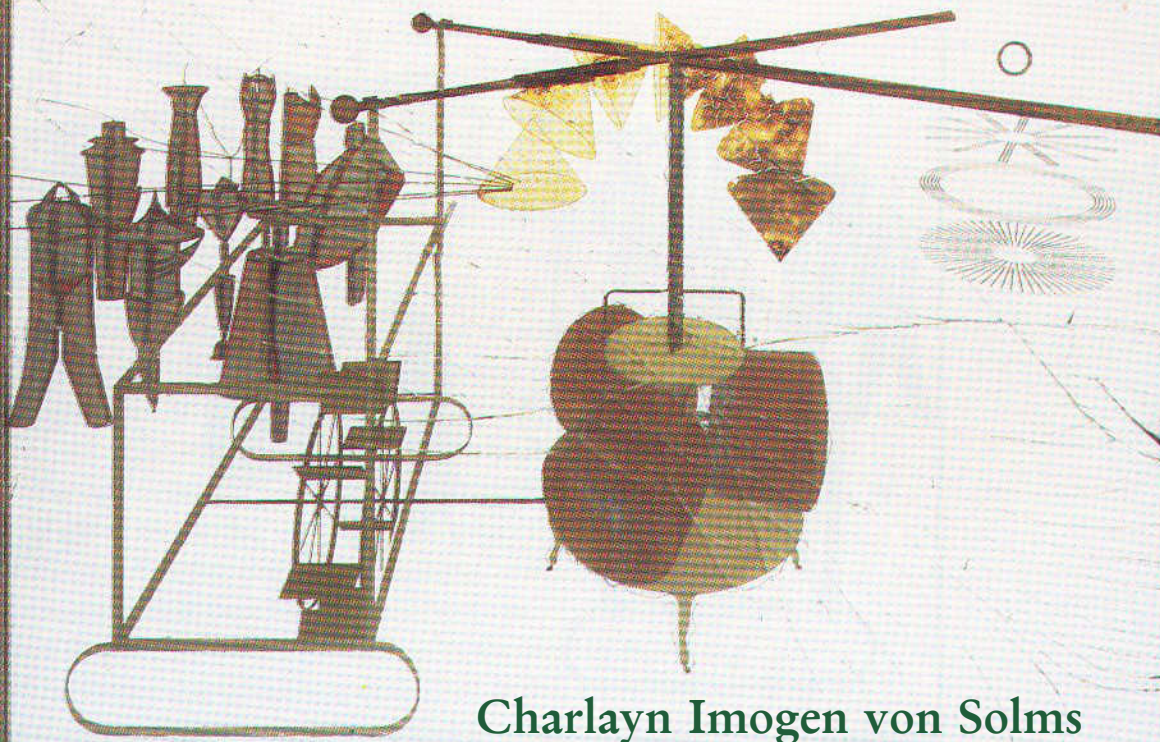# Ingenuity's Engine

History and Development of the Concept of the Muse

Charlayn Imogen von Solms

Ingenuity's Engine

An Overview of the History
and Development of the Concept of
the Muse.

Charlayn Imogen von Solms

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Supervised by Dr. Sjarlene Thom.

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature: ....

Date: ....

Summary

"The growth of any discipline depends on the ability to communicate and develop ideas, and this in turn relies on a language which is sufficiently detailed and flexible" (Singh 1997: 59).

Many metaphors relating to creativity are too misleading, confusing, and restricted in scope for a meaningful exploration of the phenomenon and its fluctuating social and cultural contexts. Given the Muse's long-term association with literature, philosophy, education, and more recently, the fine arts and other "creative" fields, an analysis of this concept may provide a unique opportunity to gain insight into the "mechanisms" underlying the creative process. Since affiliation with the Muse appears to have signalled attainment of critical cultural and/or social status by cultural practitioners in various societies, from the ancient to the present (a category which was broadened substantially), it is thus logical to assume this concept encompasses and has accumulated characteristics particular to the creative process as historically and currently valued in Western culture.

Given the limited scope of the thesis, I have focused on specific concerns:

1) Provide an overview of the history, origin and development of the concept via specific examples ranging from antiquity, the medieval period, and the modern.

2) Assess the changes which have occurred in the development of the concept, and postulate likely causes: such as for example, the impact of an increased focus on the visual - and by extension, the physical - due to a more literate populace, on a concept originally conceived of as experienced through predominantly audial means.

3) Identify closely related concepts, the characteristics of which may have played a role in the formulation of the initial concept, along with those integrated into it, to form the modern version of the Muse: examples include the influence of the myth of Pygmalion on notions regarding the poet's relationship with both material and Muse; and the consequences of an amalgamation of characteristics of Aphrodite with those of the pastoral Muse.

4) Explore the extent to which the Muse-poet interaction can reveal fundamental aspects of the creative process and its main components: the differences between the public invocation and experience of the Muse in an oral context, as opposed to the privately experienced Muse of the literate poet; also, the changes imposed on the concept's perceived means of functioning due to its extension to the practice of the visual arts; and the correlation between the Jungian notion of the *anima* and aspects of the Muse.

5) Postulate the fundamental aspects of the creative process as revealed by analysis of the concept of the Muse for further investigation.

In brief then, the main intention of this thesis is simply to examine by analysis of particular examples, the feasibility of applying the concept of the Muse as metaphor through which to identify for further exploration, issues and themes relating to the production and changes in social assessment of creative enterprises.

Opsomming

"The growth of any discipline depends on the ability to communicate and develop ideas, and this in turn relies on a language which is sufficiently detailed and flexible" (Singh 1997: 59).

Menige metafore verbonde aan kreatiwiteit is te misleidend, verwarrend, of beperk in omvang vir 'n betekenisvolle ondersoek van díe verskynsel en die fluktueerende sosiale en kulturele kontekste daarvan. Gesien in die lig van die Muse se langtermyn assosiasie met letterkunde, filosofie, opvoedkunde en meer onlangs, the skone kunste en ander "kreatiewe" velde, mag 'n analise van die konsep moontlik 'n unieke geleentheid bied om insig te verkry in die onder-liggende "meganismes" van die kreatiewe proses. Aangesien affiliasie met die Muse blyk om die bereiking van kritiese kulturele en/of sosiale status, deur kulturele praktisyne in verskeie samelewings, van die antieke tot die huidige ('n kategorie wat aansienlik uitgebou is) aan te dui, is dit dus logies om te aanvaar dat die konsep alomvattend is van eienskappe kenmerkend van die kreatiewe proses, soos geskiedkundig en huidig op prys gestel in die Westerse kultuur.

Gegewe die beperkte bestek van die tesis, is gefokus op spesifieke kwessies:

1) Verskaf 'n oorsig van die geskiedenis, oorsprong, en ontwikkeling van die konsep deur spesifieke voorbeelde, in omvang vanaf die antieke, die middeleuse periode, en die moderne.

2) Evalueer die veranderinge wat voorgekom het in die ontwikkeling van die konsep, en veronderstel moontlike redes daarvoor: soos byvoorbeeld, die impak van vermeerderde fokus op die visuele - en daarby die fisiese - as gevolg van 'n meer geletterde bevolking, op 'n konsep wat aanvanklik hoofsaaklik ouditief ondervind is.

3) Identifiseer verwante konsepte, die eienskappe waarvan moontlik 'n rol kon gespeel het in die formulasie van die aanvanklike konsep, asook die wat daarby geintegreer is, om die moderne weergawe van die Muse te vorm: voorbeelde sluit in, die invloed van die mite van Pigmalion op begrippe aangaande die digter se verhouding met beide die materiaal en Muse; en die gevolge van 'n samesmelting van Aphrodite se karaktertrekke met die van die

pastorale Muse.

4) Ondersoek die mate waartoe die Muse-digter verhouding fundamentele aspekte van die kreatiewe proses en sy hoof komponente kan ontbloot: soos die verskille tussen die publieke invokasie en ervaring van die Muse in 'n verbale konteks, in teenstelling met die geletterde digter wat die Muse privaat ondevind; asook die veranderinge temeegebring op die persepsies aangaande die konsep se funksionering as gevolg van die uitbreiding daarvan tot die visuele kunste; en die korrelasie tussen die Jungiaanse idee van die *anima*, en aspekte van die Muse.

5) Veronderstel die fundamentele aspekte van die kreatiewe proses, soos ontbloot deur analise van die konsep van die Muse vir verdere ondersoek.

Kortliks dan, die hoof voorneme van hierdie tesis is om deur analise van spesifieke voorbeelde, die uitvoerbaarheid te ondersoek om die konsep van die Muse toe te pas as metafoor vir verdere navorsing waardeur kwessies en temas, aangaande die produksie en veranderinge in sosiale waardering van kreatiewe ondernemings, ge-identifiseer kan word.

Acknowledgements

Contents

1. Introduction

"All of us are creative. Every time we stick a handy object under the leg of a wobbly table or think up a new way to bribe a child into his pajamas, we have used our facilities to create a novel outcome. But creative geniuses are distinguished not just by their extraordinary works but by their extraordinary way of working; they are not supposed to think like you and me ... They listen to their muse and defy conventional wisdom. They work when inspiration hits ... They put a problem aside and let it incubate in the unconscious; then, without warning, a bulb lights up and a fully formed solution presents itself. Aha!" (Pinker 1999: 360).

The word "creativity" elicits almost as many interpretations and meanings as its close associate - "genius". While both refer to something contemporary culture professes to value, exactly what is meant by them is rarely certain. For example, almost everyone knows Einstein was a genius, but can't always define why. The vast majority of Leonardo da Vinci's projects never left the drawing-board, yet his reputation as artistic genius is rarely questioned. Some experts will purport to be able to test for, and measure creativity, while others will even claim to be able to teach it. Evolutionists will attest to its importance to the survival of our species, while cultural historians will proclaim one society more creative than others, rarely explaining which aspects of that culture are referred to. For a complete analysis of this complex phenomenon, an effective model is required, one capable of exemplifying creativity in all its complexity without over-simplification or restriction to widely held misconceptions.

Currently, one of the most pervasive notions regarding creativity involves an obligatory subversion, and even destruction of entrenched traditions and institutions, before innovation can occur. Plato who had banished painters and poets

from his ideal Republic saw in their appeal to forces beyond reason a threat towards social order and stability[1]. And creativity as equatable with revolutionary change is a staple of twentieth-century views on art, science and all fields which include some or other form of inventiveness (Hughes 1981). Stangos (1990: 8) notes for example, that in Modernism "the importance attached to the notion of the avant-garde (which became practically synonymous with the 'experimental') was so great that it appeared to be the only standard of value for art", effectively conflating artistic value with a predominantly military term (vanguard as opposed to rearguard). This state of affairs was primarily due to the pervasive influence of a relatively short-lived, yet repercussive movement - Dadaism - on twentieth-century cultural production: Russel (1991: 199) contends that Dada was "an emergency operation. Based on an economy of starvation and on the total rejection of the past, it was international and even intercontinental in its development"[2]. Nor were its effects limited to art. Dadaism found its way into literature, philosophy and popular culture as a whole, while drawing on developments in sociology, psychotherapy and technology. The result included entrenchment of the perception of creativity as destructive first, constructive second (effectively proposing a kind of cultural amnesia as ultimate creative prerequisite (see *fig. 1*). The complex characteristics of "genius" as depicted in popular culture, are more often than not in line with these ideas: geniuses are often equally renowned for their destructive, as creative capabilities[3]. This iconoclastic reputation of artists and scientists as "outsiders" living and functioning beyond the confines of society holds clear romantic appeal, but as much as it applies to a Van Gogh, it does not hold true for

1. "[W]e shall be right in refusing to admit [the poet] into a well-ordered State, because he awakens and nourishes and strengthens the feelings and impairs the reason ... implant[ing] an evil constitution, for he indulges the irrational nature which has no discernment" Plato, *The Republic* X (trans. Jowett 1894: 262-3).

2. Stangos (1990: 7) traces the notion to developments which occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century: "Social, political and economic changes paralleled philosophical and scientific developments and the gradual collapse of traditional authoritarian systems and values ... In the arts, the tradition of the past - or at least an unquestioning adherence to it - was challenged from all sides".

3. Vincent van Gogh is known to more people as the lunatic who sliced off his own ear than for his skill as a painter, and biographies and film portrayals of Pablo Picasso at times focus more on the havoc he wreaked on the lives of those around him than his artistic production (some even justify his behaviour as necessary aspect of his creative drive).
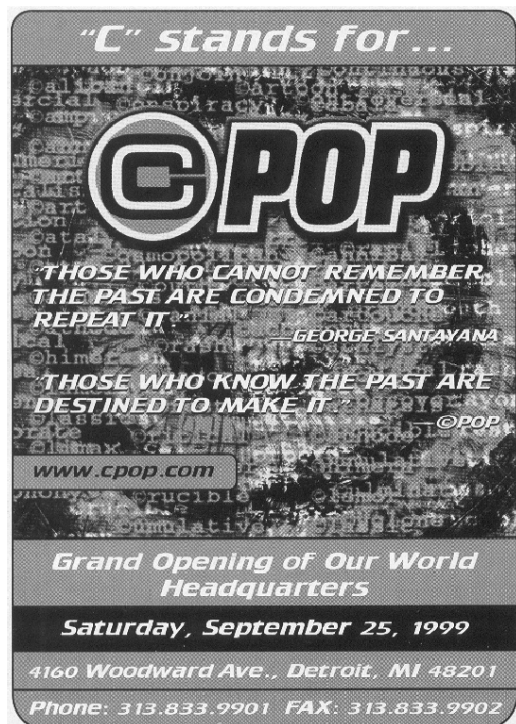
fig 1. CPOP Advertisement in *ArtNews. The art-group CPOP's rejoinder to Santayana's famous quote encapsulates the notion of the production of "cutting edge" art as possible only in the absence of the constraints imposed by history and tradition.*

a Peter-Paul Rubens or a William Shakespeare[4]. Many artists themselves even deliberately contribute to such perceptions to enhance the impact of their work[5]: Max Ernst for example whose paintings and collages were filled with images conjuring up the fears, aggression and anxieties of early twentieth century Europe stated "I was born with very strong feelings of the need for freedom, liberty ... very strong feelings of revolt. And then one is born into a period where so many events conspire to produce disgust: then it is absolutely natural that the work one produces is revolutionary work" (Hughes 1981: 222)[6].

The paradigm of innovation as impossible without prior excision, re-appears as model for intellectual, social and artistic progress in modern thought: "Since Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Western

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4. While Van Gogh certainly displayed an entire range of anti-social behaviours, Rubens was in his day more renowned as a diplomat, a profession reliant on an individual's social finesse and insight into intricasies of social etiquette. Boorstin (2001: 317) even attributes the survival of Shakespeare's plays to his personable character: "Shakespeare's life makes us pause at Proust's self-serving declaration that 'everything great comes from neurotics. They alone have ... composed our masterpieces'. Shakespeare's contemporaries seemed agreed on his good-natured equanimity ... Had Shakespeare not enjoyed the affection of his fellow actors his plays might not have survived ... [since they] as a token of friendship to him, did us the great service of preserving the texts of his plays when they arranged publication of the First Folio in 1623".

5. For a discussion of the tendency to construct a fictional persona with characteristics integral to an individual's creative output see section 3. *Muses and Poets*.

6. Part of the attraction of outsider status may be due to what Power (2002: 51) describes as censorship's "curious power to give ideas weight. When the critic Bakunin makes it to Paris ... he speaks longingly of the airtight cultural atmosphere in Russia, where ideas seem to matter more than they do in the freedom of France".

intellectuals have been in love with the idea that people are born free but kept in chains by crusty old institutions. It's cool to be a rebel and awful to be a pillar of the establishment. This powerful set of prejudices has shaped the way we perceive the Information Age" (Brooks 2001: 45). Advances in technology and the Internet are consistently presented and interpreted along the lines of "... the Internet topples hierarchies. Children and outsiders rule" (Brooks 2001: 45). The Hindu god Shiva who holds the drum of creation in one hand, and the flame of destruction in the other, may appear an ideal metaphor for this juxtaposition at the heart of the creative process, but is far more indicative of what Claude Lévi-Strauss called "the binary opposition", common in myth, than the complexities which govern ingenuity. That destruction can, and does occasionally play a role in the creative process is undeniable[7]. But a problem arises when transition alone is emphasised and the full extent and influence of continuity ignored. Nor is this a long-standing or culturally widespread idea, even in Western civilisation: during the Renaissance for example, for new ideas to be deemed acceptable meant presenting them as originating in antiquity, even if this was only occasionally the case. For the most part, the Renaissance witnessed not as much a "rediscovery" of a past which never really left, but a new capacity to incorporate previously considered antithetical "pagan" ideas into Europe's predominantly Christian mindset (Welch 2000). Current trends also contradict a narrow "kill to create" scheme. Brooks when speaking of today's computer-savvy youngsters observes: "young people - the ones who grew up with the Internet - are not rebels and free agents. On the contrary, they are incredibly - even disconcertingly - comfortable with authority [and are] not living in an age of toppled hierarchies and decentralisation of power ... there is a great wave of consolidation wherever you look - in banking, media, airlines, the automotive sector ... even in the high-tech sector, a few giants dominate" (ibid.). The creative process is clearly too complex a phenomenon to be explored solely from a narrow vantage point of innovation as fed purely by destruction - a prohibitively simplistic model. After all, as Sam Rayburn (a politician) wryly pointed out: "Any jackass can kick down a barn, but it takes a carpenter to build one".

Another misleading perception regarding creativity is the notion of the

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7. Barrow (1997: 41) in exploring links between art and science states: "Death and periodic extinctions play a vital role in promoting the diversity of life ... the sudden extinction of species allows the evolutionary process to accelerate". However, note the use of the words "periodic" and "evolutionary process". Extinction only *accelerates* the pace of creativity, but does not initiate the process, that aspect is a sustained precept.

solitary genius producing "great things from nothing" without any outside influence at all. There is certainly a core of truth in the conception of creation as a solitary pursuit, but only to a certain extent. Certain parts of the creative process actually require an ability to focus without allowing for any distraction, but other aspects could not occur without a willingness to engage with social, cultural, physical and intellectual environments (Howe 2001; Jardine 2000; Storr 1991). Interaction aids inventiveness by effectively disallowing for duplication of extant ideas, instead encouraging their additional development and elaboration by persons other than their initial author, and provision of foundations on which others can later build. Recent examples in computer science illustrate this notion well: "Arguably the most radical technological developments in our time, the Web and the Linux operating system, were developed on the open source model - in which people give away their creations openly for others to use, test and develop ... the 'closed' model is not what has generated the most important innovations in the information economy. In global competition, a revolution is not made by one person but by a network of rebels, and that requires openness" (Himanen 2002: 14). Jardine (2000: 8), when charting the development of science in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, includes in her history not only Isaac Newton and Christopher Wren, but a whole host of lesser-known intellectuals whose "... crowded motley lives, in which conversation in the coffee-house and vigorous correspondence with like-minded individuals in other countries figured as importantly as strenuous private study and laboratory experiment ... pursuing a curiously varied collection of investigative goals, and motivated by a volatile mixture of self-interest, opportunism, curiosity and pure research". Nor need interaction be supportive or collaborative. Rivalry and competition can be as useful, - if not more - to creativity. Renaissance art historian Vasari concluded that the reason why Florence became a centre of artistic excellence was due to its "spirit of criticism: the air of Florence making minds naturally free, and not content with mediocrity" (Clark 1974: 101)[8].

Thus, two central conceptions regarding creativity are misleading, and point in the exact opposite direction - that of the genius or creative individual as more reliant upon tradition and the ideas, achievements and opinions of others than their reputations would have us believe. First of all, creativity is not a single illuminating event or epiphany, but a process which can vary greatly in duration.

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8. Clark (1974: 101) also argues that "this harsh outspoken competition between Florentine craftsmen not only screwed up technical standards, but also meant that there was no gap of incomprehension between the intelligent patron and the artist".

Nor is this process divorced from the world at large, but engages with the environment and society, even when the creator him/herself does not appear to do so. Historical precedents for such conceptions regarding creativity have by and large been confirmed by recent research and studies into the creative process, of which the mythical construct of the Muse, is a particularly fitting metaphor.

1.1. The Concept of the Muse as Metaphor for Creative Processes

In his inquiry into the motivation behind creative undertakings - *The Dynamics of Creation*, Anthony Storr (1991: 11) posits the following definition: "Creativity has been defined, simply and concisely, as 'the ability to bring something new into existence' ... Fortunately, it does not imply that the 'something new' need be new to everyone, or indeed new to anyone else save the person who creates it. The child who links together in his mind two ideas which have hitherto been separated, and who produces a third as a result ... has produced for himself something which is new to *him*; and the manner in which this process of creation comes about has been found so enthralling that many millions of words have been written about it". So enthralling is this process of creation, the ancient Greeks even conceived of a mythological entity, assigned to infuse poets and philosophers with this mysterious faculty, known as the "Muse"[9].

The daughters of Zeus, ruler of the Olympian gods and Mnemosyne (Memory) were to become an intrinsic part of not only Greek mythology, but literature, music, philosophy - and later - cosmology as well. Generally defined as goddesses who preside over various branches of the arts and learning - or more recently - artists' source of inspiration, the Muse has undergone a myriad of changes throughout history, but her core characteristics have remained relatively steadfast. Comparable entities are found in the mythological traditions of a number of societies, both connected, or unknown, to ancient Greece, but what sets the Muse apart is the elaborate extent to which this idea had been developed, and the comprehensive range of attributes encompassed. For while it is common to speak of a singular Muse, they have always been conceived of as members of a group or choir, which in the Hellenistic period, led to each assuming a clearly

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9. The etymology of *Mousa* is unclear, but Dodds (1951: 99) cites scholars' attempts to connect *mousa* with *mons*, thus deriving the Muses from mountain nymphs, but this is not generally accepted. A link with *mueo / muesai* (to initiate or teach) has also been suggested (Battistini et al 1998).

defined identity in terms of not only detailed spheres of influence, but also of dress, attitude and association.

Since its first appearance in Homer's *Iliad*, the concept of an outside influence, with which the creative individual ("whom I will simply refer to as "poet") enjoys a special relationship, has remained constant in Western culture. Given its durability, sustained vivacity, and historically (and presently) close associations with creative endeavours and various means of acquiring and preserving knowledge, the underlying complexities inherent in this concept offer a scope wide enough to warrant its effective application as prototype for imagination. The exact origins of this concept are unclear, as are the reasons why it has managed to survive, but what can be stated with a degree of certainty, is the Muse's ability to adapt to the changes in her cultural environment from her inception until the present. The persistence of the concept of the Muse is all the more remarkable when one considers differences between what "creation" implies at various points in history.

Ancient Greeks conceived of creativity in a manner dissimilar to modern views of the same subject. The Judeo-Christian myth of Genesis, and it's creator-god who produces everything out of nothing, is not as universal an idea as it may seem to contemporary Westerners. The theory of "the Big Bang" may be perfectly logical to those who share this world-view, but, as those who oppose its axiomatic acceptance argue, individual beginnings and endings do not necessarily imply a universal beginning and a universal ending. Ancient Greek poets and philosophers found any notion of the world as having come from nothing, or even having at some point been created *ex nihilo* very hard to imagine. Parmenides stated: "What truly exists has not come into existence nor will it pass out of existence. It is both ungenerated and imperishable. It is complete, whole, motionless and unending. Past and future tenses do not apply to it, 'since it is now, all of it together, one and continuous'" (Luce 1997: 53). To the Greeks, the origin of their world and gods was a matter not of creation, but pro-creation, due either to *eros* (attraction), or as the result of conflict (Aphrodite as born from Ouranos' severed genitals for example). Such Greek enthusiasm for perfecting what exists, by either addition or division, evolution or devolution is one of the hallmarks of their brand of creativity[10]. Karl Popper's theory on the development of new theories

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10. "Hesiod's myth of a Golden Age ... had depicted the decline of practically everything ... Empedocles' cycles of creation, destruction, and re-creation also made progress inconceivable ... To Plato, too, nothing new seemed possible. Confined by his theory of forms, the only progress he could imagine was to come closer to the ideal models that had existed

shares this emphasis on the tenacity and influence of tradition, even in the event of a failed institution: "In everything we are, and everything we do, we inherit the whole past and however we might want to make ourselves independent of it there is no way in which we possibly can. This gives tradition an inescapable importance. It is where we start from, if only by reacting against it ... we use the tradition, we ride forward on its back" (Magee 1975: 70). In Classical Greece, the Muses were virtually synonymous with cultural tradition and social norms, their close association with the education of the young, so as to produce productive citizens, indicates their statutory conservatory role (see section 2. *Historical Overview*).

The "romantic" model of creativity favours a view of the genius creating something new by mere force of divine inspiration, which is why the notion of the artist inspired by the divine agency of the Muse is so tenacious. Alfred Russel Wallace for example concluded that there had to be something superhuman about geniuses: "Mozart's manuscripts were said to have no corrections. [thus] The pieces must have come from the mind of God, who had chosen to express his voice through Mozart" (Pinker 1999: 361). However, what generally goes unsaid in many accounts of genius is the extent of the preparation which makes these exploits possible. It has been estimated that at least a decade's worth of immersion of creative individuals in their particular fields is required before anything of extraordinary value is produced (Howe 2001; Pinker 1999). Perhaps one of the most pervasive misconceptions regarding creativity is that it is a single event (an epiphany) rather than a lengthy and complex process, of which popular culture provides many examples, the most renowned being the term "eureka!". The word "eureka" encapsulates both its proverbial original image of Archimedes leaping from his bath shouting " I have found it!" and that of every subsequent genius upon suddenly and seemingly mysteriously, finding a solution to some or other pressing problem[11].

However, it is very rarely stated that while Mozart (whose father started his musical training virtually from birth) composed symphonies as early as aged eight,

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from eternity ... [Aristotle's] preexisting ' appropriate forms' prescribed the limits within which any institution like the city-state could develop" (Boorstin 2001: 55).

11. While Plutarch describes the event in *The Impossibility of Pleasure according to Epicurus*, English quotations of Archimedes trace back to 1580, "about thirty years before the first translation of Plutarch's account" (Macrone 1992: 61). But it is only in the eighteenth century when "eureka!" becomes synonymous with the moment of creative insight (with *Eureka shirts* advertised in *Atheneum* magazine in 1853).

they were hardly masterpieces. Howe (2001: 3) points out that although he "... did indeed begin creating music at an exceptionally young age ...[m]any of Wolfgang's childhood compositions, such as the first seven of his concertos for piano and orchestra, are largely arrangements of works by various other composers. Of those concertos that only contain music original to Mozart, the earliest that is now regarded as a masterwork (No. 9, K. 271) was not composed until he was twenty-one: by that time Mozart had already been composing concertos for ten years". Pinker (1999: 361) postulates that during these years of preparation and complete immersion in the subject, geniuses "... absorb tens of thousands of problems and solutions, so no challenge is completely new and they can draw on a vast repertoire of motifs and strategies. They keep an eye on the competition and a finger to the wind, and are either discriminating or lucky in their choice of problems ... They do not repress a problem but [like Archimedes mulling over his problem while taking a bath] engage in 'creative worrying', and the epiphany is not a masterstroke but a tweaking of an earlier attempt. They revise endlessly, gradually closing in on their ideal". The genius thus initially learns from tradition, and later expands this into a personal reservoir which includes his/her own experience and prior successes, failures and discoveries.

Calvino, in debunking the mysterious spiritual origins of literary master-pieces, conceived of a "writing machine" capable of producing literary works of genius, but only once it had been thoroughly submerged in the literary canon. This familiarity he contended, would invariably breed the ennui from which masterpieces result: "a machine that will produce avant-garde work to free its circuits when they are choked by too long a production of classicism ... a literature machine that at a certain point feels unsatisfied with its own traditionalism and starts to propose new ways of writing" (Calvino 1997: 13). In such a scheme, innovation derives from an immersion in - as opposed to ignorance of - established norms, traditions and conventions. Can it work? Much depends upon the attitude with which the past is approached. Howe (2001: 180) points out that reverence "can be judicious and healthy as long as it does not stand in the way of change and innovation. Conversely, a degree of disrespect or even contempt of the accomplish-ments of earlier generations ... need not be disadvantageous provided that it does not lead to crucial insights being ignored". In both scenarios, it is the manner of the dialectic between individual and tradition which results in innovation, and not the absence of such dialogue. As Howe continues: "It is doubtful whether there are any geniuses who have *not* greatly profited from the efforts of their predecessors" (ibid.). Also very few masterpieces are entirely novel in an unprecedented sense. Most discoveries and innovations are groundbreaking because they combine a

number of seemingly unrelated notions and prior discoveries. Darwin for example was building on the discoveries of his grandfather and other scientists who had, for decades before his birth, been grappling with the very problems he fused into a single comprehensive theory (Howe 2001). Similarly, Leonardo da Vinci, arguably amongst the most inquisitive and innovative minds of the Renaissance, knew how to make the most of prior attempts at solving problems: "Taken one by one, few of the innovations deployed in the *Mona Lisa* were devised by Leonardo. As in other fields (literature, philosophy, cinema) there is a difference between being the first to produce a novelty and being the first to understand fully its implications and able to use them in a masterly fashion" (Sassoon: 2001: 33).

Radical departures from the norm *are* generally acts of creativity, but unless provided with an adaptive ability, new initiatives rarely develop beyond their initial formation. Ultimately, it is the necessity to maintain, remodel and re-engineer which determines the long-term success of one innovation over another. It is when institutions cease to preserve what they have attained, and neglect to respond to varying contexts, that they fail. This latter form of creativity requires one attribute in particular: a comprehensive knowledge of an institution's fundamental attributes. As Perry (1992: 878) articulates: "... the decline of the Roman and English nations lay in their failure to understand the institutions they had created". Thus, given the ancient Greek propensity for perfecting through revision, it is apparent why the Muses were usually considered to be daughters of Memory[12]. Moreover, while this propensity for incessant re-creation was to a great extent responsible for most of what the Greeks produced, the stylistic attributes of ancient Greek artifacts have themselves inspired constant revision in neighbouring and subsequent cultures[13] (fig. 2).

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12. While their connection to memory may simply be attributed to the Muses' origins in the conventions of oral poetry, and pre-literate bards' reliance on tradition and mnemonic techniques, recent discoveries of neuroscience posits memory as equivalent to creativity, and indispensable to intellect: "If our view of memory is correct, in higher organisms every act of perception is, to some degree, an act of imagination. Biological memory is thus creative and not strictly replicative. It is one of the essential bases of consciousness" (Edelman & Tononi 2001: 101).

13. "Not a single building of the Periclean Age of Greek architecture remains as intact as the Great Pyramid ... [ancient Greek] structures survive only as fragments, in ruins or in copies, but the forms that they created, unlike the Egyptians', surround us every day in our homes and public buildings, in our mantelpieces, in our windows and doorways. While the ancient Egyptians survive in their indestructible original works, the ancient

The enduring alliance between Muse and music for the most part derives from the oral tradition, and informed theories on mathematical harmony and cosmology alike. However, for the greater part of her known history, the Muse has been a literary phenomenon, and her story is intricately entwined with that of Greek literature, and its consequent impact on Western civilisation. In this context, the Muse exists in the details, at the periphery of the main text, only to take centre stage at rare moments such as Hesiod's introduction to his *Theogony* and more recently, in Graves' *White Goddess* and Fowles' *Mantissa*. Yet, in the figure of the Muse, countless poets, authors and artists have encapsulated the very essence of their world view and approach to life and art in general (see section 2. *Historical Overview:* Theocritus, Virgil, Dante, etc.). This "pagan" concept retained its role in poetry even at the height of Christianity's social and cultural domination (due in no small measure to the staying power of ancient Greek literature).
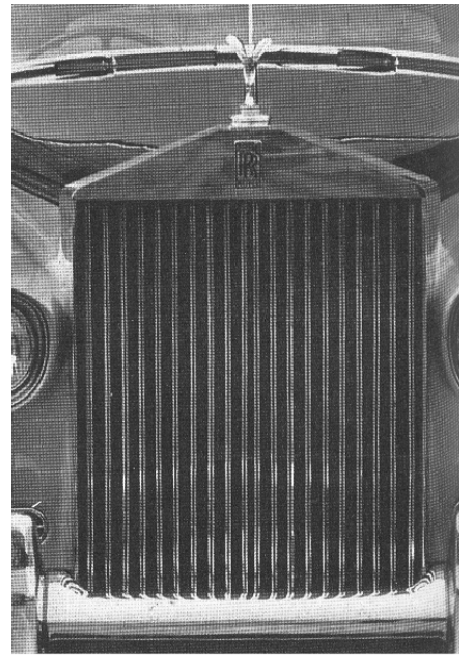
fig. 2. Rolls-Royce *radiator in Doric style (since 1904). The Greek portico in Western design is an instantly recognisable symbol of power and prestige, appearing on banks, government buildings, and even in such plainly non-architectural contexts as illustrated here.*

The extent of Greece's influence was not restricted to the civilisation which grew from the legacy of Greece and Rome, but can also be seen in the societies which came into contact with Greek culture even in ancient times: Griffin (2001: 7) argues that the "Etruscans, Lydians, Lycians, the indigenous peoples of Sicily and Syria - [all] found their own native productions by contrast embarrassingly crude and provincial. Only works in the Greek style would do, and literature in the Greek language. The other languages failed to produce literature, and (with the exception of Hebrew) were marked for disappearance. Only in Rome was the heroic decision taken to avoid the easy option of writing in Greek, and to embark on the enormous task of creating in Latin a literature which could be judged by the most exacting Greek standards". The recording of myths, legends and chronicles of events are standard in virtually every literate culture, but as can be seen in the

Greeks survive through styles and motifs. Their survival resides in their persuasive power to command imitation and reincarnation" (Boorstin 2001: 90).

contrast between the *Kumarbi* epic and its Greek derivative - Hesiod's *Theogony*, the first comes across as transcribing the most basic elements of the storyline - author and implied audience are all absent. Whereas in *Theogony* the events of the myth are but the theme: the telling of the story, the narrator's claims as to its authenticity, alongside his recollection of being chosen as the Muses' spokesman makes it more than simply a religious document, but what would now be considered literature[14].

Another hallmark of Ancient Greek society was their enthusiasm for competition. This tendency was reflected in their mythology and myths relating to the Muses in particular: In almost every story where Muses appear as characters (as opposed to the poet's source), they do so either as contestants or as facilitators or judges in contests between others[15] (the only exceptions being the stories of the weddings of Cadmus and Harmonia, and Thetis and Peleus). As Griffin (2001: 7) emphasises: "Each successive historian and philosopher made a point of showing how he improved on his predecessor, and the dialogues of Plato are full of rival experts and thinkers competing for victory in argument. The great Panhellenic occasions, at Olympia and Delphi, centred on athletic competitions; when tragedies or comedies were put on in Athens, it seemed natural that they should be ranged in order by a panel of judges". Greek innovation by all accounts appears to have derived in no small part from a general enthusiasm for competition amongst peers. Theocritus, whose bucolic poems consist of song-contests between goatherds and shepherds states as much in *Idyll 7*[16] where a singing-competition instigated by the Muses becomes a learning experience, for loser as well as winner. The story of a contest between Homer and Hesiod underlines this aspect, as Nagy writes: "the

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14. Many reasons have been posited for this difference, the most obvious the different means of written transmission. Myths from Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the vast majority of Greece's neighbours were recorded by means of pictograms, hieroglyphics, and modes of script which essentially referred to a concept, more than specific words. Greek phonetic script was of course able to record sequences of sound, rather than fixed ideas, which made it possible to write exact phrases, capturing individual "voices" and styles of expression.

15. They compete with Thamyris (see Appendix 1); and the daughters of Pierus (see section 2.); and judge the contest between Apollo and Marsyas, while facilitating the contest between Helicon and Kithaon (all of these contests involved music, poetry or singing in some form or another).

16. "...we met another traveller. The Muses fix such meetings ... He stopped, smiled, challenged me ... since the road and the day bring us together, let's see what we can learn by trying our songs". Theocritus, *Idyll 7* (trans. Wells 1989: 83).

basic premise of the story - that Homer and Hesiod competed in a poetic contest - exhibits the characteristics of a traditional theme ... [which] corresponds to a basic truth about archaic Greek society: the performance of poetry, from the days of the oral poets all the way to the era of the rhapsodes, was by its nature a matter of competition" (Nagy 1992: 79). In the classical era too, the rapid development and quality of innovation in comedies and tragic plays were due in no small part to their initial status as contest-entries. Nor was such competition limited to poets, philosophers and athletes. Ancient Greek pottery has revealed a myriad of boasts and challenges inscribed by potters and painters onto their wares. Members of the late sixth century group generally known as "the pioneers" appear to have thrived on their rivalries, naming characters in their scenes after one another, and even issuing challenges: Euthymides included the following inscription on an amphora: "Euphronios never managed anything like this" (Pedley 1998: 195). Such competition penalises those without their own distinctive abilities, ideas, or ways of doing things, to improve the quality of an own distinctive "voice"[17]. Such a voice was always that of an individual, not a team. Competitors won or lost based solely on their own merit (or lack thereof).

One of the most intriguing aspects of ancient Greek culture and a possible reason for their distinctive literature, was their attitude towards their gods and religion in general. Much has been written about the impact of an absence of dogma and an established priestly class/caste on Greek religion[18], but one of the main effects of the lack of such a solidifying factor, was that their mythologies

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17. It's thus not a surprise to find the "chief" Muse rejoicing in the name Calliope [*kalos* - 'the beautiful/immortal' + *ops* - 'voice'], or to have Homer wish for "ten tongues, ten mouths, and a voice unbreakable" with which to name the men who fought at Troy). For more on the audial aspect of the Muse see section 3.1 *Oral Poets and Public Muses.*

18. The absence of a rigidly enforced and institutionalised dogmatism may not be conducive to the type of subversive art which produces occasional revolutionary leaps in stylistic and/or theoretical innovation, but may nonetheless encourage innovative creativity and capacity to acquire vast quantities of new knowledge in general. Edelman & Tononi (2001: 91) in exploring the requirements for a functioning selectional brain include flexible value systems as absolutely essential, and warns that a "potential limit to the concept of value [appears to be] too rigid a set of evolutionary derived constraints, leading to a pinched repertoire of stereotyped responses in a selectional system [but which] can be met by evolving modifiable value systems". In an experiment involving a computer simulation it was found for example, that the "introduction of a modifiable value system in this model led to rich behaviour and allowed higher-order conditioning of that behaviour that was not possible under a rigid inherited value constraint" (ibid).

acquired the resilience born of adaptability. The characteristics of Greek gods and heroes appear in a perpetual state of metamorphosis, constantly remodelled by poets, dramatists, philosophers and even historians. Not even the heritage of the "Homeric epics" whose influence remained steadfast for over a thousand years could yield the kind of authority capable of dissuading deviation from an accepted norm[19]. Creativity in the context of ancient Greece thus rarely implied complete innovation, but rather transformation and constant reassessment. One need look only at the strange enigma of the absence of technical invention in Greek culture to see this, as there was a general preference for aesthetic perfection rather than technological innovation" (Griffin 2001: 7)[20]. But there were other factors as well, in particular the extent to which dialogue between the individual, and his/her inherited tradition was facilitated by some remarkable traits of that tradition: in contrast to the Judeo-Christian dogmatism which has informed so much of Western thought (Edinger 1999, Tarnas 1991). The two most culturally pervasive influences in Greek society, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* questioned and explored a number of important ideals and cultural values without providing clear solutions, or dictating moral codes. As a result, the relationship between past and present was not - as in Modernism - one of aversion, but a dialogue comparable to the poet's interaction with the Muse.

Defining creativity as primarily destructive (as favoured by the avant-garde), not only limits attempts at understanding the complex factors underlying creativity to one small aspect of a far more complex reality, but requires a view of

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19. The confusion caused by the absence of a definitive "correct" version of any of the myths or divine genealogies to those who came into contact with Greece can be seen in particular in Roman attempts to explain these inconsistencies (see section 2.1. *Possible Origins of the concept of the Muse*).

20. "Even such simple devices as the windmill and the screw were invented late and exploited little by a people ingenious enough to devise machines powered by steam. The existence of slavery does not account for this: slaves were a small part of the work-force in Greece. There was a general preference for aesthetic perfection rather than innovation" (Griffin 2001: 7). It should be noted though, that innovation need not necessarily always be mechanical: conceptual innovations such as means of observing and examining the world, and human behaviour, in pursuit of understanding and clarification, require no less creative innovation. The ideas of ancient Greek philosophers, it may be argued, had no less influence on the social, cultural, political and economic developments which produced modern Western culture than the more tangible technological advances by which it is customary to judge a society's degree of advancement.

tradition as an unyielding monolithic institution to be constantly challenged. However, where established institutions and traditions are pluralistic or flexible to the point of ready incorporation, such as multi-cultural societies, or Post-Modern relativism, they may not necessarily offer the resistance rebellion feeds on, or clear-cut principles to overturn or undermine. Instead, in such contexts, institutions and traditions tend to absorb and incorporate most variations from the norm, effectively disallowing one of the *avant garde's* fundamental principles - revelation through agitation. Nor should the high value placed on novelty and originality belie the extent to which the creative process relies on previously - communally or personally - obtained knowledge, contained by, and drawn from memory - mythical origin of creative inspiration. In the final analysis, the aspect of creativity which appears as chaotic destructivism, should be seen as part of a much larger cycle of factors, the vast majority of which are not only dependent upon interaction between existing institutions, but will eventually produce structures based on those very institutions: "Chaos theory proposes that when repetitive dynamics begin to interact with themselves they become so complex that they defy definition. Yet, from these "complex dynamics" there eventually emerge new patterns that are loosely based on the old. In other words, while chaotic systems break down order, they also reconstitute it in new forms" (Van Eenwyk 1997: 43).

My aim is thus to explore the extent to which the concept of the Muse is a useful metaphor through which to uncover underlying mechanisms of the creative process. Essentially, this will involve an overview of the history, development and possible origins of the concept[21], coupled with an analysis of what some of the main changes in the poet-Muse relationship reveal about the value various societies have placed on different types of creativity. And finally I will attempt to identify, through the concept of the Muse, some of the fundamental characteristics of the creative process.

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21. E. Spentzou and D. Fowler's *Cultivating the Muse: Struggles for Power and Inspiration in Classical Literature* (published 2002, Oxford University Press) was not yet available at the time of writing, which is regrettable, as such a comprehensive collection of classical scholars' views on this subject, would have been extremely useful in researching this paper.

fig. 3. The Nine Muses. *2nd century Roman mosaic. Trier West Germany. The Muses whose spheres of influence had been established by this point are shown with their attributes. Thalia Muse of comedy and pastoral poetry (top left corner) is clearly identifiable by the comic mask and shepherd's crook she holds, as is Urania (bottom left) by the globe. The others are obscure and less easily identifiable due to damage and bad restoration, but as Erato and Terpsichore were often depicted holding lyres they are most likely the figures in the top centre or middle right, while Calliope and Clio were associated with scrolls (top right and middle left).*

2. Historical Overview

"A classic is a work which persists as background noise even when a present that is totally incompatible with it holds sway" (Calvino 2000: 8)

The word "muse" comes from the ancient Greek *mousa*, the exact origins and age of which are unknown (see section 1. note 8; and section 2.1). Originally a mythological concept, the Muse, for most of her history closely associated with literature (poetry in particular), has also increasingly appeared in reference to a wide variety of other activities, all with one thing in common - creativity of some sort or another. As such, the history of the Muse constitutes a gradual extension of the category of activities, and types of professionals with which she is associated. Whereas the initial sphere of the Muse's influence refers to a very small category of creative output, it may be argued that the subsequent widespread adoption of the notion, appears due, not to a fundamental change in what is meant by "Muse", but rather in what was considered sufficiently creative to secure her patronage. This extension of patronage has not significantly distorted the concept beyond its original meanings, but the Muse does appear to have acquired some characteristics drawn from her additional protegés' respective traditions. Moreover, the distinctive characteristics of individual Muses were developed to a point where each of the nine had her own distinctive sphere of influence[1], and iconographically, her own hallmarks by which she could be identified. But what is of more relevance here is

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1. The nine Muses named by Hesiod served as basis for the most established canon of the type. Their attributed functions are generally as follows (but may vary from author to author): Calliope (the chief muse) is Muse of epic poetry; Clio of history; Erato of lyric choral poetry or marriage poetry; Euterpe of lyric poetry or the flute; Melpomene of tragedy; Polymnia of mime and sacred poetry (also reputedly invented mythology); Terpsichore of dance or light verse; Thalia of comedy; Urania of astronomy (see fig.3).

the emergence of two basic types of Muses, a "cerebral" (as seen in the works of Plato for example), and a "sensual" (as in Thucydides) version of the same basic concept.

The Muse seemingly predates literacy in ancient Greece (Havelock 1986; Nagy 1992), but her pre-literate existence can only really be postulated, since the majority of information regarding oral Greece is derived from much later textual sources. Moreover, Greek art of the oral period was predominantly geometric and non-figurative, and so does not provide information regarding mythology in as rich and illustrative a manner as later ceramics and art. Thus the role and character of the early Muse in non-literate Greece is inferred from her appearance in early literature such as Homer and Hesiod, and by looking at extant descriptions of similar concepts in more recent oral societies. Clearly the margin for error is much larger in such a situation. However, the universality of storytelling in all human cultures, alongside the similarity of the process by which narratives are collected and transmitted in the absence of writing makes it highly unlikely that ancient oral Greece should have radically differed (Kane 1998; Nagy 1992). Moreover, in their style and composition, the Homeric epics appear to have been built around the mnemonic formulae of oral poetry (Nagy 1992; Havelock 1986), one of which is the conventional invocation of the presiding deity of poetry. While the nature of the relationship between the oral poet and the Muse will be explored more fully in section 3.1 *Oral Poets and Public Muses*, it is important here to delineate the exact extent of the poet's role in an oral culture, and by definition, the function of the Muse.

For his information, the oral bard/singer/poet appeals to a deity at the outset, and occasionally during the course of the composition and performance of a repetoire of known stories and characters. This deity is addressed either as goddess or Muse/Muses, suggesting not the personal name of a specific entity, but of a type - such as nymph or siren[2]. At this point there is no indication of the Muse as concerned with anything other than verse and music. Other productive activities such as shipbuilding, blacksmithing, weaving and the like are described in great

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2. This aspect of the Muse does appear to confirm speculation that the cult of the Muses developed from localised worship of the nymphs of certain springs (such as the Castilian) the water of which was believed to impart the gifts of prophesy and poetry. Correlation between Nymphs and Muses reappeared in the Hellenistic period, and echo Thracian notions of the three water-nymphs (whom the Greeks identified as Muses) from which their poet/prophet-kings such as Orpheus were believed to be born (See section 2.1.2).

fig 4. Muse Seated on Mt. Helicon. *White-ground lekythos by the Achilles Painter. 440 BCE. The bird at the Muse's feet also appears in depictions of Apollo to whom the raven was sacred (fig.27), and in a 13th century engraving the four pagan poets or 'magi' are shown with black birds at their ears representing their sources of inspiration (fig.26). Birds in general symbolised mediation between heaven and earth, and as such in shamanistic belief, the Shaman was considered able to take their shape. In Ovid's* Metamorphoses, *the Muses claim to have escaped Pyreneus by "taking to our wings" (trans. Innes 1955: 123-4) although this is a rare instance of flying Muses. The association of Muses and Apollo with these symbols of mediation and prophesy recall the conflation between poet and seer in oral cultures (see section 3. Muses and Poets).*

detail in the Homeric epics, yet none of the practitioners of these arts appeal to, or describe their craft as acquired from the Muse. Yet, she is not alone in presiding over poetry: bards in Homer occasionally ascribe the ability to compose and perform as learnt from a god - usually Apollo. However, in this case what is referred to is poetic technique, a pivotal aspect of which is the ability to interact with the Muse during performance: for the goddess, not the god, is the entity in the *Odyssey* which spurs Demodocus to perform, and his primary source of information during the event. The functions of the two types of deity thus differ in significant ways. In Hesiod however, Apollo plays no role in the poet's acquisition of bardic abilities, he is approached, made a poet, and told of the genealogy of the gods by the Muses alone. There is no indication of the Muse being invoked by anyone other than bards and singers in Dark Age and Archaic Greece, at this point she is solely associated with the composition and performance of musical verse.

While this may seem a very limited field of influence from a modern point of view, the substantial difference in scope and cultural value placed on poetry in an oral culture as opposed to poetry's very limited role in modern Western society cannot be ignored. While modern music is vaguely similar to oral poetry in the

sense that it consists of verse sung/recited (as in Rap) to melody, the modern musician is not completely comparable to Homer: for while some contemporary trades certainly enjoy more public acclaim and influence than other contenders, no single modern pursuit alone encompasses the spectrum of the oral poet's source-material and cultural leverage. These poets' roles were comparable to modern entertainers, archives, newspapers, theological scriptures, philosophers, community historians, genealogists and even sociologists. Of course, in contemporary society, all of these professions have set "rules" ensuring credibility, and specific mechanisms according to which any opposition to said rules can be presented and dealt with. In other words, the practitioners of these professions are not entirely free to do exactly as they please, and the same applied to oral poets. While a certain amount of flexibility was allowed, this was in terms of presentation - a necessity given the different expectations and needs of various audiences. Content however, was not as open to personal improvisation. The poet's admission of reliance for information on the Muse is thus not a nicety - but a necessity. Her role here is not inspirational but absolutely practical: she personifies the oral poet's memorised repository of pre-extant plots, characters and traditional formulaic conventions from which he may only marginally deviate (Havelock 1986; Kane 1998; Nagy 1992). In short then, the poet's appeal to the Muse is the audience's guarantee of the reliability of his account, and that what they will hear is not the product of one person's imagination, but a segment of their cultural heritage, specifically tailored by the poet for them. Its's a tidy explanation, but there is a fundamental problem with it: if the Muses were simply a personification of the mnemonically reliant poet's source-material, would the notion not fall by the wayside with the advent of writing as means to record socially pertinent material?

It is certainly conceivable that the notion of the Muse may have persisted for a while due simply to poetic conventions or even nostalgia, but this does not account for more than two millennia's worth of adaptation and endurance. Nor does it explain the expansion of the Muses' sphere of influence, just when one might expect it to decline and even vanish. The exact initial extent of expansion is significant in that it appears to be limited to pursuits such as learning, scholarship, philosophy and letters, all of which appear to demand some type of *intellectual* proficiency. The traditional role of poets as teachers may have been a factor in this process: the application of Homer and other poets to illustrate cultural norms, honourable conduct, and religious ideas logically required the insight of those most likely to possess a comprehensive understanding of traditional poetry - poets themselves. The implication being that the additional role of poets as teachers

means this aspect of a poet's function thus also fell under the jurisdiction of their patron deities, Apollo and the Muses[3]. The presence of the cult of the Muses in education in ancient Greece served the function of transmitting the inherited social mores, values and religious beliefs of Greek culture[4].

The advent of writing as a means by which to store knowledge logically encouraged wider dissemination, not only of extant, but an ever-increasing quantity of new ideas which flourished from the sixth century BCE onwards, developed by philosophers who shared their discoveries with students, disciples and paying customers. This new breed of teachers, laid claim to their occupation as worthy of the Muses, with Pythagoras (c. 530 BCE) traditionally amongst the first to adopt the Muses and Apollo as personal deities[5]. By 450 BCE a new breed

3. Describing the education of the young, Aeschines, himself the son of a teacher, lists in the *Against Timarchus* rules governing teachers' conduct and goals, which included amongst the teacher's responsibilities the "regulat[ion of] the festivals of the Muses", and the production of "useful citizens" (Atchity 1996: 207).

