

THE HERA OF ZEUS

The goddess Hera is represented in mythology as an irascible wife and imperfect mother in the face of a frivolous Zeus. Beginning with the *Iliad*, many narrative traditions depict her wrath, the infidelities of her royal husband and the persecutions to which she subjects his illegitimate offspring. But how to relate this image to the cults of the sovereign goddess in her sanctuaries across Greece? This book uses the Hera of Zeus to open up new perspectives for understanding the society of the gods, the fate of heroes and the lives of men. As the intimate enemy of Zeus but also the fierce guardian of the legitimacy and integrity of the Olympian family, she takes shape in more subtle and complex ways that make it possible to rethink the configuration of power in ancient Greece, with the tensions that inhabited it, and thus how polytheism works.

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Intimate Enemy, Ultimate Spouse

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In loving memory of our fathers

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Preface

Fritz Graf

A famous relief from the Athenian Acropolis shows Athena and Hera shaking hands. It stands at the top of a stele with three decrees dated between 405/4 and 400/399; they all expressed Athenian gratitude to the Samians who remained loyal during Athens's confrontation with Sparta. Nothing in the three texts points to divine action: it is always humans interacting with and thanking other humans, Athenians and Samians. Why bring these two goddesses into play? And why goddesses, given that the human actors were all men, from the voters in the Assembly to the Assembly's secretary, Kephision of Paiania, whose name appears in much larger letters under the image as if he were the person who dedicated this gift to Athena Polias?

An easy answer would be to regard both goddesses as simple stand-ins for the two political groups concerned, the Samians and the Athenians, and the relief as a visual summary of the texts. But this would treat the goddesses not very differently from the hundreds of allegorical females (and some males) that Cesare Ripa collected in his wildly successful *Iconologia* of 1603: they all stand for some abstract concept, from *Abbondanza*, abundance, to *Zelo*, zeal. It is obvious that this will not do justice to the complexities of autonomous Greek goddesses. Understanding this, Alastair Blanshard described the relief as depicting 'two deities for whom each state had particular affection' (Blanshard 2007, p. 19). But this is an assumption rather than a historically cogent explanation, and one that might well be conditioned by the fact that we are dealing with goddesses: men project their affections onto women. A few years after the decrees for the Samians, the same image was used to head an inventory compiled by the treasurers of Athena and the Other Gods; most of the inscription is lost, and we have no idea why the goddesses came into play or why that specific financial committee would have felt affection for Athena, not to mention Hera (provided they read her image as Hera and not, say, as Demeter, as has been suggested).

The relief draws us into the still less-than-well-charted area of Greek gods and goddesses, as does the present book. During most of the past century, mainstream researchers in Greek religion were not interested in them, female or male – unlike scholars of Roman religion, who published a remarkable series of monographs on individual gods. In the final years of the nineteenth century, the emphasis was set on worship and ritual action, thanks to the pervasive influence of the Cambridge ritualists on the one side, Émile Durkheim and his students on the other. But as often, it was not the path-breaking theorists that best expressed the general trend of thought but the busy collectors of evidence and material. In his preface to the first volume of his monumental *The Cults of the Greek States* (1896–1909), Richard Farnell articulated the urgent need for ‘a compendious account of Greek cults’ in the face of the English interest in ‘Greek mythology, that apparently bizarre and hopeless thing’; mythology, fictitious accounts, could not interest serious scholars. The tension between religion as cult and myth as fiction that at best would offer aetiologies for cults would dominate most of the century; the second of Farnell’s terms, ‘state’, would have to wait for almost the century’s end to become interesting, with scholars such as Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood and François de Polignac shaping important concepts. But this is a very different discussion, although not irrelevant for this book.

In the reality of writing books, however, scholars could never really rid themselves of the gods. Even when the main scholarly focus was either on the cults or the geography, they always came as a handy roster to organise the data. Farnell’s five volumes walked the reader through a pantheon that was not much more than a pegboard for presenting the cults, with divinities grouped together in the individual volumes according to an often loosely associated mythology: Zeus, Hera, and Athena filled the first volume, an array of divine mothers the third – Gaia, Demeter, Rhea/Cybele, with Hades/Pluto thrown into the mix; the last volume collected what had not fitted in before, from Hermes and Dionysos to ‘minor cults’. Martin P. Nilsson’s *Griechische Feste* (1906) did the same, but with a few attempts, tantalisingly rare, at a categorisation of the festivals by ritual types – *saturnalienartige Feste*, *Jahresfeuer* – which would have been the more logical way to do it. Over time, scholars isolated more such ritual types, mostly with the methodology and terminology of social anthropology or folklore studies, already the inspiration for Nilsson’s *Jahresfeuer*, and, later, of structuralism. But one would have to wait for Walter Burkert’s *Griechische Religion* (1977) for an attempt to categorise and synthesise different rituals, from sacrifice to rites of passage.

