

ZEUS AND HERA:

POWER and MARRIAGE

Brother-Husband/Sister-Wife

Before we look at Zeus and Hera's mythology individually, it is interesting to consider them as a couple, not only as the king and queen of the Olympian Gods but as a brother-sister pair who are marriage partners.

The *Homeric Hymn to Hera* is a short verse singing of Hera's equality to her brother, the great God of the Olympians:

Here I sing of Hera
She has a golden throne
Rheia was her mother
She is an immortal queen
Hera is the most eminent of figures
She is the sister
she is even the wife
of Zeus thunderer
She is glorious
All the gods on vast Olympus
revere her,
they honour her
even equal to Zeus
the lover of lightning.¹

When northern tribes invaded Greece, they brought images of sky gods with them, one being Zeus. However Hera was already indigenous and worshiped in various forms throughout the Greek world. The eventual supremacy of Zeus suggests both a paradigm shift with the ascension of the sky gods and their dominant masculine values as well as order emerging out of chaos. The mythic motif of Hera's hatred for Heracles may be a vestige of the Greeks' abhorrence of these invasions, as the term "sons of Heracles" was used to describe Dorians, the northern invaders. By Homeric times and continuing throughout the classical period, the main theme in the myths of Zeus and Hera recount their stormy marriage, their power struggles, their mutual deceit and betrayals, even their attempts to overthrow one another. Hera was known as the goddess of marriage whose jurisdiction included all social customs. The hierarchy of the Olympian pantheon stressed the partnership of Zeus and Hera, the archetypal pair representing marriage. Their myth echoes the cultural expectation and experience of marriage and a married couple.

In Book 14 of the *Iliad* we have a vivid account of Hera and Zeus as lovers. Underscoring the drama is Hera's scheming: she is on a mission to protect her favoured Greeks and in order to do so she plans to seduce her husband even though "in her eyes he was hateful"² And it is during this seduction that Zeus remembers their first love encounter when they were young.

Zeus and Hera: The Sibling Marriage

*In myth the union of siblings was reserved for gods
and was realised in Hera's Gamos, where the
highest god of the Greeks joined her as brother-husband.*³

-Carl Kerényi

Hera, frustrated with the progress of the Trojan War and Zeus's protection of her Trojan enemies, decided to indirectly help the Greek offensive by getting Zeus out of the way. With Zeus not keeping his vigilant eye on the war, the Greeks would be better able to confront the Trojans. Hera schemed with both Aphrodite and Hypnos to accomplish the task. She coaxed Aphrodite into lending her the magic girdle so that when she wore it, it would make her irresistible even to her estranged husband. Then she bribed Hypnos into promising that he would keep Zeus in a deep sleep after Hera had seduced him. Having removed Zeus, the Trojans would be more vulnerable and gods, like Zeus's brother Poseidon, would be free to help the Greeks take a more aggressive course in the war.

On the peak of Mount Ida rising above Troy Zeus encountered Hera and desired her passionately, in a way he had not felt for a very long time. It reminded him of the first time they had made love together, in the palace beneath the sea. Here as youthful brother and sister, they had gone to bed together, unbeknownst to their parents or any other gods. Now all these years later the magic of Aphrodite's girdle recast its spell over Zeus. When Hera approached him, Zeus could not wait to make love to her. And on Mount Ida Hera seduced Zeus protected from sight of the other gods by a golden cloud that Zeus drew down around them. With his divine powers Zeus gave Hera the soft bed and the privacy she needed. Unlike Aphrodite Hera needed to make love to her husband secluded from the world.

There underneath them the divine earth broke into young, fresh grass, and into dewy clover, crocus and hyacinth so thick and soft it held the hard ground deep away from them. There they lay down together and drew about them a golden wonderful cloud, and from it the glimmering dew descended.⁴

After their lovemaking Hypnos took Zeus into a deep slumber as agreed, then let Poseidon know that he was free to help the Greeks. Hera's scheme, at least for now, had been successful.

There was an earlier time when the Olympian couple were not always locked in power struggles or scheming and lying to each other. This was when they first fell in love in the palace of their aunt and uncle, Tethys and Oceanus where they were being hidden, protected by their mother Rhea from the familial wars that were raging with their father.⁵ Here in the great palace beneath the sea, they consummated their relationship, a relationship that was to remain secret for 300 years.⁶

When Zeus finally defeated his father Cronus and ascended to power Hera became his queen and their marriage was often referred to as the only true marriage on Olympus. Hera became the goddess who presided over marriage and its rituals as well as the social order born from this union. However by the classical period the main version of their relationship focused on Zeus's philandering and Hera's jealousy and the power battle born out of the tempestuous feelings. Their secret relationship no longer existed.

The time that Hera and Zeus spent in their secret relationship could represent the sibling aspect of their marriage. This is often a secret level of adult relationship that remains unconscious to the partners. Hera and Zeus's sacred marriage reminds us of both the sibling and the marriage relationship that constitute a more holistic union. The sibling level of the marriage contains the feelings of equality, the facility to share both physical and emotional spaces, loyalty and *philia*, the

love of brother and sister. This love mutually shared by opposite sex siblings was also expressed in myth through sibling pairs like Artemis and Apollo as well as Electra and Orestes and Antigone and Polynices.

