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Actaeon

(Ἀκταίων [Aktaíōn], Latin Actaeon)

A. MYTH

A. is the son of Aristaeus and Autoonē, herself daughter of → Cadmus and Harmonia. A. is a passionate hunter. The → Centaur Chiron has taught him the art of hunting (Apollod. 3,4,4). One day, out hunting as usual on Mount Cithaeron, he is pursued by his own hounds (up to fifty of them: Apollod. 3,4,4; Hyg. Fab. 181; Ov. Met. 3,206-224) and dismembered. Different traditions suggest the reasons for this killing. Some (e.g. Acusilaus in Apollod. 3,4,4) say that A. wooed Semele, the lover of → Zeus and the sister of his mother, so attracting the wrath of the father of the gods, making his death a punishment by Zeus. Others, meanwhile, report that → Artemis takes revenge for A.'s improper suggestions (Stesichorus in Paus. 9,2,3) by putting the pelt of a stag around his shoulders so that his hounds mistake him for a stag and dismember him. Still others say that A. drew the wrath of Artemis because he boasted of being a better archer than she (Eur. Bacch. 337-340; Diod. Sic. 4,81,3-5). Most widespread, and thus best-known and most influential in reception history, is the version according to which A. is transformed into a stag and left to the mercy of his dogs for surprising Artemis, whether by accident or design, as she takes a bath in a spring in



Fig. 1: Artemis aims at Actaeon, as his dogs attack him. Red-figured amphora, c. 490-480 BC. Hamburg, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe.

the company of her → nymphs during the heat of the day. The goddess' fatal reaction here is either one of rage or of precaution, wishing to prevent A. from telling of the encounter (on the details and complete story of this version cf. *i. a.* Callim. H. 5,113f; Hyg. Fab. 181; Nonnus, Dion. 5,301-315; Ov. Met. 3, 138-255; Ov. Epist. 20,103f.). This version is further intensified by the detail, occasionally added, that A. is overcome by desire when beholding the goddess, and wants to rape her (Hyg. Fab. 180).

As the earliest literary attestations already make clear, A. is essentially characterized by three aspects. (1) He is a passionate hunter; (2) he is killed by his own hunting dogs; (3) his correlative figure is Artemis. The motif of transgression appertains to all three aspects, as well as motivating and enabling their fluctuating interdependencies. As a passionate hunter, A. not only seeks to compare himself to the goddess in hunting proficiency and, blinded by hubris, to outdo her, but also, according to another reading, seeks to approach the divine realm itself, as represented by Artemis, and look at it closely. This transgression is, depending on the text's standpoint, either condemned as voyeurism or as an expression of base concupiscence, ambivalently evaluated as curiosity or even celebrated as the upward striving of the (Neo-)Platonic Eros. We thus approach the spheres of ethics, aesthetics, erotica and epistemology.

B. RECEPTION

B.1. ANTIQUITY

B.1.1. FINE ARTS

The pictorial representations [8], independent as they are, accord with the typologies derivable

from the literary evidence. There are numerous depictions on 6th and 5th cent. BC Attic vases showing A. in his unchanged human form. He is being attacked by his dogs, frequently three or four in number, and either trying while still upright to fight them off or already overwhelmed by them, half collapsed on the ground or kneeling on one or both knees. → Artemis is often standing before him, aiming her bow and arrow at him. Outstanding examples of the latter configuration include a red-figured amphora from around 490-480 BC (cf. fig. 1) and a bell *krater* from c. 470-460 BC and attributed to the Pan Painter (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts).

Both these pieces were made as part of a series of similarly-configured vases at the zenith of the Persian Wars, and may therefore serve as examples of the assertion that early ancient images also had, in addition to their more or less straightforward function of portrayal, a political dimension. A. represents the Persians, whose hubris in attacking Athens will bring about their downfall. Artemis, in punishing the sacrilege, is restoring the divine order [9]. Depictions showing an A. standing upright and vigorously defending himself doubtless had another purpose. The heroic element is to the fore here. This is not contradicted by the fact that, from the last third of the 5th cent. BC, A. is ever more frequently shown with a stag pelt over his shoulders, with antlers on his head or with long ears. This may be read as indicating his impending metamorphosis.

A *metope* from Selinuntum is exceptional [8. fig. 31] (cf. fig. 2). To the right of this image, a naked, upright A. is shown, his head slightly bowed as he defends himself against the attacking

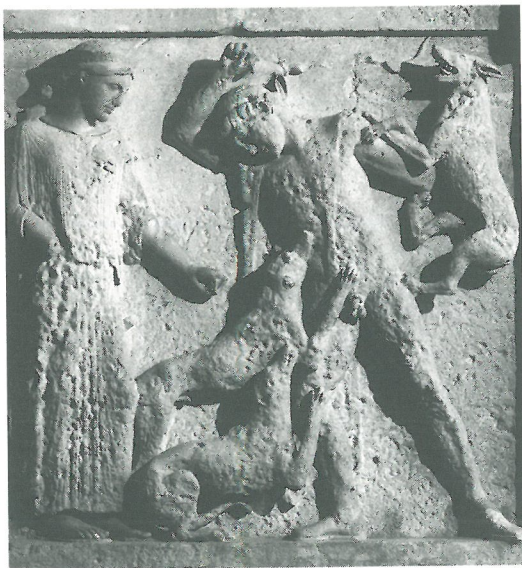


Fig. 2: Artemis has Actaeon killed by his dogs. Metope from Temple E in Selinus, Sicily, chalk tufa, c. 470/60 BC. Palermo, Museo Nazionale Archeologico.

hounds. A stag pelt is draped around his shoulders. To his left, Artemis, also standing upright, wearing a long *chiton*, looks serenely down at the dogs. Motion and rest are portrayed in equilibrium. The actions of the goddess, it appears, are given fitting expression.

While the representation of A. being attacked by his dogs dates back into the Archaic period (at which time Lyssa, personification of frenzy or rabies, is sometimes added to the scene [8. fig. 33; 44; 81]), the pictorial portrayal of the bathing Artemis espied by A. only appears later. There are numerous representations of Artemis (often surrounded by → nymphs) observed or discovered at her bath by A. in frescos of early Imperial Campanian wall-painting [13.99]; they often also show A. being killed by his dogs. Combined with bathing scenes, the scene of A. defending himself against the dogs also continues to be shown separately in the Roman Imperial period. Scenes of the A. myth on sarcophagi are rare.

