order” or “universe.” Although archaic Greek writers do not use *κόσμος* in the sense of “world” or “universe,” the basic idea of “κόσμος” is nonetheless readily apparent in the *Theogony*. Zeus brings about general stability and order in the universe when he assumes power and controls the unpredictable procreative force of femininity when he swallows Metis. He then brings about justice, lawfulness, and peace—elements of civilization. In general, Zeus is associated with culture and civilization, and he is seen as a stabilizing force for society. Pausanias even describes a temple in Laconia to Zeus “Κοσμητήης” (3.17.4) (Zeus the Orderer). Thus, even though Hesiod does not explicitly use the term “κόσμος” to describe the nature of the universe over which Zeus presides, “κόσμος” exists in his final Zeus-centered universe.

In the *Theogony*, Hesiod describes the development of the physical universe at the same time that he offers a delineation of the major generations of gods. Hesiod’s physical universe is itself, like the gods who occupy it, anthropomorphic; thus, the poem shows how larger “κόσμος” develops. The three basic zones—Ouranos (Heaven), Gaia (Earth), and Tartaros (Hell)—have sexual intercourse with each other, conspire against each other, and compete for power. Eros drives everything, and power is procreative. The universe develops from chaos into an entity which contains both feminine and masculine forces; Hesiod’s entire universe is finally stable when masculine forces exercise control over feminine forces. The physical composition of Hesiod’s universe, then, mirrors the physical (and mental) composition of Zeus’ body. Various bodily fluids

⁶⁴ Aryeh Finkelberg, “The Origins of the Greek *κόσμος*,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 98 (1998), 103-136. Aryeh Finkelberg has refuted the generally accepted idea that the Pre-Socratics were the first to use the word *κόσμος* to mean “world” or “universe.” He argues that the term still retains its early meaning of “arrangement,” “adornment,” and “order,” and he argues that these early meanings persist until well into the classical period, in fact.

figure prominently in Hesiod's Zeus-centered universe.⁶⁵ The word "μένος" appears several times throughout Hesiod's poem, and it is generally associated with Zeus' power. The specific fluid which Zeus most jealously guards in the poem is fire, which is a manifestation of "μένος," and an especially important divine fluid. Other fluids which are at work in the poem are breath, water, dew, earth, and blood, and these also may be seen as manifestations of "μένος." Thus, the larger physical "κόσμος" which Hesiod describes contains the same fluids as individual bodies in the poem. Hesiod's *Theogony*, then, uses the masculine body as a model for the universe, and fluids which flow in the universe not only mirror those but also affect those which flow in the body.

Early philosophical cosmologies of Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Empedocles, for example, also focus on basic elements such as fire, water, air, and earth in explaining the composition of the universe; thus, while these cosmologies attempt to explain the universe in philosophical, scientific terms, they echo Hesiod's anthropomorphic approach in that they all focus on basic fluids of the masculine body.⁶⁶ The medical writers often show how the universe affects the individual body as well. In the Hippocratic text *The Nature of Man*, the writer argues that all elements exist in conjunction with one another and uses temperature changes in the climate to illustrate how fluids in the body maintain a sort of general equilibrium.⁶⁷ He explains:

ὥς γὰρ ὁ ἐνιαυτὸς μετέχει μὲν πᾶς πάντων καὶ τῶν θερμῶν καὶ τῶν ψυχρῶν
καὶ τῶν ξηρῶν καὶ τῶν ὑγρῶν, οὐ γὰρ ἂν μείνειε τούτων οὐδὲν οὐδένα χρόνον
ἄνευ πάντων τῶν ἐνεόντων ἐν τῷδε τῷ κόσμῳ, ἀλλ' εἰ ἐν τί γε ἐκλίποι, πάντ'
ἂν ἀφανισθεῖν· (7)

⁶⁵ See Chapter Three for details.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the use of the human body as a model for the larger cosmos, see Leonard Barkan, *Nature's Work of Art: The Human Body as Image of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), especially 8-60.

⁶⁷ Cf. Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy*, 21-22. Buxton discusses the rhetorical aspects of the text.

(For just as every year partakes of every condition—the hot, the cold, the dry, the moist—none of these things would remain for any length of time without all the other things which exist in this *kosmos*, but if one should fail, all the rest would disappear.)

Aristotle, in *Parts of Animals*, discusses how earlier philosophers use the dynamic of the larger environment to explain the dynamic of human and animal bodies, pointing out “οὕτως γὰρ καὶ τὸν κόσμον γεννῶσιν. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ περὶ τὴν τῶν ζώων καὶ τῶν φυτῶν γένεσιν λέγουσιν...” (640b) (Thus they explain the formation of world-order. Likewise, they explain the formation of animals and plants...) Many of the ancient medical treatises in fact begin with statements about the composition or dynamic of the world and universe, and the operation of the body is often tied to outside forces in the universe. *De Hebdomadibus* is probably the best example of this kind of treatise. For years it was considered to be one the earliest texts to use the word “κόσμος” for “world-order” or “universe,” although it probably dates to the first century B.C.E.⁶⁸ The first part of the text deals with the constitution of the universe while the second part deals with the constitution of the human body. In *Airs, Waters, Places*, the Hippocratic writer writes about how environment affects human health; often, the writer focuses on fluids like water and how its worldly manifestations like rain and ice affect its bodily manifestations like sweat and saliva. Aristotle begins his *On the Cosmos* with a discussion of how nature is composed of bodies (τὰ σώματα) and how all bodies may be seen in terms of the number three.⁶⁹ He then moves on to his discussion of heavenly orbs.

The idea of “κόσμος” extends to the composition of the body, and the word itself is important in the ancient medical texts. In *Physiognomics*, the Hippocratic writer

⁶⁸ For a discussion of the date of the text, see Jaap Mansfeld, *The Pseudo-Hippocratic Tract Περί ἐβδομάδων ch. I-II and Greek Philosophy* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971).

⁶⁹ The number three is important in Hesiod in that the physical universe is tripartite.

describes the physical symptoms which indicate different types of personalities in men. The man who shows “κοσμίου σημεῖα” (807b) (marks of orderliness) is included among the desirable types of men. The Hippocratic writer in *On Fractures* refers to a general κόσμος of the body when he explains that broken arms should not be set with the elbow bent lest the bones, tendons and flesh “μετεκοσμεῖτο” (2.35) (re-order) themselves under the bandages. The medical writers tend to use “κόσμος” in this sense of an inherent order of all the parts of the body, but many also use the term in its sense of “adornment” or “ornament.” In *Parts of Animals*, Aristotle uses “ἐπικεκόσμηκεν” (658a) (decks out, adorns) to describe how Nature adorns animals’ tails with hair, although his larger point is that Nature maintains its own sense of order. In *Decorum*, a Hippocratic text which advises physicians on how to dress and act in public, the writer refers to doctors who dress in a flashy, very attractive way as “κεκοσμημένοι” (2.9) (decked out). The medical writer in this text seems to advise physicians about appearance in the same way the rhetorical writers warn orators about appearing to be too much of a dandy or too effeminate when they speak before audiences. Buxton, in fact, discusses the importance of persuasion for the medical writers in his first chapter. He argues that physicians and sophists were related in terms of their offices and that medicine and rhetoric were similar pursuits. He writes:

Besides the speculations of the sophists there is another area of conceptual and above all practical activity which was developing in Greece in the fifth century, and which enables us to see further evidence of the persuasiveness of public debate in Greek intellectual life. The area in question is medicine. Kos and Knidos were the principal centres of medical tradition in the later fifth and fourth centuries; but, just as illness was present throughout Greece, so were doctors. Like sophists, doctors were marginal figures in relation to the social structure of the polis. Like sophists, they travelled from city to city in the performance of their professional duties. Like sophists, they had to drum up a responsive group

of clients by ‘presenting’ themselves as credibly and as persuasively as they could. Plutarch (*vit. dec. or.* 833c) tells an anecdote about Antiphon which neatly illustrates the connection that was felt to exist between professing medicine and professing rhetoric:

...getting himself a room near the market place at Corinth he advertised that he had the power of curing those that were in trouble by means of speech; and discovering the causes of their sickness by enquiry he consoled the sick; but thinking that the profession was beneath his dignity he turned to rhetoric.

The author of the treatise *Prognostic* is fully aware of the importance of putting a credible case before one’s potential patients...⁷⁰

Of course, in the *Gorgias*, Plato connects medicine and persuasion when he discusses how the effects of cookery and medicine on the body are like the effects of rhetoric and philosophy.

In the first chapter of *Art and Experience in Classical Greece*, J.J. Pollitt discusses the importance of order in Greek society and art. He writes:

A deep-seated need to discover an order in, or superimpose an order on, the flux of physical and psychological experience is a continuing feature of all Greek artistic and philosophical expression. While it is true that every conscious creature feels this need to some extent, the intensity with which the quest for order was carried on by the Greeks was exceptional. Whether as a result of some mysterious tendency in the national psyche or as a spontaneous reaction to their turbulent historical experience after the break-up of the Mycenaean world, the Greeks felt that to live with changing, undefined, unmeasured, seemingly random impressions—to live, in short, with what was expressed by the Greek word *chaos*—was to live in a state of constant anxiety...If the apparent mutability of the physical world and of the human condition was a source of pain and bewilderment to the Greeks, the discovery of a permanent pattern or unchanging substratum by which apparently chaotic experience could be measured and explained was a source of satisfaction, even joy, which had something of a religious nature. For the recognition of order and measure in phenomena did more than simply satisfy their intellectual curiosity or

⁷⁰ Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy*, 20-21.

gratify a desire for tidiness; it also served as the basis of a spiritual ideal.⁷¹

The concept of “κόσμος” signifies a pleasing arrangement in general, and it is not only visually stimulating but also mentally satisfying.

Paul Cartledge also discusses the Greek idea of “κόσμος” and its importance in several spheres.⁷² He writes:

Already in Homer we find derived usages of *kosmos*, such as the prepositional phrase *kata kosmon* (‘in order’, ‘duly’, for example *Iliad* 10.472) and the adverbial *kosmiōs* (‘Very fittingly [did you sing the fate of the Achaeans]’: *Odyssey* 8.498; the latter is a reference perhaps not simply to the formal quality of Demodokos’ song but also to its truth-value (von Reden 1995b: 36). Since order was considered beautiful, *kosmos* came next to mean adornment, as in our own ‘cosmetic(s)’ (von Straten 1992: 268-9). Gorgias the Sophist, composing an encomium of Helen, makes her claim punningly that ‘For a city the finest *kosmos* [both order and adornment] is a good citizenry, for a body beauty, for a soul wisdom, for an action *aretē* [virtue], and for a speech truth’ (fr.11.1 D-K; trans. Gagarin & Woodruff 1995: 191)...This last usage rests on the cusp between the pre-philosophical and the philosophical. As early as about 500, perhaps, the Pythagorean sectaries had been using the word to describe orderliness in nature (as opposed to human culture or adornment). But the meaning ‘world-order’ seems not to have emerged much at all before the mid-fifth century, the first certain extant usage being by Empedokles (no. 397 in Kirk, Raven & Schofield 1983; though see perhaps already Herakleitos, KRS no. 217). The dogma of the *kosmos* as unitary, divine, harmonious and mathematically ordered took shape only after the mid fifth-century, possible under influence from the Near East. ...An anonymous ancient commentator wrote wittily of Plato’s work that *ὁ διάλογος κόσμος ἐστὶν καὶ ὁ κόσμος διάλογος* (‘the dialogue is a cosmos, and the cosmos a dialogue’: Westerink 1962: 30-1).⁷³

This discussion also points to the Greek association of “κόσμος” with physical beauty.

⁷¹ J.J. Pollitt, *Art and Experience in Classical Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 3-4.

⁷² Paul Cartledge, “Introduction: Defining a Kosmos” in *Kosmos: Essays in Order, Conflict and Community in Classical Athens* eds. Paul Cartledge, Paul Millett, and Sitta von Reden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 2-12.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

In the Homeric epics, “κόσμος” and the related verb “κοσμέω” (to order, to arrange) are primarily used for visual examples of order. At *Iliad* 2.554 and 3.1, for example, “κοσμέω” (to order, to arrange) is used to indicate the careful arrangement of horses and warriors on a battlefield. At 2.655, the verb is used for the organization of all the ships from Rhodes. At 4.145, “κόσμος” is used to indicate an intricately woven piece which adorns a horse. At 13.77, “κόσμος” is used for the precise distribution of Phaiakian sailors on their benches. In all of these examples, the inherent order of each is something which is determined by means of vision—one sees the strategic placement of soldiers on a battlefield, and one sees that rowers are carefully seated in rows at the oarlocks. but, even in archaic poetry, the epic text is presented in bodily terms.

The Greek word “κόσμος” is frequently used by authors such as Aristotle and Plato to describe speeches and texts.⁷⁴ In archaic poetry, the phrase “κατὰ κόσμον” (according to order) is used to indicate when a singer sings well, and “κόσμος” is also used to signify the poem itself. For example, in Book Eight of the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus asks Demodokos to sing about the wooden horse, he asks him to “ἵππου κόσμον ᾄεισον δουρατέου” (8.492) (sing the *kosmos* of the wooden horse). In this passage, the word “κόσμος” suggests the “form” of the constructed horse, the “strategem” of the horse, and the “telling” in general. Later poets echo this use of “κόσμος” for the poem itself. For example, in his philosophical and cosmological poem about the nature of being, Parmenides refers to his poem as “κόσμος ἑμῶν ἐπέων” (8.52) (a *kosmos* of my words).⁷⁵ Pindar also uses the term frequently for “poem.” Hesiod describes both the cosmogony

⁷⁴ See Chapter Two.

⁷⁵ It is worth noting here that Parmenides’ poem follows a “journey to persuasion” inspired by a goddess and deals with the composition of the universe A.H. Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides* (Dover, New Hampshire: Van Gorcum, 1986), 12.

of the physical universe in the *Theogony* and the cosmogony of the poem itself: the *Theogony* is actually an early commentary on epic.⁷⁶ Like the body of Zeus and the composition of the larger physical universe, the epic poem represents a combination of masculine and feminine energies and is a “κόσμος.” Body, text and universe all are examples of “κόσμος.”

In Book Fourteen of the *Iliad*, when Hera prepares to seduce Zeus in order to distract him from the fighting, she bathes, anoints herself, arranges her hair, puts on a special robe made by Athena (which is suggestive of ekphrastic passages in that it is embellished with many figures), and puts on jewelry and, last, a shining veil. Homer writes:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ πάντα περὶ χροῖ ῥήκατο κόσμον,
βῆ ῥ' ἵμεν ἐκ θαλάμοιο, καλεσσαμένη δ' Ἀφροδίτην
τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάνευθε θεῶν πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπε... (14.187-189)

(But when she had put the *kosmos* on her body, she went out from the chamber, and, calling Aphrodite far away from the other gods, she spoke a word to her...)

In this passage, “κόσμος” signifies “ornaments” or “adornments,” but, more importantly, it indicates beauty itself. Hera has made herself more visually appealing for Zeus, and certainly “κόσμος” is erotically charged here. Hesiod echoes the visually seductive aspect of “κόσμος” in his descriptions of the creation of Pandora. In both the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, Hesiod uses the verb “κοσμέω” to indicate what Athena contributes to Pandora, who, after all, is created to be an irresistible lure for mankind. He, therefore, also associates “κόσμος” with beauty, and, in particular, bodily beauty. Moreover, “κόσμος” is seductive.

⁷⁶ See Chapter Three.

In general, the force of “κόσμος” is associated with masculinity rather than femininity (the word itself is masculine in gender), which is why it takes a male sky-god to achieve “κόσμος” in the *Theogony* and why there is an inherent “κόσμος” of the body.⁷⁷ The term “κόσμος” and its related forms are frequently used for institutions which suggest justice and civilization, the products of Zeus’ dominance. For example, in the *Athenian Constitution*, the trainer of the Athenian ephebes is called “κοσμητής” (42.2) (the orderer). The Ephebeia served as the institutional training for eighteen-year old Athenian male youths and was intimately associated with masculine political power. Thucydides uses the term for government in general: “...ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἐπρασσετο, βουλομένων μεταστῆσαι τὸν κόσμον καὶ ἐξ δημοκρατίαν ὥσπερ οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι τρέψαι”(4.76.2). In the *Laws*, Plato uses the phrase “πόλεως κοσμητής” (844a) for the chief legislator of a state. Government and legislation was, of course, only a masculine pursuit in the ancient Greek world, and, as has been discussed above, fifth-century B.C.E. Athens was especially concerned with the appearance of masculinity in politics.

Thus, the basic ordering force of “κόσμος” is masculine, but a complete “κόσμος” in the later sense of “body,” “world,” or “universe” represents a masculine containment of feminine power—a marriage of the two energies. In *Generation of Animals*, a medical text that deals primarily with reproduction, Aristotle refers to “ἡ διακόσμησις τοῦ σώματος” (740a) (the ordering of the body) which occurs after conception. Thus, the natural “κόσμος” of the body is effected in the womb. In many of the ancient medical texts which deal with reproduction, semen is hot and actively shapes the damp, chaotic raw material which the female provides into a new life, bringing about an embryonic

⁷⁷ The κόσμος of the body which the medical writers suggest makes sense when one considers Thomas Laqueur’s argument that the early medical writers see the human body as an inherently masculine body. Any natural order of the body is a masculine order. Laqueur, *Making Sex*.

bodily “κόσμος.” Rhetorical and philosophical texts appropriate this bodily reproductive model to describe the intellectual product which results from philosophical discourse. In archaic epic, the same model is at work. The epic poet interacts sexually with the Muses, and his own masculine force provides structure and order for the raw material of inspiration which the Muses provide. The epic, then, is a combination of masculine and feminine energy, and it is born, like Athena, from the poet’s head. Thus, the epic poem, like the physical world, is a bodily “κόσμος,” an anthropomorphic entity.

Ekphrasis, like its larger surrounding epic “κόσμος,” is also corporeal. When Thetis asks Hephaistos to make new armor for her son, the encounter is sexual, although its sexual aspects are more subtle than in Venus’ interaction with Vulcan in the *Aeneid*.⁷⁸ Thetis appeals to the craftsman-god’s love for her, and entreats him with teary eyes. Hephaistos fondly recalls the time he spent with her in her cave and specifically refers to his warm feelings for her. Sexual imagery is readily apparent in Hephaistos’ recollection of his time spent with Thetis, and various bodily fluids are at work in his narration, including both foam and fire. Bodily fluids—and breath and fire—also abound when Thetis approaches Hephaistos for Achilles’ new armor. The first ekphrasis comes into being as a result of a sexualized interaction between Hephaistos and Thetis, then, and the shield is the product of Hephaistos’ fire, which, as I will show, is his divine masculinity. He shapes the metal of the shield just as semen shapes raw material in the womb, and the shield is depicted as an anthropomorphic “κόσμος.”

The shield is described in such a way that its embellishments actually form a model of the physical universe. It contains sun, stars, earth, cities, and is surrounded by ocean. As Thalmann has demonstrated, the Homeric universe is a horizontal and circular

⁷⁸ See Chapter Two.

universe,⁷⁹ and the horizontal universe of the shield thus mirrors the universe of the epic. It is clearly demarcated from the larger narrative. Like the heroes of the *Iliad*, the elaborated figures on the shield move, make noise, engage in battle, participate in courtship rituals, and argue. Many of the scenes on the shield actually parallel the larger action of the *Iliad*, and the narrative of the shield serves as a microcosm of the *Iliad*, a sort of micro-epic. The ekphrasis, then, represents “κόσμος” within “κόσμος.” Like the “κόσμος” with which Hera adorns herself or with which Athena dresses Pandora, the “κόσμος” of the ekphrasis functions as a beautiful adornment to the epic.

In the ekphrasis, it is the beautiful language that seduces; it is words that fill the roles played in the seduction by Hera’s toilet and Pandora’s clothing and jewels. Because of its concentrated imagery and hyper-visual nature, the “κόσμος” of the ekphrasis is more readily apparent to an audience than the “κόσμος” of the surrounding epic. Its irresistible images serve to excite erotic desire, and its beauty seduces the audience into the larger epic “κόσμος.” The ekphrasis is, as Heffernan has argued, feminine in form. Its highly visual language communicates through image rather than word and thus characterizes the ekphrasis as feminine. Like Metis inside Zeus, ekphrasis functions as the feminine element of epic speech: it is that essential feminine element of persuasion. At the same time, its power is procreative and generative.

In the Homeric epics (and in later epic as well), women weave images into tapestries and robes while men express themselves verbally. Communication through images, then, is characterized as feminine while communication through words is masculine. Poetry and storytelling are often discussed in terms of weaving and

⁷⁹ William G. Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984).

woolworking. Frequently, the language of the epic ekphrasis directly connects it to weaving. In its constant negotiation between image and word, ekphrasis, then, allows the poet to use both feminine and masculine methods of communication; more importantly, it allows the poet to communicate outside of the confines of language and gender. Ekphrasis offers the irresistible possibility of pre-natal wholeness and, ultimately, communion with the divine sphere—in other words, the Lacanian Real.

Summary of Project

In this project, I will show that ekphrasis begins as a feminine, corporeal element within epic which allows the poet to accomplish an act of persuasion and that ekphrasis is intimately associated with sexuality. Ekphrasis works as a poetic uterus, draining away masculine control and mental faculty from its audience, rendering its audience defenseless against the artificial world which the poet creates. Its uterine form is also procreative and offers the compelling possibility of complete “κόσμος.” It allows the poet to seemingly communicate on both masculine and feminine levels, thereby establishing the poet’s special connection to the divine sphere. Key words to track here are *kosmos*, *charis*, wonder, marvel, Labyrinth, *techne*, *ars*, spiral, circle, belly, uterus, *daidala*, and anything which has to do with vision.

In Chapter Two, I deal with the ekphrasis about Achilles’ shield in the *Iliad*. I argue that ekphrasis exists as a separate “κόσμος” within the poem and that it is intimately associated with marriage and sexuality. Homer presents ekphrasis as a feminine body which exists within the larger masculine body of the epic. This feminine element works

to charm and seduce an audience into believing the larger epic universe which the poet creates. It emasculates and renders its audience vulnerable to the poet's words. Through its structure and subject matter, this first ekphrasis offers communion with the divine sphere.

In Chapter Three, I look at the shorter Hesiodic epics. I argue that the *Theogony* is not only a cosmogony about the physical universe but also a commentary on the poetic process and the epic body itself. Hesiod presents the epic as the corporeal product of his own sexual interaction with the Muses. In delineating the structure of the universe, Hesiod exhibits a keen awareness about his own role in shaping that universe, and he even comments on the importance of persuasion in his own art. The *Theogony* is, perhaps, the earliest extant example of Homeric literary criticism. His Pandora stands as a microcosm of the larger physical universe which Hesiod delineates in the poem, and, most importantly, Hesiod's description of her creation has striking similarities to the description of Achilles' shield. I argue, too, that the passage about Pandora in the *Theogony* is actually a commentary on epic ekphrasis.

After the epics of the archaic period, ekphrasis evolves. Later poets experiment with its possibilities and incorporate it more extensively into the larger epic until, eventually, the whole epic itself becomes ekphrastic in nature. Chapter Four examines Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as an example of such an expanded ekphrasis. Ovid incorporates elements from both Homer and Hesiod into the innovative epic, including both Achilles' shield and Pandora. He offers four traditional ekphraseis, but he also extends the characteristics of ekphrasis to the rest of the poem. There are several artists in the *Metamorphoses*, and Ovid identifies to some degree with all of them, but most especially

with Arachne and Philomela in Book Six, both of whom weave tapestries with purple threads on white backgrounds. Arachne's tapestry forms the subject of one of the four traditional ekphraseis in the poem, and it actually stands as a microcosm of the larger epic. Ovid provides two readings of his epic—one linear, masculine reading which seems to celebrate the political metamorphosis of Rome under Augustus and one episodic, feminine reading which is daringly subversive. The stories about Arachne and Philomela together offer the key to seeing this secondary, feminine reading and, thus, to understanding Ovid's underlying political message. In the end, I believe this veiled political statement is actually why Ovid was exiled in 8 C.E.

In Chapter Five, the Conclusion, I summarize my argument. In general, I aim to show not only that ekphrasis is a feminine, uterine device but that successive poets manipulate it in their attempt to establish themselves in the competitive arena of epic poetry.

Chapter Two: Gender, *Techne*, and the Sexuality of Ekphrasis in the *Iliad*

In Book Two of the *Iliad*, Agamemnon attempts to rouse the disgruntled Greek army by making trial of the men; counting on their battle-spirit and competitive nature, he suggests that the Achaians abandon the fight for Troy and sail home. His speech has an unexpected effect, however. Chaos erupts in the assembly, and the men run for the ships, shouting at each other and raising a huge cloud of dust with their sudden, collective movement. Athena urges Odysseus to take control of the situation, and he grabs Agamemnon's golden "*σκῆπτρον*" (sceptre, speaker's staff). The "*σκῆπτρον*" is the work of Hephaistos and has been passed down from Zeus through several generations to Agamemnon. It is a symbol of Agamemnon's supreme status among those gathered, and it signifies masculine sexual and political privilege. As Nestor explains at 9.96-102, the "*σκῆπτρον*" not only represents political power in general, but, specifically, it stands for the right to speak in public assemblies. The "*ἄριστοι*" (the best men, the elite) hold the phallic "*σκῆπτρον*" when they address those gathered. Odysseus grabs Agamemnon's "*σκῆπτρον*" because he is attempting to restore order in the assembly, and he needs to exhibit masculine power in order to bring about such political "*κόσμος*."¹

¹ I am assuming that both Homeric poems date to the middle of the eighth century B.C.E. and that the Hesiodic poems date to the last decades of that century. I am also assuming that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* include elements from the Bronze Age as well as elements from later periods. If, as many scholars believe, the poems did not come together in their present forms until later, I do not believe my argument is changed. In this chapter, I will refer to "Homer" as the author of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* in the interest of clarity, although I understand the poems to be the products of a rich and long epic tradition which no doubt includes many contributors.

Holding the “*σκήπτρον*,” Odysseus runs among the Achaians. Whenever he encounters a “*βασιλεύς*” (2.188) (chieftain) or a man of high-standing, Odysseus speaks to him “*ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσιν*” (2.189) (with mild words), but, whenever Odysseus encounters a “*ἄνθρωπος δῆμου*” (2.198) (man of the people), he strikes him with the “*σκήπτρον*” and reminds the man of his low social status (2.200-206). Thus, Odysseus uses persuasion when he comes across men who are in his own elite class, but he uses force when he meets men who are his political inferiors. Despite Odysseus’ efforts, Thersites, a member of the lower class of men, still dares to scold the politically superior Agamemnon. Homer is careful to point out that Thersites is the ugliest man among the Achaians (2.216-219) and that Thersites’ speaks “*ἔπεα ἄκοσμα*” (ugly words, words without order) and “*οὐ κατὰ κόσμῳ*” (without order) (2.213-214). When Thersites persists with his loud complaining, Odysseus delivers a speech in which he tells Thersites that he has no place contending with *basileis* in the assembly (2.246-264). Odysseus then hits Thersites between the shoulder blades with the “*σκήπτρον*” so hard that he draws blood and causes the man to start crying. In this way, Odysseus establishes his superiority over Thersites, silencing him in a spectacle of distilled masculine dominance which involves both speech and physical abuse. Odysseus even suggests that he will strip Thersites until his genitals are exposed before whipping him out of the assembly, thus revealing that the struggle is essentially sexual in nature. In the end, Odysseus is celebrated for publicly humiliating Thersites and bringing about order among the Achaians.

As the encounter between Odysseus and Thersites shows, the heroic world is very much a world which is driven by raw masculine power. Masculine “*ἀγών*” (competition) is ubiquitous, although heroic competition occurs only among the elite members of

society. Inferior figures like Thersites are expected to simply defer to their political—and sexual—superiors.² The word “ἀγών” not only indicates a locus for contests but also in general any public assembly. It seems that whenever men gather in the heroic world competition necessarily follows, physical or verbal. Homeric culture is a performative culture; heroes constantly strive to show their “ἀρετή” (manly excellence). Public displays of “ἀρετή” not only establish and maintain the superior status of the “ἀρίστοι” (best men) but also help to construct relationships among those in power.³ Heroes show their “ἀρετή” by winning on the battlefield, by winning in athletic competitions, by sexual conquest, and by excelling at public speaking—as evidenced by the Trojan elders who watch the battle from the city wall in Book Three who, Homer tells his audience, are too old to fight but still excellent in the arena of oratory. Thus, “ἀρετή” may be physical or mental in nature; still, any performance of “ἀρετή” is fueled by the corporeal essence of masculine power, “μῆνος.”

Odysseus’ encounter with the Phaiakians in Book Eight of the *Odyssey* provides another excellent example of heroic competition. Odysseus, who has washed up on the island of the Phaiakians, is invited by the young Phaiakian men to join their athletic contests. He refuses, explaining that he has too many cares to indulge in athletic games and that he is tired from his long journey. Euryalos, one of the Phaiakian men, then insults Odysseus by saying that Odysseus does not look like an athlete, suggesting that Odysseus is past his prime—in other words, suggesting that Odysseus does not have enough “μῆνος” to compete with the young men. Odysseus delivers a clever speech at

² William G. Thalmann, *The Swineherd and the Bow: Representations of Class in the Odyssey* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 120-121. Also see W.G. Thalmann, “Thersites: Comedy, Scapegoats, and Heroic Ideology in the Iliad,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 118 (1988), 1-28.

³ For a general discussion of “ἀρετή,” see for example Margalit Finkelberg, “Timē and Aretē in Homer,” *Classical Quarterly* 48, no.1 (1998), 14-28.

Euryalos' expense and then throws a discus much farther than any other of the athletes.

Alkinoos, king of the Phaiakians, responds to the situation with the following speech:

*Ξεῖν', ἐπεὶ οὐκ ἀχάριστα μεθ' ἡμῖν ταῦτ' ἀγορεύεις,
ἀλλ' ἐθέλεις ἀρετὴν σὴν φαίνεμεν, ἥ τοι ὀπηδεῖ,
χωόμενος ὅτι σ' οὗτος ἀνὴρ ἐν ἀγῶνι παραστάς
νείκεσεν, ὥς ἂν σὴν ἀρετὴν βροτὸς οὐ τις ὄνοιτο
ὅς τις ἐπίσταιτο ἧσι φρεσὶν ἄρτια βάζειν· (8.236-240)⁴*

(Stranger, since you say these things in assembly with us not without grace, but you are willing to show your manly excellence, which is bestowed upon you, being angry because this man, standing near you in the assembly, belittled you, in such a way no man would blame your manly excellence, who understood in his heart how to speak sensibly.)

Alkinoos specifically acknowledges that Odysseus—who at this point is still unknown to the Phaiakians—has shown his “ἀρετή” (masculine excellence) after another man challenged him in an “ἀγών.” By putting Euryalos in his place with clever speech before throwing the discus farther than everyone else, Odysseus offers a demonstration to everyone gathered that he indeed has plenty of “μένος.” “Μένος” affords him both physical strength and the ability to command language, and, by performing well in both arenas, Odysseus outshines his younger opponent and shows that he is indeed worthy to compete with them.⁵

Later, Odysseus further shows off his ability to use language by entertaining the Phaiakians with the tale of his adventures after leaving Troy. The Phaiakians are impressed with his storytelling, and Alkinoos compliments him:

⁴ Nancy Felson has argued that Odysseus' competitive speech in Book Eight of the *Odyssey* anticipates epinician poetry. See Nancy Felson, “Epinician Ideology at the Phaeacian Games: Θ 97-265,” in *Contests and Rewards in the Homeric Epics: Proceedings of the 10th International Symposium on the Odyssey (15-19 September, 2004)* eds. Machi Paizi-Apostolopoulou, Antonios Rengakos, Christos Tsagalis (Ithaca: 2007), 129-144.

⁵ Cf. Thalmann, *The Swineherd and the Bow*, 141-153. As Thalmann observes, the Phaiakian men and Odysseus are members of the same class; the young men are testing Odysseus, working out his areas of excellence while at the same time demonstrating for him their own skills. As Alkinoos points out after the challenge, Odysseus may be better at certain athletic events and eloquent speech, but the Phaiakians excel at running, dancing, and feasting.

ὦ Ὀδυσσεῦ, τὸ μὲν οὐ τί σ' εἴσκομεν εἰσορόωντες
 ἡπεροπῆγά τ' ἔμεν καὶ ἐπὶ κλοπον, οἶα τε πολλοὺς
 βόσκει γαῖα μέλαινα πολυσπερέας ἀνθρώπους
 ψεύδεά τ' ἀρτύνοντα, ὅθεν κέ τις οὐδέ ἴδοιτο·
 σοὶ δ' ἐπὶ μὲν μορφὴν ἐπέων, ἐνὶ δὲ φρένες ἐσθλαί,
 μῦθον δ' ὥς ὅτ' ἀοιδὸς ἐπισταμένως κατέλεξας,
 πάντων Ἀργείων σέο τ' αὐτοῦ κήδεα λυγρά. (11.362-369)

(Odysseus, looking upon you we do not think that you are a deceiver or a cozeners, such as the black earth nourishes many men, widely dispersed, who devise false stories, from which no one could know anything. There is a beauty to your speech, and noble thoughts in your mind, and expertly, as a singer, you have told about the dismal troubles of yourself and of all the Argives.)

Alkinoos explicitly compares Odysseus to a singer (ἀοιδός) in this passage. When he relates the account of his adventures, Odysseus indeed serves as an internal narrator for the larger epic.⁶ Homer speaks through him, and, to some degree, Odysseus represents the external poet as he performs for the Phaiakians. For this reason, Alkinoos' reaction to Odysseus' tale is important in examining epic performance in general. As I established earlier, performances of poetry are exercises in persuasion just like speeches before assemblies. The oral poet persuades his audience to believe the epic “κόσμος” which he creates, and the effect which the poet's song has on its listeners is “τέρψις” (pleasure, delight) or “ῥέλιξ” (charm, enchantment). Persuasion is inextricably linked with sexuality, and “τέρψις” and “ῥέλιξ” are both also associated with sexual pleasure.⁷ Thus, the effect which the epic “κόσμος” affords is sexual. Of course, the poet's ability to persuade requires a desire in his audience to be persuaded. Thus, the poet seduces his audience into believing his epic in the same way a lover seduces his beloved. As

⁶ For a discussion of narratology in the Homeric epics, see Gerard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980).

⁷ See Chapter One, Introduction, for example. Also, see Nancy Felson-Rubin, *Regarding Penelope: From Character to Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 138-140 and Seth L. Schein, “Introduction,” in *Reading the Odyssey: Selected Interpretive Essays* ed. Seth L. Schein (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 24-26.

Alkinoos says in the passage cited above, Odysseus has told his story so well that he does not seem like he is making up stories to his listeners; in other words, he has persuaded them to surrender to his words.

Thalmann has argued that there is an intimate association between Homeric competition in general and erotic desire, and the erotic nature of competition certainly holds true for poetic performances.⁸ Any exercise in persuasion is necessarily a competition. Not only does the speaker contend to wrestle language into meaningful, compelling speech, but the speaker also competes to penetrate and dominate the minds of his listeners with his words. Oral poetry was competitive by nature, as traveling bards depended on their skills for their livelihood. The connection between hunger and poetry in oral epic is explicit.⁹ Actual contests in which prizes were offered existed for poets, of course, and Hesiod himself offers an account of winning such a competition in the *Works and Days* (650-659).¹⁰ Hesiod tells his audience in that poem that he won a tripod, which is a common prize for athletic contests in the Homeric epics.¹¹ Like speeches before assemblies, performances of poetry also are public demonstrations of masculine power, then, and Odysseus' performance as a poet above serves to show that he has masculine

⁸ Thalmann, *The Swineherd and the Bow*, 193-206. Thalmann discusses Homeric competition in general but specifically focuses on the competition over Helen, 199: "We need to ask, however, why it is specifically the scene of two men's (or armies') rivalry over a woman that is presented as the paradigm of male competition. The intuitive answer is the defeat of other men for possession of a beautiful woman functions as a sign of sexual potency, and intuition here is surely correct. Sexual potency is taken in honor-based societies as one of the primary signifiers of manhood, and these societies are simply more blunt about this matter than is our own."

⁹ See for example, Gregory Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 44-45 and 274-275 and Pietro Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and Iliad* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 191-208.

¹⁰ Of course, the account of an actual contest between Homer and Hesiod dates to the second century C.E., but some scholars speculate that it is based on a much earlier tradition.

¹¹ The competitive nature of performative poetry is readily apparent in later Greek authors. Pindar frequently conflates athletic competition with poetic competition in his epinician odes, for example, and the tragic poets not only competed with each other formally in the Dionysia but also derided the work of others internally in their plays.

“ἀρετῇ” just like his clever speech against Euryalos and his powerful discus-throw. As a whole, then, the speech of the oral poet is infused with masculine sexual power.

In the passage from Book Eleven of the *Odyssey* discussed above, Alkinoos not only explicitly compares the hero to an “ἄοιδός” but also praises the “μορφῇ” (beauty, appearance) of his words. As discussed in the Introduction, the word “μορφῇ” suggests a visual quality. It is only used twice in the Homeric epics (*Odyssey* 8.170 and 11.367), and in both cases it describes speech.¹² In general in Greek literature, however, the word and its cognates are used frequently to describe bodies. For example, in Pindar’s *Olympian 9*, the word is used to describe Opus, whom Pindar calls “ὀπέρφατον ἄνδρα μορφῇ τε καὶ ἔργοισι.” (a man beyond description in form and in deeds) (65). According to Pausanias (3.15.8), a cult to Aphrodite existed at Sparta in which the goddess was called, “ἡ Μορφώ” (The Beautiful One). Alkinoos, then, describes Odysseus’ words in the same way he might describe a beautiful body. In fact, in Book Eight of the *Odyssey*, when Odysseus puts Euryalos in his place, he himself uses the term to describe eloquent words. In his speech, he treats the “μορφῇ” of words and the “εἶδος” (appearance) of the masculine body as parallel entities. Odysseus thus equates speech and bodily beauty. Moreover, when he notes that Euryalos has spoken “οὐ κατὰ κόσμον,” he suggests that speech which manifests pleasing “μορφῇ” also exhibits “κόσμος.” Thus, the epics present not only political speeches before public assemblies but also poetic performances in terms of the masculine body.

Not only does Homeric epic have bodily form, but it also has the corporeal essence of masculinity coursing through it. The term “μένος” occurs many times

¹² At *Odyssey* 8.170, it is used for speech in an assembly, and at 11.367, it is used for poetic speech.

throughout both Homeric epics, and it always carries its essential meaning of “masculine life-force.” Translators often render it using words such as “courage,” “battle-spirit,” “strength,” “might,” or “fury,” but these specific meanings are all manifestations of masculinity. The masculine body serves as template for the heroes themselves and also for the gods and the physical world of the epics. The heroes are bursting with “*μένος*,” and the gods—who are particularly anthropomorphic in the *Iliad*—possess “*μένος*” as well.¹³ Even the river Xanthos has “*μένος*.” More specific bodily fluids such as fire, breath, water, earth, and blood are found throughout both Homeric epics, and, just as in the cosmologies of the Pre-Socratics, these fluids not only course through the bodies of men and gods but also through the larger geographical universe. Thus, the epic “*κόσμος*” which Homer constructs in the *Iliad* is saturated with masculine corporeal power.

While the penetrating whole of epic “*κόσμος*” is formed as a masculine body, like all successful oratory, it also has feminine elements which enhance its alluring quality. When Odysseus says, above, about the man who is good-looking but inarticulate, “*ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ οἱ χάρις ἀμφιπεριστέφεται ἐπέεσσιν*,” he suggests that expressive, eloquent speech has “*χάρις*” (grace). Demodokos, the blind Phaiakian singer, also functions within the *Odyssey* as an internal commentary of sorts about epic performance. When he sings so vividly about subjects which cause Odysseus to weep uncontrollably, Alkinoos associates “*χάρις*” with his song (8.536-541). Thus, the pleasing or moving song exhibits “*χάρις*” for those who experience it. Buxton has shown that “*χάρις*” is indeed a sexual force and that Charis and the Charites often attend Peitho (Persuasion) along with Aphrodite, Eros,

¹³ The Pre-Socratics attribute “*μένος*” to various elements of the universe. See Parmenides 10.3: “*ἄστρον θεομὸν μένος*” in Coxon, *The Fragments of Parmenides* and Empedocles 111.3: “*ἀνέμων μένος*” in M.R. Wright, *Empedocles: The Extant Fragments* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).

Pothos (Longing), and Himeros (Desire).¹⁴ As discussed in the Introduction, the interaction between oral poet and audience is a sexual interaction, and poems which exhibit “*χάρις*” are especially enticing.

That the quality is bodily is apparent in the *Iliad* itself. In Book Sixteen, the poet describes the beauty of Achilles with the term, saying “*ἀλλ’ ἀνδρὸς θείοιο κάρη χαρίεν τε μέτωπον ῥύετ’ Ἀχιλλῆος*” (16.798-799) (but it protected the graceful head of the godlike man and the brow of Achilles). When Achilles learns about the death of Patroklos, he “*χαρίεν δ’ ἥσχυνε πρόσωπον*” (18.24) (befouled his grace-filled physical appearance). When Hera makes herself especially physically attractive in order to seduce Zeus in Book Fourteen, not only does she adorn herself with “*κόσμος*” as discussed in the Introduction, but, in the words of the poet, “*χάρις δ’ ἀπελάμπετο πολλή*.” (14.183) (all kinds of grace gleamed out from her) Clearly, “*χάρις*” is a sexually alluring quality here. In all of these passages, “*χαρίεν*” could easily be translated as “beautiful” and “*χάρις*” as “beauty.” Because goddesses represent the quality, it seems to be a feminine rather than masculine trait. The presentation of Charis as Hephaistos’ wife in Book Eighteen (18.382) also suggests that the quality is indeed feminine. Though feminine, “*χάρις*,” is involved in endeavors which are ultimately masculine pursuits such as sexual conquest and persuasion, however.

The quality of “*χάρις*” is an adornment which makes bodies sexually attractive, and, at least in the instances discussed above, it is a quality associated with physical form or shape. That it is visual helps to characterize the quality as feminine as well. As has been shown above, verbal expression is characterized as a masculine pursuit in the epics.

¹⁴ Buxton, *Persuasion in Greek Tragedy*, especially 32-48.

While of course female characters in the epics use language, it is unusual for them to make public speeches—in other words, women do not participate in the performative aspect of language. Instead, women tend to express themselves by weaving images into tapestries or garments. Homeric poet uses the verb “ὑφαίνειν” (to weave) for both activities, however, thus suggesting that weaving textiles and manipulating language are related. Weaving textiles, formulating speeches, and composing poems are all forms of “τέχνη” (art, craft), in fact.¹⁵ All of these activities involve a marriage of masculine and feminine energies and follow a model which is based on bodily reproduction. The cosmic, ordering force of masculinity is imposed on some raw material of inspiration, and a sort of corporeal “κόσμος” is constructed. While the different forms of artistic expression are manifestations of the same cosmogonic process, the Homeric epics present the finished products of “τέχνη” as inherently gendered. Verbal “τέχνη” is masculine while visual “τέχνη” is feminine. The ekphrasis in Book Eighteen of the *Iliad* represents Homer’s attempt to communicate using both masculine and feminine “τέχνη,” both language and image.

While the larger epic “κόσμος” of the *Iliad* is anthropomorphized as a penetrating masculine body, the ekphrasis about Achilles’ shield is presented as a feminine body.¹⁶ The ekphrasis is a self-contained, individual “κόσμος” which is infused with seductive “χάρις.” Many elements of the larger poem help to characterize the ekphrasis as a feminine body, including its connection to weaving and woven things, the other artistic things which Hephaistos creates in the poem, and the shield’s connection to Helen herself. Like Helen, the appearance of the shield is frighteningly beautiful and

¹⁵ See, for example, Aristotle’s later discussion of speech-making as a τέχνη in Chapter One.

¹⁶ Cf. Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 3-5.

irresistible, and, like Helen's body, the ekphrasis is labyrinthine and potentially emasculating. The scenes on the shield also characterize the ekphrasis as feminine, especially the final dancing scene. Moreover, the overall description of the design of the shield is actually suggestive of female genitalia; its spiralling design creates a vaginal/uterine image which draws in its audience. With this first ekphrasis, the poet appropriates feminine procreative power, using the body of the ekphrasis as a sort of poetic uterus. The epic poet, then, resembles Zeus in Hesiod's *Theogony*, who swallows his first wife Metis and uses her feminine power himself. Like Zeus, the poet uses feminine ekphrasis to help accomplish the act of poetic persuasion.

This chapter will examine the description of Achilles' shield in Book Eighteen of the *Iliad* as the earliest example of ekphrasis. First, I will look at the Homeric presentation of "μένος," the essential fluid of masculinity, and I will examine the anthropomorphic, masculine universe of the *Iliad*. Second, I will look at how weaving and poesis are related in the epic and establish that weaving and feminine sexuality are closely connected. Third, I will examine the figures of Hephaistos and Daidalos generally and show that they both have procreative abilities. Fourth, I will focus on the production of Achilles' shield in Book Eighteen and show that the shield is presented in corporeal terms. Fifth, I will show that the ekphrasis is characterized as a feminine body. Next, I will look at the last scene in the ekphrasis as the key to understanding the whole of the individual scenes and the overall function of the ekphrasis within the poem. The final dancing scene characterizes the images on Achilles' shield as elements of religious ritual. Together, the scenes recall the ecstatic rituals of Minoan religion, much of which continued into the Geometric period on Crete and influenced later Greek cults. Minoan

religion focused on a fertile mother-goddess and young warrior-attendants. Finally, I will examine the reaction of Achilles to the images of the ekphrasis within the poem as a model for the interaction between oral poet and audience. Not only does the ekphrasis allow the poet to seemingly escape the confines of gender and communicate using both male and female forms of expression, but, ultimately, this first ekphrasis also hints at pre-natal wholeness and suggests to its audience communion with the divine sphere.

Masculine Sexual Power in the *Iliad*

The word “*μένος*” (masculine life-force) is used extensively throughout both Homeric poems, and, as discussed in the Introduction, although “*μένος*” can manifest as different actual fluids or as the more abstract characteristics of masculinity, in general it is the fluid which makes men masculine and which allows them to achieve “*ἀρετή*” (manly excellence). It can be lost in various forms—in the form of blood through defeat in battle or in the form of semen through sexual intercourse, for example. It can also be gained; for example, at times, various gods instill “*μένος*” in the heroes to give them additional courage, strength, and battle-fury. The entire Homeric universe, in fact, has different forms of “*μένος*” flowing through it, including fire, water, and wind. A comprehensive study of heroic “*μένος*” is beyond the scope of this project, but I hope to show in this section that there is a range of manifestations of “*μένος*” in the *Iliad* and that the epic universe is indeed constructed in terms of the masculine body.¹⁷

¹⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of how many of the ideas about the order of the body which are at work in the medical writers are to be found in the Homeric epics, see Wesley D. Smith, “Physiology in the Homeric Poems,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 97 (1966), 547-556. As Smith writes, 553: “It is a long step from the epic to the medical writer, but the line is direct.

Book One of the *Iliad* focuses on the initial quarrel between Agamemnon and Achilles. Agamemnon publicly insults Achilles when he takes for himself Achilles' war prize, Briseis, and Achilles refuses to yield to Agamemnon's aggression. Agamemnon's action is a public blow to Achilles' status among the heroes gathered at Troy, and, because social status is necessarily tied to sexual status, it is also Agamemnon's attempt to demonstrate his masculine superiority over Achilles. Homer refers to the raging "μένος" of both heroes. For example, at *Iliad* 1.207, Athena appears to Achilles after Agamemnon has claimed Briseis. She explains that she has come "παύσουσα τὸ σὸν μένος" (for the purpose of checking your *menos*). Achilles' masculinity has been threatened by Agamemnon, and Achilles' masculinity is surging in response. Later in Book One, Nestor attempts to persuade Agamemnon and Achilles to give up their quarrel, and he explicitly asks Agamemnon to "σὺ δὲ παῦε τεὸν μένος" (1.282) (check your *menos*). It is the force of Agamemnon's masculinity which fuels his aggression. Notably, Homer tells his audience at 1.304-5 that the two men were doing battle with words: "Ὡς τὼ γ' ἀντιβίοισι μαχέσσαντο ἐπέεσσιν..." (Thus these two were doing battle with fighting words). Their raging "μένος" thus causes them to contend in several ways, including with language. Homer emphasizes the corporeal quality of their language by saying that they do battle "ἀντιβίοισι ἐπέεσσιν" (with fighting words); the adjective "ἀντίβιος" is composed of the prefix "ἀντί" (set against) and the word "βιά" (bodily force). Thus, their words contend with each other just as warriors fight physically on the battlefield.

When the Homeric poems look for a way to describe the organization and functioning of the body, they do so in terms of tension and balance." Later, *ibid.* 555, he writes, "Tension and balance define the living being, describe also his health and sanity, and describe his intellectual and moral competence. Vocabulary and process of association carry over from one to the other."

When the Achaians march out to meet the Trojans in battle at the beginning of Book Three, Homer describes them as “*μένεα πνείνοντες*” (3.8) (breathing “*μένος*”). Here, “*μένος*” is explicitly connected with breath, an important essential bodily fluid in many ancient medical texts. In Book Four (4.446-456), Homer again uses the term to point to the fluid nature of “*μένος*.” Here, the “*μένος*” of warriors who are killed in the furious battle is lost in the form of blood, which the poet compares to the surging of rivers rushing down from mountains. At the beginning of the *Diomedea*, the poet’s celebration of Diomedes, Athena gives Diomedes both “*μένος*” and “*θάρος*” (5.2). At 5.506, he uses the phrase “*μένος χειρῶν*” to indicate manly physical strength. Right before she grants him the ability to distinguish gods from men on the battlefield, Athena tells Diomedes, “*θαρσῶν νῦν, Διόμηδες, ἐπὶ Τρῳέσσι μάχεσθαι· ἐν γάρ τοι στήθεσσι μένος πατρώϊον ἦκα ἄτρομον...*” (5.124-125) (Now, Diomedes, have courage to fight against the Trojans, for I have put the dauntless *menos* of your father in your breast). It is noteworthy here that Homer describes Diomedes’ *menos* using “*πατρώϊος*,” an adjective which means “derived from one’s father.” He thus emphasizes the sexual quality of *menos*. Diomedes goes on to win great glory on the battlefield and even does battle with Aphrodite and charges Apollo; thus, Athena’s gift of extra “*μένος*” allows him to excel as a warrior. At 5.296, Diomedes kills Pandaros, and the poet says that the Trojan warrior loses both his soul and his “*μένος*.” “*...τοῦ δ’ αὔθι λύθη ψυχή τε μένος τε.*” (and immediately his soul and his *menos* were drained away...) Pandaros loses his *μένος* in the form of blood. In the same book, Ares rallies the Trojans by stirring the “*μένος*” in each man (5.470), and Sarpedon attempts to motivate Hektor to lead the Trojans into battle by asking him where all his “*μένος*” has gone (5.472). Odysseus, Diomedes, and the two Aiantes in turn rally the

Greek forces, and, again, the description of their manly valor is described in fluid terms. Here, Homer compares the steadfastness of the Greeks to clouds which do not move in the force of the winds, and, at 5.524, Homer uses “μένος” to indicate the power of wind, a more cosmic form of breath.

In Book Twenty-One of the *Iliad*, as Achilles rages with battle-fury for the ultimate battle of the epic, Homer again focuses on the power of “μένος.” This battle is the height of Achilles’ “ἀρετή.” At this point, Achilles is so filled with “μένος” that he actually acts like a god and does battle with gods. He hacks through the Trojan ranks, killing so many men that the river Xanthos becomes enraged at the number of dead bodies which Achilles causes to fall into his waters. The river fights with Achilles, and Homer describes the river’s battle-fury using the term “μένος” (21.305). Xanthos calls upon his brother, Simois, to create great torrents and waves filled with debris in order to repel Achilles as he rages. Xanthos specifically calls upon his brother to use the force of their waters to oppose the “σθένος ἀνέροος” (the strength of that man). Xanthos’ own “μένος” manifests as great surges of water, and he intends to beat Achilles’ to death. He rushes against Achilles, “μορμύρων ἀφρῶν τε καὶ αἵματι καὶ νεκύεσσι...” (21.325) (boiling with foam and blood and dead bodies). The imagery in this passage is filled with fluids of the masculine body—water, blood, and foam.¹⁸ In the above Homeric passage, it is likely that the “μένος” of all the dead men—which has flowed out into the river in these

¹⁸ The “ἀφρός” in the passage is particularly compelling. The image of a white, frothy substance on waves which are already teeming with other manifestations of “μένος” is similar to the Hesiodic description of Kronos’ lopping off of Ouranos’ genitals in the *Theogony*, which will be discussed more extensively in Chapter Three. In that epic, “ἀφρός” (foam) and “αἷμα” (blood) are the two fluids which leak out of the severed genitals, suggesting that “ἀφρός” and “αἷμα” are associated with one another as sexual fluids. Both fluids are procreative: the blood impregnates Gaia, and the foam produces Aphrodite. See Chapter Three.

forms—has also contributed to the power of the river itself, their power mixing with Xanthos' waters.

Hera becomes worried that Achilles will perish in this furious battle, and she calls upon her son Hephaistos to fight against the power of the river with his fire. She tells Hephaistos to use his fire to burn the trees by the river and the river itself in order to protect Achilles (21.331-342). She specifically says:

μηδὲ πρὶν ἀπόπαυε τεὸν μένος, ἀλλ' ὅπότε ἂν δῇ
φθέγγομ' ἐγὼν ἰάχουσα, τότε σχεῖν ἀκάματον πῦρ. (21.341-342)

(Do not check your *menos* until that time when I give the signal, then hold back your burning fire.)

Hera asks Hephaistos to use his fire because he can match Xanthos in battle, and she explicitly tells him not to check his μένος (341), even if Xanthos should attempt to turn him back by means of gentle words or with threats.¹⁹ Hephaistos' fire is, in fact, a manifestation of his divine μένος. Hera herself will help Hephaistos in his endeavor by securing the power of Zephyr and Notos, two of the winds. Because Homer often refers to the μένος of the winds, it is likely that Hera attempts to harness this inherent masculine power to protect Achilles.

In general, the importance of fire as a life-force in the ancient world cannot be exaggerated. The medical writers use several different terms for both fire and heat, but in general most associate heat and dryness with men. Aristotle, in *On the Generation of Animals*, describes the male role in reproduction as one of movement; movement produces heat which gives form to the female's matter.²⁰ He also states that semen is by

¹⁹ The word ἀρετή is related not only to the name of the Greek god of war but also to the term ἀρετή. Thus, Homer focuses on the masculine nature of the battle.

²⁰ Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, 1.20-21 and 4.1

nature hot and that the hottest semen is the most fertile.²¹ As mentioned earlier in the Introduction, fire is also a basic element in several early cosmologies. Heraclitus, for example, begins his treatise by arguing that divine eternity stems from an essential, universal logos which is the product of an ever-changing but ever-constant *κόσμος* of fire. In the fragments of Heraclitus, it is clear that the *πῦρ* on which he focuses is indeed a more abstract force of life. Heraclitus' association of fire with immortality and eternity is echoed in myth, where immersion in fire is one way to make a mortal being immortal. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, for example, Demeter attempts to make the baby Demophoon immortal by anointing him with ambrosia and putting him in the *menos* of fire every night (239). Apollodorus (3.13.6) describes Thetis' attempt to make Achilles immortal by putting him into a fire. Clearly, in these accounts, fire is closely linked with divine life-force.²²

It is worth mentioning that, in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Demeter also breathes on the child Demophoon in her attempt to make him immortal. Many medical writers associate fire with “*πνεῦμα*,” (breath) another obvious force of life. In the *Hippocratic Diseases of Women*, women who do not receive regular “irrigation” through sexual intercourse and, thus who are in need of semen, eventually suffocate—in other words, they die from lack of breath. In *Airs, Waters, Places*, the Hippocratic writer discusses how winds, “*τὰ πνεύματα*,” affect people's health. In *On Breaths*, the Hippocratic writer uses several different terms for air inside the body and air outside the body, including “*πνεῦμα*,” but he writes in his introduction that all airs are intimately

²¹ Ibid., 4.1

²² For a detailed discussion of fire and its appearance and use in Greek religion, see William D. Furley, *Studies in the Use of Fire in Ancient Greek Religion* (Salem, New Hampshire: The Ayer Company, 1981).

related to each other.²³ Throughout the treatise, he argues that air and breath affect the quality of blood, water, and phlegm, and, often, diseased air becomes other bodily fluids such as blood or foam. Aristotle in *On the Cosmos*, calls wind “πνεύμα” and writes, “λέγεται δὲ καὶ ἑτέρως πνεῦμα ἢ τε ἐν φυτοῖς καὶ ζώοις καὶ διὰ πάντων διήκουσα ἔμφυχός τε καὶ γόνιμος οὐσία, περὶ ἧς νῦν λέγειν οὐκ ἀναγκαῖον”(394b). (Otherwise, it is called breath and is that substance which is in plants and animals and in everything, which engenders life and is generative). Clearly, Aristotle equates breath and semen in this statement. In the second century C.E., Galen also associates “πνεύμα” with life and blood. “Πνεύμα,” then, like fire, is both a bodily and cosmic form of “μένος.”

Another instance in the *Iliad* which illustrates that the gods have “μένος” occurs in Book Five, when Aphrodite and Ares are both wounded by Diomedes. Homer describes Diomedes’ attack on Aphrodite (5.334-340) in which she is injured. Aphrodite bleeds when wounded, although her blood is actually ichor. Later, when Ares is wounded, the war-god retreats from the battle to Zeus on Mount Olympus, also dripping immortal blood from his wound (5.869-870). The war-god complains to Zeus, saying that he would be living “ἀμενηνός” if he had not escaped from the battlefield; the word is the negative adjective of “μένος.”²⁴ Ares thus indicates that even gods can lose “μένος” in the divine form of blood.

Other fluid forms of divine “μένος” appear in the *Iliad* as environmental manifestations. Zeus, for example, shows his divine “μένος” when he uses his thunderbolts, which are flashes of fire. That Zeus’ fire is a form of his divine “μένος” is

²³ Hippocrates, *On Breaths*, 4.

²⁴ Anchises uses the same word in the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* when he wakes up to discover that he has just had sex with Aphrodite herself. He is terrified that the experience has left him impotent (in all senses of the word), and he tells her that he fears that he has been made “ἀμενηνός.”

perhaps best seen in the story of Dionysos' birth. Zeus himself acknowledges his parentage of Dionysos by Semele in the *Iliad* at 14.323-325,²⁵ although Homer does not relate the entire story of the union. The earliest full account of the nature of Semele's unusual death is found in Diodoros (3.64.3-4, 4.2.2-3), but there is evidence to suggest that the basic story had circulated earlier.²⁶ As the myth goes, Zeus conducts an affair with Semele, one of the daughters of Kadmos, and she becomes pregnant with Dionysos. Semele asks Zeus to have sex with her as he does with Hera. Reluctantly, Zeus has sex with Semele, thundering mightily and sending his thunderbolts everywhere. Semele, who is mortal and unaccustomed to such explosive sex, burns up in the process. Surely, Zeus' fiery lightning is a form of his sexual emission here.

Homer associates precipitation with Zeus' "μένος," and he frequently uses the imagery of storms to illustrate Zeus' divine power. The most explicitly sexual instance of Zeus' heavenly precipitation occurs in Book Fourteen. When Zeus is overcome with desire for his wife, Hera, upon seeing her coifed and ornamented with "κόσμος," he wants to have sex with her right there and then on Mount Ida, but Hera argues that having sex in the open would be immodest and shameful for her. Hera suggests that they go to the special bedchamber which Hephaistos has built for her, but Zeus is persistent. He says that he will cover them with a cloud so no one will see them and then takes her in his arms. Homer then describes their sexual union for his audience:

Ἡ ῥά, καὶ ἀγκὰς ἔμαρπτε Κρόνου παῖς ἣν παράκοιτιν·
 τοῖσι δ' ὑπὸ χθρῶν διὰ φύεν νεοδηλέα ποίην,
 λωτόν θ' ἐρσήεντα ἰδὲ κρόκον ἦδ' ὑάκινθον
 πυκνὸν καὶ μαλακόν, ὃς ἀπὸ χθρονὸς ὑψόσ' ἔεργε.
 τῷ ἔνι λεξάσθην, ἐπὶ δὲ νεθέλην ἔσσαντο
 καλὴν χρυσεῖην· στιλπναὶ δ' ἀπέπιπτον ἔερσαι.(14. 346-351)

²⁵ Both the *Odyssey* (11.321-325, 24.73-77) and the *Theogony* (940-942) reference Dionysos.

²⁶ For a comprehensive discussion of the evidence, see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 473-478.

(And there, the son of Kronos seized his wife in his arms. The divine earth underneath them produced new, fresh grass, and dewey clover, and crocus and hyacinth, thick and soft, which kept them up off the ground. The two of them lay down on this, and they drew around them a beautiful golden cloud. And glistening dew fell down from it.)

Here, the poet's use of dew for semen is unmistakable. The fertile imagery of the flowers growing under them only serves to emphasize the sexual and generative nature of the scene.

In Book Twenty-Four, most of the gods are concerned at Achilles' treatment of Hektor's body, and Apollo even protects it with the aegis as Achilles drags it behind his chariot in rage. When Priam goes to Achilles to ask for the body back, Hermes meets him and tells him that, although Achilles' drags it, the body does not decay. The gods have preserved Hektor's body, not only erasing his wounds and cleaning the blood from his skin but also keeping the body from decaying. In other words, they make the body appear as if it has not lost its vital life force, its "μένος." Hermes specifically says at 24.419 that the body is "ἐερσηέεις," a word which means "dewey, fresh with dew." The same adjective describes Hektor's corpse at 24.757.

Of course, a common epithet of Zeus is the "cloud-gatherer," and, as Burkert argues, Zeus is connected with the weather-gods of Asia Minor and serves primarily as a god of rain and storms.²⁷ In the *Iliad*, his divine masculinity manifests as thunder, lightning, rain, and snow. For example, in Book Ten, Agamemnon is anxious because the Trojans are winning the battle. Homer uses the following simile to describe his mental state:

ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἄν ἀστράπτῃ πόσις Ἥρης ἡΰκόμοιο,

²⁷ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical* trans. John Raffan (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher, 1985), 126.

τεύχων ἢ πολὺν ὄμβρον ἀθέσφατον ἢ ἐχάλαζαν
 ἢ νιφετόν, ὅτε πέρ τε χιῶν ἐπάλυνεν ἀρούρας,
 ἢ ἐποδί πτολέμοιο μέγα στόμα πευκεδανοῖο...(10.5-8)

(Whenever the husband of fair-tressed Hera flashes with lightning, either bringing forth a great storm or terrible hail or snowstorm, when snow scatters on fields, or drives the great mouth of shrill battle...)

Here, Zeus' power is seen in lightning, snow, hail, and rain. In Book Twelve (12.277-286), Zeus helps the Trojans by driving a blast of wind and stirring up dust among the Achaeans. Again, Zeus' divine vigor manifests as blasts of snow which blanket everything. In Book Seventeen (17.546-551), he is associated with both rain and snow. Thus, Zeus shows forth with both rainbows and snowstorms, and both manifestations of his heavenly presence are powerful.

In myth, Zeus impregnates Danae by means of precipitation: he visits her by assuming the form of a golden shower. As with Semele, Zeus himself acknowledges that he is the father of Perseus by Danae in Book Fourteen, but he does not relate the whole story. Gantz notes that a Hesiodic fragment about Zeus and Danae includes the adjective "golden," although he says that exactly which word the adjective describes is unclear.²⁸ Richard Janko argues that the story of Zeus impregnating Danae by means of golden rain "was no doubt already current" in the eighth century. He argues that the underground chamber in which Danae was imprisoned by Akrisios is a "fantasy based on a fabulously rich Argive tholos-tomb, with bronze rosettes on its walls and its relieving-triangle opened by robbers."²⁹ The myth, especially taken together with Homer's description of

²⁸ Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 300-301.

²⁹ Richard Janko, *The Iliad: A Commentary* Vol. IV (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 203-204. Cf. Ellen D. Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece* (Baltimore: The Walters Art Gallery and Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 267: "Danae's underground chamber particularly calls to mind such Mycenaean tholos tombs as the Treasury of Atreus, which was partly built underground and covered over with earth, and which had a doorway ornamented with bronze...And as earth is fertilized by rain, so is Danae impregnated by means of a golden shower, a transparent image for semen."

the dew which falls from the union of Zeus and Hera in Book Fourteen, clearly shows that Zeus' precipitation is a sexual fluid.

Snow is used to show the masculine nature of competitive speech in Book Three. As stated above, heroes show “ἀρετή” through public speaking, and “μένος” is the force which allows for the ordering of language into effective, persuasive speech. That this is so is best illustrated in Antenor's description of Odysseus' earlier attempt to persuade the Trojans to return Helen in Book Three of the *Iliad*, discussed earlier in the Introduction. Antenor describes Odysseus' speech as a fluid ejaculation of manliness, saying that his words were “νιφάδεσσιν ἐοικότα χειμερῖησιν” (222) (like a wintry snowstorm). Antenor thus offers a strikingly visual image of the speech as a storm of white semen. Because Odysseus demonstrates such “ἀρετή” in the speaking arena, no other man will compete with him when it comes to public speech.³⁰

Thus, bodily fluids course through the Homeric universe just as they flow through individual bodies. The anthropomorphic nature of the archaic epic universe is perhaps best seen in Hesiod's *Theogony*, where earth, heaven, sun, moon, mountains, and ocean come into being as human-like entities which exhibit lust, anger, and jealousy. Still, in general, the anthropomorphic nature of the universe is further evident in the Homeric epics in that words which indicate body parts are also used to describe environmental features. For example, at *Iliad* 20.5, the Greek word “κάρην” is used for the top of Mount Olympus, and at *Odyssey* 9.140, 13.102 and 346 it is used for part of a harbor. The primary meaning of the word is “head,” and it is mostly used for humans in the poems.³¹ As discussed in the Introduction, the oral poem's audience experiences the epic as a

³⁰ Cf. *Iliad*, 13.754, where the poet describes Hektor, who is raging through the Achaian ranks, as “ῥοει νιφόνεσσι ἐοικώς.” (like a snowy mountain)

³¹ Of course, English uses words for human body parts similarly.

body, not only aurally but also visually. Thus, the epic universe within the poem makes the epic itself seem corporeal and organic to its audience.

At the end of Book One of the *Iliad*, there is a scene which serves to some degree to illustrate the corporeality of the epic process. At the banquet of the gods on Mount Olympus, Apollo plays the lyre while the Muses sing.³² Apollo and the Muses thus create the song together; Apollo plays his lyre while the Muses sing “ἀμειβόμεναι” (1.604). The verb “ἀμείβειν” means “to answer” or “to partake in an exchange,” and it indicates reciprocal action. Apollo and the Muses work together to create the song, and the song is the product of both masculine and feminine energy, then. Apollo’s cosmic force imposes structure and form upon the raw material of inspiration which the Muses provide, and the epic song is the procreative product of their interaction.³³

Weaving and Sexual Union in the Epics

In *The Craft of Zeus: Myths of Weaving and Fabric*, John Scheid and Jesper Svenbro see the woven textile as a “κόσμος”—a combination of the basic forces of masculine and feminine power—and they link weaving and the woven product to the

³² The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* offers an excellent comparison (186-193). There, too, the Muses answer (ἀμειβόμεναι) Apollo’s lyre-playing with their voices. The hymnist further describes the scene on Olympus, and the festivities are erotically charged: the Charites, the Horai, Harmonia, Hebe and Aphrodite herself dance together, all of whom suggest sexual allure and seductive activity. The hymnist’s use of the verb “παίζειν” (201) in describing the participation of Ares, Hermes, and Apollo also is suggestive of sexual activity. The hymn resonates with both the Homeric and Hesiodic poems, although the sexual nature of the interaction of Apollo and the Muses is more explicit in the *Theogony* than in the Homeric epics. That poem will be discussed in depth as a commentary on the epic process in general in Chapter Three.

³³ G.S. Kirk sees this passage as a later, “awkward” addition to the text. G.S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary* Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 114. It is also worth mentioning here that Athanassakis likens the dance of the Charites, the Horai, Harmonia, Hebe and Aphrodite to the dance depicted on Achilles’ shield, which will be discussed later in this chapter. *The Homeric Hymns* trans. Apostolos N. Athanassakis, 73 note 196.

institution of marriage itself.³⁴ The activity of weaving parallels the progression from a state of disorder to “κόσμος” in the epic poem; the finished tapestry is a marriage of masculine and feminine forces and thus a “κόσμος” in and of itself. The warp, or the vertical threads which provide order for the horizontal threads, is called “ὁ ἰστός” or “ὁ στῆμων” and is masculine in gender. The weft, or woof, is called “ἡ κρόκη” and is feminine. Without the warp, the weft would simply be a chaotic pile of thread; the warp provides order for the weft. Thus, the act of weaving follows the basic reproductive model found in the ancient medical writers. Masculine power provides structure and order for the raw material of feminine power.

In both Homeric epics, the word “ὑφαίνειν” (to weave) is used to describe mental activity as well as textile-work. Women weave images into cloth, but men weave together strategems and speech. For example, the phrase “ὑφαίνειν μῆτιν” (to weave *metis*) is used to describe Nestor’s mental process as he prepares to speak in Book Seven (7.323-325). At 9.92-94, the poet uses these exact lines again to describe Nestor’s preparation for making a speech. As discussed in the Introduction, “μῆτις” is a feminine form of intelligence and is personified by the goddess Metis, Zeus’ first wife. Like most feminine powers, it is difficult to fully define, but it is a potent force. In making his speech, Nestor contends with his own thoughts; his task is to make somewhat inchoate ideas intelligible for his audience, to impose rhetorical structure on his inspiration. In formulating his speech, he uses his own natural masculine cosmic energy to harness the power of feminine “μῆτις” in his mind. The controlled “μῆτις” which is embedded in Nestor’s speech makes his speech especially attractive.

³⁴ John Scheid and Jesper Svenbro, *The Craft of Zeus: Myths of Weaving and Fabric* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 13.

In Book Three of the *Iliad*, Antenor describes to Helen the attempt made by Odysseus and Menelaos to persuade the Trojans to give Helen back:

ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ μύθους καὶ μῆδεα πᾶσιν ὕφαινον,
 ἦτοι μὲν Μενέλαος ἐπιτροχάδην ἀγόρευε,
 παῦρα μὲν, ἀλλὰ μάλα λιγέως, ἐπεὶ οὐ πολύμυθος
 οὐδ' ἀφαρμαρτοεπής· ἧ καὶ γένει ὕστερος ἦεν. (3.212-215)

(But when they wove their stories and counsels for everyone, Menelaos spoke fluently, with few words, but clearly, since he was not a man of many words nor one who rambled, even though he was the younger.)

Here, the poet also uses the verb “ὑφαίνειν” to indicate the development of speech. As discussed above, Homer goes on to describe Odysseus’ especially powerful speech in strikingly visual terms which are suggestive of semen. Antenor uses the verb “μίγνυμι” to indicate the exchange of words in the assembly. In general, the verb means “to mingle with” or “to mix together,” but it also is used frequently by Greek authors to indicate sexual intercourse.³⁵ Thus, Antenor suggests that the men compete for sexual dominance as well as for verbal excellence. Moreover, the poet says that Odysseus and Menelaos weave “μύθους καὶ μῆδεα.” (speeches and counsel) In archaic Greek, “μῆδεα” can also indicate male genitals.³⁶ Mental ability is usually considered to be a masculine characteristic, so it is likely that Antenor means for the words to suggest both mental counsel and male genitalia. Finally, it is worth noting that, later in the passage, Homer has Antenor use the common epithet for Odysseus, “πολύμητις,” (3.216) thus pointing to Odysseus’ use of “μῆτις” in speaking before the Trojans.

³⁵ For example, see *Iliad* 6.161, 6.165, 9.275, 14.295, and 21.143; *Odyssey* 1.73; *Theogony* 270, 927.

³⁶ See, for example, *Odyssey* 6.129, 18.67, 18.87, and 22.476 and *Theogony* 180.

The most frequent use of “ὑφαίνειν” in the epics is for weaving textiles, of course, and this type of weaving is women’s work.³⁷ Women spin wool and also weave both plain and decorated textiles. Often, when women weave in the Homeric poems, there is a clear connection to sexual union and marriage. When Homer first introduces his audience to Helen in the *Iliad*, for instance, she is the hall weaving a purple robe, on which, Homer tells his audience, she has worked images of Trojans fighting Achaeans for her sake (3.125-131). Helen’s purple robe represents the “ἄεθλοι” (competitions) between the Greeks and Trojans which are taking place on the battlefield outside the city. She represents the same subject as the larger epic, then, although she expresses herself in images rather than words.³⁸ By echoing the language of the description of Helen’s work when the narrative resumes, Homer highlights the fact that Helen weaves the story of the war into the cloth just as he captures the story of the war in his poem.³⁹ Thus, he thereby suggests that their activities are intimately related.⁴⁰ It is striking that Homer says that Helen weaves “ἐν μεγάρῳ,” the setting for feasts and public entertainment, rather than in

³⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of weaving and textiles in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages, see E.J.W. Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles: The Development of Cloth in the Neolithic and Bronze Ages with Special Reference to the Aegean* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

³⁸ Scheid and Svenbro, *The Craft of Zeus*, 111-115 argue that Homer does not use the metaphor of weaving for poetry, although they acknowledge that he does use it for other mental activities. I disagree. While Homer never explicitly uses the verb to indicate the composition of poetry, he certainly conflates Helen’s tapestry with his own here. Jane McIntosh Snyder argues for a connection between weaving and poetry in “The Web of Song: Weaving Imagery in Homer and the Lyric Poets,” *The Classical Journal* 76, no. 3 (Feb.-Mar., 1981), 193-196.

³⁹ Cf. George A. Kennedy, “Helen’s Web Unraveled,” *Arethusa* 19 (1986), 5 ; Ann Bergren, “Helen’s Web: Time and Tableau in the *Iliad*,” *Helios* 7, no. 1 (1979-1980), 23; Linda Lee Clader, *Helen: The Evolution from Divine to Heroic in Greek Epic Tradition* Mnemosyne supp. Vol. 42 (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1976), 7-8.

⁴⁰ Nancy Felson-Rubin links Helen’s work to Penelope’s in the *Odyssey*, which she argues parallels Odysseus’ action as well as the poet’s in *Regarding Penelope: From Character to Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15-42. Cf. Maria Pantelia “Spinning and Weaving: Ideas of Domestic Order in Homer,” *The American Journal of Philology* 114, no. 4 (1993), 493-501. Pantelia also argues that Helen’s weaving parallels the narrative of the epic poet, and writes (495): “Like an epic poet who preserves through his song the glorious deeds of his heroes, Helen weaves on her loom the story of the war. Her web fulfills her need to overcome death by producing an artifact which will survive and ‘tell *her* story,’ her *kleos*, to all future generations.”

the private rooms of the house.⁴¹ Helen's weaving is for public consumption, then, like the poet's own song.

In fact, Helen herself shows an awareness of the connection between her weaving and epic song later in Book Six. When Hektor goes from the battle to his brother's house, he finds Paris handling his weapons and armor in his bedchamber while Helen and her handmaidens work nearby at her loom. Presumably, Helen and her handmaidens are still working on the same tapestry as in Book Three, so they continue to weave the story of the war. Hektor rebukes his brother for not joining the battle, and his brother replies that Helen has been urging him to return to the battle “μαλακοῖς ἐπέεσσιν” (6.337) (with soft words). Helen then entreats Hektor to sit and rest for a while with them, saying that they will all be the subject of songs for future generations: “ὥς καὶ ὀπίσσω ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ' αἰοίδιμοι ἐσσομένοισι” (6.357-358) (so that hereafter we will be the subject of songs for future men). Helen's visual depiction of their story is the feminine version of Homer's verbal, masculine depiction.

When her husband is killed by Achilles in Book Twenty-Two, Andromache is also weaving a purple robe, and Homer tells his audience that she is also working elaborate figures into it:

Ὡς ἔφατο κλαίουσα, ἄλοχος δ' οὐ πώ τι πέπυστο
 Ἑκτορος· οὐ γάρ οἱ τις ἐτήτυμος ἄγγελος ἐλθὼν
 ἤγγειλ' ὅτι ῥά οἱ πόσις ἔκτοθι μίμνε πυλάων,
 ἀλλ' ἢ γ' ἴστων ὑφαίνει μυχρῶ δόμου ὑψηλοῖο
 δίπλακα πορφυρέην, ἐν δὲ θρόνα ποικίλ' ἔπασσε.
 κέκλετο δ' ἀμφιπόλοισιν εὐπλοκάμοις κατὰ δῶμα
 ἀμφὶ πυρὶ στῆσαι τρήποδα μέγαν, ὄφρα πέλοιτο

⁴¹ Cunliffe says that the word is used as a synonym for the women's quarters of a house and offers numerous examples in the *Odyssey* where the word is used in this way. Richard John Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect*, 258. I disagree with him about many of these instances. In many, it is quite clear that the poet indicates public space (18.185 and 198, for example). There are some instances in the poems where the word probably indicates private chambers (*Iliad* 1.418, 2.137, 9.144, for example), but I believe the poet deliberately contrasts the spaces where Helen (public) and Andromache (private) weave.

Ἑκτορι θερμὰ λοετρὰ μάχης ἔκ νοστήσαντι,
 νηπὶν, οὐδ' ἐνόησεν ὃ μιν μάλα τῆλε λοετρῶν
 χερσὶν Ἀχιλλῆος δάμασε γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη.
 κωκυτοῦ δ' ἤκουσε καὶ οἰμωγῆς ἀπὸ πύργου·
 τῆς δ' ἐλελίχθη γυῖα, χαμαὶ δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε κερκίς.
 ἢ δ' αὖτις δμῳῇσιν εὐπλοκάμοισι μετηύδα·
 “θεῦτε, δύω μοι ἔπεσθον, ἴδωμ' ὅτιν' ἔργα τέτυκται...”
 (22.436-451)

(So she spoke, weeping, and the wife of Hektor had not heard anything yet. For no true messenger had told her how her husband had stood firm outside the gates, but she was weaving a textile in the innermost recess of the high house, a double-folded purple robe, and she was sprinkling intricate figures on it. She called out in the house for her lovely-haired handmaidens to set a great tripod over the fire, so that there would be hot bath-water for Hektor, when he returned from the battle, young innocent, nor did she know how grey-eyed Athena subdued him at the hands of Achilles far from the waters of baths. And she heard a cry of grief and weeping from the ramparts. Her limbs went slack, and her shuttle fell to the ground. She called her lovely-haired handmaidens: “Come, two of you follow me. so I can see what has happened...”)

The poet uses the same language in describing both Helen's and Andromache's textiles, calling them both a “δίπλακα πορφυρέην,” (purple folded robe), but here the poet says that Andromache weaves “μυχῷ δόμου”⁴² (in the innermost area of the house). Andromache, certainly more dutiful as a wife than Helen, weaves in the women's quarters, then, rather than in the public great hall.⁴³ As will be shown later in this chapter, houses in general and especially the innermost recesses of houses are commonly associated with women's bodies. Andromache's images, as she weaves them, are only available to those who are permitted to enter the inner spaces of the house—in other words, only her husband, who

⁴² Cf. Pantelia, “Spinning and Weaving,” 495.

⁴³ Cf. *ibid.*: “Andromache's condition in the Iliad (22.441-42) is in many ways similar to Helen's. Both women face an uncertain future and express themselves through the images they depict on their webs. Both are shown in the inner palace weaving purple double-folded robes. Andromache's web, however, is not *meḡas*. It may be artistically elaborate (*thrōna poikil*’, 441) but it does not have the kind of social significance that the poet has bestowed upon the web of Helen.”

also has access to her body, may see them as they are created.⁴⁴ Homer never describes the images specifically for his audience; he only reveals that “ἐν δὲ θρόνῳ ποικίλ’ ἔπασσε.” The images are of colorful flowers, which may indicate the fertility of her status as married woman. After she hears people crying outside the chamber, she drops her shuttle and discontinues the weaving, leaving her images forever trapped in the text of the narrative.

These two scenes of weaving in the *Iliad* illustrate that the woven product is tied to marriage. Indeed, later in Book Three, when Aphrodite rescues Paris from the battlefield and then summons Helen to meet him in their bedchamber (3.385-389), the poet again draws attention to weaving and wool. Aphrodite touches Helen’s robe to get her attention and then assumes the form of a weaving woman when she is enticing Helen to go to bed with Paris. That Aphrodite touches Helen’s robe is significant: woven garments signify marriage itself. Scheid and Svenbro argue that the epithet which Sappho uses to describe Aphrodite in her famous hymn to the goddess, “ποικιλόθρονος” (frag.1.1), often translated as “on a throne of many colors,” should instead be read “with a dress of decorative flowers.”⁴⁵ Aphrodite, of course, is the goddess of sexual love, and they point to her obvious place in the marital relationship. Her dress is important, they argue, because it stands for the woven garment under which sexual intercourse takes place. They also reinterpret a similar epithet, “χρυσόθρονος” (golden-throned), which is

⁴⁴ Her handmaidens would be permitted into the inner parts of the house also, of course, and they also would be probably be permitted to see their mistress’ body naked as they bathe and dress her. Of course, Andromache’s situation is representative of the epic world, not necessarily the real ancient Greek world, where such clear division of the sexes was not at work.

⁴⁵Scheid and Svenbro, *The Craft of Zeus*, 53-59. (54) “As we learn in the etymological dictionaries of Hjalmar Frisk and Pierre Chantraine, the meaning of *poikilothronos* is not as incontestable as one might think upon reading Page’s commentary or Campbell’s translations. Indeed these two dictionaries favor the meaning “dressed in a cloak with flowered designs.” They assign this meaning to Aphrodite’s epithet because they consider it to be composed not of *poikilos* and *thronos* (“decorated” and “throne,” respectively) but of *poikila* and *throna*.”

used to describe Hera, the goddess of marriage, as one which references woven garments.⁴⁶ Among other passages they use to show that marriage and weaving are closely associated with each other, they cite, for example, the passage in the *Odyssey* in which Helen gives Telemachus a robe she has woven as a farewell gift for his future marriage (15.104-110 and 123-129).⁴⁷ That Homer connects weaving and marriage in the *Iliad* is further supported by his use of the phrase “ἐν δὲ θρόνα ποικίλ’ ἔπασσε” (22.440) (she sprinkles intricate flowers on it).⁴⁸ “θρόνα ποικίλα” recalls Aphrodite’s epithet. Homer never uses the Greek word “ποικιλόθρονος,” but, as Scheid and Svenbro point out, the word does not fit well into dactylic hexameter.⁴⁹

When Homer has Aphrodite approach Helen by touching her robe, he signifies to his audience that the goddess is summoning her to bed. The goddess invites Helen to join Paris in their bedchamber, and she says that Paris is “ἐν θαλάμῳ καὶ δινωτοῖσι λέχεσσι” (3.391) (in the bedchamber and on the bed with its spiralling pattern). She describes the bed as one which is adorned with an inlaid circular pattern, which may actually be woven into the coverlet on the bed. She then says that Paris does not look like a man who has

⁴⁶ Ibid., 60-61. “As a goddess of marriage, Hera is also *chrusothronos*. In a remarkable passage at the end of book I of the *Iliad*, Zeus settles next to Hera in the marital bed after a day of discord and festivities: ‘Zeus the Olympian and lord of the lightning went to his own bed, where always he lay when sweet sleep came over him. Going up to the bed he slept, and *chrusothronos* Hera beside him.’...In the passage quoted, Hera’s epithet is thus more indicative of the goddess’s status than of the presence of a throne in her bed. Yet we have good reason to believe that the goddess’s status is expressed by mention not of her throne but of her garment. The importance attributed to Hera’s peplos by the Eleians is a first confirmation of this. The *palla* ‘with golden threads’ offered to Juno (=Hera) by the Roman women during the Second Punic War is undoubtedly a second. The wife of Zeus is ‘wearing a peplos with golden flowers’ in her capacity not only as a goddess of the city but also as a goddess of marriage...after a day of conflict, husband and wife are temporarily reconciled under a single blanket.”

⁴⁷ Ibid., 62. Cf. 68, where they discuss Pindar’s *Pythian* 9: “To place one’s hand on the young girl’s peplos is here to prove oneself worthy of marrying her: the symbolism of the garment is clear to all. The fabric is marriage. The interweaving of the virile warp and the feminine woof is a ‘myth’ so strongly anchored in the collective memory that it requires no explanation.”

⁴⁸ In his commentary, Kirk also argues that “θρόνα” should mean “flowers.” Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 280.

⁴⁹ Scheid and Svenbro, *The Craft of Zeus*, 53.

just come from a battle but rather like a man who is going to a dance (*χορός*) (3.390-394). Because she is enticing Helen to go to bed with Paris, Aphrodite thus shows that dancing is sexual in nature and that the marital bed serves as dancing floor of sorts. This passage is especially significant for the present study because sexual intercourse, the marital bed, weaving and woven garments, “*χορός*,” and a circular pattern are all associated with each other. Achilles’ shield in Book Eighteen also features marriage, sexuality, a “*χορός*,” and spiralling circles.⁵⁰

When both Helen and Andromache weave, they create their images in the same manner. At 3.126, Homer tells his audience that Helen “*πολέας δ’ ἐνέπασσεν ἀέθλους*,” and at 22.440, he tells his audience that Andromache “*ἐν δὲ θρόνα ποικίλ’ ἔπασσε*.” The verb “*ἐμπάσσειν*” only occurs once at 3.126 and means “to sprinkle into, to insert into.” It is a compound of the verb “*πάσσειν*.” The verb “*πάσσειν*” essentially means “to sprinkle, to distribute in small particles,” and it is used only here in the poem to describe the insertion of images into a woven tapestry. Most frequently in the poem, it is used to describe the application of medicines (*φάρμακα*) on wounds.⁵¹ For example, at the end of Book Five, when Ares is wounded, he returns to Mount Olympos for healing (5.899-906). The healing god Paieon heals his wound by “*φάρμακα πάσσω*” (sprinkling *pharmaka*) into it. In this particular passage, the simile which describes the effect of the medicine on the bleeding wound involves liquids and thus implies that the “*φάρμακα*” are indeed fluids. The connection between woven “*κόσμος*” and bodily “*κόσμος*” is thus again apparent.

⁵⁰ The importance of the connection between marriage bed, woven coverlet and ekphrasis is, of course, seen in Catullus 64, where the ekphrasis is about the images woven into the bedspread on the marriage bed of Peleus and Thetis.

⁵¹ The verb is also used once to describe Achilles’ salting of meats at *Iliad* 9.214. As Kirk argues, the images are actually woven into the cloth and not embroidered on top of the cloth. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 280.

When they sprinkle the images into their tapestries, Helen and Andromache seem to be infusing their tapestries with powerful substances in the same way a doctor uses medicines. They sprinkle images into their tapestries as if they are “*φάρμακα*.”

Homer also conflates the application of “*φάρμακα*” to wounds and the telling of stories in the *Iliad* in Book Fifteen.⁵² When Patroklos is visiting Eurypylos, Homer says:

Πάτροκλος δ' ἦρος μὲν Ἀχαιοί τε Τρῳῆς τε
τείχεος ἀμφεμάχοντο δοάων ἔκτοθι νηῶν,
τόφρ' ὃ γ' ἐνὶ κλισίῃ ἀγαπήνορος Εὐρυπύλοιο
ἦστό τε καὶ τὸν ἔτερπε λόγοις, ἐπὶ δ' ἔλκει λυγρῷ
φάρμακ' ἀκέσματ' ἔπασσε μελαινάων ὀδυνάων. (15.390-394)

(Patroklos, while Achaians and Trojans fought on both sides of the wall far from the fast ships, meanwhile sat in the hut of courteous Eurypylos and delighted him with words, and sprinkled medicines which would heal the black pains on his sore wound.)

Here, Patroklos attempts to cheer up his wounded friend, and, like a poet, he delights (ἔτερπε) him with words as he sprinkles medicines to mitigate his bodily pain.

It is notable that Homer does not use the verb “*ὑφαίνειν*” when he describes the “*ἄεθλους Τρώων θ' ἵπποδάμων καὶ Ἀχαιῶν χαλκοχιτώνων*” which Helen works into her tapestry and the “*θρόνα ποικίλα*” which Andromache works into hers. He only uses “*ὑφαίνειν*” to describe their general weaving of a tapestry, not the development of specific images within the tapestry. When he says that Helen and Andromache sprinkle images

⁵² As discussed in the Introduction, in the *Odyssey*, when Telemakhos visits Menelaos and Helen in Sparta and the meeting becomes a bit uncomfortable, Helen casts a “*φάρμακον*” into the wine in order to ease the awkward situation. There, it was shown that the effect of Helen’s “*φάρμακον*” is remarkably similar to the effect an accomplished singer has on his audience according to both Homer and Hesiod. Paieon is mentioned several times in the *Iliad*, and, of course, he is mentioned in the specific passage from Book Five included above. I focus on the passage from the *Odyssey* again now because of its association of “*φάρμακον*,” women, Paieon, doctor-as-craftsman, and storytelling. Helen receives the medicine from another woman, and she uses it to beguile those around her before she tells her story about Odysseus. In other words, Helen acts as a poet herself, charming her audience. In fact, Helen herself tells those around her to take pleasure in her story (4.235-241). Helen tells her listeners to sit with her in the hall and “*μύθοις τέρπεσθε*.” She says she will offer an account of the “*ἄεθλοι*” of Odysseus. Thus, she acts just like Homer himself, entertaining the feasters in the hall, delighting them with stories about the exploits of Odysseus.

into their weaving, he, in fact, points to the similarity between beautiful images and medicines. Like drugs and the words of a talented singer, a beautiful woven image holds its audience in thrall. It is captivating and beguiling. It makes its audience temporarily forget reality and rejoice in its beauty instead. In other words, a beautiful image attracts and then dominates the mind of its audience like a beautiful body.⁵³

In general, fine woven fabrics are presented as highly seductive in both Homeric epics, and, like Helen's and Andromache's weaving, woven products themselves are infused with feminine sexual power in the *Iliad*. For example, when Aphrodite is wounded in Book Five, her robe is pierced by Diomedes' spear. Homer tells his audience that the robe is the work of the Charites themselves. The Charites and the quality of "χάρις" are associated with sexual activity and Aphrodite herself in Greek literature. The fact that the Charites have made her robe renders it especially alluring. When Helen leaves her chamber and goes to the walls of the city in Book Three (3.139-144), Aphrodite casts sexual desire (ἔμπεδος) for her former husband into Helen's heart in order

⁵³Cf. G.A. Machemer, "Medicine, Music, and Magic: The Healing Grace of Pindar's Fourth Nemean," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 95 (1993), 113-141. Machemer focuses on the Pindaric ode, but she also discusses Homer and Hesiod. Most importantly, she too connects medicine, healing, Pindaric "εὐφροσύνη" (good feelings from poetry), "θέλξις," (charm) and "χάρις." (grace) She writes, 122: "In the listener's imagination a galaxy of comparanda appear, leading him to compare the εὐφροσύνη so modified to other entities: with other pain relievers or joy bringers (victory [Pi. O. 2.19-21], wine [Dionysus], love [Aphrodite/Eros], sleep, and so on), or with such healers as Apollo, Asclepius, Machaon, and Podalirius (Asclepius' sons), and the Asclepiadae in general (all those who practice the healer's art), or even Musaios or Orpheus and their like, or with the 'iatic' graces, like Hygieia, that attend Asclepius (much as the Graces attend the Muses [below p. 133]), who are immediately analogous conceptually and imaginistically to Euphrosyna as deifications of the desired states and means of healing, or even with Euphrosyna's companion musical Graces. In the process of drawing these comparisons, not by any systematic logical deliberations, but by means of an associative cognitive reflex that is part of the listener's aesthetic comprehension of the poet's thought, the question of the true nature and meaning of εὐφροσύνη becomes present to his imagination, and the word itself ripe for dissolution into its elements." Also, at 140: "Nothing in the epic and lyric tradition gainsays this reconstruction of the traditional structure of thought behind these lines, whereas Bundy's view of the opposition between pleasure and song requires a certain amount of special pleading. The impulse in archaic and classical poetry is everywhere for the linking, not the separation, of the two concepts. Where the idea of pleasure is specifically expressed as εὐφροσύνη (rather than τέρψις, χαρά, etc.), there we find the idea of music and the idea of pleasure even more closely joined, for music, second only to love in uniting Πειθώ and Χάρις (Pi. fr. 123.14; also Hes. Op. 73), is a most potent means of affecting (θέλγειν) the φρήν."

to motivate her to go watch the contest between Menelaos and Paris on the battlefield from the city wall. After she is filled with sexual desire, Helen wraps white clothing around herself, presumably to make herself appear especially attractive to the winner of the duel. When Hera bathes and dresses in preparation for seducing Zeus in Book Fourteen, she puts on a special robe, woven by Athena herself, which is decorated with “δαίδαλα πολλά” (14.179), and she covers her head with a shimmering veil which shines white like the sun (14.184-185).⁵⁴ As discussed previously, Hera’s adornments are called collectively by the poet both “χάρις” (14.183) and “κόσμος.” (14.187) Hera also borrows Aphrodite’s special love charm, which she requests for its irresistible sexual quality. She says:

δὸς νῦν μοι φιλότητα καὶ ἵμερον, ᾧ τε σὺ πάντας
δαμνᾷ ἀθανάτους ἡδὲ θνητοὺς ἀνθρώπους. (14.198-199)

(Give me now love and sexual desire, by which you subdue all the
immortals and all mortal men.)

Thus, Hera asks for love and sexual desire in asking for the love charm. Aphrodite grants her request and gives the charm to Hera (14.214-221). Aphrodite’s special love charm is a woven strap which is “ποικίλος” (variegated), and it features “θελκτήρια πάντα” (every beguiling figure). It also features love and sexual desire as well as the soft speech of lovers, and it specifically steals away mental faculty from those who view it. Clearly, this woven charm has powerful sexual energy.⁵⁵ it is worth pointing out here that

⁵⁴ Cf. Clader, *Helen*, 12.

⁵⁵ Cf. Ellen D. Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 201: “As a laborious, intimate creation of women, textiles were naturally identified with them. Kreousa recognized that the young Ion was her son when he showed her the swaddling cloth she wove for him as an infant. Mythical women turn to garments as allies, even instruments of their will. Both Medea and Deianira prepared garments dyed with a poison that Elizabeth Barber identifies as the lethal realgar, a sulfide of arsenic that colored garments a dark purplish red. Herodotus tells of the tradition of the Athenian women, angry at the messenger who announced the catastrophic defeat of the Athenian fleet at Aegina, used the dress pins from their peploi to stab him to death, therewith precipitating a decision on the part of the men that women should henceforth

Achilles' shield is also “ποικίλος,” especially the final dancing scene, which Hephaistos “ποικίλλε” (broiders).

Hephaistos and Daidala

In general in Greek myth, Hephaistos serves as the craftsman for both gods and mortals, and he makes all sorts of spectacular artistic products, including diadems, houses, embellished armor, elaborate mixing bowls, and, of course, the shield of Achilles. He is lame either from birth or because he is thrown off Mount Olympus, and the other gods often mock him. At the end of Book One of the *Iliad*, for example, the other gods laugh at him as he hobbles around, graciously pouring their drinks for them.⁵⁶ Still, Hephaistos, like Odysseus, is called “πολυμήτις” in the Homeric poems and often uses his cunning mind to compete with faster, stronger, and better-looking gods. Hephaistos shares Odysseus' epithet because, like Odysseus, he has plenty of “μένος” but also exhibits feminine “μήτις,” although the god seems to use his skills for art rather than for

wear the chiton, which did not require the long pins. Mythical women also turned to textiles when they decided to commit suicide. Phaedra hanged herself with a cloth, as did Antigone, who deliberately used a knotted veil of the type she would have used as a bride. It has been shown that a woman's throat was so closely aligned with her vagina that hanging carried overtones of a woman's sexuality and for that reason was almost exclusively a female form of death. The sexual overtones of hanging were reinforced by the role of textiles in the process. A woman's textiles were not merely testimony to her skill and industriousness. They also came to be known as an extension of her being, inextricably merged with her...The finery signified that the young woman herself was a valuable asset as the potential bearer of children, and, through her weaving skills and hard work, a source of prosperity to her new husband's household. Textiles were so intensely viewed as an extension of the woman's self that it was thought that the natural state of the female was to be clothed whereas that of a man was to be nude.”

⁵⁶Cf. Philip E. Slater, *The Glory of Hera: Greek Mythology and the Greek Family* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 193. “When I talk of Hephaestus' response as self-emasculation I mean it neither in the sense of actual castration (as in the case of Attis), nor in the sense of symbolic castration (as in Orestes' case). While a psychoanalyst might interpret Hephaestus' lameness as symbolic castration, it would seem of less significance than what might be called his “interpersonal” self-castration. By this I mean his withdrawal from the lists of sexual and marital rivalry, his role of clown—in a sense, his resignation from manhood. Hephaestus conveys the interpersonal message: “You have nothing to fear from me, nor is there anything about me which should arouse your envy or resentment. I am merely a poor lame clown, ready to serve you, and make you laugh with jokes at my own expense.”

seduction. Hephaistos does, however, act and speak persuasively, as evidenced by his successful intervention in the quarrel between Hera and Zeus in Book One of the *Iliad*; he convinces his mother to yield to her husband and thus maintain peace among the immortals.

Hephaistos is linked with Athena, who also has “μῆτις,” in that both are craftsman-gods.⁵⁷ Athena primarily weaves and builds things in wood while Hephaistos primarily works with metal, but there is not an absolute divide between the two gods. In the *Iliad* at 5.59-61, for example, Homer attributes the skill which the craftsman Phereklos exhibits to Athena, saying that he knows how to make “δαίδαλα πάντα” (all kinds of *daidala*) because of Athena’s love for him. This phrase occurs several times in the poem and, as will be discussed shortly, generally indicates embellishments on metal, including especially what Hephaistos creates on the shield of Achilles.

A few references in literature and art attribute offspring to Hephaistos, but generally Hephaistos does not produce children.⁵⁸ Hephaistos is married to various goddesses, including Aphrodite in the *Odyssey*, Charis in the *Iliad*, and Aglaia, one of the Charites, in the *Theogony*. In all of these instances, he is associated with sexual love. Hephaistos, then, is linked to the idea of sexual energy even though he does not impregnate his partners. Hephaistos’ erotic encounters, in fact, are for the most part sad

⁵⁷ Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 85: “Of Athena’s patronage of crafts or domestic arts we hear less than we might have expected in the two epics. But she certainly weaves clothing on occasion, for in *Iliad* 5 she takes off a peplos that she made for herself (*Il.* 5.734-35), and in *Iliad* 14 Hera also has a robe that Athena made (*Il.* 14.178-79). In *Iliad* 9, Achilles speaks more generally of rejecting a daughter of Agamemnon ‘even if she matched Athena in handicrafts’ (*Il.* 9.390), while earlier she seems to have inspired Phereklos, a Trojan who knew how to build all manner of things, including ships for Paris (*Il.* 5.59-61; cf. *Il.* 15.410-21 of Athena and shipbuilders in general). In the *Odyssey*, she is also linked with Hephaistos as an instructor of men working in precious metals (*Od.* 6.233-34). But only with the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* is she formally assigned such interests (*HApH* 7-150: teaching men the manufacture of chariots, and women those things that they should know how to do in their homes (presumably weaving, though this is not specified).”

⁵⁸ See, for example, Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 77-78.

and unsuccessful.⁵⁹ The one instance where Hephaistos is explicitly married to Aphrodite occurs in Book Eight of the *Odyssey*. Because he is unable to satisfy his wife—or, as he himself says there, because he is ugly and Ares is handsome—Aphrodite engages in an extramarital affair with Ares. Hephaistos discovers the affair and traps the lovers in bed with invisible chains he has forged. Although his cunning design does indeed trap the lovers, his humiliation is witnessed by the other male gods, who gather around and laugh at the trapped couple.

In another encounter, when he attempts to have sex with Athena in the early days of Athens, he ends up ejaculating on her thigh in his eagerness to sleep with her. Apollodorus reports the story (3.14.6), describing how Athena, disgusted, wipes the semen off her thigh with wool and throws the cloth to the ground, where the semen-soaked wool impregnates the earth with Erichthonios. Apollodorus specifically points out that Athena approaches Hephaistos to ask him to provide “ὄπλα” for her, and Hephaistos’ sexual desire for her is thus aroused. The Greek word ὄπλα can signify “tools” in general, but most often, it indicates “arms” or “armor.” Thus, Hephaistos, who has been rejected by Aphrodite, reacts to Athena’s request for arms with sexual arousal and ejaculation. Homer is familiar with the story of Erichthonios’ birth; he refers to the Athenian king in the Catalogue of Ships in Book Two (2.546-549). When Thetis approaches Hephaistos to ask him to make arms for Achilles in Book Eighteen of the *Iliad*, as I will show shortly, their interaction is also sexually charged. It seems that Hephaistos’ sexual energy is closely associated with his construction of wonderful artistic products, then.

⁵⁹ Edwards also sees Hephaistos’ lameness as a sign of sexual impotence. Mark W. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary* Vol. V ed. G.S. Kirk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 193.

As discussed earlier, effective, persuasive speech is often described as exhibiting “*χάρις*” in the epics. Odysseus’ clever speech at Euryalos’ expense in Book Eight of the *Odyssey*, which was discussed previously in the Introduction and at the beginning of this chapter, is an excellent example. Odysseus says that the man who produces clever speech has “*χάρις*” on his words while the man who is good-looking but stupid suffers because “*οὐ οἱ χάρις ἀμφιπεριστέφεται ἐπέεσσιν.*” As discussed previously, Odysseus is competing to establish his masculine status among the Phaiakian men who have gathered, and he competes both by winning an athletic event and by means of this speech. Again, masculinity is apparent in many heroic activities, and Hephaistos competes by means of his art, infusing it with a seductive quality in the same way a persuasive speaker infuses his language with “*χάρις*.”

Hephaistos’ art in fact parallels the art of the poet. While the poet creates a seductive “*κόσμος*” of words, Hephaistos, as master craftsman, creates alluring “*κόσμος*” in his artistic products. In *Poetry and its Public in Ancient Greece; From Homer to the Fifth Century*, Bruno Gentili discusses the general connection between oral poet and craftsman, and he shows that Homer classifies singers with craftsmen, prophets, physicians, and carpenters—all of whom are *demiourgoi*.⁶⁰ It is notable that singers,

⁶⁰ Bruno Gentili, *Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece: From Homer to the Fifth Century* trans. by A. Thomas Cole (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 5: “The profession of oral poet calls for natural ability—or, as the Greeks would have said, *phýsis*—well beyond the ordinary, but it is equally true that the development of this individual talent would have been impossible without the possession of a refined mnemonic and compositional technique of great complexity. Essentially a craftsman’s art, this technique was a recognized part of Greek culture from earliest times down to the end of the fifth century. Already in the *Odyssey* (17, 382 ff.), Homer explicitly places the bard in the category of craftsman (*demiourgoi*) and so in the same class as the seer, the doctor, or the carpenter. The poetic act does not take place at the level of the esthetic creation, but rather as at that of inventive imitation—as a reproduction of experience or of earlier models....But even at a later period, once the practice of writing had already begun, it was felt more as a gift of the gods—and, above all, of the Muses—than as the work of men. So far as we know the first person to understand it as a genuine craft (*téchne*), articulated according to precise norms of its own that had to do with the visualization of space and images, was Simonides of Ceus (fifth to fourth centuries); and his definition of poetry as “speaking painting” and painting as “silent

craftsmen, prophets, and physicians are grouped together; all create various forms of “κόσμος.” As discussed in the introduction, the Greek medical writers approach the body as a “κόσμος” in itself. In the *Odyssey*, Homer specifically links the art of a craftsman with the beautification of the body. In Book Twenty-Three, Odysseus is bathed and anointed by Eurykleia, and Athena infuses him with extra beauty in order to make him more attractive to his wife (23.156-163). As she enhances Odysseus’ appearance by pouring beauty around him, Athena is compared to a craftsman who has been taught by both Hephaistos and Athena to create every sort of “τέχνη” and who makes “χαρίεντα ἔργα” (grace-filled works). The craftsman in this case is described as working in metal, spreading gold on a background of silver. Athena pours “χάρις” on Odysseus’ body just as the craftsman infuses his art with “χάρις.” The body and the craftsman’s art are explicitly compared, and the poet emphasizes the similarity of their actions by echoing the verb “περιχέειν.” Of course, Athena is trying to make Odysseus desirable, and the “χάρις” she pours over him is intended to stir Penelope’s erotic feelings for him.⁶¹

While Hephaistos makes many different types of things, he makes many artistic products which are described as “δαίδαλα,” (cunningly embellished things) the most important of which for the present discussion is Achilles’ shield. The plural noun “δαίδαλα,” the adjectives “δαίδαλος” (cunningly embellished) and “πολυδαίδαλος” (with many cunning embellishments), and the verb “δαίδαλεῖν” (to embellish cunningly) are all used in the Homeric epics to describe objects which are finely crafted. The group of words is used mostly for metal objects such as corselets, greaves, belts, shields, jewelry,

poetry” is not simply evidence for a conception of the poet as craftsman. It also provides, as Frances Yates has observed, the clearest possible indication of a unitary conception of ‘poetry, painting and mnemonics as a process of intense visualization.’”

⁶¹ It is worth noting here that the fact that χάρις is poured suggests that it is a fluid.

diadems, and tripods, although they are used also for wooden objects and woven garments.⁶² There is also the craftsman “Δαιδάλος,” who appears for the first time in Greek literature in the ekphrasis in Book Eighteen of the *Iliad*. There, Homer explicitly compares Hephaistos to Daidalos when Hephaistos creates a dance floor on the shield. Indeed, when he makes Achilles’ shield, Homer tells his audience that Hephaistos embellishes it with “δαίδαλα.” At the beginning of the ekphrasis, Homer says:

Ποίει δὲ πρῶτιστα σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε
 πάντοσε δαιδάλλων, περὶ δ’ ἄντυγα βάλλε φαεινὴν
 τρίπλακα μαρμαρέην, ἐκ δ’ ἀργύρεον τελαμῶνα.
 πέντε δ’ ἄρ’ αὐτοῦ ἔσαν σάκεος πτύχες· αὐτὰρ ἐν αὐτῷ
 ποίει δαίδαλα πολλὰ ἰδυίησι πρᾶπιδεςσιν. (18.478-482)

(First, he made a shield which was huge and weighty, embellishing it with *daidala* all around, and he threw around it a shining triple rim, glittering, and he made the shield-strap from silver. There were five folds of the shield. But on it he made many *daidala* with his knowing faculties.)

Here in the initial transition into the ekphrasis, Homer uses the verbs “ποιεῖν” (18.478) (to make) and “δαιδάλλειν” (18.479) (to elaborate, to cunningly embellish). Thus, the ekphrasis is a description of “δαίδαλα” itself, and, for this reason, the figure of Daidalos is especially important in considering Hephaistos’ construction of Achilles’ shield.⁶³

In *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, Sarah Morris traces the origins of the mythological figure Daidalos, and she argues that the transmission of the technology of metallurgy from the ancient Near East to Crete leads to the appearance of the craftsman in the Greek world.⁶⁴ As Morris shows, the proper noun “Δαιδάλος” is, in all probability, derived from the “daidalic” words rather than being the eponymous ancestor of them.⁶⁵

⁶² For such examples, see *Iliad* 3.358, 4.135, 8.195, 11.32, 18.479, and 19.380; *Odyssey* 1.131, 6.15, 13.11, and 23.200.

⁶³ Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 226, also connects Daidalos and Hephaistos, speculating that Δαιδάλος was probably an epithet for Hephaistos.

⁶⁴ Sarah P. Morris *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁶⁵ Ibid. As I have borrowed Morris’ term “daidalic” here in talking about this group of related words.

Thus, the figure of Daidalos develops as a personification of complex, elaborate metalwork. Most importantly, Morris links Hephaistos, Athena, and Daidalos—all Greek craftsman-figures—to the Ugaritic god Kothar, a craftsman-god who emerges during the early Bronze Age.⁶⁶

Because “δαίδαλα” derive from the transmission of metal-technology, the term essentially signifies elaborations on metal objects. Still, there is a connection between “δαίδαλα” and other types of artistic products in Greek epic. As discussed above, the special robe which Hera wears to seduce Zeus in Book Fourteen of the *Iliad* features “δαίδαλα πάντα,” and, in the Hesiodic epics, the adjective “πολυδαίδαλος” (with many cunning embellishments) is used to describe woven products. There is, then, a general archaic association between the term and woven products. The daidalic words are also used for wooden things such as Achilles’ lyre and the chair which is offered to Thetis when she arrives at Hephaistos’ house in the *Iliad* as well as the marriage bed of Odysseus and Penelope in the *Odyssey*, for example. At *Iliad* 23.743, the term “πολυδαίδαλος” is used to describe the Sidonians themselves, whom Homer credits with the production of a beautiful krater which Achilles offers as a prize in the games for Patroklos.⁶⁷

Morris points out that Kothar and his counterparts are intimately connected with a set of Ugaritic deities known as the “Skillful Ones” who preside over marriage and

⁶⁶ Morris points to many passages in Baal epic which parallel Homeric subject and language, including a passage in which Kothar makes gifts in gold and silver for the goddess Athirat. As Morris argues, this passage, in which a craftsman-god makes gifts at the request of a sea-goddess, is “too close to the Homeric episode where Hephaistos makes a new set of armor for Achilles.” Ibid., 81.

⁶⁷ This use recalls Homer’s use of the epithet “ποικιλομήτης” (with a cunningly woven mind) to describe Odysseus. Both adjectives reveal a basic association of manifestations of *κόσμος* with the human body and intellect.

reproduction and who are also singers or musicians.⁶⁸ Thus, the craftsman-god predecessors of “δαίδαλα,” Daidalos, Hephaistos, and Athena are associated with sexuality, marriage and reproduction, and they express their talent in a procreative manner. Hephaistos develops as a craftsman-god out of a basic understanding of artist as creator, and he develops out of a tradition which involves both male and female craftsman-gods and which is closely associated with sex and reproduction. Of course, Hephaistos also creates many things which are animated, including, for example, the giant bronze robot Talos, the gold and silver dogs outside the palace of Alkinoos, as well as the moving tripods and golden handmaidens in his own workshop, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Likewise, ancient tradition credits Daidalos with creating art which moves and imitates living beings. In the *Library*, Apollodoros simply says that Daidalos invented statues (3.15.8). Plato alludes to Daidalos’ moving works in both the *Meno* and the *Euthyphro*. In the *Euthyphro*, Socrates first compares Euthyphro’s words to the moving statues of Daidalos (11d-e). Socrates in that dialogue conflates speech-making and the plastic arts which Daidalos creates; both are of course forms of *technē*. In the *Eikones*, the elder Philostratos, a rhetorician of the late second and early third centuries C.E., delivers ekphrastic speeches which describe paintings which hang in a gallery of a house he is visiting in Naples; the speeches are addressed to the young son of his host. He describes a painting of Pasiphae in which Daidalos appears making the wooden device which allows her to mate with the bull. He is in his workshop surrounded

⁶⁸ Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, 90-91: “Kothar’s female namesakes preside over reproduction, or the creation of life in nature, as he provides a divine authority for the world of craftsmanship. This collaboration of male and female creators recalls how Thetis retains her residual divine function in the *Iliad*....Within the Ugaritic world, the relationship between Kothar and the kotharat—single, masculine versus plural, feminine expressions of creative powers—finds a supportive parallel in the carpenter god Ilsh(a) and his wives, the carpenter-goddesses...a male artisan-god is accompanied by female complements and assistants to his creative skills, like the ἀμφίπολοι or female servants of Hephaistos in the *Iliad*...”

by statues which are taking their first steps, and Philostratos adds for his audience that Daidalos was the inventor of moving statues (1.16).⁶⁹ Kallistratos, a rhetorician of the third or fourth century C.E., refers to the moving statues of Daidalos in three of his ekphrastic speeches (3, 8, and 9). Like Philostratos the Younger, he is quite aware of the connection between words and visual art.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Philostratos' description of Daidalos' work on the artificial cow is particularly interesting. He writes: "κάθεται δὲ ἐφ' ἁρμονίᾳ τῆς βοῆς καὶ τοὺς Ἐρωτας ξυνεργοὺς ποιεῖται τοῦ μηχανήματος, ὡς Ἀφροδίτης τι αὐτῷ ἐπιθεῖν." (He sits by the frame of the cow and sets Erotes as assistants in the construction, so as to make apparent in it something of Aphrodite.) The myth about Daidalos will be discussed in depth later in this chapter, but it is worth noting here that a rhetorician describes Daidalos' craft as using the power of Aphrodite. Just as an orator infuses his speech with seductive sexuality, Daidalos uses Erotes in the construction of the hollow cow in order to make it seductive. Not only will the hollow cow have to attract Pasiphae's bull, but, more importantly, it will have to persuade the bull that it is real. Thus, persuasion is important in Daidalos' art. Philostratos' grandson, known as Philostratos the Younger, also composed ekphrastic speeches about paintings, and, like his grandfather, his speeches feature many references to the Homeric poems. He includes a speech which describes a painting of the battle between Neoptolemos and Eurypylos (10) which actually consists primarily of an ekphrasis about Achilles' shield. After a short introduction, he starts to describe the *daidala* which adorn Achilles' shield, which in the painting is carried by Neoptolemos into battle. His description follows the Homeric ekphrasis quite closely, although his description elaborates on the original scenes. Because it is an ekphrasis about an ekphrasis, it seems particularly interesting. I believe that neither Philostratos describes actual paintings. If this is indeed the case, not only is imaginary artwork contained within highly descriptive speech, but the speech which describes the original imaginary work—the shield—is embedded within another imaginary work of art—the shield as it is painted in the painting which Philostratos describes. Achilles' shield, the Homeric ekphrasis about it, and the painting of Neoptolemos carrying the shield are all in turn embedded within Philostratos' speech. He of course mentions the dance floor which Daidalos creates for Ariadne, and, at the beginning of his description of the dance on the shield, he asks: "τίς δ' ἡ τέχνη;" (What is this *technē*?) He thus reveals the close association of rhetoric and visual art, and it is significant that he asks this question right after mentioning Daidalos. If he indeed describes an imaginary painting, as I believe, then his aim is to persuade his audience to visualize the painting just like Homer. He makes the art seem like it moves in the manner of Daidalos.

⁷⁰ Kallistratos begins his speech about a statue of Dionysos with a reference to Daidalos: Δαίδαλῳ μὲν ἐξῆν, εἰ δὲ τῷ περὶ Κρήτην πιστεύειν θάύματι, κινούμενα μηχανᾶσθαι τὰ ποιήματα καὶ πρὸς ἀνθρωπίνην αἴσθησιν ἐκβιάζεσθαι τὸν χρυσόν, αἱ δὲ δὴ Πραξιτέλαιοι χεῖρες ζωτικά διόλου κατεσκεύαζον τὰ τεχνήματα. (8) (Daidalos, if it is appropriate to trust in the wonder from Crete, was able to construct statues which could be put in motion and to force human perceptions from gold, but the hands of Praxiteles made works of *technē* which were altogether full of life.) Later, in his speech about a statue of Memnon, he again points to Daidalos' legendary ability to endow statues with motion (9.3). Kallistratos seems to have the Homeric reference to Daidalos in mind. In fact, in his speech about a statue of Eros, he specifically refers to Daidalos' ability to make a choros dance: Ἐμοὶ μὲν δὴ θεασαμένῳ τὴν τέχνην ἐπήγει πιστεῦναι, ὅτι καὶ χορὸν ἤσκησε κινούμενον Δαίδαλος καὶ χρυσῷ παρεῖχεν αἰσθήσεις, ὅπου καὶ Πραξιτέλης εἰς τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ Ἐρωτος ἐέθηκε μικροῦ καὶ νοήματα καὶ πτέρυγι τὸν ἄερα τέμνειν ἐμμηχανήσατο. (3.5) (Indeed it came upon me as I looked at this work of *technē* to believe that Daidalos did make a moving choros and endow gold with human perceptions, since Praxiteles had just about put intelligence in his image of Eros and made it so it could cut the air with its wings.) Surely, Kallistratos is describing the last scene of the Homeric ekphrasis here. In his reading of the scene, then, Homer refers to Daidalos because of the craftsman's legendary ability to endow art with motion and thus make it seem alive. Cf. Hekabe's speech in Euripides' Hekabe (812-832). At 835-842,

Both Hephaistos and Daidalos give birth to living art, and both figures operate with an essential feminine procreative element. They both possess an artistic uterus, mysteriously engendering inanimate material with the force of life.⁷¹ Hephaistos of course even creates a real woman with a real uterus when he makes Pandora out of earth and water.⁷² Thus, the “*δαίδαλα*” which adorn Achilles’ shield, like so many of Hephaistos’ creations, have the potential for animation.⁷³

Achilles’ Shield as Cosmic Body

Although Homer never uses the term “*κόσμος*” to describe the images on Achilles’ shield in Book Eighteen of the *Iliad*, like woven garments and songs of poets, the shield represents a “*κόσμος*” in and of itself. On it exists an entire universe complete with heaven and earth, all banded by the river of Ocean. The basic outline of the scenes on the shield is as follows, moving from the center of the shield out to the rim:

- I. Earth, sky, sea, sun, moon and stars (18.483-489)
- II. Two cities
 - A. City at peace: weddings; a lawsuit (18.490-508)
 - B. City at war: a siege; an ambush of herdsmen outside the city; a battle (18.509-540)
- III. Men plowing fields, drinking wine (18.541-549)
- IV. King overseeing harvesters; feast being prepared (18.550-560)
- V. Grape-picking in a vineyard; young singer performs (18.561-572)
- VI. A herd of cattle, two lions attack a bull as herdsmen and dogs pursue them (18.573-586)

Daidalos’ legendary ability to engender art with voice and movement is associated with rhetorical ability. Daidalic things are sexually alluring and persuasive.

⁷¹Traditionally, Hephaistos even assists in Zeus’ own usurping of female procreative power when he acts as midwife by cutting Zeus’ head open to allow the fully formed Athena to escape.

⁷² Hephaistos’ construction of Pandora will be discussed extensively in Chapter Three.

⁷³ Cf. Ingrid E. Holmberg, “Hephaistos and Spiders’ Webs,” *Phoenix* 57, no. 1/2 (2003), 7: “Like Zeus, Hephaistos through *μητρικς* assumes at least metaphorically the female capacity for reproduction.”

- VII. A pasture with sheep (18.587-589)
 VIII. A dance floor and dance like the one Daidalos makes
 at Knossos for Ariadne (18.590-606)
 IX. The river of Ocean (18.607-608)

Scholars have recognized that Homer captures basic elements of human existence and the world outside the limited sphere of the *Iliad*.⁷⁴ To some degree, the shield is a self-contained world within the larger narrative.⁷⁵ Moreover, the ekphrasis functions as a microcosm of the larger narrative. In general, the circular nature of the shield echoes the overall structure of the poem, which, as Thalmann has argued, represents a universe which is circular in shape.⁷⁶ As discussed in the Introduction, the concept of “κόσμος” is essentially a bodily idea, and the basic nature of the shield is indeed bodily.