However this level of relationship could also activate the incest taboo; the partners feel loving, supportive and caring of one another but not sexual. Marriage partners become concerned when their relationship lacks sexual desire or activity, however the familiarity of the sibling closeness may threaten or dull sexual desire. On the other hand, the marriage level of the relationship contains the tension of the opposites, the powerful feelings of love and desire, dependency and need. Here the unknown in the other is challenging, motivating as well as erotic. Both of these levels of the marriage relationship also have their shadow sides. Hera and Zeus have entered into the shadow side of the marriage- power struggles, jealousy, infidelity and dishonesty. The power struggle could be alleviated by their shared participation in the sibling model. The sibling aspect of their relationship is unconscious, a secret, and they have lost the ability to recognise their equality, similarity and shared origin. Recognising both levels within an adult relationship gives more scope to the union and allows the partners more flexibility when interacting with each other. To balance these levels within the marriage would be one of the tasks of adult relationships. These two spheres of adult relationship are the 'sibling archetype' and the 'marriage archetype'

The sibling archetype offers the possibility of understanding, free of parental overtones. It allows for the natural expression of positive and negative feelings of peers whose relationship is for life. The marriage archetype offers the excitement and tension of non-understanding. It permits the instinctive, biological expression of extreme ends of the dimension of maleness and femaleness, thus keeping the charge of sexuality.⁷

Hera as the goddess of marriage embodies both the sibling archetype, as sister, and marriage archetype, as wife, in her union with Zeus. She has married her brother-husband and as the patroness of marriage has lived the secret of the sibling marriage.

No Athenian bride was allowed to marry a homogastris, a brother who had the same mother as herself. Such a marriage would have been contrary to the greatest matriarchal incest prohibition, which only Hera was allowed to transgress. Of her it is said that she was the only sister allowed to have such a husband, the only one equal to her in birth.⁸

Why the sibling level of adult relationship would remain a secret is conjecture. Perhaps as Carl Kerényi suggests the sibling relationship extends beyond the image of 'normal' love to a representation of a bisexual totality. The sibling union also resonates more on the level of an equal relationship, a friend, comrade, and colleague and not on the level of dependency threatening 'the propagation of the human race'⁹ Perhaps these reasons, along with the incest taboo, would be powerful enough to keep the sibling union in the dark. The secret relationship of Zeus and Hera reminds us of the powerful union of siblings that takes place away from the consciousness of the parents. While we exclusively focus on the parental marriage we may conspire to keep the sibling marriage unconscious.

Classical myth has helped keep Hera in a fixed role of the jealous wife trapped by the marriage archetype. Yet Hera as the goddess of marriage wed to her brother-husband, Zeus is well aware of the other level of her relationship with her husband. While we keep her trapped in a one-dimensional role we fail to honour her history and her ancient tradition that brought her into union with her brother. She sets about to seduce him in order to take his 'eagle' eyes away from the battle. And in order to do this she seeks Aphrodite's help by borrowing her magic girdle.

When Zeus sees Hera coming to him, the poet refers to the first time they were together:

And Zeus who gathers the clouds saw her,
and when he saw her desire was a mist about his close heart
as much as on that time they first went to bed together
and lay in love, and their dear parents knew nothing of it ¹⁰

This seduction, told by Homer in the *Iliad*, was probably already known to the audience. An earlier myth had suggested it was Hera who first chose the youngest brother from the day he was born. In the palace of their father's siblings, Oceanus and Thetys, Hera and Zeus went to their marriage bed in secret. Other versions tell of the secret marriage taking place in Samos (a westerly Aegean island near the coast of Turkey) where their marriage took place in secret for 300 years. Samos also claims Hera as their own, and the colossal archaic stone temple built to her is one of the most important sanctuaries in ancient Greece. For the marriage to her brother¹¹, Hera received a special compensation from the gods often referred to as Hera's Gamos or Hera's wedding, a close approximation of the sacred marriage (*hierá gamos*). In this union of brother and sister and the secret relationship, we are reminded of the layer of the sibling level of adult relationship which is evident in their rivalry and competitive spirit.

Another version of the couple's first sexual encounter is perhaps a later version of the story and suggests Zeus is the aggressor. Desiring to ravish Hera, Zeus assumes the shape of a cuckoo bird. During a thunderous storm, the frightened cuckoo takes refuge in Hera's lap. She protects the cuckoo and Zeus having acquired proximity to Hera now ravishes her. A variation of this version suggests that Hera resists his advances until she has managed his pledge of equality through marriage. Hera's name may mean 'mistress'. Her tales also involve her bathing in the streams of Argos where she was able to regain her virginity lost in the marriage with Zeus. It has also been suggested that the bathing was a ritual to prepare her for union with Zeus.

By classical times the marriage is full of tales of Zeus's infidelity and the rage and jealousy that this ignites in Hera. Power has shifted in the intervening times between their secret liaison and Zeus's ascendancy to head of the Olympians. Hera's power has been diminished even trivialised, casting her in the role of a schemer and depicting her using covert manoeuvres to obtain what she wishes from Zeus. Their stormy relationship led to Olympian battles, which divided the gods and led to a revolt by Hera against Zeus when he had become unbearable. It is often said all the Olympians except Hestia joined in the revolt, binding Zeus while he slept. It was Thetis who came to his aid and unfastened him. It is because of this help that she is able to exact the promise from Zeus in Book 1 of the *Iliad* that he will champion her son Achilles. When Zeus is released, he retaliates against Hera for leading the revolt and he hangs her from heaven by the wrists with anvils at her feet.

Earlier myths suggest that his mother Rhea forbade him to marry, as this would bring discord to the customs when marriage did not exist. It is the Dorians, the northern invaders, who may have brought the notion of the marriage mate as being a possession. When addressing Hera in the first book of the *Iliad*, it is clear Zeus has become a patronising husband:

But go then, sit down in silence, and do as I tell you,
for fear all the gods, as many as are on Olympus, can do nothing
if I come close and lay my unconquerable hands upon you

Hera and Zeus's relationship stressed the tension in opposites. Their sacred marriage is an attempt to unite the opposites, however, their mythic relationship tends to consistently reveal their opposite views.

Another myth tells of Zeus and Hera's argument over which gender enjoys sex the best. Tiresias is consulted since he had lived both as a man and as a woman. Because he had accidentally interrupted two snakes copulating Tiresias was cursed to live ten years as a woman. Hera and Zeus had known this; therefore they consulted Tiresias to answer the question whether women or men enjoyed sex the most. Tiresias answered that if the pleasure were broken into ten parts, the man would enjoy one while the woman would enjoy nine, suggesting woman's enjoyment of sex was nine times more than a man's. Hera was so furious that she struck Tiresias blind. However Zeus tried to compensate for the slight and granted him the ability to prophesise, making Tiresias the blind seer and prophet. This speculation that women in Greek antiquity enjoyed pleasure more than men was also confirmed by the playwrights, who often suggested women enjoyed wine and sex much more than men implying that if women were given rein they would create disorder and chaos. By the classical period the fear of women's sexual power had been introjected into the dominant male-orientated society.

