



# Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

*a quarterly newsletter for Hellenic polytheists*

*written and distributed by the Neokoroi*

Issue Number 6

Εαρ (Spring) 2005

## Thoughts on Sallustius' "On the Gods and the World"

by Gitana

Sallustius was a Neoplatonic philosopher from 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.

One of his surviving writings is an ethical piece entitled "On the Gods and the World," which he wrote for the benefit of the Emperor Julian. It is a most interesting piece that discusses mythology, cosmology, the nature and transmigration of the soul, why we worship the gods, and the problem of evil. However, it is not a long piece, and it would benefit all Hellenic polytheists to read it.<sup>1</sup> Here I would like to highlight just a few of the topics he discusses.

Firstly, let us look at the issue of mythology. In section three, Sallustius writes, "That the myths are divine can be seen from those who have used them. Myths have been used by inspired poets, by the best of philosophers, by those who established the mysteries, and by the Gods themselves in oracles." He feels that it is quite obvious that myths are divine stories. He continues, "But *why* the myths are divine it is the duty of Philosophy to inquire." Mythology has always been a popular subject; many authors have published books of mythology. They often discuss the symbolism found within them, compare them to similar myths from other cultures, or look for ancient rituals that seem to reenact scenes from the myth. This certainly is a legitimate approach for those in the field of mythography. However, I would doubt that most of these mythographers think of these stories as *divine*.

What about us, the Hellenic polytheists? If we view them as divine, then, according to Sallustius at least, it is our duty to try to understand *why* they are divine. The method proposed by Sallustius is philosophy. "[J]ust as the Gods have made the goods of sense common to all, but those of intellect only to the wise, so the myths state the existence of Gods to all, but who and what they are only to those who can understand." By this he means that the myths are readily available for all to hear. In ancient Greece, all children grew up hearing these stories of the gods, and also as adults they were to be heard everywhere. In Plato's *Laws* we read that as early as infancy people hear these myths in many circumstances; they are used as children's stories, repeated at sacrifices, paraphrased in prayers, and acted out in rituals.<sup>2</sup> Thus, there is no question that every Greek citizen would know the stories, and know them well. However, only a few people could *understand* them.

Sallustius explains that myths are not to be taken literally. There are many contradictions in the myths, and accounts of the gods doing things that appear to be less-than-godlike. He asks, "But why have they put in the myths stories of adultery, robbery, father-binding, and all the other absurdity?" His answer is simple: these "absurdities" are meant to be red-flags to the wise.

*(continued on page two)*

## Contents

### Essays

Temporary Festival Shrines.....	10
You Give Love a Bad Name.....	7
The Muses.....	3
Callimachus' Hymn to Artemis.....	8
Thoughts on Sallustius' "On the Gods and the World" .....	1
Ritual for Kyklos Apollon.....	4

### Poetry and Songs

Poseidon.....	11
Song to Apollon.....	9

### Miscellaneous

Bacchae Fragment Translation.....	11
Demos Profile.....	5
Spring Festivals.....	10
Book Announcement.....	12

## Η ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ

© 2005 Νεώκοροι

The Neokoroi are a group of Hellenic hard polytheists working to foster communities, festivals, and temples, to provide guidance and information on religious matters, and to ensure the strength and longevity of the worship of the Greek gods.

Η Επιστολή (a “message” or “letter”) is published four times a year. We offer articles, hymns, prayers, poetry, reviews, information, rituals, community notices, fiction, recipes, and anything else of interest to the Hellenic pagan community. We welcome feedback and submissions from guest writers.

Η Επιστολή is a free publication and can be found in many locations nationwide. If you would like the newsletter delivered to you directly, subscriptions cost \$16 per year – contact us for more information. And please contact us if you would like to distribute copies in your area – in return you receive the issues for free.

To contact the editor, email:  
[oenochoe@winterscapes.com](mailto:oenochoe@winterscapes.com)

Or visit the Neokoroi website:  
[www.winterscapes.com/neokoroi](http://www.winterscapes.com/neokoroi)

We have even more articles online, as well as information on the gods, photos, links and more!

Our next issue will be coming out in June 2005. The deadline for submissions is May 20<sup>th</sup>. Advertising space is also available.

*All submissions become the property of Neokoroi, to edit for space and content as deemed appropriate. All materials published are protected by inter-national copyright law, and any unauthorized reproduction is prohibited.*

### Thoughts on Sallustius... (continued from page one)

Such philosophically-minded people will notice these discrepancies, and will not be satisfied to simply accept them. They will inquire further into the nature of the gods, into the meaning behind the story, to uncover that which is hidden in the myths. Interestingly, a very similar point is made five centuries earlier by the author of the Derveni Papyrus regarding the Orphic literature. He said that Orpheus’ poetry “is something strange and riddling to people. But Orpheus did not intend to tell them captious riddles, but momentous things in riddles.”<sup>3</sup> Again, the stories (or poems and hymns, etc.) are readily available for all to hear; however, only those “pure in hearing” will be able to understand them. Mythology, then, should be used at a starting-point through which we can gain a better understanding of the gods.

In section twelve he addresses the question “Why is there evil in the world?” His argument is thus: all the gods are all good.<sup>4</sup> Since the gods make all things, then all things must also be good. Evil cannot come from humans’ minds, souls, or bodies, because they too, being made by the gods, are all good. It cannot come from “evil” spirits, because the spirits receive their power from the gods. Therefore, evil does not have positive existence. By “positive existence” he means that it is not a thing in-and-of-itself, but comes about due to the absence of something else, namely goodness. He gives the example of darkness; darkness has no positive existence, because it is only the absence of light.