⁷⁴ See for example, P.R. Hardie, “Imago Mundi: Cosmological and Ideological Aspects of the Shield of Achilles,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 105 (1985), 11-31 for an examination of ancient reactions to the “κόσμος” of the Shield; Oliver Taplin, “The Shield of Achilles within the *Iliad*,” *Greece & Rome* 27, no. 1 (April, 1980), 1-21; Øivind Andersen, “Some Thoughts on the Shield of Achilles,” *Symbolae Osloenses* 51 (1976), 5-18; Charles Rowan Beye, *Ancient Epic Poetry: Homer, Apollonius, Virgil* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 142; James I. Porter, “Hermeneutic Lines and Circles: Aristarchus and Crates on the Exegesis of Homer,” in *Homer’s Ancient Readers: The Hermeneutics of Greek Epic’s Earliest Exegetes* eds. Robert Lamberton and John J. Keaney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 67-114; Keith Stanley, *The Shield of Homer: Narrative Structure in the Iliad* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Kenneth John Atchity, *Homer’s Iliad: The Shield of Memory* (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978), 172-176. Cf. DuBois, *History, Rhetorical Description and the Epic*, 14: “Homer recounts carefully the smith’s movements as he begins the creation of the shield. He presents a catalogue of the elements which compose the cosmos—earth, sky, and water—in language that suggests a creation myth. The catalogue of the elements serves as a prologue to the ekphrasis; the rest of the description is an elaboration of these three parts of the universe. The first element of the catalogue—earth, Achilles’ domain—appropriately receives most attention as the description unfolds. Hades’ realm of ‘those below’ cannot be pictured on the shield, since it lies beneath the surface. Yet, behind the shield as Achilles wears it lies the province of Hades, the mortal body that is to suffer death. The place of Hades is suppressed on the shield because it is unnecessary; the poem has already suggested death as Achilles’ destiny. The shield is ultimately a containment of death within the larger pattern of regeneration.”

⁷⁵ Cf. George Kurman, “Ecphrasis in Epic Poetry,” *Comparative Literature* 26, No. 1 (1974), 2: “As Ernst Robert Curtis shows, we can relate antique instances of ecphrasis to the classical (and medieval) topos of *Deus artifex*; the creation myths of the ancient world offer numerous accounts in which God, the creator of man and of the cosmos, appears as a craftsman—weaver, needleworker, potter, and smith. It is hardly accidental that the earliest instance of ecphrasis in western literature is an account of the creation of the world as well as a description in some 130 hexameters of the armament of the foremost Achaian warrior.”

⁷⁶ Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek*, 190 note 32: “The material of the shield also calls for some comment here. Hephaistos makes it in five layers (XVIII.481). Later, when Aineias’ spear pierces it, we find that the two outer layers, front and back, are of bronze. Within them are two of tin, and at the center is one of gold (XX.269-72). This shows how naturally these poets thought in rounded, inversely symmetrical structures, even at the cost here, of giving an arrangement of metals that Leaf (1900-

That the shield, like many ancient cosmologies, is presented in corporeal terms is seen first of all in Homer's description of how it comes into existence. When Thetis approaches Hephaistos in Book Eighteen to ask him to make new armor for her son, the scene is sexually charged. While it is true that Thetis' overall characterization in the *Iliad* is more in keeping with a grieving mother than an Aphrodite-like seductress, the poet does offer glimpses of Thetis' essential sexual allure. Laura M. Slatkin traces Thetis' origins to the Indo-European tradition of procreative goddesses; she argues that her origins as a goddess are similar to those of Eos, Kalypso, and Aphrodite herself and that the character of Thetis necessarily has an "erotic element."⁷⁷ When Thetis asks Hephaistos for the new armor, her erotic nature is apparent, and she subtly seduces him.⁷⁸

Thetis arrives at Hephaistos' house and is greeted by his wife, Charis, who welcomes her warmly and shows her to a special chair. That Charis rather than Hephaistos greets the visitor is striking. Usually, it is the husband rather than the wife who greets guests in the epics, with the wife emerging later from her inner chambers, often attended by two handmaidens. Of course, Hephaistos is working when Thetis arrives, but, to some extent, the reversal of roles makes Hephaistos appear feminine, especially when his appearance later attended by golden "*ἑμπίπολοι*" (handmaidens) is

1902, 368) calls "absurd, for the gold is hidden away in the middle, where it would be neither useful nor ornamental."

⁷⁷ Laura M. Slatkin, "The Wrath of Thetis," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 116 (1986), 6. For a discussion of Homeric references to Thetis' status as a goddess of the dawn, see also Laura M. Slatkin, *The Power of Thetis: Allusion and Interpretation in the Iliad* (Berkeley: University of California, 1991), 28-32.

⁷⁸ Several authors note the erotic connection between Zeus and Thetis. In an article about the importance of apples in classical literature, A.R. Littlewood offers an explanation by the Second Vatican Mythographer for Thetis' marriage to Peleus which focuses on Zeus as a fire-god and Thetis as water-goddess. Because Thetis' water might douse Zeus' fire, the goddess was married to a mortal, he explains. A.R. Littlewood, "The Symbolism of the Apple in Greek and Roman Literature," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 72 (1968), 149 note 3. As a water-goddess, in many ways Thetis exemplifies the Hippocratic female body—cold, wet, and spongy—as well as female sexuality, which drained men of their hot, dry masculinity. Hephaistos of course is a fire-god as well, although he does not have to worry about maintaining his supremacy among the gods like Zeus. Perhaps Thetis is especially attracted to fire-gods.

taken into consideration. Charis then informs her husband that Thetis has come to see him, and Hephaistos stops working, saying:

ἥ ῥά νύ μοι δεινὴ τε καὶ αἰδοίη θεὸς ἔνδον,
 ἥ μ' ἐσάωσ', ὅτε μ' ἄγρος ἀφίκετο τῇλε πεσόντα
 μητρὸς ἐμῆς ἰότητι κυνώπιδος, ἥ μ' ἐδέλησε
 κρύψαι χολὸν ἔοντα· τότε ἂν πάθον ἄλγεα θυμῳ,
 εἰ μή μ' Εὐρυνόμη τε Θέτις θ' ὑπεδέξατο κόλπῳ,
 Εὐρυνόμη, θυγάτηρ ἀψορροοῦ Ὠκεανοῖο.
 τῇσι παρ' εἰνάετες χάλκευον δαίδαλα πολλά,
 πόρπας τε γναμπτάς θ' ἑλικας κάλυκας τε καὶ ὄρμους
 ἐν σπῆϊ γλαφυρῷ· περὶ δὲ ῥόος Ὠκεανοῖο
 ἀφρῶ μορμύρων ῥέεν ἄσπετος· οὐδέ τις ἄλλος
 ᾗδεεν οὔτε θεῶν οὔτε θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων,
 ἀλλὰ Θέτις τε καὶ Εὐρυνόμη ἴσαν, αἶ μ' ἐσάωσαν.
 ἥ νῦν ἡμέτερον δῶμον ἵκει· τῷ με μάλα χρεὼν
 πάντα Θέτι καλλιπλοκάμῳ ζῳάγρια τίνειν.
 ἀλλὰ σὺ μὲν νῦν οἱ παράθεις ξεινήϊα καλά,
 ὅφρ' ἂν ἐγὼ φύσας ἀποδείομαι ὅπλα τε πάντα. (18.395-409)

(Now a goddess, awesome and honorable to me, is in our house. She saved me, when the pain came upon me, having fallen far away, through the will of my dog-eyed mother, who wanted to hide me for being lame. Then I would have suffered pains in my heart if Eurynome and Thetis had not embraced me in their bosom, Eurynome, the daughter of Okeanos, who bends around in a circle. For nine years, I worked with them as a metalworker, making many *daidala* in the hollow cave—pins, spiral-shaped ornaments which curve around, brooches and necklaces. The flow of Okeanos flowed around, boundless and murmuring with foam. No one else of the gods nor of mortal men knew about us, but Thetis and Eurynome, who saved me, knew. Now she has come to our house. I must honor in all ways the debt I owe to lovely-haired Thetis. But you now set out before her those good things suitable for a guest, while I put away my bellows and all my tools.)

Hephaistos thus fondly recalls his secret nine-year stay with Thetis and Eurynome after he had been cast away by Hera. He says that he wrought “*δαίδαλα πολλά*” for them while he was with them, and he specifies that he made pins, spiral-shaped ornaments, brooches, and necklaces—in other words, feminine adornments for the goddesses. In Greek literature, jewelry such as this often signifies sexual attractiveness. Necklaces in particular are sexually suggestive; women’s necks are often conflated with their genitals

and reproductive organs. In *Diseases of Women*, for example, the Hippocratic writer describes the various symptoms of women who do not satisfy their bodily craving for semen through intercourse. The symptoms of such deprivation include biting sensations in the neck and aphasia, and women who are unlucky enough to never have intercourse die by suffocation. The Hippocratic writings also state that a girl's neck becomes larger and her voice becomes lower when she loses her virginity.⁷⁹ In the *Theogony*, Pegasus and Chrysaor are both born out of the Gorgon's neck cavity when she is decapitated, as if the neck functions like a uterus. In the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*, Zeus makes Aphrodite fall in love with Anchises, a mortal man, as punishment for her making him fall in love with so many mortal women. Although she is burning with sexual desire, before she approaches him, she travels to Paphos, where the Charites bathe and anoint her.⁸⁰ She clothes herself in fine garments and gold jewelry. When Aphrodite appears to Anchises as a maiden, the poet tells his audience that she is with glistening garments and all sorts of jewelry. The poet tells his audience that Anchises is seized with *eros* (90). The description of Aphrodite's jewelry in this hymn is almost identical to the description of the jewelry which Hephaistos makes for Thetis and Eurynome. Of course, the language may be formulaic. Still, the adornments are clearly sexually charged; Anchises, after all, when he sees Aphrodite with such adornments, is seized with *eros*.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Cited in Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," 328.

⁸⁰ Athanassakis argues in his notes to the text that Aphrodite's burning sexual desire is actually what makes her robe "φαεινότερον πυρός αὐγῆς" (more brilliant than fire). *The Homeric Hymns* trans. Apostolos N. Athanassakis, 83 notes to lines 86-90.

⁸¹ Cf. Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 127, where Reeder describes a typical Greek wedding: "The bride was assisted in dressing for the wedding by a *nymphetria*, who was a mature woman other than the bride's mother. Other relatives undoubtedly offered their help. Her wedding garment contained some areas of purple, dyed with a costly substance obtained from the murex, a rare type of snail; for this reason the purple color carried connotations of wealth as well as, certainly, of blood. The bride's belt was tied with a double knot that was known as the bridal, or Herakles, knot and had such rich connotations that the phrase 'loosening the belt' became a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Over the

It is especially significant that Hephaistos says that he wrought these objects in a hollow cave: the hollow cave is of course a vaginal image. Later Greek literature frequently uses caves as images of the female body.⁸² Sophokles' *Antigone* has pronounced sexual imagery; in that play, Antigone, who is a virgin, is buried alive in a cave which is likened to both tomb and bridal chamber. Haemon, her fiancé, penetrates the cave at the mouth and embraces Antigone's dead body inside (she has hanged herself). He then kills himself, wrapping his body around hers; he drips blood onto her white skin. The messenger who relates the story of what has happened points out that Haemon had fulfilled his marriage in this way.⁸³ In the *Theogony*, Gaia is presented as both the physical land on which men live and also as a woman. When Zeus is born to Kronos and Rhea in the poem, Rhea tricks Kronos into swallowing a rock wrapped in swaddling clothes instead of Zeus himself and gives Zeus to her parents for safekeeping.

bride's head and shoulders was draped her veil, a piece of fabric that could have a tasselled hem.... It had been colored to a yellow-orange hue with dye from the saffron plant, which was specifically associated with women, probably because of its traditional use as a medication for menstrual ills.... The bride also wore a great deal of jewelry. In vase paintings she wears a diadem in the form of a headband from which rise individual elements which resemble leaves. We also find earrings, a necklace and bracelets. Both bride and groom were outfitted with bridal wreaths made of myrtle, an honor that, as John Oakley observes, was otherwise reserved only for victors in battle and in Panathenaic Games and which conferred a superhuman status upon the bridal pair. Indeed, when completely dressed the bride would have seemed as dazzling as Pandora appeared to Epimetheus, or Thetis on her wedding day to Peleus."

⁸² About Aristophanes, Jeffrey Henderson writes, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975; 1991), 139-141: "A comparison of the female member to pits or great caves appears several times. *Βάραθρον* is unquestionably obscene in the catalogue at Fr. 320.8, and at Pl 431 Chremes twits Penia, who is worried about being exiled, *οὐκ οὖν ὑπολοιπὸν σοι γίνεται*; that is 1) there is always the pit for criminal execution and 2) you can always rely on your cunt. The common use of *βάραθρον* is clear from the hetaera-name in Theophil. Com. 11.3 and from similar use of *barathrum* in Latin (cf. Mart. 3.81.1)...In the paratragic prologue of *Ecclesiazusae*, a grandiose double entendre is used to describe depilation by lamp; the image is from scenes of the sudden illumination of cavernous underworld regions...*μόνος δὲ μηρῶν εἰς ἀπορρήτους μυχοὺς/ λάμπεις ἀφεύων τὴν ἐπανθοῦσαν τρίχα*, lamp, you alone shine into the ineffable secret places between the thighs where you burn off the hair growing there." Henderson also lists several other terms for hollows and holes which are frequently used in comedy for female genitalia.

⁸³ Of course, the association of caves and other pits with the vagina and also with rectums occurs in Latin literature as well. For examples, see J.N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 85-86.

Gaia hides Zeus in a cave at Lyktos on Crete (477-484).⁸⁴ Thus, Gaia hides Zeus inside her own body, carrying him to Crete in the dark night.⁸⁵ Finally, Homer describes (5.55-74) Kalypso's cave in the *Odyssey* as surrounded by lush vegetation, meadows, and flowing fountains; the imagery is clearly sexual. In both Greek and Roman literature, agricultural terms and natural imagery are commonly used to describe female genitalia and intercourse, and the meadows, full of parsley and flowers, around Kalypso's cave necessarily suggest a sexual scene.⁸⁶ Odysseus has been having sex with Kalypso since his arrival at her island, and Hermes is there to break up her happy arrangement. Homer draws attention to the sexual relationship by describing Kalypso's house as her body; he

⁸⁴ Zeus, in fact, was worshipped on Crete during the Minoan period, probably as a chthonic consort of the earth-goddess rather than as the later Greek weather-god. Various accounts of Zeus' birthplace exist, including the Dictaean Cave and the Idaean Cave, but most involve caves on Crete. For a comprehensive study of Minoan religion and, specifically, Minoan Zeus and the cave sanctuaries on Crete, see Martin P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1950; 1971), especially 53-76 and 533-544. Nilsson offers an excellent enumeration of the sources on Zeus' Cretan birth. Also, see Appendix One.

⁸⁵ Many cave sanctuaries have been excavated on Crete, and they appear to have been used as important places for communion with the earth-goddess. See, for example, *ibid.* and R.F. Willets, *Cretan Cults and Festivals* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 141-147. Willets discusses, 199-223, Cretan Zeus and his cult of birth, death, and rebirth which existed on Crete. He also devotes a chapter, 120-137, to Homer's knowledge of Crete, which he shows is rather extensive.

⁸⁶ In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, for example, Persephone is playing with friends in a soft meadow, gathering all sorts of flowers, when she is abducted by Hades. Of course, Hades is abducting her to be his wife, and the natural, fertile imagery signifies the upcoming sexual union. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod tells his audience that, when Poseidon has sex with Medusa, the couple has intercourse in a meadow on which spring flowers grow. Cf. Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays* ed. Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 104 on the Sirens in their flowering meadow: "The problem is to 'escape' the seductive song of the Sirens' divine voices and their flowering meadow (*Od.* 12.158ff.). In the manner of Eros the magician, they charm and bewitch (*thelgousi*) all human beings who approach them; they charm them with melodious song, but none who listens to them returns to his home. Rather, the Sirens remain fixed in place in their meadow encircled by a heaped-up mass of whitened bones and putrefied corpses with dessicated skins. In order not to hear the Sirens, therefore, the sailors must plug their ears with wax. As for Odysseus, if he wants to hear their song he must choose either to be lost like everyone who is caught by these creatures' spell, or let himself be tied up both hands and feet to the ships' mast. Up to this point everything about these bird-women seems clear. Their cries, their flowering meadow (*leimōn*, meadow, is one of the words used to designate female genitalia), their charm (*thelxis*) locates them in all their irresistibility unequivocally in the realm of sexual attraction or erotic appeal. At the same time, they are death..."

thus introduces Odysseus—this is his first actual appearance in the poem—as a sexually potent hero and entertains his audience with a seductive scene.⁸⁷

⁸⁷Odysseus is warned by Athena to test his wife's loyalty before revealing himself to her, and she advises him to hide his treasure in a cave instead of taking with him to his palace. The cave is the haunt of nymphs, which in general characterizes the cave as feminine space. Athena specifically tells Odysseus to hide his treasure "μυχῷ ἄντρον θεσπεσίον." The dark, innermost recess of the house, an area called the "μυχός," usually served as the women's quarters for a family, and, as several scholars have noted, the area is suggestive of the female body itself. See, for example, Page DuBois, *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 107. Cf. Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 195: "The term *muchos* refers both to the interior of a woman's body and to the innermost chambers of a house." In the Greek world, women are associated not only with birth but also with death. They prepare bodies for burial, and vessels which contain dead bodies—chests, clay pots, and the earth itself—are seen in terms of the female body. Jonathan S. Burgess discusses the femininity of mortality in "Coronis Aflame: The Gender of Mortality," *Classical Philology* 96, no. 3 (2001), 214-227. In a discussion about Danae, her chamber-prison, and chest-coffin, Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, writes, 268: "The chest afloat upon the sea is an evocative image because it carries for its occupants both the threat of death and the prospect of life. As an analogy to the woman's body, the motif of the container bears paradoxical connotations, because the Greeks viewed a mother's gift of life as also one, ultimately, of death. Moreover, whereas containers usually functioned to shelter valuables, children were buried in clay vessels as late as the Classical period. In the story of Meleager, his mother Althea keeps within a chest a firebrand which she withdraws when she decides that the time as come for her son to die." A discussion of the general Greek association of the female body with containers follows in the next section. In the *Odyssey*, Agamemnon's ghost tells Achilles that Thetis gave him the golden vessel, made by Hephaistos, for his bones. Of course, Medea and Jason consummate their marriage in a cave in the *Argonautica*, and Dido and Aeneas likewise consummate their union in a cave (with thunder and lightning as fireworks in the background) in the *Aeneid*. Women were responsible for organizing and storing the goods of a Greek household, a process which is often called "thesaurization." Jean Pierre Vernant, "Hestia-Hermes: The Religious Expression of Space and Movement in Ancient Greece," in *Myth and Thought Among the Greeks* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983), 148-149: "Does this comparison allow us to imagine that in the interplay of mythical themes, there is an association between the image of the shadowy house symbolized by Hestia and that of the shelter of a woman's lap? A study of the semantic values of a word like θάλαμος, itself related to θόλος, would seem to indicate that there is such an association. The word denotes the quarters reserved for the women in the farthest, most secret depths of the house. Strictly forbidden to the stranger, (it is an interior space) and closed by a bolted door so that even the male slaves cannot have access (it is also a female space) this heart of the human dwelling place, often described as μύχος, carries a chthonic implication: the θάλαμος occasionally expresses the specific idea of an underground hiding place: Danae's prison, Trophonius's cavern, a tomb, could all be termed θάλαμος. But at the same time θάλαμος is related to marriage. It denotes sometimes the young girl's room before her wedding, and sometimes the nuptial chamber, or more explicitly the nuptial couch, and the verb θαλαμεύω signifies to lead to the bridal bed, to marry. Finally, a further meaning of the word θάλαμος is that of the hiding place of the secret fastnesses of the dwelling, where a woman stows her reserve stores, those domestic riches over which she, as mistress of the house, rules. Sometimes it is the wife and sometimes the daughter who is described as the keeper of the keys of this secret 'treasure.' Because she is dedicated to the interior, the woman's role is to store the goods that the man, directed towards the exterior, brings home to the house." Cf. DuBois, *Sowing the Body*, 97-109, especially 105-109. DuBois focuses on the Athenian acropolis as an architectural representation of the female body, and she specifically discusses the Erechtheion as a treasury, 98: "Thus, the *muchoi*, the inner recesses of the building, the hidden places, were salt water and the trident's marks: the female genitalia, salt secretions, and an opening in the earth. In addition, the Pandroseion is the place of dew, *drosos*." Later, 105, DuBois writes: "The interior whole of the Erechtheion complex is labyrinthine, with its various enclosures, uncentered doorways, different levels, interiors within interiors, and a basement at a level below that of the lowest floor. The building has *muchoi*, like those of the body, and the *korai* seem to protect the building on

When Hephaistos recalls his making “δαίδαλα πολλά” for Thetis and Eurynome in Thetis’ cave, then, he is remembering a sexual experience. Several other aspects of Hephaistos’ recollection suggest that the experience was indeed sexual. First, Hephaistos says that Eurynome and Thetis “ὑπεδέξατο κόλπω.” (18.398) (received him into their bosom). Translators usually take the phrase to mean that Thetis simply embraced Hephaistos after his fall, or welcomed him into her house. It is possible that the phrase indicates much more, however. The verb “ὑποδέχομαι” means “to receive, to take in,” and it is used for various activities, including for receiving guests into one’s house, for taking in information, and for collecting liquids, for example. When Epimetheus accepts Pandora in the *Works and Days*, Hesiod uses “δεξάμενος” to indicate that he has taken the maiden into his house as his wife. The compound verb “ὑποδέχομαι” has the same sense as “δέχομαι” with the added sense of the prefix “ὑπο,” which means “from under, beneath, from below.” It may be that Homer uses the verb in the same way as Hesiod uses it in the *Works and Days*, especially because he does not tell his audience that Thetis receives Hephaistos into her house but rather that she receives him into her “κόλπος.” As Jeffrey Henderson has argued, the word “κόλπος” can indicate “vagina” as well as “bosom,” and it is used by Aristophanes and medical writers in this way.⁸⁸ The word “κόλπος”

one corner while from the other direction it seems to invite entry.” Also, Thalmann, *The Swineherd and the Bow*, 124-133. He writes, 124: “The woman works inside the house, in storing and distributing the goods produced by male labor. Her other ideologically significant activity is in perpetuating the (patrilineal) family through procreation (hence the anxiety about her sexual honor and the legitimacy of children). Male labor can this be summed up as ‘acquisition,’ female as ‘thesaurization’ (‘storage’).” Of course, in the Homeric epics, women themselves are treated as possessions. They are frequently offered as prizes along with tripods, horses, and mixing bowls. Not only do they organize and store treasure, then, but they also serve as treasure themselves.

⁸⁸ Henderson, *The Maculate Muse*, 140: “We must therefore consider a secondary meaning of κόλπος other than the usual ‘bosom.’ It seems that κόλπος could also indicate the vagina, a meaning attested in later medical writers such as Rufus, Soranus, and Sextus Empiricus, all of whom derived their terminology and definitions from much earlier writings; Pollux identifies these earlier writings as those of Hippocrates

indicates “bosom” because it refers to the fold in a woman’s garment right above the girdle, which creates a space, a hollow in the clothing. I believe Homer—who sets out to entertain his audience with vivid imagery—is using the phrase suggestively here. When he says “κόλπος,” he simultaneously suggests to his audience a bodily hollow, a fold in clothing, and an opening in the landscape—all of which carry sexual connotations.⁸⁹ Moreover, the term is elsewhere in the poem where it is explicitly sexual in nature. For example, when Hera borrows Aphrodite’s special woven love charm, Aphrodite tells her:

τῇ νῦν, τοῦτον ἱμάντα τεῶ ἑγκάτθεο κόλπω,
 ποικίλον, ᾧ ἔνι πάντα τετεύχεται· οὐδέ σέ φημι
 ἄπρηκτόν γε νέεσθαι, ὅ τι φρεσὶ σῇσι μενοινῶς. (14.219-221)

(Come now, put this strap, elaborately decorated, on which all things are figured, in your bosom. I think that you will accomplish that which you have in mind with success.)

Hera smiles and hides the love charm in her “κόλπος.” Clearly, “κόλπος” is a sexual area of the body here.⁹⁰

Returning to Hephaistos’ recollection, Homer specifically points out that the boundless flow of Ocean was “ἄφρῳ μορμύρων” (roaring with foam) while he was making

himself. We may therefore assume a fifth-century use of κόλπος in this sense. Such genital usage, like the more common meanings of ‘bosom,’ ‘folds in a garment,’ or ‘gulf,’ derives from the word’s root notion of any hollow place, and corresponds to its use in describing other bodily cavities as well: not only the womb, but also the ventricles of the heart and the abdominal cavities.”

⁸⁹ The phrase is also used at *Iliad* 6.136, where Thetis receives Dionysos. Homer uses the phrase in the same way someone today might indicate sexual activity by saying, for example, “I got in her pants.”

⁹⁰ Cf. Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* trans. Peter Bing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 283: “In connection with the Anatolian mysteries of Demeter, Clement relates a myth reflecting certain ritual details: Demeter was enraged at Zeus for having raped her—the same reason that Arcadian Demeter had been angry at Poseidon—thus supplication ceremonies were called for in which branches hung with wool were carried (a familiar sight to the Greeks). Then ‘bile would be drunk,’ ‘a heart torn out,’ followed by ‘unspeakable touching.’ Evidently a priest would make gestures of supplication and drink a bitter drink; thereafter the sacrificial animal was killed and its heart was torn out. Then came the unspeakable act, which Clement lays bare: ‘Zeus tore off a ram’s testicles. He brought them to Demeter and threw them into the folds of her dress, thus doing false penance for his rape, as if he had castrated himself.’ It is clear that the very thing done to the sacrificial animal in ritual is here raised to the sphere of the gods in myth. In the process, guilt and expiation are played out on two levels at once: the aggressive act is motivated as punishment for a sexual crime but, because the genitals fall into the goddess’s lap, it turns into a sacred marriage.” In the ritual described by Clement, clearly the folds of the dress are equated with Demeter’s genitals.

jewelry in the cave with Thetis. Hephaistos is hinting at the presence of semen in this statement. The phrase is used two other times in the epic, at 5.599 and at 21.325 and in both instances it describes the roaring power of a river. Like the foam (ἀφρός) which flows along with blood from those bodies Achilles has dumped into the river Xanthos in Book Twenty-One, and like the foam which seeps out from Ouranos' severed genitals in the *Theogony*, the “ἀφρός” which flows around the cave is representative of Hephaistos' own divine “μένος.” Also, Thetis' cave is underwater; in Book One, for example, Thetis comes from the depths of the sea when Achilles calls upon her (1.357-358). It does not make sense for there to be sea-foam around a cave which is underwater, as sea-foam forms on the surface. That the scene is sexual in nature is further seen in Hephaistos' specific recollection that no one else knew that he was making “δαίδαλα πολλά” for Thetis and Eurynome in the cave. Like the special bedchamber which Hephaistos constructs for Hera, the entrance to which is also described as unknown to the other gods, Thetis' cave is a secret place for clandestine sexual activity.

That Hephaistos' interaction with Thetis is sexually charged is also seen in Homer's inclusion of the craftsman-god's wife, Charis. As discussed above, in the *Odyssey*, the poet presents Hephaistos as married to Aphrodite herself, and it is possible to interpret Charis in the *Iliad* as representative of Aphrodite since the goddess is so frequently associated with the Charites.⁹¹ Charis acts rather like one of the attendants Hephaistos has created, dutifully doing her job without getting in the way. In ancient written copies of the poem, of course, it would be difficult to differentiate between the

⁹¹ Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 191. Edwards argues that Aphrodite's presence would be “an embarrassment here because of her pro-Trojan bias” and suggests that Charis is a “fitting consort for a craftsman.” He links the personification of the quality of “χαρις” to Hephaistos' habit of creating “χαρίεντα ἔργα.”

word “*χάρις*” and a goddess, “*Χάρις*.” I believe Charis simply signifies sexual feeling, and the poet tells his audience that Hephaistos “marries” her in that he harnesses her energy.⁹² The Greek sense of marriage involves a taming of the wild energy of the virgin bride, a subordination of woman to man which civilizes the virgin, harnesses her energy, and brings her into the social “*κόσμος*.” Most importantly, her presence here as an intermediary between Hephaistos and Thetis works to color their interaction. Thetis seeks to persuade Hephaistos to create new, brilliant armor for her son, and, like all who engage in the contest of persuasion, she uses all of her charms to win him over.

After he recalls this earlier experience with Thetis in her cave, Hephaistos puts his tools and bellows away, cleans himself up with a sponge, and puts on a clean tunic. Thus, he makes himself more attractive and greets her as someone special. Before he goes to see her, he takes up a “*σκῆπτρον παχὺ*” (18.416) (a large staff). While the word “*σκῆπτρον*” probably signifies a walking stick in this passage, it is also the word for the staff held by speakers in public assemblies, as discussed in the Introduction.⁹³ It is a symbol of masculine sexual power, and Homer points out that the god takes it with him to greet Thetis precisely because of its sexual symbolism.⁹⁴

When he sits and talks to Thetis, he tenderly holds her hand. Thetis starts to cry, arousing Hephaistos’ feeling for her, and she prefaces her request by stating that she has suffered greatly because she was married against her will to a mortal man who has grown old. She then goes on to lament Achilles’ fate and asks for new arms for her son. Her

⁹² Stanley, *The Shield*, 25, also disagrees: “...Charis (“grace, loveliness”), who confers on her union with the craftsman-god an element less of passion than of allegory.”

⁹³ On Greek vase paintings, walking sticks are not infrequently presented as phallic images.

⁹⁴ It is worth noting here that when the Muses approach Hesiod in the prologue to the *Theogony*, they break off a branch of laurel and hand it to him to use as a poetic “*σκῆπτρον*.” Hephaistos uses his masculine sexual power to create the shield just as a poet uses his masculine power to sculpt the inspirational breath of the Muses into an ordered poem.

appeal to Hephaistos recalls her appeal to Zeus in Book One. In that Book, she approaches Zeus to ask him to help her son, and she approaches him as a suppliant, even grabbing hold of his knees and placing her right hand under Zeus' chin. Similarly, she laments her son's short life. Of course, Zeus married Thetis to Peleus in the first place either, as Pindar and Apollodorus report, because she was destined to have a son who would overpower Zeus or, according to the *Kypria*, because she refused to have sex with him when he attempted to seduce her.⁹⁵ Homer does make it clear that Thetis is married to Peleus against her will, although he is silent about the reasons for the marriage. Still, the traditional relationship between Zeus and Thetis is sexual.⁹⁶ Thetis approaches Hephaistos in much the same way, lamenting her sad fate and the inevitable death of her son. Hephaistos replies (18.463-467), saying that he wishes he could hide Achilles away from death for Thetis, who of course hid him away for so long when he was in need. He says that he will make beautiful arms for Achilles which many men will wonder at (*θαυμάσσεται*). Thus, in creating the shield, Hephaistos uses his divine ability to once again create "*δαίδαλα πολλά*" for Thetis.

Hephaistos immediately goes to work:

Ὡς εἰπὼν τὴν μὲν λίπεν αὐτοῦ, βῆ δ' ἐπὶ φύσας·
 τὰς δ' ἐς πῦρ ἔτρεψε κέλευσέ τε ἐργάζεσθαι.
 φῦσαι δ' ἐν χράνοισιν εἴκοσι πᾶσαι ἐφύσων,
 παντοίην εὐπρηστον αὐτμὴν ἐξανιῖσαι,
 ἄλλοτε μὲν σπεύδοντι παρέμμεναι, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε,
 ὅπως Ἥφαιστός τ' ἐθέλοι καὶ ἔργον ἄνοιτο.
 (18.468-473)

(Speaking thus, he left her there, and he went to his bellows. He turned these to the fire and ordered them to begin working. All twenty bellows blew on the crucibles, blowing forth puffed-up breath in every direction,

⁹⁵ For a discussion of the ancient sources, see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 228-229.

⁹⁶ In responding to Thetis' requests for help for her son, Zeus repeatedly voices his concern that Hera will discover that he is secretly helping Thetis and become enraged, which, in fact, she later does.

for him hurrying to be at this place, then again at another, wherever Hephaistos wished, and the work went forward.)

Hephaistos turns to his bellows and orders them to blow on the crucibles. They blast forth wind of their own accord, and the blasts of air cause the fires to surge, just as the stormy winds which Hera stirs up help Hephaistos fight the power of Xanthos with his fire. Thus, when Hephaistos starts to construct the shield, he uses two bodily fluids: breath and fire. Hephaistos uses his own divine “*μένος*” to give shape to the metallic raw materials of the shield; his fire shapes the metal into a shield just as semen shapes the raw material in the womb to make a child. In fact, he shapes the metals just as he shapes earth (*γαία*) in the *Theogony* and *Works and Days* to make Pandora. Thus, the shield is born out of the corporeal essence of the god.

That the shield has been created out of Hephaistos’ divine “*μένος*” is further apparent when the shield is finished (18.609-617). The corselet which Hephaistos makes for Achilles shines “*φαινότερον πυρός*” (brighter than fire), thus revealing the divine fluid which shapes it, and the entire collection of “*ὅπλα*” is described as “*τεύχεα μαρμαίροντα*” (glittering arms). Most importantly, when Thetis receives the armor from Hephaistos, the poet says that the goddess bears it “*κατ’ Οὐλύμπου νιθόεντος*.” (down from the snows of Olympus). Olympus is of course a mountain, so it does make sense that it would be described as snow-capped. In this instance, I believe the poet is using the image of white snow in the same way he uses it to describe Odysseus’ particularly masculine speech in Book Three. As discussed above and in the Introduction, Antenor describes Odysseus’ powerful speech as “*ἔπεα νιφάδεσσιν ἑοικότα χειμερίησιν*.” (3.224) (words which were like a wintry snowstorm) Odysseus’ speech is so masculine that it actually looks like semen. So too, Hephaistos places the armor in front of Thetis, and she carries it directly from its

birthplace in his house out of his divine semen to her son. The comparison is even more striking when one considers that Hephaistos and Odysseus share several epithets. As discussed earlier, Hephaistos, as craftsman, may well stand for Homer himself; thus, the construction of the shield mirrors the composition of speech. As characters, then, both Odysseus and Hephaistos serve as parallels for the poet, and both reveal their superior masculinity.

Finally, when Hephaistos finishes the armor, it all gleams as if it is filled with the fluid force of fire. In Book Nineteen, when Thetis takes the new armor to her son, it all shines brightly. Homer tells his audience that the gifts are “ἀγλαά.” (19.17) (gleaming). Achilles, who is mourning over the body of Patroklos at this point, is filled with rage, and, as was shown earlier in this chapter, his “μένος” is surging. Like the armor, his eyes gleam with fire; the poet tells his audience, “ἐν δέ οἱ ὄσσε/ δεινὸν ὑπὸ βλεφάρων ὥς εἰ σέλας ἐξεφάανθεν.” (19.16-17) (His eyes shown terribly under his eyebrows as if they were bright with fire.) Later in the book, as the Achaians arm themselves, Achilles stands out in his new, gleaming armor (19.364-380). In this passage, as the Achaians pour out from the ships for the battle, the fiery gleaming of their armor is compared to Zeus’ blasts of snow and wind, which, as has been discussed above, is a manifestation of Zeus’ “μένος.” As Achilles prepares to rejoin the battle, his eyes continue to burn with his internal fire. His teeth clash loudly, like his new armor when Thetis first presents it to her son. The poet says that there is a “καναχῆ” (loud clash) of Achilles’ teeth; the same word is used earlier in the poem (16.105, 16.794) to describe the loud clash of metal helmets. The poet tells his audience that, as he puts on his new armor, Achilles is “μενεαίνων,” (raging with “μένος”) a word which is etymologically directly related to the word “μένος.” When

Achilles takes up his shield, the shield gleams with the brightness of fire just like Achilles himself. Thus, the shield seems radiant with the divine “*μένος*” which Hephaistos has infused into it. It seems alive.⁹⁷

Hephaistos’ Other Products as Feminine Constructions

As discussed earlier, in general, Hephaistos makes many things which rival living bodies. For the most part, it seems that the majority of Hephaistos’ constructions in the epics are objects which are associated with femininity rather than masculinity,⁹⁸ perhaps because he is relatively unsuccessful with real female bodies. In this section, I will discuss the femininity of several of Hephaistos’ other important artistic works in the *Iliad*. As other products which Hephaistos has made in the poem, these help to characterize the shield of Achilles as a feminine body.

The Houses of the Gods

In Book One of the *Iliad*, Homer tells his audience that Hephaistos makes the houses of the gods. As discussed above, houses represent the private sphere in general, which is the traditional space of women. The term “*μυχός*” is even used for both the inner spaces of houses and also the reproductive organs of women. Although Greek marriage

⁹⁷ It is worth pointing out here that both the animated bronze horses and the animated bronze bulls which Hephaistos creates breathe fire, thus revealing that Hephaistos’ divine substance is indeed inside them.

⁹⁸ To be sure, he does make some things which are arguably masculine. Hephaistos of course does make armor, which, as an element of war, may be seen as masculine. He does make an embellished sceptre for Zeus, which, as a symbol of political superiority, is a masculine object. Still, the sceptre is embellished with *daidala*, which can be characterized as feminine.

was patrilocal and a wife inhabited her husband's house, she became intimately connected to the space when she entered it as a bride. The Homeric epics frequently associate houses and inner chambers with women's bodies. Perhaps Hera's private bedchamber, also built by Hephaistos, best illustrates the connection between houses and the female body in the *Iliad*. When Hera sets out to seduce her husband in order to distract his attention from the battle, she goes to this room to bathe and dress:

βῆ δ' ἴμεν ἐς θάλαμον, τὸν οἱ φίλος υἱὸς ἔτευξεν
 Ἥφαιστος, πυκινὰς δὲ θύρας σταθμοῖσιν ἐπήρσε
 κληΐδι κρυπτῇ, τήν δ' οὐ θεὸς ἄλλος ἀνῶγεν· (14.166-167)

(She went to her bedchamber, which her dear dear son Hephaistos built for her, and she closed the close-built doors in the doorposts with a secret lock, which no other god could open.)

Thus, this special room is closely associated with her private attention to her own body. Hera enters the room to prepare for sexual intercourse with her husband. Like her own body, “οὐ θεὸς ἄλλος ἀνῶγεν” (no other god can open it). Later, when Hera seduces Zeus, she suggests that they go to her bedchamber to have sex (14.335-340), conflates the room with her own body. At the end of her speech, she suggests again that they go to the chamber and adds “ἐπεὶ νύ τοι εὔαδεν εὐνή.” (14.340) (since now the bed is pleasing to you). Here, Hera substitutes the marriage bed itself for her body. A house contains its occupants and their possessions, so its association with women's bodies fits into a Greek tendency to see women in general as containers.⁹⁹ In general, Hephaistos makes many containers which are mentioned in the epics, including, for example, mixing bowls,

⁹⁹Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 195: “From earliest times we find that the Greeks were fascinated by the image of a pregnant woman containing an unseen baby inside of her. Equally intriguing was the image of a woman possessing the potential to swell up with pregnancy. The logical comparison of a woman's body to a container is well documented in Greek thought...Hippocrates likened the womb to a cupping jar, and the same word *amnion*, is used both for the membrane which surrounds the fetus and a vessel for collecting the blood of a sacrificial animal. More specific forms of containment are often mentioned. Aristotle speaks of the womb as an oven, and elsewhere we find the female body correlated with a treasure chamber.” Cf. DuBois, *Sowing the Body*, 46-49.

tripods, the golden bowl which Thetis uses for Achilles' bones, and, as will be discussed shortly, golden assistants which look and act like women.¹⁰⁰

The Aegis

In Book Fifteen of the *Iliad*, the poet attributes the aegis to Hephaistos' craftsmanship (15.309-311). This item is particularly helpful in evaluating Achilles' shield because, like the shield, it is a element of armor. Most importantly, it is quite obviously feminine in nature. The aegis is usually represented as a goatskin with snakes around it and a Gorgon-head in the middle, which is sometimes considered to be the severed head of Medusa herself.¹⁰¹ In the *Iliad*, it is often described as having tassels. Snakes are often symbols of chthonic, feminine power in Greek art and literature, and the Gorgons are three female creatures who are sometimes represented as holding snakes or as having snakes for hair. Gorgon-heads abound in Greek art, and they are often used as apotropaic images. For the Greeks, the female gaze is intimately connected to feminine allure and sexuality, which of course is often terrifying at the same time as it is irresistible.¹⁰² Several scholars have argued that Gorgon-heads, which are always staring ahead pointedly, represent the terrifying power of death, and, specifically, female genitalia. In *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, Jean-Pierre Vernant, for example,

¹⁰⁰See DuBois, *Sowing the Body*, 132-136. For an excellent discussion of and catalogue of Greek pottery and other art which is modeled after the female body, see Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 195-298.

¹⁰¹ Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 20-22.

¹⁰² For an overview, see Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 124-126 for a discussion of the female gaze in Greece art and literature. Reeder specifically focuses on the importance of the *anakalypteria*, or the unveiling of a bride to her husband. She also points out, 125, the importance of the female gaze in Homer: "The phenomenon is well attested in Greek literature; in Homer, the same phrase ('the knees are broken') describes both a warrior receiving a lethal blow in battle and a man overcome by the desire which emanates from a woman's eyes."

discusses the image of the Gorgon and argues that, to some degree, it represents the face of female genitalia.¹⁰³ Vernant also links several other female monsters to Gorgons, including the Erinyes.¹⁰⁴ In the *Eumenides*, Aeschylus describes the Erinyes as dark, chthonic creatures who have snakes for hair, and he specifically refers to them as “αἱματορρόφοι”(193) (blood-sucking). Like all female bodies, then, these Gorgon-like creatures drain “μένος” from men.

Traditionally, Medusa is the only mortal Gorgon, and men who look upon her are turned to stone. Both Zeus and Athena carry the aegis, and from the sixth-century B.C.E. forward, Athena is frequently represented in Greek art either wearing the aegis around her shoulders or carrying it over her left arm like a shield.¹⁰⁵ In the *Iliad*, when Athena prepares herself for battle in Book Five, she puts the aegis around her shoulders:

Αὐτὰρ Ἀθηναίη, κόρυνη Διὸς αἰγίοχοιο,
πέπλον μὲν κατέχευεν ἑανὸν πατρὸς ἐπ’ οὔδει,
ποικίλον, ὃν ῥ’ αὐτὴ ποιήσατο καὶ κάμε χερσίν·
ἥ δὲ χιτῶν ἐνδύσα Διὸς νεφεληγερέταο
τεύχεσιν ἐς πόλεμον θωρήσσετο δακρυόεντα.
ἀμφὶ δ’ ἄρ’ ὤμοισιν βάλετ’ αἰγίδα θυσανόεσσαν
δεινὴν, ἣν περὶ μὲν πάντη Φόβος ἐστεφάνωται,
ἐν δ’ Ἐρις, ἐν δ’ Ἀλκή, ἐν δὲ κρυόεσσα Ἰωκή,

¹⁰³Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals*, 113-114: “Despite the evident contrasts between the horror of Gorgo and those Satyrs and Silenoi, who, on a scale of monstrosity, tend more toward the grotesque, there are still significant collusions between them. These two types also have noticeable affinities with the stark and crude representation of the sexual organs—both masculine and feminine—a representation that, just like the monstrous face whose equivalent it is in certain respects, also has the power to provoke both sacred fear and liberating laughter. To clarify the play between the face of Gorgo and the image of the female sexual organ—as between the *phallos* and the figures of Satyrs and Silenoi, whose humorous monstrosity is also disturbing—a word should be said about the strange figure of Baubo, a personage with two aspects: a nocturnal specter, a kind of ogress, related, like Gorgo, Mormo, or Empusa, to infernal Hekate, but also like an old woman whose cheerful jokes and vulgar gestures provoke Demeter’s laughter and thus induce the goddess mourning for her daughter to break her stubborn fast. The correlation between the relevant texts and the statuettes of Priene, which represent a female reduced to a face is also a lower belly, gives an unequivocal meaning to Baubo’s gesture of lifting her dress to expose her intimate parts. What Baubo actually displays to Demeter is her genitals made up as a face, a face in the form of genitals; one might even say, the genitals made into a mask. By its grimace, this genital face becomes a burst of laughter, corresponding to the goddess’ laugh, just as the terror of the one who looks at Gorgo’s face corresponds to the grimace of horror that cuts across it.”

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 124.

¹⁰⁵ *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 17.

ἐν δέ τε Γοργεῖη κεφαλὴ δεινοῖο πελώρου,
δεινὴ τε σμερδνὴ τε, Διὸς τέρας αἰγιόχοιο. (5.733-742)

(But Athena daughter of aegis-bearing Zeus took off her fine robe by the threshold of her father, an elaborately-figured garment, which she herself had made and created with her own hands. Donning the tunic of Zeus the cloud-gatherer, she armed herself with war-gear for miserable battle. Around her shoulders, she threw the aegis, with tassels, terrible, around which Fear hangs everywhere like a garland. Strife is on it, and Battle-Strength, and chilling Onslaught. The head of a Gorgon, a terrible thing of impressive size, both terrible and horrific, portent of aegis-bearing Zeus.)

The aegis is “δεινὴ” (terrible), and it is attended by Fear, Strife, Bodily Strength, and Battle-Pursuit—all elements of war in this passage. The aegis strikes fear in the hearts of men who encounter it. In fact, that the aegis is called “δεινὴ” links it to the face of Helen herself, whose terrifyingly divine beauty also stops men in their tracks. In Book Three, for example, the old men who watch the battle from the walls of Troy comment on Helen’s appearance as she approaches them:

οὐ νέμεσις Τρῶας καὶ ἑκκνήμιδας Ἀχαιοὺς
τοιγῇδ’ ἀμφὶ γυναικὶ πολὺν χρόνον ἄλγεα πάσχειν·
αἰνῶς ἀθανάτησι θεῆς εἰς ὧπα ἔοικεν. (3.156-158)

(There is no blame for the Trojans and strong-greaved Achaians if they suffer for a long time for the sake of this woman; her face is terribly like the face of a goddess.)

The word “αἰνῶς” here carries the same sense as “δεινὴ,” and it signifies that Helen is so beautiful that she terrifies those who encounter her while at the same time attracting them.

That Achilles’ shield is similar to the aegis is seen in representations of the Achilles’ shield in Greek art. Often the shield does not resemble the Homeric description at all, but, rather, like Agamemnon’s shield, features a Gorgon-head in the middle. In Euripides’ *Elektra*, the chorus describes Achilles’ new armor, and, in that description, the shield features a Gorgon-head in addition to the celestial elements which appear on the

shield in the *Iliad*. Clearly, Euripides has the Homeric ekphrasis in mind, and he associates the shield with a Gorgon. Like the aegis, Achilles' shield features “*Ἐρις*,” “*Κυδοιμὸς*,” and “*Κῆρ*” (18.535) (Strife, Confusion, and Death) just as the aegis features personifications of “*Φόβος*,” “*Ἐρις*,” “*Ἀλκή*,” and “*Ἰωκή*,” (Fear, Strife, Defense, and Flight) all also elements of battle. When warriors encounter the aegis, they become terrified and lose their manly courage. For example, in Book Fifteen, Apollo carries the aegis into battle:

ὄφρα μὲν αἰγίδα χερσὶν ἔχ' ἀτρέμα Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,
τόφρα μάλ' ἀμφοτέρων βέλε ἤπτετο, πίπτε δὲ λαός.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ κατ' ἐνώπα ἰδὼν Δαναῶν ταχυπώλων
σεῖσ', ἐπὶ δ' αὐτὸς αὔσε μάλα μέγα, τοῖσι δὲ θυμὸν
ἐν στήθεσσιν ἔθελξε, λάθοντο δὲ Δούριδος Ἀλκῆς.
οἱ δ' ὥς τ' ἡὲ βοῶν ἀγέλην ἢ πῶϋ μέγ' οἴων
θῆρε δύω κλονέωσι μελαίνης νυκτὸς ἀμολγῶ,
ἐλθόντ' ἐξαπίνης σημάντορος οὐ παρεόντος,
ὥς ἐφόβηθεν Ἀχαιοὶ ἀνάλκιδες· ἐν γὰρ Ἀπόλλων
ἦκε φόβον, Τρωσὶν δὲ καὶ Ἑκτορι κῦδος ὄπαζεν. (15.318-327)

(As long as Phoibos Apollo held in his hands the aegis, without motion, so long the missiles of both sides took men, and people fell. But when looking into the eyes of the Danaans with their swift horses, he shook the aegis, and himself sounded a great cry, it beguiled the heart in their breast, and they forgot their impetuous battle-fury. And they, as when two wild animals in the depth of black night drive into confusion a herd of cattle or a great flock of sheep, coming upon them suddenly with the herdsman not being present, so the Achaians, in cowardice, fled in fear. For Apollo drove fear upon them and bestowed glory upon the Trojans and Hektor.)

Apollo easily charges through the Achaian ranks with the aegis. The poet says that it beguiles (*ἐθέλξε*) men who encounter it, then they lose their courageous spirit. The aegis causes great confusion, and it strikes fear into the hearts of the Achaians. Thus, the reaction of men to the aegis is similar to the reaction of Zeus to Hera in Book Fourteen, when she beguiles his wits with her dazzling appearance and erotic appeal. It is also similar to the reaction of the Myrmidons to Achilles' shield. In Book Nineteen, when

Thetis brings Achilles' new arms to her son, she sets down the arms with a great crash. The aegis is carried and rattled, and it terrifies by means of both appearance and sound. Achilles' new armor terrifies in the same way, and the Myrmidons are struck with fear and trembling when Thetis sets it down (19.12-20). None of the men will look directly at the armor except for Achilles himself, who delights (*τέρπετο*) in the intricacies (*δαίδαλα*) of the elaboration.¹⁰⁶

When the Trojans see Achilles in his new armor, they react similarly to men who encounter the aegis. In Book Twenty, Homer describes the reaction of the Trojans:

*Τρῶας δὲ τρόμος αἰνὸς ὑπήλυθε γυῖα ἕκαστον,
δειδιότας, ὅθ' ὀρῶντο ποδώκεα Πηλεΐωνα
τεύχεσι λαμπόμενον, βροτολοιγῶ ἴσον Ἄρηϊ. (20.44-46)*

(But a terrible trembling in the knees came upon each of the Trojans, when they looked upon swift-footed Achilles gleaming in his new armor, like man-killing Ares.)

Later in the battle, when Hektor stands before Achilles, he reacts in the same way:

*Ὦς ὄρμαινε μένων, ὃ δέ οἱ σχεδὸν ἦλθεν Ἀχιλλεὺς
ἴσος Ἐνυαλίῳ, κορυθαῖκι πτολεμιστῇ,
σείων Πηλιάδα μείην κατὰ δεξιὸν ὤμον
δεινὴν· ἀμφὶ δὲ χαλκὸς ἐλάμπετο εἵκελος αὐγῇ
ἢ πυρὸς αἰθόμενου ἢ ἡελίου ἀνιόντος.
Ἐκτορα δ', ὡς ἐνόησεν, ἔλε τρόμος· οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔτ' ἔτλη
αὖθι μένειν, ὀπίσω δὲ πύλας λίπε, βῆ δὲ φοβηθεῖς.
Πηλεΐδης δ' ἐπόρουσε ποσὶ κραιπνοῖσι πεποιθώς. (22.131-138)*

¹⁰⁶ Thus, Achilles' reaction to the scenes on the armor is similar to the reaction of an audience to a talented singer. The connection between the reaction of various characters within the poem to the images on the shield and the reaction of an audience to an oral poem will be made later in this chapter. Stephen Scully also argues for a connection between the aegis and Achilles' shield, "Reading the Shield of Achilles: Terror, Anger, Delight," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 101 (2003), 32: "Narrative description of the shield also suggests terror. Far from characterizing Achilles' shield as joyful, the narrator describes it as 'terrible and awful to behold' (*δεινός...σμερδαλέος*, 20.259-260)...*Δεινός* and *σμερδαλέος* are far from formulaic terms for shields in the poem. Only one other object in the *Iliad* is similarly terrifying and awful to behold: the severed head of the Gorgon as it appears on Athene's aegis (5.742). The figures of Terror, Strife, Strength, and Onslaught (Phobos, Eris, Alke, Ioke) surround the Gorgon's head on the goddess' protective goatskin (5.738-742). Elsewhere in the poem, the aegis itself is simply *σμερδαλή* (21.400-401). Hephaistos' shield is of a similar nature, a grim object striking fear in the beholder." Scully notes, 33, that one representation of Achilles' shield in Greek art is actually an image of Athena's aegis without the Gorgon. Scully, 35, also notes the crash of the armor as it hits the ground in Book Nineteen.

(Standing his ground, he pondered, but Achilles came close, in the likeness of Enyalios, the shining-helmed warrior, shaking the terrible Pelian ash-spear from above his right shoulder. The bronze was shining like the brilliance either of burning fire or the rising sun. But tremors took hold of Hektor, as he saw him. No longer did he hold his ground there, but left the gates behind and ran, frightened into fleeing. Peleus' son followed him, trusting in his swift feet.)

Even Hektor loses his masculine courage when he encounters Achilles' new armor, which shines brightly with the power of fiery “*μένος*” like Achilles himself. The feminine nature of the armor drains “*μένος*” away from men at the same time as it burns with the essence of Hephaistos.

The Other Objects in Book Eighteen Which Help Characterize the Shield

The feminine nature of the shield is also made apparent by the collection of other objects which Hephaistos has made which are described specifically in Book Eighteen. The “*δαίδαλα πολλά*” which he mentions in his description of his stay with Thetis have already been discussed as feminine objects which are suggestive of feminine sexuality. In his lead-in to the ekphrasis, the poet describes Hephaistos' house, animated tripods and chains which he is currently working on, and his golden assistants. While these other creations create a magical, entertaining picture of Hephaistos' divine workshop, because they are themselves suggestive of femininity, the things which Homer describes in his prelude to the ekphrasis especially serve to characterize the shield as a feminine body. First, the poet describes Hephaistos' house, which the craftsman-god has made out of bronze. Of course, that the god makes his own house is not unexpected, but it is notable that this is the most detailed description of the divine house. As Edwards notes, it is

similar to the palace of Alkinoos in the *Odyssey*, which is quite spectacular.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps Hephaistos makes up for his lack of success romantically by creating especially beautiful feminine space for himself just as he creates perfect female handmaidens.

The golden assistants (*ἀμφίπολοι*) who attend the craftsman-god are perhaps the most striking of Hephaistos' other artistic products in the prelude to the ekphrasis about the shield. Homer embeds his description of them between the exchange between Charis and Hephaistos and the subsequent exchange between Thetis and Hephaistos:

ὑπὸ δ' ἀμφίπολοι ῥῶοντο ἄνακτι
 χρύσειαι, ζῶῃσι νεήγισιν εἰοικυῖαι.
 τῆς ἐν μὲν νόος ἐστὶ μετὰ φρεσίν, ἐν δὲ καὶ αὐδὴ
 καὶ σθένος, ἀθανάτων δὲ θεῶν ἄπο ἔργα ἴσασιν.
 αἱ μὲν ὕπαιθα ἀνακτος ἐποίπνουν· (18.417-421)

(And golden handmaidens rushed nimbly in support of their lord, like living young women. There is intelligence in them, in their hearts, and they have strength and voice, and they know work from the immortal gods. These were busily serving in support of their master.)

These assistants are also constructed by Hephaistos out of metal, and they run about, “ζῶῃσι νεήγισιν εἰοικυῖαι.” (18.418) (like living young women). The connection between the shield and the assistants is further supported by the statement within the ekphrasis that the men who are depicted upon the shield fighting around their city do so, “ὥς τε ζῶοι βροτοὶ.” (18.539) (like living mortals). Like Hephaistos' golden helpers, the figures which he constructs on the shield are lifelike: they move about, exhibit strength and even bleed when wounded. Though they are made out of gold, the golden assistants actually look like real bodies, and they even have intelligence, strength, and voice.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 190: “The walls of Alkinoos' palace are also of bronze (*Od.* 7.86); probably the poet has in mind a bronze facing or ornament.” The description calls to mind the underground bronze chamber which Danae is imprisoned in, for example, and may possibly indicate a Mycenaean tholos tomb.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Becker, *The Shield of Achilles*, 120, on the figures in the city at war: “...there are also the lively characteristics of motion (*sthenos*), motivation and intention (*noos*), and sound (*audê*).”

It is particularly striking that Hephaistos would choose to make female assistants rather than male assistants. After all, work in a smithy is physically demanding. In the *Aeneid*, by contrast, Vulcan is assisted by the powerful Cyclopes. First, the assistants may stand for the feminine element of Hephaistos' procreative craft; in fact, the construction which Homer uses in line 417 in describing the handmaidens—*ὑπὸ* plus a dative object—signifies subordination and is frequently used in the Homeric epics specifically to describe the subordination of women to men for the purpose of conception and the bearing of children.¹⁰⁹ Their presence makes Hephaistos appear more feminine in general. In general, as mentioned above, it is usually the master of the house who greets guests; the master's wife appears later from the inner rooms, often accompanied by servants. Of course, Hephaistos is working when Thetis arrives, but the fact that his wife greets the guest first casts him in a feminine role. At the very least, the arrangement is unusual.¹¹⁰ The handmaidens move near Thetis with Hephaistos because they highlight the sexual union of masculine and feminine energies which will be necessary for his craft. As the poet tells his audience, the assistants “ἀθανάτων δὲ θεῶν ἅπο ἔργα ἴσασιν.” (420) (know work from the immortal gods) While the term *ἔργα* (deeds, works, things accomplished) can indicate everything from simple deeds to the tilling of land to woven crafts, the term is not infrequently used for sexual intercourse itself. Most importantly, however, Hephaistos' golden assistants not only help elucidate the process of the shield's

¹⁰⁹ Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect*, 398. Cunliffe cites *Iliad* 5.313, 2.714, and 8.469 and also *Odyssey* 11.299 and 22.445 as examples of this construction.

¹¹⁰ Cf. William G. Thalmann, “Female Slaves in the *Odyssey*,” in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture* eds. Sheila Murnaghan and Sandra R. Joshel (New York: Routledge, 1998), 26: “Everywhere else in Homer, not the master but the *mistress* of the house, when she appears before visitors, is attended by a pair of maid-servants in an attitude that signifies female chastity (Nagler 1974, 65-86). When similar figures accompany a male god, the incongruity makes their gender stand out. They are a utopian projection of male wishes about women, as we can appreciate by contrasting the too-independent Pandora, who brings utopian conditions to an end by releasing miseries into the world from the jar in which they had been confined.”

actual construction, but, by their own explicitly female form and proximity to the shield, they also help characterize the finished shield as a body which is specifically feminine. In fact, the “νόος,” “αὐδὴ,” and “σθένος” which the golden handmaids exhibit links them directly to the “δαίδαλα” on the shield’s surface, which also exhibit intelligence, sound, and strength. The golden handmaids are indeed like two life-sized “δαίδαλα.”

When Thetis first approaches the house of Hephaistos to ask him to make armor for her son, Hephaistos is in the process of making twenty tripods for use in his house. Homer tells his audience that Hephaistos is sweating as he makes the tripods; thus, he is emitting another bodily fluid as he works. The tripods have golden “κύκλα” (375) (circles), usually translated as “wheels,” underneath them to allow them to travel on their own to the gatherings of the gods and back again to Hephaistos’ house. The tripods, then, like the golden assistants, are lifelike in that they can move on their own. Homer describes the tripods as “αὐτόματοι” (18.376) (acting of their own will, self-moving). In his commentary on the *Iliad*, Mark W. Edwards says that the word was common in archaic Greek and argues that it is derived from “αὐτός” (self-) and the root found in “*me-ma-men*” on the Linear B tablets, which is the early Greek form of “μένος.”¹¹¹ Thus, the tripods move because they are infused with Hephaistos’ divine “μένος.” Like the golden assistants, they too are corporeal. Homer tells his audience:

οἱ δ’ ἤτοι τόσσον μὲν ἔχον τέλος, οὔατα δ’ οὔ πω
 δαιδάλεα προσέκειτο· τά ῥ’ ἤρτυε· κόπτε δὲ δεσμούς. (18.378-
 379)

(These were almost finished, but the ear-handles, elaborated with *daidala*, were not yet attached. He was working on these, and he was hammering out chains.)

¹¹¹ Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 190.

The “οὔατα” (handles) of the tripods, then, are also “δαιδάλεα,” like the jewelry which Hephaistos makes for Thetis and Eurynome and the shield itself. Tripods are cauldrons with three feet, and they are basically containers. In the *Iliad*, they are frequently given as prizes. For example, in preparing the funeral games for Patroklos in Book Twenty-Three (23.262-270), Achilles announces the prizes he will offer for the winners. A prize tripod is described as “δυωκαιεικοσίμετρον” (holding twenty-two measures); it is a container as well as a prize. The list of prizes Achilles offers, in fact, includes not only this tripod but an untamed mare who is fertile, another smaller tripod which has not yet been used, two talents of gold and a handled jar. Thus, the prizes include three containers and a female horse which is fertile, all of which are feminine. Most importantly, along with the first tripod, the winner will receive a woman who is skilled in weaving. That the tripods which Hephaistos is making are anthropomorphic is seen also in Homer’s description of them as having “οὔατα” (handles). The word is actually a word for “ears” in Greek; thus, even the handles of the tripods are described with bodily terms. Like the shield, these tripods are also “θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι” (18.377) (a wonder to behold).

Moreover, other tripods in the epics are also described in anthropomorphic terms. For example, before the ekphrasis about Achilles’ shield in Book Eighteen, when Achilles begins to prepare the body of Patroklos, Achilles sets a tripod over fire in order to boil water (18.343-348). Again, the tripod is clearly a container here. More significant, however, is the language which the poet uses to describe the preparation of the cauldron. The poet refers to the hollow of the tripod—the part which contains the water and in which the water boils—as a “γάστηρ.” The word “γάστηρ” usually indicates “belly” in Greek and is used in this capacity many times in both epics—in battle scenes

where a warrior is wounded in his belly and to indicate hunger in general. Like other Greek words for “belly,” however, the word can also signify “womb.”¹¹² It is used in this capacity in Book Six of the *Iliad* (6.58). In that passage, “γάστηρ” clearly indicates a mother’s “womb.” In Book Twenty-Four, the adjective “ὁμογάστριος” (24.47) (born of the same womb) is used to describe a brother. The word “γάστηρ” within this adjective of course indicates the uterus.

The poet finishes his description of the tripods with the following compound sentence: “τά ῥ’ ἤρτυε, κόπτε δὲ δεσμούς” (18.379) (He was working on these, and he was hammering out chains.) Tripods do not usually have chains adorning them, but translators frequently assume that the chains are necessarily connected to the tripods. They either suggest that the chains will be used to connect the ear-handles to the cauldron or that the word actually means “rivets.” It is possible that the mechanics of the wheels under Hephaistos’ tripods require chains, and it is also possible that Hephaistos is making chains to secure the tripods, since they can move about on their own. The second part of the sentence may be read independently from the first part, however. In that case, the poet tells us that Hephaistos was forging the tripods and that he hammered out chains as a separate endeavor.¹¹³ I believe that this is the correct reading for the sentence. The exact language is echoed in Demodokos’ song about the affair between Aphrodite and

¹¹² For a general discussion of how Indo-European languages view the womb, see Carl Darling Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages: A Contribution to the History of Ideas* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), 255. “The majority of the words for ‘womb’ are related to those for ‘belly’ and so have been discussed in 4.46. Of the others, the commonest source is ‘mother’, while some are words for ‘body’ or ‘lap’ used in a specialized sense, or of various other sources...Grk. ὑστέρα (the most usual technical term, Hipp., Aristot., etc.; cf. also ὕστρος· γαστήρ Hesych.), apparently: ὕστρος ‘latter, behind’, Skt. utaara-‘upper’, ud ‘upwards’, so orig. ‘back part’ or ‘upper part’? Or perh. ultimately: Skt. udara- ‘belly’, etc. (4.46) with analogical re-formation...”

¹¹³ Lattimore, for example, translates the word as “chains” rather than “rivets.” *The Iliad of Homer* trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 385.

Ares in Book Eight of the *Odyssey*.¹¹⁴ The poet includes the chains here to emphasize that Hephaistos not only tends to make things that are feminine, but he also frequently makes things that are binding—in other words, traps. Hephaistos makes the super-fine chains which trap Aphrodite and Ares in the *Odyssey*, and he also makes a special throne which traps Hera as soon as she sits on it, the fetters which bind Prometheus to the rock as punishment for giving fire to mankind, and, famously, Pandora herself, who serves as the ultimate snare for men. In Book Fifteen of the *Iliad*, when Zeus realizes that Hera has distracted him from the battle by seducing him, he threatens her and reminds her of when he hung her by golden chains (15.14-24). Apollodorus (1.3.5) writes that it is Hephaistos who rescues Hera from these bounds and, for this reason, Zeus threw him off Mount Olympos and thus caused his lameness. It is plausible that, as the craftsman of the gods, Hephaistos has made the chains for Zeus here, especially since Zeus specifically says that he hung anvils off of Hera's legs. Surely anvils are suggestive of Hephaistos' workshop. Furthermore, Hephaistos often is the only god who can undo his own handiwork; thus, since he released Hera, it is likely that he created the trap in the first place for Zeus.

All of these artistic objects serve to introduce Hephaistos' construction of the shield. In Greek literature and art, women's bodies contain, cover, envelope, and surround; they house and protect but also trap and, potentially, emasculate. They are dangerous but irresistible, a dilemma which Hesiod seems to capture in the *Theogony* when he says that men who try to avoid the damaging power of women by avoiding marriage also suffer by having no children. Hephaistos does not enjoy good luck with women, so he makes substitutes for them in the form of the aegis, jewelry, containers,

¹¹⁴ Cf. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 191. Demodokos' song about Ares and Aphrodite in Book Eight of the *Odyssey* is connected to the one ekphrasis in that poem, which describes Odysseus' pin.

traps and golden statues, and at times he even endows them with life. The feminine nature of Hephaistos' other creations works to characterize the shield—and thus the ekphrasis—as a feminine body.

Achilles' Shield as Feminine Body

That the shield itself is feminine is also seen in several other of its characteristics. First of all, in general a shield functions as a container of sorts; it envelopes, covers, and protects its bodily contents. A common epithet in the epics for shields is “ἀμφιβρότος” which means “man-enclosing, man-enveloping.” When Achilles and Hektor fight in Book Twenty-Two, Homer describes the encompassing nature of the shield:

ὥς Ἴκτωρ οἶμῃσε τινάσσων φάσγανον ὄξυ.
 ὀρμήθῃ δ' Ἀχιλεὺς, μένεος δ' ἐμπλήσατο θυμὸν
 ἀγρίου, ππόσθεν δὲ σάκος στέροιο κάλυψε
 καλὸν δαιδαλεον, κόρυδι δ' ἐπένευε φαεινῇ
 τετραφάλῳ. (22.311-315)

(So Hektor charged in, brandishing his sharp sword. Achilles rushed, and he filled his heart with savage *menos*. Before him the shield, beautifully elaborately with *daidala*, covered up his chest, and he nodded with his shining helmet, four-horned.)

Hektor's shield, which is also made by Hephaistos and also features “δαῖδαλα” like Achilles' shield, covers him up and thus serves to contain his body. Furthermore, in battle, warriors compete to pierce each other's shields with their thrusting spears. For example, when Menelaos fights with Paris in Book Three (3.344-360), the poet presents the battle using sexual imagery. Menelaos penetrates Paris' shield with his thrusting spear, and the image is suggestive of sexual domination. It is at the beginning of this book that Paris shrinks back into the Trojan ranks in terror as soon as he sees Menelaos descending from his chariot to fight him in the duel. His brother Hektor mocks him,

calling him “εἶδος ἄριστε, γυναιμανές, ἡπεροπευτά.” (3.39) (excellent in beauty, woman-crazed, beguiler) Hektor is saying that Paris is not a warrior, and he suggests that Paris is effeminate and soft, especially when he calls him “γυναιμανές.” As discussed in the Introduction, in general masculinity suggests control over one’s impulses, self-mastery, moderation, and Hektor here suggests that erotic longing has dominated Paris and drained him of manly control. Hektor, of course, also mocks him later in the book when he finds Paris enjoyed himself at home with Helen as the other Trojans fight for his sake around the city. When Menelaos penetrates Paris’ shield with his spear, he appears more masculine, and the earlier characterization of Paris helps to establish Menelaos’ sexual dominance over Paris. K.J. Dover, in *Greek Homosexuality*, offers several Greek vases on which swords and spears are presented as penises,¹¹⁵ and, in *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*, Eva Keuls also focuses on the phallic presentation of both weapons and maenads’ *thyrsoi*.¹¹⁶ Aristophanes, for example, frequently exploits the phallic nature of swords and spears.¹¹⁷ In fact, passages in the *Iliad* itself may reveal a conflation of weapon and penis. For example, at 9.213, Aias, who is smiling, “ἦϊε μακρὰ βιβάζ, κραδάων δολιχόσκιον ἔγχος.” (Walked along, taking huge strides, brandishing his spear with the huge shaft.) Suetonius writes that Vespasian enjoyed joking about this particular passage;¹¹⁸ surely it is possible that Homer intended the double entendre. A later passage in Book Twenty-Two seems to corroborate the sexual implications of weapons and armor. When Hektor contemplates facing Achilles, he talks to himself. At one point he says:

¹¹⁵ Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 133-134.

¹¹⁶ Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus*, 369-372.

¹¹⁷ See, for example, *Lysistrata* 632 (ξίφος) and 985 (δόρυ). Cited in Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, 19-22. The use of weapons as metaphors for male genitalia is common in Latin as well.

¹¹⁸ Cited *ibid.*, 19. (Suetonius, *Vesp.* 23.1)

μή μιν ἐγὼ μὲν ἴκωμαι ἰών, ὁ δέ μ' οὐκ ἐλεήσει
οὐδέ τί μ' αἰδέσεται, κτενέει δέ με γυμνὸν ἐόντα
αὕτως ὥς τε γυναῖκα, ἐπεὶ κ' ἀπὸ τεύχεα δύω. (22.123-125)

(I might go up to him, but he might not pity me nor esteem me, but kill me, naked, thus as if I were a woman, once I stripped my armor from me.)

Hektor clearly says that, should he be defeated and stripped by Achilles, he would be like a woman, emasculated. When shields are featured on Greek vases and in art, they most often are carried in the left hand.¹¹⁹ The Greek word “ἡ ἀριστερός” signifies the left hand, and in literature it is associated with ominousness and evil; omens in the sky, for example, often appear on the left-hand side of one’s vision. If later Athenian eating habits are reliable, the left hand is also associated with dirt and darkness, and, therefore, with the feminine.¹²⁰ When one takes into account the Greek tendency to anthropomorphize things like vases and chests, it seems reasonable to assume that in general shields would be considered feminine while swords and spears would be masculine.

It is worth mentioning here that, Agamemnon’s shield in the *Iliad* is described as having an “ὀμφαλός.”¹²¹ The word is used to describe the embellishment on shields several times in the poem, and, in these instances, it is usually translated as “boss.” The primary meaning of the word is “navel,” however. The use of word to indicate the center

¹¹⁹ For examples of shields being carried in the left hand, see for instance, the Warriors’ Vase from Mycenae, the François Vase, the inlaid daggers from the shaft graves, the north frieze on the Siphnian Treasury at Delphi. For photographs and discussion of Greek sculpture and vases which feature shields, see, for example, Jean Charbonneaux, Roland Martin, and François Villard, *Archaic Greek Art (620-480 B.C.)* eds. André Malraux and André Parrot trans. James Emmons and Robert Allen (New York: Georgia Braziller, 1971); Roland Hampe and Erika Simon, *The Birth of Greek Art: From the Mycenaeans to the Archaic Period* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); and J.D. Beazley, *The Development of Attic Black Figure* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1986).

¹²⁰ See, for example, James Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes: The Consuming Passions of Classical Athens* (London: Fontana Press, 1997), 22-23. Davidson argues that the left hand was used for bread while the right hand was used to partake of public dishes (opson/meat), and he suggests that the left hand was considered unclean because of its use in the bathroom.

¹²¹ Cf. Tyrtaios 12.25, where the shield is called “ὀμφαλοέσση.”

ornament of a shield again points to the anthropomorphic tendencies of the Greeks. The “ὀμφαλός” of the earth, for example, was thought to be located at Delphi. Thus, that the shield of Agamemnon is described as having a navel shows that it is described in bodily terms. Agamemnon’s shield is also called “ἀμφιβρότη” (man-enclosing, man-encompassing). A fragment attributed to Tyrtaios seems helpful here:

μηρούς τε κνήμας τε κάτω καὶ στέρνα καὶ ὤμους
 ἀσπίδος εὐρείης γαστρὶ καλυψάμενος.
 δεξιτερῇ δ’ ἐν χειρὶ τινασσέτω ὄβριμον ἔγχος,
 κινείτω δὲ λόφον δεινὸν ὑπὲρ καφαλῆς.¹²²

(Covering up the thighs and the lower legs downward and the chest and the shoulders in the belly of the wide shield, in the right hand I shake the heavy spear, and I vibrate the terrible crest over the head.)

In this fragment, the warrior is described as “καλυψάμενος,” (covering up) and the part of the shield which covers up the body parts of the warrior thus listed is called a “γαστήρ.” (belly) The poet is obviously referring to the hollow of the shield, but, again, the shield in the verse by Tyrtaios is explicitly described using bodily terms. In Greek, “γαστήρ” and other words for gut or belly also frequently signify “uterus.”¹²³ Also, Tyrtaios explicitly says that the warrior’s right hand holds the spear. Thus, like the tripods in the Homeric poems discussed above which are described as having bellies or wombs, the Tyrtaian shield is described in explicitly bodily terms.

Second, perhaps the most easily recognizable feminine aspect of the shield is that, although Hephaistos constructs it out of various metals, it is presented as a woven product. In fact, as something which echoes the story of the larger poem in images rather

¹²²Tyrtaios, Fragment 11 Bergk., vv.23 *et seq.* Cited in Martin P. Nilsson, *Homer and Mycenae* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1968), 150.

¹²³ A more extensive discussion of the connection between the belly and the uterus follows in Chapter Three, but it is worth noting here that the same connection between the belly and the uterus is found in Latin words such as “venter” and “aluus.” See Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, 100-101.

than words, as discussed earlier, it is remarkably similar to Helen's tapestry in Book Three. The images on the shield echo the larger action of the verbal epic in the same way Helen's images capture the action of the epic in cloth. When Homer describes the last scene on the shield, he says:

*Ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυήεις,
τῷ ἴκελον οἶόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσῷ εὐρείῃ
Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ.* (18.590-592)

(The very famous lame one elaborated a dance floor, like the one which Daidalos once fashioned for lovely-haired Ariadne at Knossos.)

Homer makes it clear that Hephaistos' creation is not original. Just as Homer represents the action of the poem with words, and just like Helen represents the action in woven figures, then, Hephaistos represents the type of dance floor constructed by Daidalos on the shield. Homer uses the verb “ποικίλλειν” at 590 to describe Hephaistos' action in embellishing the shield: “Ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυήεις...” (And there the very famous lame one elaborated a dance floor...) This is the only occurrence of this verb in the epics, although, as discussed above, the adjective “ποικίλος” and the noun “ποίκιλμα” (embroidered work, variegated ornamentation in wool) are used with some frequency in both poems. To some degree, “ποικίλος” and “δαιδάλεος” are interchangeable. The adjective “ποικίλος” is used at times in the poem to describe things which are not woven such as Agamemnon's chariot in Book Four, for example, but in general it is suggestive of many-colored embellishments on woven products. The verb is most frequently used to mean “to embellish with embroidery,” and, although it is at times used metaphorically, it usually signifies the act of creating images in cloth. Interestingly, it can indicate the act of creating intricate language as well, as in Pindar's *Pythian 9*: βαῖα δ' ἐν μακροῖσι ποικίλλειν ἀκοὰ σοφοῖς (77-78) (But to embroider a short account from long

stories is for wise men). At the very beginning of the ekphrasis, the poet uses “*δαιδάλλειν*,” and elsewhere in the ekphrasis, the poet uses “*τεύχειν*,” (to construct) “*τιθέναι*,” (to place) and “*ποιεῖν*.” (to make) Thus, his use of “*ποικίλλειν*” here stands out; the verb serves to introduce the specific scene as something which resembles a woven product. Of course, as mentioned above, the poet says that the golden handmaidens who accompany Hephaistos when he greets Thetis know “*ἔργα*” (woven crafts), thereby signifying that knowledge of weaving is important for the construction of the shield.

Several of the individual scenes on the shield themselves are suggestive of weaving. For example, Ares and Athena appear in the scene which describes the city at war. Their clothing is specifically mentioned (*χρύσεια δὲ εἴματα ἔσθην*) (516) (and they wore golden clothing), and the poet reminds his audience that it is gold. The figure of Death (*Κήρ*) in the same scene has a garment around her shoulders (*εἶμα δ' ἔχ' ἀμφ' ὤμοισι*). The whole image of plowmen also seems to suggest weaving (18.540-549). In this scene on the shield, the men plow the fields and turn back again to then move in the opposite direction. The men, then, mimic the action of a woman moving her shuttle through the warp threads when weaving. The overall picture which Hephaistos (and Homer) creates resembles a loom.¹²⁴ In the last scene on the shield, Hephaistos makes a dancing floor, with young men and women dancing on it. The dance is a courtship

¹²⁴ In the scene where young men and women pick grapes in a vineyard, the young women carry the fruit in “*πλεκτοῖς ἐν ταλάροισι*” (18.568) (in woven baskets). In the same scene, a youth plays a lyre while the young people work; Homer says that he plays “*λίνον δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ᾄδειε...*” (18.570) (And he sang a beautiful Linos-song...) Most people take “*λίνον*” in this passage to mean the song of Linos, a mythical figure who, according to Pausanias, was killed by Apollo for singing as well as the god. There is another version of Linos' death which involves him dying after changing the strings on Apollo's lyre from linen to sheep-gut. The song of Linos is a harvesting song of some kind. The word “*λίνος*” is closely related to the Greek word “*λίνον*” (thread, flax, linen). In the *Iliad*, “*λίνον*” is also used for the thread which the Fates spin and cut (20.128, 24.210). Perhaps the term should mean “thread” here, especially when one considers the last dancing scene and the role of the thread in the myth about the Labyrinth and Theseus. In any case, the term certainly is suggestive of thread and weaving.

dance, and the scene is sexually charged, as will be discussed further in the next section. The poet specifically introduces the scene by indicating that Hephaistos elaborates (ποιίκιλλε) the image, thus suggesting that the scene itself is woven. Within the scene, however, there is also imagery which suggests weaving. The poet calls special attention to clothing in this scene. The maidens are wearing linen veils, and the young men wear finely spun tunics which glisten with olive oil. Moreover, the dance itself resembles weaving. The dancers dance in a circle, but at times run towards each other in crossing rows. The young men form the warp threads, and the maidens form the weft threads. Because Homer's audience experiences the dance from a bird's eye perspective, the courtship dance seems like a woven garment itself, and the dancing floor is like a loom. The poet tells his audience that onlookers within the scene take pleasure (τερπόμενοι) in watching the desire-inducing dance (ίμερόεντα χορόν). Thus, like all finely woven products, the dance is sexually alluring for its audience, and it affords the audience the same kind of pleasure (τέρψις) as the epic song itself.

The dancers form rows in which they then run, crossing each other as they move, with “ἐπισταμένοισι πόδεσσι” (with knowing feet). In using the participle “ἐπισταμένοισι,” Homer links the dancers to talented individuals in general, including those who are skilled in battle (2.611), those who speak well publicly (14.92), those who understand good manners (7.317, 24.623), those who know how to sing poetry (*Odyssey* 11.368), and, most importantly, those who know how to build things and create crafts. For example, as discussed previously, at 5.60 the poet describes the craftsman Phereklos, who has been instructed by Athena herself:

*Μηριόνης δὲ Φέρεκλον ἐνήσατο, τέκτονος υἱὸν
Ἀρμονίδεω, ὅς χειρσὶν ἐπίστατο δαίδαλα πάντα*

τεύχειν· ἔξοχα γάρ μιν ἐφίλατο Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη· (5.59-61)

(Meriones killed Phereklos, son of Harmonides the craftsmen, who knew how to make all *daidala* with his hands. For Pallas Athena especially loved him.)

As discussed above, in the funeral games for Patroklos in Book Twenty-Three, Achilles sets out as prizes not only such valuable items as tripods, cauldrons, and horses but also women who know how to weave. At 23.705, Homer uses the phrase “πολλὰ δ’ ἐπίστατο ἔργα” (knowledgable in many woven works) to describe the women Achilles offers as a prize for the third competition. Since the scene begins with a reference to Daidalos himself, it is likely that the poet is using the dancers to elucidate Daidalos and *δαιδάλα*.

Furthermore, the ekphrasis, though it describes scenes wrought in various metals—gold, silver, and even black—involves colors which signify fine woven work in epic: gold, white, and reddish-purple. Gold appears several times, including at 18.507, 18.517, 18.549, 18.562, 18.574, 18.577, and 18.598. Since the shield is wrought of several metals, one expects to picture gold as a color, but the poet also describes things which are white and things which are purple. For example, at 18.528-529, the poet describes “πώεα καλὰ/ἀργεννέων οἴων” (flocks of beautiful silvery-white sheep). At 18.560, the poet describes “λεύκ’ ἄλφιτα πολλά” (much white barley). At 18.588, the poet again describes white sheep: “οἴων ἀργεννάων” (silvery-white sheepflocks). Reddish-purple images appear at 18.537, 18.548, 18.562, and 18.583. At 18.537, Homer tells his audience that the figure of Death’s garment is “δαφροινεὸν αἷματι φωτῶν” (red with the blood of mortal men). At 18.548, as the earth is ploughed by agricultural workers, it “μελαίνειτ’ ὀπισθεν.” (turns dark behind them) The poet only tells his audience that the earth darkens here, but other dark images on the shield involve reddish-purple things like

blood and grapes, so the color of the earth may be associated with those images. Also, wine is involved in this particular scene. At 18.562, the poet says “μέλανες δ’ ἀνὰ βότρυες ἦσαν” (clusters of grapes were dark upon it). At 18.583, lions gulp down “μέλαν αἶμα.” (dark blood) The colors gold, white, and reddish-purple appear are associated with luxurious woven garment in general, but, most importantly, many important later ekphrases involve these three colors. Here in the *Iliad*, the images on the shield resemble the colored tapestries which Helen and Andromache weave, which are both reddish-purple.

Finally, the shield is remarkably like the woven love-charm of Aphrodite. Again, the love-charm is described in Book Fourteen, when Aphrodite gives it to Hera to use in her seduction of Zeus:

*Ἥ, καὶ ἀπὸ στήθεσφιν ἐλύσατο κεστόν ἱμάντα
 ποικίλον, ἔνθα τέ οἱ θελκτήρια πάντα τέτυκτο·
 ἔνθ’ ἔνι μὲν φιλότης, ἐν δ’ ἥμερος, ἐν δ’ ὀαριστὺς
 πάρφασις, ἥ τ’ ἔκλεψε νόον πύκα περ φρονεόντων.
 τὸν ῥά οἱ ἔμβαλε χερσὶν ἔπος τ’ ἔφατ’ ἔκ τ’ ὀνόμαζε·
 “τῇ νῦν, τοῦτον ἱμάντα τεῶ ἑγκάτθεο κόλπῳ,
 ποικίλον, ᾧ ἔνι πάντα τετεύχεται· οὐδέ σέ φημι
 ἄπρηκτόν γε νέεσθαι, ὅ τι φρεσὶ σῇσι μενοινᾷς.” (14.214-221)*

(She spoke thus, and she loosed from her breast the pierced, elaborately decorated strap, where all beguiling things were figured. Love is on it, and sexual desire, and whispered speech, which steals away the mind even from those with much thoughtfulness. She put it into Hera’s hands and spoke to her and named her: “Come now, put this strap, elaborately decorated, on which all things are figured, in your bosom. I think that you will accomplish that which you have in mind with success.”)

Like the last scene in the ekphrasis, the love-charm is “ποικίλος.” Also, Homer tells his audience that it features “θελκτήρια πάντα” (all beguiling things), and Aphrodite herself specifies that it features “πάντα” (all things). As discussed earlier, the design on Achilles’ shield features all whole universe, complete with all the ritualistic elements of human

life. When Thetis gives the new armor to Achilles in Book Nineteen, Homer tells his audience: “τὰ δ’ ἀνέβραχε δαίδαλα πάντα” (19.13) (And all of the *daidala* clashed.) The Myrmidons are terrified when they see the *daidala* on the shield, but Achilles himself is charmed by the elaborations. Homer says that he delights in them, and he uses the verb “τέρπειν,” which of course is often used interchangeably with the verb “θέλγειν” to describe the beguiling, seductive effect which a singer has on his audience. Like Aphrodite’s love charm, Achilles’ shield also features “θέλκτῆρια πάντα.” In fact, the poet embeds the ekphrasis in the body of his poem in the same way Hera embeds the love-charm in her own body.

The Circular Form: Shield, Dance, Bed and Body

One of the most striking aspects about the shield is its circular imagery. As several scholars have noted, at no point does Homer explicitly tell his audience that the shield is actually circular in shape.¹²⁵ Various types of shields are represented in the poem, including long, rectangular shields called Tower Shields; long, figure-eight-shaped, ox-hide shields like those decorative shields featured in Minoan and Mycenaean art; hour-glass shields—often called Boeotian Shields—like those featured on Dipylon Vases; and smaller, circular shields like those found on the Warriors’ Vase from Mycenae.¹²⁶ That the shield is circular in overall shape is most likely, however, and it seems that artistic attempts to actually draw or sculpt Achilles’ shield assume a round

¹²⁵ Cf., for example, Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 10-14.

¹²⁶ For an extensive discussion of weaponry and armor in the poems, see Nilsson, *Homer and Mycenae*, especially 137-150.

shape.¹²⁷ Nilsson argues that small, round shields are evident from the end of the Mycenaean Age, and mentions, among other archaeological evidence, the Phaistos Disk, which features a small, round shield as one of its signs.¹²⁸ He also argues that Homeric epithets such as “παντόσ’,” (all-around) “ἴση,” (equal, even) and “εὐκυκλος” (well-circled) must indicate smaller, circular shields.¹²⁹ When Homer says that Hephaistos makes the shield “πάντοσε δαιδάλλων” (elaborating it all around), then, he indicates that the shield is circular in shape. Thus, circular shields are not at all uncommon in Homer. In Book Five, Aeneas holds his shield in front of him, which suggests that his shield must be of the smaller, circular sort. His shield is described as, “ἀσπίς πάντοσ’ ἴση.” (5.300) (a shield equal all-around). The language used to describe Achilles’ shield echoes this earlier description and suggests that Achilles’ shield is indeed round.¹³⁰ That Achilles’ shield is indeed circular is suggested by the choral ode from Euripides’ *Elektra* (452-469). In that play, Achilles’ shield not only features a Gorgon-head, but also has the constellations which appear in the Homeric ekphrasis. The shield is clearly circular in this description, as evidenced by the use of the word “κύκλος” (circle) twice, as well as by the word “περιδρόμος” (a running around). Other important shields in the poem are round, and several are described by the poet as having concentric circles.

¹²⁷ See, for example, Ludwig Weniger’s illustration from 1912 in Hermann Kern, *Through the Labyrinth: Designs and Meanings over 5,000 Years* (Munich: Prestel, 2000), 40 and 48.

¹²⁸ Nilsson, *Homer and Mycenae*, 147-148. It is worth noting that the Phaistos Disk is round itself with a spiralling layout of symbols. Thus, this early form of writing is fashioned in a remarkably similar way to the shield.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 143.

¹³⁰ Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 201: “The poet clearly visualizes a round shield, not the semi-cylindrical ‘tower’ shield or the various forms with cut-out sides which appear in Geometric art...The usual Homeric round shield is made of a number of layers of oxhide, presumably stretched over a light, wooden frame, with a bronze facing on the outside. Sarpedon’s shield was made of closely-stitched oxhides on the inside, with a bronze layer beaten out (ἐξήλατον) on the outer surface (12.295-7), and Hektor’s is ῥινοῖσιν πυκινὴν, πολλὰς δ’ ἐπελήλατο χαλκός (13.804; cf. 17.492-3). At 7.220-3 Aias’ ‘tower’ shield (see 6.117-18n., 7.219-23n.) was made of seven oxhides and an eighth layer of bronze, and Hektor’s spear penetrates the bronze and six layers (πτύχας) of hide, stopping in the seventh (7.247-8).”

Agamemnon's shield offers the best comparison. In Book Eleven, Homer describes Agamemnon's spectacular armor (11.15-40). This passage is not as long as the ekphrasis in Book Eighteen, of course, but it is a rather lengthy description of Agamemnon's armor, and, to some degree at least, it serves to foreshadow the more detailed, more climatic description in Book Eighteen. In fact, several scholars consider this description to be a Homeric ekphrasis.¹³¹ While the description of Agamemnon's armor seems ekphrastic because of its detail, there is no independent narrative within the description. For this reason, I do not consider it an example of ekphrasis, although I do believe that it anticipates the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield in Book Eighteen. The entire poem is about a contest between Agamemnon and Achilles, after all, and, when one considers how important appearance is in the Homeric world, it seems reasonable for the poet to focus on their heroic finery in developing the grand competition. Agamemnon's corselet is described as having ten "οἶμοι" (bands) of cobalt on it and thus complements the design of the shield. The shield is called "ἀμφιβρότη πολυδαίδαλος" (man-enclosing, with many cunning elaborations). Like Achilles' shield, Agamemnon's is "πολυδαίδαλος." Surely when Homer's audience learns that Achilles' shield features "δαίδαλα πολλά" other physical works of art in the poem which feature "δαίδαλα" come to mind, especially shields. The shield has ten "κύκλοι" (circles) of bronze on it, and, like the aegis, it has a Gorgon-head in the middle of it. Homer uses the verb "ἐστεφάνωτο" in describing the Gorgon-head, thus further showing the circular nature of the design. The verb is not especially common in the epics, but it does appear in the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield at 18.485. In describing the first elements of that design, the poet says:

¹³¹ See, for example, Kurman, "Ekphrasis in Epic Poetry," 3 note 7 and Becker, *The Shield of Achilles*, 67-77.

Ἐν μὲν γαῖαν ἔτευξ', ἐν δ' οὐρανόν, ἐν δὲ θάλασσαν,
 ἡέλιόν τ' ἀκάμαντα σελήνην τε πλήθουσιν,
 ἐν δὲ τὰ τεύχεα πάντα, τὰ τ' οὐρανὸς ἐστεφάνωται,
 Πληϊάδης δ' Ὑάδας τε τό τε σθένος Ὀρίωνος
 Ἄρκτον δ', ἣν καὶ Ἀμαξαν ἐπὶ κλησὶν καλέουσιν,
 ἣ τ' αὐτοῦ στρέφεται καὶ τ' Ὀρίωνα δοκεύει,
 ὅῃ δ' ἄμμορότ' ἐστὶ λοετρῶν Ὠκεανοῖο. (18.486-489)

(He made the earth on it, and heaven, and the sea, and the sun, and the moon, filled out into its wholeness, and all the stars which heaven has circled round it, the Pleiades, the Hyades, and the strength of Orion, and the Great Bear, which they call the Wagon as a nickname, which turns around in the same place and keeps watch on Orion, and it alone has no share in the washing waters of Okeanos.)

On Achilles' shield, heaven is encircled by the Pleiades, the Hyades, the strength of Orion, and the Bear in the same way that the Gorgon is encircled by the other features on Agamemnon's shield.

Like Agamemnon's shield, Achilles' shield seems to be composed of concentric circles of design.¹³² Edwards refers to several artifacts in arguing for a design of concentric circles, including bronze shields found on Crete, a Phoenician silver dish from Amathus, and a silver dish from Praeneste.¹³³ All of these artifacts are designed with scenes set in concentric bands around a central scene. The shields have an “ὀμφαλός” (navel, boss) in the center, just like Agamemnon's shield in Book Eleven. It is unlikely that Homer is describing an actual object in the ekphrasis, but it is likely that the design of the shield is based on the general design of actual art. The close connection between

¹³² Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 201-202: “There are indications that the layers of hide were laid out in concentric circles, diminishing in size towards the outer face of the shield. Akhilleus' spear hits Aineias' shield 'at the outer rim, where the bronze is thinnest, and thinnest is the oxhide laid' (20.275-6) and rips through, διὰ δ' ἀμφοτέρους ἔλε κύκλους; this seems to mean it tore apart the layer of bronze and the single layer of hide at the rim. A bronze plate beaten out over such layers of hide would itself take on the surface appearance of concentric circles, like a modern target. and this seems to be meant in the reference to Agamemnon's shield, ἣν περὶ μὲν κύκλοι δέκα χάλκεοι ἦσαν (11.33). Similarly, Idomeneus' shield is ῥινοῖσι βοῶν καὶ νώροπι χαλκῷ / δινωτήν (13.406-7)...Perhaps at one time the decoration followed these concentric bands...”

¹³³ Ibid., 203-207. Edwards includes drawings of the shields and dishes in his commentary.

the Homeric passage and the Baal epic cited by Morris seems to suggest that the design of the shield might indeed be derived from Near Eastern models.

Heffernan also accepts a design of concentric circles, arguing that, in any case, circles are certainly important in the individual scenes themselves.¹³⁴ As mentioned above, Heffernan in particular points to the importance of the individual scenes on the shield in discussing the circular nature of Achilles' shield.¹³⁵ He writes that, although the poet never explicitly says that the shield is circular in overall design, the poet does mention "the circles of the dance" in the wedding scene (494) and the 'sacred circle' of elders in the disputation scene (504).¹³⁶ Heffernan also writes that there are several enclosures on the shield which might suggest a circle, but, as he states, these enclosures could be "triangular, rectangular, or elliptical."¹³⁷ Heffernan is right in recognizing that circular nature of the shield is elusive and that the shapes of the scenes are not static but rather always moving. In his work on Aristophanes, Henderson has shown that circles and circular images are used in comedy to indicate female genitalia.¹³⁸ As discussed

¹³⁴ Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 12-13.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹³⁷ Ibid.: "Dynamic and mobile, the figures and elements in these scenes elude fixed geometrical definition. In the dancing scene, for instance, the figures shift from one kind of dance to another (599-602). They momentarily suggest a circle when their feet touch the ground as lightly as a potter touches his wheel 'to see if it will run smooth' (601), but the point of contact in this simile is not so much circularity as tactile sensitivity: the dancers' feet are as 'understanding' (*epistamenoisi* [599]) as the potter's fingers. The only shape the dancers are explicitly said to form is 'rows' (602), but, since they run in rows 'crossing each other,' the picture is explicitly moving; they are nowhere fixed in space."

¹³⁸ Henderson, *The Maculate Muse*, 139. "ἔγκυκλον, anything circular or which surrounds, is the name of a women's garment used in the same sense as κύκλος (following section). At L 1162 the Spartans' ambiguous demand for τοῦγκυκλον turns out to be for τὰν Πύλον (see section 142, above), 1163. Similarly, at L 113 Cleonice swears that she will go along with Lysistrata no matter what, καὶν εἴ με χρεῖρή τοῦγκυκλον/τουτ' καταθεῖσαν ἐκπιεῖν αὐθιμερόν. This pun, pawn my shawl/lay down my cunt, constitutes another joke on female lechery. We must suspect also that the deictic demonstrative pronoun indicates byplay on stage....κύκλος, anything circular, is used obscenely, though in the service of noble imagery, in the series of double entendres that describes in agricultural language sexual relations with Diallage (A 998); it appears in the same sense at L 267, where the men propose attacking the closed gates of the acropolis with phallic tree-stumps which they intend to burn αὐταῖς ἐν κύκλῳ θέντες τὰ πρέμα ταυτί, having put them

above, in general enclosures, containers, and things which envelope and surround are seen in terms of the female body. It follows that circular images would signify the feminine body as well. Thus, the shield is not only generally feminine as an object, but the specific design on its face is feminine in form also. Its “*δαίδαλα*” are feminine, like the golden handmaidens in Hephaistos’ workshop.

The multiple, concentric circles which make up Achilles’ shield, in fact, form a sort of spiral, especially when one considers that the round shield would not be flat but slightly convex in shape. The concentric circles would be arranged three-dimensionally. The spiral nature of the shield is especially interesting when one considers the last scene on the shield.¹³⁹ Again, Homer describes a dance which involves both young men and maidens, and the dance is a courtship ritual. There are several circular images in this final scene of the ekphrasis. First, in all likelihood, the dance floor itself is probably circular. The dancers are holding hands with each other; thus, it is likely their dancing forms circles—a dance formation which finds its way into many traditional dances of Mediterranean cultures. That they are dancing in a circle is especially likely in that the poet compares the movement of their feet to a potter running his hands along his wheel,

in a circle/into a cunt. One of the intended victims of this figurative rape is the shameless Rhodia, wife of Lycon...”

¹³⁹ Cf. Atchity, *Homer’s Iliad: The Shield of Memory*, 181: “Lloyd explicates a choreography: ‘It seems imperative on the artist to represent a double dance, a dance in a circle, of youths and maidens holding hands, and a dance in ranks—of youths opposite...maidens’ (pp.21-22). If this is indeed what Hephaistos has portrayed, the linear has been set against the circular and the diverse arrangement of the genders suggests the opposition is biological as well as geometrical: sterility (male+male, female+female) versus fertility (male+female), the latter recalling the marriage scene in the first city, that of peace and order. The creative potential of the circle, moreover, whether artistic or reproductive, is suggested by the simile...What the poet, representing his audience as fictional spectator and thereby defining their cyclical relationship with him, sees on the circular shield—a circling dance—he communicates by means of a circular simile. It is also a circular medium—the traditional language—that enables the poet, in a larger sense, to convey to his audience what he understands of reality.”

which is necessarily circular.¹⁴⁰ There are the crowns which the maidens wear, of course, which are circular. Finally, two acrobats either whirl in place or rotate around the whole group, thus forming circles themselves. Thus, the individual scene resembles the whole shield with its multiple layers of elusive circles.¹⁴¹

In the last few lines of Homer's description of this dance, the poet tells his audience that two acrobats "ἐδίνεον." (were spinning round, revolving about) The verb signifies a whirling round movement, and, in fact, the related noun "δίνη" means "whirlpool." A common epithet for the river Xanthos and other rivers in the poem is "δινῆεις," which essentially means "with whirlpools." Earlier in the ekphrasis, when Homer is describing the two cities, the related verb "δινεῖν" is used to describe the dancing of young men in the first city:

Ἐν δὲ δύω ποίησε πόλεις μερόπων ἀνθρώπων
καλάς. ἐν τῇ μὲν ῥα γάμοι τ' ἔσαν εἰλαπῖναι τε,
νύμφας δ' ἐκ θαλάμων δαΐδων ὑπο λαμπομενάων
ἡγίνεον ἀνὰ ἄστνυ, πολὺς δ' ὑμέναιος ὀρώρει·
κοῦροι δ' ὀρχηστήρες ἐδίνεον, ἐν δ' ἄρα τοῖσι
αὐλοὶ φόρμιγγές τε βοὴν ἔχον· (18.490-495)

(He made on it two beautiful cities of mortal men. In one, there were weddings and banquets, and they were leading brides under burning torches from their bedchambers through the town, and a great bridal-song was rising up. And young men, dancing around, whirled about, among whom flute players and lyre players held up their sound.)

¹⁴⁰ This simile is also striking when one considers the connection between clay pots and the female body discussed above.

¹⁴¹ In his commentary, Edwards, writes about the comparison of Hephaistos' work to that of Daidalos: "The simile compares the scene of daily life to the heroic past, an appealing reversal of the normal illustration of heroic action by a familiar action of ordinary experience. The ancient scholars, however, argued much over whether it was ἀπρεπές to have Hephaistos imitating the work of a mortal (AbT)...Cretans were famous dancers, and Aeneias hurls a jibe at Meriones the Cretan about this (16.617...)...Ariadne's name is a divine title, 'most holy'...The conception of Daidalos making a dancing-floor in Knossos for Ariadne, followed immediately by a description of a dance by young men and women, must be associated with the familiar tale of the Minotaur, the labyrinth, and the yearly tribute of young men and maidens...Tablets from Knossos mention a Daidaleion and a Mistress of the Labyrinth...and three circular platforms dating from soon after 1400 have been identified as dancing floors....Dancers in Greece still hold each others' wrists, and a line of dancers is led by a person who does his own figures, in a semi-acrobatic way." *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 229.

In this earlier scene, the dancing is also connected to marriage, and, here, the maidens are being lead from their own bedchambers by torchlight while a wedding-song is sung. Although the poet does not explicitly tell his audience that the maidens are being lead to their husbands' houses to spend the night for the first time, clearly this is the case. In general, Greek marriages involved a feast at the home of the bride's father, from which the groom and one of his friends escorted the veiled bride to her husband's house. The procession included others who sang a wedding-song to Hymen. When the procession arrived at the groom's house, the couple entered the bridal chamber, and the epithalamium was sung outside their bedchamber as they consummated the union.¹⁴² Thus, in this earlier scene, the young male dancers dance in a circular manner which suggests a spiral or a whirlpool as the couples prepare for their sexual unions.¹⁴³

The spirals and whirlpool-images in the dancing scenes are suggestive of the female body. The twirling dancers create fleeting hollows with their movements which recall other hollow things in the poems—houses, treasuries, bowls, tripods. The shapes they create by spiraling like whirlpools are especially similar to caves.¹⁴⁴ They celebrate the upcoming consummation of the marriages and, in general, the fertility of the woman's body; thus, the dancers create vaginal/uterine images with their movements. Their movements echo the overall feminine form of Achilles' shield. In fact, the similarity of the shield to Thetis' cave—and also Thetis' body—in particular is made apparent by the description of the cave which Hephaistos provides. Again, he says: “περὶ δὲ ῥόος

¹⁴² For a description of Greek marriage rituals, see the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 927. Also, Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, 126-128.

¹⁴³ For an excellent description of Greek wedding rituals and also a collection of images of weddings in Greek art, see Reeder, *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, especially 32-38 and 126-128.

¹⁴⁴ It is worth mentioning here that of course Charybdis, the famous whirlpool-monster in the *Odyssey* is a female monster, and she is located very close to the other female monster, Skylla, who lives in a cave.

Ὠκεανοῖο/ ἀφορῶ μορμύρων ῥέεν ἄσπετος.” (18.402-403) (The stream of boundless Ocean flowed, murmuring with foam, around the cave.) Of course, the last thing Hephaistos makes on the shield is the stream of Ocean, which flows around the edge of the shield.

Moreover, the various circles of Achilles’ shield echo the circular design on the marriage bed of Paris and Helen, and Homer’s use of the verbs “ἐδίνεον” and “ἐδίνεον” in these particular scenes provides a direct link between the shield and the bed.¹⁴⁵ When Aphrodite calls Helen back to her bedchamber to have sex with Paris in Book Three, Homer tells his audience that Aphrodite tells her that Paris wants her to come home and that he is waiting for her, “ἐν θαλάμῳ καὶ δινωτοῖσι λέχεσσι.” (391) (in the bedchamber and on the bed with its spiralling pattern). Cunliffe suggests that the adjective “δινωτός” indicates that something is either adorned with circles or spirals. The word is cognate with “δίνη” and the verb “δινέω,” however, and thus indicates the action of a whirlpool. It suggests that the design on the bed forms concentric circles or a spiral. In fact, at 13.407, Homer uses “δινωτός” to describe the shield of Idomeneos. Like so many other shields in the poem, including that of Achilles, it is constructed of multiple layers in concentric circles, being described as equal “πάντοσ” (all around). Thus, its face, like the face of Achilles’ shield, looks like a spiral of sorts, seemingly whirling round like an eddy in water.

The connection between the marriage bed of Paris and Helen and Achilles’ shield is made even further apparent when Paris is described as a man going to a dance:

“δεῦρ’ ἴθ’· Ἀλέξανδρός σε καλεῖ οἰκόνδε νέεσθαι.
καῖνος ὅ γ’ ἐν θαλάμῳ καὶ δινωτοῖσι λέχεσσι,

¹⁴⁵ The verb δινεύειν is used to describe the motion of the plowmen on the shield. Their movement back and forth across the field is suggestive of weaving, but the use of this verb for their spinning round at the end of the furrows also connects their movement to the marriage bed of Paris and Helen. As discussed earlier, metaphors for sexual intercourse involving agricultural activity are common in Greek literature.

κάλλει' τε στιλβων καὶ εἵμασιν· οὐδέ κε φαίης
 ἀνδρὶ μαχεσσάμενον τόν γ' ἔλθεῖν, ἀλλὰ χορόνδε
 ἔρχεσθ', ἢ ἐχοροῖο νέον λήγοντα καθίζεῖν." (3.390-394)

(Come, come; Alexandros calls for you to come back home. He is in his bedchamber and on the bed with its spiralling pattern, shining in his beauty and in his fine clothing. You would not supposeed him to be a man who has come from battle, but rather to be a man who is going to a dance or a man who, lying down, is resting, fresh from a dance.)

Aphrodite delivers this speech to Helen in order to convince her to return to her house, where Aphrodite has just deposited Paris after rescuing him from his fight with Menelaos. As discussed above, Aphrodite is bringing Helen home to Paris so that the couple can have sex. When she says that Paris is waiting for Helen in their house and that he looks like a man who is going to a dance or a young man who has just come from a dance, she indicates to Helen that Paris is ready for sexual activity. Their bed, then, will serve as a sort of dance floor for the couple, and their sexual activity is the dance itself.

Like houses and inner chambers, in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, beds also often stand for the bodies of women. As the sites of sexual union, they represent the sexual organs of women.¹⁴⁶ When Odysseus confronts Circe in Book Ten, for example, she tries to turn him into a pig, although her drugs do not work because of Odysseus' preventative ingestion of moly. She then invites him to have sex with her, which he

¹⁴⁶ Froma I. Zeitlin, *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 28-29. "Unlike *eunē*, the word *lechos* has an institutional meaning. The *lechos* is the basis of a woman's legitimate status as a wife, signified by their 'mingling together in *eunē* and *philotēs*.' She is her husband's *alochos*, one who shares the same bed, and the adjectives that sometimes accompany the word (*mnēstē*, *kouridiē* [lawfully wedded]) confirm that she has been brought into the household under the proper social and ritual protocols. It is only one short step further from bed to marriage, and *lechos* can stand for the institution of matrimony itself (Il. 8.291), as it does more regularly in later, especially tragic, texts, where it may even be taken as a synonym for the wife herself. Thus, while *lechos*, strictly speaking, remains a visual and concrete artifact, a practical necessity in the house, it also means something more. Both object and idea, both artifact and symbol, the bed stands for itself and also something larger than itself that Homeric idiom can fully put into play."

recognizes as her attempt to drain him of his manhood. He makes her promise that she will not harm him, and he indeed has sex with the sorceress. The entire account is related by Odysseus himself to the Phaiakians, and he says the following:

Ὡς ἐφάμην, ἣ δ' αὐτίκ' ἀπόμνηνεν ὡς ἐκέλευον.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥ' ὅμοσέν τε τελεύτησέν τε τὸν ὄρκον,
καὶ τότε γὰρ Κίρκης ἐπέβην περικαλλέος εὐνῆς. (10.345-347)

(So I spoke, and immediately she swore an oath as I demanded, but when she swore the oath and accomplished the swearing, then I climbed onto the very beautiful bed of Circe.)

Here, Odysseus says that, after Circe swore an oath to him, he mounted the very beautiful bed of Circe. The adjective describes the bed, not the goddess, although it clearly stands for her body. Odysseus is being playful in his storytelling, and he means of course that he mounted her body. Of course, in Book Twenty-Three of the *Odyssey*, Penelope tests Odysseus by tricking him into describing their marriage-bed, which he himself built. When Penelope suggests that the bed has been moved, Odysseus becomes enraged because he assumes that Penelope is telling him that she has slept with someone else. Their bed stands for her body.

Most translators seem to assume the circular pattern is woven into the coverlet on the bed of Paris and Helen. This is entirely plausible given the connection between Helen's weaving and their marriage-bed. However, it also may be that the circular pattern is simply associated with the bed in general as it stands for the sexual union of the couple. The marriage bed of Paris and Helen is circular in the same way her body is circular and enveloping. Like Helen's body, it draws men into it like a whirlpool.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, the sexual activity of the couple on the bed is a dance of sorts, a competition

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Atchity, *Homer's Iliad: The Shield of Memory*, 28: "Certain crucial figures are related to Helen and to one another through the creative association of the images of particular artifacts: loom, bed, house, robe, and the special case of 'song.'"

for sexual conquest. In the dancing scene on the shield of Achilles, the poet tells his audience: “πολλὸς δ’ ἰμερόεντα χορὸν περίσταθ’ ὄμιλος τερόμενοι” (18.604-605) (A large crowd stood around, delighting in the desire-inducing dance.) The dance brings about sexual desire in its audience, and those who watch it delight in it just as if taking pleasure in sex. Thus, dance floor, bed, and shield are all connected.

Thalmann has also shown that the Homeric epics exhibit a specific shape which is based on oral poets’ conception of the physical world and that the subject-matter of the poetic compositions themselves helped to map the epic geography. He posits a structure which reflects a system of “similarity and antithesis,”¹⁴⁸ and he concentrates on circular forms—hysteron proteron, ring composition, and spiral composition.¹⁴⁹ He argues that the *Iliad* is constructed in a tight, horizontal, circular form while the *Odyssey* also exhibits ring composition but is more open in form than the *Iliad*.¹⁵⁰ Unlike the Hesiodic

¹⁴⁸ Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Poetry*, 2.

¹⁴⁹ Thalmann argues that this form is natural to both poet and audience. Ibid., 3: “The cosmos, its individual constituents large and small, and the events which occur within it are all conceived in essentially the same way. The basis of this manner of viewing things is a particular sense of form as enclosure, wherein antithetical extremes define what lies between them and the whole consists of juxtaposed but interrelated parts. From our point of view this conception of form might be said to function as an aesthetic principle, but it does not appear to have been consciously worked out. It seems instead to have grown naturally out of certain habits of mind, and thus a certain way of thinking about human life and its environment, which are characteristic of the Greeks of the geometric and archaic ages. The world as they represented it has at once extraordinary diversity and an elaborate but clear arrangement of parts. The combination of qualities may seem paradoxical, but in fact only a careful design could accommodate such glorious variety without incoherence.”

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 32. “This identity between the categories of thought and the mode of their poetic expression has exciting implications concerning the nature and function of hexameter poetry. Analogy and polarity determined not only poetic structure but also the early Greeks’ conception of the order of the world. And so we return to what we noticed at the outset, that the sense of form exemplified by the shape of the physical world as the poetry depicts it is the same as that displayed by individual passages and indeed whole poems. There is a perfect correspondence between form and content, as in all good poems. But we cannot leave the matter there. For those who composed it, poetry was a profession, and for those who listened to it, a means of enjoyment. But at the same time, it was a way of knowing the world, for it told of the physical arrangement of the cosmos, of the divine powers that influenced events, and of man’s place in the whole scheme. The poem at once exhibited the world’s fullness and variety and discovered its essential order. But it represented that order by virtue of its existence as a pattern in the mind. By embodying the forms of thought habitual to poet and audience, the poem evolved in the course of performance as a model or mental image of the world that it sought to elucidate.”

universe, which is constructed vertically,¹⁵¹ the universe of the *Iliad* is shaped like a giant disk. Smaller episodes embedded within the larger epic echo the overall form of the poem, and these circular shapes help the oral poet's audience understand and relate to the poetic content. Thalmann also sees that in the epics rhetoric and poetry are "related arts,"¹⁵² and offers the specific example of Nestor's speech in Book One of the *Iliad*, which he shows has "a careful, circular structure" which reflects both rhetorical and poetic convention.¹⁵³ While he focuses rather on the "κόσμος" of the physical universe than on the "κόσμος" of the human body in his discussion, Thalmann's work does show that the poems are constructed with a basic idea of visual "κόσμος" in mind. Of course, the physical universe is itself anthropomorphic in the Homeric epics, so bodily "κόσμος" is certainly significant.

Most importantly, the circular shape of the larger epic is particularly apparent in smaller episodes within the poem, as Thalmann demonstrates using Nestor's speech. Not only is Achilles' shield as an imaginary object in all likelihood circular in shape, but the ekphrasis about it is also circular in shape. Thalmann focuses on the Hesiodic *Shield of Herakles* rather than the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad* because the ring composition of

¹⁵¹Cf. *ibid.*, 2.

¹⁵² *Ibid.* For example, at 29-30, he writes: "As it happens, there is one piece of evidence to support these arguments, an instance of public discourse, purportedly given verbatim in one of the poems, that displays a careful circular structure. That is Nestor's speech in I.254-84. It begins with a rebuke of Achilles and Agamemnon and ends with advice addressed to each of them in turn....Just before this (I.247-49), Nestor has been introduced as 'Nestor of pleasant words, the clear-voiced orator of the Pylians, from whose tongue speech flowed sweeter than honey.' The speech that follows is clearly meant to be a model of persuasive eloquence (even if it fails of its purpose in this case), a particularly fine example of the kind of rhetoric that, we are to imagine, Homeric heroes were accustomed to hear and strove to emulate. It must stand as an example of ideas systematically ordered so that Nestor's listeners can follow. The passage shows, then, how ring form makes possible clarity of exposition. Most importantly, the poet has presented this speech in verse, and if the audience is to experience it as effective rhetoric, it must be well constructed according to prevailing standards. That is, Homer has imitated forensic convention by means of poetic convention. This transfer was particularly easy because it accorded with conventional ideas: poetry and rhetoric were represented as related arts."

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 29.

the former is more “self-conscious,” but he certainly sees circular form in the ekphrasis about Achilles’ shield.¹⁵⁴ The entire ekphrasis is presented in the circular rhetorical format of the larger poem.¹⁵⁵ For example, the ekphrasis begins with a description of how Hephaistos makes the shield, “πάντοσε δαιδάλλων” (18.479) (embellishing it with *daidala* all-around). After a brief description of multiple layers of the shield, the poet again says that Hephaistos makes “δαίδαλα πολλά” (18.482) (many *daidala*). The last scene in the ekphrasis features “Δαίδαλος” whose name recalls the original action of Hephaistos. Daidalos is the most striking of all the *daidala*. Also, the first *daidala* which Hephaistos creates on the shield’s face are the earth, the heavens, and the sea. Then he makes the stars and constellations and Okeanos. The last band which Hephaistos adds to the design of the shield is Okeanos. The circular structure of the language within the ekphrasis is much more immediately apparent to the poem’s audience than the structure of the overall poem, and the circular form of the ekphrasis coupled with all of the circular imagery contained within it creates a spiralling system of concentric circles for the epic audience. The ekphrasis itself, then, is formed as a feminine body rather than a more linear masculine body. As Thalmann points out, the circular structure is particularly effective in oral culture; thus, the circular nature of the ekphrasis helps to persuade the epic audience into accepting the larger “κόσμος” of the poem.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 190 note 32. As Thalmann writes about the passage on Achilles’ shield: “It provides, in fact, a wonderful example of how much can be expressed through the relations among the various elements in the kind of complex pattern of ring composition that will be examined below.” He also sees the circular form in how the shield is constructed in layers; it has a layer of gold in the middle, two layers of tin surrounding that, and two outer layers of bronze.

¹⁵⁵ For a detailed analysis of the ring composition of the ekphrasis, see Stanley, *The Shield of Homer*, 9-13.

The Importance of Daidalos, Ariadne, and Knossos

As discussed above, in introducing the final scene in the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield, Homer says that Hephaistos creates a “χορός” like one made by Daidalos for Ariadne in Knossos, and he then describes a dance which is performed by both young men and maidens:

*Ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυήεις,
τῷ ἵκελον οἶόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσῷ εὐρείῃ
Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ.
ἔνθα μὲν ἡΐθεοι καὶ παρθένοι ἀλφεσίβοιαι
ὠρχεῦντ', ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῷ χειρὶ ἀχοντες.
τῶν δ' αἱ μὲν λεπτὰς ὀδόντας ἔχον, οἱ δὲ χιτῶνας
εἶατ' εὐννήτους, ἦκα στίλβοντας ἐλαίῳ·
καὶ ῥ' αἱ μὲν καλὰς στεφάνας ἔχον, οἱ δὲ μαχαίρας
εἶχον χρυσείας ἐξ ἀργυρέων τελαμώνων.
οἱ δ' ὅτε μὲν θρέξασκον ἐπισταμένοισι πόδεσσι
ῥεῖα μάλ', ὥς ὅτε τις τροχὸν ἄρμενον ἐν παλάμῃσιν
ἐξόμενος κεραμεὺς πειρήσεται, αἶ κε θέησιν·
ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ θρέξασκον ἐπὶ στίχας ἀλλήλοισι.
πολλὸς δ' ἰμερόεντα χορὸν περιστάδ' ὄμιλος
τερπόμενοι· δοιῷ δὲ κυβιστητῆρε κατ' αὐτοὺς
μολπῆς ἐξάρχοντες ἐδίνεον κατὰ μέσσους. (18.590-606)*

(The famous lame smith cunningly fashioned on it a dance floor, just like that which Daidalos fashioned for lovely haired Ariadne in wide Knossos. There young men and maidens who were bringing many oxen danced, holding hands with one another at the wrist. Of these, the maidens had fine linen veils, and the young men wore finely spun tunics, which were shining with olive oil. And the maidens wore beautiful garlands, and the young men had golden knives which were hanging from their silver belts. Now they ran lightly on skilled feet, as when some potter, sitting, makes trial of his wheel, fitted close in his hands, to see if it runs well. At other times, they ran against one another in rows. And a large crowd stood around the desire-inducing dance, everyone delighting in it, and two tumblers revolved along them, leading the dance in measures.)

The dance which Hephaistos fashions on the shield is a courtship dance in which the dancers form images of the feminine body, and the entire scene is sexually charged, as indicated by the adjective “ἰμερόεντα.” The young men and women are on the threshold of

marriage, as the adjective “ἀλφεσίβοιος” (bringing many oxen), which refers to bride gifts, shows. The young men, probably ephebes, wear belts with knives hanging from them and thus are displaying their status as young warriors. The whole scene is generally suggestive of initiation rites for young women and men.

