



Ancient Journeys: A Festschrift in Honor of Eugene Numa Lane

Introduction

Biography

Articles

[Preferences](#)

[Help](#)

[Tools](#)

[Search](#)

James C. Hogan, David J. Schenker, *Challenging Otherness: A Reassessment of Early Greek Attitudes Toward the Divine*

--There is one
race of men, one race of gods; but we both have breath
of life from a single mother. But sundered power
holds us divided, since the one is nothing, while for the other the brazen
sky is

established

their sure citadel forever. Yet we have some likeness in great
intelligence or strength to the immortals,
though we know not what the day will bring....

Pindar, *Nemean* 6, 1-6¹

In those days, mortal men sat and dined
together with the immortal gods.

Hesiod, fr. 1.6-7²

Despite similarities in nature and origin, and despite the remembrance of shared feasts and kin, the difference is clear: a fundamental and indisputable line of demarcation divides gods from mortals. Such is the consensus of early Greek poetry, and so, we are told, the consensus of the early Greeks. The stories reveal that the gods were unapproachably other, beings of an entirely different order, their alterity one of the essential means by which mortals defined their own limitations.

The aim of this essay, though, is to suggest that this matter of otherness is not quite so straightforward, that the boundary between god and mortal was often tested and redrawn, and, thus, that the process of human self-definition was ongoing, rather than fixed and immutable. The question is one of emphasis; while others consider an endpoint, where the gods do stand clearly apart, our focus is on the repeated and continuing resistance to arriving at that point. Buxton, for example, discusses well the shifting human-divine relations in the *Iliad*, noting the "oscillation between divine involvement and divine aloofness," but concludes that "in the end divine power asserts itself by re-emphasising the boundary with mortality."³ Indisputably

true, but in his focus on that end, Buxton loses sight of the extensive and multi-faceted process that underlies his conclusion. The same tendency is apparent in his statement about theomachia, that "heroic myths narrate what happens when proper distances are elided: Thamyras, Arachne, Marsyas, and a host of others fail to appreciate the riskiness of competing with those who are, by definition, *hors de concours*."⁴ Yes, each failed attempt reinforces that proper distance, but the multitude of those attempts suggests that the limits of the competition are not so firmly fixed, at least for these heroes. And Buxton is by no means alone in this emphasis. A common solution is to note the pattern as "a recurrent motif," and then to move on to conclusions about the unbridgeability of the divide.⁵

This modern view does draw on solid ancient foundation, a wealth of stories that center on the great distance between mortals and gods. Yet, on their most literal level, the very stories that are said to underscore this distance, those that pit humans against the gods, depend on the physical, spatial, and temporal immediacy and proximity of all the agents. The quantity and diversity of such stories preclude anything like a complete coverage of the theme, and its implications, in this essay.⁶ What we offer here is a survey, beginning with Homer and Hesiod, of some appearances of the theomachos in early Greek poetry and myth.⁷ Our primary aim is to question and complicate, if not to replace, the prevailing view that early Greek myth and religion assumes an absolute and unbridgeable divide between man and god.⁸

We appeal to myth, as scholars constantly do, for information about Greek religion and Greek religious attitudes;⁹ ever mindful that our literary versions can be no more than a solitary frozen extract from the ongoing and ever-changing flow of myth. Further, these versions are pressed by dramatic or narrative needs that might conflict with an original theology inherent in them. To have any sort of dramatic value in a story about gods and men, the divine cannot be portrayed as absolutely other, transcendent, beyond man's ken and understanding and experience. Which is to say that the more theologically sound the story is, the less dramatic value it is likely to have.¹⁰

These points in mind, we use what we have. In addition to asking of these stories, as scholars often do, what sort of crimes and blasphemy the gods punish, we consider also what leads to, motivates, and makes possible the transgressions. What notions, that is, about the relation between men and gods are implicit in the stories? Is it enough to label every theomachos as mad, or -- the same explanation, but from a different point of view -- to suggest that each of the stories reads a lesson to mortals, repeatedly, about our subordinate status? While those factors are certainly relevant, they cannot, by themselves, explain the range and multitude of theomachos myths. The Greeks saw their gods as beings of a higher order, but the stories we look at here reveal that traces of a different perception persist.¹¹

For all of their vestiges of more direct, physical involvement of the gods in human affairs, the two Homeric epics are the beginning, for us, of that "distance" between god and man that Pindar and modern commentators like to emphasize. The Homeric gods can be hurt, of course, both physically and emotionally, as we see from *Iliad* 5, where Diomedes wounds Aphrodite (335) and Ares (435), and from Zeus's grief for

Sarpedon (16.431-61). Dione generalizes the case of mortals injuring the gods, referring allusively to Ares enchained by the Aloids, and to both Hera and Hades struck by Heracles' arrows (5.381-404). Aphrodite is to be comforted not only because all who attack the gods are doomed, but also because she is not, by any means, alone in being so attacked. Reference and allusion to these and other theomachoi suggest that in earlier poetry Achilles might not have given up so readily to Apollo:

Now you have robbed me of great glory, and rescued these people
lightly, since you have no retribution to fear hereafter.
Else I would punish you, if only the strength were in me.

Iliad 22.18-20

Achilles has just waded into Scamander and very nearly been overwhelmed (21.222-26), but more typical of Homeric attitudes is this frustration at Apollo's mocking rebuke.¹² Diomedes, for example, carefully prefaces his challenge of Glaucus:

But if you are some one of the immortals come down from the bright
sky,
know that I will not fight against any god of the heaven,
since even the son of Dryas, Lykourgos the powerful, did not
live long; he who tried to fight with the gods of the bright sky
But the gods who live at their ease were angered with Lykourgos,
and the son of Kronos struck him to blindness, nor did he live long
afterwards, since he was hated by all the immortals.

Iliad 6.128-33;138-40¹³

Later, Apollo's treatment of Patroklos (16.786ff.) is an object lesson in the distance between gods and mortals, even when they share the field of battle. Patroklos never sees Apollo, and the god, eschewing the weapons of mortals, stuns Patroklos with a slap on the back. Yet even these stories underline the proximity of gods and humans. And for every circumspect avoidance of conflict, there are those who do not hesitate to challenge divine powers; and the gods, after all, do accept the challenges.

Our final Homeric example is Bellerophon, whose case is illustrative of this dual view of human/divine interaction. At the end of a particular account (*Iliad* 6.155-202), Glaucus concludes

But after Bellerophon was hated by all the immortals,
he wandered alone about the plain of Aleios, eating
his heart out, skulking aside from the trodden track of humanity.

