

INVOKING THE WATER OF LERNA

Résumé. — Il s'agit d'examiner la réputation ambivalente de l'eau de Lerne. L'article revient sur l'hydrographie du territoire argien et sur ses explications mythiques, notamment les particularités des sources et du « lac » de Lerne, ainsi que sur les mythes et les cultes situés dans le bois sacré de Lerne et dans ses environs, avec une approche critique du témoignage de Pausanias, II, 36, 6 - 37, 6. Sauvagerie des origines, surabondance, souillure matérielle et religieuse, connotations infernales mais aussi comiques, le nom de Προσύμνη qui, en renvoyant au mariage, permet d'associer Dionysos et son amant-guide Prosymnos aussi bien avec Héra et les Prœtides qu'avec Déméter, plus tard une forme de rivalité entre les mystères d'Éleusis et ceux de Lerne, telles sont les pistes ici proposées.

Abstract. — The question under examination is the ambivalent reputation of the water in Lerna. The paper recalls the hydrography of the Argian territory and its mythical explanations, especially the peculiarities of the springs and “lake” of Lerna, as well as the myths and cults located in the Lernaean sacred wood and in its neighbourhood, with a critical approach of Pausanias' testimony (II, 36, 6 - 37, 6). Wilderness, excessive abundance, material and religious defilement, infernal and also comic connotations, the name of Προσύμνη alluding to marriage and allowing to associate Dionysos and his guide and lover Prosymnos as well with Hera and the Proetides as with Demeter, and later a kind of rivalry between the Eleusinian and the Lernaean mysteries, are the answers we try to propose.

In Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 613, Eteocles, son of Oedipus, forces his brother Polyneices out of Thebes, at the end of a stormy encounter in the presence of their mother¹. He exclaims: μολῶν ἐς Ἄργος ἀνακάλει Λέρνης ὕδωρ, “Back to Argos *invoke* the water of Lerna!” Here naming the water of Lerna could be more than just indicating a place near Argos. Indeed it contrasts the Theban gods (and the water of Dirce praised v. 368) Polyneices was invoking a couple of lines above², with the Argian gods and the spring of Lerna, where Polyneices is leading his army from. Favorinus, paraphrasing the passage, sees nothing more than a sage advice in Eteocles's summons. So in the following lines:

1. On Argos in the *Phoenician Women*, see P. SAUZEAU (2008).

2. *Phoen.*, 606 : — Μυκίηναις, μὴ ἴνθαδ' ἀνακάλει θεοῦς, replies Polyneices to his brother (v. 608).

Καλὰ δὲ καὶ τὰ ἐκεῖ γυμνάσια, καὶ τὸ Λέρνης ὕδωρ, ἐὰν μὲν ὡς ἐλεύθερος πίνης, οὐδὲν σοι φανεῖται τοῦ ἐν Θήβαις καταδεέστερον.

They have also good gymnasiums there, and the water of Lerna, if you drink it as a free man, will not appear to you worse than the Theban water³.

Now here Polyneices is not a wise teacher like Favorinus – who does not fail to mention the Argian *gymnasia*! –, but an enemy. His tone is rude and abusing, in spite of the high quality the Ancients ascribed to the Lernaean water⁴. Besides the hostility between the two brothers, is there a reason why the name of Lerna should be used as an insulting one?

Attic tragedies staging episodes of both epic poems *Thebaid* and *Edipodia* from the point of view of Theban characters as opposed to Argos⁵, as well as the story of Hercules overcoming the hydra⁶, refer to Lerna as an untamed place of gruesome wilderness. From the opposite point of view, with Argian characters, Aeschylus' trilogy *The Danaid* and the Io episode in the *Prometheus Bound* are both supposed to take place in the earliest times of civilization. The death of the Lernaean giant Hippomedon, overcome by the Theban river-god Ismenos in Statius' *Thebaid* (Book 9), still echoes that reputation. Where does it come from?

Water in Argolis

The mythical “divisions of Argos”⁷, which shape the worship of the gods in this chief territory for Greek epic certainly did not lack erudite investigations, based or not on archaeology. The impressive ruins of Mycenae, Midea or Tiryns already reminded the Ancients of a prestigious past⁸. Mod-

3. Favorinus, fr. 96.7 (l. 23-26).

4. Athen., *Deipn.*, IV, 156e: “The dinner being slow in coming, a discussion arose concerning water – which was the sweetest? Some praised the water of Lerna, others, again, the water of Peirene ...”

5. Esp. Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, *Suppliants*, *Hypsipyle*, Sophocles' *Antigone*, Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*.

6. Esp. in Euripides' *Heracles* (152, 420-421, 579, 1190, 1275).

7. So the title of P. SAUZEAU (2005).

8. In Lerna too, Pausanias, II, 36, 8, saw Bronze Age relics: Καὶ ἐπὶ κορυφῇ τοῦ ὄρους ἱερὸν τε Ἀθηνᾶς Σαΐτιδος, ἐρείπια ἔτι μόνα, καὶ θεμέλια οἰκίας ἐστὶν Ἴππομέδοντος, ὃς Πολυνεΐκει τῷ Οἰδίποδος τιμωρήσων ἦλθεν ἐς Θήβας, “Upon the top of the mountain is a sanctuary of Athena Saitis, now merely a ruin; there are also the foundations of a house of Hippomedon, who went to Thebes to redress the wrongs of Polyneices, son of Oedipus.” (Transl. by W. H. S. Jones and H. A. Ormerod.) On Hippomedon see also *schol. in Euripidis Phoenissas*, 125. Athena Saïtis (from Saïs in Egypt, where we know that the goddess Neith – Athena, according to Herodotus' *interpretatio graeca*, II, 170, 175 – was held in great honour) could remind us of Danaos and his daughters fleeing from Egypt to Argos (Herodotus, II, 182, tells they founded also the cult of Athena Lindia). The name Πελασγός or Πελασγοί also stresses

ern archaeologists unearthed on the very site of Lerna a Neolithic and first Bronze Age settlement⁹. The importance, in Ancient Greek imagination and culture, of the fascinating Argian hydrography was enough underlined: on one side the bed, totally dried up during summer, of the ‘river’ Inachos flowing along the city Argos, of which the northeast χῶρα is dominated by the *Heraion*; on the southwest side, flowing into the Argolic Gulf, the abundant and perennial waters of the springs which form the river Erasinus and, further southward, at a hillfoot very close to the sea, as a present of Poseidon to the Danaid Amymone¹⁰, the springs of Lerna. The narrative of rivalry between Hera and Poseidon for the patronage of the Argian territory¹¹ illustrates this opposition between the thirsty Argos, πολυδίψιον Ἄργος¹² (moreover, in fact, very rich in well-water resources)¹³ and the gushing Lerna, situated on the narrow strip of land, between mountain and sea, which provides a road from Argos to the South Peloponnese¹⁴.

The springs of Lerna, which according to the legend rose under the tips of Poseidon’s trident¹⁵, were described both by the Ancients and by the modern travellers and scholars from W. M. Leake and J. G. Frazer to G. Casadio and P. Sauzeau, and finally by the archaeologists, the geographers and the contemporary engineers in hydraulics¹⁶. As the Ancients knew very well regarding the springs of the river Erasinus and the whirlpool of

this high antiquity (see Aesch., *Suppl.*). On Mycenaean archaeological remains in Lerna, see M. H. WIENCKE (1998).