In fact, the dance on the shield is remarkably similar to the Spartan “Necklace Dance,” which is described by Lucian in his dialogue on dance. Lucian does not mention a specific festival for the dance in his description, but pyrrhic dances and also choruses of young Spartan women are well attested.¹⁵⁶ In Lucian’s description, the first martial dance ends with steps in honor of Dionysos and Aphrodite, two fertility gods, and the youths sing a song in honor of Aphrodite and Eros. The “Necklace Dance” involves both masculine and feminine energies, with the young men dancing military steps while the young women dance modesty in harmony with them. Lucian’s use of “πλεκόμενον” (weaving, plaiting) to describe the movements of the dancers is especially compelling. Like the youths and maidens on Achilles’ shield, the young Spartans weave themselves together into the necklace as they participate in their maturation rituals, which ultimately are designed to produce citizens who fit well into the social fabric. His use of “κοσμίως” is also important: the dance is ordered and, thus, a thing of beauty. As the youths prepare for their initiation into the social *kosmos*, the young men assume their warrior

¹⁵⁶ For the social, religious and political significance of dancing in the Greek world, see Steven H. Lonsdale, *Ritual Play in Greek Religion* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1993); T.B.L. Webster, *The Greek Chorus*, (London: Methuen & Company, Ltd, 1970); and A.P. David, *The Dance of the Muses: Choral Theory and Ancient Greek Poetics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). For a detailed discussion of Spartan ritual dances, see Claude Calame, *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece: Their Morphology, Religious Role, and Social Functions*, trans. Derek Collins and Jane Orion (New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1997).

roles. The maidens dance in an alluringly feminine manner and act out their subordinate sexual status to the men. An orderly society is born out of the orderly dance.¹⁵⁷

Despite its brevity, the reference to Daidalos' dance floor in the *Iliad* is an essential element of the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield; it serves to elucidate all of the earlier scenes. It is true that the scenes on Achilles' shield represent a microcosm of the larger universe of the epic, but, more importantly, collectively the scenes also represent essential elements of religious ritual. The reference to Daidalos' "χορός" in Knossos shows that the dance on the shield is a dance in which the circular feminine body is formed and symbolically penetrated; it is a mimetic Labyrinth dance. The entire ritual represented on the shield, in fact, recalls the festivals of the Minoans, which were agricultural in nature and focused on death, rebirth, initiation, and sexuality. Of course, by the middle of the Late Minoan period, Mycenaeans were present on Crete; thus, by the middle of the second millennium B.C.E., Minoan religion was mingled to some degree with elements of Mycenaean religion.¹⁵⁸ Still, aspects of Minoan religion were still significant on Crete in the Geometric period when the importance of male initiation and the role of warriors in the fertility cult seems to have increased significantly. The Knossian rituals seem to have paralleled the mystery-rituals of Dionysos in particular, which, like the Eleusinian Mysteries, offered initiates hope for a blessed afterlife. A detailed discussion of the significance of the allusion is therefore in order, especially since references to Daidalos, Ariadne, Theseus, the Minotaur, and the Labyrinth occur in a number of post-Homeric ekphrasises.

¹⁵⁷Cf. Scheid and Svenbro, *The Craft of Zeus*, 101-103, where they interpret the "geranos" dance, which is discussed shortly in this chapter, as a weaving together of society.

¹⁵⁸ Nanno Marinatos writes that in the Postpalatial period, "Some kind of religious *koine* was probably operative in the whole Aegean." *Minoan Religion: Ritual, Image, and Symbol* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 228.

The Myth

As the myth goes, Minos is born from the union of Zeus and Europa, whom Zeus abducts in the guise of a bull. Minos becomes king of Knossos and marries Pasiphae, a daughter of Helios. Minos fails to sacrifice an especially attractive bull to Poseidon, and, as punishment, Poseidon makes Pasiphae fall in love with the bull. Daedalos, a famous craftsman who earlier had fled from Athens to Crete, constructs a hollow device which he covers with a cow's hide, which then allows Pasiphae to mate with the bull. After having sex with the bull, she gives birth to the Minotaur, a monster which has the body of a human and the head of a bull.¹⁵⁹ Daedalos then constructs the famous Labyrinth to serve as a prison for the Minotaur; the twists and turns of its confusing architectural form prevent anyone from exiting. Minos receives tribute from Athens in the form of seven young men and seven young women, who are all sacrificed to the Minotaur in the Labyrinth. The tribute is exacted because Minos' son Androgeos was murdered at the Panathenaia. Theseus, the legendary king of Athens, travels to Crete as one of the young men, and he attracts the attention of Ariadne, Minos' daughter. Ariadne asks Daedalos for help in saving Theseus, and the craftsman gives her a spool of thread. Ariadne in turn gives it to Theseus who attaches it to the door on his way into the Labyrinth and unwinds it as he walks through the confusing passageways. After killing the Minotaur, Theseus escapes by following the thread back out of the Labyrinth. He flees with Ariadne, whom he leaves on the island of Naxos. Dionysos himself later abducts her to be his bride.

¹⁵⁹ See Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 261. Palaiphatos is the earliest extant literary source to use the word "Minotaur," but there are earlier uses of the name on works of art from the sixth century B.C.E.

When he discovers Daidalos' role in Theseus' escape, Minos imprisons Daidalos in the Labyrinth with his son Ikaros. The ingenious craftsman constructs wings, which he and Ikaros use to fly out of the Labyrinth. Ikaros famously ignores his father's instructions to stay away from the sun and falls to his death while Daidalos escapes and flies to southern Italy.

The myth about Theseus and the Labyrinth is basically a coming-of-age story in which Theseus faces and overcomes death. It involves the three basic rites of passage into adulthood which were proposed by Arnold van Gennep: rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of reintegration or incorporation.¹⁶⁰ In the myth, Theseus leaves his homeland and separates from society with other youths. He travels to another land and undergoes a life-changing trial in which he faces death inside the darkness of the Labyrinth. He overcomes death by killing the Minotaur and escapes from the darkness by means of Ariadne's thread. The trial thus involves symbolic death and rebirth, a katabasis into the chthonic darkness of the earth and an anabasis back into the light. After this period of transition, he returns to his homeland and is accepted as an adult who has proven himself worthy to be king. Moreover, he emerges from the whole experience in the Labyrinth as a sexually mature individual who is ready to marry and assume his place in society.

Of course, the entire narrative of the myth about Theseus and the Labyrinth developed over time, and the accounts found in authors such as Plutarch, Diodoros, Pausanias, and Apollodoros are no doubt evolved. In general, however, the story seems to have been in existence by the eighth century B.C.E. In Book Fourteen of the *Iliad*, for

¹⁶⁰ Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960).

example, Zeus includes Europa in his list of sexual conquests, and he says that Europa is the mother of Minos and Rhadamanthys (14.321-322). Europa is also mentioned similarly in the Hesiodic *Ehoiai*.¹⁶¹ According to Gantz, the *Ehoiai* also includes references to Androgeos, the bull, someone falling in love, the sea, and a son who is half-bull and half-man born to Minos' wife.¹⁶² Homer also mentions Ariadne in Book Eleven of the *Odyssey* (11.321-325), where Odysseus tells the Phaiakians that he encountered Phaidra and Ariadne in the underworld. There, he mentions several elements of the myth, including Ariadne, Minos, Theseus, Crete, Athens, and Dionysos. Homer never uses the term “λαβύρινθος” (Labyrinth), which appears for the first time in Herodotus, but he certainly seems to have a significant understanding of the myth. As others have noted, Homer's use of the adjective “ὀλοόφρονος” (destructive-minded) to describe Minos in the passage in Book Eleven of the *Odyssey* specifically suggests familiarity with the story of the Labyrinth.¹⁶³

The scholia on the dancing scene in the ekphrasis also show that the allusion to Daidalos' “χορός” in Knossos in the ekphrasis is a reference to the Labyrinth dance. For example, a scholiast on 18.590 writes:

ἐξελθὼν δὲ μετὰ τὸ νικῆσαι ὁ Θησεὺς μετὰ τῶν ἡθέων καὶ παρθένων χορὸν τοιοῦτον ἔπλεκεν ἐν κύκλῳ τοῖς θεοῖς, ὅποια καὶ ἡ τοῦ λαβυρίνθου εἰσοδὸς τε καὶ ἔξοδος αὐτῷ ἐγγέγονει. τῆς δὲ χορείας τὴν ἐμπειρίαν ὁ Δαίδαλος αὐτοῖς ὑποδείξας ἐποίησεν.

(After his victory, Theseus, coming out with the young men and maidens, Theseus wove together such a dance in a circle for the gods, just as the

¹⁶¹ Cited by Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 209. (Hes. fr 141.7 and 140 MW)

¹⁶² Ibid., 260. (Hes. fr 141 MW and fr 145 MW)

¹⁶³ For example, Arthur Bernard Cook, *Zeus: A Study in Ancient Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914.), 657 note 2. Also, Carl Kerényi, *Dionysos: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life* trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 98. Herodotos' description of the Labyrinth at 2.148.

entrance and exit of the Labyrinth had been for him. Daidalos contrived the experience of the dance and showed it to them.)¹⁶⁴

Other scholiasts likewise interpret the dance which Hephaistos creates on the shield as a Labyrinth dance.¹⁶⁵

Plutarch's account of the myth is also important here. He writes:

Ἐκ δὲ τῆς Κρήτης ἀποπλέων εἰς Δῆλον κατέσχε· καὶ τῷ θεῷ Δύσας καὶ ἀναθεῖς τὸ ἀφροδίσιον ὃ παρὰ τῆς Ἀριάδνης ἔλαβεν, ἐχόρευσε μετὰ τῶν ἡϊδέων χορείαν ἣν ἔτι νῦν ἐπιτελεῖν Δηλίους λέγουσι, μίμνημα τῶν ἐν τῷ Λαβυρίνθῳ περιόδων καὶ διεξόδων, ἐν τινὶ ῥυθμῷ παραλλάξεις καὶ ἀνελίξεις ἔχοντι γιγνομένην. καλεῖται δὲ τὸ γένος τοῦτο τῆς χορείας ὑπὸ Δηλίων γέρανος, ὡς ἱστορεῖ Δικαίαρχος. ἐχόρευσε δὲ περὶ τὸν Κερατῶνα βωμόν. ἐκ κεράτων συνηρμοσμένον εὐωνύμων ἀπάντων. ποιῆσαι δὲ καὶ ἀγῶνά φασιν αὐτὸν ἐν Δῆλῳ, καὶ τοῖς νικῶσι τότε πρῶτον ὑπ' ἐκείνου φοῖνικα δοθῆναι. (*Theseus*, 21)

(Sailing away from Crete, Theseus put in at Delos; having sacrificed to the god and dedicated the image of Aphrodite which Ariadne had given him, he danced with the young men a dance which they say the Delians still perform, an imitation of the circular passages and through-passages in the Labyrinth, developing in some rhythm consisting of involutions and evolutions. This genre of dance is called by the Delians, “geranos,” as Dikaiarkhos reports. And Theseus danced it around the Keraton altar, which is constructed of horns all from the left side. And they say he instituted the contests in Delos, and that a palm was given first by him to the victors.)

The Delian dance is usually called the “Crane Dance,” although several scholars argue that “γέρανος” is derived from the root for “to wind” rather than the root for “crane.”¹⁶⁶

The dance may in fact have involved a rope or thread carried by the dancers as they accomplish their steps through their mimetic Labyrinth. In this account, Theseus seems

¹⁶⁴ Scholiast in Venetus A, cited by *Scholia Graeca in Homerii Iliadem*, ed. Wilhelm Dindorf (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1875). Cited in Kathryn J. Gutzwiller, “Homer and Ariadne,” *The Classical Journal* 73, no. 1 (1977), 32-36.

¹⁶⁵ Scholiast in Venetus B, *ibid.* “ἐπεὶ πρῶτην διακεχωρισμένως ἐχόρευον ἄνδρες τε καὶ γυναῖκες, οἱ μετὰ Θησεύως σωθέντες ἐκ τοῦ λαβυρίνθου ἡϊδεοὶ καὶ παρθένοι ἀναμίξ ἐχόρευσαν. (Although just before men and women danced separately, the young men and maidens saved by Theseus from the Labyrinth danced together.)

¹⁶⁶ In the article on dancing, the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* offers that the root in “geranos” is from the verb “to wind,” not from the word for crane. 429. See also Lillian Brady Lawler, “The Geranos Dance—A New Interpretation,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* Volume 77 (1946), 124. Lillian Brady Lawler argues that the original dance of the Labyrinth imitated the coils and windings of a snake, which in Minoan religion was associated with the Great Goddess, and that the thread may be a representation of a snake.

to have learned the dance steps from Ariadne when she gave him the statue of Aphrodite, and, thus, the dance has clear sexual overtones. Also, in Plutarch's account, the dance of the Labyrinth is part of a religious festival which, like many ancient panhellenic festivals, also involves athletic contests. Thus, the Delian dance also is suggestive of initiation rites.

Pausanias describes a stone relief depicting a dance or dance floor at Knossos which he claims to have seen at Knossos itself:

παρὰ τούτοις δὲ καὶ ὁ τῆς Ἀριάδνης χορός, οὗ καὶ Ὅμηρος ἐν Ἰλιάδι μνήμην ἐποίησατο, ἐπειρασμένος ἐστὶν ἐπὶ λευκοῦ λίθου. καὶ Δηλίοις Ἀφροδίτης ἐστὶν οὐ μέγα ξόανον, λελυμασμένον τὴν δεξιὰν χεῖρα ὑπὸ τοῦ χρόνου· κάτεισι δὲ ἀντὶ ποδῶν ἐς τετράγωνον σῆμα. πείθομαι τοῦτο Ἀριάδνην λαβεῖν παρὰ Δαιδάλου, καὶ ἡλίκᾳ ἠκολούθησε τῷ Θησεΐ, τὸ ἄγαλμα ἐπεκομίζετο οἴκοθεν· ἀφαιρεθέντα δὲ αὐτῆς τὸν Θησέα οὕτω φασὶν οἱ Δήλιοι τὸ ξόανον τῆς θεοῦ ἀναθεῖναι τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι τῷ Δηλίῳ, ἵνα μὴ οἴκαδε ἐπαγόμενος ἐς ἀνάμνησιν τε Ἀριάδνης ἐφέλκηται καὶ αἰεὶ νέας ἐπὶ τῷ ἔρωτι εὐρίσκηται τὰς συμφοράς. πέρα δὲ οὐκ οἶδα ὑπόλοιπα ὄντα τῶν Δαιδάλου· (9.40.3-4)

(Besides these, there is also the dance floor of Ariadne, which Homer also created as a monument in the *Iliad*. It is carved in relief in white stone. At Delos, there is a great wooden image of Aphrodite, damaged on the right hand by time. It has a square base instead of feet. I believe that Ariadne received this from Daidalos, and, when she followed Theseus, she took the statue with her from home. Thus, the Delians say that, having lost Ariadne, Theseus dedicated the wooden statue of the goddess to Delian Apollo, so that he would not, taking it home, be drawn to of the memory of Ariadne and always find new grief in his love. I know of no other works by Daidalos which are still around.)

Pausanias certainly takes the dance on the shield of Achilles to be a representation of an actual dance or dancing place at Knossos.

The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, which possibly dates to as early as the eighth century B.C.E.,¹⁶⁷ describes performances of young women in the festivals on Delos:

¹⁶⁷ Athanassakis, for example, argues that the hymn is the oldest of the Homeric Hymns and that it may date to the eighth century. Athanassakis, *The Homeric Hymns*, 70.

ἀλλὰ σὺ Δήλω, Φοῖβε, μάλιστ' ἐπιτέρπειαι ἦτορ,
 ἔνθα τοι ἐλκεχίτωνες Ἴάονες ἡγερέδονται
 αὐτοῖς σὺν παῖδεσσι γυναιξί τε σὴν ἐς ἄγνιαν·
 οἱ δέ σε πυγμαχίῃ τε καὶ ὀρχηστῷ καὶ ἀοιδῇ
 μνησάμενοι τέρπουσιν, ὅταν καδέσωσιν ἀγῶνα.
 φαίῃ κ' ἀθανάτους καὶ ἀγήρως ἔμμεναι ἀνὴρ,
 ὃς τότ' ἐπαντιάσει', ὅτ' Ἴάονες ἀδρόοι εἶεν·
 πάντων γάρ κεν ἴδοιτο χάριν, τέρψαιτο δὲ θυμὸν
 ἀνδράς τ' εἰσορόων καλλιζώνους τε γυναικάς
 νῆας τ' ὠκείας ἢ δ' αὐτῶν κτήματα πολλά.
 πρὸς δὲ τόδῃ μέγα θαῦμα, ὅου κλέος οὐ ποτ' ὀλείται,
 κούραι Δηλιάδες, Ἐκατηβελέταο θεράπναι·
 αἷ τ' ἐπεὶ ἄρ' πρῶτον μὲν Ἀπόλλων' ὑμνήσωσιν,
 αὐτίς δ' αὖ Λητώ τε καὶ Ἄρτεμιν ἰοχέαιραν,
 μνησάμεναι ἀνδρῶν τε παλαιῶν ἢ δὲ γυναικῶν
 ὕμνον ἀείδουσιν, δέλγουσι δὲ φύλ' ἀνθρώπων.
 πάντων δ' ἀνθρώπων φωνὰς καὶ βαμβαλιαστύν
 μιμῆισθ' ἴσασιν· φαίῃ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἕκαστος
 φέγγεσθ'· οὕτω σφιν καλὴ συνάρηρεν ἀοιδή. (146-164)¹⁶⁸

(But you, Phoibos, delight your heart most of all on Delos, where the Ionians come together in your honor in long tunics, with their children and wives on your street. Remembering you, they delight you with boxing matches and dancing and singing, whenever they gather the assembly. Whoever should come upon the Ionians when they are gathered together might think them to be immortal and ageless. He would see the grace of everything and would delight his heart looking upon the men and the beautifully-girdled women and the swift ships and their many treasures. There is also this great wonder, the fame of which will never perish: the Delian maidens, attendants of the god who shoots from afar. After they first hymn Apollo and Leto and arrow-shooting Artemis, remembering men and women of long ago, they sing a hymn and charm the races of men. They know how to mimic the tongues and clacking of all men. Each man would think himself to be speaking, so beautifully their song is performed.)

The ritual described here involves dancing, singing, and athletic contests and honors Apollo, a god frequently associated with Greek coming-of-age rituals, in his birthplace. Thus, it is in keeping with Plutarch's account. The hymnist here specifically says that the maidens sing about ancient men and women and that they mimic the clacking sounds of

¹⁶⁸ I am using the Loeb text edited by Jeffrey Henderson, 2003.

all people.¹⁶⁹ The poet suggests that the ritual is quite old and that it involves language besides Greek. Also, it is worth noting that the dance here exhibits “χαρίζ” and brings about a kind of sexual pleasure in those who watch it just like the dance depicted on Achilles’ shield. The hymnist says about the dancing maidens: “θέλγουσι δὲ φύλ’ ἀνθρώπων” (they charm the races of men). The maidens charm the audience just like the dancers on Achilles’ shield charm their audience. The dance also is spiritually uplifting, making those who participate in the ritual seem immortal and ageless. The poet may be exaggerating for effect here, but it is not unlikely that the dance of the Delian maidens resulted in some kind of divine epiphany. Kallimachos’ *Hymn to Delos* also describes the ritual dancing and singing of young men and women on Delos. Kallimachos describes a ritual which involves coming-of-age rites for both girls and boys, and, like the accounts in Plutarch and in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the ritual seems sexual in nature.¹⁷⁰ Moreover, he explicitly connects the ritual on Delos, which he calls “Ἀστερίη” (Asteria), to the myth about Theseus, the Minotaur, and the Labyrinth.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Alfred Burns suggests that the maidens might have actually sung songs in the Minoan language, “The Chorus of Ariadne,” *The Classical Journal* 70, no. 2 (1974-1975), 8: “The association of Theseus, Ariadne, and the Labyrinth with the Cretan origin of the *aphrodision*, the memory of the Cretan sacrificial horns implied in the name of the ‘Keraton’ altar, and the description of the dance seem to indicate clearly that we are face to face with an unbroken tradition going back to Minoan times. In the dance of course, the *anelixeis* correspond to Homer’s whirling like a potter’s wheel and the *parallaxeis* to the forming of rows (*epi stichas*). The *aphrodision* must be the damaged wooden image of Aphrodite on Delos mentioned in Pausanias’ catalogue of Minoan works. The age of the Delian festival is confirmed by the Homeric Hymn to Apollo which describes the dancing and singing where the Delian girls ‘sing a song of ancient men and women and delight the tribes of men. For they know how to imitate the voices (*phōnas—speech?*) and clacking sounds (*krembaliastyn*) of all men’ (157-163). The last sentence seems to be an indication that even songs in the long-forgotten Minoan language were still part of the ritual. Thus, not only the relief sculptures at Knossos but also the living ritual at Delos, or both, could have provided visual inspiration to the epic poets as to the later vase painters. The Francois Vase and some other parallels mentioned by Schachermeyr show the liberation dance of Theseus and his troupe in just such a dance with boys and girls alternating and holding hands.” Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 110, also suggests that the festivals on Delos include “some vestige of the epiphany of the deity in dance, as inferred for the Minoan religion.” Kern also focuses on the Francois Vase as evidence for an original Minoan dance. Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 49.

¹⁷⁰ It is notable that Kallimachos calls the island “Asteria,” or “The Starry One.”

¹⁷¹ According to Thucydides (3.104.), festivals in Delos had occurred in the distant past when the Athenians purified the island and instituted new Delian games in the fifth century B.C.E. The festivals involved

The Labyrinth

As Hermann Kern points out in his comprehensive study of labyrinths, *Through the Labyrinth: Designs and Meanings over 5000 Years*, there is a difference between a labyrinth and a maze. Whereas a maze offers many different passageways and is necessarily confusing, a labyrinth only offers one passageway to its center, although it features multiple windings and twists.¹⁷² (The earliest representation of a maze dates to around 1420 C.E.¹⁷³) A Cretan labyrinth has seven circuits and is usually represented as a circular system which resembles a spiral, although it is also easy to depict it using a rectilinear form. Kern argues that the essential design is associated with the feminine body of the earth.¹⁷⁴ Representations of the design are found not only on Crete but also in rock-carvings in places such as Cornwall, England¹⁷⁵ and Sardinia, for example.¹⁷⁶ In *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture*, Vincent Scully argues that Greek architectural forms evolve from such a basic understanding of the earth as

athletic contests as well as multiple dances some of which were danced by youths and men and others which were danced by maidens.

¹⁷² Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 23.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 30-31: "It is no accident that some of the earliest labyrinths—Bronze Age petroglyphs—are either associated with graves...or with mines..., i.e. those places where a person sets out on the dangerous path back into the womb of Mother Earth, the 'queen of the underworld.' Returning to the womb, regressing to an embryonic stage, being cast out again by way of restrictive twists and turns and the narrow entrance: this interpretation—symbolic of birth—is borne out of the shape and narrowness of the winding path. It is not by chance that labyrinths are associated with the loops of entrails...Accordingly, the labyrinth's path also represents the path to the underworld, the return to Mother Earth being associated with the promise of reincarnation...We have just discussed the labyrinth as a uterus and the 'penetration into the womb of Mother Earth.'" Kern's comprehensive study of labyrinths includes many illustrations of labyrinths and things which are associated with labyrinths. Among these, 35, he includes a drawing by Leonardo da Vinci which represents a cross section of the "coitus position." The uterus is represented with folds and as having seven cells—in other words, as a labyrinth.

¹⁷⁵ Penelope Reed Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth: From Classical Antiquity Through the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 19. The petroglyph in Tintagel dates to 1800-1400 B.C.E.

¹⁷⁶ Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 66-67. The petroglyph in Sardinia dates to around 1500-1000 B.C.E. and was carved near the ceiling of a chamber tomb.

mother. He too sees the Labyrinth in the complex caves of Crete, twisting openings into the body of the earth.¹⁷⁷ Essentially, the Labyrinth is a representation of the feminine body of the earth; it is a uterus.¹⁷⁸

An oenochoe found in an Etruscan tomb near Tragliatella which dates to around 620 B.C.E. is particularly interesting for the present discussion.¹⁷⁹ The design on the pitcher is divided into four registers. On the neck, there is a naked man leading a goat by means of a rope, a couple facing each other, two birds, a boat which has been turned on its side so that it appears to be standing on its end, and another goat which is also depicted vertically rather than horizontally. The largest register features a seven-circuit Cretan labyrinth which is turned on its side and which contains the word “truia” written from right to left. Young men on horseback appear to be emerging out of its entrance/exit. They carry round shields with depictions of birds on them. The second rider also carries a spear. One naked man walks directly in front of the riders carrying a staff of some kind. In front of him walk seven naked or almost naked young men carrying shields in their left hands and three spears each. Their shields feature images of wild boars. The seven youths are depicted with one foot raised up off the ground, as if they are dancing. Another female figure, behind the Labyrinth, also raises her foot in the manner of the youths and thus also appears to be dancing. The design, of course, seems to be linked to the *lusus Troiae* in some way, but the meaning of “truia” is unclear. It may indeed mean “Troy,” or it may mean, possibly, “dance floor” or “arena.”¹⁸⁰ In front

¹⁷⁷ Vincent Scully, *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), 10-11. Cf. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 24-25.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Charles F. Herberger, *The Thread of Ariadne: The Labyrinth of the Calendar of Minos* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1972), 116.

¹⁷⁹ Capitoline Museum, Palazzo dei Conservatori, Salla del Camino, inv. no. 358. Kern includes several drawings of the designs.

¹⁸⁰ Doob, *The Idea of the Labyrinth*, 27.

of the youths, three figures converse with each other. There is a man in a loin cloth holding a disk or a ball, and there is a clothed woman holding a larger disk or ball. A smaller female figure stands between them. Some kind of repeated animal-face or mask adorns the register in between the two described above, and the bottom registers feature leaping animals and a snake. It has been suggested that the vase shows the judgment of Paris, and but it likely depicts Theseus on Crete.¹⁸¹

The most striking element of the design for the present discussion is the inclusion of two couples having sex directly behind the Labyrinth. The artist has quite clearly shown the penises of the men entering the bodies of the women, whose reproductive organs are rendered as simple half-circles (probably because the couples are shown in profile). The woman of the lower couple also has three lines around her genitals, which may indicate pubic hair. The semi-circular shapes which indicate the reproductive organs of the female figures echo the overall shape of the Labyrinth beside the couples (especially considering the multiple lines around the lower woman's genitals), suggesting that the Labyrinth is associated with the female body. In any case, these copulating couples certainly suggest that the Labyrinth is intimately connected to sexuality.¹⁸²

A Boiotian drinking-cup which dates to the first half of the sixth century B.C.E., known as the Rayet Skyphos, is also interesting for the present discussion.¹⁸³ The drinking-cup features Theseus fighting the Minotaur as Ariadne looks on from behind. Theseus and the fourteen young men and women look on from behind the Minotaur. On

¹⁸¹ Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 78-83 enumerates the different arguments. I actually think it is quite possible that all of the features on the oenochoe are the basic elements of a religious ritual which stems from Minoan ritual, very much like Achilles' shield.

¹⁸² Cf. *ibid.*, 80. The François Vase, which dates to around 570 B.C.E., also figures into the present discussion. On the top register, Theseus is depicted landing by boat on either on Crete or on Delos. Six young men and seven maidens dance together in a line, holding each other by the hand. Theseus leads the group, playing a lyre. Ariadne holds a ball of thread out to him as her nurse looks on.

¹⁸³ Louvre MNC 675. I viewed the cup at <http://www.louvre.fr> (accessed July 8, 2008).

the other side of the cup, there is a strange winged man who may be Ikaros or Daidalos, and there is also a man on horseback carrying a spear. The figure of Ariadne holds a spiral of sorts which most interpret to be the ball of thread, unraveling. Gantz says that the spiral looks “remarkably like a labyrinth.”¹⁸⁴ I agree; the painter has painted the object in black and white, which emphasizes its spiral form. Ariadne’s thread follows the path of the Labyrinth, so the two objects are closely related in myth. Ariadne’s arms are not shown, and the object spirals out directly from her body. If the object is intended to represent both the thread and the Labyrinth, it is significant that it is so closely connected to her body in the design.¹⁸⁵

Many ancient visual depictions of the myth show Ariadne (or her nurse) holding a circular object, which at times looks like a ball of thread and at other times looks more like a crown or garland, an object which figures into some versions of the story.¹⁸⁶ Sarah Morris points out that “χορός,” thread, spiral and garland are all related in their circularity, and she links the various mythical elements to earlier pre-historic motifs.¹⁸⁷ Circular and spiral themes are indeed common in Minoan and Mycenaean architectural and art. The

¹⁸⁴ Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 267.

¹⁸⁵ The description on the Louvre’s website (<http://www.louvre.fr> July 8, 2008) suggests that the winged figure is probably Ikaros or Daidalos and that the horseman may just be “filling up space.” It seems possible, however, that the horseman is to be taken as the horsemen on the oenochoe from Tragliatella—that is, as part of a pyrrhic dance. The horseman is wearing a helmet and carrying a spear, after all.

¹⁸⁶ For descriptions of the important visual depictions, see Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 262-270. As Gantz discusses, Pseudo-Eratosthenes offers a version of the myth in which Ariadne receives a golden crown made by Hephaistos and gives it to Theseus to help light his way in the Labyrinth. Ibid., 264-265.

¹⁸⁷ Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, 188-189: “A recent study of Greek wreathes includes the speculation that the χορός in Iliad 18.590, gift of Daidalos to Ariadne, could have been confused with the circular motifs in the visual arts and contributed to the legend of a wreath or garland, luminous enough if made of precious metal. The correlation between different motifs begins in antiquity—for example, with a scholiast’s comment on Iliad 18.590—that the dance steps of the χορός imitate the Labyrinth, an explanation which betrays an attempt to synthesize works attributed to Daidalos. Χορός, spiral and garland share the theme of circularity, vivid in antiquity in the gloss of Hesychius (χορός· κύκλος, στέφανος), as well as close associations with Crete. Wreath and garland, like the spiral, are survivals of Minoan-Mycenaean cosmographic motifs, all worn, carried, or held by women. These garlands survived in Greek ritual, and particularly in Crete...in ritual scenes, and as attributes of Cretan deities (?) like Diktynna, Eileithyia, and Europa. In myth, Ariadne and her wreath are surely a survival of prehistoric female figures engaged in ritual activity, transformed into a mythological paradigm to serve a new master, Theseus.”

“running spiral” and a variety of rosettes and other round designs—including many which feature multiple concentric circles—appear in Minoan frescoes, on jewelry and other metalwork, and carved into stone. The famous Minoan snake-goddesses often have snakes spiraling around their bodies, and even the typical Minoan flounced skirt is not infrequently represented as a series of concentric circles of fabric. Many of these circular shapes seem to derive from a basic celebration of the fertile feminine body.¹⁸⁸

The circular form is found in many Minoan structures and objects. For example, circular *tholoi* tombs which date to the Early Minoan period are found on the Mesara plain and are probably the models for the more famous circular *tholoi* around Mycenae such as the Treasury of Atreus.¹⁸⁹ Interestingly, the Cretan *tholoi* have paved dancing areas next to them.¹⁹⁰ Circular pits, often interpreted as granaries, which date to the protopalatial period have been discovered in the West Court at Knossos and also at

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Kerenyi, *Dionysos*, 95: “Like most Cretan art, the spiral decoration so frequent on Minoan walls must be interpreted as directly related to *zoë*, which suffers no interruption and permeates all things.”

¹⁸⁹ When the shaft graves of Grave Circle A at Mycenae were surrounded by a parapet towards the end of the Mycenaean period, the Mycenaeans used a circular wall to designate the sacred space of the cemetery.

¹⁹⁰ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 33-34, describes the chthonic rituals which were carried out in and around the circular *tholoi* on Crete: “The large circular stone buildings for the dead, the *tholoi*, first appear in the Early Minoan period on the Mesara plain in southern Crete. These tombs served as burial places for entire clans over many generations. The paved dancing places laid out next to the tombs indicate that they were also cult centers for the community as a whole; curious clay cylinders which were to be placed upright may be interpreted as *phalloi*. Dancing in the precinct of the dead renews the will to life...It is in the Late Mycenaean period that *tholos* tombs of Crete are imitated on the mainland and rise to an unprecedented monumentality, culminating in the Treasury of Atreus. The beehive-shaped building is roofed with a false vault and disappears beneath a mound of earth; a passageway lined with masonry, the *dromos*, leads to the entrance; after each burial it was filled in and then re-excavated for the next burial. The grave chamber itself is a small annex to the massive vault chamber which serves for the ritual and represents the subterranean world itself. The only un plundered *tholos* tomb was found at Archanes near Knossos; here a queen was buried from the time when Greeks were ruling in Knossos...The skull of a sacrificed bull had been placed in front of the door leading to the burial chamber, and a horse had been slaughtered and dismembered in the *tholos*. In other places the chariot horses of the dead lord were stabbed in the *dromos* and buried there. Traces of burning are regularly found in the *tholoi*. A magnificent and uncanny burial ceremony may be imagined: the *dromos* is excavated for the funeral procession and the door to the underworld is opened; the *tholos* is purified with fires and sacrifices; the remains of earlier burials are swept carelessly aside; animal sacrifices follow, doubtless with a sacrificial banquet; and finally the earth closes once more over the dead and their belongings.”

Phaistos.¹⁹¹ There are circular buildings which date to the Late Minoan period at Knossos, and these were quite likely dancing platforms.¹⁹² Several sculptural representations of women and men dancing in circular form have been found, and circular offering tables have been found in several of the palaces.¹⁹³ Concentric circles and spirals adorn Minoan pots from different periods, and concentric circles continue to appear as prominent decorations on Mycenaean pots and even on Attic pots from the late Geometric Period.¹⁹⁴ Finally, the famous Phaistos disk seems important; it is a small clay circular tablet inscribed with hieroglyphs running in a spiral which begins at the outside of the tablet and runs towards the middle.¹⁹⁵

The Aegean “frying pans” also seem helpful here. These date to the Early Bronze Age and have been found in the Cyclades, on Crete, and on the Greek mainland. The objects are called “frying pans” not because they were actually used as frying pans but because they consist of a large, circular “pan” and a short “handle.” The circular “pan” is often embellished with concentric circles or spirals. Moreover, the objects frequently feature a triangular design where the circular “pan” meets the “handle,” which many

¹⁹¹ Nanno Marinatos, “Public Festivals in the West Courts of the Palaces,” *The Function of the Minoan Palaces Proceedings of the Fourth International Symposium of the Swedish Institute in Athens, 10-16 June 1984* eds. Robin Hägg and Nanno Marinatos (Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1987), 135-137.

¹⁹² Peter Warren, “Circular Platforms at Minoan Knossos,” *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 79 (1984), 307-323.

¹⁹³ Photographs available in Geraldine Cornelia Gesell, *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete* Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology Vol. 67 (Göteborg: P. Åströms Förlag, 1985), 187 and 199-201.

¹⁹⁴ See Louise Schofield, “The Iconography of the Concentric Circle Group Oinochoai,” in *Klados: Essays in Honor of J.N. Coldstream* (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 1995), 239-247.

¹⁹⁵ The spiral design of Phaistos Disk is particularly compelling for the present examination of ekphrasis. Because the text runs from the outside to the inside, the text itself creates a whirlpool image which draws a reader into its vortex, very much like the design on Achilles’ shield. John G. Younger has interpreted the text to represent a musical composition which has the form of calls and responses, and he likens the song on the disk to the kind of song which the harvesters on the Harvesters Vase seem to be singing. John G. Younger, “The Mycenaean Bard: The Evidence for Sound and Song,” in *Epos: Reconsidering Greek Epic and Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology Proceedings of the 11th International Aegean Conference/ 11e Rencontre Égéenne Internationale Los Angeles, UCLA-The J. Paul Getty Villa, 20-23 April 2006* eds. Sarah P. Morris and Robert Laffineur *Aegaeum* 28 (Liege, Austin: University de Liege and the University of Texas, 2007), 71-79. Younger’s interpretation is striking in that, if he is correct, the author of the disk has envisioned the written text as a spiralling design.

scholars take to be a pubic triangle.¹⁹⁶ While the use of these odd artifacts has been long debated, many scholars believe that they represent the female womb and were used in a ritual capacity.¹⁹⁷

Lucy Goodison, in *Death, Women, and the Sun: Symbolism of Regeneration in Early Aegean Religion*, discusses the connections between goddesses and death, the body of the earth, solar imagery, the sea, and, most importantly, the circular form.¹⁹⁸ She traces these associations, focusing on the Aegean, Crete, and on the Greek mainland, from the Bronze Age through the Geometric and Archaic periods. In discussing how these associations play out in early Greek literature, she focuses on Circe, Eos (Dawn), Aphrodite, and also Hekate. In her analysis of Circe, she points out that, in the *Odyssey*, not only is Circe related to the sun-god Helios but that her island is located both where the sun rises and where Eos lives. She also has “χοροί” (dancing floors, dances) there. Most importantly for the present discussion, Circe’s name is etymologically related to “κίρκος” which means both “circle” and “hawk”.¹⁹⁹ The connection between the two meanings is found in the circling movement which hawks make when flying.²⁰⁰ Indeed, circles and circular shapes seem generally to be associated with the womb.²⁰¹

When the mythical Daidalos creates the Labyrinth, then, he creates a mimesis of the female body. As a clever craftsman, Daidalos understands *techne*, therefore, he, like Hephaistos, understands how to harness feminine procreative ability. Daidalos is

¹⁹⁶ For an overview of images of the frying pans, see Lucy Goodison, *Death, Women, and the Sun: Symbolism of Regeneration in Early Aegen Religion* Bulletin Supplement 53 (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, 1989), figures 38-41.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 3-4 and 31-39. Goodison offers a good summary of scholars’ interpretations of the “frying pans.”

¹⁹⁸ Ibid..

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 134-135.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 112. Cf. Karl Kerényi, *Goddesses of the Sun and Moon: Circe, Aphrodite, Medea, Niobe* transl. Murray Stein (Irving, Texas: Spring Publications, Inc., 1979), 10-11.

intimately connected to the sexual acts which are at the heart of the myth—Pasiphae's mating with the bull and Ariadne's union with Theseus. He even gives Ariadne the thread which allows her to help Theseus, and, thus, he brings about their sexual union. The thread, as an element of weaving, may represent Ariadne's procreative sexuality and, like other textiles, also her own body. When she offers Theseus the thread, she is granting him entrance to her own inner Labyrinth, and the thread represents his bodily journey along the path.²⁰² Ariadne's thread also may have its roots in the sacral knot, a frequent religious symbol which is associated with the Minoan goddess.²⁰³ Daidalos' familiarity with the inner recesses of the feminine body is also seen in an account of his adventures after fleeing Crete. The story is related by Apollodorus in his *Epitome* (1.15). After Daidalos escapes from Crete to Italy, Minos pursues him to Sicily, where he gives Kokalos a spiral sea shell and asks him to pass a thread through it. Kokalos, who is hiding Daidalos, takes the shell to the craftsman, who attaches the thread to an ant and lets the ant carry the thread through the twisting interior of the shell. When the threaded shell is returned to Minos, the Cretan king knows that Daidalos is hidden on the island. Like Hephaistos, Daidalos uses feminine “μῆτις” in his creativity. Henderson has shown that the interiors of seashells, which are often pink or red in color, are used by Aristophanes and other non-comedic authors as representations of female genitalia.²⁰⁴ Spiral-shaped seashells, as will be shown below, have been found in Minoan sanctuaries

²⁰² The story of Theseus, Ariadne, Daidalos, and the Labyrinth forms the ekphrasis in Catullus 64; in that poem, Catullus also uses the term for whirlpool, “turbo,” at 149 for the Labyrinth. In discussing the poem, Scheid and Svenbro argue that Ariadne's thread is masculine and that it assumes the shapes of the Labyrinth: “The ‘thread’ is called *mitos* in the fifth-century B.C. historian Pherekydes and *stamen* in Propertius; both words mean ‘warp.’ The thread offered to Theseus by Ariadne is thus a thread destined to fulfill the ‘male’ function. Rolled into a ball, it makes a spiral shape, analogous to the ‘whirl’ (turbo) of the Labyrinth itself.” *The Craft of Zeus*, 100.

²⁰³ See Appendix One.

²⁰⁴ Henderson, *The Maculate Muse*, 142.

and were possibly used as votive offerings to a fertility goddess; other vessels have been found which imitate the forms of shells as well.²⁰⁵ Daidalos can thread the spiral of the shell in the myth because, as a craftsman, he understands how to master the power of femininity. In threading the shell, Daidalos penetrates the miniature labyrinth just as Theseus, with Daidalos' and Ariadne's help, penetrates the larger Labyrinth earlier.²⁰⁶

When Theseus enters the Labyrinth, he is entering the darkness of the spiralling feminine body. He penetrates and descends deep into the inner recesses of the womb. He faces the chthonic realm of death, then turns and retraces his steps until he is reborn into the light. In the myth, the Minotaur lurks in the deepest recesses of the Labyrinth and is a man-eating monster. Certainly this figure in its essence is associated with death, but the figure of the Minotaur also signifies communion with the divine through death and rebirth. The figure of the Minotaur, in all likelihood, stems from Minoan religious ritual, which involved dancers wearing masks in the form of bulls' heads, bull-jumping contests, bull-sacrifice, and even at times human sacrifice.²⁰⁷ Theseus is reborn out of the Labyrinth as a sexually mature individual who understands the power of the fertile feminine body. After all, in the myth, his sexual relationship with Ariadne is an important factor in his escape from the Labyrinth; Ariadne is a name for a Minoan fertility goddess.

While it is impossible to understand the exact nature of the ritual dance of the Labyrinth, it is likely that it was part of a larger Knossian ritual—or even series of

²⁰⁵ Also, see Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 153-154. Also, Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 35. For a discussion of shells found in tombs and sanctuaries on Crete and in other areas of the Aegean, see David S. Reese, "Triton Shells from East Mediterranean Sanctuaries and Graves," *Journal of Prehistoric Religion* Volume 3-4 (1990), 7-14.

²⁰⁶ Hesychius' gloss for "Labyrinthos" is "A place in the shape of a marine conch shell."

²⁰⁷ See Appendix One for an overview of Minoan religion.

rituals—which served to celebrate fertility.²⁰⁸ The dance no doubt focused on a cycle of death and rebirth, and it also involved a coming-of-age ritual in which young men and women faced sexual maturity. It is likely that, in conjunction with the dance, the young men competed in athletic contests, quite possibly bull-jumping sports, and also used their newly acquired military skills to help engender the land with fertile energy. Both young women and men, then, celebrated initiation into the fabric of adult society. Like the later coming-of-age rituals described by Ephoros, the ritual probably involved group marriage and, quite possibly, *hieros gamos*. The entire ritual involved the sacrifice of animals, and it may have involved human sacrifice as well. Burkert identifies three concepts which were common to ancient mystery cults: initiation, agrarianism, and sexuality. He argues that the “experience of life overcoming death” existed in the uniting of these three ideas.²⁰⁹ It seems likely that the religious rituals which took place at Knossos in the Minoan period and which continued with increased focus on male initiation and militarism into the Geometric Period and later, functioned like other mystery-rites in that they focused on fertility, initiation, sexuality, and renewal.

Finally, archaeological evidence suggests that various elements which eventually appear in the myth about Theseus and the Minotaur can easily be traced back well into

²⁰⁸ Cf. Nanno Marinatos, “Minoan Sacrificial Ritual: Cult Practice and Symbolism,” *Skripter Utgivna Av Svenska Institutet I Athen* 8° 9 (Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1986), 36-37: “That some of these offerings were remnants of meals can be concluded because of the presence of conical cups, burned pots, or even fava beans, as in Thera. This need not always have been the case, but it is clear that the burying was of a ritual nature. Thus we have here two practices, one of which involves sending the meat below, through burying, the other sending it above, through burning. The existence of animal figurines both in Thera and in the peak sanctuaries, suggests that the meat in question was from a sacrificed animal. This dual practice can be regarded as a polar ritual involving celestial and chthonic deities. However, both practices are characteristic of peak sanctuaries and caves; the former being the typical abode of celestial deities, and the latter of chthonic ones...It is impossible to tell how many deities were involved, but one fact emerges clearly: there was an essential unity in Minoan cult.”

²⁰⁹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 276-277.

the Bronze Age.²¹⁰ A Linear B tablet found at Knossos contains the word “*da-da-re-jo-de*,” which has been translated as “Daidaleionde” (towards the Daidaleion), a word which suggests that a specific place at Knossos was associated with the idea of Daidalos.²¹¹ Another Linear B tablet from Knossos may allude to the “*λαβύρινθος*” in the word “*da-pu-ri-to*”²¹² or “*da-pu-ri-to-jo*.”²¹³ The words “*po-ti-ni-ja me-ri*” (honey for the mistress) also appear on that same tablet. The whole phrase is usually taken to mean “honey for the Mistress of the Labyrinth,” especially since the previous line is a dedication of honey “to all the gods.”²¹⁴ A Linear B tablet from Pylos which dates to around 1200 B.C.E. features a graphic design which probably is a representation of the Labyrinth itself.²¹⁵ Of course, the Linear B tablets appear after the Mycenaeans have a real presence on Crete, but it seems that many aspects of Minoan religious ritual continued through the Mycenaean period and even into the Geometric Period and later.²¹⁶

²¹⁰ For example, see H.L. Lorimer, “Homer’s Use of the Past,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 49, pt. 2 (1929), 145-159. Lorimer argues that, while it is purely a creation of the poet, the shield of Achilles is based on Minoan art.

²¹¹ Alfred Burns, “The Chorus of Ariadne,” 3. Burns writes that K. Kerényi links the word to the chorus in the Iliadic ekphrasis.

²¹² Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, 186.

²¹³ Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 89.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 89-90. Cf. Hermann Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 25: He writes: “The earliest literary references lead one to assume that the term ‘labyrinth’ signified a notable (stone) structure. What is probably the first mention of labyrinth appears on a small Mycenaean clay tablet found at Knossos, dating from ca. 1400 BCE. On the tablet is a text in Linear B script for which the following translation has been proposed: ‘One jar of honey to all the gods, one jar of honey to the Mistress of the ?*Labyrinth*.’ Apparently, this is a list of offerings. The ‘Mistress of the Labyrinth’ (Ariadne?) tends to suggest a goddess and the ‘*Labyrinth*’ seems to signify a particular structure. It must have been a place of worship so utterly different from other temples that it was considered worth mentioning. It is also possible that the word signified a dance surface bearing a labyrinthine pattern corresponding to the drawing on the approximately contemporary clay tablet at Pylos...”

²¹⁵ Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, 186. For an in-depth discussion of the design on the tablet, see John L. Heller, “A Labyrinth from Pylos?” in *American Journal of Archaeology* 65, no. 1 (1961), 57-62.

²¹⁶ For discussions of the continuation of Minoan culture into the Mycenaean Period and subsequent Iron Age, see, for example, Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*; Willets, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, especially part two; Gertrude Rachel Levy, *The Gate of Horn: A Study of the Religious Conception of the Stone Age and their Influence upon European Thought* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1948), 242-330; Gessell, *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete*, 66; Mieke Prent, “Cult Activities at the Palace of Knossos from the End of the Bronze Age: Continuity and Change,” in *Knossos: Palace, City, State*

Achilles' Shield as Kosmos of Ritual

Several scholars have argued that there are links between the reference on Achilles' shield to the dance floor which Daidalos makes for Ariadne at Knossos to Minoan religious rites.²¹⁷ It is my belief that the dancing scene on the shield is not the

Proceedings of the Conference in Herakleion organized by the British School at Athens and the 23rd Ephoreia of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities of Herakleion, in November 2000, for the Centenary of Sir Arthur Evans's Excavations at Knossos eds. Gerald Cadogan, Eleni Hatzaki, and Adonis Vasilakis (London: The British School at Athens, 2004), 411-419; Alan Peatfield, "After the 'Big Bang'—What? or Minoan Symbols and Shrines Beyond Palatial Collapse," in *Placing the Gods: Sanctuaries and Sacred Space in Ancient Greece* eds. Susan E. Alcock and Robin Osborne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 19-36; and Carla M. Antonaccio, "Placing the Past: the Bronze Age in the Cultic Topography of Early Greece," in *Placing the Gods: Sanctuaries and Sacred Space in Ancient Greece* eds. Susan E. Alcock and Robin Osborne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 79-104; and Post Minoan Crete Proceedings of the First Colloquium on Post-Minoan Crete held by the British School at Athens and the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 10-11 November 1995 eds. W.G. Cavanagh and M. Curtis (London: The Managing Committee of the British School at Athens, 1998).

²¹⁷ For example, Cook, in his *Zeus*, 483-485: *A Study in Ancient Religion*, argues that the Labyrinth dance was a Minoan ritual in which dancers performed a dance which reflected solar patterns in the sky. Levy, *The Gate of Horn*, 246-248, Levy traces religious ideas from the Paleolithic Age through the Classical Age in Greece. She also interprets the Homeric reference as an allusion to Minoan religious rituals which involved a Labyrinth dance, the goddess Ariadne, a "bull-masked ministrant," and young men. Willets, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, 96-103 and 120-126. Willets sees Ariadne as a fertility goddess who was associated with the moon, and he interprets Ariadne's dance as a "love-dance." He argues that the original Minoan ritual involved "collective marriages," probably following institutionalized male initiation rituals. Willets also suggests that the Labyrinth dance followed the movement of the sun through the sky. Alfred Burns argues that Homer probably saw a representation of the dance at Knossos or, perhaps, a ritual on Delos which was a continuation of the Labyrinth dance at Knossos. Burns, "The Chorus of Ariadne," 1-12. Burns argues that it is "not unlikely" that Homer or earlier poets could have actually seen the representations which these later writers describe. Burns, "The Chorus of Ariadne," 6: "That the wandering poets covered a great amount of territory is usually taken for granted. Homer's specific remarks on the composition of the population of Crete, his description of the harbor of Amnisos with the near-by cave of Eileithyia (*Od.* 19.172-189) seem to indicate first-hand acquaintance with Crete." Kathryn Gutzwiller argues that the Labyrinth dance was an essential element of the myth itself and that the formulaic language of the Homeric passage shows that knowledge of the dance was transmitted via oral tradition. Gutzwiller, "Homer and Ariadne." Steven H. Lonsdale, "A Dancing Floor for Ariadne (*Iliad* 18.590-592): Aspects of Ritual Movement in Homer and Minoan Religion," in *The Ages of Homer: A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule* eds. Jane B. Carter and Sarah P. Morris (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 274. Lonsdale writes, 275: "The technai alluded to on the Shield—dance, architecture, metalwork, decorated pottery—all had reached very high levels in the Bronze Age, and the poet is celebrating the renewed surge in technical ability in the Iron Age, as seen elsewhere in the technological similes in the *Odyssey*. Unlike writing, which had to be reinvented, there was a more or less continuous tradition of poetry, metalwork, wheel-made pottery, and, by implication, dance. In the epic poets' repertoire *ekphrasis* and simile are among the most virtuostic poetic techniques—what more obvious opportunity for a poet to display his special vision of the Bronze Age and his link to the craftsmen than in his tour de force? With the Ariadne-Daidalos simile the poet gives the final vignette a special rub that activates a memory of

only scene on the shield which is rooted in ancient ritual; all of the scenes together, in fact, form the whole of a ritual—or even a series of rituals—which focuses on initiation, death, sexuality, fertility, and the renewal of life. In general, the ritual depicted on the shield focuses on the feminine body and its procreative power, which the culminating Labyrinth dance clearly illustrates by means of its mimesis of the spiralling interior of a uterus. The ritual embodied on Achilles' shield functions very much as a mystery rite, offering its audience comfort and hope for a blessed afterlife in the face of death. The cyclical nature of the subject-matter of the ekphrasis thus echoes the basic circular form of its composition.

Bronze Age dancing rituals." Lonsdale takes the "brevity" of the Homeric allusion to Daidalos, the dancing floor, and Ariadne to indicate that Homeric "audiences had an automatic familiarity with the legendary dances of Crete and their role in Ariadne's tale." Lonsdale, 277-279, sees displays of agonistic behavior in courtship dances, which, he argues, parallel such displays in military situations. He connects the movements of the dancers on the shield to the movements which Achilles and Hektor execute during their final battle. He argues, 278, that both the dance on the shield and the later interaction between Achilles and Hektor on the battlefield are based on Minoan ecstatic religious ritual; he focuses specifically on sacrificial ritual and suggests that Achilles' movements suggest that he turns Hektor into a sacrificial victim. Ann Bergren sees evidence of ritual sexuality elsewhere in the *Iliad*. In discussing Hera's deception of Zeus, she recognizes elements of the festival of the Daidala, which was celebrated in Boiotia. The festival focused on the quarrel and reconciliation of Zeus and Hera, who were represented as wooden statues which were ritually burned. Bergren, "Helen's Web," 27-28: "At the center of the *klea andrōn* is ritual sexuality—the ritual, the holiday, the comedy, the plotting that is sexuality. For the Deception of Zeus evokes by detailed parallels one of the most common rituals of the Greek states, the *hieros gamos* or 'sacred marriage' of the sky-god with the goddesses of the earth, the union by which Zeus calls himself the 'father of men and gods.' The fullest *hieros logos* upon the *hieros gamos* accompnies the Boeotian festival of the Daedala. In this myth we see how the *hieros gamos* of Zeus and Hera celebrates fertility and sexuality as a comic plot of jealousy, deception, recognition and laughter...In light of the *hieros gamos* of the Daedala and the other celebrations of the union of Zeus and Hera it is clear that the Deception of Zeus in the *Iliad* represents the traditions of this ritual, but with a critical twist: in the epic all phases of the action are in the control not of Zeus but of Hera...the *Iliad* here recreates the union by which the Indo-European sky god makes himself the *patēr andrōn te theōn te*, but with Zeus too, like Aphrodite, tricked by his susceptibility to sex." Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 63, says of the Boioitian Daidala, "Connections with the Minoan peak cults, and perhaps even with the Semitic and Anataolian fire festivals, must be considered, even though it is impossible to find direct proof." For a description of fire festivals in Greece, see Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 60-64 and William D. Furley, *Studies in the Use of Fire in Ancient Greek Religion* (Salem, New Hampshire: The Ayer Company, 1981). In general, Burkert traces rituals involving *hieros gamos* to the Near East, and, while he argues that evidence is "scanty and unclear" for cults involving *hieros gamos* in Greece, he too includes the union of Zeus and Hera in Book Fourteen of the *Iliad* as an illustration of the concept. *Greek Religion*, 108.

Also, in recent years, several scholars have seen formulaic elements of Homeric epic in Minoan and Mycenaean art.²¹⁸ The miniature frescoes from the West House at Akrotiri on Thera have been the subject of particular interest. Although the frescoes are Cycladic, they are heavily influenced by Minoan culture. Collectively, the frescoes show, among other subjects, several towns, a large fleet of ships, warriors marching, processions of different groups of people, a dance, herdsman and animals, and a religious ritual being carried out on a hilltop.²¹⁹ S. Hiller has argued that the shield of Achilles contains elements which are well represented in traditional Minoan art and, in fact, that the ekphrasis is based on Minoan poetry.²²⁰ The scenes on Achilles' shield all represent elements of human life which are ritualistic—activities which happen over and over.²²¹

²¹⁸ For example, Robert Lafinneur has shown that the imagery of Homeric similes is strikingly similar to imagery in art from the Late Bronze Age. Robert Lafinneur, "Homeric Similes: A Homeric Background?," in *Epos: Reconsidering Greek Epic and Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology Proceedings of the 11th International Aegean Conference/ 11e Rencontre Égéenne Internationale Los Angeles, UCLA-The J. Paul Getty Villa, 20-23 April 2006* eds. Sarah P. Morris and Robert Laffineur *Aegaeum* 28 (Liege, Austin: University de Liege and the University of Texas, 2007), 79-85.

²¹⁹ In the "Ship Procession" fresco, women look at the action from the rooftops in a manner which is reminiscent of the scene with the city at war on Achilles' shield. The fresco features a procession of young men who are young warriors, and one of the youths leads a bull for sacrifice, which, according to Immerwahr, suggests a religious procession. Sara A. Immerwahr, *Aegean Painting in the Bronze Age* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 126. On 71, Immerwahr argues that the "Meeting on the Hill and Shipwreck and Landing Party" fresco shows warriors landing at a sight and that part of this fresco may show a religious ritual on a Minoan peak sanctuary. Nanno Marinatos has shown that the site was a shrine and that the frescoes, all together, depict a spring religious festival which focuses on warriors, naval power, and the sea. Nanno Marinatos, "The West House at Akrotiri as Cult Center," *Mitteilungen des deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung* 98 (1983), 1-19. J.A. Macgillivray has suggested that the "Ship Procession" fresco actually commemorates the Thera youth travelling to Palaikastro on Crete to be initiated into the Minoan rites of passage which took place there. J.A. MacGillivray, "The Therans and Dikte," in *Thera and the Aegean World III* Volume I: Archaeology (London: The Thera Foundation, 1990), 363-369.

²²⁰ S. Hiller, "The Miniature Frieze in the West House: Evidence for Minoan Poetry?," in *Thera and the Aegean World III* Volume I: Archaeology (London: The Thera Foundation, 1990), 229-236.

²²¹ Sarah P. Morris, an early proponent for a connection between the "Ship" fresco and the Catalogue of Ships in Book Two of the *Iliad*, has argued that many of the scenes which appear in the miniature frescoes from Akrotiri on Thera are echoed in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Specifically, she has suggested that the frescoes include scenes which are remarkably similar to several of the scenes on Achilles' shield. Morris argues that the same narrative which is found in epic exists in the frescoes and in other Minoan and Mycenaean works. She also argues that the parallelism between the elements of the frescoes and the Homeric poems shows that the epic sources for the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* must have existed in some form by 1500 B.C.E. Morris suggests that the narrative art of the frescoes should be seen as decorative rather than religious, but it seems that the frescoes could easily have functioned as beautiful decorations which were at

Religious ritual often focuses on cyclical events and the renewal which is necessary to sustain human life. In elaborating the designs on Achilles' shield, Hephaistos creates a narrative of images which is quite similar to the narrative of images found in the art of the Late Bronze Age, which is religious in nature and which often depicts ritual. Specifically, the scenes on Achilles' shield parallel Minoan rites which took place at Knossos as they continued into the Geometric period, focusing primarily on the fertile, feminine body of the earth. That the shield contains elements of a Knossian religious ritual or a series of rituals which focused on a fertility goddess is not surprising given that the shield itself was an important symbol of a goddess and was, to some degree, anthropomorphized to stand for her. Moreover, shields also were an important element of ritual pyrrhic dancing on Crete. Technology and craft—especially metalwork—figure largely in the cult activity of the Kouretes and Cretan Zeus, which focused on a goddess and involved mystery-rites. A detailed discussion of the scenes on Achilles' shield follows, but it is worth pointing out that, in general, the three elements which Burkert argues are common to the ancient mystery cults—initiation, agrarianism, and sexuality—

the same time religiously significant for their audiences. Sarah P. Morris, "A Tale of Two Cities: The Miniature Frescoes from Thera and the Origins of Greek Poetry," *American Journal of Archaeology* 93, no. 4 (1989), 511-535. L. Vance Watrous argues that the "Fleet" fresco from Akrotiri on Thera parallels the organization of the *Odyssey*. Watrous sees significant evidence of religious ritual in the frescoes and likens them to Egyptian tomb paintings which "guaranteed the tomb owner the continuing order of the cosmos created by the Egyptian empire." L. Vance Watrous, "The Fleet Fresco, the Odyssey, and Greek Epic Narrative," in *Epos: Reconsidering Greek Epic and Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology Proceedings of the 11th International Aegean Conference/ 11e Rencontre Égéenne Internationale Los Angeles, UCLA-The J. Paul Getty Villa, 20-23 April 2006* eds. Sarah P. Morris and Robert Laffineur *Aegaeum* 28 (Liege, Austin: University de Liege and the University of Texas, 2007), 97-105. (Quotation from pg. 101) Interestingly, Watrous argues that the entire series of miniature frescoes runs in a "clockwise circular path" around the room. Andreas G. Vlachopoulos has focused on the Thera frescoes which depict maturation rituals and compared them with epic imagery and language; Vlachopoulos also links the frescoes to religious ritual, arguing for an understood mythology about humans and gods which to some degree survived as Homeric "ἔπεια" (words). Andreas G. Vlachopoulos, "Mythos, Logos, Eikon: Motifs of Early Greek Poetry in the Wall Paintings of Xeste 3 at Akrotiri, Thera," in *Epos: Reconsidering Greek Epic and Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology Proceedings of the 11th International Aegean Conference/ 11e Rencontre Égéenne Internationale Los Angeles, UCLA-The J. Paul Getty Villa, 20-23 April 2006* eds. Sarah P. Morris and Robert Laffineur *Aegaeum* 28 (Liege, Austin: University de Liege and the University of Texas, 2007), 107-117.

are all well represented within the imagery of the ekphrasis.²²² In this section, I will discuss each scene on the shield in terms of Minoan and later Cretan ritual and, at times, fertility ritual in general.

I. Earth, sky, sea, sun, moon and stars (18.483-489)

Hephaistos first embellishes the shield with the basic elements of the universe: the earth, the sky, and the sea. These are the important areas of the Minoan world and are

²²² The imagery is shared by illustrations on other Greek artifacts. See Glenn Markoe, *Phoenician Bronze and Silver Bowls from Cyprus and the Mediterranean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 1, 55-66 and 116. For example, many of the bowls and shields show scenes of grazing animals and herds of domestic animals such as cattle and sheep. Many feature lions as well. The Bernardini cauldron, for example, features a cowherd attempting to drive away a lion which is attacking his herd. Like the cowherds on the shield of Achilles, the man is helped by his dog. The same cauldron includes a farmer tending his fields while his wife harvests grapes. Two Phoenician bowls, from Amathus and Delphi, show cities being besieged. The Amathus bowl shows a two-pronged attack and, as Markoe writes, 66, “is strongly reminiscent of the city siege described in ‘the story of two cities’ on the shield of Achilles.” A dancing scene appears on one bowl from the Idaian cave. Interestingly, twelve Phoenician bowls show religious processions or banquets, many for an enthroned goddess who is probably the fertility goddess Anat-Astarte or Aphrodite. Nanno Marinatos recognizes the figures of two naked goddesses on a Phoenician bowl from Olympia and argues that the naked goddesses are symbolic as protectresses of heroes. Nanno Marinatos, *The Goddess and the Warrior: The Naked Goddess and the Mistress of Animals in Early Greek Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 44. It is certainly beyond the scope of this project to speculate about the ritual use of these Phoenician artifacts, but it is worth mentioning that many of the Phoenician bowls found in Greece have been discovered at religious shrines such as Olympia, Athens, and Delphi. Thus, even if they were simply votive offerings, at least to some degree the artifacts are religious in nature. Of course, as discussed above, the bronze shields and bowls found in the Idaian Cave were actually used in religious ritual. While I do not believe that Homer is describing an actual work of art in the ekphrasis about Achilles’ shield, or even that he is basing his own embellished description on any one artifact, I do believe the shield is based on this genre of *technē*. That this genre of metalwork is the basis for Homer’s description seems especially likely in light of the other connections to Near Eastern poetry and craft discussed earlier in this chapter. Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, 172. “The fate of archaic Crete represents an eccentric and isolated version of the Orientalizing experience in Greece, intensified by the island’s early, continuous, and thorough contact with the Near East. Several centuries of this intimate and profound exchange produced innovations in art that did not evolve into Panhellenic archaic and classical patterns, for history turned its back on Crete after 600 B.C. Instead, the effects of early contact survived in legend: Greek memory helps modern discoveries illuminate the particular experience of Crete, rescuing the Orientalizing from its marginalized status as an archaeological phase. The challenge of this chapter is to correlate the complexity of Cretan early Iron Age art with its mythological and ritual traditions. The comparison of the Idaian shield and the Palaikastro hymn in the previous section suggests that many early scenes in Crete remained close to Levantine parallels before integration into Greek religion. Myth and ritual were not the only two partners in the dialogue of Greek religion; art was often a vital third participant. Cult practices millennia old found new representations just as they inspired new etiologies, rarely codified as a fixed set of tales or beliefs. The story of Daidalos exemplifies this process, building epic episodes onto a rich iconographic tradition.”

the zones which the Minoan goddess occupies. They are also the realms which figure into many fertility rituals. In the Eleusinian Mysteries, for example, the initiates began their spiritual journey with a ritual purification in the sea, supposedly because Demeter had a special connection to the sea.²²³ Some sources indicate that the initiates even carried their piglets, symbols of earth-goddesses, into the sea with them before sacrificing them.²²⁴ The Greater Mysteries took place in the autumn in the month of Boedromion and focused on the grain-giving fertility of the earth and the cycle of death and rebirth as evidenced by Persephone's marriage to Hades. Before the building programs of Solon and Peisistratos, when the Telesterion was constructed, the Mysteries were in all likelihood conducted around a fire, directly under the night sky. As Burkert argues, the participants invoked both earth and sky in their celebration of fertility; thus, an ouranic element was no doubt present in the rites.²²⁵

Hephaistos then adds specific celestial bodies to the realm of the sky on the shield: the sun, the moon, and the constellations. The ouranic realm necessarily figures into fertility rituals because the movement of the celestial bodies in the sky marks the course of the agricultural year. Both the Homeric and the Hesiodic poems show significant knowledge of the constellations, and Hesiod's *Works and Days* shows that the stars were used extensively by ancient farmers to time seasonal activities, for example. Even the cult of Zeus Olympios at Athens and Sparta, a god very much of the ouranic realm, was mainly concerned with the fertility of the earth; after all, as a weather-god,

²²³ Karl Kerényi, *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter* trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1967), 60.

²²⁴ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 286.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 288-289.

Zeus could nourish or destroy crops.²²⁶ That Minoan ritual included celestial elements seems clear in that all of the Minoan palaces are laid out according to the four points of the compass, and thus aligned with the stars, despite significant differences in terrain at each site.²²⁷ Many peak sanctuaries show evidence for astronomical observances.²²⁸ Lucy Goodison has shown that the alignment of the doorways of Minoan circular tholos tombs with the rising sun which has been noted by several scholars is echoed in the architecture of Knossos. The architecture of the “Throne Room” complex at Knossos shows careful alignment with the rising sun through the course of the year and that sunlight entering the dark interior space of the “Throne Room” through the anteroom at certain times of the day creates a particular “theatrical” effect.²²⁹ Charles Herberger argues that Minoan religion focused on the celestial bodies and that the famous Taureador Fresco from Knossos is actually an astronomical calendar.²³⁰ Alexander MacGillivray also believes that this fresco depicts astral movements, and he traces Minoan astronomical knowledge to the Egyptians. He argues that the Labyrinth is actually the spiralling dome of the sky and that the constellation Taurus is an excellent

²²⁶ Noel Robertson, *Festivals and Legends: The Formation of Greek Cities in the Light of Public Ritual* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1992), 134-143.

²²⁷ Nanno Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 41-43. It is worth mentioning here that Florence and Kenneth Wood have argued that the annual movement of the constellations is encoded in the *Iliad* and that the whole poem served to transmit astronomical information from one generation to the next. While it does not make sense to me that farmers would memorize an epic for this purpose when it would be much easier just to walk outside and point out monthly changes in the sky, their association of the poem with celestial movements is nonetheless interesting. Florence and Kenneth Wood, *Homer's Secret Iliad: The Epic of the Night Skies Decoded* (London: John Murray, 1999).

²²⁸ See, for example, G. Henriksson and M. Blomberg, “Evidence for Minoan Astronomical Observations from the Peak Sanctuaries on Petsophas and Traostalos,” *Opuscula Atheniensia* 21 (1996), 99-114.

²²⁹ Lucy Goodison, “From Tholos Tomb to Throne Room: Perceptions of the Sun in Minoan Ritual,” in *Potnia: Deities and Religion in the Aegean Bronze Age* [Aegaeum 22] eds. Robert Laffineur and Robin Hägg (Liege/ Austin: 2001), 77-88. Also, Lucy Goodison, “From Tholos Tomb to Throne Room: Some Considerations of Dawn Light and Directionality in Minoan Buildings,” in *Knossos: Palace, City, State* (London: The British School at Athens, 2004), 339-350.

²³⁰ Herberger, *The Thread of Ariadne*.

candidate for the legendary Minotaur.²³¹ As has been shown above, the Labyrinth is a representation of a uterus, but, of course, in Minoan religion, the fertility goddess had both chthonic and ouranic manifestations. Thus, it is possible that the feminine body of the earth was also reflected in the sky.

As mentioned above, the religious symbols of the sun disk and crescent moon appear in Minoan religious art. For example, a Minoan gold ring from Mycenae features a goddess sitting under a tree, receiving offerings which appear to be lilies and other flowers from women.²³² The tree appears to be full of fruit; the entire scene suggests fertility and abundance. The sun and the moon both hang in the sky, close to each other as a pair, separated from the earthly realm by a curving arc. The religious symbols of the double axe and the figure-eight shield also hang in the sky. Interestingly, the shield is anthropomorphized with a head, arms, and legs. As mentioned above, several scholars believe that *hieros gamos* figured into Minoan ritual. Some argue that the original Labyrinth is associated with a fertility ritual in which the sun and moon mate.²³³ Several scholars argue that Pasiphae, whose name essentially means something like “All-Shining,” as the daughter of Helios the sun god, represents the moon.²³⁴ Pausanias claims to have seen bronze statues of Helios and Pasiphae, whom he explicitly calls “Σελήνης” (3.26.1,) (The Moon), in Thalamae. Her mythical mating with the bull may

²³¹ Alexander MacGillivray, “The Astral Labyrinth at Knossos,” in *Knossos: Palace, City, State* (London: The British School at Athens, 2004), 329-338.

²³² CMS I, 17.

²³³ See, for example, Raymond Christinger, “The Hidden Significance of the the ‘Cretan’ Labyrinth,” *History of Religions* 15, no. 2 (November, 1975), 183-191. Christinger argues that the Labyrinth is a representation of the nocturnal sky and that the *potnia dapurito* of the Linear B tablets is actually a star. He also compares the Labyrinth dance to the Chinese magic square and links the Cretan ritual to Egypt; Also, Philippe Borgeaud, “The Open Entrance to the Closed Palace of the King: The Greek Labyrinth in Context,” *History of Religions* 14, no.1 (1974), 1-27. Borgeaud sees the cult of Zeus Asterios at Gortyn in Crete as a cult of the nocturnal sky and links Ouranos Asterios (the spouse of Gaia) to Zeus Asterios.

²³⁴ Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 46, for example.

represent a ritual in which the coupling of sun and moon was carried out, especially considering the role of queens in other Greek religious rituals.²³⁵ The fact that both sun and moon are represented on the ring seems to suggest that a union of some kind was important, but, most importantly, it certainly suggests that celestial elements were important for the goddess.

Minoan and later Cretan art often features designs which seem to be stars or suns, often in conjunction with fertility goddesses and Minotaurs. For example, a Cretan seal found at Knossos which is made from black hematite and dates to around 1500 B.C.E. shows an acrobat in the middle of a flip of some kind. The acrobat's upper body resembles that of a bull, and his lower half looks human. There is a star between the horns of the bull.²³⁶ In the *Library* (3.1.4), Apollodoros says that the Minotaur's actual name was "Asterios." In Greek, "Asterios" basically means "the Starry One," so the name certainly imparts an astral element to the myth itself.²³⁷ The silver coins from Knossos, which are discussed above and which range in date from 500-100 B.C.E., show a variety of labyrinthine patterns, human dancers with bulls' heads, the head of a bull

²³⁵ For example, in the Athenian festival of the Dionysian Anthesteria, the wife of the Basileus, the Basilinna, was given to the god Dionysos to be his wife. Their sexual union was carried out in the Boukolion. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 109, writes, "The technicalities of the act, whether an image was involved or whether the king donned the mask of the god, are left to speculation. The mythical reflection of this is Ariadne whom Theseus, the first king of Attica, had taken as wife, and whom, at divine command, he was then obliged to surrender to the god at night time. Ariadne is surrounded by orgiastic rites and lamentation, just as the Anthesteria wantonness appears united with dark myths of death. Here too the marriage is sacred insofar that it is more than human pleasure." It is worth noting here that Dionysos often is represented as having bull's horns or even as a bull.

²³⁶ Cited in Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 51. (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, inv. no. 1938, 1070)

²³⁷ In a scholion to a section of Book Twelve of the *Iliad*, there is an account of Zeus' abduction of Europa in which she is gathering flowers in a meadow with other girls when Zeus turns himself into a bull and lures her away. He has sex with her, and she gives birth to Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon. Then she is given to the king of Crete as his wife. The king's name is Asterion. Cited in Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 210.

inside a labyrinthine pattern, fertility goddesses such as Demeter and Persephone, as well as suns or stars.²³⁸

It is significant that Homer uses the Greek word “τείρεα” for the stars on Achilles’ shield instead of “ἀστέροι” or “ἄστροα.” The word which is the epic plural for “τέρας” usually means “portents” rather than “stars,” although here it clearly indicates the constellations since the Pleiades, the Hyades, Orion, and the Bear are all mentioned. The word is used in the Homeric epics to indicate signs from the gods; thus, these celestial bodies are endowed with religious significance. The Pleiades, the Hyades, and Orion are visible from May to November, when all of the agricultural activities later described on the shield would regularly occur.²³⁹ As Edwards notes, in the *Works and Days*, Hesiod uses the settings of Pleiades, the Hyades, and Orion to indicate the period for plowing and reaping.²⁴⁰ Robert Hannah adds that, by mentioning the four groups of stars together as a unit, the poet specifically signifies the ploughing season and the harvesting season rather than the expanse of time from May to November.²⁴¹ In any case, certainly it is significant that the poet points out these particular groups of stars. In suggesting that Taurus may be the Minotaur in the Labyrinth, MacGillivray points out the Hyades and Pleiades make up the head and shoulder of the bull figure in the constellation. He also points out that Orion, the constellation which represents a young ephebic hunter, “confronts” Taurus as that constellation is “charging east.”²⁴² Thus, the movement of the stars mimics a bull-hunt, which, as has been discussed, figured in Minoan initiation rites.

²³⁸ Cited in Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 53-55

²³⁹ Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 212.

²⁴⁰ Ibid. Edwards also points to a possibly etymology for the Hyades in the Greek word for pig, a common symbol of earth-goddesses and fertility. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary* agrees, translating the word as “Piglets.”

²⁴¹ Robert Hannah, “The Constellations on Achilles’ Shield,” *Electronic Antiquity* 2, no. 4 (December 1994).

²⁴² MacGillivray, “The Astral Labyrinth at Knossos,” 334.

In any case, as a creature found in the Labyrinth, it is likely that the original Minotaur represents the divine element which is found inside the mysterious, fertile interior of the feminine body.²⁴³

As discussed above, Homer says in the *Odyssey*:

τῇσι δ' ἐνὶ Κνωσός, μεγάλη πόλις, ἔνθα τε Μίνως
ἐννέωρος βασιλεὺς Διὸς μεγάλου ὀαριστής...
(19.178-179)

(There is Knossos, the great city, where Minos ruled for eight-year periods, a familiar of great-hearted Zeus...)

Using evidence collected at the peak sanctuary at Petsophas in eastern Crete, Mary Blomberg and Göran Henriksson have shown that the Minoans indeed understood the oktaëteris, the eight-year lunisolar cycle and that they used the oktaëteris to regulate their calendar of religious rituals.²⁴⁴ Blomberg and Henriksson argue that the Minoan fertility goddess was associated with the moon, and, using both Linear A and Linear B tablets, they show that the Minoan goddess was still worshipped after the Mycenaeans took over at Knossos. The Mycenaean ruler at Knossos (identified by Sir Arthur Evans—who was well familiar with the Homeric passage—as a priest-king) took advantage of the Minoan knowledge of the celestial cycle and used the information to rule with legitimacy, through a process of syncretism of Mycenaean and Minoan beliefs. They also argue that the Mycenaean use of Minoan religion continued on the mainland and that use of the oktaëteris was still apparent in the Geometric and later periods in other parts of Greece.

²⁴³Cf. Paul Allen Miller, “The Minotaur Within: Fire, the Labyrinth, and Strategies of Containment in *Aeneid* 5 and 6,” *Classical Philology* 90, no. 3 (July, 1995), 225-240. Allen offers an extensive discussion of the feminine sexuality of the Labyrinth, although he of course is focusing on later uses of the motif.

²⁴⁴ Mary Blomberg and Göran Henriksson, “Minos Enneoros: Astroastronomical Light on the Priestly Role of the King in Crete,” in *Religion and Power in the Ancient Greek World: Proceedings of the Uppsala Symposium of 1993* eds. Pontus Hellström and Brita Alroth Acta Univ. Ups. *Boreas: Uppsala Studies in Ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern Civilizations* 24 (1996), 27-39.

The Spartan kings, for example, every ninth year underwent divine judgment by ritual observations of the celestial bodies.²⁴⁵

Lucian's dialogue about dance includes a discussion of the ouranic bodies and dance. In the dialogue, the character Lycinus explains the origins of dance:

...ἀλλ' οἱ γε τάληθδέστατα ὀρχήσεως πέρι γενεαλογοῦντες ἅμα τῇ πρώτῃ γενέσει τῶν ὅλων φαῖεν ἄν σοι καὶ ὀρχησιν ἀναφῦναι, τῷ ἀρχαίῳ ἐκείῳ Ἑρωτι συναναφανεῖσαν. ἢ γοῦν χοτεία τῶν ἀστέρων καὶ ἡ πρὸς τοὺς ἀπλανεῖς τῶν πλανήτων συμπλοκὴ καὶ εὐρύθμος αὐτῶν κοινωνία καὶ εὐτακτος ἁρμονία τῆς πρωτογόνου ὀρχήσεως δείγματά ἐστιν. (7)

(...But indeed the genealogists of dance who are the most truthful will tell you that dance sprung into being at the same time as the first genesis of the universe, appearing at the same time as Eros—the ancient one. The harmony of the stars and the interlacing of the unfixed planets with the fixed planets and the rhythmic concord and well-ordered harmony are evidence for primordial dance.)

Of course, Lucian is not specifically discussing the dance of the Labyrinth. Still, his notion that the origins of dance are found in the movement of the planets and stars is compelling, especially since the very next subject he discusses are the first earthly dances, which took place in Phrygia and on Crete. It is also noteworthy that he links both dance and the origin of the universe to the force of *eros*.²⁴⁶ Moreover, in the choral ode which describes Achilles' shield in Euripides' *Elektra*, discussed above, the celestial elements appear as “ἄστρον αἰθέριοι χοροί” (ethereal choruses of stars). Euripides' interpretation suggests that the celestial elements on Achilles' shield are involved in a

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 39.

²⁴⁶ Lucian, in fact, discusses the scene in the Homeric ekphrasis shortly later in the same dialogue: Ἄ δὲ Ὀμηρος ὑπὲρ Ἀριάδνης ἐν τῇ ἀσπίδι πεποίηκεν καὶ τοῦ χοροῦ ὃν αὐτῇ Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν ὡς ἀνεγνωκότε σοι παρήμι, καὶ τοὺς ὀρχηστὰς δὲ τοὺς δύο οὓς ἐκεῖ ὁ ποιητὴς κυβιστητῆρας καλεῖ, ἡγουμένους τοῦ χοροῦ, καὶ πάλιν ἃ ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ ἀσπίδι λέγει· “Κοῦροι δ' ὀρχηστῆρες ἐδίνεον,” ὡς τι κάλλιστον τοῦτο τοῦ Ἥφαιστου ἐμποιήσαντος τῇ ἀσπίδι. (13) (I let pass by as known to you those things which have been said by Homer about Ariadne on the shield and about the dance floor which Daidalos made for her, and also the two dancers whom the poet there calls tumblers, who lead the dance, and again those things which he says on the same shield: “Young male dancers whirled about.” This was elaborated into the shield by Hephaistos as something particularly beautiful.) Lucian often refers to the Homeric poems in the dialogue, but the reference to the dance floor which Daidalos makes for Ariadne is especially compelling when one considers the other examples of dance which surround it.)

dance of some kind. In any case, the celestial bodies which Hephaistos elaborates on the shield easily fit into a religious ritual which is based on fertility and renewal.

II. City at Peace and City at War (18.490-540)

Hephaistos next embellishes the realm of earth; he makes two cities, one which is at peace and one which is at war. In general, the two cities together signify civilization and the human achievement of “κόσμος,” which is inextricably tied to the development of agriculture and the domestication of animals. The primary agricultural festival in the Athenian calendar was the Thesmophoria, held in honor of Demeter to celebrate fertility and help bring about good harvests. This festival was only open to women and was, perhaps, the most feminine of all Greek fertility festivals. The duration of the festival varied from city to city, but everywhere it involved a symbolic return to nature and the basic power of feminine procreative power. Married women left their families and celebrated the rites in their own female-ruled societies.²⁴⁷ The rituals seem to celebrate nature over culture, chaos over civilization, followed by a return to civilization and thus it, ultimately, ensured the continuation of civilization. Burkert puts it well: “The Greeks finally interpreted Demeter *thesmophoros* as the bringer of order, the order of marriage, civilization, and of life itself...”²⁴⁸ In Athens, women gathered for the Themosphoria on the hill of the Pnyx, which is where the Athenian assembly regularly met.²⁴⁹ Ancient religious ritual was intimately tied to civic enterprise, and, while religious rituals which

²⁴⁷ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 245. “At the core of the festival there remains the dissolution of the family, the separation of the sexes, the constitution of a society of women; once in the year at least, women demonstrate their independence, their responsibility, and importance for the fertility of the community and the land.”

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 246.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 242.

focused on nature and fertility seem to be at odds with ideas of culture and civilization, such rituals nevertheless support civic prosperity.

It is significant that the description of the city at peace involves activities which take place inside the city while the description of the city at war involves activities which take place outside the city, a situation which is emphasized by the poet's use of the prepositions “ἐν” (in) and “ἄμφω” (around) in introducing the scenes. The interior space of cities, like the interior space of houses, is often presented as feminine space; after all, in the *Iliad*, it is where the Trojan women and children stay. The exterior space around cities is masculine space; it is where the men of fighting age do battle. In the scene involving the city at war, women, children and the old men who cannot fight stand on the city wall, watching the masculine action outside the city walls. Thus, the women are inside the city, and the men are outside the city. Thus, in including two cities, Hephaistos represents feminine and masculine sides of civic life, and he weaves together the social fabric which any fertility ritual seeks to celebrate and protect. In many ways, the union of feminine and masculine which is readily apparent in the final dancing scene on the shield is also seen in the two cities. After all, the sexual unions of the young people will ensure the continuation of the social order in the cities.

While the two cities on the shield of Achilles represent different aspects of civilized life, all of the specific activities represented in both cities involve the basic Greek idea of *agon*, which is part of many ancient Greek religious festivals. In Plutarch's account of Theseus' stop at Delos, for example, Theseus not only teaches the youths the Labyrinth dance and sets up the image of Aphrodite which Ariadne had given him, but he also institutes athletic contests. In Greek marriage, there is a basic

competition in which the husband seeks to win the bride and also to subdue the wild, untamed spirit inside her virgin body. The entire story of the *Iliad*, of course, is rooted in the agonistic nature of marriage (and rape) and its connection to the more public arenas for masculine competition. The law court involves verbal competition in the assembly and represents a struggle for power within a society. The city which is besieged represents competition on the battlefield as well as for the means to life—property, land, and livestock. It then depicts masculine competition between different societies. The level of competition grows more public and larger with each scene in the cities. The activities which take place within the city at peace are in many ways less exaggerated exercises of male competition than the activities which take place in the city at war, where male competition reaches its height. Moreover, as Steven Lonsdale recognizes, agonistic practices such as athletic contests, bull-sports, and ritual dancing served to bring about an epiphany or to otherwise connect with divinity in Minoan culture.²⁵⁰ Burkert associates ritual *agon* with death and funerary rites, sacrifice, and the celebration of life despite death; in other words, *agon* is associated with renewal in light of death.²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ Lonsdale, "A Dancing Floor for Ariadne," especially 280-281.

²⁵¹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 106. A scene from Euripides' *Bacchae* seems relevant here. In the play, Dionysos returns to Thebes, but his cousin Pentheus, who has assumed the rule from Cadmus, does not believe in his divinity. Dionysos punishes the whole city for its impiety, and he specifically targets Pentheus for his lack of faith. He convinces Pentheus to dress in woman's clothing so that he can witness the activities of the Dionysos-crazed Theban women on the mountain without detection. When Pentheus puts the dress on, he also completely surrenders himself to the intoxicating power of the god. He not only looks like a woman, but he also starts to act like a woman, thus becoming that which had disgusted him about the effeminate Dionysos earlier in the play. When Pentheus returns to the stage (918-922), he says to Dionysos that he sees two suns and two Thebes and that Dionysos looks like a bull. Dionysos then tells Pentheus that he is seeing the god and that he is seeing what he could not see before he yielded to his power. When Pentheus experiences the ecstatic power of Dionysos, he experiences an entirely different side of life. He experiences the dark, feminine, chaotic side of existence, which to this point he has completely dismissed. Thus, he sees that the civic order to which he has clung as ruler has two sides and that one manifestation of the city cannot exist without the other. That Pentheus sees Dionysos as a bull in this passage is especially compelling in light of the close connection between Cretan Zeus and Dionysos. Hephaistos' two cities are likewise two sides of civic life.

A. City at peace: weddings; a lawsuit (18.490-508)

There is more to the scenes in the cities, however. There are multiple marriages in the first city which are accompanied by celebratory festivals. This scene seems to suggest group marriage rather than individual marriages, especially since the brides are lead through the city. The celebrations involve singing and dancing in circular, spiralling forms. Marriage often marks the final step in maturation for women (and often for men) in Greek culture; thus, this scene also suggests sexual initiation, which was formally celebrated in religious rituals. Sexual initiation is an essential element of any culture, and, as discussed above, ancient Greek marriage is presented as an ordering institution in which the potentially destructive chaotic power of a maiden's body is tamed by sexual conquest and domination. Both Homeric poems show evidence for this understanding of marriage. In Book Eighteen of the *Iliad*, for example, Thetis herself describes her own marriage to Peleus in terms of taming (18.432).²⁵² The myth about Theseus and the Minotaur clearly involves sexual initiation, and, in all likelihood, derives from actual initiation rites carried out at Knossos. Many scholars believe that Minoan initiation practices for boys culminated with some form of ritual marriage and, perhaps, *hieros gamos*, and Diodorus describes a *hieros gamos* between Zeus and Hera which took place periodically at Knossos. The role of sexual initiation and marriage in fertility rituals seems obvious. Festivals for Demeter and Persephone often focus on the marriage

²⁵² Cf. Calame, *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece*, 239-240: "In a female context, the metaphor of domestication refers both to a girl's education and to her marriage. Homer has an example of this where the idea of taming is still related to the violation of a virgin on her wedding night. This metaphor extends to many images centering on the yoke: the young wife is a young animal who submits to the yoke, a yoke imposed on her by her husband when he encloses her in the bonds of marriage. The association of marriage with the image of the yoke probably shares a common origin with the metaphor in the amorous sphere of Eros as tamer. In this erotic context, the beloved is depicted as a colt that the lover must tame before submitting him to his love."

of Persephone to Hades; the Eleusinian Mysteries, for example, probably included some manifestation of *hieros gamos*. The scene on the shield is clearly convivial; it is a festival. The specific aspect of the women of the city looking out from their doorways calls to mind Minoan and Mycenaean frescoes which depict women looking at some ritual from doorways or windows.

The legal dispute also fits into the context of a Knossian ritual. The figure of Dike (the goddess of Justice), is central in Hesiod's *Works and Days*, which is about the annual agricultural cycle and the sustenance of life in a difficult world. In the *Works and Days*, Dike is a daughter of Zeus, who is ultimately responsible for the administration of justice. Hesiod suggests in the poem that offenses against Dike result in the infertility of the land and of human beings. It is worth mentioning that Hesiod connects Zeus to Demeter and calls him “Διὸς χθονίος” (465) (Chthonic Zeus), suggesting that Zeus himself is associated with the fertility of the land. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod says that Themis, Zeus' second wife, bears for Zeus “Ἦρα, Εὐνομίην τε Δίκην τε καὶ Εἰρήνην τε θαλυσῖαν...” (901-902) (The Seasons—Lawfulness, Justice, and Plentiful Peace...) Here, the concept of Justice is actually one of the Seasons, who are all daughters of Zeus and Themis, an earth-goddess who later becomes associated with custom and law. Aeschylus actually conflates Themis and Gaia at times.²⁵³ It is worth noting that the participle “τε θαλυσῖαν,” which describes Peace, comes from the Greek verb “θάλλειν,” which indicates the luxuriant growth of vegetation. Thus, in general, justice and law are closely associated with agricultural abundance. That the legal dispute functions as part of a religious ritual is also supported by the fact that Homer tells his audience that the men sit

²⁵³ Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 52-53.

“ἱερόῳ ἐνὶ κύκλῳ” (18.504) (in a sacred circle). The word “ἱερός” (sacred) is used in the Homeric poems to describe places, people, or offerings which are under the protection of a deity; here, as Cunliffe states, the circle is sacred because it is under the jurisdiction of Zeus.²⁵⁴

The palaces of Bronze Age Crete seem to have functioned primarily as centers for religious ritual. Nanno Marinatos, who argues that the palaces were centers for seasonal agricultural festivals, also argues that the political authority of the ruler or ruling class was periodically renewed at these festivals. She argues that political authority was closely tied to agricultural success; agricultural abundance was a divine sign of righteous political power. She also points to the close connection between nature, the harvest, and kingship in Egypt and the Near East.²⁵⁵ Kerenyi points out the obvious limitations in arguing for such a custom but nevertheless also supports this idea.²⁵⁶ The annual ritual of renewal by the Kouretes at the Idaian Cave, discussed above, seems to support such a ritual. It may even be the case that this scene represents some sort of rhetorical contest in which the political leader had to prove periodically that he could mete out justice in a way which satisfied the community and thus demonstrated that his authority was legitimate. Certainly the importance of persuasion for *basileis* as they lead their communities and hand out justice in the Homeric and Hesiodic poems supports such an understanding of authority. In any case, the political-religious authority at Knossos

²⁵⁴ Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect*, 195.

²⁵⁵ Nanno Marinatos, “Public Festivals in the West Courts of the Palaces,” 140-141. Marinatos cites Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods: A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as the Integration of Society and Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948) and C.J. Bleeker, *Egyptian Festivals: Enactments of Religious Renewal* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967).

²⁵⁶ Karl Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera: Archetypal Image of Father and Husband* transl. Christopher Holme (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 30-32.

would no doubt be involved in some way in the administration of justice for that community.²⁵⁷

In his *Life of Lycurgus*, Plutarch describes the Spartan *agoge*, a rigid male educational system. Boys were taken from their mothers at the age of seven to begin their training as soldiers and as citizens. As they aged, the boys would progress through a series of age-groups which focused on various skills designed to produce tough, virile, and obedient warriors. Of course, the boys' training focused largely on athleticism and military skills. Still, young Spartans were also expected to participate in political discussions and to learn to render concise opinions when asked. Plutarch reports that the boys who excelled both in passing judgments and in courageous fighting were made leaders of their groups (16.4-5). Both the Minoan male educational system and the later system described by Strabo, discussed above, show remarkable similarity to the Spartan *agoge*.²⁵⁸ Thus, it is reasonable to assume that training in rendering judgments and maintaining civic order would be part of the Cretan *paideia*.

The mythical figure of Minos, of course, is associated with passing judgments and creating laws. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus tells the Phaiakians that he saw Minos in the

²⁵⁷ Cf. Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 217. Also, Edwards, writes, "The circle is sacred because Zeus presides over judicial matters (e.g. 9.98-9) and the public altars would be close to the assembly-place (cf. 11.807-8). Similarly, threshing-floors are *ἱεραὶ* (5.499)." Cf. Pierre Carliere, "Are the Homeric Basileis 'Big Men?,'" in *Epos: Reconsidering Greek Epic and Aegean Bronze Age Archaeology Proceedings of the 11th International Aegean Conference/ 11e Rencontre Égéenne Internationale Los Angeles, UCLA-The J. Paul Getty Villa, 20-23 April 2006* eds. Sarah P. Morris and Robert Laffineur *Aegaeum* 28 (Liege, Austin: University de Liege and the University of Texas, 2007), 126: "The famous trial scene in the Shield of Achilles (Iliad XVIII 497-508), which has given rise to many controversies, may be interpreted in a similar way. Three institutions are mentioned as taking part in the trial. The *laoi*, divided into two groups of opposed supporters, listen to the discussion and shout loudly in favour of one or the other litigant; the elders express their opinion one after the other; the *ἴστωρ* says which of the elders has given the better advice, and consequently which of the litigants is right. The text does not say that the *ἴστωρ* is a king, but his role is exactly parallel to the role kings play in political discussion. In both cases, the decision is reached in the same way: after listening to the elders, in front of the assembled people, one man takes the final decision."

²⁵⁸ For the connection between the Spartan and Cretan systems, see, for example, Säflund, "The Agoge of the Minoan Youth as Reflected in Palatial Iconography;" Willetts, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, 43-53.

underworld (11.568-571). Like the scene on Achilles' shield, petitioners here seem to surround Minos—perhaps even in a circle. They plead their cases before him. As Gantz argues, Minos is not judging deeds committed by men during their lives in this passage (as he later does in Plato and Dante, for example); the text clearly shows that the dead souls expect Minos to resolve their disputes. Gantz suggests that Minos is simply represented doing what he would have done in life, and he points out that other figures in the underworld are represented performing activities which they had carried out earlier in life.²⁵⁹

In Plato's *Minos*, Socrates praises Minos as a king and lawgiver. In discussing Minos' ritual interaction with Zeus at the Idaian Cave, Socrates says:

ἀλλ' ἦν αὕτη ἡ συνουσία, ὥσπερ ἐγὼ λέγω, διὰ λόγων ἐπὶ παιδείᾳ εἰς ἀρετήν.
ὅθεν δὴ καὶ τοὺς νόμους τούτους ἔθηκε τοῖς αὐτοῦ πολίταις, δι' οὓς ἢ τε Κρήτη
τὸν πάντα χρόνον εὐδαιμονεῖ καὶ Λακεδαιμόν, ἀφ' οὗ ἤρξατο τούτοις χρῆσθαι,
ἅτε θείοις οὖσι... Παδάμανδρος δὲ ἀγαθὸς μὲν ἦν ἀνὴρ· ἐπεπαίδευτο γὰρ ὑπὸ τοῦ
Μίνω· ἐπεπαίδευτο μέντοι οὐχ ὅλην τὴν Βασιλικὴν τέχνην, ἀλλ' ὑπηρεσίαν τῇ
βασιλικῇ, ὅσον ἐπιστατεῖν ἐπιστατεῖν ἐν τοῖς δικαστηρίοις· (320 b-c)

²⁵⁹ Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 126. Lattimore translates line 570 as "...who all around the great lord argued their cases." I have followed Cunliffe's argument that the phrase, while it does contain the number nine, indicates an eight-year period of rule and regular evaluation in the ninth year. *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect*. Also, note Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, 179-180: "This densely packed phrase in Homer could be a slim survival of a whole world of laws and rites common to Greece and the Near East in the Late Bronze Age, explored in the convergence of Mycenaean and Canaanite culture behind Daidalos and Kothar. Minos and Moses might be another pair like the two craftsmen, the Hebrew figure spanning the Exodus until the Exile, the Homeric king, like his client, Daidalos, a bridge across the Dark Ages. And like Daidalos' impact on archaic and classical Greek art and ritual, Minos' Homeric guise already participates in early Greek law....the Homeric description of Minos in periodic intercourse with Zeus suggests early Greek legal terminology...The most striking coincidence between Homeric ἐννέωρος and early Greek kingship comes from Sparta, described in Plutarch's life of Agis (11). In the third century, an unusual ceremony termed simply τὸ σημεῖον, 'the sign,' is invoked to settle a dispute between two kings, Leonidas II and Agis IV (243-242 B.C.). On a moonless night, the ephors of Sparta watch in silence for a falling star, whose appearance leads to a trial of the Spartan kings περὶ τὸ θεῖον and a suspension of their powers until an oracle confirms their right to rule. This rare procedure implies a vote of confidence in reigning kings, guided by ritual observances including consultation of astral phenomena and oracular sources....Plutarch indicates its periodic use at regular intervals with the temporal phrase, δι' ἐτῶν ἐννέα, 'every ninth year.' The kinship between the constitutions of Crete and Sparta, acknowledged in antiquity as in modern opinion, supports the remembrance of this procedure and its timing to Homer's description of the kingship of Minos. The phrase ἐννέωρος βασιλεύει may reflect early Iron Age constitutional practices..."

(But this interaction, as I say, was by discussion for education towards excellence. From this he established these laws for his citizens, by which Crete and Sparta—since she began to make use of them—have been happy for all time, since they are divinely given...Rhadamanthys was a good man, for he was educated by Minos. He was not educated as a whole in the *techne* of kingliness, but in one area of kingliness, inasmuch as he understood how to preside in the law courts.)

Thus, Minos obtains his right to decide matters of justice directly from Zeus, and, in this way, he is very much like Agamemnon, who himself gets his kingly power (and speaker's staff) directly from Zeus. It is notable that Plato attributes Spartan law to Crete, especially since Sparta had initiation rites and ritual dances which closely resembled those of the Cretans. It is also notable that Plato refers to the action of kings as a form of *techne*. As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Homeric *basileis* of course use speech-making and, in particular, persuasion to demonstrate and to maintain their elite standing in society.

Knossos figures significantly in Plato's *Laws*. In that dialogue, the protagonist is an Athenian, and his two interlocutors are a Spartan and a Cretan. The three old men discuss politics and ethics, and they develop the characteristics of an ideal city. To some degree, the dialogue resembles the *Republic*, but more personal freedoms are allowed in the ideal city of the *Laws*. Minos and his brother Rhadamanthys are the first subjects of conversation, and the three, who seem to assume that Minos and Rhadamanthys were real men, agree that the two figures were legendary administrators of justice. The Homeric allusion to Minos' periodic interaction with Zeus is brought up, and the three note that Minos got his laws directly from Zeus. Most importantly, the entire dialogue occurs as the three walk from Knossos to a cave and temple of Zeus on Mount Ida, so they seem to reenact Minos' ritual interaction with Zeus themselves. Surely it can be no accident that

the three men walk to the cave of Zeus on Ida as they converse; Plato thus connects the Cretan rites of the Kouretes and Idaian Zeus to justice, political power, and law.

It is also interesting to point out that the subject of dance is important in the *Laws*. It is decided early on in the dialogue that proper education of children is necessary for the ideal city, and training in music and dance is recommended as a means of teaching children to control both their bodies and their minds. As Steven Lonsdale points out, the title of the work, “*Nómoi*,” indicates both “law” and “custom” and also “melody.”²⁶⁰ In the dialogue, in Book Seven, Plato describes different types of dances, including dances which are warlike and dances which are peaceful. Both types help to groom ideal, law-abiding citizens and to bring about civic *kosmos*.²⁶¹ It has been shown that both speech-making and dancing are forms of *techne*, and thus the two endeavors are closely related. In his dialogue on dance, Lucian explicitly compares dance to rhetoric in several passages (35, 62, 65). Good dancing, like good rhetoric, is persuasive. Again, all of the scenes in the cities represent forms of *agon*, and the legal dispute is a verbal manifestation of this basic Greek concept.

In general, verbal competition fits into the context of religious ritual. Verbal *agon*, after all, is an essential element of tragedy and comedy, which develop as part of Dionysiac ritual. Athletic competitions were carried out in many ancient religious festivals, but verbal competitions in the form of poetic performances also were frequent

²⁶⁰ Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play*, 21.

²⁶¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 57-60. Dancing is not mentioned in the scene with the dispute, but some of the imagery of the scene is, to some degree, suggestive of ritual and dancing. First, the poet tells his audience that the setting is in the agora. Lonsdale argues that the open space of an agora is associated in general with civic order and that the civic activities which would take place there include dance, cultic ritual, political assemblies, and judicial procedures. *Ibid.*, 114-120, especially 117. Gregory Nagy argues that the scene features an inner circle of elders which is surrounded by an outer circle of people; in other words, the participants are arranged in concentric circles. Gregory Nagy, “The Shield of Achilles: Ends of the Iliad and Beginnings of the Polis,” in *New Light on a Dark Age: Exploring the Culture of Geometric Greece* ed. Susan Langdon (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 201-202.

manifestations of ritual *agon*.²⁶² Aeschylus' *Eumenides*, in particular, focuses specifically on the concept of justice, especially on how the age-old system of justice changes with the development of democracy in Athens. In that play, the Erinyes attempt to exact justice after Orestes has killed his mother. They are dark, vampiric female creatures, conjured up from the chthonic depths by Klytaimnestra's ghost to avenge her murder. In the course of the play, they lose their age-old power and become benevolent beings who agree to be worshipped on the akropolis as fertility goddesses. Interestingly, the Linear B tablets contain the name "*e-ri-nu*" (Erinys), which is the singular form of Erinyes; Erinys may actually be the name for a Minoan goddess of justice.²⁶³ The *Eumenides*, then, may actually represent the shift from a Minoan understanding of justice which focuses on feminine power to a Mycenaean understanding of justice as a masculine pursuit. In any case, certainly the sacred circle of the legal dispute fits into the context of a religious ritual.

*B. City at war: a siege; an ambush of herdsmen outside the city;
a battle (18.509-540)*

Military and hunting elements seem to have been at work in the Minoan rituals which took place at Knossos, as evidenced by the "Sacred Grove and Dance" fresco, for example, which includes ephebes, possibly showing off their skills.²⁶⁴ Despite their

²⁶² An Orphic gold tablet found in Thessaly which dates to around 320 B.C.E. indicates that the dead person must ask Dionysos for assistance in pleading his case before a tribunal in the underworld. Perhaps the tribunal on Achilles' shield is suggestive of such an understanding. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, "Orphic Literature," 1078

²⁶³ Marymay Downing, "Prehistoric Goddesses: The Cretan Challenge," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 1 (1985), 21.

²⁶⁴ A picture of the "Shield Fresco" is available in Litsa Kontorli-Papadopoulou, *Aegean Frescoes of Religious Character* Vol. 142 Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology (Göteborg: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1996), 204. The fresco shows figure-eight ox-hide shields against a running spiral design. It is worth mentioning that very similar frescoes have been found at both Mycenae and Tiryns. See 243-247 for pictures of these.

reputation as a peaceful, flower-loving people, there is plenty of evidence for militarism in Minoan culture, and military subjects do appear in Minoan art.²⁶⁵ The “Shield Fresco” from the Hall of the Colonnades at Knossos is, like the other frescoes, religious in nature, and many scholars believe that the Minoan figure-eight shield symbolizes a goddess. Similar frescoes have been found at both Mycenae and Tiryns, where the shields also seem to stand for a goddess; in fact, a figure-eight shield with arms and legs was found on an plaster tablet from Temple I in the cult area at Mycenae which is pretty widely accepted as a “Palladion” standing for Athena or another feminine warrior-goddess.²⁶⁶ The faience “Town Mosaic” from Knossos, which probably dates to the Middle Minoan IIIA period, features drowning men, ships, and marching warriors and archers.²⁶⁷ One fragment of a miniature fresco discovered by Evans in the same room as the “Temple or Grandstand” fresco and the “Sacred Grove and Dance” fresco at Knossos, which he labeled the “Siege Fresco,” depicts either a battle or a religious ceremony which involved warrior and war games. In the fragment, young warriors bear javelins, and, as Immerwahr points out, one figure looks very much like the chieftain on the Chieftain Cup from Hagia Triada.²⁶⁸

The scene with the city at war features women and elderly men looking out from the city at the fighting around it, which recalls the *teichoskopia* in Book Three, where

²⁶⁵ See, for example, Wolf Dietrich Niemeier, “When Minos Ruled the Waves: Knossian Power Overseas,” in *Knossos: Palace, City, State Proceedings of the Conference in Herakleion Organised by the British School at Athens and the 23rd Ephoreia of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities of Herakleion, in November 2000, for the Centenary of Sir Arthur Evans’s Excavations at Knossos* eds. Gerald Cadogan, Eleni Hatzaki, and Adonis Vasilakis (London: The British School at Athens, 2004), 393-398; and Lucia Alberti, “The Late Minoan II-IIIa Warrior Graves at Knossos: The Burial Assemblages,” in *Knossos: Palace, City, State Proceedings of the Conference in Herakleion Organised by the British School at Athens and the 23rd Ephoreia of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities of Herakleion, in November 2000, for the Centenary of Sir Arthur Evans’s Excavations at Knossos* eds. Gerald Cadogan, Eleni Hatzaki, and Adonis Vasilakis (London: The British School at Athens, 2004), 127-136.

²⁶⁶ Kontorli-Papadopoulou, *Aegean Frescoes of Religious Character*, 166.

²⁶⁷ Sara A. Immerwahr, *Aegean Painting in the Bronze Age*, 68.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 66.

Helen and the Trojan elders look out over the battle below from the walls of the city. To some degree, this element also recalls the women who look out as the new brides are lead through the city in the city at peace. The arrangement is seen in Minoan and Mycenaean religious art. Another fragment from the same deposit of miniature frescoes at Knossos features two women looking out from a window and thus resembles a later Mycenaean fresco.²⁶⁹ The Mycenaean Silver Siege Rhyton, found in a shaft grave and dating to the 1600-1500 B.C.E., depicts a violent battle around a city as citizens watch from the ramparts. Most scholars believe the silver vessels from the shaft graves to be the work of Minoan craftsman commissioned by the Mycenaeans or actual imported wares from Crete.²⁷⁰ Evans even linked the rhyton to the Town Mosaic found at Knossos.²⁷¹ The miniature frescoes from the West House at Akrotiri on Thera include militaristic scenes. Of course, clear battle scenes occur in frescoes at Mycenae, Orchomenos, and Pylos.²⁷²

As discussed above, Minoan initiation rites for boys focused on hunting and military training under the guise of a fertility goddess just as the later rituals involving the Kouretes during the Geometric period focused on pyrrhic dancing as part of fertility and regeneration.²⁷³ It is worth noting that even in militaristic Sparta, where the citizenry did not participate directly in agriculture, rituals to Demeter, Dionysos, and Persephone were nonetheless carried out. Moreover, these rites were tied to ritual *agon*.²⁷⁴ The ambush depicted on Achilles' shield is sudden, violent, and bloody. Even in the Homeric world,

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ http://projectsx.dartmouth.edu/classics/history/bronze_age/lessons/les/16.html#10 (accessed on November 3, 2008).

²⁷¹ Immerwahr, *Aegean Painting in the Bronze Age*, 68.

²⁷² Ibid., 122-128.

²⁷³ As Edwards notes, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 218, miniature frescoes of both peaceful scenes and also of seige scenes have been found at the West House at Akrotiri on Minoan Thera.

²⁷⁴ Robert Parker, "Demeter, Dionysos, and the Spartan Pantheon," *Early Greek Cult Practice Proceedings of the Fifth-International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 26-29 June, 1986* (Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1988), 99-103.

initiation rites for young men are often quite dangerous and violent; after all, they are designed to prepare young men for the ultimate competition of war. In Book Nineteen of the *Odyssey*, for example, Eurykleia recognizes the disguised Odysseus by means of a scar on his leg. Homer relates for his audience the detailed account of the hunting expedition on which Odysseus received the injury. As a youth on the cusp of manhood, Odysseus went to Parnassos, where he was embraced by his maternal grandfather. While there, the male members of the family took him hunting with them, and he was violently injured by a wild boar as he killed it. Odysseus was nursed back to health and returned to his rejoicing parents, having proved his manhood.²⁷⁵ Boar-hunting scenes have been found at both Pylos and Orchomenos, and, of course, hunting scenes in general are found throughout the Aegean.²⁷⁶ Telemachos also undergoes a violent initiation rite-of-passage at the end of the *Odyssey* when he and his father kill the suitors and punish the disloyal servants.

Furthermore, that the scene involves an ambush is particularly significant in the context of religious ritual. Homer uses the terms “λόχος” (ambush) and “λοξάω” (to lie in wait for) in this scene. The words are used with some frequency in the Homeric epics, and, indeed, battles involving small bands of warriors are common. Steven Lonsdale has shown that ritual pyrrhic dancing is linked to the concept of “λόχος,” and he sees evidence of ritual pyrrhic dancing in the battle scenes of the *Iliad*.²⁷⁷ The Kouretes were

²⁷⁵ Nancy Felson discusses this passage as a typical male initiation ritual in *Regarding Penelope*, 69-71.

²⁷⁶ Immerwahl, *Aegean Painting in the Bronze Age*, 113, 129-132.

²⁷⁷ Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion*, 139: “Since the weapon dance is preparatory to actual combat it is important to consider its relation to fighting tactics. But rather than examine its affinities with the hoplite phalanx (with which a pyrrhic chorus is incontestably linked) it is more productive to consider the weapon dance in relation to the small band of fighters in an ambush (*lochos*), who engage in a furtive type of warfare associated with Sparta....The word *lochos*, like *choros*, is a versatile noun referring at once to the ambushers, their covert activity, and the place of ambush. Like *choros*, it refers to a group with a leader, a *lochagos*, just as a *choros* has a *chorēgos*. Related to English ‘lie,’ the

known especially for their leaping activity, and the Hymn to Zeus from Palaikastro urges the god, invoked as the “greatest kouros,” to “leap up” several times, suggesting that the youths who danced in a pyrrhic chorus leapt as part of the ritual.²⁷⁸ Also, the two herdsmen play pipes, so there already is a musical element to this scene. Moreover, like a pyrrhic chorus, the warriors here surround the city, as indicated by the introductory adverb “ἀμφί” which means “on both sides of” and “around.”

The presence of Athena and Ares in this scene also suggests that ritual pyrrhic dance is hinted at. Athena, as warrior-goddess and also as a goddess of civic order, is a clear choice for a leader of kouroi. According to one version of her birth, she herself performed a pyrrhic dance upon emerging in full armor out of Zeus’ head.²⁷⁹ The name Athena appears on the Linear B tablets at Knossos, and there is evidence that she may have been associated with the Minoan Snake-Goddess who attended the Knossian

word *lochos* implies the prostrate position of the warriors in the ambush before rising up and attacking. In the *Iliad*, for example, when Paris issues forth from the ambush where he has been hiding, he ‘leaps up’ (*ek lochou ampēdēse*). Leaping motion, in coordination with crouching, are the essential movements of the pyrrhic...”

²⁷⁸ For a good analysis of the hymn and a discussion of its connection to civic life in Crete, see Paula J. Perlman, “Invocatio and Imprecatio: The Hymn to the Greatest Kouros from Palaikastro and the Oath in Ancient Crete,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 115 (1995), 161-167.

²⁷⁹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 102-103. Cf. Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion*, 155: “The ambiguity of Athena’s identity as a weapon goddess is emphasized by her inverted birth (from a male womb) and complemented by her dual (androgynous) sexuality. Similarly, Zeus removes the threat of overpowering offspring that were to be born to Metis by assuming the male and female roles, expressly again by the concept of the *lochos*. By hiding Athena within him he carries out a deceitful ambush, a typical male activity; but the hiding also leads to childbirth, the female biological function. Athena’s birth successful averts the threat that Metis poses to Zeus. The birth is both part of a deceitful action (*lochos*), at the same time that it is literally the birth of Zeus’ child. Moreover, when Zeus gives birth to an armed Athena, he also in effect gives her weapons. The story of the birth of Athena thus shares in common with the narratives of Cronus and Zeus the motifs of hidden weapons and the giving of weapons. The interconnections between the births of Athena, Zeus, and Cronus in the Greek succession myth indicate the the birth of Athena as a pyrrhic aetiology inherits and is reinforced by the motif of hiding and emerging from the preceding phases of the myth. The war goddess is but the last element in the chain of myths that informs the pyrrhic. The specific connection between vigorous dancing and the motifs of hiding and emerging (*lochos* and epiphany) is prominent in the births of Athena and Zeus. The birth of a divinity, a form of divine epiphany, is a vigorous leaping (i.e. dancelike) activity, and by definition Athena’s leaping birth in armor is a weapon dance...”

ruler.²⁸⁰ Ares, too, appears on the Linear B tablets from Knossos, and, he too, is associated with dancing. In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, for example, when Apollo plays for the gods on Olympos, the Muses sing and dance, accompanied by the Graces, the Seasons, Harmonia, Hebe, and Aphrodite, Artemis, Hermes, and Ares. The dragon whose teeth produce armed warriors, born out of the earth, is Ares' son. Surely, this myth is suggestive of figures like the Kouretes, whose armed dances affect the fertility of the earth. Arlene Allan has linked Ares to Hermes in that they both provide guidance for male initiation. She points out that the hymnist in the Homeric hymn uses the verb “παίζειν” (play) in describing the dancing of Hermes and Ares. The verb is used frequently for initiation-dances and war-games.²⁸¹

It is interesting that the poet describes the city at war as “ἐπὶ ἡρατος” (18.512) (lovely, erotically attractive). The adjective is related to the word *eros* and suggests something which is sexually attractive. Of course, the city at peace—with its multiple weddings, sexual dances, and passionate attempts at persuasion—also has plenty of sexual energy about it. The use of an erotic adjective here reveals the essential sexuality which underlies all forms of *agon* and civilization in general. The poet uses the term “ἄλοχοι” (wives) in this passage, which is a word which emphasizes the marriage bed and which also recalls the “λόχος” of the warriors. Of course, it is not just the possessions and the livestock of the city which is at stake in the event of attack; wives and children are subject to sexual assault, as the conversation between Andromache and Hektor at the end of Book Six (6.406-529) clearly indicates. Like the sudden appearance of warriors who

²⁸⁰ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 140.

²⁸¹ Arlene Allan, “From Agônistês to Agônios: Hermes, Chaos, and Conflict in Competitive Games and Festivals,” in *Games and Festivals in Classical Antiquity Proceedings of the Conference held in Edinburgh 10-12 July 2000* eds. Sinclair Bell and Glenys Davies (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004), 45-54.

have been concealed, the marriage bed also involves a appearance of something which has been concealed—that is, the bride’s face and body—as seen in the *anakalypteria*, the ritual of lifting the bride’s veil to reveal her face. Moreover, as Steven Lonsdale argues, in general, the term “λόχος” also signifies a place for giving birth, a process which also involves the sudden appearance of something which has been hidden.²⁸² The connection between pyrrhic activity and sexuality is significant in that the scene with the city at war leads directly into the agricultural scenes on the shield, almost as if the activity of the warriors inspires the fertility of the land on the shield.

III. Men plowing fields, drinking wine (18.541-549)

After the two cities, Hephaistos makes a series of agricultural scenes which together represent the annual agricultural cycle. As Edwards notes, all of the agricultural scenes end with some sort of celebration.²⁸³ The significance of these three scenes for fertility ritual seems obvious, especially in that they all involve celebration. First, the poet says of the first scene: “Ἐν δ’ ἐτίθει νειὸν μαλακὴν, πείραν ἄρουραν, εὐρεῖαν τρίπολον...” (18.541-542) (On it he made a soft field, fertile land, wide, triple-ploughed...) The term “τρίπολος” (triple-ploughed) may refer to a ritual ploughing of fields three times before sowing by a king or priest and, as Edwards notes, must be related to the figure of Triptolemos, the Eleusinian leader who is instructed both in the arts of agriculture and in the secrets of her mysteries by Demeter in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. Edwards notes the existence of sacred ploughing rituals in Attica.²⁸⁴ In Book Five of the *Odyssey*, when Kalypso complains to Hermes that the gods do not tolerate goddesses sleeping with

²⁸² Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion*, 167.

²⁸³ Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 221-222.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 222.

mortal men, she refers to Demeter's union with Iasion “*νειῶ ἔνι τριπόλῳ*” (5.127) (in a triple-ploughed field), and, as discussed above, the same story occurs in the *Theogony*. Again, the movements of the plowers suggest circular activity and, as discussed earlier, the back and forth movement of weaving. First, men plow fields, drinking wine at the end of the furrows. The poet uses the verb “*δινεύειν*” (to whirl) in describing the movements of the plowmen. The verb recalls the spiralling movements of the whirling acrobats in the scene with the weddings and anticipates the movements of the dancers in the Labyrinth dance.

IV. King overseeing harvesters; feast being prepared (18.550-560)

The scene in which a king oversees his reapers, who cut, bind, and carry the sheaves of grain, calls to mind the famous Minoan Harvester's Vase, a black steatite libation vessel which dates to around 1500 B.C.E. It was discovered, together with the Chieftain Cup and Boxer Vase, at Hagia Triada and depicts harvesters holding harvesting implements, singing joyously as a priest or ruler leads them. This scene also involves the slaughter and consumption of a bull. As discussed above, bulls are common sacrificial animals in both Minoan and later Greek culture, and, of course, the animal would be eaten in a feast after the ritual slaughter. Barley was also used in ancient Greek fertility rites; the kykeon, a drink made from barley which those about to be initiated in the Eleusinian Mysteries consumed, is perhaps the best example here, but many festivals involved offerings of grain. It is also worth noting that the feast takes place under a tree. Trees appear frequently as important cult symbols in Minoan art, often as sites for cult

activity and divine epiphany.²⁸⁵ Certainly, the feast after the harvest in the this scene involves religiously significant elements.

V. Grape-picking in a vineyard; young singer performs (18.561-572)

Finally, religious ritual involving harvested grapes and wine are well known in ancient Greece. The *Dionysia* is perhaps the most famous festival celebrating wine, but the Athenian *Anthesteria*, held in the spring, also included a drinking contest.²⁸⁶ The Athenian *Oschophoria* included a ritual procession of people carrying grapes and a race for ephebes,²⁸⁷ and the Spartan *Karneia*, which focused on the maturation of boys into warriors and also involved dances of young men and maidens, included a race of the “grape-runners,” although apparently no grapes were actually carried here.²⁸⁸ In fact, in the grape-picking scene, a singer plays a lyre and entertains young men and women. Homer says:

τοῖσιν δ' ἐν μέσσοισι πάϊς φόρμιγγι λιγείῃ
ἰμερόεν κιθάριζε, λίνον δ' ὑπὸ καλὸν ᾄδει
λεπταλέῃ φωνῇ· (18.570-571)

(In the middle of these, a youth played on a clear-voiced lyre in a desire-inducing manner, and sang a beautiful lino-song with a high voice.)

Here, the singer sings “ἰμερόεν” (in a desire-inducing manner). In any case, the song in this scene is sexually seductive just like the dance in the last scene on the shield.²⁸⁹ Again, the youth is in the middle of the young men and women; a circular dance is

²⁸⁵ See, for example, Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 262-288.

²⁸⁶ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 238.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 441 note 22.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 234-235.

²⁸⁹ When the Muses dance in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (7-8), their dance is also “ἰμερόεις (desire-exciting, desire-producing) and καλός (beautiful).

suggested. It seems clear that each of these three scenes easily fit into the context of religious ritual.

VI. A herd of cattle, two lions attack a bull as herdsmen and dogs pursue them (18.573-586) and VII. A pasture with sheep (18.587-589)

After the three agricultural scenes, Hephaistos embellishes the shield with two scenes of herdsmen. Men with dogs drive cattle, and two lions attack one of the bulls. The young men among the herdsmen attempt to stop the attack with the help of the dogs, but they are unable to rescue the bull. Next, Hephaistos makes a meadow with rural dwellings and shelters, pens, and men tending flocks of sheep. Oliver Taplin argues that these scenes are to be taken as the winter activities of the agricultural year, although it may be that, in a Mediterranean climate, these activities would be year-round.²⁹⁰ Of course, the domestication of animals goes hand in hand with the cultivation of land, and the fertility of the land also ensures the health and fertility of domesticated animals. Thus, these scenes also figure into Knossian ritual, especially given the importance of animals as Minoan religious symbols.