Evil appears in the action of people, though not of all people and not all the time. These evil actions happen because the soul makes mistakes about what is good. The soul, while believing that an action is good, actually creates an outcome that is bad (evil). Sallustius gives several examples: an adulterer is thinking that his/her pleasure is good and a murderer thinks the money he is paid is good. Sallustius explains, “The soul sins therefore because, while aiming at good, it makes mistakes about the good.” The gods try to teach us what is good, through art, science, prayer, sacrifice, initiation, laws, and judgments.<sup>5</sup> Although Sallustius doesn’t say this, we might suspect that some people just cannot understand, just as some do not understand the hidden meaning in the myths, as we saw earlier.

The final point we shall discuss here is the transmigration of souls, which Sallustius presents in section twenty. For those unfamiliar with the phrase, “transmigration of the soul” refers to the belief that the soul, that which not only animates but directs the body, leaves the body upon death, and is “transferred” to another body as it is born (reincarnation). In later years this is also called *metempsychosis*. It is difficult to say if the majority of ancient Greeks believed in this theory or not. It was, however, believed by the Pythagoreans and the Orphics. Pindar, Empedocles, Herodotus, and Plato also write about the subject. Most of the mystery cults also teach some form of life after death, if not specifically reincarnation.

As a Neoplatonic philosopher, it would do us well to look at Sallustius after having considered Plato’s version of reincarnation. In the *Phaedo* he argues that the soul existed before one’s birth because the soul “recollects” concepts such as Beauty or Justice upon seeing instances of them in the physical world. Also in Book 10 of *Laws* he explains that the good soul receives a better body in its next incarnation; a bad soul receives a worse one.

Sallustius gives two reasons to prove that souls reincarnate. The first, which he assumes to be self-evident, is that souls must reincarnate due to the fact that some people are born with disabilities, such as blindness, for example. His second argument is the more compelling, in terms of logic. He explains that if souls did not reincarnate, then there either must be an infinite number of souls, or the gods must constantly be making new ones. Now, there cannot be an infinite number of souls existing within a finite world. As he puts it, “for in a finite whole there cannot be an infinite part.” However, if the gods are making new souls, it means that the world is unsatisfactory without these new souls. That, of course, cannot be, because whatever the gods create is by definition perfect, and nothing that is perfect has need for anything.

He is also concerned to explain how souls can animate different types of bodies. He says that if the soul is to occupy the body of a rational being, then that must be the body of a person, since humans are the only rational beings with a body. If, however, the soul transmigrates to the body of an animal, it does not “inhabit” that body in the same way as it would that of a person. Instead, the soul “follows the body outside, as a guardian spirit follows a man.”

## Thoughts on Sallustius.... (continued from page two)

This is because animals are irrational, while our souls are rational, and nothing rational can inhabit the body of an irrational being. Although it is not explicitly stated, it also follows that these guardian spirits that guide us are souls of “higher” beings with the same relationship to us as we have to animals.

As I have commented earlier, the essay by Sallustius is something I believe all Hellenic polytheists should read. I have heard some people say that they don’t like to read the philosophers because, on the whole, they reject the gods, and try to find some other reason to explain the happenings in the cosmos, for example. While that certainly is true of some of the philosophers, most notably the Presocratics, who were there “first” philosophers, the later developments in philosophy, as we can clearly see in Sallustius, did not have this same approach. I

hope that what I have presented here will make you want to read more, as he gives incredible insight into many subjects that are important to us.

<sup>1</sup> A translation can be found in Gilbert Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, 1955, pp. 191-212. If you don’t have access to that text, you can read it at the following website:

<http://persephones.250free.sallustius.html>

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Laws* 887c-d

<sup>3</sup> Column 7 of the Derveni Papyrus, here quoting the translation of Gábor Betegh in *The Derveni Papyrus: Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> He proves this earlier in his treatise.

<sup>5</sup> He gives a few more examples in the text.



## The Muses

by Dan Adler

Often, in Hellenismos, people tend to become very focused on the idea of “The Gods”, when what they mean to talk about are “The Olympian Gods”, or sometimes “The Major Gods” (by which phrasing they include Hades and/or Persephone, or Hestia). But “The Gods” also includes all of the so-called “Minor Deities” as well. Beings like Pan, the Fates, and the Muses sometimes get overlooked. We’ll often hear about people who are dedicated to Apollon. Or Hera. Or Dionysus. But it’s rare to find someone dedicated to one of these “other” gods (or groups). Me? Yes, I’m dedicated to Apollon, and hope to be His priest one day. But I’m also dedicated to the Muses. Yep, the entire group. And with that in mind, I thought I’d share some information about them.

### Who are the Muses?

Great question! Glad you asked. The Muses (Mousai, in Greek) are goddesses of music, song, dance, and are also the source of inspiration to poets and playwrights. As the patrons of literature, they are also, to some degree, the goddesses of knowledge. Each Muse has her own area of specialization, and her own attributes by which she is known. The names of the Muses are... wait... there’s another question we have to answer first:

### How many Muses are there?

Another wonderful question! Thank you! OK. The answer to this one is... well... it depends on who you ask, actually. Let me explain:

-The Aloads, a people from Thessaly, maintained that there are three Muses, and that their names are Aoede (Song), Melete (Practice), and Mneme (Memory)<sup>1</sup>

-Plato, in his *Phaedrus*, named four of them: Erato, Kalliope, Urania, and Terpsikhore.<sup>2</sup>

-Most other sources name nine: Kalliope, Klio, Erato, Euterpe, Melpomene, Polymnia, Terpsikhore, Thalia, and Urania.

Generally, in our modern time, when one speaks of “The Muses”, one is referring to the classical nine. Although some

people include the three from Thessaly, and count twelve muses. Whatever the number, most people agree that the Muses are the offspring of Zeus, and the Titaness Mnemosyne (the original Goddess of Memory, whose name is apparent in the name of the Aload Muse Mneme).

