Marcel Detienne

THE HUNT AND THE EROTIC*

No serious argument proves that mythology is only a by-product or a residue of history. On the contrary, a certain number of analyses and theoretical reflections on the myth suggest that different levels of meaning, covering the whole body of mythology, demonstrate a great autonomy and that if the hunt, for example, introduces a series of myths, in a society as fundamentally agricultural as Greece in the first millenium, it is not a distant echo but rather is faithful to the social means of production of a horde of hunters who had crossed the clearings of History some millenia before, but in a less diffuse manner because the cynegetic activity constitutes an excellent operative in the scheme of the myth. For a series of reasons: the hunt, a fundamentally masculine activity where the confrontation with wild animals results in bloodshed in order to procure a meat complement, contrasts with the cultivation of the land but is closely linked with warfare. If this is completely the privilege of the male, because it is a work of death, the production of cultivated foods, on the contrary, takes place on the level of gestation and reproduction, even if working the land in Greece is assumed by men. As for the connection between the powers of life and death, the hunting episode includes both the beyond and negation of cul-

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tivated lands. Chosen place of the forces of barbarity, the open domain of the hunter belongs only to the masculine sex. For the young boys who venture there alone or with companions their own age, the cynegetic adventure assures integration into the political class of adults. It is by passage through the wild lands that the male child, raised in the shadow and heat of female bodies, is introduced to the kingdom of virility; it is by confronting wild animals that he prepares himself, more or less directly, to become a warrior, initiated into the undivided privilege of men: violence that makes blood flow. Artemis, mistress of the hunt but a virgin, only half opens her forest domains and mountains to the young maidens condemned to marriage. The little "she-bears" cannot leave the enclosure bounded by the sanctuary where, to expiate the murder, committed by a man in this very place, of a she-bear intimate with Artemis, the young girls of Athens are taken into the service of the goddess "to play she-bear" in a saffron dress, in order to have the right to abandon their virginity and return to the city to become brides and mothers, at the end of the novitiate.[1]

The hunting territory, forbidden to young girls and crossed by boys before achieving the status of warrior and adult, is not only the negation of cultivated land and the closed space of the home, it also represents a dimension outside of marriage: entertaining deviant forms of sexuality, or rather, those alien to the city. A series of relations seems to tie together the hunt and the erotic: through hatred of the woman, a young man goes into the mountains in pursuit of the hare and does not return; to escape the marriage which lies ahead of her, a young woman decides to go off to the mountain tops and make war with the wild animals. But, in masculine love affairs, the gifts the lover offers the beloved (eraste to eromene) are often fruits of the hunt (hares, deer, foxes),[2] just as in the courtly tradition of Crete, it is in

[1] The body of traditions on the origin of the ritual of the she-bear is examined by W. Sale, " The Temple Legends of the Arkteia ", *Rh. Mus.*, no. 118, 1975, pp. 265-284.

[2] In this manner the hare and the deer, on the Cotyle cup of Amasis: Louvre, 479 (S. Karasou, *The Amasis Painter*, Oxford, 1956, p. 37, N. 71, pl. 13); hare and fox, on Socles' cup: private collection (K. Schauenburg, "Erastes und Eromenos auf einer Schale des Sokles," *Archäologischer Anzeiger*, 1965, pp. 849-867, fig. 3).

the course of a hunting season, lasting two months, that the adolescent, raised according to custom, is intimate with his lover before being integrated into the brotherhood of warriors, access to which is opened to him by the ravisher, when at the end of the initiation the beloved receives his war rank from the hands of the lover.[3]

Forests and mountains compose the masculine landscape from which the female-bride is radically absent, as are the socio-political values defining the correct use of the female body. Consequently, it is there, where social rules are silent, that deviations are expressed and transgressions occur. Hippolytus, the fool of Artemis, inseparable companion of the Virgin,[4] is devoured by the fire of continence and avoids the daughters of Proitos, maddened with desire and completely naked since the day they insulted Hera; Dionysius, the wild hunter, carries off the pack of brutalized women, who left their weaving tasks, abandoning husbands and homes;[5] Atalanta, possessed with hatred for Aphrodite, pursues, javelin in hand, the dream of an intangible virginity while Polyphontus, the Great Murderess leaves to be a little "she-bear" and lives in the sole company of Artemis, falling madly in love with a real bear, with whom she makes love under the horrified eyes of the Virgin Huntress.[6]

At the same time, if the woods, forests and mountains compose the common landscape of the adventures of Hippolytus, Atalanta and the daughters of Proitos, it should not be necessary to conclude hurriedly that the hunting domain in Greece served as a refuge for the unhappy victims of sexual problems. In its position between war and marriage the cynegetic realm has the capacity to become, in mythology, the privileged place of marginal sexual behavior; that is, the refusal of marriage by the male as well as by the female, or the opposite, the experimentation with censured sexual behaviors. Liminal space where the dominant relations between the two sexes are suspended, the realm of the hunt is

[3] Strabo, X, 483. Cf. H. Jeanmarie, *Couroi et Courètes*, Lille, 1939, pp. 450-455.

[4] Euripides, *Hippolytus*, 17.

[5] Cf. J. Kambitsis, *Minyades kaì Preitides*, I, Jannina 1975.

[6] Antoninus Liberalis, *Métamorphoses*, XXX. Desire for the bear is suggested to her by Aphrodite, who is outraged at the scorn shown her by Polyphontus.

open to the subversion of love relationships, whatever might be their methods or details.