4. Given the wide dissipation of Greek communities through colonisation and topography, their insistence on a uniquely Greek cultural identity separate from that of their neighbours (all in spite of their regional peculiarities) indicate some or other means of self-identification of "Greekness". In Sissa and Detienne (2000: 145-6) the Greeks' religious mythology served a unifying purpose for colonials in particular: "These gods were "mental constructs" even more than they were statues or images lying in the ships' holds. They were gods who existed in people's minds, mental representations of invisible powers that made it possible to organise the world, to think it out in a differentiated fashion, classifying its various aspects just as the model of a city ... on the basis of a particular idea of how to live and act as a community". In Nagy's (1992) view, poets such as Homer and Hesiod owed their cultural prominence to their provision of a "Pan-Hellenic" poetry, populated by a pantheon of gods which all Greeks had in common (as opposed to the localised cults of regional gods and heroes. Or even localised traditions, variants and/or genealogies of the Olympian gods).

5. According to a tradition cited by Cicero the ascetic philosopher even reputedly offered a sacrifice of a dozen oxen to the Muses upon discovering new theorems: "They do say that Pythagoras, whenever he had discovered a new theorem in geometry, used to sacrifice an ox to the Muses, but I do not believe it, because he refused even to make a sacrifice to Apollo of Delos, as he would not spill blood upon his altar" *The Nature of the Gods* III (trans McGregor 1972: 231). Blood-sacrifices to the Muses appear to be somewhat unusual, with only the Spartans apparently offering sacrifices to them before battle (Bell 1993: 314). Did the Spartans perhaps believe that such sacrifices would induce the Muses - and poets - to pay particular and favourable attention to their actions on the battle-field?

of wandering teachers called Sophists were in increasing demand to train and prepare young men for success in public and political life, where the capacity to speak convincingly and informedly in general assemblies and juries was now essential. They supplemented existing educational systems, and were amongst the first to impart their teaching by producing their own manuals and textbooks, effectively placing writing within the jurisdiction not only of preserving knowledge, but also of teaching and aiding in developing new thinkers. Luce (1997: 81) argues that the Sophists were "significant as representing the stage in linguistic development when language first became conscious of itself, and started to reflect on, and describe, its own operations". As their fundamental area of expertise was the manipulation of language, it is to be expected that many of them were also poets, such as one Evenus, reputedly versed in literary composition, oratorical devices and poetry[6].

However, while written manuals were a teaching aide to the Sophists, Plato's mastery of, and reliance on the written word must rank him as one of the earliest accomplished authors of philosophical discourse. His role in the incorporation of the concept of the Muse into new perceptions of scholarship was significant. In Plato's *Phaedo* for example, Socrates while awaiting his execution, has begun composing poetry (a hymn to Apollo and lyrics based on Aesop's fables). The reason for this he explains, is because he mistook a recurring dream exhorting him to practice "the arts" as encouraging him in his pursuit of philosophy, and now concludes the dream may have meant not "philosophy", but "poetry". Socrates' mistake is significant: the word used in the Greek is *mousikos*, which while literally translated as "music" referred of course to a whole range of activities overseen by Muses. Of these Socrates describes philosophy as "the greatest of the arts" while poetry is simply "this popular form of art", the main requirement of which is the production of stories[7]. Poets and playwrights were apparently not too enthusiastic at the prospect of sharing the Muse with philosophers such as Socrates who was viewed with particular suspicion and distrust. Aristophanes for example, fumed: "They sit at the feet of Socrates till they can't distinguish the wood from the trees, and tragedy goes to pot; they don't care whether their plays are art but only whether their words are smart" *The Frogs* (trans. Barrett 1964: 211). Moreover, Plato even contends that poets and philosophers share a similar concern - the

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6. According to a later tradition he instructed Socrates in poetry.

7. "[A] poet, if he is to be worthy of the name, ought to work on stories, not discourses" Plato, *Phaedo* 61b (trans. Tredennick & Tarrant 1993: 113).

unreliability of the senses in the soul's quest for truth: "is there any certainty in human sight and hearing or is it true, as the poets are always dinning into our ears, that we neither see nor hear anything accurately?" *Phaedo* 65b (trans. Tredennick & Tarrant: 1993: 118). Were philosophers simply attempting to allay the fears raised by their propensity to question and challenge convention by associating their enterprise with the custodians of communal values - the Muses? It is certainly ironic that the same Plato who so rails against poets with their dependence upon possession/inspiration by/from the Muse, for their "morally worthless" information (as opposed to dialectically concluded knowledge) in *Ion*, should honour these same deities in his school[8].

Plato and later Aristotle, became the first teachers of higher learning not to wander from place to place, but to found permanent teaching schools in Athens in the fourth century BCE. Their institutions became prototypical for all subsequent schools and universities. The Academy was organised as a *thiasos* (group of worshippers) under the patronage of the Muses and "was organized as a cult group, the ancient equivalent in law of a corporate body, and this enabled the property to be vested in the members of the school, and transmitted down the centuries for the continuance of the founder's intentions. The stated object of the cult was appropriate - the worship of the Muses" (Luce 1997: 96). Plato had clear ideas regarding the requirements for learning: a teacher who imparts knowledge - as opposed to personal discovery; and the capacity to explain what has been learnt,

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8. This may conceivably indicate that Plato's concern was not with the Muses as source of knowledge, but rather the means by which knowledge was acquired, i.e. the poet's methodology as opposed to the philosopher's. In Plato's *Ion* Socrates appears to argue that poets and rhapsodes depend on possession (madness) more than skill (*techne*) for a specific reason: "For he believed *morality* to be a skill, acquired by dialectic; and if that skill could ever be discovered, it would lead to conduct far different from the models of human behaviour offered by the poets ... [thus rejecting] the claims of the poets and rhapsodes to be teachers of morality" (Saunders 1987: 41). Since the poet is a "passive recipient", his comprehension of the knowledge he transmits will be inferior to that of the philosopher - an "active inquisitor" who can teach this ability to others, instead of simply transmitting inherited knowledge as codified by long-dead poets. The *Ion* has been much maligned for the weakness of its argument, but what is particularly strange about Plato's view is the role played by skill. Plato in this respect is pretty much at odds with the majority of sentiment ever since: one of the principal reasons why certain creative fields such as the plastic arts - and sculpture in particular - were long denied the status of poetry and music was their perceived over-reliance on *techne*, and general lack of intellectual and/or divine inspiration (see sections 3 and 3.3).

i.e. to understand what has been learnt sufficiently to impart it to someone else. Proper learning was thus not achieved by simply training someone in holding the "right" opinions, nor was it something which could be achieved without the aid of a knowledgeable other. In the *Phaedo* (73a) learning is equated with recollection. Plato thus (in spite of himself) conceives of learning in a manner similar to an oral poet receiving the knowledge he reveals to his audience from his storehouse of memorised material i.e. the Muses, daughters of memory. It is arguable that the retention of the Muses, after the introduction of writing may have been aided by their association with memory and its processes. For while writing is currently conceived of as a substitute for personal memory ("artificial memory") the ancient Greeks verb *anaginôskô* "to read" reveals a conception of reading as reliant on personal memory - as it literally translates as "to know again"[9]. Reading, like learning, was thus considered no less reliant upon memory than the composition of oral poetry. Thus, the use of writing to record knowledge, advance learning and sustain social values - far from rendering the Muse obsolete - only served to entrench the identification of the concept as commensurate with all facets of knowledge. Hence, the practice of collecting and storing manuscripts in places sacred to the Muses - the foundation of museums and libraries.

The use of writing in the composition and distribution of poetry, had a distinctive impact on the role of the Muse in a manner both similar and dissimilar to philosophy. While poetry was increasingly textually recorded from Homer onwards, it was still primarily experienced through performance by professional *rhapsodes* who did not simply read to text, but memorised their material beforehand, and recited without constant reference to the written format. The

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9. Plato's theory of Ideals is echoed to some degree in recent studies regarding the workings of the brain, and specifically the role played by recollection and interpretation in processing new information. According to these, all new experiences are understood in terms of pre-extant expectations, and prior experiences of similar objects and/or events. The brain can thus be said to hold "ideal" versions of objects - acquired at some point in its past - which is recalled whenever similar objects are encountered and with which they are then compared. Edelman & Tononi (2001: 109) define this as "the remembered present" and argue that it forms an essential basis for the emergence of primary consciousness: "What is new perceptually can be incorporated in short order into memory that arose from previous categorizations. The ability to construct a conscious scene is the ability to construct, within fractions of seconds, a remembered present ... with such a process in place, an animal would be able ... to plan and link contingencies constructively and adaptively ... it would have greater selectivity in choosing its responses to a complex environment".

invocation of the Muse is still present, and formalised enough to suggest a pervasive poetic convention. However, what is significant is that her perceived interaction is with the composer not the performer. Thus, while in oral poetry the Muse is repeatedly invoked during each performance - even of the same story or poem, the literate Muse is primarily present at the singular instance of a poem's composition and recording in writing, and not automatically during performance by either its author, or another performer (see section 3.2. *Literate Poets and Private Muses*). The "praise-poetry" of Pindar (518-442/438 BCE) is characteristic of early literate poetry, and was constructed along very precise lines and strictures which still echoed those of oral poetry. The poet's general attitude is one of great piety, and like Homer and Hesiod still boasts of a unique relationship with the Muses, claiming to have received his mandate from them personally[10]. Yet his professional conceit in his own ingenuity is nonetheless evident in *Paean 7b* for example, where he professes to not simply work within a traditional framework, but invent his own poetry[11]. In spite of this claim, and in spite of Pindar's distinctive poetic "voice", he nonetheless adheres to Homeric and Hesiodic formulae in certain important areas, specifically using similar terminology when speaking of, or to, the Muses. As Eustathius, in his commentary on the *Iliad* already points out when he compares Pindar's "Prophecy, Muse, and I will be your mouthpiece" (*Pindar frag.* 150 trans. Conway & Stoneman 1997: 387) to Homer's own invocations of the Muse. Likewise, Homeric and Hesiodic formulae appear in sections such as *Paean* 6[12]. As this type of poetry was often commissioned and composed for a specific client - usually to celebrate a sporting victory - the poet's economic dependence upon his patron is undeniable, as is his occasional resentment, and fear of loss of poetic integrity. He suggests as much in *Pythian* II where he complains: "Ah, Muse, 'tis yours', if you agreed to hire your voice for pay or silver fee, to praise now one name, then another" (trans. Conway & Stoneman 1997: 183), and in *Isthmian 2*: "For then the Muse had not yet bowed to love of gain, or made herself a hireling journeyman; nor in the market clad in masks of silver did honey-tongued

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10. " The Muse made me the supreme herald of wise words for Hellas and the lovely dancers" Pindar, *Dithyramb 2* (trans. Conway & Stoneman 1997: 356)

11 "... sing hymns going not along the trodden path of Homer but with different horses" Pindar, *Paean 7b*(trans. Conway & Stoneman 1997: 337).

12. "How did the [strife] of the immortals begin?" The gods can persuade the wise of these things, but mortals cannot discover them. But you, Muses - for you know all things (you share this dignity with the dark Cloudfather and with Mnemosyne) - hear me now" Pindar, *Paean* 6 (trans. Conway & Stoneman 1997: 332).

Terpsichore barter her gentle-voiced and sweetly-sung refrains" (trans. Conway & Stoneman 1997: 283). At this point, "Muse" no longer refers only to a mythological construct, but serves as metaphor for the enterprise of poetry as a whole, a practice still in use.

A shift in the relationship between the poet and his audience, along with the audience's expectations of the poem is discernible from poets such as Pindar on. For while Homer describes bards performing before an audience dining in the hall of some great lord, Pindar's audience no longer expects the presence of the poet, a *rhapsode* performing a commissioned poem will also do, while the subject of the poem is in praise not only of gods and mythical heroes, but of human individuals as well. The setting is also different, performance now often took place during symposia, an environment where the expression of individual opinions was encouraged, and took on a competitive aspect (Conway & Stoneman 1997). I would suggest, a poet who wished to impress such an audience would have benefited from developing an individual "voice" or style by which to distinguish himself from other poets, and so heighten his popularity. Pindar's occasional boast of not reverting to clichés, but of devising his own metaphors, are thus indicative of a type of poetry where idiosyncratic elaboration on traditional themes is valued as much (if not more) than blind adherence to long-standing poetic conventions. Since important cultural or mythical information could now be entrusted to manuscripts, poets posed little threat to the collective cultural memory and value-system when incorporating their own individual ideas and interpretations into their work. Some poets, such as Pindar's contemporary (and according to some - his mentor) Korinna (*c.* 510 BCE) used the freedom writing offered to reassess the same stories their oral predecessors had mnemonically preserved. In her rendition of the story of the singing contest between Helicon and Kithaion, she reveals an attribute of the Muses which also occurs elsewhere: the Muses as referees, arbiters and judges (at the contest between Apollo and Marsyas). Later they were even described keeping the register of conscript deities in Apuleius' *Golden Ass.* Thus, they are presented as charged with maintaining social order and harmony (a notion further explored in 2.1.1.1 *Music of the Spheres*). Korinna specialised in Boeotian myths and legends, but the new-found capacity to explore - rather than preserve - old stories provided many a poet, as well as the playwrights of fifth-century Athens, with a wealth of new material.

The retention of traditional conventions from which to launch innovation resulted in a wide variety of works, which in spite of the relative brevity of the period of their creation (approximately one century), are still produced, interpreted

and enjoyed by people from a variety of cultures, exercising widespread influence. Fifth-century tragedy arose from a collision between traditional values and new "languages of persuasion", advances in philosophy, and changes in political and social systems. Unlike archaic poetry with its distinct purpose to preserve and transmit religious and cultural norms, tragedy as an urban, civic invention, served to evaluate the individual's experience within a civic environment with its own unique set of problems and shifting values[13]. In Aeschylus' (525 -465 BCE) *Eumenides* for example, Athena represents the Athenian citizenry for whom, and by whom these plays were written and performed. In the play, the city-state's values triumph over the archaic demands for vengeance from the Erinyes because they were "proven" superior in a court of justice by means of legal argumentation, impartial judgement (by a jury of Athenian citizens) and eventual mediation, which sees the bloodthirsty Erinyes transformed into the Eumenides (blessed/ kindly ones)[14]. Tragedies were the creations of distinct individuals with known political and social opinions and affiliations, who were mostly on equal terms with their audience. As Burian (1999: 206) emphasises, their examination of "the tensions between heroic legend and democratic ideology" encouraged non-traditional approaches to myth and legend, while the competitive framework in which tragedies were composed and performed (nine new productions annually) demanded constant novelty. In Athenian tragedy "innovation serves not only its obvious function of differentiation among repeated enactment of myth in the ritualised setting of tragic performance, but also pushes to the limit the search for truth in myth, for the authentic token of cultural identity and meaning" (Burian 1999: 206)[15]. In tragedy, the continued employment of Homeric themes, characters and even phrases emphasises the relationship these new plays enjoy with the extant tradition. Hence, even when the tragedian changes the story, or shifts the emphasis, the inevitable and constant presence of the original will still form an

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13. Hall (1999: 97) states that the "standard setting of tragedy came to be a house within a polis, or a house-surrogate within a polis-surrogate such as a tent in a military encampment".

14. Like his Apollo, Aeschylus' Athena has no qualms about challenging ancient mores and beliefs on the grounds of their innate unfairness, i.e. rational proof vs. blind superstition.

15. Goldhill (1999: 129) reminds that "Homer holds a privileged place in Athenian cultural life. His epic poems, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey,* played an integral role in the education, institutions and ideology of the polis. They were the main teaching texts in schools, and ... provided a resource of normative images of the world and ways to relate to the world that informed all aspects of Athenian culture"

integral part of the meaning and impact of the play. In this dialectic between the tragedian's present and his society's past, tradition is crucial in that it provides the author with a starting point - something to reassess, reaffirm, or even refute.

Where tragedy both adheres to, and differs from conventional means of storytelling is the chorus. The notion of a singing, dancing chorus echoed traditional ritual practices. Easterling (1999: 157) reminds that " long before tragedy was invented at Athens ... the Greeks in general had been familiar with groups of worshippers who expressed their devotion to particular deities and celebrated festival occasions through richly varied patterns of song and dance. It is no accident that the Muses themselves were imagined as a divine *choros* singing and dancing in honour of their father Zeus to the accompaniment of Apollo's lyre; this was the paradigm image for performance in the Greek polis". In tragedy the chorus served as intermediary between audience and the events on stage, helping to decode the meaning of the events by providing crucial insight and information[16]. The chorus serves to connect not only audience with performance, but also the actuality of participating in a ritual as part of the City Dionysia and a mythical world conjured by a playwright. Like the Muse, the chorus thus participates in the story, while still being the conventional means by which the audience receives the "truth" behind the characters.

It can be argued that the very ambivalence of the cultural and social values expressed in Ancient Greece's traditional poetic canon not only enabled, but even encouraged the degree to which tragic authors could explore and deviate from the originals. Taplin (2001: 68) argues that if "the 'Heroic Code' were agreed and beyond dispute, there would be no real conflict. In fact the criteria for approval and disapproval are open for consideration; and much of the power of the *Iliad* comes from its lack of moral simplicity and consistency". The frustrating inconsistency, the amoral behaviour of the gods depicted in it, and its conflictingly flawed yet idealised heroes meant that the *Iliad* was particularly open to interpretation and could offer no definitive guidance on moral, religious or ethical behaviour. Ancient philosophers like Plato decried the absurdity of attempting to use the behaviour of the gods in Homer and other ancient authors as template for

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16. Easterling (1999: 165) explains that "the chorus combines witnessing with trying to understand, and its guidance is intellectual or even philosophical as well as emotional ... Their language thus directs the audience to the problems of interpretation presented by the action ...(however) choruses typically fail to see what is clear to the audience, but at the same time they have the power to speak with authoritative wisdom ... and thus to offer guidance at the deepest level of understanding".

human codes of moral conduct. But while ancient philosophers may have derided the epics' lack of clarity and consistency, it was in all probability these very characteristics which encouraged the unprecedented intensity of analysis, derision and revision by Greek authors and scholars of their traditional literature. With this critical attitude came a conception of the Muse in literary symbolism which differed from its application in other fields in one significant aspect: the Muse appears as a conservative element in an innovative environment, a situation encapsulated in the conflict of interest between Muse and Athena in the tragedy *Rhesus.*

Athena was conventionally the goddess of wisdom, skill and strategy (as in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*), as well as the personification of the progressive and rationalist spirit propagated by the city-state which bore her name. However, her close association with Odysseus in the Homeric epics, alongside Athens' growing imperialist attitude during the fifth-century (and the disastrous consequences thereof) indicated less favourable aspects of the goddess, which in the play, is the source of the Muse's hostility towards her. Athena's favourite in the Homeric epics - Odysseus - was both praised and disliked for his cunning and manipulative skills in Greek and later, Roman literary critique. In *Rhesus* Athena's role as Odysseus' protector and advisor suggests that the goddess, by approving and encouraging him in his tactics to some extent participates in his duplicitous character. When mourning her son Rhesus' death, the Muse even blames Athena for manipulating Odysseus and Diomedes into committing the murder. She knows Athena engineered the entire affair, and laments her devious conduct and ingratitude (the Muses blessed Athens by sending the city poets such as Orpheus and Musaeus). She then predicts her revenge: "Henceforth no other learned man I'll bring to thee". Thus, Athens' underhanded martial victories will come at the cost of great cultural losses[17]. This view of the Muse in conflict with Athena is intriguing in the light of the association of both with scholarship and philosophy. However, in the *Rhesus* it appears their contrast is based not on their intellectual symbolism but the conflicting value-systems they personify: while Athena supports the subterfuge of Odysseus and Diomedes as legitimate means to wage war, the Muse's Thracian and

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17. Ironically, the Muse's warning is applicable to tragedy - the genre could not maintain its cultural dominance after Athens lost the Peloponnesian War. As the date and authorship of *Rhesus* is unclear (some scholars ascribe it to Euripides which would place it in the fifth century, others consider it to have been written as late as the fourth) it cannot be stated with any certainty whether the Muse's revenge may have been a later author's commentary on the demise of Athens' most unique cultural product - tragedy.

Trojan favourites exemplify a more traditional "ritualistic" honour-based notion of conduct and warfare[18]. Nor is the matter as simple as Argave vs. Trojan: the Muse expresses sympathy for Thetis as Achilleus will fight and die a "true" warrior. Her quarrel with Athena involves her distaste with the juncture where Odysseus' cunning mutated into base immorality. Creativity of the kind exemplified by Museaeus and Orpheus is thus connected to respect for customs and traditions governing honourable conduct. Odysseus who won the shield of Achilles due to his slick tongue from the less eloquent, but respected warrior Ajax; and Diomedes who had the temerity to injure Aphrodite in battle, embody a very different code of conduct which prizes individual initiative over respect for tradition. These notions reveal the degree to which creative production was interconnected with notions of piety and adherence to cultural norms. The Muse is thus depicted as a conservative - almost reactionary - force, but also a foreign entity somewhat alien to Athenian habits (but not cultural ideals)[19].

While tragedies were carefully constructed to provide the illusion of transporting the audience to a fictional mythical world, comedy (introduced to the Greater Dionysia in 488/7 BCE) often stripped the theatrical illusion bare, addressing not only the issues of the day, but sometimes the act of staging and watching a play itself. Thus, comedies not only exhibited a remarkable self-awareness of their own illusory quality, but also an acute recognition of their dialectic with their audience, the kind of give-and-take found in oral poetry and the poet's interaction with the Muse. Moreover, words spoken and ideas expressed in a comedy could have repercussions in the "real" world, as exemplified by Aristophanes (448/5 - 386/80 BCE) who found himself in court at least twice[20]. Yet, in juxtaposition to such constant allusions to actual persons and events, a larger variety of creatures populate these plays: ranging from the divine (gods like Dionysus, Pluto etc.) to satyrs, nymphs, frogs, dogs, clouds, corpses on their way to Hades, and even a set of cooking utensils. It is then not surprising to come across the odd Muse here and there, yet the manner in which they are depicted is

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18. Rhesus describes Odysseus' tactics as befitting only a coward: "No brave man deigns to his foe in secret, but to meet him face to face".

19. This notion of the Muse not as Greek, but an import from less rational, more superstitious neighbours rapidly gained ground from the classical period onwards and will be discussed in 2.1.2 *The Thracian Connection*.

20. Eventually, the comedian's 'licence' to poke fun at prominent politicians, generals and leaders caused no small amount of discomfort, and was "revoked" in 415, when a law was passed prohibiting the use of actual person's names in comedies.
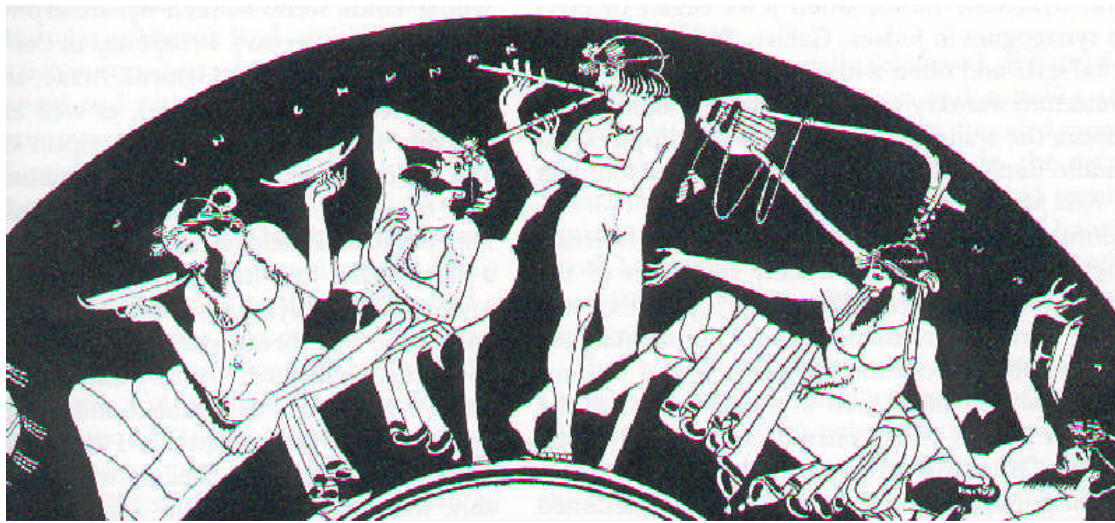
fig. 5. Symposium-scene *on an early 5th-century Athenian drinking cup. The nude female flute-player at the centre was most likely one of the professional entertainers and female companions* (hetairai) *representing amongst others Dionysus, Aphrodite and the Muses (Murray 1998: 697) at symposia. Such practices reveal a different aspect to the lofty virgin Muses found in Hesiod, Plato or Pindar. These "Dionysian" Muses are associated more with pleasure, conversation and seduction (encapsulated in lyric poetry composed for the event) than religious knowledge, wisdom or morality. Did Aristophanes perhaps have a girl like the one in this image in mind for Euripides' Muse?*

very revealing of changes in perception of the concept. On the one hand, the Muse is very clearly designated as a mythical and somewhat exotic creature, but on the other the quality of a poet's verse is equated with the quality of his Muse, as occurs in Aristophanes' *Frogs*: In this play Aeschylus insults Euripides' works by equating his Muse with a dancing girl.[21] This passage illustrates the notion of each poet differing in source of inspiration, as much as style and content. Thus, not only does the Muse no longer limit her attention to poets, a dignified traditionalist such as Aeschylus does not have the same type of Muse as a rabble-rouser like Euripides. But the most intriguing part of this passage is not only the allegorical identification

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21. "If I make use of traditional elements in my lyrics, I do at least take them from a respectable source and make them serve an artistic purpose. There is more than one kind of flower in the garden of the Muses - why should I pluck the same ones as Phrynichus or anyone else? But this man [Euripides] flings in bits and pieces from all over the place. He gets his inspiration from the brothel or the drinking-club; his lyrics are full of the rhythms of the dance-floor ... I'll show you what I mean. Bring me a lyre - no, a lyre's too good for this sort of thing: where's that girl with the castanets? [then pointing at a very saucy-looking dancing-girl he exclaims] ... Aha! The Muse of Euripides! Come along my dear, stand over here. Just the right accompaniment for this kind of lyric" Aristophanes, *The Frogs* (trans. Barrett 1964: 203).

of an actual woman with a Muse, but that the highly erotic attributes of the dancing-girl in question qualify her for the job. Aristophanes was poking fun of course, but both these associations were to become - and still are - inseparable aspects of what is meant by "Muse", and herald the emergence of the "sensual" or Dionysian variant of the concept of the Muse.

While Aristophanes ends his *Frogs* bemoaning the impact of philosophy on Athenian society's appreciation of the arts, it was the philosopher Plato - himself largely contemptuous of artists and poets - who was instrumental in cementing the notion of a specific woman as a Muse when he declared Sappho the tenth Muse: "Some say nine Muses - but count again. Behold the tenth: Sappho of Lesbos.'" (Atchity 1996: 58-9). By Hellenistic times, the conflation of specific woman with Muse was to be entrenched to the extent that Ptolemy IV Philopator's wife Arsinoë III (*c.*235-205BCE) came to be worshipped as the tenth Muse, while the first century CE epigrammatist Antipater of Thessalonika could speak of a canon of women poets as human equivalents of the Muses[22]. But Plato also conceived of the Muse in a seemingly contradictory manner: in *Cratylus* 428c. he writes of a Muse as being inside the philosopher Socrates: "And so, Socrates, your oracular utterances seem to me to be much to my mind, whether you are inspired by Euthypro or some other Muse has dwelt within you all along without our knowing it". Moreover, he compares the Muse to a seer - in this case Euthypro. While the notion of Muses as oracular deities is already ancient at this point, the concept of a deity within a person is more recent, yet draws on ancient beliefs regarding the exact manner of interaction between those individuals chosen by the gods, and their divine sources of information (Apollo possessing the Pythia for example). However, this inner Platonic Muse is clearly not the kind who drives her host to a frenzied madness, as was the perceived case with the Corybantes (Dodds 1951), this is Socrates after all, whose Muse will exemplify his own attributes of wisdom, curiosity and intellectual vigour.

While notions of the Muse as symbolic of scholarship and intellectual achievement were to prove influential, another type of Muse - one already hinted at partly by Hesiod and wholly by Aristophanes - emerges in the poetry of the

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22. "These are the divine-voiced women that Helicon fed with song, Helicon and Macedonian Piera's rock: Praxilla; Moero; Anyte, the female Homer; Sappho, glory of the Lesbian women with lovely tresses; Erinna; renowned Telesilla; and you Corinna, who sang the martial shield of Athena; Nossis, the tender-voiced, and dulcet-toned Myrtis - all craftswomen of eternal pages. Great Heaven gave birth to nine Muses and Earth to these nine, the deathless delight of mortals" Antipater (trans. Atchity 1996: 170).

post-classical period. The sensual, Dionysian "pastoral" Muse as established in the work of Theocritus (*c.* 300 BCE - ?) exhibited different aspects to the cerebral, Apollonian epic Muse, effectively resulting in two diverse dialects of the same basic idea. The main difference lies in the extent of the Muses' perceived physicality. In Homer - with the exception of the narrative of Thamyris - the generally unnamed Muse is more or less omnipresent, heard only by the poet, and largely invisible. By contrast, the pastoral Muse is as visible and tangible as a nymph. Her interaction with the poet is thus far more visual. Thus, while Homer never professes to seeing his Muses, he only hears them - nor does (or could) his blind bard Demodocus, Hesiod by contrast not only meets the Muses while tending his flock, but even physically interacts with them when they present him with a staff. This physicality extends to the characteristics of the pastoral Muse as she develops from Theocritus onwards a full-blown sensuality, largely absent from the traditionally sage (and virgin) Muse.

The rustic poet and his Muse was of course not Theocritus' invention, and appears as early as Homer and Hesiod[23], but Theocritus furnishes the concept with its own distinctive voice and subject-matter. Credited with inspiring amongst others, Moschus, Bion and a school of epigrammatists (in Hellenistic Greece), Virgil, and Calpurnius Siculus (in Rome), Theocritus' influence can be detected even in the post-Renaissance world (the Alexandrian poets were particularly responsible for the transfer of Greek poetry to the Romans from whom Europeans later acquired it). Poets of this era were faced with a problem not unlike that of the post-modernist: what to select and what to omit from numerous cultural traditions at their disposal, and the inescapable presence of a highly influential literary inheritance. Since every grand theme had already been articulated by a canon of old masters, poets of this era (with rare exceptions such as Apollonius Rhodius) preferred "small" intimate themes, resulting in a new type of poetry. Wells (1989: 22-3) speaks of a "redefinition of the language and forms of poetry; in the isolation of a narrowly literary element in poetry, enigmatic in its self-sufficiency and capable of great fluidity of meaning; and in the determination of the relation between learning and poetry, between the *doctus poeta* - the educated poet - and the

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23. As seen in the myth of Apollo as *Musagetes*, the best-known shepherd-god, and poets such as Hesiod, who claimed to be not only a simple farmer, but even to have been herding his flocks when approached by the Muses, provide evidence of this type as innate to Greek opinions of poets. Even Homer, whose emphasis falls more on the aristocratic warrior-class than peasants, hints at this with his inclusion of two piping herdsmen in the description of the shield of Achilles (Homer, *Il.* 18. 525f.). For more on poets as herders see section 3. *Muses and Poets.*

tradition from which he drew his material". Consequently, bucolic poetry is characterised by an apparent contradiction: on the one hand the poet reveals an intellectual's cultivated insight (in Theocritus' case an Alexandrian urbanity) juxtaposed with a rural - albeit romanticised - candour.

The term "bucolic" comes from Theocritus himself and is derived from "cowherd", and is used by the herders who populate the *Idylls* to describe their songs. Thus, while the poetic persona is a shepherd or goatherd, the actual poet is an educated city-dweller. Wells (1989: 24) argues that in the poems, poet and persona are aware of, and influenced by each other: "... the herdsman conceals the Alexandrian scholar-poet. The degree to which both worlds are present varies greatly from poem to poem and also within a poem. It is sometimes hard to know which predominates, or the point at which one shades into the other. Theocritus likes to play on this ambiguity. The herdsman draws on the poet's learning and refinement, and is also a figure on whom the pains and pleasures of the poet and his friends are projected"[24]. Paradoxically, such evocations of rural life only developed once literary audiences had become predominantly urbanised, hence the associated romanticism. Unlike newly-founded cities such as Alexandria, in which Hellenistic culture rarely extended into the foreign countryside, the old Greek *polis* was by definition not only the city, but also its surrounding farmland and countryside. This pastoral idealisation was to be a recurring theme throughout Europe for centuries, and always saw a new revival whenever large urban centres developed. In eighteenth century England the countryside was considered a paradise of health, plenty and ease, a notion which upset the country parson

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24. The depiction of Muses in Theocritus' bucolic poems reveals them wavering between the poet's application of his knowledge of poetic convention, and vivid religious entity in the fictional (and simplistic) herdsmen's eyes. In *Idyll I (The Passion of Daphnis)* the invocation of the Muse is integrated into the poem in the form of a repetitive refrain. Such an invocation also appears at the beginning of another song-within-a-poem in *Idyll* 10 (*The Reapers*). These herders enjoy a relationship with the Muses which has been consciously modelled on Hesiod's. In *Idyll* 7 (*The Harvest Festival*) the speaker boasts "I, too have been given a clear voice by the Muses" and later "I too have kept a flock in the hills. The Nymphs there have made me their pupil and taught me many songs" (trans. Wells 1989: 83-5). Such references to Muses as "the nymphs" effectively conflate the rustic cult of Pan and the nymphs with that of Apollo and the Muses, but also reflect the by then prevalent belief that the Muses were Thracian in origin, and central to Thracian myth was the cult of three water-nymphs from whom poet-kings like Rhesus and Orpheus had been born (see section 2.1.2. *The Thracian Connection.*
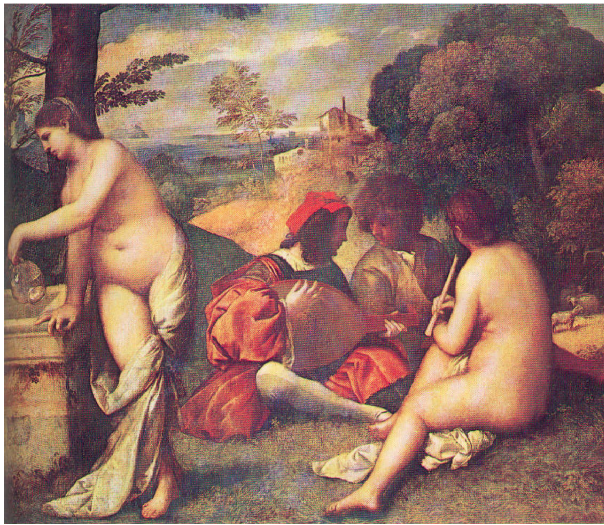
fig.6. Pastoral Symphony *c. 1508. Giorgione and/or Titian. One of the most intriguing aspects of this image concerns the relationship between the male and female figures, the former, rapt in conversation appear either to not see or acknowledge the latter, which has prompted speculation as to the identity of the female figures: are they nymphs or even Muses (the presence of musical instruments and the fountain may indicate as much).*

fig.7. Le Déjeneur sur l'Herbe. *1863. Édouard Manet. The inclusion of two artists and two women widely known to be their usual nude models caused great controversy, yet the basic theme is similar to its 16th-century predecessor: two "poets" relaxing in an artificial paradise (a park in Paris in this case) in the company of their "muses". One of the main differences though, is the principal female figure who directly engages the viewer.*

George Crabbe so much, he sought to dispel it with the following retort: "Yes, thus the Muses sing of happy Swains, Because the Muses never knew their pains. O'ercome by labour and bow'd down by time, Feel you the barren flattery of a rhyme?" (Bronowski 2002: 260). Crabbe's deflation of the pastoral idyll is to the point, in that bucolic poetry is primarily written by well-educated urbanites, not the happy shepherds of popular imagination. This pastoral Muse appears to be little more than a Marie-Antoinette playing at being a shepherdess in the gardens of Versailles. However, the recurrent popularity of the pastoral ideal is intimately connected with the very loaded symbolism of nature in Western civilisation - from nature as perfect source of knowledge in alchemy, to unsullied paradise in everything from religious thought to philosophical and artistic escapism. Nature in Calvino's (1997: 54) reading of Frye is "the ideal society, which mourns the dead hero (in elegy) or accepts the runaway hero (in pastoral)". Thus, while the traditional epic Muse transmits the perceived values of a perfect heroic society from the mythical past, the pastoral Muse represents a simple paradise presumed to

somehow exist in an ideal place removed from the harshness of urban reality[25].

While poets were liberated to explore new avenues by the introduction of writing, the subsequent shift in responsibility for preserving crucial information from oral poets to written records produced a new problem: poets were now at the mercy of a market less than willing to pay more than a pittance for poetry. Like Pindar, Theocritus expresses the literate poet's frustration at the notion of poetry as a commodity to be tailored to the needs and vanities of specific clients, rather than fulfilling its former function to society as a whole. His fear of the potential cultural losses incurred is evident in works such as *Idyll* 16 (*The Graces*)[26] and *Idyll* 22 (*The Dioscuri*)[27]. Wealthy citizens in his view can display their piety to gods and heroes by making it possible for poets to preserve their fame for future generations to enjoy. Referring to Odysseus and the heroes of the *Odyssey* he writes: "Great names, but they would have vanished all alike if the blind Ionian had not come to their rescue. Though living men make free with a dead man's goods, the Muses' gift of fame can never be taken" *Idyll 16.* (trans. Wells 1989: 108). The bucolic Muse thus encapsulates not only the urban intellectual's yearning for an idealised pastoral existence free from the cares and complexities of the modern city, but also the poet's dissatisfaction with the revised status of poetry as something to be purchased like the products of ordinary craftsmen. While Pindar had already bemoaned the shift in poetry's status into a commodity, by Theocritus' time it can be argued that the physical textual recordings of the poems themselves have become synonymous with poetry[28]. This seems a banal statement, yet it is easy to

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25. The pervasiveness of the notion of nature as beneficent paradise in Western culture is only really apparent when turned on its head as Brodsky (1988: 72) does in *Bust of Tiberius* where he addresses the Roman tyrant: "You were surely a monster, though perhaps more monstrous was your indifference. But isn't it monsters - not victims no - that nature generates in her own likeness? ... with stony looks hewn out of stone, you look like a durable organic engine of pure annihilation ... And to defend you from harsh tongues is like defending oak trees from leaves".

26. "[T]he proper task of Zeus's daughters and of poets is to celebrate the god's and great men's lives" Theocritus, *Idyll* 16 (*The Graces*) (trans. Wells 1989: 107).

27. "All poets are cherished by Castor and Pollux, by Helen and the heroes ... They owe their glory to a poet ... Poems are the gift which gods are most grateful for" Theocritus, *Idyll 22 (The Dioscuri)* (trans. Wells 1989: 122).

28. Consider the extent to which modern authors are reliant upon the number of copies their books are likely to sell, to be published in the first place. The author's value to the publisher is in line with the economic value of the physical objects his/her ideas produce.

forget that in a literate environment language ceases to be the sound of a voice only, but also becomes a tangible thing to be examined once fossilised in text (Sanders 1995). Poetry's commodification may be linked to its changing status from ephemeral sounds to scribbles on parchment or paper. While the former can be temporarily "hired", the latter can be bought and owned permanently. Thus the transition of the Muse herself into a more physical being is understandable, as is the accompanying increase in sensual characteristics which such physicality engenders. Moreover, it may be argued that when poetry and philosophy become objects (books, manuscripts) which can be bought, stored, and destroyed[29], other fields of creative activity hitherto considered separate from the Muse no longer seem so different. Thus it is to be expected that it is the pastoral Muse who should be more dominant in fields such as the plastic arts.

Anther factor in the emergence of the more physical Muse is the exploration of the individual human quirks and inner motives of their characters - including female ones. One particular example being the Medea in Apollonius of Rhodes' (295 - 274 BCE) *Voyage of the Argo*. While long for its day, Apollonius' interpretation of the traditional epic format was considerably shorter than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, providing a prototype for subsequent poets such as Virgil, Dante and Milton. Apollonius differs from his predecessors in important ways: Jason, his main protagonist and hero of myth, is not a hero in the tradition of Odysseus, Achilles, Aias or Hector. The success of his voyage primarily depends on Hera's anger towards Pelias, and his ability to trade on his good looks. He's an unskilled leader, easily disheartened, and prone to self-pity - a truly reluctant hero. The character in *Voyage of the Argo* closest to the Homeric hero is Idas whose expression of disgust at Jason's reliance on Medea may betray the author's

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29. The survival of ancient authors' works came to rely entirely on the approval by, and subsequent survival of, the influential libraries of Greece and Rome: "Acceptance into a great library marked a work as authentic (Dictys Cretensis p.3 II Eisenhout) or politically acceptable (Hor. *Epist.*1. 3. 17; Ov *Tr* 3. I. 59 ff.) ... But favour could do nothing against fire (the Palatine Library burnt down under Nero or Titus again in AD 191, finally in 363); mould and the worst enemy of the Muses (*Anth. Pal. 9. 251*), worm, put paid to many immortalities" (Parsons 1998, 415). The literate Muses' worst enemy is thus no longer a Thamyris who challenges the authority of the memorised canon, but the multiple means by which the ideas stored in the "artificial memory-banks" (books, computers, visual and audial recordings, etc.) of a culture can be lost to future generations. Yet, in both scenarios the aim is to prevent any loss of memory, irrespective of the form it takes.

self-awareness of the difference between his own work and the masters'[30]. Idas' tirade against their reliance on women is particularly ironic, given the motivation behind the whole Trojan war (Helen), the impact on the war of Achilles' anger (at losing Briseis) and the reasons Odysseus takes so very long to get home to Penelope (Circe and Calypso). Apollonius' Jason is at least resigned to the inescapable presence, and influence of these women in the Argonauts' adventures. Jason even justifies his actions in the light of Theseus' use of Ariadne to get what he wants. (Once Medea has served her purpose, she will, like Ariadne be dumped by the hero for another woman).

Apollonius begins his revision of the epic with a statement of divine inspiration from Apollo himself[31]. Appeals to the Muses appear late (books three and four where he deals with Jason and Medea), and when Apollonius does invoke his Muse, he calls specifically on Erato, asking her to "stand by me and take up the tale" (trans. Rieu 1971: 109), admitting to doing so for a specific reason: Erato (whose name is derived from *eros*) shares Aphrodite's capacities, and it is with Aphrodite's help that Athena and Hera plan to have the heroes succeed. Significantly, the character - Medea - about whose actions and motives the poet questions the Muse, is generally considered the most vivid in *Voyage of the Argo*, and at the outset of book four, Apollonius insists on his inability to fathom her motives on his own[32]. While Apollonius is clearly using established formulae of the archaic epic - such as invocations of the Muse - the context in which these appeals appear in the poem, reveals a poet aware of the limits of his own knowledge: not of a battle list, or an accurate description of who died where and at whose hand. Such information can be gleaned from the numerous books on mythology which were available to Hellenistic scholars and poets - but not the complex motives and inner conflicts of a girl about to betray her family because she is infatuated with an attractive stranger. The poet must imagine these himself, and thus, in spite of its apparent convention and mannerism, there is a genuine appeal for insight beyond the poet's immediate own. Apollonius' Muse thus marks

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30. "For shame! Have we come here to trot along with women calling on Aphrodite to support us, instead of the mighty god of battle? Do you look to doves and hawks to get you out of trouble? Well, please yourselves! Forget that you are fighters. Pay court to girls and their silly heads" Apollonius, *Voyage of the Argo* (trans. Rieu 1971: 124).

31. "Moved by the god of song" Apollonius, *Voyage of the Argo* (trans. Rieu 1971: 35).

32. "Now tell us, Muse, in your own heavenly tongue how the Colchian maiden schemed and suffered. Speak, Daughter of Zeus; for here your poet falters and words fail to come" Apollonius, *Voyage of the Argo* (trans. Rieu 1971: 147).

a completion of transition from left-over vestige of oral poetry to integral aspect of new written format. The literate poet no longer needs to consult the Muse on matters of tradition - a purpose already served by the vast collections in her temples (libraries) - but now consults her when conceiving new and idiosyncratic responses to existing notions.

Another aspect of *Voyage of the Argo* is the influence on later immitators of the appearance of Orpheus as one of the main characters. There is a parallel to the presiding presence of poetry and storytelling as it appears in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, but the main difference is the heightened religious aspect of this poet. Thus, while Apollonius may begin his story with an appeal to Apollo, it is his almost immediate identification of Orpheus as the son of Calliope, which exposes his literary intentions, and religious environment. As son of the Muse of epic poetry, Orpheus symbolises what the poem is about - a Hellenistic assessment of the epic tradition. But in Orpheus as son of a goddess, and founder of the Orphic mysteries, Apollonius can include the intrinsic religious aspect of the epic format by a contemporary means, rather than simply imitate Homer's eighth cent. BCE attitudes to the divine[33]. In a similar vein, later Christian imitators of Greek literary tradition such as Dante and Milton used the epic format - Muses included - as vehicles for contemplation of religious ideals.

As most European writers and scholars encountered the Roman long before the Greek, the Muses as they appear in Roman literature were to be the Muses inherited by medieval poets such as Dante, Renaissance scholars, writers and even artists. Publius Vergilius Maro (Virgil) (70 - 19 BCE) for example provides examples of both the sensual and the intellectual Muse transmitted to subsequent writers via his immense influence [34]. The Poet effectively condensed and conveyed

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33. Orpheus is shown initiating his comrades into the mysteries, but given the code of secrecy, the poet can only allude to but not describe the event. Thus the author was either a believer who thought he would violate sacred rites by revealing them, or he did not know. "In the evening, at the suggestion of Orpheus, they beached the ship at Samothrace, the island of Electra daughter of Atlas. He wished them, by a holy initiation, to learn something of the secret rites, and so sail on with greater confidence across the formidable sea. Of the rites I say no more, pausing only to salute the isle itself and the Powers that dwell in it, to whom belong the mysteries of which we must not sing" Apollonius, *Voyage of the Argo* (trans. Rieu 1971: 60-1).

34. "To the whole of late Antiquity, as to the whole of the Middle Ages, Virgil is what he is for Dante: 'l'altissimo poeta.'" (Curtius in Campbell 2001: 109). Fowler and Fowler (1998: 772) further state that "[a]lthough in English literature the Augustan period is most

two literary streams from ancient Greece to the European world: through the *Aeniad* the Homeric tradition (on the model of Apollonius of Rhodes' shorter interpretation of it); and through his *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, the pastoral poetry of Hesiod and Theocritus. While Virgil had obviously not invented the pastoral poem (he does credit his forerunners in his work), he was, and is still regarded as a master of the genre[35]. In Horace's praise of Virgil an important aspect of pastoral poetry - already evident in Theocritus - can clearly be seen: it has its own distinctive Muses. While in other forms, the traditional Muses are invoked in a manner similar to Homeric convention, Virgil's rustic Muse is not the sophisticate to whom the library in Alexandria serves as temple, nor is she an arsenal of battle-lists and who-killed-whom-where. Instead Virgil - like Theocritus - reveals a deity close to the nymphs who populate the streams and fields, who delights in poetic rivalries and competitions amongst simple, and probably illiterate, peasants. In the *Eclogues* for example, the patronesses of pastoral poetry range from the Muse Thalia to nymphs such as Arethusa (*Eclogue X*).

While traditional Muses set their poets to sing about wars, heroes and exciting adventures, the pastoral Muse's protegés sing love songs and insult each other's talents. The heroes in these poems are shepherds like Daphnis[36] (who in Vergil's *Eclogue V* is something of a vegetation god), Linus (whose cult stretches back to Homer's time), and Gallus (who in *Eclogue VI* is given Hesiod's own pipe by the Muses). In *Eclogue VIII*, when speaking of two poets whose skills are said to be comparable to Orpheus', the poet speaks of "the pastoral Muse of Damon and

obviously an *aetas Vergiliana*, he has played a surprisingly important role in the modern period, from Eliot to Hermann Broch ... if no major work stands in relation to the *Aeneid* as Joyce's *Ulysses* does to the *Odyssey*, the tactics that the novel adopts towards its model are entirely Virgilian. For Eliot as for Milton and Dryden Virgil was *the* classic; if this centrality has given way first before vernacular heroes (Shakespeare, Dante) and then before a more general scepticism towards the canon, Virgil continues to posses the alternative canonic virtue of continued reinterpretation and cultural reuse".

35. Horace for example enthused: "To Virgil the Muses who love the country have given a light and charming touch. This form had been tried by Varro and Atax and others without success and was therefore one which I could perhaps develop - though always below its inventor. I wouldn't presume to snatch from his head the crown he wears with such distinction" Horace. *Satire I.10* (trans. Rudd 1979: 80).

36. In the story of Daphnis in particular, the theme of love as source of suffering and death becomes an integral part of a poetic style which at least superficially gives the appearance of mirth and ease.

Alphesiboeus" (trans. Lewis 1983: 33). Likewise in *Eclogues IV* and *VI* he distinctly emphasises this attribute - calling her Thalea (VI: 1) and Sicilian Muse (IV: 1), and declares: "When I commenced poet (sic), my Muse was not ashamed to live in the woods and dally with lightweight pastoral verse, Next kings and wars possessed me; but Apollo tweaked my ear, Telling me, 'Tityrus, a countryman should be concerned to put flesh on his sheep and keep his poetry spare'" (trans. Lewis 1983: 25). Thus Virgil's character states that Homeric poetry about kings and wars is inappropriate for herdsmen who should rather compose "light-weight" poems so that he does not forget his flocks. It is of course Apollo who reminds him of this because the god had been a herdsman himself, but the mythic characters who populate this pastoral verse, such as Silenus and the nymphs, are all connected to Dionysus. Virgil further echoes Theocritus when he identifies the Muse as responsible for organising singing-contests among herders, and identifies their Muse as pastoral but also Orphic. The effects of the two competing poets' music on animals and streams is similar to the effects of the music of Orpheus, another poet who though seen as a shepherd was closely allied with the cult of Dionysos[37]. The value of this poetry is, in spite of the lowly status of its practitioners, considered worthy, since in *Eclogue III* Virgil has Damoetas sing: "My Muse is but a country girl, yet Pollio has sung her praises. Fatten a calf, ye Muses all, for Pollio who loves your lays" (trans. Lewis 1983: 15)[38]. However, in spite of the herders' clear devotion to the Muses as patronesses of poetry, they tend to indulge in boasts of the kind which in Greek myth would have cost them dearly: "Oh then I should not be worsted at singing by Thracian Orpheus or Linus - even though Linus were backed by Calliope his mother, and Orpheus by his father, beauteous Apollo. Should Pan compete with me, and Arcady judge us, even Pan, great Pan, with Arcadian judges, would lose the contest" *Eclogue IV* (trans. Lewis 1983: 20)[39].

In the *Aeneid* the Muses Virgil addresses are closer to the Homeric tradition. On the one hand, the poet only appeals to his Muses on matters of conflict and

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37. "Let us honour the pastoral Muse of Damon and Alphesiboeus, whose singing, when they competed together, left the lynxes dumbfounded, caused a heifer to pause in her grazing, spellbound, and so entranced the rivers that they checked their onward flow" Virgil, *Eclogue VIII* (Lewis 1983: 33).

38. Asinius Pollio - poet, historian and statesman - is believed to have been Virgil's patron (he credits Pollio with commissioning *Eclogue VIII*).