### Why are the Muses important?

It was believed that the myths, the stories that bound the disparate people of ancient Greece together, were handed down by the Muses. This is why, when telling a myth or writing a story at that time, the author always began with a specific formula, which called upon the Muses to guide their writing, and which acknowledged the divine origin of their story. Indeed, the opening line of the *Odyssey* reads, “Goddess of song, teach me the story of a hero...”<sup>3</sup> As Plato wrote in the *Phaedrus*

And a third kind of possession and madness comes from the Muses. This takes hold upon a gentle and pure soul, arouses it, and inspires it to songs and other poetry, and thus by adorning countless deeds of the ancients educates later generations. But he who without the divine madness comes to the doors of the Muses, confident that he will be a good poet by art, meets with no success, and the poetry of the sane man vanishes into nothingness before that of the inspired madman.<sup>4</sup>

It was also believed that the ability to tell a true tale was the privilege of the Gods, and not of men, because human beings were known to have an innate difficulty in distinguishing between truth and falsity because they “have only hearsay and not knowledge.”<sup>5</sup> In the *Theogony*, Hesiod says that the Muses told him,

“We know enough to make up lies which are convincing, but we also have the skill, when we will, to speak the truth.”<sup>6</sup>

(continued on page four)

## The Muses (continued from page three)

### Who is associated with the Muses?

A number of folks, actually. The one most people think of as being associated with the Muses is Apollon. Indeed, one of his titles is Mousagetes, which means "Leader of the Muses". Classical authors, from Homer, to Pindar, to Sappho, make mention of His as singing with them, dancing with them, and sitting back to listen as they sing for Him, and for the entertainment of all the Gods. They were also said to be companions of Dionysus and, with the Satyrs, make His life "happy and agreeable."<sup>7</sup>

### How were the Muses worshipped?

We have evidence, mostly from fragments that have survived to the modern era, that the poets and playwrights of the day regularly made libation to the Muses, or to the Muses and Apollon Mousagetes together. There were also shrines to them scattered throughout Greece. Plutarch mentions one south of Apollon's temple at Delphi where a spring wells up: "...where the holy water of the lovely-haired Mousai is drawn from below for lustration"<sup>8</sup> Plutarch also names the Muse Klio as the overseer of lustral water. They were also worshipped at Helikon and Parnassos, the mountains that are supposed to be their home.

### So who are the Muses?

Oh, right. We never did answer this question, did we? Well, here's the list of the Muses then, along with each one's special area of expertise:

Aoede: Song

Erato: Lyric Art

Euterpe: Song.

Kalliope: Philosophy and Epic Poetry. (She is said to be the oldest of the Nine, and their leader)

Klio: History

Melete: Practice

Melpomene: Tragedy

Mneme: Memory

Polymnia: Hymns of Praise

Terpsikhore: Dance

Thalia: Comedy

Urania: Astronomy (she is said to be able to tell the future by the position of the stars)

<sup>1</sup> <http://homepage.mac.com/cparada/GML/Muses.html>

<sup>2</sup> Plato, Phaedrus 259

<sup>3</sup> Homer, Odyssey 1.1

<sup>4</sup> Plato, Phaedrus 245

<sup>5</sup> Homer, Iliad 2.484

<sup>6</sup> Hesiod, Theogony 25

<sup>7</sup> Diodorus Siculus 4.5.3

<sup>8</sup> Greek Lyric III Simonidies Fragment 577 (From Plutarch)



## A Ritual for Kyklos Apollon

by Todd Jackson

Considering how few we are, and how scattered, I'd long had the idea of Hellenists performing a synchronized ritual, something that might unite disparate Hellenists in a single moment, if not a single place; while being alone, in solitary worship, physically, we would at least be together before the Gods. It made this simpler that I honor Apollon, the very idea of whom suggests the transcendence of space; Apollon, whose worship suggests an obvious day – Sunday – an obvious time of day – dawn – and an obvious central site for the focus of our worship: the Temple of Delphi. It further made it easier that I had always perceived the ritual I perform for Apollon to be, fundamentally, a public ritual, though performed by one man.

The group would be Kyklos Apollon, *kyklos* Greek for circle, but suggestive of active whirling rather than a passive geometry: worshipers worldwide united in a single moment in common praise. Though I am Reconstructionist, from the outset I wanted this group to be open to a variety of paths; I wanted nothing to matter but that we worship Apollon. This would be a place free of fractious arguments, and of divisions – even justified divisions. Accordingly, it would have been inappropriate – never mind futile – to think to impose a common ritual upon everyone. Yet it was necessary that the group have some core practice, a

defined ritual which would serve two purposes: as the ritual one *does*, and as the ritual one precisely does *not* do, but chooses *against*.

The ritual would, as it turned out, end up reflecting both my Reconstructionist bearings and the eclecticism of the group. It turned out Recon, but it swings a little. It isn't Greek, after all, to honor Apollon each Sunday in the first place. The Greeks honored Apollon on the seventh day of the month; it was the Roman Emperor Constantine who would invent the day of the week to honor the Sun. So I began as a modernizer.

Even a modernizer may stand on roots. In my case, those roots would be the general tendency of almost all Apollonian worship, through all its sometimes bewildering varieties: objective self-reflection, geared toward spiritual and moral virtue. Apollonian worship has not tended toward celebration of what is, but has been a reverent reaching for what might be.

Inscribed upon the Temple of Delphi, reputedly in letters inlaid with gold, *Gnothi Sauton* – "Know Thyself."

(continued on page five)

## A Ritual for Kyklos Apollon *(continued from page four)*

There is the further example of Pythagoras, by legend Apollon's son, conceived at Delphi, who wrote in his Golden Verses:

"Never suffer sleep to close thy eyelids, after thy going to bed,  
Till thou hast examined by thy reason all thy actions of the day.  
Wherein have I done amiss? What have I done? What have I  
omitted that I ought to have done?  
If in this examination thou find that thou hast done amiss,  
reprimand thyself severely for it;  
And if thou hast done any good, rejoice."