The livestock-scenes may simply serve to complete the celebration of agricultural abundance, but there may be more to them. Burkert has shown that ritual sacrifice is inextricably tied to the primitive experience of hunting; he has also shown that hunting and the blood sacrifice of animals necessarily accompanies harvest festivals.²⁹¹ As Burkert argues, “for the ancient world, hunting, sacrifice, and war were symbolically interchangeable.”²⁹² The two lions killing the bull on the shield may actually signify a

²⁹⁰ Taplin, “The Shield of Achilles Within the Iliad,” 8.

²⁹¹ See Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 44-45 for a discussion of the role of blood sacrifice in harvest festivals.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 47.

ritual killing. Bulls, lions, dogs, and sheep all appear in Minoan and Near Eastern art, and bulls were common sacrificial victims. Nanno Marinatos argues that Minoan depictions of sacrifice frequently show animals themselves sacrificing other animal victims. Thus, the animals stand as priests, and human sacrificers are then also animal-predators. Lions, griffins (which are combinations of eagles and lions), and, oddly, dolphins, are commonly shown in the roles of both hunter and sacrificer.²⁹³ Nancy R. Thomas notes the parallelism of man and lion in Mycenaean imagery, and she links lions to the masculine social roles of hunter, warrior, and “ritual maker.”²⁹⁴ As Edwards points out, the bull-killing scene on the shield is remarkably similar in imagery and language to a simile in Book Seventeen (17.61-67) in which Menelaos is compared to a lion killing the best cow from a herd.²⁹⁵ Such similes are common in the Homeric poems, and warriors in the poems are frequently described using the imagery of animals. Lyvia Morgan also has argued that animals stand as important symbols of power in Minoan and Mycenaean art, and she also links man and lion.²⁹⁶ In Greek ritual, interplay between the animal and human worlds was not uncommon. Athenian girls dressed and played as bears at the sanctuary of Artemis at Brauron, for example. In Dionysian cult, initiates, when intoxicated with the spirit of the god, shed the trappings of civilization and acted like wild animals. In fact, as discussed above, there is evidence for ritual omophagy among participants, just like the lions practice here.²⁹⁷ The choruses of animals in Attic

²⁹³ Nanno Marinatos, *Minoan Sacrificial Ritual: Cult Practice and Symbolism* (Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1986), 43-49.

²⁹⁴ Nancy R. Thomas, “The Early Mycenaean Lion Up to Date,” in *Charis: Essays in Honor of Sara A. Immerwahr* ed. Anna P. Chapin (Hesperia Supplement 33), 2004, 161-206, esp. 184-185.

²⁹⁵ Edwards, *The Iliad: A Commentary*, 227.

²⁹⁶ Lyvia Morgan, “Of Animals and Men: The Symbolic Parallel,” in *Klados: Essays in Honor of J.N. Coldstream* ed. Christine Morris (London: Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, 1995), 171-184.

²⁹⁷ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 291.

comedy derive from Dionysiac cult. Finally, as discussed above, Minoan ritual involved men dressing in masks, and in all likelihood acting, like various animals, especially like bulls. It is worth mentioning here that a Spartan dance, called the mophasmos, in which youths danced as various animals.²⁹⁸

*VIII. A dance floor and dance like the one Daidalos makes at
Knossos for Ariadne (18.590-606)*

The next scene on Achilles' shield is the dancing scene, which serves as the culmination of the ritual represented on the shield. Again, the poet informs his audience that the dancing floor is just like the one at Knossos which Daidalos built for Ariadne, a Minoan fertility goddess. Of course, the word "χορός" means both "dance" and "dancing place," and here it carries both senses. Hephaistos constructs a dancing floor for his own dancers, and he also creates the dance. Young dancers perform a mimetic dance of the feminine body, and, at the same time, undergo a ritual katabasis and rebirth as sexually mature individuals. It is noteworthy that the young men wear daggers like the young warriors represented in Minoan art, and the young women wear garlands. One fresco from Knossos shows garlands as symbols of religious rites for the Minoan goddess.²⁹⁹ Thus, even the ritual implements which the young people carry echo the linear and circular movements of the dance, which, ultimately, are associated with masculinity and femininity. The dance is infused with sexual energy, and the sexuality of the dance helps to make clear the essential sexuality inherent in the other scenes. In fact, the erotically charged dance echoes the depictions of *agon* in the scenes of the two cities. The dance is a prelude to the group marriages and also involves persuasion like the legal scene in that

²⁹⁸ Vernant, *Mortals and Immortals*, 241.

²⁹⁹ Kontorli-Papadopoulou, *Aegean Frescoes of Religious Character*, 207.

the young people attempt to attract and seduce partners by means of their skillful dancing.³⁰⁰ The adjective “ἀλφεσίβοιος” (bringing many oxen), which is suggestive of bride-gifts, in itself connects the dance to the city at war, where the wealth of livestock is so important. The obvious circular forms in the dancing scene also point to the basic cyclical nature of the other scenes. It is not unlikely that the Labyrinth dance actually included references to all the other elements on the shield—the celestial bodies, the fertile earth, the fabric of civilization, the wealth of land and livestock, the life-giving sea, death, and rebirth. Ultimately, the Labyrinth dance, like the Spartan “Necklace Dance,” serves to weave together the social fabric which makes up civilization.

IX. The river of Ocean (18.607-608)

The final element of the ekphrasis is the ocean, which Hephaistos represents along the rim of the shield. The ocean certainly makes sense as the last element Hephaistos makes, as it can nicely be depicted as a circular band around the shield. The ocean, of course, is mentioned along with earth and sky at the very beginning of the ekphrasis, so, to some degree, this scene brings the ekphrasis back around to its starting point and helps to emphasize the cyclical nature of the fertility ritual. The ocean also fits well into the context of Knossian fertility ritual in several ways. First, in general, water is a frequent element of ritual. Festivals to Demeter involved purification with water and ritual libations, for example.³⁰¹ Burkert offers that as part of the Eleusinian Mysteries,

³⁰⁰ Lucian, as shown above, explicitly compares dancers to rhetoricians on several occasions. *On Dance*, 62 and 65, for example.

³⁰¹ Susan Guettel Cole, “The Uses of Water in Greek Sanctuaries,” in *Early Greek Cult Practice: Proceedings of the Fifth-International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 26-29 June, 1986* (Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1988), 161-165.

two vessels were filled with liquid and overturned towards the east and west as participants urged the sky to rain and the earth to conceive.³⁰² Ritual water-bearing festivals, called *hydrophoria*, occurred in multiple places.³⁰³ In Minoan culture, water was used with some frequency in religious ritual. Alan Peatfield argues that water and other liquids figure into Minoan cult in three ways: as libations, as the focus of specific cult sites, and in iconography, and he connects the use of and focus on water to fertility and purification rites.³⁰⁴

Fresh water of course is a necessary element of growth and fertility, but salt water also figures into ritual. In the myth about the battle between Athena and Poseidon for precedence in Athens, for example, Athena gives Athens the olive tree, the essential commodity of Athenian agriculture, while Poseidon offers a salt water spring. Both gifts were memorialized in the Erechtheion on the Akropolis, where the marks of Poseidon's trident could be seen and where Athena's sacred olive tree grew. Burkert points out that sexuality permeates ancient sacrificial ritual, and he argues that often the castrated genitalia of male sacrificial victims were cast into the sea, especially in the case of sacrifices to Aphrodite, an essential goddess for fertility.³⁰⁵ In Hesiod's *Theogony*, when Kronos lops off his father's genitals with a sickle, he also casts the genitals into the sea, where they eventually give birth to Aphrodite herself.

³⁰² Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 73.

³⁰³ Ibid..

³⁰⁴ Alan Peatfield, "Water, Fertility, and Purification in Minoan Religion," in *Klados: Essays in Honor of J.N. Coldstream* Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement ed. Christine Morris 63 (1995), 223.

³⁰⁵ Burkert, *Homo Necans*, 58. "If the themes of killing and eating are so intensely enacted in ritual that they are able to grip, move, and transform human personality, it is inconceivable that the most powerful human impulse, sexuality, would play no part. On the contrary, sexuality is always intimately involved in ritual. There is no social order without a sexual order; but, even so, sexuality always retains the quality of something extraordinary and strange." Also, Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 155.

The sea was necessarily an important feature of Minoan life, and representations of aquatic life abound in Minoan art. One manifestation of the Minoan goddess seems to have been as a goddess of the sea, and, as discussed earlier, shells are found as cult implements in caves, in graves, on peaks, and in the palaces. In *Death, Women, and the Sun: Symbolism of Regeneration in Early Aegean Religion*, Lucy Goodison argues that in pre-Mycenaean Minoan religion, both the sun and the sea were associated with the regenerative power of the goddess. Goodison proposes that the Minoans saw the sun set into the ocean rather than across land and thus imagined the sun as a fish or making its journey in a boat.³⁰⁶ The frying pans, which often feature a noticeable pubic triangle, are adorned with both solar and sea imagery. One seal shows a goddess relaxing on the waves of the sea, and several have boats on them.³⁰⁷ Moreover, boats also appear with some frequency in Minoan art in general.

Finally, it is worth pointing out that the ocean also has a significant role in the myth about Theseus and the Labyrinth. In the basic myth, of course, Theseus and the Athenian youths travel by sea to Crete and also escape from the island in the same way. In an ode by Bakchylides (17), on the voyage from Athens to Crete, Theseus confronts Minos after Minos assaults one of the Athenian maidens. Minos then challenges Theseus to show that he is indeed the son of Poseidon. Minos asks his father Zeus to send a portent and then throws a gold ring into the sea, assuming that Theseus will only be able to find the ring with the help of Poseidon. Theseus dives in, and dolphins guide him to Poseidon and Amphitrite. The goddess gives him a purple robe and a crown which

³⁰⁶ Goodison, *Death, Women, and the Sun*, 34-37.

³⁰⁷ Goodison, *ibid.*, includes a selection of illustrations of Aegean frying pans. Note in particular figure 40d, 40f, and 56.

Aphrodite originally had given her.³⁰⁸ As Gantz points out, this version of the myth is echoed by various depictions on vases, some of which show Amphitrite holding a crown and some which also show Theseus.³⁰⁹ Hyginos offers a version of the myth in which Theseus then gives the crown to Ariadne.³¹⁰

Thus, all of the scenes which make up the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield fit into the context of a Knossian ritual which involved the Labyrinth dance. As discussed, there is ample evidence that some Minoan beliefs and cult activities continued into the Geometric and Archaic periods. There is also evidence that cult practices were disseminated to the Cyclades and to the Greek mainland from Crete. It is entirely possible that knowledge about Cretan religious practices was widespread in the eighth century B.C.E., especially when one considers how specific and accurate the Homeric poems are in general when it comes to Cretan geography and social composition. That Hephaistos models his creation on a festival at Knossos is not at all surprising in that Crete—and Knossos in particular—was an epicenter of technology and craftsmanship in the Bronze and Iron Ages. Most importantly, Hephaistos' ritual culminates with a celebration of the procreative feminine body in which dancers continuously form a mimesis of a uterus. Thus, the actual subject matter of the imagery described in the ekphrasis focuses on femininity.

³⁰⁸ Cited in Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 263.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

Seeing the Shield

In the prelude to the *hoplopoiia*, Thetis laments her son's impending death, and, as discussed above, Hephaistos says that he will create something at which other men will marvel. Hephaistos makes the armor for Achilles not only because the hero requires armor to enter the battle, but as something which can ease the sorrow of Achilles' death, which is exactly what he says in his reply to Thetis (18.463-466). In saying that he will make arms which "τις...θαυμάσσεται, ὅς κεν ἴδῃται," Hephaistos recalls the other things in the poem which fall into the category of being "θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι," like Hera's chariot, the armor of Rhesos, Achilles' first set of armor, and the animated tripods in Hephaistos' own workshop. Raymond Prier argues that the verb "θαυμάζειν" (to be amazed, to wonder, to marvel at) and the phrase "θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι" indicate an understanding of the presence of the gods. He argues that the phrase "θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι" in particular signifies "an intermediation between the polarities of men and gods."³¹¹ Achilles' shield is the most spectacular object in the poem, and it is the most awe-inspiring artistic creation by Hephaistos.

It is particularly striking that Hephaistos says that he wishes he could "ἀποκρύψαι" (to hide away, conceal) Achilles. The verb connects the shield to both Hera's private bedchamber, which has a lock which is "κρυπτός" (hidden, unknown) (14.168), and also to Thetis' cave, in which Hephaistos lives concealed for nine years. The connection of both places to the female body has been discussed above. The verb "κρύπτειν" is used to describe the protective nature of shields in general at 14.373. Most importantly,

³¹¹ Raymond Adolf Prier, *Thauma Idesthai: The Phenomenology of Sight and Appearance in Archaic Greek* (Tallahassee: The Florida State University Press, 1989), 81-91.

“ἀποκρύπτειν” and “κρύπτειν” both suggest the mysterious concealment of a child in the mother’s womb. In Hesiod’s *Theogony*, for example, when Ouranos pushes his children back into Gaia’s womb, Hesiods uses the verb “ἀποκρύπτειν” (156) to describe his activity. When Rhea hides the infant Zeus in a cave on Crete—an orifice of Gaia’s own body which is itself both vaginal and uterine—Hesiod uses “κρύπτειν” for her secretive act. Thus, Hephaistos indicates to Thetis that he wishes he could send Achilles back into her womb, hidden away from death, like a Divine Child. He, of course, cannot do that, but, as he says, he can make beautiful arms instead. In other words, the shield is a substitute for the protection of Thetis’ own body.

When Thetis delivers her son’s new arms, she sets them down with a great clash. The clashing of the armor itself is suggestive of the clashing of the Kouretes’ shields and spears as they dance around the infant Zeus. The poet specifically points out that “ἀνέβραχε δαίδαλα πάντα” (19.13) (all the daidala clash), thereby emphasizing the importance of the embellishments over the arms themselves. Besides the clashing of the arms as Thetis sets them down, of course, there is music contained in most of the scenes on the shield, for therein the *daidala* play flutes, lyres, and sing. Emasculating fear seizes the trembling Myrmidons at the sound, and none of them will look directly at the glittering armor. Achilles, however, examines the gifts with great intent:

Ὡς ἄρα φωνήσασα θεὰ κατὰ τεύχε' ἔθηκε
 πρόσθεν Ἀχιλλῆος· τὰ δ' ἀνέβραχε δαίδαλα πάντα.
 Μυρμιδόνας δ' ἄρα πάντας ἔλε τρόμος, οὐδέ τις ἔτλη
 ἄντην εἰσιδέειν, ἀλλ' ἔτρεσαν. αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεύς
 ὥς εἶδ', ὥς μιν μᾶλλον ἔδν χόλος, ἐν δέ οἱ ὅσσε
 δεινὸν ὑπὸ βλεφάρων ὥς εἰ σέλας ἐξεφάνθεν·
 τέρπετο δ' ἐν χεῖρεσσιν ἔχων θεοῦ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα.
 αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ φρεσὶν ἦσι τετάρπετο δαίδαλα λεύσσων,
 αὐτίκα μητέρα ἦν ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα· (19.12-20)

(So speaking, the goddess set down the armor in front of Achilles. And all the *daidala* clashed loudly. Trembling seized all the Myrmidons, and none of them had the courage to look at them face to face, but they shrunk away in fear. But Achilles looked at them, and anger rose in him more, and his eyes shone bright with fire, terribly, under his eyebrows. Holding the shining gifts of the god in his hands, he delighted in them. But when he had delighted his heart looking at the *daidala*, immediately he addressed his mother with winged words...)

It may be that the Myrmidons are simply frightened by such amazingly beautiful craftsmanship, but their reaction is, in fact, very like warriors reacting to the aegis. In general, as a image which is suggestive of female genitalia, the face of the shield is indeed apotropaic and emasculating. At this point, it is important to remember the golden handmaids and automated tripods which assist Hephaistos in his workshop. Hephaistos' work is frequently animated, and, as discussed earlier, the golden handmaidens and tripods serve to introduce the ekphrasis. It is my belief that the “*δαίδαλα πολλά*” which Hephaistos creates on the shield are not just spectacular in their beauty but are wondrous because they are moving and making music in the same way the golden handmaids and tripods move. Hephaistos has created art which rivals life. The Myrmidons are terrified because the figures on the shield seem, as the poet says, “*ὥς τε ζῶι βροτοῖ*” (18.539) (like living beings). Like the golden handmaidens in Hephaistos' workshop, the *daidala* are exhibiting sound, intelligence, and strength.

After taking in the imagery, Achilles says that the armor is the work of a god and that no mortal could have made the gifts. Achilles immediately recognizes that the armor is divine because only a divine creator could impart life to the metallic figures and cause them to act out a ritual on the surface of the shield. Homer specifically says that Achilles delights in “*πάντα δαίδαλα*” (all the *daidala*) which must refer to the images on the shield. Achilles takes in all the scenes at once and sees all of the moving circles at the same time;

rather than reacting with repulsion, Achilles is drawn into the spiralling movements of the *daidala*.

Achilles' reaction to seeing all the *daidala* is telling. First, as he looks at the face of the shield, there is “*χόλος*” (anger). The word “*χόλος*” indicates both “bile” and “anger;” bitter anger is the emotional response to excessive bile in the body. So, Achilles experiences a rise in a bodily fluid when he views the shield. As has been shown, “*μένος*” is manifested in actual bodily fluids, and bile certainly can be a form of “*μένος*.” In general, several words are used in the *Iliad* for Achilles' anger, including “*θυμός*,” “*μῆνις*,” and even “*μένος*.” The word most commonly associated with Achilles' wrath is “*μῆνις*,” which is actually etymologically related to “*μένος*.”³¹² In discussing ecstatic rituals in the Greek world, Burkert says that the Greek word *mania* is etymologically connected to the word “*μένος*.” Buck agrees.³¹³ Burkert argues that *mania*—extreme intoxication with the power of a god—is actually an experience of frenzy which is derived from “intensified mental power” rather than “delusion.”³¹⁴ Thus, the ecstasy experienced in such religious rituals is an extreme form of emotional energy. When Achilles views the *daidala* on the shield, as they move around and carry out the ritual of renewal contained within, he reacts with a powerful emotional response which leads to ecstasy and divine communion. When Achilles actually puts on the armor, Homer tells his audience that Achilles is “*μενεαίνων*,” (raging with “*μένος*”).

In the last scene of the ekphrasis, the people in the crowd watching the dance are described as “*τερόμενοι*” (charmed, delighted). As discussed in the Introduction, the

³¹² For an in depth discussion of Achilles' anger, see Leonard Muellner, *The Anger of Achilles: Mēnis in Greek Epic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), especially 177-194.

³¹³ Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo European Languages*, 1134.

³¹⁴ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 161-162.

verb “τέρπειν” is used by Homer to describe sexual pleasure as when the poet describes Hera’s effect on Zeus in Book Fourteen, for example. Also, as discussed previously, the word is used in the epics also to describe the effect of a talented singer on his audience. The crowd within the scene watches the young men and women perform a dance in which representations of the uterus are created, and the crowd delights in the erotically-charged movements. The women watching the wedding procession and the circles of dance associated with it in the first city also form an internal audience, and Homer tells his audience that they “θαυμάζον” (wondered at) the spectacle. Most importantly, the crowds in the scenes on the shield watch the same “δαίδαλα πολλά” (many *daidala*) which Achilles sees, although Achilles sees the whole rather than just the individual scenes.

Like the internal audience watching the Labyrinth dance on the shield, Achilles also takes sexual pleasure in (τετάρπετο) the “δαίδαλα” which adorn the shield. As Scully argues, Achilles’ pleasure in seeing the shield’s images is primarily due to the fact that he can look at the design as a whole rather than only each individual scene.³¹⁵ Indeed, Achilles takes pleasure in the shield because he can observe the universe within its design from the perspective of a god, as if he occupies the space of heaven.³¹⁶ Still, he also experiences sexual pleasure because he is looking at a ritual which is sexual in its essence. Ancient mystery cults frequently included sexual elements. As Burkert notes, “We have the word of Diodorus that Priapos Ithyphallos played a role in nearly all the mysteries, though it was ‘with laughter and in a playful mood’ that he was introduced.”³¹⁷ The rites of the Kouretes in honor of Cretan Zeus certainly involved ritual sexuality. The Eleusinian Mysteries focused on marriage and first sexual

³¹⁵ Scully, “Reading the Shield of Achilles: Terror, Anger, Delight,” 40.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 104-105.

experience and may have included a dramatic *hieros gamos*. Dionysiac festivals often involved ritual obscenity, *phallegoria*, and *hieros gamos*. The Bacchic mysteries focused on sexual coming-of-age, and rumors of ritual sex and even initiation by rape are found in ancient authors.³¹⁸ Although the words are not used in Homer, the terms “*ὄργια*” (orgies, secret rites), “*ὄργη*” (anger, lust, passion), “*ὄργα*” (to swell with moisture, to swell with lust) are often associated with Dionysiac rituals in particular. It is notable that the words are associated with both anger and sexual lust. Thus, Achilles reacts to Hephaistos’ art with both anger and sexual arousal.

It is significant that Achilles takes in all of the images visually, and, of course, only he and the other observers within the poem experience Hephaistos’ art in this way. The poem’s audience experiences the images through language, and, even if that language is highly visual in nature, Achilles sees the images directly while Homer’s audience hears the images and must visualize them from the poet’s words. It is worth pointing out that the state which the initiates reached after experiencing the Eleusinian Mysteries was called *epopteia*. The word basically means “the state of having seen.” As shown above, when Pentheus becomes intoxicated with the power of Dionysos in the *Bacchae*, it is his vision which changes first. He sees the world differently. The various mystery cults differed in their specific focuses, but in general most sought to offer some comfort for a blessed afterlife, often by invoking the regenerative force of the feminine body. Achilles, who alone actually takes in the entire design on the shield at once, experiences the ritual as a live event, just as the crowd watches the dance in the last

³¹⁸ Ibid., 105-106.

scene. The “*δαίδαλα πολλά*” which Hephaistos creates for him, like many ancient mystery rituals, offer Achilles a new perspective on death and immortality.³¹⁹

When he rejoins the battle, Achilles understands that he will soon die; his own horse even prophesies his impending death at the end of Book Nineteen. When Achilles first beholds the shield’s imagery, then, he is in a liminal state between life and death, and, because his mother is a goddess, he approaches divinity himself while in this liminal state. Again, the dancing in the last scene colors all of the other scenes of the ekphrasis and encircles all of them. With the exception of the river of Ocean which runs around the exterior of the shield, then, the representation of the Labyrinth contains all of the other

³¹⁹ Of course, as discussed above, the Cretan ritual probably involved a coming-of-age rite for girls and boys as well as general celebrations of fertility. In recreating the Labyrinth in a dance, dancers simulate a descent into the body of the earth. In tracing out the pathway into the uterus, they also simulate a descent to the underworld. They face death as they celebrate life and sexuality. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, argues, 290, that the “cult of Dionysos is very ancient in Greece” but that the cult was ever-changing. In discussing possible rites of Dionysian celebrations, Burkert argues for nocturnal rituals which focused on wine, intoxication, sexuality—possibly including sexual initiation rituals for adolescents—and divine revelation. He writes, 291: “Dionysos is the god of the exceptional. As the individual gains independence, the Dionysos cult becomes a vehicle for separation of private groups from the polis. Alongside public Dionysos festivals, there emerge private Dionysos mysteries. These are esoteric, they take place at night; access is through individual initiation, *telete*. As a symbolic Beyond, closed and mysterious, the Bacchic grotto or cave appears....The same cult of Dionysos Baccheios appears in a third-century inscription from Miletus. Both men and women, we learn, are initiated, but the initiations should be undertaken separately for each sex by priests and priestesses respectively. Omophagy, the eating of raw flesh, which in myth appears as the gruesome high point of Dionysic frenzy, is mentioned....Dionysic initiation is fulfilled in raving, *baccheia*. The initiate is turned into a *bacchos*. The state of frenzy is blessedness, compellingly expressed in the entrance song of Euripides’ Bacchae; earth is transformed into a paradise with milk, wine, and honey springing from the ground; meanads offers their breasts to a fawn. Yet at the very center of this paradise there is murderous savagery when the frenzied ones become irresistible hunters of animal and man striving towards the climax of dismemberment, ‘the delight of eating raw flesh.’” Burkert also goes on to discuss the role of the underworld in Bacchic rituals. In discussing the Eleusinian Mysteries, 285-290, Burkert argues that the cult can be traced back to Mycenaean times. The Mystai were of course forbidden from disclosing the secrets of initiation, but, as Burkert argues, 285, there is more information about the cult than any other. The celebrations involved, among other elements, ritual purification, fasting, abstinence from drinking wine, barley-drinks, ritual obscenity and other forms of sexuality, a cave dedicated to Pluto, animal sacrifices (including bulls), dances, torches and fire, and feasting. Burkert writes, 289, “Finally two special vessels, *plemochoai*, are filled and poured out, one towards the west, another towards the east, while people, looking up at the sky, shout ‘rain!’, and, looking down at the earth, ‘conceive!’ In Greek, this is a magical rhyme, *hye—kye*. Perhaps there were dances across the Rharian field where according to myth the first corn grew...” The Mysteries, of course, dealt with death and the afterlife, and, as stated in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, those who were initiated would be blessed in the afterlife. In discussing Greek mystery cults in general, Burkert, 276-277, argues for an element of terror along with basic elements, early on, of puberty initiations, agrarian elements, and sexual aspects.

scenes. Visually, the other elements of the design are found inside the Labyrinth.³²⁰ His viewing of the “δαίδαλα πάντα” (all the elaborations) on the shield is a sexual experience. The elusive, spiralling design of the labyrinthine shield draws Achilles into its center like Helen’s whirling bed and vortex-like body. It serves as a kind of visual katabasis. Inside the shield’s circles, which also form a sort of cave, Achilles faces the terror of death but also finds the divine sphere, with its birds-eye view of the earth, the nocturnal sky full of stars, the sun, and the moon. In fact, in uniting visually with the uterine form of his new shield, Achilles engenders his own immortality as a hero who achieves *kleos*. He is even described as “δαίμονι ἴσος” (like a divine spirit) at 20.493 and at 21.18 and at 21.227, suggesting that he has indeed touched upon the divine sphere.³²¹ Achilles, of course, is also a singer, and he, like Helen, exhibits an awareness of his own role in shaping his future and in creating subject-matter for future songs. In fact, he may realize that his own immortality lies in the *technē* of poetry.

Soon after viewing the shield, Achilles laments the possibility of Patroklos’ body rotting to his mother, and Thetis tells him that she will work to preserve the body. Homer says:

³²⁰ Cf. Atchity, *Homer’s Iliad: The Shield of Memory*, 175-176: “What gives Hephaistos the ability to present contemporaneous events is transcendent, divine viewpoint. The Olympian’s detachment, like the Muse-inspired poet’s, allows him to recreate an objective and universal vision because he stands outside it in the concentration of his technique (the relationship between the possession and the ecstasy of the artist). The emphatic position given to the dance, then, suggests it is Homer’s way of communicating that the human artist shares in the god’s aloofness precisely when he creates the images of art and artifacts. Lloyd remarks: ‘The last circlet of the chorus contrasts with all the rest in being continuous all round...absolved from all reference to the hopes and fears, the labours and dangers, the emulation and the contests of busy existence. Here all...blend away in the delirium of social sympathy and festive art.’ (pp.40-41)...the dance unifies the depicted events—gives them orderly meaning and direction.”

³²¹ F.A. Wilford argues that because this formula, which occurs nine times in the *Iliad*, always occurs following the bucolic diaeresis at the end of a line, it “appears to belong to the most primitive level of the Epic.” “Δαίμων in Homer,” *Numen* 12 no. 3 (1965), 221. Wilford writes, 221, that “Such a man is clearly not acting in his own best interests, or even of his own volition. He cannot attend to his preservation, or even know what he is doing. He has ceased to be his normal self, and is said to resemble some supernatural power—and is indeed fully in the grip of that power.”

Ἦς ἄρα φωνήσασα μένος πολυθαρσές ἐνῆκε,
 Πατρόκλῳ δ' αὖτ' ἀμβροσίην καὶ νέκταρ ἐρυθρὸν
 στάξε κατὰ ῥινῶν, ἵνα οἱ χρώς ἔμπεδος εἴη. (19.37-39)

(Thus speaking, she put into him dauntless “μένος,” and dripped ambrosia and red nectar through the nostrils of Patroklos, so that his skin stay fresh.)

It is striking that Thetis fills Achilles with “μένος.” There are other instances in the poem in which gods instill additional “μένος” in heroes, and Thetis simply may be fortifying her son for a grand *aristeia*. Achilles already seems to possess plenty of “μένος,” however, and he is remarkably changed after viewing the shield. He does not eat or drink, and Athena later feeds Achilles with nectar and ambrosia (19.352-354). As Scully recognizes, this is the only instance in the Homeric epics in which a mortal consumes the food and drink of the immortals.³²² In several of the ancient mystery rituals, initiates did not partake of food or wine for a period of time.

When Achilles puts on the armor, it gleams just as Achilles himself glows with internal fire:

ἐν δὲ μέσοισι κορύσσετο δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.
 τοῦ καὶ ὀδόντων μὲν καναχὴ πέλε, τῷ δὲ οἱ ὅσσε
 λαμπέσθην ὡς εἴ τε πυρὸς σέλας, ἐν δὲ οἱ ἦτορ
 δῦν' ἄχος ἄτλητον· ὁ δ' ἄρα Τρωσὶν μενεαίνων
 δύσετο δῶρα θεοῦ, τά οἱ Ἥφαιστος κάμε τεύχων.
 κνημίδας μὲν πρῶτα περὶ κνήμησιν ἔθηκε
 καλὰς ἀργυρέοισιν ἐπισφυρίοις ἀραρυίας·
 δεύτερον αὖ θώρηκα περὶ στήθεσσι ἐδυνεν.
 ἀμφὶ δ' ἄρ' ὤμοισιν βάλετο ξίφος ἀργυρόηλον
 χάλκεον· αὐτὰρ ἔπειτα σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε
 εἴλετο, τοῦ δ' ἀπάνευθε σέλας γένετ' ἥϊτε μήνης.
 ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἂν ἐκ πόντοιο σέλας ναύτησι φανήῃ
 καιομένοιο πυρός, τό τε καίεται ὑψόθ' ὄρεσφι
 σταθμῷ ἐν οἰόπόλῳ· τοὺς δ' οὐκ ἐθέλοντας ἄελλαι
 πόντον ἐπ' ἰχθυόεντα φίλων ἀπάνευθε φέρουσιν·
 ὡς ἀπ' Ἀχιλλῆος σάκος σέλας αἰθέρ' ἵκανε
 καλοῦ δαιδαλέου· περὶ δὲ τρυφάλειαν ἀείρας
 κρατὶ θέτο βριαρὴν· ἥ δ' ἀστήρ ὥς ἀπέλαμπεν
 ἵππους τρυφάλεια, περισσεύοντο δ' ἔθειραι

³²² Scully, “Reading the Shield of Achilles: Terror, Anger, Delight,” 39 note 29.

χρύσσαι, ὥς Ἡφαιστος ἴει λόφον ἀμφὶ θαμνιάς.
 πειρήθη δ' ἔο αὐτοῦ ἐν ἔντεσι δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς,
 εἰ οἱ ἐφαρμόσσειε καὶ ἐντρέχοι ἀγλαὰ γυῖα·
 τῷ δ' εὖτε πτερὰ γίγνεται, ἄειρε δὲ ποιμένα λαῶν.
 (19.362-386)

(Brilliant Achilles equipped himself in the middle of these. A clash went out from his his teeth, and his eyes glowed as if they were the brightness of fire, and his heart filled with unbearable grief. Raging at the Trojans, he put on the gifts of the gods, which Hephaistos, in creating them, toiled to make. First, he put the beautiful greaves fitted with silver guards on his legs. Next, he put around his chest the corselet. Around his shoulders he threw the sword ornamented with silver, a bronze thing. But then he took up the shield, huge and weighty, and its brilliance shone far, as from the moon. As when the light from a burning fire which burns high in the mountains in a lonely shelter shines for sailors across the sea; storms carry the sailors, not willing, far, far away from those dear to them along the fish-teeming sea. So the brilliance of the shield of Achilles, beautiful and elaborated with *daidala* rose up to the upper air. And lifting it, he set the strong helmet on his head, and the helmet, crested with horse-hair, shone like a star, and the golden fringes were shaking around it which Hephaistos drove thick along the crest. And brilliant Achilles tried himself out in the armor, to see if it fit him well and if his beautiful limbs ran free in it. And it became like wings for him and lifted up the shepherd of the people.)

When Achilles wears the armor, he is raging with internal energy, and the armor glows along with his body as if it has become one with him. It is striking that Homer describes the light from the shield as light from the moon. Achilles not only shines with fire, but he also is explicitly compared to a star (ἀστὴρ) in this passage. This description of Achilles brings to mind the image of Apollo in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*. As Apollo leaps from the Cretan ship, he is described as:

ἀστέρι εἰδόμενος μέσσωι ἥματι· τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ πολλαί
 σπινθαρίδες πωτώντο, σέλας δ' εἰς οὐρανὸν ἵκεν...
 πᾶσαν δὲ Κρίσην κάτεχεν σέλας...(441-445)

(...looking like a star in the middle of the day; from him many sparks flew, and his brightness went up to heaven...his brightness filled all of Kriisa...)

A few lines later, at 19.397-398, Homer explicitly compares Achilles' radiance to the sun:

... ὅπιθεν δὲ κορυσσάμενος βῆ Ἀχιλλεύς,
τέυχεσι παμφαίνων ὥς τ' ἠλέκτωρ Ὑπερίων...

(Armed for battle, Achilles stood behind him, gleaming in his armor like the Sun, Hyperion.)

Later, in Book Twenty-Two, Homer again describes the radiance of Achilles:

Ὡς ὄρμαινε μένων, ὃ δέ οἱ σχεδὸν ἦλθεν Ἀχιλλεύς
Ἴσος Ἐνυαλίῳ, κορυθαίῳι πτολεμιστῇ,
σειῶν Πηλιάδα μελίην κατὰ δεξιὸν ὤμον
δαινῆν· ἀμφὶ δὲ χαλκὸς ἐλάμπετο εἴκελος αὐγῇ
ἢ πυρὸς αἰθομένου ἢ ἡελίου ἀνιόντος. (22.131-135)

(Thus he pondered, remaining there, but Achilles came close to him, like Enyalios, the shining-helmed warrior, shaking from above his right shoulder the terrible Pelian ash spear. The bronze around him was shining like the gleam of burning fire or the rising sun.)

Here, Achilles's brilliance is explicitly compared to the sun. When Achilles puts on his armor, then, the shield shines like the moon, and he shines like the sun. This is striking considering the possibility of a *hieros gamos* between the moon and the sun in Minoan ritual discussed earlier. Achilles' spear is likened to the evening star right before he kills Hektor (22.311-321). Achilles becomes a fusion of masculine and feminine energy: he himself represents a *hieros gamos* of sorts.³²³

In fact, as Achilles tests the fit of his new armor, Homer tells his audience that it becomes like wings and raises him up. As Scully writes, "This is a remarkable conceit, unparalleled elsewhere in the Iliad, and further suggests a form of transcendence."³²⁴

Sarah Morris also focuses on the wings which Achilles' new armor engender and links

³²³ Cf. Prier, *Thauma Idesthai*, 42-46. Prier argues that the sun and moon and the light they provide are, 43, "powerful, affective symbols...Normally, the the gleam of the sun and moon illuminates objects of supernatural importance...The collocation of vocabulary in this passage has, of course, a great importance for the mutual interdependence of sight and appearance, for the appearance of the moon is clearly a key prerequisite for sight, this 'moon' that is no mere reflection of light but a source of light regarded with special awe. This is the moon that appears in its fullness (selēnē to plēthousan) along with the sun on the Shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.484). It represents the blinding, awe-inspiring light of Penelope's web, that once woven and washed, 'shone like the sun or moon' (*Od.* 24.148). This 'light' that appears from the moon and sun is archetypal in its splendor and affective in its power; it is totally a phenomenon of the 'other world.'"

³²⁴ Scully, "Reading the Shield of Achilles: Terror, Anger, Delight," 39.

them to the figures on the neck of a pithos from Tenos which dates to the seventh century B.C.E., which shows in relief the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus. All of the figures, including the armed Athena, Zeus, Hephaistos, and the attendants have wings.³²⁵ As mentioned above, Morris also points out that Phoenician and Ugaritic deities often travel by flying with wings.³²⁶ Birds frequently accompany goddesses in Minoan art, and some depictions of deities show them with wings themselves.³²⁷ Nilsson discusses the importance of birds and divine figures which seem to descend from the sky in Minoan art, and he also argues that gods appear only as birds in Homer.³²⁸ When Thetis leaves Hephaistos' workshop in Book Eighteen, she is likened to a hawk (18.616), for example. When he wears his new armor, Achilles is profoundly transformed.

Robert Rabel connects the Labyrinth dance on the shield to the movements of Achilles' final battle with Hektor.³²⁹ Rabel also sees the dance on the shield as having warlike elements and aggressive movements between the youths and maidens. Achilles' battle with Hektor similarly involves similar circling and running images, and it has

³²⁵ Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, 15-16. "Wearing all five pieces of his new and magic armor, the hero is literally levitated upward 'as if on wings,' in a moment of metaphor become reality. This imagined event, acceptable within poetry, bestows great powers on 'daidalic' art and Daidalos, who is eventually credited with the invention of wings. In fact, this poetic vision could well have encouraged the legend that gave Daidalos man's first flight...If Hephaistos made a suit of armor that mobilized the hero, Achilles, with imaginary wings, it is not surprising that a manufacture of wings by Daidalos, who appears in the same epic context, borrows from the imagery of the *hoplopoiia*...In the most fantastic scene of craftsmanship in Greek art (Figures 13, 14), craftsmen, attendant figures, the god giving birth, and the work of art itself—the armed figure springing from the head of the god—are all wearing wings."

³²⁶ Ibid., 79.

³²⁷ Cf. Miriam Robbins Dexter, *Whence the Goddesses: A Source Book* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1990), 12. Dexter focuses on feminine snake and bird iconography in her first chapter: "Among the Greeks and Romans, wings were given to many goddesses, both positive and negative figures in the mythologies: as we discussed earlier in this chapter, the Gorgon Medusa was winged and snaky. Further, Sirens, Harpies, and most other negative Greco-Roman goddesses which were not snaky, were provided with wings or other avian paraphernalia."

³²⁸ Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 330-340 (for birds and bird-epiphanies) and 491-496 (for gods in Homer changing into birds, especially Athena).

³²⁹ Robert J. Rabel, "The Shield of Achilles and the Death of Hektor," *Eranos* 87, (1989), 81-90. Cf. Lonsdale, "A Dancing Floor for Ariadne," 277-278. Lonsdale sees the circling movements as signs of ritual sacrifice.

explicit erotic overtones. When Hektor contemplates facing Achilles, for example, he imagines himself in the role of a woman, and he even compares a potential conversation with Achilles to the soft whispers between young men and maidens during sex (22.126-130).³³⁰ Thus, Achilles and Hektor also create fleeting feminine forms. They dance the Labyrinth dance just as the youths and maidens on the shield, although only Achilles emerges from the Labyrinth alive. Hektor is forever left in the depths of the Labyrinth, the chthonic realm of death.³³¹

Achilles is frequently compared to both the hunter Orion and also to various animal-predators in the final battle with Hektor. Moreover, as Lonsdale has argued, the

³³⁰Cf. Rabel, "The Shield of Achilles and the Death of Hektor," 89-90: "Not only the appearance of the dancers is stressed, but the details of their performance, however obscure to a reader, were apparently finely choreographed for viewers of the shield: they run on well-schooled feet (*θρέξασκον ἐπισταμένοισι πόδεσσι*, 18.599) and in circles, a direction which Homer conveys to us through the simile of the potter (18.599-600). Alternating with circular movements (*ὅτε... ἄλλοτε*) they proceed in straight lines (18.599-602). Achilles and Hektor accomplish a similar pattern. They whirl in circles about the city on quick feet (*πόλιν πέρι δινηθήτην/καρπαλίμοισι πόδεσσι*, 22.165-66)—Homer here employs a dual form of the verb that described the tumblers on the shield (cf. 18.606)—and break that pattern at regular intervals (*ὄσσάκι... τοσσάκι*) when Hektor springs for the gates of the city. Achilles, anticipating this attempt at escape, drives him back into a circle (22.194-97), so that the pursuit is accomplished in alternations of circular and linear motion which, however unprecedented in the type-scenes of battle, recall the mock warfare of the shield's young male and female dancers."

³³¹Lonsdale, "A Dancing Floor for Ariadne," 280-281. Steven Lonsdale connects the movements of Achilles and Hektor in their final battle to Ariadne's dance of the Labyrinth as well. He also argues that the reference to Daedalos' dance floor on the shield is intended to signify much more to the poem's audience. He traces the Cretan dance to funerary rites, and, in particular, to sacrificial ritual. He writes, 280: "Recent discoveries on Crete suggest that bull sacrifice may have overlapped with human, even child, sacrifice. Moreover, there is evidence that the flesh of children may have been ritually consumed or offered to a divinity. A ring from Khania depicts a girl in a skirt before an enthroned goddess in a shrine structure. A knife, reminiscent of the sacrificial axes above the sacrifice on the Hagia Triadha sarcophagus, is poised above her head, indicating that she is about to be killed. The unsavory scene brings to mind the child tributes offered to the Minotaur, who embodies bull and man, and who in turn is slain by Theseus. Something of a tauromorphic *daimōn* finds its way into the myth about Zagreus, whose name and presence in Crete before Dionysos suggest a Minoan heritage. As a child under the guard of the Kouretes, Zagreus was lured away by toys dangled by the Titans. Proteus-like, he attempts to avoid his aggressors by taking on various shapes, including the bull, but in this form is captured, torn apart, and devoured. In the myth of Dionysos, god of epiphany, the motif of child sacrifice reappears in the tale of the Proetides, who are punished and driven mad by dance. However distantly removed the myths are from Minoan religious practices, the convergence and violently playful activity offers an analogy to ecstatic phenomena visible in Minoan art." Lonsdale suggests Achilles' slaying of Hektor within the circles of the Labyrinth dance is informed by the Minoan rites; it is a sacrifice.

imagery of ritual sacrifice permeates the description of Achilles' killing of Hektor.³³² In fact, when Hektor entreats Achilles to return his dead body to his family, Achilles says:

μή με, κύον, γούνων γουνάξω μηδὲ τοκήων·
αἱ γάρ πως αὐτόν με μένος καὶ θυμὸς ἀνείη
ὥμ' ἀποταμνόμενον κρέα ἐδμεναι, οἷα ἔοργας,
ὥς οὐκ ἔσθ' ὅς σῆς γε κύνας κεφαλῆς ἀπαλάλκοι... (22.345-348)

(Do not entreat me, you dog, by knees or parents. If only somehow my *menos* and spirit would drive me to eat your meat raw, cutting it away from you, for the things you have done. So, there is no one who can keep the dogs away from your head...)

Achilles himself says that he wishes his “*μένος καὶ θυμός*” would push him to the point where he could actually eat Hektor's flesh raw. He thus attributes his own rage to “*μένος*.” I believe Achilles is referencing the extreme sacrificial practice associated with the cult of Cretan Zeus and the later Dionysiac cults which develop out of it. He is experiencing a sort of frenzy similar to Bacchic possession. As Donna Wilson argues, even expressing such a wish has the effect of actually carrying it out.³³³ Thus, Achilles rages so the ritual enacted by the *daidala* on Achilles' shield allows the hero to achieve an elevated state of mind which touches on the raw, animalistic, savage side of human nature—thus, as Wilson points out, the chaotic, feminine side of human existence. He

³³² See also Sarah P. Morris, “The Sacrifice of Astyanax: Near Eastern Contributions to the Siege of Troy,” in *The Ages of Homer: A Tribute to Emily Townsend Vermeule* eds. Jane B. Carter and Sarah P. Morris (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 221-245. Morris argues that the sacrifice of Astyanax from the walls of Troy is rooted in the Near Eastern custom of child-sacrifice. She also links the sacrifice to coming-of-age rituals in areas of Phoenician activity in Greece such as Crete and Sparta.

³³³ Donna F. Wilson, *Ransom, Revenge, and Heroic Identity in the Iliad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 123: “Achilleus is the only other figure in the *Iliad* besides Hera and Hekabe associated with the wish to commit omophagy; he wishes his anger would let him cut Hektor up and eat him raw. As it is, he will leave his corpse for the dogs and birds to devour. He expresses his wish as unattainable, but ‘Achilles means what he wishes...The beastly wish is an amplification of an already beastly premise [that Achilleus will give Hektor's corpse to the dogs.]’ Achilleus' words and conduct conform in other respects as well to the paradigm established in the cases of Hera and Hekabe...his escalating savagery, culminating in a wish to eat his enemy raw, marks him as outside the commensal political order and even the human community. Inasmuch as he is assimilated into a pattern of inverted order, otherwise reserved for females and associated by analogy with Hera and Hekabe, he embodies at this moment what is not Greek....Hence his position is not unlike the adolescent initiand...”

does not fear death after his visual katabasis. He focuses only on avenging the death of Patroklos, and he turns Hektor into the culminating sacrifice of his ecstatic experience. Of course, by killing Hektor in a glorious *aristeia*, Achilles will assure himself of a grand reputation after his death and a relatively blessed state in the afterlife.

That Achilles does indeed become a sort of *bakchos* when he views the designs of the ekphrasis and joins the battle again may also be seen in the description of his glorious funeral at the end of the *Odyssey*.

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ σε φλόξ ἥγνυσεν Ἥφαιστοιο,
ἥῳθεν δὴ τοι λέγομεν λεύκ' ὅστέ', Ἀχιλλεῦ,
οἴνω ἐν ἀκρήτῳ καὶ ἀλείφατι· δῶκε δὲ μήτηρ
χρύσειον ἀμφιφορῆα· Διονύσοιο δὲ δῶρον
φάσκ' ἔμεναι, ἔργον δὲ περικλυτοῦ Ἥφαιστοιο.
ἐν τῷ τοι καῖται λεύκ' ὅστέα, φαίδιμ' Ἀχιλλεῦ,
μῖγδα δὲ Πατρόκλοιο Μενoitιάδαο θανόντος,
χωρὶς δ' Ἀντιλόχοιο, τὸν ἔξοχα τίεις ἀπάντων
τῶν ἄλλων ἐτάρων μετὰ Πάτροκλόν γε θανόντα. (24.71-79)

(For after the flame of Hephaistos consumed you, at dawn we gathered your white bones, Achilles, in unmixed wine and oil. Your mother gave you a golden jar. She said that it was a gift from Dionysos, and that it was the work of the very famous Hephaistos. Your white bones rest in it, brilliant Achilles, mixed with those of dead Patroklos, son of Menoitios, and apart from those of Antilochos, whom you esteemed above all the rest of your companions after dead Patroklos.)

Burkert suggests that this passage may refer to Dionysiac mysteries.³³⁴ The association of death, Achilles, his mother, a container, Hephaistos, and Dionysos is indeed compelling here. Often, the secrets imparted to initiates in mystery cults are considered gifts of the gods.³³⁵

³³⁴ Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults*, 21.

³³⁵ Of course, the ritual depicted on the shield, as Homer tells his audience, is like the chorus which Daidalos makes for Ariadne at Knossos, and any recognizable ritualistic behavior in the final battle between Achilles and Hektor is informed by this most important comparison. At the same time, however, the warriors are ultimately competing for Helen. As they mimic the movements of the young warriors in the Labyrinth dance depicted on the shield, Achilles and Hektor seem to compete not only for victory on the battlefield but also for Helen herself. In the *Iliad*, of course, Helen has a face like a goddess, but there

It is significant that it is Thetis who commissions the new armor and who brings it to Achilles. In giving her son the shield, Thetis not only gives him a representation of the female body in general, but she also gives her son the opportunity to re-enter her own womb. As a goddess associated with the sea, caves, dawn, and fertility, Thetis fits easily into the group of goddesses who carry vestiges of Neolithic and Bronze Age earth-goddesses. The ritual of the Labyrinth which depicted on the shield could easily be carried out in her own honor. In visually penetrating the Labyrinth of the shield's design, Achilles, then, re-enters the body of the mother and becomes one with her again. He thus experiences divinity, where, as the Muses tell Hesiod in the *Theogony*, the realms of past, present, and future all are available at once. Achilles is then reborn having communed with the divine sphere. Thetis accomplishes what was impossible at Achilles' birth: she gives Achilles a form of immortality.

Conclusion

Finally, then, ekphrasis makes its debut in western literature as an element of epic which is feminine in nature. Many things help to characterize Achilles' shield as a feminine object, including that it is circular, that it is a protective container of sorts, and

is evidence that she actually was a goddess at one point. Nilsson sees much similarity between Helen and Ariadne. Both are abducted by lovers and eventually hanged in myth. Helen, he argues, was a fertility goddess associated with trees, as her epithet "δενδρίτις" (of a tree) shows. Nilsson points out that Helen had several temples at Sparta and that she was worshipped, as Isocrates says, not as the mortal wife of Menelaos but as a goddess. He speculates that Helen might be a manifestation of the Mistress of Animals. In any case, Nilsson argues that "the Minoan tree cult survives in the cult of Helen." Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion*, 522-532 esp. 528-531. Willetts agrees. *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, 193: "It is now generally agreed that Ariadne was a vegetation-goddess of Minoan origin, a type of the Minoan goddess—like Britomartis. This comparison holds good in several respects. Just as Britomartis means 'Sweet Maid,' so Ariadne (or Ariagne) means 'Very Holy Maid.' Like Pasiphae, she had associations with the moon, and therefore with fertility. It was suggested earlier that the Knossian Dance in her honour was part of the ritual of collective marriage, following on the graduation of the initiates: it was a love-dance. This partly explains her association with Dionysus and with Aphrodite. Again, just as we compared Britomartis with Persephone, so we may compare Ariadne with both. She too is carried off and mourned."

that in general Hephaistos tends to make things which are feminine. The golden handmaidens in Hephaistos' workshop, in particular, which seem like life-sized *daidala*, make the images within the ekphrasis seem feminine. The ekphrasis itself is feminine because of its highly visual language, its association with weaving and woven products, and the spiralling, circular structure of its composition. That the actual subject matter of the ekphrasis focuses on a ritual which is based on the feminine body further characterizes it as feminine. The final image of the ekphrasis is a mimetic uterus, forever spiralling in and out of existence, and this striking image characterizes the ekphrasis absolutely as a feminine body.

With the ekphrasis, Homer appropriates the power of femininity—including its power to beguile, its ability to seduce, its potential to terrorize, its threat of emasculation, its capacity for engendering life, and even its close association with the chthonic realm and death. Ekphrasis is an example of poetic “*μῆτις*,” it serves to draw in and trap just like Hera's woven love-charm borrowed from Aphrodite. In short, ekphrasis is irresistible to its audience. With all of its “*κόσμος*” and “*χάρις*,” the stunning beauty of ekphrasis drains away mental faculty, leaving its audience vulnerable to the larger narrative of the epic poem. In the end, it not only serves to accomplish the act of poetic persuasion, but it also allows the poet to give birth to the universe of his poem. After all, it is only through the act of persuasion that Homer's poem becomes a reality; in the world of oral poetry, the poem only exists in the momentary interaction between the poet and his listeners.

Homer, in fact, offers a model for the reception of ekphrasis right in his poem. In the dancing scene on the shield of Achilles, the poet tells his audience: “*πολλὸς δ' ἰμερόεντα χορὸν περιστάθ' ὄμιλος τερόμενοι*” (18.604-605, A large crowd stood around,

delighting in the desire-inducing dance.) Within the scene, then, a crowd stands around and watches the dance, a “ἰμερόεσσα χορός” (a desire-producing dance). This Labyrinth dance—which is not only the culminating scene on the shield but also the key to all the scenes—is presented as sexually alluring to those who watch it. Like beautiful women, finely woven textiles, and persuasive songs, the dance draws its audience into its center, holding them rapt with attention. The crowd delights in the performance, and in the uterine form of the dance. The internal audience’s reaction to the dance is then echoed by Achilles, who also reacts with sexual pleasure to the scenes of the ekphrasis. The erotically-charged reaction to the dance in the last scene of the ekphrasis works to shape how Homer’s audience experiences the dance externally. Just as the internal crowd experiences sexual pleasure in the movements of the dancers, so too Homer’s audience reacts to the beautiful description of the dance with sexual delight. Achilles’ reaction to the images on the shield further informs the reaction of Homer’s external audience. Like the crowd watching the dance within the ekphrasis and like Achilles, who watches the dance from within the larger epic universe, Homer’s audience then delights in the virtuosic performance of the poet. Homer’s language is so detailed and the scenes are so compelling that the poem’s audience actually envisions the words. The poem’s audience also sees the uterine form of the dance and, in turn, the uterine form of the ekphrasis as a whole. Homer’s listeners also experience sexual pleasure in the ekphrasis and yield to the words of the poet. The ekphrasis works to seduce Homer’s listeners into the epic “κόσμος” which he creates.

With the device, then, the poet creates his own uterus, embedding it in the body of the epic and thus harnessing its vast power. Like Hephaistos and Daidalos, he

understands the nature of *techne*. The *Theogony* will be examined as a commentary about the epic process itself in Chapter Four, but it is worth pointing out here that Homer operates very much in much the same way as Zeus in that poem. As discussed in the Introduction, when Zeus eats his first wife, Metis, she does not die; he keeps her in his belly so that he can use her abilities. Feminine procreative power is the primary force in Hesiod's poem, and both Ouranos and Kronos are overthrown because of their inability to understand and control their wives' generative capacity. Zeus not only uses Metis for her wisdom; he also uses the procreative power of her body by giving birth himself. By consuming Metis, Zeus is able to contain and control feminine energy. He also understands both masculine and feminine thinking, which is one reason for his success as a ruler. Moreover, Zeus has the feminine quality of "*μητις*," and, thus, he is especially persuasive as a ruler. In creating his own poetic uterus, Homer seemingly elevates himself to the realm of Zeus by escaping the confines of gender. As the audience experiences the highly detailed language of the ekphrasis, the figure of the poet merges with the figures of Hephaistos and Daidalos, and speech approaches visual *techne*.

Homer also presents the ekphrasis as something which leads to the divine sphere. Just as Achilles is captivated by the scenes of the ekphrasis and experiences a powerful religious ritual, Homer's own audience is drawn into the spiral and also undergoes a virtual katabasis into the labyrinthine interior of the ekphrasis. Of course, Homer's audience views the *kosmos* on the shield through the words of the poet, so the vision is fleeting and incomplete. Still, the ekphrasis hints at a pathway to the divine sphere and offers a glimpse of the pre-natal wholeness which Achilles experiences. In the end, Homer uses the ekphrasis to offer his audience an experience which borders on the

ecstatic: the opportunity for freedom from everyday cares and the chance to experience another reality. In other words, he accomplishes just what Hesiod in the *Theogony* suggests gifted singers should accomplish. Hesiod says that when the gifted poet sings, “αἶψ’ ὃ γε δυσφροσυνέων ἐπιλήθεται οὐδέ τι κηδέων μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων.” (103-104,) (the grieving man straightway forgets his cares and does not remember his grief; the gifts of the gods quickly turn his mind.) Hephaistos’ gift to Achilles is Homer’s gift to his audience.

Chapter Three: Poetic Cosmogony and the Feminine Body of Ekphrasis in Hesiod's *Theogony*

In the *Theogony*, Hesiod describes the succession of three primary generations of Greek gods and, at the same time, he delineates the tripartite structure of the physical universe. The force of *eros* is ubiquitous, and, in general, power is procreative—a principle demonstrated first by Gaia when she gives birth to her husband Ouranos parthenogenically.¹ Through the course of the poem there is a progression from feminine power to masculine power. Gaia is the first real potency in the universe, and she exemplifies feminine power, which is associated with nature, disorder, chthonic energy, darkness, and tricky, cunning intelligence. Hesiod associates masculinity with culture, order, ouranic energy, light, and rational thought, and Zeus embodies this force in the poem. Gaia eventually forfeits her considerable power to Zeus, a thunderbolt-wielding sky-god, and the older matriarchy becomes a patriarchy. Unlike previous male gods, Zeus manages to surmount the threat which his own offspring poses to his rule. When Zeus understands that his first wife, Metis, will bear a son who will overcome him, he swallows her when she is pregnant with Athena. Eventually, Zeus gives birth to Athena out of his own head. To some degree, then, he achieves parthenogenesis himself and stops the struggle for power between the older and younger generations of gods. In general, when Zeus assumes supremacy, feminine power is brought under the control of a

¹ For a discussion of the general sexuality of the poem, see, for example, Hesiod, *Theogony, Works and Days, Shield* translated by Apostolos Athanassakis (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1983), 3-11; Marilyn Arthur, "Cultural Strategies in Hesiod's *Theogony*: Law, Family, Society," *Arethusa* 15 no. 1,2 (1982), 63-82; and Linda S. Sussman, "The Birth of the Gods: Sexuality, Conflict, and Cosmic Structure in Hesiod's *Theogony*," *Ramus* 7 (1978), 61-77.

masculine god, and the universe evolves from a state of “*χάος*” (unformed matter) to a state of “*κόσμος*” (order).

Hesiod’s primary agenda in the *Theogony* is to show how an ordered, male-dominated universe has come into being and to celebrate how Zeus has achieved his position. The *Theogony* is not only a cosmogony about the Zeus-centered universe, however. It also is a clever commentary about epic itself. The prologue, which, at one hundred and fifteen lines, is remarkably long for a poem of only just over one thousand lines, demonstrates that this is the case. The long prologue has been interpreted as an introductory hymn to the Muses and as a grand outline of the poem, for example.² While it is true that the prologue celebrates the Muses and also that it offers an overview of the poet’s material, its most striking elements are Hesiod’s description of his own encounter with the Muses and the passage about kings and poets. Hesiod shows a pronounced awareness of his own role in shaping the universe which he lays out in the course of the poem.³ The prologue works to establish a connection between Hesiod and Zeus, the champion of the epic; the Muses help both figures. In fact, Hesiod actually refers to himself in the third person in the prologue, thereby suggesting that he himself is a character in the poem, just like Zeus:

Αἵ νύ ποθ’ Ἡσίοδον καλὴν ἐδίδαξαν αἰοιδήν,
ἄρνας ποιμαίνονθ’ Ἑλικῶνος ὑπὸ ζαθέοιο. (22-23)

(The goddesses taught Hesiod beautiful song, as he tended his flocks on Mount Helikon.)

² Cf. Edward M. Bradley, “The Relevance of the Prooemium to the Design and Meaning of Hesiod’s *Theogony*,” *Symbolae Osloenses* 41, 29-47. For a discussion of the prologue as a separate and formal hymn to the Muses, see, for example, William W. Minton, “The Proem-Hymn of Hesiod’s *Theogony*,” *TAPA* 101 (1970), 357-377. Also, P. Walcot, “The Problem of the Prooemium of Hesiod’s *Theogony*,” in *Symbolae Osloenses* 33 (1957), 37-47.

³ Cf. Pietro Pucci, *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 8.

Moreover, as Gregory Nagy has noted, Hesiod's name actually means "he who emits the Voice;" his identity as the poet is itself a construction which "embodies the poetic function of the very Muses who give him his powers."⁴ As he lays out the various generations of gods in the *Theogony*, Hesiod's action as a singer parallels the cosmogonic development within the universe and, thus, Zeus' own power. Just as Zeus brings about a state of "κόσμος" in the universe, Hesiod is at the same time producing the "κόσμος ἐπέων" (*kosmos* of words) which celebrates Zeus' rule.

Order is achieved in the universe when Zeus secures his position as king of the gods, and he does this not only by means of his intense masculine energy but also by his exploitation of feminine power. When Zeus swallows Metis, she does not die; he actually keeps her enveloped inside his own body. As discussed in earlier chapters, Metis is the personification of *metis*, a form of cunning intelligence which is variously translated as "craftiness," "resourcefulness," or "wiliness." When Zeus ingests Metis in the poem, he assumes her abilities. Not only does he then understand both masculine and feminine mentality, but he appropriates the feminine cunning which Metis represents. He also harnesses her reproductive power, as evidenced by Athena's birth.

In carrying out his poetic agenda, Hesiod likewise makes use of feminine power. He focuses in the prologue on the nature of artistic inspiration and the epic process, and his general presentation of the Muses is erotically charged. Hesiod tells his audience that the Muses appear to him as he tends his flocks, and his description of the encounter contains striking sexual imagery. Hesiod presents the epic as the corporeal product of his sexual interaction with the Muses, who fill him with their divine raw material. He uses his own masculinity to channel their feminine material into communicable form,

⁴ Gregory Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 47-48.

shaping the epic body out of mortal language. Like Zeus, then, he appropriates feminine procreative power for his generation of the epic intellectual product. Hesiod also mirrors Zeus in his use of feminine cunning. The figure of Pandora—embedded in the middle of Hesiod’s epic body—functions for Hesiod just as Metis does for Zeus.

Traditionally, Pandora is the first woman, ordered by Zeus as a punishment after Prometheus steals fire and gives it to men. The passage about Pandora in the *Theogony* should be considered as part of the larger commentary on epic which the poem offers rather than simply an account of the origin of women. Hesiod, after all, never actually says that Pandora is the first woman, although her status as such is nonetheless significant.⁵ Pandora is an example of Hephaistos’ “τέχνη” (craft), and, like all of Hephaistos’ products, she exudes “χάρις” (grace) and “κόσμος.” As in the Homeric poems, Hephaistos stands for the figure of the poet, and his “τέχνη” exemplifies the poem itself. In creating Pandora, Hephaistos starts with clay (γαῖα), the feminine raw material of the earth and uses his masculine, cosmic energy to shape it into a bodily “κόσμος”—just as he creates Achilles’ shield. Thus, Hesiod’s Pandora is a microcosm for the larger epic universe of the *Theogony*, which also begins with Gaia and is shaped into a state of “κόσμος.” Most importantly for the present project, the language of Pandora’s construction in the *Theogony* is highly suggestive of ekphrasis—specifically of the ekphrasis about Achilles’ shield in the *Iliad*.

In general, Hesiod tends to personify abstract ideas in the *Theogony*. Some, such as “Κράτος” (Might), “Βίη” (Force), and “Πείθω” (Persuasion), appear with some frequency elsewhere in Greek literature, while others, such as “Ἀπάτη” (Deception) and

⁵ To be sure, he does say: “ἐκ τῆς γὰρ γένος ἐστὶ γυναικῶν θηλυτεράων” (590) (from her there is the race of female women), and, in the next line, he adds: “τῆς γὰρ ὀλώϊόν ἐστι γένος καὶ φύλα γυναικῶν” (591) (For from her comes the destructive race and the tribe of women).

“Μάχας” (Battle) are less recognizable and may be Hesiod’s poetic inventions. That the *Theogony* serves as a statement about epic itself is seen especially in Hesiod’s personification of “Ψεύδεα” (Falsehoods), “Λόγοι” (Words, Speeches), and “Ἀμφιλλογίαι” (Counterspeeches), for example. These are all types of speech, and Hesiod presents them as actual deities just like Zeus or Athena. Hesiod uses “ψεύδεα” and “λόγοι” in both poems to indicate various types of rhetoric; in fact, he uses “λόγος” to describe the entire narrative of the Five Ages in the *Works and Days* (106). When Zeus deceives Metis in the *Theogony*, Hesiod says he uses “αἰμυλίοι λόγοι” (890) (coaxing words), and he tells his audience in the *Works and Days* that Hermes instills “ψεύδεα” and “αἰμυλίοι λόγοι” in Pandora (78). Of course, the Muses famously tell Hesiod in the prologue to the *Theogony* that they have the ability to relate “ψεύδεα” (27) as well as “ἄληθέα (true things), which must, as the stuff the goddesses breathe into him, constitute at least large parts of the poem. When Hesiod inserts “ψεύδεα” and “λόγοι” as personified bodies into his cosmogony alongside all of the other beings which are born into his divine genealogy, he reveals the *Theogony*’s double agenda of the *Theogony*. These figures, in particular, show that the universe he creates in the words of the poem represents not only the physical universe over which Zeus presides but the epic text itself—the “κόσμος ἐπέων,” which is necessarily filled with “ψεύδεα,” “λόγοι,” and “ἀμφιλλογίαι.”⁶

Within this matrix, Pandora personifies epic ekphrasis. As discussed in the Introduction, the convention is not actually called “ekphrasis” until the term is adopted in

⁶ For a general discussion of how Hesiod’s personifications help to structure his universe, see Thalia Phillis Feldman, “Personification and Structure in Hesiod’s *Theogony*,” in *Symbolae Osloenses* 46 (1971), 7-41. Cf. especially 7-8: “...by his pervasive use of names Hesiod displays his very Greek anthropomorphism, in that he uses people to mean things, places, states, conditions, moods, etc....As the great teacher of the Greeks Hesiod uses these elements, some old and some newly invented, to explain and expound; as a great poet, he uses them to carry much of his narrative and text. Indeed, sheer names *are* his text in large measure. In their pithy, self-explanatory form, Pontos, Gaia, Helios, Thanatos literally structure both the Creation and the composition of the poem.”

the rhetorical handbooks of the Roman period; thus, Hesiod has no specific word which his audience would recognize that he could turn into a personification. Pietro Pucci has argued that Hesiod's description of Pandora stands as a *mise en abîme* for the poetics of his texts, and Andrew Sprague Becker has read Hesiod's Pandora as a statement about the rivalry between visual art and verbal art.⁷ Both analyses are important in reading Hesiod's account of Pandora in terms of epic ekphrasis; Becker's analysis, especially, focuses on the descriptive quality of the passages in both poems and the play which exists between the visual and verbal dimensions of the narrative. Neither recognizes, however, that Pandora, as part of the larger commentary on epic which is at work in the poem, actually serves as Hesiod's conception of ekphrasis. Pandora embodies the qualities of the rhetorical device and, in using her, Hesiod, possibly recognizing how the device works in the Homeric poems, corroborates that ekphrasis exists as a feminine body within the surrounding epic. Pandora serves to characterize ekphrasis as feminine and sexually alluring, and, through her, Hesiod demonstrates that ekphrasis is uterine in form and emasculating. Moreover, like Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*, even though she has terrifying, threatening qualities, Pandora offers her audience the possibility of communion with the divine sphere and a glimpse of pre-natal wholeness. Hesiod's Pandora demonstrates that ekphrasis is an exhibition of poetic *metis*, designed to delight, to trap, to overpower, and, most importantly, to persuade the epic audience into believing the whole of the poem.

This chapter will examine the *Theogony* as a statement about the epic process, and it will look specifically at the figure of Pandora as a micro-commentary on the epic

⁷ Pucci, *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry*, 82-126 and Andrew Sprague Becker, "Sculpture and Language in Early Greek Ekphrasis: Lessing's *Laokoon*, Burke's *Enquiry*, and the Hesiodic Descriptions of Pandora," *Arethusa* 26 (1993), 277-293.

device of ekphrasis. First, I will show that the universe which Hesiod describes in his epic is corporeal in nature and that it abounds with manifestations of *menos*. Next, I will discuss the nature of Zeus in the poem and the connection between kings and poets which Hesiod makes explicit in the prologue. Third, I will show that the poet's interaction with the Muses is erotic and that the poetic product is also a corporeal "*κόσμος*" which results from the imposition of masculine sexual energy on essential feminine matter. Finally, I will look specifically at the figure of Pandora, examining her as a microcosm of the bodily *κόσμος* of the epic and as Hesiod's corporeal representation of epic ekphrasis.

Sexual Fluids in Hesiod's Cosmogony

In general, Hesiod's physical universe is modeled on the masculine body; like the Homeric universe, it is filled with manifestations of "*μένος*," the essence of masculine power. The Hesiodic universe includes bodily fluids such as blood, semen, and breath as well as more cosmic fluids such as water, snow, fire, earth, and wind. Like many Greek authors, Hesiod treats *μένος* as a fluid force which can be gained or lost.⁸ The castration of Ouranos best demonstrates this fundamental principle. When Kronos cuts off his father's genitals with the sickle which his mother has given him, Ouranos immediately loses all of his power over Gaia and his children. He continues to serve as Gaia's companion, although he has lost his strength, his sexual potency, and his ability to dominate others. In other words, he loses his "*μένος*." Hesiod refers to two actual fluids in the account, blood and semen, which, as discussed in the Introduction, are both

⁸ See the Introduction for a comprehensive discussion of *menos*.

common manifestations of “μένος” in Greek literature. Blood from the severed genitals drops on Gaia and impregnates her with the Furies, the Giants, and the Ash Tree Nymphs. The severed genitals produce “λευκὸς ἀφρός” (190-191) (white foam) as they are carried by the sea, and Aphrodite eventually grows out of this white foam. The white foam signifies semen, and its generative capacity is obvious.

Hesiod uses the term “μένος” several times, most often in association with Zeus. At line 492, for example, Hesiod uses the term to describe Zeus when he is first born: “Καρπαλίμως δ’ ἄρ’ ἔπειτα μένος καὶ φαίδιμα γυῖα ἤϋξετο τοῖο ἀνακτος” (Then the *menos* and the shining limbs of the lord grew quickly). As Zeus develops into a mature god, his life-force and masculinity increase. In general, after he reaches adulthood, Zeus’ “μένος” is quite powerful. At 687, when describing the Titanomachy, for example, Hesiod says:

Οὐδ’ ἄρ’ ἔτι Ζεὺς ἴσχευεν ἔον μένος, ἀλλὰ νῦ τοῦ γε
εἶδαρ μὲν μένεος πλήντο φρένες, ἐκ δέ τε πᾶσαν
φαῖνε βίην· ἄμυδις δ’ ἄρ’ ἀπ’ οὐρανοῦ ἦδ’ ἀπ’ Ὀλύμπου
ἀστράπτων ἔστειχε συνωχαδόν, οἱ δὲ κεραυνοὶ
ἵκταρ ἅμα βροντῇ τε καὶ ἀστεροπῇ ποτέοντο
χειρὸς ἀπὸ στιβαρῆς, ἱερὴν φλόγα εἰλυφώωντες
ταρφέες. (687-693)

(Zeus no longer held back his *menos*, but now at once his heart was filled up with *menos*, and he shone forth with all his might. Together from the heavens and from Olympus, he approached flashing continuously with lightning, and lightningbolts flew together with flashing thunder from his sturdy hand, whirling about in collective sacred flame.)

Zeus’ supremacy comes about when he defeats the Titans, and his “μένος” is what allows him to win the great battle. Hesiod also uses the term in describing Zeus’ battle with Typhoeus, a fire-breathing monster that Gaia produces as a last challenge to Zeus’ growing supremacy:

Ζεὺς δ’ ἐπεὶ οὖν κόρθυνεν ἔον μένος, εἶλετο δ’ ὅπλα,
βροντῇ τε στεροπῇ τε καὶ αἰθαλόεντα κεραυνόν,
πλήξεν ἀπ’ Ὀλύμπου ἐπάλμενος· ἀμφὶ δὲ πάσας

ἔπρεσε θεσπεσίας κεφαλὰς δεινοῖο πελώρου. (853-856)

(Zeus, after he raised up his *menos*, and gathered his weapons, thunder and lightning and the flashing thunderbolt, he leaped down from Olympus and struck him. He set fire to all of the awful heads of the terrible monster.)

Zeus' intense masculine power is apparent at his birth, and, when his power is threatened and he needs to establish his supremacy, his “*μένος*” surges. It manifests itself most impressively in his ability to command lightning and fire; when he needs to demonstrate his masculine superiority, he flashes with fire.

Fire, in fact, is the most important manifestation of “*μένος*” in the poem, and, in general, it seems to be a particularly divine form. Hesiod uses “*μένος*” to describe the fiery monster Typhoeus, for example. Hesiod tells his audience that Typhoeus would have achieved supremacy in the universe had Zeus not kept a careful watch for such competition. Hesiod says about the monster:

*Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ Τιτῆνας ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἐξέλασε Ζεὺς,
ὀπλότατον τέκε παῖδα Τυφωέα Γαῖα πελώρη
Ταρτάρου ἐν φιλότῃ διὰ χρυσέην Ἀφροδίτην·
οὗ χεῖρες μὲν ἔασιν ἐπ' ἰσχύι ἔργματ' ἔχουσαι,
καὶ πόδες ἀκάματοι κρατεροῦ θεοῦ ἐκ δέ οἱ ὤμων
ἦν ἕκαστον κεφαλαὶ ὄφιος, δεινοῖο δράκοντος,
γλώσσησι δνοφερῇσι λελιχμότες· ἐκ δέ οἱ ὄσσων
θεσπεσίης κεφαλῇσιν ὑπ' ὀφρύσι πῦρ ἀμάρυσσεν·
πασέων δ' ἐκ κεφαλέων πῦρ καίετο δερκομένοιο· (820-828)*

(But when Zeus drove the Titans down out of heaven, huge Gaia bore her youngest child Typhoeus, having laid in love with Tartaros by golden Aphrodite. His hands were for mighty deeds, and the feet of the powerful god were unwearying. From his shoulders were a hundred snake-heads, such as terrible dragons have, licking with dark tongues. And fire flashed from the eyes from under the brows of the divine heads. And fire burned from all the heads of the monster as it cast glances about.)

In describing the different voices which Typhoeus' many heads emit, Hesiod says,

“ἄλλοτε μὲν γὰρ φθέγγονθ' ὥς τε θεοῖσι συνιέμεν, ἄλλοτε δ' αὖτε ταύρου ἐριβρύχῳ μένος

ἀσχέτον ὅσσαν ἀγαύρου....” (830-832) (At times, they uttered voices so that they came together for the gods, and at times they uttered an unrestrained, proud *menos*, the voice of a loud-bellowing bull). After Zeus hurls the defeated Typhoeus down into Tartaros, the monster’s fiery “*μένος*” is no longer threatening in Zeus’ realm but still emerges from the depths of Tartaros in the form of powerful winds, or *pneuma*. Typhoeus is Zeus’ most formidable challenger, and it is his fiery “*μένος*” which so threatens Zeus and compels him to eliminate the monster as a rival.

At 324, the fire-breathing monster Chimaira uses “*μένος*.” Hesiod writes:

Ἡ δὲ χίμαιραν ἔτικτε πνέουσαν ἀμαιμάκετον πῦρ
 δεινὴν τε μεγάλην τε ποδώκεά τε κρατερὴν τε.
 τῆς [δ]’ ἦν τρεῖς κεφαλαί· μία μὲν χαροποῖο λέοντος,
 ἥ δὲ χιμαίρης, ἥ δ’ ὄφις, κρατεροῖο δράκοντος.
 πρόσθε λέων, ὅπιδεν δὲ δράκων, μέσση δὲ χίμαιρα,
 δεινὸν ἀποπνεύουσα πυρὸς μένος αἰδομένοιο. (319-324)

(She bore Chimaira, who breathed a force of fire, terrible and huge and swift and mighty. She had three heads. One was of a fierce-eyed lion, another of a goat, and the other of a serpent, a mighty dragon. The front was a lion, the back was a serpent, and the middle was goat, and she breathed forth an awful *menos* of glowing fire.”)⁹

Chimaira is one of the children of Typhoeus, so her fire-breathing ability probably stems from her father’s power.

When Zeus does battle with the Titans, he uses fire as his main weapon. After describing how Zeus raises up his own *menos* (686-687), Hesiod goes on to describe the nature of the battle:

ἀμφὶ δὲ γαῖα φερέσβιος ἐσμαράγιζε
 καιομένη, λάκε δ’ ἀμφὶ πυρὶ μεγάλ’ ἄσπετος ὕλη·
 ἔζεε δὲ χθὼν πᾶσα καὶ Ὀκεανοῖο ῥέεθρα
 πόντος τ’ ἀτρύγετος· τοὺς δ’ ἄμφεπε θερμός αὐτμῇ
 Τιτῆνας χθονίους, φλόξ δ’ ἥερα δῖαν ἵκανε

⁹ At *Iliad* 6.181-182, Homer also says that Chimaira “πρόσθε λέων, ὅπιδεν δὲ δράκων, μέσση δὲ χίμαιρα, δεινὸν ἀποπνεύουσα πυρὸς μένος αἰδομένοιο.”

ἄσπετος, ὅσσε δ' ἄμερθε καὶ ἰφθίμων περ ἑόντων
 αὐγὴ μαρμαίρουσα κεραυνῷ τε στεροπῇ τε.
 καῦμα δὲ θεσπέσιον κάτεχεν Χάος· (693-700)

(The life-giving earth, burning, resounded all around, and the great wood clashed all around with fire. All the earth and the streams of Ocean and the barren sea seethed. And the hot blast overtook the earthly Titans, and the huge flame touched the shining sky. And the burning blaze of the thunderbolt and lightning blinded their eyes, even though they were fighting mightily. Divine conflagration held Chaos.)

Hesiod suggests here that Zeus's *menos* burns the whole universe; he goes on to describe the whirling storms and horrible clashing which Zeus' fire creates. Zeus' ability to command fire in the form of lightning figures largely in his rule over gods and men, and he jealously guards his divine *menos*.

When Prometheus steals Zeus' fire and gives it to mankind, Zeus is furious. Hesiod's description of the theft shows that fire is indeed a sexual fluid; Prometheus steals the fire by hiding it in the hollow core of a fennel stalk.: “ἀλλά μιν ἐξαπάτησεν εὐς πάϊς Ἰαπετοῖο, κλέψας ἀκαμάτοιο πυρὸς τηλέσκοπον αὐγὴν, ἐν κοίλῳ νάρθηκι” (565-567) (but the noble son of Iapetos deceived him, having stolen the far-flashing, untiring light of fire in a hollow fennel stalk). Apparently, this was a method of saving embers for future use in Hesiod's day, but it is nevertheless significant that the fennel stalk is a phallic image.¹⁰ In general, Hesiod treats the theft of fire as a challenge to Zeus' supreme power. The poet, in fact, explicitly states that Zeus is threatened by competing displays of masculinity; for example, at 514, Hesiod says, “ὑβριστὴν δὲ Μεινοίτιον εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς εἰς Ἐρεβος κατέπεμψε βαλὼν ψολόεντι κεραυνῷ εἵνεκ' ἀτασθαλίας τε καὶ ἠνορέης ὑπερόπλου” (514-516) (Far-seeing Zeus sent Menoitios, a transgressor, down to Erebos,

¹⁰ That the fennel stalk is phallic may also be seen in the association of the *thyrsos* with Dionysos, a god of fertility. The thyrsos is a wand usually made from a fennel stalk topped with a pine cone which is carried by followers of Dionysos. Dionysian ritual, of course, is quite sexual, and phallegoria is common.

throwing him down with smoldering lightning because of his recklessness and excessive manhood). That Zeus is threatened by challenges to his masculinity is especially seen in Hesiod's use of “ὕβριστης,” which in its original sense indicates someone who commits bodily transgression or rape. Menoitios threatens to dominate and even emasculate Zeus, so Zeus cast him into Erebus. Although Hesiod does not reveal what it was that Menoitios did to offend Zeus, it is clear from this passage that Zeus does not tolerate challenges to his supreme manliness.

Hesiod specifically says in the *Theogony* that Athena is “ἴσον...πατρὶ μένος” (896) (equal to her father with respect to *menos*). Although he does not use the term “μένος” specifically in association with the craftsman-god Hephaistos, he certainly suggests that Hephaistos also shares some of Zeus' divine *menos*. In describing the battle between Typhoeus and Zeus, for example, Hesiod says:

Ζεὺς δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν κόρθυνεν ἐὸν μένος, εἶλετο δ' ὄπλα,
βροντὴν τε στεροπὴν τε καὶ αἰθαλόεντα κεραυνόν,
πλῆξεν ἀπ' Οὐλύμποιο ἐπάλμενος· ἀμφὶ δὲ πάσας
ἔπρεσε Δεσπεσίας κεφαλὰς δεινοῖο πελώρου.
αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ μιν δάμασε πληγῇσιν ἰμάσσας,
ἤριπε γυιωθεῖς, στενάχίζε δὲ γαῖα πελώρη.
φλόξ δὲ κεραυνωθέντος ἀπέσσυτο τοῖο ἄνακτος
οὔρεος ἐν βήσσησιν αἰδνῆς παιπαλοέσσης
πληγέντος· πολλή δὲ πελώρη καίετο γαῖα
αὐτμῇ Δεσπεσίῃ καὶ ἐτήκετο κασσίτερος ὥς
τέχνη ὑπ' αἰζηνῶν ὑπὸ τ' εὐτρήτου χοάνοιο
θαλφθεῖς, ἥε σιδηρός, ὃ περ κρατερώτατός ἐστιν,
οὔρεος ἐν βήσσησι δαμαζόμενος πυρὶ κηλέῳ
τήκεται ἐν χθονὶ δῖη ὑφ' Ἡφαίστου παλάμῃσιν·
ὥς ἄρα τήκετο γαῖα σέλαι πυρὸς αἰδομένοιο.
ῥῖψε δὲ μιν θυμῷ ἀκαχὼν ἐς Τάρταρον εὐρύν. (853-868)

(But then Zeus raised up his *menos*, and took hold of his arms, thunder and lightning and the brilliant thunderbolt, and leaping down from Olympus he struck. He blew up fire around all the awful heads of the terrible monster. But when he subdued him, having whipped him with blows, crippled, Typhoeus collapsed, and the huge Earth groaned. The flame of the

thunder-loving lord sped along in the dark, rocky woodlands of the mountain. And much of the huge Earth burned with the awful breath and it melted like tin having been heated by the *techne* of eager craftsmen in a well-bored crucible, or iron, which is by far the strongest metal, tamed in the woodlands of the mountain by blazing fire, melts in the divine Earth under the hands of Hephaistos. So the Earth melted in the blazing of the burning fire, and Zeus raging in his heart cast him into wide Tartaros.)

Zeus' fiery battle with Typhoeus is explicitly compared to the fiery process of Hephaistos' metal-craft here. It is worth noting that in the simile Hesiod uses the term “*αἰζήσας*” to describe craftsmen who melt tin. The term means “eager,” “vigorous,” or “assiduous,” but it also carries a sense of the bodily vigor which makes young men sexually potent—hence, “lusty.”¹¹ In using it, Hesiod suggests that the force which compels craftsmen such as Hephaistos to shape metal is sexual in nature. In general, Hephaistos creates many artistic products which rival living things, and it is his fiery *μένος* which allows him to accomplish these acts of creation. In the *Theogony*, Hephaistos of course uses his divine “*μένος*” to create Pandora.

Although Hesiod does not actually use the word “*μένος*” in association with them either, the Muses, like Athena and Hephaistos, also exhibit divine “*μένος*.” Hesiod says that when the Muses honor a *basileus*, they pour “*γλυκερὴν ἑέρσην*” (82) (sweet dew) on his tongue and then “*τοῦ δ' ἔπε' ἐκ στόματος ῥεῖ μέλιχρα*” (83) (honey-sweet words flow from his mouth). The word “*ἑέρσην*” is etymologically related to the verb “*ἐράω*” (to love sexually),¹² and signifies sexual liquid.¹³ It can mean water, foam, raindrops, or dew.

¹¹ See, for example, Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect*, 11.

¹² Anne Carson, “Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt and Desire,” in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient World* eds. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 138 note 9.

¹³ The *Arrhephoria*, the nocturnal festival of the Dew-Carriers in Athens, is relevant here. Two young girls who lived for one year in a special house on the acropolis would descend from the Acropolis to the precinct of Aphrodite through an underground passage with baskets on their heads. They would leave the baskets underground and return with something else which was veiled. When they would return, their service as virgin priestesses would end. See Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 229. Burkert interprets the dew as a symbol of

The Muses' dew, like the dew which drips from the golden cloud surrounding Zeus and Hera in Book Fourteen of the *Iliad*, is a manifestation of “μένος.”¹⁴ The Muses also pass along *pneuma*, breath, to the poet when they inspire him, and *pneuma* is, as established in the Introduction, another common manifestation of “μένος” in the ancient medical texts.

Hesiod also tells his audience that the Muses breathe into him “αὐδὴν θεσπιδος” (31-32) (a divine voice). In general, the adjective “θεσπιδος” means “divine” or “awe-inspiring,” but it is essentially a word which means “having the quality of speech from

impregnation and new offspring, and traces the festival to the myth about the daughters of Kekrops: “The ritual is mirrored in the myth of the daughters of Cecrops, the very first king of the Athenian citadel, half snake and half man. Athena gave the daughters Aglauros, Herse, and Pandrosos a *kiste*, strictly forbidding them to ever open it; but at night, when Athena was absent, curiosity got the better of them. Aglauros and Herse opened the container and saw Erichthonios, the mysterious child of Hephaistos, but at the same time one or two snakes darted out of the basket causing the girls to fall in terror over the north face of the Acropolis to their death. There at the foot of the rock wall lies the sanctuary of Aglauros; Pandrosos, whose name also contains the word dew, *drosos*, and who in the myth remains free of guilt, has her precinct in front of the Erechtheion, where the sacred olive tree grows; moist with dew, it embodies the continuity of the order of the polis. This order is also expressed by the almost year-long service of the *Arrhephoroi* who also start the work of weaving the *peplos* for the Panathenaia. Perhaps the *kistai* simply contained the offscourings from the cleaning of Athena's lamp, which had been burning throughout the year, wool and oil; myth makes simple things symbols of things unheard of. Athena used the wool to wipe Hephaistos' semen from her thigh, and threw it on the earth, and the earth gave birth to Erichthonios. Where the hidden child within the virginal precinct comes from, neither the priestess nor the young girls must know—but their nocturnal pathway takes them to Aphrodite and Eros. The snake belongs to Athena, terrifying and yet fascinating—also in the sense of phallic....” The Athenian festival and the underlying myth includes many of the elements in the Homeric universe including eros, dew, semen, fire, for example. E.J.W. Barber, using a dissertation by John Mansfield which cites Pausanias Attikistes, argues that the *arrhephoroi* prepared the warp for the weaving of Athena's *peplos*. E.J.W. Barber, “The *Peplos* of Athena,” in *Goddess and Polis: The Panathenaic Festival in Ancient Athens* ed. Jenifer Neils (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 113. Erika Simon disagrees with Burkert's interpretation of the *Arrhephoria*, although she does argue that the festival centered around fertility. She argues that the *arrhephoroi* represented Athenian princesses such as the daughters of Kekrops and that they reenacted the duties of early princesses for the cult of Athena Polias. In particular, their ritual served to promote the fertility of the olive crop through an abundance of nourishing dew. It is worth noting that she likens the service of the *arrhephoroi* for Athena to the young girls represented on a gold Mycenaean ring, suggesting that such service can be traced back into the Bronze Age. Erika Simon, *Festivals of Attica: An Archaeological Commentary* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 38-48.

¹⁴ Page DuBois, in *Sowing the Body*, 45, also associates dew with semen. In discussing the autochthonous myth of Kekrops, she writes: “The child Erichthonios is tended by Athena, kept in a box to be guarded and not looked into by Kekrops' daughter Pandrosos (*drosos* means dew, and it is the word Clytemnestra uses when speaking of the rain, the ‘dew,’ of blood from her husband's dying body [Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, 1390]. Kekrops' other daughter is Herse. The word *hersē* also means ‘dew,’ ‘raindrops,’ ‘foam’ (like the mutilated genitals of Ouranos which create foam and give birth to Aphrodite), ‘honey’ (*Theogony*), and finally, ‘the young of animals’ (*Odyssey* 9.222).” In Euripides' *Hippolytus*, for example, Phaedra lusts after her stepson Hippolytus but has vowed to die rather than bring shame upon her family. She complains frequently about how thirsty she is and how she wants to drink from the streams in the countryside. She craves “μένος” and is conflating semen and water.

the gods.” It is probably composed from the words “θεός” (god) and “ἔπος” (word), and it and its cognates are used to describe oracular utterances.¹⁵ When Hesiod receives his inspiration from the Muses, he says that they breathe divine voice into him “ἵνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ’ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα...” (32) (so that I might celebrate the things which will be and the things which have been...). So, when Hesiod says that the Muses give him “αὐδὴν θεσπιδίαν,” he is describing the gift from a human perspective. The Muses do not breathe “αὐδὴν” into Hesiod; they breathe their own divine breath into him and it manifests in him as “αὐδὴν θεσπιδίαν,” which other mortals can understand. Still, the *menos* which the Muses impart to Hesiod is intimately connected with the words of his poetry. The fluid nature of his language is made explicit later in the prologue when Hesiod says that, when the Muses love a man, “γλυκερὴ οἱ ἀπὸ στόματος ῥέει αὐδὴν” (97) (sweet voice flows from his mouth).

Many of the medical writers treat semen and menstrual fluid as fluids which originate from the same source. Because women are essentially cold and moist, the *μένος* which exists in their bodies—and which they receive from men—never manifests as semen or masculine power; the nature of their bodies forces it to manifest as lesser, “colder” fluids such as menstrual blood. Aristotle, in fact, sees menstrual fluid as the raw material which is shaped by semen in reproduction.¹⁶ Thus, the “μένος” which the Muses exhibit is inseminating, but it is in all likelihood a feminine raw material. This interpretation seems especially compelling in the case of Hesiod’s own interaction with them, as will be discussed shortly. In the end, it is important that Hesiod distinguishes between the fluid which the Muses give to *basileis* and the fluid which they give to him.

¹⁵ See Liddell and Scott, 795.

¹⁶ Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, 1.19-20.

Pneuma is a hotter and drier manifestation of “*μένος*” than “*έέρση*,” and for that reason it is likely that it is a superior form.

The gods who inhabit Hesiod’s physical *kosmos*, then, exhibit various manifestations of “*μένος*,” and the entire physical universe itself flows with cosmic manifestations of the masculine life-force such as wind and water. Also, in using fluid imagery for the voice which singers emit, Hesiod presents the epic text in bodily terms. Thus, the entire universe which Hesiod develops in the course of the *Theogony*—which encompasses both the physical universe and also the universe of the epic text—is anthropomorphic to some degree. As established earlier, it is “*μένος*” which helps bring about a state of *kosmos* in general. Zeus is successful because he uses his “*μένος*” to defeat his enemies and, thus, to establish himself as ruler of the universe. Moreover, Zeus is also successful because he uses his “*μένος*” to harness the power of femininity, and Zeus’ use of feminine power forms the subject of the next section.¹⁷

The Figure of Zeus

Once he brings about “*κόσμος*” in the universe, Zeus rules as “*θεῶν βασιλεύς*” (886) (the *basileus* of the gods). When the Olympians defeat the Titans and establish themselves as the dominant generation of gods, the other gods ask Zeus to become their leader, and he accepts the position at their urging:

Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ ῥα πόνον μάκαρες θεοὶ ἐξετέλεσαν,
 Τιτῆνεςσι δὲ τιμῶν κρίναντο βίηφι,
 δῆ ῥα τότε ὥτρυνον βασιλευμένῃ ἡδὲ ἀνάσσειν
 Γαίης φραδοσύνῃσιν Ὀλύμπιον εὐρύοπα Ζῆν
 ἀθανάτων· ὃ δὲ τοῖσιν εὐ διεδάσσατο τιμάς. (881-885)

¹⁷ Cf. Sussman, “The Birth of the Gods,” 72.

(But after the blessed gods accomplished this labor, and by force stripped the Titans of their honors, then, through the advice of Gaia, they urged Olympian Zeus, wide-thundering, to serve as *basileus* and to rule the immortals. And he distributed honors to them in a fair manner.)

The term *basileus* is frequently translated as “king” but indicates a local king or chieftain rather than an all-powerful ruler. Hesiod no doubt models Zeus’ rule on the political system with which he is familiar; in the eighth-century B.C.E., Hesiod’s rural Boiotia was governed by several local *basileis*, who had some power locally but who themselves answered to more powerful political figures in the larger surrounding cities.¹⁸ These *basileis* functioned as judges, primarily settling local disputes, rather than as general administrators of the community. The presumptive reason for the composition of the *Works and Days*, for example, which is addressed to Hesiod’s brother Perses, was an unfair decision about Hesiod’s inheritance by a local *basileus*. Certainly Hesiod does not view Zeus in such a limited position, but, in all likelihood, his general conception of the dynamics of political power stems from his own experience.

To some degree, Hesiod also models Zeus’ rule on the *basileis* of the Homeric epics. As discussed earlier, the Homeric heroes demonstrate their manly excellence not only in battle and in athletic competitions but also with eloquent public speech. The heroes compete within their own class; their superior political status and sexual power over those who are not of the elite class is assumed. The incident involving Thersites in Book Two of the *Iliad* demonstrates that this is case. As discussed in Chapter One, when low-born Thersites attempts to speak publicly against Agamemnon, Odysseus hits him

¹⁸ For a comprehensive study of Hesiod’s biographical information and the political system at work in Askra, see, for example, Anthony T. Edwards, *Hesiod’s Askra* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2004) and Paul W. Wallace, “Hesiod and the Valley of the Muses,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 15, no. 1 (1974), 5-24.

over the head with the speaker's staff and verbally abuses him, humiliating him in front of the troops. In that passage, when he attempts to restore order in the assembly, Odysseus uses persuasion when dealing with members of the heroic class but brute force when dealing with his political inferiors. Still, in general the Homeric heroes have a somewhat symbiotic relationship with their men, who accompany their leaders in war not as bound subjects but as loyal followers hoping to profit from the experience. Thus, to some degree, even with their own men the Homeric *basileis* rely on persuasion as well as force to rule effectively.¹⁹

In Hesiod's description of Zeus' rise to power, quoted above, Zeus does not keep all of the power to himself; unlike Ouranos or Kronos, he metes out honors to the other gods and wisely allows them a share of power. As a ruler, Zeus is associated with law and justice; the goddess Δίκη, the personification of justice, is actually one of Zeus' daughters. Zeus certainly uses physical might when necessary, but, as a *basileus*, he rules largely by means of craft and effective speech. For example, in the Titanomachy, Zeus' motivating speech (644-653) stirs the Hekatoncheires to fight with increased energy:

κέκλυτέ μευ, Γαίης τε καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀγλαὰ τέκνα,
ὅφρ' εἴπω τά με θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι κελεύει.
ἤδη γὰρ μάλα θηρόν ἐναντίοι ἀλλήλοισι
νίκης καὶ ἀρτεος πέρι μαρνάμεθ' ἡμᾶτα πάντα
Τιτῆνές τε θεοὶ καὶ ὅσοι Κρόνου ἐκγενόμεσθα.
ὑμεῖς δὲ μεγάλην τε βίην καὶ χεῖρας ἀάπτους
φαίνετε Τιτῆνεσσιν ἐναντίον ἐν δαΐ λυγρῇ,
μνησάμενοι φιλόττητος ἐνέεος, ὅσσα παθόντες
ἐς φάος ἄψ' ἵκεσθε δυσηλεγέος ὑπὸ δεσμοῦ
ἡμετέρας διὰ βουλὰς ὑπὸ ζόφου ἡερόεντος. (644-653)

(Listen to me, glorious sons of Gaia and Ouranos, so that I may say that which my heart commands me to say in my chest. For too long every day now the Titans and gods fathered by Kronos have fought against each

¹⁹ For a discussion of the connection between Zeus and *basileis* in the Homeric poems and other early Greek literature, see Robert Mondi, "ΣΚΗΠΤΟΤΥΧΟΙ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΣ: An Argument for Divine Kingship in Early Greece," *Arethusa* 13 (1980), 203-216.

other for victory and power. But now show the Titans your great might and the strength of your hands face to face in this woeful battle. Remembering our noble friendship, the many things you suffered until you came to the light, from cruel chains and cloudy darkness, through our counsels.)

In his speech, Zeus not only urges the monsters on, but he also strategically reminds them of their debt to him for freeing them from Tartaros, where Ouranos had bound them in chains. The Hekatoncheires respond, acknowledging their debt to him:

*δαιμόνι, οὐκ ἀδάητα πιφαύσκεαι· ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτοὶ
ἴδμεν ὅ τοι περὶ μὲν πραπίδες, περὶ δ' ἐστὶ νόημα,
ἀλκτὴρ δ' ἀθανάτοισιν ἀρῆς γένεο κρυεροῖο·
σῆσι δ' ἐπιφροσύνησιν ὑπὸ ζόφου ἠερόεντος
ἄψορρον δῆξαῦτις ἀμειλίκτων ὑπὸ δεσμῶν
ἠλύθομεν, Κρόνου υἱὲ ἄναξ, ἀνάελπτα παθόντες.
τῷ καὶ νῦν ἀτενεῖ τε νόῳ καὶ ἐπίφρονι βουλῇ
ῥυσόμεθα κράτος ὑμὸν ἐν αἰνῇ δημοτῆτι,
μαρνάμενοι Τιτῆσιν ἀνὰ κρατερὰς ὑσμίνας. (655-663)*

(Divine one, you say things that are not unknown. But we ourselves know full well your mind and your thinking, and you are the protector against chilling disaster for the gods. By your plans, Lord, son of Kronos, we came up back again from cruel chains and cloudy darkness, having suffered unexpected pains. And now with exceeding resolve and keen counsel we will defend your power in the fierce battle, fighting the Titans through the warring.)

In reminding the Hekatoncheires that they were once in chains, Zeus subtly suggests that, if he loses, they might be thrown back into Tartaros again. His speech is indeed effective, as indicated by the next few lines:

*Ὡς φάτ'· ἐπήνησαν δὲ θεοὶ δωτῆρες ἑάων
μῦθον ἀκούσαντες· πολέμου δ' ἐλιλαίετο θυμὸς
μᾶλλον ἔτ' ἢ τὸ πάροιθε· μάχην δ' ἀμέγαρτον ἔγειραν
πάντες δῆλειαί τε καὶ ἄρσενες ἥματι κείνῳ
Τιτῆνές τε θεοὶ καὶ ὅσοι Κρόνου ἐξεγένοντο
οὓς τε Ζεὺς Ἐρέβουσφι ὑπὸ χθονὸς ἦκε φώσδε,
δεινοὶ τε κρατεροὶ τε, βίην ὑπέροπλον ἔχοντες. 664-670)*

(So he spoke, and the gods, bestowers of good things, hearing the speech approved it. And they longed for war in their hearts more than ever before. On that day they fought a fierce battle, all of them—female and

male—the Titans and the gods fathered by Kronos and those whom Zeus brought up into the light from Erebus under the earth, both terrible and powerful and having matchless strength.)

Interestingly, these speeches are some of the few examples of direct speech in the poem. Zeus, then, is quite skilled at using speech to manipulate his followers and to accomplish his goals.

As Hesiod suggests to his audience in the prologue to the poem (81-97), persuasion is important for all *basileis*, who stand to lose the confidence of their people if they offer unjust decisions, and Zeus is no exception. Zeus is of course the center of Hesiod's ordered universe, and, as Hesiod tells his audience at 96, all *basileis* descend from him. Another instance in the poem in which Zeus demonstrates his ability to use language occurs right after Zeus marries Metis. As soon as Zeus becomes *basileus* of the gods, he takes Metis as his first wife, but he deceives her “δόλω” (889) (by means of a snare) and “αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισιν” (890) (by means of soft, wheedling words). Thus, Zeus uses both deception—usually the *modus operandi* of female characters in Hesiod's universe—and, notably, coaxing speech to trap Metis inside his belly. Interestingly, in the *Works and Days*, Hesiod says that Hermes instills “ψεύδεα θ' αἰμυλίου τε λόγους καὶ ἐπίκλοπον ἥθος” (78) (falsehoods and soft, wheedling words and a thievish nature) in Pandora. Indeed, then, “αἰμυλίοι λόγοι” are associated with seductive femininity. In fact, in the *Odyssey* at 1.56, Homer uses the same term to describe the speech Kalypso uses to charm Odysseus into forgetting his homeland. Thus, in exercising persuasion, Zeus knows how to use language which is forceful and masculine and also language which is soft and feminine.

Zeus has plenty of masculine power, as will be discussed in the next section, but Zeus' supreme power is due to his understanding and exploitation of feminine power. As mentioned previously, Zeus largely maintains his rule among the gods because he prevents his wife from producing a son who will usurp his power. Hesiod describes Zeus' marriage to Metis in the following passage:

Ζεὺς δὲ θεῶν βασιλεὺς πρώτην ἄλοχον θέτο Μῆτιν,
 πλεῖστα θεῶν εἰδυῖαν ἰδὲ θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων.
 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ἤμελλε θεὸν γλαυκῶπιν Ἀθήνην
 τέξασθαι, τότε ἔπειτα δόλῳ φρένας ἐξεπατήσας
 αἰμυλίοισι λόγοισιν ἐὴν ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν,
 Γαίης φραδμοσύνησι καὶ Οὐρανοῦ ἀστερόεντος·
 τῷ γὰρ οἱ φρασάτην, ἵνα μὴ βασιληίδα τιμὴν
 ἄλλος ἔχοι Διὸς ἀντὶ θεῶν αἰειγενετῶν·
 ἐκ γὰρ τῆς εἵμαρτο περίφρονα τέκνα γενέσθαι,
 πρώτην μὲν κόρυην γλαυκώπιδα Τριτογένειαν
 ἴσον ἔχουσαν πατρὶ μένος καὶ ἐπίφρονα βουλὴν,
 αὐτὰρ ἔπειτ' ἄρα παῖδα θεῶν βασιλῆα καὶ ἀνδρῶν
 ἤμελλεν τέξασθαι, ὑπέρβιον ἦτορ ἔχοντα.
 ἀλλ' ἄρα μιν Ζεὺς πρόσθεν ἐὴν ἐσκάτθετο νηδύν,
 ὥς οἱ συμφράσσαιτο θεὰ ἀγαθόν τε κακόν τε. (886-900)

(Zeus, the *basileus* of the gods, made Metis, who knew more than all the gods and mortal men, his first wife. But when she was about to give birth to the goddess grey-eyed Athena, then having deceived her mind by means of a trick (*dolos*), with wheedling words he put her down into his belly, through the schemes of Gaia and starry Ouranos. For they advised him thus, so that no other god would hold the honor of being *basileus* over the immortal gods. For it had been fated that a very wise child would be born from her, first a daughter—the grey-eyed Tritogeneia, holding *menos* equal to her father and wise counsel, but then a son who would become *basileus* of the gods and men, having an overweening heart. But before this happened, Zeus put her down into his belly, so she might advise him concerning good things and bad.)

Zeus does seem to have some natural feminine guile of his own, for he does use feminine craftiness to trap Metis. As Detienne and Vernant have noted, he actually uses her own skill against her.²⁰ Still, after he eats her, he certainly appropriates feminine power.

²⁰ Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, 21.

Zeus eats Metis to stop her from giving birth to a son who will usurp his supremacy, but he does not kill her in the process. Hesiod tells his audience that Zeus puts Metis in his “*νηδύς*” (890), which is a word which means “belly” but which also frequently indicates “womb.”²¹ Of course, eventually Zeus gives birth to Athena out of his head, which suggests that Zeus indeed has uterine abilities. Since Metis is pregnant with Athena when Zeus eats her, it is likely that his uterine abilities are due to her presence in his body. To be sure, in the myth about Dionysos’ birth (which Hesiod does not relate in its entirety in the *Theogony*), when Semele burns up while having sex with Zeus, Zeus sews the fetal Dionysos into his thigh so that the child may complete his gestation. Later, Zeus gives birth to the young god out of his own thigh. In that story, Zeus’ uterine abilities manifest near his genitals rather than his head. In the *Theogony*, however, the connection between the head and the uterus is made explicit with Athena’s birth. Hesiod exploits the double meaning of “*νηδύς*” in this passage and exploits an explicit connection between the belly and the womb throughout the poem. For example, in his attempt to stop the threat which his own children pose to his power, Kronos eats them and keeps them in his own belly. He later vomits them up as if he is giving birth to them himself.

Hesiod tells his audience that Zeus puts Metis in his belly “*ὥς οἱ συμφράσσαιτο*” (900) (to contrive together with him). Hesiod specifically says that Zeus stuffs Metis inside his “*νηδύς*” so that she can advise him, and, in using the verb “*συμφράζομαι*,” he suggests that Zeus and Metis actually debate issues while she is inside of him. The verb

²¹ Cf. Marilyn Arthur, “Poetics and the Circles of Order in the Theogony Prooemium,” *Arethusa* 16 (1983), 97-116, especially 107.

means “to contrive together,” or “to debate,” and it suggests dialogue. Hesiod uses the same verb at 471:

Ρέην δ' ἔχε πένθος ἄλαστον.
 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ Δί' ἔμελλε θεῶν πατέρ' ἠδὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν
 τέξεσθαι. τότε ἔπειτα φίλους λιτάνευε τοκῆας
 τοὺς αὐτῆς, Γαῖαν τε καὶ Οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα,
 μήτιν συμφράσσασθαι, ὅπως λελάθοιτο τεκοῦσα
 παῖδα φίλον, τείσαιτο δ' Ἑρινὺς πατρὸς ἐοῖο
 παίδων οὖς κατέπινε μέγας Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης. (467-
 473)

(And Rhea held endless grief. But when she was about to bear Zeus, the father of gods and men, then she begged her own dear parents, Gaia and starry Ouranos, to contrive together a cunning scheme, so that he would not notice her giving birth to her dear child, and her father's Erinys would avenge the children whom sinuous-minded Kronos gulped down.)

Rhea asks her parents “*μήτιν συμφράσσασθαι*” (to contrive together a cunning scheme), and it is clear that, although Gaia at this point is certainly the dominant partner, Gaia and Ouranos will work together to develop the plan. Thus, their scheme is the result of both feminine and masculine energy. It is worth pointing out that Hesiod uses the word “*μήτις*” (*metis*) for their plan to conceal Zeus' birth. By using his masculine energy to exploit the “*μήτις*” which Metis embodies, Zeus is able to use the most effective aspects of both masculine and feminine power. Marilyn Arthur has argued that Zeus specifically exploits the prophetic power which Metis controls.²² Zeus' use of Metis—especially his use of her procreative power—is what makes him particularly skilled at persuasion. He can give birth to a convincing body of speech out of his head which exhibits masculine logic and order and which also has feminine seductivity and cunning.

²² Arthur, “Cultural Strategies in Hesiod's Theogony: Law, Family, Society,” 78: “In the swallowing of Metis, the homology between *gastēr* and *nēdys* is expanded and transcended, for Athena is born from the head, seat of wisdom, rather than from the thigh, the mouth, or the genitals. At the same time, *nēdys* is redefined as the place of prophecy, since Metis remains within Zeus as his prophetic voice. Thus, the succession-cycle is transformed from the repetitive yielding of place to the future generation into a control over futurity through prophetic knowledge.”

Of course, as discussed earlier, persuasion is intimately tied to seduction in Greek literature, and Zeus certainly is also skilled at seduction. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod lists the goddess Peitho (Persuasion) among the daughters of Tethys and Okeanos. In the *Works and Days*, he says that Peitho assists in making Pandora irresistible to men by decking her out with golden necklaces (74-75), so in that work Hesiod clearly associates persuasion with seduction. Stories about Zeus' ability to seduce and mate with women abound in Greek mythology, and Hesiod himself lists many of Zeus' sexual conquests in the *Theogony*, including Semele, Maia, and Alkmene, for example. Like his ability to persuade, Zeus' ability to seduce sexual partners stems from his understanding of feminine *metis*. Not only does he understand the feminine mind, but he uses craftiness to do whatever it takes to accomplish the deed. Zeus' control of Metis' cunning is what motivates him, for example, to assume the forms of a swan (Leda), a bull (Europa), or a golden shower (Danae). Zeus' sexual prowess is related to his skill in speaking; in both endeavors, his success is due to his general exploitation of femininity.

Hesiod explicitly points to the general importance of persuasion in the prologue.

He says:

ὄντινα τιμήσουσι Διὸς κοῦραι μέγαλοιο
 γεινόμενόν τ' ἐσίδωσι διοτρεφέων βασιλῆων,
 τῷ μὲν ἐπὶ γλώσση γλυκερὴν χεῖουσιν ἐέρσην,
 τοῦ δ' ἔπε ἐκ στόματος ῥεῖ μείλιχα· οἳ δέ τε λαοὶ
 πάντες ἐς αὐτὸν ὀρώσι διακρίνοντα θέμιστας
 ἰθὺίησι δίκησιν· ὃ δ' ἀσφαλέως ἀγορεύων
 αἰψά τε καὶ μέγα νεῖκτος ἐπισταμένως κατέπαυσεν.
 τοῦνεκα γὰρ βασιλῆες ἐξέφρονες, οὔνεκα λαοῖς
 βλαπτομένοις ἀγορήφι μετὰτροπα ἔργα τελεῦσι
 ῥηιδίως, μαλακοῖσι παραιφάμενοι ἐπέεσσιν.
 ἐρχόμενον δ' ἂν ἀγῶνα θεὸν ὥς ἰλάσκονται
 αἰδοῖ μειλίχην, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγορμένοισιν·
 τοίη Μουσάων ἱερὴ δόσις ἀνδρώποισιν.
 Ἐκ γὰρ τοι Μουσέων καὶ ἐκηβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος
 ἄνδρες ἀοιδοὶ ἔασιν ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ κιθαρισταί,
 ἐκ δὲ Διὸς βασιλῆες· ὃ δ' ὄλβιος, ὄντινα Μοῦσαι

φιλῶνται· γλυκερή οἱ ἀπὸ στόματος ῥέει αὐδὴ.
(81-97)

(Whoever among sustained *basileis* the daughters of great-hearted Zeus honor, and look upon when he is born, they pour sweet dew upon his tongue, and honey-sweet words flow from his mouth. All the people look to him as he decides matters with straight justice, speaking firmly and straightway putting an end to great strife with skill. For this reason *basileis* are shrewd, because in the assembly they right wrongs for injured people easily, exhorting with gentle words. They treat him graciously with gentle respect like a god when he comes to the assembly, and he stands out among those assembled. Such is the holy gift of the Muses for men. For singing men and lyre-players on the earth are from the Muses and far-shooting Apollo, but *basileis* are from Zeus. Whomever the Muses love is blessed. Sweet sound flows from his mouth.)

The Muses help *basileis* create alluring speech, and words flow from their mouths like honey. Hesiod actually expressly links the Muses to law and justice—the domain of *basileis*—earlier in prologue:

...πάντων τε νόμους καὶ ἥθεα κεδνὰ
ἀθανάτων κλείουσιν,... (66-67)

(...they sing the laws and thoughtful customs of all the gods..)

Early Greek law was transmitted orally, possibly in verse or by means of poetic language, so it is understandable that the Muses would be connected to the maintenance of law and justice in society.²³ Also, the goddesses are also the daughters of Mnemosyne (Memory), and memory of course plays a significant role in the oral transmission of law and social customs.

In the above passage, Hesiod says that *basileis* use “μαλακοῖσι ἐπέεσσιν” (soft words) when speaking in their assemblies. Thus, the speech which *basileis* use in the

²³ For a discussion of early Greek law and the presentation of law in Hesiod’s poems, see Michael Gagarin, “The Poetry of Justice and the Origins of Greek Law,” in *Ramus* 21, no. 1 (1992), 61-77. For a discussion of justice, see P. Walcot, “Hesiod and the Law,” in *Symbolae Osloenses* 38 (1963), 5-21. For the poetic nature of the speech of both kings and poets, see Jeffrey M. Duban, “Poets and Kings in the Theogony,” in *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 33 (1980), 7-21. For a discussion of the early law code of Gortyn, see Michael Gagarin, “The First Law Code at Gortyn Revisited,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 36, no. 1 (1995), 7-15.

prologue is quite similar to the coaxing words which Zeus uses to deceive Metis. The adjective “μαλακός” generally means “soft” or “delicate,” but it also carries a strong sense of femininity. Hesiod uses it to describe the meadow on which Poseidon has sex with Medousa at 279, for example. As discussed earlier, meadows frequently represent female genitalia in Greek literature. When used to describe words or speeches in later Greek literature, “μαλακός” often means “weak,” “feeble,” or even “effeminate.” So, Hesiod’s *basileis* dominate society politically (and sexually) by deciding straight justice and ending social strife, but they use beguiling feminine language to bring about effective persuasion.

In arguing that the Muses help both *basileis* and poets, Hesiod clearly establishes a connection between *basileis* and poets.²⁴ The successful poet, like Zeus and all *basileis*, relies on rhetorical excellence. Hesiod states:

εἰ γὰρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδεῖ θυμῷ
 ἄζηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὸς
 Μουσάων θεράπων κλεῖα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων
 ὑμνήσει μάκαράς τε θεοὺς οἳ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν,
 αἰψ’ ὃ γε δυσφροσυνέων ἐπιλήθεται οὐδέ τι κηδέων
 μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων.
 (98-103)

(Someone, holding fresh grief in his heart, aggrieved, may dread his heavy heart, but a singer, a servant of the Muses, hymns the glory of ancient men and the gods who hold Mount Olympus, immediately the mournful man forgets, and does not remember his care. The gift of the gods diverts his mind quickly.)

As discussed earlier, in entertaining his audience, the oral poet constructs an alternative universe for his audience, and he attempts to persuade those listening to believe that “κόσμος ἐπέων.” In enrapturing an audience, the poet convinces his listeners to yield to the poetic world which he has constructed, letting it usurp their own awareness of reality.

²⁴ Cf. John T. Kirby, “Rhetoric and Poetics in Hesiod,” in *Ramus* 21, no. 1 (1992), 34-60.

Thus, the poet interacts with his audience in the same way a speaker interacts with an assembly or, specifically here, a *basileus* interacts with his people. Like Homer, Hesiod treats performative speech as an expression of masculine power; the epic itself is anthropomorphized as a masculine body which, if successful, dominates the minds of its audience.

Hesiod says in the prologue that people look upon the king who utters pleasing, persuasive speech as a god:

ἐρχόμενον δ' ἄν' ἀγῶνα θεὸν ὥς ἰλάσκονται
αἰδοῖ μιλίχρη, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγρομένοισιν· (92-93)

(They treat him graciously with gentle respect like a god when he comes to the assembly, and he stands out among those assembled.)

As others have noted, this statement is remarkably close to a statement which Odysseus makes in Book Eight of the *Odyssey*.²⁵ In that work, when Odysseus' manhood is insulted by a Phaiakian youth, he retaliates, as discussed previously, by easily winning an athletic competition and also delivering a clever speech at the young man's expense. He says:

ἄλλος μὲν γὰρ εἶδος ἀκιδνότερος πέλει ἀνὴρ,
ἀλλὰ θεὸς μορφὴν ἔπεισι στέφει, οἳ δέ τ' ἐς αὐτὸν
τερπόμενοι λεύσσουσιν· ὁ δ' ἀσφαλέως ἀγορεύει
αἰδοῖ μιλίχρη, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγρομένοισιν,
ἐρχόμενον δ' ἄν' ἄστει θεὸν ὥς εἰσορωσιν, (8.169-173)

(For one man turns out to be less remarkable for physical beauty but the god puts beautiful form on his words, and men delight looking upon him. He speaks in the assembly without fault and with sweet modesty, and he very much stands out among those gathered and for those who look upon him as a god as he goes along in the city.)

²⁵ See for example Fredrich Solmsen, "The 'Gift' of Speech in Homer and Hesiod," in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 85 (1954), 1-15.

Odysseus thus puts the young Phaiakian in his place and raises his own estimation, as a man who is skilled at performative speaking, to the divine level. Hesiod by specifically referring to *basileis* speaking out in assemblies cleverly suggests that he too approaches divinity. After all, the Muses help both *basileis* and poets, and, while effective *basileis* may produce honey-sweet speech, poets produce “*αὐδὴν θέσπιν*,” a mortal voice which carries elements of divine truth in it.

Hesiod says that the Muses’ favors are a “*ἱερὴ δόσις*” (93) (holy gift) for mankind. It may be that Hesiod intends this statement to be taken only for the *basileis* he has just described in detail, but the “*γάῳ*” in line 94 suggests that the statement should be taken for both *basileis* and singers. Persuasive speech is a gift, then, and epic song is also a gift. Moreover, the gifts of the Muses have the power to make men remember or forget. In the passage above, Hesiod says:

*αἶψ’ ὃ γε δυσφροσυνέων ἐπιλήθεται οὐδέ τι κηδέων
μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων.*

(Immediately the mournful man forgets, and does not remember his care.
The gifts of the gods divert his mind quickly.)

Earlier in the prologue, Hesiod says that Mnemosyne gives birth to the Muses as “a forgetting of evils and freedom from cares” (“*λησμοσύνην τε κακῶν ἄμπαυμά τε μερμηράων*,” 55). Of course, *basileis* also effect memory and forgetfulness; they both carry the memory of laws and customs in society and also motivate people to forget their grievances against each other by offering just settlements. In the passages above, Hesiod refers specifically to singers, however, who seem to free their listeners from their concerns by turning their minds away from everyday cares to the universe of the poem.

There are other instances in the poem in which memory and forgetfulness figure prominently. First, when Rhea acts to stop her husband Kronos from devouring the infant Zeus, Hesiod says that she begs her parents:

...μήτιν συμφράσσασθαι, ὅπως λελάθοιτο τεκοῦσα
παῖδα φίλον... (471-472)

(...to contrive together *metis*, so that he would not notice her giving birth
to her dear child)

In this example, the verb “λελάθοιτο” indicates forgetfulness on Kronos’ part; he lets his guard down and assumes that the stone Rhea hands him is the infant Zeus. Of course, Gaia also distracts and tricks Kronos “ἐννεσίῃς πολυφραδέεσσι δολωθεῖς” (494) (with crafty, eloquent suggestions), causing him to vomit up his other offspring. The stone which Rhea hands Kronos is similar to the song of a gifted singer, which assumes a kind of reality in its listeners’ minds. It is particularly interesting that Hesiod calls the act of making Kronos forget the birth of Zeus “μήτιν” (471). *Metis* is distracting; it causes one to forget one’s sense of reality and give up some of one’s mental faculties. Those who successfully manipulate *metis* thus penetrate and take over the minds of others, both acts of masculine dominance.

The other instance in the text where memory and forgetfulness come into play is with Prometheus, Zeus and Pandora. Hesiod describes Prometheus as “ποικιλόβουλος” (521) (with a many-hued mind) and “ποικίλος αἰολόμητις” (511) (variegated, with many-hued *metis*). Prometheus, then, is associated with the idea of “ποικίλος,” which, as discussed earlier, essentially signifies the quality of complicated weaving or embroidery, although the term is used for other forms of art. Weaving, however, suggests feminine craft. Moreover, Hesiod explicitly associates Prometheus with feminine cunning with the

term “αἰολόμητις.” Indeed, Prometheus, like Rhea, attempts to distract Zeus with something that looks attractive but is undesirable. In the aetiology of the sacrifice, Prometheus covers the inedible parts of an ox he has killed with the fat of the animal, making them look like the desirable portions. He covers the meat, entrails, and fat of the ox “γαστρὶ βοείῃ” (539) (with the belly of the ox). Hesiod describes Prometheus’ action here with the phrase “δολίῃ ἐπὶ τέχνῃ” (540, 555) (with tricky *technē*), and at one point he reminds his audience that, in standing up to Zeus, Prometheus “δολίης δ’ οὐ λήλετο τέχνης” (547) (did not forget his tricky *technē*). In Hesiod’s account, although Zeus realizes that Prometheus is attempting to deceive him, he chooses the portion which only looks good. Afterward, raging, he says:

“Ιαπετιονίδη, πάντων πέρι μῆδεα εἰδῶς,
ὦ πέπον, οὐκ ἄρα πω δολίης ἐπελήλεο τέχνης.” (559-560)

(“Son of Iapetos, you stand out among everyone in knowledge and counsel, my friend, but somehow you do not forget your tricky *technē*.”)

