



10 Perseus and Bellerophontes

Akrisios and Danae

In chapter 6 we saw that the line of Io led us through Belos to his children Danaos and Aigyptos; by the time of the *Prometheus Desmotes*, certainly, the union of their respective offspring—Hypermestra and Lynkeus—points to the future birth of Herakles. All known accounts, however, also make Herakles descend from Perseus, so that very likely in earlier tradition, as in Apollodoros, the child of Hypermestra and Lynkeus is Abas, Perseus' great-grandfather (ApB 2.2.1; cf. Σ *Pho* 180). This Abas is actually documented in a fragment of the *Ehoiai*, but unfortunately the names of his parents are lost at the beginning of the papyrus (although mention of a "great insult" might refer to the slaughter of the Aigyptioi: Hes fr 129 MW). In any case, Abas in the *Ehoiai* marries someone (again the name is lost; Apollodoros suggests Aglaia), and the offspring are two sons, of whom one is Akrisios and the other missing but (since he marries Stheneboia) surely Proitos (first attested as a son of Abas and brother of Akrisios at Bak 11.40, 64–69). The *Ehoiai*'s sole concern (here at least) is genealogy; thus there are no stories of the two brothers beyond their marriages and children. Akrisios weds Eurydike, daughter of Lakedaimon; there is room for one child, whose name is lost but who must be, as in the *Iliad*, Danae (*Il* 14.319–20). Proitos has, meanwhile, several children by Stheneboia, three daughters, in fact, though only one name, "Iphianassa," survives. These daughters are destined to a long madness (for varying reasons) and a cure at the hands of Melampous, while their mother will cast covetous eyes on Bellerophontes when he becomes a guest in their home; we will return to both these tales in the second half of the present chapter.

Before leaving the family, however, we should note that Bakchylides recognizes a quarrel between the two brothers over some slight cause, a quarrel that induces the people to suggest that Proitos, here named as the younger brother, leave Akrisios and Argos and found a new city at Tiryns (Bak 11.59–72). Apollodoros adds to this that the brothers quarreled already in their mother's womb (much as did the sons of Phokos in the *Ehoiai*), and continued that argument as grown men, with the kingdom of Argos at stake (ApB 2.2.1). In this latter account, Akrisios succeeds in expelling Proitos from the Argolid altogether; the latter retires to Lykia, where he marries Stheneboia, daughter of the king Iobates. With his new father-in-law's help he then succeeds in return-

ing to the Argolid and installing himself at Tiryns. Pausanias seems to reflect something of the same idea in saying that there was a pitched battle that was inconclusive, and then a reconciliation (2.25.7).

We hear again of Akrisios in one other fragment of the *Ehoiai*, where despite gaps we find Danae bearing Perseus to Zeus and being thrown into the sea in a *larnax* or chest (perhaps before she has actually delivered the child); the word "golden" appears next to Zeus here, but without its last letters we cannot tell whether it referred to him (as a shower of gold?) or something else (Hes fr 135 MW). We can, however, say that the story was not told in any greater detail than this. Otherwise we have nothing until the fifth century, but at that point Pherekydes offers (even in a scholiast's summary) a very full account that largely obviates the need to resort to later sources. As he relates the story, Akrisios marries Eurydike, daughter of Lakedaimon, just as in the *Ehoiai*, and a daughter Danae is born to them (3F10). But when the new father goes to Delphi to inquire about the prospects for a son, he is told that he will have none, but that Danae will bear a son by whom he will die. Accordingly, he returns to Argos and has an underground chamber of bronze constructed in the courtyard of his house to serve as a prison for Danae and her nurse. It seems that we must suppose an aperture in the roof of this chamber to let in light and air, for Zeus, desiring Danae, flows down into her lap like gold; when he has revealed himself the union takes place. Perseus is of course the result, and his mother and the nurse raise him without Akrisios' knowledge until he is three or four years old; at that point, Akrisios hears his shouts as he plays, and the secret is discovered. Akrisios executes the nurse and, taking Danae to the altar of Zeus, demands to know who has fathered the child. Danae's claim that it was Zeus is disbelieved, and both she and the child are placed in a chest, which is then locked and thrown into the sea. Carried through the sea, the chest comes to the island of Seriphos and catches in the nets of the fisherman Diktys, son of Peristhenes. When he discovers the contents, he takes Danae and Perseus home, and treats them as his own family.