39. Either none of them are as familiar with the fate of Thamyris as they should be, or the poet is bargaining on the reader being aware of the dangers inherent in such boasts (see Appendix 1).

battle[40]. Yet in distinctly non-Homeric style, "Muse" in Virgil, also - as is by now common - symbolises the type of poem the poet is writing: when appealing to them in the *Aeneid*, the poet calls the Muses Heliconian (in grand epic style) and requires of them the kind of information typical to an epic - wars and battles. He thus does the same here as in the pastoral genre, where the poet repeatedly defines his style in terms of its specific pastoral Muse[41]. Virgil also like Apollonius - and unlike Homer - addresses his Muses by name - as Calliope and Erato. His appeal to Calliope is to be expected, as she is by now the acknowledged Muse of epic poetry[42]. His war-cry appeal to Erato is more unusual yet significant[43]: while Virgil echoes Apollonius in his specific identification of Erato, her invocation may be attributed to Venus' prominent role in the story of her son Aeneas. In the *Aeneid*, Venus fulfils a role similar to Athena in the *Odyssey*. It is Venus who like the Christian Madonna mediates between Aeneas and Jupiter, while guiding him on his way[44]. She is not only his intercessor and mediator, but shares with him a unique relationship: as his mother, Venus is a very real and intimate physical entity, but as a goddess she is ethereally unapproachable. This relationship between the hero and Venus/Aphrodite mirrors the changing relationship between Muses and poets (many by now considered sons of Muses in the "Thracian" style. See note 24 this section).

Like Virgil, Publius Ovidus Naso (Ovid) (43 BCE) in his *Metamorphoses*, reveals two basic types of Muse, one in keeping with established tradition, and the

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40. "Tell me Muse, the cause; how pained, how foiled in Will, the Queen of Gods drove one whom Virtue crowned" Virgil, *Aeneid* I (trans. Billson 1906: 1); "Now open Helicon, O Muses! wake The Song of Warring kings … for ye remember, ye can rehearse; though scarce to us blown rumours faintly come!" Virgil, *Aeneid* VII (trans. Billson 1906: 136); Say, Muse what God such conflagration turned" Virgil, *Aeneid* IX (trans. Billson 1906: 162); and "Now open Helicon, O Muses! wake the song of all who filled Aeneas' train" Virgil, *Aeneid* X (trans. Billson 1906: 185).

41. The term is clearly allegorical. "Damon's Muse" can thus be said to literally mean: "Damon's poetic style and skill", as was the implication by Aristophanes in *Frogs* when he had Aeschylus disdainfully refer to a dancing girl as Euripides' Muse.

42. "Ye, O Calliope! inspire my song! The tale of deaths …Unroll with me the mighty page of war" Virgil, *Aeneid* IX (trans. Billson 1906: 173).

43. O come, instruct me, Erato … Thou, O Goddess, aid me thou, to unfold the dawn of War!" Virgil, *Aeneid* VII (trans. Billson 1906: 121).

44. Venus here recalls Athena helping Odysseus, while providing a blueprint for Beatrice guiding Dante at the behest of the Virgin.

other in direct contrast with an earlier work. In the narrative, the Muses appear due to the transformation they imposed on the daughters of Pierus, and the death of the mad Thracian king Pyreneus. Ovid here calls them daughters of Mnemosyne, while the Pierides address them as "daughters of Thespis". But what is of interest is their interaction with Minerva/Athena. Unlike in *Rhesus*, where they occupy opposing camps, the Muses here welcome her as an associate[45], while the Muses are described as "learned sisters" - so resembling one another in function, as they did in early philosophical views. The chasm between the rational Athena who presides over wisdom, strategy and *techne*, and the prophetic Muses whose poets perform while in some state of divine possession is not viable here. These Muses not only embody knowledge and learning, but the technical proficiency and originality in inventiveness which initially fell under Athena's jurisdiction (and so incensed the Muse in *Rhesus*) are now vital poetic attributes. The importance of these is illustrated by the Pierides' punishment: the Muses transform them into magpies "birds who can [only] imitate" *Metamorphoses* (trans. Innes 1955: 124). The Muses are still set on maintaining their poetic superiority, but now the ultimate punishment meted out to a poet is not the loss of poetic faculty as in the story of Thamyris, but the inability to do anything other than imitate.

While the gods in Ovid tell myths to offer moral guidelines (or outright warnings), humans use myths and stories the gods would rather not hear, to confront and challenge rather than praise them. Calvino (1997: 150) in his critique of the stories of the Pierides and Arachne presents the Muses as primarily concerned with punishing "irreverent or blasphemous intentions in the story [the Pierides told]", rather than the quality of their presentation. The actual story-telling contest instead takes place between Athena and Arachne. Calvino posits this shift as due to a concern with the technical virtuosity of the story told, rather than simply the moral desirability of its content: "The technical precision with which Ovid describes the working of the looms in this challenge might suggest a possible identification of the poet's work with the weaving of the tapestry in various shades of purple". Elsewhere in Ovid (the story of the daughters of Minyas) the association between Minerva/Athena and storytelling is clarified: weavers told stories for entertainment, as an aid to productivity, and source of the images depicted in their weaving. Ovid's own ambiguous sympathies - does he applaud Athena's punishment of the vain Arachne, or delight in the girl's sarcastic depiction of divine abuse of power (usually due to lust) - reflect the nature of

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45. "Tritonian Pallas, you who would have been one of our company, had not your courage directed you to greater tasks" *Metamorphoses* V (trans. Innes 1955: 123)

mythology, but also of a poetry which concerns itself as much with adherence to cultural orthodoxy as exploration of moral relativity by means of a compelling story well told.

The theme of poets challenging Muses forms the basis of probably the only myth in which the Muses participate as main characters[46] - the myth of Thamyris which made its first appearance in the *Iliad*. The transformation of both poet and Muses in this story from antiquity to the Hellenistic period, reflects the changes which had occurred in both. So for example the late version of the story (recorded in the encyclopaedic collection of myths known as *The Library of Greek Mythology*[47]) emphasises a sexual component completely absent from the Homeric original: Thamyris in the *Iliad* is punished by the Muses for his hubris only[48]. In the context of the epic the story serves as a warning, but also an acknowledgment by Homer of his reliance on the Muses: the poet takes care to tell the story of Thamyris following an appeal to the Muses before launching into a particularly difficult section (the *Catalogue of Ships*[49]) where he praises their superiority over mere mortals. In this manner the poet proclaims his wisdom and humility, and assures his audience of the truthfulness of what they are about to hear: he can remember complex details because he knows, and is rewarded for the extent of his dependence on the Muses. In the *Library*, however, the focus has shifted from Thamyris' hubris to his sexual excess: He is listed as the first man to desire other men - in this case the Muse Clio's son Hyacinthos whom Apollo later seduces - and his contest with the Muses is for the prize of his choice, which is to have intercourse with all nine should he win. He loses of course, and is deprived of his

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46. As opposed to their usual depiction as chorus performing for the gods on Olympus and on momentous occasions such as in the weddings of Thetis and Peleus, or Cadmus and Harmonia. Or as the means by which stories are transmitted to poets.

47. Compiled by an author known only as Apollodorus (*c.* 140 CE).

48. He does not even have the opportunity of a contest of skill, or to make demands should he win as he does in the *Library* - the Homeric Thamyris only has to boast that he could beat the Muses if they were to sing against him, and that is enough to seal his doom. He loses his eyesight, an affliction Muses usually visited upon poets, but then they would receive poetic skill in return. In this case Thamyris also loses his musical skills and most damaging for a poet - his memory (see Appendix 1).

49. The *Catalogue of Ships* includes not only the names of the various groups of warriors who fought at Troy, but also their leaders, their leaders' genealogies and descriptions of their places of origin. In oral poetry, a section such as this would have required substantial mnemonic skill.

eyes and musical skill (but not his memory). The *Library's* depiction of the story confirms an erotic view of the Muses, which though primarily absent in archaic and early classical mythology, appears well-entrenched by the Hellenistic period. The *Library* enjoyed extensive use by scholars of later antiquity and successfully made the leap to the Middle Ages ("in the twelfth century the Byzantine scholar John Tzetzes made extensive use of it ... writers of this later period thought that it had its virtues" (Hard 1997: viii). Thus, the Medieval world inherited from the ancient two types of Muses: one an aloof, abstract source of wisdom and religious or philosophical knowledge, mediating between the gods and human agents of her choice; the other an intimate, sensual object of the poet's desire, who inspires individual creativity and expression through infatuation. But, as can be seen in the work of Dante, while the former retained the name and for the most part remained virtually unchanged, the latter would undergo extensive development under a variety of guises, regaining the label of "Muse" only centuries later.

While the Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265 - 1321) is widely regarded as instrumental in consolidating Christian thought with antiquity's latent legacy in Medieval Europe[50], his amalgamation of the notion of the Muse with the Medieval notion of "courtly love" (which had evolved from the Christian cult of the Virgin) to produce the blueprint of the modern application of the term "muse", is of prime interest here. The Christian notion of spiritual love which included the capacity of the idealised feminine to mediate sacred knowledge to those (usually men) who knew how to seek it[51], reached its apex in the Middle Ages and found popular expression in love-stories spread by minstrels, troubadours and authors such as Marie de France. Most of these revolved around the notion of unobtainable love: in this scenario the woman (who usually represents all that is female perfection) is

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50. "[I]t was when the Aristotelian-Ptolemaic cosmology bestowed to Christianity by the Scholastics was embraced by Dante that the ancient world fully re-entered the Christian psyche and was there elaborated and permeated by Christian meaning ... Dante realised in his epic poem *La Divinia Commedia* what was in effect the moral, religious and cosmological paradigm of the medieval era" (Tarnas 1996: 194).

51. "When the Gnostic sects were repressed by the edicts of the Emperor Constantine in AD 326 and 333, the image of Sophia as the embodiment of Wisdom was again lost ... it reappeared again in the Middle Ages, in the great surge of devotion to the Virgin Mary and the pilgrimages to the shrines of the Black Virgin, as well as the philosophical impulse of these times, expressed in the writings of great scholars ... in the sudden manifestation of the Order of the Knights Templar, the Grail legends, Alchemy, the troubadours and the Cathar Church of the Holy Spirit, Sophia, or Sapientia, as the image of Wisdom became the inspiration, guide and goal of a spiritual quest" (Baring & Cashford 1993: 611).
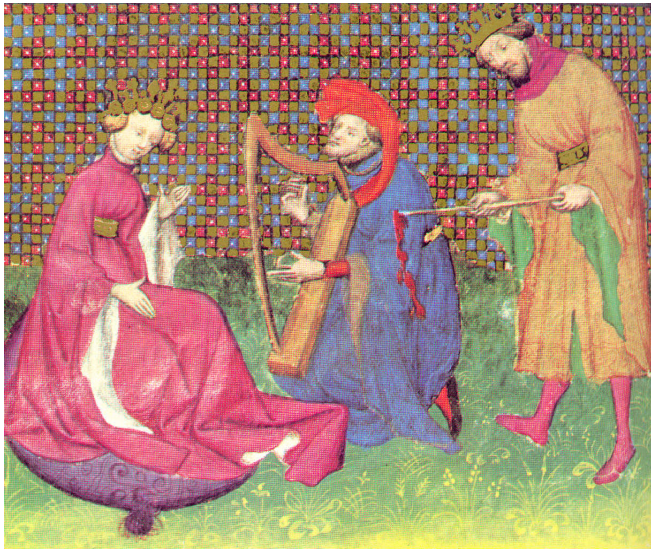
fig.8. Tristan struck by King Mark's Spear while singing a Ballad to Isolde. *Ilustration from* The Romance of Tristan *15th century, The Master of Bedford. Medieval stories involving fatal love-triangles such as that of Tristan, Isolde and King Mark (her husband and Tristan's uncle) were interpreted by Robert Graves in* The White Goddess (1961) *as symbolic of the poet's struggle against his "evil twin" for the Muse's favour.*

desired by one man, yet is out of bounds as she belongs to another[52]. In Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, Beatrice fulfils a similar role, except she is unobtainable because she is dead, and her soul resides in Paradise, while the Pilgrim must still find his salvation. Moreover unlike Isolde in *Tristan and Isolde*, she is not entirely a figment of the poet's imagination, but was based on a girl he had once met.

While *The Divine Comedy* is Dante's interpretation of the epic format as encapsulated in Virgil's highly influential *Aeneid*, Dante differs from Virgil in his inclusion of both epic and pastoral Muses in the same poem. However, in what was to become typical of subsequent writers, the latter is not identified as muse by the poet/author in the text, but usually by commentators, based upon the poet's view of this woman as expressed in his work and/or her apparent influence over his creative output. It may thus be argued that the distinction between "Muse" and "muse" as it occurs in dictionary form, originates here[53] as the notion of a woman

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52. Burgess & Busby (1999: 24-5) describe this love as "... often adulterous (a young wife closely guarded by a jealous old husband), nearly always problematic in some way or another, always profound and always refined. Despite having a cerebral appearance due to an extreme formalism, the love is not platonic, the physical union being directly alluded to as the ultimate goal for the sake of effect rather than out of prudishness". Boorstin (2001: 256) compares it to "the Medieval afterlife [which] put lovers on this earth in another kind of exile ... combining of courtly love with love of God, neither of which could be consummated in this life".

53. Note the subtle difference between "muse (mju:z) *n.* (often preceded by *the*) a goddess that inspires a creative artist, esp. a poet" and "Muse (mju:z) *n. Greek myth.* any of nine sister goddesses, each of whom was regarded as the protectress of a different art or science" (Hanks & McLeod 1985: 742).

from whom the poet is believed to draw creative inspiration, forms the basis of the modern conception of an author/artist's muse. Both types of Muse make their appearance in Canto II of *Inferno*[54]. However, while the epic Muses are invoked by the poet, it is the Virgin through St. Lucy and Beatrice who answers his call for guidance by sending Virgil to aid him. In the context of the poem, Beatrice, Lucy and Mary - alongside Matelde who represents the juncture where memory of sin is washed away - symbolise the paradise to which the pilgrim aspires, and can thus be considered Dante's version of the pastoral Muse. Moreover, they fulfil a role similar to Venus in the *Aeneid*, while the epic Muse symbolises the tradition and formulae of poetry itself - an impersonal almost abstract allegorical standard of poetic truth. The latter is clearly allied with Apollo, whom Dante invokes in Canto I of *Paradise* with a request which echoes Homeric notions of Apollo as capable of imparting the skills necessary for the performance of poetry (but not the inspiration): "Enter my breast, breathe into me as high a strain as that which vanquished Marsyas ...O Power divine, but lend me of yourself so much as will make clear at least the shadow of that high realm imprinted on my mind" (trans. Musa 1986: 2). The poet is of course asking for a voice and enlightenment comparable to the god of poetry's own, as this is the only way in which he will achieve "his hope that the great poem will win him the poet's crown of laurel" (Musa 1986: 9). It is a view of poetry and the Muses which acknowledges their anachronistic status: in Canto I of *Purgatory* for example, Dante not only affirms that the poetry he admires is "dead" but also clearly associates it with Calliope[55]

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54. The epic Muses are invoked alongside Genius and Memory: "Now, Muses, now, high Genius, do your part! And Memory, faithful scrivener to the eyes, Here show thy virtue, noble as though art!"*Hell* II: 7 (trans. Sayers 1949: 78), while Virgil describes Beatrice (here in the role of "pastoral Muse") to the Pilgrim: "A Lady summoned me - so blest, so rare, I begged her to command my diligence" *Hell* II: 52 (trans. Sayers 1949: 79) who identifies herself: "Beatrice am I, who thy good speech beseech; Love that first moved me from the blissful place" *Hell* II: 70 (trans. Sayers 1949: 80) telling Dante that the virgin herself had "... summoned Lucy to her side, and there Exhorted her: 'Thy faithful votary Needs thee and I commend him to your care'. Lucy the foe to every cruelty, Ran quickly and came and found me in my place Beside ancestral Rachel, crying to me: 'How now, Beatrice, God's true praise! No help for him who once thy liegeman was, Quitting the common herd to win thy grace'" *Hell* II: 94-103 (trans. Sayers 1949: 80 - 81).

55. "And I shall sing about that second realm where man's soul goes to purify itself and become worthy to ascend to Heaven. Here let death's poetry arise to life, O Muses sacrosanct whose liege I am! And let Calliope rise up and play her sweet accompaniment" *Purgatory* I: 4 - 10 (trans. Musa 1985: 1).

while referring to the ascension of souls alongside the revival of ancient poetry and the rising of the Muse. Dante effectively compares his resurrection of Greek and Roman poetic traditions to the salvation of the Pilgrim in the poem, but both will require some degree of transformation. Thus, at the end of the *Purgatory* the Muses appear in their Christianised form of "Most holy Virgins". His appeal to Urania's help "to put into verse things difficult to grasp" (trans. Musa 1985: 310) reflects her absorption into Christian iconography due primarily to the meaning of her name - "the heavenly"[56]. The transition from Calliope, to Clio (chronicler of facts), to Urania, and finally Polymnia (many hymns)[57] in Paradise itself, signifies a progression from the most traditionally pagan to the most compatible with Christian values. Yet, the Muses here are allegorical, in keeping with the Medieval penchant for depicting the Liberal Arts, the Virtues and Philosophy - amongst others - as female figures. Their application by Dante is thus purely symbolic, and his depiction of their progression from the epic towards the religious Muse should be understood as being virtually interchangeable with his aims of advancing poetry itself.

Likewise, Dante's own "Venus" in the poem - Beatrice - undergoes four basic transformations: Beatrice in the *Inferno* is a romanticised version of an actual woman Dante had briefly known and been infatuated with before her death. Musa (1986: xxiii) even finds "strong courtly overtones throughout Canto II of the *Inferno*", which would make this Beatrice the type of unattainable beloved to whom medieval knights and minstrels paid their romantic tributes. The poet does not encounter her directly while still in Virgil's company[58], nor is he able (or due

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56. Urania recalls both Mary's role as queen of heaven and Platonic notions of Aphrodite Urania who symbolised spiritual love. Leonard (2000: 381) points out that "Du Bartas in *L'Uranie* had made Urania the Muse of Christian poetry". Milton even divorced her from her sisters and genealogy in *Paradise Lost* Book VII: 1-9: "Descend from Heav'n Urania, by that name If rightly thou art called, whose voice divine Following above th' Olympian hill I soar, above the flight of Pegasean wing. The meaning, not the name I call: for thou Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top of old Olympus dwell'st, but Heav'nly born, Before the hills appeared or fountain flowed Thou with eternal Wisdom didst converse", it is this Urania who Milton requests should guide him: "Up led by thee Into the Heav'n of Heav'ns I have presumed, an earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air" (Book VII: 12-4).

57. Musa suggests her identification here (Canto XXIII, 55-7) as due to her being responsible for "singing to the gods". The choir of Muses is thus now equivalent to the choirs of angels singing "with many tongues" in heaven.

58. At the threshold of Paradise, the pagan poet reached the full extent of his knowledge as he had predicted in Canto XXI: 33 and ceased to be Dante's guide.

to his shame willing) to see her clearly at first, but must feel and sense her presence. Moreover, Beatrice associates his descent into sinfulness to his abandonment of his devotion to her after her death. Musa (1985: 329) argues that the source of Beatrice's anger at the Pilgrim is based almost entirely upon his role as poet: "'Imagine' she is saying, 'a young man endowed by God with unique gifts and privilege to have as guide one who represents the goal of the Supreme Good. But he loses his guidance and abandons his goal. His must become not only a worthless life but a destructive one: destructive of the gifts with which he had been endowed". The means by which she had hoped to sway him are in keeping with ancient - and in many cases still prevalent - notions of poetic insight: "I prayed that inspiration come to him through dreams and other means: in vain I tried to call him back" (trans. Musa 1985: 325)[59]. Musa (1985: 328) suggests Beatrice here symbolises "certain virtues and forces, particularly perhaps, she represents Revelation". But Beatrice in her descent to the underworld to save Dante also reminds of the myths of Inanna, Ishtar, Orpheus and Christ who enter the realm of death to save those they love, there is however a difference in her demeanour: in Cantos XXX and XXXI of *Purgatory* Beatrice is a forbidding vision of femininity who treats the Pilgrim without pity. Dante compares himself to a child chided by a strict mother who scolds the poet so that he may repent his sins and cross the river Lethe into heaven[60]. The notion of a man comparing the woman he is infatuated with to his mother would provide any Freudian with a wealth of interpretations, but the poet as son of his Muse had been firmly established in the myths of Orpheus, Thamyris and others, and affirms Beatrice's complex symbolism for Dante as poet. In forcing him to confess his sin - which is entirely based on his abandonment of what she symbolised for him, to pursue lesser avenues - it is Beatrice who elicits the transformation of the poet so that he may cross the river of forgetfulness. In Hesiod, Homer, Virgil and others the Muses similarly transform ordinary men and poets into master-poets: Hesiod received a staff and had a voice breathed into him, Demodocus was struck blind in exchange for his poetic gifts, while Gallus was given Hesiod's reed pipe so that he could compose his

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59. Coleridge for example, had encouraged a rumour that his poem *Kubla Khan* had come to him in an opium-induced dream and after waking, while writing it down, he was interrupted, and could then not remember how the dream had ended.

60. "I was the guilty child facing his mother, abject before her harshness: harsh indeed, is unripe pity not yet merciful" *Purgatory* XXX: 79 - 81 (trans. Musa 1985: 323), and "As children scolded into silence stand ashamed, with head bowed staring at the ground, acknowledging their fault and penitent - so I stood there" *Purgatory* XXXI: 64 - 66 (trans. Musa 1985: 332).

masterpiece. Dante is not only incapable of fully seeing Beatrice, but is also unable to speak while she reprimands him[61], yet he can redeem himself only by speaking[62]. Thus the poet's altered voice and insight come from his encounter with the Muse as his *genetrix*. The image of the Muse as the poet's mother thus recalls her role as initial author, whose creativity allows the poet to acquire his. Initially still clearly based on Dante's superficial version of the actual woman he had known, Beatrice at the end of the *Purgatory* takes on an almost completely allegorical aspect: "She is now *Sapientia*; she is all the wisdom God has revealed to man which allows him to return to his Creator, and this aspect of Beatrice will remain throughout the journey through paradise. But it is the real woman, and not Divine Wisdom who in the final canto of the poem takes her seat among the Blest" (Musa 1986: xxiii). Beatrice's final transformation into multi-faceted person rather than romantic ideal or mystical allegory reveals the extent of the poet's new-found capacity to look beyond the surface and see inner truth[63].

Aspects of the three other female characters - Matelde, St. Lucy and Mary - also echo classical and Hellenistic traditions of Muses. The lady inhabiting the earthly paradise of the Garden of Eden - identified by Beatrice as Matelde - is perhaps the closest any of the female figures comes to Virgil's pastoral Muse. Her function for the Pilgrim, as for all souls who come her way, is to explain the meaning of the two rivers - Lethe and Eunoë - (the former erases memories of sinfulness, while the latter refreshes the memory of good deeds done), and to aid in their crossing. Musa (1985: xxi) defines her sphere as "the antechamber to Paradise itself ... where the Christian and pagan worlds join to re-enact the fall of man". In Matelde's association with the garden, and the flowers she so clearly delights in, she echoes a very ancient type, already extant prior to Greek and Roman culture in

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61. "I stood before her paralysed, confused; I moved my lips, my throat striving to speak, but not a single breath of speech escaped" *Purgatory* XXXI: 7 - 9 (trans. Musa 1985: 330).

62. Beatrice responds to his confession: "Had you kept silent or denied what you have just confessed, your guilt would still be clear to the great Judge who knows all things" *Purgatory* XXXI: 37 -39 (trans. Musa 1985: 331).

63. "In Dante's final tribute to Beatrice for her role, Musa writes that "it is interesting to note that in the Italian Dante shifts his form of address from the formal *voi* to the familiar *tu* when addressing Beatrice at this point. This change is a surprising one and must be seen in the light of Beatrice's change of status or role in the narrative of the Poem: she is no longer the Pilgrim's guide, no longer playing her allegorical role. She is, once more, the Poet's beloved, and he sees her here for the last time as the blessed soul of a real person, the lady he loved in the earthly realm" (Musa 1986: 372).

Minoan and Theran wall-paintings of young women amongst abundant vegetation and flowers (see fig. 9). Marinatos (1984: 80-1) detects a connection between this Bronze Age image and later Greek myths of Persephone and Eurydice who had both been gathering flowers prior to their descent to the underworld, and links vegetation festivals to initiation rites. The latter connection is significant, as it is Matelde who pulls the unconscious Dante into the river Lethe before submerging his head in the water - a direct reference to Christianity's main initiatory rite of Baptism[64]. As rites of passage are widely celebrated at the turn of the seasons[65] the reference to eternal Spring in Matelde's domain is significant. Dante's further comparison of her with the nymphs of ancient myth recalls Theocritus and Virgil's nymphlike Muses of pastoral poetry[66] who mourn for dead vegetation gods like

fig. 9. Girl Collecting Flowers. *Theran Fresco c. 1500 BCE. Santorini. The myths of Persephone and Eurydice both result in a descent to the underworld, linking the image of the flower with death and rebirth. In the iconography of The Music of the Spheres (see also section 2.1.1.1), Thalia in the guise of a Charite and a Muse, appears both in the immobile highest and lowest spheres, representing two extreme stages in a regenerative cycle.*

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64. "The recognition of my guilt so stunned my heart I fainted" *Purgatory* XXXI:88-89 (trans. Musa 1985: 332). Dante's loss of consciousness adheres to the symbolism of initiation where the initiate has to die a ritual death before being reborn and often purified: "She had led me into the stream up to my neck ... embraced my head and dipped it in the stream just deep enough to let me drink of it. She took me from those waters, cleansed and led me" *Purgatory* XXXI: 93 - 104 (trans. Musa 1985: 332 - 3). Also compare this phrase to notions of poetry as beverage in section 2.1.3.

65. "'[S]easonal rites of passage may be found in rites intended to assure the rebirth of vegetation after the transitional period of winter dormancy'. We see then, that vegetation festivals, far from being incompatible with initiation rites can provide the framework in which the latter take place" (Marinatos 1984: 81).

66. "And like those nymphs that used to stroll alone through shaded woodlands, one seeking the sun, another trying to avoid its light, so she began to walk along the bank" *Purgatory* XXIX: 4 - 7 (trans. Musa 1985: 309).

Daphnis and Linus. Matelde is thus Dante's Thalia (whose name means to blossom or bloom), Virgil's rustic Muse, and the only Muse who shared her name with a nymph and a Charite (for which reason she acquired substantial symbolism in Renaissance mysticism (see 2.1.1.1. *The Music of the Spheres*)).

Saint Lucy, whom the Virgin sends to Beatrice, was usually considered symbolic of the three gifts of the Holy Ghost, but it is her association with the notion of illuminating Grace and her role as patron saint of the weak-sighted which connects her with the traditional Muse. The Muses were of course held responsible for striking poets blind - once as punishment, but usually in exchange for the gift of poetry[67]. In *The Divine Comedy* truth is symbolised by light: the more divine the truth, the brighter the light, to the extent that Dante who is first temporarily blinded, upon regaining his sight finds himself able to look at things in a new manner. Thus, the poet who could initially only experience this light reflected through Beatrice, can now see it for himself.

In approaching Dante, Virgil had told him that it was the Virgin Mary who had alerted Beatrice through St. Lucy about the danger Dante's soul was in. Mary had by the Middle Ages acquired a number of roles previously associated with a wide variety of female deities, and it is consequently quite possible to find an association with any single one of them, ranging from Isis through Athena (Baring & Cashford 1993). In *The Divine Comedy* she displays qualities reminiscent of the Muse, while also encapsulating aspects of the three other principal female figures: St. Lucy's patronage of the weak-sighted, and embodiment of illuminating grace becomes Mary's attributes in St. Bernard's prayer, where he requests for Dante "the power to raise his vision higher still to penetrate the final blessedness ... that you through your own prayers dispel the mist of his mortality, that he may have the Sum of Joy revealed before his eyes" (Musa 1986: 391). Mary also recalls Matelde's connection with flowers and regeneration in Canto XXXIII: 7-9 where the Virgin is the origin of the Celestial Rose[68] (the heavenly host of the blessed and

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67. Blindness traditionally symbolises two very distinct states: "For some blindness means ignorance of the real state of things ... To others, the blind are those who ignore the deceitful shadows of this world, and thanks to this are privileged to know its secret reality ... The blind share the godhead, they are inspired: poets, wonder-workers, 'seers' ... folklore is full of blind musicians, bards and singers treated as inspired beings (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 99). When blindness has been inflicted as a punishment, sight (if restored), then symbolises new-found insight: "when it was the gods' pleasure to restore sight to the guilty, they became Masters of Light" (Chevalier & Gheerbrant 1996: 100).

68. "Within your womb rekindled was the love that gave the warmth that did allow this

the angels arranged in the shape of a gigantic white rose. Moreover, as Musa (1986: 369) points out, the rose is closely allied to the celebration of Christ's initiatory death in its association with the Passion: "the Pope blesses a golden rose on the fourth Sunday of Lent". Beatrice, and in particular her devotee's relationship with her reappears constantly in Dante's descriptions of Mary. In Canto XXXII: 109 for example, Dante appropriates the language of courtly love for the angel Gabriel who in Dante's words "bore the palm below to Mary when the son of God had
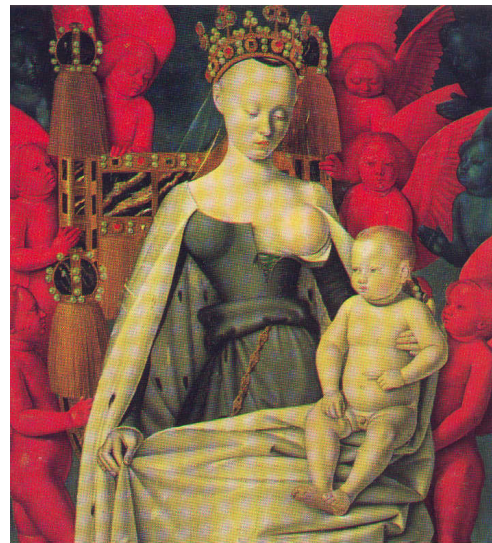
Left: fig. 10. Fundamentalist Anglicans protesting at the procession of the Black Virgin in Walsingham, England. 1989. The focus of the protesters' rage is the cult of the Virgin as "Queen of Heaven". The figure of Mary was endowed from the Middle Ages onwards with numerous attributes last seen in Pagan Goddesses such as Inanna, Ishtar and Isis - the ancient "Queens of Heaven". Her popular status eventually far outstripped her marginal role in the Gospels (Baring & Cashford 1993), and endured in spite of - rather than due to - the doctrines of the Catholic Church (she was only officially proclaimed Queen of Heaven in 1954 while having been depicted as such in art and literature for centuries: in Canto XXXI: 100 and 116, for example, Dante has St. Bernard describe her as "The Queen of Heaven" and later as "Empress" - Augusta in the Italian). Consequently, her iconography was determined primarily by popular imagination and regional pre-Christian traditions such as agricultural fertility rites, resulting at times in some bizarre expressions: Jean Fouquet's Mary and the Child surrounded by Angels *(fig 11. above) for example, features a portrait of Agnes Sorel, mistress to Charles VII as the Madonna. The depiction of a recognisable woman reputed to be the mistress of the king as the Mother of God echoes Praxitiles' use of his own mistress as model for Aphrodite, herself a mediator between Aeneas and the gods, and a Lady of Heaven under the epithet "Urania".*

flower to come to bloom within this timeless peace" *Paradise* XXXIII: 7 - 9 (trans. Musa 1986: 390).

willed to bear the weight of man's flesh on Himself", i.e. the annunciation[69]. Elsewhere, in Canto XXXII: 4, the wound of sin caused by Eve which Mary heals, echoes Dante's praise for Beatrice in Canto XXXI: 89 as the one responsible for healing his soul. Like Dante when speaking of Beatrice, St. Bernard expresses his reverence for the Virgin in the language of avid infatuation: "The Queen of Heaven, for whom I constantly burn with love's fire ... because I am her faithful one". *Paradise* XXXI: 100 - 102 (trans. Musa 1986: 368). Bernard's devotion to Mary serves as template for Dante's own fidelity to Beatrice (the previous deficiency of which had resulted in his fall from grace). In both instances the devotee can only desire, not possess.

Up until this point, the Muse is associated only with the expression of ideas through words or sound. The transition to literacy certainly influenced perceptions of the Muse as physical being in tandem with similar perceptions of language. However, it was only with the acquisition by artists of the Renaissance of the status of protegé of the Muse that the concept came to be associated with expression via non-linguistic, non-audial means

Fig 12. Madonna of the Magnificat. *c. 1480's. Sandro Botticelli. The Virgin crowned with stars, is shown writing the hymn taken from Luke 1: 46-55, known as the Magnificat (used as a canticle in her honour). Her role as author - her hand guided by Christ - recalls the role she plays in the* Divine Comedy *where the Virgin, not Dante, is the poem's main protagonist - the one who sets all the events the poet describes in action. She is thus the poem's ultimate author, with Beatrice, St. Lucy, Virgil and Dante as her instruments. This Mary can thus be considered a direct descendant of the Heliconian Muses who selected, instructed and showed Hesiod Olympus, so that their version of the genealogy of the gods, and the origin of the world would be recorded by an able poet through whose fame it would be transmitted and perpetuated*

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69. The words used -"loving pride and gracious joy" comes from the Italian "'baldezza e leggiadra', words used frequently in the courtly love lyrics of the times with particular reference to earthly love. Dante transfers them to Paradise, purifying them at the court of the Virgin Mary" (Musa 1986: 386). Dante also here refers to the consequences of Gabriel's actions - Mary's virgin pregnancy could not have come from earthly love, thus reiterating the merit of the physical unobtainableness of his own Beatrice.

(see section 3.3.). Dante's use of a specific woman who was also the object of his desire in a mediatory role provided the template for the uniquely modern notion of the visual artist's model as Muse. But, divorced from its religious/spiritual context, the Dante - Beatrice model produces a distinct set of primarily sexual tensions. In the modern rendition of Marcel Duchamp's (1887 -1968) *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (fig. 13), this contorted relationship reappears completely devoid of the very emotional aspect which for Dante was its defining purpose. Duchamp by contrast approaches the intricacies of this frustrated desire from an entirely mechanistic view-point: "subjected to a profoundly unemotional investigation - as if an extra-human being were trying to work out what went on in this kind of operation" (Breton in Cabanne 1997: 132). This is evident in Duchamp's own notes in which both Bride and Bachelors are machines performing repetitive actions which fail to result in breaching their divide[70]. He himself had called it an "agricultural machine", thereby effectively distilling what had for Dante been sublime emotions of love and spiritual desire to its most intrinsic function of procreation and fertility in a manner reminiscent of the cult of Aphrodite. But with one distinct difference, by retaining Dante's unconsummatable desire, Duchamp has created a perpetual motion machine: by keeping the Bride and Bachelors separate, their interaction is based primarily on each other's anticipation of an event which can never occur. Hughes (1981: 55) compares the situation to the one expressed by Keats in his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*[71] where the payoff is eternal preservation of the intensity of initial infatuation (a

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70. Duchamp's notes describe them as follows "The Bride is basically a motor. But before being a motor which transmits her timid power ... a sort of automobiline, love gasoline, that distributed to the quite feeble cylinders ... is used to fragment and scatter this virgin who has reached her desire's term ... In this blossoming, the Bride reveals herself nude in two appearances: the first, that of the stripping by the Bachelors, the second that voluntary-imaginative one of the Bride ... [she] accepts this stripping by the Bachelors, because it provides the love gasoline to the sparks of this electrical stripping" (Duchamp in Cabanne 1997: 136). The Bachelors, meanwhile, according to Duchamp's notes "try to indicate their desire to the Bride by concertedly making the Chocolate Grinder turn, so that it grinds out an imaginary milky stuff like semen. This squirts up through the rings, but cannot get to the Bride's half of the *Glass* because of the prophylatic bar that separates the panes" (Hughes 1981: 55).

71. "Bold Lover, never never canst thou kiss,
   Though winning near the goal - yet, do not grieve;
    She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
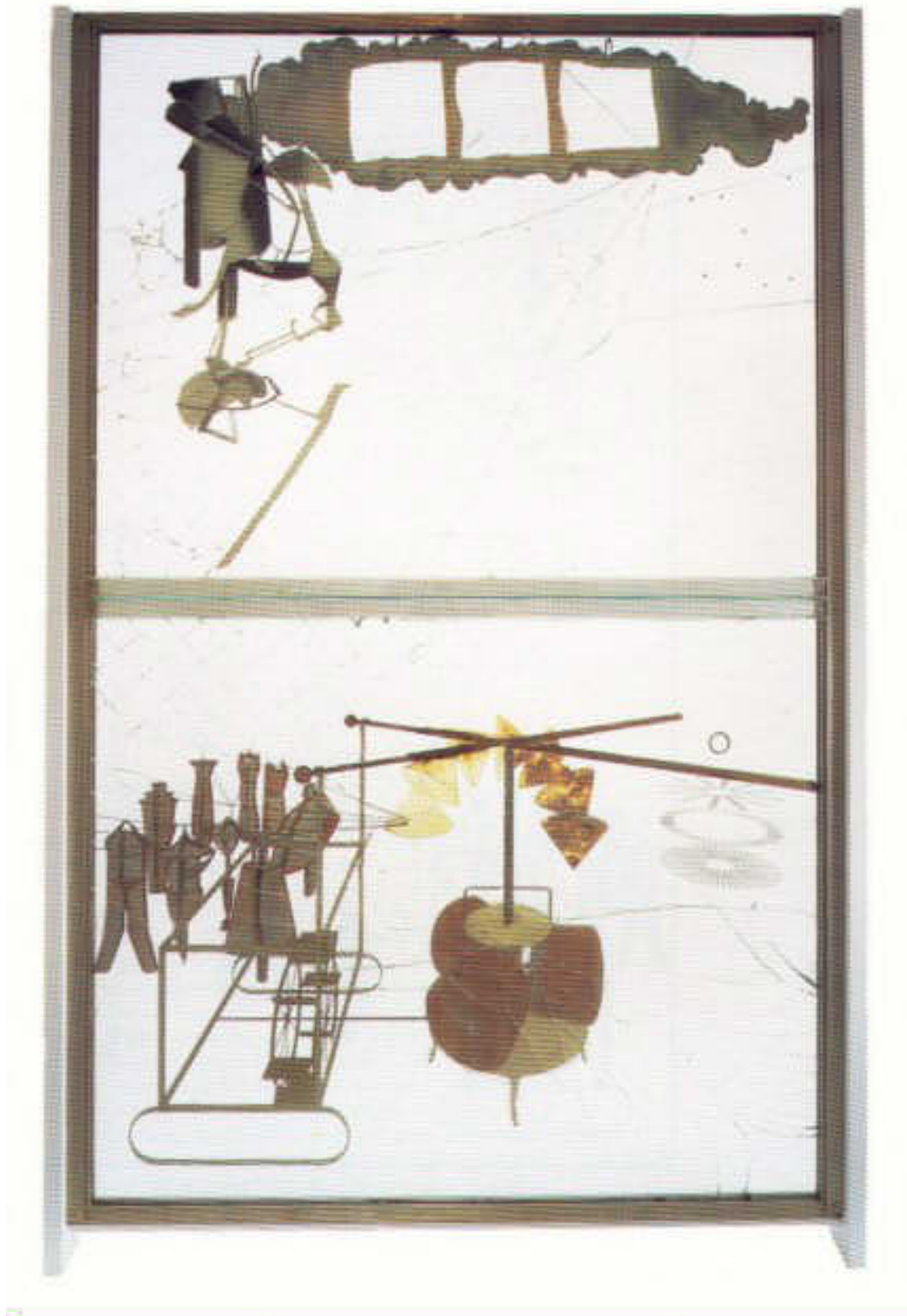   For ever wilt thou love and she be fair!" (Keats in Hughes 1981: 55).

fig.13. The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even *(The Large Glass). 1912, 1915-23. Marcel Duchamp.*

state which has been compared to near-insanity) and a woman whose seeming perfection will never be revealed for the illusion that it is, yet Hughes sees "... the *Large Glass* [as] an allegory of Profane Love - which, Marcel Duchamp presciently saw, would be the only sort left in the twentieth century ... the Bride is condemned always to tease, while the Bachelor's fate is endless masturbation. In one sense the *Large Glass* is a glimpse into Hell, a peculiarly modernist Hell of repetition and loneliness". Hughes however, ascribes an emotional facet to the work which Duchamp had purposefully circumscribed in his mechanistic approach. What Hughes appears to ignore is the fact that both sets of machines can only function as long as this desire remains, and the Bachelors in particular are exceptionally productive - constantly working their chocolate grinder, churning out their expression of that desire. *The Large Glass*, I would argue is an allegory of creative production, with the Bride as the Muse and the nine Bachelors her various protegés. Duchamp returned to the notion of frustrated desire in his last and most intriguing work - *Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas*, an elaborate installation hidden behind a wooden door with only two gaps through which to view it. Cabanne (1997: 173) comments that "The viewer has to move from one eyehole to the other to see the whole of the scene. The search for an overall view of these fragments disrupts standard patterns of exploration, which are undermined both by this physical obstacle and by the curiosity which this fragment exacerbates. The viewer thus finds himself in the same situation as the Bachelor - pursuing an inaccessible prey which he will never be able to possess" (Cabanne 1997: 173). In both works the artist aims at arousing not the viewer's lust but their intellectual curiosity. *The Large Glass* has inspired more interpretations, analyses and flights of fancy than any other work of the Modern era[72]. All entirely in keeping with the artist's own stated intentions: "In his own words, the work served as a 'platform' on which he could erect a monument to 'intellectual expression' in art, as opposed to 'retinal expression'. The result is an object that is accessible to the viewer's gaze only insofar as the rational mind guides it towards the objects structure and meaning" (Cabanne 1997: 132).

But if this is about creativity then why not allow consummation of desire? Perhaps Duchamp understood that from a psychological view, wanting and obtaining involve two very distinct processes, with divergent results. Solms and

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72. To Duchamp himself, the *Large Glass* served as primary source: "The result of Duchamp's efforts over a period of eight years was an object that acted as condensation of time itself, time both chronological and mental - the time before the work, the time during which the *Glass* was made, and the past-*Glass*, throughout which most of Duchamp's projects were derivations from and extensions of his *magnum opus*" (Cabanne: 1997: 136).

Turnbull (2002) define these as "seeking systems" and "lust systems", with the qualities of the former typical of the responses Duchamp sought to prompt with his conceptually-driven artwork: "Long known as a 'reward' system, the seeking system is also associated with the terms 'curiosity', 'interest' and 'expectancy'. This system provides the arousal and energy that activates our interest in the world around us. On the perceptual side, it generates the feeling that something 'good' will happen if we explore the environment or interact with objects" (Solms & Turnbull 2002: 115). When this system is damaged however "... patients lose interest in objects in the world, dreaming ceases, and positive psychotic symptoms (hallucinations and delusions) decrease. Conversely, when the system is stimulated, energy levels increase, dreaming increases, and psychosis may ensue. There is therefore a clear series of links between dreaming, psychosis and the operation of the seeking system" (Solms & Turnbull 2002: 207-8). By contrast, "[a]ctivation of the lust system switches the seeking system 'off,' signalling that an inner need has been met". As this system effectively involves gratification or "consummation of the appetites that activate the seeking system" (Solms & Turnbull 2002: 119), its activation will effectively result in the termination of all the aforementioned brain-processes which result from the seeking system's ascending projections. Thus Duchamp's preference for intellectual curiosity and rational scrutiny over purely visual or emotional responses to art is epitomized in the Bachelors coveting, stripping, yet never actually possessing, their Bride.

Amongst visual artists however, Duchamp was more or less alone in his retention of the basics of the Dante-Beatrice paradigm. By the time he made *The Large Glass*, a very different view of creative dialectic had become the norm. And in this version, the poet/artist is no longer content with a physically inaccessible Muse. The notion of the Muse as the artist's/author's mistress - or perhaps more accurately - the mistress as Muse emerges from developments in female characterisation in literature during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the influence of the methods and reputations of visual artists (whose roles had been steadily changing from craftsmen to intellectuals since the Renaissance). In literature, the nineteenth century saw the invention under the auspices of Romanticism of a very different female type, the *femme fatale*[73]. While the

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73. While dangerous female characters can be found in pre-nineteenth century literature, it is only during this period that the type becomes common enough to be considered a literary convention. Sassoon (2001: 98) points out for example that "the word 'seductress' entered the English language only in the nineteenth century, while the male term 'seducer' was used by Shakespeare".

opposite of the virtuous unattainable woman whose chaste moral love galvanizes men into action, the *femme fatale* nonetheless differs from prior conceptions of dangerous femininity: Sassoon (2001: 96) emphasises that "the new *femme fatale*, unlike some of the wicked female monsters of the past, such as the Gorgons, was not an ugly demon, or one sent by the Devil to bring discord, to destroy cities and brew deadly poisons, as in the Middle Ages. The *femme fatale* was beautiful, and perfidiously used her beauty to ensnare hapless men [who] once in love, were enticed towards inescapable perdition, folly and ruin". Another significant difference between earlier dangerous women and the typical *femme fatale* was that the latter's danger lay in her flagrant sexual appetite which produces in those men who enjoy her sexual favours a lust for more, eventually driving them insane. In Jungian terms, the image of the *femme fatale* is a facet of the *anima* (see section 3.4 *The Muse as Jungian Archetype*) "... as cold and reckless as certain uncanny aspects of nature itself" (von Franz 1990: 179). The *femme fatale* can be considered an inversion of the pastoral Muse representing not the rustic utopian fantasies of the ancients and Dante's visions of heaven, but the dystopian nightmares which populate modern literature and art[74]. Seduction

fig. 14. The Disquieting Muses *1916. Oil on Canvas. Giorgio de Chirico. Read (1990: 86) sees in Chirico's* The Disquieting Muses, *a reference to "Poussin's* Inspiration of the Poet *[where the] natural landscape is replaced by an entirely artificial one: instead of trees a prison-like building and factory chimneys: instead of idealised human figures, stuffed dummies and a plaster cast. Yet out of these artificial elements Chirico builds up a poetic atmosphere - not, indeed, the poetry of the Cid, but definitely that of the* Waste Land*. In this interpretation of the theme of the poet's interaction with his Muses, the artist's source of inspiration is neither an uplifting spiritual truth or personal creative conviction, but unease and anxiety, emotions in keeping with the less than romantic and ideal environment in which the poet operates. Chirico's* Disquieting Muses *are the pastoral Muse turned on her head.*

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74. See fig 14 and note 25, this section, and section 3.4. *The Muse as Jungian Archetype.*

by a *femme fatale* leading to madness, ruin and occasionally death, found expression in the work of authors such as Gautier where the woman inspiring such dangerous passion is herself frequently dead to begin with in some form or another: in *Inés de la Sierras* for example, she is the ghost of a dancer seeking revenge through seduction and murder, but in *Récits fantastiques* the women are 'dead' in that they are objects - a statue, painting or Egyptian mummy. The idea of the statue coming to life was of course not new - Ovid had initially told the story in his *Metamorphoses*, and as in Ovid's tale it is the man's obsession with this creature which brings it to life, but by the nineteenth century Pygmalion's story invariably ends badly and the disruptive object must be returned to its original state. Thus, not only is the object of desire attain-

fig. 15. The Painter and his Muse. *2000. Alan Feltus. This image typifies the current convention of what is meant by "muse". The average viewer will likely interpret the woman in the picture as either the artist's model and/or wife/mistress, rather than an allegory or mythical entity.*

able, but her very means of seduction relies on physical contact (as opposed to Beatrice's complete physical absence), but the artist/author is conceived of as bringing dead objects to life by erotic means. However as with Dr. Frankenstein's monster, these creations are themselves destructive aberrations, resulting in inventor and invention competing for control. The unresolvable tension in Duchamp's *Large Glass* is thus replaced with destructive antagonism.

Likewise, another story from antiquity - Apelles and Campaspe - illustrates the impact of artistic practice on the emergence of the notion of the Muse as mistress (see Appendix 2). According to tradition, Apelles while painting a portrait of Alexander the Great's mistress Campaspe, fell in love with her. When Alexander noticed this, he gave Campaspe to him (generally however, husbands and lovers are not as forgiving as Alexander). In modern literature (Robert Browning's *My Last Duchess*), popular culture (Chris de Burgh's *The Painter*) and biographical anecdotes, the artist seducing his female model (often dubbed his muse), is by now an established convention. Portraits of women produced by the
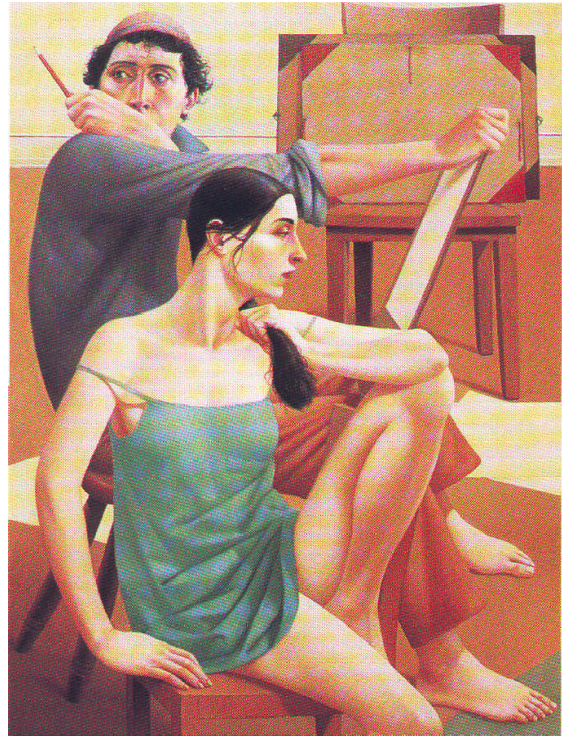
modern painters Pablo Picasso and Lucien Freud are usually accompanied by rumours of the artist's sexual relationship with the sitter[75]. This notion gained currency partly due to pragmatic reasons: Sassoon (2001: 117) explains that "By the nineteenth century the typical sitter for a portrait was a woman ...[and it] was widely assumed that models who sat naked had affairs with those who painted them. Apart from occasional nude portraits of upper-class sitters, the women who posed nude were usually the artist's wives, mistresses or prostitutes. Painters such as Degas and Toulouse-Lautrec even set up impromptu studios in bordellos to do nude studies[76].

As many a (male) artist's creative energy is portrayed as interconnected with - or even dependent on - their libido, the creative process is increasingly associated with sexual intercourse Nor is this perception of creativity as epitomised by masculine sexual aggression limited to figurative depictions of female sitters, but extends to non-figurative art where for example, the Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock's assaults on his canvasses earned him the nickname "Jack the Dripper"[77], while the reputedly homosexual painter Francis Bacon's violently

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75. When supermodel Kate Moss was reported seen leaving the studio of the 79-year-old Lucien Freud, two conclusions were immediately reached - 1) the artist is painting her portrait, and 2) they are having an affair: "There is no painter alive with a reputation as sinister and sexual as his, as a long line of female sitters before Moss can testify. Over the years, many of his female subjects have become his lovers and stories are forever being retold in the clubs of Soho of the times he has been pursued by irate husbands. 'Like Svengali, he mesmerises women into capitulation,' ... One estimate has the painter fathering upwards of 40 illegitimate children" (Independent News Network: July 21 2002).

76. Even the woman depicted in the *Mona Lisa* was suggested to have been da Vinci's lover in the catalogue of the Galerie du Musée Napoléon: "... was Leonardo only really Mona Lisa's painter? I don't know, but one can see the genius of love and seduction cannot go much further than that" (Joseph Lavallée in Sassoon 2001: 117).

