

JASON, HYPsipYLE, AND NEW FIRE AT LEMNOS A STUDY IN MYTH AND RITUAL

HISTORY of religion, in its beginnings, had to struggle to emancipate itself from classical mythology as well as from theology and philosophy; when ritual was finally found to be the basic fact in religious tradition, the result was a divorce between classicists, treating mythology as a literary device, on the one hand, and specialists in festivals and rituals and their obscure affiliations and origins on the other.¹ The function of myth in society was studied by anthropologists,² the interrelation of myth and ritual was stressed by orientalists,³ but the classicists' response has been mainly negative.⁴ It cannot be denied that Greeks often spoke of correspondence of λεγόμενα and δρώμενα,⁵ that rituals are usually

¹ This paper was read at the Joint Triennial Classical Conference in Oxford, September 1968. The notes cannot aim at completeness of bibliography. The preponderance of ritual as against myth was vigorously stated by W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (1889; 1927³), ch. i, pressed further by Jane Harrison: myth 'nothing but ritual misunderstood' (*Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens* [1890], xxxiii). In Germany, it was the school of Albrecht Dieterich who concentrated on the study of ritual. Thus mythology is conspicuously absent from the indispensable handbooks of M. P. Nilsson (*Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung* [1906; hereafter: Nilsson, *GF*] and *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* [i, 1940; i², 1967; hereafter: Nilsson, *GGR*]) and L. Deubner (*Attische Feste* [1932; hereafter: Deubner]), whereas Wilamowitz stated that mythology was the creation of poets: 'Der Mythos . . . entsteht in der Phantasie des Dichters' (*Der Glaube der Hellenen* i [1931], 42). Mythology tried to re-establish itself in the trend of phenomenology and C. G. Jung's psychology, largely ignoring ritual: cf. the surveys of J. de Vries, *Forschungsgeschichte der Mythologie* (1961); K. Kerényi, *Die Eröffnung des Zugangs zum Mythos* (1967); 'die Religionswissenschaft ist vornehmlich Wissenschaft der Mythen' (K. Kerényi, *Umgang mit Göttlichem* [1955], 25).

² B. Malinowski, *Myth in Primitive Psychology* (1926); D. Kluckhohn, 'Myths and rituals: a general theory', *HTHR* xxxv (1942), 45-79.

³ S. H. Hooke (ed.), *Myth and Ritual* (1933), defining myth as 'the spoken part of the ritual', 'the story which the ritual

enacts' (3); *Myth, Ritual, and Kingship* (1958). Th. H. Gaster, *Thespis* (1961²). Independently, W. F. Otto, in his *Dionysos* (1934), spoke of 'Zusammenfall von Kultus und Mythos' (43 and *passim*). In fact connections of myth and ritual had been recognized by F. G. Welcker and, in an intuitive and unsystematic manner, by Wilamowitz ('Der mythische Thiasos aber ist ein Abbild des im festen Kultus gegebenen', *Euripides Herakles* i [1889], 85, cf. 'Hephaistos' [*GGN*, 1895, 217-45; hereafter: Wilamowitz; = *Kl. Schr.* v. 2, 5-35], 234 f. on the binding of Hera). In interpretation of Greek tragedy, due attention has been paid to ritual, cf., e.g., E. R. Dodds, *Euripides Bacchae* (1960²) xxv-xxviii.

⁴ Nilsson, *GGR* 14 n. with reference to Malinowski: 'für die griechischen Mythen trifft diese Lehre nicht zu'; cf. *Cults, Myths, Oracles, and Politics in Ancient Greece* (1951), 10; H. J. Rose, *Mnemosyne* iv. S. 3 (1950), 281-7; N. A. Marlow, *BRL* xliii (1960/1), 373-402; J. Fontenrose, *The Ritual Theory of Myth* (1966). As a consequence, historians of religion turn away from the Greek, cf. M. Eliade, *Antaios* ix (1968), 329, stating 'daß wir nicht einen einzigen griechischen Mythos in seinem rituellen Zusammenhang kennen'.

⁵ With regard to mysteries, as Nilsson (cf. n. 4 above) remarks (*Gal. UP* 6, 14 [iii. 576 K.]; *Paus.* 1. 43. 2; 2. 37. 2; 2. 38. 2; 9. 30. 12, cf. *Hdt.* 2. 81; 2. 47; 2. 51; M. N. H. van den Burg, *ΑΠΟΡΡΗΤΑ ΔΡΩΜΕΝΑ ΟΡΓΙΑ*, Diss. Amsterdam, 1939), not because there was nothing similar in non-secret cults, but because only the secrecy required the use of general passive expressions as λεγόμενα, δρώμενα. Ritual as

said to have been instituted 'on account of' some mythical event; but it is held that these myths are either 'aetiological' inventions and therefore of little interest, or that 'well-known types of story' have been superimposed on 'simple magical rites and spells' as Joseph Fontenrose concluded from his study of Python: 'The rituals did not enact the myth; the myth did not receive its plot from the rituals.'¹

Still, a formula such as 'simple magical rites' should give rise to further thinking. Life is complex beyond imagination, and so is living ritual. Our information about ancient ritual is, for the most part, desperately scanty, but to call it simple may bar understanding from the start; the simplicity may be just due to our perception and description. It is true that we do not usually find Greek myths as a liturgically fixed part of ritual; but this does not preclude the possibility of a ritual origin of myth; and if, in certain cases, there is secondary superimposition of myth on ritual, even the adopted child may have a real father—some distant rite of somehow similar pattern. Only detailed interpretation may turn such possibilities into probability or even certainty. But it is advisable to remember that those combinations and superimpositions and aetiological explanations were made by people with first-hand experience of ancient religion; before discarding them, one should try to understand them.

One of the best-known Greek myths, from Homer's time (*Od.* 12. 70) throughout antiquity, is the story of the Argonauts; one incident, the 'Lemnian crime' followed by the romance of Jason and Hypsipyle, enjoyed proverbial fame. That it has anything to do with ritual, we learn only through sheer coincidence: the family of the Philostrati were natives of Lemnos, and one of them included details of Lemnian tradition in his dialogue *Heroikos*, written about A.D. 215.² The Trojan vine-dresser who is conversant with the ghost of Protesilaus describes the semi-divine honours allegedly paid to Achilles by the Thessalians long before the Persian war, and he illustrates them by reference to certain Corinthian rites and to a festival of Lemnos; the common characteristic is the combination of propitiation of the dead, *ἐναγίσματα*, with mystery-rites, *τελεστικόν*:

ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ ἔργῳ τῷ περὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν Λήμνῳ γυναικῶν ἐξ Ἀφροδίτης ποτὲ πραχθέντι καθαίρεται μὲν ἡ Λήμνος †καὶ καθ' ἓνα τοῦ ἔτους† καὶ σβέννυνται τὸ ἐν αὐτῇ πῦρ ἐς ἡμέρας ἑννέα· θεωρὶς δὲ ναὺς ἐκ Δήλου πυρφορεῖ, καὶ ἀφίκεται πρὸ τῶν ἐναγισμάτων, οὐδαμοῦ τῆς Λήμνου καθορμίζεται, μετέωρος δὲ ἐπισαλεύει τοῖς ἀκρωτηρίοις, ἔς τε ὅσιον τὸ ἐσπλεύσαι γένηται. θεοὺς γὰρ χθονίους καὶ ἀπορρήτους καλοῦντες τότε καθαρὸν, οἶμαι, τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἐν τῇ θαλάττῃ φυλάττουσιν. ἐπειδὴν δὲ ἡ θεωρὶς ἐσπλεύσῃ καὶ νεύμωνται τὸ πῦρ ἔς τε τὴν ἄλλην δίαταν ἔς τε τὰς ἐμπύρους τῶν τεχνῶν, καινοῦ τὸ ἐντεῦθεν βίου φασὶν ἄρχεσθαι.³

μύμησις of myth, e.g. Diod. 4. 3. 3; Steph. Byz. s.v. *Ἀγρᾶ*. Cf. Ach. Tat. 2. 2 τῆς ἑορτῆς πατέρα διηγοῦνται μῦθον.

¹ Python (1959), 461–2, against Hooke (above, p. 1, n. 3) and J. E. Harrison who wrote 'the myth is the plot of the *δρῶμενον*' (*Themis* [1927²], 331).