B.1.2. LITERATURE

As is evident from the artistic portrayals, the aspect of the hunting rivalry between A. and → Artemis must long have been the dominant one. In the literary tradition too, the version in which A. sees the goddess at her bath appears relatively late. The first reference may be a passage in Callimachus' hymn *The Bath of Pallas* (Hellenistic Alexandrian period, 3rd cent. BC), comparing the fate of Tiresias to that of A. (Callim. H. 5,107-116). Both happen to see a

goddess bathing, Pallas → Athena in the case of Tiresias and Artemis in the case of A. The punishment imposed by Athena, though, is disproportionately more lenient than that of Artemis. Tiresias loses only his eyesight, and indeed, at the pleading of his mother, the → nymph Chariclo, he receives the gift of second sight as a compensation. Breaks with tradition are the element of transgression, at once an erotic moment, and a narrative development of the *locus amoenus*.

The version of the A. myth richest in detail and poetic refinement, and most influential in the reception history of literature, art and music, is that told by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*. Its function appears to consist in illustrating the contingency of human existence, the shift from happiness to disaster. The transition from the → Cadmus story to that of A. is formulated as follows (Ov. Met. 3,138-142): "*Prima nepos inter tot res tibi, Cadme, secundas/Causa fuit luctus alienaque cornua fronti/Addita vosque, canes satiatae sanguine erili./At bene si quaeras, Fortunae crimen in illo,/Non scelus invenies; quod enim scelus error habebat?*" ("Your grandson, Cadmus, was the first, amid your happiness, to bring you sorrow, as unnatural horns grew on his brow. And you hounds sated yourselves on the blood of your master. If you look at it carefully will find the crime was Fortune's: no sacrilege here – for how could error be sacrilege?"). Cadmus' grandson A. is transformed into a stag, as metonymically introduced in "*alienaque cornua fronti*", and becomes the prey of his own hounds. All reasoning on crime and punishment is rejected. The rhetorical question "*quod enim scelus error habebat?*" is fundamental. The insistent association of *error* and *scelus* may be formulated to imply criticism of the Aristotelean concept of *hamartia*, and consequently also of the early Attic concept of tragedy or of the whole tragic conception of A.'s fate, which formed the basis for Aeschylus' lost tragedy *Toxotides* ('The Archeresses').

Contingency corresponds to tragedy. A., unintentionally, wandering about without destination, quite by chance reaches a grove of trees ("*non certis passibus errans/Pervenit in lucum: sic illum fata ferebant*", Ov. Met. 3,175f.). The grove contains a grotto through which a spring flows – "*rorantia fontibus antra*" (Ov. Met. 3, 177). → Nymphs, naked, are bathing, and in their midst is Diana. A. sees Diana, Diana sees A. – or, more precisely, she sees him see her naked: "*in vultu visae sine veste Dianae*" (Ov. Mt. 3,185). A transgression of the 'face' has taken place, manifesting itself in linguistic and structural form through the rhythmically alliterative variation of the sememes – and presented as a mutual one. This key scene, poetically so refined in structure and placed almost exactly

at the midpoint of the narrative, may perhaps add an interesting variant to the exculpatory haphazardness of A.'s stumbling upon the goddess which Ovid stresses in his *argumentum*: by implication, the 'misdeed' may actually lie in that mutual 'catching of sight', in that reciprocity of aspect and simultaneity of awareness. The divine and the human become one. This may also be one explanation for the fact that A., having been transformed into a stag, keeps his human voice and his full human consciousness until he is dismembered by his hounds in what is nothing short of a Dionysian act. The Ovidian text, though, offers up still another delicacy: the scandal is not merely that A. has *seen* Diana (when a mortal sees a god manifest, he must, according to the ancient understanding, die), but that he sees her, the goddess of chastity, "without clothes" ("*sine veste*"), naked. The element of the infringement of modesty is thus added.

The end of the story revisits the beginning, this time referring to the indeterminacy of the relation between 'crime' and 'penalty' (Ov. Met. 3,253-255): "*Rumor in ambiguo est: aliis violentior aequo/Visa dea est, alii laudant dignamque severa/ Virginitate vocant; pars invenit utraque causas.*" ("Opinions varied: to some, the goddess seemed unduly harsh, others called her act worthy of her strict virginity. Both sides found justification for their judgment").

The Ovidian version of the A. myth is characterized by the narrative exposition of details of space and time, the creation of plot tension, a lascivious or erotic element, an implicit discussion of guilt and expiation and, not least, the linguistic and poetic enactment of a mystery. Three aspects, though, are of significance to reception: (1) the epistemological aspect of chance and fate, and hence the aspect of contingency; (2) the moral aspect of chastity and the consequences of infringing chastity; (3) the aesthetic-aesthetic and (as we shall see) the philosophical aspect of seeing, more precisely of the capacity and willingness to perceive. The real explosive power here lies in the interaction of these three aspects arising from the fact that this is an encounter between the divine and the human. – encapsulated in the poetic image in the mutual 'catching of sight' between deity and human (or hero).

Compared to the complexities of the Ovidian version, each of the two subsequent *retractationes* relevant to the reception of the A. myth focuses on unequivocal accents. Apuleius, in his *Metamorphoses* (2nd cent. AD) (Apul. Met. 2,4,3-10), emphasizes the aspect of curiosity: "*A. [...] curioso optatu in deam [...] proiectus*" ("A., with curious gaze, bending towards the goddess"; Apul. Met. 2,4,10). The aesthetic peculiarity of the Apuleian version lies in its pre-

sentation of the myth in the form of an ecphrasis: the first-person narrator Lucius, transformed into an ass and himself a victim of his own curiosity, is describing a sculptural ensemble that depicts the moment in which A. sees the goddess and is instantly transformed into a stag.

