After 20 years of work, the great digital and multilingual Etymological Dictionary of Greek Mythology (Dizionario Etimologico della Mitologia Greca multilingue On Line (DEMGOL) is now (2013) operational. It will be of great benefit to Schools and Universities that count humanities among their program of studies, and where approaching a knowledge which is the basis of European and more widely Western cultures’ development is deemed useful.

The DEMGOL, which has been translated almost entirely from Italian to Spanish and Portuguese, and partially to French and Catalan, provides teachers and students with immediate information about mythical names (especially of minor characters), with selected sources checked first-hand and available in the most reliable and recent editions. We hope to move forward with the British translation, as only few items are now available in English. These details are supplied with an instantaneous effectiveness that is seriously lacking while consulting traditional printed volumes. Above all, DEMGOL provides a reliable etymology of these names, along with a brief discussion on any other interpretations that - according to the analysis and examination of the research of ancient and modern linguists - appear to be refused. When necessary, names and terms of mycenaean origin are carefully indicated. A precise etymological index of “Nomina Homerica” is about to be completed as a special section of the Dictionary.

We must not overlook the images (and links) apparatus, whose enlargement is in progress. This does not claim to document the immense amount of ancient iconic representations of Greek myth (for which there are already huge iconographic Lexicons, usually very expensive), but seeks to highlight the survival and effectiveness of “mythical” models in the arts and in modern culture, including mass-media, from the Renaissance to present day and future.

Our most important achievement is the preparation of all the resources in digital formats that will be available as PDF and E-PUB. This will enable international users, from Brazil to France, from Argentina to Italy, from Mexico to Angola, to consult DEMGOL by any Internet device such as Netbooks, Tablets, Smartphones, and of course standard PCs and Macs.

The work began in 1992 with Carla Zufferli’s PhD thesis, and is now carried out under the direction of Ezio Pellizer, with the past and present collaboration of many GRIMM members: Francesca Marzari, Luisa Benincampi, Stefano Di Brazzano, Alberto Cecon, Alberto Pavan, Ilaria Sforza, Ingrid Leschiutta; Francesca Marzari and Françoise Létoublon (HOMERICA group, Grenoble) worked at the French translation; the Spanish translation was carried out by Álvaro Ibáñez (Granada) and José Antonio Clúa Serena (Barcelona) and is currently mainly performed by Diana De Paco Serrano (Murcia). In Brazil Matheus Trevizam, Tereza Virginía, Manuela Ribeiro Barbosa, and Antonio Orlando Dourado Lopes are very active. The Catalan translation progresses especially thanks to Vicky Alsina, Daniel Ramon, Xavier Riu e Nereida Villagra.
Ἀδαµάστωρ

ADAMASTOR

A huge monster*, as big as the Colossus of Rhodes, that appeared to Vasco de Gama and the Portuguese fleet near the Cape of Good Hope, foretelling disaster. Probably invented by Camões, Lusíadas 5, st. 41-51, on classical models. He is referred to as the companion of Enceladus, Aegaean and of the other Giants who fought against the gods. Interrogated by the leader of the expedition, he tells of his own unhappy love for the wife of Peleus, Thetis, who tricked him with an apparition of herself, for which he was transformed into the rock of the Cape of Good Hope (Lus. st. 52-60). This figure is almost totally unknown to Greek and Roman mythology, which refers to a giant Damastor (Claudian. Gigant. 101-103), while one Adamasthor is listed among the other giants only in Sidon. Apollin. Carm. 15.20 (sec. V- inizi VI d.e.v.).

The name is a nomen agentis formed with the suffix -τωρ, from the verbal adjective ἀδαµαστός, which means "unconquerable" "unconquered", used frequently of young women who have not had sexual relations with a man (from ἀ- privativo e δαµ-, δάµνηµι, δαµάω). It seems to be constructed by analogy with Alàstor, Phobètor, and would mean "that is unconquerable", "implacable". The adjective ἀδαµάστωρ (v. l. ἀδαµάτωρ) is also found in Pap. Mag. IV 2717, in the sense of "virgin", said of Hecate.