² On the problem of the Philostrati and the author of the *Heroicus*, K. Münscher, *Die Philostrate* (1907), 469 ff.; F. Solmsen, *RE* xx (1941), 154–9; on the date of the *Heroicus*, Münscher, 474, 497–8, 505; Solmsen, 154.

³ Ch. 19 § 20 in the edition of G. Olcarius (1709; followed by Kayser) = ch. 20 § 24 in the edition of A. Westermann (1849; followed by Nilsson, *GF* 470) = ii. 207 of the Teubner edition (C. L. Kayser, 1871); critical editions: J. F. Boissonade (Paris, 1806), 232; Kayser (Zürich, 1844, 1853²), 325. καὶ καθ' ἓνα τοῦ ἔτους is found in three codices (γ, φ, ψ) and apparently in a fourth (p) before correction; the printed editions, from the Aldina (1503), dropped the καὶ at the beginning; Boissonade and Westermann

It is frustrating that one important detail, the time of the festival, is obscured by corruption. The reading of the majority of the manuscripts, καθ' ἑκαστον ἔτος, is too obvious a correction to be plausible. But the ingenious suggestion of Adolf Wilhelm¹ to read καθ' ἐνάτου ἔτους has to be rejected, too: it introduces an erroneous orthography of old inscriptions into a literary text of the Imperial age, it gives an unattested meaning to κατά with genitive,² and it fails to account for the καί; it is as difficult to assume two unrelated corruptions in the same passage as to imagine how the misreading of ἐνάτου should have brought forth the superfluous καί. Looking for other remedies, one could surmise that a masculine substantive, required by καθ' ἕνα, is missing, hiding in that very καί: καιρὸν καθ' ἕνα τοῦ ἔτους—an unusual word-order, modelled on Herodotus' frequent χρόνον ἐπὶ πολλόν and similar expressions and thus combining archaism with peculiarities of later Greek.³ Of course it is possible that more serious corruption has occurred; still the traditional emendation καθ' ἑκαστον ἔτος may not be far off the mark as to the content: Achilles received his honours which the Lemnian custom is meant to illustrate, ἀνὰ πᾶν ἔτος too (ii. 207, 2, Teubner edn.).

Nilsson, in *Griechische Feste* (470), has Philostratus' account under the heading 'festivals of unknown divinities'. This is an excess of self-restraint. There is one obvious guess as to which god must have played a prominent role in the fire festival: Lemnos is the island of Hephaistos,⁴ the main city is called Hephaistia throughout antiquity, it has the head of Hephaistos on its coins. Incidentally, one Lucius Flavius Philostratus was ἱερεὺς τοῦ ἐπωνύμου τῆς πόλεως Ἡφαίστου in the 3rd cent. A.D. (*IG* xii. 8, 27). But Hephaistos is the god of fire, even fire himself (*Il.* 2. 426): the purification of the island of Hephaistos, brought about by new fire, was a festival of Hephaistos. Philostratus indeed alludes to this: the new fire, he says, is distributed especially 'to the craftsmen who have to do with fire', i.e. to potters and blacksmiths. The island must have been famous for its craftsmen at an early date: the Sinties of Lemnos, Hellanicus said (*FGH* Hist 4 F 71), invented fire and the forging of weapons. The 'invention', the advent of fire, is repeated in the festival. It is true that Philostratus mentions Aphrodite as the agent behind the original crime: she ought to have a place in the atonement, too.⁵ But the question: to

adopted καθ' ἑκαστον ἔτος found in the other manuscripts. Kayser lists 32 codices altogether.

¹ *AAWW*, 1939, 41–6, followed by M. Delcourt, *Héphaïstos ou la légende du magicien* (1957; hereafter: Delcourt), 172–3; Nilsson, *GGR* 97, 6. S. Eitrem *SO* ix (1930), 60 tried καθαίρονται ἢ Λήμνος καὶ (οἱ Λήμνιοι) καθ' ἕνα κατ' ἔτος.

² κατά c. gen. 'down to a certain deadline' in the instances adduced by Wilhelm: a contract κατ' εἴκοσι ἐτῶν, κατὰ βίου, κατὰ τοῦ παντός χρόνου. Cf. W. Schmid, *Der Attizismus* iv (1898), 456.

³ Moer.: ὦρα ἔτους Ἀττικοί, καιρὸς ἔτους Ἕλληνες, cf. Schmid, loc. cit. 361. For inversion of word-order, cf. *Heroicus* 12. 2 κρατήρας τοὺς ἐκείθεν.

⁴ *Il.* 1. 593, *Od.* 8. 283–4 with schol. and Eust. 157. 28; A.R. 1. 851–2 with schol.; Nic. *Ther.* 458 with schol., etc.; cf. Wila-

mowitz; C. Fredrich, 'Lemnos', *MDAI(A)* xxxi (1906), 60–86, 241–56 (hereafter: Fredrich); L. Malten, 'Hephaistos', *JDAI* xxvii (1912), 232–64 and *RE* viii. 315–16. Combination with the fire-festival: F. G. Welcker, *Die aeschyleische Trilogie Prometheus und die Kabirenweihe zu Lemnos* (1824; hereafter: Welcker), 155–304, esp. 247 ff.; J. J. Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht* (1861), 90 = *Ges. Werke*, ii. 276; Fredrich, 74–5; Delcourt, 171–90, whereas L. R. Farnell, *Cults of the Greek states*, v (1909), 394 concluded from the silence of Philostratus that the festival was not connected with Hephaistos. The importance of the craftsmen was stressed by Welcker, 248, Delcourt, 177. That the festival belongs to Hephaistia, not Myrina is shown by the coins already used by Welcker, cf. p. 8, n. 3 below.

⁵ Cf. A.R. 1. 850–2, 858–60; a dedication Ἀφροδίτῃ Θρακίαι from the Kabeirion of

which god does the festival 'belong', seems to be rather a misunderstanding of polytheism: as the ritual mirrors the complexity of life, various aspects of reality, i.e. different deities, are concerned.¹ The 'beginning of a new life' at Lemnos would affect all the gods who played their part in the life of the community, above all the Great Goddess who was called Lemnos herself.²

To get farther, it is tempting to embark on ethnological comparison. Festivals of new fire are among the most common folk customs all over the world; striking parallels have been adduced from the Red Indians as well as from East Indian Burma;³ and one could refer to the Incas as well as to the Japanese. Nilsson, wisely, confines himself to Greek parallels, not without adding the remark (*GF* 173): 'Daß das Feuer durch den täglichen Gebrauch . . . seine Reinheit verliert, ist ein überall verbreiteter Glauben.' 'Ubiquitous belief' is meant to explain the ritual. Where, however, one ought to ask, do such ubiquitous beliefs come from? The obvious answer is: from the rituals.⁴ People, living with their festivals from childhood, are taught their beliefs by these very rituals, which remain constant as against the unlimited possibilities of primitive associations. Thus the comparative method does not, by itself, lead to an explanation, to an understanding of what is going on—if one does not take it for granted that whatever Greeks or Romans told about their religion is wrong, but what any savage told to a merchant or missionary is a revelation. At the same time, by mere accumulation of comparative material, the outlines of the picture become more and more blurred, until nothing is left but vague generalities.

In sharp contrast to the method of accumulation, there is the method of historical criticism; instead of expanding the evidence, it tries to cut it down, to isolate elements and to distribute them neatly to different times and places. The *πυρφορία* described by Philostratus connects Delos and Lemnos. This, we are told, is an innovation which betrays Attic influence. The suggestion cannot be disproved, though it is remarkable that Philostratus wrote at a time when Lemnos had just become independent from Athens, that the Athenians got their new fire not from Delos, but from Delphi (Plut. *Num.* 9), and that the role of Delos as a religious centre of the islands antedates not only Attic, but plainly Greek influence.⁵ Still, the critical separation of Lemnian and Delian worship has its consequences: if the Lemnians originally did not sail to Delos,

Lemnos, *ASAA* 3/5 (1941/3), 91 nr. 12; a temple of Aphrodite at Lemnos, schol. Stat. *Theb.* 5. 59; the *καρτίστη δαίμων* in Aristophanes' *Lemniai* (fr. 365) may be the same 'Thracian Aphrodite'.

¹ The sacrificial calendars regularly combine different deities in the same ceremonies, cf. as the most extensive example the calendar of Erchiai, G. Daux, *BCH* lxxxvii (1963), 603 ff., S. Dow *BCH* lxxxix (1965), 180–213.

