The Gods of Greek Hexameter Poetry

From the Archaic Age to Late Antiquity and Beyond

Edited by James J. Clauss,
Martine Cuypers
and Ahuvia Kahane

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PREFACE

In 2013, Marios Skempis began the work of organizing a multi-authored book on the gods in Greek hexameter poetry. He had already assembled a group of scholars when circumstances required that he leave the project. He graciously handed over the undertaking to two of the contributors, James Clauss and Ahuvia Kahane, who then invited Martine Cuypers to join them in editing the collection.

As the project evolved and chapters came in – some originally invited by Professor Skempis, others solicited to fill in gaps – we came to appreciate the value of a collection of essays focused on the representation of the gods in Greek hexameter poetry from the archaic period to late antiquity, with a brief epilogue on their reception among the Romans and modern authors. The individual chapters, however different in their approach, focus and scope, trace a broad historical arc and sketch a distinct macro-narrative, reflecting developments in religious thought and practice, and ongoing philosophical and literary-critical engagement with the nature and representation of the divine and the relationship between humans and gods. Many themes recur in a number of chapters, suggesting connections which we have tried to highlight in our introduction, through cross-references in the chapters, and in the index. While this volume neither covers all Greek hexameter poetry nor discusses individual poems exhaustively, we hope that as a collection with a wide scope, it may provide starting-points for further research into the representation and role of the gods, suggesting approaches to, and comparisons between these poems and others.

We would like to thank all of the contributors for continuing to believe in *The Gods* and for their patience as we geared up for taking on this project and brought it to completion. We would also like to express our gratitude to Katharina Stüdemann, Harald Schmitt and Albrecht Franz of Franz Steiner Verlag for their assistance and support of this project.

James J. Clauss, Martine Cuypers and Ahuvia Kahane

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Edward Adams holds degrees in both English and Classics and is Professor and Chair of English at Washington and Lee University. He has authored numerous articles on eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century literature and historiography. His study *Liberal Epic: The Victorian Practice of History from Gibbon to Churchill* won the Perkins Prize of the International Society for the Study of Narrative in 2012. He is currently completing a monograph entitled *Imagining Decline: The Afterlives of Edward Gibbon and Modern Narratives of Decline*.

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Adam Bartley conducted research at the University of Sydney, Georg-August Universität in Göttingen and University College Cork and lectured at the University of Kent from 2005 to 2014; he now works as a professional translator. His publications, most of which focus on the Second Sophistic, include a study of Oppian's *Halieutica* and the anonymous *Cynegetica* (*Stories from the Mountains, Stories of the Sea*, 2003) and the collection *A Lucian for Our Times* (2009).

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ABBREVIATIONS

The abbreviations used for the names ancient authors and works in this volume are based on those in H. Liddell, R. Scott and H. S. Jones (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon* (for Greek authors) and P. G. W. Glare (ed.), *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (for Latin authors), but many have been expanded for greater clarity (e.g., 'Aesch.' instead of 'A.' for Aeschylus).

Editions identified by the name of the editor(s) are listed in the Bibliography (e.g., 'Aesch. fr. 83 Radt' matches Radt 2009 in the Bibliography).

The spelling of names has been harmonised (generally: Latinized) throughout the volume, including in quotations and credited translations.

Abbreviations specific to the individual chapters are explained in opening footnotes. Abbreviations for reference works cited throughout the volume include:

BNJ	Worthington, I. *et al.* 2007–. *Brill's New Jacoby* [http://referenceworks.brillonline.com].
FGrH	Jacoby, F. *et al.* 1923–. *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Leiden.
HE	Gow, A. S. F. and Page, D. L. 1965. *Hellenistic Epigrams*. Cambridge.
IG	Varii. 1873–. *Inscriptiones Graecae*. Berlin.
IK	Merkelbach, R. *et al.* 1972–. *Inschriften griechischer Städten aus Kleinasien*. Vienna.
LfgrE	Snell, B. *et al.* 1955–2010. *Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos*. Göttingen.
LIMC	Ackermann, H. C. and Giseler, J. R. 1981–99, 2009. *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*. Zürich.
LSJ	Liddell, H., Scott, R., Jones, H. S. and McKenzie, R. 1996. *A Greek-English Lexicon, with Revised Supplement.* 9th edition. Oxford.
MW	Merkelbach, R. and West, M. L. 1967. *Fragmenta Hesiodea*. Oxford.
Pf.	Pfeiffer, R. 1949–53. *Callimachus*. Oxford.
P.Oxy.	Varii. 1898–. *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. Oxford.
RE	Pauly, A. von, Wissowa, G. and Kroll, W. 1893–1980. *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*. Stuttgart.
SEG	Varii. 1923–. *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. Amsterdam and Leiden.

HIERO'S QUESTION: AN INTRODUCTION

James J. Clauss, Martine Cuypers and Ahuvia Kahane

Twenty-five years ago, Denys Feeney, in an Epilogue to the paperback edition of his seminal *The Gods in Epic*, implicitly set a challenge when he wrote that the scope of his study 'could be expanded.' The present collection, we hope, makes some contribution to addressing that challenge, as it explores representations of the gods in Greek poetry where Feeney focused primarily on Latin, and journeys all the way from the archaic age to late antiquity, paying attention to epic in the narrow sense but also to *epos* in other guises, including didactic, hymn and 'epyllion' and brief forays yet further beyond. Completeness, of course, remains impossible even in a hefty tome, nor would it be intellectually prudent to reduce such a broad and diverse enquiry to a single, simple narrative. Feeney opened his Epilogue by quoting an anecdote preserved in Cicero's *On the Nature of the Gods* (1.60). Asked by Hiero, 'What is god or what is he like?' the poet Simonides initially requested one day to come up with an answer, then repeatedly doubled the allotted time, and finally explained to the bemused tyrant that the more time he spent thinking about it, the more obscure the topic appeared to him. It is in the spirit of this anecdote that the following pages, which seek to highlight developments and common ground in the chapters of this book, should be read. We sympathize with Simonides, but Hiero also deserves credit for posing the question in the first place. The impossibility of a straight answer does not make the question any less relevant.