Then, later still, Socrates, championed by Delphi as the wisest man in Greece, and a confessed servant of Apollon, who offered the famed dictum "The unexamined life is not worth living." Three points, then, describing a single point: that in the worship of Apollon it is crucial not just to give the God His due honors, but to subject ourselves to objective scrutiny. The goal of this scrutiny, again, is to *improve*; to worship Apollon is, among other things, to desire to make oneself better than one has found oneself.

The ritual would be a ritual of purification – appropriate since purification was always one of Apollon's principal offices, with several of His names suggesting this office: Apollon Apotropaïos, the Purifier; Apollon Alexikakos, Warder Off of Evil; Apollon Thargelios, Lord of the Athenian festival of civic purification. In Pythagorean fashion, I would prescribe recording what we had done amiss, but on paper.

The reason to record our misdeeds on paper: so that we could ritually set them aflame and burn them. While doing so, speaking what I find to be the most powerfully purgative words, the *holiest* words, in the ancient Apollonian texts. These, the words Apollon speaks over the dying Python, whom He has just laid low with His arrows. From the Homeric Hymn (#3) to Apollon:

ho d' epêuxato Phoibos Apollôn:  
entauthoi nun putheu epi chthoni bôtianeirêi:  
oude su ge zôousa kakon dêlêma brotoisin  
esseai, hoi gaiês poluphorbou karpon edontes  
enthad' aginêsousi telêssas hekatombas:

oude ti toi thanaton ge dusêlege' oute Tuphôiêus  
arkesei oute Chimaira dusônumos, alla se g' autou  
pusei Gaia melaina kai êlektôr Huperiôn.  
hôs phat' epeuchomenos: tèn de skotos osse kalupse.  
tèn d' autou katepus' hieron menos Êelioio,  
ex hou nun Puthô kinklêsketai: hoi de anakta  
Puthion ankaleousin epônumon, houneka keithi  
autou puse pelôr menos oxeos Êelioio.

The ritual, then: to speak these words while lighting our faults ablaze, as the Sun rises above Delphi, on Sunday morning. It is simple, brief, and appendable to whatever else each Kyklos member might wish to do. It is also portable, capable of being performed even if one is, at the proper time, away from one's altar.

The passage translates as follows:

"Then Phoebus Apollo boasted over her:  
Now rot here upon the soil that feeds man' You at least shall live  
no more to be a fell bane to men who eat the fruit of the all-  
nourishing earth, and who will bring hither perfect hecatombs.  
Against cruel death neither Typhoeus shall avail you nor ill-  
famed Chimera, but here shall the Earth and shining Hyperion  
make you rot.  
Thus said Phoebus, exulting over her: and darkness covered her  
eyes. And the holy strength of Helios made her rot away there;  
wherefore the place is now called Pytho, and men call the lord  
Apollo by another name, Pythian; because on that spot the power  
of piercing Helios made the monster rot away."

As Apollon commands the Sun to rot the carcass of the dragon, we ask Apollon to burn away our ill deeds, which we have made conscious to ourselves, and are committed to struggle against. We ask for purification from the God who is God of purification. Speaking the ancient words connects us to our spiritual ancestors, and restores honors to Apollon, who once heard these same words sung in great agons and festivals. It brings us together as one circle, worldwide; once every week, we who are solitary are no alone. Once every week, Apollon is again worshiped by many, as though a chorus of old.

Ie! Ie Paian



## Demos Profile

by Phoebe Lyra

*Name of group (if any), and location:*

In the Hyperborean Canadian city of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, we are a small but quite active demos . We are not members of Hellenion, but are quite active in the local community. Since our "group" consists of only two people right now, we don't have a name for it as yet.

*How many people does your group have, how old is it, and how did it begin?*

Our group is only about three years old. Late in 2001, I was not part of a Pagan community anywhere, not even online, and was about as solitary as anyone could get, especially when Apollo made his presence known to me at that time. In fact, I was telling myself that I would never be able to tell anyone

*(continued on page six)*

## **Demos Profile** *(continued from page five)*

about this, and would just have to accept the fact that I am more of an oddball than anyone could ever guess. I honestly didn't think there were other people in the world who believed in the Gods of the Hellenic pantheon anymore. After a bit of searching on the Web, I was very delighted to find out I was wrong! Four months later, I was able to get up enough courage to come out of the closet and join the online Hellenic Pagan community. I was still in the closet in the local community, though, which I look at now as a sort of incubation stage, when I took some time to get to know other Hellenic Pagans online and start researching as much as I could about this religion. In about mid-2002, my friend Phoenix Delos became interested in what I was doing, and became a devotee of Apollo.

With two of us to worship and work together, we decided it would be a good idea to start letting other Pagans in the local community know we exist, and also to organize a festival for Apollo. Not knowing much about the lunar calendar yet, we chose Feb. 7 as a special day for him and began inviting guests to participate. We booked a table at a local Greek restaurant, and when the day came, it really was a holiday. The ritual was very simple, and the meal was enjoyed by all.

*How often do you perform ritual together, and what types of things do you do?*

Most of our rituals are focused on Apollo and Artemis. In the past, we have celebrated Delphinia, Thargelia, Metageitnia, and Pyanepsia, sometimes with larger groups of people, and sometimes on our own. These celebrations are usually tailored to include those who are not Hellenic Pagan, but who are interested in learning a bit more about our religion. An example is Thargelia last year, where we invited people to participate in a meal at a local Greek restaurant. It would not have been practical to chase two volunteer pharmakoi out the door, so what we did was decorate a plastic box with black and white paper mache "figs" and half-fill it with water. Slips of paper and pencils were handed around the table for participants to write down everything they wanted to eliminate from their lives. Then, the "Pharmakos Box" was passed around so that everyone could deposit their crumpled slips of paper into it so that they could be soaked, hand-shredded and disposed of. Libations and handing blessed bay leaves out for each person to take home is also usually part of this type of ritual. Sometimes innovations of this sort are necessary in order to accommodate the circumstances. Last summer, we celebrated Metageitnia at a Pagan festival that included all different types of Pagans, and were able to use more of a reconstructionist format, but it was still held indoors, with the necessary modifications.