9. See the reports by J. L. CASKEY (1954-1959) of the “Excavations at Lerna”, and the final results in the series *Lerna* (1969-2015), along with a very useful “short guide”: J. L. CASKEY and E. T. BLACKBURN (1997).

10. *Amymone* was the title of a lost satyr play by Aeschylus (following the *Danaid* trilogy with the *The Suppliants*). See the story in Apollod., *Bibl.*, II, 1, 4; Hygin., *Fab.*, 169. Further references in T. GANTZ (2004), p. 367; *LIMC* I, s.v. “Amymone”, p. 742-752 (E. SIMON [1981]). See also D. F. SUTTON (1974). According to P. SAUZEAU (2005), p. 296, the tragic plot of *The Suppliants* was thought to take place in Lerna (see for instance Aesch., *Suppl.*, 538-540).

11. Apollod., *Bibl.*, II, 1, 4; Pausanias, II, 15, 4; 22, 4. See P. SAUZEAU (2005), p. 64-69.

12. See e.g. *Iliad*, 4, 171; Strabo, 8, 6, 10; Eustath., *ad Iliadem*, I, p. 729; *Etymologicum Magnum*, s.v. Πολυδίψιον Ἄργος, p. 681. Cf. M. PIÉRART (ed.) (1992a), especially the editor’s paper: M. PIÉRART (1992b), with the discussion p. 149-155.

13. Strabo, VIII, 6, 8.

14. Pausanias, II, 15, 5

15. Hygin., *Fab.*, 169; *schol. in Euripidis Phoenissas*, 186-187; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, VIII, 238-242.

16. G. CASADIO (1994), p. 223-228, gives an account of the earlier descriptions of the site; R. BALADIÉ (1980) examines Strabo’s testimony; map in H. LEHMANN (1937), see also H. LEHMANN (1938) and R. A. TOMLINSON (1972); on the roads, see e.g. W. K. PRITCHETT (1980), p. 54-77 and *passim*; on hydraulics, see C. LEIBUNDGUT and R. ATTINGER (1985-1986) and J. KNAUSS (1996).

Dine¹⁷ – a stream of fresh water rising out of the sea in the Argolic Gulf –, the springs of Lerna too depend on an underground river system fed by the sinkholes of the high plains of Arcadia¹⁸; unless, as suggested by Pausanias (2, 36, 8), they do result simply from rainwater stored and restored by the Pontinus, a hill of which these resurgences flow out of the foot and which forms the end of a mountain range staging westward to Arcadia, just allowing a small place to the narrow strip of plain we spoke above, very close to the sea.

Lernaean water

Now it is necessary to specify: our most talkative informant, Pausanias¹⁹, first writes about two ‘rivers’, ποταμοί, that means, from North to South, the Pontinus (quite dry today, its water beeing canalized), homonym of the neighboring hill, and the Amymone; he mentions then two πηγαί, “gushing springs”, the one bearing the same name Amymone and thus which it is necessary to identify with the spring of the corresponding ‘river’, the other one “said to be of Amphiarao”: doubtless the Amymone spring is the resurgence which forms the small but full river we can still see today. I visited the modern village of Myloi without guide during summer, 2014, so I will give a naive account of its hydrography. It seemed to me we may recognize the Alcyonian Lake slightly lower than the main spring Amymone, in a kind of narrow puddle, surrounded with reeds, quite close to the aforementioned spring. At any rate it forms a seizing contrast with the rushing flow of the latter: no ripple on the surface of this small circle of

17. The river Erasinos was thought by the Ancients to be an issue from the water of Stymphalia, cf. Pausanias, II, 24, 6, who saw “on the right of the road a mountain called Khaon. At its foot grow cultivated trees, and here the water of the Erasinos rises to the surface. Up to this point it flows from Stymphalos in Arkadia [...] At the places where the Erasinos gushes forth from the mountain they sacrifice to Dionysos and to Pan”. Cf. Ovid, *Met.*, 15, 275 ff. — On the whirlpool Dine, see Pausanias in his description of Arcadia, VIII, 7, 1-2: “[1] After crossing into Mantinean country over Mount Artemisius you will come to a plain called the Untilled Plain, whose name well describes it, for the rain-water coming down into it from the mountains prevents the plain from being tilled; nothing indeed could prevent it from being a lake, were it not that the water disappears into a chasm in the earth. [2] After disappearing here it rises again at Dine (Whirlpool). Dine is a stream of fresh water rising out of the sea by what is called Genethlium in Argolis. In older times the Argives cast horses adorned with bridles down into Dine as an offering to Poseidon.”

18. On καταβόθρες (sinkholes) and κεφάλαια (resurgences), see also e.g. Aristotle, *Problemata*, 947a; *Meteorologica*, I, 13, 27. Cf. G. FOUGÈRES (1898), p. 12 and chapt. III, p. 25-38, esp. p. 33-34; P. SAUZEAU (2005), p. 53-64.

19. Pausanias, II, 36, 6 - 37, 6.

dark water, to which at the time of my visit an iron fence closed access²⁰. This “Alcyonian Lake (λίμνη)”, in fact a karstic upwelled shelf water (a bottomless pit had already noticed the curious Neron)²¹, is named by Pausanias immediately after he mentioned the source “of Amphiarao”.

We may find the Amphiarao spring quite a little further southward, a fresh and clear water hidden by thick vegetation. Hardly a few dozens of yards eastward down, both ‘rivers’ issued from the springs which I identified with “Amymone” and “Amphiarao” join their streams, showing more or less the outline of a nipple at the foot of Mount Pontinus’ curves, and soon provide at their mouth a pool of fresh water to the swimmers (perhaps

20. I quote here an earlier description of the whole site: E. SMEDLEY *et al.* (eds.) (1845) coming from South, northward (with references to W. M. LEAKE [1830], who went southward from Argos): “the coast to the North-East of Cynuria, formed by the abrupt termination of Mount Parthenius, (Zabitz), is crossed by a narrow and difficult road called *Anigraea*; and at the distance of six or seven miles from Astrum, (Astròn,) a fortress on a rocky peninsula, at the Thyreat Bay is the Dine, (Anábolos,) or whirlpool, (Pausan. viii. 7. 2.) supposed by the Ancients to be the exit of the Gareates, which waters the plain of Mantinea. The shore of the Argolic Gulf, Northwards, is crossed by a stream coming from Hysiae, (Akhladócambo,) and traversing the valley between Mounts Parthenius and Creopolus. About a mile and a half beyond this river, which is small, but deep and rapid, is a deep marsh, and a lake fed by some copious sources issuing from under the rocks just behind them, and passing through the lake into the sea. These springs correspond exactly in position to the Amymone of Pausanias, and formed the Southern boundary of the sacred grove of Lerna, (Pausan. ii. 37. 1.) in which the Lernaean Games in honour of Ceres were celebrated. The Hydra, which Pausanias believed to have only one head, was supposed to have been bred under a plane-tree which overshadowed the spring of Amymone (*Ibid.* 4.) Another stream of short course, the Pontinus, issuing from three copious springs, rising at the foot of a conical rock, which terminates the plain of Argos to the South, is the Northern boundary of Lerna; and the Chimarrus, (*i.e.* torrent,) with the Erasinus, which receives the Phryxus, cross the plain, now a marsh in Winter and Spring, between that rock and Argos” (indeed, the “conical rock” is Mount Pontinus). Cf. J. G. FRAZER (1898), III, p. 603-605, especially the followig romantic lines: “Some eighty yards or so to the north-east of the springs but completely hidden by a screen of trees is the Alcyonian Lake described by Pausanias. It is a pool of still, dark, glassy water surrounded by great reeds and grasses and tall white poplars with silvery stems. Though distant only about thirty yards from the high-road and the village the spot is as wild and lonely as if it lay in the depths of some pathless forest of the New World. I sought it for some time in vain, and when at last I went upon it, in the waning light of a winter afternoon, everything seemed to enhance the natural horror of the scene. The sky was dark save for one gleam of sunlit cloud which was reflected in the black water of the pool. The wind sighed among the reeds and rustled the thin leaves of the poplars. Altogether I could well imagine that superstitions might gather about this lonely pool in the marsh. Of such a spot in England tales of unhappy love, of murder and suicide would be told. To the Greeks of old it seemed one of the ways to hell. The man who drove me from Argos said, like Pausanias, that the pool had never been fathomed and was bottomless”.