It is nevertheless always tempting to arrange histories along the straight line of time, to mark 'beginnings,' 'middles' and 'ends,' to trace events, themes, names, poems and practices in sequences that bear clear relationships of cause and effect, emplotted to create a plausible (hi)story. Happily, our texts sometimes allow us to pursue such temptations. From high above, it is possible to trace some broad historical lines, following developments in religious thought and practice and ongoing philosophical and literary-critical reflection about the nature and representation of the divine. We can see the divine play a central role in archaic *epos*, become more distant and impersonal in the Hellenistic period and Empire, and reclaim center stage, though much changed, in Christian late antiquity and reappear changed yet more radically, sometimes to the point of crisis, in modernity. The gap between religious reality and literary representation waxes and wanes; cultural and theological order gives way to multicultural hybridity and ultimately, to a new theological order. Yet history never fails to remind us that it is always a little more 'lumpy' and disorganized than any well-wrought tale we choose to tell. The diversity of the observations that emerge from the chapters of this volume is,

we believe, not merely a product of our refusal to force upon our contributors a single set of questions, but suggests that the gods presented a singular challenge, which each poet negotiated in his own way, and which can only to some degree be explained from the poet's unique historical context and the approaches of earlier poets who offered models. To tell the story of the Greek hexameter gods in all their Protean shapes, we must, therefore, allow our narrative to move, not only forward, not only in essential arcs, but also sideways, backwards or rapidly forward, sometimes along more than one path or at a varying pace, indeed, in languages other than Greek.

ARCHAIC POETRY

Extant Greek literature begins with the reintroduction of writing in the eighth century BCE. Though early oral traditions are doubtless part of the ancestry of our written texts and are embedded in them, the evidence makes it difficult to construct systematic accounts of how such traditions represented the gods. The Greeks of the archaic age, at least, were keenly aware of the absence of contemporary 'living' demigods in their midst – heroes able to pick up with ease boulders that require two or more men 'of today' (*hoioi nun*). Regardless of the relative dating of early hexameter poetry, the *Theogony*, sections of the *Works and Days* and the longer Homeric hymns celebrate a period that antedated the heroic era featured in the *Iliad*, *Odyssey* and subsequent poems dealing with bronze age legends – a period in which the universe came into being together with the generations of gods who first populated it, and which culminated in the establishment of a permanent status quo under the rule of Zeus. It seems likely that the awareness of posteriority, of 'lost' past worlds, contributed to the archaic poets' urge to take account of their divine inheritance, as they sought to comprehend and articulate some of the practice and beliefs of their presents, to acknowledge the emergence of more elevated concepts of the divine, of accounts of the cosmos, of the value and limits of human endeavor, the struggle with mortality and an incipient belief in the human potential for greatness and for suffering. First and foremost, they faced the challenge of embedding their emergent systems of thought within a framework of past narratives that depicted gods as made in the image and likeness of humans. The paradox remained intrinsic to representations of the gods and the divine throughout the history of Greek and Latin hexameter poetry – the hexameter was an essential vehicle for theological thinking in antiquity – and poets, literary critics and philosophers from the classical period onwards sought to negotiate this paradox in various ways. The gods in archaic hexameter verse are anthropomorphic in appearance and behavior; and yet they reside, literally and conceptually, above humanity and have almost complete control over human affairs. The chapters in this section consider how archaic poets, within these parameters, attempted to describe and make sense of their pantheon, its contradictions, its evolution, its interactions with the world of mortals and its eventual separation from

that world, when (in narrative, at least) Zeus put an end to gods and humans producing joint offspring.

In 'The Justice of Zeus in the *Theogony*?' **Jenny Strauss Clay** considers the difference between gods and humans as represented in Hesiod's major poems. As the question mark in her title suggests, Strauss Clay contrasts the theme of justice (*dike*) in the *Works and Days* to what she proposes, provocatively, is the absence of this concept from the *Theogony*. The *Works and Days*, she suggests, provides a view of the cosmos from a human standpoint, the *Theogony* from the perspective of the gods. Strauss Clay draws inspiration for her argument from David Hume's *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. 'What if nature had provided abundantly for all the needs and desires of humanity? … In such a situation, ownership is superfluous … and justice is useless.' If the concept of justice comes down to questions of scarcity and abundance and hence, in an immediate sense, of sustenance and food, the gods have no need for justice, since their extended and dysfunctional family never worries about its next meal. Negotiating intra-familial interests on Olympus therefore involves 'privileges' (*timai*), which Zeus dispenses or withholds at will. In contrast, humans, once Zeus and the other gods hide infinite sustenance (*bios*), have only two ways to obtain it and stay alive: by agriculture or theft. For this reason, among humans there emerges a critical need for justice. *Dike* is an inescapable part of the *human* condition, which separates humans from animals but also from the gods. In the universe of *Works and Days*, gods rule immortal and supreme, while life for humans in the grim Iron Age is a struggle over the basic needs and for survival in the face of death.

The collection of Homeric hymns, although certainly composed after the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, evokes an age similar to the age of the *Theogony* and the theogonic sections of the *Works and Days*, a time when the gods were still evolving and acquiring their various individual *timai*. Divine interaction with humans is limited in these poems. Each hymn focuses on the emergence of the honorand as a divine force within a relatively fluid pantheon. The regime of the Olympian gods as we find it in the Homeric epics and in the fragmentary remains of the Epic Cycle (apart from the Cycle's *Theogony* and *Titanomachy*) is in place, and Zeus' rule of this divine world is acknowledged. As **Andrew Faulkner** says in 'The Gods in the Narratives of the Homeric Hymns,' the hymns complement the Hesiodic *Theogony*, with its focus on the birth of the gods and the foundation of Zeus' kingship. Yet, as he points out, 'the godly world of the Homeric hymns … occupies a mythological middle position, one in which Zeus is newly established in his control of the pantheon, but in which the gods and goddesses beneath him are in a phase of formation or re-ordering, vying with him and each other for their own powers and functions.' This focus explains, for example, why there is no long narrative hymn to Zeus and why Zeus' role as arbitrator and the number of lines he speaks in direct speech in the corpus is remarkably limited. The limited presence of mortals in the hymns also keeps the spotlight on the divinities below Zeus, some of whom, such as Hades, Demeter and Hestia, receive relatively little attention in other extant poems. The hymns thus diversify the portrayal of the gods and 'back-fill' aspects of divine history not present in, for example, the Hesiodic po-

ems. At the core of such filling, we need to keep in mind, is a far weaker interest in human actions and interests than in other types of hexameter poetry, even as the hymns, which are themselves poetic offerings, establish a strong, immediate relationship between mortals and gods.