We do rituals for Artemis at every Full Moon, even though the timing of it may not be totally in keeping with historical accuracy. The ritual format we use is basically reconstructionist, although we have included some Neo-pagan elements in some of those rituals. These are usually quiet, home-based rituals, sometimes with invited guests. Quiet activities like sacred art, meditation, and listening to music are what we usually do.

Recently, Todd Jackson has founded Kyklos Apollon, an online group that encourages people to pray to Apollo and meditate every weekend at a time that coincides with Sunday dawn at Delphi. Phoenix and I have started doing a purification ritual at that time every weekend.

*Do you meet outside of formal worship?*

Since Phoenix lives next door to me, and we usually get together for meals anyway, the answer is Yes. This is usually a good time for us to talk about the festivals or rituals we would like to celebrate next, and to discuss Pagan theology.

*Are you open to new members, and if so do you have any criteria?*

We are certainly open to new members, and if anyone expresses an interest in what we're doing, we invite them to participate in one of our rituals or festivals. If there are people who wish to become regular demos members, we would prefer that they be hard polytheists and that there be enough compatibility in our theological perspectives to avoid the sorts of conflicts and difficulties that can happen when someone in the group does not support the belief that the Gods are individual entities with their own thoughts and personalities or that human beings can interact with these deities. It is essential that every member have the opportunity to share personal experiences with the group, and be supported and taken seriously. We have learned from past experience that this is a very important consideration.

*Have you made any innovations as a group, any aspects of worship unique to you?*

Scheduling our rituals for Artemis at every Full Moon is one innovation that works well for us and has helped us to stay on track without creating too many scheduling conflicts. In the rituals themselves, we have replaced the "agon" part with an activity that is non-competitive and more likely to be in keeping with the harmonious, peaceful mood that we like to create in these rituals. The love of competition is something Phoenix and I do not seem to share with the ancient Greeks.

*Is there anything else you would like to say about your group?*

We do a fair amount of networking with the local Pagan community, and we continue to participate in conferences and other events that are hosted by others in Edmonton. When we are able to, we attend the Wiccan Open Circles that are led by a ritual team of people who are very supportive of us, and who have given us a tremendous amount of help to let others in the community know that we exist. We do our best to try to be patient with those who may have a perspective on worship or theology that runs on a set of assumptions that are different from our own. It requires a lot of work to educate people about Hellenismos, especially when there are people who have never heard of it before, but it is certainly proving to be worth it.

## You Give Love a Bad Name

by Aristotimos

The season of spring is when love is in the air. The natural world is rushing forth in a huge dance of mating, budding and sprouting. In thinking of the goddess of love, images of flowers, honey, seashells and come hither smiles may be the first in one's mind. Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* shows Aphrodite emerging from the ocean. She is often called "foam born." This comes from one creation story of her being from the seed of Uranus's castrated penis and the foam of the ocean. Aphrodite, by this myth is not one of the Olympians, but rather from the generation of Titans. The Titans were a more primordial race than the more ordered and well defined gods of Olympus.

In this aspect, I think it would do us well to reflect on Aphrodite in her more primordial role. It is a good thing to look at Love in all of her forms. Love in modern culture is painted to be the highest emotional experience a person can have. Pop culture would have us believe that love is airy and sweet and everlasting. The ancients had a slightly different view of Aphrodite.

Aphrodite represents much more than just romantic love. She is the fire of passion. She is the pain of unrequited love. She is the stab of jealousy and the twist of spite. She represents sex, prostitution, longing and obsession and sexually transmitted diseases as well as affection, joy and laughter. The Greek word for "laughter loving" is very close to the word for genitals.

In this season of spring, let us look at ourselves and our relationship to love's many aspects. First off, how do we view the ones we love? What do they mean to us? Would we be able to function as a person if these connections were not in our lives? Whether it is a love relationship with a friend, family member or lover is there a clear distinction in your mind between love and affection? Let us take a moment to think and feel our way through these lines of connection.

Next let us look at sex. What are our views about sex? Do we see love and sex as being mutually exclusive? Are love and sex able to be clearly separated? Who was the last person you made love to? Who was the last person you had sex with? Does an

affair have something to do with love? Are there areas of sex that we are uncomfortable with? What topics of sex do you find embarrassing or taboo?

Now let us look at our emotions surrounding love and sex. When is the last time we burned with jealousy? Unrequited love? Have you ever been obsessed with a person or your idea of a person? Spend a moment looking at these things. Summon up a situation from your past and feel them through. Look at it again without the emotional ties, try and be objective. Is there a difference?

We live in an age where sex comes with some heavy consequences. Love and affection of a sexual manner cannot be given indiscriminately without some risk to yourself. How does this tie into the former questions we asked ourselves? What are we doing to express ourselves, our emotions and our sexuality? What can we do better and what have we learned?

This exercise is not meant to be one of morbid reflection. There is no need to rehash negative things and dwell in misery or self-pity. This form of meditation is to open us up the many facets of the Lady of Love. Venus is not as simple as we would make her. She has many shades and subtleties.