By contrast, Nonnus' version in his *Dionysiaca* (5th cent. AD), a dramatic, novelesque exposition of the myth (Nonnus, Dion. 5,287-551), takes the overall 'Dionysian context' of his work clearly into account in the double and very forceful portrayal of A.'s killing by the frenzied dogs (the figure of Lyssa (see above B.1.1.) is implicitly evoked here) and the equally emphatic accent on A.'s having ambushed the goddess of the hunt, driven by the desire ("*andros eromaneos*") to see her naked body (Nonnus, Dion. 5,305-311). There may be an intentional contamination here with the tradition that A. desired Semele, lover of → Zeus and later mother of → Dionysus (see above, A.).

Curiosity and Eros, epiphany and desire were subsequently taken up as motifs and themes, though valorizations fluctuated. Eros and epiphany could thus be brought together in the metaphor of the hunt which, in philosophical and epistemological terms, derived from Plato's 'hunt for being' [4], united into the Platonic-Neoplatonic quest for the true, good and beautiful.

B.2. CHRISTIAN LATE ANTIQUITY AND MIDDLE AGES

B.2.1. LITERATURE

In Christian late antiquity and the Middle Ages, ancient literature and especially ancient myth found themselves 'captives' of allegory. Upon the historical 'sense' was superimposed a second, generally moral 'sense'. 'Christian readings' in particular hence form heterogeneous and complementary but also contradictory interpretations. In the *Mythologiae* of Fulgentius (Fulg. Myth. 3,3,709; 5th/6th cents. AD) and in the *Allegoriae super Ovidii Metamorphosin* (3,2; late 12th cent.) of Arnulf of Orléans which largely follows it, the glimpsing of the naked goddess at noon is interpreted as a belated, but clear insight on A.'s part into the emptiness and uselessness of his passion for hunting. His flight as a terror-struck stag shows his intention to convert, but this is foiled by his dogs, the irresistible drive to hunt, i.e., to Fulgentius, curiosity. A. is hence seen as the victim of the curiosity represented by his dogs. The anonymous *Ovide moralisé* (first third of 14th cent.) takes up this reading but develops the aspect, already mentioned in the preceding version, of the dogs preying on their master and thus materially 'voracious'. The 'moral' of this first reading (3,574-603) is a warning against the harm done by profligacy. A second, soteriological or Christological reading,

which follows immediately as the "more noble" ("plus noble" [3,605]), identifies A. with the Son of God who in → Artemis succeeds in perceiving *la Dèité* (3,635) in her very Trinity. The homophonic play of French *cerf/serv* ('stag'/'servant', 'slave') makes it possible to read Christ's human incarnation in A.'s metamorphosis into a stag, and to interpret A.'s killing by the hounds as the crucifixion of Christ by the Jews (3,658–669). This reading in *malam partem* and in *bonam partem* also characterizes the *Ovidius moralizatus* (c. 1342) of Pierre Bersuire and Chapter 69 of the *Epistre Othea* (1400) by Christine de Pizan. On the one hand the figure of the otiose and profligate A., too fond of his hunting and his hounds, is intended as a warning to knights against falling prey to Diana (→ Artemis) and being devoured by their own dogs. On the other hand, A. transformed into a stag (*cerf*) represents the penitent sinner who "has mastered his own flesh and made it serve his spirit" ("a maté sa propre char et faite serve a l'esprit").

Giovanni dei Bonsignori, who composed a free prose translation with commentary of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in his *Ovidio Methamorphoseos vulgare* (1375–1377; printed 1497), views A. on the one hand as the hunter who, on seeing the naked goddess, becomes conscious of the *vanitas* of his passion for hunting, and gives it up, but keeps his dogs and continues to care for them, and hence sinks into poverty (3,5–7). Also in this tradition is the A. episode in the *General Estoria* (ed. Solalinde, Kasten, Oelschläger, 1957, 148b–154a) by Alfonso X of Castile (late 13th cent.), although here there are clear political implications. The inability of A. to divest himself of the "pack of hounds" that is preying on him enables his enemies to conquer his country.

Without examining in detail the other 'expositions' of this period, which vary only slightly since they all interdepend, allegory was a dominant form of reception of the ancient myth throughout the Middle Ages until the 16th cent. It generally accompanied abbreviated or embellished retellings and very free (though seldom aesthetically sophisticated) translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It dominated their commentaries and hence came to influence the illustrations in these versions, which in turn came to constitute the models for the selection of motifs and scenic design in paintings and cycles of paintings of the 16th and 17th cents. The three great Italian mythographers of the 16th cent., Natale Comes, Vincenzo Cartari and Giglio Gregorio Giraldi, still took up the traditional allegorical readings in their philological and scholarly presentations of ancient mythology. Conti, for instance, emphasizes in his *Mythologiae* (1610) the morally didactic function of ancient fables in general, taking A. as a warning, among other

things, against curiosity: "*ne simus nimis curiosi in rebus nihil ad nos pertinentibus, quoniam multis perniciosum fuit res arcanas aliorum cognovisse*" ("that we might not be excessively curious in matters that do not concern us, since it was of the utmost disadvantage to many to know the private affairs of others"; *Mythologiae*, p. 662). There is also an implicit reference here to a passage in Ovid's *Tristia*, in which Ovid alludes to the possible reason for his banishment to Tomis, namely having been forcibly made privy to secrets of the rulers and enduring punishment for it, just like A.: "*inscius A. vidit sine veste Dianam*" (Ov. Tr. 2,105; "unknowing, A. saw Diana unclothed"). John Gower's *Tale of Acteon* from his *Confessio amantis* (1390; 1,333–388) is already indebted to this view – the 'warning' against the forbidden albeit unintentional sight.

The genre of illustrated literature *par excellence* of the early modern period, the emblemata, still reflects the allegorical tradition. In Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber* (1531), the emblem *In Receptatores Siccariorum* (E 6b; 'Against those that take in assassins') warns against excessive guilelessness when dealing with riff-raff, who reward generosity as the hounds rewarded A.: with ingratitude. This appears to be a modernization of the Greek dictum *θρέψαι κύνας* (Schol. Theoc. 5,38, *thrépsai kýnas*, 'to rear dogs') in the sense of 'reaping ingratitude', a saying that owes its imagery to the A. myth. Barthélemy Aneau's *Picta poesis* (1552) makes A. a master who has become a slave – the *inscriptio* is *Ex domino servus* –, a victim of parasitic sycophants, represented by the raving dogs. The conventional *pictura* shows Diana to the left by the spring with four → nymphs, and A. to the right with his head turned into that of a stag. As is often the case with emblemata, this *pictura* may equally have been assigned to a different reading of A., there being no mention of 'Diana bathing' in the *subscriptio*. Joannes Sambucus, in his *Emblemata* (1564), condemns A.'s hunting passion as "miserable profligacy" ("*voluptas ærumnosa*").