21. Pausanias, II, 37, 5.

it was the place of the “millpond” described by J. G. Frazer: ruins of a circular building are still to be seen), before they flow bubbling into the Argolic Gulf. So they divide the narrow beach, which curves and provides northward, at equal distance of their mouth and of the former mouth of the Pontinus, a shelter to a small port belonging to the village of Myloi (this name means “mills”, and in fact an early traveller – Barbié du Bocage, 1810 – saw no less than six watermills in Lerna)²².

The sacred wood was situated over the whole space between both ‘rivers’ Pontinus and Amymone, down to the sea. Pausanias asserts it extended as far as the shore. A wood of eucalyptus grows today near, I guessed, the former mouth of the Pontinus, and thick reeds border the beach southward after the mouth of what I called the Amymone river, in the direction of the plain of Kiveri. Southward, immediately near the former “sacred wood” – alongside the short “Amphiaraos” stream before it meets the “Amymone” –, on a tumulus formed with the strata of successive house buildings, the American excavations undertaken by John L. Caskey cleared a rather considerable Neolithic site dating about 5000 years B.C., but abandoned, doubtless because of the swampy miasmas, since the Mycenaean time²³.

The field tests indeed give evidence that a lake of variable area, fed with water of the river Erasinus, extended in the past over a large part of the plain south of Argos. But the expression “lake” or “swamp (λίμνη) of Lerna”, which we should not confuse with the Alcyonian “Lake”, was used rather to indicate this whole site full of gushing, streaming or swampy water: it was famous for its bad smell, which our sources refer to the heads of the hydra of Lerna thrown by Heracles into the lake²⁴, or to the heads of the sons of Egyptos severed by the Danaids during their wedding-night, or, even more often, to cleansing rites and to their residues (to the cutting out of intestines of sacrificed animals, states one source), in particular to the refuse from the cleansing of the Proetids (the soothsayer Melampus threw their “defilement” into the lake)²⁵. The proverbial expression “a Lerna of

22. *Magasin encyclopédique* (1810), p. 56 (the name of the village *Muloi* comes from “6 moulins que la rivière de Lerna fait tourner”); p. 57 (“le fleuve Pontinos, qui n’est plus qu’un ruisseau”).

23. For a recent summing up of the excavations, see V. PETRAKIS (2014).

24. See Hygin., *Fab.*, 30, 3: “This monster (*scil.* the Hydra) was so poisonous that she killed men with her breath, and if anyone passed by when she was sleeping, he breathed her tracks and died in the greatest torment.”

25. Strabo, 8, 6, 8; Pausanias Atticus, Ἀττικῶν ὀνομάτων συναγωγὴ, Λ, 11; Apollod., *Bibl.*, II, 2, 2; Hésychius, Λ, 691-692; *Suda*, Λ, 302; *scholia in Lucianum* 78, 8, 2; Diogenianus Gramm., *Paroemiae*, Centuria 6, 7; Zenobius Sophista, *Epitome collectionum Lucilli Tarrhaei et Didymi*, centuria 4, 86; Gregorius II Patriarcha,

troubles”, so wide-spread that the comic author Cratinus could make a transparent pun of it for his Athenian audience, may come non also from the huge flooding of the spring, but also, according to most commentators from the Antiquity to the enlightened *Encyclopédie*, from this stinking smell²⁶: that is not new.

But most amazing, for the modern tourist, is to discover, just over the houses skirting the first slope of Mount Pontinus, a man-made channel which runs horizontally, on one hand southward to the foothills lining the coastal plain of Kiveri, on the other hand northward to the mountain slopes fencing the plain of Argos, so as to irrigate luxuriant orchards of citrus fruits. Where from comes the water of this channel, with its powerful current in spite of its horizontality? A kind of small power plant built in 1960 over the main spring of Lerna uses the force of its gushing to make turn turbines able to urge 5000 cubic meters of water per hour upstream into three big pipes which climb straight on the Pontinus’ hillside up to a small water tower above the channel.

Every house below draws from that channel to water its garden, secondary pipes are connected to it to irrigate crops, but there remains flow enough to supply a small reservoir lake nested in the northern slope of Mount Pontinus, which receives the bubbling stream (but also, it seemed to me, the water of the former Pontinus’ spring?), before distributing it further, in the direction of the Erasinus, the channel going on towards the sources of this river at Kefalari (**Plate 1**).

Paroemiae, Centuria 4, 23; Michael Apostolius, *Collectio paroemiarum*, Centuria 10, 57; J. Tzetzes, *Chiliades* 2, 36, 240.

26. Λέρνη κακῶν: the expression was well known to the Athenian audience at least at the time of Cratinus (fr. 347 Kock), who draws from it his pun Λέρνη θεατῶν (also Λερναία χολή, *Trag. Adesp.*, 229). Was the crowd of spectators also supposed to stink? The expression was often commented by the Ancients and the Byzantines, as we just have seen in the previous footnote. The *Encyclopédie* of D. DIDEROT and J. LE ROND D’ALEMBERT (1765, t. 9, p. 397), quoting Strabo (8, 6, 8), has the following commentary: *Quoi qu’il en soit, ce lieu étoit réputé mal-sain, & les assassinats qu’on y avoit commis, obligerent plusieurs fois de le purifier. Ce sont ces purifications, qui suivant Strabon, donnerent naissance à une expression proverbiale, Λέρνη κακῶν, Lerne de maux, expression [...] que les modernes interpretes des proverbes, comme Zénobius, Diogénianius, & autres, ont prétendu expliquer, en supposant qu’on viroit à Lerne tous les immondices d’Argos.* Analyses performed on the human rests found on the prehistoric site of Lerna give indications of the malaria, which is evidence of the unhealthy and inhospitable character of the place, in spite of the high quality of the resurgent waters on the same site: J. L. ANGEL (1971); E. ZANGGER (1991).

