

PREFACE

This Dictionary of Classical Mythology marks a fresh start in the complex task of mapping, cataloguing and reporting on the body of material that guides the contemporary reader through the mythology of Ancient Greece and Early Rome. Different versions of the narratives and genealogies in this material are endemic to the study of the subject, since variations were preserved in the tradition of oral culture, and then adapted to the interests of family and city propaganda, the literary contexts of drama and poetry, the evolution of ritual and the expansion of knowledge of the physical and human aspects of the inhabited world. Yet, despite the variations, common themes of quests, vengeance and homecoming and patterns of character such as 'first woman', 'youngest son', 'cruel stepmother' and 'shape-shifter' persist through legend, folk-tale and saga, and have their most articulate expression in the myths (the μύθοι and 'fabulae') of Greek and Roman literature and art. And not only do we have the narratives preserved but also the ancient attempts to probe and interpret them through allegory, personification and euhemerism (an ancient form of reductionism), laced often with a healthy scepticism. Modern analysts continue the exercise, still searching for approaches to understanding through ritual, primitive conflict, structuralism, and, most famously, through studies of individual psychology and collective dream images.

We aim to present a reference work that will be attractive in its own right, encourage browsing, give a lead into reading the original stories in ancient epics and dramas and perhaps stimulate an interest in the languages in which they were written. In addition, because the primary sources have all been consulted anew, we hope that this project will prove useful to students and scholars with professional interest in the ancient world. The related myths of transformation into stars (known technically as 'catasterism') have cross-references back to the main entries. The terrestrial landscape was also steeped in myth – many of the animals, birds and plants, springs and rivers, mountains and islands, had stories attached to them which explained their defining characteristics and location, and it is convenient to group these together in a summary of metamorphoses, which includes sex-changes. The most significant events for ancient mythology were the Theban and Trojan wars, and it is hoped that the entries relating to these will clarify the complex alliances and relationships involved. A major consequence of the fall of Troy was the escape of Aeneas and his companions to start a new life in the west, and so set in motion the train of events that would lead to the foundation of Rome; many Roman families liked to trace their ancestry back to Trojan origins, so that their names find a place in the entries.

There were two famous wall paintings at Delphi by the artist Polygnotus, which depicted the capture of Troy immediately after the fighting (and after the events described in the *Iliad*), and the visit of Odysseus to Hades from the eleventh book of the *Odyssey*; although the paintings have not survived, the detailed description of them by the Greek travel-writer Pausanias provides an invaluable source for the Greeks' own presentation of their mythology. The focus in this *Dictionary*, however, is on surviving literary evidence; for the essential complementary support given by sculptures, vases and

wall-paintings *The Oxford History of Classical Art*, edited by John Boardman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) should be consulted.

In the main body of the text the majority of the alphabetical entries are of individual people, but there are also significant groups, such as Amazons and Centaurs, events like the Theban wars, places important to myth such as Eleusis, Delphi and Olympus as well as meteorological phenomena (Rainbow and Winds for example), and the explanation of such sayings as 'Clouduckooland' and 'Gordian Knot'. Each entry has its head-word in its most commonly recognised form, followed by the Greek term, and the Latin form where appropriate; the meaning of the name is added in English where it is of interest. Multiple entries with the same head-word are numbered and explained in approximate chronological order; long entries are divided into paragraphs, and Heracles (the longest of all) has the paragraphs flagged by letters for ease of cross-reference. The entries generally start with the family connections and geographical location, followed by the relevant narrative incorporating the main alternatives, and with occasional comment added. An asterisk marks a cross-reference to an entry which provides relevant supplementary information, and the main sources for the entry (in alphabetical order) are given in square brackets at the end. '*See Constellation*' with a number italicised points to further information in an entry in the section on Constellation Myths.

The summary of sources gives more details on the references. Some sources are of major importance and constantly recur – in Greek these are mostly Homer, Hesiod, Pindar, the tragedians (Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides), Apollonius, Apollodorus, Diodorus, Pausanias and Plutarch; the chief authorities in Latin are Cicero (*On the nature of the Gods*), the first book of Livy's *History of Rome*, Ovid (*Metamorphoses* and *Fasti*), Vergil (*Georgics*, *Aeneid*), Propertius and the compilations attributed to Hyginus. Philosophical interpretations are of special interest, so myths referred to by Plato and Lucretius in particular are noted. Related reference works and suggestions on contemporary approaches, comment and methodology relevant to the myths of Greece and Rome are given under 'Further Reading'.

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