The children of Zeus and Hera are their sons Ares and Hephaestus¹², two of Olympians who are the most mocked. Ares is hated by his father, abandoned by his mother, as is Hephaestus. These offspring mirror the dysfunctional marriage that became the main plot of the Hera-Zeus myth in the classical period. By this time the mythic underpinning of their sacred marriage had been rewritten and forgotten and Zeus had triumphed over the feminine to become the supreme Olympian.

ZEUS

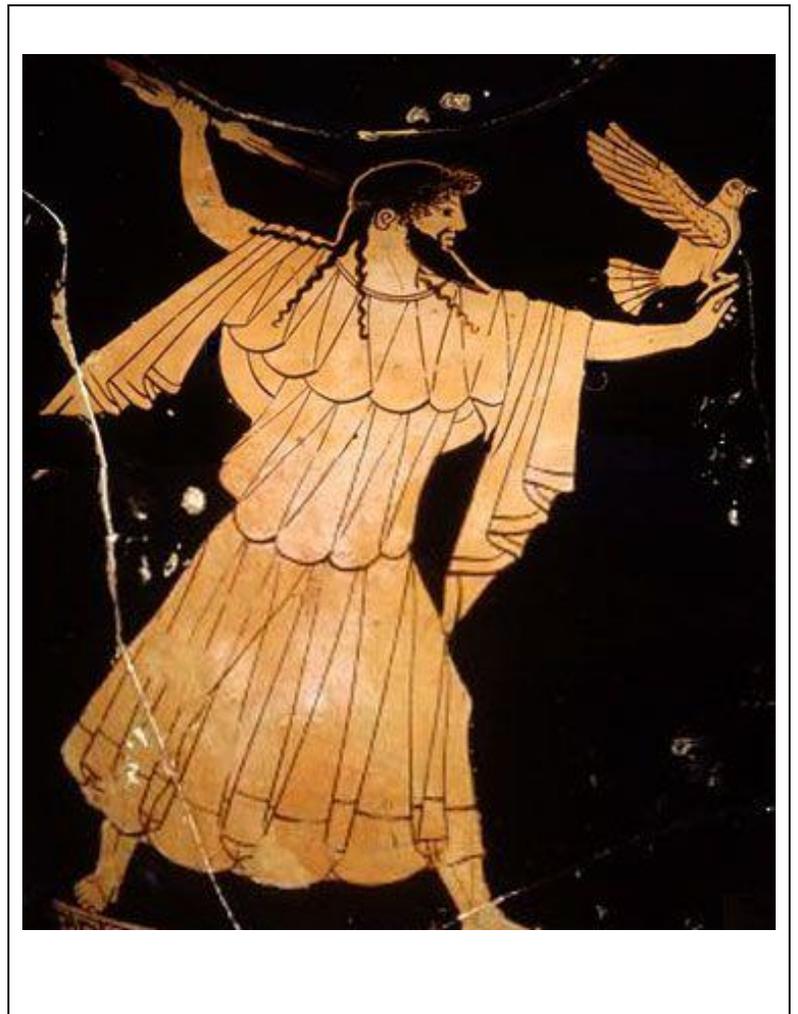
*Come, you gods, make this
endeavour, that you may all learn
this.*

*Let down out of the sky a cord of
gold; lay hold of it
all you who are gods and all who
are goddesses, yet not
even so can you drag down Zeus
from the sky to the ground, not
Zeus the high lord of counsel,
though you try until you grow
weary.*

*Yet whenever I might strongly be
minded to pull you,
I could drag you up, earth and all
and sea and all with you¹³*

- Homer

Attic Red Figure Amphora
ca 470 - 460 BCE
Louvre Museum, Paris



The New Dynasty

Speaking through the poet Homer the god Zeus lets all the other gods and goddesses know clearly that his power is far greater than all of them combined. Only Zeus can throw his weight around to this extent. Zeus is the chieftain of the Olympian gods who rises to power with the help of his siblings by overthrowing his father Cronus. Zeus, according to Hesiod's *Theogony*, is the youngest in his sibling constellation. Three older sisters and two older brothers have been born before him and suffered the fate of being swallowed by their father. The five eldest have been devoured by their dark father Cronus and have resided in his underworld womb. Zeus is the only sibling not devoured, therefore the only one to not be interred in his father's belly. Zeus is a sky god and his experience is not to know what it feels like to be devoured or to feel powerless. He is freed from this fate in order to overpower the old order.

When he was born his mother Rhea was desperate not to have the pattern continue and therefore wrapped a rock in swaddling clothes and presented this to her mate Cronus who believing it to be his newborn son swallowed it whole. The newborn child was whisked away to Crete and nurtured until he was old enough to return to claim the inheritance his father had tried to prevent him from having. In order to do this he was first helped by Metis who supplied the herbal potion, which was the emetic that facilitated his siblings to be regurgitated out of the belly of their father. Ironically it is Metis who will be later devoured by Zeus when he fears her child will overthrow him. The cycle once again repeats itself.

With the help of his siblings Zeus waged war on their father. The course of the war turned to their side when Zeus released the imprisoned sons of Ouranus – the Cyclopes and the Hecatonchires who had been condemned to Tartarus. With their help Cronus was overthrown which paved the way for Zeus's ascension to power. After the war the world is divided into three spheres, the sky, the seas, and the underworld. Zeus received the lot of the sky and became the dominant ruler moving from the youngest in his sibling system to now being the oldest and most powerful. Zeus's ascension to power could also be seen through a historical, cultural, and psychological lens. He takes over the supremacy by subjecting other god/goddesses to him in a move towards a more monotheistic version of the pantheon. All the Olympians are either his siblings or his children. Homeric genealogy rearranges the Hesiodic version of Aphrodite's primitive birth from the severed genitals of Ouranus. According to Homer she is Zeus's daughter aligning all the Olympians under Zeus as either their father or eldest brother. With the kingship of Zeus the development from the monstrous to the anthropomorphic gods is completed. Zeus represents the triumph of order over chaos and becomes the supreme representative of a rationalistic culture.