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Within the perspective opened by the connection between the hunt and the erotic, the example of Adonis must have served as the touchstone. At least it leads one to re-examine the cygenetic activity whose fatal issue polarizes attention and risks orienting the interpretation narrowly. In an earlier analysis we had emphasized the negative aspect of the confrontation with the wild boar: how, in a tradition between the fourth and third century before our era, from the comic poet Euboulos to Nicander to Colophon, the emphasis was placed upon the flight before the monster's charge and upon the ridicule of a hunter whose fear could send him hiding in a lettuce patch, unless his mistress was foolish enough to offer him the protection of a plant whose deadly effects she would know at her expense.[7] The impotence which follows happens to sanction, on the erotic level, the lack of virility of a hunter who does not have the courage either to spear the wild boar or await it on firm feet, thus proving that he possesses neither the valor nor the fighting fury of his adversary. But Aristarchus is not wrong: it would have been as ridiculous to compare Adonis' adventure to the feats of Hercules, killer of monsters and destroyer of wild beasts as to let Aphrodite's splendid eyes brave Athena's steely gaze.[8] A negative reading can demonstrate how Adonis, because of his behavior in the hunt, finds himself excluded from the masculine world instead of integrated into it as was proper for adolescents his age. But in pointing out a lack, the interpretation risks forgetting that the beautiful eyes of Aphrodite are not strangers to the conduct of Adonis the hunter.

Ovid's version is quite explicit on this point.[9] Seduced by the beauty of a young man, Aphrodite forgets the shores of Cythera, and abandoning heaven, she follows the steps of Adonis. In order to follow her lover in his race through forests and moun-

[7] *Jardins d'Adonis*, p. 130.
[8] *Schol. T. in Il.*, XXIV, p. 31.
[9] *Metamorphoses*, X, pp. 520-576.

tains, Aphrodite transforms herself into the power of the hunt: her dress rolled up to her knees in Artemis' style, she excites the dogs and pursues the animals, not without discernment. Her game, animals one can capture without danger: hares ready to run away, head lowered; red deer with long antlers; or even fallow-deer. She keeps a distance from wild boars, formidable in their strength; she avoids the ravishing wolves; the bears armed with claws and the lions which gorge themselves on the blood of oxen.[10] In introducing herself to the world of the hunt, Adonis' mistress immediately divides the animals into two groups: on the one side, hares and deer, the game which flees before the hunter's aggression; on the other side, bears and wolves, lions and wild boars, the ferocious beasts whose aggression provokes flight. These limits imposed upon the cygenetic activity, Aphrodite does not confine them to a singular use: she assigns them to her lover by way of a myth, the narration of which is relegated to Adonis and justifies the treatment reserved for the most savage animals, in particular, lions and wild boars. If these fierce beasts are excluded from the cygenetic circle in which Adonis sees himself confined, it is because Aphrodite vows to hate them without pity, in return for which the violence of these wild animals does not cease to nourish itself. The origin of the division is a young woman named Atalanta, who devotes herself to the hunt because she looks upon Aphrodite and marriage with horror, which will make it worthwhile for her to be transformed into a lion, into one of those animals whose odious race is a heavy weight hanging over the happiness of lovers.

Between Adonis the seducer and Atalanta the huntress, the confrontation presents itself as inevitable, on the double terrain of the hunt and sexual desire: Aphrodite provokes and orders it in person. Moreover, the encounter between Atalanta and Adonis is neither surprising nor without precedent. An Etruscan mirror from the end of the fourth century before our era offers us a version which places it under the sign of the hunt.[11] In the

[10] *Op. cit.*, pp. 537-541.

[11] Etruscan mirror from East Berlin (Staatliche Museen, Antikenabteilung, Inv. Fr. 146): J. D. Beazley, " The World of the Etruscan Mirror, " *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, no. 69, 1949, pp. 12-13 (a good photograph of it was given by W. Attalah, *Adonis dans la littérature et l'art grecs*, Paris, 1966, fig. 5, p. 65).

center, at the top of the scene, a boar's head. Arranged on both sides, two couples distinctly separated. To the right, Atalanta and Meleager: he standing upright, his shoulder leaning slightly on his lance; she, nude as is her companion, is seated, an elbow propped against the right knee, and in turning the head away from her surroundings, her gaze drifts off into the distance. The other couple is equally bisexual, but this time it is the masculine figure who finds himself seated in the symmetrical position of Atalanta. In the left hand he clasps a lance while his right hand draws the woman leaning towards him, whose arms already encircle his shoulders. The incription names her *Turan*.[12] It is the Etruscan Aphrodite who intimately embraces her lover, Adonis. Between the two couples, within the axis of the monstrous animal, a fifth person occupies the center of the scene: a winged woman with a hammer in one hand, and in the other a spike which she prepares to thrust as high as the boar's head. This is Atropos, the Fate (Moira) spinning the irrevocable destiny, not only for Adonis and Meleager but for the two contrasting couples as well. Atalanta, assisted by Meleager, triumphs over the wild boar, recluse of Calydon who mobilizes the flower of young men. Adonis, the opposite, dies a pitiful death, defeated by one of the inhabitants of the woods whom Aphrodite instructs to fear hatred and to flee from violence. The predominant tension is not between Adonis and Meleager,[13] for the latter is more or less a nonentity, bound to the tragic end that Artemis' displeasure has reserved for him, in setting himself up against his maternal uncles who refuse to let a woman get a hold of the wild boar's hide and carry off the trophy, symbols of masculine virtues and power. In the presence of a hunter with "a shameless passion," [14] clinging to the body of his mistress, Atalanta presents herself not only as a huntress without a male equal but also in the ephemeral and detached couple she forms with Meleager, a woman as indifferent to the desire of her companion as to the ferocious animals inhabiting the forest.

[12] Cf. R. Schilling, *La religion romaine de Venus*, Paris, 1954, pp. 165-167.
[13] Contrary to the interpretation defended by Beazley.
[14] Cf. *Jardins d'Adonis*, 130, N. 1. In his essay on *Panyassis of Halikarnassos* (Text and Commentary, Brill, 1974), 120-125, Victor J. Mattheis relates this trait to the version developed by Panyassis [F 25 k (b)].