This version of the beginning of the story is accepted in its general lines by later writers and becomes the standard account; indeed already in Pindar's *Pythian* 12.17–18 we find reference to the shower of gold by which Zeus came to Danae. There is, however, one surprising deviation recorded by an *Iliad* scholion and ascribed likewise to Pindar among others: the scholiast says that Danae was seduced (or forced) by her own uncle Proitos, and that for this reason Proitos and Akrisios quarreled (Σ Ab *Il* 14.319 = fr 284 SM). The scholiast does not actually say that Perseus was therefore Proitos' child, but his language and order of events make clear that he supposes Proitos to be an alternative to Zeus as Danae's lover. Apollodoros offers the same information without naming Pindar, and again as a variant on the usual tale of Zeus and the shower of gold, suggesting that he too thought Perseus might in some accounts be Proitos' child (ApB 2.4.1). We have seen that in both the *Iliad* and the *Ehoiai* Zeus is clearly the father, and elsewhere too (*Nem* 10.11) Pindar

mentions his visit to Danae. Consistency in Pindar's use of myths from one poem to the next we need not expect, so that possibly Proitos was in some work of his the father of Perseus. But perhaps too our scholiast and Apollodoros misread their sources, and Akrisios imprisoned his daughter as a punishment for her seduction, leaving Zeus free even at this point to visit her and father her child (compare Aithra, who spends the same night with Aigeus and Poseidon). If this is correct, then the seduction by Proitos substitutes for the oracle (as cause of Danae's imprisonment), rather than for Zeus as Perseus' father. Admittedly, however, if there is no oracle Akrisios' treatment of his daughter will be curious—mere imprisonment after her seduction, but attempted execution after she bears a child. On the whole, Proitos as seducer suggests a familial conflict in which one brother challenges the other's authority by usurping his right to give away his own daughter, but when this idea might have arisen and to what extent it challenged Zeus' role in the matter remain questions.

From Pindar's slightly earlier contemporary Simonides, we have the famous lament of Danae as she watches her son sleep peacefully in the (open?) chest in which they have been placed (543 *PMG*). Although the poem is undeniably elegant, and ends with a poignant appeal to Zeus, it offers us nothing beyond the obvious difficulties of their situation, and does not even name Zeus as the father, though the implication is very strong. Turning to tragedy, we find that all three of the major tragedians dealt with Danae's plight, but very little remains. Aischylos almost certainly dedicated an entire trilogy to Perseus, of which two of the tragedies were *Phorkides* and *Polydektes*, while the satyr play was the *Diktyoulokoï*.¹ This last (in English, *Net-drawers*), treated Danae's arrival on Seriphos and her rescue from the Satyroi, who in a satyr play are naturally the ones to find her.² At one point in the preserved fragments, Danae does refer to some blame on the part of Zeus for which she has paid the penalty (fr 47a.18–20 R), so we can probably assume Zeus' complicity. As for the tragedies, in the absence of the third title we must admit some uncertainty. Presumably the middle play was the *Phorkides* and related the conquest of Medousa, while the final drama (*Polydektes*?) probably depicted Perseus' return to Seriphos. But the opening play could equally have dramatized the causes of Danae's predicament or the conflict with Polydektes that forced Perseus to seek the Gorgon's head. In any case, Danae probably provided an Aischylean version of this first part of the story in the course of the *Diktyoulokoï*, since she surely explained her presence in the chest to Diktys, if not to the Satyroi. Judging by the titles *Danae*, *Akrisios*, and *Larisaioi*, Sophokles may also have composed a connected group. Whether this was the case or not, he seems to have dealt quite fully with Akrisios' dilemma, since both the *Danae* and the *Akrisios* are probably set in Argos; perhaps one play dealt with his decision to imprison his daughter and the other with his casting her into the sea after the child is discovered.³ Nothing useful remains from these plays, save Akrisios' conviction that if the child lives he must die (fr 165 R), but a chorus from the same poet's *Antigone* reminds us that Danae "exchanged the light of

the sun for bronze-bound halls," and "honored in her conceiving guarded the gold-poured offspring of Zeus" (*Ant* 944–50). Euripides' *Danae* seems to have followed the same pattern, with Akrisios desiring to have a son, an oracle, Zeus in the form of gold, and Danae pleading for the safety of her child; the imprisonment in the chest may have represented an alternative to his instant death.⁴ For the very popular later notion that Danae was imprisoned in a tower rather than underground, the earliest ancient source appears to be Horace (*Odes* 3.16.1–4), followed by Ovid (*AA* 3.415–16 *inter alios*); possibly this is a misconstruction of the Greek word *pyrgos*, usually translated as "tower" but often just an out-building (though admittedly never underground).