6.200-202

Bellerophon's assault on Olympus is evidently already familiar to Homer's audience, as Glaucus's allusive telling implies; but we learn nothing of that here. The attentive listener, however, will have heard Diomedes' description of another who was "hated

by all the immortals" (ἀπήχθε το πᾶσιν θεοῖσιν), Lycurgus (6.140 = 200); Glaucus, perhaps, does not want to put his celebrated grandfather in the company of such a god-defier, but the tug of the tradition cannot bury it altogether. Homer is not alone in treating so allusively Bellerophon's failed flight to Olympus: Apollodorus (2.3) ends his story happily, and Pindar, silent on that part of Bellerophon's career in *Olympian* 13, offers something more like a conclusion in *Isthmian* 7.

Yet Pegasos
the winged, cast down
Bellerophon, his lord, when he strove to reach
the houses of the sky and the fellowship
of Zeus. An end in all bitterness awaits
the sweetness that is wrong.

Isthmian 7.44-48

Glaucus' version of the Bellerophon story is thus the earliest of several that downplay the direct conflict between man and god or include only inorganically his attempt on Olympus.¹⁴ Motivation and causality are tight until the end, as the story gets its coherence from familiar social conventions (exile after murder, need for purification, rules governing hospitality) as well as from equally familiar narrative motifs (the lewd wife; magical help, here in the form of Pegasus; divine aid, either Poseidon's or Athene's). Nothing, however, in the social norms of myth requires an attempt to reach the halls of the gods, much less to challenge the gods directly; and though the theomachos might be called a conventional narrative motif, after the apparent closure of "wife and kingdom" in this story, we are bound to ask why.¹⁵ The usual answers, from Homer (*Iliad* 6.201) to modern commentators, are madness and hybris. While fair enough as post hoc evaluations, we may nonetheless pause to wonder. Nothing in the career of Bellerophon, save possibly the killing of his brother, argues either madness or hybris, which are after all more a pair from frequent association than from natural pathology. Bellerophon sanely sought purification, eluded the grasp of Sthenoboea out of sexual restraint, accepted the commissions of Proetus and then of Iobates without complaint, and did not attempt retaliation on his would-be persecutors. Neither madness nor hybris seems organic to his character.¹⁶ The more general question is why any mortal would attack the gods, who as immortal seem by definition invulnerable, and who as "the stronger" must necessarily win such contests.¹⁷

The matter is more centrally thematic, if still allusively handled, in Hesiod, our other early witness to its evolution. Two different strands contribute to the issue: on the one hand, in the *Theogony* Hesiod's narrative on the rise of Zeus repeatedly emphasizes a world made from a succession of conflicts between god and god. Uranus, dimly defined as a person, instinctively represses his children, attempting to deny them any opportunity to seize power. Correctly, for his manners, if not their nature, inspire rebellion, and he is castrated and removed from the throne. Cronus is no less violent, and even when he has been tricked into regurgitating Zeus and the other future Olympians, a trial of strength ensues: Zeus must combat the Titans and remove them to Tartarus before any true reign can begin. That rule, however, is itself

insecure until the monstrous power of the earth, Typhon, is put away. As so often happens with the poets, a theme (here the celebration of Zeus) and the poet's moralizing restrict our view: Apollodorus (1.6.3) offers a more dramatic version of the battle with Typhon, in which Zeus loses the first round (the monster cuts out his sinews, hides them, incapacitates the god). Thus we see that Hesiod recognizes the history of violence, but includes only those parts of it (repressing, e.g., the battle of the gods and giants, which Apollodorus places prior to Typhon) that contribute to his theme.¹⁸

The prime focus of the *Theogony* is on the gods and the struggle for supremacy. When Hesiod includes man in his perspective, the trend from primitive violence toward reason and law seems reversed, as the poet describes (in the myth of the five ages) a world beginning in bliss and ruefully falling away to harder and harder times: war and pestilence become common and man loses his direct, immediate contact with friendly gods. Particularly suggestive are hints of common dining and amicable gathering.¹⁹ Far from focusing on basic antagonisms in the cosmos, this perspective suggests a social unity symbolized by the shared meal. Mortals dined with the gods, enjoyed their company, received favors from them and put them under social obligation; there was a time, in this mythical perspective, when hospitality was indifferent to boundaries between mortal and immortal.

In this scheme, where humanity's relation to the gods is very much the issue, the conflict between generations of the gods is replaced by conflicts between man and the gods. The division of sacrifice at Mecone (*Theogony* 535ff.) seemingly takes place in the context of peaceful, customary dining together, yet if 535 means "they were in the process of coming to a settlement" (ἐκρίνοντο θεοὶ θνητοὶ τ' ἄνθρωποι), then apparently some unspecified antecedent decision or action has led to a rupture (represented by the prospective division of the food), or perhaps the usual division of the meal, according to proper τιμῆ, became the occasion of the trickster's ruse.²⁰ Whatever the occasion for the dining and the impulse to divide the meal, no hostility appears until Prometheus attempts to trick Zeus. Whether Zeus "knows the show" or not, man pays for his patron's cunning division.²¹

From the viewpoint of theomachia, the succession myths offer a paradigm of vulnerable gods who are repeatedly challenged, know they are susceptible to deposition, and must turn to others for help in maintaining their rule.²² No god's power is absolute: they have achieved their station through physical violence and live in the shadow of insecurity. Zeus may swallow Metis or cause Thetis to wed Peleus, but his success derives from the help of others (oracles, feminine powers); he is not omniscient and his lust constantly reminds him of his vulnerability. Much later the *Prometheus Bound* continues to draw on the strength of this theme.

The sacrifice at Mecone sheds light on the status of the divine from a different angle. Gods and men meet to share a meal. Prior to Mecone there was no question of decorum, of who would have which portion. The drama of the story implies a time of social affability. Gods may have been superior in happiness and power but they were hardly remote; they entertained heroes, got children by their daughters, accepted their supplications, even enjoyed human cleverness and wit. Such is the world of Prometheus, Tantalus, Niobe, Ixion, and Sisyphus, all of whom are close

enough to the Olympians to think of turning against them. The Mecone story offers one explanation for the rift between man and god.²³ The divine trickster wins for man something he must have, nourishment and fire, at the price of division, animosity, even guilt.²⁴ Man is condemned to sacrifice, to cheat, and to recognize his dependence on the gods even in the act of asserting his independence. Whatever Prometheus' motivation for tricking Zeus, he, with cruder monsters such as Typhon, provides a prototype for successful, if limited, defiance of divine authority. He has disturbed a social equilibrium and made enemies of those who were friends.