Though in all likelihood written after the 'genuine' Hesiodic and Homeric poems, the *Catalogue of Women* situates itself between the ascendency of Zeus, as told in Hesiod's *Theogony*, and the grim Iron Age of the *Works and Days*, as **Kirk Ormand** notes in 'Divine Perspective and the Plots of Zeus in the Hesiodic *Catalogue*.' The poem covers an age in which gods and humans commingled, producing a hybrid race of *hemitheoi*, demigods who were nonetheless mortal. In the *Theogony* and other theogonic narratives, Zeus faces serious threats to his reign by the Titans and Giants. The humans who challenge Zeus in the *Catalogue* are no match for his might and are easily dispatched. What is more, we learn that Zeus has decided to end the gods' congress with humans and to rid the world of semi-divine mortal issue through the Trojan War. As Ormand observes, the *Catalogue* ends up being a 'prequel' to the *Iliad*, heralding a permanent alteration to the lives of humans. Henceforth mortals will no longer have direct contact with the gods and they will suffer some form of geoclimatic change that will make their life far more challenging, marking the demise of the Heroic Age and the beginning of the Iron Age of the *Works and Days*. Mortals cannot understand the mind of Zeus nor the 'wondrous deeds' (*theskela erga*) he conceives. Yet from a human perspective, the slaughter of the last of the *hemitheoi* offers an opportunity to win *kleos* – in the face of personal annihilation – in epic verse. The two irreconcilable perspectives, mortal and divine, and the total dissolution of a shared experience underscore an existential divide that, as far as we can tell from the *Catalogue*'s surviving fragments, will never again be bridged.

Once we come to the Homeric epics, the Olympian pantheon appears fully formed, with Zeus clearly in charge and the other gods firmly in possession of their respective *timai*. In his chapter 'Herding Cats: Zeus, the Other Gods, and the Plot of the *Iliad*,' **Jim Marks** begins by asking 'why did every ancient Greek epic give significant roles to divine characters?' Marks' answer focuses on Zeus, his actions and words, his interaction with the other gods and his pivotal role in the development of the plot, tracing how the Father of Gods and Men enacts his master plan, the famous *Dios boule*, in negotiation with his powerful and often fractious Olympian court, whose denizens often pursue a personal agenda that runs contrary to the plan. Marks concludes that while most modern narratives find sufficient energy in human motivation to drive a plot, Homeric epic relies on an external force to set events in motion and give shape to them as the narrative progresses; it assigns pivotal roles to the gods at least in part because they represented a satisfactory and efficient way to motivate and contextualize the action in terms that made sense to those for whom the poems were composed. Although these terms clearly changed over time, the gods were to retain their status of traditional, essential characters in epic narratives, posing a challenge that later poets almost without exception chose to confront rather than avoid.

Zeus' plan in the *Iliad* not only brings about the honoring of Achilles, which Thetis requests, but also the destruction of Troy. As we know from the *Catalogue* and other texts, Troy's fall signaled the end of the Heroic Age. Zeus' management of his divine subjects no longer requires physical violence of the type that marked the beginning of his rule. Marks argues that it evolved to embrace manipulation through wit and deception. It is as if, already within the bounds of the *Iliad*, the divine plane shifts from an 'Achillean' to an 'Odyssean' *modus operandi*. The Iliadic Zeus points to a more transcendent conception of divinity. He is a god who possesses superior intelligence and who determines both divine and human destiny. The *Iliad*, Marks suggests, presents us with the portrait of a god who rises above partisan politics and serves cosmic history. He is a divinity deserving of worship for reasons beyond fear and anxiety, whose function and power transcend his anthropomorphic representation.

In his chapter 'Poseidon in the *Odyssey*,' **Richard Martin** takes on the fraught issue of whether genuine religious sentiment and cult practice underlies poetic representation. Recalling Pascal's Wager ('there exists at least a small probability that god exists; with human life and infinite rewards at stake, belief is a rational choice') he posits that 'it is safer to assume that, for archaic and classical audiences of Homer, the gods were realities above and beyond epic depictions.' The sacrifice of numerous bulls on the beach during Telemachus' visit to Nestor at Pylos, Martin suggests, may be an annual replication of Nestor's sacrifice ten years earlier at Geraistos, a site closely associated with the worship of Poseidon. Moreover, the presence of Athena at the sacrifice in Pylos replicates the shared interest of both gods in a number of locations, such as Athens. Martin points out that Athena shows respect for Poseidon's public cult by taking part only in Nestor's private worship. Ironically, later in the poem Odysseus himself assumes the character of Poseidon, his nemesis. Like the god, Odysseus wreaks vengeance on his enemies from the sea. Poseidon, as Martin stresses, is associated (in his capacity as *Phutalmios, Genethlios, Phratrios* and *Poliouchos*) with the initiation of young men into clans and cities. In this aspect of the god's divine prerogative, Odysseus, a 'landed version of angry Poseidon,' becomes for Telemachus the 'social Poseidon,' a power who assists in Telemachus' socialization and entry into the society of men. The gods of the *Odyssey* thus not only appear as a more settled community among themselves, with firmly established roles, remits and relationships; they also provide a model. Humans replicate some of the gods' behavior and traits, and a circle of representation is closed. If in the beginning the gods were created in the image of man, we are now invited to view humans as made in the image and likeness of their gods.

