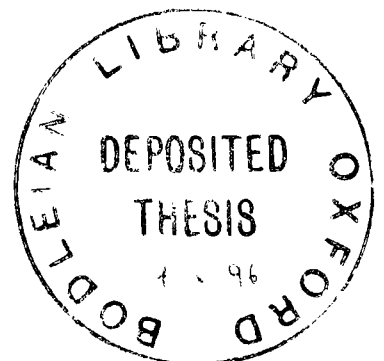


**Perceptions of Gender and the Divine
in Greek Texts of the Second
and Third Centuries A.D.**

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**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

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This thesis investigates the construction and reflection of gender identities in the religious sphere, namely the gods, their worshippers, and the rituals which link them. Religiously-interested Greek texts written by Artemidoros, Pausanias, Plutarch and Heliodoros in the second and third centuries A.D. form the basis of four chapter-studies. The introduction explores how deploying gender as a tool for investigating the texts reveals the author's own perceptions of how male and female operate within his discourse, and considers how these perceptions relate to the world beyond the text.

Chapter two examines Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams*: his analytical system of dream interpretation reveals contemporary thought patterns. Artemidoros places striking reliance on gender in his structuring of divine and human power, and employs two differing divine models of gender, which have significant implications for the social construction of human gender. Chapter three emphasizes Pausanias' fascination with the marvellous in his *Guide to Greece*, and focuses on why he considers female priests more noteworthy than male. The problematic sexuality of female priests is frequently his focus in descriptions of myth and rite.

The fourth chapter considers Plutarch's Pythian dialogues and *Isis and Osiris*. It is the marriage-like nature of their relationship with their gods that makes both human and divine females perfect mediators between worshippers and their male god, the Pythia with Apollo, and Isis with Osiris. Chapter five finds a middle way between opposing views that Heliodoros' *An Ethiopian Story* is either a religious mystery text or entertainment without religious meaning. It focuses on how the relationship between the two lovers, Theagenes and Charikleia, is patterned by their relationship to their gods, Apollo and Artemis.

The concluding chapter draws out the significance of gendered hierarchy amongst the gods, and the importance of gender in the role and function of priests and prophets. It also considers the implications of the thesis' findings and approach for Jewish and Christian texts of the same period.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In some senses, my study begins where the first volume of *A History of Women in the West* tantalizingly ends.¹ In the concluding chapter, editor Pauline Schmitt Pantel offers her reflections on 'Women and Ancient History Today'. Under the heading 'New Concepts', she analyses the use and potential of the term 'gender'. In its broadest application, she says, it simply notes the existence of women as well as men, referring to 'the division of the world between masculine and feminine, to a sexual or sexualized categorization'.² Used more precisely, gender can express ways in which men and women relate to one another. Schmitt Pantel comes to what I believe to be a most important understanding, writing,³

In this sense gender is an analytic category that has proved useful to scholars seeking a concept in terms of which to make sense of a wide variety of case studies. With this concept in hand we can ask general questions: How does gender relate to other types of social relation? How can the study of gender add to historical understanding?

Her conclusions hold a challenge which I intend my thesis to take up and develop. Gender is the analytic category which binds together my investigations into some religiously-interested texts of the second and third centuries A.D., written by Artemidoros, Pausanias, Plutarch, and Heliodoros. The particular area of historical understanding I wish to extend is the interaction between gender and the divine (by which I mean the gods, their worshippers and the rituals which link them). My deployment of gender as a tool for investigating the texts should reveal the author's own perceptions of how male and female operate within his discourse, and provide a starting point for thinking about gender and the divine in the texts' cultural environment.

I. Gender and the divine

The changing meaning and use of the term 'gender' make an interesting story of late twentieth-century thought. It is a tale well told, for example, by Joan Scott in

¹ Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot (eds.), *A History of Women in the West*. I: Pauline Schmitt Pantel (ed.), *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints* (Eng. trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1992).

² Schmitt Pantel (ed.), *A History of Women in the West*. I, p. 467.

³ *ibid.*

her article of 1986, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis'.⁴ The idea of gender has largely been welcomed and begun to be explored in many areas of scholarly activity, including now the study of the ancient world, but the increasingly fashionable frequency with which the term gender is invoked risks devaluing it. By considering some origins of the concept, its current state, and future potential, I aim to establish gender as a serious and powerful analytical tool.

A first concern is to formulate a relationship between the study of gender and the study of women. Is gender simply a new way of saying women? It is noticeable that the titles of books, seminars, study courses, often now read 'gender' where once they read 'women'.⁵ Does the change in labels bring with it a proper concomitant change in method? Sarah Pomeroy's *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*, for example, was an early piece of influential work on classical women.⁶ She approaches her subject by building up a largely factual picture of different women's lives in Greece and Rome, ambitiously spanning some 1,500 years. From such work of the 1970s grew that exemplified by the essays collected by Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt in their 1983 *Images of Women in Antiquity*.⁷ Contributors to this volume show an increasing awareness of the utility of studying perceptions and representations of ancient women. But as the editors themselves are now able to observe in an introduction to the revised edition of 1993, 'This collection is high on women's history, but generally low on theory, feminism and gender, all of which occupy a large amount of space in current work'.⁸ The shift in emphasis from women to gender is certainly not universal, as demonstrated by the firm focus on lives of ancient women in Sarah Pomeroy's 1991 collection of essays *Women's History and Ancient History* and a book of 1994 by Elaine Fantham *et al.*, *Women in the Classical World*.⁹ But thinking about how to study women in more sophisticated ways has in part led to the evolution of gender as an analytic category.

⁴ Joan W. Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', in *A.H.R.* 91 (1986), pp. 1053-75, discussed below. Also, her *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York and Oxford, 1988), especially Part I.

⁵ The changing emphasis is explicitly remarked upon by Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick, in the case of their own Oxford seminar series, Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick (eds.), *Women in Antiquity: new assessments* (London and New York, 1995), p. xiii.

⁶ Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: women in classical antiquity* (New York, 1975). Pomeroy's work was in its turn a significant step away from the previous long-standing and limiting debate about the 'status' of women in the ancient world. The historiography of work on Greek women in particular is clearly documented by Marilyn A. Katz, who argues that the issue of women's status was a concern arising from an eighteenth-century discourse on freedom, the individual and civil society, 'Ideology and the "status of women" in ancient Greece', ch. 2 in Hawley and Levick (eds.), *Women in Antiquity: new assessments*.

⁷ Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity* (London, 1983; revised edition, London, 1993).

⁸ *Op. cit.*, revised edition, p. xvii.

⁹ Sarah B. Pomeroy (ed.), *Women's History and Ancient History* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina and London, 1991), with a focus on the relationship between the public and private lives of women spanning archaic Greece to late antiquity; Elaine Fantham, Helene Peet Foley, Natalie Boymel

Scholars who have thought carefully about women have generated the important recognition that 'woman' is not an undifferentiated category. Refusal of biological essentialism, or determinism, has been a key feminist argument: a certain set of physical attributes does not necessarily dictate a certain set of social roles. The work of Helen King on Hippocratic medical texts has strikingly revealed how ancient theories about the female body differ, both obviously from our own, and also from each other.¹⁰ Once we are prepared to say that a woman is more than a certain set of biological characteristics, or to see that the interpretation of those characteristics is culturally determined, then how are we to define her? A woman can change her identity in society in childhood, marriage, motherhood, old age. Whether she is rich or poor, a holder of public office or not - all these considerations affect her identity as a woman. For the feminist historian Denise Riley, it is axiomatic that, 'Both a concentration on and a refusal of the identity of "women" are essential to feminism'.¹¹ The recognition that there can be no single unproblematic concept of woman has important consequences. Above all, it suggests that we need a sophisticated and relational analytic device to investigate cultural constructions of female and male. Gender is such a device. So the study of gender is not the study of women, although thinking about women has in many good ways contributed in the development of the idea of gender.

Classical scholars with feminist interests have played an influential part in the study of women and of gender. Writing about feminism and classical scholarship, Ruth Padel traces out the 'reading revolutions' which made a feminist reading possible, 'Psychoanalysis, Marxism, social anthropology (amongst others) burst open new ways of looking at differences between people, and at the use society makes of these differences'.¹² A central tenet of many feminists is the acknowledgement and investigation of 'difference'. Essential for a study of women then, minimally as a standard of comparison, are men. So Ruth Padel insists on the need for attention 'to the foreign and the other'. For her, 'Understanding and reading women, in most cultures, certainly ancient Greek, means also understanding men'.¹³

Not all feminists agree. Notably Amy Richlin, writing as co-editor of *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, raises her voice against the falling of the study of

Kampen, Sarah B. Pomeroy, H. Alan Shapiro, *Women in the Classical World: image and text* (New York and Oxford, 1994).

¹⁰ For example, Helen King, 'Bound to bleed: Artemis and Greek women', ch. 8 in Cameron and Kuhrt (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity*.

¹¹ Denise Riley, 'Am I That Name?' *Feminism and the category of 'women' in history* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 1.

¹² Ruth Padel, 'Between theory and fiction: reflections on feminism and classical scholarship', *Gender and History* 2 (1990), p. 198.

¹³ *ibid.*, pp. 206-7.

women from fashion. She talks of the 'retreat' from women to gender.¹⁴ Reduced to its simplest form, the problem is a methodological one – can women be studied adequately as an isolated element or can they only be understood in the context of their wider society? The ideological anxiety which sees the recently 'discovered' ancient women sinking back again into study of a male-oriented ancient society must be understood and respected. However it seems to me more historically accurate to look at women in their social context, and it perhaps strengthens the contribution of women to their society if we see them not as a hidden element to be rescued from it, but as a crucial, creative element within it. Gender then looks at the relationship between men and women, and ideas of male and female, to discover their joint place in, and shaping of, their culture.

Like histories of women, historical studies of sexuality are also an increasingly popular form of academic endeavour. A common theme to the arguments about sexuality is an agreement on the importance of cultural context. Denise Riley points out a pattern of change in cultural estimations of sexuality and female identity over several centuries of English history. She traces a history of an increasing sexualization, reaching its peak in the eighteenth century, 'in which female persons become held to be virtually saturated with their sex, which then invades their rational and spiritual faculties'.¹⁵ Sexuality and gender are both, to an arguable degree, culturally determined; the two must be studied together. To what extent, for instance, is a person's gendered identity a sexual identity?

Stimulating and influential studies of sexuality have brought the issue to the front of classical scholarship. The much-quoted Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* is an attempt to write a history of culture. His work can stand as an example of the insights such enquiry can produce, and the differences between such a study and a study with gender questions at its centre. His interests are less in the political and social spheres, more in the privatization of public life and concentration on the self. Marriage, for example, is therefore a strong concern. But his treatment of the subject is problematic. Madeleine Henry has some cogent criticisms, writing, 'His discussions of marriage constitute most of his treatment of women's experience, and both are written almost entirely from the husband's point of view; his section on prostitutes in the Greek world mentions only boys'.¹⁶ In effect, Foucault virtually ignores female sexuality: he does not see male and female experience as both essential components of one whole. Foucault's interest in power leads him to emphasize the male and ignore the female, without considering the necessary

¹⁴ Nancy Rabinowitz and Amy Richlin (eds.), *Feminist Theory and the Classics* (New York and London, 1993), p. 281.

¹⁵ Riley, 'Am I That Name?', p. 8.

¹⁶ Madeleine Henry, 'The edible woman: Athenaeus' concept of the pornographic', in Amy Richlin (ed.), *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (New York and Oxford, 1992), p. 251.

contribution of both to the balance of power. Moreover, sexuality is only a part of the formation of the self. To concentrate exclusively on sexuality is to lose other important components of ideas of male selfhood, quite apart from female. Gender therefore encompasses sexuality, but is not limited to it.

Gender is more than women, more than sexuality, more too than a simple comparison between men and women as biological beings. It is a cultural, a social, an historical construct. In her postlude to *History as Text*, Averil Cameron reflects on how 'cultural history is beginning to be seen at least by some not as some specialised field, like the "history of ideas", but as the central, if not the only proper subject of the historian'.¹⁷ Discovering the ways in which gender is conceptualized is to investigate a society at its heart. Perceptions of what it is to be male and female are organizing principles in society: male and female come to symbolize wider structures in society than the simply physical. As Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead argue from a sociological perspective in their book *Sexual Meanings*, 'The symbolic approach is shown to be particularly powerful in dealing with the tangled domain of gender problems; seeing sex and gender as symbols liberates this whole area of inquiry from constraining naturalistic assumptions and opens it to a range of analytic questions that would otherwise not be asked'.¹⁸ The *raison d' être* of Ortner's and Whitehead's book is their understanding of 'the attempt to understand gender and sexuality in social and cultural context to be among the most important tasks of contemporary social science'.¹⁹ The same priority applies equally to ancient history.

But there are dangers in talking too fluidly and easily about gender and its function in society. A detailed study of the complex ways gender forms and reflects cultural values needs a particular investigative sphere to anchor it, and to produce specific rather than generalized conclusions. Religion is a profitable place to hunt, particularly in the ancient world. On a purely pragmatic level, religion provides a very good chance of finding evidence for gender in the Graeco-Roman world. Men and women are observable together in the same arena, since ancient women were at their most visible when acting religiously: both men and women held priesthoods, participated in public festivals and performed private rituals. In the western world today, there is sometimes a tendency to devalue the influence of religion in society but it would be a grave error to adopt such an attitude in historical research. As Plutarch argues in his second-century A.D. treatise *Superstition*, 'Atheism's ignorance is indeed grievous. To be blind in so important a matter is a great misfortune to the mind, which loses thereby the brightest and most vital of its many eyes, its perception

¹⁷ Averil Cameron (ed.), *History as Text: the writing of ancient history* (London, 1989), p. 207.

¹⁸ Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, *Sexual Meanings: the cultural construction of gender and sexuality* (Cambridge, 1981), p. ix.

¹⁹ Ortner and Whitehead, *Sexual Meanings*, p. ix .

of the divine.²⁰ In the twentieth century, Ruth Padel reasons the advantages of a religious perspective for studying the ancient world. 'As outsiders, we feel our way into the Greeks' perceptions of the world by looking at their gods. Religion was the Greeks' most vivid medium for expressing their sense of their world and their relationships.'²¹

How are we to define the operation of gender within culture and particularly within religion? Joan Scott defines gender carefully as a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and as a primary way of signifying relationships of power.²² She identifies gender's legitimization and construction of social relationships in four specific areas.²³ I want to stress the correlation between the operation of gender and of religion in these areas. Gender, argues Scott, is found in 'culturally available symbols that evoke multiple (and often contradictory) representations'. She illustrates this point with a religious example Eve and Mary in the Christian tradition. Secondly, gender is tied in to 'normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meanings of symbols'. These concepts, Scott says, are expressed in a number of doctrines, and she lists religious ones before those of education, science, law and politics. Religion is a privileged area for analysing gender roles: it reflects gender differences whilst also constructing and negotiating them.

Scott's third aspect of gender relationships requires an analysis of politics, of social institutions and organizations, to discover how and why men and women are placed in certain relationships to one another, rather than assuming such relationships have a timeless permanence and validity. Religion provided one of the most pervasive frameworks of social organization in the ancient world. It is susceptible to analysis as a system, where meaning lies in connections between individual elements as well as within the elements themselves. Her fourth aspect of gender is something Scott labels 'subjective identity' This is an historical exhortation to beware the universal claims about male and female identity made, for example, by psychoanalytic schools of thought. 'Historians need instead to examine the ways in which gendered identities are substantively constructed and relate their findings to a range of activities, social organizations, and historically specific cultural representations.' I can investigate in a properly historical manner particular religious figures, and groups, within my culturally specific texts. Gender and the divine are both essential contributors to social organization, and to understand the connections between them helps in understanding ancient society as a whole.

²⁰ Plutarch, *Superstition* 167. Translation by Donald Russell, *Plutarch: selected essays and dialogues* (Oxford, 1993).

²¹ Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek images of the tragic self* (Princeton, 1992), p. 7.

²² Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', p. 1066.

²³ *ibid.*, pp. 1067-9.

Whilst the complex correlations between gender and religion have been increasingly explored in theology, in classics less work has been done, and this thesis is an attempt to move the debate further forward. Writing from a theological perspective, for instance, Caroline Bynum has deepened our understanding of medieval spirituality through studying the relationships between concepts of masculine and feminine in the beliefs and practice of individual Christians, and in Christian communities. She writes, 'It is no longer possible to study religious practice or religious symbols without taking gender - that is, the cultural experience of being male or female - into account. And we are just beginning to understand how complex the relationship between religion and gender is'.²⁴ Such productive and significant studies should encourage the endeavour in the classical world. At present, however, classicists have tended to study women, rather than gender, in a religious context. John Scheid's chapter, 'The religious roles of Roman women', is a good example of such a treatment. He acknowledges the complexity of Roman religion 'in which women, though subordinate, remained a necessary complement to men'.²⁵ He diagnoses a male religious paradigm which women must also follow. Rather less successful is Ross Shepard Kraemer's *Her Share of the Blessings*.²⁶ Kraemer describes her book as being 'about women's religions in the world of Greco-Roman antiquity and the connections between women's religions and the social constraints under which women lived their lives'.²⁷ Her focus is so exclusively on women that her picture of religion becomes distorted. Men are needed for a full understanding of religious life, and above all the relationship between the religious activities of women and men. For instance, the important family context for the holding of religious offices in the Greek world of the Roman empire is underplayed by Kraemer in her seventh chapter. Her idea that status for women must necessarily entail independence from men influences her argument that women's titles and offices do not derive from those of their husbands: her approach does not illuminate interesting questions such as why the majority of imperial priesthoods are husband and wife teams. In choosing to look at gender and religion, my thesis should avoid some of Kraemer's pitfalls, and instead explore a new area of considerable interest.

At this point I should outline some of the particular questions I aim to address. Generally, I will be concerned with how gender roles are reflected and constructed in religious contexts. As outlined above, my definition of 'the divine' of my title covers

²⁴ Caroline Bynum, writing in the introduction to *Gender and Religion: on the complexity of symbols*, edited by Caroline Bynum, Stevan Harrell, Paula Richman (Boston, 1986), pp. 1-2.

²⁵ John Scheid, 'The religious roles of Roman women', in Schmitt Pantel (ed.), *A History of Women in the West*. I, pp. 377-408, with quotation from p. 377.

²⁶ Ross Shepard Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings: women's religions among pagans, Jews and Christians in the Greco-Roman world* (New York and Oxford, 1992). A more detailed critique may be found in my review of her book, *J.R.S.* 83 (1993), pp. 249-50.

²⁷ Kraemer, *Her Share of the Blessings*, p. 3.

three key areas, the gods, their worshippers, and the systems which hold them together. Both individual elements and the articulation of the nature of their interrelationships are crucial to understanding how gender works. Considering male and female gods within the religious system will help elucidate gender representations and their cultural values. How do male and female human relations fit with male and female relationships amongst the gods? Can they be mapped directly, or is the process more complicated? The connection between the gods and their priests emerges as an area of particular importance. The balance of power between male and female is important: the second and integral part of Scott's definition of gender is that gender is a primary field in which power is articulated.²⁸ Is power mediated by polar opposites or some other organizing, structuring principle? The basis for such questions is the understanding that the constructions that are gender and the divine are not arbitrary but explicable.

There is always a risk, of course, in reading texts with a specific focus. As literary critic Gillian Beer observes, 'there will always be more to the text than the single sharply posed question reveals or than the reader's particular experience necessitates'.²⁹ Nevertheless, I trust that my concentration on gender and the divine will be worth the loss of other insights into aspects of the work of Artemidoros, Pausanias, Plutarch and Heliodoros, since I hope I will be highlighting new aspects to texts and subjects not yet sufficiently understood.

II. Text and context

One overwhelming focus for recent work on religion and sexuality has been Athenian society of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. In the substantial collection of essays that is *Before Sexuality*, for instance, more than half the chapters take evidence from classical Athens as their point of departure.³⁰ Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood's excellent *Studies in Girls' Transitions*, and *'Reading' Greek Culture*, both concentrate on archaic and classical Greece.³¹ In the first volume of *A History of Women in the West* another traditional emphasis in subject matter is illustrated. For the most part, chapters either treat classical Greece, or they move to Republican and imperial Rome. In studies of religion and sexuality, there is certainly scope for more work on the Greek world of the Roman empire.

²⁸ Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', pp. 1067, 1069.

²⁹ Gillian Beer, *Arguing With The Past: essays in narrative from Woolf to Sidney* (London, 1989), p. 6.

³⁰ David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, Froma I. Zeitlin (eds.), *Before Sexuality: the construction of erotic experience in the ancient Greek world* (Princeton, 1990).

³¹ Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, *Studies in Girls' Transitions: aspects of the arkteia and age representation in Attic iconography* (Athens, 1988); *'Reading' Greek Culture: texts and images, rituals and myths* (Oxford, 1991).

Cultural life in the Greek world of the second and third centuries A.D. was as vigorous as ever it had been in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Writers from this period surely have much to tell us about gender and the divine in their society. It is vital not to fall into methodological error and assume, as often used to be done, that second and third-century A.D. Greek culture is merely a jaded extension of the classical period. The later period consciously used the ideas and practices of the earlier period but we cannot assume that the two eras are synonymous. Information from second and third-century Greece should not be used to fill in the gaps from the fifth century, or *vice versa*, without careful investigation and argument. Writers of the second and third centuries should be allowed their own cultural context.

The second and third centuries A.D. were in fact a fertile time for the production of reflective Greek texts about religion. Averil Cameron is drawing on the ideas of Clifford Geertz when she says of religion, 'It is part of culture, if not indeed the defining element of a given culture; it offers rich material which lends itself to an analysis in terms of texts and codes'.³² The group of texts I have selected for study were written by men active in practising and analysing their religion. Works from four writers form the basis of substantive chapter-studies: Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams* (Chapter 2), Pausanias' *Guide to Greece* (Chapter 3), works from Plutarch's *Moralia*, the Pythian dialogues *On the Pythian Oracles* and *Oracles in Decline*, and his interpretation of the myth of the Egyptian gods, *Isis and Osiris* (Chapter 4), and Heliodoros' *An Ethiopian Story* (Chapter 5). There are three prime reasons for the choice of these particular texts.

First, all four men write about religious thought, experience and practice: three of them are explicitly contemporary in their focus, whilst the fourth, Heliodoros, sets his story in the Greek world of the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. How Heliodoros imagines a religious world will be of interest in comparison to the contemporary world portrayed by Artemidoros, Pausanias and Plutarch. Secondly, I especially sought out lengthy, focused texts where my themes of gender and the divine were treated in detail, wanting not to raid writings for snippets of information, but to see how to see the way entire texts worked. For this reason, other interesting texts of the period proved on investigation to be unsuitable for my aims, texts such as Aelius Aristides' *Sacred Tales*, Lucian's *The Syrian Goddess*, *Peregrinos*, *Alexander the False Prophet*, *On Sacrifices*, *Assembly of the Gods*, *Dialogues of the Gods*, *Judgement of the Goddesses*. Finally, my texts all come from very different genres: Artemidoros' handbook, Pausanias' travel writing, Plutarch's philosophical investigations, Heliodoros' novel. The advantage of this is that any constants in the findings of my four chapters are likely to reflect the wider world of which the texts

³² Cameron (ed.), *History as Text*, p. 5.

are part, not simply the conventions of a particular genre. Importantly, too, studying gender and the divine cuts across the frequently unhelpful categorization of classical texts as either literary or historical: the focus of gender encourages historical rather than antiquarian or simply literary questions.

Key questions of method which must be addressed are these: How can a text be read in an historically valuable manner? How can a number of texts be analysed together? There has, of course, been a longstanding answer to this question, memorably identified and criticized by R. G. Collingwood over fifty years ago as 'scissors-and-paste' history.³³ In Collingwood's account, the (male) historian who practises this method decides on his subject and goes in search of authorities containing relevant statements.³⁴

Having found in such a statement something relevant to his purpose, the historian excerpts it and incorporates it, translated if necessary and recast into what he considers a suitable style, in his own history. As a rule, where he has many statements to draw upon, he will find that one of them tells him what another does not; so both or all of them will be incorporated. Sometimes he will find that one of them contradicts another; then, unless he can find a way of reconciling them, he must decide to leave one out; and this, if he is conscientious, will involve him in a critical consideration of the contradictory authorities' relative degree of trustworthiness. And sometimes one of them, or possibly even all of them, will tell him a story which he simply cannot believe, a story characteristic, perhaps, of the superstitions or prejudices of the author's time or the circle in which he lived, but not credible to a more enlightened age, and therefore to be omitted.

'Scissors-and-paste' has been a favourite method in classical scholarship; as Ruth Padel neatly comments, 'Classics is traditionally empirical and empiricist'.³⁵ Classical scholars have used texts to create the intellectual equivalent of (to vary Collingwood's metaphor a little) a patchwork quilt. Scraps gleaned from different parts of a text, and from different texts, are carefully joined together to make a pleasing whole. The resulting pattern is one the quilter-historian has made: the choice of materials reflects the selector's tastes and interests. But whilst onlookers can admire the craftsmanship of the finished product, they have no sense of where these scraps have come from and the part they played in their original setting.

The 'big picture' so composed by the empiricist historian has undoubted attractions. The best practitioners of this method are consummate story-tellers. They weave together their chosen pieces of information into an imaginative, entertaining and compelling narrative. Peter Brown is an example of this approach at its best. The descriptive terms which Mary Beard uses in her review of his *The Body and Society* are telling: the book is 'a glittering *mosaic* of sophistication, insight and

³³ R. G. Collingwood discusses 'scissors-and-paste' history in *The Idea of History* (revised edition with additional material and introduction by Jan van der Dussen, Oxford, 1993), pp. 257-66 and pp. 274-82, where he develops ideas alluded to more briefly in *An Autobiography* (Oxford, 1939), pp. 79-81.

³⁴ Collingwood, *The Idea of History*, p. 257.

³⁵ Padel, 'Between theory and fiction', p. 202.

scholarship' (my italics).³⁶ Brown is fully aware he provides a personal interpretation of his subject, and we can value his work because of its obvious sensitivity and perspicacity. Robin Lane Fox's *Pagans and Christians* can have a similarly mesmeric effect. But closer analysis of his methods gives cause for thought. Much of the strength of the book lies in the fascination of his material: Lane Fox has a talent for a good anecdote. Yet does the number of instances overwhelm us? Should we allow ourselves to be convinced by an accumulation of examples? We need more explicit interpretative argument, yet this is hard to achieve without a detailed sense of the textual context from which particular stories come.

In the hands of less skilled historians, the empirical method is deeply worrying. The texts I am studying have at times been misused as sources of 'factual' information, whilst the vital context for these 'facts' is ignored. It is not just that by ignoring the text as source for individual pieces of information we may not gain a complete understanding, but rather that we run a severe risk of gaining an understanding that is quite false. Mining texts for facts without concern for their textual context produces distortions and untruths, not fact. A text cannot be seen as an encyclopaedia, it is not fair game for factual rape and pillage. If we do not put the information a text can yield into its textual framework, then by default we put it into one of our own construction. This practice has been justified by claims of professional objectivity, of a lack of preconceptions, of a common-sense reading. But none of these conditions can exist. All readers have integral 'perceptual filters' (in Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood's terms), their own personal and cultural bias.

The first attempts to write about Greek texts of the first to third centuries A.D. in an historical fashion were begun over twenty years ago by Glen Bowersock and Christopher Jones. Bowersock's *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire*, for example, or Jones' *Plutarch and Rome*, were exciting in their exploration and crossing of the conventional boundaries set between history and literature.³⁷ The central argument of Jones' later *Culture and Society in Lucian* is a refutation of the traditional view of Lucian as a writer isolated from contemporary reality, and a demonstration that Lucian is a 'keen observer of the society and culture of his time'.³⁸ But one problem with these books is that whilst they talk a lot about texts, and whilst they see text as integrally related to productive context, they perform little explicit textual analysis. The contents of a sophist's work may be summarized and discussed, but the reader is allowed little direct contact with the sophist's actual words: the texts under discussion are not examined sufficiently. Ewen Bowie's criticisms of Bowersock's *Greek*

³⁶ Mary Beard, review in *J.R.S.* 81 (1991), p. 180.

³⁷ Glen W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1969); Christopher P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford, 1971) and *The Roman World of Dio Chrysostom* (Harvard, 1978).

³⁸ Christopher P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1986), p. v.

Sophists in the Roman Empire stem from dissatisfaction with the treatment the sophists receive.³⁹ His conclusion, that the Second Sophistic is of more importance in Greek literature than in Roman history, is a strong attempt to counterbalance what he sees as Bowersock's overly historical rather than literary interpretation of the sophists and their activities. This unfortunate division of *either* literary *or* historical interpretation could in part be resolved by concentrating first on the texts themselves.

How we should seek to read the texts is a difficult, and interesting, question. Thoughtful methods have been identified in particular by Nicole Loraux, *Façons tragiques de tuer une femme*, and Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, '*Reading*' *Greek Culture*.⁴⁰ Sourvinou-Inwood, for example, is very concerned with how to read a text without imposing more of our own cultural values and preconceived ideas than is avoidable. In her first chapter she proposes a method for neutrality, which she operates through the book.⁴¹ The value these scholars ascribe to their texts is important. Texts should not be patronized and corrected, they must not be judged by a commentator's own standards. To make a qualitative judgement on a text can be to take a very short road to nowhere. If a text is thought to be 'inaccurate' or in a 'low style', then enquiry effectively ceases. But if a text can be valued as a piece of ancient evidence, and for the perceptions it can convey, then use of the text can continue. Texts reveal perspective, both how the writer perceives his subject matter and often the extent to which he believes his readers share his assumptions too. It is essential to appreciate the existence of perspective within a text, and the powerful entry point this can constitute in the recovery of a culture. By looking for the perspectives with which an author writes we can find information beyond that which he is consciously giving us. The way a particular author writes about things opens up his thought world: how things are perceived to be is as important as any objective existence they might have. As Henk Versnel comments, 'we are learning in recent decades that perceptions as objects of historical research are at least as valuable as facts, assuming for the moment that we are able to define what "facts" are'.⁴² The influence of perceptions is potentially vast, particularly in the arenas of gender and the divine. As Pauline Schmitt Pantel writes, 'The male perception of the female becomes the basis of a symbolic code that permeates the entire culture'.⁴³ Gender and religion are above all the products of what and how people think. Investigating textual perspective can provide, for example, a second-century framework of approach to second-century concepts of gender and religion.

³⁹ Ewen Bowie, 'The importance of sophists', *Y.C.S.* 27 (1982), p. 53.

⁴⁰ Nicole Loraux, *Façons tragiques de tuer une femme* (Paris, 1985).

⁴¹ Sourvinou-Inwood, '*Reading*' *Greek Culture*, ch. 1, and *passim*.

⁴² Henk Versnel, *Ter Unus: Isis, Dionysos, Hermes, three studies in henotheism* (Leiden, 1990), p. 80.

⁴³ Schmitt Pantel (ed.), *A History of Women in the West*. 1, p. 6.

Reading an entire text is an important methodological principle. The significance of any one apparent 'fact' can be understood only in its textual location: then we might know why it is there, what weight it has in the overall picture. It is vital to analyse a text in its entirety, because then coherence or disjunctions discovered are valuable because of their one identifiable origin. They are certainties or confusions present in the writer's and/or his society's own way of thinking about things. They are not due to accidents of survival, where lost evidence distorts the picture. Nor are they due to the (un)conscious prejudices of a selector, picking items which create a consistent pattern. These are the advantages of not trying to mine facts from a text, of treating it as a whole.

My point is to emphasize the impossibility of being a historian without being a literary critic. Recent interest in the relationship of history and literature, originating more amongst literary critics than historians, has yielded Averil Cameron's important and encouraging collection of essays, *History as Text*. For Cameron, it is refreshingly self-evident that 'literature and history must go together'.⁴⁴ The connection between the two is essential, yet that connection is not made as frequently as it should be in ancient history. Fergus Millar's article, 'The World of the *Golden Ass*', is an archetypal example of a traditional historian's approach to a 'literary' text.⁴⁵ Millar's reasoning is at first glance temptingly straightforward; he wants to treat the text as a mirror of second-century A.D. Greek life. He puts forward an alleged 'realism of tone' to justify his argument that the text contains 'a mass of vivid, concrete and realistic detail, on physical objects, houses, social structure, economic relations, the political framework of the local communities, and the wider political framework of the Empire'.⁴⁶ Millar therefore makes confident deductions. For example, listing journeys made by different characters at different points in the narrative he says, 'Travel between different regions of the Empire is simply presumed as an aspect of the wider context'.⁴⁷ But this method has hidden dangers. Apuleius' is a very subtle text, a Greek story told in Latin. In it is a fabulous, fantastic mingling of the credible and the incredible: how are we to distinguish between the two, how much indeed does Apuleius intend us to? The literary conventions governing representation in such a text as Apuleius' are of supreme importance. Convention may dictate some of the details Millar loves: the text need not be a window through which we can look at reality. In their joint article, 'The romance of the novel', Ewen Bowie and Stephen Harrison differ in their interpretation of apparent *Realien* in the Greek novels.⁴⁸ For Bowie, 'at least the novels yield a presentation of the countryside as alien and

⁴⁴ Cameron (ed.), *History as Text*, p. 10.

⁴⁵ Fergus Millar, 'The world of the *Golden Ass*', *J.R.S.* 71 (1981), pp. 63-75.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 63, 66.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 66.

⁴⁸ Ewen Bowie and Stephen Harrison, 'The romance of the novel', *J.R.S.* 83 (1993), pp. 159-78.

(Longus apart) hostile'.⁴⁹ Whereas for Harrison, 'one might argue, for example, that the presence of bandits has at least as much to do with the literary tradition of the Greek novel or parody of historiography ... as with the real breakdown of law and order'.⁵⁰ As I discuss below, the relation of text to cultural context is a complex question requiring considered argument not assumption.

So the answer to my first key question of method, which asked how to read a text in an historically valuable manner, is to concentrate ^{an} an author's perspective on his material, the structure and arguments (or 'rhetoric') of his text. The whole text is important, not the nuggets of perceived 'fact' it might be thought to contain. My second methodological question focused on how my chosen texts can be analysed together as a group. They are linked loosely of course by their common subject matter of gender and the divine, by their geographical location in the Greek world, and their time-frame of the second and third centuries A.D. But this is not enough. There is an important theoretical issue at stake. The question of how a few chosen texts might relate to one another is part of the much wider problem of how texts relate to the context in which they were written and read.

Text and context have been at the heart of the methodologies for reading texts developed over the past few decades. There are now a number of models available for relating - or not relating - a written text to the material conditions, social structures and events that might be said to constitute its context. The arguments for each are often passionately made, stemming from their supporters' philosophy of history, and political commitment. To survey some of the current thinking, then.

New Criticism, originating with the study of poetry in southern America in the 1920s and going on to flourish as a mainstream critical school, puts forward the idea of autonomous literary history - a theory based on the formalist isolation of text from context. In his discussion of the movement, Terry Eagleton writes, 'A typical New Critical account of a poem offers a stringent investigation of its various "tensions", "paradoxes" and "ambivalences", showing how these are resolved and integrated by its solid structure'.⁵¹ One consequence of such exclusive concentration on the individual text is that there is no possibility of comparing texts for any features other than those of style. The New Critics' valuing of the dynamics of the individual text is important, but their emphasis on the autonomy and isolation of the text is unsatisfactory for an historian wanting to study social systems such as gender and religion, let alone cause and effect, a phenomenon's change through time, and so forth. Furthermore, as Stephen Greenblatt, a critic of Renaissance literature, rightly asserts, 'Works of art, however intensely marked by the creative intelligence and

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 166.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 172.

⁵¹ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: an introduction* (Oxford, 1983), p. 49.

private obsessions of individuals, are the products of collective negotiation and exchange'.⁵²

A rather different approach to the problem of text and context is offered by Post-structuralist theory. It is pithily encapsulated in Jacques Derrida's classic statement, 'Il n'y a pas de hors-text'. Everything, in other words, is a text. There *is* no text and context. As Lee Patterson comments in his endeavour to establish an historical understanding of medieval literature, 'For deconstruction the paradox of textual-historical relations - the text as at once constituted by and constituting history - can be resolved by collapsing both elements into textuality'.⁵³ But if everything can be understood as a text, still there seems to be a problem of how one text might relate to another. If we talk of 'inter-textuality', of what exactly does the 'inter' consist?

Further conceptualizing of text and context has developed through the assorted approaches which group together under the label of New Historicism. This movement began in the late 1970s in the field of Renaissance literature, with Stephen Greenblatt its chief protagonist (although he himself now prefers to see his work as establishing 'a poetics of culture').⁵⁴ The New Historicist approach has spread beyond its origins, and its insights have been incorporated into books on such disparate topics as sexual practice in Talmudic culture or the religious significance of food to medieval women.⁵⁵ Important influences upon New Historicists are the work of cultural anthropologists like Clifford Geertz, and the theories of discourse and culture developed by Michel Foucault. Unlike New Criticism, New Historicism argues that texts should be located in their cultural context: unlike Derridean post-structuralism, it acknowledges a difference between text and context. But how?

Louis Montrose, who also prefers the newer term of cultural poetics to describe his work, writes, 'In effect this project reorients the axis of inter-textuality, substituting for the diachronic text of an autonomous literary history the synchronic text of a cultural system. As the conjunction of terms in its title suggests, the interests and analytical techniques of "Cultural Poetics" are at once historicist and formalist; implicit in its project, though perhaps not yet adequately articulated or theorized, is a conviction that formal and historicist concerns are not opposed but rather are inseparable'.⁵⁶ The relationship between text and context is inter-textual here in the

⁵² Stephen J. Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations: the circulation of social energy in Renaissance England* (Oxford, 1988), p. vii.

⁵³ Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: the historical understanding of medieval literature* (Madison, 1987), p. 58.

⁵⁴ Stephen Greenblatt, 'Towards a poetics of culture', in H. Aram Veesser (ed.), *The New Historicism* (London, 1989), pp. 1-14.

⁵⁵ Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: reading sex in Talmudic culture* (Berkeley and London, 1993); Caroline Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: the religious significance of food to medieval women* (Berkeley and London, 1987). Both are volumes in a series entitled *The New Historicism: studies in cultural poetics*.

⁵⁶ Louis A. Montrose, 'Professing the Renaissance: the poetics and politics of culture', in Veesser (ed.), *The New Historicism*, p. 17.

sense of a relationship between literary texts and cultural texts. In Hayden White's analysis, New Historicists espouse 'a view of history as a sequence of integral "cultural systems" of which both literature and social institutions and practices are to be regarded as manifestations or expressions and the relations among which are to be regarded as mutually determining and determined'.⁵⁷ A defining characteristic of much New Historicist work is history through anecdote – an attempt 'to return to history via the marginal and the esoteric'.⁵⁸ The point is that a quirky literary anecdote can illuminate the much wider social practices of which it is a part – often by its marginality showing times of strain or change in the prevailing practice.⁵⁹

There are, then, different and conflicting theories of textuality currently being employed by critics. And the theories themselves are subject to change, New Historicism's elision into cultural poetics, for instance, or the rather differing descriptions given of their practice even by those who claim the same New Historicist label. Furthermore, the very textuality of history itself is highlighted, as Averil Cameron explores in her *History as Text*.⁶⁰

... it is increasingly recognised that history is after all a kind of literature, and that as such, it must be exposed to the problems of criticism and interpretation which are felt so keenly at the present time by literary critics. When they, like philosophers, are so pre-occupied with the relation or non-relation of texts to the world 'out there', history, which is felt in an obvious sense to have a peculiarly close relation to events and facts, must also take its place in the literary debate as one of the kinds of discourse most in need of interpretation and discussion. When literature, or in the language of some critics, rhetoric, is seen by some as essentially related to a real world ('secular' criticism) and by others as irrevocably self-referential (the 'hermetic' approach), the status of history-writing becomes a major issue, and history a critical subject for analysis.

I have taken the view that text and context are separate, whilst also inseparably interlinked – one must inform us about the other. Louis Montrose well expresses the dynamic relationship between text and context when he writes, 'Representations of the world in written discourse are engaged in constructing the world, in shaping the modalities of social reality, and in accommodating their writers, performers, readers, and audiences to multiple and shifting subject positions within the world they both constitute and inhabit'.⁶¹ One way in which text can be related to context is in the local conditions of its production and reception. Writing about English literature from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, Gillian Beer is keen to emphasize the importance of 'the hermeneutic circle of novel and first readers, the

⁵⁷ Hayden White, 'New Historicism: a comment', in Veese (ed.), *The New Historicism*, p. 298.

⁵⁸ So writes Michael S. Roth, in his introduction to numbers 2 and 3 of *New Literary History* 21 (1989-90), both dedicated to articles on New Historicism, p. 242.

⁵⁹ For a fuller explanation of the value of the marginal to New Historicism, see Hayden White, 'New Historicism: a comment', p. 301.

⁶⁰ Cameron (ed.), *History as Text*, p. 4.

⁶¹ Louis A. Montrose, 'Professing the Renaissance', p. 16.

complexity of whose relations is written into the work'.⁶² But the lack of direct evidence for the reception of my texts makes this particular relation of text to context impossible to follow through in detail.

Taking a New Historicist view that text and context are part of the same cultural system, it seems acceptable to study that cultural system through texts. My four chapter studies essentially concentrate on *intratextual* analysis, looking at how the connections between gender and the divine are represented in that text – a representation that forms part of the cultural system which is both in and beyond the text. Yet because text and context form part of the same cultural system, it is also methodologically permissible to locate a text with regard to other material outside the text. Finally, to return to the question of how to study my four chosen writers' texts together, it is possible to locate one text with regard to another because they are all constituents of, and constitute, the cultural systems of the Greek world of the second and third centuries A.D. But how much similarity and difference is there in these cultural systems in the understanding of gender and the divine? The choice of four different authors, and four generically different types of text, gives the best chance of answering this question.

⁶² Gillian Beer, *Arguing With The Past*, p. 4.

Chapter Two

The Power of Gender in Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams*

In the exciting pages of Artemidoros' dream book, the restrictive grasp of reality is loosened and a world of new possibilities expands. Here it is that a man may dream he wears his head backwards, eats the stars, and sails the sea in the bowl of a tripod.¹ The series of dreams 'about difference', *περὶ ἀλλοιώσεως*, may not be the most bizarre in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, but arguably they are some of the most interesting. Writing in the late second century A.D., Artemidoros interprets the consequences of men dreaming that they become women, and women that they become men.²

If a man dreams he changes into a woman, the consequences are good for a poor man or a slave. The one will have someone to care for him, as a woman does, and the other's life as a slave will be less difficult. For women's work is lighter. But the consequences are bad for a rich man, especially if he is involved in politics, since women usually stay at home. Therefore the dream indicates that the dreamer will be stripped of all his public authority. For gymnasts, it signifies sickness. For women are weaker than men.

If a woman dreams she changes into a man, if she is unmarried she will marry and if she is childless she will give birth to a male child, and in this way she will change into the nature of a man. But if the woman has both a husband and a son, she will live out her life as a widow. For a man needs a woman, and not a man. The dream signifies greater servitude for a female slave; but it is auspicious for a prostitute. For the former will endure her labours, for the most part, like a man; the latter will always be in demand.

These sex-change dreams provide striking evidence of perceptions of gender in Artemidoros' text. A person's fortunes in real life are predicted by Artemidoros according to his or her sex: dreaming of changing from male to female or *vice versa* radically alters one's lot in life. In these dreams 'woman' connotes physical weakness, lighter work, staying at home, being cared for, whilst 'man' represents physical strength and harder work, with political and public responsibility for the rich.³ Particular characteristics and roles are ascribed to being male and female.

These transformation dreams show very clearly that the male/female ordering of society is basic to Artemidoros' thinking. It is noticeable that the pattern of relationship between male and female is the pattern on which all other relationships

¹ 1.36, p. 45.14; 2.36, p. 165.19; 5.21, p. 306.11. References to the text are made by book and chapter, with the page and line number from the edition of Roger A. Pack (Leipzig, 1963); line numbers indicate the beginning of the passage under discussion. Translations are adapted from Robert J. White, *The Interpretation of Dreams: Oneirocritica by Artemidorus* (Park Ridge, 1975).

² 1.50, p. 56.4

³ These themes are pursued elsewhere in the text. For example, an athlete dreamt he had given birth to his own child and was nursing it; he suffered defeat and retired from his sport. Artemidoros explains this was because he was performing the functions of a woman rather than a man. 5.45, p. 311.25.

are predicated. Being rich or poor, strong or weak, free or enslaved, young or old can all be represented in terms of being male or female. Poor men and slaves dreaming of becoming women will be looked after like a woman; rich men will lose their public duties outside the house; athletes will lose their strength. Such is the power of gender that the sets of values attached to female and male can be used to denote all other social conditions – wealth and poverty, freedom and slavery, youth and age, strength and weakness. Male and female are vital for signifying meaning in Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams*.

In rather a novel way, these sex-change dreams reveal Artemidoros using gender in his system of dream interpretation, and giving it a central role. They hold out the promise that Artemidoros' dream book will be a good source for investigating the gender identities he attributes to men and women. It should be possible to see how male and female gender identities relate to one another, that is, what structures of power connect them. In the first section of this chapter, I look at how, as a dream interpreter and religious expert, Artemidoros specialized in making connections between dreams and real life: the *Interpretation of Dreams* is ostensibly a text book for his contemporaries to use in predicting their future lives. Section II considers Artemidoros' methods for interpreting dreams, and develops the argument that his dream book reflects the perspectives and concerns of his wider society. I will be prioritizing Artemidoros' presentation of the gods and examining patterns of gender and power on the divine plane (section III), before following through the implications of his religious models for the social construction of human gender (section IV).

The range of existing scholarly approaches to the *Interpretation of Dreams* varies. A good proportion of Artemidoros' earlier commentators have been content to treat the text in methodologically rather primitive fashion. They have raided the text for 'facts' of life in the second century A.D., in Artemidoros' references to trade, travel, city politics, social status. Ramsey MacMullen, for instance, takes very much this approach in his attempt to write social history from astrological works, combining 'facts' from the *Interpretation of Dreams* with those from a number of other texts.⁴ This is his way of trying to build up a picture of life in Artemidoros' day. But individual elements in Artemidoros' text only really acquire meaning in their full context as parts of his overall system of dream interpretation. As early as 1928, Siegfried Laukamm collected together data about women, marriage, religion, in his article 'Das Sittenbild des Artemidor von Ephesus', but he lacks an interpretative

⁴ Ramsey MacMullen, 'Social history in astrology', *Ancient Society* 2 (1971), pp. 105-16. More sophisticated articles, although with the same main focus of interest, have been written by Jacques Annequin, 'L'onirocritique chez Artémidore', *Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne* 13 (1987), pp. 76-113; István Hahn, *Traumdeutung und gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit: Artemidorus Daldianus als sozialgeschichtliche Quelle*, *Xenia* 27 (Konstanz, 1992); Arthur J. Pomeroy, 'Status and status-concern in the Greco-Roman dream-books', *Ancient Society* 22 (1991), pp. 51-74.

framework for his findings: in contrast I would prefer to see 'facts' about men and women in the context of the role male and female gender identities are made to play in Artemidoros' interpretative system.⁵ The text has received sophisticated attention from writers on the history of sexuality in the ancient world, such as Michel Foucault and Jack Winkler, and the analysis of this chapter draws on their perceptions.⁶ Simon Price has rightly argued the need to ensure that an inappropriate Freudian perspective does not misjudge Artemidoros' methods and purposes as a dream interpreter.⁷ The only writer who as yet has explicitly addressed questions of gender within the *Interpretation of Dreams* is Suzanne MacAlister, and to some extent our findings coincide, but I will study gender in the context of religion which perhaps surprisingly - she does not.⁸

I. Artemidoros and his text

Artemidoros lived and wrote as a professional dream interpreter. Why should he have devoted his energies to interpreting dreams? For Artemidoros, the importance of dreams was their ability to foretell the future, the same importance they had held for earlier Greeks from Homer onwards, and for other societies which have left the very earliest written records (tablets from Mesopotamia, papyri from Egypt, texts from the Semitic tradition). Freud's interest in dreams as a revelation of the unconscious self was not theirs. But exactly how dreams predicted the future was a moot point. In the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. dreams were understood and interpreted differently by Herodotos and the tragedians, by Plato and the Stoics. And the debate continued. So by the second century A.D. Artemidoros has to be seen in context as an heir to a long, complex and conflicting tradition of dream interpretation.

Early and emphatically in his own dream book, Artemidoros distinguishes between different types of dream, and declares a specialized interest. He is uninterested in what he terms an ἐνύπνιον, a dream which reflects the present mental or physical state of the dreamer.⁹ Instead he favours an ὄνειρος, a dream he describes as one that calls the dreamer's attention to a prediction of future events. Whereas an

⁵ Siegfried Laukamm, 'Das Sittenbild des Artemidor von Ephesus', *ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ* 3 (1928), pp. 32-71: material on women (pp. 40, 46-7), on marriage (pp. 51-2), on children (p. 53), and a whole section on religion (section V).

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self* (Eng. trans. Robert Hurley, Harmondsworth, 1988), chs. 1-3; Jack Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: the anthropology of sex and gender in ancient Greece* (New York and London, 1990).

⁷ Simon Price, 'The future of dreams: from Freud to Artemidorus', *Past and Present* 113 (1986), pp. 3-37.

⁸ Suzanne MacAlister, 'Gender as sign and symbolism in Artemidoros' *Oneirokritika: social aspirations and anxieties*', *Helios* 19 (1992), pp. 140-60.

⁹ I.1, p. 3.13

ἐνύπνιον has no life once it is over, an ὄνειρος awakens and excites the ψυχή, 'soul', leading it into active undertakings.¹⁰ However, a merely predictive dream is not enough. For someone to dream of shipwreck and then to experience one is of no (technical) interest to Artemidoros.¹¹ Rather than on these direct 'theorematic' dreams, he concentrates on 'allegorical dreams, where one thing is signified by means of another', ἀλληγορικοὶ δὲ οἱ δι' ἄλλων ἄλλα σημαίνοντες.¹² Why is this so? The literal significance of allegorical dreams is explained in his next clause, ἀνισσομένης ἐν αὐτοῖς φυσικῶς τι [καὶ] τῆς ψυχῆς: in such dreams is found 'the meeting point of soul and body', although Artemidoros reserves judgement on whether dreams are god-sent or not.¹³ And such predictive, allegorical dreams require interpretation.

The *Interpretation of Dreams* is intended as a text book, a guide to dream interpretation: it is a serious piece of writing, highly self-aware. In it, Artemidoros sets out to explain and demonstrate his system of dream interpretation. Of his five books, the first three he dedicates to Cassius Maximus (generally believed to be the eminent orator, Maximus of Tyre). The penetrating insight with which Artemidoros credits Cassius Maximus is used to validate his interpretative system. 'You, because of your wisdom and extraordinary intelligence ... will be able to decide without any hesitation whether each of my statements is right or wrong.'¹⁴ There is no doubt that Artemidoros held himself in high regard as an expert in the field of dream interpretation. He admonishes, whatever lawyers say about law, doctors about medicine, or prophets about prophecy, 'must be accepted as the advice of an expert', ταῦτα ὡσπερὲν κατορθούντων ἐν ταῖς τέχναις διαλάμβανε.¹⁵ In an effort to make his system as comprehensive as possible Artemidoros adds a third book, the Φιλαλήθης, *Truth-lover*, or Ἐνόδιος, *By the Wayside*, to his original plan of two.¹⁶ As the beginning of book three makes clear, the *Interpretation of Dreams* is ambitiously intended to be the very last word in dream criticism. 'I have included separately, autonomously, and in chapters that are somewhat loose and disconnected all the material that was previously omitted, so that no one will have any excuse or

¹⁰ 1.1, p. 4.14

¹¹ 1.2, p. 4.22

¹² 1.2, p. 5.9

¹³ He calls dreams θεόπεμπα, 1.6, p. 16.3, in the sense that everything unforeseen is called 'god-sent', going on to explain, 'I do not, like Aristotle, inquire as to whether the cause of our dreaming is outside of us and comes from the gods or whether it is motivated by something within, which disposes the soul in a certain way and causes a natural event to happen to it'.

¹⁴ 2. 70, p. 202.22, also 3. *praef.*, p. 204.1.

¹⁵ 4.33, p. 266.16. Price, 'The future of dreams', p. 28, points out that Artemidoros' work should be compared with the extensive scientific investigations of his time, such as Ptolemy's observation of over one thousand stars and Galen's dissections of the digestive and nervous systems.

¹⁶ 3.28, p. 216.9

reason to compose a work of this kind.¹⁷ Books four and five are dedicated to Artemidoros' son, also Artemidoros, 'so that you will be sufficiently equipped if you are called on simply to interpret, and also that you will never be at a loss when it comes to answering the sceptics'.¹⁸

How does Artemidoros present and justify his system of dream interpretation? He makes two promises to his readers: first, he will validate divination, based on his personal experience and proof from the fulfilment of genuine dreams, putting the practice beyond criticism; secondly, he will provide an accurate system of forecast for those seeking reliable prophecy.¹⁹ Artemidoros opens his *Interpretation of Dreams* with a statement that is at once an apology for the delay in writing this treatise and a vindication of its worth. He has been 'overwhelmed by the vast amount of research involved in the work and by the abundance of material'.²⁰ His method is straightforward: by recording people's dreams and their outcomes in sufficient quantity, he thinks he can deduce how a dream predicts that outcome. With some pride, he records that, 'I have consorted for many years with the much-despised diviners of the marketplace. ... Throughout the cities of Greece and at great religious gatherings in that country, in Asia, in Italy and in the largest and most populous of the islands, I have patiently listened to old dreams and their consequences'.²¹ Over and again, he offers the criterion of his personal experience by which he means that he himself has heard as true all the dreams he collects as the guarantee of the truth of his text. 'My writing is based on personal experience. I myself have observed on each occasion how these dreams have come true.'²² In his insistence on experience, Artemidoros seems to follow established Empiricist methodological practice. Everything, he reiterates, has been the result of personal experience, since he has not done anything else, but always devoted himself νύκτωρ καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν, 'night and day', to the study of dream interpretation.²³ He emphasizes that he has been at pains

¹⁷ 3. *praef.*, p. 204.12. Can the fact that this is the only surviving piece of dream criticism of the many written in antiquity indicate the success of his endeavour?

¹⁸ 4. *praef.*, p. 237.22. Artemidoros goes on to say books four and five are for his son's eyes only, intended to make him a dream interpreter superior to anyone else. But they survive with the rest of the work is what Artemidoros has to say a sort of double bluff, really desiring publicity rather than secrecy for his very best methods of dream interpretation?

¹⁹ 1. *praef.*, p. 1.13

²⁰ 1. *praef.*, p. 4.22. Artemidoros adduces personal experience and the proof furnished by the actual fulfilment of dreams to hold the ground against all scorners of divination, 1. *praef.*, p. 1.17.

²¹ 1. *praef.*, p. 2.17

²² 2.32, p. 155.21

²³ 2.70, p. 202.20. The relationship between Artemidoros and Empiricist methodology is interesting. The Empiricists were rigorous in accepting knowledge *only* from repeated observation. As Heinrich von Staden concludes, 'This is all that this πείρα represents: the *ad hoc* "trying out" of similars, without any attempt at understanding', 'Experiment and experience in Hellenistic medicine', *B.I.C.S.* 22 (1975), p. 192. But Artemidoros diverges from strict Empirical methodology in his willingness to use his personal observations to form a *system* of dream interpretation: the Empiricists did not agree with forming hypotheses or looking for causal explanations (although they did tolerate some reasoning by the process of analogy, a method of which Artemidoros makes great use). For the Empiricists, see K. Deichgräber, *Die griechische Empirikerschule* (second edition, Berlin, 1965).

to obtain every book on the interpretation of dreams, and points out that his own theories are up-to-date, drawing contrasts with works from Homer through to more recent treatises, which he often criticizes – such as those of Geminus of Tyre, Demetrius of Phalerum, and Artemon of Miletus.²⁴

As a dream interpreter Artemidoros was a religious expert. The religious aspect to the *Interpretation of Dreams* has not been understood or emphasized sufficiently. Certainly, the trade of the dream interpreters was not highly regarded: Artemidoros himself describes the 'much-despised diviners of the marketplace', although he rejects the opinion of people who disparage them.²⁵ As Simon Price reminds us, 'dream interpretation was marginal to Greek prediction. Public actions were not officially determined by it and, with the exception of priests of Asclepius interpreting dreams about cures for diseases, dream interpreters were not public officials.'²⁶ But this is no reason to deny the religiosity of the *Interpretation of Dreams*, or Artemidoros' own religious role. Louis Robert's characterization of him as 'le religieux Artémidore' is surely right.²⁷ Artemidoros draws several significant parallels between dream interpretation and sacrificial practice. In judging a dream, the practice of sacrifice diviners should act as a guide, since they know how each individual sign fits into the whole, and base their judgements as much on the total sum of the signs as on each individual one.²⁸ The activities of the prophet are described in terms similar to Artemidoros' own practice. A prophet acts as a guide, like a helmsman or astronomer; he is experienced in many areas and takes on the anxieties of people who come to him for advice.²⁹ Artemidoros is aligning himself with two central religious activities.

Important evidence for Artemidoros' religious allegiance is his explicit acknowledgement of Apollo 'Mystes' of his mother's home town, Daldis, in Asia Minor, as his inspiration.³⁰ Artemidoros himself comes from Ephesus and, he says, he has often written under this name, but now uses the name 'of Daldis' to give glory to an insignificant Lydian town in thanks for his up-bringing. But perhaps it is not unfair to note that Daldis also allows him to claim a useful close association with Apollo, god of prophecy; Ephesus' city deity was of course Artemis. The end of the

²⁴ 1. *praef.*, p. 2.11; 2.44, p. 179.13

²⁵ 1. *praef.*, p. 2.11

²⁶ Price, 'The future of dreams', p. 30. The Greek tradition of medical dreams is investigated by Steven M. Oberhelman, 'Dreams in Graeco-Roman medicine', *A.N.R.W.* II.37.1 (1993), pp. 121-56.

²⁷ Louis Robert, 'Retour à Magnésie avec Artémidore', *Documents d'Asie Mineure*, *B.C.H.* 102 (1978), p. 543.

²⁸ 3.66, p. 235.3. The same high standards of professional behaviour apply, 1.12, p. 20.22, to a dream interpreter as to someone who reads a sacrifice. When Artemidoros counsels on how to respond to incomplete dreams, he likens the interpreter to οἱ θύραι, 'sacrificers'; just as sacrificers admit that they cannot interpret ambiguous signs, rather than lie and say that they are untrue, so the dream interpreter should not comment on things he cannot comprehend accurately.

²⁹ 1.26, p. 33.14; 3.21, p. 212. 16.

³⁰ 3. 66, p. 235.13

second book makes it clear that the writing of the *Interpretation of Dreams* represents an act of religious obedience. 'Apollo has encouraged me in the past and now ... he clearly presides over my work and has all but commanded me (μονονουχὶ κελεύσαντι) to compose this work.'³¹ So Artemidoros operates within a firm religious view of the world and the influence of humans on gods, and this is the framework into which his perceptions of gender and power need to be fitted.

Artemidoros makes large claims for his dream book. He says that he writes περὶ πάντων τῶν περὶ ἄνθρωπον κοινῶν τε καὶ ἐν χρήσει ὄντων, 'about the universal condition and the customs of mankind'.³² Certainly in constructing his interpretational system, Artemidoros focuses on the individual. Simon Price observes that 'unlike the Freudian sex-based model of the personality, Artemidoros presupposes that the social role of the dreamer was basic'.³³ Artemidoros identifies six elements in a dreamer's predictive profile – identity, occupation, birth, financial status, health and age.³⁴ The same dream can have different meanings according to its recipient's standing in these areas. In the text, therefore, there are references to: people who are soldiers, sailors, housewives, athletes, city officials, prostitutes; of high or humble birth; rich, poor; well, ill; old, young. Books four and five are presented almost in the form of case-notes, with the minimum of detail and the large number of named individuals adding a further note of veracity. So many examples are there and of such scope that no less than Artemidoros' most recent editor, Roger Pack, describes reading the *Interpretation of Dreams* as 'actually a somewhat penitential exercise', and finds distasteful what he calls the 'rather sordid world' of the text.³⁵ But Artemidoros' claim to universality needs at least some geographical qualification. His text is centred in his home region of urban western Turkey, with its essentially Greek cultural base. He is closely connected with Lydia and its customs. As Louis Robert notes, 'Les cultes sont l'objet de son attention et de sa ferveur'.³⁶ For instance, Artemidoros gives Apollo of Daldis his local title of Mystes, in acknowledging him as inspiration for the work.³⁷ In Asia Minor, the places Artemidoros mentions are Daldis, Ephesus, Smyrna, Perge in Pamphylia, Laodicea, Miletus and Pergamon. But he has also ventured further abroad, in Greece, to Cyllene, Corinth and Olympia; in Italy, to Rome. Artemidoros and his text are fully anchored in their cultural context of the eastern Roman empire.

Artemidoros' claim to cover the *universal* condition and custom of mankind already has to be qualified to mean the eastern Roman empire. It also has to be

³¹ 2.70, p. 203.10. Artemidoros himself was born in Ephesus, 3.66, p. 235.13-22.

³² 2. *prae*f., p. 100.4

³³ Price, 'The future of dreams', p. 15.

³⁴ 1.9, p. 18.16

³⁵ Roger Pack, 'Artemidoros and his waking world', *T.A.P.A.* 86 (1955), pp. 288, 282.

³⁶ L. Robert, 'Retour à Magnésie avec Artémidore', p. 540.

³⁷ 2.70, p. 203.11

qualified in terms of who his dreamers are. Most of the dreams Artemidoros records are dreamt by men – men's dreams are found in their hundreds, women's merely in their tens.³⁸ The consequences of this are important. First, the concerns these dreams exhibit are overwhelmingly those of men. When women occur in these dreams and their interpretation, they will be viewed from the perspective, the interests, of the male dreamer. And then all the dreams – men's and women's – are interpreted by a male interpreter. So gender relations are unavoidably presented from a male perspective.

Artemidoros himself places great emphasis on the system he devises to allow prediction from dreams: it is the *raison d' être* of the *Interpretation of Dreams*. What he feels to be the proven and comprehensive nature of his system allows him to claim that his work is one of universal application, useful not only for the present generation but for many to come.³⁹ Κόσμος, 'order', is a term that rings through Artemidoros' text; for example, the ἐνύπνιον/ὄνειρος contrast is introduced immediately so that the work should not appear ἄκοσμος, 'without order'. Order and clarity are priorities. The interpretation provided is intended to be precise and rational. In the preface to his second book, Artemidoros asks Cassius Maximus to pay attention not to his style, which is inferior to the orator's own, but 'to the precision of the interpretation', τῷ ἀκριβεῖ τῶν κρίσεων.⁴⁰ The reasoning is to be recognized as 'normal and logical', ὀρθῶς καὶ κατὰ λόγον.⁴¹ In instructing his son and other interested parties on how to predict the outcome of the few dreams not covered by his text book, Artemidoros commends the use of analogy.⁴² This process of reasoning κατὰ τὸ ὅμοιον, 'from parallel cases already given', will only work in a consistent and logically connected system, and that is what Artemidoros thinks he has developed.

Superficially Artemidoros' equivalences look simple; x in a dream equals y in real life. But why does x equal y? The equation depends on a complex associative structure. Jacques Annequin comments, 'Nous sommes donc bien devant "un ouvrage de méthode" ... et cette méthode de lecture doit être connue de ceux qui veulent utiliser le *corpus* des inscriptions d' Artémidore.'⁴³ Annequin appreciates the need to get to grips with Artemidoros' interpretational structure, in order to discuss the appearance of slaves in the text, but he does not carry his analysis far enough. A

³⁸ Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire*, p. 39, lists the small number of women's dreams described: 1.16, 26, 28, 30, 41, 44, 56, 58, 76, 77; 2.3, 5-7, 18, 20, 30, 65; 3.16, 23, 32, 65; 4.59; 5.63, 80, 86.

³⁹ 1. *praef.*, p. 1.5

⁴⁰ 2. *praef.*, p. 100.13

⁴¹ 1.78, p. 90.17. Artemidoros admits it can be difficult to select one explanation from a confused collection of dream images, but the system creates its own internal logic; it is impossible for the significant elements in dreams to contradict one another if dreams foretell events that will inevitably take place, 3.66, p. 233.15.

⁴² 2.41, p. 177.12

⁴³ Annequin, 'L'onirocritique chez Artémidore', p. 81.

careful analysis of Artemidoros' interpretational system is essential. Comparisons may be drawn with Madeleine Henry's successful exegesis of the concept of the pornographic in Athenaeus' *Deipnosophistai*. She complains that almost no attention has been paid to Athenaeus' thought. 'Scholars have looked for cookery and other *Realien* but generally failed to find any unity of thought in his work.'⁴⁴ If we can get behind the connections between dreamt sign and signified reality then we can evaluate Artemidoros' own 'unity of thought'. That there is such a thought structure is indicated by Artemidoros' insistence on the logic of his system. In discerning Artemidoros' thought structure, we will understand his perspective on his material.

The direction in which to proceed is that unwisely rejected in Arthur Pomeroy's unremarkable article on status and status-concern (concentrating on slaves) in Graeco-Roman dream books. Of the *Interpretation of Dreams* he writes, 'I do not wish to trace the various methods of interpretation which tend to be based either on metonymies and metaphors, or on direct opposites. Such a "system" is clearly so general as to admit almost any possibility'.⁴⁵ But it is vital to understand how Artemidoros thinks his system works, to study rather than dismiss his linguistic interpretative methods. As Patricia Cox Miller warns in her short but careful analysis of Artemidoros' methods for interpreting dreams, their seeming simplicity is deceptive.⁴⁶ Seeing how Artemidoros' interpretative system works should allow us to evaluate his perspective on gender and its relation to power structures amongst gods and humans. Is it uniquely his system's, or does it reflect attitudes of his wider society? To relate text to context by some system analysis is crucial.

II. System analysis

Artemidoros' system of dream interpretation is founded upon the use of language; it is above all a verbal system. The special value of words can be demonstrated by some recurring techniques of translation between sign and signified. For instance, for Artemidoros, the number of letters in a name is significant. Sarapis can be considered a chthonic deity along with Pluto (Πλούτων) because both names contain seven letters.⁴⁷ Words with equal numerical values can be exchanged ('isopsephism'). For example, a dream of a weasel represents a treacherous woman

⁴⁴ Madeleine Henry, 'The edible woman: Athenaeus' concept of the pornographic', p. 250, in Amy Richlin (ed.), *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome* (New York and Oxford, 1992).

⁴⁵ Pomeroy, 'Status and status-concern in the Greco-Roman dream-books', pp. 61-2.

⁴⁶ Patricia Cox Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: studies in the imagination of a culture* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 86, 89, and in general her section entitled 'Artemidoros and the classification of dreams', pp. 77-91.

⁴⁷ 5.26, p. 307.11

(γαλῆ) and a law suit (δίκη), because γαλῆ is equal in numerical quantity to δίκη.⁴⁸ The precept of 'anagrammatical transposition', ὁ ἀναγραμματισμός, likewise plays with words, by moving syllables or omitting or adding letters in the name of a dreamed object (although Artemidoros advises that its use can be impressive but misleading).⁴⁹ These equivalences seem impenetrable if read in English translation, but it is important to understand their context; Greek numbers were represented by letters of the alphabet. From his use of numerical equivalences between words, it is noticeable that here Artemidoros thinks about words, language, in a culturally determined way. These devices show Artemidoros privileging the Greek language as an interpretative medium.

Metaphor is a bridge Artemidoros builds to cross between dream and reality. It is a quintessential linguistic device, and Artemidoros frequently accords it impressive explanatory power. The value of metaphor for Artemidoros is its derivation from similarities. As he explains, 'the interpretation of dreams is nothing other than the juxtaposition of similarities', καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ὄνειροκρισία ἢ ὁμοίου παράθεσις.⁵⁰ Some 'practice in this concept of similarities', εἰς δὲ τὸ γυμνάσιον τῆς τῶν ὁμοίων ἐπινοίας, is provided by Artemidoros in the dreams of seven pregnant women that they gave birth to a snake.⁵¹ In each case, the character of the woman influences the type of child she produces. The child of one became a hierophant: the snake takes part in sacred rites and the woman's husband was a priest. Another woman's child grew into an excellent prophet: a snake is sacred to Apollo, the god most versed in prophecy; the woman was a prophet's daughter.⁵² A further woman had a son who turned out wanton and undisciplined, and he committed adultery with most of the women of the city: the snake slips secretly through narrow holes and the woman was a common prostitute. Given that Artemidoros believes strongly in the value of metaphors, the important question to ask is what we can deduce from his use of them. There is much that is 'heuristically fruitful' in imagery.⁵³

⁴⁸ 3.28, p. 216.11. κήλη (hernia) and ζημία (injuries) also add to the same, 3.45, p. 223.7: γραῦς (old woman) and ἡ ἐκφορά (carrying out a corpse for burial) both total 704, 4.24, p. 259.7; the examples are numerous.

⁴⁹ 4.23, p. 258.19

⁵⁰ 2.25, p. 145.11. This dictum is made in summary of a section on trees, where certain types of trees indicate certain types of women. The laurel is similar to a rich wife because it is green, to a pretty wife because it is graceful; box trees, myrtles and rose laurels resemble wanton and indecent women (no reason given).

⁵¹ 4.67, p. 289.12

⁵² The status of both women here is noticeably defined through the occupation of their close male relatives.

⁵³ Geoffrey Lloyd, *The Revolutions of Wisdom: studies in the claims and practice of ancient Greek science* (Berkeley and London, 1987), p. 213. His ch. 4, 'Metaphor and the language of science' demonstrates the way imagery, analogy and myth are used by society to think with.