² Phot., Hsch. s.v. *μεγάλη θεός* = Ar. fr. 368; Steph. Byz. s.v. *Λήμνος*. Pre-Greek representations: Fredrich, 60 ff. with pl. VIII/IX; A. Della Seta, *AE*, 1937, 644, pl. 2/3; Greek coins in B.V. Head, *Historia Numorum* (1911²), 263.

³ Fredrich, 75; J. G. Frazer, *The Golden*

Bough (hereafter: Frazer, *GB*; 1911³) viii. 72–5; x. 136; generally on fire-festivals: ii. 195–265; x. 106–xi. 44.

⁴ Usually 'beliefs' are traced back to emotional experience; but cf. C. Lévi-Strauss, *Le Totémisme aujourd'hui* (1962), 102 f.: 'Ce ne sont pas des émotions actuelles... ressenties à l'occasion des réunions et des cérémonies qui engendrent ou perpétuent les rites, mais l'activité rituelle qui suscite les émotions.'

⁵ F. Cassola, 'La leggenda di Anio e la preistoria Delia', *PP* lx (1954), 345–67; there is an old sanctuary of the Kabeiroi on Delos, B. Hemberg, *Die Kabiren* (1950; hereafter: Hemberg), 140–53; the Orion myth combines Delos and Lemnos, below, p. 6, n. 1.

where did their new fire come from? Obviously from an indigenous source: the miraculous fire of Mount Mosychlos.¹ This fire has a curious history. The commentators on Homer and Sophocles and the Roman poets clearly speak of a volcano on Lemnos;² this volcano was active in literature down to the end of the 19th century, with some scattered eruptions even in later commentaries on Sophocles' *Philoctetes*,³ though geographical survey had revealed that there never was a volcano on Lemnos at any time since this planet has been inhabited by *homo sapiens*.⁴ Thus the volcano disappeared, but its fire remained: scholars confidently speak of an 'earth fire', a perpetual flame nourished by earth gas on Mount Mosychlos. As earth gas may be found nearly everywhere and fires of this kind do not leave permanent traces, this hypothesis cannot be disproved. Nothing has been adduced to prove it either. The analogy with the fires of Baku ought not to be pressed; no reservoir of oil has been found at Lemnos.

There is no denying that 'Lemnian fire' was something famous and uncanny. Philoctetes, in his distress, invokes it:

ὦ Λημνία χθὼν καὶ τὸ παγκρατὲς σέλας ἡφαιστότευκτον (986).

Antimachus mentions it in comparison (fr. 46 Wyss):

Ἡφαίστου φλογὶ εἵκελον, ἣν ῥά τιτύσκει
δαίμων ἀκροτάτης ὄρεος κορυφαίῃ Μοσύχλῳ.

This fire on the summit of the mountain is in some way miraculous, *δαμόνιον*—but *τιτύσκει* (after *Il.* 21. 342) is hardly suggestive of a perpetual flame. There is, however, another invocation of Lemnian fire in the *Philoctetes*: τῷ Λημνίῳ τῷδ' ἀνακαλουμένῳ πυρὶ ἔμπρησον (800 f.), the hero cries. ἀνακαλουμένῳ has proved to be a stumbling-block for believers either in the volcano or the earth fire.⁵ ἀνακαλεῖν, ἀνακαλεῖσθαι is a verb of ritual, used especially for 'imploping' chthonic deities: Deianeira implores her δαίμων (Soph. *Tr.* 910), Oedipus at Colonus his ἀραί (Soph. *OC* 1376). Thus ἀνακαλουμένῳ seems to imply a certain ceremony to produce this demoniac fire; it is not always there. Understood in this way, the verse turns out to be the earliest testimony to the fire-festival of Lemnos; it confirms the guess that the fire was not brought from Delos at that

¹ Fredrich, 75; with reference to a custom in Burma, Frazer, *GB* x. 136; Malten, *JDAI* xxvii. 248 f.; Fredrich, however, thinks that the earth fire came to be extinguished at an early date.

² κρατῆρες: Eust. 158. 3; 1598. 44; schol. Soph. *Phil.* 800, 986; Val. Flacc. 2. 332-9; Stat. *Theb.* 5. 50, 87; *Silv.* 3. 1. 131-3. Less explicit: Heraclit. *All.* 26. 15 (echoed by Eust. 157. 37, schol. *Od.* 8. 284) ἀνιένται γηγενεὺς πυρὸς αὐτόματοι φλόγες (F. Buffière, *CB* 1962 keeps the manuscript reading ἐγγυγγενεὺς, 'un feu qu'on croirait presque sorti de terre', but this is hardly Greek); Acc. trag. 532 'nemus expirante vapore vides...' is incompatible with the volcano-, though not with the earth-fire-hypothesis.

³ L. Preller-C. Robert, *Griechische Mythologie*, i⁴ (1894), 175, 178; R. C. Jebb, Sophocles, *Philoctetes* (1890), 243-5; P. Mazon, Sophocles, *Philoctète* (*CB* 1960), note on v. 800.

⁴ K. Neumann-J. Partsch, *Physikalische Geographie von Griechenland* (1885) 314-18, who immediately thought of the earth fire, cf. Fredrich, 253-4, Malten, *JDAI* xxvii. 233, *RE* viii. 316, Nilsson, *GGR* 528-9; R. Hennig, 'Altgriechische Sagen-gestalten als Personifikation von Erdfeuern', *JDAI* liv (1939), 230-46. Earth fires are well attested at Olympos in Lycia (Maltén, *RE* viii. 317-19), where the Hephaistos-cult was prominent, and at Trapezus in Arcadia (Arist. *Mir.* 127, Paus. 8. 29. 1) and at Apollonia in Epirus (Theopompus, *FGrHist* 115 F 316) without the Hephaistos-cult.

⁵ Meineke and Pearson changed the text to ἀνακαλούμενον, Mazon translates 'que tu évoqueras pour cela', though keeping ἀνακαλουμένῳ; Jebb translates 'famed as', with reference to *El.* 693, where, however, ἀνακαλούμενος is 'being solemnly proclaimed' as victor.

time. How the fire was kindled in the ritual, may have been a secret. Considering the importance of Lemnian craftsmen, the most miraculous method for χαλκείς would be to use a χαλκεῖον, a bronze burning-mirror to light a new fire from the sun.¹ Hephaistos fell on Lemnos from heaven, the *Iliad* says (1. 593), on Mount Mosychlos, native tradition held;² he was very feeble, but the Sinties at once took care of him. In the tiny flame rising from the tinder in the focus, the god has arrived—alas, this is just a guess. But it seems advisable to send the earth fire of Mosychlos together with the volcano after the volcanic vapours of Delphi, which, too, vanished completely under the spade of the excavators; the miracles of ritual do not need the miracles of nature; the miracles of nature do not necessarily produce mythology.

To get beyond guesses, there is one clue left in the text of Philostratus: the purification is performed 'on account of the deed wrought by the Lemnian women against their husbands'. It is by myth that ancient tradition explains the ritual. Modern scholarship has revolted against this. As early as 1824, Friedrich Gottlob Welcker found a 'glaring contrast' between the 'deeper' meaning of the festival and the 'extrinsic occasion' said to be its cause.³ George Dumézil,⁴ however, was able to show that the connection of myth and ritual, in this case, is by no means 'extrinsic': there is almost complete correspondence in outline and in detail.

The myth is well known:⁵ the wrath of Aphrodite had smitten the women of Lemnos; they developed a 'foul smell' (δυσωδία) so awful that their husbands, understandably, sought refuge in the arms of Thracian slave-girls. This, in turn, enraged the women so much that, in one terrible night, they slew their husbands and, for the sake of completeness, all the male population of the island. Thereafter Lemnos was a community of women without men, ruled by the virgin queen Hypsipyle, until the day when the ship arrived, the Argo with Jason. This was the end of Lemnian celibacy. With a rather licentious festival the island returned to bisexual life. The story, in some form, is already known to the *Iliad*: the son of Jason and Hypsipyle is dwelling on Lemnos, Euneos, the man of the fine ship.