The moral allegory of the A. myth, to sum up, is without exception accorded a negative implication, while the anagogic allegory is naturally given a positive connotation. The passion for hunting and curiosity, understood as a striving for knowledge, only began to find rehabilitation later in the early modern period, not least under the influence of Platonism and Neoplatonism (see below B.3.1).

B.2.2. FINE ARTS

The most important medium of pictorial representation in the Middle Ages was manuscript illumination, but this field remains little-researched. Greater not only in number but in impact on painting, esp. of the 16th and 17th cents., were the series of woodcuts made for printed editions



Fig. 3: Actaeon, Diana and the nymphs (simultaneous depiction), woodcut from Giovanni dei Bonsignori, *Ovidio metamorphoseos vulgare*, Venice 1497.

of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, for their vernacular reworkings and translations. A feature of the illustrations of the *Metamorphoses* stories is the simultaneous depiction of different episodes. The woodcut portraying the A. myth in Giovanni dei Bonsignori's version of the *Metamorphoses* (cf. fig. 3) shows to the left the scene in which Diana (→ Artemis) is naked in the pool with two → nymphs, surrounded by trees, the approaching A. splashing with water, while to the right a stag is attacked by three hounds and two hunters blow their horns in response to the attack. A town is shown in the background. This depiction, while artistically still quite clumsy, nevertheless became the iconographic model, in structure and concept, for numerous subsequent illustrations of the A. myth, not only in printed editions and reworkings of the *Metamorphoses*, but also for early self-contained paintings.

B.3. EARLY MODERN PERIOD

B.3.1. LITERATURE

Although allegoresis (esp. of the moralistic type) remained the dominant form of myth reception well into the 16th cent. and beyond (see above B.2.1.), a poetic, aesthetic appropriation of ancient myth began to emerge as early as the mid-14th cent. The pioneer here was Giovanni Boccaccio, with his *Genealogie deorum gentilium libri*, among the intentions of which is the legitimizing poetry as fiction through ancient myth. The minor epic *La caccia di Diana* (1334), probably Boccaccio's earliest work, is one example of a decisive departure from allegory, in the sense of detheologization. Here, the narrator Cimone is transformed from a stag into a man, from an animal into a human being, and this metamorphosis is effected by love (→ Aphrodite), the rival of chastity (i.e. → Artemis). Love is embodied in the 'beloved Lady' (*donna piacente*), who, with her companions, withdraws from the reti-

nue of the goddess of the hunt to pay homage to love. The option was hereby established of a decisively erotic valorization of the myth of A. and Artemis, and this possibility was explored in ever-changing variations in the lyrics of Petrarch and subsequent 15th and 16th cent. Petrarchian poetry. In modes of simile, parallel and metaphor, A. became the figure of identification for the Lover longing for the Beloved, who longs to see or actually sees her body and is punished by 'metamorphosis' or 'death', being 'hunted down' by pangs of conscience and 'killed' by the prospect of beauty. The linguistic imagery is variegated and rich, as a love is explored which is, not infrequently within a single collection of poems or even a single poem, now (Neo-)Platonizing, now tangibly sensual, now unfulfilled.

A. is among the speaker's identifications in Petrarch's so-called *canzone delle metamorfosi* (*Canzoniere* 23), as the poet considers the encounter with the Beloved and its consequences through the model of the Ovidian version of the A. myth, even if he places a different accent upon it. The encounter here is not haphazard, but the consequence of a wild ardour ("*il mio sfrenato ardire*", v. 143) which strives for fulfilment in full awareness of its guilt, and whose fulfilment in the 'catching of sight' of the Beloved brings only still greater suffering. This appropriation of the A. myth hence once more represents the underlying theme of the *Canzoniere* in its essence. Subsequent poetry of the Petrarchians (noteworthy examples are the poems of Maurice Scève, Joachim du Bellay, Pierre de Ronsard, Philippe Desportes [3]; [12]) as far as possible strips the guilt out of desire, which already in Petrarch is a desire of the body and the soul, and even legitimizes it as an expression of "intramundane self-assertion" ("*intramundaner Selbstbehauptung*"; Hans Blumenberg). At the same time, the motif

of the hunt undergoes a Platonic/Neoplatonic ennoblement, becoming an expression of the striving of the spirit for knowledge of the absolute.

Giordano Bruno's dialogue *Degli eroici furori* (1584/85) contains an outstanding example of the epistemological and aesthetic functionalization of A.'s quality as a passionate hunter. Appropriating the metaphorical view, current at least since Plato, of the hunt as a striving for knowledge of absolute truth, A., the hunter, becomes an allegory of "the intellect, intent upon hunting down divine wisdom, upon apprehending divine beauty" ("*l'intelletto intento a caccia de la divina sapienzia, a l'apprension de la beltà divina*"; 1,4). Yet what he here succeeds only in seeing "among the waters" ("*tra l'acque*") is not the divine itself, but merely a reflection of the divine "in the mirror of similitudes, in those works that blaze with the efficacy of the divine goodness and splendour" ("*nel specchio de le similitudini, ne l'opre, dove riluce l'efficacia de la bontade e splendor divino*"). The faculty of perceiving earthly beauty, such beauty being understood as a mirror of divine truth, responds to the early modern principle forbidding the direct perception of divine truth i.e. the recognition of the intelligible. In his catching-sight-of the divine "as in a shadow or a mirror" ("*come in ombra e specchio*"), hence as a simulacrum, the hero A. 'contracts' the divine in himself, himself becoming a 'second God'. He 'converts'.

