

## G

**Gaia or Ge** (*Γαῖα, Γῆ*, Latin 'Tellus', 'Terra'). Mother earth, oldest of the gods, the personification of the antiquity and fertility of the earth, from which all life emerges, and to which it returns in death. Her main mythology is from Hesiod, who views earth as a flat disk, the first formation from the primeval \*Chaos. As the original mother, she gave birth from herself first to Uranus, the sky, and then, with the articulation of her surface, she brought forth hills and Pontus, the sea. In the second phase of generation, she mated with Uranos to produce the twelve \*Titans, the first of which was \*Oceanus, the freshwater river which then encircled her. Next were the monstrous, one-eyed \*Cyclopes, and then, among the most terrible of her children, the three \*Hundred-handers. But their father Uranus would not allow them to be born, and to be relieved of the agony of her travail, Gaia plotted with the youngest Titan \*Cronus to overthrow his father. She provided Cronus with a sickle, and hid him within her until Uranus spread himself over her in love; the son then castrated his father, and from the drops of blood that fell on the earth were born the \*Erinyes, the \*Giants, and the \*Meliae, nymphs of the ash-tree (who in Hesiod are connected with the origins of the human race); the severed genitals of Uranus fell in the sea, floated to Cythera in Cyprus, and from them arose \*Aphrodite. The emergence of sky and sea from earth, the marriage of earth and sky and the violence involved in their separation narrate the stages in the generation and separation of the world masses in the Hesiodic cosmogony. In her final challenge to Zeus, Gaia produced by Tartarus one last child – the monstrous serpent \*Typhon, who had a hundred heads with flickering tongues and spouting flames; when this creature was defeated by Zeus, vast stretches of the earth-mother were said to have melted from the blazing fire. This later support of Titans, Giants and monsters against Zeus which led to Gaia's eventual defeat is often interpreted as the overthrow of the matriarchal ascendancy by the new generation of male-dominated Olympians. Some heroes and peoples later claimed to be 'Autochthonous', i.e. born or descended directly from mother earth, which could reinforce territorial claims or length of ancestry. Most notable of these were the Athenians themselves, maintaining descent from the very earth on which their city was built through their first king \*Erichthonius.

Because of her great age Gaia was also thought to be all-knowing, and so was associated with prophecy. Both Cronus and Zeus were told by her that they would be overcome by a child of theirs – Cronus attempted to avoid this by swallowing his children, and Zeus by swallowing \*Metis, the mother of Athena. Of greater significance was her control of the oracle at Delphi in the beginning, which she then passed to \*Themis, and from her Apollo became its guardian, but only after he had defeated Python, another snake-monster sent from earth against the new race of gods. There were sanctuaries to Gaia throughout the Greek world, and especially at Athens, Sparta, Delphi and Olympia. In art she is represented as a mother-figure with children at her breast, and with a \*cornucopia of flowers and fruits; she is also especially associated with snakes. [Aeschylus *Eum* 2; Apollodorus 1.1.1-4, 2.1, 6.3; Hesiod *Theog* 116-87; Homer *Od* 576; Ovid *Met* 1.156-60] See Cybele.

**Galatea** (*Γαλάτεια*). **1.** A sea nymph, daughter of Nereus, who was loved by the ungainly Cyclops \*Polyphemus, but she rejected him in preference for \*Acis. The jealous Polyphemus threw a rock at Acis which crushed him to death, but Galatea transformed her lover into a stream. According to some versions Galatea did have three sons by Polyphemus, who were the eponymous founders of three tribes – Galas of the Gauls, Celtus of the Celts and Illyrus of the

Illyrians. [Homer *Il* 18.45; Hesiod *Theog* 250; Ovid *Met* 13.750-898] **2.** The name given to the statue of a young girl carved by \*Pygmalion, which was so beautiful that the artist prayed to Aphrodite that his creation might come to life. The goddess granted his prayer, and Galatea bore him a son Paphos, who founded Aphrodite's city of that name in Cyprus. [Ovid *Met* 10.243-97]

