INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most alluring and delightful characteristic of ancient Greek art is the pervasiveness of myth and mythological narratives as subjects for visual representation. The familiarity yet remoteness of the deities and mythological figures of this past society, combined with skillful narrative depictions, often in aesthetically pleasing form, make Greek art and myth nearly irresistible to layman and specialist alike. But what charms us in Greek art often was regarded with much greater seriousness by ancient Greek viewers, who understood such myths as part of their past history and whose gods, often the subject of myth, had complete control of their daily lives – weather phenomena were manifestations of the god Zeus, for example, and plagues and other illnesses were caused by some slight to a deity and could only be cured by making amends. Agriculture and the productivity of the land fell under the realm of Demeter; if the crops failed, it was clearly due to an offense to the goddess. A successful childbirth could only be accomplished with the help of Artemis, and those about to be married made offerings to Artemis and to Aphrodite to ensure a successful outcome of the transition from their unmarried to married state. Religious practice, for example, sacrificial ritual, and the need to respect and honor the gods were often explained in terms of myth, and narratives about deities are usually placed in the category of "myth." Yet not all myths concerned religion, and not all religious practices had mythological narratives attached to them.

Until the Hellenistic period (c. 323–31 B.C.), Greek sculpture is almost entirely religious in nature and, in the case of architectural sculpture and

large-scale free-standing sculpture, primarily composed of mythological figures (including Greek divinities) and/or mythological narratives. Indeed, myth and religion were the raisons d'être for much of Greek art throughout its history, although politics certainly played a critical role in most public projects. Standing at a distance of nearly two and a half millennia and situated in another, very different culture, how can we understand what myth meant for the ancient Greeks?

Myths express and reveal cultural values; they offer messages, but the modern viewer can only decipher or decode the "language" of the myth and the monument if the myth and art are considered in their original cultural context. In the case of ancient Greece, we are fortunate to have written accounts by viewers of Greek art, such as Pausanias (fl. c. 150 A.D.) and Pliny (c. 23/24–79 A.D.), but we do not possess contemporary *interpretations* of Greek art and myth. What do Greek myths mean, and how was meaning created for the ancient viewer? This book considers the use of myth as architectural sculpture in Classical Greece (c. 480–323 B.C.) and argues that myth is not randomly selected and does not serve a purely decorative function but has meaning (the same is true for small-scale works, such as vase painting), and the interpretation of a given myth depends on context. The same myth, such as the ubiquitous Centauromachy, can mean different things in different contexts, and in a monumental context, the mythological image relates to the site and often to other monuments surrounding it, which redouble, resonate, or create variations on a theme. Different facets or variants of a given myth can be emphasized depending on context. Although the concentration here is on architectural sculpture, that is, major monuments, the text also, by necessity, examines if and how the meaning of a given myth differs when an object, such as a funerary monument, is invested with personal, not public, importance.

The architectural sculpture examined here is discussed in a series of five case studies, chronologically arranged, which offer a range of physical settings, historical and social circumstances, and interpretive problems. While western Greece and many islands had a rich tradition of architectural sculpture in the Archaic (c. 600–480 B.C.) and Classical periods, this book is confined to four mainland Greek sites and a fifth in Asia Minor. Comparanda from elsewhere are adduced when useful. Throughout this study, the methodology depends on visual semiotics – context determines

the meaning of images (in this case, mythological images), and meaning is malleable – and viewer response, that is, how an ancient viewer (who requires definition) might have interpreted these images. Reconstructing that context relies on using all available evidence – visual and written – to establish how a site appeared at any given moment, what occurred at the site (which determines who the intended viewers were likely to be), and the current political, religious, and historical situation.