To take an example frequently used throughout the *Interpretation of Dreams*, agricultural metaphors are employed by Artemidoros in predicting the sexual lives of his clients. To till, sow, plant or plough in a dream is propitious for those who intend to marry, and for the childless. The field is a metaphor for a wife, seeds and plants for children, even to the detail of wheat for sons, barley for daughters and pulse for miscarriages.⁵⁴ Artemidoros' choice of imagery is heavily conventional. ἄρουρα, 'field', can be found as a metaphorical description of a woman receiving seeds and bearing fruit in authors from the sixth century B.C. onwards; Theognis, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Plato, for instance.⁵⁵ Ruth Padel notes that in general fifth-century imagery of women's bodies, fields and furrows play an important role, to the extent that Plato can parody common Athenian rhetorical images of the earth as mother in his *Menexenus*.⁵⁶ The plough is a good sign for marriage, the bearing of children and business.⁵⁷ The wife as a field to be ploughed is a concept deeply embedded in the quasi-technical language of Attic betrothal: referring to Athenian marriage contracts, Menander says a man takes a woman 'for the ploughing of legitimate children', παίδων ἐπ' ἀρότῳ γνησίων.⁵⁸

Metaphor is excellent for revealing perspectives, because it can, as Geoffrey Lloyd points out, create a similarity as well as show one'.⁵⁹ Since metaphor expresses the connections between one thing and another, it must derive from what is perceived to be an important element in the identity of both, in order to be meaningful. And metaphor, argues Ruth Padel, is the key to all Greek ideas of mind and self.⁶⁰ Artemidoros' use of these agricultural metaphors is interesting in revealing an important aspect of a woman's gendered identity. Gender is the perspective put on the facts of being male and female: the perspective of these metaphors is the link created between woman and field, their perceived common receptive fertility.

Can wider claims be made for Artemidoros' use of metaphor in his interpretational system? His choice of such *traditional* metaphors is important in acting as a control on the meaning of the text. We can judge whether his ideas are unique and original or whether they are conceived and developed in an existing tradition. The relationship between a discourse and its creative context is always difficult to determine, but here we begin to see that Artemidoros' associative thought patterns are those prominent and long endorsed in Greek culture.

⁵⁴ 1.51, p. 58.10

⁵⁵ Theognis 582; Aeschylus, *Seven against Thebes* 754; Sophocles, *Oedipus the King* 1257; Plato, *Laws* 839a, ἄρουρα θήλεια. Page duBois, *Sowing the Body: psychoanalysis and ancient representations of women* (Chicago, 1988) has plenty of examples in ch. 3, 'Field' and ch. 4, 'Furrow'.

⁵⁶ Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek images of the tragic self* (Princeton, 1992), p. 100.

⁵⁷ 2.24, p. 142.7

⁵⁸ Menander, *Dyskolos* 842. Similar phrases are used in Menander, *Cropped* 436, and in Lucian, *Timon* 17. Euripides, *Hypsipyle* fragment I iii 25 has τέκνων ἀρότοισιν.

⁵⁹ Lloyd, *The Revolutions of Wisdom*, p. 186.

⁶⁰ Padel, *In and Out of the Mind*, p. 9.

Assonance and alliteration often function as interpretative tools for Artemidoros. A simple equation he makes is that a dream of having one's hair cut by a barber is a good thing; *καρῆναι* 'to have one's hair cut' can be understood as *χαρῆναι* 'to rejoice' by substitution of a single letter.⁶¹ Some of these verbal sleights of tongue are explained in the text, others are not. An axe-head and shovel are said to signify a woman and her occupation; the occupation because a shovel draws things towards the user, a woman because of the sound of the name. Roger Pack suggests the play is on *γυνή*, woman or wife, and either *γένυς*, edge of an axe, or *ἀξίνη*, axe-head.⁶²

Double meanings of identical sounds are important. A dream of a well where none existed before is auspicious for a bachelor or man about to marry, signifying a wife and children. This is so because *νύμφη* means both nymph and young bride; nymphs live in wells, and like a wife, a well provides the household with the life-giving supplies it needs.⁶³ A writing tablet seen in a dream can signify a woman because it receives imprints (*τύπους*) of letters, and colloquially, children are called *τύπους* too.⁶⁴ A garden augurs well for brothel-keepers, because of the many seeds and seasonal nature of work in a garden; for women it means slander for indecent behaviour. The (unstated) reason is that *κῆπος* can indicate both a garden and any fertile region, including a woman's sexual parts.⁶⁵

This exploitation of similar sounds is found in many Greek writers. Depending on the context, 'pun' may not be helpful as a term in understanding these word plays. In comedy, one type of humour might reasonably be thought sufficient explanation of their presence. But in other circumstances, the similarities are not regarded as a joke, nor even as a coincidence; they are thought of as possessing real meaning. John Denniston draws out the connections between assonance, alliteration and philosophy.⁶⁶ Aeschylus can use assonance to enforce a moral lesson, for example, *πάθει μάθος*, 'experience teaches', *Agamemnon* 177. In the development of Heraclitus' philosophy, alliteration plays a noticeable part; 'greater deaths are allotted greater destinies' is expressed in strongly alliterative fashion, *μόροι μέζονες μέζονας μοίρας λαγχάνουσι*.⁶⁷ The word 'play' in these situations is serious and is

⁶¹ 1.22, p. 29.10

⁶² 2.24, p. 142.14, with Pack's note. There are numerous 'similar sounds' equivalences made throughout the *Interpretation of Dreams*, for example 1.80, p. 97.14; 2.5, p. 106.7; 2.12, p. 119.7, p. 120.1, p. 121.2; 3.35, p. 219.1; 5.53, p. 313.16.

⁶³ 2.27, p. 149.11

⁶⁴ 2.45, p. 179.19

⁶⁵ 4.11, p. 250.20. At Diogenes Laertius 2.116, Theodoros impudently asks Stilpo how he can tell whether Athena is a male or female god, ἢ ἀνασύρας αὐτῆς τὸν κῆπον ἐθεάσατο;

⁶⁶ J. D. Denniston, *Greek Prose Style* (Oxford, 1952), p. 124 ff.

⁶⁷ Heraclitus fr. 25, H. Diels, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, sixth edition by W. Kranz (Berlin, 1951).

considered to lend weight to what is being said. Assonance and alliteration were used ever more frequently by Hellenistic and later authors.⁶⁸

Artemidoros' use of these devices is a significant reflection of national linguistic habit. His processes of reasoning and understanding again fit into his wider context. Such methods also show the limit of the universality he claims for his system. They are a strong indication of how firmly culturally bound his analyses must be. Once the words are translated into any other language the similarity of sound is lost and with it the consequent link between sign and signified. Artemidoros' system of dream interpretation relies on Greek uses of language, and on the Greek language itself. It can only function effectively where the Greek language is the cultural common denominator of experience.

Artemidoros also exploits what he believes to be the etymology of words. It is clearly stated as an interpretational principle 'that many interpretations should be based on the true meanings of words', ὅτι πολλὰ ἐκ τῶν ἐτυμῶν τῶν ὀνομάτων κριτέον.⁶⁹ A particularly striking example of this is the meaning Artemidoros finds in the names of the gods. He derives Artemis from ἀρτεμές, Dionysos from διαινύειν, Nemesis from νεμεσᾶν and Demeter from ζείδωρος.⁷⁰ So Artemis keeps safe those who are afraid, Dionysos signifies rescue from difficulty because he brings everything to a conclusion, Nemesis hinders criminals because she stands in their way and Demeter has the same meaning as the earth, called wheat-giving. The truth or falsehood of an etymology, from a modern perspective, should not be the focus of our attention. The meanings words were thought to have is what is important.

Putting Artemidoros' derivations in context is to appreciate that proper names especially were a focus of keen Greek etymological interest. Many examples are to be found, from Homer, Hesiod and the tragic writers, and with increasing frequency. The Atticist lexicographers, creating the linguistic climate in Artemidoros' day, have this very agenda; Eirenaeus of Alexandria in the early second century A.D. held etymology and analogy to be the basis of language. Artemidoros' use of etymology reflects its wider practice, and belief in the efficacy of the same. His associative system demonstrably has the same basis and emphases of his cultural context.

The extent to which Artemidoros' system is dependent on established formulations is shown by the value he ascribes to sayings and quotations. Artemidoros testifies to the truth of the παλαιὰ διαίρεσις, the 'old saying', that the right arm symbolizes a son, father, friend or anyone else who in colloquial language

⁶⁸ As the Greek rhetoricians noted. Hermogenes of Tarsus (active late first – early second century A.D.), for example, noted in his discussion of seven ideal forms of style, that the effect of subtlety can be created through the use of two words which sound alike, *On Types of Style* 342.

⁶⁹ 4.80, p. 295.25, where the principle is proved from the dream related by Menecrates the grammarian. Other examples abound: 1.43, p. 50.13; 1.67, p. 74.6; 1.77, p. 85.16; 1.78, p. 90.2; 1.79, p. 92.3; 1.80, p. 97.14; 2.14, p. 128.17; 2.36, p. 161.2 etc.

⁷⁰ 2.35, p. 159.14; 2.37, p. 169.24; 2.37, p. 171.9; 2.39, p. 175.1.

can be called one's 'right hand man'.⁷¹ Pindar's equation, 'gold, like blazing fire', is accepted as a valid connection.⁷² Burning and shattering pillars of a house portend the death of the family's sons; Artemidoros quotes Euripides, στύλοι γὰρ οἴκων παῖδες εἰσὶν ἄρσενες.⁷³ The identification of a licentious woman with a boar is secured by Menander's comment, καπρᾶς, κακόδαιμον.⁷⁴ These literary allusions have been seen as Artemidoros' attempt to establish the scholarly validity of his work, to prove his own education and credibility rating. This is probably true; sometimes impressively obscure literary references do seem carefully cultivated for their own sake, while better known quotations lend the necessary 'tried-and-tested' quality to his narrative.⁷⁵ But it is not the whole truth.

Quotations and sayings in Artemidoros' system have an explicatory value beyond their potential to impress. The actual formulation of language has authority. For example, the power of (complete) hexameters or epigrams is shown by Artemidoros' belief that those heard spoken in sleep come true. One female slave dreamt another female slave quoted the Euripidean line to her, 'Roast, burn my flesh and eat your fill of me'. She provoked the anger of her mistress and suffered much. This was quite understandable to Artemidoros; the dream came true in a way corresponding to Euripides' story of Andromache.⁷⁶ If language as such has power, then the importance that we have attached to considering Artemidoros' language is reinforced. His use of language produces the ability to interpret dreams, predict the future. And the language Artemidoros considers to have analytic strength is that of Greek tradition.

It is therefore argued that this section on system analysis represents a significant new approach to the *Interpretation of Dreams*. I have diagnosed Artemidoros' interpretative system as being linguistically based, in its construction from the interchangeability of words and numbers, metaphor, similar sounding words, etymologies, sayings and quotations. All Artemidoros' linguistic devices are ones with long histories in the Greek world, and still in his time in current use. Artemidoros' work is contemporary, consciously of its time. Simon Price notes that it contains no apparent social or political anachronisms.⁷⁷ It is clear how deeply Artemidoros' system is rooted in its linguistic and cultural context. There is a good

⁷¹ 1.42, p. 48.10

⁷² 2.9, p. 112.3. Pindar, *Olympian Odes* 1.1-2.

⁷³ 2.10, p. 116.10. 'Male children are the pillars of the house', Euripides, *Iphigeneia in Tauris* 57.

⁷⁴ 2.12, p. 125.15. 'You are as wanton as a boar, you demon of a wife!', Menander fr. 917 (Kock), fr. 666 (Koerte).

⁷⁵ 2.44, p. 179.13. The little-known works of Heracleides of Pontus and Parthenias are alluded to at 4.63, p. 287.9.

⁷⁶ 4.59, p. 284.3. In fact the line comes from the *Syleus* not the *Andromache*. Another woman dreamt she heard two lines of Homer, *Iliad* 18. 20-1, on the death and despoilment of Patroclus; her husband also died, and the imperial treasury seized his money as Hector did Patroclus' armour.

⁷⁷ Price, 'The future of dreams', p. 27.

case for taking Artemidoros' perspective on his material to be much that of his surrounding society. The next two sections will examine the interconnections between gender, religion and society that exist in Artemidoros' perception and feasibly in his wider cultural context.

III. Gender and the gods

i. The gods as a group

The first place to look for the power of gender in the *Interpretation of Dreams* must be the gods.⁷⁸ If we want to see things as Artemidoros sees them, then we need to follow his line of sight, and for him the gods have foremost place in the order of things. Early in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, common customs are differentiated from particular ones.⁷⁹ The κοινὰ ἔθη, 'common customs', are listed first, with primary place given to the gods. 'To worship and honour the gods', θεοὺς σέβεσθαι καὶ τιμᾶν, is explained as a necessarily universal concern since there is no nation without a god, just as there is none without a ruler. Artemidoros recognizes that different people worship different gods, but states that 'all have the same point of reference', ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τῆν ἀναφορὰν ἔχουσι πάντες.⁸⁰ The gods head the list of the alleged *sine qua non* of human society; they are as much part of the natural order of things as the other common customs listed, raising children, yielding to women, being awake in the day, asleep at night, eating, resting, living indoors. Particular customs are ethnic customs: for example, amongst the Thracians, says Artemidoros, the well-born children are tattooed, whilst amongst the Getae, it is their slaves. This κοινὰ/ἴδια contrast forms part of the argument for the six elements of a dreamer's predictive profile noted in section I – identity, occupation, birth, financial status, health and age. A person is to be judged in these areas against the commonly agreed standards of society, and Artemidoros' definition of this society is begun first of all by the worship of the gods. The gods are an initial and unquestioned given for human life.

At the outset of his dedicated section on the gods, 2.34-44, Artemidoros does not hesitate to divide and categorize them into a well-defined hierarchy. At the top come the Olympian or aetherial gods, followed in descending order by the celestial,

⁷⁸ Rather than use the terms god and goddess, with their suggestion that the female is somehow calqued from the male, I prefer male god and female god, and similarly male priest and female priest.

⁷⁹ 1.8, p. 17.5

⁸⁰ 1.8, p. 17.5. At 4.2, p. 243.4, Artemidoros restates the same pattern. Mysteries, initiation rites, festal assemblies, national games, military service, agriculture, city settlement, marriage, the raising of children and the like have all been universally agreed, κοινῆ, but clothing, hairstyles, food preferences, daily activities are all personal choices, ἴδια.

the terrestrial, the sea and river gods, the chthonic gods.⁸¹ The first interpretation Artemidoros makes using this hierarchy is that dreaming of the Olympians is beneficial for very influential men and women, whilst the celestial gods are good for those of moderate means, and the terrestrial gods for the poor.⁸² The hierarchy amongst the gods corresponds to the hierarchy created in the human world by wealth, either its possession or lack thereof. The identification of the rich with the highest echelon gods, and the poor with the lower, means that Artemidoros is using a hierarchy of power amongst the gods to describe one amongst humans.

The links between religion, wealth and power are made many times. For example, Artemidoros treats each of the gods separately, albeit briefly. He describes the significance of Zeus first: a dream of him in his proper attire is auspicious for a king or a rich man.⁸³ Elsewhere, a dream of being struck by a thunderbolt portends no harm for the rich man who is about to wear gold ornaments as priest or magistrate.⁸⁴ Menander became wealthy and well-known as a result of a dream that foretold his becoming priest of Zeus.⁸⁵ The gods are themselves arranged in power relationships, and they are used to explicate power relationships in the human world.

At 2.69, there is a marvellously clear exposition of the trickle-down nature of authority in society, authority defined as those who 'must be believed and obeyed', πιστεύειν χρῆ καὶ πείθεσθαι.⁸⁶ First are the gods, the ultimate source of authority in Artemidoros' view. They are positioned at the top of an integrated and coherent league table of power. This is because, Artemidoros explains, the gods are incapable of lying. This reasoning is repeated elsewhere. The gods do not tell lies: they might speak in riddles, veil what they say in mystery, but only so that their hearers should think through what they say.⁸⁷

Then come priests, because they enjoy the same respect among men as do the gods; the reasoning has Homeric echoes.⁸⁸ Men's and women's dreams that predict the possibility of becoming a priest are always interpreted favourably by Artemidoros. For example, if a man dreams that he has become a god, it signifies he will become a priest or a prophet, for they receive the same respect as gods; if a rich

⁸¹ Too many to list completely, the gods in these categories are for example: Olympians, Zeus, Hera, Artemis, Apollo; celestials, Helios, Selene, the stars and clouds; terrestrials, Hekate, Pan, the Dioscuri, Dionysos, Hestia; sea and river gods, Poseidon, Amphitrite, Nereus; chthonic gods, Pluto, Persephone, Demeter, Kore (with Artemidoros interestingly listing Persephone and Kore separately).

⁸² 2.34, p. 158.14

⁸³ 2.35, p. 159.1

⁸⁴ 2.9, p. 112.3

⁸⁵ 4.49, p. 276.4

⁸⁶ 2.69, p. 195.3

⁸⁷ 4.71, p. 292.12

⁸⁸ This argument is based on Artemidoros' favourite premise of traditional literature. Homer's *Iliad* comments that the priests Hypsenor (5.78) and Laogonos (16.605) were honoured by the people as gods, although such a sentiment would have been regarded as hyperbole rather than literal truth by his contemporary and classical audiences.

and powerful man has the same dream, it means his power will increase, for like the gods, powerful men have the authority to treat people well or ill.⁸⁹

Kings and rulers follow priests at 2.69, and a quotation supports the assertion: τὸ κρατοῦν γὰρ δύναμιν ἔχει θεοῦ, 'to rule is to have the power of a god'. Not only is it a phrase ascribed to Menander, but the sentiment is proverbial.⁹⁰ The hierarchical framework Artemidoros is outlining is supported by tradition. Parents and teachers are next in line; parents bring their children to life, and teachers instruct them on how they must live that life.⁹¹ The obedience children owe their parents is referred to elsewhere.⁹²

Prophets are the last in the chain of command, but they must divine from reputable sources: those who interpret sacrifices, the flight of birds, the stars, strange phenomena, dreams and livers are to be believed, but not the ignorant deceivers who use dice, cheese, sieves, shapes, palms, dishes and the dead. Whatever a true prophet replies must be believed.⁹³ Only men who hold office in the city, priests and prophets have sufficient authority to dream on behalf of the city: others can only dream on their own personal account.⁹⁴

Considering the gods as a collectivity in Artemidoros' text reveals several fundamental points. The gods have a place at the head of society; influence flows down from the divine to the human world. It therefore seems right that in order to elucidate Artemidoros' perspective, we must therefore understand the divine world first in order to understand the human world. The gods themselves are grouped in a hierarchical structure of power, from Olympians through to chthonic deities. Divine ranking is seen to create and explain status, for example of rich and poor, amongst humans. Power in society, in terms of those who must be believed and obeyed, is defined hierarchically with reference to the gods: priests are respected like gods, kings have the power of gods, parents and teachers produce and inform life as the gods do, prophets are the voice of the gods. But the gods do not always stay undifferentiated as a group. How is gender operative in the divine hierarchy?

⁸⁹ 3.13, p. 209.12. Accepting an offer of a priesthood from the people is good luck for all except those in hiding, for priests are illustrious people, 2.30, p. 153.3.

⁹⁰ The quotation is also to be found earlier at 2.36, p. 163.9, where it is called τὸ παλαιὸν. Menander is credited as its source in Stobaeus, *Florilegium* 3.32.7 (fr. 223.3, Koerte). Simon Price, *Rituals and Power: the Roman imperial cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge, 1984) points out the proverbial aspect in n. 1 on p. 234.

⁹¹ Reiterated 4.69, p. 291.4.

⁹² 1.48, p. 54.19

⁹³ 3.20, p. 212.6. The cult of Isis is the one context for the institutionalized interpretation of dreams. Françoise Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée*, vol. 3, (Leiden, 1973), p. 313, lists all known inscriptions of Isiac dream interpreters, four male and two female, all from Delos with the exception of one ὄνειροκρίτης from Athens (*I.G.* II² 4771, dated to A.D. 127-9).

⁹⁴ 1.2, p. 11.4

ii. Gender amongst the gods

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the Greek gods in a Judaeo-Christian perspective is that they are divided, male and female. How did the Greeks deal with having representations of the female on the divine stratum? Richard Gordon envisages religion as a code articulating for its adherents 'the scope and nature of power "vertically" between us and the divine world and "horizontally" between men'.⁹⁵ This concept of religion needs gendering. The horizontal relationship between male and female gods needs working out first of all. Only once the operation of gender has been defined amongst the gods can we see how religion might articulate power vertically between the gods and their male and female 'adherents', and then horizontally between men and women. Artemidoros understands society in terms of power structures which are religious structures, as demonstrated in his treatment of the influence of hierarchically configured deities. *The Interpretation of Dreams* should be a fertile place to look for definitions of gender as a power structure, and the connections between the divine and human planes.

How does Artemidoros think female and male gods stand in relation to one another? I would like to propose two divine gender models that show a relationship between gender and power. Zeus and Hera are a good exemplar. Zeus' meanings for men are described; Hera's meanings for women are to be calqued from those of Zeus. 'Ἡρα δὲ γυναιξὶ <μὲν> τὰ αὐτὰ τῷ Διὶ σημαίνει, 'Hera has the same meaning for women as Zeus', ἀνδράσι δὲ ἥττονα, 'but she is less [in some sense] for men'.⁹⁶ Similarly, Helios and Selene, male sun and female moon, are divine examples also treated in Artemidoros' section on the gods.⁹⁷ The moon signifies the same good and bad eventualities as the sun, yet always to a lesser degree because the moon is less warm than the sun. This perception of physical weakness leads to an interpretation of overall weakness on the part of the female.⁹⁸ The moon is interpreted as the paler reflection of the sun, having no light of its own.⁹⁹ The female is perceived to derive from the male: she must therefore be an inferior copy.* Male/female divine relations work in these instances along a model of graded similarity, male superior to female, my first gender model.

⁹⁵ Richard Gordon, 'The real and the imaginary: production and religion in the Graeco-Roman world', *Art History* 2 (1979), p. 17.

⁹⁶ 2.35, p. 159.12. The significant meaning of proper nouns is exemplified with male names at 3.38, p. 220.14; female names are to be deduced ὁμοίως.

⁹⁷ 2.36, p. 163.1

⁹⁸ The second-century A.D. physiognomist Polemo lists the virtues that follow male strength, *Physiognomy* 2, 1.192. 'The male is physically stronger and braver, less prone to defects and more likely to be sincere and loyal. He is more keen to win honour and he is worthier of respect [than the female].'

⁹⁹ 5.11, p. 304.18. One of Plutarch's explanations of the Delphic oracle is based on the idea that the soul of the Pythia transmits the divine wisdom of Apollo as the moon reflects the sun's rays (see below, chapter four, section I.ii).

This divine gender pattern is used by Artemidoros to interpret dreams. He says, for instance, that a dream of the moon signifies that its fulfilments will only come true through the agency of a woman; this follows Helios and Selene.¹⁰⁰ A lioness signifies the same things as a lion, but to a weaker extent. If she bites, this predicts injury to the dreamer coming from women rather than men; the relationship between Zeus and Hera is mirrored.¹⁰¹ The actions of men and women can be predicted from the gendered identities of the gods on model one.

But Artemidoros also makes some very clear and programmatic remarks on the horizontal relationship between male and female deity which suggest another rather different pattern of gender relations. At 2.36, he says, 'there is a certain affinity between all gods and rulers, male gods with masters and female gods with mistresses', κοινὸν γὰρ πάντες οἱ θεοὶ λόγον ἔχουσι πρὸς δεσπότηας· οἱ μὲν ἄρσενες πρὸς ἄρσενας αἱ δὲ θήλειαι πρὸς θηλείας.¹⁰² This is a remarkably unambiguous statement of the connection between male god and man, female god and woman. Moreover it is made in the context of rulers, those with power. Power is divided into quite separate male power and female power.

Reiteration of this striking male/female separation occurs later in book four. 'What male gods signify for men, female gods do for women. Male gods are more auspicious for men than female; female gods are more auspicious for women than male', "Ὅσα οἱ ἄρσενες θεοὶ τοῖς ἀνδράσι σημαίνουσι, ταῦτα καὶ αἱ θήλειαι ταῖς γυναιξίν. Οἱ ἄρσενες θεοὶ ἀνδράσι συμφέρουσι μᾶλλον τῶν θηλειῶν καὶ αἱ θήλειαι γυναιξὶ μᾶλλον τῶν ἀρρένων.¹⁰³ Equivalent power and status are ascribed to the female as to the male. Yet male and female are certainly different, if one cannot function equally well in place of the other. The attribution of equivalent power and status to the female as to the male is remarkable.

With these programmatic statements, Artemidoros is setting up two parallel divine hierarchies of power that are gendered male and female – my second model. Male and female gods are equal but different, not interchangeable: each is gender specific to man and woman respectively. How can the relationship between female and male gods be classified? The model most often put forward to explain the relationship of male and female gender is one of binarily opposed constructs: it is solidly founded in Greek thought and language. According to Aristotle, the Pythagoreans listed ten pairs of opposites, the fifth of which is male and female.¹⁰⁴ Modern commentators, particularly anthropologists and structuralist thinkers, have

¹⁰⁰ 2.36, p. 164.3.

¹⁰¹ 2.12, p. 122.12

¹⁰² 2.36, p. 163.7

¹⁰³ 4.75, p. 294.20

¹⁰⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.5.986a 22-6; these oppositions are interpreted (with reference to the ephēbeia) in Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter: forms of thought and forms of society in the Greek world* (Eng. trans. Andrew Szegedy-Maszak, Baltimore and London, 1986), p. 140 ff.

used these oppositions as a way in to the Greek thought world.¹⁰⁵ What is interesting about Artemidoros' oppositional thinking is the extent to which the male/female opposition is here seen to derive from a divine power structure.

Where men and women act in explicitly religious contexts, the two distinct and parallel hierarchies can be seen. One dream and its interpretation demonstrate this excellently. If a woman dreams she holds any priestly office or magistracy not open to a woman, she will die, and if a man dreams he holds any priestly office or magistracy not open to a man, his death is likewise portended.¹⁰⁶ Men and women have the same role, but must operate separately: the impossibility of each holding the other's position is expressed by death. The holding of religious office is an area where female power is permitted and acknowledged. Rich, free married and unmarried women who dream of driving a chariot through the city will obtain good posts as priests; poor women who dream equally of such public exposure will become prostitutes.¹⁰⁷ The equation of power with wealth matches the male part. In general, a religious setting means that exceptionally there is no disadvantage in being a woman. When men dream of wearing women's clothes, there is a notable exception to the disadvantage this presages. To put on women's clothes at a feast or public festival is not bad luck; in this part of the public arena, to be female is acceptable.¹⁰⁸ We can understand why it might be that women can have power in a religious context, since the ideals of equal although separate male and female power are present in the parallel gendered hierarchy of the gods.

The gods produce two possible patterns for male/female relations within the overall organizing principle of hierarchy. The first can be described as graded similarity, the female being a lesser copy of the male. The second is parallel and opposed gendered hierarchies. The two models are not logically compatible, but clearly Artemidoros articulates and uses both in his dream interpretation. How can this be? Why is there conflicting thinking about the gods as gendered gods? That the gods as a group are hierarchically organized seems simple enough. The difficulty comes with the ascription of gender to hierarchical patterns; the exact balance of power between male and female gender identities seems to be a problematic area for Artemidoros (and conceivably for his wider society, as argued earlier). I will explore this further by considering how these divine gender models relate to gender patterns

¹⁰⁵ For instance, Geoffrey Lloyd, *Polarity and Analogy: two types of argumentation in early Greek thought* (Cambridge, 1966); Richard Garner, *Law and Society in Classical Athens* (London, 1987), pp. 75-83.

¹⁰⁶ 2.30, p. 153.12

¹⁰⁷ 1.56, p. 65.4. Perceptions of female priests in Pausanias' *Guide to Greece* will be explored below, ch. 3.

¹⁰⁸ 2.3, p. 103.23. Women's clothes are also favourable for actors who normally take women's parts, or for bachelors in need of a sympathetic wife.

in the human world, section IV. But first, to look more closely at how the divine and human worlds interrelate.

iii. Relating the divine and human worlds

How well should we expect either or both of the divine models of gender to interact with the human world? Jack Winkler points out that 'the very act of drawing a map, insofar as it implies an established and unarguable regularity and system, falsifies important uncertainties, smoothes out the wrinkles, and regularizes all matters that are still to be negotiated between actors in the social conglomerate'.¹⁰⁹ Having delineated the two divine gender models and demonstrated their applicability to some examples in the human world is not to imply their complete applicability.

'Wrinkles' in a possible map of relations between the divine and human worlds can be investigated with particular reference to Artemidoros' divine gendered hierarchies. How do men and women outside the religious power framework of the priesthood conform to the pattern predicated by these parallel hierarchies? How good is the fit? Are male gods demonstrably more auspicious for men than female, and female gods more auspicious for women than male? To test these questions, I will look at what Artemidoros has to say about two male and two female deities.

After Zeus, Apollo is the next god Artemidoros interprets.¹¹⁰ A dream of him is good news for musicians, for doctors, and for philosophers and prophets. These are more commonly male professions, but female flute players or prophets cannot be discounted. Apollo signifies that secrets will be brought to light. This is universally a bad thing in Artemidoros' text, and can happen for men and women.¹¹¹ Apollo Delphinios signifies foreign travel, again not a gendered activity. Apollo's meanings seem often to be generally applicable to both sexes, rather than simply to men. The next god, Pan, has definitely male applications, being good for shepherds and hunters.¹¹² But some are non gender-specific, since he signifies confusion and tumult, and insecurity to the confident. •

The first meaning of Artemis is a general one, derived from the etymology of her name, since she guards those afraid, as discussed in section II.¹¹³ Her second

¹⁰⁹ Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire*, p. 20, with reference to Pierre Bourdieu's ideas in his 1972 *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique*, translated by R. Nice as *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge, 1977).

¹¹⁰ 2.35, p. 160.7

¹¹¹ The revelation of secrets as a consequence of a dream frequently puts the secret-holder in a vulnerable position, for example, 1.68, p. 75.10. This same image is applied to a woman in a sexual context. In offering sex, the woman is also said to have offered to the man 'the opportunity to touch what is secret', παρέχει γὰρ ἡ τοιαύτη καὶ τῶν ἀπορρήτων ἄψασθαι. The man has 'entered into the secrets of the woman', ἐν μυστηρίοις τῆς γυναικὸς, 1.78, p. 88.22.

¹¹² 2.37, p. 167.18

¹¹³ 2.35, p. 159.14, and above p. 12.

meaning flows from this and relates to women: she keeps women safe in childbirth as Λοχεία. But instantly following this come two titles that show she has special applicability to men, as Ἀγροτέρα for hunters and Λιμναῖτις for fishermen. Athena too has relevance for both genders.¹¹⁴ As Ἐργάνη she is good for men and women in their appropriate gender roles. Craftsmen will benefit from seeing her. The man who dreams of her will have a wife who is respectable and a good housekeeper. As the personification of wisdom, Athena predicts good fortune for philosophers. She is equated with Ares as auspicious for men setting out for war. Since she is a virgin, she is not auspicious for prostitutes, women committing adultery, and women wanting to marry.

This sampling proves that male gods are not restricted exclusively to having meaning for men, or female gods for women. Nor are the gods always favourable to their respective sexes. Artemidoros must be using the gods in his system in different ways. What I have analysed as the two divine models of gender are the deities as 'symbols', representing possible relationships of male and female to one another in a hierarchical power structure. Certain aspects of the gods' *personae* are polarized in order to produce these patterns. But what we also find are the deities as 'functioning' gods, as just exemplified from the description of their meanings for men and women at 2.34-44. Some of their characteristics are interpreted as male and female in the active world of men and women. Is there further evidence in Artemidoros to support this idea of functioning deities?

Myths and religious rituals frequently define the gods and heroes, and Artemidoros regards them as paradigmatic for human experience. Hephaistos signifies that secrets, especially adulterous affairs, will be brought to light, because of his own discovery of his wife, Aphrodite, with Ares.¹¹⁵ A bear can represent a woman, because of the tale that Kallisto was transformed into such an animal.¹¹⁶ A woman dreamt she performed the labours of Herakles; not much later she was burned alive, since the story went that Herakles' body was also consumed by fire.¹¹⁷ Sometimes the events predicted in real life approximate to those that form the basis of the myth. Artemidoros contends, for instance, that dreams of the events of the mysteries will come true in the same way in real life, and that the amount of time it takes to see the mysteries determines the amount of time in which the prediction will be accomplished. He gives the example of a woman who dreamt that drunk, she danced in a chorus in honour of Dionysos. She lived to kill her three-year-old child,

¹¹⁴ 2.35, p. 160.13

¹¹⁵ 2.37, p. 172.13

¹¹⁶ 2.12, p. 122.12

¹¹⁷ 4.45, p. 270.22

imitating the legend of Pentheos and Agave, and the fact that the festivals of the gods are conducted every three years.¹¹⁸

The gods as functioning deities are the backbone of Artemidoros' and his society's semantic system. Divine attributes govern much of the symbolism attached to objects and people. Seeing and eating sweet sun-ripened apples foretells the pleasures of love, since apples are sacred to Aphrodite; sour apples predict quarrels and discord because they belong to Eris.¹¹⁹ Definition of the apple by the gods gives the fruit a shared social value, perceived uniformity and stability of meaning. So the olive is Athena's; Artemidoros' associations importantly are the traditional ones, universally recognized. An olive garland means marriage to a virgin, because the garland is bound together (a symbol of marriage), and it is made of olive (sacred to the virgin deity).¹²⁰ A myrtle garland is auspicious for farmers regarding Demeter, and women regarding Aphrodite, for myrtle is sacred to both gods.¹²¹ Imperfection in a known attribute is dangerous. A man dreamt he went through the market place as Helios with eleven rays. He was appointed chief magistrate of the city but died in eleven months, since the full complement of Helios' rays is twelve.¹²² The gods as functioning deities permeate the way in which almost all life is lived, in Artemidoros' estimation; their myths and attributes govern meaning in other apparently unconnected areas - marriage, athletics, business *etc.*

The difference between the symbolic and functional operation of the gods is significant. Symbolically, clear and discrete patterns of gender relationship can be supported. Functionally, the multitude of possibilities offered by real life complicates matters. On the one hand, we have statements of the ideal, the creation and maintenance of separate gender identities amongst the gods which are said by Artemidoros to be mirrored in the human world. On the other hand, we find that in the world lived in by men and women, the gods can function in a less polarized way. For example, the activities over which the gods preside are not all gendered; indeed not all activities can be gendered. The importance Artemidoros ascribes to the gender of deities becomes problematic when they must be related to the men and women in 'real life'.

Looking at gender and the gods has produced the following conclusions. The gods head a hierarchy of power in society: the male and female genders can be understood as expressions of power. At the level of the symbolic, Artemidoros can have separate, contradictory models of gender relations: female god as inferior copy of the male, or male and female gods as equal and opposed heads of parallel gendered

¹¹⁸ 4.39, p. 268.22

¹¹⁹ 1.73, p. 78.16

¹²⁰ 4.28, p. 263.4; 5.18, p. 305.26.

¹²¹ 1.77, p. 85.13

¹²² 4.49, p. 275.20

hierarchies. Both divine models can interpret the human plane, but they are not sufficient. When the gods interact directly with the human world as 'functioning' deities, they reveal more patterns between men and women, sometimes distinguishing between them with different meanings for each, and sometimes not. It has been argued that the male/female relationship is the most significant in Artemidoros' interpretational system. The very importance of this whole area of thought might lead us to expect problems. No one model is ever going to encompass all the complex and perhaps contradictory possibilities of gender relations in different circumstances. Above all, considering gender in the context of the gods has shown that Artemidoros can construct differing models of gender in relation to power, and that the environment in which the model must be applied has some influence. How can we apply these lessons learnt from the divine world to understanding gender on the human social scene?

IV. Gender in society

In her study of the Eucharist in the Late Middle Ages, Miri Rubin writes, 'The power exercised in the networks of social relations is always realized through symbolic formations which tend to attach themselves to the holy'.¹²³ One way to understand the fit between gender amongst the gods and amongst humans might be to differentiate between what Clifford Geertz describes as 'religious' and 'common-sensical' ways of thinking and doing. He comments, 'The movement back and forth between the religious perspective and the common-sense perspective is actually one of the more obvious empirical occurrences on the social scene, though ... one of the most neglected by social anthropologists'. In distinguishing between these two perspectives, this is what he means. 'The religious perspective differs from the common-sensical in that ... it moves beyond the realities of everyday life to wider ones which correct and complete them, and its defining concern is not action upon those wider realities but acceptance of them, faith in them.'¹²⁴ Do the gendered identities of men and women differ from those we established at the level of the gods because of a difference between religious and secular settings, between what is possible and necessary on the divine and human planes?

¹²³ Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval culture* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 349.

¹²⁴ Clifford Geertz, 'Religion as a cultural system', in *The Interpretation of Cultures: selected essays* (New York, 1973), pp. 119, 112; first published in M. Banton (ed.), *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion* vol. 1 (London, 1966).

i. Gendering the body

In organizing his original two books, Artemidoros deliberately does not begin with dreams of the gods, but with dreams of the natural world; the human body, its care in exercise, washing, feeding, its use in sexual intercourse.¹²⁵ Recent scholarship suggests that analysing the way Artemidoros interprets the human body could prove fruitful. As Averil Cameron has pointed out, 'body symbolism has the potential for a totally integrated rhetoric of god, community and individual'.¹²⁶ We might see the links between divine and human, which I am wanting to quantify, expressed in the body.

I can trace Artemidoros' interpretation of the body through his use of an essentially linguistic device; synecdoche allows the representation of a part by the whole, or *vice versa*. As he says, 'The mind often shows the whole from just a part'.¹²⁷ The correlations Artemidoros discovers between part and whole are instructive, particularly in the context of the body. For example, the head is the father, the foot the slave; the upper teeth represent the more important members of the household, the lower, the less important.¹²⁸ The body is perceived as a suitable vehicle for the expression of hierarchical power relationships: it is precisely because ideas about the body are culturally constructed that Artemidoros' treatment of it is so important.

There is above all a clear polarizing of the body along the lines of right/male, left/female. The right hand equates to father, son, brother, male friend, whilst the left indicates wife, mother, female friend, daughter or sister. To dream of baldness on the right side of the head indicates the loss of male relatives; on the left side a lack of hair means female relatives will be wanting. The same pattern is true of the eyes, teeth, and arms.¹²⁹

What is the significance of right and left in the identification of male and female? Artemidoros describes the identification as a *παλαιὰ διαίρεσις*, a 'traditional distinction'. He quotes approvingly the opinion that the right arm signifies things to be acquired, the left things that have been acquired, since the right arm is suited for taking things, the left for keeping them.¹³⁰ Right might therefore indicate male activity, going out into the world, and left female passivity, guarding possessions close to home. But the religious implications of right and left also deserve

¹²⁵ 1.10, p. 19.6

¹²⁶ Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the development of Christian discourse* (Berkeley and London, 1991), p. 69.

¹²⁷ 4.42, p. 270.13

¹²⁸ 1.2, p. 9.6; 1.31, p. 37.14.

¹²⁹ Hands, 1.2, p. 8.20; head, 1.21, p. 28.7; eyes, 1.26, p. 34.7; teeth, 1.31, p. 37.17; arms, 1.42, p. 48.13. The general pattern that right equates to male and left to female is reiterated at 4.25, p. 261.1.

¹³⁰ 1.42, p. 48.7, 10

consideration. In his section on the meaning of the gods, Artemidoros records that if Iris is seen on the right she means good luck, but if she is seen on the left she means bad luck. In fact, from as early as Homeric omens, right is lucky and left unlucky.¹³¹ In 1908, Robert Hertz argued that social polarity is a consequence of religious polarity. He understood right and left not as a question of 'strength or weakness, skill or clumsiness, rather as a question of different and incompatible functions linked to contrary natures'.¹³² By interpreting the body in terms of right/male and left/female, Artemidoros is continuing the gender opposition found amongst the gods. But the opposites are not equal, as in the second divine gender model: right is stronger than left, male superior to female.

In book one, Artemidoros takes us on a head to toe tour of the significance of what he thinks are the most important parts of the body, chapters 17-49. It rapidly becomes apparent that the body is almost exclusively a male body, and the interpretation of it is almost all in terms of what is meant for men. Dreams of the head, for example, 1.17-39, are mostly translated into men's concerns; a head can on occasion signify a wife, but it is not said equally to signify a husband.¹³³ Above all, such dreams predict how a man will fare in his professional life: rich men may win or lose office, be talked of, increase or decrease their property; a poor man might become wealthy, or suffer want; slaves may have long servitude or freedom; soldiers may endure hardship; sailors can be shipwrecked; athletes may be victorious; criminals might be condemned to forced labour. A man's family may become ill, he might lose his house. The head can signify a whole range of possibilities for many different categories of men.

In contrast, there are only a few interpretations in the long exegesis of the head which are specifically for women. Women can be treated as an undifferentiated group: three dreams all equate good fortune to a pleasing person. Long hair predicts good fortune to those who customarily wear their hair long, and this includes women, who often supplement their hair with that of others; thick, well-defined eyebrows are particularly auspicious for women, who often colour them in; full cheeks are especially beneficial for women.¹³⁴ Looking too lovely, though, has its dangers. One dream of having many eyes is unfavourable for a woman in her prime; there will be

¹³¹ 2.36, p. 166.4: *Iliad* 24. 315-21, *Odyssey* 2.146-54, for instance.

¹³² Robert Hertz, 'The pre-eminence of the right hand: a study in religious polarity', pp. 8, 16, in Rodney Needham (ed.), *Right and Left: essays on dual symbolic classification* (Chicago and London, 1973).

¹³³ 1.35, p. 43.16, a dream of being beheaded can predict the loss of a wife; 1.35, p. 45.8, a poor man who dreams of having two or three heads will gain much property, and have a wife and children dear to his heart.

¹³⁴ 1.18, p. 26.18; 1.25, p. 32.3; 1.28, p. 36.6. A woman's appearance is linked closely with her part in society. An attractive woman will find a husband and reproduce: the pairings 'rich and attractive', 'poor and ugly', are often repeated as representing the best and worst possibilities of womankind, at 2.31, p. 154.3, for instance. This is validated at the highest level on the divine plane; the richer and more attractive Tyche appears, the better luck she should be considered as bringing, 2.37, p. 172.23.

many *μοιχοὶ*, 'unlawful sexual partners', around her.¹³⁵ When women are differentiated in dreams of the head, it is in terms of their relationship to men. Dreams of a long, thick beard are good for orators and philosophers (it will give them dignity), and for men about to do business (they will seem formidable).¹³⁶ The dignity and strength of a beard, when a woman has such a dream, is translated in terms of her male connections. A widow who dreams of having a beard will marry again. A wife will be separated from her husband and manage the household alone. A pregnant woman will bear a son, and when he is full grown, then she will seem to have a beard. A woman involved in a law suit will not be treated with disdain, having, as it were, the attributes of a man. These women are evaluated in connection to men; they have a dependent relationship, like the first divine gender model.

The same patterns of gender and power are displayed as Artemidoros descends through the body. A hairy chest is profit and good luck for men, but widowhood for women.¹³⁷ The reason for widowhood is explicit; widows lead a more neglected and hairy life since the men for whom they adorn their bodies are no longer there. Artemidoros sees women's beauty as something to be judged in relation to men. A dream of having many breasts signifies adultery for a woman.¹³⁸ The heart signifies the wife of the dreamer; a vital organ for a vital relationship?¹³⁹ For a female dreamer, the heart can signify her husband, and Artemidoros spells out the reason why: a husband exercises control and authority over her body. The power relationship is only expressed from male to female, not female to male.

The reasons underlying Artemidoros' interpretation of the body, and the relationship of men and women to one another, are most explicit in the area between the innards and the knees, 1.45-6. Emphatic and central meaning is attributed to the male genitalia. A man's reproductive organ places him at the centre of his family, recalling the generative powers of his parents, being the cause of his children, symbolizing the nature of his relationship with his wife or mistress, the connection with his brothers and blood relatives: ἐπεὶ τοῦ παντὸς οἴκου ὁ λόγος ἤρτηται ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰδοίου, 'the interrelationship of the entire household depends upon the male organ'.¹⁴⁰ The genitalia are interpreted as symbolizing, amongst other things, strength and vigour, wealth and possessions, dignity and respect, speech and education. In Suzanne MacAlister's words, 'That masculinity equates with activity, public prestige, and dominance is expressed, then, as a biologically given "truth"'.¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ 1.26, p. 35.2

¹³⁶ 1.30, p. 36.15

¹³⁷ 1.41, p. 47.4

¹³⁸ 1.41, p. 47.16

¹³⁹ 1.44, p. 50.25, and see below on marriage.

¹⁴⁰ 1.45, p. 51.16

¹⁴¹ Suzanne MacAlister, 'Gender as sign and symbolism', p. 146.

This is a society in which authority and success lie in the power and control associated with being a man.¹⁴²

In sharp contrast, no mention of the female genitalia is made here. There are two references elsewhere in the text, and the meanings are both unfavourable or shameful. A man dreamt his wife lifted up her clothes and showed him τὸ αἰδοῖον, her 'sexual parts'. She caused him much suffering as a result, because she lifted up her dress as she would to a contemptible person.¹⁴³ Helen King discusses some cultural connotations of ἀνασύρμος, 'skirt-lifting'. She analyses a group of war stories from the third century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. which show more precisely the nature of the contempt involved. Men running away from battle are halted by their wives and mothers lifting up their skirts. She writes, 'They are accused of acting like slaves, like women, like children; they are addressed with contempt, but with a particular kind of contempt intended to reinstate them in their correct identity as free, brave adult men.'¹⁴⁴ The gesture in Artemidoros seems utterly destructive with no salvific purpose; there is no benefit for the husband in being compared to a woman by his wife. The silence and shame surrounding the female genitals shows that power and status are male attributes, that female attributes are associated with failure and loss for a man, at least. For a woman, causing distress by lifting her skirt argues she possesses hidden strength.¹⁴⁵

The lengthy chapters of 1.78-80 detail sexual dreams whose interpretation differs depending on the partner involved and the type of act indulged in (categorized in three sections by Artemidoros as natural, illegal or unnatural¹⁴⁶). Extensive and important work on Artemidoros' perception of male and female roles in sexual intercourse has been undertaken by Michel Foucault and Jack Winkler.¹⁴⁷ Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* can be criticized with some justice for seeing mainly the male 'self' of his sources, for not investigating female sexuality. But in this study of

¹⁴² 2.69, p. 196.11, priests of Cybele, castrated men and eunuchs feature in a list of men not to be trusted, since their physical condition indicates false expectations.

¹⁴³ 4.44, p. 271.9. At 5.63, p. 315.21, a woman had sexual relations with her own child, and died a miserable suicidal death.

¹⁴⁴ Helen King, 'Agnodike and the profession of medicine', *P.C.P.S.* 32 (1986), p. 67, generally pp. 61-8.

¹⁴⁵ Less directly, the female sexual organs are represented above all in the *Interpretation of Dreams* by their reproductive capability, the significance of which is explored below in section IV.ii. As Suzanne MacAlister comments, 'Female anatomical difference ... is not a multifarious organ like the male penis; rather it is talked of, physically and symbolically, in terms of a functional, procreative role', 'Gender as sign and symbolism', p. 146.

¹⁴⁶ 1.78, p. 86.17. The three categories need glossing; Artemidoros' use of the terms is in a different cultural context to our own. Natural acts are those classed as legal and customary; they include a man's sexual relations with his wife, prostitutes, slaves male or female, richer older men, and masturbation. Illegal sexual acts are those a man commits with young children, his sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, his mother, and oral-genital contact. Unnatural intercourse takes place between two women, or with a god, with corpses and animals, or with oneself.

¹⁴⁷ Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, chs. 1-3; Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire*, ch. 1.

Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams*, it is precisely the author's perspective that is at stake.

Artemidoros interprets sexual dreams as metaphors for the wider social concerns of his dreamer. As David Halperin observes, such dreams are rarely about sex or any erotic experience in real life; instead, they treat of 'the dreamer's public fortunes, the vicissitudes of his domestic economy'.¹⁴⁸ The parts played by male and female are interpreted within a framework of power relationships. Sexual position is regarded as a key factor by Artemidoros. It is essential to 'ride' rather than 'be ridden', to be in the position of control. If a man does not come out on top, then his authority is effectively overturned by someone who should literally be beneath him. For instance, for a man to be possessed forcibly by his son signifies he will be injured by that son, and also that the son will regret his actions.¹⁴⁹ Winkler writes that, 'The invasive protocol restates the principle that sex (like competition) makes reference chiefly to the self by treating it as a way of expressing hierarchical movement, up and down the ladder whose rungs are marked by levels of wealth and prestige'.¹⁵⁰ This is well illustrated by the example of a man dreaming of having sex with his slaves. A controlling relationship indicates the enjoyment of his goods; to be possessed by a slave means the dreamer will be despised.¹⁵¹ Sexual relations between women are contemplated just once in dream, and never predicted for reality. The meaning of the dream is unfavourable; the possessor will take on futile projects, the possessed will be divorced or widowed.¹⁵² For no hierarchy of power can be expressed.

The interpretation of the sexual act in terms of social relations is demonstrated most clearly at 1.79. Artemidoros details the many and complex ways in which a man can dream he is having sexual intercourse with his mother. A wonderful web of mother-imagery is woven together. Foucault comments, 'There is no question that Artemidoros considered mother-son incest to be morally wrong. But it is noteworthy that he assigns it a predictive value that is often favourable, making the mother into a kind of model and matrix, as it were, of a large number of social relations and forms of activity'.¹⁵³ Such a dream is good for a craftsman, for it is customary to call a craft 'mother'; physical involvement with her must signify industriously earning a living. It bodes well for a public figure, a leader of the people, since it is usual to describe a

¹⁴⁸ David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York and London, 1990), p. 37.

¹⁴⁹ 1.78, p. 90.6. In dreams of sex with animals, there are benefits to be had in accordance with the type of animal when mounting, but violence to be met with when mounted, 1.80, p. 98.12. Riding an obedient horse is a good sign, since the animal represents a wife or mistress, as it takes pride in its beauty and bears its rider, 1.56, p. 65.4.

¹⁵⁰ Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire*, p. 40.

¹⁵¹ 1.78, p. 88.5.

¹⁵² 1.80, p. 97.9. Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, p. 35, points out that whilst women's sexual relationships with women are categorized as contrary to nature, mutual male sexual acts are simply contrary to the law.

¹⁵³ Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, pp. 22-3.

native country as the 'motherland'. A sick man having intercourse with his living mother indicates a recovery since nature is the mother of all and it is natural to be well: with his dead mother the prognosis is fatal, because mother earth is where the dead are laid. Sexual congress with a dead mother is auspicious for a man engaged in a law case over land rights, for a man who wants to purchase land, for the farmer who wants to harvest the land; the earth she symbolizes means the exile will return home, the land will yield for the farmer and the litigant will win his mother's property.

These dreams encourage some speculation on mother-son relationships in real life. Foucault takes a rather male-centred view, commenting, 'In such dreams the subject is ... seen in a position of activity with respect to a mother who gave birth to and nurtured him, and whom he ought to cultivate, honour, serve, maintain, and enrich in return, like a piece of land, a native country, a city'.¹⁵⁴ He sees the relationship as that between more powerful son and less powerful though 'respected' mother. A study by Charles Stewart of modern Greek village society points to the importance of the mother-son relationship and provides an alternative interpretative perspective; women as wives and mothers exercise an informal power through their ability to sway their husbands and especially their sons.¹⁵⁵ It could equally be the influence of a mother on her son, as the easily-made opposite assumption, that produces her central position in this mother-son incest imagery.

Still, there is more to say about the relationship of women to men in Artemidoros' sexual dreams than has been said by Foucault and Winkler. Dreaming of sex with the gods indicates help from superiors, but fear and confusion if there was no pleasure in the act: the connection of sex with power is explicit in this divine context. Listed also are a group of female gods with whom sex would indicate no less than death for the (male) dreamer; Artemis, Athena, Hestia, Rhea, Hera and Hekate. *σεμναὶ γὰρ αἱ θεαί*, 'these deities inspire awe', explains Artemidoros.¹⁵⁶ The incompleteness of the list might appear odd. How can this selection of female deities be explained? Artemis, Athena and Hestia are virgins, Rhea is Zeus' mother, Hera his wife, and Hekate has associations with witchcraft, the underworld and death. The undesirability of clashing with someone more powerful might explain why Zeus' relatives are out of bounds. But power alone cannot account for the others. Sex with the other female gods, with virgins and a witch, would be inappropriate. Whereas sex with a smiling male god is always favourable, sex with female gods is complicated by what they might be thought to represent. If this is what happens on the divine plane,

¹⁵⁴ Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, p. 32.

¹⁵⁵ Charles Stewart, *Demons and the Devil: moral imagination in modern Greek culture* (Princeton, 1991), p. 68. Also valuable for their investigations into gender relations in rural society in modern Greece are Michael Herzfeld, 'Semantic slippage and moral fall: the rhetoric of chastity in rural Greek society', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 1 (1983), pp. 161-72; Jill Dubisch, 'Greek women: sacred or profane?', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 1 (1983), pp. 185-202.

¹⁵⁶ 1.80, p. 97.20

how on the human plane does Artemidoros use perceptions of women to characterize men's behaviour?

For Artemidoros, women are something to think with. The word he uses is εἰκῶν, a symbol or likeness, a visible simile. The most striking example of this phenomenon occurs in Artemidoros' treatment of sexual dreams. The meaning of a man's dream of sexual intercourse with an unknown woman is discussed. 'Unknown women must be interpreted as symbols of things that will happen to the dreamer, so that the character and disposition of the woman determine what will happen to him', χρῆ γὰρ ἠγεῖσθαι τὰς ἀγνοουμένας γυναῖκας εἰκόνας εἶναι πράξεων τῶν συμβησομένων τῷ ἰδόντι. οἷα ἂν οὖν ἦ ἡ γυνὴ καὶ ὅπως διακειμένη, οὕτω καὶ ἡ πράξις διαθήσει τὸν ἰδόντα.¹⁵⁷ If the unknown woman is attractive, expensively dressed, wearing gold necklaces, and gives herself willingly, she indicates success for the dreamer. But if she is an ugly and ill-dressed old woman, living a life of suffering, unwilling to give herself, she indicates quite the opposite. 'Woman' functions as an interpretative device in Artemidoros' text (far more often than the dreams of real women are analysed).

So Artemidoros' body symbolism tends to follow model one of the divine gender patterns, male superior to female. Men are the right side of the body, women the left; dreams of the head signify only meanings for men, and for a woman simply reflect on her relations with men; a whole network of power is associated with possessing the key attribute of manhood which women cannot equal. However, this is not all that can be said. By far the most common context for dreams to be interpreted in is marriage. To appropriate an observation from Stewart's study, 'marriage constitutes an inversion of everyday life in which segregation between the sexes is the *status quo*. In this ceremony men and women are yoked together'¹⁵⁸ What happens when Artemidoros must interpret men and women in the shared world of the marital household?

ii. Marriage

Marriage and children are the ultimate goals to achieve in Artemidoros' predictions of good fortune: being unmarried or without children appear as transition states for both men and women.¹⁵⁹ Artemidoros sets up a striking analogy between marriage and death; both are critical points in life and they can therefore represent

¹⁵⁷ I.78, p. 88.1

¹⁵⁸ Stewart, *Demons and the Devil*, p. 68.

¹⁵⁹ Mules tell against marriage and procreation, since they are sterile, 2.12, p. 121.13. Whenever there is a wife in the house she is symbolized by the bedroom, 2.10, p. 115.9. 'Both a hearth and a baking oven are similar to a woman, in that they receive things that are productive of life. Seeing fire in them means that a man's wife will become pregnant, for at that time a woman becomes warmer too', 2.10, p. 116.21.

each other.¹⁶⁰ Marriage is valued highly enough to be regarded as the best framework for sexual pleasures. Artemidoros quotes Homer, *Iliad* 5.429, in interpreting marriage as 'full of lovely deeds', ἰμερόεντα ... ἔργα γάμοιο.¹⁶¹ Therefore it would seem that gender relations in marriage are an important area for gender relations as a whole.

Women's dreams are most frequently interpreted in the context of marriage by Artemidoros. A dream of good jewellery has favourable implications for a woman. 'For just as women are adorned by their jewellery, they will be adorned in the same way by husbands, children and wealth. Furthermore, jewellery embraces a woman's neck, just as her husband and children do.'¹⁶² The best things that Artemidoros can conceive of happening for her are threefold. If unmarried she will marry, if childless she will have children, if she is blessed with both these already, only then will her property and wealth increase.¹⁶³ The wife who dreams she marries again will lose her existing husband, or if she is pregnant will marry off her daughter, or having a daughter already will find her a husband. There is the possibility that if she has something to sell, she will sign a contract, like a marriage contract. The theory of a reciprocal relationship is exemplified by that between women and their children. 'Whatever is signified by one thing symbolizes reciprocally the very thing by which it is signified. For example, a woman dreamt that her eyes were very sore. Her children took sick. Another woman dreamt that her children were sick and she had trouble with her eyes.'¹⁶⁴ In Artemidoros' perspective, marriage is above all the real life situation into which he translates women's dreams.

But for men, too, dream images and their translation put a central emphasis on marriage, on having a wife. The olive tree seems to symbolize everything necessary for a happy, successful life; the list begins with a wife followed by athletic training, political office and freedom.¹⁶⁵ There is a strong equivalence between the wife and the very life of the dreamer: the tripod and hearth indicate both.¹⁶⁶ A man's wife signifies his craft or occupation, from which he derives pleasure, or whatever he governs or controls; if he has a satisfactory sexual relationship with her, if she yields to him willingly and submissively, then all will go well.¹⁶⁷ The dream of a new bride is good for a man setting up in business, since her dowry will bring him new property; if he dreams of marrying a woman no longer a virgin, then he will not regret

¹⁶⁰ 2.49, p. 181.11, τέλη μὲν γὰρ ἀμφοτέρω τοῖς ἀνθρώποις εἶναι γενόμεναι καὶ ὁ γάμος καὶ ὁ θάνατος. The similar circumstances of a marriage and funeral are adduced at 4.30, p. 265.6.

¹⁶¹ 5.39, p. 310.17

¹⁶² 2.5, p. 106.18

¹⁶³ 2.5, p. 106.7

¹⁶⁴ 4.24, p. 260.14

¹⁶⁵ 2.25, p. 143.20

¹⁶⁶ 1.74, p. 80.21

¹⁶⁷ 1.79, p. 86.23

concentrating on old rather than new business ventures. Should he dream his existing wife marries another man, then a change of occupation, or a separation is indicated.¹⁶⁸ 'All agree', συμφώνως εοικέναι λέγουσι πάντες, that one's craft corresponds to one's mother because it nourishes, and to one's wife because it is 'one's own to the highest degree', ιδιαίτάτον. So male success in life is frequently equated to having a good wife.

Artemidoros is quite clear on the qualities which constitute a good wife. At 2.32 there is a system set-piece on the visual metaphorical correspondence of nine different types of gladiators to different types of wives.¹⁶⁹ For example, if a man fights with a Thracian, he will marry a wife who is rich, crafty and fond of being first. She will be rich because the Thracian's body is covered in armour, crafty because his sword is curved not straight, fond of being first because this gladiator employs the advancing technique. If a man fights with a *secutor*, he will marry a wife who is attractive and rich, but she will be over-proud of her wealth. Too much money in a wife is a bad thing; here it will make a woman disdainful of her husband. She will be the cause of many evils because the natural balance of power is upset. The ideal wife is represented by fighting with silver weapons. She will be attractive, moderately wealthy, faithful, a good housekeeper and obedient to her husband.

Sexual fidelity and good housekeeping are the two qualities most emphasized in Artemidoros' translation of dreams of having a wife. Michel Foucault has detected an increasing anxiety about sexual conduct, a greater importance accorded to marriage and its demands, and less value being placed on the love of boys.¹⁷⁰ Two differing aspects of Aphrodite show the feared and desired sexual conduct in a wife. Aphrodite Pandemos is profitable for prostitutes but not for housewives or women who intend to marry, since she indicates that as a wife she will be κοινή, 'common property'. Aphrodite Ourania is particularly propitious for marriages, partnerships and the birth of children, being the cause of sexual union and its offspring. She contains within her cult identities the expression of good wife and bad; it is as important to have a model to avoid as one to follow.¹⁷¹ Or again, in dreams of birds, a primary division into two types of women is distinguished via different types of birds. Ring doves and pigeons mean women: ring doves mean women who are altogether dissolute; common pigeons sometimes mean housekeepers and decent women.¹⁷² A swallow, Artemidoros has discovered, is generally a good omen. What

¹⁶⁸ 2.65, p. 189.3. The analysis is repeated at 4.30, p. 264.23.

¹⁶⁹ So close and accurate a recorder of the human scene has Artemidoros been deemed to be that Louis Robert was happy to use this passage to elucidate gladiators' different armour and fighting methods, in *Les gladiateurs dans l'orient grec* (Paris, 1940).

¹⁷⁰ Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, p. 36.

¹⁷¹ 2.37, p. 171.13. This idea of opposites held in unity in the one deity is found also in Aphrodite as Pelagia, favourable for seafarers, and Aphrodite as Anadyomene, signifying storm and shipwreck.

¹⁷² 2.20, p. 137.11

is good in the context of marriage is that the dreamer's wife will be faithful as well as a good housekeeper.¹⁷³ So much is the loom a wife's main concern that 'a woman dreamt she had finished weaving at the loom. She died the following day. For she had nothing more to do, that is to say, she no longer had to live'.¹⁷⁴

Why is there such an emphasis on marriage and appropriate female behaviour within it?¹⁷⁵ Many of Artemidoros' interpretations of dreams about the marital household demonstrate a keen sense of social structure. The physicalities of the household denote gender roles. Up and down, above and below, are spatial indications of gender identities. On a man's bed, the head section identifies sons, the foot section daughters.¹⁷⁶ This pattern is highly reminiscent of the scheme discernible in Artemidoros' body symbolism. But the male/female relationship is developed beyond this opposed pattern. On that same bed, the man is characterized by the inner rails, his wife by the outer, and the legs are the household. Of the house walls, the central wall signifies the man, the left the wife, the right the children.¹⁷⁷ Each part needs the others to create a working whole, the common goal of marriage, a family, a household. The male part still has the stronger imagery - inner rails, central wall - but it cannot stand in isolation. In an interdependent relationship, one part cannot exist without the other, however much the rhetoric values one part, the male, above another, the female. In marriage, men need women and this alters the balance of power in this gender relationship.

A dream from close to the end of the *Interpretation of Dreams* vividly demonstrates a man's dependence on his wife's conduct for his public success and private happiness.¹⁷⁸

A man who was living in Rome dreamt that he flew around the city near the rooftops and that he was elated by his adept flying. And all those who looked at him were struck with admiration. But as a result of a certain pain and palpitations of the heart, he stopped flying and hid in shame. An extraordinary man and an excellent prophet, he lived a distinguished life in the city. He not only gained people's respect but a great fortune as well. But he did not get to enjoy either his prophetic art or his financial gain. For his wife no longer loved him and was unfaithful. Consequently, he left the city in shame.

The coercive expectations of a wife's behaviour which Artemidoros presents are a measure of the strength of a wife's power to make or break a marriage - and her husband.

Artemidoros' marriage imagery tacitly acknowledges gender interdependency. The metaphors most often used for marriage in the *Interpretation of Dreams* are those

¹⁷³ 2.66, p. 191.3

¹⁷⁴ 4.40, p. 269.6

¹⁷⁵ There are no parallel expectations levied on the husband. Only a wife's sexual infidelity could introduce bastards into the family.

¹⁷⁶ 1.74, p. 80.27; 2.9, p. 114.5.

¹⁷⁷ 2.10, p. 115.17

¹⁷⁸ 5.69, p. 317.22

of partnership. To dream of flax is propitious with regard to marriage and partnerships because it is interwoven.¹⁷⁹ The pinna fish and pinna-guard are good for marriage and partnerships because of their close relationship and the good will they bear towards one another, explains Artemidoros.¹⁸⁰ Dreams of garlands of date-palm and olive indicate marriage because they are intertwined and children because they are evergreen.¹⁸¹ Marriage is recognized as a bond, but not an easy one. Dreaming of crucifixion for the unmarried man signifies marriage because the connection between victim and cross is close yet difficult.¹⁸² A yoke is a symbol of marriage, and fetters too.¹⁸³ A marriage is difficult because it holds a tension of power within it. Men need to be in charge, but are dependent on the labour and the ability of women to bear (legitimate) children.

The picture gained from Artemidoros of an interdependent balance of male and female power in marriage has been detected by other scholars for both classical and modern Greece. Commenting on classical Athens, Lin Foxhall writes that, 'The household embodies the unification of the male/female opposition. ... The balance of the opposites in a household, manifest in the genders, ages and statuses of its individual members, is ... expressive of its health and well-being as a properly constituted social body. The household is the context in which male and female individuals operate as a single social entity'¹⁸⁴ Of modern Greek villages, Charles Stewart observes 'that the very different spheres of male and female activity should properly be viewed as complements, especially at the level of the household'.¹⁸⁵

How do my two divine models of gender relate to Artemidoros' images of marriage? Artemidoros' rhetoric is very interesting. In the more abstract considerations of the body and its use in sexual intercourse, the inferior relation of female to male, as Selene to Helios, is given full play. In marriage, the male rhetoric similarly attempts to keep the upper hand: for instance, translating dreams of household articles, Artemidoros sees a lamp-stand as indicating a wife, the lamp, the master of the house.¹⁸⁶ The female role is interpreted as supporting the male role,

¹⁷⁹ 3.59, p. 230.4.

¹⁸⁰ 2.14, p. 131.1. Playing a harp is a dream for a good marriage because of the harmony of the strings, 1.56, p. 63.10.

¹⁸¹ 1.77, p. 85.3. Artemidoros says this is specifically the case for free women.

¹⁸² 2.53, p. 183.10. The dream of forging metal is not a happy one; the prospective wife will be sympathetic, εὐνοῦς, but contentious, since bellows breathe together but hammers make a noise, 1.52, p. 59.14. Similarly, dreams of a toll collector indicate sympathy but disputes, as arguments arise over the payments of tolls, 3.58, p. 229.15.

¹⁸³ 2.24, p. 135.5; 2.47, p. 180.11.

¹⁸⁴ Lin Foxhall, 'Household, gender and property in classical Athens', *C. Q.* 39 (1989), p. 23. She goes on to argue that the case is very different outside the private household in the wider community. Here she says, 'male and female are separate, opposing and unequal, and thus serve to define other parts of the culture in the same terms'. But more account of, for example, religious roles needs to be taken: ownership of property is not a sufficient basis for arguing gender relations, as Foxhall tries to do.

¹⁸⁵ Stewart, *Demons and the Devil*, p. 68.

¹⁸⁶ 1.74, p. 80.18

from a subordinate position (the lowly lampstand). But the vocabulary of partnership Artemidoros uses to describe marriage suggests there might be more importance to be attached to the female role in marriage than this. Do the parallel divine hierarchies, my second model, illuminate the married relationship?

The idea of partnership is certainly not one found on the divine plane. The difference between symbol and function helps to explain this striking innovation on the human plane. On the symbolic model of parallel divine hierarchies, male and female power can be equal but separate and opposed. In the world of social function, male self-interest cannot allow separate and independent female power and the parallel divine hierarchies are hardly ever replicated on the human level, except for dreams of becoming a priest (above, section III.ii). But in the situation of marriage the female is necessary, and *de facto* this puts her in a position of power. In her examination of gender, discussed in my introductory chapter, Joan Scott writes, 'Fixed oppositions conceal the heterogeneity of either category, the extent to which terms presented as oppositional are interdependent, deriving their meaning from internally established contrasts rather than some inherent or pure antithesis'.¹⁸⁷ Gender opposition at the divine level becomes mutual dependency at the human level. Married partnership and co-operation are the human models in which a balance of male and female power is acknowledged.

V. Conclusions

The *Interpretation of Dreams* provides a valuably integrated perspective on the interconnections between gender and the divine. Artemidoros collected his dreams primarily from the culturally Greek areas of the Roman empire, and the *Interpretation of Dreams* sets out his system of dream interpretation, a system which he expects his readers to accept as logical and universally applicable. In establishing the traditional Greek linguistic base to the connection⁸ Artemidoros makes between dreamt sign and signified reality, I propose that Artemidoros' system reflects understanding in his broader society. Much more than a repository of social statistics, Artemidoros can open up his contemporary thought world to us. Tracing Artemidoros' perceptions of the power of gender in his interpretative system has revealed differing divine patterns and human realities. Where there is conflict between models, or where interpretation of gender relations must be adapted to circumstance, is important and meaningful. The ideals and problems are all part of one system of thought, certainly Artemidoros' own, and, as I argue, his society's.

¹⁸⁷ J. W. Scott, 'Gender: a useful category of historical analysis', *A.H.R.* 91 (1986), p. 7.

Artemidoros sees society as headed and patterned by hierarchized gods. Hierarchy is the structure into which divine-mortal and male-female relations fit. Two models of gender relationship are indicated by Artemidoros amongst the gods: the female occupying an inferior position on a descending scale of similarity to the male; male and female being equal, discrete and opposed heads of parallel divine hierarchies of power. The gods are symbols of possible and contradictory male/female relationships. The fact that the two models are not logically compatible already suggests that Artemidoros has differing ideas about how male and female relate even on the ideal divine plane. Furthermore, the attributes and activities of the gods as functioning deities do not follow the strict gendered templates Artemidoros cuts out for them. There is a difference between symbol and function on the divine plane which can be demonstrated on the human level.

The male perspective of the text, and male social needs, become apparent in looking at the gendering of the human body. Power is concentrated on the possession of male attributes, particularly the genitals. In sexual intercourse, the upper penetrative role is made synonymous with control and authority. Women are evaluated in terms of their relationship to men; they are something for men to think with in men's competitive relations with one another. After all, a man's desire to have his dreams interpreted is a response to anxiety about future success, a desire to avert failure. It is however important not to overplay the nature of this competition. Artemidoros' dreamers compete in a recognizably Greek world, where success is still sought in the traditional arenas of politics, the priesthood, the army, athletics and so on. Suzanne MacAlister goes too far in her diagnosis of 'atomised individuals' in 'a waking world where self-focus and suspicion of others prevail'¹⁸⁸ In his interpretative system, Artemidoros ascribes definite values to being male and female. His construction of masculinity associates it with power and status in a professional world where education, respect, wealth, in other words, success, are the highest priority. His construction of femininity associates it with failure and danger. Masculinity acquires its meanings in contrast to its opposite, the feminine 'other'.¹⁸⁹

But Artemidoros' images of marriage complicate the neat and simple definition of masculine as power and success, feminine as weakness and failure. Artemidoros unequivocally represents marriage, a wife, as very important for men. A wife can represent a dreamer's life, she can represent success or failure in his craft. A man needs a good marriage - an obedient wife, well-kept house, his own children to be a success. But this success needs female co-operation. So the balance of power

¹⁸⁸ Suzanne MacAlister, 'Gender as sign and symbol', p. 141. She writes, p. 140, 'The late Hellenic world was one in which Greeks, now living amongst hitherto unfamiliar peoples and in hitherto unfamiliar environments, were struggling for a new sort of control over their lives'.