Immediately after, Hesiod comments:

ὥς φάτο χωόμενος Ζεὺς ἄφθιτα μῆδεα εἰδῶς.
ἐκ τούτου δῆπείτα δόλον μεμνημένος αἰεὶ
οὐκ ἐδίδου μελίησι πυρὸς μένος ἀκαμάτοιο
θνητοῖς ἀνθρώποις, οἳ ἐπὶ χθονὶ ναιετάουσιν. (561-564)

(So spoke Zeus whose knowledge and counsels never perish. From this event thereafter remembering always the trick, he did not grant to ash trees the *menos* of burning fire for mortal men, who dwell on the earth.)

Zeus is angry because Prometheus challenges his supreme power by means of a crafty bit of *technē*, choosing not to yield mentally to Zeus and forego his tricks. It is worth pointing out here that the Greek word “μῆδεα” can indicate both “mental faculty” or “counsel” and also “male genitals.” Zeus is enraged because Prometheus challenges his masculine superiority, and Hesiod is capitalizing on the double-meaning of the word.

Zeus himself also does not forget the offense and orders Hephaistos to create the ultimate distraction, Pandora. Like Prometheus' challenge to Zeus, Pandora is a "δόλος." She is also, like Prometheus' tricks, an example of cunning "τεχνή." Pandora is also very much like the attractive but undesirable portion of the sacrificed ox which Prometheus prepares for Zeus. She is alluringly beautiful on the outside but a dangerous snare on the inside. Unlike the edible portions of the ox, which are covered with a unattractive "γαστήρ," Pandora hides her own destructive "γαστήρ" inside her irresistible body. Like the word "νηδύς," the word "γαστήρ" can mean both "belly" and "womb." It is both Pandora's dangerous sexuality and her consumption of food and resources which makes her undesirable for men. When he accepts Pandora as his wife, Epimetheus, who is immediately struck by her appearance, forgets his brother's advice and readily embraces his own doom. Pandora brings about forgetting in the same way Prometheus causes it with his tricks. Pandora, then, is an example of Zeus' own "μήτις" and also a demonstration of his supreme masculine status.

In connecting poets and *basileis* in the prologue, Hesiod establishes a link between himself as poet and Zeus, the divine figure from whom all *basileis* descend. Like Zeus, Hesiod also uses feminine power to accomplish his poetic agenda, and, like Zeus, Hesiod specifically appropriates procreative ability. Hesiod achieves a form of parthenogenesis as well, giving birth to the poem. Moreover, within the poem, Pandora not only serves as an example of Zeus' *metis* but also as an example of Hesiod's poetic *metis*. She not only makes men in general lose their mental faculty, but she also specifically distracts Hesiod's listeners with her beauty. Her compelling image seduces

them just as she seduces Epimetheus. The listeners forget reality, and, thus, allow Hesiod to divert their minds with the epic *kosmos* he has created.

The Erotics of Inspiration

As stated earlier, Hesiod uses the extended prologue to show that the epic process parallels the creation of his Zeus-centered universe and that there is an important connection between himself and Zeus. The prologue, then, is a general reflection on the essence of poesis, and it reveals that *eros* drives both poetic inspiration and every other creation in Hesiod's universe. In his descriptions of the Muses, for example, Hesiod uses language which is pointedly erotic. In the opening lines, the poem reads:

Μουσάων Ἑλικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ' αἰεῖδεν,
αἵ δ' Ἑλικῶνος ἔχουσιν ὄρος μέγα τε ζαθέον τε
καί τε περὶ κρήνην ἰοιδέα πόσσ' ἀπαλοῖσιν
ὀρχεῦνται καὶ βωμὸν ἐρισθενέος Κρονίωνος·
καί τε λοεσσάμεναι τέρενα χροά Περμησσοῖο
ἢ Ἴππου κρήνης ἢ Ὀλμειοῦ ζαθέοιο
ἀκροτάτῳ Ἑλικῶνι χοροὺς ἐνεποιήσαντο
καλοὺς ἰμερόεντας, ἐπερρώσαντο δὲ ποσσίν. (1-8)

(Let me begin to sing of the Helikonian Muses, who hold Helikon, the great and holy mountain, and dance around the violet spring and the altar of mighty Zeus with their soft feet, and, having bathed their smooth skin in Permessos, in Hippokrene, or in holy Olmeios, on Helikon's peak they execute their lovely dances which excite desire and stamp them out with their feet.)

On Helikon, the Muses' dancing is “ἰμερόεις” (desire-exciting, desire-producing) and “καλός” (beautiful). Marilyn Arthur argues that Hesiod's description of the Muses in this passage of the prologue resembles archaic descriptions of young virgins.²⁶ While they are

²⁶ Arthur, “Poetics and the Circles of Order in the Theogony Prooemium,” 98. Arthur notes, “the shimmering quality of their raiment (fr. 43a M-W 73-74 [Eurynome], the tenderness of their limbs and the delicacy of their movement (fr. 75 M-W 9-10 [Atalanta], and the pure water in which they bathe (fr. 59 M-

beautiful and enticing like virgins, the Muses are quite sexual. They clearly have an erotic relationship with the poet.²⁷ Himeros is the personification of erotic longing, and, later in the poem, Hesiod himself says that Himeros, along with Eros, is an attendant of Aphrodite. The Muses' dancing is in fact very much like the dancing of the young men and women in the final scene on Achilles' shield, which is, as Homer says, “*ἰμερόεις χορός*” (18.603) (a desire-inducing dance). It brings about an erotic feeling in those who witness it.

In his description of Mnemosyne's impregnation by Zeus, Hesiod again points to the erotic nature of the Muses. He describes their singing and dancing for Zeus:

*ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ῥ' ἐνιαυτὸς ἔην, περὶ δ' ἔτραπον ὦραι,
μηνῶν φθινόντων, περὶ δ' ἤματα πόλλ' ἐτελέσθη,
ἧ δ' ἔτεκ' ἐννέα κόρας ὁμόφρονας, ἧσιν αἰοιδῇ
μέμβλεται ἐν στήθεσσι ἀκηδέα θυμὸν ἐχούσαις,
τυτθὸν ἀπ' ἀκροτάτης κορυφῆς νιφόεντος Ὀλύμποῦ·
ἔνθα σφιν λιπαροὶ τε χοροὶ καὶ δώματα καλὰ·
παρ δ' αὐτῆς Χάριτες τε καὶ Ἴμερος οἰκί' ἔξουσιν
ἐν θαλίῃς· ἐρατὴν δὲ διὰ στόμα ὅσσαν εἶσαι
μέλπονται, πάντων τε νόμους καὶ ἥδεα κεδνὰ
ἀθανάτων κλείουσιν, ἐπήρατον ὅσσαν εἶσαι.
Αἶ' τότε ἴσαν πρὸς Ὀλύμπου ἀγαλλόμεναι ὅππῃ καλῇ,
ἀμβροσίῃ μολπῇ· περὶ δ' ἴαχε γαῖα μέλαινα
ὑμνεύσαις, ἐρατὸς δὲ ποδῶν ὑπο δοῦπος ὀρώρει
νισομένων πατέρ' εἰς ὄν· (58-71)*

W 4 [Coronis].” Arthur argues that they present themselves to Hesiod as virgins, that the Muses remain virgins, and, 99, that they have “immunity to everything associated with ‘dread Night’: death, gloom, sexuality, and deceit.”

²⁷ Cf. Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 55. Gantz notes that several of the Muses actually give birth to children after sexual encounters. Arthur, in “Poetics and the Circles of Order” argues, 99, that “the opening scene of the Prooemium is a complex and dynamic picture of the world at rest and in tension, the peculiarly Greek idea of order which includes two features of special importance for this poem: the victory through struggle of the son over the father, and the unity of the father and daughter betokened by the daughter's virginity (i.e. absence of marriage). As such, the opening scene anticipates the final stage of the succession-myth, in which on the one hand Zeus consolidates his rule and, on the other, generates through the birth of Athena the model for a non-conflictual bond between male and female. This picture is, to be sure, an ideological construct which embodies an eternal liminality freed from the limits of the historical necessities to which human life, as the myth of Pandora shows, is bound. That is, the father-daughter unity of Zeus' rule presents a moment of dynamic stasis, a freedom from the process whereby the daughter, given out in marriage and thereby inserted into the historical cycle, produces a son to displace the father.” I disagree that this is the case with the Muses. Hesiod sets himself up in the prologue as a lover to the Muses, and his poem is their offspring.

(But when a year passed, and the seasons turned round, and the months waned, and many days passed, she bore nine daughters of similar mind, for them singing is the only concern in their breast, a little bit away from the highest peak of snowy Olympus. There are their brilliant dances and beautiful homes. The Graces and Himeros have their houses near them, in the presence of their feasts. They sing, releasing an erotic voice from their mouths, and they celebrate the laws and wise customs of all the immortals, sending out an erotic sound. Then they went to Olympus, delighting in their beautiful voice, their immortal song. The black earth roared all around with their hymns, and an erotic sound rose up under their feet, moving toward their father.)

The Muses sing with “ἐρατῆς δὲ διὰ στόμα ὄσσα” (65) (an erotic voice from their mouths) and “ἐπὶ ῥατος ὄσσα” (67) (a seductive voice), and there is “ἐρατὸς δὲ ποδῶν ὑπο δοῦπος” (70) (an erotic sound under their feet). Most translations render “ἐρατῆς,” “ἐπὶ ῥατος,” and “ἐρατὸς” as “pleasant” or “lovely,” but these adjectives stem from the Greek verb “ἐράω,” which means “to love sexually, to desire passionately.” Later in the poem, Hesiod uses the adjectives in the phrase, “μιγεῖσ’ ἐρατῇ φιλότητι” (having mixed in erotic love) when listing various divine couplings (e.g., 970, 1009, 1018). The use of the adjective in these instances necessarily carries sexual overtones. Hesiod tells his audience in line 64 that the Muses dwell near the Charites and Himeros. Like Himeros, the Charites are attendants of Aphrodite, and, as discussed earlier, the quality “χάρις” which they represent is a sexual quality. For example, at *Iliad* 5.338, the Charites make a garment for Aphrodite, and at *Odyssey* 8.364-66, they assist Aphrodite in bathing and dressing after she is trapped in Hephaistos’ net of chains when she is having sex with Ares. Hesiod, then, eroticizes the Muses from the beginning of the poem.

Hesiod recalls his own initial interaction with the Muses in detail. I believe that the entire account does not describe a vision which Hesiod experienced or even his own poetic awakening; the account is not autobiographical as much as it is allegorical. It is

entirely likely that Hesiod was not a herdsman at all and only presents himself—albeit intentionally—as a herdsman in order to further his poetic agenda. As he is tending his flocks on Mount Helikon, he explains, the Muses appear to him:

Αἶ νύ ποθ' Ἡσίοδον καλήν ἐδίδαξαν ἀοιδήν,
 ἄρνας ποιμαίνονθ' Ἑλικῶνος ὑπὸ ζαθέοιο.
 τόνδε δέ με πρόωτιστα θεαὶ πρὸς μῦθον ἔειπον,
 Μοῦσαι Ὀλυμπιάδες, κοῦραι Διὸς αἰγιόχοιο·
 “ποιμένες ἀγραυλοὶ, κάκ' ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶον,
 ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
 ἴδμεν δ', εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι.”
 ὥς ἔφασαν κοῦραι μεγάλου Διὸς ἀρτίπειραι·
 καί μοι σκῆπτρον ἔδον, δάφνης ἐριθιλέος ὄζων
 δρέψασαι θηητόν· ἐνέπνευσαν δὲ μοι αὐδὴν
 θέσπιν, ἵνα κλείοιμι τὰ τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα,
 καί με κέλονται ὑμεῖν μακάρων γένος αἶεν ἐόντων,
 σφάς δ' αὐτὰς πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὕστατον αἶεν ἀεΐδειν.
 (22-34)

(They taught Hesiod beautiful song, while he was keeping his sheep under hallowed Helikon. This is the speech the goddesses, the Olympian Muses, daughters of aegis-bearing Zeus, first told me. “Bumpkin herdsman, reproaches to your name, only bellies, we know how to say many false things just like true things, and we know, when we want to, how to relate the truth.” Thus the daughters of great-hearted Zeus, with perfectly-fitting speech, spoke. Having plucked a marvelous branch from the flowering laurel, they gave me a staff. They breathed into me a divinely sweet voice, so that I celebrate the future and past, commanding me to hymn the race of the immortal gods, and always to sing about them first and last.)

The Muses both compel and enable him to compose the poem, sharing with him their own sacred knowledge by breathing it into him. Thus, they impart *pneuma*, a bodily form of *menos*, to Hesiod in the process.

Again, their breath carries “αὐδὴν θέσπιν” (a divine voice). The adjective “θέσπις” signifies something which comes from the divine sphere, especially something which is difficult for mortals to endure or excessively beautiful because of its divine origin. As discussed earlier, the term carries oracular overtones. The closely related word “θεσπέσιος” is used by Homer in Book Twelve of the *Odyssey* to describe the song of the

Sirens, for example, who very much resemble the Muses. The Sirens, too, exude feminine sexuality. They sit in the middle of a fertile meadow, which, as discussed earlier, often signifies feminine genitalia.²⁸ They seduce men to gather round them with their irresistible voices, and their voices are indeed so captivating that men who hear them waste away and die while happily caught in a trance, forgetting their own homecomings. The song which the Sirens produce is like the voice of the Muses in that it is extremely seductive and also in that it comes directly from the divine sphere. For most mortals, the divine beauty of the sound is overpowering and thus dangerous; Odysseus hears it safely only because his men tie him to the mast of his ship. It is significant that Odysseus in the *Odyssey* is presented as a poet-figure, and indeed, among mortals, only poets seem capable of hearing divine song with impunity.²⁹

Hesiod continues by describing how the Muses delight Zeus in their singing:

Τύνη, Μουσάων ἀρχώμεθα, ταὶ Διὶ πατρὶ
 ὑμνεῦσαι τέρπουσι μέγαν νόον ἐντὸς Ὀλύμπου,
 εἰρεῦσαι τὰ τ' ἐόντα τὰ τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα,
 φωνῇ ὁμηρεῦσαι· τῶν δ' ἀκάματος ῥέει αὐδὴ
 ἐκ στομάτων ἡδεῖα· γελᾷ δέ τε δώματα πατρὸς

²⁸ It is worth pointing out here that Angela Della Volpe, in “The Great Goddess, the Sirens and Parthenope,” in *Varia on the Indo-European Past: Papers in Memory of Marija Gimbutas* eds. Miriam Robbins Dexter and Edgar C. Polomé Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph 19 (1997), 103-123, has argued, 108 note 4, that in the Indo-European traditions, the afterworld is represented as a meadow. The Sirens’ meadow is associated with feminine sexuality and also death and the afterlife.

²⁹ For a analysis of the Sirens as they are represented in epic, see, for example, Lillian Eileen Doherty, “Sirens, Muses, and Female Narrators in the *Odyssey*,” in *The Distaff Side: Representing the Female in the Odyssey* ed. Beth Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 81-92. Doherty argues, 84, that the Sirens are sexual whereas the Muses are not, which I believe is an incorrect reading of the Muses: “The choir of Muses in the *Theogony*, though described as lovely and desirable, have no husbands or lovers; they seem to be cast in the mold of the maiden chorus and are closely linked with their father’s house (*Theogony* 36-74). The Muses invoked in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are virtually sexless. By contrast, the Sirens have a decidedly ambiguous sexual status. Like Kalypso, they occupy a flowery meadow (5.72; 12.159), a setting connected elsewhere in archaic poetry with sexual encounters. Their song is said to delight (*terpein*, 12.189) and to charm (*thelgein*, 12.41-43)...Whereas *terpein* and *thelgein* are commonly used of the pleasure given by poetry, they are also associated with sexual pleasure and help to link the Sirens with other seductive females in the *Odyssey*.” For a discussion of the Sirens as they are represented in Greek art, see Jenifer Neils, “Les Femmes Fatales: Skylla and the Sirens in Greek Art,” *The Distaff Side: Representing the Female in the Odyssey* ed. Beth Cohen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 175-184.

*Ζηνὸς ἐριγδοῦποιο θεῶν ὅπι λειριόεσση
σκιδναμένη· (36-42)*

(Oh, let me begin with the Muses, who celebrating their father Zeus in hymn, delight his great mind on Olympus, relating things which are and which will be and which have been, singing in accord with sweet sound. Effortlessly, sweet sound flows from their mouths. The abode of their thundering father Zeus resounds with laughter in the lily-white voice of the goddesses, ringing about.)

The Muses entertain Zeus in the divine sphere and delight him with their performances. Hesiod uses the verb “τέρπειν” in this passage, which, as has been discussed, is often used to describe the effect a talented singer has on his audience. Hesiod uses it again in line 51 to describe the effect which the Muses have on Zeus when they entertain him. As discussed earlier, the verb is pointedly sexual in nature. Hesiod, in fact, uses it in the *Works and Days* to describe the effect which Pandora has on men:

*τοῖς δ' ἐγὼ ἀντὶ πυρὸς δώσω κακόν, ᾧ κεν ἅπαντες
τέρπωνται κατὰ θυμὸν ἐὼν κακὸν ἀμφαγαπῶντες. (57-58)*

(I will give to them an evil in place of fire, in which all of them will delight in their hearts as they embrace their own evil.)

Hesiod specifically mentions here that Pandora will delight men as they embrace her sexually. The Muses' singing and dancing is seductive in nature and gives Zeus sexual pleasure, and Hesiod enjoys their performance firsthand as does Zeus.

Hesiod specifically points out that the Muses have knowledge of past, present and future: “εἰρεῖσαι τὰ τ' ἐόντα τὰ τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα...” (38) (relating things which are and which will be and which have been...). Through his interaction with them, Hesiod can tap into information which would otherwise be inaccessible, as when he says that the Muses inspire him so that he can celebrate “τὰ τ' ἐσσόμενα πρό τ' ἐόντα” (32) (the things which will be and the things which have been). Presumably Hesiod himself can sing

about things in the present, but his special relationship with the Muses allows him access to the future which is normally within the divine sphere. Hesiod touches on the traditional association of poetry and prophecy here; through the Muses, he has access to their knowledge, which is free from the boundaries of time and space. The poet is, then, an intermediary between the mortal sphere of existence and the divine sphere, and, through his liminal status, he can offer his mortal audience a glimpse into the divine world.³⁰

The Muses of course begin their address to Hesiod with a series of insults: “ποιμένεες ἀγραυλοὶ, κάκ’ ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἷον” (26) (bumpkin herdsmen, reproaches to your name, only bellies). Hesiod offers the description of his encounter with the Muses to explain why and how he has come to sing about the subject at hand and also to corroborate his poetic authority before his audience. Other narratives of poetic transformation exist which involve a lowly herdsman and the Muses, so Hesiod may simply be using a traditional notion.³¹ Herdsmen have some association with oracles and prophetic powers, however, and Hesiod may be using the persona of a herdsman in order

³⁰ Cf. E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1951), 100 note 118: “Several Indo-European languages have a common term for ‘poet’ and ‘seer’ (Latin *vates*, Irish *fili*, Icelandic *thulr*). ‘It is clear that throughout the ancient languages of northern Europe the ideas of poetry, eloquence, information (especially antiquarian learning) and prophecy are intimately connected’ (H.M. and N.K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, I.637). Hesiod seems to preserve a trace of this original unity when he ascribes to *the Muses* (*Theog.* 38), and claims for himself (*ibid.*, 32) the same knowledge of ‘things present, future and past’ which Homer ascribes to Calchas (*Il.* 1.70)...”

³¹ Nagy, for instance, *Greek Mythology and Poetics*, 49, offers the comparison of Archilochus. He writes: “The narrative is typical of traditional Greek myths that motivate the cult of a poet as a hero. In the *Life of Archilochus* tradition, for example, the diffusion of which can be historically connected with the actual cult of Archilochus as hero on his native island of Paros from the archaic period onward, we find another story about the poet and the Muses. The paraphrase that follows is from the Mnesiepes Inscription (Archilochus T 4 Tarditi). On a moonlit night young Archilochus is driving a cow toward the city from the countryside region of Paros known as the *Leimōnes* ‘Meadows’ when he comes upon some seemingly rustic women, whom he proceeds to antagonize with mockery. The disguised Muses respond playfully to his taunts and ask him to trade away his cow. Agreeing to do so if the price is right, Archilochus straightaway falls into a swoon. When he awakes, the rustic women are gone, and, so, too, is the cow; but in its place Archilochus finds a lyre that he takes home as an emblem of his transformation from cowherd to poet.”

to corroborate his own connection to the divine. Plutarch writes that the oracle at Delphi was discovered by a shepherd whose animals became agitated when they approached the chasm in the rock, for example. It is likely that the Muses are insulting because they are addressing mortals, but it is also likely that they are flirting playfully with their mortal audience. After all, erotic activity in the *Theogony* is generally agonistic.

The Muses also use the phrase “*κάκ’ ἐλέγχεα*” (reproaches to your name). The word “*ἐλέγχεα*” is closely related to the rhetorical verb “*ἐλέγχειν*” (to put to shame, to disgrace, to refute), which indicates the act of responding aggressively or arguing against something. The Muses may use it here because they are about to give Hesiod the gift of clever speech and the word is insulting but also invites him to stand up to them rhetorically. Archaic poetry, after all, is a competitive arena, as Hesiod himself attests when he describes his own participation in a poetic competition at Chalkis in the *Works and Days*.

In any case, the Muses’ initial address to Hesiod is especially interesting in that they refer to him using the word “*γαστερές*” (bellies). The Muses simply may be referring to mortals’ constant toil for food—and, to be sure, the connection between hunger and the belly and epic poetry is important. It is possible that they are focusing on Hesiod’s “belly” because they are particularly interested in that organ, however.³² As discussed

³² Joshua T. Katz and Katarina Volk also argue that the Muses here are singling out the “*γαστερές*” of the shepherds because they intend to fill that organ with their divinity. As they write, 127, the poet is then a “receptacle of inspiration.” They connect the Muses means of inspiring with ancient ideas about prophetic possession and mantic frenzy, which often manifest through the belly. Although they conclude that the Muses’ focus on the “*γαστερές*” when talking to Hesiod shows that his presentation of poetic inspiration is one in which the poet is only a “possessed medium”—which I do not agree with—nevertheless the connection to a divinity’s possession of a prophet is compelling, especially considering Nagy’s ideas about the staff the Muses hand Hesiod. Joshua T. Katz and Katarina Volk “‘Mere Bellies’?: A New Look at *Theogony* 26-8,” in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 120 (2000), 122-131. Cf. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, 71-72. Interestingly, Dodds, 72, cites a Hippocratic text which refers to “the women called belly-talkers.”

earlier, the word “γαστήρ” can indicate the stomach, but, like “νηδύς,” it can also refer to a womb.³³ Hesiod uses the term “νηδύς” for where Zeus puts Metis and also for the place Kronos puts his children after eating them (460). Since both Kronos and Zeus are attempting to control the process of birth, Hesiod is using the term pointedly. Hesiod focuses on “γαστερές” when discussing the nature of women in the passage about Pandora, and, of course, Pandora is dangerous to men not only for her consumption of resources but, most importantly, because of her uterine nature.³⁴ Because there is a general connection between Zeus and the poets in the poem, it is likely that “γαστήρ,” like “νηδύς,” signifies womb here as well.³⁵ Hesiod thus describes poetic inspiration as a transfer of divine “μένος” from the Muses into the metaphorical “womb” of the poet—material that will in turn be ordered and come into being as a poem.³⁶ Like Zeus, then, the poet eventually gives birth to the body of the epic poem out of his head.

Later in the prologue, Hesiod says, “ὁ δ’ ὄλβιος, ὅντινα Μοῦσαι φίλωνται· γλυκερή οἱ ἀπὸ στόματος ῥέει αὐδὴ.” (96) (Whomever the Muses love is blessed. Sweet voice flows

³³ For a general discussion of how Indo-European languages view the womb, see Carl Darling Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages: A Contribution to the History of Ideas* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), 255: “The majority of the words for ‘womb’ are related to those for ‘belly’ and so have been discussed in 4.46. Of the others, the commonest source is ‘mother’, while some are words for ‘body’ or ‘lap’ used in a specialized sense, or of various other sources...Grk. ὑστέρα (the most usual technical term, Hipp., Aristot., etc.; cf. also ὕστρος· γαστήρ Hesych.), apparently: ὕστρος ‘latter, behind’, Skt. utaara-‘upper’, ud ‘upwards’, so orig. ‘back part’ or ‘upper part’? Or perh. ultimately: Skt. udara- ‘belly’, etc. (4.46) with analogical re-formation...”

³⁴ See *Theogony* 599, for example. The word γαστήρ is used by Aristotle, Herodotus, and Homer, for example, for the uterus. Interestingly, the term is also by Tyrtæus used to indicate the hollow of a shield, a common medium for ekphrases.

³⁵ Since breath is a manifestation of *menos* in the poem, it seems that the Muses inseminate a poet when they inspire him. Many of the medical writers view the raw material which is provided by the female—often in the form of menstrual fluid—as originating from the same source as semen. So, the Muses may be breathing into the poet, but the fluid is a feminine manifestation of raw material rather than heat-providing semen.

³⁶ The association between the mouth and female genitalia is an important theme in the *Theogony*. Not only are women associated with consumption of family provisions, but Kronos even mimics birth by vomiting up his children. The poet also will give birth to the poem through his mouth, as he performs for an audience.

from his mouth.) While the verb “φιλεῖν” can indicate asexual love or friendship, it can just as often indicate sexual love.³⁷ Hesiod uses its cognate “φιλότης” throughout the poem to indicate what must be sexual love. For example, in describing the birth of Ether and Day, Hesiod says, “Νυκτὸς δ’ αἴτ’ Αἰθήρ τε καὶ Ἡμέρη ἐξεγένοντο, οὓς τέκε κυσαμένη Ἐρέβει φιλότῃτι μιγεῖσα.” (124-125). (Ether and Day were born from Night, whom she bore having mixed in love with Erebus). In describing the birth of Aphrodite, Hesiod calls her “φιλομμηδής” (200) (loving a male genitals) and says that “γλυκερής φιλότης” (206) (sweet love) derives from her. Since Aphrodite is the goddess of sexual love, attended by Eros and Himeros, the love indicated by the root “φιλο-” necessarily is sexual here, and, since the power of Eros permeates the poem, it is reasonable to interpret Hesiod’s use of “φιλεῖν” as sexual. So, the Muses choose some mortal men for erotic interaction, and those men produce sweet sound because of the experience.³⁸

In his description of his encounter with the Muses on Helikon, Hesiod says that the goddesses give him a “σκῆπτρον.” The word “σκῆπτρον” is used for the staff which herdsmen use, the walking stick which the blind use, the staff which priests and prophets carry, the wand which heralds carry, and also, as discussed Chapter One, the speaker’s staff which *basileis* hold in assembly. Hesiod means for his audience to understand the “σκῆπτρον” as a symbol of both poetic and political power, especially considering his statement later in the opening (68-97) about the gifts the Muses bestow on both poets and

³⁷ For discussion of the Greek verb *φιλεῖν* and its cognates and their erotic connotations, see K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 49-50. Homer uses the verb to indicate sexual intercourse, for example, in the *Odyssey* at 8.309, in Demodokos’ song about Aphrodite and Ares, and at 18.325, in describing Melanthe’s repeated sex with Eurymachos.

³⁸ In his discussion of the Muses, Gantz cites a scholion which includes a tale about a singer in Thrace who expects to have sexual intercourse with all nine Muses. *Early Greek Myth*, 55.

basileis.³⁹ The lame craftsman-god, Hephaistos, uses a “σκήπτρον” in Book 18 of the *Iliad*, so Hesiod also may be hinting at the connection between artists and poets, a possibility which is especially attractive in the present discussion. Nagy and Arthur specifically link the “σκήπτρον” here to the scene in the city at peace on the shield of Achilles, where heralds carry the “σκήπτρον” to each elder in the circle as he stands to offer judgments.⁴⁰ Nagy also argues that the “σκήπτρον” which the Muses hand to Hesiod harkens back to an Indo-European tradition in which prophet, herald, and poet are signified by the same figure.⁴¹ In any case, the Muses hand Hesiod a symbol of masculine power and, in particular, a symbol of the masculine power of performative speech. As discussed earlier, the “σκήπτρον” is phallic; it is a sign to others of one’s masculine dominance in society and one’s ability to command language. When the erotically alluring Muses appear to Hesiod and hand him a symbolic phallus, they excite sexual desire. In this erotically charged encounter, they breathe their divine song into Hesiod. Of course, the “σκήπτρον” is from a laurel tree, which is the sacred tree of Apollo, so Hesiod’s staff also carries prophetic powers. There is evidence that the Pythia not only chewed laurel leaves and purified herself in the smoke of burning laurel leaves but also held a laurel branch while delivering her oracular responses to petitioners. As a

³⁹ For the authorizing and political power which the *skeptron* signifies, see for example, Frederick M. Combellack, “Speakers and Sceptres in Homer,” *The Classical Journal* 43, no. 4 (1948), 209-217 and Naoko Yamagata, “ἄναξ and βασιλεύς in Homer,” *The Classical Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (1997), 1-14.

⁴⁰ Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics*, 53 and Arthur, “The Dream of a World without Women: Poetics and the Circles of Order in the Theogony Prooemium,” 106.

⁴¹ Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics*, 59: “The Indo-European heritage of Greek poetry goes back to a phase where the functions of poet/herald/seer are as yet undifferentiated. Traces of such a phase survive not only in the characterization of Hesiod as protégé of the Helikonian Muses but also in the paradigm of Hermes as protégé of *Mnēmosinē*. By virtue of singing a theogony, Hermes is said to be *krainōn* ‘authorizing’ the gods (*Hymn to Hermes* 427). The verb *krainō* denotes sovereign authority as exercised by kings and emanating from Zeus himself. It conveys the notion that kings authorize the accomplishment of something and confirm that it will be accomplished (as at *Odyssey* viii 390). A cross-cultural survey of ritual theogonic traditions throughout the world reveals that a basic function of a theogony is to confirm the authority which regulates any given social group. By singing a theogony and thus ‘authorizing’ the gods, Hermes is in effect confirming their authority.”

poet, Hesiod must use his masculine sexual power to impose an ordering force on their divine song so that it may be communicated clearly through language to other mortals. He must use his “σκῆπτρον” and its inherent masculine ordering ability to produce the poem.⁴²

When the Muses first appear to Hesiod on Mount Helikon, they tell him:

ποιμένες ἀγραυλοὶ, κάκ' ἐλέγχεα, γαστέρες οἶον,
ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,
ἴδμεν δ', εὖτ' ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι. (26-28)

(Bumpkin herdsmen, country hicks, only bellies, we know how to say many false things just like true things, and we know, when we want to, how to use straight language.)

The meaning of “ψεύδεα” and “ἀληθέα” in this passage has been the subject of much scholarly debate. The Muses seem to toy with Hesiod in telling him that they know how to tell “ψεύδεα” (falsehoods) which sound like the truth, and Hesiod seems to suggest here that the goddesses have chosen to tell him the truth whereas they have given false information to previous poets. The arena of poetry is competitive, and Hesiod no doubt seeks to establish himself as an authority. In Greek, generally “ψεύδεα” are actual lies, but I do not believe Hesiod’s Muses are talking here about language which is categorically untrue versus language which is categorically true. When the Muses say to Hesiod: “ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα,” they use the word “ἐτύμος.” This adjective carries a sense of truth, but “ἐτύμος” means “true” in the sense of “true to one’s nature” or “original.” So, the Muses know how to create “ψεύδεα” which seem to be true

⁴² It is worth mentioning here that ancient medical schools and the god Asclepius also are symbolized by staffs. My understanding of poetic inspiration is in keeping with that of Penelope Murray, for example, who argues that there is much evidence that the poet is an active participant in his own craft and far from only a medium possessed by a divinity, although certainly the Muses touch on the prophetic model. “Poetic Inspiration in Early Greece,” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 101 (1981), 87-100. Also cf. Claude Calame, *The Craft of Poetic Speech in Ancient Greece* trans. by Janet Orion (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), especially 44-62.

to the basic sense of the words. In other words, the stories are not obviously tricky or duplicitous. Again, in the *Works and Days*, Hesiod says that Hermes instills “*ψεύδεα θ’ αἰμυλίου τε λόγους καὶ ἐπίκλοπον ἥθος*” (78) (falsehoods and soft, wheedling words and a thievish nature) in Pandora. In the same way that coaxing words are thus characterized as feminine, “*ψεύδεα*” are therefore also associated with femininity. Hesiod’s language almost exactly recalls Homer’s description of Odysseus’ ability to tell stories in Book 19 of the *Odyssey*: “*Ἴσκε ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγων ἐτύμοισιν ὁμοῖα* (203) (He knew how to say many false things just like true things). Odysseus’ ability to create such speech stems from his inherent ability to command *metis*. Hesiod’s Muses are talking about cunning speech versus straight speech. In referring to their ability to tell convincing “*ψεύδεα*,” the Muses simply reveal that, like Odysseus, they are skilled at persuasion; they tell believable, seductive stories.⁴³

Pietro Pucci, using Derrida, has argued that the Muses’ confusing statement about falsehoods and truth in the prologue to the *Theogony* reveals an awareness of the basic relationship between imitation and language.⁴⁴ The poetic *logos* is always false to some

⁴³ Cf. Bruce Heiden, “The Muses’ Uncanny Lies: Hesiod, *Theogony* 27 and its Translators,” *American Journal of Philology* 128 (2007), 153-173. Heiden argues that both *ψεύδεα* and *ἀληθῆα* represent the truth which the Muses relate.

⁴⁴ Pucci, *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry*, 9-10. “It is remarkable that Hesiod, the supposedly mythical thinker, should, first, deny ‘the Homeric belief in the identity of truth and poetry’ (Luther, p. 42) and, second, represent the relationship between truth and falsehood in rationalistic terms. In stating that the untrue statements of the Muses look like truth Hesiod invokes the concept of *imitation*, which is fundamental to Greek thought on language. The precise meaning of the text has never—to my knowledge—been elucidated: what is it that is imitated by the false statements of the Muses (*ψεύδεα*—from *ψεῦδος*—*λέγειν*)? Given that *ὁμοῖος* can suggest both similarity and identity, what precise relationship is established between the true and the untrue? The word *ἔτυμα* (i.e. the truth that the false statements of the Muses imitate) might mean both that which actually exists and that which is thought to be true. But, since *ἔτυμος* has a positive formation and is possibly connected with *εἶναι*, one might wish here to stress its meaning as ‘what actually exists as true.’ The text of line 27 would then imply that the Muses’ false *logos* (*ψεύδεα λέγειν*) resembles things which exist or have happened. If line 27 echoes *Odyssey* 19.203, where the author comments on Odysseus’ ability to invent fictitious facts about himself, the passage in the *Theogony* might suggest that the Muses invent stories which are similar or even identical to actual facts or events...Their definition of the *logos* as something ‘tricky’ bears on the language of all poetry.”

degree, and only the Muses understand the degree to which it is distorted. Without access to the divine sphere, mortal men never are positioned to see how the *logos* might be false.⁴⁵ Marilyn Arthur follows Pucci; she writes:

But what is important, and in my view, *necessary* in order to understand what Hesiod says, is some theoretically founded notion of the *indeterminacy* of the signifying relation, the recognition that language itself—the *logos*—is a form of fiction, that representation itself is always, in some sense, a “lie.”⁴⁶

Giovanni Ferrari has argued that Homeric and Hesiodic poetry instead reveals that, while the signified is “spurious,” the signifier is not.⁴⁷ I agree; Hesiod certainly seems aware of the power of language to deceive, but he is referring to two entirely different spheres of understanding in the prologue. While “*ψεύδεα*” occur within the mortal sphere of existence, “*ἀληθέα*” are operative in the divine sphere. Thus, both poets and kings are never capable of speaking absolute truth—that is “*ἀληθία*.” As Thalmann says, “No mortal, neither poet nor king, can possess *alētheia* free of *lēthē*, or can utter the truth without an admixture of deception.”⁴⁸ Still, those whom the Muses help can produce language which has elements of the divine in it.

The Muses also say: “*ἴδμεν δ’, εὔτ’ ἐθέλωμεν, ἀληθέα γηρύσασθαι*” (28). Here, they use “*ἀληθέα*” to indicate the opposite of “*ψεύδεα*.” The adjective “*ἀληθής*” is composed of the root found in “*λήθος*,” and “*λήθειν*,” for example, which indicates “forgetfulness” or “a forgetting,” and an alpha-privative. Thus, something that is “*ἀληθής*” is “true” in that

⁴⁵ Ibid., 25-26: “But, as a pupil of the Muses, Hesiod learns from them the double power of their *logos*. This whole ‘mythical’ pattern, then, elicits a ‘rational’ discovery about the nature of language, its ambiguity, its autonomy from ‘things,’ and therefore its power both to speak the truth and to deceive: it draws attention to the core of the problem of language.”

⁴⁶ Marilyn B. Arthur, “The Dream of a World without Women: Poetics and the Circles of Order in the Theogony Prooemium,” in *Arethusa* 16, no. 1 (1983), 106.

⁴⁷ Giovanni Ferrari, “Hesiod’s Mimetic Muses and the Strategies of Deconstruction,” in *Post-Structuralist Classics* ed. Andrew Benjamin (New York: Routledge, 1988), 57.

⁴⁸ Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought*, 148.

it does not cause or show evidence of forgetfulness.⁴⁹ In other words, it does not exhibit seductiveness or *metis* in the manner of Prometheus and his tricks or Pandora and her beguiling appearance.⁵⁰ Pucci specifically notes that the word “*γηρύσασθαι*” here carries religious overtones.⁵¹ The Muses are also talking about their ability to relate information from the divine sphere; things which are “*ἀληθέα*” are also the stuff of prophecies. Thus, when the Muses appear to Hesiod and tell him that they know how to sing things which are “*ψεύδεα*” without seeming to be and also how to sing things which are “*ἀληθέα*,” they are talking about the charming, beautiful language of poems and also divine truth.

The Muses sing directly to Zeus and the other gods, but their divine song must be communicated to an earthly audience through poets.⁵² Of course, the poet has to translate the divine song of the Muses into mortal language, and mortal language is limited. Thus, Hesiod receives the divine song of the Muses but cannot communicate all aspects of it to his mortal audience.⁵³ The poet also understands from the Muses that he

⁴⁹ For a discussion of the etymologies of “*ἀληθής*” and other related words for truth in Greek and other Indo-European languages, see Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages*, 1168. Gregory Nagy, “The Pan-Hellenism of the ‘Days’ in the Works and Days,” in *Daidalikon: Studies in Memory of Raymond V. Schoder, S.J.* ed. by Rober F. Sutton, Jr. (Wauconda, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1989), 273-277, argues that “*ἀληθέα*” indicates pan-Hellenic poetry rather than poetry delivered by local bards which focuses on local gods. See also Nagy, *Greek Mythology and Poetics*.

⁵⁰ Cf. Louise H. Pratt, *Lying and Poetry from Homer to Pindar: Falsehood and Deception in Archaic Greek Poetics* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993), 17-22.

⁵¹ Pucci, *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry*, 9.

⁵² Cf. Bradley, “The Relevance of the Prooemium to the Design and Meaning of Hesiod’s Theogony,” 41-42: “But the Muses are only the spirit of poetry, not its substance. They only represent poetry’s potential force, since for the realization of their benevolent mission they depend upon the poet....Poetry, defined by the role of the Muses in the prooemium as a potential means of communication and understanding between man and god, has at last found its interpreter.”

⁵³ Cf. Pietro Pucci, *Hesiod and the Language of Poetry* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 12: “We may conclude that the *logos* signifies things by *imitating* them with some obliquity, distortion, and addition. Nevertheless, this difference, this movement askance, is not perceptible to men, as only the Muses recognize it. However, before we examine why only the Muses can fathom the difference, let us recapitulate the predicament of the poet. The insults that the Muses address to the shepherds should be understood as a strong indictment of the powerlessness and ignorance of men before the poetic *logos*. The mystery of the *logos* is no wonder; for the *logos* is a gift of the gods. Not all song, even that produced by the Muses, is true; nevertheless, sung in the voice of the Muses, it always appears as truth. This

is subject to, as Marilyn Arthur puts it, “the constraints of reality.”⁵⁴ The truth of poetic *logos* is only available directly to the Muses and those who also have access to that divine sphere. As Derek Collins has shown, archaic Greek poetry is clear that the voice of the divine sphere is “ὄσσα” while the voice of the mortal sphere is “αὐδὴ.”⁵⁵ For mortals, the song of the Muses is like the original feminine powers in Hesiod’s universe—chaotic, undefined, and disorderly—and the poet must use his masculine essence to impose order on it, shaping it into a recognizable body of speech for mortals. The *kosmos* of his poem, then, is the result of his own insemination of the chaotic material which the Muses breathe into him.⁵⁶ They offer the poet potential—matter for his manipulation, but he must shape it into something comprehensible. Like the Greek *rhetor*, the poet’s craft resembles that of nature, and Hesiod presents poesis in reproductive terms.

The imagery of darkness and light which Hesiod includes in the prologue also shows that he presents poesis in reproductive terms. Hesiod’s description of the Muses setting out from Mount Helikon depicts them enveloped in darkness, setting out at night, veiled in a mist: “ἐνθεν ἀπορρύνμεναι, κεκαλυμμέναι ἡέρι πολλῶ, ἐννύχαιαι στεῖχον περικαλλέα ὄσσαν ἰεῖσαι....” (9-10) (From there setting out, veiled in a mist, they go at night, to send out their very beautiful voice...). Later, he describes the house of Night, as “ἐρεμνή” (744) (dark, black) and he says that it is “νεφέλης κεκαλυμμένα κυανέησιν” (745) (enveloped in an gloomy cloud). He says that Night itself is “νεφέλη κεκαλυμμένη ἡεροειδεῖ” (757)

disheartening message leaves the poet alone, facing the precariousness of the *logos*. As Hesiod (still often considered to be on the threshold of mythical thinking), begins a new type of song, he boldly accepts his own individual responsibility for truth; and with tremendous energy he denies the demonstrability of truth.”

⁵⁴ Arthur, “Poetics and the Circles of Order,” 106. Arthur writes, “...what is important and, in my view, *necessary* in order to understand what Hesiod says, is some theoretically founded notion of the *indeterminacy* of the signifying relation, the recognition that language itself—the *logos*—is a form of fiction, that representation itself is always, in some sense, a ‘lie.’”

⁵⁵ Derek Collins, “Hesiod and the Divine Voice of the Muses,” in *Arethusa* 32 (1999), 241-262.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of feminine language and its ambiguity, see, for example, Ann L. T. Bergren, “Language and the Female in Early Greek Thought,” *Arethusa* 16 (1983), 69-95.

(enveloped in a murky cloud). Hesiod thus associates the Muses as they set out to sing their song with other dark, chthonic, feminine forces in the poem. Hesiod frequently uses the epithet *μέλαινα* (black) for Gaia, for example, and he often describes her body in terms of darkness and murkiness. Indeed, artistic inspiration is difficult to describe and often defies articulation, so Hesiod's association of the Muses with darkness and murkiness is fitting.

Most notably, Hesiod describes the process of birth as a movement from darkness to light. In the passage about Ouranos' attempt to control Gaia's procreative power, for example, when Ouranos pushes his children back into Gaia's body, Hesiod says that "...ἐξ φάος οὐκ ἀνίεσκε..."(157) (he did not send it forth to the light...). Hesiod also says that Ouranos hid each of his children in Gaia and "ἐς φάος οὐκ ἀνίεσκε"(157) (kept it back from the light). So, Gaia's womb is dark, and birth is a process of moving out of the darkness into the clear light. Similar imagery is used with Rhea. When Gaia helps Rhea conceal newborn Zeus from his father Kronos, she carries the baby away to Crete at night and hides him in a cave:

*ἔνθα μιν ἵκτο φέρουσα θοὴν διὰ νύκτα μέλαιναν,
πρώτην ἐς Λύκτον· κρύψεν δέ ἐ χειρσὶ λαβοῦσα
ἄντρῳ ἐν ἡλιβάτῳ, ζαθέης ὑπὸ κεύθεσι γαίης,
Αἰγαίῳ ἐν ὄρει πεπυκασμένῳ ὑλήεντι. (481-484)*

(Carrying him swiftly through the black night, she came first to Lyktos. Taking him in her hands, she concealed him in an hollow cave, at the bidding of the god-haunted earth, covered-up on thickly wooded Mount Aigaion.)

Rhea of course hides the infant Zeus in a place which is very much like her own body—a cave surrounded by thick woods. She sets out as she is about to give birth, and it is significant again that she operates "διὰ νύκτα μέλαιναν" (through the black night). Thus,

the female body is dark, concealing, and mysterious, and the Muses' journey to poets is described using imagery which is suggestive of the feminine body.

In the passage about kings and poets in the prologue, Hesiod traces poetic skill to both the Muses and to Apollo. He states, “Ἐκ γάρ τοι Μουσέων καὶ ἐκ ηὐβόλου Ἀπόλλωνος ἄνδρες ἀοιδοὶ ἔασιν ἐπὶ χθόνα καὶ κισσαρισταί, ἐκ δὲ Διὸς βασιλῆες.” (94-96) (For the singing men and the lyre-players on the earth are descended from the Muses and far-shooting Apollo, but kings are descended from Zeus). Again, when Hesiod describes his own experience, he says that the Muses gave him a “σκῆπτρον” from the laurel, which is Apollo's sacred tree, before breathing into him their divine song. The Muses, then, teach Hesiod to sing by first giving him a symbol of Apollo, and, thus, they establish him as a surrogate for the god. Apollo is associated with light and brightness, probably from his common epithet “Φοῖβος” (Shining One, Bright One).⁵⁷ Even in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, which may date to Hesiod's own time, as Apollo leaps from the Cretan ship, he is described in terms of blazing light:

ἀστέρι εἰδόμενος μέσῳ ἡματι· τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ πολλαί
σπινθαρίδες πωτώντο, σέλας δ' εἰς οὐρανὸν ἵκεν...
παῖσαν δὲ Κρίσῃν κάτεχεν σέλας...(441-445)

(...looking like a star in the middle of the day; From him many sparks flew, and his brightness went up to heaven...his brightness filled all of Krisa...)

As Athanassakis argues, this kind of bright, divine light is a sign of extreme masculinity.⁵⁸

The light which radiates out from Apollo seems to represent the surging divine *menos* inside him. Both types of poetic energy—that of the Muses and that from Apollo—are necessary for Hesiod to compose the epic, and Hesiod himself provides the Apollonian

⁵⁷ Cf. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 87.

⁵⁸ *The Homeric Hymns* trans. Athanassakis, 76.

element. He uses his laurel staff to order the Muses' divine song, channeling it into mortal language and thus bringing it into the mortal world. His staff is what brings their song out of its feminine darkness into the light.

Like Zeus, the inspired poet has an essential feminine element inside his masculine exterior. After ingesting Metis, Zeus assumes the power of procreation and gives birth to Athena out of his head, and the poet likewise exhibits procreative ability and gives birth to the *kosmos* of the poem out of his mouth. Moreover, the actual epic body which the poet produces in the process is also very much like Zeus' body—that is, as a body of speech which penetrates and dominates the minds and memories of its recipients, it has a masculine exterior which surrounds a powerful feminine element. Like the Homeric epics, the *Theogony* is composed in a complex structure of concentric circles, and this basic ring structure is evident not only in the structure of the poem itself but also in the structure of the universe it describes. Hesiod's physical universe is composed in multiple circles, although the overall structure is vertical rather than horizontal in form.⁵⁹ In the *Theogony*, Pandora is not only an example of Zeus' command of *metis*, but she also serves as evidence of the poet's *metis*. The passage about Pandora occurs right in the middle of the poem. Pandora and her “*γαστήρ*” sit inside the belly of the epic just like Metis exists within Zeus, and the poet makes use of her feminine abilities. When the Muses inspire a poet, they breathe some of their own natural feminine cunning into the poet's “*γαστήρ*” while giving him their divine *menos*. He shapes the Muses' song into a communicable *kosmos* using his own masculinity and thus produces the epic body. Like Zeus, he uses *metis* to make his epic song especially

⁵⁹ Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought*, 38-45. For the various cosmic circles which Hesiod suggests in the prologue to the *Theogony*, see also Arthur, “Poetics and the Circles of Order in the *Theogony* Prooemium.”

persuasive.⁶⁰ Within the context of epic commentary which Hesiod offers in the *Theogony*, then, Pandora actually serves as the poet's micro-commentary about ekphrasis.⁶¹

Pandora as Seductive Micro-Kosmos and Commentary on Ekphrasis

According to Hesiod, Hephaistos fashions Pandora out of “γαῖα” (clay, earth) to serve as a punishment for mankind, acting “Κρονίδεω διὰ βουλάς” (572) (through the counsels of Zeus).⁶² The entire *Theogony*, of course, is an elaborate delineation of the physical *kosmos*, so the whole poem is descriptive in nature. The account of Pandora's creation is a particularly vivid passage, however, and Pandora stands out in the epic as a visually alluring example of divine *techne*. In the *Theogony*, the two gods who fashion Pandora, Hephaistos and Athena, are the craftsman-gods who represent the two traditional media for ekphrasis: metalwork and weaving. They themselves are often associated with ekphrastic passages in epic as the creators of the works of *techne* which those ekphrases describe. Like Achilles' shield, Pandora is a “δῶρον” (gift) from the gods, although Hesiod only explicitly calls her this in the *Works and Days* (82). She is not

⁶⁰ For a discussion of lying in early poetry, see, for example, Louise H. Pratt, *Lying and Poetry from Homer to Pindar* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1993). See especially, 110-111: “The paradoxical phrase ‘lies like true things’ would explicitly recognize a principle that operates elsewhere in archaic poetry: namely, that the best artist is one who can confound reality and fantasy, truth and fiction, to create poetic enchantment (thelxis).”

⁶¹ Andrew Sprague Becker also sees a connection between Pandora and ekphrasis, although he does not argue that she serves as a commentary on the device. See A.S. Becker, “Sculpture and Language in Early Greek Ekphrasis: Lessing's Laokoon, Burke's Enquiry, and the Hesiodic Descriptions of Pandora,” *Arethusa* 26, 277-293.

⁶² For views of Hesiod's Pandora see, for example, John D. McLaughlin, “Who is Hesiod's Pandora?” in *Maia* 33, no. 1 (1981), 17-18; Froma I. Zeitlin, “Signifying Difference: The Case for Hesiod's Pandora” in *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 53-86.

named in the *Theogony*, but in the *Works and Days* Hesiod explains the derivation of her name:

ἐν δ' ἄρα φωνήν
 θῆκε θεῶν κῆρυξ, ὀνόμηνε δὲ τήνδε γυναιῖκα
 Πανδώραν, ὅτι πάντες Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες
 δῶρον ἐδώρησαν, πῆμ' ἀνδράσιν ἀλφειστῆσιν. (79-82)

(And the herald of the gods put voice in her, and he named this woman Pandora, because all the gods who hold the Olympian seats gave her as a gift, a scourge for industrious men.)⁶³

Within the *Theogony*, Pandora is similar to the “δῶρα” (103) (gifts) which the Muses grant to singers when they inspire them, so she is connected to epic song in that both are divine gifts to mortal men. Like the “δῶρα θεάων” (gifts of the gods) which the Muses give to singers, Pandora too “ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε” (diverts the mind quickly). Her irresistible appearance, like the beautiful songs of singers, causes men to forget reality and to surrender their mental fortitude. Thus, she resembles the “ψευδέα” which Hermes instills inside her; she herself is “ψεῦδος.” As discussed earlier, the highly visual language of ekphrasis compels its audience to envision an image which only exists in words; ekphrasis is a concentrated exhibition of language which is necessarily “ψεῦδος.”

The passage about Pandora in the *Theogony* is not an ekphrasis in the same way Achilles’ shield or Odysseus’ pin are ekphrases because it does not contain internal narrative, but it pointedly includes language which is closely associated with ekphrasis—most notably with the ekphrasis about Achilles’ shield. The constellation of words and phrases which are associated with ekphrasis—“ἵκελον,” “εἶδος,” “ἔοικα,” “κόσμος,” “θαῦμα,” “θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι,” “δαίδαλα πολλά,” and “δαιδαλέος” as well as the verbs of artistic

⁶³ The Greek here allows for the alternate translation, “...because all the gods who hold the Olympian seats gave her, a scourge for industrious men, a gift.” Many translate the passage thus, but Hesiod hardly makes clear that all the gods bestow gifts on her. She is the gift here, especially since she is a punishment for Prometheus’ gift of fire to mankind and his tricky gift of sacrifice to Zeus.

construction “τεύχειν,” “τιθέναι,” and “ποιεῖν”—which Hesiod uses in his account of Pandora’s production cannot be merely coincidental. The poet deliberately uses this language in describing Pandora in order to establish her as a corporeal presentation of the device. Pandora embodies many of the characteristics of epic ekphrasis, and, as stated earlier, Hesiod uses her to show that ekphrasis is indeed sexually alluring, uterine, emasculating, and, as a feminine element within the masculine body of the poem, a bit of poetic *metis* which serves to accomplish an act of poetic persuasion. In the end, Pandora even embodies that recurring motif of epic ekphrasis, the Labyrinth.

In *Hesiod’s Cosmos*, Jenny Strauss Clay has convincingly argued that the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days* should be read together as complementary poems.⁶⁴ The *Theogony* depicts the divine realm while the *Works and Days* depicts the mortal realm, but the poems represent two halves of the universe and work together to offer a complete picture of the cosmos. Clay focuses on the two accounts of the Prometheus story in her analysis. I agree that this story, which of course deals with the separation of men and gods, functions as an important point of intersection between the two spheres. I also believe the account of Pandora’s creation, which is included as part of both accounts about Prometheus, is a particularly important point of intersection between the divine sphere and the mortal world. I will return to this point later, after showing first of all that the passage about Pandora in the *Theogony* should be read as a statement about ekphrasis. The present discussion focuses on Hesiod’s presentation of Pandora in that poem, but, because the two poems work together to offer an all-encompassing picture of the universe, I will use some material from Hesiod’s description of Pandora in the *Works and Days* in my analysis.

⁶⁴ Jenny Strauss Clay, *Hesiod’s Cosmos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

That Hesiod uses the account of Pandora's creation as a statement about ekphrasis is apparent right from the beginning of the passage. She is created by Hephaistos as a living sculpture. In introducing Pandora, Hesiod says that Hephaistos fabricates “παρθένῳ αἰδοίῃ ἵκελον” (572) (the image of a bashful maiden). It is significant that Hesiod does not say that Hephaistos fashions a maiden but, rather, an “ἵκελον” of a maiden. Hesiod uses this exact language in his description of Pandora's creation in the *Works and Days* at 71. He also describes her as an “εἶδος” (image, vision) in the *Theogony* at 589 and in the *Works and Days* at 64. The word “εἶδος” actually stems from the verb “to see” in Greek, so it necessarily indicates a visual likeness of something else. The word “ἵκελον” also essentially signifies a visual quality, although it stems from the verb “εἰκώ” (to be like, to resemble). It is related to the Greek words “εἰκόλος” (likeness, image) and “εἰκών” (likeness, image). These words are common in ekphrastic passages, often describing the specific embellishments on art. In fact, the Greek term “εἰκόνες” (images) is used as the title for the ekphrastic speeches of rhetoricians such as Philostratos. Hesiod's language in describing Pandora echoes the language Homer uses in introducing the final scene on Achilles' shield, where Homer tells his audience that Hephaistos fashions a dancing floor which is “ἵκελον” (18.591) (a likeness) to one which Daidalos made at Knossos. The word “ἵκελον” is also used in the ekphrastic poem the *Shield of Herakles* at line 198 to describe an image of Athena which Hephaistos embellishes on Herakles' shield. It is used also in that poem at 211 to describe dolphins which seem to swim across the shield and at 243 to describe representations of women standing on the ramparts of a city, who “ζωῶσιν ἵκελαι” (are like living women). It is widely agreed that the *Shield of Herakles* is a direct response to the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield. To be sure, the phrasing which

Hesiod uses to introduce Pandora is perhaps formulaic; such phrasing is not uncommon in archaic Greek literature. Still, it is important that the word “ἵκελον” is remarkably inappropriate for a story about the first woman. If Hesiod is focusing on Pandora only as the first woman, it does not make sense for her to resemble a maiden—something which to this point has not existed. In all likelihood, Hesiod uses this language to emphasize the visual nature of his description and to present Pandora in terms of ekphrasis.

Hesiod’s use of the word “ἵκελον” to describe Pandora not only connects her with the convention of ekphrastic speech but necessarily sets her up as a vision for his own audience. Hesiod positively compels his audience to consider her in visual terms by introducing her in this manner, and the splendor with which Pandora is outfitted in the passage further invites visual inspection. In the more extensive account which Hesiod gives in the *Works and Days*, the poet tells his audience:

Ἥφαιστον δ’ ἐκέλευσε περικλυτὸν ὅττι τάχιστα
 γαῖαν ὕδρι φύρειν, ἐν δ’ ἀνθρώπου δέμεν αὐδὴν
 καὶ σθένος, ἀθανάτης δὲ θεῆς εἰς ὧπα εἰσκειν
 παρθανικῆς καλὸν εἶδος ἐπήρατον· (60-63)

(He ordered the very famous Hephaistos to quickly mix earth with water, and to place human voice and strength in it, and to make the beautiful, alluring form of a maiden, like an immortal goddess in the face.)

In the *Works and Days*, then, Pandora is to be given a face like a goddess. Hesiod’s description here connects Pandora with Helen, who also has a face like a goddess. Interestingly, Hesiod never gives his audience specific information about Pandora’s appearance—the color of her hair or eyes, for example. In this way, she is also like Helen, who is radiantly beautiful but never described by ancient authors in such specific terms. In using Pandora to comment on the power of ekphrasis within epic, Hesiod leaves her appearance open to the imagination of his audience. Every listener is free to

create the ideal mental picture of an alluring woman for himself, which is exactly how ekphrasis works. While its language is quite detailed, it is not so specific that the imagery is concrete. The image created is always elusive and subjective.

In the *Theogony*, Hesiod describes Pandora's production as a punishment for Prometheus' stealing fire from Zeus:

Αὐτίκα δ' ἀντὶ πυρὸς τεύξεν κακὸν ἀνθρώποισιν·
 γαίης γὰρ σύμπλασσε περικλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις
 παρθένω αἰδοίῃ Ἴκελον Κρονίδεω διὰ βουλᾶς·
 ζῶσε δὲ καὶ κόσμησε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη
 ἀργυρέῃ ἐσθῆτι· κατὰ κρήνην δὲ καλύπτειν
 δαιδαλέην χεῖρεσσι κατέσχεδε, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι·
 ἀμφὶ δὲ οἱ στεφάνους νεοδηλέας ἄνθεσι ποίης
 ἱμερτοὺς περίθηκε καρήατι Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη.
 ἀμφὶ δὲ οἱ στεφάνην χρυσέην κεφαλῇφιν ἔθηκε,
 τὴν αὐτὸς ποίησε, περικλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις
 ἀσκήσας παλάμῃσι, χαριζόμενος Διὶ πατρί·
 τῇ δ' ἐνὶ δαίδαλα πολλὰ τετεύχατο, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι,
 κνώδαλ' ὅσ' ἥπειρος δεινὰ τρέφει ἥδ' ἐδάλασσα·
 τῶν ὅ γε πόλλ' ἐνέθηκε--χάρις δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἄητο--
 θαυμασία, ζῶοισιν εἰκότα φωνήεσσιν. (570-584)

(Immediately in place of the fire he constructed an evil for men; for the very famous Lame God fashioned out of Gaia the likeness of a bashful maiden through the counsels of Zeus. The goddess grey-eyed Athena clothed her and ordered her with a shining garment. On her head she hung a cunningly embellished veil, a wonder to behold. Pallas Athena set around her head desire-inducing wreaths of flowers from a fresh meadow. She put on her head a golden crown, the very famous lame smith having wrought it with his hands, delighting the father Zeus. On it he had formed many *daidala*, a wonder to behold, with as many terrible monsters which the land and sea nurture. He set on it many of these—and grace is blown on all of them—marvellous things, like things with living voices.)

Prometheus steals some of Zeus' divine *menos* when he steals fire, so Zeus orders the creation of a being who will drain that force away from men. In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod also explicitly says that Pandora is “ἀντὶ πυρὸς κακόν” (57) (an evil in place of the fire). According to Hesiod's account in the *Theogony*, Pandora is a “δόλος” (589) (trick, snare) for men, and thus is a fitting response to Prometheus' tricks, which are themselves

“δολίαι τέχναι” (tricky forms of *techne*).⁶⁵ Pandora is a crafty form of *techne*—irresistibly beautiful but powerfully emasculating.

In the *Theogony*, Hephaistos fashions Pandora out of “γαῖα” (clay, earth). In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod says that Zeus orders Hephaistos to make Pandora out of “γαῖα” and “ἕδωρ” (61) (earth and water). Page DuBois has pointed out that Hephaistos is a potter in fashioning Pandora from clay and that she is like the jar she holds in *Works and Days*.⁶⁶ She is modeled as a “πίθος,” which is a clay pot used for storing large amounts of household staples. Some Greek “πίθοι” are actually human-sized. As discussed earlier, women’s bodies are often described as containers in Greek art and literature, and Hesiod’s description of Pandora certainly is in keeping with this tendency. As Froma Zeitlin has observed, the Greek medical texts frequently use the image of an upside-down pot to describe the uterus.⁶⁷ Of course, Hesiod does not explicitly say in the *Theogony* that Hephaistos bakes the clay in making Pandora, but Hesiod’s audience may assume that Hephaistos is charged with her production because he is the god of fire. Hephaistos’ divine *menos* shapes the feminine clay into a finished body just as semen bakes feminine raw matter in ancient reproductive theories. In the end, Pandora herself is a feminine manifestation of *techne* and bodily “κόσμος,” just like the woven and wrought forms of *techne* which she wears on her body.

⁶⁵ Hesiod says that Prometheus acts “δολίῃ ἐπὶ τέχνῃ” (with tricky *techne*) at *Theogony* 540, for example.

⁶⁶ DuBois, *Sowing the Body*, 47. “Created by the craftsman god, the earthmaker, Pandora is analogous to earth and to ceramic vase. As Pucci says: ‘The reader would certainly like to know what Hephaistos does with this molded piece of earth, whether he bakes it or animates it without any further manipulation. There is not a word in the text which would enlighten us on this point, and we can only speculate that he probably does bake it.’ The suppression or omission here is interesting. Gold need not be baked to assume a final form, so the other automata created by Hephaistos are not subjected to the baking process. However, the putative life of Pandora would be burnt out of her by a potter’s kiln, so the analogy between her and the vase cannot be made so explicit. The fact presents interesting problems in relation to the oven metaphor...”

⁶⁷ Zeitlin, “Signifying Difference: The Case for Hesiod’s Pandora,” 65.

Pandora's body, like the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield, represents a microcosm of the larger universe which Hesiod delineates in the *Theogony*, which also progresses from “*γαῖα*” to a state of “*κόσμος*.” Hephaistos reproduces in his artistic product the evolution from chaos to “*κόσμος*” which occurs in the larger epic. The noun “*κόσμος*” (order, beauty) and the verb “*κοσμέω*” (to order) only occur in the *Theogony* in the account of Pandora's creation. Hesiod first uses the term at 573, in the passage above, to describe Athena's contribution to Pandora. Athena puts the final touches on Hephaistos' creation, clothing her with beautiful woven garments and “ordering” her into her final alluring appearance. After that passage, Hesiod continues:

Αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δὴ τεῦξε καλὸν κακὸν ἀντ' ἀγαθοῖο,
ἐξάγαγ' ἔνθα περ ἄλλοι ἔσαν θεοὶ ἢ δ' ἄνθρωποι,
κόσμῳ ἀγαλλομένην γλαυκώπιδος ὀβριμοπάτρης.
θαῦμα δ' ἔχ' ἀθανάτους τε θεοὺς θνητοὺς τ' ἀνθρώπους,
ὥς εἶδον δόλον αἰπὺν, ἀμήχανον ἀνθρώποισιν. (585-589)

(But when he had made the beautiful evil—a mixture of evil and good, he lead her to the other gods and men, and she delighted in the *kosmos* from the mighty-fathered grey-eyed goddess. Wonder holds the immortal gods and mortal men, as they look upon her form, a certain trick, irresistible to men.)

Again, Hesiod points specifically to Pandora's bodily *kosmos*, which, as discussed earlier, indicates both her visually ordered state and her extreme beauty.

In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod also points to the *kosmos* of Pandora. In this more extensive account, he says:

Ἥφαιστον δ' ἐκέλευσε περικλυτὸν ὅττι τάχιστα
γαῖαν ὕδρι φύρειν, ἐν δ' ἀνθρώπου θέμεν αἰδὴν
καὶ σθένος, ἀθανάτης δὲ θεῆς εἰς ὧπα εἰσκειν
παρθενικῆς καλὸν εἶδος ἐπήρατον· αὐτὰρ Ἀθήνην
ἔργα διδασκῆσαι, πολυδαίδαλον ἴστον ὑφαίνειν·
καὶ χάριν ἀμφιχέαι κεφαλῇ χρυσέην Ἀφροδίτην
καὶ πόθον ἀργαλέον καὶ γυιοβόρους μελεδῶνας·
ἐν δὲ θέμεν κύνεόν τε νόον καὶ ἐπὶ κλοπὴν ἦθος
Ἑρμείην ἥνωγε, διάκτορον Ἀργεϊφόντην.

Ὡς ἔφαθ', οἳ δ' ἐπίθοντο Διὶ Κρονίωνι ἄνακτι,
 αὐτίκα δ' ἐκ γαίης πλάσσε κλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις
 παρθένῳ αἰδοίῃ ἵκελον Κρονίδεω διὰ βουλᾶς·
 ζῶσε δὲ καὶ κόσμησε θεὰ γλαυκῶπις Ἀθήνη·
 ἀμφὶ δὲ οἱ Χάριτές τε θεαὶ καὶ πότνια Πειθὼ
 ὄρμους χρυσείουσ' ἔδεσαν χροῖ· ἀμφὶ δὲ τήν γε
 ὦραι καλλίκομοι στέφον ἄνθεσι εἰαρινόισιν·
 [πάντα δὲ οἱ χροῖ κόσμον ἐφήρμοσε Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη·]
 ἐν δ' ἄρα οἱ στήθεσσι διάκτορος Ἀργεϊφόντης
 ψεύδεά θ' αἰμυλίουσ' τε λόγους καὶ ἐπικόπον ἦθος
 τεῦξε Διὸς βουλῇσι βαρυκτύπου· ἐν δ' ἄρα φωνήν
 θῆκε θεῶν κῆρυξ, ὀνόμηνε δὲ τήνδε γυναιῖκα
 Πανδώρην, ὅτι πάντες Ὀλύμπια δώματ' ἔχοντες
 δῶρον ἐδώρησαν, πῆμ' ἀνδράσιν ἀλφειστῆσιν.
 (61-83)

(He ordered famous Hephaistos to mix earth with water, and to place in it the voice and strength of a human, and to make her face like that of a goddess, to make her the beautiful, erotic form of a maiden. He ordered Athena to teach her crafts, to weave a cunningly multi-embellished web. And he ordered golden Aphrodite to pour around her head golden grace, painful yearning and limb-gnawing cares. He ordered Hermes, the Guide and the Slayer-of-Argos, to put in her the mind of a bitch and the character of a thief. Thus he spoke, and they obeyed lord Zeus; immediately, the famous Lamé One made from earth the likeness of a bashful maiden, through the counsels of Zeus. The grey-eyed goddess Athena decked her round and ordered her. The goddess-Graces and queenly Persuasion put golden necklaces on her body. The lovely-haired Seasons garlanded her round with fresh flowers. Pallas Athena then fitted *kosmos* on her body everywhere. In her breast, Argeiphontes the Guide formed lies and wheedling words and a thievish character, through the counsels of loud-thundering Zeus. And the herald of the gods put in her voice, and he called this woman Pandora, because all those who dwell on Olympus gave her as a gift, a bane for toiling men.)

Hesiod once again uses the verb “κοσμέω” in describing Athena’s contribution in creating her, so, again, he describes Pandora’s body as an ordered universe.

Like Achilles’ shield, Pandora’s bodily shape reflects the overall shape of the larger epic which surrounds her. The *Theogony*, like the Homeric poems, exhibits circular structure in its overall design, although it does also show linear progression through the course of the poem. Like the *Iliad*, the ring composition is most apparent in

specific episodes such as the prologue, the account of Prometheus' tricks, and the passage about Pandora's creation. Pandora's body reflects the circular structure of the passage in its own circularity and also in its adornment. First, in being fashioned as a pot, Pandora's body is formed as a container constructed from multiple circles of clay. Second, in both the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, Athena "ζῶσε" (girds) Pandora and then "κόσμησε" (orders) her. The verb "ζώννυμι" (to gird, to put around) and the noun "ζώνη" (girdle, belt) suggest circularity. The word "ζώνη" in particular is suggestive of feminine sexuality in general and is sometimes used in Greek to mean "womb."⁶⁸ In the *Theogony*, Athena puts "ἀμφὶ δὲ οἱ στεφάνους νεοθηλέας ἄνθεσι" (576) (wreathes of fresh flowers around her). (In the *Works and Days*, the Horai garland her with flower-wreathes.) The wreathes themselves are circular, of course, and the circular imagery is reinforced by the word "ἀμφὶ" (around). Hephaistos then puts on her head "ἀμφὶ δὲ οἱ στεφάνην χρυσέην" (a golden crown around her). Again, the crown is circular, and its shape is emphasized by the introductory word "ἀμφὶ" (around). In the account in the *Works and Days*, the Charites and Peitho put golden necklaces around her body, further emphasizing the circularity of her adornment. Like the spiralling circles of Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*, Pandora's body and adornment also includes multiple circles. Thus, she not only is a microcosm of the larger epic body in her circular design, but her body, with its similarity to a container and its readily apparent multiple circles, is presented as a sort of vortex within it.

It is worth pointing out here that in the *Works and Days*, when Hesiod describes the opening of Pandora's *pithos*, he says:

⁶⁸ See, for example, Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 608, where the phrase "ἐντὸς ζώνης" (within her girdle) is used for the uterus. Also, the phrase "ὑπὸ ζώνης" (under the girdle) is used to indicate where a woman carries her child: see Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers*, 992.

μούνῃ δ' αὐτόθι Ἑλπίς ἐν ἀρρήκτοισι δόμοισιν
 ἔνδον ἔμεινε πίθου ὑπὸ χεῖλεσιν οὐδὲ θύραζε
 ἐξέπτη· (96-98)

(Only Elpis remained inside under the lip of the pithos in her unbreakable house and did not fly out through the top.)

Hesiod describes Pandora's *pithos* here as “ἀρρήκτος δόμος” (an unbreakable house). Hesiod uses the same adjective to describe Pandora's *pithos* that Homer uses to describe the chains which Hephaistos forges to trap Aphrodite and Ares in the Book Eight of the *Odyssey*. There, Homer tells his audience that Hephaistos makes “δεσμὸν ἀρρήκτους” (8.274-275) (unbreakable chains), and he sets them in a circle on his marriage-bed. Hephaistos' creation in that episode is also a “δῶλος,” and that trap is also closely connected to feminine body. Because Pandora's *pithos* represents her own hollow body, her body is also “ἀρρήκτος,” and she traps her audience just like Hephaistos' chains trap Aphrodite and Ares.

Just as in the Homeric epics, in fashioning Pandora Hephaistos stands for the poet himself. This connection is made readily apparent when he points out in the *Theogony* that Hephaistos blows “χάρις” onto the figures he has made on Pandora's crown, which “ζῶοισιν ἐοικότα φωνήεσσιν” (584) (are like things with living voices). Of course, the Muses blow their own *menos* into Hesiod when they inspire him, and Hesiod in turn produces the poem. Hesiod, like Hephaistos, makes the characters within the poem—his artistic creations—seem alive. Those characters have movement and voice as well, and Hesiod even makes some characters seem especially vigorous when he includes instances of direct speech in the poem. In an oral performance of the epic, the poet or rhapsode would no doubt adapt his voice and tone for the characters as he recited their direct speeches, making the characters and action of the poem vivid for his audience.

Moreover, Hesiod and Hephaistos both create visible forms of technology. Although scholars disagree about the exact date of Hesiod's composition, the poem probably dates to the late eighth century B.C.E., a few decades after the composition of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Hesiod composes, then, when the alphabet is first introduced into Greece. At some point his poems were written down, but it is quite possible that he himself did not know how to read or write. In any case, Hesiod composes in the initial stages of the physicality of poetry; suddenly in the eighth century, the poem becomes a physical body in his universe rather than an ephemeral product of mental activity. Of course, the transition from orality to literacy takes centuries, but Hesiod can imagine the written poem as a physical work of art in his own universe.⁶⁹ Notably, clay pots provide some of the earliest extant examples of writing in the Greek alphabet. It may even be that Hesiod imagines himself operating like Athena, who adorns Pandora's vase-like body with garments which themselves are covered with *daidala*. Artistic embellishments—especially geometric embellishments—might resemble letters to someone encountering them for the first time.

In any case, as an artistic representation of a young woman, Pandora is, as others have recognized, remarkably like the golden attendants in Hephaistos' workshop in Book Eighteen of the *Iliad*, who appear right before the ekphrasis on the shield of Achilles and, as discussed in Chapter One, help to characterize the ekphrasis as a feminine body. Homer says: “ὑπὸ δ’ ἀμφίπολοι ῥύοντο ἄνακτι χεύσεται, ζῶῃσι νεήρισιν εἰοικυῖαι” (18.417-418) (His golden handmaids moved about, subject to their master, likenesses of living

⁶⁹ For a discussion of the transition from oral to written culture, see Peter Bing, *The Well-Read Muse: Present and Past in Callimachus and the Hellenistic Poets* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1988). Bing argues that the important moment for the transition from an oral culture to a literary culture occurs in the Hellenistic Age. Still, there is evidence of written text even in Homer (*Iliad*, 6.168-9).

young women).⁷⁰ The golden attendants have intelligence, strength, voice, and skills which they learned from the gods: “τῆς ἐν μὲν νόος ἐστὶ μετὰ φρεσίν, ἐν δὲ καὶ αὐδὴ καὶ σθένος, ἀθανάτων δὲ θεῶν ἅπο ἔργα ἴσασιν” (18.419-420) (There is intelligence in their breast, and voice and strength, and from the immortal gods they know works). These golden handmaids, themselves sculptures made by Hephaistos which are likenesses of living young women, anticipate the forging of Achilles’ shield, on which Hephaistos also sculpts figures which are “ὥς τε ζῶσι βροτοὶ” (539) (just like living mortals). In his description of Pandora’s creation in the *Works and Days* (60-64), Hesiod specifically recalls the Homeric language, telling his audience that Pandora has “αὐδὴ καὶ σθένος” (61-62) (voice and strength) as well as “νόος” (67) (intelligence). In that account, Athena teaches her to weave “ἔργα” (64) (crafts), so Pandora, like the golden handmaidens, also knows work from the immortal gods.

In the *Iliad*, the golden handmaidens are only one magical creation in Hephaistos’ workshop; there are also automatic tripods and self-motivated bellows. All of these lifelike technical achievements create a sense of awe and wonder which paves the way for the production of the most wondrous creation of all—Achilles’ shield. As discussed earlier, the shield is “θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι” (a wonder to behold). Hesiod’s account of Pandora’s creation in the *Theogony* also alludes to Achilles’ shield in that she is also “θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι.” In adorning Pandora’s body, Athena places a veil on her head: “κατὰ κρητῆν δὲ καλύπτρην δαιδαλέην χεῖρεσσι κατέσχεθε, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι” (574) (She placed with her hands over her head a veil, embellished with *daidala*—a wonder to behold.) The daidalic crown which Hephaistos places on Pandora’s head (581) is also described as “θαῦμα

⁷⁰ It is worth pointing out here that in this passage, Hephaistos holds a *skeptron*.

ἰδέσθαι.” Both the woven garments and the crown are divinely manufactured and, thus, marvels in themselves, but they help make Pandora herself a marvel, just as Hephaistos’ embellishments on the shield of Achilles’ make the shield a wonder to behold.⁷¹

In the Iliadic ekphrasis, the poet’s emphasis is on the step by step production of the images on the shield, and Homer describes each image as Hephaistos creates it. The ekphrasis about Herakles shield in the *Shield*, by contrast, describes a completed work of art, and Vergil’s ekphrasis of the images on Aeneas’ shield, which is also described as a completed work rather than a work in progress, are mentioned as Aeneas looks at them. With the passage about Pandora, Hesiod recalls the Homeric description of Achilles’ shield in that he describes her production as Hephaistos creates her. She too is a work in progress. In fact, Hesiod uses the exact language of the Iliadic ekphrasis. He uses the verbs “τεύχειν” (to construct, to form), “τιθέναι” (to set, to place), and “ποιεῖν” (to make, to bring about). Homer uses these exact three verbs in introducing each scene which Hephaistos creates in the ekphrasis about Achilles’ shield. Thus, it seems that Pandora’s body is being elaborated by Hephaistos and Athena in the manner of Achilles’ shield.

The only other verb Homer uses in introducing the scenes on Achilles’ shield is “ποικίλλειν” (to broider, to elaborate), which introduces the final dancing scene there. As discussed earlier, “ποικίλλειν” and the related adjective “ποικίλος” (many-colored, variegated) are used to describe other things, but these words primarily suggest the multiple colors and intricacies of woven art. As discussed earlier, in introducing the scene with this verb, Homer suggests that Hephaistos’ metalwork is like a woven product and that the dance is similar to a woven product. While Hesiod never uses “ποικίλλειν” or

⁷¹ Homer says, “αἱ γάρ μιν θανάτοιο δυσηχέος ὥδε δυναίμην, νόσφιν ἀποκρύψαι, ὅτε μιν μόρος αἰνὸς ἰκάνοι, ὥς οἱ τεύχεα καλὰ παρέσσειται, οἳά τις αὔτε, ἀνθρώπων πολέων θανυμάσσειται, ὅς κεν ἴδῃται.” (18. 464-467)

“ποικίλος” (many-colored, variegated) in describing Pandora, Hesiod’s description of her certainly suggests that she too could be “ποικίλος.” She is decked out with elaborately woven adornments, including a lovely garment and a veil, both made by Athena herself. Pandora is designed to distract men, and her woven embellishments serve her well in this capacity. In *Works and Days*, Zeus orders Athena to teach Pandora her own crafts: “ἔργα διδασκῆσαι, πολυδαίδαλον ἱστὸν ὑφαίνειν” (65) (to teach her works, to weave a cunningly embellished loom). So, like other women in epic, Pandora’s craft is weaving, and her woven art is embellished with *daidala* just as Pandora herself is embellished by Athena. As discussed earlier, in general in Greek literature and art, women’s woven products stand for their own sexual bodies, and their weaving is often considered sexually motivating. Moreover, Hesiod does use the compound adjective “ποικιλόβουλος” to describe Prometheus. This term means “with a multi-hued mind,” but it carries a metaphorical suggestion of “with a cunning mind” or “wily.” It is closely related to the term “ποικιλόμητις” (of many wiles, with a cunning mind), which is an epithet of Odysseus in the Homeric epics, and also to “πολύμητις” (having much *metis*), an epithet which Odysseus and Hephaistos share. Pandora is Zeus’ answer to Prometheus’ clever tricks and the threatening “τεχνή” which he has accomplished. Thus, Hesiod’s audience may assume that Pandora’s body is “ποικίλος” just as Prometheus’ mind is “ποικίλος.”

Perhaps most strikingly, Pandora, like Achilles’ shield, is decked out with all sorts of *daidala*. The use of the words “δαίδαλέη,” “πολυδαίδαλος,” and “δαίδαλα” in Hesiod’s description of Pandora’s birth is particularly compelling for the present discussion. To some degree, these words are interchangeable with “ποικίλλειν” and “ποικίλος,” although “ποικίλλειν” and “ποικίλος” tend to suggest woven products while the daidalic words tend

to suggest metallic designs. In general, all of these words suggest intricate, clever designs, and, as discussed earlier, Homeric ekphrasis focuses specifically on daidalic art. For example, at the beginning of the ekphrasis in Book 18, Homer says that Hephaistos “ποίηι δὲ πρῶτιστα σάκος μέγα τε στιβαρόν τε πάντοσε δαιδάλλων...” (18.479) (First he made a shield, huge and heavy, embellishing it with *daidala* all around). The finished product has “δαίδαλα πολλὰ” (18.482) (many *daidala*). Odysseus himself describes his gold pin in the *Odyssey* as “δαίδαλον” (19.227) (a daidalic thing). In the *Theogony*, Athena gives Pandora a veil which is “δαίδαλέη” (cunningly embellished with *daidala*). The veil is quite similar to the robe Hera puts on in Book Fourteen of the *Iliad*, which is also covered with “δαίδαλα πολλὰ” (many *daidala*). Hera’s robe—which is also a gift from Athena—contributes to the overall effect of “κόσμος” which Hera’s special toilet produces. Of course, Hera’s embellishment is designed to distract Zeus. As discussed earlier, *daidala* themselves are indeed sexually attractive. In describing Pandora as a body covered with *daidala*, Hesiod suggests to his audience that she is to be viewed as an artistic product which rivals Achilles’ shield. In fact, as Sarah Morris writes, all of the epic passages which describe daidalic art “culminate in the most dazzling epic creature of all, Hesiod’s Pandora.”⁷²

The golden crown which Hephaistos makes for Pandora helps make her particularly stunning for her audience. Like her woven garments, it too is adorned with “δαίδαλα πολλὰ” (581) (many *daidala*).⁷³ These *daidala* in particular are very much like the *daidala* on Achilles’ shield; they too seem to be alive.⁷⁴

⁷² Cf. Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, 230.

⁷³ DuBois also connects the crown of Pandora to the Homeric ekphrasis in Book Eighteen: “Particularly interesting in light of the vase/body analogy is the description of the crown made by Hephaistos, which is placed on Pandora’s head by the craftswoman goddess Athena...To this description compare Hephaistos’

ἀμφὶ δὲ οἱ στεφάνην χρυσέην κεφαλῇφιν ἔθηκε,
 τὴν αὐτὸς ποίησε, περικλυτὸς Ἀμφιγυήεις
 ἀσκήσας παλάμῃσι, χαριζόμενος Διὶ πατρί·
 τῇ δ' ἐνὶ δαίδαλα πολλὰ τετεύχατο, θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι,
 κνώδαλ' ὅσ' ἥπειρος δεινὰ τρέφει ἠδὲ θάλασσα·
 τῶν ὅ γε πόλλ' ἐνέθηκε--χάρις δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἄητο--
 θαυμάσια, ζώοισιν ἐοικότα φωνήεσσιν. (578-584)

(She put on her head a golden crown, the very famous lame smith having wrought it with his hands, delighting the father Zeus. On it he had formed many *daidala*, a wonder to behold, with as many terrible monsters which the land and sea nurture. He set on it many of these—and he blew grace on all of them—marvelous things, like things with living voices.)

Again, Hesiod never launches into an actual ekphrasis in describing the crown, but his description of the elaboration on the crown is nevertheless suggestive of the device. Hesiod says that, “τῶν ὅ γε πόλλ' ἐνέθηκε--χάρις δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσιν ἄητο--θαυμάσια, ζώοισιν ἐοικότα φωνήεσσιν” (He set on it many of these [*daidala*]*—and grace was blown on all—wondrous things, like things with living voices*). In the *Iliad*, Hephaistos orders his bellows to “blow” energy onto his fires, causing the flames to rise high, and, like all of his artistic products, the figures on Achilles’ shield are infused with “*χάρις*.”⁷⁵ In the Hesiodic passage, the air which Hephaistos blows onto the figures seems to bring them to life. Thus, the images on Pandora’s crown have voice, like the images on Achilles’

work on the shield of Achilles in the *Iliad*, which may be likened to a creation myth...Hephaistos’ work in the creation of Pandora’s crown, as on this shield, has a living presence. His metalwork, like his pottery, has a divine energy.” *Sowing the Body*, 46-47.

⁷⁴ Cf. A.S. Brown, “Aphrodite and the Pandora Complex,” *Classical Quarterly* n.s. 47 n. 1 (1997), 26-47.

⁷⁵ 18.468-477.

shield.⁷⁶ In the *Works and Days*, of course, Hermes gives Pandora voice, so Pandora herself is a work of art which, like Hephaistos' figures, has a voice like a living being.⁷⁷

The figures on Pandora's crown are described as "δεινὰ" (terrible). Hesiod describes them as: "κνώδαλ' ὅσ' ἥπειρος δεινὰ τρέφει ἡδὲ θάλασσα" (as many terrible monsters as the land and sea nourish). First, the figures on Pandora's crown are similar to the many monsters in the *Theogony*. Several monsters in the poem are explicitly described as "δεινὰ," including Echidna, Chimaira, and the giant snake which Keto births. Hesiod also describes the monster Typhoeus with the adjective "δεινός" (825, 829).⁷⁸ Like Hephaistos' *daidala*, Typhoeus has voice: "ἄλλοτε μὲν γὰρ φθέγγονθ' ὥς τε θεοῖσι συνιέμεν, ἄλλοτε δ' αὔτε ταύρου ἐριβρύχῳ μένος ἀσχέτον ὅσσαν ἀγαύρον..." (830-832) (At times, they uttered voices so that they came together for the gods, and at times they uttered an unrestrained, proud, masculine power, the voice of a loud-bellowing bull...) Like the images on the crown, which are "θαυμάσια," Typhoeus' voices are "θαύματ' ἀκοῦσαι." (834) (wondrous to hear). The connection between Typhoeus and the monsters on Pandora's crown is illuminated by Hesiod's description of Tartaros, where Typhoeus is imprisoned after his defeat by Zeus. Tartaros is enclosed with a wall of bronze with gates built by Poseidon; Tartaros is surrounded by metal just as the figures on Pandora's crown are surrounded by metal. Thus, Pandora's crown, in a way, is a representation of

⁷⁶ As Heffernan has observed, ekphrasis involves prosopopeia, or the assignment of sound to something which is silent. Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 6-7. "To recall this root meaning is to recognize that besides representational friction and the turning of fixed forms into narrative, ekphrasis entails prosopopeia, or the rhetorical technique of envoicing a silent object. Ekphrasis speaks not only *about* works of art but also *to* and *for* them. In so doing, it stages—within the theater of language itself—a revolution of the image against the word, and particularly the word of Lessing, who decreed that the duty of pictures was to be silent and beautiful (like a woman), leaving expression to poetry."

⁷⁷ The tradition that Daidalos created statues which could breathe and walk about like living beings seems especially appropriate here.

⁷⁸ For a discussion of how the generation of monsters fits into the overall scheme of the *Theogony*, see for example, Jenny Strauss Clay, "The Generation of Monsters in Hesiod," in *Classical Philology* 88, no. 2 (1993), 105-116.

the underworld, which, as discussed earlier, is often associated with femininity in ancient Greek literature.

While Pandora's crown certainly is suggestive of Achilles' shield, it recalls even more strikingly the shield of Herakles. Whereas, with the exception of the scene with the city at war, Achilles' shield in general features scenes which are convivial and celebrate the cyclical nature of everyday life, the shield of Herakles, which to be sure has many scenes which are clearly based on Achilles' shield, features horrible demons and monsters. For example, the ekphrasis about Herakles' shield, which constitutes the bulk of that poem, begins:

*Χερσί γε μὴν σάκος εἶλε παναίοιον, οὐδέ τις αὐτὸ
οὔτε' ἔρρηξε βαλὼν οὔτ' ἔθλασε, θάῤῥμα ἰδέσθαι.
πᾶν μὲν γὰρ κύκλῳ τιτάνῳ λευκῷ τ' ἐλέφαντι
ἡλέκτρῳ θ' ὑπολαμπές ἔην χρυσῷ τε φαεινῷ
[λαμπόμενον, κυάνου δὲ διὰ πτύχες ἡλήλαντο].
ἐν μέσσω δ' ἀδάμαντος ἔην Φόβος οὐ τι φατειός,
ἔμπαλιν ὅσσοισιν πυρὶ λαμπομένοισι δεδορκώς·
τοῦ καὶ ὀδόντων μὲν πλήτο στόμα λευκαδεόντων,
δεινῶν, ἀπλήτων, ἐπὶ δὲ βλοσυροῖο μετώπου
δεινὴ Ἔρις πεπότητο κορύσσουσα κλόνον ἀνδρῶν,
σχετλίῃ, ἥ ῥα νόον τε καὶ ἐκ φρένας εἶλετο φωτῶν
οἵτινες ἀντιβίην πόλεμον Διὸς υἱὶ φέροιεν.
[τῶν καὶ ψυχὰι μὲν χθόνα δύνουσ' Ἄϊδος εἴσω
αὐτῶν, ὅστέα δὲ σφι περὶ ῥινοῖο σαπείης
Σειρίου ἀζαλέοιο κελαινῇ πύθεται αἴη.] (139-153)*

(He took up the shining shield in his hands, which no man in thrusting had broken through or damaged—a wonder to behold. For everywhere in circles of white gypsum and ivory and electrum was paler metal shining with brilliant gold, and layers of blue enamel were beaten over them. In the middle Fear carved out of steel, not to be uttered, looked back with burning eyes of fire. And its mouth was filled with white teeth, terrible, huge, and on its grim forehead hovered terrible Strife, rearing the violent movement of battle for men, savage, who robs men of their mind and wits—men who would wage war face to face with Zeus' son. Their souls plunge beneath the earth to Hades, and their bones rot on rotten skin on the black earth, with Sirius parching them.)

It is worth mentioning here that the *Shield of Herakles* also exhibits complex ring composition.⁷⁹ Like Pandora in the *Theogony*, it is set within the concentric circles of the surrounding poem, and, like the passage about Pandora, the ekphrasis itself also exhibits circular design. Thus, the terrible monsters which Hephaistos creates on that shield inhabit the circles of its design just like the terrible figures on Pandora's crown inhabit its golden circle. Also note that the first fifty-four lines of the *Shield of Herakles* are taken from Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*.⁸⁰ Most modern scholars believe that the author of the *Shield of Herakles* is not Hesiod and that the poem is likely a later rhapsodic interpretation of the shield of Achilles although it was widely accepted as Hesiod's in ancient times. As Athanassakis points out, the late-seventh-century to early-sixth-century B.C.E. poet Stesichoros did not question its authorship, and Apollonios Rhodios himself thought that the poem was Hesiodic.⁸¹ If indeed it is by Hesiod, its connection to the *Catalogue of Women* is particularly interesting, given the present examination of ekphrasis as a feminine body within epic. In any case, the author uses the adjective “δεινὰ” in the passage above to describe the horrific images of Fear and Strife, but the term also occurs many times throughout the rest of the ekphrasis. The images on the shield are repeatedly described as “δεινὰ.” If the poem is indeed Hesiod's, it may be that the images on Pandora's crown specifically allude to such images on Herakles' shield, although the reaction of the Myrmidons to the figures on Achilles' shield suggests that those *daidala*, too, may be considered “δεινὰ.”

⁷⁹ Thalmann, *Conventions of Form and Thought in Early Greek Epic Poetry*, 62-64.

⁸⁰ Athanassakis offers a brief but thorough introduction to the in Hesiod, *Theogony, Works and Days, Shield*, 113-121.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

Pandora's crown stands as a representation of her own body, and the fact that the crown is a circular object reinforces that this is so. In fact, the monsters which Hephaistos embellishes on the crown are notably similar to the evils Pandora carries in her body. In the longer account of Pandora's creation in the *Works and Days*, Hesiod offers the following statement about the escaped contents of Pandora's jar:

ἄλλα δὲ μυρία λυγρὰ κατ' ἀνθρώπους ἀλάττηται·
 πλείη μὲν γὰρ γαῖα κακῶν, πλείη δὲ θάλασσα·
 νοῦσοι δ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἐγ' ἡμέρη. αἱ δ' ἐπὶ νυκτὶ
 αὐτόματοι φοιτῶσι κακὰ θνητοῖσι φέρουσαι
 σιγῇ, ἐπεὶ φωνὴν ἐξείλετο μητίετα Ζεὺς (100-101)

(But countless sorrows roam about among men; for the earth is full of evils, and the sea is full of evils. Some plagues fall upon men by day, but others roam about at night as *automata*, bearing evils for men in silence, since Zeus the counselor took away their voice.)

All of the “κνώδαλα δεινὰ” which exist along the earth and sea are featured on Pandora's crown, and the evils—which are themselves necessarily “δεινὰ”—which Pandora unleashes upon mankind also come from the earth and sea. The evils which roam about at night are “αὐτόματοι” (self-moving things, automata), just like the golden handmaidens in Hephaistos' workshop in the *Iliad* and just like the animated figures on Pandora's crown, which are “ζῶοισιν ἐοικότα φωνήεσσιν” (like things with living voices).⁸² Hesiod actually draws attention to the similarity between Pandora's body and her crown with the use of the verb “τρέφειν” (to rear, to nurture). Again, Hesiod says that Hephaistos sets on Pandora's crown “κνώδαλ' ὅσ' ἥπειρος δεινὰ τρέφει ἠδὲ θάλασσα” (as many terrible monsters as the earth and sea nurture). The verb is used primarily for the nurturing of

⁸² Cf. Clay, *Hesiod's Cosmos*, 120-121: “Hesiod devotes an equal number of lines to describing her gold diadem, adorned with lifelike images of ‘terrible monsters that the earth and sea nurtured’ (578-84), which again doubles the figure of Woman herself. These lines send us back to the catalogue of monsters at lines 270-336 of the *Theogony*, creatures who constitute a self-enclosed genealogical line, a kind of anti-cosmos in which the evolutionary cosmological processes that function elsewhere in the poem do not operate. The fabricated Woman likewise defies categorization.”

children by mothers, and Hesiod uses it several times in the *Theogony* in this way. For example, in his account of the birth of Zeus, Hesiod says:

*πέμψαν δ' ἐς Λύκτον, Κρήτης ἐς πίονα δῆμον
ὀππότ' ἄρ' ὀπλότατον παίδων ἤμελλε τεκέσθαι,
Ζῆνα μέγαν· τὸν μὲν οἱ ἐδέξατο Γαῖα πελώρη
Κρήτη ἐν εὐρείῃ τρεφέμεν ἀπιταλλέμεναί τε. (477-480)*

(They sent her to Lyktos, to the rich land of Crete, when she was about to bear her youngest child, great Zeus, whom huge Gaia would receive on wide Crete to nurture and to foster.)

Here, it is Gaia who nurtures the infant Zeus in her huge body. Of course, as the first woman, Pandora's body also nurtures children.

In general, Pandora is created to be a tempting snare for men, and she is beautifully decked out for her marriage to Epimetheus. Pandora is, in fact, dressed very much like the maidens in the final dancing scene on Achilles' shield, who are also decked out for their imminent marriages. As discussed earlier, Homer describes a scene in which maidens and young men perform a dance, and he likens the “χορός” to one built by Daidalos for Ariadne at Knossos (18.590-606). The passage reads:

*Ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυήεις,
τῷ ἵκελον οἶόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσῷ εὐρείῃ
Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ.
ἔνθα μὲν ἦῖθεοι καὶ παρθένοι ἀλφεσίβοιαι
ὠρχεῦντ', ἀλλήλων ἐπὶ καρπῷ χειρὶς ἔχοντες.
τῶν δ' αἱ μὲν λεπτὰς ὀδόνους ἔχον, οἱ δὲ χιτῶνας
εἴατ' ἐϋνήτους, ἦκα στίλβοντας ἐλαίῳ·
καὶ ῥ' αἱ μὲν καλὰς στεφάνους ἔχον, οἱ δὲ μαχαίρας
εἶχον χρυσείας ἐξ ἀργυρέων τελαμώνων.
οἱ δ' ὅτε μὲν θρέξασκον ἐπισταμένοισι πόδεσσι
ῥεῖα μάλ', ὥς ὅτε τις τροχὸν ἄρμενον ἐν παλάμῃσιν
ἑζόμενος κεραμεὺς πειρήσεται, αἷ κε θέησιν·
ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ θρέξασκον ἐπὶ στίχας ἀλλήλοισι.
πολλὸς δ' ἰμερόεντα χορὸν περιίσταθ' ὅμιλος
τερπόμενοι· δοιὼ δὲ κυβιστητῆρε κατ' αὐτοὺς
μολπῆς ἐξάρχοντες ἐδίνεον κατὰ μέσσους. (590-605)*

(The famous lame smith cunningly fashioned on it a dance floor, just like that which Daidalos fashioned for lovely haired Ariadne in wide Knossos.

There young men and maidens who were courted with oxen danced, holding hands with one another at the wrist. Of these, the maidens had fine linen veils, and the young men wore finely spun tunics, which were shining with olive. And the maidens wore beautiful garlands, and the young men had golden knives which were hanging from their silver belts. Now they ran lightly on skilled feet, as when some potter, sitting, makes trial of his wheel, fitted close in his hands, to see if it runs well. At another time, they ran against one another in rows. And a large crowd stood around the desire-inducing dance, everyone delighting in it, and two tumblers revolved along them, beginning the dance in measures.)

Pandora's lovely veil and "στεφάναι" recall the veils and "καλὰ στεφάναι" (beautiful crowns, garlands) which the maidens in this scene wear. The Homeric simile which compares the circular motion of the dance to the movement which a potter makes with his wheel as he tests it is particularly striking when compared with Hesiod's description of Pandora's production as a clay pot. With the simile, Homer subtly suggests that Hephaistos acts like a potter. As discussed earlier, both Daedalos and Hephaistos are associated with creating surrogates for the feminine body, and the dance itself here is a representation of the feminine body, just like many examples of pottery both from Minoan and early Greek culture. In the Homeric simile, the potter tests his wheel "ἐν παλάμῃσιν" (in his hands). In the *Theogony*, Hephaistos fashions Pandora's circular crown "παλάμῃσιν" (580) (with his hands), just as he molds her body from clay. Homer describes the dance between the young men and women as "ἰμερόεις" (desire-inducing).⁸³ Hesiod uses the related adjective "ἰμερότης" (577) (desire-inducing) to describe the garlands of flowers which adorn Pandora, who is made even more sexually alluring by them. She herself is the picture of something which is "ἰμερόεις."

Pandora, like the dancers in the Homeric ekphrasis, has an internal audience within the *Theogony*. Hesiod says:

⁸³ Again, Hesiod describes the dance of the Muses in the prologue to the *Theogony* as "ἰμερόεις."

θαῦμα δ' ἔχ' ἀθανάτους τε θεοὺς θνητούς τ' ἀνθρώπους,
ὥς εἶδον δόλον αἰπύν, ἀμήχανον ἀνθρώποισιν. (588-589)

(Wonder held both the immortal gods and mortal men when they saw the
lofty snare, irresistible to men.)

Of course, Achilles' shield is itself very much a “θαῦμα” (wonder), and those who look at it are either terrified or, in the case of Achilles and Homer's own audience, delight in it. Homer uses the verb “τέρπειν” in describing Achilles' reaction to the shield, which echoes the reaction of the internal audience watching the dance. Homer also uses “τέρπειν” to describe that audience's reaction to the dance, which is also an example of “θαῦμα.” In the passage about Pandora in the *Works and Days*, Zeus specifically says that he will give a gift to men in return for Prometheus' theft of fire in which all men will delight, and he too uses the verb “τέρπειν.” As discussed earlier, the verb is sexually charged and is often used to describe the effect of a talented singer on his audience, and Hesiod indeed uses it also to describe the effect of the Muses on their audiences. In general, the reaction of Pandora's audience is similar to the reaction of those who view Achilles' shield. She stuns and delights her audience with her loveliness. Moreover, just as the internal audience in the last scene on Achilles' shield informs the reaction of Homer's own audience to the scene and to the ekphrasis in general, so too the internal audience in Hesiod's passage about Pandora helps to shape the reaction of the poem's audience to the spectacle of Pandora. Just as she is a “θαῦμα” to gods and men within the poem, she is also a “θαῦμα” for Hesiod's audience.

As discussed earlier, the young dancers in the Homeric ekphrasis are performing the Labyrinth-dance, which is a coming-of-age ritual which likely represents ritual group marriage. In general, it is a mimetic dance which represents a katabasis into the female

body of the earth; those who enter the Labyrinth face death and are reborn into society as sexually initiated adults. In her capacity as the first woman, Pandora of course represents the origins of marriage and sexuality.⁸⁴ When Epimetheus accepts Pandora, he accepts her as his sexual partner. Again, the *pithos* she holds in the account in the *Works and Days* represents her own body. When she removes the lid from the jar, she is experiencing sexual intercourse for the first time: the lid is her hymen.⁸⁵ In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod uses the term “ἔργα” (64) (works) for the crafts which Athena teaches Pandora, and he thus suggests that Pandora’s own art is sexual in nature and procreative. The term “work” is often used in Greek for sexual intercourse which is meant to produce children, as opposed to recreational sexual activity, which is called “play.”⁸⁶ Also in the *Works and Days*, Zeus orders Athena to teach Pandora “πολυδαίδαλον ἱστὸν ὑφαίνειν” (to weave a cunningly embellished web). Pandora’s weaving stands for her own sexuality, which is attractive and also dangerous.

⁸⁴ Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 155.

⁸⁵ Cf. DuBois, *Sowing the Body*, 59.

⁸⁶ Carson, “Putting Her in Her Place: Woman, Dirt and Desire,” 149. “As he must labor with his wife to produce food, so the Greek husband labors with his wife to produce children, by means of the *πόνος* (‘labor’) or the *ἔργον* (‘work’) or the *κάμνος* (‘toil’) of the sexual act. Thus the Spartans defined the purpose of marriage as ‘for the work of begetting’ (*ἐπὶ τὸ τῆς τεκνώσεως ἔργον*, Plutarch *Comp. Lyc. cum Num.* 4.77). Ancient betrothal formulas specify this *ἔργον* as that of ‘sowing’ (*ἐπὶ παῖδων γνησίων σπόρῳ*, Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 2.23) or ‘ploughing’ (*γνησίων παῖδων ἐπ’ ἀρότρῳ*, Menander, *Perik.* 435), while in comic contexts the verb ‘to hoe’ (*σκαλεῦειν*, or its cognate *σκαλαθύρειν*) is frequently used of sexual intercourse (Aristophanes, *Pax.* 440; *Ekk.* 611). In Homer, the act of love which engenders ‘splendid offspring’ is called ‘love-work’ (*φιλοτήσια ἔργα*, *Od.* 11.246). Aiskhylos refers to the procreation of Epaphos as ‘this work of Zeus, this engendering’ (*Διὸς τόδ’ ἔργον καὶ τόδ’ ἂν γένος*, *Suppl.* 588; cf. 1034-37). When Hippokrates describes the activity of sexual intercourse as an exertion that reduces the flesh by melting, he terms it *πόνος* (*Vict.* 2.58). By means of the *πόνος* of sex, the Greek husband domesticates his wild bride, and, just as he does for his land and the beasts on it, brings to fruition that which would otherwise remain savage and unproductive.” As Anne Carson also states, 143, “Marriage is the means, in the Greek view, whereby a man can control the wild *eros* of women and so impose civilized order on the chaos of nature.”

Pandora actually originates as a earth-goddess, and her name, which basically means “All-Gifts” or “All-Giver,” reflects her original status.⁸⁷ In fact, her name may be used simply as an epithet for Gaia herself.⁸⁸ Essentially, Pandora is a manifestation of the various fertility goddesses of pre-Greek period—Gaia, Demeter, Rhea, the Mountain Mother, the Near Eastern Great Goddess. Most importantly, she resembles the Minoan goddess in whose honor the Labyrinth-dance was performed at Knossos. Like these goddesses, then, she is associated both with the fertility of the earth and also death and the underworld. Pandora’s golden crown, with its many terrible monsters, specifically reveals her chthonic origins.⁸⁹ Page DuBois has linked Hesiod’s presentation of Pandora with his presentation of monsters such as Chimaira, Echidna, and Akhlus, the goddess of the mist which comes over mortal eyes upon death; as she says, Hesiod’s view of the

⁸⁷For a discussion of literary and artistic evidence which points to Pandora’s origins as an earth-goddess, see, for example, Jane E. Harrison, “Pandora’s Box,” in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 20 (1900), 99-114; A. H. Smith, “The Making of Pandora,” in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 11 (1890), 278-283; and Joan O’Brien, “Nammu, Mami, Eve, and Pandora: What’s in a Name?,” in *The Classical Journal* 79, no. 1 (1983), 35-45.

⁸⁸Harrison, “Pandora’s Box,” 105. Harrison, 106, references a scholion on Aristophanes’ *Birds* 971, where the oracle of Bakis orders a ram to be sacrificed to Pandora. The scholion explains that Pandora is the Earth and also offers the descriptive “anesidora.” Liddell and Scott, who also cite the passage in Aristophanes as evidence of “πανδώρας” as an epithet of Earth, also offer “πανδώτειρα” as an epithet of Demeter.

⁸⁹Cf. Smith, “The Making of Pandora,” 283. Also, Patricia A. Marquardt, “Hesiod’s Ambiguous View of Women,” *Classical Philology* 77, no. 4 (1982), 285-287: “Hesiod’s version of Pandora’s creation is depicted on a kylix of approximately the same date: Pandora, half-statue and half-woman, has been modeled by Hephaestus, and Athena is adorning her. Although the depiction alone identifies the figure as Pandora, next to her is written *ΑΙΝΕΣΙΔΟΠΑ* (“She who sends up gifts”), a title befitting an earth-goddess. A few literary references also testify to Pandora’s original role. In Aristophanes’ *Birds* there appears an instruction about sacrificing a white-fleeced lamb to Pandora (971). The scholiast interprets this line as ‘to Pandora, the earth, because she bestows all things necessary to life.’ In an passage in Athenaeus (9.370B), Pandora is specifically associated with the Thargelia, the festival of the first fruits of the earth....That Pandora is being remodeled to accommodate her to the Olympian system becomes transparent in the description of her intricately carved golden crown on which the many beasts (*κνώδαλα*) of land and sea appear (Theog. 581-84)...The association with animals more properly belongs to the goddess of wild nature, the *πότνια θηρῶν*.”

feminine is one of the “malevolent and monstrous.”⁹⁰ Interestingly, DuBois also links Pandora with the monsters represented in the ekphrastic *Shield of Herakles*.

Hesiod is, in all likelihood, aware of Pandora’s identity as an earth-goddess and is using her status as such for his own agenda.⁹¹ Later vases actually show Pandora emerging from the earth as a goddess and testify to the survival of her original divine status.⁹² It is significant that Hesiod only uses “δαίδαλα,” “δαίδαλεος,” and “πολυδαίδαλος” to describe Pandora and her own weaving in his poems.⁹³ As discussed in Chapter One, all of these words are point to the mythical figure of Daidalos, who appears for the first time in the Homeric ekphrasis about Achilles’ shield. Like Hephaistos, the figure of Daidalos is associated with representations of the feminine body. The terms “δαίδαλα,” “δαίδαλεος,” and “πολυδαίδαλος” all signify not only the mythical craftsman who creates statues which come to life but also Knossos and, most importantly, the Labyrinth.

⁹⁰ Page DuBois, “Eros and the Woman,” in *Ramus* 21, no. 1 (1992), 112.

⁹¹ Athanassakis speculates that Hesiod borrows the name from the earth-goddess and may have been attempting to connect the first woman with the chthonic elements which an earth-goddess would necessarily embody. *Theogony, Works and Days, Shield*, 90.

⁹² Gantz, *Early Greek Myth*, 163-164, describes one such vase, Oxford G275, which dates to around 450 B.C.E., in which Pandora, who is named, rising out of the earth to meet Epimetheus, who holds a hammer. One white-ground cup, London D4, dating to 460 B.C.E., calls her “Anesidora,” 155-158. Another vase, CabMed 298, shows two silenoi hitting the enormous head of the goddess with hammers as she emerges out of the earth. The goddess has been interpreted both as Persephone and as Pandora. Gantz, 68. The hammers in these depictions are puzzling. There was a satyr-play entitled either “Pandora” or “The Hammerers,” which is lost. Gantz, 163. It seems that these tools may be related to the clashing shields of the Kouretes in Crete, who were also craftsmen and who helped to engender the fertility of the land by invoking the goddess with their dancing and loud clashing.

⁹³ Cf. Morris, *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, 31-33. Morris argues that Hesiod’s use of these words only in conjunction with Pandora is quite intentional, 32: “The restriction of δαίδαλα in Hesiod’s poems to the creation of Pandora, most splendid and most destructive artifice in all of epic poetry, designed to deceive and ruin mankind, seems deliberate and was not without influence. The artificial maiden inherits from Homer the ‘arming of Hera,’ the assistance of Athena, and the craftsmanship of Hephaistos. Pandora also receives instruction on the loom, πολυδαίδαλον ἴστον, Penelope’s weapon against the suitors and often Helen’s pastime, as when she first appears in the *Iliad*, weaving the substance of the *Iliad* itself (3.125-28). Despite ample opportunities, Hesiod nowhere applies δαίδαλεος to weaponry, except insofar as the assembly of Pandora is an arming scene in feminine garb and a prelude to the ἀπάτη of mankind by the gods. Her combination of qualities—the dazzling and the dangerous—attracted epic epithets that describe quality craftsmanship in Homer but also magic and unpredictable powers. Hesiod’s highly specialized use of δαίδαλεος for the figure of Pandora, bringer of evils to men, suggests that he exploited, in a conscious and sophisticated manner, the connotative functions of such words in hexameter in order to frame her as dangerous.”

Hesiod describes the earth-goddess Pandora with these daidalic words because she herself, with her cavernous *pithos* and her multiple circles of deceptive adornment, is the very embodiment of the Labyrinth.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Hesiod's celebration of the goddess Hekate is also significant here. Hesiod offers a somewhat puzzling hymn to the goddess in the middle of the *Theogony* (411-452), in which he explains that Zeus grants her special honors even though she is a Titan. This hymn follows Hesiod's celebration of the river Styx and introduces the description of Zeus' birth and concealment on Crete, his dealings with Prometheus, and the passage about Pandora. In general in the Greek pantheon, Hekate is a chthonic goddess who is associated with night, the dark spirits of the underworld, and also, like Circe, magic and drugs. She is often represented with three faces, perhaps indicating an original tripartite essence, and she is associated with snakes, dogs, Artemis, Persephone, Demeter, torches, and, in later periods, even the soul. Most scholars trace her origins to Caria. Like most of the later Greek goddesses, Hekate also derives from the powerful earth-goddesses of the pre-Greek period. Hesiod's presentation of her seems to focus on her benevolent nature rather than on her death-related and terrifying qualities. Hesiod's celebration of Hekate includes a specific statement about the assistance she offers to *basileis*:

ἐν τε δίκη βασιλεύσι παρ' αἰδοίοισι καθίζει,
ἐν τ' ἀγορῇ λαοῖσι μεταπρέπει ὅν κ' ἐθέλησιν· (429-430)

(She sits by the side of august *basileis*, and in the assembly the man she favors stands out.)

As Patricia A. Marquardt has noted, "A Portrait of Hekate," in *The American Journal of Philology* 102, no. 3 (1981), 249, the only other such use of the Greek verb ἐθέλειν (to be willing, to have the power to accomplish) in the *Theogony* occurs in conjunction with the Muses, who of course also help *basileis* speak well. Hekate, then, helps *basileis* offer clear judgments just like the Muses. Zeus is of course the *basileus* of the gods from whom all mortal *basileis* descend, so presumably Hekate also helps Zeus in this area. It may be that Hekate also helps Zeus in another capacity as well, as a *kourotrophos*. Again, Hekate's honor as a nurturer of children is traced "ἐξ ἀρχῆς," suggesting that her worship as a *kourotrophos* is very old. She is, in fact, the only goddess with this epithet in the *Theogony*. Hesiod moves right from the passage about Hekate into his description of Zeus' birth and concealment in a cave on Crete. It seems likely that Zeus has given Hekate the continuing honor of being a nurturer of children because he himself was reared with her help. Hesiod, of course, does not mention Hekate as a participant in the hiding of Zeus on Crete, but he is of course composing for an audience which is already largely familiar with the stories he tells. The east frieze of the Hellenistic temple to Hekate at Lagina depicts the birth of Zeus; Hekate carries the stone which is given to Kronos instead of the infant Zeus. See also, Pamela A. Webb, *Hellenistic Architectural Sculpture: Figural Motifs in Western Anatolia and the Aegean Islands* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 36. Thus, she is associated with the cunning attributed to feminine deities such as Gaia and Rhea. It is tempting to link Hekate and Pandora together with the Minoan goddess who was worshipped at Knossos, especially since there is strong evidence that the Minoan language, represented by Linear A, is a form of Carian or Luwian and also because many scholars argue that the word "λαβύρινθος" (labyrinth) comes from the Carian word for double-axe, "labrys." Of course, as discussed previously, Cretan Zeus was connected to the Minoan goddess at Knossos, and Hesiod certainly seems to have knowledge of Cretan myths. Moreover, Hesiod says that Hekate's mother is Asteria, which recalls Asterios, the legendary name of the Minotaur. All of the areas over which Hesiod says Hekate presides represent general areas of human life—sacrifices, law courts, assemblies, fishing, raising livestock, rearing children. Like the scenes on Achilles' shield, these areas would easily figure into religious ritual which focused on fertility and regeneration. Jenny Strauss Clay, in "The Hekate of the Theogony," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 25, no. 1 (1984), 27-38, argues that Hekate occupies a transitional place in the structure of the *Theogony* and serves as an intermediary between gods and men. She focuses on Hekate's role in the formula "ἔκαστι Διός" (by the will of Zeus) and shows that Hekate serves as the "Willing Goddess." Finally, Hekate is associated with a device known as the iynx-wheel or iynx-top, which was apparently used to force the epiphany of spirits and also as a love-charm to create sexual desire.

Hesiod uses Pandora as part of his larger commentary on epic because her status as chthonic-earth-goddess-turned-woman allows him to present ekphrasis easily in anthropomorphic terms. As a convention of oral poetry, ekphrasis is very much part of Hesiod's universe, but, as discussed in the Introduction, ekphrasis is also elusive and difficult to fully define. Hesiod uses Pandora as his personification of ekphrasis because she naturally embodies many of its characteristics. Like Achilles' shield, Pandora is an irresistibly beautiful adornment on the epic body and a microcosm of it. Like Achilles' shield, she is a trap which draws its audience into its labyrinthine structure. Like Achilles' shield, her beautiful appearance is threatening and emasculating. Finally, like Achilles' shield, Pandora is also intimately associated with death.

In the longer account about Pandora in the *Works and Days*, Pandora takes the lid off her *pithos* after she is presented to Epimetheus and he accepts her as his wife. Hesiod tells the story:

αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ δόλον αἰπὺν ἀμήχανον ἐξετέλεσεν,
εἷς Ἐπιμηθεῖα πέμπε πατὴρ κλυτὸν Ἀργεῖφόντην

The device seems to be a circular object on a string; it functioned by spinning in one direction and then back again in the opposite direction. The movement of the wheel recalls the movement of the dancers in the Labyrinth-dance. Of course, it is tempting to link this device to the Labyrinth itself. In any case, the hymn to Hekate in the *Theogony* seems to function as an introductory passage for the account of Pandora's creation. In addition to the aspects of Hekate discussed above, Hekate is also a goddess of crossroads, like Hermes, and, most importantly, of pathways—especially pathways through the dark. Her association with torches probably stems from this function, and her participation in Persephone's descent into the underworld and rebirth out of it certainly involves her power over dark pathways. Perhaps she offers both Zeus and Hesiod assistance in their navigation of and conquest of the mental Labyrinth. See Jenny Strauss Clay, in "The Hecate of the Theogony," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* Volume 25, Number 1 (1984), 28. Deborah Boedeker, "Hecate: A Transfunctional Goddess in the Theogony?," in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* Volume 113 (1983), 84 note 22., Miriam Sexter Robbins, *Whence the Goddesses: A Source Book* (New York: Pergamum Press, 1990), 108-128. Some scholars have attempted to explain Hesiod's special hymn to Hekate by arguing that Hesiod's family must have had a special devotion to the goddess, even perhaps introducing her worship into Boiotia. This explanation seems unlikely to me. See, for example P. Walcot, "Hesiod's Hymns to the Muses, Aphrodite, Styx and Hecate," in *Symbolae Osloenses* Volume 34 (1958), 5-14. For a discussion of the inyx-wheel, see Sarah Iles Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: A Study of Hekate's Roles in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 90-110. Also, for a general study of the inyx in Greek and Roman art and literature, see A.S.F. Gow, "ITΓΞ, POMBOΣ, Rhombus, Turbo," in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 54 (1934), 1-13.

δῶρον ἄγοντα, θεῶν ταχὺν ἄγγελον· οὐδ' Ἐπιμηθεὺς
 ἐφράσαθ' ὥς οἱ ἔειπε Προμηθεὺς μή ποτε δῶρον
 δέξασθαι παρ Ζηνὸς Ὀλυμπίου, ἀλλ' ἀποπέμπειν
 ἐξοπίσω, μή πού τι κακὸν θνητοῖσι γένηται·
 αὐτὰρ ὃ δεξάμενος, ὅτε δὴ κακὸν εἶχ', ἐνόησε.
 Πρὶν μὲν γὰρ ζώεσκον ἐπὶ χθονὶ φύλ' ἀνθρώπων
 νόσφιν ἄτερ τε κακῶν καὶ ἄτερ χαλεποῖο πόνοιο
 νούσων τ' ἀργαλέων, αἱ τ' ἀνδράσι κῆρας ἔδωκαν,
 [αἱψὰ γὰρ ἐν κακότητι βροτοὶ καταγερᾶσκουσιν.]
 ἀλλὰ γυνὴ χεῖρεσσι πίθου μέγα πῶμ' ἀφελούσα
 ἐσκέδασ', ἀνθρώποισι δ' ἐμήσατο κήδεα λυγρὰ.
 μούνη δ' αὐτόθι Ἑλπίς ἐν ἀρρήκτοισι δόμοισιν
 ἔνδον ἔμεινε πίθου ὑπὸ χεῖρεσιν οὐδὲ θύραζε
 ἐξέπτει· πρόσθεν γὰρ ἐπέμβαλε πῶμα πίθοιο
 [αἰγιόχου βουλῇσι Διὸς νεφεληγερέταο].
 ἄλλα δὲ μυρία λυγρὰ κατ' ἀνθρώπους ἀλάττηται·
 πλείη μὲν γὰρ γαῖα κακῶν, πλείη δὲ θάλασσα·
 νοῦσοι δ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἐγ' ἡμέρη. αἱ δ' ἐπὶ νυκτὶ
 αὐτόματοι φοιτῶσι κακὰ θνητοῖσι φέρουσαι
 σιγῇ, ἐπεὶ φωνὴν ἐξείλετο μητίετα Ζεὺς. (82-104)

(But when he had made the lofty, irresistible snare, the father sent the famous Argeiphontes, the swift messenger of the gods, to lead the gift to Epimetheus. But Epimetheus did not heed that Prometheus had told him never to accept a gift from Olympian Zeus, but to send it back lest it become some evil for mortal men. But, upon accepting it, when he held the evil, then he understood. Before this, the race of humans lived on the earth without evils or difficult toil or painful diseases, which give death to men. For straightway mortals age before their time in difficult conditions. But the woman, taking the great lid from her pithos in her hands, scattered its contents, and brought about painful cares for men. Only Hope stayed inside in her strong house under the rim of the pithos and did not fly out. For she slapped back down the lid of the pithos, according to the plans of aegis-bearing, cloud-gathering Zeus. But numberless sorrows roam about among men. For the earth is full of evils, and the sea is full of evils. Some plagues fall upon men by day, but others roam about at night as *automata*, bearing evils for men in silence, since Zeus the counselor took away their voice.)