In art there is nothing before the early fifth century, and nothing even in that period which suggests any variant traditions.⁵ A Red-Figure calyx krater by the Triptolemos Painter (Leningrad 637) shows two phases of the story: on one side Danae (so named) sits on a couch adjusting her headdress while drops of liquid descend into her lap from above; on the other a carpenter adds the final touches to a chest in which Danae and child stand while Akrisios (also named) looks on. Both these scenes repeat themselves often in the remainder of the century (with Danae frequently holding up her skirts to catch the rain), but the motif of the chest's preparation (or Danae seated in it with her child) is perhaps the more popular. Two of the earliest examples, a stamnos by the Eucharides Painter (Leningrad 642) and a hydria by the Gallatin Painter (Boston 13.200) deviate from the representation of the Triptolemos Painter in showing Danae beside the chest while a nurse holds the child, but both also feature the carpenter fitting the chest, as do several later pieces. Such agreement on a rather incidental detail has prompted the suggestion that all these painters have been inspired by a play, most likely one by Aischylos for his trilogy.⁶ But of course a wall painting is also a possible source, and then too, the other side of the Leningrad krater is not likely to have been inspired (at least visually) by a stage work. A Red-Figure lekythos by the Providence Painter (Toledo 69.369) presents the chest already finished; Perseus from inside reaches up to his mother, while Akrisios gestures to Danae, presumably ordering that she too must enter. Still other examples show mother and child seated in the chest as Akrisios watches (e.g., Ferrara 818, Boston 03.792). Later vases usually offer just variations on this basic tableau, although on a lekythos by the Ikaros Painter in Providence we see Danae and Perseus actually floating in the chest while birds flutter around overhead (Providence 25.084), and several Red-Figure vases from the 450s show Diktys and his fellow fishermen opening the lid of the chest (on one piece snarled in their nets) to find the mother and child inside (e.g., Clairmont Coll, no #; Agora P29612; Syracuse 23910).⁷

One other quite problematic illustration appears on a White-Ground lekythos of about 450 B.C., also now in Bern (Jucker Coll). An old man, grieving or lost in thought and labeled as Akrisios, sits on the middle step of a three-tiered monument that certainly looks like a tomb; on that middle tier is the name "Perseus" in the genitive, marking the monument as his, and below the

letter *s*, perhaps the last letter of Danae's name in the genitive. It has been thought that this is Danae's underground prison, but since Akrisios is at this point in the story unaware of Perseus' existence it becomes hard to see why the child's name should be given. Perhaps, though, he has just now learned of that unwanted birth and sits pondering what to do.⁸ Alternatively, there is the suggestion that Akrisios in remorse has built a cenotaph (empty tomb) to honor his lost daughter and grandson after their presumed demise.⁹ In any event, a play would seem a likely source for this singular tableau, although if the object is a cenotaph we will be hard-pressed to devise a plot, given that no preserved version brings Perseus back to Argos to find Akrisios. Just possibly Akrisios might have built such a cenotaph at Larissa (for Sophokles' *Larisaioi*?).

*Danae and
Polydektes*

Again Pherekydes is our fullest source, and here our earliest source of any kind. Diktys has a half-brother Polydektes (by the same mother, Androthoe, daughter of Perikastor: 3F4), who is king of Seriphos (3F11). When Perseus has grown to manhood in the house of Diktys, Polydektes chances to see Danae and becomes enamored of her, but is at a loss how to win her. Preparing a feast, he invites Perseus together with many others. At this point, the scholiast's summary of Pherekydes becomes slightly unclear, and we must seek help from Apollodoros, who gives every indication of using Pherekydes as a source (ApB 2.4.2). The feast is actually an *eranos*, that is, an affair designed to solicit contributions; Apollodoros says that Polydektes pretended he was in need of gifts for the wedding of Hippodameia, daughter of Oinomaos.¹⁰ In Pherekydes, Perseus then asks what contribution is needed; Polydektes replies, "a horse," and Perseus answers, "the head of the Gorgon." Our scholiast does not give any reason for this strange retort, but Polydektes chooses to take it at face value, so that when Perseus on the following day brings his horse with the others, the king rejects it and insists on the head. Rather illogically, Polydektes adds that if the head is not supplied, he will claim Perseus' mother. Apollodoros for his part presents the remark as a piece of foolish bravado in which Perseus claims in the spirit of the moment that no request by Polydektes is too great, not even the head of Medousa. This makes fair enough sense, but it could scarcely have been predicted by Polydektes, and so does not explain his purpose in offering the feast to begin with, any more than it explains why Danae should be forfeit. Aischylos may have dramatized the whole situation, if the first play of his Perseus trilogy, like the third, took place on Seriphos. The plot is admittedly not what one normally thinks of as Aischylean drama, but then neither are the plots we believe to have been used for the second and third plays (the beheading of Medousa and lithification of Polydektes). Euripides seems pretty certainly to have used the threat to Danae as the basis for his *Diktys*, in which Danae takes refuge at an altar when Polydektes tries to seize her by force; probably there was some explanation here too of why Perseus had to secure the Gorgon's head. From Pindar's *Pythian* 12 we have only the briefest refer-