The Temple of Zeus at Olympia (Chapter 1), a Panhellenic sanctuary and site of the ancient Olympic games, presents a rich array of architectural sculpture that addressed the athletes and visitors to Olympia. The myths used on the temple are clearly specific to the site, but also exhibit dramatic innovations, as well as variations on a theme, the labors of Herakles, already familiar from architectural sculpture at other sites. The sculptures of the Parthenon on the Athenian Akropolis (Chapter 2) are well known to modern viewers and have been studied extensively by scholars. However, a consideration of one aspect of the myths depicted, the role of women, together with religious rituals that occurred at the site facilitates a different interpretation of the sculptures available to one set of viewers, the girls and women who were so critical to the city's continuity and to the populace at large. Moreover, the Centauromachy that appears on the Parthenon offers an opportunity to compare this rendition to that at Olympia. In the Athenian Agora below the Akropolis, the Hephaisteion (Chapter 3) sits above the buildings central to the workings of the Athenian democracy, yet is carefully integrated into this larger political landscape. Its sculptures are spatially apportioned to emphasize their relationship to the surrounding structures, to which they have a thematic relationship, and were clearly addressed to Athenian citizens moving through the Agora. Both the labors of Herakles and the Centauromachy recur here, where they take on different significance as a result of their setting. Like the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, the Temple of Apollo at Delphi (Chapter 4) is set in a Panhellenic sanctuary but one with a different orientation; while Olympia was renowned first and foremost for its athletic games, it was Apollo's oracle that dominated at Delphi (although it is important to note that Olympia *also* had an oracle, and Delphi *also* had Panhellenic athletic games). Our study focuses on the temple's fourth-century B.C. incarnation, when the political situation in Greece was undergoing a critical upheaval as a result

of encounters with the Macedonians. Unlike the architectural sculpture discussed in preceding chapters, that on the Temple of Apollo does not present mythological narratives but emblematic mythological figures, which were meant to recall past images on the same site in an effort to trumpet current political affiliations. The final case study takes us to Lycia in Asia Minor, where Greek myths appear on the Heroon at Trysa, a tomb and hero shrine for the local dynast, who served as a satrap for the Persian king. The dynast's tomb enclosure was extensively decorated with sculptured reliefs depicting Greek mythological themes, as well as narrative images apparently drawn from the life of the ruler. The reuse of familiar mythological themes from mainland architectural sculpture and monumental painting, together with the use of myths not commonly found in such monumental contexts, reveals differing aims: to reach a non-Greek audience and to exalt a mere mortal to the status of hero, a practice that persists and develops in the subsequent Hellenistic period. Finally, as an epilogue, the text briefly looks at the Altar of Zeus from Pergamon, which revives the use of the Gigantomachy in monumental form and combines it with a local myth to address the concerns of a monarch eager to promote the idea of Pergamon as a new Athens. In sum, specific and varied contexts – Panhellenic sanctuary, tomb, mainland, Asia Minor, private, public, time period – shape the patron's choice of myth, available meanings, and targeted audiences.

Although the myths examined in this book decorate temples and tombs among other structures, their meaning or deployment is not always religious, and this book will explore (though not exhaust) the complicated relationship and interaction among myth, religion, ritual, and art. Some myths clearly have nothing to do with religion, such as the Centauromachy and Amazonomachy, yet they decorate religious buildings and are demonstrably linked to their sites and monuments, most often because of historical, social, or topographical concerns. Other myths clearly have connections with religion and ritual, such as myths concerning Dionysos and his followers and resistors, which appear very rarely in monumental contexts, or those about Athena or Apollo, which frequently are used as architectural decoration. In many cases, however, the connection or disjunction between myth and religion is not so distinct. The relationship of the mythical followers of Dionysos to the real-life worshippers of the god and what practices each engages in are

difficult to discern. If there are real-life counterparts to Bacchae, what about Satyrs? The problems multiply when we consider visual representations of myth and religion. To take only one example: at the Heroon of Gjölbaschi-Trysa, mythological images suggest the heroization of the deceased ruler, who was worshipped at the site. Why are particular myths chosen for this purpose, and how do they make the analogy between historical ruler and hero? Do the myths in some way justify the worship of the ruler as a hero, and if so, which myths do so? Is a heroic pedigree necessary for worship, or would the ruler have been worshipped if there were no visual images decorating the structure? Many questions cannot be answered with the present state of our evidence (the Trysa heroon is especially tricky because we have no ancient written evidence concerning it), but they should be borne in mind.