During these decades, the gods in their paradoxical splendour survived in a few niches, mostly in German scholarship and away from the academic mainstream. There was, foremost, Walter F. Otto's *Die Götter Griechenlands: Das Bild des Göttlichen im Spiegel des griechischen Geistes*, with its aim to view the 'image of the divine in the mirror of Greek thought', as the programmatic subtitle has it, with the German *Geist* being 'spirituality' as much as 'thought' – a highly successful undertaking that led to up to now ten editions of the German original, several translations, and the suspicion among his colleagues that Otto believed in the objective reality of the Greek gods: if they couldn't be allegories, they must have been living entities. There were the books of Otto's admirer Karl (Károly) Kerényi on single gods as 'mythologemes', mythical paradigmatic images or, with the later Kerényi, Jungian archetypes of human life forms, from the 'masculine source of life' (Hermes) to the 'archetypal image of indestructible life' (Dionysos) and the 'archetypal image of father, husband, and wife' (Zeus and Hera – a unique consideration of the couple, which is appreciated by Pironti and Pirenne-Delforge). All this had its impact much more outside than inside classical studies and resonated especially in the United States with an educated general readership through the translations in Princeton's Bollingen Series (which owes its name to Jung's vacation home on Lake Zurich). Writers such as Philip Slater (*The Glory of Hera* (1968)) or Paul Friedrich (*The Meaning of Aphrodite* (1978)) would jump on the bandwagon.

This reduction of divinities to archetypes or 'mythologemes' is only marginally more sophisticated than Ripa's allegorisation; and more than Ripa, it resonates with lifestyle counselling. It testifies to the modern difficulty in taking Greek gods seriously, as living realities that cannot be streamlined into concepts, even concepts as multidimensional as Jung's archetypes or Otto's idealistic metaphysics. The difficulty, to be honest, is not solely modern. Stoic allegorisation that saw Hera as air expressed it as well, although for different reasons and with a lesser degree of intellectual sophistication. In its basic intellectual operation, Ripa's undertaking was not much more than an inversion of that allegorisation.

The few classicists who entered the field, mostly scholars of literature, either applied Frazerian paradigms, as did John A. Dutra in his 1965 Tufts dissertation, or stuck to a comparison of Greece and Rome, as did Reinhard Häußler in his 1995 book on *Hera and Juno* (which scarcely exhausted the heuristical possibilities of the comparison). Only in recent years have more mainstream scholars turned to the gods. The result is still in flux. Essay collections such as the ones by Alan Lloyd (1997), Bremmer

and Erskine (2010), or Pironti and Bonnet (2017) express by design scholarly polyphony and demonstrate how scholars are still looking for the right way – although it would be worth exploring whether such a polyphony might not be in the nature of its object, as Versnel’s thorough and provocative *Coping with the Gods* (2011) suggested. Polyphony at least implies that the contemporary study of Greek religion has not come to an agreement on what a Greek god is, and even less how to understand the plurality of gods (Robert Parker famously thought it ‘indescribable’), the hierarchies among them, and the role of cultural tools (epithets, prayers, or rituals) in constructing divinities. There is, however, a strong convergence towards Vernant’s rejection of the concept of divine personality in favour of divine power (*puissance*) – an idea that should invite more discussion insofar as *puissance*, like δύναις, is both ‘might’ and ‘potentiality’: gods are not just the accepted powers that tradition has given, but also new entities of whose existence for whatever reasons humans have just come to learn. And, as this book shows, there seems also to be wide agreement with Vernant’s structuralist approach that transferred Saussurian linguistics onto the study of gods. As in language, meaning in a pantheon is generated by context; in the closed system of a local pantheon, a divinity is not an isolated object but a *puissance* defined by its position compared to all other powers; it gains specific meaning from the relationship with the context of all other gods. The corollary to this is that there is no universal Greek pantheon but a large number of local systems that form specific individual contexts, with ‘local’ being meant not just geographically. The Homeric pantheon has to be regarded as first and foremost another local system, as does Hesiod’s – two systems that over time influenced how Greeks envisioned their local gods. Implicitly, this can also be seen as Vernant’s answer to Otto’s view of the Homeric gods as transcendent absolutes.

