Transformations of Scylla and Charybdis:
Encounters with Otherness and Ancient Greek Myth
in Post-Classical Perspective

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This PhD research includes an attached Documentary Film.

ABSTRACT

This is a study of contemporary uses of the myth of Scylla and Charybdis, often personified as female monstrosities or explained as a rock and whirlpool in Italy's Strait of Reggio and Messina. Focusing on theoretical, methodological, and disciplinary issues of historical transmission, it addresses media appropriations of these signifiers of Greco-Roman traditions, as well as abject femininity, animality, and Otherness.

Nineteenth-century European travellers visited the Strait in search of the landmarks of Homer's *Odyssey*. The area attracted the travellers' antiquarian appreciation of the myth-place and its relation with legends of marine dangers, a narrative that later reached broader audiences through twentieth-century international tourism and media. In parallel, Scylla and Charybdis were popularized as monstrous figures in the imaginaries of travel, horror, fantasy, and erotica.

Drawing on deconstructive approaches to myth studies, the thesis analyses the Scylla and Charybdis motif in the broader context of ideas about antiquity in historiographical, psychoanalytic, and positivist perspectives. Looking at under-researched media, such as travel literature, role playing and video games, and pornographic iconography, the study shows how the monsters embodied imagined encounters with the abject, the marvellous, the other-than-self, and the other-than-now.

Extending critiques of Greco-Roman history's exceptionalism developed within reception and cultural studies, the thesis conceptualizes antiquity as a series of reciprocal impacts between the present and the past, and it discusses the pliability of the myth figures and the variety of purposes they served. Ethnographic research in the Strait, presented through an accompanying Documentary Film, demonstrates how the figures became local symbols of selectively philhellenic local histories.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.
Arriving there is what you are destined for.
But do not hurry the journey at all.
Better if it lasts for years,
so you are old by the time you reach the island,
wealthy with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

C.P. Cavafy, *Collected Poems* (1992)

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INTRODUCTION

I–1: *Scylla and Charybdis: diachronic persistence, synchronic transformation*

This is a study on the modern circulation and reformulations of the ancient Greco-Roman myth of Scylla and Charybdis, traditionally seen as monstrous females, or identified with rocks and whirlpools in the Italian Strait of Messina, in modern and contemporary texts, media, and discourses. Drawing on Greco-Roman reception studies, approaches like psychoanalysis and post-structuralism, media and cultural studies, and ethnography, I look at ancient mythology from the point of view of its historical transmission and social relevance. The study unpicks the ways in which Greek myth is conceptualized, represented and consumed in the present. Scylla and Charybdis, albeit distinct monsters, often feature in the same mythical tale, so that one usually implies the other—as I will illustrate from case to case. Their diachronic persistence and transformations invited research on the figures' enduring ability to inspire people's fantasies and anxieties of travel into liminal geographies, encounters with monstrous femininity, animality, and otherness, and states of corporeal hybridity. At the same time, many have received the myth alongside broader ideas on Greco-Roman antiquity, as well as assumptions about its cultural and aesthetic value.

This is not a thesis on the tale of Scylla and Charybdis in antiquity. While some aspects of reception of the myth will lead me to consider the ancient uses of the symbols, I focus on Scylla and Charybdis from the early modern period to the present, following their dissemination beginning with Greco-Roman traditions (especially through Homer's *Odyssey*) in a variety of media and discourses, among transnational and global audiences. Through elements of ethnographic research, I also looked at the Greek myth's modern reception in the town of Scilla in Italy, traditionally associated with Homeric geography, and on the impact of Greek antiquity on the town today. My study works contrapuntally, between cases in which people understood Scylla and Charybdis especially as signifiers of a relation with Greco-Roman traditions, and other areas of reception, where this myth of sea monster was liberally disseminated and transformed, regardless of awareness of its belonging to a specific canon.

In some contexts, Scylla and Charybdis often resurface in transnational fantasy and horror media in worlds of imagination or the pure embrace of fantasy.[1] Their motifs work within novel formulations of abject or sexualized femininity, or are related to stories of aquatic monstrosities lurking beyond the confines of safe spaces. In other contexts, such as the town of Scilla, the frame of value is different: the myth signals a larger presence of the Greeks in the region, underpinning the idea of descending from Homer. This distinction is, of course, not a rigid binary: local representations in Scilla have been influenced by the myth's planetary circulation, while even the most imaginative fantasy reformulations tend to be set in a fictionalized Strait. Yet, this tension between the resilience of cultural traditions and the uncoordinated forces running behind a myth's reception will run through the cases I chose for this study, signalling my interest in how the myth worked over time and in different sectors of society.

My methodology consisted firstly in a broad investigation of the lexical and visual resurfacing of the motif in today's scholarship, popular discourses, and media. In parallel, I produced a broad literature review on studies focusing on the reception and conceptualization of antiquity in the present.[2] I was thus able to identify three main areas of reception where the myth resurfaced. Firstly, the myth's reception in relation to its traditional localization in the Italian Strait between the island of Sicily and Calabria, at the tip of the peninsula. Secondly, its relation to motifs of female monstrosity, and incorporation in genealogies of femme fatales and gendered abjections. Thirdly, explanations of Scylla and Charybdis as geographical and marine features of the sea, such as whirlpools in the Strait, animals like whales and giant octopuses, or other marine behemoths.

While these strands of reception are often related or overlap via inter-textual or conceptual relations, I organize the research material to make sense of three perspectives that stand out as some of the historically most relevant areas of both specialist and popular mythologies: historiography, psychoanalysis, and

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[1] I use "fantasy" as a broad term for stories set in imaginative and "impossible" worlds and, more specifically (see Ch. 3 and 4), as a genre or kind of content in literature, film, role playing and video games. More broadly on the fantastic, see Todorov (1970) and Caillois (1965). On Greco-Roman influences on modern fantasy (albeit through a method that largely retains a linear model of 'classicity'), see Rogers/Stevens (2017).
[2] See Wyke (1997).

epistemology. The chapters are arranged as if working in pairs, each pair focusing on a main area of reception. In this Introduction, I will deploy the methodological foundation of a multidisciplinary inquiry into the uses and interpretations of Greco-Roman myth made by different individuals and communities, employing qualitative analysis developed in disciplines like historiography, film theory, psychoanalysis, and cultural and gender studies.[3]

While each chapter focuses on a particular area and specific case studies to show Scylla and Charybdis' synchronic relations with various areas of culture, the overall thesis also follows the diachronic dimension of the myth's reception. In so doing, this thesis historicises the myth in precise contexts and, thus, contributes to ongoing debates on how to decentre or 'post-classicize' Greco-Roman antiquity's impact on the present. Some of my findings derive from my research in the town of Scilla, which I also discuss in the Documentary Film that accompanies this thesis.[4] In 2014, I spent three months in the village and in the Strait, researching the landmarks associated with Greek myth, and liaising with the locals and many of the tourists that visit Scilla as a seaside holiday destination during the summer. In the Strait, some use mythic figures to brand restaurants and hotels. Other see themselves as the heirs of Homer, and believe the bard was born in their hometown. Localizing the Homeric myth on the map is part of a larger narrative through which people selectively pick ancient Greece as the genealogical foundation of their origins within Western history.[5]

As I will discuss briefly, ethnography allowed me to adopt an additional perspective to approach the issue of how antiquity is received, constructed, and made meaningful. In this Introduction, I trace an overview of the diachronic and thematic dissemination of the myth, outline my methodology in qualitative discourse analysis, and provide the conceptual framework on the reception of antiquity and the notion of myth that will guide my analysis of Scylla and Charybdis' modern resilience and transformations.

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[3] See Bloor/Bloor (2013: 1–14).
[4] Henceforth, I will refer to it as "the Documentary Film": in addition to the attached copy, the Documentary can also be viewed online at this address:
https://vimeo.com/238236625/f5d6db415d
[5] A polyvocal discourse takes places in society among individuals and social institution who trace back their lineage to Greek antiquity. See Pipyrou (2012). On this subject, via a reflection on turning historiographies into objects of analysis, see Palmié/Stewart (2016: 207).

I–2: *Areas of myth-reception, case studies, and approach*

I begin my study on the contemporary presences of Scylla and Charybdis with a contextualization of how Greek myth was received during the Grand Tours between the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Chapter 1). At that time, European travellers like Saint-Non (1783), Edward Lear (1852), Gissing (1901), and others were attracted by the literary prestige of ancient mythical landmarks, and took pleasure in visiting the Strait of Messina as the traditional location of the Homeric monsters, seen as metaphors of the dangers and beauty of the sea. The Grand Tours ushered in the reception of the Strait as a literary myth-place for twentieth century travellers, explorers, and tourists attracted by the Mediterranean Sea and the prospect of "playing Ulysses" along the sea routes of the *Odyssey*. Therefore, I then follow the myth's reception in travel books and documentaries like Ernle Bradford's *Ulysses Found* (1963) and *The Search for Ulysses* (1965), and Folco Quilici's *L'Italia vista dal Cielo* (1968) and *Italy from the Sky* (1970), as well as international tourist guides of the era (1920-1970). Through such media, Scilla's fame as a landmark associated with Homer was increasingly disseminated worldwide.

The following two chapters follow the myth's diachronic dissemination on a planetary scale in the following decades, and their transition to areas of reception where the Scylla motif emerged in the canons of horror, fantasy, and erotica. In role-playing games like *Dungeons and Dragons* (1977), the anxieties and fantasies of femininity and sexuality underlining the Greek myth were reactivated in novel formulations of accursed femininity (Chapter 3). Looking at Japanese video games *Castlevania* (1997) and *God of War* (2010), I contextualize the reception of Scylla and Charybdis within globalized reworkings of the tropes of femme fatales, she-monsters and *vaginae dentatae*. Following the myth's dissemination among transnational audiences, and its hybridization with other literary canons like vampirism and weird fiction, I look at how Scylla and Charybdis worked as creative material for new *myth-scegenations*, as well as erotica and pornography (Ch. 4).

Tracing uses of Scylla and Charybdis not only as feminine, but also as marine monsters, I then follow their resurfacing in stories of the unfathomable

seas. I look at edutainment documentary *Clash of the Gods* (2010) and mystery programme *Destination Truth* (2010)*,* discussing how Scylla and Charybdis have been linked to discourses on marine creatures lurking in the seas ever since antiquity. In modern science programmes, Greek myth was used as a platform for science to explain myths as irrational fears, while mystery programmes used myth to legitimize monster hunts and sightings (Chapter 5).

Finally, I look at the association between Scylla and Charybdis and the Strait of Messina in relation to modern attempts to explain the *Odyssey*'s settings. Looking at Jean Cuisenier's journey in the Mediterranean (2003) and Felice Vinci's theory on Ulysses' supposed Scandinavian origins (2002)*,* I underline the Strait's importance as a landmark for an ongoing history of attempts to pinpoint mythical landmarks on geographical maps. Given the town of Scilla's lexical correspondence with the myth, offering "correct" mappings has been seen as crucial evidentiary material for those claiming authority in Greco-Roman history, or willing to sell sensationalised alternative histories (Ch. 6).

My final chapter also briefly touches upon the issue of how philologists and scientists based in the Strait claim that this place inspired the myth, and that this area is the birthplace of Homer. Ethnography offered a chance for another perspective on the ambiguities and complexities of assessing discourses on antiquity and myth in the present. Continuing this discussion in my Documentary Film, I corroborate it with a reflection on how local historiographies in the region often operate through a selective, Greek-centric lens. In so doing, I also reconnect with the historical thread laid out by the early chapters of the thesis, where I explain how European Grand Tours popularized Scilla as a Homeric landmark in modern times, contributing to a narrative that impacted back on the town's history.

I–3: *The theme of the Journey: playing the Hero, encountering the Other*

Scylla and Charybdis owe most of their popularity to the *Odyssey.* In Homer's epic, Odysseus—on his tortuous way back to his home in Ithaca, after the war of Troy– had to cross a narrow passageway. On each side lurked a

fearsome monster. Scylla was a six-headed predator that lived in a cave by the sea, and whose waist was encircled by wailing, canine heads. Charybdis was a vast creature dwelling in the depths of the sea, whose gaping maw could gulp water and anything that sailed too close.[6]

> In it dwelt Scylla, yelping terribly. Her voice to be sure is only as loud as the voice of a newborn whelp, but she herself is an evil monster, nor anyone would be glad at the sight of her, not even though it should be a god that met her.
> […] the other cliff, you will observe, Odysseus, is lower—they are close to each other; you could even shoot an arrow across—and on it is a large fig tree with rich foliage, but beneath this divine Charybdis sucks down the black water.[7]

Mentions also occurred in Greek drama, poetry and geographical texts; while mentions of Charybdis mostly occur in literature alongside Scylla. Visual representations found in reliefs, coins, pottery and mosaics from the V century BCE onwards mostly focus on Scylla, portraying it as a hybrid creature with a woman's upper body and snakes, dogs, and tentacles from the waist down.[8]
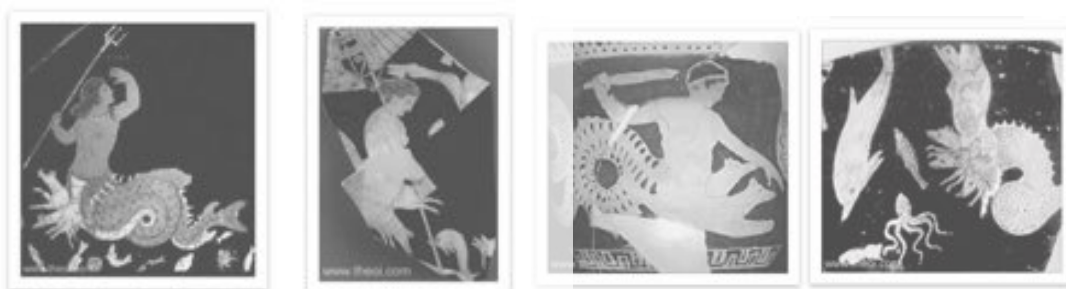
Fig. I-1: Scylla in Late Classical and Classical age pottery.[9]

According to Hopman,[10] the ancient Scylla works at the semantic intersection of "sea, dog, and woman", as a synthesis of both previous marine deities and circumstantial elements. Scylla is a projection of the zoological category of canines onto marine creatures, real or imagined (including

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[6] Homer, *Odyssey,* 9: 71-73; 83-85 and 101-4, *ca.* VIII BCE. Scylla's etymology can be read as the Snatcher, the Rock, or the Bitch; Charybdis can stand as the Whirlpool, the Swallower, or the Maw. See Aguirre Castro (2012) and Hopman (2012:12).
[7] Homer – *Odyssey,* book 12, 85-88 and 101-104 (Eng. Translation by A. T. Murray; 1998 edition, Cambridge MA and London: Loeb).
[8] Hopman (2012: 9). Also in earlier Minoan fragments: Malibu 81.AE.78, ca. 340 BCE and 86.AE.417, ca. 375-50 BCE (Getty).
[9] Source: www.theoi.com
[10] Hopman (2012: 12).

metaphorical readings of protruding rocks), and the derogatory term *skylla* (for the female dog, or 'bitch').[11] Ovid's *Metamorphoses* further canonized Scylla.[12] Scylla and Charybdis' origins, however, can be traced to pre-Homeric tales and folklore.[13] While the Strait has been traditionally associated with the myth, Homer did not mention any precise location. Yet, the vagueness of the epic poem and geographical clues gave rise to a tradition of mapping it on the Strait that goes back to ancient geographers.

Scylla and Charybdis have since embodied dangerous aspects of the sea, such as the whirlpools in the waters of the Strait or the protruding rocks of the town of Scilla (Fig. I–4).[14] The literary fame of myth and town (Fig. I-4) ran in parallel. The passage became an iconic element of Homeric geographies of the Mediterranean.[15] The Strait's narrowest 3km stretch (Fig. I–1), whether it inspired the myth or was associated with a pre-existing myth, was inextricably associated with one of Ulysses' destinations in his literary journey. The Strait has been working cartographically as such a symbolic landmark across the ages: from the ancient maps of Italy (Fig. I–3) to today's uses in local newspapers (Fig. I–2).[16]

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[11] Hopman (2012: 15).

[12] P. Ovidius Naso, *Metamorphoses,* 8 CE. See Gildenhard/Zissou (2013: 36).

[13] See Hopman (2012) on Scylla and Page (1973) and Lane Fox (2015) about folk tales and the *Odyssey*. The theme is discussed *infra*, esp. Chapter 5.

[14] See Thuc. 4.24.5, 5.53 (Σκύύλλαιον τεριπλεῖν); also sch. on [Plat.] *Ep.* 545 e. Discussed in Hopman 2012:135n); see Chapter 1. Arisotle believed the triple drawing and expulsion of the sea of Charybdis, as mentioned by Homer, was a literary take on the three phases of sea tides. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 2.9, citing Homer, *Odyssey,* 12.219.

[15] Phillips (1954:53); see Ch. 6.

[16] Consolo (1993: 41).

Fig. I–1 (top left): Satellite view of the Italian Strait between Sicily and Calabria.
Fig. I–2 (top right): Montage of the Strait with Scylla and Charybdis from G. Montorsoli's 1554 Statue of Neptune in Messina (La Gazzetta di Calabria, 2016).
Fig. I–3 (bottom left): Scylla and Charybdis in the Strait, unidentified Flemish author, 1868.
Fig. I–4 (bottom right): A view of Scilla in the province of Reggio Calabria.

In post-Homeric times, Charybdis became a signifier for monsters at frightening ends of the known world in Medieval sea charts.[17] Renaissance paintings focused on the humanized Scylla and merman Glaucus.[18] Visual and literary documents like political vignettes, etchings, novels and encyclopaedias further popularized the idiomatic rendition of the myth as finding oneself stuck between a rock and a hard place.[19] Yet, Scylla and Charybdis' meanings as "speaking names" are those of a 'snatching bitch' and a 'gulping maw'.[20] Even though meanings went partially lost for non-Greek-speaking audiences, artists were still able to reactivate linguistically and figuratively the figures' condensation of female and marine monstrosity of both ancient documents and intervening renditions across the ages.[21]

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[17] Olaus Magnus, *Carta Marina* (1539), in Van Duzer (2013:43). See Mittman/Dendle (2013: 432); discussed in Ch. 2 and 5.

[18] See Carracci's 1597 fresco, Lauri's painting (1623-94), and Rosa's oils (1615-73), as well as an extensive overview of the thems in the D'Anville collection of Paris' National Library, in Séstito (1995: 63-72).

[19] One of the earliest such uses in Latin, *Incidit in scyllam cupiens vitare charybdim,* is in Erasmus' *Adagia* (1508).

[20] See Hopman (2012), esp. 113-130 and 245-249.

[21] See Bettini/Spina (2007:100) on speaking names between *omina* and *nomina* in antiquity.

Novel elaborations occur in a great variety of contexts, even though all of them could be seen as travels or journeys and as encounters with otherness. Countless studies have been dedicated to the Ulysses theme.[22] Ulysses "sailing out beyond the known world" has become a blueprint for fantastical voyages, journeys by sea and on land.[23] As Hall suggested, Homer's epic poem is now "the intellectual property of the global village".[24] Countless studies have focused on the travels of the *Odyssey* in literary traditions.[25] The poem's perpetual reinvention in literal and metaphorical forms reflects "the open-endedness of Homer's work" and the way it "ponders the theme of distance".[26]

Within this broader tradition, looking at the encounter with Scylla and Charybids allows me to focus on specific issues of geography, sexuality, and animality. In my early chapters, I focus on how travelling to Scilla meant to travel back to antiquity. A sense of foreignness and exoticism was attached to the Strait as a distant land—a space-time literary landmark or *chronotope* (in Bakhtin's definition)[27] that philhellenes associated with the timeless glories of Greece (Ch. 1). In twentieth century travel books and tourist guides, or the accounts of explorers and tourists on the track of Ulysses (Chapter 2), Scylla and Charybdis continued to evoke the Strait as a *heterochronotopia*,[28] a place imaginatively *other* in space and time.

In other cases, travel was mediated. In recent decades, audiences of fantasy and horror encountered the monsters' abject-femininity by venturing into the caves and marine depths of film, role playing and video games (Ch. 3, 4). In these cases, I will look at psychoanalysis' transformation into a theme used by artists and recognized by audiences alongside representations of Greek myth. Games like *Castlevania* and *God of War* (Chapter 3) transport players to the recess of the oceans, and/or their psyche, in a confrontation with alluringly threatening uterine and phallic attributes that re-activate the ancient Scylla and Charybdis' meanings as a monstrous *bitch* and a *swallower*, and their relations with metaphors of the

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[22] Stanford (1947 and 1954); Stanford and Luce (1974).
[23] Bassnett (2013: xi). See Foulke (2002) on sea voyage narrative in relation to Homer.
[24] Hall (2012: 8).
[25] Bedell (1954); Boitani (1992), Greenwood (2003: 881).
[26] Bassnett (2013: 880-1).
[27] Bakhtin (1981), discussed in Ch. 1.
[28] Foucault (1984b.

sea as an annihilating womb (Ch. 3, 4).[29] Scylla and Charybdis became, in the accounts of European travellers to the Strait, symbols of luscious but cruel Mother Nature (Ch. 1). A male gaze focusing on the feminine features of the monsters is evident in accounts by explorers and tourists (Ch. 2), scientists and cryptozoologists (Ch. 5). In my Documentary Film, I show female models playing the Sirens in a tourist boat tour, and fishermen—who half-seriously identify with Homer–explaining Scylla as an "easy nymph".

As Hopman notes, even Homer's navigational terms often overlapped with ones related to intercourse—the result of a male gaze confronting animality and abjection in physically or metaphorically unsafe spaces.[30] Feminine metaphors of the sea as an element of unfathomableness emerge in the myth's reception. The uterine depths of the sea became spaces of imagination and hybrid creatures. Today's Scyllae are cases of "hybrid aberration", "fabulations" of biological conundrums[31] ranging from human-animal hybrids to sea monsters. The reproductive abilities assigned to the female body are a symbolic terrain for the projection of various anxieties about gender, sexuality, and miscegenation. Both the sea and the female body are seen as sites of sexual abjection and animality, in which to experiment otherness, by exploring or trespassing boundaries between normalcy and monstrosity (Ch. 4).

Scylla and Charybdis are examples of monsters as catalysts for binaries such as male/female, or human/animal, and their confusion.[32] Their reactivations look at the sea as the unknown and liminal area outside mankind's safe space, where demons have traditionally been thought to reside:[33] the recesses of the oceans, the frightening sea or other similar dimensions.[34] Proponents of cryptozoology (the science of 'hidden animals')[35] peek into the abysses and suggest that monsters like Scylla and Charybdis may still lurk in the depths. Internet users hybridize sea animals in new uterine or phallic creatures. People

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[29] See Hopman (2012:135); Shapiro (1994); Aguirre Castro (2012).
[30] Hopman (2012: 15, 217).
[31] Mac Cormack (2012: 294-303)
[32] See Stevens/Rogers (2017: 6) on perceptions of monstrosity in antiquity in relation to ideas of physical or metaphysical discordance and disunity.
[33] Stewart (1991).
[34] See Romm (1992: 190-2).
[35] See Eberhart (2010) and Hurn (2017), discussed in Ch. 5.

relate new legends on marine monsters to the ancient Scylla and Charybdis, as I will discuss in my Chapter 5.

Yet, imaginative travel occurred alongside parallel interests in mapping the authentic places behind the epic poem—as in the attempts of scholars and explorers to explain, as Helfers noted, "the oldest Western journey narrative through words".[36] Eratosthenes famously stated that one would be able to follow Ulysses only by finding the cobbler of the bag of the winds.[37] However, attempts to sail the waves and establish evidence of the poem's locations have been incessant, and motivated, as I discuss in my Chapter 6, by disciplinary and affective interests (Ch. 6). The *Odyssey* has been defined as "the first depiction of landscape and travel".[38] Maps are also imaginative tools.[39] The variety of cultural, affective, professional motivations behind geographical interpretations of the epic seem to demonstrate these theories. To follow the traces of the ancient figures meant to follow the history of a highly influential tale of travelling, otherness, and monstrosity, while considering its enduring relevance for the present, in spite of the temporal oceans that separate it from the past.

I–4: *Methodology: thematic criticism and discourse analysis*

This thesis combines an investigation of reception in different contexts and media with a diachronic structure of the myth's reception. It also draws on participant observation and unstructured film interviews conducted during my ethnographic work in the Strait, where the myth has been traditionally located.[40] My aim is not to produce a linear and exhaustive catalogue or a rigidly structured view of the myth's modern instantiations. Rather, I delve into a variety of responses to Greek mythology post-antiquity, and into the very notion of myth as understood by different individuals and audiences, at a global to a local level, by

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[36] Helfers (2013: 766).
[37] C. 275–193 BCE; cit. in Strabo 1.2.15); see ch. 6.
[38] Helfers (2013:766)
[39] McQuillan (2013: 769).
[40] My main field site (see Bailey 2007: 2) was the town of Scilla, but I also spent time in other areas of Calabria and Sicily, grasping a broader view in places affected by similar relations with Homeric antiquity, such as Aci Trezza in Sicily and Bova in Calabria. See my Documentary Film. On participant observation, see Atkinson/Hammersley (1994).

following intertextual disseminations and making sense of polyvocal material. Therefore, this is not a study on a 'monomyth', stemming from a formalist or archetypal conception in which the same pattern or motif –such as the story of Ulysses–can be extracted as a formula to explain the most diverse stories.[41] Rather, my work on myth's reception in the present looks at Greek antiquity in socially constructivist terms, as cultural processes that require contextual interpretation.

While analyses and overviews of Greek myths' figures and motifs abound in Greco-Roman scholarship –see studies of Ulysses, Circe, Poseidon, or the Sirens–[42] most of them focus on antiquity or have an art-based approach. An excellent summary of Scylla's mythographies from antiquity, Sole (2000) arranges the myth's reception around categories such as art, nature, myth, religion, and society.[43] While Sole attempted to make sense of myth in philosophical terms through Scylla, by focusing on ancient material, my study looks at how modern contexts understand Greco-Roman myth historically. Other works, such as Bettini/Spina on the Sirens[44] and Bettini/Franco on Circe,[45] can be taken as examples of studies that focus almost exclusively on textual and historical exegesis. They also display a high arts-oriented approach, with only the odd extra reference to popular culture.[46] In contrast, I look at ancient material inasmuch as it reveals the salience of the Greco-Roman figures today in popular contexts.

My study also stands in contrast to recent studies in the myth's modern reception. In Chapter 3, I will discuss Nisbet's views on Japanese comics and Miller's reception of Scylla as examples in which scholars tend to explicitly or implicitly look at Greco-Roman myth as an expression of high culture that seems to emerge in the vacuum of history and is later re-adapted in degraded popular forms in modernity.[47] On the contrary, as I am about to discuss, I deconstruct

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[41] On the monomyth, see Campbell 1949. On the issue, see Csapo (2005, 190-211).
[42] See Bettini/Spina (2007) and Bettini/Franco (2010) on the Sirens and Circe; Stanford (1963) on Ulysses; Spence (2010) on Jason; Zusanek (2009) on Poseidon; Yarnall (1994) on Circe among others.
[43] Sole (2000: 11, 69). Sole's organization of the material likely follows Coupe's (1997) similar arrangement of 'myth', whom Sole references.
[44] Bettini/Spina (2007).
[45] Bettini/Franco 2010.
[46] Bettini/Spina (2007, photographic insert).
[47] See Nisbet (2016) and Miller (2013).

assumptions of Greco-Roman myth's artistic or historical exceptionalism, reminding that modern reception is a multi-layered historical process involving elements from various canons, and that ancient Greek myths were never 'pure' or emerging from a vacuum: myths, as cultural phenomena, should be seen as hybrids of hybrids.[48]

My research found a historical and conceptual platform in Hopman's study of the ancient myth of Scylla.[49] Hopman distances herself from approaches to myth-figures that see them as discrete figures emerging in works of art. Rather, she focuses on myths' hybridity and relations with motifs, stories, and symbols originating in various ancient cultures and impacting on Greek myths. Hopman sees the ancient Scylla as an intersection of diachronic myth-motifs and synchronic structures in precise textual genres. This stands in contrast with formalist or archetype-oriented approaches to ancient myth like Yarnall[50] (1994), where Circe is seen as an image of the universal collective unconscious that resurfaces in the arts of the Greeks as well as in the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Victorian England. Conversely, Hopman demonstrates that the ancient Greek Scylla resulted from enduring exchanges of elements and that myths are constantly being re-told and re-interpreted.[51]

Likewise, I see modern Scyllae and Charybdes not as adaptations of ancient models but as syncretic motifs where different ideas of the past, animality, femininity, and otherness have stratified time and again. To look at the specific entanglements of idea of Greco-Roman myths in diachronic and synchronic relations with other texts and narratives, I considered various approaches. For instance, I could have looked at Scylla as a female and marine monster that is thematically similar both to other ancient myths, like the Sumerian "reversed mother" Lilith,[52] and contemporary films, like *Jaws*.[53] However, the first comparative scenario of analysis would have required a much larger field of investigation on ancient cultures, while my interests lie in the present. The second

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[48] As discussed by Stewart (2011:53) in relation to cultural hybridity.
[49] Hopman (2012).
[50] Yarnall (1994) and the cited Campbell (1949) are influence by the approaches to myth developed by C. J. Jung and M. Eliade, discussed *infra*.
[51] Hopman (2012: 1–8, 91–112).
[52] Bril (1989).
[53] Dir. S. Spielberg (USA 1975).

scenario was also interesting, even though it would have entailed a broad, philosophical, formalist enquiry on myth.

I thus chose to keep my focus on Scylla and Charybdis whenever people explicitly lexicalized them as such, as signifiers of Greco-Roman traditions. This allowed me to look at the motif as something that people have—in varying degrees and with various ends in mind—recognized, understand, and employed specifically as Greco-Roman material. I, in other words, asked *why* the new Scyllae are still seen by many as *those* ancient Greek monsters. The weight and popularity of Greco-Roman antiquity secured the historical persistence of Scylla and Charybdis as discrete, distinct figures.[54] However, myth is also syncretic and polymorphous. It resurfaces in such different contexts as travel, exploration, horror media, pornography, cryptozoology, popular and academic histories, and mysteries and fringe sciences. From case to case, I observed different and sometimes contingent reasons behind the myth's reception, ranging from conscious appropriations to casual reworking, based on reactivations of different visual, narrative, and thematic elements.

While not exempt, in principle, from the danger of being selective or subjective, my choice of case studies was motivated by wanting to open a series of windows onto some of the most historically resilient and remarkable traditions underpinning this Greek myth's extraordinarily varied cultural presence in the present.[55] Under some aspects, this study is comparable to thematic criticism– a paradigm focusing on the aesthetic or thematic content of art works.[56] In other ways, it distances itself from it. Like thematic criticism, I do consider that series of texts display similar characteristics or functions, are inter-textually related, or share similar audiences based on recurring meanings. However, thematic criticism focuses on aesthetic motifs as discrete series of art works. On the contrary, I look at diachronic and synchronic discursive formations impacting on how different people access and rework ideas of Greek myth, whether through conscious cultural investment or for contingent circumstances.

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[54] Along with people's inherent reliance on creating and remembering names: see Kripke (1980).
[55] See Marshall/Kovacs on this methodological issue (2011: xii).
[56] See Schein (2016) on Homeric epic as a theme.

Renouncing art critique,[57] I place my study on the map of critical textual and discursive analyses. I am thus able to explicitly challenge a narrative of Greco-Roman material's alleged or perceived aesthetic superiority. Such views are widespread in quarters of specialized scholarship, where Greek art is set apart from popular or lowbrow of art and culture (and, ostensibly, from anything non-Greco-Roman). Such approaches recognize canons of value embodied in the works,[58] while my concern is with the socially and historically constructed narratives underpinning such frames of value. In the following sections I discuss how strands of specialized scholarship have scrutinized longstanding presumptions of aesthetic supremacy that one can still find among the conservative scholars who see Greco-Roman as "classics" due to their purported universality and timelessness. In contrast, I align with critiques of the term as carrying elitist assumptions of value, preferring the use of "Greco-Roman".[59]

Even though I do not focus on art aesthetics, considerations on art status are important because of how they underpin distinctions between high and low cultures. This binary is an unviable approach to social and cultural analysis, and I will only mention it whenever openly discussing such assumptions of cultural value. I will also use the term "popular" to refer to the broader dissemination of Greco-Roman material in contrast to specialist approaches, and without implying aesthetic ranks. Likewise, I will not use the term "specialist" to express a necessary judgment of superior value—indeed, I will discuss the often frail boundaries between specialists' views and dominant cultural categories of their times and contexts–[60] but, rather, meaning that Greco-Roman scholars are obviously a smaller audience than the rest of the public.

Setting art apart had consequences on the choice of material. Copious amounts of fine art and reinterpretation of myths – from Victorian and neo-classical renditions of myth to British surrealist Ithell Colquhuon's sexualized

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[57] Even Panofsky's more socially-constructivist formulation of iconology as iconography turned interpretative is still based on a contextual analysis of myth-motifs as works of art. See Panofsky (1955: 32, and 1972).
[58] See Mitchell (1986).
[59] On this issue, see Wyke (1997: 7), as well as Budelmann and Haubold (2008: 16), Hardwick (2013: 16-18).
[60] See European intellectuals' attitudes to the Strait's inhabitants (Ch. 1) and the grey areas between scholarship and cultural appropriation of Homer (Ch. 6).

Scylla (1938) deserve attention. Renouncing them, however, allowed me to break out of the mould of the art/authorial-based approaches that dominate reception, in favour of markedly under-researched territory in which the reworking of the myth was not necessarily planned or understood as an exercise in fine art.[61] Recent attempts to frame Greek myth as world literature[62] are an example of how I distance myself from aesthetic ideals bound to art canons. McConnell resorted to Goethe's *Weltliteratur* to look at "classics" as cosmopolitan literature that transcends nationalism, projecting Greco-Roman material beyond the limits of their geographical and temporal confines.[63] This view remains entrapped in an elitist conception of "classics" as superior literary masterpieces, falling outside the ranks of critical studies' approach to cultural analysis.[64]

Positioning my research outside of art-based or exceptionalist views of myth allows me to investigate media as diverse as travelogues, travel and photo books and audio-visuals, pornography and social networks, alongside more traditionally trodden territory like film. This is important because a multifaceted discussion on myth as a concept and historical notion would have been impossible by focusing on a single specific medium. One cannot, as I will discuss below, see Greek myth without crossing genre boundaries. Myth is a polyvalent word and concept, loaded with different expectations and receptions in both every-day linguistic processes and different disciplines.[65] Media-specific definitions of myths would have not allowed me to look at them as narratives in the guise of canons, consisting of "selective figures, events, story lines, ideas and values, colligated by definite plots, perspectives and explanations", operating across media.[66]

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[61] Such a choice explains the exclusion of Italian modernist author Stefano D'arrigo's novel *Horcynus Orca* (1975)*,* an important text for the literary legacy of the Strait that blends readings of Homer, Joyce, and local folklore, but falls outside the kind of popular narrative of mythology I examine in this thesis. The post-war 1,000-pages behemoth (written over 20 years) also inspired the name of cultural association Horcynus Orca, set on both sides on the Strait (see my Documentary Film).

[62] See the "Classics and/as World Literature" conference, 3rd-4th June 2016, King's College London.

[63] Mc Connell (2016: 8).

[64] McDonnell (2016: 3).

[65] See Briggs/Bauman (1992) on the difficulties of tackling similarly loaded terms, such as "text" or "genre" for formal analysi, and on the complexities of relating literary theory and practice with everyday uses of such terms.

[66] Grever/Stuurman (2007: 4).

In this light, both the modern renditions of Scyllae and Charybdes and the ancient figures are the result of what Michel Foucault defined as history's "unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers" and of a vaster series of intersections, accretions and syntheses.[67] Myths operate as cultural complexes of storytelling "both synchronic and diachronic".[68] Such patterns propagate historically in non-linear ways in different registers and dimensions, as Deleuze and Guattari have discussed through the metaphor of the rhizome—[69] in spite of how scholars of Greco-Roman traditions have tried to coax them into their art and literary canons.

The perceived prestige of Greek antiquity in myth reception works in varied contexts and is non-univocal. Alignment with "high" culture in Western tradition may be a relevant factor: the *Odyssey* can be a hypotext which subsequent hypertexts, such as the *Aeneid,* Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Italian modernist D'Arrigo's *Horcynus Orca* used as a platform.[70] On the other hand, video games players may engage with modern reactivations of the monstrous female figures of Scylla and Charybdis without recognizing their Greek origins. My deconstructive approach neither aims to deny Greco-Roman antiquity's historical importance and aesthetic value, nor to undermine the specialized expertise of scholars of antiquity. On the contrary, as I will discuss, it supports further developments in multidisciplinary research, while reminding one that Greek myth figures have always found a richness of references that emphasized, but at the same transcended, the art and literary texts where they took form.[71] Hopman (2012) saw the Greek Scylla as a conflation of motifs from previous histories, in Pan-Aegean and Mediterranean perspectives. Likewise, I follow Scylla and Charybdis' reception as they have been ferried into the present by the opaque and tumultuous waves of historical reception.

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[67] Foucault (1984a: 82).
[68] Smith (2006: 321).
[69] Deleuze/Guattari (1987: 7-8).
[70] Hall (2012: 6). See Joyce (1922), D'Arrigo (1975).
[71] See Bettini/Spina (2007: 100).

I–5: *Reception studies: traditions and cultural transmission*

A literary take on the necessity to choose between the lesser of two evils, the *Odyssey* was partly inspired by Mediterranean and Aegean (or possibly more widespread) popular lore envisioned by seafaring cultures.[72] The epic was imagined for specific Hellenic audiences—not modern ones. Still, its enduring popularity in the modern world transcends the literary merits of Homer's epic. Greco-Roman reception studies addressed the way antiquity has been "transmitted, excerpted, translated, interpreted, rewritten, re-imagined, and represented".[73] It acknowledged that generations of audiences have processes of transmission and reinvention outside specialist circles and represented many audiences' first or only access to the ancient material. Reception opened opportunities to conceive the study of antiquity in relation to their presence in contemporary cultures[74], as a discipline dedicated to Greece and Rome's broader circulation in the sphere of culture.[75] However, scholars also underscored methodological issues. Martindale (2006:5) stressed how false analogies to modern equivalents would arise by analysing ancient texts anachronistically "as exemplars of more or less universal patterns".

Martindale's objection can be answered by following Wyke, and pointing out that reception actually looks at what modern texts tell about *themselves* in relation to their understanding of antiquity, and as "a culturally dense access to ancient history […] in relation to broader discursive formations" that are situated in the present.[76] Yet, these considerations underpin the problem of who owns Greco-Roman history and the cultural values traditionally assigned to it. Elements of reception suggested a "postclassical" stance to the material.[77] A long-standing assumption is that the works of Greco-Roman antiquity implied "moral and stylistic qualities of universality and timelessness, maturity and amplitude" that would justify seeing them as the artistic bedrock of Western civilization.[78] This

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[72] See Louden (2011).
[73] Hardwick/Stray (2008: 1).
[74] Hardwick/Stray (2008: 1–2).
[75] Beard/Henderson (1995: 7).
[76] Wyke (1997: 8).
[77] Hardwick/Stray (2008: 1).
[78] See Wyke (1997: 5) on this issue.

notion came under scrutiny when new historicism removed works that had illuminated "classics" from "the luxury of contemplative withdrawal from history" and approached them in post–colonial, planetary perspective, so that their understanding could be returned to scholars' "secular enterprise of making sense of how other minds understood the world".[79]

In a post-Western-centric world, Greco-Roman exceptionalism is sensibly questioned.[80] The global circulation of non-specialist ideas on Greco-Roman history offered specialized scholars to sink their teeth into new forms of historical understanding of antiquity, criticizing the assumptions of universality of the body of works once considered the "classic".[81] While my thesis does not aim to produce a comprehensive discussion of the larger theme of post-classicism, taking into consideration this debate is inevitable: the reception of Scylla and Charybdis often impinges—whether through an acknowledgement of prestige, or by force of sheer popularity—on a variety of perceptions around aesthetic and cultural values.