**Galates** (*Γαλάτης*). Son of Heracles and Celtica, a Celtic princess, he was conceived during Heracles' travels through Gaul. Through his outstanding bravery and physical strength Galates became ruler of most of the territory of Gaul, and gave his name to the Galatians. [Diodorus 5.24]

**Galanthis** (*Γαλανθίς*). A slave-girl of \*Alcmena, who helped her when she was in labour with Heracles. Hera tried to prevent the birth by keeping the goddess of childbirth sitting on her altar; Galanthis shouted that Alcmena had produced a son; the goddess jumped up in surprise, the spell was broken and Alcmena was then able to give birth. Galanthis was changed into a weasel, whose young were thought to be born through the mouth in revenge for the falsehood Galanthis told. [Ovid *Met* 9.306-323]

**Ganymede** (*Γανυμήδης*, Latin 'Catamitus'). The son of \*Tros, the eponymous ancestor of the Trojans, said to be the most beautiful boy on earth. He was loved by Zeus, who swooped down on him on Mount Ida in the form of an eagle and carried him to Olympus to be the cup-bearer of the gods, and to pour his nectar for him. The insult to Zeus' wife Hera (and to her daughter \*Hebe who had had this honour before Ganymede) was given as one of the reasons for her hostility to the Trojans. Ganymede was also taken to be the constellation Aquarius in the Zodiac. The abduction of the lovely youth by the eagle became a favourite subject of art, and the myth also gave rise to the whole *genre* of homosexual romance. (The Latin name of Ganymede was sometimes given as Catamitus.) [Homer *Il* 5.266, 20.231-5; *Hom Hymn* 5.202-13; Ovid *Met* 10.155-61; Pausanias 5.24.5; Pindar *Ol* 1.44-5; Vergil *Aen* 1.28, 5.254-5] (**I.**) *See* Constellation **9**.

**Gates of Horn and Ivory.** The two gates of sleep through which dreams come to the human race, false ones through the gate of ivory, those that bring true prophecy through the gate of horn. The Trojan hero \*Aeneas, ancestor of the Romans, somewhat enigmatically left the world of the dead through the gate of ivory. [Homer *Od* 19.562-9; Vergil *Aen* 6.893-9]

**Ge** (*Γῆ*). *See* Gaia.

**Gemini.** *See* Dioscuri and Constellation **9**.

**Genius.** The tutelary deity of a place, city, society or individual, and even of the 'Roman people'; in the plural 'genii' were related to or identified with the ancestral dead or \*Manes. The genius of a place would be invoked on arrival at a new location or, for example, at a theatre at the opening of a play. The genius of a family in particular could be identified with the guardian spirit of its head, the *paterfamilias*, ensuring the prosperity of the house and its continuation through the begetting of children on the marriage bed (the *lectus genialis*). It was represented on the family altar as a snake, flanked by the household gods called \*Penates, and possibly to be identified with the \*Lar. The father's birthday was the festival of his 'genius', and slaves would venerate it; from

this practice from the time of Augustus the worship of the 'genius' of the emperor was promulgated through the western provinces. This allowed the superiority of the emperor to be asserted (since his 'genius' was supreme) while avoiding specific deification during his lifetime. The association in general of 'genius' with festivals and social enjoyment gives the derivation of the adjective 'genial'. [Horace *Odes* 3.17.14; Ovid *Fasti* 3.523; Vergil *Aen* 5.95-6, 7.136]

**Geryon** (Γηρυών) or **Geryoneus** (Γηρυονεύς). A monstrous giant, 'the strongest of mortals', born of Medusa's son \*Chrysaor and the Oceanid Callirhoe. He had three upper bodies and heads springing from the one waist (so he is sometimes referred to in the plural as *Geryōnes*). He lived on the legendary island of Erytheia in Ocean in the far west, where he owned large herds of cattle tended by his herdsman Eurytion and his dog Orthus. Stealing these cattle was the tenth of the \*Labours of Heracles, who first killed Eurytion and Orthus, and then wrestled with the giant, whom he eventually overcame with blows from his club. Heracles was said to have returned with the cattle either in the golden bowl of the sun in which he had travelled to Erytheia or by a long and adventurous journey overland through Spain, France, Italy and the shores of the Black Sea. [Aeschylus *Ag* 870; Apollodorus 2.5.10; Hesiod *Theog* 287, 981-2; Lucretius 5.28; Stesichorus *Song of Geryon* (West 86-9); Vergil *Aen* 6.289, 8.202]

