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***LIGHT AND DARKNESS IN ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN
MYTHOLOGY AND RELIGION***

From the Archaic Age to the Augustan Period

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ABSTRACTS

Mercedes Aguirre

Erinyes as Creatures of Darkness

In the different literary sources the Erinyes, the terrible goddesses of vengeance, are always considered negative and hateful, but it is in Aeschylus in particular where they have some characteristics which make them really creatures of darkness and powers of darkness. First of all in *Eumenides* they are considered Night's children and they are described as black, wearing dark clothes, which makes them particularly fearsome for Orestes, the Pythia and obviously the audience in the Athenian theatre.

In this paper I aim to explore how in literary texts –particularly in Aeschylus- this relationship with darkness is represented, in contrast with Delphi and Apollo, as a power of light. Furthermore, I would like to see if iconographical representations of the Erinyes also insist on their association with darkness by depicting them holding torches, not only in the scenes in Hades but also in the scenes of the pursuit of Orestes. In these cases torches might be the iconographical way to represent a scene which happens at night or in darkness. Finally, I would like to see if other fearful characters of Greek mythology can be considered in a similar sense as creatures of the dark, for instance the Gorgons.

Pascale Brillet-Dubois

The rivalry of Eos and Aphrodite in Greek myths

Eos, the Dawn goddess, appears in archaic poetry as a deity whose motion structures space and time, but also who brings to the world the light that will give their proper shape to things and beings, and separate what Night has confused or united. In that context, it is not surprising that she might appear as a rival to Aphrodite and a threat

to the bonding power of love. We will examine the Greek myths involving Eos in this perspective, in order to determine the influence on her mythology of the conflictual relationship between the two goddesses.

Walter Burkert

Night and Light in Archaic Greek Cosmogonies: The Derveni Theogony of Orpheus

2006 has finally seen a legitimate edition of the Derveni Papyrus. For the first time this text presents incontrovertible early evidence for the theogony of “Orpheus”, probably from the 6th century, a text which was to be remodeled and expanded in later centuries. This theogony, as has always been known, began with Night. We learn that Ouranos is the son of Night; he seems to be connected with the first appearance of light. The sequence Ouranos-Kronos-Zeus appears in a form quite similar to Hesiod, including the castration of Ouranos by Kronos. Then there are novel acts, Zeus getting oracles from Night, swallowing a phallus (this is controversial), and “having all the gods growing on” to him (proséphyn), so that he “became the only one” (monogenes). The central message that comes out is the uniqueness and power of Zeus. The most startling details have parallels in Anatolian and Egyptian traditions: Late archaic “Orpheus” turns into a document of some speculative koiné at the fringe of the Greek horizon.

Richard Buxton

The Significance (or Insignificance) of Blackness in Mythological Names

In my paper I talk about names of mythological characters which involve the word “melas”: Melantho, Melanthios, Melanthos, Melanion, Melanippe, Melampous and so on, trying to see how far the idea of “blackness” plays a part in the way in which these characters are perceived and how they act. In some cases it is clear that “blackness” (especially in some negative moral sense) “is” relevant –e.g. in the *Odyssey*, where so many of the names are significant. In other cases, though, it looks as if such a notion is absent, or at least undetectable. Perhaps an explanation could be that one aspect of the variability of Greek mythology is that, in different contexts, the etymology of a name can be active or become activated (as with -to take a different example- Pentheus or Hippolytus in tragedy) but in other contexts the etymology remains dormant.

Menelaos Christopoulos

Dark winged Nyx and Bright winged Eros in Aristophanes’ “Orphic” Cosmogony. The *Birds*, 693-703.

This paper deals with the “Orphic” Cosmogony parodied in Aristophanes’ *Birds* 693-703 and, in particular, with the ideas of darkness and brightness, expressly or allusively developed in this text. Special semantic entities like Nyx, egg, wind, sprout, seed and wings are explored in their wider “orphic” significance. The aristophanic image of bright winged Eros (who bears an intentional resemblance to Phanes) is associated with analogous features and concepts mainly depicted in Plato’s *Symposium*.