Thus, the hunter, having striven for the divine as his prey, himself becomes that prey, and the hounds (i.e. thinking consciousness) – sent out as accessories to the hunt in order to capture the intended prey – throw themselves on the 'converted' hunter, himself now the prey. This 'conversion', however, does not mean death as the end, but rather as the beginning: a new life as a divine life in immanence. For divinity "lives in us by virtue of the regenerated intellect and will" ("*abitare in noi per forza del riformato intelletto e voluntade*"). In the midst of this idiosyncratic philosophical allegoresis of A., Bruno postulates the aestheticization of transcendence in immanence, and hence lays the epistemological foundation for the aestheticism of the modern period [11].

Of less epistemological stringency but highly persuasive in aesthetic and poetic terms is Giovan Battista Marino's *idillio favoloso*, *Atteone*, part of the collection *La Sampogna* (1620), as it configures an ambitious synthesis of sensuality and intellect, Eros as desire carnal and intellectual alike. In the interdependency of the two erotic concepts, *Atteone* appropriates the Petrarchian, Petrarchist and Brunian usages of the A. mythologem and radicalizes them such that sensuality is intrinsically of the mind or

soul, the mind or soul intrinsically sensual, and that hence all distinction between the concepts or spheres is abolished. This succeeds not least by virtue of the dramatic clarity brought to the plot and processes by the first-person narrative of A. as the protagonist. Marino's reference texts are the A. narratives in Nonnus' *Dionysiaca* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (see above B.1.2.), and it is evident from appropriations of language and style as well as paraphrases that he (also) read the latter work in the version by Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara (1563), a translation as free as it is poetically sophisticated.

The courtly dramatic festivals opened up another 'stage' to ancient mythology. These festivals had a twofold function: firstly to entertain the court, secondly to represent princely power and glorify the ruling families. An example of this encomiastic, hortatory tendency is the Baldassare Taccone play *Atteone* probably performed in 1489 at Milan. The play culminates in Mercury's (→ Hermes) warning to all political opponents to refrain from malicious machinations or expect the vengeance of the gods. Revolt against the duke, Lodovico Sforza, is hence related to A.'s infringement of the divine realm. The mythical image transfigures the political power struggles of the time.

What is true of most ancient myths also applies to the A. myth: reception is in no way restricted to the artistically refined development or remodelling of the myth as a whole. Rather, a plethora of narrative, dramatic and poetic texts merely allude to the A. mythologem, evoking the figure of A. as it were in passing in order to modernize one of its various aspects, or to parody and travesty it, transforming it into farce and the burlesque. The supreme examples of this are the plays of William Shakespeare. Among others, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1595) may be mentioned here; in which, though admittedly only to a limited extent, Bottom hints at A. and Titania at Diana, *Twelfth Night* (c. 1601), in which Orsino protests that he was transformed into a stag on first seeing his beloved Olivia and has ever since been pursued by his desires "like fell and cruell hounds" (1,1, vv. 19–23); or *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1597), in which being "like Sir Acteon" is synonymous with being cuckolded. The depiction of the grotto in Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* (1590) or in Giovanni Battista Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido* (printed 1590) is indebted to Ovid's portrayal of the grotto in the A. myth. Teasing out the dispersed borrowings of the Ovidian A. episode (among others) by way of the translation of the *Metamorphoses* by Arthur Golding (1567) in Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1596) is a task for philologists. Robert Cox' farce with dances, *Acteon and Diana With a Pastoral Story of the Nymph Oenone* (1656),

meanwhile, would scarcely merit mention were it not symptomatic of the banalizations that have accompanied all 'high culture' reception. Similar phenomena are seen in art and music.

B.3.2. FINE ARTS

The pictorial programme of the A. myth in the early modern period largely continued that of the illustrated *Metamorphoses* editions and reworkings (translations, paraphrases, commentaries) of the 15th and 16th cents.: Diana (→ Artemis), bathing naked in a spring or a well, surrounded by her likewise naked female companions and seen at the moment of their discovery by A. A. appears as a hunter, is transformed (esp. in early versions of the scene) into a stag; this transformation is usually limited to his head and upper body. He steps forward or turns to flee, and is accompanied, or else already attacked and dismembered, by his dogs. A rough distinction can be made of two types of images: either Diana (with her surrounding → nymphs) and A. each occupy approximately half of the image, or the goddess' bath forms the foreground with the hunter A. in the background. While individual pictures must rely on portraying the 'pregnant moment', large-scale pictorial decorations of interior spaces can depict the narrative sequence of the myth. An artistically outstanding example, complex in narrative, is Parmigianino's cycle of frescos *Stories of Diana and Actaeon* (1523) in the Rocca Sanvitale at Fontanellato (Parma), a work which is also an expression of Humanist moral philosophy [15].

Valorizations (moralizing, epistemological, aesthetic-philosophical) of A.'s attitude and actions also differ in art according to the intentions of the individual artist.

An example of a primarily moralizing intention in pictorial expression is Rembrandt's early painting (c. 1634/35) *Diana, Actaeon and Callisto* (Anholt/Westfalen, Museum Schloss Anholt, Fürst Salm-Salm Collection). Scenes from two mythical narratives are presented in a landscape that dominates the image. The left-hand side as far as the middle ground is taken up by the scene of A. surprising Diana. A., as well as all the female figures in the water and on the shore evidently belong to this scene, i.e. Diana and her nymphs, some of whom are attempting to flee, others looking on in horror, others still oblivious to what is happening. Diana is trying to splash A. with water, and A. already has horns and is looking at Diana in some surprise and defensiveness, meeting her gaze. The dogs are ready to attack him. The right-hand side of the image shows the scene 'Discovery of the pregnancy of Callisto' (cf. Ov. Met. 2,401–532; → Nymphs). Callisto, chaste and the favourite companion of Artemis, has been raped by → Zeus, after he won her confidence by taking the shape of Artemis.

The nymphs discover the consequence. The picture shows a knot of jostling, naked women, one of whom is trying to tear the clothes from Callisto's pregnant body.