The two authors of this book follow this approach and extend it in two ways, one explicit, the other implicit. Implicitly, they regard the gods of Homer’s two poems as yet another system; this justifies the introductory analysis of Hera’s role and relationship to Zeus in *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Explicitly, Vernant’s structuralist (and as such synchronic) analysis is expanded into diachrony with the theory of a network in which single positions are not just connected horizontally as the relationship between different divine powers on the same temporal level, as in Vernant, but also vertically on different time horizons as the changing relationship between different powers or different forms of the same power over time: Hera in fifth-century Athens is not just defined by fifth-century Zeus (or Athena, for that matter, or Ares), but also by her Athenian position in the Imperial

epoch. Implicit in the plan of the book, there is a third level of relationship, the synchronic relationship between different local systems as a consequence of the somewhat brittle (but already Herodotean) notion of the religion of the Greeks.

This network model resolves the tension that Farnell had articulated, between local cults and mythology. They both express some aspect and form of a divinity, and the poetic elaboration of mythology is as important as the local cults and cannot simply be harnessed to research on cults by analysing it as an aetiology of rituals (Johnston 2017, pp. 34–64). Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge had been on the way to this model already in her 1994 book on *Greek Aphrodite*, which in hindsight marks a vital step in the new interest in Greek gods; its title implies a panhellenic view that is then realised through the discussion of local religious life (Pirenne-Delforge 2010a, p. 5). Similarly, Gabriella Pironti's book on Aphrodite (Pironti 2007), combines the analysis of literature with the study of local cults, often through epigraphy, in her attempt to define the goddess not by isolating her but by using Ares as the major systematic foil, not unlike how this book uses Zeus as the foil for Hera.

A different set of questions concerns the goddesses. Hellenists usually took the linguistic fact that a goddess is grammatically the female version of the male god – either as ἡ θεά or ἡ θεός – without further reflection as a statement that goddesses are simply female gods. Accordingly, in a problematic shortcut, scholars saw men being drawn to gods, women to goddesses: in this reading, ‘the Hera of Zeus’ is mostly the problematical wife. If scholars wanted to mark a specific status of the female god, they used the construction of the Great Mother, an all-powerful primary form of divine power, which Bachofen's concept of “mother right” had elevated into a social theory and which, via Engels, Marxist theory embraced and propagated into twentieth-century culture, even after *Mutterrecht* had long lost the status of a serious social theory. In a seminal, albeit rambling, paper of 1991, Nicole Loraux pointed out that the role and function of Greek goddesses was something that needed more thought; two years before that, Walter Burkert had seen the (obvious) gender symmetries, only then to problematise the asymmetries between human males and divine females. The reception of Loraux's paper was slow; Gabriella Pironti moved the topic forward in a 2013 paper, and it obviously will return in this book. In a gendered discourse, the ‘Hera of Zeus’ is more insidious than tradition would assume or contemporary gender discourse would allow.

Overall then, this book is an important step in the study of Greek gods, well beyond the lessons learned from Vernant. It takes his Saussurian look seriously by not elaborating again an isolated view of an ancient divinity, but by using a major god as the hermeneutic foil to understand crucial aspects of her, and by reading Homer's and Hesiod's gods as local systems in their own right. And it overcomes the severe limits set by the synchronicity of a structuralist approach by using the local cults as dots in a panhellenic network that allows us to see changes and developments over time by connecting those dots not just with the horizontal lines of synchronicity. Which incidentally, and much to my own pleasure, gives the study of local cults an importance and an impulse that goes far beyond the antiquarianism that often has driven them.