Sylvana Chrysakopoulou

Light and Night in Parmenides’ Proemium

The paper suggests a new interpretation of Parmenides’ proemium according to his *Physics* based on the distinction between light and night. In this interpretation I do not only deal with philosophical matters raised by the text itself, but also with archaeological evidence concerning the myth and the ritual the text may refer to.

Soteroula Constantinidou

The light imagery of divine manifestation in Homer

Homeric references to light and vision are mainly formulaic and the language of the epic often emphasizes the contrast of life, light and vision to death, darkness and loss of sight. A heroic situation may be reflected by the description of the ferocious, glaring look which accompanies the fierce attack of a hero (e.g. *Iliad* 15.607ff.). Eyes flashing like fire (together with other elements of fire imagery given in the epics, especially in the *Iliad*), in some contexts have a symbolic function as they imply future events and particularly destructive and poignant situations. For example, at the end of *Iliad* 19.203ff. the arming of Achilles is illustrated by light similes (as light created by fire, by the moon, by a star, by the sun) creating an impressive and splendid image dominated by an idea of brightness. This paper, however, will attempt to focus attention on the imagery of light associated with divine appearances in the Homeric poems. In *Iliad* 1.200, the divine presence is marked by the flashing eyes which makes Achilles recognize Athena with surprise but also in a familiar way. Here, the dazzling flash of her eyes is the most important sign of Athena’s epiphany, and is responsible for her divine self-revelation and recognition by the others. Athena’s brilliant eyes, although the most destructive, are not the only distinguishing sign of her manifestation in epic or outside epic. Her appearance in myth (e.g. of her birth) and art, as a warrior goddess covered with bronze (i.e. armour), is also associated with light and brightness. Athena’s divine manifestation is thus usually associated with an atmosphere of gleam and light (see *Iliad* 199-200, 21.415). In the *Odyssey* (19.35ff.), Telemachus feels the presence of the goddess through being astonished by the glow of the

various parts of the palace (the walls, the beams, and the columns). Among other external features which are characteristic of Aphrodite's beauty and a clue for the goddess's recognition are her "flashing eyes" in *Iliad* 3.397 that should be understood as indicative of beauty. More examples of divine epiphanies and their distinctive features associated with brightness and vision will be examined in this paper.

Ken Dowden

Trojan Night

1. Night-battles, *nyktomachiai*, hold a particular place in the Greek imaginaire. Instances and contexts will be reviewed in order to establish, at least in a 'soft' sense, the mythology of night-fighting. The role of the moon and its distinctive light will be included. I will also look briefly at the perceived connections between night-escapades and initiation/trickery.

2. The primary night-escapade in the Trojan saga is the theft of the Palladion. On this foundation, Homer constructs the *Doloneia* (a position that the Neoanalysts were largely prevented from adopting).

3. Among the relatively few episodes which may be said to make up the 'myth of the Trojan War', the capture of the city becomes the archetypal *nyktomachia*. It is also appropriate because of the role of night in the closure of human life in the *Iliad*.

4. If time allows, I will offer a few remarks on the methodology of myth-analysis – on the place of the imaginaire and the applicability of the initiation paradigm.

Radcliffe Edmonds

The Bright Cypress of the "Orphic" Gold Tablets: Direction and Illumination in Myths of the Underworld

The bright cypress tree that appears in many of the so-called Orphic gold tablets presents many puzzles to the modern interpreter: Where does this mythic motif of an underworld tree come from? Why a cypress? Should the tree be on the left or the right? Should it mark the spring to be avoided or the spring of Memory that the deceased is seeking? While some of these questions may never be answered, I argue that we can better understand the mysterious cypress if we examine its function in the tablets' narrative of the deceased's journey through

the underworld and compare this illuminating marker with other ways of finding the path in the underworld.

Ariadni Gartzou-Tatti

Blindness as Punishment

The aim of my paper is to investigate blindness as a result of divine punishment. The cases of Phineus, Teiresias, Thamyris, Oedipus etc. will be examined so that the correlation between the kind of punishment and the extent of their sin and the deprivation of light is shown.