The debate on reception has divided scholars. A faction lamented "popular aesthetics" as a degradation of the "pure" aesthetic of Homer's *Iliad* or "the ruined glories of Phidias' marbles".[82] In contrast, the "democratics" criticized views of modern adaptations as degradations of the Greek "originals", and the idea that ancient texts emerged exceptionally in Greece from a vacuum in history.[83] For the "democrats", elitists essentialise Greco-Roman antiquity, failing to critically grasp the historical transmission and social relevance of its manifold traditions, and their broader relations with the histories of mankind.

I side with the democrats, acknowledging that the notion of a canon presupposes an enduring corpus "of the values held by a particular group" that restricts entry to a number of qualified people.[84]

Notably, such hierarchies of literature are tied to social hierarchies: they are based in how, as noted by Briggs and Bauman, social groups and institutions "create, sustain, and question social power".[85] In Bourdieu's renowned definition,

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[79] Gorak (1991: 239).
[80] See Said (1978) and, in relation with Greco-Roman antiquity, Bernal (2006).
[81] Hence this thesis' preference for the term 'Greco-Roman' as a standard definition.
[82] Silk, Gildenhard and Barrow (2014: 4,120).
[83] Hardwick/Harrison (2013).
[84] Gorak (1991: 245).
[85] Briggs/Bauman (1992: 161).

social taste and the choice of symbolic capital is related to social, cultural, economic, and historical factors whereby one social groups distinguishes itself from others.[86] Reception studies, by historicizing the timelessness of classics, and by seeing their values as those held by a community rather than as ontological standards, promises to reposition the entire disciplinary within the broader context of the humanities and their postcolonial turn.[87] In such perspective, Greek antiquity is not an *ur*-canon descending from the heavens, but an "interconnected narratives" of specific worldviews.[88]

The idea of de-mythologizing history and cultural appropriation was especially relevant for my ethnographic in the area of the Strait, where the sea monsters flag a larger relation between the region and ideas of Hellenic descent. Local philologists and scientists who claim that the myth of Scylla and Charybdis was inspired by the town of Scilla, and Homer as their own denizen, will go to such lengths as to present unconvincing evidence and self-explanatory arguments or ignoring other literature studies to back up their claims. Aligning their home towns with ideas of Greco-Roman historical exceptionalism allows them to claim an important place in Western history and canons.[89]

Such glorifications occur, not unlike the case of some ranks of conservative classicism, in quasi-religious fashion. In the Strait, this narrative can take on a nativist, existential value: it counters people's awareness of the region's infrastructural, economic and political marginalization compared to dominant areas of Italy and the whole of Europe.[90] Such ideas are, of course, put in a different perspective by considering a broader context. For the young son of a migrant family coming to Scilla for summer, Scylla is a monster from the video games like *God of War* (See Ch. 3). The worldwide audience of such media probably exceeds the population of the entire Strait—let alone those seeking to

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[86] Bourdieu (1984).
[87] See Bernal (2006).
[88] (Gorak 1991: vii).
[89] I am hereby adopting the same stance that led Herzfeld (1982) to reflect how folk provided a terrain for modern Greek nationalism to define its foundations.
[90] The debate on Greek origins in the area is complex and involves several individuals and communities. See Pipyrou (2012).

believe Homer was their ancestor.[91] Ancient Greece's cultural status in many Western histories definitely impacted on how people chose or were led to understand myth and, therefore, ideas of heritage and history associated with it. Yet, one should be careful of the dangers that such assumption pre-forms research, attributing pre-emptive importance to the status of "classical" antiquity and preforming reception as a study in adaptation.

In my thesis, I will argue that modern formulations of antiquity, even though firmly connected with present interests,[92] may still suggest new ways to look at the ancient texts for reception scholars. Hopman's (2012) deconstructive view of Scylla as a semantic intersection (2012), and focus on the male-centred gaze in ancient art, is indebted to developments in post-feminist and post-structural fields (See Ch. 3 on Scylla in relation to the *vagina dentata* motif), thus allowing to cast new light on the ancient material. New perspectives acknowledge aspects of antiquity that may have been elided or erased, and shouldn't be quickly dismissed as "presentist" cultural standards.[93]

In this thesis, I will argue that forms of "aesthetic feudalism"[94] in Greco-Roman studies would cause *any* popular aesthetic to appear uninteresting and pre-empt any attempt to make sense of the significance of the Greco-Roman world in the present.[95] Moreover, in such an *unreceptive* perspective, any cultural element outside the classical would be implicitly invisible–even the elements of the ancient figures that derive from their demotic and vernacular origins, and from different civilizations and cultures synthesized within the Greco-Roman models.[96]

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[91] The two main cities in the Strait, Reggio and Messina, exceed a population of one million overall; Calabria and Sicily amount to roughly seven million people; the *God of War* game featuring Scylla (Ch. 3) sold more than 1 million copies, while the whole game series sold in excess of 20 million. Source: GameSpot: https://www.gamespot.com/forums/system-wars-314159282/sony-releases-official-god-of-war-sales-numbers-29187556/ (l. a.: 5 May 2017).
[92] Wyke (1997: 3).
[93] Martindale (2006:5).
[94] Hardwick/ Harrison (2013: xxxvii).
[95] Hardwick (2013: 16-18).
[96] See the Minoan figures in Evans (1921: I.697-9, Fig. 520; III.96; IV. 952, Seq., Figs. 917-9).

I–6: *Deconstructing myth theory*

Along with the issue of historical transmission, a discourse on ancient Greek myth cannot continue without unpicking "myth" as a loaded term. It has become a ritual obligation for scholarship to avoid concise definitions. Like similarly broad and encompassing concepts like *text* or *genre*, and even more so, *myth* is imbued with "every-day" expectations (in relation to allegation, falseness, or fantasy against factuality, truth, and rationality), and addressed from points of views such as content, morphology, or function.[97] Theoretical surveys may refer to a "science of mythology"[98] but more often dissolve it in macro-categories like literature, religion, or ritual, or broader conceptions of the physical world, the mind, and culture,[99] allowing for "no discipline of myth in itself".[100]

Again, this work does not aim to produce any distillation of what myth is. Rather, in my survey of myth-reception, I noticed that Scylla and Charybdis resurfaced in cultural domains and discourses that may be related to specific intellectual traditions, such as eighteenth-century comparative studies, psychoanalysis, existential historicism, and positivist reductionism. Whether in specialist or lay circles, myth has often been explained as a terrain of the unconscious, as a blueprint for history, or as pre-science. Such approaches represent a foundation of people's understanding of Scylla and Charybdis today, becoming enmeshed with the myths they explained. Traditional paradigms belong to a world prior to the inception of mass media and communications, but they intricately connect to more recent studies in cultural transmission.

Comparative and evolutionary mythology is at the root of conservative classicists' elitist conceptions of Greek antiquity. James Frazer (1854-1941) formulated totalizing genealogies of countless variants and "cultural survivals" gathered from different cultures and distilled in an original *Ur-myth,* usually within a linear view of cultures transitioning from "primitive" and modern.[101] In

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[97] See Briggs/Bauman (1992) for a discussion on such loaded concepts in the humanities.
[98] Csapo (2005: 316).
[99] Segal (1999: 1).
[100] Segal (2004: 2). Coupe (1997) produces a similar inquiry around the notion of myth, while Sole (2000) resort to a similar structure for his summary of interpretations of Scylla.
[101] Csapo (2005: 11-24); Segal (2004: 14).

this view, the Greeks stood as proto-modern people and incubators of European genius and civilization.[102] The superiority of Greek myth would derive from their ability to condense savagery in art form. In contrast, I will look at myths as multi-layered "commonwealth of motifs and ideas" derived from "continuous intercultural contacts" through history.[103] Frazerian ideas of historical linearity, singularity, and hierarchy belong to a world of scholarship prior to embracing history as a messy entanglement of discourses. Conservative classicists retain a Frazerian tree-knowledge model of culture where art sprouts under exceptional conditions of civilization.[104] In contrast, I am siding with López-Gregoris' espousal of Deleuze and Guattari's definition of cultural processes as rhizomatic, a view that "uproots ideals of linearity singularity and hierarchy […] embedded in the cult of classics".[105] The ancient Scylla is no exception to cultural hybridity. Likewise, there is no 'rebound effect' through which Scylla and Charybdis continue to be reflected in time since their first literary apparition in the *Odyssey*: the figures result from the continuing crossing over of many discourses and tradition (as I discuss through the hybrid *Cthylla* in my Chapter 4).

Psychoanalysis is another theoretical tradition deeply connected to Greco-Roman myth. Viennese physician Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) saw myth as a carrier of culturally repressed and sublimated incestuous and parricidal desires. For Freud, the Greek Medusa – a female monstrosity akin to Scylla– displayed the terrifying genitals of the Mother and embodied the fear of castration.[106] Freud saw women as negative counterparts of male "normality"[107] –a view overturned by philosophers like Julia Kristeva.[108] The case studies of this work –such as video game *God of War*'s castration complex innuendos (Ch. 3)– demonstrate the resilience of a male-centred gaze in popular views of femininity, as well as how Greek myth and psychoanalysis became common currency for audiences of fantasy.

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[102] Frazer (1922); discussed in Csapo (2005: 61-66) and Veyne (1988: 25).
[103] Csapo (2005: 78-9).
[104] Given how mythology was 'invented' at the peak of Western-centric philhellenism: see Detienne (1986), discussed earlier and *infra*.
[105] See Deleuze-Guattari (1987: 5-8), discussed in López-Gregoris (2015: 276).
[106] Freud (1922); Csapo (2005: 98-102); Strenski (1992: 55).
[107] Csapo (2005: 110).
[108] Kristeva (1980); see Zajko/O'Gorman (2013:7).

Functionalist theories–exemplified by Polish anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski's research (1884-1942)– saw myths as explanations of natural phenomena tied to social and practical activities.[109] His views are consistent with a long tradition of seeing Scylla and Charybdis as the result of a poetic transposition of whirlpools or octopuses.[110] One can still see this tradition at work in how science documentaries explain Scylla or explorers of Homeric geographies set out to the Mediterranean in search of evidence of the natural phenomena that the Greeks turned into monsters (Ch. 5, 6).[111] Malinowski also saw myths as narratives of prestige.[112] This reminds, again, of how people in the Strait resorted to alleged scientific evidence to prove that Homer was a denizen of their home town. In such views, clues in the verses of the *Odyssey* or the upwelling of "viper fish" and other abyssal fauna in the area (both depicted in my Documentary) explain the myth of Scylla and Homer's origins in the Strait, backing up some people's claims of descending from the Greeks.

Fig. I–5: Viper fish from the Strait of Messina (from the Documentary Film)

Other theories offer concomitant perspectives to understand myth as a strategy of projection of social identity.[113] Historian of religion Mircea Eliade (1907-86) saw in myth and religion alike a yearning for timeless origins.[114]

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[109] Strenski 1987:45, 71-72

[110] Thuc. 4.24.5, 5.53 (Σκύύλλαιον τεριπλεῖν); also sch. on [Plat.] *Ep.* 545 e. Discussed in Hopman 2012:135n)

[111] Lincoln (1999).

[112] Malinowski (1962: 79); Strenski (1992: 114-115).

[113] For Segal (1999:1), nineteenth-century theories attempt "scientific explanations" and twentieth-century ones progressively break away from them.

[114] (Eliade 1987) (Strenski 1987:105-7) (Segal 1987:72).

Myth offered existential redemption in the face of historical adversity[115]—a formulation which is highly significant for how myth provides people in the Strait (and conservative classicists) with affective histories. Eliade saw myth as the moment history "first took place": looking at Melanesian tales, he explained how stories of long sea voyages become exemplary, and how "where a captain goes, he personifies the mythical hero", thus being projected into the moment of the original voyage.[116] Chapters 1, 2, and 6 of this study show how travellers to the Strait "played Ulysses" by sailing in the Mediterranean and using it as a sort of ethnographic prototype in which the myth-journey can be "reactivated as a compelling experience".[117] Eliade finally saw water as a signifier of a "return to the formless", consistent with the cosmogonies, *ketoi* and sea monstrosities of ancient Greek mythographies.[118] Such meanings are re-activated in modern beliefs in creatures purportedly roaming the abysses ever since the inception of navigation and cartographic imagination (Ch. 5).[119]

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) would have seen such correspondences as manifestations of the same archetypes—"deposits of the constantly repeated experiences of humanity" accumulated through genetic inheritance that reveal a concealed symmetry between man and world.[120] Such theories informed myth-readings like Yarnall's.[121] In contrast, French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009) understood myth as a form of thinking that is immanent to a social and historical system of culturally transmitted meanings.[122] Lévi-Strauss reflected on how myths work affectively, existentially, and philosophically on people, writing them as much as they write myths.[123]

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[115] See Lincoln (1999:143-5) on Eliade's experience of Romanian right-wing nationalism.
[116] Eliade (1991:32-6); discussed in Segal (1999:21).
[117] Stewart (2012: 19); discussed *infra*.
[118] Hesiod, *Theogony*, VIII/VII BCE.
[119] See Ch. 5 as well as Romm (1994); Daston/Park (2001:333); Van Duzer (2013). See Eliade (1991: 9) on regions of social order *versus* others "innhabited by monsters, uncultivated lands, unknown seas" and seen as chaotic, undifferentiated and formless.
[120] Jung (1968); discussed in Segal (1999:69-81); Jacobi (1968:5-10, 30-51); Segal (1999:77); Csapo (2005:94).
[121] Yarnall (1994), discussed *supra*.
[122] As well as language, drawing on Saussure (1916): Lévi-Strauss 1981: (537-60).
[123] Lévi-Strauss (1978: 34) and 2004 (228-244).

Structuralism dealt with "what we call time and what we call history" in cultural and ideological perspective.[124] Myth is something that impacts on people's present—something that is rooted in history and yet goes, in Stewart's words, "beyond current reality".[125] Indeed, many of the contexts in which Scylla and Charybdis are reworked have to do with experiences in which the present is transcended through travel in time and space.[126] Philhellenes travelled to the exotic Strait of Scylla and Charybdis to follow Homer, fixing the Strait in their classical past. People in the Strait have taken on the Greeks in forms of metaphysical and nativist attachment, using the past as a beacon to look at the present: as Barthes formulates, myth is culture turned into a naturalized truth.[127]

Structuralism ushered in cultural studies, the "self-conscious, meta-critical concern with the nature of signifying and validating systems in the humanities"[128] that underpins my work. Cultural studies developed while myth-theories shifted from "archaic or primitive" contexts to the "peculiar workings of contemporary communications and media".[129] In post-industrial Western societies, notions of locality, place and context originally contemplated by myth theories only imperfectly apply to a reality in which media shapes collective imaginaries,[130] effectively construct culture,[131] or enable trans-national audiences.[132]

Greek myth has become more radically syncretic than in the past due to easy access to multiple tradition—and to certain extents, more global and stereotyped, expressing the characteristics of mass culture".[133] Art historian Ernst Gombrich's view of art canons as art formulae and standards through which artists spoke to audiences[134] resonates with how leisure industries rework antiquity as a

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[124] Foucault (1984b: 1). Also see Strenski (1987:157-9) on Lévi-Strauss' de-emotionalization of myth as a reaction to primitivist or *volkish* fantasies of rival approaches of the time, such as Jung's mysticism or Eliade's "cosmic religiosity".
[125] Stewart (2012: 216).
[126] See Greenwood (2013: 881) on the *Odyssey* and tourism; also Ch. 2.
[127] Barthes (1987).
[128] Gorak (1991: 224).
[129] Coupe (1997:148). See Vernant (1974) and Detienne (1972) as structuralist methods applied to Greek antiquity.
[130] Debord (1967).
[131] Gamson *et al.* (1992).
[132] Hall/Jefferson (1993).
[133] Csapo (2005: 276). See Bignell on postmodern media cultures (2001).
[134] Gombrich (1960); discussed in Gorak (1991:95).

repertoire.[135] The Scyllae of video games *Castlevania* and *God of War* (Ch. 3) are syncretic pastiches of various artistic origins, produced by international teams conceiving "myth" as motifs for their audience. In some cases, such elements are commonplace simulacra,[136] like the geometric motifs emblazoned on the package of a Greek-styled McDonald's sandwich, or Starbucks' siren logo. Commonplace symbols can signal exoticism, or class or prestige, like the Medusa logo re-imagined by fashion brand Versace.[137] As I am going to discuss at length, the relations between such signifiers and traditional ideas of Greek myth need to be re-contextualized.[138]

I–7: *Greco-Roman traditions and myth-motifs*

In this study, I reframe the understanding of ancient Greek myth as a process taking place in the present,[139] between the centrifugal processes of fantasy and the gravitational force of Greco-Roman motifs, in line with the "growing interdisciplinary interest in the ways that people […] perceive the past".[140] Far from transparent, "pastness" is in "indissoluble connection with the present and the future as produced in ongoing social situations,[141] and a highly context-sensitive projection strategy.[142] While the impact of the Greco-Roman tradition has been put to scrutiny "both outside and within the discipline of classical studies",[143] its presence still explains the popularity of Greek heroes, gods, and monsters like Scylla and Charybdis in the historical traditions of the West. Still, such a permanence is hardly approachable in the way, as Butler words, classical "counter-reformists" fetishize the "gems" of primary texts that history "had deposited on modern shores".[144]

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[135] Morales (2007: 2).
[136] Baudrillard (1994: 75, 121 and 1993:50)
[137] Italian fashion designer Gianni Versace (1946-1997) was born and raised in Reggio Calabria.
[138] Starbucks got its name from a character in Melville's novel *Moby-Dick* (1851): see Rippin (2007). The logo of the town of Scylla derives from similar iconography (see Bettini/Spina 2007).
[139] Morales (2007:1-4).
[140] Stewart (2012: xvi).
[141] Stewart (2012:212).
[142] Wyke (1997).
[143] Wyke (1997:6).
[144] Porter (2008: 473).

In a work published while I was writing this thesis, Butler warned about the risk of the discipline to succumb "to the field's deepest fears of irrelevance in a changing world".[145] Butler suggested a repurposing of Greco-Roman studies in a horizontal, multidisciplinary relation to the humanities—rather than in a relation where "classics" would claim an exceptional standpoint. One could thus look at antiquity's "creative symbioses" in the present.[146] Given that canons are means of intellectual monopoly and division into fields,[147] with new theory comes the opportunity to formulate new questions about antiquity. For Butler, conservative classicism appear as "pretty obviously limited by the interest, expertise, and knowledge" of its proponents", and the aim to "reground the unity of the 'classical' as 'Western'" is based on glaring, selective historical omissions.[148]

As a study in media and culture, this research ultimately sits "east of reception", on a terrain where different disciplinary areas may cooperate rather than seclude their understanding and deconstruction of myth.[149] Far from diminishing the value of Greco-Roman history, this approach simply avoids an antiquarian view of the past that obscures the historians' political and psychological responsibilities in bringing the past into the present:[150] from the delusional idea of certain conservative classicists that "classics" should be jealously secluded from the planetary stage (upon which, on the contrary, they must inevitably be put in perspective) to the Strait's nativist, metaphysical claims of Homeric affiliation (which entail dangerously mythical constructions of science).

The rest of Scylla and Charybdis' reception is a rich story of the many ways these figures began to roam in popular modernity–freely, ambiguously, even contradictorily. For this work's specific interest in the recurring threads of marine

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[145] Holmes (2016: 279-80).
[146] Holmes (2016: 282-5).
[147] Said (1978), discussed in Gorak (1991:186).
[148] Holmes (2016: 279). See Lianeri (2011: 22) on how historiographies in the eighteenth century constructed the Greek past in a highly selective fashion, as an original source from which their own civilization had developed: the past justified a deployment of worldviews pitting European democracy against oriental barbarism. See Bernal (2006) on the Afroasiatic roots of the Greeks as examples of how novel approaches seek to decentre Greco-Roman histories within a non-exceptional, non-Western planetary history.
[149] Harloe (2013: 11).
[150] See Nietzsche (1874), discussed in Lianeri (2011: 24-28), in relation the idea of antiquarian histories.

and female monstrosities, and their attachment to a locality and area in the Mediterranean, the task lies in understanding Greco-Roman myth between the undoubtedly globalized endurance of its themes, and the need to parochialise its overall impact alongside that of other histories. In a way, like Ulysses, my thesis will navigate in multiple destinations, following the myth's rich archipelago of textual transformations. Unlike the hero of the *Odyssey*, however, I will benefit from a route established through the compass of the empirical inquiry and epistemic method described so far. Its organization looks at some of the earliest contexts of its circulation in Western culture, following its increasingly globalized trajectories, and eventually returns to the issue of the impact of such globally widespread ideas on the places that putatively gave rise to the legend in the Strait.

The issue of debating Greek antiquity's place in post-classical, world histories perspective is explored in my Documentary Film. In defining the issue of who owns Greco-Roman antiquity, my ethnographic work in the Strait was very important. My initial interest in the Strait was motivated by finding evidence of local architectural and landscape relations with myth, but on-site experience allowed me to reframe my understanding of what myth, heritage and history meant for different communities. As a researcher, I was able to approach the place with a mix of familiarity and unfamiliarity, given that I was born in the area, but moved elsewhere in Italy and then abroad at a relatively young age. As an estranged native, I was able to understand nativist claim of descending from Homer, but also to distance myself critically from them.

Ethnographic perspective allowed me to see how many more living voices and perspectives regarded Scilla's mythical past. When filming my interviews, I presented myself as a researcher of the history and heritage of the region.[151] I thus obtained a great variety of insights from such diverse individuals as disoriented tourists, disillusioned fishermen, enthusiastic entrepreneurs, forward-looking

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[151] The film interviews presented in my Documentary Film are all unstructured, some even unplanned and improvised on the spot. While working with a camera, I have approached them as much as possible as conversations and elements of a broader participant observation. Taking precautions to avoid leading questions, I always let my interviewees direct the conversation, and avoided being the first who introduced terms like "myth" or referencing Homer directly. My ability to relate to the locals using my home dialect, differing from Italian, allowed me to pursue a sense of familiarity with some interviewees. On the ethnographic interview, see Schensul/Schensul/LeCompte (1999).

people working in hospitality, cautious publishers, incensed politicians, strenuous activists, and passers-by. Rather than dwelling solely on written histories on the place, and replicating them, I considered them in light of ideas of people whose interests in Greek antiquity ranged from nil to paramount, from instrumental to affective, from contingent to existential.

I have approached the areas of reception and case studies of the rest of my research with the same spirit, avoiding a preformed idea of what Scylla and Charybdis meant, safe for what they could mean for different people: travellers and tourists, writers and readers, players and spectators, mystery hunters and scientists, Homeric specialists and laymen. Both in the field and while researching on media and in libraries, openness to a variety of voices and perspectives allowed me to gain a broader and deeper platform from which to look at the manifold iterations of Scylla and Charybdis that this study sets out to illustrate.

In the process, I will side with the monsters, seeing in their struggle "of order against chaos, known against unknown, familiar against unfamiliar", and "culture against nature"[152] a deconstructive philosophical principle. I will look at monsters as constructions of otherness that embody anxieties as well as potentially inspiring and liberating chances to liberate subjects in the flow of relations with multiple others.[153] Relating such concepts to reception, I will suggest a view of Greco-Roman reception in which the discipline—and its proponents and supporters– are liberated in their approach to many and not just one history.

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[152] Felton (2012: 131).
[153] Braidotti (2012: 49-50).

CHAPTER 1: CHRONOTOPES OF HELLAS:
THE STRAIT OF SCILLA DURING THE GRAND TOURS

1–1: *Myth as heritage: Scilla and the Strait during the Grand Tours*

Representations of the Strait of Reggio and Messina as the landmark of Homer's myth of Scylla and Charybdis received a decisive formulation in modern times in travel diaries, maps, and illustrations produced between the late eighteenth and the early twentieth centuries as part of the phenomenon of the European Grand Tours. Travellers to the South of Italy provided the literary reputation of the Strait of Scylla and Charybdis with an historical echo chamber through which the South of Italy became an extension of mythical Hellas. This reputation continued in later travel literature, scholarship, and popular historiographies, which I analyse from Chapter 2 onwards. The town of Scilla's apparent homonymy with the monster from Homer's *Odyssey* made the Strait of Reggio and Messina an iconic and recognizable mythical landmark that travellers visited and represented in charts and maps. Visitors essentialized Calabria as a remote and timeless land, uncontaminated by modernity, exotically beautiful, and yet subtly threatening due to its wilderness. The region's perceived mix of idyllic beauty and subtly disquieting exoticism was thus suitably embodied by the monstrous and yet alluring figures of Scylla and Charybdis as symbols of the region's wilderness.

Through this process, I will argue that the Strait became a place in the guise of what Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's defined as a *chronotope*, a commonplace defined by its relation with literature–in this case, the canonical Homeric epos.[1] I will also look at the Strait through the lens of French social theorist Michel Foucault's formulation of the *heterotopia* as a projected elsewhere that visitors approach to escape familiar spaces.[2] My discussion will revolve on the basis of analysis of textual and visual references to the myth across various travel books and illustration: The Abbé de Saint-Non's *Voyage pittoresque* (1783), an illustrated travelogue; Henry Swinburne's *Travels in the two Sicilies* (1783), a travel diary; French Aristocrat Astolphe de Custine's 1830 *Mémoires et*

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[1] Bakhtin (1981).
[2] Foucault (1984b).

voyages, collecting his travel impressions; Goethe's *Italian Journey* (786-1788)*;* George Robert Gissing's *By the Ionian Sea* (1901); and visual representations like G.– G. Fortuyn's *Southern view of the City of Scilla* (1773), among others.

Inspired by their knowledge of Greco-Roman literary traditions, visitors looked at this region as a setting for the erudite escapism and philhellenic literary travel, where striking sceneries co-existed with the disquieting *rêverie* of legends. Showing how visitors re-enacted Ulysses' crossing of the Strait, I discuss the co-existence of a poetic and nostalgic mode of receiving Homeric myth alongside a more rationalistic view in which the monstrous-feminine creatures became allegories of the marvels and dreads of an area associated with currents, whirlpools, volcanic activity, and earthquakes. In travel and cartographic imagination, the Strait's association with Greater Greece received a strong characterization as a conflation of natural wonders, picturesque and wild landscapes, surviving myths of marine monsters, backward villages, and the ruins of ancient civilizations.

By seeing this region as a timeless and ahistorical counterpart to the civilized space represented by the bustling European capitals, visitors to the former Magna Graecia[3] entailed not only a spatial motion, but also a conceptually temporal motion to the times of an idealized antiquity, on the basis of what Fabian has defined as a denial of coevalness.[4] Steeped in forms of antiquarian appreciation of Hellenism, these representations emerged at the same time as modern historiography emerged around the eighteenth century.[5] As some of the earliest modern historical documents through which the Hellenistic *topos* of the Strait began to circulate, the Grand Tours reinforced a tradition that would endure in international modern tourism and in broader commonplaces of media and cultural industries. Such views would both usher in a global way of seeing the Strait as a place-myth defined by media narratives in tourism and media[6], and impact on subsequent local histories of the area centred on a selective, Hellenocentric narrative (see Ch. 2, 6, and the Documentary).

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[3] Ceserani (2013).
[4] Fabian (1983).
[5] Gorak (1991: 52), and Ceserani (2013)
[6] Shields (1991); see Ch. 2.

1–2: *Picturesque voyages: European travellers and the South of Italy*

For artists' and travellers' reception of the Mediterranean Sea, its myths and history as transmitted through the Greco-Roman tradition were decisive.[7] For European elites, in the period between early travelogues such as Thomas Hoby's diaries from 1547-64 and the rise of modern tourism, re-enacting the routes of history and myth became a formative experience.[8] Erudite travellers' appropriation of Greco-Roman landmarks became a rite of passage in which intellectuals, writers, artists and poets visited places like Florence, Rome, and Pompeii.[9] Further South beyond Naples, their encounters gave rise to amazement. In Calabria and Sicily, the former Greater Greece, travel acquired an added layer of adventurous, exotic enticement.[10] Many of these era's travelogues distinctly refer to the mythical material in the rising print medium by combining a sense of re-enactment of Ulysses' travels with occasional cartographic maps and illustrations of sceneries accompanied by representations of the monsters.

The Strait represented one the most recognisable landmarks of Homeric myth, along with Capri and its Sirens in Campania, the rocks of the Cyclops in Aci Trezza, and Hephaestus' Mount Etna in Sicily. The lexical correspondence between Scylla and the marine village of Scilla, near the ancient Chalcidian Rhegion, was a crucial element through which to understand the area. The association dates as far back as ancient Greek coinage (Fig. 1–1) and endures to present-day town emblems (Fig. 1–2).[11]

Figure 1–1: A *nomos* from Cumae with Scylla holding a fish, ca. 440 BCE.

Figure 1–2: Modern town emblem of Scilla (province of Reggio Calabria).

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[7] See Hall (2012: 3) on the impact of Homer in the 'West'.

[8] On literary travel and tourism, see Black (1992) and Watson (2009).

[9] Chaney (1998: xi).

[10] The fascination for past Mediterranean civilizations was boosted by Schliemann's excavations of Troy (1874) and Evans's excavations in Knossos, Crete (1909). See Ziolkowski (2008).

[11] See Hopman on coins (2012: 124). As I discuss in my Documentary, local culture in Scilla has deep ties with this history. See Mazza (2002).

On the Sicilian coast, Cape Pelorus ("monstrous") also reminded of the Homeric tale.[12] Travel diaries and literary accounts drew on a lineage of texts discussing myth that can be traced back to such diverse works as Strabo's writings,[13] Eustathius' 12th century CE commentary on Homer, Ortellius' 1619 *Sicilia Antiqua,* or the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and Jean Baptiste Le Rond D'Alembert and Denis Diderot's *Encyclopédie*–in the latter, Scylla and Charybdis are discussed in sections on mythology and poetry as well as those of ancient and modern geography.[14] Scilla's rocks were understood as "celebrated by the ancient fables" and part "of classical memory", and crossing the Strait allowed access to a space the reception of which had been prepared by ancient mythology.[15] Citing the Odyssean passage became a recurrent display of erudition, poetic flair, and naturalistic or antiquarian interests. Fascination with the South's mythical toponyms pervaded re-enactments of the routes beaten by Ulysses.

An increasingly abundant body of travel literature had been catering to audiences' interest in mythical landmarks. In 1771 Johann H. Riedesel had published *Reise durch Sizilien und Großgriechenland*, citing the "Charybdis of the ancient" close to Messina.[16] The year 1783 saw the publication of influential, popular travelogues that used myth-places as itineraries, such as Swinburne's travelogue,[17] in which the writer's comfortable crossing of the Strait was compared to the more perilous journey of Ulysses (and based on the idea that Homer had described the scenery and customs of these places):

> Homer, in the opinion of Strabo and the most enlightened critics, had travelled
> much, and did not raise his epic building merely upon the shadowy basis of fiction;–
> –the voyages of Ulysses had been handed down by traditions, and to some well-
> known stories he added poetic embellishment. [18]

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[12] See Louden (2011: 168). The predominant interpretation situates the Homeric Strait between Sicily and Calabria, but a narrow passage within Scilla's own cohort of cliffs (sunk after an earthquake 1783, see Figure 1–2) is also often mentioned. See *infra*, the Documentary, and Séstito (1995: 143).

[13] Str., 1.2.15. On Homeric geographies see Wolf and Wolf (1983) and Burgess, online resource: http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~jburgess/rop/od.voyage.html (latest access: 20/08/2016).

[14] Cited as "in the Strait that separated Italy from Sicily" Jaucourt, "Scylla", in Diderot, D'Alembert, *Encyclopédie,* 1751-1772, Vol. 14:845, online at: http://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu [latest access: March 1, 2017].

[15] Didier (1846); Strutt (1840).

[16] Riedesel (1773: 139).

[17] Swinburne (1783: 333) also discussed in Ceserani (2013: 79).

[18] Swinburne (1783:326).

Crossing the Strait had become an established must–see in the rediscovery of South Italy's Greco-Roman landmarks. The 1830 *Letters* of Astolphe de Custine, a French aristocrat, can also be taken as an example of the impact of the Greco-Roman tradition on the visitors' understanding of the region:

> I could not have forgiven myself had I not let myself be transported by the waves of the strait that have seen the passage of Ulysses' boat. It was either to face Scilla's rocks, or not come to Calabria at all.[19]

Such narratives began to be accompanied by visual representations of the travels. In the Abbé de Saint-Non's *Voyage pittoresque,* the author dedicated extensive attention to Reggio, Messina, Scilla, and Cape Pelorus in the *detroit* of Homer.[20] The "famous and dreadful Rock" of the mythical Scylla of the ancient Greeks is explained as a cliff facing a charming sea village. The description is accompanied by an illustration that shows growing appreciation for Italy's landscape as well as literary history (Figure 1–3).[21]

Figure 1–3: *Rochers et Ecueils renommés Des Scylla*, Saint-Non (1783).

1–3: *Mapping the myth-places: cartography and Homeric landmarks*

Cartographic media such as maps or engravings, often contained within travelogues, actively contributed to the establish the Strait of Greek legends as an iconic visual landmark of travel literature.[22] Illustrations and maps integrated the

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[19] Author's own translation from Custine (1830). Custine's and most other travelogues are on Project Gutenberg (http://www.gutenberg.org). On Custine, see Muhlstein (2001).
[20] Saint-Non (1783: 132).
[21] Saint-Non (1783: 131-133)
[22] Ceserani (2013).

travel diaries, disseminating both a pictorial (Fig. 1–3) and top-down, cartographic view of the Strait largely inspired by myth.[23] In a map included in Saint-Non's *Voyage* (Fig. 1–4), geographical landmarks are not shown in relation to current geopolitical realities, but largely on the basis of mythical place-myths.

Fig. 1–4: Route of myth-places in Saint-Non's *Voyage* (1783) (detail).

Clustered with references to myth-places like Cape Pelorus in the Strait, the Lestrigonians in Sicily, and the Promontory of Hercules in Calabria, such maps display a selective, philhellenic gaze of Southern Italy. Saint-Non was not the first: he followed in the footsteps of a previous journey by "travelling philosopher" Carlantonio Pilati that had taken place between 1775 and 1777.[24] Visual consumption of the sceneries of Southern Italy was on the rise and enjoyed increasingly international literate audiences. Riedefield's *Reise* had been translated into French and English in 1773, Swinburne's *Journey* into French and German in 1785, and Saint-Non's *Voyage* into English and German in 1789.

All of these works encapsulated on-going traditions of explaining the myth: Riedesel discussed Charybdis in relation to the actual currents off the shore of Messina;[25] La Salle's *Voyage* (1829) describes mythical landmarks such as "Jaci Reale" and its "rocks of the Cyclops" (Aci Reale in Sicily, off Mount Aetna) as poetic transfigurations of nature. The Strait still occupied a special place: among the many hazards and wonders of the South, for La Salle "there exist two

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[23] See Consolo (1993). Also Séstito (1995: 53-60) for an iconographic repertoire on the Strait's representations in cartography from 1538 to 1878.
[24] Pilati/Ceravolo (2010).
[25] Riedesel (1773: 138-9).

in particular, which the imagination of poets and popular traditions have recognized under the names of Charybdis and Scylla".[26] The Strait and Scilla represent a constant in the travellers' consumption of the constellation of mythical localizations set in the Mediterranean: as Séstito notes, publishers and engravers saw elements like the Strait, mount Etna and other Homeric landmarks as closely related.[27] Norman Douglas would later write about Capri as the land of the Sirens, indulging in poetic descriptions of the marine fauna and its relations to myths.[28] Gissing's 1901 *By the Ionian Sea,* ending with an image of Etna and the strait of Scylla and Charybdis, featured an attached map of Southern Italy and Sicily.[29]

Still, the Strait was perceived as eminently recognizable: "whether rendered as sharp or smudged in undulating lines, and hollowed by an over-sized grotto or seen as landing ground, the cliff of Scilla is a must-see stop of the Grand Tours".[30] The representation of Scilla and of its scenery began to enjoy increasing attention in their own right. Achille Étienne de La Salle's 1822-26 *Voyage* reports of it as a place where nature had unfolded its marvels.[31] This fascination was shared by Willem Fortuyn's artwork for an article on "the southern view of the town of Scilla" from 1773 (Figure 1–5). The illustration seems to resound with the *picturesque* as an aesthetic category bringing nature together with monumental remains and the relics of the past,[32] while incorporating the monsters in a frame within the artwork. Such depictions had already been established in encyclopaedias, engravings, etchings, and cartographic iconography. As van Duzer shows, monsters from the Greco-Roman tradition had already accompanied map-makers' bestiaries such as the 1515 Schöner globe.[33] However, while earlier sea monsters inhabited and symbolized unknown areas of the far seas, Fortuyn's Scylla and Charybdis did not necessarily represent the unfathomable abysses, at a time when science and progress in navigation technology had made travel safer, and as the Age of Discovery pushed the uncharted areas of wilderness away from

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[26] La Salle (1829).
[27] Séstito (1995: 73).
[28] Douglas (1911).
[29] Gissing (1905: 235).
[30] Séstito (1995: 104).
[31] La Salle (1822-26).
[32] See De Seta (1982: 167) on the *picturesque.*
[33] Van Duzer (2010: 7, 34-35). Also see Helfers (2013: 767).

the Mediterranean. The Strait of the monsters expressed above all a philological embellishment, signalling a literary form of erudition shared by writers and readers (Fig. 1–5).

Fig. 1–5: G. Fortuyn, *Southern view of the City of Scilla*", incision, 1773.

Other illustrations show how myth began to be read especially as superstition or pre-science, or as a form of poetic transfiguration of natural phenomena. Such perspectives had already been maintained by the ancient allegorists and euhemerists, who read myths as containing poetic truths or as inspired by natural phenomena.[34] However, the rise of positivist thought re-activated such views, and the Strait became a site where intellectuals could display not only erudition, but also scientific flair.[35] In Figure 1-6 below, Franciscan friar Vincenzo Coronelli explains the currents of the Strait by comparing two distinct artworks: Swiss engraver Matthäus Merian's geographical treatise *Topographia Italiae* (1688), and German polymath Athanasius Kircher's illustration of the Strait for his *Mundus Subterranean* (1683).[36]

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[34] See Hawes (2014:1-35) on myth-interpretation in ancient Greece and the traditions of allegorism and euhemerism.
[35] See Lincoln (1999: 3-43) on the impact of Greek antiquity's notion of myth on positivism.
[36] Coronelli (1690).