¹⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 154.

between men and women becomes crucial and an object of anxiety. Gender models on the divine plane embody two ideal, if not compatible, ways of ensuring male control and safety from ruin by the female through the male being stronger than the female, or through male and female being quite separate from one another. And on the human plane, male attributes, rather than female, are constantly associated with control and good fortune. But in the human world the divine ideals of control and separation cannot be wholly carried through. In Artemidoros' images of marriage we see the uneasy recognition of the power of the female and male dependency on it, despite the optimistic rhetoric of male control. The wife as symbol takes on a mediating role, between the private home life of the male dreamer and his public life.

To return to the transformation dreams with which I began this chapter, the role played by the female as symbol when men dream of changing into women needs further nuancing. It is Suzanne MacAlister's argument for the mediating role played by ideas of the female that is one of the strongest points in her analysis of the *Interpretation of Dreams*.¹⁹⁰ To quote,

Not only does the dream show again that the expressions of gender difference once more translate into notions of social status, but it also demonstrates that the feminine is again made to shift about in its symbolism so as to perform a mediating and transforming role between opposing poles of prestige/disgrace and domination/subordination, which themselves correspond to the masculine and the feminine spheres, respectively. Through the mediation of symbols of the feminine, the publicly-manifested social identity of the opposing categories of dreamers stands to be transformed. The feminine, in one symbolic form, is given the power to enhance the social status of the poor man and slave while, in another symbolic form, it is given the power to diminish the social identities of the rich man and the athlete.

The mediating role ascribed to the female, apparent in Artemidoros' interpretative system, will be explored in detail in Plutarch's writings on the Pythia and the myth of Isis and Osiris.

Analysing Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams* provides an excellent foundation for pursuing perceptions of gender and the divine in the thought structures of my further second and third-century Greek texts. It has established the perceptions of gender in operation at Artemidoros' time of writing, providing a contemporary, normative base against which to compare treatment of male and female in my next texts: it has shown quite dramatically how such gender stereotypes can be used as symbols in understanding and interpreting the world. Furthermore, I have detected an anxiety about the relationship between male and female which is strikingly revealed by the lack of fit between models of gender on the divine plane, and between the divine and human planes. Anxiety about the female in a priestly context will be a key theme of my next chapter on Pausanias' *Guide to Greece*.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 150.

Chapter Three

Greek Priests, Male and Female: a Pausanian Perspective

A procession begins. At its head the priests and the annual magistrates move forwards together, then women, men and children. At the rear of the procession comes a perfect heifer, untamed, dancing. She is driven to the sanctuary, where she is let loose. As she enters the temple, the doors are slammed shut behind her. Waiting for her inside are four old women, her slaughterers. With a sickle they slit her throat. Then in are driven a second, a third, and fourth cow to meet the same fate, and each animal must fall on the same side as the first. This is Pausanias' account of how the Hermioneans offer their annual sacrifice to Demeter Chthonia.¹

The ritual is bizarre and Pausanias plays up our sense of surprise in its telling. Τὸ δὲ λόγου μάλιστα ἄξιον, his description begins, 'Here is a very interesting thing'. The gendered nature of the ritual is striking, and Pausanias emphasizes it. He records two local versions of how a woman, Chthonia, founded the cult. Women are listed before men in the procession. The heifer's sex is stressed by a specific term θήλειαν, 'female'. Sacrifices were normally conducted with a knife; Pausanias' sentence describing the means of sacrifice begins with δρεπάνωι, 'with a sickle', emphasizing the oddity. The actions of the four old women are the focus of attention. The reader is made very aware that female officiants kill a female victim for a female god. Entwined with the female, marvel is central to Pausanias' treatment. καὶ τόδε ἄλλο πρόσκειται τῆι θυσίαι θαῦμα, 'another amazing thing about this sacrifice' is the way the cows must fall. The mystery is compounded in Pausanias' final statement. 'But I have not seen the one they most worship, and nor has any other man, Hermionean or foreigner; no one knows what it looks like except for the old women.'

Female priests, the aberrant, and the amazing; the combination of these three elements in Pausanias' account is striking.² Is the union of these factors in the Chthonia festival a coincidence? Is it a unique occurrence? Or is it part of a wider

¹ 2.35.4-8. The cult is celebrated on the headland at Hermion, south-east of Corinth, and Aelian knows of it too, *On Animals* 11.4. References to and extracts from the text of Pausanias are made using *Pausaniae Graeciae Descriptio*, edited in three volumes by Maria Helena Rocha-Pereira (Leipzig, 1989). References will normally be restricted to the footnotes for easy reading. Translations owe a debt to those of Peter Levi, *Guide to Greece*, two vols. (Harmondsworth, 1971), and W. H. S. Jones, *Description of Greece*, five vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1918).

² Aelian's account of the ritual differs noticeably in its emphasis from Pausanias'. He describes one aged female priest, who is able to lead the largest *male* cattle docilely to the altar to be sacrificed (by whom he does not say).

pattern? The fascination of the episode acts as a catalyst for a detailed study of gender and the priesthood in the perspective of Pausanias' text.

I. Reading the text

The keen footnote reader will find Pausanias' *Periegesis*, his *Guide to Greece*, adduced as proof for many assertions of fact within works of ancient history. That Pausanias' vibrant and valuable text has often been relegated to this place is unfortunate: new work must hope to put Pausanias in a brighter light. That the *Guide to Greece* is pervasively pillaged for factual underpinning in explications of classical Greek religion is more worrying. An indiscriminating, antiquarian approach to Pausanias not only underrates his text, but also misrepresents it. A crucial antidote to the prevailing 'fact-finding' tendency of scholarship is to acknowledge the existence of perspective in a text, to be aware that its temporal and geographical location, the agenda of its author (even the most seemingly retiring), have an organic relationship to the material contained within it. The aim of this first section is to explore Pausanias' authorial perspective.

A proper place in his second-century A.D. context is often denied Pausanias. He gathered the material for his *Guide to Greece* in some twenty-five years of travelling around Greece, estimated from the text, our only evidence about the author, as between A.D. 155 and 180.³ Peoples, places, religious customs, and stories told about the gods, heroes, and humans are the subjects of his work. The typical pattern for each of his ten books (excluding the experimental first) is an account of the tales about the past attached to the region or city he has visited, followed by a 'guided tour' written with certain priorities. The ancient and the sacred predominate. Yet the *Guide to Greece* is usually treated as some timeless handbook of Greek religion, even by the best of scholars. The (mostly unexpressed) reasoning behind this practice must be the assumption that because Pausanias interests himself in things past and things holy, everything he records is just as it was in, for example, the fifth century B.C. Historically, seven hundred years cannot have not passed without significant changes. The passage of time affects what Pausanias writes about and how he chooses to do so.

The *Guide to Greece* must be a book of Pausanias' present, not the Greek world of the past. In her study of Roman Greece in the early imperial period, Susan Alcock has made excellent use of Pausanias as 'one important *contemporary* voice' (my italics). Pausanias is 'a self-aware observer of the sacred landscape of second-

³ Christian Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide to Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, 1985), p. 9. It is commonly thought Pausanias was born in A.D. 115, making the *Guide to Greece* the work of his middle and later years.

century Greece'.⁴ Jás Elsner has lately argued that 'Pausanias offers us a guide to the formation of Greek religious identity as a form of resistance to the realities of Roman rule'.⁵ He sees Pausanias taking refuge in the glories of Greece's independent past from her present status as Achaia, province of Rome. 'The inevitable tension between this myth of Greek identity and the facts of Roman rule was resolved for Pausanias only by evoking a religious identity, deeper than socio-political realities, which lay in the sacred sites and monuments of Greece'.⁶ Elsner's argument relies on the perception that we see Greece through the eyes of an insider.⁷ Who could be better qualified to act as a guide to Greek religion than a Greek? This is an assumption which needs careful questioning.

What sort of a Greek is Pausanias? It is a fair argument that puts Pausanias at home in Lydia, a citizen of Magnesia by Mount Sipylus.⁸ Whilst by the second century this obviously makes Pausanias a cultural Greek, it does not identify him as an insider of the Greek mainland. In fact, Pausanias emphasizes his origins by quite explicit and repeated references. For instance, 'Some traces of the life of Pelops and of Tantalos are still left in our country (παρ' ἡμῖν) today: the lake of Tantalos named after him and ... Pelops' throne, on the mountain top at Sipylus'.⁹ Two points emerge. Pausanias has not only an Asian background, which he wants us to note, but also an Asian perspective. Tantalos and Sipylus are described as *our* country. What might be the influence of Pausanias' Magnesian origins on his outlook and sense of purpose?

It is observable that Pausanias' interest in recent innovation is slight, in terms of both history and religion. Fourth and third-century Greece is well-covered (to recount much of the fifth would be to rewrite what Herodotos and Thucydides had put so well, as Pausanias acknowledges¹⁰). But only the Roman emperors, the formative Augustus, Nero, and those of Pausanias' own day, break through the silence of Greek history from the Achaian war of 146 B.C. onwards. Susan Alcock observes

⁴ Susan E. Alcock, *Graecia Capta: the landscapes of Roman Greece* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 174.

⁵ Jás Elsner, 'Pausanias: a Greek pilgrim in the Roman world', *Past and Present* 135 (1992), p. 5. He has reworked this article as chapter 4, 'Viewing and identity: the travels of Pausanias; or, a Greek pilgrim in the Roman world', of his *Roman Art and the Viewer: the transformation of art from the pagan world to Christianity* (Cambridge, 1995): same quotation on p. 127. Elsner's reading of Pausanias' text is more sophisticated than most. He aims 'to explore [Pausanias'] formidable evidence as to *how art was seen*. The way Pausanias structures his subject-matter, if we examine his methods of discourse rather than simply look at the objects he describes, reveals his ways of viewing as well as what he viewed', *Art and the Roman Viewer*, pp. 126-7.

⁶ 'Pausanias: a Greek pilgrim', p. 5. His interpretation is followed by Alcock, *Graecia Capta*, pp. 174, 201-2, 214.

⁷ Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide*, p. 25, 'in a good many of the instances in which Pausanias speaks of "the Greeks" he ought to be understood to mean "we the Greeks"'

⁸ Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide*, p. 15.

⁹ 5.13.7

¹⁰ For example, 2.30.4, 'Since the story of Auxesia and Damia ... has all been told in accurate detail by Herodotos, I have no intention of recording what has been well said in the past'.

Pausanias' neglect of events and monuments dating from the mid second century B.C. onwards. This partial disinterest in the recent past and present is a characteristic shared by Greek authors of Pausanias' period.¹¹ The newly introduced cults of Isis and Sarapis receive scant attention: the locations of their shrines are noted briefly, with few cult details.¹² In Pausanias' thought structure they are unimportant. In this respect, Pausanias embodies the attitudes of his time. Ewen Bowie describes Pausanias' interests in local history of some time past, mythology and classical works of art as 'typical mid second-century'. The language of the text has Attic, archaizing tendencies: traits of Pausanias' work align him firmly with the styles and preoccupations of his second-century contemporaries.¹³ The educated of Asia Minor had a particular interest in the past of mainland Greece; nostalgia for old Greece, their historical country of origin? Pausanias should be counted as one of the broad community of eastern intelligentsia within the Roman empire.

On his own evidence, Pausanias was well-travelled: he had seen much of western and central Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Byzantium, the Aegean islands, Rome, Campania and parts of southern Italy.¹⁴ Elsner is forced to describe Pausanias' choice to write about his 'native land' as something odd.¹⁵ Fitting Pausanias into the tradition of travel-writing and pilgrimage which developed from the third century B.C. makes much more sense if we realize that he is writing to some degree about his travels 'abroad'. A picture of Pausanias that builds a slight distance between observer and observed helps us to appreciate the significance of an authorial perspective which commentators have not exploited.

Pausanias is a subtle author, whose framework of approach is only partially enunciated. Like Artemidoros, he stresses his personal research. Scrupulously he notes when he did not have the personal experience we might have expected. He did not arrive in time for the Elean festival of the Thyia for Dionysos, but the best of the citizens and strangers too have vouched for the accuracy of the ritual details he records.¹⁶ All important are his own viewing, questioning of informed individuals and people from the local communities, his reading of inscriptions, of poetry, literature, and history available widely or only locally. Many different verbs are used

¹¹ Alcock, *Graecia Capta*, p. 28.

¹² Bare references to Isis and Sarapis, for example, 3.14.5, 'There is also a Spartan sanctuary of Sarapis which is extremely new'. Also 1.18.4, 1.41.3, 2.2.3, 2.4.6, 2.13.7, 2.32.6, 2.34.1, 2.34.10, 3.22.13, 3.25.10, 4.32.6, 7.21.13, 7.25.9, 7.26.7, 9.24.1. At 10.32.13-18, the sanctuary of Isis at Tithorea in Phokis is given the most lengthy treatment. The sanctuary is the holiest the Greeks have ever built to the 'Egyptian goddess', says Pausanias, and he details the spring and autumn festivals celebrated for Isis, adducing parallel Egyptian practices.

¹³ Ewen L. Bowie, 'Greeks and their past in the Second Sophistic', *Past and Present* 46 (1970), pp. 3-41. See also Glen W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford, 1969).

¹⁴ Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide*, p. 17.

¹⁵ Elsner, 'Pausanias: a Greek pilgrim', p. 7.

¹⁶ 6.26.2

to stress the breadth of Pausanias' enquiry.¹⁷ He is a confident researcher and writer, standing guarantor of his own text. 'You may take my statements as accurate.'¹⁸ He assumes responsibility with phrases like *δοκῶ δὲ ἕγωγε*, 'in my opinion'.¹⁹ When he has discovered something not previously generally known, or recorded, he tells us this: thereby he gains credit both for the originality of the new, and for the preservation of the old.²⁰ Unlike Artemidoros, Pausanias is less explicit about how we are to interpret his work into meaning in real life. But there are good reasons for thinking Pausanias did not simply write down everything he saw or heard.

Definite organizational principles are at work in the text. Pausanias is a writer impressively in control of his vast and diverse material. He is an enviably competent cross-referencer; he knows from where he comes and where he is aiming towards. Any excursus from the main thrust of the narrative is labelled as such.²¹ A change in his interpretation is explained, not lost in muddled argument.²² Claude Calame has shown how tight is the construction governing just one small section of text, the description of Hera's temple at Olympia.²³ There is a hierarchical order of elements, using rhetorical devices, especially synecdoche and metonymy. The narrative moves from the announcement of the temple, through its style, measurements and into its materials; it feeds into a wider description of the site at Olympia, into the rites celebrated by Hera's women and the myths told about them. The story brings us back to Hera, with whose temple the extended descriptive unit began. Pausanias' care is evident - his is not an account written 'as seen'.

The rarity with which Pausanias openly expresses a guiding principle demands that we pay it attention. He comments that, 'The Greeks are very prone to marvel more at foreign things than things at home.'²⁴ Distinguished historians,

¹⁷ For instance, 1.23.5, *ἑτέρου πλέον ἐθέλων ἐπίστασθαι πολλοῖς αὐτῶν τούτων ἕνεκα ἐς λόγους ἦλθον*, 'wanting particularly to know who the satyrs are, I talked to a great number of people about it'; 1.28.3, *πυθανόμενος*, 'enquiring'; 2.4.1, *ἐπελεξάμην*, 'I read'; 2.16.3, *ἤκουσα*, 'I heard'; 2.24.7, *εὕρισκον*, 'I found out'.

¹⁸ 6.13.11. 5.25.1, 'I have given a very accurate survey of statues in the Altis'; 1.23.3, the crisp brevity of *μαρτυρεῖ δέ μοι*, 'I can prove it'.

¹⁹ E.g. 8.2.2.

²⁰ 1.23.2, *λέγω δὲ οὐκ ἐς συγγραφὴν πρότερον ἦκοντα*, 'I write what has not been written down before' a story of how Hippias tortured Aristogeiton's mistress, which Pausanias says is widely believed by the Athenians.

²¹ For example, the story of the Messenians' capture of Philopoimen is related to a particular juncture, 4.29.12, then Pausanias tells us we must wait to hear how he died until his account of Arkadia (8.51 ff, in fact). Of course, this is the narrative device of hooking and keeping the interest of the audience, but that Pausanias can do it in writing is significant. Cf. Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide*, pp. 103-4, for instances of stories begun in book one, and continued in later books.

²² Most strikingly done at 8.8.3 when Pausanias revises his opinion of the value of Greek myths (and see below). 3.5.1, Pausanias gives what he now considers a more probable story than one he told in book one.

²³ Claude Calame, 'Pausanias le périégète en ethnographe ou comment décrire un culte grec', in Jean-Michel Adam *et al.*, *Le discours anthropologique: description, narration, savoir* (Paris, 1990), pp. 227-50.

²⁴ 9.36.5

complains Pausanias, have described the pyramids in great detail, but no one has written about the equally marvellous treasury of Minyas and the walls of Tiryns. That Pausanias makes this comment in the course of his own description of Minyas reveals that he feels his work is emphasizing the deserving and the unrecorded. Key here is not the opposition between foreign and domestic, but the reason why something merits selection for description. θαῦμα, 'marvel', is the criterion Pausanias isolates.²⁵ It has not been appreciated sufficiently that the pursuit of the marvellous is a prime motivation for Pausanias' writing. His dedication to things ancient and divine is not in question, but part of his attachment to them, and the aspects of them he chooses to record, are better understood in the light of his appreciation of the unusual. This is a distinctively Pausanian perspective on the 'facts'.

It would be easy to ignore or undervalue Pausanias' comments on the marvellous. Their distinctly Herodotean ring might be thought to lend them a (deceptively) quaint and echoing quality. In fact, reference to Herodotos should help elucidate Pausanias. Marvel and wonder have a leading role in Herodotos' writing. The *Histories* open with a 'mission statement' that ἔργα μεγάλα τε καὶ θωμαστά, 'both great and wondrous deeds', should not fade through time.²⁶ As noun, adjective, and verb the idea of the marvellous is expressed very many times. At *Histories* 3.60, for example, Herodotos explains that he has dwelt on the Samians at length ὅτι σφί τρία ἐστὶ μέγιστα πάντων Ἑλλήνων ἐξεργασμένα, 'because three of the greatest works in all Greece were made by them'. Herodotos makes a particular link between the amazing and the divine. The miracles that greet the Persians at Delphi, for instance, are clearly divine.²⁷ Pausanias quotes from many authors, but demonstrably he is aligning himself in the Herodotean tradition.²⁸

In its differing forms, θαῦμα has a comparably strong presence in the text of Pausanias to that of Herodotos.²⁹ Frequently Pausanias chooses it as an evaluative term. Something may be marked out as a marvel, or even negatively as not a marvel. For example, Pausanias notes a θαῦμα at the sanctuary of Demeter in Mykalessos, Boiotia; fruit placed at the feet of the image in the autumn remain fresh throughout the year.³⁰ The awesome and the divine coincide. The marvellous can be a visual thing. 'Worth seeing', θέας δὲ ἄξιον, is a phrase repeatedly employed as a indicator

²⁵ ἐν θαύματι τίθεσθαι μείζονι ... οὐδὲν ὄντα ἐλλάττονος θαύματος. 9.36.5.

²⁶ Herodotos, *Histories* 1.1.

²⁷ Herodotos, *Histories* 8.37-8. Further miraculous divine links occur with a beard-growing female priest, Pedasa, 1.175; an apparition at Marathon, 6.117.2-3; a miracle at Plataea, 9.65.2.

²⁸ Of Homer, for example, Pausanias says his ideas have proved useful to humans in all matters, 4.28.8: Strabo's excessively Homeric Greek *Geography* is a further influence. The second century was a highly literate time; more classical authors can be shown to have been read than in any other period, Bowie, 'Greeks and their past in the Second Sophistic', p. 35.

²⁹ As a crude comparison, I counted some ninety-two references in a scan for 'θαυμ' in the *Histories* using the Pandora text-searching system of the *T.L.G.* disk, and approximately seventy three in a search for θαῦμα in the *Guide to Greece*.

³⁰ 9.19.5

of something of importance within the text.³¹ How is the phrase first used? The *Guide to Greece* opens in conspicuously inconspicuous fashion; no dedication, no apologetics (at least none surviving), contrast Artemidoros. We round the Sounion headland and sail along past Laurion's silver mines to the harbour of Piraeus. Pausanias' first explicitly selective act is to recommend θέας δὲ ἄξιον τῶν ἐν Πειραιεῖ, 'things worth seeing in the Piraeus'.³² That evaluated as noteworthy is the τέμενος, 'sacred enclosure', of Zeus and Athena. From the start, Pausanias is interested in the most striking, the special, in a divine context.

This strong sense of the extraordinary must be borne in mind when reading the passage often quoted as the *locus classicus* for Pausanias' purpose in writing. Δεῖ δέ με ἀφικέσθαι τοῦ λόγου πρόσω, πάντα ὁμοίως ἐπεξιόντα τὰ Ἑλληνικά. 'I must get further on with my work, which is a description of all Greece.'³³ The phrase picked out has been πάντα ... τὰ Ἑλληνικά, 'all of Greece', or perhaps more accurately 'all things Greek'. If we allow this passage to represent Pausanias, then his work indeed seems vague and unfocused; past dull underestimations of the *Guide to Greece* are explained. In context, the sentence functions in the text to return us from stories about the general Olympiodoros to a continued tour of the physicalities of the Athenian acropolis; it is primarily a rhetorical device for swift onward movement. We must not read too much into the shorthand phrase. Pausanias' text is more exciting than πάντα ... τὰ Ἑλληνικά gives him credit. 'I do not want my story to extend to private individuals', says Pausanias of the descendants of King Laios.³⁴ He knows who these people were, but he does not intend to tell us. His narrative will not contain what is not important, the uninteresting. Part of the curiosity Pausanias' text evokes, and the sheer entertainment it provides, result from its clear preference for the spectacular, when available.

Pausanias' frame of reference is constant throughout the *Guide to Greece*. The close of the description of Attica is marked with an authorial signature more openly than its beginning. 'These in my opinion are the γνωριμώτατα 'most famous' legends and sights at Athens: from the beginning my discussion has picked out from the masses of material the things that deserve to be recorded.'³⁵ At a significant point, the opening of a new narrative on Sparta, Pausanias chooses to reiterate what he said at the end of his Attic account.³⁶ He himself provides the corrective to any misreading of 1.26.4. 'I am not going through everything (τὰ πάντα) but selecting and discussing the really memorable things (<τὰ δὲ> μάλιστα ἄξια μνήμης).' Phrases

³¹ *T.L.G.* provides about seventy examples of the phrase.

³² 1.1.3

³³ 1.26.4

³⁴ 5.4.5

³⁵ 1.39.3

³⁶ 3.11.1

are repeated. For instance, ἀπέκρινε δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν πολλῶν ἐξ ἀρχῆς ὁ λόγος μοι ... at 1.39.3, is very much present in ἐμοὶ γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἠθέλησεν ὁ λόγος ἀπὸ πολλῶν ... at 3.11.1. Again the emphatic superlative is employed, this time as τὰ ἀξιολογώτατα; 'the most noteworthy' is to be discriminated from the mass of worthless stories people tell about themselves.³⁷ The verb of judgement and selection, ἀποκρίνειν, occurs in both passages. Pausanias uses language to demonstrate the fixity of his purpose. His confidence in his own judgement, Thucydides-like, is manifest. 'Since my plan has been a good one there is no change I can make in it.'

So much for Pausanias' sense of the special; what is his sense of the sacred? Proverbial-type assertions about the gods suffuse the text. For instance, the Knidians were prevented by the Pythia from digging through their Isthmus. 'So difficult is it for humans to alter by violence what is divinely ordained.'³⁸ One Arkadian legend tells of the good times past, when mortals and immortals sat at table together.³⁹ This legend, Pausanias says, is of the very oldest, and is likely. The gods rewarded human goodness, and men became heroes. The ideal of the past is contrasted with the sad reality of the present. In Pausanias' time, wickedness flourishes to the utmost, no-one is deified except in flattering obeisance, and evil-doers escape punishment until death. In a later book, Pausanias twice states his interpretation of a painting of Polygnotos', in which the punishment of a sacrilegious thief is depicted: people in those days still honoured and respected the gods.⁴⁰ And there are many other examples. We are not to be in any doubt about Pausanias' piety. Oracles are a case in point. Kleomenes' bribery of the Pythia is set down as peerless audacity: telling of the Phokian seizure of the Delphic sanctuary, Pausanias comments οὐκ ἐς ἔπαινον τίθεμαι, 'I do not find it praiseworthy'.⁴¹ These statements may read like clichés, but they form part of his personal belief system.

Pausanias writes in self-consciously pious and protective fashion. He will not prostitute his religion for our pleasure or curiosity. Religiously inspired silences both authenticate and frustrate. Only the initiated can enter the grove of Kabeirian Demeter and Kore, in Boiotia; as to who they are and what they do σιωπὴν ἄγοντι ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν συγγνώμη παρὰ ἀνδρῶν φιληκόων ἔστω μοι, 'the curious will have to forgive me if I keep silent'.⁴² Jás Elsner elucidates the relationship between sight

³⁷ This strong critical term is used a dozen times according to *T.L.G.*

³⁸ 2.1.5. This is an Herodotean tale, *Histories* 1.174. Other examples of pious statements at 4.29.9, 8.33.1, 9.17.6. 1.17.1 and 1.24.3 comment on the special piety of the Athenians - religious behaviour is something he notices and believes worthy of comment.

³⁹ 8.2.4-7

⁴⁰ 10.28.6

⁴¹ 3.4.6; 3.10.4.

⁴² 9.25.5. Pausanias demonstrates his pious silence also at 2.37.6, οὐχ ὅσιον ἐς ἅπαντας ἦν μοι γράψαι, 'it would be sacrilegious to write about this for everyone'; 5.15.11, it would not be right to record the words used at a sacred ceremony; 8.37.9, he will not reveal Despoinea's name to the

and the sacred in temple-visiting.⁴³ Frequently Pausanias describes a temple's exterior but discloses no details about the interior. Writes Elsner, 'The act of viewing or contemplating (*theasthai*) is associated with man's relation to the Divine (*theos*) in the ritual context of a sanctuary'. Pausanias reflects cultural attitudes with this practice, and emphasizes his personal religiosity. He respects the mystery of the Eleusinian rites; as an initiate he has knowledge he will not divulge.⁴⁴ But it is not only commonly-felt respect that bids silence (note that we the readers are not presumed to be fellow worshippers). A dream forbade him describe things within the walls of the sanctuary.⁴⁵ On another occasion, against his wishes, Pausanias is once more kept by a dream from describing the contents of an Athenian sanctuary, the Eleusinion. Instead he turns to what it is ὄσιον γράφειν, 'not sacrilegious to write'. Pausanias perceives himself as a man in contact with the divine, enjoying a special relationship with the gods through the medium of his dreams.⁴⁶

Where possible, Pausanias participated in the cults he describes. Like Artemidoros, like Plutarch, Pausanias shows us contemporary religion from the perspective of a practitioner. His is an informed approach. Pausanias will note particular instances when he has worshipped. For instance, the only detail he wants to add to Herodotos' account of the cult of Auxesia and Damia is the fact that he has seen their statues and sacrificed to them with the same sacrificial rites as are used at Eleusis.⁴⁷ The intricate and arduous consultation of the oracle of Trophonios is related in every detail; the enquirer, we learn, returns from the descent to the oracle 'possessed with terror and hardly aware of himself or his surroundings'.⁴⁸ The vivid realism of the account comes from Pausanias' own participation. γράφω δὲ οὐκ ἀκοῆν ἀλλὰ ἑτέρους τε ἰδὼν καὶ αὐτὸς τῶι Τροφωνίῳ χρησάμενος, 'I am not writing from hearsay, as I have consulted Trophonios and seen others do so'. The exception proves the rule: Pausanias tells us when he was not present at a festival he

uninitiated.

⁴³ Jás Elsner, ch. 3, 'Viewing and the sacred: pagan, Christian and the vision of God', *Art and the Roman Viewer*, p. 93.

⁴⁴ 1.37.4, 'Those who know the mystery of Eleusis and those who have read what are called the Orphic writings will know what I am talking about'.

⁴⁵ 1.38.7

⁴⁶ 1.14.3-4. Pausanias also records a restraining dream at 4.33.5. There is a quantity of second century A.D. evidence for the influence of dreams on educated people, and not just from the professionally interested Artemidoros. For instance, Galen's father set his son to study medicine after a dream of him as a doctor; Galen dreamt one of his treatments. Cassius Dio wrote his *Roman History* on divine instruction given in a dream. Aelius Aristides and Marcus Aurelius were further significant dreamers.

⁴⁷ 2.30.4. Elsner, 'Pausanias: a Greek pilgrim', p. 8, notes that Pausanias seems in particular to have been an initiate of Demeter and Kore.

⁴⁸ 9.39.5-14. Philostratos, *Life of Apollonios of Tyana* 8.19-20 provides an early third-century account of Apollonios' mid first-century visit to the oracle. There, visitors are pulled down into the oracular cavern, sitting. 'They must be dressed in white, and carry honeycakes in their hands to appease the reptiles which fasten upon you as you descend. The earth restores some of the votaries to the daylight not far away, some quite far away.' Apollonios is reported to have stayed under the earth for seven days, the longest stay ever achieved, and to have been told that Pythagoras' doctrines form the best philosophical system.

records.⁴⁹ He should have an excellent understanding of both the mechanics and meanings of Greek cult.

In establishing the correct pilgrim/tourist ratio for Pausanias, the question of 'guides' is significant. Such is the translation generally given for ἐξηγηταί, the people to whom Pausanias refers on some nineteen occasions. In Athens and at Eleusis, ἐξηγηταί had a special function. From the fourth century B.C. onwards, they existed as religious officials, with a recognized position as expounders of the sacred and ancestral law.⁵⁰ Early evidence is provided by Plato's dialogue, *Euthyphro*, which refers to the consultation of an Athenian exegete over the appropriate treatment of a slave who has murdered another slave.⁵¹ How should we think of ἐξηγηταί in Pausanias? Felix Jacoby disallows Pausanias' terminology, and gives little weight to his evidence. 'The correct name for those people, whom, for whatever reason, Pausanias in a number of Greek cities called ἐξηγηταί ... is περιηγηταί. ... Judging by what he learns from them, the ἐξηγηταί of Pausanias are, without any doubt, simply guides (*ciceroni*, περιηγηταί ...), who may have been State servants, because the towns were interested in the tourist trade.'⁵² But when we look at the activity of ἐξηγηταί in Pausanias, Jacoby's certainty seems unjustified.

Pausanias tells us of Iophon of Knossos. He produced responses in hexameter verse for those Oropians who threw a coin into the spring of Amphiaros in thanks for their restoration to health; this ἐξηγητής is certainly a religious practitioner.⁵³ At Elis, care for the sacrifices is shared among a limited number of people on a monthly basis; one of these is an ἐξηγητής.⁵⁴ The term is used in the sense of interpreters, of dreams and portents.⁵⁵ By making ignorance an exception, Pausanias implies high standards can be expected of guides.⁵⁶ Sometimes the ἐξηγηταί do simply give information, rather than perform religious actions.⁵⁷ Herodotos, elsewhere Pausanias' model, provides parallels for Pausanias' representation of ἐξηγηταί. He mentions

⁴⁹ 8.41.6

⁵⁰ James H. Oliver, *The Athenian Expounders of the Sacred and Ancestral Law* (Baltimore, 1950), esp. pp. 10-11, 32, 37, 40. Felix Jacoby, *Atthis: the local chronicles of ancient Athens* (Oxford, 1949), pp. 8-50, derives the exegetical institution from Solonic times. But Oliver, 'On the exegetes and the mantic or manic chresmologians', *A.J.Ph.* 73 (1952), pp. 406-13, disputes this and maintains his arguments for a late fifth-century origin. With some caveats, Kevin Clinton supports Oliver's argument, in his discussion of the exegetes of the Eumolpidae, *The Sacred Officials of the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Philadelphia, 1974), p. 90.

⁵¹ Plato, *Euthyphro* 4C-D, dated to c. 399 B.C.

⁵² Jacoby, *Atthis*, p. 237, note 2, and p. 399.

⁵³ 1.34.4. Pausanias knows the poem written by Lykeas, an Argive ἐξηγητής, on Pyrrhos' death at the hands of Demeter disguised as a woman, 1.13.8.

⁵⁴ 5.15.10

⁵⁵ 5.23.6

⁵⁶ 2.9.7; 5.21.8-9. Some Lydian ἐξηγηταί confirm Pausanias in his defence of the true rather than the popular version of events, 1.35.8. The ἐξηγητής at Olympia is called by name, Aristarkhos, 5.20.4. The quality of exegetical information can vary, however. Pausanias can correct or supplement what he is told, 1.42.4, 2.23.6, 2.31.4, 5.18.6, 9.3.3.

⁵⁷ 1.41.2, 4.33.6, 5.6.6, 5.10.7, 7.6.5, 10.28.7.

three, one an interpreter of portents, one an interpreter of the ancestral customs, and one an expounder of good advice to the royal house.⁵⁸ On the whole, Pausanias provides enough evidence about the ἐξηγηταί to suggest their role was more complex than mere leaders of tour parties. In a significant number of cases, they have an expressly religious role. Ἐξηγηταί are more priest-like in their professionalism, not random civic officials. 'Guiding', as well as 'being guided', is more of a sacred activity than a secular one.

The close consideration given to the text in this first section is essential for putting Pausanias' portrayal of priests in the correct perspective. The most noteworthy and the most remarkable, in a religious context, are what Pausanias will record of things he sees and hears. We must ask what implications his selection criteria have on the text and the subjects it talks about. How should Pausanias' search for the spectacular inform our reading of his text? By regarding the *Guide to Greece* in this new light we may attempt to burnish the image of the man ('substantial and sober') and his work ('a careful and thorough job') dulled by the epithets of stolid scholarship.⁵⁹

II. Male priests, female priests

There are good reasons for bringing the evidence of Pausanias to bear on the study of Greek priests. The first is a general one: the bibliography on the subject is disappointing, and especially weak in modern contributions.⁶⁰ Methodology for studying priests often consists of no more than listing and cataloguing. A prime example of this approach is constituted by Robert Garland's article, 'Religious authority in archaic and classical Athens'.⁶¹ He trawls through office after office, heading information from disparate sources under sub-sections of sanctuaries, appointment, origins, festivals, honour, dress, emoluments, known holders *etc.* Not only does this make for very repetitive reading, but the priests are deprived of their contexts in text or inscription. Lost too, therefore, is any real sense of the priests in relation to their fellow worshippers, the part they play in the overall activity of the cult of their god or gods, any feeling for the particular manifestation of the divine

⁵⁸ Herodotos, *Histories* 1.78, 3.31, 5.31.

⁵⁹ Habicht, *Pausanias' Guide*, p. 12 and p. 63.

⁶⁰ A work from the nineteenth century still not superseded is Jules Martha, *Les sacerdoces athéniens* (Paris, 1882).

⁶¹ Robert S. J. Garland, 'Religious authority in archaic and classical Athens', *A.B.S.A.* 79 (1984), pp. 75-125; his chapter, 'Priests and power in classical Athens', in Mary Beard and John North (eds.), *Pagan Priests: religion and power in the ancient world* (London, 1990), pp. 75-91, is a better attempt at placing the wide variety of Athenian religious personnel in the context of the functioning and development of the Athenian democracy.

they serve. The development and understanding of the priestly role in history and myth remains unconsidered.

The second reason is more specific. Greek women were arguably at their most visible when acting religiously. Religious ritual was a main form of action for women outside the house. As John Gould comments, 'In the sacred and ritual activities of the community the active presence of women in the public world is not merely tolerated but required'.⁶² Women holding the priesthood are one very measurable form of religious operation. In view of the age and scarcity of work on priests, it is sad but not surprising that female priests have received comparatively little attention. Brief discussions in recent works are still happy to rely on material written early in the twentieth century, placing an unfair burden upon it.

Priests merit just four pages entirely their own in Walter Burkert's *Greek Religion*. The only supporting reference, undiscussed, to his short statements on maleness and femaleness as factors in the office is Lewis Farnell's 1904 article, 'Sociological hypotheses concerning the position of women in ancient religion'.⁶³ For its time, Farnell's work was good, and is still of interest. But it is also *of its time*, with lists once more of priests male and female in different categories: the whole thrust of discussion is an argument against matriarchy in archaic societies, scholarly bees in bonnets long out of fashion. We might reasonably expect more from the first volume of *A History of Women in the West*, but in vain: no chapter with a focus on priests, and the index in this book of women refers us to a total of fifteen pages regarding male priests and just ten for female priests.⁶⁴ The volume of collected essays edited by Mary Beard and John North, *Pagan Priests: religion and power in the ancient world*, interprets priesthoods within a framework of the political system. The effect is to sideline priests without an explicit political function – most of all, women. The emphasis of the book is on Roman religion, but, for example, the cult role of the empresses is not mentioned, nor the growing number of women in the provinces who held priestly office.⁶⁵

Greater sophistication is overdue in the gender-aware questions we should ask about priests, and in the ways we might try to answer them. Where we find women and men awarded the same title in the public arena that was ancient religion, where

⁶² John Gould, 'Law, custom and myth: aspects of the social position of women in classical Athens', *J.H.S.* 100 (1980), p. 50.

⁶³ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: archaic and classical* (Eng. trans. John Raffan, Oxford, 1985), pp. 95-8. Lewis R. Farnell, 'Sociological hypotheses concerning the position of women in ancient religion', *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 7 (1904), pp. 70-94: the sole reference of Burkert, *Greek Religion*, note 32, p. 98. Another old work of lists still referred to is Helen McClees, *A Study of Women in Attic Inscriptions* (New York, 1920).

⁶⁴ Pauline Schmitt Pantel (ed.), *A History of Women in the West. I.* (Eng. trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1992).

⁶⁵ These points are made and developed further in the review by the Tübingen Work Group, 'Priesthoods in Mediterranean religions', *Numen* 40 (1993), especially pp. 85, 91-2.

our information derives from the same single source, the conditions for an investigation into gender promise excellently. The possibilities of Pausanias nicely complement those of Artemidoros. The *Interpretation of Dreams* moves between the secular and sacred worlds. In contrast, the *Guide to Greece's* religious setting is almost hermetic. Our attention moves to a new area. We can concentrate on the formation, expression and understanding of gender models in priestly ritual. The advantages of Pausanias' *Guide to Greece* as the hunting ground for clues are legion. His comments about priests are only a fraction of the interesting material in the *Guide to Greece* with a bearing on questions of gender, but they are a good and discrete starting point for developing a reading of the text. Within Pausanias' constant perspective, comparisons between male priests and female may be made with methodological integrity.

A focus on gender brings to prominence new and interesting problems and the material with which to begin to solve them. We can learn what Pausanias thought it important for the sympathetic outsider to know about male and female priests, as we are invited to look through the refracting lens of his text. Myth, history, current practice across the community, are all possible components of the explanation of a priesthood: we can consider how they are deployed for male priests and female, and why there might be variation. Wider avenues of approach might open up. Is there a connection between gender in heaven and on earth? What implications did sexual difference have for religious activity? At this point it is right to reiterate the thoughts which underpin the whole enterprise of reading the, a, text. The results will constitute a study of perspective, not of 'fact'. How Pausanias says something is as important as what he says: what he says is important only in the context of what he does not say. This is a piece equally about Pausanias' text and female and male priests.

A preliminary delineation of the priestly phenomenon is requisite. Many previous attempts rely heavily, and therefore perhaps unhelpfully, on negative definitions. Much has been made of the divergences of Greek priests from the Christian clergy. Walter Burkert, for example, writes that, 'Greek religion might almost be called a religion without priests: there is no priestly caste as a closed group with fixed tradition, education, initiation, and hierarchy, and even in the permanently established cults there is no *disciplina*, but only usage, *nomos*'.⁶⁶ Beard and North comment that pagan priests 'did not play the part (at least officially) of moral leaders ... [they] never (or only in exceptional circumstances) stood apart from the political order'.⁶⁷ So much may be true and worth saying, but it is not enough. Whilst it is

⁶⁶ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 95.

⁶⁷ Beard and North, *Pagan Priests*, p. 1. The sentence written to conclude the section about cult officials in Louis Gernet and André Boulanger, *La génie grec dans la religion* (Paris, 1932), p. 209, reads, 'Il n'y a pas de clergé'.

simple to say what Greek priests are not, scholars find it much harder to talk in interesting ways about what they are. The theme of power in *Pagan Priests* forms a partial exception, but as said above, the book's emphasis is rather Roman than Greek, and indeed male rather than female.

It is better to take native Greek terminology not alien Christian concepts as an entry point. Jean Rudhardt has made such a linguistic study of Greek religious terms. He explains the priestly role in describing the foundation of temples and altars. 'Elle incombe par excellence aux ἱερεῖς, à qui l'étymologie assigne la fonction de manier des objets ἱερά ou mieux d' en fabriquer, de rendre ἱερός.'⁶⁸ The ἱερεῖς, 'male priest', and (we must supplement) the ἱέρεια, 'female priest', perform ἱερά, 'cult acts', as accepted in local custom. 'Le verbe ἱερεύειν signifie l'acte propre du ἱερεῖς: de celui qui fait des ἱερά, comme le χυτρεῖς fait des pots ou le γραμματεῖς dessine des lettres.'⁶⁹ Such a definition of Greek priests concentrates on the notion of ἱερός, powerful and pervasive in Greek religion.⁷⁰ The priest does sacred deeds and is her or himself bound up in a special and sacred relationship with the gods. 'L'adjectif ἱερός en outre s'applique à plusieurs objets qui se trouvent explicitement en rapport avec les dieux.'⁷¹

I begin my gender-oriented analysis of who Pausanias' priests are and whom they serve with a few figures. Some comparative numbers are the simplest way to begin to build an argument. The totals and ratios are in no way to be read as representative of the objective numbers of priests female and male practising in Greece during the span of Pausanias' travels. Rather, in this stark format they may serve as preliminary indications of textual perspective. There are thirty-one instances of female priests recorded, to twenty-four male, about a quarter more female references than male. The preponderance of women in the male-oriented society of the text arouses interest but tells us nothing in isolation. However, when we remember Pausanias' selection criteria of the most remarkable and noteworthy, we will need to consider whether he regards female priests as more remarkable and noteworthy than male, and if this is so, what his reasons might be.

Priests cannot be examined in isolation from the gods they serve. An essential question asks about the sex of the priest and of the god in a particular cultic context.

⁶⁸ Jean Rudhardt, *Notions fondamentales de la pensée religieuse et actes constitutifs du culte dans la Grèce classique* (Geneva, 1958), p. 231.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 291.

⁷⁰ Rudhardt's exploration is thorough, pp. 22-30. Pp. 23-4, 'Le neutre pluriel, τὰ ἱερά, signifie tout ce qui concerne les cultes, les sanctuaires et les dieux; c'est une des locutions qui correspondent au français *religion*; il faut souligner toutefois que les sens en est plus concret. Elle désigne des objets matériels, des institutions, des événements. Dans un sens plus limité, τὰ ἱερά est un acte religieux, un ensemble de rites, un sacrifice. ... En bref dans les cas où l'adjectif ἱερός paraît revêtir sa pleine signification, τὰ ἱερά nomme ce qu'il y a de plus actif parmi tous les objets mis en cause dans l'opération rituelle.'

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 24.

Is gender is a factor in who serves whom?⁷² In the text, the greatest single group consists of female priests officiating for female gods, earth mirroring heaven, twenty-three references in all.⁷³ The next largest group is male priests serving male gods; at thirteen, it is just under two-thirds of the female total.⁷⁴ For mixed sex combinations of priest and god, there are seven references to female priests serving male gods⁷⁵, and ten to male priests serving female gods.⁷⁶ Taken as a fraction of the total references to either male or female priests the figures seem significant; about two-fifths of male priests are serving a female god or gods, whilst close on a quarter of female priests are serving the male divine. Men and women serve as priests for one female god; there are slight references to priestly families.⁷⁷

How do these figures fit with scholars' few previous thoughts on gender in priestly service? In *Greek Religion*, Burkert is brief and mysterious. 'A priestess very commonly officiates for goddesses and a priest for gods, but there are important exceptions and qualifications.'⁷⁸ Pausanias fits the pattern that the majority of priests serve deities of their own sex, but strikingly a substantial minority (two-fifths male, one quarter female) do not conform. What are the 'important exceptions and qualifications' that might be the cause of such a deviation? Burkert himself gives no hint. His only reference to a discussion is Farnell's 1904 article and he contents

⁷² Questions about the sex of the worshipping group are also important, but Pausanias provides very little information on this.

⁷³ Female priests of female gods: of Athena on the Athenian Acropolis, 1.27.3; of Aphrodite close to the Corinthian Asklepieion, 2.10.4; of Hera at the Heraion at Mycenae, 2.17.1; of Demeter Chthonia, Hermion, Corinth, 2.35.4-8; of Eileithyia at Hermion, south-east of Corinth, 2.35.11; of Thetis, Sparta, 3.14.4; of Apollo's daughters Hilaria and Phoibe, Sparta, 3.16.1; of Artemis Orthia, Sparta, 3.16.10; of Knagian Artemis, Sparta, 3.18.4; of Hera, Messene, 4.12.5; of Demeter at Aigila in Lakonia, 4.17.1; of Olympic Eileithyia, Mt. Kronios, Elis, 6.20.2; of Demeter Chamyne, Elis, 6.20.9; of Artemis Laphria, Patrai, Achaia, 7.18.12; of Triklarian Artemis, Patrai, Achaia, 7.19.1; of Hera, Aigion, Achaia, 7.23.9; of Eumenides, Keryneia, Achaia, 7.25.7; of Gaios, Aigai, Achaia, 7.25.13; of Artemis, Aigeira, Achaia, 7.26.5; of Artemis Hymnia, Orchomenos, near Mantinea, 8.5.11; of Demeter Melaine, near Phigaleia, Arkadia, 8.42.12; of Artemis, Tegea, 8.53.3; of Itonian Athena, near Koroneia, Boiotia, 9.34.2.

⁷⁴ Male priests of male gods: of Karneian Apollo, Sikyon, 2.10.2; of the winds, Titane, Corinth, 2.12.1; of Nemean Zeus, Argos, 2.15.3; of Hippolytos, Troizen, 2.32.1; of Herakles, Messenia, 4.26.3; of Zeus, Ithome, Messenia, 4.33.2; of Herakles, Elis, 6.11.2; of Dionysos Aisymnetes, Patrai, Achaia, 7.20.1; of Dionysos, Kalydon, 7.21.1; of Zeus and Herakles at Aigion, Achaia, 7.24.4; of Apollo at Thebes, 9.10.4; of Trophonios, Lebadeia, Boiotia, 9.39.8; of Dionysos, Amphikleia, 10.33.11.

⁷⁵ Female priests of male gods: Pythia, *passim*; of Apollo Deiradiotes, Larisa, Argos, 2.24.1; of Poseidon, Kalaureia, Troezen, 2.33.2; of Dionysos and a hero, Kolona, Lakonia, 3.13.7; of Sosipolis, Mt. Kronios, Elis, 6.20.2; of Herakles, Thespiai, Boiotia, 9.27.6; of Dionysos, Delphi, 10.6.4.

⁷⁶ Male priests of female gods: torchbearers of Demeter at Eleusis, 1.37.1; of Demeter and Kore, between Athens and Eleusis, 1.38.1; hierophant of Demeter, Keleai, Corinth, 2.14.1; of Artemis, Aricia, Italy, 2.27.4; of Soteiria, Aigion, Achaia, 7.24.3; of Artemis Saviour, Pellene, Achaia, 7.27.3; of Demeter Kidaria, Pheneos, Arkadia, 8.15.3; of Athena, Tegea, 8.47.3; of (another) Athena, Tegea, 8.47.5; of Athena Kraneia, Elateia, Phokis, 10.34.8.

⁷⁷ Male and female priests of Artemis Hymnia, Orchomenos, Arkadia, 8.13.1. Families of priests: of Great Goddesses, Messene, 4.14.1; 4.27.5. The office of Eleusinian torchbearer is also hereditary, 1.37.1. Inscriptions *I.G. II*² 2452, 1034, 3507, 3508 testify to the truth of Pausanias' account of offices held by various members of Akestion's family. Did Pausanias copy a monument she erected? It seems likely, Clinton, *The Sacred Officials of the Eleusinian Mysteries*, pp. 54-5.

⁷⁸ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 98. His only reference is to Farnell, 'Sociological hypotheses'.

himself with a very few examples from sources as disparate as Callimachus, Plutarch and an inscription. On this most interesting of questions, he writes his shortest and least investigative paragraph in his section (6) on priests. Indeed, the male/female interplay seems of little interest to Burkert, and his narrative focuses strongly on the male experience as the norm. With Pausanias' predilection for the marvellous in mind, we need to ask whether his high figures do derive from a perception that such cross sex priest-god relationships are strange. There is scope for attempting new explanations of the relationships between the sex and gender roles of priest and god, certainly regarding their appearance in the *Guide to Greece*, and possibly as they function in second-century Greek society. With this bare framework of Pausanian preferences in the inclusion of material in place, we can go on to examine priestly gender in the three ways Pausanias portrays it, in sections III. the past, IV. myth and rite, and V. rite alone.

III. The past

If we want to achieve a fully rounded reading of the *Guide to Greece*, we must privilege what Pausanias heard equally with what he saw. Pausanias is a great teller of others' tales. These vary from the short story to feature-length items. Today we would make a distinction between the historically proven past and the stuff of legend. But for Pausanias, there was one indivisible category of the past. 'Most people have no historical knowledge, so they tell and believe untruths', he says of tales in circulation about Theseus. In contrast he stresses that he provides a 'correct' version.⁷⁹ Theseus might be unreal for us, and therefore variations in stories about him immaterial, yet for Pausanias there are nevertheless accurate and inaccurate things that can be said about him. What is our reaction to these Greek myths?⁸⁰ With the honourable exception of Paul Veyne's *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths?*, Pausanias' mass of material about the past has been either neglected or noticed only to be scorned as historical evidence.⁸¹ In the pursuit of priests of the past, we need to establish Pausanias' own attitude to his stories, and to consider what his use of them might tell us.

⁷⁹ 1.3.3. 'The legends of Greece generally have different forms, and this is particularly true of genealogy', 8.53.5; a similar sentiment at 9.16.7.

⁸⁰ Fritz Graf, *Greek Mythology: an introduction* (Eng. trans. Thomas Marier, Baltimore and London, 1993) surveys nineteenth and twentieth-century approaches to Greek myths in his first two chapters; the scientific study of myth, psychoanalysis, myth-and-ritual theory, functionalism, structuralism, semiotic interpretations.

⁸¹ Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths? An essay on the constitutive imagination* (Eng. trans. Paula Wissing, Chicago and London, 1988).

Pausanias knows that what people think is important and worth recording. He articulates an archetypally Herodotean attitude. 'I am bound to tell the stories that are told by the Greeks, but I am not bound to believe them all.'⁸² Marcel Detienne suggests that one Greek way of thinking of mythology is as a framework of thought.⁸³ This is true of Pausanias: what the Greeks say forms an integral part of his investigation and representation of their culture. Many myths can therefore be related without comment. By regarding myth as a system of thought, individual stories link inextricably into the wider cultural whole. So first, myth in Pausanias reflects his concepts of what it was to be Greek.

When we ask what Pausanias himself thought about what the Greeks said, the answer is more complicated. Paul Veyne describes him as obsessed by the problem of myth, wrestling with the enigma.⁸⁴ Sometimes he will relate a story in disbelieving tone. For example, he says, 'Ancient legends, deprived of the help of poetry, have given rise to many fictions, especially concerning the pedigrees of heroes.'⁸⁵ At other times, he will rationalize the seemingly irrational, searching for a plausible kernel of truth. According to Pausanias, Aktaion's hounds destroyed their master through a contagious madness, not the angry intervention of Artemis.⁸⁶ Both incredulity and rationalism were contemporary responses to Greek myth. Aetiology, the search for origins, also provided a generally accepted approach to myth, and Pausanias tells many stories to explain the foundation of a cult, or the name of an area. He recounts the legend that Arethousa fled from the enamoured Alpheios and became the Ortygian spring, whilst her pursuer in turn became a river and joined her in the waters. The story, he notes, derives from the flow of sea, river and spring around Ortygia, as confirmed in a Delphic oracle, and has led to the river's reputation for love.⁸⁷ Myth as knowledge was what the Attic historians, the philosophers pursued. Pausanias exhibits their painstaking search for accuracy.

A striking change in these conventional literary attitudes is recorded late in the day at book eight. Pausanias has just told an Arkadian account of Rhea's mothering of Poseidon. 'When I began to write my history, I thought these Greek stories were rather silly, but now that I have reached Arkadia I have reached this view. Of old, those Greeks considered wise spoke in riddles rather than in a direct way ... So in religious matters I will follow the received tradition.'⁸⁸ One excellent reason for

⁸² 6.3.8. Herodotos, *Histories* 7.152, 'My business is to record what people say, but I am by no means bound to believe it - and that may be taken to apply to this book as a whole', repeating what he has said earlier about Egypt at 2.123.

⁸³ Marcel Detienne, *L'écriture d'Orphée* (Paris, 1989), p. 186.

⁸⁴ Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in their Myths?*, p. 3.

⁸⁵ 1.38.7

⁸⁶ 9.2.3-4

⁸⁷ 5.7.3

⁸⁸ 8.8.3. Jás Elsner, 'From the pyramids to Pausanias and Piglet: monuments, travel and writing', in Simon Goldhill and Robin Osborne (eds.), *Art and Text in Ancient Greek Culture* (Cambridge, 1994),

Pausanias' concern with the past is that the past is divine. That was the time of gods and heroes. Their stories are the beliefs and substance of Greek religion. Piety was part of the reason why Pausanias rejected seemingly ridiculous tales about the gods. Now it is his piety that leads him to find a deeper meaning in these tales than can be established by 'rational' argument. As Jás Elsner points out, 'The mythic past becomes a haven of myth-historical and spiritual identity before which the impious present is a lamentable ruin'.⁸⁹ Read with faith, myths could serve Pausanias' purposes by acting as guides to correct living in accordance with the traditions of Greece.⁹⁰ They can help to counteract contemporary standards which he finds deplorable.

A story of the past must continue to have meaning in the present, both for Pausanias and his audience. Aetiological myths, for example, can aim to contrast the superior arrangements of the present with problematic arrangements in the past. Or they can explain the present by claiming similarity with the past. They may express community ideals which would be too difficult to achieve in reality. Surprisingly, that myth can possess a current meaning has not been widely recognized as true. Jan Bremmer provides a modern example of an opposing approach, writing 'Post-Hellenistic travellers, such as Pausanias, still recorded the archaic myths connected with the temples they visited, but these tales now had lost completely their erstwhile relevance to the community'.⁹¹ But why would Pausanias have expended such effort to record irrelevancies? The myths he retells must have current meaning in their communities, must respond to his purposes in writing. It is necessary to read Pausanias' stories for the concerns of the second century. Here lies the prime motive for looking at Pausanias' use of the past. More is at stake than a good story.

Where Pausanias uses a tale in explanation, how he chooses to tell it should prove interesting. In an eclectic survey of women in myth, John Gould concludes 'it is the ambivalence of sex, and the uncertainties of femininity and of sexual roles which is perhaps most striking and interesting'. Looking at female protagonists in fifth-century tragedy, he develops 'an instructive perception of how ambiguous, in Greek male imagination, is the masculine/feminine polarity'.⁹² There is good reason to hope that myth will be revealing about gender in Pausanias' perspective, and that of the people who told him his stories.

p. 227, 'Pausanias' position here is a paradigm for the way that the Other (in this case, ancient legends) doesn't merely define self by contrast but can also change it'.

⁸⁹ Elsner, 'From the pyramids to Pausanias and Piglet', p. 249. The point relates to the explication of Pausanias' religious position in section I.

⁹⁰ This is the role Philip Hardie ascribes to religion and philosophy, 'Plutarch and the interpretation of myth', in *A.N.R.W.* II.33.6 (1992), p. 4743.

⁹¹ Jan Bremmer (ed.), *Interpretations of Greek Mythology* (London and Sydney, 1987), p. 5.

⁹² John Gould, 'Law, custom and myth', pp. 55-6.

It is immediately noticeable that there are rather more episodes involving female priests in the past than there are male. What perceived aspects of being male and female in a religious setting might lead this to be so? Let's look at some Pausanian tales. Pausanias begins book eight with a history of the Arkadian kings, and when he reaches Aichmis' son Aristokrates, he selects just one episode to illustrate his reign. ἅ δὲ ἀνοσιώτατα ἔργων ἐς θεοὺς ἐργασάμενον οἶδα αὐτόν, ἐπέξεισί μοι ταῦτα ὁ λόγος, 'I will now tell what I myself know to be his worst acts of sacrilege committed against the gods'.⁹³ The superlative, ἀνοσιώτατα, is emphatic. Aristokrates offends in the sanctuary of Artemis Hymnia at Orchomenos, where Pausanias stresses that all the Arkadians have worshipped ἐκ παλαιοτάτου, 'for a very long time'. In those days, says Pausanias, creating a sense of distance, the priesthood was always held by a virgin girl. Aristokrates' crime is told in one climactic sentence. 'The young girl continually resisted his advances and finally fled for safety to the sanctuary, where Aristokrates raped her beside <the statue of> Artemis.' The outcome for Aristokrates was stoning by the Arkadians, and for the priesthood, a change of rule. 'Now instead of a virgin girl they give Artemis a mature woman who has had enough of sexual intercourse with men.'

Pausanias makes it clear that Aristokrates violates the sanctuary and sanctity of Artemis. The detail that the crime was committed παρὰ τῇ Ἀρτέμιδι, 'beside <the statue of> Artemis', is an indication of the serious and personal affront offered to the god by the rape of her priest. The virgin girl is unnamed; her virginity is the one salient fact about her. Pausanias' version of the story has an outcome for Aristokrates and for the priesthood, but not for the particular victim. This rape is presented to us as a crime against the gods, not against women, because the priest's sexual status is an expression of the sacred. The sanctity of Artemis must be avenged (the criminal is stoned to death) and protected (an elderly woman as priest reduces the likelihood of a repeated assault). Aristokrates offends against the god in relation to the community: he has no respect for the universal and ancient custom of the Arkadians. It is the community which provides the god with her requirements. Pausanias says the Arkadians διδῶσι, 'give', to Artemis her priest, in language reflecting the making of a dedication.⁹⁴ Through the special sexual status of the virgin girl, Pausanias can express the close nature of the relationship between the god and her servant, and the god and her worshipping community. The female gender well illustrates how heinous it is to break such sacred ties. Female sexuality carries unique possibilities for Pausanias, and with this story we can start to trace a pattern of his exploitation of it.

⁹³ 8.5.11. The whole story is told 8.5.11-12.

⁹⁴ 'For human gifts, the proper words are δῶρον and διδόναι or ἐπιδιδόναι', William H. D. Rouse, *Greek Votive Offerings: an essay in the history of Greek religion* (Cambridge, 1902), p. 323.

The change in the conditions of Artemis' priesthood needs consideration from the human as well as the divine angle. How do female sexuality and female priesthood relate? There is a hint in Pausanias' choice of phrasing that some blame attaches to the virgin priest. Her successor is to be a woman *ὀμιλίας ἀνδρῶν ἀποχρώντως*, 'who has had enough of sexual intercourse with men'. Is it implied that the virgin girl in some way desired sex because she had not had enough of it, indeed any of it? Her status as virgin, something apart from men, was vital to her service of the virgin god: but her sexual identity also proved an irresistible threat to her priestly activity. Her youth and attraction as a virgin girl acted as an open invitation to Aristokrates. The old woman who has fulfilled her sexual role satisfies Artemis' need for a woman independent of men in a safer way.

The action of women lies behind a narrative in book four which follows the fortunes of the Messenian Lykiskos.⁹⁵ His daughter had been selected by lot for sacrifice to chthonic gods to ensure victory in the war against Sparta. They fled. In exile, she died; Lykiskos was captured and tried. His justification was that he had believed a prophecy that the girl was not his, and was therefore ineligible for the sacrifice. The surprise factor is the role of the female priest of Hera. She steps into the incredulous hostility surrounding Lykiskos in the assembly to announce that the child is hers, given to Lykiskos' barren wife. Her secret and her priesthood are thereby ended. The Messenian rule, she explains, is that if the child of a priest predeceases him or her, then the priesthood must pass to someone else. Another woman is chosen priest and Lykiskos forgiven.

The priest provides the exciting twist in the tale which makes it worth telling. The bearing and substituting of children in secret (for Lykiskos' fellow citizens know nothing of the affair, nor even Lykiskos himself before the prophecy) is a quintessentially female motif. Evident in both the actions of the women and the proposed fate of Lykiskos' adopted daughter is the importance attached to legitimate birth. It is these themes of female subterfuge and familial relations which provide Pausanias with an interesting episode. And in the Messenian rule governing the dramatic admission of the priest of Hera, Pausanias can also expand his interest in local religious idiosyncrasies.

Female priests play a vital role in the explanation offered for the foundation of two different cults. The Spartan sanctuary of Thetis *κατασκευασθῆναί φασιν ἐπ' αἰτίαι τοιαύτηι*, 'they say was founded for this reason'.⁹⁶ In war, the Spartan king Anaxander took some women prisoner, including Kleo, Thetis' priest. Leandris, wife to Anaxander, had a dream which led her to ask for Kleo. On discovering that Kleo had the cult statue of Thetis in her possession, the two women set up a temple for the

⁹⁵ 4.9.4-5 and 4.12.6.

⁹⁶ 3.14.4-5

god. Their piety, the one in not abandoning her god, the other in obeying her dream, is the *aition*, 'original reason', for the cult. The second story is the legend told of Knagian Artemis.⁹⁷ Knageos, a Lakonian, was taken prisoner after a battle and brought to Crete, close by a sanctuary of Artemis. In the course of time he ran away with the virgin priest, she bringing Artemis' statue with her. Hence the name Knagian for this particular cult of Artemis in Lakonia. It is interesting that Pausanias criticizes the account of how Knageos reached Crete but no other details of the legend. The two stories depend on a tenacious relationship between female priest and female god. Strikingly, in each story, in difficult circumstances of imprisonment and elopement, the priest did not abandon her god. The connection between female priest and god was strong enough for these two stories to make sense in Pausanias' second-century context.⁹⁸

Male priests in the past receive less notice from Pausanias. The only story unconnected with rite is of doomed love.⁹⁹ Koresos was priest of Dionysos at Kalydon. Pausanias chooses to tell his story deliberately, attaching the episode loosely to the record of a sanctuary at Patrai with a Kalydonian statue of Dionysos, although Koresos was neither the founder of the cult nor priest there. Koresos, judges Pausanias, 'more than any other man suffered injustice through love' How? He loved a virgin girl, Kallirhoe, as strongly as she detested him. When she remained resistant to his prayers and entreaties, Koresos supplicated Dionysos' image. *ὁ δὲ ἤκουσέ τε εὐχομένου τοῦ ἱερέως*, 'the god listened to the prayer of his priest' and sent the Kalydonians raving as if drunk to a mad death. Those capable appealed to the oracle at Dodona: the cure declared was the sacrifice of Kallirhoe or a willing substitute to appease the anger of Dionysos. No rescuer for Kallirhoe volunteering, the scene of sacrifice was set, with Koresos (horrifically) prepared to do the deed. A dramatic change of the priest's heart, however, led him to kill himself in her place. 'He proved his love to be the most sincere of any man we know', says Pausanias. Kallirhoe was overcome by pity and shame, and committed suicide by the spring in Kalydon, bequeathing it her name.

This is a tale about a male priest, but it is once more female behaviour (Kallirhoe's perceived obstinacy) which provokes a crisis. The gendered and cultural nature of Pausanias' perceptions is apparent. The perspective of the tale is overwhelmingly male. Pausanias' sympathy for Koresos is obvious, and his comments on the trials of love and the sincerity of Koresos' feelings reflect badly on the female part. It is not reasonable for Kallirhoe to exercise choice (as Koresos has

⁹⁷ 3.18.4-5

⁹⁸ Heliodoros' *An Ethiopian Story* will provide further evidence of the strong relationship between female priest and her gods, in the case of Charikleia, Artemis and Apollo (see below, chapter five, sections III-V).

⁹⁹ 7.21.1-5

in loving her) and reject her suitor. Even the later extremity of his actions does not justify her refusal; she must be made to feel not only pity for the man's (unbalanced) behaviour, but also shame for her own. Only in death can she atone for her 'crime'. In contrast to Artemis' virgin and elderly female priests, Koresos' sexual activity has no significance for his priestly status. If anything, it strengthens the bond between priest and god. For Dionysos backs the obsession of his priest all the way. The relationship between deity and priest is strong: Koresos' request for revenge on the Kalydonians is granted. His actions are given clear religious sanction. The problems possible when women do not fall in with 'legitimate' male desires create a sensational story.¹⁰⁰

One theme emerging from these stories is a strikingly personal priest-god relationship. Much of what is written today implies that a priest was no more than a magistrate, a public official, performing the will of the city with regard to the gods.¹⁰¹ These of course are the more quantifiable relationships between priest and community, attested in dedications, inscriptions, city and sacred laws.¹⁰² In Pausanias, we have the opportunity to see the elusive other side of the equation, of the connections between priest and god. One of the reasons Mary Beard and John North have difficulty in defining priesthood as a category is the lack of attention paid to priests in relation to their gods. Stories in particular elucidate this important relationship.

A gendered line of argument is also developing. Pausanias' stories about priests in the past rely heavily on the female for their interest and excitement. Kallirhoe and Lykiskos' adopted daughter, for example, provide macabre enthrallment as proposed female human sacrifices. Emily Kearns rightly argues that the sacrifice of virgin girls, above all, is perceived as a desperate and terrible deed.¹⁰³ Her youth and the virginity her husband will require of her are a girl's most precious possessions: we do not hear of the sacrifice of married women. In her discussion, Emily Kearns notes that 'since a woman's sexual experience is seen in terms of her being possessed, her virginity is a sort of guarantee that she belongs only to the deity to whom she is sacrificed'. Male-female relationships are particularly vivid in the

¹⁰⁰ It is notable that female desire, as opposed to male, is rarely prominent in Greek myth (Phaedra is exceptional both in feeling desire and in desiring someone within the family).

¹⁰¹ An exception is John Scheid, 'Le prêtre et le magistrat: réflexions sur les sacerdoces et le droit public à la fin de la République', in Claude Nicolet (ed.), *Des ordres à Rome* (Paris, 1984), pp. 243-80. Using a prosopographical argument, he traces the evolution of the priesthood in the Roman state: separate and important in the Republic, priestly power became fused with and subordinate to the power of the magistrates in the Empire.

¹⁰² 2.17.7, Chryseis the priest of Argive Hera allowed the temple to burn down through her carelessness. Nevertheless, says Pausanias, the Argives kept her statue in place. The statue is physical witness to the standing of the priest in her community.

¹⁰³ Emily Kearns, *The Heroes of Attica* (London, 1989), p. 57.

context of the divine. These stories therefore attract Pausanias' attention. Female priests in particular are the focus for such stories.

IV. Myth and rite

A basic definition of Greek religion is the meeting point of myth and ritual. Yet so often in discussions of religious practice, one is analysed in the absence of the other. Reading the *Guide to Greece* might help show the way to a restoration of the interpretative balance. There are times when Pausanias simply tells a story; there are times when he concentrates his description entirely on contemporary cult activity. But there are a significant number of cases where present rite and past practice are made to coincide. Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel offer a definition of ritual. 'A ritual is a complex of actions effected by, or in the name of, an individual or a community. These actions serve to organize space and time, to define relations between men and the gods, and to set in their proper place the different categories of mankind and the links which bind them together.'¹⁰⁴ If ritual has the capability to express so many aspects of understanding, and we have already demonstrated that myth has similar properties, then the contact of myth with ritual should be doubly informative of Pausanias' perspective. Both myth and ritual are collective forms of expression within the community. We need not worry that this admixture of myth and rite is simply dependent on the source material available. Pausanias decides what aspects of each to record. He may choose not to relate a legend known to him. For instance, Medusa is described ἀπόντος δὲ τοῦ μύθου, 'leaving out the myth'.¹⁰⁵ The conscious connections Pausanias creates between myth and rite deserve investigation.

In a coherent development of the pattern found for tales of the past alone, there are overwhelmingly more stories attaching to female priests and their cultic setting than are attached to male priests. How does Pausanias' use of myth mesh with his description of a ritual? What part does gender play in this process? Based on our investigation into myth, a reasonable hypothesis to investigate would be that the sexuality of female priests is often a source of interest to Pausanias.

An unusually complex case is a ritual conducted at Patrai in Achaia.¹⁰⁶ Myth attaches to this ritual as a complicated *aition*. Annually, an all-night festival is celebrated for Dionysos Aisymnetes ('Adjudicator'). Surrounded by nine men

¹⁰⁴ Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* (Eng. trans. Paul Cartledge, Cambridge, 1992), p. 27.

¹⁰⁵ 2.21.5. 2.13.4, Pausanias notes that the Phliasiens have a sacred legend to explain why they have no cult statue of Hebe, but he does not tell it us.

¹⁰⁶ 7.19-20.2

prominent in the community, and nine women, nine boys process to the river wreathed in ears of wheat as if for sacrifice, but exchange them for ivy leaves, before going on to Dionysos' temple. Pausanias represents the cult as a pantomime of the original ritual of human sacrifice carried out for Artemis. In his telling of the tale, the present rite is portrayed as a corrective to the aberrant ritual previously practised. Pausanias tells us how this came about.

Triklarian Artemis was worshipped by the local Ionians with an annual festival and all-night vigil. Her priest was a virgin girl, who held the post until the time for her to marry. Handsome boy, ὄψεως εὐπρεπείαι μάλιστα ὑπερηρκότα, met beautiful girl, τὸ εἶδος καλλίστην παρθένον. Melanippos persuaded the priest Komaitho to marry him, but neither set of parents would consent. 'Opposition to youth is a general consequence of old age in all matters, but particularly in lack of sympathy with lovers'. Undaunted, the pair consummated their love in the sanctuary of Artemis. The god at once responded with destructive anger. The harvest failed and unusually deadly disease was rife. Appeal to the Pythia resulted in a command to sacrifice the guilty couple to Artemis, and every succeeding year to sacrifice the most beautiful boy and girl to her. The practice was only ended when at the command of the Pythia one Eurypylos settled in Patrai with his chest containing an image of Dionysos. In thus obeying the Pythia, Eurypylos was cured of his madness. The cult of the more benevolent Dionysos replaced the savage demands of that of Artemis.