Stella Georgoudi

Gaia/Ge, divination and Dark Caves: Modern Theories and Ancient Data

Modern scholars suggest that “in primitive times deities could be approached by entering caves” (cf. Parke), and that the oracular inspiration comes from the depth of the earth. Therefore, they associate caverns, prophecy and Gaia (the “earth-goddess”), considered as the first owner of Greek oracular centres. Reflections about these theories.

Daniel Jakov

Milk on Pelinna Tomb Tablets

The paper attempts to revive an old hypothesis formulated already in 1891 by A. Dietrich that the “milk” on the tablets is nothing more than the galaxy as a seat of the souls and a path to the palace of Zeus.

Efimia D. Karakantza

Dark Skin and Dark Deeds; Danaides and Aigyptioi in a Culture of Light

Starting with the notion of skin colour (*melan*) as denoting a non Greek feature of the Danaides and Aigyptioi, an attempt will be made to investigate other features and actions that are registered in the circle of darkness: the appalling mass murder of the Aigyptioi, the sinister burial of their heads by the shores of Lerna and the endless torture of the Danaids in the Underworld. Those “dark” deeds, however, intermingle with the world of light, by outlining the case of Hypermnestra, the finding of drinking water by Amymone, the founding of a new Argive dynasty and the introduction of the Thesmophoria into Peloponnese; all these actions lay the ground for the construction

and function of a *polis*. Thus, a "culture of light" seems to be the synthesis of light and darkness, of Greek and non Greek, of denial and acceptance, which leads us to the very nature of classical myths and the construction of the Greek self definition in a reconciliation of opposites.

Dimitris Kyrtatas

Light in Hell

Within about two generations after the completion of the major New Testament documents, the early Christians seem to have changed their minds (and their teaching) regarding Hell. From an original understanding of Hell as total destruction or eternal death and hence total darkness they moved, rather rapidly, to an understanding of Hell as a locus of eternal punishment. Although no reason was ever provided for this transformation, it has been reasonably assumed that it served the purpose of Christian edification, making the moral messages of Jesus' teaching more compelling. Yet, it may be argued that at the same time, Christian eschatology became less pessimistic. The entire human race was entitled to eternal resurrection, cruel punishments being preferable to total annihilation. To serve as a place for punishment, Christian Hell was illuminated –probably from torturing fire. But when there is light, even dim light, there is hope.

Françoise Létoublon

Blind People and Blindness in Ancient Greek Myth

The theme of blindness and the role of blind persons in Greek literature and myth will be studied up from Homer, the Archaic poetry and the mythographs, with a firm anchor taken in linguistic data (language, wording, poetic formulas). As *aoidoi*, poets or seers, blind men seem to bear a mark of an ambiguous punishment or a compensation for their exceptional gift for seeing; thus, blindness appears as a metaphor for real sight.

Michael Lipka

The Augustan Secular Games of 17 BC: The Bright Side of Darkness

The paper will be concerned with the ritual and political exploitation of the notion of "light" during the Secular Games held in Rome in 17 BC, inaugurating as it were a new ("Augustan") Age. Attention will be given to both epigraphic and literary evidence.

Avgi-Anna Maggel

Tithonus and Phaon: Mythical allegories of Light and Darkness in Sappho's poetry

Tithonus, the ageing but never dying husband of Eos, figures in the new poem 58 by Sappho impersonating the old age, while Phaon, though never mentioned in her poetry, is said to be the legendary lover of Sappho for whose desperate passion she endeavours the Leucada's leap. The myths of Tithonus and Phaon seem to converge into the context of Sappho's poetry alluding to different degrees of impressions of light spread in her poetic imagery and to a suggestive darkness lurking behind Sappho's poetic words.

By the conjunction of mythical pairs like Eos and Tithonus, Hesperus and Dawn, Selene and Endymion, Sappho transfers the emotions she experiences into a series of images alluding to life, love and death. In her poetry the sight of the outer world aspires within a light coming from loving faces standing in the moonlight, from objects of an idyllic nature or a decorous household, from instances of nocturnal wedding ceremonies. In the consciousness of a literary tradition Sappho herself transfigures into a mythologised presence by means of her love for Phaon, the idealistic lover, who throws his shadow over her life and poetry as he is visualized by Ovid's *Heroides* epistle 15.