**Giants** (Γίγαντες). Sometimes confused with the \*Titans (who were immortal), the giants were earth born, sprung from \*Gaia as the result of the fertilisation of the drops of blood which fell on her when \*Uranos was castrated by his son. Their birthplace was by Phlegra, on the western tip of Chalcidice in Thrace, or in other accounts in southern Italy where they were said to have been buried under the volcanoes. The Giants were at first represented as humans on a large scale 'with gleaming armour and holding long spears' but later as hybrids with wings, or with their legs ending as snakes or 'serpent-footed'. Earth tried to keep her children from death with a magic herb, but this was stolen by Heracles with the help of Zeus, or by renewing their strength when they stayed in contact with her, but in this too she was thwarted. [Hesiod *Theog* 184-6; Homer *Od* 7.59; Horace *Odes* 3.1.7; Ovid *Fasti* 3.348; Pausanias 8.29.1-3; Propertius 1.20.9] *See* Antaeus, Hundred-handers and Gigantomachy.

**Gigantomachy** (Γιγαντομαχία). The name given to the battle of the earth-born \*Giants against the gods who were led by \*Zeus – a cosmic battle of the old matriarchal order against the new patriarchy, also seen as that of barbarism against civilisation. From birth, in anger at the treatment of the Titans, the Giants attempted to storm Olympus and overthrow the gods by hurling burning oak-trees and huge rocks upwards, or, like the \*Aloadae, by piling mountain upon mountain. Initially Zeus and Athena stood against them, but then they were joined by the other gods, and because they could not defeat the Giants without the aid of a mortal, the help of \*Heracles was enlisted, to shoot arrows as Zeus drove the chariot. The first victim was Alcioneus, who was wounded and then dragged outside the sphere of Gaia's power and so died. Next Porphyron was struck by Zeus' thunderbolt as he attempted to rape Hera, and then killed by another of Heracles' arrows. Other Giants were killed by Hermes wearing Hades' cap of invisibility, or by the arrows of Apollo and Artemis, by Hecate's torches, Hephaestus' red-hot metal darts, the Fates' bronze clubs, or combinations of Zeus' thunderbolts and Heracles' arrows. The scale of the battle is shown by the report of Poseidon breaking off a piece of the island of Cos and throwing it at one of the Giants; another Giant, Enceladus, was flattened when Athena hurled the island of Sicily at him, after she had flayed \*Pallas and used his skin to protect herself. Some say the battle ended in

Arcadia, where the ploughmen still turn up huge bones. The Gigantomachy was a favourite theme in Greek art and sculpture, most notably on the metopes of the Parthenon at Athens, the treasure house at Delphi, and, later, on the altar at Pergamum. [Apollodorus 1.6.1-2; Diodorus 5.71; Euripides *HF* 177-80; Ovid *Met* 1.151-62; Pindar *Nem* 1.67-8; Strabo 5.4.4] *See also* Titanomachy.

**Glauce** (Γλαύκη). **1.** A \*Nereid, daughter of Nereus and Doris, the name being a personification of the colour of the sea. [Hesiod *Theog* 244; Homer *Il* 18.39] **2.** Daughter of Creon, king of Thebes, also called Creusa. When she was about to supplant \*Medea as wife of Jason, Medea sent her a wedding dress and diadem as a deceptive gift; when the princess put them on they turned into instruments of torture, constricting Glauce's head and melting her flesh in a sheet of flame; her father and those who tried to save her were caught up in the same hideous death. [Apollodorus 1.9.28; Euripides *Medea* 1136-1221; Ovid *Met* 7.394-5]