Again, Pandora's *pithos* represents her own body, and her removal of its lid stands for her sexual intercourse with Epimetheus. It is worth noting that *pithoi* were used not only as storage pots in the Greek world but also as burial vessels. David Johnson has shown that Hesiod's description of the underworld, which is extensive, shows that the underworld is conceived of as an "immense, dark, enclosed space" and that at times the underworld

seems to resemble a *pithos* in form.⁹⁵ Pandora's *pithos* represents not only her own body but also the feminine body of the earth—dark, hollow, and spiralling. Hesiod specifically says that, before Pandora's appearance, men were free from the diseases which gave “*κῆρας*” (death) to men. “*Κῆρ*” (Death) is a dark spirit of Death, born along with “*Μόρος*” (Fate), “*Θάνατος*” (Death), “*Ὕπνος*” (Sleep), and “*Ὀνείριος*” (Dream) through parthenogenesis to Night early in the poem (211-212). It is worth noting that Hesiod says that the evils which Pandora unleashes give diseases and death “*ἀνδράσι*” (to men) rather than “*ἀνθρώποισι*” (to mankind); in using the gendered term, Hesiod shows that Pandora's sexual difference is necessarily important in Pandora's effect. As discussed earlier Pandora's bodily appearance causes men to forget themselves and forfeit mental faculty, and actual entrance into the Labyrinth of her body offers a taste of the extreme experience of forgetting—death. Of course, Epimetheus survives his sexual encounter with Pandora, but he does undergo a ritual death in the process.

Pandora also represents the point of separation of men from the divine sphere, and she thus also offers a potential pathway back to that blessed state of being. In the *Works and Days*, Hesiod says:

Κρύψαντες γὰρ ἔχουσι θεοὶ βίον ἀνθρώποισιν.
 ῥηιδίως γάρ κεν καὶ ἐπ' ἡματι ἐργάσσαιο,
 ὥστε σε κείς ἐνιαυτὸν ἔχειν καὶ ἀεργὸν ἐόντα·
 αἰψά κε πηδάλιον μὲν ὑπὲρ καπνοῦ καταθεῖο,
 ἔργα βοῶν δ' ἀπόλοιτο καὶ ἡμιόνων ταλαεργῶν.
 ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς ἔκρυψε χολωσάμενος φρεσὶ ἧσιν,
 ὅττι μιν ἐξαπάτησε Προμηθεὺς ἀγκυλομήτης·
 τοῦνεκ' ἄρ' ἀνθρώποισιν ἐμήσατο κήδεα λυγρά,
 κρύψε δὲ πῦρ (42-50)

(For the gods, concealing it, keep the means to life from men. For easily otherwise a man could work for a day and have enough for a year with no

⁹⁵ David M. Johnson, “Hesiod's Descriptions of Tartaros (‘Theogony’ 721-819),” in *Phoenix* 53, no. 1/2 (1999), 12-14.

more work. Straightway he could hang up his bridle over his smoking fireplace, forgetting the work of oxen and much-enduring mules. But Zeus, with anger in his heart, concealed it, because Prometheus deceived him with his crooked *metis*. On account of this, Zeus devised painful toils for men, and he concealed fire.)

Hesiod attributes the gods' concealment of sustenance to Zeus' anger at Prometheus. Presumably, before this point, men lived without having to work for their livelihood and lived close to the gods. Pandora of course is Zeus' remedy for men's possession of divine fire, and she—with her powerful “*γαστήρ*”—is sent by him to drain men of their *menos* and their livelihood. After Pandora's appearance, men have to toil for their livelihood. Hesiod's use of “*ἐργα*” and “*ἐργεῖν*” in this passage signifies not only men's toiling for their sustenance but also their sexual activity with women, which of course Pandora introduces to men. The “*βίος*” (life, means to life) which the gods conceal from men is not only food but also the source of their offspring—women's reproductive bodies. As the source of sexuality, human marriage, and reproduction, Pandora is a gateway to the world before her. As discussed earlier in this section, Hesiod includes the account of Pandora's creation in both the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, emphasizing her status as a point of intersection between the divine sphere and the human sphere, respectively.

Moreover, Pandora not only stands for the origins of marriage and human reproduction, but she also stands for the origin of mortal language. Human language begins to develop at birth and is necessarily predicated on separation and difference. As discussed earlier, several scholars have shown that Hesiod distinguishes between divine voice and mortal voice; he uses “*ῥοσα*” to indicate divine sound and “*ἄδῃ*” for mortal voice. In the *Works and Days*, Zeus orders Hermes to instill “*ἄδῃ*” (61) (human voice)

in Pandora. Before Pandora—before men are separated from the divine sphere—there is no difference between “ὄσσα” and “αὐδή.” Of course, Hermes also instills in Pandora “ψευδέα θ’ αἰμυλίου τε λόγους καὶ ἐπικλοπον ἥθος” (78) (falsehoods and coaxing words and a thievish nature).⁹⁶ Pandora, then, suggests a pathway back to the pre-natal sphere, where perfect understanding and wholeness exists. In other words, she hints at access to the Lacanian Real.⁹⁷

Michael Nagler has shown that in the Homeric phrase “δεινὴ θεὸς αὐδήεσσα” (dread, terrible goddess endowed with speech), which Homer uses for Circe and Kalypso, for example, as well as for Eidothea, Leukothea, and the Sirens, a pre-Greek aspect of Greek goddesses is at work which attributes prophetic speech to female figures.⁹⁸ These goddesses derive from a Dawn goddess and are often quite sexual in their interaction with men, especially when helping them. Nagler sees evidence for the same association between female characters and prophecy in the *Theogony*, particularly in the figure of Nēmertēs, one of the daughters of Nereus, whom Hesiod singles out for being “ἄψευδῆς καὶ ἀληθέης.”⁹⁹ It is worth mentioning here that Thetis is one of the Nereids; she too falls in to this group of goddesses. Like the goddesses Nagler uses in his study, Pandora

⁹⁶ She has a thievish nature because she drains men of their masculine life-force and also their livelihood.

⁹⁷ Cf. Paul Allen Miller, “The Minotaur Within: Fire, The Labyrinth, and Strategies of Containment in Aeneid 5 and 6,” *CP* 90 n. 3 (1995), 233.

⁹⁸ Michael N. Nagler, “Dread Goddesses Endowed with Speech,” *Archaeological News* 6, no. 1 (1977), 77-85. Cf. 80: “Underneath the surface meaning ‘god-speaking,’ therefore, the traditional phrase *theos audēessa* refers to the life-saving ability of the goddess to prophesy and perhaps magically to bespeak the hero’s ‘return to light and life.’ On this level the ‘marked’ meaning of *audēessa*, ‘uttering’ or even ‘endowed with (prophetic) speech’ (see Il. 19.407, and Liddell-Scott-Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v.) is surely operative, whether or not it is consciously recognized by the singer or his audience. The juxtaposition with the formula of *theos* and *audēessa* is pregnant with meaning because it alludes to the fact that the potent figure designated by the phrase personifies a precious contact with a realm that is usually inaccessible to the mind of man, or in Homer’s words, which ‘speaks another language’ than our own.” Nagler even suggests that this connection between female figures and prophecy continues well into the Roman period and cites Augustine’s prophetic view of his mother as an example of such late allusions.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 77. Marilyn Arthur also links prophetic power to female figures, particularly Gaia and Metis, in the *Theogony*. “Cultural Strategies in Hesiod’s Theogony: Law, Family, Society.”

occupies a liminal position between goddess and mortal woman and is “*ἄυδῆσσα*.” After all, she has “*αὐδῆ*” from the gods. Moreover, Pandora, as the terrible monsters on her crown demonstrate, is certainly “*δεινή*.”

As discussed earlier, the poet’s status as an intermediary between the divine and mortal spheres suggests to his mortal audience a possibility of complete understanding and access to the divine through the poem. The Muses say to Hesiod when they appear to him in the prologue: “*ἴδμεν ψεύδεα πολλὰ λέγειν ἐτύμοισι ὁμοῖα*” (27) (we know how to say many falsehoods which appear to be the truth). They then breathe into Hesiod “*αὐδῆ*” which is “*θέσπις*” (divine). Thus, Pandora, who resembles the Muses’ “*ψεύδεα πολλὰ*” in that she too has a deceptive appearance, represents the origins of Hesiod’s own poetic language, which, as has been discussed, is limited in its ability to communicate divine truth. Like all pleasing mortal language, it is full of “*ψεύδεα*.” Hesiod’s language is enhanced by its divine origins, however; it carries a suggestion of divine truth. After all, Hesiod says that the Muses give him a “*αὐδῆ θεσπις*” so that he can sing about “*τά τ’ ἐσσόμενα πρό τ’ ἐόντα*” (32) (the things which will be and the things which have been). Again, Hesiod taps into the traditional association between poet and prophet and suggests to his audience that he has access to the divine sphere. Pandora is especially attractive to Hesiod’s audience and furthers the appearance of his connection with the divine sphere.

Finally, Hesiod tells his audience in his description of Epimetheus’ acceptance of Pandora that “*Ἐλπίς*,” which is perhaps best translated as “Expectation,” stays inside Pandora’s *pithos*.¹⁰⁰ *Elpis* is actually a form of desire, just like *eros*.¹⁰¹ In the Hesiodic

¹⁰⁰ Many scholars have attempted to pinpoint just what Hesiod means with the term *Ἐλπίς*, and opinions differ widely. For a variety of views, see for example, Valdis Leinieks, “*Ἐλπίς* in Hesiod, *Works and Days* 96,” *Philologus* 128, No. 1 (1984), 1-8;

account, *elpis* is left at the lip of Pandora's jar because it represents the compelling aspect of the feminine body. Pandora excites *eros*, and she also offers *elpis*, which is the longing for immortality through sex. As Froma Zeitlin has argued, to some degree, *elpis* represents children or the expectation of children following sex.¹⁰² Children carry on a family's name and, in remembering their parent and grandparents, offer a form of immortality. Newborn children also serve as evidence for the cyclical nature of life. Hesiod's *elpis* does suggest children, but it really represents the desire for pre-natal wholeness—in other words, communion with the divine.

Conclusion

Hesiod tells his audience that, when Kronos vomits up the children he has swallowed, the stone which Rhea gives him instead of the infant Zeus comes up first. Hesiod then says:

τὸν μὲν Ζεὺς στήριξε κατὰ χθονὸς εὐρυοδείης
 Πυθοῖ ἐν ἡγαθέῃ γυάλοις ὑπὸ Παρνησσοῖο,
 σῆμ' ἔμεν ἐξοπίσω, θαῦμα θνητοῖσι βροτοῖσιν. (498-500)

(Zeus set it up at Pytho along the wide-pathed earth under the holy hollows of Mount Parnassos, to be a sign from then on, a marvel for mortal men.)

¹⁰¹ Thucydides, in fact, explicitly connects *eros* and *elpis* as forms of erotic motivation. Thucydides thus reports Diodotus' speech in Book 3: ἡ τε ἐλπίς καὶ ὁ ἔρως ἐπὶ παντί, ὁ μὲν ἡγούμενος, ἡ δ' ἐφεπομένη, καὶ ὁ μὲν τὴν ἐπιβουλὴν ἐκφροντίζων, ἡ δὲ τὴν εὐπορίαν τῆς τύχης ὑποτιθεῖσα πλείστα βλάπτουσι, καὶ ὄντα ἀφανῆ κρείσσω ἐστὶ τῶν ὁρωμένων δεινῶν. καὶ ἡ τύχη ἐπ' αὐτοῖς οὐδὲν ἔλασσον συμβάλλεται ἐς τὸ ἐπαίρειν" (3.45.5-6) (Both Elpis and Eros are everywhere, Eros leading, Elpis following. Eros contrives the plan, and Elpis advises about the facility of fortune. Being unseen, they are stronger than seen dangers. And besides these, Fortune contributes no less to motivate men...)

¹⁰² Zeitlin, "Signifying Difference: The Case for Hesiod's Pandora," 64.

Hesiod is referring to the famous *omphalos* at Delphi, which was a sacred stone which marked the center of the earth. As discussed earlier, the word actually means “navel” and is used to describe various things which are located centrally. The *omphalos*-stone was kept in the temple of Apollo and was connected to the oracle. While it is generally assumed that the place-name Delphi is related to the Greek word for dolphin, Athanassakis has proposed that the name actually derives from the Greek word “*δελφύς*,” which means “womb.”¹⁰³ This makes sense; if the center of the earth is characterized as a navel—which marks the belly—surely, considering the general connection between the belly and the uterus, it could also be seen as a womb. Aeschylus reports in the *Eumenides* that the original deities who presided over Delphi were Gaia and Themis, two chthonic earth-goddesses. Certainly a sanctuary which was located at the center of the earth and which was dedicated to an earth-goddess before it was inhabited by Apollo would have some association with the uterus of the earth. Hesiod says that Zeus himself puts the stone there to commemorate his rise to sovereignty. As Hesiod says, the stone is both a “*σημα*” (sign) and a “*θαῦμα*” (wonder, marvel) for mortal men. By marking the center of the earth with his own monument, Zeus symbolically lays claim to the earth’s body, an accomplishment which parallels his appropriation of feminine power in the course of the poem.

In the *Theogony*, Pandora is also a “*θαῦμα*” for mortal men. Her daidalic veil is a “*θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι*,” and her crown depicts many monsters which are themselves “*θauμάσια*.” When the gods and men see Pandora for the first time, “*θαῦμα*” (588) seizes them. The only other beings which are described using this language are Thaumás, the

¹⁰³ *The Homeric Hymns*, 76.

personification of “*θαῦμα*” and Typhoeus’ many voices, which are “*θαύματα*.” Like the stone which Zeus sets up at Delphi, then, Pandora is also a “*σῆμα*.” While the stone which Zeus sets up at Delphi stands as a testament to his usurpation of feminine power and continued sovereignty, Pandora stands as a monument to Hesiod’s skill as a poet. She is the crowning achievement of poetry—art which rivals life, and Hesiod harnesses her feminine power for his own poetic agenda.

Pandora’s irresistible sexual attraction not only strikes wonder in the gods and men who see her within the poem, but, like Achilles’ shield, Pandora’s sexual allure works on Hesiod’s audience outside the universe of the poem. Her irresistible appearance and the multiple circles of her labyrinthine body draw in Hesiod’s audience and render his listeners vulnerable to the rest of his words. Like Metis inside Zeus, Pandora helps Hesiod persuade his epic audience into believing the description of the universe which he has set out. With her, Hesiod shows that ekphrasis in epic is formed as an irresistibly beautiful woman; it is pleasurable and captivating for its audience, but it is a uterine construction of words which traps its audience and drains away mental fortitude, rendering an audience vulnerable to the poet’s language. Though it is emasculating, ekphrasis, like Pandora, holds *elpis*—expectation. Its procreative nature allows for an endless number of individual visual constructions. Its attempt to communicate through both language and image offers the promise of complete understanding, of the truth which is available within the divine sphere, and that possibility is enormously compelling. Pandora, like all epic ekphrasis, stands as Hesiod’s poetic “*σῆμα*,” forever marking the landscape of the text.

Chapter Four: *Purpureae Notae*: the Transformation of Epic Ekphrasis in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

Book Six of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* opens with the story of Minerva and Arachne. Arachne, the daughter of a wool-dyer whose skill as a weaver has won her great fame, offends Minerva by not paying her proper homage. The goddess, disguised as an old woman, visits the girl and admonishes her, but Arachne refuses to yield to the goddess. The two end up weaving elaborate tapestries to determine who is the more accomplished weaver. Ovid describes their tapestries in two ekphrasises. Minerva's tapestry depicts the competition between Neptune and herself for precedence in the city of Athens, the twelve gods enthroned on the Areopagus, as well as several scenes which warn against offending the gods. Arachne's tapestry, by contrast, shows Jove, Neptune, Apollo, and Bacchus involved in deceitful, predatory sexual exploits. Arachne's tapestry is so good that Minerva tears it to shreds and wielding a shuttle, beats the girl until she contemplates suicide. In the end, Minerva turns Arachne into a spider.

Several scholars have recognized that Ovid identifies as an artist with Arachne and that her tapestry stands for the larger poem.¹ While some scholars see a basic connection between the story about Minerva and Arachne and the story of Tereus, Procne and

¹ See, for example, Leo C. Curran, "Transformation and Anti-Augustanism in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," in *Arethusa* Volume 5 Number 1 (1972), 71-91; Eleanor Winsor Leach, "Ekphrasis and the Theme of Artistic Failure in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," in *Ramus* Volume 3, Number 1 (1974), 102-142; Donald Lateiner, "Mythic and Non-Mythic Artists in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," in *Ramus* Volume 13, Number 1 (1984), 1-30; Byron Harries, "The Spinner and the Poet: Arachne in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," in *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* Volume 216, n.s. 36 (1990), 64-82; Michael Vincent, "Between Ovid and Barthes: *Ekphrasis*, Orality, and Textuality in Ovid's 'Arachne,'" *Arethusa* Volume 27, Number 3 (1994), 361-386; Clara Shaw Hardy, "Ekphrasis and the Male Narrator in Ovid's Arachne," in *Helios* Volume 22, Number 2 (1995), 140-148; Patricia B. Salzman-Mitchell, *A Web of Fantasies: Gaze, Image, and Gender in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Columbus, Ohio: The Ohio State University Press, 2005), especially 117-149.

Philomela, which occurs later in Book Six—primarily in that weaving is involved—most do not realize that the two stories should be read together. In the latter story, Procne asks her husband Tereus, the king of Thrace, to bring her sister Philomela for a visit from Athens. Tereus agrees, but, when he sees Philomela for the first time, he is struck by an overwhelming lust for her. After persuading Philomela's father, Pandion of Athens, to entrust his daughter to his care, Tereus takes his sister-in-law to Thrace but imprisons her in a shack in the woods instead of taking her to the palace. There, he violently rapes Philomela and, to prevent her from revealing his crime, cuts out her tongue. After a year of this imprisonment and abuse, Philomela weaves the account of the rape into a tapestry. Ovid does not offer an ekphrasis on Philomela's tapestry, but he does reveal that Philomela's work involves purple signs on a white background. Philomela sends the tapestry to her sister Procne, who unrolls the woven work and instantly understands what has happened to Philomela. The two sisters avenge the outrage against Philomela by killing Tereus' son and only child, Itys, and serving the boy as a meal to Tereus. The myth concludes with Tereus, Procne and Philomela all turning into birds.

With these two stories, Ovid finesses the traditional gendered connection between epic poetry and weaving: men in epic express themselves with language while women express themselves by weaving images into textiles. In another story in the *Metamorphoses*, the two artistic media are explicitly conflated: the daughters of Minyas weave as they tell stories in Book Four (add line numbers). The first daughter relates the tale of Pyramus and Thisbe, the second daughter tells the stories of Mars and Venus and the Sun-God and Leucothoe, and the third daughter offers the story of Salmacis. Like Odysseus in Books Nine through Twelve of the *Odyssey*, the daughters of Minyas serve

as internal narrators for that portion of the poem, and the fact that they are weaving as they narrate makes Ovid's poem itself seem like their woven text.² Indeed, Ovid reminds his audience after the second set of stories that the women are still weaving, thereby emphasizing their intertwining of the plastic and verbal arts. Ovid actually presents the entire *Metamorphoses* as a woven work of art, and he uses the tapestries in Book Six as models for the epic as a whole. Like the images of the Trojan War which Helen weaves into her rich textile in Book Three of the *Iliad*, the images in Arachne's tapestry in particular constitute the subject of the *Metamorphoses*, for Ovid's poem is filled with stories about the deceitful sexual exploits of the gods. Furthermore, many of the scenes which Arachne depicts are narrated or referenced in the larger poem. In using Arachne's and Philomela's work as a statement about his own epic, Ovid deliberately associates his poetry with feminine expression.

Ovid skillfully invokes the traditional association between woven textiles and women's bodies.³ This association is apparent in both stories in Book Six, but it is particularly evident in the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela. Philomela weaves her tapestry as a testament to Tereus' raping her, and the textile stands for her injured body. Her purple signs represent her own blood, corporeal evidence for the rape.⁴ After the initial assault, Ovid compares Philomela to two injured animals:

illa tremit velut agna pavens quae saucia cani

² Gianpiero Rosati shows the Ovid's language in this section carefully reflects the conflation of storytelling and weaving. Gianpiero Rosati, "Weaving the Text in the *Metamorphoses*," in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on the Metamorphoses and its Reception* eds. Philip Hardie, Alessandro Barchiesi, and Stephen Hinds (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999), 240-253, especially 243-246.

³ For a discussion of Ovid's conflation of the body and the overall poetic text of the *Metamorphoses*, see Joseph Farrell, "The Ovidian Corpus: Poetic Body and Poetic Text," in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on the Metamorphoses and its Reception* eds. Philip Hardie, Alessandro Barchiesi, and Stephen Hinds (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999), 127-141.

⁴ Cf. Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 47.

ore excussa lupi nondum sibi tuta videtur,
 utque columba suo madefactis sanguine plumis
 horret adhuc avidosque timet quibus haeserat ungues.
 (6.527-530)

(She trembled like a frightened lamb which, wounded by a wolf and thrown out from its mouth, does not yet think that it is safe. She is like a dove, with its feathers soaked in its own blood, still scared and fearing the greedy talons which had caught it.)

Here, Ovid vividly depicts Philomela as an injured animal covered in its own blood. It is significant that Ovid chooses two animals which are white. Thus we see in these similes purple blood on a white background, just like Philomela's tapestry.

Ovid actually reveals with the stories in Book Six that the convention of ekphrasis generally figures much more prominently in the *Metamorphoses* than in earlier epics.⁵ In general, artists play a significant role in the *Metamorphoses*, and, throughout the poem, Ovid alludes to sculpture, painting, carving, and metalwork.⁶ There are four instances of formal ekphrasis in the poem—that is, description of physical artwork which contains internal narrative. These are the description of the doors of the palace of the Sun in Book Two (2.5-18), the two descriptions of the tapestries at the beginning of Book Six (6.70-128), and the description of the cup which Anius gives to Aeneas in Book Thirteen (13.683-701). As I demonstrate below, however, Ovid also presents his description of the formation of the universe in Book One as an ekphrasis, and, upon close inspection, there are many passages in the text which exhibit the characteristics of ekphrasis I

⁵ Cf. Patricia J. Johnson, *Ovid Before Exile: Art and Punishment in the Metamorphoses* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2008). Johnson's overall argument is similar to my own in that she focuses on the importance of art and the extensive use of the characteristics of ekphrasis in the *Metamorphoses*. She argues that the artists in the poem collectively offer Ovid's commentary on the lack of artistic freedom under Augustus, so she too sees a political dimension to the poem, although her overall reading of the poem is not as politically charged as mine. She does not recognize that the device is gendered, however, and she does not recognize the evolutionary aspect of Ovid's innovation.

⁶ Cf. Joseph B. Solodow, *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 201-231, especially 214-215.

identify in the Introduction. Moreover, Ovid uses the ekphrastic passages to drive home a political point of view, in my reading of the poem. While all of the ekphrasises in the *Metamorphoses* are important in this regard, the two at the beginning of Book Six, when read together with the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela, offer the key to understanding Ovid's larger poetic agenda in the *Metamorphoses*.

In general, the structure of the poem is difficult, but there is a basic linear narrative progression which connects the many episodes. Ovid himself offers his audience this linear form at the beginning of the poem:⁷

In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas
 corpora; di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illa)
 aspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
 ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.⁸ (1.1-4)

(My mind is motivated to tell of bodies changed into new forms; you gods [for you have changed these also] aspire me to new beginnings and draw out a continuous song from the initial origin of the world to my own times.)

The poem is essentially divided into thirds, with the sections roughly focusing on the realm of the gods, the world of humans, and the more specific spheres of Troy and

⁷ For discussions about time and the idea of the continuation of time in the poem, see, for example, Denis Feeney, "Mea Tempora: Patterning of Time in the *Metamorphoses*," in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on the Metamorphoses and its Reception* eds. Philip Hardie, Alessandro Barchiesi, and Stephen Hinds (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999), 13-30; Andrew Zissos and Ingo Gildenhard, "Problems of Time in *Metamorphoses* 2," in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on the Metamorphoses and its Reception* eds. Philip Hardie, Alessandro Barchiesi, and Stephen Hinds (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999), 31-47. Note especially 47: "To answer this, it will be useful to return briefly to the ekphrasis with which the book opens. The description of the palace of the Sun marks a new beginning in Ovid's epic, reprocessing the cosmogony of the first book in ekphrastic terms....Ekphrasis spatializes time, making it stand still, or reordering linear time in a spatial pattern."

⁸ Ovid translates Callimachus' "ἐν ᾧσιμα διηγεκέας," which opened the *Aitia* with "carmen perpetuum." Cited in K. Sara Meyers, *Ovid's Causes: Cosmogony and Aetiology in the Metamorphoses* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994), 2. Cf. Peter E. Knox, *Ovid's Metamorphoses and the Traditions of Augustan Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1986), 9-10. Stephen M. Wheeler, in *A Discourse of Wonders: Audience and Performance in Ovid's Metamorphoses* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 8-10, argues that Ovid's opening lines trick the reader and foreshadow Ovid's manipulation of the very form of epic in the poem.

Rome.⁹ Ovid begins his poem with an account of creation which closely follows Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*. He then offers many and varied mythological stories. There is sometimes recognizable chronology from one story to the next or among a group of stories, for example, but, in general, it is difficult to tease out an overall chronology among the stories. Eventually, Ovid arrives at the story of the Trojan War in Book Twelve. There he narrates the "Little Aeneid" and the early history of Rome. After a statement by Pythagoras in Book Fifteen, he describes the arrival of Aesculapius in Rome, an event which occurred in the early third century B.C.E. when plague broke out in the city.¹⁰ Ovid then skips over hundreds of years of Roman history to land at the apotheosis of Julius Caesar, a relatively recent event for Ovid's original audience. At the end of the poem, Ovid suggests—in a completely over-the-top encomium—that Augustus also will become a god when he dies (15.868-870). In general, the stories are united by the transformations which occur in them. When the poem is read from beginning to end, it seems to be a political cosmogony, a linear progression from chaos to the *kosmos* of Augustan Rome. In this way, it is a glorification of the political metamorphosis of Rome under the Augustan regime and, most importantly, a celebration of the princeps himself.

⁹ Cf. William S. Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 1-5* (Norman, Oklahoma: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 13. Anderson divides the text into "(a) gods and men (1.1-6.423); (b) human beings as victims of their own passions (6.424-11.478); (c) Troy, Rome, and the apotheosis of Roman heroes (11.479-15.870)." E.J. Kenney divides the poem into the gods (1.452-6.420), heroes (6.421-11.193), and "what (on the premises that ancient history began with the Trojan War) may broadly speaking be termed historical figures (11.194-15.744)." Kenney adds a "Prologue (1.5-450: Creation-Deluge-Repeopling of Earth) and an Epilogue (15.745-870): Apotheosis of Julius Caesar." E.J. Kenney, "The Metamorphoses," in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature Volume II Latin Literature* Ed. E.J. Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 434. Brooks Otis divides the poem into fourths: "The Divine Comedy" in Books One and Two, "The Avenging Gods" from Book Three to 4.400, "The Pathos of Love" from 4.401 to Book Eleven, and "Rome and the Deified Ruler" from Book Twelve through Book Fifteen. Otis also demonstrates that each section has a central "epic panel" and that there is a kind of ring composition at work, which he calls "symmetrical progression." Brooks Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 83-85.

¹⁰ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* trans. David Raeburn (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 669.

This traditional reading of the poem focuses on the linear progression of the language of the epic as it is read from beginning to end; this reading is a masculine approach.¹¹

While there is a linear structure to the poem, it is a rather loose structure. As mentioned above, after the account of creation in Book One, there is no clear sense of time or space.¹² The books of the epic themselves are not clearly divided units; often stories bleed from one book into the next. Ovid offers minimal direction for how the individual stories fit together as a whole. Some stories continue on from a previous story, some are embedded within larger stories, and some are presented with multiple, confusing concentric circles of narration. The lack of clear demarcations between the stories is, in fact, remarkably similar to the subtle graduations in the rainbow of colors created by the purple threads in both Minerva's and Arachne's tapestries and the between the scenes on Achilles' shield. As Ovid says regarding that rainbow of colors, the extreme ends of the poem are easily distinguishable, but it is difficult to detect the exact point at which one story ends and the next begins.

¹¹ Cf. Llewelyn Morgan, "Child's Play: Ovid and his Critics," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 93 (2003), 79-80: "Epic is the genre of imperatives, jussive subjunctives, rhetorical questions, all the grammatical armature of power: epic speaks authoritatively, too. Here, as often, the masculine authority claimed by epic corresponds most closely to that possessed by the cultural symbol of the father, especially in his paedagogical role..."

¹² Gianpiero Rosati points out that there is an overall spatial progression from east to west in the poem. Gianpiero Rosati, "Narrative Techniques and Structures in the *Metamorphoses*," in *Brill's Companion to Ovid* ed. Barbara Weiden Boyd (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 281.

Ovid offers a secondary reading to the *Metamorphoses* which is a feminine one.¹³

With this reading, Ovid necessarily manipulates and expands the epic device of ekphrasis. He erodes the boundaries between it and the larger body of the poem, allowing ekphrasis to bleed into the rest of the epic. The result is that his entire poem may be read as a description of a work of woven art with internal narrative—in other words, as one large ekphrasis.¹⁴ Many passages in the poem which are not formal ekphraseis are nonetheless highly suggestive of ekphrasis in that they are extremely descriptive in nature and extraordinarily vivid. In fact, some scholars consider some of these passages to be traditional ekphraseis.¹⁵ Several scholars have noted that the four actual ekphraseis in the poem are unremarkable and that they are simply standard demonstrations of the poetic device, lacking the innovation and complexity of Vergil's ekphraseis, for example.¹⁶ While I certainly think Ovid is inventive when it comes to

¹³ Alison Sharrock has shown that double forms appear frequently in the imagery and language of the *Metamorphoses*, and she points to the figure of Hermaphroditus as a model for Ovid's poetic thought. Alison Sharrock, "Representing Metamorphosis," in *Art and Text in Roman Culture* ed. Jas Elsner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 103-130. Also, cf. Alison Sharrock, "Gender and Sexuality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid* ed. Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 95: "More than any other non-dramatic ancient poetry, male-authored as it overwhelmingly is, Ovid's work gives space to female voice, in however problematic a manner, and to both male and female voices which reflect explicitly on their own gendered identity. It is also driven by a troubled relationship with the purveyors of Roman masculinity—the army, politics, Augustus, epic, and so on. Moreover, the poet—par excellence—of the fluidity of identity clearly provokes a gendered reading."

¹⁴ Ovid actually hints at this feminine reading of the poem in the first lines, where he asks the gods to "deducite" (draw out, unwind) his song. The term is frequently used in Latin poetry, and it suggests both poesis and also spinning and weaving wool. For a discussion of the use of "deducere" by Roman historians, see Stephen M. Wheeler, "Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Universal History," in *Clio and the Poets: Augustan Poetry and the Traditions of Ancient Historiography* eds. D.S. Levene and D.P. Nelis (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 163-189. Cf. G. Karl Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses: An Introduction to the Basic Aspects* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 83: "Ovid's suggestion of his aesthetic creed by means of an ekphrasis provides added justification for using art as a reference point. Within the Augustan culture, Ovid's attitude towards structure and form has parallel tendencies in Pompeian and Roman painting. A wall painting from the 'House of Livia' on the Palatine may serve as a specific example." Galinsky is discussing the story of Minerva and Arachne here.

¹⁵ For example, in his commentary, Anderson includes passages from Book Eight (8.797 ff.) and Book Eleven (11.592 ff.) in his list of ekphraseis. Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 6-10*, 160.

¹⁶ See, for example, Joseph B. Solodow, *The World of the Metamorphoses*, 228-229: "This is precisely what is absent from Ovid. His scenes never break away from their frame and take on a life of their own. All three descriptions are brief and dry, nearly a catalogue, and they never allow us to forget that they are

ekphrasis, it is true that he does not use his formal ekphraseis to show off his poetic ability. Instead, he turns the entire poem into a forum for his visual pageantry. The term “imago” (image)—which occurs three times just in the ekphrasis about Arachne’s tapestry—occurs multiple times in every book of the poem. The use of the word in the ekphrasis itself colors its use in the rest of the poem and makes those other narratives seem ekphrastic. Other words which suggest ekphrasis such as “simulacrum” (likeness), “facies” (appearance), “forma” (form, appearance), “species” (vision, image), and “effigies” (likeness, effigy) are also used with noticeable frequency in the poem,¹⁷ and Ovid often focuses on eyes, the gaze, and vision. Words associated with wonder and marvel such as “mirari” (to wonder at), “miraculum” (miracle, wonder), “admirabilis” (wondrous, marvellous), “stupere” (to be stunned, to be amazed), and “mirus” (astonishing) appear throughout the text, making the poem seem like one large “θαῦμα ἰδεσθαι” (wonder to behold). Approaching the epic as an extended ekphrasis causes the loose linear progression of the poem to fade into the background and Ovid’s striking visual images to stand out. Just as Philomela, deprived of language, communicates with her sister by means of purple signs woven into a white background, Ovid communicates with his audience through the striking impressions of his individual episodes.¹⁸

In the story of Minerva and Arachne, Ovid describes the materials which they use in weaving their competing tapestries:

Illic et Tyrium quae purpura sensit aenum

artifacts.” Solodow does recognize that there are “a large number of stories narrated within the poem, which serve the same purpose of self-reflection” (228).

¹⁷ For an enumeration and discussion of these terms as well as for words associated with marvel and wonder, see William S. Anderson, “Multiple Changes in the Metamorphoses,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 94 (1963), 1-27, especially 2-5.

¹⁸ Cf. Charles Segal, “Philomela’s Web and the Pleasures of the Text: Reader and Violence in the Metamorphoses of Ovid,” in *Modern Critical Theory and Classical Literature* ed. Irene J.F. de Jong and J.P. Sullivan (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill 1994), 266-267.

Textitur et tenues parvi discriminis umbrae;
 Qualis ab imbre solent percussis solibus arcus
 Inficere ingenti longum curvamine caelum;
 In quo diversi niteant cum mille colores,
 Transitus ipse tamen spectantia lumina fallit:
 Usque adeo, quod tangit, idem est; tamen ultima distant.
 Illic et lentum filis inmittitur aurum
 Et vetus in tela deducitur argumentum. (6.61-69)

(There purple which has felt the Tyrian bronze is woven and subtle shades of small difference; just as arcs, with sunbeams struck with rain, tend to dye the long sky in a huge curve. Although a thousand different colors glitter in it, nevertheless the subtle fading leads astray examining eyes, so that which a color touches seems the same, but the extreme colors are distinct. There also stiff gold is worked into the threads, and the ancient subject is drawn out.)

Like Minerva and Arachne, Philomela also uses purple thread to weave her tapestry;

Ovid writes:

Signa deus bis sex acto lustraverat anno;
 quid faciat Philomela? fugam custodia claudit,
 structa rigent solido stabulorum moenia saxo,
 os mutum facti caret indice. grande doloris
 ingenium est, miserisque venit sollertia rebus.
 stamina barbarica suspendit callida tela
 purpureasque notas filis intexuit albis,
 indicium sceleris, perfectaue tradidit uni,
 utque ferat dominae, gestu rogat, illa rogata
 pertulit ad Procnem; nescit quid tradat in illis. (6.570-580)

(The sun-god showed his twelve signs as the year passed. What has Philomela been doing? A guard keeps her from flight, the walls of her quarters built with solid rock stand firm, her mute mouth lacks the ability to tell of the deed. Terrible grief is inventive, and cunning arts come from miserable situations. She suspended a skillful warp on a foreign loom, and she wove purple signs in white threads, a testament of the outrage, and she handed the finished work to her serving woman, asking her with a gesture to take it to the queen. She, once asked, took the work to Procne. She did not know what she carried in that work.)

It is striking that Ovid explicitly specifies that all three female characters use purple thread to create their woven images. Greek and Roman epic often feature purple and red

textiles; these colors signify wealth, luxury, and royalty. Thus, in general, the fact that Minerva, Arachne, and Philomela all use purple thread in their weaving is not remarkable. Closer inspection, however, reveals that the *Metamorphoses* is steeped in the color purple.¹⁹ The words “purpura” (purple) and “purpureus” (colored with purple) occur frequently in the poem, and the related words “Tyrius” (Tyrian, purple), “puniceus” (Punic purple, red), “ostrum” (purple dye), and “murex” (purple shellfish, purple dye) also recur. The words “ruber” (red), “rubeus” (reddish in color), “rubor” (redness, blush), “rutilus” (red, red-orange), “rubicundus” (reddish), “rubescere” (to grow red), and “rubēre” (to be red) further color Ovid’s episodes. Even terms such as “viola” (violet), “crocus” (orange-red), “croceus” (orange-reddish), “rosa” (rose), “roseus” (pink, rosey), “sanguis” (blood), “sanguineus” (bloody), “cruor” (blood, gore), “cruentus” (bloody, gory), “vinum” (wine), “uva” (grape), “racemus” (cluster of grapes), “baca” (berry, fruit), and “pomum” (apple, fruit) signify purple and red hues throughout the poem. Ovid’s color-laded stories in the *Metamorphoses* are particularly visual in nature, and the purple and red colors—often mentioned together with the color white or things which are white—significantly enhance the vivid quality of those narratives.²⁰ The color may appear in the individual stories as a blush on an ivory cheek or as blood on white feathers or even as the rosy sky at dawn, for example. Taken collectively, however, these vivid

¹⁹ Ovid also includes the color gold in many stories, and of course Arachne and Minerva also use gold thread in weaving their tapestries.

²⁰ Some scholars have focused on the colors red and white. See, for example, Phillip L. Thomas, “Red and White: A Roman Color Symbol,” in *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* Volume 122 (1979), 310-316. Thomas argues that the colors are associated primarily with death. Also, Catherine Campbell Rhorer, “Red and White in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: The Mulberry Tree in the Tale of Pyramus and Thisbe,” *Ramus* Volume 9 (1980), 79-88. Rhorer argues that the colors are used primarily to signify sexual situations.

strokes serve as Ovid's own purple thread; they are the purple "notae" which he weaves into the fabric of his epic.²¹

Ovid, then, like Homer and Hesiod, incorporates the feminine body of ekphrasis into his masculine epic. Ovid also appropriates images from earlier epic ekphraseis and assimilates them into his poem. For example, he deploys scenes from Achilles' shield (the sun, moon, stars, cities, marriages, battle, the Labyrinth), Jason's cloak (the Cyclopes, Amphion, the city of Thebes, Aphrodite, Ares, Pelops, Apollo), the wall in Juno's temple in Carthage (scenes from the Trojan War), the doors of the temple of Apollo at Cumae (Daedalus, Theseus and the Labyrinth), and Aeneas' shield (various scenes from Roman history, including the star of the deified Julius Caesar) and cleverly weaves them into his own epic tapestry. Poetry is competitive, and Ovid competes with all the epic poets who come before him.²² Moreover, competition is the focus of many stories in the *Metamorphoses*, especially competition in the political, athletic, sexual, divine, and artistic arenas. In fact, the narrative about the Muses' singing competition with the daughters of Pierus in Book Five, which is related by the Muses themselves to Minerva, leads directly into Ovid's account of the contest between Minerva and Arachne. Ovid's own competition is, of course, primarily with Vergil, who himself uses ekphrasis more extensively than earlier poets, but he also competes with Homer and Hesiod. In his attempt to establish himself as an epic poet, Ovid takes the virtuosic performance which ekphrasis offers—the height of poetic achievement—and applies that intensity to the

²¹ Horace's statement at the beginning of the *Ars Poetica* that, when it comes to poems which feature beginnings which exemplify "gravitas" and which offer ambitious promises, "purpureus...unus et alter adsuitur pannus..." (14-16) (one or two purple patches are sewn into them) comes to mind here. I wonder whether Ovid might be deliberately playing with Horace's statement in the *Metamorphoses* by including the color purple in all of its shades everywhere throughout the text.

²² For a discussion of Ovid's use of material and language from earlier epics, see Alison Keith, "Sources and Genres in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 1-5," in *Brill's Companion to Ovid* ed. Barbara Weiden Boyd (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 235-269.

entire poem. This manipulation of the rhetorical device is, then, a metamorphosis of the genre itself. Ovid privileges the feminine reading of the poem: it is still through the uterine body of ekphrasis that he holds out to his audience the opportunity for truth.

Scholars have long debated the degree of Ovid's participation in the politics of Augustan Rome and how his poetry does or does not fit into that political world.²³ I believe that the *Metamorphoses* is a decidedly political poem.²⁴ In a linear, masculine reading, the poem seems to compete with Vergil's great epic in glorifying Rome and Augustus.²⁵ In reading the poem as a tapestry, however, envisioning the images as visual art and paying close attention to the purple "notae" which Ovid has woven into the poem, the *Metamorphoses* becomes quite subversive.²⁶ In other words, if one understands Ovid's signs as Procne understands Philomela's signs and reads with a feminine eye, one will see an entirely different picture of the politics of the day—one which spotlights (in purple on white) tyranny, rape, and hubris. For a Roman audience, purple is not only the color of wealth and luxury, it is the color of the politically powerful. Senators wear togas

²³ Galinsky, for example, takes Syme to task for writing: "Ovid was a disgrace. He had refused to serve the State...Augustus was vindictive," arguing that there is no primary evidence for such theories. Galinsky, *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 211.

²⁴ For a political reading of Ovid's other poetry, see P.J. Davis, *Ovid and Augustus: A Political Reading of Ovid's Erotic Poems* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Company, Ltd, 2006).

²⁵ Cf. Karl Galinsky, "Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Augustan Cultural Thematics," in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on the Metamorphoses and its Reception* eds. Philip Hardie, Alessandro Barchiesi, and Stephen Hinds (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999), 103-111. Galinsky argues here that Ovid captures the overall importance of change under Augustus.

²⁶ Cf. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, "Time for Augustus: Ovid, Augustus, and the *Fasti*," in *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble* eds. Michael Whitby, Philip Hardie, and Mary Whitby (Oak Park, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1987), 223: "Augustus was too demanding to allow anyone's world to remain insulated from politics. Aggressive and uncompromising, this intruder inserted himself into every corner of Roman life and consciousness, transforming it in the process. Not a street corner could be passed, not a meal served, not a sexual act entered upon, without reminders of his presence. No poet would be unpolitical. Let us not ask what Ovid's purpose was, and whether he meant it (for this drags us into the whole of theoretical quagmire of authorial intention), but how Augustus and other Romans would have received the *Fasti*. It might be a useful exercise to look at the poem through the eyes of the Augustan *delator*, ready to accuse the poet of *maiestas* if his words fail to revere the common saviour. Let us assume that propaganda was not an option but a duty, and ask whether Ovid has succeeded in his duty."

with purple borders on them, and Ovid's contemporary audience no doubt would associate the color with the princeps himself.²⁷

Although the *Metamorphoses* is quite subversive, it does not necessarily follow that Ovid held anti-Augustan political views. He is responding to the Augustan campaign to recast the bloodiness of Rome's recent civil wars and to the careful and deliberate crafting of the public persona of the princeps, which in part depended on art and visual imagery.²⁸ As Denis Feeney writes in his introduction to David Raeburn's translation:

What we do find in Ovid, however, is a highly intelligent contemporary's prolonged observation of the Principate as a gradually evolving institution, together with all the consequences of that evolution for Roman politics, religion, and society in general.²⁹

Ovid witnessed the transformation of Rome with new architectural monuments; altars to new gods; decorative motifs which signified sacrifice (bucrania, wreathes, fillets, knives and axes); representations of the princeps and his family which connected them to Venus and Apollo and which depicted them as models of Roman *pietas*; and new legislation which focused on morality. Ovid recognized how important artistic imagery was in this ongoing act of political persuasion, and he saw how mythological allusion, in particular,

²⁷ In his *Life of Augustus*, Suetonius, for example, tells a story in which Augustus' elegant purple cloak is the subject of ridicule on the battlefield (*Life of Augustus*, 10). Lewis and Short offer several examples of "purpura" being used to indicate the garments which kings and magistrates wear. They list Ovid. *Epistulae ex Ponto* 4.4.25; Vergil. *Georgics*. 2.495; Horace. *Carmina*. 2.18, for example. For the use of the color to indicate the emperor or imperial power, they list, among other examples, Ammianus Marcellinus. *Histories*. 21.9.8; *Codex Theodosianus* 6.24.3; *Codex Justinianus*. 2.8.6 and 2.8.12. Jane DeRose Evans writes that Caesar wore a purple toga in the manner of the ancient Roman kings. Jane DeRose Evans, *The Art of Persuasion: Political Propaganda from Aeneas to Brutus* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 91.

²⁸ For an examination of how architecture and art were used as political propaganda in the Late Republic and the Augustan Age, see Jane DeRose Evans, *The Art of Persuasion*; Paul Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* transl. Alan Shapiro (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1988); Karl Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Jaś Elsner, "Inventing Imperium: Texts and the Propaganda of Monuments in Augustan Rome," in *Art and Text in Roman Culture* ed. Jaś Elsner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 32-53.

²⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses: A New Verse Translation* translated by David Raeburn (London: Penguin, 2004), xviii.

was being exploited for political ends. In this spectacle of political pomp, Ovid realized the potential for ekphrasis in epic. The *Metamorphoses* is both a product of the Augustan conversion of Rome and also a commentary on the artificial and deliberate nature of that political transfiguration—sometimes biting and often humorous. In the end, I believe that it was the underlying political commentary of the *Metamorphoses* which precipitated Ovid's exile.³⁰

This chapter will examine the *Metamorphoses* as Ovid's expansion of ekphrasis from epic microcosm to the epic body itself. The first section will use the story of Minerva and Arachne as Ovid's statement about his own art. The second section will interpret the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela as both a political commentary and a key to reading Ovid's poem. The third section will focus on the opening cosmogony in Book One and on how Ovid presents the body of earth as a circular work of art. The circular surface of the earth forms the landscape for the entire poem in much the same way that Achilles' shield forms the landscape for Hephaistos' *daidala*. Fourth, I will show that the whole poem is presented as an ekphrasis. I will also discuss Ovid's presentation of the Labyrinth, which sits in the middle of the body of the *Metamorphoses*. Like the original Labyrinth at Knossos, Ovid's Labyrinth represents the uterus of the earth. It also stands for the uterine structure of the *Metamorphoses* as a whole. Next, I will examine a few individual stories which involve purple imagery—Ovid's "purpureae notae"—some of which are politically suggestive while others are Ovid's commentary on

³⁰ Cf. Leo Curran, "Transformation and Anti-Augustanism in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," 89: "We can even go beyond this and sense a genuine, if veiled, insolence here. Suppose there are real digs at Augustus that Ovid thought he could get away with on the grounds that a busy head of state would not have the time or interest to give a close reading to a collection of myths? Ovid may have assumed that Augustus would react to his poem much as Agnew reacted to the Spiro Agnew wrist watch: how nice to be thought of! (Augustus did write prose and verse...It may be that some officious toady of literary acumen was the one who got Ovid's real message across to Augustus and Augustus was not amused.) The theory that the *Metamorphoses* was at least part of the true reason for Ovid's exile deserves reconsideration."

his own work. Next, I will look at *Tristia* 1.7 as Ovid's own statement about the *Metamorphoses*. Finally, I will examine the evidence for Ovid's exile and discuss the *Metamorphoses* as the possible cause for it.

Minerva and Arachne

As mentioned above, the story about Minerva and Arachne follows the story which the Muses relate to Minerva about their own contest with the daughters of Pierus.³¹ Minerva emerges from her visit with the Muses saying to herself that she too should punish those who are scornful of her power, and she specifically thinks of Arachne, who is known for her expert weaving. Ovid introduces the encounter between Minerva and Arachne by describing Arachne's background and reputation as a weaver:

non illa loco nec origine gentis
 clara, sed arte fuit. pater huic Colophonius Idmon
 Phocaico bibulas tingeat murice lanas;
 occiderat mater, sed et haec de plebe suoque
 aequa viro fuerat. Lydas tamen illa per urbes
 quaesierat studio nomen memorabile, quamvis
 orta domo parva parvis habitabat Hypaepis.
 huius ut aspicerent opus admirabile, saepe
 deseruere sui nymphae dumeta Timoli,
 deseruere suas nymphae Pactolides undas.
 nec factas solum vestes, spectare iuvabat
 tum quoque cum fierent; tantus decor adfuit arti!
 sive rudem primos lanam glomerabat in orbes,
 seu digitis subigebat opus repetitaque longo
 vellera molliabat nebulas aequantia tractu,
 sive levi teretem versabat pollice fusum,
 seu pingebat acu, scires a Pallade doctam. (6.7-23)

³¹ Minerva, of course, is part of the Capitoline Triad, and she appears on Aeneas' shield as such (8.699). For a discussion of Minerva's role in the *Aeneid*, see Michelle P. Wilhelm, "Minerva in the Aeneid," in *The Two Worlds of the Poet: New Perspectives on Vergil* eds. Robert M. Wilhelm and Howard Jones (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 74-81.

(She was famous not because of where she came from or the origin of her family, but because of her art. Her father Colophonian Idmon dyed thirsty wool with Phocaeen purple. Her mother had died, but she too was low-born, equal to her husband. Nevertheless, Arachne had attained a name for herself through the cities of Lydia because of her memorable craft, although she herself lived in a small town in Hypaepia, raised in a humble home. Often, the nymphs left the thickets of their own Tmolus, the nymphs of the Pactolus left their waves, so that they could watch her wonderous work. Not only was it pleasing to see her finished works, but it was also pleasing to watch as they were made. There was such beauty in her art! Whether she was gathering the raw wool into balls, or she was working the ball under her fingers, softening the fleece until it was like puffy clouds, pulling it repeatedly into a long thread, or she was turning the polished spindle with her delicate thumb, or she was painting her work with her embroidery needle, you would know that she had been taught by Pallas.)

In describing her background, Ovid establishes a connection between himself and Arachne,³² for by the time he composed the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid, like Arachne, was famous for his poetry rather than for his family name or connections. Ovid also goes into detail here about Arachne's weaving, describing the multiple steps to transform the raw wool into a finished tapestry. He thus draws particular attention to the cosmogonic nature of weaving and sets up the parallel between his own poem and the two tapestries.

Minerva visits Arachne disguised as an old woman, and she admonishes her to keep her reputation to the mortal sphere. Arachne reacts angrily and insults the old woman. Minerva then reveals herself, but Arachne refuses to yield to Minerva's excellence, even in the presence of the goddess:

venerantur numina nymphae
Mygdonidesque nurus, sola est non territa virgo;
sed tamen erubit, subitusque invita notavit
ora rubor rursusque evanuit, ut solet aer
purpureus fieri, cum primum Aurora movetur,

³² Ellen Oliensis sees the relationship between Minerva and Arachne as a model for the relationship between Ovid and Augustus, whom she sees as a rival "image-makers." "The Power of Image-Makers: Representation and Revenge in Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' 6 and 'Tristia' 4," *Classical Antiquity* 23 no. 2 (2004), 285-321.

et breve post tempus candescere solis ab ortu. (6.44-49)

(The nymphs and the Lydian women venerate her majesty, but the virgin alone was not afraid. But, she nevertheless grew red, and suddenly uninvited redness marked her face and again it disappeared. Just as the air tends to become purple, just as Aurora dawns, and a short time after grows white from the rising of the sun.)

Arachne seems unintimidated by the angry goddess, yet the involuntary blush which stains her cheeks reveals her strong emotion. In comparing Arachne's face to the gradations of purple colors in the sky at dawn, Ovid connects Arachne's face to her own tapestry. In fact, soon after, Ovid compares the two tapestries to colors in the sky:

Illic et Tyrium quae purpura sensit aenum
 Texitur et tenues parvi discriminis umbrae;
 Qualis ab imbre solent percussis solibus arcus
 Inficere ingenti longum curvamine caelum;
 In quo diversi niteant cum mille colores,
 Transitus ipse tamen spectantia lumina fallit:
 Usque adeo, quod tangit, idem est; tamen ultima distant.
 Illic et lentum filis inmittitur aurum
 Et vetus in tela deducitur argumentum. (6.61-69)

(There purple which has felt the Tyrian bronze is woven and subtle shades of small difference; just as arcs, with sunbeams struck with rain, tend to dye the long sky in a huge curve. Although a thousand different colors glitter in it, nevertheless the subtle fading leads astray examining eyes, so that which a color touches seems the same, but the extreme colors are distinct. There also stiff gold is worked into the threads, and the ancient subject is drawn out.)

Moreover, Ovid's use of "notavit" in line 46 to indicate how the purple blush marks Arachne's face foreshadows the "notae" which will mark Philomela's tapestry later in the book. Arachne's tapestry is, like Philomela's, intimately connected to her own body. Ovid also plays with this traditional connection later in the story, when Minerva, outraged at the quality of Arachne's irreverent art, tears the girl's tapestry to pieces and beats her with a shuttle. Ovid's use of "deducitur" in line 69 recalls his use of the word

in the initial lines of the epic and further connects the tapestries to his poem. Also noteworthy is Ovid's use of "argumentum" in line 69. The term is used elsewhere to indicate the subject of artwork, but it is also a rhetorical word meaning "proof." In using it, Ovid suggests that the tapestries stand as evidence in a rhetorical endeavor. As a "purpurea nota," the story of Minerva and Arachne is indeed part of the larger "argumentum" in the act of political persuasion at work in the poem.

The actual ekphraseis are especially interesting. Minerva is a focus of her own tapestry, for her battle with Neptune for precedence in the city of Athens is the primary subject of her art.³³ Ovid writes:

Cecropia Pallas scopulum Mavortis in arce
pingit et antiquam de terrae nomine litem.
bis sex caelestes medio Iove sedibus altis
augusta gravitate sedent. sua quemque deorum
inscribit facies: Iovis est regalis imago;
stare deum pelagi longoque ferire tridente
aspera saxa facit medioque e vulnere saxi
exsiluisse fretum, quo pignore vindicet urbem;
at sibi dat clipeum, dat acutae cuspidis hastam,
dat galeam capiti, defenditur aegide pectus,
percussamque sua simulat de cuspidе terram
edere cum bacis fetum canentis olivae
mirarique deos; operis Victoria finis. (6.70-82)

(Pallas painted the Areopagus, on the citadel of Cecrops, and that ancient contention about the name of the land. Twice six celestial ones sit on lofty seats with august seriousness with Jove in the middle. She inscribes each one of the gods with his own appearance: the image of Jove is regal. She makes the god of the sea stand and strike with his long trident the jagged rock and from the middle wound of the rock sea water leapt up, by which pledge he lay claim to the city. But she gives to herself a shield, she gives a spear with a sharp point, she gives a helmet for her head, her chest is defended by the aegis, and she constructs the likeness of the land, shaken by the point of her spear, bearing a tree teeming with the gray fruit of the olive, and the gods looking on with wonder. Victory finishes the work.)

³³For a discussion of the significance of Athens for the foundation of Rome, see Ingo Gildenhard and Andrew Zissos, "Ovid's 'Hecale': Deconstructing Athens in the *Metamorphoses*," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 94 (2004), 47-72.

Minerva's tapestry shows the gods an ideal state: they sit on the citadel on lofty thrones and exhibit dignity and majesty. Of course, Minerva depicts herself and the other gods as she wants to be seen, and she spotlights an earlier competition in which she was the victor. Minerva goes on to frame this central contest with four contests in miniature, all of which involve mortals suffering punishment for challenging gods. Thus, Minerva's work is directly relevant to her present situation. She attempts to bring about victory in her competition against Arachne by constructing a representation of her victorious self. In other words, she works to influence the future by means of the messages in her art. In this way, she is very much like Augustus himself.³⁴

As others have observed,³⁵ the general design of Minerva's tapestry echoes Augustan art, which frequently harked back to classical and Hellenistic Neo-Attic art. The Prima Porta Augustus, for example, was modeled on the Doryphoros of Polykeitos. The design and size of the Ara Pacis was based on the classical Altar of the Twelve Gods in the Athenian agora, and its frieze was styled after the Parthenon frieze.³⁶ Minerva's tapestry is balanced and symmetrical. Its subject is sober and instructive. Its Athenian setting betrays Minerva's self-promotion and simultaneously follows the Augustan fondness for Atticism.

Minerva's choice of subject is also interesting in that she focuses on a contest over the name of the city. The myth is Athenian, of course, but it is similar to the contest

³⁴ Minerva herself is a subject of Augustan art. For example, on the Corinth Puteal, which is executed in Neo-Attic style, Minerva, who is holding her helmet, is depicted meeting Apollo, who holds his lyre. Both gods were important to Augustus. Nancy H. Ramage and Andrew Ramage, *The British Museum Concise Introduction to Ancient Rome* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2008), 163-164.

³⁵ For example, see Anderson, *Ovid Metamorphoses Books 6-10*, 160; Curran, "Transformations and Anti-Augustanism in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," 84.

³⁶ Zanker, *The Power of Images*, 160 and Anthony Bonnano, *A Handbook of Roman Art*, ed. Martin Henig (Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1983), 74.

between Romulus and Remus over the name of Rome. Vergil alludes to this myth in Book One of the *Aeneid*, but Livy offers two versions of the story in Book One of his history. According to him, when Romulus and Remus have restored their grandfather Numitor to the throne of Alba Longa, they set out to found their own city. Because they are twins, the matter of who will give his name to the city and rule there cannot be decided by age. Thus, the brothers agree that they will seek signs from the gods and that whoever is given signs will name the city. Remus sees six vultures first, but later Romulus sees twelve. They fight over whether timing or number of birds is more important, and Remus is killed. In another version which Livy says is more common, Remus jumps over a wall which Romulus is building and is killed for the offense. In any case, as the surviving brother, Romulus names the city. Surely Minerva's depiction of the contest to name Athens would make a Roman audience think of Romulus, especially because Minerva's contest occurred during the reign of Cecrops, the legendary first king of Athens. In his early principate, before he became Augustus, Octavian considered taking the name "Romulus" but decided against it because of its associations with kingship.³⁷ Nevertheless, even the title "Augustus" was connected to Romulus and the religious nature of early Roman kingship.³⁸

³⁷ Suetonius, *Life of Augustus* 7.2; Cassius Dio, 53.16.7-8; Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 98.

³⁸ Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome: Volume 1, A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 182-183: "Victory against Antony gave Octavian such dominance over Rome that his official Roman name, Imperator Caesar, seemed no longer adequate to represent his exceptional status: some people proposed that he be called Romulus, as if to style him the second founder of Rome. Others thought that this was too regal a name, as well as carrying the taint of fratricide in the story of Romulus' murder of his brother Remus. There was, besides, the uncomfortable tradition (as we have seen) that Romulus had been murdered by the senators—a story which had particular resonances with the death of Julius Caesar, Octavian's forerunner, adoptive father and closest role-model. An alternative proposal won the day. From 27 B.C., he was officially re-titled Imperator Caesar *Augustus*. Like 'Romulus', the name 'Augustus' indicated that the bearer was uniquely favored by the gods for the service of Rome. The story was told that when Octavian was campaigning for his first consulship in 43 B.C. six vultures appeared, and when he was elected six more appeared; this auspicy, with its echo of the myth of

Minerva's representation on her tapestry of the twelve gods in their thrones is similar to the picture Ovid offers of the gods in Book One. He writes:

hac iter est superis ad magni tecta Tonantis
 regalemque domum. dextra laevaue deorum
 atria nobilium valuis celebrantur apertis.
 plebs habitat diversa locis; hac parte potentes
 caelicolae clarique suos posuere Penates.
 hic locus est quem, si verbis audacia detur,
 haud timeam magni dixisse Palatia caeli.
 ergo ubi marmoreo superi sedere recessu,
 celsior ipse loco sceptroque innixus eburno
 terrificam capitis concussit terque quaterque
 caesariem, cum qua terram mare sidera movit. (l.
 170-180)

(This is the way for the gods to the home of the great Jupiter Tonans and his royal house. The atria of the high-born gods to the right and left, with doors opened wide, are visited with frequency. The plebian element lives in another area. In this part, the powerful and famous heavenly ones place their own Penates. This is the place which—if the boldness for such words be granted—I would not fear to call the Palatine of great heaven. Then, when the gods sat down in their marble chamber, Jupiter himself, higher in his seat and leaning on an ivory sceptre shakes the terrifying hair on his head three times and again, with which he moves the earth, the sea, and the stars.)

Here too the gods sit on high thrones, on either side of Jupiter, and here too Jove and his residence are “regalis” (royal, regal). In this description of the gods’ heavenly abode, Ovid explicitly compares the place to the rich residences on the Palatine Hill, which is humorous (or maybe hybristic) and, also, establishes an early connection in the poem between Augustus and his family and Jupiter and the gods. The fact that Ovid uses “Tonans” as the epithet for Jupiter also is suggestive of Augustus, who dedicated a

Romulus, indicated that he too, like Romulus, would (re)found the city of Rome. This theme was maintained in the invention of the name ‘Augustus’, a word previously known only as an epithet (usually particularly of places) with the meaning ‘consecrated by *augures*.’ As a name it evoked not only the favor of the gods, but also the auspicy that marked the founding of Rome. Yet ‘Augustus’ in no way proclaimed regal status, and as a new name had no unfortunate past. In other respects, however, Romulus figured prominently in the religious imagery of Augustus, who in 16 B.C. rebuilt the temple of Quirinus—a god identified since the late Republic with the deified Romulus.”

temple to Jupiter Tonans in 22 B.C.E.³⁹ Later in Book One, Ovid makes the connection between Augustus and Jupiter even more explicit:

Confremuere omnes studiisque ardentibus ausum
 talia deprecant. sic, cum manus impia saevit,
 sanguine Caesareo Romanum extinguere nomen,
 attonitum tanto subitae terrore ruinae
 humanum genus est totusque perhorruit orbis.
 nec tibi grata minus pietas, Auguste, tuorum est
 quam fuit illa Iovi. qui postquam voce manumque
 murmura compressit, tenuere silentia cuncti.
 (1.199-206)

(Everyone was in an uproar and with great eagerness called for the punishment of the one who dared such things. Just as when the impious band raged to extinguish the name of Rome with the blood of Caesar, the human race was terrified with such fear of sudden ruin and the whole world shuddered. And the piety of your people is welcome to you not less, Augustus, than that of the gods was to Jove. After this, he calmed their murmuring with his voice and with a gesture, and all of them were silent.)

Ovid thus compares the assassination attempt against Augustus to Lycaon's plot against Jupiter. Of course, this passage is reminiscent of Vergil's simile in Book One of the *Aeneid*, where Neptune's calming of the sea is likened to Augustus' calming of the passionate mob. Ovid also connects Augustus and Jupiter in the last book of the poem:

Juppiter arces
 temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis,
 terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque.(15.858-
 860)

(Jupiter rules the heavenly citadels and the realms of the tripartite universe, but earth is under Augustus; each one is father and ruler.)

Ovid's uses the word "arx" in this passage to indicate Jupiter's realm while earth is Augustus'. Minerva's woven picture of Jupiter and the other gods presiding on the Athenian "arx," then, mimics the arrangement of the larger universe. Furthermore, Ovid

³⁹ Anderson, *Ovid Metamorphoses Books 1-5*, 169. According to Anderson, Ovid was the first poet to use this epithet in poetry.

explicitly associates Augustus with Jupiter in Book One and Book Fifteen and Minerva's textile reflects that association..

Moreover, Ovid uses the phrase "augusta gravitate" (with august seriousness) to describe the manner in which the gods preside in Minerva's picture. The adjective "augustus" carries deep religious overtones.⁴⁰ But at a purely etymological level, the word connects the ekphrasis with Augustus. As William Anderson notes, as soon as Augustus received the cognomen in 27 B.C.E., the religious meaning of the adjective began to carry pronounced political overtones.⁴¹ By the time Ovid composed the *Metamorphoses*, then, the adjective was inextricably tied to the principate. In using "augustus" to describe Minerva's tapestry, Ovid overtly links the art with Augustus.

Finally, Minerva finishes her tapestry with a border of olive:

circuit extremas oleis pacalibus oras
(is modus est) operisque sua facit arbore finem.
(6.101-102)

(She surrounds the outside border with peaceful olive [this is her manner]
and she finishes the work with her own tree.)

Ovid calls the olive "pacalis" (peaceful). Minerva carefully constructs an image of herself imbued with dignity and peace, which is quite amusing when one considers that she ends up relentlessly beating Arachne with a shuttle in a fit of anger. According to Anderson, Ovid coined this word and uses it only three times in his entire corpus.⁴² This is the first.

The second appearance of "pacalis" occurs in Book Fifteen (590-595), in the story about Cipus. There, Ovid applies the adjective to laurel instead of olive:

⁴⁰ See, for example, 9.270 to describe Hercules after his apotheosis and 15.145, in the speech of Pythagoras, to describe the oracular mind connected with Delphi.

⁴¹ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 6-10*, 161.

⁴² Ibid., 164.

dixit et extemplo populumque gravemque senatum
 convocat; ante tamen pacali cornua lauro
 velat et aggeribus factis a milite forti
 insistit priscoque deos e more precatus
 ‘est’ ait ‘hic unus, quem vos nisi pellitis urbe,
 rex erit...

(He spoke and immediately called together the people and the grave senate. He covered his horns with peaceful laurel and climbed up on a mound which was constructed by his brave army and he prayed to the gods according to ancient custom: “There is one man here who will be your king unless you drive him from your city...”)

In this story, Cipus, a Roman general returning from a military victory, suddenly finds that horns have sprouted from his head which, according to an augur, means that he is destined to be king of Rome. Cipus, horrified by the idea of becoming king, arranges for his own banishment from the city instead, thus preserving Roman republicanism. The story of Cipus is heavily laden with political significance, especially given Cipus’ similarity to Julius Caesar and Augustus. Ovid’s telling of the story is characteristically comical and far from reverential,⁴³ and, according to Karl Galinsky, the laurel wreath which conceals Cipus’ horns—which themselves indicate his desire to be king—represents Augustus’ own attempt to conceal his role as king.⁴⁴ The story is a stab at Augustus; and, of course, the laurel in the story reminds us of Apollo and the connections between Augustus and Apollo.⁴⁵ The gold shield of honor was inscribed with the words “virtus” (masculine virtue), “pietas” (piety), “clementia” (clemency), and “iustitia” (justice).⁴⁶ On bronze coins dating to 7 B.C.E., Augustus appears with the figure of

⁴³ G. Karl Galinsky, “The Cipus Episode in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (15.565-621),” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 98 (1967), 181-191.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 216-218.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of Augustus’ use of traditional Republican symbols, see Walter Eder, “Augustus and the Power of Tradition,” trans. Karl Galinsky in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* ed. Karl Galinsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 13-32. Eder discusses the shield on 24-25.

Victoria, who holds a cornucopia and a laurel crown over Augustus' head.⁴⁷ Surely Ovid's audience would be reminded of the importance of laurel to Augustus in this story.⁴⁸

The third use of the adjective "pacalis" appears in the *Fasti* at 1.719:

Ipsam nos carmen deducit Pacis ad aram:
 haec erit a mensis fine secunda dies.
 frondibus Actiacis comptos redimita capillos,
 Pax, ades et toto mitis in orbe mane.
 dum desint hostes, desit quoque causa triumphi:
 tu ducibus bello gloria maior eris.
 sola gerat miles, quibus arma coerceat, arma,
 canteturque fera nil nisi pompa tuba.
 horreat Aeneadas et primus et ultimus orbis:
 siqua parum Romam terra timebat, amet.
 tura, sacerdotes, Pacalibus addite flammis,
 albaque perfusa victima fronte cadat;
 utque domus, quae praestat eam, cum pace perennet
 ad pia propensos vota rogate deos.
 Sed iam prima mei pars est exacta laboris,
 cumque suo finem mense libellus habet. (1.709-724)

(The song has led us to the altar of Peace: this day will be the second from the end of the month. Wreathed in Actian laurel fronds on your carefully arranged hair, Peace, remain softly in the whole world. While there are no enemies, while there is no cause for a triumph: you will be a greater glory for our leaders than war. My the soldier bear arms, which restrain against arms, and may the fierce trumpet be blown for nothing except processions. May the world first and last fear the sons of Aeneas: and if there is any land which feared Rome too little, may it love her. Priests, add incense to the Peaceful flames, and may a white victim fall, with its forehead moist with poured liquid; and ask the gods who are inclined towards pious prayers that the house, which stands before her, endure with peace. But now the first part of my labor is done, and this little book has its end with its month.)

⁴⁷ Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 117.

⁴⁸ Cf. Philip Hardie, "The Historian in Ovid," in *Clio and the Poets: Augustan Poetry and the Traditions of Ancient Historiography* eds. D. S. Levene and D. P. Nelis (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 208: "Cipus, hailed by the haruspex as king if once he enters the city, tells his fellow Romans to drive him from the city. The admiring citizens reward him with a crown and a large grant of land. Is Cipus a pure example of a Republican hero, a counter-example to a Julius or an Augustus who takes on the de facto role of a king, or is he a parallel for Julius' refusal of a royal diadem, and for Augustus' ostentatious return of powers to the Republic?"

Here, “pacalis” is used to describe sacrificial fires at the Ara Pacis; again, Ovid uses the adjective in a situation which is clearly suggestive of Augustus. Augustus of course promoted the idea of the “Pax Augusta” (Augustan Peace), a play on “Pax Romana” (Roman Peace), and he fashioned himself as a bringer of peace. His promotion of the “Pax Augusta” is perhaps best seen in his symbolic closing of the doors of the temple of Janus in 29 B.C.E. Ovid’s use of “pacalis” to describe Minerva’s olive is ironic; after all, Minerva beats Arachne over the head when she sees her excellent tapestry. In the story of Minerva and Arachne, Ovid not only offers a model for his own work, but he points to the artificial nature of Augustan imagery. He suggests that Augustus, like Minerva, represents himself only as he wishes to be seen, deliberately avoiding a true image. In the Augustan age, then, the image of Augustus is itself an ekphrasis of sorts.

By contrast, Arachne’s tapestry resembles the *Metamorphoses* in design and subject-matter. As Anderson says, Arachne creates a “swirl” of scenes which are effective because of their “sheer bulk.”⁴⁹ Whereas Minerva’s tapestry features a central narrative which is framed by four scenes warning against offending the gods, Arachne’s tapestry does not exhibit order, symmetry, or balance. Her design references twenty-one stories in which Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo, Bacchus, and Saturn change their form in order to rape goddesses and mortal women. The ekphrasis begins:

Maeonis elusam designat imagine tauri
 Europen; verum taurum, freta vera putares.
 ipsa videbatur terras spectare relictas
 et comites clamare suas tactumque vereri
 adsilientis aquae timidasque reducere plantas.
 (6.103-107)

⁴⁹ Anderson, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses Books 6-10*, 164 and 167. It is interesting, given the spiralling nature of the Labyrinth, that I have encountered several discussions of Arachne’s tapestry which refer to its “swirling” nature or its “swirl” or “whirl” of scenes.

(The Maeonian girl depicted Europa deluded by the image of a bull; you would think it a real bull, a real sea. The girl seemed to look at the land left behind and to call out to her companions and to fear the touch of the water leaping up at her and to pull up her timid feet.)

Ovid thus begins the ekphrasis by describing Arachne's depiction of Europa. This scene creates a recognizable link between the ekphrasis and the rest of his epic. Ovid himself narrates the story of Europa at the end of Book Two, and Arachne's representation closely follows his own telling. In Book Two, he writes:

dixit, et expulsi iamdudum monte iuveni
litora iussa petunt, ubi magni filia regis
ludere virginibus Tyriis comitata solebat.
non bene conveniunt nec in una sede morantur
maiestas et amor: sceptri gravitate relict
ille pater rectorque deum, cui dextra trisulcis
ignibus armata est, qui nutu concutit orbem,
induitur faciem tauri mixtusque iuvenis
mugit et in teneris formosus obambulat herbis. (2.
843-851)

(He spoke, and right away the cattle, driven down from the mountain, seek the shore as ordered, where the daughter of the great king was accustomed to play with her companions, Tyrian maidens. Majesty and love do not mix well and they do not sit on one seat together: with the gravity of the sceptre left behind, the illustrious father and ruler of the gods, whose right hand is armed with the three-pronged lightning, who shakes the world with a nod of his head, put on the image of a bull and, having mixed with the cattle, he moos and his beauty walks up and down on the delicate grass.)

Ovid's earlier narrative about Europa—which also contains purple and white imagery—reveals just how low Jupiter will sink for sexual satisfaction. He emphasizes the inappropriateness of Jupiter's behavior by pointing out that he leaves behind the “gravitas” of his office and that he is “ille pater rectorque deum” (the father and ruler of the gods). The picture of Jupiter mooing as he parades up and down on the grass, trying to attract Europa's attention, is not only quite funny, but also it serves to show how

ridiculous the gods' behavior can be in myth. Because bulls and bucrania were frequent elements of Augustan art, it is possible that Ovid is here appropriating an Augustan symbol and poking fun at it, conveniently cloaking his political punch with myth.

Arachne's tapestry picks up Ovid's earlier picture of Europa playing with her companions on the beach, and the connection between the two representations is apparent in the echoing of and play on certain language. Arachne's "comites" (companions) picks up on Ovid's earlier "comitata" (companions), for example. In the narrative in Book Two, Jupiter dons "facies tauri" (the image, appearance of a bull), and Arachne later weaves the same "imago tauri" into her work. The earlier narrative continues:

quippe color nivis est, quam nec vestigia duri
calcavere perdis nec soluit aquaticus Auster;
colla toris exstant, armis palearia pendent,
cornua parua quidem, sed quae contendere possis
facta manu, puraque magis perlucida gemma;
nullae in fronte minae, nec formidabile lumen:
pacem vultus habet. miratur Agenore nata
quod tam formosus, quod proelia nulla minetur. (2.852-859)

(Indeed, he is the color of snow, which harsh feet have not trampled and wet rains have not melted. The neck of the bull swell with muscles, his dewlaps hang with magnificence. His horns are small, but they are such that you would think them crafted by hand, and they are more translucent than a pure gemstone. There is no threat in his face, no menacing eye: his appearance has peace. The daughter of Agenor marvels at him, because he is so beautiful, because he threatens no attack.)

Ovid's exaggerated description here borders on ekphrasis, and his description of Europa staring in wonder at the bull draws attention to the visual nature of the passage. Disguised as the bull, Jupiter looks harmless and, like Minerva in her own tapestry, is the very picture of "pax" even though he plans to rape the girl. Though technically a living bull, it is here assimilated to a static work of art, as when Ovid says that Jupiter's horns seem

“facta manu” (made by hand) and when Agenor’s daughter gazes at him and marvels. Also, Ovid’s description of Jupiter’s “cornua parva” (small horns) carries sexual suggestions; Ovid may be hinting at Augustus’ own sexual shortcoming.

The final lines of the narrative about Europa in Book Two are also referred to in Arachne’s tapestry:

ausa est quoque regia virgo,
 nescia quem premeret, tergo considerare tauri,
 cum deus a terra siccoque a litore sensim
 falsa pedum primis vestigia ponit in undis;
 inde abit ulterius mediiue per aequora ponti
 fert praedam. pauet haec litusque ablata relictum
 respicit et dextra cornum tenet, altera dorso
 imposita est; tremulae sinuantur flamine
 vestes.(2.867-875)

(The virgin princess even dared to sit on the back of the bull, not knowing whose sides she pressed with her legs, when the god little by little puts the false steps of his feet, away from the land and the dry shore, in the shallowest waves. From there he goes further and then carries his booty out to the middle of the ocean. She shakes with fear, and as she is carried away she looks back at the shore left behind and her right hand holds the bull’s horn, the other rests on his back. Her fluttering dress billowed in the wind.)

When Ovid says that Arachne’s representation of the bull seems to be a “verus taurus,” he plays with this earlier description of the bull’s footsteps as “falsa.” Most importantly, the image Ovid offers in Book Two of Europa looking back at the shore as Jupiter carries her into the ocean appears on Arachne’s tapestry. In the ekphrasis, Ovid says “ipsa videbatur terras spectare relictas” (the girl seemed to look at the land left behind). Thus, Ovid blurs the lines between his ekphrasis and the rest of the epic.

The ekphrasis about Arachne’s tapestry continues:

fecit et Asterien aquila luctante teneri,
 fecit olorinis Ledam recubare sub alis;
 addidit ut satyri celatus imagine pulcrum

Iuppiter implerit gemino Nycteida fetu,
 Amphitryon fuerit cum te, Tirynthia, cepit,
 aureus ut Danaen, Asopida luserit ignis,
 Mnemosynen pastor, varius Deoida serpens.

(She made Asterie, caught in the grip of a struggling eagle, she made Leda, lying under the wings of a swan. She added how Jupiter, concealed with the image of a satyr, impregnates Antiope with twin offspring, how he was Amphitryon when he seized you, Alcmena, how as gold he took Danae, he deceived Aegina as fire, Mnemosyne as a shepherd, Persephone as a mottled serpent.)

Arachne thus enumerates Jupiter's rapes, and, again, several of these figures—or the offspring produced by them after the rapes—appear in the poem proper. Ovid includes Helen, daughter of Leda and Jupiter, 12.5, 13.200-201, 14.669, and 15.232-233. Amphion, the son of Antiope and Jupiter, appears elsewhere in Book Six and also at 15.427. Hercules, the son of Alcmena and Jupiter, appears many times in the second half of the poem. Ovid refers to the shower of gold by which Jupiter raped Danae at 4.611 and at 4.698. Aeacus, the son of Aegina, appears in Book Seven, and the Muses of course appear several times in the poem. The last of Jupiter's rapes which Arachne weaves into her work is perhaps the most offensive because Ovid has just told the story of the rape of Persephone by Hades in Book Five. Thus, Arachne's depiction of Jupiter shows him committing incest at the same time he rapes Persephone.⁵⁰ In any case, most of the rapes in Arachne's tapestry are tied to other stories in the epic.

After depicting Jupiter as a serial rapist, Arachne shows Neptune behaving similarly. Although Augustus' association with Jupiter is much more pronounced, it is

⁵⁰ Cf. Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 6-10*, 166. Some speculations about Ovid's exile involve his discovery of an incestuous relationship between Augustus and his daughter. See John C. Thibault, *The Mystery of Ovid's Exile* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1964), 24-30.

worth noting that Octavian did use the image of Neptune for himself on coinage after the Battle of Actium.⁵¹ Ovid writes:

te quoque mutatum torvo, Neptune, iuvenco
virgine in Aeolia posuit; tu visus Enipeus
gignis Aloidas, aries Bisaltida fallis,
et te flava comas frugum mitissima mater
sensit equum, sensit volucrem crinita colubris
mater equi volucris, sensit delphina Melantho.
omnibus his faciemque suam faciemque locorum
reddidit. (6.115-121)

(She put you on there also, Neptune, changed to a menacing bull for the Aeolian girl, in the form of the river Enipeus you fathered the sons of Aloeus, as a ram you fooled the daughter of Bisaltes, and the most gentle blond-haired mother of grain felt you as a horse, the snake-haired mother of the flying horse felt you when you had wings, Melantho felt you as a dolphin. To all of these people she gave their natural appearance and she created the exact likenesses of the settings.)

Again, Arachne's scenes resonate with the rest of the poem. Ceres and Medusa both appear in the *Metamorphoses*, and Ovid actually includes Neptune's rape of Medusa at the end of Book Four, where Perseus himself tells the story at his wedding feast. Perseus says:

clarissima forma
multorumque fuit spes inuidiosa procorum
illa, neque in tota conspectior ulla capillis
pars fuit; inveni, qui se vidisse referret.
hanc pelagi rector templo vitiasse Mineruae
dicitur; auersa est et castos aegide uultus
nata Iovis textit, neue hoc impune fuisset,
Gorgoneum crinem turpes mutauit in hydros.
nunc quoque, ut attonitos formidine terreat hostes,
pectore in aduerso, quos fecit, sustinet angues.
(4.794-803)

(Her beauty was very famous, and she was the jealously sought hope of many suitors. The most striking part of her was her hair, according to a

⁵¹ Richard Beacham, "The Emperor as Impresario: Producing the Pageantry of Power," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* ed. Karl Galinsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 153-154.

young man who said that he had seen it. It is reported that the ruler of the sea assaulted her in the temple of Minerva. The daughter of Jove turned away and covered her chaste face with the aegis. And so that this did not go unpunished, she changed the Gorgon's hair into horrible snakes. Now also, in order to terrify her enemies, striking them with dread, she keeps the snakes, which she created, on the front of her chest.)

Perseus is answering a question about Medusa's snake-hair in offering this account, and he tells his audience very little about the rape itself, choosing instead to focus on how Medusa ended up with snakes for her hair. Still, it is significant that Minerva turns her head away from the rape which is happening right in front of her inside her temple and hides her face behind the aegis. What she was able to avoid at the time, she can not avoid later when she is forced to look at the rape as she examines Arachne's tapestry in Book Six. There, it is displayed openly, with exact likenesses and settings. Presumably, Medusa's beautiful hair is included in Arachne's picture, and, in fact, the word "crinem" serves as a connecting point between the two representations of the rape. Minerva cannot avert her eyes from the tapestry like she does when witnessing the event itself because she is carefully examining the tapestry for flaws; she is forced to look at the offensive behavior of her fellow gods. Just as she punishes the innocent victim of the rape in Book Four, so too she punishes Arachne for revealing the unattractive truth.

Arachne then includes rapes by Apollo, Bacchus, and Saturn:

est illic agrestis imagine Phoebus,
utque modo accipitris pennas modo terga leonis
gesserit, ut pastor Macareida luserit Issen,
Liber ut Erigonen falsa deceperit uva,
ut Saturnus equo geminum Chirona crearit.
ultima pars telae, tenui circumdata limbo,
nexilibus flores hederis habet intertextos. (6. 122-128)

(And there is Apollo in the likeness of a farmer, now he displays the wings of a hawk, now the hide of a lion, as a shepherd he deceived Isse, the

daughter of Macareus. Liber deceived Erigone with a false bunch of grapes, Saturn fathered two-natured Chiron as a horse. The last part of the web, surrounded by a narrow border, featured flowers interwoven with ivy tied in.)

Augustus had a special fondness for Apollo and constructed his own image with explicit references to Apollo.⁵² Here Ovid describes Apollo's four rapes with simply a quick list of his disguises—farmer, a hawk, a lion, and a shepherd. Elsewhere in the poem, Apollo rapes or seduces women and also appears in disguise.

The most striking connection between Arachne's depiction of Apollo and the rest of the poem occurs in Book One in the story of his attempt to rape Daphne. The picture of Apollo in this story is quite irreverent: Ovid portrays him as a divine and dangerous *Pépé Le Pew*. As he chases the terrified nymph, Apollo attempts to persuade Daphne to stop:

nympha, precor, Penei, mane! non insequor hostis;
 nympha, mane! sic agna lupum, sic cerva leonem,
 sic aquilam penna fugiunt trepidante columbae,
 hostes quaeque suos; amor est mihi causa sequendi.
 me miserum, ne prona cadas indignae laedi
 crura notent sentes, et sim tibi causa doloris!
 aspera qua properas loca sunt. moderatius, oro,
 curre fugamque inhibe; moderatius insequar ipse.
 cui placeas inquire tamen; non incola montis,
 non ego sum pastor, non hic armenta gregesque
 horridus obseruo. nescis, temeraria, nescis
 quem fugias, ideoque fugis....(1.504-515)

(Please, my nymph, daughter of Peneus, stop! It is not an enemy who follows you, my nymph, stop! Thus a lamb flees a wolf, a deer flees a lion, or a dove flees an eagle on fluttering wings—each one flees its enemy. Love is the reason for my pursuit. Miserable me! I fear that you will fall down, be harmed underservedly, that the brambles will mark your legs and I will be the cause of your pain. The ground you run over is rough. Run more slowly, I beg you, and put an end to your flight. I will follow more slowly. Ask who it is who loves you: I am not an uncouth

⁵² Antony used the image of Dionysos for himself, as well as that of Hercules. Beacham, "The Emperor as Impresario: Producing the Pageantry of Rome," 155.

mountain dweller, I am not some shepherd, some bumpkin watching his herds and flocks around here. You don't realize whom you flee, and still you flee...)

Apollo tries to persuade Daphne by explaining that he is not like a wolf pursuing a lamb, a lion pursuing a deer, or an eagle pursuing a dove though, on her tapestry, Arachne depicts Apollo raping women in the guise of both a "leo" (lion) and a "accipiter" (hawk, bird-of-prey).⁵³ Apollo continues on with a list of his honors and powers:

mihi Delphica tellus
et Claros et Tenedos Pataraeque regia servit;
Iuppiter est genitor; per me quod eritque fuitque
estque patet; per me concordant carmina nervis.
certa quidem nostra est, nostra tamen un sagitta
certior, in vacuo quae uulnere pectore fecit.
inuentum medicina meum est opiferque per orbem
dicor et herbarum subiecta potentia nobis.
ei mihi, quod nullus amor est sanabilis herbis,
nec prosunt domino quae prosunt omnibus artes!
(1.515-522)

(Delphi and Claros and Tenedos all are mine, and the palace of Patara serves me. Jupiter is my father. Through me the future and the past and the present all are revealed. Through me songs harmonize with lyres. My arrows are certain indeed, although one arrow is more certain than mine, the one which made this hole in my heart never wounded before. Medicine is my invention and I am called a helper through the world, and the power of herbs is under my power. Alas! No love is curable by herbs, and those arts which are comforts to everyone else are not a comfort to their master!)

Apollo's speech is designed to turn her mind—and thus also her body—to a more favorable position. Although ridiculous both in its lack of delicacy and its display of arrogance, it is full of imperatives and other signifiers of power. Apollo's use of "servire" (serve, be a slave to) in line 516, for example, betrays his desire to subjugate Daphne, and his statement that he is Jupiter's son reveals his patrifocal perspective. His use of

⁵³ Both the lion and the eagle were used in Augustan Age imagery. See Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*.

“dominus” in line 522 further reveals his intention to dominate the nymph. Apollo also infuses his speech with suggestions that he is a victim, and these not only make the speech funny for Ovid’s audience but, more importantly, also reveal that the god is only concerned with satisfying his sexual desire. Apollo’s speech clearly demonstrates how speech in the *Metamorphoses* is most frequently associated with masculinity and male power while Arachne’s pictures offer the unmitigated truth from the feminine perspective.

Finally, Arachne finishes her tapestry with a border of flowers and ivy. Anderson suggests that Ovid uses the flowers and ivy simply as a parallel to Minerva’s olive border.⁵⁴ Flowers, fruit, reeds, leaves, and grain stalks commonly appear in Augustan art, as do vines and garlands, particularly of ivy and laurel.⁵⁵ More than half of the surface area of the exterior enclosure of the Ara Pacis, for example, is covered with vines and garlands.⁵⁶ Images which suggest fertility abounded during the Augustan Age, and such decorative motifs promoted the idea of a new golden era of abundance and growth for Rome.⁵⁷ Arachne’s flower and ivy border fits comfortably within the repertoire of Augustan imagery, and here Ovid may be using that repertoire playfully. Still, flowers, grassy meadows, lush foliage, and other nature motifs are frequently used by ancient poets to introduce or underscore sexual scenes. So, Arachne’s flower and ivy border certainly wraps up the subject of her art effectively, just as the stream of ocean encircles the world in Homer’s description of the shield of Achilles.

⁵⁴ Anderson, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses 6-10*, 167.

⁵⁵ Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*, 172-183.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 179.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 172-183.

Moreover, the entire *Metamorphoses* is bursting with the fertile imagery of nature. Flowers and ivy, specifically, figure in many of the stories, including for example the account of the rape of Europa in Book Two (flowers), the story Acoetes and Bacchus in Book Three (ivy), the account of Salamacis and Hermaphroditus in Book Four (ivy), the story about the daughters of Minyas in Book Four (ivy), the story of the rape of Persephone in Book Four (flowers), the story about Minerva and the Muses in Book Five (ivy), the account of Dryope in Book Nine (flowers), and the story of Cyparissus in Book Ten (ivy). Thus, the border also points to a connection between Arachne's tapestry and the rest of the epic. It is worth mentioning that the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela also has ivy in it. When Procne rescues her sister from her prison during a festival to Bacchus, she dresses Philomela in a bacchant's costume and hides her face with fronds of ivy (6.596-600). Ovid thus connects Arachne's tapestry to Philomela's body.

When Arachne is finished, Minerva and Livor (Envy, Spite) are unable to find a flaw in her work, and Minerva loses her composure. Ovid writes:

Non illud Pallas, non illud carpere Livor
possit opus. doluit successu flava virago
et rupit pictas, caelestia crimina, vestes;
utque Cytoriaci radium de monte tenebat,
ter quater Idmoniae frontem percussit Arachnes. (6.
129-133)

(Neither Pallas nor Livor could criticize the work. The blond virgin goddess felt pain at the success and ripped up the pictured tapestry, the celestial crimes. She was still holding the shuttle from Mount Cytorus, and she hit Arache the daughter of Idmon over the head again and again.)

When she sees how good Arachne's work is, Minerva is aggrieved and reacts to the open depiction of the male gods assuming lowly forms in order to have sex. Ovid's wording

emphasizes that it is the images on the tapestry themselves which infuriate Minerva.⁵⁸ “rupit pictas, caelestia crimina, vestes” (ripped up the pictured tapestry, the celestial crimes). By placing the participle first, Ovid draws attention to the images on the tapestry, which he grammatically equates with the “caelestia crimina.” The true, unflattering images cause Minerva—a goddess associated with dignity, civilization, and civic harmony—to shed her majestic persona and lose her dignity completely. In other words, Minerva exposes the artificial nature of her own careful artistic construction. It is no coincidence that Minerva beats Arachne as she destroys the tapestry. The body of the artist is conflated with the artistic product.

It is significant that Minerva uses her shuttle as a weapon for Ovid later alludes to the use of the shuttle as a weapon in the ekphrasis about the mixing bowl which Anius gives Aeneas in Book Thirteen. That ekphrasis describes a scene in which the daughters of Orion sacrifice themselves in order to save Thebes from a devastating plague:

ecce facit mediis natas Orione Thebis,
hanc non femineum iugulo dare uulnus aperto,
illam demisso per fortia pectora telo
pro populo cecidisse suo pulchrisque per urbem
funeribus ferri celebrique in parte cremari.

(See how he made the daughters of Orion in the middle of Thebes, one administering a wound not normally reserved for women to her opened jugular, the other giving herself a wound with the weapon straight down through her brave breast. They died for their people and were carried in beautiful funerals through the city into the square to be cremated.)

Ovid uses the word “telum” for the weapon in the ekphrasis, but, in the traditional account of the myth, the girls are weaving when they learn about the danger which Thebes faces and subsequently volunteer to sacrifice themselves for the good of the

⁵⁸ Cf. Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses 6-10*, 168.

city.⁵⁹ They use the shuttles they already hold to cut their own throats. Because it is the tool women use to carry the weft through the warp when weaving, the shuttle is certainly a feminine instrument. Still, it is hard and often sharp, so it is also knife-like. Minerva and the daughters of Orion use it offensively. In fact, Minerva uses her shuttle here very much in the same way Odysseus uses the speaker's staff in Book Two of the *Iliad*. Ellen Oliensis sees Minerva's attack as a symbolic rape which anticipates Tereus' raping of Philomela.⁶⁰ Philomela, as will be shown shortly, uses her shuttle more as a defensive weapon, weaving the tale of what's happened to her into her tapestry. Ovid presents the shuttle as a weapon in these stories because it is his own literary weapon of choice.

Finally, it is also significant that Arachne turns into a spider at the end of the story. The only other source available for Minerva's contest against Arachne is Vergil's brief reference to it in the fourth Georgic (4.246-247), where the spider is associated with Minerva.⁶¹ Thus, it is difficult to determine how closely Ovid follows the traditional story. Ovid refers to spiders and spiderwebs at one other point in the text, and this reference suggests that Ovid includes Arachne's transformation into a spider pointedly. In the story of Mars and Venus, which Leuconoe recites for her sisters in Book Four, Ovid compares the invisible chains which Vulcan forges as a trap for his adulterous wife and her lover to spiderwebs:⁶²

hunc quoque, siderea qui temperat omnia luce,
cepit amor Solem; Solis referemus amores.
primus adulterium Veneris cum Marte putatur

⁵⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses: Book XIII* ed. Neil Hopkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 32-34.

⁶⁰ Oliensis, "The Power of Image-Makers: Representation and Revenge in Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' 6 and 'Tristia' 4," 290-292.

⁶¹ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses 6-10*, 151.

⁶² Cf. Micaela Janan, "'There beneath the Roman Ruin Where the Purple Flowers Grow': Ovid's Minyeides and the Feminine Imagination," *The American Journal of Philology* 115, No. 3 (1994), 432-437, where Janan also links the story of Arachne and the story of Mars and Venus.

hic uidisse deus; uidet hic deus omnia primus.
 indoluit facto Iunonigenaeque marito
 furta tori furtique locum monstrauit; at illi
 et mens et quod opus fabrilis dextra tenebat
 excidit. extemplo graciles ex aere catenas
 retiaque et laqueos, quae lumina fallere possent,
 elimat (non illud opus tenuissima uincant
 stamina, non summo quae pendet aranea tigno),
 utque leues tactus momentaque parua sequantur
 efficit et lecto circumdata collocat apte.
 ut uenere torum coniunx et adulter in unum,
 arte uiri uinclisque noua ratione paratis
 in mediis ambo deprensi amplexibus haerent.
 Lemnius extemplo ualuas patefecit eburnas
 immisitque deos. illi iacuere ligati
 turpiter, atque aliquis de dis non tristibus optat
 sic fieri turpis; superi risere, diuque
 haec fuit in toto notissima fabula caelo. (4.169-189)

(Love has even seized the Sun God, who sways everything with his starry light. I will relate the loves of the Sun. This god is thought to have first seen the adulterous affair of Venus with Mars; this god sees everything first. He was upset about the deed and revealed the deceitful deeds of the marriage bed and the place of the offense to her husband, born of Juno. Both the mind and the work which his crafty right hand was holding dropped. He immediately polished up thin chains out of bronze and nets and snares, which the eyes are not able to detect (the thinnest warp threads could not surpass this work, nor a spiderweb which hangs from the highest beam), and he made it so that the trap reacted to light touches and small movements and he arranged these tightly in a circle all around the bed. So that when his wife and her lover met in the bed, the two were caught surprised in the middle of an embrace by the art of the husband and by ingenious cunning. The Lemnian suddenly threw open the ivory doors and sent in the gods. Those two were lying there, all tied up, in their shame, and one of the undisgusted gods wished that he was so shamed. The heavenly ones laughed, and for a long time this story was very much repeated around the whole of the sky.)

In this story, Ovid associates Vulcan's art with weaving. Not only is the story narrated by one of the daughters of Minyas while she is weaving, but Ovid specifically compares Vulcan's chains to "stamina" (warp threads). Of course, the story about Venus and Mars also is connected to Arachne's pictures in that it is about an adulterous affair. Ovid

clearly alludes to Homer's account of Aphrodite's affair with Ares here; his reference to one of the gods wishing that he were caught in the same kind of shame refers to the playful exchange between Hermes and Apollo in Homer's account, for example. Homer specifically compares Hephaistos' chains to spiderwebs, linking Hephaistos' cunning art to Odysseus' own marriage-bed and the ekphrasis about Odysseus' pin. Ovid clearly has picked up on the Homeric comparison.

More importantly, however, Ovid's description of Arachne's transformation into a spider reveals that he, like Homer and Hesiod, associates ekphrasis with the uterus. After describing Minerva's reaction to Arachne's tapestry, Ovid describes how Arachne is turned into a spider:

post ea discedens sucis Hecateidos herbae
sparsit, et extemplo tristi medicamine tactae
defluxere comae, cum quis et naris et aures,
fitque caput minimum, toto quoque corpore parva est;
in latere exiles digiti pro cruribus haerent,
cetera uenter habet, de quo tamen illa remittit
stamen et antiquas exercet aranea telas.(6.139-145)

(After these words, leaving, she sprinkled Arachne with the juice of a Hecataean herb, and immediately, the harsh potion, when it touched her head, made her hair fall off of her head, and with these, her nose and ears, and her head became very small, and she was tiny in her whole body. In place of legs, slender fingers hang onto her sides, and the rest of her is only belly, from which nevertheless she spins her warp and, as a spider, executes her old tapestries.)

Ovid describes Arachne's body after her transformation as one which is a "venter" (belly). As is the case in most Indo-European languages, in Latin often words for belly are used for the womb.⁶³ In fact, Ovid uses "venter" at 11.311 to indicate a pregnant woman's uterus. In describing Arachne's transformation into a spider as one in which

⁶³ Buck, *A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages*, 252-255.

she becomes all “venter,” Ovid echoes the Homeric and Hesiodic association of ekphrasis with uterine forms.

Tereus, Procne, and Philomela

While the story of Minerva’s contest against Arachne certainly has political allusions, the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela is overtly political. Its political importance is apparent right from its introduction. Ovid leads into the story by describing a war which Athens is fighting against barbarian tribes. Pandion receives financial and military assistance from Tereus of Thrace, and the Athenian king rewards Tereus by marrying his daughter Procne to him. Thus, the marriage between Tereus and Procne is a high-profile political alliance between royal houses as well as a sexual union. Also, there is an underlying theme of civilization versus barbarianism. As an Athenian ruler, Pandion represents civilization and social order; Tereus, by contrast, is Thracian and thus represents barbarianism. When Pandion marries his daughter to Tereus, he is also bringing Tereus and his kingdom into the folds of civilization and high culture. Thus, when Ovid describes the negatives omens which accompany the wedding—Juno, Hymen, and the Graces are all absent while the dark Eumenides attend with funereal torches—he not only foreshadows the terrible fate of the marriage itself but also the disastrous political consequences which follow.

Ovid describes Tereus as “genus a magno ducens forte Gradiuo” (6.427) (tracing his ancestry to great, brave Gradivus). Gradivus is an archaic epithet for the god Mars, probably stemming from the verb “gradi” (to walk, to step) and meaning “he who steps in

battle.” Livy reports that the twelve Salii were introduced by Numa Pompilius to serve Mars Gradivus; these priests performed pyrrhic dances which involved leaping and also carried the sacred ancilia in ritual processions around the city (1.20).⁶⁴ Ovid explains in Book Three of the *Fasti* that one of these ancilia dropped from heaven as a gift from Jupiter to Numa Pompilius and that the eleven others were created to conceal the original. Thomas Habinek discusses the Salian rituals as initiation rites in *The World of Roman Song*.⁶⁵ Interestingly, the dance of the Salii, like the dance of the Kouretes on Crete, formed circular shapes around the city: it was an embodiment of the Labyrinth.⁶⁶ The dance involved both young men and young women (or young men dressed like young women), and it worked to ensure the fertility of the land and the continuation of Rome. Habinek argues that the Etruscan oinochoe which was discussed in Chapter Two actually depicts both the Salii and young men enacting the *Lusus Troiae* on horseback.⁶⁷ The element of sexual initiation which necessarily was part of the Salian ritual is captured by the two couples having sexual intercourse behind the spiralling Labyrinth on the vase.

In general, Augustus revived many archaic rituals and priesthoods, and he probably took special interest in the Salii.⁶⁸ The hymn of the Salii was so archaic that even priests of the cult did not understand its allusions or meaning, but Augustus seems to have been involved in the college,⁶⁹ even dedicating a temple to Mars Gradivus which

⁶⁴ Note the obvious connection to Minoan pyrrhic dancing and the pyrrhic elements of the Labyrinth dance as it is represented on Achilles’ shield.

⁶⁵ Thomas Habinek, *The World of Roman Song: From Ritualized Speech to Social Order* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 254-256.

⁶⁷ See my earlier discussion of the Labyrinth in Chapter Two.

⁶⁸ Note too that Augustus’ name was inserted into the Salian hymn in 28 B.C.E: Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 206-207.

⁶⁹ Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome*, 206-207.

featured the wolf and Romulus and Remus on its pediment.⁷⁰ The temple of Mars Ultor in the Forum of Augustus was one of the stops for the procession of the Salii around Rome and, in all likelihood, the site for their famous feasting. Vergil also uses the epithet “Gradivus” in the *Aeneid*, at 3.35 and 10.542, so it is possible that this epithet was reinvigorated in the Augustan period, especially given Augustus’ fondness for pyrrhic dancing in general. In any case, Ovid also uses the epithet in Books Fourteen and Fifteen of the *Metamorphoses*. At 14.820, he uses it to describe Mars in the account of Romulus’ deification, and at 15.863 in his final encomium to Augustus, he applies it to Mars.

Tereus is descended from Mars Gradivus, then, and, in specifying this lineage, Ovid not only connects Tereus to Romulus but also connects Tereus to Augustus’ own religious revival. Hyginus and Apollodorus write that Tereus is actually the son of Mars, and it is likely that Ovid is simply following that original idea here. If Ovid means that Tereus is actually the son of Mars, the connection between the Thracian king and Romulus is even more explicit. In describing Tereus as a descendant of Mars, Ovid not only links the Thracian king to Romulus, but, more importantly, he links Tereus to Augustus himself. It is worth noting here that both Mars and Romulus are also associated with rape.⁷¹

It is notable that Ovid calls Tereus “tyrannus” (tyrant) at 6.436. He refers to Tereus as a tyrant several times in the course of the story, and, in this story, he only uses the term for Tereus, whom he also calls “rex”(6.490 and 6.520) (king). Although the term “tyrannus” is used in Latin simply to indicate a single ruler—Vergil uses it to describe Aeneas at *Aeneid* 7.266, for example—it generally is associated with the

⁷⁰ Evans, *The Art of Persuasion*, 71.

⁷¹ Mars rapes Rhea Silvia to produce Romulus and Remus, and Romulus later supervises and orchestrates the rape of the Sabine women: Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 1.3-4 and 1.8-11.

negative qualities of despotic power. Ovid uses it throughout the *Metamorphoses*, and he uses it much more frequently in the *Metamorphoses* than in his other works.⁷² In the majority of these instances the term carries a pointedly negative connotation. For example, in Book One, Ovid uses the term to describe Lycaon:

Meanala transieram latebris horrenda ferarum
et cum Cyllene gelidi pineta Lycae;
Arcadis hinc sedes et inhospita tecta tyranni
ingredior, traherent cum sera crepuscula noctem. (1.216-
219)

(I crossed over Maenalus, dreadful with its haunts of wild beasts, and the pines of cold Lycaeus, along with Cyllene. Here I entered the abode and inhospitable home of the Arcadian tyrant, while the evening twilight was ushering in nightfall.)

As discussed above, Lycaon's offenses are described in the text by Jupiter to the rest of the gods; he not only tried to murder a disguised Jupiter in his sleep but also attempted to serve human flesh to him. Ovid also uses the term to describe Pluto in Book Five:

ergo dum Stygio sub terris gurgite labor,
uisa quidem tristis neque adhuc interrita uultu,
sed regina tamen, sed opaci maxima mundi,
sed tamen inferni pollens matrona tyranni. (5.504-
508)

(Then, while I was gliding under the earth in the eddies of the Styx, indeed she seemed grief-stricken and not yet with her face recovered from her terror, but nevertheless she was a queen, but she was the greatest woman of the dark world, but, still, she is the powerful wife of the infernal tyrant.)

This story resembles the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela in that it involves a rape, although Ovid does not relate the details of the rape in this telling. Still, in both accounts, he presents tyrants raping young women. It is worth noting here that the story of Proserpina's rape also features prominent purple and white images; Proserpina frolics among the flowers and picks "aut violas aut candida lilia" (5.392) (violets or white lilies).

⁷² Cf. Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses 6-10*, 173.

Ovid also uses the term “tyrannis” (tyranny) in his introduction to Pythagoras’ speech in Book Fifteen:

Vir fuit hic ortu Samius, sed fugerat una
et Samon et dominos odioque tyrannidis exul
sponte erat. isque licet caeli regione remotos
mente deos adiit et quae natura negabat
uisibus humanis, oculis ea pectoris hausit. (15.60-64)

(There was a Samian man, born here, but he had fled altogether Samos and its rulers, and he was an exile of his own accord from the hatefulness of tyranny. His mind approached the gods, remote in heaven, and what nature denied to the vision of humans, he draws in with the eyes of his heart.)

Pythagoras is a voice of authority in the poem, and by introducing his speech with a description of his voluntary exile from Samos because of the evils of tyranny, Ovid underscores the negative connotations of tyranny in the rest of the poem.

Most importantly, Pythagoras’ speech leads up to Ovid’s story about Cipus, later in Book Fifteen. In this story, Cipus calls his fellow Romans together and addresses them:

dixit et extemplo populumque grauemque senatum
conuocat; ante tamen pacali cornua lauro
uelat et aggeribus factis a milite forti
insistit priscoque deos e more precatus
‘est’ ait ‘hic unus, quem uos nisi pellitis urbe,
rex erit. is qui sit signo, non nomine, dicam;
cornua fronte gerit. quem uobis indicat augur,
si Romam intrarit, famularia iura daturum.
ille quidem potuit portas inrumpere apertas,
sed nos obstitimus, quamuis coniunctior illo
nemo mihi est. uos urbe virum prohibete, Quirites,
uel, si dignus erit, grauibus uincite catenis,
aut finite metum fatalis morte tyranni.’ (15.590-602)

(He spoke and immediately called together the people and the grave senate. He covered his horns with peaceful laurel and climbed up on a mound which was constructed by his brave army and he prayed to the gods according to ancient custom: “There is one man here who will be

your king unless you drive him from your city. I will not say who this man is by name but rather by a sign. He has horns on his head. The augur has declared that, if he enters Rome, he will enact laws which will make you slaves. That man, indeed, was able to force his way through the open gates, but I prevented him, although no one is closer to me than that man. Quirites, keep this man out of the city, or, if he is worthy, bind him in strong chains. Or, end your fear by the death of a deadly tyrant!)

Cipus goes on to reveal that he is the man with the horns, and he is honored by the people because of his aversion to becoming king. The figure of Cipus serves as a testament to Roman “virtus” and republicanism. As discussed earlier, Ovid’s presentation of Cipus is suggestive of both Julius Caesar and Augustus, and Cipus’ statement that a potential king of Rome is “fatalis tyrannus” (a deadly tyrant) certainly colors its use for the rest of the poem.

In using the term “tyrannus” for Tereus, Ovid refers to the traditional association of tyrants with sexual excess. As discussed in the Introduction, in both Greek and Roman literature, political power is often conflated with sexual power, and tyranny in particular is associated with sexual exploitation. The connection between tyranny and rape is especially pronounced in Athenian literature, and Ovid harnesses the Athenian hatred of tyranny by using the term in a story which is partly set in Athens. The Greek association between the word “τύραννος” (tyrant) and rape extends not only to “tyrannus” (tyrant) in Roman literature but also to “rex” (king), “dominus” (master), “regnum” (kingdom), “dominatio” (despotism), “dominatus” (absolute power), “regnare” (to rule), “dominari” (to domineer), “regius” (royal), “regie” (in the manner of a king).⁷³ Political invective of the first century B.C.E. often associates “tyrannus” with “vis” (strength, power), “superbia” (arrogance), “crudelitas” (cruelty), and, most importantly, “libido” (sexual

⁷³ J. Roger Dunkle, “The Greek Tyrant and Roman Political Invective of the Late Republic,” *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 98 (1967), 152. The list of words is Dunkle’s compilation.

drive).⁷⁴ In his speeches against Verres, for example, Cicero uses most of these words, and, in arguing for the charge that Verres raped the daughter of Philodamus, Cicero says “tyrannus libidinosus crudelisque” (2.1.82) (a cruel and lustful tyrant).⁷⁵

The most famous Roman story about the sexual excess of monarchy is the account of Sextus Tarquinius’ rape of Lucretia. As Livy relates the story, several young men are drinking together when they begin to praise their own wives, and they decide to drop in on the wives in order to determine which of them is the most virtuous. Most of the wives are involved in a luxurious party, but when the group arrives at the home of Collatinus, they find Lucretia dutifully spinning wool even though it is night. Sextus Tarquinius, the son of the king, is immediately seized with lust at the sight of Lucretia at work. He returns to Collatinus’ house a few days later, when he knows Lucretia will be alone. She receives him with hospitality, but, later during the night, he steals into Lucretia’s room and rapes her. She reports the crime to her father and husband, and, even though both men reassure her that she herself is blameless in the situation, she commits suicide, saying that she will be an example for future women. The offense motivates Brutus to call for the end of the monarchy:

Brutus illis luctu occupatis cultrum ex vulnere Lucretiae extractum, manantem cruore prae se tenens, "Per hunc" inquit "castissimum ante regiam iniuriam sanguinem iuro, vosque, di, testes facio me L. Tarquinium Superbum cum scelerata coniuge et omni liberorum stirpe ferro igni quacumque dehinc vi possim exsecuturum, nec illos nec alium quemquam regnare Romae passurum." Cultrum deinde Collatino tradit, inde Lucretio ac Valerio, stupentibus miraculo rei, unde novum in Bruti pectore ingenium. Vt praeceptum erat iurant; totique ab luctu versi in iram, Brutum iam inde ad expugnandum regnum vocantem sequuntur ducem. (Livy 1.59)

⁷⁴ Ibid., 151.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 162.

(Brutus, with the others consumed in lamentation, holding before himself the knife which he had drawn out from Lucretia's wound, dripping with blood, said "By this blood—most pure before the royal assault—I swear, and you, gods, I make witnesses that, with sword and fire, and with whatever else will make this possible, I will pursue L. Tarquinius Superbus with his unchaste wife and all of his children, and that I will not allow them or any other to be king of Rome." Then he handed the knife to Collatinus, then to Lucretius and Valerius—all stupified by the miraculousness of the event, which had brought about a new feeling in Brutus. They swore an oath, as decided. Everyone was turned from grief to anger. They followed their leader, who was now calling for the monarchy to be overthrown.)

The Tarquins are then driven into exile and the Republic is established.⁷⁶

Ovid relates this story in Book Two of the *Fasti*, closely following Livy's account. His narration has some remarkable similarities to his account of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela in the *Metamorphoses*. First, like Tereus, Sextus Tarquinius is overcome with "ignis amoris" (fire of love) as soon as he catches sight of Lucretia. Lucretia hangs on her husband's neck (*collum*) when the friends visit Collatinus' house, and Sextus' sexual desire is fueled by his voyeuristic pleasure of watching the husband and wife interact. Likewise, Tereus watches Philomela hang on her father's neck (*collum*), and his desire grows as he watches the interaction. So, both Sextus and Tereus are voyeurs, and they both feed their desire by recalling their first sights of the women and rolling their memories around in their imaginations. In his description of Sextus' raping of Lucretia, Ovid compares Lucretia to a lamb caught by a wolf:

illa nihil: neque enim vocem viresque loquendi
aut aliquid toto pectore mentis habet,
sed tremit, ut quondam stabulis deprensa relictis
parva sub infesto cum iacet agna lupo. (2.797-800)

⁷⁶ For a political analysis of Livy's account of the rape of Lucretia, see Sandra R. Joshel, "The Body Female and the Body Politic: Livy's Lucretia and Verginia," in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* ed. Amy Richlin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 112-130.

(She answered nothing: she had neither voice nor the power of speech nor any presence of mind in her heart, but she trembled, just as when a small lamb, caught after leaving its pens, lies under a vicious wolf.)

Ovid likewise compares Philomela to a lamb injured by a wolf:

illa tremit velut agna pavens quae saucia cani
ore excussa lupi nondum sibi tuta videtur...(6.527-
528)

(She trembled like a frightened lamb which, wounded by a wolf and thrown out from its mouth, does not yet think that it is safe...)

Moreover, Ovid specifically points out that Lucretia is unable to speak during the rape; thus, Ovid's Lucretia resembles Philomela, who, as will be discussed shortly, is also silenced during her rape. Notably, Ovid also follows his lengthy description of Lucretia's rape and subsequent suicide in the *Fasti* with a short reference to Tereus and Procne (2.853-856), thus pointing to the connection between the two stories.

Ovid first uses "tyrannus" for Tereus at 6.436 in his description of how the Thracians rejoice when Itys is born to Tereus and Procne. The birth of a son seems to make up for the negative signs which attend their marriage-ceremony, and Ovid at first presents Tereus as a decent husband and ruler. When his wife asks to visit her sister, Tereus immediately sails to Athens:

iubet ille carinas
in freta deduci veloque et remige portus
Cecropios intrat Piraeaque litora tangit.
ut primum soceri data copia, dextera dextrae
iungitur et fausto committitur omine sermo.(6.444-
448)

(He orders ships to be dragged to the straits and by sails and rowers he enters Cecrops' harbor and he touches the shores of Piraeus. As soon as he is granted an audience with his father-in-law, right hands are joined and with the favorable omen the conversation is started.)

Once in Athens, Tereus approaches Pandion both as son-in-law and fellow king. It is significant that Ovid refers to Athens using the adjective “Cecropius” (of Cecrops). Ovid also refers to Cecrops earlier in the book, when he begins the ekphrasis about Minerva’s tapestry:

Cecropia Pallas scopulum Mauortis in arce
pingit et antiquam de terrae nomine litem. (6.70-71)

(Pallas painted the Areopagus, on the citadel of Cecrops, and that ancient contention about the name of the land.)

Cecrops was the first king of Athens, and Minerva’s contest against Neptune occurs during his reign. In the ekphrasis about Minerva’s tapestry, Ovid uses the names Cecrops and Mauors together. Ovid uses of Cecrop’s name later in the story about Tereus, Procne, and Philomela not only to suggest early kingship in general but also subtly to allude to Tereus’ connection to Mars—and, thus also, to Romulus. Therefore, early in the story, Ovid seems to be using “tyrannus” simply to mean “ruler,” but he hints at Tereus’ inherent ruthlessness.

As Tereus starts to ask Pandion to allow Philomela to visit her sister in Thrace, Philomela appears:

coeperat aduentus causam, mandata referre
coniugis et celeres missae spondere recursas:
ecce venit magno diues Philomela paratu,
diuitior forma; quales audire solemus
Naidas et Dryadas mediis incedere siluis,
si modo des illis cultus similesque paratus. (6.449-454)

(He began to tell the reason for his arrival, the requests of his wife and to pledge a swift return for the visiting girl: behold, Philomela comes in, rich with much attention to her attire, richer in beauty, like we are accustomed to hear the Naiads and Dryads walking in the middle of forests, if only you grant them cultivation and similar refinement.)

Ovid narrates Philomela's arrival in a manner which forces his audience to view her as a spectacle; his use of "ecce" (behold!) makes her entrance seem especially vivid and, as Anderson observes, signifies the dramatic change in Tereus upon seeing his wife's sister.⁷⁷ In fact, his use of "ecce" makes the scene seem like an ekphrasis which Ovid is describing for his audience. Ovid also points to the importance of her rich dress; it is not only her natural beauty but also her fine garments which are attractive. Ovid thus conflates Philomela's dress with her body, setting his audience up for the later connection between her body and her own weaving.

Tereus is instantly struck by lust when he sees her image:

non secus exarsit conspecta uirgine Tereus
 quam si quis canis ignem supponat aristas
 aut frondem positasque cremet faenilibus herbas.
 digna quidem facies, sed et hunc innata libido
 exstimulat, pronumque genus regionibus illis
 in Venerem est; flagrat uitio gentisque suoque.
 (6.455-460)

(Just so, Tereus became inflamed as he spied the virgin, like when someone sets fire to white grain or leaves and burns the hay in the haylofts. Indeed, her face is worthy, but innate sexual drive goads Tereus—men of his region are prone to lust. He burns with his own fault and also with that of his people.)

Ovid uses language which suggests uncontrollable lust here; words such as "ignis" (fire), "flagare" (to flame up), "cremere" (to burn), and "exardescere" (to become hot, to blaze up) recall Vergil's use of fire-imagery to describe destructive feminine passion—especially that which consumes Dido—in the *Aeneid*. As a Thracian, Tereus is a barbarian compared to his Athenian host; thus, he lacks the "virtus" (masculine excellence) which characterizes civilized men. Ovid's fire-imagery emphasizes Tereus' lack of masculine control over his own emotional response, and his use of words such as

⁷⁷ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 6-10*, 211.

“libido” (sex drive) and “vitium” (crime, sexual offense) reinforce Tereus’ inherent tyrannical tendency towards lust. Ovid is explicit that Tereus’ lust is something which surfaces at the vision of Philomela mostly because of his “genus” (race, ancestry). By drawing attention to Tereus’ “genus,” Ovid not only suggests that the tyrant’s sexual drive is motivated by his being Thracian, but he also suggests that his lust stems from Mars. After all, as discussed earlier, Ovid introduces the story by describing Tereus as “genus a magno ducens forte Gradiuo” (6.427) (tracing his ancestry to great, brave Gradivus).

Moreover, Ovid also connects Tereus here to Apollo, who similarly burns with the fire of lust in Book One.⁷⁸ When Apollo is struck with lust for Daphne, Ovid uses similar agricultural imagery:

Phoebus amat visaeque cupit conubia Daphnes,
quodque cupit sperat suaque illum oracula fallunt.
utque leues stipulae demptis adolentur aristas,
ut facibus saepes ardent, quas forte uiator
uel nimis admouit uel iam sub luce reliquit,
sic deus in flammis abiit, sic pectore toto
uritur et sterilem sperando nutrit amorem. (1.490-
495)

(Phoebus is struck with passion and desires sex with Daphne as soon as he sees her. What he desires he hopes for and his own oracles fail him. Just as fragile stubble burns after the grain has been harvested, as hedges burn from torches, which by chance a traveler has either moved too close or left there at dawn. Thus, the god burst into flames, thus he burns in his whole heart and he feeds his passion by hoping for her empty love.)

Apollo is of course struck by one of Cupid’s arrows, and his sudden passion is driven by that wound. Still, he experiences lust as soon as he spies Daphne’s “forma” (beauty) just

⁷⁸ For a comprehensive study of the similarity between the story of Apollo and Daphne and the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela, see Garrett A. Jacobsen, “Apollo and Tereus: Parallel Motifs in Ovid’s ‘Metamorphoses’,” *The Classical Journal* 80, no. 1 (1984), 45-52.

as Tereus sees Philomela's "divitior forma" (6.452) (richer beauty). Ovid even mentions Apollo in the middle of his account of Tereus' trip to Athens at 6.486.