At the risk of losing sight of the particular purposes of each telling, we move now to a thematic overview of several of the central theomachos stories. Two rather different lines feed into "fighting the god." On the one hand we find duplicity, with violations of hospitality, featuring cannibalistic feasts and sexual assault; on the other, direct challenge and physical attacks reminiscent of Typhon and the Giants. The first implies social intimacy and compatibility, the second alienation and inveterate hostility. In either case, whereas our commentaries and many an ancient poet emphasize the abyss separating the immortals and mortals, these stories recall an era in myth when man was a good deal less sensitive to his limitations. We recognize, of course, that multiple sources and versions for most of the stories make categorization difficult, if not impracticable. For example, if we accept Calypso's protest to Hermes, we have a happy mating of Orion and Eos, terminated by divine jealousy and the arrows of Artemis:

'You are hard-hearted, you gods, and jealous beyond all creatures beside, when you are resentful toward the goddesses for sleeping openly with such men as each has made her true husband. So when Dawn of the rosy fingers chose out Orion, all you gods who live at your ease were full of resentment, until chaste Artemis of the golden throne in Ortygia came with a visitation of painless arrows and killed him;

Odyssey 5.118-24

The scholiast on this passage, however, reports that Orion had attempted a sexual assault on Artemis, while Apollodorus (1.4.5) says that Orion challenged the goddess at throwing the discus. It is probably hopeless to reconcile these versions, though a good deal of scholarship has been devoted to such projects.²⁵

In a number of stories we can detect the assumption of a time when gods and men lived and feasted in something like a social unity. The crimes and misdemeanors of Tityus, Tantalus, and Sisyphus (*Odyssey* 11.576-600) are predicated on familiar intercourse with the gods. Admittedly, Tityus is "earth-born" (11.576) and huge, yet also in some versions, like Tantalus, a son of Zeus; he is guilty of trying to rape Leto, which distinguishes him from true monsters such as Typhon. The variety of Tantalus' activities all take place against a background of daily business with the gods. In a lost epic he was said to have been given a wish by Zeus and to have embarrassed the god by asking to live the life of the gods.²⁶ The Homeric punishment in Hades responds to this episode: he lives within sight and sound of divine ease but cannot have the fruits. Again, the story that he fed Pelops to an

assembled gathering of the gods recalls not only the dining at Mecone but also Lycaon's damned feast; these feasts are based on trust, hospitality and frequent social intercourse. Pindar (*Olympian* 1) wants to deny the mutilation of Pelops, but he is sure Tantalus entertained the gods (lines 36-39), which gave him the opportunity to commit another crime:

because he stole
and gave to his own fellowship
that ambrosia and nectar
wherewith the gods made him immortal.

Olympian 1.60-64

Lattimore's "fellowship" (ἀλίκεσσι συμπτώταις) designates his friends, mortals whom Tantalus, like Asclepius, apparently would free from mortal coils. Since the gods already have a distinct food, we are looking at a version not easily reconciled with the Promethean division, even though a common table, at least for favored mortals, is taken for granted. Unlike man's share at Mecone, the stolen portion makes possible immortality, and Tantalus himself has already benefitted from that gift.

Tantalus is also charged with the tamer, euphemistic vice of not being able to hold his tongue (*Orestes* 10), which may hint at something like Sisyphus' crime of revealing Zeus's rape of Aigina, or to mysteries of the gods revealed (e.g., Phineus at *Argonautica* 2.178-93 and *Apollodorus* 1.9.21; and Teiresias, at *Apollodorus* 3.6.7). More in the nature of a folk tale is the story of Tantalus and the golden dog of Zeus. Scholia on the *Odyssey* and Pindar tell how Tantalus received from Pandareos, son of Merops, a golden dog stolen from the shrine of Zeus. When questioned by Hermes, Tantalus swore that he had never seen it. Hermes found him out and he was punished. Given the number and variety of tales linking Tantalus with divine society, we cannot be surprised that Niobe is described as "divine and descended from the divine" (*Antigone* 832), and it may be their happier times as friends of the gods that provides the context for Sappho's line (fr. 142), "Leto and Niobe were dear companions." Tantalus, the son of Zeus, while dining with his father and their friends, is granted by the gods his dearest wish, which is to be like them. But he ruins the divine banquet by introducing a cannibalistic feast, and has not the restraint to refrain from blabbing to mere mortals the intimacies gained from his favor, not to mention a desire to share immortality with mortals. Just as the punishment differs, so we should not expect to see all of these motifs in any one version. His motives are hardly evident. Divine in his associations; all too mortal in his manners.

There is more behind Tantalus' behavior than a desire to share the happiness of the gods.²⁷ The feast of Pelops, which of course took a central place in the tradition and suggests a testing of the gods, i.e., a denial of godhead, seemingly at odds with an impulse to participate in their good life. This violent, hostile test, however, is deeply rooted in Greek myth. According to Hesiod (fr. 163 MW), Lycaon responded to Zeus's debauchery of his daughter Callisto by entertaining the god at a dinner composed of the flesh of her child.²⁸ As usual, the Hesiodic narrative tells us little enough, but an invitation to dinner may argue the unsuspecting god thought he had

seduced the girl without rousing Lycaon's anger.

Ixion also breaks the rules of friendship. Having killed his father-in-law, he finds that only Zeus will receive him for ritual purification.²⁹ Yet he cannot live with good fortune and so attempts to rape Hera. Hence his punishment on the wheel. Pindar treats the story in *Pythian* 2.24-6, where he ignores the murder to focus on Ixion's ingratitude:

To your benefactor return ever with kind dealing rendered.
He learned that lesson well. By favor of the sons of Kronos,
he was given a life of delight but could not abide the blessedness long....

His "delightful life" (γλυκὺν | βίον) is that of the immortals, but he is not granted immortal lust and so becomes the father of a monstrous breed. As Gildersleeve notes, "he had presumed as if he were a god;" or, we might say, he had presumed as if the gods were men. Endymion, too, "was brought up to heaven by Zeus," only to be blasted by lightning after attempting Hera (Hesiod fr. 260). No leveler like sex, as the Hymn to Aphrodite makes plain, and no inspiration to leveling like lust, as Anchises says:

And so neither god nor mortal man will restrain me
till I have mingled with you in love
right now; not even if far-shooting Apollon himself
should shoot grievous arrows from his silver bow.

Hymn to Aphrodite 149-52³⁰

When a hero wants to name the ultimate limit on action, one beyond which he is willing to go, he names the appropriate god. This is usually in the context of boasting.

Orion reminds us of ambiguous figures who are larger than life but mortal and not usually monstrous in form. Homer's allusions to the sons of Aloeus (*Iliad* 5.385-91; also *Odyssey* 11. 305-20) report both the famous attack on Olympus as well as an initially successful binding of Ares, who is at length rescued from his bronze caldron by Hermes. Apollodorus (1.7.4) has a familiar motif, that they attempted sexual assaults on Hera and Artemis.³¹ In the *Odyssey* their size, strength, and good looks suggest a combination of heroic handsomeness and the power attributed to such as Tityus and Typhon. The tradition evidently regarded them sometimes as sons of Poseidon, sometimes as sons of Aloeus. Odysseus calls Orion "gigantic" (πελώριον) and Tityus covers nine acres (11. 572 and 577). Sisyphus is not normally so strong but his stone is also described as "gigantic" (11.594).

