What’s in a name? Using the example of a famous monster from Greek myth, this book challenges the dominant view that a mythical symbol denotes a single, clear-cut “figure” and proposes instead to define the name “Scylla” as a combination of three concepts – sea, dog, and woman – whose articulation changes over time. While archaic and classical Greek versions usually emphasize the metaphorical coherence of Scylla’s components, the name is increasingly treated as a well-defined but also paradoxical construct from the late fourth century BCE onward. Proceeding through detailed analyses of Greek and Roman texts and images, Professor Hopman shows how the same name can variously express anxieties about the sea, dogs, aggressive women, and shy maidens, thus offering an empirical response to the semiotic puzzle raised by non-referential proper names.

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SCYLLA

Myth, Metaphor, Paradox

MARIANNE GOVERS HOPMAN
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1 Etruscan ivory pyxis from the Pania necropolis, Chiusi. Florence, Archaeological Museum 73846. Photo © Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici della Toscana / Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Firenze.


5 Late Geometric krater from Pithecusae, cemetery in the Valle di San Montano. Ischia, Archaeological Museum 168813. Photo © Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei.


8a and b Black-figure amphora from Etruria. Athens, collection S. Niarchos A 059. Photo © Christie’s Images/ The Bridgeman Art Library.
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<td>Apulian pelike by the Underworld Painter. Naples, Archeological Museum SA 708. Photo © Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Napoli e Pompei.</td>
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<td>Apulian red-figure pelike. Ruvo, Jatta Collection 1500. Photo © Koppermann, DAI Rom Neg. D-DAI-ROM 64.1162.</td>
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Preface and acknowledgments

This book stems from an intense curiosity about how people from a temporally distant culture thought about and tried to give meaning to their experience. As cultural barriers loosen and the world becomes increasingly cosmopolitan, the concept of reality, long scrutinized with suspicion by philosophers, has grown even more elusive. A trip to Peru or an outing to Chinatown acutely reminds us of the fact that our perceptions are shaped by mental filters resulting from our individual histories and cultural backgrounds. This diversity of viewpoints may make cross-cultural communication challenging, but it also raises the intriguing possibility of widening and enriching our Weltanschauung through that of others: such is the premise of my interest in the cognitive mechanisms whereby the Greeks mentally grasped and impressed coherence upon the random elements of life.

Given my interest in symbolic forms, broadly defined, I chose to focus on “monsters” not so much because they are scary (although that may have been part of the thrill), but because they are unambiguously the product of the human imagination. Although many scholars and laymen alike try to relate mythical beings to empirically verifiable phenomena, it is – or at least should be – clear that this genetic approach, even when it is rigorously carried out, cannot account for the enduring popularity of mental constructs. Origins do not explain later success. Thus, a full understanding of non-referential creatures requires contextualizing them in the broad system of representations, concepts, and images characteristic of a culture. As such, monsters offer a privileged point of entry into the collective imagination of a people.

As the humanities find themselves under considerable pressure to account for their mere existence, classicists often justify their discipline historically, stressing that Western culture was so largely shaped by the Greco-Roman heritage that some knowledge of the latter is indispensable to achieve a good understanding of the former. While this argument is
Preface and acknowledgments

perfectly legitimate, what I want to offer here is something different: an experience closer to a journey to a foreign land, emphasizing singularities rather than similarities among cultures. I am, in other words, interested in what strikes us as bizarre and alien in ancient Greece, what may have not passed down to Western culture, yet follows a logic of its own and can be studied through scholarly tools.

Ultimately, however, the journey is still about us. The exploration of far-off cultures not only immerses us into others’ viewpoints, but also provides us with the cultural distance necessary to reflect upon our own cultural assumptions. In addition, the exploration of foreign images and stories can enrich our own stock, expand our horizons, and add new layers of resonance and meaning to our experience. For that reason, I hope that this book will be of interest not only to academics but also to creative artists seeking to challenge, deepen, and invigorate our contemporary culture through new modes of thinking.

***

It is a great pleasure to thank the many people who have helped me as I was writing this book. My work on Scylla started as a doctoral dissertation that I jointly submitted to Harvard University and the Université de Paris IV–Sorbonne in 2005. I am grateful to the members of my dissertation committee, Albert Henrichs, Charles de Lamberterie, Gregory Nagy, and Gloria Ferrari Pinney, for their help charting out the topic and finding my way among sources from many different contexts, genres, and media. My thesis co-directors, Charles de Lamberterie and Gregory Nagy, enthusiastically supported the then rather uncommon experience of a cotutelle de thèse between a French and an American university. I thank them for the research opportunities and occasions of fruitful collaboration that this transatlantic framework gave me.