Fig. 1–6: V. M. Coronelli, Explanation of the tidal flow and whirlpool in the Strait (1690). [37]

Coronelli explains the currents of Charybdis by comparing Kircher's allegorical rendition of myth with a more naturalistic depiction of the Strait. Kircher had witnessed in 1638 the eruptions of Mount Vesuvius – one of the two volcanic landmarks of Southern Italy– "as it creaked and groaned under the strain of its geologic rhythms".[38] This experience heavily influenced his compendia of symbols, curiosities and stories in which the mythical Greek god Hephaestus was related to volcanic Mount Etna in Sicily and the whirlpools of the Strait to Charybdis, both portrayed as marvellous places where deities manifested their powers.[39] On the other hand, Merian's work is a geological and geographical study in which the Strait is seen from the close perspective of the sea and any monstrous visual marker is absent–the myth is cited in relation to a scientific explanation of the tides, rocks, and whirlpools. Even though only fifty years separate the works, Kircher's work is a specimen of a pre-positivist era when

[37] Includes illustrations fom A. Kircher's 1683 *Mundus Subterraneus*, and the *Atlante Veneto,* vol. 1, 1690.
[38] Findler (2014: 20-21).
[39] Stolzenberg (2013: 15).

belief in myths were not dispelled.[40] In contrast, positivist views rekindled ancient explanations such as the ones referred to by Thucydides, in which the myth had to do with the apprehension and fears of ancient sea people dealing with the dangers of currents, unknown marine creatures, or volcanic eruptions from the nearby Etna, "exaggerated by […] imagination to the point where they became fables".[41] Scylla and Charybdis thus started to stand as an example of myth as pre-scientific thought that concealed geographical or natural truths behind symbols—a view that would characterize modern narratives of science and marine monsters that I discuss in Chapter 5.[42]

1–4: *Maps of monsters: the Feminine as Nature's beauty and dread*

The impact of the narratives described above contributed to transform the Strait and Southern Italy, in the eyes of modern visitors, into a cove of mythical landmarks and scientific curiosities. Visitors could revel in poetic inspiration, or demonstrate an understanding of modern, rationalist interpretations of ancient beliefs. The Strait belonged to a part of the world where wild and untamed forces of nature, such as volcanoes and unique marine currents, were to be found. While such phenomena were understood by science, they nonetheless characterized the region with a majestic threat. Along with an appreciation of the area's natural beauty, there lurked a sense of fear of its underlying, threatening forces. It is interesting to read Fortuyn's treatment of Scilla (Fig. 1–5) as if foreshadowed by such relations. Scilla is principally represented as a picturesque, idyllic place, but the monsters lurk in the smaller illustration at the bottom of the print, reminding the viewer of the area's lurking dread.

 Earthquakes and tsunamis, which had been feeding the imagination of

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[40] Kircher actually believed in the existence of Cola Pesce, the mythical mermain of a folk tale of the Strait. See Séstito (1995: 15), and Pitrè on Cola Pesce (2016).

[41] See Lenormant in *La grande-Grèce* (1881: 270). See Sole (2000: 87-93) on how the once dangerous and potentially deadly sea of ancient fishermen who sailed it for sustenance was progressively domesticated by technology and science.

[42] Further discussed in Ch. 6; See Hawes (2004) on the rationalizations of myth in antiquity; Detienne (1986) on "myth" seen as pre-science; Lincoln (1999) on the evolution and use of the term. Bassnett (2013: xi) on Etna and Vesuvius as hellish symbols of nature. On associations with nymph Aetnea, Hephaestus and Demeter, Typhon or Briareus, and Enceladus, see Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound,* 365-370; Aelian, *De Natura Animalium*, 11.3; Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca,* 1. 39 – 44*;* Callimachus, *Hymn. in Del.* 141.

European travellers ever since Kircher's *Mundus*,[43] were also discussed. Some visitors displayed a sense of awe that reminded of Kircher's, even though through a rationalizing lens that set them apart from his metaphysical peregrinations. Custine's *Mémoires et voyages* of 1830 insisted on the "couleur d'époque" of Southern Calabria and its delightful scenery that made it appear like a paradise on earth,[44] but also referred to the terrible effects of a nature that, through volcanoes and earthquakes, had "revolted against the conquests of man, deriding his civilization".[45] Duret De Tavel, a French official, described the earthquake and tsunami which devastated Calabria and Sicily in 1783, reporting how the promontory of Campallà (Monte Pacì, south of Scilla) "collapsed into the sea and pushed an enormous mass of water onto the opposite shore […] swallowing all the people who were seeking shelter from the previous earthquake on the shore of Scilla".[46]

Another report on the disaster was signed by Didier, who wrote that "the huge mass of water flowed on the two borders of the Strait, swallowing a great number of Sicilians […] and the Calabrese who had sought shelter".[47] These renditions were often accompanied by interpretations of monstrous figures as allegories. In 1907, Norman Douglas equated the metaphorical dread of ancient Greek monsters to sinister phenomena "like the worst earthquake of the century", and debated the mythical figures as signifiers of death and putrefaction. Scylla, as a figure of monstrous femininity and a "speaking name" signifying death and annihilation,[48] provided a suitable symbol for the Strait's scenic beauty, as well as for what many saw as cruelty inflicted by Mother Nature upon its inhabitants.[49]

The destruction and wholescale suffering brought about by the 1783 earthquake that devastated the region (with Scilla as one of the epicentres)[50]

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[43] The book was produced in Amsterdam, "the centre of the European book trade", highlighting the already strong interest of European urbanites in the images of mythical landmarks in the far-away South. Stolzenberg (2013: 15). The *Mundus* was "a long-term, lucrative collaboration" between Kircher and the Dutch firm that published it Rowland (Stolzenberg 2004: 199).
See Zecchi (2006) on the tsunamis and earthquakes; Romm (1994: 185) on myths.
[44] Custine (1830: 382).
[45] Custine (1830: 392).
[46] De Tavel (1825).
[47] Didier (1846).
[48] See Bettini/Spina (2007: 95); on feminine metaphors, see the Introduction and Ch. 3 and 4.
[49] Chaney (1998: 128).
[50] See Carbone Grio (1884) and Consolo (1993: 32).

bewildered literate visitors, who related to the place through a combination of awe and horror.[51] In a way, the relation between the far, Arcadian and yet ambiguous South of Italy worked in a contrastive relation to familiar, civilized Europe: on the one hand, the Strait was associated with two half-human marine monsters, conveying fascinating ideas of monstrous sexuality, weirdness, and abjection; on the other, the myth of Europa, ravaged by Zeus disguised as a bull, symbolized the rise of the European continent in many documents of that era through a bestially hypertrophic but reassuringly binary gendered narrative (Fig. 1–7).[52]
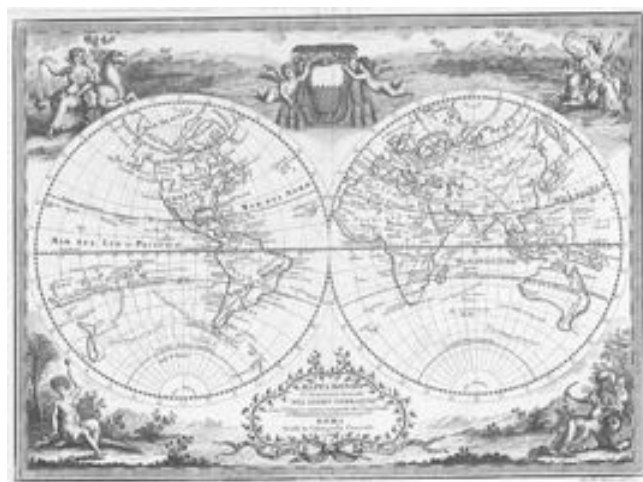
Fig. 1–7: Allegory of the continents, G. Cassini, *Nuovo Atlante Geografico,* 1788.

Aside from the historical event of the 1783 tsunami, poetic enjoyment and rationalizing interpretations went hand in hand with traditional versions of the tale. Charles Didier rehearsed the notorious etymological explanation of the dogs' heads of Scylla as the hissing winds through the rocks that produced a deceitful barking sound;[53] Arthur John Strutt also noted in 1842 that the rocks in Scilla seemed to be eternally fighting a marine war with the "barking waves".[54] Edward Lear reported, with a hint of disappointment, expecting howls and screams but

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[51] Heinrich von Kleist's 1807 *Das erdbeben in Chili* (*Earthquake in Chile),* in which the 1647 seismic event that struck Santiago is equated to Sodom and Gomorrah and used as the setting for a story of moral redemption, is another example of the coeval modern literary interest for cataclysms occurring in distant parts of the world. As a reaction to the 1908 Reggio and Messina earthquake, see Lanucara (1949). On earthquakes and literature, see Morabito (2011).

[52] On Europe's symbolism see Passerini (1999) and Wintle (2009).

[53] Didier (1846). See, again, Hawkes (2014), and Lincoln (1999: 3-43) and Coupe (1997: 108-9).

[54] See Aguirre Castro (2012) and Hopman (2012); also the Introduction.

being unable to perceive even a small "degree of romance in our researches" (1852); however, he was still awestruck by the "wide expanse of sea" and the "very magnificent" rocks of Scilla, "rising above the boiling current of dark blue foamy water".[55] This now typical view of Scilla (Fig. 1–8) would later become the cover of the English edition (Lear 1964).
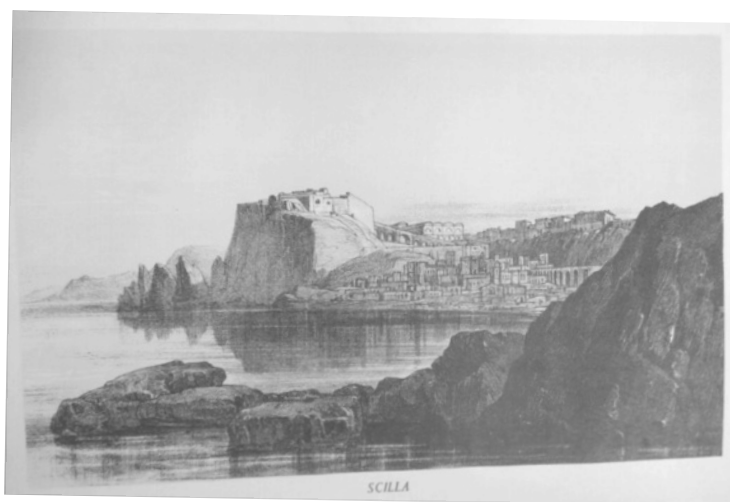
Fig. 1–8 – *Scilla* (Lear 1852).

All sorts of suggestive elements in the region contributed to inspire poets and intellectuals: the cliff dominating the sea, the rocks, the view of Sicily and the Aeolian islands, and the peculiar fishing techniques that corresponded to those described in the *Odyssey*. The traveling aristocrat Custine noted, while passing "through Charybdis and Scylla", that the hunt for swordfish, a peculiar "species of notorious monsters", could be found in ancient texts.[56] Atavistic fear could be elicited by a plethora of suitably inspiring phenomena. Marine animals like sharks and whales roamed the Strait with threatening, massive mouths. Protruding sea rocks posed a danger for boats, and winds hissed and wailed through the cliffs, sounding like packs of dogs. Strong currents, spurred by the meeting of the Ionian and the Tyrrhenian seas at different sea levels and temperatures, generated turmoil and dangerous eddies. Such natural elements and appreciation of Hellenic myths all flowed into future representations of the Strait.

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[55] Lear (1852: 172).
[56] Custine (1830: 156-159). The explanation of the passage in the *Odyssey* (12: 95-7) is referred at the earliest to Eustathius, as referenced by Saïd (2011: 161). See also Luce (1974). Also see Ch. 6 and the my Documentary Film.

1–5: "Southernizing" the landscape: Europe, Hellenism, and exoticism

The scenery of the Strait, separating the mainland from Sicily and with the Aeolian islands in sight, certainly inspired literary appreciators with its combination of idyll and danger. Visitors to the Strait came not only from philhellenic cultural backgrounds, but also from latitudes with relatively less welcoming climates. They were thus inclined to idealize the scenery. Still, the power of the landscape's seemingly objective, pre-cultural marvels was also largely prepared and fostered by a series of grand narratives on civilization and nature. As Barthes noted, a character of myth, understood as social ideology, is that it naturalizes history, making it look as timeless and ahistorical.[57] The myth of Scylla and Charybdis served, in this light, as a suitable symbol for one of the European continent's peripheries and for untamed nature.

In part, the reception of the landscape was caused by the region's insularity. Even by the early sixteenth century, when the cartography of Europe "was very well established", and when "that of the New World and the coasts of Africa was evolving rapidly", the Strait was seen geographically as part of the borders separating the West from the East and South.[58] Even as new continents were discovered and colonized, and the unreachable poles of the Earth conquered by daring explorers, the Strait remained relatively inaccessible: Mediterranean Sea routes had declined in favour of transatlantic exchanges and, paradoxically, some of the European visitors had to play Ulysses after tortuously reaching Southern Calabria by land from the Italian peninsula.[59]

In addition to being hard to reach, the Strait appeared to visitors as neither urbanized, civilized and European, nor entirely rural, archaic and oriental. It was conceptualized in what I would define a *southernizing* fashion —to borrow and adapt Said's conceptualization of orientalism as the West's 'other'.[60] Such a perspective was underpinned by a selective view on the area – a binary between

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[57] Barthes (1987).
[58] Van Duzer (2010: 8).
[59] Ceserani (2013: 87). See Arnold (2002) and Spybey (1992) on the "age of discovery" and colonialism. See Love (2006) on maritime exploration; Hurley (1948) and Naylor/Ryan (2010) on the Antarctic.
[60] Said (1978).

urban and country life that could be transposed into a North/South narrative.[61] Relation to antiquity became a selectively heightened property of the landscape, as images of ruins in the travelogues also provided a sense of "temporal density".[62] The fact that the Strait served as a passage to foreign cultures reinforced the tendency to over-analyse the landscape as exceptional nature in backward Hellas, and pit it against modernity.[63] Dynamics of centre and periphery–and consequently of culture and nature, familiarity and foreignness—took centre stage in binary representations of Europe and its borders.[64] In the case of Southern Italy, the tendency was to see the region as the site of a "stark contrast between present-day isolation and the lost glory of the past".[65] Remains and mythical landmarks constantly pitted the past against the present.[66]

This view of Italy became a constant in foreigners' depictions of the region, even if it had earlier origins within Italian traditions: Dominican Leandro Alberti (1479-1552), who lived between Bologna and Rome, had already drawn abundantly from ancient tropes in describing Calabria as an extension of Hellas, and disseminated them in print decades earlier.[67] Alberti's *Descrittione* of Italy relied on ancient texts, maintaining an "eerie silence on contemporary political and religious upheavals", while displaying "garrulity in relating myths, legends, and anecdotes from the long-lost past".[68] This highly selective focus on the south of Italy as an ideal extension of the *topos* of Hellas meant that the former could be reclaimed as essentially Western, even though it bordered on the Orient.[69] The South's "imaginative destiny at the margins of Europe" can be understood in this perspective "in relation to that of eastern Europe, itself a link between modernity

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[61] Itself part of a "complex interplay between the ancient and the modern in Renaissance humanist culture": Ceserani (2013: 31).

[62] Slaner (2016:87). Also see Ch. 5 on Charybdis a a metonymy for all sea whirlpools as an effect of the impact of the tradition.

[63] On philhellenism see Leontis (1995). See Arnold (2002) on travel and the onset of modernity and Spybey (1992) on exploration, the West, and how exploration reflected colonialist thought.

[64] See (Chard 1999) on exoticism during the Grand Tours, and Hamblyn 1996 on their relations with primitivism, Orientalism, and Romantic Hellenism.

[65] Ceserani (2013: 1).

[66] See Spencer (1986), and *infra,* on philhellenism in modern Greece.

[67] See Ceserani 2013), esp. 77-78 on the dialectic between foreigners and locals.

[68] Ceserani (2013: 24).

[69] On European explorers' 'sense of the past' in relation to the 'foundational' place of Greek and Roman history, see Lianeri (2011:7).

and backwardness".[70] Aristocrat Custine wrote on both the Strait (1830) and the 'East' of Europe in 1843, considering both the areas primitive and underdeveloped: however, Southern Italy benefited from the classical tradition, while "easterners" were seen as savages with not a hint of taste or civilization.[71]

We can thus understand the selective gaze that determined the visitors' frequent choice to focus less on urbanized centres like Reggio and Messina, and more on depictions of small villages and the countryside. Mythical place-names worked as "a culturally dense access to ancient history […] even though their reception was being obviously influenced by and "intimately connected with present coordinates and interests".[72] While effective differences existed in the level of development between Southern Italy and the northern countries affected by the industrial revolution, visitors' representations still amplified them. A descent to Southern Italy seemed to equate to an utter temporal regression: the South was fixed in the Past, and erasure of its elements of modernity was part of a more or less explicit tendency to deny that it could take part of modernity.[73] Natural and cultural wilderness could merge into one as the Strait began to acquire narratives that connoted uniqueness and nostalgia. Travel books worked by creating "the illusion of something which no longer exists but still should exist".[74]

Travellers discovered that the mythical landscape could also be profitably commoditized. Saint-Non marketed Southern Italy in his travelogue after realizing that north of Rome, Italy was not such a novelty to his audience. He asked the artist Denon to turn empty plains into powerful views of "rustic" bridges with added vegetation growing out of the ruins to enhance the picturesque effect. Saint-Non also quickly capitalized on the 1783 earthquake that destroyed Reggio, Messina, Scilla, and other places: he stopped the press in order to be able to rework an illustration of Messina he had already commissioned for the cover of the book, and present it in the form of a torn page symbolizing the effects of the earthquake.[75]

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[70] Moe (2002: 6).
[71] Custine (1830); Custine (1843: 22).
[72] Wyke (1997: 3).
[73] See, again, Fabian (1983).
[74] Lévi-Strauss (1974: 38).
[75] Saint-Non (1783: 6).

The exoticizing lens of colonialism provided another grand narrative: exploration and adventure.[76] Swinburne had stated that "a situation blest with so delicious a climate and so fine a haven, must have attracted the early notice of the eastern navigators, who, like Christopher Columbus, Drake and James Cook of modern times, sailed from home in quest of new worlds, and unexplored coasts".[77] Prominent travelogues mostly "fail to mention the work of early geographers and topographers who had written on Magna Graecia, presenting instead their trips to South Italy as novel explorations of unknown lands", showing a "widening gap between local and foreign approaches to the region" at that moment in history.[78] The new travelogues stepped into territory conceptualized as uncharted, as reflected in their narrative style, publishing history, and their fixation on ruins and landscape.

Early modern travellers made sense of the new worlds that they encountered on their travels through their own ethnocentric views: borders were imagined and manufactured as territories where meanings were created and transformed.[79] Attached to Italy's "ankle" on its southernmost border, forming a progression of high mountains descending to steep cliffs, the landscape of Calabria afforded vistas of the Strait only after tortuous mountain paths: crossing was an exciting and potentially profitable act that could be framed as discovery. The new genre of travel writing was in some ways "divisive almost by definition, as foreigners […] claimed the right to treat the South as an unknown region".[80]

Naturally, there were exceptions to this narrative. British explorer Thomas Hoby had admired Messina's neoclassical "fountaine of verie white marble" in his 1547-1564 *Travels,* representing Neptune, Scylla and Charybdis, commissioned by the Senate in 1557 and produced by Michelangelo's assistant

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[76] See Ceserani (2013: 95) on colonial parallels affecting views of Magna Graecia "imagined as a colonial territory of the ancient Greeks".
[77] Ceserani (2013: 96-7).
[78] Ceserani (2013: 77-78).
[79] Black (1992: 1). This resonates with Said's critique of *orientalism* (1978). See Betteridge (2007: 1) and Frank and Hadler (2011: 1) on frontiers and national ideologies. See Adamovsky (2006: 251) on Euro-orientalism as an East/West narrative. See Chaney (1998: xi) on the patronisation of Italy as "a museum set in a picturesque landscape" and for Magna Græcia as a "South-within-the-South". See Ceserani (2013: 79) on how Grand Tours shifted northern European disdain for modern Italy from the entire peninsula to the South.
[80] Ceserani (2013: 77-78).

Giovanni Montorsoli; he had also praised the city as quite lively.[81] The fountain –
–amplifying a tradition of illustrations, maps, and Renaissance art—was an
expression of the wealthy elites' power within the harbours of the Strait (Fig. 1–
9). This image of the town stood in contrast with how most European visitors
tended to essentialize the whole region as archaic. Custine's visit to Reggio in
1830 almost ruined his uchronic wanderings into the lost past of Greater Greece
as he was forced to acknowledge that the urban centre was actually– like the
Messina of Montorsoli's statue– a modern, busy, and well-connected harbour. In
time, though, he also resumed his original travels to pre-modern vistas and the
rural and isolated world of the Southern spirit, romantically celebrating Arcadian
life and the pre-cultural wilderness of the picturesque.[82]

Figure 1–9: Fountain of Neptune, Messina (ancient *Zancle*), G. Montorsoli (1554).

1–6: *From travelogues to tourism: the Grand Tours and the image of the Strait*

Travelogues could be said to anticipate the fascination for otherness and
experiential loss that would later characterize the modern tourist. Travel writers
have been seen as exploring a subjective dimension comparable to that of
novelists, and often focused on a binary opposition between "home and
elsewhere".[83] Riedesel, Saint-Non and Swinburne were highly influential in
perpetuating the mythical fame of the Strait of Ulysses, even if they were only
passing on a boat on their way back to Naples. Goethe, with Riedesel's guide in

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[81] Hoby (1902: 45). The fountain is shown in the Documentary Section.
[82] Custine (1830: 166).
[83] Bassnett (2013: xi).

hand in 1768-88," was one of these visitors.[84] As Bettini notes, Goethe passed the Strait "tossed about by the waves like Odysseus", and "found Homer" in Sicily, which he did not feel as absolute archaic but, rather, as an "ancient present", as if in "a private *Odyssey* of which he was a character".[85] Foster saw some of these travellers as novel versions of Pausanias, whom he also saw as "the forerunner of Victorian antiquarianism".[86]

Movable type print could be argued to have widely popularized this kind of symbolic consumption of the landscape: Pausanias's *Description of Greece* (II century BCE) had already served "as a somewhat bulky handbook for scholarly travellers",[87] but travel guides had become more accessible and portable, evolving gradually in parallel with modern tourism. In the meanwhile, "economic and political might in Europe shifted northward", and the status of Italy and Greece diminished, while their allure grew as comparatively distant lands that attracted interest from seekers of exoticism".[88] In the eighteenth century, a time of discovery and new beginnings, new forms of antiquarianism emerged when revolutions in taste and social formations meant that "traveling gentlemen replaced armchair scholars as the main figures of innovation".[89] After the Napoleonic Wars, Southern Italy had progressively become a destination for travellers in search of traces of ancient civilizations.[90] The majority of early eighteenth-century visitors, however, did not foresee even brief excursions off the beaten track and probably assumed that "l'Europe finit à Naples… La Calabre, la Sicile, tout le reste est de l'Afrique".[91] By the nineteenth century, however, travelling was no longer a prerogative of the élites, and tourism became gradually more widespread among the lower classes which mimicked the aristocrats.[92]

The emerging travel literature "provided an opportunity for autobiography and literary amateurism, not least in the readable context of a heroic or mock-

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[84] Goethe (1992:269).
[85] Bettini (2005: viii, xii). Still, Goethe despised some of Southern Italy's most dilapidated contexts, such as Paestum (Bettini 2005: v).
[86] Foster (2013: 509), also on Posidonius as an ancient traveller.
[87] Grushow (2013:520).
[88] Ceserani (2013: 77-78).
[89] Ceserani (2013: 41).
[90] Black (1992: 53).
[91] Creuzé de Lesser (1806).
[92] Watson (2009: 166).

heroic journey",[93] which would later coalesce in twentieth-century travel and photographic books and re-enactments of Homeric geography (which I discuss in Ch. 2). Joseph Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* had inaugurated this interest for the "antiquities and curiosities" to be found in Italy, seeing regions like Calabria as a trekking ground of the stories of Greek civilization.[94] Works like the 1819 *Classical Tour through Italy and Sicily* by Richard Hoare –who followed Pliny and Horace–further demonstrated the blend of literary interests and leisure that would, at a later point, be labelled as literary tourism.[95]

Murray's 1863 *Hand-Book for travelling in the Continent* was another example of proto-touristic behaviour. The archaic civilization of the South held the romantic promise of an escape from modernity and its grip on the individual. The *uchronia* of the South, the continent's purported cradle as part of Greater Greece, developed while catering visitors who, like tourists later, sought at least a degree of "personal adventure", the "crossing of boundaries", and a "demand for alterity".[96] George Robert Gissing's re-enactment of the classical voyage (1901) is an example of the kind of mythical reactivation described in this thesis' introduction, in which the journey projects the traveller back to the moment when myth "first occurred":[97]

> Alone and quiet, I heard the washing of the waves; I saw the evening fall on cloud-wreathed Etna, the twinkling lights come forth on Scylla and Charybdis; and, as I looked my last towards the Ionian Sea, I wished it were mine to wander endlessly amid the silence of the ancient world, to-day and all its sounds forgotten.[98]

Such was the fame of the Strait among travellers that the images of myth were not separable from geography. The Strait could be argued to have become a *chronotope*– a literary travel location informed, in Bakhtin's definition, by "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships […] artistically

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[93] Black (1992: 3).
[94] Addison (1706: 1).
[95] Watson (2009).
[96] Chard (1999: 17, 20).
[97] Eliade (1991: 132-6); Stewart (2012: 19).
[98] Gissing (1901).

expressed in literature".[99] For Bakhtin, the chronotope was a formal, constituent category of literature; however, his definition suits the Strait well as a conflation of historical and temporal otherness largely based on ideas drawn from the Greco-Roman tradition. For some European visitors, Southern Italy was akin to an open air museum of ruins and memories set in the sublime dimension of wilderness and, as such, it could elicit ecstasy verging on transportation in time.[100] The Strait produced such responses ranging from Gissing's nostalgic musings to Lear's disappointment when he was forced to acknowledge that the actual place did not immediately feel as sublime and threatening as it did in Homer's narration.

To borrow another definition, this time from Michel Foucault, the Strait worked as a heterotopia: a place similar to an unreal utopia, and yet distinguished from it, because a heterotopia relates to real places where time and space can appear as frozen, and ideas of society can be "represented, contested, and inverted".[101] In this sense, the Greek and Roman past worked in contrast with articulations of the modern, asserting "modern Europe's special bonds with ancient, or more specifically classical, times, while simultaneously affirming the moderns' distance from antiquity.[102] As in the case of Greece discussed by Spencer,[103] so in Calabria representations of the region were moulded by local and visitors alike as a way to regard the nation's temples and traditions as witnesses to their former splendour—and contemporary decadence.

Such sense of distance relied significantly on the binary between urban and rustic life described earlier, and was projected on the landscape as much as the region's inhabitants. Both were compared to the home society of the visitors. Books such as Lenorman's *La Grande Grece* (1881) widely capitalized on Magna Graecia's unfulfilled potential as "an alluring, little-known destination and subject

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[99] Bakhtin (1981: 84).

[100] This could be related to the more extreme range of psychological experiences or delusions psychiatry refers to as 'Jerusalem Syndrome' (Bar-el *et al.* 2000), as well as to Stendhal's notorious syncope suffered in Florence in the face of famous art. Also See Décultot's (2000) likening of Winckelmann's history of art to a travel narrative that invites the reader to traverse the past.

[101] Foucault (1984b).

[102] Lianeri (2011: 16).

[103] Spencer (2000) wrote on philhellenism and its impact on narratives of Greece from the fall of Constantinople to the arrival of Byron.

of study" that its own inhabitants could not bring to thriving.[104] Lenormant saw the Calabrians in evolutionary and ethnocentric view: "rather taciturne, and having in their ways a restrained gravitas and dignified attitude that reminds of the Orientals", they lived in a society where civilization had not yet "overcome an imperfect stage of development".[105] The region, and its inhabitants, remained outside of the well-known, akin to the "oriental" but not completely so. Elisabeth Décultot's likening of Winckelmann's history of art to a travel narrative grasped this tendency for the foreignness of place and narrative to converge on past remoteness, inviting it to be traversed.

1–7: *Europe, Hellenism, and exoticism*

With the onset of mass communications and transnational audiences in the twentieth century, the Strait's chrono-topic commonplace was further disseminated. The travelogues anticipated a sense of "touristic landscapes" whose seductive nature resided not just in their natural aspects, but also in a culturally constructed anticipation of such places.[106] The Grand Tour inaugurated a 'heterotopology' of the Strait s as a simultaneously mythic and real 'elsewhere' that works as a stage to enact a certain narrative, and as a 'slice of time' as well as place.[107] Heterotopies can also be seen as heterochronies that organize "a perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place […] outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages.[108] The impact of the Grand Tours can be observed, as the next chapters will argue, at two levels. Firstly, the Grand Tours had an effect on the local histories of places like Scilla in the Strait, where these travels have become a part of local history, often presented in book series. Secondly, this historical narrative of the Strait, and its correlation with Homer, was disseminated on a global scale, through the travelogue's reception in later photo books, adventure travels, and exploration and documentary films, and contributed to larger patterns of reception of Hellenism.

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[104] Ceserani (2012: 212.
[105] Lenormant (1881: 22).
[106] Cartier and Lew (2005: 5).
[107] Foucault (1984b: 1).
[108] Foucault (1984b: 6).

In relation to local historiographies, not only do mythical Greek names already pervade the public spaces of the Strait –from statues of siren and of Scylla erected through the centuries to restaurants named after myth-creatures– but European travel literature provides an external narrative that reinforces the historical claim of a continuity with Greco-Roman traditions. Inglis's idea that "few historical examinations of tourism" could overlook "the influences of the Grand Tour […], including travel to classical Mediterranean sites",[109] is confirmed by the impact of this literature on the Strait. Today, the Grand Tours have themselves become part of local histories based on a belief in the region's direct descent from the ancient Greeks. The famed European visitors have become, themselves, a part of affective relations with Hellas.[110] Their re-prints feature in local newsagents in Scilla alongside souvenirs, travel guides and commodities. Calabrese publisher Rubbettino republished many travelogues in a new book series, with a companion website and smartphone application designed to rediscover the "itineraries of myth and history" in the region, offering extensive attention to Scilla–including a comparison between the routes of Saint-Non (1783) and Pilati (1775-1777).[111]

In local historiographies, a cultural record is often assigned to the Greeks. Violi's remark on the "splendid" history of the *megale hellas* that was "felt as indicative of Calabria's *poleis*"[112] is an example of history that elevates the Hellenic period of the region as its highest. A more complex and nuanced history would consider the pre-Greek presence of Iapyges, Messapii and Pelasgians before the Greeks, as well as the more recent influence of the Goths, Byzantines, Normans, Spanish, Arabic, and French.[113] Selective, Greek-centric histories usually overlook the ancient Greeks' own synthesis of elements of many other cultures, preventively stifling more nuanced forms of heritage. Consolo argues that "were our Strait a time machine, a photographic plate bearing the impressions of all of the shapes it has seen, we would see in it countless boats, sails of every

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[109] Inglis (2000: 25).
[110] An idea that has been discussed in relatin to the museum: Cartier and Lew (2012: 4).
[111] *Viaggio in Calabria*, http://www.viaggioincalabria.it, latest access (5 October 2015),
[112] Violi (2006: 22).
[113] See Winks (2004) on the ancient Mediterranean; Ceserani (2013) on commonplaces of the 'South'.

shape and kind, soldiers and merchants of all races—we would read an infinite story".[114] In Séstito's wording, not only the waters, but cultures, legends, and peoples have also mingled in the Strait.[115]

In spite of the great variety and specificity of each travelogue and map, the documents of the Grand Tours as a corpus definitely contributed to defining the image of the Strait in European imagination and worldwide, impacting on future, local monumentalizations of Greek history (See Ch. 6, and my Documentary). Many of the most common ideas held about this region today may be traced, in part, to the moment that the Grand Tours' romantic focus on the glorious past was received and internalized by the locals. Such ideas also ushered in a surprisingly enduring perspective on the Strait as a remote place: until very recently, one could find Michelin guides describing Scilla as the place of Homeric myths, but also as a place where transportation is lacking and public services are poor.[116] The next chapter looks at how the Grand Tours transitioned views of the Strait as a cornerstone of Homeric geography into the adventurous and navigational travel books of the cultural and tourist industries, where Scylla and Charybdis continued to work as literary embodiments of the beauties and unforgiving calamities of nature, expressed through alluringly monstrous guardians.

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[114] Consolo (1993: 23).
[115] Séstito (1995: 3).
[116] *Michelin Italy* travel guide, volume 1989, page 70.

CHAPTER 2:
ON THE TRACK OF ULYSSES

2–1: *Myth as journey: travel, exploration, and the Strait's myth-place*

The relation between the myth of Scylla and Charybdis and views of the Strait as a landmark of Homeric geography received a decisive popularization, in the twentieth century, thanks to leisure media like popular travel and photography books, tourist guides, and documentary films. Historical narratives of the Strait previously discussed in relation to the Grand Tours were transmitted in discourses of the media and tourism industries, which rekindled the popularity of the mythical landmark. In this chapter, I demonstrate how the journey of Ulysses continued to inspire travel re-enactments in the Mediterranean, in conjunction with the parallel emergence of a literature of exploration and adventure and with the emerging phenomenon of tourism and visual consumption of the landscape. I will look at the Strait through the sociological concept of the place-myth: as a location understood publicly, at an international level, in an essentialized or stereotyped mediated form.[1] Combining this concept with my previous considerations on the Strait as a chrono-topical conflation of space and time, I will discuss the Strait's popularity as a Homeric landmark in visual media, tourism practices, and resurging interest in exploration narratives. In this chapter, my interest will be on Scylla and Charybdis as signifiers of a relation with the landscape of the Strait and the Mediterranean, while following chapters will focus on the *Odyssey* as a source of material to explore the monstrous body.

I will consider two main case studies, that I have chosen for the opportunities they offer to discuss the international character of media constructions of the Strait in cultural industries of this period. Through these cases, I will consider how ideas of Homeric landmarks in the Strait transitioned into an increasingly internationalized media system that represented the exclusive forms of access to Greco-Roman antiquity for many audiences. The first case is British historian and explorer Ernle Bradford's book *Ulysses Found* (1954)– along

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[1] Shields (1991). In this thesis, I will use both the terms "place-myth", to explicitly refer to Shields' (1991) specific formulation, and "myth-place", whenever referring to relations between myth and geography.

with its documentary film adaptation, *The Search for Ulysses* (1965)– in which the explorer follows Ulysses' route on a boat in the Mediterranean in order to establish empirical evidence of Homeric geography. The second case study is the documentary series *L'Italia vista dal Cielo* (1967-1975, RAI national television, Italy), directed by Italian ethnographer, writer, and film maker Folco Quilici. *L'Italia* features a bird's eye overview of Italy's landscape and classical place-myth, framed within a representation of Calabria as a backward, archaic region of Hellenic remains. Both Quilici and Bradford appear to be influenced both by preceding philhellenic traditions, such as the ones examined in my previous chapter on the Grand Tours, and by emerging trends the representation of the Mediterranean in photography books and tourist guides. In such media, the mythical Strait is often represented through the same aesthetic of ruins and temples that characterized Hellas in popular media like film.[2] The Strait also took part in a larger narrative of the Mediterranean as a sailing playground, where explorers like Bradford and Quilici could venture in the wake of Ulysses, or emulate Schliemann's discovery of Troy, Bérard's localizations of Homeric geographies,[3] and Norwegian explorer Thor Heyerdahl's Pacific exploration.[4]

Looking at how Ulysses' voyages offered chances for travel literature, I discuss the transformation of the Strait into an iconic Homeric landmark onto an internationalized stage. Quilici's and Bradford's documentary films invited an analysis of their relationship with narratives of travel that give "simultaneous credence to both actual and imagined topographies and exploits them" for leisure and consumption[5]. Looking at tourist guides from the era, I will discuss the long-lasting impact of the popular reception of Greco-Roman antiquity on visions of the Strait as a region for escapism, where received ideas of Greek myth and the arcadia of the sun-stricken South yielded the promise of the unfathomable depths of the seas of ancient lore. In diachronic perspective, this chapter will also allow me to touch upon a series of important issues that I will consider with more depth and attention in other sections of this work: the impact of mediated and touristed

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[2] Such as *Homer's Odyssey* (1911) and *Ulysses* (1954), discussed *infra* and in the next chapter. On commonplaces of Greekness in film, see Blanshard/Shahabudin (2011: 66).
[3] Bérard (1929); see Ch. 6 in relation to Homeric geographies.
[4] Heyerdahl (1952).
[5] Cardinal (2003 :423).

international narratives on the town of Scilla (in my Documentary Film); the broader dissemination of Scylla and Charybdis in literature, theatre, and film, with a marked interest in their monstrous-feminine bodies (Chapters 3 and 4); and how explorers like Quilici and Bradford, as well as film and tourist material, relate to long-standing debates on Homeric geographies and the actual localizations of the myth (Chapter 6).

2–2: *Travel books and visual cultures: the Strait in the imaginaries of travel*

Before delving into the case studies, I will discuss travel books, tourist guides and popular explorations occurring in the years that precede and follow Quilici's and Bradford's travels in the Homeric Strait.[6] Tourist guides represent an interesting body of evidence to consider the issue of how existing historical narratives on the Strait were disseminated to emerging media in the following decades. In the guides I have had the chance to examine from archival research, the town of Scilla and Scylla and Charybdis are the most extensively discussed and cross-referenced of all Homeric landmarks.[7] Muirhead's *Blue Guide* from 1928 (UK), discussed the "comparatively little known southern half of the Italian peninsula, which was fringed in antiquity with the cities of Magna Græcia", seeing it as rich in ancient art and dowered with natural beauty", echoing some of the descriptions of the European travellers of the Grand Tours.[8] Mounts Vesuvius in Campania and Etna in Sicily were featured alongside information about the historically notorious earthquakes occurred in the region, and a discussion of Acireale and the Aeolian Islands, associated with Greek myth. The Strait of Messina is described as "incomparable for beauty of landscape and related to the ancient "terrors of the mariners".[9] The rock of Scylla is mapped in Scilla, and Charybdis is said to have been placed by modern geographers "to a spot near the harbour of Messina".[10] The guide was adapted from an irretrievable Italian

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[6] Extensive and specific archival research, also outside of Europe, would be required to retrieve more material in the ephemeral and under-preserved form of magazines.
[7] My research was limited to London libraries, as well as Italian libraries in Bologna and Reggio Calabria. Further research may shed light on a more extensive body of research.
[8] Muirhead (1928:i).
[9] Muirhead (1928: 411).
[10] Muirhead (1928: 362).

edition, but a later version of the latter includes an extensive mention of "the fable of Ulysses, of the Sirens and of the vortex of Charybdis" (and references the nearby grottos of Tremusa/Lamia).[11] Italy's 1938 *Touring Club* also sees South Italy as "a land sacred to Ceres, Pallas Athena, and Dionysus", and dedicates extensive space to archaeological sites, as well as to images of the "splendid" Scilla.

These descriptions persist through the decades. In 1965, De Lange's *Guide to Italy* (Amsterdam/London) described the "incredibly beautiful" Strait of Messina "in which is the vortex of Charybdis", dedicating mentions to the Scylla "famous in mythology" as well as "the Cyclop Islands".[12] The guides conceptualize the South of Italy in much the same way the Grand Tours did: De Lange defines remains of Greek architecture as "standing majestically in a silent land", and begins the book with an image of Alberobello as "the most African town in Europe".[13] British traveller Henry Morton's travel diary (1969),[14] detailing an ethnographic account of Southern Italy, is markedly philhellenic: it begins in a hotel in Rome with a discussion of Ovid. It contains a section on the "the famous rock of Scylla" and a lengthy discussion on the earthquakes of the area[15] and on the *Odyssey*'s relation with local swordfish hunt. Morton laments how modern tourism has impacted on some localities in Italy (an issue that I will soon discuss in relation to Bradford and Quilici),[16] and finishes his book with a description of himself looking out of his window at the Strait of Messina, sometimes seeing the "red angry Etna", hoping that perhaps "someday I might be fortunate enough to cross those tempting waters".[17]

In parallel to such guides and diaries, there emerged another stream of more adventurous journeys into the Mediterranean in the wake of Odysseus.