The portrayal of the gods in the Homer epics reflects serious thinking about the nature of the divine. Amidst events that sometimes defy logic or expectation, the gods' erratic behavior could offer an explanation for the inexplicable. Yet one might also find indications of an emerging sense of greater control, 'political' stability and social complexity, for example, in the representation of the Iliadic Zeus. Here is a god who uses his knowledge and power to rein in divinities who are pursuing their own interests, gods who were often at odds with each other and whose

conflicts brought about mystifying disaster in human experience. The *Odyssey*, in whose world right and wrong are formulated more explicitly, in which evil-doers are punished and the virtuous rewarded, reflects a yet more stable context, in which cultic and social practices mesh, and in which the gods are more respectful of each other's domains and are willing to support deserving humans. From the creation of the world out of Chaos to Odysseus' return, we see in the Hesiodic and Homeric poems an 'evolutionary' path of the representation of the divine and its relationship with humanity. The epic gods, though portrayed as anthropomorphic, are beginning to manifest as responsible transcendental powers.

The fragments of the Epic Cycle reveal a subtle but significant shift in the divine terrain, as **Christos Tsagalis** demonstrates in 'The Gods in Cyclic Epic.' Even with the limitations of our evidence, it is clear that the authors of the Theogonic, Theban and Trojan poems of the Cycle offered a fairly consistent portrait of the gods. These gods can be angry and competitive, they may offer advice, shift their forms as opportune, intervene in human affairs, communicate through signs and prophecies (though, in contrast to Homeric epic, not through messengers) and produce semi-divine progeny. Tsagalis' chapter suggests that, although the Cyclic epics are seemingly intended to fill in gaps in epic narrative, their gods do not continue Homer's emerging transcendent beings, but have evolved as stereotyped characters. Also remarkable is that the Cyclic gods responded to the deaths of their semi-divine offspring by giving some of them immortality, when in Homer the gods could only express grief at the death of their mortal children. Might this represent an adjustment of perspective, away from an insurmountable gap between gods and humans and toward a more anthropocentric view of the world, with the possibility of at least some humans bridging that gap?

As **Timothy Heckenlively** reminds us in the final chapter of this section of the book, 'Ares in the Pseudo-Hesiodic *Shield*,' the story of Heracles' battle with Cycnus, son of Ares, was popular in the poetry and art of the archaic age. The extant poem celebrating this event was long the object of scholarly scorn. Yet it turns out to be more than evidence for the popularity of a theme. Like the poems of the Epic Cycle, the *Shield* strikingly narrows the gap between gods and humans. The poem echoes the structure of the Homeric hymns, offering a birth narrative and a central heroic feat. Its 'honorand,' however, is not a god but the semi-divine Heracles, who not only defeats the semi-divine Cycnus but also routs his divine father, Ares. As Heckenlively argues, the imagery on Heracles' shield, associated with Ares, functions as a sort of apotropaic device. It allows the mortal hero Heracles to gain ascendency over the banes, *arai*, whom he has destroyed in service of humanity. The mortal warrior carries an image of the war-god whom he defeats, thus assuming his power. In literary representations of this type, when humans overcome the gods we have entered a new conception of the relationship between mortals an immortals.

The seven chapters in this opening part describe an 'evolutionary' movement within the earliest corpus of Greek poetry as we have it. This movement does not trace a single straight line, and due to the fragmentary nature of much of our evidence, our picture is inevitably incomplete. Yet the progress of the gods in early

Greek epic seems to be marked by a starting point and a direction of travel, from identities in the making towards a pantheon and a structure (more or less) of divine authority within the universe. In these chapters, we observe how the anthropomorphic gods, reflections of human imperfection, evolve to provide models for human behavior and start taking on some of the characteristics of universal transcendental powers that will facilitate their allegorical interpretation and influence their representation in the centuries ahead.

HELLENISTIC POETRY

Once a fully developed Olympian pantheon, overseen by Zeus, is in place and human beings appear on the scene, for a while gods mate with mortals, as attested copiously in the *Catalogue*. Yet after several generations of congress and numerous semi-divine offspring, Zeus puts a decisive end to such practice, initiating a separation of the world of the Olympians from that of mortals. At the same time, we noted the appearance of humans, such as Heracles in the *Shield*, who assume divine status and even vanquish gods. In the hexameter poetry of the Hellenistic period, both themes come to the fore. The Hellenistic poets lived in a hybrid, multicultural and cosmopolitan world, among peoples who practiced other religions, during a time of significant changes to the political, social and philosophical contexts of religion, and a rise of public and private cult practices that were quite different from the religious reality that inspired archaic poetry's representations of the divine. Against this backdrop it is perhaps not surprising that in hexameter verse we see a reduction of direct, active intervention of the Olympians in human affairs and a further distancing of the higher gods, and most of all Zeus, who becomes increasingly an abstract principle. At the same time, political reality, which saw the rise of extremely powerful rulers who adopted many of the religious trappings of Near-Eastern kingship, made the idea of mortals crossing the divide between the human and divine worlds almost commonplace. A striking example is Hermocles' hymn in honor of the Macedonian king Demetrius Poliorcetes (ruled 294–288 BCE), which combines religious voice and political thought in a manner that would have been unimaginable in the archaic period (fr. 1.13–19 Powell = Ath. 6.63, 253d–f):

> Hail, son of Poseidon, the mightiest god;
> hail, son of Aphrodite.
> For other gods are either at a long distance,
> or have no ears,
> or no existence; or they do not heed us at all –
> but you are present to our eyes,
> not made of wood or stone but a true god.

Whereas in the archaic conception the anthropomorphic statues of the gods symbolized their presence, availability and engagement with human affairs, the poet's philosophical doubts here reduce the gods to mere wood and stone, dead effigies of divinities who may not exist as living beings; or who, if they do exist, may not

be reachable; or who if they are reachable, may not hear the pleas of mortals; or who if they hear, may not care. In this vacuum, the living monarch rises as a 'genuine god,' and we see the emergence of new heroes who, like Heracles, would ascend the heights of Olympus.