As I embarked upon the process of turning the dissertation into a book, I was fortunate to find a remarkably supportive environment in the department of Classics at Northwestern University. Remarks from the students in my “Mythology,” “Odyssey,” and “Metamorphoses” classes have challenged me to reconsider many of my assumptions about poetry and myth. I am grateful to my Classics colleagues Kate Bosher, Daniel Garrison, John Schafer, Francesca Tataranni, Robert Wallace, John Wynne, and Claudia Zatta for making the department such a pleasurable place to work. Reginald Gibbons read and commented upon an earlier version of the manuscript with characteristic acuity and intellectual generosity. Special thanks go to department chairs Sara Monoson and Ann Gunter for their much-needed advice in professional and other matters.
Preface and acknowledgments

I am pleased to acknowledge the various institutions that supported me over the years of this project. As a graduate student, fellowships from the Harvard Graduate Society and the Humanities Center at Harvard gave me the chance to focus solely upon the dissertation. A 2005–2006 College Fellowship from Northwestern University greatly eased the transition from student to faculty member. A 2009–2010 fellowship from the Loeb Classical Library Foundation allowed me to devote an entire year to research, during which I was able to finalize most of the manuscript. A publication subvention from the University Research Grants Committee at Northwestern University greatly helped toward the costs of the photographs included in the book.

Several teachers, colleagues, and friends stepped in at various stages of the writing process to advise me on sections or the whole of the manuscript. For their careful reading and suggestive comments, I am grateful to Richard Buxton, Claude Calame, Kathleen Coleman, Lillian Doherty, Jonas Grethlein, Albert Henrichs, Tim O’Sullivan, and Corinne Pache. My husband Carl Hopman patiently listened to, judiciously criticized, and helped me articulate almost every single argument developed in this book. The project would have been much more difficult to complete without his unfailing support.

I also wish to thank those who helped me turn the manuscript into a book: Michael Sharp from Cambridge University Press for his interest in the project and his patient advice to a first-time author, the two anonymous press readers for their sharp and incisive comments, Jenny Lee and Rebecca du Plessis for their careful copy-editing, Eric Johnson for his assistance in the preparation of the indices, and Carmen Arnold-Biucchi and Hans Goette for their help sourcing the images. Part of Chapter 1 is a revised version of the article “Narrative and rhetoric in Odysseus’ tales to the Phaeacians,” that was first published in the American Journal of Philology 133:1 (2012): 1–30. I am grateful to the Johns Hopkins University Press for their permission to reprint some sections from the article in the book.

After several years of courageously struggling against a rare neurological disease, my mother Bernadette Govers-Lassier passed away in July 2012, a few months before Scylla was published. Amidst the sadness and sorrow, I am immensely grateful to her and to my father, Tom Govers, for the atmosphere of intellectual curiosity that they fostered in my childhood home and for their unfailing support of my graduate student years. My great-aunt Suzanne Lassier, a scholar of the Mahabharata and the author of a book on Gandhi, nurtured my interest in myths and symbolic thinking very early on. To him, and to their dear memory, I dedicate this book.
Note on transliterations and translations

The transliteration of Greek names is always a challenge. In the interest of consistency, since I use both Greek and Latin sources across the book, I have adopted the Latinate rather than Greek forms for the name of most authors, places, and mythological characters.

I have used or adapted the following translations:


Note on transliterations and translations


### Note on transliterations and translations

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<th>Text</th>
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<th>Year</th>
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Abbreviations

Reference works often cited in the notes are abbreviated as follows:

ABV  J. D. Beazley (1956) *Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters*. Oxford.


ARV²  J. D. Beazley (1963) *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters*. 2nd edn. Oxford.


CVA  *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum* (1922– ).


List of abbreviations

LIMC  

LSG  
H. G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H. Stuart Jones (1940)  

OCD  
S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth (eds.) (1996)  

OLD  

Para  
J. D. Beazley (1971)  
*Paralipomena*. Oxford.

PCG  
R. Kassel and C. Austin (eds.) (1983–2001)  

PLG  
T. Bergk (ed.) (1878–1882)  

PMG  
D. Page (ed.) (1962)  

RE  

Roscher  
W. H. Roscher (ed.) (1884–1937)  

RVAp  

RVP  
A. D. Trendall (1987)  

SNG  
*Sylloge nummorum graecorum* (1931–).

Suppl. Hell.  
H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons (eds.) (1983)  

TrGF  
*Tragicorum Graecorum fragmenta*. Göttingen.

The titles of modern journals are abbreviated as per the *Année Philologique*.  
Ancient authors and their works are abbreviated according to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edn. (1996).