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[11] Bertarelli (1928: 685). On the grottos, see Ch. 6.
[12] De Lange (1965: 239, 294).
[13] See Creuzé de Lesser on the South of Italy as African (1806), Ch. 1.
[14] The consulted edition is Morton (1983).
[15] Complete with a Grand Tour-esque reflection on how "nature has somehow reserved an unusual beauty for those parts of Calabria which she has most frequently destroyed" (Morton 1983: 352).
[16] Some of these aspects are discussed further in the Documentary Section, where townsfolk in Scilla recounts stories on the swordfish hunt and an Irish tourist guides laments Scilla's congestion in much the same way as Morton.
[17] Morton (1983: 403).

Finnish writer and art historian Eric Schildt (1917-2009) published a book on his navigations after Ulysses in the Strait of Messina .[18] Louis Golding (1895-1958), a British fiction writer, travelled in the Mediterranean and argued that the *Odyssey* was inspired by real places.[19] Coffee table photographic books also flourished. Canadian photographer and world traveller Beny Roloff published a lushly illustrated book on Gibraltar, the Strait of Messina, the Eolic Islands, and Li Galli in Campania, featuring a silver-printed map of Homeric place-myth (Figure 2–1) and images of ruined marbles like the ones cherished by Saint-Non or Swinburne (Chapter 1). Roloff combines interest in the "little fretwork of land and islands where stood those temples, statues, and olive trees" with a plethora of Greco-Roman references.[20]

Figure 2–1: The Homeric Mediterranean in B. Roloff, *A Time of the Gods* (1962)

Austrian photographer Erich Lessing's photo book[21] also begins with a two-page map of Mediterranean mythical landmarks. Scylla and Charybdis are not illustrated here (Poseidon and the winged Sirens are), but they are still mapped in the Strait of Messina, the "scene of the struggle" of Ulysses (Figure 2–2a), and accompanied by excerpts from the *Odyssey*.[22] Original photography of Mediterranean and Aegean locations is interspersed with photos of ancient

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[18] Schildt (1951; English edition 1953). See also Schildt (1959) on the track of Icarus.
[19] Golding (1955).
[20] Roloff (1962: 13-14).
[21] Lessing (1965).
[22] The book includes extracts from Schliemann's book on Troy (1874) and an essay on Ulysses by Hungarian scholar Károly Kerényi.

artefacts and archaeological remains. This "hunt for the places […] which Ulysses visited" includes Capri, passages from the *Odyssey* on Scylla, and a photograph of an unspecified rock in the sea described as 'Scylla'.[23] Cornelia Kérenyi's Pictorial Index in the the book describes it as the rock of Scilla, even though the formation depicted in the photo is located in nearby Palmi (and associated with Orestes, as I discuss in my Documentary). Like Kérenyi, Quilici, too, will prefer Palmi's dramatic representation of the myth-places over the rock of Scilla.

Figure 2–2: The Mediterranean of myths, in E. Lessing, *The Voyages of Ulysses* (1965).

Overall, these books transpose existing narratives of the Homeric Mediterranean within the context of visual cultures emerging with photography. Pictorial interest in the landscape found new formulations in mass produced media. Colour prints offered even larger audiences the opportunity to "stay at home and yet travel the world" through lush, actual representations of the landscape.[24] A highly selective gaze thus stylized Southern Italy within the aesthetics of Hellas, and decorated its depictions with stylized renditions of Greek art (Fig. 2–1 and 2–2). Such representations were commonplace in other media, like film: Italian-American production *Ulysses* (1954) and Italian TV miniseries *L'Odissea* (1968) also began with views of barren landscapes, remains of monumental antiquity, and captions that declared the films were shot in the real places of myth.

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[23] Lessing (1965: 7-15, 27).
[24] Quanchy (2013: 939).

Print and film media could transport readers, tourists, and scholars to the Mediterranean of Homer, allowing them to imaginatively 'play Ulysses'—in a continuation of a *topos* whose decisive historical formulation occurred during the Grand Tours. Quilici and Bradford, as I am about to discuss, also continued in this tradition. They also seem to pose as *bona fide* explorers rather than armchair scholars or spectators, and to distance themselves from tourists, setting out to empirically test elements of myth geography on the sites.

2–3: Ulysses Found: Bradford's Mediterranean voyage

British historian and yachtsman Ernle Bradford's *Ulysses Found* (1963) is a report –later followed by a documentary film– on the seafarer's appreciation of Homeric geography. Bradford spent much of his life sailing in the Mediterranean, was specialized in naval history, and well versed in historical topics like the Battle of Thermopylae and the Siege of Malta. *Ulysses Found* starts with the forewarning that it may be taken as an unnecessary gloss upon the *Odyssey,* given that for centuries people had been happy to read the poem as if it were only a fable. Still, Bradford is ardently interested in knowing "what seas washed the insubstantial shores that harboured Circe and Calypso" ever since he was nineteen—a sails man in the Mediterranean, carrying the *Odyssey* with him while he crossed the Strait on the "40,000 horsepower of a destroyer".[25]

For Braford, extensive seafaring experience allows one to find, "out of your own experience, that great sections of the poem seem to read like accurate reportage"; he argues he knows the *Odyssey* "as thoroughly as the Messina Strait", and sees the place as a cornerstone of Homer's geography.[26] His journey covered ground from the Aegean to Sicily as he looked for the Cave of Polyphemus, the Laestrygonians, the land of the Phaeacians, Calypso's island, the Wandering Rocks, and the Strait. Bradford looks at traditional interpretations of Odysseus' journey in order to test each landmark's consistency. He compiles observations gathered from his sailing and relates them to the myths, providing maps of Greece and the Aegean, the West Coast of Sicily, the Central Mediterranean, Sicily, and

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[25] Bradford (1963: vii).
[26] Bradford (1963: x).

the Strait of Messina. Bradford writes as a sailor who handles the navigational guides and is able to establish such connections:

> Coming through this same Strait in the late autumn of 1952 I did exactly as Ulysses had done 3,000 years ago—get close to the Italian coast where the village of Scilla now stands, so as to avoid the broken water and overfalls on the Sicilian side of the strait.[27]

Bradford eventually states that the Strait of Messina is certainly the one Homer hinted at in the *Odyssey*. Bradford sides with a tradition of reading the epic as a map (this will be discussed in Chapter 6), but his alignment with the Greco-Roman tradition is above all an excuse to indulge in the pleasures of playing Ulysses, and to present himself as an explorer. Ancient historian A. R. Burn, in his Foreword to *Ulysses Found,* describes Bradford's attitude during the journey as eminently *lyrique* rather than scientific, seeing the *Odyssey* above all as poetry, but praising Bradford's intent to follow the tracks of the historical elements in the poem.[28]

One could say Bradford tries to identify with Ulysses: his book is an autobiographical journey alongside the routes of the hero. Bradford also vehemently explains the relations of each myth with the epic. Scylla, "the Render", and Charybdis, "the Sucker Down", are thus explained, respectively, as a giant squid or octopus and as a large whirlpool that would have once existed in the Strait.[29] Bradford is certain that "there has never been any suggestion that Scylla and Charybdis dwelt anywhere but in the Messina Strait" (150). While aligning with a euhemerist tradition of explaining the myths (see Ch. 5 and 6), however, his main interest is to use the *Odyssey* as a map of myth-places in which to sail in the Mediterranean.

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[27] Bradford (1963: 155). The *Admiralty Pilot* consists in sailing directions produced by national maritime and hydrographic services: Reidy (2008: 140)
[28] Burn (1963: xvi).
[29] Bradford (1963: 144–8), also on swordfish hunts in the Strait and in the *Odyssey*, and on the Kraken myth (152-153); discussed further in Ch. 5.
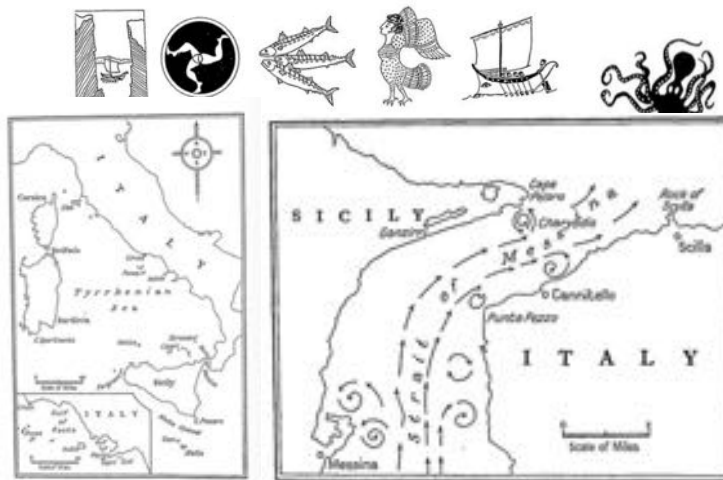
Figure 2–3: Chart *of the Strait of Scylla and Charybdis* (Bradford 1963:141)
and illustrations of the myth-figures (at the beginning of each chapter).

These aspects emerge even more clearly in the sixty-minute film adaptation of the book produced by CBC news. *The Search for Ulysses* (1966) is motivated by need for "visual documentation", and follows Bradford along a re-enactment of the original journey.[30] The narrating voice, taking turns with Bradford's own, begins by stating that Ulysses was a real man on a real journey to real sea places (Fig. 2–4 c, f), and that scholars could only speculate from their desks—until Bradford put theories to the test. The pinpointing of the myths is presented as solid evidence firstly introduced by the book, and accepted by scholarship (Fig. 2–4 d-e).[31] Ulysses' route is explained as a 2500 old mystery that may have finally been solved. Bradford is visually likened to Ulysses (Fig. 2–4 a-b), as he stands on the deck or close to the masthead where Ulysses would have been tied in order to be able to listen to the sirens without falling prey to them; all the while, the narrating voice recites the passage from the *Odyssey*.

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[30] Bradford (1966).

[31] Indeed, the 1949 *Oxford Classical Dictionary* states that nothing in the kind of whirlpools existed in the Strait, while the Second Edition from 1970 corrects the statement by saying that Charybdis was later identified in the area, citing Bradford's *Ulysses Found* (1963).
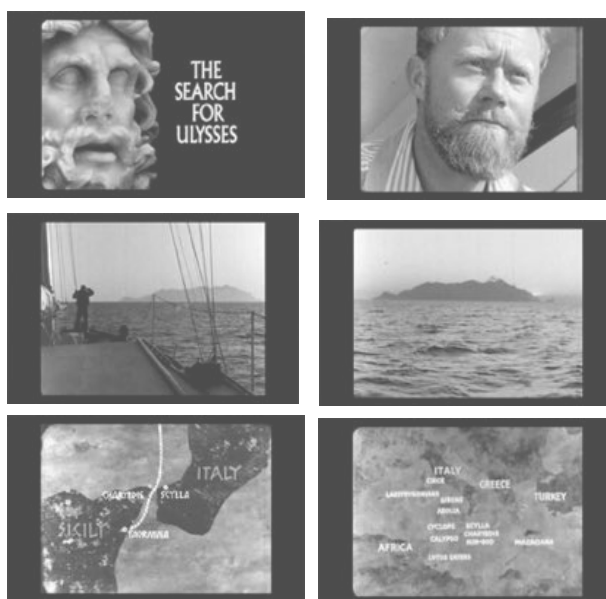
Figures 2–4 (a-f, clockwise from top left): The Homeric Mediterranean and
its novel Ulysses (stills from Bradford/CBC 1966).

Most of the journey deals with geography and landscape. However, interestingly, some passages feature art iconography, suggest the persistence of elements of myth in folk practice and social reality (an aspect I discuss in Ch. 5 by looking at Jean Cuisenier's *voyage*), and even highlight a male-centred gaze. Bradford claims myth figures have different names but always represent "the same thing: the eternal danger and appeal of a beautiful woman" (2.42). Sirens are equated to bathing women (Fig 2–5 a, b). Circe is likened to a woman surrounded by men around a pool (Fig. 2–5 c, d). Bradford even spoofs Malta's women by likening their physical build to local ancient art depicting a Great Mother and described as the goddess Calypso, declaring that Ulysses had to share his couch with "a rather ample goddess" (see my Chapters 3 and 4 on the male gaze and sexualized reception of Scylla and Charybdis as female monsters).

Figures 2–5 (a-f): Women from myth and
from the Mediterranean (stills from E. Bradford/CBC 1966).

Overall, Bradford's re-enactment of Ulysses' journey exudes with an experiential quality. Bradford declares that he has even heard or imagined the Sirens' song, while serving during World War II. In the film, while an eerie chanting whistle or accordion plays in the background, he refers to "what sounded like singing; low, distant, reminiscent of waves or wins, but about it a human quality", and of how "no man's voice could have made that low, sweet sound".[32] He also poses as an actual explorer, likening himself to archaeologist Schliemann or Columbus:

> It may seem automatic to believe in poetic fiction from your desk, but travel just
> once on a boat on the Mediterranean seas, and you will begin to understand *The*
> *Odyssey* and begin to understand Ulysses, the first man to sail east south of Greece
> — like Columbus he was challenged by the adventure of the unknown. […]
> If scholars would only leave their desks and come out here, they would feel these
> winds and see these clouds and know that this could only be the place".[33]

Meanwhile, representations of ancient and modern boats elicit a sense of adventurousness, while evocative shots of the marine landscape convey a sense of timelessness and stillness. Such passages are accompanied by sounds of low

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[32] In fact, this potentially contradicts his previous claim to know the *Odyssey* by heart.
[33] Bradford (1966 at 19.23).

strings and the hammering snare of the drum kit, illustrating a further movement towards "the impossible choice" waiting for Ulysses with Charybdis on one side, the rock of Scylla on the other".[34]

Figures 2–6 (a-b): Boats and Curragh on the track of Ulysses
(stills from E. Bradford/CBC 1966).

A montage of the Sperlonga group (actually from Lazio) and images from the coastline and waters is used to introduce the myth– even though the discovery is presented as anti-climactic:

> In describing Scylla's rock Homer is indulging in poetic exaggeration: to me,
> Scilla frankly looks like a travel poster. But even modern maps and guidebooks
> bear me out—the fishing village […] still bears the fearsome name of Scylla; in a
> small boat the waters here are not as peaceful as they seem; local fishermen still
> fear the currents, eddies, shifting tides, and whirlpools. [35]

Bradford's comment demonstrates his interest in pursuing as complete as possible myth-place correspondences. To this end, he presents a description of Charybdis through a decontextualized image of a whirlpool.
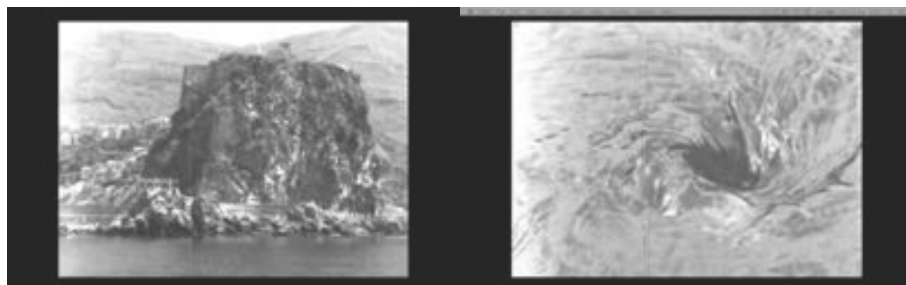
Figures 2–7 (a-b): Scylla and Charybdis in the Strait
(stills from E. Bradford/CBC, *The Search for Ulysses*, Canada 1966).

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[34] ——at 5.55 to 06.51.
[35] Bradford 24.40; on the Sperlonga statues, see Contincello (2012) and Ch. 6.

Regardless of the reasonable assumption that Homer spoke of these places (discussed further in Chapter 6), Bradford's journey is above all an attempt to rediscover Ulysses on his own, subjective terms:

> Turn to the story of Ulysses; come to the sea as he has sailed, and you too may be caught by this power and begin a search too perhaps of a different sort; we all have a different journey to make; this was mine.[36]

2–4: *L'Italia vista dal cielo*: Folco Quilici's Hellenic South

Italian film director and writer-explorer Folco Quilici's documentary film series *Italia vista dal Cielo*[37] also notices the routes of Ulysses in his aerial tour of Italy. The fourteen-episode documentary film was commissioned by Italian subsidiary of fuel multinational Hexxon for Italian national broadcasting company RAI, and features helicopter views of Italy's regions accomplished through a then innovative shooting technology.[38] The visual style thus obtained strongly characterizes the concept and narrative: an exploration of the landscape from a bird's eye perspective that slows down and zooms in on scenic, archaeological and architectural landmarks. The series originally ran from 1968 to 1978, was broadcast on RAI's public television channels up to the present day, and was recently re-mastered on DVDs in 2002-2006.[39] The documentary episodes were also adapted into books.[40] ExxonMobil claim that the series represented a high achievement, winning numerous prizes and being broadcast all over the world.[41] Quilici's work can be taken as an example of how the Strait continued to be

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[36] Bradford (1966, at 24.40)

[37] RAI, Italy, 1967–1978.

[38] The technology, called Helivision, was developed and implemented by documentarist, producer, and game designer Albert Lamorisse, who died in 1970 in a crash while shooting *Les Vent des amoreux* (1978).

[39] The complete list includes: *Basilicata e Calabria* (1967); *Emilia Romagna e Marche* (1968); *Veneto e Venezia* (1968); *Abruzzo e Molise* (1970); *Sicilia* (1970); *Campania* (1971); *Toscana* (1971); *Lombardia* (1973); *Liguria* (1973); *Piemonte e Valle d'Aosta* (1974); *Puglia* (1974); *Lazio* (1975); *Umbria* (1976); *Sardegna* (1978).

[40] Quilici (1970 and 1987).

[41] See http://www.exxonmobil.it/it-it/ruolo-sociale/arte-e-cultura/l_italia-vista-dal-cielo/l_italia-vista-dal-cielo (latest access: 25/06/2017).

understood in media, both at a national and international level, through myth and archaic vistas.

The succession of the series' episodes alternates focus on regions from the south and north of Italy. The very first one is dedicated to Calabria and Basilicata, the two southernmost regions of the Italian peninsula (1967).[42] Quilici claims that they have never been filmed before. His travel begins from the same regions visited that the visitors of Grand Tours had deemed as exotic and remote, echoing their narrative as European visitors who discover a periphery. Not unlike the Grand Tour travellers, Quilici also presents the regions as almost ahistorical, taking his spectators south to the Strait, but also back in time.

Calabria is portrayed as an enticing, off-the-track destination. A narrating voice declares that the voyage starts from "our Deep South", offering "living images" of "areas […] which are perhaps among the least well known in our country."[43] These, for Quilici, remain "the most insulated regions", which the film "is dedicated to, for the purpose of their understanding".[44] Scylla and Charybdis receive an early mention. As the helicopter flies along the coasts "where the Mycenaeans, the Dorians, the Achaeans" came from, "for that chapter of ancient history which was called Magna Graecia", the narrator states that Greek colonisers disembarked in those shores, igniting a flourishing phase of Greek civilization.

Scilla is finally introduced, with a close up of an ancient print depicting a mountain top which descends onto a coast, in front of which a large cliff emerges from the waters.[45] "There is the sea", the narrating voice says, "and the first thing that comes to mind is that there Ulysses passed by; perhaps he may just have been here moments ago".[46] Off the coasts of the Strait in Calabria, where past and present "connect seamlessly", even "the sacred monsters of myth are still there, nested in the gloomy waters".[47] The evocative travel culminates in a dramatic shot showing a rock projecting from the sea and surrounded by trees in a gloomy dawn. There is to be found "the large rock of Scylla, between the mountains and the sea".

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[42] Of the two main island regions, Sardinia and Sicily, the latter is also the southernmost.
[43] Quilici (2005) [1968a], at 01.10-01.42. My translations throughout the chapter.
[44] — at 01.50-01.58.
[45] Quilici 2005 [1968a], at 00.18. The illustration was drawn by Matthaeus Merian for *Topographia Italiae*, 1688.
[46] Quilici 2005 [1968a], at 25.05-25.11.
[47] — 25.23-25.29.

From there, one can already catch sight of the Sicilian coast, "where the fear of the seafarer escaped from Scylla would take the name of Charybdis".[48]

Figures 2–8: Film representations of Scylla's
rock and of remains of Greater Greece, *L'Italia vista dal cielo* (1967).

L'Italia explicitly mentions that "our South" had illustrious visitors of the likes of Goethe and Swinburne during the Grand Tours.[49] Focusing on combination of landscapes, archaeological remains, and references to archaic lore, it sees Southern Italy as punctuated by mythical landmarks, and thus as a starting point for a historical discourse beginning with possibly the same sort of "ancient present" that Goethe had found in Homeric Southern Italy.[50] Like earlier travelogues and coeval guides, it, too, composes a literary geography where Scylla and Charybdis represent a prominent myth-place. The episode about Calabria was co-written by Folco Quilici and Giuseppe Berto, an Italian writer and classically trained teacher.[51] Other Southern regions feature similar references. In the episode on Sicily, "the land of sea and fire", Quilici focused on Aci Castello and Aci Trezza, which, the authors inform us, featured the Faraglioni—traditionally read as the pieces of mountain that Polyphemus tore off and threw against the ships of Ulysses in the *Odyssey* (Fig. 2–9).

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[48] — 36.30-36.40.
[49] Quilici 2005 [1968].
[50] Goethe (1992:269), see Ch. 1.
[51] In his autobiographical novel, Berto (1964:366) discusses his arrival in Calabria as a homecoming: "a place for my life and my death".

Figure 2–9: *Faraglioni* cliffs in Aci Trezza, Sicily, associated with the Cyclopes myth.

In the Sardinia episode, the *Domus de Janas*, the "tomb of the Witches" are inhabited by "*they*"– the ones who "shooed Ulysses away".[52] The episode about Campania references Virgil and celebrates Cape Palinuro as taking its name from the *Aeneid*, recognizing Cuma as the abode of the Sybil.[53]

Overall, representations of the South are dominated by mixed feelings of awe and nostalgic contemplation. Vestiges of ruins and stark landscapes convey a sense of a wilderness implanted on nostalgia for mythical landmarks and an extinct civilization.[54] The viewer is made to gaze on crumbling temples or oblique point of views on abandoned castles and villages on top of isolated hilltops, looking down on the seashore. Northernmost regions, on the other hand, focus more extensively on Italy's then ongoing industrialization. Therefore, while Calabria's view focuses on peasant rituals and the time-stricken faces of the elderly, isolated in deserted villages left empty by the emigrating youth (Fig. 2–10), representions of Emilia Romagna (ep. 2, 1968) look at the "fast modernisation processes" and the "irruption of modernity". Calabria's seashores are infused with the wild and the mythical echoes of Scylla and Charybdis. Emilia is seen as place of "tumultuous swarming up of international masses and kaleidoscopes of colours".

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[52] Quilici 2005 [1978] (29.00-30.10). This reference could apply to both the Cyclops or the Lestrigonians from the *Odyssey*.

[53] The writing homages Miseo and references the waters of lake Averno, mythologized as a gate to the descent into hell.

[54] Nostalgia is the ache (ἄλγος), or longing, for a homecoming (νόστος). Odysseus' voyage has been read traditionally through this notion (Hall 2012).

Figure 2–10: The Arcadia of the former Greater Greece,
L'Italia vista dal Cielo (1967).

Overall, Quilici's south is static and archaic, while his north is dynamic and multicultural. Calabria is underlined musically by evocative acoustic and wind instruments, conveying a sense of melancholy and nostalgia, while northern regions like Emilia Romagna feature a cheerful, buzzing jazz. This binary emerged from a much larger political and social issue, which also became a narrative and commonplace: the growing developmental gap between a backward Southern Italy and an industrialized, modern North. Such historical processes fall beyond the scope of this work: they include issues like political peripherality, fragmentation at the regional level of post-unitary Italy, and the so-called *questione meridionale*.[55] For my study, what is relevant in Quilici's treatment of Greek myth is that the South was selectively portrayed as coinciding with nature, wilderness, and distant antiquity, and that evocation of Homeric landmarks like the Strait of Scylla and Charybdis was once again used—as in the Grand Tours––in concomitance with a narrative that selectively focused on timelessness and pre-empted a nuanced representation of the region's complexity.

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[55] The South was actually less developed industrially, and experienced poverty, depopulation, and mass migration to the North. Its rural areas had poor or non-existent transport lines, and commodities such as water and electricity could be unavailable or in poor conditions. However, the idea of the South as underdeveloped also took form, both socially and discursively, as a political project, under the combination of western eurocentrism, Italian nationalism, and bourgeoisification (Moe 2002: 1).

Even though an analysis of Italian history in the context of the Questione Meridionale is not the scope of my work, one cannot but notice how Quilici and his classical aide Berto drew on longstanding ideas of a South where remoteness, backwardness, and peripherality composed a canvas to sketch out re-enactments of ancient myth.[56] The myth of Scylla and Charybdis, while apparently unrelated to current social and political realities, actually confirms and underpins what ethnographer Vittorio De Seta noted about Southern Italy as a geo-historical construction in its own right, "with respect to which central-northern Italy is extraneous", and which, most notably, could be seen as a part "of a cultural area whose epicentre was mythical Greece".[57] Quilici's film (as well as in the book adaptations, also focusing on Greek temples, abandoned towns, and Homeric landmarks–Figures 2–11)[58], locks the South in a nostalgic representation as the timeless "far south" of Italy, almost becoming a self-fulfilling historical prophecy.[59] Tensions between modernization and traditional societies were discussed at the times with growing concern by historians, linguists, folklorists, and anthropologists like Costantino Nigra, Giuseppe Pitré, Lamberto Loria, and Ernesto de Martino—[60] Quilici's sense of urgency might explain why the episode about Calabria as the southernmost tip of Italy inaugurates the series.[61]

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[56] I am using this term based on Said's notion of *Orientalism (1978)*.

[57] See De Seta (1982:233) and Moe (2002: 56). See Pipirou on the complex relations between Calabria's 'Grecanico' language and communities of the Greek-influence Bovesia region, their claim of descending from the Greeks, and their displacement in larger cities like Reggio due to depopulation and emigration in the countryside. A comprehensive study is in De Martino (1961)

[58] Quilici/Berto (1970).

[59] Some of these areas still verge on such conditions. See Pipyrou (2012: 80).

[60] In this context, Italian ethnographer and film-maker De Seta represented the Strait as a land of heritage and traditions rooted in a harsh confrontation with nature. See the ethnographic documentary film *Lu tempu di li pisci spata* (De Seta 1954)

[61] One could also argue that the Italian subsidiary of an international oil and fuel company, Esso, by financing the film, was able to brand itself as a modernizing force and yet also as a careful agent of cultural preservation in the making of booming Italy.
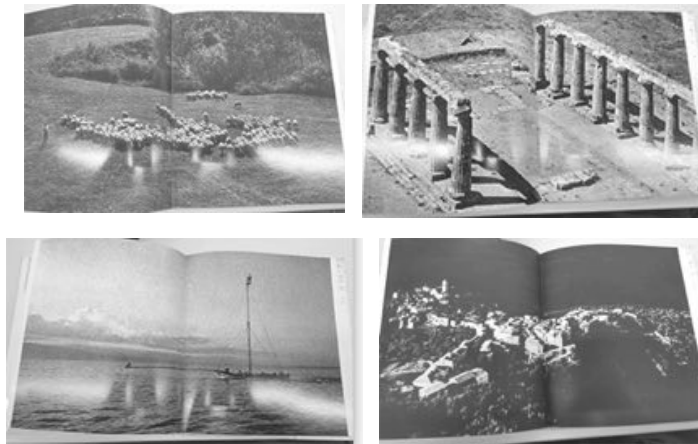
Figures 2–11: Greater Greece's remains, abandoned villages,
and the sea of the Strait, *Italy from the Sky* (Quilici 1987).

Issues relating to modernization were also of concern for Berto's Introductory text to one of Quilici's books. Such issues allow one to introduce a further element: the transformation of the Strait into a commonplace of tourism. Berto dedicates impassioned pages to the Strait as "one the most beautiful places on Earth", but also sees mass tourism as a potential threat to the area.[62] He reflected on how Scilla was beginning to become known "not only to avant-garde tourists and artists in their perennial search for the unknown and therefore cheap beauty, but also to average tourists travelling in economy cars and using their August holidays".[63] His description (while certainly suggesting that his infatuation with Scilla derived from his training), can be taken as evidence of Scilla's growing notoriety at the time. The English edition of the book, edited by Quilici alone,[64] focuses more on the landscape. However, tourism is also lamented here as folly threatening the delicate equilibrium of the old communities. Rather than as tourists, as I am about to discuss, Quilici (as well as Bradford) sees himself as an explorer.

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[62] Translation by the Author.
[63] Berto in Quilici (1970), unnumbered pages.
[64] Quilici 1987).

2–5: *Playing Ulysses: Homeric geography and exploration*

Both Bradford's and Quilici's approaches to travel owe much to emerging popular tropes of historical exploration. Mass-produced, photographically illustrated newspapers and magazines –as well as film– flooded audiences with images of foreign lands, while archaeologists, geographers, travellers and anthropologists "were discovering the value of photographically recording landscapes, possible harbors, ancient ruins, and tribal peoples".[65] Thor Heyerdahl's *Kon Tiki* (1952) must have arguably inspired popular engagements with archaeology and the discovery and spectacularisation of the past, creating demand for similar narratives. Heyerdahl had an impact on scholarship of ancient human migration, but also proved popular worldwide: the journey was adapted into a book and a film, and licensed to a whole set of other media, including a board game.[66] Bradford embarked only a few years after Heyerdahl.

While not enjoying the same popularity as the Norwegian explorer, Bradford also had popular success: *Ulysses found* enjoyed translations in several languages and reprints, inspired other books—e.g., Lessing (1965)—and rekindled interests in exploratory approaches to archaeology and ancient literature.[67] His first-hand accounts of his travels after Ulysses invited scholars to leave their desks to taste the real life described by Homer. The impact of Heyerdahl in Quilici's work is less easy to assess, even though Quilici saw himself as an explorer: in addition to filming *L'Italia,* he had ventured into ethnographic journeys across the world, working as a travel journalist for almost five decades, filming works on the seas and historical exploration, and pioneering underwater photography.[68]

Both cases demonstrate how the emergence of ethnographic and reportage film offered new opportunities to re-activate the grand narrative of Hellenic Calabria and Sicily, in which the Strait has usually represented a key landmark. Understanding these works within larger stories of exploration makes it possible

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[65] Quanchy (2013: 939).

[66] See Ch. 3 on coeval games on the *Odyssey.*

[67] He also impacted on scholarship of Homeric geographies: see Luce (1974: 118) and my Chapter 6.

[68] See Quilici (1953) on the Sixth Continent of the oceans, and the sea mystery novel *L'abisso di Hatutu* (2001) about the discovery of a titanic octopus. On this subject, see Ch. 5.

to acknowledge the selective and often creative treatment of Greco-Roman myths in Bradford's emulation of Ulysses and Quilici's dramatization of the scene relating to Scylla. In the overlapping of adventure, and interest in landscape and Greco-Roman traditions, the latter's strong cultural prestige clearly impacts on the writers. The role of Berto's co-writing in guiding reception of the landscape via Greek myth in Quilici's documentary and Italian book has already been discussed. In the case of Bradford, his fascination for the landscape seems motivated by attempts to challenge through exploration what he sees as the limits of desk-bound scholarship.

Attempts to pinpoint myths could even lead explorers into disappointment when geographical localities didn't quite match the tales. The explorers thus approached their reconstructions creatively, in plain contradiction of their claims of empirical factuality boasted while matched places and myths. In Scilla, as discussed earlier, Bradford was disappointed to note that the quiet scenery was far less dramatic than one would believe by reading Homer, and used a decontextualized close-up of a whirlpool that he probably obtained from elsewhere (Fig. 2–7). Similarly, Quilici takes liberal steps to ensure myth and places are strikingly paired: the evocative Charybdis rock by the Homeric fig tree of Quilici's footage is not actually to be found in the Strait but, rather, in Palmi (Fig. 2-11). The choice was probably motivated by the fact that Palmi's cliff is visually more striking than Scilla, and even has a tree on its top, like in Homer's description.[69]

Fig 2–12: The rocks of Palmi (*L'Italia vista dal Cielo,* 1967) and Scilla (Bradford 1966).

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[69] On the other hand, an actual illustration of Scilla in Quilici's documentary (Matthäus Merian's geographical treatise *Topographia Italiae* (1688), show in the top half of Fig. 1–4) is described as if it depicted another locality in Capo Vaticano, Calabria.

This tendency can be observed in other works. Cornelia Kérenyi's description of the Strait as 'very narrow'[70] did not consider that the narrowest point between Sicily and Calabria is 3 km wide—hardly material for a successful bowshot. Bradford and Quilici went one step further by sailing or flying by the mythical landmarks, their reconstruction of Homeric geography making use of creative licence. Bradford offers no evidence of sorts for his claims that Charybdis was "a clear description of a violent whirlpool", and that Scylla was inspired by squids or octopus which abounded in the area" (see Chapter 6).[71] His claims are an excuse to re-live the adventure of Odysseus or align himself with other adventurers. Even though putatively explored for evidence, the Strait is in fact constructed on the spot, to best match Homer.

In the process, Quilici and Bradford contributed to a Hellenic construction of Italy that became popular and often standardized in these decades.[72] Documentary film has been discussed as a genre particularly suited for those who work on "the formation of popular memory".[73] Places like the Strait offered publishing houses and broadcasters unique opportunity to mix archaeology, landscape and Greek antiquity. Alongside Quilici's travel through time and Bradford's alignment with the great explorers, Roloff's (1962) travel book is a photographic tribute to the Mediterranean landscape. Schildt openly declares he travels on a ketch "from Circe's island to Scylla and Charybdis" as an excuse to enjoy the "sun-baked islands and rural poverty among crumbling temple ruins" of "what was called Great Greece".[74] When in the Strait, he and his wife take out Goethe's *Italianische Reise* (1992) and its account of "the same coast we were following", discussing in turn the "treacherous tidal coasts" of the Strait:

> Near Charybdis we were suddenly seized by a southbound current, with which we literally flew toward Messina, while fishing boats closer inshore flew in the opposite direction in the counter currents. Not until we were off Reggio did we slip around. We have succeeded in our venture and would long remember it. The whole of this morning trip […] was one of the most exhilarating sails I have known.[75]

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[70] In Lessing (1965).
[71] Bradford (1963: 145–150).
[72] Howard (2003: 117).
[73] Nichols (2010: ix-x).
[74] Schildt (1965: 39).
[75] Schildt (1965: 44).

Armed with nautical instructions, Schildt turned off the engine to enjoy "the freak spots of nature" of the Strait and "cut across the monster's whirlpool" before sleeping "as Odysseus on the Phaeacians' ship".[76] The Strait is encountered twice in their round trip of the Mediterranean, and framed in a playful atmosphere of suspense that re-enacts previous episodes of emulation of Ulysses. The Strait is thus transformed into a must-see landmark in the Mediterranean and into a tradition of playful rituals of the philhellenes of different ages.

2–6: *Place-myths: the Strait in mass media and tourism*

Alongside affectionate and adventurous re-enactments of Ulysses like Quilici's, Bradford's, and Schmidt's, photographic and film media also stylized the Mediterranean and the Strait into visual signifiers communicating to non-specialist audiences that they were looking at Greek art (see Roloff's art in Fig. 2–1, and Schildt's in Fig. 2–2). Greek myth may have elicited the emotional response of the erudite philhellene traveller, but for broader audiences, Greco-Roman motifs were consumed in internationally recognizable form in cultural industries and the tourism sector. Historical episodes or world areas such as the Grand Tour of Europe, the remains of the Parthenon, or the Far East, as well as "exotic ports, the safari, and the trip around the world",[77] became typified motifs. Quilici and Bradford's texts, therefore, should also be understood within a larger process of conceptual and geographical narration of the *topoi* of both Hellas and Southern Italy. Places like the Strait underwent a transformation into place-myths (again, after Shields's definition).[78] Such ideas developed at the intersections of new forms of publishing, tourist material, and visual media, but worked in much the same way as Quilici's conceptualization of Calabria: they made mythic Hellas coincide with a "rural landscape" where the exclusive signs of civilization could take the form of "a small temple in the far background".[79]

The decades examined in this chapter could be seen as the historical period when the Strait and the myth were first established internationally through media.

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[76] Schildt (1965: 45-47).
[77] Quanchy (2013: 939).
[78] Shields (1991).
[79] Blanshard/Shahabudin (2011: 66).

During these years, popular and visual cultures established through broadcasting, print, and film emerged within the increasingly pervasive and internationalized systems of the information age, as technology, transportation and a capitalist system intensified the flows of information, things, and people worldwide.[80] Ideas of antiquity established in these decades could be defined not only as potentially globalized, but also as the exclusive forms of access to Greco-Roman antiquity for many audiences, both through media and through more generalized education that exposed the broad population to Greek history and literature.

An important consequence is that while cultural elites assigned historical exceptionalism to the Greco-Roman tradition, broader strata of audiences increasingly understood Greek myth as a repertoire of settings and motifs alongside many others, such as the Middle Ages, the Norse era, high fantasy, and so on. These representations also freeze the Mediterranean in archaic form, offering audiences dramatized views of hazardous geographies, stark depictions of far-away lands, vestigial ruins, and mythical figures signs and signifiers that they already associated with Hellenism. Examples of such tropes can be found in film and other media, where Homeric geographies are variously seen as conflations of actual geographical localities. The 1969 *Odissea* miniseries[81] claimed to film "the very same places that bore witness to the journey of Ulysses", which the Italian audience was thus supposed to associate with the Mediterranean.[82] Earlier Hollywood-European co-production film starring Kirk Douglas, *Ulysses* (1954), informed the spectators through a caption that "the exteriors of this motion picture were filmed on the Mediterranean coasts and islands described in Homer's *Odyssey*".[83] Such ideas were widely disseminated and internationally popular: in his travel book from 1965, Lessing sees Ernle Bradford (whom he knew as a crew member for his documentary) as "an energetic, sea-going professor of Greek, with a blond, pointed beard who looks, in his photographs, rather like Kirk Douglas playing Ulysses" (from the above mentioned film). Similar intertextual cases of reception explain how Scylla and

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[80] Rantanen (2005); Cartier/Lew (2005: 10).
[81] Dir. Rossi, M. Bava, Italy 1968.
[82] At 00.02.48. The film dramatizes Ulysses' encounter with Polyphemus, but omits Scylla and Charybdis. See Ch. 3 on Camerini's (1954) and Liguoro's (1911) film renditions of the *Odyssey*.
[83] Camerini (1954, at 00.01:38).

Charybdis have become motifs of a broader narrative of Greekness determined by a "poetics of the space […] recovered in the literary imagination"[84] that could orientate the expectations of various audiences.