The interest in the Ovidian version of Adonis' adventures is not only to develop a series of distinctions between a seducer gone astray from a hunting party and a huntress fleeing from marriage; it is to turn their development in the direction which provokes the maximum tension between the two figures, since Aphrodite's narrative, in allowing us to foresee the death of Adonis, attributes the responsibility beforehand to Atalanta, with the discretion that homology implicit between the lion and the wild boar in the Greek bestiary allows.[15] Paradoxically, Ovid's narrative is not centered around the exalted feats of Atalanta blazing through the forest defying wild beasts. The race has replaced the hunt. Atalanta is a strong young woman accustomed to the foot-race. She is so well-endowed that she surpasses all of the male champions in the special event. Perhaps that is why one day Atalanta goes to the Oracle to ask if she has to take a husband. The reply is explicit: you do not need one and even, run from it. To this advice he adds a warning: but you will not escape, and, without ceasing to live, you will cease to be yourself.[16] Terror-stricken, Atalanta runs away; she retreats into the somber forests from which she consents to leave only to make her impatient suitors undergo the test of speed, whose stakes are her virgin body or the head of the man.

Since Antiquity, mythographers have wanted to distinguish two Atalantas: one, originally from Arcadia, hunts and draws the bow; the other, Boetian, is the swift runner.[17] But that the different versions of the same myth can vary is not disputed, there as elsewhere in their geographic components. Where a woman is concerned, racing and hunting are not such clearly contrasted activities that they alone justify a radical division. In addition, the Ovidian narrative does not separate them: the forest becomes the domain of the young woman, so agile a runner since she decided to flee from marriage. In an earlier Ovidian tale, the *Metamorphoses* related the part taken by Atalanta in

[15] Cf. "L'olivier, un mythe politico-religieux," *Revue de l'Histoire des Religions*, 1970, no. 3, pp. 18-19.

[16] *Metamorphoses*, X, pp. 564-566.

[17] Thus in *Schol. Theocr.* III 40 d; *Schol. Eur. Phénic.* 150; and the modern mythographs have confirmed the division (cf. W. Immerwahr, *De Atalanta*, Berlin, 1885).

the expedition against the wild boar of Calydon.[18] A young girl swifter in the race than the competing males must necessarily appear to others and to her own eyes, as an ambiguous being whose appurtenance to one sex more than to the other remains uncertain. In seeing Atalanta join the hunters who are going to ferret out the wild boar, Meleager does not know if this face is that of a virgin in a young man or of a young boy in a virgin.[19] Undoubtedly, the foot-race is a less clearly masculine activity than the pursuit of wild animals: the young girls reclused in the Artemisian sanctuary of Brauron[20] participate in the tests of speed in the same manner as the young Spartan girls who confront each other at the feasts in honor of Helen,[21] and as on Mt. Olympus, at the college of sixteen married women.[22] But at some of these meets, the women are not able to match their masculine competitors whose swift arms and legs are part of their warrior qualities. On the contrary, the races in which Atalanta triumphs take place exclusively on masculine terrain, the only time her superiority brings into question her sexual identity and afterwards allows her to eliminate her suitors and show them that in spite of appearances, she does not belong to the tame world of women.

In the case of Atalanta, the homology of the race and the hunt is much clearer than that of the young woman bearing arms and the one who sheds blood. In reality, the race that Atalanta inflicts upon her suitors is only the continuation of the hunt by the same means and with the same weapons. In the version retained in the *Library* of Apollodorus, the refusal of the feminine world marks the destiny of Atalanta since birth. Her father, who had wanted a son, exposes her. A she-bear suckles her and nurses her until some hunters find her and take charge of her upbringing.[23] Before triumphing over the wild-boar and assuming a leonine form, Atalanta is a little she-bear, but not in the manner of the Athenian girls who are she-bears before the wedding, in honor of Artemis of Mounchie or those of Brauron, so that, as

[18] *Metamorphoses*, VIII, pp. 317-430.
[19] VIII, pp. 322-323.
[20] Lilly G. Kahil, "Autour de l'Artémis attique," *Antike Kunst*, 1964, pp. 20-33.
[21] Theocritus, *Epithalamus of Helen*.
[22] Pausanius, V, 16, 2.
[23] III, 9, 2.

the old saying goes, they may purge themselves of every trace of savagery.[24] On the contrary, by drinking the milk of the she-bear, Atalanta is introduced to the world of wild beasts and at the same time is detracted from a marriage vocation that most certainly does not make her think of camaraderie with men who are exclusively impassioned by the hunt in the middle of the woods.

"Become a complete woman, (teleía) she wanted to remain a virgin (parthénos), and hunting in the lonely forests, she never surrendered her weapons (kathōplisménē dietélei)."[25] The tension that the Apollodorian narrative already indicates between the physiological accomplishment of the nubile period and the lot chosen by Atalanta, armed and a virgin, is broadly explored in the version by Theognis of Megarus.[26] Atalanta is ripe for marriage (hōraíē) but refuses it and steals away on her wedding night (gámos). "Being girded around the waist /or/ equipped with her arms (zōsaménē), she accomplishes meaningless feats /or/ without end (atélesta télei). Abandoning her father's home, the blonde Atalanta goes into the high crests and the mountains to escape a desirable union and to flee from the gifts of the golden Aphrodite. But in spite of her refusal she experiences marriage /or/ understands what its consummation was (télos d'égnō)."[27] The marriage season opens with sexual maturation (hōraîos). When growth permits it, that is to say, when there is a complete woman (teleía),[28] the conjugal state is imposed as a natural moment of the female being, just as the tree, once it reaches maturation cannot refuse to bear fruit. On the contrary, Atalanta refuses to realize herself through marriage, and under the circumstances, the homology between *gámos* and *télos* justifies itself in syntactical parallelism which introduces the Theognis narrative of Atalanta's adventures.[29] In her father's house virginity is unsufferable; the marriage problem