Calypso knows that not all wooing is rape, and in some cases the mortal contends with a god and lives to hear his own fame. A difficult passage in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (208-13) probably intends to celebrate the god's victories in several wooings:

Or am I to sing of you as wooer and lover of maidens,

sing how, wooing the daughter of Azas, you raced
against godlike Ischys Elationides, possessed of good horses,
or against Phorbas sprung from Triops or against Ereutheus?
Or in the company of Leukippos' wife,
you on foot and he with his horses?

In *Pythian* 3 Apollo punishes Koronis, daughter of Phlegyas, for having shared her bed with Ischys after she was pregnant (with Asclepius) by Apollo. We are not told of any punishment of Ischys; of Phorbas we know nothing, save that his father is Triops, brother of Aloeus (perhaps contention with the gods ran in the family, or Phorbas was emulating his cousins). Nor is Ereutheus known to us. Leukippos would seem to allude to a contest for Daphne,³² but no such connection is made in our early sources. Possibly all these male contestants were punished by the gods, but this poet's business is to celebrate the god, not the ambition of mortals. Nonetheless, these passages do reveal, if only incidentally, how ready these poets were to see gods and men engaged in typically mortal contest.

Another rivalry with Apollo features Idas, the son of Aphareus, who was preferred by Marpessa to the god because, as Apollodorus has it, she feared the god would desert her when she grew old (1.7.8-9; *Iliad* 9.556-65). Zeus himself finds a rival for Semele's favor in the person of Actaeon.³³

But of course the rivalries and affronts are not all sexual. A commonplace of tragic boasting carries a defiance of some god:

How can I tell you how Capaneus raged?
For he came with the steps of a long ladder.
This was his boast, that Zeus's awful fire
Could not hold him back from overturning the city.

Phoenician Women 1174-77³⁴

Neither Capaneus nor the tragedians have a monopoly on boasting: the lesser Ajax raped Cassandra on the altar of Athena, for which the homecoming Greek fleet was struck by a storm. Proteus tells Menelaus that

Aias would have escaped his doom, though Athene hated him,
had he not gone wildly mad and tossed out a word of defiance;
for he said that in despite of the gods he escaped the great gulf
of the sea, and Poseidon heard him, loudly vaunting
and at once with his ponderous hands catching up the trident
he drove it against the Gyraean rock, and split a piece of it,
and part of it stayed where it was, but a splinter crashed in the water,
and this is where Aias had been perched when he raved so madly.

Odyssey 4. 502-509

Ajax utters his defiant boast even after Poseidon has shattered his ship. This is more than pride, and Proteus, like many another storyteller, calls it madness (the ἄτῆ

stem, here verbal, occurs in 503 and 509). Here a kind of layering of explanations is found: initial defiance takes the form of violating the altar (a religious perspective on his character); then he escapes a storm (the god's power has shifted its modality); finally the boast, a revelation of *hybris* which the poets see as rooted in delusion, imbalance, and self-infatuation.

Skill-challenges are numerous and would not have appeared in the tradition before the divinities began to claim specific powers and functions. Homer knows Niobe (*Iliad* 24.602-17) who "likened herself to Leto" and observed that the goddess had only two children, whereas Niobe had many. The Cypria assigned Agamemnon's troubles, at least in part, to his boast that not even Artemis could shoot better.³⁵ A number of stories focus on the divinity's special skill or province: Marysas challenges Apollo in music, Thamyras makes light of the Muses, and Eurytus the archer thinks himself superior to Apollo. Surviving literature concerning these contests is allusive, but we know of their popularity.³⁶ Telamonian Ajax's dismissive boast (Sophocles, *Ajax* 764-76) asserts his autonomy and independence, with what, as in so many cases, we can only call needless provocation. Capaneus and Ajax make light of divine power: they will do as they will, regardless of god.

Boasts of prowess and self-assertion are moderation itself compared to desecration and blasphemy. Ajax need not have offended Athena when he raped Cassandra; Pelias, who killed Sidero on the altar of Hera (Apollodorus 1.9.8), and Neoptolemus, who killed Priam on the altar of Zeus (Pindar, *Paian* 6.113-5), incur the wrath of the gods for what seems gratuitous impiety. Proteus actually says the lesser Ajax would have survived the first wave had he not mocked divine wrath. Niobe could have been proud (our usual translation/gloss on these heroic vices) without publicly insulting the goddess.³⁷ Salmoneus wins the prize, however, though in truth he does little more than say overtly what the behavior of others implies:

Salmoneus at first dwelt in Thessaly, but afterwards came to Elis and there founded a city. And being arrogant (ὕβρις τῆς) and wishing to put himself on an equality with Zeus, he was punished for his impiety; for he said that he was himself Zeus, and he took away the sacrifices of the god and ordered them to be offered to himself; and by dragging dried hides, with bronze kettles, at his chariot, he said that he thundered, and by flinging lighted torches at the sky he said that he lightened. But Zeus struck him with a thunderbolt, and wiped out the city he had founded with all its inhabitants.

Apollodorus 1.9.7

The fact that we know his daughter Tyro survived her father's and people's punishment because she protested his blasphemy is accidental, depending on the survival of a papyrus fragment (Hesiod fr. 30). Pindar calls Salmoneus a "bold-devisor" (*Pythian* 4.143) and the scholiast on that passage cites lines from Hesiod in which he is called "unjust" (ἄδικος). There is little doubt that Salmoneus' denial of Zeus' godhead and parodic arrogation to himself of divine power goes back to Hesiod. He is not alone: Ceyx and Alcyone call themselves Zeus and Hera (Apollodorus 1.7.4); Caeneus demands that his people worship his spear

(Apollodorus, *Epitome* 1.22).

To say "I shoot as well as Apollo" dismisses the god's superiority; Salmoneus dismisses the god. Religious and theological challenges are common.³⁸ For most readers the opposition to Dionysus will come to mind immediately. The folly of Lycurgus, Pentheus and the women of Argos simply resides in the denial that Dionysus is a god. These so-called resistance myths, characteristic of Dionysus, are a separate category in that a question of the god's divinity is the impulse for the story. This god proves himself in epiphany, validating the moral "madness" by visiting on his opponents self-destructive mental aberration. This is very different from attacking one's benefactor and host. Confrontation is initiated by the god, albeit passively. The essence of the problem is theological, i.e., a matter of belief and the power of divinity, not moral, as it is turned in Ovid's tales of Lycaon and of Baucis and Philemon.