Theme: Transformation

Ἀγλαία

AGLAIA

Name of one of the Graces or Charites (Hes. Theog. 69; 907 ss.).

It is derived from the adjective ἀγλαός, "illustrious" "shining," and means "she who displays radiance, beauty."

Ἀφροδίτη

APHRODITE

Goddess of love (Hom. Il. 5, 820 and passim; Hymn. Hom. ad Ven.; Hes. Theog. 190 ff.), born of the foam of the sea and the genitals of Ouranos, or, according to another tradition, of Zeus and Dione.

She is a goddess of Near Eastern origin, and later there arises a folk etymology that interprets the name as coming from ἀφρός, "foam" (Plat. Crat. 406 c); οὔνεκ' ἐν ἀφρῷ / θρέφθη (Hes. Theog. 197-198). The theory of Grimme ("Glotta" 14, 1925, p. 18), who proposes an association with the Semitic goddess of fertility Astoret, has not been proven, nor has that of Hammarström ("Glotta" 11, 1921, pp. 214 ff.), who compares this name with the pre-Indo-European πρύτανις, Etruscan (e)p r ni; this latter hypothesis is also maintained by Carnoy (DEMGR), but with the help of Pelasgian phonology, according to which p would become ph.

Theme: Catasterism

Ἀθήνη

ATHENA

A goddess, daughter of Zeus and Metis, born from the head of the god (Hes. Theog. 886 ss.).

This name is already attested in Mycenaean in the form of a-ta-na-po-ti-ni-ja (KN V 52.1, 52 bis) and is difficult to explain. Carnoy (DEMGR) supports the Pelasgic hypothesis of Van Windekens (Le Pélasgique, pp. 40-41), according to whom the initial Ath- is a Pelasgic form of the Indo-European "at-no", Sanskrit ātta, "mother", with the change t > th;
but Athena does not have maternal characteristics in the historical period. It is possible that it is a pre-Hellenic name (cfr. van der Valk, in Snell, Lex. fr. Ep., col. 208).

Βασίλεια
BASILEIA
Eldest daughter of Uranus and Titaia, who distinguished herself from her sisters through her wisdom and intelligence; she married her brother Hyperion and gave birth to Selene and Helios (Diod. Sic. 3, 57, who reports a non-Greek tradition).

The name means “queen,” ending in the suffix -*y -. Its origin is probably as a loan word (Chantraine, DELG, s. v. βασιλέως) from Mycenaean qa-si-re-u.

Βορέας
BOREAS
God of the North Wind, the son of Eos and Astraeus, brother of Zephyrus and Notus (Hes. Theog. 378).

One theory is that it means “wind from the mountain”, related to Sanskrit girl-, Avestan gairi-, and ancient Slavic gorá, “mountain” (Chantraine, DELG).

Ἅδης
HADES
God of the underworld, son of Chronus and Rhea, husband of Persephone (Hesiod. Theog. 311).

There are various interpretations of this name. 1) It was analyzed from ἀ-ιδ-(α) by Plato (Gorg. 493 b; Crat. 403 a) with the meaning “invisible”. 2) Because of the aspiration, a form *ά-ιδ- has been suggested, identical to ancient Indian sam-viđ-, “to be together, reunite”, with the meaning “to be together with the god of the afterlife”. This interpretation implies that the long α- of Ἀίδης is to be considered secondary. 3) A comparison with ἀίσσω has been attempted, with the meaning “who hurls himself quickly, impetuously, powerfully” (Danielsson, “Indog. Forsch.” 14, 1903, pp. 387 ss.).


Theme: Abduction

Ἁγνώ
HAGNO
Name of a nymph of the spring on mount Lycaeus; according to an Arcadian legend, she was said to have raised infant Zeus (Pausan. 8, 31, 2; 38, 2 ss.; 47, 3).

It is derived from the adjective ἁγνός, “sacred, pure, chaste,” and means “pure.”