With this myth, the fire ritual is connected not in a casual or arbitrary manner, but by an identity of rhythm, marked by two περιπέτεια: first, there

¹ Ancient burning-mirrors were always made of bronze; the testimonies in J. Morgan, 'De ignis eliciendi modis', *HSCP* i (1890), 50–64; earliest mention: Theophr. *Ign.* 73, *Eucl. Opt.* 30 (burning-glass: *Ar. Nub.* 767); used in rituals of new fire: *Plut. Num.* 9 (Delphi and Athens, 1st cent. B.C.); Heraclit. *All.* 26. 13 κατ' ἀρχὰς οὐδέπω τῆς τοῦ πυρὸς χρήσεως ἐπιπολαζούσης ἀνθρώποι χρονικῶς χαλκοῖς τιαν ὀργάνοις ἐφειλκύναντο τοὺς ἀπὸ τῶν μετεώρων φερομένους σπινθήρας, κατὰ τὰς μεσημβρίας ἐναντία τῷ ἡλίῳ τὰ ὀργανὰ τιθέντες.

Parallels from the Incas, Siam, China: Frazer, *GB* ii. 243, 245; x. 132, 137. Fredrich, 75. 3 thought of the burning-mirror in connection with the myth of Orion, who recovers his eyesight from the sun with the help of the Lemnian Kedalion (Hes. fr. 148 Merkelbach–West). 'Fire from

the sky' lit the altar at Rhodes, the famous centre of metallurgy (Pi. *O.* 7. 48). The practice may have influenced the myth of Helios' cup as well as the theories of Xenophanes and Heraclitus about the sun (21 A 32, 40; 22 A 12, B 6 DK).

² Galen xii. 173 K., cf. Acc. trag. 529–31.

³ Op. cit. 249–50.

⁴ *Le Crime des Lemniennes* (1924; hereafter: Dumézil).

⁵ Survey of sources: Roscher, *Myth. Lex.* i. 2853–6 (Klügmann), ii. 73–4 (Seeliger), v. 808–14 (Immisch); L. Preller–C. Robert, *Griech. Mythologie*, ii⁴ (1921), 849–59; cf. Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung*, ii (1924), 232–48. Jason, Hypsipyle, Thoas, Euneos in Homer: *Il.* 7. 468–9, 14. 230, 15. 40, 21. 41, 23. 747; cf. Hes. fr. 157, 253–6 Merkelbach–West.

begins a period of abnormal, barren, uncanny life, until, secondly, the advent of the ship brings about a new, joyous life—which is in fact the return to normal life.

Correspondences go even farther. The mythological *aition* compels us to combine with the text of Philostratus another testimony about Lemnian ritual, which, too, is said to be a remnant of the Argonauts' visit. Myrsilos of Lesbos is quoted for a different explanation of the infamous *δυσωδία*: not Aphrodite, but Medeia caused it; in accordance with the older version ousted by Apollonius,¹ Myrsilos made the Argonauts come to Lemnos on their return from Kolchis, though the presence of Medeia brought some complications for Jason and Hypsipyle. The jealous sorceress took her revenge: *καὶ δυσσομίαν γενέσθαι ταῖς γυναιξίν· εἶναί τε μέχρι τοῦ νῦν κατ' ἐνιαυτὸν ἡμέραν τινα, ἐν ᾗ διὰ τὴν δυσωδίαν ἀπέχων τὰς γυναῖκας ἄνδρα τε καὶ υἱεῖς.*²

Thus one of the most curious features of the myth reappears in ritual, at least down to Hellenistic times: the foul smell of the women, which isolates them from men. Evidently this fits very well into that abnormal period of the purification ceremony. Extinguishing all fires on the island—this in itself means a dissolution of all normal life. There is no cult of the gods, which requires incense and fire on the altars, there is no regular meal in the houses of men during this period, no meat, no bread, no porridge; some special vegetarian diet must have been provided. The *ἐστία*, the centre of the community, the centre of every house is dead. What is even more, the families themselves are broken apart, as it were by a curse: men cannot meet their wives, sons cannot see their mothers. The active part in this separation of sexes is, according to the text of Myrsilos, played by the women; they are the subject of *ἀπέχων*. They act together, by some sort of organization; probably they meet in the streets or the sanctuaries, whereas the male population is scared away. Thus the situation in the city closely reflects the situation described in the myth: disagreeable women rule the town, the men have disappeared.

Dumézil already went one step farther and used the myth to supplement our information about the ritual. There is the famous fate of King Thoas, son of Dionysus, father of Hypsipyle: he is not killed like the other men; Hypsipyle hides him in a coffin, and he is tossed into the sea.³ Valerius Flaccus (*Arg.* 2. 242 ff.) gives curious details: Thoas is led to the temple of Dionysus on the night of the murder; on the next day, he is dressed up as Dionysus, with wig, wreath, garments of the god, and Hypsipyle, acting as Bacchant, escorts the god through the town down to the seashore to see him disappear. It is difficult to tell how much of this Valerius Flaccus took from older tradition;⁴ the

¹ Pi. P. 4. 252–7.

² *FGrHist* 477 F 1a = schol. A.R. 1. 609/19c; F 1b = Antig. *hist. mir.* 118 is less detailed and therefore likely to be less accurate: *κατὰ δὴ τινα χρόνον καὶ μάλιστα ἐν ταύταις ταῖς ἡμέραις, ἐν αἷς ἰστοροῦσιν τὴν Μήδειαν παραγενέσθαι, δυσώδεις αὐτὰς οὕτως γίνεσθαι ὥστε μηδένα προσεῖναι*. Delcourt, 173, 2 holds that only the information about Medea goes back to Myrsilos; but the scholiast had no reason to add a reference to 'contemporary' events, whereas Myrsilos was interested in contemporary *mirabilia* (F

2; 4–6). Welcker, 250, already combined Myrsilos' with Philostratos' account.

³ A.R. 1. 620–6; Theolytos, *FGrHist* 478 F 3, Xenagoras, *FGrHist* 240 F 31, and Kleon of Kurion in schol. A.R. 1. 623/6a; cf. Eur. *Hyps.* fr. 64. 74 ff.; 105 ff. Bond; Hypoth. Pi. N. b, iii. 2, 8–13 Drachmann; Kylix Berlin 2300 = *ARV*² 409, 43 = G. M. A. Richter, *The Furniture of the Greeks, Etruscans and Romans* (1966), 385.

⁴ Cf. Immisch, Roschers *Myth. Lex.* v. 806. Domitian had made a very similar escape from the troops of Vitellius in A.D. 68:

general pattern, the ἀποπομπή of the semi-divine king, the way to the sea, the tossing of the λάρναξ into the water surely goes back to very old strata.¹ It is fitting that the new life, too, should arrive from the sea—ἀποπομπή and *adventus* correspond.

One step further, beyond Dumézil's observations, is to realize that the bloodshed wrought by the women, the killing of the men, must have had its counterpart in ritual, too: in sacrifices, involving rather cruel spectacles of bloodshed.² It would be impossible to 'call secret gods from under the earth' (Philostratus loc. cit.) without the blood of victims, flowing into a pit, possibly at night; the absence of fire would make these acts all the more dreary. Women may have played an active part in these affairs; at Hermione, in a festival called Chthonia, four old women had to cut the throats of the sacrificial cows with sickle swords (Paus. 2. 35). In Lemnos, a ram-sacrifice must have been prominent; a ram is often represented on the coins of Hephaestia.³ The fleece of a ram, Διὸς κώδιον, was needed in many purification ceremonies;⁴ incidentally, the Argonauts' voyage had the purpose of providing a ram's fleece.

Most clearly the concluding traits of the myth reflect ritual: the arrival of the Argonauts is celebrated with an *agon*; the prize is a garment.⁵ This is as characteristic a prize as the Athenian oil at the Panathenaia, the Olympian olive-wreath in Olympia; the Lemnian festival must have ended with an *agon*, though it never attained Panhellenic importance. The garment, made by women, ἀγλαὰ ἔργα ἰδύλαι, is a quite fitting gift to end the war of the sexes; if Jason receives the garment of Thoas (Ap. Rh. 4. 423-34), continuity bridges the gap of the catastrophe. There is one more curious detail in Pindar's account of the Lemnian *agon*: the victor was not Jason, but a certain Erginos, who was conspicuous by his untimely grey hair; the others had laughed at him.⁶ Erginos 'the workman', grey-haired and surrounded by laughter, but victorious at Lemnos after the ship had arrived—this seems to be just a transformation, a translation of Hephaistos the grey-haired workman, who constantly arouses Homeric laughter.⁷ Thus the myth itself takes us back to the

Isiaco celatus habitu interque sacrificulos (Suet. Dom. 1. 2, cf. Tac. Hist. 3. 74; Jos. Bell. Iud. 4. 11. 4; another similar case in the civil war, App. BC 4. 47; Val. Max. 7. 3. 8).