James Redfield has constructed a sophisticated interpretation of this Pausanian passage, seeing a complementary transformation from the first ritual into the second of sex into politics and nature into culture. He elucidates the different view points of those in and outside the religious system. The insider interprets the ritual in terms of the myth: a mock sacrifice to Dionysos is enacted in second-degree expiation of the crime of Komaitho. For the outsider, 'the myth is not an explanation but an interpretation of the ritual, telling us that this ritual is somehow about the risks of sexuality. Myth and ritual, in other words, are alternative statements of a common meaning'.¹⁰⁷ As an insider, Pausanias tells the myth as 'an *aition* for the ritual. As outsiders, we notice that the aspect of the ritual given explanation is the human sacrifice. The sacrifice is ascribed to the anger of Artemis at the use of her sanctuary as a bridal chamber by the lovers. The male-female relationship is once more at the heart of Pausanias' interest.

Gender is obviously one focus of the story. Komaitho voluntarily transgresses her dedicated virginity and must be punished. But sexual activity is also intimately

¹⁰⁷ James Redfield, 'From sex to politics: the rites of Artemis Triklaria and Dionysos Aisymnetes at Patras' in David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, Froma I. Zeitlin (eds.), *Before Sexuality: the construction of erotic experience in the ancient Greek world* (Princeton, 1990), pp. 115-34. The quotation is from p. 118.

bound up with the story, as in Aristokrates' rape of Artemis' virgin priest, or Knageos' elopement with Artemis' priest. The manner of the story's spinning confirms this. Maximum narrative excitement is obtained from the telling of the love story. It is generated, for example, by the general maxims on the nature of love that Pausanias produces.¹⁰⁸ He pities the sacrificial victims innocent before the god, and their relatives, but thinks Melanippos and Komaitho did not suffer. *μόνον γὰρ δὴ ἀνθρώπῳ ψυχῆς ἔστιν ἀντάξιον κατορθῶσαί τινα ἐρασθέντα*, 'the only thing really worth a man's life is true success in his love'. Particularly to the point are Pausanias' comments on the dangers of love, when it creates an unsanctioned relationship between man and woman, 'Melanippos' sufferings proved once more that it is the property of love *ἀνθρώπων συγγέαι νόμιμα καὶ ἀνατρέψαι θεῶν τιμάς*, to confuse the laws of mankind and overturn the worship of the gods'.¹⁰⁹ The religious setting of the story, through Komaitho's holding of the priesthood, throws the problems caused by sexual relations between male and female into high relief.

The link between Artemis' priest and her society is clear. Artemis defends her own honour with vengeance not only on the lovers but on their community. Society provided the virgin priest to serve the god; now she is defiled, collective provision of virgins is required, to die for the god in annual expiation. The priest erred as an individual, but even more as a representative of her community. It has been a breakdown in community function that has caused the problems; the old age of the parents begrudged youth lawful wedded happiness. The appropriate regulation of the male-female relationship in marriage has been denied, with repercussions for the divine and human plane. The community's punishment of the couple is insufficient because it is itself guilty. Reading the story of Komaitho and Melanippos as told by Pausanias elucidates the conceptual connections between priest, community and two different gods.

The resolution to the crisis of human sacrifice comes from the substitution of community worship of Dionysos in place of the damaged relationship with Artemis. Such a replacement of one god with another is extremely odd in Greek myth. Dionysos is always represented as a foreign god, coming from the outside. Here he is brought to Patrai, mysterious in his chest, by Eurypylos. In a situation where excessive sexuality has produced excessive violence, his is the role of *aisymnetes*: he mediates from a position of influence outside the existing system.¹¹⁰ He strikes a balance between crime and its punishment. Human sacrifice to Artemis ends and a procession and festival to Dionysos are instituted: the community is stabilized, with

¹⁰⁸ Others occur at 1.9.3, 7.23.3, 8.24.9, 8.31.6. Gender perceptions are strongly operative in Pausanias' strictures on love. For instance, 8.24.9, 'Senseless passions shipwreck many men and even more women'.

¹⁰⁹ 7.19.3

¹¹⁰ Redfield, 'From sex to politics', p. 131.

equal numbers of men and women able to come together safely in worship of the new god. The regulation of sexuality by the sacred is particularly powerfully revealed. In his own day at Patrai, says Pausanias, there are twice as many women as men, and if ever women belonged to Aphrodite, they do.¹¹¹ Pausanias notes female sexuality in the present, and comments on its dangers in the past, as revealed in relationships with the divine.

The ritual used to worship Artemis Orthia at Sparta is also presented by Pausanias as a cure for past cultic requirements of human sacrifice.¹¹² Pausanias tells a story of the cult statue's 'foreign source', ἐκ τῶν βαρβάρων. Those who found it went mad: when the four local Spartan groups sacrificed to Artemis, she cursed them through the statue with quarrels and murders. Many died at her altar; disease took the rest. Human sacrifice was therefore offered to the statue, after the drawing of lots. Pausanias draws a distinction between Spartan practice before Lykourgos, and time from Lykourgos on, when the whipping of young men was substituted. During the whipping, the female priest of Artemis stands by the altar holding the lightweight statue. But if the scourgers spare a victim for his beauty or rank, then the statue grows heavy and the priest reprimands them.

Once more, the story speaks to the theme of priest-god association. The priest functions as a channel of communication for the god. Through her burden, the displeasure of Artemis is expressed. By her complaints, she makes known the will of the god to the worshipping community. The honours done to the god connect to desired standards of conduct within that community. The curses of Artemis seem to have originated because of inappropriately competitive behaviour amongst the different Spartan communities: now in ritual the young men must receive equal treatment regardless of personal status. Komaito, not allowed to terminate her vulnerable state of virginity in decent marriage, enjoyed sacrilegious sex. The corrective rites are designed to enforce a commonly recognized measure of behaviour.¹¹³ Since sexuality is such a large part of human relations, it is not surprising that we find stories and rites involving female priests the ideal vehicle for exploring community values in this area.

The virgin priest of Herakles is a good example of differing sex in officiant and god.¹¹⁴ 'They have a sanctuary of Herakles where a virgin priest serves until she dies.' This is all Pausanias says about the present of the sanctuary in Thespiiai, Boiotia. The majority of priesthoods involved at most restricted periods of chastity. As Robert Parker stresses, female (and indeed male) virgin priests were not the norm.

¹¹¹ 7.21.7

¹¹² 3.16.9-11

¹¹³ Redfield, 'From sex to politics', pp. 128-9.

¹¹⁴ 9.27.6

'It is because they are not the rule that we hear specifically from Pausanias of "virgin priestesses" and the like.'¹¹⁵ Young children and the elderly were usually chosen for the posts that would impose restraints on the sexually mature. Evidence for the life-long virgin priest, he says, is very hard to find (and mostly the sources are literary).¹¹⁶ Nicole Loraux makes the point that 'chastity is an eminently divine luxury that no mortal, male or female, can choose without being severely punished, as the examples of Hippolytus and Atalanta show'.¹¹⁷ Virginity is a physical fact, desirable in youth, but without value beyond that time, quite undesirable indeed. Of Hera, the Argives at Nauplia say that she recovers her virginity each year by bathing in the Kanathos spring.¹¹⁸ The immortal is the antithesis not only of the possible but also of the acceptable in the mortal.

Herakles' priest's perpetual virginity is so odd as to trigger local explanatory myths, which Pausanias chooses to pass on to us. He begins his second sentence about the sanctuary with that Hellenistic rallying cry, ἀὔτιον. One local answer is that Herakles slept with all fifty daughters of Thestios in one night, meeting just one refusal. In revenge he condemned the recusant to be his virgin priest for life. Pausanias' response to the story is both rationalizing and very male-centred. His disbelief focuses not on the unfairness of Herakles' behaviour to the women on their own account, but to them as daughters of their father, his friend. He also finds it incredible that Herakles as a mortal could have established his own cult in his own lifetime. (Pausanias' own explanation of the cult is that an older Herakles, not Herakles the well-known hero, was its founder.) Another local tale Pausanias has heard tells that all fifty sisters slept with Herakles, all bearing him sons, with the youngest and oldest producing twins. On this story he offers no comment.

Pausanias' use of myth here is directly related to the anomalous nature of this female priesthood. Susan Guettel Cole lists the known occurrences of such priesthoods. 'While priests often served female divinities, priestesses rarely served male divinities, and where they did, there were often strict requirements for their behaviour.'¹¹⁹ My own initial Pausanian figures confirm these relative frequencies. Pausanias' treatment emphasizes that a female priest serving a male god is an oddity. In the case of Herakles, with a well-known Phokian cult in the guise of 'woman-hater', this is even more surprising. Both a female priest serving Herakles, and her eternal virginity, are strange. Even more difficult and puzzling is the myth of Herakles' giving the priesthood as punishment to someone hostile towards him, when

¹¹⁵ Robert Parker, *Miasma: pollution and purification in early Greek religion* (Oxford, 1983), p. 87.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 93.

¹¹⁷ Nicole Loraux 'What is a goddess?', in Pauline Schmitt Pantel (ed.), *A History of Women in the West*. I, p. 22.

¹¹⁸ 2.38.2

¹¹⁹ Susan Guettel Cole, '*Gunaiki ou themis: gender difference in the Greek Leges Sacrae*', *Helios* 19 (1992), p. 112.

other stories stress the close bond between priest and god. This tale makes plain the unpleasant nature of divine restraint on female priestly sexuality: we have seen the strain inherent in other female virgin priesthoods shows when rape or love proves irresistible.¹²⁰ Pausanias' use of myth highlights the coincidence between a female priesthood, female sexuality, and the problematic.

An excellent opportunity for comparing service of a female god by a female priest, and service of a male god by a female priest, is presented by the cults of Eileithyia and a local masculine deity Sosipolis, 'City Saviour'. These two gods are celebrated together on Mount Kronios at Elis.¹²¹ Pausanias describes the cults primarily in terms of their priests. Eileithyia's priesthood is simple; a woman chosen annually fills the post. The attendant of Sosipolis is treated in greater detail. She is an old woman νόμῳι τε ἀγιστεύει τῶι Ἡλείῳι, 'bound by Elean custom to lead a chaste life'. It is her special task to bring the god his bath water and honeyed barley cakes. One temple serves both cults. Eileithyia is worshipped at the front of the temple, with access for all. Sosipolis' worship is secret, and takes place in the inner temple. Only his priest has entrance, when her head and face are veiled in white. Other women, married and unmarried, worship Sosipolis in Eileithyia's sanctuary, with hymns, incense, and wineless libations. The female priest of Eileithyia is an uncomplicated case, but the female priest of Sosipolis is bound about with unusual restrictions and injunctions. Sosipolis' priest's chastity (the chastity expected of an older woman) is used to express the special importance of the deity; her unique, veiled access conveys the same message. On important occasions an oath is sworn by Sosipolis.

Pausanias offers us a mythical 'explanation' for the peculiar treatment of Sosipolis. The story is set during Elis' war with Arkadia. An Elean woman approached the Elean generals with her baby son at her breast, saying she had been commanded in a dream to let him to fight for Elis. The little boy was placed between the two armies; he metamorphosed into a snake and routed the amazed Arkadians. Salvation for the city comes, Emily Kearns points out, 'from a highly improbable method and source: from the aggressive power of the being least able to defend itself. Somehow, what was marginal to the city has become central. This kind of topsy-turviness is clearly associated with the gods, whose mode of operation is notoriously often at odds with that of human beings'.¹²² The Eleans recognized the child's divinity, named him City Saviour and built him a sanctuary where the snake disappeared into the ground. His mother's part was acknowledged by establishing the

¹²⁰ Interestingly, Philo *On the Contemplative Life* 68 contrasts the *forced* virginity of Greek female priests with the freely entered into virginity of the Therapeutae.

¹²¹ 6.20.2-5

¹²² Emily Kearns, 'Saving the city', in Oswyn Murray and Simon Price (eds.), *The Greek City from Homer to Alexander* (Oxford, 1990), p. 326.

worship of Eileithyia who had brought him into the world.¹²³ The myth does not provide complete clarification of the rite. Rather myth and rite are parallel narratives.¹²⁴ It is their points of intersection that are most significant. Jás Elsner has traced a pun on *theos* (god) and *thea(ma)* (sight, contemplation), frequently used in Greek to emphasize the power of the divine.¹²⁵ The baby's divinity depends upon his miraculous acts. 'Needless to say, the shrine of this transforming and vanishing god is not to be entered. Even the woman who tends the god is veiled; sight, which was once given as a visible metamorphosis to save Elea and then a disappearance into the ground to deify the site, is forever after denied.' Myth and rite come together in the person of the female priest and the peculiar conditions of her priesthood: Elsner might say 'even the woman who tends the god', but for Pausanias the manner of her priesthood is of prime interest and importance. Gendered aspects in the rite (the chaste female priest particularly distinguishing the male deity) act as the peg on which to hang the story.

Of all the male priests who serve female gods, only one merits a myth, and his is a cult that is in many ways rather odd. Raised to life by Asklepios, Hippolytos refused to forgive his murderous father Theseos and left for Aricia in Italy.¹²⁶ There he dedicated a grove to Artemis. In Pausanias' day, a duel was still held, the winner to be priest to the god. Only run-away slaves were eligible to compete. The service of the virgin god must reflect Hippolytos' own commitment to chastity; the slaves escape as Hippolytos did to Italy. Myth explains the strange conditions of the priesthood. Pausanias does not say that male priest is bound sexually by serving a female god, but he might think that the Hippolytos-Artemis link makes it self-evident. The unusual sexual aspect of the priesthood in this myth (and rite?) draws Pausanias' attention: it is an aspect much more often exemplified by female priests than male.

Myths are employed by Pausanias as *aitia* for female priestly θαύματα, 'marvels'. A couple of instances illustrate this. In Pausanias' time, the rites for Apollo of the road at Tegea included Artemis' female priest chasing someone.¹²⁷ This oddity Pausanias explains with a story. Apollo and Artemis came to Tegea seeking vengeance for the ill-treatment their mother Leto had received in pregnancy. Leimon, son of Tegeates, suspected his brother of informing upon him to the gods. Therefore

¹²³ An analogous cult mentioned in Strabo, *Geography* 14.1.41, identifies Sosipolis as the baby Zeus, which would help explain his precedence over his mother. However, it is not an explanation Pausanias wants to give us.

¹²⁴ Louise Bruit discusses the connections between myth, oracle and ritual attaching to the cult of Demeter Melaine, 8.42, in 'Pausanias à Phigalie: sacrifices non-sanglants et discours idéologique', *Métis* 1 (1986), pp. 71-96. The myth does not immediately seem to explain the nature of the ritual or the oracle, but she teases out resemblances between the myth and the oracle 'qui semblent deux réalisations différentes d'un même modèle', p. 77.

¹²⁵ Elsner, *Art and the Roman Viewer*, pp. 93-4.

¹²⁶ 2.27.4.

¹²⁷ 8.53.3

he murdered his brother. Artemis punished Leimon by shooting him. The gods sent sterility upon the land, rectified only by the establishment of sacred ceremonies, including mourning for the murdered brother. The priest in ritual mimics directly the mythical acts of the god; heaven is represented on earth through the cultic role of the priest.

A unique rite is performed by a woman for Athena in Itone, near Koroneia in Boiotia.¹²⁸ Daily she lays fire on Iodama's altar, saying three times in the Boiotian dialect, 'Iodama lives and asks for fire'. Pausanias tells the story of how the priest Iodama had gone into the sacred enclosure by night. Athena appeared to her with the Gorgon Medusa's head on her tunic; on seeing it, Iodama was turned to stone. The myth is designed to explain this ritual offered by one living woman to one strangely killed female priest.

Myth functions in the *Guide to Greece* as explication and comment on ritual. In rites practised by priests, the priests who receive such mythical elucidation are nearly all female. Female priests are a group which wins Pausanias' attention. They and their rites, in a male perspective, are θαύματα to entertain us, to be explained to us. When serving male deities female priests occupy an anomalous position which myth must justify. Both myth and rite often centre on the sexual status of the female priest. The perceived problems female sexuality can cause, as exemplified by these female priests, is integral to their gendered identity. In stark contrast, almost no myths (only the exceptional Aricia one) are needed to complement the perceivedly uncomplicated part played by male priests, when serving either male or female gods.

V. Rite

We have found that there are many more stories, and rites with myths, involving female priests than male. The exception is in the cultic activity of priests in the present tense alone. We hear of more male activities than female. Bearing in mind that we hear less of male priests than female priests overall, we learn more about what male priests do than female priests. It has been assumed that the larger number of male rites derives from Pausanias' sex, that as a man, Pausanias was more privy to male ritual acts than female.¹²⁹ How true is this? Pausanias does record the results of his conversations with some male priests. τὰ δὲ ἐς τὰς ἐπωνυμίας ἔστιν αὐτῶν διδαχθῆναι τοῖς ἱερεῦσιν ἐλθόντα ἐς λόγους, 'you can find out all

¹²⁸ 9.34.2

¹²⁹ For example, James Redfield, 'From sex to politics', p. 132, 'no doubt Pausanias, like most male ethnographers, found it hard to get the women to talk to him'.

about these names [of the gods], by discussing them with the priests'.¹³⁰ But equally on several occasions Pausanias specifically records what women have told him. An Athenian shrine of Eileithyia has several wooden cult statues. Pausanias records the Delian and Cretan versions of their origins, then he tells us what the women say. Placed last, their understanding acts as a settlement of the issue (two came from Crete, one, the oldest, from Delos).¹³¹ The Athenian Thyiades clarified a passage in Homer previously opaque to Pausanias.¹³² Explaining the male/female ratio in terms of Pausanias' contacts can only be speculative, not proven even by to whom Pausanias tells us that he talked. The changing pattern deserves a more sophisticated attempt at exegesis.

Pausanias' first description of a priest conducting her cultic duties sets the tone for his treatment and my discussion of female priests and ritual.¹³³ He is describing the shrine of Athena Polias, 'of the city', on the Acropolis. The ritual of the priest and her assistants is presented in a startling way. ἅ δέ μοι θαυμάσαι μάλιστα παρέσχευ, ἔστι μὲν οὐκ ἐς ἅπαντας γνώριμα, γράψω δὲ οἷα συμβαίνει, 'There were things which greatly amazed me, which not everybody knows, so I shall write what happens'. Two virgin girls live not far from the temple of Athena, called by the Athenians ἀρρηφόροι.¹³⁴ So begins Pausanias' description. He focuses on the annual nocturnal rites they perform, relating their activities in a vague and mysterious manner. For example, 'They carry on their heads what Athena's priest gives them to carry, and neither she who gives it nor they who carry it know what it is she gives them'. The girls take their unknown burdens underground close to the sanctuary of Aphrodite in the Gardens, leave them below, and return with new things.

The key-notes of this account are the amazing and little-known. Pausanias does not include the more routine elements of the girls' service, helping weave the robe for Athena's statue at the Panathenaia, for instance. Nor is he interested in providing a mythical interpretation for events. Modern scholars have interpreted the ritual as mirroring the myth of the three sisters, Aglauros, Herse and Pandrosos, daughters of Kekrops: Pausanias makes no explanatory reference to the story, which he has told earlier.¹³⁵ His enigmatic description generates a curiosity in the reader

¹³⁰ 1.22.3

¹³¹ 1.18.5, ἔλεγον αἱ γυναῖκες.

¹³² 10.4.3, ἐδιδάχθη ὑπὸ τῶν παρ' Ἀθηναίοις καλουμένων Θυιάδων. They taught him how they dance at places along the road from Athens to Parnassos, where yearly they meet the women of Delphi to perform rites for Dionysos. Panopeos is a place on that road, and Pausanias thus explains Homer's characterization of Panopeos by its fine dancing ground.

¹³³ 1.27.3

¹³⁴ The translation of this term is in doubt: carriers of dew? bearers of secret things?

¹³⁵ 1.18.2. Athena gave the sisters a chest, but forbade them to open it. At night, Aglauros and Herse disobeyed. They opened the box, saw inside Erichthonius and some snakes, and maddened fell to their deaths over the edge of the Acropolis. Cf. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, pp. 228-9, and more fully in 'Kekropidensage und Arrephoria', *Hermes* 94 (1966), pp. 1-25.

which he makes no attempt to satisfy. The oddity and obscurity of this female priestly ritual is emphasized.

This account of the Arrephoria provides an excellent example of the danger of taking what Pausanias says out of context. In his *Greek Religion*, Walter Burkert fails to bring out the import of the text. Discussing the Arrephoria, he quotes from Pausanias; but he begins with the girls placing their unknown loads upon their heads. He gives no indication of Pausanias' wonder at the ritual, and its apparent obscurity.¹³⁶ The impression created is quite misleading. First, a second-century account is being used without qualification as direct evidence for the classical period. Secondly, the Pausanian perspective picks out the *recherché* and the female. What Pausanias tells as a female marvel, Burkert recounts as a piece of standard fact. The ritual seems merely inexplicable to us; we lose the sense that to one second-century Greek at least, it was also mysterious and hence noteworthy.

The rites Pausanias records female priests enacting have a common theme of oddity, and in particular, odd sexual requirements. The appointment procedure for the female priest of Broad-Breasted Earth, Gaios, at Aigai in Achaia, meets both these criteria.¹³⁷ The priest must be chaste from the time of taking office, and may have had sexual experience of only one man beforehand. A test of drinking bull's blood determines the suitability of candidates: any woman who has lied (presumably about her sexual qualifications) is punished. If there are several possible applicants, lots are drawn for the honour. The account is perplexingly brief. Why the stringent requirements of sexual status? What is it to drink bull's blood, and how does one pass or fail the test? There^{are} no explanations offered.¹³⁸ Pausanias' silences, here and elsewhere, baffle. Feasibly, this is the intention. Mystique is an important part both of Greek religion and also of the art of entertainment.

A second example is furnished by Pausanias' comments on a sanctuary of Aphrodite not far from the agora in Corinth.¹³⁹ He has just concluded his description of the Asklepieion with the phrase ἐς μνήμην, its 'memorable' features. Demonstrably he is selecting the outstanding. Immediately he turns to Aphrodite's sanctuary and the description of her female priests. 'Only a woman who may no longer lawfully have intercourse with a man and a virgin girl consecrated for a year

¹³⁶ In 'Kekropidensage und Arrephoria', p. 1, Burkert does begin his quotation of the passage with this sentence, but no comment on Pausanias' wonder is offered. He point out that Pausanias describes the ritual as little known and obscure in his *Homo Necans: the anthropology of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual and myth* (Eng. trans. Peter Bing, Berkeley and London, 1993), p. 150.

¹³⁷ Γῆς δὲ ἱερόν ἐστιν ὁ Γαῖος ἐπίκλησιν Εὐρυστέρνου, 7.25.13.

¹³⁸ We may need to supplement from the evidence of other accounts, where drinking bull's blood is usually fatal. For example, Herodotos. *Histories* 3.15.4, relates that when discovered, a traitor to Cambyses drank bull's blood and died on the spot. Plutarch, *Superstition* 168, tells that Midas committed suicide by swallowing bull's blood. The female priest's sexual status must be proved by this most dangerous of tests.

¹³⁹ 2.10.4-5

whom they call the water-bearer can enter it.' The prohibition on the woman is expressed in forceful terms, μηκέτι θέμις, 'no longer lawful'. This is the language of religious restriction particularly for women.¹⁴⁰ These sexually special priests have unique access to the sanctuary: everyone else can only watch and pray from the entrance. The distinction of the priests matches the singular form of sacrifice: the thighs of all sacred animals except the pig are burnt for the god with the leaves of a tree called, ὁ παιδέρωσ, 'lad's love'. This tree grows in the enclosure, but, says Pausanias, nowhere else on earth.¹⁴¹ Where even the spice of sacrifice has carnal connotations, the sexual abstinence of the priests of the god of sexual pleasure is a paradox. The female sexual prohibitions, the unique priestly access, the special herbal sacrifice all form part of the same odd package of interest to Pausanias.

The annual festival held at Patrai for Artemis Laphria is unusual.¹⁴² A large log circle is laid around the altar and piled upon it. A grand procession is formed for the god. The female priest, whom Pausanias notes is a virgin, rides last in a chariot drawn by yoked deer. Affinities between the honour due the god and that given the priest are clear; there is more than an air of the divine in the remarkable deer-drawn chariot.¹⁴³ Pausanias is fascinated by the peculiar rites in which the priest participates. The following day a bizarre sacrifice is performed. Animals of every description are thrown live onto the altar, from birds to deer, wolf and bear cubs. They are burnt alive, escapees being thrown back onto the pyre. Such a cremation is highly abnormal, and the whole account has a fantastic air about it. There is no record, Pausanias remarks, of anyone being injured by the animals.

Pausanias' depiction of a female prophet reveals a divine connection between women and the weird. Apollo Deiradiotes, 'of the ridge', *μαντεύεται γὰρ ἔτι καὶ ἐς ἡμᾶς*, 'prophesies still even in our time'.¹⁴⁴ *γυνὴ μὲν προφητεύουσα, ἀνδρὸς εὐνῆς εἰργομένη*, 'a woman speaks for him, kept from the bed of a man'. The feminine/masculine contrast is stressed by the sentence structure. Each month a ewe-lamb is slaughtered by night, the priest tastes its blood and is wholly possessed (*κάτοχος*) by the god. The correspondence between the sex of the sacrifice and the prophet is interesting. The monthly cycle must fit with the pattern of the moon, usually identified as feminine.¹⁴⁵ Is the ritual gendered deliberately? All is female,

¹⁴⁰ Susan Guettel Cole, '*Gunaiki ou themis*', investigates the language of inscriptions of Greek sacred laws. 'The usual expressions in religious restrictions are *ou themis* ('it is not sanctioned by custom') and *ouch hosia/ouch hosion* ('it is not sanctioned by divine law'). These expressions were used of women and foreigners, but not apparently of men', p. 106.

¹⁴¹ The holm-oak, *quercus ilex*, is usually what is meant by ὁ παιδέρωσ.

¹⁴² 7.18.8-13

¹⁴³ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, pp. 97-8, lists similar priest god parallels. Artemidoros, *Interpretation of Dreams* 2.69, p. 195.5, priests enjoy the same respect among men as do the gods.

¹⁴⁴ 2.24.1

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Artemidoros, *Interpretation of Dreams*. Selene [female moon] signifies the same good and bad outcomes as Helios [male sun] but in a lesser degree, as the moon is cooler than the sun, 2.36, p. 163.1. A dream of the moon indicates that the dream will be fulfilled by a woman, 2.36, p. 164.3.

chaste woman and ewe-lamb, to be dominated by the male power of the god. Perhaps we have a clue as to one meaning of the sexual restrictions on female priests who serve male deities: they are thus excluded from the normal fabric of society. Such women, like a sacrificial animal or sacred piece of land, have been let go by their fellow mortals for the use of the gods.¹⁴⁶

ἔστι δ' οὖν Ποσειδῶνος ἱερὸν ἐνταῦθα ἅγιον, ἱεράται δὲ αὐτῷ παρθένος. ἔστ' ἂν ἐς ὥραν προέλθῃ γάμου. 'There is in fact a holy sanctuary of Poseidon here, served by a virgin priest until she comes to her time for marriage.'¹⁴⁷ Pausanias characterizes the cult of Poseidon at Kalaureia, Troezen, with this 'one liner' The only fact of importance is the service of a male god by a female priest, and the conditions of her service (virginity until marriage). Nothing else is said about the cult. Pausanias' interest in questions of sexual status and requirements, for which I have been arguing, is almost proved by this one reference alone.

How does Pausanias' treatment of male priests in ritual differ from that of female priests? Or how is it similar? The number of boy priests Pausanias records is instantly striking. We have discovered that their sexual status is an important part of female priests' priestly identity: should these boy priests be placed in the same light? The term παῖς, 'boy', corresponds to that period of a girl's life when she is called παρθένος, both 'girl' and 'virgin'. Where a girl must marry to become γυνή, 'woman', with the birth of her first child, a boy changes into man's estate through puberty alone. So being a boy implies the sexual status of virginity. The boy / man division is the major marker of male sexual status: it is not counted how often a man marries, nor assumed he will live chastely in old age. Is this why Pausanias, with his interest in sexual status, selects these boy priests for inclusion?

At Aigion in Achaia Pausanias reports there are images of Zeus as a boy, and Herakles as a beardless youth.¹⁴⁸ In his day, god and hero are served by adult male priests. τὰ δὲ ἔτι παλαιότερα, 'in an even earlier period', the most handsome boy was picked out to be priest of Zeus. When his beard began to grow, the honour for beauty went to another boy. The priesthood rewards the best example of the prepubescent state. Child priest replicates child god. The Greeks prized highly the looks of beardless boys; by evaluating the best looking on this criterion, the youth of the priest is emphasized. Pausanias' description of the priesthood calls attention to the undeveloped sexuality of the priest.

The δαφναφόρος, 'bay-bearer', of Ismenian Apollo at Thebes demonstrates the link between sexual status and strange restrictions which fascinates Pausanias.¹⁴⁹ A

¹⁴⁶ As remarked by Robert Parker, *Miasma*, p. 93.

¹⁴⁷ 2.33.2-3

¹⁴⁸ 7.24.4

¹⁴⁹ 9.10.4

boy from a distinguished family, handsome and strong, is made priest for a year. There are many elements of interest for Pausanias in this story. Once more the good looks of the young boy are a factor. Unusually he wears bay wreathes. The richer boys, thinks Pausanias, dedicate tripods to the god, and thus a link between past and present is created. Pausanias begins the description with himself, 'This I know happens at Thebes in my own day'. He ends exotically with Herakles: the one tripod distinctive for its antiquity is that dedicated by Amphitryon (Herakles' father) when Herakles was bay-bearer.

The priesthood of the boy who serves Athena Kraneia at Elateia in Phokis is scrupulously defined by its holder's child status.¹⁵⁰ A priest is chosen from boys with a care that the priesthood be over before the onset of puberty. Since the priesthood lasts five years, this demands some judgement. Pausanias notes that the priest τήν τε ἄλλην δίαιταν ἔχει παρὰ τῆι θεῶι, 'has his living with the god' during this time, including taking his baths in a cauldron κατὰ τρόπον ... τὸν ἀρχαῖον, 'in the ancient way'. The cult is old, with a particular ritual lifestyle demanded of the eternal child priest. Examination of these three cases of boy priesthood reveals that they have special features; the importance of the prepubescent state is stressed, all the rites have constituents Pausanias describes as ancient (therefore noteworthy on their own account). Their exclusion of male sexuality is striking. These priests are of interest to Pausanias for the unusual conditions of service female priesthoods more normally entail.

The case of the male prophet of Dionysos at Amphikleia provides an interesting contrast with the female prophet of Apollo Deiradiotes.¹⁵¹ Local people have their illnesses cured through dreams; the priest acts as the god's interpreter, and gives oracles when possessed by him. The word expressing possession is the same, κάτοχος, but there is no mention of any sexual requirements of the priest, no strange ritual. This male prophet serving a male god is unremarkable in the Pausanian scheme of things, unlike the female prophet serving a male god.

A good test of the role of gender is to compare situations where there is differing sex in priest and god. Pausanias' treatment of female priests indicated that the situation was fraught with problem; how is it for male priests? Pausanias records four instances of male priests of Demeter and Kore.¹⁵² The torchbearers at Eleusis are simply listed off. The only fact given about the priests who live between Athens and Eleusis is that they alone may fish in the Rheitoi streams sacred to the two gods. The hierophant of Demeter, at Keleai, Corinth, is described in greater detail. But the

¹⁵⁰ 10.34.8

¹⁵¹ 10.33.11

¹⁵² At Eleusis, 1.37.1; between Athens and Eleusis, 1.38.1; at Keleai, Corinth, 2.14.1; at Pheneos, Arkadia, 8.15.3.

main point of interest for Pausanias is the comparison of the Corinthian rites with those they imitate at Eleusis: it is in this context that Pausanias tells us that a priest is appointed anew for each mystery, and that he may take a wife, both outside the Eleusinian tradition. The ritual action of the priest of Demeter Kidaria, at Pheneos in Arkadia, is more peculiar. At the greater mystery, he dons a mask of Demeter and beats the underworld gods with rods, and Pausanias does not know why this should be. A short local tale about the founder of the cult expresses this mystification. Mostly, the male priests of Demeter can be described in the one dimension of rite. They are perceived in uncomplicated fashion by Pausanias; they have little a myth might need to explain. The male gender is not problematic.¹⁵³

Finally, Pausanias records one category-defying case where a male and female priest serve together in the cult of Artemis Hymnia at Orchomenos, Arkadia.¹⁵⁴ Their duty is 'to live a holy life', ἀγιστεύειν, and not just sexually. They live and bathe differently from other people; they never enter private houses. Their service is lifelong. The closest comparison Pausanias can draw is with the ἱστιάτορες, 'guest-masters', of Ephesian Artemis, who live in a similar way, but for a year only. Controlled sexuality is an indicator of connection with the sacred, as has been particularly apparent in the case of female priests. Nevertheless the stringent conditions of this priesthood are extraordinary for both men and women: that they serve together is an added surprise. Pausanias' detailing of this cult is the clearest indication of his delight in priesthoods with unusual conditions. Normally it is female priests who are subject to such conditions, therefore we have heard most about them.

VI. Conclusions

This chapter functions as a contribution to the rehabilitation of Pausanias' *Guide to Greece* in the work of ancient historians. The text need no longer languish as an encyclopaedia of unchanging Greek 'facts', a footnote filler, an antiquarian curiosity. When we begin to ask proper historical questions, we see the exciting possibility of drawing out Pausanias' unique perspective on his material, a perspective formed in his particular context. The *Guide to Greece* is a well-ordered piece of scrupulous personal research. It explains second-century Greece from the point of view of an educated Greek from Asia Minor, a man passionately interested in the practice of his religion. For him, the divine is noteworthy and often marvellous.

¹⁵³ Nor is it in other male priests of female deities. Pausanias is interested in the cake-throwing rites of the priests of Soteiria at Aigion in Achaia, 7.24.3; the priests of Artemis Saviour at Pellene in Achaia are remarkable for their unique access to the statue and their good family backgrounds, 7.27.3; the 'one liner' about the priest of Athena at Tegea records his yearly entry into the sanctuary, 8.47.5.

¹⁵⁴ 8.13.1, albeit it with a tantalizing lacuna in the text.

Being a priest was a possibility open to both men and women. It therefore provides an excellent exploratory shaft for investigating gender in religious ritual. Especially in regard to Greek priests, this is still an area of research in its infancy. Reading the *Guide to Greece* in this way has yielded some discoveries. In general, female priests feature rather more than male; this pattern is reversed only in Pausanias' descriptions of current ritual custom. Looking at the context in which these priests occur has provided clues to the interpretation of this pattern.

Pausanias is interested in the past, more particularly in what the Greeks think about their past. He will sometimes comment or qualify what they say, but he does record it. Importantly, therefore, Pausanias' text can have wider implications: he shows us what he thinks it is to have a Greek understanding. For Pausanias, the past is divine. Stories of the past reflect present understanding of that divine. The part of priests in tales of the past must relate to perceptions of their second-century role. Pausanias' priestly stories are nearly all about female priests. In Greek eyes, such women prove interesting, unusual, problematic in different ways. When Aristokrates rapes the virgin priest of Artemis, her sexuality can represent the sanctity of the god, which the community must protect. The one story of a male priest, Koresos, focuses on the difficulty of male-female relationships; Kallirhoe's refusal of Dionysos' priest necessitated the foul ritual of human sacrifice. Female sexuality is a particular source of story. It is both integral to, and yet sometimes a threat to, women's priestly activity.

Interconnections between myth and rite can take us to the very heart of Greek religion. The part of female priests in rite is often illuminated by Pausanias with a myth; problematic female priests require perceived explication much more often than male. Particularly noticeable are cases where priest and god are of different sex. The single fact that Herakles has an eternally virgin female priest attracts two myths. Sosipolis' female priest, old and chaste, is also given cause in myth. Women's sexuality, and therefore the manner in which they relate to men is a strong theme. When a male priest serves a male god, the sexual status of the priest is only mentioned in Pausanias' definition of two priesthoods.¹⁵⁵ In contrast, when a female priest serves a female god, almost half of Pausanias' descriptions of the priesthood include the holder's sexual status.¹⁵⁶ The same pattern is found amongst priests serving a god of the other sex. Of the male priests, only one serves with rules as to

¹⁵⁵ 7.24.4, of the gods Zeus and Herakles in their own boyhood; 9.10.4, of Apollo.

¹⁵⁶ There are seven virgin girls (five of Artemis the virgin god): of Aphrodite, 2.10.4; of Hilaeria and Phoibe, 3.16.1; of Knagian Artemis, 3.18.4; of Artemis Laphria, 7.18.12; of Triklarian Artemis, 7.19.1; of Artemis, 7.26.5; of Artemis Hymnia, 8.5.11. The more complex categories are the young woman who may no longer have sexual intercourse, priest of Aphrodite, 2.10.4; an old woman past the natural time for such intercourse, priest of Artemis Hymnia, 8.5.11; and a woman who must have had only one husband and who will observe chastity whilst priest of Gaios, 7.25.13.

his sexual status.¹⁵⁷ Of the female priests, four are restricted: there are fewer such women so the proportion is even larger.¹⁵⁸

The rites which Pausanias describes confirm that it is primarily the sexual side of their being which makes female priests a source of such comment. The rites of the Arrephoria, with their shrouded sexual overtones, Pausanias finds amazing and intriguingly obscure. The female priesthoods of Gaios, and of Apollo Deiradiotes, are sexually defined. It is the exclusion of sexuality from the three boy priesthoods that leads Pausanias to include them. Normally, male priests are by contrast with female priests much less complicated. They mostly appear in rite alone; they are perceived to need little explanation, to provide less of the stuff of story. Even serving a female god does not inspire special clarification from Pausanias.

The strain of female sexuality in Greek society frequently leads Pausanias to equate the female with the wonderful. Demonstrably he believes women have the potential to be peculiar. *τέρατα γὰρ πολλῶι καὶ τοῦδε θαυμασιώτερα καὶ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἔτικτον γυναῖκες*, 'Even in our time women have produced much more amazing monsters than this one [the Minotaur]'.¹⁵⁹ Pausanias is not expressing some belief about the dimness of the past, but making a statement of fact about the present. It should be noted that Greek myth as a whole contains the same bias towards marvels involving women. Pausanias' concentration on unusual or problematic women, as exemplified by female priesthoods, is striking enough to indicate his own real interest, yet it also draws upon the themes provided by his wider Greek cultural background. Such are the motives that have so prominently led Pausanias to put the female first.

Where does this study lead us beyond the text of Pausanias? Some new thoughts about the nature of priesthood have emerged. Following Rudhardt's linguistic definitions, I have examined the connections of the priest to the god, to the ritual and to the community. The ties are close. Both priest and community are punished by Triklarian Artemis when her sanctuary is abused by Komaitho and Melanippos, for example. Komaitho's virginity was an essential part of her service of the virgin god. A gender-aware investigation proves that who serves whom is a significant part of belief and ritual. These leads add to the information that the usual inscriptional studies produce. They take us away from the sacrifice-centric model of priesthood normally adopted by scholars. Marcel Detienne, for example, sets up three levels of sacrificial participation, with the sacrificing priest who wields the knife to stab the victim on the highest level.¹⁶⁰ Since he argues that women were often

¹⁵⁷ Boy priest of Athena Kraneia, 10.34.7.

¹⁵⁸ Of Apollo, 2.24.1; of Poseidon, 2.33.2; of Sosipolis, 6.20.2; of Herakles, 9.27.6.

¹⁵⁹ 1.24.1

¹⁶⁰ Marcel Detienne, 'The violence of well-born ladies: women in the Thesmophoria', in Marcel Detienne and Jean-Paul Vernant (eds.), *The Cuisine of Sacrifice* (Eng. trans. Paula Wissing, Chicago

excluded from the slaughter, the female role seems devalued, unequal to the male. But Guy Berthiaume points out that most ritual butchery was performed by male non-priestly specialists, and finds no evidence of gender difference in the ritual part played in sacrifice by priests. 'Cependant, si c'était une obligation pour les prêtresses, on ne voit pas qu'il ait été coutumier pour les prêtres de déléguer ce pouvoir.'¹⁶¹ Robin Osborne challenges the validity of Detienne's sacrificial levels, and demonstrates that it is exceptional for women to be debarred from the sacrificial process, rather than the norm, as Detienne argues.¹⁶²

The debate over who wields the knife leads us down a blind alley. It reflects a Christian perspective, where the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice in the Eucharist is often made the defining act of priesthood. The Greek perspective traced in the reading of Pausanias' *Guide to Greece* opens up better avenues of approach. Priesthood does not lie in one specific ritual act, but in embodying connections between human and divine in the religious system. I will pursue these connections as represented by specific female priests, Plutarch's Pythia and Heliodoros' Charikleia, in the next two chapters.

and London, 1986), p. 131.

¹⁶¹ Guy Berthiaume, *Les rôles du mégéiros: étude sur la boucherie, la cuisine et le sacrifice dans la Grèce ancienne* (Leiden, 1982), p. 32.

¹⁶² Robin Osborne, 'Women and sacrifice in classical Greece', *C.Q.* 43 (1993), pp. 392-405.

Chapter Four

Between Man and God? Models of the Female in Plutarch's Pythian Dialogues and *Isis and Osiris*

Plutarch produced a gratifying number of highly gender-aware texts. But to date, much has been made of his philosophy and his comparative studies of Greece and Rome, not withstanding the descriptions of 'unoriginal' or 'populist' with which scholars have tended to slight his work. Far less attention has been paid to his remarkable writing about men and women, and its importance for analysing his contemporary Greek society of the late first to early second centuries A.D.¹

The possibilities for interested readers are numerous. In *The Bravery of Women*, for example, Plutarch relates stories of female courage. Startlingly, he says he believes a man's bravery and a woman's bravery are one and the same, τὸ μίαν ... καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν ἀνδρὸς καὶ γυναικὸς ἀρετὴν, 242F. However, almost by definition, these female deeds of bravery are unusual; they represent standards of behaviour to be abjured once the extreme necessity for them is past.² Aretaphila of Cyrene illustrates the pattern: after she has freed her city from tyranny she retires to the women's quarters, to spend the rest of her days quietly at her loom in the company of family and friends, 255E-257E. As France Le Corsu comments, 'Pour notre moraliste, la femme idéale est l'épouse soumise, menant une vie discrète et digne, toute de dévouement à son mari, sans tapage et sans luxe'.³ Another fascinating text is Plutarch's *Advice on Marriage*, addressed to the bride, Eurydice: Plutarch's ideal picture of the wise guidance a husband would offer his younger wife is borne out in practice in the advice he gives to his own wife in his *Consolation* on the death of their daughter. The debate *On Love* focuses on the social disturbance caused by the successful wooing of a young man by a richer, older widow.

Most promising, from my perspective in this study, are the texts where concepts of gender and the divine meet. As the subjects of this chapter, I take Plutarch's Pythian dialogues, *On the Pythian Oracles* and *Oracles in Decline*, and *Isis and Osiris*. The Pythian dialogues debate the function of the Pythia, a woman unique and powerful in her communication of the will of Apollo. In *Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch tells the myth of the Egyptian gods, strikingly interpreting religion along gendered lines. Such a choice of texts has the advantage of developing fruitful areas of

¹ The point has also been made by Jill D. Harries, in her paper 'The cube and the square: masculinity and male social roles in Roman Boeotia', delivered at Nottingham University on 5 March 1994. I am indebted to her for a copy of the text.

² As noted by Donald Russell, in his paper on the text given at a 'Women in Antiquity' seminar in Oxford, 2 March 1992.

³ France Le Corsu, *Plutarque et les femmes dans les Vies parallèles* (Paris, 1981), p. 274.

investigation from Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams* and Pausanias' *Guide to Greece*. Since female priests proved so informative in Pausanias, there is good reason to hope that the Pythia, female priest *non pareille*, will prove similarly significant in Plutarch's understanding of gender and religion. The prominent female/male division between the protagonists Isis and Osiris recalls the structure of male and female divine power set out by Artemidoros, and applied by him on the human plane in his system of dream interpretation. Plutarch's use of myth in *Isis and Osiris* expands my previous consideration of religious myth as an important expression of gender ideas in Pausanias.

This chapter attempts a study of several texts by the same author, rather than just one text. There are methodological implications to the decision, as outlined in the Introduction. How may texts be read together? Although my chosen texts are all written by the same author, one unchanging authorial point of view cannot be assumed. Each text is complete, coherent and autonomous. I consider each text separately, paying attention to the literary and rhetorical forms shaping it. Similarity and/or difference will be allowed to emerge rather than be assumed.

I. Privileging the Pythia?

Foretelling the future in antiquity was the job of oracles. These were often women who would be put into a trance by some drug or by breathing the fumes from a volcanic vent. Their ravings would then be interpreted by the surrounding priests. The real skill lay in the interpretation.⁴

Another scholarly pilgrimage to Delphi may justify itself by taking these words of Stephen Hawking as a starting point. For Hawking goes on to make it clear that in talking of oracles in antiquity he is in fact thinking of one in particular, the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. His intention is to frame his predictions of our future by Greek attempts at theirs, and to contrast his judgements on the reliability of the two systems. The Delphic oracle provides him with sufficient popular negative images to exploit. Immediate ground for suspicion is the asserted preponderance of women in oracular positions. Worse, these are women under dubious influences: they 'rave', they are senseless. What the women say must be remodelled by men. To the male priests Hawking ascribes the only intelligent, intelligible part of the process, their skilled interpretation. Hawking's woman of the oracle, priest of Apollo, the Pythia, is caught between a rock and a hard place: she is subject to intervention both non-human (drugs, fumes) and human (male priests). This interested account raises

⁴ Stephen Hawking, 'We're running out of time', p. 14 in *The Times*, 6 September 1993. The article is an extract from *Black Holes and Baby Universes and Other Essays* (London, 1993).

several questions. Even a sketch of ancient oracles by a twentieth-century scientist brings gender issues to the fore – female prophets channelling information about the future from god to men in a particularly female way. How then does Plutarch in his Pythian dialogues deal with the prominent part played by gender in the prophetic process? As Hawking's rhetoric shows, the image of the raving female prophet is still readily understandable today. To understand the implications of Plutarch's texts, we need to locate them in the extraordinarily long tradition of ancient and modern writing about the Pythia.

i. Orientation

Evidence about the Pythia herself is surprisingly sparse: we know very much more of the oracles (reported and real) than the succession of women who gave them. As Georges Roux suggests, we may know so little of the Pythia because the Greeks knew her so well.⁵ The peculiar patterns formed by the distribution and types of evidence have created diverging and often distorted interpretations of the Pythia.⁶ Athenian drama of the fifth century B.C. has provided some of the most potent representations of the Pythia. Apollo's priestess Cassandra is in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* a prototype Pythia, who is overcome by waves of god-bearing, prophetic pain. Robert Flacelière, an influential writer on Delphi and Plutarch, exemplifies a popular approach by taking her as the definitive model of female inspired divination, 'We see her writhing in the power of the god, who, having deprived her of reason, reveals to her crazed mind terrifying visions of the crime that is about to be committed'.⁷ The female prophet is possessed, powerless, out of her mind. As Ruth Padel comments on Cassandra, 'The implications of physical pain and erotic penetration ... helped to establish in the tradition the idea that prophetic possession by a male god involved pain, which the priestess naturally resisted'.⁸ Flacelière's recreation of the consultation of the Pythia is strikingly dependent on Aeschylus' dramatic presentation. 'The chasm emitted a vapour (*pneuma*) which, penetrating every orifice

⁵ Georges Roux, *Delphes: son oracle et ses dieux* (Paris, 1976), p. 64.

⁶ At one end of the scale there is the foundation of the Delphic oracle as piously portrayed by the sixth-century B.C. Homeric *Hymn to Apollo*, and at the other considerable Christian criticism in the early centuries A.D. (Not that all non-Christian Greek writers treated the Pythia with respect. Lucian's second-century A.D. description is irreverent, and worlds away from the Homeric *Hymn*. Apollo, he makes Zeus say, has to be ready to turn up anywhere where the priestess has drunk the holy water, chewed on her laurel leaves and begun to writhe on her tripod calling for him to appear, *The Double Indictment* 1, καὶ ὄλωσ ἔνθα ἄν ἡ πρόμαντις πλοῦσα τοῦ ἱεροῦ νάματος καὶ μισησαμένη τῆς δάφνης καὶ τὸν τρίποδα διασειάσασα κελεύη παρῆναι.)

⁷ Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1140, the chorus says to Cassandra φρενομανῆς τις εἶ θεοφόρητος, 'You are frenzied in soul, god-ridden'. At 1150, they describe her θεοφόρους ... ματαίους δύας, 'vain, god-bearing pangs of prophecy'. Robert Flacelière, *Greek Oracles* (Eng. trans. Douglas Garman, London, 1965), p. 28.

⁸ Ruth Padel, 'Women: model for possession by Greek daemons', in Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity* (revised edition, London, 1993), p. 14.

of her body, produced in her a state of ecstasy that enabled her to ejaculate the words and cries breathed into her by the god, as though in some way Apollo took possession of her and obscured her powers of reasoning. ... All our sources confirm that when the Pythia was prophesying she was in a state of frenzy.⁹ But in his turn, Flacelière has been overpowered by the persuasive influence of drama. It is patently untrue that *all* our ancient sources confirm such a state of frenzy.

Tragedy itself provides alternative models of the Pythia's behaviour. The Pythia of Euripides' *Ion* acts as the interpreter of Apollo's will to Ion and Kreusa, speaking in normal iambic dialogue with final authority.¹⁰ By concentrating on evidence like this, and especially on Pythian pronouncements which he judges historically genuine, Joseph Fontenrose has formulated a Pythia as definitive as she is opposed to Flacelière's. His Pythia 'spoke clearly, coherently and directly to the consultant in response to his question'.¹¹ A horrid episode recounted by Plutarch, where the Pythia died from a disastrous forced attempt at prophecy, he describes as 'the unfortunate session in which the Pythia was overcome with some emotional sickness'.¹² In rationalizing away the mystery of divination, Fontenrose erodes the vital sense of contact with the divine, which the Flacelière school of thought overemphasizes through its insistence on the Pythia's wild behaviour.

In the fourth century B.C. Plato wrote, 'It is to their madness that we owe the many benefits that the Pythia of Delphi and the priestesses of Dodona were able to bestow upon Greece both privately and in public life, for when they were in their right minds their achievements amounted to little or nothing', ἡ τε γὰρ δὴ ἐν Δελφοῖς προφήτις αἵ τ' ἐν Δωδώνῃ ἰέρειαι μανεῖσαι μὲν πολλὰ δὴ καὶ καλὰ ἰδίᾳ τε καὶ δημοσίᾳ τὴν Ἑλλάδα εἰργάσαντο, σωφρονοῦσαι δὲ βραχέα ἢ οὐδέν.¹³ It is telling that the association between madness and prophecy is made specifically in the case of female prophets. For Plato and subsequent commentators, a woman's madness is easily credible. Stephen Hawking uses the model of the raving Pythia because it is an image of the female which still works in our society today. (To take one example, criticism of Margaret Thatcher during her premiership was instructive not least for the terms in which her male colleagues expressed their disapprobation: Ian Gilmour, for example, found her 'fevered and very often

⁹ Flacelière, *Greek Oracles*, pp. 48, 50.

¹⁰ Euripides, *Ion* 1320-68.

¹¹ Joseph Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle: its responses and operations with a catalogue of responses* (Berkeley and London, 1978), p. 10. His interpretation draws on the influential work of Erwin Rohde, which made a strong connection between divine possession and frenzy, *Psyche: the cult of souls and belief in immortality among the Greeks* (Eng. trans. of eighth edition, W. B. Hillis, New York, 1925).

¹² Plutarch, 438B. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle*, p. 226. The more recent treatment of Yvonne Vernière, 'La théorie de l'inspiration prophétique dans *Les Dialogues Pythiques* de Plutarque', *Kernos* 3 (1990) takes the same position. 'On peut penser que la pauvre femme est terrassée par l'angoisse d'avoir violé le tabou', p. 361.

¹³ Plato, *Phaedrus* 244A-245C, 265A-B. He plays on the similarity of sound (and therefore, to the Greeks, of meaning) of μαντική (prophecy) and μανική (mania).

irrational'.¹⁴) If the influence of Apollo is discounted, if the reality of ancient religion is denied, then modern commentators are forced to look for an explanation of the Pythia's behaviour within the nature of the woman herself. Many have said as much, seeking to solve the mystery of centuries with phrases like 'auto-suggestion' and 'self-induced hypnotism'. E. R. Dodds, for example, says, 'I take it as fairly certain that the Pythia's trance was auto-suggestively induced, like mediumistic trance today': H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell write of 'a simple and suggestible peasant woman', who is 'an easy victim to a self-hypnosis', and makes 'the confused and disjointed remarks of a hypnotized woman'.¹⁵ These scholars imply a woman had the capacity within herself, within her female nature, to act in this way.¹⁶ Modern as well as ancient perceptions of gender are highly instrumental in understanding the how and why of existing interpretations of the Pythia.

Methodological problems in approaches to the Pythia do not end with diagnosis of gender stereotypes. First, ancient recycling of ideas and literary motifs about the Pythia generate a Pythian tradition, often distanced from any actual historical situation. Ruth Padel shows how tragic images inform the descriptions of Virgil's Sibyl, and the female priest in Lucan, who feigns divine possession twice in an ultimately vain attempt to avoid the rigours of the real thing.¹⁷ Secondly, modern writing about the Pythia is frequently determinedly empirical in method. Fontenrose's chapter, 'The mantic session', takes us from the philosophical Plutarch (first century A.D.) and the history of Diodorus Siculus (first century B.C.) on pages 197-8, to Platonic philosophy and Herodotean history (fourth and fifth centuries B.C.) page 204, to Euripides' tragic *Ion* (fifth century B.C.) page 206, on to Lucan (first century B.C.) page 209, and skips briskly through the distinctly out-of-context Christian evidence on page 210.¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, in this case and others, historical analysis is lost somewhere along the way. Writers are often not careful enough about the drawing of overarching conclusions. The sheer scale of time over which the post of Pythia existed is frequently ignored. Delphi in the fifth century B.C. was a powerful political force, a centre for the working out of relationships between the Greek states,

¹⁴ 'Thatcher, the Downing Street Years', part one, broadcast on BBC 1, 20 October 1993.

¹⁵ E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), p. 73. Flacelière, *Greek Oracles*, p. 51, advocates self-hypnotism and auto-suggestion as the keys to understanding the Pythia. Again, these sentiments are repeated in Vernière, 'La théorie de l'inspiration prophétique', p. 361. H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* vol. 1 (Oxford, 1956), p. 39.

¹⁶ An instructive contrast is offered by William Golding's last novel, *The Double Tongue* (London, 1995), a powerful exploration of Delphi of the first century B.C. His narrative centres on the life experiences of the (invented) chief Pythia, one Arieka. He is fascinated by the nature of inspiration - hysteria or prophetic foresight, cunning fiction or divine revelation? He does not simply invoke female stereotypes to explain Arieka's 'double-tongued' prophecies.

¹⁷ Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.77 and Lucan, *Civil War* 5.169. Padel, 'Women: model for possession by Greek daemons', p. 14 with n. 23.

¹⁸ Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle*, ch. 7. Roux's description of the consultation also sees collected details taking on a life of their own, as 'fact' beyond the original context of their sources, *Delphes*, p. 148 ff.

as Robert Parker's study has shown.¹⁹ Much had changed politically by the first and second centuries A.D., when the Roman emperors ruled their provinces, of which Greece (Achaia) was one, without reference to Delphi. How feasible is it to assume that the role of the Pythia and representation of it had remained unchanged? Compiling composite accounts of a 'standard Pythia' is an activity as methodologically unsound as it is confusing and unhelpful.

How then to study the Pythia with methodological integrity? Seeking to combat cultural prejudice about spirit possession and divination, L. Maurizio puts the Pythia in a cross-cultural perspective.²⁰ She is not interested in how the Pythia was thought to communicate her prophecies, but how actually she did. Maurizio deploys comparative anthropology to recreate the 'ritual logic' of a Delphic divinatory session. She is right to point out the ancient and modern traditions that have devalued the part played by the Pythia in prophecy, but her reconstructed Delphic session is, as she herself admits, no less speculative than that of other scholars. In preference, I would argue that to study the Pythia we need a specific location, time and framework of approach. Only then can her relationships with other humans, and her god, be put into a coherent system of thought and given meaning; only then can questions about the operation of gender in this religious setting be answered. For me, what was thought about the Pythia is more significant than what 'actually' happened. Ruth Padel has achieved fascinating results by her disciplined and sensitive study of images of divine possession in fifth-century B.C. Attic tragedy.²¹ For the late first and early second centuries A.D., Plutarch's Pythian dialogues offer similarly exciting possibilities.

What credentials of Plutarch's permit this claim? Plutarch lived his life centred in his native Chaironeia, Boiotia, c. A.D. 40-5 to 120.²² Thus he lived some twenty miles from Delphi, where, as a member of an influential and affluent local family, he became a priest. Frederick Brenk diagnoses Plutarch's partiality for Delphi from his numerous references to the place and its institutions in his *Parallel Lives* series.²³ From the late eighties or early nineties until his death, Plutarch served together with his συμπερεύς 'fellow priest', whom he names at one stage as Euthydemus.²⁴ Plutarch describes himself as τῷ Πυθίῳ λειτουργοῦντα πολλάς

¹⁹ Robert Parker, 'Greek states and Greek oracles', in Paul A. Cartledge and F. David Harvey (eds.), *Cruce: essays in Greek history presented to G. E. M. de Ste. Croix on his seventy-fifth birthday* (London, 1985).

²⁰ L. Maurizio, 'Anthropology and spirit possession: a reconsideration of the Pythia's role at Delphi', *J.H.S.* 115 (1995), pp. 69-86.

²¹ Ruth Padel, *In and Out of the Mind: Greek images of the tragic self* (Princeton, 1992).

²² Christopher P. Jones includes a concise, albeit approximate, chronological table of Plutarch's life and works in *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 135-7. The arguments for his dating scheme are laid out in 'Towards a chronology of Plutarch's works', *J.R.S.* 56 (1966), pp. 61-74.

²³ Frederick E. Brenk, 'An imperial heritage: the religious spirit of Plutarch of Chaironeia', *A.N.R.W.* II.36.1 (1987), p. 254.

²⁴ *Table Talk* 700E. Inscriptions from the third century B.C. onwards record the twin Delphic priests,

Πυθιάδας, 'serving the Pythia for many Pythiads'.²⁵ On his own evidence, Plutarch's priesthood was an active one. Simon Swain reviews the arguments of Robert Flacelière and Christopher Jones over a speech made by Theon in Plutarch's *On the Pythian Oracles*, praising the leader of Delphi's splendid renewal and fresh florescence, 409A-C. Rejecting some of Jones' arguments, Swain nevertheless reaches his conclusion, and confirms that the text points to Plutarch being that leader.²⁶ For over twenty years, Plutarch as priest had a particular interest and involvement at Delphi, and he must have known the oracle all his life.

From this close knowledge of Delphi, Plutarch wrote three dialogues which debate various Delphic concerns. They are numbered amongst his *Moralia*, namely *The Delphic E*, *On the Pythian Oracles* and *Oracles in Decline*.²⁷ Estimates for the dating of these works vary, and the arguments have a certain circularity, being based on possible affinities between the works. Many scholars accept a date in the nineties A.D. for *Oracles in Decline* and *The Delphic E*, then place *On the Pythian Oracles* some twenty years later at the end of Plutarch's life.²⁸ Jones differs by putting the works closer together, c. A.D. 83 for *Oracles in Decline* and A.D. 95 for the other two. I will be focusing on the two dialogues which concentrate on the Pythia. Plutarch's works are a major source for Delphi and the Pythia. Walter Burkert acknowledges this when he turns to Delphi in his chapter 8.3 on oracles, writing, 'The most important literary evidence comes from Plutarch'.²⁹ But the acknowledgement comes only in a footnote, and Plutarch's 'most important' evidence is scarcely mentioned or discussed. Instead, Burkert proceeds to give an account of the Pythian consultation procedure in his usual style, with more reference to secondary discussions than primary evidence, and 'facts' from varying sources pieced together. But Plutarch's Pythian dialogues need coherent analysis as whole texts, not quotation in accounts of the oracle as a timeless institution.

Plutarch's Delphic writings have largely been exploited in the reconstruction of Delphic prophetic procedure, as the best evidence we have. But it should be unacceptable to extract purportedly factual details of what went on without considering Plutarch's explanations of why they went on: description and analysis are heavily interdependent. The dialogues need consideration as entire texts for them to yield us their full information about ideas of the Pythia at the time of their

but they are mentioned in literature only once before Plutarch, Roux, *Delphes*, p. 54.

²⁵ *Old Men in Politics* 792F.

²⁶ Simon Swain, 'Plutarch, Hadrian and Delphi', *Historia* 40 (1991), pp. 318-30. Hadrian's renewal of Delphi probably did not begin until c. A.D. 125, after Plutarch's death.

²⁷ The dialogues are numbered as follows; *The Delphic E*, 384D-394C, *On the Pythian Oracles*, 394D-409D, *Oracles in Decline* 409E-438E.

²⁸ Flacelière, *Greek Oracles*, p. 82, assumes such a dating.

²⁹ Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: archaic and classical* (Eng. trans. John Raffan, Oxford, 1985), n. 63 to p. 115.

composition. For instance, Plutarch is interested in thinking about Delphic prophecy, whereas Simon Price in 'Delphi and divination' is more interested in using his texts to recreate Delphic procedures.³⁰ The emphasis is rather wrong. The reconstruction line of enquiry is also limited by the lack of evidence; after all, the Pythia gave her prophecies in unobserved privacy. Archaeology has received privileged emphasis in reconstructing consultation practices, but the results are of greater interest about us, testimony to our ingenuity and 'superior' knowledge, than they are of explanatory value for the Greek situation. For example, the discovery of the impossibility of vapours arising from a chasm has been trumpeted loudly but how much does it avail us? Which question is the more informative, what was physically possible or what was believed possible by the Greeks? Surely the most interesting investigations to make into the Delphic oracle are what was thought to be happening, not to impose our criteria of what was 'really' going on (auto-suggestion, no prophetic vapours *etc.*).

In her study of Delphi in its earliest period, Catherine Morgan makes a pertinent observation. 'The oracle has attracted much attention almost for its curiosity value, and the tendency to regard it in isolation from, or even in opposition to, the wider Greek world persists.'³¹ Delphi's position in the ancient world was a paradoxical mixture of marginality and centrality, expressed in its physical location outside the boundaries of its consulting Greek states. The work of Robert Parker and Simon Price has contributed towards integrating Delphi into wider Greek social systems. However, their emphasis has been mainly on the relationship between the oracle and Greek πόλις: Parker's time-frame is the fifth to the third centuries B.C., Price explores the Herodotean evidence. The less politically glamorous Delphi of the Roman empire has received rather less attention. In fact, Plutarch's treatment of the Pythia reveals perceptions of gender and the divine in a firmly Greek context. Simon Swain notes how *On the Pythian Oracle's* emphasis on Delphi's rejuvenation 'is in part a celebration of Greek aid by the Greeks for the Greeks under the auspices of the Amphictyons. The tone of the passage is exclusive of outsiders'.³² Rome merits just three references. Concentrating on the Pythia in Plutarch's thought system allows us to put the Pythia into her late first and early second-century Greek perspective.

Useful comparison with a later second-century cultural context can be achieved by reference to Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams*. Artemidoros' text naturally places a high value on the prevalence and efficacy of prophecy. In his explicit structuring of figures of authority in society, prophets have fifth and last

³⁰ Simon Price, 'Delphi and divination', in P. E. Easterling and J. V. Muir (eds.), *Greek Religion and Society* (Cambridge, 1985).

³¹ Catherine Morgan, *Athletes and Oracles: the transformation of Olympia and Delphi in the eighth century B.C.* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 151.

³² Simon Swain, 'Plutarch, Hadrian and Delphi', p. 324.

place, after gods, priests, kings and rulers, then parents and teachers.³³ Artemidoros builds a picture of the frequent use of prophets by ordinary Greeks. A dream of becoming a prophet is good for a poor man because it symbolizes wealth, since prophets are in great demand.³⁴ Apollo appears as the chief prophetic god in the *Interpretation of Dreams*, for it is to the Apollo of Daldis that Artemidoros ascribes the inspiration and command to write.³⁵ A dream of Apollo by prophets and philosophers indicates they will be perfect and famous.³⁶ Artemidoros is explicit about the status in which he holds Apollo. A serpent is sacred τῷ μαντικωτάτῳ Ἀπόλλωνι, 'to Apollo the best in prophecy'.³⁷ Artemidoros' emphasis on the prevalence of prophecy and the prominence of Apollo passes beyond the personal into the accepted common values of his day, for ordinary associations are the basis of his interpretative system. Plutarch's focus on Delphi is part of the wider Greek importance placed on oracles and Apollo which Artemidoros' text reflects.

Like Artemidoros and Pausanias, Plutarch is invaluable for the first-hand nature of his evidence. He is interested not only in recording but thinking about the meaning of contemporary religious practices in which he participates and believes. We hear of the Pythia through the male voices Plutarch represents in his dialogues. One religious woman is mediated through male perceptions. How is the Pythia thought to connect enquirers to Apollo and *vice versa*? To explore the Pythia may be to explore perceptions of gender in Greek society as a whole.

ii. Reading the texts

Oracles in Decline

I begin with *Oracles in Decline*, generally supposed to be the first Pythian dialogue written. At the heart of the piece lies a unifying question, framed by Demetrios. 'There is no need to ask questions and puzzle about Ammon in particular, when we see the dimming of the oracles here, or rather the eclipse of them all, barring one or two. The question to ask is why they have become so enfeebled, δι' ἣν αἰτίαν οὕτως ἐξησθένηκε.'³⁸ Answers are essayed by Lamprias, Didymos, Ammonios, Kleombrotos, Demetrios, voicing Cynic, Epicurean, Stoic and Platonist

³³ Artemidoros, *Interpretation of Dreams* 2.69, p. 195.10 ff. See the discussion above, chapter two, section III.i. All his prophets are described as μάντιες.

³⁴ *ibid.*, 3.21, p. 212.19-20.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 2.70, p. 303.6 ff.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 2.35, p. 160.9-10.

³⁷ *ibid.*, 4.67, p. 290.2.

³⁸ *Oracles in Decline* 411E. Extracts are taken from W. R. Paton, M. Pohlenz, W. Sieveking (eds.), *Plutarchi Moralia* vol. 3 (Leipzig, 1972). The translation is by Donald Russell, *Plutarch: selected essays and dialogues* (Oxford, 1993).

points of view. As Demetrios points out, even in Boiotia 'which in former times spoke with many tongues because of its oracles', the oracles have failed entirely: Plutarch has personal motivation for exploring the question seriously. The dialogue is no abstract piece of timeless philosophy but an investigation into a contemporary problem, with current causes and potential solutions. What Plutarch will have to say about Apollo and the Pythia is firmly anchored in his contemporary context.

The dialogue begins by placing the debate in contemporary time. Didymos suggests that the flood of wickedness engulfing the world has forced out *πρόνοια θεῶν*, 'divine providence', from the oracles, 413A. He inverts the debate by asking why the Delphic oracle has *not* foundered, characterizing the questions asked of the oracle as at best trivial, at worst shameful and impious, 413B. Ammonios counters him by arguing that, 'The only reason for the god's abandoning many of the oracles would be to demonstrate the depopulation of Greece', 414A. He cites Delphi as evidence. When the god made Greek cities strong, two female prophets were employed and were sent down in turn, *δυσὶν ἐχρῶντο προφήτισιν ἐν μέρει καθιεμέναις*, with a third in reserve. Now one suffices for all enquirers, 414B. The god will not continue to prophesy where there are no longer any to hear him. Plutarch's dialogue is an undoubted entrée into the concerns and thoughts of late first and early second-century Greek society.

Pausanias' *Guide to Greece* reveals the contemporary nature of Plutarch's debate, showing how times have changed by the later second century. There is no agonizing for him about declining oracles, since the second century saw a considerable revival in their fortunes. Pausanias represents divination as a flourishing and important ritual. He commends the altar of Amphilochos at Mallos in Cilicia as the best oracular shrine of the present time.³⁹ Also in the present tense, Pausanias records shrines where oracles are given to sleeping inquirers, where they are obtained by lot or other mechanistic devices.⁴⁰ There are male prophets recorded as well as female.⁴¹ Sometimes the precise nature of the delivery of the oracle is not made plain, as is the case with the mysterious and fearful oracle of Trophonios at Lebadeia.⁴² For Pausanias, Delphi was only one of several important and well-consulted oracles, such as those of Apollo at Klaros (male prophet)⁴³, at Didyma

³⁹ *Guide to Greece* 1.34.2.

⁴⁰ Oracles to dreamers: of Amphiaraios at Oropos, 1.34.2-3; of Ino at Thalamai, 3.26.1. Mechanical oracles: of Thryxean Apollo at Kyaneai, 7.21.6; of Herakles at Boura, 7.25.6; of Hermes at Pharai, 7.22.2.

⁴¹ For example, a male prophet (*πρόμαντις*) of Dionysos at Amphikleia, 10.33.11, and a female prophet (*μαντική*) of Apollo Deiradiotes at Argos, 2.24.1.

⁴² 9.37.3-40.1

⁴³ Over three hundred civic inscriptions from Klaros, for example, beginning c. A.D. 110, show the increasing popularity and development of the oracle. Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century A.D. to the Conversion of Constantine* (Harmondsworth, 1986), pp. 172-3, 177-80, 201.

(female prophet), of Zeus at Dodona (female priests), of Ptoan Apollo in Boiotia (male prophet) and even Ammon in Egypt (male priests). He does however mention with some frequency the abandoned towns and sacred sites of which Lamprias talks.⁴⁴

Pausanias also shows up Plutarch's priorities as well as his own. Not for him an interest in Delphi of the present; Delphi of the distant past is his concern. When he visits Delphi in book ten, Pausanias is noticeably silent about the current operation of the oracle. He talks about the first temples at Delphi and what Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood has named the myths of the 'previous owners' of the oracle.⁴⁵ He concentrates on the antecedents of the Pythia in stories about the Sibyls, rather than on the current Pythia herself.⁴⁶

In order to understand fully the explanations for the decline of oracles advanced in Plutarch's dialogue, it is imperative to consider the dialogue's construction. According to Lamprias, Plutarch's brother, contributor to and supposed recorder of the debate, the discussion arose from the chance meeting of ἄνδρες ἱεροὶ δύο, 'two holy men', on their travels – Demetrios the grammarian and the Spartan Kleombrotos. The narrative has a dramatic date, shortly before the Pythian games held whilst Kallistratos was in office, A.D. 83-4, and is set at Delphi, 410A. The Pythian dialogues seem to follow directly in the literary tradition of dramatic, philosophical writing best represented by Plato's *Symposium*. As texts they deserve sophisticated interpretation. It is valid to look for Plutarch's perspective, and to expect the dialogue to make sense as a whole, not just in the parts of its speakers.