This transition of Greek literature and art to the global stage can be read as a consequence of how cultural industries' treatment of cultures "both homogenizes and differentiates territories, rewriting the geography of the globe" through a logic that sees every difference as opportunity.[85] The chronotope of the Strait[86] follows how Greek visual motifs operating within popular consciousness establish "a vision of Greece" within different genres, media and audiences. A consequence of this global circulation is that Greek antiquity permeates popular forms of consciousness by becoming the only form of access to ideas on the past for large non-specialist audiences. Antiquity can be fragmented, or selectively altered to match the desires and values of audiences. In effect, this is what happens already with views of places like Calabria that conflate it with the timelessness of Homer and the *topoi* of Hellas examined so far in Quilici and others.[87] Such a use of place can also be seen to work in other ways in travel books, photography magazine, film, and media: at its most extreme, it can be observed in theme parks where stereotypical signifiers inform the visitor that what they are viewing is "old England", "small town America", or the "Homeric Mediterranean and Aegean".[88] Such commonplaces are "locationally and perceptually convenient" for industries as they operate through a recognizable system of labelling. In this perspective, the Strait is a part of a "system of illusion" within advertising and the media, created by the overlaying of different gazes: as a literary landmark, it is "the fusion of the real worlds in which writers lived with the worlds portrayed as novel".[89] In the upcoming closing section of this chapter, I considers this issue through the lens of tourism as a practice in which the Strait may be discussed as a place-myth

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[84] Nagy (1995: vi).
[85] See Hardt/Negri (2000: 310). Globalization is not implied here "a simple mantra", but as a process that stretched "intensification of interactions" and the interpenetration of images of distant cultures (Shaw/Williams 2002: 27). On globalization as a framework see Shaw/Williams (2002: 26, 47).
[86] Bakhtin (1981), see Ch. 1.
[87] Leontis (1995).
[88] Hollinshed (1997: 217).
[89] Herbert (1995: 33).

understood publicly through its selectively historicized and mediated form, and how such narratives impacted back on local cultures and economies in Scilla.[90]

2–7: *The leisured landscape: the Strait as the unfamiliar*

Both Quilici and Bradford, in discussing the Strait, express views on tourism. In his documentary, Bradford declares disappointment in seeing the village of Scilla resembling a magazine poster. Likewise, Quilici often mentions that he sees the potential inception of mass tourism–historically never occurred–[91] as a threat to Scilla's authenticity and the Strait's timeless equilibrium. Such mentions can be related to the myth-place's appearance in tourist guides of the time, discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Both travellers seem aware that a broader economy of signs is at play in public understanding of the Mediterranean, even though themselves relying on an "essentially visual" and culturally selective means of appropriation of memory.[92] Even as Quilici presents a one-dimensional view of the Strait, frozen at the time of the archaic Magna Græcia and pre-modernity, he simultaneously expresses fears that "the erosion of mass-scale tourism" would turn places into postcards, and that their "romantic and wild unity" would be lost. [93]

Quilici's fear of cultural standardization is based in awareness that leisured cultural traditions can be artificially packaged and sold through an "ambience of foreignness"[94] within a world marketplace. In this view, modernity and mass media transform landscapes into stereotypes—a process that could be said to have historical antecedents in national representations at Expo fairs of late nineteenth century, and its most extreme examples in world commonplaces like the ones of Disney's theme parks.[95] Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard have argued that mass-mediated signs can completely supplant a nuanced understanding of reality.[96]

As I also show in my Documentary Film, the ambiguous development of tourism in the village of Scilla is rooted in an idea of transforming the past into an

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[90] Shields (1919).
[91] See Mazza (2012), and my Documentary.
[92] Balm/Holcomb (2003: 157).
[93] Quilici (1970) at 39.31-40.48.
[94] Butler (1991: 291).
[95] Hollinshead (1997: 205-207).
[96] Guy Debord (1967). (Baudrillard 1988c:149-158).

asset. Scilla's touristic potential as a marine village has been debated relentlessly in relation to its being a Homeric place-myth. Scilla can be thought of as such for the way its Greco-Roman historical narrative was received through traditions and media and impacted on the local economies and cultures, creating expectations that the town should live up to it. Tourism emerged in the post-war, post-industrial societies of the West[97] as deeply engrained in larger worldwide relationships and transmissions of information.[98] The Documentary discusses how this industry represents a perennially discussed issue in the town of Scilla. Positions range from locals working in the hospitality sector on the basis of a niche ideal of tourism tailored to the size of the village to entrepreneurs who foresee expansion through the untapped potential of cultural heritage and marine resorts. Tourism is seen by some locals as salvation from economic stagnation. For others, however, it is also a threat to the perceived genuineness of the town— a view that reminds of Quilici's contempt of mass tourism in the whole South.[99] In a way, Quilici and Bradford distance themselves as explorers from tourist who are shielded "from the shocks of novelty and oddity" by a in industry that directs them.[100] More pragmatically than Quilici, families of fishermen in Scilla lamented tourism as a threat for the way it gentrified the place and eroded their lifestyle. This perspective, which I gained from ethnographic practice, allowed me to put Greco-Roman importance for the town in a nuanced perspective.

Tourism does account for the economy of Scilla, even though not in relation to the Homeric fame *strictu sensu*.[101] Still, its mythical fame and appeal is undeniable. At the time of Quilici's and Bradford's journeys, the village was included in tourist guides as a hard to reach destination. This narrative persists, alongside the one on the region's historical backwardness. Today, Scilla is still the village that "owes its name to Greek mythology", ideal for "classics enthusiasts" looking for "a feel for the ancient Greek culture".[102] It is situated in

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[97] Shaw/Williams (2002: 29).
[98] Shaw/Williams (2002: 03).
[99] Quilici (1968).
[100] Bassnett (2013:xi).
[101] See Mazza (2012).
[102] Source: www.Italy101.com (latest access: 15/05/2017).

a region where one may cruise and "follow the adventurous course of Ulysses".[103] However, it is also an underdeveloped, hard to reach place"[104]. In part, the Strait's charm may even lie in its being perceived as a destination off the beaten track of mass tourism. Scylla was mentioned in a top-ten list of 'Must-See Mythical Places' along with the 'Cyclops Riviera' of Sicily, ranked as number one among such destinations as Troy in Turkey, Shangri-La in Tibet, Loch Ness in Scotland, Mount Olympus in Greece and El Dorado in Colombia—an example of how mythical Mediterranean destinations can be packaged and consumed as part of a broader legible map of the world based on conflations of history and fantasy.[105]

The Strait is the kind of place where one would expect to experience the crossing of the boundaries of familiarity, as in a "Tennysonian Lyoness".[106] Such literary landmarks of peril, Lenman argues, are characterized by a peripheral destinations, barely containable by progress and civilization, and apt to be spectacularized due to the monstrous or extraordinary events associated with them—landscape is metonymically represented by exceptional phenomena, in order to eliminate unpoetic realities of myth-places and make them suitable for narrativized journeys from the safe, familiar and prosaic to the perilous and exotic.[107] The Strait is a chronotope,[108] because pastness and ideas of Hellas define it as a literary *topos;* it is a hetero-chrono-topic place, because visitors project and romanticize its backwardness and timelessness against their familiar world fast-paced present;[109] and it is a place-myth (following Shields),[110] given how both traits are essentialized by the logics of tourism and media representation in order to be conveniently and enticingly appreciated as a place for escapism.

Still, the Strait is able to entice visitors as a real, physical space. Landscapes also provide a terrain of escapism, experiential loss, or challenge. In some cases,

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[103] (*Mediterranean Yachting* http://www.mediterranean- yachting.com/Hist-6a.htm (latest access: March 1, 2014).

[104] See, for instance, www.italy1010.com/articles/calabria (latest access: 15 April 2017;); *Michelin Italy* travel guide (1989: 70), mentioning poor transportation; *Italy Green Guide Michelin* (2012, 2013).

[105] Moore (2013).

[106] Lenman (2003: 101); see the Documentary Section on the Sea in the Strait.

[107] Lenman (2003: 104).

[108] See Bakhtin (1981), discussed *supra.*

[109] As I have discussed earlier borrowing the concept from Foucault (1984a).

[110] Shields (1991).

places can deserve notoriety based on their being physically harsh—such as Mount Everest—or appear as from the edge of history, such as Hellas and Crete.[111] The Strait seems to incorporate both features: Scilla has become a renowned underwater resort for scuba divers, both for its Homeric fame and for its peculiar position at the intersections of two seas. An interviewee of my Documentary defined its waters as "the Everest of the Mediterranean". Quilici, Berto, Bradford, and the other explorers are not so different from tourists who explicitly suspended the realities of work and home,[112] leaving their seat to feel new places like Bradford did. One could say the Strait works as a projection space luring those who are attracted by its picturesque beaches or the sea, an unfathomable "cognitive space that stands in contrast to the familiarities [of] known and daily existence"[113]. Scilla's social and economic existence as a myth-place seems strongly bound to both its qualities as a marine resort, and the gift and burden of its Homeric affiliation.

Moreover, media are not all. Desire to travel and mediated, imaginative readings of spaces in film and literature are not necessarily contrastive but, rather, ambiguously interwoven. In the context of film studies, Manovich noticed that media "enabled audiences to take a journey through different spaces without leaving their seats";[114] historian Anne Friedberg reckoned film created "a mobilized gaze that conduct a *flânerie* through an imaginary other place and time".[115] The untamed sea or ocean can be experienced as a child does, overflowing the boundaries of rationality and consciousness and being confronted with the excitement and fear of being faced with the enormity of a "water planet" at the ends of earth,[116] and with its creatures. The mediated Sea, as well as places like grottos and caves, as conveyed by painters, writers, and artists, cannot be radically separated from its real-life dimension. In this light, literature, fiction, art, and role-playing may also be seen as providing access to Scylla and Charybdis as figures of otherness and liminality—as discussed in the next chapters of this work.

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[111] Balm/Holcomb (2003).
[112] Watson (2009: 6-7).
[113] Balm/Holcomb (2003: 158).
[114] Manovich (2001: 134).
[115] Friedberg (1991: 420).
[116] See Cartier/Lew (2005: 5).

CHAPTER 3
ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHERNESS

3–1: Myth on the couch: antiquity, psychoanalysis, and popular horrors

In this chapter, I look at how Scylla and Charybdis have been reworked, as monstrous feminine figures, in popular media like video games, role-playing games, pulp magazines, and horror film. In this area of the myth's reception, the main focus of the reworking is on the gendered characteristics and sexual projections of the She-monsters, rather than their association with Hellenic Southern Italy. The popularity and dissemination of this motif motivates an epistemic switch in my investigations to psychoanalytic and gender studies approaches, in order to make sense of Greek antiquity's reactivation in these media. Yet, this section still emerges within the same diachronic processes of dissemination of ideas on Greek antiquity that I have discussed in Chapter 2 and that now involves increasingly transnational audiences.

My main focus will be on the video games *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* (Konami, Japan 1996), and *God of War* (Sony/Capcom, USA 2010), among other related examples. *God of War* uses Greek motifs, along with influences from Gothic and fantasy, as its main theme. The game features violent, hyper-masculine fantasies of battles in a fantastic scenario of antiquity, and pits its playable hero against monsters, including Scylla, which appears as a gigantic, anthropomorphic, shark-like creature (Fig. 3–4, and my Documentary Film). *God of War* also explicitly mentions psychoanalytic themes. *Castlevania*, my second case study, also employs Greek motifs as part of a rich pastiche of visual canons, mythical elements, and popular repertoires. It features a battle between the vampire protagonist and Scylla, seen as a seductive and monstrous maiden (Fig. 3–3).

I am focusing on video games –in their broader relation with role playing, film, and other media– because the medium offers an opportunity to look at a relatively under-researched field. Video games also allow one to consider how Greek myth has become, in cultural industries, something that matters as material and a means to explore fantasies about horror and sexuality, rather than as a canon imbued with the prestige of Hellenism. This perspective allowed me to follow

Greek antiquity in the media as it strayed away from the gaze of specialists and philhellenes and its relation to a canonical ancient body of literature.[1] For media communities and industries, Scylla and Charybdis and other Greek myths have become recognizable repertoires, themes, and audio-visual formulae that are both stable signifiers (or commonplaces) of ideas of Greekness, and opportunities to develop original artistry.[2]

In games, film, and role-playing cultures, Scylla and Charybdis have been enduringly used to explore abject femininity[3] and the psychological uncanny.[4] I will argue that games can also be used, like film, as a vehicle to explore encounters with antiquity related to "sensual pleasure, sexual desire and humour but also to suspense, shock and horror".[5] Games also offer opportunities to discuss how the Hellas and Mediterranean of Scylla and Charybdis have become a fictionalized background—spectators do not necessarily engage with them based on a preformed philhellenic lens. Yet, while the new contexts are apparently removed from the putative origins of the myths, such as horror media, these operations still work on the basis of layered threads of cultural transmission that could be said to re-activate some of the characteristics of the ancient texts—such as Scylla's simultaneous representation and disruption of a male/female gendered binary, the male-centred ideology behind its moniker after a lustful dog/bitch, and her marked sexualisation across different tradition from Homer onwards.

In this chapter, I am going back to my discussion of the debate on what constitutes a "classic", on the issue of new "adaptations" from the purported source material in the Greco-Roman world, and to arguments on the arts/popular binary. Discussing the case studies, I will argue that only by adopting a post-classical perspective that does not look at ancient texts as a canon[6] can one try to make sense of the multitudes of uses of ancient myth today—both in terms of how mythical figures can be conceptualized broadly speaking and, more specifically, as sexualized constructs. I begin with an overview of the historical and intertextual

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[1] See Gorak (1991: xi) on the notion of the canon.
[2] See Gombrich (2000: 146-180) on the canon in this perspective.
[3] Kristeva (1981).
[4] I am referring to Freud's (1922) notorious formulation of the psychologically unsettling.
[5] Michelakis/Wyke (2013: 12).
[6] Hardwick/Stray (2008: 1); see Introduction.

background to how Greek she-monsters have become a mainstay of horror and fantasy cultures, within broader narratives of femme fatales, vampires, and other monstrosities– on the basis of Greek myth's transformation into a visual spectacle, a process that began in modern times with literature and silent film.[7] Focusing on the games, I then discuss Greco-Roman motifs in relation to ideas of Greekness expressed through visual signifiers through which producers and audiences actively co-construct and configure certain 'genres' or classes of texts.[8]

My perspective then switches to psychoanalysis. Noticing that games like *God of War* explicitly mention psychoanalytic themes (such as the castration complex) while representing myth at a meta-textual level, I assess the opportunities afforded by looking at the texts in this light.[9] Discussing how media like *Castlevania* reactivate the sexualized uterine and phallic undertones of the Scylla motifs, I contextualize the texts' production and consumption within a far more complex accumulation of narratives of Greekness, psychoanalysis, and *vagina dentata* motifs. As I will discuss, intersections between Greco-Roman myths and psychoanalysis have become popular in both scholarly and non-specialist audiences beginning with Freud. I will also argue that a sensible way to approach the endurance of such themes is for reception studies to decentre Greco-Roman material and broaden and deepen their engagement with cultural studies and theory, revealing antiquity not as a source model, but as a territory for contemporary expression of sexual anxieties, gendered representations, violence, and misogynistic fears.

3–2: *Monsters and femme fatales: a historical background*

Most of the Scyllae of horror and fantasy media tend to be a conflation between eroticized women and monsters. Charybdis tends to recur with less frequency, due to her conventional explanations as a whirlpool, whereas Scylla tends to be more popular, given that it is a monstrous female. The latter's representations are consistent with the ancient Scylla's oscillation between

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[7] Michelakis (2013: 156). Michelakis/Wyke (2013: 3).
[8] See Bauman/Briggs (1990).
[9] Schnedier (2009); Zajko/O'Gorman (2013).

Homer's "multi-limb" and sea monster-by-excess, and Ovid's treatment of the figure, where feminization "coincides with a sexualisation of the fears associated with the symbol".[10] Such features were also a constant of ancient figurative arts, such as the *ketos* or sea monster in a Corinthian amphora from the fifth century BCE, and the Scylla of a Boeotian red-figure krater (fourth century BCE) that Hopman associates, respectively, with Scylla's belonging to sea monsters or *ketoi* (Fig. 3–2), and with castrating female figures (Fig. 3–1). [11] Modern variants in figurative arts, film, and literature retain this binary. In *God of War*, Scylla is a titanic, anthropomorphic shark with tentacles (Fig. 3–4); in *Castlevania,* she is an attractive maiden encircled by snakes and dogs' heads (Fig. 33).

Figure 3–1 (top left): Scylla wielding a sword—Beotian red-figure krater (*C.* 430 BCE).
Figure 3–2 (top right): Perseus and a *ketos*—Corinthian amphora (575-550 BCE).
Figure 3–3 (bottom left): *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, Konami, Japan 1997.
Figure 3–4 (bottom right): *God of War: Ghost of Sparta*, Sony, USA 2010.

If one approached Figures 3–1 to 3–4 through a linear model of reception, one would be tempted to conclude that the modern texts 'adapted' the ancient originals.[12] As I am now going to demonstrate, reception does not actually work as a linear and cultural "scaling-down" of ancient originals. Rather,

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[10] Hopman (2012: 113).
[11] Hopman (2012: 60).
[12] See the Introduction's discussion on methodology and reception, Section I–6).

representations of Greek myths work on the basis of the simultaneous impact on multiple existing canons, alongside which Greco-Roman antiquity has been transformed and received, such as vampirism, femme fatales traditions, Scandinavian monsters like the Kraken, and the traditions of the Gothic and horror. The titanic, animal monstrosity of *God of War*'s Scylla and the sexualized she-monsters of *Castlevania* draw from explorations of the body developed in art and myth and continued into cultural industries.[13] Both *Castlevania* and *God of War* actively mix such themes with other canons and traditions and reflect on their meanings at a meta-textual level.

A historically relevant example from which to begin a contextualization of the sexualized modern reception of Greek she-monsters is *Homer's Odyssey* (1911): in the film, Scylla is characterized with a degree of faithfulness to the Greek monster (3–5).[14] At the same time, the film explores representations of hybrid female bodies through the rendition of the Sirens (Fig. 3–6). Recent games like *God of War* or *Castlevania* all engage at large with these recognizable representations of Scylla and Charybdis and other monsters.

Figure 3–5 (left): Scylla in *Homer's Odyssey* (Italy 1911).
Figure 3–6 (right): the Sirens in *Homer's Odyssey* (Italy 1911).

Greek female monstrosities have often been involved in larger narratives and iconographies of feminine creatures who either physically devour or metaphorically consume men. *Homer's Odyssey* is only an early film example of this dimension of eroticism and fantasy that began to be projected into antiquity and myth through a sensorial relation, making use of fictional narratives, optical

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[13] Brunetta (2011: 10-11).

[14] *L'Odissea,* produced/directed by F. Bertolini, G. de Liguoro, A. Padovan (Italy, 1911),

tricks and special effects.[15] Cinema, mass media, and other art forms hailing back to the nineteenth century–such as optical devices, commercial entertainment, fairs, print— had offered opportunities to look back to Greco-Roman antiquity as a source of motifs for novel interrogations of sexuality and gender.[16] Like other trick and adventure and fantasy works, and as part of a general interest in the uncanny,[17] *Homer's Odyssey* used classical mythology not only "as a platform for the display of optical tricks" such as the man-eating Scylla (Figure 3–5), but also as an excuse to indulge in the representation of semi-naked women (Figure 3–6). The production heavily relied on the commercial and cultural attractiveness of the Greco-Roman tradition,[18] but the themes of accursed woman, deadly seductresses, and she-monsters harkened far and beyond Greekness.

The concept of the femme fatale "peaks in the *fin-de-siècle* portrayal of snake women, women spliced with or embracing animals, all terrors of sexual excess and deviance".[19] Within this tradition, Greco-Roman sources worked in a much more complex genealogy. The Scylla and Sirens of Liguoro's *Homer's Odyssey* remind one of earlier sources of inspiration like neo-classical painting, such as the predatory sirens disguised as monsters in English painters Etty and Waterhouse (1837 and 1900, respectively Fig. 3–8 and 3–9).

Fig. 3–7 (left): *The Sirens and Ulysses,* William Etty (England, 1837).

Fig. 3–8 (right): John Williams Waterhouse, *The Siren* (UK, 1900)

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[15] Michelakis/Wyke (2013: 10). See Michelakis (2013:151) in relation to silent film.
[16] Wyke-Michelakis (2013: 4-6)
[17] Michelakis (2013: 147), on other adventurous renditions of Homer; Michelakis/Wyke (2013:11) on antiquity, film, and the uncanny.
[18] See Michelakis (2013: 149-150) on the promotion of the *Odyssey*.
[19] Simmons (2013: 36).

Liguoro's Scylla and sirens also remind how silent film stars and sex symbols like Theda Bara flirted with the appearance of myth-figures like Medusa, re-read through Gothic imagery (Fig. 3–9).[20] The motif can be seen in coeval films where no direct Greco-Roman references are employed, like Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), where temptress character Maria is presented as a Scylla look-a-like, emerging on a sea shell from which tentacles seem to erupt, on a stage from where she lures her male suitors (Figure 3–10). Such motifs may in turn be related to literary figures like *Carmen* (P. Mérimée, 1845)*, La Fosca* (I. Tarchetti, 1869), or the demonic women of films like *Les Vampires* (L. Feuillade, 1915) and *The Blue Angel* (J. von Sternberg, 1930).

Fig. 3–9: Theda Bara (1885–1955) as a *femme fatale.*
Fig. 3–10: Brigitte Lang in *Metropolis* (1927, Germany–Weimar Republic).

By drawing such comparisons, my intent is not to provide an exhaustive catalogue of Greco-Roman adaptations or demonstrate a transcultural archetype of the femme fatale. Rather, I want to suggest that an understanding of Scylla and Charybdis in recent horror media as myth-motifs operating in a cultural context must acknowledge the diachronically transmitted formations behind their current uses. These narratives are historically situated, but the representation of femininity through the figure of Scylla is diachronically persistent, and can highlight continuous relationships between ancient and modern texts. In her study on the ancient Scylla, Hopman uses the notion of the *femme fatale* to demonstrate how conflations of sex and death were formulated in relation to the ancient Greek

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[20] Theda Bara played the role of Cleopatra in the eponymous 1917 American silent historical film. On femme fatales and myth, see Damiani (2006).

monsters, and their becoming signifiers of physical or psychological corruption in different ancient Greek traditions.[21]

Such popular representations eventually coalesced around fantasy and horror cultures. Partly, this process took place as an understanding of the Greek Scyllae in relation to the *femme fatale* percolate into pulp magazines and popular literature. In the same years an explorer like Bradford drenched his Mediterranean documentary in fantasies of sexualized female bodies (see Figures 2–5 and Ch. 2),[22] M. G. Bishop used the Greco-Roman man-eater to name his female protagonist, a murderous wife, in pulp novel *Scylla* (1957) (Figure 3–11). A similar novel by William Irish, *Waltz into Darkness* (1947), was later adapted by Francois Truffaut into the film *Mississippi Siren* (1969)–a tale of romantic deceit where the woman is lexicalized as a mythical creature.

Fig. 3–11: *Scylla* (book cover), Malden Grange Bishop, 1947.

Fig. 3–12: *La Sirene du Mississippi* (film poster; dir. F. Truffaut, 1969).

Other significant intertextual genealogies established relations between the Greco-Roman and the Gothic and supernatural. An earlier examples of such exchanges in literary fantasy is Richard Garnett's *The Twilight of the Gods and Other Tales* (1888)[23]. Role playing games like *Dungeons and Dragons*, where many of the playing boards featured Greek themes, drew on this strand of

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[21] See Hopman (2012: 91, 113) on Medea likened to Scylla in ancient theatre plays.
[22] Bradford (1966), discussed in Ch. 2, Fig.
[23] Also see John Kendrick Bang's *Olympian Nights* (1902), John Erksine's *The Private Life of Helen of Troy* (1925) and *Venus, the Lonely Goddess* (1949).

reception.[24] Other role-playing games, such as *Vampire: The Masquerade*,[25] merged Greek themes with literary traditions like vampirism.[26] Notably, Theda Bara was also known as 'The Vamp', and studies have related vampires to the Greek succubae.[27] Such mythographies re-emerge, as I will show, in *Castlevania*'s visual renditions and in its databases of monsters, where the player collects information about the various creatures (Fig. 3–14). Either sexualized or monstrous, or combining the two aspects, Scylla, as well as Medusa, the Sirens, and other, also abound in board games like *The Odyssey of Homer* (1977) (Figure 3–13), and game books like *The Return of the Wanderer* (1986). These games also transpose the locations of myths onto a fictionalized Mediterranean (see my Documentary Film).

Figure 3–13: *The Odyssey of Homer* (board game and detail), USA 1977.

The Scylla motif was eventually transmitted into video games, where ancient Greece had already been used as a setting by companies in the major European, American, and Japanese markets, often aiming at trans-national audiences.[28] Early examples include *Kid Icarus* (Nintendo, Japan 1986), *Glory of Heracles* (Nintendo, Japan 1987; probably influenced by the animation film *Little Pollon*, 1982-83), and *Altered Beast* (Sega 1988) (Figure 3–14). Assimilation, imitation, and cross-fertilization of Greco-Roman commonplaces in games can be seen in *Age of Mythologies,* which features Scylla and the rest of the ancient Greek creatures alongside renditions of the Norse and Egyptian canons (Microsoft

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[24] Gygax/Arneson (1974).
[25] M. Rein-Hagen (1991).
[26] See Ch. 4 on role-playing cultures, Greek myth, and weird literature.
[27] Introvigne (1996).
[28] Consalvo 2006

Studios, USA 2002). In these games, the player often faces Medusas and Minotaurs, or is presented with visual markers such as columns in the background, and decorative elements from ancient vases. *God of War* and *Castlevania* retain role-playing cultures' references to Greek settings and monstrous repertoires, while bringing them into confrontations and mashups with other iconographies and traditions (Fig. 3–14, 3.15).[29]

Figure 3–14 (left): Greek temples in *Altered Beast* (Sega 1988).
Figure 3–15 (right): Egyptian, Greek, and Norse gods in *Age of Mythologies* (Microsoft 2002).

To look at these intertextual, iconographic, and representative processes by focusing on a single media is not enough. Games like *God of War* and *Castlevania* draw equally from film, games, role-playing, and other media and genres. Ray Harryhausen's *Clash of Titans* (Figure 3.17), as I will discuss, directly influenced *God of War* as a source of titanic, animal-like monstrosities. So did the blockbuster fantasy epic *300* (2007)[30] and fantasy/horror *The Odyssey*.[31] *God of War*'s blend of Greekness, violence, and sexuality is imbued with elements of horror and splatter alongside Gothic and Greco-Roman elements draw from the most diverse sources; its monstrous Scylla (Figure 3–4) is 'Greek' but derives from a more composite tradition of representing monsters: from *Cloverfield* (2008) (Fig. 3–18) to the Kraken of Harryhausen's film (1981) (Fig. 3–17) and its 2010 remake.

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[29] See Jenkins (2011) on sexualized appropriations of Homer in adult fantasy comics.
[30] *300* (2007); based on the homonymous graphic novel by Miller (1998).
[31] *The Odyssey* (1997).
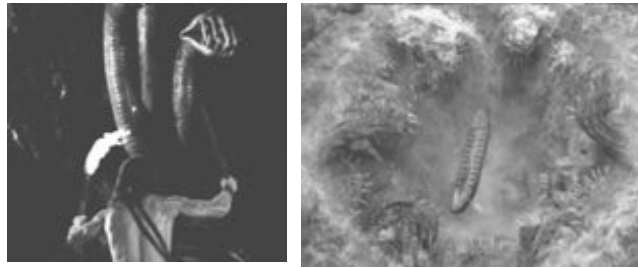
Figure 3–16: *The Odyssey*, dir. A. Konchalowsky, USA 1997.

Figure 3–17 (left): The Kraken, *Clash of the Titans,* UK/USA 1981.

Figure 3–18 (right): *Cloverfield,* M. Reeves, USA 2008.

Looking at *God of War* and *Castlevania,* I will now discuss how by the 1990s and 2000s motifs of Greco-Roman mythologies had taken part in broader genealogies of monsters involving multiple canons and media and transnational audiences.

3–3: Castlevania: *Scylla, snakes, and vampires*

   Castlevania: Symphony of the Night is a 1997 Japanese action/adventure fantasy console video game. The player controls Alucard, a *dhampir* –a union between a vampire and a mortal. *Symphony* is part of a successful series running from 1986 to the present across different gaming platforms. This series can be understood as situated at the intersection of different developments: the consolidation of video games as home entertainment, the success of the horror genre from the 1980s onwards, and the enduring popular fascination for themes like vampirism and mythology. In Japan, the game was developed as *Akumajo's Dracula* ("Devil's Castle Dracula"), but Konami adopted the term *Castlevania* internationally to broaden the appeal of a series which steadily draws motifs not only from vampirism but also Universal Horror films, including *The Gorgon* (1964)*,* and a multitude of ancient and modern mythologies.[32]

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[32] The franchise spans more than thirty original titles and an original mythology which a fan-base has developed into an unofficial storyline from 1094 to the imaginary future of 11,797 BCE, usually involving vampire hunter Simon Belmont and the Belmont Clan against Dracula.

In many instalments of the *Castlevania* series, floating Gorgon heads may turn the unwary player into stone, and Medusa has often been featured as one of the 'main bosses' (hard-to-beat enemies, often signposting a crucial moment for progressing in the game). *Castlevania* can be defined as a bi-dimensional, action-adventure 'hack and slash' game, containing role-playing elements such as increasing skills and transformations. It revolves around the exploration of a monumental supernatural mansion designed like a labyrinthine world – a castle with a complex series of interconnected areas which the player is left to wander.

Fig. 3–19: One of Scylla's 'Wyrms', *Castlevania*, Konami (Japan 1997).
Fig. 3–20: Scylla in *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night*, Konami (Japan 1997).

Alucard encounters Scylla in the *Underground Caverns*, featuring dripping rocks and pools of water populated by amphibian creatures. The player first encounters the Scylla 'Wyrm'—a creature protruding from the walls of a chamber (Figure 3–19). Scylla subsequently makes her appearance, represented as a naked blonde maiden from the lower part of whose body protrude several other 'wyrms' and barking canine heads. The body of Scylla occupies the whole cavern, looking down at the player against a background with Greek columns. The monster attacks as the snakes howl and snap at the player. Scylla also throws weapons and globs of a watery substance. Alucard has to eliminate the heads and make his way ahead to attack the creature's body – as one advances, the joints of the tentacle-like creature are more clearly revealed (Figure 3–20).

3–4: God of War: *Scylla, tentacles, and phallic breasts*

More so than *Castlevania, God of War: Ghost of Sparta* is extensively based on Greco-Roman mythology. *Ghost of Sparta* is part of a series of cinematic

action video games developed by US-based Santa Monica Studios for Sony Computer Entertainment from 2005. The series features the Spartan warrior Kratos,[33] a mortal transformed into a demigod, who seeks revenge against the Gods for the loss of his family. Eventually, Kratos goes on to destroy Ares and become himself the God of War. Major elements from the series involve the story of Kratos' upbringing as a Spartan youth, the slaying of monstrous and animal creatures, and clashes and fights with ancient Greek monsters and deities, involving their eventual defeat and dismemberment, disembowelment, or otherwise atrocious killing. *God of War* features animated violence, blood and gore, rendered spectacular by cinematics and in-game camera work dramatizing the gruesome scenes. Kratos is a hypertrophic, unbeatable masculine incarnation of power (as his name denotes) as well as *hubris*: throughout the series, in his ascent to power, he slays monsters like the Hydra and Scylla, deities like Hermes and Ares, and dozens of Medusas, Lamias, Cyclopes and Satyrs, either by dismembering, gouging out eyes, or variously brutalizing his enemies.

The production of this game occurs in the post-*Gladiator* boom in attention to Greco-Roman antiquity in popular entertainment, in parallel with a film like *300*, displaying similar characteristics.[34] Visual and narrative motifs are consistent with the stereotypical trappings of the Greek aesthetics of mythical warfare in modern spectacular fiction. The player is presented with a cinematic intro narrated by a female voice, and sets out to retrieve Kratos' brother in sunken Atlantis, despite Athena's warning not to wage war against Poseidon.

Scylla appears very early in the game, as a start-of-show big monster inaugurating its spectacular apparatus. The tentacles of a seemingly octopus-like, gigantic sea monster start crawling along the deck of Kratos' boat, eventually encircling it and crashing it on nearby rocks. Scylla rises spectacularly from the water into the scene, looking down at the ship's wreck (Figure 3–21). The figure is rendered as of vast proportions and combines animal features with a vaguely anthropomorphic form. Threatening the player with wails and roars, Scylla's head

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[33] See Hodkison/Macgregor Morris (2012) on popular fascinations for Greek antiquity through Sparta.

[34] The first *God of War* (2005) actually anticipates *300* (2007). Marketing placement and production probably began in parallel, and the two brands may have influenced each other.

resembles the muzzle of a shark with six eyes (Figure 3–21). The monster's mouth contains two additional sets of nested jaws each from within one other (a homage to H. R. Giger's 'xenomorph' featured in the 1979 film *Alien*). Scylla also displays what resembles a set of three pairs of breasts, which open up and deploy erupting tentacles (Figure 3–22). Kratos is eventually able to climb on the monster's head, slice across its face, stab its eyes (a recurring scene in the game, discussed *infra*), and rip out its jaw.
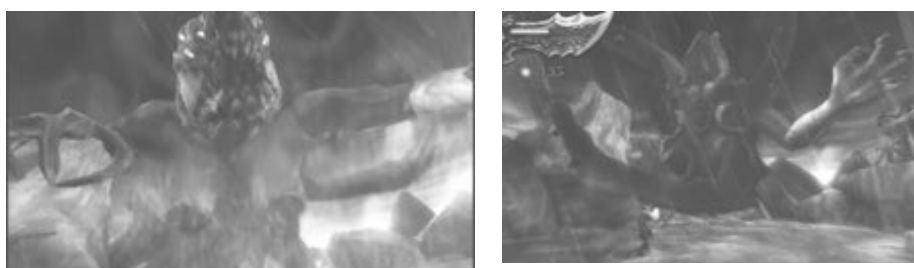
Fig. 3–21 (left): Scylla's inception, *God of War: Ghost of Sparta,* Sony, USA 2010.

Fig. 3–22 (right): Scylla's tentacles, *God of War: Ghost of Sparta,* Sony, USA 2010.

The level continues through a series of temples lining up the shore (a commonplace ancient Greek settings),[35] where Scylla makes a surprise return. The monster is then shown as it lurks around the setting of Atlantis – a cyclopean city of Greek columns and marbles. As the player decapitates monstrosities in the mist-laden ruins of the city, steeping on the blood of unidentified soldiers flowing into the waters, Scylla is shown in the distance as it destroys the city. Towering from a distance, it recalls the monster from *Cloverfield* (2008) (Figure 3–18). In the final confrontation, set in the underground caves of a volcano, Scylla bursts out from the waters, trying to swallow Kratos. The latter will harpoon the monster's head and pull it against an 'Archimedean screw' – a gigantic drill.[36]

3–5: *Greekness in media: temples and female demons*

God of War and *Castlevania* were produced, respectively, in the United States and in Japan, even though their productions catered to transnational audiences. In this light, specific understanding of 'Greekness' take on different formulation. *Castlevania* worked in Japan as a blend of exotic European

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[35] See Blanshard/Shahabudin (2011: 66), discussed in Ch. 2, and *infra.*

[36] Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZ6_hOkwI3s (latest access: 10/03/2016).

repertoires – like vampire films – and Japanese cultural traditions and horror motifs. In turn, the game became an 'oriental' cult title once imported in the US and Europe.[37] On the other hand, *God of War* was exported in Japan to a lukewarm reception, since its graphic macho violence, typical of US game productions, only made it palatable to a smaller niche of hard-core game buffs. As Consalvo notes, "the game industry can include a certain element of exoticization", but always within "affiliation and identification with a larger group or subculture.[38]

Like the urban filmgoers of silent cinema's reworkings of antiquity, the players of these games are confronted with a recognisable visual iconography that "collapses the differences between ancient cultures into a singular and undifferentiated antiquity".[39] *Symphony of the Night* exemplifies a reading of Greek motifs within "a global(ised) imaginary, implicated in complex circuits of influence and exchange".[40] The same could be said for *God of War*, where Greek motifs and themes are crossed with high fantasy because of opportunities arising from trends in the market suggesting audiences would be drawn to such themes.

In such a context, interest in Greco-Roman content is contingent: the cultural status enjoyed by Greco-Roman antiquity among scholars and philhellenes is irrelevant to the aims of the productions. Both games draw extensive elements from Greek repertoires as well as from other sources. Elements of Greekness equate, to a large extent, to simple linguistic labelling or audio-visual surface. Enjoyment of the consumer could be said to be based largely on how the games play, rather than on specific content. Previous games like *Super Metroid* (1994) and *Onimusha* (2001), could be considered the prototypes of my case studies in terms of game play, even though they employed completely different thematic settings. Producers draw on diverse sources: David Jaffe, *God of War*'s producer, stated he came out with the idea for the game by wanting to copy the game *Onimusha* and "make it with Greek Mythology", given that "in school, I loved *Clash of the Titans* and all the Harryhausen stuff".[41]

However, content does orient consumption of games—examples of the

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[37] Gallagher (2014).
[38] Consalvo (2007: 40)
[39] Michalakis/Wyke (2013: 12).
[40] Gallagher (2014: 42). On *Castlevania*'s reception, also see Martin (2011).
[41] Gera (2010).

relevance of Greco-Roman motifs can be seen in games like *Apotheon* (2015), whose main selling point is its Greek-inspired art style.[42] Greek monsters, in such texts, are just some of the many other creatures one can find in the multiple, vast ocean of monstrous symbols. The Scylla of *God of War* arguably draws from ancient Greek myth as well as from *Cloverfield* (2008) and the *Alien* series (1979-1997). The Scylla of *Castlevania* borrows from an even broader interest in the erotic and grotesque: vampire *manga* and horror literature and film; Hammer films such as Hammer's *Gorgon* (Fig. 3–23); medieval motifs; H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu (misspelled to avoid copyright issues);[43] Celtic myth; Shakespearean drama; the novels of Kurt Vonnegut; Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872)*; alongside a *shonen manga* art style (a comics genre targeted at adolescent boys) and a soundtrack blending orchestral baroque pieces with heavy metal solos and evocative ambient synthesizers In *Castlevania,* one can see a treatment of vampirism which ties Scylla to female succubae and demonic maidens (see Medusa's sexualisation, Fig. 3–25), and which might have been influenced by popular films like Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula* (1992– a few years prior to the game). In the film, Stoker's original sisters of the demon were rendered as Gorgons (Fig. 3–24). Later *Castlevania* games, like the Spanish-Japanese *Lords of Shadow* (Fig. 3–26), would in turn mimic *God of War's* design[44] and play out their own transnational renditions of Medusa (Fig. 3–26).[45]
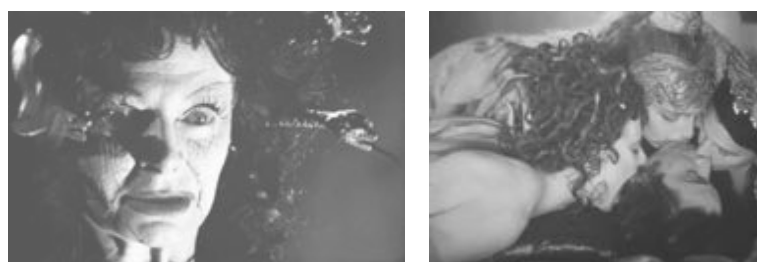
Fig. 3–23 (top left): *The Gorgon,* dir. T. Fisher, UK 1964.
Fig. 3–24 (top right): The Gorgons in *Dracula,* dir. F.–F. Coppola, USA 1992.

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[42] This distinction may be read as impinging on game studies' debates on narratology and ludology; however, siding with Kokonis (2014), this study sees such a distinction as philosophically artificial, given that conditions for prevalence of one or the other form of consumption in games should be observed pragmatically from the perspective of a production/consumption relation.
[43] Source: http://www.vgmuseum.com/mrp/screen-cvsotn.htm
[44] http://www.eurogamer.net/articles/i_godofwar_ps2
[45] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkQYCcNjvuA

Fig. 3–25 (bottom left): *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night,* Konami, Japan 1997.
Fig. 3–26 (bottom right): *Castlevania: Lords of Shadow 2*, Konami, Spain/Japan 2014.