[24] Élien, *Hist. Var.*, 13, 1; *Anecdota graeca*, I, 444, 30-445, 13, Bekker.
[25] Apollodorus, III, 9, 2.
[26] 1289-1294.
[27] In the space of 6 lines, the word *télos* appeared three times explicitly; a fourth, by way of its equivalent *hōraiēh*.
[28] Cf. *Jardins d'Adonis*, pp. 218-219. There is a *télos...gámoio* (*Od.* 20, 74) or a *gamēlios télos* (Aeschylus, *Eumenides*, 835).
[29] 1289: *anainoménīn gâmon andrôn/pheúgein* 1294: *télos d'égnō kai mál' anainoméhē*.

will make him violent, sooner or later. Only one problem: how to short-circuit the fulfillment which threatens her by obliging her to another, which unfolds in a strange space where conjugal relations are abolished, but at the same time where a woman, if she penetrates that space, becomes a troublesome image and nobody knows if she is a girl or a boy.

Already at the onset ambiguity colors the gestures. The expression "to gird onself" points in two directions. The belt is the last piece of clothing put in place; to tie it or close it completes the woman's attire or completes the warrior's uniform. When the gods convened by Zeus crowd around Pandora, and the snare is set to trap Prometheus and mankind, it is Athena who attends to the attire of the virgin and binds the belt.[30] But at Thebes, in memory of a counter-attack led by Amphitryon against the Eubean warriors, they had raised a statue of Athena, called "of the girdle" (zōstēría) in the very spot where the Theban king dressed himself and donned his arms.[31] Between the feminine dress and the military uniform, Athena, virgin and warrior, assures a mediation so much more efficacious that she prefers to gird and bind, willingly surrendering the privilege of the loosened virginal belt to Artemis,[32] for this is also the piece of clothing that the groom unties and which the young woman must consecrate the first time she unites herself with a man.[33] To be precise, Atalanta does not intend to untie it and she binds her waist only to guard and defend her virginity.

In entering the domain of the hunt and donning the arms which henceforth she is not going to cease wearing, Atalanta girds her loins with "the belt of Ares," the talisman which guarantees the Amazons in the name of their queen, Hippolyta, pre-eminence in the art of war.[34] Instead of fulfillment through marriage (*télos... gámoio*) she chooses to accomplish (*teleîn*) feats whose essential

[30] Hesiod, *Works*, 72; 76.

[31] Pausanius, IX, 17, 3. Cf. Ch. Picard, "Athéna Zōstēria," *Revue des études anciennes*, 1932, 245-253, The warriors are called Zōstēres Enyoús; Callimachus, *Hymne à Apollon*, 85.

[32] *Parthenìē zōnē*: *Od.* XI, 245.

[33] *Paroemiegraphi graeci*, II, 513, 5-8.

[34] *Zōstēr* of Ares: Apollodorus, II, 5, 9; after having captured the queen of the Amazons, Hercules is going to offer her to Hera, sovereign power over matrimony in the temple at Mycene: Euripides, *Hercules*, 416-418.

virtue is that of being without end or conclusion. *Atélesta*, in two senses: endlessly, for they must never cease;[35] but also without offspring, for they are useless and vain. Atalanta's hunt is as interminable as the race to flee marriage is perpetual. In the same way so many cynegetic feats are frivolous from the moment that they are no longer directed in the sense of a return and an integration within a civilized society.

Like the Amazons, carnivorous virgins,[36] Atalanta the huntress fully assumes the traditional double meaning of the epithet, *antiáneira*: resembling a male and hostile to men.[37] A woman who has the value of a man can only be his enemy, in the race as in the hunt. But it's in a test of speed that Atalanta reveals a ferocity that, far from satisfying, the pursuit of wild beasts seems to excite and carry to an extreme. In the Apollodoran version where a refound father immediately pressures his daughter to respond to the attention of the suitors, Atalanta leads the game: she imposes the test, she dictates the conditions. The man starts first; he has the right to a head start.[38] But it is not the handicap that a desirable champion imposes upon herself to modify a very obvious superiority. Between the two adversaries, a distance is required so that there be a chase. In truth, Atalanta is releasing her game right in front of herself. The man is naked; she is armed.[39] As in the hunt: a lance, javelin or dagger. On the inner sides of a Roman vase, preserved in the castle at Vincigliata, near Florence, Hippomenes dashes forth with all of his speed towards the goal, his head turned towards his pursuer who is bounding forward while holding an unsheathed sword in her right hand.[40] The race to which the suitors are invited is thus only a hunting party but where they must play the role of the game, of the snared beast whose safety depends on the swiftness of his feet.