Οὐρανός
OURANOS
Name of a divinity of the sky, son and husband of Gaia, from whom Cronos, father of Zeus, descends.

For many years, much credence was given to the (still widely accepted) hypothesis that Οὐρανός is related to Sanskrit Varuna-, placing *ό(ʔ)ορανός, with initial vocalism, alongside *(ʔ)ορανός. This encouraged G. Dumézil to compare the
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mythic function of the two gods, Ouranos and Varuna (Dumézil, “Bull. de la Société de ling. de Paris” 40, 1939, p. 53). Phonetically, however, this etymology cannot be supported, as Wackernagel (Sprachliche Unters. zu Homer, p. 136 n. 1) has demonstrated: there is regular contract in Greek of οὐρ- and in any case Varuna (the accent of which also does not agree with Ὄυρανος) is not a god of the sky. Wackernagel (Kleine Schriften 1, p. 632) instead suggests deriving the name from =#έρση and #ουρέω, and in particular from Sanskrit vorza, “rain”. That the initial diphthong οὐ- is spurious is known thanks to Doric ὀρανός, Aeolic ὀρανός (for which one expects ὄρρανος). Hence, the name would mean “he who sends the rain and the dew, who makes fertile”: a plausible - even if not absolutely certain - interpretation. Ouranos could also be a name borrowed from some other language. Pokorny (Indog. Etym. Wört., p. 1152) proposes another Indo-European etymology, deriving the name from the root uer-, extended to uer-d-, uer-s-, “an elevated place”, comparable with Skt. varsman-, "height", Lith. virsus, “upper summit”; its meaning would therefore be “he who stands erect on high”. But this is hardly likely.

Τάρας
TARAS
Name of a river that runs near the city in Magna Graecia named from it, and from its god, Lat. Tarentum.

According to Kretschmer ("Glotta" 14, 1925, p. 87; 30, 1940, p. 104) the suffix -nt is particularly frequent in Illyrian, a poorly known language of which toponyms in -ntum are certainly characteristic. The question is whether the suffix has a participial or purely nominal function; this is difficult to resolve because we are confronting thorny etymological problems in a poorly attested language. Carnoy (DEMGR) believes that the name comes from Indo-European “taro-, "swift" (Sanskrit tarani-, "swift" from the root "ter), which is commonly found in river names, e.g. Thérain, Taro, Tara, Tarascone.

Theme: Eponymism

Ζαγρεύς
ZAGREOS
Name of an ancient chthonic deity; son of Zeus and Persephone, often identified with Dionysos.

The two most reasonable and widely accepted derivations are: first, that proposed by Chantraine (DELG), B. Mader (in Snell, Lex. fr. Ep.) and Perpillou (Les substantifs grecs en -εύς, § 389), from the name of the mountain Ζάγρος in Asia Minor; in this case, it would be useless to seek an etymology from within Greek. Second, that proposed by Frisk (Gr. Et. Wört.) and endorsed as well by Mader, relating the name to ζάγρη, “trap for animals”, a form explainable as a borrowing from a North/West Doric dialect, "ζαγρέω = ζωγρέω, "to trap living beings", “to capture live prey”. Chantraine considers this unprovable. Carnoy (DEMGR) suggests it is a derivative of Pelasgian ζαγγά, from Indo-European "gh̥gh̥, an elaboration of ghe, "to remain open-mouthed", found for example in ancient Icelandic gj grar, "rock fissure": this would require assimilation of the - g -. The ancients analyzed the word as ζ-αγγεύς = *di-αγγεύς, "the perfect hunter", a conjecture accepted by Pape and Benseler (WGE): but this is a folk etymology.

Ζῆλος
ZELOS
Personification of envy (Gk. Ζῆλος), son of Styx, brother of Nike, Cratos and Bia (Hesiod. Theog. 383-385).
The name is likely derived from δίζηµαι, ζητέω, "to pursue, seek"; perhaps related to Greek ζηµία, "damage, loss, penalty" (Chantraine, DELG, s. v). From Greek ζῆλος, deriving from Indo-European *ja-lo-s, "zeal, fervor".