The derivation of Zeus is linked back to light or sky and this is his domain: the thunder, lightning, the golden rain, and the heavens. Homer refers to the god as the "cloud gatherer" and "lord of the lightning" who "delights in the thunder." With his weapon, the thunderbolt, he would strike down those who had offended him or those who had been offensive to the gods. Asclepius the god of healing was one of these; he had offended Hades by raising a hero from the dead and Zeus struck him down with the thunderbolt. Another hero punished by Zeus was Prometheus for his theft of fire from the realm of the gods and disseminating this to mankind. Besides being the punisher of those who transgressed the boundaries of the gods, he was the protector of law and the god of justice.

To the ancient Greeks their sovereign god was known as the "Thunderer" the one who avenged wrong and rewarded piety by keeping his watchful eye on the tides of human affairs. Ancient epics portrayed him overseeing the human drama by keeping his eye on the hero's progress both on the battlefield and on their quest. In the *Aeneid* the Roman's equivalent God, Jupiter protects the hero

Aeneas whose fate is to found Rome, the new Troy. In the *Iliad* Zeus watches the battle from his vantage point on Mount Ida.

Even being the greatest of all gods Zeus grieved that he was unable to alter the fate of his son Sarpedon who was destined to die at the hands of Patroclus. Zeus had already prearranged the war by setting in motion important events that led to the escalation of the bloody conflict between the Greeks and the Trojans. Part of his plan to bring about the Great War was to ensure that two great beings would be born. By manipulating human circumstances Zeus made sure that Helen and Achilles, the two protagonists of the Trojan drama, would come into being fated to play out their dramatic roles in the Trojan saga. The fate of death, however, was in the hands of the Moirai.

Zeus and the Goddess

The most consistent aspect of Zeus's myth is his relationship to the feminine. He seems to dominate, absorb and appropriate the feminine sphere through his relationship with the powerful goddesses and heroines of myth: Metis, Semele, Hera, Themis, and Danae. He marries or seduces them bringing their qualities under his rule and hence their domain is now experienced in a different way. Zeus also is the father of many heroes with his numerous lovers as the table on the following page attests. Maria Mavromataki suggests some reasons why the mythic narratives of Zeus include numerous erotic affairs:

In describing the erotic encounters of their primal deity, what the ancient Greeks were doing was to attribute to some higher being the generation of all the elements of nature, of all the laws and intellectual or spiritual powers, of the rules which govern society, and even of the origins of mankind itself.¹⁴

In unions with the goddess new spheres of being were conceived under the aegis of Zeus. With Metis, the goddess of wisdom, Athena, new knowledge was conceived. With Mnemosyne the ancient goddess of memory, he fathered the nine muses, the products of the imagination. In the Greek mind, Zeus, as the supreme authority, was absorbing the past, the epoch ruled by the goddess.

Mother	Zeus's Child
Aegina	Aeacus
Alcmene	Heracles
Antiope	Amphion/Zethus
Callisto	Arcas
Carme	Britomartis
Danae	Perseus
Demeter	Persephone
Dia	Pirithous
Elara	Tityus
Europa	Minos/ Rhadamanthys/ Sarpedon
Eurynome	Aglaia/ Euphrosyne/ Thalia
Hesione	Orchomenus
Io	Epaphus
Leda	Helen/Polydeuces (Pollux)

Mother	Zeus's Child
Mera	Locri
Mnemosyne	the Nine Muses
	Calliope <i>Epic Poetry</i>
	Melpomene <i>Tragedy</i>
	Euterpe <i>Flute</i>
	Urania <i>Astronomy</i>
	Terpsichore <i>Dancing</i>
	Thalia <i>Comedy</i>
	Polyhymnia <i>Sacred Music</i>
	Erato <i>Lyre</i>
	Clio <i>History</i>
Niobe	Argos
Olenus	Anaxithea
Pluto (an Oceanid)	Tantalus
Protogenia	Opuns
Taygete	Lacedaemon
Thalia	Palici
Themis	The Horae
	Eunomia <i>Legislation</i>
	Dike <i>Justice</i>
	Eirene <i>Peace</i>

While only a partial list of Zeus's offspring it reminds us of the potency of the god and his creativity. Historically his adventures with the feminine are allegorical of the subjugation of the goddess. The ascension of Zeus to prominence through the suppression of the feminine underpins these myths. The most overt example of this is Zeus devouring Metis and the subsequent birth of Athena through Zeus's forehead. Both are goddesses of wisdom yet Metis belongs to the matrilineal past recycled in Zeus's belly to Athena, the goddess of the new Olympian order under Zeus. During the classical period Zeus's erotic adventures were numerous yet the mythic fragment of the potent goddess is still discernible.

Zeus and Callisto

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow idealised Callisto in his poem "Birds of Paradise" who would not love, if loving she might be changed like Callisto to a star in heaven reflecting the romantic enmeshment of love and metamorphosis, motifs in the myth of Callisto, a devotee of Artemis. Callisto honoured her goddess by remaining chaste. But Zeus's desire for her would change all that. Disguising himself as the goddess Artemis, Zeus approached Callisto whose protective instincts were not on guard, as she had no reason to feel afraid or suspicious. When Zeus was close enough he seized and ravaged her, leaving her pregnant. For months Callisto concealed her pregnancy from the goddess, however, Artemis eventually discovered the inevitable. Being pregnant Callisto no longer could remain in the sphere of Artemis who protected, guided and watched over the phase of girlhood. Callisto must now relinquish this phase of her life; therefore the goddess had no choice but to release Callisto from her protection. Artemis could no longer guard her development as another archetypal presence had entered the young woman's life. Callisto now faced new and powerful feelings, no longer protected by the sacred circle of the goddess Artemis.