The ceremonial hunt in which Atalanta exhibits herself is not

[35] Parmenides, 8, 4 and 8, 32; 42.
[36] *Kreobóroi*: Aeschylus, *Supplicants*, 287.
[37] The epithet is given here by Nonnos, *Dionysiaca*, 35, 82, but *The Iliad* attributes it to the Amazons (3, 189; 6, 186).
[38] Apollodorus III, 9, 2.
[39] III, 9, 2: *kathōplisménē*: Hygin, *Fables*, 185.
[40] A. Minto, "La corsa di Atalanta e Hippomenes figurata in alcuni oggetti antichi", *Asenia*, no. 9, 1919, pp. 78-86.

reduced to a perverse form of passion for an activity which violently rejects the conjugal model. The test of speed is not without a relation to the marriage. In Sparta, Ulysses takes Penelope away after a victory in a race which permits a decision between the numerous suitors;[41] in the Libyan tradition, Anteus, the King of Irasa, places his marriageable daughter at the end of the race and announces to the gathered suitors that the first one who touches her veil would win her; at Argos, the forty-eight daughters of Danaos are married in this manner, without reprieve, thanks to the wisdom of a father who decided that each of the competing candidates would obtain, in the order of arrival, the hand of one of his daughters.[42] In a test of this kind, the woman does not run; she waits at the end of the course in front of the suitors who contend with agility and vigor. Atalanta deliberately inverts this scenario: instead of offering her desirable body at the end of a race track, it is the armed woman who hunts down some naked men before her and throws them into a maddened flight. To her uncertain victor Atalanta insists again that it be only the quickest man to run away from her. The subversion of marriage by the hunt functions thus on a terrain where, by inverting the roles assigned to the masculine and to the feminine, Atalanta, carnivore and virgin, can pretend to herself that she practices only that hunt so earnestly recommended to Adonis by his mistress: choose the game that one captures without danger, hunt only frightened hares and terrified deer, all the animals ready to flee before the hunter.

This is the huntress whose adventures Adonis hears from Aphrodite, who while leaning on the breast of the lover rests after the weariness of hunting the hare. A story, says Ovid, which was often interrupted by kisses.[43] Whereas for Atalanta cynegetic activity is the path chosen in the denial of sexual desire and refusal of Aphrodite's gifts, by forcing the space reserved for marriage to be now solely the domain of the hunter, for Adonis and his mistress who whispers the rules of the game to him, the hunt is part of the countryside where one hesitates between the pleasure in pursuing a frightened hare and

[41] Pausanias, III, 12, 4 sq.: 13, 6.
[42] Pindar, *Pythiques*, 9, 105-124.
[43] *Metamorphoses* X, 557-559.

the charm of stretching out on the grass under the shadow of a large tree. As much as Atalanta wishes and makes herself more virile than a man in devoting herself to the hunt, so Adonis finds in the same activity the opportunity to prove himself effeminate and voluptuous, a hunter so seductive that Aphrodite abandons heaven to accompany him and instructs him to heed only the victims who refuse his ardor with the same resistance that a lover anticipates from his mistress. The choice of certain animals emphasizes again the erotic character of the Adonian hunt, for the deer as well as the hares are his hosts in the woods, the importance of which Attic pottery reveals in love relations, where they are offered as gifts to the desired partner. But here again, if the comparison confirms the aphrodisiac symbolism of the game reserved for Adonis' courage, it shows how the erotic rapport between Aphrodite and her lover expresses itself in the hunting domain on the masculine and homosexual model of a relationship between the *éraste* and the *éromène*, between the adult warrior and the still beardless adolescent.

It is in the logic of the division of the cynegetic domain established by Aphrodite that a so very effeminate hunter becomes the designated victim of wild beasts, lions or wild boars. The narrative has only to establish the modalities and the occasion of an encounter. It's in this context, it seems, that three versions of Adonis' death are written. In the first,[44] the principal role is assumed by the Muses, daughters of Memory who want to avenge themselves for having been constrained by Aphrodite to mate with mortals and to bear progeny by them. Their weapon is song: they invent a hunting melody so captivating that Adonis, full of pride—or blindness, states a sub-version—rushes forward to confront the forest monsters. The wild boar was at the meeting place. The magic of a hunting melody is required to make him forget the prudent advice of Aphrodite. And the plan devised by the daughters of Memory would have been senseless if Adonis were not the lover ignorant of the masculine hunt which Ovid's narrative and the Etruscan mirror demonstrate.

In the second version,[45] it is Artemis who takes the initiative:

[44] *Scholies à Lycophron*, 831, ed. Scheer, 266, 4-21.
[45] Apollodorus, III, 14, 4; *Schol. Euripide, Hippol.* 1421.

she too wants to avenge herself of Aphrodite, responsible for the death of another hunter, Hippolytus, who, the opposite of Adonis, had chosen the Artemisian forest to protect himself from marriage and to reject sexuality with as much passion as Atalanta. The pleasure party that Aphrodite organizes for herself and her lover could only increase the anger that the mistress of the hunt already nursed. As for the third version, it combines death under the blows of the furious beast with the chastisement reserved for a seducer: it is Ares, Adonis' unhappy rival who appears in the form of a wild boar, rendering what are usually warrior's skills to the service of a lover's grudge.[46]

A recently published ceramographic document defines the special relationship which links the hunt and seduction through the myth of Adonis. In 1972, Erika Simon revealed the circular imagery of a small box, a *pyxis* which can be dated back to the year 380 before our era and which is attributed to the Painter of the Amýonè of Würburg.[47] The freize unfolds between two seated figures of opposite sexes, in a verdant setting which locates the action in the middle of nature, and to be exact, in a hunting reserve as indicated by the two javelins in the left hand of the seated young man. Around and between the two main figures are four persons, arranged in pairs. Two winged Cupids, the first of which has an animal on a leash, turns towards the hunter to whom a standing woman is speaking, the movement of whose hands reveals the verbal content. The other Cupid, on his knees, is the counterpart of a masculine figure in a broad-brimmed hat and Hermes' wand, which he holds near the seated woman. E. Simon's interpretation allows for the identification of all the characters. Thanks to the wand and the head-gear, Hermes was undoubtedly the least enigmatic. Standing, the elbow leaning lightly on a raised knee, right hand on the hip, the deity brings his gaze in the direction that rests equally, though by turning the head, upon the seated figure of the female sex. Two characteristics permit the identification of Aphrodite at Hermes'

[46] *Scholies à Lycophron*, 831; Nonnos, *Diony.*, 42, 209-211. Cf. W. Attalah, *Adonis*, 320-321, where the bride who draws the vengeance of the seducer calls on Hephaïstos.