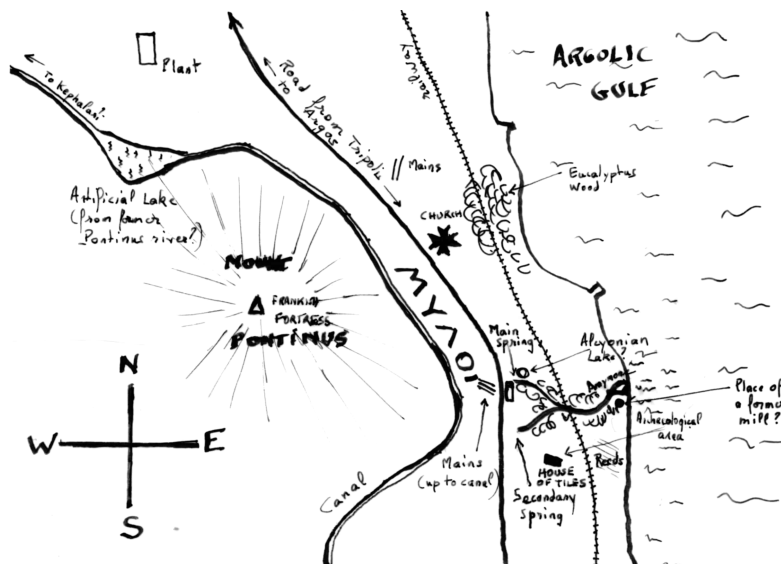


Plate 1. Myloi, 2014
(drawing by the author)

Gods, heroes and myths of Lerna

Such a strong flow, in spite of its domestication, allows us at least to get an idea of the impressive character of the primitive natural phenomenon, which showed in the opinion of the Greeks the subterranean activity and the indomitable power of Earth-Moving Poseidon. But a Greek god never works alone. His or her action results from a nexus of divine will and forces (we have already seen how Poseidon opposes Hera at Lerna). If we stick to the site of Lerna, following Pausanias (*l.c.*, n. 19) it would be necessary to name Demeter, perhaps surnamed Λερναία²⁷, Demeter Πρόσυμνα,

27. Pausanias, II, 36, 7: Καὶ τελετὴν Λερναία ἄγουσιν ἐνταῦθα Διήμητρι (“and here they celebrate mysteries honoring Demeter Lernaia / in Lerna”). Her festival was called *Lernaia*: see 2, 37, 3, where Pausanias gives the name of the founder of the Lernaia mysteries: Καταστήσασθαι δὲ τῶν Λερναίων τὴν τελετὴν Φιλάμμωνά φασι. Demeter is at home in a grove so near the entry of Hades. Pausanias noted also, just before arriving at Lerna, a “circuit of stone” that marked the exact spot wher Pluto took Core, the daughter of Demeter, to his underground kingdom (2, 36, 7). Now in Lerna Dionysus, it seems, not Core, embodies the main link of Demeter with Hades, and his rites seem to be entangled with those of Demeter.

Dionysus Σαώτης (“the Saviour”)²⁸, Aphrodite (ἐπι θαλάσση: “just near the sea”, or, perhaps, “emerging from the sea”, like an ἀναδυομένη?)²⁹, Athena Σαΐτις (from Sais in Egypt, where the Danaids come from), not to mention Amphiaraios and the hero Hippomedon, the giant really born to live in this wilderness, according to Euripides’ *Phoenician Women*,

{Θε.} οὔτος Μυκηναῖος μὲν αὐδᾶται γένος, [125]
Λερναῖα δ’ οἰκεῖ νάμαθ’, Ἴππομέδων ἄναξ.

{Αν.} ἔ ἔ,
ὡς γαῦρος, ὡς φοβερὸς εἰσιδεῖν, [127]
γίγαντι γηγενέται προσόμοιος,
ἄστερωπὸς ὥσπερ ἐν
γραφαῖσιν, οὐχὶ πρόσφορος ἀμερίωι γένναι.

Tutor: That’s Lord Hippomedon, my lady and they say that he is a Mycenaean. He lives near the springs of Lerna.

Antigone: How frightening he looks! How wild! Like one of those earth-born giants. He has a face like one of those dazzling stars, like those they draw in pictures. Unlike any mortal!³⁰

as well as certain Polymnos who would have indicated to Dionysus the Alcyonian lake as a door of underworld, when the god intended to bring his mother Semele back from the dead (Pausanias, 2, 37, 5): we shall return to that point.

Several cycles of myths intersect through these few names of gods and heroes. Let us pick briefly the list from Pausanias:

- First, the myth of the Danaids, who would have offered the image of Aphrodite (as a prenuptial offering, or atoning for the murder they committed on their husbands?), while their father Danaos dedicated a sanctuary on Mount Pontinos to an Athena whose name, as we have

28. On the initiation mysteries of Dionysus, cf. Firmicus Maternus, *De errore prof. rel.*, 22 (Halm): Θαρρεῖτε μύσται, τοῦ θεοῦ σεσωσμένον· ἔσται γὰρ ἡμῖν ἐκ πόνου σωτηρία, “Take heart, initiates, now that the god has been saved, for us awaits salvation from toils.” The toils in initiation rites may consist in a mudbath, for which the swamp of Lerna was highly appropriate. See E. KEULS (1974), p. 27-29. — According to Pausanias, Dionysus is precisely called “Saviour” in Lerna. But Plutarch (*De Iside*, 35) gives another name, Dionysus Βουγενής (“born of a bull”), whom “they call up out of the waters [of the Alcyonian lake]”. There is no contradiction: both names are cult epithets, each was used in its time and place. Cf. *schol. in Pindar. Ol.*, 7, 60. Βουγενής may allude to the known Dionysus Ταῦρος (Bull), god of the strength of gushing water: see N. SPINETO (2005), p. 67; G. ARRIGONI(1999), p. 3. Plutarch also mentions the Lernaean festival in a strange comparison with the cult of Yahweh, identified as Bacchus, *Quaest. Conv.*, IV, 6, M 671D.

29. On Aphrodite as a sea-goddess, see *infra*, n. 56.

30. Euripides, *Phoen.*, 125-130 (transl. G. Theodoris). We have seen (above, n. 8) that Pausanias visited the ruins of Hippomedon’s house: impressive like those of Tiryns or Midea?

seen, maybe was Egyptian (the Athena of Saïs) and so reminiscent of their origin. The father and his fifty daughters, while fleeing from the sons of Aegyptos, would have landed ashore in the South of Lerna, in a place called, for that reason, Ἀπόβαθμοί³¹. Pausanias (II, 24, 2) writes that that the sons of Aegyptos were killed at Lerna, and their corpses would have been left there, with the exception of their heads.