The present paper attempts to explore Sappho's subtleties in the theme of light/brightness, night/darkness within the mythological surroundings she is engulfed as well as to comment on Sappho's deeper insight in the imagery of the senses through her personal poetic experience.

Dimitrios Mantzilas

Mater Matuta and the Matralia

Mater Matuta was the Roman goddess of dawn, whose temple was in the Forum Boarium (cattle forum). She was responsible for the morning light. In the Greek tradition, she was identified with Leucothea (the divinized Ino), a goddess of the water. In other circles she was connected to fertility or nature.

She was worshipped by the matrons during the Matralia, a public fest held every year, on the 11th January. The matrons offered cakes baked in earthenware pots. The most important aspect of the fest is the fact that Roman women carried their sisters' children (but not their own) in their arms and prayed for their welfare, an action which has been interpreted in various ways, related or not to the light.

Nanno Marinatos

The Dusky Meadow of Asphodels: The Map of the Netherworld in the Odyssey

The topography of the netherworld in the Odyssey has been confusing to scholars. There exist some contradictions in the narrative: on the one hand the dead are said to descend (katabainein) to Hades, on the other, they go (bainein). Moreover, Odysseus arrives to the netherworld by ship, crossing the Ocean, so this is not descent but horizontal travel across waters.

Another issue is that of light and darkness. The netherworld is dark but not entirely so. Rather, it may be described as a place of perpetual dusk and mist containing beautiful groves and asphodels, even a city (demos). Complete darkness is reserved for the pit of the universe: Tartaros.

The object of this paper will be to provide a coherent map of the netherworld, which puts all the evidence together. Such a map was derived from conceptualizations of the beyond shared by Greeks, Egyptians, Levantines and Mesopotamians alike, although the main inspiration was undoubtedly Egypt. The constructed map removes some of the contradictions. It also solves the problem of darkness which will be defined as absence of the sun but not absence of light.

Christina Mitsopoulou

Lighting equipment from Demeter Sanctuaries on the Cycladic islands: general considerations and the case studies of Kythnos and Tinos.

This paper aims to explore archaeological evidence concerning the use of light in sanctuaries of Demeter. *Polykandela*, or multinozzled lamps are often to be found amidst the material equipment of sanctuaries, and do indicate nocturnal activities or rites. Sanctuaries of Demeter belong to the most frequent find places of such lighting equipment. In this study a survey of published contexts of reference will be made, and new material from two insular contexts will be examined. Typologies and dating problems will be discussed. Ways and occasions of their use will be stressed. In conclusion, the eventual contribution of these material finds towards the general interpretation of their contexts will be sought.

Andreas Panagopoulos

“Everything One”; The unity of all things in the ancient Greek philosophical thought

Parmenides continues and develops the Unitarian thought of the Eleatic School of philosophy, initiated by his teacher, Xenophanes of Colophon. His extant fragments reveal a vigorous mind, producing equal measures of reason, insight and poetry. He will later greatly influence the mind of Socrates and the thought of Plato, the latter of which will bring Unitarian thought to completion.

Dimitris Paleothodoros

Light and Darkness in the Dionysiac Rituals of 5th century Athens: some iconographic aspects

Dionysos is normally adorned during nocturnal festivals (pannychides). This is an important aspect of his cult, as is witnessed by a variety of cultic epithets (f.e. Nyktelios or Nykterinos). The meagre evidence on dionysiac mysteries during the classical period, and the imposing evidence on later periods, points to the importance of nocturnal mysteries, normally conducted at subterranean adyta. Yet, at the same time, Dionysos is first and foremost a divinity of bright shining light. Nowhere is this more apparent than on a famous attic black-figured amphora in Paris: the god is depicted as a boy standing on the knees of Zeus and holding two torches, while Hera is watching. An inscription claims that the boy is Zeus' Light (Dios Phos). Recent studies have stressed the importance of pannychis for the celebration of the most popular Athenian dionysiac festival, the Anthesteria. Girls were dancing all night long to honor the god in private and family-centered banquets, from at least the beginning of the 5th century on. It is not by accident that the imagery of torch-bearing in dionysiac rituals appears at exactly the same time. After examining iconographic evidence that illustrates those nocturnal dances, I will propose, in this paper, to examine dionysiac imagery of the 5th century not as a representation of reality, nor as a purely mythological iconography, but rather as a reflection of developments in the sphere of official, as well as mystic dionysiac rituals.