ence, but he does say that Perseus made bitter Polydektes' *eranos* and the continual slavery and forced marriage bed of his own mother (*Py* 12.14–15). Such language clearly implies that Polydektes had in fact married Danae in some accounts, and we find the same detail in one of the Cyzicene temple epigrams from the second century B.C. (*AP* 3.11). Likely enough the king did not expect Perseus to return, and saw no point in waiting to claim his forfeit. Neither art nor later literature has anything more to contribute to this part of the story, save for the odd tale of Hyginus that upon finding Danae Diktys took her immediately to Polydektes, who married her and caused Perseus to be raised in the temple of Athena (*Fab* 63). The sequel to this has Akrisios come directly to Seriphos, where Polydektes intercedes with him on behalf of Perseus and Danae, then dies. In such a version, Polydektes seems Perseus' protector rather than his enemy, and the marriage to Danae appears amicable; the expedition for Medousa's head is not mentioned. For one other idea, that Polydektes asked Perseus for a horse because he knew the boy could not afford one, I have not found any ancient source. Pherekydes and Apollodoros both state clearly that he did in fact bring one.

Perseus and the Gorgons

As we saw in chapter 1, Homer mentions a Gorgon's head in both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, but never Medousa by name, nor Perseus in connection with such an adventure. Indeed, we cannot be entirely certain that Homer knew or thought of Gorgons as complete creatures, suitable for decapitating. At one point we do find the Gorgon head on Athena's aegis (*Il* 5.738–42), but perhaps that detail is older than the explanation of how the head got there (or perhaps Homer knew rather Euripides' tale of Athena's slaying of a Gorgon at Phlegrai [*Ion* 989–96]). Our earliest sure reference to Perseus and the Gorgons is the *Theogony*, where Perseus cuts off Medousa's head (all three sisters are named here), and Chrysaor and Pegasos emerge from her neck (*Th* 270–81). The scene is somewhere toward the edge of night, beyond Okeanos near the Hesperides; no motive or further details are given. In the *Aspis* we see Perseus on Herakles' shield, flying through the air, with winged sandals, a sword slung about his shoulders, a tasseled *kibisis* on his back with the head of the Gorgon in it, and the cap of Hades on his head (*Aspis* 216–37). Other Gorgons (the text does not say how many) pursue. In art the earliest representations appear to be the act of decapitation on two Boiotian relief pithoi (Louvre CA 795, CA 937),¹¹ and the subsequent flight on the Protoattic Eleusis amphora, all dating probably to the second quarter of the seventh century. On only one of the two relief pithoi is Medousa preserved (as a female Kentauros), but in both cases Perseus averts his gaze, thus attesting to the power of the Gorgon's face. The Eleusis amphora features Medousa's decapitated body stretched out horizontally while her sisters pursue Perseus; already here we find Athena intervening as a rear guard between Perseus and the Gorgons, a detail that will become standard in a good many later representations. Hermes seems first to appear on the Gorgon Painter dinos in the Louvre, where he and Athena bring up the

rear, behind the Gorgons (E874). The better preserved Boiotian pithos shows clearly the sandals, *kibisis*, a petasos, and a straight sword; likewise on a clay metope of the later seventh century from Thermon (which shows only Perseus: Athens 13401) and a spouted krater by the Nettos Painter (Berlin: Lost F1682), as well as the Louvre dinos. On the Samos ivory relief Perseus' lower body is missing and the *kibisis*, if present, is hidden; only the pointed cap and sword survive (Samos: VM E 1). The artistic tradition grows progressively richer as we move down into the sixth and fifth centuries, showing sometimes the beheading (as on the Olympia shield-band B 975), more often the pursuit, but rarely adding any new narrative detail to the story. But we do find one exception on a Chalkidian amphora dating to about 520 B.C. (London B155). Here three women, inscribed as Neides, approach Perseus with the gifts he needs: the first holds the winged sandals, the second a broad-brimmed cap, and the third a *kibisis*. Perseus himself already has a straight sword in scabbard slung round his shoulders, and Athena stands behind him. The bronze temple of Athena in Sparta, dated by pottery to about this same time, displayed a similar scene, if we may trust Pausanias (3.17.3).