Aphrodite,  
You bear the chalice of emotion.  
Foam Borne One,  
You dwell in the depths of us.  
Laughter-Loving,  
You would have us relish in our bodies.  
Honeyed Maiden,  
You would teach us life is sweet.  
Fire-Lighter,  
You would have us burn with all of life.  
Beautiful of Buttock,  
You would have us see beauty all around,  
But especially within ourselves.

Praise be to thee Venus!  
Bless us on this day as  
We bless you in return!

"Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods who haunt this place, make me beautiful within, and grant that whatever happens outside of me will help my soul to grow. May I always be aware that true wealth lies in wisdom, and may my "gold" be so abundant that only a wise man can lift and carry it away. For me that is prayer enough."

~ Socrates

## Callimachus' Hymn To Artemis (excerpts of a longer essay)

by Yvonne Rathbone

Callimachus lived and wrote during what we call the Hellenistic Age. During this age, local religion and dialect merged into a larger, common Greek culture that encompassed the varied and various traditions of the individual city-states. Unlike their predecessors, Hellenistic authors wrote for a perspective that surveyed the different beliefs scattered throughout the Greek world. By reading these authors, we can fill in some of the gaps left by earlier authors who only represented the local perspective of their city-state.

In Callimachus, we find this Hellenistic perspective at its most articulate. Rather than write from the perspective of his own city-state, Callimachus drew on his encyclopedic knowledge of Greek culture. The works of Callimachus lost to us give some inkling of the encyclopedic knowledge the man possessed. The Byzantine cataloguer, Suidas, lists tables of writers, treatises on the Rivers of Europe, a collection of marvels from around the world. Callimachus was a man of broad knowledge and far ranging curiosity. Callimachus was a writer of incredible conciseness. He is known to have written in just about every form used throughout Greek culture, the major exception being the epic. He thought the epic was dead and likened it to a huge, silt filled river. Callimachus, by his own admission, preferred the clear mountain streams of shorter poetic forms.

Unfortunately, very little of Callimachus' work has come down to us. Of the 6 hymns, 60 or so epigrams and various fragments of other works, the Hymn to Artemis stands out both for length and for the breadth of information regarding the goddess that is packed into every line. The fact that Callimachus is making a hymn do the work of an epic gives each word choice, each turn of phrase, each scene, a much more condensed importance. The hymn becomes a mnemonic for Artemis, encoding many of her stories, attributes and places of worship. By going through the hymn carefully, we will end up with a map of Artemis that spans the centuries before and after Callimachus.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the opening lines of the hymn, Callimachus lays out a brief sketch of Artemis that will be filled in throughout. Along with archery and hunting, her charge is singled out as the care for mountains. The word is 'ouros' which means specifically a boundary or limit, which in Greek thought is most aptly shown as the mountains that form the boundaries of city-states. Artemis cares for the mountains as boundaries.

Kerenyi speculates that these boundaries are not just political or geographical. He describes Artemis as guarding those lands which lead to the other world, particularly the lands leading to Hesperia. Artemis is also often conflated with Hekate and Persephone, sharing titles and attributes, indicating that her domain exists as well between the world of men and the world of the dead. The mountains are a symbol for a kind of land that exists between the world of civilized men and the other realms of the gods, and it is these boundaries that Artemis cares for.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Artemis and Poseidon

Artemis interrupts the Kyklopes as they are working on a project. They are building a huge horse trough for Poseidon. In the spaciousness of an epic, this kind of detail would be fairly standard, but in the lyric of Callimachus, where every line has been boiled down to an essence, we are justified in questioning why such a detail would appear that is otherwise seemingly unconnected with the subject of the hymn.

It turns out that there is a tantalizing connection between Artemis and Poseidon. Poseidon Hippo or Horse, is a common form of the god in Arkadia. He is linked to Artemis both by a number of closely related sacred sites and by one direct relationship involving the horse epithet where Artemis is called the Horse Finder and paired with Poseidon Hippo.

Furthermore is the possibility that Artemis was considered a daughter of Poseidon in some parts of Arkadia. The support for this is circumstantial, but compelling. The Thelapsians relate the story through Pausanias that while Demeter was wandering in search of her daughter, Poseidon ravished her in the form of a horse. From this, Demeter gave birth to Despoina, a goddess generally considered the Arkadian Persephone, although as the story specifies, Demeter was out looking for Persephone when she conceived this younger daughter. Later on in his narrative, Pausanias tells us that in some parts of Arkadia, Artemis is considered the daughter of Demeter rather than Leto.

Pausanias describes the temples of Artemis and the Mistress as belonging to different people, but the individual identities of Persephone and Artemis do become blurred at times. In a Greek Papyri (Betz, IV 2241-2358), the goddess called upon is invoked with imagery belonging to Persephone (Maid, Ruler of Tartaros), Hecate (thrice-bound, dog maiden), and Artemis (goddess of childbirth, shooter of arrows). Regardless of the ultimate identity of Despoina, her connection with Artemis is strong, and through her, Artemis' connection with Poseidon Hippo.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Artemis and Hephaistos

The rest of this section serves to establish the good relationship between Hephaistos and Artemis. Hephaistos was the god of smithcraft and so has a particular relationship with iron and iron implements. Artemis' domain is the wildwood untouched by the farmer's scythe, untouched by Hephaistos' metal artifacts, just as Artemis' wild nature is untouched by the craft of men.

*(continued on page nine)*



## Callimachus.... (continued from page eight)

The two gods seem to have little in common, and yet we are told of an affectionate connection. They've met before, when Artemis was a babe. Hephaistos gave her gifts and she sat on Brontes lap, much the way she did with Zeus at the beginning of the poem. All this has made Artemis quite unafraid in the clashing din of forge that so frightens her nymphs.