Plutarch's different characters advocate answers to the debate's central thesis which must all have a measure of credibility in their contemporary setting. Rather than imposing one model of the godhead, and of relationships between the Pythia and Apollo, the Pythia and enquirers, Plutarch's characters air different theories. Valuably, Plutarch provides different explanatory models which all have a basis in the way Greek society thinks about itself and its phenomena. The complements and disjunctions between the different ideas are not 'confusion' but wonderfully expressive of the agreements and contradictions in Greek thought. Therefore I shall analyse Plutarch's characters' suggested answers to the debate's central question to see what each can say about my concerns of gender and the divine.

⁴⁴ Susan Alcock comments on this Pausanian tendency, *Graecia Capta: the landscapes of Roman Greece* (Cambridge, 1993), for example, pp. 200-10.

⁴⁵ Pausanias, *Guide to Greece* 10.5.9-13. Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, *'Reading' Greek Culture: texts and images, ritual and myths* (Oxford, 1991), chs. IV.1 and IV.2. In Sourvinou-Inwood's close and persuasive readings of Pausanias' Delphic myths, they 'are shaped by and express positive representations of the Delphic oracle and its god and of the role and nature of prophecy, as well as perceptions pertaining to the ritual and to relationships between deities, and through them also to the Greek conception of the cosmos', p. 234.

⁴⁶ *Guide to Greece* 10.12.1-9.

Commentators are often exercised in deciding behind which of his characters Plutarch is hiding. They operate with a very black and white view of causation, arguing that only one of the solutions to the question, why are oracles failing?, can be correct and that one must of course be Plutarch's own answer. Most votes have been cast for Lamprias: he is Plutarch's brother, his substantial contribution has the strong concluding position in the debate. Scholars have been disturbed because the dialogue appears 'confused', there is no one clear-cut solution to the problem. (This is partly the reason why *On the Pythian Oracles* has been dated so much later giving Plutarch a decent amount of time to come to a firmer conclusion!). But searching for right and wrong seems a highly wasteful way in which to read this dialogue.

Plutarch's structuring of the dialogue is all-important. We need not only to trace the developments of individual arguments, but also to keep firmly in mind their conclusion. The denouement of the debate is Lamprias' lengthy focus on the part played by the Pythia in prophecy, 436F-438E. It is in the person and function of the Pythia that Lamprias seeks a resolution to the different points of view put forward in the course of the debate. She provides the dialogue with its cohesion and coherency.⁴⁷ As inspired by Apollo, she represents the ultimate in prophetic models. Upon her, Lamprias finds the patterns and arguments previously made about oracular function are displayed at their strongest and clearest. Thinking with the female is the most desirable way of coming to understand how the god speaks. The female is chosen as a model by the male voice(s) of the text.

Plutarch's treatment of the Pythia is very much in the abstract. She is a category rather than a person. The speakers in the dialogue are named, and their characters to some extent delineated. In contrast, the Pythia is nameless. Her personal identity is simply irrelevant. She is a representation, a type. Modern writers have often commented on our ignorance of who the many Pythias of the years were. Plutarch was priest, obviously having personal contact with the Pythia; even within the constraints of the dialogue, all his speakers are informed religious people gathered at Delphi itself. His is a deliberate choice to stay silent. The Pythia is an explanatory unit with which to conjure.⁴⁸

If the Pythia, the female, is the ultimate choice for thinking about prophecy, this must affect our reading of the whole text. What Lamprias says is a part of what Plutarch knows to be the explanatory currency of his day; it derives from wider Greek

⁴⁷ Bearing in mind that Lamprias says, 'This is a subject I should wish you to debate again and again. There are many objections and doubts which suggest to the contrary, but time does not allow us to go in to them now', 438D.

⁴⁸ A contrast in the naming of female priests, albeit fifth century B.C., is provided by Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War* 4.133. Thucydides tells how the temple of Hera at Argos burnt down through the carelessness of the priest, named as Chrysis. She fled, and her successor is also named, as Phaeinis. For Thucydides the names of the individual female priests help date the events he is narrating to the ninth year of the war. Plutarch is not interested in such specifics.

strands of thought. To what extent are the arguments constructed in terms of male and female concepts? How gendered is Plutarch's thought, Greek thought, about divination? Quite the best study of the Pythia has been made by Giulia Sissa, in her book *Greek Virginity*.⁴⁹ Her focus is crucially different to that of other interpretations, which focus on Delphic mechanisms. She realizes that '[the Pythia's] mystery for us resides not so much in her language as in the relation of her virginal state to her oracular function'.⁵⁰ I will be drawing on her study in my analysis of Plutarch's Pythian dialogues.

But first, it is important to consider Plutarch's understanding of the Pythia's god, Apollo. Plutarch's broad personal philosophical position reflects mainly the tenets of Middle Platonism, with indirect influence from Peripatetic, Stoic and Pythagorean formulations.⁵¹ At the end of *The Delphic E*, Ammonios poses a crucial question – how does Apollo relate to other gods? The long answer invokes the classic Middle Platonic understanding that he is 'immovable, timeless, undeviating'. As John Dillon notes in his study of Middle Platonism, 'Apollonios resoundingly affirms 'the oneness and unchangingness of the Supreme Deity, for whom Apollo (etymologized as "Not-Many" [α-πολλοί]) is the perfect epithet'.⁵² Apollo as the Supreme Deity has implications for his relations with humans. Dillon writes, 'The more transcendent the Supreme God becomes, the more he stands in need of other beings to mediate between him and the material world, over which, in Platonism, he always exercises a general supervision (*pronoia*)'.⁵³ So we might expect to find mediation an important concept for Plutarch. How then does the Pythia mediate between Apollo and his enquirers?

Lamprias opens the debate with an interesting paradox. What god creates for human benefit, ἡ φύσις, 'nature', or rather ἡ ὕλη, 'matter', sometimes destroys, 414D. The materiality of humanity and the visible world is separated from the immateriality of the divine. Prophetic powers are obscured through natural causes, not through the god, their origin. 'It is foolish, indeed childish, to believe that the god himself, like the ventriloquists who used to take the name Eurycles and now take the name Python, enters into prophets' bodies and uses their mouths and voices as his instruments. To mix god's nature with human needs is to fail to respect his dignity or safeguard the status and greatness of his excellence', 414E. Lamprias' denial of the body of the

⁴⁹ Giulia Sissa, *Greek Virginity* (Eng. trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1990), especially Part I, 'The enigmatic virgin', pp. 9-70.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵¹ John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: a study of Platonism, 80 B.C. - A.D. 220* (London, 1977), Plutarch 'is an important link in the chain of evidence for the development of Middle Platonism, and he is also ... not quite devoid of originality in his doctrines', p. 185.

⁵² *The Delphic E* 393A, 'Ἄλλ' ἔστιν ὁ θεὸς ... κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τὸν ἀκίνητον καὶ ἄχρονον καὶ ἀνέγκλιτον. John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p. 191.

⁵³ Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p. 216.

prophet as instrument of the god is startling.⁵⁴ Writes Fontenrose, 'Thus does Plutarch destroy the whole theory of mediumship and possession'.⁵⁵ If this is true, Plutarch's understanding of the Pythia is very different from tragic images of the same, and it is an understanding that only the sanitizing Fontenrose gives emphasis to in his account of the Pythia. But can we be quite as categoric as Fontenrose? What is the point Lamprias is trying to make here? One contrast is between serious godly prophecy and that practised by the ventriloquists, whose reputation in other literature is not high.⁵⁶ More importantly for us, Lamprias affirms that the divine prophetic message is mediated through nature and matter. The wrong sort of human contact with the divine can destroy communication, can cause oracles to fail. Therefore the right nature and matter is the *sine qua non* of prophecy, on Lamprias' model.⁵⁷ The Pythia must have something in her female nature that makes her the ideal channel of communication between man and god.⁵⁸

Kleombrotos introduces a daimonological explanation, τὸ τῶν δαιμόνων γένος, the 'race of daimons'. In his definition, this category of daimons 'comes between gods and humans and somehow links and brings together the community to which we both belong', 415A.⁵⁹ Kleombrotos uses imagery to illustrate the three natures, principally that of the solar system. Gods' perceptible images are the suns and stars, mortals' lights and comets, while daimons' are the moon because it displays a mixed physical structure, 416D-E. The moon waxes and wanes, an earth-like star, or a star-like earth: it has the attributes of heaven and earth, like Hekate. Quoting Plato, *Republic* 260D, Kleombrotos talks of τῆν ἐρμηνευτικὴν ... καὶ διακοικικὴν ... φύσιν, the 'interpreting and ministering' nature of daimons, 416F. For oracles, the consequences are that as the daimons fail or revive, so in turn do they, 418C.

Can the qualities Kleombrotos ascribes to the daimons also be understood of the Pythia, since she is the supreme exemplar of divination in action?⁶⁰ Daimons facilitate prophecy by acting as link figures, τρόπον τινα, 'somehow', holding together the two different communities of gods and humans. Plutarch's moon simile calls the female instantly to mind; the moon often represents the female in Greek

⁵⁴ He is prepared to use the image of the human souls as an instrument played by a divine plectrum, 436F, but not their mouths and bodies as here.

⁵⁵ Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle*, p. 206.

⁵⁶ Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, p. 71 and nn. 47-52.

⁵⁷ See the discussion of Isis and Osiris, below section II.ii, for the role of matter, and its part in Middle Platonism.

⁵⁸ The female and material nature of Isis enables her to act as a communicator between Isis and Osiris; see below, section II.ii-iii.

⁵⁹ As Kleombrotos acknowledges, the ultimate origin of this doctrine is Hesiod, who listed rational beings as gods, daimons, heroes and men (Hesiod, fr. 304 Merkelbach-West). Kleombrotos maintains that his view of daimons is a Stoic one, 420A. John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, pp. 216-30, discusses Plutarch's daimonology, which has drawn the attention of many commentators, and concludes it is more traditional than original.

⁶⁰ Brenk, 'An imperial heritage', p. 291, argues that Kleombrotos' views are 'at least partially a parody by Plutarch of pseudo-scientific literature', with humorous intent.

thought.⁶¹ Kleombrotos' moon has a 'mixed' nature and works in regular cycles, demonstrably akin to the physical patterns of being female. The moon-female connection is proved to be in Plutarch's mind, with Kleombrotos' anecdote about the Thessalian woman Aglaonike, who when the moon was in eclipse, pretended to be bewitching it. The story, he says, was believed by women, 416F-417A. The mixed physical nature of moon and daimon makes them a part of the human and divine worlds. The implication seems to be that moon and daimon are like the female Pythia: all act as mediating between divine and human through their two-sided nature.

Kleombrotos' choice of language develops this role of the mediator further. His daimons have a διακονικὴν ... φύσιν, 'ministering nature'. The verb διακονέω, from its first occurrence in Herodotos, means literally 'to wait at table', a low status job. Figuratively it has the sense 'to provide or care for'. In this sense it is often used of the work of women: Plato, *Laws* 7.805E, uses the verb in debating the best part to be played by women, 'Shall it be that of the Thracians, and many other tribes, who employ their women in tilling the ground and minding oxen and sheep and διακονεῖν μηδὲν διαφερόντως τῶν δούλων, serving just like slaves?'. Some inscriptional evidence shows διάκονος occurring in cultic settings. For example, an inscription from Metropolis in Ionia, *Inscripfen von Ephesos* VII.1.3418, mentions male and female deacons with male and female priests. In lists of cultic officials, deacons are mentioned after cooks, suggesting a food-serving role. Presumably it is these practical and religious aspects of acting as a deacon that encouraged the use of the word in the early church.⁶² Deacons can be men serving bishops; the term is also applied to women in the church, notably Phoebe, Romans 16.1. Certainly an order of female deacons was quickly established.⁶³ Kleombrotos chooses to explicate the part of daimons in prophecy by a word ^{which} can be applied to the female as much as, if not more than, the male.

After a lengthy consideration of Plato's theory of five worlds, Demetrios moves the debate back to the departing daimons and idle oracles, 431A. The larger question which the daimon interpretation raises, he says, is ἡ χρώμενοι ποιούσι κατόχους τοῖς ἐνθουσιασμοῖς καὶ φαντασιαστικούς τοὺς προφήτας καὶ τὰς προφήτιδας, 'by what means they render male and female prophets inspired visionaries', 431B. Ammonios argues that daimons are souls who quite naturally

⁶¹ *Interpretation of Dreams* 2.36, p. 163.1, Selene (female moon) signifies the same good and bad outcomes as Helios (male sun), but in a lesser degree because the moon is cooler than the sun. A dream of the moon indicates that the dream will be fulfilled by a woman. The female priest of Apollo Deiradiotes prophesies on a monthly basis, in Pausanias' *Guide to Greece* 2.24.1.

⁶² G. Kittel and G. Friedrich (eds.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Eng. trans. G. W. Bromily, Michigan, 1964-76), vol. 2, pp. 81-93, s.v. διακονέω and διάκονος.

⁶³ See Roger Gryson, *Le ministère des femmes dans l'église ancienne* (Gembloux, 1972), ch. 5, 'The Didascalion of the Apostles'; Jo Ann McNamara, *A New Song: women in the first three Christian centuries* (New York, 1983), ch. 3, 'Mary laughed'.

communicate the future to one another, as humans talk amongst themselves. Lamprias is invited to reply. Arguing for consistency, he says that if disembodied souls are to have the power to tell the future, embodied souls must possess it too, albeit in muffled form, 431E-F. Mortality confuses and contaminates the prophetic quality of the soul. To function, its faint power will require healing and reviving, and the removal and cleansing of the environment that surrounds it. Often therefore in dreams or at the moment of death, the prophetic power of the soul shines forth, 432A. At such moments, the faculty of thought and reason is relaxed from the present and the irrational and imaginative powers of the soul turn towards the future. 'The prophetic tablet of the mind has no writing on it, no rational sense, no definition provided by itself. It accepts images and premonitions emotionally, and makes contact with the future without benefit of reasoning processes ... This distancing (ἐξίσταται) happens as a result of the physical balance and disposition of the body in a moment of change; we call it inspiration (ἐνθουσιασμός)', 432D.

Lamprias' prescription for the ideal prophetic circumstances is striking in its dependence on Greek thought about the female. The soul's prophetic power is but weak. It needs cherishing in a protected atmosphere, away from contamination. Dreams or death are conducive to prophecy because thought and reason fade. Prophecy comes from a lack of self-control, again a quality endemic to the female in Greek thought. Lamprias characterizes that which foretells the future as both ἄλογον καὶ ἀόριστον, 'irrational and indefinite'. The image of the prophetic mind as an empty tablet is one employed by Artemidoros to signify a woman, since he says it receives the imprints of all kinds of letters.⁶⁴ It is significant that Demetrios' larger question explicitly names τοὺς προφήτας καὶ τὰς προφήτιδας, female prophets as well as male. Prophecy is an area where women are important in their own right; they are not to be subsumed behind an overarching male phrase. Rather than the male providing a model for the female, here in prophecy, perhaps uniquely, the female provides a model for the male. We might guess that it is the simple, protected, female receptivity of the Pythia that makes her the perfect prophet: Lamprias confirms this interpretation in his final explanation.

Inspiration is almost never spontaneous, Lamprias continues, 432D. Outside forces act upon the body. The earth, he opines, emits many streams of force, and of these, the holiest and most divine is τὸ μαυτικὸν ῥεῦμα καὶ πνεῦμα, 'the stream and spirit of prophecy', whether conveyed by air or water. When this stream mingles in the body, it disturbs the normal balance of the soul. The story of the herdsman Koretas is cited as proof of the theory; he stumbled across the prophetic stream given forth at Delphi and began to tell the future, 433C.⁶⁵ Lamprias proposes various

⁶⁴ *Interpretation of Dreams* 2.45, p. 179.19.

⁶⁵ Diodorus Siculus has the fullest version of this story, 16.26.

analogies for the action of the prophetic force upon the soul. For example, by warmth and dilation, the stream opens up certain passages in the soul which admit visions of the future. Or the stream fills in voids in the soul and holds it together, as tin melted down with bronze binds and strengthens it. The sun kindles, excites, and encourages the visual power of sense in the same way as Apollo does the prophetic power of the soul, 433E. The likening of prophecy to a physical force gives Lamprias his explanation for the failure of oracles. The earth is eternal, but always changing rivers disappear and new ones form, existing mineral seams are exhausted and fresh ones mined. So he argues prophetic streams are also subject to change: rain, lightning, earthquakes may all disrupt them. Delphi itself is still suffering the effects of the great earthquake of 373 B.C., 433F-434C.

In Lamprias' current model, prophecy depends on an openness to outside influence. His physical analogies depend on the idea of holes in the soul, whether as passages dilated with heat or gaps to be infilled. That having holes is a property of women is a Greek cliché. Aristotle's is a fourth-century B.C. formulation of the precept, when he says that women's flesh is more porous than men's.⁶⁶ The Hippocratic *Dreams* argues that a healthy soul will resist fullness or emptiness, and anything intrusive from outside.⁶⁷ If having holes is a risky, unhealthy state to be in, the dominant male culture is more likely to attribute it to the female than to itself. Lamprias' description of the soul can best be understood in terms of Greek ideas about the female body. As a woman, the Pythia must be open, the perfect channel for prophetic forces.

I come now to that part of the dialogue most often ransacked for Pythian facts. But since we have seen divination cast in the model of the female, by reading the whole of the dialogue, we can put the details of the Pythia into a more meaningful context. She is less an anomaly, an oddity with which to end, and acts more as an anchor of oracular theory in reality. Ammonios objects to the way the argument has shifted responsibility for prophecy from the gods, to daimons, and on to physical forces: he fears impiety if thought is deflected too much away from the gods, 434F. Lamprias' avowedly Platonist response is that both divine and material causes are mutually interdependent in any explanation of a phenomenon, 436A-F. The prophetic art takes as its material the human ψυχή, 'soul', and the soul is played upon as an instrument by the divine plectrum of the inspirational stream (for the earth and sun which produce the stream are gods). The daimons are the overseers of the process, 436F-437A. With consummate skill, Lamprias weaves the previous arguments about prophecy into one garment tailored for the Pythia, 437A-438E.

⁶⁶ Aristotle, *The Generation of Animals* 747A.

⁶⁷ *Dreams* 88.15.

Early in the dialogue, Lamprias spoke of a prophet's need to respect the god's dignity and safeguard the status and greatness of his excellence, to approach him in the right way, 414E. οἱ ἱερεῖς καὶ ὅσοι, 'the priests and holy men', offer preliminary sacrifices at Delphi which must be read in relation not only to the god but also to the prophet, the Pythia.⁶⁸ When the libation of cold water is poured over the sacrificial goat, the animal must shiver and tremble as a sign that θεμιστεύειν τὸν θεόν, 'the god is prepared to prophesy', 435C and 437A-B. Shivering from the cold is a normal reaction, indicating that the animal is in its right ψυχῇ. The goat and the generalized (but Pythia-foreshadowing) prophet of 436F must have souls in the correct condition. In both soul and body, Lamprias says that the sacrificial goat must be καθαρὸν καὶ ἀσινὲς καὶ ἀδιάφθορον, 'pure, undefiled and uncorrupted', 437B. The ritual of the goat expresses the preparedness of not only Apollo but also the Pythia. The parallels between the goat and the Pythia are striking, one dying, one a living sacrifice.

At 432A, Lamprias argued that mortality confuses and contaminates the prophetic quality of the soul. It needed a cleansing and reviving environment, away from the ordinary world. Death and dreaming provided such an escape. So too do the living conditions of the Pythia. She is kept as ready as possible to prophesy by her removal from the usual conditions of life. Ammonios describes the Pythia in one sentence in telling terms. If the prophetic spirit can affect everyone, εὐθές ἐστι τὸ μιᾷ γυναικὶ πρὸς τὰ μαντεῖα χρῆσθαι, καὶ ταύτῃ παρέχειν πράγματα φυλάττοντας ἀγνήν διὰ βίου καὶ καθαρευούσαν, 'it is idiotic to employ one woman for the oracle and give her a hard life by insisting on lifelong chastity and purity', 435D. As Giulia Sissa perceptively comments, 'Sexual virginity is the primordial condition of distance, of detachment from all that is exterior. Hence it represents an essential aspect of Apollonian divination. Ammonius ... remarks how absurd it would be to prescribe abstinence and purity to a designated female if prophecy were merely a natural phenomenon. Outside the singular and faithful relationship with Apollo, his servant's chastity would make no sense. ... [The Pythia's] virginity is a pure state connoting self-mastery, which signifies an exclusive and dedicated offering'.⁶⁹ Lamprias expands a little on the Pythia's living conditions. καὶ συνουσίας ἀγνὸν τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸν βίον ὅλως ἀνεπίμικτον ἀλλοδαπαῖς καὶ ἄθικτον ὁμιλίαις φυλάττουσι τῆς Πυθίας, 'they keep the Pythia's body pure of any sexual activity and her life free from all association and contact with strangers',

⁶⁸ Plutarch's evidence, *Greek Questions* 292D, is that there were five such holy men at Delphi, appointed for life.

⁶⁹ Giulia Sissa, *Greek Virginity*, pp. 34, 39.

438C.⁷⁰ The Pythia is the ultimate concrete expression of the purity necessary for prophecy, for uninhibited communication with the divine.

Prophecy, Lamprias said, depends upon the physical balance and disposition of the body in a moment of change, when the body is open to the prophetic stream, 432D. His later description of the Pythia shows how much of a model she is for this general understanding of oracles. The prophetic stream at Delphi demonstrably varies in strength: from time to time a fragrance as if of the sweetest and most expensive perfume is carried out on the air from the inner shrine, 437C-D. If his hearers cannot believe this, Lamprias is certain they will agree that the part of the Pythia's soul which comes into contact with the prophetic force differs at different times and does not preserve an unchanging state. Sometimes the result is harmonious and good, like a well-tuned instrument. At other times, disturbances of which she is both conscious and unconscious grip her body and soul, 437D. The Pythia's openness to the influence essential for prophecy is stressed. Yet so is her capacity for evil influence as well as good. This availability is an essential attribute of a mediator.⁷¹

Kleombrotos proposed that daimons come between gods and humans, linking together the two communities, 415A. A frightening and recent incident recalled by Lamprias reveals how the Pythia occupies this dangerous middle ground, 438A-C. A foreign embassy came to consult the Delphic oracle. The priests poured the libation over the goat, but it failed to shiver. Instead of abandoning the proposed consultation they forced a reaction from the animal by drenching it with water. The Pythia went unwillingly into the oracle. From the first her voice was harsh and distressed, κακοῦ πνεύματος οὔσα πλήρης, 'as she was filled with an evil spirit'. Utterly overcome she fled the shrine with a dreadful scream, scattering the terrified deputation and religious officials. Recovered by them after a little while, she died a few days later. The Pythia acts as a go-between. The resistance of the goat and her unwillingness signify that the god does not wish to communicate. Yet pushed into prophesying by her fellow humans, the Pythia shields them from the consequences of their wrong decision, absorbing herself the absence of Apollo and the presence of the evil force.

Lamprias' own interpretation of the incident is significantly that little bit different. For him, the Pythia's potential openness to evil influence is the primary point of the story. It is for this reason that the chastity of the Pythia is guarded and her contact with the outside world strictly policed. The implication is that it is something in her female nature that makes her prey to undesirable forces; her female

⁷⁰ The variant φυλαττοῦσης occurs in the manuscript tradition, which would give the Pythia guardianship over her own body and life. Russell follows this reading in his translation. However, it seems more likely that 'they', the Delphic officials, society, keep guard over the Pythia, for her purity serves them not herself: reading the verb in the third person plural also fits better with the continuation of the sentence with how λαμβάνουσιν, 'they take', the preliminary sacrifice.

⁷¹ Isis as mediator has it too, as will be seen below, section II.ii-iii. She has the capacity to receive evil as well as good, although she leans towards the good, *Isis and Osiris* 372E-F.

body and soul are frequently in a state of change which leaves her vulnerable to influence. For it is in conditions relating to her as a woman that she is controlled. Prophecy is dependent on ideas of the female, of which the Pythia is the ultimate expression. At this point, with room for objections and further suggestions, as Lamprias himself says, the dialogue closes, 438E. Within the dialogue, the Pythia is the ultimate and supreme demonstration of how prophecy works: the differing explanations of prophecy put forward during the debate all rely on the perceived nature of women, which makes them ideal mediators between human and divine. These ideas are developed in the next Pythian dialogue.

On the Pythian Oracles

On the Pythian Oracles is a dialogue that also takes one central question as the subject of debate. Some little way into the piece, Diogenianos asks it succinctly. οὐδεὶς γὰρ ἔστιν ἡμῶν, ὃς οὐκ αἰτίαν ἐπιζητεῖ καὶ λόγον, πῶς πέπαυται τὸ μαντεῖον ἔπεσι καὶ μέτροις χρώμενον. 'Everyone here wants to find a rational explanation for why the oracle has stopped using hexameter verse', 397D. The dramatic setting for the discussion is a conversation reported by T. Flavius Philinus (friend of Plutarch) to Basilokles, held earlier the same afternoon, whilst Diogenianos was guided around Delphi by Philinus and friends (Theon, Sarapion, Boethos). The Pythia is once more the central focus of thought; from an understanding of her and her role, an explanation to answer the question is developed. In her person, a philosophical debate is resolved.

The prose or verse format of an oracle is important because of its implications for its origin—divine or mortal. Diogenianos raises the possible contradiction between Apollo, a god strongly associated with poetry, and oracles flawed in language and metre, 396C-D. Sarapion, characterized as a poet, refuses to equate what is good with what is luxurious and pleasurable. 'We shall soon be blaming the Pythia for not making sweeter sounds than the lyre-singer*Glauke, and for not using perfume or putting on a purple dress before going down to the oracle, or burning incense of cassia or laudanum or frankincense instead of bay and barley meal', 396F-397B. He quotes Heraclitus on the Sibyl, precursor in myth of the Pythia. She 'speaks words without laughter, without adornment, without perfume, from her mad-woman's lips, and reaches through a thousand years with her voice, because of the god'.⁷² With this quotation, and one from Pindar, Sarapion opposes the concept of the

⁷² B 92 in H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Fragmenta der Vorsokratiker* (sixth edition, Berlin, 1951-2). Later in the dialogue too, the Sibyl illustrates the Pythia, as do stories about her function in Pausanias, *Guide to Greece* 10.12. Sarapion recalls the Sibyl's prophecies about herself, 398C-D. After death, she will go round and round with the moon (again the moon-female prophecy connection). Her spirit will live in voices and rumours. Boethos ridicules these ideas. But Diogenianos argues that whatever the

Pythia to the concept of pleasure. 'Ἡδονὴν γὰρ οὐ προσίεται τὸ ἀπαθὲς καὶ ἄγνόν, 'The pure and the passionless gives no place to pleasure'. Purity and lack of passion are therefore, in Sarapion's view, defining characteristics of the Pythia.

Theon responds by taking a rather different tack, 397B-D. Whether the oracles are in prose or verse, of good quality or bad, is less significant if people believe not that the god composes them, but that he initiates the movement for their composition, and each of the female prophets is moved according to her nature. 'Voice and sound, diction and metre, belong not to the god but to the woman. He merely puts the concepts into her mind, and gives her soul light to view the future; that is what inspiration means.' Theon argues that the *form* of the prophecy is unproblematic, 'provided we hold pure and unerring opinions about the god, and do not believe that it is he himself who puts the oracle into the Pythia's mouth, like an actor speaking through a mask', 404B. His reply recalls Lamprias at 414E, who will not think of the god as a ventriloquist, entering into prophets' bodies and using their mouths and voices.

The imagery by which divination is defined is of great interest, and relates to that of *Oracles in Decline*, 404B-405A. An ὄργανον, 'instrument', is the metaphor Plutarch finds most expressive; it is at the heart of the dialogue. The soul, Theon says, is the instrument of god. How he thinks an instrument works is important. The excellence of an instrument lies in copying its user's intention with whatever power it has, and displaying it in its own medium. Moulded metal, mirrors, reflect a model in their own medium. 'But there is nothing so like a mirror as the moon, nothing so obedient to serve as an instrument.' We remember the previous associations of the female with the moon, in a Pythian context. Theon continues, 'Yet when the moon borrows fire and brilliance from the sun, she does not transmit it to us in the same form; the fire mingles with the moon, changes colour, and acquires a different force'.⁷³ The moon now is more than a weaker reflection of the sun, she has some active part in the transmission process. Theon makes the parallels explicit. 'Think of the god here as using the Pythia in the world of hearing as the sun uses the moon in the world of sight.' The god only reveals his thoughts as they are mixed through a human body and soul. And that body and soul cannot be stable, stationary, but must be 'tossing on its own troubled waters and bound up with the even more disturbing motions and emotions within it'. The Pythia, we deduce, is eminently suitable for

stories about the Sibyls, yet the prophecies have demonstrably come true. They foretold things which are hard to believe even once they have happened, harder still therefore to foretell without divine inspiration, 398E. Boethos counters again. Prophecies made now are false time and chance will fulfil almost any prophecy, 398F-399B. Sarapion says very exact prophecies do not come true through chance. Philinus mocks Sarapion's stoicism. Plutarch shows us differing attitudes existing contemporaneously.

⁷³ The mixed, median nature of the moon is treated by Plutarch in *On the Face that Appears in the Moon* 945C-D.

channelling the god's thoughts, because she is female and moon-like, because she has an inherently unstable internal make up. These images, so potent about perceptions of the Pythia, feed back into the debate about prose or verse oracles. Theon argues that it is not within the capacity of the present Pythia to speak in verse because she is uneducated, 405C. The essence of Plutarch's divinatory inspiration is, in Giulia Sissa's words, 'harmony between a woman's soul and a musician god, lunar attenuation of a searing brilliance, navigation of mountainous seas. The Pythia stands ... balanced on the ridge where the male god married the female voice, where truth veiled itself in a sign'.⁷⁴

If the medium has an integral part in the transmission of the message, it becomes clear why the Pythia must be kept in controlled conditions. Beyond the chastity and seclusion of the Pythia in *Oracles in Decline*, we hear of the advantages of using the current Pythia, 405C-D.⁷⁵ Her moral character is flawless, since 'from birth she has lived as lawful, honourable and orderly a life as anyone in Delphi'. She has been brought up in the home of poor peasants, so that when she goes down into the oracle οὐτ' ἀπὸ τέχνης οὐδὲν οὐτ' ἀπ' ἄλλης τινὸς ἐμπειρίας καὶ δυνάμεως ἐπιφερομένη, 'she takes with her no resources of art or experience or capacity'.⁷⁶ Theon makes the situation quite clear by the analogy he draws between the Pythia and the wife in Xenophon's *Oikonomikos*. Xenophon's ideal of a bride is a girl who has seen and heard as little as possible before entering her husband's house; she is therefore entirely malleable by him - he can implant the characteristics he wishes in her, and she has very little basis from which to oppose him.⁷⁷ Says Theon of the present Pythia, οὕτως ἄπειρος καὶ ἀδαῆς ὀλίγου δεῖν ἀπάντων καὶ παρθένος ὡς ἀληθῶς τὴν ψυχὴν τῷ θεῷ σύνεστιν. 'Similarly inexperienced and ignorant of almost everything, she goes to the god with the soul of a virgin',

⁷⁴ Giulia Sissa, *Greek Virginity*, p. 32.

⁷⁵ Whether all Pythias were selected on these criteria is not clear. In the second century A.D., Maximus of Tyre 8.14 says any woman could aspire to be Pythia. But at the same period, the Pythia Theonike 'appartenait à ces riches familles de notables qui fournissaient alors le personnel de la plupart des sacerdoces, et un Delphien, secrétaire des Amphictions, rappelle avec fierté qu'il est petit-fils de Pythie', Roux, *Delphes*, p. 67. By A.D. 200 there is evidence for a Pythia from a wealthy family, Parke and Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* vol. 1, p. 36. At 16.26.6 Diodorus Siculus tells the story of the rape of a young virgin Pythia by Ekhekrates of Thessaly. The Delphians therefore decided that the Pythia should no longer be a virgin, but a woman over fifty years old. The story is part of a pattern for thinking about female priests; for example the female priest of Artemis Hymnia at Orchomenos is a mature woman who has had enough of sexual intercourse with men, after the virgin holder of the priesthood was raped by Aristokrates, Pausanias, *Guide to Greece* 8.5.11-12.

⁷⁶ Robert Parker, speaking generally, 'Greek states and Greek oracles', p. 300, says that divination must seem objective to function. 'Where divination is by trance-mediumship the prophet is often a stranger, a person deemed free from partisan interests.' As a woman the Pythia is a stranger to the concerns of her own society - she should have no interest in politics, no desire to influence important consultants unduly. (Hence the force of the stories of her being bribed for example by the Alkmaionidai, Herodotos, *Histories* 5.62-3. It is as much against expectations of her as a woman, as the perversion of the word of the god?)

⁷⁷ For example, Xenophon, *Oikonomikos* 7.4-5. Hesiod gave the same advice, succinctly, in the sixth century B.C. 'Marry a virgin, so that you may teach her good ways', *Works and Days* 699.

405C. The Pythia as bride, her virgin soul, and the verb *σύνειμι* which is used of sexual intercourse, constitute an important example of Plutarch's sexual interpretation of her priesthood.⁷⁸

Plutarch's sexual imagery is of the socially necessary, married variety. It is employed respectfully, in contrast to the almost pornographic descriptions given of the Pythia's relations with Apollo by Christian critics. Compare the careful emphasis on purity in Plutarch's account with this sample from the mid third-century Origen, *Against Celsus* 7.3, 'It is said of the Pythia ... that when she sat down at the mouth of the Castalian cave, the prophetic spirit of Apollo entered her private parts; filled with it she gave utterance. Judge by this whether that spirit does not show its profane and impure nature, by choosing to enter the soul of the prophetess not through the more becoming medium of the bodily pores which are both open and invisible, but by means of what no modest man would ever see or speak of'.⁷⁹ Even worse, argues Origen, this happens not once or twice, which interestingly he thinks would be permissible, but every time Apollo inspires her. (This passage speaks at least as much of Origen's attitude to sexual activity as it does of his interpretation of the Pythia.) Origen's point is to prove Apollo is no good god. No truly divine spirit would choose to drive his prophet into an ecstatic and frenzied state, to cause her to lose possession of her consciousness; it must be an evil daimonic spirit which fills her mind with darkness (7.4). Later in the third century, John Chrysostom's Pythia is equally luridly portrayed. She sits legs apart on Apollo's tripod, as the evil spirit enters her from below and fills her with madness; her hair flies and her mouth foams.⁸⁰ The intention is to shock, to degrade the Pythian oracle in the readers' estimation. It is striking and important that sexual imagery is not exploited by Plutarch in this way. We must avoid reading Christian ideas of the Pythia into Greek descriptions of the same.

Part of modern accounts' problematic portrayal of a wildly possessed Pythia may well then come from Christian readings. Part comes from the influence of tragedy, the portrayal of Cassandra, as traced above. Part too comes from a question of terminology in translation. 'Possession' as a translation for *ἐνθουσιασμός* carries all the wrong connotations of male/female relationships in our modern society.⁸¹ To us, being possessed means being owned or overcome. Or it means being disturbed, distressed, as is implied by evil spirit possession in the New Testament. But for older cultural reasons, the transliteration of 'enthusiasm' is also tricky. Enthusiasm was a

⁷⁸ Similarly, Isis' sexual relationship with Osiris is a vital part of the way she communicates between him and humans; see below section II.iii.

⁷⁹ Origen expands upon his brief remark at 3.25 that Apollo passes into the so-called prophet seated at the Pythian cave through her genitals.

⁸⁰ John Chrysostom, *Homily 19 on the First Letter to the Corinthians* 260B-C.

⁸¹ In his translations, Russell senses the difficulty; he puts possession in quotation marks and adds *enthusiasmos* in brackets.

blanket term of derision and abuse for a variety of religious movements of the seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries, from Quakerism, and the Methodism of George Whitefield and John and Charles Wesley, to Shakerism and Moravianism.⁸² In his dictionary, for example, Samuel Johnson defined enthusiasm as 'a vain confidence of Divine favour or communication'. Critics saw in enthusiasm a surrendering of reason and a privileging of direct communication with the divine which resulted in undesirably extravagant religious fervour. It is hard to separate Greek ἐνθουσιασμός from this tradition of enthusiasm. 'God-inspired', or 'inspiration', sound positive and desirable qualities and are perhaps the best ways in which to understand and translate ἐνθουσιασμός.⁸³

For Plutarch's Pythia, being in a state of enthusiasm is certainly not an intrinsically objectionable and degrading state. Plutarch insists on the dignity of her occupation, on her splendid character. For example, her answers, he says, are in prose; they are clear and uncomplicated replies to the simple questions about daily life put to the oracle in present times.⁸⁴ 'The Pythia herself is a woman of noble character; and when she goes down to the oracle and is with the god, she is more concerned <with serving him according to her duty> than with the reputation or the praise or blame of men', 408C-D. ἐνθουσιασμός is only undesirable when an evil spirit inspires the priest. We should not let tragedy, the Plutarchan incident of fatal evil inspiration, New Testament ideas of spirit-possession or the eighteenth-century concept of enthusiasm influence our understanding of Plutarch's perception of ἐνθουσιασμός.

Plutarch's Pythia speaks for herself. It is because she is uneducated that oracles are in prose.⁸⁵ This is all to the good, Theon argues. In tune with the changing of the times, now that the oracle need no longer play the diplomat with ambiguous prophecies, 407D, the Pythia's speech is as direct as the shortest line between two points, 408F. Yet this certain (if incomplete) evidence of Delphic practice in the first and early second centuries A.D. is ignored by commentators who purport to write about Delphi and the Pythia as a timeless institution, but will not give weight to the Plutarchan oracle. Flacelière, for example, is falsely authoritative: 'The

⁸² R. A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: a chapter in the history of religion with special reference to the XVII and XVIII centuries* (Oxford, 1950).

⁸³ Lord Shaftesbury, in his *Essay on Enthusiasm* of 1711, illustrates the different cultural implications of these terms, writing that 'inspiration is a real feeling of the Divine presence, and enthusiasm a false one'.

⁸⁴ Klaros too would field such questions at a slightly later date, Parker, 'Greek states and Greek oracles', p. 304.

⁸⁵ Aelius Aristides, *Oration* 45, arguing the virtues of prose in addressing the gods, indicates that at the time of composition (c. A.D. 142) the Pythia spoke in prose. 'Is it, by Zeus, that all the prophets of the gods, who can predict the future, indicate metrically what can be done? Yet, by Zeus, most oracles are not given metrically by the prophetess herself in Delphi, by the priestesses in Dodona, by Trophonios, and by the dreams from Asclepius and Sarapis', 45.7. Tacitus, *Annals* 2.54, comments that the male prophet of Klaros was ignorant of most writing and poetry.

fact of the matter is that the oracle was produced as the result of collaboration between the Pythia, the inspired medium, and the temple officials who were responsible for giving it its final form'.⁸⁶ In giving the temple officials a role, Flacelière is not only suspiciously keen on the idea of male control over the female, he also loses the important point made by Plutarch, that the Pythia as a woman is sole and sufficient intermediary between humans and divine.⁸⁷ As Flacelière later points out himself, one of the differences between *Oracles in Decline* and *On the Pythian Oracles* is the prized direct contact between Apollo and the Pythia; no daimons or prophetic streams are needed.⁸⁸ The Pythia's own delivery of her oracles is stressed by L. Maurizio in her attempt to put the Pythia back into the consultation process. 'No ancient source suggests that anyone other than the Pythia issued oracular responses.'⁸⁹

iii. Interim conclusions

Thinking about the Pythia has led me to believe that a still-prevalent scholarly attitude to divination requires reconsideration. In his introductory paragraph to his section on ecstasy and divination in *Greek Religion*, Burkert talks of the independence of established cult from such 'abnormal phenomena'. He states, 'This is also true of Greece where ecstatic, mediumistic, and yoga-like experiences are far from unknown, but are either pushed to the periphery of religious life or else strictly circumscribed; they do not become the foundation of a revelation', p. 109. Is it true to say that because divination does not produce a revealed religion, it is therefore at the limits of Greek religious life? This uses a highly Judaeo-Christian definition of religion. But if religion does not have to be revealed to count as religion, then divination can be rescued from the limits of modern descriptions of the nature of Greek cult. There are in fact good arguments for placing divination at the centre of Greek cult practice. Priests divine the will of the god from animal entrails *vel sim.* as a central part of worship. It is the same communication between immortal and mortal that is aimed at in the consultation of a priest who gives 'ecstatic' prophecy. In

⁸⁶ Flacelière, *Greek Oracles*, p. 52. Roux, *Delphes*, p. 56, takes the same inaccurately generalizing position. 'La fonctionnement de l'oracle relevait en effet de la compétence de spécialistes, les prophètes et les Hosioi.' Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 116, allows not even a hint of 'en effet' doubt. 'The utterances of the Pythia are then fixed by the priests in the normal Greek literary form, the Homeric hexameter.'

⁸⁷ Heliodoros, *An Ethiopian Story* portrays two seemingly spontaneous oracles delivered in verse by the Pythia; to Kalasiris at 2.26-7 and one as Theagenes and Charikleia are about to perform the sacrifice to Neoptolemos, 3.35. Heliodoros does not feel the need to include male intermediaries or translators, in line with the strong relationship he depicts between the female and the divine, Charikleia and Apollo, see below chapter five.

⁸⁸ Flacelière, *Greek Oracles*, p. 84.

⁸⁹ Maurizio, 'Anthropology and spirit possession', p. 69.

sacrificial divination, in priestly prophecy, the god speaks - and what is any religion if not attempted communication with the divine?

Turning back now to Pythian prophecy in particular. 'We hear much about prophetic women ... but it is not true that oracular "possession" was a distinctively female gift or essentially imagined in the metaphors of man's "possession" of women.' To this sweeping denial, Robin Lane Fox appends an unargued footnote, condemning in its brevity; 'on females, R. Padel (1983) 12-14 (exaggerated)'.⁹⁰ He apparently counts a few instances of male prophets (at Klaros, Patara) as sufficient 'factual ammunition' with which to destroy Padel's ideas of women as models for daimon possession. But proof of male prophets does not in itself disprove the feminizing imagery of divination. Padel argued a good case for fifth-century B.C. tragedy, concluding, 'Women are the possessed; natural victims in the human system, as humanity is the natural victim in the divine world'.⁹¹ The relationship between the woman and god is paradigmatic of the relationship between man and god.

This study of Plutarch's two dialogues debating divination at Delphi shows, particularly in *Oracles in Decline*, that discussion of divination is dependent on ideas of the female with which to think. The ultimate example and expression of this is seen in the conclusion of the dialogue with Lamprias' consideration of the Pythia. Through use of the female as a discussion medium, Plutarch can best illuminate the working of the deity.

So if my first interim conclusion is to notice how the Pythia, and the female nature which she represents, are Plutarch's chosen vehicles for thinking about prophecy, the second must be that the Pythia is a mediating figure between the human and divine worlds. She achieves this through her open and receptive female nature, above all through her sexual nature. Giulia Sissa's words are worth quoting. 'The virginity of the prophetess is not merely an accessory quality, as it would be if it were merely a cultural precaution to ensure cleanliness; it is that which makes reception of the god possible. If the priestess can surrender, accessible and intact, to her husband and master, it is by virtue of that integrity which symbolizes that her body is in tune and capable, like a musical instrument, of full and faithful rendition.'⁹² As I turn to *Isis and Osiris*, the focus shifts from human female to divine female, from the Pythia

⁹⁰ Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, p. 208 and n. 27, referring to Ruth Padel, 'Women: model for possession by Greek daemons'.

⁹¹ Padel, 'Women: model for possession by Greek daemons', p. 16.

⁹² Giulia Sissa, *Greek Virginity*, p. 4. The sexual nature of the Pythia's prophetic role leads Sissa to develop her study of the Pythia into a wider examination of Greek concepts of virginity. As she writes, pp. 166-7, 'The utterances of the Pythia, emanating from a possessed body open to certain vapours, appeared to be intimately associated with a contradictory sexual state: though a virgin, the priestess opened herself wide in order to prophesy. What notion of Greek virginity made this body thinkable?' Her answer lies to a large extent in the discovery that Greek virginity had nothing to do with the presence of a hymen, and leads her to speculate about the Pythia's link with the earth, with the possibility of her being pregnant with the god, giving forth her prophecy as a form of 'oral birth', p. 52. This takes her far beyond the texts of Plutarch, in which these ideas are not hinted at.

to Isis. Does a concept of female mediation between worshippers and male god occur again?

II. *Isis and Osiris*

They say that ... Isis and Osiris, being in love with one another even before they were born, had sexual union in the darkness of the womb. Some say that Aroueris was born as a result, called the elder Horus by the Egyptians, and Apollo by the Greeks. 356A

... the process of consecration ... accustoms one to undertake austere and difficult services in sacred rites, of which the end is the knowledge of the First and the Lord, whom only the mind can understand and whom the goddess summons one to seek as a being who is near and with her and united to her.⁹³ 351F-352A

The relationship between male and female is at the very heart of the myth of Isis and Osiris, as told by Plutarch. At the beginning of time, brother and sister in their mother's womb, the two gods are also lovers. Theirs is a fruitful union, and they produce a son, Horus. From the very start of the myth, Plutarch emphasizes the creative sexual relationship between Isis and Osiris. His interpretation of the myth involves exegesis of the theme. As he opens the work, he hints at what this will be. Through her close, sexual relationship with Osiris, Isis can lead the worshipper to him. *Isis and Osiris* is a text with two central and divine characters, one male, one female: Plutarch's myth and his interpretation depend on how they interact with each other, and with the wider divine and human worlds.

i. The text, possibilities and questions

A résumé of the myth Plutarch relates, 355D-358E, is essential for discussion. The story starts with the birth of Osiris, the elder Horus, Typhon, Isis and Nephthys. Whilst Osiris began to civilize the world, Typhon plotted against him, luring him into a coffin and casting it into the river. In her grief, Isis searched for him and found the coffin concealed in a tree which was being used as a pillar in the royal palace at Byblos. At last obtaining the coffin, she opened it and embraced the dead Osiris. Typhon discovered the coffin, cut the body into fourteen parts and scattered them: Isis

⁹³ The text used is that of John Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride* (Cardiff, 1970); translations are largely based on his. In the Teubner edition of Plutarch's *Moralia*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1971), W. Sieveking brackets the clause 'whom the goddess ... united to her', on the grounds that it is not Plutarch's but an ancient gloss of the preceding lines. However Griffiths *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, p. 262, supports its inclusion as genuine, quoting descriptions of Isis in Pausanias and Apuleius, and modern studies on the ideas of election and vocation in the cult of Isis; I follow Griffiths.

recovered them and buried them, all except his phallus which could not be found. From the underworld, Osiris appeared to his son Horus and trained him for vengeful battle against Typhon. Horus was victorious in the fight, but Isis freed Typhon in the face of Horus' anger. Typhon was defeated in two further battles, and Isis gave birth to Harpokrates, product of her union with the dead Osiris.

In *Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch recounts the myth of the Egyptian gods and provides an extensive commentary on it. The possibilities for source-critical study have been seized upon by most modern scholars, to the exclusion of other interesting questions. The text has become a battle-ground for critics attempting to demonstrate the purity, or otherwise, of Plutarch's Egyptology. How far does Plutarch's exposition of myth, ritual and meaning agree with the rather sparse evidence of Egyptian sources?⁹⁴ The question is complicated, and resists complete resolution. But there is much more to be said for Plutarch's text, if we are prepared to move beyond the narrow confines of this one debate.

The crucial change to make is one of perspective. Instead of asking what Plutarch knows about Egypt, we should consider what he can tell us about Greece. The most recent work on *Isis and Osiris* has begun to see this. Philip Hardie investigates how *Isis and Osiris* can be understood as a handbook for the interpretation of myth, a *Greek* handbook.⁹⁵ For however Egyptian his source material, Plutarch writes, thinks, interprets as a Greek. *Isis and Osiris* could be considered the product of Plutarch's fullest understanding, since it is generally held to have been completed in his latest years, c. A.D. 117-18.⁹⁶ The realization that *Isis and Osiris* is a work by a Greek, written in Greek terms, for a Greek audience, is an essential basis for my approach to the text. In a work where the central subject matter is religious, and the myth has two main divine protagonists, one male and one female, there is excellent scope for examining the interconnections between gender and religion, in Plutarch's perception in particular, and also in his wider Greek framework.

It is important to orient *Isis and Osiris* in Plutarch's contemporary Greek world. How much were the Greeks interested and informed about the Egyptian gods? By Plutarch's day, the Egyptians had been worshipping Osiris, Isis and their divine relations for some 2,500 years. Literature is the first evidence of an enduring Greek fascination with things Egyptian, beginning with Homer in the *Odyssey*, then Stesichorus, Hekataios, the ethnography of Herodotos' *Histories* Book 2, the *Suppliants* of Aeschylus, and so on. Cult practice originally spread from Egypt to

⁹⁴ Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, pp. 1-2, 51-74, considers the question.

⁹⁵ Philip R. Hardie, 'Plutarch and the interpretation of myth', *A.N.R.W.* II.33.6 (1992), pp. 4743-87.

⁹⁶ Christopher Jones, 'Towards a chronology of Plutarch's works', pp. 71, 73, dates *Isis and Osiris* to A.D. 117-18 with reference to two Delphic inscriptions mentioning Klea. Doubt has been cast on the identification of the inscriptional Klea with the Plutarchan Klea (for example, by E. Kapetanopoulos), but such doubt has also been rejected (for instance, by Robert Flacelière). Cf. Frederick E. Brenk, *In Mist Apparell'd: religious themes in Plutarch's Moralia and Lives* (Leiden, 1977), p. 5.

Greece in the fourth century B.C. The first document to mention the cult of Isis is a decree from the Piraeus of 333 B.C., which grants a group of merchants from Kition the right to erect a temple to Aphrodite, citing as precedent the permission already granted to some Egyptians to found a temple of Isis there.⁹⁷ The cult became more widely practised in the second half of the third century B.C., particularly in Athens, Boiotia, Euboia, Thessaly and some Aegean islands.⁹⁸

The Egyptian gods chiefly worshipped in Greece were Isis and Sarapis. The origins of Sarapis are debated. Ancient sources say he first appeared in third-century B.C. Ptolemaic Egypt: modern opinion derives him from the Memphian god Apis-Osiris, as a god in Greek format promoted by Ptolemy Soter in an astute move to establish his new dynasty with resident Greeks. Robert Turcan, for example, says, 'Il semble que les Ptolémées aient tenu à concilier la tradition nilotique avec la piété hellénique en instituant le culte de Sérapis'.⁹⁹ Worship of Sarapis rather than Osiris continued in Greece after the decline of the cult of Sarapis in Egypt. Increasingly, the Greeks worshipped Isis more than either Sarapis or Osiris, reversing the original Egyptian emphasis. From the third century B.C., the cult of Isis developed hymns in praise of the god, which were inscribed on stone. Today, five epigraphical aretalogies remain, of Maroneia, Andros, Kyme, Thessalonike, and Ios.¹⁰⁰ Their archetype and elaboration, whether Egyptian or Greek, is another source-critical problem delighted in by scholars, and well discussed by Jean Leclant.¹⁰¹

These patterns of worship and the cults' diffusion continued throughout the Roman period; the direct patronage of Roman emperors (for instance, Gaius, Nero, Otho, Vespasian) and the wide recruitment and campaigns of the Roman army both contributed to the great popularity of the cults in the second century A.D.¹⁰² Plutarch wrote *Isis and Osiris* at a time of enthusiastic and widespread worship of Isis and Sarapis, none more so than in his home town of Chaironeia. Inscriptions of the second century B.C. commemorate the freeing of numerous slaves there in honour of the Egyptian gods: other inscriptions testify to the presence of the cult in the first and third centuries A.D.¹⁰³ Françoise Dunand writes, 'Le culte égyptien à Chéronée a

⁹⁷ F. Sokolowski, *Lois sacrées des cités grecques* (Paris, 1969), no. 34, pp. 66-8.

⁹⁸ Françoise Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis dans le bassin oriental de la Méditerranée* vol. 2, *Le culte d'Isis en Grèce* (Leiden, 1973), p. 217.

⁹⁹ Robert Turcan, *Les cultes orientaux dans le monde romain* (Paris, 1989), p. 78, and Dorothy J. Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies* (Princeton, 1988), p. 116. On Sarapis, see especially Peter M. Fraser, *Two Studies on the Cult of Sarapis in the Hellenistic World, Opuscula Atheniensia* III (Lund, 1960).

¹⁰⁰ Henk S. Versnel, *Ter Unus: Isis, Dionysos, Hermes, three studies in henotheism* (Leiden, 1990), pp. 40-52. For a list of editions, commentaries and translations, and of texts associated with the aretalogies, see Yves Grandjean, *Une nouvelle arétalogie d'Isis à Maronée* (Leiden, 1975), pp. 8-11.

¹⁰¹ Jean Leclant, 'Aegyptiaca et milieux isiaques: recherches sur la diffusion du matériel et des idées égyptiennes', *A.N.R.W.* II.17.3 (1984), pp. 1694-1700.

¹⁰² Turcan, *Les cultes orientaux*, pp. 20-1.

¹⁰³ Leclant, 'Aegyptiaca et milieux isiaques', p. 1701.

connu une assez longue durée d'existence, du IIe siècle a.C. au IIIe siècle p.C. ... Assez curieusement, alors qu'à l'époque hellénistique Sarapis paraît avoir eu la première place, à l'époque impériale c'est manifestement Isis qui prédomine'.¹⁰⁴

The worship of the Egyptian gods in Greece was therefore a long-standing reality for Plutarch, present in both cult practices and cultic texts. These were the connections between things Greek and things Egyptian, visible around him. Knowledge of Plutarch's contemporary setting acts, for the reader, as a foil for his own treatment of Egyptian religion. In the light of the prevalence of the cult in Greece, it is *a priori* likely that Plutarch should have wished to interpret the Egyptian myth in Greek terms. How then does he do so? Answers may be sought partially by comparing Plutarch's practice with that of his fellow Greeks, and other writers on the cult, helpfully putting this tricky text in perspective. It is instantly noteworthy, for example, that Plutarch chose to write about Isis and Osiris when Isis and Sarapis were most worshipped around him, also that he chose to write so much about Osiris when the cult of Isis was the stronger of the two in Greece. But first and best, we can consider how Plutarch himself explains what he does.

Examining the structure of the text provides some important preliminary indications of the force and direction of Plutarch's arguments. As Mary Beard writes in her analysis of Cicero's *On Divination*, 'An understanding of the literary form of *De Div.* is integral to an understanding of its philosophical and historical point'.¹⁰⁵ Just as in the earlier discussion of the Pythian dialogues, the import of one argument is seen most clearly if it is read not in isolation but as having a part within the text as a whole. Plutarch begins with some remarks about his general purposes, and praise for purity in religious matters, which the practices of the Egyptian priests exemplify. The myth of Isis and Osiris he tells for the most part in chapters 12-20, 355D-358E, just eight chapters of the text's total eighty.¹⁰⁶ We must not underestimate his achievement in providing an entire and coherent account of the myth: it is because his is the only such surviving account, perhaps even the only account at all, that it is of such interest to historians of Egyptian religion.¹⁰⁷ But obviously, from the distribution of his material, simply telling the myth is not for Plutarch an end in itself. The substantive portion of the text is given over to extensive comment upon the myth.

How committed is Plutarch to the myth? The general conclusion of complex source criticism is that the cult details are mostly Egyptian: what of their

¹⁰⁴ Dunand, *Le culte d'Isis*, pp. 169-70.

¹⁰⁵ Mary Beard, 'Cicero and divination: the formation of a Latin discourse', *J.R.S.* 76 (1986), p. 33.

¹⁰⁶ There are occasional additional details added in later chapters. For instance, Plutarch gives a second version of how the phallus of Osiris was lost at 365C; the adultery of Nephthys and Osiris, and their illegitimate child Anubis, is briefly related in the main mythical narrative and elaborated at 366B-C, 368E, 375B.

¹⁰⁷ Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, p. 2.

interpretation?¹⁰⁸ Structurally, the interpretation is not one long continuum. Without being a dialogue, it nevertheless shares the characteristics of some dialogic texts. Plutarch's different levels of explanation rise in a crescendo to his most preferred option, rather like the different characters in *Oracles in Decline* seeming to come closer and closer to the truth of why oracles are failing, with Lamprias giving the final answer. From the earliest moments of *Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch identifies himself as a keen seeker after truth, which is to be found in understanding the nature of the gods. ὡς οὐθὲν ἀνθρώπῳ λαβεῖν μείζον, οὐ χάρισασθαι θεῷ σεμνότερον ἀληθείας, 'Nothing greater is attainable by man, and nothing nobler can be granted by god, than truth', 351D. Longing for the truth, he says, is a yearning after divinity; this requires intellectual tasks in acquiring sacred lore, holier tasks than ceremonies and temple service, 351E.

Plutarch emphasizes what he says by talking to his readers as he talks in the text to Klea, to whom *Isis and Osiris* is addressed.¹⁰⁹ Klea is identified as a follower of Isis, when Plutarch first describes ἦν σου θεραπεύεις, 'she whom you worship', 351E. *Isis and Osiris* begins in cleverly interwoven fashion. Plutarch describes his search for the truth about the gods, which is the only truth, to Klea, who is in turn a worshipper of Isis, a god whom Plutarch characterizes as ἐξαιρέτως σοφὴν καὶ φιλόσοφον οὔσαν, 'exceptionally wise and devoted to wisdom', 351E. Klea is invoked again to note (with us) Plutarch's definition of the Isiac devotee. The true devotee is not the man with linen clothes and shaven head, but 'he who, whenever he hears the traditional view of what is displayed and done with regard to these gods, examines and investigates rationally what truth there may be in it', 352C. Philip Hardie speculates interestingly on a possible literary precedent for Klea in Plato's *Symposium*, asking, 'Is Diotima a factor in the choice of Clea as dedicatee?' Both women are used as wise, guiding figures in reaching the correct conclusion in a debate: in the dialogue-like structure of Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris* there are certainly other echoes of the *Symposium*.¹¹⁰ The rational, truth-seeking nature of the follower of Isis and the wise nature of the god herself, as described by Plutarch, fit with his more general attitudes to the interpretation of religion. He urges good religious beliefs and practice, avoiding superstition and its opposite but equal evil, atheism, 355D.¹¹¹ The useless and the outrageous are to be avoided, 358E.

¹⁰⁸ Griffiths, for example, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, p. 67.

¹⁰⁹ Flavia Klea was personally well-known to Plutarch, a friend. She was the daughter of Pollianus and Eurydice, for whom Plutarch wrote his *Advice on Marriage*. She is also the addressee of *The Bravery of Women* (written to commemorate another woman, Leontis).

¹¹⁰ Hardie, 'Plutarch and the interpretation of myth', p. 4762. Like Klea, Diotima's wisdom and experience are appealed to as a way of developing of the argument.

¹¹¹ This sentiment is the entire thesis of Plutarch's early work *On Superstition*. It is restated in *Isis and Osiris* at 377D-378A.

Plutarch's search for truth illuminates the connections he makes between Egyptian and Greek religion. The broadest statement of Plutarch's position is made at 377F, 'We do not regard the gods as different among different peoples nor as barbarian and Greek and as southern and northern. But just as the sun, moon, earth and sea are common to all, though they are given various names by the varying peoples, so it is with the one reason which orders all these things and the one providence which has charge of them and the assistant powers which are assigned to them'. Plutarch attacks those who would associate the Egyptian gods too closely with the Nile, and the surrounding land. 'By doing so, they would take these great gods from the rest of mankind, who have no Nile or Buto or Memphis. But Isis and the gods related to her belong to all men and are known to them; even though they have not long since learnt to call some of them by their Egyptian names, they have understood and honoured the power of each god from the beginning', 377C-D. After the contention that all gods are one, the claim that the Greeks have always worshipped the Egyptian gods is substantiated by Plutarch's equation of specific deities. For example, Sarapis is Pluto, Isis is Persephassa, 361E; Osiris is Dionysos, and Sarapis is Osiris, 362A. Plutarch likens Greek and Egyptian myths and cult practices. The Python's struggles with Apollo, the jealousies of Dionysos and the wanderings of Demeter οὐδὲν ἀπολείπουσι, 'are fully on a par with', the stories about Osiris and Typhon and their like, 360E-F. He notes that both the Greeks and the Egyptians hold many similar ceremonies at about the same time, 378D.

How can Plutarch treat Greek and Egyptian gods as one and the same? Of course, a rather patronizing attitude that foreign gods are in fact Greek is a possible explanation. But particularly in the case of Egypt, a strong Greek tradition militates against this view. Herodotos is firmly of the opinion (which he acknowledges as controversial) that the Greek gods came from Egypt.¹¹² At *Histories* 2.43, for example, he is insistent that the Greeks took the name of Herakles from the Egyptians, not the other way round. He credits one Melampos, son of Amythaon, with bringing the worship of Dionysos to Greece, saying, 'Nor will I allow that the Egyptians ever took over from Greece either this custom or any other', 2.49. In Herodotos' opinion, Demeter too was originally an Egyptian deity: he identifies the Thesmophoria rites celebrated for Demeter as those brought out of Egypt by the daughters of Danaos and taught to the Pelasgian women, 2.171. Plutarch builds on existing cultural traditions of interconnection between Greek and Egyptian gods. His particular understanding, however, is less explicitly historical than Herodotos', and more philosophical. Writing of the Supreme Deity worshipped in different ways by

¹¹² Walter Burkert discusses Herodotos on foreign gods, in 'Herodot als Historiker fremder Religionen', (eds.) Walter Burkert, Giuseppe Nenci, Olivier Reverdin, *Hérodote et les peuples non grecs: neuf exposés suivis de discussions*, *Entretiens Hardt* 35 (1990), pp. 1-39.

different peoples he asserts that 'in these matters above all we should take as a guide into the mysteries the understanding which philosophy gives and reflect devoutly on everything said and enacted', 378A. Egyptian theology is subjected to a very Greek philosophical interpretation, principally in the Middle Platonic tradition.¹¹³ Just how successfully he achieves this difficult task I will consider below.

Klea is an important proof in the argument that *Isis and Osiris*, although treating an ancient Egyptian myth, is written from a contemporary and Greek perspective. She has more than an ornamental function in the text. Her knowledge and experience have an important bearing on Plutarch's material: she is no detached dedicatee. Plutarch is careful to outline her part in Greek worship of Egyptian gods. Isis is the god she worships, 351E. She is appealed to at 364D-E because she is both leader of the Thyiades, female worshippers of Dionysos, at Delphi, and has been consecrated in the rites of Osiris by her father and mother. Klea is the perfect exemplar of what Plutarch is urging – the thoughtful pursuit of Greek and Egyptian religion together. Each time she is invoked in the text, it is to emphasize this point, 351C-D, 351E, 352C, 364D-E. Going further, can anything be made of the fact that Plutarch has chosen a female example to follow?

Isis and Osiris is altogether an exciting text of which to ask gender questions. Plutarch is looking to write about ultimate and universal truths, about the nature of the gods and their relationship to the world. It is a work thoroughly attached to Plutarch's Greek setting through his approach to the myth, the philosophical equation of Greek and Egyptian, his admiration for Klea. How then do ideas of male and female feature in Plutarch's exposition of ultimate truth about the way the material and immaterial worlds work? Specifically, what part does Plutarch give gender in interpretation of the myth? To return to Klea, *Isis and Osiris* begins with two females who can take us to the truth. There is the female worshipper, Klea, and her female god, Isis. The first description Plutarch gives of Isis is extremely significant, and bears quoting again.

... the process of consecration ... accustoms one to undertake austere and difficult services in sacred rites, of which the end is the knowledge of the First and the Lord, whom only the mind can understand and whom the goddess summons one to seek as a being who is near and with her and united to her.
351F-352A

Strikingly, from the outset of the text, we are enjoined to follow female guides. Worshippers and seekers after truth can find Osiris through Isis because of her close sexual relation with him. Our human relationship to the divine is channelled through

¹¹³ As traced by John Dillon, ch. 4, 'Plutarch of Chaeroneia and the origins of second-century Platonism', in *The Middle Platonists*.

the female to the ultimate male deity. To what extent then does Plutarch continue to use gender to pattern the divine and human worlds?

ii. Myth and interpretation

At the heart of Plutarch's interests lie religion and philosophy viewed as guides to correct living in accordance with the traditions of Greece; correspondingly traditional is the broad outline of his attitude to myth which, an inevitable and central feature of Greek culture, nevertheless must adapt itself to the prior claims of religion in the field of piety and of philosophy in the field of rational truth.¹¹⁴

Philip Hardie's admirable summary of Plutarch's attitude to myth is very helpful in understanding how, and why, Plutarch interprets the myth of Isis and Osiris. He is indeed searching for pious religion, for rational truth, and therefore from these a right way to live. As he advises Klea, the avoidance of atheism and superstition lies in her receiving the myth from those who interpret it *δοίως καὶ φιλοσόφως*, 'reverently and philosophically', and in constant performance of the accepted rites, 355C. Myth for Plutarch contains hidden truth, which needs revealing by interpretation. Writing of the ancient Egyptians he says, 'A king chosen from among the warriors instantly became a priest and shared in the philosophy that is hidden for the most part in myths and stories which show dim reflections and insights of the truth', 354C. And on completing his telling of the myth he comments, 'Just as the scientists tell us that the rainbow is an image of the sun made brilliant by the reflection of its appearance into a cloud, so the present myth is the image of a reality which turns the mind back to other thoughts', 358F-359A. Plutarch's approach to the oracle at Delphi is similar. Both the myth of Isis and Osiris, and the Pythia, function as images of the truth they conceal, directly and indirectly.¹¹⁵ He says, 'We must not treat the myths as wholly factual accounts, but take what is fitting in each episode according to the principle of likeness (to truth)', 374E. Following Platonic dialogue structure, in *Isis and Osiris* Plutarch builds up a hierarchy of explanations of the myth, moving through quite direct literal interpretations to allegorical explanations and on to the most highly valued symbolic level of understanding: Plutarch's favoured exegesis is the one he previews for Klea at the beginning of the book, and with which he finally concludes.¹¹⁶ Since first Plutarch explains to Klea how Isis leads to Osiris, 351F-352A, a promising way to look at gender patterns in *Isis and Osiris* should be to trace the relationship of Isis to Osiris in the developing interpretation of the myth

¹¹⁴ Hardie, 'Plutarch and the interpretation of myth', pp. 4743-4.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 4746.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. 4755.

which Plutarch offers. I shall concentrate on the two main exegetic tactics Plutarch uses, first physical then metaphysical allegory.

Physical allegory

The first interpretation of the myth which Plutarch explores is Euhemeristic, 359D-360A; but thinking of the gods merely as great men is unacceptably atheistic for Plutarch. The view which makes Isis and Osiris daimons is given more space and credence, 360D-363D. Even so, Plutarch turns from this explanation to 'the most lucid of those who claim to have something more philosophical to say from another standpoint. These are the people who say that, just as the Greeks explain Kronos allegorically as time, Hera as the air and the birth of Hephaistos as the change of air into fire, so among the Egyptians Osiris is the Nile uniting with Isis as the earth, while Typhon is the sea into which the Nile falls and so disappears and is dispersed, except for that part which the earth takes up and receives, becoming fertile through it', 363D. The imagery is of procreation, *συνόντα* (with overtones of *sexual* union) and *γόνιμος* (fertile). This is primarily how Plutarch shows male and female relating to one another. The physical allegories most employed by Plutarch are sexual in nature.

The allegory is refined. 'The wiser of the priests not only call the Nile Osiris ... but apply the name Osiris to the general principle and power of moisture, regarding it as the cause and the essence of seed', 364A. Plutarch says that the priests believe water to be the origin of everything, that they therefore explain Osiris as the Greek god Oceanus ('Ocean') and Isis as the Greek god Tethys ('Nurse'). It is the male role to generate, and the female role to 'nurse and nourish everything together', 364C-D. The Greeks call Dionysos Hyes ('Rainy'), the god of moist nature, being none other than Osiris.¹¹⁷ Plutarch makes it clear that these ideas about the originating and nourishing roles of male and female respectively are universal, both Egyptian and Greek.

Plutarch deliberately emphasizes the procreative and phallic nature of Osiris, 365B-D. He adds a story to the original body of myth which he has related, telling how Typhon threw Osiris' phallus into the river. Isis failed to find it, but she prepared an identical image with the instruction that it should be honoured and carried in phallic processions (just like the Pamyliia festival and its image with triple phallus, which Plutarch twice describes, 355E, 365B). For Plutarch, the story teaches that from the beginning Osiris used moisture as his procreative material. After honouring first the male part in the sexual process, Plutarch turns to Isis and the female, 366A-C.

¹¹⁷ At 365A, Plutarch quotes Pindar to prove the Greeks regard Dionysos as originator not only of wine but of all moist nature, fr. 153, Herwig Maehler (ed.), *Pindari carmina cum fragmentis* vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1975).

The Egyptian priests believe the earth to be the body of Isis. But not all earth - only as much as the Nile covers, fertilizing it. The child of the union is Horus.¹¹⁸ Sexual intercourse is an intrinsic part of Plutarch's conceptualization of the gods, and of the relationship between male and female.

Isis' personal procreative experience is developed by Plutarch on a wider plane, 372E-F. She is the female principle in nature, receiving all forms of generation. Most people, he notes, call her μυριώνυμος, 'many-named', because she is transformed by reason and receives all corporeal and spiritual forms. The introduction of λόγος, 'reason', lifts the interpretation to another level. The nature of her femaleness is her 'innate love of the first and most sovereign thing of all', ἔρωτα τοῦ πρώτου καὶ κυριωτάτου πάντων, ὃ τὰγαθὸν ταῦτον ἐστὶ, which is the same as what is good. This she longs for and pursues. Although both good and evil can flourish in her, she shuns what is evil and inclines to what is better. She offers to what is better the chance to impregnate her with ἀπορροίας καὶ ὁμοιότητος, 'effluxes and likenesses'. She rejoices at her pregnancy. Plutarch explains the potency of this image of pregnancy, writing, 'For procreation in matter is an image of being, and what comes into being is an imitation of what is'. In procreation we see an echo of the ultimate divine, that which exists. In Plutarch's analysis, it the part of women to reproduce, to want to reproduce, to reproduce the male goodness which impregnates them, and in so doing to partake in the supreme divine order.