For any literary account beyond the brief description in the *Aspis* we must once again be grateful to Pherekydes, although for this part of the story we will have some help from Aischylos as well. As the scholiast continues his summary of Pherekydes' account, Perseus in despair over his dilemma goes to the furthest part of Seriphos (3F11). There Hermes appears to him and asks the cause of his lament; on learning of the problem the god takes him to see the Graiai, Athena leading the way. From these sisters Perseus steals their one eye and tooth as they pass them among themselves, and refuses to give the items back until they tell him where he might find the Nymphai who possess the cap of Hades, the winged sandals, and the *kibisis*. They do so, he returns the eye and tooth, and acquires the assistance he needs under Hermes' escort. He then flies to Okeanos where the Gorgons live, with both Hermes and Athena following. They find the Gorgons sleeping; the two gods warn Perseus that he must look away as he cuts off the head, and tell him which of the three is mortal (in this respect agreeing with the *Theogony*). He secures the head, puts it in the *kibisis*, and flees; the sisters pursue but cannot see him. We should note that this account agrees exactly with the Chalkidian amphora as to the Naiades and their gifts to Perseus (cap, sandals, *kibisis*), although we may well wonder why Hermes could not supply the sandals, and why Hades does not have his own cap. Aischylos' *Phorkides* appears to have been rather different in some details, but we must remember the limitations of his stage: Pherekydes' version requires four separate locales (Seriphos, Graiai, Nymphai, Gorgons), and the playwright can show only one. Apparently he chose to put the Graiai on stage, and to eliminate the Nymphai altogether, for several writers say that in Aischylos Perseus received his sword from Hephaistos (e.g., *Katast* 22), and the play is very likely the source for the immediately adjacent idea that Hermes supplied the sandals and cap (full citations in fr 262 iv, v R).

In any case, Aischylos certainly draws greater attention to the Graiai by making them the guardians of the Gorgons; thus, rather than obtaining information from them, Perseus intercepts the one eye that they use to stand guard and throws it into the Tritonian lake (fr 262 i-v R). The Graiai are in this fashion blinded, and the way cleared for Perseus to steal up on the sleeping Gorgons. Some support for a pre-Aischylean origin of this version might come from Pindar's *Pythian* 12, an early ode (490 B.C. ?)¹² in which we are told that Perseus "darkened the wondrous race of Phorkys" (*Py* 12.13). Such a remark could, of course, refer to a temporary seizure of the eye such as Pherekydes describes, but it will have far more point if Pindar envisions the same situation as Aischylos. On the other hand, two separate sources associate the motif of permanent blindness specifically with Aischylos, and we can see why he might have invented it: he wants to make his one scene as important as possible, and if the most crucial part of the mission becomes the disarming of the Graiai, then the actual beheading of Medousa can more easily be remanded to a messenger speech. But whether this element is new or not, the playwright does retain the essential features of the story, that is, magical gifts and the help of the gods without which Perseus cannot succeed, and the Graiai as a somehow necessary stepping-stone to the Gorgons. A Red-Figure pyxis lid and a krater fragment, both about 425 B.C., represent the first preserved attempts to show the theft in art. On the lid Perseus creeps in on hands and knees and reaches up as the transfer of the eye is about to be made (Athens 1291); the krater fragment shows him moving away from one of the sisters as she sits eyeless (Delos B7263). But we cannot say for either of these artists whether Perseus keeps the eye or gives it back.¹³

To the few details noted above we can add that Pindar's *Pythian* 10 sends Perseus to the far north, to the land of the Hyperboreans (*Py* 10.29–36). Pindar does not, however, say that Perseus actually found the Gorgons (or the Graiai) there; possibly he was looking for the Nymphai. In Aischylos' *Prometheus Desmotes*, we have already seen that the Graiai and Gorgons live near each other, and somewhere to the far east where Io can encounter them (*PD* 791–800). Prometheus, perhaps exaggerating for effect, says that no mortal can look on any of them and live. In Apollodoros we do find several new features that may or may not go back to Pherekydes' original account. For one thing, the sword (not mentioned at all in our scholiast's summary) is a present from Hermes; for another, we find here the idea that Athena holds up a polished shield so that Perseus may guide his hand when striking the blow (*ApB* 2.4.2).¹⁴ The first preserved literary appearance of this shield is in Ovid (*Met* 4.782–83; cf. Lucan 9.669–70, *DMar* 14), but several South Italian pots have already illustrated the decapitation in such a way (e.g., Boston 1970.237, an Apulian bell krater). Quite a number of South Italian vases and Etruscan mirrors offer a variant on this, with Perseus and Athena calmly viewing the decapitated head's reflection in a pool of water, presumably to satisfy Perseus' curiosity once the deed has been accomplished (so, e.g., London B620 [mir-

ror]).¹⁵ The idea of that reflection as a defense against her power is by contrast conspicuously absent in sixth- and fifth-century representations, where Perseus simply looks away as he cuts off the head (so Olympia B 975, NY 45.11.1), or even presumes to look at it (Richmond 62.1.1). The birth of Pegasos and Chrysaor from the neck of Medousa, noted as early as the *Theogony* and frequently shown in art, has already been discussed in chapter 1. One other tale, that Perseus visited Atlas on his way back from the isle of the Gorgons, we have likewise discussed in chapter 1, in dealing with Atlas' fate. A dithyrambist Polyidos apparently told an early form of this story (Σ Lyk 879 = 837 PMG), but we know it best from Ovid's preserved account (*Met* 4.627–62). In both versions Perseus and the Gorgon's head are simply a device to transform Atlas into a mountain that subsequently supports the sky; Perseus' justification for the deed is that Atlas has threatened him or rudely refused shelter, recalling as he does a warning that a son of Zeus will steal his apples. Perseus is not the son meant, of course, and the tale is probably late in its inception.