The first common factor correlating the two myths is the figure of Artemis, and the goddess consequently stands in the front of the composition at the centre, while the two scenes are also linked by individual nymphs from the two groups looking or pointing at the other. Both mythical figures, A. and Callisto, breach a threshold, that of chastity, A. by catching unchaste sight, Callisto by being unchastely touched in consequence of an unchaste catching of sight. The metamorphosis of A. is his punishment for his wild desire to see, and the shame of Callisto (who is later transformed into a bear) is a warning against falling prey to seduction. This painting is thus another and very late example of moralistic mythical allegory (on which see [2], who also demonstrates rhetorical and stylistic peculiarities).

Titian's version of *Diana and Actaeon* (cf. fig. 4), eight decades earlier, is by virtue of its iconography a document of the early modern world view of the *Rinascimento*, more precisely of the epistemologically-founded experience of contingency. In Artemis, A. is confronted by Fate. Even more clearly than Ovid, who sees 'coincidence' at work in the hunter's encounter with the goddess of the hunt (Ov. Met. 3,141: "*fortunae crimen in illo*"), A. here comes face to face with Fate as represented by Artemis. Entering the scene rapidly, discovered at the same moment and (as yet) untransformed, A. indicates Artemis with his right hand, while his left points at a skull on a plinth in the background: the skull of a stag. A direct reference is thus insinuated between the goddess and her potential act, the transformation of A. into a stag. But Artemis here does not defend herself by, as is customary, splashing A. with water. Rather, she tries to cover herself. The small, white cloth that she lifts corresponds to the large, red cloth that the nymph lifts away to reveal A. the voyeur. But, in the iconography of the *Rinascimento*, the billowing (sail) cloth is an attribute of the goddess Fortuna, and its form is taken up and intensified by the corresponding attitude of the black attendant girl who tries to protect Artemis. She almost forms a unity with Artemis as her other, dark side, in turn symbolically alluding to Artemis/Diana-Luna, that is the constant alternation of shadow and light, an alternation that equally lends itself to Fortuna ([14], whose further interpretations must, however, be rejected). One reading of this painting might be that A. the hunter has the potential to resist Artemis, the goddess Fortuna, and that the encounter of the human with the divine need not end in death, but constitutes a challenge to human self-assertion.



Fig. 4: Titian, *Diana and Actaeon*, oil on canvas, 1556/59. Edinburgh, National Gallery of Scotland.

This is not contradicted by the fact that in another painting (*The Death of Actaeon*, 1562, London, National Gallery), Titian represents Artemis as a statuesque huntress preparing herself to fell A., transformed into a stag and attacked by his hounds, with her bow and arrow, an image strikingly similar in iconography to the portrayal on the Boston bell *krater* (see above B.1.1.).

It will not be possible to ascribe a meaningful semantic depth to every one of the uncommonly many pictorial representations of the A./Artemis constellation that date from the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th cents., and yet there is scarcely an artist of note whose oeuvre lacks this constellation, not infrequently multiple versions of it. It is above all the aesthetic stimulus of female nudity in an unending variety of positions which lies behind the popularity and wide dissemination of the subject, and which leads from the 'voyeur in the picture', A., to the 'voyeur of the picture'. Voyeurism as one possible theme becomes *the* aesthetic experience of the image *tout court*. By the early 18th cent. at the latest, the moralizing aspect still evinced by the 'bathing scenes with observer' of 16th and 17th cent. painting and expressed *i. a.* by the gestures and pantomime of disturbance and shock in the nymphs and goddess – examples include Lucas Cranach the Younger's *Diana and Actaeon* (c. 1550, Darmstadt, Hessisches Landesmuseum), Giuseppe Cesari's *Diana and Actaeon* (c. 1606, Paris,

Louvre), to some extent the works of Francesco Albani, who, liked Cranach, painted several versions including *Actaeon surprises Diana and her Nymphs*, (1620/22, Paris, Louvre; *Diana with nine Nymphs and the fleeing Actaeon*, c. 1625, Paris, Louvre; variant: *Diana with eight Nymphs and the fleeing Actaeon*, c. 1625/30, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie) – gives way to a primarily aesthetic, hedonistic representation. Venetian painting, as represented by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, Giovanni Battista Piazzetta, Jacopo Amigoni, Giambattista Pittoni and Sebastiano Ricci, as well as later European Rococo painting offer decorative variants on the subject focused far more on new artistic processes than on 'content'.

The eroticism of 'voyeurism' is a means rather than an end. So it was, for instance, for Sir Thomas Gainsborough, who opposed the prevailing academicism with one oil sketch (Royal Collection, UK) and at least two chalk-and-wash drawings (*Diana and Actaeon*, 1784/85, San Marino, California, Henry E. Huntington Library, and Bedford, Cecil Higgins Art Gallery).

B.3.3. MUSIC AND BALLET

Probably the earliest setting of a poem on the myth of A. and Diana (the poem being Petrarch's *Non al suo amante più Diana piacque* (*Canzoniere* 52) dates from the 14th cent. and is by Jacopo da Bologna. Settings of this and many other sonnets and madrigals from Petrarch's *Canzoniere* followed in great numbers, esp. in 16th cent. Italy. Noteworthy among them is,

for instance, the setting of *Canzoniere* 52 by Luca Marenzio (1st Book of Madrigals, 1580). Numerous cantatas, madrigals and ballets treat the A. myth, not infrequently (esp. in the 17th cent.) shifting it into the burlesque genre, e.g. the cantata *Actéon* (1700) by Pierre-César Abeille, or, in the 18th cent., attaching a purely aesthetic value to it, e.g. the cantata *Diana and Actéon* (1780) by John Abraham Fisher, or Joseph Bodin de Boismortier's cantata for soprano solo, violin and basso continuo, *Diane et Actéon* (1755). For ballet scenarios, the 'fruitful moment' was the 'surprising of Diana at her bath', as the very titles of a number of ballets show: *Diana sorpresa* (premiere Venice 1774) by Onorato Viganò and *La surprise de Diane* (premiere London 1805) by Josef Wölfl.

Towards the end of the 18th cent., Carl Ditters von Dittersdorf composed a total of twelve symphonies on stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (six of which are lost). These include the Symphony No. 3 in G major, *Actéon changé en cerf* (1785).