Ζέφυρος
ZEPHYROS

One of the three principal winds (cf. Hesiod. Theog. 378-380 and Schol. ad loc., = Acusil. Fr. 15 Fowler), who are joined by Euro (the south-west wind; Hom. II. 2, 145-147; 16, 765). He is the son of Astraees and Eos, and brother of Boreas and Notos (Hesiod. loc. cit.). By the Harpy Podarge he fathered the two divine horses of Achilles, Balios and Xanthos, Hom. II. 19, 400). Already in the Homeric poems (passim) he personifies the west wind, often violent. He does not have a particularly well developed mythology.

This name is present in Mycenean cf. ze-µ2-ro, PY Ea 56, etc. The etymology is related to Greek ζόφος, "darkness" "west" (Buttmann, Lexilogus 114 a, cf. Frisk, Gr. Et. Wört. s. v) - namely, the cardinal point of the wind’s origin. It means therefore "west (wind)".

Ζήτης
ZETES

Son of the wind Boreas, brother of Calais, a participant in the expedition of the Argonauts. At Salmydessos in Thrace, along with his brother - both were winged, but apparently mortal: in other words, demigods - he chased away the Harpies who were tormenting the king, Phineas, whose second wife had imprisoned their sister Cleopatra, the king’s first wife (Apollod. Bibl. 3, 15, 2-5; Apollon. Rhod. Argon. 2, 296-297 e Schol. ad loc.). The tomb of the Boreads was on the island of Tenos (Hygin. Fab. 14, 18), where they were supposed to have been killed by Heracles (Acusil. Fr. 31 Fowler, apud Apollod.Bibl. 3, 15, 2).

The name is traceable to ζήτεω, cf. the epithet off Zeus Ζητης, possibly meaning “The Searcher”; there is no need to consider it redender Name (cf. W. Beck, in Snell Lex. fr. Ep. col. 876) in reference to the pursuit of the Harpies. The etymology from ζάω, "to live, grow" (Room, Room’s Classical Dictionary, p. 308: "he who blows hard") is unlikely. The Etymologicum Magnum 411.7 suggests originally Ζαήτης, παρά τὸ ΖΑ καὶ τὸ ἀήτης, ὁ µεγάλως πνέων, perhaps correctly: in this case, from ἄηµι "to blow", we would have "he who blows through", or even "he who blows with force" (Pape-Benseler "Stürmer", "Stormy").

Theme: Abduction

Ζεύς
ZEUS

Ancient name of the sky, the god of the sky, and the day. Son of Cronos and Rhea, “father of gods and men”.

The etymology is preserved above all in Sanskrit, Greek, the Italic languages, and Hittite. The forms, given by Frisk (Gr. Et. Wört.), are: Ζεύς = Skr. dyáuh, Ζῆν = Skr. dyam, Lat. diem; Δι-ός (Myc. di-wo), -ei (Myc. di-we), -i, Δια correspond to Skr. divah, divé, divi, divam. Innovative forms in Greek are: Ζην-α with Ζην-ός, -i. Benveniste (Origines, pp. 59-60) explains that this set of forms depends on the root *dei- (Sanskrit di-, “to shine”). The root with suffix *-w gives the stem *deiw-, the thematic derivation of which is *deiwó- (Skr. devá-, Lat. deus, etc.). Morphologically, this term showed the variation *deiw, gen.-abl. *diw-é/os; from this genitive/ablative and from the resulting forms come Δι(Ϝ)-ός, Δι(Ϝ)-εί, Δι(Ϝ)-ει. Beside *deiw- there is the derivative *dy-eu, *dy-ēu- with lengthening of the diphthong Zeús, of Ζην and of
the corresponding Sanskrit forms. Carnoy (DEMGR) adds that among the Germanic people Tiu > Ziu became the god of war, as in English Tuesday, a translation of Martis-dies, It. martedi.

Theme: Catasterism