[47] "Aphrodite und Adonis. Eine neuerworbene Pyseis in Würzburg." *Antike Kunst*, no. 15, 1972, pp. 20-26, pl. 5-7.

side: at first sight, the Cupid kneeling at her feet, followed by the gesture of the right hand slightly raised behind the shoulder as if to support a veil: characteristic position of Aphrodite "in the Gardens." [48] The look of female power falls simultaneously upon the young woman and her handsome hunter, who in order to listen to her, turns his head in the direction of the two women. A wine flask in the Hermitage,[49] dated at the end of the fifth century before our era, leaves no question as to the meaning of the scene. The woman who is speaking to the seated young man in such a convincing manner can only be Aphrodite's faithful companion, *Persuasion* (Peithō), the messenger "who was never refused." [50] On the vase with reliefs at the Hermitage, the same power occupies the central position between two figures whose names are revealed by the inscriptions: Aphrodite on one side, and seated facing her, with a Cupid resting at his knees, Adonis. To identify more precisely the hunter towards whom Aphrodite dispatched "sorcery in honey-coated words," [51] whoever made the *pyxis* was unable to ignore the she-cat held on a leash by Cupid, balanced by Aphrodite's priest. Now, this carnivore, apparently in hunting dress and resembling a Felid of the Panther family, presents the zoological characteristics of the cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*).[52] In Old Cyrenian which was spoken by the Berbers and elsewhere in Egypt since the 18th and 19th dynasties,[53] the cheetah serves as a dog because it can be easily tamed and because of its remarkable adaptation to racing which allows it to attain a very high speed, in the order of 100 kilometers per hour.

Coveted by Aphrodite from that moment on, the hunter is some Eastern prince: Paris-Alexander, Anchises or Adonis.[54] As the first two plainly manifest their Eastern origins by dress and hair style as by the ceramographic tradition rendering them, and

[48] E. Langlotz, "Aphrodite in den Gärten," *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philos. Hist. Kl.*, 1953-54, 2, Heidelberg, 1954.
[49] K. Schefold, *Untersuchungen zu den Kertscher Vasen*, Berlin, 1934, 103, fig. 41-42; W. Attalah, *Adonis*, 203-204, fig. 60.
[50] E. Simon, *op. cit.*, 22.
[51] Aeschylus, *Prometheus*, 172.
[52] E. Simon, *op. cit.*, 22.
[53] O. Keller, *Thiere des Classischen Alterthums in culturgeschichtlicher Beziehung*, Innsbruck, 1887, pp. 154-157.
[54] E. Simon, *op. cit.*, 22.

since in addition both are shepherds and not hunters, Adonis' candidacy seems to be the most serious after all. It remains to interpret the meeting between Aphrodite and Adonis in a forest setting and the manner in which the love mission of *Persuasion* reconciles itself with the hunting prospect that seems to confirm the cat's impatience to enter the hunt. The interpretation which Erika Simon suggests concentrates the actions around one individual:[55] Adonis, placed at the crossroads between the twin Cupids, face to face, whose struggle must decide whether the passion of the hunter or the loving happiness offered by Aphrodite will win. Is Adonis going to yield to the call of the hunt and the cheetah, or on the contrary, is he going to listen to the persuasive voice of the matchmaker who is going to offer him the pleasures of marriage and the promise of a union with Aphrodite?

The iconographic tradition of the twin Cupids and enemy brothers has *Eros* and *Anteros* confront each other: sometimes one is blond and the other has black hair; but almost always they fly towards each other, or even fight together, sometimes alone, sometimes under Aphrodite's eyes or before an audience of goddesses.[56] On the *pyxis* of Würzburg, to the contrary,[57] the Cupids ignore each other and are completely absorbed with their priestly functions in the service of two major figures, the movement of whose heads indicates a symmetrical position. Between Aphrodite and Adonis there is no longer any open defiance: as on the relief vase at the Hermitage, the persuasive word of *Peithō* follows the path of reciprocal desire which makes the two lovers gaze at each other in the middle of the forest. Aphrodite's glance is conveyed by the voice of *Persuasion* whose triumph is registered by the attention of the hunter turning his head towards the two women. Alert and seated next to Aphrodite, Hermes is not only there in the name of former complicity with Aphrodite and her companion: his presence is warranted by an equal competence in both domains, which meet under his very eyes, while he contemplates the loves of Aphrodite with a young hunter, far from roads and houses, in a wild place

[55] E. Simon, *op. cit.*, 22.
[56] A. Greifenhagen, *Griechische Eroten*, Berlin, 1957, pp. 40-46.
[57] The documents reproduced by E. Simon, *op. cit.*, pl. 6 clearly show the difference with the *pyxis* towards the one they collected.

removed from cultivated lands. Between love and the hunt, Adonis of the Painter of the Amymone of Würzburg hesitates no longer: he has already chosen. Proof of it is furnished by the same feline that Eros, Adonis' companion, has on a leash.