77. In Hall's (2000: 303) view Pollock's sculptural approach to his paintings as physical objects to be interacted with rendered him "a modern Pygmalion, and that his picture is his Galatea ... His relationship with his artwork is highly charged. It is more in keeping with this de-idealised late nineteenth-century versions of the Pygmalion myth, where Galatea's awakening causes conflict ... While making a picture, Pollock appeared to address the canvas with some sexual aggression that had been previously imputed to sculptors. A running joke in the history of art shows the clumsy sculptor in his studio about to strike a statue of a woman with his chisel - and the statue, an unwilling Galatea, seems to swoon or flinch".

disturbing works were routinely attributed to his sexual appetites and "perversions"[78].

This "gendering" of the artwork as an involuntary and predominantly female or effeminate recipient of the male artist's sexual onslaughts, effectively disallows women the role of active creator. This appears to be a predominantly modern phenomenon extending beyond the visual arts: Balzac for example, wrote of Georges Sand that "She is a bachelor, an artist, she is great, generous, devoted, chaste; she has a man's features; ergo she is not a woman ... In fine, she is a man, and all the more so since she wishes to be one, since she has gone outside the position of a woman, and is not a woman" (Storr: 1991: 242). Robert Graves went one further, not only selecting his mistresses in accordance with his theory of poetry based on the poet's sexual relationship with a "Muse-possessed" woman[79] - or in his case women - but also concluded that "woman is not a poet: she is a Muse or she is nothing ... A woman who concerns herself with poetry should, I believe, either be a silent Muse and inspire poets by her womanly presence ... or she should be the Muse in a complete sense ... She should be the visible moon: impartial, loving, serene, wise" (Graves 1961: 446-7). However, most of Graves' muses *were* themselves poets, artists, actresses and dancers[80], and it is ironic that this

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78. Popular conceptions regarding the sexual preferences of artists vary from one period to another, yet are invariably seen as mandatory for the production of art: "the love-affairs of artists [have] produced singularly conflicting opinions among scholars. There are those who find that artists show a marked leaning towards celibacy, while others maintain that they are predominantly of an amorous or even promiscuous bent. Nineteenth-century biographers often described artists of the past as simple and staunch family men. Tales to the contrary were taken either as exceptions or malicious inventions. Modern writers by contrast, are inclined to discover a tendency towards homosexuality in artists past and present ... It is true that Leonardo himself was ascetically inclined, disapproved of what he called 'lascivious pleasures' and tried to suppress his own sensuality as far as possible. But Raphael ... had many love affairs; whilst Rubens and Bernini seem to have been both happily married and model husbands" (Storr 1991: 56).

79. "No Muse-poet grows conscious of the Muse except by the experience of a woman in whom the Goddess is in some degree resident ... But the real, perpetually obsessed Muse-poet distinguishes between the Goddess as manifest in the supreme power, glory, wisdom and love of woman, and the individual woman whom the goddess may make her instrument" (Graves 1961: 490).

80. Graves' muses included American poet Laura Riding, artist Judith Bledsoe, actress Margot Callas, artist Cindy Lee/Aemile Laraçuen and dancer Juli Simon, amongst others. With the exception of Riding, his relationships with these women were all relatively

Pygmalean paradigm of creativity should take hold just as the feminist movement - and with it increasing numbers of female writers, artists and scientists - emerge. Consequently, in the 1982 novel *Mantissa* - John Fowles' examination of the author's relationship with the Muse - the twentieth-century's battle of the sexes becomes an analogy for the creative process as contest between author and Muse for ultimate control.

Fowles explores the creative process through his re-interpretation of two myths - Pygmalion and Thamyris (see Appendix 1). A novel, *Mantissa* can be considered a type of eclogue: the narrative consists of a competitive dialogue between two characters: a male writer - Miles Green, and his Muse in various disguises - Erato. As with Theocritus, Virgil and Dante, Fowles creates something entirely new, yet reinterprets specific works from literary tradition:

fig. 16. Pygmalion and Galatea, *1890. J. L. Gerome. One of the few depictions of the myth by a sculptor - albeit in painted format, the painting shows the exact moment of transformation where, as the sculptor caresses his creation, ivory becomes flesh. If taken in conjunction with images of the male artist and his Muse (fig. 15), the amalgamation of artwork, model/muse into a single entity in late versions of Pygmalion's story is apparent.*

in this case Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, and Aristophanes' *Frogs*. The first is a sort of Pygmalion story exploring the extent to which fictional characters once created, take on a life and an autonomy of their own; the latter, a farcical evocation of Thamyris' contest with the Muses in the guise of Euripides and Aeschylus' poetry contest in Hades. By including in one narrative the two most prominent myths relating to creativity, Fowles reveals the extent to which they complement, yet contradict each other, effectively baring inconsistencies inherent to the creative process as conceived of in Western cultural tradition. Externally, Pygmalion and Thamyris have much in common: Both myths involve creativity of some sort -
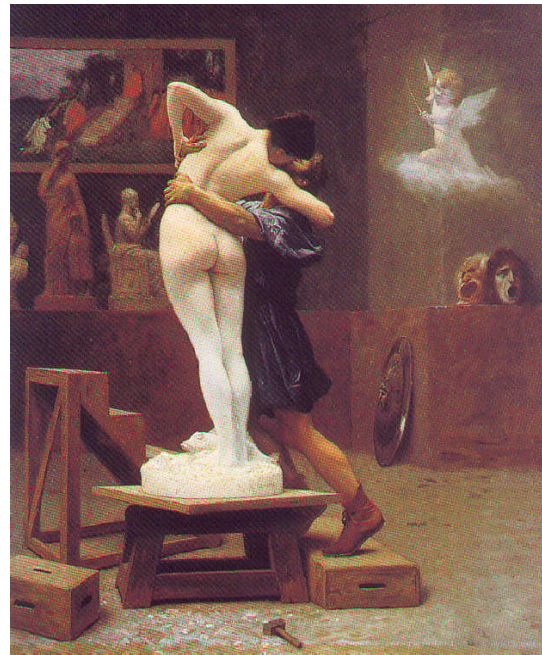
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short-lived, while he remained married to Beryl Hodge. Lee/Laraçuen had even approached Graves at his own "... expense, and with the hope of becoming his Muse" (Graves 1995: 377). She proved to have a mercurial personality and capacity for manipulation and deceit, enabling her to be exactly what Graves wanted her to be.

poetry and sculpture; conflict - between the poet and Muses (Thamyris) and sculptor and animated sculpture (in later versions of Pygmalion); and both men find women somewhat unpalatable - Thamyris in that he is the first man to desire other men (although this does not preclude him lusting after goddesses), and Pygmalion the misogynist creates his ideal woman because he is incapable of finding any redeemable qualities in real ones. Yet, in spite of the increased prominence of eroticism in both myths over time, its role differs: in Pygmalion, it is the sculptor's sexual attentions which brings the statue to life (and Galatea's sexuality which causes strife), thereby assigning eroticism the symbolism of the creative process itself, but in Thamyris, lusting after the Muses and entering into competition with them results in the poet's loss of his creative faculties.

While the Muse has remained a constant in Western culture, Thamyris and his punishment are mostly absent from post-classical literature and art[81]. Pygmalion and his statue on the other hand, have constantly reappeared, the vitality of this myth demonstrated by the variety and regularity of its reincarnations[82]. Interest in the myth reached its apex in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Hall (2000: 126) posits its popularity during this period as it being "a lascivious counterpart to John Locke's 'Molyneaux Question', in which a blind man has his sight restored ... The close association of Pygmalion's statue with the Lockeian

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81. Thamyris appears in a brief reference in Milton where he is listed amongst other blind bards (Bulfinch 1996: 239). The only instance in which the Muses are commonly recalled as punishing *hubris* in post-classical works, is the punishment of the Pierides.

82. Variants of the myth include a Galatea which is not a statue, but a woman lacking in refinement, such as Hazlitt's *Liber Amoris* or *The New Pygmalion* (1923) and George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1912) in which the 'statue' is an illiterate working-class girl, and Pygmalion a phonetics professor. Here consciousness is primarily achieved by refinement of linguistic skill. The musical comedy *My Fair Lady* (1956) by Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Lowe was based on Shaw's, and provided the foundation for the most recent version, the film *Pretty Woman* in which Galatea's transformation is predominantly sartorial. Where Galatea is still originally a statue, the sculptor's material changes from ivory to marble, and she takes on Frankensteinian proportions in Barbier's *Galatee* (1871) and W.S. Gilbert's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (1871). In one of the most recent versions *Pretty Woman*, the prostitute who had so disgusted Pygmalion in Ovid, supplants the statue as the 'raw material' on which he performs his transmutation. It is ironically one of the few recent interpretations which end happily for both parties. "Galatea" does not revert, while the initially destructive "Pygmalion" (a businessman who buys ailing businesses which he then liquidates for their assets) redirects his skills towards saving a company he had intended to destroy.
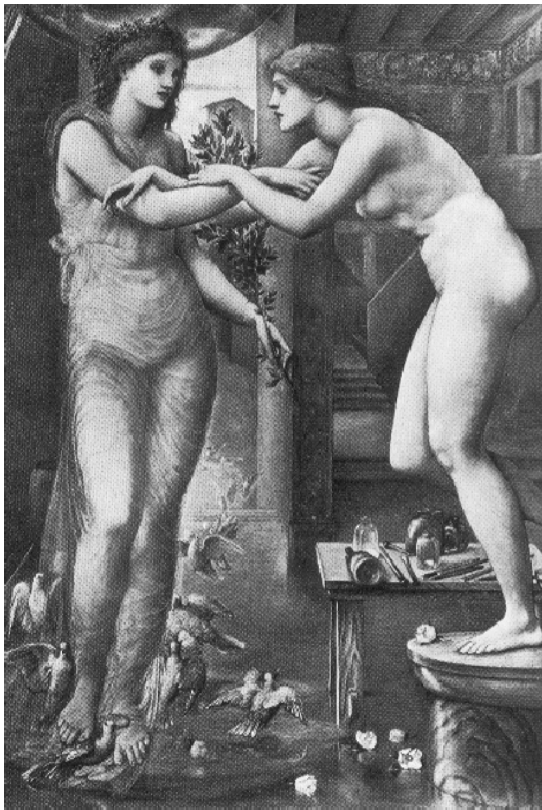
fig. 17. Pygmalion: The Godhead Fires. *1878. Edward Burne-Jones. One in a series of three, it is preceded by* The Hand Refrains, *and followed by* The Soul Attains. *While the portrayal in this series of Aphrodite rather than Pygmalion bringing the statue to life is true to Ovid's original story, it is nonetheless at odds with traditional depictions of the event (see fig, 16). As the titles reveal, Burne-Jones was attempting a moral reading of a traditionally lascivious story, in keeping with the aims of the Pre-Raphaelite movement. Yet, the much commented on androgyny of the figure of Aphrodite reveals the extent to which the moment of Galatea's transformation had been ingrained in popular imagination as equatable with an erotic liaison between a predominantly male creator and a female object.*

tabula rasa could give rise to profound musings about the origins of life and language". The question here then regards the sudden acquisition of consciousness by a formerly 'dead' object, or an attempt at imagining consciousness[83] without any other distractions such as memory. The statue is thus as amnesiac as Thamyris post-punishment, which ironically, is the same state Miles Green finds himself in at the beginning and end of *Mantissa.* Moreover, as Erato in the guise of Dr. Delfie and nurse Cory will bring him back to full cognition by erotic means[84], the author

83. An excerpt from the *Discours de la Méthode* is the first thing the reader encounters in *Mantissa*: " I could not pretend that I did not exist; that, on the contrary, from the very fact that I was able to doubt the reality of the other things, it very clearly and certainly followed that I existed; whereas, if I had stopped thinking only, even though all I had ever conceived had been true, I had no reason to believe that I might have existed - from this I knew that I was a being whose whole essence or nature is confined to thinking and which has no need of a place, nor depends on any material thing, in order to exist. So that this I, that is to say the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body, is even easier to know than the body, and furthermore would not stop being what it is, even if the body did not exist" (Descartes in Fowles 1988: 5).

84. Erato's (as Dr. Delfie) diagnosis is distinctly Freudian (the good doctor having been somewhat sex-obsessed himself): "Now listen closely Mr. Green ... Memory is strongly attached to ego. Your ego has lost in a conflict with your super-ego, which has decided to

as would-be Pygmalion has placed himself in a situation suited more to the statue, with Erato apparently serving as Pygmalion. However, while Erato is assigned the role of bringing to life the "dead matter" that for the majority of the book is Miles Green, she should not be confused with Pygmalion, but rather considered a response to the vacuum left by Aphrodite's omission from later version of the myth. In Ovid's version, it is Aphrodite, not Pygmalion who brings the statue to life (see fig 17), as a reward to Pygmalion for having learnt to love. Thus, the original myth involves not one, but two transformations of "dead matter" - the statue, and the sculptor are both brought to life by Aphrodite. In later versions however, Aphrodite has vanished, and Pygmalion not only becomes the sole agent through which the statue comes to life, but undergoes no real character development whatsoever: at the end he remains incapable of dealing with real live women[85]. With Aphrodite's absence, the notion of an outside agency which facilitates the creative process is exorcised from the Pygmalion myth, resulting in a view of the artist as completely self-sufficient[86]. Thus, to Miles Green the absence

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repress it - to censor it. All Nurse and I wish to do is to enlist the aid of the third component of your psyche, the id" (Fowles 1993: 31). The super-ego in this case is the Muse, and the conflict, the contest Thamyris devised and lost: "If you must know, Mr. Green, your memory-loss may well be partly caused by an unconscious desire to fondle unknown female bodies" (Fowles 1993: 26). The appeal to the id to restore memory is synonymous with an appeal to Aphrodite, but as Erato admonishes Miles Green, this is an appeal to Aphrodite as goddess of love, not sex: "We're not testing your ability to produce mere *sperm*, Mr. Green. There was something he did not grasp about the contemptuous emphasis she gave 'sperm', as if it were synonymous with scum or froth" (Fowles 1993: 25).

85. It may be argued that the character progression of "Pygmalion" in *Pretty Woman* (see note 82) may be due to the reappearance of Aphrodite in the myth - albeit in the guise of a prostitute, which is how ancient worshippers at her temples in Knidos and Corinth would have approached her. However, the tell-tale misogyny of Pygmalion is largely absent in this rendition, and Pygmalion's main weakness is instead his belief that all things, including love, friendship and respect can be obtained through money and power.

86. The notion of genius as inborn quality is a fairly recent development. Howe (2001: 11-12) argues that originally "A person's genius was seen as working broadly in the way that a poet's muse was believed to function: genius was envisaged as a partly external spirit that gave a helping hand. Not until the eighteenth century did the practice of referring to a person as a genius become common. The modern meaning of the word comes partly from the Latin word *genius* which stems from *gens*, meaning family, but also from the Latin *ingenium*, denoting natural disposition or innate ability".

of memory is alluring, for it implies release from the confines of the literary traditions the Muse represents. To Miles Green, Thamyris' punishment is rather a reward, and so he competes with Erato that he may lose his knowledge of literary convention, and create truly original and innovative art. The desirability of such complete autonomy from anything other than consciousness itself is not limited to this character[87], Fowles encapsulates in Miles Green the very spirit of rationalist modernism Descartes had anticipated (see note 83). Their battle is thus partly between memory and a desire to forget: should Miles defeat Erato, he will achieve not only his emancipation from her, but will finally relegate her to a fictional character subservient to him - as opposed to the traditional Muse on whom the author is dependent.

The contest between Euripides and Aeschylus in *Frogs*, is ideally suited as template for this battle for authority. In the play, Aristophanes depicts Dionysus descending to Hades to fetch a poet who can serve Athens best at her time of greatest need (at the height of the Peloponnesian War). Undecided who it should be, the god decrees a poetry contest between the two great legends of Athenian theatre - Euripides and Aeschylus, with himself as referee. In *Mantissa*, Dionysus is represented by the cuckoo clock (a reference to Dionysus shouting "Cuckoo!" in the play to signal the end of each round[88]), while the contest takes place in a padded hospital room symbolising Miles Green's own mind. The innovative Euripides certainly appears the favourite, as Barrett (1964: 152) points out: "For fifty years [Euripides'] plays, his ideas, his original way of looking at things, his fresh approach to morality and religion, his clever use of words, have held the attention of the public, shocked them out of their old traditional attitudes, helped to create the modern outlook". Miles Green imagines himself such an author, and wastes no opportunity to display his linguistic dexterity. By contrast, Erato the mythical anachronism resembles "Aeschylus, that dry old 'classic' with his

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87. The name Miles Green appears to have been derived from Flann O'Brien's *nom de plume* "Myles na Gopaleen" under which he wrote a column for the *Irish Times;* the Latin term for a braggart (particularly a braggart combatant) - *miles gloriosus*; and a comment Fowles made in his essay *On being English but not British* (1964) regarding the distinguishing characteristics of "the green Englishman ...[of] emotional naivite and moral perceptiveness" (Fowles 1998: 88). Miles Green is thus partly O'Brien, partly Thamyris the braggart, and partly Fowles himself.

88. "DIONYSUS: Now you must each take hold of your own pan [of the scales] and hold it steady, and each recite one line; and when I call 'Cuckoo!' you'll both let go" Aristophanes, *The Frogs* (trans. Barrett 1964: 206).

slow-moving plots and his ponderous, majestic language that so cries out to be parodied" (Barrett 1964: 152)[89]. While Euripides, like Miles Green, likes his women erotic, Aeschylus, like Erato, demands a more dignified depiction[90], and as with Pygmalion, Euripides is accused of falling victim to "too much of Aphrodite", his wife having been rumoured to have had an affair with one of his slaves or lodgers (Barrett 1964: 224). In the end though, it is the pompous old Aeschylus who wins, due more to moral value than pure literary critique. As Barrett points out, "wisdom, we begin to see, is not the same thing as cleverness. Wisdom is bound up with moral qualities, such as courage, integrity, justice, and moderation - old-fashioned virtues perhaps, but of more value to Athens than the ability to talk them out of existence." (Barrett 1964: 153).

But in *Mantissa*, no-one really wins. Erato does reduce Miles to his original state of oblivion in the end, a conclusion which suggests a constant return to the beginning and repetition of all that has gone before. As long as they are in opposition, neither party can win, because neither can exist without the other. Fowles thus posits the defining characteristic of the Muse as her relation to the writer, but posits a warning: in *Mantissa* Erato's assistance (and the quality thereof) is hampered by her protegé's misogynistic, rationalist attitude towards her as female, and as indispensable archetype[91]. While an individual writer cannot invent

89. These characteristics are emphasised in the hymn to the Muses sung by the chorus: "Two grimmer foes ne'er took the field: For one is armed with words of might, And one the sword of wit doth wield" *Aristophanes, The Frogs* (trans. Barrett 1964: 189). Secondly, while Aeschylus is careful to pray to Demeter whom he credits for "nourishing his brain" with her Mysteries, Euripides appeals to his own faculties: "Hail Pivot of my Tongue! Hail Mind! Hail sentient Nostrils! Inspire me with all the right answers, amen!" (ibid).

90. "AESCHYLUS: *I* didn't clutter *my* stage with harlots like Phaedra or Stheneboea. No one can say I have ever put an erotic female into any play of mine.

EURIPIDES: How could you? You've never even met one.

AESCHYLUS: And thank heaven for that. Whereas you and your household had only too much experience of Aphrodite, if I remember rightly. She was too much for you in the end" Aristophanes, *The Frogs* (trans. Barrett 1964: 194).

91. "All right. Then be a woman, and enjoy it. But don't try to think in addition. Just accept that that's the way the biological cards have fallen . You can't have a male brain and intellect as well as a mania for being the universal girl-friend ... At some future date, when and if I feel I could use a little advice, I'll give you a ring. No offence, but I'll call you ... I'll take you to a kebab house for lunch, we'll talk, we'll drink a little retsina ... If I have time I'll take you to the airport, put you on a plane back to Greece. And that'll be that" (Fowles 1993: 121).

fig.18. Aphrodite, Pan and Eros. *c. 100BCE.*
This statue encapsulates the humorously conten-
tious eroticism of Miles Green's relationship
with Erato. While much maligned as a tasteless
piece of statuary made for Delos' noveaux
riches, Beard & Henderson (2001: 139-40) see in
it a response to the neighbouring island of
Knidos' famous statue of Aphrodite (see fig. 52):
Pan is there as embodiment of "the extreme of
heterosexual male lust: to touch, interfere, enter
the artwork - and have her. And so the role of
the viewer is figured as lustfully male. On the
other hand, the statue emphatically reminds us
that no viewer can simply put himself in the
place of Pan, and that he is as much excluded
from as he is included in this scene ... [with
Eros] bringing together the couple in a mutual
gaze that locks all others out".

or eradicate the Muse, he nonetheless determines her manifestation through his own perception of her: Meaning that the Muse's efficiency is directly dependent on the extent of the writer's intellectual and emotional refinement. Consequently to a misogynist such as Pygmalion, or a sexual predator like Thamyris, the Muse is in Miles Green's words a "totally slippery, malicious and two-faced creature" who "invented literature just to get [her] own back, [and] deliberately confuse and distract [her] masculine betters; to make them waste their vital intellectual aspirations and juices on mantissae and trivia, mere shadows on walls" (Fowles 1993: 184-5). In *Mantissa* this strained relationship still results in some creative output - though in Miles' case of very poor quality - but Miles finally debilitates himself completely by imagining his Muse as a creature with whom only a physical interaction is possible[92], thereby unwittingly depriving himself not only of his own linguistic proficiency, but inflicting upon himself the complete physicality the true Cartesian seeks to escape. Thus, instead of becoming the innovative intellectual giant he yearns to be, Miles Green is transformed into a debauched

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92. "He evokes this new candidate now, as he stares at the ceiling. She is Japanese: modest and exquisitely subservient in kimono, exquisitely immodest and still subservient without it. But incomparably her greatest beauty and attraction is linguistic ... with her, any dialogue but that of the flesh is magnificently impossible" (Fowles 1993: 185-6).

satyr. This penultimate punishment, a physical manifestation of acute satyriasis reveals the core of Miles Green's transgression: satyriasis as the male equivalent of nymphomania, parallels the punishment Aphrodite[93] inflicted on the Propoetides when they denied her divinity.

Perhaps the most succinct description of a disquieted relationship between poet and Muse appears in *The Fly* (1986), by Russian-born poet Joseph Brodsky (1940 - 1996) where he writes: "Look, we are victims of a common pattern. I am your cellmate, not your warden. There is no pardon" (Brodsky 1988: 111). The poem on its surface is the poet's observation of a fly at the end of its life in autumn. But in essence, the fly is a metaphor for the poet's Muse (hinted at in the word-play on the similarity between "Muse" and the Latin name of the housefly[94], and the poet's anticipation of his own deterioration. While in *Mantissa*, the writer's focus falls on the differences between writer and Muse, in Brodsky they resemble one another: both are unwanted pests who in their heyday spread unwanted ideas like a disease[95] (In 1964 Brodsky had been sentenced to five years exile with hard labour for "social parasitism", and spent the remainder of his life in the United States). Now however, the fly spends her time silently crawling, instead of buzzing and flying, she has degenerated from being primarily heard and seen at a distance[96], to a silent entity which the poet can touch and inspect at close range[97].

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93. The combination of the myths of Thamyris and Pygmalion reveals an important characteristic of the twentieth-century sensual Muse - that she may be considered an amalgamation of Aphrodite and the classical Muse, a connection which appears as early as Virgil's Venus in the *Aeneid*, and was entrenched in Dante's Beatrice. But, it is in the shift from Aphrodite Urania to Pandemos - from unattainable to physically intimate - in the Aphrodite element of the sensual Muse, where the main difference lies.

94. "[A]midst existence's loose change and glitter, your near-namesake, called the Muse, now makes a soft bed, dear *Musca domestica*, for your protracted rest. Hence these syllables, hence all this prattling, this alphabet's cortege" (Brodsky 1988: 113). Brodsky may also be alluding to the Ancient Greek poetess Korinna (Fl. 510 BCE) who had been nicknamed "the fly" (Atchity 1996: 95).

95. "And here's just two of us, contagion's carriers. Microbes and sentences respect no barriers, afflicting all that can inhale or hear" (Brodsky 1988: 110); "It seems what pairs us is some paralysis - that is, your virus" (Brodsky 1988: 111).

96. "Weren't you the one in those times so fatal droned loud above my midnight cradle" (Brodsky 1988: 108).

97. "Yet, these days, as my yellowed finger-nail mindlessly attempts to fiddle with your soft belly, you won't buzz with fear or hatred dear" (Brodsky 1988: 108).

Thus, to Brodsky, the tangible, silent Muse signifies a poet in decay: "But your eyesight has gone a bit asunder. The thought of your brain dimming under your latticed retina - downtrodden, matted, tattered, rotten - unsettles one. Yet you seem quite aware of and like, in fact, this mildewed air of well-lived-in quarters, green shades drawn. Life does drag on" (Brodsky 1988: 107). But, that Brodsky sees this as part of a life-cycle is evident in his assertion that come spring, the fly will be reborn[98] and return to her poet[99]. The image of the fly buzzing outside the poet's reach is in Brodsky's poetry echoed by images of the Muse Urania and signifies an abstract entity associated with endless space, time and sound. The notion of the vacuum constantly reappears in connection with her in poems such as *Lithuanian Nocturne* (1974), *Eclogue IV: Winter* (1977) and *To Urania* (1981). She is thus clearly Brodsky's version of the abstract Homeric Muse whose voice is the poet's main point of contact with her. In Brodsky then, the two types of Muse - the abstract and the tangible are seen as the younger and older versions of a single entity. While young, the Muse is primarily heard, her incessant buzzing/singing the poet's primary evidence of her presence. She is not as much Hesiod's Urania, or one of the queens of Heaven - Aphrodite or Mary - as the Urania who occupies the highest sphere of the fixed stars in the arrangement of the "music of the spheres"[100], in that the sounds this Muse presides over are those of the universe itself. In this reading the universe is equated with the mouth and the throat, it's main function the production of language and sound, as the poet describes it in *Lithuanian Nocturne*: "In that world where our dreams haunt the ceiling, our O's shape the vault of the palate, where a star gets its shine from the vat of the throat! That's how the universe breathes ... Air, the tongue's running course! And the firmament's a chorus of highly pitched vocal atoms, alias souls ... Muse, may I set out homeward? to that out-loud realm where witless Boreas tramples over the

98. "[N]ext spring perhaps I'll spot you flitting through skies into this region, rushing back home. I, sloshing through mud might sigh "A star is shooting" and vaguely wave to it, assuming some Zodiac mishap - whereas there, quitting spheres, that will be your winged soul, a-flurry to join some dormant larva buried here in manure, to show its nation a transformation" (Brodsky 1988: 115).

99. "[S]hall I discern you in their winged (a-priori, not just Elysian) a-swirling legion, and you swoop down in familiar fashion onto my nape, as though you missed your ration of mush that thinks itself so clever? (Brodsky 1988: 114-5).

100. "Muse of dots lost in space! Muse of things one makes out through a telescope only! Muse of subtraction but without remainders! Of zeroes, in short" *Lithuanian Nocturne* (Brodsky 1988: 15). See also figs.20 - 21.

trophies of lips in his flight, to your grammar without punctuation, to your Paradise of our alphabets and tracheas, to your blackboard in white" (Brodsky 1988: 16). Neither time, nor place applies to this Muse representing the very opposite of all that is physical[101], and since in Brodsky, sound alone is devoid of limits and horizons, this Muse represents freedom from all constraints[102]. But, as she grows old and loses both voice and flight, she descends to the poet's realm and tangibly decomposes in the squalor of the aged poet in decadence and silence[103].

While Urania as abstract entity presides over space and sound, the decaying Muse presides over passage of time, anticipation of death and the qualities of specific places. Hence, the description of the old decaying autumn Muse's feet and wings in *The Fly* as "so old-fashioned, so quaint. One look at them, and one imagines a cross between Great-grandma's veil et la Tour Eiffel - the nineteenth century, in short" (Brodsky 1988: 108), and the winter Muse as intimate companion who presides over the filling of the very void her younger aspect represents: "In exchanges on death, place matters more and more than time. The cold gets harder ... And the Muse's voice gains a reticent private timbre. That's the birth of an eclogue. Instead of a shepherd's signal, a lamp's flaring up. Cyrillic, while running witless on the pad as though to escape the captor, knows more of the future than famous sibyl: of how to darken against the whiteness, as long as the whiteness lasts. And after." *Eclogue IV: Winter* (Brodsky 1988: 80-1).

Brodsky in describing the Muse as both sound and script, page and ink, thus encapsulates the extent to which the concept of the Muse in its development mirrors the apparently contradictory scope of the creative process itself: from the unrestricted abstraction of an idea in its initial stages to physical objects existing in real time and place, to the necessity of memory, tradition and convention for innovation and cultural endurance; and finally, of the creative process as fundamentally dialectical.

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101. "And what is space anyway if not the body's absence at every given point?" *To Urania* (Brodsky 1988: 70).

102. "Everything has a limit: the horizon that splits a round eye; for despair, it is memory; often it's the hand's fabled reach. Only sound, Thomas, slips specter-like from the body" *Lithuanian Nocturne* (Brodsky 1988: 16).

103. "[W]ere you younger, my eyes'd scan the sphere where all that is abundant. You are, though, old and near" (Brodsky 1988: 111).

2.1. Possible Origins of the Concept of the Muse

"Origins belong to the intellectual and literary worlds, not to the world of events, either political or social. Such constructs are aspects of *intellectual history*" (Thompson 2000: 31).

Any attempt to ascertain the exact origins of a mythological concept is bound to be fraught with contention. Myths are by nature accumulative, devoid of any specific moment of inception, but rather a stockpiling of different 'events' during the existence of a mythological construct, all of which modify and determine character. Nor is such a process limited to the history of an idea, for as long as it remains current, it continues to be reinvented, without necessarily entailing the eradication of extant meaning: "... religious growth is geological: its principle is, on the whole and with exceptions *agglomeration*, not substitution. A new belief-pattern very seldom effaces completely the pattern that was there before: either the old lives on as an element in the new - sometimes an unconfessed and half-unconscious element - or else the two persist side by side, logically incompatible, but contemporaneously accepted by different individuals or even by the same individual" (Dodds 1951: 179). Moreover, the origins, or *perceived* origins of an idea, construct or institution, will at some point play an important part in the re-generation of that concept. Karl Popper described this principle in the following manner: "... almost all human societies of which we have knowledge seem to have had an interpretation of the world which was articulated in some myth or religion ... The truth is to be kept unsullied ... For this purpose institutions develop - mysteries, priesthoods ... schools ... should a member of the school try to change the doctrine, then he is expelled as a heretic. But the heretic claims as a rule that his is the true doctrine of the founder" (Magee 1975: 63). This emphasis placed by heretics on a "return" to the original form of the institution they are challenging often appears to entail the re-discovery/invention of a previously non-existent/unknown origin-myth, or an elaboration of an extant one. In some instances, this process may even entail the refutation of existing origin-myths as later cover-ups of a more agreeable truth. Robert Graves, for example, in his exploration of poetry - *The White Goddess* - explains the tradition of Apollo as *Musagetes* (leader of the Muses) as an attempt by patriarchal forces to obliterate the matrilineal traditions of prehistoric Greece by fracturing the

triple-goddess into nine flimsy entities and then placing them under the domination of a male god[1].

Ehrenzweig (2000: 180) sees in Graves' work an overall tendency to extract the original from the accumulative. It was thus not a single occurrence in his work, but formed the basis of his creative approach[2]. Graves shared this insistence on extracting "lost" origins with the social anthropologist - Sir James Frazer, whose works may no longer be popular amongst academics, but whose "standing is undiminished with poets and artists. They share Frazer's intuitive understanding of the (poemagogic) power of the material and his sensitivity to its underlying unity ... This unity need not point to a common root in prehistory; rather it does point to a common root in the human mind ... it was perhaps only Jung who grasped the poemagogic quality of Frazer's material. In his theory the images become 'archetypes' watching over certain creative processes of integration" (ibid).

On the one hand, the existence of similar ideas regarding poetic inspiration in completely unrelated cultures points towards the Muses' status as archetypal, while on the other, ancient beliefs, and intimations present in traditions regarding the Muses may either provide vital information, or misleading red herrings. Two of the most intriguing problems involve the age, place or people (i.e. Indo-European?) of origin. The age of the Muses in particular has been a source of contention since ancient times: different "generations" of muses were being spoken of by the classical age, and Hellenistic and Roman writers especially, wrestled with the implications of stories involving seemingly Olympian and pre-Olympian Muses. In early Greek poetry such as the *Theogony*, the mother of the Olympian Muses is Mnemosyne (Memory) the "goddess who holds sway over the Eleutherian hills", and they were born in Piera, on Mount Olympus. Terpandros (c. 645. BCE) and Alkman (c. 630 BCE), similarly identify Mnemosyne as mother of the Muses. Solon (640-560 BCE) in his *Elegiacs* addresses the Muses as Pieran and identifies them as daughters of Olympian Zeus and Memory. But, according to Diodorus Siculus (c. 20 BCE), some poets, including Alkman, also classify Ouranos and Gaia as their parents. Much later Pausanias (c. 175 CE), would claim that according to

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1. A similar process can be detected in one of the most radical artistic revolutions ever - the Dadaist school - whose stated aim was to destroy art: for this purpose they created a form of "primitivism" derived from their own society's romanticised views of African and other "primitive" peoples.

2. "He extracts the ubiquitous theme of the White Goddess from almost every myth by removing the top layers of late versions ... [and] tries to use psychologically determined revision as a means to construct prehistoric events".

Mimnermos (late 7th cent. BCE) there were two generations of Mousai of which the first came from Ouranos and Gaia, and the second from Zeus and Mnemosyne[3]. A surviving fragment of the *Eumolpia* contains the same idea of two generations of Muses. It does not specify the parentage of the elder set (born in the time of Kronos), but does identify Zeus and Mnemosyne as parents of the nine younger Mousai. Pausanias named the three Heliconian Muses as Melete, Mneme and Aoide[4]. In Pausanias' own explanation of the number and origin of the Muses, the cult of the second group of nine Muses had been brought to Thespis by the Macedonian Pieros who may also have had nine daughters whom he named after the Muses. In a spirit of true rationalisation, Pausanias then postulates that the "sons of the Muses" such as Orpheus, may in fact have been the sons of their human namesakes. At the same time however, "Pierides" was a well-known and ancient epithet of the Muses as having been born in Piera[5]. In Cicero of course, the daughters of Pierus count as third set of Muses, reflecting the confusion in identification which would allow for Plato and subsequent writers to draw up canons of female poets as "earthbound Muses".

However, in spite of these difficulties, attempts to determine the origins of such ideas are nonetheless plentiful. Ancient, and in particular Hellenistic literature, contains various accounts detailing the supposed origins of religious rites, and mythological oddities. One particularly intriguing account comes via Varro, who recounted a tale of the convention of the Muses as nine in number as established due to a sculpture contest arranged by Apollo's priests: according to this story, the priests commissioned three sculptors to produce sculptures of the three Muses each. Once the sculptures had been completed, they were all so finely made that the priests could not choose between them, and consequently kept all nine. Cicero, instead of comprehending the various cults of Zeus as products of different communities and environments, attempted to make logical sense of them by interpreting the different variations of Jupiter's genealogy as evidence of

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3. It is not clear whether Pausanias derived this information directly from the now largely lost works (only 90 lines remain) of Mimnermos, or if he was citing popular tradition: "Mimnermos ... says in the preface that the elder Mousai were the daughters of Ouranos, and that there are other and younger Mousai, children of Zeus" *Paus* IX.29.1 (trans. Levi 1979: 368).

4. "The sons of Aloeus believed the number of Muses was three, and gave them the names Study, Memory and Song" *Paus* IX.29.2 (trans. Levi 1979: 368).

5. Was Ovid referring to this confusing idea when he has the human Pierides call the Muses the daughters of Thespis?

different generations of Jupiters, cataloguing the offspring of Jupiter in accordance - resulting in three sets of Muses: "The first set of four Muses, Thelxinoe, Aoede, Arche and Melete, were daughters of the second Jupiter [Son of Caelus and father of Minerva, born in Arcadia]. The second set were the nine Muses born of the third Jupiter [son of Saturn, born in Crete] and Mnemosyne. Not to mention a third set born of Pierus and Antiope, called by the poets the Pierides or Pieriae. They have the same names and number as the set I have just mentioned" *The Nature of the Gods* (trans. McGregor 1972: 215). This frustration with inconsistencies and implausibilities inherent in myth is not restricted to Cicero and his period either. In his award-winning book *Women of Classical Mythology. A Biographical Dictionary*, modern mythologist Robert Bell consistently attempts logical explanations of mythical incidents and events. Speaking of Mnemosyne for example, he notes that the conception of the Muses "occupied nine consecutive nights. The physiological ramifications of this phenomenon are endless" (Bell 1993: 310).

Another problem involves the constant association from Homer onwards of Muses with Thracians. This is a particularly difficult problem, as it is easy to assume such a long-standing connection as evidence of the "Thracian origins" of the Muses. As will be discussed, however, mythological origins, both in terms of age and location may be more likely indicative of the characteristics of a given subject, than of actual origins.

2.1.1. The Muse as Music

"[L]ovely is the voice that issues from their lips as they sing of all the laws and all the gracious customs of the immortals, and glorify them with their sweet voices. At that time, glorying in their power of song, they went to Olympus in immortal music, and all the black earth re-echoed to them as they sang, and the lovely beat of their footsteps sprang beneath them as they hastened to their father, to him who is king in the heaven, who holds in his own hands the thunder and the flamy lightning, who overpowered and put down his father Kronos, and ordained to the immortals all rights that are theirs, and defined their stations. All these things the Muses who have their homes on Olympus sang then" *Hesiod, Theog.* (trans. Atchity 1996: 23).

In Hesiod's poem recounting the origins of the cosmos and establishment of the Olympian gods' dominion - the *Theogony* - Zeus visits and conceives by the

Titanide Mnemosyne, the nine Muses whose task it will be to celebrate the victory of the new gods over the Titans. While the *Theogony* has been revealed to have much in common with the Hittite *Kumarbi* epic, as well as Akkadian and Egyptian foundation myths, Hesiod's version differs in the degree to which the old - instead of simply being overthrown - is absorbed into the new. Apart from battling Titans, and monsters, Zeus also engages in the transformation of predominantly feminine aspects of the pre-Olympian order, effectively producing Olympian gods from unions with Titanides. His liaison with Mnemosyne is typical: The master of the new order - in conjunction with the primordial repository of accumulated experience - produces the means by which it will be codified in poetic format. This is more significant than it appears. The Muses' celebration of the god's victory over the Titans is not a decorative element. In the logic of myth, the new order only becomes established through the medium of song, a widespread notion found in a variety of cultures (the majority removed from ancient Greece in both geography and time). As Nagy (1992: 59) emphasises, a "cross-cultural survey of ritual theogonic traditions throughout the world reveals that a basic function of a theogony is to confirm the authority that regulates any given social group ... singing a theogony and thus 'authorising' the gods ... is in effect confirming their authority". It is then no accident that the ancient Greek (as well as most modern European) word for music - *mousike* is directly derived from Muse - *Mousa*. The Muses *are* music.

The early history of the Muse is also the history of storytelling/singing, an activity of far more social relevance in an oral culture, than immediately apparent from a modern literate society's point of view. Analysis of oral poetic traditions will reveal a divine source as common factor in storytelling traditions of many predominantly illiterate societies. The recording of these stories, alongside the descriptions of the complex performances (from both teller and listeners) which accompany them, has facilitated a degree of insight into world-view rarely retained once orality has been replaced by literature. Chief amongst these is the perceived power of song and narrative in the formation and functioning of the cosmos as a whole. From an indigenous North American tribe - the Haida - comes a good example: In Haida cosmology, the gods are homeless until they are provided with a context in which to live. This process is expressed by three means - song, dream and memory. In the *Epic of the Raven*, the new-born gods are lying on a rock in the middle of the great expanse of water. Loon woman, who lives in Voicehandler's house, hears the gods wailing and responds: "Sir, I'm not talking only on my own account. The gods tell me they need places to live. That's the reason I keep talking." Voicehandler then says "I'll make some" (Kane 1998: 55), lies down and

starts dreaming. When his grandson Raven (the trickster-god of the Haida), having been initiated into the spirit world, arrives, he receives the dreams in a talismatic box. Kane (1998: 132) explains its significance: "Dream, then the actualisation of that dream - it is the sequence followed by any artist. But since intelligent life is already potent in a dream, the act of creating is a sort of remembering. This is also true of the opening creation scene of *Raven Travelling*, the Haida epic of the Raven ... The dreams are potent in a talismanic box which the old man gives him ... consciousness within consciousness within consciousness, a symbol of memory. From memory the world of the Haida was made". The words, dream and memory provide the gods with a context in which to exist and operate, a narrative constructed along very specific lines. Words are mediated by Loon woman, dreams are dreamt and handed over by Voicehandler - who lives in the ocean - and memories fall under the care of the trickster, who will ultimately be responsible for teaching the Haida all they know.

In such a culture, everything that exists does so by means of the song, it provides the pattern through which to make sense of things, essentially furnishing the society with its world-view. For this reason, such songs are subject to strict codes of composition and performance. It is important to note however, that such poetic formulae are just that. The poems themselves are never exactly the same, each performance is the result of the poet's interaction with the audience, place and time. What does stay the same is the underlying pattern, and characterisation of different mythic personalities. No poet can make Zeus do something which runs contrary to his fundamental character. As Kane (1998: 202) explains: "... the great song men of eastern Arnhem Land add a touch of new mastery to the old rhythms, extending or abbreviating the original versions as the mood seizes them - and 'there are outstanding song men who compose their own songs or receive inspiration from some spiritual source[6] ... In a society where everybody is unselfconsciously a narrative artist, or at least knows the art of listening, there is a mixed pool of possible story bits and motifs: some tried-and-true, some distorted and essentially untellable, some of them myths that exist more as narrative gestures or resonances ... A violation of the score is an infringement on the sacred, the sacred being the

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6. The source and the format in which information is handed down are clearly identified in the story itself: "The musical score from which performance variations are uttered is a set of instructions handed down to the mythteller by an elder, an ancestor or a god - the ones whose presence in the story, if not at the storytelling event itself, is felt in the formula 'they say'" (Kane 1998: 202).

culture's patterns of memory and ex-
pectation, its mythology". This fear of
violating the pattern persists even after
the introduction of writing. Plato for
example warns of the social implica-
tions of tampering with traditional
musical formulae[7].

Plato's emphasis on music is by
no means eccentric or unique, but echo
prevailing views regarding music's rel-
evance: "Greeks of all social classes
sang, danced and played instruments,
besides listening to professional per-
formances. Music was credited with
divine origins and mysterious powers,
and it was the pivot of relations be-
tween mortals and gods ... Music, all in
all, was essential to the pattern and
texture of Greek life at all social levels,
providing a widely available means for
the expression of communal identity

fig.19. Harpist. *EC II (c. 2500 - 2200 BCE).
While most of the statuettes produced in
Cycladic art were of highly schematised fe-
male figures, depictions of musicians such as
seated harpists and standing pipers reveal a
slightly different artistic sensibility, suggesting
perhaps that they may have served a separate
social or ritualistic purpose.*

and values, and a focus for controversy, judgement, and partisanship in which all
citizens could enthusiastically engage" (Barker 1998: 479). Nor were the Greeks
alone in their musical enthusiasm. Music, it would appear is one thing all humans
have in common. As Barrow (1997: 188) claims, "there have been cultures without
counting, cultures without painting, cultures bereft of the wheel or the written
word, but never a culture without music ... The oldest known musical instruments
have been found in Cro-Magnon settlements in central and north-western Europe.
They are decorated flutes ... and simple percussive instruments like castanets, and
are between 20 000 and 29 000 years old. Other artifacts found with them indicate

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7. "This is the point to which, above all, the attention of our rulers should be directed, -
that music and gymnastics be preserved in their original form, and no innovation made.
They must do their utmost to maintain them intact. And when any one says that mankind
most regard 'The newest song which the singers have' [*Od* I, 325] they will be afraid that he
may be praising, not new songs, but a new kind of song; and this ought not to be praised,
or conceived to be the meaning of the poet; for any musical innovation is full of danger to
the whole State, and ought to be prohibited" Plato, *Republic* IV (trans. Jowett 1894: 93).

that these instruments were used in the performance of a ceremony. All known human cultures have well-developed musical practices".

What this early affiliation indicates is that the Muse at this point refers to something not limited to a specific society's cultural practices, symbolising instead an inescapable part of human experience. Darwin even believed music to be a precursor of language (evolving from mating calls), while the relation between music and physiology has been clearly defined: musical phrases, for example, "produce intervals of time that are similar to the human breathing cycle; an even closer approach to this cycle results if singing or wind instruments are involved in the production of sound" (Barrow 1997: 189). The same principle applies to dancing, where rhythm would have been dictated by the number of movements the human body is capable of making within a set period of time. But music not only derives from physiology, it has a perceptible influence on mind and body, and despite its proven mathematical foundations, human responses to music are often highly irrational and even inexplicable. Storr (1991: 292) states as much: "the appreciation of musical form is a vital aspect of musical appreciation in general; but it is impossible to accept that this constitutes the whole of our response. Music generates emotion; in fact, a whole range of physiological responses which can be measured, including changes in pulse-rate, blood pressure, rate of respiration, muscular energy". Likewise, Graves (1961: 24) in his investigation into poetry (*The White Goddess* 1961) describes the presence of the muse in physiological terms, as the "reason why the hairs stand on end, the eyes water, the throat is constricted, the skin crawls and a shiver runs down the spine".

However, in spite of the universal appearance of music, and its undeniably profound impact on human beings, some cultures place more emphasis on it than others. The Greeks certainly fall under the former category. Plato, yet again, stresses its use in the instruction of the young, based not on the pleasurable aspects of the medium though, but because of the underlying harmonic and creative principles which govern it[8]. It should thus come as no surprise that the ancient Greeks incorporated what is essentially a hallmark of oral cultures only, into their philosophical model of the world: the Pythagorean notion of "the music of the

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8. "... our youth should be trained from the first in a stricter system, for if amusements become lawless, and the youths themselves become lawless, they can never grow into well-educated and virtuous citizens ... And when they have made a good beginning in play, and by the help of music have gained the habit of good order, then this habit of order, in a manner unlike the lawless play of the other will accompany them in all their actions and be principle of growth to them" Plato *Republic* IV (trans. Jowett 1894: 94).

spheres" essentially reiterates a cosmology in which all things occur in accordance with musical pattern. This idea was described in the work of an anonymous nineteenth-century esotericist in the following manner: "Pythagoras conceived of the universe to be an immense monochord, with its single string connected at its upper end to absolute spirit and at its lower end to absolute matter - in other words, a chord stretched between heaven and earth. Counting inward from the circumference of the heavens, Pythagoras, according to some authors, divided the universe into nine parts ... 'these sounds of the seven planets, and the sphere of the fixed stars, together with that above us [Antichthon] are the nine Muses, and their joint symphony is called Mnemosyne'" (Hall 1995: 83).

2.1.1.1. The Music of the Spheres

"The ancient Greeks had long associated measure with beauty. 'Measure and commensurability,' wrote Plato in the *Philebus*, 'are everywhere identifiable with beauty and excellence.' This notion, the heart of Polyclitus's canon, Aristotle himself traced back to Pythagoras' discovery that 'the qualities of numbers exist in a musical scale [*harmonia*], in the heavens, and in many other things.' If the sounds of an octave could be expressed in harmonious proportions, why not the harmony of the whole universe?" (Boorstin 2001: 174).

While the notion that heavenly bodies emit harmonious sounds in movement was reputedly first devised by Pythagoras, no records from the Pythagorean school exist, making Aristotle and Plato the first known textual sources of this theory. Aristotle first mentions and disputes it in *De coelo* II, 9, while Plato includes it in both his *Republic* and *Timaeus*. Ironically, while this idea has much in common with oral poetic cosmological tradition, the Pythagoreans arrived at it not via mythology, but through their interest in the inherent qualities of numbers: *Arithmos* (number), constituted the fundamental axiom in all Pythagorean thought. Their school conceived of number as being the primary foundation (*arche*) of all things, and built an elaborate system in which numbers were endowed with wide-ranging characteristics, including - in the absence of a system comparable to Arabic numerals - status as visual objects (formations of pebbles) and geometric terms. And while they were amongst the first to realise the abstract and conceptual potential of numbers, they chose to express this not in

purely "rational terms" but in a pseudo-mythological manner. Numbers in this scenario were divine, and could consequently be regarded as being good and evil, male and female. Carl Jung, writing from a psychological perspective accentuates the less "abstract" qualities of numbers as perceived by human minds[9]. Thus, when the Pythagoreans discovered that the musical intervals most pleasant to people's ears expressed numerically, were contained within the simple numbers - 1,2,3 and 4 - and that these were also the numbers of the *tetractys* which added up to the number of fingers on human hands, they regarded this as somehow relating to the fundamental structure of the universe as a whole. The *tetractys* was the name for the visual geometric expression of the first four numbers. It was of tremendous relevance to the Pythagoreans, and there was even a tradition equating it with the Delphic oracle[10]. The result was to imagine the entire universe as consisting of a giant musical scale arranged along perfectly mathematical lines. Plato's interpretation of these ideas was to be highly influential, and as previously discussed, may have dedicated his school to the Muses precisely due to their role of patronesses of music and the maintenance of social norms (rather than due to their role as presiding over those "deceitful" poets whom he banned from his ideal republic): "Plato believed it was man's encounter with the celestial movements that had first given rise to human reasoning about the nature of things, to the divisions of the day and the year, to numbers and mathematics and even philosophy itself ... The universe was the living manifestation of divine Reason ... Far from being merely a

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9. "There is something peculiar, one might even say mysterious, about numbers. They have never been entirely robbed of their numinous aura ... The sequence of natural numbers turns out to be unexpectedly more than a mere stringing together of identical units: it contains the whole of mathematics and everything yet to be discovered in this field. Number, therefore, is in one sense an unpredictable entity ... Number helps more than anything else to bring order into the chaos of appearances ... It may well be the most primitive element of order in the human mind" (Jung in Edinger 1999: 23-4). The modern painter Giorgio de Chirico likewise ascribed mathematical principles to human experience, describing the human spirit as "governed by fixed mathematical laws. It ebbs, flows, departs, returns and is reborn like everything else on our planet" (de Chirico in Russel 1991: 198).

10. "[it was spoken of as the answer to the question: What is the oracle of Delphi? The answer:] 'The *tetractys*; that is, the harmony in which the sirens sing' .. The Sirens produce the music of the spheres, the whole universe is harmony and number, *arithmos* ... The *tetractys* has within it the secret of the world; and in this manner we can also understand the connection with Delphi, the seat of the highest and most secret wisdom" (Edinger 1999: 25).

soulless domain of moving stones and dirt, the heavens contained the very sources of world order" (Tarnas 1991: 50)[11].

In Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*, the music of the spheres is presented in a manner echoed centuries later by Dante amongst others. Its narrator, Publius Cornelius Scipio has a dream in which Africanus appears to him and reveals to him not only his own future and his father's ghost, but the structure of the cosmos as well, meaning that the entire dream is a discussion on order and harmony, extended even to a political sphere. Cicero's description of the relations of the different spheres to one another, and their motions and sounds is amongst the most detailed to emerge from ancient authors. The intimate connection between individual spheres and Muses which forms such an integral part of later models of the music of the spheres, makes an early appearance, as he placed great emphasis on the necessity of qualities unique to each sphere, and their harmonious co-operation. At the time of writing (first cent. B.C.E.), the Muses were already highly differentiated individual divinities, and the undisputed patronesses of learning, sciences and the arts. Therefore, when the medieval encyclopedist Martianus/Felix Capella's (*c.* 4th - 5th cent. CE) *Satyricon* reveals a diagram of the music of the spheres in which each sphere is associated with a specific Muse, Cicero's description has found visual expression. A few centuries later, the medieval poet Dante, in the conclusion of his *Divine Comedy*, Vol III: *Paradise* imagined himself being shown the universe by his deceased Beatrice, in a manner not unlike Cicero's Africanus explaining the structure of the cosmos to Scipio in a dream.

The *Somnium Scipionis* was well known in medieval Europe via the commentary of Macrobius, and the strong similarities between the two works certainly appear to indicate Dante's familiarity with it[12]. In Canto II of *Paradise* for example, he describes the motion of the planets in the following manner: "The

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11. Tarnas (1991: 20) also points out that in "his cosmological dialogue, the *Timaeus*, Plato described the stars and planets as visible images of immortal deities whose perfectly regulated movements were paradigms of the transcendent order ... [the demiurge] had created the heavens as a moving image of eternity, revolving precisely according to perfect mathematical Ideas".

12. Dante's expression of the notion in his *Divine Comedy* as model for an astrologically deterministic Christian universe was neither exceptional nor unparalleled. Tarnas (1991: 193) points out that the "traditional Christian objection to astrology - its implicit negation of free will and grace - was [already] met by Aquinas in his *Summia Theologica* [where] he affirmed that [while] the planets influenced man ... through the use of his God-given reason and free will man could control his passions".
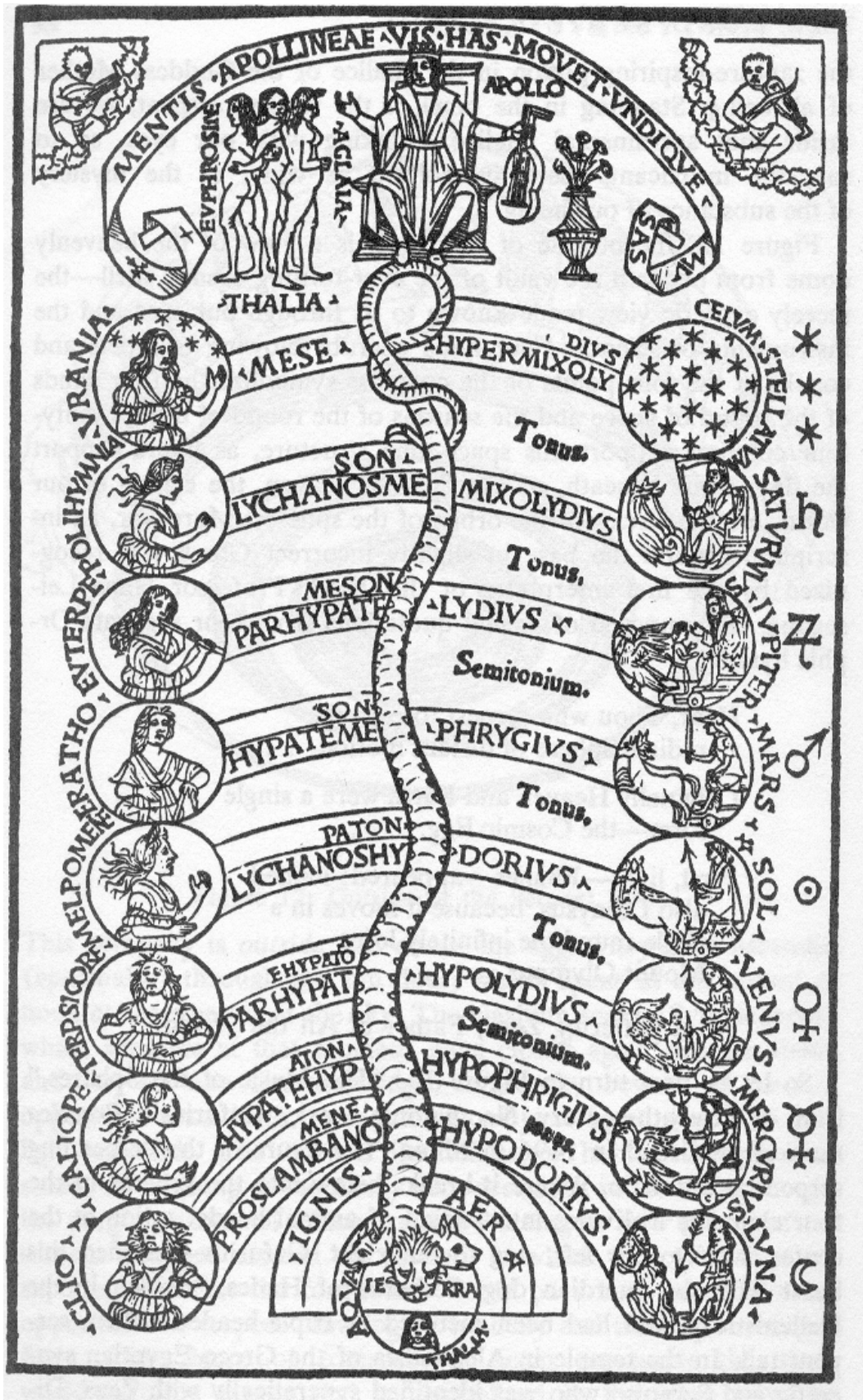
fig. 20. The Music of the Spheres *1469, from Practica Musice. Franchino Gafurio*

power and motion of the sacred spheres must by the blessed movers be inspired" (trans. Musa 1986: 22). Dante depicts each sphere with its own unique character, and the "... angelic orders or 'Intelligences' impress upon their assigned spheres a distinctive 'quality' or virtue and motion ... The spheres are called 'sacred' because they are incorruptible, having been created directly by God" (Musa 1986: 30). In Canto III, 51, this allusion appears again. Musa (1986: 38) explains the words "slowest sphere" as referring to the sphere of the moon, "... being the innermost of the nine concentric spheres, and the furthest from the Empyrean, moves the slowest, since the speed of each sphere is in direct proportion to its proximity to God. Speed, like intensity and quality of light, is an indication of their share of Divine Love". It is, however only in *Paradise* where he really applies this theory: an indication of a world-view in which hell or the underworld existed in a realm distinct from the earth, planets, stars and heaven.

While in the *Inferno*, and the *Purgatory*, Dante relies only on Virgil and the Muses on his journey, but in *Paradise*, he also invokes Apollo. Musa (1986: 7) explains that "Apollo is also associated with theology, and with the sun, both of which suggests, that the Poet seeks inspiration of the highest kind for the task at hand". Apollo's presence also indicates Dante's probable familiarity with the visual depiction of the music of the spheres as found in Capella, where Apollo is depicted seated above the ninth sphere in the area designated as *Primum Mobile*. Dante writes in Canto I, 76-8: "When the great sphere that spins, yearning for You eternally, captured my mind with strains of harmony tempered and tuned by You" *Paradise* (trans. Musa 1986: 3), effectively imagining the Christian God as source and controller of this celestial music, effortlessly replacing Aristotle's unmoved mover and Cicero's god, with his own. Apollo in this scheme is thus clearly not indicative of the pagan Apollo as god, but as allegorical figure symbolic of reason, poetry and learning. It is then to be expected that the same applies to the Muses: they are not here in their capacity as goddesses, instead, each has become synonymous with the art or science she once presided over. Thus when in Canto II, 7-9 he writes "I set my course for waters never travelled; Minerva fills my sails, Apollo steers, and all nine Muses point the Bears to me" *Paradise* (trans. Musa 1986: 18), what is implied is that wisdom fuels his voyage, reason sets his course and he navigates by virtue of his acquired knowledge. Cicero and Dante's use of the music of the spheres as "theological" model, expounding the underlying order of the cosmos was, alongside Capella's diagrammatic representation, to have lasting influence.

During the Middle Ages, the Neo-Pythagorean Capella's encyclopedia was

fig. 21. Music of the Spheres *1665, from Ars Magna Lucis. Anastasius Kircher.*

hugely popular. The *Satyricon* (also known as *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*) consisted of "two introductory books, an allegory, followed by seven books surveying the seven branches of Medieval learning: grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric; geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, and music. It is an encyclopedia of its period and was highly esteemed during the Middle Ages" (Dudley et al 1963 :551). That its influence was indeed widespread and enduring can be seen in imitations of his planetary model as found in Franchino Gafurio's *Practica musice* (published 1496, fig. 20) and Anastasius Kircher's *Ars magna lucis* (1665, fig. 21). Gafurio was a renowned Neo-Platonist, and musical theorist and wrote "that the Muses, Planets, Modes, and strings correspond with one another" (Campbell 2001: 103), and in his diagram provided not only a Muse for each sphere, but also a note from the scale, a Greek musical mode and an appropriate metal.

Strong similarities and almost exact duplication occur between the two diagrams depicting the universe in accordance with the theory of the music of the spheres found in *Practica Musice* and the *Ars magna lucis*. The most apparent, of course, are the exact associations between individual Muses and the nine spheres. In Kircher they are numbered and include a tenth sphere identified as the *Primum Mobile*. In both Gafurio and Kircher the following legend appears in its vicinity: *"Mentis Apollinae vis has movet undique Musas"* (in Gafurio) / *"Mentis Apollinae mens has mouet undique Musas"* (in Kircher) - which Campbell (2001: 105) translates as "the energy of the Apollinian Mind sets these Muses everywhere in motion". Like Cicero's interpretation of human music-making and learning as a means to "return" to universal order, this motto emphasises the impact of cultivated knowledge on the human ability to discover underlying natural laws. Nor is the idea far-fetched, science after all relies heavily on the application of mathematics, geometry, physics and accumulated knowledge.

Another constant is the serpent which mediates between the lowest sphere and the apex. The serpent is a complex and universally occurring image, and the manner in which it appears is highly significant in determining meaning. An *ouroboros* (serpent biting its tail) will differ from a serpent depicted as a straight line, for example. Chevalier & Gheerbrandt (1996: 850 -1) point to a specific association between Apollo and serpent: "Greek thought only disapproved of the serpent to the extent that it attempted to reduce the cosmos to its original chaos ... it remained the essential other side of the spirit, the life-giving force which inspired the sap to rise from the roots to the crown of the tree ... The inspirational role of the serpent may be seen in all its clarity in the myths and rituals surrounding the worship of the two great gods of poetry, music, healing and above all, divination,

Apollo and Dionysus. Apollo, the most solar of gods ... [freed] the Delphic oracle from that other larger-than-life symbol of the powers of nature, the serpent Pytho. This is not, however, to deny Nature soul and intellect, as Aristotle was to emphasize, but rather to free that soul and that deep and inspiring intellect which together must fecundate the spirit and thus ensure the order which the spirit strives to establish". The serpent here can thus be interpreted as Pytho, an essential aspect in knowledge and wisdom, as echoed in Athena's association with serpents. In both Kircher and Gafurio's images, Apollo rests his feet upon the loop in the serpent's tail, Campbell interprets the loop as reference to the "sun-door", and its positioning right above the sphere of the fixed stars certainly points to a function as some or other means of transition. While both diagrams show the serpent as three-headed, Gafurius has given each head a distinct character: "Where it breaks below into the spheres of the four elements it divides into a triad of animal heads: a lion at the center, wolf to our left, dog to our right. Gafurius identified this beast with the guardian dog Cerberus of Hades, which in the Hellenistic period had been pictured as triple-headed with a serpent tail ... The beast's heads symbolize Devouring Time in its three aspects - Present, Past and Future" (Campbell 2001: 99-101). Gafurius also appears to have drawn on another medieval classic for this image, in this case, Macrobius's *Saturnalia* (5th cent. C.E.) "The lion violent and sudden, expresses the present; the wolf, which drags away its victims, is the image of the past, robbing us of memories; the dog, fawning on its master, suggests to us the future, which ceaselessly beguiles us with hope" (ibid). Time in its three aspects has been associated with the Muses since Hesiod called upon them to reveal "what is, what is to be, and what was before now" *Theog.* (trans. Atchity 1996: 22).

Both images show Apollo seated at the summit above the sphere of the fixed stars accompanied by three female figures. In Kircher, these are clothed, crowned and seated. In Gafurius, they are nude, standing and identified by name as the three Graces[13]. This is probably the closest integration of these two mythological groups. While ancient poets such as Pindar and Theocritus had used both Muses and Graces as symbolic of the various aspects of poetry, they had generally refrained from exploring the curious duplication of the name "Thalia" in each

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13. Campbell (2001: 104) also points out that the Graces were considered "unfoldments of the spirit of the goddess Venus, Love". In Dante of course the Virgin, St. Lucy and Beatrice symbolise the spiritual love and Divine Grace which saves the Pilgrim from ruin. While the distillation of nine secular Muses to Three holy Graces makes mathematical sense, it also echoes attempts by Greek and Roman scholars and poets to derive the nine Muses from three "original" ones.

group. Hesiod had been the first to name both a Muse and a Grace by this name, and in Gafurio's diagram, the two Thalias appear on the extremes of the planetary ladder. The Muse Thalia (patroness of bucolic poetry and comedy) related to nature, falls within the earthly sphere. Gafurio, unlike Kircher restricts the Muse Thalia to the lower half of Earth's sphere, for which reason he calls her *surda Thalia*, "Silent Thalia". In Cicero's description of the music of the spheres, Earth, the lowest sphere was the stationary sphere, and as a consequence produced no sound[14]. The Grace Thalia, as already mentioned, appears in the realm above the ninth sphere in the company of Apollo and her sisters Euphrosyne and Aglaia. In Kircher, this area is identified as the *Primum Mobile*, the "prime mover" which in Aristotle was responsible for setting everything else in motion, yet remained itself unmoved. The two Thalias can be viewed as two aspects of one enveloping idea: the lowest Thalia is unheard, because she makes no sound, the highest cannot be heard because the pitch of her voice is beyond human hearing. Given the period from which this diagram originates, an incorporation of Christian mysticism would not be unusual, Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas (1544 -1590) had already proclaimed Urania the Muse of Christian poetry in *L'Uranie*[15], and as Campbell (2001: 101) argues: "Read in terms of the churchly tradition, the Grace Thalia, above, would suggest Eve in her state of purity ... Thalia below, Eve in exile, subject to the serpent and consequently to the fears, hopes, and bereavements of time". Such conflation of theological and theoretical elements were not uncommon to the period. Tarnas (1996: 294-5) reveals Johannes Kepler (1571 - 1630), one of the major protagonists of the scientific revolution- but also a professional astrologer - as "confes[sing] that his astronomical research was inspired by his search for the celestial 'music of the spheres' ". Ironically, it was to be navigators' widespread use of Kepler's *Rudolphine Tables*, which helped gain widespread acceptance of Copernicus' heliocentric theory, of which Kepler was a long-standing advocate.

Modern astronomy clearly no longer views the universe as either ordered - chaos theory has changed all that - or as simplistic as the original Pythagorean idea would have it. However, what has been retained is the notion of cosmological

14. This silent Thalia as nature in a state of death recalls Brodsky's aged and silent Muse in *The Fly* (see *Historical Overview*).

15. Du Bartas in his *Divine Weeks and Works* also alludes to this perception of the structure of the cosmos, and describes the soul's passage through it: "By th' air's steep stairs, she boldly climbs aloft To visit the world's chambers: heaven she visits oft, Stage after stage: she marketh all the spheres, And all the harmonius, various course of theirs" (trans. Joshua Sylvester 2001: 2).

theorising based on mathematically produced models, while "observing" astronomical phenomena by means not only of perceivable light, but more often than not by use of radiowaves amongst others. Astronomers and cosmologists are quite literally "listening" to the universe. Recently, a group of cosmologists produced high-resolution images obtained by an experiment identified as BOOMERANG (Balloon Observations of Millimetric Extragalactic Radiation and Geophysics) which produced "the most precise measurement to date of several of the parameters which cosmologists use to describe the universe" (UniSci 2001). What is of interest in these findings is its application. While one scientist responded by stating "It looks like we now have a 'Standard Model of Cosmology'" (Mauskopf in UniSci 2001), the findings, it was argued, support the Big-Bang theory, modern science's origin-myth: "the universe was created 12-15 billion years ago in an enormous explosion called the Big Bang. The intense heat that filled the embryonic universe is still detectable today as a faint glow of microwave radiation known as the cosmic microwave background (CMB) which is visible in all directions ... Whatever structures were present in the very early universe would leave their fingerprints as a faint pattern of brightness variations in the CMB. By measuring these fingerprints, cosmologists can solve the mystery of the formation of structures in the universe ... the size and amplitude of structures that formed in the early universe would form what mathematicians call a "harmonic series" of structure imprinted on the CMB"(UniSci 2001).

Now, this mathematical harmony is exactly the type of harmony the Pythagoreans were getting at when they first devised the notion of the music of the spheres, and the use of CMB as "memory" of how the universe came to be the way it is, is not dissimilar to oral mythology as collective memory. These scientists make an effortless leap from harmonious arrangements of numbers to actual music-making: "The early Universe is full of sound waves compressing and rarefying matter and light, much like sound waves compress and rarefy air inside a flute or trumpet ... For the first time the new data show clearly the harmonics of these waves ... Using a music analogy, we could tell what note we were seeing - if it was C-sharp or F-flat. Now, we see not just one, but three of these peaks and can tell not only which note, but also what instrument" (UniSci 2001). However, one would need some serious astronomical training and insight to "hear" this music. Clearly a desire for music to somehow form part of a mythology of origins is undeniable, as is its effective application in expounding any type of cosmology. But of more pertinence here is the role played by the Muse in describing and facilitating comprehension of the basic principles of varying analyses of the structure of the universe, from antiquity to the present.

2.1.2. The Thracian Connection

"Absolute 'Greekness' is a quality that few, if any, Greek gods can claim"
(Henrichs: 1998, 233)

It is tempting to read into Hesiod's *Theogony* an account of the fusion between the religious traditions of the indigenous population of prehistoric Greece and the Dorian invaders, here symbolised by Zeus and Mnemosyne, which cannot simply be ruled out. However, it is the idea of an enhanced type of god replacing a primordial one, which is the intrinsic factor here, irrespective of whether or not the story commemorates an actual series of events in prehistoric Greece. However, the belief in the occurrence of such invasions formed a part of ancient Greek conceptions of themselves. Thucydides' inclusion of Pelasgians, Ionians, and invading Dorians gives the impression of a well-known "folk-history" passed down from one generation to another. Unfortunately, the ancient Greeks appear to have been generally ignorant of most of their ancient history, and as Grant (1997: 332) ventures: the story of the three Greek ancestral tribes may be a later invention: "The old classification of Greek dialects into Ionian, Doric and Aeolic now requires amendment. Misleadingly linked to supposed 'race', it cannot, in fact, represent *preexisting* racial differences, since distinctions of dialect become perceptible only after 1200 BC, when they are produced by the isolation of the small communities separated by mountains and the sea (by the fifth and sixth centuries a sort of racial consciousness separating Dorians and Ionians had been artificially prompted by political, social, religious and linguistic differences) ... a recent argument suggests that, since various 'Linear B' texts can perhaps be divided between upper-class and lower-class idioms, the Dorians had already been present earlier as the serfs of the Myceneans - and that in consequence, Dorian invasions never took place". Grant has clearly taken the extreme version here, but supposing his argument is even partly valid, then instead of large-scale invasion, Indo-Europeans found their way into Greece by slow infiltration[16]. Where the poem does demonstrate indigenous encounters with foreign religions, is in the Akkadian, Hittite and Egyptian influences which can be detected within it.

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16. The Indo-European names of some Olympians do point towards some form of influx, as opposed to "native" deities whose names appear in Linear B texts and thus fall into the Minoan-Mycenean category.

Greek society on all levels exhibited signs of cultural "borrowing". Unlike the xenophobic Egyptians, Greeks were widely travelled. Their rugged geography made travel by land an arduous and dangerous task, it was easier to reach one's destination by sailing along coastlines. Consequently, as they mastered seafaring, their ships began roaming far and wide. And when the growing population at home compelled them to found colonies, their interactions with neighbouring communities changed from occasional trade encounters, to permanent cohabitation. Some degree of amalgamation of foreign ideas and practices is thus to be expected. The phonetic writing system they adopted from the Phoenicians, and its subsequent impact is but a case in point. Such Greek enthusiasm for emulating in their own culture what they admired in others, resulted in a particularly rich and varied artistic heritage and mythology. The Greek ability to adopt and merge, did not extend to their stringent notions of who and what constitutes "Greek" and who and what does not. This matter is particularly intriguing in the light of how widely Greek communities were scattered - from Mainland Greece to Phasis on the Black sea to Marseilles, as well as Asia Minor, Sicily, southern Italy, and most of the islands in the Aegean. While most colonies were predominantly Greek, they also included Scythians, Thracians, Libyans, Gauls, and numerous other peoples. Nonetheless, Finley (2000: 122) states that "[u]nless prevented by another power, each community had its own government, its own coinage, calendar and laws, its own temples and cults. The variations were infinite, yet Herodotus could speak, without descending to nonsense, of their common language, religion and customs ... the grounds on which every one of the innumerable scattered communities was accepted to be as Greek as every other, in its own opinion, and in the judgement of the rest". This "Greekness" was offset by the notion of the foreigner or "barbarian" (one who speaks another language), associating cultural identity with preferred language[17].

In the Archaic period, there is no strict differentiation between Greeks and non-Greeks. Homer for example, even though speaking of Achaians and Trojans and their allies, assumes for all the participants in the war, common gods and cultural and religious practices. The only participants in the war whose language is identified as foreign are the Carians who were described as "those who held Miletos and mount Phithires thick-covered in leaves and the streams of Maiandros and the sheer peaks of Mykale" *Iliad* II (trans. Hammond 1987: 40). The historical

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17. A similar situation can be detected in the use of the term *makwerekwere* (babblers) by many indigenous South Africans to describe Africans from north of South Africa's borders.

record affirms this: "The pastoral Carians, speaking a non-Indo-European language, lived mainly in hill-top villages under native dynasties based on sanctuaries, their principal centre being Mylasa (where there was a shrine of Zeus Kairos)" (Grant 1997: 344). The Carian's non-Indo-European language would thus have rendered their speech completely alien and incomprehensible to their Greek neighbours, in contrast to peoples such as the Thracians, Hittites, and Phrygians in the Balkans and Asia Minor, whose own Indo-European languages would have sounded vaguely familiar, even if not fully grasped. Thus, while Archaic Greeks were able to differentiate between their own culture and those of others, they did not place as much emphasis on such differences as their classical counterparts, although Homer does poke fun at Carians' sense of dress when describing one of their leaders - Nastes - as going "into battle wearing gold like a girl, poor fool" *Iliad* (trans. Hammond 1987: 40). Wiedemann (1998: 113) argues that the great importance assigned in classical literature to defining a common Greek identity, was most responsible for the creation of the idea of the barbarian, and that it occurred as direct result of the following factors: "*(a)* the imposition of Persian control over western Asia Minor from the mid-6th cent BC and the successful armed resistance to Persia by many Greek states in 480/79 BC; *(b)* justification of Athenian hegemony over the Delian League on the grounds that Greeks should unite to continue resistance against Persia; and *(c)* the appearance of considerable numbers of non-Greek slaves at Athens". The distinction was to be of importance until the Hellenistic period, where the loss of the *polis*, and the expansion of Greek culture into seemingly every corner of their known world, rendered it valueless.

As literature served in no small part to entrench these ideas, it is to be expected that literature itself would be affected. From Aeschylus' *Persians* onwards, the barbarians are characterised by their lack of reason, control, competence and moral responsibility. Their sexual and violent appetites are voracious. Their clothing is effeminate (as in Homer's Nastes), and their tastes run to drinking wine neat, and "emotionally charged" music in the Lydian mode. Thracian in particular, becomes a by-word for barbarian, as can be seen in the history of the myth of Tereus, who "thought originally to have been a Greek (Megarian) hero, includes rape, tearing out a tongue, a mother's murder of her own child, and cannibalism: consequently Tereus had to be reclassified as a 'barbarian' (Thracian) king" (Wiedemann 1998: 113). The already extant tradition of Thracian characters populating Greek mythology would have made such substitutions easy. Thracians and Greeks had a long history of contact, conflict and cohabitation. This connection is pertinent in that virtually every myth involving the Muses includes references to Thrace, in particular as far as the so-called "Thracian" poets:

Thamyris, Musaeus, Orpheus, etc. are concerned. In *Rhesus*, the Muses are clearly associated with Thracians and barbarians. Even the location of their contest with Thamyris is shifted from the Peloponnese (where Homer placed it) to the area bordering Macedonia with Thrace. In Homer, Thamyris (identified as Thracian) was defeated by them at Dorion in Nestor's kingdom, but in the tragedy, the action takes place on Mt. Pangaeus in Thrace, across the river Strymon. Pausanias even ascribes the tradition of nine Muses to a possible Thracian influence: "... they say Pieros of Macedon, from whom the mountain took its name, established nine Muses at Thespiai and gave them the names they have now. Pieros introduced this tradition because he thought it wise or else because of an oracle or perhaps he was taught it by a Thracian. The Thracian race in the old days seems to have been in every way more advanced than the Macedonians. In particular the Thracians were not so lacking in religion" *Pausanias* IX. 29. 2. (trans. Levi 1979: 368).

The Thracians were a people who occupied the eastern half of the Balkans, and were familiar to the Ancient Greeks, in myth and history. While they spoke a similar language, their appearance apparently differed enough from the Greeks for Xenophanes to comment on their hair-colour as red, and their eyes as blue. In Homer the Thracians were enemies who fought on the side of Troy. In Herodotus, they constitute amongst the greatest and most populous peoples on earth. To the Greeks, by all accounts, the Thracians were a hostile people, appearing as enemies as early as the mid-seventh century B.C.E. challenging the Greek colony at Thasos[18]. They appear to have reached their golden age in the fourth century, their kingdoms only falling to the Romans. Mallory (1999: 72 - 3) argues for a basic continuity stretching from the Iron Age back into the Bronze Age, as far back as

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18. Mainland Thrace saw the first attempt at Greek colonisation *c.* 654 BCE which failed due to Thracian opposition. The city of Abdera was founded by Greeks fleeing Persian domination in Teos, in 545 BCE (and included the poet Anacreon) and traded extensively with the Thracians. The population of Lesbos is also believed to have been predominantly Thracian until approx. 1130 B.C.E. (the lyre of Orpheus was apparently contained within Apollo's temple). The Lesbian city of Mytilene was ruled from *c.* 590 by the Thracian Pittacus (later considered one of the Seven Sages of Greece), appointed as *aesymnetes* (arbitrator). It is ironic, that at the time it was the lyric poet Alcaeus, who "...reviled the new 'arbitrator' as a vulgar, boastful, arrogant, envious, splay-footed, big-bellied, drunken, upstart rapist and murderer" (Grant 1997: 180). Thasos, the foremost Greek colony of the northern Aegean,. and "a bulwark of Hellenism against the mainland Thracians" (Grant 1997: 261), was settled by Greeks *c.* 650? B.C.E., and had been inhabited by a Thracian tribe known as the Sintes. Both Thracian and earlier Neolithic habitations have been found at a site on Mount Kastri, as well as below the Greek city. A grave in the *agora*, set up by

3000 B.C.E. Prior to this, the archaeological record includes too many wide-ranging discontinuities. Nearly fifty Thracian tribes have been identified, while Homer listed three as coming to the aid of Troy. Many of the important islands of the northern, central, western and eastern Aegean such as Thasos, Samothrace, Imbros, Lemnos, Euboea, Naxos, Lesbos and Chios were initially occupied by Thracians. In Thrace itself Vulchitrun in the north attests to significant developments in the later Bronze age, while in the south-eastern parts, megalithic graves and dolmens range in date between the twelfth and sixth centuries BCE, indicating a materially advanced civilisation.

Thracians and Greeks enjoyed a complex, wide-ranging and long-standing relationship (unlike the relatively simple matter of the Persians, who could be classified a definite adversary with ease). "Indeed, at each of these [north-eastern] Greek centres, relations with the huge concatenation of Thracian tribes was a dominant factor. As a result of such contacts, important elements in Thracian religion, especially relating to the worships of Dionysus and Orpheus, gradually passed into Greek cult" (Grant 1997: 262). Such influences on Greek cult have often been interpreted as proof of the Thracian origins of certain Greek gods and cultic practices. Pythagoras certainly appears to have derived his notion of "bilocation" (the indestructible soul as temporarily detachable from the body) from shamanistic faiths (often described as Orphic) then current in Scythia and Thrace. (Grant 1997: 229). Not even the Eleusinian Mysteries were exempt: at Eleusis, where priestly duties were firstly the hereditary prerogative of certain families - the Eumolpids and Kerykes (both Athenian), the former claimed descent from the Thracian Eumolpus who within the mythology of the ritual was the first celebrant of the mysteries. A similar situation can be seen on Naxos, where the

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the 'sons of Bendis' however "bears witness to the survival of a Thracian element in its population" (ibid). Athenian colonisation of the entire Thracian Chersonese was undertaken with the sanction of the Delphic oracle. Miltiades the elder ruled it as an independent state, with the support of Pisistratus and the nearby Thracians (Dolonci). Miltiades the younger ruled over the native Thracians of the Chersonese and married the daughter of the Thracian king Olorus. Following a brief exile after a Scythian invasion, it was the Thracians who brought him back in 494 BCE. In contrast to such happy coexistence, the Thracian population at Byzantium was subjugated by Greek colonists from Megara to the helot-like status of Prounikoi (bearers of burdens). By comparison, the Milesian colony of Apollonia Pontica on the Thracian Bosphorus found itself in the precarious position of being surrounded by hostile Thracian forts. Even Calchedon, colonised by Megara in 685 BCE may originally have been a Thracian site, having yielded prehistoric remains.

early inhabitants of Naxos were believed to have come from Thrace and Caria. "A prominent centre in the Mycenean age, when it served as a staging point for eastward maritime traffic, Naxos originated numerous Greek myths. As its additional name of Dionysia suggested, and its famous wine production (celebrated on local coinage) confirmed, it was one of a number of places which competed with Thrace as a claimant to the birthplace of the god Dionysus, who, according to tradition, found Ariadne (abandoned by Theseus) on the island, and made her his bride" (Grant 1997: 184)[19].

The Indo-European-speaking Phryges who occupied the larger part of the central plateau and internal western flank of Asia Minor during the thirteenth and twelfth centuries BCE had according to tradition, originated in Thrace, where they were known as the Byges. Their kingdom in Asia Minor was associated by the Greeks with the legendary figures of Midas and Gordius. The Phrygians appear to have assimilated certain Greek aspects into their culture, while the Greeks also imported aspects of Phrygian culture. "Ancient writers report that Dionysus came to them from Thrace of Phrygia - which owed its creation, as we saw, to a Thracian tribe. The Phrygians knew the god as Diounis, a deity of vegetation. By the eighth or seventh century, too, the great mother-goddess of Asia Minor, whose principal sanctuary was at Pessinus on the border of Phrygia, had come to Greece under the name of Cybele (Kubila and Agdistis to the Phrygians). The Great Gods (Cabiri) of the north Aegean island of Samothrace ... who were at first underworld (fertility) deities, also seem to have originated in Phrygia. The musicians of that land, too, exercised much influence on the Greeks, who credited them with the invention of cymbals, flutes, triangles, the Pan-pipe, and the Phrygian "mode" ..." (Grant 1997: 290).

It is thus clear why Dionysus has been considered a late addition to the Greek pantheon - an assumption established by the Greeks themselves - his arrival usually calculated to have occurred not prior to the eighth cent. BCE. However, there is one particular problem in equating the Thracian impact on the characteristics of Dionysus, and religious practices associated with him, with Dionysus' real origins. The god himself may not have been as late an import as traditionally thought. He may not have been an import at all, nor would this be the first time a god's actual origins are at variance with his mythological ones. Apollo for example, is generally described, as the "most Greek of Greek gods", yet

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19. The Cretan aspect of the myth is not surprising, considering that after the initial settlement by Thracians and Carians, the Cretans followed. The other great claim to Dionysus came from Phrygia.

he may be more of a latecomer to Greece than Dionysus. Plato attributes to Apollo "the institutions of temples and sacrifices, and the entire service of gods, demigods, and heroes; also the ordering of the repositories of the dead, and the rites which have to be observed by him who would propitiate the inhabitants of the world below. These are matters of which we are ignorant ourselves, and as founders of a city we should be unwise in trusting them to any interpreter but our *ancestral* deity. He is the god who sits in the centre, on the navel of the earth, and he is the interpreter of religion to all mankind" Plato, *Republic.* IV (trans. Jowett 1894: 96). Archaeological evidence shows that while his cult and main centres (Delphi and Delos) were sufficiently established to be familiar to Homer and Hesiod, his presence has not been detected in Bronze Age Greece, which means he must have risen to prominence during the Dark Ages[20]. Apollo's prominence in Homer, and Dionysus' comparative absence (he appears in stories told by characters) had been interpreted as proof of the relative recentness of Dionysus' arrival in Greece. However, it should be borne in mind that the focus of these epics fell squarely on an aristocratic, military aspect of myth, and society. The Bronze Age foundation of these stories is no guarantee that the gods and heroes who populate them were known in Greece during the Bronze Age. Homer's epics, as previously discussed, date from, and reflect the cultural climate of the eighth century BCE. If Apollo is prominent in the epic cycle, it is because he was the protector (alongside the Muses) of epic singers and cithara-players (*Theog.* 94). The epic is his medium, it is only natural he should play an important part in it. If Dionysus is mainly absent, he is not alone, Demeter - another fertility deity - is also mentioned, but unlike her siblings (Zeus, Hera and Poseidon) does not participate.

Unlike Apollo, Dionysus' presence in Bronze Age Greece has been attested,

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20. While *paean* (the type of hymn sung to Apollo) appears in Linear B (Mycenean Cnossus) - derived from *Paiawon*, the name Apollo is now believed to be of Indo-European origin: "after earlier theories explaining the god from the sun (following an identification as old as the 5th cent., and adding the linguistic argument that the epiclesis *Lykeios* would derive from the stem *luc-, as in Latin* lux), partisans of an Anatolian, esp. Lycian, origin relied upon the same epiclesis and upon his mother's name being Lycian and connected with *lada*, 'earth'; the French excavations in Lycian Xanthus proved both assumptions wrong. More promising is the connection with Dor. *apella*, 'assembly', i.e. annual reunion of of the adult tribesmen which also introduces the young men into the community. This explains his widespread role as the divinity responsible for the introduction of young initiated adults into society ... and his cult has to do with military and athletic training" (Graf 1998: 51).

the name *Diwonusos* appearing on three Linear B tablets from Mycenean Pylos (Western Peloponnese and Khania in Crete). The particulars of Mycenean Dionysus are still contested[21], but what is apparent is that even at this early point, Dionysus exhibits the kind of characteristics which led later writers to believe him an import, and that Thracian ideas may have added to his cult, but were not its originators: "If we had more information on the bronze age Dionysus, he would probably turn out to be a complex figure with a substantial non-Greek or Mediterranean component" (Henrichs 1998: 233).

Thus, Dionysus, rather than being a late addition, is most likely an established divinity of clear antiquity. Which means that the frequency with which his arrival in Greece is alluded to should be interpreted not as reference to the historical introduction of his cult, but as essential aspect of his myth and character. Dodds (1951: 77) describes the aim of the Dionysian cult as *estasis* "which could mean anything from 'taking you out of yourself' to a profound alteration of personality. And its psychological function was to satisfy and relieve the impulse to reject responsibility, an impulse which exists in all of us and can become under certain social conditions an irresistible craving". Given the classical characterisation of barbarians as irresponsible and irrational, Dionysus' association with the non-Greek is not surprising. But this notion of "otherness" goes deeper than that. As Henrichs (1998: 234) argues, at Dionysian festivals in Athens, "merrymaking predominated, but it was punctuated by ritual reminders of a temporary suspension of the city by spirits of evil, or by the dead, or by strangers called 'Carians'; the silent drinking at separate tables, explained by the myth of the matricide Orestes' arrival in Athens and the fear of pollution it provoked; the 'sacred marriage' (*hieros gamos*) of the wife of the *basileus* (an Athenian Magistrate) to Dionysus; and the cereal meal prepared on the festival's last day for the dead or

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21. "One of the Pylos tablets may point to a tenuous connection between Dionysus and wine ... A Dionysiac connection has been claimed for several archaeological discoveries; none convinces; ... Yet typical features of Dionysus and his religion - including wine and ivy; divine epiphanies and ecstatic forms of worship; women dancing; handling snakes, or holding flowers; the divine child and nurturing females [which is how he appears in the *Iliad*]; and bulls with and without anthropomorphic features are all prominent in the Aegean, especially Cretan religion and art. The earliest Dionysus may indeed be sought in the culture of Minoan Crete ... [however] Attempts to derive the name Semele from Phrygian, *bakchos* from Lydian or Phoenician, and *thyrsos* ... from Hittite, though highly speculative, reflect the wide spectrum of potential cross-cultural contacts that may have influenced the early formation of Dionysus and his cult" (Henrichs 1998: 233).

for Hermes Chthonios and the survivors of the Great Flood". Thus whereas Apollo, in Plato's words, controls and sets up the guidelines for religious and cultic rites. He oversees the training of the young by means of gymnastics, music and the military training of ephebes and their initiation into the community. Apollo thus represents Greek society's version of "normality". These are all aspects essential for the smooth functioning of their world. Dionysus is the anathema to all this safety and predictability, he represents danger, confusion and the world beyond the known. Dionysus can thus never be Greek, the very purpose of this mythical construct is to absorb and represent the foreign and the mysterious, which is why so many stories connected to him depict his arrival in Greece, and emphasise how much he differs from the other gods: his mother is a mortal; he is born twice; and he must prove his divinity.

Thus, when the Muse is consistently, and increasingly associated with Thrace, the question arises, do these connotations reflect a historical or mythological aspect of the Muse? Homer may hold a clue: in the *Iliad* the Muses make their first appearance alongside a Thracian bard -Thamyris. However, at this point, the only Thracian aspect of the story is the bard - not as happens later - the location, or as in Apollodorus, the customs as well. It is notable how Thracian connotations with Muses increase during the classical era, with the Thracians involved as either poets or lunatics. While the Muse, like Apollo, Dionysus, and virtually every other Greek god is undeniably (to various degrees), derived from non-Greek mythology, it is dubious that Greek fondness of perceiving mythical poets (Orpheus, Musaeus, Thamyris, etc.) as Thracian should be interpreted as indicating Thracian origins ("actual" poets such as Homer and Hesiod by contrast, are distinctly Greek - Ionian and Boeotian). The poet when composing, is generally depicted as encountering something beyond him/herself: to oral poets, this something was the vast collection of potential phrases, characters, scenarios and formulae with which the tradition presented them and the combinatory factors of audience, prevailing mood, and place. By the fifth century, the notion of poets reliant on something beyond themselves was described by Plato as "an old story" (Dodds 1951: 82), while Democritus wrote that "the finest poems were those composed 'with inspiration and a holy breath,' and denied that anyone could be a great poet *sine furore*" (ibid). The mythical Thracian thus symbolises this interaction with an "other". This interaction between an individual and something beyond their normal selves, may signify an aspect critical to creativity. As Storr (1991: 287) explains "... creative people habitually describe their dependence for inspiration upon sources outside their conscious volition. Moreover, creative people show a wider than usual division in the mind, an accentuation of opposites".

2.1.3. Poetry as Beverage in Greek and Teutonic Myth.

"Now do we mix a second bowl of song The Muses' gift to honour Lampon's clan, And shower upon the isle of Aegina The honeyed music of our songs. Pindar, *Isthmian* 6: 1-9

For I shall pour forth a draught of Dirke's holy water, the spring which the deep-bosomed maids of golden-robed Mnemosyne made flow beside the well-walled gates of Cadmus" Pindar, *Isthmian 6*: 72-5 (trans. Conway & Stoneman 1997: 300 & 303).

The concept of the Muse does not appear to have had exact counterparts in ancient neighbouring mythological systems, but comparable relations between poet and "source" of poetic skill and/or inspiration can be found in what remains of the mythology of the Northern European Teutons. Whether or not these similarities are due to a common Indo-European heritage, or rather indicate a universal symbolisation of poetry and storytelling is uncertain. The absence of the distinctive figure of the Muse in Teutonic myth - as opposed to the clearly identifiable counterparts of Thracian myth[22] - does appear to indicate that the notion of the Muse was not shared by all Indo-European peoples and may have been an amalgamation of Indo-European notions relating to the production of poetry with those of the peoples indigenous to Greece. The correlation between Teutonic and Greek characterisation of the poet as trickster figure, and poetry as some type of beverage (usually water or honey) appear to support a view of the Muses as orginially deities associated with those liquids which were believed to impart the gifts of poetry and/or prophecy (see section 3. *Muses and Poets*).

The mythology of what came to be the population of northern Europe, - generally known as the Germanic or Teutonic peoples - was only textually recorded when it had already been superseded by Christianity in the southern parts of traditionally Germanic homelands. Moreover, as the last vestiges of Teutonic myth were primarily from Scandinavia, these surviving myths are generally read as a regional dialect of a much broader mythological system which can only be inferred. However, certain major deities would no doubt have been as pervasive - irrespective of region - as the prominence of Zeus, Poseidon, and Hera in different

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22. For more on connotations between the Muses and the Thracian Nymphs See note 2. in *Historical Overview*, and fig. 22. this section.

local versions of Greek myth. One such deity being Odin/Woden: alongside Thor, Odin comes across as the epitome of masculinity and brute force. He is identified as the king of the gods, but is not a benevolent or loving father figure, but a highly untrustworthy and potentially destructive entity delighting in promoting strife and general deception. His physical appearance was malleable according to his will, yet he always had only one eye, having traded the other for knowledge[23]. He patronised kings, nobles and poets, and also awarded victory in battle (sometimes unfairly).

Tonnelat (1993: 253) emphasises that while Odin was for a long time thought to have originally been a minor demon, later added to the Teutonic pantheon of great gods "recent researches have shown that this is not the case, that Woden is a prolongation of an Indo-European type". Woden's interest is not confined to warriors and the battlefield, his range varies from shamanistic figure indulging in magic to wandering inquirer, constantly elaborating his knowledge by pointedly questioning everyone he meets. One of these sources, Mimir (he who thinks) was a water demon and Odin's maternal uncle. Odin had to exchange one of his eyes for Mimir's insight. When Mimir died, Odin preserved his head so that it retained the power of speech[24]. Poetry, however was conceived of as a drink called *hydromel* or *odrerirr*, brewed by the dwarves from honey and the blood of Kvasir, the wisest of all men whom they had killed. Any one who drank it immediately became a poet and a sage. Wodin however, stole the potion after which he dispensed it only to those he favoured[25]. Bad poets were those who had found the few drops of hydromel Woden had dropped on his way to Asgard. Later Scandinavian traditions include a god specifically devoted to poetry: Braggi Bodassonm, Odin's bard (skald) and cup bearer. He appears to have developed from a tradition surrounding a mythical bard, credited with inventing a celebrated type of strophe in the same manner in which poets such as Thamyris were credited with the invention of different musical modes. In both the traditions of Woden and Braggi, runes play a symbolic role: Woden is said to have brought runes to the world when he hung

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23. This notion of losing physical sight to gain knowledge is of course echoed in the blindness of so many poets in Greek myth, but appears a universal, rather than localised symbol.

24. The poet Orpheus' head was found alongside his lyre on a riverbank, bloody and still singing. Similar imagery of severed heads retaining speech or protective capacity also appears in Celtic myth.

25. This echoes the Greek notion of poets as selected and given their poetic powers by the gods as claimed by Hesiod in his *Theogony*.

himself from the world tree for nine nights, while Braggi was said have had runes engraved on his tongue[26].

While the myths of Odin/Woden and the Muses clearly have certain aspects in common, the fundamental differences are clear. The selection of poets by the gods as being comparable, if not equal to that of kings is emphasised in both mythologies. Hesiod even assigns the Zeus-selected king his own personal Muse - Calliope - who sets him apart from other men by endowing him with the gift of persuasive speech (in effect legitimising the claim of those men who may not have been born to an inherited high office to claim it by virtue of skilled political arguments and mastery in the art of rhetoric). Woden's patronage of nobles, warriors and poets, all afforded their status and skill by his will only, falls squarely within this category. Odin's resemblance to Zeus is also intriguing: like Zeus, he is a storm and sky god who takes the form of an eagle, and like Zeus he swallows the source of knowledge and then brings it forth again - in Zeus' case he swallowed Metis (wisdom) and Athena sprang from his head, while Odin stole the mead of poetic inspiration and wisdom by drinking it, and then regurgitating it at a later stage. But here is also the main difference, in Teutonic myth, poetry is concentrated alongside a number of other attributes in one figure who is also the king of the Gods. In Greek myth a greater degree of diversification is apparent:

fig. 22. The Three Thracian Nymphs. *In Thracian myth the cult of the great goddess Bendis was closely connected with that of the Nymphs. They held far greater distinction in Thracian culture than their Greek counterparts: according to legend, "Thrace" was derived from the name of the Nymph Thrake, while Thracian poet-kings of myth were often the sons of the nymphs. Their connection with rivers and springs was well-established, but reliefs from the Roman period in particular symbolise the curative powers of springs (Fol & Marazov 1977).*

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26. In Greek myth writing was brought to Greece by Cadmus from Phoenicia. He appears to have been a skilled musician as the walls of his city of Thebes were described as *mousodomos* (built by song), and he apparently retrieved Zeus' stolen sinews from Typhon by bewitching the monster with his song, and convincing it that he needed the sinews to string his lyre. As a reward he was given Harmonia, and their wedding-procession which includes the Muses features on many early vase-paintings.

while the Muses, like Athena, were produced by Zeus, they are separate from him. And while in Thracian and Greek imagery the poet and the Muse/Nymph are closely related symbols, they are nonetheless distinct from one another. In the figure of Odin who himself speaks only in poetry and alone determines who is to be a poet, the ultimate source of poetry is not so much the god as the mead brewed from Kvasir's blood.

Poetry and poetic skill as beverage appear in Pindar as well. Pindar's allusions to various liquids (honey, draught, water, springs, rivers, etc.) when speaking of poetry, reflect the historically close associations between the Mousai and fountains sacred to them. Moreover, given Pindar's references to Orphic beliefs in his poetry (*Olympian Odes 2 - 3* in particular), such metaphors, and the presence of Mnemosyne, may also be seen as oblique reminders to initiates of the mysteries of the two springs in the underworld: Lethe (oblivion) from which the uninitiated were believed to drink, and the spring of Mnemosyne which guaranteed life after death[27] (both rivers reappeared in Dante's earthly paradise). The poet Gottfried, drawing on both traditions, does the same: "My prayers and entreaties will I now send forth from heart and hands aloft to Helicon, to that ninefold throne whence the fountains spring from which the gift of words and meaning flow. Its host and nine hostesses are Apollo and the Camenae [Roman Muses] ... And could I obtain of it but a single drop, my words would be dipped in the glowing crucible of Camenian inspiration, to be transmuted into something strangely wonderful" (Campbell 2001: 80). At Corinth behind the temple in the market-square was a sanctuary of the Muses which Pausanias in his *Guide to Greece* claimed had been built by Ardalos - inventor of the flute. He calls them the daughters of Ardalos (*Ardalides)*, which Levi (1979: 204) ventures "must originally have meant 'daughters of the water-spring'; [and that] these muses were water-nymphs at one time ... [since a] man afflicted with the nymphs and one possessed by the muses show similar symptoms in popular ancient belief". Pittheus apparently taught "the arts of language" at this Mouseion, while sacrifices were made to the Muses alongside Hypnos (sleep).

The widespread connection between beverage and poetry is comprehensible given the crucial importance of large reliable quantities of drinkable water to urbanisation. The vast majority of the earth's population still resides in coastal cities, or on the banks of major rivers such as the Ganges, Nile, Thames, Seine,

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27. Such associations may account for the frequent appearance of Muses on Sarcophagi, (such as the example in the Louvre) especially prevalent during the later Hellenistic period.

Rhine, etc. Thus, as civilisations depend upon water for their initial development and long-term sustenance, it is not surprising that deities associated with culture, learning and creativity should have liquid symbolism. In Athens for example, the local cult of the Muses held that they were the daughters of the river Ilissos. While hardly spectacular and eventually silted up, the river nonetheless attracted a number of cults and mythical associations. Elsewhere in Greece where rivers were scarce, smaller streams and springs took on great importance: at Delphi, the Pythia and all visitors to the sacred precinct would first be required to purify themselves at the spring of Kastalia, while the Pythia drank of the waters of the spring of Kassotis before delivering her oracles. The Muses were called Kastalides after the former spring, and they had a shrine in the form of a well next to the temple of Apollo which may in all likelihood have provided the waters used by the priests during their duties. Thus the theory that the Muses became patronesses of poetry because they initially presided over the springs believed to impart poetic and prophetic powers to those who drank from them[28], is not entirely inconceivable.

fig. 23. Reconstruction of The Sanctuary of the Muses and Ge in the sacred precinct at Delphi *(marked 34). The water in this raised well appears to have originally flowed under the temple from the spring of Kassotis, but after the landslide of 353 was "piped into the sanctuary by a complicated system of channels" (Levi 1979: 469). According to Pausanias "the water of this Kassotis dives under the earth and makes women prophetic in the god's holy places" (trans. Levi 1979: 469). While the Pythia was said to purify herself in the Kastilian spring, she drank from Kassotis before giving oracles. (see also note 28).*
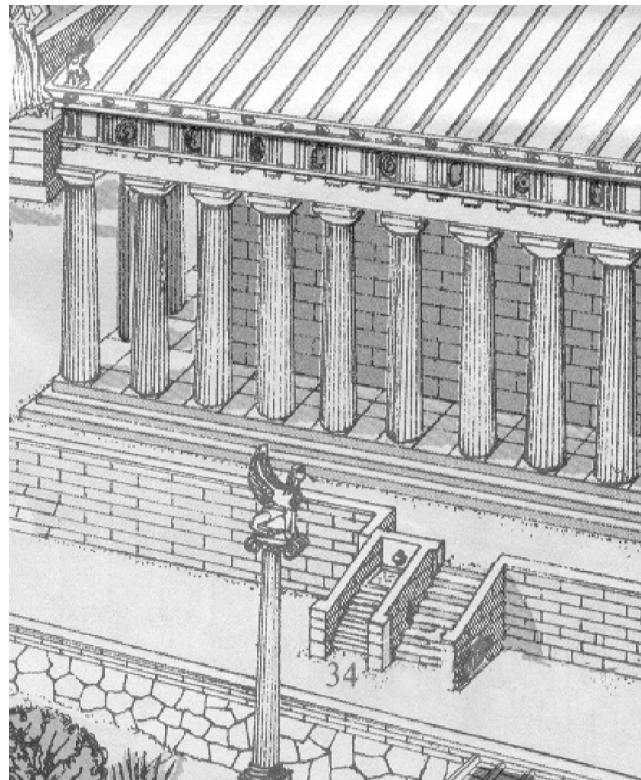
28. Recent research conducted by a team of geologists and archaeologists at Delphi suggests that some water-sources may indeed have been more conducive to prophetic inspiration than others: water extracted from sources near the temple of Apollo was found to contain ethylene which according to John Hale "reduces the oxygen reaching the brain and makes you feel high" (Leake & Dennis 2000: 11).

3. Muses and Poets

"'It's not my fault that I'm equally the programmed slave of whatever stupid mood you've created. Whatever clumsy set of female emotions you've bodged up for me. To say nothing of *your* character. I notice there's not been a single word about his exceedingly dubious status. I wonder who's pulling *his* strings?'