Neglect of sacrifice often figures as a significant narrative motif in other stories. Minos is a notable example: granted a bull from the sea as a sign of his divine right to rule, he refuses to sacrifice that animal to his patron (Zeus or Poseidon). More often we are told of "neglect" or forgetfulness, as when Oeneus fails to sacrifice to Artemis and finds himself the victim of the Calydonian boar (Apollodorus 1.8.2); Tyndareus inadvertently neglected Aphrodite (Stesichorus fr. 223) who punished his daughter; Pelias, like Neoptolemus, kills his enemy (Sidero) on an altar (Apollodorus 1.9.8). There is no such thing as innocuous neglect: as in ritual, so in myth, to fail in one detail is to ruin the whole. Wild beast and pestilence fall on those who cross the divine power. More remote cousins of these attitudes are found in the stories of Laius and Laocoon, both of whom violate sexual restraints imposed by Apollo's oracle.

In the "crimes" of Sisyphus and Asclepius we may detect other nuances of man-against-god. The famous trickster reveals Zeus' liaison with Aigina to her father. Zeus sends Thanatos to seize Sisyphus, who contrives to bind Death and temporarily annul the distinction between mortal and immortal. His personal success in tricking Hades and returning to finish his natural span strikes a different tone, more intellectual and more peculiar to the trickster, but the idea abides. Asclepius may or may not have successfully cured death; a variety of early sources report that he was blasted by Zeus for intending to.³⁹

Heracles in the context of theomachia, as in most, is a special case; he has more reason to be a theomachos.⁴⁰ Already in Homer he is the pre-natal object of Hera's angry persecution, and Agamemnon's apology (*Iliad* 19.78ff.) tells the tale of the hero as ground of divine contention: Zeus and Athena will always aid him; Hera will continue her aggressive brutality. If Heracles is to win through, he must be strong, and while many heroes luckily survive nasty attacks on their infancy, Heracles is credited with throttling snakes sent by Hera and biting the nipple of his stepmother Hera, who has been deceived by Athena into nursing the needy prodigy.⁴¹ More relevant to an examination of early Greek evidence is Dione's catalogue, cited above, of those who have attacked the gods (*Iliad* 5.382ff.). After mentioning the Aloids, Dione adds,

Hera had to endure it when the strong son of Amphitryon struck her beside the right breast with a tri-barbed arrow, so that the pain he gave her could not be quieted. Hades the gigantic had to endure with the rest the flying arrow when this self-same man, the son of Zeus of the aegis, struck him among the dead men at Pylos, and gave him agony;.... Brute, heavy-handed, who thought nothing of the bad he was doing, who with his archery hurt the gods that dwell on Olympos!

Iliad 5.392-400; 403-4

(See Apollodorus 2.7.3)

For us it little matters whether Dione refers to one or two confrontations. Perhaps the allusion to Hades takes us to a version of his visit to the underworld, perhaps not. If Burkert is right in describing Heracles as a "master of animals" and Hades as a kind of cattle baron from the dark side, then this particular struggle will apparently find its roots in the earliest, non-Greek, versions of his story.⁴² In any case the violence so characteristic of this hero targets two divinities, and in a certified physical assault. There is also the wounding of Ares after the killing of Cygnus (*Aspis* 460-63; at 359ff. Heracles brags of an earlier defeat of Ares at Pylos). Further allusion to such conflict, and perhaps to the same one as that of *Iliad* 5, is found in *Olympian* 9.30-35, where Poseidon, Hades, and Apollo are all listed as opponents of Heracles.

Dover observes that over 150 vases and sculptural representations illustrate Heracles trying to carry off the tripod of the Pythia, and one of these is dated to around 700, though the greatest interest begins in the mid sixth century.⁴³ Apollodorus has Heracles visit Delphi before (2.4.12) and after his labors, and it is the murder of Iphitus that prompts the second petition (2.6.2), the Pythia's refusal to respond, and the hero's decision to plunder the temple and carry off the tripod. As in Heracles' battle with Ares, Zeus intervenes between his sons and a compromise is effected. Zeus is represented as arbitrator and mediator, a role he also plays in the contest between Idas and Apollo for Marpessa (Apol. 1.7.9). Clearly, this defiance of Delphi's authority cannot have the antiquity and near-eastern antecedents which Burkert finds in most of the labors.

A much younger hero, Neoptolemus, also challenges the god at Delphi when the son of Achilles demands compensation for the death of his father (Euripides, *Orestes* 1655-58 and *Andromache* 49-53). Earlier he had slaughtered Priam on the altar of Zeus, and in some versions his death at Delphi was attributed to Apollo's vengeance on behalf of Zeus.⁴⁴

Neoptolemus and Heracles have little in common besides this hostility towards Apollo. In a sense, neither takes the god seriously, or at least no more seriously than he would take any other proprietor. The search for meaning is darkly labyrinthine at times, and most scholars prefer ritual to theology; avoiding literalism and the suggestion that Heracles' manners represent any attitude toward divinity, Burkert explains:

Still more ancient, and immensely popular, is the story of how Heracles fought Apollo for the Pythian tripod. This may or may not reflect the memories of a Dorian invasion and the take-over of a pre-Dorian cult-site; in any case, the fact that two polarized groups arose in the Delphic ritual, each struggling for the sacrificial meat -- which, of course, would have been kept in the tripod -- and the fact that the 'robbers' in this ritual were those who were truly obedient to the god are good indications that the ritual provided the story's basic structure and that it was not just a product of chance. ⁴⁵

Perhaps the story does reflect cult, but that does not explain why the storytellers chose to transpose it into this theological key, nor the extraordinary popularity of the story, which as the art testifies, extended well beyond Delphi. Fontenrose has a good deal to say about theomachy, but his conclusion about Neoptolemus/Pyrrhos solves the problem by denying it:

It is likely, therefore, that the Delphic Pyrrhos represents the pre-Apolline deity who fought with the dragon of death and chaos, but was ousted by Apollo from his prominent position; i.e., his cult was subordinated to Apollo's, and Apollo took over the champion role. The supersession of his cult by Apollo's was reflected in myth as hostility between Apollo and Pyrrhos, so that Pyrrhos became confused with the old enemy Python-Dionysus.⁴⁶

Again, such an explanation may or may not describe the historical process; it does not explain how and why a hero's rash demand for compensation from a god was accepted and achieved universal standing.

Most of the stories cited above are familiar. As narratives they get their dynamics from man's confrontation with the divine. What are the conditions and context of these confrontations? Most of these myths assume that man has frequent business with the gods. A minor offender like Oeneus, for example, has previously received the vine from Dionysus; Minos refuses the god his due but there is no question that the bull was a gift of the god; Theseus and Pirithous know they are raiding Hades and act as if that is as natural as raiding Sparta; Tantalus and Lycaon are accustomed to entertaining the gods. No significant "distance" separates man from the gods: the lust of Ixion and Orion, not to mention the success of Tithonus and Anchises, stipulates proximity and normal sexual intercourse. Odysseus refers to Minos as a "familiar" of Zeus.⁴⁷ Like the Phaeacians and Ethiopians, these men of myth live near the gods. God's power is greater, and man is usually punished for his presumption, but most of the human protagonists act as if a god can be beaten at running, shooting, or wooing. While some of the figures are god-defiers, even god-deniers, most seem to act as if "god" simply denotes another class of being, one very like their own, though happier, more affluent, more powerful. Still, these divinities can be, and have been, bound, wounded, deceived, and cheated. Yes, they are immortal, but they have given that precious immortality to mortals, and Hades and Death have been denied their own.