**Glaucus** (Γλαῦκος). A number of figures in Greek mythology have this name, in particular: **1.** Glaucus of Potniae, son of Merope and Sisyphus, and father of Bellerophon – he was the subject of a lost tragedy by Aeschylus. This Glaucus met his death by being torn to pieces (and possibly eaten) by his mares in the chariot race for the funeral games of \*Pelias. The horses were said to have gone out of control from fright, or from having drunk from a sacred well, or from having eaten the herb *hippomanes*, or after being driven mad by Aphrodite after Glaucus increased their power by not allowing them to mate. His ghost was thought to haunt the Isthmian games and frighten the horses there. [Apollodorus 2.31; Hesiod *Cat* 7; Homer *Il* 6.154-5] **2.** Glaucus of Lydia, son of Hippolochus and grandson of Bellerophon. who fought with Sarpedon for Priam in the Trojan war and was killed by Ajax; his body was carried back to Lycia by the winds. During one battle he encountered \*Diomedes, and since they were connected by ties of guest-friendship through their ancestors they exchanged gifts and kept away from each other in the fighting. The exchange of armour – Glaucus' gold for Diomedes' bronze – became proverbial for a foolish exchange. [Homer *Il* 6.2347, 16.493-500, 17.140-82] **3.** Glaucus of Crete, the young son of Minos and Pasiphae who fell into a *pithos* (a large jar) of honey and was smothered. The complex story of his recovery was the subject of lost plays by Sophocles and Euripides. It seems that the soothsayer Polyidus was trapped with the dead boy; when a snake came into the honey he killed it, when a second snake came it had a herb in his mouth which brought the first snake back to life. Polyidus applied the herb to Glaucus and he too revived, so that 'Glaucus drinking the honey' became proverbial for a sudden recovery. Minos later ordered Polyidus to instruct Glaucus in the art of prophecy, but when the lessons were over Polyidus told Glaucus to spit into the mouth of his teacher, and he consequently forgot all that he had learnt. [Apollodorus 3.3.1-2; Hyginus 136] **4.** Glaucus Pontius, a Boeotian fisherman who was transformed into a god after eating a divine herb sown by Cronus. He became a patron of sailors and fishermen, and was thought to make an annual tour of the islands and coastline, delivering gloomy prophecies, for, like most sea deities, he could foretell the future as well as change his shape. His story is the subject of a lost play by Aeschylus, and his reception as a god of the sea by Poseidon and Amphitrite is a favourite subject of vase paintings. In some versions he is connected with the \*Argonauts, in human form as one of the original carpenters and in divine form as their protector on the sea. He loved first \*Ariadne, but was driven from Naxos by Dionysus, and then \*Scylla; but the witch \*Circe, jealous of Scylla, poisoned the pools where she bathed, and this caused the lower part of the nymph's body to be transformed into ravenous dogs' heads. Plato has a vivid description of the sea-god as the

'old man of the sea', encrusted with shells and seaweed. [Ovid *Met* 7.233, 13.905-69, 14.9-70; Pausanias 9.22.7; Plato *Rep* 611d]

**Golden Age** (Latin 'aureum saeculum'). A time of innocence and happiness, believed by some to have been at the beginning of the history of the human race (comparable to the 'Garden of Eden'), but followed by successive degenerate stages until the Iron Age of the present time is reached. The first reference is in Hesiod, who speaks of 'a golden race of mortals' created by the Olympian gods in the time of \*Cronus, who 'dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands, rich in flocks and dear to the gods'. This generation was free of cares and toil, content with the abundant fruits of the earth, not ageing, but, when the time came to die, it was like falling asleep; after death they became kindly spirits watching over the earth. This race was followed by the Silver, the Bronze, the Heroic and then the Iron. The sequence represents a pessimistic view of history as degeneration, opposed to that of progress from a primitive past; sometimes it was used to show that technical advance accompanies moral regress. Vergil used the myth as a way of complimenting Augustus as one who would bring back the golden age to Italy. [Hesiod *WD* 109-28, Ovid *Met* 1.89-112; Vergil *Aen* 6.791-5, *Ecl* 4.4-10]