- The well known story of Heracles and the Hydra I will pass over here, although the stench of the Lernaean lake is often ascribed to the episode (see below, n. 47).
- The name of Prosymna given to Demeter is also attested in an inscription of late imperial period from Argos³². Προσυμναῖα is the *epiklesis* of Hera too, honored, near a place called Prosymna, in the *Heraion* of Argolid: so the connection of the goddess Hera with marriage³³ is here taken over, reworked or appropriated by Demeter. Anyway, between the lines this evidence recalls the epic narratives on Melampus, the soothsayer, and king Proetus' daughters who foolishly dared to challenge Hera (according to Bacchylides³⁴ and Acousilaus) or to refuse to worship Dionysus (according to Hesiod)³⁵ and were

31. Pausanias, 2, 38, 4.

32. *IG* IV 666 (not before 3rd-4th c. AD) = Kaibel, *Epigr.* 821: Βάκχω μ[ε] Βάκχον καὶ προσυμναία[ι] θεῶι στάσαντο Δηοῦς ἐν κατηρεφε[ί] δόμω[ι], τὸν Ἀρχελ[ά]ου πα[ί]δα ὁμώνυ-μ[ον] πατρ[ί]. / ταυτῶ δ[έ] μ' ἐξ<ῆ>ρ[ε] ἐν χρόνω δά-/μαρ κλυ[τ]ῶι / Βάκχον Λ[υ]αίω[ι]. γ[ῆ]ς δὲ πυρφό-/[ρ]οί[ς] θεα[ί]ς / Φοίβω Λυκε[ί]ωι θ' – οὔνεκα ἀντίτων / λ[ά]χοι — [δά]μαρ [με ν]εῖμε καὶ προσυ<μ>- / [ν]αῖος λεῶς / α[ἰ]δοῦ τε Φοίβου πυρφόροι λ[υ]- / [κοκτ]όνο[υ]. (“To Bacchus and to the goddess Prosymnaea, they set me up, me [initiated to the mysteries of] Bacchus, in the arched house of Deo, [me] the son of Archelaos, bearing the same name as my father. In the same time my wife praised me as Bacchos to the glorious Loosener, and, to the goddesses carrying torches of this country and to Phoibos the Wolf, my wife entrusted me – may she be rewarded for it! –, as well as the Prosymnaeus people and those who carry the torches of Phoebus himself, the killer of wolves.”) See also *IG* II² 13252 (G. KAIBEL [1878], n° 822, 4), where the same Archelaos or his father is said to have been, *inter alia*, δαδοῦχος, in charge of “the mystic torches in Lerna”. Prosymnaeus people: the Argians. Apollo the Wolf (Λύκειος) was worshipped in Argos. On both texts and a few inscriptions connected with them, see M.-F. BILLOT (1997), n. 352; G. CASADIO (1994), p. 316-225, on the close connections between Demeter in Lerna and her mysteries at Eleusis (adducing *IG* II² 3674, 4841; IV 664; and *CIL* VI 1780 = *ILS* 1260 [Dessau]); see also M. P. NILSSON (1957), p. 49; E. E. GROAG (1946), p. 54-55.

33. Indeed also intended in the name *Prosymnaia* (the CRESCAM *Banque de données des épicleses grecques* translates it “from Prosymnaia”, as if it were about a place-name; the place-name Prosymna is given by Stephanus Byz.). See below, p. 306.

34. Bacchylides, *Ep.*, XI, 40-112.

35. Cf. Apollodorus, *Bibl.*, II, 2, 2: by Dionysus, because they had despised his worship (see also Diodorus, IV, 68), and according to others, by Hera, because they

punished with a destructive and contagious madness, frenzied running like the frantic flight of Io chased by the goddess. Vengeance of Hera or punishment by Dionysus? This uncertainty gives opportunity to a paradoxical encounter between the wife of Zeus and the son of Semele; once more, it connects thirsty Argos and watering Lerna³⁶. The importance of Melampus in the cult of Dionysus, particularly at Argos, is attested from Herodotus (II, 49), who claims the soothsayer founded the Φαλληφόρια, to Nonnus (XLVII, 474-741), who tells us Melampus invited the Argians to devote themselves to the worship of the god.

- Then the myth of Perseus (he was the “nephew” of the Proetids)³⁷ reminds us that Perseus would have killed Dionysus by throwing him, together with the women who followed the god, into the Lernaean (Alcyonian) lake³⁸. Nonnus inserted the episode into his long epic narrative, the *Dionysiaca* (quoted above), by conferring it a happy ending. Dionysus was worshipped along with Demeter in her Lernaean temple, but with his own mysteries, rather linked with his ties to the underworld and with Persephone: during the annual celebrations (δρώμενα) of the local rite as reported by Plutarch, the Argians called up, to the music of trumpets hidden under their wands wreathed in ivy-leaves, the god Dionysus to rise out of the Alcyonian Lake³⁹.
- The name of Polymnus introduces another version of the presence of Dionysus at Lerna: according to a legend known in particular by Clemens of Alexandria and by Hyginus, Dionysus would have obtained from certain Prosymnus, Polymnus, or Hypolipnus (the name of the character varies according to our sources), the indication of an access to the underworld, in exchange for a vile sexual favor. Doubtless this same “Polymnus” hides himself, in Plutarch’s text we just quoted above, under the name of the “Guard of doors” (Πυλάοχος) to whom people made the offering of a lamb by throwing it “in the abyss” of Lerna (*scil.* the Alcyonian lake) during the night-evocation

considered themselves more handsome than the goddess, or because they had stolen some gold of her statue (Servius *ad Virg. Ecl.*, VI, 48).

36. Note that, as noticed by S. MONTIGLIO (2005), p. 18, Dionysus usually drives mad married women, not young girls, and Hera too has to deal with married women.

37. Following Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women*, fr. 129 Merkelbach-West, the twins Acrisius and Proetus divided between them the Argian territory; Acrisius was the father of Danae, Perseus’ mother, and Proetus the father of the Proetides.

38. Pausanias, II, 20, 3 and II, 22, 1, cf. *schol. ad Iliad.*, XIV, 319 (Erbse). See G. ARRIGONI (1999).

39. Plutarch, *De Is. et Osir.*, 35 [M 364F], cf. Pausanias, II, 37, 6.

of Dionysus with sound of trumpets: he would then be another Cerberus posted at the threshold of Hades⁴⁰, and his name Prosymnus, which also resounds in Hera's Argian name, reminds us that another dog, with several heads or eyes, Argus, persecuted Io on Hera's order. Let us note besides that, whatever are the versions of the legend of Polymnus/Prosymnus, the catabasis of Dionysus was followed by an ascent, by an ἀνοδος, if only because it was a question of getting his mother Semele freed from Hades, or because the god had to fulfil his promise to his lustful guide, who unfortunately was dead when he returned, so the god had to use a selfmade tool in order to please his guide *post mortem*⁴¹ ...

- In the names of Prosymnus and Polymnus, we may recognize the *hymn* of course, but also a wedding song, such as it could also suit to the Argian Hera. Dionysus himself was, according to certain tradition, father of Hymenaïos⁴², and he is named Ὑμενήϊος in the *Palatine Anthology* IX, 524, v. 21. Sure, as for a link with marriage, the argument is little convincing⁴³. Note that in Argolis Hera is connected with Dionysus not only in the story of the Proetides and in her Argian sanctuary, but in another place too: at Nauplion, a city on the Argolic Gulf situated just in front of the coast of Lerna, Pausanias saw a fountain named Canathus, where every year Hera recovered her virginity by bathing in, according to a “holy secret” revealed during the local mysteries of the goddess; in the same place, the Periegetes draws to his reader's attention an image of a donkey carved on a rock, on which he reports with obvious distaste a popular saying, opposing it to the “holy secret” of Hera's mysteries (οὐ τὸς μὲν δὴ σφισιν ἐκ τελετῆς, ἦν ἄγουσι τῆ Ἥρα, λόγος τῶν ἀπορρήτων ἐστίν: τὰ δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν Ναυπλία λεγόμενα ἐς τὸν ὄνον): the donkey, “by gnawing a vine stock, made it more productive for the following grape harvest”, so teaching people the art of cutting vines⁴⁴.