In '*Heldendämmerung* Anticipated: The Gods in Apollonius' *Argonautica*,' **James J. Clauss** begins his discussion with passages in the Hellenistic epic that clearly allude to the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, especially its beginning, describing the era of cohabitation by gods and humans, and the climactic moment in Book 5 when Zeus announces his plan to prevent the birth of further demigods and end the Heroic Age through the Trojan War. Apollonius' engagement with the *Catalogue* raises the expectation that the gods of his poem will have less physical contact with humans. Zeus is indeed notoriously absent from events in the poem and the other Olympian gods interact only indirectly with mortals, leaving the latter in an unprecedented degree of uncertainty. Of note is also the fact that, when the Argonauts *do* have direct contact with the divine, through lesser gods, their encounters all involve deities associated with water – perhaps not surprising in a maritime epic. The increased distance between Olympians and mortals makes room for these minor divinities but also for 'gods in the making,' Heracles and the Dioscuri. The foreshadowed apotheoses of these mortals effectively open the door to the deification of others, such as the poet's Ptolemaic patrons in Alexandria, whose absence from the poem parallels the invisibility of the Olympian gods to the Argonauts.

A sense of distance from the gods can also be detected beneath the surface of Aratus' didactic poem about the stars, as **John Ryan** shows in 'Zeus in Aratus' *Phaenomena*.' Aratus makes a point of beginning from Zeus, harking back to Hesiod's *Works and Days*, but his poetic rendition of Eudoxus' star catalogue reveals seams that call into question traditional conceptions of the divine. Zeus can be regarded as an anthropomorphic god who created the constellations to benefit human kind, a Hesiodic Zeus. But he can also represent the sky itself, whose stars are observed, mapped and interpreted by human astronomers, a Eudoxan Zeus. As Ryan notes, 'the tension between Aratus' two *aitia* of the constellations provides a productive lens through which to read a "double aesthetic" of the *Phaenomena*, one that easily alternates between the epic narrative of catasterism myths and the scientific description of Hellenistic astronomy.' At a time of prolific enquiry, when scholars were exploring new scientific, literary and artistic horizons, the scientific side of Aratus' Hesiodic poem seems to have had the upper hand, as the *Phaenomena* attracted scholarly commentary for its science rather than its theology. Zeus, then, was giving way to Eudoxus and other learned men.

Callimachus' *Hymns* likewise contribute to the sense of a new reality, as **Ivana Petrovic** shows in 'Gods in Callimachus' *Hymns*.' The royal symposia at Alexandria and festivals throughout the Hellenized world offered the Ptolemies the opportunity to showcase poetry that celebrated their greatness and dynastic ideology both directly and in less obvious ways. Callimachus' *Hymns* are a case in point. Contrary to archaic representations, the gods of the *Hymns* are a harmonious family unit. Callimachus' Zeus is not negotiating dynastic threats (as in the

Theogony), nor 'herding cats' (as in the *Iliad*), nor resolving tensions among his kin (as in the *Odyssey* or the Homeric hymns), but he is firmly and lovingly in charge of an orderly court. The anthropomorphic depictions of the gods in these poems, Petrovic argues, served as a positive paradigm for the royal family, and divine epiphany offered an Olympian parallel for the staged appearances of the living dynasts whose statues could be seen alongside those of the gods during festivals.

Like the Hesiodic *Catalogue* and the Cyclic Epics, Callimachus' *Hecale* only survives in fragments, so that our picture of how this epic poem represented the gods is necessarily hypothetical. As we learn from **Massimo Giuseppetti**'s chapter 'Gods in Fragments: Callimachus' *Hecale*,' the remains that we do possess strongly suggest that the Olympian gods appeared in the *Hecale* only indirectly: they formed part of the backstory and backdrop – Attica with its myths, cults and landmarks. But, just as in Apollonius' *Argonautica*, they did not converse or otherwise engage with the poem's human characters directly. At the poem's center is a major Athenian myth: Theseus' arrival in Athens and his mastering of the Marathonian bull. This is a context where we expect to encounter Athena. We do, but not as a character in the main story. As far as our evidence indicates, the goddess is only talked about: Theseus tells his father Aegeus that he has Athena's support; and an aged crow provides a 'mythological archeology' of Athena's city that culminates in the bird's banishment from the Acropolis. These latter details are particularly noteworthy. An old bird provides a highly peculiar and likely the longest narrative about the chief deity of Athens in the poem, and one that is not quite flattering. Other divinities who had significant cults in Attica, Demeter and Nemesis, also appeared in the poem. Giuseppetti offers a plausible hypothesis for the context in which each of these goddesses may have been mentioned. He suggests that the treatment of the gods in this poem points to a quintessentially Callimachean approach, in which erudition may have gone hand in hand with *pathos*. The poet presents the gods, rituals and cult places of Attica more like objects in a 'cabinet of curiosities' than as objects and settings of devotion. But at the same time the *Hecale*'s divine backstories seem to have echoed many of the themes of its main story, for example, by staging the quick-tempered Athena as a foil for the poem's title-character. Subverting the scheme of the *Odyssey*, which fashions Odysseus in the likeness of Athena, the humble old Hecale here ironically emerges as a better model of hospitality than the goddess made in the image of man.