**Golden Apples** (*Χρυσᾶ μήλα*). The golden apples were said to have been a wedding gift by \*Gaia to Hera on her marriage to Zeus. They grew in the garden of the \*Hesperides in the far west, guarded by the serpent Ladon. Fetching three of the apples was the eleventh \*Labour of Heracles; after showing them to Eurystheus Heracles gave the apples to Athena who returned them to the Hesperides. The apples also appear in the myth of \*Atalanta, given to her suitor by Aphrodite: in the race run against her he dropped the three apples one by one, she was tempted to pick them up and so slowed down and lost the race. It may also have been one of the golden apples of the Hesperides which \*Eris threw down at the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, inscribed 'to the fairest'; the dispute over which goddess deserved the award led to the \*Judgment of Paris, and eventually to the Trojan war. [Apollodorus 2.5.11; Apollonius 4.1397-8; Euripides *HF* 395-45; Hesiod *Theog* 215-6; Pausanias 5.18.4]

**Golden Bough**. Before his descent to the underworld, \*Aeneas was told by the Sibyl first to pick a 'golden bough' as a talisman to offer Proserpina for a safe passage through the world of the dead. Aeneas was guided to the tree by a pair of doves sent by his mother Venus, and, although the bough was said to break off easily for one favoured by destiny, it at first resisted his pull. The bough was shown to the ferryman \*Charon to allow passage in his boat over the Styx, and was eventually fastened to the portal at the entrance to Elysium. Servius' commentary on Aeneas linked the bough with a cult of the goddess \*Diana at Aricia, and the annual ritual in which a slave broke off a branch from a tree sacred to her before proceeding to kill the king and take his place, to be supplanted in turn the following year. (This ritual in Diana's grove gave the theme to Frazer's great work on the origins of religious customs called *The Golden Bough*). [Vergil *Aen* 6.136-48, 187-211, 406-9, 636]

**Golden Fleece** (*Χρυσόμαλλον δέρας*). The fleece of the ram (fathered by Poseidon) which was given by \*Nephele to \*Helle and Phrixus; they flew on the ram through the air from Thebes to Colchis to escape their stepmother. Helle fell into the sea (which was named Hellespont after her), Phrixus arrived safely, and the fleece of the ram was set up on an oak-tree by the king \*Aeetes, guarded in the precinct of Ares by a fire-breathing dragon. It was the purpose of the expedition of \*Jason and the Argonauts to steal the fleece and take it to Pelias of Iolcus, a task

which was successfully accomplished after many adventures. The ram was placed among the stars as the zodiac constellation Aries. [Apollonius 2.1267-4.182 *passim*; Hyginus 3; Ovid *Met* 7.149-58] See Constellation **21**.

**Gordian Knot** (*Γόρδιος δεσμός*). Gordios was a peasant who travelled to Phrygia with his wife and son \*Midas in an ox-cart to which the yoke was tied in an intricate knot (in some versions the knot tied a shaft to a war-chariot). In accordance with an oracle that the first arrival at the temple of Zeus should be made king, he was suddenly elevated, the capital was named Gordium after him, and the cart was kept in the temple. A subsequent oracle assigned the kingdom of Asia to the one who could untie the knot. When Alexander arrived in 334 BC, he is said to have sliced through the knot with his sword and so claimed the mastery of Asia. 'To cut the Gordian knot' became proverbial for solving a difficulty by force rather than cunning, or by reinterpreting the conditions of the task. [Arrian 2.3; Plutarch *Alexander* 18]

**Gorge** (*Γόρρη*) **1**. Daughter of Oeneus and Althea, brother to \*Meleager, and one of several sisters of \*Deianira. Through the intervention of Dionysus she and Deianira were the only two girls in the family to keep their human forms when the rest were changed into partridges as they grieved for the death of their brother. [Apollodorus 1.8.1; Hyginus 174; Ovid *Met* 7.542-6] **2**. Daughter of Megareus and wife to Corinthus; her children were slain and in despair she threw herself into a lake, which was given the name: *Γοργῶπις* – 'Gorge's face'. [Aeschylus *Ag* 302; *Et M* s.v. *Γοργῶπις*]