These games' investment in Greekness is thus part of ambitious artistic research, and their overall design is different from the sum of their parts, in a way that would be missed by looking at these elements as linear adaptations from Greco-Roman models. Liberated in this perspective, Greekness can emerge as one, but only one, of the elements at play. Both games display a penchant for visual nomenclatures and hybridization. In *Castlevania,* one can see mermen, a minotaur, a hippogriff, and winged harpies; an Arabian-nights like Princess morphing into a reptile-like monster; a Charon-like figure transporting Alucard through aquatic expanses. These monsters are 'collected' into an on-screen database, consistently with role playing cultures' tendency to draw on diverse literary canons (a form of consumption conceptualized as *epistemaphilia* in fandom studies,[46] and discussed more closely in the next chapter).

God of War's development follows a different thread of references, such as the themes of a film like *300* (Snyder, USA 2007) and the resurgence of mythical and historical action/war TV series.[47] Not unlike *300,* the game features bestiaries deployed in gigantic environments with temples in the background, all the displaying elements such as the streets of Heraklion, the ashen victims of Pompeii, the Atlantideans, Scylla, the sirens, and the Erinyes. As a manifesto for pop culture's appropriation of Aegean-Greek myths merged with adventure and fictional narratives, *God of War*'s Scylla rediscovers the stunning monstrosity of the aquatic Greek tale –and other such tales of marine monstrosities – with an effective sense of dread (see my Documentary Film).

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[46] Jenkins (2006: 114).
[47] See *Rome* (HBO/BBC2/RAI 2005-07)*, Spartacus* (Starz, USA 2010-13), or later historicized fictions like *Vikings* (Octagon, Canada 2013-16) and *Marco Polo* (Netflix 2015-16).

Greco-Roman decorative patterns and temples in the background elicit an expectation of Greekness in non-specialist audiences, which they will have drawn from previous reception of similar material. However, this is not always the case, and elements of the audience can also be unaware of the motif's origin. In an episode of the popular *James and Mike Mondays* YouTube channel, in which the YouTubers[48] play and comment on a game from the *Castlevania* series, one of them points out that the figures could be Greek, to which the other replies he doesn't know.[49] This case demonstrates the empirical and theoretical limits in the belief that "classical" material is sought after for its prestige or popularity. In an analysis of Japanese texts incorporating elements of Greco-Roman myth, Thesien argues that a Japanese reader would not be expected to perk up any implicit connection with elements of Greekness. In such cases, reception is a mirror in which "aspects of reception are obscured"; Japanese traditions, Theisen argues, have their own 'classics'.[50] Reference to myth motifs may carry completely different significance in different contexts.

Greco-Roman texts can be presented ambiguously by writers and artists, and not recognized by a consumer. A consideration of this semiotic assumption, according to which the text is recreated in the interpreter's mind,[51] has sometimes been omitted by elements of Greco-Roman studies, whenever the "classical" material was believed to benefit or deserve universal knowledge. In a partial critique of Theisen's paper, Nisbet argues that native Japanese manga could be seen as trying to repackage and "teach our Greek 'classics'" to the "already primed" audiences of "Native Japanese" who might want to learn more about the source texts.[52] In fact, Nisbet's evangelical argument is historically unfounded and reveals a preformed and self-centred assumption about audiences' response to the material, in addition to taking classics for granted as monolithically representing "us" as the "West". A more plausible model of reception would consider how not all audiences see Greek material as "bearing the venerable weight of centuries of

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[48] On YouTube, see Burgess *et al* (2009).
[49] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5mP_ISMuFw; in the video comments section, online users further discuss the issue.
[50] Theisen (2011: 59).
[51] See Eco (1994).
[52] Nisbet (2016: 67).

tradition and resonating with immediate recognition": Greek antiquity could be taken, more sensibly, as representing stories and concepts "more likely to be experienced by the reader as exotic and unfamiliar",[53] thus making the material palatable for artists.

That does not mean Greco-Roman material is only and necessarily a filler, nor do I aim to diminish the historical or aesthetical value of its motifs. Rather, I align with Theisen in suggesting that decentralizing the Greco-Roman material allows a more nuanced approach to their uses for different forms of media pleasures. Rather than as visual prototypes or archetypes, Greco-Roman material can be approached as elements played out in the elsewhere of fantasy, in which the sexuality and violence, fascination and monstrosity of different symbols can be conveniently reinterpreted. Whereas the travellers and tourists discussed in my previous chapters visited the chronotope of Hellas in the Strait, the spectators, readers and players of *God of War* and *Castlevania* meet the monstrous Scylla in fantastic worlds, plunging, in the process, into their own psychological dimension.

3–6: *Scylla on the couch: media images and psychoanalysis*

The Scylla and Charybdis of *Castlevania* and *God of War* invite a psychoanalytic treatment of their symbols, both in light of the strong historical relations between Greco-Roman myth and the discipline, and because explicit treatment of such a relation can be observed to operate meta-textually. Psychoanalytic approaches owe much of their popularity to Freud's theorization of the castrating mother motif, which used Medusa as a symbol of castration and of uncannily phallic femininity.[54] In *God of War,* not only do Medusa or Lamia-like shrieking creatures, bare-breasted sirens, and Erinyes feasting on men's bodies dominate the scene alongside Scylla, but symbolic elements often associated with castration or penetration are constantly enacted. Scylla erupts from the water threatening to snatch or devour the player.

Julia Kristeva's notion of the abject (1980) is another useful starting point

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[53] Johnson (2016: 95).
[54] Freud (1922); Csapo (2005: 98-102); see the Introduction.

because of the scholar's focus on the feminine dimension.[55] For Kristeva, the mother, as the closest and biggest challenge to self-identity, works as the original abject, the rejection of which, in order for the subject to constitute itself, inaugurates the marginalization of women from male social territory to the borders of the imagination.[56] In Kristeva's model, construction of the mother's body as a phallic or uterine abjection stems from the developing child's need to sever its ties from the mother to establish its self. Abjection is the problem of a confused or transgressed border, found earliest in our attempts to release the hold of the maternal entity. Kristeva's post-structural critique of patriarchal fear recognized female sexuality – monstrous, disturbing, and in need of repression – as the root of female demonization. One could find confirmation of the existence of such metaphors in *Castlevania*'s grotto of Scylla: the player steps into an annihilating Womb. The labyrinthine caves with dripping rocks and pools of water resemble uterine cavities, and the snapping maws of Scylla's wyrms are phallic symbols.

Such a reading is not valid objectively, or in principle. However, these games do address such themes, sometimes explicitly. Scholars have argued that psychoanalysis has become, itself, a part of the narrative of Greek myths, as well as a narrative motif in itself.[57] The hypothesis seems corroborated by empirical evidence: in *God of War*, Kratos meets a ghost-like simulacrum of his mother which eventually reveals herself as a monster. Once slain, the player is offered a trophy titled 'a mother's sacrifice'. Another trophy is titled 'inner child abuse'. In *Castlevania,* as suggested by Martin, Freudianism comes up to popular (un)consciousness in *Castlevania* "through the horror genre rather than the annals of psychoanalysis", even though the "strange manner of the mother's recurrence-as succubus-marks her as an object of illicit sexual desire".[58]

Analyses of Greco-Roman themes in relation to psychoanalysis have underlined the importance of context. In his analysis of Méliès' *Island of Calypso* (1905), Michelakis notes how the trick cinematography conveying the blinding of

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[55] Kristeva's analysis developed partly as a correction of Freud's male-biased theories on anxiety repression. Schneider (2009: 59).
[56] Kristeva (1980); further discussed in Simmons (2013: 35).
[57] Schneider (2009: 3). Young (1999) read Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* as a Gothic novel. Freudianism has become common currency in ordinary parlance, and it is probably fair to assume its tenets exerted a more decisive influence than Kristeva's formulations on game artists.
[58] Martin (2011).

Polyphemus could be related both thematically to Méliès' *Le voyage dans la lune* (1902) (Fig. 3–27) and psychoanalytically to sexual anxieties. Ulysses punctures Polyphemus' eye "with his phallic spear, but, instead of blood, a semen-like liquid pours out": the encounter aligns the film with cinematic horror and fantasy (Fig. 3–28).[59] Similarly, in *God of War:* Kratos gouges the eye out of the Cyclops (Fig. 3–29), and penetrates Scylla's head with a titanic drill (Fig. 3–309).
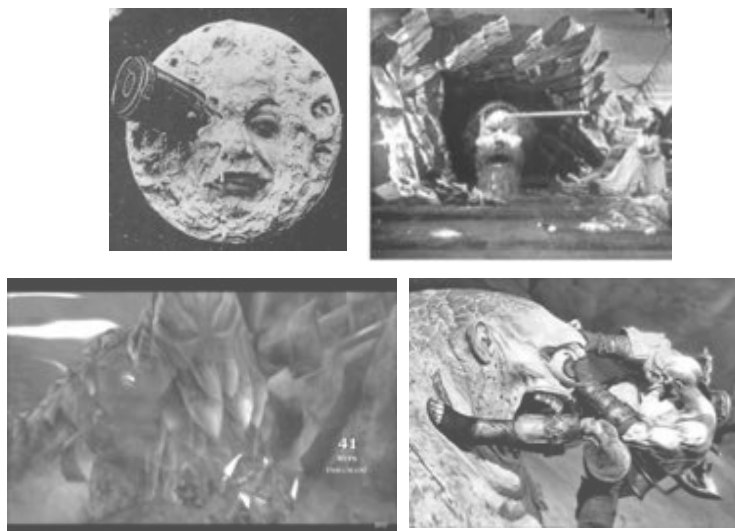
Fig. 3–27 (top left): *The Island of Calypso* (G. Méliès, France 1905).
Fig. 3–28 (top right): *Le Voyage dans la lune* (G. Méliès, France 1902).
Fig. 3–29 (bottom left): Kratos drills Scylla (*God of War,* Sony, USA 2007).
Fig. 3–30: Kratos rips a Cyclops' eye (*God of War,* Sony, USA 2007).

The importance of contextualization resonates with this study's alignment outside of trans-historical, archetypal analyses of symbols. Traditionally speaking, psychoanalysis has provided insights on the presumed repression of anxieties revealing themselves symptomatically in texts where bodily symbols and sexualized metaphors—such as the ones that characterize horror genres–can be recognized. However, a parallel critique of theoretical circularity has often been levelled at psychoanalysis as a "hermetic and self-confirming" approach producing archetypes or "closed, self-justifying systems".[60]

Critiques to the application of Freud's and Kristeva's theories to the genre

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[59] Michelakis (2013: 156).
[60] Schneider (2009: 2). Malinowski (1924) had already corrected Freud's father-son relations model through empirical experience; discussed in Strenski (1992: 57).

of horror have been formulated in film and cultural studies, where psychoanalysis was highly influential. Creed's formulation of the monstrous-feminine (1993) discussed how women and mothers in the horror genre are frequently presented as monstrous threats to men. Creed's view originates from Freudian and Kristevian psychoanalytic hypotheses –castration anxiety and the abject corporeal feminine. Her reading of Kristeva—whose theorization of the abject provided a watershed for feminist readings–proved popular. However, Creed's methods have also been criticized for overlooking specific readings of films. For Peters, Creed's method assumes "an impersonal, perfect universal [male] 'receiver'" of the equally imagined "feminine" in the absence of any significant consideration of the gender of the subject who experiences the abject film.[61] Likewise, Grant argued that, in marked contrast to Kristeva's method, Creed took concepts "from an approved source" to apply them directly to the films, thus universalizing a view in which the feminine Other is subordinated to the phallic order, so that the conclusion is "presupposed by the very concepts from which the argument stems" and "the whole argument is circular".[62]

Yet, while psychoanalytical theory may not always underline truths, its methods can still be used to shed light on the texts (Schneider 2009:6-8). Based on textual evidence, one could sensibly argue that *Castlevania*'s caves and snakes, and *God of War*'s drills, decapitations, and renditions of Scylla are used as phallic and vaginal symbols, conveying metaphors of penetration and castrations. This perspective can be corroborated by Williams's formulation of "body horror" in genres like pornography, horror, and melodrama as a way to employ sex, violence, and "gross-out horror" to cater for "adolescents careening wildly between the two masculine and feminine poles".[63] A similar argument is proposed by Allison, who discusses Japanese *shonen* media (a genre whose target audience is consistent with that of *Castlevania*), arguing that readers symbolically explore sexual fluidity in the realm of fantasy, before such fluidity is made to revert into the socially normative gender binary.[64] Such binaries are not universal: in Williams' approach

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[61] Peters (1993: 108-113).
[62] Grant (2009: 117).
[63] Wiliams (1991: 4).
[64] Allison (1996).

they are "structures of fantasy" within historically specific genres.[65] Psychoanalytic concepts can be employed not to "explain" horror films, but to analyse specific fantasies through media and texts.[66] Williams' empiric focus on genres suggesting a psychoanalytic influence "in hermeneutics mode", aiming to uncover the "workings of the unconscious of ideology".[67]

The labyrinth of *Castlevania,* the mammalian tentacles of *God of War*'s Scylla, or the hacking away at a naked maiden with octopus-like bodies in these games are not necessary evidence of the player's dread of the Mother. Psychoanalytic interpretation does not reveal universal conditions.[68] The experience of each gamer or spectator should be scrutinized through individual psychoanalytic sessions and ethnography. While such an endeavour falls beyond the scope of this thesis, textual analysis does provide evidence that Greek myth and psychoanalysis are closely related traditions, reserves, and common currency of horror canons.

3–7: *Abject mothers and accursed animals: Greek she-monsters and gender*

In addition to psychoanalytic themes, a strong male bias underpins the gendered and sexualized attributes of characters in *God of War* and *Castlevania*. In the paradigm of cultural studies, Laura Mulvey's (1975) formulation of the "male gaze" individuated a visual and conceptual fixation on women's bodies, determined by a male-biased asymmetry in female agency and representation in the cultural industries. Such narratives are not archetypical, but rooted in observable ideologies and conveyed through leisure media. The Scylla of *Castlevania* does indeed seem to emerge from within a tradition of sexualized monstrous figures and hyper-sexualized *femme fatales* from video game cultures, such as as Mileena and Kitana from the *Mortal Kombat* series (Midway, USA 1992–2017), within a medium dominated by misogynistic industry standards and latent or manifest sexism.[69] Even though studies read *God of War* as campy and

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[65] Williams (1991: 4).
[66] Urbani (2009: 6-30).
[67] Tudor (2009: 58-60). Postulating a universal view of horror audiences as adolescents making way from onanism to reproductive sexuality would prohibit an explanation of why the viewer enjoys films. See Twitchell (1985: 85) and Turvey (2009: 81).
[68] Lakatos 1970: 129).
[69] See Massanari (2017).

androgynous in its representations of maleness, *Castlevania* does eroticize demonic feminine creatures far more than the ones it engenders as males. Interviews with the game producers highlight the asymmetrical male bias behind such choices: for producer Koji Igarashi, "as a gamer […] you become one with the character, and since *Castlevania* has a lot of male players, it's natural to have male characters".[70] As a consequence, female characters are sexualized or relegated to niche roles in the narrative or gameplay.

God of War features manifest misogyny. In one situation, Kratos visits a brothel. The semi-naked women invite Kratos in, and the player is invited to an off-scene sex session where he has to quickly mash at the game controller's buttons. More and more women join Kratos off screen. If the player is successful, he will have earned a humorous conclusion and power-ups. If the player doesn't wiggle fast enough, the women will be disappointed. In both outcomes, Kratos walks out while shooing the adoring women away. *God of War* has been reviled as the epitome of sexism in male gaming cultures, alongside others featuring rape or dubious representations[71] (like *Catherine,* a game featuring a succubus that inhabits the body of the male character's girlfriend).

Such articulations of femininity and masculinity also stand in relation to animality. Ironically, *God of War*'s objectification of women resonates with the term *skylla*, a term that translates, both ancient and modern Greek, to the derogatory term *bitch*.[72] A correlation with canine nomenclature relates lustfulness to animality. For Kristeva, the abject explained not only the mother, but also the "fragile states where man strays on the territories of *animal*".[73] In the game, female monsters are seductive, snake-like and bird-like, while male monsters tend to be massive and bull-like minotaurs and cyclopes. As Urbano noted,[74] monsters are important "for what they do, not simply because of what they are": in this case, they enforce a misogynistic male bias. Braidotti defined

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[70] Source: http://castlevania.wikia.com/wiki/Koji_Igarashi
[71] *God of War's* creative director Ru Weerasuriya responded by underplaying the game as light-hearted and comedic, and "actually tame" compared to "the original mythology"—see Gera (2010). On female objectification in games, see Elise (2014).
[72] Hopman (2012: 128).
[73] Simmons (2013: 12-13).
[74] Urbano (2009: 24).

animals as "nature-culture compounds".[75] In these games, they seem to enact "the production and normalization of masculine and feminine" through symbolic performances that may both consolidate and disrupt these divisions.[76] Figures like Scylla elicit perturbation as figures of "hybrid aberration".[77] Their vaginal or phallic attributes, as "fabulations" of impossible combinations, represent a "contradictive conundrum" of instability, offering consumers chances to interrogate myths of human integrity, biologically and metaphysically through "different forms of sympathy and aggression", or catalysing in them an "irresistible desire in repulsion".[78]

Conversely, Kratos can be taken as an example of normative hyper-masculinity, marked "by inflated physical traits, as well as performances of aggression and domination", and exaggerated stereotypical behaviours.[79] The "ultravirility" of the protagonist is also affirmed through his violent diminishing of monsters which intercept his rage. The game's spectacular artistry focuses on physical confrontations with increasingly menacing monsters in gruesome ways. Disembowelments can be quite graphical and genuinely disturbing for the way in which Kratos realistically and violently engages and destroys his opponents (Figure 3–31). *God of War* conveys a particularly extreme compendium of combat and violence. According to series producer Mark Simon, the game responds to a fascination for fighting "horrific beasts", given how "by nature, we're gonna be violent and that's what feels right".[80] Kratos' hyper-masculinity ideally reverses what happens in the *Odyssey*, vanquishing Scylla where Ulysses could only flee.[81] Against her, Kratos arguably comes to terms with the repression of the degenerative, abject animal monsters that resides in her. As Braidotti argued, dominant ideological views grant the normative male human the power to define and destroy the feminine, animal, brute and instrumental Other.[82]

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[75] Braidotti (2012: 49-5).
[76] Butler (2012: 345).
[77] McCormack (2012: 294).
[78] MacCormack (2012: 1, 303). Also see Wengrow (2013) on monstrosity and cognition and on the origins of monstrosity, which he sees in relation with the emergence of ancient urban centres.
[79] Oswald (2012: 347).
[80] Cullen (2015), online resource.
[81] On the ancient material: Felton (2012: 121).
[82] Braidotti (2012: 1-6).

In yet another psychoanalytic approach, *God of War's* fights— in which Kratos destroys enormous opponents– could be read as symptomatic not only of an Oedipal, but also of a Zeus-Chronos complex, in which the child-player confronts the father-titan, or as a reworking of a David vs. Goliath theme. Both games revolve around confrontations with far larger creatures than the protagonist, but *God of War* stands out with its titan-sized foes, whose proportions are constantly dramatized. Point of views are constructed to convey a sense of the smallness of the player, indulging in the representation of gigantic mechanisms, huge landscapes, and gargantuan boss characters (Fig. 3–32).[83]

Fig. 3–31 (left): Kratos kills a Minotaur (*God of War III, S*ony, USA 2010).

Fig. 3–32 (right): Kratos (circled) confronts Poseidon (*G.o.W. III, S*ony, USA 2010).

However, the environments can also turn into claustrophobic tunnels and dungeons. In a study on *Castlevania,* Martin demonstrated that the space of *Castlevania* works for the player-character as a recursive site akin to a labyrinth– –again, supporting views of a confrontation with the annihilating mother in a uterine setting.[84] Such elements do resonate with the real-life caves and marine abodes of folkloric monsters such as the grottos of Tremusa, in the Strait, associated with Scylla and Lamia (see Chapter 6, and my Documentary Film). As Stewart notes, demonic creatures have always been seen as residing outside civilized areas.[85] Monsters occupy the boundaries of the discernible, the untamed cliffs, and the natural wilderness in geographical imagination[86] as well as, one could argue, the spaces of media like games.

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[83] Huge 'bosses' have always been featured in games, from earlier examples like *Altered Beast* (1988) to recent productions: see Ch. 5 on fantasies of huge sea creatures such as the Megalodon.
[84] Martin (2011).
[85] See Stewart (1991) on *exotica* as "things outside".
[86] Felton 2012:105)

God of War's and *Castlevania*'s underwater and underground cavities elicit a a relation between the represented bodies and the spectator's psyche.[87] Horror's "recreational terror"[88] have been conceptualized in relation to horror film as well as to the medium of the video game. Habel and Kooyman analysed games and cinema as media that produce a comparable "bounded experience of fear".[89] Games recreate "the same visceral revulsion, subtle moods, and other strategies" of cinema: they are a specific form of embodiment comparable to the screen or the visual imagination of a reader.[90] The way players engage games has been explained through the notion of an "agency mechanics": games convey the *as if* of other embodied experience, whether as a contemplative spectator or in heightened interactive mode.[91] Cinematic antiquity has likedwise been observed to offer an engagement with the past that is sensorial rather than cognitive.[92] In that respect—regardless of the response and in the interpretation of the individual viewers—antiquity can be seen as space in which to variously project sexual urges, gendered constructions, and misogynistic violence.[93]

3–8: *Reading the* vagina dentata*: decentring Greco-Roman reception*

The cases discussed so far allow one to conceptualize the Greek monstrous-feminine in relation to its processes of post-classical re-emergence and hybridization, and in relation to the broader theme of the *vagina dentata*. One of the main aims of this study, discussed in the Introduction, has been to avoid traditional linear models of reception that see Greek myths as cultural prototypes. Hopman's (2012) study on Scylla has been discussed for her contextualization of the ancient Scylla among preceding and coeval variations of female monsters, rather than as a story emerging *ex nihilo*. As noted by Friedman, the Greeks

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[87] Williams (1991).
[88] Pinedo (1997: 11).
[89] Habel/Kooyman (2014: 38). See Krzwynska (2002) and Perron (2009) on intertextual relation in horror games and film.
[90] Therrien (2009: 33).
[91] Habel/Kooyman (2009: 138).
[92] Michelakis/Wyke (2013: 10).
[93] See Jenkins on sexual desires, adult comics and Greco-Roman material (2011:231-3s5).

derived their monsters from Near Eastern legends, even though Greek literature and art would later become highly relevant in Western traditions: yet, Medusa and Scylla, in which "chaos is tied to the primal female nature", are Greek versions of a larger pool of mythical cosmogonies.[94] On the other hand, Greco-Roman scholars still tend to situate monstrosities like Scylla at an ideal beginning of history: classicist Miller, in her analysis of the variations of the theme of the *vagina dentata*, and of the fears that motifs of explicitly or metaphorically toothed or castrating female genitalia engender in men, tends to employ Scylla as an archetype of all other later figures bearing such traits.

Miller considers the motif's iterations in Greco-Roman, medieval, and recent times, including an analysis of *Teeth* (2007) (Fig. 3–44), a film about a girl with teeth in her vagina "who punishes men who rape her so that they bleed to death".[95] Discussing the "polymorphous *vagina dentata*" as a monster "that may maim the reproductive body during the act of sex", she discusses the theme in relation to "the intersection of monstrosity and sexuality".[96] Drawing on psychoanalytic film scholar Barbara Creed's elaboration of the monstrous-feminine,[97] Miller interprets the bite of the vagina dentata as the moment that converts the passive pleasurable body into the punishing body, as expressed in "rape revenge" horror that features such motifs. Miller mentions the flexibility of the motif and the fact that the theme may be found in folklore from various parts of the globe. However, Miller focuses almost exclusively on Greco-Roman material. She labels Scylla as a "prototype" that has lent her shape to subsequent creatures whose toothed genitals symbolize the contradictory overlapping of the allure of carnal pleasure and the horror of punishment, pain, and death".[98] Scylla is made to work as an archetype from the culturally exceptional Greco-Roman tradition. In such a perspective, Miller does not mention that the motif of *Teeth* (Fig. 3–35) is found in transnational horror both as a subtext and theme – for instance, in the Japanese animation video *Wicked City*, 1987, Fig. 3–33, and in splatter action *Tokyo Gore Police* (Fig. 3–34) and horror comedy *Spring* (Fig. 3-

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[94] Friedman (2012: xxviii).
[95] Friedman (2012: xxxv).
[96] Miller (2012: 314).
[97] Creed (1993).
[98] Miller (2012: 315-316).

36), before *Teeth* and around time.

Fig. 3–33: *Wicked City,* dir. Y. Kawajiri, Japan 1987.
Fig. 3–34: *Tokyo Gore Police,* dir. Y. Nishimura, Japan 2008.
Fig. 3–35: *Teeth*, dir. M. Lichtenstein, USA 2007.
Fig. 3–36: *Spring,* dir. J. Benson/A. Moorhead, USA 2014

Miller also does not mention Julia Kristeva's reflections on the abject, citing Creed's thesis in what could be seen as a lack of a broader epistemic frame of reference.[99] The fact that a Greco-Roman scholar centres her analysis in material consistent with her background is understandable. However, the fact that such an approach sees Greco-Roman material as the premise and goal of the analysis is is symptomatic of how inter-disciplinarity could be read as "a buzz word classicists like to claim", while the integrity of the tradition or the archive "has been assumed in advance".[100] There seems to be an unconscious bias of elements of Greco-Roman reception scholars, the result of a half-developed willingness to broaden the focus of their historical approach or of their internalization of Greco-Roman traditions as inherently exceptional. This closet exceptionalism makes Greek antiquity work "naturally" as a category of texts to which modern ones can be traced back to.[101]

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[99] Creed (1993).
[100] Holmes (2016: 275).
[101] See Briggs/Bauman (1992: 134) on how text genres can work on the basis of a naturalization of the process that brought them into existence, creating a backwards point of departure for intertextuality based on their cultural capital.

Marshal and Kovacs observed how this tendency worked in relation to film even in progressive strands of scholarship, where the modern material was approached by assessing "the lengths to which Greek myth must be distorted to accommodate the modern action-film template".[102] In Miller's analysis, too, the results are entirely provided by the disciplinary frame that sees classics as the core point of access to myth. As Gorak noted, heterodoxies can also become "as homogenous as orthodoxies":[103] even in the field of reception, one can find cultural elitism to survive in soft forms.

Demonstrating an interest in film and the horror genre from the exclusive lens of Greek myth, Millers subscribes to the historically fabricated transcendent cultural value of classical literature. Historically, comparing distinct sets of materials or disciplines has been demonstrated to underpin varied intents. Inter-textuality has allowed scholars, in the case of horror, "to align texts with other texts for the purposes of praising them as art", or even denigrating them as trash.[104] Film scholar Creed uses Greek tragedy alongside Freud, Kristeva *et aliae* not only to engage processes of subjectivity set out by psychoanalytic theory (birth, seduction, castration) but also to praise horror as artistic.[105] One should not forget that even psychoanalysis validated itself through Greek myth.[106] Studies such as Miller's, which locate Greco-Roman mythology at the zero moment in the history of symbols, seem to engage with modern material while maintaining an implicit bias in how they historicize and conceptualize reception.

In contrast, I have looked at horror for its cultural relevance in relation to ideas of Greekness. While the Scylla theme can be discussed as an important catalyst of representations of gendered monstrosity, or motifs like the *vagina dentata*, Greco-Roman material is used in games like *God of War* and *Castlevania* to tap into far larger and deep-rooted misogynistic ideas pervading society. One can find a reflection of such ideologies in practices like play, spectatorship, and readership. Through this analysis, I suggest that reception studies should approach popular Greco-Roman themes in post-classical perspective, looking at the larger

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[102] Marshall/Kovacs (2016: xvi).
[103] Gorak (1991: ix).
[104] Staiger (2000: 186).
[105] Hills (2009: 215).
[106] Csapo (2005: 91-104).

synchronic and diachronic relations they entertain with other texts and societies. In the process, as I am going to further argue in the next chapter, analytic tools developed in the present, such as gender studies and feminist theories,[107] can be applied back to ancient texts, highlighting aspects that would otherwise "not have received attention altogether", allowing the research to gain a perspective on ancient literature that is not pre-moulded as an "entirely gentlemanly artefact".[108]

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[107] Richlin (1992: xi).
[108] Gorak (1991: 2).

CHAPTER 4
OCTOPUS GIRLS AND TENTACLES

4–1: *Myth as the hotbed: sexualized and pornographic Scyllae*

Following the previous chapter's analysis of monstrous-feminine renditions of Greek myth in horror and fantasy, through the lens of psychoanalytic and gender studies, I will now look at more openly sexualized or pornographic renditions of Scylla and Charybdis. In these texts, the figures worked as biological others, through which audiences explored fantasies and anxieties of reproduction and sexual miscegenation in the categories of animality and femininity.

I will focus on the myth's reworking at the intersection of horror and erotic media, such as the genre of weird and supernatural literature,[1] the fantasies of monstrous intercourse of the visual trope of tentacle erotica',[2] and fandom and amateur art found on the Internet and social media. Investigating Scylla and Charybdis' reformulations in novel streams of eroticized monstrosities, I will argue that they reactivate elements of the ancient myths and coeval narratives of biological horror spread in film and literature.[3] Going back to my critique of narrowly classics-centred approaches to reception, I will suggest that transformations of mythical figures, ancient and modern alike, appear in the form of cross-canonical, unregulated, relentless processes of *myth-scegenation*.

My two main case studies will allow me to discuss the historical manifestations of popular ideas of Greco-Roman myth within variously layered genealogies of texts, shifting this time to media like social networks. Online platforms worked as echo-chambers for the appropriation of myth by individuals and transnational communities of readers and spectators. My first case study is the *Monster Girl Encyclopedia*,[4] a collection of erotic art in which sexualized renditions of Scylla and Charybdis, as well as other maidens from various mythical traditions, are reworked within the aesthetics of Japanese manga comics. The second case is Cthylla, a character born out of a literary pastiche of the Greco-

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[1] Joshi (2003).
[2] Carbone (2013).
[3] See Thackeray (2002). Scylla was, herself, the offspring of incestuous Echidna and Typhon (Sole 2000: 54).
[4] Cross (2010).

Roman Scylla and Cthulhu, the cosmic horror deity imagined by American weird tales writer H.P. Lovecraft.[5] I will consider both cases by following their dissemination in social media like *deviantArt* and *Wikia* and other web-sites, where traditions of Greek myth already developed in role playing cultures, fantasy and horror, erotica, and niche literature were further re-elaborated.

Contextualizing the newly sexualized and pornographic Scyllae within recent visual tropes like the "octopus girl" and the fantasies of tentacle erotica, I will discuss how audiences continued to mix up Scylla and Charybdis in new formulations of monstrous creatures, whose uterine and phallic qualities reveal a varied spectrum of social constructions: from the manifestly misogynistic rape cultures of young male audiences' fantasies to appropriation of monstrosities through which female viewers and artists seem to challenge patriarchy and normative sexuality. Through my analysis of Cthylla and of the creatures of *Monster Girls,* I will open a window on the ebullient processes of proliferation and transformation underlying people's uses of mythical figures: far from being unitary and discrete characters, myth figures shape-shift and myth-scegenate, each context of their reception and reformulation responding dynamically to historically situated anxieties, such as genetic engineering and zoophilic practices.

Considering how the phallic and vaginal metaphors simmering underneath the ancient stories re-emerge in new texts, and are made more explicit by new audiences, I will discuss how the Greco-Roman lexicalization of 'Scylla' worked in such texts not as an aesthetic model of sorts, but as a cultural construct with a capacity to attract many expressions of the turbulent and fluid currents of monstrosity in media due to Greco-Roman myth's recognizable repertoires. Following MacCormack's argument that monsters may inspire both desire and repulsion,[6] and Braidotti's conceptualization of animals as sites on which to explore taboos on living beings,[7] I will draw conceptual analogies between ancient myths of miscegenation, like the one of Scylla and Glaucus, Leda and the Swan, and Pasiphae and the Bull, and contemporary uses of myth as a scenario on which to project interrogations of sexuality and social and biological taboos.

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[5] Lovecraft (1928).
[6] McCormack (2012).
[7] Braidotti (2012).

4.2 – *Octopus ladies and tentacle erotica: an overview*

Explicitly sexualized or pornographic representations of Scyllae and Charybdes represent a broad cluster of texts circulating among international audiences through comics and animation, fine and amateur art, Internet memes, and other graphical renditions shared across web-sites and social media platforms.

These texts have emerged especially over the last decade, mixing up Greek motifs and others drawn from fantasy, and generating a vast series of variants.[8] *Monster Girl Encyclopaedia*, which I will soon discuss in detail, is an example of a sexualised Scylla within the aesthetics of Japanese *manga* comics.[9] An illustrated "compendium of knowledge concerning Monster Girls, or *mamonos*" designed by Japanese comic book artist Kenkou Cross, the collection of erotic illustrations features Scylla and Charybdis as well as female characters from other visual canons and literary traditions. Scylla is as a female with octopoid arms— "a type of monster that lives in the ocean and has a lower body resembling octopus tentacles", hides in crevices, and launches "sudden tentacle attacks on men" (Figures 4.1).[10] Charybdis is presented as an example of a species needing human men for food and breeding.[11]

4.1 (a-b) Scylla's monster girl embrace, *Monster Girls Encyclopedia,* Cross, Japan 2010.

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[8] As part, one could argue, of a broader tendency of "pornification" in the media: see Paasonen/ Nikunen/Saarenmaa (2007).
[9] On Japanese manga as a medium and style, see Boissou (2010) and Brenner (2007).
[10] http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Scylla
[11] http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Charybdis

The Scylla from *Monster Girl Encyclopaedia* is only one example of a proliferating overflow of comics, animation, fan art, and other pieces of art and narration merging myth, fantasy and pornography. Japanese artist Horitomo's *My sister is a little Scylla* (2012) (Figure 4.2) is remarkably similar to the previous example: Scylla is "an eight legged monster girl", while an accompanying story is titled *Lamia of Love*.[12] Another example, the video game *Smite* (where players "take on the visage of a god or other mythological figure") also includes a Scylla with dogs' heads (Fig. 4–4)[13] that reminds a similar, albeit less sexualized, representation in *Castlevania* (Figure 4–3; Ch. 3, Fig. 3–19, 3–20).

Fig. 4–2 (left): Horitomo, *My sister is a little Scylla,* Japan 2012.
Fig. 4–3 (top right): Scylla in *Castlevania,* Konami, Japan 1997.
Fig. 4–5 (bottom right): Scylla in *Smite,* Hi-Rez, USA 2014.

These products' audiences vary from the niche subcultural consumers of Cross and Horitomo to specific sub-audiences of gamer communities. The myth-motifs are internationalized by the Internet and social media. Extensive descriptions of Cross's book, for instance, are accessible in electronic form and discussed through a *Monster Girls* wiki (a collaborative Internet platform based on user-generated content) run by *Wikia,* a service hosting dozens of online communities.[14] Such social platforms emerged as "a major tool used by Internet users on a daily base", and allowed for high level of circulation of material on the

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[12] Horitomo (2012).
[13] See http://www.smitegame.com, latest access: 15/05.2016).
[14] See http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com (latest access: 12 May 2016). *Wikia* capitalizes from user-generated traffic and content by encouraging production and dissemination of fandom material on profitable franchises– currently, it hosts several hundred wikis. See Mittel (2013).

most diverse subjects and literatures among consistent audience bases.[15] The *Monster Girls* wiki allows readers to access and disseminate elements of the book. On the Internet, several other wikis include pages on Scylla. The *Villains Wikia*[16] devotes pages to various renditions of the Greek Scylla: the one from *Castlevania,* the one from *Smite*, and the one from the *Percy Jackson* novels and films. Through the web-sites, a user can read about the figures' representation in different texts.

A notable consequence of the popularity of wikis is that they allow users to upload their own material with ease and relative anonymity: therefore, sexualized and pornographic material can proliferate unbridled and make its way to the broader sphere of the Internet. Tracing these transformations can be daunting, due to their sheer quantity and variety of styles and approaches they draw on: from the manga aesthetics to horror illustrations, from fine art inspired by mythology to amateurish toon porn (satirical, pornographic renditions of popular cartoons). Variants include *Monster Girls'* octopus lady motif (Fig. 4–7); cartoonish octopus ladies (Fig. 4-8); woman with tentacles in place of their legs (Fig. 4–6); sexually hypertrophic females with phallic tentacles (Fig. 4–9); and hybrids, such as Cthylla—a mix between Scylla and Cthulhu (Fig. 4–10).

Fig. 4–6 (top/left): Erotic Scylla with tentacle legs (unidentified artist).
Fig. 4–7 (top/middle): Scylla as octopus girl, *Monster Girls Encyclopedia*, Japan 2012.
Fig. 4–8 (top/right): Anthropomorphic octopus lady (unidentified artist).
Fig. 4–9 (bottom/left): Hyper-sexualized Scylla (unidentified artist).
Fig. 4–10 (bottom/right): Cthylla (unidentified artist).

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[15] Mittel (2013:35).
[16] See http://villains.wikia.com/wiki/Scylla_(disambiguation) (l. a.: 12/052016).

The sexualized Scyllae also displays traits if the visual trope of 'tentacle erotica', a subset of fantasy pornography through which artists have explored representations of monstrous and tentacular intercourse.[17] Fantasy sex involving tentacles had emerged transnationally in crossovers between erotica and horror previous decades from underground or niche products like the animation films *Wicked City* (Kawajiri 1987)[18] and *Urotsukidoji* (Maeda/Takayama 1987-1994). The theme then found its way into the mainstream through blockbuster films like *Prometheus* (Scott 2012) and popular TV shows *Family Guy*,[19] *Futurama*,[20] and *Mad Men*.[21] Katsushika Hokusai's *shunga* woodblock picture from the Edo period, *The Dream of the Fisherman's wife* (1814), was pinpointed as the originator of the motif.[22] Audiences and producers started to use the term *tentacle erotica* retrospectively, for any situation involving phallic tentacular monsters (the Corman-produced 1980 horror/sci-fi *Galaxy of Terror*, the arthouse horror thriller *Possession*, 1980) directed by A. Żuławski), or tentacular mythical creatures like Scylla and Charybdis. The Scylla of *Monster Girls* is described as a monster that with "a lower body resembling octopus tentacles" (Cross 2010).[23] Yet more examples can be found in pornographic dark adult stories such as *Tentacles of Scylla* (Figure 4–11), *Scylla's Cove: an erotic tentacle journey* (Figure 4–12), and *Sandwiched by Scyllas* (Figure 4.13).
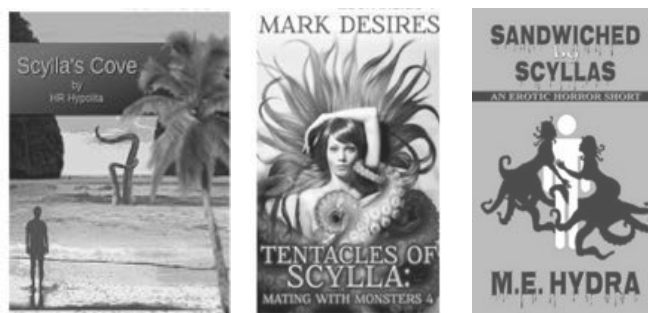
Fig. 4–11 (left): *Scylla's Cove*, R. Hypolita, USA 2012.
Fig. 4–12 (middle): *Tentacles of Scylla,* M. Desires, USA 2012.
Fig. 4–13 (right): *Sandwiched by Scylla,* USA 2016.