Giving birth to her son Arcas and becoming a mother ignited feelings of love and nurture within Callisto. At the same time Hera unleashed her rage at Callisto for giving birth to her husband's son.

On one pole were the feelings of attachment and love, on the other, jealousy and rage. The constellation of these powerful feelings resulted in Callisto's transformation into a bear and her retreat into the wild.

Arcas, the son of Zeus and Callisto was orphaned after Hera had transformed his mother into a bear. Abandoned in the wild, Arcas was raised by Maia in the land that bore his name, Arcadia. To the Romans Maia was associated with fertility and growth and they identified her with the great mother-goddess Cybele. During Arcas's adolescence fate drew him and his mother together again. Hunting wild beasts Arcas came face to face with his mother. Unable to recognise her in the shape of a bear he raised his spear to kill what he believed to be a ferocious and menacing force. Zeus intervened to protect Callisto, his former lover, transforming Arcas into a bear like his mother. Sweeping both up in a whirlwind he placed them together in the two bear constellations that circumnavigate the North Pole: Arcas as the Lesser Bear (Ursa Minor) and Callisto as the Greater Bear (Ursa Major).

Here it is Zeus who initiates Callisto into womanhood abducting her from the sanctity of her girlhood.

Zeus and Europa

Greek myths included many bulls especially those connected to the successive generations of the dynasty of Crete. Underneath the Cretan palace of Knossos hidden in a labyrinthine chamber lived a bull-man, the Minotaur, the shameful shadow of the Minoan clan. However the myth begins two generations earlier when Zeus shape shifted into a beautiful white bull to seduce a young Phoenician princess named Europa. Like the gods of the old religion Zeus took the shape of the bull, which instigated the founding of two great dynasties - the Minoan and the Theban - as well as the eponymous continent named for the virgin Zeus abducted.

Europa was playing in a field gathering spring flowers to make garlands when she became mesmerised by a large charismatic white bull that meandered through the meadow. Possessed with desire to know the bull, she moved closer. Zeus, the bull-god, gently beckoned Europa onto his back. She dared to climb upon him, and then slowly he took her step-by-step across the meadow towards the sea. With the power of a great god, the bull strode the waves across the Mediterranean to Crete. Europa clung tightly to the great bull, as she rode farther and farther away from her homeland. Zeus had made his conquest. He took Europa as his lover, fathering three children by her; one was Minos the founder of the Cretan dynasty.

Zeus and Leda

An early cosmological theme in Indo-European myth depicted the swan as laying or brooding the world egg linking the swan to the theme of birth and regeneration. It was this mythic threads that the Greeks used to weave together their story of Cygnus, immortalized in the heavens as the swan, and much later in daVinci's painting 'Leda and the Swan'. To the later Greeks the swan reminded them of Leda who laid two eggs, one conceived with her husband, the other with Zeus.

Leda was the beautiful wife of Tyndareus, the king of Sparta, who was also desired by Zeus. With the help of Hermes Zeus devised a plan to deceive Leda in order to seize the opportunity to ravage her. Disguised as a helpless swan Zeus sought the refuge of the Queen's embrace while being pursued by Hermes, in the guise of an aggressive eagle. Safe in Leda's arms Zeus revealed himself as the great god, and then seduced her with his persuasive charm, inseminating her with his divine seed. Unknown to Leda she was already pregnant. Therefore when it was time to give birth Leda produced two eggs. From one hatched Zeus's divine progeny Helen and Pollux while from the other the mortal offspring of Tyndareus, Clytemnestra and Castor, emerged. While this myth amplifies the complexity of twinship and the sibling relationship it contains the vestige of the ancient cosmological motif but now Zeus is intimated as the world parent.

Zeus and Antiope

The kingship of Thebes had a complex and difficult history since its first founder, Cadmus. Pentheus, the next king, had not accepted the divinity of his cousin Dionysus and was torn to pieces by his own mother and other Maenads, the ecstatic worshipers of the God. After the similar death of the next king, Labdacus, his young son Laius took the throne. However the throne was usurped by Lycus, who banished the boy from the kingdom. Differing versions suggest that Lycus was voted regent by the populace of Thebes, but in all cases he appears as a dark force on the throne of Thebes.

Lycus's niece Antiope was renowned for her exquisite beauty¹⁵. Zeus was enamoured with the attractive girl and seduced Antiope in the form of a horse-legged satyr. Enraged his daughter was pregnant Nycteus asked his brother to punish Antiope before committing suicide. Fearing for her life the young girl fled from her homeland to Sikyon where she married the king, Epaphos.

Her uncle Lycus, now the king of Thebes, was determined to avenge the shame that Antiope had brought on the family. He killed King Epaphos and abducted Antiope from her adopted homeland bringing her back to Thebes in chains. On her return she delivered twin sons and was forced her to expose them, abandoning Amphion and Zethus in a cave on Mount Cithaeron. A herdsman found them, welcomed them into his family and became their loving foster father.

The two sets of twins, Castor/Pollux and Amphion/Zethus, are both known as the Dioscuri; Amphion and Zethus are known as the Theban Dioscuri while Castor and Pollux were the Spartan Dioscuri. Unlike Castor and Pollux, Zethus and Amphion are psychologically separate from one another and forge very different characters. Zethus follows the role of his foster father becoming a strong and powerful cattleman while Amphion, inspired by Hermes's gift of the lyre, becomes an accomplished musician. Zethus represents the earth and body while Amphion represents the ether and the soul.