Osiris, Isis and Horus are patterned by Plutarch in explicitly Greek ways, 373E-374E. Plato, he says, calls what is spiritually intelligible the form, pattern and father; the material he names mother, nurse, place of creation; their joint product their offspring and creation, 373E.¹¹⁹ These ideas correspond to Osiris, Isis and Horus. On Isis' presentation in this way John Griffiths remarks, 'Isis is equated with the Receptacle of the *Timaeus* and with Matter as well as with Wisdom. This amalgam produces an entity which is on the one hand fallen and imperfect, though filled with longing for completion by the logos of God, while on the other being the cause of our creation and the vehicle by which we can come to know God'¹²⁰ Plutarch sees similarities with the Pythagorean interpretation of the 'procreative triangle' which Plato refers to in the *Republic* 546B. The vertical is three (odd, male), the base four (even, female) and the hypotenuse five (whose power equals that of the other two sides, their product). 'Similarly Osiris should be seen as the origin, Isis as the receptive element, and Horus as the perfected achievement', 374A. In Hesiod

¹¹⁸ At 368C-D, Osiris is the moon with whom Isis has intercourse, yet the Egyptians also call the moon mother of the world. It is female in being made pregnant by the sun, and male in disseminating creative elements into the air. The gender roles are clear, although having one symbol represent both male and female is unusual.

¹¹⁹ Plato, *Timaeus* 50C-D.

¹²⁰ Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p. 204.

Theogony 116 ff, Plutarch detects the same pattern. There he says Hesiod reduces the primal principles of the universe to Chaos, Earth, Tartarus and Eros, and with a transference of names, Earth becomes Isis, Eros Osiris and Tartarus Typhon, 374C. Another Platonic myth, *Symposium* 203B ff, is invoked by Plutarch, where Poverty slept with Wealth to produce Eros. 'For wealth is none other than the primal lover, the desired one, the perfect and the self-sufficient; Poverty, however, Plato called the material, which was of itself lacking in the Good, but which is impregnated by it and constantly desires and shares it', 374C-D. So Wealth is Osiris, Poverty is Isis and Eros Horus. The respective parts of male and female in the sexual process, and its purpose in producing offspring, is quite clear.

Plutarch endorses the views of ἔνιοι, 'some philosophers', who pattern the divine processes of procreation on an explicitly human model, 374F-375A. τὸ σπέρμα τῆς γυναικὸς, 'the seed of woman', is neither a power nor a primal principle, but the material and sustenance of creation. The female god has a part in the male god by having intercourse with him, significantly, through love of his good and fine qualities and not opposing him. This sounds like the human male ideal of the female. Plutarch continues, 'Just as we say that a good wife who has a husband and has intercourse with him, yet longs for him, so we may say that she [Isis] always yearns for him [Osiris] and coaxes him and is impregnated with the most authoritative and pure qualities', 375A. The preferred Greek relation of wife to husband is the strongest epitome of the interconnection between Isis and Osiris.¹²¹

Metaphysical allegory

Plutarch gradually increases the distance from simple physical allegory for the parts of Osiris and Isis within the myth. Philosophy is Plutarch's preferred guide in matters divine, 378A. 'Of all the qualities which humans naturally possess, none is more divine than reason, especially that which concerns the gods, nor do they possess a greater driving force towards happiness', 378C. He says, 376E, that it is not right to think of Osiris or Isis as water, sun, earth or heaven, or of Typhon as fire, drought or sea. Rather Typhon is everything without measure or order, where what is well-ordered, good and useful should be honoured. This is the work of Isis, and the image, imitation and reason of Osiris. With a developing metaphysical and spiritual interpretation, the mythical actions of Isis and Osiris are played out at a truly cosmic

¹²¹ Unlike the case of the Pythia, there is little need to counter hostile Christian interpretations of the cult of Isis. There are only two Christian complaints about the immorality of the cult, made by Epiphanius and Cyril of Alexandria. Plutarch's interpretation of the myth may emphasize the sexual relationship between Isis and Osiris. But Christian writers such as Lactantius, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian praise the devotees of the Egyptian gods for their chastity. In *To A Wife* 1.6, for instance, Tertullian is impressed by the chastity within marriage observed by female followers of Isis whose husbands are still alive.

level. Metaphysically, the myth of Osiris and Isis is a metaphor for the life of the cosmos; through her desire and love for the pre-eminent Osiris, Isis as the material principle in nature takes part in the creation of an ordered universe. Spiritually, as Philip Hardie points out, 'The final goal of the human soul, attainable only in its disembodied state, is μετουσία τοῦ θεοῦ (382F) ['association with the god'], the fulfilment of a yearning like that of Isis for Osiris'.¹²² Plutarch now develops in greater depth the allegory he suggested at the start of the work, 351F-352A, where Isis' search for Osiris is the worshipper's search for knowledge of 'the First and the Lord, whom only the mind can understand and whom Isis summons one to seek as a being who is near and with her and united to her'. Eventually, the ultimate truth contained in the myth relates to the unseen world.¹²³

Plutarch makes some illuminating etymological explorations. The fertilizing and saving aspect of nature inclines towards Osiris, and towards existence, he maintains, 374C. 'For this reason do they name Isis thus, from ἔσθαι, "to hasten", μετ' ἐπιστήμης, "with understanding" and φέρεσθαι, "to move", since she is soulful and intelligent movement', 375C. How Isis' movement enables the god is shown by a myth of the Egyptians which Plutarch takes from Eudoxos, 376C.¹²⁴ Zeus' limbs grew together and he spent his time in isolation, but Isis separated his limbs and gave him mobility. What the myth symbolizes, says Plutarch, is that the god's mind and reason exist alone, unseen and unperceived, and only through movement blossom into creative activity. Isis is a necessary intermediary between the god and his influence on the wider world.

The different cultic robes of Osiris and Isis are interpreted by Plutarch at the highest level of importance. Isis' robes are multi-coloured, symbolizing her material nature which πάντα γινομένην καὶ δεχομένην, 'becomes everything and receives everything', paired opposites such as light and darkness, fire and water, life and death, 382C. In contrast, Osiris' robe is of one light colour. 'For the origin of things is unadulterated and the primal element which is spiritually intelligible is unmixed.' Isis' robes are used many times, but Osiris' robe is used just once, 382C. The two gods offer different levels of knowledge: Isis is perceptible, close, she provides many and varying glimpses of the truth. Osiris, however, is the pure truth and 'the understanding of what is spiritually intelligible and pure and holy ... affords only one chance to touch and behold it'. This revelation is the ultimate end of philosophy, and can only be achieved after passing through the stages of philosophical enlightenment represented by Isis, 382D-E.

¹²² Hardie, 'Plutarch and the interpretation of myth', p. 4773.

¹²³ *ibid.*, p. 4772.

¹²⁴ Eudoxos of Knidos, fourth century B.C., is primarily known as a mathematician and astrologer. His comments on Egyptian religion are cited six times by Plutarch. At 353C, Plutarch refers to Eudoxos' contact with Egyptian priests, recorded in the second book of his *Geography*.

To living people, Osiris is, affirms Plutarch, only a vision seen dimly by the light of philosophy, 382F. But on their death, Osiris becomes their leader and king, 'for depending on him, they behold insatiably and desire the beauty which is, to men, ineffable and unutterable', 383A. The blessing which results from knowledge of Osiris, and which Isis makes possible, is eternal life. As John Griffiths notes, this is somewhat surprising, since Plutarch does not emphasize the overcoming of death in his main narration of the myth.¹²⁵ Plutarch returns to the myth. ὁ παλαιὸς λόγος, 'the old story', shows that it is this beauty which Isis ever loves and pursues and with which she has sexual union. In this way she fills the world with everything beautiful and good that has a part in creation. This is Plutarch's final word on the myth, his best interpretation, and he says so. 'Such is the interpretation of these matters which is most becoming to the gods.'

iii. Analysis

My gender-focused enquiry has concentrated upon the roles ascribed by Plutarch to Isis and Osiris, and his interpretations of them. The aim of this analytic section is to explore the implications of the descriptive answer sketched in the previous section to my crucial question, 'How does Isis relate to Osiris?' But in order to put Plutarch's gendered treatment of the myth in a balanced perspective, we must consider the extent to which this treatment prevails.

Whilst Isis and Osiris are the chief players on the mythical scene, Typhon's part is considerable. It would be beautifully neat to set up a male/female schema as the one significant theme in Plutarch's interpretation, but dishonest. In order to point up the goodness and desirability of Osiris and Isis, Plutarch needs a contrasting concept of evil – Typhon. The battle between good and evil is not represented by male against female, but by male (and female) against male. Plutarch explains his view of the matter at 371A ff. The creation and constitution of the cosmos is composed of powers that are opposed, but not equally strong: the better powers are supreme. On the material plane, Osiris is the established order of the seasons, whilst Typhon is natural disaster, disease, death, 371B. On the spiritual plane, Osiris is mind and reason, and Typhon the passionate, brutish, irrational element of the soul.¹²⁶ The implications of the Osiris-Typhon as well as the Osiris-Isis dimension to the myth are two-fold. The battle of Osiris (and Isis) with Typhon, is not about male and female. A male-male relationship is being explored, and at some length. Overt gender

¹²⁵ Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, p. 71.

¹²⁶ The theory that there are two rival principles in the cosmos is an important argument in *Isis and Osiris*, although as Griffiths notes, pp. 23-4, there are passages where this fundamental dualism is not maintained, most notably in the monotheistic philosophy at the beginning and end of the work.

associations are not the complete key to the myth. But the way that the good/evil relationship is explored has implications for the way we can think about gender in the text.

The polarized systematizing which pits the villain Typhon against the hero Osiris is of course archetypally Greek. Drawing on the Pythagoreans, Aristotle gives a list of ten paired opposites.¹²⁷ On the male side, for example, are ranged light and right, balanced by darkness and left on the female. But in *Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch cannot forge the good/male, bad/female connection which these paired opposites imply; it would be inconceivable to cast Isis as a principle of evil. This makes *Isis and Osiris* all the more interesting a text. The relationship between male and female must be represented and understood in other ways. Immaterial Osiris is clearly quite different to material Isis. But both are dependent on each other, especially as seen in the process of sexual reproduction. Theirs is a complementary rather than hostile opposition. Through Isis and Osiris, Plutarch picks out links between male and female. The nature of their unity in opposition is what is most strikingly revealed.

Plutarch subsumes many of the Greek gods into a strongly gendered division of one male god (Osiris) and one female god (Isis). Demeter, Persephassa, Athena all become Isis; Zeus, Hades, Dionysos, Hermes, Eros, Oceanus all become Osiris.¹²⁸ Plutarch is working with basic and powerful ideas of what it is to be male and female, of how male and female relate together. Only the assumed existence of an essential, divinely-validated, gender structure can allow Plutarch to make Isis and Osiris supreme exemplars. But on closer enquiry, just how satisfactorily are his identifications between Greek and Egyptian gods justified? Demeter and Isis have obvious parallels in their agricultural and fertility capacities, which Plutarch draws out. But we may wonder how well the divine systems of which they are a part can coalesce. Demeter is a divinity of independent action, but Isis is intimately linked to Osiris. There is a lack of fit between the two systems. Plutarch's problems come from the inherent difficulty in moulding together two quite different cultural systems.¹²⁹ His solution is to approach religion at the most abstract philosophical level.

Henk Versnel makes the important point that attention to inconsistencies and ambiguities is essential in the writing of history. He writes, 'Culture and society are categorical constructs. As a corollary they cannot but provoke numerous and

¹²⁷ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1.5.986A 22-6. These oppositions are discussed in chapter two on Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams*, section III.ii.

¹²⁸ As Isis, for example, Plutarch mentions Athena, 354C, 376A; Demeter, implied *passim*; Persephassa (Persephone), 361E; Tethys, 364D. As Osiris, Plutarch lists, for instance, Zeus 376C; Hades, 382E; Dionysos, 362B, 364D, 365D-E; Hermes, 373B; Eros, 374C; Oceanus, 364D. Not all Greek gods are identified in this way - Apollo, for instance, is not.

¹²⁹ Beard, 'Cicero and divination', p. 36, finds similar problems with Cicero's innovatory attempt to integrate Greek philosophy with traditional Roman practice and thought, in his *On Divination*.

disquieting inconsistencies, anomalies, ambiguities and paradoxes'.¹³⁰ For the complexities of ancient religion, the point is of the utmost relevance. It is emphatically not the job of historians to sweep problems away. Considering the problems Plutarch has in fitting together Greek and Egyptian gods reveals how his ultimate philosophical solution is dependent on gender concepts. Eudoxos, Plutarch reports, 377A, is sceptical and perplexed as to how Isis and not Demeter controls the sphere of sexual love, and how Dionysos cannot make the Nile rise or rule the dead as Osiris does. Plutarch subsumes these difficulties, which we might share, in the male/female pattern of the text. In a general sense, he says, all these gods have to do with what is right and good. And what is right and good exists because of them, τὸν μὲν διδόντα τὰς ἀρχάς, τὴν δ' ὑποδεχομένην καὶ διανέμουσαν, 'in that the god grants the beginnings, whilst the goddess receives and distributes them'.

As Plutarch's physical allegories for the myth show, his understanding of the relation of male to female is sexually based. The point is emphasized by Chrissoula Veligianni-Terzi. 'Das Bezeichnende bei dieser Vereinigung von Isis und Osiris ist, daß das Geschlechtliche im Vordergrund steht, nicht andere Eigenschaften oder Seiten, d.h. sie werden nicht als abgerundete Persönlichkeiten präsentiert. Infolgedessen werden beide in bezug auf ihr Geschlecht gleich dargestellt. Eine erotische Spannung durchdringt ebenfalls jedes symbolische Bild.'¹³¹ The creative union of male and female is at the heart of the physical universe, an essential natural fact; the union of Isis and Osiris in their mother's womb symbolizes their original and eternal relationship. Isis receives and nurtures Osiris' seed. It is very much a case of male initiative and female response, for example 364A-D. Between Osiris and Horus, Isis plays an enabling and middle role. She is the incubating link between Osiris' generative act and their son's birth, 374A. This is the role of the divine female and it is also the role of the human female, as Plutarch's comparison of Isis to a justly desirous wife makes plain, 375A.¹³²

It is my contention that this primarily sexual understanding of Isis and Osiris strongly patterns Plutarch's metaphysical allegories for the actions of the gods. Plutarch does not reject all physical allegories; he acknowledges them as a partial insight into religious truth. But the link between the physical and metaphysical allegories is in fact closer than that. His philosophical explanations are deeply dependent on his presentation of physical processes. Isis, as is hinted at when the

¹³⁰ Versnel, *Ter Unus*, p. 12.

¹³¹ Chrissoula Veligianni-Terzi, 'Bemerkungen zu den griechischen Isisaretologien', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 129 (1986), pp. 72-3.

¹³² Plutarch's comparisons of Isis' and Osiris' association to human marriage are interesting. The sexual relationship between Isis and Osiris is firm and long-standing, as a marriage should be: it is cemented by their child Horus, making them a family group. This is an idea that will have been found in Isiac iconography. The divine bond also withstands Osiris' adultery with Nephthys: Isis gains the upper hand by herself adopting Anubis, offspring of the liaison, 368E.

work opens, 351F-352A, draws the human to the divine. She invites and encourages men and women to seek knowledge of Osiris. The way Isis acts as a philosophical guide of humans to Osiris is calqued upon her sexual relationship with the god. At the end of Plutarch's interpretation, he reveals Osiris as ultimate and ineffable beauty, 383A. Isis fills the world with Osiris' goodness and beauty through her eager sexual relationship with him. Human perceptions of Osiris' goodness are focalized through Isis. She is an intermediary in spiritual matters through her part in the physical procreative process.¹³³ Plutarch's concept of mediation is of a gendered, specifically female, sort. His philosophical thinking relies upon his understanding of the physical relationship between male and female.

In his essay, 'The structural study of myth', Claude Lévi-Strauss has some very apposite comments to make about the concept of mediation.¹³⁴ He argues that 'mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution'. That is, where there are two opposite features in the framework of the myth, for example life and death, then the myth will require a third mediating feature. The mediating concept or figure has a dual identity, being part of both opposites; it connects and resolves the differences between them. In the myth of Isis and Osiris, as interpreted by Plutarch, Isis has just such a role as intermediary between humans and the highest divine being, Osiris. Whilst being divine, she also shares in the materiality of the human condition. She is the female principle in nature, 372E, procreative receiver of all forms material and spiritual. She reveals what is good, Osiris, through her participation in the material way of life. 'For procreation in matter is an image of being, and what comes into being is an imitation of what is', 372F. Isis also mediates between Osiris and Typhon, between creative power and destructive power, to the advantage of Osiris and creation. She seeks and finds the limbs of Osiris scattered by Typhon and brings forth life from them, 375A-B. She prevents the chaos and sterility of Typhon from taking hold. In the outer regions of matter controlled by Typhon, 375B, Osiris can only scatter seed very weakly: some Typhon destroys, but some Isis rescues and fosters to strength. .

Plutarch uses many images to display Isis' mediating role. At 376E, Isis is the mirror in which the divine qualities of Osiris are reflected to humankind; her work is in imitation of him. She is the supreme communication medium between immortal and mortal. The cultic robes of the gods are interpreted by Plutarch to signify the differing roles of the two gods. Isis is close at hand to humans, providing many

¹³³ John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p. 164, notes the interesting parallels between Philo's Sophia, *On Drunkenness* 30-1, and Plutarch's Isis - 'a female life-principle assisting the supreme God in his work of creation and administration, but also somehow fulfilling the role of mother to all creation. Philo found the concept already established, presumably in contemporary Platonized Pythagoreanism'.

¹³⁴ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (Eng. trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf, New York, 1963), pp. 224-6.

glimpses of the truth; realizing these as her devotee allows the worshipper the chance to reach the rare and revelatory truth that is Osiris. She provides the path from the human world to the best of the divine world; she also provides the momentum. She provides a way which worshippers can follow. At 361D-E, Plutarch comments on the help she rendered Osiris when he was under frenzied attack by Typhon: 'into the most sacred rites she infused images, suggestions and representations of her experiences at that time, and so she consecrated at once a pattern of piety and an encouragement to men and women overtaken by similar misfortunes'. Looking at the journey of faith from this side, she encourages men and women. Looking from the other, she encourages Osiris himself. Eudoxos' tale of her freeing the limbs of Zeus, 375C, is telling: her action brings the god's mind and reason into creative activity.

Another way to think about mediation suggested by Lévi-Strauss is as an attempted solution 'to the problem of bridging the gap between *two* and *one*'.¹³⁵ On this model too, Isis strives to bridge the gap between divine and human, leading humans towards a full knowledge of the revealed god. She achieves this at the end of Plutarch's interpretation, when aspiring souls see Osiris after death, 382D-E. Worship of Isis provides the necessary philosophical enlightenment for this supreme revelation of Osiris. In the final instance, Isis is for humans a mediator between life and death, between immortality with god and mortality without him, 383A. She helps break down the barriers between human and divine, if not to make the two one, then to bring the two together.

How uniquely Plutarchan is this interpretation of the myth? Some comparison with contemporary treatments of Isis helps define exactly what Plutarch is doing. The portrait of Isis and her cult given by Apuleius in book eleven of his *Metamorphoses* is separated from that of Plutarch by time (Apuleius wrote some fifty years later and in Latin) and most of all by approach. Whilst Plutarch tells the whole myth and interprets it, Apuleius describes one Isiac festival in a personal and confessional way. Plutarch valuably locates Isis in her wider cultic and cultural framework, allowing us to see her as part of an interpretative religious system, which we cannot do with Apuleius' account. The philosophical analysis of Isis as matter and Osiris as creative reason is quite absent in Apuleius, which is especially remarkable since Apuleius too is a Platonist.¹³⁶

Aspects of the aretalogies seem to form another striking contrast with Plutarch's treatment. Rather like his *Isis and Osiris*, they are a Greek interpretation of originally Egyptian subject matter. Henk Versnel writes, 'one cannot but conclude that the aretalogies of Isis are a genuinely Hellenistic creation ... in which Greek elements dominate without, however, blotting out the Egyptian-oriental

¹³⁵ Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, p. 226.

¹³⁶ Griffiths, *Plutarch's De Iside et Osiride*, pp. 49-51.

contribution'.¹³⁷ In these hymns, Isis defines herself through many pronouncements, often beginning 'I am'. The aretalogy from Kyme, the most complete surviving, has some fifty such pronouncements. Versnel has paid careful attention to the seeming contradiction in lines 3a of the aretalogy, 'Isis, I am, the tyrant of all land', and 25, 'I have destroyed the mastery of tyrants'. He explains the two statements with reference to contemporary Hellenistic political models. 'Apparently, in the early Hellenistic period, gods and kings shared two contradictory, yet concomitant, faculties: they liberated people from tyranny and gave them freedom, while simultaneously making them their subjects and slaves.'¹³⁸ As liberator and subjector, Isis of the aretalogies is very much a supreme ruler, with titles such as βασίλισσα and ἄνασσα, 'queen', δέσποινα and κυρία, 'mistress'. This autonomous and all-powerful Isis is unlike the important but dependent and mediating god of Plutarch's interpretation. Does the hymnic picture of Isis have any points of contact with Plutarch's?

The aretalogies have been used to argue that Isis is a women's god. In the aretalogies, Isis is ordainer of marriage and childbirth. To take the aretalogy from Maroneia as an example, lines 17-18, σύνοικον δ' ἔλαβες Σέραπιν, καὶ τὸν κοινὸν ὑμῶν θεμένων γάμον..., 'You took Sarapis as your companion, and after you both had instituted marriage ...'.¹³⁹ Lines 26-8 praise Isis for making all peoples live in harmony with one other, not only men with women. She ensures children honour their parents, lines 31-2, and has decreed that life comes from men and women, lines 41-2. Sharon Heyob is one exponent of the Isis as women's god proposition. Her argument is simple and superficial: Isis governs activities undertaken by women, therefore she appeals to women, therefore she is a women's goddess. Furthermore, Heyob quotes from the hymn of *P. Oxy.* 1380, σὺ γυναιξὶν ἴσην δύναμιν τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐποίησας, 'You gave women power equal to that of men', and in her optimism hails Isis as no less than 'one of the first advocates of women's liberation'!¹⁴⁰ Can Heyob's interpretation be true?

It should be possible to object in principle to the idea of a women's god, as well as to the identification of Isis as such a god. There are of course particular cults and rituals performed by women alone. But what does the absence of men from a ceremony mean? When in classical Greece an élite group of girls act the bear for Artemis at Brauron, or when married women gather to worship Demeter at the

¹³⁷ Versnel, *Ter Unus*, p. 44.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 83. He adds, p. 88, 'The paradox that man paid for his freedom by deeper subjection to his divine liberator was, in later times, noticed and deliberately elaborated'. It is present, for instance, in the devoted subjection of Apuleius to Isis in *Metamorphoses* 11.

¹³⁹ The text is that of Grandjean, *Une nouvelle arétalogie d'Isis à Maronée*, pp. 17-18.

¹⁴⁰ Sharon K. Heyob, *The Cult of Isis among Women in the Graeco-Roman World* (Leiden, 1975), p. 52. Her interpretative terms are even more anachronistic at p. 113, 'Since Isis was the self-proclaimed leader of the movement for the emancipation of women, having given women equal power to that of men...'

Thesmophoria, they seem to be part of the purposes of a male-driven society, growing into good citizen women, creating the next legitimate generation of the πόλις.¹⁴¹ To herald a god like Isis, with her specific traits of ordainer of marriage and of childbirth, as a god only for women, is to take too narrow (and misleading) a view.

An analysis of Isis as a women's god rather more sophisticated than that of Sharon Heyob is that of Chrissoula Veligianni-Terzi. For her, Isis' aretalogical championship of women must first be set in its social context. The status of women in the Hellenistic period was not significantly altered by worship of Isis, nor did women even make up the majority of her worshippers.¹⁴² Secondly, the equal power which Isis gives to men and women must be interpreted in its aretalogical context. And the supreme context for what Isis says about men and women is marriage and the production of children. It is in these social processes that men and women have interdependent parts. Veligianni-Terzi writes that the theme of the aretalogies 'besteht vielmehr ein reziprokes Verhältnis. Zweifellos zielt es auf die Institution der Familie und deren normale Funktion. Das kommt durch die Beseitigung von Hindernissen besser zustande, die sich der Beziehung der Frauen zu den Männern als erster Form des Zusammenlebens und Kernpunkt des Kollektivlebens in den Weg stellen'.¹⁴³ It seems then that in the aretalogies, as in Plutarch, Isis is not a god for women only; her appeal and relevance is to both men and women. On this interpretation, the aretalogies back my reading of Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*. Isis is at the heart of male-female relationships through her role in human and divine marriage and reproduction. In Plutarch, these physical images form the basis of his philosophical analysis of Isis' mediating function between worshippers and their greatest male god.

III. Conclusions

How does Plutarch face the female in two quite different religious systems, Greek Pythia, Egyptian Isis? There are striking parallels in his interpretation, although the facts of the two cases are so different. It was Plutarch's choice to write about the Pythia when he wanted to discuss prophecy, his choice to interpret the myth

¹⁴¹ Although Lucia Nixon deploys evidence from sanctuaries, plants and myths to argue that the cults of Demeter and Kore reveal female control over their own fertility, rather than more simply male anxiety to reproduce the πόλις, 'The cults of Demeter and Kore', in Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick (eds.), *Women in Antiquity: new assessments* (London and New York, 1995), pp. 75-96.

¹⁴² For the figures, see Fabio Mora, *Prosopografia isiaca II. Prosopografia storica e statistica del culto isiaco* (Leiden, 1990), ch. 1, 'La partecipazione delle donne al culto isiaco'.

¹⁴³ Veligianni-Terzi, 'Bemerkungen zu den griechischen Isisaretalogien', p. 74.

of Isis and Osiris in the manner that he did. It has been my choice to put these texts together. I would argue that in so doing, I have revealed a Plutarchan, and feasibly a wider Greek way of thinking about a role for the female in certain religious settings. The case becomes more apparent in studying the texts together. My reading adds to work done individually on each text, and my demonstration of Plutarch's interpretation along gendered lines is strengthened in the comparison of one text with another.

The Pythia of *Oracles in Decline* is the ultimate resolution of the prophetic models suggested in the debate. She has the correct receptive nature, is kept in pure seclusion, the perfect conduit for the god to communicate with mortals. Her body is an open instrument, available to her god. These qualities are enlarged upon in *On the Pythian Oracles*. The Pythia's body is again an instrument: the god plays his prophetic tune and the Pythia speaks it aloud in her own words. She has a part to play in the communication of the message. Therefore, the virginal, bride-like state of the Pythia is all-important. Divine inspiration is in effect sexual possession: the most direct contact between priest and her god is sexually imagined.

From the beginning of the myth in his *Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch stresses the sexual relationship existing between Isis and Osiris. His physical allegories for the myth are overwhelmingly sexual. Isis occupies the middle ground between humans and the highest expression of the divine, Osiris. Her nature allows her to receive all things corporeal and spiritual. Like the Pythia, she is likened to a wife in her connection with Osiris. Derived from his physical allegories, Plutarch's metaphysical allegories confirm this interpretation. Isis spreads the knowledge and goodness that is Osiris to mortals, just as she receives his seed and generates the natural world.

There are important differences between the religious systems Plutarch is portraying, and the role of the female within them is thus bound to vary. The Pythia communicates between Apollo and his enquirers essentially on a question and answer basis. Isis acts more as a spiritual guide, in the worshippers' search for knowledge and goodness. The gendered divine hierarchy of lower Isis and higher Osiris has no counterpart in the cult of Apollo alone. But nevertheless, for both a human female and a divine female, the roles Plutarch envisages are remarkably similar.

Both the Pythia and Isis act as mediators between the human and divine worlds, and both do so in their capacity as sexual beings for forming a relationship with the male divine. In the case of the Pythia, it is her bridal virginity that ensures a pure and dedicated instrument for prophecy. In the case of Isis, her procreative, maternal role is emphasized; she is the creative medium in which Osiris' goodness can be reproduced in the world. In both cases, the image of marriage is peculiarly apt for female relationships with male gods. Greek marriage demanded complete sexual commitment from a woman, and both the Pythia with Apollo, and Isis with Osiris,

fulfil these requirements. The same commitment was not expected from a man in marriage. It is therefore as the wholly committed and controlled partner of the god that the Pythia and Isis are fit models for thinking about the appropriate medium for god to communicate with humankind. These are the gendered ideas about the female which so inescapably place her between man and god.

Chapter Five

Romance and Religion in Heliodoros' *An Ethiopian Story*

In my estimation, one can never have a surfeit of love, whether one is engaged in its pleasures or listening to tales of it. And if the story being told is the love of Theagenes and Charikleia, who could be so insensitive, so steely-hearted, that he would not be spellbound by the tale, even if it lasted a whole year? 4.4.3

"The leader of the sacred mission should be the one to light the fire, with the torch that he has received from the hands of the female acolyte. This is the usage laid down by ancestral custom." ... At the moment when they set eyes on one another, the young pair fell in love. ... For a brief second full of emotion, they stood motionless; then slowly, so slowly, she handed him the torch and he took it from her, and all the while they gazed hard into one another's eyes ... 3.5.3-4

Heliodoros himself knew he was telling a fascinating and entrancing tale. After great success in Byzantine and Renaissance times, his *An Ethiopian Story* is beguiling a new generation of readers.¹ On the basis of Heliodoros' own argument, then, that one can never have too much of a good thing (especially if that thing be love), I have chosen the romance of Theagenes and Charikleia as the subject of my final chapter study. Theirs is a story of love at first sight - but is the cliché as secure as it seems? Is there more to the story than the struggle of young love to gain familial, particularly paternal, acceptance? When boy meets girl, Heliodoros strikingly emphasizes the questions of where and how. Their meeting is at Delphi, no matter of chance, but a sacred duty. As ὁ τῆς θεωρίας ἄρχων, 'leader of the sacred mission', Theagenes must take the torch needed to light the sacrifice to Apollo παρὰ τῆς ζακόρου, 'from the female acolyte', Charikleia. I will return to the scene, part of a larger and important sequence. But as a taste and as an incentive to further study, the two passages I have quoted suffice.² Heliodoros' is an entertaining story with two key protagonists, one male, one female; their love is framed from its very inception in a religious context. Once more, the stage is set (as Heliodoros might say) for an investigation into the connections made between gender and the divine.

¹ Gerald N. Sandy, *Heliodorus* (Boston, 1982) has a final seventh chapter on 'The *Aethiopica* through the ages'.

² There is no recent text of Heliodoros; I have used the 3 volumes of Budé, R. M. Rattenbury, T. W. Lumb and J. Maillon (eds.), *Héliodore. Les Éthiopiennes (Théagène et Chariclée)*, (Paris, 1935-43). There are, however, several recent translations of Heliodoros, and I cite the readily available version of John Morgan, in Bryan P. Reardon (ed.), *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (Berkeley and London, 1989), pp. 349-588. For clarity, I also adopt his title for the work, *An Ethiopian Story*, and his spellings of Greek names.

I. Text and context

Heliodoros' *An Ethiopian Story* is classified today as a key text in the genre of the Greek novel. Surviving seemingly in their original form are five substantial prose stories, Heliodoros', and Chariton's *Chaereas and Kallirhoe*, Xenophon of Ephesus' *An Ephesian Tale*, Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Chloe*, Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*. Indications that these five texts are not the full extent of this type of writing are provided by the summaries and papyrus fragments also known to us.³ These texts share a number of distinctive features. Each draws its reader along the excitingly obstacle-strewn path of true love between a young man and a young woman, which ends eventually and successfully in marriage. From her studies of women in the Greek novels, Brigitte Egger remarks, 'This combination of passion with the social institution of marriage is one of the criteria that distinguish the "ideal" Greek novels from other types of ancient erotic literature, as well as from other ancient prose fiction'.⁴ Another acknowledged criterion is that although they were most probably written whilst the Roman empire flourished in the first to third centuries A.D., these romantic adventures are all set in a world of the past, whether real or imagined. Their setting is predominantly Greek, but they can also move between Greek and non-Greek worlds, as for example Heliodoros' novel, with its Greek beginning and Ethiopian ending. It is also through their increasingly perceived and distinctive literary merit that the Greek novels have endeared themselves to modern scholarship as a group of texts worth studying.⁵

The Greek novels are then highly susceptible to study as a genre, and many scholars have approached them in this way. But whilst it is important to know the literary stables of any text, this should not preclude study of an individual text. Emphasizing similarities must not lead to the down-playing or non-observation of a text's particular features. Each text is valuable for its own unique perspective; the

³ The ninth-century Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople, includes amongst his many summaries of works of literature one of Antoninus Diogenes' *The Wonders Beyond Thule* (*Bibliotheca* 166), and he is the chief source for Iamblichus' *A Babylonian Story* (*Bibliotheca* 94). Fragments range in length from the longer *A Phoenician Story* of Lollianus, to the shorter pieces named after their apparent main character, such as *Iolaus* or *Calligone*: there are seven significant fragments in total. The newest edition of the fragments is by Susan A. Stephens and John J. Winkler, *Ancient Greek Novels: the fragments: introduction, text, translation, and commentary* (Princeton, 1995). All the complete novels, summaries and published fragments are translated in Reardon's *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*. Petronius' *Satyricon* and Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* are two extended pieces of Latin prose fiction.

⁴ Brigitte Egger, 'Women and marriage in the Greek novels: the boundaries of romance', in James Tatum (ed.), *The Search for the Ancient Novel* (Baltimore and London, 1994), pp. 260-80. The quotation here is from p. 262.

⁵ The history of changing scholarly attitudes to the Greek, and Latin, novels is charted in the introduction to the extremely useful survey article of Ewen L. Bowie and Stephen J. Harrison, 'The romance of the novel', *J.R.S.* 83 (1993), pp. 159-78. The article itself is of course testimony to the novels' ever-increasing popularity.

individual must be as important as the group. Of the Greek novels, Heliodoros' *An Ethiopian Story* is the longest, and arguably the most complex and sophisticated. It is also *prima facie* the most promising of the novels, for my purposes, in terms of its subject matter. Men, women and the gods are apparent, for example in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*, but not a female priest, a motif in my previous chapters and, as will be argued, central to Heliodoros' text. For these reasons I have chosen to study *An Ethiopian Story* as a separate text, mostly apart from the other Greek novels. Of course this has been done for Heliodoros before, notably in Gerald Sandy's book, *Heliodorus* and John Morgan's series of articles.⁶ But it has not been done with quite the questions I propose to ask.

First, however, who was Heliodoros, when and what did he write? About Heliodoros, we know reliably no more than he tells us himself, at the conclusion of his story, 10.41.4.⁷ He says, ὁ συνέταξεν ἀνὴρ Φοῖνιξ Ἐμισσηνός, τῶν ἀφ' Ἡλίου γένος, Θεοδοσίου παῖς Ἡλιόδωρος, 'The writer is a Phoenician from the city of Emesa, one of the clan of the descendants of the Sun, Theodosios' son, Heliodoros'. So much, and no more, Heliodoros considers it desirable for his readers to understand. How should we regard this single, brief concluding sentence? For Gerald Sandy, 'Heliodoros' business-like "sign-off" provides at least one valuable clue to his *floruit*'.⁸ True, but this cannot be Heliodoros' purpose in writing it, and is the imagery of Heliodoros simply signing a business document appropriate? I think not. John Morgan writes off any significance for the sentence even more devastatingly. He has written an entire article on 'A sense of the ending: the conclusion of Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*', which takes the ending of Heliodoros' text effectively to be the ending of his story, at 10.41.3, as Theagenes and Charikleia depart to celebrate their marriage.⁹ Precisely because Morgan is considering the text 'primarily as a piece of narrative engineering', it is incredible that he does not seriously consider the relationship of the story to the final framing sentence describing its author.¹⁰

⁶ John R. Morgan, 'History, romance, and realism in the *Aithiopikā* of Heliodoros', *Classical Antiquity* 1 (1982), pp. 221-65; 'The story of Knemon in Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*', *J.H.S.* 109 (1989), pp. 99-113; 'A sense of the ending: the conclusion of Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*', *T.A.P.A.* 119 (1989), pp. 299-320; 'Reader and audiences in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodoros', in Heinz Hofmann (ed.), *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel*, vol. IV, (Groningen, 1991), pp. 85-103; ch. 6, 'The *Aithiopika* of Heliodoros: narrative as riddle', pp. 97-113 in John R. Morgan and Richard Stoneman (eds.), *Greek Fiction: the Greek novel in context* (London and New York, 1994).

⁷ Beyond his text, the first evidence about Heliodoros is provided by Socrates, a church historian of the fifth century, who records a tradition that Heliodoros was a Christian bishop who introduced celibacy amongst his clergy. Unfortunately, the evidence for this attractive theory seems to derive only from Heliodoros' treatment of sex and marriage within the text.

⁸ Sandy, *Heliodorus*, p. 2.

⁹ Morgan, 'A sense of the ending', p. 318, 'The text concludes with the departure of all the *dramatis personae* (except poor Meroebos) to celebrate τὰ ἐπὶ τῷ γάμῳ μυστικώτερα'. Elsewhere, Morgan refers to the mysteries of marriage as 'the very last words of the text apart from a colophon in which the author identifies himself', 'The story of Knemon in Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*', p. 110.

¹⁰ *idem*, 'A sense of the ending', p. 300.

Before I consider the implications of what Heliodoros says, where he chooses to say it is important. Normally and understandably for works presented in rolled papyrus form, ancient writers often name themselves at the beginning of their text. Comparison with other Greek novels is instructive. Chariton provides a classic example of the standard opening gambit, writing, 'My name is Chariton, of Aphrodisias, and I am clerk to the attorney Athenagoras. I am going to tell you the story of a love affair that took place in Syracuse'. But Heliodoros deliberately eschews such a 'title page' function for his naming of himself. Achilles Tatius and Xenophon of Ephesus consider their personal identity irrelevant to their text, since they do not mention it. Longus introduces his story as the interpretation of a beautiful picture he has seen; the relationship between frame and story is surely important, although it does not hinge on the author's personal identity. In contrast, *An Ethiopian Story* is a text that consists of a crescendo of problems solved and identities revealed, notably that of Charikleia to her natural parents; Heliodoros' is the final and hence I would argue the most significant revelation of identity of them all. The dynamics of the text are so arranged that the readers frequently understand what they read by an explanation provided after the fact.¹¹ Who Heliodoros is seals the narrative and puts it in its correct final perspective. The question of Heliodoros' identity, or rather, how Heliodoros represents himself to his readers, assumes more importance than mere biographical curiosity.

There are two parts to Heliodoros' unusual concluding self-revelation, his place of origin and his ancestry. I argue now from the premise that Heliodoros is a very deliberate writer. His text is intricately and skilfully crafted, both in the development of the story and the words in which it is told. There is precious little in the text that is accidental. What contemporary significance is there to Heliodoros pointing out his origins in Phoenicia, and specifically Emesa? Without anticipating the arguments for the dating of the text, the general period for the production of the Greek novels may be considered. Emesa was a prosperous place in the second and third centuries A.D.¹² Its territory extended as far as Palmyra, and the city possibly benefited from Palmyra's location on an important caravan route; Emesa was made a Roman *colonia* by Caracalla (A.D. 211-17), and Palmyra by Septimius Severus or Caracalla.¹³ This part of the world received significant imperial attention in the third century, militarily *and* religiously, and I will examine three examples of this.

¹¹ The best example of this technique of Heliodoros' is the way book one opens with an episode from the middle of his story, which is not finally made wholly clear until 5.33.

¹² Emesa only appears for the first time in our sources in the first century B.C., as the base for a local dynasty, Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 B.C. - A.D. 337* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1993), p. 301.

¹³ The significance of colonial status for cities like Palmyra is discussed by Fergus Millar, 'The Roman *coloniae* of the Near East', especially section 5, 'The third century after Septimius Severus', in Heikki Solin and Mika Kajava (eds.), *Roman Eastern Policy and Other Studies in Roman History* (Helsinki,

In A.D. 218, Varius Avitus Bassianus was declared emperor at Emesa. His was an influential local family intertwined with the imperial family since his great-aunt Iulia Domna married Septimius Severus, then a senator, in the 180s A.D. For my purposes, the interest of this young emperor is encapsulated by the name under which he briefly ruled (A.D. 218-22). His official name became M. Aurelius Antoninus, but he was known at the time as Elagabalus, after Emesa's chief god, Elagabal or Heliogabalus, of whom he was an hereditary priest. The bizarre-sounding name of Elagabal derives from the Semitic LH'GBL, and in Emesa at least he was worshipped as god of the Sun. There survives, for example, an inscription from an altar dedicated by Elagabalus' grandfather C. Iulius Avitus to 'his ancestral god of the Sun, Elagabal'.¹⁴ As priest and emperor, Elagabalus was zealous in his introduction of the cult at Rome, and contemporary observers record the exotic details of his ostentatious worship of his god.¹⁵

A second illustration of the connection between Emesa and the cult of the sun is provided by the complex *Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle*, compiled from a number of Greek texts in the mid third century. Shaped as a prophecy, it deals with events in the region of Palmyra and Emesa from the 230s to the 250s A.D. One of its final predictions reads, 'There will be a rout of the Romans; but immediately thereafter a priest will come, the last of all, sent from the sun, appearing from Syria, and he will do everything by craft; the city of the sun will arise, and around her the Persians will endure the terrible threats of Phoenicians'.¹⁶ Emesa is the city of the sun, and the saviour a priest from that city's ruling dynasty. The strength of both the city and its priesthood obviously impressed the author of these lines.

Between the 260s and 272 A.D., Palmyra seems to have grown in power independently from Rome, filling a partial power vacuum in the Roman Near East.¹⁷ In his imperial *New History* of c. A.D. 500, Zosimus records how the emperor Aurelian 'reconquered' Palmyra and returned to Rome in triumph. 'At this time, he

1990), pp. 39-56. For 'the acute problem of whether the eastern trade of Palmyra really was significant for the evolution of Emesa into a notable city', see Millar, *The Roman Near East*, p. 309. After Caracalla, the peoples of the Near East all held Roman citizenship, as in other provinces, but only certain towns were given the status of *colonia*. Both Emesa and Palmyra seem to have declined in importance after the third century A.D., possibly from the loss of Palmyra's trade route prosperity, possibly from more local economic factors, *Roman Near East*, p. 301: the two *coloniae* are also discussed in Millar's 'Empire, community and culture in the Roman Near East: Greeks, Syrians, Jews and Arabs', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38 (1987), pp. 143-64.

¹⁴ Millar's *The Roman Near East* has a section (9.2) on Emesa and Elagabal, pp. 300-9. C. Iulius Avitus' inscription is addressed to Deo [atrio] Soli Ela[gabalo], whilst a Greek dedication, perhaps from the temple site, talks of Theos Helios Elagabalos. Both formulations are precisely the same, i.e., the Sun god, Elagabalus.

¹⁵ Herodian 5.3.2-6 describes Elagabalus' part in the cult at Emesa, and Cassius Dio 79.11.1-2 his worship at Rome.

¹⁶ Lines 150-4, with David S. Potter, *Prophecy and History in the Crisis of the Roman Empire: a historical commentary on the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle* (Oxford, 1990), especially pp. 323-8.

¹⁷ Millar, *The Roman Near East*, pp. 170-3.

built a lavish temple to Helios, which he adorned with votive offerings from Palmyra, and in which he set up statues of Helios and Belos.¹⁸ The *Historia Augusta, Aurelianus* 25.5-6, similarly recounts Aurelianus's victories in the East, and his triumphal entry into Emesa, where he went to worship at the temple of Elagabalus. Visited there by a divine vision, he established new temples and also built a temple to Helios at Rome.¹⁹ So in introducing Emesa as his home town, Heliodorus is laying claim to a place of considerable contemporary religious significance for the worship of the sun god.

Both Heliodorus' place of origin and his ancestry interconnect in linking him strongly with the sun god. Demonstrably, in the third century there was a thriving connection between Emesa and Elagabalus, the sun, also referred to as Helios or Sol. The ancestry Heliodorus claims for himself develops his association with Helios. He is τῶν ἀφ' Ἡλίου γένος, 'one of the clan of the descendants of the Sun'. Heliodorus is establishing a strong personal tie with Helios. This description seems to indicate that Heliodorus was a member of the family which supplied Elagabalus with his priests. Was Heliodorus a priest himself? Some have thought so.²⁰ It is also tempting to speculate on Heliodorus' relationship with the imperial family, but it does not seem to be a point on which he wishes to give us any information. Rather, it is his relationship with Helios which is demonstrably of paramount importance to him. Heliodorus' own name, which he saves for the very last word of his text, identifies him with the god again; he is literally Helios-given. So, the way Heliodorus describes his place of origin, his family and his final revelation of his name are all inescapably and powerfully redolent of a bond with the god of the sun.

The date at which Heliodorus wrote is unfortunately not yet a matter of general agreement.²¹ One argument favours a fourth-century date, based primarily on an alleged dependency of Heliodorus' account of the siege of Syene, 9.3-11, on two speeches of Julian's describing the siege of Nisibis by Shapur in A.D. 350.²² John Morgan has varied the argument slightly by claiming that Heliodorus and Julian are both independent witnesses to the siege of Nisibis, thus dating Heliodorus' text to A.D. 350-70.²³ In a recent article, Christopher Lightfoot has weighed these two linked

¹⁸ 1.61.1-2, recording events of c. A.D. 272.

¹⁹ As Millar says, *The Roman Near East*, pp. 172-3, this is 'an item of great importance, if true. ... Rightly or wrongly, therefore, the author says that the temple of the Sun-god in Rome was a borrowing made by Aurelianus from Emesa'. Cf. *SHA Aurelianus* 35.3.

²⁰ See Karl Kerényi, *Die griechisch-orientalische Romanliteratur in religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung* (Tübingen, 1927), pp. 47-54, and 250 ff; and Simon Swain n. 1 and p. 14 with n. 60 in his excellent chapter, 'Greek novel and Greek identity', from his forthcoming book on the Second Sophistic. I am grateful to have been given advance access to his material.

²¹ On the paucity of evidence for the dating of the other Greek novels, see Bowie and Harrison, 'The romance of the novel', p. 160.

²² It was first advanced by M. Van der Valk, 'Remarques sur la date des Éthiopiennes d'Héliodore', *Mnemosyne* 3, Ser. 9 (1941), pp. 97-100, and has been viewed favourably as recently as 1982 by Gerald N. Sandy, 'Characterization and philosophical decor in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*', *T.A.P.A.* 112 (1982), p. 154.

²³ Morgan, 'History, romance and realism', p. 226 and n. 15.

arguments and found them unconvincing.²⁴ Julian's accounts have panegyric not historical purposes. They are full of glorious invention, in the best epic and tragic styles. Lightfoot plausibly concludes that the literary skills of Heliodoros provided inspiration for Julian, not *vice versa*.²⁵ Arguments for a third-century date are increasingly popular. Ewen Bowie rightly points out that 'a location in the 220s or 230s would strengthen the case for linking [Heliodoros] with the imperial house that sprang from Emesa and the religious propaganda that has been credited to it. ... the preoccupations and presentation of Heliodoros seem too close to those of Achilles [Tatius] and Philostratus to make anything later than the 230s seem probable'.²⁶ Jean Pouilloux has compared Heliodoros' detailed picture of Delphi in books two to four with surviving inscriptional and archaeological evidence. His conclusions have implications for dating the text. Of Theagenes' Thessalian embassy to Delphi he writes, 'Pour correspondre si parfaitement à ce que nous savons de Delphes et de la société delphique au II^e siècle, ou au III^e siècle commençant, un tel épisode ne doit pas avoir été écrit à une époque plus tardive'.²⁷

The temporal setting for Heliodoros' story is rather different. In Chariton's and Longus' novels the dramatic environment might be characterized, loosely, as classical. In Xenophon and Achilles Tatius (as in the Latin novels) it is recognizably closer to contemporary conditions. The genre of the novel gave scope for choice, and writing in the early to mid third century (let alone by the fourth century), Heliodoros would have been aware of both options. He adopted a classicizing approach, recreating the Greek world of the late sixth and early fifth centuries B.C.: Alexandria has not yet been founded, Egypt is in thrall to Persian power. The setting Heliodoros creates for his story is an important indicator of his influences and purposes as a writer.

A fictional romance set in the distant past – how promising a prospect can this really be for an historian? Unlike Artemidoros, Pausanias and Plutarch, Heliodoros does not immediately seem to be writing about the present day, or his own experience. Does this present problems both for using *An Ethiopian Story* as evidence for gender and the divine in Heliodoros' own time, and for his novel making a coherent whole with the texts at the heart of my previous three studies? There are a number of features to Heliodoros' text which make it very much a product of its time,

²⁴ Christopher S. Lightfoot, 'Facts and fiction – the third siege of Nisibis (A.D. 350)', *Historia* 37 (1988), pp. 105-25.

²⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 117-23. His arguments build on those of T. Szepessy, for example in 'Die "Neudatierung" des Heliodoros und die Belagerung von Nisibis', *Eirene: Actes de la XII^{ème} conférence internationale d'études classiques* (1972) and elsewhere.

²⁶ Ewen Bowie, 'The Greek novel', *C.H.C.L.* I, p. 696.

²⁷ Jean Pouilloux, 'Delphes dans les *Éthiopiennes* d' Héliodore; la réalité dans la fiction', *Journal des Savants* 1983, p. 286.

and therefore a fair piece of evidence for that time's perceptions of gender and religion.

It is crucial to think about the sort of Greek world Heliodoros portrays, beyond its chronological location in the events of Greek history. We could expect him to be setting the scene particularly carefully as he opens his first book, to orient the reader. The book begins as a party of bandits discovers a young woman tending an injured young man on a beach strewn with newly slain bodies. These two are Charikleia and Theagenes, although Heliodoros does not reveal their identities at this juncture. When Charikleia stands before the bandits, the rattling of her weapons is imagined in terms reminiscent of those of Apollo, *Iliad* 1.46-7. Heliodoros' description of the marsh homes of the Herdsmen, 1.5-7, incorporates details from Herodotos' account of the lake-dwelling Paionians, 5.16, and at 1.7 a long phrase is taken from Demosthenes, *Against Meidias* 21.138. Within several sentences of their meeting at 1.8, Knemon is quoting Euripides at Theagenes, *Medeia* 1317 (and it is more often Euripides than Aeschylus or Sophocles that Heliodoros chooses). Epic, history, oratory, drama – Heliodoros covers a good range of Greek literature in his first few pages, and continues in the same way. His past is above all a literary past, mediated as it is through other Greek writers.

Heliodoros' prolific and knowledgeable use of Greek literature is a key characteristic of writers during Greece's cultural renaissance of the second and third centuries – Artemidoros, Pausanias and Plutarch all display it, for example. Stylistic features place Heliodoros firmly in this period.²⁸ His grammar and syntax parallel the practice of Lucian, Aelian, Philostratus: his sentences are often long, complex and carefully balanced. His vocabulary frequently includes the unusual and the erudite. The organization of the narrative, as will be apparent from the summary below, is incredibly complicated, a triumph in sophisticated and self-aware writing.

A further shared characteristic of some Second Sophistic texts is their treatment, or rather non-treatment, of Rome. Like Artemidoros, Pausanias, and Plutarch in his Pythian dialogues and *Isis and Osiris* (but not of course in all his works), Heliodoros writes within ostentatiously Greek parameters. Strikingly, both second and third-century 'fact' (Artemidoros, Pausanias, Plutarch) and 'fiction' (Heliodoros) operate with the same self-imposed scope.²⁹ Heliodoros looks firmly

²⁸ Sandy, *Heliodorus*, traces them in his fifth chapter, 'Embellishing the story'.

²⁹ Of course, many writers of the Second Sophistic were not mainland Greeks at all. Pausanias, from Asia Minor, visits Greece and celebrates the origins of Greek culture. Heliodoros, with his self-classification as a Phoenician from Emesa, has a still more complicated relation to the Greek world. Glen Bowersock and Christopher Jones were the first to surmise that Heliodoros was an Arab, since Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* 2.32 mentions an Arab of that name. It may even be that Heliodoros had a Roman career. Ewen Bowie speculates that 'if Heliodorus of Homs is the same as the sophist Heliodorus the Arab in Philostratus, he ... went west, holding the post of *advocatus fisci* and living in retirement near Rome', 'The readership of Greek novels in the ancient world', in James Tatum (ed.), *The Search for the Ancient Novel* (Baltimore and London, 1994), p. 450. But otherwise how

east, displaying the Greek cultural self-absorption that is so typical of writers of the Second Sophistic.

Heliodoros' intended readership surely bears on his intentions in writing. For whom then was he writing? The romantic theme of Greek novels has tempted some recent writers into deceptive comparisons with the modern world. The novels published so prolifically by Mills and Boon and Harlequin have been offered as parallels, because of their strong sense of genre, their stereotypicality.³⁰ The small number of surviving papyrus fragments of Greek novels do not suggest anything like a Mills and Boon mass readership, or indeed production, of ancient romances.³¹ The reader profile is crucially different. As has been persuasively argued, Greek novels were aimed at an élite market. Writes Ewen Bowie, 'I am not persuaded ... that the *typical* reader envisaged by Chariton or Xenophon (far less than the sophistic novelists) was significantly different from that we assume for the *Lives* and *Moralia* of Plutarch, for the historians, or for Lucian, or the sort of people who attended lectures and epideictic performances by philosophers and sophists'.³²

So if *An Ethiopian Story* is not a romantic opiate for the people, for whom was it designed? Bryan Reardon has seen the novels' typical expulsion of lovers from their native city, and their perilous return, as odysseys undertaken by the Hellenistic soul, lost and isolated in an increasingly Roman world.³³ Individuals were to find their salvation and comfort in the private bond of marriage, not the changing and uncertain public world. More recently, after a book's worth of arguments devoted to demonstrating the sexual symmetry of love relationships in the novels, David Konstan has concluded that marriage in the novels is essentially 'a matter of private attachment rather than a ... function of civic identity'.³⁴ But as shall be argued further below (section V), to treat marriage as a personal union alone is a serious misunderstanding. Marriage partakes of the wider community structures in which it is contracted: Charikleia and Theagenes may fly the constraints of social expectations but crucially they also return and are reintegrated into the community, no longer two

informative is the label of Arab? Millar would rather say that, 'It is no use our asserting that the Emesenes, or their leading families, "were" really "Arabs" or "Phoenicians" or "Greeks" All three descriptions are possible,' *The Roman Near East*, p. 306.

³⁰ Most recent is David Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry: love in the ancient novel and related genres* (Princeton, 1994), particularly his fifth chapter, 'Modern novels: the division of desire'.

³¹ Susan A. Stephens conducts some statistical analyses of numbers of novel fragments found, 'Who read Ancient Novels?', in Tatum (ed.), *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, pp. 409-16. 'The conclusion seems to me inescapable that the novels were not popular with the denizens of Greco-Roman Egypt Christian or otherwise', p. 414.

³² Ewen Bowie, 'The readership of Greek novels in the ancient world', in Tatum (ed.), *The Search for the Ancient Novel*, p. 441, and p. 448 too. Bowie also argues against the idea (sometimes well-intentioned, sometimes derogatory) that women were the intended readers of the novels, pp. 436-40. All ancient books would have been expensive to own, and the novels require a highly educated audience for their extensive literary allusions to be appreciated fully

³³ Reardon, 'The Greek novel', *Phoenix* 23 (1969), pp. 55-73.

³⁴ Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry*, p. 226.

individuals with a private pledge to one another but a universally recognized married couple. Indeed, the novels are less about individual isolation, and much more about communal values, and urban identity. Cities of the Greek East positively flourished in the first to third centuries A.D., just as Emesa did. The élite members of cities, such as perhaps were Heliodoros' family, were actively involved and in control in their home cities, despite burgeoning Roman careers. So Heliodoros seems to me to be writing very much for readers in his own image, members of the local, influential, urban élite (just the sort of people who could be expected to afford the high purchase price of a book). Heliodoros, then, writes for the same readers as Artemidoros, Pausanias, Plutarch. Their world, their preoccupations, are addressed. Heliodoros' novel is therefore a valid piece to treat alongside my previous texts.

An élite readership certainly has implications for Heliodoros' presentation and interpretation of his material. As Simon Swain comments astutely, 'The answer to the question of the novel's origin lies not in reading it as a reflection of unhappiness, individual or otherwise, but in seeing it as another outlet for the cultural ideals and formulas of the élite, as another expression of their cultural hegemony'³⁵ What Swain does not make so clear is the form he thinks this cultural hegemony takes. I have already demonstrated Heliodoros' strong familial and civic links to the god of the sun as the one salient point he thinks we need to know. The élite of other cities were equally if differently a main force behind the religious life of those cities; as my previous chapters have surely proved, religion was a vital force in Greek culture in Roman times. It is, I feel, an eminently reasonable conclusion that Heliodoros' text should reflect and explore the religious preoccupations that played so large a part in his own and his readers' lives.

An Ethiopian Story is a work with all the traits of the Second Sophistic – its emphasis on Greece, notably the Greek past, its virtual exclusion of Rome, its linguistic and stylistic habits. How then can an historian hope to use the text for evidence about the environment in which it was written? A first option is a search for factual details about the world of the author. This is possible to a certain degree, but there are difficulties in attempting to disentangle fact from fiction. How much of what Heliodoros says is an undistorted reflection of his contemporary experience, and how much is shaped to fit the demands of his plot or literary conventions? And even if a careful reader should succeed in excerpting actual fact from the text, how is he or she to go about evaluating such fact? All facts need an interpretative structure, and the danger of isolated facts is that they will be moulded into a framework of the reader's own imagining.

³⁵ Swain, 'Greek novel and Greek identity', p. 7.

Encouragingly, John Morgan has examined *realia* in Heliodoros' novel in a properly critical way. Too often, he notes, the purpose of *realia* in a novel is not examined, and this is the question he addresses for *An Ethiopian Story*.³⁶ Painstakingly, Morgan demonstrates that Heliodoros is a 'conscious realist', that he adopts a convincing and extensive historiographical pose as a writer. For example, geographical and ethnographical details are derived from well-known Greek literary sources and would therefore fit in with educated people's perceptions of the truth in these matters.³⁷ Morgan's focus and hence his conclusions are purely literary. He diagnoses that the function of Heliodoros' realism in the narrative strategy of the novel is to produce 'intensity of experience for the reader'.³⁸ Interestingly, he concludes, 'realism implies a certain kind of response from the reader which involves equating the events of the novel with those of the real world – that is to say, an intensely emotional, sympathetic response'.³⁹ This equation between the novel and the real world through the device of realism is surely very significant. Thus it is possible to develop historical approaches to the text in profitable conjunction with literary ones.

I believe Morgan's conclusions can be drawn out further. A writer who aims at a realistic gloss colludes with the reader in a joint estimation of how things are. If this works for factual details, it must also work with what is less tangible. Writer and reader in fact share an entire mindset. Heliodoros' story may appear to be set in the past, but it addresses the concerns of the present. The lack of an explicit contemporary setting in *An Ethiopian Story*, for comparison with my earlier studies, is of no moment. Whereas Heliodoros' recreation of the sixth and fifth-century world may well be a mix of past remembrance and literary *topoi*, the emphases and perceptions that pattern them must be thoroughly modern. The events and motives which form Heliodoros' *An Ethiopian Story* use contemporary cultural priorities and expectations. The themes of the novel, dwelling on the relationships between men and women, between humans and their gods, between home and abroad, Greeks and strangers are themes found in the Greek past yet still very much current preoccupations. Bowie and Harrison comment that the novels 'undoubtedly mirror the contemporary importance of religious ideas and modes of thought'.⁴⁰ They do not

³⁶ Morgan, 'History, romance, and realism in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodoros', p. 234.

³⁷ Jack Winkler, 'The mendacity of Kalasiris and the narrative strategy of Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*', *Y.C.S.* 27 (1982), p. 135, objects that if Heliodoros had really wanted to create historiographical verisimilitude, he would have written in the first person, as do Herodian, Polybios and Herodotos. But surely Heliodoros can use certain known literary devices to lend an air of realism without having to adopt the complete persona of an historian?

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 260.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 262.

⁴⁰ Bowie and Harrison, 'The romance of the novel', p. 166.

indicate what these might be, and this is one of the important questions this chapter is designed to consider.

As a novelist, Heliodoros provides unique potential for exploring his particular perceptions. Artemidoros, Pausanias, Plutarch all write from some factual basis. Heliodoros is not limited to putting forward his interpretation of the facts: he controls them. His novel is set in Greece and Egypt – both well-known, at least literarily, to a Greek-speaking readership – and also in Ethiopia. From Homeric times, the Ethiopians had the reputation of being 'the farthestmost of men' (*Odyssey* 1.23). And even by the third century A.D., Ethiopia was still a largely a foreign land. So Heliodoros can use existing ideas about Ethiopia whilst also adapting them to his own purposes. To illustrate this, Heliodoros' development of the picture of Ethiopia in, for instance, Strabo's *Geography*, is instructive. Ethiopia is of course for Heliodoros the land of the sun, as it had been in Greek perceptions from the fifth century B.C. onwards (Strabo quotes Aeschylus and Euripides on the subject, at 1.2.27). And its rulers, priests of the sun and moon, are at the heart of his novel's dynamic.

Strabo (17.2.1-3) describes both kings and priests in Ethiopia in his description of the people and their customs. 'In general they [the Ethiopians] regard their benefactors and royal personages as gods; of these the kings as the common saviours and guardians of all.' Strabo says that Meroe is the royal seat, and there are worshipped Herakles, Pan, Isis and 'some other barbaric god'. Furthermore, 'In Meroe the highest rank was in ancient times held by the priests, who indeed would give orders even to the king, sometimes ordering him through a messenger to die, and would appoint another in his stead'. Strabo's description contains all the elements which Heliodoros uses in his version of Ethiopia – a close relationship, even equation, between king and god, worship at Meroe, the importance of priests in the kingdom and their connection with the king. Noticeably, however, Heliodoros changes these themes – to the male and female rulers, themselves priests of Helios and Selene, chief gods of the Ethiopians. Now Strabo is only a reasonable example of what Heliodoros might have known from existing literature about Ethiopia. But strikingly the similarities and difficulties reveal Heliodoros' adoption and adaptation of themes to suit the purposes and preoccupations of his narrative – the priest-god relationship in particular.

Before progressing to an analysis of the text, it is essential to have my guiding questions firmly established. There is no need to lament insufficient attention to the Greek novels by modern scholars. Much has been published recently. Unlike my previous texts, sophisticated methodologies for studying such texts have already been

developed are perhaps even over-sophisticated.⁴¹ Particularly of interest has been the treatment of sex, and gender, within the novels.⁴² Other, often rather earlier, work gave thought to religion in the texts.⁴³ There does however seem to be a gap in an otherwise crowded market. It is the essential question which shapes my thesis, namely in what ways do gender and the divine connect? As the quotations with which I opened should show, love between boy and girl flourishes in a divine frame. The relations between men, women and their gods are prominent and striking themes in Heliodoros. This chapter must in part aim to bring together work on sex in the novels and work on religion in the novels, to see if a new and more holistic picture emerges when gender and religion are considered as integral to one another.

This final study of Heliodoros serves to develop some of the key themes traced out in the chapters on Artemidoros, Pausanias and Plutarch. These previous chapters now themselves set the agenda for this study. They have revealed the religious codes and concerns of the second and third centuries A.D. Priests, dreams, oracles – the whole area of communication between divine and mortal has proved to be of great concern. And of course of paramount importance has been the religiously-mediated definition of male and female. How does Heliodoros manipulate the cultural baggage of his times? I will examine the use he makes of current religious ideas for his own narrative purposes. So this study should function as a suitable continuation of the foregoing chapters. My analysis of the text will be divided into the following sections: II. Religion in the novel; III. The gods; IV. Human relations with the gods; and V Chastity and piety. A summary of the plot is provided in Appendix One.

II. Religion in the novel

This century has seen two broad and divergent positions emerge on the meaning of religion in the Greek novels. At a time when the novels were viewed by scholars as at best lightweight, at worst slightly sordid, a bold theory was formulated that elevated these pieces of fiction into an altogether higher realm. Writing in 1927, Karl Kerényi argued that the novels should be understood as sacred literature; the

⁴¹ An example of this may be Winkler, 'The mendacity of Kalasiris and the narrative strategy of Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*'.

⁴² For instance, Simon Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginity: ancient erotic fiction and the history of sexuality* (Cambridge, 1995), the significance of whose work for the study of sexuality in the ancient world is well pointed out by James Davidson, *London Review of Books*, 19 October 1995, pp. 21-2; J. J. Winkler, 'The education of Chloe: hidden injuries of sex', in *The Constraints of Desire* (New York and London, 1990); Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry*; Egger, 'Women and marriage in the Greek novel'; H. H. O. Chalk, 'Eros and the Lesbian pastorals of Longos', *J.H.S.* 80 (1960), pp. 32-51.

⁴³ See section II below.

characters and events in the stories represented stages along the road of initiation into particular mystery cults.⁴⁴ The priestly clothes of Charikleia in books one and ten, for example, he connects with rituals in the Egyptian worship of Isis.⁴⁵ For Kerényi, Heliodoros' story is bound up with the religious patterns and beliefs of the Egyptians, to the extent that he prefaces his entire book with Kalasiris' observation of 2.27.3, that 'Greeks find all Egyptian lore and legend irresistibly attractive'. Some thirty years later, Reinhold Merkelbach wrote further on the novels' function as mystery texts in his *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike*.⁴⁶ The basic thesis of these two scholars is exciting, but inherently unconvincing. Certain proof is simply unobtainable since readers must detect significant names and episodes themselves, and provide their own interpretations; while mystery cults still remain so much of a mystery to us, this exercise is doubly difficult.

Such a strong, definite idea about how religion works in the novels has inevitably stimulated a backlash of opinion. Very broadly, the movement could be characterized as the swing from an overly religious interpretation to one that is not religious enough. The hallmark of the counter-attack is its insistence on the purely local function of religious devices, its reluctance to explore the possible wider significance of the use of religion. John Morgan, for example, consistently downplays religious influences or motivation in favour of the wholly human. Heliodoros frequently provides alternative, or perhaps better, dual, explanations of events – one divine and one human. Morgan writes, 'Heliodoros is at pains to leave nothing unexplained or unmotivated. While a shadowy level of divine planning – ἡ ἐκ θεῶν οἰκονομία, as Kalasiris calls it [4.9.1] – remains, it is overlain throughout by another, human and rationalistic, level of motivation'.⁴⁷ But if the divine layer of explanation is unimportant, why does Heliodoros repeatedly feel the need to include it? Morgan's basic argument must be that the story is essentially human, not divine. But if divine or religious motivation is removed from the text, does it still make sense? Is there rationale without religion? Can the supernatural really be 'an explanation of the last resort', as Morgan claims?⁴⁸ •

Morgan's recent reiteration of his view is tellingly formulated. 'I cannot find any consistency in the attribution of events to non-human agencies, and am inclined

⁴⁴ Karl Kerényi, *Die griechisch-orientalische Romanliteratur in religionsgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung*.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 144-6.

⁴⁶ Reinhold Merkelbach, *Roman und Mysterium in der Antike* (Munich and Berlin, 1962), pp. 234-98 particularly on Heliodoros. In the face of sustained criticism, Merkelbach has not relinquished his views, producing in 1988 a study of Longus and Dionysiac symbolism, *Die Hirten des Dionysos: Mysterien der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Munich and Berlin, 1988).

⁴⁷ Morgan, 'History, romance, and realism in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodoros', p. 255. Gerald Sandy's view seems to value divine and human more equally. 'The *Aethiopica* is a complex blend of divinely orchestrated and naturally motivated events presented from multiple points of view without linear chronological progression', *Heliodorus*, p. 41.

⁴⁸ Morgan, 'History, romance, and realism in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodoros', p. 230.

to think the whole divine apparatus a literary device to give the plot a sense of direction, purpose, and eventual closure, rather than a statement of belief intended to instruct its readers in the ways of a god.⁴⁹ Similarly, Gerald Sandy has a scant three page section on religion in his book, 'because Heliodorus was ultimately more concerned to tell a good story than to present coherent religious doctrine'.⁵⁰ Both these statements are clearly framed in terms of the 'novels as mystery texts' debate. Since the writers cannot believe in the thesis, religion has been relegated to the place of a humble helpmeet of the plot (Morgan), of a good story (Sandy).

A serious attack on meaningful religion in *An Ethiopian Story* is mounted in Jack Winkler's article, 'The mendacity of Kalasiris and the narrative strategy of Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*'. His emphasis is on the primacy of the narrative, almost the narrative as god. He asks whether there is a philosophical or religious underpinning to the narrative, and, if it exists, whether it is philosophically or religiously meant. In answer, he argues that 'in the *Aithiopika* the only theology to be found is a vague and shifting set of contrasts between provident/malevolent or provident/indifferent. ... these references are not meant philosophically or religiously but rather as reflexive allusions to the novel's own structure of progressive and problematic intelligibility'⁵¹ Once more, the contrast with the Kerényi-Merkelbach axis of opinion could not be clearer.

These arguments developed by Morgan, Sandy and Winkler are valuable for the perspective in which they place the idea that a novel is a mystery text. But it does seem that their view of religion in the novels has been circumscribed within the limits of the debate mapped out by Kerényi and Merkelbach. The question of a coherent religious doctrine is not the only one that can and should be asked. Just because religion serves the plot does not mean it is valueless. Indeed if religious considerations shape the plot, they must have value. It is time to outline a middle way between the two sides of the debate that will take us out of the impasse and allow us to make sense of at least some of the vast quantity of religious material in *An Ethiopian Story*.

A middle way?

There is more to the gods and to religious events than their role in the plot. Summarizing the religion debate, Simon Swain comes to a flat conclusion, 'The novels' interest in religious matters simply reflects the pervasive nature of religion in

⁴⁹ Made in his introduction to his translation of *An Ethiopian Story* in Reardon's *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, p. 351.

⁵⁰ Sandy, *Heliodorus*, p. 54. 'Religion in the *Aethiopica* is an aspect of motivation and plot', p. 55.