\*\*\*\*\*

### Pan and the Kingship of Arcadia

After receiving her bow and arrows, Artemis next goes to Pan to receive her famous hounds. This is not the young Pan, but the Bearded Pan, a grown man, the ancestral god of Arcadia. We meet him not frolicking in the fields as a randy satyr, but preparing food for his hounds. The meat is lynx from Menalaus, a precinct sacred to Pan and the resting place of Arkas, the bear king of the Arcadians. By receiving her hounds from Pan, Artemis secures her worship in Arcadia both through the Bearded God and through Arkas. The bitches are specified as Kunosourian, an epithet of Arktos and meaning they are from Lakedaimon.

The reference to the porcupine seems strange at first. This shy, unassuming animal hardly seems like worthwhile prey for a huntress such as Artemis. The word used here is hustrix, and interestingly it is also used to mean a scourge or whip. Together, with the kunosourian dogs and the references to ancient Arcadian kinship, this passage appears to reference the story of the transition out of human sacrifice in Artemis' worship. In Lakaedaimon, it is said, instead of sacrificing humans, youths were whipped in from of Artemis' altar. Other references to the transition away from human sacrifice are directly referenced later in the poem.

### Primary Sources

Callimachus. *Hymns, Epigrams, Select Fragments*. Trans. Stanley Lombardo and Diane Rayor. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1988.

Callimachus. *Hymns and Epigrams*. Trans. A.W.Mair. Cambridge: Loeb, 1960.

Callimachus. *Hymns And Epigrams*. Trans. Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff. Berlin: Weidmann, 1897. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>

Couat, A. *Alexandrian Poetry Under The First Three Ptolemies*. Trans. James Loeb. Chicago: Ares, 1991.

### Secondary Sources

Burkert, W. *Greek Religion*. Trans. Jahn Raffan. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1985.

*Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*. William Smith LLD. London: Walton and Maberly, Upper Gower Street and Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row; John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1854. [www.perseus.com](http://www.perseus.com)

Gantz, T. *Early Greek Myth, Volume 1*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1993.

Kerenyi, C. *Gods of the Greeks*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1981.

Kerenyi, C. *Heroes of the Greeks*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1981.

Ogden, D. *Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Otto, W. *Homeric Gods, The*. New York: Thames & Hudson, 1979.

To read the full essay, go to Yvonne's website at:

<http://home.earthlink.net/~yvonnr/pagan/classics/toc.html>

### Song to Apollon by Sarah Lawver

A - pol - lon, Lord of mu - sic, in - spire us as we  
sing of Gods and kings and he - roes, and o - ther lof - ty  
things.

## Temporary Festival Shrines

by Oenochoe

Many of us live far away from any other Hellenic polytheist. Yet we still want to celebrate festivals, both for our own pleasure and that of the gods. Whether we are reconstructing a specific ancient Greek festival or trying to create a new one in the right spirit, we face the problem of what exactly to *do*, all by ourselves.

First, let me quickly go over some of the ritual acts that can be performed by a solitary worshipper: You can start with a bath or shower and put on fresh clothes. You can wear a wreath on your head of leaves or flowers. You can go through the basic sacrificial ritual – washing your hands in khernips, saying prayers and hymns, throwing barley, burning incense, making offerings and sacrifices. You might, depending on the festival, make a special dish to eat, go to the theatre, play a sport or game, or many other activities.

Even with all these things, though, I found myself looking for something more to do, something that would symbolize each individual festival and satisfy my sense of ritual *and* my obligations to the gods. What I have come upon, after some thought, is the practice of building small, temporary shrines for each festival. I did not invent this, but rather I noticed other Hellenic pagans doing it, and I have been doing it occasionally for festivals for years, without really pausing to consider why; it just felt right.

Analyzing the practice in context, it still makes sense to me. Ancient Greeks would go to a god's temple to celebrate that god's festival, but we do not currently have temples available. So why

not create a small bit of "sacred space" which honors that god and gives them a place to inhabit for the duration of the festival, in much the same way as they were believed to inhabit their temples in ancient times. This shrine can also become the focal point for the ritual, the place to set up offerings and pour libations.

Creating the shrine is also a devotional act in itself. Carefully choosing which objects will be part of it causes you to really think about the god in question and all of his or her attributes, as well as the reason for the festival. For instance, on the Oskhophoria – which celebrates the vine harvest and Dionysos – the shrine could include grapes, a bottle of wine, a statue or mask of Dionysos if you have one, silk ivy or grape leaf garlands (which are readily available at every craft store), a glass or bowl in which to pour libations to Dionysos, as well as the items needed for basic Hellenic ritual (purified water, barley, etc). It can be as simple or ornate as you wish. You don't even have to have a space specially set aside for such a shrine – a small folding tray table can be covered with a cloth and erected anywhere for that one day, or even only for a couple of hours while you celebrate the festival.

You may wish to leave the temporary shrine in place for at least a few days, to remind you of the festival and the god(s) involved. But make sure that you respectfully dismantle it before the next festival (at the very latest), and in the meantime clear away any perishable items such as food offerings so that the shrine remains clean and fresh.



## Spring Festivals (from the ancient Athenian calendar, with dates for this year)

by Oenochoe

March 19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>: **Greater Dionysia** (9-13 Elaphebolion) In ancient Athens this was the largest of Dionysos' festivals. The god is placed outside of the city and officially escorted in. Then follows a great revel all night long. The rest of the festival is set aside for theatrical performances and contests.

March 24<sup>th</sup>: **Pandia** (14 Elaphebolion) A festival in honor of Zeus, about which little is known.

April 14<sup>th</sup>: **Mounikhia** (6 Mounikhion) A festival of Artemis as she is associated with the moon. A procession is made of people carrying *amphiphontes* – round cakes holding lit candles arranged in a circle.

April 27<sup>th</sup>: **Olympieia** (19 Mounikhion) A festival of Olympian Zeus, including a bull sacrifice. Since this is likely impossible

currently, substitutions could be made, such as a clay figurine of a bull, a cake shaped as a bull, or a large steak.