Andromeda Curiously enough, our summary of Pherekydes passes over this adventure altogether and takes us directly back to Seriphos to deal with Polydektes. Later, however, it does acknowledge Andromeda's presence, for Perseus brings her with him when he sails back to Argos (3F12). We should consider too that the purpose of the scholion that gives us this part of the story (the decapitation) is to explain the origin of the Libyan snakes in the *Argonautika* as springing from drops of Medousa's blood; thus there is really no reason for the scholiast to report an unrelated *parergon*. The tale of Andromeda *is*, on the other hand, recounted by Apollodoros, in all probability using material from Pherekydes which the scholiast omitted. As we saw in chapter 6, the *Ehoiai* notes the marriage of Perseus and Andromeda (Hes fr 135 MW), and while the fragment in question says nothing about deeds of heroism to bring about that union, these are guaranteed at least for the sixth century by a Corinthian amphora now in Berlin to which we shall return shortly.

In chapter 6 we found Kepheus provided with two contrasting pedigrees, both ascribed to Euripides: Apollodoros said that the playwright made him and Phineus sons of Belos (ApB 2.1.4; so too Hdt 7.61), while Hyginus claimed that Euripides and others gave him to Phoinix as offspring (*Astr* 2.9). Whichever side of the line of Inachos he falls upon, the literary account of his misfortunes surfaces first in the lost *Andromeda* plays of Sophokles and Euripides. From Sophokles we get only one piece of real information, but an important one: Kassiopeia, wife of Kepheus, dares to compare herself to the Nereides in beauty, and Poseidon sends a sea monster (*kētos*) to destroy the land; therefore Andromeda is offered up to the monster (p. 156 R apud *Katast* 16, 36). Of Euripides' play we know that Andromeda speaks the prologue from her place of confinement and is then visited by Perseus, who secures promises from her in return for his proposal to slay the beast (fr 132 N²). Probably he also frees her at this time; in any case, the latter part of the drama seems to have revolved

around Perseus' subsequent difficulties in establishing himself to Kepheus (or Kassiepeia?) as a suitable husband.¹⁶ If we can believe Hyginus (*Astr* 2.10), the original cause of the trouble, Kassiepeia's boast, was here the same as in Sophokles. Ovid and Apollodoros likewise agree with that explanation and add that Kepheus was forced to offer up his daughter after Ammon had pronounced that he could thus appease the monster (*Met* 4.668–71; *ApB* 2.4.3). Perseus here arrives, contracts a bargain directly with Kepheus for Andromeda's hand, and slays the monster. But Kepheus' brother Phineus, the former betrothed of the girl, objects, and in Apollodoros concocts some sort of plot to kill Perseus, who uses the Gorgon head to turn him and his friends to stone; in Ovid there is simply a pitched battle after Phineus has interrupted the nuptial feast, with similar results (*Met* 5.1–235). On this whole development as an aftermath of the rescue (i.e., Phineus' claim to his niece and Perseus' use of the Gorgon head to lithify his rival), Ovid is our earliest preserved source, followed by Apollodoros and Hyginus (*Fab* 64), but we saw that Euripides in some drama makes Kepheus and Phineus brothers. That being the case, and given that Perseus in the *Andromeda* does encounter difficulties of an uncertain nature in claiming his bride, it seems quite possible that Phineus was a character in the play;¹⁷ if Apollodoros has drawn on Pherekydes for this part of his account the story would be older still. Hyginus' version follows the same lines as the others but makes the former suitor Agenor, not Phineus. As so often with this author, it is impossible to say whether he here records a genuine variant, or has simply confused members of the same family. Herodotos adds that Perseus and Andromeda remained with Kepheus for a time, and left their first-born child Perses with him when they departed, as he had no offspring of his own (*Hdt* 7.61).

Later literary sources follow closely this general outline, and thus have little to contribute. In art we do find, however, some small points of interest. The Corinthian amphora in Berlin mentioned above is certainly the earliest representation of the tale (Berlin:PM F1652); it may well be joined later in the sixth century by a Caeretan hydria (Hirschmann Coll, no #).¹⁸ The amphora shows Perseus advancing toward the *kêtos* with a stone in each hand, while behind him Andromeda waves her arms in excitement; all three figures are named. On the hydria only Perseus (if it is he) and the *kêtos* are shown; the hero holds a stone in one hand and a *harpê* in the other as he prepares to do battle. The story does not reappear until the third quarter of the fifth century, and we may thus suspect that Sophokles' play is responsible for a renewal of interest (Euripides' version is surely later¹⁹). In fact, a whole series of Red-Figure vases in this period depict Andromeda as tied between two poles or posts to await her fate; on one, Perseus contemplates her while holding the *harpê* (Basel BS 403).²⁰ No early source says how Perseus dealt with the monster, although the stones used on the Corinthian amphora might suggest that it was simply driven off. Later writers all have Perseus destroy him, with Ovid in particular describing his use of his sword to do so (*Met* 4.706–34). In the later