When Antiope's persecution by her uncle finally became unbearable, she escaped from Thebes and fled to the place where she had relinquished her twins. When Zethus and Amphion eventually learn of their biological heritage they defend their mother against their uncle and claim the Theban kingship. Both become the next kings of Thebes before Laius returned to claim his throne¹⁶. The twins were responsible for the building of Thebes's famous walls and each brought their own expertise to the task. Zethus's might and strength laboured on the walls and Amphion's beautiful lyre music inspired the natural environment so that the stones and trees cooperated with their building. One twin finds his identity in the mundane world, while the other identifies more strongly with the imaginative world. Both twins also took separate brides. Zethus married Thebe, also a twin, who gave her name to the great city. Amphion married Niobe.

Zeus was involved with the great dynasties allowing the ancient Greeks to trace their lineage back to the gods and heroes of their myths.

Father of the Heroes

As patriarch of the new dynastic order Zeus's children were favoured. He fathered the favoured Olympians such as Athena, Apollo and Hermes as well as many Greek heroes including Perseus and Heracles, the two most revered heroes of the Greek myths.

Zeus, Danäe and Perseus

Like other heroes Perseus's conception was both divine and miraculous. His mother Danäe was interred in an underground chamber by her father to prevent her becoming pregnant and giving birth to a grandson who would destroy him, as the oracle had prophesied. However Zeus, disguised as a

shower of gold, seeped into the internal chamber through the walls and ravaged Danäe, who fell pregnant and gave birth to Perseus in the dungeon of her father's palace. Cast adrift at sea with his mother, Perseus's fate became entwined with the feminine, first as a hero to his mother, then as the slayer of the monstrous Gorgon, and later as the saviour of Andromeda. To help prevent his mother's marriage to an unsuitable king Perseus set out on his quest for the head of the Gorgon. Of the three Gorgons, Medusa was the only mortal one, transformed into a hideous monster by Athena for desecrating her temple where Poseidon had ravaged her. Cursed by Athena Medusa's face became so petrifying that anyone who looked into it was turned to stone, an apt metaphor for the paralysis of the dark feminine which Perseus must overcome by leaving home and becoming heroic.

Zeus, Alcmena and Heracles

Alcmena refused to yield her virginity to Amphitryon, her husband, until he had avenged the death of her brothers who died at the hands of the Teleboans, the enemies of her father. Venturing abroad Amphitryon set out on his quest to avenge the murder of his brothers-in-law. Successful at his quest the seer Tiresias delivered the good news to his queen Alcmena that her husband had been triumphant. However the night before he returned home Zeus disguised himself as Amphitryon in order to seduce Alcmena. Susceptible to his charms Alcmena gave herself to the great god thinking that it was her heroic husband. That night she conceived the hero Heracles with Zeus. The following night Amphitryon returned from his labours and consummated his marriage. This night Amphitryon fathered Iphicles, the twin of Heracles.

When Alcmena was near to term Zeus boasted that he would be the father of a great hero –who shall rule over all that dwell around him; he shall be born of the race that is my blood¹⁷. Ate, the goddess of inflation and impetuosity, of rash acts and momentary blindness, inflamed Zeus –Hear me, all ye gods and all ye goddesses, that I may utter what the heart in my bosom bids me. This day Eileithyia of the birth pains shall bring to the light a man child who shall bear sway over all that dwells around, being of the blood of those men who spring from me¹⁸

Pretending that she did not believe her husband's boast, Hera extracted the promise that the first child born of the royal family would be the great one. Having his word Hera hastened the birth of the wife of the king of Mycenae and delayed the birth of Alcmena's sons. Therefore the son first born into the family was Eurystheus, not Heracles, who fulfilled the terms of Zeus's boast. In order for Zeus's heroic son, Heracles, to claim his greatness he would later have to fulfil the agreements of the twelve labours set down by his cousin, Eurystheus. Hera, jealous of the young sons of Zeus, sent two snakes into their cribs and as a small infant it was said that Heracles strangled both these snakes to death with his bare hands.

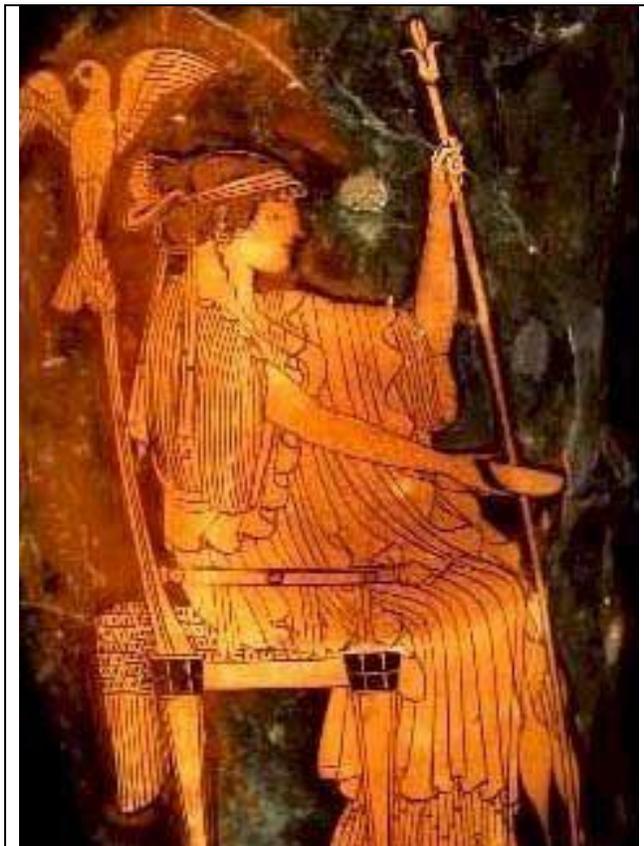
The Queen of the Gods was angry at heart
And at once sent snakes,
Which passed through the open doors
Into the chamber's wide space,
Eager to writhe their quick jaws
Around the children. But *he*
Lifted his head on high and made first trial of battle.
In two unescapable hands
He seized the two serpents by their necks:
He strangled them, and his grip
Squeezed the life out of their unspeakable frames.¹⁹

Other mythic variations suggest Heracles was exposed on the plains, which came to be known as –the plains of Heracles and Athena and Hera rescued the child. Athena patron of the hero was impressed

by the strong youth and coaxed Hera into nurturing him at her breast. He sucked so strongly that when she pulled him away the breast milk spurted out across the heavens and formed The Milky Way, the drops of Hera's breast milk forming the pattern throughout the sky. But Heracles had ingested the immortal milk of the Goddess and now was to serve in the glory of Hera.