Noteworthy among the plethora of 17th and 18th cent. operas is Marc-Antoine Charpentier's *Actéon* (1683–1685; libretto by the composer; premiere Fontainebleau 1684). This work, a pastoral in six scenes, is explicitly described as an 'opéra de chasse', and thus honours the courtly interest in hunting as a privileged pastime of the nobility. The dramatic sequence is intensified in the alternation of recitative and melodic passages and ends in the death of A., mourned by his hunters, whose chorus is accorded a prominent position in the ensemble. It is interesting, and entirely in keeping with the priorities of the opera, that the figure of A. is modelled on Euripides' *Hippolytus* (→ Phaedra, B.2.1.). Not only is he, as Diana's faithful servant, himself chaste like the goddess and her → nymphs, but he ultimately falls, entirely innocent, victim to Juno's vengefulness, who merely uses the goddess of hunting as her instrument. A. here suffers punishment on behalf of → Europa, the sister of his ancestor → Cadmus, who famously attracted the sexual interest of the father of the gods and hence in turn enraged his consort. The particular design of the figure of A. and his fate may also have been inspired by Jean Racine's tragedy *Phèdre et Hippolyte* (1677, → Phaedra, B.4.1.), highly successful at the time. This play, in its turn, is a transformation of the Euripidean tragedy *Hippolytus*.

B.4. MODERN PERIOD

B.4.1. LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

If platitudes such as the 'grand spectacle en deux parties' entitled *Actéon changé en cerf, ou La vengeance de Diane* contributed by Jean-Baptiste-Augustin Hapdé for the opening of the

Cirque Olympique in Paris on 4 March 1811 are disregarded, appearances of the A. myth in literary works of the modern period tend to be still more allusive than earlier. In this, the myth participates in particular in a general tendency of literature and poetry, antiquity and to fragment and intermesh present, hence appropriating ancient myth into new aesthetic concepts. The supreme example is T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (vv. 196–201), in which the rogue Sweeney approaches Mrs. Porter as A. approaches Diana (→ Artemis). The sophistication of the passage derives in part from the fact that the figures of A. and Diana are never referred to by name, but are only metonymically present as 'horn' and 'spring' and in a slightly-altered quotation of two verses from the allegorical masque *The Parliament of Bees* (1607) by John Day in which A. and Diana are indeed explicitly mentioned.

In Ezra Pound's short poem *The Coming of War: Actaeon* from the collection *Personae* (1952), the appearance of A. – "Actaeon of golden greaves!" – evokes a moment at once threatening and fascinating. John Erskine's *Actaeon* from the collection *Actaeon and Other Poems* (1907) recounts his story (the encounter with Diana and its consequences) to the denizens of the underworld, and refuses to drink from the Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, so that he may always remember his experience and "tell what beauty was". Ted Hughes, meanwhile, composed two poems entitled *Actaeon*. The first, from the collection *Moortown* (1979), deals with the impossibility, in spite of seeing the goddess, of recognizing her – echoes of Giordano Bruno? The second and much longer poem, from the collection *Tales from Ovid. Twenty-four Passages from the 'Metamorphoses'* (1997), takes up the *topoi* of A.'s curiosity and the fateful nature of the encounter. The intent is to demonstrate the relevance of the ancient myth to modernity.

Without doubt the most interesting approach to the myth of A. and Diana is Pierre Klossowski's *Le Bain de Diane* (first published 1956; English translation 1990). This highly allusive prose text, composed of brief, digressive individual texts, some with heading and motto, is a summation and idiosyncratic synthesis of the various historical readings of the A. and Diana myth. The implicit references to Ovid and esp. Bruno and his Neoplatonist version of A. (see above B.3.1.) are unmistakable. The Brunian theory of the goddess Diana (→ Artemis) – perceptible to the human A. only "as in a shadow", hence as a simulacrum, – is given Neoplatonist emphasis by the introduction of the 'daimon' (*démon*, i.e. the world-soul), the mediator between the divine and human spheres. He enables the goddess to be

seen in the glow of the female body, and in the human mind of the human hunter A. he instills the 'face' of the goddess: "Il (sc. le démon) devient l'imagination d'Actéon et le miroir de Diane" ("He becomes the imagination of Actaeon and the mirror of Diana"). The divine is hence reflected in the human, and the human in the divine. The consequence is a mutual desire, the effect of which is a moment of ecstasy, of transcendence of space and time, of transition into an absolute mythical state of immediacy and directness. But this epiphanic effect is the 'unutterable' (*indicible*), which in turn elicits a tension "known only to the poet, which the artist can instill in the scene he intends to portray [...]". Even more clearly than the Brunian version, then, Klossowski's *Le Bain de Diane* is an allegory of poetic and pictorial poiesis, more specifically of poiesis as a venue of transgression (cf. here also [6]). At the same time, the text of *Le Bain de Diane* itself aims at poetical transgression both on the level of *histoire* and that of *discours*, finding its pictorial analogue in a series of paintings and drawings by Klossowski entitled *Diane et Actéon* (see below B.4.2) No verdict is sought as to success or failure. Rather, the ceaseless 'task' of partaking the metaphysical within the physical is debated. Just such a reading was embraced by Jacques Lacan in *La chose freudienne* (1955/56) when, contemporaneously with Klossowski, he called on the mythical figure of A. to defend Sigmund Freud and his method against detractors. A. here becomes a metaphor of Freud's pursuit of an ultimately uncapturable 'truth', that of psychoanalytical knowledge, which, however, in contrast to the A. figure in Bruno and Klossowski, has no expectation of a theophanic element, but is continued by his 'disciples' [10.22ff.].

B.4.2. FINE ARTS

The appropriation of mythological themes in 19th cent. art had different functions: a licence to a certain freedom *in eroticis*, the opening up of 'exotic' spaces and times, the 'symbolistic' depiction of a reality beyond rationality. Admittedly, it is not always possible to categorize unambiguously according to typology. This is true of Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot's Neoclassical painting *Diane et Actéon* (1836, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Robert Lehman Collection) and Théodore Chassériau's hieratic version, clearly influenced by Corot, *Diana surprised by Actaeon* (1840, private collection), no less than of Eugène Delacroix' colourfully expressive depiction of *Diana and Actaeon*, which represents summer in the 'Four Seasons' series (1856-1863, São Paulo, Museu de arte). The attitudes and constellation of the two protagonists Diana (→ Artemis) and A. clearly show Titian to have been the model

(see above B.3.2, fig. 4). But there is one difference; In Delacroix, the attitudes and gazes of the goddess and the hunter express a mutual desire, experienced with astonishment. This was new, and only with Pierre Klossowski (see below) would it be approached again.