Michael Paschalis

“I Removed the Mist that Clouded your Eyes”: Visions of the Supernatural from Homer to Sikelianos

In *Iliad* 5 Athena grants Diomedes supernatural vision by removing the “mist” that clouded his eyes. Having become able to distinguish gods from men on the battlefield,

the Achaean hero wounds Aphrodite and eventually Ares, but in the meantime Apollo warns him to take heed because men will never match the immortal gods. In antiquity and later times the Homeric scene with Athena removing the mist that screens mortal vision became a paradigm for the revelation of philosophical and religious truth of all kinds. The paper examines four pivotal moments of its reception covering a 2000-year time span: Aeneas' apocalyptic vision of the gods destroying Troy in Augustan Rome; Boethius' vision of personified Philosophy in the prison of King Theodoric in the twilight of Antiquity; the revelation of Gospel truth by an enlightened priest on the eve of the Greek War of Independence; and the mystic vision of Leucadian light in Sikelianos' *Alafroiskiotos* (*Moonstruck*) on the threshold of the twentieth-century.

Ioanna Patera

Light in the Feasts of Demeter: Symbolism and Ritual Use

Symbolism of light, as well as lighting device, like lamps and torches are often mentioned in literary sources in relation with the Eleusinian Mysteries and other feasts of Demeter. A confrontation of these testimonies with the archaeological evidence from various sanctuaries of Demeter and other deities, may help to qualify our conception of the ritual use of these cult implements.

Maria Patera

Lurking in the Dark, appearing at noon. The Relationship of a *Phasma* to Light and Darkness

Empusa is a frightful phasma which appears at midday or during the night, but it is also the nickname of a woman (Aeschines' mother) who lurks in dark places and appears suddenly to women and children to frighten them. Empusa is related to the Underworld and has been identified as a "midday daemon". The purpose of this paper is to examine, first, Empusa's various modes of apparition and their implications and, second, her links with the mysteries (Sabazian and Eleusinian).

Spyridon Rangos

Light and Darkness across Philosophy and Mystery Religion until Plato

Combining the testimonies of Plato and Plutarch we understand that the initiand in the Eleusinian mysteries passed through stages of ritual darkness followed by an encounter with unexpected light. The dark phases of initiation correspond, naturally, to psychological states of fear, and perhaps terror, leading the initiand, through despair, to a sudden illumination accompanied by joy and a sense of blessedness. The

regeneration of the initiate's life was effected by a vivid encounter with the underworld powers of death (personified in the figure of the divine Maiden) and the realization of their beneficial role in the continuation of existence. The life-long bliss which the initiate thus acquired seems to have come from an extra-ordinary experience of *unio oppositorum*. A similar pattern of manifest opposition and latent unity features prominently in early Greek philosophy. Parmenides' *Doxa* is the most pronounced case of such a dualistic conception of empirical reality, as distinct from the static unity of being in the *Way of Truth*. Here the symbols of fundamental opposition are, significantly enough, light and night. (The pair also figures in the Pythagorean table of opposites.) Parallel claims of the underlying unity of opposites abound in Heraclitus. It seems that the Orphic figure of the androgynous but invisible First-Born Phanes (= the Manifest One) is not far away from this cluster of mystic ideas. The paper addresses the issue of the light-and-darkness dualism in archaic and early classical Greece, in so far as an identical mental structure stretching over philosophy and mystery religion can be discerned. If the question of influence be raised, one might perhaps speak of the emergence of rationality from the spirit of mystery.