To the ancient Greeks he was their archetypal hero, the pan-Hellenic composite of all heroes. The Delphic oracle gave him the name Heracles meaning the glory of Hera as he was destined for glory despite the enmity of the goddess. Hera's hatred for Heracles was ever present. He was the son of her husband Zeus and another reminder of his infidelity. Heracles' fate is forever interlinked with Hera as his name incorporates the goddess. Their antagonistic relationship ironically spurred him on to become the greatest hero and at the end of the Herculean myth Hera actually becomes his mother-in-law. When he is deified Heracles weds her daughter Hebe and no longer is the object of her hate. Hence the heroic round is completed and Hera is truly integrated into Heracles.

While the classical storyline of Hera and Zeus involves the consistent themes of infidelity and jealousy faint fragments of their sacred marriage are evident in the myths. Through Heracles they are reunited as family on Olympus. But like all the goddesses long before Zeus Hera was worshipped as a powerful deity in her own right.



Attic Red Figure Lekythos
ca 500 - 475 BCE

HERA

*O Hera, queen of all the blessed consort of
Zeus.
You send soft breezes to mortals, such as
nourish the soul,
and, O mother of rains, you nurture the
winds and give birth to all.
Without you there is neither life nor
growth:
and, mixed as you are in the air we
venerate, you partake of all,
and of all you are queen and mistress,
You toss and turn with the rushing wind.
May you, O blessed goddess and many-
named queen of all,
come with kindness and joy on your lovely
face.*²⁰

- Orphic Hymn to Hera

The derivation of Hera's name may be related to Hora or season. Certainly her Roman name Juno was the derivative of June, the season of the bride. On the Olympian pantheon she was the goddess of marriage or of yoke (union) and embodied social ritual and custom. At her cult in Argos young girls ran races to prepare for their marriage and the rituals of womanhood. As a bride Hera does not

embody Eros²¹; this is Aphrodite's domain. Unlike her husband Hera does not have affairs and if she is pursued by an admirer (as in the story of Ixion) Zeus exacts revenge. The trinity of Wife, Lover or Sexual Being, and Mother was often ascribed to the three goddesses Hera, Aphrodite and Demeter who were not always able to cooperate as their different roles and orientations to the feminine were at odds in many of the Greek myths.

Epithets of Hera such as "cow-eyed" refer to her earlier association with the earth and agriculture, while her epithet "of the white arms" may link her to an association with the Moon. She is often depicted in three phases: *pais* as the maiden, *teleia*, the fulfilled and *chera*, the solitary. It has been suggested that these three phases could also align with a trinity of aspects of Hera represented by Hebe, Hera and Hecate. Hebe was the daughter of Hera and the cupbearer to the Gods who became married to Heracles after his apotheosis to Olympus. In this aspect Hera is the maiden, the youth and the aspect of the feminine that retains her virginity, even in relationship. The central phase was motherhood, wifedom and a woman of power. Local folklore suggested she bathed in the streams of Argos where she was able to regain her virginity lost in the marriage with Zeus. It also been suggested that the bathing was a ritual to prepare her for union with Zeus. Hecate was associated with the final phase embracing Hera's aloneness and need for solitude. At times Hera would leave Zeus to go off on her own to pursue her needs for privacy, renewal and worship.

Hera's name may mean "mistress" However this is far older than her relationship to Zeus. Hera was indigenous to Greece long before Zeus was triumphant. The cult of Hera may have been so powerful that unlike the other goddesses Zeus was unable to be dominant, settling instead for an equal relationship. Herodotus suggests Hera may have been originally from Northern Greece while other suggestions link her back to the Neolithic Snake Goddess.²² Her cults on Samos and in Argos are linked to the prehistoric period. On Samos one of the first mammoth stone temples of the archaic period was built in honour of Hera. Similarly her temple at Olympus predates the magnificent one built for Zeus. Even the Argive myth of Zeus as the cuckoo seducing Hera seems to be a later variation to introduce Zeus into the powerful region of the Argolid. Kerényi suggests that this mythic fragment aligns Zeus with the history of Hera in Argos.²³ No doubt Hera is an older goddess like Demeter and Hestia her sisters who were born to Cronus and Rhea before their brothers. However to incorporate Hera into the politics on Olympus she became the wife of Zeus and mother to his children. By the Homeric period she is portrayed as being a negative mother to her two sons Hephaestus and Ares.

Another mythic fragment, which suggests Hera is a powerful ancient goddess, is her link to Heracles. Even though their relationship is estranged Heracles is named for the great goddess. His name literally translates into the glory of Hera. Hera whose name closely resembles hero is aligned with the greatest of all heroes, Heracles and plays a potent role in many heroic sagas. It was often her antagonism that shaped the hero and challenged him to become heroic.

Hera and the Hero

Hera's hatred for Heracles had always existed. He was the son of her husband Zeus and another reminder of his infidelity. As a baby Heracles strangled the snakes Hera sent into the nursery, the seminal episode in their antagonistic relationship. Unlike Athena Hera was the adversary of the hero, the agent of his trials and the spur for his heroism. The exception was Jason where Hera appeared as an old crone whom he helped across a mountain stream. For his kindness Hera was somewhat protective of this hero.

Hera's hatred for Heracles was equal to her passionate dislike of the Trojans. Having lost the beauty contest to Aphrodite she turned her vengeance onto the Trojans. In the *Iliad* we experience Hera's manipulation and control. However, in the *Aeneid* we fully appreciate her hatred of the hero. Like Aphrodite in the epics the male writers Homer and Virgil depict Hera as a dangerous force.