artistic tradition he likewise employs a sword (so, e.g., Berlin:Ch VI 3238, a Campanian hydria); not until Loukianos do we find it suggested that the head of Medousa came into play (*DMar* 14, but note that here he uses both *harpê* and head). The illustration of Andromeda's imprisonment and rescue is especially abundant in Apulian pottery of the fourth century B.C.. In these examples Andromeda is sometimes still tied to posts (Naples Stg 708), but sometimes also bound to the entrance of a rocky overhanging grotto (Würzburg 855), and finally just chained to a solid outcrop of rock (Halle, no #); this last option will carry the day in subsequent centuries. One other point to be considered is the role of Kassiepeia. She is entirely absent from the fifth-century representations, although she may be the casually seated woman on some fourth-century ones. The astronomical tradition is in solid agreement that her constellation shows her sitting in a chair, and Ps-Eratosthenes says she is presented as being near her daughter (*Katast* 16). But this is absolutely all the literary tradition gives us. Of the Apulian vases, one shows an elaborate empty throne placed under the two posts to which Andromeda is tied (Matera 12538); Kassiepeia is probably the woman standing to the right looking up at Perseus and her daughter. On another, an oinochoe in Bari (1016), Perseus converses with a woman who is seated on a similarly elaborate throne and clearly tied to it. This figure is usually considered to be Andromeda, but given the empty throne on the previous example (with Andromeda already accounted for) we should probably recognize Kassiepeia; Perseus will then be negotiating with her for a promise of marriage to her daughter. Such an interpretation receives some slight support from its recurrence in illustrated medieval manuscripts, with both Kassiepeia (in her chair) and Andromeda (between two trees) shown bound.²¹ Why Kassiepeia should be thus treated we will never know: possibly it is to restrain her from going to the aid of her daughter, but possibly too to ensure that she remain to watch the destruction of Andromeda by the monster.

The Death of Polydektes

All accounts (save for that of Hyginus in which Polydektes plays the role of protector) agree that after rescuing Andromeda Perseus returns to Seriphos where he also uses the head of Medousa to lithify the king of that island; our earliest sources are Pindar's *Pythian* 10 and Pherekydes. Pindar's reference is brief, but makes it clear that all the people of Seriphos were turned to stone (*Py* 10.46–48); so too Pherekydes, where Perseus asks Polydektes to gather all the islanders together, and then shows them all the head at one time, averting his own gaze (3F11). Nothing in these writers or others explains why Perseus' vengeance should be so extensive; we must, I suppose, presume that the whole island supported the king's claim to Danae. Aischylos will have dramatized the story in his *Polydektes* (or else a play of lost title, if *Polydektes* was about the *eranos*), and we have already seen how Euripides arranged Perseus' return and rescue of Danae in his *Diktys*, although unfortunately we have no information about that play's denouement. In art the earliest preserved representation is an Attic Red-Figure pelike by Hermonax on which Perseus shows the head of

Medousa to standing and seated men who remain seemingly unaffected (VG, no #).²² But any doubts about the head's efficacy are removed by a Red-Figure bell krater of about 440 B.C. (Bologna 325): here Perseus holds up the head as Polydektes reaches for it, and we see the lower part of the king's body already turning to stone. Pherekydes goes on to say that Perseus then gives Medousa's head to Athena, who puts it on her aegis, and the *kibisis*, cap, and sandals to Hermes, who returns them to the Nymphai. He himself makes Diktys king of the island, and leaves for Argos with Danae, Andromeda, and the Kyklopes (here inexplicably mentioned for the first time, at least in the scholiast's summary). Subsequently, these Kyklopes will have some role to play in the continuation of the story as the builders of the walls of Tiryns and Mykenai (Bak 11.77–81; Paus 2.16.5), but what they would be doing on Seriphos remains a mystery. Apollodoros, who agrees with Pherekydes in other points of this narrative, does not mention them at all. Finally, no ancient source even hints that Perseus ever gave his mother to Diktys in marriage, as one might have expected.