In effect, the iconography of myths cannot prove a zoological fact on its own. Once more it is neccssary to inquire as to the position the cheetah occupied in the Greek bestiary, that is to say, in the melange of encyclopediac knowledge and symbolic values atributed to different kinds of animals. In addition, in the figurative area, and not only in ceramics, it is not always easy to distinguish a cheetah from a panther. In a cup from Vulci which is a British Musem holding, an elegant ephebe bearing a long wand with a sponge at the end of it, moves forward holding a superb spotted cat on a leash: for O. Keller, specialist in the history of animals from Antiquity, it's a cheetah;[58] for Erika Simon, it is either a panther or a leopard.[59] Doubt is not only accepted, it is essential. The Greeks, to whom this imagery was bestowed, did not possess the linguistic means to distinguish these different species of animals from each other. While they gave specific names to the lion and tiger, when it came to the designation of the wild beasts of the Felis genus (*Panthera* and *Acinonyx*) the Greeks used two words, *párdalis* and *pánthēr*, almost indiscriminately.[60] When Elien in his *History of the Animals* [61] tells of the hunter who had tamed a *párdalis*, it is impossible to know if he means a tiger-cat, a cheetah, a panther or a leopard. Such semantic imprecision cannot be without consequence in the corresponding figurative realm.

From Aristotle to the Byzantine bestiary, animals like the *párdalis* and the *pánthēr*—we shall refer to the panther for convenience's sake—present a certain number of symbolic features clearly demonstrable. Like the other great wild beasts, the panther is not an animal one hunts; she is a hunter and the man who confronts her must possess equal courage.[62] As for the rest of

[58] O. Keller, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-157; 389, N. 81 (other documents).

[59] A documentation largely based on the panther in H. Geret, *see Panther*, *R. E.* (1949), C. 767-776.

[60] Fr. Wotke, *see Panther, R.E.* (1949), C. 747-767.

[61] VI, 2.

[62] His valor affirms itself in a Homeric comparison, *Il.* 21, 573-580, the only one where Hector's challenge is announced: it is then that all of the

the animal world, the panther draws upon some hunting skills which belong to the fox and cunning beasts. Like them, she possesses the virtue of prudence, the *phrónēsis*, intelligence which comes from trickery and knowing how to disguise the objective she intends to reach. Undoubtedly, in this game she cannot compete with the Fox, who in Aesop's fable compliments her on her new coat, but comments that the motley (poikilía) pattern of her coat is nothing in comparison with the motley or spotted (poikílos) spirit, by which he, the Fox, earned the surname Cunning.[63] Without doubt, the panther knows just as well how to play dead in order to catch monkeys, in spite of their agility and their caution regarding her.[64] But if the fox's prudence gives way in the sudden reversal of death that happens so swiftly, the panther's guile is more secretive: she has recourse to the faculty of pleasant scent. In effect, the panther is a perfumed beast. It is moreover what distinguishes her from other animals. No animal except the panther naturally releases a pleasant odor, writes Theophrastus.[65] And an Aristotelian problem inquires, without clearly replying to it, moreover, why all of the animals with the exception of the panther are foul-smelling.[66] There was even in the city of Tarsus, in former times, a perfume reputedly called *Panthère* (pardalium), but the formula for it was lost in the time of Pliny the Naturalist.[67]

The panther recognizes and uses her lovely scent to capture her victims. Aristotle explains it when he offers some examples of cautious behavior in the animal kingdom. "The panther, he says, realizes that the wild animals love to inhale her perfume; she hides in order to hunt them; they advance close by, and she snares them the same way she snares the doe." [68] Pliny insists

Trojans flee toward the city, Agenot meeting him. "Such is a panther, coming out of the deep thicket, who challenges the hunter. Her heart shows neither fear nor desire to flee, when she hears the dogs bark. If the first man touches her or reaches her, even piercing her with the javelin, she does not lose courage; she will attack first or perish."

[63] Aesop, *Fables* 42; Plutarch, *Moralia*, 500, C-D.

[64] Élien, *Treatise on the Nature of Animals*, V, 54.

[65] *Caus. Plant.* 6, 17, 9; Pliny, *Natural History*, 8, 62; 21, 39.

[66] XIII, 4, 907 b 35-7.

[67] 13, 6.

[68] Aristotle, *History of the Animals*, IX, 6, 612 a 12-15. Cf. Theophrastus, *Caus. Plant.*, VI, 5, 2; [Antigone], *Mirabilia*, 31, in *Paradox. gr.* 50-51 Giannini.

upon it: the panther is an expert in self-concealment. For if all the animals are so strangely attracted by her odor, in return, the fierce expression of the carnivore sends them running. This is why the panther is very careful to hide her head as much as the rest of her body.[69] The invisible perfume is the snare in which victims lose themselves while breathing the fragrance of the wild beast. In Élien's narrative the panther pleases herself by exhaling a scented breath, and the fawns, wild goats and all the animals of the forest draw near as if bewitched by a magic spell, by the charm of an *iunx*. The technique is even more refined in the *Physiologus*,[71] which will give the Medieval bestiary tradition *The Tale of the Panther of Love*:[72] when the panther has eaten she retires to her lair; three days later she awakens, lets out a roar and since her great throat is full of the perfume, soon all of the animals drawn by her exquite scent rush in to throw themselves into the jaws of the wild beast who awaits them.

Such a fragrant animal does not itself remain insensitive to the perfumes which surround it. That would seem to explain why panthers are frequently captured in the Pamphylia region, which has numerous aromatic spices. Attracted by the scented emissions, the panthers come from Armenia across the moutains, leap across the Taurus and advance in the direction of the gum of the styrax tree, when the wind blows and the trees begin to smell sweet. Philostratus, to whom the information dates back, tells in *The Life of Apollonios of Tyanus* that one day they captured one of these animals, which wore a gold collar around her neck with an inscription engraved in Armenian: "King Arsace to the god Nysa."[73] Because of her beauty and her form, the panther was dedicated to Dionysius.[74] For some time she accepted the caresses of her master, but the springtime excited her; she

[69] *Natural History*, 8, 62.
[70] *Op. cit.*, V, 40.
[71] I, 16, ed. Sbordone, p. 60, 5 sq.
[72] Nicole de Margival, *Le dit de la panthère d'amors*, éd. H. A. Todd, Paris, 1883. "Li vraie pantière... garist de se douche alains" the wounded or sick animals which come near him. Richard de Fornival, *Li Bestiaire d'Amours*, ed. C. Segre, Milan, 1957, 45, 1.
[73] II, 1-2. Passage taken from the *Bibliothèque* of Photius, 324, a25, b18.
[74] Cf. H. G. Horn, *Mysteriensymbolik auf dem Kölner Dionysesmosaik*, Bonn, 1972, 109 sq.

left, headed in the direction of the mountains. She was captured in the Pamphylia region where the scents had lured her.