Even before one tackles these complex issues, other, more basic problems arise: how do we recognize Greek myth when it appears, and how is it distinguished from nonmythological depictions? For example, armed combat is a subject that frequently occurs in sixth-century vase painting and sculpture, yet some of these scenes represent a specific mythological battle (although the figures wear contemporary armor) as indicated by inscribed names, attributes, or accompanying figures, while others bear no inscriptions, no apparent indicators of myth. Are the latter also mythological, and if there is ambiguity, is it intentional, designed to blur the boundary between myth and actuality, or simply the modern viewer's failure to comprehend what s/he sees? Also important to consider is the intended viewers of architectural depictions of myth; differences in gender, social status (e.g., citizen, metic, slave), age, and social or civic circumstance (e.g., athlete competitor at Olympia v. female participant in the Panathenaia) affect perception of the myths depicted. In some instances, the targeted audience can be defined with some specificity, such as at Olympia, where the temple's sculptures seem to specifically address athletes, but in other instances, at the Parthenon in Athens, for example, varying messages seem to address a plurality of viewers, male and female, citizen and foreigner. Although public monuments and their myths are usually geared to aristocratic, even monarchical ideas, they also reflect popular beliefs and ideology and often incorporate elements of "real life" so that one can categorize them as monuments of popular culture, as well.

Ancient written accounts, however short on actual interpretations, are invaluable in deciphering visual material and provide vast amounts of information about religious, social, political, topographical, and historical matters that enable us to build a framework in which to contextualize monuments and to formulate interpretations. One of the most indispensable ancient authors for any Greek archaeologist is the travel writer Pausanias, though it must be borne in mind that he, and others such as Pliny or Strabo (born c. 64 B.C.), were writing centuries after the works they describe were created, so their accuracy is sometimes worth questioning (though I would not go so far as some scholars and largely or wholly discount their texts). In their favor, however, is the fact that they actually *saw* much of what they describe; they are first-hand witnesses to monuments, rituals, and events that, in some cases, would be entirely unknown to us were it not for their attestation. One frustration experienced by modern readers is that these writers were not always recording what we want to know or what we find most compelling, but what struck *them* as significant or what their guides prized. To give one notable example: although Pausanias mentions the Parthenon and describes the subjects of its pediments, he makes no mention of the frieze, which is an obsession of modern archaeologists! In the case of travel writers, such as Pausanias, or encyclopedists, such as Pliny, it is likely that they were not composing their texts on the spot as they walked through a particular site, but assembled texts some time, perhaps months, later from notes and memory. That details are omitted or sometimes in error should not vitiate the value of the entire text; it is sometimes the case that these texts, as flawed as they may be, provide the only means of identifying a myth portrayed on a building, or are the most complete source for a religious ritual known otherwise only from a brief tantalizing mention in other, sometimes fragmentary, texts.

In addition to these writers, who aimed to record the world around them, much can be derived from a sensitive interpretation of other literary genres – drama, lyric poetry, epinician, comedy, and the like. This can be tricky because writers such as Pindar, Euripides, and Aristophanes are not writing to transmit data, as Pausanias does (though this does not mean that his material is not artfully arranged or designed to elicit certain responses), but for different, often more dramatically motivated ends, such as theatrical productions. Their texts can be mined for cultural

information about a number of topics – social relations, religious belief and practice, gender relations, and daily life matters, to name just a few. Again, care must be taken with writers of later date and also to separate out what can be designated as "information" from "literary device" or "artistic freedom." Some of the same precautions apply for writers of legal speeches and rhetoric, whose motivations or political agendas shape their prose.