40. On the Alcyonian lake as a door of Hades, in addition to Pausanias, II, 37, 5-6 and Socrates of Argos, *FGrHist* 310, F 2 *ap.* Plutarch, *De Is. et Osir.*, 35 [M 364 F], see Pollux, 4, 861; *schol. ad Lycophron.*, *Alex.*, 212 (Scheer); *schol. ad Iliad.*, XIV, 319 (Erbse).

41. Dionysus Zagreus, son of Persephone, and Dionysus the son of Semele are one and the same god: see J. RUDHARDT (2002).

42. *Schol. ad Iliad.*, XVIII, 493.

43. The epithet is only one of a long series: the poem in the *Anth. Palat.*, IX, 524 is a hymn of which each verse contains mere epithets beginning with the same letter, in alphabetical order.

44. Pausanias, II, 38, 2-3: [...] παρήμι οὐκ ἀξιόλογα ἡγούμενος, “all this I pass over as trivial” (transl. W. H. S. Jones).

- The memory of the “seven against Thebes” rests on the names of two leaders: the soothsayer Amphiaraos, who vanished underground when he was fleeing from the Thebans⁴⁵, and Hippomedon, the terrible giant we already mentioned. Euripides’ *Phoenician Women* gives evidence of the importance of this reference to Lerna in the mythical Theban war⁴⁶.

The stench of Lerna

Let us now return to our initial question: why should it be insulting, in Eteocles’ speech, to send his brother Polyneices back to the water of Lerna?

1. A first answer follows from the proverbial expression we already met, Λέρνη κακῶν, a “Lerna of troubles”⁴⁷. “Go away and call upon the stinking and/or surabundant water of Lerna!” The paraphrase could at best explain the passage.

2. An idea of material as well as religious defilement connotes the site of Lerna. The Lernaean “Lake” in particular seems to have been the main destination of the καθάρματα, sacrificial victims for purification or residues of purification rites, especially for women in case of marriage or childbirth. To the καθάρματα from the purification of the Proetides, whose Bacchylides’ description (*Ep.*, 11) suggests the vile madness, Hesiod added sexual lust, vitiligo, and dermatosis which caused hair loss⁴⁸. These καθάρματα also served to explain somewhere else, I mean in the mouth of the Anigros river in Elis, the stench of some water⁴⁹.

But stains are also what we get rid of, what we reject, an excrement, and the second obvious paraphrase would then be, more or less: “you decay, you scruffy man, I send you back to the filth of Lerna”.

We know the Lemnian women stank because of the murder they had committed on her husbands. There is an opposite tradition about the young Danaids, although they were destined to commit the same crime: according to the poet Melanippides, “they liked to hunt in the sacred groves and to

45. On Amphiaraos, see P. SINEUX (2007).

46. Euripides, *Phoen.*, 126 (Hippomedon), 187 (Amymone), 613, 1113 (Hippomedon), 1136 (the Hydra). See P. SAUZEAU (2008).

47. Hesychius, s.v.: Λέρνη κακῶν, παροιμία διὰ τὸ τοὺς Ἀργεῖους καθάρματα εἰς αὐτὴν βαλεῖν (“a proverb, because the Argians threw residues of defilement into it”). See also Photius and Souda s.v.; Hygin., *Fab.*, 30, 3: The stench came from the heads of the sons of Aegyptos thrown by Danaos into the lake, or from the heads of the Hydra thrown by Heracles.

48. Hesiod, fr. 132 and 133, 4-5 Merkelbach-West (αἱ δὲ νῦ χαῖται / ἔρρεον ἐκ κεφαλέων, ψίλωτο δὲ καλὰ κάρηνα).

49. Strabo, VIII, 3, 19, cf. Pausanias, V, 5, 9. A name *Anigraea* occurs very close to Lerna, see above n. 20.

look for the holy tears of the incense, the nice-smelling figs ...” These ἄλσεα, this imaginary landscape of Egypt, according to P. Sauzeau⁵⁰, was also the Lernaean ἄλσος for the Greeks⁵¹. Anyway, here the smell as related with maiden, marriage, sexual defilement and purification⁵², is a key part of the story.

3. The scholars did not miss to notice that the *katabasis* of Dionysus in Aristophanes’ *Frogs* offers a caricatural comment on the natural and religious peculiarities of Lerna. Here Heracles plays the character of Prosymnus / Polymnus, when he indicates to the god the way toward the infernal swamps, not without obscene allusions concerning the urging “desire” or “lust” (πόθος, ἕμερος v. 53 ff.) Dionysus would feel craving to go down to these dirty places. So the infernal “swamp” where frogs constantly croak gives an idea of what the λίμνη of Lerna is considered to be the entry⁵³. The chorus of the initiated calling upon Iacchos⁵⁴ suggests the closeness of Eleusina: but in Lerna too, as we have seen, the secret rites of Demeter and those of Bacchus are very close from each other⁵⁵, both situated in the “sacred grove” which extended over the whole narrow coastal plain – and even in a unique temple which we may suppose built with two

50. P. SAUZEAU (2005) p. 299.

51. Melanippides, fr. 757 Page, in Athen., XIV, 651 F: ἀν’ εὐ-ἡλί’ ἄλσεα πολλάκις / θήραις φρένα τερπόμεναι, / <αἱ δ’> ἱερόδακρυον λίβανον εὐώ-/δεις τε φοινίκας κασίαν τε ματεῦσαι / τέρενα Σύρια σπέρματα [...]. On the crime of the Lemnian, see G. DUMÉZIL (1998²). The mental confusion between the Egyptian landscape and the landscape of Lerna also appears in the myth of Io, who was running the opposite way, from Lerna to Egypt. Lerna and/or Egypt offer λειμῶνες to the god’s rape, with a strong emphasis on sex, violence, blood and defilement in marriage. See P. SAUZEAU (2005), *passim*, esp. p. 316-336.

52. See the very rich analysis of P. Marchetti in P. MARCHETTI and K. KOLOKOTSAS (1995), p. 187-266, esp. 237-245 (p. 238 on the Melanippides’ fragment), and the whole book of K. DOWDEN (1989), esp. ch. 4-7. Also S. SETTIS (1973) on the Athenian Λήνια.

53. Vapors which kill birds are known from some mouths of hell, so in Asia Minor the *Ploutonion* of Hierapolis (Strabo, XIII, 4, 14). Is it impossible that gases similar to those which emanate from the volcanic peninsula of Methana, on the other side of Argolis, could add to the bad reputation of Lerna? See D. OGDEN (2001), p. 185-186; Y. USTINOVA (2004), p. 84, 86-87, 120-122, 149.

54. See the Scholiast (Ar., *Frogs*, 479) on the Athenian Λήνια: ἐν τοῖς Ληναίκοις ἀγῶσι τοῦ Διονύσου ὁ διαδοῦχος κατέχων λαμπάδα λέγει καλεῖτε θεόν. καὶ οἱ ὑπακούοντες βοῶσι Σεμελίη Ἰακχε πλουτοδότα.

55. Approaching the site of Lerna from the North, after the crossing of the Erasinos river, Pausanias (II, 36, 7) had met a first stream, most probably, according to its name, dried up during the summer, the Cheimarrhus, near of which a circle marked by stones indicated the place where Ploutôn, having kidnapped Core, the daughter of Demeter, had come down again into hell. On the importance of the cults of Demeter in Argolis, see P. SAUZEAU (2005), p. 214-216.

separate ναοί, the one dedicated to the goddess Prosymne (Demeter), the other one to Dionysus the Saviour (Σαώτης).