Isabelle Ratinaud

Héphaïstos, dieu de lumière

Au chant XVIII de l'*Illiade*, vers 368 et suivants, Héphaïstos reçoit en sa forge Thétis venue lui demander de nouvelles armes pour son fils. De l'atelier d'Héphaïstos, l'*Illiade* retient le feu, la chaleur et la lumière, le métal en fusion, l'acte de création qui y est associé et la force physique nécessaire à une telle transformation, là où l'on attendait les cendres, la fumée et les scories consécutives du travail de la forge, ici appliqué à des armes, instruments de mort. La communication se propose de mettre en évidence et de comprendre cette image positive du dieu boiteux et de son art dans l'*Illiade*, indice possible de celle du forgeron dans la société auditrice de l'épopée.

Richard Seaford

Mystic Light in Athenian Tragedy

- (1) I review the mentions of light in tragedy that are designed to evoke the appearance of light in the darkness in mystic ritual.
- (2) I focus on the identification of the mystic light with a *person*.
- (3) I focus on how our recent advance in understanding Aeschylus' *Bassarai* has allowed us to understand the role of the mystic light in that play.
- (4) I propose that modern research into 'Near-Death Experiences' is important for understanding the source of the appearance of light in mystic ritual (and its evocation in tragedy).

Spyros Syropoulos

S-light anomaly: dark brightness in Euripides' *Medea*

Medea is a dark figure, for she commits one of the most horrible crimes ever: conscious infanticide. She escapes in the chariot of the Sun, the ultimate image of Light and she leaves the spectator with an overall "dark" feeling, not explained or uplifted. This gloominess is in accordance with the political message of the tragedy (the approaching of the Peloponnesian War), and in accordance with the images of light and dark, which run the play and inform the meaning of it. The transgression of every physical norm and role is emphasized by the reversal of light's and dark's attributes, since every "bright" image (Gold, the Sun) becomes "dark" and the dark heroine becomes the brightest symbol, through the justification of her *sofia* and her equalization to the Sun, when she rides next to him in his chariot.

Evanthia Tsitsibakou-Vasalos

Aigla-Coronis-Arsinoë Her Initiatory Experience in Pindar's *Pyth. 3*

Chiaroscuro imagery bordering on oxymoron as blurring the boundaries between brightness/life and darkness/death, multiple polarities, deviations from religious and societal norms, trespassing of natural laws and reversals of human fate are recurrent elements in the *Pythian 3*, and are thickly clustered in the Coronis myth. The nature and function of this myth in the ode will be the subject of the present paper.

Coronis' story is studded with key terms, themes and polarities that are typical of myths of coming of age. For instance: her defiance of her father, the communal customs and wedding rituals performed by groups of coeval girls; her betrayal of a divine *erastes* for the sake of a mortal stranger from Arcadia -- a region notorious for its initiation rites that center on cannibalism and severe child abuse; her entry into a clandestine and illegitimate sexual union with Ischys, a man who personifies "Force"; her lewdness, mental blindness (*amblakiai phrenôn, auatan*) and stubborn, almost manly volition (*lêma*), and, finally, her tragic death on the pyre, which coincides with the delivery of her foetus by a proxy midwife, Apollo, are significant pointers to the initiatory background of her myth. Polarities, such as *physis* and culture, reason and derangement or *mania*, near and far, up and down, inside-out, and especially brightness and darkness, which are masterfully interwoven in this myth and the wider compass of the *Pythian 3*, constitute regular components of such stories. Comparable themes and conflicts, as well as perverted sexual preferences and brutal killing or transformation of girls occur in several mythical narratives that involve the maturation of maidens and their introduction into adulthood and motherhood. Independent literary evidence corroborates the reading proposed here for the Coronis myth, adding two motifs that recur in initiatory contexts: *metonomasia* and physical transformation. Both play a great role in an adolescent's growth and renewed identity, and are attested in the story of Aigla-Coronis-Arsinoë. Her heroization and the ritual performed in her

honor in the sanctuary of Athena at Titanē, strengthen the present argument; the name of the region and the cults performed in the vicinity are significant.