All this seems a matter of degree: how much greater are the gods than man? The

answer obviously depends on the poet and the story. Nemean 6, quoted at the beginning of this essay, starts famously with a contrast between the gods' sure abode and man's ephemerality. What separates the two races is power (δύναμις). Sisyphus, Eurytus, and Idas do not seem to have read Pindar, nor do they realize that the divine is "inexorably other." Heracles does not think he is so inferior in mind and nature when he attacks Hera and Ares and struggles with Apollo for the tripod. These, of course, are implications, i.e., what the stories imply for us about the attitudes of their protagonists. Some poets, like Pindar, clearly don't like these implications but have some trouble separating the hero from his deeds, less trouble in condemning the deed.

Piety does not need the stories and may find them offensive. Experience cannot verify their theology. We should not be terribly surprised to observe that the myths themselves call into question the notion of the divine they purvey. All of the stories mentioned above assume the gods are little better than super-mortals: like other men, they are challenged to combat; they are tricked, seduced, or at least subjected to overwhelming lust; their honors are ignored, neglected, or simply denied. Would Minos deny Poseidon the god's own bull if the king did not suppose he could get away with a substitute, inferior gift? Would Tantalus and Lycaon offer the gods a cannibalistic feast if they thought the gods could not be tricked? Would Theseus and Pirithous attempt Hades if they did not think they could carry off Persephone? Would Actaeon vie with Zeus for the hand of Semele, or Idas challenge Apollo for Marpessa, if the mortal thought his chances hopeless, his doom certain?

The stories themselves call attention to the ontological status of the "divine". Agents like Salmoneus and Caeneus, not to mention the playthings of Dionysus, are there because they question or deny god's power, even the very divinity of divinity. That is to say, the stories would be nonsensical if we assumed the agents really believed that the gods were, in significant ways, different from and superior to themselves. Of course, if we can put aside "god" as expressive of anything more than quantitative superiority (a quicker hand, a heavier blow), then the idea makes sense in this sector of myth. For it is certain that the gods generally have a life mortals prefer to their own, as it is that they generally defeat man's effort to get around them. If one takes the common line that the stories are told for the moral, i.e., that the meaning/message of the story is to prove the agents wrong, that does not remove the problem: the story revolves around a person who imagines, if only through his actions, a cosmos radically different from that of the narrator. In such stories it seems impossible to separate religious and narrative values.

If Bellerophon thought, like Tantalus, that he wanted and could achieve heaven's gate, he is either thinking of a real possibility or is indeed mad. Our poets, of course, opt for the second. It is curious that this power begotten madness directs its attention at attacking or appropriating some aspect of divine power, when, for example, the hero might come to a bad end through tyrannical behavior at the expense of his fellows. Iris seems to have it right:

Let him [Heracles] learn what Hera's anger is,
and what is mine. For the gods are nothing,
and men prevail, if this one man escape.

If man does not pay the penalty (842) for recognizing that the gods are "nowhere" (taking the idiom of 841 literally), then men are great ("prevail"). On a very literal level, Bond may be right that the "primary and adequate motivation for Hera's punishment [is] that Heracles is the bastard of her husband Zeus."⁴⁸ If, however, these stories have any religious and theological dimension, on another level, and not a very remote or nebulous one, Heracles' defiance of Hera denies the divine altogether and represents man's achievement as all man should imagine.

¹ All translations of Pindar are from Richmond Lattimore, *The Odes of Pindar* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947)

² All citations of the fragments of Hesiod from R. Merkelbach and M.L. West edd. *Hesiodi Fragmenta Selecta* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1970). This translation from C.W. Macleod, ed. and comm. *Homer: Iliad 24* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1982) ad 463-4.

³ Richard Buxton, *Imaginary Greece: The Contexts of Mythology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 148. Cf. Mario Vegetti, "The Greeks and Their Gods," in *The Greeks*, ed. Jean-Pierre Vernant, trans. C. Lambert and T.L. Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 263: "...the worlds of gods and men are constantly interweaving and overlapping."

⁴ Buxton (above, note 3) 150.

⁵ As in, e.g., M.L. West, *The East Face of Helicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 124.

⁶ In his paper on the theomachos in Greek tragedy Kamerbeek goes so far as to say "It would be tedious, however, to enumerate the many cases where men are literally in battle with the gods". J. C. Kamerbeek, "On the Conception of THEOMACHOS in Relation with Greek Tragedy." *Mnemosyne* 4th series, Vol I (1948) 282. Wolfgang Kullmann, *Das Wirken der Götter in der Ilias* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1956) briefly discusses opponents of the gods (141-46).

⁷ For versions of the stories and their sources see Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). Because we are more interested in early Greek stories, we have avoided references to what seem to be Hellenistic versions and the turns given Greek myth in Ovid and other Latin poets. Apollodorus is a good source for early versions but has bowdlerized and abbreviated in the manner of a schoolbook; on which see M. van der Valk, "On Apollodori Bibliotheca," *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 71 (1958) 100-68.

⁸ As seen in, e.g., Buxton (above, note 3). Jean-Pierre Vernant, in "Mortals and Immortals: The Body of the Divine," in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*,

ed. Froma Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) 27-49, reassures us that the gods are really quite splendidly "other". His examples from myth do not call upon any of the stories discussed in this essay. P. E. Easterling, in her edition of Sophocles' *Trachiniae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) 10, suggests that Homer studied to enhance "the great gulf between human and divine knowledge." The impulse behind much "distance/otherness" seems to be to elevate Greek theological speculation, or, to put it another way, to make the gods worthy of their name. A different kind of othering is evident in Kirk's note to *Iliad* 5.436-9: "Similarly some particular but unrecoverable act of imagination must have initiated the physical-attack-on-a-god idea, though that certainly lay far in the past, perhaps in a Mesopotamian rather than a Greek context." (G.S. Kirk, *The Iliad: A Commentary* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985-93]). This seems a variant on the idea found in the RE articles on Bellerophon and Tantalus that these figures are ancient daimons or fallen gods. Cf. E.R. Dodds, in his commentary on *Bacchae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960) ad 229-30: "Ino, Actaeon, Aristaeus (1371) seem to be old gods or δαίμονες who have been worked into the genealogy."