¹ This is the manner of death of Osiris, Plut. Is. 13. 356 c. Parallels from folk-custom: W. Mannhardt, *Wald- und Feldkulte*, i (1875), 311 ff.; Frazer, *GB* ii. 75, iv. 206-12; Dumézil, 42 ff. Hypsipyle is a telling name; 'vermutlich war Hypsipyle einst eine Parallelfigur zu Medea; die "hohe Pforte" in ihrem Namen war die Pforte der Hölle' (Wilamowitz, *Griechische Tragödien* iii⁷ [1926], 169, 1)—or rather, more generally, the 'high gate' of the Great Goddess. The same name may have been given independently to the nurse of the dying child—another aspect of the Great Goddess (*hymn. Cer.* 184 ff.)—at Nemea.

² Cf. Burkert, 'Greek tragedy and sacrificial ritual', *GRBS* vii (1966), 102-21.

³ Cf. *Königliche Museen zu Berlin, Beschreibung der antiken Münzen* (1888), 279-83; Head, 262-3; A. B. Cook, *Zeus*, iii (1940),

233-4; Hemberg, 161. A similar ram-sacrifice has been inferred for Samothrace, Hemberg, 102, 284. Instead of the ram, the coins of Hephaestia sometimes have torches, πῆλοι (of Kabeiroi-Dioskouroi), and kerykeion, also vines and grapes; all these symbols have some connection with the context of the festival treated here.

⁴ Nilsson, *GGR* 110-13; Paus. Att. δ 18 Erbse.

⁵ Simonides, 547 Page; Pi. P. 4. 253 with schol.; cf. A.R. 2. 30-2; 3. 1204-6; 4. 423-34.

⁶ Pi. O. 4. 23-31; cf. schol. 32 c; Callim. fr. 668. Here Erginos is son of Klymenos of Orchomenos, father of Trophonios and Agamedes (another pair of divine craftsmen, with a fratricide-myth, as the Kabeiroi), whereas A.R. 1. 185, after Herodorus, *FGrHist* 31 F 45/55, makes him son of Poseidon, from Miletus, cf. Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung*, ii. 238.

⁷ The constellation Erginos-Jason-Hypsipyle is akin to the constellation Hephaistos-

fire-festival: this is the triumph of Hephaistos, the reappearing fire which brings new life, especially to the workmen in the service of their god. It is possible that laughter was required in the ritual as an expression of the new life—as in Easter ceremonies, both the new fire and laughter, even in churches, are attested in the Middle Ages.¹ Another peculiarity seems to have been more decidedly 'pagan': surely neither Aeschylus nor Pindar invented the unabashed sexual colouring of the meeting of Lemniads and Argonauts; in Aeschylus, the Lemniads force the Argonauts by oath to make love to them.² Behind this, there must be ritual *αἰσχρολογία* or even *αἰσχροποιία* at the festival of licence which forms the concluding act of the abnormal period.

Many details are bound to escape us. Hephaistos, at Lemnos, was connected with the Kabeiroi. The Kabeirion, not far from Hephaistia, has been excavated; it offers a neat example of continuity of cult from pre-Greek to Greek population, but it did not yield much information about the mysteries, except that wine-drinking played an important role.³ Myth connects the Kabeiroi of Lemnos with the Lemnian crime: they left the accursed island.⁴ Since their cult continued at Lemnos, they evidently came back, when the curse had come to an end. In Aeschylus' *Kabeiroi*, they somehow somewhere meet the Argonauts; they invade the houses and mockingly threaten to drink everything down to the last drop of vinegar.⁵ Such impudent begging is characteristic of mummers;⁶ these Kabeiroi, grandchildren of Hephaistos, reflect some masked club, originally a guild of smiths, probably, who play a leading role at the purification ceremony anyhow. It is tempting to suppose that the ship of the Argonauts arriving at Lemnos really means the ship of the Kabeiroi; being associated with seafaring everywhere, it fits them to arrive by ship. The herald of the Argonauts who rises to prominence only in the negotiations of Argonauts

Ares-Aphrodite in the famous Demodocus hymn (*Od.* 8. 266–366): another triumph of Hephaistos amidst unextinguishable laughter. A special relation to Lemnos is suggested by a pre-Greek vase fragment, found in a sanctuary in Hephaistia (A. Della Seta, *AE*, 1937, 650; Ch. Picard, *RA* xx (1942/3), 97–124; to be dated about 550 B.C., as B. B. Shefton kindly informs me; cf. Delcourt, 80–2): a naked goddess *vis-à-vis* an armed warrior, both apparently fettered. This is strikingly reminiscent of Demodocus' song, as Picard and Delcourt saw, though hardly a direct illustration of Homer's text, rather of 'local legend' (cf. K. Friis Johansen, *The Iliad In Early Greek Art* [1967], 38, 59), i.e. a native Lemnian version. The crouching position of the couple reminded Picard of Bronze Age burial customs; anthropology provides examples of human sacrifice in the production of new fire: a couple forced to mate and killed on the spot (cf. E. Pechuel-Loesche, *Die Loango-Expedition* iii. 2 [1907], 171 ff.). Surely Homer's song is more enjoyable without thinking of such a gloomy background.

¹ Mannhardt, 502–8, Frazer, *GB* x. 121 ff.; on 'risus Paschalis', P. Sartori, *Sitte und Brauch*

(1914), iii. 167.

² Fr. 40 Mette, cf. Pi. *P.* 4. 254; Herodorus, *FGHHist* 31 F 6.

³ Preliminary report *ASAA* i/ii (1939/40), 223–4; inscriptions: *ASAA* iii/v (1941/3), 75–105; xiv/xvi (1952/4), 317–40; D. Levi, 'Il Cabirio di Lemno', *Charisterion A. K. Orlandos*, iii (Athens, 1966), 110–32; Hemberg, 160–70. Wine-vessels bore the inscription *Καβείρων*. Kabeiroi and Hephaistos: Akousilaos, *FGHHist* 2 F 20, Pherekydes, *FGHHist* 3 F 48 with Jacoby ad loc.; O. Kern, *RE* x. 1423 ff.; this is not the tradition of Samothrace nor of Thebes (where there is one old *Κάβριος*, Nilsson, *GGR*, pl. 48, 1), and thus points towards Lemnos. In the puzzling lyric fragment, adesp. 985 Page, Kabeiros son of Lemnos is the first man.

⁴ Photios s.v. *Κάβειροι*: *δαίμονες ἐκ Λήμνου διὰ τὸ τόλμημα τῶν γυναικῶν μετενεχθέντες· εἰσὶ δὲ ἦτοι Ἡφαῖστοι ἢ Τιτᾶνες*.

⁵ Fr. 45 Mette; that the Kabeiroi are speaking is clear from Plutarch's quotation (*q. conv.* 633 a): *αὐτοὶ παίζοντες ἠπέλιθσαν*.

⁶ K. Meuli, 'Bettelumzüge im Totenkult, Opferritual und Volksbrauch', *Schweizer Archiv für Volkskunde*, xxviii (1927/8), 1–38.

and Lemniads is called Aithalides, 'man of soot';¹ this binds him to the blacksmiths of Lemnos; the island itself was called Aithalia.² These Kabeiroi—blacksmiths would, after a night of revel, ascend Mount Mosychlos with their magic cauldron and light the fire, which was then, by a torch-race, brought to the city and distributed to sanctuaries, houses, and workshops—seductive possibilities.

Equally uncertain is the connection of the purification ceremonies with the digging of 'Lemnian earth'. *Λημνία γῆ*, red-coloured clay, described by Dioskurides and Galen, formed an ingredient of every oriental drugstore down to this century;³ superstition can even outlive religion. Travellers observed how the clay was dug under the supervision of the priest at the hill which, by this, is identified as Mount Mosychlos; in the time of Galen, it was the priestess of Artemis⁴ who collected it, throwing wheat and barley on the ground, formed it into small disks, sealed it with the seal of a goat and sold it for medical purposes. The priestess of the goddess operating at the mount of Hephaistos—it is possible to connect this with the fire festival. Indeed it is all the more tempting because, owing to the continuity of ritual, this would give a clue as to the date of the festival: Lemnian earth was collected on 6 August; this corresponds with the time of Galen's visit.⁵ Late summer is a common time for new-year festivals in the ancient world; incidentally, the *μύσται* of the Kabeiroi at Lemnos held conventions in Skirophorion,⁶ i.e. roughly in August. Still, these combinations do not amount to proof.