When Apollo is overwhelmed with lust in Book One, he becomes ridiculous as he chases Daphne, but Tereus becomes a monster. After describing his initial reaction to Philomela, Ovid goes on to describe how Tereus becomes completely consumed with his lust for his sister-in-law:

impetus est illi comitum corrumpere curam
nutricisque fidem, nec non ingentibus ipsam
sollicitare datis totumque impendere regnum,
aut rapere et saeuo raptam defendere bello;
et nihil est quod non effreno captus amore
ausit, nec capiunt inclusas pectore flammās.(6.461-
466)

(His inclination is to corrupt the care of her companions and the trust of her nurse, or to woo Philomela herself with expensive gifts and risk his whole kingdom, or to seize her and to defend his captured prize with savage war. There is nothing he would not dare, caught by unbridled passion, and the flames raging inside his heart could not be controlled.)

Ovid again shows that Tereus' sexual feeling is inextricably tied to his political status as a tyrant; he is even willing to use war to achieve his sexual goal—an option which would not be available to him if he were not tyrant.

Tereus starts to petition Pandion to entrust his daughter to him, and lust motivates his argument:

iamque moras male fert cupidoque revertitur ore
ad mandata Procnes et agit sua uota sub illa.
facundum faciebat amor, quotiensque rogabat
ulterius iusto, Procnen ita uelle ferebat;
addidit et lacrimas, tamquam mandasset et illas. (6.467-
471)

(He no longer could bear the wait, and he returned with a passionate voice to Procne's mandates—he drives his own wishes under Procne's. Love made him eloquent, and whenever he went too far in asking, he would say

it was what Procne wished. He even added tears, as if Procne had also instructed him to shed those.)

Tereus' plea before Philomela's father is exaggerated and emotional; the urgency of his sexual desire drives his rhetorical skill. He speaks "cupido ore" (with a passionate voice); Ovid points out specifically that "facundum faciebat amor" (love made him eloquent). His unbridled lust even causes him to burst into tears in a hollow display of spousal devotion. In the end, Tereus is successful in persuading Pandion to entrust Philomela to his care, even though Pandion fears what may happen (509-510). Tereus, in fact, is exactly the kind of orator rhetoricians such as Cicero and Quintilian fear—that is, an eloquent speaker who is driven by passion and who lacks "virtus."⁷⁹

After describing Tereus' impassioned argument before Pandion, Ovid interrupts the narration:

pro superi, quantum mortalia pectora caecae
noctis habent! ipso sceleris molimine Tereus
creditur esse pius laudemque a crimine sumit.
(6.472-474)

(Oh gods, how mortal hearts have blind darkness in them! Tereus seems to be pious in his execution of the crime and he receives praise for his crime.)

By interrupting the story and offering a general statement about humanity, Ovid opens the story up for universal interpretation. Ovid thus invites his audience to consider similar situations, and, because the story is so politically charged in general, Augustus becomes a natural point of comparison.

Philomela, who is taken in by Tereus' passion and eloquence and does not realize that she is helping her future rapist, actually assists in act of persuading her father:

quid quod idem Philomela cupit patriosque lacertis

⁷⁹ See, for example, Cicero, *De Inventione*, 1.1-5 and Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 1.9-17.

blanda tenens umeros, ut eat uisura sororem,
 perque suam contraque suam petit ipsa salutem.
 spectat eam Tereus praecontrectatque uidendo,
 osculaque et collo circumdata bracchia cernens
 omnia pro stimulis facibusque ciboque furoris
 accipit; et quotiens amplexitur illa parentem,
 esse parens uellet. (neque enim minus impius esset!)
 uincitur ambarum genitor prece; gaudet agitque
 illa patri grates et successisse duabus
 id putat infelix, quod erit lugubre duabus. (6.475-485)

(What's more, Philomela desires the same thing—caressing and hanging on her father's shoulders with her arms—she seeks to go visit her sister, for her own health, she says—more likely against it! Tereus sees her and he handles her beforehand by watching her. He sees her kisses and her arms encircling his neck, and he uses everything to motivate, to fire, and as fodder for his fury. Whenever she embraces her father, he wishes that he were that father. (Indeed he would be even more impious!) Her father is conquered by the pleas of both. Philomela rejoices and gives thanks to her father and she thinks she has been victorious for the two of them—unhappy girl, because there will be grief for the two of them.)

Here, Philomela coaxes her father into allowing her to visit her sister, and Ovid presents her wheedling as sexual in nature. She caresses, kisses, and embraces her father. As Tereus watches her sweet-talk her father, he imagines himself as Pandion and is even more stimulated. Ovid plays with the sexuality of Philomela's relationship with her father: Philomela is "blanda" with her father just as Procne uses "blandita" earlier with Tereus.⁸⁰ Tereus of course remains sexually aroused by the scene and, later, when he is in bed, cannot stop thinking about her "faciem motusque manusque" (6.491) (appearance and movements and gestures). Pandion is finally persuaded by the combination of Tereus' impassioned argument and the feminine wheedling of his daughter (6.483). Ovid thus follows Homer and Hesiod in suggesting that femininity is an effective element of persuasion. Ovid's use of "vincere" (to conquer) in this statement draws attention, not only to the competitive nature of persuasion but also to the political element of the act in

⁸⁰ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 6-10*, 214.

this case. By persuading the king to send his daughter, who stands for the continuation of the Athenian royal household and also future Athenian political alliances, Tereus sets the stage for his subsequent overpowering of the princess.

Ovid points to the political nature of Tereus' verbal victory with repeated imagery of joined right hands. Tereus and Pandion first join right hands when the Thracian king arrives at the Athenian court (6.447-448); they join hands both as political allies and also because of their familial relationship. After Pandion makes the decision to allow Philomela to visit her sister, the two again grasp hands:

lux erat, et generi dextram complexus euntis
 Pandion comitem lacrimis commendat obortis:
 'hanc ego, care gener, quoniam pia causa coegit
 et uoluere ambae (uoluisti tu quoque, Tereu),
 do tibi perque fidem cognataque pectora supplex,
 per superos oro, patrio ut tuearis amore
 et mihi sollicitae lenimen dulce senectae
 quam primum (omnis erit nobis mora longa)
 remittas. (6.494-501)

(Morning arrived, and having clasped his son-in-law's right hand Pandion, with tears, committed Philomela to Tereus' care as his fellow-traveller: 'Dear son-in-law, since a pious reason has compelled me, and both girls wanted it (and you also wanted it, Tereus), I give to your safekeeping this young woman, both though your trust and the ties that bind us, I ask by the gods, that you look after her with a father's love, and send her back to me this sweet solace of anxious old age as soon as possible [every bit of the time will be long for me].)

Here again, the kings' joining of right hands carries both political and familial significance, and Ovid highlights the political overtones of the scene with the word "fides" (trust, assurance), which is often used to indicate a sovereign power's promise of protection or safe-conduct.⁸¹ In fact, the importance of "fides" itself constitutes an

⁸¹ The importance of clasped right hands is illustrated in a scene on Trajan's arch at Beneventum. There, Jupiter stands in between the emperor and a barbarian ruler, who both extend their right hands to seal a political alliance. The artist suggests that Jupiter oversees the treaty. The importance of Jupiter's image is

element of Augustan ideology: in Horace's *Carmen Saeculare* (57-59), for example, "Fides" is celebrated along with "Pax" (Peace), "Honos" (Honor), "Pudor" (Modesty), and "Virtus" (Manliness, Virtue).⁸²

Ovid describes how Pandion then joins Tereus' right hand to Philomela's, almost as if the king is granting Tereus Philomela's hand in marriage:

utque fide pignus dextras utriusque poposcit
inter seque datas iunxit natamque nepotemque
absentes pro se memori rogat ore salutent,
supremumque 'vale' pleno singultibus ore
uix dixit timuitque suae praesagia mentis. (6.506-
510)

(He asked for the right hand of each as a pledge of faith and joined them together and asked that they send his greeting to his absent daughter and grandson. He was scarcely able to say "goodbye" with his voice full of sobs, and he feared the foreboding in his mind.)

Of course, as Apollodoros and Hyginus tell the story, Tereus actually does marry Philomela after lying about Procne's death to Pandion, and, as Anderson observes, Ovid may be demonstrating to his audience that he in fact knows that version of the myth.⁸³ In any case, marriage is a political institution, and Tereus' assurances have strong political overtones.

discussed in Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Religions of Rome: Volume 2, A Sourcebook* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 27-28. Also, it is worth noting that virtues such as Fides and Pietas were commonly worshipped as divine beings in Rome. Karl Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 299.

⁸² Cf. J.A.S. Evans, "The Aeneid and the Concept of the Ideal King: The Modification of an Archetype," in *The Two Worlds of the Poet: New Perspectives on Vergil* eds. Robert M. Wilhelm and Howard Jones (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 151: "Moreover, Roman readers must have caught an echo of their own apothegm *Punica fides* when they read Dido's reproaches. She complained of *fides* broken by Aeneas, expressing her bitterness with unconscious irony. Not only was she using a term familiar to Roman law, but also one familiar to Roman historical tradition. Dido turned one of Rome's stock calumnies against the Romans: *Punica fides*, as the Romans called it, in her experience was *Trojan fides*, and to the Roman legal mind, *fides* breached was a violation of *fas*, and should bring divine punishment upon the offender."

⁸³ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 6-10*, 217-218.

After pledging to care for Pandion's daughter, Tereus sails back to Thrace with Philomela. Ovid describes Tereus, ogling Philomela when she is on board his ship, by comparing the tyrant to an eagle:

Vt semel imposita est pictae Philomela carinae
admotumque fretum remis tellusque repulsa est,
'vicimus!' exclamat 'mecum mea vota feruntur'
[exultatque et uix animo sua gaudia differt]
barbarus et nusquam lumen detorquet ab illa,
non aliter quam cum pedibus praedator obuncis
deposuit nido leporem Iouis ales in alto;
nulla fuga est capto, spectat sua praemia raptor.
(6.511-518)

(As soon as Philomela is on board the painted ship, and the crew pushes off from the land and starts to row out into the straight, he cries "I have won! My prayers have been answered! The barbarian rejoices, scarcely able to hold off from the pleasures in his mind, and he never takes his eyes off the girl. Not unlike the winged predator of Jove which has deposited a rabbit in its high nest with its hooked talons. There is no escape for the captive victim, the raptor looks over his prize.)

Here, Ovid specifically mentions Jupiter, simultaneously recalling Arachne's depiction of Jupiter raping Asterie in the form of an eagle earlier in Book Six and foreshadowing the simile about the hawk and the dove which Ovid uses to describe Tereus and Philomela after the rape. Again, Jupiter is necessarily associated with Augustus at this point of the poem. During the voyage Tereus can hardly contain his desire; Ovid pointedly refers to Tereus as "barbarus" (barbarian) at 6.515, drawing attention to Tereus' political status and alluding to the violence which takes place upon their arrival.

When they arrive, Tereus rapes Philomela:

iamque iter effectum iamque in sua litora fessis
puppibus exierant, cum rex Pandione natam
in stabula alta trahit, siluis obscura uetustis,
atque ibi pallentem trepidamque et cuncta timentem
et iam cum lacrimis ubi sit germana rogantem
includit fassusque nefas et virginem et unam

ui superat, frustra clamato saepe parente, saepe
sorore sua, magnis super omnia diuis.(6.519-526)

(Now the journey ended, and they stepped out onto his own shores with the ships being tired, when the king drags the daughter of Pandion to a shack on high ground, hidden in an old forest, and there he locks her in, growing pale and trembling and fearing everything and already asking with tears where her sister is. And he told her about the abomination and then overcame the virgin with force, with her screaming in vain for her father, for her sister, for the great gods above all.)

Tereus' barbarian act of violence takes place in the woods, away from the royal court and the trappings of civilization. When Tereus later returns to the palace, he assumes the guise of a dutiful husband and ruler once again and persuades Procne that Philomela has died. It is also significant that Tereus tells Philomela that he is about to violate her right before he commits the rape; Ovid's terse wording juxtaposes the act of speaking with the act of bodily penetration, suggesting that Tereus' statement is a kind of verbal rape which precedes the actual physical act. In raping Philomela, Tereus violates not only the girl's body but also the bounds of marriage and the political ties he has with her father, the king of Athens.⁸⁴ Tereus' verbal assault also underscores the masculine, phallic nature of language.

Ovid compares Tereus to a wolf and to a hawk:

illa tremit velut agna pavens quae saucia cani
ore excussa lupi nondum sibi tuta videtur,
utque columba suo madefactis sanguine plumis
horret adhuc avidosque timet quibus haeserat ungues.
(6.527-530)

(She trembled like a frightened lamb which, wounded by a wolf and thrown out from its mouth, does not yet think that it is safe. She is like a dove, with its feathers soaked in its own blood, still scared and fearing the greedy talons which had caught it.)

⁸⁴ Cf. Patricia Klindienst Joplin, "The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours," in *Rape and Representation* eds. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 41.

The wolf was sacred to the god Mars,⁸⁵ and Ovid uses the animal not only to highlight Tereus' ferocious nature but also to further the connection between Tereus and the god. On Arachne's tapestry, Jupiter, Neptune, and Apollo all commit rapes disguised as birds of prey, and Ovid here connects Tereus to these rapacious gods by means of the hawk simile.

Ovid tells his audience that Philomela calls out for her father, her sister, and the gods during the rape. Of course, Pandion invokes the gods when he asks Tereus to deliver his daughter safely back to him, and he focuses on the longing he will feel as a father for his daughter while she is gone. So, Philomela's calls for help, to some degree, echo her father's plea to Tereus and help to show how treacherous the tyrant is. When Pandion entrusts his daughter to the Thracian king, he asks Tereus to look after Philomela "patrio amore" (with a father's love). Pandion's request recalls the sexual pleasure which Tereus enjoys while watching Philomela coax her father and his desire to be her father as he watches the spectacle. Of course, Tereus himself is also a father, and Procne and Philomela effect their revenge on Tereus by killing his son and thus destroying that element of his life. Ovid's pronounced focus on the father-figure in this politically charged story evokes Augustus' own focus on the political image of the father.

Augustus fashioned his political image in terms of the Roman family, presenting himself as a *pater familias* for Rome itself.⁸⁶ Augustus' cultivation of this image is

⁸⁵ Lesley Adkins and Roy A. Adkins, *Handbook to Life in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 265.

⁸⁶ Cf. Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 301-302: "After Augustus became *pontifex maximus*, he did not move to that priest's official residence near the Temple of Vesta in the Roman Forum. Instead, in a characteristic blurring of private and public domains, part of his house on the Palatine was made *domus publica* and dedicated to the worship of Vesta. The Lararium of this household thus became 'almost *ipso facto* a shrine of the state as well as of Augustus' family.' The Romans, as we have seen, were used to associating and representing the Genius of the *pater familias* with the twin Lares, as is clear, for instance, from the pictorial evidence in Pompeii (Pl. 6). The customary offering to the Genius was flowers and incense and, especially,

perhaps best demonstrated by his show of religious devotion and assumption of various priesthoods. Augustus assumed the position of pontifex maximus in 12 B.C.E., after Marcus Lepidus died.⁸⁷ Just as the Roman *pater familias* maintained the household shrines and led his family in the cultivation of the gods, Augustus propitiated the gods on behalf of the state. He even placed his own family's Lares (*lares Augusti*) at shrines located at crossroads in Rome.⁸⁸ Most importantly, he actually assumed the title "Pater Patriae" (Father of the State) in 2 B.C.E.⁸⁹ The occasion is described by Suetonius:

Patris patriae cognomen universi repentino maximoque consensu detulerunt ei: prima plebs legatione Antium missa; dein, quia non recipiebat, ineunti Romae spectacula frequens et laureata; mox in curia senatus, neque decreto neque adclamatione, sed per Valerium Messalam. Is mandantibus cunctis: 'Quod bonum,' inquit, 'faustumque sit tibi domuique tuae, Caesar Auguste! Sic enim nos perpetuam felicitatem rei p. et laeta huic precari existimamus: senatus te consentiens cum populo R. consalutat patriae patrem.' Cui lacrimans respondit Augustus his verbis— ipsa enim, sicut Messalae, posui—'Compos factus votorum meorum, p. c., quid habeo aliud deos immortales precari, quam ut hunc consensum vestrum ad ultimum finem vitae mihi perferre liceat?'

(All together, they offered Augustus the title "Father of the State" by a quick and very great movement: the plebs sent a delegation to Antium first, then, because he did not accept this, there were crowded spectacles with laurel wreathes for him when he came to Rome. Soon, the senate did

unmixed wine. In 30 B.C. Octavian had received the honor that henceforth a libation to his Genius should be poured at banquets, both public and private (Dio. 51.19.7). The practice was followed widely, as we know from literary and artistic sources. A particularly illustrative example is the addition, in the Lararium of a private house in Pompeii, of a second Genius figure to that of the *pater familias*. It is the Genius of Augustus, as is clear from the accompanying inscription EX S.C. that refers to the senate's decree to honor him with libation. This libation is integral to Horace's encomium on Augustus (C. 4.5.29 ff.), where he is associated with Castor and Hercules who, along with some other gods, had been worshipped together with the Lares Compitales. In the new cult of the Lares Augusti at the *compita*, Augustus was honored not with mere libation or flowers, but with the sacrifice of a bull (Figs. 137, 140), an animal reserved for major gods of the state such as Hercules, Apollo, and Mars Ultor. The choice of a bull rather than a steer (the sacrificial animal of Jupiter and the other great gods) is related to the generative powers of the Genius, a word connected to *gignere*, 'to beget.' Hence, the Genius was always represented as a young figure and his chief insignia was the cornucopia, symbolizing fertility and prosperity. We may note the obvious parallel with the ageless Augustus portrait and the emblematic use of cornucopiae in Augustan iconography."

⁸⁷ Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 300 and Beard, North, and Price, *Religions of Rome: Volume 2, A Sourcebook*, 205-206. Augustus himself writes about his election to this office in the *Res Gestae*.

⁸⁸ Diane Favro, "Making Rome a World City," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* ed. Karl Galinsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 246.

⁸⁹ Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 76.

the same in the curia, neither by decree nor by acclamation, but through Valerius Messala. With everyone calling for it, he said, ‘Caesar Augustus, may that which is good and auspicious come to you and your family! Thus, indeed, we consider this a prayer also for perpetual happiness and prosperity for the republic. The senate in agreement with the Roman people hails you “Father of the State.” Augustus, crying, responded with these words—“indeed I have recorded the very ones, just as with Messala—my wishes have been fulfilled, conscript fathers, what other can I pray for to the immortal gods, than that I be allowed to carry your approval until the final day of my life.”)

Ovid uses Tereus’ lustful reaction to Philomela’s interaction with her father, his desire to be in the father’s position, and Pandion’s request that Tereus look after Philomela as a father loves his daughter to further the connection between Tereus and Augustus.

The figure of the father is significant not only in the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela but also in many other stories in the *Metamorphoses*, including those about Apollo and Daphne, Phaethon, Scylla and Minos, Cinyras and Myrrha. Indeed, the figure of the father stands out in Ovid’s passages about Julius Caesar and Augustus in Book Fifteen. There, Jupiter tells Venus to make Julius Caesar’s soul into a comet, and she visits the Roman senate and catches up the soul, carrying it up into heaven:

dumque tulit, lumen capere atque ignescere sensit
emisitque sinu; luna uolat altius illa
flammiiferumque trahens spatioso limite crinem
stella micat natiue uidens bene facta fatetur
esse suis maiora et vinci gaudet ab illo.
hic sua praeferri quamquam uetat acta paternis,
libera fama tamen nullisque obnoxia iussis
inuitum praefert unaque in parte repugnat.
sic magnus cedit titulis Agamemnonis Atreus,
Aegea sic Theseus, sic Pelea uicit Achilles;
denique, ut exemplis ipsos aequantibus utar,
sic et Saturnus minor est Ioue. Iuppiter arces
temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis,
terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque. (15.846-860)

(And while she carried it, she sensed that it gathered light and caught fire and she released it from her fold; it flew higher than the moon, and, trailing a flaming mane in its wide path, it flickers as a star. And seeing the deeds of his son, he admits that they are greater than his own and he rejoices that he has been surpassed by him. Although Augustus denies that his accomplishments surpass his father's, nevertheless free speech, obedient to no commands, prefers him, unwilling, and does battle against him in only this one area. So, great Atreus yielded to Agamemnon's titles, so Theseus surpasses Aegeus, so Achilles surpasses Peleus. Finally—to use examples equal to these men themselves—so Saturn is lower than Jupiter. Jupiter rules the heavenly citadel and the realms of the triformed world, and the earth is under Augustus—each one is father and ruler.)

Here, Ovid clearly refers to Augustus' status as *Pater Patriae*, although, as will be discussed shortly, his description of the apotheosis of Julius Caesar and his call for Augustus' own deification is comical in tone rather than reverential. It is worth pointing out that Ovid specifically mentions unfettered speech here: "*libera fama tamen nullisque obnoxia iussis*" (15.852) (nevertheless free speech is obedient to no commands). Ovid embeds these words in his generally over-the-top encomium of Augustus, but his statement seems particularly ironic in light of his exile. There was, of course, some pressure on poets of the Augustan Age to praise the princeps and support his political agenda, and certainly open criticism of the emperor was, at the very least, risky.

After the rape, Philomela does not cower for long; she soon reacts by tearing her hair and delivering a damning speech which she begins by calling Tereus "*barbarus*" (6.533) (barbarian), thus drawing attention to Tereus' non-Athenian status and also the broken alliance between the two states. At 6.539, she calls Tereus "*perfidus*" (treacherous man), emphasizing that Tereus has not acted under the "*fides*" of his alliance with her father. Philomela threatens to report the rape, and Tereus grows angry and fearful:

Talibus ira feri postquam commota tyranni

Nec minor hac metus est, causa stimulatus utraque,
 Quo fuit accinctus, vagina liberat ensem
 Arreptamque coma fixis post terga lacertis
 Vincla pati cogit; iugulum Philomela parabat
 Spemque suae mortis viso conceperat ense:
 Ille indignantem et nomen patris usque vocantem
 Luctantemque loqui compresensam forcipe linguam
 Abstulit ense fero. Radix micat ultima linguae,
 Ipsa iacet terraeque tremens inmurmurat atrae,
 Utque salire solet mutilatae cauda colubrae,
 Palpitat et moriens dominae vestigia quaerit.
 Hoc quoque post facinus (vix ausim credere) fertur
 Saepe sua lacerum repetisse libidine corpus. (6.549-562)

(With such words, the anger of the savage tyrant is incited, and not less than this his fear. Motivated by anger and fear, from where it was girded, he frees his sword from its sheath. With her arms tied behind her back, he compels her to suffer fetters, caught by the hair; Philomela offered her throat and, seeing his sword, began to hope for her own death. Tereus, having gripped it with pincers, cut off her tongue with his sword, still crying out against the assault, and calling the name of her father, and trying to speak. The root of her tongue quivers, and the tongue itself lies on the ground, and, trembling, murmurs on the black earth, like the tail of a mutilated snake jumps around, it wriggles and, dying, it seeks the footsteps of its mistress. And even after this outrage (it is hardly possible to believe it!) it is said that he repeatedly attacked her wounded body because of his lust.)

Ovid thus offers a disturbingly vivid description of Tereus cutting out Philomela's tongue and then raping her again and again. He conflates speech and bodily assault, but, instead of assaulting Philomela with a speech about what he is about to do to her, Tereus assaults her, this time by removing her own ability to speak. Ovid's description of the root of her tongue moving around in her mouth suggests that she is in the middle of crying out against him when he mutilates her, and the horrifying picture of her tongue crawling over to her feet, trying to speak as it dies slowly, draws special attention to the scene. Tereus, then, uses three weapons against Philomela—his own tongue, his penis, and his sword. Tereus' telling her that he is about to rape her, his actual rape of her body, and his

assault against her tongue all constitute acts of power over Philomela. Philomela's aggressive speech after the initial rape challenges Tereus' masculine authority over her, and the tyrant will not tolerate such verbal or bodily resistance. Thus, Ovid presents speech in general as a hyper-masculine form of communication.

In general, with the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela, Ovid offers a commentary on kingship and tyranny. Tereus starts out as a dutiful husband and ruler, but, when his passion is ignited, his position as tyrant makes it possible for him to commit such an outrage. Specifically, Ovid uses the story as an allegory for the politics of Augustan Rome. Tereus represents Augustus, and Philomela stands for the Roman people. Although the ideal Roman citizen is characterized by masculine "virtus," the body of Rome itself is often characterized as feminine, in the general manner of cities in the ancient world. Roma, the spirit of the city, was represented as a goddess and, in fact, played a not insignificant role in Augustan Age propaganda, appearing, for example, on the Ara Pacis Augustae and in the pediment of the temple of Mars Ultor.⁹⁰ The goddess also appears on the Gemma Augustea seated next to Augustus,⁹¹ almost in the manner of a consort. Under Augustus, many other goddesses—including Venus, Pax, Concordia, Victoria, Ceres, and Tellus Mater—were also called upon as part of the general characterization of the new regime. The femininity of Rome is also evidenced by the figure of Lucretia, whose bodily violation gives rise to the idea of Roman virtue as it develops in the Republic. Tereus' rape of Philomela stands for the violation of Roma herself and the collective political body of the Roman citizenry. As a son of Mars,

⁹⁰ Ibid., 105-111.

⁹¹ Ibid., 120.

Tereus, like Augustus, is another Romulus (also associated with rape) although, unlike Romulus, he violates his charge rather than protects it.

Tereus continues to rape Philomela for a year, and she is prevented from escaping by a constant guard:

Signa deus bis sex acto lustraverat anno;
 quid faciat Philomela? fugam custodia claudit,
 structa rigent solido stabulorum moenia saxo,
 os mutum facti caret indice. grande doloris
 ingenium est, miserisque venit sollertia rebus.
 stamina barbarica suspendit callida tela
 purpureasque notas filis intexuit albis,
 indicium sceleris, perfectaue tradidit uni,
 utque ferat dominae, gestu rogat, illa rogata
 pertulit ad Procnen; nescit quid tradat in illis.
 euoluit uestes saeui matrona tyranni
 germanaeque suae carmen miserabile legit
 et (mirum potuisse) silet. dolor ora repressit,
 uerbaque quaerenti satis indignantia linguae
 defuerunt; nec flere uacat, sed fasque nefasque
 confusura ruit poenaeque in imagine tota est.(6.570-586)

(The sun-god showed his twelve signs as the year passed. What has Philomela been doing? A guard keeps her from flight, the walls of her quarters built with solid rock stand firm, her mute mouth lacks the ability to tell of the deed. Terrible grief is inventive, and cunning arts come from miserable situations. She suspended a cunning warp on a barbarian loom, and she wove purple signs in white threads, a testament of the outrage, and she handed the finished work to her serving woman, asking her with gestures to take it to the queen. She, once asked, took the work to Procne. She did not know what she carried in that work. The wife of the tyrant unrolls the tapestry and reads the miserable poem of her sister—and she says nothing (a miracle to be able!). Grief stifled her voice, and the words which she sought to express her outrage failed her—there were no words powerful enough. She cannot cry, and she rushes on, confusing right and wrong, and her every thought is about revenge.)

Philomela hung a cunning web on a barbarian loom (6.575, “stamina barbarica suspendit callida tela”). Philomela’s hanging of the warp threads (suspendere) echoes Arachne’s own hanging (pendere) earlier in the book. Also, Philomela’s loom is “barbaricus”

(barbarian) just like Tereus, and the repetition of the adjective links Tereus' own assaulting body with Philomela's weaving apparatus. In weaving her story into the masculine warp threads, Philomela symbolically assaults Tereus just as he has assaulted her. Furthermore, Philomela weaves the story of the rape into the tapestry with purple thread on a white background, and the finished tapestry represents her own broken body. She then asks her servant to take it to Procne by means of gestures, again communicating without speech. The communication between Philomela and Procne is a feminine form of communication in that the transaction between the women involves only images. Of course, weaving is necessarily a feminine means of expression in epic, so the fact that the message involves a woven product also characterizes the communication as feminine.

Philomela, like Minerva earlier in the Book, uses her shuttle as a weapon, although she uses it as an instrument of subversive speech rather than an instrument for physical assault; thus, Philomela's shuttle is like Ovid's own writing instrument. When the servant takes the tapestry to the queen, Procne "euoluit" (unrolls) the tapestry and reads her sister's "notas" (signs). Indeed, Procne unrolls the tapestry just as any ancient reader would unroll the scrolls on which the *Metamorphoses* was written.⁹² Ovid even uses the verb "legere" to describe Procne's deciphering of her sister's signs. Furthermore, Ovid refers to Philomela's tapestry as a "carmen" (poem) at 6.582, thus emphasizing the connection between Philomela's tapestry and his own epic. It is not clear what Philomela's "notae" are. Some scholars argue that Philomela weaves letters into her tapestry and sends a woven letter to Procne while others believe that Philomela weaves pictures of her story, in which case Procne actual reads images. I believe that

⁹² John Van Sickle has pointed out that the ancient book-roll "imposes linear movement through or back. No skipping around or dipping in..." in, "The Book-Roll and Some Conventions of the Poetic Book," *Arethusa* 13, no. 1 (1980), 5.

Philomela weaves images into her tapestry rather than letters but that the ambiguity of Ovid's words is deliberate. By only indicating that Philomela weaves "purpureasque notas" into "filis albis," Ovid allows for both interpretations, making it easy for his audience to see his own epic poem as a tapestry of purple signs.⁹³ Since both tapestries feature purple on white, Ovid clearly connects Philomela's defiant tapestry to Arachne's art, which, as an ekphrasis, certainly features images rather than words.

The poet identifies with Philomela—both as a Roman citizen and, more importantly, as an artist. Ovid uses Tereus' cruel act of cutting out Philomela's tongue to indicate the regulation of speech under Augustus. Ovid recognizes that he cannot exercise true freedom of speech in his art; like Philomela, his literary tongue has been excised. Like Philomela, Ovid's poetic "ingenium" is motivated by extreme circumstances, and he too weaves purple signs into the white background of his papyrus-roll, which offers a true account to challenge the artificial imagery promulgated by the politically powerful.⁹⁴

The *Metamorphoses* as Expanded Ekphrasis

Ovid begins the *Metamorphoses* with the following lines:

In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas
corpora; di, coeptis (nam uos mutastis et illa)
aspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi

⁹³ There is some evidence for the use of reddish ink in Ovid's day, and, in the later empire, the emperor used purple ink to sign documents.

⁹⁴ While vellum was used for books, papyrus was the material of choice for books in the Augustan period. Papyrus rolls were created by splitting the papyrus stems and laying the fibers in layers, first in a parallel arrangement and then at a ninety degree angle to the first layer. The layers were then pressed together, the juices from the plant binding the fibers in the process. Finally, the surface was made smooth by rubbing with a pumice stone or similar object. At times, cedar oil was used to protect against worms. Thus, Ovid's text, written on a papyrus roll, would look like signs on a woven background. *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.(1.1-4)

(My mind is motivated to tell of forms changed into new bodies; you gods (for you have changed these also) aspire me to new beginnings and draw out an immortal song from the initial origin of the world to my own times.)

In the first line, Ovid tells his audience that he will speak of “formae” (shapes, images) changed into new “corpora” (bodies). Ovid seems to indicate that the subject of his poem is bodily transformations—which of course it is—but he also reveals in this first line that he will change ekphrasis in his epic. The word “forma” can mean “appearance,” “beauty,” “shape,” or “figure,” and it is close in meaning to “species” (look, appearance), “imago” (representation, image), and “vultus” (face, countenance). Ovid uses it here because “forma,” like these other words, is suggestive of ekphrasis. Not only does it carry a sense of appearance and beauty, but it also suggests the creation of a work of art. In fact, Vergil uses “informare” (to give shape to, to fashion) in the *Aeneid* at 8.447 for the action of Vulcan and the Cyclopes when they begin to make Aeneas’ shield. In this first line of the poem, Ovid intimates that he will narrate (dicere) a metamorphosis of the body (corpus) of ekphrasis. In line 2, Ovid playfully continues, indicating to his audience that he has changed the meter of his poetry from elegiac to dactylic hexameter and that his epic will constitute a significant change—both for himself and for the epic body itself.

Ovid thus introduces the poem, and his audience encounters the artistic transformation right away in the initial cosmogony. Ovid begins his poem with an ekphrasis which describes the universe as a work of art. Denis Feeney and Stephen Wheeler have both observed that Ovid’s account of creation reads like an epic

ekphrasis,⁹⁵ and Wheeler, in fact, has argued that Ovid's account is based on Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*, also reflecting elements of Hesiod's *Theogony*, Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautika*, and Vergil's *Aeneid*. Ovid presents the creator of the universe, who is initially called "deus et melior natura" (1.21) (a god or better nature), as "mundi fabricator" (1.57) (fashioner of the world) and "opifex rerum" (1.79) (artisan of things).⁹⁶ Everything at first is Chaos, which is "rudis indigestaque moles" (1.7) (an unrefined and disordered mass) and "pondus iners" (1.8) (an inert weight)—in other words, raw materials for artistic expression.⁹⁷ Wheeler points to Ovid's use of verbs, such as "iussit" (he ordered) and "addidit" (he added), "whose subject is the creator himself,"⁹⁸ his depiction of spatial arrangements and distinct elements,⁹⁹ and the numerous similarities to the more traditional ekphrases in the poem.¹⁰⁰ He also points to the vividness of the entire passage:

In addition to defining the relative position of the four parts of the universe, Ovid enumerates the contents of each region exhaustively, presumably to achieve vividness. According to rhetorical theory, enumeration helps effect visual immediacy or *enargeia*—the goal of ekphrasis. So Ovid catalogs bodies of fresh water (springs, swamps, lakes, and rivers, 38-43), terrestrial formations (plains, valleys, forests, and mountains, 43-44), meteorological phenomena (fog, clouds, thunder, lightning, and winds, 54-66), and the *animalia* that inhabit each region (72-75)....Ovid differs from Balbus in that he concludes each regional catalogue (water, earth, and air) with a fully developed picture, a technique that parallels the description of vignettes on visual works of art.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ D. C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 189 note 4 and Stephen M. Wheeler, "Imago Mundi: Another View of the Creation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *The American Journal of Philology* Volume 116, Number 1 (1995), 95-121.

⁹⁶ Wheeler, "Imago Mundi: Another View of the Creation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," 106.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 105-106.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

Certainly these are the characteristics of ekphrasis. While Wheeler recognizes the important connection between Ovid's opening cosmogony and the ekphrasis about Arachne's tapestry,¹⁰² he does not recognize that Ovid presents the universe as an anthropomorphic body or that the cosmogony sets the stage for the rest of the epic.

Ovid follows Hesiod in his presentation of the universe as a body. He begins the cosmogony with these lines:

Ante mare et terras et quod tegit omnia caelum
unus erat toto naturae vultus in orbe,
quem dixere Chaos; rudis indigestaque moles
nec quidquam nisi pondus iners congestaque eodem
non bene iunctarum discordia semina rerum. (1.5-9)

(Before the sea and the lands and the sky which touches everything, there was one face in the whole circle of the natural world, which men have called Chaos; it was an unrefined and disordered mass, not anything except inert weight and a stagnant heap of discordant, incompatible basic matter.)

Ovid uses the term "vultus" (face, countenance) to describe the universe, thereby suggesting that the universe is anthropomorphic in form.¹⁰³ Moreover, he calls the universe "totus naturae orbis" (the whole circle of nature). Even in its elementary stage, Ovid's universe, like Hesiod's, is circular.

Later in the cosmogony he says:

utque erat et tellus illic et pontus et aer,
sic erat instabilis tellus, innabilis unda,
lucis egens aer; nulli sua forma manebat
obstabatque aliis aliud, quia corpore in uno
frigida pugnabant calidis, umentia siccis,
mollia cum duris, sine pondere habentia pondus. (1.15-20)

(There was earth there and sea and air, but thus the earth was unstable, the waves unswimmable, the air lacking light. None of these elements maintained its own shape, and things stood against each other, because

¹⁰² Ibid., 105-106 and 114.

¹⁰³ Ovid uses "vultus" at 3.185 and 8.529, for example, for actual divine and human faces.

cold things fought with hot, wet with dry, soft with hard, things having weight against things without weight—in one body.)

Here, Ovid uses the term “corpus” (body) to describe the rudimentary universe, and he even alludes to manifestations of bodily fluids and conditions which characterize gender. His list of “frigida” (cold things) and “calida” (hot things), “unmentia” (wet things) and “sicca” (dry things), “mollia” (soft things) and “dura” (hard things), and “habentia pondus” (things having weight) and “sine pondere” (weightless things) describes female bodies and male bodies, respectively. All of these conditions are at odds with each other in the early stages of development. Ovid’s universe is corporeal in nature just like Hesiod’s universe.

Ovid again points out the circular nature of the universe later in the cosmogony:

densior his tellus elementaque grandia traxit
et pressa est gravitate sua; circumfluit umor
ultima possedit solidumque coercit orbem.
sic ubi dispositam quisquis fuit ille deorum
congeriem secuit sectamque in membra redegit,
principio terram, ne non aequalis ab omni
parte foret, magni speciem glomeravit in orbis.
(1.29-35)

(The earth was denser than these and dragged down the bigger elements and sank down by its own weight. The water which flows around took the last position and reigned in the solid circle. Thus, when he, whoever of the gods it was, divided the arranged mass and reduced it, divided, into its limbs, in the beginning he moulded the earth into the image of a great circle, so that it would be equal in form in every part.)

First, Ovid further describes the universe in bodily terms, as evidenced by his use of “membra” (limbs) at 1.33. Again, the world is “solidus orbis” (a solid circle) at 1.31, and the earth is “magnus orbis” (a great circle) at 1.34-35. Of course, “orbis” may mean “orb, sphere” here, but, in any case, the round, circular shape is significant. As discussed earlier, circular shapes tend to signify femininity, and the body of the earth (tellus, terra),

certainly, is feminine. Ovid reminds his audience of the circular shape of the world many times throughout the course of the poem; “orbis” occurs at least 95 times in the *Metamorphoses*. Every book features multiple appearances of the word, primarily to indicate “earth” or “world.” There are many other circular shapes in the universe of the poem—balls, pools of water, pebbles, rings of trees, shields, wreathes, a discus, and even the island of Crete (8.100). Thus, Ovid’s circle of earth has many circular shapes upon it, just like Achilles’ shield. Ovid’s poetic universe not only resembles the circular body of Hesiod’s universe but, more importantly, Pandora’s own circular body in the *Theogony*. Second, Ovid does not say that the creator-god forms a great circle; he says that the creator-god forms the “species” (image, likeness) of a great circle. In this way, Ovid signifies that the earth is an artistic representation, and he points to the visual quality of the art. He thus reveals that the entire cosmogony is an ekphrasis. His wording exactly recalls Hesiod’s wording in introducing Pandora in the *Theogony*, where Hesiod says that the craftsman-god makes “παρθένῳ αἰδοίῃ ἵκελον” (*Theogony*, 572) (the likeness of a shy maiden).

Ovid also connects the formation of the earth to his description of Arachne in Book Six, as Wheeler has noted.¹⁰⁴ In Book Six, Ovid describes Arachne’s art:

nec factas solum uestes, spectare iuuabat
 tum quoque cum fierent; tantus decor adfuit arti!
 siue rudem primos lanam glomerabat in orbes,
 seu digitis subigebat opus repetitaque longo
 uellera molliabat nebulas aequantia tractu,
 siue leui teretem uersabat pollice fusum,
 seu pingebat acu, scires a Pallade doctam.(6.17-23)

(Not only was it pleasing to see her finished works, but it was also pleasing to watch as they were made. There was such beauty in her art! Whether she was gathering the raw wool into balls, or she was working

¹⁰⁴ Wheeler, “Imago Mundi: Another View of the Creation in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,” 105-106.

the ball under her fingers, softening the fleece until it was like puffy clouds, pulling it repeatedly into a long thread, or she was turning the polished spindle with her delicate thumb, or she was painting her work with her embroidery needle, you would know that she had been taught by Pallas.)

Ovid indicates that it is pleasing to watch Arachne as she worked, just as it is pleasing to Ovid's own audience to experience the formation of the universe. Ovid uses the exact same language to describe Arachne rolling the wool into balls as he does in describing the creator-god forming the earth into a round object. The words "rudis" (raw), "glomerare" (to gather together, to form a heap or ball), and "orbis" (circle, sphere) appear in both passages. Arachne's woven work, of course, is inextricably tied to her own body, and, as has been shown, the tapestry she creates in the competition against Minerva is closely tied to Ovid's own poem.

That Ovid fashions the universe in terms of the human body is seen, finally, in his description of the origins of man. He writes:

Sanctius his animal mentisque capacius altae
deerat adhuc et quod dominari in cetera posset.
natus homo est, siue hunc diuino semine fecit
ille opifex rerum, mundi melioris origo,
siue recens tellus seductaque nuper ab alto
aethere cognati retinebat semina caeli,
quam satus Iapeto mixtam pluuiaribus undis
finxit in effigiem moderantum cuncta deorum.
pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram,
os homini sublime dedit caelumque uidere
iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere uultus.
sic modo quae fuerat rudis et sine imagine tellus
induit ignotas hominum conuersa figuras. (1.76-88)

(An animal more sacred than these and more capable of high thought was still missing—one which could be dominant over the rest. Man was born, whether that artisan of things, a creator of the better world, made him out of divine semen, or the earth, just recently lead away from the high air, retained the elements of the kindred sky, that earth which the son of Iapetos mixed with rainwater and fashioned into an image of the

controlling gods. While the rest of the animals look at the earth prone, he gave to man a raised face and he ordered him to see the sky and to carry his face towards the stars, standing erect. Thus, the earth, which had been raw and without image, newly changed, clothed itself with the figures of men, previously unknown.)

Ovid thus offers two explanations for mankind's origin. Anderson argues that the second, longer account is Ovid's preferred aetiology,¹⁰⁵ but both accounts link the formation of the earth with the formation of humans. In the first explanation, the same creator-god who fashions the universe fashions mankind, which suggests that both are bodily entities, especially since Ovid specifies that the creator-god makes man "diuino semine" (from divine semen). In the second explanation, he equates the earth and human in their common origin from raw material. Also, both are images, and both are described as having a "vultus." Ovid's reference to the myth of Prometheus creating humans from clay and water further recalls Hesiod's description of Hephaistos making Pandora.

Moreover, Ovid specifically refers to the uterus of the earth at several points in the poem. In Book Two, for example, he writes:

Alma tamen Tellus, ut erat circumdata ponto,
inter aquas pelagi contractosque undique fontes
qui se condiderant in opacae uiscera matris,
sustulit oppressos collo tenus arida uultus
opposuitque manum fronti magnoque tremore
omnia concutiens paulum subsedit et infra
quam solet esse fuit fractaque ita uoce locuta
est...(2.272-278)

(Nourishing earth, as she was encircled by the sea, among the waters of the sea and the contracting springs everywhere, which had buried themselves in the inner recesses of their dark mother, parched by the heat as far as her neck, raised up her oppressed face and put her hand on her brow and with a great tremor shaking everything sat down a bit even lower than she was accustomed to, and spoke thus in a broken voice...)

¹⁰⁵ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 1-5*, 160.

In this passage, Ovid calls the inner recesses of the earth's body "viscera." This word not only indicates "the entrails" or "guts," but, like "venter" in Latin and "γαστήρ" and "μηδύς" in Greek, it is commonly used to mean "uterus."¹⁰⁶ Ovid refers to the earth's "viscera" again in Book Seven, when he describes the armed soldiers which grow from the teeth of the dragon which Cadmus slays at Thebes:

...galea tum sumit aena
uipereos dentes et aratos spargit in agros.
semina mollit humus ualido praetincta ueneno
et crescunt fiuntque sati noua corpora dentes;
utque hominis speciem materna sumit in aluo
perque suos intus numeros componitur infans
nec nisi maturus communes exit in auras,
sic ubi uisceribus grauidae telluris imago
effecta est hominis, feto consurgit in aruo,
quodque magis mirum est, simul edita concutit
arma. (7.121-130)

(Then he takes the teeth of the dragon from a bronze helmet and scattered them in the ploughed fields. The seeds, moistened beforehand with venom, soften the earth, and grow and the sown teeth become new bodies. Just as a baby takes the form of a human in the maternal womb and inside it is composed through its numerous parts into a whole, and it does not exit into the world outside until it is complete, thus when the image of a man was completed in the uterus of the pregnant earth, from in the fertile field he emerged—something which was even more marvellous—he clashed the arms which were born with him.)

In this passage, the sown teeth are nurtured in the womb (viscera) of the earth and emerge from the soil just as a baby emerges from its mother's body.

The last lines of the passage are especially significant in that Ovid says the earth, transformed from its unrefined beginning, "induit" (decks out, clothes, adorns) itself. Again, Ovid does not say that the earth adorns itself with humans; he says that the earth adorns itself "figuras hominum" (with the figures of humans), again using language

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 2.340 and Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, 10.3.4. The word is also used to mean "child," the product of the womb.

which is associated with ekphrasis. Ovid thus suggests that humans adorn the earth just like *daidala* adorn Achilles' shield. Later in Book One, after the flood has wiped away everything, Deucalion and Pyrrha repopulate the land by throwing rocks over their shoulders. Ovid describes the stones as they soften and grow into humans as sculptures coming to life. In fact, the stones come to life as the warriors which grow out of the teeth of the dragon in Book Seven emerge from the earth and as Pygmalion's beautiful marble statue softens and comes to life right before his eyes in Book Ten. Ovid even compares the transforming stones to statues emerging from marble:

sed uti de marmore coepta
non exacta satis rudibusque simillima signis...
(1.405-406)

(...but just as statues begun from marble, not completed yet but very
similar to unrefined images...)

As the sun heats up the wet surface of the earth, other forms of life spring into existence.

Ovid writes:

ergo ubi diluvio tellus lutulenta recenti
solibus aetheriis altoque recanduit aestu,
edidit innumeras species partimque figuras
rettulit antiquas, partim noua monstra creauit.
(1.434-437)

(Therefore, when the earth, muddy from the recent flood, grew hot from
the ethereal sun beams and high heat, put forth innumerable forms. In part,
she restored the old figures, and in part she gave birth to new wonders.)

Ovid echoes his description of the earth putting forth humans in the cosmogony in this passage, and here too the earth creates "figuras." After describing the birth of new "species" and "figurae" from earth, Ovid begins his account of Apollo's slaying of the Python, which is one of the earth's newly created "figurae." From there, he narrates the tale of Apollo and Daphne, and the various episodes of the epic continue.

The larger landscape of the poem is the product of the opening cosmogony; thus, the entire poem is about a work of art which exhibits internal narrative. The individual stories of the epic are scenes which adorn that work of art, and the characters of the stories in the larger poem are the “*figurae hominum*” which act in those scenes. Like Hesiod, Ovid’s cosmogony about the physical universe mirrors the literary cosmogony of his poem; as the physical universe takes shape, so does his epic.¹⁰⁷ Ovid’s cosmogony presents the world as work of art, and the rest of the poem is an extended ekphrasis which describes the activities of that circular world in detail.¹⁰⁸ In fact, all of the activities which are represented on Achilles’ shield are found in the *Metamorphoses*. There are the celestial bodies and the various divisions of the universe, the ocean, cities at peace, cities at war, marriages, councils for judgment, herds of livestock, hunting, agricultural scenes, religious ritual, and, of course, Daedalus and the Labyrinth. Moreover, the three rough divisions of the epic echo the rough divisions of Homer’s ekphrasis about Achilles’ shield. That ekphrasis begins with a description of the main areas of the universe, then proceeds to a description of various activities on the earth—weddings, the administration of justice, war, harvesting, feasting, herding—and, finally, ends with a specific description of a religious ritual at Knossos. The *Metamorphoses* begins with a description of the main areas of the universe, then proceeds to a lengthy description of activities which occur on the earth, then finally ends in a description of a specific place, Rome. Ultimately, the poem ends with a description of religious ritual in Rome—augury

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Wheeler, “Imago Mundi: Another View of the Creation in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,” 117: “The *deus et melior natura* may therefore be read as a figure for the poet, and the ordering of the universe as a metaphor for creation of the poem; thus, the ‘real’ subject of Ovid’s cosmogony may be the literary creation of the *Metamorphoses*, just as the shield of Achilles is emblematic of the creation of the *Iliad*.” Wheeler goes on to argue that the cosmogony does not “fully represent the metamorphic world of the poem,” however.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Andrew Laird, “Sounding out Ekphrasis: Art and Text in Catullus 64,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993), 29-30.

for kingship, the bringing of Aesculapius into the city, and the deification of Julius Caesar. The landscape of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is essentially the surface of Achilles' shield, magnified and expanded.

Ovid narrates the whole of the *Metamorphoses* with extreme vividness and achieves *enargeia* not just in the opening cosmogony but throughout the poem.¹⁰⁹ For example, Book Two begins with the following lines:

Regia Solis erat sublimibus alta columnis,
 clara micante auro flammasque imitante pyropo,
 cuius ebur nitidum fastigia summa tegebat,
 argenti biforesh radiabant lumine ualuae.
 materiam superabat opus; nam Mulciber illic
 aequora caelarat medias cingentia terras
 terrarumque orbem caelumque quod imminet orbi.
 (2.1-7)

(There was the palace of the Sun, lofty on high columns, bright with shimmering gold and with bronze imitating flames, the white ivory of which touched the highest gables, and double doors were brilliant with glimmering silver. The workmanship surpassed the material. For Mulciber had carved there the oceans, encompassing the central land and the circle of lands and the sky which hangs over the circle.)

The book begins with, as Anderson writes, "the formulaic words that announce an ekphrasis."¹¹⁰ "Regia Solis erat" does indeed announce the ekphrasis about the carvings on the doors which begins in line 5, but these words also introduce the whole story of Phaethon as an ekphrasis.¹¹¹ The ekphrasis about the doors continues:

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Philip Hardie, *Ovid's Poetics of Illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 177: "Ovid's universal narrative allusively launches itself under the guise of ekphrasis, the description of a work of art coextensive with reality itself. A consequence is that all later acts of viewing in the poem, whether by characters in the text or by the reader, are viewings of events that take place within the demiurge's/Ovid's masterwork. If this universe is a work of art, of that magical, Hephaestean and Daedalean, kind endowed with the power of movement, then all particular narratives and descriptions within the universe are examples of ekphrasis."

¹¹⁰ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 1-5*, 229.

¹¹¹ Cf. Robert Brown, "The Palace of the Sun in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," in *Homo Viator: Classical Essays for John Bramble* eds. Michael Whitby, Philip Hardie, and Mary White (Oak Park, Illinois: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1987), 213, where he argues that the ekphrasis actually has three parts

caeruleos habet unda deos, Tritona canorum
 Proteaque ambiguum ballenarumque prementem
 Aegaeona suis immania terga lacertis
 Doridaque et natas, quarum pars nare uidetur,
 pars in mole sedens uirides siccare capillos,
 pisce uehi quaedam; facies non omnibus una,
 non diuersa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum.
 terra uiros urbesque gerit siluasque ferasque
 fluminaque et nymphas et cetera numina ruris.
 haec super imposita est caeli fulgentis imago
 signaque sex foribus dextris totidemque sinistris.
 (2.8-18)

(The sea holds the blue gods: melodius Triton and ambiguous Proteus and Aegaeon pressing down on the huge backs of whales with his arms, and Doris and her daughters, some of these seem to swim, some seem to dry their sea-green hair sitting on a rock, and some seem to be carried on fish. There is not just one appearance for them all, but they are not completely different, as is fitting for sisters. The land has men and cities and forests and wild animals and rivers and nymphs and the rest of the deities of the countryside. Above these was set the image of the shining sky, six signs of the zodiac on the right door and six on the left.)

Ovid echoes the ekphrastic cosmogony in Book One, even repeating some of his earlier language. Moreover, he offers a synopsis of the descriptive passages which he narrates in the rest of the tale.

Phaethon climbs up the steps of the palace and approaches his father:

Quo simul accliui Clymeneia limite proles
 uenit et intrauit dubitati tecta parentis,
 protinus ad patrios uertit uestigia uultus
 consistitque procul; neque enim propiora ferebat
 lumina. purpurea uelatus ueste sedebat
 in solio Phoebus claris lucente smaragdis.
 a dextra laeuaque Dies et Mensis et Annus
 Saeculaque et positae spatiis aequalibus Horae;
 Verque nouum stabat cinctum florente corona,
 stabat nuda Aestas et spicea sarta gerebat,
 stabat et Autumnus calcatis sordidus uuis,
 et glacialis Hiems canos hirsuta capillos.

within it, an ekphrasis about the palace, the ekphrasis about the doors, and an ekphrasis about the Sun and his retinue. On 219, Brown writes: "In literary historical terms, Ovid has combined Vergil's motif of door carvings with Homer's description of the shield of Achilles."

inde loco medius rerum nouitate pauentem
 Sol oculis iuuenem quibus aspicit omnia uidit
 'quae'que 'uiae tibi causa? quid hac' ait 'arce petisti,
 progenies, Phaethon, haud infitianda parenti?'
 (2.19-34)

(When the child of Clymene came to that place on the steep path and entered the house of his doubted father, right away he turned his footsteps towards his father's face, and he stood at a distance. Indeed, he could not endure the brilliant rays any closer. Phoebus was sitting, wearing a purple robe, on his throne which gleamed with sparking emeralds. On his right and left stood Day and Month and Year and Century and the Seasons, positioned at equal distances. New Spring stood wreathed with a floral crown. Nude Summer stood there and wore a garland of grain. Autumn stood, stained by the smashed grape, and icy Winter covered with white hair. There, in the middle of these, the Sun, whose eyes see everything, saw the youth, who was trembling at the new sights, and said "Why have you come? Why have you sought this citadel, Phaethon, son—who need not be denied by his father?)

Ovid describes the scene from Phaethon's perspective here and makes it especially vivid for his audience. More importantly, Ovid presents this passage as another ekphrasis. The palace of the Sun is "clara micante auro flammasque imitante pyropo" (bright with shimmering gold and bronze which imitates flames), and the doors themselves gleam "argenti lumine" (with glimmering silver). The vision before Ovid's audience here is also gleaming; there are "lumina" (brilliant rays) and a throne which "claris lucente smaragdis" (gleamed with sparkling emeralds). Ovid not only describes this scene in great detail, but he mimics the directional language of the earlier ekphrasis, indicating that Day, Month, Year, and Century are located "a dextra laeuaque" (on the right and left), for example. In the ekphrasis of the doors, he gives the same directions in describing the zodiac signs engraved "dextris" (on the right door) and "sinistris" (on the left door). He also indicates that the Seasons are "positae spatiis aequalibus" (positioned at equal distances) and that the Sun sits "medius rerum" (in the middle of these), as if he

is describing a work of art. Just as he describes colors in the ekphrasis—“caeruleus” and “viridis”—he describes the striking colors of the scene—“purpureus” and “canus.” The daughters of Doris drying their “uirides capillos” (sea-green hair) in the ekphrasis about the doors, he describes Winter’s “canos capillos” (white hair) in this passage.

When Phaethon convinces his father to let him drive his divine chariot across the sky, Ovid offers the same bird’s eye view of the universe which he presents in the opening cosmogony and in the ekphrasis about the doors. In the larger narrative, however, Ovid describes the same scenes in much greater detail. Phaethon sees not just “signa” (the signs of the zodiac) but the Wagon, the Serpent, and Bootes. All of these constellations are accomplishing their own actions as Phaethon sees them. For example, the oxen of the Wagon, which consists of seven stars called the “Septemtriones” by the Romans,¹¹² grow hot and attempt to cool themselves in the ocean:

Tum primum radiis gelidi caluere Triones
et vetito frustra temptarunt aequore tingi...(2.171-
172)

(Then, for the first time, the cold Oxen grow hot by the rays and attempted
in vain to wet themselves in the forbidden sea...)

Likewise, the Serpent starts to grow angrier because of the fire, and Bootes tries to flee. These constellations adorn the sky just like Hephaistos’ *daidala* adorn Achilles’ shield, and, just like Hephaistos’ *daidala*, they exhibit internal narrative. Phaethon looks down from his chariot and sees the lands on the circle of earth. Ovid writes:

quid faciat? multum caeli post terga relictum,
ante oculos plus est. animo metitur utrumque
et modo quos illi fatum contingere non est
prospicit occasus, interdum respicit ortus,
quidque agat ignarus stupet et nec frena remitiit
nec retinere ualet nec nomina nouit equorum.

¹¹² Anderson, *Ovid’s Metamorphoses Books 1-5*, 248.

sparsa quoque in uario passim miracula caelo
 uastarumque uidet trepidus simulacra ferarum.
 est locus, in geminos ubi bracchia concauat arcus
 Scorpios et cauda flexisque utrimque lacertis
 porrigat in spatium signorum membra duorum;
 hunc puer ut nigri madidum sudore ueneni
 uulnera curuata minitantem cuspide uidit,
 mentis inops gelida formidine lora remisit.)2.187-
 200)

(What shall he do? Much of the sky is behind his back, but more is in front of his eyes. He measures each one in his mind. At times, he looks to the east, at times to the west, which he is destined never to reach. Not knowing what to do, he is dazed, and he neither releases the reins nor is strong enough to hold them, and does not know the names of the horses. Also, fearfully, he sees scattered wonders and representations of huge beasts in various parts of the sky. There is a place where the Scorpion bends out his arms in twin arcs and, with his tail and arms flexed out on both sides, he stretches his limbs into the space of two zodiac signs. As the boy saw this sign, moist with venomous sweat, threatening to wound him with his curved tail, without his wits because of icy fear, he dropped the reins.)

In this passage, Ovid expands on his descriptions of the sky in both the opening cosmogony and the ekphrasis about the design on the doors; he offers a much more detailed and colorful account than in either of his earlier presentations. In the opening cosmogony, Ovid describes the “sidera” (1.71) (stars), the “astra” (1.73), and the “formae deorum” (1.73) (divine forms) which animate the sky; and in the ekphrasis of the doors he describes the “signa” (2.18) which adorn them. Here, Ovid describes the “miracula” (wonders) and “simulacra” (representations) of huge beasts which adorn the sky, once again treating the sky as a work of art. Ovid shows his audience the “signa” which adorn the doors of the palace of the Sun up close; his animated description of Scorpio, for example, represents the height of poetic embellishment. Again, he offers the loose directional cues which are characteristic of ekphrasis, once again from the perspective of

Phaethon.¹¹³ Phaethon is stunned and captivated by the images in the sky, and, like the Myrmidons when faced with the *daidala* on Achilles' shield, he reacts to the very lifelike representation of the Scorpion with fear.

The chariot continues in its uncontrolled flight, and Ovid elaborates on both his initial cosmogony and the ekphrasis about the engravings on the doors as he describes in exaggerated detail how the various regions of the earth react to the fiery carriage. He describes the earth in even more specific and poetic detail than earlier in the poem; he gives long lists of specific rivers, mountains, and cities, for example, and the earth herself is much more animated. At 2.272, he writes:

Alma tamen tellus, ut erat circumdata ponto,
inter aquas pelagi contractosque undique fontes
qui se condiderant in opacae uiscera matris,
sustulit oppressos collo tenus arida uultus
opposuitque manum fronti magnoque tremore
omnia concutiens paulum subsedit et infra
quam solet esse fuit fractaque ita uoce locuta
est...(2.272-278)

(Nourishing earth, as she was encircled by the sea, among the waters of the sea and the contracting springs everywhere, which had buried themselves in the bowels of their dark mother, parched by the heat as far as her neck, raised up her oppressed face and put her hand on her brow and with a great tremor shaking everything sat down a bit even lower than she was accustomed to, and spoke thus in a broken voice...)

Ovid also includes obvious references to the ekphrasis of the doors. For example, he describes how Nereus, Doris, and their daughters hide in their hot caves:

ima petunt pisces nec se super aequora curui
tollere consuetas audent delphines in auras;
corpora phocarum summo resupina profundo
exanimata natant; ipsum quoque Nerea fama est
Doridaque et natas tepidis latuisse sub antris;
ter Neptunus aquis cum toruo bracchia uultu

¹¹³ When Aeneas views the pictures on the walls of the temple of Juno in the *Aeneid*, for example, he is stunned by them.

exserere ausus erat, ter non tulit aeris ignes. (2.265-271)

(Fish seek the lowest depths, and the dolphins no longer dare to raise themselves curving over the sea into their customary air. The bodies of seals swim lifeless prostrate with upturned bellies; it is said that even Nereus and Doris and their daughters hid in tepid caves. Three times, Neptune dared to raise his arms with his fierce face out from the water, three times he did not bear the fire of the air.)

Doris and her daughters appear in the ekphrasis about the doors of the palace of the Sun.

Again, Ovid introduces Book Two with the words “regia Solis erat,” thus signalling the upcoming ekphrasis about the engravings on the doors and the ekphrastic story which follows. Ovid actually uses this very construction to introduce several other stories in the poem. For example, in Book Three, he introduces the story of Actaeon with the same construction:

Mons erat infectus uariarum caede ferarum
iamque dies medius rerum contraxerat umbras
et sol ex aequo meta distabat utraque,
cum iuuenis placido per devia lustra uagantes
participes operum compellat Hyantius ore...(3.143-147)

(There was a mountain dyed with the slaughter of various beasts. The middle point of the day had contracted the shadows of things and the sun was at equal distance from both of its turning points, when Actaeon addressed his companions, wandering through out-of-the-way haunts, with a pleasant voice...)

In transitioning into this story, Ovid paints a picture of the scene for his audience, just as he does in the beginning of Book Two. One translator, in fact, renders this transition as: “Picture a mountain stained with the carnage of hounded beasts....”¹¹⁴ Ovid hints at the connection between the idyllic scene and art with the verb “inficere” (to tinge, to dye), which is suggestive of the dying of wool. This verb also connects the scene to the stories

¹¹⁴ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* translated by David Raeburn (London: Penguin Books, Ltd., 2004), 99.

about weaving in Book Six. The mountain here is tinged with blood, which ranges from red to purple in color. Not only does Arachne's father dye wool purple, but Minerva, Arachne, and Philomela all use wool tinged with purple for their art. Ovid's use of "distare" (3.145) (to stand apart, to be at a distance) is suggestive of the loose spatial arrangements typically included in ekphrasis.

A few lines later, Ovid again uses the construction:

Vallis erat piceis et acuta densa cupressu,
 nomine Gargaphie, succinctae sacra Dianae,
 cuius in extremo est antrum nemorale recessu
 arte laboratum nulla; simulauerat artem
 ingenio natura suo, nam pumice uiuo
 et leuibus tofis natium duxerat arcum.
 fons sonat a dextra tenui perlucidus unda,
 margine gramineo patulos incinctus hiatus;
 hic dea siluarum venatu fessa solebat
 uirgineos artus liquido perfundere rore. (3.155-164)

(There was a valley, dense with pines and sharp cypress, with the name Gargaphie, the sacred place of Diana with the tucked-up dress. In its extreme recess is a sylvan cave, made by no art. Nature, by her own cunning, had imitated art, for she had led a native arch out of living pumice and soft tuff. On the right, a clear spring with a narrow stream babbled, widening into a pool girded by a grassy bank. Here the goddess of forests, when tired from the chase, was accustomed to bathe her virgin joints in the running water.)

Again, Ovid paints a vivid picture of the scene for the poem's audience.¹¹⁵ Here, Ovid explicitly connects the scene to art. Again, Nature is an artist, and the earth is her artistic product. Like Philomela in Book Six, Nature's art stems from "ingenium" (cunning).

¹¹⁵ Cf. Stephen Hinds, "Landscape with Figures: Aesthetics of Place in the Metamorphoses and its Tradition," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid* ed. Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 136: "Ovid has often, and justly, been described as a 'visual' poet; and seldom is the appeal to visuality stronger than in his set-piece landscape descriptions. It is not that such pieces break new ground in their recreation of particular slices of nature, as apprehended by the eye (or by any other sensory organ): as with any other ancient poet (except perhaps Lucretius) the topography, however attractive, remains generic, specifications of light, colour and spatial relation are conventional ('shady,' 'red and white,' 'in a circle,' ('on the right'), and the botany on display (whether or not 'perpetual spring' is invoked) is seasonally and climatically promiscuous. Rather the point is that Ovid's landscape descriptions characteristically involve *invitations to view*..."

Ovid's use of "simulare" (to imitate, to represent) at 3.158 is particularly compelling because of its associations with ekphrasis. Moreover, Ovid's description of a natural "arcus" (arch) which is carved out of soft stone here is compelling. Ovid says that Nature imitates art in creating the arch, thereby alluding to arches which are fabricated. Ovid's description suggests Roman triumphal arches, which "increased dramatically in number and urban significance under Augustus."¹¹⁶ The word "arcus" actually occurs quite frequently in the *Metamorphoses*, indicating many different curved things, and Ovid seems to be appropriating an important Augustan monumental image and using it to decorate his own landscape.

Ovid also uses the ekphrastic construction to introduce Juno's descent into the underworld in Book Four:

Est via declivis, funesta nubila taxo;
 ducit ad infernas per muta silentia sedes.
 Styx nebulas exhalat iners, umbraeque recentes
 descendunt illac simulacraque functa sepulcris;
 pallor hiemsque tenent late loca senta, nouique,
 qua sit iter, manes, Stygiam quod ducat ad urbem
 ignorant, ubi sit nigri fera regia Ditis.
 mille capax aditus et apertas undique portas
 urbs habet, utque fretum de tota flumina terra,
 sic omnes animas locus accipit ille nec ulli
 exiguus populo est turbamue accedere sentit.
 errant exsanguis sine corpore et ossibus umbrae,
 parsque forum celebrant, pars imi tecta tyranni,
 parsque aliquas artes, antiquae imitamina uitae
 <.....>
 [exercent, aliam partem sua poena coercet.] (4.432-446)

(There is a sloping path, shaded by the funereal yew-tree. It leads to infernal realms through mute silence. Motionless Styx exhales vapors; recent shades descend there, the shades of those whose funerals have been executed. Pallor and cold hold these widely neglected places. The new shades are ignorant of which is the path which leads to the Stygian city,

¹¹⁶ Favro, "Making Rome a World City," 250.

where the savage palace of black Dis is. The city has a thousand wide approaches and gates open everywhere. As the ocean has the rivers which flow from the whole earth, so that place receives all the souls. It is not too small for any people, nor does it feel crowding come about. The bloodless shades wander with their bodies, without bones. Part of them frequent the forum, part frequent the palace of the netherworld tyrant, and part exercise some craft which imitates their former life, another part serves their own punishments.)

Ovid, following Vergil, presents his description of the underworld as an ekphrasis.¹¹⁷

Again, words such as “simulacra” (representations, likenesses) and “imitamina” (imitations, representations) suggest ekphrasis. Later, Ovid writes:

Nocte uocat genitas, graue et implacibile numen;
 carceris ante fores clausas adamante sedebant
 deque suis stros pectebant crinibus angues.
 quam simul agnorunt inter caliginis umbras,
 suurexere deae. sedes Scelerata uocatur:
 uiscera praebebat Tityos lanianda nouemque
 iugeribus distractus erat; tibi, Tantale, nullae
 depreduntur aquae, quaeque imminet, effugit arbor;
 aut petis aut urges rediturum, Sisyphe, saxum;
 uoluitur Ixion et se sequiturque fugitque;
 molirique suis letum patruelibus ausae
 adsiduae repetunt, quas perdant, Belides undas.
 (4.453-463)

(She called the daughters of Night, the grave and implacable divinity; before the closed adamantine gates of the prison they were sitting, and they combed black snakes out of their hair. As soon as they recognized Juno among the shades, the goddesses rose up. The place is called the Polluted Place: Tityos was offering his guts to be torn out and he was stretched on nine acres; no water touches you, Tantalus, and the tree which hangs over you always flees away. Either you seek or push the rock which is going to return to the same spot, Sisyphus; Ixion is wheeled around, both following and fleeing himself. The Belides, having dared to contrive the death of their cousin-husbands, constantly seek the water which they lose.)

¹¹⁷ In his commentary, Anderson recognizes this passage as an ekphrasis which echoes the ekphrasis about creation in Book One, although for some reason he says that the ekphrasis ends with the word “illac” in line 435. Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 1-5*, 460.

Ovid thus offers a selection of the various sights of the underworld. Indeed, the visual nature of the description is emphasized by Ovid's transition back to Juno:

Quos omnes acie postquam Saturnia torua
vidit et ante omnes Ixiona, rursus ab illo
Sisyphon aspiciens...(4.464-466)

(Juno looked at all of these with a sharp look, but especially at Ixion,
again turning away from him and looking at Sisyphus...)

Ovid's use of "vidit" (saw) and "adspiciens" (looking at) highlights the visual quality of the passages. The shades of the dead seem like artistic images on the sculpted body of the underworld.

In Book Five, the account of the rape of Persephone begins similarly:

Haud procul Hennaeis lacus est a moenibus altae,
nomine Pergus, aquae; non illo plura Caystros
carmina cyncorum labentibus audit in undis.
silua coronat aquas cingens latus omne suisque
frondibus ut uelo Phoebeos summouet ictus.
frigora dant rami, uarios humus umida flores;
perpetuum uer est. quo dum Proserpina luco
ludit et aut uiolas aut candida lilia carpit... (5.385-
392)

(Scarcely far from Henna's walls, there is a pool of deep water called Pergus. Cayster does not more than that pool hear the songs of swans on its gliding waters. A wood crowns every side, girding the waters, and with its own fronds as an awning protects against the rays of the Sun. The branches provide coolness, the moist ground gives forth many-colored flowers: it is perpetual spring. In this wood Proserpina plays and gathers violets and white lilies...)

Ovid's description of the forest, the lush foliage, the beautiful purple flowers, and the violets and white lilies is as visually stimulating as his description of the underworld. The liberal use of color in this passage makes the place seem like a painting.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Because of its similarity to the description of Juno's descent to the underworld in the previous book, it is interesting to note that Anderson does not recognize this passage as an ekphrasis. Cf. Charles Paul Segal,

Moreover, Ovid's use of "coronare" (to crown, to wreath), "cingere" (to gird, to encircle), and "frons" (garland, chaplet, foliage) makes the description of the natural world seem like a work of Augustan art, which frequently featured wreathes, crowns, and garlands.

Ovid uses the same technique in Book Fourteen to describe Scylla's transformation into a monster:

Paruus erat gurgis curuos sinatus in arcus;
grata quies Scyllae, quo se referebat ab aestu
et maris et caeli, medio cum plurimus orbe
sol erat et minimas a uertice fecerat umbras. (14. 51-54)

(There was a little whirlpool, curved into a rounded circle. Its quietness was pleasing to Scylla. There she would find respite from the fury of the sea and the sky, when the sun was most in the middle of the sky and from his summit had left minimal shade.)

Again, the effect of the introductory phrase makes it seem like Ovid is beginning an ekphrasis. Also, Ovid's use of "arcus" (curve, arch) not only describes the curve of the pool of water but also is to some degree suggestive of triumphal arches. Indeed, there are many such highly descriptive, extremely vivid passages throughout the epic.

Moreover, in addition to the highly descriptive nature of his narration, Ovid also repeatedly refers to vision, eyes, and seeing. The words "lumen" (light, eye), "oculus" (eye), "spectare" (to look at), "videre" (to see), and "visere" (to look at) are some of the most frequently used words in the poem.¹¹⁹ Ovid not only describes scenes in seductive detail, but he often describes the scenes which the characters themselves see, thus drawing attention to the general significance of vision in approaching the poem. His

Landscape in Ovid's Metamorphoses: A Study in the Transformations of a Literary Symbol (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1969), 7, where he calls this passage an ekphrasis.

¹¹⁹ I used a concordance to determine that this is the case. Roy J. Deferrar, M. Inviolata Barry, and Martin R. P. McGuire, *A Concordance of Ovid* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1939).

initial description of the world as “species orbis” (1.35) also points to the importance of the visual quality of the whole world.

Ovid, then, presents the physical universe as a work of art, and his epic is an extended narration of what happens on the surface of that piece of art. The circle of the world is the underlying landscape of the *Metamorphoses*, after all. As discussed earlier, Ovid presents the earth itself as an anthropomorphized feminine body. That Ovid, like Hesiod, conflates the cosmogony of the physical universe with the cosmogony of the body of the epic is seen especially in his presentation of the Labyrinth. Ovid’s description of the Labyrinth is positioned in Book Eight, right in the middle—the “viscera”—of the circle of the poem’s body, just like Pandora in the *Theogony*.¹²⁰ Ovid writes:

Vota Ioui Minos taurorum corpora centum
soluit, ut egressus ratibus Curetida terram
contigit, et spoliis decorata est regia fixis.
creuerat opprobrium generis foedumque patebat
matris adulterium monstri nouitate biformis;
destinat hunc Minos thalami remouere pudorem
multiplicique domo caecisque includere tectis.
Daedalus ingenio fabrae celeberrimus artis
ponit opus turbatque notas et lumina flexa
ducit in errorem uariarum ambage uiarum. (8.152-161)

(Minos paid his prayers to Jove—a hundred sacrificed bulls—when he touched the land of Crete after leaving his ships, and his palace is decorated with displayed spoils. The disgrace of his family had grown, and the foul adultery of his queen was clear by the oddity of the two-formed monster. Minos determined to remove this shame from his house and to imprison it in a winding house and blind passageways. Daidalos, most celebrated for his genius in the craftsman’s art, performs the work, throws any signs into a spiralling whirl, and leads turning eyes into error by a winding confusion of different passages.)

¹²⁰ Cf. Barbara Pavlock, “Daedalus in the Labyrinth of Ovid’s ‘Metamorphoses,’” *The Classical World* 92, no. 2 (1998), 142.

Like Philomela, Daedalos uses “ingenium” (cunning) in designing the Labyrinth. Ovid further connects the two characters in his description of how Daedalos is closed in by the sea and thus creates wings for himself and Ikaros; he echoes the language he uses in Book Six to describe how Philomela is closed in by the walls of her secluded shack. While Philomela weaves purple signs (“notae”) into her tapestry, Daedalos here “throws his signs into a whirl” (“turbatque notas”) in order to lead the eye “in errorem” (into error). Ovid of course alludes to Vergil’s description of the Labyrinth in the *Aeneid* at the beginning of Book Six, echoing much of that poet’s language. Vergil does describe the circles (“orbes”) formed by the riders in his description of the *lusus Troiae* in Book Five, where he also refers to the Labyrinth, but Ovid’s use of “turbare” (to make whirl, to form a whirlpool) in this passage seems specifically to recall the spiralling design of Achilles’ shield in the *Iliad*. Ovid’s use of “turbare” certainly suggests that he recognizes the circular, spiralling—and thus feminine—nature of the Labyrinth.¹²¹ As discussed earlier, both Arachne and Philomela stand for Ovid himself, and Daedalos also stands for the poet. Just as Daedalos deceives the eye with his spiralling “notae,” Ovid creates a labyrinthine epic with his own confusing passages and whirling “notae.” His entire epic is indeed a Labyrinth.¹²²

Whereas Homer and Hesiod embed the feminine element of their epics inside the masculine epic body, Ovid blurs the boundaries between the masculine and the feminine and presents an epic body with two different faces. His epic body is actually quite

¹²¹ Catullus uses the word “turbo” in poem 64 to describe Ariadne’s whirl of thread.

¹²² Cf. Pavlock, “Daedalus in the Labyrinth of Ovid’s ‘Metamorphoses,’” 141-157. Pavlock writes, 142: “Ovid, I believe, responds to Vergil’s ekphrasis by enlarging the significance of the labyrinth for his own poem and by perceiving a more problematic aspect in Daedalus’ invention of wings as a violation of boundaries. This study will consider Ovid’s vision of the labyrinth as a metaphor for the design of the *Metamorphoses* in contrast to Vergil’s maze.” Also, cf. Riemer Faber, “Daedalus, Icarus, and the Fall of Perdix: Continuity and Allusion in the *Metamorphoses* 8.183-259,” *Hermes* 126, no. 1 (1998), 85. Faber points to the deceptive, confusing nature of the Labyrinth in the *Metamorphoses*.

similar to the figure of Teiresias in Book Three, who changes from a man into a woman and then back again. Teiresias, of course, has prophetic power—Jupiter grants this gift to make up for the blindness which Juno inflicts on Teiresias in Ovid’s version—and his ability to see divine truth may stem from his understanding of both the masculine and the feminine. Indeed, Ovid also connects the body of his epic with divine truth. Again, to some degree the body of the poem is conflated with the body of the earth, which is circular and feminine. Ovid refers to oracular seats several times in the course of the poem. He certainly associates Apollo with Delphi and oracular abilities, but he also connects Themis, an earth-goddess, with the ancient oracle (4.643).¹²³ In Book Fifteen, Ovid describes Delphi’s location in the center of the earth:

...auxilium caeleste petunt mediamque tenentes
orbis humum Delphos adeunt, oracula Phoebi...
(15.630-631)

(they sought celestial aid, and they went to Delphi, which occupies the
middle ground of the circle of earth, the oracle of Phoebus...)

In the *Theogony*, Zeus sets up the stone which his mother gives to Kronos, after his father vomits it up, in Delphi as a sign (σῆμα). That stone is the *omphalos*, and it marks the center of the earth. The connection between the navel, which marks the belly, and the uterus was discussed in the last chapter, as was the possible derivation of the name Delphi from a Greek word for uterus. Ovid specifically says that Delphi is located at the center of the “orbis” (circle) of earth. His placement of the Labyrinth, the image of the earth’s uterus, at the center of the body of the poem, which itself is closely connected to the body of the earth, certainly seems to be more than just coincidence. That spiral of

¹²³ Aeschylus explains in the *Eumenides* that the oracle passes from Gaia to Themis and then to Apollo.

“notae” which Daidalos makes in creating the Labyrinth is indeed a pathway to divine truth.

Purpureae Notae

Ovid uses Arachne’s irreverent tapestry and Philomela’s “purpureae notae” as models for his own art. As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, there are many words which indicate the colors purple and red throughout the text; the *Metamorphoses* is stained with the color just like the wool with which Arachne and Philomela weave. In fact, it is difficult to find a story in the text which does not include any purple, red, or white imagery. The words “purpura” and “purpureus” themselves occur twenty-two times in the text. Some of the stories in which these particular words occur have already been discussed in this chapter, including, most importantly, the stories in Book Six about Minerva and Arachne and Tereus, Procne, and Philomela, which are both, as has been shown, rich in allusion to the Augustan regime. The other stories which contain these words are the stories about Phaethon, Actaeon and Diana, Narcissus, Pentheus and Bacchus, Pyramus and Thisbe, the daughters of Minyas, Jason and Medea, Minos and Scylla, Philemon and Baucis, Cyparissus, Midas, Cynus, Hyacinthus, Atalanta and Hippomenes, Ulysses and Ajax, Polyphemus’ love-song to Galatea, and Picus, Canens, and Circe. While it is tempting to look only to these stories which include the actual words which Ovid uses to describe the colors of the tapestries in Book Six, Ovid’s poetic weaving is subtle, and, like Minerva and Arachne, he offers a whole range of hues from the darkest purple to the lightest pink in his stories. Thus, most of the stories in the text

can be read for their political implications. Still, even if one only examines the stories in which the words “purpura” or “purpureus” occur, strikingly daring political statements emerge. Many of the stories involve children (most often daughters) disobeying the authority of their fathers, some involve hubristic humans who attempt to rival or challenge gods, some involve rape—often with a political dimension—and some offer ridiculous or unflattering characterizations of Augustus’ patron gods. In particular, Apollo, who was the favorite of Augustus, appears in many of these stories, and he is often depicted as foolish. Augustus, of course, invoked Apollo at Actium, vowing a temple to him upon victory. On Aeneas’s shield, Vergil describes a scene about the Battle of Actium over which Actian Apollo presides. For Vergil, this is a great achievement, one in which he has opened up a window within his poem and set himself up as a prophet. Ovid makes Apollo seem ridiculous. Mars, Venus, and Jupiter also appear in several of these stories, and, likewise, Ovid’s presentation of these Augustan favorites is often far from reverential. In this section, I will discuss a few of the stories in terms of their political implications.

Phaethon

This “purpurea nota” is striking because it involves Apollo, who by the Augustan period is essentially conflated with Helios as the Sun-god.¹²⁴ Several of the stories in which Ovid uses “purpura” or “purpureus” involve Apollo, in fact. In Book 10, for example, the stories about Cyparissus and Hyacinthus both focus on Apollo’s

¹²⁴ Joseph E. Fontenrose challenges this conflation, “Apollo and the Sun-God in Ovid,” *The American Journal of Philology* 61 no. 4 (1940), 429-444.

homosexual pursuits. Ovid's description of Cyparissus' unstoppable sobbing at the accidental death of his favorite stag—which he treats in much the same way Pygmalion treats his statue—makes Apollo's love for him seem silly. That story foreshadows Apollo's own exaggerated lamentation at the accidental death of Hyacinthus, who is killed when Apollo's discus bounces off the ground and hits him in the face. Both of these stories make Apollo seem like a character in a comedy. The story of Phaethon not only involves Apollo, but it also involves the son of a god. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid explicitly describes Augustus as the son of a god, so the story invites political analysis.

Phaethon does not believe his mother, Clymene, that the Sun-god is his father and travels to the Sun's palace to find out the truth about his parentage. As discussed earlier, Ovid offers an ekphrasis which describes the engravings on the doors of the palace at the beginning of the story and then continues the detailed, compelling imagery for the whole of the tale. Phaethon climbs the “adclius limes” (2.19) (steep path) to the “tectis parentis” (2.20) (roof of his parent). As Anderson notes in his commentary, Ovid's description hints at the positioning of homes of Roman nobles on hilltops.¹²⁵ He turns himself “ad patrios vultus” (2.21) (towards the face of his father). The image of Apollo, robed in a purple cloak, sitting on his throne in his palace necessarily is suggestive of Augustus. Anderson argues that Ovid's imagery is more appropriate for a king than for the Sun-god, who does not feature these attributes in artistic renderings.¹²⁶ Indeed, King Aetes of Colchis is described similarly by the poet in Book Seven, where he sits on his throne and also wears a purple cloak. Phaethon, of course, attempts foolishly to step into the shoes of his divine father by driving his chariot across the sky and fails miserably.

¹²⁵ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 1-5*, 232.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Because his father is the Sun, he is a star. In fact, Ovid explicitly links him with the stars at 4.169-170, when he describes him as “siderea qui temperat omnia luce” (who rules all the stars with his light). Also, because Phaethon’s ride takes him through the heavens, right near the stars, the story reverberates in particular with Ovid’s description of Julius Caesar’s apotheosis in Book Fifteen. Again, there, Ovid writes:

dumque tulit, lumen capere atque ignescere sensit
 emisitque sinu; luna uolat altius illa
 flammiferumque trahens spatioso limite crinem
 stella micat natique uidens bene facta fatetur
 esse suis maiora et vinci gaudet ab illo.
 hic sua praeferri quamquam uetat acta paternis,
 libera fama tamen nullisque obnoxia iussis
 inuitum praefert unaque in parte repugnat.
 sic magnus cedit titulis Agamemnonis Atreus,
 Aegea sic Theseus, sic Pelea uicit Achilles;
 denique, ut exemplis ipsos aequantibus utar,
 sic et Saturnus minor est Ioue. Iuppiter arces
 temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis,
 terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque. (15.846-860)

(And while she carried it, she sensed that it gathered light and caught fire and she released it from her fold; it flew higher than the moon, and, trailing a flaming mane in its wide path, it flickers as a star. And seeing the deeds of his son, he admits that they are greater than his own and he rejoices that he has been surpassed by him. Although Augustus denies that his accomplishments surpass his father’s, nevertheless free speech, obedient to no commands, prefers him, unwilling, and does battle against him in only this one area. So, great Atreus yielded to Agamemnon’s titles, so Theseus surpasses Aegeus, so Achilles surpasses Peleus. Finally—to use examples equal to these men themselves—so Saturn is lower than Jupiter. Jupiter rules the heavenly citadel and the realms of the triformed world, and the earth is under Augustus—each one is father and ruler.)

Ovid’s description in this passage of Julius Caesar’s soul catching fire and developing a flaming mane as Venus carries it evokes the image of the Sun at the same time it describes a comet. It also recalls Phaethon’s wild, flaming ride through heaven. Like Augustus, Phaethon is the mortal son of a god, and Phaethon’s disastrous attempt to

operate in the celestial sphere points to the hubris of any mortal step into the divine sphere.

Minos and Scylla

The most striking image in this story is of course Nisus' purple lock of hair, which grows in the middle of a head of white hair and which is the source of Nisus' power. In the story, Scylla, Nisus' daughter, falls in love with Minos while watching him from the ramparts of her father's city. Minos' army is attacking Nisus' city, and Scylla's forbidden attraction to the enemy king carries political implications as well as sexual ones. Minos, too, wears purple and rides on a white horse, so the enemy king is also a stand-in for Nisus. As he does in the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela, Ovid captures how Scylla's sexual body is tied to her father's political power. She herself captures the relationship between her own body and the city itself in her lamentation:

si quae te peperit talis, pulcherrime rerum,
 qualis es, ipsa fuit, merito deus arsit in illa.
 o ego ter felix, si pennis lapsa per auras
 Cnosiaci possem castris insistere regis
 fassaque me flammisque meas qua dote rogare
 uellet emi; tantum patrias ne posceret arces!
 nam pereant potius sperata cubilia, quam sim
 prodicione potens—quamuis saepe itile uinci
 uictoris placidi fecit clementia uictis.
 uista gerit certe pro nato bella perempto
 et causaque ualet causamque tenentibus armis
 et, puto, uincemur. qui si manet exitus urbem,
 cur suus haec illi reseret mea moenia Mauors
 et non noster amor?...
 coepta placent, et stat sententia tradere mecum
 dotalem patriam finemque inponere bello;
 uerum uelle parum est! aditus custodia servat,
 claustraque portarum genitor tenet: hunc ego solum
 infelix timeo, solus mea vota moratur.

do facerent, sine patre forem!... (8.49-72)

(If the woman who bore you, most beautiful of kings, was such as you are, the god's burning for her was deserved. Oh, I would be three times happy if, gliding down on wings through the air, I could enter the camp of the Knossian king and confess my love for him and ask with what dowry he would wish to be paid for my love. Only let him not ask for my country's citadel! For I would rather lose the bed I long for than be able to get it by treachery—although often the clemency of a placated victor towards the conquered has made it beneficial to be conquered. He certainly wages a just war for his murdered son, and he is strong both in his cause and in the arms which promote his cause. And I think we will be conquered. If that doom awaits our city, why should his warriors unlock these walls of mine and not my love? The opinion stands that I will hand over my country with myself as my dowry and put an end to the war. But truly to wish is not enough! A guard watches the approaches, my father holds the keys to the gates. Him alone I, unhappy, fear; he alone hinders my wishes. Would that the gods had made it so I would be fatherless!)

Scylla of course plans to give herself up sexually at the same time she gives Minos access to the city.

Overcome finally with desire for Minos, Scylla waits until her father is sleeping, and then steals into his room and cuts off his purple lock of hair. Ovid uses the term “spoliare” (8.86) (to despoil) to describe Scylla's act of cutting away the lock, suggesting the act of a warrior stripping his victim of arms. In using “spoliare,” which can also be used to indicate any act of violence involving injury or plunder, Ovid also hints at rape. He interrupts the narration of Scylla's act with the exclamation “heu facinus!” (8.85) (Oh, horrid crime!), which recalls the similar interruption in Ovid's narration of Tereus' second assault against Philomela at 6.561. This earlier rape is also called a “facinus.” Other similarities exist between the two stories, including that both Scylla and Philomela are guarded against escape by a “custodia,” and both are described as closed-in with the verb “claudere.” Scylla presents the lock of her father's hair to Minos, saying that in

giving him the purple lock as a token of her love she is really giving him her father's head, again conflating her body and the city itself. He is horrified and screams:

...Minos porrecta refugit
turbatusque noui respondit imagine facti:
'di te submoueant, o nostri infamia saeculi,
orbe suo, tellusque tibi pontusque negetur.
certe ego non patiar Iouis incunabula, Creten,
qui meus est orbis, tantum contingere monstrum.'
(8.94-100)

(Minos recoiled from the offering, and, thrown into a whirl at the image of the bizarre deed, responded: "May the gods banish you, oh disgrace of our age, from their world, and may land and sea be denied to you. Certainly I would not tolerate such a monster to touch Crete, the cradle of Jove and my own world.)

Minos then enters the city, rejecting Scylla altogether, and returns to Crete. Scylla turns into a sea-bird.

In general, this story is significant for its focus on the father-figure. Ovid explicitly refers to Augustus' status as *Pater Patriae* elsewhere in the poem, and his reference to this title colors the image of the father throughout the text, especially in political situations. Minos, who, like Phaethon, is the son of god—a god who also was a particular favorite of Augustus—is presented here as a voice for morality, and his condemnation of Scylla for her betrayal of her father is suggestive of Augustus' own emphasis on the importance of the Roman family and his attempts at moral reform. Minos' powerful proclamation that he will not tolerate "tantum monstrum" on the soil of Crete is Ovid's playful transition to the next story, which begins when Minos disembarks from his ship on Crete and which is about the Minotaur, the horrifying "monstrum" of his wife's adulterous affair with a bull. Minos himself is betrayed by his daughter Ariadne in the story, thus showing that even monarchs such as Minos do not have control over their

own family's actions. In fact, when one considers the exile of Augustus' daughter Julia in 2 B.C.E. for adultery, this story is particularly compelling for its dysfunctional father-daughter relationships.

Ulysses and Ajax

In Book Thirteen, Ovid offers a lengthy account of the verbal competition between Ajax and Ulysses for Achilles' arms, which of course are the arms which Hephaistos makes for him in the *Iliad*. This story is significant for its inclusion of a direct reference to the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield. In his speech, Ulysses offers a brief but accurate description of the initial lines of the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield. Ovid writes:

scilicet idcirco pro nato caerula mater
ambitiosa suo fuit, ut caelestia dona,
artis opus tantae, rudis et sine pectore miles
indueret? neque enim clipei caelamina nouit,
Oceanum et terras cumque alto sidera caelo
Pleiadasque Hyadasque immunemque aequoris
Arcton.
[diuersosque orbes nitidumque Orionis ensem.
postulat ut capiat quae non intellegit arma.] (13.
288-295)

(Was is for this reason that the celestial mother was ambitious for her son, that those heavenly gifts, a work of such art, should adorn a rude and brainless soldier? Indeed he does not know the relief-work of the shield—Ocean and the lands and the stars in the high heavens, the Pleiades, the Hyades, the Bear never touching the sea and diverse circles and the shining belt of Orion. He demands that he take arms which he does not understand.)

In this reference to the ekphrasis, Ovid only includes the cosmological elements which adorn Achilles' shield, thus highlighting the connection between the shield and his own

initial ekphrastic cosmogony. Ulysses describes Ajax as “rudis,” likening him to the unevolved forms of the cosmogony in Book One. He also points to the opening cosmogony with the verb “induere” (to put on, to dress), which he uses in Book One to describe the earth’s action in creating the “figurae” which adorn its surface. Ovid’s erudite audience would of course know that Achilles’ shield is covered with *daidala*, and Ovid makes clear here that the earth’s “figurae” are in fact *daidala*. In saying that Achilles’ shield is “artis opus tantae” (a work of such art), Ovid reminds his audience that the landscape of his poem is a work of art. In his speech, Ulysses argues that Ajax does not “novit” the images on the shield and that he cannot understand them. His use of “noscere” recalls Philomela’s “notae.”

Ulysses of course wins the competition, and the arms are awarded to him. Thus, Ulysses’ reference to the Homeric ekphrasis helps to persuade his audience of his own worthiness for the arms. Ovid shows here that he understands the persuasive quality of ekphrasis. This story also reveals the importance of oratory and persuasion in general. Ovid begins his description of Ajax’s suicide with the following lines:

Mota manus procerum est, et quid facundia posset
re patuit, fortisque uiri tulit arma disertus. (13.382-
383)

(The band of chiefs was moved, and the power of oratory was apparent,
and the strong speaker carried the arms of the brave man.)

Ovid points to the power of persuasive ability in general, not only demonstrating the power of political rhetoric and imagery but also hinting at his own power to persuade through poetic technique.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Cf. Philip Hardie, “Ovid and Early Imperial Literature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid* ed. Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 37: “Ovid recasts the famous deeds of epic tradition as verbal skirmishing, with an acute sense for the anachronistic effect of endowing Homeric

Narcissus

The story of Narcissus easily invites comparison of the protagonist and Augustus. In his commentary, Anderson points out that Ovid's is the only lengthy account of this tale and that there is no evidence at all for an earlier source.¹²⁸ So, Ovid may have simply made up this story for his own purposes. Narcissus, of course, falls in love with his own image in this story, and, utterly overcome with desire for himself, he wastes away as he stares into his own eyes. Ovid's description of Narcissus when he first sees his own reflection in a pool of water is striking:

hic puer et studio uenandi lassus et aestu
 procubuit faciemque loci fontemque secutus;
 [dumque sitim sedare cupit, stis altera creuit,
 dumque bibit, uisae correptus imagine formae
 [spem sine corpore amat, corpus putat esse quod
 unda est.]
 adstupet ipse sibi uultuque immotus eodem
 haeret, ut e Pario formatum marmore signum.
 spectat humi positus geminum, sua lumina, sidus
 et dignos Baccho, dignos et Apolline crines
 impubesque genas et eburnea colla decusque
 oris et in niueo mixtum candore ruborem,
 cunctaque miratur, quibus est mirabilis ipse.
 se cupit imprudens et qui probat ipse probatur,
 dumque petit petitur, pariterque accendit et ardet.
 inrita fallaci quotiens dedit oscula fonti!
 in mediis quotiens uisum captantia collum
 bracchia mersit aquis nec se deprendit in illis!
 quid uideat nescit, sed quod uidet uritur illo

heroes with the debating skills of the declamation hall. But this is not an arid exercise in rhetorical point; rather, the point is precisely the dissolution of the famous actions of the heroic tradition into a contestation of words, concluding in the triumph of words over deeds (13.382-3)...with more than a hint of the celebration of the poet Ovid's own powers. The claim can be formulated more strongly, in terms of the *priority* of words over deeds; Ovid lets out the secret that epic and historical traditions are not simply faithful mirrors of things done (the model of the poet as the passive conduit for the omniscient and objective Muse), but partial constructions of a version of reality, or two versions, in the case of the debate such as that between Ajax and Ulysses."

¹²⁸ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 1-5*, 372.

atque oculos idem qui decipit incitat error.
 credule, quid frustra simulacra fugacia captas?
 (3.413-432)

(Here the youth lay down, tired from hunting and the heat, following the appearance of the place and the spring. And while he desires to quench his thirst, another thirst starts to grow. While he drinks, seized by the image of a beautiful sight, he loves a bodiless hope. He thinks what is a shadow is a body. He is stupified by his own image, and he hangs there, struck immobile by his own face, like a beautiful statue from Parian marble. Lying prone on the ground, he gazes at twin stars, his own eyes, hair worthy of Bacchus or Apollo, his smooth cheeks, ivory neck, and the beauty of his face, and the red blush mixed with snowy white—he marvels at everything for which he himself is admired. Imprudently, he desires himself, and he who is approved by others also approves. While he seeks, he is sought. Equally he excites and burns with love. How many times he gave vain kisses to a deceitful pool! How many times he plunged his arms into the middle of the water attempting to seize the neck envisioned there! he does not know what he sees, but he burns for what he sees. And the same error which deceives him stimulates his eyes. Oh credulous boy, why do you seize a deceptive representation in vain?)

Ovid's comparison of Narcissus to "e Pario formatum marmore signum" (3.419) (a statue formed out of Parian marble) and his later reference to Apollo in particular (3.421) hint at Augustus' own marble images, particularly the statue of Augustus from Prima Porta. This representation of the princeps, shown barefoot, was modeled after the Greek Doryphoros, and it evokes the image of Apollo. Apollo is also represented on the breastplate along with Diana, Venus, and Mars.¹²⁹ Ovid also plays with a reference to Apollo when he writes towards the end of the story: "iste sum ego! sensi, nec me mea fallit imago" (3.463) (I am that boy! I know, and my image does not deceive me). Ovid's statement here picks up on Teiresias' earlier prophecy that Narcissus will be fine "si se non nouerit" (3.348) (if he never knows himself). With these references, Ovid alludes to Apollo's famous oracular utterance at Delphi. Moreover, Ovid's use of "sidus"

¹²⁹ Galinsky, *Augustan Culture*, 24-28. It is worth pointing out here that Marc Antony used the image of Bacchus in his own political propaganda.

to describe Narcissus' eyes also connects the passage to Julius Caesar and Augustus, who are both associated with stars in the poem. Ovid seems to be making fun of Augustus' fondness for copious public imagery of himself and his family by likening it to auto-eroticism.

In the story of Narcissus, Ovid also points to the erotic allure of imagery in general and, specifically, of ekphrasis.¹³⁰ His multiple references to eyes, vision, image, and likenesses in this story all point to the rhetorical device. The fact that Narcissus cannot capture the image he desires is suggestive of the elusive nature of ekphrasis, where the actual work of art never materializes. In fact, the entire scene begins as if it is an ekphrasis. At 3.407, Ovid writes: "fons erat..." (There was a spring...), and at 3.411 he writes: "gramen erat..." (There was a patch of grass...). His initial description of the scene is highly visual and suggestive of artwork in the manner of the other extremely descriptive introductions to scenes discussed earlier. Moreover, Ovid's description of the clearing and pool of water even has noticeable circular imagery. He uses the verb "turbare" (to swirl, to throw into confusion) at 3.410, and he uses "circa" (around) at 3.411. The verb "turbare" in particular suggests spiralling rotation and recalls Homer's use of "δινεύειν" (to whirl), "δίνη" (whirlpool), and "δινῆεις" (whirling, spiralling) on the shield of Achilles.

¹³⁰Cf. Jaś Elsner, "Viewer as Image: Imitations of Narcissus," in *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 137-146. Elsner also links the figure of Narcissus to ekphrasis, and he points out that Narcissus is a popular subject of the ekphrastic speeches of Philostratus and Callistratus

Pygmalion

Ovid's story of Pygmalion features several references to things which are purple, red, and white, although this is a story in which the words "purpura" and "purpureus" do not appear, but it is particularly interesting for its focus on art which seems like a lifelike feminine body. In the story, Pygmalion becomes disgusted with women after witnessing the shameful behavior of the Propoetides, and he vows never to marry. He instead creates a perfect woman by sculpting her out of ivory. His statue eventually comes to life because of Pygmalion's prayers to Venus, and the hard substance softens in very much the same way the rocks which Deucalion and Pyrrha throw soften and become living humans. In fact, the statue develops into a living maiden just as the earth is formed in the initial cosmogony. Pygmalion's statue stands, like Arachne's and Philomela's tapestries and Daedalus' Labyrinth, for Ovid's own art—the poem.¹³¹ Ovid writes:

interea niueum mira feliciter arte
 sculpsit ebur formamque dedit, qua femina nasci
 nulla potest, operisque sui concepit amorem.
 uirginis est uerae facies, quam uiuere credas
 et, si non obstet reuerentia, uelle moueri;
 ars adeo latet arte sua. miratur et haurit
 pectore Pygmalion simulati corporis ignes.
 saepe manus operi temptantes admouet, an sit
 corpus an illud ebur, nec adhuc ebur esse fatetur,
 [oscula dat reddique putat loquiturque tenetque]
 sed credit tactis digitos insidere membris
 et metuit pressos ueniat ne lior in artus. (10.247-
 258)

(Meanwhile, with wondrous art he happily sculpts white ivory and gives it a form with which no woman can be born, and he begins to feel love for his own work. Her face is that of a true virgin, which you would believe to be living, and, if respect did not stand in the way, to want to be moved. Thus, art hides its own art. Pygmalion marvels and assumes the fires in

¹³¹ Cf. A.R. Sharrock, "Womanufacture," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991), 37.

his heart for the representation of a body. Often, he touches the work with his hands to, trying to determine whether it is a body or ivory, nor does he confess that it is ivory. He gives it kisses and thinks that it is kissing him back, and talks to it and holds it and believes that his fingers sink in on the touched limbs, and he fears that bruises will develop in its pressed-upon limbs.)

Like many figures which adorn art in epic ekphrases, Pygmalion's statue is so lifelike that it seems to be alive. Pygmalion falls in love with the "simulatum corpus" (representation of a body), not simply the "corpus" itself. Ovid again hints at ekphrasis with the word "simulatum," and, because ekphrasis is indeed a fabrication of the feminine body, his inclusion of the word "corpus" here is important. Ovid continues, describing how Pygmalion treats his statue like a real woman:

et modo blanditias adhibet, modo grata puellis
munera fert illi, conchas teretesque lapillos
et paruas uolucres et flores mille colorum
liliaque pictasque pilas et ab arbore lapsas
Heliadum lacrimas. ornat quoque uestibus artus;
dat digitis gemmas, dat longa monilia collo,
aure leues baccae, redimicula pectore pendent.
cuncta decent; nec nuda minus formosa uidetur.
conlocat hanc stratis concha Sidonide tinctis
appellatque tori sciam acclinataque colla
mollibus in plumis tamquam sensura reponit.
(10.259-269)

(Now he employs blandishing words, now he brings it the sort of gifts which are pleasing to girls, shells and smooth little stones, and small birds, and flowers of a thousand colors, and lilies and dyed balls, and tears of the Heliades which fall down from a tree. He adorns its limbs with garments, and he gives gems to its fingers. He gives it long necklaces on its neck. Pearls hang from its ears, garlands on its breast. All of these are beautiful, but the nude statue does not seem less beautiful. He lays this on coverlets dyed with Sidonian purple, and he calls it the consort of his couch. He positions its reclining neck on soft feathers as if it could feel them.)

Ovid also connects Pygmalion's sculpture with the tapestries of Book Six. He not only points to the purple dye of the bedcoverings with "stratis concha Sidonide tinctis," but he

also specifically recalls the variations of colors—“mille colores”—which appear in Minerva’s and Arachne’s tapestries when he describes the “flores mille colorum” (flowers of a thousand colors) which Pygmalion gives to his statue. The “pictae pilae” (colored balls) which Pygmalion offers to his perfect statue also remind the audience of Arachne’s “orbes” of wool. Moreover, when Pygmalion’s statue comes to life, she blushes (“erubit” in both cases) just like Arachne blushes. In Book Six, Arachne’s and Philomela’s tapestries are inextricably tied to their own bodies, and, here, Pygmalion’s statue’s red and ivory coloring echoes the purple and white colors in the rest of the story. Pygmalion speaks to his statue using “blanditias” (blandishing words) just like Philomela is “blanda” with her father and Procne uses “blandita” with Tereus.

Pygmalion’s creation and adornment of the statue he has made specifically recalls Hephaistos’ and Athena’s creation and adornment of Pandora in the *Theogony* and *Works and Days*.¹³² In both cases, the artists set out to create an irresistibly alluring feminine body. Pandora and Pygmalion’s statue are both virgins intended for marriage—strikingly beautiful and full of potential fertility. In Chapter Three, Pandora’s original status as an earth-goddess was discussed. While Pygmalion’s statue is not directly presented as a earth-goddess, but, as A. R. Sharrock has argued, there are elements of Ovid’s description which are suggestive of the worship of a deity and religious ritual.¹³³ Pygmalion’s statue

¹³² Cf. A. R. Sharrock, “The Love of Creation,” *Ramus* 20 no. 2 (1991), 169-182, especially 173-176.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 171. Also, in other versions of the myth, Pygmalion’s statue is actually of Aphrodite, a fertility goddess. As Genevieve Liveley points out, 208-209, ivory has special significance: “Instead, she is fashioned from ivory—an ambiguous material with apparently contradictory associations. It is a material which connects *natura* and *ars*: ivory is a ‘natural’ material like stone, wood, and bone and also a material favoured by artists and craftsmen for their work. Ivory is also a material that may be seen to connect the living with the dead, and the animate with the inanimate, since it was once an apparently inanimate part of a living animal. In classical art, ivory also played a significant role in connecting the human and the divine, being employed in the construction of chryselephantine cult-statues, to bring gods into the presence of mortals. Pygmalion’s ivory statue may thus be seen to retain some of the characteristics of contradiction, deception and illusion associated with the material from which she was formed.” Genevieve Liveley,

certainly is linked to the fertile body of the earth and the living things which grow from it, especially in its similarity to the stone statues which grow into humans out of “*ossa magnae parentis*” after the great flood in Book One. Like Hesiod, Ovid treats his audience to a visually stimulating spectacle as he enumerates the details of the statue’s embellishment, seducing his own audience with his description. Ovid even echoes Hesiod’s language in his presentation of Pygmalion’s statue. Whereas Hephaistos creates “*παρθένω αἰδοίῃ ἕκελον*” (*Theogony*, 572) (the likeness of a shy maiden), Pygmalion creates “*simulacrum corporis*” (10.253) and “*virginis est verae facies*” (10.250) (the appearance of a true maiden), which is almost a word-for-word translation of Hesiod’s language. Moreover, whereas Pandora is a “*θαῦμα ἰδέσθαι*” (a marvel to behold), Pygmalion “marvels at” (“*miratur*”) his statue. In his treatment of Pygmalion’s art and its similarity both to the art of Book Six and to Hesiod’s Pandora, Ovid points to the erotic allure of the feminine body of ekphrasis.

As Jaś Elsner has argued, Ovid manipulates the ancient associations of ivory with deception in this story.¹³⁴ Both ivory and horn signify liminal space and have associations with the gateway between the underworld and the world of the living, and thus between death and life. The gates of ivory and horn are mentioned in both the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid*; the gate of ivory is the gate where false dreams exit the underworld. Elsner points out that all art involves deception, and, while Ovid certainly plays with the idea of the deceptive quality of art in the *Metamorphoses*, in his use of ivory here he captures both the deceptive quality of ekphrasis and also the liminal quality

“Reading Resistance in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,” in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on the Metamorphoses and its Reception* eds. Philip Hardie, Alessandro Barchiesi, and Stephen Hinds (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999), 197-213.

¹³⁴Jaś Elsner, “Viewing and Creativity: Ovid’s Pygmalion as Viewer,” in *Roman Eyes: Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 124-131.

of the device. As discussed earlier, the feminine body of ekphrasis offers its audience a visual katabasis into the feminine body—and the possibility of a pre-natal wholeness.

Ovid's statement that "ars adeo latet arte sua" (art hides its own art) is particularly compelling in this story. He may simply mean that Pygmalion's artistic product is so lifelike that it hides the fact that it is indeed art, but it may indicate much more. Ovid offers commentary on his own craft with this statement. The statement seems to describe epic ekphrasis perfectly. Since the actual artwork which is described in an ekphrasis is only available to a poem's audience through the words of the poet, the poet's craft actually hides the work of art it describes. The elusive nature of the ekphrastic vision is powerfully compelling. Furthermore, Ovid's poetic art may actually conceal another form of art—the politically subversive tapestry which lies just beneath the linear reading of the text.

Ovid's Own Commentary on the *Metamorphoses* in *Tristia* 1.7

Ovid writes about the *Metamorphoses* in *Tristia* 1.7, where he urges his audience to read the poem. Thus, the poem serves to some degree as the poet's own commentary about his work. He writes:

grata tua est pietas: sed carmina maior imago
sunt mea, quae mando qualiacumque legas,
carmina mutatas hominum dicentia formas,
infelix domini quod fuga rupit opus. (1.7.11-14)

(Your piety is welcome: but my verses are a greater image, which I ask you to read, whatever sort they are—the verses which talk about the changed forms of men, the unhappy work which my flight interrupted.)

It is significant that Ovid says that the *Metamorphoses* is a “maior imago” (greater image) in line 11. He begins the poem by referring to his own “imago” (likeness, portrait), and, on one level, he says that his “carmen” is a better “imago” than his own portrait. More importantly, on another level, his description of his “carmen” as a “maior imago” points to his use of ekphrasis in the *Metamorphoses*. The poem is a “maior imago” because it is written as an extended description of a work of art—an “imago.” It is “maior” because it represents his ambitious transformation of ekphrasis.

Ovid continues:

haec ego discedens, sicut bene multa meorum,
 ipse mea posui maestus in igne manu.
 utque cremasse suum fertur sub stipite natum
 Thestias et melior matre fuisse soror,
 sic ego non meritos mecum peritura libellos
 imposui rapidis viscera nostra rogis:
 vel quod eram Musas, ut crimina nostra, perosus,
 vel quod adhuc crescens et rude carmen erat.
 quae quoniam non sunt penitus sublata, sed extant
 (pluribus exemplis scripta fuisse reor),
 nunc precor ut vivant et non ignava legentem
 otia delectent admoneantque mei.
 nec tamen illa legi poterunt patienter ab ullo,
 nesciet his summam siquis abesse manum.
 ablatum mediis opus est incudibus illud,
 defuit et scriptis ultima lima meis. (1.7.15-30)

(As I was leaving, sadly I myself placed these verses, just as many things which were mine, in the fire with my own hand. Just as Althaea, Thestius' daughter, is said to have burned her own son under the branch and was a better sister than mother, so I placed the little books, not deserving of it, destined to die with me, my own womb, on the tearing fire: either because I hated the Muses as much as the accusations against me or because the poem was still growing and rough. Since the verses were not altogether destroyed, but they exist (I think that they were written down in more copies), and now I pray that they live and that they will delight the reader in my not slothful leisure and remind him of me. Nevertheless, they are not able to be read patiently by anyone who does not know that they are lacking the final hand. That work was taken away from me while it was in middle of the anvil, and the final polish is absent from my writing.)

A few other statements stand out in this passage about the *Metamorphoses*. First, his reference to Althaea—a mother who out of loyalty to her brother sacrificed her own son—has obvious parallels to the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela. Procne sacrifices her son Itys out of loyalty to her sister in that story. Ovid says that he hopes the poem will delight his reader and remind the reader of himself. He may mean that he hopes his reader will think of him because of his lovely poetry, or he may mean that he hopes the poem will remind his reader of him because he is an example of the dangers of tyrannical power—the very picture of tyrannical power he offers in the *Metamorphoses*, especially in the story of Tereus, Procne, and Philomela.

Ovid likens the *Metamorphoses* to his own “viscera” in line 20, and his use of this word is particularly striking. Ovid himself uses the word to mean “uterus” in the *Metamorphoses*, as has been shown, and he uses it to mean “uterus” in his other works. For example, he uses it in the *Fasti* at 1.624. There, the pregnant woman is “visceribus crescens” (growing in her womb). In *Tristia* 1.7, Ovid writes: “adhuc crescens et rude carmen erat” (1.7.22) (the *Metamorphoses* was growing and rough). Thus, he presents the epic poem as a pregnant body. With “rudis” (raw, rough), he further links the body of the poem to the earth, the stones which Deucalion and Pyrrha throw which turn into humans, Arachne’s balls of wool—all of which start out as things which are “rudis—and also to Pygmalion’s ivory statue, which, as has been shown, has connections to all of these stories. Ovid plays with the multiple meanings of the word “viscera” in this poem. He captures the emotional distress which the burning of his poem engenders by suggesting that his guts have been wrenched out, and he also presents the poem as a coporeal product connected with his own stomach—his child. He thus follows Homer

and Hesiod in presenting the poem as a corporeal entity, and, most importantly, Ovid's use of "viscera" here in *Tristia* 1.7 suggests that the *Metamorphoses* is uterine in its bodily form. It has been shown that both Homer and Hesiod present ekphrasis as a uterine body within the larger masculine epic. Because Ovid applies the characteristics of ekphrasis to the entire body of the poem, he thus follows both of these authors when he describes the whole of the *Metamorphoses* as his own "viscera." Like Homer and Hesiod, Ovid uses ekphrasis as a poetic uterus. His entire poetic tapestry is feminine in form, with a Labyrinth sitting right at the innermost spot of the poem.

Ekphrasis and Exile

Ovid says in the passage from *Tristia* 1.7 discussed above that he burned the *Metamorphoses* as he was leaving Rome. While he may be alluding to the tradition that Vergil asked that the unfinished *Aeneid* be burned upon his death, it seems much more likely that Ovid burned the poem because it was the reason for his leaving. It is even possible that he was ordered to burn it by Augustus; after all, he says at lines 14 and 29-30 that the poem was taken from him. The feminine reading of the *Metamorphoses*—which pokes fun at Augustus' patron gods, appropriates and calls into question Augustus' artistic images, and emphasizes the dangers of tyrannical power—is indeed a likely cause.¹³⁵ As Ovid says himself in *Tristia* 1.7, the *Metamorphoses* was certainly

¹³⁵ For a discussion of Greek and Roman methods of criticizing the politically powerful, see Frederick Ahl, "The Art of Safe Criticism in Greece and Rome," *The American Journal of Philology* 105, no 2 (1984), 174-208.

circulating in 8 C.E.,¹³⁶ the year he was exiled, and several scholars have already suggested that the *Metamorphoses*, rather than the *Ars Amatoria*, was the much more likely cause of Ovid's *relegatio* to Tomis.¹³⁷

Several scholars have argued that Augustus grew increasingly intolerant of free speech as he aged.¹³⁸ Cassius Dio writes about public burning of pamphlets which were considered seditious (ἐφ' ὑβρεῖ τινῶν) and punishment of authors.¹³⁹ Seneca writes about how Titus Labienus, a virulent orator and historian, was prosecuted similarly and his writings were burned by decree of the senate.¹⁴⁰ Another aggressive orator, Cassius Severus, was also prosecuted for inflammatory speech or writings; he was exiled to Crete.¹⁴¹ Although these events are generally held to date to 12 C.E., using Jerome, Syme suggests that these events may have actually occurred in 8 C.E.¹⁴²

There are dozens of stories in the *Metamorphoses* which can be read as politically subversive, and several already have been discussed in the course of this chapter.¹⁴³ In general, Ovid's less-than-flattering depiction of Augustus' patron gods—Minerva, Jupiter, Venus, and especially Apollo—seems enough to deeply offend Augustus. The

¹³⁶ Kenney, "The *Metamorphoses*," 441. Kenney holds that the poem was circulating, if not actually published, in the form we have it in now by this date.

¹³⁷ Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 1-5*, 5 and 37 and Anderson, *Ovid's Metamorphoses Books 6-10*, 4-5. Also, Charles Segal, for example, has noted, 475, that the Ovid of the *Metamorphoses* is a "poet in revolt. The revolt is subtle, and its weapons are wit and irony; but it is none the less real..." "Orpheus and Augustan Ideology," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 103 (1972), 473-494. Also, 492: "Ovid's very opposition to Augustan ideology and to the Augustan epic which went with it could hold his poem, albeit in a negative way, close to the experience of his own times and could thus give it a freshness and immediacy which Callimachus could not attain."

¹³⁸ See, for example, Ronald Syme, *History in Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 199-229.

¹³⁹ Cited *ibid.*, 212. Cassius Dio 56.27.1.

¹⁴⁰ Cited *ibid.*, 212-213. Seneca, *Controversiae*, 10. praef. 4-10.

¹⁴¹ Syme, *History in Ovid*, 212-214..

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 214.

¹⁴³ Patricia Johnson argues that Ovid's representation of artistic failure in the *Metamorphoses* is a direct response to the growing atmosphere of artistic suppression and literary control in the ten years which precede Ovid's exile. *Ovid Before Exile*, 1-21. Cf. A.W.J. Holleman, "Ovid and Politics," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 20 no. 4 (1971), 458-466.

story of Cyparissus in Book Fifteen in particular seems to positively invite the wrath of the emperor. Still, if these aspects of the poem escaped the notice of Augustus, surely Ovid's treatment of apotheosis in the poem must have sent Augustus into fits. Several characters undergo apotheosis, including Hercules, Aeneas, Romulus, and Julius Caesar. Especially in describing the apotheoses of Hercules and Julius Caesar, Ovid's tone is comical, irreverent, and far from pious.¹⁴⁴

The description of the apotheosis of Hercules occurs in Book Nine, and it is the first of the apotheoses. Ovid describes in nauseating detail how Hercules suffers when he dons the tunic soaked in Nessus' blood:

dum potuit, solita gemitum uirtute repressit;
 uicta malis postquam est patienta, reppulit aras
 impleuitque suis nemorosam uocibus Oeten.
 nec mora, letiferam conatur scindere uestem;
 qua trahitur, trahit illa cutem, foedumque relatu,
 aut haeret membris frustra temptata reuelli
 aut laceros artus et grandia detegit ossa.
 ipse cruor, gelido ceu quondam lammina candens
 tincta lacu, stridit coquiturque ardente ueneno.
 nec modus est, sorbent auidae praecordia flammae
 caeruleusque fluit toto de corpore sudor
 ambustique sonant nerui, caecaque medullis
 tabe liquefactis tollens ad sidera palmas...(9.163-
 175)

(While he could, he repressed his groaning with his customary manliness; When his suffering was conquered by his pain, he pushed back the altar and filled woody Oeta with his cries. Without delay, he tries to tear the deadly garment. When it is torn, it tears skin with it, and—a foul thing to relate—it either clings on his limbs once it is attempted in vain to tear it away or it uncovers his lacerated joints and his enormous bones. His blood itself, as glowing, red-hot metal in an icy pool, hisses and boils with the burning poison. Without limit, the aggressive flames consume his vital organs and dark sweat flows from his whole body. His burnt tendons sound, and with the blind wasting melting his marrows, raising up his hands to the stars...)

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Solodow, *The World of Ovid's Metamorphoses*, 101-109, where he discusses how Ovid's wit and humor permeates the text.

Unable to escape the horrible fire running through his body, Hercules builds a pyre and climbs on it. As the hero lies in the flames, the gods fear for him. Jupiter then delivers a pompous speech:

... 'nostra est timor iste uoluptas,
o superi, totoque libens mihi pectore grator,
quod memoris populi dicor rectorque paterque
et mea progenies uestro quoque tuta fauore est...
(9.243-246)

(This fear of yours is my pleasure, o gods, and I am pleased in my whole heart because I am called both ruler and father of a mindful people and my child is safe also by your inclination...)

In using the phrase “rectorque paterque” (both ruler and father) here, Ovid connects Jupiter to Augustus himself. As discussed earlier, he uses the same phrase in Book Fifteen to describe both Jupiter and Augustus. Jupiter of course in this speech is talking about the imminent apotheosis of Hercules. That his first words are “nostra est timor iste uoluptas” (this fear of yours is my pleasure) is striking: these are not the words of a gentle ruler.

Jupiter continues, describing what will happen to Hercules:

omnia qui uicit uincet quos cernitis ignes,
nec nisi materna Vulcanum parte potentem
sentiet; aeternum est a me quod traxit et experts
atque immune necis nullaue domabile flamma,
idque ego defunctum terra caelestibus oris
accipiam cunctisque meum laetabile factum
dis fore confido. si quis tamen Hercule, si quis
forte deo doliturus erit, data praemia nolet,
sed meruisse dari sciet inuitusque probabit. (9.250-
258)

(He who conquered everything will conquer the fires which you see, and he will feel nothing of Vulcan's power except in the maternal part. The part which he has derived from me is eternal and immortal and immune to death and unable to be conquered by flames. I will receive this in the celestial shores when it is through with the earth, and I am confident that

my deed will be a joyous thing for all the gods. If nevertheless anyone, if there is by chance anyone who will be unhappy that Hercules will be made a god, he will begrudge the reward, but he will know that it was granted deservedly and reluctantly he will approve it.)