'I am. I'm me. Don't be ridiculous.'

'Then why's he being referred to as "he" throughout? What are you trying to hide?'

He is silent for a moment" (Fowles 1993: 88).

No analysis of the concept of the Muse will be complete without an investigation into the concept of the "poet" since the two ideas are intricately related and depend on each other for meaning and function. As has been discussed, the sphere of the Muses' influence expanded substantially from ancient times to the present. As the dispersion of writing in time caused poetry to lose its special status as fleeting experience to be accessed as manufactured object instead, the distinction between poets and other skilled professionals no longer made immediate sense. Instead, a new distinction was to become the benchmark for classification as worthy of the Muse - the intellectual content of a product was to become the main hallmark of creativity, and in the case of fields formerly relegated to craft (such as the fine arts) it was only by adopting an intellectual/philosophical stance that social rank could be raised to the level of scholar and/or poet. The figure of the poet was thus as prone to change due to invention, social development and cultural influence as mythological constructs such as the Muse.

In Greek society itself, the poet's role and social standing were informed by the traditions and conventions of poetry inherited via the Homeric epics, and oral myths and legends. The poet's identity was thus derived from the depiction of

poets in poetry itself. But it has been argued that the poets of pre-literate Greece were probably closer to the Teutonic Odin: king, poet, seer, magician all rolled into one. Nagy (1992: 59) for example, contends that "The Indo-European heritage of Greek poetry goes back to a phase where the functions of poet / herald / seer are as yet undifferentiated"; while Dodds (1951: 100) points out that "[s]everal Indo-European languages have a common term for 'poet' and 'seer' (Latin *vates*, Irish, *fili*, Icelandic *thulr*). '[i]t is clear that throughout the ancient languages of northern Europe the ideas of poetry, eloquence, information (especially antiquarian learning) and prophesy are intimately connected'"[1]. Dodds further maintains that " ... Hesiod seems to preserve a trace of this original unity when he ascribes to the Muses *(Theog.* 38), and claims for himself *(ibid.,* 32), the same knowledge of 'things present, future, and past which Homer ascribes to Calchas (*Il.* I.70); the formula is no doubt ... 'a static description of a seer'" (ibid), but concedes that "In Homer the two professions are quite distinct; but we have good reason to believe that they had once been united, and the analogy between them was still felt" (Dodds 1951: 81). Poets, seers and heralds were a logical clique in that they all shared similar characteristics and skills, the most significant of which was related to memory and an ability to hear the gods when they spoke. That heralds and poets enjoyed special status is evident in the *Odyssey*, where the bard Phemius, who had been forced to serve the suitors, and the herald Medon, are both spared by the enraged Odysseus, but the priest Leodes is killed[2]. Odysseus is wise not to kill the

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1. The notion of the artist as seer re-emerged in the twentieth century, particularly in the works of Giorgio de Chirico who "saw the artist as someone who used the gift of clairvoyance to reappraise the objects of everyday, and to release from them a mysterious and ominous element which normally passes unnoticed. 'Metaphysical' was the name which he gave to this element" (Russel 1991: 197). He referred to the true essences of things as "daemon"which had to be discovered, in short then, he conceived of the world in terms similar to the animist, and drew on ancient beliefs and philosophical theories. In his article *Zeus the Explorer* of 1918 he writes: "'The world is full of demons', said Heraclitus of Ephesus, walking in the shade of the porticoes at the mystery-fraught hour of high noon ... *One must find the demon in every thing.* The ancient People of Crete painted an enormous eye in the middle of the narrow bands that circled their vases, on their household utensils, and on the walls of their houses ... *One must discover the eye in every thing"* (De Chirico in Chipp 1968: 447). Arnason (1988: 223) agrees that "De Chirico saw himself as an oracle" whose paintings constitute "visions of loneliness and nostalgia, his fear of the unknown, his premonitions of the future and the reality beyond physical reality".

2. When pleading for his life Phemius says: "I am at your knees, Odysseus. Respect your suppliant and have mercy. You will repent it later if you kill a minstrel like me, who sings

poet as one Calondas of Naxos was reputedly cursed by the Delphic oracle for "killing a great servant of the Muses - considered by many second only to Homer" (Atchity 1996: 42) the poet, and mercenary Archilochos (*c.* 650 BCE). The poet shared with the herald a reliance on and achievement of intensive mnemonic skill, but shared with the seer a capacity to access and share knowledge[3].

These associations can further be detected in the main characteristics of gods often associated with Mnemosyne and the Muses - Apollo, Dionysus and Hermes, encompassing between them the roles of poet, seer and herald.: Apollo as *Musagetes* was perhaps the god most closely associated with the Muses, and symbolised two aspects of Nagy and Dodd's Indo-European poet: poetry and prophecy. Apollo's Delphic opposite, Dionysus who took possession of the shrine during the Winter was also, albeit indirectly, associated with the Muses: in Attica Pausanias cites a title of Dionysus as "the Harp-singer" which he explains as equivalent to Apollo's epithet of "Dance-leader of the Muses (trans. Levi 1979: 15)[4]. Dionysus' main means of interaction with his devotees appears to have been one of ecstatic possession facilitated by music and dance. While Apollo and Dionysus' association with the Muses can primarily be ascribed to the characteristics they share with the Muse, the god Hermes bears the closest resemblance not to the Muse, but the *poet*. In *Hymn to Hermes* 425-433 for example, the god is depicted as singing a theogony like Hesiod does. But with two distinctive details: firstly Hermes' theogony is "technically a hymn to the mother of the Muses, *Mnemosune* who is described as

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for gods and men. I had no teacher but myself. The god has implanted in my heart all manner of songs; and I am worthy to sing for you as for a god" *Odyssey* 22: 344 -349 (trans. Rieu 1991: 339).

3. "[H]uman repositories, the poets, had (like the seers) their technical resources, their professional training; but visions of the past, like insight into the future, remained a mysterious faculty, only partially under its owner's control, and dependent in the last resort on divine grace. By that grace poet and seer alike enjoyed a knowledge denied to other men" (Dodds 1951: 81).

4. At this Dionysus' shrine is a depiction of the Muses alongside Athena the healer, Zeus, Mnemosyne, Apollo and an Akratos (apparently a member of Dionysus' retinue described as "a face let into the masonry wall) The word *akratos* when used in reference to liquids applies to them in their pure state - i.e. unmixed wine. To the Greeks, consuming wine not mixed with water was a barbaric pastime, particularly amongst the Thracians. The presence of this very Dionysian figure recalls the close association between the Thracian Muses and liquid symbolism as discussed in 2.1.3. The ecstatic dancers commonly associated with Dionysus - the Corybantes - who like the Meanads danced while possessed by some or other god or madness were in the *Library* cited as daughters of a Muse.

the deity presiding over and defined by the characteristics of Hermes ... In the same way the Helikonian Muses preside over and are defined by the characteristics of Hesiod - characteristics that they themselves had conferred upon him" (Nagy 1992: 58). Thus, while the human poet is the protegé of Mnemosyne's daughters, Hermes as god is protegé to Mnemosyne herself; secondly Hermes, like Hesiod, does not invent his theogony, but receives it from the Muses[5]. Hermes as poet is also alluded to in Apollo's praise of Hermes as achieving what poets - with the exception of Thamyris - conventionally admit as impossible - he surpassed the Muse[6]. In this aspect he differs from Apollo performing poetry and Dionysus dancing, because while both gods are depicted performing these activities in the presence of the Muses, they also perform them regularly in their absence, suggesting that neither are "visited" by the Muse while performing in the manner described in the hymn, which is the manner of a poet. In Nagy's view, the transaction between Apollo and Hermes in the *Hymn to Hermes* further indicates that Hermes' traditional role as herald presupposed a faculty for poetry and prophecy: "The division of attributes between Apollo and Hermes dramatizes the evolutionary separation of poetic functions that are pictured as still integral at the time when Hermes sang the theogony. But then Hermes cedes the lyre to Apollo and confines himself to the primitive shepherd's pipe so that Apollo can take over the sphere of the *aiodos* 'poet'. Apollo also takes over the sphere of the *mantis* 'seer' on a highly evolved pan-Hellenic level (his oracle at Delphi), leaving to Hermes the more primitive sphere of the *mantis* 'seer' as a local exponent of the sort of *aletheie* 'truth' that is induced by fermented honey[7]" (Nagy 1992: 60). Nagy (1992: 59) suggests that the sphere of prophecy given to Hermes is one of authorisation - as is the process of singing a theogony which entails the confirmation of the divine hierarchy and authority: "These Bee Maidens also *krainousin* 'authorise' when they are fed

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5. "Then Hermes took his lyre and he sang songs of praise to each of the immortals. He sang of the deathless gods and how the earth was dark at first and how things were made and appointed to each of the immortals to command. To Mnemosyne, first of the gods, he sang - the Mother of the Muses, for the Muse came down upon Maia's son that day" (Kane 1998: 221).

6. "Tell me - have these gifts been always yours or did someone teach them to you? For your song fills my ears beautifully, and no one - on Olympus or anywhere - has such a gift. No not even the Muse herself who knows the dances and the lovesome sound of the flute." (Kane 1998: 221).

7. "There are three sisters, the Thriae, the mountain-goddesses of Parnassus, who sprinkle their heads with the white barley flour - they were once my nurses. In their form as bees

honey, they are in ecstasy and tell *aletheia* 'truth', but they *pseudontai* 'lie' when deprived of this food. Such ecstatic divination is achieved with fermented honey - a pattern typical of an earlier phase when *aidos* 'poet' and *mantis* 'seer' were as yet undifferentiated.". This type of prophecy in which a honey-type drink is first consumed recalls the image of Odin whose mead brewed from honey mixed with Kvasir's blood imparted poetic and prophetic ability (see section 2.1.3. *Poetry as Beverage in Greek and Teutonic Myth*). The clear distinction between the prophecy presided over by Apollo and this means of discerning the truth appears to indicate that while poetry is not so much oracular prophecy, as an expression of divinely acquired truth. But note also that while the Bee Maidens may speak the truth once full of honey, they are likely to tell lies when not, a quirk which echoes Hesiod's Muses' warning that "we know how to say many false things that seem like true sayings, but we also know how to speak the truth when we wish to" *Theog.* (trans Atchity 1996:22)[8].

The logic of a link between the roles of herald and poet is perhaps best explained by Hesiod's reception of a *skêptron* (staff, sceptre) as symbol of his poetic authority. The word *skêptron* as used in archaic poetry was associated with heralds, prophets, priests and kings. In assemblies such as the one depicted on the shield of Achilles in *Iliad* XVIII 497-508, the elders would take the *skêptron* from the attending heralds and then speak in favour of one side or the other: "As each elder speaks ... he is described as rendering *dike* 'judgement'/justice' ... Such an elder is the equivalent of the generic *basileus* 'king' as described in the *Theogony*. Moreover, the king's function of speaking *dike* at the *agora* 'assembly' is in fact a gift of the Muses ... In sum the *skêptron* given to Hesiod by the Muses indicates that the poet will speak with the authority of a king - an authority that emanates from Zeus himself" (Nagy 1992: 53). Thus, Hermes should not simply be approached from a modern point of view as lowly messenger-boy to the gods, his function as herald means that ultimately it is he who owns the divine *skêptron* and all that it entails[9].

Hermes thus bears a distinctive resemblance to another poet-god: Odin, king

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they eat the honey-combs of the mountain, and when they are full of honey they speak the truth which they discern in pebbles" (Kane 1998: 221).

8. This warning indicates poetry's illusory aspect, and the inherent deception of such *mimesis* - was to cause Greek philosophers such as Plato much concern.

9. Apollonius of Rhodes, in his *Voyage of the Argo*, when describing the crew's official herald - Aethalides - emphasises the importance of the herald's staff to his mnemonic and

of the Teutonic gods. Like Odin, Hermes is a classic example of the cunning trickster, as is another Greek mythical character who on occasion performs the role of poet - Odysseus king of Ithaca. The application to Odysseus of Hermes' epithet of πολυτροπος (of many turns) referring to his role as mediator between all opposites, appears in line 1 of Book I of the *Odyssey*, and is again applied to the hero by Circe[10]. Thus a connection exists with the poet as performing the duties of herald to the king: in Homer, and later Pindar, poetry is primarily depicted as performed at the behest of the elite, with Pausanias commenting on the long-lost relationship between poets and kings: "In those days poets were the companions of kings, and even earlier than that, when Polykrates was dictator of Samos, Anakreon lived with him, and Aischylos and Simonedes were summoned to Syracuse by Hieron ...But Hesiod and Homer were either not lucky enough to live with kings or deliberately despised them, Hesiod being a country-mannered man who disliked moving about, and Homer having travelled a very long way from home, and valuing his popular reputation more than any material assistance from the ruling class. He does in fact write about Demodokos living with Alkinoos and about Agamemnon leaving a poet with his wife" *Pausanias. Guide to Greece* (trans. Levi 1979: 13-4)[11].

But it is Hermes as herdsman, which is in Greek and Roman poetry the most characteristic representation of the poet. This is of course a role Hermes shares with Apollo, but in their trade it is Hermes who is left with the shepherd's pipes, and it is Hermes who was considered the protector of shepherds. The conditions under which herdsmen worked were believed to be particularly conducive to composing poetry: "His duties entail the constant exercise of vigilance. He is awake

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other abilities: "He was the swift herald to whom they entrusted their messages and the wand of his own father, Hermes, who had endowed him with an all-embracing memory that never failed" (trans. Rieu 1971: 53).

10. Circe's identification of Odysseus on the strength of what Hermes had previously told her of the hero is indicative of what Nagy (1992: 34) describes as "the multiple (self-)characterisations of Odysseus".

11. A similar situation for visual artists is endorsed by Giovanni Pietro Bellori in an address at a meeting of the Academia in November 1677 : "His argument, as the title suggests ("Gli onori della pittura, e scoltula"), was that the arts flourish when artists are held in esteem. His examples ranged from antiquity to his own day: Alexander and Apelles, Charles V and Titian, Louis XIV and Le Brun" (Goldstein 1996: 206). If one were to add the Popes to this list of rulers, then an even larger number of painters and sculptors will fall into this category.

and watching. Hence he is compared with the Sun, which sees all things, and with the king. Furthermore ... the shepherd symbolizes the nomad, he is rootless and stands for the soul which is not a native of this Earth but always a stranger and pilgrim. In so far as his flock is concerned, the shepherd acts as a guardian and this is linked to knowledge, since he knows what pasture suits the animals in his charge. He observes the Heavens, the sun, the Moon and the stars and can predict the weather. He distinguishes sounds and hears the noise of approaching wolves, as well as the bleatings of lost sheep ... he is regarded as a wise man whose activities are the result of contemplation and inner vision" (Chevalier & Gheerbrandt 1996: 873-4).

fig. 24. Hermes Kriophoros *(the rambearer). c. 6th cent. BCE. Hermes in his role as protector of flocks and herds is believed to have been a god of the Pelasgians. Here he is an older bearded figure, in later depictions he is the handsome young man of the* Odyssey.

One of the most famous shepherd-poets - Linus, was considered, like Orpheus a son of a Muse[12] and may have originally been a dying vegetation god "like Lityrses and John Barleycorn; his name was a word like 'alas'" (Levi 1979: 369). In Apollodorus, Linus is killed by Heracles whom he had apparently taught to play the lyre, but had for some reason struck Heracles with the instrument upon which Heracles retaliated and killed him. As a result Amphitryton sent Heracles to live with his herdsmen (*Library* trans. Hard 1997: 71). In other versions Linus is killed by Apollo for challenging him. He was variously credited with inventions relating to music and language to the extent that he was later considered a son of Hermes in his aspect as god of science and language. He was also known as brother of Orpheus with whom he became identified. In the *Iliad* the antiquity of his myth is shown in the

12. Calliope according to Apollodorus either by Oiagros or Apollo, but more often of Urania and occasionally Terpsichore.

fig. 25. The Annunciation to the Shepherds. *Vault Painting, Pantheon de los Reyes, Leon, c. 1160. The image of the shepherd in Western culture is of course highly influenced by the nomadic Judaic tradition where the title is reserved for leaders and kings such as David, but the legend of the annunciation to the shepherds has much in common with Greek myth. In this painting, for example, the shepherds are shown tending their flock in a mountain-setting, not dissimilar to Hesiod's account of his own encounter not with angels, but Muses.*

description of the shield of Achilles[13]. Unlike an epic on the scale of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, a Linos-song is thus simple enough for a rustic boy to be able to sing and play. The performance during harvesting, and the participation of the harvesters do appear to link Linus to the types of rituals performed in honour of a dying vegetation-god. The bucolic poems of Theocritus and Virgil can thus be related to this tradition. Griffiths (1998: 520) even argues that the competitive nature of bucolic poetry reflects the daily realities of the herdsman's life: "the goatherd ... ranges furthest into the wild territory of Pan in search of shrubs on which only his calcentric and omnivorous charges will browse; and in these lonely wastes it is

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13. "Girls and young men, innocent-hearted, were carrying out the honey-sweet crop in woven baskets. In their midst a boy was playing a lovely tune on a clear-sounding lyre, and to it sweetly singing a linos-song in his delicate voice: they followed him with singing and shouting, and danced behind him with their feet beating time to his music" Homer, *Iliad* 18 (trans. Hammond 1987: 309).
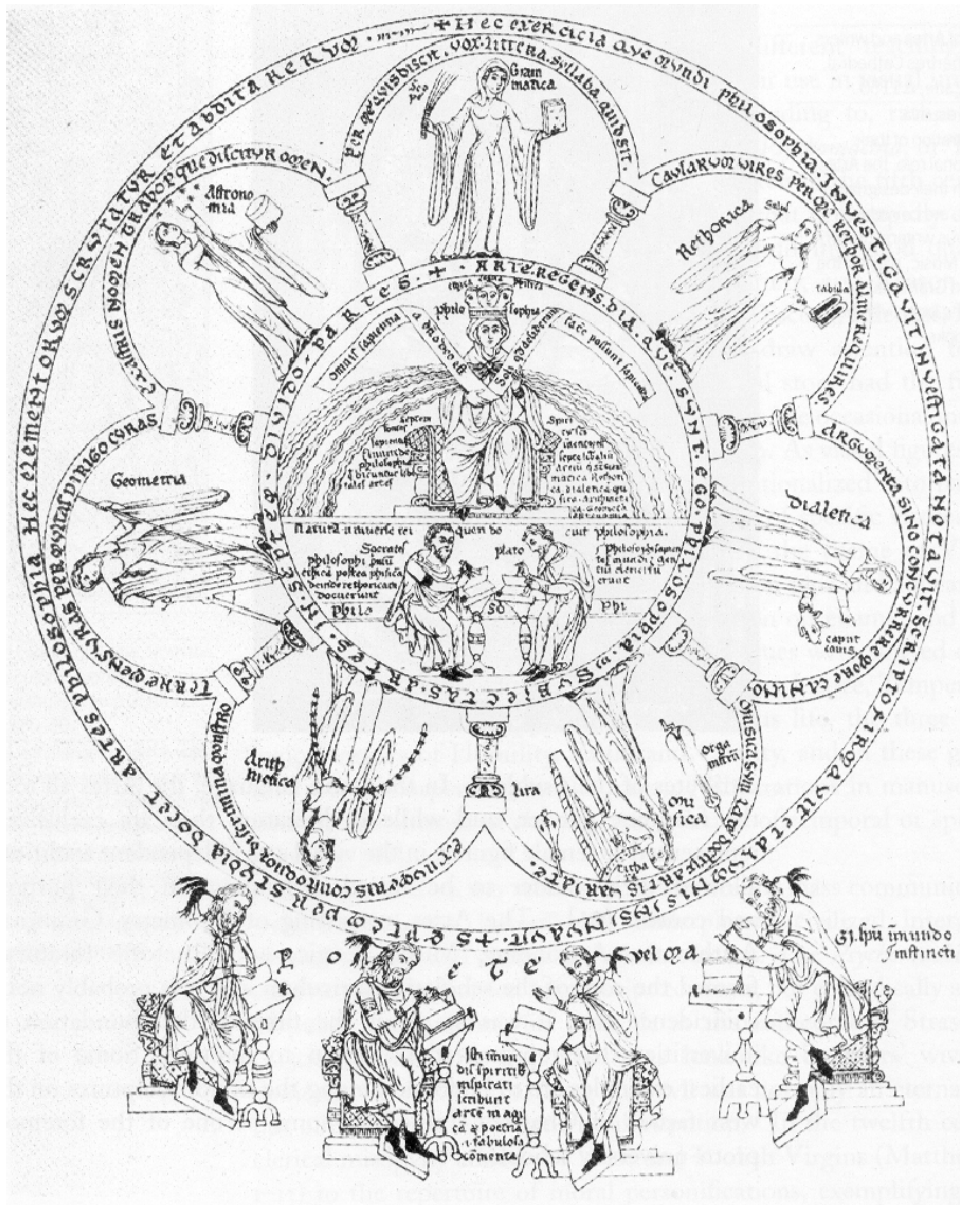
Above: fig.26. The Liberal Arts, *Hortus delici-arum, c. 1200 (engraved 19th cent. copy). Philosophy is seated at the centre wearing a triple crown depicting Ethics, Logic and Physics, Plato and Aristotle seated below her, surrounded by the seven liberal arts. Outside their sphere sit four poets who are being instructed by birds at their ears, depicting their "dubious" sources of inspiration). The Teutonic god Odin, likewise relied for information on two Ravens called Muninn (memory) and Huginn (thought).*

Left: fig.27. Apollo Pouring a Libation. *5th century BCE. The raven opposite the god was emblematic of his role as seer.*

only natural that two herdsmen whose paths cross should not only perform in each other's company but that their songs should be competitive".

The presence in poetry of poets as characters, at times extends to the presumed poet of the narrative he appears in and composes as with the story of Odysseus told by Odysseus telling his own story. Or even more directly - Hesiod recounting in his *Theogony* not only how he came about it, but also how he was made a poet by the Muses so that he could convey it to his listeners. Nagy (1992: 48) for example contends that "it appears that the ideology reflecting the cult of Hesiod is built into the poetry of Hesiod. ... the very identity of Hesiod within his poetry is consistently determined by the traditions that are the foundation of this poetry". Nor was this tendency for the author as fiction peculiar to ancient poets, Calvino (2002: 111) for example contends "... the successive layers of subjectivity and feighning that we can discern underneath the author's name, and the various "I"s that go to make up the "I" who is writing. The preliminary condition of any work of literature is that the person who is writing has to invent that first character, who is the author of the work. That a person puts his whole self into the work he is writing is something we often hear said, but it is never true. It is always only a projection of himself that an author calls into play while he is writing; it may be a projection of a real part of himself or the projection of a fictitious "I" - a mask in short". thus, the author's *persona* is as much a work of invention and fiction as the characters he/she creates. This is thus the point where poet and Muse most resemble one another, as both author and invention of the same story.

Two aspects are crucial: the poet is not only as much a mythical /fictional construct as the characters who populate the poems[14], but the poet's identity is integral to the poetry as well, since the poet like the Muse, not only moulds the myth, but partakes in it as well. Note for example, the plethora of stories which arise about "geniuses" after their deaths: in some circles the identity of Shakespeare has for centuries been seen as a fiction, a construct created by an unknown person

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14. "[T]he generic poet's epithet, '*therápön* [attendant] of the Muses' (*Theogony* 100), literally identifies Hesiod with these divinities ... The poetic word *therápön*, conventionally translated as 'attendant', is apparently borrowed from an Anatolian word, attested as Hittite *tarpan-alli-* 'ritual substitute'. We may compare the generic warrior's epithet, '*therápön* [attendant] of Ares' (*Iliad* II 110, VI 67, for instance), which identifies the hero with the god of war at the moment of his death ... there is reason to believe that the historically attested cults of the Homeric heroes are no mere reflex of Homeric poetry; rather, both the cults and the poetry represent interacting aspects of a broader phenomenon" (Nagy 1992: 48).

(in some accounts even by Roger Bacon), and the "evidence" is generally derived from that which such individuals produced during their life-times, i.e. their "poetry". Moreover, the poet's transformation from person to mythical construct is particularly pronounced upon the poet's death. As with Elvis Presley, even when no longer alive, their identi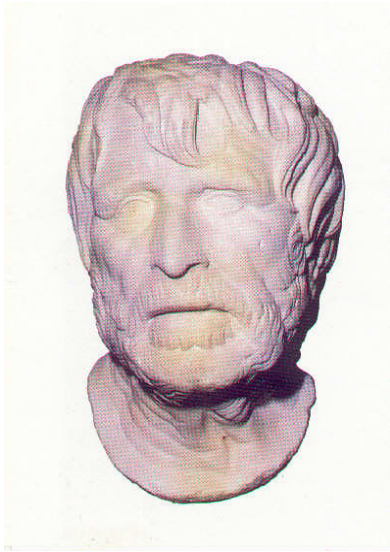ties continue to develop and change. Nagy identified this "cult of the dead poet" with archaic Hero-cults in ancient Greece: "we note that the epithet '*therápön* of the Muses' is applied to Archilochus precisely in the context of the story retelling the poet's death (Delphic Oracle 4 PW). Then again, just as Archilochus was worshipped as cult hero in his native Paros, so was Hesiod in Askra ... the lore about Hesiod fits a general pattern that is characteristic of a local cult hero. The parallelism of Hesiod and Archilochus in this regard becomes even more noteworthy [as] the local cult of Archilochus at Paros ... is the actual source of the myth about the poet's transformation [by the Muses] from cowherd into poet. In the case of Hesiod's transformation from shepherd into poet, however, the myth is built into the *Theogony* itself" (Nagy 1992: 50). In this scenario, even a minor work by an artist of great renown, such as Picasso, is valued more highly than an excellent work by an unknown. If the Picasso is worth more than its own individual value, it is because it participates in the entire Picasso mythology, and provides insight - even if only to a small degree - into the formation of the master's *oeuvre*. Even Einstein's most insignificant notebook can be of great importance, not simply by virtue of having been his, but since it may provide clues as to how he conceived of, and formulated his ideas. These objects evoke a dead genius' aura as much as a relic participates in the mystique of a saint. As Nagy (1992: 50) emphasises, the poet "may be considered an idealized creation of the poetry in which he has an integral function - and which he is credited with creating". Thus, it can be argued that the poet's relationship with the Muse is encapsulated in fiction as a relationship between the author's poetic voice/*persona* and the Muse: as occurs in Dante between the Pilgrim and Beatrice, and in Fowles between Miles Green and Erato. But, in both these instances, the poet's relationship with the Muse is determined by his own psychological maturity, that is, their Muses can only take them as far as their own efforts will allow: in *The Divine Comedy* Dante

fig.28. Portrait of Hesiod

requires two male guides at the outset and completion of his journey: a pagan poet, and a Christian mystic: Virgil who leads him through realms neither Beatrice nor Matelde may enter, and St. Bernard who must prepare him for his final vision (and a third - Statius - a secretly converted pagan poet in between). Virgil and St. Bernard can be considered symbolic of aspects of Dante's personal development during his journey. While the poetic achievement symbolised by Virgil is an invaluable tool in gaining knowledge and insight, only private contemplation as displayed by St. Bernard can fully reveal divine truth. Thus, the Muse can guide, mediate, instruct and inform, but as far as attaining knowledge is concerned, the onus falls on the extent of the poet's own character-development. (the Muse can lead the poet to her spring, but she can't make him drink from it). The notion of the poet as worthy of his skill can be traced back to poets such as Hesiod's boast of having been chosen by the Muses and personally told the truth about the gods and the world by them, while Dante's preoccupation with the poet's individual responsibility for his own enlightenment, aided by divine mediation, would have been informed by the religious principles of his day. The idea can also be found in Jungian theories regarding psychological development (see 3.3 *Contemporary Poets and Archetypes*).

If the Muse's effectiveness is directly dependent upon the poet's personal character-development, then clearly the symbolism of the Muse favours a view of poetic brilliance as something earned as opposed to being an inborn trait or supernatural ability. On the surface, such a view contradicts most general perceptions regarding genius as inborn, an inexplicable gift which requires no real

fig. 29. Degas and Friends stage a holiday charade, *1885. Inspired by Ingres' painting "Apotheosis of Homer" of 1827, Degas takes the role of Homer at the centre, with the two boys as the* Iliad *and* Odyssey *kneeling at his feet, flanked by "three graces". The notion of the deification of the poet which the artist and his friends are here poking fun at, is an aspect of the author's created persona who populates the work of writers and artists alike.*

training or skill-development. However, the popularity of this perception belies the extent of the debate surrounding it. It appears to be more a case of people wishing it were true, than a conclusion reached from close scrutiny. As early as the first century CE an unknown author generally referred to as Pseudo-Longinus, acknowledged perceptions regarding brilliance as inherent in his *On the Sublime*, but only to argue that instruction is not inimical to creative accomplishment[15]. It is likely that the notion of the genius as someone blessed with superhuman capacities is part and parcel of the phenomenon of the fictionalisation of the poet. Indeed, it is important to note that "genius" is almost always retroactively applied, only rarely - as in the case of Einstein and Mozart - is anyone considered a genius in his/her own life-time. Of course, in addition to describing his own selection and instruction by the Muses, Hesiod also describes how kings are blessed by Calliope at birth. But, these kings receive a very specific gift, the capacity to speak convincingly and as Nagy (1992) emphasised, with justice and righteousness. The fact that only kings are blessed in this manner is an indication of its uniqueness, and not a rule applicable to all. Poets in Greek myth are chosen and formed, not born.

While the extension of the Muses' sphere of influence beyond poetry had much to do with changes brought by literacy, it can also be argued that had the attention of the Muse not long been conceived of as something acquired, her sphere of influence would probably have remained limited to poets alone. Thus, while the notion of artists having Muses is common currency in Twentieth-century popular culture, such notions were for the most part inconceivable in ancient Greek thought. Pollit (1998: 78-9) for example points out that "[u]ntil the late Hellenistic period, there is no evidence that sculpture and painting were viewed as fundamentally different from shoemaking or any other profession which produced a product", however, in the late Hellenistic period, a small minority

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15. "For the effect of genius is not to persuade the audience but rather to transport them out of themselves. Invariably what inspires wonder casts a spell upon us and is always superior to what is merely convincing and pleasing ... Genius, it is said, is born and does not come of teaching, and the only art for producing it is nature. Works of natural genius, so people think, are spoiled and utterly demeaned by being reduced to the dry bones of rule and precept. For my part I hold the opposite may be proved, if we consider that while in lofty emotion Nature for the most part knows no law, yet it is the way of nature to work at random and wholly without system ... We must remember also that mere grandeur runs the greater risk, if left to itself without the stay and ballast of scientific method, and abandoned to the impetus of uninstructed enterprise. For genius needs the curb as often as the spur" Pseudo-Longinus, *On the Sublime* (trans. Atchity 1996: 302).

begins to view the production of visual arts in a similar light to poetic production: "a new theory of artistic creativity was developed in which certain artists, especially Phidias, were recognized as inspired visionaries whose insight (*phantasia*) and creative ability surpassed that of ordinary people and made them sages of a sort. This '*phantasia*' theory, which grew out of an amalgam of Stoicism and Platonic idealism, left its mark on a variety of Roman and late Greek writers (e.g. Cicero, Dio Cocceianus, or Chrysostom, and Plotinus) but was never part of the Greek mainstream thought about art" (Pollitt 1998: 78-9). Perhaps the biggest barrier to acceptance of artists as worthy of the Muses lay in their reliance on technical skill which in Aristotle was equated with *techne* "which Aristotle defined as the 'trained ability (*hexis*) of making something under the guidance of rational thought' (*Eth. Nic.* 1140^{a}9-10)" (Pollitt 1998: 78-9). Thus in Greek thought, art fell under the guidance of Athena, not the Muses. But as has been discussed, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the enmity which existed between the Muses and Athena in *Rhesus* is absent, and the goddess is hailed by the Muses as one who would have been one of their company[16].

By the Middle Ages, Athena's association with artists and craftsmen had been largely obliterated by her role as personification of wisdom in her Roman incarnation Minerva. Instead, painters and sculptors at this point fell under the auspices of Hermes/Mercury alongside the likes of scribes, clockmakers, conjurers, cooks, armourers, and makers of musical instruments (see fig. 30). Artists thus acquire the patronage of the personification of the pre-literate poet. Nor is this entirely unprecedented: the prototypical artist of Greek myth - Daedalus[17] - displayed distinctly Hermetic qualities: firstly, his name itself was derived from *daidalos* which translates as "cunningly or curiously wrought". Variations on this word generally give an impression of the artist's ingenuity as one dependent on a certain degree of guile, skill and even trickery as it also applies to the artificers' skill, but it is important to note the role played by the artist's hand in his cunning: this is not purely mental cunning, but as with the conjurer, what is primarily

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16. "Tritonian Pallas, you who would have been one of our company, had not your courage directed you to greater tasks" Ovid, *Metamorphoses* V (trans. Innes 1955: 123).

17. Socrates as son of a mason was in conventional Greek thought considered a descendant of Daedalus. When in Plato's *Euthyphro*, Socrates debates the nature of piety and holiness with the young soothsayer of the title, Euthyphro complains of the circuitous nature of their argument and Socrates compares the soothsayer's ideas to his own traditional ancestor's push-button - and delusive - inventions (*Euthyphro* 11 a-d, and 15 b-c).
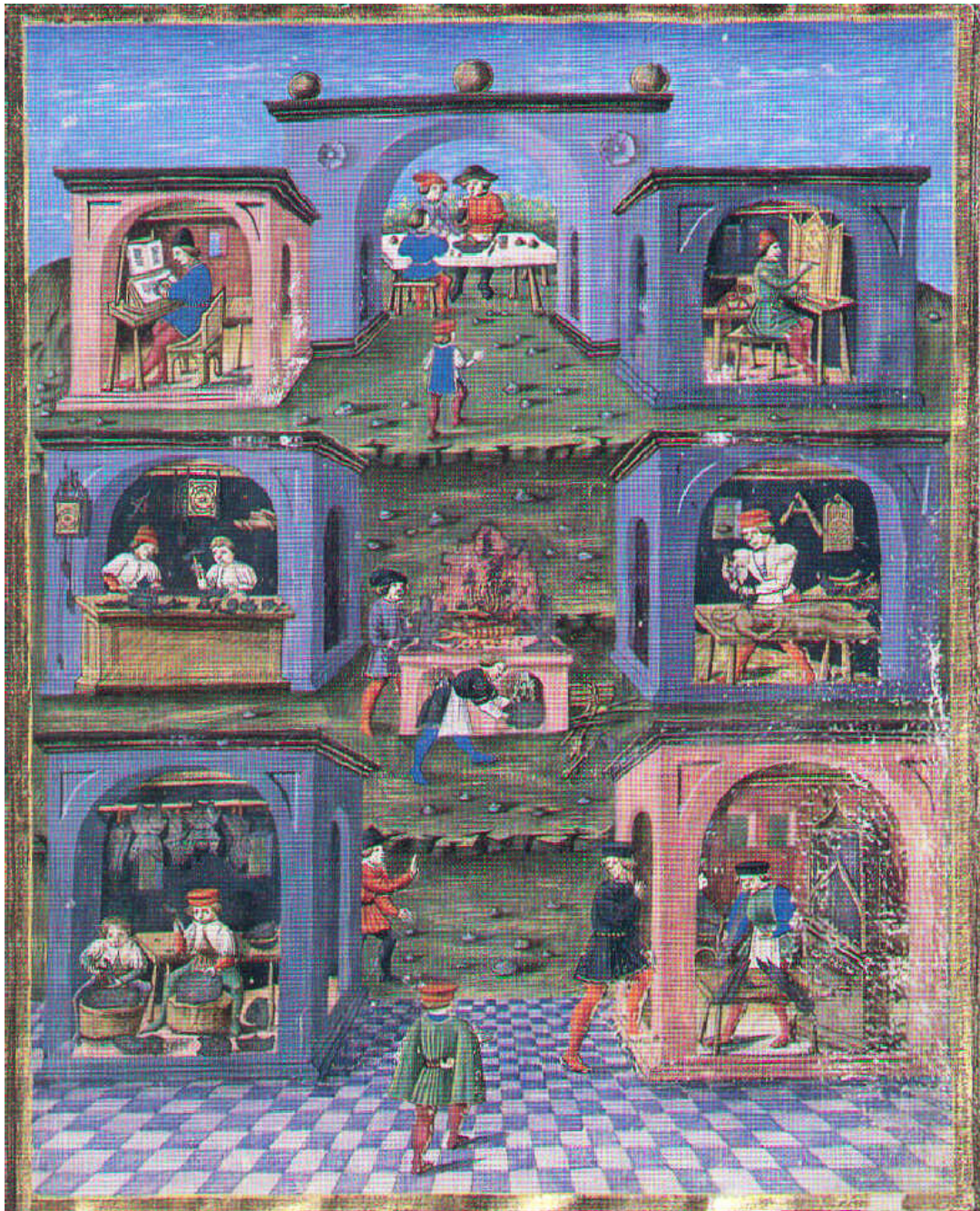
fig. 30 De Sphaera Manuscript, fo. 11, c. 1450-60. Maria Sforza of Milan. The Occupations under the Jurisdiction of Mercury *from top left: scribe, conjurer, painter, clockmaker, cook, sculptor, armourer, and maker of musical instruments. Mercury, whose symbolism derived from that of the Greek god Hermes - who as messenger of the gods imparted divine knowledge to humans - was widely associated with creativity, imagination and intelligence, but also with delusion and disguise. Artisan's workshops of this period were legally required to allow viewers from outside to see how objects were produced, and more importantly, the quality of materials used and techniques applied. The fifteenth century merchant and traveller Cyriacus reputedly addressed the following prayer to Mercury upon leaving Delos during a storm: "Mercury, benevolent father of the arts, of the mind, of intelligence and of eloquence, who rekindled our soul and our courage ... continue, O noble genius, to protect our intelligence, our mind and our eloquence!" (Etienne 1992: 29).*

referred to is a dextrous hand. The artist is thus Hermes as trickster, and later as metallurgist, alchemist and scientist (developing perspective, developing through chemistry new paints and pigments, advances in anatomy, etc.) - the Hermes Trismegistus of Hellenistic belief. Even the means of Hermetic divination as it appears in the *Hymn to Hermes*, is a skill comprising definite steps to be followed, as opposed to complete possession by a god.

While Plato's wariness of artists lay in his unique view of their commonality of purpose with the poets: to convince of reality by deception and illusion, in his view, poets and artists differed widely in the means of their production: "all good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed. And as the Corybantic revellers when they dance are not in their right mind, so the lyric poets are not in their right mind when they are composing ... falling under the power of music and metre they are inspired and possessed ... and there is no invention in him until he has been inspired out of his senses, and the mind is no longer in him: when he has not attained to this state he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles" (Plato in Read 1990: 111-2). Also, in spite of Platos's dislike for artists, he nonetheless used terms applicable to them in his philosophy: *dialektike* for example, by which the philosopher reaches morality is a *techne*[18] (Saunders 1987), and the word demiurge (*demiourgos*) which he uses to describe the creator of the universe[19] was applied to sculptors in general, and to those with specific skills - craftsmen; medical practitioners; etc. the term literally means "working for the people". Masons in Ancient as well as Medieval society created temples, cathedrals and depictions of gods, heroes and saints for specific social and religious purposes which in Medieval times in particular, involved educating the illiterate masses in religious matters, otherwise available only in texts. Thus, these artists can be said to have fulfilled a cultural role similar to the oral poets: in the writings of Theophilus (around 1100 CE) for example, the work of the priests is dependent on that of the artists: " 'Henceforth be fired with greater ingenuity: with all the striving of your mind hasten to complete whatever is still lacking in the house of the Lord and without which the divine mysteries and the administering of the offices cannot continue'" (Sekules 2001: 52). To this monk

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18. Plato even "... orients speech in relation to *logos*, or reasoning thought, and away from *epos*, or human speech as song. The changed orientation supports the ideal of an act of purer knowing in which not just speech but also the thinking process can become a *techné* by which the reasoner can elucidate a single explanatory principle" (Kane 1998: 246).

19. Later defined in Gnosticism as a supernatural being subordinate to the Supreme Being.

then at least, art of all types played not only a vital role in the functioning and ministry of the church, but the artists themselves were depicted not in competition with God or nature, but as vital agents in the completion of God's own creation: a notion in complete contrast to Plato's distrust of art and poetry as inferior (and dangerous) imitations of the real. Likewise, patrons responsible for initiating or funding restoration of existing churches, or the construction and decoration of new ones, often

fig. 31. Dedication Stone, Ulm Cathedral *1377. The mason as agent through which God's works are facilitated is expressed here in this acknowledgement of the Cathedral's patrons of the architect as means by which their dedication to God has been achieved. Depictions of masons straining under the bulk of a building's weight were common at this period.*

reveal a conception of the artists and masons as their agents through which they themselves had worked. Abbot Suger, responsible for the rebuilding and embellishment of the abbey church of Saint-Denis, near Paris in the 1140s for example, fails to identify a single artisan in his account of his labours, in spite of his confirmed belief in the spiritual impact of great art on the human soul: "The dull mind rises to truth through that which is material.' The artists themselves were his tools ... He composed 13 verses for inscriptions throughout the new work and, like an impresario, claimed all the credit for bringing the whole enterprise into being" (Sekules 2001: 57). The notion that artists in the Middle Ages were predominantly anonymous, has been shown to be a fallacy - numerous artists identified themselves in inscriptions in their work, and the most accomplished were well known and highly sought after, an indication that the abbot's insistence on identifying only himself as author of his great work, mirrors Theophilus' conception of the artist as tool to be used by a higher power in the completion of God's work.

However, neither an identification with Hermes, nor a view of the artist as agent for a divine source was sufficient to establish a notion of the artist as protegé of the Muse. It was only with the conscious efforts of artists during the Renaissance to improve their social standing by emphasising the intellectual content of their work, and the subservience of their skill to concept and

"inspiration" that artists began to occupy the sphere hitherto reserved for poets, philosophers and scholars. As has been discussed, the inclusion of artists in this hallowed company had some unforeseen consequences, as the development of the literate Muse into a more "physical" being than her ephemeral oral counterpart was to be exacerbated by the amalgamation of the artist's Muse with his model in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: resulting in the currently popular conception of Muses as specific individuals. But this process was preceded and made possible by another development, that of the poet's private Muse.

The private Muse is a product of literacy: in orality, language is fleeting, a word is a sound, not a thing, it vanishes as soon as it is uttered, and can only be stored in the memories of individuals. Poetic performances are thus, in spite of the formulae and conventions governing the use of phrases, structure, plot and characterisation, tailored to the moment and mood of the audience. Thus, no two performances can ever be the same, based as each is on intuition and feeling. In other words, oral performance poetry falls within the realm of *eros*, which is essentially the capacity to relate to other people and surroundings. As the oral poet interacts with the Muse while composing, this interaction is thus a public, social event. In script, language becomes an object, something which, once written, remains exactly as recorded. Thus the Muse can be bypassed, anyone who desires to know the names of the leaders and their ships who participated in the siege of Troy can consult the text of the *Iliad*. The Muses thus need not be present every time a story is told - as in oral performance, but only once, when first recorded. The audience no longer experiences the Muse's presence as her interaction with the writer now takes place in private. No longer is the Muse a shared cultural entity, but an intimate asset confined to individuals. No longer *the* Muse, but *his* Muse[20]. Once the Muse is conceived of as an aspect of the poet it becomes possible to perceive of the Muse as symbolic of an inner psychic facet of the poet's own psyche, and the psychological entity most like the Muse is the Jungian notion of the *anima*, particularly in its capacity to be projected onto an actual physical entity such as a specific woman or depiction of a woman. In this final interpretation then, poet and Muse are fused into one single entity, with the creative process as the result of interaction between constellated psychic opposites.

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20. Small wonder then that by the fifth century, Plato could conceive of the Muse as being inside the poet.

3.1. Oral Poets and Public Muses

"It is their [the Muses'] function, so far as the oral bard is concerned, to supply his material, which exists nowhere 'on paper', when he needs it, *not* to supply inspiration for poetry more sublime than the poet could otherwise compose" (Adkins 1970: 61).

fig. 32. Portrait of Homer

"Ancient religions did much of their business with stories. Poets, priests and temple-attendants used stories to help confirm faith among the faithful, to explain the origin and future of the world, and to describe the complex relation between Gods and humans, and the importance and identity of the particular cult which they favoured" (Hopkins 1999: 138). The importance of the story to any religion cannot be overstated. While some are clearly told as and thus, meant to be received as straightforward stories, others are intended and interpreted as conveying some universal truth. Nor is this only true for so-called primitive societies lacking in the various sciences and humanistic studies. The nation currently regarded as amongst the most-developed in terms of technological, economic and a variety of other benchmarks displays in sectors of its society a remarkable faith in the purported truth of myths connected to a religion founded two millennia ago: "... more than a quarter of today's Americans believe in witches, almost half believe in ghosts, half believe in the devil, half believe that the book of Genesis is literally true, sixty-nine percent believe in angels, eighty-seven percent believe that Jesus was raised from the dead, and ninety-six percent believe in a God or universal spirit" (Pinker 1999: 554). Thus while the social impact of culturally significant stories, legends and myths has not substantially altered, the means of their communication has, and oral societies appear to function very differently in this respect than literate ones. Assuming that the oral culture of pre-literate Greece did not differ substantially from oral cultures everywhere, it can be presumed the Muse was communally invoked and publicly experienced. And as Kane (1998: 200) in describing storytelling in oral societies points out, "[i]n regard to change and variation in an oral tradition, it is the storytelling act that is the seed-bed for new stories. Here is where rearranged motifs and sub-stories have the potential to issue as new

narratives". Thus the invocation of the Muse during performance personified innovation through the act of preservation in a ritualised social setting governed by convention and tradition.

An increasing number of studies on the subject of orality have revealed the surprising extent to which the manner in which oral cultures preserve and transmit their values and social norms differ from literate ones[21]. Perhaps the facet of orality most difficult to fully comprehend, is that in an oral culture, word of mouth is everything. This may seem a banal overstatement of the obvious, but the complete reliance on spoken or sung words for *all* information is almost incomprehensible from a literate point of view. The impact of such a situation on how people perceive themselves and others is significant: the notion that what you do or say now can influence how you will be spoken of in the distant future can play a greater role than immediate consequences in the making of any decision. In *Iliad* VIII for example, Diomedes explains why he fears taking Nestor's advice to retreat before Hector, since this will give Hector and the Trojans the right, at any given time, to boast of having forced Diomedes to flee[22]. The capacity of certain trained individuals to recall not only important stories and events, but also the various genealogies indicating social role and status, was thus of crucial social and cultural importance: as primary source of dissemination of knowledge regarding the world, its gods and the social values exemplified in the feats of heroes, oral bards held the ability to mould and even change public perceptions and opinions. Yet, in spite of this poetic authority, only gods could have absolute authority, as Kane (1998: 211) emphasises: "In an oral culture, there is no official version of anything. No single version of Odysseus legislates his reality. Consequently, he is different things to

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21. Scholars identify three types of orality prevalent in ancient Greece, these being: (1) oral composition, (2) oral communication, and (3) oral transmission. Oral composition has been shown to have been possible - and not unusual - even during performance, and is evident quite late in spontaneous symposiastic poetry, and public oratory. The composition during delivery made possible by set phraseology and techniques enabling the poet access to a vast repository of formulae (see Thomas 1998).

22. Adkins (1970: 32) argues that Diomedes' fears are justified: "If the Trojans believed and spread it abroad that Diomedes was *kakos* and lacking in valour, this would cause terrible *elencheie* for him. And naturally so: he lives in a society without writing, without permanent record which can be consulted later. What matters is what is said of him by his contemporaries, and remembered by future generations; and if that is false, there is no alternative source of information from which he could be rehabilitated ... One's self, in the last resort, only has the value that others put on it".

the different minds and ears of his listeners
... no single story, not even the one that
Odysseus tells himself, is authoritative".
The oral poet however, had one sure
means of convincing the audience of the
validity of his tale: the poet's ability to
speak convincingly of people he has never
met, and things he did not see, was
believed to be derived from his privileged
access to the primary source of all experi-
ential knowledge - the Muses who, unlike
humans bound by their time and place,
were immortal and omnipotent and could
see and hear everything[23].

    The mainstays of Greek culture, the
Iliad, and its "sequel" - the *Odyssey*, are
generally considered to have been codified
some time between the eighth and fifth
centuries BCE, but many scholars estimate
the oral traditions upon which these epics
were based to date back at least as far as
the thirteenth century BCE (Atchity:
1996)[24]. While the bulk of the stories
emanated from Bronze Age Greece, and

fig. 33. Reconstruction of a Lyre *incor-
porating Ivory Youth from Samos. Late
7th c.BCE. As music formed an integral
part of oral poetic performance, instru-
ments such as the lyre provided perfect
accompaniment, and is regularly included
in depictions of poets, Apollo and the
Muses. (see figs. 4 & 27).*

the use of language and formulae exhibits traces of oral poetic method, these epics
also reveal the prevailing cultural conditions of Greece in the eighth century BCE,
when they were recorded in writing. Thus, they effectively encompass broad
spectrums of prehistoric and archaic Greek society. Both epics depict kings and
heroes as poets, singers and accomplished public speakers (Odysseus in particular),
and are as much about storytelling and poetry as war and adventure. The very
fabric into which the narrative is woven forms an integral part of that narrative.
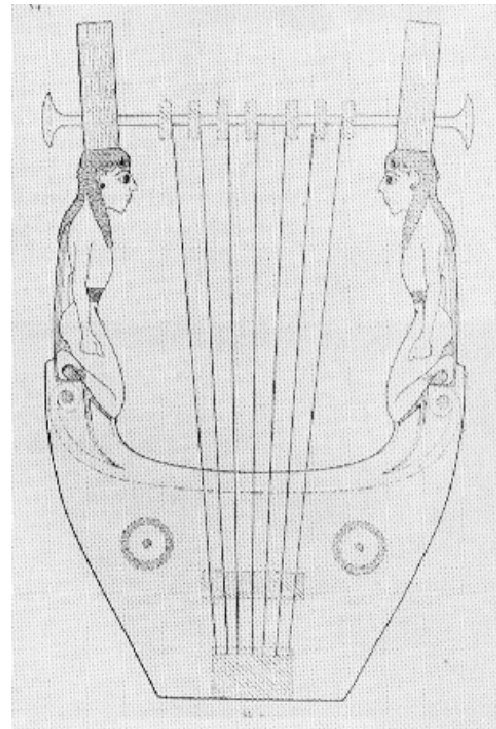
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23. "The poet's inherited conceit, then, is that he has access not only to the content but also
the actual form of what his eyewitnesses, the Muses, speak as they describe the realities of
remote generations" (Nagy 1992: 26).

24. Some venture specific dates, such as Willock (1998: 348) for example, who posits 750
BCE for the *Iliad*, and 725 BCE for the *Odyssey*.

Kane (1998: 210) asserts that the entire *Odyssey* is concerned with notions of memory with Odysseus as both character in the story (Homer's, Demodocus' and Odysseus') and the occasional storyteller himself[25]. Odysseus becomes a storyteller himself where Demodocus fails: filling in all the details Demodocus' story does not yet include, with some additional extras: "Conscious that he is preparing the oral fabric that he will take his place in when he returns to Ithaka, aware that he is weaving himself into existence, Odysseus the trickster is not above inserting some white lies into the oral network to see how it will respond ... periodically tes[ting] the web of memory and its bearers, for veracity" (Kane 1998: 210). This "web of memory" exhibits similar characteristics to human memory which is not surprising given oral cultural maintenance by individual mnemonic skill.