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[17] Carbone (2013: 67).
[18] Ch. 3., Fig. 3–33.
[19] Season 10, episode 11, 'The Blind Side', Fox TV, USA 2012.
[20] *The Beast with a Billion Backs,* USA 2008.
[21] Season 3, episode 2, 'Out of town', USA 2009; see Carbone (2013: 21-42).
[22] See Carbone (2013: 21-42) on how the transnational motif was orientalised as an example of perverse Japan by Western journalists and media.
[23] http://villains.wikia.com/wiki/Scylla.

In these often tongue-in-cheek stories, men's sexual encounters with women remind us of the *femme fatales* of pulp novels like Bishop's *Scylla* (1947, Ch. 3, Fig. 3–11), even though the male protagonists end up discovering the pleasures of monstrous intercourses. Scylla continued to work as a lexical signifier not only for temptresses and demons, but also for the newly emerging octopoid monstrous girls and gendered monsters of *Monster Girls Encyclopaedia* and Cthylla, which I will now proceed to discuss more in detail.

4–3: Monster Girls Encyclopaedia: *mythographies and cross-overs*

The illustrated book *Monster Girls Encyclopaedia* provides a good example to understand how the new transformations of Scylla occurred at the intersection of production and consumption through fandom.[24] In *Monster Girls*, Scylla and Charybdis are featured alongside other female monsters from the traditions "of many countries, religions, history, literature and Japanese RPGs [role playing games]":[25] they include Greco-Roman mermaids, gorgons and succubae, krakens from the Norse pantheon, werewolves, amazonesses, angels, goblins, ghosts, and even a satanic Baphometess. Cross adopts the perspective of "a scholar travelling the globe and documenting information on the multitude of Monster Girls" he meets.[26] Monster girls are described as the offspring of the carnal union between a "Demon Lord" and "the sultry, seductive, and sexy succubus race", in a narrative where forces of sex and chaos oppose the repression of a "theocratic Chief God".[27] These creatures may sport writhing tentacles, but also display "a literally irresistible sexuality".[28]

The habitats of the creatures are forests, deep seas, mountaintops, and graveyards: aberrant bodies inhabit, as in folklore, the borders of civilization.[29] The Scyllae hide in crevices, and launch sudden tentacle attacks on men in order

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[24] See http://kurobine.sakura.ne.jp/mamonogirllover/zukan/ (latest access: 12 May 2016). On Japanese manga as a medium and style, see Boissou (2010) and Brenner (2007).
[25] See http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com.
[26] http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Scylla
[27] A similar plot is narrated in *Urotsukidoji* (1994).
[28] See http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki.
[29] Ellen (2017: 1).

"to force intercourse for the purpose of bearing offspring".[30] Similarly, Charybdes "snare men by sucking them underwater with giant whirlpools",[31] since they need human men for food and breeding, whom they hunt by generating whirlpools. Such representations are best approached as working in a broader context of sexualisation of existing canons, extended and re-elaborated through fandom practices on social media. For instance, a *Monster Girls* sequel, *After-School Alice Tale* (2014), transposed the 'cute' monster girl commonplace within the narrative worlds of Lewis Carroll's iconic tales. Such compendia also work in mythographic fashion: *Monster Girls* relates the Kraken, the sea monster from Norse myths, "as a kind of Scylla" (Figure 4.15).[32] Interpretations can work inter-textually: the card game *Yu-Gi-Oh* features a Scylla that reminds one of the *Castlevania* game (Fig. 4.14, 4.16). The latter presented a feature that allowed the player to compile a database of the monsters (Fig. 4º–16; also see Ch. 3), many of which tentacular or of the *vagina dentata* kind (See fig. 4–17).

Fig. 4–14 (top/left): Scylla game card, *Yu-Gi-Oh,* Toei, Japan 1998.
Fig. 4–15 (top/right): Kraken, *Monster Girl Encyclopedia*, Cross, Japan 2010.
Fig. 4–16 (bottom/left): Scylla, *Castlevania*, Konami*,* Japan 1997.
Fig. 4.17 (bottom/right): Diplocephalus, *Castlevania.*

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[30] See http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Charybdis.
[31] I*bid.*
[32] See http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Kraken.

Such practices of in-game collection, as well as inter-textual and trans-media relations, involve a work of genealogical research alongside creativity. Exchanges are open-ended and permutations are the norm, allowing for a continuous re-shaping of the source materials. These practices have a strong tie with role-playing cultures, where players may creatively reshape existing repertoires into novel narratives of "shared fantasy".[33] Online fan cultures, wikis, and other platforms for the sharing and creation of content are, in Jenkin's terms, an example of *epistemaphilia*—a pleasure not simply in knowing, but also in exchanging knowledge.[34] Such processes underpin audiences' liberal reworkings and disseminations of sexualized and pornographic Scyllae and Charybdes in media like *Monster Girls* and its wiki, as well as in cases like the literary pastiche Cthylla, which I am now about to discuss more closely.

4–4: *'In his daughter's darkling womb': Scylla, Cthulhu, and Cthylla*

Cthylla is a monstrosity of minor literary fame that emerges from a fusion of two cultural icons of monstrosity: Scylla and Cthulhu.[35] Cthylla was born in the field of niche supernatural literature. However, her popularization is the result of her circulation on the Internet. The genesis of the character is, consistently, reconstructed in the aforementioned *Villains Wikia*: "Cthylla's name may be a reference to Scylla, a sea monster of Greek mythology"; she is also "the daughter of one of the Great Old Ones known as Cthulhu, and a villainess in the Cthulhu Mythos of H. P. Lovecraft".[36] The so-called *mythos* is a popular term that emerged to define the fictional universe spanned by the American writer's tales and their characters.[37] The wiki credits the creature's genesis to British horror writer Brian Lumley's 1975 novel *The Transition of Titus Crow,*[38] even though, as Price notes (2002:68), the character had already been mentioned in a story in horror magazine *Eerie* by American writers Archie Goodwin and Gray Morrow.[39]

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[33] Fine (2002).
[34] Jenkins (2006: 114).
[35] Price (2002: 68).
[36] See http://villains.wikia.com/wiki/Cthylla (latest access: 12 May 2016).
[37] See Joshi (2013: xiii); Joshi (2008); Mackley (2013).
[38] Lumley (1975).
[39] Goodwin/Morrow (1966), "The Island at world's end", *Eerie,* n. 4, July 1966, pp. 45-46.

As the *Wikia* states, American weird fiction writer Tina L. Jens later provided the first extensive treatment of the character in the 1997 short story 'In His Daughter's Darling Womb'.[40] In the wiki, Cthylla is described as a "a gigantic, red-bodied, black-ringed, and six-eyed octopus with small wings" that can extrude or retract "as many as twelve arms" (Fig. 4.18). The wiki also features an illustration of the monster from an unnamed artist. Other art works can be found on other digital platform for the sharing of visual content, like *deviantArt* (Fig. 4.18, a-b).[41]

4.18 (a-b) Cthylla, Daughter/mother of Cthulhu, unidentified authors.

The evolution of Cthylla must be read in the context of how Lovecraft's bringer of cosmic horror, Cthulhu, had become itself a cultural icon after the American author's posthumous success from the 1960s onwards.[42] Lovecraft's literary corpus stimulated continuations of its elements: his stories relied on an open-ended universe which fellow writers from his circle could expand on with new settings, characters, and subplots.[43] In this *mythos,* Lumley imagined Cthylla in *The transition of Titus Crow* as "the spawn-mother" of Cthulhu itself, in a sort of incestuous time-space paradox which also involved a Greek Hydra.[44] Lumley's meta-literary pastiche was followed by Tina Jens's less metaphysical and more lurid and visceral approach to Cthylla. In her story (Jens 1997), Dr Katherine Cullom, a marine biologist, experiments with a gigantic female octopoid captured in the Devil's Reef in the Pacific. Her team artificially inseminates the specimen for interspecies breeding, using a "biogenetically engineered spermatophore"

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[40] Jens (1997).
[41] See www.deviantart.com (latest access: 12 May 2016).
[42] The plot of 'The Call of Cthulhu' (Lovecraft 1928) involves people sharing horrific dreams of a city rising out of the ocean, a seafarer being driven insane from what he saw in the Pacific Ocean, and the rise of a cosmic annihilator.
[43] Mackley (2013).
[44] Lumley (1991: 59).

operated by Katherine that involved exhausting "foreplay". The story is tinged with a paranoid treatment of reproductive anxieties. While the octopod Cthylla is laying and winnowing eggs, Katherine –who had before repeatedly suffered miscarriages– has an affair with a man of strange behaviours and innuendos and also becomes pregnant. The team is harrowed by deafening wails, Katherine has "horrid dreams", and the man reveals a dark interest in the specimens. Cthylla mangles a person, and Katherine is electrically shocked by the monster. Waking up in a hospital, she delivers a premature birth, suffering sixty-five stitches. After freeing the mother and baby octopods in the ocean, she has nightmares of something wriggling out of her body and of mothering a monstrous creature.

Jens's exploration of Cthylla's corporeal horror developed its embryonic character. However, the new character's popularization owes much to its subsequent uptake by fans. In the *Villains Wikia*, Cthylla is discussed by audiences of role-playing games.[45] Such audiences would be familiar with games like *The Call of Cthulhu*[46] and the Medusas and Scyllae that have been featuring in role playing, card games, and related media (See Fig. 4.14 and 3.13, Ch. 3). Lovecraftian and weird fiction[47] had garnered acolytes by percolating "into mainstream popular culture in the later decades of the twentieth century", across magazines, fanzines, film and games, and role playing games.[48] By reading Greek *myth* alongside Lovecraftian *mythos,* readers elevated Cthylla from literary experimentation to a relatively popular character.[49] Lovecraftian fans have often created genealogies of monsters that are reminiscent of the ones of Greek myth (Fig. 4–20). The Lovecraftian Yog-Sothoth and Shub-Niggurath may not be directly related to Greek myth,[50] but their genealogies do recall similar treatments of Hesiodic deities from the *Theogony* (Fig. 4–19).

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[45] On role playing and gaming cultures see Williams/Hendricks/Wikler (2006); Nephew (2006) in relation to Lovecraft.

[46] Petersen/Willis (1981); developed in the wake of the well-known *Dungeons and Dragons* (Gigax 1974).

[47] On the genre, see Joshi (2003), Joshi and Schultz (2001: 255), and H. P. Lovecraft's own essay from 1927, now in Lovecraft (2011). "brackets only if cited in main text"

[48] Jones (2013:227).

[49] The influence of Greco-Roman on H. P. Lovecraft is well known: see Joshi/Schultz (2001: 28–29). His earliest surviving work is, aptly, *The Poem of Ulysses*, a paraphrase of the *Odyssey*, which includes a passage on Scylla and Charybdis: see see Joshi (2012: 129). In "Dagon" (1919), Lovecraft describes another creature as "vast" and Polyphemus-like" (Lovecraft 1999).

[50] See http://villains.wikia.com/wiki/Cthylla (latest access: 12 May 2016).
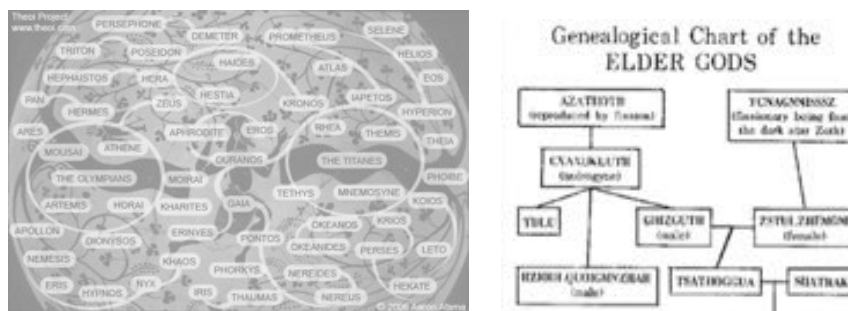
Fig. 4–19 Left: Greek pantheon gods, A. Astman.
Fig. 4–20: Clark Ashton Smith, "The Family Tree of the Gods".

While one can see Greek myth undoubtedly had a profound impact on Lovecraftian literature, one could say that the development of a character like Cthylla took place in much larger multi-directional processes and inter-canonical exchanges. As Marshall has noted in the context of Greco-Roman reception, "retroactive continuity in an overarching theme" works on the basis of "elements produced by different authors in different texts".[51]

Within this fusion of canons, Scylla and Cthulhu were related by being understood as marine, tentacular figures. Cthulhu was described by Lovecraft as a vaguely anthropoid, massive monster with an octopus-like head (Fig. 4.21) and whose face was a mass of feelers, emerging from the accursed sea depths. The ancient Scylla was a hybrid maiden with a fish or octopus-like lower half of the body (Fig. 4.22). Cthylla is often presented in amateur art online as a hybrid of such elements, borrowing elements from both parent figures in various combinations (see Figures 4.18a-b, 4.23, and bearing meta-textual traces of her formulation in her very name). Cthylla does remind us that neither Cthulhu nor Scylla were "originals"—rather, as Friedman argues, they worked as hybrids, catalysing imagination and collective storytelling and art as intersections of multiple elements.[52]

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[51] Marshall (2016: 91).

[52] Friedman (2012: xxvii). In the art critique field, see Colburn (2016:3) on on how ancient artistic exchange could be said to date "to the prehistoric era all over the world", and considered "global in the modern usage of the word given that it occurred across "the known limits of the world at the time".

Fig. 4–21: (left): Cthulhu in a sketch by H. P. Lovecraft, 1934
Fig. 4–22 (middle): Late Classical Skylla, Apulian Red Figure, Beazley P 27.3.
Fig. 4–23 (right): 'Cthylla', Yuggothian (deviantart.org).

4–5: *The Scylla and Cthylla hybrids: monstrosity as intersection*

Cases like *Monster Girls* and Cthylla display the multiple, protean transformations behind a mythical name. As Hopman (2012) has demonstrated in her study on Scylla, a myth-figure does not necessarily express an essential property of a character but, rather, the intersection of certain features. The Kraken and Scylla *Monster Girls* and amateur art featuring Cthylla could be mistaken one for the other, given that their features are common and interchangeable. Cthylla or Scylla may be argued to be the same creatures based on their appearance (Fig. 4–18 a-b, 4–23): identification is based on the interpretative competence and interpretation of the reader. This apparently banal argument seems to have been overlooked by elements of reception that read the Greco-Roman Scyllae or *ketoi* as the monogenetic sources of inspiration for other creatures in different canons; on the other hand, Lovecraftian scholars have used Greco-Roman myth within a weird literature-centric perspective of mythical lineage.[53]

People develop monsters by freely mixing various visual elements. On a *deviantArt* user profile, Cthylla becomes a gargoyle-like demon, transitioning into more traditionally gothic territory, reminiscent, again, of the Scylla of *Castlevania* (Fig. 4. 26; compare to 4.16, 4.17). In the video game *Chaos Code* (Fig. 4.28), Cthylla is much more similar to the Scylla maidens of other Japanese comics than its monstrous Lovecraftian variants (Fig. 4.27).

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[53] See Miller and the *vagina dentata* theme, discussed in Ch. 3.

Fig. 4–26: Cthylla, Daughter of Cthulhu, Arcosart (deviantart.com), USA 2016.
Fig. 4–27: Cthylla, *Chaos Code,* FK Digital, Japan 2012.

Such transformations would be hard to understand without highlighting philological and intertextual relations between texts across different media and platforms. The cases of this chapter show, again, the limits of a linear approach to reception that would see Cthylla as a derivation of ancient Scylla. On the contrary, literature, visual and role-playing cultures would intersectionally as the breeding ground of such explorations of the body. A relentless symbolic rumination across texts, databases and archives is the dimension in which readers, players, and spectators appropriated popular notions of Greek myths. Such appropriations took form through a logic that reminds how role-playing allows stories to develop, as Slavicsek argues, non-linearly, with action taking place in imagined worlds shared by different individuals, relying on an open set of exchanges.[54]

Yet, experimentation does operate on the basis of consistent features and established traditions. Efforts can be made to activate meaningful, rather than gratuitous, associations between distinct literary sets. In this light, the gravitation of many octopus-girls and she-monsters renditions the name of Scylla is a consequence of the popularity of Greco-Roman myths. While creativity influences the reshaping of a figure, an audience's familiarity with a symbol or tradition matters. Canons, as Asmann notes, could be seen to work as a meta-mnemonic practice, based on the persistence of tradition and memory in relation to ever-emerging creativity.[55] Cthylla and Scylla may be ultimately mistaken one

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[54] Slavicsek (2002:4-5).
[55] Asmann (2008: 100-106).

for the other, but one difference between the two is that the gravitational force of the Greco-Roman tradition as a popular repertoire prevents Scylla from slipping into completely different variants. In other words, Scylla retains a relatively stable identity because of her popularity as a Greek female-animal monster. (Fig. 4–16). In contrast, artists and users soon evolved the lesser known Cthylla into further and sometimes hardly unique variants of female monstrosity: *Chaos Code*'s Cthylla may well be taken as any other female monster (Fig. 4–27).

Greek myth's fame does compensate for the shifting sands territory of monstrous transformations. Moreover, Greco-Roman traditions can maintain a strong cultural impact based on which audiences are appropriating them. Lovecraftian scholars Joshi and Mariconda appropriated Greek myth as the illustrious precursor of the themes of weird fiction. Their chronology of "remarkably, and lamentably, understudied" poetry of Western literature that had "indulged in weird poetry", understood as a genre drawing on the supernatural, weirdness, and terror,[56] begins precisely with Homer's episode on Scylla and Charybdis (as well as Euripides' *Medea*). The editors then present the likes of Tennyson, Poe, and Lovecraft, and carry on to contemporary authors. Considering how elements of Greco-Roman culture are reflected in Lovecraft's work through his cultural background, it is not surprising to see that Mariconda and Joshi's new canon sees Greek myth as the provider of a prestigious connection, and cultural legitimization, for their newly created canon of weird fiction.

4–6: *Reproductive anxieties: vaginal and phallic Scyllae*

Cthylla may be used as a prime example of myth-scegenation, or myth's inherently imaginative character as a dimension of imagination and cultural hybridization— consistently with how Lévi-Strauss defined myth as "intellectual bricolage".[57] I will now move from an inter-textual and literary level of interpretation to one where I look at the sexual overtones of the new octopus girls and vaginal and phallic tentacular monsters—an aspect that will allow me to reconnect with the issue of modern texts' relations with the possible cultural

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[56] Joshi/Mariconda (2013: 13).
[57] Lévi-Strauss (2004: 10-12) [first edition 1966].

valence of Greek myth in antiquity. The functions and forms of these texts can vary in relation to a gendered and psychological perspective. As I am now going to discuss (see my discussion in Sections 3–6 and 3–7), uses of monsters reveal the most diverse gender constructs. The *Monster Girl Encyclopedia* clearly satisfies the sexual anxieties of young male readers.[58] Scyllae are said to "love men so much that they feel uneasy unless they're clinging to a man"; "they will wrap their 2 arms and 8 legs thoroughly around a man's body to glue their bodies together".[59] Charybdis are also "extremely lustful, and when they suck a man into their nesting holes, they spread their vagina open with their own fingers and tempt the man".[60] At the same time, the monsters as "insecure and starving for affection": their heart "is at ease and they feel happiest when joined closely with a man, so they always have their wet tentacles crawling all over a man's body".[61]

In *Monster Girls,* sexual intercourse is often framed by a narrative in which the male has to insist and win out against female resistance. Female characters are portrayed as lustful but shy, drawn into and yet embarrassed by sexual experiences, and often blushing. [62] Visual clues such as blushing and representations of supposedly mild resistance to sexual advances have been analysed by scholars of animation products as markers of rape culture that accompany female objectification.[63] Not only does the lewdness of the female monsters works to 'authorize' male insistence (the Charybdes of *Monster Girls* blush, but are also "fans of gangbangs"),[64] but encounters with human males are also said to end in " reverse rape" where the lustful monsters would abuse the man. Such fantasies attribute intention of the reader's unconfessed, prohibited fantasies of rape onto the figure represented in the medium, turning it from victim of such fantasies to purported sexual aggressor. This kind of narrative caters to an insecure male readership by providing a masturbatory playground and fantasies

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[58] Or even, in principle, to increase readers' anxiety, or otherwise feed into or capitalize from their attraction for such representations.

[59] http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Scylla

[60] http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Charybdis

[61] http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Charybdis

[62] Blushing is associated with the *roricon complex* Shigematsu (1999); the term is derived from Nabokov's novel *Lolita* from 1928; it defines hypertrophic sexualized women with a very child-like and often neotenic appearance.

[63] See Allison (1997: 147–160).

[64] http://monstergirlencyclopedia.wikia.com/wiki/Charybdis

of sexual abuse normalized in a fantastic setting. This is not inconsistent with my previous discussion of how video game audiences are imbued with misogynistic narratives. Role-playing cultures have also been discussed as often teeming with a misogyny that provides "an outlet for male players' erotic desires".[65]

In other cases, however, the reception of the vaginal and phallic symbolism associated with the octopoid Scyllae could be more nuanced and liberating. Jens' story of Cthylla uses monstrosity as a terrain to experiment different kinds of gendered anxieties and pleasure. The female protagonist of the story has "to grasp and hold" the octopod to inseminate her through "an hour of flirting and teasing", realizing that the monster behaved "almost as if she knew it was me touching her".[66] Adult tales like Dare's *Caught by Scylla* seem to target open-ended pleasures in terms of gender orientation as "young prince Ariston sails into the infamous strait of Messina" and his body is offered as a sacrificial scapegoat by the crew "to Scylla's many arms, hoping that his untouched beauty will distract the monster".[67] Alongside the prevalent and patently misogynistic narratives of tentacle erotica, queer or female-oriented monstrous pornography has also flourished.[68] Both Scylla and Cthylla has been used by female *cosplayers*,[69] showing that transgressive and bestial, monstrous icons can be appropriated rather liberally, by activating a range of fantasies, or even the simple pleasures of role playing, regardless of sexualized implications (Figures 4–28, 4–29). Scylla's monstrosity derives largely from male-produced fear of femininity, but women have also been claiming monstrosity affirmatively, and its generative powers as means to disrupt orders and open to a field of possibilities for many different audiences.

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[65] Nephew (2006:129).

[66] Jens (1997:79).

[67] (Dare 2013), from the book's blurb: https://www.amazon.com/Caught-Scylla-Isabel-Dare-ebook/dp/B00H1ZVZNS/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1495131195&sr=8-1&keywords=caught+by+scylla (latest access: 12/05/2017).

[68] See http://www.pornhub.com/view_video.php?viewkey=1272274723 (latest access: 15/05/2016).

[69] A portmanteau for *costume players*, i.e. participants of practices where people role-play as characters from comics, games, or animation by faithfully re-creating their appearance. See Orsini (2015).

Fig. 4–28*: Smite* costume player as Scylla, USA 2015.
Fig. 4–29: Scylla Horror make-up, Kelton Ching, Singapore 2014.

Such a polysemic potential of the monstrous-feminine draw a lot from the the representation of tentacles and their sexualization. Modern variants of octopus girls and creatures from tentacle erotica share the ancient Scylla's relation with such signifiers of aquatic otherness. Octopods have often been related to bodily proliferation, representing both what is utterly alien and what is monstrously hyper-human. Discussing the octopus motif from Minoan pottery to modern literature, Roger Caillois noted that these animals have often been perceived as bodiless heads with arms and have, therefore, been perceived as lewd and sexually hyperactive creatures.[70] Tentacles short-circuit the binary between the human and the non-human, embodying transgressive superimpositions, paradoxes and *oxymora*. When Tina Jens shaped Cthylla, she got rid of Lumley's Lovecraftian metaphysics, and provided the creature with lascivious-sounding descriptions of feelers and appendices.[71] Both Cthylla and the Scyllae of *Monster Girls* are tentacle creatures whose appendixes take on a phallic role, overlapping with the implied or explicit vaginal aspects of their renditions (in many representations, the vagina is made to correspond to mouth of the octopus which, in *vagina dentata* fashion, contains a dangerous beak).

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[70] Caillois (1973: 87).
[71] Such aspects have been discussed in an implied sub-text in Lovecraft's literature of "indescribable" horrors, whereas his successors and audiences often made them explicitly in literature, art, film, and video games. Miller (2011:147).

By the 2000s, Cthylla become a signifier of tentacular, Lovecraftian monsters read in sexualized terms, an example of which is the collection of stories *Cthulhurotica*.[72] The cover art of this book (Fig. 4–25) is one of the many examples of how representations of Scylla (Fig. 4.24) or descriptions of Cthylla have shifted modern reception of the ancient Greco-Roman myth from a focus on the canine to a fixation on the octopoid.

Fig. 4–24 (left): A Scylla/succubus, 'Other Races'.
Fig. 4–25 (right): *Cthulhurotica*.

Cthulhurotica's cover and other variants of porn and sexual Scyllae, including the tentacular physiognomies of *Monster Girls,* display a playful approach to monstrous biology and to the consumption of sexualized material. Jens supplied her character with three rows of teeth, like sharks (an animal associated with Scylla, who has six heads).[73] She explained that octopods have eight tentacles, even though Cthylla could, nonsensically, have both eight or twelve feelers at different times. The potential for both phallic and vaginal readings of the tentacles reactivate possible readings in line with the ancient Scylla's as a castrating feminine creature girdled by dog heads, and with Charybdis as a gaping maw erupting from the sea-womb. The substitution of the snakes with headless tentacles like the arms of octopods in new variations multiplies interpretive potential, given how the penetrative quality of the Scylla motif seem to have been enhanced. The market of erotic products like *Monster*

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[72] Cuinn (2010).
[73] Jens (1997:70).

Girls also offers stories in which monsters have feminine secondary sexual traits but male sexual organs, such as in the *futanari* genre. The *Monster Girls* could be argued to deconstruct sexual binaries for curious males, prior to their re-composition into a binary.[74] The Monster Girls use tentacles to ensnare their sexual victims, but the octopoid arms surrounding their vaginas suggest penetrative fantasies.

A variety of sexual fantasies could be said to be left to the imagination of audiences. Manipulative or intrusive tentacles could be said to work as phallic substitutes to convey a sense of otherness at a surface, figurative level.[75] As "primordial characters", to borrow Needham's formulation,[76] they condense into one signifier a broader notion of other–than–the–human that characterized the monsters of myth and the aliens of science fiction alike, embodying fear of the other as well as attraction.

4–7: *Myth and miscegenation: patriarchy and pansexuality*

The considerations I have made so far regarding Scylla and Charybdis as oxymoronic, hybrid creatures of otherness will allow me to conclude this analysis with a discussion of how contemporary anxieties about miscegenation may be deemed to resonate with ancient Greek myths' interrogations of biology. In *Monster Girls'* plot, humans and monster girls generate hybrids. Likewise, the manga *My Sister is a Little Scylla* (Fig. 4–2) even touches upon incest, using monstrosity as a device through which to represent the taboo. Many other examples of fan art across web-sites openly represent pregnant monstrous creatures, sometimes alongside children.[77] In *Monster Girls,* Scylla is described as receiving "constant marriage proposals"; vignettes from the books series portray scenarios of intercourse with the monster girls (Fig. 4–30).[78] Studies of anime consumption from a psychoanalytic perspective have suggested that certain texts may be designed to cater to a young male readership in order to soothe and

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[74] See again Allison (1996) on this process in Japanese youth audiences.
[75] Carbone (2013: 91-95).
[76] Needham (1994).
[77] See, for examples, http://cthyllafhtagn.tumblr.com, or
http://appledumplings.tumblr.com/post/43551448791/slugboxcreatureart-theres-a-lot-of.
[78] See http://hentai2read.com/my_little_sister_is_a_scylla/1/ (latest access: 15/05/2016).

overcome a latent Oedipal complex in relation to their mother.[79] Reproductive anxieties are also a central feature of Jens's story about Cthylla. The encounter feeds into a paranoid fantasy of conspiracy involving the character's own baby, contact with Cthylla, and birth of a monstrous hybrid.[80] These scenarios have been explored extensively in tentacle erotica's fantasies which include representations of maternity;[81] as well as in some of Jens' manifest sources of inspiration, among which the popular supernatural thriller *Rosemary's Baby*–in which the female protagonist has a child by Satan.[82]

Jens's work also seems influenced by how more recent films have reflected on genetic engineering through projection onto monsters and aliens. In the *Species* series (1995-2007), half-alien hybrids lure male victims while disguised as human females to harvest their semen, revealing raping tentacles and castrating maws, in a pulpy *sci-fi-esque* take on the femme fatale trope (Figure 4–32). In *Alien: Resurrection* (1997) the protagonist Ripley is cloned. She retains human and xenomorphic genes, and mothers a terrifying man-alien hybrid (Fig. 4–31). The mainstream film *Prometheus* (2012) features a scene of tentacle rape that reminds of Renaissance representations of Glaucus and Scylla (Fig. 4–33).[83]

Fig. 4–30 (top left): *Monster Girl Encyclopaedia: Monster Brides*, Cross 2012.
Fig. 4–31 (top middle): *Alien: Resurrection*, J.–P. Jeunet, USA 1997.
Fig. 4–32 (top right): *Species,* R. Donaldson, USA 1995.
Fig. 4–33 (bottom): *Prometheus*, R. Scott, USA 2012.

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[79] For a psychoanalytic take on erotic manga and anime see Allison (1996). On the complexities of audiences see Shamoon (2004).
[80] Jens (1997: 90).
[81] https://foolz.fireden.net/d/thread/6182609/
[82] Ira Levin (USA, 1967), adapted in film form by R. Polanski (USA, 1968).
[83] See Chapter 1, note 18.

These examples of bio-horror, which Thacker defined as the union between scientific dystopias and processes taking place in the human body,[84] are part of larger cultural narratives in which the reception of Scylla and Charybdis must be contextualized as embody discourses on the abnormal.[85] *Monster Girls* and Jen's story see the monstrous body as a "contradictive conundrum" of biological instability, rupturing the boundaries of mankind's integrity through "hybrid aberration".[86] Sexualized she-monsters cater to an ultimately unbridled pansexual imagination that transgress the borders of what separates the human from the animal. Ostensibly, they disrupt a normative symbolic order, even though the female body is the site where the 'culprit' of miscegenation is usually investigated. Jens's protagonist, biologist Cullom, could be read as an Ovidian Scylla, who suffers from Glaucus' and Circe's deeds (Circe punished the maiden and turned her into a monster for giving in to the advances of the merman). Both Cullom and Scylla take part in the "liminal women" tradition of the Lovecraftian tradition, sources "of disruption and disorder", often "culpable of miscegenation, interbreeding with the alien Other, creatures from the sea, from Hell, from other dimensions".[87]

Through the female and animal body, myth explores fears that familiar orders may collapsed, and contains them symbolically within a domesticated fantasy. The Scyllae of this chapter explore the confines of this order, probing zoophilic fantasies in which ideals of normative humanism are shattered and leave room for ambiguous perspectives.[88] Studies of ancient symbols have always read animalistic hybrids like Scylla as representations of a bestial side of humanity.[89] The operations of modern texts analysed in this chapter are conceptually similar to how myths are thought to have operated in ancient Greece: as Newmyer notes "differentness" was explored but removed from the centre of the male citizen; to reach the animal, one had to follow a trajectory that would go through barbarians

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[84] Thacker (2002).
[85] See Braidotti (2012). Such themes in the films discussed above are also likely to have been partly inspired, or rekindled, by the public debate on cloning that followed the case of the Dolly sheep cloning from 1996.
[86] McCormack (2012: 294–:303).
[87] See Wisker (2013: 32).
[88] See biologist Dekkers on the physical love for animals (2007: 154).
[89] See Dombrowski (2014: xv).

and female "others".[90] Genealogies of monsters and deities –or hybrids like the Minotaur generated by Pasiphae and the Bull, or the story of Leda and the Swan– worked as manifestations of the perceived unbridled generative powers of nature. Likewise, one has to traverse the female monstrosity of Scylla to plunge into the abysses of miscegenation, before resurfacing in the normalized order of reality.

Braidotti conceptualizes relation between humans and animals as an ontological entitlement in which animals are saturated with projections, taboos and fantasies on the basis of their being Others.[91] Her approach to living matter is conceptualized as an interrogation of the conflict between *bios* and *zoe,* where the first term denotes life organized with men at the peak of zoological and gendered norms, while the second stands for the wider scope of animal life explored through fantasy, to which femininity is also associated.[92] Interestingly, Donna Haraway deliberately "steals" Lovecraft's *mythos* to discuss the Cthulucene as a political view that defies biological hierarchies, hailing all life as an inherently and positively monstrous entanglement of all varieties of "mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings".[93] These perspectives seem to confirm my reflections on how Scylla and Charybdis' relevance in media like *Monster Girls* lies in the Greek figure's potential to work as catalysers for relentless discourses and interrogations of otherness, rather than in any idea of aesthetic affiliation with Homer.

4–8: *The monstrous as anti-canon: Scylla and the classical paradigm*

As I have already argued in this research, Greek myth's popularity explains the variety of re-activations of Scylla and Charybdis in modern media, but is only one of the many elements at play in each case. For Western Lovecraftian authors, Scylla is part of a familiar and prestigious idea of Greek

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[90] Newmyer (2014: 507).

[91] Braidotti (2012: 68). Also see Derrida's (2006) concept of *carnophallogocentrism,* describing how male ideologies symbolically subdue the subjects it qualifies as feminine, animal, brute, and other.

[92] Braidotti (2012: 60).

[93] Haraway claims an original reappraisal of the term's roots. She defines the Chthulucene (spelled as such) as a metaplasm of the two Greek roots *khthôn* (for cthonic, earthly beings) and *kainos* (the now, or time of beginnings, a time for being in the present), and advocates for a way of living the present that rejects both "awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures" (Haraway 2016: 1). See also Haraway (1991) on animality.

myth. For the Japanese designers of *Monster Girls,* Greekness is an exotic, otherworldly setting on which to fantasies of annihilating wombs, phallic women, and metonymically sexual representations of bodies. On a Facebook page titled "Do Androids Dream of Electric Memes?", collecting Internet material of various kinds, mostly related to fantasy, a user declared the following:

Fig. 4–34: Folk mythology theory, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Memes?*[94]

This observation is not entirely naïve—in fact, it captures the ambivalence between originality and derivativeness of many myth-variants discussed in this chapter, along with their lewdness and excess, and the way monstrous bodies are often metonymically reminiscent of sexual organs.[95] Ancient myth is part of a multi-layered and decentred rhizome of relations in social context: ancient images carry with them diachronically sexual undertones that are reactivated by new renditions alongside those of coeval genres, themes, and preoccupations. In addition to displaying concerns with sexuality and ideologies of the present, the examples of this chapter seem to suggest that a diachronic appreciation of the persistence of myth motifs should not be ruled out in principle as an absolutely decontextualizing practice. In spite of obviously different contexts, visual and narrative motifs do persist across time, allowing the researcher to glance into historical processes through which myth-motifs remain resilient.

Of course, the pornographic Scyllae and Cthyllae of contemporary media are hardly the fantasies of ancient Greek sailors. Rather, they seem to anxieties of the present age, relating to genetic engineering and laboratory practices. They also reflect the "differentiation (and targeting)" of our era's pornography, "working through the axes of interrelated genres, *paraphilias*, and subcultures", facilitated

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[94] Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/Do-Androids-Dream-of-Electric-Memes-1399579600356723/ (latest access: 31 /12/2016)
[95] On Priapus, Baubo, and other vaginal and phallic myth-characters, see Lubell (1994).

by the Internet and social media.[96] And yet, the modern monstrosities are consistent with the ancient Greek material's ability to provide a *what if* around the sexual and generative powers of the animal-other and the monstrous-feminine.

Biogenetic-related obsessions of the present focus on hybrid creatures that interrogate, as Braidotti noted, the fibre of the living, exploiting the generative powers of women, animals, plants, genes, and cells.[97] Scylla demonstrates monsters' powers to show what McCormack defined as "the excesses, potentialities, and infinite protean configurations of form and flesh available in nature".[98] The ancient Greek myth of Pasiphae and the Bull, with the Minotaur as the horrifying consequence of deviant copulation,[99] explored similar anxieties. Bulls provided models of fertility and sexuality.[100] Bio-medical theory in antiquity has been argued to focus on the reproductive organ of bulls as a consequence of the practices of husbandry.[101] Myths like the ones of Leda and Pasiphae could be argued to explore similar territory. Likewise, Scylla's ancient myths insisted on correlations with perceived animal lustfulness and fantastic permutations.

Such operations are open to both reactionary and potentially liberating, scandalous possibilities in relation to mankind's Others.[102] In spite of on-going interplay and transformation, the popularity of Greco-Roman symbols has secured Scylla and Charybdis' powerful iconography as an intersection of feminine and aquatic, human and animal. In the examples discussed over this and the previous chapters, the female abjection and biological otherness of Scylla and Charybdis was observed in their inhabiting a monster-within human nexus. The figure's relation with the life of the oceans, will be approached in the next chapter from a different perspective, considering a different series of texts in which the creatures have also been seen as animals and monsters-out-there.

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[96] Maina/Zecca (2011). See Williams' (1999) conceptualization of obscenity as what is culturally kept *off-scene* and can be explored through non-public consumption of media like pornography.
[97] Braidotti (2012: 40).
[98] McCormack (2012: 293).
[99] Shelton (2007: 100).
[100] Gordon (2007: 127).
[101] Kalof (2007: 2, 100).
[102] Carbone (2013: 104-5).

CHAPTER 5:
SEARCHING FOR SEA MONSTERS

5–1: *Myth and factuality: the spectacle of aquatic giants*

Narratives of discoveries of mysterious marine monsters represent another area of reception in which Scylla and Charybdis resurface enduringly, this time as *monsters-out-there* in the sea. Alongside the monstrous-feminine reception of the myth explored in previous chapters, a striking amount of references to Scylla and Charybdis can be found in modern stories and tales on sea creatures, accounts of sightings of cetaceans, massive octopuses and squids, and of the purportedly elusive animal species that the proponents of cryptozoology—the science of hidden animals–seek to bring to light.[1] Such sightings are reported in a variety of media, from documentary films to alleged sightings in newspapers, often at the intersection between entertainment, popular science, and mystery, and often convey narratives of journeys to the recesses of the water element.

To discuss Scylla and Charybdis' resurfacing within new legends of sea monsters disseminated through media in different areas of culture, I will focus on two US-produced television series. The first case, *Clash of the Gods* (2009),[2] is a documentary series based on Greek mythology where Scylla and Charybdis are rationalized as a pre-scientific misreading, attributed to the ancient Greek seafarers, of giant octopuses and whirlpools in the Mediterranean Strait. *Destination Truth* (2007-2012)[3] is a pseudo-scientific programme on allegedly inexplicable mysteries from across the world that stages a mission to film a sea monster in Ayia Napa (Cyprus), and defines it as a relative of the Greek Scylla. After showing how recent narratives of sea monsters continue long-standing traditions of myth, literature, and maritime exploration, I will discuss the broad

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[1] Heuvelmans (1970). The term is derived from Greek words *kruptos* ('hidden'), *zoon* ('animal'), and *logos* ('discourse'). See Heuvelmans (1970: xxv). See also *Still on the Track. The Voice of the International Cryptozoological Society*, http://forteanzoology.blogspot.co.uk , (l. a. 2016 06 28).
[2] History Channel, USA—produced by J. Gaffey, B. Hunt, V. Kralyevich, *et al.*
[3] Known in the UK as *The Monster Hunter*; Discovery Channel, USA— Mandt Bros. Productions, Ping Pong Productions.

inter-textual relations tying the documentaries to tales of sea monsters and how such tales circulate trans-medially: (from modern legends in Cyprus, covered by local newspapers, to discussions taking place on social networks). Such interpretations of Scylla and Charybdis reflect both longstanding narratives of marine monstrosities, and traditions of explaining them as misreading of natural phenomena.[4]

Looking at the persistence of a positivist tradition that reduces myths' cultural complexity to single monogenetic causes found in nature, and drawing on Gyerin's (1983) and Hesse's (1993) notion of disciplinary "boundary work", I will discuss how "correct" explanations of myth take part in larger claims that different communities, scientists and mystery buffs alike, make regarding their purported ability to explain myth as nature.[5] Drawing on documentary film theory, folk and legends studies, and epistemology, and adopting Karl Popper's theorization on the limits of empiricism,[6] I will argue that such reductionist perspectives on myth reveal above all a series of disciplinary or cultural confirmation biases, while revealing contingent interest in selling entertainment products with a science-solves-myth narratives.