May 14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>: **Thargelia** (6-7 Thargelion) This festival commemorates the birthdays of Apollon and Artemis. On the first day, two people are chosen as *pharmakoi* (scapegoats), feasted, and then beaten and/or driven from the city to purify the community. This can be done symbolically too. The second day revolves around an offering to Apollon of first fruits, called the *thargelos* – either a stew of mixed vegetables or loaf of bread made from various grains. Hymn singing contests can also be held.

First week of June: **Plunteria** (last week of Thargelion) In ancient Athens, this festival marked the washing of the statue of Athene Polias. The temple was cleaned, her eternal

flame relit, and then priestesses and other women removed the statue's robe and carried the statue to the washing place. Afterwards, the statue was carried back by torchlight procession, ready to be re-clothed with a new robe during the Panathenaia.

June 18<sup>th</sup>: **Skiraphoria** (12 Skiraphorion) The festival of the cutting and threshing of grain, held at the sacred sanctuary of Demeter and Kore, where the first sowing supposedly took place.

The festival was celebrated mostly by women, who threw cakes shaped like snakes and phalluses as well as pigs into the sacred caverns of Demeter. The men had a race carrying vine-branches from the sanctuary of Dionysus to the temple of Athena Skiras. The winner was given the Fivefold Cup, which contained wine, honey, cheese, corn and olive oil. He shared this drink with the goddess, pouring her a libation to request her blessing on the fruits of the season.



## Poseidon

The city is yet small before Poseidon.

He is in the brown February, with  
Las Vegas thick and wet from the downpours.  
Under Hekate's low ceiling  
The land has gone brown from the rain;  
Not just the matted turf of weed and long grasses,  
But the tree-stump posts, too, are soaked to umber.  
Flat black puddles in the mudfield  
Are a glass to the drifting clouds above.

Something of this brown yet clings in the grouting  
Of the broad grey bricks that make the wall.  
This earth must be damp a good forty feet down.

Over the wall, the horses, sienna,  
Bold as knight-pieces along the angle of the grey wall,  
They bring flashes of red inside the brown.  
And so too there is the one red row of bricks,  
Slim along the inside angle of the grey wall,

And the power of the horses is the power of forty foot deep of earth  
Reared up on hooves.

Yours, Poseidon. Todd Jackson

O Thebes, Nurse of Semele,  
Abound,  
Abound—with green,  
with beautiful-fruited bryony.

Rave with branches of oak or fir,  
and trim your garments of dappled fawnskin  
with tufts of white-plaited wool.

Make pure the violent fennel-rod—all round,  
and at once,  
all Earth will dance a choral dance,

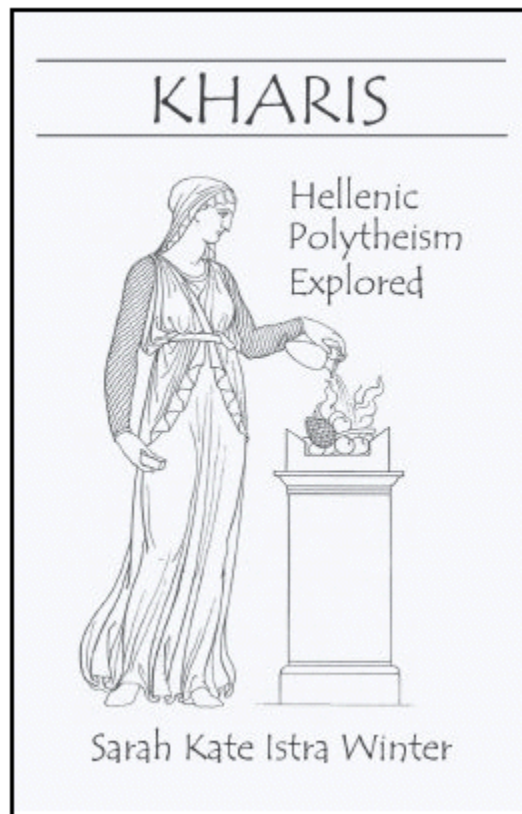
When Bromios leads the thiasoi—  
To the Mountain,  
To the Mountain,

Where the female throng awaits,  
Frenzy-stung from shuttle and loom by Dionysos.

(Euripides *Bacchae* lines 105-119).

--- for the God. Euoi, Euoi, Euoi, Bacchos,  
Bromios, Dionysos.

Translated by Karen McCollam



Time for some shameless self-promotion! I have just self-published a book called *Kharis: Hellenic Polytheism Explored*, which delves into the many aspects of the revival of ancient Greek paganism. It discusses the history and ancient roots of Hellenismos, as well as everything involved in the modern practice. It addresses the issues facing the community, and the decisions each Hellenic pagan must make about everyday religious activity. It also speaks on how to foster deep and personal spiritual connections to the gods and other divinities.

This book is for the person new to Hellenismos as well as the person who has been practicing for years, and for people outside of the religion who are interested in learning more. It covers the basics of belief and practice but also goes into depth on issues such as cultivating relationships with the gods, making the ancient religion relevant to modern lives, and understanding the Greek mindset.

The glue that ties this all together is the concept of *kharis*, the reciprocity so implicit in the practice of Hellenismos. I discuss the application of *kharis* to everything from formal group ritual to intimate personal interaction with the gods. From the simplest devotional act, to prayer, to divination, to mysticism, the principle of reciprocal favor governs the heart of this religion and lets each worshipper encounter the gods on a real and profound level.

For more information, go to my website: [www.winterscapes.com/kharis](http://www.winterscapes.com/kharis). There you will find the Table of Contents, other Hellenic resources, and a link to the Cafepress shop where you can purchase a copy of the book.

~ Oenochoe, Editor of He Epistole