In order to trap wild beasts partial to fine aromas, men will only have to turn their power of seduction and guile against them. The formula for it is given by Oppien: it's the scent of wine.[75] It is enough to pour a few flasks of it near a water hole. Aroused by the odor, panthers draw near and drink as much of it as there is. All that remains is to seize them by profitting by their inebriation. And if the trap is very effective, it is undoubtedly because panthers also have a reputation of being constantly thirsty.[76]

In her hunting technique, the panther combines guile and seduction: the snare that she sets for her victims is no other than her wild body whose scent causes them to forget the voracious death that lurks within it. This seduction through the olfactory sense must have born a close association between the panther and the image of the perfumed woman with a desirable body. For Aristophanes and his contemporaries, a courtesan is, in effect, a "panther" (pórdalis).[77] But the word does not have the perjorative and contemptuous connations of the term *kasalbás*, which refers simultaneously to the flesh and bedding. In *Lysistrata*, after the overthrow of the males, forced to yield to their wives' arguments, the male leader pays an angry homage to the strength of desire to which the female body gives rise: "mark of the most indomitable beast, mark of the most consuming flame, no panther is as bold." Lysistrata's friends clearly demonstrate that in transparent blouses, little saffron-colored tunics and in perfumes, they are capable of "roasting and turning their husbands on the grill." Myrrhina, who disappears after being doused with perfume, and leaving her husband to waste away, does she not prove a fierceness greater than that of the panther towards the victims drawn by her scent? Moreover, it's here Socrates who derives the theory from practice, scandalizing the prudish, on the occasion of his meeting with Theodotis, a very beautiful courtesan who was Alcibiades' mistress. He explains to her that in order

[75] *Cygenetica*, IV, 320-353; Timothée de Gaza, 11 ed. M. Haupt.
[76] Damascius, *Vie d'Isidore*, 97.
[77] Aristophanes, F. 478 Kock; *Lysistrata*, 1014-1015.
[78] *Jardins d'Adonis*, 121-122.

to find lovers, she engages in an activity similar to the hunt: she hires game-beaters; she uses dogs of several breeds; she sets up ambushes; and all this apparatus to trap the game and to hold him in a snare is her female body, beautiful and desirable.[79] Like the panther, the beautiful courtesan employs a kind of hunt that the Greeks called "Aphrodite's hunt" (*aphrodisía ágra*):[80] desire is its snare, and whoever is the victim of it is seized by love, in the same way that partridges, so ardent that the shrill song of the waiting bird gives rise in the male to a violent desire to mate, to the point that he sometimes even places himself on the head of the female.[81]

The Adonis of Würzburg is thus not like Hercules at the crossroads; his choice is already made: it is the hunt, but in the manner of the panther that Cupid keeps at his side. And the charming call of the wild beast who does not distinguish between seduction and hunting responds symmetrically to the persuasive voice of *Peithō*. It's as if the painter, prolonging the myth which Ovid's narrative confirms, had wanted to show in the same figurative scene the double relationship of seduction which joins lovers and write into the cygenetic domain familiar to Adonis, a new homology between the desire which produces the myrrh-tree and the attraction to the perfumed breath of the panther which is exerted in an irresistible way. No other animal, it seems, could better symbolize the aphrodisiac nature of the hunt reserved for the daughters of Myrrha: a hunt so emasculated and unvirile that it was led by the courtesan appropriately surnamed, *Panther*.

To look for a reference, preserved by some miracle, to an historic detail or to some original event which could explain the fabulous narrative and senseless language of Adonis' hunt, recorded in Greek mythology, would be to misunderstand seriously the nature of its significance. Nevertheless, in the conviction that mythology had to explain itself by its own past, interpretations are not lacking. Among the first, the pitiful death of

[79] Xenophon, *Memorable*, III, 1, 1, 5 sq.

[80] Hesychius, *s.v. aphrodisía ágra; Paroemiographi graeci*, II, 150, 6, Leutsch-Schneidewin.

[81] Aristotle, *History of the Animals*, IX, 9, 614 a 26-28.

[82] On the Cotyle d'Amasis (Louvre A 479), in the procession of presents and enamoured couples, a man on his knees has an upright, frisking panther on his left arm, the figurative context of which certifies its erotic value.

Adonis could be evidence of the forced retreat of hunter-gatherers before the rise of grain eaters; others, less formal, seemed to think that all cygenetic activity could be located only in the immensity of the Paleolithic period, the only period in human history so long that it determined genetic evolution to the extent that it provided favorable grounds for the invention of gestures and conduct which impressed the memory of men and released in them the mythopoetic creation.

The analysis we have presented here—by separating the hunting sequence from other episodes in the same continuous mythology—does not concede to those forms of history; on the contrary, it concerns itself with what is, on this scale, the only true history: the encounter in the domain of the hunt between Adonis and Atalanta. And through the interwoven myths of the young girl who takes up the hunt to escape marriage and the young man whom Aphrodite sweeps away, confusing the art of seduction and the art of trapping game, it is the hunt as a mythic vehicle—and not above all a socio-economic reality—that the selected interpretation questions while exploring the space where seduction, marriage and the cygenetic activity meet.