⁵¹ Winkler, 'The mendacity of Kalasiris and the narrative strategy of Heliodoros' *Aithiopika*', p. 122.

ancient society at all periods'.⁵² This seems an incurious statement. It should be a matter for excitement that Heliodoros' novel expresses the nature of religion in ancient society – it is not, after all, as if this were something perfectly well understood. How religion pervaded society is a question which begs investigation. Asking it is to treat the text in an historical as well as simply literary way, to have a sense of the historical importance of the part played by religion in the narrative in addition to its literary function.

Attempting to establish a middle way between religion in the novels as a) mystery texts, and b) merely a literary device, provides a methodology for approaching a 'literary' text in an historical manner. It facilitates an approach to the text that is neither wholly, traditionally, literary or historical. It is argued that while the novels do not represent actual mystery religions, the religious devices contained in them are not used as so much fictional filler, thereby being rendered effectively meaningless. Heliodoros' use of religion can reveal something of his understanding of its function in defining male and female in society. The middle way establishes an approach that fits between the conventional categories of literature and history. It contextualizes the novel whilst offering an analysis of the text faithful to the structures and arguments of the text itself (which is no less than the approach explored and developed throughout this thesis). Such a reading of the text should rescue it from the current orthodoxy of a purely literary approach to the novel.

An Ethiopian Story should prove susceptible to analysis of individual religious motifs, notably the priesthood. But because these are motifs found within the framework of a story, there is hope for still more than this. Roger Beck has identified the most tempting element of the mystery text thesis. 'If', he says, 'the theory is at all correct, the novels should yield up clues not merely about various isolated tenets of the mysteries but also about their sacred *structures*.'⁵³ A novel is a coherent and integrated narrative, and the part religion plays must partake of that intelligible order. Heliodoros' *An Ethiopian Story* should be able to offer us more than isolated religious ideas, it should be able to offer a picture of how religion works in a social context. The opportunity offered for system analysis is invaluable.

Heliodoros' presentation of his story encourages the search for the interplay of religion and gender in Greek life. His narrative is theatrical, and not only in the sense of its being immediate and entertaining. Consistently throughout the novel, Heliodoros makes us feel as much audience as reader; we are watching actors in

⁵² Swain, 'Greek novel and Greek identity', n. 21.

⁵³ Roger Beck, 'Soteriology, the mysteries, and the ancient novel: Iamblichus *Babyloniaca* as a test-case', pp. 527-40 in Ugo Bianchi and Maarten J. Vermaseren (eds.), *La Soteriologia del culti orientali nell' Impero Romano* (Leiden, 1982), p. 527.

shifting scenes. Technical terms from the theatre proliferate, such as σκηνή, stage, δράμα, drama, and μηχανή, a mechanical device for special effects.⁵⁴ The striking opening tableau of Theagenes and Charikleia alive amidst the wreckage of corpses and feast is described as τοιοῦτον θέατρον λησταῖς Αἰγυπτίοις, 'this theatrical show for the Egyptian bandits', 1.1.6. Both Theagenes and Charikleia see themselves as characters in a play, more often a tragedy than a comedy. Theagenes, for example, is driven to exclaim, 'To wage this campaign against us is heaven's sport, as if our lives were a drama played on stage for its pleasure', 5.6.3. By the next book, Charikleia's despair will no longer compare with mere tragedy, as she reproaches destiny and the gods, saying, 'The drama in which you have cast us is infinitely protracted, more tragic than anything on stage', 6.8.5.

Every play must have an author. Who then stage-manages the dramatic tableaux, who directs the vexed course of Theagenes' and Charikleia's romance? On a simplistic level, that person is Heliodoros. But does he say as much? No. In each of the three examples quoted above, the situations are divinely orchestrated. The deity, ὁ δαίμων, created the opening scene. Theagenes feels they are pawns in a game played by heaven, and Charikleia blames destiny and the gods. The same pattern holds true for many further instances. Shadi Bartsch has made a good study of Heliodoros' theatrical leanings. She notes that, 'Effacing himself as much as possible, he constantly suggests that the stage-managing of these spectacles should be attributed to a divine will or impulse; this is his refrain from his first description of a spectacle to his last'.⁵⁵

The illusion of the action of the novel being that of a play is an important one. The deeply religious nature of classical Greek theatre entails that a sense of the gods both structures the action of a play and imbues it with meaning. The events of the play are formulated within an explicitly religious context. To be a character in a play is to operate in a religious environment: Theagenes and Charikleia are quite literally acting religiously.⁵⁶ The theatre was the venue where traditionally the Greeks displayed their religiously-mediated social codes. It is the place where cultural identity is perhaps most strongly apparent. The divine theatre that is *An Ethiopian Story* should be an excellent place for discerning interconnections between gender and the divine.

⁵⁴ For example, Charikleia declares that Thisbe's startling arrival in Egypt from Greece resembles some sort of theatrical special effect, καθάπερ ἐκ μηχανῆς, 2.8.3.

⁵⁵ Shadi Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel: the reader and the role of description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius* (Princeton, 1989). The relevant chapter is her fourth, entitled 'Descriptions of spectacles: the reader as audience, the author as playwright', esp. pp. 129-36, the quotation coming from p. 140.

⁵⁶ There are strong parallels, it seems, between acting and performing religious rituals or acting in a religious way. Compare, for example, the extremely theatrical behaviour of Lucian's false prophet, Alexander.

III. The gods

One argument peddled by the proponents of 'religion as a literary device' runs along the lines that there is simply too much religion in the novels to take it seriously, to discover any religiously meaningful pattern to its presence.⁵⁷ I doubt the validity of this argument and no more so than in the case of Apollo. Rather it seems to me that the actions and attributes of Apollo build a framework for the events of *An Ethiopian Story*. The text is insistently Apollo-centric. Conceptually and in immanent form through dreams and oracles the god shapes the novel. Introducing his translation of *An Ethiopian Story*, Morgan writes that, 'It is very hard either to find a role for the sun god in the economy of the plot, or to trace any connection between the theology and rather strict morality of the narrative and those of the cult of the sun'.⁵⁸ Whilst his second statement might well be true, the first is surprising. How then to investigate it? The end of a novel, especially such a tricky one as *An Ethiopian Story*, is where all conflicts and tensions and puzzles are resolved. It is the final revelation of the truth. So it is the best place to start to look for the role of Apollo in 'the economy of the plot'.

The identity of Apollo is given its fullest expression in book ten. The traditional Greek assimilation of Apollo to the sun god Helios is made explicit by Charikles at 10.36.3. Talking to Hydaspes, Charikles describes Apollo as 'one and the same as Helios, the god of your fathers'. A typical feature of the Greek novels is the eventual return of the fugitive lovers to the home town where they originally fell in love. Konstan thinks he detects a break in this pattern with the flight of Theagenes and Charikleia from Greece to Ethiopia, dubbing *An Ethiopian Story* unique in this respect.⁵⁹ But Theagenes and Charikleia experience a home-coming that is deeper than a merely physical place. They met at a ceremony conducted at the shrine of Apollo in Delphi, and they are married at a festival for Helios in Meroe. In other words, they are united at their spiritual home, in the presence of the sun god. They are transformed from servants of Apollo and Artemis to priests of Helios and Selene. Their home-coming brings them full circle – their beginning with Apollo and ending with Helios is one and the same spiritual place – the two gods are identical. So the

⁵⁷ In Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, pp. 350-1, Morgan writes, 'The *Aithiopika* is also a very religious, or rather religiose, text. References to supernatural agencies of various kinds abound ... I cannot find any consistency in the attribution of events to nonhuman agencies and am inclined to think the whole divine apparatus a literary device to give the plot a sense of direction, purpose, and eventual closure, rather than a statement of belief intended to instruct its readers in the ways of god. It is striking that virtually the whole plot is motivated sufficiently at a human level.'

⁵⁸ Morgan, p. 351 in Reardon (ed.), *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*.

⁵⁹ Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry*, p. 91.

figure of the sun god as Apollo and Helios has a crucial role in initiating and concluding the plot of the novel.⁶⁰

The relationship between Helios and Heliodoros also merits some thought. Heliodoros' final self-identification ties him closely to Helios via his place of origin and his ancestry, as seen in section I. So what then is Heliodoros' connection to the role of the divine in his narrative? As the novel draws to its end, Heliodoros provides an interesting interpretation of the joyful reaction of the onlookers when Persinna confirms to Hydaspes that Theagenes is indeed Charikleia's husband. In one of his characteristic human/divine dual explanations, Heliodoros comments that the Ethiopian people either deduce what has happened from earlier events (most of the proceedings having been conducted in, for them, the foreign language of Greek), 'or else perhaps they had been brought to a realization of the truth by the same divine force that had staged this whole drama', 10.38.3.

The significance of Heliodoros' conclusion has been variously interpreted. Shadi Bartsch contends that the divinity behind Heliodoros' plot is presented to the reader as an obvious analogy for the author himself.⁶¹ So is the sun god no more than a mask for Heliodoros, literally gift-of-Helios? Does the analogy between deity and writer point only to the god-like power of the author to control the events of his narrative? Jack Winkler makes a rather different point, writing that, 'The religious re-signification of the plot is not religiously meant, but is rather part of Heliodoros' playful exploration of popular narrative and its audience'.⁶² Winkler's interpretation of the story's ending is on a par with his irreligious interpretation of the novel as a whole. His argument for this conclusion runs as follows, 'It is a cliché, and an effective one, from the popular stage that "the Real Truth was More Astonishing than we realized". The sophistication of Heliodoros' use of this cliché is that he makes it refer to the form itself of his novel, for what we learn at the end (or almost the end) is that where we thought Heliodoros was writing a romance, the Real Truth is that Heliodoros is telling the story of how the gods devised a romance. He is not a romancer but a mere scribe of the divine melodramatist'.⁶³ As Bowie and Harrison note, it is important to consider the destructive effects of Winkler's interpretation of Heliodoros' playfulness on arguments for serious and reliable religious content.⁶⁴ But surely the ascription of Heliodoros' narrative to Helios need not negate a deeper religious significance to their connection?

⁶⁰ And whilst Theagenes' parents are absent from the novel, Charikleia returns 'home' to Meroe in the sense that she was born there, her natural parents live there, and her adoptive father Charikles also arrives there.

⁶¹ Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel*, p. 164.

⁶² Winkler, 'The mendacity of Kalasiris', p. 155.

⁶³ *ibid.*, pp. 154-5.

⁶⁴ Bowie and Harrison, 'The romance of the novel', p. 173.

Heliodoros is not making some Hesiod-like claim to be writing under divine inspiration. It is more that he is saying that his story is religiously sound. It is for religious reasons that his story takes the form it does. So if religion, most often in the shape of the sun god, is the reason why things happen the way they do, then we should be able to deduce something about Heliodoros' understanding of religion and its impact on the actions of his characters. Apollo-Helios provides a religious framework within which the events of the novel are conducted. Without this religious framework, the events would make no sense at all. Religion gives meaning to the actors and events of the novel.

Artemis plays a surprisingly subdued role in a novel which depends on religious virginity. She is the god to whom Charikleia has vowed a perpetual virgin service as priest, 2.33.4. She provides the role-model for Charikleia's rejection of men and marriage. Such a rejection can only have a divine archetype; it was not an option available in human Greek society, as demonstrated by Charikles' distress and his appeal for help from Kalasiris, 2.33.6-7, 'Make her realize she is a woman now ... do not condemn me to live out my life without children, without comfort, without heirs'. But Charikleia wants to be like her god, to behave as her god does – the ultimate form of worship. This makes her virginity self-enforced, a conscious religious choice. It is not a condition forced upon her for the benefit of the god, as for example Plutarch's Pythia was kept chaste for the better communication of Apollo's divine messages.

Nevertheless although Charikleia is a dedicated priest of Artemis, through the course of the novel we develop a much stronger sense of her relationship to Apollo. Artemis can be invoked as the god of virginity, like the gods of love and marriage, as in Theagenes' oath of 4.18.6, but that is the extent of her presence. She remains the divine exemplar of virginity, not an active participant in the action. The male god is the guiding force behind the narrative, not the female.

The relationship between Apollo and Artemis is significant for the relationship Theagenes and Charikleia seem to bear to one another for most of the novel. Just as Apollo and Artemis are brother and sister, so Theagenes and Charikleia frequently claim to be siblings. Partly, this relationship is paraded in self-defence, to ward off Arsake's destructive jealousy of rivals to her love for Theagenes, for example (7.13.1). And partly, in a world where friendship between adult, unmarried men and women is not a viable option, the relationship of brother and sister is the only model available to Theagenes and Charikleia if they wish to explain their situation of sexually innocent intimacy.

But also, and importantly, in part the claim to a brother-sister bond is an accurate reflection of the nature of the relationship between Theagenes and Charikleia. As servants of Apollo and Artemis respectively, they seem to partake in

the relationship of their gods to one another. When finally they become priests of the Helios and Selene in Ethiopia the brother-sister element is still preserved in the gods whom they now serve. And further, is the brother-sister relationship continued in their marriage? As readers we never witness (or even find a hint of) Theagenes and Charikleia enjoying the long-preserved delights of marital sexual union. Their story ends as their marriage is pronounced by Hydaspes and the players depart not for bed, but for further religious ceremonies within the city. For us, Theagenes and Charikleia are preserved as perpetual virgins. Theirs has been a story of chastity before marriage, and remains a story of chastity within marriage, as far as Heliodoros allows us to follow them.⁶⁵

Beyond named gods, it should be noted how often occur more generalized references to the divine. τό θεῖον, ὁ δαίμων and so on crowd the narrative. The gods are so frequently invoked and with such differing attitudes that it is hard to make out one overall attitude to the gods. Even Theagenes and Charikleia, the sincerity of whose religious belief is not in doubt, can at different times both trust the gods and despair of them too.⁶⁶ As narrator, Heliodoros can speculate that it was destiny's will that the unpleasant Thermouthis should die of a viper's bite, μοιρῶν τάχα βουλήσει πρὸς οὐκ ἀνάρμοστον τοῦ τρόπου τὸ τέλος καταστρέψας, 2.20.2. Yet he can also describe Knemon's conviction that Thisbe was still alive as the playfulness of τι ... δαιμόνιον, a supernatural power 'whose habit it is in general to make mock of all human life and use it as its plaything', 5.4.1. In many ways this mixed praise and blame of the gods is encouraging. It has the virtue of realism, and perhaps the actors speak of and to the gods in ways reflecting ordinary usage as Heliodoros knew it. Easier to map more specifically is how humans relate to divine power through prophecy and priesthood.

IV. Human relations with the gods

As in previous chapters, the communication of gods with mortals is a major theme running through the text. Delphi, communication centre *par excellence*, and the two key communication channels of prophecy and priesthood are all prominent in *An Ethiopian Story*. Some of the similarities and differences in Heliodoros' interpretation of these themes in comparison with those of Artemidoros, Pausanias

⁶⁵ In contrast, the consummation of love is the concluding focus of Longus' novel, *Daphnis and Chloe* 4.40.

⁶⁶ For instance, at 8.11.8, Charikleia is prepared to believe that it was by the gods' grace that she was saved from Arsake's fire, although her first soliloquy at 1.8.2 berates Apollo for the punishment she and Theagenes are suffering.

and Plutarch will be pursued in the concluding chapter. For the moment, the concern is to trace out Heliodoros' use of these motifs.

i. Prophecy

Apollo is above all a god who communicates and is communicated with. Kalasiris describes him as 'the god with the greatest powers of prophecy', 4.15.1. In *An Ethiopian Story*, dreams and oracles are the main prophetic media. For Heliodoros, prophecy can serve important narratological functions. Foreknowledge of events can induce an excited expectation in the reader, just as conversely misinterpretation of prophecy can allow unexpected final fulfilment (Thyamis does not marry Charikleia as he interprets his dream of Isis to mean, 1.18.4, but (thinks) he kills her). Misinterpretations can in fact be crucial to the successful ending of the romance. Kalasiris is a past master at this. For instance, he 'corrects' Charikles' accurate interpretation of a frightening dream in which Charikleia is snatched from him by an eagle of Apollo, by arguing that it is her bridegroom who is taking her away, 4.14-15. He thus persuades Charikles to give Charikleia the jewels left with her by Persinna – jewels that will keep Charikleia safe from harm in Arsake's fire and serve as recognition tokens for her parents.⁶⁷

The important question to ask is whether prophecy is ever more than a cunning narrative strategy. The situating of oracles and dreams within the narrative indicates that it is. The Pythia's prophecy about Theagenes and Charikleia, largely ignored by the people of Delphi, 2.35.5, makes it clear from early in the novel that the gods are guiding all to turn out right. Kalasiris' dream of Odysseus, 5.22.1, occupies a significant central place in the narrative, as Marilea Futre Pinheiro argues, 'il occupe une place stratégique dans la structure narrative, tout en renforçant, encore une fois, chez le lecteur, l'idée que, malgré les péripéties intermédiaires, tout s'accomplira d'après un plan prévu depuis le commencement'.⁶⁸ Heliodoros' prominent use and careful placing of prophecy within his text creates a strong sense that the gods are concerned about and involved with human affairs, that what happens in the novel is divinely patterned.

⁶⁷ For further examples see Bartsch, *Decoding the Ancient Novel*, ch. 3, 'Dreams, oracles and oracular dreams: misinterpretation and motivation'.

⁶⁸ Marilea P. Futre Pinheiro, 'Fonctions du surnaturel dans les *Éthiopiennes* d'Héliodore', *Bulletin de l'association Guillaume Budé* 1991, p. 369.

ii. Priesthood

An Ethiopian Story is filled with priests. In Marilea Futre Pinheiro's opinion, indeed, 'Le personnage du "prêtre" est d'importance primordiale dans le fonctionnement du récit'.⁶⁹ Charikles is priest of Apollo at Delphi. Thyamis follows his father Kalasiris as high priest of Isis at Memphis, Egypt. In Ethiopian Meroe, Hydaspes and Persinna serve Helios and Selene respectively and are replaced in these offices by Theagenes and Charikleia. And supremely, of course, Theagenes and Charikleia are servants of Apollo and Artemis, both when they meet at Delphi and throughout the novel.⁷⁰ Some of the themes revealed by the study of Plutarch's Pythian dialogues and *Isis and Osiris* in the previous chapter are again of importance. What is the relation of priestly or prophetic individuals to their god? How do they represent their god? How are priests shown as communicating between humans and their god?

The priesthoods held by several characters within the novel help to build up a picture of how priests should best serve their gods. And in particular the other priests in the novel act as a foil and a model for the behaviour of Charikleia *qua* priest. The correct sexual motives and conditions are especially emphasized. Thyamis is the first priest we meet in book one. He (mis)interprets a dream, which Heliodoros describes as god-sent, to mean that he must marry Charikleia, 1.18.5. He must first claim Charikleia as his own from the common pool of booty and the reasons he gives to his fellow bandits are instructive. Firstly, he vows that he has never misused a woman so we can deduce that he must be a virgin. And Charikleia is to be his wife, not merely a sleeping partner. 'As the priestly caste despises common sex, it is not for bodily pleasure that I have decided she should be mine, but for the continuation of my line', 1.19.7. He is attracted to her by her apparent good birth, her modest expression. 'But, most important, she seems to me to be the priestess of some god. ... I put it to you, my friends: what better match could there be than one between high priest and consecrated priestess?', 1.20.2. The bandits give their enthusiastic assent to his arguments. So Thyamis represents a disciplined approach to sex (for procreation, not pleasure) as an inherent part of his priesthood.⁷¹

In book two, Kalasiris explains his reasons for leaving his high priesthood at Memphis. He fled Memphis to avoid Rhodopis, a sexually predatory and extremely

⁶⁹ Futre Pinheiro, 'Fonctions du surnaturel dans les *Éthiopiennes* d'Héliodore', p. 361.

⁷⁰ For instance, at 2.11 when Knemon happens to mention the shrine of Pytho in telling of Thisbe's death, they both cry out, 'O Pytho! O Delphi!'; at 5.5.4, Theagenes is pleased to carry Charikleia's bow, 'the special attribute of the god they served', φόρτον ἥδιστον ἐκείνω καὶ θεοῦ τοῦ κρατοῦντος ὄπλον οἰκεióτατον.

⁷¹ At 7.2.2-3, we are told that when Thyamis was first high priest, before being banished by Petosiris' machinations, Arsake had seen him and lusted after him but Thyamis had not even noticed her attentions.

tempting Thracian woman ('second in beauty only to Charikleia', 2.25.1). It was not loss of his self-control that Kalasiris feared so much as the risk of offending as a priest. 'I decided not to bring disgrace on the priesthood with which I had grown up, resolved not to defile the gods' temples and precincts', 2.25.3. Kalasiris had had a wife quite lawfully, but widowed he eschewed a sexual liaison because of his priesthood. So from early in the novel these two instances of priesthood present sexual purity as an essential component of being a priest. Thyamis and Kalasiris are both priests of Isis, and the connection which Heliodoros makes – albeit implicitly – between Isis and Artemis is worth noting. He draws the comparison at 1.2.6, where the bandits think Charikleia may be a goddess, Artemis perhaps or Isis. Isis demands strict sexual standards of her priests – they are also the standards to which Charikleia must adhere as priest of Artemis.

Charikles' priesthood of Apollo does not impinge greatly on the reader's notice. As seen above, he receives a dream warning of the imminent snatch of Charikleia but is persuaded out of his justified fears by the smooth arguments of Kalasiris, 4.14-15. His chief virtue lies in his attitude to Charikleia's vowed virginity. Priest as he is himself, he does not support Charikleia in her wish to continue her priesthood. His horrified disapproval points out the unusual nature of Charikleia's ambition.

The chief priesthood is of course Charikleia's. But the close relationship with Apollo of both Charikleia and Theagenes enables some interesting enquiries about the influence gender has. Does gender appear to make a difference in how they serve their god? What does the status of priest mean to Charikleia, and how similar is the relationship she and Theagenes have to Apollo? These are important questions for discerning Heliodoros' perceptions of the interplay between gender and religion.

When considering the relationship that Theagenes and Charikleia have to their gods, Heliodoros' first introduction of the two lovers is striking. The first sight we are granted of Charikleia reveals, 'a creature of such indescribable beauty that one might have taken her for a goddess', 1.2.1. And which goddess is also made plain. Charikleia is crowned with laurel and a quiver hangs from her shoulders – she is the very picture of Artemis. Or is she? The laurel and bow are strongly reminiscent of Apollo as well as Artemis. When Charikleia leaps up to face the bandits at the opening of the novel, they think she might be Artemis or Isis, or at least god-possessed, but Heliodoros depicts her rattling weapons, flashing golden robe and streaming hair in terms which allude to the *Iliad* 1.46-7 description of Apollo. And when Charikleia is delaying Thyamis' plans to marry her, she brings forward her need first to lay down her priesthood, not at a shrine of Artemis but at a shrine of Apollo, 1.22.6.

Divinity is not obviously part of Theagenes' initial description; although wounded, his beauty is 'manly, radiant': the radiance could be divine, but it is not explicitly so. Even when Theagenes is described on his arrival at Delphi as leader of the Thessalian sacred mission 2.34-5, it is his likeness to Achilles, his forebear, that is repeatedly stressed, not any more open divine comparison. So Artemis and Apollo are invoked by Heliodoros in his first introduction of his two main protagonists, and interestingly these divine associations are made with Charikleia rather than Theagenes.

Charikleia's beauty continues to be characterized in divine terms throughout the novel. On her father's gridiron, she appears more like the cult statue of a goddess than a mortal woman, and her beauty is remarked as superhuman, 10.9.3-4. Indeed, in the Greek novels as a whole, analogies between the principal characters and the gods are frequent. Some time ago, Kenneth Scott noted how, 'In the romances of Chariton, Heliodorus, and Xenophon of Ephesus extraordinary beauty wins divine honours for its possessors, especially for the heroines.'⁷² There seems to be a particular link between female beauty and the divine, and Charikleia is an exemplar of this.

When Charikleia tells her first lie before Thyamis and his men, 1.22.2 (or as she says, 1.25.3, 'a few expedient words uttered in need'), she mixes fact with fiction. She presents Theagenes and herself as brother and sister (false), priests of Artemis and Apollo (partly true), *en route* to Delos to lay down their priesthoods at a festival (false). She behaves religiously, appearing to appreciate her good fortune in marrying a high priest when she is herself dedicated to the gods. She also asks that she may visit a shrine of Apollo (*not* Artemis) to lay down her priesthood before her marriage. Now Charikleia could have seized on any tactic to disinform and delay Thyamis. It is interesting that her persona is so inherently religious, that she simply alters the details of her priesthood rather than abandon it altogether.

It is time to reprise the quotation at the very beginning of this chapter. For perhaps above all, the first meeting between Theagenes and Charikleia is striking for the way it marks out the divinely-mediated nature of their relationship. The whole episode is recounted by Kalasiris, to Knemon, 3.1-6 (and a second, abbreviated account is given by Charikles to Hydaspes, 10.36.2-4, see below). Theagenes enters, heading fifty Thessalian young men, a figure of light, fully armoured, carrying a spear of ash wood recalling that of Achilles in the *Iliad*. But when Charikleia rides forth from the temple of Artemis, her beauty surpasses Theagenes 'in such measure as perfect female beauty is lovelier than the fairest of men', 3.4.1. She is fully the priest,

⁷² Kenneth Scott, 'Ruler cult and related problems in the Greek romances', *C.Ph.* 33 (1938), p. 383: the evidence for Chariton's Kallirhoe is best. Scott's main argument is that the adulation received by the heroes and heroines of the Greek novels is like the worship accorded to mortals in real life.

her purple cloak embroidered with golden rays, her hair wreathed with laurel, carrying a golden bow and quiver, a lighted torch. Yet her priestly identity is complicated there is a tension between the chastity demanded by her office and her great beauty. Heliodoros hints as much in his luscious description of the golden band of entwined serpents which drapes her breasts. 'There was no cruelty or fellness in their eyes ... but they were steeped in a sensuous languor as if lulled by the sweet joys that dwelt in Charikleia's bosom.'

Charikles declares that according to ancestral custom the sacrificial fire must be lit by the leader of the sacred mission with the torch received from the hands of the acolyte, Charikleia. Kalasiris' comments at this point are worth quoting at some length, 3.5.4-5:

With these words he [Charikles] began the libation, and Theagenes made to take the fire; and in that instant it was revealed to us, Knemon, that the soul is something divine and partakes in the nature of heaven. For at the moment when they set eyes on one another, the young pair fell in love, as if the soul recognized its kin at the very first encounter and sped to meet that which was worthily its own. For a brief second full of emotion, they stood motionless; then slowly, so slowly, she handed him the torch and he took it from her, and all the while they gazed hard into one another's eyes, as if calling to mind a previous acquaintance or meeting.

Heliodoros makes plentiful and pointful use of Platonic ideas in describing this scene. Not only do Theagenes and Charikleia fall in love in the most religious of surroundings, lengthily depicted, but their doing so is divine, 'the soul is something divine and partakes in the nature of heaven'. Interestingly, there is no evidence outside the text to attest to a priest of Artemis who must present a prize to the victor of such a race as Theagenes won.⁷³ Heliodoros has not just seized on some convenient custom to act as his vehicle for Theagenes and Charikleia to meet. He has quite deliberately constructed the occasion and nature of their meeting; its religiosity is Heliodoros' intentional religiosity.

Commenting on Kalasiris' enabling of the match between Theagenes and Charikleia, Gerald Sandy writes, 'Like so much else in the *Aethiopica*, this secular, even profane activity is invested with religious overtones'.⁷⁴ But religion seems to me to lie at the heart of what is going on - it is no mere overtone. Consider the character of Kalasiris, and his role as matchmaker.⁷⁵ Kalasiris is a deeply religious character. The Pythia prophesies Theagenes' and Charikleia's journey to Ethiopia at the end of book two, and of all those in Delphi who hear, he is the only one to understand. He is vouchsafed visions of Apollo and Artemis, 3.11.5. Kalasiris' actions may well have an element of trickery and deception in them, but there is nothing inherently

⁷³ Pouilloux, 'Delphes dans les *Éthiopiennes* d' Héliodore', pp. 268-9.

⁷⁴ Sandy, *Heliodorus*, p. 11.

⁷⁵ As others have done, notably Winkler, 'The mendacity of Kalasiris', Sandy, 'Characterization and philosophical decor in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*', pp. 142-54.

irreligious in this. Apollo, whose purposes Kalasiris furthers, is himself a tricky god if one thinks only of the riddling prophecies his Pythia gives forth in the text.

Pouilloux's study of Delphi in the second and third centuries A.D. argues that Heliodoros is usually accurate in his use of Delphic detail with one significant exception.⁷⁶ Not only is there no evidence for the presentation by a female priest of Artemis, there is no record of a female priest of Artemis at Delphi at all. Heliodoros has invented the role of the virgin female priest who lives in chaste seclusion in the temple sanctuary. He has deliberately constructed Charikleia's priesthood, with conditions to suit his story. Theagenes could well have been made to fall in love with a lovely local girl, but this would be to miss Heliodoros' point. It is important that Charikleia is a priest, that she is priest of Artemis, that she is vowed to virginity (see section V below).

There are also some interesting points to note in Charikles' deliberately partial account of the meeting and elopement of Theagenes and Charikleia (10.36.2-4). He describes Charikleia as a virgin acolyte of Artemis at Delphi, and he equates Theagenes' stealing away of Charikleia to looting the holy shrine of Apollo, even harming the person of Apollo himself. As he says to Hydaspes, 'And so you might with justice consider yourselves the victims of his sacrilege, for he has desecrated the person and the holy precinct of Apollo, who is one and the same as the Sun, the god of your fathers'. Again, we note that while Charikleia is priest of Artemis, it is Apollo who is affected by her loss. And the terms in which Charikles speaks of Charikleia's abduction are highly reminiscent of the story told by Pausanias, *Guide to Greece* 8.5.11-12, where Aristokrates' rape of Artemis' female priest in the sanctuary of the god offends Artemis' own sanctity.⁷⁷

After their elopement, Theagenes' and Charikleia's subsequent relationship continues to be patterned by Apollo as much as was their first meeting. Their relationship to Apollo gives their relationship to one another its character, its unique identity. When the two lovers need to agree tokens by which they could recognize one another if separated, their signs are as much Apolline as human, 5.5.1-2. Both adopt the title Pythian, and choose code words. Charikleia's is 'torch' and Theagenes' 'palm' the two objects held by Charikleia at the race in armour at the festival in Delphi.⁷⁸ Two human tokens are also agreed on, a hunting scar in Theagenes' case

⁷⁶ Pouilloux, 'Delphes dans les *Éthiopiennes* d'Héliodore', pp. 268-9. 'Le monde de Delphes où se situe l'action du roman demeure constamment à l'image de la réalité, et, si d'aventure il s'en écarte pour la nécessité du récit, l'auteur se hâte de corriger sa fantaisie', p. 269.

⁷⁷ See the discussion above in chapter three, section III. Heliodoros also cleverly supplies a Pausanias-like *aition*. The Council of Delphi decrees that the sexually dangerous practice of a young female priest serving young men in the festival race in armour must be stopped. Heliodoros rather self-consciously shares the interest Pausanias exhibits in the sexuality of young virgin female priests, the danger they can pose, the need to get them safely married, and above all their potential for a good story when this does not happen.

⁷⁸ Cf. Winkler, 'The mendacity of Kalasiris', p. 157.

and Charikleia's mother's engagement ring. But when these tokens are indeed needed, 7.7.7, it is the Apolline rather than the human signs that Charikleia resorts to, whispering, 'O Pythian, have you forgotten your torch?' *In extremis*, it is religion that is the unbreakable link between them. And Charikleia never abandons the priestly apparel she has carried away with her from Delphi her cloak, her bow not even when she sets out in search of Theagenes with Kalasiris, both disguised as beggars.

V. Chastity and piety

Awareness of Charikleia's chastity is reinforced in the reader through what she herself says, what other characters say about her, and by direct authorial comment. To begin with the words given to Charikleia. Her first and early soliloquy is interesting. As she spends her first night at Thyamis' camp, her opening word is Apollo, railing against him for a too harsh punishment of her sins and Theagenes', 1.8.2-3. An inviolate death, she says, would be a sweet end. 'But if someone is to have his way with me as not even Theagenes has - then I shall forestall the outrage by hanging myself, preserving myself as pure as I now preserve myself, even unto death.' From the beginning of his novel, Heliodoros emphasizes the importance of chastity to Charikleia, and her virgin state, despite her love for Theagenes.

Charikles gives albeit in hostile terms the explanation for Charikleia's passionate attachment to the virgin state, 2.33.4-5. 'She has renounced marriage and is resolved to stay a virgin all her life; she has dedicated herself to the sacred service of Artemis and spends most of her time hunting and practising archery. ... Virginité is her god, and she has elevated it to the level of the immortals, pronouncing it without stain, without impurity, without corruption. But Eros and Aphrodite and all nuptial revelry she curses to damnation.'⁷⁹ Charikleia is rather more than fulfilling the injunction given to her by her mother, embroidered on the band with which she was abandoned. Persinna stitched, 'Honour chastity: it is the sole mark of virtue in a woman', 4.8.7. Persinna's is very much the standard Greek view on chastity as a desirable feature in a young girl, before marriage. Heliodoros also invokes the very archetype of patient chastity at 5.22.3, when Kalasiris has a slightly sinister dream of Odysseus. That hero sends Penelope's greetings to Charikleia, 'since she esteems chastity above all things'.⁸⁰ But Charikleia is not preserving herself for her husband,

⁷⁹ The terms in which Charikleia esteems virginité are worth quoting in Greek, ἐπανατείνεται ἐκθειάζουσα μὲν παρθενίαν καὶ ἐγγύς ἀθανάτων ἀποφαίνουσα, ἄχραντον καὶ ἀκίρατον καὶ ἀδιάφθορον ὀνομάζουσα.

⁸⁰ Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry*, p. 91, discerns further Odyssean parallels: he believes Penelope's recognition of Odysseus' identity at the end of the *Odyssey* is echoed in the revelation of Charikleia's identity and her relationship with Theagenes at the end of *An Ethiopian Story*.

as Charikles, Persinna and Penelope would highly approve; she has sworn herself to chastity as a permanent way of life. This is something odd and merits investigation.

Charikleia is a reluctant lover. To Kalasiris, Charikleia confides her pain and distress on succumbing to her passion for Theagenes, 'the very mention of which is an affront to the august name of virginity', λυμαιομένου δὲ καὶ μέχρις ἀκοῆς τὸ παρθενίας ὄνομα σεμνότατον, 4.10.3 Love Theagenes as she does, Charikleia cannot quite trust herself in his sole company, and demands divinely aided protection, 4.18.5. To Kalasiris' approbation, she asks, 'Let him swear that he will have no carnal knowledge of me before I regain my home and people; or else, if heaven prevents this, that he will make me his wife with my full consent or not at all'. Theagenes is compelled to act to this effect, whilst protesting that the oath deprives him of the chance to be seen to behave well of his own accord. The oath itself is interesting. Charikleia demands a relationship on her terms or not at all, she is to have the final say in whether they will marry or not. What Theagenes actually swears is even more interesting. He binds his oath by Pythian Apollo, Artemis, Aphrodite and her Erotes all the gods concerned in chastity, marriage and love and vows 'that he will in all things do exactly as Charikleia willed and bade him'. Charikleia's chastity is here seen as most tender, most in need of protection, yet it is also the most powerful. She dictates the terms on which she holds her chastity and on which she is prepared to surrender it. Is Charikleia's chastity as a woman more important than, or at least different to, Theagenes' chastity as a man? These are questions which Simon Goldhill has also asked more generally of the Greek novels. The extent to which chastity^{is} a gendered issue is a main focus of his final chapter in his *Foucault's Virginity*. As he writes, there is 'the problem of how sexual difference - the degree to which men and women are alike - is articulated with regard to chastity'⁸¹

A look at some instances of Theagenes' and Charikleia's togetherness might help in answering these questions for *An Ethiopian Story*. Heliodoros creates a fascinating tension for his readers in the passionate yet chaste relationship Charikleia and Theagenes succeed in sustaining. Charikleia, however, is the one who explicitly exercises control, as in their reunion in Thyamis' cave, after Theagenes has suspected Thisbe's corpse to be that of Charikleia, 5.4.5.

They instantly forgot their plight and clasped one another in a prolonged embrace so tight that they seemed to be of one flesh. But the love they consummated was sinless and undefiled; their union was one of moist, warm tears; their only intercourse was one of chaste lips. For if ever Charikleia found Theagenes becoming too ardent in the arousal of his manhood, a reminder of his oath was enough to restrain him; and he for his part moderated his conduct without complaint and was quite content to remain within the bounds of chastity.

⁸¹ Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginity*, pp. 112-13.

Charikleia is quite clear that her love and its circumstances are extraordinary. After witnessing the happy marriage of Knemon and Nausikleia, Charikleia is unbalanced by the contrast with her own uncertain fate, since Theagenes is a prisoner, she knows not where. Kalasiris is shocked by the condition in which he finds her after her outpouring of grief; her apology is remarkable, 6.9.4. 'Perhaps I may be forgiven; for it is no depraving desire such as ordinary people feel that makes me act as I did in my distress, but rather a pure and chaste longing for one who, in my eyes, is nonetheless my husband for never having consummated our love, for a man of Theagenes' quality.' Even the good and conventional marriage of Knemon and Nausikleia acts as a foil for Charikleia's relationship with Theagenes.

Theagenes' chastity is not, at its first introduction at least, of the same order as Charikleia's. Misogyny rather than a chastity vowed to the gods seems to have been the reason for his abstaining from sexual activity. Kalasiris recounts Theagenes' past feelings about women, how 'he had never felt anything but contempt for their whole sex ... and even for married love ... but now Charikleia's beauty had exposed the falseness of his pretensions', 3.17.4. And Theagenes' reasons for continuing his chastity seem less divinely motivated than Charikleia's. As already seen, when he swears to respect Charikleia's virginity, he protests that his conduct would in any case have been moral, 4.18.6; he does not say that his respect for Apollo, or such like, would prevent his misbehaviour. This same more human theme of morality is echoed when Theagenes is being pursued by Arsake. He will not even pretend to Arsake that he will in time become her love, an expedient fiction which Charikleia is prepared to countenance, 7.21.3-5. As he says, 'To speak immoral words is just as wrong as to commit immoral acts'. It is not clear, but possible, that at one desperate point Charikleia is able to think of Theagenes' sacrificing his chastity to save hers. At a juncture when marriages are proposed between Theagenes and Arsake, Charikleia and Achaimenes, he asks ^{what} plan will prevent this, 7.25.6. Strikingly, Charikleia replies, 'Only one. By consenting to the one you will be able to prevent mine'. Can she be serious? If so, her words are only defensible if both of them recognize that her virginity is of a higher order than Theagenes', more in need of preservation. In fact, Theagenes is not yet so despairing, but looks for other ways to save them both. Whether he would ultimately sacrifice his chastity for hers remains unproved, but is certainly something Charikleia hints at, as a pretence (7.21) and apparently as a reality (7.25).

Hydaspes' gridiron test of virginity is applied to both Theagenes and Charikleia, Theagenes first, 10.9.⁸² Theagenes steps on, is proved chaste, and

⁸² Note the setting in which the Ethiopians propose to conduct their sacrifices to the Sun and the Moon, 10.4.4-5. Women are excluded, lest they pollute the sacrificial victims (even *involuntarily*). The Sun and Moon are described as 'the purest and most resplendent of the gods'. The only women to

impresses the crowd 'that a young man such as he, in the full vigour of his youth, was ignorant of the joys of Aphrodite'. Charikleia's trial is depicted with greater drama. 'She produced her Delphic robe ... and put it on. She let her hair fall free, ran forward like one possessed, and sprang onto the gridiron, where she stood for some time without taking any hurt, her beauty blazing with a new and dazzling radiance ...; in her magnificent robe she seemed more like an image of a goddess than a mortal woman.' Whereas the crowd had been impressed that a good-looking man like Theagenes should be chaste, their reaction to Charikleia is far stronger. Awe and wonder mark their response to the fact that her more-than-human beauty should be undefiled. More significant still is the way Heliodoros chooses to depict Charikleia. She is virgin *via* her identity as Delphic priest. Just as she looks more female god than mortal, her chastity is firmly associated with the divine sphere.

The striking nature of Charikleia's vowed chastity is highlighted by comparison with the classical Greek world in which her story is ostensibly set. Giulia Sissa notes, 'The Greek word *parthenos* does not unambiguously signify the perfect integrity implicit in our word virginity. ... The word *bastard* makes it clear that the Greeks did not expect of their *parthenioi* the absolute, unwavering chastity that defines virginity in the Christian ethos'.⁸³ On a purely human level, as the crowd's reaction shows, the onlookers are surprised that Charikleia has not succumbed to sexual temptation. After all, virginity is not something visible – it takes a (rare) virginity test to establish it. Charikleia's unusually strict behavioural standards stem from her perfect loyalty to her absolutely virgin god, Artemis.

It is noticeable that while chastity is an important ideal in the other Greek novels, it is also negotiable. Daphnis, for instance, accepts an offer of sexual initiation from the eager Lycaenion, so that he can go on to become a better husband for Chloe.⁸⁴ But then none of these characters are priests, or have made vows to or by the gods. Theagenes' chastity is represented mostly in terms of good moral behaviour, of swearing by the gods in order to satisfy Charikleia. It is Charikleia whose chastity is repeatedly explained in terms of her Delphic priesthood, and her voluntary vow of chastity to Artemis.⁸⁵ As a woman, Charikleia can best reveal the strength and power of the gods. Where a mere woman might conventionally be perceived to be weak, she can, as a priest, be strong. Her connection with the gods

be present are Persinna - seemingly exempt from pollution through her priestly status - and Charikleia, a proven virgin. The feared impurity of women seems to be a sexual impurity. A male victim must be sacrificed to the Sun and a female to the Moon, both virgins (Dionysos, the third ancestral god sacrificed to, does *not* demand the same conditions), 10.7.6-7.

⁸³ Giulia Sissa, *Greek Virginity* (Eng. trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1990), pp. 76, 83, and in general ch. 7, 'Virgin births'.

⁸⁴ Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 3.15-20. Chastity is not maintained in two other of the novels. David Konstan discusses constancy versus chastity, *Sexual Symmetry*, pp. 48-55.

⁸⁵ Although the Dionysiac side to Delphi is quite absent from her religious profile.

seems deeper than that of Theagenes. She can reassure his sometimes failing faith.⁸⁶ Charikleia, then, is more of a hero than Theagenes. The female is more important than the male because of her dedicated priestly status. Her vowed virginity helps Charikleia act as an equal – if not more than an equal – to Theagenes. Normal gender expectations are subverted because Heliodoros seems to privilege female links to the divine over male. And this perception presumably is one shared by the audience for whom he wrote.

The implications of chastity and marriage for Charikleia are explored by Heliodoros through his use of the imagery of light. Apollo, Artemis, Helios, and Selene are, after all, all gods of light. How are Theagenes and Charikleia represented in terms of light? Sometimes light is simple and shared. At 10.9.7, for instance, a halo of light falls encircles their heads, interpreted by Sisimithres as 'a sure sign that they are under the protection of one of the lords of heaven'. This would seem to be the uncomplicated glow of Homeric heroes. But Heliodoros' images of light can also be more subtle and ambivalent than this. When we look at Theagenes and Charikleia separately, and compare the imagery surrounding them, it soon becomes apparent that the light metaphors attach very little to Theagenes. Overwhelmingly, Charikleia is their subject.

The corpse-in-the-cave episode at the beginning of book two is redolent with pictures of dark and light. As Thyamis' camp burns, Theagenes laments Charikleia, 2.1.3, 'no wedding torches did heaven light for you, but these flames instead'. Weddings and light are an association throughout the novel – Charikleia as the bride who isn't. On finding the corpse, Theagenes mourns, 2.4.3, 'You do not speak. That prophetic, god-inspired voice is silent! Darkness has snuffed out the bringer of light! Oblivion shrouds the attendant of the inner shrine!' The significance of light here is to link Charikleia to her god, Apollo: she is represented in strikingly Pythia-like terms. Her voice is prophetic, from the 'inner shrine' in which the Pythia prophesied at Delphi. Other episodes throughout the text develop these associations.

As noted above, the light of divinity expresses Charikleia's beauty. At 1.29.4, Knemon reluctantly shuts her in the cave on Theagenes' orders, consigning 'mankind's brightest jewel to darkest night'. Light also hints at a more-than-mortal status. Charikleia's beauty shines forth, ἐξέλαμψεν, 4.1.2. On his reunion with Charikleia in her disguise as a beggar, Theagenes is dazzled by the brilliance of her eyes, 'as if by a shaft of sunlight shining out between the clouds', 7.7.7; dazzling eyes are, of course, a prime signifier of divinity.

⁸⁶ 8.11.5-6, 9.22, 9.24, with Sandy, *Heliodorus*, pp. 60-2.

Light and Theagenes' desire for Charikleia coalesce. Charikleia is (willingly) snatched away from her father's house, at dead of night, in a blaze of torchlight, 4.17.4, possibly a mocking echo of the torches of a legitimate wedding procession. The connection is made explicitly by Delphi's chief magistrate, 4.21.1, when the citizens debate how to prevent such an abduction occurring again. He says, 'The holy acolyte should no longer display the torch to those who are competing in the race in armour, for it is my guess that this was the flame that kindled Theagenes' wickedness. Apparently he conceived the idea of abducting her at the very first sight of her'. They agree unanimously.⁸⁷ Remember that it was not just any flame, though, it was the sacred flame in a ceremony to honour Apollo. Their relationship begins in a religious light.

Charikleia has the striking attribute of a sacrifice to the gods. Thyamis describes his murder of 'Charikleia' (in fact, Thisbe) as the sacrifice 'of the most beautiful of victims', 1.31.2. Condemned by Arsake to die at the stake, 8.9.13, Charikleia is memorably evoked. 'The flames flowed around her rather than licking against her; ... serving merely to encircle her in splendour and present a vision of her standing in radiant beauty in a frame of light, like a bride in a chamber of light.' Charikleia offers herself to the gods, to the Sun and Earth. She is quite literally self-sacrificing, a voluntary burnt offering. There is a remarkable elision of sacrificial and bridal images.

Hydaspes also makes an equation between the two when he proposes to sacrifice his now-recognized daughter to Selene, 10.16.10:

Come with your father: he has not been able to robe you in a bridal gown; it is not to marriage torches and a bridal chamber that he has brought you, but it is for sacrifice that he adorns you now, and the torches he lights are not those of the wedding ceremony but those that burn on the altar of sacrifice, to which he brings your peerless and supreme beauty as an offering.

Charikleia's great beauty and chastity make her a fitting offering to the gods – either living as prophetic priest – or dying as perfect, pure sacrifice.

So images of light as applied to Charikleia have associations of Apollo, of marriage torches, and also of sacrifice and death. These are a rather ambivalent group of associations. Her relationship with Apollo carries overtones of the sacrificial victim, in her pure, chaste state, and her channelling of his prophetic voice (as an animal sacrifice could be read for the god's instructions). The torches of marriage are similarly not entirely joyous. The bride too is a sort of sacrifice – as a woman gives her virginity to her lord and master, her husband. Charikleia embodies the difficulties inherent in close contact with an all-powerful male god, and the sacrifice of herself a woman must make in marriage.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ The change in practice answers the query of why such a ceremony no longer takes place. Like many of Pausanias' aetiological anecdotes, the danger is safely buried in the past.

⁸⁸ Charikles' tales of the death of his bridal daughter and then his wife provide illustrations within the

My findings both endorse and diverge from some of the arguments made by David Konstan in his stimulating book, *Sexual Symmetry*.⁸⁹ Early in this book, discussing the Greek novels as a whole, he writes, 'the primary couple's experience of love in the Greek novel is not essentially differentiated by gender'.⁹⁰ But for Charikleia and Theagenes, their differing genders, and hence their differing relationship to the gods, means that they *do* experience love differently. Her priesthood of Artemis means that for Charikleia her chastity and the conditions under which she can surrender it are more important than for Theagenes. The view that sees Charikleia as a free and equal partner in her adventures must be tempered by the realization of how much her actions are presented as divinely ordained. Her seemingly free choice of Theagenes, for example, is decided by Apollo at Delphi. So much of Charikleia's apparent power and freedom is due to her doing what the gods will. She is a good religious woman, and thus perhaps fulfils more of a gender stereotype than Konstan allows.

Konstan's main thesis of men and women as equal partners in love in the Greek novels, that is, of sexual symmetry, is also hopefully optimistic. It is dealt a significant blow by the arguments of Brigitte Egger, based on her comparison of the legal forms of marriage within the novels and their relation to classical and Hellenistic marriage customs. She concludes, 'The love ideal is, to a certain extent, a liberating and egalitarian force, but its containment in archaizing legal norms, in marriage nostalgically viewed as socially constraining to women, undermines this impression of equality'.⁹¹ Simon Goldhill's final conclusion on the differences gender creates in sexuality is that, 'The "move towards symmetry", that has featured so markedly in current accounts of the history of sexuality, not only mobilizes particular and often difficult and shifting representations of the female, but also repeatedly is layered with more traditional, hierarchical images of the relations between the genders. The recuperative powers of patriarchal discourse remain strong'.⁹²

So how can the love relationship between Charikleia and Theagenes be defined? The pairing of the two as servants of Artemis and Apollo fuels the particular and peculiar aspects of their romance. Intriguingly, Charikleia regards herself as married, prior to receiving Charikles' and Hydaspes' consent, prior to beginning a sexual relationship with Theagenes. At 6.9.4, she longs for 'one who, in my eyes, is nonetheless my husband for never having consummated our love'. At

novel of the dangers attendant upon marriage, 2.29.3-4.

⁸⁹ See especially his analysis of the relationship between Charikleia and Theagenes, in his short section 'Heliiodorus: sex and the sacred', pp. 90-8.

⁹⁰ Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry*, p. 8.

⁹¹ Egger, 'Women and marriage in the Greek novels', p. 274.

⁹² Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginité*, p. 160.

10.21.12-15, she presents herself as a suitable performer of the sacrifice of Theagenes to Helios, knowing that the custom is that only married priests can perform the human sacrifice. What is the bond that binds them? They made mutual vows at ^{the} outset of their relationship, as recalled by Charikleia, 1.25.4, 'from the start I gave myself to you not like a woman yielding to her lover, but like a wife pledging herself to her husband. ... Many times have I repelled your advances, looking to the day when the union we pledged ... will be legally solemnized'.

Heliodoros draws out the religious dimensions of their bond. Theagenes and Charikleia choose to marry each other, confident it is the will of their gods. Charikleia notably rejects both her fathers' choice of husband for her Charikles' Alkamenes and Hydaspes' Meroebos which her otherwise considerable filial feeling would surely not allow. This is a deliberate departure from classical Greek practice on Heliodoros' part, and points out the strength of Theagenes' and Charikleia's trust in the gods. David Konstan comments that Heliodoros 'sacralizes erotic passion'.⁹³ But in my analysis, the emphasis is rather reversed. It is the sacred identity of Theagenes and Charikleia at the Delphic ceremony and eventually as priests of Helios and Selene that is the origin and framework of their passionate attachment.

Marriage in *An Ethiopian Story* is a very religious thing in its structure and meaning husband and wife become complementary priests in married union. A sacrifice to Helios and Selene confirms Hydaspes' pronouncement of the marriage of Charikleia and Theagenes, a marriage that he recognizes is the gods' will, 10.40-1. And the sacrifice is carried out by Theagenes and Charikleia themselves, wearing their new priestly insignia as servants of Helios and Selene. The sacrifice appears an integral part of the marriage union. Nor does their joining in marriage end there. As the story closes, the wedding party departs into the city 'where the more mystic parts of the wedding ritual were to be performed with greater magnificence', τῶν ἐπὶ τῷ γάμῳ μυστικωτέρων κατὰ τὸ ἄστυ φαιδρότερον τελεσθησομένων, 10.41.3. This is very unlike classical practice, where no religious ceremonies were needed to enact a valid marriage. The Apollo-Artemis connection during their committed courtship, and the Sun and Moon connection on legal marriage, give quite a twist to the reader's understanding of Theagenes' and Charikleia's marriage.

VI. Conclusions

So how might *An Ethiopian Story* relate to life outside the novel? Does Heliodoros help us understand more about Greek ideas about gender and the divine in

⁹³ Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry*, p. 9.

the second and third centuries A.D.? On the one hand, the novel is deliberately peculiar – set in the classical past, with servants of Apollo and Artemis as its main characters, travelling from Greece via Egypt to Ethiopia. Heliodoros' readers will not have such experiences; the novel is in many ways the opposite to their everyday lives. Heliodoros cannot be offering a model for the ordinary conduct of marriage, for example. But he can be dealing with contemporary themes and concerns. In *Foucault's Virginité*, Simon Goldhill takes it as his premise that the Greek novels are obsessed by chastity, and writes, 'Although ... the relations between the novels and the society in which they were written are extremely hard to trace even in outline, their passion for chastity cannot be seen as merely a literary *topos* ... or as a sign of The Romance. ... In later antiquity, virginity was a hot topic'.⁹⁴

In the normal Greek world, virginity beyond puberty was odd. Marriage is almost a universal state in Artemidoros, female virgin priests attract strange stories in Pausanias, and in Plutarch's opinion, the Pythia's unique committed virginity makes her the ideal communication channel for Apollo. So Charikleia's determination to 'make a god of virginity', 2.35.5, is extremely striking. Greek literature was full of advice on how to be a good wife, not how to live as a chaste virgin. Even Theagenes, less explicitly religiously motivated than Charikleia, declares his unwillingness to pollute himself (μὴ ἀνομήναι) by lawless sexual contact with Arsake, 7.25.7.⁹⁵

Before their legal marriage in Meroe, Theagenes and Charikleia seem to conduct a Greek version of a spiritual marriage, better known in contemporary Christian circles. There may just be a hint that spiritual marriage is an interest of Heliodoros' in the comments of the fifth-century Socrates 'Scholasticus', *A History of the Church* 5.22. There Socrates records a custom he came across in Thessaly, whereby clergymen ceased to sleep with their wives once ordained. 'It is said that the author of this usage which obtains in Thessaly, was Heliodorus bishop of Tricia in that country; under whose name there are love books extant, entitled 'Ethiopicis', which he composed in his youth.' Presuming that Heliodoros never was a Christian bishop, could his interest in spiritual marriages have been deduced from *An Ethiopian Story*?

One of David Konstan's concluding findings is that 'marriage came to be ... imagined in the novel as a matter of private attachment rather than as a function of civic identity'.⁹⁶ Now this may be valid for the other Greek novels, but for *An Ethiopian Story* it seems patently untrue. And it is the religious framing of the

⁹⁴ Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginité*, p. 2.

⁹⁵ Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry*, p. 55, discussing Theagenes' refusal to sleep with Arsake because it would pollute him, writes, 'The reference to stain or miasma suggests a more absolute prohibition on sexual commerce outside of the primary union than in other Greek novels, and it may be the case that Heliodoros betrays a greater preoccupation with ritual purity of the body'.

⁹⁶ Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry*, p. 226.

romance of Theagenes and Charikleia that proves it so. There is little that is private about their love; it is god-ordained and the best thing for the city of Meroe, where they will become the next priests and rulers, ceasing the barbaric custom of human sacrifice. Their sexuality is not free but constrained by consideration of their gods. Notably, in the oath of abstinence which Charikleia makes Theagenes swear, she makes it clear that her preferred option is to regain her home and people before their marriage. Marriage is something to be conducted in the face of the community. Charikleia does not want some individualized and escapist romance.

An Ethiopian Story deals with female integrity in particular, an integrity based on religious belief and practice. It is striking how Charikleia's priestly calling is brought out in great detail. The emphasis on the female is unmistakable - Charikleia, her parents (both sets) her familial gods (Apollo/Helios served by Charikles and Hydaspes, Artemis/Selene by herself and her mother), her birthplace recovered; Theagenes' family and homeland are completely absent. The influence of religion in keeping Greek women well behaved was always a concern of Greek society, Greek story-telling. Partly Charikleia is a continuation of this tradition. But she also partakes of Greek society's interest in the connections between women and their sexuality, and the divine. The tensions caused by Charikleia's chastity are explored in great detail, but significantly they are resolved in marriage (however asexual Heliodoros may hint the union of the new priests of Helios and Selene might be). In investigating the connections between women and religion, satisfying the city's need for priests and the city's need for the next generation, Heliodoros is dealing with the concerns of his own class, the city élite. Alongside its playfulness, and narrative intricacy, there is serious and contemporary religious thought in *An Ethiopian Story*. Such must be the satisfying conclusion of taking the middle way, neither reading the novel as a mystery text nor thinking that the religious material in it is just so much background colour.

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Chapter Six

Conclusion

I. Thematic analysis

In her self-styled 'affectionate critique' of her article from 1980, 'The sexual status of Vestal Virgins', Mary Beard's main revision is that, 'Gender categories are not objective, cultural "givens"'.¹ The main thrust of this thesis has been to examine the construction and manipulation of gender categories within Greek culture of the second and third centuries A.D. I have argued that religion is an essential element of such an investigation, a conclusion with which Mary Beard agrees in her re-assessment of the Vestal virgins. As she writes,

Yes, it is obviously the case that religion may *reflect* the gender differences and categories operating within society more generally; it is obviously the case, too, that any system of religious symbolism may in part *be constructed out of* (or parasitic on) gender categories defined in the wider cultural world. Yet at the same time, religion itself plays a major part in actively *constructing, defining* and *negotiating* those categories in defining what it is to be female, what constitutes virginity or marriage and so on. In fact, to put it more strongly, religion regularly acts as a privileged space, a key place within any particular culture for the definition of gender roles, for debate on gender norms and transgressions.²

My parallel enquiries into texts of Artemidoros, Pausanias, Plutarch and Heliodoros have indeed revealed religion as a 'privileged space' for the defining of gender, sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit.

My study of Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams* provides the most comprehensive view of gender definitions and gender roles. Whereas much previous use of the text has concentrated on reconstructing details of second-century life, in contrast I have established its value for explaining connections between the different spheres of human and divine, male and female. In a text that can be classed as religious by virtue of Artemidoros' Apolline inspiration, and his likening of dream-interpretation to prophecy and sacrifice, male and female prove fundamental analytic categories. Above all, male and female are used by Artemidoros to express hierarchy: strength and success (male), weakness and failure (female), are the outcomes desired and dreaded by his dreamers in their daily lives. The inferior relation of female to male is set out and validated on the divine plane, which Artemidoros locates at the head of human society. This unequal polarizing is visible in Artemidoros' body symbolism, where the powerful right side of the body is male,

¹ Mary Beard, 'Re-reading (Vestal) virginity', in Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick (eds.), *Women in Antiquity: new assessments* (London and New York, 1995), p. 169. The article she critiques is her 'The sexual status of Vestal Virgins', *J.R.S.* 70 (1980), pp. 12-27.

² *ibid.*

and the feebler left side female, and in his interpretation of sexual dreams, where the controlling part is synonymous with masculinity. But my analysis of gender amongst the gods complicates this male-oriented, male-interested picture.

Hera can be less than Zeus, but also present is a model whereby male and female deities head equal and separate hierarchies of power. The two divine models cannot be reconciled with one another, nor can they both be made to relate directly to the human scene. Gender as symbol takes two different patterns among the gods: gender roles complicate these patterns. For Artemidoros makes it quite clear that marriage is the universal goal of both sexes. In marriage, a woman's role is to provide children and a well-kept house, and this gives her power in relation to her husband. He needs her co-operation to make the marriage a success, and, furthermore, as Artemidoros seems to imply, to enjoy success in his professional life too. So both divine symbolic models of inferior female, and equally powerful male and female, are moderated by the demands of human life to a model of partnership – an interdependent if difficult relationship.

Artemidoros' problems in enunciating one clear way in which male and female interconnect, on either the symbolic divine plane or in the waking human world, are some of the most important conclusions to be drawn from the chapter. Since the differing models all come from one text, one analytic system which Artemidoros intended his readers to recognize as normal and logical, they show ideas of gender and the relationship between male and female, men and women, are not fixed and certain. Rather they are actively being negotiated, reformulated in text and context. Artemidoros' analytical interpretative system reveals contemporary thought patterns.

The connections between gender and the divine in the *Interpretation of Dreams* are framed in terms of large-scale systems. With Pausanias' *Guide to Greece*, the relationship between the two becomes more personalized, in terms of particular gods, their priests and worshipping community. My second study concentrates especially on the difference made by gender (both divine and human) in the relationship between god and priest. This is a new reading of a text most often treated as an encyclopaedia of fact about Greek religion: it also brings to the fore Greek priests, surprisingly little studied, and the significance of gender in priesthoods, frequently ignored. Pausanias discusses gods and priests in three ways, by retelling stories of the past, by recording rites he has observed and the accompanying myths he has heard, and by simply describing rites he has witnessed. In the first two cases, there are many more female priests in the text than male, a pattern overturned only in the case of rites without a story attached. The role of myth in describing female priests and their gods is important: it is in myth that the unusual is explored, mystery explained, change charted. It is in the mythical past that gods and humans mingle

most freely. In Pausanias' perspective and that of the communities who retold their sacred stories female priests merit, even need, the opportunities for exploration offered by myth.

All the tales Pausanias tells are amazing; the divinely miraculous is a key interest of his text. And what creates most mystery, causes most trouble, are female priests. Female priests serving male gods are a particular focus of interest: for example, Pausanias records several myths with the intention of explaining or justifying the virgin female priest of Herakles. When Aristokrates raped the virgin priest of Artemis Hymnia at Orchomenos he offended the god and the Arkadians. The replacement priest had to be an old woman, past sex, her sexual status unimpeachable. A dual burden is laid upon a female priest's correct sexual status and its maintenance: the sanctity of the god and the good relationship with their god of the worshipping community. The requirement of virginity from male priests is much rarer in Pausanias' text, with just three instances of virginal boy priests recorded. All Pausanias' stories indicate a close connection between priest and god, priest and community: but the relationship is seen much more often with female priests than male, and the sexual status of the female priest is at its heart. Pausanias chooses to highlight the exceptional cases of virgin priests because they are a good source of story: virginity is integral to these priesthoods yet can also be a threat to them. Male and female priests do not fulfil the same role, are not interchangeable. The significance of a female priest's sexual status for the very nature of her priesthood, of her and her community's relationship with the divine, is a theme that emerges in the texts of chapters four and five.

In approaching Plutarch's Pythia, it is essential to view her in context, not to blend Plutarch's explanations of her prophetic powers with images from Attic tragedy, or the interested interpretations of modern commentators (Flacelière's raving female, Fontenrose's flatly uninspired sanity). The sexual status of Plutarch's Pythia, in his *Oracles in Decline* and *On the Pythian Oracles*, is at the very core of her prophetic role. In the first text, the female is used as a model for how the god communicates with mortals: prophecy is discussed in feminizing imagery. The right nature and matter are required, a prophetic body prepared as an instrument for the god to play on. The sacrificial purity of the anonymous Pythia, lifelong virgin, provides the best channel for contact between Apollo and his worshippers. In the second text, the importance of the Pythia's chastity is elucidated. The relationship between god and priest is pictured in terms of a marriage: the Pythia goes to her god with the soul of a virgin. She acts as a mediating figure through her open and receptive female nature, especially her sexual nature.

In studying the superficially rather different text of *Isis and Osiris*, I argue that Greek ideas of gender govern how the myth of these male and female gods is

interpreted by Plutarch. In both the physical and metaphysical allegories of the myth which Plutarch develops, Isis' relationship to Osiris is primarily sexual, wifely: spiritually, she transmits knowledge of Osiris' supreme goodness to the world in the same way as materially she receives his generative seed and brings forth life. By considering *Isis and Osiris* in conjunction with the Pythian dialogues, it is apparent that Plutarch creates very similar roles for both the divine and human female. It is the single, committed and dependent nature of their sexual, marriage-like, relationship with their gods that makes both Isis and the Pythia the perfect vehicles for reliable mediation between humans and the divine.

My fourth study examines Heliodoros' novel, *An Ethiopian Story*. Like Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*, ostensibly we are looking at a very different world: in Heliodoros' case, the text not only ranges in Greece and Egypt but in the even more exotic location of Ethiopia too. His time-frame is also disconcerting - not the Greek world of the Roman empire but the Greek world of the classical era. But Heliodoros writes in a contemporary genre, that of the Greek novel. If his format is contemporary, it is likely his imagined world draws its interest for his readers from his treatment of modern themes and concerns. Heliodoros writes his story drawing on established views of gender and religion, creating something original using a detectable social and genre framework. My argument reclaims this novel as a fruitful area for religious investigation, finding a middle way between the current opposing views either that the work is a mystery text or that it is no more than a good story with no religious meaning.

The obstacle-strewn romance of Theagenes and Charikleia is fascinating for its strikingly emphasized religious context. The two meet at a religious ceremony at Delphi, where Charikleia is a priest of Artemis, and their eventual marriage sees them installed as priests of Helios and Selene in Ethiopia. The narrative is very Apollo-Helios centred, from Heliodoros' own name and origins, the lovers' meeting at Delphi, through a series of oracles and prophecies, to the new priesthoods in Meroe. It is the unusual and extreme behaviour of Charikleia in swearing life-long chastity to her god, and renouncing normal life (marriage), that creates and drives Heliodoros' story. Theagenes and Charikleia enjoy what is almost a spiritual marriage, after Theagenes' vows to respect Charikleia's chastity: Heliodoros teases the reader with the passion of their resolutely unconsummated love. The connections between Charikleia's chastity and her priestly role are constantly reinforced when she passes Hydaspes' gridiron test of virginity, for instance, triumphantly arrayed in her Delphic priestly robes. It is Charikleia rather than Theagenes who enjoys the closest relations with their gods; hers is the prophetic, god-inspired voice, hers the divine beauty. *An Ethiopian Story* is not the escapist fantasy it might at first appear. In moving from one family, town

and priesthood to another, Charikleia's story is firmly set in a civic setting, where the connections between chastity and piety seem a subject of intense interest and tension.

What then are the shared themes revealed in my parallel enquiries? There are four main areas which I would like to draw out. The first is the significance of a gendered hierarchy amongst the gods; second, the importance of gender in the role and function of religious personnel; third, the links between gender and prophecy divine-human communication; and fourth, images of marriage on the divine and human planes.

At the heart of Artemidoros' exposition of the gods and their relative positions of power is gendered hierarchy; female inferior to male, and male and female equally but separately powerful. These gendered divine hierarchies prove integral to the social construction of human gender. In the case of Plutarch's *Isis and Osiris*, the relationship between the two gods of the title also patterns human behaviour, although in a rather different way. Osiris' worshippers are to respond towards him as Isis does. Like a good wife, Isis yearns for Osiris and is impregnated by him with authoritative and pure principles. The gendered model of behaviour established between Isis and Osiris is to act as an appropriate guide for worshippers to follow. In Heliodoros' novel, the brother-sister relationship of Artemis and Apollo provides a model for their pious followers to emulate: the disguise Theagenes and Charikleia choose and maintain is that of brother and sister – a close, loving but chaste relationship.

What are the implications of the importance of gendered divine hierarchy for our general understanding of the Greek pantheon? One way to answer the question is to look at expositions of the pantheon in two well-known works on Greek religion, Louise Bruit Zaidman's and Pauline Schmitt Pantel's *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* and Walter Burkert's *Greek Religion*.³ The relevant chapter of *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* is chapter 13, 'A polytheistic religion', in Part III, 'Systems for representing the divine'. Here the authors expound their understanding of the polytheistic system and its implications for Greek society. Rightly, they insist on the need 'to concentrate on the *structures* of the pantheon rather than on the divinities taken in isolation'. Then 'we can see just how far the pantheon ... is a vital intellectual construct, possessing its own logic, and functioning within and for the benefit of the society that gave it birth'.⁴ To do this, they adopt differing tactics – looking at divinities associated with marriage, with technology. They choose a 'divine couple'

³ Louise Bruit Zaidman and Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City* (Eng. trans. Paul Cartledge, Cambridge, 1992); Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: archaic and classical* (Eng. trans. John Raffan, Oxford, 1985).

⁴ Bruit Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel, *Religion in the Ancient Greek City*, pp. 184-5.

Apollo and Dionysus to investigate the way the pantheon worked as an entity, investigating its 'mutually antithetical and complementary' character.⁵ They sketch out the particular pantheon recorded by Pausanias as being in operation at Mantinea.

But what this otherwise good attempt to get to grips with the consequences of a polytheistic system seems to lack is a due emphasis on the role of gender in the system. At the beginning of the chapter, for example, divine power is divided into three categories – gods, *daimones* and heroes. No specific reference is made to the existence of male and female gods, no thought given to the ramifications of having divine representations of male and female within the system. The divine couple investigated is male-male, not male-female. The closest gender comes to forming part of their interpretation is in a passage quoted from Jean-Pierre Vernant, where he discusses the Hermes-Hestia couple, showing the nature of the association between them although not (in this passage, at least) making clear how their gendered relationship might fit with their male and female worshippers.⁶

Burkert's chapter 'Polis and polytheism' is his fifth, coming *after* his exposition of individual gods in chapter three. He first considers 'thought patterns in Greek polytheism' before going on to treat topics such as calendars, festivals, initiations and piety in the mirror of Greek language. He has some cautionary remarks on the dangers of treating Greek polytheism as a system with a logical structure: 'such relationships are good for thinking, but reality does not always follow suit; a certain stubbornness of the facts remains'.⁷ Instead, he suggests, 'The conglomerate of tradition which constitutes religion perhaps owes its particular form less to the cunning of reason than to the cunning of biology'.⁸ He goes on to analyse the gods in terms of their family relationships – Zeus and Hera the central couple, Demeter the widowed daughter, Athena and Artemis confirmed virgins who belong in the innermost centre of the house, and so on. Pairs of gods are examined – Apollo and Artemis, Hephaistos and Athena, Ares and Aphrodite. Plenty of male and female here, but not enough explicit discussion of how divine gender models relate to the human world. So with these two books as illustrations of the standard treatment of divine gender hierarchy and its relation to human gender in Greek religion, my study would indicate more work is necessary.

My second area of concern is the importance of gender in understanding the role of religious personnel. My interpretation of Pausanias' *Guide to Greece* argues that male and female do not perform the same priestly part and function with regard to their god and community. Male and female are not interchangeable – they are

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 191.

⁶ Pp. 277-8 in Froma I. Zeitlin (ed.), *Mortals and Immortals: collected essays* (Princeton, 1991).