Ovid then describes the actual apotheosis:

interea quodcumque fuit populabile flammae
 Mulciber abstulerat, nec cognoscenda remansit
 Herculis effigies, nec quidquam ab imagine ductum
 matris habet, tantumque Iouis vestigia seruat.
 utque nouus serpens posita cum pelle senecta
 luxuriare solet squamaque nitere recenti,
 sic, ubi mortales Tirynthius exuit artus,
 parte sui meliore uiget maiorque uideri
 coepit et augusta fieri grauitate uerendus.
 quem pater omnipotens inter caua nubila raptum
 quadriiugo curru radiantibus intulit astris. (9.262-
 272)

(Meanwhile, whatever the flames could destroy, Mulciber carried off, and no recognizable appearance of Hercules remained, and anything he had from his mother was gone from his image, and he only kept the vestiges of Jove. As a new serpent with its old age put away with its skin is accustomed to luxuriate and shines with its new skin, thus, when the Tirynthian put off his mortal limbs, he grew vigorous in his better part and he began to seem bigger and to become august and worthy of reverence in his dignity. His all-powerful father, having seized him among the hollow clouds, in his four-horse chariot placed him among the shining stars.)

Ovid says that Hercules becomes “augusta...grauitate uerendus” (venerable with august seriousness). Hercules, then, becomes like one of the gods Minerva represents on her tapestry in Book Six. Of course, Ovid’s use of the adjective “augustus” here further connects the story to Augustus. Hercules becomes “maior” (larger in size) when he becomes a god, which provides a transition into the next story. There, Alcmena tells the comical story of giving birth to Hercules, who was an enormous baby. At one point, she says:

namque laboriferi cum iam natalis adesset
 Herculis et decimum premeretur sidere signum,
 tendebat grauitas uterum mihi, quodque ferebam
 tantum erat ut posses auctorem dicere tecti
 ponderis esse Iouem. nec iam tolerare labores
 ulterius poteram; quin nunc quoque frigidus artus,
 dum loquor, horror habet, parsque est meminisse
 doloris. (9.285-291)

(When the natal hour of bearing Hercules approached and the tenth sign was pressed on by the sun, weight was stretching my uterus, that which I was carrying was so great that you could easily say that Jove was the creator of the weight. I could no longer tolerate the pangs. Even now cold horror holds my limbs as I talk about it, and part of the pain is present even in remembering it.)

The word “grauitas” in line 287 echoes the earlier occurrence of the word in line 270. Here, however, Alcmena is describing how huge her baby was and how difficult it was to give birth to him, so the word “grauitas” is humorous in this story. Alcmena’s comical account of giving birth to Hercules colors the word “grauitas” and makes Ovid’s earlier description of Hercules as “augusta...grauitate verendus” seem ridiculous. The apotheosis itself becomes comical and colors the other apotheoses in the poem—most importantly, the apotheosis of Julius Caesar and the future apotheosis of Augustus himself.¹⁴⁵

Ovid’s description of the apotheosis of Caesar in Book Fifteen, which itself was a subject of Augustan art, is completely overblown.¹⁴⁶ He writes:

Hic tamen accessit delubris aduena nostris;
 Caesar in urbe sua deus est. quem Marte togaque
 praecipuum non bella magis finita triumphis
 resque domi gestae properataque gloria rerum

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Garth Tissol, “Roman History and Augustan Politics in *Metamorphoses*,” in *Brill’s Companion to Ovid* ed. Barbara Weiden Boyd (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 327.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Galinsky, “The Cypus Episode in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (15.565-621),” 181: “The flattery that is expressed in this passage is so grotesque and absurd that its implications cannot possibly be unintentional.” For the apotheosis of Caesar on art of the Augustan Age, see for example, John Scheid, “Augustus and Roman Religion,” in the *Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus* ed. Karl Galinsky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 175-193, especially 184.

in sidus uertere nouum stellamque comantem,
 quam sua progenies; neque enim de Caesaris actis
 ullum maius opus quam quod pater exstitit huius.
 scilicet aequoreos plus est domuisse Britannos
 perque papyriferi septemflua flumina Nili
 uictrices egisse rates Numidasque rebelles
 Cinyphiumque Iubam Mithridateisque tumentem
 nominibus Pontum populo adiecisse Quirini
 et multos meruisse, aliquos egisse triumphos,
 quam tantum genuisse uirum? quo praeside rerum
 humano generi, superi, fauistis abunde.
 ne foret hic igitur mortali semine cretus,
 ille deus faciendus erat...(15.745-761)

(This Aesculapius came to our shrines as a foreign god, but Caesar is a god in his own city. Whom, outstanding in war and in peace, his wars ending in triumphs, his accomplishments at home, his accelerated glory, then less turned him into a new star and hairy comet than his son. Indeed, Of the acts of Caesar, no work is greater than that his status as father of this man. Is it more to have conquered the sea-girt Britons, to have driven his victorious ships through the seven-mouthed waters of the papyrus-bearing Nile, to have added the rebel Numidians, Cinyphian Juba, Pontus, which swells with the name Mithridates to the rule of the people of Quirinus, and to have deserved many, to have celebrated some triumphs, than to have fathered such a man? With him as protector of things, you gods have bestowed abundant blessings on humankind. Therefore, lest this man be born from mortal seed, that man had to be made a god...)

Ovid's introduction of the apotheosis of Julius Caesar follows his elaborate and lengthy description of how Aesculapius is brought in the form of a giant snake to Rome from Epidaurus, so his abrupt declaration that "Caesar in urbe sua deus est" (Caesar is a god in his own city) points to the absurdity of Caesar's status.¹⁴⁷ Ovid captures the artificial nature of the whole account by saying, for example, that Julius Caesar accomplished nothing so great "quam tantum genuisse virum" (than to have fathered such a man). Of

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Hardie, "The Historian in Ovid," 208: "Denis Feeney has brilliantly drawn out the contrast between the corporate senatorial handling of the introduction of Aesculapius as a god to Rome, and the 'privatization' of Roman religion within the imperial household hinted at in the poem's closing prayer to the gods of Rome. But equally one could read the story of Aesculapius as a comment on the elaborate charades of senatorial and popular validation of the deifications of Julius and Augustus. Ovid knew as much about dissimulation as did either Tiberius or Tacitus."

course, Julius Caesar did not father Augustus at all; Augustus was adopted by Caesar to be his heir. Ovid's playful wit emerges in the last few lines of this passage, especially when he writes "ille deus faciendus erat" (that man had to be made a god).¹⁴⁸

After describing Caesar's apotheosis with exaggerated detail and pomp, Ovid writes:

Di, precor, Aeneae comites, quibus ensus et ignis
 cesserunt, dique Indigetes genitorque Quirine
 Urbis et inuicti genitor Gradiue Quirini,
 Vestaque Caesareos inter sacrata Penates
 et cum Caesarea tu, Phoebae domestice, Vesta,
 quique tenes altus Tarpeias Iuppiter arces,
 quosque alios uati fas appellare piumque est—
 tarda sit illa dies et nostro serior aeuo,
 qua caput Augustum, quem temperat, orbe relicto
 accedat caelo faueatque precantibus absens. (15.
 861-870)

(O Gods, I pray, comrades of Aeneas, for whom the sword and fire yielded, and native gods and father of the city Quirinus, and Gradivus father of unconquered Quirinus, and Vesta, who is made sacred among the penates of Caesar, and with Caesar's Vesta, you, Phoebus of Rome, and you, lofty Jupiter, who holds the Tarpeian citadel, and all the rest of those gods it is fitting and pious for the bard to call upon—may that day be distant and far away from our time, when Augustus leaves the circle of the world, which he rules, in heaven, and gone from us, he answers our prayers.)

Here, Ovid calls upon the gods to welcome Augustus into their ranks, who he says will leave behind the "orbis" of earth. Because he has painted a generally unflattering picture of the gods in the body of the poem, especially of Apollo and Jupiter, his invocation of them here recalls all of their earlier antics.¹⁴⁹ In calling upon Gradivus to ensure the

¹⁴⁸ Cf. D.E. Hill, *Ovid Metamorphoses XIII-XV* (Warminster, England: Aris & Phillips, Ltd., 2000), 226. Hill writes: "It is difficult not to detect some irony here." Some scholars read Ovid's words as sincere. For example, Brooks Otis, "Ovid and the Augustans," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 69 (1938), 188-229.

¹⁴⁹ Stratis Kyriakidis argues that Ovid's hasty treatment of the Alban kings shows that he presents the history of Roman power in negative terms. "The Alban Kings in the *Metamorphoses*," in *Clio and the Poets: Augustan Poetry and the Traditions of Ancient Historiography* eds. D.S. Levene and D.P. Nelis

future apotheosis of Augustus, Ovid specifically reminds his audience of another descendant of Mars Gradivus, Tereus.

In pointing to the circle of earth in this passage, Ovid reminds his audience of the circular work of art which he has been describing over the course of the poem and hints at the fact that Augustus himself is just a *daidalon* on that piece of art—like Daphne, Minos, and Hercules. In fact, as Sophia Papaioannou has observed, there are striking connections between the apotheosis of Julius Caesar and Ovid’s calling for a future apotheosis of Augustus in Book Fifteen and the ekphrasis about Anius’ krater in Book Thirteen.¹⁵⁰ That ekphrasis describes a scene in *Thebes*, which, as Papaioannou recognizes, stands for Rome itself.¹⁵¹ Of course, at the beginning of Book Fifteen, Pythagoras describes the fall of once powerful cities, including Mycenae, Sparta, Athens, and Thebes. Ovid thus suggests that Rome will one day fall into ruin just as these cities, and he suggests that Augustus himself will be simply a figure on a work of art—which of course he already was in Ovid’s day.

Ovid’s last statement in the *Metamorphoses* is thus especially daring:

Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iouis ira nec ignis
nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere uetustas.
cum uolet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius
ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi;
parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis

(Leiden: Brill, 2002), 211-229. Cf. 226: “Unlike this, the catalogue in the *Metamorphoses* has a more concrete purpose. It belongs to a *perpetuum carmen*, as the poet himself has declared from the beginning, where everything is part of a universal history, in which feelings, situations, natural phenomena, human actions or whatever else belong. It is a universal history which begins with the creation of the universe from Chaos and reaches the time of the Rome of Ovid’s days. This catalogue of the Alban kings refers just to a small period of tempus edax and –unlike Vergil’s—is stripped of its *kleos*. With its historiographical provenance it declares itself to be part of a broader and all embracing historical process. Instead of exalting Rome, therefore, the poet –through his treatment and composition of the catalogue—allows his negative insinuations concerning the violence and the struggle for power which are implicit in the foundation myth of Rome to surface.”

¹⁵⁰ Sophia Papaioannou, *Epic Succession and Dissension: Ovid, Metamorphoses 13.623-14.582, and the Reinvention of the Aeneid* (New York: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Company, 2005), 20-40.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 27-28 and 32-37.

astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum;
 quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris,
 ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama
 (si quid habent ueri uatum praesagia) uiuam. (15.
 871-879)

(And now I have finished my work, which neither the wrath nor Jove nor fire nor sword nor greedy age will be able to destroy. When it will, let that day, which has jurisdiction over nothing but this body, put an end to the expanse of my uncertain life. Nevertheless, in my better part I will be carried on wings beyond the heavenly stars, and my name will be imperishable. Wherever Roman power extends over conquered lands, I will be read on the lips of the people, and through all ages [if the prophecies of bards have any truth] I will live in fame.)

Ovid predicts his own apotheosis here, even echoing some of the language he uses in the other apotheoses of the poem.¹⁵² Ovid says that he will rise “super astra” (beyond the stars), thus suggesting that his own immortality will extend beyond that of Caesar, who in becoming a god only reached “caelestibus in...astris” (15.846) (in the heavenly stars), and that of Augustus himself, who only “aetherias sedes cognataque sidera tanget” (15.839) (will touch heavenly seats and the stars related to him).¹⁵³ Because he places himself “super astra”—that is, beyond the limits of the universe—he hints at his being the divine fabricator of the universe in Book One.¹⁵⁴ Of course, as the artist who creates the poem, Ovid, like Hesiod, is also the artist who constructs the physical universe represented in the poem. Here, Ovid reveals his awareness of his own power as a poet in constructing the *kosmos* of Rome and the image of the principate. Surely Augustus would consider this final challenge to his supremacy a pointed affront.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Cf. Kenney, “The *Metamorphoses*,” 441.

¹⁵³ Cf. Carroll Moulton, “Ovid as Anti-Augustan: ‘Met.’ 15.843-79,” *The Classical World* 67, no. 1 (1973), 4-7. Moulton believes that Ovid’s tone is irreverent and that the apotheoses are full of irony.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Catherine Rhoter, “Ideology, Tripartition, and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,” *Arethusa* 13 no. 2 (1980), 307: “In claiming that he will be carried beyond the stars (15.875-876: *super alta perennis astra ferar*), he is borne outside his mythological Cosmos; by means of his *perpetuum carmen* the poet becomes *perennis*.”

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Charles Segal, “Myth and Philosophy in the *Metamorphoses*: Ovid’s Augustanism and the Augustan Conclusion of Book XV,” *The American Journal of Philology* 90 no.3 (1969), 290: “To turn

Indeed, in *Tristia* 1.7, Ovid tells his audience that the *Metamorphoses* was unfinished when he left Rome, and he begs his readers to forgive the rough quality of his writing. At the end of the poem, he writes:

hos quoque sex versus, in prima fronte libelli
 si praeponendos esse putabis, habe:
 ‘orba parente sua quicumque volumina tangis,
 his saltem vestra detur in urbe locus.
 quoque magis faveas, haec non sunt edita ab ipso,
 sed quasi de domini funere rapta sui.
 quicquid in his igitur vitii rude carmen habebit,
 emendaturus, si licuisset, eram.’ (1.7.33-40)

(Have also these six verses, if you think that they should be put at the front of my little book: ‘Whoever touches these rolls, deprived of their parent, let a place be granted to them at least in your city. May you also be more indulgent, because these have not been published by me, but they were seized as if from the funeral of their master. Whatever defect therefore this rough poem will have in these verses, I would have corrected, if this had been allowed.)

It is worth pointing out Ovid’s presentation of himself as the parent of his work; he thus follows both Homer and Hesiod in presenting the poem as a corporeal product of sexual union. The word “edita” in line 37 reinforces this idea. The verb “edere” means both “to give birth” and “to publish.” In these last lines, Ovid may simply be asking his audience to forgive his rough editing, but there may be more to them. If indeed the *Metamorphoses* was the cause of Ovid’s exile, Ovid may be trying to convince Augustus that he never intended to publish the objectionable aspects of the *Metamorphoses*, or he may be lamenting the fact that he was not offered the opportunity to rewrite the text. In any case, Ovid would certainly have plenty of time in Tomis to edit his rough poetry, and

away from the Emperor’s deification to a first-person self-encomium is, from an Augustan point of view, a rude anticlimax....the effect is more of a shock than would be the case at the end of a more personal poem...The first line of the epilogue, and especially the phrase, *nec ira Iovis* contains another shock. Only a few lines before Ovid has compared Augustus to Jove (XV, 858-60).”

it was not uncommon for multiple versions of a text to be circulating, so it seems unlikely that Ovid is truly concerned that only an unpolished version of the *Metamorphoses* will survive. His use of “vitium” is compelling; the word can mean both “defect” and “crime.” Ovid may be subtly indicating here that the poem was the “vitium” which precipitated his *relegatio*.

Most of the important evidence for Ovid’s exile comes from the poems which Ovid wrote while in Tomis.¹⁵⁶ In much of his exilic poetry, Ovid is attempting to soothe the anger of the princeps and to mitigate his political affront. Because he is trying to convince the emperor to allow him to return to Rome, or at least to move him to a more pleasant place, the statements which Ovid makes about his exile in the *Tristia* and in the *Ex Ponto Libri Quattuor* are, to some degree at least, questionable testimonies to what actually happened. Still, the evidence from Ovid’s own poems is valuable. Later sources such as *Epitome de Caesaribus*, which dates to about 400 C.E., and the Codex Vaticanus, which dates to the fourteenth century C.E., for example, provide all sorts of interesting reasons for the exile—some report that Ovid saw Augustus having sex with a boy, some report that Ovid saw Livia or Julia nude, and some report that Ovid discovered an incestuous relationship between Augustus and his daughter or granddaughter—and many specifically name the *Ars Amatoria* as the cause.¹⁵⁷ Ovid himself says that his *relegatio* was due to a “carmen” (poem) and an “error” (mistake) at *Tristia* 2.207, and most take these things to be two different reasons. The “error” might be the “carmen” itself, however, or even the wandering of the careful reader away from the linear progression of the “carmen” and into the feminine reading of it. It is worth mentioning here that the

¹⁵⁶For a comprehensive study of the evidence for Ovid’s exile, see, for example, Thibault, *The Mystery of Ovid’s Exile*.

¹⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, 24-27.

words “error” and “errare” occur frequently in the *Metamorphoses*; indeed, these words occur frequently in most of Ovid’s poetry.

Most scholars understand the “carmen” to be the *Ars Amatoria*. The *Ars Amatoria* was published in 1 or 2 C.E.,¹⁵⁸ however, and, although its subject matter would no doubt be offensive in light of the Augustan moral reforms, it seems extremely unlikely that the emperor would wait eight years after that poem’s publication before taking action against Ovid. Ovid himself seems to point this out in Book Two of the *Tristia* (2.539-546). The *Ars Amatoria* would be a convenient poem to cite in the public edict about Ovid’s exile (*Tristia* 2.135, 5.2.58), however. Augustus would not want to draw attention to the anti-Augustan reading of the *Metamorphoses*, mostly because such public attention would no doubt stir public interest in the poem and cause copies to multiply in the city. So, the *Ars Amatoria* may have been used in this capacity.

Ovid actually uses the word “Ars” several times in the *Tristia* and in the *Ex Ponto Libri Quattuor*. For example, in the second book of the *Tristia*, he writes:

at si, quod mallet, vacuum in Arte mea.
illa quidem fateor frontis non esse severae
scripta, nec a tanto principe digna legi:
non tamen idcirco legum contraria iussis
sunt ea Romanas erudiuntque nurus...
ecquid ab hac omnes rigide summovimus Arte,
quas stola contingi vittaque sumpta vetat?
“at matrona potest alienis artibus uti,
quodque trahat, quamvis non doceatur, habet.” (2.239-254)

(But if, as I would prefer, by chance there would have been an empty moment for you, you would have read no crime in my Art. That, I confess was not written with any serious sentiment, is not worthy to be read by such a princeps: not for that reason is it against the commandments of the law, nor has it educated young Roman women...Have I not rigidly excluded from this art all those whom the matron’s dress and the fillet

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 33.

protect? “But the matron is able to use foreign arts—that which she carries from it she has, although she is not taught.”)

It seems clear that Ovid is describing his *Ars Amatoria* in these lines, and his reference seems to suggest that that poem was at least partly to blame for his *relegatio*. It is worth pointing out that he also uses the term “ars” in line 2.253, and there it refers to the skills which the poem teaches rather than to the *Ars Amatoria*. In ancient manuscripts, of course, it would be difficult to distinguish between capitalized letters and lower case letters.¹⁵⁹ Another passage which is often cited occurs later in the poem:

haec tibi me invisum lascivia fecit, ob Artes,
quis ratus es vetitos sollicitare toros.
sed neque me nuptae didicerunt furta magistro,
quodque parum novit, nemo docere potest.
sic ego delicias et mollia carmina feci,
strinxerit ut nomen fabula nulla meum. (2.345-350)

(This licentiousness has made me hateful to you, on account of my arts, who thought that they violated forbidden beds. But no brides learned deception from my instruction; no one is able to teach that which is only knows a little of. I made delicate, soft poems in such a way, that no scandal touched my name.)

Here, Ovid’s use of “ars” in line 345 is unclear. Some editors capitalize the word, assuming that Ovid refers to the *Ars Amatoria*, and others leave it uncapitalized, assuming that Ovid is using the word to indicate his poetic art in general.¹⁶⁰ In the fifth book of the *Tristia*, Ovid may also allude to the *Ars Amatoria*:

sic utinam, quae nil metuentem tale magistrum
perdidit, in cineres Ars mea versa foret! (5.12.67-68)

¹⁵⁹ For a discussion of scripts used in Roman manuscripts, see L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature* Second Edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, 1974), 32.

¹⁶⁰ In the OCT edition edited by S.G. Owen, the word is capitalized, while the Loeb edition edited by Arthur Leslie Wheeler leaves the word uncapitalized. Wheeler, 81, translates the passage: “This wantonness has caused thee to hate me on account of the arts which thou didst think disturbed unions that all were forbidden to attack.” Thibault, in *The Mystery of Ovid’s Exile*, 31, lists this line as one of Ovid’s own references to the *Ars Amatoria*.

(Thus, if only my “Art,” which ruined its master who feared no such thing, had been turned into ashes!)

Again, it seems unclear in this passage whether Ovid means the *Ars Amatoria* or his own poetic craft here. There is a similar passage in Book Two of the *Ex Ponto Libri Quattuor*:

nec quicquam, quod lege vetor committere, feci:
 est tamen his gravior noxa fatenda mihi.
 neve roges, quae sit, stultam conscripsimus Artem:
 innocuas nobis haec vetat esse manus.
 ecquid praeterea peccarim, quaerere noli,
 ut lateat sola culpa sub Arte mea. (2.9.71-76)

(I have done nothing which I am forbidden to do by law: nevertheless I must confess a more serious offense than these things. Do not ask what it is. I have written a foolish art: this keeps my hands from being blameless. Don’t ask whether I have erred even further—so that my mistake may hide under my art alone.)

It is once again difficult to determine whether Ovid means the poem or his own art in this passage. Thibault cites this passage as evidence that Ovid considers the *Ars Amatoria* to be a screen for the real reason for his exile.¹⁶¹ In fact, in line 76 Ovid echoes the language he uses in the story of Pygmalion in Book Ten of the *Metamorphoses*. As discussed above, in that story, he says: “ars adeo latet arte sua” (10.252) (art hides its own art). Again, Ovid is commenting in this sentence in the *Metamorphoses* on his own use of ekphrasis to conceal the underlying political statement of the poem, and the repetition of the language in the passage cited above from *Ex Ponto Libri Quattuor* seems deliberate. It seems likely that Ovid is deliberately manipulating the ambiguity of the word “ars” in these passages.

Ovid does say in several places in the *Tristia* that he saw something he should not have seen. For example, at 2.103-104, he writes:

¹⁶¹ Thibault, *The Mystery of Ovid’s Exile*, 31.

cur aliquid vidi? cur noxia lumina feci?
cur imprudenti cognita culpa mihi?

(Why did I see anything? Why did I make eyes culpable? Why was the guilt known to me, with me not foreseeing?)

Later, in Book Three, he writes:

inscia quod crimen viderunt lumina, plector,
peccatumque oculos est habuisse meum.
non equidem totam possum defendere culpam,
sed partem nostri criminis error habet. (3.5.49-52)

(Because my unknowing eyes saw a crime, I am punished, and my sin is to have had eyes. Indeed, I am not able to defend myself against all the blame, but error had a part of my crime.)

It may be the case that Ovid did accidentally see something scandalous—Augustus in a compromising sexual position, Livia undressed, or Julia engaged in an adulterous affair—but it seems just as likely that Ovid refers to his own recognition of the potential for ekphrasis. After all, as discussed earlier in this chapter, the *Metamorphoses* is a highly visual poem, and it is full of references to the gaze, vision, and eyes.

Ovid begins the first poem of the first book of the *Tristia*, poems written while he was in exile, with the following lines:

Parve (nec invideo) sine me, liber, ibis in urbem:
ei mihi, quod domino non licet ire tuo!
vade, sed incultus, qualem decet exulis esse:
infelix habitum temporis huius habe.
nec te purpureo velent vaccinia fuco:¹⁶²
non est conveniens luctibus ille color:
nec titulus minio, nec cedro charta notetur,
candida nec nigra cornua fronte geras.
felices ornent haec instrumenta libellos:

¹⁶² The word “vaccinium” may indeed mean “berry,” as most translators assume, but it is worth pointing out that the word is quite close to “vacca” (cow) and may mean vellum. Florence Dupont in fact translates it in this way in “The Corrupted Boy and the Crowned Poet, or The Material Reality and the Symbolic Status of the Literary Book at Rome,” trans. Holt N. Parker in *Ancient Literacies: The Culture of Reading in Greece and Rome* eds. William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 157.

fortunae memorem te decet esse meae.
 nec fragili geminae poliantur pumice frontes,
 hirsutus sparsis ut videare comis.
 neve liturarum pudeat. qui viderit illas,
 de lacrimis factas sentiat esse meis. (1.1.1-14)

(Little book, you will go without me (I'm not jealous) to the city. Alas for me that it is not permitted for your master to go! Go, but unadorned, such as is fitting for an exile: unhappy book, have the appearance of this time. No cover will veil you with purple dye: that color is not appropriate. No title of vermillion, no page marked by cedar oil, you will wear no white knobs with black edges. These are the sort of things which adorn happy books. It is fitting for you to be a memorial of my fate. The two edges should not be polished by fragile punice, so that you appear hairy with uncombed hair. Do not be ashamed at your blots. Anyone who sees them will understand that they were made by my tears.)

Ovid introduces his exilic poems by anthropomorphizing the book in which they are written, which is able to return to Rome when its author cannot. The book to some degree stands for its author in the same way Philomela's tapestry stands for her injured body.¹⁶³ Ovid instructs his book to return to the city "incultus" (unadorned), and he elaborates on how the book will not feature any of the trappings of previous books.¹⁶⁴ Specifically, he says that no purple will tinge its cover, it will have no title illuminated with vermillion, no cedar oil will mark its papyrus, and it will not wear white knobs next to blackened edges—the marks of expensive books. He sends the book as a "fortunae memor meae" (1.10) (reminder of my fortune). While it seems that Ovid is simply lamenting his sad *relegatio* to Tomis on the Black Sea and using the book as an image for himself here, the combination of "purpureus fucus" (purple dye), "notare" (to mark, to

¹⁶³ Cf. Kenney, "The *Metamorphoses*," 446: "The subsequent reference to the *Metamorphoses* is also glossed: the fate of its author may itself rank as a metamorphosis (119-22). The wit of the paradox—the creator of the poem now part of its own subject matter—reads like a bitter echo of the proem of the *Metamorphoses*; in the context it is sharp and, in the light of previous characterization of Augustus' power, suggestive."

¹⁶⁴ It is worth recalling here that Ovid describes Philomela as "cultus" when Tereus first sees her. When Tereus locks her in the shack in the woods, of course, she becomes "incultus." Just like the raped and silenced Philomela, trapped in a barbarian land, Ovid's book is necessarily "incultus."

make signs), and “candida cornua” (white knobs) in these opening lines is remarkable given his use of purple, white, and “notae” in the story about Tereus, Procne, and Philomela in the *Metamorphoses*. I believe Ovid introduces his *Tristia* with a clever reference to why he was exiled: the *Metamorphoses*. When Ovid writes that no “vaccinia” will color his book with purple dye, Ovid uses the word “velare.” This verb can mean “to cover” or “to veil,” but it can also mean “to conceal.” Ovid uses it cleverly here, and he manipulates its double meaning. He refers to the veiled, politically subversive poetic tapestry of the *Metamorphoses*, which, like Arachne’s and Philomela’s tapestries, is colored with purple dye.

Indeed, a bit later in the poem, he offers two subtle allusions to the stories in Book Six of that poem. In describing the rough circumstances which surround him in Tomis and which make writing poetry difficult, Ovid says that the sea, the wind, and the savage winter all harass him, and he says “carminibus metus omnis obest” (1.1.43) (all this fear stands in the way of my poems). He then says:

carminibus metus omnis obest: ego perditus ensem
haesurum iugulo iam puto iamque meo (1.1.43-44)

(Poetry is injured by any fear: I in my ruin am ever and ever expecting a sword to pierce by throat.)

The words “iugulum” (throat) and “ensis” (sword) recall the language of that story in the *Metamorphoses*. When Tereus draws his sword after Philomela threatens to report the rape, she offers her throat to him:

talibus ira feri postquam commota tyranni
nec minor hac metus est, causa stimulatus utraque,
quo fuit accinctus uagina liberat ensem
arreptamque coma flexis post terga lacertis
uincla pati cogit. iugulum Philomela parabat

spemque suae mortis uiso conceperat ense...(6.549-554)

(With such words, the anger of the savage tyrant is incited, and not less than this his fear. Motivated by anger and fear, from where it was girded, he frees his sword from its sheath. With her arms tied behind her back, he compels her to suffer fetters, caught by the hair; Philomela offered her throat and, seeing his sword, began to hope for her own death....)

Like Philomela, Ovid has been injured and silenced by a ruler with tyrannical power, and he too thinks that he will ultimately be killed by a cut to the throat. He comments on the fact that he has been allowed to live in this same poem, although, like Philomela living in her remote shack, he does not live “salvus” (1.1.19) (safe). Ovid also says in the first poem of the *Tristia*:

da mihi Maeoniden et tot circumspice casus,
ingenium tantis excidet omne malis. (1.1.47-48)

(Give me the Maeonian one and look around at so many misfortunes, and all the genius will fall away with such evils.)

Here, Ovid may be referring to Homer with the word “Maeoniden,” but it is likely that he refers to Arachne, who also is called “Maeonis” and who is specifically described both as “Maeonia” and “Maeonis” in the story of Minerva and Arachne in Book Six of the *Metamorphoses*. Ovid identifies as an artist with Arachne, and, as discussed earlier, her tapestry stands for the *Metamorphoses* itself. Here in the *Tristia*, Ovid laments his earlier “ingenium” (genius, poetic skill), which at least in part caused his exile, and he says that, given his present circumstances, Arachne’s artistic “ingenium”—which stands for his own—would fall away. In other words, he would not have written what he did. In fact, In *Tristia* 3.3.74, Ovid writes:

quosque legat versus oculo properante viator,
grandibus in tituli marmore caede notis:

HIC EGO QVI IACEO TENERORVM LVSOR AMORVM
 INGENIO PERII NASO POETA MEO
 AT TIBI QVI TRANSIS NE SIT GRAVE QVISQVIS AMASTI
 DICERE NASONIS MOLLITER OSSA CVBENT

hoc satis in titulo est. etenim maiora libelli
 et diuturna magis sunt monimenta mihi,
 quos ego confido, quamvis nocuere, daturos
 nomen et auctori tempora longa suo. (3.3.71-80)

(Carve in large letters in the marble lines which the passerby may read with a quick eye: I WHO LIE HERE, A PLAYER OF TENDER LOVES, I, NASO, A POET, PERISHED BY MY OWN GENIUS. BUT YOU WHO PASS BY, DO NOT BE SEVERE, YOU WHO LOVED, SAY "THE BONES OF NASO LIE SOFTLY." This is enough for an epitaph. My little books are a greater and more lasting monument to me, which I am confident, although they have harmed me, will give a name and a long life to their author.)

Ovid describes his future tombstone, and his epitaph indicates that his "ingenium" was the cause for his ruin. It is worth recalling here that it is Philomela's "ingenium" which motivates her to weave purple "notae" on a white background.

Conclusion

In the Introduction to this project, I argued that ekphrasis begins as a feminine rhetorical device which helps the oral poet accomplish an act of persuasion. While Ovid is certainly far removed from the world of oral epic, he nevertheless also uses the feminine body of ekphrasis in an act of persuasion. His is an act of political persuasion, a response to the grand act of persuasion the Augustans themselves effected in convincing the Roman people to accept the principate. Just as Augustus used art and architecture to fashion his political image, Ovid uses the visual imagery of ekphrasis to construct his own monument to the Augustan regime. Ovid witnessed Augustus' manipulation of

Roman mythology and the extended choreography of his political performance. He saw the carefully scripted creation of “Pax Augusta,” and he could not resist a witty response to the *pietas*-infused political propaganda. Augustus’ own artistic motifs—bucrania, laurel wreathes, garlands, fillets, fires, and horns-of-plenty appear all over the *Metamorphoses*, adorning Ovid’s own artwork.

Ekphrasis, of course, already was associated with the politics of the day by the time Ovid composed the *Metamorphoses*. Vergil’s striking ekphraseis link the princeps with Aeneas and Romulus, and he uses ekphrasis to glorify Augustus and to celebrate the new golden era, filled with peace and prosperity, which Augustus ushers in. Because his ekphrasis is so extended and because the scope of the poem is so ambitious, the detail of the *Metamorphoses* also conceals the underlying political statement while at the same time it constructs the statement. Ovid’s virtuosic language and beautiful imagery seduces his audience into the universe of the *Metamorphoses*. There, his readers become trapped in the alluring details of the stories. Still, Ovid exploits the connection between the uterine form of ekphrasis and divine truth. When one views the poem as a large work of art elaborated with individual images and examines those images closely, one not only sees the artificial nature of artistic imagery itself but also the many references to Augustus and his political campaign. By placing Augustus himself in that artistic universe—as a *daidalon* which adorns a work of art—Ovid offers his audience an opportunity to see Augustus alongside characters such as Apollo, Minerva, Jupiter, Cipus, and Tereus, for example. The truth exists in the labyrinthine swirl of the poem, where, as the Muses say to Hesiod in the *Theogony*, past, present, and future are all available.

One image which stands out most in the *Metamorphoses* is that of horns. Ovid uses the word “cornu” with great frequency throughout the poem: it appears multiple times in every book of the poem. Taken collectively, the many occurrences of “cornu” decorate the surface of the poem with two important Augustan symbols—the cornucopia and the bucranium. Horns are of course also phallic objects—Ovid himself points to the phallic nature of horns many times in the poem—and Ovid’s scattering of the image throughout the poem’s body may serve to underscore the politically aggressive nature of his “carmen.” Like Philomela, who eventually gets back at Tereus by tricking him into eating his own son—and thus who “rapes” him orally in the same way he raped her vaginally—Ovid shows that his poem is also a masculine speech act at the same time it is an example of feminine cunning. Of course, Ovid conceals the phallic nature of his poem by spreading the phalluses out over the many stories of the poem. Also, because “cornu” is both an object and a material for carving, the plethora of “cornua” in the poem provides an artistic medium for the *Metamorphoses*. Just as Pygmalion carves his statue out of ivory, Ovid carves the feminine body of his poem out of horn. In this way, he plays with the notion of the gates of ivory and horn in the underworld. In the *Aeneid*, Aeneas leaves the underworld through the gate of ivory, which is the exit reserved for false dreams. Ovid’s copious use of horn suggests that his whole poem is the gateway for truth.¹⁶⁵

In the beginning of his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid writes that his intention is to write a “perpetuum carmen” (1.4) (continuous, eternal poem). He plays with the meaning of

¹⁶⁵ It is worth recalling the horned altars and horned gates which appear in Near Eastern, Aegean, Minoan, and European religion and ritual from the Paleolithic period through the Bronze Age. The horns are fertility symbols, but, more importantly, they are linked with mother-goddesses and also liminal space between life and death and night and day. Levy, *The Gate of Horn*, 100, 129, 140, 150, 163, 204, 217, 217, 229, and 230.

“perpetuus” here. He suggests that his poem will have a continuous thread from beginning to end, but he also hints at the immortality which poetry affords its author. In manipulating the epic connection of ekphrasis, Ovid accomplishes his goal; he becomes immortal. He expands ekphrasis so that the larger body of the poem takes on the characteristics of ekphrasis, and the whole poem seems like a description of a plastic work of art. Everyone who has read Homer’s *Iliad* remembers the shield of Achilles, and everyone who has read Vergil’s *Aeneid* remembers the pictures on the walls of the temple of Juno, the doors of the temple of Apollo, and the shield of Aeneas, for example. The striking visual nature of the language of these passages makes a lasting impression on audiences, and the images which these ekphrasis offer leave audiences not only with memories of language but, more importantly, with visual monuments. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid has made his entire poem seem like a plastic work of art. He has communicated on both verbal and visual levels.¹⁶⁶ That his tapestry will last is assured by its dual nature. No one will forget it because of its striking visual imagery, and no one can destroy it because it is constructed with words. The last word of Ovid’s poem is “vivam,” and indeed he has.

¹⁶⁶ Alison Keith has shown that Ovid explores the epic association with “virtus” in the *Metamorphoses* and that he often diminishes the masculinity of heroes. She also argues that Ovid’s transexual characters stand out in the poem as representations of Ovid’s own deliberate blurring of gender. Alison Keith, “Epic Masculinity in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*,” in *Ovidian Transformations: Essays on the Metamorphoses and its Reception* eds. Philip Hardie, Alessandro Barchiesi, and Stephen Hinds (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1999), 214-239.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This project has attempted to show that the rhetorical technique of ekphrasis exists inside the masculine body of ancient epic as an alluring feminine body. Its structure is uterine, and it is thus both emasculating and procreative in nature. Essentially, ekphrasis serves the poet in the act of persuasion which occurs between poet and audience. Its visually stimulating language renders the epic audience vulnerable to the words of the poet, and, ultimately, the irresistibly virtuosic performance seduces the audience into believing the larger universe of the poem. The feminine form of ekphrasis also reveals to its audience the possibility of the pre-natal wholeness which exists in the divine sphere. This association with divine truth—and thus prophecy—also works to attract the epic audience into the poem. As epic poetry develops diachronically, ekphrasis evolves. Eventually, the boundaries between it and the rest of the poem are eroded, and the larger epic body takes on characteristics of ekphrasis. Still, its feminine nature, its persuasive quality, and its association with the divine sphere persist even when ekphrasis is expanded into the larger body of the poem.

The earliest epic ekphrasis is the Homeric description of Achilles' shield in the *Iliad*, and, to some degree, all later ekphraseis are informed by this first example. Because the *Iliad* is an oral epic, the act of persuasion which is at work between poet and audience is foregrounded. The poet attempts to speak so well that his audience is overcome with the picture he creates with his words and loses itself in the universe of the

poem. The spiralling, uterine form of the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield functions very much like Aphrodite's irresistible woven love-charm: it stuns, beguiles, and drains away mental fortitude, leaving its audience open to the rest of the poet's words. The subject-matter of the scenes on the shield—various elements of Minoan religious ritual—also serves to underscore the feminine nature of the device. Minoan religion focused on a fertile earth-goddess and her male warrior-attendants, and Minoan rituals functioned very much like later Greek mystery rituals, which centered on initiation, agrarian magic, and sexuality and offered participants the opportunity to face and overcome the terror of death. The Labyrinth dance, which is represented in detail on Achilles' shield, was an initiation rite which involved a ritual katabasis into the uterine body of the earth. In encountering the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield, Homer's audience participates virtually in the ritual represented on the shield, although the experience of the epic audience is mitigated by the fact that the shield only exists within the words of the poet. Nevertheless, the images represented in the ekphrasis suggest an avenue for communion with the divine sphere, and the ritualistic images themselves, then, help to seduce Homer's audience into the universe of the poem.

In the *Theogony*, Hesiod offers a general commentary on oral epic poetry at the same time he delineates the cosmogony of the physical universe. As a poet, Hesiod identifies with Zeus, who effectively uses persuasion in ruling the universe. In eating his first wife Metis, Zeus appropriates not only the feminine cunning she represents but also her procreative ability. Because he harnesses Metis' feminine power, Zeus is especially skilled at producing things out of his head—namely Athena and persuasive speeches. Hesiod recognizes the importance of persuasion in epic poetry, and he recognizes that

ekphrasis functions within the masculine body of epic just as Metis functions inside Zeus. In general, Hesiod personifies many abstract ideas in the *Theogony*—including several rhetorical concepts such as Persuasion, Falsehoods, Speeches, and Counterspeeches. He uses the figure of Pandora, who originates as an earth-goddess, to represent the rhetorical technique of ekphrasis. Pandora is constructed as a seductive body which helps to persuade the audience into believing the cosmogony which Hesiod has delineated, and, like Metis inside Zeus, Pandora's procreative ability serves the poet in constructing his own “κόσμος ἔπεων.” Pandora herself stands as an embodiment of the Labyrinth, and, like Achilles' shield, she offers her audience a virtual katabasis of sorts—into her own uterine body. In using Pandora to personify ekphrasis, Hesiod thus continues Homer's earlier presentation of ekphrasis as a feminine body.

In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid closely follows Hesiod in constructing his poetic cosmogony, and he too shows pronounced awareness of his own role in shaping the physical universe—in this case the universe of Augustan Rome. Ovid presents the world as a work of art and his poem as an extended ekphrasis which describes it. Ovid actually offers two readings of the *Metamorphoses*. The traditional reading of the epic is linear and masculine in nature: when read from beginning to end, the poem seems to be a glorification of Augustan Rome and a celebration of the princeps and his family. The other reading is non-linear and feminine. The feminine reading of the *Metamorphoses* demands that the audience approach the poem as an extended ekphrasis, looking at the individual stories as the images which make up Arachne's irreverent tapestry. The entire text is another kind of representation of the Labyrinth; Ovid uses the Labyrinth to suggest political truth. When read on this level, Ovid's politically subversive undertext

materializes, and his attempt at political persuasion becomes apparent. Ovid's audience undergoes a katabasis into his labyrinthine text and emerges with Ovid's image of Augustus.

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Appendix One: Minoan Religion

In general, there are two schools of thought about the Minoan pantheon: one argues for a pervasive earth-goddess who had many manifestations while the other, led primarily by Martin Nilsson, argues for an early pantheon of many different deities which then merged with the Mycenaean pantheon, eventually evolving into the gods and goddesses of later Greek culture. In any case, it is generally agreed that Minoan religion celebrated femininity and focused, if not exclusively, at least primarily on a fertility goddess.¹ Representations of male figures certainly exist, and, in at least one case, it seems likely that the representation is of a deity.² Male figures are often represented as young warrior-figures who attend the goddess. Of course, Minoan religion evolved over time, but the focus on fertility and femininity seems to have remained somewhat constant. The goddess had several manifestations, including as a deity of the sky who was associated with birds, as a chthonic snake-goddess worshipped in caves and tombs,

¹ For additional studies on Minoan religion, see, for example Gesell, *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete*; B.C. Dietrich, "Minoan Religion in the Context of the Aegean," in *Minoan Society Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium 1981*, eds. O. Kryszkowska and L. Nixon (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1983), 55-60. Dietrich, 58, connects Minoan cave and peak cults with "the natural rock within Demeter's altar in Arcadian Lykossoura and for her subterranean *megara* or caves in Priene and Knidos, which also contained the familiar terracotta bull figurines." See also Geraldine C. Gesell, "The Place of the Goddess in Minoan Society," in *Minoan Society Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium 1981*, eds. O. Kryszkowska and L. Nixon (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1983), 93-99; Paul Rehak and John G. Younger, "Review of Aegean Prehistory VII: Neopalatial, Final Palatial, and Postpalatial Crete," in *Aegean Prehistory: A Review* ed. Tracey Cullen (Boston: Archaeological Institute of America, 2001), 383-473; *Sanctuaries and Cults in the Aegean Bronze Age: Proceedings of the First International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens 12-13 May 1980* eds. Robin Hägg and Nanno Marinatos (Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1981); *Early Greek Cult Practice: Proceedings of the Fifth-International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 26-29 June, 1986* (Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1988); Nanno Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*.

² Lucy Goodison and Christine Morris, "Beyond the 'Great Mother': The Sacred World of the Minoans," in *Ancient Goddesses*, 128-130.

as a water goddess associated with both fresh and salty water, and also as a protectress of cities. She was worshipped on mountain peaks, in caves, at springs and wells, in open-air shrines, in town sanctuaries, in houses, within the palaces, and at tombs.³ Geraldine Gesell sums it up it well:

There is much evidence from pictorial representations and images that the chief divinity of the Minoan pantheon is the Great Mother Goddess. She has many aspects, appearing with snakes as a chthonic goddess, with birds as a sky goddess, with various animals as the Earth Mother or Mistress of Animals. Several male gods have been suggested as her companion—Boy God, Master of Animals, Vegetation God, all of which are based on pictorial representations, for no images of a male divinity have been found...In the cult caves, some of which have impressive stalactites and stalagmites, were found many terracotta and bronze offerings together with evidence of animal sacrifice....The rites in Open-Air Shrines, as pictured on seals and rings, may have followed the yearly vegetation cycle with the birth of the Vegetation Deity in the spring and its death in the following winter. Dancing is depicted before an altar and a sacred tree, resulting in the epiphany of the goddess or god, portrayed by a figure descending from the sky...Offerings were left in libation bowls and on offering tables in town, palace and house sanctuaries. Areas for offerings and cult rites can be identified in front of and inside tombs, but whether the rites were to the dead as deified or as an interceder for the living or to the divinity of the underworld in behalf of the dead is unknown.⁴

In her summary of Minoan religion, Nanno Marinatos writes that Minoan religion focused on “death and regeneration; the concept of a fertility goddess and a young hunter/warrior god; sacred marriage of a divine pair; the use of natural imagery as a framework for cyclical regeneration; ritual hunting and animal-based metaphors...”⁵

Important Minoan cult symbols include the horns of consecration, the double axe,⁶ bulls, birds, snakes, agrimi (a long-haired wild goat native to Crete), the sacral knot,

³ Gesell, *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete*, 1. For specific information on the Minoan peak sanctuaries, see Evangelos Kyriakidis, *Ritual in the Bronze Age Aegean: The Minoan Peak Sanctuaries* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, Ltd., 2005).

⁴ Gesell, *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete*, 1.

⁵ Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 242.

⁶ The double axe was a symbol of renewal. See B.C. Dietrich, “A Minoan Symbol of Renewal,” *Journal of Prehistoric Religion* 2 (1988), 12-24.

the sun-disk and the moon-crescent.⁷ Trees, baetyls, and pillars seem to have been connected with goddess-worship. Gesell points out that spiral seashells, chalices, and pots were also important objects in Minoan ritual. She includes that special pots with “two breast-like protuberances” may have been used in rituals, which is noteworthy considering the earlier discussion of the general Greek tendency to see women’s bodies as containers.⁸ Indeed, Minoan vessels often are formed as anthropomorphic images of the feminine body.⁹ Some even have spouts for pouring libations where nipples would otherwise be located.¹⁰

In discussing the importance of the Linear B tablets at Knossos, Gesell states that the tablets contain names for Zeus, a feminine manifestation of Zeus, Poseidon, a feminine Poseidon, Athena, Eileithyia, Ares, Hephaistos, Apollo as Paian, and Erinys.¹¹ In their discussion of the Linear B texts, Rehak and Younger add Enyalios, Pan, and Dionysos among those whose names appear on the tablets.¹² Again, the Linear B tablets date to the Mycenaean period rather than the Minoan period, and, as Gesell argues, these deities are probably Mycenaean in origin. Gesell figures that Minoan deities were to some degree “absorbed” into these later figures.¹³ Potnia appears with some frequency on the tablets and is probably a term for the Minoan-Mycenaean mother-goddess, although once the name appears with Athena.¹⁴

⁷ Gesell, *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete*, 3.

⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁹ For an example, see *ibid.*, 179.

¹⁰ Alan Peatfield, “Water, Fertility, and Purification in Minoan Religion,” 223.

¹¹ Gesell, *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete*, 2.

¹² Rehak and Younger, “Review of Aegean Prehistory VII: Neopalatial, Final Palatial, and Postpalatial Crete,” 457.

¹³ Gesell, *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete*, 2.

¹⁴ Ibid.

In general, bulls appear quite frequently in Minoan art, often in a religious context.¹⁵ The famous “Taureador” fresco was found at Knossos by Sir Arthur Evans; it depicts a running bull and three youths who are in various stages of flipping over the bull. The paintings at Knossos generally date to the later palatial period, or, as Emily Vermeule states, right around the time of the arrival of the Mycenaeans in the fifteenth century B.C.E.¹⁶ Terracotta rhytons (libation vessels) shaped like bulls have been found at Pseira on Crete and date to around 1500 B.C.E.¹⁷ Serpentine rhytons which are formed as bulls’ heads have been found at both Knossos and Zakro; similar rhytons are carried by Cretans depicted in Egyptian tomb-paintings dating to around 1500-1450 B.C.E.¹⁸ The gold cups found in a tholos-tomb at Vapheio near Sparta depict men catching bulls in nets and, on one cup, a bull trampling an unsuccessful hunter.¹⁹ A terracotta bull found at the circular tholoi discussed above has two human figures holding onto its horns and may, in fact, be the earliest evidence for Cretan bull-sports.²⁰ Another Cretan seal from the Middle Minoan period features a square object with a criss-cross design and a bull which appears to be leaning on the edge of the square object. The lower front legs of the bull seem to disappear behind or into the object. A youth wearing a belt with a dagger is leaping over the head of the bull. At least one scholar has

¹⁵ For information about bull-capture, bull-hunting, bull-grappling, and bull-jumping see Eleanor Loughlin, “Grasping the Bull by the Horns: Minoan Bull Sports,” in *Games and Festivals in Classical Antiquity Proceedings of the Conference held in Edinburgh 10-12 July 2000* eds. Sinclair Bell and Glenys Davies (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2004), 1-8; Maria C. Shaw, “The Bull-Leaping Fresco from Below the Ramp House at Mycenae: A Study in Iconography and Artistic Transmission,” *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 91 (1996), 167-190.

¹⁶ Emily Vermeule, *Greece in the Bronze Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964; 1972), 188.

¹⁷ Reynold Higgins, *Minoan and Mycenaean Art* revised edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 124.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 164.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 144.

²⁰ Goodison and Morris, “Beyond the ‘Great Mother,’” 117.

interpreted the square design as a representation of the Labyrinth.²¹ An agate which dates to around 1500 B.C.E. features a bull charging towards a acrobat and another acrobat flipping over another bull.²² An ivory figurine which dates to around 1600 B.C.E. also shows an acrobat in the middle of a jump.²³

The bull seems to have been associated primarily with the fertility of the earth, although scholars differ about whether the animal is more closely associated with the female goddess or her male attendant.²⁴ Levy has shown that horned animals are significant in many Neolithic and Bronze Age cults, focusing on goats, bulls, and rams. She sees in the spiral form of rams' horns "springs of creative energy," and even traces later Greek artistic forms such as the capitals of Ionic columns and the volutes found on Attic tombstones to the use of spiral horns as symbols of the "renewed existence" of the Great Goddess in the Near East during the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods.²⁵ Levy traces the horned altar, which is significant in Plutarch's account of the Labyrinth-dance which Theseus institutes on Delos and also featured in Minoan art, to Neolithic period on Crete.²⁶ She argues that the bull-sports depicted in Minoan art were religious rituals in honor of the goddess, and she points to the additional presence of such symbols of the goddess as the sacral knot and pillars on gems and in the frescoes which depict bull-grappling and bull-jumping.²⁷ Cook also argues that the bull-sports were fertility rituals

²¹ Cook, *Zeus*, 498-499.

²² Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 51.

²³ Higgins, *Minoan and Mycenaean Art*, 35.

²⁴ As Johannes Maringer writes about the bull in Near Eastern cult, in *The Gods of Prehistoric Man* trans. Mary Ilford (London: Weidonfeld and Nicolson, 1960; reprint London: Phoenix Press, 2002), 149-50: "The bull is the partner of the goddess, symbolising the virile principle of generation and indomitable force. The familiar Greek legend of the goddess Europa, whom Zeus, in bull-form, abducts from Phoenicia to Crete, is a later echo of this widespread cult."

²⁵ Levy, *The Gate of Horn*, 99-102.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 229.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

which focused specifically on touching the bulls' horns. Contact with the horns allowed participants to harness the "fertilising force" of the bull.²⁸ Cook points out the significance of the *cornu copiae* in the Cretan myths about the goat Amaltheia and the infant Zeus and also in later Greek art, where it is frequently associated with both Hades and Dionysos, both gods with aspects of fertility.²⁹ It is worth mentioning here that Levy also associates the horned gate with the fertility goddesses of the Bronze Age, who were connected to chthonic tombs and also to the fertilizing aspect of horns. From its earliest appearances, the horned gate represents the liminal area "between night and day, between life and death, human and divine..."³⁰ Levy views the ritual contact with horns in the Minoan bull-sports as an obvious "prelude ... to sacrifice."³¹

Minoan finds at Tell el-Dab'a (Avaris), the seat of the Hyksos, in Egypt include a fresco which features a representation of a labyrinth-design as well as a bull and acrobats. The fresco dates to the protopalatial period in Crete (1900-1550 B.C.E.), so it generally predates the frescoes at Knossos. In evaluating the Minoan finds at Tell el-Dab'a, Peter Warren argues that the fresco was painted by Minoans who used their own knowledge and symbols but borrowed from Egyptian techniques.³² Livia Morgan argues that the paintings at Tell el-Dab'a were made to decorate a Minoan shrine abroad; instead of

²⁸ Cook, *Zeus*, 500.

²⁹ Ibid., 501-504.

³⁰ Levy, *The Gate of Horn*, 100-101.

³¹ Ibid., 229.

³² Peter Warren, "Minoan Crete and Pharaonic Egypt," in *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant: Interconnections in the Second Millennium B.C.* eds. W. Vivian Davies and Louise Scholfield (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 4-5. "It is therefore now worth airing an alternative view to that of the Knossian origin of the Tell el-Dab'a paintings, namely that the frescoes there are indeed Minoan, in subject, style, ground color and technique (these last two with a long Minoan ancestry) and were painted at Avaris to Minoan order (it is not easy to imagine otherwise), but were based on knowledge of Egyptian figural painting, and were *the first such Minoan frescoes to be painted*, providing a model for such work in Crete, to be taken up immediately in early LM IA." Warren's theory is especially interesting when one considers not only Herodotus' (2.148) and Strabo's (*Geography*, 8.17.1.3) description of an Egyptian Labyrinth but also the descriptions by Didoros (*Library* 161) and Pliny the Elder (*Natural History*, 10.36.19.84-89), which both attribute the Cretan design to the Egyptian model.

actual bull-leaping, she suggests, a kind of virtual bull-leaping was achieved through the painting as an offering to the Minoan goddess.³³ Most importantly, the fresco serves as early evidence of a connection between the Labyrinth, bulls, and acrobats and, also, shows significant religious interaction between the Minoan and Egyptian cultures.³⁴ In addition, fragments of frescoes which seem to depict labyrinth-like designs have also been discovered at Knossos and Phaistos on Crete.³⁵

Many later Cretan coins have been found which feature various depictions of the Labyrinth, including representations in circular, rectilinear, and meander form. Most range in date from 500 to 100 B.C.E. Several depict men with bull-heads, often in a position which is suggestive of dancing. One shows a dancer wearing a bull-mask carrying a staff on one side and, on the other side, a Labyrinth. Hair which hangs from under the mask indicates that the dancer is clearly wearing a mask, even though the figure also has a tail. Many feature a representation of a woman or goddess, variously interpreted as Demeter, Persephone, or Ariadne. One features the head of a bull framed by a Labyrinth on one side and the goddess on the other side. One coin shows Athena's owl next to a rectilinear Labyrinth on one side and Athena herself on the other. Some show Zeus or Apollo. Many have representations of the sun or stars in the center of the

³³ Morgan, "Minoan Painting and Egypt," in *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant: Interconnections in the Second Millennium B.C.* eds. W. Vivian Davies and Louise Scholfield (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 44. Morgan's thesis of Minoan art as virtual ritual is especially compelling for my own argument that the ekphrasis about Achilles' shield is a mimesis of religious ritual.

³⁴ Many scholars have recognized the influence of Egyptian culture on the Minoans, and the finds at Tell el-Dab'a provide important evidence for such cross-cultural exchange. For a survey of Egyptian material on Crete and Minoan material in Egypt, see Manfred Bietak, "Connections Between Egypt and the Minoan World: New Results from Tell el-Dab'a/Avaris," in *Egypt, the Aegean and the Levant: Interconnections in the Second Millennium B.C.* eds. W. Vivian Davies and Louise Scholfield (London: British Museum Press, 1995), 19-28 and Warren, "Minoan Crete and Pharaonic Egypt." The Egyptian hippopotamus-goddess Taweret, for example, was adopted and adapted by the Minoans. See Judith Weingarten, *The Transformation of Egyptian Taweret into the Minoan Genius: A Study in Cultural Transmission in the Middle Bronze Age*, Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology no. 88 (Partille, Sweden: Paul Åström Förlag, 1991).

³⁵ Livia Morgan, "Minoan Painting and Egypt; The Case of Tell el-Dab'a," 43.

Labyrinth-design, and one shows the crescent of the moon in the center. The coins vary in design, but there does seem to be a general association of Labyrinth, bull, divinity, dancing, and celestial elements. Moreover, the coins show some continuity of symbols and, probably, ritual from the Bronze Age through the Classical and Hellenistic periods.

Gesell notes several important sites of cult activity on Crete which show continued use from the Middle and Late Minoan periods through Protogeometric times. At Knossos, for example, she notes continued and even renewed cult activity in several areas after the palace destruction.³⁶ Goodison argues for a shift in focus during the late Bronze Age away from “a cult of vegetation towards a cult associated with height, authority, and martial power, whether armed or unarmed.”³⁷ She points to the appearance of more vertical motifs and fewer circular motifs.³⁸ In a diachronic study of cult sites on Crete, Marina L. Moss concludes, in general, that, after the catastrophic destructions of the Late Minoan IA period, there is increased activity in the cave sites, that multiple deities were worshipped at each place, that there is greater focus on a goddess of renewal—especially in caves—and that ritual focused on “renewal, male initiation, and war.”³⁹ It is important to point out, however, that, despite this shift in emphasis, the Minoan fertility cult is still significant during and after the Late Bronze Age.

In *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion*, Martin Nilsson discusses the figure of Ariadne and her involvement in myth. Several of the myths about her culminate with her death, and, in some of them, she dies in childbirth.

³⁶ Gesell, *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete*, 66.

³⁷ Goodison, *Death, Women, and the Sun*, 112.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Marina L. Moss, *The Minoan Pantheon: Towards an Understanding of its Nature and Extent* British Archaeological Reports (Oxford: John and Erica Hedges, Ltd., 2005), 193.

Nilsson points out that in the Homeric passage in the *Odyssey*, Artemis kills Ariadne and that Artemis herself is a goddess who is associated with childbirth. Nilsson connects Eileithyia, the Greek goddess of childbirth, to both Artemis and Ariadne, and he argues that Ariadne was actually a fertility goddess who originated as a Minoan deity, although her main place of worship was on Naxos rather than on Crete.⁴⁰ He also argues that Eileithyia was once the “Minoan Goddess of Nature and Mistress of Animals,” and he shows that Eileithyia, Eleusis, Eleusinia (festivals for Demeter in Laconia), Eleuthia (a goddess of fertility), and Elysium are all related and pre-Greek in origin.⁴¹ Of course, the cave of Eileithyia near Amnisos, the harbor of Knossos, is mentioned by Odysseus in the *Odyssey* (19.188), when he lies to Penelope about his identity. Nilsson also connects Ariadne to Aphrodite. That Ariadne was originally a fertility goddess is corroborated by Hesiod in the *Theogony*, when he says that Dionysos married her and that Zeus made her immortal and ageless.⁴² Gertrude Levy also discusses Ariadne’s origin as a goddess, and points out that “Ἀριάγνη” (Ariagne), which means “Very Holy One” and which is a variant form of “Ἀριάδνη” (Ariadne), was an epithet of Aphrodite on Cyprus.⁴³ Kerényi also sees Ariadne as a later name for the Minoan goddess; he points out that the Homeric epithet for Ariadne, “καλλιπλόκαμος,” is more frequently for goddesses than for mortal women.⁴⁴ Interestingly, Kerényi connects the figures of Ariadne and Persephone, goddess of the springtime and queen of the underworld.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 523.

⁴¹ Ibid., 518-524.

⁴² Burns argues that Ariadne was actually the name “for the great Minoan goddess, the nature and fertility goddess, in other words, the equivalent of Aphrodite. Burns, “The Chorus of Ariadne,” 8.

⁴³ Levy, *The Gate of Horn*, 248.

⁴⁴ Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 98.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 98-104.

Scholars disagree about the exact function of the Minoan palaces, but most agree that the palaces were centers for religious ritual. Marija Gimbutas has argued that the Minoan palaces were religious centers which focused on the regenerative power of the female body.⁴⁶ She follows Dorothy Cameron in separating the west and east areas of the palace at Knossos into areas devoted to death and birth, respectively. She sees the dark, pillared “crypt-shrines” of the west-palace as man-made caves and representations of the womb. She writes:

Symbolism in Minoan crypts suggests seasonal rites of renewal. Additionally, personal rites of passage, a ceremony in which the initiate was “reborn” or healed, cannot be excluded. I believe that rituals that occurred in the dark crypts of the Knossos temple complex relate, on the other hand, to those performed one or two thousand years earlier in the large tomb shrines of Old Europe: Newgrange and Knowth in Ireland, and the Hal Saflieni Hypogeum in Malta. On the other hand, they mirrored those enacted in classical times, such as the Mysteries of Eleusis in Greece. The ceremonies of initiation at Eleusis, accompanied by music and dance, symbolically imitated death and resurrection.⁴⁷

The east-palace, with its light and brightly colored atmosphere symbolized rebirth and life. Gimbutas, following Rodney Castleden, also argues that if a king was present at Knossos, as Evans thought, he was subject to the authority of the goddess’ priestesses.⁴⁸

Indeed, many agree that the frescoes at Knossos, which of course is the largest of the palaces, depict religious symbols and events. Some of the frescoes date to the Middle Minoan period, but most date to the Late Minoan period. Some seem especially relevant for the present discussion. The famous “Taureador” fresco most likely depicts an initiation ritual in which youths show off their acrobatic skills by vaulting over running bulls. As the evidence listed above shows, this ritual is repeatedly represented in other

⁴⁶ Marija Gimbutas, *The Living Goddesses* ed. Miriam Robbins Dexter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 131-150.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 136.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 134.

artistic media. The “Labyrinth” fresco may date to as early as the Middle Minoan IIIA periods and depicts a Labyrinth.⁴⁹ Maria Shaw has argued that the fresco decorated a floor rather than a wall.⁵⁰ A fragment of an elaborate spiral, which may also represent a Labyrinth, was discovered in the Loomweight Basement, and fragments of bull-leaping scenes were discovered nearby. These seem to date to the Middle Minoan IIIA period also.⁵¹ The “Procession” fresco shows various groups of both men and women in procession. The figures seem to be divided into different age-groups or ranks, and most walk with their forearms raised in a reverential pose. Some of those who process carry offerings in various vessels; the male figures of the “Cupbearer” section carry conical cups which are similar to the Chieftain Cup found at Hagia Triada. The procession includes a priestess or goddess bearing double-axes. The “Camp-Stool” fresco shows young men and women sitting facing each other on stools, exchanging cups. Female figures who are either priestesses or goddesses attend them. Other subjects of the frescoes at Knossos include ox-hide figure-eight shields, garlands, monkeys, birds, griffins, lilies, and various representations of priestesses.⁵²

The miniature frescoes found in the Room of the Spiral Cornice and Miniatures Deposit include the “Temple” or “Grandstand” fresco and the “Sacred Grove and Dance” fresco, which both depict religious ceremonies. The “Temple” or “Grandstand” fresco shows a tripartite shrine surrounded by a large crowd of both men and women with priestesses. Additional female figures, possibly priestesses, appear on staircases. In the

⁴⁹ <http://www.therafoundation.org/articles/art/thewallpaintingsofcrete>. Accessed on November 12, 2008.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² All of these frescoes are catalogued and reproduced in Litsa Kontorli-Papadopoulou, *Aegean Frescoes of Religious Character* Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology no. 142 (Göteborg: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1996). Kontorli-Papadopoulou includes a summary of potential dates for each fresco.

fresco of the “Sacred Grove and Dance,” a group of women dance for a large crowd, which is similar in nature to that of the “Temple” or “Grandstand” fresco, near trees. The fresco shows both women and men in the audience, and there is a group of men who appear to be walking right into a part of the crowd which is composed of women. Nanno Marinatos argues that Minoan religious ritual followed a seasonal cycle, and she proposes that miniature frescoes at Knossos show a periodic harvest festival. Marinatos points to the presence of circular granaries from the protopalatial period in the West Court and, also, to causeways which are carefully laid out around them. Marinatos notes that the arrangement is echoed at Phaistos and at Malia. At both Knossos and Phaistos, these granaries were eventually paved over (at which point grain was stored primarily in giant *pithoi* inside the palace), but the granaries remained above ground and open at Malia. At that site, the apex of the triangle formed by the causeways points right at the granaries.⁵³ She recognizes a ritual “handing over” of sacred objects in the “Temple” or “Grandstand” fresco which and likens the gesture to a relief from Eleusis in which Demeter and Persephone hand small objects to each other.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Marinatos offers a reconstruction of the “Sacred Grove and Dance” fresco which includes a special parade of young men who participate in the festival by displaying their military prowess on the causeways of the West Court while the women dance.⁵⁵ She also argues that the festivals included a ritual renewal of political authority.⁵⁶

Just as in later Greek cults, animal sacrifice was of course an important part of Minoan ritual. Bulls in particular seem to have figured prominently as sacrificial animals.

⁵³ Marinatos, “Public Festivals in the West Courts of the Palaces,” 137-138.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 140.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 141-142.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 140.

The sarcophagus found at Hagia Triada depicts a funerary ritual of some kind which includes the sacrifice of a bull, for example.⁵⁷ The scene features a priestess wearing an animal-skin, the religious symbol of the double axe, a basket which is possibly filled with fruits, a bird, and an altar.⁵⁸ A seal found at Mallia depicts both a bull-jumper and a sacrificed bull, suggesting that the two activities were related.⁵⁹ A painting found at Pylos features a procession with a bull being lead to be sacrificed.⁶⁰ Two bulls' skulls were found in a house at Knossos with "cultic implements" nearby.⁶¹ Burkert writes that horns and the double axe, the "two most reknown and ever recurrent signs of the sacral in the Minoan-Mycenaean cult," are associated with bull-sacrifice.⁶² Burkert focuses on the bull as a sacrificial animal and suggests that animals involved in the sacrifices may have become conflated with the deities themselves.⁶³

As discussed above, representations of bulls abound in Minoan art, but animals in general are important religious symbols. Birds are associated with the Minoan goddess in her manifestation as a sky goddess, and snakes are associated with her as a chthonic goddess. She appears as a "Mother of the Mountain" or "Mistress of Animals" with various animals, including lions, goats, and even griffins.⁶⁴ Marinatos argues that a hierarchy of animals is at work in Minoan art which is based on a system of predators and prey. Lions and imaginary animals such as griffins and genii, otherwise known as

⁵⁷ Gesell, *Town, Palace, and House Cult in Minoan Crete*, 197.

⁵⁸ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 36.

⁵⁹ Gesell, *Town, Palace and House Cult in Minoan Crete*, 199.

⁶⁰ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 36.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 37.

⁶³ Ibid., 64-66. The bull is particularly associated with Zeus, Poseidon, and Dionysos.

⁶⁴ See Levy, *The Gate of Horn*, 223-225; also Nanno Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 152-166.

daimones, serve as predators and attend both male divinities and goddesses.⁶⁵ Genii tend to hunt or to carry libation vessels in art, and, as Marinatos points out, hunting and sacrifice and the pouring of libations for the Minoan goddess form the major part of Minoan ritual.⁶⁶ The genii are associated with fertility in general. Marinatos follows Evans in arguing that the Minoan genii derive from the Egyptian fertility goddess Taurt, who is formed like a hippopotamus wearing a crocodile on her back.⁶⁷ Levy argues that the Minoan genii are attendants of the Minoan goddess and that they “represent a fusion of divinity and worshipper.”⁶⁸ Interestingly, Levy links the Minoan genii to the later daimones which adorn the orientalizing shields found in the Idaian cave which were used by the cult of the dancing Kouretes.⁶⁹

Levy suggests that many animal-figures in Minoan religious iconography are representations of priests or ritualistic dancers dressed in animal-costumes and that these costumed figures may be responsible for the later idea of the Minotaur.⁷⁰ Cook argues that the mythical Minotaur derives from a Minoan prince at Knossos who dressed as a bull, and he links the practice to Egyptian religious rites in which royal figures impersonated bulls, lions, and snakes as part of their authority.⁷¹ There is notable physical evidence for dances which were carried out by dancers dressed like bulls. A Minoan gemstone shows a figure who is half-human and half-man in a back flip of some

⁶⁵ To be sure, some scholars believe that the animals featured in Minoan and Mycenaean art may only represent animals involved in hunting. See for example, Edmund F. Bloedow, “Notes on Animal Sacrifices in Minoan Religion,” *Journal of Prehistoric Religion* 10 (1996), 31-44.

⁶⁶ Marinatos, *Minoan Religion*, 197.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Levy, *The Gate of Horn*, 225.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 226-227.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 227.

⁷¹ Cook, *Zeus*, 496.

kind. A figure-eight shield and a symbol of sacrifice also appear on the gem.⁷² A stater from Knossos which dates to around 500-431 B.C.E. features a dancer who is wearing a bull's head mask (human hair protrudes from the sides of the mask). The other side of the stater features a design which looks like a Labyrinth.⁷³ As discussed above, several other Cretan coins have been found which show Minotaur-figures that appear to be dancing. An Athenian hydria features multiple figures who have bulls' heads and human bodies, all of whom seem to be dancing. Minotaur figures, dancing with stones in their hands, run across the shoulder of an Athenian hydria.⁷⁴ An Etruscan pitcher which dates to the sixth century B.C.E. shows two registers of dancing figures. The top register shows Theseus engaged in a dance-fight with the Minotaur as a girl hurries away. As Kern notes, the Minotaur's head appears to be a mask.⁷⁵ The bottom register shows youths dancing together in couples and may represent the young Athenians who accompanied Theseus.⁷⁶

Dance, in fact, was also a major element of religious ritual in Minoan Crete. As discussed earlier, ritual dance is evidenced both by the circular platforms found at the palaces and also by the dancing women featured in the frescoes from Knossos, particularly by the "Sacred Dance and Grove" fresco. Even the circular *tholoi* of the Mesara plain have paved dancing areas near them.⁷⁷ Depictions of dance often are ecstatic in nature. A gold ring from Isopata, near Knossos, shows four female figures dancing in what looks like a circular formation. The women are surrounded by flowers

⁷² Levy, *The Gate of Horn*, 226, fig. 106.

⁷³ Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 53.

⁷⁴ The British Museum B 308. Drawing from Cook, *Zeus*, Plate XXX.

⁷⁵ Kern, *Through the Labyrinth*, 52.

⁷⁶ Ibid. The François Vase also shows a dance of youths and maidens who accompany Theseus. Some scholars believe the scene represents the dance on Delos while others interpret it to be the Athenians landing on Crete.

⁷⁷ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 33.

and, possibly, grain stalks. A tiny fifth figure hovers above the group, possibly indicating an epiphany of the goddess.⁷⁸ Ecstatic dancing also is featured on rings from Arkhanes, Kalyvia, Sellopoulo, and Vapheio. The ring from Vapheio features a figure-eight shield.⁷⁹ A sealing from Kato Zakros shows dancing figures stretching arms out to a figure-eight shield and a tower-shield which is wearing a helmet.⁸⁰ Warren connects ecstatic dancing at Knossos and elsewhere to figure-eight shields, and he argues that the shields are anthropomorphic images of a goddess in at least two instances, one of which is a bronze double-axe from the Mesara plain engraved with such an image.⁸¹

Dance was often part of ancient religious experience, and ritual dances in Greek cities are well documented. Burkert writes:

The names Paeon and Dithyrambos refer equally to the god, his hymn, and his dance, perhaps from Minoan tradition. Elsewhere too the experience of the dance merges with the experience of the deity. At the Gymnopaedia boys dance for Apollo, and everywhere girls dance for Artemis: the vigorous youthful form of these divine siblings appears as a projection of these dances. Apollo himself plays for the dance, and Artemis joins in the dance with her Nymphs. In this group of Nymphs or Charites, in the bands of Kouretes, and even in the case of the dance-loving satyrs, divine archetype and human reality are often virtually inseparable, except that what for man is the short-lived blossom of youth attains permanence in the mythical-divine archetype.⁸²

The Panathenaia featured a pyrrhic dance which imitated the war-dance which Athena supposedly performed when she sprung from Zeus' head fully armed, and, as discussed

⁷⁸ Seen in Higgins, *Minoan and Mycenaean Art*, 186-187.

⁷⁹ Listed in Peter Warren, "Minoan Crete and Ecstatic Religion: Preliminary Observations on the 1979 Excavations at Knossos," in *Sanctuaries and Cults in the Aegean Bronze Age: Proceedings of the First International Symposium at the Swedish Institute in Athens, 12-13 May, 1980* eds. Robin Hägg and Nanno Marinatos (Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1981), 164.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 102-103.

earlier, the Spartan festivals of *Karneia* and *Gymnopaïdiai* involved both pyrrhic and other dances, for example.⁸³

In the Greek world, Crete in particular was associated with dance. In his dialogue on dance, Lucian (49) says that subjects of Cretan dance included Europa, Pasiphae, the two bulls (the Minotaur and the bull which impregnated Pasiphae), Androgeos, and Daidalos and Ikaros. The Kouretes, mythical warriors who protected the infant Zeus from his father by clashing their shields to cover up his crying, were perhaps the most famous of Crete's dancers. Many manifestations of the Cretan Zeus have been attested, including Zeus Agoraios, Zeus Alexikakos, Zeus Ammon, Zeus Arbios, Zeus Diktaios, Zeus Epopsios, Zeus Idiaos, Zeus Hekatombiaos, and Zeus Asterios, an epithet which recalls the name of the Minotaur.⁸⁴ In his dialogue on dance, Lucian traces the origins of ritual dance to both Phrygia and Crete; he refers to the myth about Zeus' birth, in which Rhea tricks Kronos and hides the infant on Crete:

Πρῶτον δὲ φασιν Ῥέαν ἡσθεῖσαν τῇ τέχνῃ ἐν Φρυγίᾳ μὲν τοὺς Κορύβαντας, ἐν Κρήτῃ δὲ τοὺς Κουρήτας ὀρχεῖσθαι κελεῦσαι, καὶ οὐ τὰ μέτρια ὄνατο τῆς τέχνης αὐτῶν, οἳ γε περιορχούμενοι διεσώσαντο αὐτῇ τὸν Δία, ὥστε καὶ σῶστρα εἰκότως ἂν ὁ Ζεὺς ὀφείλῃεν ὁμολογίῃ αὐτοῖς, ἐκφυγὼν διὰ τὴν ἐκείνων ὀρχησιν τοὺς πατέρας ὀδόντας. ἐνόπλιος δὲ αὐτῶν ἡ ὀρχησις ἦν, τὰ ξίφη μεταξὺ κροτούντων πρὸς τὰς ἀσπίδας καὶ πηδῶντων ἔνθεν ἅτι καὶ πολεμικόν.
(8)

(They say that Rhea, delighted by the craft, first ordered the Korybantes in Phrygia and the Kouretes on Crete to dance, and she delighted not moderately in their craft, who saved Zeus for her by dancing around him. Therefore Zeus naturally might agree that he owes them a thank-offering, since he escaped his father's teeth through their dancing. Their dance was a war-dance, clashing their swords on their shields during it and leaping in a possessed, warlike manner.)

⁸³ Ibid., 102.

⁸⁴ In several of Zeus' Cretan manifestations, he is associated with bulls and cows, and in at least one manifestation (Zeus Asterios), he is associated with the sun. For a comprehensive discussion of the many Cretan cults of Zeus, see Willetts, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, 231-255.

In the *Theogony*, Hesiod says that Rhea hides Zeus in a cave on Crete with the help of her parents, but he does not include the Kouretes in his account, although he does mention them elsewhere in the poem. According to another Cretan myth, the Kouretes protected the infant Zeus by clashing their shields around him in a dance after the goat Amaltheia hung his cradle on a tree.⁸⁵ It is worth here noting that Lucian refers to dance as a form of “τέχνη” (craft) in this passage, linking it to other forms of *techne*—poetry, weaving, speech-making, and the creation of *daidala* in metalwork.⁸⁶

The Kouretes were not only mythical warrior-dancers; they also served as models for Cretan young men, who imitated them in initiation rites. Lucian also says of the first dances on Crete: “Μετὰ δέ, Κρητῶν οἱ κράτιστοι ἐνεργῶς ἐπιτηδεύσαντες αὐτὸ ἄριστοι ὀρχησται ἐγένοντο, οὐχ οἱ ἰδιῶται μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ βασιλικώτεροι καὶ πρωτεύειν ἀξιοῦντες.” (8) (Afterwards, the strongest of the Cretans, practicing the dance assiduously, became the best dancers, not only the common men, but men of royal lineage and expecting to be preeminent.) Citing a Hesiodic fragment, Strabo calls the Kouretes “lovers of sports and dancers.”⁸⁷ He also says that they are called “flute-players,” “Phrygians,” “earth-born,” and “bronze-shielded.”⁸⁸ An archaeological find of bronze shields (the very shields which are often cited as comparisons for Achilles’ shield) in the Idaian Cave serves as

⁸⁵ Cook, *Zeus*, 530 note 4. Cook cites Hyginus as his source.

⁸⁶ The association of dancing and Crete is apparent in the Homeric poems not only in the reference to Daidalos and Knossos in the ekphrasis about Achilles’ shield but also in Book Sixteen of the *Iliad*. There, Aineias taunts the Cretan warrior Meriones on the battlefield by referring to his dancing ability:

Μηριόνη, τάχα κέν σε καὶ ὀρχηστήν περ ἔοντα
ἔγχος ἐμὸν κατέπαυσε διαμπερές, εἴ σ’ ἔβαλόν περ. (16.617-618)

(Meriones, if I had hit you, my spear would have stopped you straight through, though you are excellent at dancing.)

⁸⁷ Strabo 10.3.19.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

evidence for actual pyrrhic dances at that site during the eighth century B.C.E..⁸⁹ The dancing warriors apparently brought about a divine epiphany of Zeus out of the cave.⁹⁰

Burkert writes:

Crete is also the place where myth localizes the Kouretes, who by their name are just young warriors. This reflects a cult association of young warriors meeting at the grotto of Mount Ida, and brandishing their shields in war dances to which the bronze *tympana* and votive shields of Orientalizing style give testimony. Every year the birth of Zeus in this cave is celebrated with a great fire, but mention is also made of the burial of Zeus by the Kouretes, and there are rumours of child sacrifice. Birth, the cave, the death of a child, and war dances are all clear initiation motifs. But peculiar mysteries also seem to have developed at the place. Dictaeon Zeus, for his part, is invoked in the hymn of Palaikastro as the greatest kouros, and certainly it is the real youths, kouroi, who sing the hymn and take the great leaps in which they invite the god to join. The explicit goal of the song and dance is to summon in the god for the year with all the blessings he brings.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 102. Also, 127, Burkert recounts the account of Rhea hiding Zeus on Crete: "The story of Zeus' childhood is further elaborated in a post-Hesiodic Cretan *Theogony* which tells how a band of youthful warriors, the Kouretes, danced with swirling shields around the Zeus child to prevent his cries from being heard. Mirrored here are Cretan initiation rituals as found in the Ida mysteries: here Zeus was born every year in the glow of a great fire. In the war dance of the youths the Dictaeon Zeus appears as the greatest *Kouros* who springs on flocks, corn fields, houses, towns, ships and young citizens. Where there is birth, there is death; it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the infamous Grave of Zeus on Crete, where the Kouretes bury Zeus, is a polar counterpart to the birth of Zeus, even though the local traditions cannot be linked." There is evidence of cult activity in the Idaian cave from the late Middle Minoan period until the fifth century C.E. See J.A. Sakellarakis, "Some Geometric and Archaic Votives from the Idaian Cave," in *Early Greek Cult Practice* eds. Robin Hägg, Nanno Marinatos, and Gullög C. Nordquist (Stockholm: Paul Åströms Förlag, 1988), 173-193. Interestingly, many of the later finds include not only votives decorated with warrior-imagery but also jewelry.

⁹⁰ Willetts, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, 98, writes of the Kouretes: "We have seen reason to accept the possibility of a formal system of initiation of the youth of the Minoan Age, developed from a primitive basis in association with the rise of the religious conception of the armed god, as the Minoan youth adapted their arms from hunting to warfare. The Kouretes of Crete were guardians of the infant god and attendants on the Mother-goddess. They were initiated young men. According to Hesiod, they were also 'lovers of sport and dancing.' They are likened by Strabo to similar bands, such as the Korybantes, Kabeiroi, Daktyloi, and Telkhines. Strabo also refers to the tradition that, of the nine Telkhines who lived in Rhodes, those who accompanied Rhea to Crete and nourished the young Zeus were named Kouretes. Moreover, one Kyrbas, a comrade of these, was the founder of the Cretan city of Hierapytna—hence the saying that the Kouretes were *daimons*, 'spirits,' and sons of the goddess Athene and the sun-god Helios."

⁹¹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 261-262.

While the primarily focus of Minoan religion seems to have been on a feminine deity or deities, Cretan Zeus was thus also important, especially from the Late Minoan period onwards.⁹²

The regenerative focus of the Kouretes is especially interesting when one considers the Homeric description of Minos in the *Odyssey*. In that poem, Odysseus says:

τῇσι δ' ἐνὶ Κνωσός, μεγάλη πόλις, ἔνθα τε
Μίνως
ἐννέωρος βασιλεὺς Διὸς μεγάλου ὀαριστῆς...
(19.178-179)

(There is Knossos, the great city, where Minos ruled for eight-year periods, a familiar of great-hearted Zeus...) ⁹³

This reference is certainly suggestive of some kind of ritual in which the king of Knossos renewed his power periodically by means of direct interaction with Zeus.⁹⁴ That this was probably the case is supported by Plato's *Minos*. In that dialogue, Socrates says:

Τοῦτο γὰρ σημαίνει τὸ ἔπος τὸ
ἐννέωρος βασιλεὺς Διὸς μεγάλου ὀαριστῆς,
συνουσιαστὴν τοῦ Διὸς εἶναι τὸν Μίνων. οἱ γὰρ ὅαροι λόγοι εἰσί, καὶ ὀαριστῆς
συνουσιαστῆς ἐστὶν ἐν λόγοις. ἐφοίτα οὖν δι' ἐνάτου ἔτους εἰς τὸ τοῦ Διὸς
ἄντρον ὁ Μίνως, τὰ μὲν μαθησόμενος, τὰ δὲ ἀποδειξόμενος, ἃ τῇ προτέρᾳ
ἐννεετηρίδι ἐμεμδήκει παρὰ τοῦ Διός. εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ ὑπολαμβάνουσι τὸν ὀαριστὴν
συμπότην καὶ συμπαιστὴν εἶναι τοῦ Διός... (319 d-e)

(For the line “he ruled for eight-year periods, a companion of great-hearted Zeus” means that Minos was a disciple of Zeus. For conversations are discourses, and a companion is a disciple in discourses. Therefore, every eighth year, Minos went to the cave of Zeus, in order to learn things, and also to show off those things which he had learned from Zeus in the previous eight years. There are some people who understand that as a companion, he was a drinking-buddy and playmate of Zeus...)

⁹² For a table of dates and finds in cave cult sites on Crete, see Moss, *The Minoan Pantheon*, 190.

⁹³ For an explanation of the meaning of “ἐννέωρος,” see Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect*.

⁹⁴ Marinatos, “Public Festivals in the West Court of the Palace,” 135-143.

Minos, of course, is a mythical king, but he is representative of Knossian rulers. Certainly, Socrates' explanation of the Homeric line suggests that Minos as king of Crete engaged in periodic rituals in a cave associated with Zeus which legitimized his kingship. Socrates goes on in this speech to refute the idea that Minos was a drinking-buddy and playmate of Zeus, but the inclusion of this assumption by others is striking. Minoan and later Cretan initiation rituals, discussed below, involved both ritual sharing of cups, sports, and dancing. Both sports and dancing are frequently referred to as "play," in Greek, and the verb "παίζειν" (to play) can indicate ball-games, dancing, athletic contests, or even sexual activity—all of which fit into the context of initiation ritual.⁹⁵

Cook argues that Zeus was worshipped in the form of a bull on Crete and that he was also associated with the sun, and he compares the Cretan manifestation of Zeus to gods in Egyptian religion.⁹⁶ He points to the sacred cattle of the sun at Gortyna, and he references Gortynian coins which feature Zeus as a bull running across the sea and Zeus carrying Europa on his back. Both designs, he argues, depict Zeus radiating light.⁹⁷ Cook also argues that Pasiphae was represented as a cow and that she was associated with the moon.⁹⁸ Cook connects Cretan Zeus to the great fertility goddess of Crete and likens him

⁹⁵ As Sarah Morris recognizes, the term *δαριστής* has a sexual connotation. *Daidalos and the Origins of Greek Art*, 177.

⁹⁶ Cook, *Zeus*, 468. Cook argues (468 note 8) that Zeus is "a sort of" Adonis. In the text on the same page he states: "As in Egypt, so in Crete, the fertilising bull was in the long run identified with the sun. Apollodoros states that *Tálos* or *Talôs*, the man of bronze, about whom we shall have more to say, was by some called *Taûros*. But *Tálos* or *Talôs* means 'the sun,' and *Taûros* means 'a bull.' It follows that some who wrote on Cretan mythology spoke of the sun as the 'Bull.' Presumably, therefore, the Cretans or at least certain Cretans conceived him to be a bull. But more than this, another lexicographer expressly asserts that the Cretans called the sun the 'Adiounian bull,' on the ground that, when he changed the site of his city, he led the way in the likeness of a bull." In connecting Talos to Zeus, Cook references Hesychios' gloss for the epithet "*Ταλαιός*." "*ὁ Ζεὺς ἐν Κρήτῃ*" (Zeus in Crete). Ibid., 729 note 1. Hesychios' gloss for "*Ταλῶς*" is "*ὁ ἥλιος*" (the sun). Cited ibid., 719 note 1.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 472.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 521-524. Cf. Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 116.

to Adonis.⁹⁹ Willets follows Cook, arguing that the bull was a symbol of fertility and was associated with the sun for that reason, and he links the Cretan symbols to Egypt.¹⁰⁰ Burkert points out that the bull was associated closely with the god Zeus.¹⁰¹ Of course, in myth he assumes the form of a bull when he abducts Europa—this particular event was apparently particularly important at Gortyna—and he changes Io into a heifer to avoid detection by Hera. Interestingly, on at least one of the orientalizing bronze *tympana* found in the Idaian cave, Zeus is shown as a young man holding a lion above his head and stepping on a bull below him. He is surrounded by winged Kouretes, who dance and beat drums or cymbals. The entire scene is surrounded by fertile lotus buds.¹⁰²

Despite their militaristic nature and connection to Zeus, the Kouretes are associated with fertility ritual in that they protect and engender an earth goddess. In her book *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy in Ancient Greece and Recent Africa*, Sandra Blakely shows that the Cretan Kouretes and other similar warrior-figures such as the Korybantes, the Daktyloi, the Telchines, and the Kabeiroi—there are slight differences between them but all are generally considered *daimones*—are in essence chthonic figures which are associated with caves and, to some degree, metalworking and craft. Blakely shows that their ritual performances of pyrrhic dance serve to engender the fertility of the land.¹⁰³ Again, Marinatos argues that the festival shown in the “Sacred Grove and Dance” fresco is a harvest festival; she also proposes a reconstruction of the fresco which includes the

⁹⁹ Cook, 645.

¹⁰⁰ Willets, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, 100.

¹⁰¹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 65, 126.

¹⁰² Plate XXXV in Cook, *Zeus*. Discussed on 645.

¹⁰³ Sandra Blakely, *Myth, Ritual, and Metallurgy in Ancient Greece and Recent Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). See especially chapters 1, 4, and 6. Interestingly, Blakely also associates them with medicine and drugs.

presence of young men showing off their newly acquired military skills. Her reconstruction seems especially compelling in the context of the Kouretes.¹⁰⁴

In general, ancient Greek initiation rites for boys frequently involved training for both hunting and military service, and many also involved elements associated with fertility. Athenian teens, for example, participated in the *ephebeia*, from the age of eighteen to twenty. The ephebes were physically separated from society and exempted from civic duties. Under the general leadership of the *kosmetes*, the “orderer,” they underwent a rite of passage which focused on military training, at the end of which they were enrolled in the ranks of the citizenry. The ephebes swore their oath in the shrine of Aglauros, a figure associated with sexuality and the fertility of the Athenian soil and its citizens.¹⁰⁵ The oath itself includes invocations to Enyo and Enyalios, war gods, as well as Thallo and Auxo, agricultural goddesses; the oath concludes by calling upon the “boundaries of the fatherland, wheat, barley, vines, olives, and fig trees.”¹⁰⁶ Burkert argues that the Athenian ephebes participated in the Eleusinian Mysteries by accompanying the hiera from Eleusis to the Eleusinion in Athens and also sacrificing a bull at the sanctuary itself.¹⁰⁷ Noel Robertson points out that, in the Hellenistic Period, the ephebes distributed the meat from the sacrifice.¹⁰⁸ Thus, even the Eleusinian Mysteries included some reference to military prowess.

There is ample evidence from Crete of similar initiation ritual and dance. Strabo (10.4.20-21) describes a rite of passage in which boys are abducted by men and taken

¹⁰⁴ Marinatos, “Public Festivals in the West Courts of the Palaces,” 141-142.

¹⁰⁵ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 251. For Aglauros as a fertility goddess and her sanctuary on the akropolis in Athens, see *ibid.*, 228-229.

¹⁰⁶ Cited *ibid.*, 251. Burkert’s translation.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 286-289.

¹⁰⁸ Robertson, *Festivals and Legends*, 6-7.

away from society to the countryside, where the couples hunt, feast, and engage in homosexual activity for a period of two months. When the couples return to society, the boys receive a military habit, an ox, and a drinking cup; at the return feast, the boys then sacrifice their oxen to Zeus and disclose the details about their sexual activities with their lovers. The Cretan initiation ritual also involves ritual group marriage for the boys. Artifacts such as the Chieftain Cup and the Boxer Vase show that Minoan coming-of-age rituals for boys were quite similar to the Cretan initiation rites found in Strabo, who uses Ephoros.¹⁰⁹ The Chieftain Cup is a conical serpentine vessel which was found in an annex at Hagia Triada and dates to around 1650-1500 B.C.E. It depicts two young male figures who are outfitted differently; one wears a short kilt which features a dagger and holds a staff while the other figure is less ornately outfitted and holds a sword. The other side of the cup features three male figures who carry cow-hides. The Boxer Vase is a serpentine conical rhyton which is decorated in four registers which, like the Harvester Vase, was found inside the palace. It depicts boys of various age groups boxing and also an advanced group of boys capturing and, perhaps, leaping over wild bulls. Both objects point to a Minoan origin for the custom described by Strabo.

Robert Koehl has shown that Cretan artifacts found at the sanctuary of Hermes and Aphrodite at Kato Syme—including conical cups which are similar to the Chieftain Cup, bronze plaques which depicts men and youths with hunting implements feasting, as well as bronze figurines of ithyphallic youths—show that the custom described by Strabo was a continuation of Minoan initiation rites.¹¹⁰ Notably, Kato Syme was associated in

¹⁰⁹ See, for example, Säflund, “The Agoge of the Minoan Youth as Reflected in Palatial Iconography,” 227-233. Also, Willetts, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, 43-53.

¹¹⁰ Robert B. Koehl, “The Chieftain Cup and a Minoan Rite of Passage,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 106 (1986), 99-110.

particular with Knossos.¹¹¹ Säflund argues that the Minoan initiation rites, like the later Cretan rites, culminated with a ritual group marriage and that this ritual group marriage forms the subject of the “Sacred Grove and Dance” fresco.¹¹² Säflund also points to a passage in Diodoros about a wedding feast which says that the feast was held “in the territory of the Knossians, near the river Theren, in a sanctuary of Zeus and Hera. Here the natives of the place annually offer sacrifices and imitate the marriage [of the divine couple] *in the manner in which tradition tells us it was originally performed.*”¹¹³ Minoan initiation rites, then, like the later Cretan custom described by Strabo, quite possibly concluded with ritual group marriage and *hieros gamos*.¹¹⁴

Burkert, in the citation above about the Kouretes, also suggests that the cult of Cretan Zeus at the Idaian Cave involved not only initiation rites but also mystery rites. Their ecstatic, pyrrhic dancing resulted in the epiphany of the infant Zeus, reborn out of the cave, usually accompanied by a great fire and, at least according to one source, blood from the process of partuition.¹¹⁵ Cook suggests that Cretan Zeus was actually quite close to Dionysos and the Orphic figure of Zagreus. Cook argues that the the cult of Idaian Zeus involved activities which paralleled the activities of the Bacchic mysteries.¹¹⁶ Willets also argues that Cretan Zeus was notably close to the later Greek Dionysos.¹¹⁷ Kerényi agrees, arguing that the Cretan manifestations of Zeus and Dionysos are

¹¹¹ Whittaker, “Sacrificial Practice and Warfare in Homer and in the Bronze Age,” 182.

¹¹² Säflund, “The Agoge of the Minoan Youth as Reflected in Palatial Iconography,” 232-233.

¹¹³ Ibid., 233. Säflund’s translation. Diodoros 5.72.4.

¹¹⁴ The “Jewel” fresco at Knossos dates to the Middle Minoan period. It shows a man putting a necklace around the neck of a woman; the beads on the necklace are shaped as men’s heads. Evans interpreted this fresco as a representation of *hieros gamos*. <http://www.therafoundation.org/articles/art/thewallpaintingsofcrete>. Accessed on November 12, 2008.

¹¹⁵ Cited in Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 543.

¹¹⁶ Cook, *Zeus*, 648-651.

¹¹⁷ Willets, *Cretan Cults and Festivals*, 240. In Euripides’ *Bacchae*, when Pentheus puts on a dress and becomes completely intoxicated with the power of Dionysos, he sees Dionysos in the form of a bull, and he also sees two suns.

indistinguishable from each other.¹¹⁸ Of course, in the myth about Theseus and the Labyrinth, Dionysos marries Ariadne after Theseus abandons her on Naxos, so Dionysos is important in that mythical narrative as well.¹¹⁹ It is likely, then, that the cult of the Kouretes involved ecstatic dancing and other elements found in later Dionysiac cults.

Again, Lucian's dialogue about dance is helpful here. After a brief discussion of the dancing scene on Achilles' shield, Lucian goes on to discuss dance in mystery cults:

Ἐγὼ λέγειν, ὅτι τελετὴν οὐδεμίαν ἀρχαίαν ἔστιν εὐρεῖν ἄνευ ὀρχήσεως, Ὡρφέως δηλαδὴ καὶ Μυσαίου καὶ τῶν τότε ἀρίστων ὀρχηστῶν καταστησαμένων αὐτάς, ὥς τι κάλλιστον καὶ τοῦτο νομοθετησάντων, σὺν ῥυθμῷ καὶ ὀρχήσει μυεῖσθαι. ὅτι δ' οὕτως ἔχει, τὰ μὲν ὄργια σιωπᾶν ἄξιον τῶν ἀμυήτων ἔνεκα, ἐκεῖνο δὲ πάντες ἀκούουσιν, ὅτι τοὺς ἐξαγορεύοντας τὰ μυστήρια ἐξορχεῖσθαι λέγουσιν οἱ πολλοί. (15)

(I suffer to say that it is not possible to find one ancient mystery ritual without dancing, plainly since Orpheos and Musaios, the best of the dancers then, established them, ordaining it as something particularly beautiful to be initiated with rhythm and dancing. That this holds true—it is fitting for me to remain silent about the secret rites on account of the uninitiated person—there is this thing which everyone has heard, that many say that those people who divulge the secrets of the mysteries *dance* them out.)

¹¹⁸ Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 119: "The Zeus born on Crete and the Cretan Dionysos were not Greek gods. They were not distinguished from each other by such contours as defined 'God,' or a god, in his unique form for the Greeks—in fact, they were not separate at all. They may be aptly characterized by a name that Lewis Richard Farnell, the historian of Greek religion, devised for the divine being who in Olympia was known by the circumlocution 'Sosipolis,' 'savior of the city,' and who appeared in the form of a child and that of a snake: 'the Zeus-Dionysos of Crete.' Zeus-Dionysos, the precursor of both Greek gods on Crete, changed his form as he passed through the three phases of his myth, which are comparable to the acts of a drama, and reproduced himself. The three phases and acts correspond to the three stages of *zoë*, or life, which in the Dionysos myth is masculine in its relation to women. The first act corresponds to the sperm, the second to the embryo, and the third to the male from infancy on. At the sperm stage the self-engendering god was a snake; at the embryo stage he was more animal than man; from infancy on he was the little and big Dionysos. As primal mother and source of *zoë*, his feminine counterpart was named 'Rhea'; as mother and again as wife, she was named 'Ariadne.'"

¹¹⁹ It is worth noting that Xenophon's *Symposium* ends with a sexual dance between Dionysos and Ariadne (who are played by actors for the guests) in which the couple ends up in a marriage bed. The performance is so erotically charged that the single men start announcing that they will get married, and the married men immediately go home to their wives. (9.3-7)

Burkert points out the importance of dancing in the major mystery cults, including especially the Eleusinian Mysteries and the Bacchic Mysteries.¹²⁰ Lucian also specifically discusses Bacchic dancing and even suggests that it had a military effect:

Τὰ μὲν γὰρ Διονυσιακὰ καὶ Βακχικὰ οἶμαι σε μὴ περιμένειν ἐμοῦ ἀκοῦσαι, ὅτι ὄρχησις ἐκεῖνα πάντα ἦν. τριῶν γοῦν οὐσῶν τῶν γενικωτάτων ὄρχήσεων, κόρδακος καὶ σικιννίδος καὶ ἐμμελίας, οἱ Διονύσου θεράποντες οἱ Σάτυροι ταύτας ἐφευρόντες ἀφ' αὐτῶν ἐκάστην ὠνόμασαν, καὶ ταύτη τῇ τέχνῃ χρώμενος ὁ Διόνυσος, φασίν, Τυρρηνοὺς καὶ Ἰνδοὺς καὶ Λυδοὺς ἐχειρώσατο καὶ φύλον οὕτω μάχιμον τοῖς αὐτοῦ θιάσοις κατωρχήσατο. (22)

(As for the Dionysiac and Bacchic rites, I guess you are not waiting to hear from me that everything about them was dancing. The Satyrs, attendants of Dionysos, invented the Cordax, the Sicinnis, and the Emmeleia—which are the three most typical dances—and named them after themselves. Dionysos, acting by means of this *techne*, they say, subdued the Tyrrhenians, the Indians, and the Lydians and thus danced the warlike people into submission with his band of revelers.)

It is worth pointing out that Lucian again refers to dancing here as a form of *techne*.

Interestingly, Strabo actually uses the same term to describe actual Dionysian and Orphic religious rites.¹²¹

Diodoros, in fact, traces the famous mystery cults to Knossos itself:

Περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν θεῶν οἱ Κρήτες τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς λεγομένων γεννηθῆναι τοιαῦτα μυθολογοῦσι· τὰς δὲ τιμὰς καὶ θυσίας καὶ τὰς περὶ τὰ μυστήρια τελετὰς ἐκ Κρήτης εἰς τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους παραδεδῶσθαι λέγοντες τοῦτο φέρουσιν, ὡς οἴονται, μέγιστον τεκμήριον· τὴν τε γὰρ παρ' Ἀθηναίοις ἐν Ἐλευσίνι γινομένην τελετὴν, ἐπιφανεστάτην σξεδὸν οὔσαν ἀπασῶν, καὶ τὴν ἐν Σαμοθράκῃ καὶ τὴν ἐν Θράκῃ ἐν τοῖς Κίκοσιν, ὅθεν ὁ καταδείξας Ὀρφεὺς ἦν, μυστικῶς παραδίδωσθαι, κατὰ δὲ τὴν Κρήτην ἐν Κνωσῷ νόμιμον ἐξ ἀρχαίων εἶναι φανερώς τὰς τελετὰς ταύτας πᾶσι παραδίδωσθαι, καὶ τὰ παρὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ παραδιδόμενα παρ' αὐτοῖς μηδένα κρύπτειν τῶν βουλομένων τὰ τοιαῦτα γινώσκειν. τῶν γὰρ θεῶν φασὶ τοὺς πλείστους ἐκ τῆς Κρήτης ὁρμηθέντας ἐπιέναι πολλὰ μέρη τῆς οἰκουμένης, εὐεργετοῦντας τὰ γένη τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ μεταδιδόντας ἐκάστοις τῆς ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων εὐρημάτων ὠφελείας. (5.77.3-4)

(The Cretans tell such myths about their gods, who they say were born in their land. Saying that the honors and sacrifices and the rites concerning

¹²⁰ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 276-296.

¹²¹ 10.3.23.

the mysteries were given over from Crete to the rest of men, they hold this, as they believe, very convincing argument: that the initiation rite celebrated by the Athenians in Eleusis, perhaps the most well-known of them all, and that in Samothrace, and that in Thrace among the Kikones, where Orpheus, having revealed them, went are all handed over secretly, but at Knossos on Crete it has been customary since ancient times to hand over all the initiation rites to everyone openly. And those things which are handed over with other people as not to be divulged, by the Cretans they are not kept hidden from anyone who wants to know such things. For they say that most of the gods started out from Crete to go to the many areas of the known world, bestowing good deeds on the races of men and giving over to each of them the assistance of their discoveries.)

Diodoros says that the mysteries at Knossos had been conducted “ἐξ ἀρχαίων” (since ancient times), and he explicitly links the Eleusinian Mysteries, the mysteries in Samothrace, and Orphism to religious rites at Knossos.

Indeed, there is early literary evidence for a connection between Demeter and Crete. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Demeter, disguised as a old woman, tells the daughters of Keleos and Metaneira that she has come to Eleusis from Crete. The cult of Demeter at Eleusis dates to the Mycenaean period, and the hymn itself probably dates to the early seventh century B.C.E. In the *Theogony*, Hesiod reports that Demeter coupled with the hero Iasion in Crete:

Δημήτηρ μὲν Πλοῦτον ἐγείνατο δῖα θεάων,
 Ἰασίῳ ἥρῳ μιγεῖσ' ἐρατῇ φιλότῃτι
 εἰῶ ἐνὶ τριπόλῳ, Κρήτης ἐν πόνι δήμῳ,
 ἐσθλόν, ὃς εἶσ' ἐπὶ γῆν τε καὶ εὐρέα ὤτα θαλάσσης
 πᾶσαν· τῷ δὲ τυχόντι καὶ οὐκ ἐξ χειρὸς ἴκηται,
 τὸν δ' ἀφνειὸν ἔθηκε, πολὺν δέ οἱ ὥπασεν ὄλβον. (969-974)

(Demeter, brilliant among goddesses, having mingled in erotic love with the hero Iasion in a triple-plowed field in the rich land of Crete, gave birth to Ploutos, a noble child, who goes everywhere on the land and on the wide surface of the sea; and when he comes to the hands of those he encounters, he grants wealth, and he bestows great prosperity.)

The account is echoed in the *Odyssey* (5.125-128), where Zeus kills Iasion with a lightening bolt, and it is also reported by Diodoros (5.77.1-2). Moreover, Emily Vermeule argues that the adjective “*χρυσάορος*,” which is used in the fourth line of the Homeric Hymn to describe Demeter and which is usually translated “of the golden sword,” actually means “of the golden double axe” and helps to reveal a Minoan origin for Demeter.¹²²

In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, Apollo, in the form of a dolphin, captures a ship full of Cretans from Knossos to be guardians of his sanctuary at Delphi and to carry out his rites. Apollo also is connected to Crete in Plutarch’s story about Theseus’ Labyrinth-dance on Delos, Apollo’s birthplace. A temple dedicated to Apollon Delphinios existed at Knossos, and the epithet “Delphidios” is associated with Apollo in Cretan inscriptions of religious nature on Delos.¹²³ Athanassakis speculates that Delphi, which was originally a chthonic cult site for an earth goddess, takes its name from the Greek word “*δελεύς*” (womb). He argues that this derivation seems especially likely when one considers that Delphi was viewed as the navel of the world.¹²⁴ Apollo often is associated with maturation rites, and, like Cretan Zeus, is often depicted as a *kouros*. It is notable that Dionysos was also associated with Apollo, most importantly at the panhellenic sanctuary at Delphi; Dionysos occupied the sanctuary during winter months while Apollo was in residence during the summer. As Burkert argues, at Delphi Dionysos served as

¹²² Emily Vermeule, “A Gold Minoan Double Axe,” *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 57, no. 307 (1959), 14. Vermeule also connects Minoan Demeter to Carian and Cretan Zeus and also to Dionysos.

¹²³ *The Homeric Hymns*, trans. Apostolos N. Athanassakis, 75.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

“the dark, chthonic counterpart to Apollo.”¹²⁵ Finally, Apollo, Dionysos, and Orpheus are also all associated with each other in some texts.¹²⁶

The first choral ode of Euripides’ *Bacchae* explicitly traces Dionysiac worship to the rituals of the Kouretes in honor of Cretan Zeus. The chorus sings of mysteries, blessedness, and ecstatic dancing, and it connects Dionysos to Cybele, the mother-goddess of Phrygia. The chorus also calls Dionysos “ταυρόκερων θεόν” (100) (the bull-horned god). Half-way through the ode, the chorus sings about Crete:

ὦ θαλάμειμα Κουρή-
των ζᾶθεοί τε Κρήτας
Διογενέτορες ἔναυλοι,
ἔνθα τρικόρυδες ἄντροις
βυσσότονον κύκλωμα τόδε
μοι Κορύβαντες ἤϋρον·
βακχείᾳ δ’ ἀνὰ συντόνῳ
κέρασαν ἀδυβόῳ Φρυγίων
αὐλῶν πνεύματι ματρός τε Πέας ἔς
χέρα θῆκαν, κτύπον εὐάσμασι Βακχᾶν·
παρὰ δὲ μαινόμενοι Σάτυροι
ματέρος ἐξανύσαντο θεᾶς,
ἔς δὲ χορεύματα
συνῆψαν τριετηρίδων,
αἷς χαίρει Διόνυσος. (120-134)

(Oh haunt of the Kouretes and holy caves of Crete, which give birth to Zeus, where triple-plumed Korybantes invented in their caves this circle with hide stretched over it. In their Bacchic frenzy, they mingled it with the breath of Phrygian pipes and put it into the hands of Mother Rhea, resounded with the songs of the Bacchae. By them, raging Satyrs carried out the rites of the Mother Goddess, and they joined it to the dances of the triennial festivals, in which Dionysos rejoices...)

Clearly, Euripides links Dionysos and Bacchic ecstasy with the Kouretes and Cretan Zeus here.

Strabo also links the Eleusinian Mysteries and those performed for other gods to the rites of the Kouretes in Crete. He writes:

¹²⁵ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 224.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 225.

τοιούτος γάρ τινας δαίμονας ἢ προπόλους θεῶν τοὺς Κουρήτας φασιν οἱ παραδόντες τὰ Κρητικὰ καὶ τὰ Φρύγια, ἱερουργίαις τισὶν ἐμπεπλογμένα ταῖς μὲν μυστικάις, ταῖς δ' ἄλλαις περὶ τε τὴν τοῦ Διὸς παιδοτροφίαν τὴν ἐν Κρήτῃ καὶ τοὺς τῆς μητρὸς τῶν θεῶν ὀργιασμοὺς ἐν τῇ Φρυγίᾳ καὶ τοῖς περὶ τὴν Ἴδην τὴν Τρωικὴν τόποις...οἱ μὲν οὖν Ἕλληνες οἱ πλεῖστοι τῷ Διονύσῳ προσέδεσαν καὶ τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι καὶ τῇ Ἑκάτῃ καὶ ταῖς Μούσαις καὶ Δήμητρει, νῆ Δία, τὸ ὀργιαστικὸν πᾶν καὶ τὸ βακχικὸν καὶ τὸ χορικὸν καὶ τὸ περὶ τὰς τελετὰς μυστικόν, Ἰακχόν τε καὶ τὸν Διόνυσον καλοῦσι καὶ τὸν ἀρχηγέτην τῶν μυστηρίων, τῆς Δήμητρος δαίμονα· δειδροφορίαι τε καὶ χορεῖαι καὶ τελεταὶ κοιναὶ τῶν θεῶν εἰσι τούτων· ...Ἐν δὲ τῇ Κρήτῃ καὶ ταῦτα καὶ τὰ τοῦ Διὸς ἱερὰ ἰδίως ἐπετελεῖτο μετ' ὀργιασμοῦ καὶ τοιούτων προπόλων. οἳ περὶ τὸν Διόνυσόν εἰσιν οἱ Σάτυροι· τούτους δ' ὠνόμαζον Κουρήτας, νέους τινὰς ἐνόπλιον κίνησιν μετ' ὀρχήσεως ἀποδιδόντας, προστησάμενοι μῦθοι τὸν περὶ τῆς τοῦ Διὸς γενέσεως...(10.3.7-11)

(For those who hand down the traditions of Crete and Phrygia, woven together with certain sacred rites—some being mystery-rites, some focusing on the childrearing of Zeus in Crete and having to do with the orgies of the mother of the gods in Phrygia and in those places around the Trojan Ida—say that the Kouretes are *daimones* of such sort or attendants of the gods...Most of the Greeks impute to Dionysos and to Apollo and to Hekate, and to the Muses and, most of all, to Demeter everything orgiastic and Bacchic and choral and that which is mystical concerning mysteries, and they call Dionysos “Iakchos” and also the leader of the mysteries, who is the daimon of Demeter. And branch-carrying, choruses, and mysteries are common for all of these gods...In Crete, both these and, distinctly, those rites sacred to Zeus were performed with orgiastic ritual and with such attendants as the Satyrs, the sort who attend Dionysos. These are called the Kouretes, certain young men who carry out warlike movements with dancing, setting forth the account of Zeus’ birth...)

Thus, Strabo also links the idea of a fertility goddess and Cretan Zeus to other mystery cults such as Demeter and Dionysos.

Diodoros relates the Orphic story about Dionysos’ birth on Crete:

Διόνυσον δὲ μυθολογοῦσιν εὐρετὴν γενέσθαι τῆς τ' ἀμπέλου καὶ τῆς περὶ ταύτην ἐργασίας, ἔτι δ' οἰνοποιίας καὶ τοῦ πολλοὺς τῶν ἐκ τῆς ὀπώρας καρπῶν ἀποδησαυρίζεσθαι καὶ τὰς χρεῖας καὶ τὰς τροφὰς παρέχεσθαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐπὶ πολὺν χρόνον. τοῦτον δὲ τὸν θεὸν γεγονέναι φασὶν ἐκ Διὸς καὶ Φερσεφόνης κατὰ τὴν Κρήτην, ὃν Ὀρφεὺς κατὰ τὰς τελετὰς παρέδωκε διασώμενον ὑπὸ τῶν Τιτάνων· (5.75.4)

(The myth-tellers say that Dionysos was the discoverer of the vine and of the cultivation of it, and of wine-making and of storing-away many of the first-fruits for the use of them to provide nourishment for men for a long time. And they say that this god was born on Crete of Zeus and

Persephone, whom Orpheus has handed down as part of the mysteries as being torn bodily into pieces by the Titans.)

In being torn apart by the Titans, Dionysos here provides a good example of the Divine Child, a figure which, as Nilsson shows, is common to the cults of Cretan Zeus, Demeter at Eleusis, Dionysos, and Zagreus.¹²⁷ In general, the Divine Child usually is born under some threat, hidden away, nursed in the wild, and undergoes ritual death and rebirth, often from the chthonic depths of the underworld. Fire is frequently involved. Nilsson links Cretan Zeus' status as the “μέγιστος κοῦρος” (greatest young man) of the Palaikastro Hymn with the infant Zeus who was born out of a cave periodically.¹²⁸ As discussed above, both Dionysos and Zagreus follow Cretan Zeus as examples of the Divine Child.¹²⁹ The role of the Divine Child in the cult to Demeter may not seem as apparent. At Eleusis, however, the hierophant supposedly announced after a great light shown forth from the anaktoron, “the Mighty and Strong one has born a strong son.”¹³⁰ Burkert writes that the child was either Ploutos or Iakchos-Dionysos.¹³¹ Burkert argues that one child was always initiated “from the hearth” in the mysteries and that the practice followed from the mythical account of Demeter hiding the baby Demophoon in the fire to make him immortal.¹³² Nilsson provides much artistic evidence which shows a child along with Demeter, Persephone, Triptolemos, and Hades. Kerenyi also discusses many

¹²⁷ Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 533-583.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 547-550.

¹²⁹ For a discussion of the Divine Child and the connections between Cretan Zeus, Dionysos, and Zagreus, see, for example, Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 298; Kerényi, *Dionysos*, 114; and Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 533-583.

¹³⁰ Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 559. Nilsson cites the testimony of Hippolytus.

¹³¹ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 288.

¹³² Ibid.

vases paintings and reliefs which variously show that the Mysteries involved a Divine Child.¹³³

Cook argues that the cult of Cretan Zeus may have involved human sacrifice and consumption in the manner of the cult of Zeus Lykaeos in Arcadia. He references both Pausanias' description of human sacrifice in Arcadia and also a quotation of a fifth-century B.C.E. historian, Agathokles, found in Athenaios, which similarly refers to human sacrifice at the site, as evidence.¹³⁴ The cult of Zeus Lykaeos was especially invoked as a rain cult; thus, that manifestation of Zeus also is associated with fertility.¹³⁵ Recent excavations of the ash altar have turned up a Minoan rock crystal seal adorned with a bull which dates to the Late Minoan period, thereby revealing a connection between Minoan Crete and the cult of Zeus in Arcadia.¹³⁶ Cook cites a choral ode from Euripides' *Cretans* in which the chorus speaks to Minos. The chorus sings of a temple glued together by means of bulls-hides, Zeus, Mount Ida, Zagreus, a mountain-mother Rhea, birth, death, and omophagy (the eating of raw flesh). The chorus says that they began as *Kouretes* and ended as *Bakchoi*. In the first choral ode in Euripides' *Bacchae*, discussed above, immediately after singing about the connection between Dionysos and Cretan Zeus, the chorus sings that Dionysos delights in omophagy (135-141). Euripides writes:

ἡδὺς ἐν ὄρεσιν, ὅταν ἐκ Διάσων δρομαί-
ων πέσῃ πεδόσσε, νε-
βρίδος ἔχων ἱερὸν ἐνδυτόν, ἀγρεύων
αἶμα τραγοκτόνον, ὠμοφάγον χάριν, ἱεμε-

¹³³ Kerényi, *Eleusis*, 150-169.

¹³⁴ Cook, *Zeus*, 651-665. Cook also discusses bovine omophagy in the cult. Pausanias 8.38.7. Cook includes the original and a translation of the passage from Athenaios.

¹³⁵ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 266.

¹³⁶ University of Pennsylvania Museum (January 28, 2008). New Discoveries At The Ash Altar Of Zeus Offer Insights Into Origins Of Ancient Greece's Most Powerful God. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved October 13, 2008, from <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/01/080123114601.htm>

νος ἐς ὄρεα Φρύγια, Λύδ', ὁ δ' ἑξαρχος Βρόμιος,
 εὐοῖ.
 ῥεῖ δὲ γάλακτι πέδον, ῥεῖ δ' οἶνω, ῥεῖ δὲ μελισσῶν
 νέκταρι. (135-143)

(He is sweet on the mountains, when he falls on the ground from the running bands of revelers, having the sacred wrap of the fawn-skin, hunting the blood of a slaughtered goat, delightful omophagy. He goes to the mountains of Phrygia, Lydia, and Bromius is the leader. Evoe! And the ground flows with milk, the ground flows with wine, the ground flows with the nectar of bees!)

The fact that the chorus in the *Bacchae* connect Dionysos to Cretan Zeus and the dancing Kouretes and also sing of sparagmos and omophagy in conjunction with the connection suggests that the cult of Cretan Zeus paralleled such Dionysiac practices.

Nilsson points out that Cretan Zeus' tomb was thought to exist not only at Mount Ida but also at Mount Dicte and, most importantly, at Knossos.¹³⁷ The connections between Cretan Zeus and ritual at Knossos is especially compelling in light of several archaeological finds. A find dating to the Late Minoan IB period in a building called the North House at Knossos included many pieces of pottery, including one amphora decorated with four figure-eight, ox-hide shields.¹³⁸ Figure-eight shields appear on several Minoan artifacts, often in scenes which involve ecstatic dancing. As mentioned above, they seem to be associated with the fertility goddess and, in several instances, are actually anthropomorphic images of a goddess.¹³⁹ As Warren points out, the shield was important in the cult of Zeus Diktaios, as evidenced by the Palaikastro Hymn found at the sanctuary in the early twentieth century.¹⁴⁰ Like the Kouretes at the Idaian Cave, the *kouroi* there performed pyrrhic dances in honor of Zeus Diktaios as part of a general

¹³⁷ Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion*, 552-554.

¹³⁸ Warren, "Minoan Crete and Ecstatic Religion," 156.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 164; see also Kontorli-Papadopoulou, *Aegean Frescoes of Religious Character*, 166 and 242.

¹⁴⁰ Warren, "Minoan Crete and Ecstatic Religion," 164.

fertility rite. What is so striking about the find in the North House at Knossos is that hundreds of children's bones also have been discovered there. There are clear knife-marks on the bones which suggest that the children were sacrificed and that the flesh was carved off the bones and, in all likelihood, eaten.¹⁴¹ Evidence of human sacrifice has been found elsewhere on Crete.¹⁴² In Cretan myth, the figure of Zagreus was lured away from the Kouretes by the Titans and eaten, and this story was later used by the Orphics. Peter Warren argues that the figure of Zagreus, which is a non-Greek name, predates Dionysos and that later Dionysos grew from this cult.¹⁴³ Following Nilsson, he emphasizes that rare evidence for Cretan cult activity in honor of Dionysos is explained by the existence of Zagreus and Cretan Zeus.¹⁴⁴ He points out that several ancient authors treat Zagreus, Zeus Kretagenes (Cretan-born Zeus) and Dionysos, whom Burkert argues was "very ancient,"¹⁴⁵ as equivalent gods.¹⁴⁶ All of these cults involved sparagmos (a ritual tearing apart of the body) and omophagy, usually of a bull or goat but, as Warren's find at Knossos clearly shows, also of humans. As Peter Warren has argued, the rituals at Knossos focused on ritual death, consumption, rebirth, initiation, and the overall fertility of the land.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ S.M. Wall, J.H. Musgrave, and P.M. Warren, "Human Bones from a Late Minoan Ib House at Knossos," *Annual of the British School at Athens* 81 (1986), 333-388. See also Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 37. Cook speculated that bovine and human omophagy may have been part of cult-practice for Cretan Zeus. *Zeus*, 651-665.

¹⁴² See, for example, Yannis Sakellarakis and Efi Sapouna-Sakellarakis, "Drama of Death in a Minoan Temple," *National Geographic* 159, no. 2 (February 1981), 205-223.

¹⁴³ Warren, "Minoan Crete and Ecstatic Religion," 161.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 290.

¹⁴⁶ Warren, "Minoan Crete and Ecstatic Religion," 161.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 161-163.