In 'Erotic Battles? Love, Power-Politics and Cosmic Significance in Moschus' *Europa* and *Eros on the Run*,' **A. D. Morrison** discusses two poems that flirt with their own belatedness in the striking self-consciousness of their portrayals of the divine and their awareness of how the picture they develop differs from earlier representations. At issue in the case of *Europa* is first and foremost the relationship with the *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite*. The archaic model concludes with clear consequences for gods and mortals – the end of the Heroic Age and the birth of Aeneas. In contrast, Moschus refuses to make the eponymous link between Europe and Europa or to name the children whom Europa will bear to Zeus, eliding the significance of Europa's rape for humanity entirely. There are no

divine repercussions either, as Moschus' Zeus feels no shame or embarrassment at his actions and he faces no rebuke. In *Eros on the Run*, there is a similar sense that the erotic escapades of the gods are of little or no consequence. Morrison concludes that both poems evince 'a self-contained fictional realm whose events are related for their own sake rather than for their power to explain or account for anything in the world of the audience.' While none of the other Hellenistic poems discussed in this section go so far as to turn the world of Greek hexameter poetry into a self-referential microcosm, *Europa* and *Eros on the Run* seem to represent one possible outcome of the *Götterdämmerung* that has also left its mark elsewhere. At the same time, as Morrison shows, these poems serve as a reminder that for the development of representations of the divine in Hellenistic poetry the Homeric epics do not have the status of privileged models, as Apollonius' engagement with the *Catalogue*, Aratus' rethinking of the *Works and Days* and Callimachus' debt to the Homeric hymns in both the *Hymns* and *Hecale* also make clear. Later hexameter poetry, as we shall see, presents a different picture.

IMPERIAL AND LATE ANTIQUE POETRY

We begin the section on imperial and late antique hexameter poetry with Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica*. Composed probably in the third century CE, this narrative epic in fourteen books bridges the gap between the events of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In 'Reading Homer, Writing Troy: Intertextuality and Narrativity of the Gods and the Divine in Quintus of Smyrna's *Posthomerica*,' **Silvio Bär** aptly points out that Quintus' close association with the Homeric poems was achieved in part by self-conscious linking of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. The beginning of the poem lacks an invocation to the Muse, stressing direct continuity with the *Iliad*, while towards the end of the final book we find a gesture towards the proem of the *Odyssey*. Yet, as Bär notes, the Homeric interaction between gods and humans is significantly reduced in the *Posthomerica* and the Homeric practice of 'double motivation' has been all but eliminated: the mortal characters in the poem are mostly made to carry sole responsibility for their choices and there is a marked decrease in divine motivation of human action. The gods' presence in the poem is also otherwise reduced. Divine type scenes are restricted to a single occurrence and interaction among the gods themselves is severely limited. What is more, Zeus forbids the Olympians to interfere in human affairs and, unlike in the *Iliad*, his order is obeyed without protest or insubordination. This, Bär argues, provides an 'inner-fictional' motivation for the gods' segregation from the human world (a state of affairs which Apollonius had allusively tied to the Hesiodic *Catalogue*), and highlights the unchallenged supremacy of the father of the gods in this poem. At the same time, Quintus emphasizes the subordination of all Olympians, including Zeus, to Fate, whose personifications (Aisa, Moira[i] and Ker[es]) appear in many places where, in Homeric epic, we would have expected the Olympians to play a role. These marked differences from Homer are all the more striking in light of the poem's intense engagement with the Homer's diction and style – an

extreme form of Homericizing which, Bär argues, calls attention to the author's 'being and not being Homer' and creates a cognitive dissonance for the reader that must be intentional rather than accidental.

Triphiodorus' *Sack of Troy*, a mini-epic in 691 hexameters written, probably, after the *Posthomerica* but still in the third century, provides a different lens for observing the diminished stature of the archaic gods. In '"With a Little Help from my (Divine) Friends": Double Motivation and Personification in Triphiodorus' *Sack of Troy*,' **Laura Miguélez-Cavero** shows that Triphiodorus' creative representation of the divine is informed by critical interpretations of the Homeric passages that his poem evokes, by comparing the Homeric scholia, the pseudo-Plutarchan treatise *On Homer* and Heraclitus' *Homeric Problems*. In the *Sack of Troy*, human agents initiate action and the gods are represented as merely assisting; and unlike Apollonius' Argonauts, who were at least allowed to guess about the gods' involvement, Triphiodorus' Greeks and Trojans seem oblivious to the divine presence behind the scene. In line with the scholarly tradition, the poem's gods often seem to reflect elements of nature, psychological states and philosophical interpretations. No longer whimsical beings prone to the same passions and errors as humans, Triphiodorus' gods symbolise the compelling force of circumstances and human behavior. Thus the 'design of the gods/Zeus' in the *Sack of Troy* effectively equals fate, a development which Quintus' *Posthomerica* already seemed to prefigure. In this fascinating retelling of the fall of Troy that deploys both Homeric tradition and scholarly interpretation, anthropomorphism and allegory exist side by side, but the latter seems to have the upper hand.

A different but no less intellectual approach was adopted, at the start of the third century, by the anonymous author of the *Cynegetica*. This didactic poem, which aims to teach us all we need to know about hunting, was composed, not by the Oppian who wrote the *Halieutica*, but by a poet from Apamea in Syria, and is dedicated to the emperor Caracalla and his Syrian mother Julia Domna. This background is crucial to understanding the poem's kaleidoscopic portrayal of its patron goddess. As **Adam Bartley** shows in 'The Huntress and the Poet: Artemis in the *Cynegetica*,' Artemis is invoked or mentioned near the start of each of the *Cynegetica*'s four books, but each time she is 'colored' in a different way. In Book 1, Artemis plays the role of Apollo in Callimachus' *Aetia*; her playful *recusatio* of topics to be shunned claims, for herself, a share in the domains of Apollo and Aphrodite, and for her protégé, a place alongside the scholar-poets of the Hellenistic age. Book 2 invokes a more traditional Artemis, with reference to the *Hymn to Artemis* and the Homeric epics. Book 3 does not call upon Artemis directly, but mention of the lions that draw Rhea's chariot here calls to mind a number of oriental goddesses, including the Phrygian goddess Cybele and the Syrian goddess Atargatis/Astarte, whose worship was to some extent interchangeable with that of Artemis in the Near East. Book 4, finally, opens with an encomiastic salute to the emperor, asking the goddess to teach him the art of hunting. In Books 1, 2 and 4 the goddess, whether presented in a more 'Hellenistic,' 'archaic' or 'imperial' light, remains the traditional Greek goddess of the hunt. Yet the poet's intertextual play in the Artemis-passages of these books hints at her potential to be

more like the 'universal' oriental goddesses evoked in Book 3 and in the poem's opening dedication, where Julia Domna is likened to Atargatis/Astarte. What we have in the *Cynegetica*, Bartley's analysis suggests, is a sophisticated engagement not only with divine representation in earlier poetry but also with the cultic realities of the poet's own time and place.