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Abbreviations

<i>ABV</i>	J. D. Beazley, <i>Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters</i> . Oxford, 1956.
<i>BAPD</i>	<i>Beazley Archive:Pottery Database</i>
<i>CGRN</i>	J.-M. Carbon, S. Peels, and V. Pirenne-Delforge, <i>A Collection of Greek Ritual Norms</i> . Liège, 2017– (http://cgrn.ulg.ac.be).
<i>DELG</i>	P. Chantraine, <i>Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque</i> . Paris, 1968.
<i>Guide Délos</i>	P. Bruneau, J. Ducat, M. Brunet, A. Farnoux, and J.-C. Moretti, <i>Guide de Délos</i> , 4th edition. Paris, 2005 [1965].
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> . Berlin, 1903–
<i>I.Knidos</i>	W. Blümel, <i>Die Inschriften von Knidos I</i> . Bonn, 1992.
<i>I.Oropos</i>	V. Petrakos, <i>Oi ἐπιγραφές τοῦ Ὀρωποῦ</i> . Athens, 1997.
<i>I.Stratonikeia</i>	M. Ç. Şahin, <i>Die Inschriften von Stratonikeia</i> , 4 vols. Bonn, 1982–2010.
<i>LIMC</i>	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> . Zurich, 1984–.
<i>LIMC Aphrodite</i>	A. Delivorrias, ‘Aphrodite’, <i>LIMC</i> II (1984), pp. 2–151.
<i>LIMC Apollon</i>	V. Lambrinudakis <i>et al.</i> , ‘Apollon’, <i>LIMC</i> II (1984), pp. 182–327.
<i>LIMC Artemis</i>	L. Kahil, ‘Artemis’, <i>LIMC</i> II (1984), pp. 618–753.
<i>LIMC Athena</i>	P. Demargne, ‘Athena’, <i>LIMC</i> II (1984), pp. 955–1044.
<i>LIMC Dionysos</i>	C. Gasparri, ‘Dionysos’, <i>LIMC</i> III (1986), pp. 414–514.
<i>LIMC Eileithyia</i>	R. Olmos, ‘Eileithyia’, <i>LIMC</i> III (1986), pp. 685–99.
<i>LIMC Hebe I</i>	A.-F. Laurens, ‘Hebe I’, <i>LIMC</i> IV (1988), pp. 458–64.
<i>LIMC Hera</i>	A. Kossatz-Deissmann, ‘Hera’, <i>LIMC</i> IV (1988), pp. 659–719.
<i>LIMC Herakles</i>	J. Boardman <i>et al.</i> , ‘Herakles’, <i>LIMC</i> IV (1988), pp. 728–838; <i>LIMC</i> V (1990), pp. 1–192.

List of Abbreviations

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| <i>LIMC</i> Herakles | S. J. Schwarz, 'Herakles/Hercle', <i>LIMC</i> V (1990), pp. 196–253. |
| <i>LIMC</i> Hermes | G. Siebert, 'Hermes', <i>LIMC</i> V (1990), pp. 285–387. |
| <i>LIMC</i> Zeus | M. Tiverios <i>et al.</i> , 'Zeus', <i>LIMC</i> VIII (1997), pp. 310–74. |
| <i>LSAM</i> | F. Sokolowski, <i>Lois sacrées de l'Asie Mineure</i> . Paris, 1955. |
| <i>LSCG</i> | F. Sokolowski, <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques</i> . Paris, 1969. |
| <i>LSS</i> | F. Sokolowski, <i>Lois sacrées des cités grecques</i> . Supplément. Paris, 1969. |
| <i>NGSL</i> | E. Lupu, <i>Greek Sacred Law. A Collection of New Documents</i> . Leiden, 2005. |
| <i>OGIS</i> | W. Dittenberger, <i>Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae</i> . Leipzig, 1903–5. |
| <i>PMG</i> | D. L. Page, <i>Poetae Melici Graeci</i> . Oxford, 1962. |
| <i>RE</i> | A. Pauly, G. Wissowa, and W. Kroll, <i>Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> . Stuttgart, 1893–1978. |
| <i>SEG</i> | <i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> . Leiden, 1923–. |
| <i>SVF</i> | H. von Arnim, <i>Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta</i> . 4 vols. Leipzig, 1903–24. |
| <i>TLG</i> | <i>Thesaurus Linguae Graecae. A Digital Library of Greek Literature</i> . University of California, Irvine. |
| <i>TrGF</i> | <i>Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta</i> . Göttingen, 1986–. |