One question has been left unsolved: what about the recurrent *δυσωδία*? Can this be more than legend or slander?⁷ The simple and drastic answer is given by a parallel from Athens: the authority of Philochoros⁸ (*FGrHist* 328 F 89) is quoted for the fact that the women *ἐν* (δὲ) *τοῖς Σκίροις τῇ ἑορτῇ ἡσθιον σκόροδα ἔνεκα τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι ἀφροδισίων, ὥς ἂν μὴ μύρων ἀποπνέουσιν*. Thus we have an unmistakable smell going together with disruption of marital order, separation of the sexes, at the Skira. The women flock together at this festival according to ancient custom,⁹ and Aristophanes' fancy has them plan their *coup d'état* on this occasion (*Eccl.* 59). But there is even more similarity: the main event of the Skira is a procession which starts from the old temple of the Akropolis and leads towards Eleusis to the old border-line of Attica, to a place called Skiron. The priest of Poseidon-Erechtheus, the priestess of Athena, and the priest of

¹ A.R. 1. 641–51, cf. Pherekydes *FGrHist* 3 F 109.

² Polyb. 34. 11. 4, Steph. Byz. *Αἰθάλη*.

³ Fredrich, 72–4; F. W. Hasluck, *ABSA* xvi (1909/10) 220–30; F. L. W. Sealey, *ABSA* xxii (1918/19) 164–5; Cook, iii. 228 ff.; Diosc. 5. 113; Galen, xii. 169–75 K. (on the date of his visit to Lemnos, Fredrich, 73. 1; 76. 1: late summer A.D. 166). According to Dioscorides, the blood of a goat was mixed with the earth, but Galen's informants scornfully denied this. The 'priests of Hephaistos' used the earth to heal Philoctetes: schol. AB B 722, Philostr. *Heroic.* 6. 2, Plin. *N.H.* 35. 33. Philoctetes' sanctuary, however, was in Myrina (Galen, xii. 171).

⁴ Possibly the 'great Goddess', cf. above, p. 4, n. 2.

⁵ Cf. n. 3 above.

⁶ *ASAA* iii/v (1941/3), 75 ff. nr. 2; nr. 6; but nr. 4 Hekatombaion.

⁷ General remarks in Dumézil, 35–9. Welcker, 249 thought of some kind of fumigation. Cf. Frazer, *GB* viii. 73 for the use of purgatives in a New Fire festival. A marginal gloss in Antig. *hist. mir.* 118 (cf. p. 7, n. 2) mentions *πήγανον*, cf. Jacoby, *FGrHist* iii. Komm. 437, Noten 223.

⁸ E. Gjerstad, *ARW* xxvii (1929/30), 201–3 thinks Philochoros misunderstood the sense of the ritual, which was rather 'aphrodisiac'; though he recognizes himself that short abstinence enhances fertility.

⁹ *IG* ii/iii² 1177. 8–12 *ὅταν ἡ ἑορτὴ τῶν Θεσμοφοριῶν καὶ Πληροσῖαι καὶ Καλαμαῖος καὶ τὰ Σκίρα καὶ εἴ τινα ἄλλην ἡμέραν συνέρχονται αἱ γυναῖκες κατὰ τὰ πατρία*.

Helios are led together under a sunshade by the Eteobutadai:¹ Erechtheus is the primordial king of Athens; he left his residence, the myth tells us, to fight the Eleusinians ἐπὶ Σκίρῳ and disappeared mysteriously in the battle; his widow became the first priestess of Athena.² Thus we find in Athens, on unimpeachable evidence, the ritual ἀποπομπή of the king which was inferred from myth for the corresponding Lemnian festival. At Athens, the concluding *agon* has been moved farther away: the 'beginning of new life' is the Panathenaia in the following month Hekatombaion, the first of the year. If the perennial fire in the sanctuary of Athena and Erechtheus, the lamp of Athena, is refilled and rekindled only once a year,³ this will have happened at the Panathenaia when the new oil was available and used as a prize for the victors. The month Skirophorion coincides approximately with August, the time of the digging of Lemnian earth. The name Σκίρα is enigmatic, but most of the ancient explanations concentrate on some stem σκιρ- (σκυρ-) meaning 'white earth', 'white clay', 'white rock'. The place Skiron is a place where there was some kind of white earth, and Theseus is said to have made an image of Athena out of white earth and to have carried it in procession when he was about to leave Athens.⁴ Were the σκίρα some kind of amulets 'carried' at the σκυροφόρια, though less successful in superstitious medicine than their Lemnian counterparts?

There was another festival at Athens where the women ate garlic in considerable quantities:⁵ the Thesmophoria. This festival was among the most widespread all over Greece, and there must have been many local variants; but there are features strikingly reminiscent of the pattern treated so far: there is the disruption of normal life, the separation of sexes; the women gather (cf. n. 5 below) for three or four days, they live at the Thesmophorion in huts or tents; in Eretria they did not even use fire (Plut. *q. Gr.* 31). They performed uncanny sacrifices to chthonian deities; subterranean caves, μέγαρα, were opened, pigs thrown down into the depths; probably there was a bigger, secret sacrifice towards the end of the festival. In mythological phantasy, the separation of the sexes was escalated into outright war. The lamentable situation of the κηδεστής in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusai* is not the only example. The

¹ Lysimachides, *FGrHist* 366 F 3; schol. Ar. *Ecl.* 18; fullest account: E. Gjerstad, *ARW* xxvii (1929/30), 189–240. Deubner's treatment (40–50) is led astray by schol. Luk. p. 275. 23 ff. Rabe, cf. Burkert, *Hermes* xciv (1966), 23–4, 7–8.

² Eur. *Erechtheus* fr. 65 Austin; death and tomb of Skiros: Paus. 1. 36. 4.

³ Paus. 1. 26. 6–7.

⁴ An. Bekk. 304, 8 Σκειράς Αθηνᾶ· εἶδος ἀγάλματος Αθηνᾶς ὀνομασθέντος οὕτως ἦτοι ἀπὸ τόπου τινὸς οὕτως ὀνομασμένου, ἐν ᾧ γῆ ὑπάρχει λευκὴ . . . (shorter *EM* 720, 24); schol. Paus. p. 218 Spiro σκυροφόρια παρὰ τὸ φέρειν σκίρα ἐν αὐτῇ τὸν Θησέα ἢ γύνυν· ὁ γὰρ Θησέας ἀπερχόμενος κατὰ τοῦ Μινωταύρου τὴν Αθηνᾶν ποιήσας ἀπὸ γύψου ἐβάστασεν (cf. Wilamowitz, *Hermes* xxix [1894], 243; slightly corrupt *Et. Gen.* p. 267 Miller = *EM* p. 718, 16, more corrupt Phot., *Suda* s.v. Σκίρα, who speak of Theseus' return);

schol. Ar. *Vesp.* 926 Αθηνᾶ Σκυράς, ὅτι γῆ (τῇ codd.) λευκῇ χρίεται. R. van der Loeff, *Mnemosyne* xlv (1916), 102–3, Gjerstad, 222–6, Deubner, 46–7 tried to distinguish Σκίρα and Αθηνᾶ Σκυράς, Deubner, 46, 11 even Σκίρα and the place Σκίρον (Σκίρον? Herodian, *Gramm. Gr.* iii. 1, 385. 1–4; iii. 2, 581. 22–31 [cf. Steph. Byz. Σκίρος] seems to prescribe Σκίρον; Σκίρα Ar. *Thesm.* 834, *Ecl.* 18); contra, Jacoby, *FGrHist* iiii Suppl., Notes 117–18. The changing quantity (cf. αἶρος) is less strange than the connection σκιρ-, σκυρ- (cf. LSJ s.v. σκίρον, σκίρος, σκίρρος, σκυρρος) which points to a non-Greek word. On Σκυρρος (cf. Oros. *EM* 720, 24) Theseus was thrown down the white rock (Plut. *Thes.* 35).

⁵ *IG* ii/iii². 1184 διδόναι . . . εἰς τὴν ἐορτὴν . . . καὶ σκόρδων δύο στατήρας. On Thesmophoria, Nilsson, *GF*, 313–25, *GGR*, 461–6, Deubner, 50–60.