Suspicious mysteries

The text of Pausanias (II, 37,1-2) is actually not clear:

[1] Ἐντὸς δὲ τοῦ ἄλλου ἀγάλματα ἔστι μὲν Δήμητρος Προσύμνης, ἔστι δὲ Διονύσου <> καὶ Δήμητρος καθήμενον ἄγαλμα οὐ μέγα· [2] ταῦτα μὲν λίθου πεποιημένα, ἐτέρωθι δ' ἐν ναῶ Διονύσου Σαώτης καθήμενον ξόανον καὶ Ἀφροδίτης ἄγαλμα ἐπὶ θαλάσῃ λίθου.

[1] Within the grove are images of Demeter Prosymne and Dionysus. Of Demeter there is a seated image of no great size.

[2] Both are of stone, but in another temple is a seated wooden image of Dionysus Saotes (Savior), while by the sea is a stone image of Aphrodite (transl. W. H. S. Jones).

I would like to suggest another translation:

Within the grove are images, one of Demeter Prosymne, and a seated image of no great size of Dionysus and Demeter: both are of stone, but in a second part of the temple there is a seated wooden image of Dionysus Saotes (Savior) and a stone image of Aphrodite on the sea (ἐπὶ θαλάσῃ, *on the shore* or a kind of ἀναδυομένη in the same ναός?).

Enumerating statues is not enough to understand the cult organization: ἔστι μὲν, ἔστι δὲ, to start with, seems to associate and at the same time to oppose Demeter Prosymne and Dionysus (seated with Demeter?), as if their images were in two separate locations and perhaps also of different sizes; as for Aphrodite, perhaps she was the *πάρεδρος* of Dionysus Saotes, or Pausanias saw her image in another temple near the sea: we often find her shrines by the sea (in fact, at the mouth of what we call the river “Amymone”, there could be a place well fitting for Aphrodite)⁵⁶.

The following words are not clear: (ἔστι δὲ) Διονύσου <> καὶ Δήμητρος καθήμενον ἄγαλμα οὐ μέγα. Keeping strictly to the text of Pausanias, we may understand them:

- as describing briefly, after the mention of an image of Dionysus, the first mentioned image of Demeter, and so we might have two statues made of stone, the one, of small size, of the seated Demeter, the other one of Dionysus, perhaps standing;

56. Aphrodite and the sea: cf. V. PIRENNE-DELFORGE (1994), p. 433-437; G. PIRONTI (2007), p. 245-247; EAD. (2015). Aphrodite with Dionysus: see esp. another place, called “Muck Soils”, on the border between Argolis and Arcadia, where Pausanias (8.6.4) saw a *megaron* of the “Meliasts” (the initiates of Dionysus) near a spring and a temple of Aphrodite Melainis. Herodotus, in his book II, calls *megaron* the Egyptian inner temples.

- or (if we delete the comma) as a small joint seated image of Dionysus and Demeter, opposing the first statue which could be a high standing image of Demeter Prosymne. The configuration would be very uncommon, since a seated Demeter is normally associated with her daughter (Core or Despoina), not with a male god. But we may note that according to Hesiod, *Theogony*, 969, a son named Ploutos was born to Demeter and Iasion: now the Athenians used to invoke Dionysus as Πλουτοδότης, “Wealth Donor” at the Λήνια festival.⁵⁷
- or as introducing a third image, namely a seated and small-sized Demeter, to be added to the images of Demeter Prosymne and Dionysus.

Ἐτέρωθι δ’ ἐν ναῶ then for the first time in our text sheds light on the existence of a temple, which up to now we could only deduce from the presence of cult images; the adverb ἐτέρωθι means “in the second side of the (one and same) temple”, a temple which thus somehow juxtapose (see for example the Erechtheion at Athens) at least two ναοί or *cellae*. And this second *cella* also would shelter a wooden image, a ξόανον of a seated Dionysus, this time close to an image – or another temple? – of Aphrodite “on the sea”.

At any rate, it seems Dionysus was present in both sides of the temple⁵⁸. Since the abduction of Core, as seen, took place very close to the sacred wood of Lerna, and Core therefore became Persephone, the queen of the underworld, Demeter is not accompanied by her daughter to whom the dual τῶ θεῷ unites her in Attica, but by a male son and πάρεδρος. In her relation with Dionysus, she could have been complemented by Aphrodite; finally, she is named like the Argian Hera (Προσύμνη)⁵⁹. Nevertheless, her worship was deeply rooted in Lerna and it could have led, at least during the Roman empire, to strengthen the ties between Eleusina and Lerna and to celebrate here and there so to speak twin mysteries: we may illustrate this point with two fourth century Attic epigrams. In both poems the same man, Cleadas, son of the hierophant of Eleusis, boasts about his own charge, “equal” to his father’s own privilege, of the Lernaean secret rites⁶⁰.

57. See below, n. 64.

58. M. PIÉART (1996) insists on separating the cult of Demeter and the cult of Dionysus. The latter would be much older (and indeed we may read his name on the mycenaean tablets).

59. Even her torches are lent to her from the outside: it was from an Arcadian sanctuary of Artemis Πυρῶνια that people brought fire for the Lernaea (Pausanias, VIII, 15, 8).

60. *Anthol. Gr.*, IX, 688: Τήνδε πύλην λάεσσιν ἐυξέστοις ἀραρυῖαν, / ἀμφοτέρων κόσμον τε πάτρῃ καὶ θάμβος ὀδίταις, / τεύξε Κλέης Κλεάδαζ ἀγανῆς πόσις εὐπατερείης,

Now it is clear that our second century writer Pausanias scornfully rejects these ties between the mysteries of Eleusis and those of Lerna: Argian people, he explains, ascribe the instauration of the Lernaean mysteries to the mythical musician Philammon, the father of Thamyris and Eumolpus⁶¹, so the Lernaean mysteries would have been more or less as ancient as the Mysteries of Eleusis. But he goes on indicating that a scholar of his time demonstrated that the Dorian dialect used for regulating the Lernaean mysteries in an inscription on a “heart of orichalk” necessarily dates from later than the return of the Heraclids, several generations after Philammon. Nevertheless, if we add the legend of Prosymnus / Polymnus / Door keeper and of Dionysus’ *katabasis*, Demeter with her mysteries also stresses the infernal connotation of the Lernaean ‘marsh’, which the bad smell already suggested⁶², and the *Lernaia* could have been first associated, not with the Eleusinian mysteries, but with the Athenian *Λήναια*, celebrated in honor of Dionysus “of the marshes” and staged in Aristophanes’ *Frogs*⁶³. At any rate, the Scholiast mentions the Eleusinian *δαδούχος* entering the *Λήναια* with a torch and inviting the audience to invoke the god as the son of Semele and wealth donor, so attesting a link between the cults of Eleusinian Demeter and marshy Dionysos, thought of as another Hades⁶⁴.