**Gorgon** (*Γοργώ(ν)*, plural *Γοργόνες*). Only one Gorgon is mentioned in Homer, but in Hesiod and later they are three sisters born of the Titans Phorcys and Ceto, and living in the far west – the immortals Stheno ('strong') and Euryale ('far-sprinting'), and the mortal \*Medusa ('ruling'), who was killed by \*Perseus. In their iconography they have snakes for hair, and also wings and bronze talons; anyone who looked on them was literally 'petrified', i.e. turned into stone. The Gorgons were younger sisters of the \*Graiae and protected by them, until Perseus forced the Graiae to reveal the remote hiding-place of the Gorgons and their secret – that winged sandals from the Nymphs, a bag to carry the head, and Hades' Helmet of Invisibility were needed to defeat their mortal sister, Medusa. In some versions there are two Gorgons (as two Graiae) with Medusa as a later addition. [Aeschylus *PV* 799-801; Hesiod *Theog* 274-5; Homer *Il* 8.348-9; Ovid *Met* 4.777-9; Vergil *Aen* 6.289]

**Gorgoneion** (*Γοργόνειον*). The head of a Gorgon, usually taken to be that of \*Medusa, capable of turning whoever looked on it into stone. The head was grotesque, almost comic, with round staring eyes, grinning teeth and the tongue hanging out. It was the terror-inspiring device on the \*aegis of Athena (who herself had the epithet *Gorgō*) and on the shield of Agamemnon, and also found on coins, seals and the metope of the temple at Selinus. The *gorgoneion* of Medusa was allegedly buried in the agora of Argos, where it averted evil from the city. [Euripides *Helen* 1315-6; Homer *Il* 11.36-7, *Od* 11.634-5]

**Gorgophone** (*Γοργοφόνη*). Daughter of Perseus and Andromeda, wife first to \*Perieres of Messena and mother of Aphareus and Leucippus. Rather than dying with her first husband, she made history by being the first widow to marry a second time. Her second husband was \*Oebalus

of Sparta, and her two sons by him were Icarus and the famous \*Tyndareus. [Apollodorus 3.10.2; Pausanias 3.1.4, 4.2.5]

**Graces** (Gratiae). The Roman version of the Charites, the three goddesses of beauty and artistic inspiration, companions of Venus and of the Muses. In their Roman form they are generally found in painting and sculpture as a group of three nude figures with their arms intertwined. [Horace *Odes* 1.4.6, 30.6, 3.19.16, 21.22] *See* Charites.

**Graiae** (Γραῖαι). Three ancient sisters, Enyo, Pemphredo and Dinos, (but only two in Ovid's version), daughters of the Titans Phorcys and Ceto, sometimes called Phorcydes after their father. They were grey-haired from birth, paradigms of the crone, with one eye and one tooth passed between them. As sisters and guardians of the \*Gorgons, \*Perseus had to track them down, and he made them reveal the secrets of the Gorgons by stealing their one eye; he afterwards threw it into a lake, so that they slept ever after. They were said to dwell 'outside the light of sun and moon' beyond the western boundaries of Libya, and are mentioned as being in one of the regions that \*Io had to traverse. [Aeschylus *PV* 794-5; Ovid *Met* 4.774-81]

**Great Bear.** *See* Constellations: Ursa Major.

**Great Goddess / Great Mother.** *See* Cybele.

**Griffins** (Γριμμεις). Bi-forms with the head, beak and wings of an eagle and a lion's body, who were the legendary guardians of buried gold. They were located in Asia or India originally, and then in the north of Europe in Scythia, where it was said that they were permanently at war with the one-eyed Arimaspians who came on horseback to try to steal the gold from them. [Aeschylus *PV* 803-6; Herodotus 3.116]

**Gyes** (Γύης). One of the \*Hundred-handers, born of Gaia and Uranus, who were hidden in the earth. With his brothers he was brought into the light by Zeus, and for his essential assistance in the cosmic battle was made a 'trusted guardian' of the defeated Titans. [Hesiod *Theog* 149, 714-20, 734-5]

**Gyges** (Γύγης). A Lydian shepherd who found a 'ring of invisibility' on a corpse discovered during a thunderstorm in a hollow bronze horse, and used its powers to kill the king and marry the queen. Herodotus tells a less fabulous story of a friend of the king of Lydia who was persuaded to see the queen naked and was then charged by her to kill the king and marry her, or be killed himself. The 'ring of Gyges' became proverbial for a device by which one could behave unjustly without getting caught. [Herodotus 1.9-12; Plato *Rep* 359d-360b, 612b]