Laconian women are said to have overpowered the famous Aristomenes on Messene, when he dared to approach them at the time of the Thesmophoria; they fought, by divine instigation, with sacrificial knives and spits and torches—the scenery implies a nocturnal *ἀπόρρητος θυσία* (Paus. 4. 17. 1). The women of Kyrene, at their Thesmophoria, smeared their hands and faces with the blood of the victims and emasculated King Battos, who had tried to spy out their secrets.¹ The most famous myth in this connection concerns those women whom Euripides already compared with the Lemniads (*Hek.* 887): the Danaids. They slew their husbands all together at night, too, with one notable exception, as at Lemnos: Lynkeus was led to a secret escape by Hypermetra the virgin. As the Argives kept the rule of extinguishing the fire in a house where somebody had died,² the night of murder must have entailed much extinguishing of fires. Lynkeus, however, when he was in safety, lit a torch in Lyrkeia, Hypermetra answered by lighting a torch at the Larisa, *ἐπὶ τούτῳ δὲ Ἀργεῖοι κατὰ ἔτος ἕκαστον πυρσῶν ἑορτὴν ἄγουσι* (Paus. 2. 25. 4). It is questionable whether this ritual originally belongs to the Danaid myth;³ the word-play Lyrkeia–Lynkeus does not inspire confidence. The myth at any rate has much to tell about the concluding *agon*, in which the Danaids were finally given to husbands.⁴ After the outrage against nature, a new life must begin, which happens to be just ordinary life. But it is Herodotus who tells us that it was the Danaids who brought to Greece the *τελετή* of Demeter Thesmophoros, i.e. introduced the festival Thesmophoria.⁵ Thus the similarity of the myths of the Danaids and Lemniads and the similarity of the rituals of Thesmophoria and the Lemnian fire-festival is finally confirmed by Herodotus, who connects myth and ritual.

One glance at the Romans: their *μέγιστος τῶν καθαρμῶν* (Plut. *q. R.* 86) concerns the *virgines Vestales* and the fire of Vesta, and it covers a whole month. It begins with a strange *ἀποπομπή*: 27 puppets are collected in sanctuaries all over the town, brought to the *pons sublicius* and, under the leadership of the *virgo*, thrown into the Tiber. They are called Argei, which possibly just means ‘grey men’.⁶ There follows a period of Lent and abstinences: no marriage is

¹ Aelian, fr. 44 = Suda s.v. *σφάκτραι* and *θεσμοφόρος*. Nilsson, *GF*, 324–5.

² Plut. *q. Gr.* 24. 296 F.

³ Cf. Nilsson, *GF* 470, 5; Apollod. 2. 22, Zenob. 4. 86, etc. point to a connection of Danaid myth and Lerna (new fire for Lerna: Paus. 8. 15. 9).

⁴ Pi. *P.* 9. 111 ff., Paus. 3. 12. 3, Apollod. 2. 22. Dumézil, 48 ff. discussed the similarities of the Argive and the Lemnian myth, without taking notice of the Thesmophoria.

⁵ Hdt. 2. 171 *τῆς Δήμητρος τελετῆς περί, τὴν οἱ Ἕλληνες θεσμοφόρια καλεῖναι . . . αἱ Δαναοῦ θυγατέρες ἦσαν αἱ τὴν τελετὴν ταύτην ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐξαγαγεῖν καὶ διδάσκειν τὰς Πελασγίωτιδας γυναῖκας*. The connection of Danaoi and Egypt is taken seriously by modern historians (G. Huxley, *Crete and the Luwians* [1961], 36–7; F. H. Stubbings, *C.A.H.* xviii [1963], 11 ff.; P. Walcott, *Hesiod and the Near East* [1966], 71); Epaphos may be a Hyksos name. Now Mycenaean representations mainly from the Argolid

show ‘Demons’ (cf. Nilsson, *GGR*, 296–7) in ritual functions—procession, sacrifice—whose type goes back to the Egyptian hippopotamus-Goddess Taurt, ‘the Great One’ (cf. Roeder, Roschers *Myth. Lex.* v. 878–908). S. Marinatos, *Proc. of the Cambridge Colloquium on Mycenaean Studies* (1966), 265–74 suggests identifying them with the *Δαίμονες* of Linear B texts. If these ‘Demons’ were represented by masks in ritual (E. Heckenrath, *AJA* xli [1937], 420–1) it is tempting to see in this ritual of the ‘Great Goddess’, influenced from Egypt, the Thesmophoria of the Danaids. Cf. also p. 8, n. 1.

⁶ Cf. G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (1912²), 420; K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte* (1960), 412–14; on Vestalia: Wissowa, 159–60, Latte, 109–10; on Matralia: Wissowa, 111, Latte, 97–8, G. Radke, *Die Götter Altitaliens* (1965), 206–9, J. Gagé, *Matronalia* (1963), 228–35. The flogging of a slave-girl at the Matralia has its analogy in the role of the Thracian concu-

performed in this period,¹ the *flaminica*, wife of the *flamen Dialis*, is not allowed to have intercourse with her husband. From 7 to 15 June, the temple of Vesta is opened for nine days; the *matronae* gather, barefoot, to bring offerings and prayers. Especially strange is the rule of the Matralia on 11 June: the *matronae*, worshipping Mater Matuta, are not allowed to mention their sons; so they pray for their nephews. Finally on 15 June the temple of Vesta is cleaned; *quando stercus delatum fas*, ordinary life may start again. The correspondence with the Lemnian *πυρφορία* is striking: the *ἀποπομπή* and tossing into the water, the separation of the sexes, of man and wife, even of mother and son, while the fire is 'purified' on which the *salus publica* is thought to depend.

Enough of comparisons;² the danger that the outlines of the picture become blurred as the material accumulates can scarcely be evaded. Whether it will be possible to account for the similarity of pattern which emerged, by some historical hypothesis, is a formidable problem. There seems to be a common Near Eastern background; the pattern of the Near Eastern new-year festival has been summed up in the steps of mortification, purgation, invigoration, and jubilation,³ closely corresponding, in our case, to *ἀποπομπή*, *ἀπόρρητος θυσία*, abstinences on the one hand, *agon* and marriage on the other. There appear to be Egyptian influences; more specifically, there are the traditions about the pre-Greek 'Pelagians' in Argos, Athens, Lemnos (according to Athenian tradition), and even in Italy.⁴ But there is not much hope of disentangling the complex interrelations of Bronze Age tribes, as tradition has been furthermore complicated by contamination of legends. It may only be stated that similarities of ritual ought to be taken into account in such questions as much as certain names of tribes or of gods or certain species of pottery.

Still there are some definite conclusions, concerning the problem of myth and ritual: there is correspondence which goes beyond casual touches or secondary superimposition. But for the isolated testimonies of Myrsilus and Philostratus, we would have no clue at all to trace the myth back to Lemnian ritual, as we know nothing about the Thesmophoria of Argos. But the more we learn about the ritual, the closer the correspondence with myth turns out to be. The uprising of the women, the disappearance of the men, the unnatural life without love, the blood flowing—all this people will experience in the festival, as

bines at Lemnos and the hair-sacrifice of the Thracian slave-girls in Erythrai (below, n. 2). With the 'tutulum' (= *pilleum lanatum*, Sueton. apud Serv. auct. *Aen.* 2. 683) of the Argei, cf. the *πίλοι* of Hephaistos and Kabeiroi (above, p. 8, n. 1).

¹ Plut. *qu. R.* 86, 284 F: no marriage in May; Ov. *Fast.* 6. 219–34: no marriage until 15 June, the *flaminica* abstains from combing, nail-cutting, and intercourse.

² There is connection between the Lemnian festival and the Chian myth of Orion (above, p. 6, n. 1); a cult legend of Erythrai implies another comparable ritual: 'Heracles' arrived on a raft, and Thracian slave-girls sacrificed their hair to pull him ashore (Paus. 7. 8. 5–8).

³ Th. Gaster, *Thespis* (1961²); for necessary qualification of the pattern, C. J.

Bleeker, *Egyptian Festivals, Enactment of Religious Renewal* (1967), 37–8.