/Λερναίων ἀδύτων περιώσιος ὄργιοφάντης, /τερπόμενος δώροισιν ἀγασθενέων βασιλήων (“This gate built with well polished stones, an ornament for his homeland [or family line] as well as a wonder for the passers-by, Kleadas erected it, the husband of gentle Klea born from a good father, he, the very blessed exhibitor of the rites of the Lernaean inner sanctuary, who enjoys presents of the very powerful emperors”). IG II² 3674 = *Anth. Gr.*, Appendix, Epigrammata dedicatoria, 276 : Δηοῦς καὶ Κούρης θεοεἰκελον ἱεροφάντην, / κυδαίνων πατέρα, στήσε δόμοις Κλεάδα, Κεκροπίης σοφὸν ἔρνος, / Ἐρώτιον, ᾧ ῥα καὶ αὐτὸς / Λερναίων ἀδύτων ἴσον ἔδεκτο γέρας (“The hierophant, equal to the gods, of Deo and Kore, / his father, it was in order to give honour to him that Kleadas set up in the house / <the statue of this wise person, offspring of the Cecropia, <named> Erotios: in his turn he received an equal privilege, that of the inner shrine of Lerna”). See above, n. 32 and *SEG* 11.366 ; 17.158 ; 38.189, 306 ; 39.353 ; 45.268 ; 48.36.

61. Apollodorus, I, 3, 3; Pausanias, IV, 33, 3; Euripides, *Rhesos*, 901; Theocritus, 24, 110.

62. Vapors which kill birds are known from other mouths of Hades, so in Asia Minor the *Ploutonion* of Hierapolis (Strabo, XIII, 4, 14). Is it impossible that gases similar to those which emanate from the volcanic peninsula of Methana, on the other side of Argolis, could have added to the bad reputation of Lerna? See D. OGDEN (2001), p. 185-186 ; Y. USTINOVA (2004), p. 84, 86-87, 120-122, 149.

63. On the *Λήναια* with several references to the Dionysus mysteries of Lerna, see N. SPINETO (2005), p. 125-183 (and *passim*).

64. *Schol. ad Ar., Frogs*, 479 : see above n. 54 and N. SPINETO (2005), p. 148-153 (N. Spineto, p. 152, quotes Hesiod, *Th.*, 969, where Ploutos is said to be the son of Demeter and Iasion).

So, for a third explanation of Eteocles' abusing answer, we could suggest the following paraphrase: "Go and invoke the infernal marsh of Lerna!," "Return to the underworld you are coming from!" We would say today: "Go to the blazes!" – although Dionysus' underworld is not burning, but marshy and watering.

Dionysiac throwing

We would like to introduce a more dionysiac explanation⁶⁵, connected to the double gesture of flinging something ritually down into water and of calling the god to rise, to ascent from the waters: this ascent we may also infer from the prefix *ἀνα-* of the verb *ἀνακαλεῖν* in our quotation of the *Phoenician women*. Flinging down is very close to flinging away or flinging off: so we may connect this comment to our interpretation of the *καθάρματα* evacuated into the waters of Lerna, and rely it to Pausanias' reluctance concerning on one hand, as we have seen just now, the Lernaean mysteries, on the other hand the yearly *δρόμενα* of Dionysus by the Alcyonian Lake⁶⁶ (see also his reticence about the legend of the ass gnawing a vine stock at Nauplion).

The leap of Dionysus and the leaps he provokes are well know, first of all in the Homeric episode of Lycurgus and in the *Homeric Hymn to Dionysus*. In both texts leap follows panic and flight. It gives evidence of Dionysus' fashion when he deals with sea water (Homer described the sea as dark like wine, *οἴνοπα πόντον*)⁶⁷ or fresh earth water: he dwells neither in these waters nor underground, but he suffers under their violence as well as he stirs them by provoking his crushing terrors. We have seen that the war he waged against Perseus ended with Dionysos himself flinging down into the (Alcyonian) lake of Lerna⁶⁸. Other versions ascribe the same destiny to his female followers, the *bacchae*. Dionysos indeed is thrown or

65. On Dionysus at Lerna, see esp. G. CASADIO (1994), p. 223-325.

66. Pausanias, II, 37, 6: *Τὰ δὲ ἐς αὐτὴν Διονύσω δρόμενα ἐν νυκτὶ κατὰ ἔτος ἕκαστον οὐχ ὄσιον ἐς ἅπαντας ἦν μοι γράψαι*, "The nocturnal rites performed every year in honor of Dionysus I must not divulge to the world at large". Did he draw from Herodotus, II, 171, a similar formula about a very resembling cult in Egypt (Osiris in the temple of Neith - "Athena of Saïs")? "On this lake they enact by night the story of the god's sufferings, a rite which the Egyptians call the Mysteries. I could say more about this, for I know the truth, but let me preserve a discreet silence". See also above, n. 43. Cf. V. PIRENNE-DELFORGE (2008), chapter VI, esp. p. 299-304 (Lerna), on Pausanias keeping silent about some mystery cults.

67. Cf. A. GRAND-CLÉMENT (2013). Also M. DARAKI (1982) and I. TASSIGNON (2001).

68. It is not easy to combine the tale of Perseus against Dionysus and the story of Prosymnos. The logic that allows the passage from one myth to the other would require a further study.

throws himself, even although he does not require rituals as gruesome as the cult of Palaemon⁶⁹. But deep in the sea he still shows the gushing of the nourishing springs, he only dives in order to reappear, and only scatters (himself) in order to re-assemble. So the night-concert of the thyrsus-like trumpets dressed in ivy-leaves, calling him up from the Alcyonian water, showed not only the gloomy mood that J. G. Frazer noted in the landscape of Lerna: indeed it radiated dionysiac frenzy, ambiguous cheerfulness, with authoritative and tremendous sounding, which the god's ἄνοδοι of the vase paintings also suggest⁷⁰. Dionysus' force may appear in a variety of shapes: so sap or sexual potency. The presence of Aphrodite is not irrelevant. The myth of Prosymnos, the tradition according to which Melampus instaurated phallophories, Aphrodite perhaps standing near the ξόανov of Dionysos in his temple at Lerna, the goddess whose birth in the sea, out of the αἰδοῖα of Ouranos is related by Hesiod, – all this evidence suggests a last interpretation of Eteocles' abusing dismissing of his brother. "Go away and invoke the water of Lerna" also means "Go and join the rituals which call upon the epiphany of Dionysos", these ambiguous rituals of which Heraclitus already stressed the indecency, merely restaured by the aura of the god (fr. 15 D.-K.). We know from the Skythian people of Herodotus, from Heraclitus of Ephesus, from the Roman repression of the *Bacchanalia*, how much some aspects of the cult of Dionysus would offend the sensibilities of non-Greek people and sometimes make the shiest ones feel uncomfortable among the Greeks themselves.

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69. Lycophron, *Alex.*, 229; Callimachus, fr. 91 (dieg.)-92 Pfeiffer; Philostr., *Her.*, 19; *Icon.* II, 16.

70. *LIMC*, "Dionysos", vol. III.2: see esp. the colossal head of Dionysus (twice with a head of a woman) which seemingly appears out of the underworld, between gloating satyrs or Menads, n° 53-55, n° 153 (with a phallus at the same place); his birth out of Zeus' leg, n° 666-679; C. BÉRARD (1974), pl. 3-13, *passim*, esp. fi. 34a-B (though the author denies that it is an ascent scene) and F. LISSARRAGUE (1992).

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