⁹ Readers on myth and religion will be familiar with the variety of opinion about the relation of the two. Many would argue, with Jean Rudhardt, *Notions fondamentales de la pensée religieuse et actes constitutifs du culte dans la Grèce classique* (Geneva: E. Droz, 1958), that the connection between myth and religion is largely one of shared names, i.e., that myths do not signify or describe the objects of faith (59-60). We have found Rudhardt's discussion useful but cannot subscribe so confidently to his notion that the two areas represent different forms of consciousness. See the remarks of Buxton, (above, note 3) 157-65. W. Burkert, in *Greek Religion*, trans. John Raffan, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), consistently appeals to poetry and myth for description and elucidation of the Greek divinities. See also the formulation (8-9) of John Gould, "On Making Sense of Greek Religion," in *Greek Religion and Society*, edited by P.E. Easterling and J.V. Muir (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 1-33; and the comments of J.M. Bremer, "The So-Called 'Götterapparat' in *Iliad* XX-XXII," in *Homer: Beyond Oral Poetry*, edited by J.M. Bremer, I.J.F. de Jong, and J. Kalff (Amsterdam 1987) 31-46.

¹⁰ Cf. Vegetti (above, note 3), 264: "The existence of omnipotence clearly excludes the possibility of narrative, which requires a plurality of agents whose deeds and intentions act upon one another to produce the events of the story."

¹¹ The historian of religion is caught between the gods' all too human nature and the conviction that divine power belongs to a different order: "For the early period the anthropomorphic gods were a matter of course, though it is difficult to understand this in all seriousness. A god is a god in that he reveals himself; but the epiphany of anthropomorphic gods could never be spoken of in anything but a vestigial sense." (Burkert [above, note 9] 186.

¹² In the quotation, "punish" (20) is the verbal of "retribution" (19, τίσαιμεν after τίσιν): "You do not fear retaliation; surely I would take recompense from you, if I had the power (δύναμις)." On Achilles and Apollo see Jasper Griffin, *Homer on Life and Death* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980) 85-89. Griffin

thinks that Zeus "loves" Hector, Achilles, Patroclus, and Sarpedon (his notes refer to various forms of φίλος); perhaps we need a definition of "love".

¹³ Cf. the Thamyras story in (2.594-600). All translations from Homer are from the Chicago University Press versions of Richmond Lattimore (*Iliad*, 1951; *Odyssey*, 1965).

¹⁴ On the exclusion of contact with the gods, cf. *Iliad* 24.463-64, Hermes to Priam: νεμεσσητὸν δέ κεν εἴη ἄθανατον θεὸν ὦδε βροτοῦς ἀγαπαζέμεν ἀντην. Macleod (above, note 2) helpfully assesses the evolution, but overstates the difference -- traces of the old are still evident in Homer. It is Bethe (RE 3. 244) who calls the episode inorganic.

¹⁵ G.S. Kirk (above, note 8) speaks of "excess against the gods" (ad 6.200-2); M.P.O. Morford and R.J. Lenardon, in *Classical Mythology* 6th edition (New York: Longman, 1999) 493, speak of him as "attempting to rise too high" and as someone who "abused the friendship of the gods." In Isthmian 7.44-47, Pindar says Pegasus threw his master, who wished to come into the company of Zeus.

¹⁶ It seems fair to speak of "character" even in such schematic versions as that of Apollodorus, if we keep in mind that it is defined simply as the acceptance or rejection of the conventions within the stories.

¹⁷ So Kullmann (above, note 6) 24. For L. Sechan, *Le Mythe de Prométhée* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1951) 20, *hybris* covers all the *theomachoi*. Ruth Padel comments briefly on madness and fighting the god in *Whom Gods Destroy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) 201-4. In her *In and Out of the Mind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) 128 she asserts that "Obvious *theomachia* is more than useless. It is impious, fatal." Should we not, then, ask why impiety is so pervasive? Is it sufficient to answer that the Greek poets were reading their audiences a lesson, again and again?

¹⁸ We are assuming, with Robert Mondi, "*The Ascension of Zeus and the Composition of Hesiod's Theogony*," *GRBS* 25 (1984) 325-44, that Hesiod was selective in both the stories he chose to use and in what he incorporated from the variety of narratives available to him. To "repress" something found in a later version, then, claims that (1) Hesiod knew stories and variants of them which he did not use and (2) Hesiod exercised a certain artistic and intellectual control over these traditional, oral songs, although he was not able to integrate all his materials seamlessly and without contradiction and obscurity (on which see the remarks of Mazon *Hésiode* [Paris, 1972] 13-29. It will be clear from this paragraph and the following discussion that we do not accept the analysis of Jean-Pierre Vernant, who treats the Hesiodic corpus as a single, integrated field of metaphor. See, e.g., "*At Man's Table: Hesiod's Foundation Myth of Sacrifice*" in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*, edd. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989). An earlier analysis will be found in his *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980) 168-85.

¹⁹ The myth of the five ages occurs at *Works and Days* 108-201; see also Hesiod fr. 1 and M.L. West, *The Hesiodic Catalogue of Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 3, 56.

²⁰ The transition at 535 is abrupt. West's references ad loc. seem to point in the direction of our translation; cf. Vernant's (above, note 18) 226, "It was a time when gods and mortal men became separate from each other (ἐκρίνοντο) at Mecone." Fritz Graf, on the other hand, in *Greek Mythology*, trans. Thomas Marier (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) 85, thinks that "What took place between Prometheus and Zeus was of great importance for the men of Hesiod's time. However men understood their earliest status, the sacrifice at Mecone was seen as integrating them into Zeus's world." It is hard to see how the imperfect can be translated "when gods and mortals reached a settlement at Mecone" (81-2). For a survey of the problems in this passage and special attention to Prometheus as a trickster, see Eliot Wirshbo, "The Mekone Scene in the *Theogony*: Prometheus as Prankster," GRBS 13 (1982) 101-110.

²¹ Hesiod would have us believe Zeus intentionally chooses the poor portion (*Theogony* 544 and 551); we may detect an earlier version in which Prometheus deceived the god. See M.L. West, ed. and comm. *Theogony* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966) ad 551, and Burkert (above, note 9) 57.

²² Zeus needs the hundred-handed ones to defeat the Titans and, more significantly, the gods must turn to a mortal hero to beat the Giants (Apol. 1.6.1).

²³ We can assume that many such attempts at explanation and aetiology occurred to the Greeks before Homer and Hesiod. We may presume multiple answers led to a variety of explanations and stories, which would have, through time, interacted. At some point, and such a hypothetical "moment" would seem to be well before our poetic sources, which, specifically in Hesiod, show signs of incorporating reflection on myth into myth, historical self-consciousness began to reflect on the stories and their meanings. Man sacrifices to the gods, who are not present, who demand obeisance but in fact receive the lesser portion.

²⁴ Guilt is emphasized by Burkert, *Homo Necans*, trans. Peter Bing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), though not particularly with reference to Mecone. In Wirshbo's reading, the trickster's role is seen, for example, in that "the emphasis is entirely on the unequal portions rather than on who specifically gets which portion" (above, note 20) 106. We may agree with Wirshbo that Hesiod's Prometheus is not the cultural hero of *Prometheus Bound*, but it does not seem impossible that some of the confusion in the *Theogony* results from competing, interacting traditions and perspectives, to which a proto-cultural hero could have contributed.