⁴ The evidence is collected by F. Lochner-Hättenbach, *Die Pelasger* (1960). The Athenians used the legends about the Pelagians, whom they identified with the *Τυρρηνοί* (Thuc. 4. 109. 4), to justify their conquest of Lemnos under Miltiades (Hdt. 6. 137 ff.). There was a family of *Εὐνεῖδαι* at Athens, acting as heralds and worshipping Dionysos Melpomenos, J. Toepffer, *Attische Genealogie* (1889), 181–206; Preller-Robert, ii. 852–3. On Pelagians in Italy, Hellanikos, *FGrHist* 4 F 4, Myrsilos, *FGrHist* 477 F 8 apud D.H. *Ant.* 1. 17 ff., Varro apud Macr. *Sat.* 1. 7. 28 f.; on Camillus–*Καδμῖλος* A. Ernout–A. Meillet, *Dict. étym. de la langue latine* (1959⁴) s.v. *Camillus*.

well as the advent of the ship which brings the joyous start of a new life. So far Jane Harrison's formula proves to be correct: 'the myth is the plot of the dromenon';¹ its *περιπέτειαι* reflect ritual actions. The much-vexed question, whether, in this interdependence, myth or ritual is primary, transcends philology,² since both myth and ritual were established well before the invention of writing. Myths are more familiar to the classicist; but it is important to realize that ritual, in its function and transmission, is not dependent on words. Even today children will get their decisive impressions of religion not so much from words and surely not from dogmatic teaching, but through the behaviour of their elders: that special facial expression, that special tone of voice, that poise and gesture mark the sphere of the sacred; the seriousness and confidence displayed invite imitation, while at the same time relentless sanctions are added against any violation: thus religious ritual has been transmitted in the unbroken sequence of human society. By its prominence in social life, it not only provided stimulation for story-telling, but at the same time some kind of 'mental container'³ which accounts for the stability, the unchanging patterns of mythical tradition. Thus for understanding myth, ritual is not a negligible factor.

Still one can look at flowers without caring much for roots: myth can become independent from ritual; ritual origin does not imply ritual function—nor does the absence of ritual function exclude ritual origin. Ritual, if we happen to know about it, will be illustrative especially of strange features in a myth; but as these tend to be eliminated, myth can live on by its own charm. Apollonios did not bother about Lemnian festivals, and he dropped the *δυσωδία*. The first and decisive step in this direction was, of course, Homer; or to be more exact, Greek myth found its final form in the oral tradition of skilled singers which is behind the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the other early epics. As a consequence of this successful activity of *αοιδοί* and *ῥαψωδοί* there took place, of course, all kinds of conflation, exchange, and superimposition of myths, as local traditions were adapted to 'Homeric' tales. Thus myths are often attached to rituals by secondary construction; in this case, the details rarely fit. Poets and antiquarians are free to choose between various traditions, even to develop new and striking combinations. One myth may illustrate or even replace another, the motifs overlap, as the underlying patterns are similar or nearly identical.

Still more clear than the importance of ritual for the understanding of myth is the importance of myth for the history of religion, for the reconstruction and interpretation of ritual. Myth, being the 'plot', may indicate connections between rites which are isolated in our tradition; it may provide supplements for the desperate lacunae in our knowledge; it may give decisive hints for chronology. In our case, Philostratus' testimony comes from the 3rd century A.D., Myrsilus' from the 3rd century B.C., Sophocles' allusion takes us back to the 5th; but as the Hypsipyle story is known to the *Iliad*, both myth and ritual must antedate 700 B.C. This means that not even Greeks are concerned, but the pre-Greek inhabitants of Lemnos, whom Homer calls *Σύνριοι*, the later Greeks

¹ *Themis* (1927²), 331.

² Cf. above, p. 1, n. 3. In Egypt, there were clearly rituals without myths, Bleeker, 19; E. Otto, *Das Verhältnis von Rite und Mythos im Ägyptischen*, SBHeid. 1958, 1. Biologists have recognized rituals in animal

behaviour, cf. K. Lorenz, *On aggression* (1966), 54–80.

³ An expression coined by W. F. Jackson Knight, *Cumaeen gates* (1936), 91 for the function of the mythical pattern as to historical facts.

Τυρρηνοί.¹ Excavations have given some picture of this pre-Greek civilization and its continuity into the Greek settlement; in spite of continuous fighting and bloodshed, there seems to have been a surprising permeability in religion, in ritual, and even in myths, between different languages and civilizations, and an equally surprising stability of traditions bound to a certain place.

If myth reflects ritual, it is impossible to draw inferences from the plot of the myth as to historical facts, or even to reduce myth to historical events. From Wilamowitz down to the *Lexikon der Alten Welt*,² we read that the Lemnian crime reflects certain adventures of the colonization period, neatly registered in *IG* xii. 8, p. 2: 'Graeci ± 800—post 700' inhabiting Lemnos—as if the Lemniads had been slain by the Argonauts or the Argonauts by the Lemniads. To be cautious: it is possible that the crisis of society enacted in a festival breaks out into actual murder or revolution, which is henceforward remembered in the same festival;³ but actual atrocities by themselves produce neither myth nor ritual—or else our century would be full of both. Another historical interpretation of the myth, given by Bachofen but envisaged already by Welcker, has, through Engels, endeared itself to Marxist historians:⁴ the Lemnian crime as memory of prehistoric matriarchal society. The progress of research in pre-history, however, has left less and less space for matriarchal society in any pre-Greek Mediterranean or Near Eastern civilization. Indeed Hypsipyle did not reign over men—which *would* be matriarchy—the men have simply disappeared; and this is not a matriarchal organization of society, but a disorganization of patriarchal society, a transitional stage, a sort of carnival—this is the reason why the Lemniads were an appropriate subject for comedy.⁵ Social order is turned upside down just to provoke a new reversal, which means the re-establishment of normal life.

If ritual is not dependent on myth, it cannot be explained by 'beliefs' or 'concepts'—which would be to substitute another myth for the original one. Ritual seems rather to be a necessary means of communication and solidarization in human communities, necessary for mutual understanding and co-operation, necessary to deal with the intra-human problems of attraction and, above all, aggression. There are the never-dying tensions between young and old, and also between the sexes; they necessitate periodically some sort of 'cathartic' discharge; it may be possible to play off one conflict to minimize the

¹ Identification of Sinties and Tyrhenians: Philochoros, *FGH* 328 F 100/1 with Jacoby ad loc. Main report on the excavations (interrupted before completion by the war): *ASAA* xv/xvi (1932/3); cf. D. Mustilli, *Enc. dell'arte antica*, iii (1960), 230–1, L. Bernabo-Brea, *ib.* iv (1961), 542–5. It is remarkable that there are only cremation burials in the pre-Greek necropolis (*ASAA*, loc. cit. 267–72). Wilamowitz, 231 had wrongly assumed that the pre-Greek 'barbarians' would have neither city nor Hephaistos-cult.

² Wilamowitz, 231; *LAW* s.v. Lemnos.

³ In several towns of Switzerland there are traditions about a 'night of murder' allegedly commemorated in carnival-like customs; a few of them are based on historical facts; cf. L. Tobler, 'Die Mordnächte

und ihre Gedenktage', *Kleine Schriften* (1897), 79–105.

⁴ Welcker, 585 ff.; Bachofen, cf. above p. 3, n. 4; F. Engels, *Der Ursprung der Familie, des Privateigentums und des Staats* (1884), Marx-Engels, *Werke* xxi. 47 ff.; G. Thomson, *Studies in Ancient Greek Society* (1949), 175 (more circumspect: *Aeschylus and Athens* [1941; 1966³], 287). For a cautious re-evaluation of the theory of matriarchy, cf. K. Meuli in Bachofen, *Ges. Werke*, iii. 1107–15; on the Lycians, S. Pembroke, 'Last of the matriarchs', *Journ. of the Econ. and Soc. Hist. of the Orient* viii (1965), 217–47.

⁵ *Ἀγυῖαι* were written by Aristophanes (fr. 356–375), Nikokhares (fr. 11–14), and Antiphanes (fr. 144/5); cf. Alexis (fr. 134), Diphilos (fr. 54), and Turpilius (90–9).

other. This is what the myth is about: love, hatred, and their conflict, murderous instincts and piety, solidarity of women and family bonds, hateful separation and lustful reunion—this is the story of Hypsipyle, this is the essence of the ritual, too; only the myth carries, in phantasy, to the extreme what, by ritual, is conducted into more innocent channels: animals are slain instead of men, and the date is fixed when the revolution has to come to an end. Thus it is ritual which avoids the catastrophe of society. In fact only the last decades have abolished nearly all comparable rites in our world; so it is left to our generation to experience the truth that men cannot stand the uninterrupted steadiness even of the most prosperous life; it is an open question whether the resulting convulsions will lead to *κάθαρσις* or catastrophe.

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