Paul Cézanne, for his part, painted a series of female and male bathers, mostly in the 1890s and the early years of the 20th cent., with variations in the compositions of groups of figures that certainly appropriate groupings of Diana and her → nymphs in paintings of the 16th-18th cents. This affiliation may be confirmed in an early painting from 1870, which unlike the later works is dark and pastose. This is *Female bathers surprised by a passer-by observing them* [I. fig. 10], and it quite clearly refers to the myth of Diana and A.

The myths of antiquity exerted a particular pull on the Surrealists and their circle, insofar as they represent the (supposedly) 'pre-rational', indeed the archaic. Here, though, those mythical figures whose 'hybridity' implies the animal in the human and *vice versa*, were of especial interest – such figures including the → Centaurs, the → Minotaur and A. in the moment of his transformation. One example is André Masson's *Actéon* (1945, Mannheim, Kunsthalle), a pastel in which just a few powerful black lines depict A. being attacked by three dogs, while Diana is represented only by a hinted half-moon.

Far more refined is a series of mostly large-format crayon drawings and one painting by Pierre Klossowski, all entitled *Diana and Actaeon* (from 1953 to 1990). The constellation is always the same. A., transformed into a stag apart from his hands or just one hand, standing upright in human posture and dressed in a jacket, embraces the naked body of the goddess Diana from behind or from the side, as she turns her back or turns side on to him. In the 1990 painting (cf. fig. 5), a dog is also jumping up between the thighs of Diana and trying to touch his tongue to her sex. These representations of A. and Diana are neither pornographic nor hieratic, but are both at once in a tension of ambivalence, and by that very tension they seek to present in pictorial form the mutual desire of the 'human' and the 'divine' so intricately formulated in *Le Bain de Diane* (see above B.4.1) and hence to consistently 'simulate' it.

B.4.3. MUSIC AND BALLET

In 19th cent. opera, the A. myth was nothing more than a burlesque or comic subject. Examples of this type include the one-act *opéra-comique Actéon* by Daniel-François-Esprit Auber (libretto: Eugène Scribe), first performed with great success at the Théâtre national de l'Opéra-Comique, Paris, in 1836, and the operetta *Actéon*

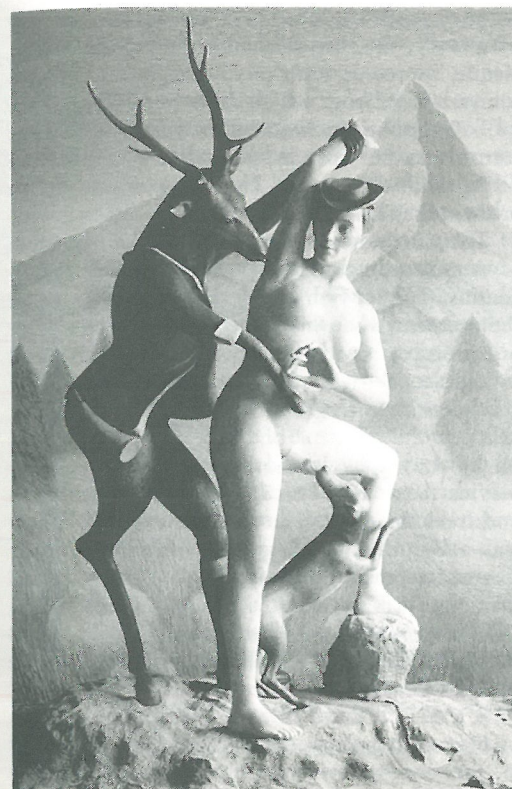


Fig. 5: Pierre Klossowski, *Diana and Actaeon*. Synthetic resin and acrylic on canvas, 1990. Denise Klossowski Collection.

by Francis Chassaigne, its libretto based on a vaudeville by Félix-Auguste Duvert, Emmanuel Théaulon and Adolphe de Leuven (first performance: 1878, Paris, Palais-Royal): on the whole, these were ephemeral vogue pieces of the Belle Époque.

In the 20th cent., by contrast, the A. myth was primarily taken up in symphonic poems, cantatas and ballets. The symphonic poem *Actéon* or *Acteon* by Alfred Alessandrescu, for instance, was performed on 20 December 1915 at the *Ateneul Român din Bucuresti* (Romanian Athenaeum Bucharest). In accordance with the genre, the piece seeks to give a representation of the character and actions of A. through music. In 1930, Tony Louis Alexandre Aubin won the *Prix de Rome* with his cantata *Actéon* (1930).

The myth of A. and Diana became a popular subject for ballet in the 1930s and 1940s. In 1929, Francis Poulenc composed *Aubade*, a 'concerto chorégraphique' for piano and 18 instruments (movement structure: *toccata, récitatif, rondeau, presto, récitatif, andante, allegro feroce* and *conclusion/adagio*). It is a modern development of the *opéra-ballets* of Jean-Philippe

Rameau. Poulenc's *Aubade* was frequently staged in the ensuing years, e.g. by Bronislava Nijinska (Paris 1929), George Balanchine (Paris 1930), Harald Lander (Copenhagen 1933), Alexis Dolinoff (Philadelphia 1936) and Serge Lifar (Monte Carlo 1946). While Poulenc envisaged only female dancers for his choreographic staging, Balanchine added a male dancer for the figure of A. in 1930. In Leningrad in 1935, the Russian ballet dancer and teacher Agrippina Yakovlevna Vaganova choreographed the ballet *La Esmeralda* (already choreographed in London in 1844 by Jules-Joseph Perrot and in St. Petersburg in 1886 by Marius Ivanovich Petipa), which includes a *pas de deux* for A. and Diana. This, in turn, was first performed as *Diana and Actaeon* in 1963 at the London Royal Academy of Dance by (and with) Rudolf Nureyev. A. ballets remain in the repertoire of international companies to this day.

→ Artemis; Nymphs

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Admetus see → Alcestis and Admetus