Moving forward to the fifth century, we come to Nonnus of Panopolis and his fourty-eight-book epic extravaganza *Dionysiaca*. Earlier, Quintus engaged with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by creating a Homerizing narrative that links the two epics. Nonnus writes a poem in the same number of books as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* combined. As **Domenico Accorinti** points out in 'Naming the God of Metamorphosis: The Ever-Changing Shape of the Infant Dionysus in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca*,' Nonnus in his proem presents the shape-shifting Proteus of the *Odyssey* as a model for both the titular hero and the metamorphic qualities of the *Dionysiaca* itself. But he also matches aspects of Dionysus' precocious exploits with the greatest warrior of the *Iliad*, Achilles. Metamorphosis is a prominent feature in the story of Zagreus, the 'first Dionysus' who is killed by Titans. In the god's incarnation as Dionysus, his ability to shape-shift is a central motif of his battle with the Indian king Deriades, and manifests already in infancy, when to elude Hera he adopts, among other guises, that of a young girl. As Accorinti shows, Nonnus here alludes to an episode from the youth of Achilles, whom Thetis hid on Scyros dressed as a girl to prevent his going to Troy; and where Achilles was raised by Chiron, Dionysus' guardians, the Pheres, likewise become centaurs. Accorinti also points out overlaps between the infancy narrative of Dionysus and those of Hermes and Heracles. If allowed to speculate about deeper intentions, one might suggest that we are presented with different pathways to immortality for the infant Dionysus in these models, which concern one of the last additions to the Olympian pantheon; a semi-divine human who ascended to Olympus post-mortem; and a *hemitheos* who died young but lived on forever in Homer's song or, according to other versions, enjoyed an eternal second life on the Isles of the Blessed.

Such considerations are the more pressing if, as now seems impossible to deny, the *Dionysiaca* invites a Christian reading of its themes and hero, having been composed by a poet who also gave us a lengthy *Paraphrase of the Gospel of John*. The latter poem **Anna Lefteratou** sets alongside the Homeric centos of the fifth-century empress Eudocia in her chapter 'Jesus' Late Antique Epiphanies: Healing the Blind in the Christian Epics of Eudocia and Nonnus.' Both Eudocia's retelling of the synoptic gospels and Nonnus' paraphrase of John include the story of a blind man healed by Jesus; and both engage with classical pagan literature, Neoplatonic philosophy and the exegeses of the Church Fathers. While Eudocia's rendition, stitched together from Homeric lines, seeks its model for the scene primarily in the *Odyssey*, in Athena's epiphany to Odysseus upon his return to Ithaca, Nonnus' version incorporates themes of Sophocles' Oedipus plays. At the core of both poets' retelling of the miraculous cure lies an allegorical interpretation: the blind man's healing represents the conversion of the Gentiles, not dissimilar to Neoplatonic readings of Odysseus' *nostos* as an allegory of the journey of the soul. As Lefteratou shows, the classical themes of blindness, wandering,

return and epiphany support a new Christian narrative, albeit differently in Nonnus and in Eudocia. In the meter and literary form which celebrated the Olympians' birth, ascension to power and control of the world, the Father of Gods and Men has been supplanted by the Son of God and Son of Man. And where in the pagan poems of the Hellenistic period and Empire we saw the divine increasingly retreat into the background, it reclaims center stage in these explicitly Christian poems no less than in Nonnus' mythological epic about Dionysus, the Son of God in a different guise.

Colluthus, a poet influenced by Nonnus, also brings back a world in which humans have direct contact with the divine. However, in Colluthus we are presented with an amusing restaging of the traditional gods, which in its irreverence goes beyond even the most playful portrayals of the Olympians by the Hellenistic poets. As **Enrico Magnelli** shows in 'Gods and Men in Colluthus' *Rape of Helen*,' this poet's divine characters are no better than his human cast, whose hero is the womanizer Paris. In Colluthus' 'Homeric' epyllion, the gods are childish, selfish, quarrelsome, their frailties all-too-human. Reduced in stature, the Olympians have also lost control. Zeus' plan to cull the human population cited in the *Cypria*, for instance, is not foregrounded as a reason for the Trojan War in the proem. Instead, the poet begins by focusing on the shepherd Paris as the war's main cause. He then shows how Eris' neurotic anger prompts Paris' judgment and how lies, pettiness and sexual desire lead to the epoch-ending conflict. Even as Paris achieves his 'heroic' feat of winning Helen, no gods participate in his triumph. His beauty, charm and boastful words accomplish what Aphrodite promised. And even then, Helen's commitment to the relationship is short-lived. Colluthus' gods, Magnelli concludes, are meant to be Homeric in their least attractive way: the poet has chosen to enlarge and make the object of humor precisely the sort of inappropriate traits and behavior that Homeric critics had sought to excuse through allegorical readings. This strategy makes good sense for a poet of 'light verse' working in what was, no doubt, a Christian context.

Sometime in the late fifth or sixth century there appeared a curious anonymous poem that, from its fictional narrator, Orpheus, and its content, the journey of the Argo, scholars refer to as the *Orphic Argonautica*, or better, the *Argonautica of Orpheus*. For as **Oliver Schelske** reminds us in his chapter 'The *Argonautica of Orpheus* as Poetic Theology? Divine Hierarchies in Late Antique Poetry and Philosophy,' this is not simply an Orphic work. As we might expect from both the Orpheus we know from the Orphic Poems and his Apollonian counterpart, the *Argonautica of Orpheus* includes a theogony, in fact two theogonies, one told as part of the narrative frame in the opening lines of the poem by Orpheus the narrator and another told inside the narrative itself by the character Orpheus. As Schelske's analysis shows, the first of these theogonies contains a number of elements that diverge from canonical Orphic mythology (e.g., the lack of the primordial egg) but that can be understood if read through the works of Damascius and Proclus, philosophers who sought to reconcile Orphic with Neoplatonic views. The narrator of the poem, it emerges, offers an Orphic theogony colored by Neoplatonism. The second and shorter theogony, told by the character Orpheus, more

closely follows the traditional versions. This suggests that the older and more experienced Orpheus of the frame narrative has learned much since his days as an Argonaut. An attractive explanation of this state of affairs might be that, just as the Neoplatonists allegorized the voyage of Homer's Odysseus, so our anonymous poet conceived of the Argonautic quest as an experience that gave Orpheus a deep metaphysical insight.