Orality differs from literacy, as human memory differs from artificial memory: information stored in artificial memory (of which writing is a prime example) will remain entirely fixed in the exact format it held when first committed to storage (any variation will be restricted to the physical deterioration of the means of recording or storage such as the degeneration of paper, or physical damage to magnetic film, etc). By contrast, all information stored in a human memory - with the exceedingly rare exception of the debilitating condition of "photographic memory" - will be entirely mutable, depending on the prevailing environmental and personal conditions at the moment of recollection. Now, granted interpretation of information will occur irrespective of the means of memorisation, but with artificial memory, this will always occur after recollection and only in commentary on, or response to what is essentially fossilised information. The information held in human memory by contrast is altered by the very process of recollection itself, and relies not on specific details but rather on general meaning: "brains do not work with *information* in the computer sense, but with *meaning*. And meaning is a historically and developmentally shaped process, expressed by individuals in interaction with their natural and social environment. Indeed, one of the problems of studying memory is precisely that it is a dialectical phenomenon. Because each time we remember, we in some senses do work on and transform our memories; they are not simply called up from store and, once consulted, replaced unmodified. Our memories are recreated each time we

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25. "Everything is at stake - every memory, every story, every lineage, every cultural value and inherited wisdom. Those left at Ithaka are being pressured to forget; others have been pushed to the margins where the work of remembering is still going on ... Odysseus weeps at all of this. But most of all he weeps because a renowned singer of tales has included him in his repetoire" (Kane 1998: 210).

remember" (Rose 1994: 91). The reliance of individual human memory on value[26] also indicates that its means of functioning are closely allied to those of conceptual creation which implies that in recollection as re-creation[27] the brain is essentially drawing on its capacity for invention (which certainly makes sense of the notion of the Muses as divinities presiding over creativity as daughters of Memory).

Practically, this makes for an intriguing brand of innovation: While the poet can rely on basic themes and a collection of stock phrases and plots, each audience upon each different occasion demands their own unique version. Also, Kane in describing the process of storytelling as involving not only personal memory and mediation but also an audience which knows how and when to respond reveals the extent to which such poetry echoes the dialectical functioning of memory: "Evidently, the essential pattern of the tale together with its key phrases are held intact in the storyteller's memory as a sort of musical score for improvisation. Milman Parry saw that the bards of Montenegro generated their versions from a memory hoard of couplets and epithets flexed and ready to fill the right rhythm ... the storytelling act is dialogical rather than monological. There is a give-and-take with the listeners happening all the time during the telling of a story. That exchange can be quite explicit. It is common, I understand, in African oral traditions for someone in the audience to interrupt the story, in the right place, with a question" (Kane 1998: 198). Also deducible from Kane's description is the extent to which sound is primary in oral society. Both the names of Homer and Hesiod for example are testimony to the attachment of poetry with sound: Wender

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26. "Memory is defined as the capacity specifically to repeat or suppress a mental or physical act. That capacity arises from combinations of synaptic alterations in reentrant circuits. Furthermore, because a selectional nervous system is not pre-programmed, it requires *value* constraints to develop categorical responses that are adaptive. The diffuse ascending value systems of the brain are known to be richly connected to the concept-forming regions of the brain ... These regions affect the dynamics of individual memories which, in turn, are established or not, depending on positive or negative value responses" (Edelman & Tononi 2001: 105).

27. Nagy (1992: 131) points out for example that "in oral poetry, a given theme may have more than one version or variant, but such multiplicity of thematic variants does not mean that any one of them is somehow basic while others are derivative. In terms of any operating system of oral poetics, each thematic variant is but a multiform, and not one of any variants in a given isolated grouping may be treated as a sort of *Ur*-form ... The picture that emerges is not really one of conflict between preserver of tradition and creative artist; it is rather one of the preservation of tradition by the constant re-creation of it. The ideal is a true story well and truly retold".

(1973: 151) for one, ventures a possible origin of the name "Homer" from "harmony"[28], while Nagy (1992: 47) postulates that the means by which Hesiod received his poetic skills (they breathed a voice into me *Theog.* 31) is encapsulated in his name: "(t)he very name *Hesíodos* at *Theogony* 22 means something like 'he who emits the Voice'"[29]. Thus since the oral poet listens to the Muse while his audience is listening to him, it means that at this point every "human" aspect of poetry involves sound, a situation epitomized by a main feature of this poetry which is defined as *kléos* (fame). Nagy (1992: 26) notes the word's significance: "From its etymology we know that the Greek word κλεος (*kléos*) was originally an abstract noun meaning simply 'the act of hearing'. The word came to mean 'fame' because it had been appropriated by the singer *in his traditional role as an individual performer* to designate what he sang about the actions of gods and heroes. The meaning 'fame' betrays merely the consequences. It shows the social prestige of the poet's art form. The actions of gods and heroes gain fame through the medium of the singer, and the singer calls his medium *kléos* from 'the act of hearing'". Sight, or first-hand experience, can be considered the preserve of the Muses, not the oral poet, as Homer clearly states in his elaborate invocation of them in *Iliad 2: 484:* "Tell me now, you Muses who have your homes on Olympos - you are gods and attend all things and know all things, but we hear only the report and have no knowledge" (trans. Hammond 1987: 31). True knowledge is thus associated with the privilege of seeing things for oneself, the poets and their audience who must rely on a verbal report "have no knowledge". Moreover, as their ability to transmit this knowledge is limited to the capacity of their voices,

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28. "... the Greek is *homereusai*, which could, but does not mean 'with Homeric voices'. Is it possible that here we find a clue to the meaning of Homer's name? The Homeridai (sons of Homer) were a guild of professional singers. Maybe their name originally meant 'harmonious men', 'sons of harmony', and the name Homer was invented for their eponymous founder, then applied to the author of the epics they sang" (Wender 1973: 151).

29. "The root ... recurs in the expression *óssan hieîsai* 'emitting a [beautiful/immortal/ lovely] voice, describing the Muses themselves at *Theogony* 10 / 43 / 65 / 67, while the root *$h_2$uod- of *-odos* recurs as *$h_2$uod- in *audé* 'voice', designating the power of poetry conferred by the Muses upon the poet" (Nagy 1992: 47). That this poetic ability constitutes a "power" characteristic of the Muses is emphasised by Hesiod's description of his new abilities as including the "... power to sing the story of things of the future, and things past" and an instruction to "... sing the race of the blessed gods everlasting" *Theog.* (trans. Atchity 1996: 22), this triple ability (summarized as *ta eonta, ta proeonta, ta essomena*) is attributed to the Muses in particular: "... they tell of what is, and what is to be, and what was before now with harmonious voices" (*Theog.* 36).

fig. 34. His Master's Voice, *Trademark of The Gramophone Co. Ltd. (undated). This famous image inadvertently illustrates why adial media such as radio does not recreate orality in spite of its audial means of communication. Radio cannot dialectically interact with its audience: it plays either a record which will produce the same sequences of sounds it was originally engraved with whenever played; or it involves a disk jockey ensconced in a booth, able only to interact with a fraction of his/her audience by telephone. By contrast, true orality is entirely interactive, even the poet does not simply listen to the Muse, but invokes and directs specific queries at her.*

the true measure of an oral poet is his voice[30]. The poet's "eyes" are thus the Muses, which perhaps explains the prevalence of the notion of the blind poet, or why the Muses punished Thamyris by taking his eyes along with everything else. Consequently, the Muse in this scenario is not something which is commonly encountered visually, and when this occurs it is clearly defined as a rare occasion with particular significance for the poet. Also, as the Muse is invoked and tells her stories to the poet during performance the poet Muse interaction is not an intimate, but a public affair. There is thus a "distance" between Muse and poet, as Kane (1998: 202) emphasises "Greek oral tradition identifies Mnemosyne and the Muses, the Daughters of Memory, with the mountains, sacred locales beyond the reach of human beings".

Of course, the extent of innovation in an oral culture is limited by the burden of preservation. Poets must first and foremost ensure that they do not in any way endanger the survival of inserted knowledge by too much deviation from the norm, and it further appears that even the variations produced by differences in environment and individual interpretations, constant reworking of similar themes

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30. "As for the mass of men, I could not tell of them or name them, not even if I had ten tongues and ten mouths, and in me a voice of unbreakable bronze" Homer, *Iliad* 2 (trans. Hammond 1987: 31).

nonetheless result not as much in identification of idiosyncrasy, but homogeneity: "There is a barrier on this process of improvisation ... it is probable that most of the time, stories are *essentially* unchanged by the conditions of performance ... the repeated performance of a story often leaves that story more true to its inner score, enforcing, by the test of the pleasure of many kinds of listeners, its homology over time" (Kane 1998: 200).

3.2. Literate Poets and Private Muses

In Photius, patriarch of Constantinople's copy of Apollodorus' *Library of Greek Mythology,* this poem had been inscribed: "Now due to my erudition, you can draw upon the coils of time, and know the stories of old. Look no longer in the pages of Homer, or in elegy, or the tragic Muse, or lyric verse, and seek no longer in the sonorous verses of the cyclic poets; no look in me, and you will discover all that the world contains" (Hard 1997: ix).

Writing and in particular the alphabetical system - in spite of its current prevalence - appears to be more of an accidental discovery which proved to be of exceptional advantage, than the norm: Pinker (1995: 189) for example points out that "although language is an instinct, written language is not. Writing was invented a small number of times in history, and alphabetic writing, where one character corresponds to one sound, seems to have been invented only once. Most societies have lacked written language, and those that have it inherited it or borrowed it from one of the inventors". The particular set of circumstances then that conspired to produce not only literature in ancient Greece, but with it the retention of a concept formed in an oral environment for the distinct purposes of the transmission of information by oral means, may be the reason why the notion of the Muse as it exists today is such a unique concept. That the concept underwent changes with the introduction of language is undeniable, but as writing still follows innate human linguistic instincts, it follows that the literate Muse will do the same: "though writing is an artificial contraption connecting vision and language, it must tap into the language system at well-demarcated points, and that gives it a modicum of logic" (Pinker 1995: 189). It is thus important to understand the extent to which writing is as much an invention as one of the mythical

Daedalus' machines was, and it is of particular importance to note the coalition between language and vision in writing, and the impact of such a fusion on how language is conceived of.

While in orality, language, poetry and interaction with the Muse are based entirely on sound, writing removes language from the arena of the purely audial by its fundamental reliance on visual recognition and decoding: "Writing and reading privilege the eye, by forcing attention to the visual. To reach meaning, the eye must continually scan ... To decipher reality, the eye must dominate whatever comes into view by immediately breaking everything it sees into discrete parts. It analyses spatial relationships, and sends this information back to the brain for processing ... A person who utters the phrase 'I see what you mean' indicates that he or she understands in an archtectonic way, that he or she understands the world of ideas in terms of a complicated maze of spatial relationships" (Sanders 1995: 20-1). This is a substantial shift, and its consequences on poetry, poets, and the characterisation and function of the Muse are undeniable. For one, the transformation of language into the physical realm brings poet and the Muse into the realm of Pygmalion: language as script is comparable to a Galatea brought to life by the reader's eye. "When Horace writes of writing: '*Littera scripta manet* ('The written word remains'), *manet* contains a pun on *manes*, the remains of the dead - their shadows. Written words lie on the page, inert and dead, and return to life before the reader's eye, or more accurately, *because* of the reader's eye. Reading turns into a peek-a-boo game in which scenes and characters come startlingly alive, only to disappear once the

Fig. 35. The Inspiration of St. Matthew, *1602. Caravaggio. The saint while writing, does not only listen, but turns and looks at the source of his inspiration, who in turn ticks off major points on his fingers. The physical reality of the entire scene is enhanced by the vivid reference to gravity: the bench Matthew rests his weight on hovers uncomfortably on edge. Like Hesiod, Matthew's role as instrument is reflected in his name, but while Hesiod's refers to "voice", "Matthew" is derived from* 'manus' *(hand) and* 'theos' *(god).*

reader closes the book" (Sanders 1995: 120-1).

It may not be possible to know exactly what the ancient Greeks thought of writing, but their myth and literature offer some indication of how it was conceived by society in general, and intellectuals in particular. In Greek myth, writing was brought to Greece from Phoenicia by Cadmus founder of Thebes in the form of an alphabet comprising sixteen letters (*kadmeia* or as in Herodotus - *foinikeia grammata*). The later so-called Ionic additions being η ω θ φ χ ζ ξ ψ. Classical sources allude to reading and writing as becoming quite commonplace, with books - in Plato - being not only readily cheaply available,

fig. 36. LOVE, *1972. Robert Indiana. The word as physical object. Language's transition from fleeting sound to permanent presence in script, had a similar effect on the Muse as physically intimate entity.*

but also highly influential[31]. In Euripides' *Hippolytus* the playwright assumes his audience will not find it strange or improbable for Phaedra to write a letter, or for those who find her body to be able to read it (although in both instances members of the upper classes are being referred to). The impact of writing on ancient Greek thought can however be clearly identified in examples such as Socrates' positing a "'picture theory' of language in which words resemble that which they represent - [or are] literally, the 'instruments' of representation" (Goldstein 1996: 19). Aristotle described the activities of philosophers as "... *theoria* and its verb *theorein*, both referring to the act of looking at something" (Havelock 1986: 111). Vision thus equals analysis, and analysis creates a power-structure in which the observer dictates to the observed. This stands in complete opposition to orality where it is only the Muse who truly "sees" and by definition, knows. Moreover by creating an artificial memory-bank of texts and documentation, the aloof oral Muse as ultimate source of reliable information is supplanted by tangible repositories available to all who have eyes and knowledge of script. And while the oral poet composed in public, aided by the presence and expectations of the audience, the literate poet
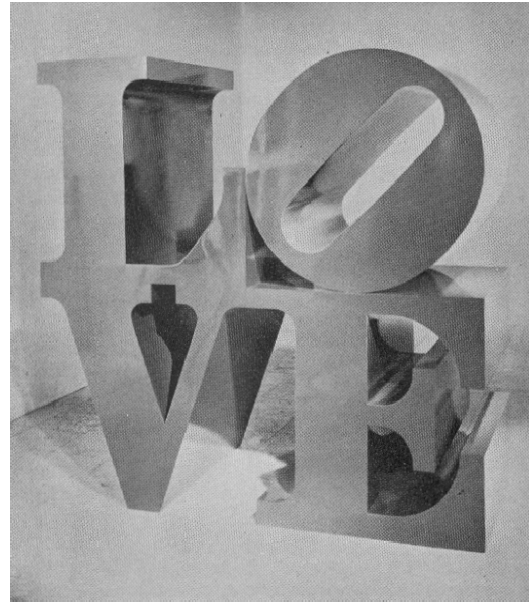
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31. "Have you so poor an opinion of these gentlemen, and do you assume them to be so illiterate as not to know that the writings of Anaxagoras of Clazomenae are full of theories like these?" Plato, *The Apology* 26d (trans. Tredennick & Tarrant 1993: 49).

composes in private, shifting the experience of the Muse's presence from a social event to an individual one.

The impact of this shift from a collectively experienced entity to a personal one on the audience's understanding of the Muse is undeniable. The oral poet invoked and "heard" the Muse primarily during performance, which meant that since the audience enabled the process, the audience played as integral part in the invocation of the Muse and her interaction with the poet. In a literate environment, the audience only receives the result of the poet/Muse interaction after it has taken place, which means that experiencing the "presence" of the Muse becomes the preserve of the poet. As characterisation of the Muse moves from society as a whole to the personal interpretations of individual poets, variants in how the Muse is perceived and described arise, to the extent that descriptions of Muses are determined by the idiosyncrasies in style and imagination of different poets: the Muse thus begins to resemble the poet. Also with a growing awareness of written language as tangible object which occupies the same physical space of the writer, the Muse can be seen to undergo a similar transformation (facilitating the conflation between Muses and actual persons that was to come).

The dynamics of the literate poet's relationship with this private Muse differ substantially from those of the oral poet. First, as the Muse is no longer the sole source of reliable information, and the poet no longer risks jeopardising the survival of inherited cultural experience each time he/she innovates or deviates from the norm, the literate poet can be said to enjoy a greater freedom from the dictates of the Muse. But this is only to a certain extent, for while the private Muse is certainly no longer the ultimate source, she is still the personification of cultural tradition and an aspect of memory, both of which continue to play a significant role in a literate environment. The former may, depending on the poet's point of view, either offer set guidelines in accordance with which the poet chooses to work (such as Pindar for example), or it may offer an innovative poet something to respond to, or react against[32]. The second hallmark of the private Muse is the retention of her connection with memory, albeit a shift from the collective memory of the society as a whole, to a more personal process of recollection. As

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32. In the hands of the 5th cent. BCE Athenian playwrights, tradition offered a wealth of known and immediately recognisable characters, themes and plots through which contemporary issues could be explored. Similarly, modern authors such as John Fowles, Salman Rushdie (*The Ground Beneath her Feet*), Joyce James, etc., have found in the literary traditions of ancient Greece a treasury of well-told stories and vivid proto-characters to produce highly innovative works which nonetheless display a marked modernity.

discussed in section 2, the very act of reading is a type of recollection which the Greeks acknowledged in the word *anaginôskô* (to know again). For example, while the oral poet can rely on the generally defined and accepted characterisation of the various characters who populate myths and legends, the literate poet, in accordance with the freedom from strict adherence to such conventions which literacy provides, can define characters along more specific lines: the motives, history, environment and the whole host of other factors which cause people to act in certain ways and not others can now be taken into account when inventing a character. Moreover, while the oral poet takes the audience to the world populated by heroes and gods while in the specific setting of the performance, the oral poet's fiction is received by the audience as just that, an alternate sphere populated by well-known characters who predate both its audience and its teller. The literate poet by contrast can create a fiction which mirrors the reality of the writer and audience , the literate fictional character can convince a reader of his/her capacity to occupy the same everyday reality. The result is an "authentic" depiction of human nature, derived from the poet's personal experience of how people behave. Thus while the oral poet can rely on voice and collective memory, the literate poet must observe the environment, people, read books, and draw on personal memories and experience.

A significant benefit of literacy is the additional time poets gain in which to compose. Certainly, oral poets had vast amounts of time in which to rehearse, memorise and contemplate their material, but the actual instance in which the real essence of oral poetry - the performance - is located, was limited to the length of the performance itself, the reason being the function of the audience in determining the form the poem should take. The literate poet by contrast, does not require the presence of the audience during the composition, and is thus less reliant on trained responses to a set of environmental circumstances. Thus while the oral poet will respond to the audience in an "instinctive" manner, the literate poet can explore the plot, characters, themes, etc. in a far more leisurely, considered manner[33]. The potential for creating a more convincing description of reality, of

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33. The shift in poetry from oral to literate, from preservative to innovative can mirror the difference between instinctive and pre-considered actions. Solms & Turnbull (2002: 281) point out that "the [brain's] frontal lobes offer the potential to *delay* (inhibit) [rapidly made] decisions in the interests of *thinking*. Thinking may be regarded as *imaginary* acting, whereby the outcome of a *potential* action is *evaluated*. This is achieved by running the envisaged action programs while motor output is precluded (inhibited). Acting without acting is thinking (imaginary action). Inhibition is therefore the prerequisite *and* the medium of thought".

fictional characters who behave as if they were real, means a loss of the particularly "dreamlike" nature of the story of which in orality the listeners were constantly reminded by the storyteller and the trickster: Sanders (1995: 83) posits for example, that: "[i]n literate cultures the tricksters disappear. They have climbed inside the sentences themselves ... erasing each sentence as quickly as we read it ... They make us wake up and realize we have fallen into a fictional dream. The writer creates a reality, raises the book to ontological status. But sooner or later the bubble pops, the dream ends". As a result, "language entices us into believing we have found the truth, in fact all that we wind up knowing for certain is something about language itself - the grammar and syntax and intonations of the sentences we fabricate" (Sanders 1995: 84). While in the symbolism of tricksters such as Hermes or Odin as poet, the story is evidently a deception of which the audience is clearly aware - they know that Achilles, Athena, Zeus, etc. occupy a sphere distinct from their own. By contrast, the facility offered by writing to create fictional characters who can convince of absolute human reality, the story as "magic trick" is replaced by the story as plausible reality, and the writer and reader alike become the Pygmalion who temporarily inducts these creations into the real world.

3.3.The Artist as Intellectual and the Secret Muse

"The rediscovery of Classical antiquity drew the attention of Botticelli's contemporaries to the enormous respect accorded artists during antiquity. They recalled that the Muses inspired artists, but not artisans. Artists gradually received a more privileged position and as a consequence, better pay. Michaelangelo, a generation after Botticelli, was the first artist to leap to fame and riches. Pointing out that artists do not merely work with their hands, but also with their heads, Michaelangelo set himself apart from the class of artisans" (Hagen & Hagen 1996: 34 - 5).

The notion of "fine art" as it exists in modern Western culture is not historically as universal or as widespread a phenomenon as it may appear, which is ironic, considering how the vast majority of remnants of ancient material cultures from which archaeologists derive their information, fall under the category of

"art". Moreover, the production of sculptures and images is a basic constant as integral to human culture as language. Fine art as an aspect of "intellectual" culture as critical as literature, philosophy and scientific advances is a notion which first appears in the Renaissance, and was based on a misconception regarding the status of artists in ancient Greece and Rome: when stories about great artists such as Phidias, Praxitiles and Apelles[34] came to the fore, it was presumed that unlike their "anonymous" Medieval counterparts, artists in ancient Greece and Rome enjoyed a status similar to poets. Phidias, Praxiteles and Apelles were the exceptions rather than the rule, and only a few Hellenistic thinkers were prepared to consider artists as comparable to poets, philosophers and the like (see section 3. *Muses and Poets*). The extent to which institutional transformation can depend on a re-discovered - yet most likely fabricated - origin myth has already been discussed in section 2.1. (*Possible Origins of the Concept of the Muse*), and the Renaissance idealisation of the ancient artist was just that, a fabrication. Hauser (1989: 54) points out that "The emancipation of the painters and sculptors from the fetters of the guilds and their ascent from the level of the artisan to that of the poet and scholar has been attributed to their alliance with the humanists; the humanists' support for them, on the other hand, has been explained by the fact that the literary and artistic monuments of antiquity formed an indivisible unity in the eyes of these enthusiasts, and that they were convinced that the poets and artist of classical

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34. While artists were considered to be no more than craftsmen in classical and Hellenistic Greece and Rome, the increased fame of individual painters and sculptors from the classical period onwards is substantial, specifically when seen in the context of a similar lack of renown for accomplished craftsmen in other fields. The fame of such individuals as Myron and Praxiteles is inextricably bound to the ancient appreciation of their products as being of outstanding quality of a type produceable only by these individuals. In art historical discourse, it is still not unusual to approach classical Greek art through these artists, in spite of the regrettable absence of their originals - which essentially leaves only numerous copies and written descriptions to work from. Spivey (1997: 14-5) sees a link between the reputations of individual artists and the development of artworks as objects of economic value - as opposed to religious: "whenever art becomes capital, names have more than simple taxonomic usefulness. They serve as economic guarantors, price labels, signatures of authenticity". Yet, the ultimate value of any artwork at this point was clearly still religious: for example, while Phidias' gigantic chryselephantine Athena was highly valued for the richness of its materials and superb skill of its maker, the focus of Athena's cult remained situated in an ancient (and presumably crude) wooden depiction of the goddess (presumably of the kind of palladium believed to have fallen from the sky) housed in the Erectheion.

fig. 37. Alexander Presenting Campaspe to Apelles, *1673. Louis Dorigny. Stories such as the one illustrated here of the painter held in high esteem by his patron - the mighty Alexander who gave the painter his mistress, convinced Renaissance scholars that ancient artists enjoyed a much higher status than their later counterparts. A keen understanding of the economic and political value of the services and guaranteed ownership of the products of highly skilled craftsmen was by no means limited to Alexander, but for the humanists, Aritostle's most famous pupil's elaborate show of respect elevated the painter to the level of the philosopher.*

antiquity were held in equal regard ... And they made their own age - and the whole of posterity right into the nineteenth century - believe that the artist, who had never been anything more than a mere mechanic in the eyes of antiquity, shared the honours of divine favour with the poet". The Renaissance conviction that the ancients in their superior sophistication considered artists on a par with poets had a profound effect on how artists came to view themselves, the creative process, and in time resulted in a complete overhaul of the means by which artists conducted their affairs, and educated art-students. The most significant development in the context of this thesis, was the artist's acquisition of the poet's most prominent component - the Muse. But the artist's Muse was to take on some peculiarities previously absent in the poetic tradition, yet to be highly influential on modern perceptions of the concept (see Appendix 2).

Hauser (1989: 46) posits an increase in demand for art as the reason for the artist's social ascent from the ranks of tradesman[35] to that of free intellectual

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35. The artist's status in the early Renaissance is still that of the petty bourgeois artisan,

worker. The latter class appears to be a largely Renaissance phenomenon, consolidated into a social and economically secure group only during this period. The claim to intellectualism had clear social and economic benefits, for while artists were considered craftsman, they were treated with the familiarity of domestics and paid salaries equal to those of tradesmen: thus while Ghiberti drew a fixed salary of 200 florins a year while working on the doors of the Baptistry, famous literati and university teachers could earn anywhere from 500 to 2000 florins per annum and in addition to a much higher social status, enjoyed freedom of movement which the strictures of artist's guilds still made very difficult. However, while greater demand for art from patrons other than the church played a significant role, the artist's advance in status primarily relied on social perceptions of the function and production of art as a whole. The long-standing role of the artist as craftsman was not so much a reflection of societies which did not value art, but societies in which the value of the artwork had very little to do with the identity of its maker. The artist's "presence" in his/her work is not a universal or long-standing tradition, especially not in artworks created for specific ritualistic or religious purposes. The anonymity of artists at numerous points in history is usually directly related to the perceived power of the artwork, revealing an intriguing paradox: the ritualistic/religious power of an artwork - and in particular any depiction of a deity, cult-hero or spirit, relies on the anonymity of the artist who made it. It is thus not the artist who controls the meaning of the work, but a strict set of criteria and inherited formulae which, irrespective of the quality of execution, determine the value of the artwork. Amongst the Dogon for

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reflected in artists relations with their guilds to which they are subject, and their purely practical education in workshops first as labour and later as apprentices and assistants. The workshops generally produced works which bore the name of the Master, but were invariably produced by a number of different artists. "The artist's studio of the early Renaissance is still dominated by the communal spirit of the mason's lodge and the guild workshop; the work of art is not yet the expression of an independent personality, emphasising his individuality and excluding himself from all extraneous influences ... Until the end of the fifteenth century the artistic labour process still takes place in purely collective forms" (Hauser 1989: 48). Nor is there clear distinction between fine art and craft: "The spirit of craftsmanship which dominates the Quattrocento is expressed, above all, in the fact that the artist's studios often take on minor orders of a purely technical nature ... a vast amount of handicraft goods is produced in one busy painter's workshop; apart from pictures, armorial bearings, flags, ship signs, tarsia-works, painted wood-carvings, patterns for carpet-weavers and embroiderers, decorative objects for festive occasions and many other things are turned out" (Hauser 1989: 49).

example, sculptures intended for religious and ritualistic purposes have "several different meanings and knowledge of them is, apparently, a progressive acquisition linked to the stages of initiation which lasts until death. As an aid to knowledge acquired by initiation, the symbol is sometimes imbued with a magic power. Some peoples have established a correlation between such power and the pose of the statuette" (Chevalier & Gheerbrandt 1996: 931).

The artist in this scenario is thus nothing more than an agent through which the culture produces the artwork, and to attempt any reading which does not take its context (both at time of production and at time of interpretation) into account will be insufficient. In the case of artworks created for purely ritualistic purposes such as the carved masks of the Benin and Yoruba of West Africa, differences in skill and quality are recognised, but do not determine or influence the accepted value of the works. As long as a mask or statuette is considered suitable to hold or host the spirit or power it represents its social and cultural meaning is assured. It is not even the artist who endows these objects with these capacities either: "When it leaves the sculptor's hands, the carved figure is uncharged with its powers. It is only after appropriate rituals that it becomes consecrated and steeped in religious strength. Deconsecrated carvings may be sold, given or thrown away. They are powerless" (Chevalier & Gheerbrandt 1996: 931)[36].

Large-scale secularisation of art would logically produce a different value-system by which artworks are judged in economic terms based on the technical accomplishment of the artist, the quality of materials and the desirability of the theme depicted. Yet, such valuation is and has always been the standard benchmark in valuation of craft: the blacksmith who uses the finest metals with the greatest of skill to produce a weapon or implement in great demand will enjoy a higher status than another smith whose works are not as finely wrought. Instead of simply adhering to such means of valuation, which by the Renaissance would have been well in place, artists aspiring to the ranks of the intellectuals required an additional means of value which artisans lacked. The solution was to be an "intellectual" aspect of their work, considered to be lacking in applied craft, a component termed *disegno*, the presence or absence of which came to be the deciding factor in whether or not an object was art or craft. Translated into English simply as "drawing" the term carried a mass of connotations extending far beyond

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36. Ancient Egyptian rituals served similar purposes: statues of gods were animated on a daily basis, and when destroyed, first needed to be ritualistically and physically (usually by some type of defacement) deprived of their capacity to host the god.

the actual act of drawing, and plays an integral part in the development of the Academic tradition in Western art. Renaissance Academies were not schools in the sense of an institution in which the production of art is taught[37]. Artists would learn and practice the "mechanics" of their trade in the workshops of the various master painters and sculptors, and continued to do so for a long time to come. Where academies differed from the original artist's clubs was in their focus on drawing (*disegno*). Vasari whose academy was amongst the earliest and most influential, defined "*Disegno* [as] an apparent expression and declaration of the *concetto* [or judgement] that is held in the mind and of that which, to say the same thing, has been imagined in the intellect and fabricated in the *idea*" (Goldstein 1996: 14). This drawing, which was held to form the very foundation of all of the fine arts, was thus a far cry from simple descriptive drawing. Simply put, Vasari's view of *disegno* constitutes a means of arriving at the Platonic ideal, and the attempt at somehow evoking that ideal. Thus while the end result would be a physical object produced manually by means of technical expertise, the most crucial part of the entire process took place in the mind, and was thus dependent upon the imaginative and intellectual capacity of the artist. By designating their groups as academies, these artists were consciously aligning themselves with the likes of Marcilo Ficino whose Platonising philosophy reputedly led him to found the first academy since the end of classical antiquity. By around 1500, academies had become highly fashionable, and a vast array, dedicated to the study of particularly humanist subjects such as philosophy and literature, had sprung up.

The notion that while craft is taught, art cannot be learnt (evident during the twentieth century in the approach of the Bauhaus school) makes its first appearance in the Florentine academy in the reluctance of its members to introduce the teaching of artistic theory based on classical rhetoric. "The writers acknowledge, that is to say, the elusiveness of art and of the natural talent that an artist either has or does not have, and of the potential harmfulness of intervention in the activity of artists of the first kind and the futility of study for the second. Vasari for example ... stresses the need to go beyond the rules, for the sake of 'facility' and 'grace' refracted by them" (Goldstein 1996: 25). Goldstein (1996: 25) argues that when Vasari uses such Christian terms his intention is for them to be read in their theological sense: "he understands grace, that is to say, as God-given, so that

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37. The early academies appear to have grown partly out of artists' clubs where members would enjoy lectures on a number of subjects, engage in discussions, and occasionally compose and listen to poetry and music.

fig. 38. An Academy of Painting, *c. 17th. cent. N. Dorigny, after Carlo Maratta. The transition of the artist's studio from craftsman's work-shop to place of intellectual pursuits such as anatomy, per-spective, classical studies and "Disegno" is here presided over by the Graces, while the artists themselves are depicted as philosophers and scholars.*
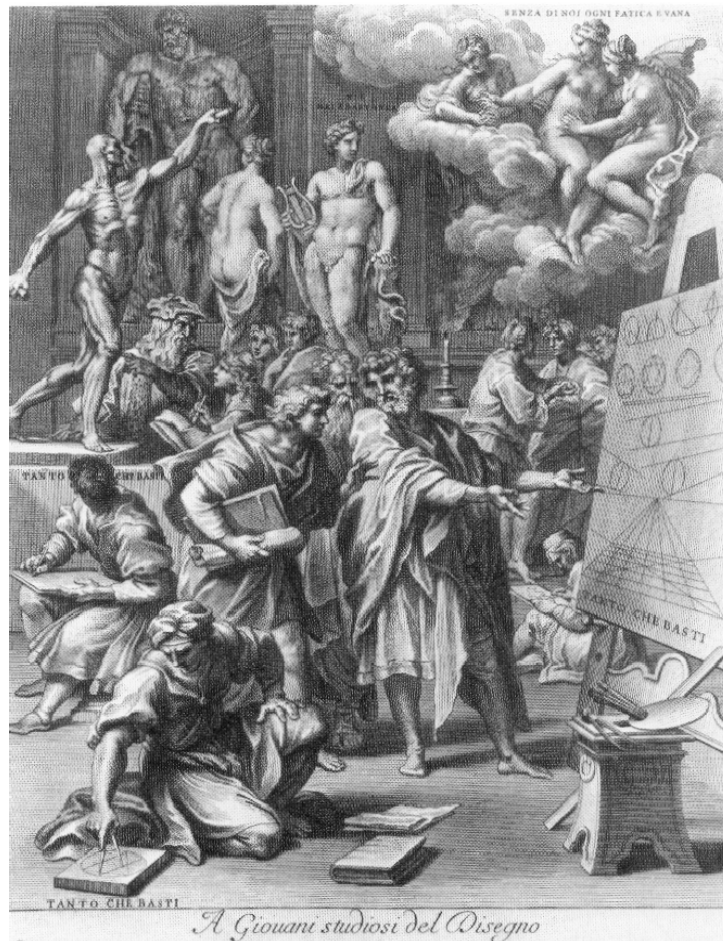
greatness in painting is a sign of God's favour ... an artist in such a state has no need of instruc-tion; not so favoured, he will benefit little from it". In some instances, this "God-given grace" is related directly to the classical model: Pindar's Graces are reborn in an image by Carlo Maratta in which the three Graces appear in an idealised image of the academy as the very means which makes all of the artistic ardour below them worthwhile (fig. 38). One of the most influential statements of academic art theory - known as the *Idea* discourse - came from Giovanno Pietro Bellori (first delivered 1664, published 1672): "This is the *Idea* originating in the mind of God and expressed in eternal purity by the heavenly bodies before passing into unstable terrestrial objects, the necessarily imperfect human figure among them; the task of the artist is to 'imitate the highest artist' by finding within himself a notion of that perfect beauty by means of which nature can be perfected. This is metaphysical speculation of the kind, it is to be recalled, that baffled the members of Zuccaro's academy, for whom theory was interwoven with practice; placing art in the ephemeral embrace of God is, rather, to render it contingent to a God-given grace that is gifted rather than acquired" (Goldstein 1996: 46). It is significant that the Graces/Charites make their appearance here. They were of course closely connected with poetry in the works of classical authors from Pindar onwards, and the etymology of their name - both in Greek and Latin supports this notion of

artistic talent as a type of god-given gift[38]. The association between the Muses and the Charites was not unprecedented, making its appearance as early as Hesiod, where the Charites and Muses are neighbours on Olympus, while in Theognis, both groups were closely associated with beauty[39]. In Pindar the Charites took on specific significance as the aesthetic aspects or benefits of poetry. Stoneman (1997: xxxix) argues that "...at least as important to Pindar's 'theory of poetry' as the Muses are the Graces, the Charites (who) have a symbolic role to play as guarantors of the beauty of poetry and celebration. The Graces are the rulers of the poet's technique". While in poetry, the Graces are only fully integrated into the creative process at a much later stage, the artists of the Renaissance acquire the Graces before the Muse. But it should be noted that the Graces of the Academy are not Pindar's, they are the Graces of the "Music of the Spheres" (fig's 20 & 21) and as such represent something of a "distillation" of the mediating Muses into a "holy trinity", in a process which recalls the emergence of the three Heliconian Muses as the original set. When the artist does eventually come to be associated with the Muse, she is a far less divine apparition whose characteristics derived from the practical aspects of making art.

While the Academy placed great emphasis on drawing and studying the human figure, the models used and allowed, were as a rule, male. Women were completely banned from academies, and this included female models. But there was an ideological aspect to this ruling as well, the male body was considered the epitome of physical perfection, and the female as a lesser version[40]. Artists responded to this in two ways, some simply "feminised" male models, but others, whose number increased exponentially over time, secretly employed female models in the privacy of their own homes or studios. The social stigma attributed to these women was such that artists either had to marry in order to secure access to a nude female body, or they employed women for whom reputation did not matter, such as prostitutes. In both instances the artist's personal and/or sexual relationship

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38. In Greek *charis, charitos* means both *grace* and *thanks*; while in Latin *Gratiae* is derived from *gratia* meaning grace, goodwill, kindness favour and even obligation thus both terms referring to those things which are pleasing and freely given.

39. "Muses and Graces, daughters of Zeus, who came to Cadmus' wedding, once you sang theses words: 'The beautiful is good, and if a thing's not beautiful, it isn't good"Theognis, *Elegies* 15-18 (trans. Wender 1973: 97).

40. This notion is particularly visible in the work of Michaelangelo whose female figures rather appear to be muscular men with breasts.

with the women depicted in his art came to be an integral part of how these images were popularly viewed (see Appendix 2). The situation of St. Luke who paints the Virgin as she appears to him in a vision (fig. 39) is in a secular context transposed onto the actual woman the painter paints as she sits before him. However, while the saint's relationship with the Virgin is comparable to that of Dante's St. Bernard, and even the Pilgrim himself, the artist's rumoured relationship with the woman in his painting is one either of marital intimacy, or if she is a prostitute - of lust. In this manner the Muse as her protegé's lover is an extension of the artist's model as mistress.

fig. 39. St. Luke Painting the Virgin. *c. 1550. Maerten van Heemskerck. While in earlier versions the Virgin as vision is emphasised by placing her on a cloud, here the status of the female figure is far more problematic, is this a woman posing as the Virgin, or is it the virgin herself? Note the similarity with current depictions of the painter and his Muse (fig 14) where a similar ambiguity exists.*

The development in literature of the characteristics of the Muse into a greater "physicality" (which was in keeping with the transition of language itself into a tangible entity) most likely contributed to the notion of an artist's source of inspiration being an actual woman. Combined in the nineteenth century with the emergence in literature of the *femme fatale* (see section 2. *Historical Overview*) the two notions amalgamated into the currently popular conception of the Muse as a specific woman with whom the writer/artist has a particularly intimate relationship (albeit not always necessarily sexual). Of particular interest, are the close comparisons that can be drawn between this view of the Muse and apsects of the Jungian notion of the *anima* as projected onto a specific woman, and as Storr (1991: 231) warns: "Inspiration, in the case of men, is commonly personified as a female figure. It is not uncommon, but usually disastrous, for creative people to confuse their mistress with their muse. The former belongs to the external world, the latter to the inner".

3.4. The Muse as Jungian Archetype

"... a man's anima functions as guide to the inner life, mediating to consciousness the contents of the unconscious. She co-operates in the search for meaning and is the creative muse in the artist's life ... in fact as an archetypal life force, the anima manifests in whatever shape is necessary to compensate the dominant conscious attitude" (Sharp 1991: 21).

fig. 40. Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse *1784. The projected anima is much like the costume this actress wears, if removed the illusion ends.*

In Jungian psychology the anima is the psychic symbolisation of feminine aspects of the masculine psyche; a psychological equivalent of contrasexual genetic material present in psychological make-up. In the female psyche this aspect is defined as the animus (the masculine in the feminine) which often displays characteristics similar to those of Hermes as psychopomp as both anima and animus perform a mediatory function between the psychic upper world (consciousness) and underworld (unconsciousness)[41]. As personal complex and archetype, the anima ranges from positive helpful aspect to negative and destructive: Sharp (1991: 19) explains how the "anima is personified in dreams by images of women ranging from seductress to spiritual guide. It is

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41. The extent of the influence exerted by non-conscious aspects of the mind on everyday behaviour is proving to be increasingly important: "at times our conscious self seems to act very much like the CEO of an organization. The CEO asks for a report, somebody in the organization produces that report (the CEO may not know who or where), and at some point the report is delivered to him or her. This pervasive automatization in our adult lives suggests that conscious control is exerted only at critical junctures, when a definite choice or a plan has to be made. In between, unconscious routines are continuously triggered and executed, so that consciousness can float free of all those details and proceed to plan and make sense of the grand scheme of things. In action as well as in perception, it appears as if only the last levels of control or analysis are available to consciousness, while everything else proceeds automatically" (Edelman & Tononi 2001: 58).

associated with the eros principle, hence a man's anima development is reflected in how he relates to women. Within his own psyche, the anima functions as his soul, influencing his ideas, attitudes and emotions". Thus, while a man's anima can be revealed in his outward perception and actions towards women, it can also reveal the characteristics of his persona since "[a]s an inner personality, the anima is complementary to the persona and stands in a compensatory relationship to it" (Sharp 1991: 19)[42]. It is when a man completely identifies with his persona that the anima is most likely to be projected onto an actual woman who personifies every quality lacking in the persona[43]. Thus, the projected anima or the Muse as actual woman, provides the least capacity for dialectical interaction instead, signalling a loss of individual freedom and conscious functioning.

The Muse as mistress in this context thus makes sense, as the propensity to project the anima onto a person or object primarily occurs when the anima is unconscious - the hallmark of the undeveloped anima: the Jungian model defines four broad stages of anima-development[44] "analogous to levels of the Eros cult described in the late classical period ... personified as Eve, Helen, Mary and Sophia" (Sharp 1991: 20). These stages are symbolic of a man's relation to his own

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42. "It seems that men have assigned all the mysteries and luxuries to women - beauty, compassion, intuition, grace, concern with aesthetics, emotions, sensuality, closeness to nature and many other traits and properties ... women are allowed to be emotional, but their emotions are seldom given full play in the political arena where they might bring significant change ... are allowed to cultivate and express aesthetic values in their clothes and appearance, but are discouraged from becoming fashion designers. Men grant that women are gifted in understanding the nuances of interpersonal relationships, but do not encourage them to enter the helping professions. As a whole, it would seem that men insist that women confine their gifts and talent purely to the personal sphere" (Singer 1973: 235).

43. Sharp (1991: 20) warns that to "[i]dentify with the persona automatically leads to an unconscious identity with the anima because, when the ego is not differentiated from the persona, it can have no conscious relation to the unconscious processes ... Anyone who is himself his outward role will infallibly succumb to the inner processes ... he can no longer keep to his individual way ... Moreover, the anima is inevitably projected upon a real object, with which he gets into a relationship of almost total dependence".

44. Dante's development of Beatrice in four stages, alongside the transformation of the Muse in four stages mirror Jung's theory regarding the *anima's* development. As in Dante, this can only occur alongside maturation of the *ego*, and the female is initially perceived in romantic terms as an object of desire, transformed into an intellectually stimulating embodiment of wisdom and complexity.

fig. 41. Tellus Mater *c. 13-9 BCE. The first stage of the anima as the image of the mother. In this stage the female is seen as ultimate resource providing everything a man requires.*
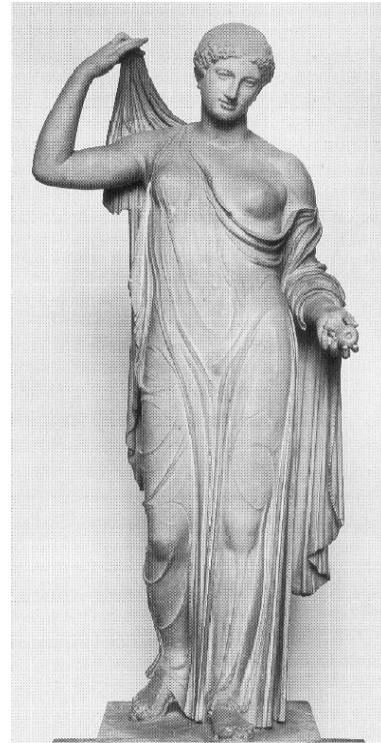

fig 42. Aphrodite Frejus *Roman copy of a Greek original of about 410 BCE. A highly romanticised view of an ideal woman as object of desire.*

fig. 43. Aphrodite Urania on her Goose. *c. 470 BCE. This image of femininity as connected with "heavenly" aspects was particularly pronounced in the imagery of the Virgin Mary in Christian iconography. (See also figs. 10 & 11).*
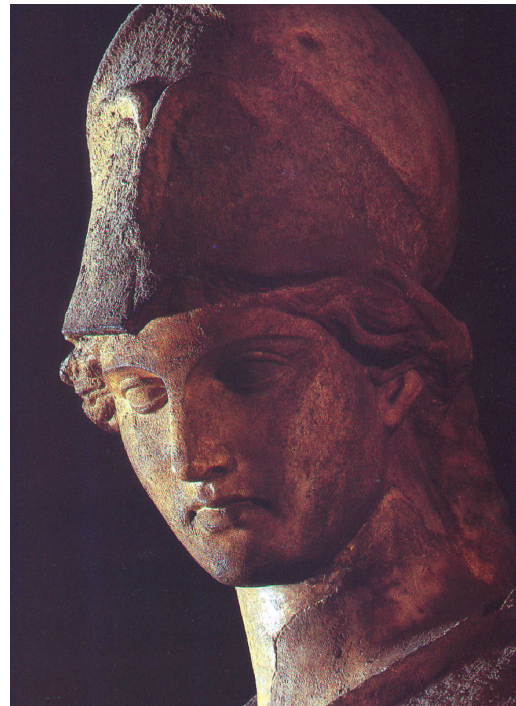

fig. 44. Athena *(undated). The final stage of the anima as personification of wisdom, found expression in ancient art as Athena/ Minerva.*

unconscious. In the first stage - Eve - the anima takes on all the qualities of the man's own mother, and he displays a complete dependence upon women[45]; the second stage - Helen - involves a romanticised view of femininity with sexual overtones (the idealised pin-up); the third stage - symbolised by the Virgin Mary will manifest in heightened spiritual devotion or extreme religiosity, but also of commitment and lasting relationships with specific women; in the final stage - Sapientia/Sophia, the anima becomes a mediator between a man's conscious ego and unconsciousness, such a man will search for meaning even beyond that offered by religion. During the initial stages of development, a man risks complete projection of the anima, "he is always prone to see aspects of his anima, his soul, in an actual woman" (Sharp 1991: 21). Thus, in the Jungian model it is entirely natural for a man to perceive aspects of his own psyche in specific women, the danger lies in the extent to which this occurs. But some concede that projection is not always necessarily an entirely bad thing: "It is a necessary part of a man's development to meet the anima first in her projected form, that is, out in the world, and deal with her there ... Projections are necessary; they serve the purpose of bringing the unconscious into view" (Singer 1973: 252). Either way, for a man to enjoy a useful relationship with his anima, she has to be transformed from a possessive and troublesome adversary[46] into the main means of mediation between the conscious aspect of a man's psyche and all its unconscious contents. Thus, the ideal anima, like the ideal Muse provides a man with knowledge he could not have accessed on his own.

Jung's conception of the psyche as divided between consciousness and

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45. Graves at one point began to equate one of his Muses (Aemelia) with his mother whom he had adored: "he had begun to refer to [his mother] not as Amy or Amalie but as Aemelia Graves" (Graves 1995: 429). Graves here displays a characteristic of "Don Juanism" whereby a man seeks his mother in every woman he meets. As a man's experience of his mother forms the basis for his relation to his *anima*, it is not surprising that Graves who thought his mother faultless should have been so completely blind to the exceptional flaws inherent in the majority of his "muses". Each of the women he chose as Muses became agents for his own mental projection, and this was certainly apparent to those around them. His friend James Reeves warned him that "[a]ll the properties that you attribute to M [Margot Callas] are the ones that you gave her" (Graves 1995: 343).

46. "The anima might then have easily seduced me into believing that I was a misunderstood artist ... If I had followed her voice, she would in all probability have said to me one day, 'Do you imagine the nonsense you're engaged in is really art? Not a bit.' Thus the insinuations of the anima can utterly destroy a man. (Jung 1983: 212).

fig. 45. Muse (La Meditation sans bras) *Auguste Rodin. The two women Rodin had relationships with personified different functions of the anima: his wife Rose (with whom he spent the vast majority of his life) was a substitute mother-figure on whom he relied to provide for his physical environment, expecting her to take care of his sculptures as well. By contrast, Rodin's mistress Camille Claudel served as student, assistant and lover and model for the majority of his most sensual pieces, such as this one which Rodin decribed as a depiction of his incomplete, frustrated thoughts. Their relationship also inspired Rodin's numerous depictions of Dante's doomed lovers Francesca and Paolo.*

unconsciousness mirrors the typical mythical division of the cosmos into human and divine spheres. In Plato's *Symposium*, for example, the character Diotima defines love as a great "daemon" which mediates between humans and gods. Mediation between human and god, infers some type of separation, a gulf which cannot be bridged by simply anyone, at any given time, but only by certain agents or means. This conception of a breach of some sort between human and deity is a widespread phenomenon. In the Greek, as in numerous other myths - including the well-known Judeo-Christian model - a cataclysmic event, usually due to some human weakness, causes this schism to occur. This lost communion with the gods is more than a mythical place, but a longed-for condition, which in the words of Hodson (1997) "finds expression in the idea of paradise. In psychological terms, paradise symbolises the psyche in its infantile preconscious state "when the ego or the centre of human consciousness, has not yet been developed. In this state there is no difference between inner and outer, subject and object. There is no, or little sense of distinction between what is of the mother and what is the child" (Hodson 1997: 7). Paradise is thus either projected onto the past, or onto a possible future - i.e. paradise regained - but never onto the present; a state of affairs which somehow implies an incompatibility between existing within such perfect union, and the capacity to imagine it. Thus the pastoral Muse who personifies either Utopia - or in later versions a distopia - recalls the drive for unity between the disparate parts of the psyche, or warns of the consequences of such a complete lack of

consciousness and autonomy[47]. It is significant, that in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, the Titan responsible for convincing humans to aspire to divinity - and consequently their fall from grace - is also progenitor of all advantageous skills: "fire has proved for men a teacher in every art, their grand resource" (trans. Vellacott: 1973: 24). Likewise, it is Lucifer "the bearer of light" who is responsible for humanity's fall in Judeo-Christian mythology. In Jungian terminology, it is the emergence and development of the ego, the individual "light" of consciousness which brings an end to the child's incapacity to identify itself as an individual being. The ego now experiences itself as separate and even in conflict with the rest of the psyche: the unconscious, the Self, and a whole host of obscure and potentially threatening archetypes, instincts, impulses, and inhibitions.