A third category of written material is inscriptions – on stone, on metal, on terracotta, on precious stones, votive inscriptions, epitaphs, public decrees, inventory lists, and so on. This nonliterary information is immensely valuable, often a direct line to the ancient world and its thinking (as opposed to literature, which has different motivations), and for this study, it is especially useful for learning about which deities or mythological figures receive what kinds of dedications, about what mythological motives might be appropriate for a given situation, about how the ancient Greeks conceived of various mythological figures or sites or actions, and so on.

Finally, aside from the pure pleasure of looking at Greek architectural sculpture and myth, such a study is instructive in illuminating the complicated relationship of myth to reality and yields valuable information about ancient Greek culture, specifically ideas about some of man's most vexing questions: the nature of what it is to be human, the relationship of men and gods, gender and sexuality, man's relationship to the natural world, the role of the individual in his community, death, and human relationships. What we learn is that the Greeks were as troubled and perplexed about such matters as we are and that their means of addressing, explaining, and coping with them was sometimes similar but more often quite different from ours.

CHAPTER ONE

THE TEMPLE OF ZEUS AT OLYMPIA, HEROIC MODELS, AND THE PANHELLENIC SANCTUARY

These case studies begin with the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, which allows us to examine a Panhellenic sanctuary, a place of enormous renown, at an early point in the Classical period, shortly after the Battle of Plataia in 479, which we now categorize as the conclusion of the Persian Wars (Figs. 1–4).* The Greeks, however, did not know that and consequently were vigilant in their preparations for further conflicts on their own soil and beyond. The sculptures of the Temple of Zeus clearly were designed to be seen and understood in *this* location, in this context, which makes this site an especially good place to begin this study. They offer the first examples of several myths in monumental form – in some instances, the first depictions of a myth altogether – and offer innovations in conceptions of myth and architectural sculpture that signal the sculptures' close connections to the site. As is evident from the following chapters, the sculptures on the Temple of Zeus had a lasting impact not only at Olympia but also in Athens and elsewhere.

Legend held that the Olympic games, celebrated every four years at Olympia in the Peloponnese, were founded in c. 776 B.C. These Panhellenic athletic competitions were one of a series of four "crown" games, athletic contests open to all Greeks for which the victory prizes were vegetal crowns – olive in the case of Olympia. The Olympic games were unquestionably the most prestigious of this series, which also included games

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1. Map of the Mediterranean region. Drawing: H. R. Goette.

at Isthmia, Nemea, and Delphi (the Pythian Games). While the Olympic games were the earliest, the other three were founded in the sixth century B.C., perhaps as a result of the development of hoplite warfare and the consequent necessity for trained bodies. Athletic games had long been part of Greek culture (recall Homer's description of the funeral games in honor of Patroklos, organized by his bereaved companion Achilles, described in *Iliad* 23) and were consonant with the highly agonistic nature of Greek society.

The foundation of the Olympic games was variously attributed to Herakles (Pind. *Ol.* 6.67–69, 10.24–25, 57–59; Paus. 5.7.6–10), Zeus in honor of his victory over his father Kronos (Paus. 5.7.10), and most commonly, Pelops, the hero who gave his name to the Peloponnese (Pind. *Ol.* 1.67–88; Paus. 5.8.2).[1] Pelops accepted the challenge of Oinomaos, the king of nearby Pisa, to compete in a chariot race against him to win the hand of Oinomaos' daughter Hippodameia, thus becoming the heir to

2. Map of the Greek mainland. Drawing: H. R. Goette.

the throne. Equipped with special horses, Oinomaos had already defeated thirteen suitors, who paid with their lives: after giving the suitor a head start, Oinomaos overtook his opponent and as he did so, he planted a spear, a gift from his father Ares, in the suitor's back.[2] Aided by winged horses given to him by his erstwhile lover Poseidon, Pelops was able to defeat Oinomaos, thus winning the daughter and the kingdom. This race was regarded as the founding event of the Olympic games, according to Pindar, who composed his first *Olympian* ode in 476 B.C. (1.67–88).[3] An alternate tradition, not attested until c. 440 B.C. (Pherekyd. *FGrH* 3 F 37),