The last chapter of this section shows the ancient Greek gods attracting downright condemnation in the Judaeo-Christian books of the Sibylline oracles. Continuing a pagan form, these oracles were produced by communities of Jews and Christians, then used by Christians of the early Church for apologetic purposes, so that they offer a complex tapestry. **J. L. Lightfoot**, in her chapter 'Polytheism in the Sibylline Oracles,' takes on the complex topic of representation of the traditional Greek gods in the surviving collection of fourteen Sibylline books. Following a brief examination of the Sibyl's identity and voice in the pagan oracles, Lightfoot turns to the Judaeo-Christian oracles, whose Sibyl was identified as the wife of Noah, an antediluvian figure predating the separation of Semitic and non-Semitic peoples. These texts offer a sustained polemic against the anthropomorphism of the pagan gods, a critique that began among the Greeks themselves as early as the sixth century BCE, with figures such as Xenophanes. A related criticism is idolatry. The oracles obsessively fulminate against the representation of the true living God in inert matter, not unlike the Hellenistic poet Hermocles whom we saw discredit the statues of the gods as dead and powerless compared to the living presence of the benevolent ruler. The oracles, however, claim that it is precisely in ruler cult that polytheism originated, turning against the gods of myth a Greek theory that was originally devised to vindicate them: Euhemerism, according to which the gods were humans of the distant past who received divine honors for their services to mankind. Elsewhere, the oracles reduce the Greek gods to metonyms for physical aspects of the world, as prefigured in allegorical interpretations of the Homeric epics, and we see Yahweh usurp epithets that in Homer belonged to Zeus and Poseidon. Arguing for and celebrating the *Götterdämmerung* of the Olympians in hexameters instantiates the ultimate irony.

BEYOND THE GREEKS

As the main sections of this book demonstrate, the gods lead diverse and resilient lives within the world of Greek hexameter poetry. Already in our archaic texts, we are dealing with a tradition of reception that reframes its real or constructed antecedents, and this process continues through the centuries. Every past has a future. Every past has more than one future. And of course, the existence of the gods of *epos* does not end at the boundaries of the Greek language, or of the hexameter, or of Greek culture, or of antiquity. Once we leave the common ground of a single language, literary form and culture, we enter vast and disparate worlds. To sketch out the parallel lives and afterlives of the gods in these worlds, even in brief, would require, not a book but a library full of books. Yet these 'other' lives offer

important vantage points, not in the last place because their framing and reframing of the epic gods has also influenced how we ourselves approach them – the patterns, problems and paradoxes we perceive; the questions we ask and answers we come up with. The concluding section of this book therefore offers a few selective examples of such alternative and future paths outside the trajectory of Greek hexameter poetry. By necessity, these are merely islands in the vast stream of the reception. But if these examples prove anything, they certainly prove that Simonides was right. The answer to Hiero's question is that the more we think about our topic, the more complex it becomes, and the more time (and pages) we need.

From the concluding chapter of the last section and the Sibylline oracles we take a step, back in time and sideways in language and culture, to Augustan Rome. As **Ward Briggs**' reminds us in 'Homer's Gods and Virgil's *Aeneid*,' for Virgil the epic 'divine apparatus' presented a considerable challenge. How could the 'whimsical, self-indulgent, and amoral Homeric Olympians' be made believable to a contemporary Roman audience within a serious epic celebrating Roman destiny? Since the subject of the *Aeneid* is the founding of an entire nation and its rise to greatness, culminating in the rule of Augustus, Virgil must fuse Italic gods and Olympians into 'a consistent moral authority that sanctions Rome's dominion.' The 'political gods' that emerge from this process are imbued with a sense of purpose that gives them new 'life.' They are driven, not by petty motives, but by real stakes. Juno and Venus safeguard the future of historical cities and nations, Jupiter assures Roman dominion and Apollo, in the centuries ahead, will become Augustus' patron. While the grand historical design is, at various points, momentarily threatened by gods and humans with contrary goals, ultimately the actions of both, witting and unwitting, fulfill the demand of fate that Rome should rise as a world power. Thus a Roman poet gave the Olympians more gravity than they perhaps ever had in Greek epic.

Staying in the same frame of time but moving a step beyond the hexameter form, we gain a similar sense of re-invigoration from Ovid's elegiac *Fasti*. Although no one, either today or in antiquity, would associate Ovid with traditional piety of the sort Augustus' policies promoted, **Fritz Graf**'s 'The Gods in Ovid's *Fasti*' reveals an important, indeed critical facet of the poet's festival calendar: the degree to which Ovid looks at festivals as real events in the Roman community, and the contribution he brings to that engagement from his own personal experience, from encounters with veterans, old women, Roman priests, even 'the gods themselves.' Although the *Fasti* have often been read as an intellectual, literary and antiquarian exercise, Graf invites us to view the poem as a significant document of Roman religion. Prayers for the welfare of the Roman state during the *Kalendae Ianuariae* are indeed, in the *Fasti*, the stuff of serious ritual and politics, not 'an opportunity to pick up girls.' When Ovid encounters a god in epiphany, he styles himself a *vates* in the original sense of 'seer' and mouthpiece of the gods, restoring religious significance to a term that, by this time, had simply come mean 'poet.' As Graf observes, 'we are in the world of religion and ritual, and the poet's persona reflects this world.' Ovid's personal involvement with the cults he aetiologizes offers a striking difference between the *Fasti* and Callimachus' *Aetia*, its