In Storr's (1991: 295-6) view it is precisely these divisions in the mind which feed the creative drive: "... we know little of the pattern-making function of the mind which underlies aesthetic activity. But we do know that, at any rate in part, it is beyond the control of the conscious will, and that the unconscious from which it takes origin can no longer usefully be regarded as simply the product of repression. Man is a creature inescapably, and often unhappily divided; and the divisions within him recurrently impel the use of his imagination to make new synthesis". If this is indeed the case, then it can be postulated that the creative process itself can be considered the interaction between divergent aspects such as consciousness and unconsciousness. In this scenario, the Muse is a mediator facilitating a dialectical interaction between different aspects of the psyche. The main problem with this view is that if the Muse is completely identified with the anima - that is, if the Muse is considered nothing other than an archetype as constellated in the male psyche, then creativity is located entirely in the male with the female's only role as receptacle for his projected anima. There is evidence of women actively seeking out this role in order to participate in various creative fields: "... there is a particular type of woman who regards herself as a 'femme inspiratrice', and who therefore attaches herself to creative men in the belief that she is especially qualified to nurture his (sic) genius. Lou Andreas Salomé, the mistress of Rilke, the expositor of Nietzsche, the confidante of Freud, is one example of the type. Alma Mahler is another. She was first married to the

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47. It appears that certain types of recollection require full consciousness: "only if we are conscious can we access so-called episodic memory, the conscious memory of particular events in our life" (Edelman & Tononi 2001: 149). Thus the successful poet is not so much possessed by the Muse as that he deals with her as distinct entity in a dialectical, not a subservient manner.

composer, Gustav Mahler. After his death she became the mistress of the painter Kokoschka. For a short while she was married to the architect Walter Gropius; and then became the wife of the writer Franz Werfel" (Storr: 1991, 55). However, there may be another factor at play in the behaviour of women such as Alma Mahler, Bronowski (2002: 404-6) argues that "[t]here is evidence now that women marry men ... and men marry women who are intellectually like them. And if that preference really does go back over some million years, then it means that selection for skills has always been important on the part of both sexes ... even in his biological evolution, man has been nudged and driven by a cultural talent, the ability to make tools and communal plans ... Ours is a cultural species, and I believe that our unique attention to sexual choice has helped to mould it. Most of the world's literature, most of the world's art, is preoccupied with the theme of boy meets girl. We tend to think of this as being a sexual preoccupation that needs no explanation ... On the contrary, it expresses the deeper fact that we are uncommonly careful in the choice, not of whom we take to bed, but by whom we are to beget children".

4.   Conclusion

"Advance in any field has always been preceded by a sudden leap of the imagination, which is recognised for its brilliance by the participating group, and galvanises them in their turn into further activity. Here is a kind of intellectual anthropology that can be further explored. Our Western intellectual heritage has been shaped by ingenuity, quick-wittedness, lateral thinking and inspired guesswork, but not haphazardly. In its detail it is guided and given its informing values by a common code of practice, which is simply an extension of the rules that govern our everyday life" (Jardine 2000: 5).

Contrary to most beliefs regarding creativity, there is nothing mysterious or superhuman about it. The notion of the writer/artist inspired by some divine entity to achieve things no ordinary human could ever have done[1] is a metaphorical description of the creative process, not the creative individual. Instead, the very fact that creation has - and still is - associated with a concept derived from myth, is an indication of the very normality of creativity, since mythology by definition does not record the extraordinary, the unique, the once-in-a-lifetime, but those experiences and archetypes which people have in common: as Sherrard (1992: 235) points out, "Myth is the natural language of the supra-natural world. Only in terms of those symbols and images that constitute a myth is it possible to give expression, not to that which is transient, but to that

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1. Dodds (1951: 82) even ascribes the notion's origins to a specific individual - Democritus: "The notion of the 'frenzied' poet composing in a state of ecstasy appears not to be traceable further back than the fifth century ... the first writer whom we know to have talked about poetic ecstasy is Democritus, who held that the finest poems were those composed 'with inspiration and a holy breath' and denied that anyone could be a great poet *sine furore* ... it is to Democritus, rather than Plato, that we must assign the doubtful credit of having introduced into literary theory this conception of the poet as man set apart from common humanity by an abnormal inner experience".

which abides through all change. Only in these terms can the inner reality of man's life be mirrored ... reality which myth renders intelligible, and from which it partakes, is not something which varies from generation to generation, from age to age, but is what is constant behind all temporal and phenomenal events".

On its most basic level, creativity has its origins in the survival tactic commonly described as adaptation, a means by which to ensure either a less hostile environment, or avert dangerous situations. As such, it is a capacity inherent in all humans, not just some. The difference between a person considered "creative" and the rest of the populace will thus be not a matter of presence or absence of this specific attribute, but the extent to which some individuals are more skilled at its application. Assessment of the concept of the Muse thus provides a useful insight into not only the mechanisms underlying the creative process, but by extension, how some more than others are able to apply it to such remarkable extent. As discussed, the concept of the Muse, in spite of numerous transformations throughout its lifetime, does exhibit certain invariable characteristics, all of which are as applicable to creativity in general as to the occasional genius.

The primary - and perhaps most misleading - attribute of the Muse is the dialectical nature of her interaction with the poet. I say misleading, because the notion of the Muse visiting the poet with inspiration - or in the case of the oral poet - with information, apparently affirms the perception of creativity as something which has to come from outside. Rather, the poet - Muse interaction is similar to that of an organism's relation to its environment: it is not the environment which bestows on an organism the capacity to adapt itself to it, that capacity is already present in the organism, the environment provides the incentive. And while in Darwin's original theories, this is a one way street, recent theories define a far more interactive scenario: Lewontin (1997: 131) for example

fig. 46. Calvin and Hobbes, *1993. Bill Watterson. While this joke is aimed mainly at the average procrastinator, it does highlight some fundamental aspects of creativity - the provision of solutions to problems, or formulation of responses to imminent threats.*

describes how "[t]he environment of an organism is not an independent, preexistent set of problems to which organisms must find solutions, for organisms not only solve problems, they create them in the first place. Just as there is no organism without an environment, there is no environment without an organism. 'Adaptation' is the wrong metaphor and needs to be replaced by a more appropriate metaphor like 'construction'" (Lewontin 1997: 131). The capacity to "create a problem" is in most organisms an involuntary one, but as Socrates proved, the capacity to formulate a good question provides the means by which to gain knowledge. Thus, when the oral poet invokes and directs a question at the Muse, that in itself involves a creative act. In all these scenarios the solution to the problem posed - be it a hostile environment, or a carefully formulated question - will rely on the extent to which an organism, or an individual can apply prior personal experience, i.e. memory[2].

As discussed, the Muses were considered daughters/aspects of Memory. And as seen in various stages of the concept's development, this aspect has been attributed both negative and positive qualities: negative in the sense of suffocating tradition, positive as useful reservoir of accumulated knowledge. As Calvino (2000: 12-3) warns: "Memory truly counts - for an individual, a society, a culture - only if it holds together the imprint of the past and the plan for the future, if it allows one to do things without forgetting what one wanted to do, and to become without ceasing to be, to be without ceasing to become". Literature and art history are full of examples of what happens when authors and artists blindly adhere to tradition: stilted pastiches devoid of any true depth or meaning. Yet, this does not mean that tradition or an abundance of memory is a bad thing, by contrast, an incapacity or

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2. Some neuroscientists now argue that the development of a capacity for individual memory is what gave rise to consciousness: "Whatever evolutionary event we wish to consider as representing the beginning of true information ...[we conclude that] it is the transcendent leap from simple nervous systems, in which signals are exchanged in a relatively insulated manner within separate neural subsystems, to complex nervous systems based on reentrant dynamics, in which an enormous number of signals are rapidly integrated within a single neural process constituting the dynamic core. Such integration lead to the construction of a scene relating signals from many different modalities with memory based on an entire evolutionary history and an individual's experience - it is a remembered present. This scene integrates and generates an extraordinary amount of information within less than a second. For the first time in evolution, information acquires a new potential - the possibility of subjectivity. It is information 'for somebody'; in short, it becomes consciousness itself" (Edelman & Tononi 2001: 211-2).

unwillingness to use both personal and collective memory will not necessarily lead to innovation, but is more likely to result in rudimentary solutions to problems which have already been solved long ago. As the tendency to revolt against one tradition by resorting to another demonstrates, experience is of tantamount importance to devising innovative and unique solutions to problems: "Memory is particularly important to anyone who cares about change, for forgetting dooms us to repetition" (Rose 1994: 308). It has even been argued that Albert Einstein's encountering other people's unique solutions to a wide variety of problems while working at the patent office, played a significant role in fostering his own creativity.

A prime example of innovation achieved through tradition is Edouard Manet's ground-breaking work *Le Déjeneur sur l'Herbe* of 1863 (fig. 7 & detail fig. 48). By the nineteenth century, the Art Academies which had propelled Renaissance artists from the ranks of craftsmen to the intelligentsia had atrophied into dictatorial institutions in which contemporary artists, like Hesiod's post-Golden Age man, would always be inferior to the great heroes of old. It can be argued, that the main problem with the academies was not that there was too much memory, but there was not nearly enough remembering. The act of recollection, as previously discussed, is in itself a creative act, an interpretation of the past to make sense of it in the present. However, students at the academies were discouraged from doing this: instead there was a fixed canon of established and approved masters whose work students had to copy and emulate as accurately as possible. There was no dialogue between present and past, individual and tradition. These artists were being trained simply to preserve the style of old masterpieces without really needing to consider what they meant, and memory as we have seen is primarily concerned with meaning. Manet's great innovation lay in his attempt to engage with the meaning of the traditions of the old masters, selecting for his painting a theme well established in Western art and literature - the pastoral[3].

While typical nineteenth century pastoral images placed blatantly fictional characters in a setting removed from anything the viewer would ever have

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3. Manet's use of the very tradition he was examining is quite unusual, but his use of the symbol of pastoral idyll is not, many early modern artists evoked the notion of the simplicity of "paradise lost" in response to the conventions of the art academies: Van Gogh and Gauguin both sought it amongst the rural populace of places like Brittany, with the latter even fleeing to Tahiti to seek out "primitive truth". Others such as Picasso evoked the Western notion of the "noble savage" by drawing stylistic inspiration from African art which many collected.
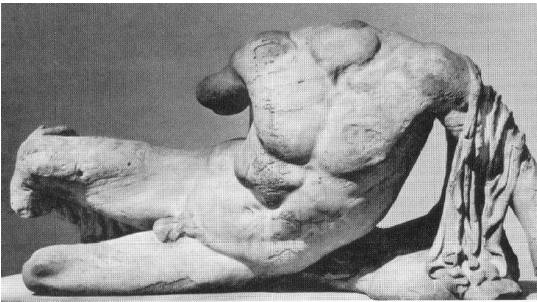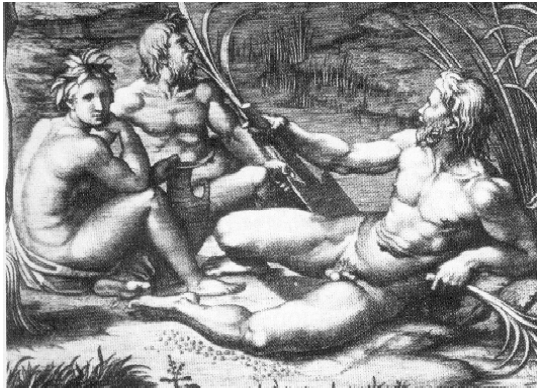
from top left: fig. 47. Detail from The Judgement of Paris. *c. 1520. Marcantonio. Raimondi, after Raphael.*

fig. 48. Detail from Le Déjeneur sur l'Herbe (*see fig. 7.*)

left: fig. 49. Reclining River-God *5th c. BCE.*

experienced, Manet sets his scene in a Paris park and uses two artists and their models for the poets and nymphs/muses, breaking two rules: "... in the *Déjeneur*, Manet does not attempt to revive 'great painting', but to speak in a new voice and with an authority equal to his celebrated predecessors. He takes the theme of a pastoral paradise, familiar in painting from Giorgione to Antoine Watteau, and embodies it in living, identifiable people: his model Victorine Meurend, his brother Gustave (with cane), and the sculptor Leenhof" (De la Croix & Tansey 1986: 841). The painting was initially rejected by the Salon, and was subsequently displayed at the Salon des Refusés which had been set up to display the particularly large number of works which had been refused entry to the Salon[4] of 1863 where it caused a great scandal. While art-critics were mainly offended by Manet's stylistic deviations from the accepted norm, the public were offended by what was depicted: Manet was forcing people to evaluate the meaning of a type of image they all knew intimately, but had never truly been forced to look at. This, De la Croix and Tansey (1986: 842) argue, "is what outraged the public; the pastoral brought up to date - the promiscuous present in a Paris park - was more the concern of the police than of lovers of art".

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4. De la Croix & Tansey (1986: 841) point out that during "the nineteenth century, at least until the 1880's, the Salon was the field of intense professional competition among artists and the battleground of 'modern' versus 'traditional'". At that point it had been widely lamented, as Eugene Fromentin did, that "Great painting is dead. That much is understood".

The most remarkable aspect of the *Déjeneur* however, is the extent to which Manet adhered to established tradition in its execution. Unlike others discontented with the academy and the Renaissance canon it enforced, Manet's challenge to the tradition drew on a work by one of the academy's greatest heroes - Raphael: the figure of the reclining artists and model in the foreground come from a depiction of river-deities in Raphael's *The Judgement of Paris* (fig. 47), itself derived from an earlier Greek depiction of a river god of a type found on the Parthenon (fig. 49). Manet's method of manipulating expectation to reveal underlying meaning was to become an effective weapon in the modernist arsenal: "The masterpiece has the force of tradition without its form; the *Déjeneur* is the valedictory of the world of present fact to the world of mythic past. The public expected the latter world and was overwhelmed by the former; defeated expectation is part of the shock-tactics of modern art in its unceasing effort to force the public to face a reality that modern art defines for it" (De la Croix & Tansey 1986: 842).

The amalgamation into one complex symbol of artwork/model and Muse on the one hand, reflected developments in both literature and art, but also reveals another important aspect of the fundamental characteristics of creativity: the medium/material determines the artist's technique, there is thus a further dialectic which takes place during the creative process, between the creator and creation, Pygmalion and Galatea. Ehrenzweig (2000: 102) posits this process as reflective of inner psychological processes: "Any work of art functions like another person, having independent life of its own. An excessive wish to control it prevents the development of a passive watchfulness towards the work in progress ... 'accidents' that crop up during the work could well be the expression of parts of the artist's personality that have become split off and disassociated from the rest of the self". In its most accentuated form, the material itself thus functions as Muse: Bronowski (2002: 128) for example, when describing Chinese bronzes argues "that they form an art that grows spontaneously out of its own technical skill. The maker is ruled and directed by the material; in shape and surface, his design flows from the process. The beauty that he creates, the mastery that he communicates, comes from his own devotion to his craft". Nor is this unique to physical material, many artists and writers conceive of their ideas as somehow autonomous: "'The songs made me, not I them', said Goethe. 'It is not I who think', said Lamartine; 'it is my ideas that think for me.' 'The mind in creation', said Shelley, 'is a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakens to transitory brightness'" (Dodds: 1951, 100-1). Yet again, though this is not unique to artists, writers, poets and philosophers, Lewontin (1997: 133) points out that since organisms in responding to their environments effectively "create their own environments we

cannot characterise the environment except in the presence of the organism that it surrounds". Thus the Muse and poet in their interaction transform each other (as seen in the overview of the development of the concept of the Muse).

Finally, it is in the effect creation has on the creator where the concept of the Muse and her protegé matches the most basic purpose of the creative process: the transformation of the individual. When an organism responds to an environmental challenge, its survival depends on the efficacy of its response - which is the creative act. The organism's solution to the environmental problem will change its environment, and more significantly, it will change the organism. Hesiod's encounter with the Muses on mount Helicon for example, transformed him from herder to poet (as much as it changed them from regional Heliconian Muses to Pan-Hellenic Olympian ones). Thus, like the Muse who both participates in the *Theogony* as character, yet is also its author, the poet's ultimate product is his/her own transformed self.

In John de Andrea's *The Artist and His Model* of 1980 (fig. 50) the status of the artist as his own invention no less "created" by himself than his artwork, is cunningly explored. The work is life-size and executed in a hyper-realistic style, consisting of two figures, one male - the artist - seated on a small stool with a can of paintbrushes at his feet, and the other female - the model - seated on a sculpture plinth. At first glance it appears to be a straightforward portrait group of a sculptor and his model while working, except for one crucial detail: the woman's lower legs are left unpainted, she is thus clearly not meant to be seen as a "real" woman, but a sculpture. She is an established type, and reminds of the half-stone half-flesh Galatea in Jerome's *Pygmalion and Galatea* (fig. 16), but the main question the work poses regards the status of the male figure: it is indeed a portrait of the artist, but there is no stylistic difference between what is clearly a depiction of an actual individual, and his sculpture, like John Fowles' Miles Green and Erato they inhabit and at the same time continually fabricate the same fictional reality. The concept of the Muse thus provides a means through which to symbolise and explore the characteristics of the entire range of what may constitute the essential "other" without which the creative process cannot occur.
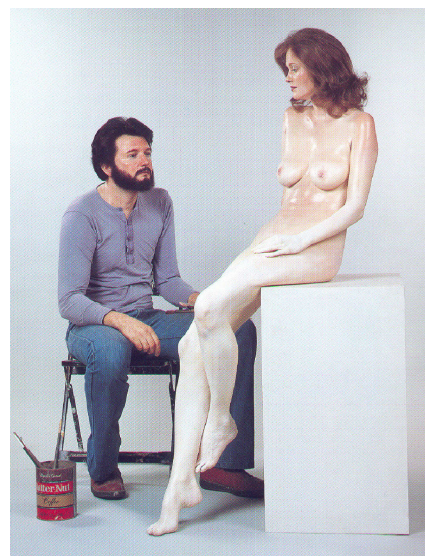

fig. 50. The Artist and His Model *1980. John de Andrea.*

5.   Appendices

5.1. The Myths of Thamyris and Pygmalion.

"If you must know, Mr. Green, your memory-loss may well be partly caused by an unconscious desire to fondle unknown female bodies" (Fowles 1993: 26).

"Narcissism, or pygmalionism, is the essential vice a writer must have. Characters (end even situations) are like children or lovers: they need constant caressing, concern, listening to, watching, admiring" (Fowles 1998: 14).

Thamyris was a Thracian bard, who while on his way from northern Greece (Thessaly) made a boast at Dorion, a town in Nestor's kingdom of Pylos (south-western Peloponnese), that his poetic skills were superior even to those of the Muses. Angered by his boast, the Muses took from him his sight, talent for singing and memory[1]. In later versions, the Muses agree first to a contest to take place on Thamyris' home-ground (Mount Pangaeus in Thrace according to Euripides), and stakes for the victor and conditions appear: should the Muses win, they can do with Thamyris as they please, but if Thamyris were to win, then he may have intercourse with each Muse (claiming such polygamy as a Thracian custom). In these accounts, the actual eyes of the bard are taken, which prior to maiming are of wondrous appearance - one is grey/white, while the other is black. Vase paintings and occasional references to Thamyris depict him as blinded in Hades, broken lyre in hand. He was also reputedly the first man to desire other

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1. "Dorion, where the Muses met Thamyris the Thracian and stopped his singing, ... in his boasting he had claimed he would win even if the Muses themselves were to sing against him, the daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis: they grew angry with him and maimed his sight, then took from him the divine gift of song and drove away his memory for the lyre" Homer, *Iliad* 2 (trans. Hammond 1987: 33).

men (Hyakinthos who is later accidentally killed by Apollo). As far as Thamyris' genealogy is concerned, he was generally considered the son of the bard Philammon and the nymph Argiope. In the A scholia to *Iliad* 10. 435 he is the son to Erato (Gantz 1996: 55) and even of Melpomene (Grimal 1991: 426). He was also considered by some to have been Homer's teacher; to have invented the Dorian mode; and to have composed a Theogony, Cosmogony and Titanomachy (ibid). Through his daughter Menippe, he is occasionally the grandfather of Orpheus, while himself a grandson of Apollo.

Originally it was a story of a highly skilled and gifted individual, punished for excessive *hubris*, but over time, with each retelling, it undergoes certain distinct changes: While Thamyris was initially simply a boastful bard, summarily punished by the Muses, he later becomes a sexual predator (of women and men) who attempts to trick the Muses into intercourse by coercing them into competition. Although in these later scenarios the Muses still defeat Thamyris, the very fact that they now have to compete with him first, implies a possibility (however remote) that they may equally have lost. This emergence of a blatant eroticism, and contention for authority, reveals a marked shift in the relationship between poet and Muse. Homer's account of Thamyris should be seen in the context of the exact place in the *Iliad* where it first appears: in the section where the poet recites the names and places of origins of the warriors and their crew who came to Troy (the so-called *Catalogue of Ships, Iliad* 2) and only once he has appealed to them for information and acknowledged their authority. The first of a few stories contained in the catalogue, and the only one not directly connected to either combatants or their ancestry, the account of what happened to Thamyris at Dorion, instead resembles Pausanias' anecdotal descriptions of places by recounting events which had occurred there. Rather, Thamyris' story does not provide information relevant to the catalogue, as much as serving as counterpoint to the extensive invocation of the Muses which introduces this section. It is effectively a warning: in oral poetry, remembering and reciting the catalogue of ships would no doubt have constituted a substantial poetic achievement, one accomplished not by the likes of a Thamyris, but a Homer, who takes care not to insult the Muses and risk losing his poetic abilities.

Not only a single poet's accomplishments are at stake, but an entire society's cultural cohesion as Havelock (1986: 58) explains: "[oral] poetry must be seen as functional, a method for preserving an 'encyclopedia' of social habits and custom-law and convention which constituted the Greek cultural tradition of the time when the poems were composed". Thus, when Thamyris boasts of his

superiority to the Muses, he is in effect not only angering the gods, but endangering the very knowledge and values the oral poet had been tasked with preserving. His penalty then was not as much aimed at putting him in his place, but to permanently shut him up, lest he pollute the cultural tradition with falsehoods[2]. After all, an oral poet who rejects the authority of the Muses who see all, in favour of his own limited experience, thus clearly fabricates any story which involves events beyond what he has seen himself. Thamyris' main crime then, is his reliance on his own eyes, instead of those of the Muses. The poet aspires to authorship, but as Sanders (1995: 11) emphasises, "[o]rality admits no authors - not in the contemporary sense of a person who makes up stories out of his own imagination and assumes the mantle of authority". Authorship is thus an attribute distinctive to literacy, as is the transformation of language from fleeting sound, to physical object[3], which is the junction where Thamyris also becomes Pygmalion (an amalgamation Fowles so dextrously explored in *Mantissa*).

The myth of Pygmalion first appeared centuries later than that of Thamyris, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The exact age or origin of the myth is uncertain, but has since classical times reappeared constantly, in a marked contrast to Thamyris, who, with the exception of Fowles, was only mentioned by Milton, and virtually no-one else. Reworkings of the Pygmalion myth often appear contrary to the tone of Ovid's version, yet generally contain the same basic themes, with one exception: as the cultural context in which the myth operates is altered, one pivotal element - Aphrodite - fails to find a comparable symbolic substitute, and the vacuum left by her absence dooms post-classical Pygmalions to frustration and dissatisfaction with

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2. That this was perceived of as a very real danger is evidenced by the veiled threat Odysseus makes when asked to tell his story at the court of Alcinous: Odysseus claims he can't until he has eaten, as hunger leads to forgetfulness (*Odyssey* VII: 215-221). Nagy (1992: 44) states that "[s]uch a gambit would be typical of an oral poet who is making sure that he gets an appropriate preliminary reward for entertaining his audience".

3. "The conversion of an acoustic medium for communication into a visible object used for the same purpose had wide effects ... All language could now be thought of as written language - in fact, that writing *is* language, rather than merely a visual artifact designed to trigger the memory of a series of linguistic noises by symbolic association ... The confusion is understandable, because it is only as language is written down that it becomes possible to think about it ... in the alphabetised document the medium became objectified ... reproduced perfectly in the alphabet, not a partial image but the whole of it, no longer just a function of 'me' the speaker, but a document with an independent existence" (Havelock 1986: 112).

their creations.

According to Ovid's account, a group of women from the mining district of the Phoenician city Amathus (the Propoetides) denied the divinity of Aphrodite, and as a consequence were transformed into raving nymphomaniacs, prostituting themselves in public. Eventually they metamorphosed into stone flints. Pygmalion of Paphos, morally outraged by this small group of women's behaviour, renounced all women, creating his own ideal from ivory instead. To his mind, this statue was so superior to any living woman, he fell in love with it, bringing it gifts, dressing it in finery, and taking it to bed with him. By the time the festival of Aphrodite arrived, Pygmalion was so obsessed with his creation he asked the goddess to grant him a woman like it. Aphrodite, instead of mimicking the sculptor's creation, brought the statue itself to life. Pygmalion and his statue were married and had a daughter Paphos after whom the island took its name.

The myth of Pygmalion initially does not appear applicable at all to either poet or Muse (other than that it is told by Orpheus). What it does deal with however is the notion of creativity and *eros* as personified by Aphrodite. In stark contrast to the rest of the *Metamorphoses*, Pygmalion is perhaps the only character whose desire does not lead to a tragedy. Pygmalion's yearning for his statue does result in a metamorphosis, but the transformation happens the "wrong" way around - from inanimate object to living being, as opposed to human being into plant, mineral, animal, etc. Eros in Ovid displays very distinctive hallmarks: "Love here is love at first sight, an impelling demand, without psychological complications, and one that cries out for immediate satisfaction. Since the creature desired usually refuses and flees, the motif of a chase through the woods is recurrent. Metamorphosis can occur at different moments, either as a disguise on the part of the seducer, or as an escape for the trapped girl, or else as a punishment meted out to the victim of seduction by some jealous goddess" (Calvino 1997: 159). The pattern of attraction and repulsion does appear in Pygmalion, but the other way around: Pygmalion is first repulsed by the behaviour of the Propoetides who have been changed as punishment by Aphrodite, and is then attracted to the sculpture he makes. The statue, as with most transformations in Ovid, is transformed in response to a request to a divinity and - in a rare instance - the lover and the object of his desire unite and live happily ever after. Remarkably it is primarily in Ovid where this is the case, in most subsequent versions of the Pygmalion myth the transformed girl is independent to the point of being disruptive, much to the dismay of her "maker" (the fact that in all of these versions it was Pygmalion alone, and not Aphrodite who brought the statue to life, suggests why).

Aphrodite is thus not only the creative force who brings to life an inanimate object by the sheer power of *eros*, but also - in Ovid's version - the primary "author" of the event. While Ovid's version is the earliest known telling of the Pygmalion myth, its fundamental theme - *eros* as creative force - was already extant when Hesiod wrote his *Theogony*. This Eros was not the familiar adolescent cherub or Roman Cupid, but the force which caused heaven and earth to produce life. While *eros* is not particularly associated with the Muses, Orpheus was generally considered a composer of hymns devoted to the god, and Pausanias notes that at Thespis, where the Muses had a temple[4] Eros was particularly revered[5]. In the Pygmalion myth, the basic structure of modern views on creativity are apparent: the sculptor (Pygmalion), dissatisfied with things as they have been rendered by Aphrodite (the Propoetides prostituting themselves as punishment from the goddess) invents his own ideal version, based upon the very same archetype (Aphrodite) responsible for his dissatisfaction. This creation is then brought to life by virtue of the sculptor's erotic obsession with it as a reward from Aphrodite. Aphrodite thus spurs Pygmalion to create by causing his dislike for the women of his area. She then serves as model for the idealised woman he creates, and then once he has begun to lavish this fake woman with his attentions, Aphrodite makes her real. In the case of the Muse, she spurs the artist/poet to create. In modern instances, the Muse is then projected onto an actual woman (often the artist's model) on whom the resulting creation is based.

However, most modern Pygmalions are frustrated by their inability to control their creations. These Galateas as a rule disrupt their creators' lives to such an extent that some even return them to their original petrified state. This insubordinate type of Galatea can be considered a reincarnation of Pandora. The latter is of course also an initially inanimate creation brought to life by the gods, but her existence is for purposes of revenge, not love (or lust). Also, while Galatea turns against her maker, Pandora was created by Zeus to punish humans for

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4. Ovid's Pierides call the Muses 'daughters of Thespis' and in Pausanias Thespis was the first place Pieros established his cult of nine Muses which he brought from Macedon.

5. Levi (1979: 364) comments that while: "[t]he Orphic cosmogonies we have were mostly written in the age of Hadrian and of Pausanias" an example of the type can be found in Aristophanes' *The Birds"* where the chorus of birds, claiming superiority to the gods, sings: "Eros the deeply-desired, Eros the bright, the golden-winged. And it was he, mingling in Tartarus with murky Chaos, who begot our race ... There was no race of gods till Eros brought the elements together in love: only then did the Sky, the Ocean and the Earth come into being" (Barrett 1978: 178).

fig. 51. Pandora as Mannequin. *Classical vase painting. Pandora's stance in this image is clearly that of a statue, not yet a living being. Like Pygmalion projecting his own ideal woman onto his creation, the gods each provide Pandora with their own attributes.*

obtaining from Prometheus a means of deceiving him. As Harris and Platzner (1998: 145) argue, "[l]ike the inedible bones and hide covered with an attractive pelt that Zeus selected as his part in the divine-human arrangement, Pandora is alluring on the outside but is worthless within, an economic parasite who will subvert the advantages of Promethean fire". This theme reappears in Mary Shelley's monster of Frankenstein, a destructive and unforeseen consequence of intellectual curiosity, i.e. the dark side of creativity[6]. The horror at the destruction caused by the atom bomb experienced by those scientists whose work had made it possible, and the extreme fear scientific innovations of the twentieth century have engendered, are an expression of the myths of Pandora and Pygmalion's troublesome Galatea: a notion that once created, ideas take on a life and a momentum of their own. Like genetically engineered organisms, ideas thus have the capacity to outlive their creators: propagating, adapting and constantly changing to suit new contexts and environments with unforeseeable consequences.

6. While Prometheus did not directly create Pandora himself, her existence is as a direct consequence of his actions - stealing fire from the gods, and inducing humans to deceive Zeus. Prometheus is however occasionally depicted creating the human race from soil in a "Pygmalean" manner. As embodiment of intelligence, cunning, and insubordination he is a classic trickster figure, and it is significant that Hesiod has Hermes, another trickster, deliver Pandora to the unsuspecting Epimetheus.

5.2. The Artist's Model as Muse

An intriguing association between the women used as models by artists and the Muse is a modern and prevalent notion. While literary counterparts are discernible, the notion does not appear to have been as much a hallmark of any ancient writer as it is of modern authors such as Robert Graves, for example. When and where did it originate, or has it always been an attribute which our sketchy knowledge of the ancient poets' lives has prevented critics and historians from noticing?

Neither Hesiod not Homer, or any other poets of the archaic or classical period appear to have regarded a specific woman as personal Muse in a manner a contemporary poet might. While these poets address the Muse personally and in their poems reveal an intimacy with their creative source, the Muse is clearly conceived of as a divinity, one which serves its purpose without needing to resort to any means of human incarnation. Plato as mentioned earlier, becomes the first known person to speak of human Muses, but he does so in a manner which differs from later identification on an important point: these are the human version of a divine type. In other words, as in his theory of the Ideal with its multiple imperfect versions, so there exists the Ideal, which is the Muse, of whom a female poet is a reflection. Sappho and her ilk in Plato's version are "human Muses" not because their creative capacity revolved around providing inspiration to a male poet, but by virtue of their own poetic and creative abilities. Thus, in Plato's version, these women poets were earthly "reflections" of the divine Muses composing and performing on Olympus, a view in perfect concord with his philosophy of Ideas. Plato's comments had an impact on later writers, but the question is whether or not the leap from purely divine source to human incarnation can be attributed solely to a misinterpretation of Plato's compliment to Sappho. The complex relationship which exists between the author and his Muse in post-classical literature and the visual arts reveals a substructure which differs from the features of the Muse as she is conceived of by ancient writers, to the extent that it appears as if characteristics of another goddess have been incorporated into the concept of the Muse. It also appears as if certain aspects of this goddess's cult have become entwined with that of the Muse, to result in an intriguing variation of the traditional interchange between poet and Muse.

Praxiteles' *Aphrodite of Knidos* (350 BCE), "the statue which, in Kenneth Clark's phrase, sustained a 'sensual tremor' for five hundred years, and arguably

laid the basis for the female nude in Western art" (Spivey 1997: 177), also appears to have provided a foundation upon which the notion of the artist's model as Muse subsequently developed[7].

In ancient Greek and Roman art, the male nude was a particularly endemic and well-developed genre, for a number of reasons, not least of which the ubiquity of male nudity in a large variety of social situations, ranging from Greek gymnasia and athletic contests to Roman baths. Contrary to current perceptions of the male nude as either purely homoerotic, or somewhat ridiculous and embarrassing to the viewer, ancient attitudes to male nudity were much different: "conventions of ancient representation, in all media, gave nakedness a role as a costume of power - the 'heroic nudity' which clothed deities, emperors, and other would-be supermen" (Beard & Henderson 2001: 112). Consequently, in Western art, any untitled male nude can be identified as one of a large range of types: Kouros, Apollo,

fig 52. Aphrodite of Knidos. *Roman copy of Greek original of c. 350 BCE.*

Dionysus, Hermes, Athlete, David, Adam, etc. The nude female however, is predominantly labelled Aphrodite/Venus, and occasionally, Eve. So entrenched is this notion, that when prehistoric statuettes and carvings of nude female figures were found at Willendorff and Laussel for example, they were immediately baptised "Venus" (much to the chargin of later feminists). Virtually every female nude viewed from a Western perspective thus participates, to some degree, in the mythology of Aphrodite of Knidos.

"Some scholars maintain that the revealed female body - so captivating was its appearance - gave rise to adapted poses in sculpture in the late fourth century, and that the creation of modified views continued during the third. Others, however, think that while Praxitiles' Aphrodite provided the formal platform for the development of the female nude, it was not until the second half of the second century BC (i.e. coinciding with increased, indeed dominant, Roman presence in

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7. "[I]t is clear that its resonance was stylistically, and socially, deeply felt around the Mediterranean" (Spivey 1997: 183).

Greece) that the type became popular, and variants began to proliferate. The Capitoline Venus, a Roman copy of an original of the third or second century BC, changes the goddess from a distant confident figure into a more immediate, self-conscious and seductive type" (Pedley 1998: 339). The confusion regarding the impact of Praxitiles' Aphrodite on ancient artists reflects an assumption that the the female nude, once discovered by Praxitiles, proved too compelling to both ancient artists and their audience to ignore, which is why female nudes only really appear after (and not before) this masterpiece. Yet, Greek tradition may not have been as devoid of the type as such an argument would indicate. Spivey (1997) points out that examples of nudes predate the *Aphrodite of Knidos*. Greek artists, it may be assumed, simply found the nude male more appropriate in terms of both social and artistic tradition. The canonical female nude, of which the Knidian Aphrodite was the inspiration, traces its true origins to Roman interpretations of her, since it was to be the compliant Roman Venus (rather than Praxiteles' Aphrodite) which the Academic tradition adopted as canon for the depiction of the female nude. Nor is this unique. Ancient Greece has, for most of Western history, been viewed through the lens of ancient Rome.

Why was Praxiteles' Aphrodite so renowned (and scandalous?). Eco (1998: 198) in attempting to comprehend the allure of the "cult object" (what is in contemporary culture known as "cult movies" such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, as opposed to an object which forms part of religious ritual or belief) postulates a specific set of attributes which such products of the entertainment industry have in common: "... in order to transform a work into a cult object one must be able to break, dislocate, unhinge it so that one can remember only parts of it, irrespective of their original relationship with the whole". This certainly appears to have been not only possible with the Aphrodite of Knidos, but almost appears to have been considered the ideal way to view her; with the heterosexual capable of seeing her as the ideal woman (from the front), the homosexual as the ideal boy (from behind) while the bisexual appreciates her in the round. Secondly, Eco (1998: 198) states that the audience or "[i]ts addressee must suspect it is not true that works are created by authors. Works are created by works, texts by texts, all together they speak to each other independently of the intention of their authors". The Aphrodite serves as template for the entire canon of nudes in Western art, which is why she is often considered to have been the first of her kind. This clearly is untrue, but a reason for her notoriety may lie in the third of Eco's criteria: "When all the archetypes burst out shamelessly, we plumb Homeric profundity. Two clichés make us laugh but a hundred clichés move us because we sense dimly that the clichés are talking among themselves, celebrating a reunion" (ibid). The

two most prominent clichés in the Aphrodite of Knidos both relate to the act of washing or bathing; the goddess at her bath, and the ritual washing of her statue. As with a number of other goddesses, bathing plays a significant role in both myth and religious practice. Homer depicts her bathing in the *Odyssey*, where following her public shaming when caught committing adultery with Ares, Aphrodite flees to "Paphos in Cyprus, where she has her sacred sanctuary and altar fragrant with incense. There the Graces bathed her and anointed her with the celestial oil" Homer *Odyssey* 8 (trans. Rieu 1991: 117). Elsewhere in the *Iliad,* washing appears as an act of ritual purification. Chevalier and Gheerbrandt (1996: 1080) identify the symbolism of ablution as part of that of springs and water in general: "allow[ing] the washer to absorb the virtues of the spring, the various properties of the waters being communicated to the person soaked in them. They cleanse, stimulate, heal and fecundate". Barren women were regularly immersed in rivers, springs and lakes for over three thousand years throughout the Mediterranean, extending to the far east, and the practice of bathing for reasons both sacred and profane extends to virtually all peoples for purposes of cleansing and regeneration[8]. As goddesses such as Hera and Aphrodite were believed to bathe annually or biannually to renew their fertility - and in some opinions - their virginity, their cult statues were subjected to similar cleansing rituals[8].

Perhaps commemorating stories such as the one told in the *Odyssey* - or maybe the *Odyssey* saluted an established ritual - the cult statue of Aphrodite at her sanctuary at Paphos was bathed and clothed in an elaborate ceremony during which it was probably carried down to the ocean by her priestesses so that she might be reborn from the same waves from which she had reputedly first emerged. However, myths related to the ritual of bathing, anointing and clothing cult statues were not unique to Greece. In Ancient Egypt for example, such ablutions formed a vital part of daily rituals aimed at restoring the cult statue's power which was lost during the night[9]. These rituals survived well into the Roman period, their general air of secrecy intact, with the image of the god visible to the general

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8. Advertisements for bath-products such as foam-bath, bath-salts or aromatherapy oils as a rule promise relief from the stress or side-effects of ageing by virtue of the regenerative qualities of the product as absorbed by skin and body during bathing.

9. "The clothes he [the god's statue] had worn the day before were removed, and numerous purifications were carried out with water and incense ... The god was then dressed again ... To bring the ritual to a close, the king [or his priestly representative] dabbed his little finger with ointment and lightly touched the god's forehead. After it had been anointed with this fragrant oil, the revitalized statue, once again hidden from view behind the

populace only on special feast-days when a portable statue did the rounds in grand procession (Hopkins 1999: 187). Thus, while the bathing of the statue, like the bath of the goddess, was a well-known and integral aspect of the cult, such rituals in general were clearly considered significant and sacred events. This is linked to the notion that Praxtiles' statue of Aphrodite, ritually submerged in the ocean, represents the critical moment where statue and goddess are one.

I would argue, that it is due to the aspect of the statue as the goddess, rather than the statue's simple nudity that caused a scandal. In Greek myth, witnessing a goddess at her bath could be hazardous to one's health, as Actaeon discovered. In Ovid he accidentally stumbles across Artemis at her bath while out hunting. She transforms him into a stag (to be torn to pieces by his own hounds) by splashing him with her bathwater. Ovid has her exclaim that she does so in order to prevent him from telling anyone what he has seen. Actaeon is thus punished because he witnessed something reserved for Artemis' attendant nymphs only, similarly one could say, only initiates should be privy to a secret rite. In Apollodorus, Actaeon's fifty hounds, distressed by their master's absence endlessly search for him until they come to Cheiron's cave, who makes a statue of Actaeon to placate them. The notion of the statue as an equivalent of what it represents was a standard in ancient religious beliefs and can still be found in numerous belief-systems. In Greek mythology, the type is well defined and occurs regularly. The Statue of Pallas (the Palladium) which had to be stolen by Odysseus from Troy before the city would fall to invaders, had numerous stories and powers attributed to it. It had not been carved by a human hand but Athena's, while Zeus had thrown it from the heavens onto earth. In another tale, Aspalis, an ordinary girl's wooden likeness became the object of a cult after her body had vanished. In myths involving Aphrodite, Anchises, Paris and Adonis are perhaps the only mortals to see her in the nude, and Anchises upon discovering her disguise is more concerned about his potential early death, than excited at having been seduced by the goddess of love herself.

Praxiteles thus places his viewer in a difficult situation. On the one hand, the cult statue is clearly not the goddess herself, but an instrument at most. On the other, it forms the focus of a sacred ritual commemorating an important aspect of her myth as well as cult, the sight of which is denied the non-initiate. After all, it is rare enough to see a woman bathing, but when the woman is a goddess, and her bath is a significant cosmic event, voyeurism takes on an entirely different dimension: the fate of Actaeon could very easily become that of the viewer. The

locked, sealed doors of the naos, was ready to bear the god's earthly presence" (Meeks & Meeks 1999: 128)

male lover had already been compared to a hunter by Euripides: "So hunting Aphrodite with your lovely face" *Bacchae* (trans. Vellacott 1973: 206). In love of course, it is not unusual for the hunter to also suddenly become the hunted. The stag into which the hunter had been transformed was not only sacred to Artemis, but is a regular feature in depictions of Aphrodite and Adonis, and is occasionally symbolic of lyric poetry due to its connection with the muse Erato (with whom a stag fell in love). Chevalier & Gheerbrandt (1996: 533) cite traditional hunting dances where hunters imitate the movements of the animals they wish to kill as representing an intentional identification of hunter with prey. Thus, Roman copies of Praxiteles' *Aphrodite of Knidos*, whose apparent "bashfulness" appears contradictory to notions of Aphrodite as seduction personified, might rather have illustrated this paradox: Aphrodite may appear embarrassed at having been caught at her bath, but she knows very well, that whoever sees her will fall victim to her wiles.

However, it is in the final of Eco's criteria where Praxiteles' sculpture's most resounding impact lies: those films, books and other products of mass media, literature and art which become "cult favourites" tend to engender the kind of additional and behind-the-scenes gossip and addenda in which the most enthusiastic of aficionados become highly versed. The primary piece of gossip regarding the Aphrodite of Knidos regards the source of the sculptor's vision of the goddess of love - his mistress - a courtesan named Mnesarete but commonly known as Phryne (due to her fine complexion). This was a well known rumour - at least by Hellenistic times - as evidenced by epigrams devoted to the statue, of which one reads: "Just when did you see me naked Praxiteles?" (Spivey 1997: 182). Phryne herself forms an integral part of legends regarding Praxiteles. Pausanias describes two of the sculptor's stone statues at Thespiae (where she was reputedly born some time in the 4th century BCE) as depicting Aphrodite and Phryne. He also reports a gilded image of Phryne at the sanctuary in Delphi, which had been made by Praxiteles (here described as *one* of her lovers) and which she herself dedicated to the god. Aphrodite was thus mediated to the sculptor via his model, who was also his lover. Prostitutes (*hetairai*) such as Phryne were often associated with the cult of Aphrodite Pandemos, as many of her temples offered the services of "sacred prostitutes" who administered to her devotees on behalf of the goddess[10].

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10. "Aphrodite's vicars at her Corinthian temple, up on the eminence of Acrocorinth, were reckoned in the early Roman empire to number a thousand or so. These women were *hierodouli*, 'priestesses' insofar as they officiated on behalf of Aphrodite. But since the goddess herself was synonymous with making love - *aphrodisia*, the act *aphrodisizein,* the action - her priestesses necessarily acted, under sacred guise as *hetairai*" (Spivey 1997: 176).
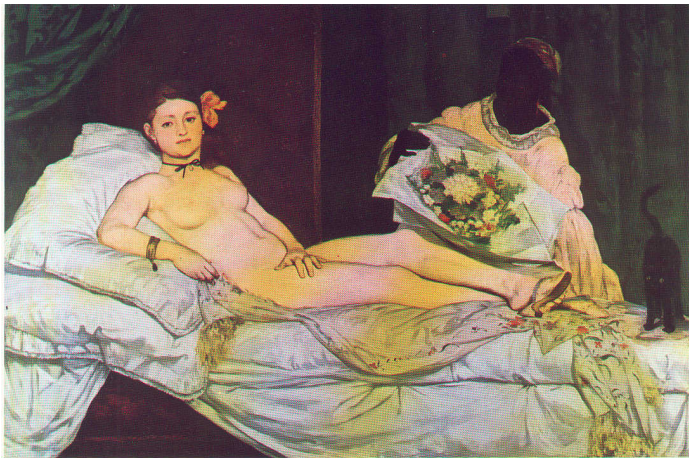
left. fig. 53. Olympia. *1863. Edouard Manet. Manet's reclining nude is clearly no Venus, but a streetwise prostitute who greets her viewer with a harsh business-like stare.*
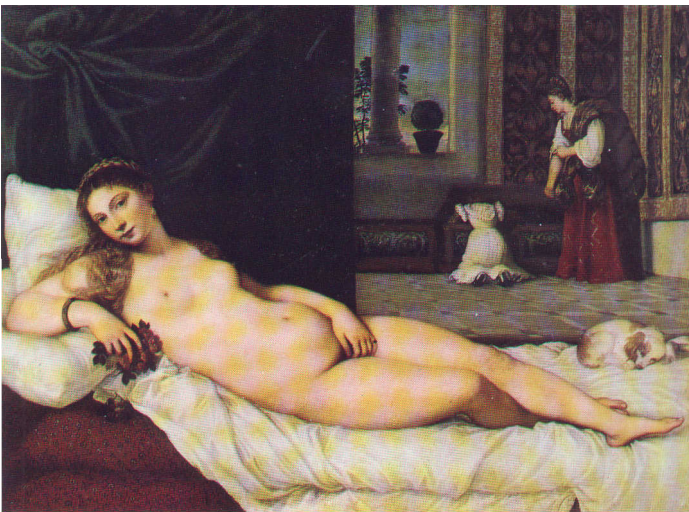
below: fig. 54. Venus of Urbino. *1538. Titian. One of the first reclining Venuses to acknowledge the viewer, her gaze is more of a seductive glance than a stare.*

The practice of employing women who were used to baring their bodies as models, for much of art-history, invariably meant using prostitutes, or wives, women who from the public's point of view most certainly performed "other functions" as well[11].

So well entrenched was the notion that Baudelaire, in advocating the idea of the modern nude, could write: "If an artist ... were commissioned to paint a courtesan of today, and, for this purpose, were to get inspiration (to use the hallowed term) from a courtesan by Titian or Raphael, the odds are that his work would be fraudulent, ambiguous, and difficult to understand." (Jacobs 1980: 215). Nonetheless, many tried to the extent that "[t]he urban counterpart to the peasant, as a favourite Realist figure, was the prostitute. This fact of city life provided both Courbet and the Pre-Raphaelites with subjects for major pictures in the 1850's, but its *locus classicus* in painting was reached in Edouard Manet's *Olympia* of 1863 [fig. 53]" (Jacobs 1980: 215). The relationship between *Olympia* and her audience is very different from that suggested by the passive nudes of Titian (fig. 54.) and

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11. While the Venetian painter Lorenzo Lotto had noted in his records that his nude models were "courtesans or common women without shameful scruples" (Hagen & Hagen 1996: 3), marriage provided many an artist with a full-time means of reference to the female body, which was effectively banned from the academies. Rembrandt in particular, blatantly used his wife as model, and made little or no attempt to hide her identity.

Giorgione. *Olympia's* viewer is clearly her client, whom she scrutinizes with a direct "businesslike" gaze. As Jacobs (1980 216) states, "*Olympia* would remind men neither of revered paintings of the past nor of their fantasies; but it might remind them of real encounters with living women".

Transition from Muse to model is particularly apparent in two paintings by Vermeer and Courbet: Vermeer's a variation on traditional depictions of St. Luke, and Courbet's a reference to this Vermeer. St. Luke, patron saint of painters, was often depicted in the process of painting the Madonna, who in these images appears to him for the express purpose of sitting for her portrait. In Giorgio Vasari's *St. Luke Painting the Virgin*, 1570-1 (fig. 55) the entire scene is "unreal" the Virgin surrounded by cherubs hovers before the painter on a cloud, while St. Luke's own symbol, the bull lies at his feet, the scene is thus clearly symbolic, and not real. Yet, the very fact that both are equally "unreal" reinforce the viewer's perception that the model for the picture is clearly the Virgin herself. Vermeer's *The Allegory of Painting c.* 1665 (fig. 56) draws on the traditional representation of St. Luke, but with very different aims and results. The painting depicts an artist painting a picture of Clio, Muse of history. But, his model is clearly a young woman dressed up as the Muse, and not the goddess herself (were Vermeer's style less realistic, the identity of the female figure would have been more ambiguous). The painter in the image is thus not producing a "direct portrait" as St. Luke does, but engages in the type of substitution through which gods are usually portrayed

fig. 55. St. Luke Painting the Virgin, 1570-1. Giorgio Vasari

fig. 56. The Allegory of Painting, 1665. Vermeer van Delft

in art and ritual. The domesticity of the scene is in apparent contrast to Vermeer's identification of it as an allegory. Which part is allegorical? Perhaps neither the girl dressed as Muse, nor the fictional painter, but the entire state of affairs. The term "allegory" refers to more than employment of characters and events to symbolise moral or spiritual meaning, but also various means of communicating it, i.e. a poem, picture or play. Vermeer's image does have the element of a performance or play. But the viewer is not shown the performance (that will be the completed painting), but instead given a glimpse of events backstage behind the large curtain which has been drawn aside, revealing not only a model dressed up to be transformed into a mythical character, but a whole range of props arranged on the table to make future transformations possible. Vermeer thus reveals the underlying mechanisms of painting, much like a magician's trade secrets, as if saying: "look it's all smoke and mirrors". The painter is an alchemist, the model, usually a prostitute or a member of the lower classes, his proverbial lead transformed not into gold, but madonnas, goddesses, nymphs and mythical heroines and queens.

The nineteenth-century realist painter Courbet's response to Vermeer's allegory is strangely - and in complete contradiction to Vermeer - "surreal". With its complete title as: *Interior of My Studio, a Real allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Life as an Artist.* The work is clearly not intended to be seen as a depiction of an actual event occurring in the artist's studio. Each of the numerous figures present is not only symbolic of an aspect of his life or career, but where they are

fig. 57. Interior of My Studio, a Real Allegory Summing Up Seven Years of My Life as an Artist. *1855. Gustave Courbet.*

placed in relation to the central figure of the artist becomes significant. The central group which includes the artist at his easel is thus crucial: there are two figures, a young boy and a nude woman, both of whom are watching the artist as he paints a landscape. Janson (1986: 619) postulates that the boy is "intended to suggest 'the innocent eye,' and the nude model. What is her role? In a more conventional picture, we would identify her as Inspiration, or Courbet's Muse, but she is no less 'real' than the others here: Courbet probably meant her to be Nature, or that undisguised Truth which he proclaimed the guiding principle of his art (note the emphasis on the clothing she has just taken off)".

The nude in the allegory is a distinctive Courbet feature. He was renowned for his depictions of nudes in outdoor settings, bathers next to streams in particular, and usually with a white piece of cloth draped over them (fig. 58). Vogt (1989: 132) explains that "Courbet glorifies the woman as life giver and embodiment of the life force. Water and forest surround her, as attributes of regeneration". The nude in the allegory thus embodies the very symbolism of the landscape the artist is depicted as painting. Courbet thus unlike De Andrea, Vermeer or Vasari shows the painter producing not an image of the model's likeness on his canvas, but of what she represents to him:

fig. 58. Sleeping Woman by a Stream. *1868. Gustave Courbet.*

nature itself. As women were considered less rational than men, lacking in self-control, and closer to nature, the feminine principle could thus serve as repository of all those characteristics men denied themselves, so as to become civilised intellectuals. Like the bucolic poets whose response to their urbanity was an invented pastoral ideal, modern male artists thus projected onto specific women all those attributes they would not allow in themselves and called them their Muses. Yet, as Brodsky and De Chirico warn, every utopia contains a potential distopia, and the image of the nude bathing in a forest stream evokes bathing goddesses such as Artemis, the mistress of the beasts as glimpsed by Actaeon, and his fate is well known.

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