*The Death
of Akrisios
and Perseus'
Children*

Continuing with our scholiast's summary of Pherekydes (3F12), we find that Perseus arrives at Argos only to discover that Akrisios in fear has fled north to Larissa. Leaving Andromeda and the Kyklopes and Danae behind with the latter's mother Eurydike, he sets out in pursuit. When he locates Akrisios in Larissa he persuades his grandfather to return with him to Argos. But as they are about to depart, Perseus allows himself to be enticed by athletic games that are taking place; he throws the discus, which rolling strikes his grandfather's foot, and Akrisios subsequently dies of the wound. The people bury him before the city, and Perseus returns to Argos. Apollodoros differs from this narrative only in suggesting that Perseus came to Larissa precisely to compete (and thus perhaps did not know his grandfather was present until he struck him: ApB 2.4.4). As noted, Sophokles wrote a play, *Larisaioi*, on this subject; about all we can deduce of it is that Akrisios himself gave the games (to celebrate his reconciliation with his grandson?) and that Perseus in making his throw was bothered by another competitor. Hyginus' version transfers all this to Seriphos, but the result is much the same: funeral games are given for Polydektes, and in the course of these Perseus' discus throw is carried off line by the wind and strikes Akrisios on the head (*Fab* 63).

Ovid, on the other hand, does not relate the death at all, but offers the novel idea that before returning to Seriphos to deal with Polydektes Perseus went back to Argos, where Proitos had now chased out Akrisios, and turned his great-uncle to stone in revenge (*Met* 5.236–41: Ovid admits that Akrisios scarcely deserved this show of support). Hyginus in a different *fabula* from those we have been considering says, even more oddly, that Megapenthes, son of Proitos, slew Perseus in revenge for his father (*Fab* 244), and possibly Ovid's story is what he is referring to. In Apollodoros, where continuous genealogical narrative is more of a concern, Perseus declines to rule Argos, given the man-

ner of Akrisios' death, and invites the same Megapenthes to exchange with him Tiryns for Argos (ApB 2.4.4). Pausanias tells the same story, and adds the foundation by Perseus of Mykenai, with the name derived either from the cap of his sword or a mushroom (2.16.3).

As for the children of Perseus and Andromeda, Homer notes only Sthenelos, future father of Eurystheus (*Il* 19.116–24). The same fragment of the *Ehoiai* that tells us that Andromeda was the daughter of Kepheus goes on to list her three sons, but here too only Sthenelos survives, in the central part of the line in question (Hes fr 135 MW). Still, the names "Alkaios" and "Elektryon," crucial for all later tradition, will fit the gaps, and what follows seems to have dealt with the death of Elektryon's sons at the hands of the Teleboans. In another (very) fragmentary Hesiodic papyrus, their marriages to three daughters of Pelops are discussed, although only the names of Astydameia and (in part) Nikippe and Sthenelos survive (Hes fr 190 MW). But we surely need not doubt that here as later Alkaios receives Astydameia (and becomes as early as the *Ehoie* of Alkmene the father of Amphitryon: Hes fr 195 MW), while scholia do attest as Hesiodic that Sthenelos takes Nikippe (Hes fr 191 MW; in Pherekydes, *Amphibia* [3F68]). To this second couple, later tradition like Homer assigns a son Eurystheus; the *Ehoiai* may have added a daughter, probably the same as the Astymedousa, daughter of Sthenelos, named by Pherekydes as the third wife of Oidipous (3F95).²³ Regarding the last son of Perseus, the papyrus under discussion fails completely, but a second one confirms that this son, Elektryon, also married a daughter of Pelops (name missing, supplied as "Lysidike" by Plutarch [*Thes* 7] and various scholia) to produce a substantial series of sons and, of course, a daughter Alkmene (Hes fr 193 MW), who has this father also in her own *Ehoie* (cf. *Hkld* 210–11: Alkmene child of a daughter of Pelops). As noted, the names in these unions vary at times, and Apollodoros even has Elektryon marry his own niece Anaxo, daughter of Alkaios, to produce the necessary offspring (ApB 2.4.5),²⁴ but the basic elements—three sons of Perseus (Alkaios, Sthenelos, Elektryon) generating three first cousins (Amphitryon, Eurystheus, Alkmene)—remain constant. Apollodoros also includes for Perseus a daughter Gorgophone, whose difficulties as a genealogical figure we observed in chapter 5. The *Ehoiai* does not mention her immediately after Perseus' sons, but possibly her introduction was delayed until after the tale of the death of Elektryon's sons.

Proitos' Daughters

At the close of the first section of this chapter Proitos, son of Abas, had made his way from Argos and his brother Akrisios to Tiryns, according to Apollodoros via Lykia (ApB 2.2.1). Whether or not this is an early notion, in Homer Proitos is certainly married to Anteia, daughter of the king of Lykia (*Il* 6.160). The *Ehoiai*, Euripides, and most other sources call his wife instead Stheneboia, but whereas in the *Ehoiai* she is the daughter of <Apheidas> son of Arkas (Hes fr 129 MW), by the time of Euripides' play *Stheneboia* she has apparently become equated with Anteia, and her father specifically named as Iobates

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