The identity of the divinities involved in this myth is also revealing: Ischys is killed by Apollo, a god engaged in the initiation of males, and Coronis by Artemis, a hunting and kourotrophic deity who presides over the coming of age of adolescent girls, over premarital rites and childbirth. Artemis is causally linked with manic states and transformations, and worshiped in marshy and wooded regions. It is perhaps no accident that Coronis, pregnant with Asclepius, is killed by *thyioisa* Artemis (33) before reaching her term (*prin telessai*, 9; cf. *proteleia*). Nor that she lives by the banks of Lake Boibēis and the River Amyros in Thessalia, a peripheral region teeming with similar stories and monstrous creatures that mediate between nature and culture. Matters that contribute to the elucidation of this myth are discussed here.

Yulia Ustinova

Oracles and Caves

A great number of Greek oracular cults focused on caves, notwithstanding the divergent nature of the divine patrons of these cults. In some instances, the association with caves may be explained, at least superficially, by resorting to the divine personalities of the gods. Thus, the Nymphs and Pan were the deities of wild nature, dwelling in caves. Another category of prophecy given in caves is connected to the chthonic realm. Myth tended to place entrances to the Netherworld in multiple caves, and many among them became seats of prominent oracles, where predictions were given either by the dead or by deities of the Netherworld.

In oracles belonging to several liminal figures, neither living nor dead, who supposedly resided in subterranean abodes, the communication with consultants was direct, by means of visions or dreams. Foundation myths of the oracles of the subterranean dwellers produce an impression of being invented in order to explicate their predilection for existence below the earth. It was the initial location of these oracles in caves that determined the nature and mythology of the tutelary deities.

Even more startling are several prominent oracles of Apollo where vatic activities were centered in caves. At first sight, no other Olympian would be farther apart from the subterranean world, but it was Apollo who returned there time and again, prophesying from the darkness of natural caves and artificial grottos. In Delphi, the umbilical center of the world, the oracle most respected by all the Greeks operated in a gloomy cavern or nook. The contrast between Apollo's divine personality and his recurrent descents into caves indicates that sojourns in caves were fundamental for inspired vaticination which belonged to him *par excellence*.

The fundamental reason for locating prophetic activities in caves was the need of the gods' mediums to attain divine inspiration, that is, to alter their state of consciousness. Age-long experience taught the Greeks to induce altered states of consciousness by a variety of means. For the purposes of divination they used at least two methods. The easiest and universally practiced technique was sensory deprivation. Modern research demonstrates that reduction of external stimuli leads to dream-like autistic states, involving release of internal imagery: cut off from external input, the mind concentrates on itself and produces from within images and visions. These apparitions are often interpreted as revelations of

divine truth, more real than everyday experience. In the geographic setting of Greece, caverns and grottos provide an easy way to achieve total or near total isolation.

The second technique was based on special geological conditions, namely, a source of poisonous gas having euphoriant or psychotropic effect. It is essential that the gas be inhaled in sufficient concentration, therefore in closed space. Natural combination of these requirements was provided by clefts opening into caves in the Meander valley, whereas in Delphi the prophetic gas was to be inhaled inside an artificial grotto.

Thus, caves were instrumental in stimulating altered states of consciousness in two ways, either as places of isolation causing sensory deprivation, or as closed spaces allowing inhalation of narcotic gases in the required dosage. This psychotropic or, in the opinion of the Greeks, numinous quality of the caves was common knowledge to such a degree that the association of seers and prophets with caves became universal.

Alexandra Zervou

Eos and Nyx in the Odyssey

The paper studies narrative and poetical structures as posterior forms of mythical patterns.

Athanassia Zografou

Lychnoi in Magical Papyri

Tout au long de l'antiquité l'utilisation des lampes dans les milieux cultuels était répandue; celles-ci servaient non seulement à l'éclairage des sanctuaires, mais jouaient aussi des rôles rituels divers. Dans les recettes des *papyri* magiques grecs les *lychnoi* sont mentionnés très fréquemment tant lors des étapes préparatifs que dans le cadre du rituel central; leur allumage est ainsi particulièrement lié aux sacrifices et aux offrandes auxquelles il va presque à se substituer. Quel serait le sens à donner à cet étonnant usage ?