The *Aeneid* tells the story of the Trojan Aeneas, the son of Aphrodite, escaping from the ruins of Troy and journeying to found Rome. However on his voyage he is relentlessly pursued by Juno who is determined to destroy the hero. Juno is the Roman equivalent of Hera. During the funeral games for Anchises, Aeneas's father, Juno tries to destroy the Trojan fleet. She summons Iris who appears to the Trojan women bemoaning their endless wanderings and constellating their feelings of homelessness. She inflames the women to set fire to the Trojan ships in the harbour of Carthage. In the Juno-inspired frenzy with the ships ablaze Aeneas appealed to Jupiter who sent the rains which quelled the fires. Only four ships were lost.

When the Trojans eventually landed in western Italy Juno summoned Alecto, a fury loathed by her sisters and father, from the bowels of the underworld. Alecto secreted her toxins, instilling the lust for war in the indigenous people. Finally in the epic Juno must acknowledge that Aeneas's fate to found the new empire and Jupiter's decree are stronger than her fury. The *Aeneid* records the founding of Rome by Aeneas and the dominance of Jupiter. By the 1st Century BCE the power of the goddess had been usurped.

While Hera's hatred for the hero in epic the motif may be a more archaic image derived from the relationship of the goddess with her partner. Through their relationship the partner became heroic. From a Jungian perspective this suggests that the Hera aspect of the anima challenges and strengthens the masculine identity in the world.

In a man's psychology, Hera can represent the authoritarian aspect of the mother complex, against which the masculine ego must establish itself.²⁴

In the Roman pantheon of gods she was Juno, a goddess equal to her husband.

Juno Regina

To the Romans she was known as Juno *Regina*, the sovereign who shares the honour of the highest deity in the Roman pantheon as queen next to her husband-brother Jupiter, king of the gods. Each woman had her own guardian spirit named *juno*, who guided her transition into the stages of motherhood and marriage. As a light bringer she was also invoked for protection during childbirth. As the goddess of marriage her Roman name Juno was the derivative of June, the season of the bride. Women celebrated her annually in the festival of *Matronalia*. By the Roman period Juno had become emblematic of the woman as wife and citizen presiding over social customs and duties. In earlier Greek myths Hera was the adored feminine deity of many powerful city-states.

Juno and Hera are the composite that portray the seasons of a woman's life as well as the evolution of women's roles. The *juno* in contemporary woman has new power and possibilities and she invites women to challenge the constructs of inhibiting social roles. As a partner and equal Juno is supportive, enterprising, challenging and confronting, helping shape potentiality into reality. On an archetypal level Juno is the aspect of a woman who oversees the changing of social roles or is aware when entering a new phase of life that demands new customs and routines. To a man she is his sister and wife, companion and partner.

Honouring Hera supports our status and achievements in the world. Hera's ancient legacy is relationship and through her archetypal presence the individual comes more into contact with their heroic self.

ENDNOTES

¹ The Homeric Hymns, *The Homeric Hymn to Hera*.

² Homer, *Iliad*. Book 14:157-8.

³ C. Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera Archetypal Images of Father, Husband and Wife*, translated by Christopher Holme, Princeton University Press (Princeton, NJ: 1975), 113.

⁴ Homer, *The Iliad*. Book 14:346-51.

⁵ C. Kerényi in *Zeus and Hera Archetypal Images of Father, Husband, Wife*, 102 states that the source of this myth of Zeus and Hera's first lovemaking was most probably a sacred story told or sung among women at a Hera Festival.

⁶ This is the tale from the island of Samos. The story is either that the wedding night lasted 300 years or the marriage was secret for 300 years. For amplification on this see C. Kerényi, *The Gods of the Greeks*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1951, 95-99 as well as C. Kerényi, *Zeus and Hera, Archetypal Images of Father, Husband and Wife*, 91-113.

⁷ Lynda Schmidt. "The Brother-Sister Relationship in Marriage", from *The Journal of Analytic Psychology*, Volume 25, Number 1, January 1980, 34

⁸ C. Kerényi. *Zeus and Hera Archetypal Images of Father, Husband, Wife*, p.109

⁹ *Ibid.* 113

¹⁰ Homer, *The Iliad*. Book 14:293-5

¹¹ A near Eastern custom of the brother-sister marriage amongst the aristocracy was not acceptable in Greek antiquity as it was in Egyptian culture

¹² Homer considers both as the sons of Hera and Zeus, whereas Hesiod reports only Ares as the son of the couple. Two other children are Hebe the cupbearer, replaced later by Zeus's boy-lover, Ganymede, and Eileithyia, the goddess of childbirth and an epithet for Artemis.

¹³ Homer, *the Iliad*. Book 8: 18-24.

¹⁴ Maria Mavromataki, *Greek Mythology and Religion*, Haitakis (Athens: 1997).

¹⁵ Euripides play *Antiope* concerned the tragedy of her family. Unfortunately the play was lost and remains only in fragmentary references.

¹⁶ A different version suggests the twins were the original founders of Thebes. Mythographers have pieced the two stories of Cadmus and the twins together in a linear fashion.

¹⁷ Homer, *Iliad*. Book 19. 102-105

¹⁸ C. Kerényi, *Heroes of the Greeks*, p. 132

¹⁹ Pindar, *Nemean Odes*, 1: 40-8.

²⁰ *The Orphic Hymns*, translated by Apostoios Athanassakis, Scholars Press (Missoula, MO: 1977), 27.

²¹ Myrtle, which was seen as an erotic plant, was not placed in the marriage crown so that Eros was to be left out of marriage.

²² Marija Gimbutas, *The Goddesses and Gods of Old Europe*, Thames and Hudson (London: 1982). 149-50.

²³ C. Kerényi. *Zeus and Hera Archetypal Images of Father, Husband, Wife*, 123.

²⁴ Edward Edinger, *The Eternal Drama*, Shambhala (Boston, MA: 1994).