²⁵ Calypso's second example, Demeter and Iasion (5.125-28) tells of another voluntary mating of divinity and mortal, which rouses the indignation of Zeus, who kills the mortal. Behind the elaborate game of the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite may lie a simpler version in which the goddess chose a mortal mate. The sophisticated

poet makes her infatuation the work of Zeus, then dramatizes the hero's response and Aphrodite's ambivalence. Anchises is at first reluctant, recognizing in Aphrodite's beauty a divine apparition (92-106), and is terrified after their intercourse (181-190). One thinks of Ishtar's "Come Gilgamesh, be thou (my) lover!" (cited from *The Ancient Near East*, vol I, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958) 51. On this theme and possible connections between the *Iliad* and Gilgamesh see W. Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1992) 96-99.

²⁶ For Tantalus' wish see Nostoi fr. 4 in Albertus Bernabé, ed. *Poetae Epici Graeci* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1987). For a collection of references to Tantalus see Gantz (above, note 7) 531-36, and 532-33 for the problems of *Olympian* I, which have been studied by J.G. Howie, "The Revision of Myth in Pindar *Olympian* 1," *Papers of the Liverpool Latin Seminar* 4 (1983) 277-313.

²⁷ We might compare the lack of clarity in Bellerophon's motives: was his flight to Olympus hostile in intent, or founded in a desire to live with the gods?

²⁸ Since Apollodorus (3.100) explicitly denies Hesiodic authority for Callisto as daughter of Lycaon, and because we have Arcadian genealogies tracing descent from Arcas, there is some question about this attribution. West, (above, note 19) 91-92, follows Carl Robert's suggestion that two different Hesiodic poems provided the variants.

²⁹ Regarding Ixion: the scholia on *Phoenissae* 1185 (Pherecydes fr. 103) offers a version in which Zeus not only received the murderer but gave him a share of immortality, too. Apart from the famous example of Heracles, we should also note that Tantalus, Tithonus, Kleitos (*Odyssey* 15. 250-51), Diomedes (*Thebais* fr. 5 Davies, cited by Burkert [above, note 29] 205 n. 9), Aristaeus (*Pythian* 9.68), and Phylonoe, daughter of Tyndareus (Apol. 3.126) become immortal. And in the Aithiopsis, both Memnon and Achilles were given immortality (a "deflation of the *Il.*'s tragedy of heroic death" according to M.W. Edwards, comm. *Iliad*: Books 17-20 [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991] 141. More frequently we hear of the offer of immortality, e.g., to Demophoon (*Hymn to Demeter* 242 and Apol. 1.5.1-2), and to Tydeus (contemplated by Athena, Apollodorus 3.75-76, 3.6.8).

³⁰ This and other translations from the hymns are by Apostolos N. Athanassakis, *The Homeric Hymns* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

³¹ Gantz (above, note 7) 79 and 170-71, notes the two references (Il. and Od.) seem at odds: the *Iliad* tells a "completely different story." Gantz also finds an allusion to this and to Artemis' hand in their deaths depicted on a red-figure bell krater (c 450 BC).

³² Gantz (above, note 7) 90.

³³ For Actaeon in the Hesiodic Catalogue see West (above, note 19) 87-88; for a survey of sources see Gantz (above, note 7) 478-9.

³⁴ Cf. *Seven Against Thebes* 424-29. The translations from tragedy are from *The Complete Greek Tragedies*, edd. David Grene and Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958).

³⁵ According to Proclus' summary, this boast occurred at the second gathering at Aulis; see *PEG* (above, note 26) 41. Apollonius (*Argonautica* 1.466-71) makes Idas swear by his spear, which aids him more than Zeus, that "no contest will be unaccomplished, not even if a god opposes him." Hermann Fränkel ("*Ein Don Quijote unter den Argonauten des Apollonius*," *Museum Helveticum* 17 (1960) 1-20) relates the foil Idas to Caeneus and Vergil's Mezentius.

³⁶ For Marsyas see Apollodorus 1.4.2 and Gantz (above, note 7) 95; Thomas H. Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991) 80-1, discusses Marsyas, Actaeon and Thamyras in early painting. Eurytus is a negative paradigm for Odysseus (*Odyssey* 8.224-8); cf. *Argonautica* 1.87-89. Thamyras is mentioned at *Iliad* 2.594-600. Sophocles wrote a play about him and another about the lesser Ajax.

³⁷ Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 6.170-72) makes Niobe ask why Latona is worshiped when her own numen is unattended. Her inflammatory rhetoric adds the favors shown Tantalus, her grandfather Atlas, and Jupiter himself, a relative on both sides. Ovid may have invented Niobe's claims to divine honors, but note that in Achilles' version (*Iliad* 24.611-12) Zeus has turned her people to stone. Comparing the fate of Salmoneus' people, we might speculate that the ossification was a penalty for acquiescing in the queen's demand for divine honors.

³⁸ There is a difference: 'religious' challenges appear only after cult has become a motif in the stories. Theology is there from the moment god/man, mortal/immortal is effective.

³⁹ Pindar, *Pythian* 3.55ff; Eur. *Alcestis* 3-4.

⁴⁰ For references, see Gantz (above, note 7) 91-2.

⁴¹ There is apparently no source before Lycophron for this incident; see Gantz (above, note 7) 378.

⁴² Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979) 78-98.

⁴³ K.J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978) 8, where he notes that despite this copious evidence in iconography the story "is known in extant classical literature only from a single oblique allusion in Pindar (*Olympian* 9.32f.). See also Carpenter (above, note 35) 43 and figures 72 and 73.

⁴⁴ For Neoptolemus at Delphi see Pindar, *Paian* 6.111-16 and Gantz (above, note 7) 690. Burkert, (above, note 24) 120-21, does not mention the motif found in Euripides.

⁴⁵ Burkert (above, note 24) 121-122. Burkert does not tell us who suggested that the story was just a product of chance.

⁴⁶ Joseph Fontenrose, *Python* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959) 400.

⁴⁷ Minos is mentioned allusively by Odysseus at *Odyssey* 19.179. The writer of the Platonic *Minos* interprets: "Minos was a disciple of Zeus... So every ninth year Minos repaired to the cave of Zeus, to learn some things, and to show his knowledge of others that he had learnt from Zeus in the preceding nine years. Some there are who suppose he who has colloquy is a cup-companion and fellow-jester of Zeus" (*Minos* 319e, trans. W.R.M. Lamb in the Loeb edition, [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927]). It is not a long stride from the spirit of this passage to comedy.

⁴⁸ G.W. Bond, ed. and comm. *Euripides: Heracles* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981) ad 841f.