⁷ Burkert, *Greek Religion*, p. 217.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 218.

priests in different ways. Access to the divine differs according to gender. For female priests, their sexual status is an important element in their relationship with their god, shown particularly in the noteworthy and remarkable cases Pausanias likes to choose, where the demands for virginity can impose a special strain on the priest and the community who must ensure her chastity. Male sexual status by contrast rarely rates a mention, is nothing important in the male priest's relationship with his deity. There is a close tie-up between Pausanias' text and Heliodoros'. Their very different works in genre and content seem to send the same message about priesthood. Charikleia's vowed virginity as priest of Artemis is her quintessential defining characteristic; upon it hangs the whole tale. It is her chastity which is demurred to by Theagenes, emphasized repeatedly by Heliodoros. Nor does she break her vow of lifelong dedication to her god (which is what her chastity signifies) in marrying Theagenes, since she takes on the priesthood of Selene by virtue of her marriage.

The correlation between female virginity and priesthood is seen most clearly in the case of prophets. Apollo's female prophets have been a subject of study in *An Ethiopian Story* and Plutarch's Pythian dialogues, where perceptions of gender have been revealed in the way they communicate between immortal and mortals, between humans and the divine. Charikleia may strictly be Artemis' priest, but it is with Apollo that she enjoys an active relationship in Heliodoros' narrative: her priesthood is held at Delphi, she wears her Delphic priestly regalia with pride, she calls upon Apollo in times of joy and distress. Whilst she does not deliver explicit prophecies from Apollo, Theagenes patterns her relationship to the god in prophetic vein, when he mourns (on finding Thisbe's corpse) that her prophetic, god-inspired voice should now be silent (2.4). Plutarch's Pythian texts and *Isis and Osiris* indicate the sort of thinking that could draw a parallel between Charikleia's virgin priesthood and acknowledged female prophets. Isis acts as a channel of communication between worshippers and Osiris by virtue of her married, sexual connection with the god. Superficially it then appears contradictory that it is the Pythia's virgin state that allows her to mediate the will of god to men and women. But virgin as she is, the Pythia's association with Apollo is imagined in sexual terms: the Pythia is not married to a man, she is married to god. Virginity represents the Pythia's purity unsullied by contact with men, dedicated to the god: it also indicates her innocence and inexperience she is formed by contact with Apollo alone. The control Apollo has over his prophet is a microcosm of the control he exerts over the lives of his worshippers.

Images of marriage on the divine and human planes have played a significant part in three of my four authors as the place where male-female relations emerge most vividly. In Plutarch's texts there are pictures of divine marriage between Isis and

Osiris, where Isis' behaviour is likened to that of a good wife: the divine provides a direct model for mortals. The Pythia and Apollo share a marriage of mortal and immortal, where the sexual bond is supposed to produce effective control of the female by the male, where marriage is an image of smooth communication from male to female. In Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams*, the marriage of Zeus and Hera provides one model of how a mortal marriage might work, Hera being inferior to Zeus. Artemidoros also provides the best picture of marriage on the human plane. Much of his rhetoric tries to assert the same relations within human marriage as are demonstrated by immortal-immortal or immortal-divine unions in my other texts. But here the wish-fulfilment element of the divine marriage models is revealed. Certainly women want marriage as much as men, but the real dependence of male on female for children, a well-kept house, for success and respect is very apparent. The differing models and realities of marriage in my texts suggest that in this closest of gender relationships constant attention is needed, there is no room for relaxation.

One question inevitably involved in a study of Greek culture in the second and third centuries A.D. is that of similarity and difference with the cultural world of classical Greece. What signs of change are visible? I began this study expecting to find a chasm of difference between the two periods. And in many ways there are differences. Society in the second and third centuries A.D. was more fluid than in the classical era: the benefits of the *pax Romana* provided greater opportunities for concentrating on wealth-creation, not war. For those with the right qualities and qualifications, there was the Roman career ladder to climb as well as the Greek. Not that I endorse the idea of lost Hellenistic souls struggling for survival in an alien environment. As Artemidoros' *Interpretation of Dreams* makes clear, competition takes place within well-defined traditional *polis* structures; for instance, his fifth book contains numerous examples of inter-*poleis* semi-professional athletic rivalry.

But within the worlds of my texts, change is less immediately apparent chinks rather than a chasm. Partly I think this can be explained by appeal to the ethos of the Second Sophistic, whose precepts my writers all demonstrably adhere to. I have to analyse my texts in the ongoing context of Greek culture, where fashion demanded the constant re-negotiation and re-exploration of classical ideas. Partly I am drawn to think that fewer signs of change in the area of gender and the divine result from the very nature of the subject. My findings pay tribute to the enduring power of Greek ideas of gender. Ideas that were current in the classical period could still be current in the Greek world of the Roman empire. Whilst it may be somewhat disappointing not to have identified revolutionary new developments, it is still significant to have shown that classical ideas can be contemporary, on-going.

Nevertheless, there are, I believe, signs of change, or at least emphasis on particular aspects of gender relations in the context of the divine. Reading imperial inscriptions, for instance, Riet Van Bremen notes the changing patterns in the holding of imperial priesthoods in Asia Minor by men and women, changing patterns of public benefaction by women – both new areas of activity for women, albeit conducted within a family context.⁹ In my texts, signs of strain in marriage relationships, not being able to take the old stereotypes of male control for granted, appear in Artemidoros. Heliodoros' Charikleia is exceptional in her voluntary devotion to lifelong virginity in service of her god. One way to consider the question of change is to relate my four thematic conclusions to evidence from Jewish and Christian contexts in the same timeframe, and to consider what new avenues for research are opened up.

II. New possibilities

The second and third centuries A.D. are obviously a time of great interest for the history of Judaism and Christianity. Theologians have long studied the period. Increasingly it is attracting the interest of the historian: Robin Lane Fox's *Pagans and Christians*, Peter Brown's *The Body and Society* and Averil Cameron's *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire* are notable products of this trend.¹⁰ If both theologians and historians are to write responsibly about questions of gender and the divine in Judaism and Christianity, they need an awareness of the gendered and religious contexts in which these religions grew and flourished. Comparisons are often drawn with classical Greek practices, but as a working method this has its weaknesses. It seems to assume (without proof) that there has been no change over hundreds of years. It is not sensitive to the aspects of classical culture which are the focus of particularly close attention in the Greek world of the Roman empire. My study of Greek texts of the second and third centuries A.D. should provide a closer, better, basis for comparison.

A considerable problem is what form this comparison might hope to take. What are the connections of Jewish and Christian authors with writers on Greek

⁹ Riet Van Bremen, 'Women and wealth', in Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt (eds.), *Images of Women in Antiquity* (second edition, London, 1993), pp. 223-42; Mary Taliaferro Boatwright makes the same argument in the case of one substantial female benefactor, 'Plancia Magna of Perge: women's roles and status in Roman Asia Minor', in Sarah B. Pomeroy (ed.), *Women's History and Ancient History* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina and London, 1991), pp. 249-72.

¹⁰ Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century A.D. to the Conversion of Constantine* (Harmondsworth, 1986); Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: men, women and sexual renunciation in early Christianity* (New York, 1988); Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire: the development of Christian discourse* (Berkeley and London, 1991).

religion? Secure in their long Jewish tradition, Jewish writers like those of the midrashim and Talmuds had little cause to interact directly with Greek religious culture (see below). Christian writers of the second and third centuries demonstrably used Greek writings in their own works. The eirenic second-century apologist Justin Martyr could discuss Platonic and Stoic ideas to show how Christianity was the final revelation of the truth partially perceived by Greek philosophers. Conversely, another second-century apologist, the polemical Tatian, could inveigh against Greek literature, against Greek culture, seeking to separate Christianity from the errors of the past and of contemporary society. In the case of hostile writers like Tatian, a good knowledge of what the Greek texts say is important for us in detecting the spin put on them by Christian writers: it is vital not to look at Greek religious texts through the interested purposes of Christian writers. Past diagnoses of a 'decline' in Greek religion of this period stem from the enduring polemic directed against it by some of the apologists of the Early Church. But my analysis of my chosen texts should have demonstrated the rude health of Greek religion in the second and third centuries - they are confident texts.

It is important to consider which Greek texts are used by early Christian writers. For example, are they familiar with all the texts they quote or do they just have a handbook of selected highlights of Greek literature to hand?¹¹ And do they quote from classical or contemporary texts? It is striking that none of my particular texts appear to have been used by Christian writers. Plutarch's Pythia and that of Origen in his *Against Celsus*, for instance, are very different women, very different prophets.¹² Origen's Pythia is much more the prophet of the classical Greek period. In his discussion of the Pythia (7.1-6) he quotes from Plato, and other references to her in the same work quote prophecies recorded in Herodotos' *Histories*.¹³ The fifth-century Socrates 'Scholasticus' knows of Heliodoros' *An Ethiopian Story* but could not be said to use it in his work. It seems that early Christian writers respond to texts from the Greek past rather than the Greek present, which may reflect their own education, their use of florilegia, their rhetorical purposes in wanting to develop or attack the very foundations of Greek culture.¹⁴ So my study of my chosen texts does not on the whole provide a basis for comparison with the presentation of the same texts in Christian authors: its use must rather be to illustrate second and third-century

¹¹ See Henry Chadwick, s.v. 'florilegium', in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* vol. 7 (Stuttgart, 1969), pp. 1133-59.

¹² See above, chapter four, section I.ii.

¹³ *Against Celsus* 2.9 quotes Herodotos, *Histories* 1.47; 3.26 quotes 4.14-15; 8.46 seems to refer to 6.66. For a study offering detailed comparisons between Plutarch's ideas and those found in early Christian literature, see H. D. Betz (ed.), *Plutarch's Theological Writings and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden, 1975), ch. 2, 'De Iside et Osiride', ch. 4, 'De Pythiae oraculis', ch. 5, 'De defectu oraculorum'.

¹⁴ See Henry Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition: studies in Justin, Clement and Origen* (Oxford, 1966).

Greek society and its religious discourse on gender and the divine as the context in which Christian writers wrote.

When we want to raise the question of the influence of Jewish and Christian authors on contemporary Greek writers, the way forward is if anything harder. By the second century A.D., 'Christianity had begun to achieve a certain measure of public visibility'.¹⁵ But my authors do not respond directly to Jewish and Christian people or their texts - not even Heliodoros, my latest, third-century, author. And in general it is unclear how much interplay there is between Greek and Christian religious writing in the second and third centuries (by the fourth century it is clearly apparent). Do the two traditions pursue parallel or very different paths?

Philostratos' *Life of Apollonios of Tyana* neatly illustrates the problem of tracing Christian influence on Greek religious writing. Written c. A.D. 220, the *Life* portrays the first-century A.D. Apollonios as a Neopythagorean philosopher and godly prophet and miracle-worker. The difficulty comes in detecting Philostratos' motives for writing his account. Was he setting up a model of a Greek holy man, in opposition to Christian accounts of the life of Jesus? Ewen Bowie points out Apollonios' vigorous defences of Hellenic religion and culture (*Life* 6.19, 20), which have a much smaller part in the pre-Philostratos tradition.¹⁶ Certainly just decades after the *Life's* composition, this seems to have been the motive ascribed to Philostratos, or at least the purpose to which his text was put. One of Eusebius' earliest works of c. A.D. 303, *Against Hierokles*, attacks Philostratos' *Life* and the Apollonios it depicts because of comparisons drawn by the said Hierokles, a provincial governor, between Apollonios and Christ; Hierokles ridiculed Jesus as a brigand and proclaimed the superiority of Apollonios' miracles.¹⁷ But whether Philostratos deliberately opposed Apollonios to Jesus, or was simply later thought to have done so, is unclear.

I would suggest that my study has the potential to help thinking about the Jewish and Christian religions in this period in two ways. First, in terms of method. How can one study Jews and Christians in this period? There is the well-known, much-used empirical method espoused, for instance, by Robin Lane Fox in his *Pagans and Christians*, which looks at religion in terms of its institutions, its practitioners, and so forth. The advantages and disadvantages of such an approach were discussed in my Introduction. But is there the potential for investigating Judaism and Christianity in a more text-respectful manner? Can more or different

¹⁵ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*, p. xiii.

¹⁶ Ewen Bowie examines Philostratos' reworking of the Apollonios tradition, which has a bearing on Philostratos' purposes in writing, 'Apollonios of Tyana: tradition and reality', *A.N.R.W.* II.16.2 (1978), pp. 1652-99. On the *Life* in general, see Graham Anderson, *Philostratos: biography and belles lettres in the third century A.D.* (London, 1986), pp. 121-239.

¹⁷ Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), pp. 164-7.

things be learned by giving consideration to the autonomy of individual texts, their perspectives, the thought patterns they reveal? In other words, what happens when the methods of this study of Greek religious writers are applied to their Jewish and Christian counterparts? The second contribution this study may make to the study of things Jewish and Christian is in terms of identifying common themes, common areas of concern: my Greek religious texts may not refer directly to Jewish and Christian texts, but do they share the same concerns? To what extent may ideological oppositions be masking shared assumptions?

i. Jewish texts

In the early centuries of the Christian era, Judaism was no more monolithic than Christianity. Just as there were different Christianities there were differing Judaisms, represented for example in the texts of the Alexandrian Jew Philo, the Essene writings of Qumran, the philosophers who produced the Mishnah.¹⁸ But not all Judaisms have left textual evidence of their world view and way of life. In the diaspora especially, epigraphic and archaeological evidence are all that remains, such as the great synagogue of the third to fourth centuries at Sardis. It was Rabbinic Judaism, flourishing alongside early Christianity, that generated the important Jewish texts of the period. The rabbis were active in Palestine and Babylonia from the second to sixth centuries A.D., and during this time two major collections of Jewish literature were produced – the midrashim and the Talmuds. The formative status of this material and its writers can probably be likened to the influence of the Church Fathers and their writings on the Early Church.¹⁹

So text-based investigations of rabbinic Jewish thought and practice are eminently possible, and indeed have long been a focus for scholarly effort. One leading scholar who has worked with these texts, for example, is Jacob Neusner.²⁰ A younger scholar who has approached the texts with the principles of New Historicism in mind is Daniel Boyarin. He seeks to discover tensions in them, and through these tensions identify key – if problematic – issues for the Rabbis and their followers. He writes,

My practice here will be to look at texts as (necessarily failed) attempts to propose utopian solutions to cultural tensions. The tensions are what interest me, so using the sensibilities and even techniques of the various hermeneutics

¹⁸ For works which emphasize and investigate Jewish pluralism, see Ernest Frerichs, William Scott Green, Jacob Neusner (eds.), *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge, 1987), and Judith Lieu, John North, Tessa Rajak (eds.), *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire* (London and New York, 1992).

¹⁹ For an investigation into the similarities and differences in the development of rabbinic Judaism and the Early Church, see Hershel Shanks (ed.), *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: a parallel history of their origins and early development* (Washington, 1992).

²⁰ See, for example, his *The Canonical History of Ideas: the place of the so-called tannaite midrashim* (Atlanta, Georgia, 1990).

of suspicion, I hope that by observing the effects of the energy expended by the culture in attempting to suppress or (put more positively) deal with the tensions, the underlying strains and pressures can be brought to light.²¹

It is precisely the ability to find these valuable signs of tension, of conflict in the system, that is the advantage of reading entire texts.

If such is the scope for text-based explorations, what is the scope for work on questions of gender in these texts?²² As in other fields of study, the last ten to fifteen years have seen an increasing interest in Jewish women of the first few centuries A.D., often taking the rabbinic texts as its basis.²³ To take just two examples. Judith Romney Wegner's book, *Chattel or Person?*, is a feminist approach to the Mishnah. As she writes, 'if the text is the work of men, women must deconstruct it to expose the motivations that subordinate women to men's needs. If the text is the word of God, women must explore whether gynecentric exegesis yields results different from those obtained by androcentric interpretation'.²⁴ She points out the tensions in the thinking of the sages who wrote the Mishnah, who 'sometimes perceive woman as self (a being who shares a common humanity with man) and sometimes as other (a creature that can legally be handled in ways not acceptable when dealing with men)'.²⁵ Woman, it seems, is 'other' by virtue of her reproductive capacity and her sexuality, both of which men seek to control: she is both a chattel and a person, a 'logical anomaly' Léonie Archer's *Her Price is Beyond Rubies* traces the social and legal position of Jewish women of Graeco-Roman Palestine through their life-cycle, from birth and education, marriage and motherhood, to death. She discerns the ascription of innate gender characteristics to women, diagnoses Jewish society's culturally constructed fear of women, and the social needs which such ascription and construction served. However, as she herself notes, her study does not explicitly analyse social forms,

²¹ Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: reading sex in Talmudic culture* (Berkeley and Oxford, 1993), p. 15. It is of course Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza who first advocated a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (exposing the misogynistic male rhetoric) then a 'hermeneutics of remembrance', in her book *In Memory of Her: a feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins* (New York, 1983).

²² I choose to survey the present state of play in Jewish studies, rather than provide a personal analysis of the issues, owing to a lack of competence in the field. I do think that it is worth making the attempt to locate gender and Jewish texts into an analysis of gender and the divine in the early centuries A.D., rather than leave them out as some sort of 'suppressed middle', as for instance Robin Lane Fox's *Pagans and Christians* does to some extent.

²³ For example, Léonie J. Archer, *Her Price is Beyond Rubies: the Jewish woman in Graeco-Roman Palestine*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 60, (Sheffield, 1990); Peter J. Haas, *Recovering the Role of Women: power and authority in Rabbinic Jewish society* (Atlanta, Georgia, 1992); Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine: an inquiry into image and status* (Tübingen, 1995) and Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person? The status of women in the Mishnah* (New York and Oxford, 1988). One epigraphic study is Bernadette J. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: inscriptional evidence and background issues*, *Brown Judaic Studies* 36 (Chico, California, 1982).

²⁴ Judith Romney Wegner, *Chattel or Person?*, p. vi, and see ch. 8, 'The Mishnaic woman and feminist theory'.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 8.

language and gender construction its focus is firmly on women alone. Only very recently does the emphasis seem to be shifting from women to gender.

Daniel Boyarin's book, *Carnal Israel*, seeks to explore gender, the ideology of sexuality and the body in the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds (which comprise two main strands of material, *halakha* or religious law, and *aggada* or narrative, especially biographical stories about the Rabbis). His central thesis is 'that rabbinic Judaism ... was substantially differentiated in its representations and discourses of the body and sexuality from Greek-speaking Jewish formations, including much of Christianity'.²⁶ Religious meaning for rabbinic Jews was invested in the body, he argues, whereas for other religious traditions in Judaism and Christianity it was invested in the soul. Thus virginity, prized in a few select Greek religious settings, and much more widely in Christianity, was highly problematic in rabbinic Judaism. Sexuality and procreation were acts of religious significance for rabbinic Jews to deny them was to deny God.

Carnal Israel is a good example of the results that can be achieved with the right questions and the right methods. Both complement those used in my own study. Direct comparisons between the rabbinic, Greek and Christian traditions risk superficiality, but on the basis of Boyarin's text-based inquiry, it seems fair to note the areas of concern expressed in the Talmuds. Gender is constructed heavily on the basis of bodily sexual difference, as is religious identity.²⁷

Some Christians (whether Jewish or Gentile) could declare that there is no Greek or Jew, no male or female. No rabbinic Jew could do so, because people are bodies, not spirits, and precisely bodies are marked as male or female, and also marked, through bodily practices and techniques such as circumcision and food taboos, as Jew or Greek as well.

So social customs such as marriage have a direct bearing on gender and religious identity. Boyarin's fifth chapter analyses the romantic story told of the marriage of Rabbi Akiva. This rabbi lived in the second century A.D., but the fourth or fifth-century A.D. narrative has little to do with the actuality of his life and much with contemporary Babylonian marriage and sexual practices. Just so did Heliodoros' novel use a different timeframe to explore contemporary issues (although with entirely fictional central characters).

However, Boyarin's assessment of rabbinic ideas of gender is not undisputed. Lawrence Hoffman's 1996 *Covenant of Blood* makes a direct challenge to some of his conclusions.²⁸ Rather than undertake a study of women with some bearing on men, Hoffman approaches from the opposite angle, focusing on the male ritual of circumcision and its consequences for our understanding of gender in the rabbinic

²⁶ Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, p. 5.

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁸ Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood: circumcision and gender in Rabbinic Judaism* (Chicago and London, 1996).

texts. He claims to use the techniques of 'close reading' of the texts, and interdisciplinary methods drawn from the human sciences. A key strand of his argument contrasts the blood of circumcision (with its salvific role) with menstrual blood, showing how they symbolize a gender dichotomy within the rabbinic system, and explaining the marginalization of women in rabbinic law.²⁹ In Hoffman's analysis, official rabbinic culture is unavoidably male-dominated, constructed around the male lifeline with no idea of a female lifeline. He presents his work as 'a ready contrast to his [Boyarin's] attempt to blunt rabbinic androcentrism', writing that,

the essence of my argument is that precisely because rabbinic Judaism was a religion of the body, men's and women's bodies became signifiers of what the Rabbis accepted as gender essence, especially with regard to the binary opposition of men's blood drawn during circumcision and women's blood that flows during menstruation. Gender opposition remains absolutely central in my reading of rabbinic texts.³⁰

Unlike Greek religious texts, but like Christian texts, the complexity of the debate in trying to establish the relationship between gender and religion is deepened by the ongoing religious dialogue of faith in Judaism; it is the openly avowed aim of both Boyarin and Hoffman to evaluate the implications of the rabbinic texts for modern Jewish men and women.

ii. Christian texts

The degree to which early Christianity is text-based and peculiarly susceptible to analyses in terms of text has been emphasized by Averil Cameron.³¹

Christianity is concerned with texts to an exceptional degree – not only with the establishment and interpretation of a canonical set of texts, but also, from its Judaic background, with the practice of teaching and preaching, and finally with the articulation, both oral and written, of a complex body of doctrine.

In her own chapter in *History as Text*, she draws out the associations she sees between Christian and other religious writings.³² There are, she writes,

close connections between Christian writings on women, sex and virginity and classical and other texts dealing with the same themes, or using the same metaphorical language. Christian writers were not after all detached completely from their surrounding culture; thus there will inevitably be common ground. The virgin choir in Methodius' *Symposium* ... had its ancestors not only in Philo's *Therapeutae* but also in the virgins of Greek ritual and myth.

In looking at Jewish texts I indicated how they have been and are being read with women and latterly gender questions to the fore. In considering Christian texts, I propose to take a rather different approach. Women in the Early Church have certainly been a focus of recent studies, but in assessing the potential for studying

²⁹ *ibid.*, ch. 6, 'Wine, blood, and salvation in Rabbinic Judaism' and ch. 7, 'Blood, salvation, works, and faith; circumcision in early Judaism and Christianity'.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 23.

³¹ Averil Cameron (ed.), *History as Text: the writing of ancient history* (London, 1989), pp. 5-6.

³² *ibid.*, ch. 8, 'Virginity as metaphor: women and the rhetoric of early Christianity', p. 182.

Christian texts with gender and the divine in mind, I shall take one extended example and follow it through myself.³³ The *Acts of Paul and Thekla* are an excellent place to explore a textual analysis of themes of gender and the divine in a Christian context. Thekla is perhaps the most popular and influential female figure in early Christianity. She is first mentioned by Tertullian in his treatise *On Baptism* (17.4-5), written at the end of the second century. His purpose is to condemn the example of Thekla being used as justification for women baptizing and preaching. In dismissing Thekla's story, he says it was written by a priest from Asia Minor (although it is not entirely clear whether this refers to the apocryphal *Acts of Paul* as a whole, rather than the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* which form just a part of them). Tertullian is usually quoted in support of a late second-century date for the *Acts of Paul and Thekla*, but he is also useful for his attitude towards her story.³⁴ Thekla the self-baptized and her preaching gift are rejected.

It would be easy to dismiss Tertullian's disapproval. After all, Thekla went on to enjoy great popularity in the Church. The manuscript tradition alone attests to this. Over forty versions of her story are now known to be extant, and they exist in six languages – Greek, Latin, Syrian, Armenian, Slavonic and perhaps Arabic. Her *Life* and stories of her miracles were current in the fourth and fifth centuries.³⁵ Also in Late Antiquity, she was the subject of a prophetic shrine, the sender of prophetic dreams.³⁶ But there are significant differences between the Thekla of later cult and the Thekla of the apocryphal *Acts*. It is the thesis of Kerstin Aspegren that, 'When later on she is described in the Christian tradition, which often happens, her activities, preaching and baptizing are passed by in silence, and since she was wise, chaste and patient, she stands out as an example of the perfect, that is the manly, woman'.³⁷ Thekla then is a woman for her times, changing as they do. So what might the Thekla of the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* have to say about contemporary early Christian

³³ Such studies on women in the Early Church include Roger Gryson, *Le ministère des femmes dans l'église ancienne* (Gembloux, 1972); Judith Lang, *Ministers of Grace: women in the Early Church* (Slough, 1989); Jo Ann McNamara, *A New Song: women in the first three Christian centuries* (New York, 1983); Ben Witherington III, *Women in the Earliest Churches* (Cambridge, 1988).

³⁴ For instance, Tertullian's mention of Thekla is seen as an unproblematic indication of a second-century date for the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* in J. Quasten, *Patrology* vol. 1 (Utrecht-Antwerp, 1950), p. 131 (where before A.D. 190 is suggested), and in the more recent Angelo Di Berardino (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Early Church* vol. 2 (Eng. trans. Adrian Walford, Cambridge, 1992), where 'before A.D. 200' is specified, p. 659. But is the text we now have the text that Tertullian seems to be referring to in *On Baptism*? After all, as the *Encyclopedia of the Church* points out, vol. 1, p. 57, from the fourth century onwards the apocryphal *Acts*, including the *Acts of Paul*, were expurgated and rewritten to avoid the risk of heterodoxy and make them acceptable reading material for contemporary Christians.

³⁵ See Gilbert Dagron, *Vie et miracles de Sainte Thècle* (Brussels, 1978).

³⁶ Polymnia Athanassiadi, 'Dreams, theurgy and freelance divination: the testimony of Iamblichus', *J.R.S.* 83 (1993), notes how Christians introduced her cult to supersede the healing cult of Apollo Sarpedonios in Cilician Seleucia, p. 125.

³⁷ Kerstin Aspegren, *The Male Woman: a feminine ideal in the Early Church*, (ed.) René Kieffer (Stockholm, 1990), pp. 14-15.

perceptions of gender and the divine? The writer of her tale must both articulate his/her faith and relate it to the prevailing social discourse.³⁸

Thekla is in effect an escapee from the Greek religious world to the Christian. By following her transition from the one world to the other it might be possible to see some of the connections between them. But first a brief summary of her story as told in the *Acts*. Thekla is a young upper-class girl from Iconium, engaged to marry Thamyris. When Paul arrives in Iconium she is transfixed by his preaching, and breaks off her engagement. Her following Paul into gaol enrages Thamyris and her mother. Brought before the governor, Paul is cast out from the city and she is condemned to be burnt to death, but is saved by a miraculous rainstorm. Thekla is reunited with Paul and his supporters outside the city. Overcoming Paul's doubts, she cuts her hair and goes with him to Antioch. There she is assaulted by Alexander, an influential citizen, who brings her before the governor for the actions she committed against him in self-defence. Condemned to fight with wild beasts, she gains the interim protection of one Queen Tryphaina, a rich widow who has lost her only daughter. Twice Thekla is sent against the animals, only to be defended by a female lion. When the lion is killed, Thekla baptizes herself in a pool of dangerous seals, who are instantaneously killed by lightning. She continually receives the support of the women in the crowd; flames free her when she is bound before raging bulls. The torment stops when the important Queen Tryphaina faints. The governor questions Thekla about her salvation: she explains and is set free. She spends some days with Tryphaina before meeting up with Paul in Myra, leading a band of young men and women, herself dressed in a man's cloak. Paul commissions her to spread the word of God, so she returns to Iconium and then goes on to Seleucia. There are three endings in the surviving codices, all granting her a blessed death after a long life spent preaching God's message.

It is instructive to consider the approaches offered to the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* by two text-based studies, namely Kerstin Aspegren's *The Male Woman*, mentioned above, and Virginia Burrus' *Chastity as Autonomy*.³⁹ Aspegren chooses Thekla as the prime illustration of the argument driving her whole book, that the Christian Church believed a woman must become male to be perfect. Her first five chapters, on Plato, Aristotle, Stoicism, 'women's real position in classical and Hellenistic society' and Philo, are intended 'to show the fundamental patterns that had contributed to the feminine ideal of the early church'.⁴⁰ Note that the only contemporary parallels offered to Christian material are those of the rather atypical

³⁸ To paraphrase Averil Cameron, *History as Text*, p. 6.

³⁹ Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy: women in the stories of the apocryphal Acts* (Lewiston/Queenston, 1987).

⁴⁰ Aspegren, *The Male Woman*, p. 9. Comment on Aspegren's work must be tempered by the fact that it was incomplete upon her death, although its structure and main argument were firmly in place.

Jew Philo: no second or third-century A.D. Greek religious material is called into play. The remaining chapters comment on 'the Thekla figure', advance the Christian imperative for the female to become male, and re-examine the next substantial literary portrayal of Thekla in literature, as one of the ten wise virgins at Methodius' *Symposium* (c. A.D. 300).

Aspegren's solution to the problem of how to relate the *Thekla Acts* narrative to its cultural context is to argue that whilst Thekla is 'in all essentials a literary character', she is nevertheless 'historically and psychologically reliable'.⁴¹ She notes the parallels between the *Acts* and Hellenistic novels and folklore motifs, yet writes, 'the narrative of Thekla is also a unique story in which both women in general and Thekla in particular present themselves in a way that is remarkable for those times. The clichés characteristic of the genre are then in fact transformed and serve the purpose of relating a special story of the fate of an individual woman'.⁴² Thekla is treated as being as good as a real historical woman, who becomes male to fulfil her Christian mission: 'Thekla places transcendence before immanence, universality before individuality, which is an outlook that has been considered throughout the ages to be foreign to the female mind'.⁴³ The emphasis on Thekla's realism is valuable for the contemporary character it allows to her narrative, although Aspegren does not perhaps draw out this point enough: Thekla is a woman of the second century, more than just a mishmash of Greek novel and folklore. How satisfactory the diagnosis of Thekla's male identity is remains to be seen.

Virginia Burrus' book takes as its subject matter a group of apocryphal *Acts* from the late second and early third centuries, some seven stories from the *Acts* of Andrew, John, Paul, and Thomas, chosen 'to complement and correct androcentric portrayals of early Christian women's chastity'.⁴⁴ Burrus' main argument is that in chastity, women find independence from the oppressive authority of husband or political ruler. Chastity, she argues, empowers women, presenting this as a rather different perspective to women seen as controlled by the Church *via* chastity. For her, the *Acts* offer 'a rare glimpse of a woman's point of view'.⁴⁵ Three of the book's four chapters are devoted to the question of the origins of the *Acts* – literature or folklore are the options examined. Only the fourth considers 'a socio-historical interpretation of the stories'. The questions of origin already have a substantial early twentieth-century scholarship behind them⁴⁶: Burrus' survey and own analysis lead

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 102.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴⁴ Virginia Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy*, p. 4.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁴⁶ The question was first raised by Ernest von Dobschütz, 'Der Roman in der altchristlichen Literatur', *Deutsche Rundschau* 111 (1902), pp. 87-116; the fullest treatment is Rosa Söder, *Die apokryphen Apostelgeschichten und die romanhafte Literatur der Antike* (Stuttgart, 1932).

her to conclude that the *Acts* are not fictional tales of romantic love, but written versions of oral stories. From here it is but a short step to finding that they 'are most appropriately viewed as folk-stories which were originally told by women and which reflect significant social and psychological facts of these women's experience and outlook'.⁴⁷ I doubt the truth of this. Can there be a more helpful way to read the *Acts* than this insistence on women's experience?

I turn now to the text to examine the aspects which seem to me important for the connections between gender and the divine. We meet Paul before Thekla, on his journey to Iconium. His physical description is unpromising (φιλόδον τῇ κεφαλῇ, ἀγκύλον τὰς κνήμας, 'bald-headed, bandy-legged'), but his spiritual description is impressive: he is χάριτος πλήρη, 'full of grace', and 'Sometimes he seemed like a man, and sometimes he had the face of an angel' (3).⁴⁸ Paul is given hospitality at Onesiphoros' house, where he begins to preach what seems like his own version of the Beatitudes (5-6). 'Blessed are the pure in heart' it begins, in conventional Gospel fashion, but then it takes on a uniquely Pauline slant: 'Blessed are those who have kept the flesh chaste (μακάριοι οἱ ἀγνήν τὴν σάρκα τηρήσαντες), for they shall become a temple of God; blessed are the continent (μακάριοι οἱ ἐγκρατεῖς), for God shall speak with them; blessed are those who have kept aloof from this world, for they shall be pleasing to God; blessed are those who have wives as not having them, for they shall experience God'. Happiness is then ascribed to those who fear and know God, who have 'kept the baptism'. Paul's final blessing is for 'the bodies of the virgins (τὰ σώματα τῶν παρθένων), for they shall be well pleasing to God and shall not lose the reward of their chastity. For the word of the Father shall become to them a work of salvation in the day of the Son, and they shall have rest for ever and ever' The theme of virginity, its godliness, and its eternal rewards is at the forefront of Paul's preaching, and established early in the story.

Thekla, sitting by her window, ἤκουεν ἱυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας τὸν περὶ ἀγνείας λόγον, 'listens day and night to the discourse of virginity' (7). But her interest in Christian virginity compromises her virginity as a good young Greek girl. Her mother, Theokleia, describes to Thamyris (8) how 'looking earnestly as if upon some pleasant sight she is devoted to a foreigner teaching deceitful and artful discourses, so that I wonder how a virgin of her great modesty (ἡ τοιαύτη αἰδῶς τῆς παρθένου) exposes herself to such extreme discomfort'. But Thekla is restraining her fascination she does not leave her mother's house to go to hear Paul in person, although the sight of other women and virgins doing so fills her with

⁴⁷ Burrus, *Chastity as Autonomy*, p. 3.

⁴⁸ The Greek text is that of R. A. Lipsius and M. Bonnet (eds.), *Acta Apostolorum Apocrypha* vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1891), pp. 235-72. Translations are taken from James K. Elliot, *The Apocryphal New Testament: a collection of apocryphal Christian literature in an English translation* (Oxford, 1993).

longing to do likewise (7). It is perhaps significant that Thekla has no father in the story: the man to whom Theokleia must appeal for help is Thekla's betrothed. This sets up a sort of competition between the two men as rivals for her affection. Theokleia's account of Thekla's rapt attention certainly has an erotic edge to it (9): 'my daughter, clinging to the window like a spider, lays hold of what is said by him with a strange eagerness and fearful emotion (κρατείται ἐπιθυμῖα καινὴ καὶ πάθει δεινῷ). For the virgin looks eagerly at what is said by him and has been captivated' Thamyris greets Thekla with a kiss but at the same time is disturbed by her powerful emotion for Paul (10).

The competition between Paul and Thamyris also contrasts two destinies for Thekla – virtuous wife of the leading man of the city, or unmarried outcast from society. When Thekla will not answer Thamyris but remains intent on Paul's preaching, the household's reaction is to mourn (10). Thamyris grieves for a wife, Theokleia for a child, the female slaves for a mistress. In his love for Thekla, Thamyris seeks out Paul's two hypocritical travelling companions to find out more about Paul's teaching: 'I am greatly distressed about Thekla, because she so loves the stranger and I am prevented from marrying' (13). Paul is the stranger, the foreigner (8, 13, 16, 19): in being attracted to him, Thekla is upsetting the ways of the city. She is of an excellent family – she should marry into another, and so continue the life and traditions of the two families and their city.⁴⁹ And it is before the city authorities that Paul's companions persuade Thamyris to bring Paul. Thamyris accuses him on two counts of deception – of the city of the Iconians first, and of his betrothed bride second (15): Paul defends himself and explains his teachings in front of the proconsul Castellius (16-17).

Thekla's loyalties are strikingly revealed when secretly by night she visits Paul in prison to hear his teachings. There she is found, 'chained to him by affection', καὶ ἐξεληθόντες ἐκεῖθεν τοὺς ὄχλους ἐπεσπάσαντο καὶ τῷ ἡγεμόνι ἐνεφάνισαν (19). She is sustained in her faith by Paul's presence. When he is taken from the prison, she stays 'riveted to the place' where he had sat (20). When both are brought before Castellius, she is asked why she will not marry Thamyris 'according to the law of the Iconians': her response is non-verbal – she looks earnestly at Paul, ἢ δὲ εἰστήκει Παύλῳ ἀτεινίζουσα. Enraged, Thekla's mother calls for her to be burnt as an example: 'Burn the wicked one; burn her who will not marry in the midst of the theatre, that all the women who have been taught by this man may be afraid' (20). Her daughter's misbehaviour as a virgin, and the precedent she might set in the city,

⁴⁹ Thekla's high social status seems to me to have everything to do with the effect of her actions thus have on the city, her representation of the success or failure of Greek culture. It is not to make the story more glamorous for lower-class readers/listeners, as Virginia Burrus suggests, *Chastity as Autonomy*, p. 100.

outweigh all else. It is Thekla who must die for her crimes against family, city, religion (although this latter is strangely never made explicit) Paul receives a lesser punishment of being scourged then cast out of the city (21).

It is worth considering to whom Paul's preaching has appealed in Iconium. Theokleia cites other women, but men too have followed him. As Theokleia chided Thamyris at an earlier point (9), 'this man will overturn (ἀνασείει) the city of the Ionians and your Thekla too; for all the women and the young men go in to be taught by him'. Thamyris himself then enquires of Paul's companions, 'tell me who is this man among you, leading astray the souls of young men and deceiving virgins so that they should not marry but remain as they are?' (11). Paul's hospitality in Iconium is provided by one man, Onesiphoros, and his household. The same pattern continues for the rest of the text. The Christian message attracts both men and women, but it is the effect of its appeal to women that is brought out and emphasized.

At Thekla's burning, there occurs an important development in her relationship with Paul. As Thekla searches for him in the crowded theatre (21), 'she saw the Lord sitting in the likeness of Paul and said, "As if I were unable to endure, Paul has come to look after me" And she gazed upon him with great earnestness, but he went up into heaven'. Paul's godly identity is fully revealed. He was originally introduced to us as half-man, half-angel: now in his physical likeness as well as in his words he directly channels God to Thekla. It is to God in Paul that Thekla has responded. Her love for Paul is her love for God. The miraculous storm that saves Thekla from her pyre indicates the close relationship between Thekla and God: he has compassion on her (22).

On her escape, Thekla goes in search of Paul, who with Onesiphoros and his family has been praying and fasting for her in a new tomb out of town. Thekla is quite explicit in her first open address to God (24), 'I praise you that you have saved me from the fire so that I may see Paul again'. She is determined to go where he leads (25), περικαρούμαι καὶ ἀκολουθήσω σοι ὅπου δᾶν πορεύῃ, 'I will cut off my hair and I shall follow you wherever you go'. But despite her offer to appear superficially as a man, Paul is not convinced. He is afraid her beauty will still cause trouble for her; strikingly he is also afraid she will not be able to resist the temptation of a desirable suitor again, that she will become δειλανδρήσης, 'mad after men'. In response, Thekla requests baptism, Μόνον δός μοι τὴν ἐν Ἐριστῷ σφραγίδα, καὶ οὐχ ἄψεταιί μοι πειρασμός, 'Only give me the seal in Christ, and no temptation will touch me'. And Paul accepts this. For them both, her baptism, the confirmation of her dedication to God, will remove her from the temptations she is exposed to as a beautiful young woman.

Paul and Thekla travel on to Antioch together, where Alexander is attracted by her. Now it is Thekla who is τὴν ξένην ... τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δούλην, 'the stranger ...

the servant of God' (26). Thekla is still very much a woman – attractive enough to merit Alexander's attention, and woman enough to humiliate him for his impotency by making him look a fool in the street. It is because she, a woman, has shamed his manly pride as an influential citizen of Antioch that he brings her before the governor where she is condemned to the wild beasts. It seems to be purely this male-female conflict that lands Thekla in trouble – no street preaching, no declaration of her Christian faith (although see what chapter 28 says, below). I stress Thekla as a woman in the face of modern interpretations that see her as 'a male woman' (Aspegren, above), as 'an honorary man'.⁵⁰ Paul treats her as a woman, Alexander treats her as a woman; it is as a woman that she will undergo her torment and eventual release.

One of the points in the argument that makes the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* a women's story is the number of Thekla's female supporters. Certainly they really are very prominent. When Thekla is first condemned to the beasts, the women of the city cry out before the tribunal, 'Evil judgement! Impious judgement!' (27). When Thekla asks to remain ἀγνή, pure, chaste, before her ordeal, she is taken under the wing of the widowed Queen Tryphaina, to whom she increasingly becomes a consolation for her dead daughter, Falkonilla. So Thekla is supported by women, takes her place in a female household – and even wins the protection of the female lion she is sent to fight. The lion merely licks her feet, and the women and children repeatedly cry, ὦ θεέ, ἀνοσία κρίσις γίνεται ἐν τῇ πόλει ταύτῃ, 'O God, outrageous things take place in this city' (28). Are they objecting to her treatment as a woman at the hands of Alexander, at the hands of the city authorities? Or are they appealing to her God? A short, mysterious sentence says, ἡ δὲ αἰτία τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς αὐτῆς ἦν Ἱερόσυλος, 'And the charge on her inscription was "Sacrilegious"' (28); this is the first charge we have heard against her as a Christian. Thekla is returned to the charge of Tryphaina, who has received a dream in which her daughter asked her to shelter Thekla, so that she should pray for her 'to come to the place of the just'.

Thekla's femaleness is still to the fore on her second encounter with the wild beasts. Tryphaina mourns for Thekla's beauty (29), as does the governor (34). Thekla herself prays for Tryphaina, because of her compassion and 'because she kept me pure' (31). The spectators are described as τοῦ δήμου καὶ τῶν γυναικῶν, 'the people and the women' (32), some shouting 'Away with this sacrilegious person', others calling down destruction on the city for this iniquity. The female lion defends Thekla against the bears but dies fighting a male lion – to the distress of the women in the crowd. At this crucial juncture, as more animals are let in against her, Thekla baptizes herself in a pool of seals – and is surrounded by fire, keeping away the wild

⁵⁰ Averil Cameron, *History as Text*, p. 194.

beasts and covering her nakedness. The women distract some of the animals with their perfumes: another divine miracle protects Thekla from enraged bulls. When the influential Tryphaina, relation of Caesar, faints, the torture is halted. Alexander pleads for Thekla's release - once more her behaviour is threatening the city (36).

Before the governor, Thekla explains about the God who has saved her and the truth of her faith is recognized. Representing the city, the governor issues an edict that 'the pious Thekla, servant of God' be released. The women join Thekla in her faith, praising God, 'One is the God, who saved Thekla', and highly significantly they shake the city by their voices, Αἱ δὲ γυναῖκες πάσαι ἔκραξαν φωνῇ μεγάλη καὶ ὡς ἐξ ἑνὸς στόματος ἔδωκαν αἶνον τῷ θεῷ λέγουσαι Εἷς θεὸς ὁ Θέκλαν σώσας, ὥστε ἀπὸ τῆς φωνῆς σεισθῆναι πᾶσαν τὴν πόλιν (38).

After staying a week with Tryphaina, instructing her and her household in God's ways, Thekla leaves in search of Paul. Now she travels in the guise of a man, wearing a cloak she has altered to look like a man's, ἀναζωσαμένη καὶ ῥάψασα τὸν χιτῶνα εἰς ἐπενδύτην σχήματι ἀνδρικῷ ἀπῆλθεν ἐν Μύροις, leading a group of young men and women (40). No longer does she need Paul's support, but has come to tell him of her baptism. She does not stay with him in Myra, but returns to her home city, with Paul's injunction, Ὑπαγε καὶ δίδασκε τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, 'Go, and teach the word of God' (41). Her identification with God in Paul, rather than Paul as a man, is complete when she returns to Onesiphoros' house, where she first heard him preach, to thank God for her salvation. She is no longer to be regarded as a fiancée Thamyris is dead but she is still a daughter, visiting her mother. From there, in the text's shortest ending of just one sentence, she travels to Seleucia where she 'enlightened many by the word of God' before resting 'in a glorious sleep' (43). Her preaching activities are not the focus of this version.

In codices G and M, the longest ending, Thekla lives in a cave outside Seleucia, where some of the well-born women go to her to hear of God's miracles. Many join her in an ascetic life. She is especially skilled in healing the sick, which brings the anger of Seleucia's doctors upon her. They react with an entirely Greek-religious mindset. Αὕτη ἡ παρθένος ἱερὰ τυγχάνει τῆς μεγάλης θεᾶς Ἀρτέμιδος· καὶ εἴ τι ἂν αἰτήσῃ αὐτήν, ἀκούει αὐτῆς ὡς παρθένου οὔσης, καὶ φιλοῦσαν αὐτήν πάντες οἱ θεοί, 'This holy virgin has influence upon the great goddess Artemis and if she ask anything of her she hears her, being a virgin herself, and all the gods love her' They decide to pay to have Thekla raped, on the grounds that neither Artemis or the other gods would pay her any attention when she should no longer be a virgin. When the hired rapists arrive, Thekla offers this prayer: 'let them not insult my virginity (τὴν παρθενίαν μου) which for your name's sake I have preserved till now because I love you and desire you and adore you, the Father,

and the Son, and the Holy Ghost for ever'. A crack in the rock appearing, Thekla disappears to glory.⁵¹

The ending of these codices I find particularly important for our understanding of Thekla. To the Greek doctors, she appears as nothing other than that familiar creature of my study, the virgin female priest. It is by virtue of her virginity that she is thought to serve Artemis, to receive special favour and healing powers. The destruction of this physical quality, regardless of Thekla's obedience or dedication, will break the close priest-god relationship. But the doctors are of course mistaken. Their question, though, of the relationship between virginity and godliness, is worth summing up in Thekla's proper Christian context.

Thekla's final prayer is extremely elucidating. To repeat, she tells God that she has preserved her virginity 'till now because I love you and desire you and adore you'. Thekla is very much the woman in her relationship with God; as a virgin she enjoys a special, dedicated love relationship with him. Her virginity is a sign of her commitment and closeness, just as it would have been had she really been a priest of Artemis. At first this intensity is focused on Paul, God's messenger, the closest Thekla can get to God – hence the uneasy hints of eroticism in the descriptions of her relationship with him. But after her baptism, when Thekla effectively meets directly with God, expressing the ultimate commitment, Paul ceases to be her focus. He is always her important guide, and she follows his injunction to go and preach – but now she draws directly on God for her strength, not his intermediary.

Thekla to me is no honorary man: her male disguise – short hair, a man's cloak – are expedients for travelling. They are practical rather than spiritual in their implications. In her relationship with God, Thekla is female; in her relationship with her fellow humans and even the animals, Thekla is female. This is surely what the support of the women in the crowd, of Tryphaina, of the female lion, stresses. This is how Alexander and his governor see her (a lovely young girl), this is how the Greek doctors see her even in her old age.

The *Acts of Paul and Thekla* enjoy an undoubted narrative simplicity in comparison with, for instance, Heliodoros' *An Ethiopian Story*. But how much do the apocryphal *Acts* owe to Greek novels? The search after origins – novel or folklore – seems to me rather misguided. Certainly, as has long been noticed, the similarities between the Greek novels and the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* and the other apocryphal *Acts* are striking: a central female protagonist of high birth and great beauty, her religious devotion, conflict between her desires and those of her family, dangerous

⁵¹ Codices A, B and C seem to contain an abbreviation of this tradition, with the bizarre addition of Thekla's journeying underground to see Paul in Rome after escaping her rapists: on finding him dead, she herself dies shortly afterwards and is buried two to three stades away.

travels, saving miracles.⁵² But similar incidents in the plot do not create an identical genre. Importantly, Greek novels and the apocryphal *Acts* are very different in their tone and purpose.⁵³ Although chastity figures prominently in both novels and *Acts*, it is of a very different nature. Chastity in the Greek novels may be vowed to the gods (as is the case with Charikleia's), but it is always temporary, awaiting resolution in the marriage of the novel's end; chastity in the *Acts* is a permanent state and goal in itself. This difference is linked to the educational and inspirational functions of the Christian *Acts*. This literature encourages the spread of the ascetic ideal, contains statements of the tenets of the Christian faith: Methodius, Gregory of Nyssa and Jerome all used the life of Thekla to promote their ideal of the Christian woman. For them, Thekla is a 'true' character, and thus influential, in a way the always fictional Charikleia never is. Greek novels would not appear to share the *Acts*' evangelistic bent. The apocryphal *Acts* no doubt use some of the plot conventions of Greek novels, but their particular form and message are very much products of their own Christian context.

Alongside the question of the *Acts*' relationship to Greek novels comes the question that has been raised concerning both bodies of writing – namely, were they the product of female authorship? I agree with Averil Cameron, when she writes of the *Acts of Paul and Thekla*, 'to argue ... that this and similar texts emanate from women's communities or even that they are written by women, is premature. Certainly we should be asking why this group of apocryphal writings lays emphasis on women; but it still has to be proven that one can argue so directly from text to "reality"'.⁵⁴ Women's authorship or women's readership is too simplistic.

The key aim must surely be to get behind the ideology of the text, to see what it can tell us about the community in which it was produced. Peter Brown makes a good point about the vulnerability of Thekla as virgin woman showing both the pressures that could be brought upon the Christian by the non-Christian world, and at the same time the supreme protective power of Christ. 'The impression of its [the world's] brutal power was heightened by being seen from the viewpoint of the most vulnerable of all its potential victims, the unprotected virgin woman. ... To the Christian reader, Thekla at her most exposed was the privileged vehicle of the indestructible power of Christ.'⁵⁵ Thekla's virginity makes her ideal demonstrative

⁵² See above, note 46. Seeking a new way ahead, Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, ch. 3, 'Stories people want', aims to explore the *Acts* as narratives in the context of 'pagan' narratives of the period, to see 'how the Christian system was articulated in the early period, and thus how it got itself established in the Roman Empire' (p. 119).

⁵³ These arguments are advanced by Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Life of Melania the Younger: introduction, translation and commentary* (New York, 1984), ch. 4, 'The Life of Melania the Younger and the Hellenistic romance: a genre exploration'.

⁵⁴ Averil Cameron, *History as Text*, p. 193.

⁵⁵ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society*, pp. 156-7.

material for the relationship between God and his worshippers – as seen in the virgin priests of Pausanias, and Plutarch's Pythia.

Thekla and the women who support her are excellent illustrations of the tensions in Greek cities at a time of change. They show the divisions on the level of the family and the city when the two are confronted with the new ways of the Christian strangers. The changing status of female virginity (from largely undesirable in a Greek context to prized in a Christian one) is a microcosm for much larger changes. In the *Acts of Paul and Thekla*, Christianity is seen as having a particular appeal to women. This was one of the objections to Christianity made by Celsus, as quoted by Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.55,

In private houses also we see wool-workers, cobblers, laundry-workers, and the most illiterate and bucolic yokels, who would not dare to say anything at all in front of their elders and more intelligent masters. But whenever they get hold of children in private and some stupid women with them, they let out some astounding statements as, for example, they must not pay any attention to their father and school-teachers, but must obey them ...

The quotation clearly shows how women (and children's) adherence to Christianity rents the social fabric. Patriarchy – male authority – is at stake, the very underpinning of the city and society. The social consequences of Christian proselytizing also threatened the city, with some Christians creating separate communities in which to live out their new faith.⁵⁶

As in my Greek religious texts, in the *Acts of Paul and Thekla* the female is still the best symbol, the best metaphor, for demonstrating the connection between humans and the divine. Thekla's independence from Paul, her divine mission to preach, are all the more striking because she is female – and this emphasizes the things that enabled that independence and mission – her complete commitment to God (demonstrated by the maintenance of her virginity) and above all the seal of that commitment in baptism. The importance of baptism, and the power it gives to the Christian life – enabling Thekla to go against the normal desires and life patterns of a young girl – are the perhaps neglected message of this text. And it is the close connection between the female and the divine that allows this message to be best conveyed.

⁵⁶ Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: proselytizing in the religious history of the Roman empire* (Oxford, 1994), ch. 5, 'Mission in the Early Church'. 'From a very early date there existed self-aware communities into which an outsider could be inducted. ... Precisely what they [early Christians] meant by "full conversion" doubtless varied, but there can be little doubt that they sometimes expected the convert to enter a new community', pp. 102-3.

Appendix One

Heliodoros' *An Ethiopian Story*: a Summary of the Plot

The intricacy of Heliodoros' plot, and the manner in which he chooses to tell it, are clearly seen in a summary of the text. The almost unavoidable length of such a summary from the first reveals the many convolutions in the tale before Theagenes and Charikleia are safely united at last. Heliodoros deliberately eschews a simple linear progression in his narrative. The following summary reflects his combination of direct narrative, and stories told by characters during that narrative, by indenting the major stories-within-stories.

Book One

Bandits discover a young man and woman (Theagenes and Charikleia) on an Egyptian beach amid sea of corpses and treasure. A second group of bandits drives off the first, captures Theagenes and Charikleia and takes them to island headquarters. Knemon, an Athenian, is assigned to look after them by the bandit chief (Thyamis).

Knemon's story: His young step-mother Demainete had desired him, but he had rebuffed her. She used her slave girl Thisbe to exact revenge, tricking Knemon into attacking his father, Aristippos. The Athenian Assembly exiled Knemon. He heard from a friend that Demainete regretted the loss of Knemon, resented Thisbe. In self-defence, Thisbe pretended to arrange for Demainete to sleep with Knemon, and for Aristippos apparently to find her in the act. Caught, Demainete committed suicide and Aristippos hoped to recall his son.

Thyamis dreams of Charikleia: Isis says, 'You shall have her and not have her' Thyamis explains to Theagenes and Charikleia that he is son of the high priest at Memphis, although usurped by his younger brother Petosiris. He has decided to marry Charikleia to continue his priestly line. The bandits approve. Charikleia says Theagenes is her brother and priest of Apollo, while she is priest of Artemis: she must lay down her priesthood at Apollo's shrine, as was her intention prior to the shipwreck, before she can marry. Thyamis agrees. Charikleia reassures Theagenes she will not marry Thyamis, hoping the gods will intervene.

The bandits are attacked and Thyamis orders Knemon to shut Charikleia in a cave for safety. As his men lose, Thyamis decides he must kill Charikleia to prevent the enemy capturing her. He kills a Greek-speaking woman in the cave. Thyamis is taken alive by bandits working for Petosiris.

Book Two

Knemon takes Theagenes to the cave, where they discover a female body. Theagenes is mourning Charikleia when she emerges from ^{the} back of ^{the} cave a torch reveals the body is Thisbe's.

She had fled Athens with her lover Nausikles of Naukratis, after Demainete's family demanded her as a witness to the trick which led to Demainete's death (which they have heard of from Nausikles' former mistress). Aristippos was exiled for not producing Thisbe as a witness. Knemon now explains that he is in Egypt looking for Thisbe so that his father's name can be cleared.

Thyamis' henchman, Thermouthis, had captured Thisbe as she was travelling with Nausikles and kept her for himself in the cave. He now returns and finds her dead. Thisbe is buried, then Knemon and Thermouthis set out to find news of Thyamis. Thermouthis is given the slip by Knemon, and soon dies of a snakebite.

Hurrying to meet Theagenes and Charikleia at an agreed rendezvous, Knemon comes across an old man who resembles a Greek priest (Kalasiris). Kalasiris takes Knemon to the merchant's (Nausikles') house, where he is staying, and tells his story. He begins by pouring a libation to Theagenes and Charikleia, 'his children'. Knemon reveals that they are alive and well. Kalasiris says Nausikles is away trying to recover Thisbe from the bandits.

Kalasiris' story: He had been high priest of Memphis but left his position and city to avoid sexual temptation. He travelled to Delphi as a godly place of refuge. There he received a prophecy from the Pythia, 'I shall lead you home to black-soiled Egypt'. He also met Charikles, priest of Apollo.

Charikles' story: His only daughter died on her wedding night, and his wife soon afterwards. Grief drove him abroad, eventually to Egypt. There a black-skinned man accosted him and offered him precious gems, in return for taking care of a seven year old girl (Charikleia). She had been exposed by her mother with the jewels and an embroidered band, rescued by the black-skinned man and given to shepherds to rear. Her beauty grew to be so conspicuous that her rescuer had brought her to Egypt in his capacity as Ethiopian ambassador, to find her safety and a new guardian. Charikles brought her back to Greece. She is now eminently marriageable but has dismayingly devoted herself to Artemis and virginity. Charikles implores Kalasiris to use his Egyptian wisdom to turn her mind to marriage.

As Charikles and Kalasiris were speaking, the Ainianes arrived from Thessaly on a sacred mission. Their leader was a descendant of Achilles, called

Theagenes. Charikles, Kalasiris and Theagenes were going towards the altar, where Charikleia as priest of Artemis was to assist in the ceremony, when the Pythia prophesied, 'One who starts in grace and ends in glory, another goddess-born ... to the black land of the Sun they will travel'.

Book Three

Knemon objects when Kalasiris passes over the details of the religious ceremony.

Kalasiris' story continues: He describes the sacrificial procession, the hymn, the fine figure of Theagenes, the even more beautiful vision of Charikleia. Theagenes had to light the altar fire with a torch given him by Charikleia, and in the exchange they fell in love. Charikles invited Kalasiris to visit Charikleia at home, where she was found languishing. In public Kalasiris diagnosed that she was suffering from the evil eye, in private he deduced lovesickness for Theagenes. Charikles and Kalasiris attended a party given by Theagenes, where he was also struck by the same evil eye. By night, Apollo and Artemis appeared to Kalasiris in his dreams entrusting Theagenes and Charikleia to his care, to return with them to Egypt. Kalasiris was wondering how to accomplish this when Theagenes arrived, to ask for help with his love for Charikleia. Kalasiris promised to help. Called by Charikles, Kalasiris also promised to help cure Charikleia's illness.

Book Four

Kalasiris continues: The religious celebrations ended with games. Contestants raced in armour to receive a torch and palm branch from Charikleia. Theagenes ran and won. Kalasiris visited Charikleia to rid her of the evil eye. She was not convinced by his remedies and he encouraged her to confide in him, which she said she would do the next day. Kalasiris prevented Theagenes from asking Charikles' permission to marry Charikleia, revealing she was engaged to her cousin. Charikles informed Kalasiris that doctors had diagnosed that Charikleia was in love, but not with whom. After Charikleia reacted adversely to the sight of her cousin, Kalasiris argued that he must see the embroidered band in order to help.

The band read: Persinna, Queen of Ethiopia, exposed her only child. Although her husband's child, the baby was white-skinned (the result of Persinna's looking at a portrait of Andromeda at the moment of conception) and she feared the baby would be thought illegitimate. The jewels with the baby included Persinna's engagement ring (*pantarbe*) as a recognition token.

Kalasis continues: He revisited Charikleia, who was embarrassed to speak of her love. She heard the band translated for the first time. Kalasis then told her that he had been sent by Persinna to seek her out and return her to Ethiopia. He persuaded her to pretend to marry her cousin, prevailing upon Charikles to give her the Ethiopian band and jewels as a dowry. He was on his way to the shrine of Apollo to seek further advice when a band of Phoenicians called him to join their sacrifice. They were to leave for Libya the following day and Kalasis begged passage with them to Sicily. Kalasis gave his instructions to Charikleia and then Theagenes. That night a group of revellers led by Theagenes stormed Charikles' house and made off with Charikleia. They came to Kalasis. Charikleia refused to go further until Theagenes swore to respect her virginity until she reached her home or until she gave her full consent he obliged. Meanwhile, Kalasis went to see Charikles to tell him Theagenes had stolen Charikleia. Charikles informed a midnight meeting of the Delphian council of this. They vowed to catch Theagenes, and also that the priest of Artemis should no longer offer the prize at the race in armour (where Theagenes fell in love with Charikleia).

Book Five

Kalasis' tale is interrupted by the return of Nausikles. Knemon is distressed to hear that Nausikles has Thisbe in his possession. He hears a woman lamenting in terms to convince him Thisbe is still alive and collapses in terror. But the woman is Charikleia.

Theagenes and Charikleia had been left in the cave by Knemon and Thermouthis. After embracing and agreeing on Apolline recognition tokens, they had left the cave only to be captured again by armed men. The men belonged to Mitranes, a commander in the service of Oroondates, satrap of the Persian King in Egypt. He was employed by Nausikles to find Thisbe. On seeing the beautiful Charikleia, Nausikles was quick to claim her as Thisbe. Charikleia concurred for her own safety. Theagenes was claimed by Mitranes, and sent to Oroondates with a letter offering him to the King.

Kalasis and Knemon question Nausikles and discover that his 'Thisbe' is Charikleia. Re-union. Nausikles asks a reward for Charikleia's release and is given an Ethiopian amethyst. At the feast following a sacrifice, Nausikles asks to hear Kalasis' story.

Kalasis narrates: The Phoenician ship carried him, with Theagenes and Charikleia, to Zakynthos where it anchored for the winter. Kalasis begged lodgings with an old fisherman, Tyrrhenos, and his sons. With difficulty, Kalasis stalled the wish of the Phoenician ship's captain to marry Charikleia. Then Tyrrhenos told him of pirates waiting to capture the Phoenician ship as

their leader Trachinos desired Charikleia. Kalasiris persuaded the ship's captain to set sail quickly to expedite his marriage to Charikleia. The ship sailed safely to Crete, but followed by the pirate vessel. Setting sail again, the Phoenician ship was captured by the pirates. Trachinos agreed to Charikleia's pleas that her 'brother' and 'father' be spared. After a serious storm, the pirates arrived in Egypt in the Phoenicians' ship. Trachinos began to organize a sacrificial feast to celebrate his marriage to Charikleia. Kalasiris told Trachinos' henchman, Peloros, that Charikleia would prefer to marry him, stirring up a quarrel between Trachinos and Peloros involving all the pirates. Charikleia shot arrows from the ship, and Theagenes chased away Peloros, the last pirate left alive. Kalasiris had hidden from the fighting on a nearby hill, and just as he was about to rejoin Charikleia and Theagenes, they were captured by a group of bandits [as opening of book 1].

Nausikles promises to help recover Theagenes from Mitraneas.

Book Six

Nausikles, Kalasiris and Knemon set off to rescue Theagenes, Knemon telling Nausikles the story of his involvement with Thisbe *en route*. A friend of Nausikles' tells him that Theagenes has been captured by Thyamis and his men, as he travelled to Oroondates. They return with the news; Charikleia is distraught. Nausikles offers them continued hospitality. Kalasiris and Charikleia must seek Theagenes, but Knemon stays to marry Nausikles' daughter. Charikleia despairs of marrying Theagenes, but Kalasiris says the prophecies indicate that such is the gods' will.

Charikleia suggests that they look for Theagenes and Thyamis disguised as beggars. Just before reaching Thyamis' headquarters they find signs of a struggle between Persians and Egyptians, and an old Egyptian woman mourning her dead son. Thyamis and his men had rescued Theagenes from the Persians, and fearing Persian retaliation had decided to improve their position by attacking Memphis, possibly to capture Oroondates (he may be away fighting against Ethiopia) and certainly to restore Thyamis to his high priesthood.

Kalasiris and Charikleia see old woman conjuring her son back from the dead: the corpse condemns his mother for her action while prophesying success for Kalasiris and Charikleia. The old woman dies trying to attack them.

Book Seven

Kalasiris and Charikleia press on for Memphis, where Thyamis is attempting to besiege the city. In Oroondates' absence, the people of Memphis consult his wife Arsake. (Arsake's lust for Thyamis, although not reciprocated, had in the past caused Thyamis' exile from the city when Petosiris revealed it to Oroondates.) Arsake

decides to parley with Thyamis, who asks for the return of his priesthood and the punishment of Petosiris. Arsake is divided between love for Thyamis and for Theagenes. She decrees Thyamis and Petosiris must fight for the priesthood. As Thyamis and Petosiris fight, Kalasiris arrives and stops the conflict. Theagenes needs recognition tokens to discern Charikleia in her beggar's disguise. The people escort Thyamis into city where Kalasiris crowns him priest.

Arsake is overcome with passion for Theagenes, which she confesses to her elderly slave and confidant, Kybele. Kalasiris dies, and Theagenes and Charikleia cannot stay in the sanctuary. Instead, Arsake offers Theagenes and Charikleia hospitality. Kybele presses them for information and they say that they are brother and sister. Kybele's son Achaimenes catches sight of Charikleia and falls in love, also recognizing Theagenes as the man captured by Mitranes and intended for Oroondates. Arsake and Kybele treat Theagenes and Charikleia well to woo Theagenes, but are resisted. Kybele fears consequences of failure and Achaimenes promises to help if he can have Charikleia. He tells Arsake that Theagenes is already her slave, captured by Mitranes. Arsake pledges Charikleia to Achaimenes, and says Theagenes will pour wine at her table. Theagenes persuades Arsake to release Charikleia from Achaimenes in return for doing as she requires. He waits at table, and Achaimenes, angered at the loss of Charikleia, leaves to find Oroondates and tell all.

Book Eight

The king of Ethiopia had outwitted Oroondates to take control of Philai, on the river Nile. Achaimenes finds Oroondates, rouses him to anger against Arsake and love for Charikleia (hoping to gain Charikleia for himself after Oroondates had had her). Oroondates orders Theagenes and Charikleia to be sent to him.

After mourning Kalasiris, Thyamis enquires after Theagenes and Charikleia, but Arsake will not release them to him. Unsuccessful with Theagenes, Arsake orders him flogged. Still unsuccessful, Arsake and Kybele decide to weaken Theagenes by poisoning Charikleia. Kybele persuades Charikleia to drink with her, but dies when a slave gives her the poisoned cup in error. Charikleia is accused of murder. The slave confesses, but at her trial Charikleia declares she is guilty, having agreed with Theagenes that death would be preferable to a life without hope. Charikleia is condemned to be burnt at the stake. On her pyre she declares her innocence and accuses Arsake. The flames do not harm Charikleia, and the crowd prevail upon her to come out of the fire. Arsake has her thrown back into gaol, with Theagenes. Charikleia recalls her dream of the previous night, in which Kalasiris predicted her deliverance through wearing the *pantarbe*, her mother's engagement ring; Theagenes remembers his dream of Kalasiris reassuring him that he would reach Ethiopia with a maiden. Theagenes does not understand, but Charikleia explains.

Oroondates' messenger arrives. Arsake is ill, and in trouble with her husband, so the guard allows him to take Theagenes and Charikleia away to join Oroondates in Thebes. On the road they hear Arsake is dead, having hanged herself. The party also learns that Oroondates is no longer in Thebes, but at Syene, the new target of the Ethiopian King. They are captured in an Ethiopian ambush and taken to the King.

Book Nine

Syene is held by Oroondates and besieged by the Ethiopian King, Hydaspes. Hydaspes is pleased at the sight of Theagenes and Charikleia and declares that as the first prisoners they will be victory sacrifices

For speed, Hydaspes decides on a spectacular siege tactic, building walls round the city which are connected to channels to the Nile, threatening to flood Syene. Hydaspes sends a boat over the encircling water to receive the surrender of Syene, and allows some of Oroondates' men to leave for Elephantine (not thinking they will alert Oroondates' troops). The two sides relax and the people of Syene celebrate the feast of the Neiloa. Unnoticed, Oroondates leads the Persians out of the city and away to Elephantine. Hydaspes hears what has happened, and soon Oroondates' army is upon him. Hydaspes wins the battle, capturing Oroondates alive. Achaimenes is killed trying to murder Oroondates. Hydaspes divides the spoils of battle. Theagenes and Charikleia are brought to see him, but they do not reveal their identity, thinking that they need Persinna's support. Hydaspes settles fair terms with Oroondates.

Book Ten

Hydaspes sends ahead so that victory sacrifices can be prepared in his capital, Meroe. Sisimithres, head of the college of gymnosophists, warns that the sacrifices will be disrupted. Hydaspes returns. The sacrifice is to be held in honour of the Sun and Moon, with no polluting females present except Persinna she is priest of the Moon as Hydaspes is priest of the Sun. The crowd demands the human sacrifice. Charikleia is radiant and Persinna thinks of her lost baby girl, and Hydaspes admits he is moved too. Intended sacrificial victims are tested for virginity via a gridiron device, since only virgins can be sacrificed to the Sun and Moon. To the regret and surprise of all, Theagenes and Charikleia pass the test. Charikleia appeals to Sisimithres, saying she cannot be sacrificed to the gods. Charikleia realizes Sisimithres is the man who protected her for the first seven years of her life. Charikleia claims Hydaspes as her father, bringing out embroidered band which Hydaspes reads, also her mother's jewels and engagement ring. Charikleia's white skin colour is verified by comparison with the portrait of Andromeda seen by Persinna as she conceived. Charikleia also displays a black birthmark and Persinna runs to embrace Charikleia, Hydaspes following too. Hydaspes tells the crowd he

must sacrifice Charikleia, using^a deliberately unconvincing argument. The crowd prevents him.

Next Hydaspes asks Charikleia for Theagenes' identity. She cannot explain her relationship to him, saying instead that if he must die, she wishes to kill him. She says she is eligible to sacrifice, despite the fact that priests must be married, because she already has a husband. Hydaspes knows Charikleia is virgin after the gridiron test and concludes she must be mad. He tells Persinna to talk to her.

Hydaspes receives an embassy from his nephew, Meroebos, and offers him Charikleia as his wife. Meroebos brings champion wrestler and boxer to Hydaspes as tribute. A long line of embassies offers gifts, including a giraffe. The bull and horses waiting to be sacrificed bolt at the sight of the giraffe. Theagenes cleverly brings them back. The crowd demands a match between Theagenes and Meroebos' champion. Theagenes uses skill to outwit force. Hydaspes regrets Theagenes cannot be spared from the sacrifice, and Theagenes requests Charikleia kill him, since she does have a husband. Persinna finally persuades Charikleia to tell her the truth.

A letter arrives from Oroondates, requesting Charikleia so that he can return her to her father (Charikles), who accompanies the messenger. Charikles sees Theagenes and attacks him for kidnapping Charikleia. Theagenes replies he cannot give back Charikles' daughter unless Hydaspes returns his daughter. Sisimithres reassures Charikles that Charikleia is safe, and clarifies Charikles' identity. Persinna explains to Hydaspes how Theagenes is Charikleia's husband. Hydaspes asks Sisimithres for advice! Sisimithres advises human sacrifice be abandoned henceforth. Hydaspes declares Theagenes and Charikleia married, and enrolls them as priests of the Sun and Moon. All depart into the city for the religious ceremonies of the marriage.

Such is the story told by a Phoenician from Emesa, one of the clan of the descendants of the Sun, Theodosios' son, Heliodoros.

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