While showing how Scylla and Charybdis re-emerge within different narratives of creatures seen and unseen, factual or imaginary, proven or disproven, I will underline how Greco-Roman antiquity works as a platform from which to retrieve evidence, seek cultural legitimation for disciplines like cryptozoology, or set science in storytelling mode. By discussing how "correct" explanations of Homeric tales as octopuses or whirlpools underpin claims to legitimate appropriation of myths, I will also pave the way for Chapter 6's examination of the affective and cultural forms of attachment to Homeric geographies and localities in the Mediterranean.

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[4] See my Introduction, and Chapter 1.
[5] Gieryn (1983: 792) conceptualized boundary-work as a series of discoursive strategies aimed at demarcating disciplinary and academic territory, with the result that conflicts often may emerge not only on the notion of validity of criteria of analysis, but even because different disciplines pursue different claims of authority and resources. Hesse (1993) adapted this model to claims to scientific factuality among different sectors and discourses in American society.
[6] Popper (2002a; first English edition 1957).

5–2: *Scylla and Charybdis in sea monsters' traditions*

Whilst the Age of Discovery has ended, the oceans have remained the vastest unexplored area of the world.[7] Exploration of the deep sea, including historic ones by Jacques Cousteau,[8] and recent ones like James Cameron's *Aliens of the Deep*,[9] demonstrates both scientific and popular interest in our planet's oceans and their inhabitants, and their spectacular potential in film form. Given that the Sea is a largely occluded and occult area, documentary films on marine expanses employ concepts that characterize it as a world of its own, populated by alien creatures, from Folco Quilici's *Sesto Continente* (1954) and Cousteau and Louis Malle's *Le monde du silence* (1956), to BBC's *The Blue Planet* (2001). The unfathomable oceans have often inspired hypotheses about the existence of large-sized aquatic species such as giant octopuses and squids, and sightings of such animals have often been related to the alleged belief of the ancients in monsters like Scylla and Charybdis.

As I am about to discuss, *Clash of the Gods* and *Destination Truth* provide audiences with elements of myth, mystery, and scientific discovery. Stories about the marvels and aquatic abysses of our planet are a prerogative of the popular imagination and scholarly traditions alike. Recent studies have focused on the relations between the seas and the "marvellous, terrible, and colossal fishes, serpents, sirens, and other creatures from the populous mythological cast", which would of course include tritons, sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, and the kraken, "each of them colossal, singular, and fearsome".[10]

The mythological kinship of Scylla and Charybdis with beasts like the Tennysonian Kraken, *Moby Dick*'s whale, and other titanic animals has been continuously rekindled in popular science—for instance, in Gail Stewart's *Water Monsters* (2011), an example of many, accessible Western genealogies of mythical sea creatures available to audiences. In other media, the re-activation of ancient myth works to provide historical grounding to new sightings (actual or alleged) of sea creatures: the assumption being that titanic creatures may have

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[7] See Deacon/Rice/Summerhayes (2001).
[8] Filmed in Cousteau/Malle (1956).
[9] Cameron/Quale (2005).
[10] Warner (2014) an online resource, discussing Van Duzer (2013) and Nigg (2013).

remained largely concealed from the experience of most people and official scientific discovery, even though spotted in the past, influencing our myths. Newspaper articles often make use of spectacular titles or striking photography to underscore the exceptionality of the finds, and describe waters as a mythical deep dimension, whose fauna is alien and removed from common experience, unless the creatures, or their remains, are spotted or surface on our shores. Stories of sea monsters usually take the form of fascinating or unsettling reports of specimens of newly-discovered, bizarre species, or ones setting new records of gigantism (giant crabs, shored whales, and record-sized octopuses): from the recently shored "huge sea creature" in Indonesia (Fig. 5–2)[11] and "legendary 17-foot long" sea monsters revealed to the human eye (Figure 5–3)[12] to the fabricated mystery of the Bloop (Fig. 5–34,[13] a mysterious underwater sound,[14] and the 'Crabzilla' hoax.[15]
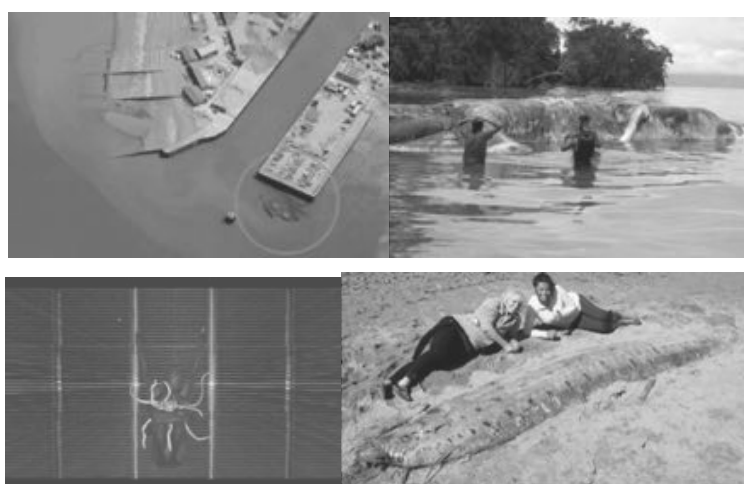
Fig. 5–1 (top-left): The mystery of 'Crabzilla', *Mail Online,* UK 2014.
Fig. 5–2 (top-right): Shoring of a giant sea creature, Indonesia, 2017.
Fig. 5–3 (bottom-left): Fictional oceanic octopus, *The Bloop* (Slate Magazine, USA 2014).
Fig. 5–4 (bottom-right): Shoring of a sea snake, *CNN*, USA 2014.

Scylla and Charybdis are often included in such stories. Recently, an article on the *BBC Culture* web-site stated that "ever since antiquity, mankind [has

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[11] Baynes (2017).
[12] Martinez/Chan (2015).
[13] Slate Magazine (2014).
[14] An alleged audio call from a titanic creature from the oceans, related in popular imagination to such stories as H. P. Lovecraft's Call of Cthulhu (see Ch. 4).
[15] Spillet (2014).

been] fretfully besotted with strange creatures from the oceans' depths"; the author thus proceeded to cite Scylla and Charybdis as prime examples of "fantastical and threatening sea creatures" derived from real animals, not unlike the Testament's Leviathan, the Norse Kraken, and the more recent (and freshwater) Loch Ness monster.[16] The article noted that "Scylla's top half took the form of a gigantic, bare-breasted woman, while her nether regions consisted of several vicious dogs, emerging from her genitals", but focused more on her resemblance to monsters from Olaus Magnus's *Charta Marina* (see Fig. 5–9), historical records of the sightings and shoring of whales, and other cases of aquatic behemoths understood as monsters.[17] In such views, myth is a form of pre-science, or the product of poetic inspiration. This narrative can be traced back to the second century BCE Greek historian Polybius' euhemerist reading of Scylla as a reflection of marine fauna, including "the dolphins, dog-fish, and other *ketos*" roaming in the Strait.[18] Charybdis was explained as a whirlpool and then became, in turn, a metonymical way to address any such phenomena. In Magnus' *Carta Marina*'s (1539) depiction of "a Charybdis" in the Scandinavian waters (where the large whirlpool of the Saltstraumen is located), or in a print of the 'Charybdis Muscana', representing the Mokstraumen whirlpool in Norway, in which erupting columns of recall the heads of Scylla (see Fig. 5–5 and 5–6).

Fig. 5–5: Horrenda Charybdis in Scandinavia, Olaus Magnus, *Carta Marina* (1539).[19]
Fig. 5–6: Charybdis Muscana, Jansson van Waesberghe (1678).

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[16] Sooke (2016).
[17] Sooke (2016).
[18] Phillips 1953:187-188. Euhemerists explained myth as generating from actual historical or natural events. See Hawes (2004), discussed *supra,* Ch. 1 and note 42.
[19] Whirlpools are still situated both off the Lofoten islands, and the strait of Saltstraumen off Bodø, Norway. See Van Duzer (2013: 43).

Explanations of myth as natural phenomena also underpin forms of professional or affective claims today. In my Documentary Film (and in the next chapter), I discuss how a biologist residing in the area of the Strait interprets the monsters as the mythical renditions of local whirlpools and of the viper fish that occasionally shore in the area.[20] Scylla and Charybdis are also a mainstay of the catalogues of cryptozoology, a discipline defined by its proponents as "an examination and evaluation of ethnographic, testimonial, and physical evidence" to determine the identity of 'hidden' animals requiring further evidence for scientific appraisal.[21] The founder of cryptozoology, Bernard Heuvelmans, believed the myth of Scylla demonstrate the existence of giant octopodes of colossal sizes.[22] Intersections between cryptozoology and studies of antiquity have generated a distinct tradition: Mayor (1989) suggested the cross-checking of paleontological records, modern sightings, and ancient Greco-Roman sources. In 2016, the Cryptozoological Society announced a Yearbook on monsters and cryptids "of Classical Myth".[23] Cryptozoology publications make extensive use of images of monsters from myth and legend: from extensive references to Scylla and Hydra (Fig. 5–2), to modern-age engravings of giant octopuses attacking boats (Fig. 5–1), whale hunts (Fig. 5–3), and sea serpents (Fig. 5–4).

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[20] See Fig. I–13; further discussed in Ch. 6.
[21] Eberhart (2010: xxiii).
[22] Heuvelmans (1958).
[23] *Still on the Track. The Voice of the International Cryptozoological Society*, http://forteanzoology.blogspot.co.uk (l. a. 2016 06 28).

Fig. 5–7: *Poulpe Colossal,* P. Denys de Montford, 1801.
Fig. 5–8: Hercules and the Lernean Hydra, date unclear (Louvre– F386).
Fig. 5–9: *Baleine pris pour une île*, from Lafréri's *Carta Marina* (1572).[24]
Fig. 5–10: Sea Monster Serpent, Hans Egede, Naturalist's Library, London-Edinburgh 1839.

Ancient myths have also been incorporated into more recent discourses of mysteries. In the *Encyclopedia of Science* (an independent Internet web-page designed to collect and explain fantastic stories) astronomer and science writer David Darling classifies both the Scylla case and cryptozoology within the dimension of "scientific mysteries" like alien abductions, the Roswell Incident, and paranormal views on the dark matter.[25] Television programmes like *Destination Truth*, as I will discuss, presume Scylla and Charybdis are "living fossils"— cetaceans, giant octopuses, sea snakes, and other animals from archaic era, that may still lurk undiscovered in the depths of the oceans.[26] Alternatively, such myths are explained as the result of a misreading of existing species, like sharks, whales, or giant octopuses (as I will soon discuss, *Clash of Gods* classifies the Sirens as manatees or cormorants). In such cases, science is shown to provide

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[24] Artist Lafréri adapted O. Magnus' *Carta Marina* (1539, see Fig. 5–5).
[25] *Encyclopedia of Science*, http://www.daviddarling.info (*l.a.*, 28/06/2016)
[26] See Heuvelmans (1970:70) on the living fossil as an "anachronism [...] from a vanished age".

actual explanations for phenomena that, in antiquity, would have worked either as inspirations for poets or as material for superstition, becoming folk legends and false beliefs .

Both of these strategies can also go together: stories may be combinations of scientific approaches to myths and literature about the sea and more openly fantastic visualizations or claims. As I am now going to discuss, programmes like *Clash of the Gods* and *Destination Truth,* and the way in which they conceptualize, dramatize, and package marine mysteries and their explanations, show how the Greek monsters have become part of a way of looking at marine mega fauna in which the latter is neither completely imaginary nor entirely fictitious. Greek myth and aquatic monsters occupy an ambiguous status between natural the dimensions of observation and mystery, providing primary material for stories revolving around science and exploration.

5–3: *Clash of the Gods – Greek myth and edutainment*

Clash of the Gods is a weekly television series based on mythology that premiered in 2009 on History, a satellite channel available to more than 96 million viewers in the US alone.[27] The programme covered Greek and Norse mythologies.[28] Scylla and Charybdis featured extensively in episodes 6 and 7 of the show's Season 1, and also appear on the DVD cover. Episode 6 presents the dilemma of Odysseus crossing the infamous two-sided narrow channel where "a man-eating monster known as Scylla" faced "a massive whirlpool known as the Charybdis" on the other side (ep. 6, 22.27). The animated show follows them with the commonplace mapping on the Strait of Messina (Fig. 5.11; see Ch. 1 and 2), with Ulysses stuck between a rock and a hard place ("where the cliché originated", 23:23). *Trompe l'oeil* animations and gritty visual effects illustrate the tsunamis and giant whirlpool of Charybdis the crew steers away from and that "sucks up the ocean, seizing everything in its reach". Eventually, in the form of a six-headed marine serpent, "the Scylla strikes" (Fig. 5.12) (24.50).

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[27] Previously The History Channel, http://www.history.com; from Seidman (2015).
[28] See Chapter 3 on the relations between Greek and Norse myths in film and games.
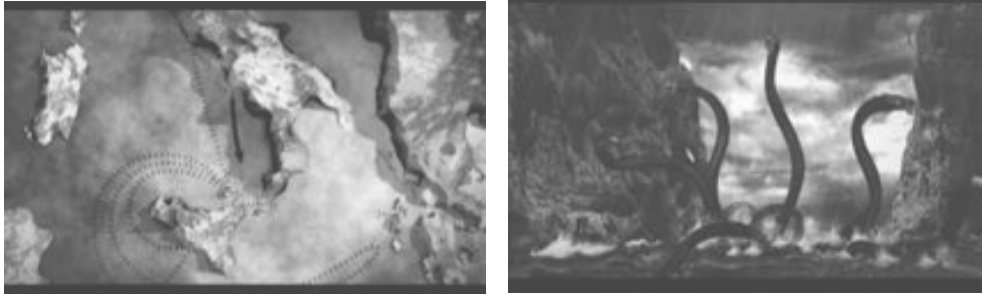
Fig. 5–11: The Homeric Strait, *Clash of the Gods* (History, USA 2009: ep. 07 at 20.55).

Fig. 5.12 – Scylla emerging in the Strait, *Clash of the God* (History, USA 2009: ep. 07 at 23.08).

Clash of Gods' marketing material claims that the programme engages and presents Homer's "lively epic" for "literature, global studies, […] world civilization courses, or […] units and lectures on mythology […] for 8th grade and above".[29] It is explicitly presented as the result of factual information, and the network even devoted a companion web-site to Greek myths.[30] In fact, the show is above all a spectacular take on Greek mythology, playing to the interests of its target audience through a vibrant aesthetic of monstrosity. It also draws on the gruesome representations of blood and battles (ep. 6, 27.05) (Ep. 7., Fig. 5.13a--b) of films like *Clash of the Titans* (2010), graphic novels like *300* (1998), and video games like *God of War* (See Ch. 3). In spite of the often over-dramatic style, the re-enactment achieves the kind of dread expressed by the *Odyssey*'s description as the serpent-like Scylla heads emerge from the waters and devour Ulysses' men (Fig. 5.13c-d).

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[29] See *Odysseus: Curse of the Sea,*
http://cdn.history.com/sites/2/2015/08/ClashoftheGodsOdysseus.pdf (latest access: 02/21/2017).
[30] "Greek mythology", *History.com,* http://www.history.com/topics/ancient-history/greek-mythology, latest access: 21/02/2017).

Fig. 5–13 (a-d, clockwise): Polyphemus, Spartan fights, and Scylla,
Clash of the God (Ep. 07—00.20, 00. 15, 25.33 and 25.40).

Clash of the Gods[31] also engages the explanatory modalities and truth-claim values of expository documentary film,[32] conveying a narrative in which science evolves from irrationality: "to us it's a myth, but to the ancients it was reality; a way to make sense of a terrifying world'.[33] The show overlooks the feminine characteristics of other traditions of reading them as female monsters (Ch. 3 and 4) in favour of a marked interest in their features as terrifying aquatic monsters. Scholars are said to have puzzled for centuries over what might have inspired Homer, until "corpses of massive tentacle beasts washed up ashore across the globe" in the 1800s, and giant squid made the fictive Scylla "become fact".[34]

In figures 5.14 and 5.15, one can see how the Scylla in *Clash of Gods* is associated with scenes of titanic octopuses attacking ships–a commonplace ever since Olaus Magnus' *Carta Marina* (see Ch. 2). This interpretation is also typical of cryptozoologists (as I discuss *infra*). In *Clash,* it is sometimes presented in the form of a question ("was the Scylla based on real sightings of a real squid?"),[35] and other times as a notion acquired through modern empirical science. Scylla's "neighbour, the whirlpool Charybdis", is related (while zooming on a map of the

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[31] From now on, in time-coded notes, *CoG*.
[32] See Nichols (2008).
[33] *CoG*, ep. 1, at 00.22.
[34] —ep. 7,, at 26.25.
[35] —ep. 7, at–27.09

Strait—Fig. 5.15) to modern oceanographers' discovery of "a giant whirlpool zone that matches its description in the narrow strait of Messina". Scylla is again related to octopodes or squids (Fig. 5.14). Likewise, Sirens are said to have been explained by "German scientists"[36] as monk seals, whose wails were amplified by rocks sounding as a natural megaphone on the Li Galli islands – called *Les Sireneuses* (Fig. 5.16b).[37]
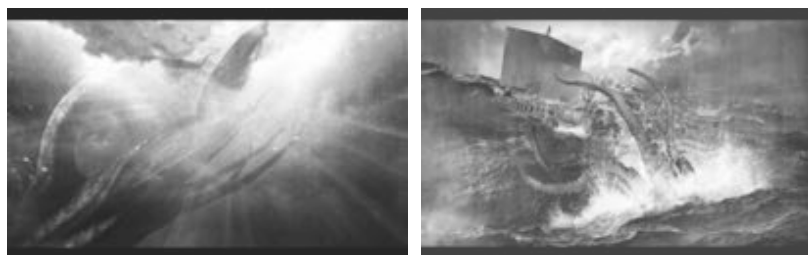
Fig. 5–14 (a-b, clockwise): Giant octopuses of mythology, *Clash of the Gods* (2009).
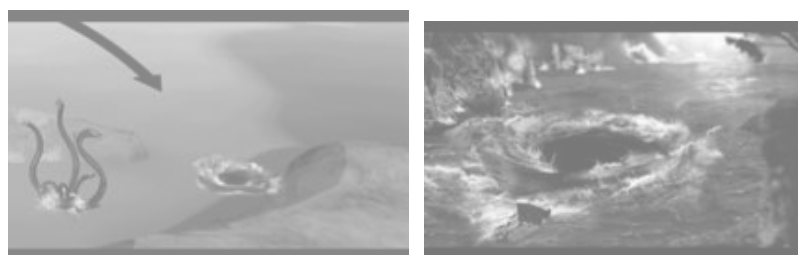
Fig. 5–15 (a-b): Charybdis as a whirlpool, *Clash of the God* (2009)
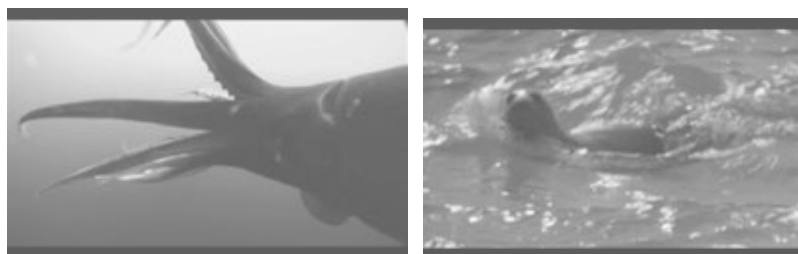
Fig. 5–16 (a-b): Squids and seals as inspiration for myths, *Clash of the God* (2009).

The "stunning discovery of the real causes of myth" (ep. 6, 19.17) is accompanied by interviews with scholars of Greco-Roman antiquity with an interest in archaeology, like David George (Saint Anselm College) and Kristina Milnor (Barnard College). Late economist and classical enthusiast Robert Bittlestone, author of *Odysseus Unbound* (2005), also restates his book's claim that Homer "put his hero into real life places", and that Greek sailors "were

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[36] The reference is probably to Wolf & Wolf (1983), also discussed in Ch. 2, 6.

[37] *CoG*, ep. 6, at 19.17.

exploring far-off lands across the Mediterranean"(Fig. 5.18).[38] For Bittlestone, the *Odyssey* was — in Malinowskian fashion—more than entertaining fiction: it was a guidebook to live in a dangerous world".[39] Hence, giant squids and "treacherous whirlpools" inspired the myths as "threats faced by the ancient sailors".[40] Such views are reinforced by Scientific American editor-in-chief John Rennie, who explains that the clashing of the Tyrrhenian and Ionian seas in the Strait results in "huge whirlpools and vicious tides" (Fig. 5–17).[41]

Fig. 5.17 (left): J. Rennie discusses Li Galli, *Destination Truth* (2009).
Fig. 5.18 (right): R. Bittlestone discusses Homeric geography (*Destination Truth*, 2009).

The presence of the experts reinforces a sense of the authoritativeness of the documentary form. Rennie (Fig. 5.17) emphatically states that "it scares [one] to imagine just how powerful [the whirlpools in the Strait] must have been in ancient times, especially for sailors" (ep. 7 at 5.17). In fact, no evidence is presented for this hypothesis: the statement sounds more in line with "the ability of the imagination to exaggerate physical and behavioural difference" of alleged monstrous sightings in order to make them more symbolically striking.[42] The whole packaging of this myth-explanation, ultimately, spectacularizes the gargantuan size of the creatures hailing back from a remote era as well as special dimensions.

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[38] *CoG*, ep. 6, at 02.43-52.
[39] *CoG,* ep. 6, at 2.44.
[40] ——ep. 7, at 28.00. On Malinowski, see the Introduction.
[41] ——ep. 7, 27.32.
[42] Ellen (2017: 3; in print: manuscript provided by the Editor).

Conveying a science-solves-mystery narrative in edutainment and, possibly, sensationalist mode, *Clash of Gods* seems to suggest that viewers will be able to identify, through a suspension of disbelief, with the ancient Greeks who were terrified by the sight of marine giants.

5–4: *Destination Truth — the mystery of Scylla's relative*

While *Clash of the Gods* explains Charybdis and Scylla as giant whirlpools and octopuses, *Destination Truth* correlates a modern tale of a sea monsters to the mythical figures. The television series, mostly offering paranormal programmes and cryptozoological contents,[43] ran from 2007 to 2014 on SyFy Channel, a cable and satellite US channel with a potential of 96 million viewers in the US.[44] SyFy is comparable to History in terms of target audience, even though more focused on animation, science fiction, reality TV, and the supernatural. *Destination Truth* revolves around "intrepid world-adventurer" Josh Gates, travelling with a crew with the aim of investigating "the existence of strange creatures and paranormal phenomena".[45] Highlights include trips to a haunted research stations in Antarctica, and getting on the tracks of imaginary creatures like lake mermaids and the *chupacabra*. In episode 13 of season 4, Gates travels to Cyprus, in search of a sea monster allegedly lurking in the waters around Cape Greco, near the sea resort of Ayia Napa, on the south-eastern coast of the island (Fig. 5.19). The episode revolves around this "Mediterranean monster" and Scylla is shown in an ancient piece of art that remains in the House of Dionysus in Cyprus,[46] "a Roman villa that features a mosaic of a Mediterranean sea monster", discussed as "perhaps a distant relative of our suspect"; Fig. 5.20).[47]

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[43] I am not claiming cryptozoology falls entirely within the ranks of pseudo-scientists. On this issue, see Hurn (2017) and the discussion *infra.*

[44] Seidman (2015).

[45] http://www.syfy.com/destinationtruth (*l.a.*: 05/07/2016)

[46] *"Ayia Napa sea monster: Revision history"*, *Wikipedia,* 16.08.2007, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ayia_Napa_sea_monster&dir=prev&action=history (latest access: 08.06.2016).

[47] *Destination Truth,* Season 4, episode 13, at 30.00—30.17. From now, in time-coded notes, *DT.* The pebble mosaic is displayed in Paphos, in the remains of a Hellenistic building from 2nd century BCE boasting "556 square metres of art covering floors with mythological, vintage and hunting scenes". Department of Antiquities, Republic of Cyprus.

Fig. 5–19 (left): Ayia Napa and Nea Paphos, Cyprus.

Fig. 5–20 (right): Mosaic at the House of Dyonisos, Paphos, Cyprus, ca. 300 BCE.

Scylla's mention establishes an important connection for the show's script, suggesting that ancient myth corroborates the persistence of unknown marine creatures in the present. Cyprus is presented as "the mythological birthplace of Aphrodite", and as "an archaeological wonderland befitting a Greek goddess".[48] The whole episode is structured like an adventure: the crew travels from Los Angeles to Cyprus as special effects display a 3D map of the itinerary covering "almost one third of the world" (28.00). Gates aims to see unexplained things, using the latest technologies available to decipher the setting of "a modern-day mythos", in a daring high-sea journey in pursuit of a "thousands of years old truth".[49] The maps and travel narrative seem to replicate the commonplace exoticism of Mediterranean discovery of the Grand Tours and international tourism, which I have discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. The monster hunting programme, in cryptozoology, engenders a binary between urbanization and the wildness of distant rural places "where legends may still be found".[50]

In *Destination Truth,* ancient mythology– "rich with tales of sea monsters that drag sailors to death"– is discussed alongside alleged contemporary evidence from Ayia Napa, such as newspaper articles and (probably scripted) interviews with witnesses.[51] People are said to have been talking about this monster for thousands of years: the film shows souvenirs with nymphs and sea creatures and ancient art

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http://www.mcw.gov.cy/mcw/DA/DA.nsf/All/59FFC9310818070EC225719B003A2EB8?Open
Document (latest access: 09/06/2016). See Wright (1990:472).

[48] *DT,* at 29.30.

[49] *DT,* at 00.22-00.36.

[50] Heneise (2017: 4, in print: manuscript provided by the Editors).

[51] *DT,* 26.40–27.45.

replicas for tourists, implying the existence of an old local legend relating to the ancient tale. As a modern legend, Ayia Napa blends elements from the supra-local reception of ancient myths and contemporary hearsay developed locally and disseminated through the media. Sightings had been reported in local newspaper *Cyprus Weekly* in 2007, and a Wikipedia page had been established in 2007, containing a description of what was known about the legend:

> The Ayia Napa Sea Monster is a cryptid, claimed to inhabit the coast off Ayia Napa in Cyprus, a popular tourist resort in the Mediterranean. There has been no evidence that the monster actually exists, except in folklore and through various sightings by tourists and locals alike. There exists little photographic evidence except unverified short-films and pictures.[52]

Later, in 2008, an article in the local *Famagusta Gazette* reported the case (Fig. 5–21), this time claiming that some kind of creature, possibly a giant crocodile, was lurking in the Kouris Dam, and equating the case to another supra-local myth, the legend of the Loch Ness monster. *Destination Truth* described rumours of a massive creature "with red eyes and sharp teeth" in the waters; the monster – "a she" – was allegedly sighted many times at Cape Greco as a huge flapping animal destroying fishing nets.[53]

Fig. 5–21: *Cypriot newspaper covering the "Cyprus Nessie", 2008.*

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[52] "Ayia Napa sea monster", *Wikipedia*, 15 August 2007:
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ayia_Napa_sea_monster&oldid=151435536; it was not possible to access an original copy of the newspaper.
[53] *DT,* at 35.10.

The team of *Destination Truth* similarly draws comparison between local and more broadly notorious narratives of monsters. They are shown while visiting the maritime museum in Cape Greco, discussing ancient charts of the sea, threats posed by sharks, and legends of crocodiles dumped in the sewers.[54] Throughout the show, the explorers are followed as they venture on boats, go underwater, and use camera and other instrumentation to try and find the creature (Fig. 5–22). The adventurers head out to a "massive system of caves" and dive down "where the monster might be hiding".[55] Armed with infrared cameras, they locate shredded fishing nets and claim to see something they then lose track of, before deciding "not to play the sea cowboys" and "come up alive".[56] The occasional tongue-in-cheek humour and intentionally unconvincing acting seems to communicate to the savvy spectator not to take the search too seriously. The show overloads the audience with climactic sound effects, musical crescendos and *jump-scare* sudden noises that create false alarms and maximum suspense, only to reveal that all potential discoveries adds up to nil. Something dark and big in length *could have* been half the boat, or maybe it was just a shark or a dolphin. Disturbances in the waters eventually show that "it's just water"; from a hydrophone, one of the crew is "not hearing anything".[57] The crew heads back to Los Angeles to examine the footage, reaching the conclusion they have little evidence, even though they did see something: "this leviathan *may well be a* busking shark" or, again, something else.[58]

Fig. 5–22: Searching for Sea Monsters, *Destination Truth* (Discovery, USA 2007)

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[54] On modern myths of crocodiles in the sewers, especially popular in the US, see Coleman (1996).
[55] *DT,* at 37.13.
[56] *DT,* at 39.30.
[57] *DT,* at 47.00.
[58] *DT,* at 48.00.

Destination Truth's goal is to achieve a search for marine monsters that "have been a fixture of every civilization that ever sailed the high seas", including "the ancient Greeks who used the Mediterranean as a vast highway", and for whom "these creatures were a proxy for all the mysteries lurking beneath the waves". For *Destination Truth,* "the ocean hides its inhabitants well and in the blackest depths there may still be discoveries to be made".[59] The explorers explicitly affiliate the monster with ancient mythology, showing they have collected iconography and studies, and reconstruct the creature with the aid of computer graphics for the pleasure of the viewing audience, comparing it to ancient representations of sea monsters shown on their computer screens (Fig. 5–23).
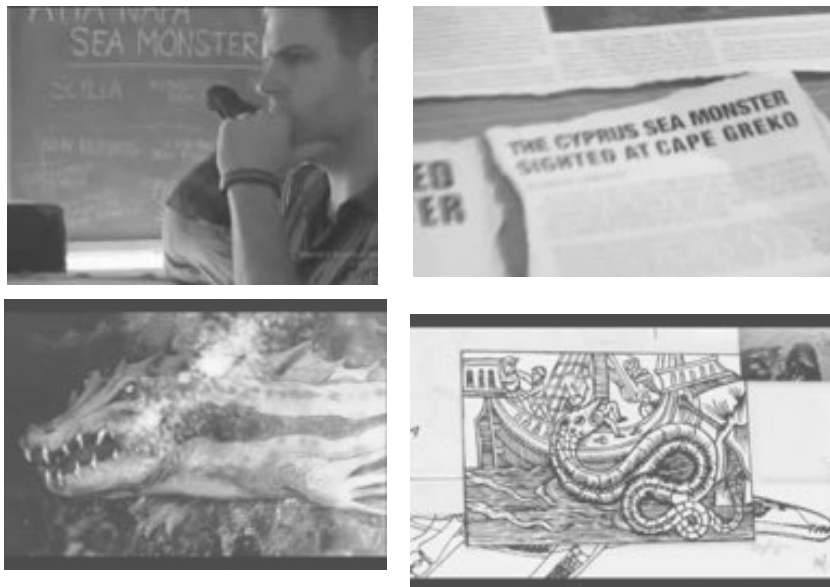
5–23: Investigating modern and ancient monsters, *Destination Truth,* Discovery, USA 2007).

5–5: *Monster-hunters and documentary films: myths and science*

By looking at how these case studies turn myth and science into stories, I am now proceeding to analyse how they can be used to approach critically the tradition of reading myths in positivist fashion. I have, so far, discussed this approach through a discussion of nineteenth century myth-theories (in my Introduction) and more extensively by reminding about the established tradition

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[59] *DT,* at 48.10-25.

of looking at Scylla and Charybdis as natural phenomena. Given how *Destination Truth and Clash of the Gods* rely on a narrative that explains Greco-Roman myth while capitalizing on its popularity, these cases offer an opportunity for me to use them as a platform to continue a discourse on the value of the purported historical truths behind myth. With these case studies as a testing ground, I would like to criticize the larger positivist tradition of explaining the Greek myth that the programmes rely on, suggesting that the reasons why people reiterate such methods have often to do with particular forms of professional and personal alignment with the truths they seek to demonstrate.

To do so, I am reminded, first of all, that even though both programmes are scripted so as to suggest that they align with actual facts and science, neither could be conceived of as conveying scientific research. Both offer entertainment to audiences interested in encounters with the mythical and the unknown, and aim to produce specific mixes of belief and disbelief. One would assume *Clash*'s fictional history falls in a different category than *Destination Truth*'s paranormal antics, but both shows are equally unscientific, in the vein of most paranormal series and supernatural programmes hosted by the SyFy and History channels. While resorting to science as a generic narrative of discovery, their underlying episteme reflects the reductionist flaw of the positivist thought they rely on: what philosopher of science Karl Popper has defined as the *problem of induction*.[60] For Popper, relying on empirical experience may suggests a distance from "the fanciful and arbitrary creations of the poet's mind", but experience can be pre-formed by one's assumptions, unless a given hypothesis is always deemed as falsifiable. In this light, *Destination Truth* merely amasses anecdotal evidence to fabricate a story of a monster lurking in Aghia Napa ever since the times of the ancient Greeks, while *Clash of the Gods* simplifies a process of reception of elements from the natural world into mythology as a linear process that has already been established *a priori*.

In addition to Popper's critique of positivism, I am borrowing the notion of "boundary work" from Gyeran's study on inter-disciplinary discourse (1983), particularly in its adaptation by Hesse's (1993), who used it for an anthropological

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[60] Popper (2002a: 4).

study of beliefs in the paranormal. Hesse discussed claims of the supernatural as a disputed terrain between anti-establishment New Agers, fringe researchers, and institutionalized positivist sceptics. Adapting Hesse's conceptualization, I am looking at claims on the existence of sea monsters as a terrain where one could distinguish between positivist scientists, mystery hunters, and mystery believers. The conceptual framework of boundary-making will allow me to probe into how different disciplines operate not simply by being more or less rational, but also through "boundary-work", drawing lines between non-legitimate and legitimate claims to factuality.[61]

In light of this classification, *Destination Truth* could be regarded as an example of mystery believers' approach to myth. The documentary is crassly unscientific, even though it flaunts a lot of questions and hypotheses for the sake of providing a mystery-solving attitude. A platform for fantasy disguised as the search for truth, it follows monster of the deep that may have been neglected by sciences.[62] *Clash of the Gods*, on the other hand, caters to the positivist scientists' group. It suggests that the myth of Scylla and Charybdis can be explained by attributing mysticism and credulity to the ancients, in contrast to modern science's savviness and method. In so doing, consideration of the complexity of ancient Greek history and myths[63] is elided, and the past is portrayed as a monolithic dimension of belief. One can see the ancients/moderns epistemic binary at work in many other documentaries, like the 2011 Italian show *Ulisse*, a prime time popular science series that explained Scylla as a shark or an octopus (Fig. 5–24).[64] Guest biologist Mainardi also explained the half-bird sirens from ancient Greek myth as marine birds producing a child-like, mellow, lamenting verse, and their later half-fish versions as manatees, whose breasts seen from a distance would recall women—myth could be discovered "while studying zoology".[65]

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[61] Hesse (1993).
[62] See Hines (2003: 16) on mystery programmes and anti-establishment narratives.
[63] See, again, Hawes (2014:1-35) on euhemerists and allegorists in antiquity. Also see Rossi (1971) and Severi (2015: 5) on a more nuanced approach to the oral/written traditions binary.
[64] *Ulisse – Il fantastico viaggio dell'Odissea*, RAI, Italy 2001, at 00.14.
[65] ——08.00. See Barloy (1978: 105).
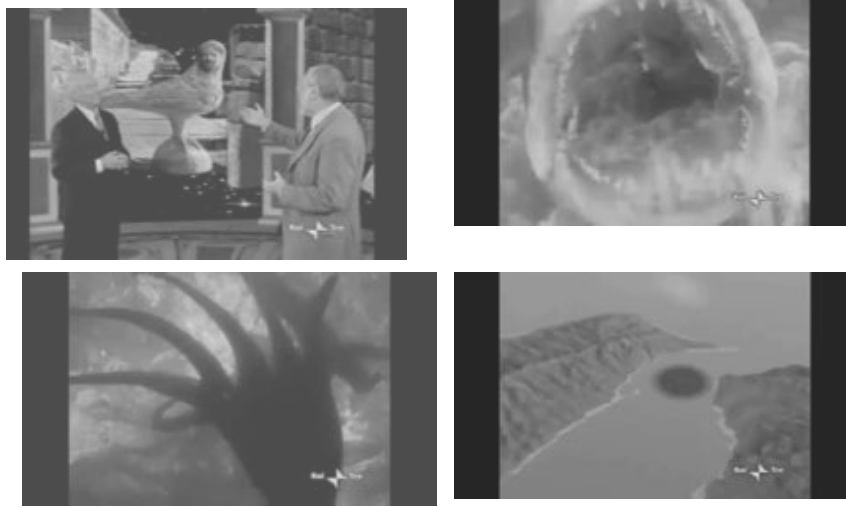
Fig. 5–24: Scylla, Charybdis, and the Sirens, *Super Quark,* RAI, Italy 2001.

And yet, both *Clash of the Gods* and *Destination Truth* can be argued to cater to a fuzzier category of mystery hunters: both enact a narrative in which a mystery is acknowledge, confronted and possibly—even though with different results—explained. Behind the façade of scientific research, their aim is to cater to a vast audience. This slippage between fact and fantasy can be contextualized within the recent history of the networks. Far from providing critical content, both SyFy and the History Channel have been involved in controversies for airing sensational programmes with unsubstantiated content, such as History's series *Ancient Aliens* and *UFO Hunter,* or SyFy's documentary that alleged UFO sightings during NASA's missions to the Moon.[66] Similar controversies took place in relation to beliefs in sea creatures. With *Megalodon: The Monster Shark That Lives* (Fig. 5–25),[67] Discovery Channel came under fire for suggesting titanic sharks still roamed the oceans. Science journalist Christie Wilcox (2013) criticized the misleading use of the term 'dramatized' instead of 'fictional'. The documentary *Mermaids: the Body Found* (Fig. 5–26)[68] was also criticized for disseminating the modern legend of the "aquatic ape hypothesis"– that a half-fish

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[66] SyFy's show featured retired lunar lander Buzz Aldrin: see Saagers (2014). On UFOs as an archetype in Junghian perspective, see Jung (178).

[67] Discovery Channel, USA 2013, prod. Pilgrim Studios.

[68] Broadcast on Animal Planet (May 27, 2012) and Discovery Channel (June 17, 2012); dir. S. Bennett; prod. D. Smithson, T. Brisley.

breed of humans evolved in parallel to mankind. The show mentioned creatures spotted by the Greeks and other sea-faring cultures, an account by Christopher Columbus, imagery from ancient art, and a digitally fabricated video. Critics voiced concern about the dangers of deluding gullible audiences.[69] Even though *Mermaids* was easily identifiable as a fake or a mockumentary, one could argue that it even lacked the "*call to play*" of such genres that would eventually signal to a savvy spectator that the facts presented were fabricated.[70] Likewise, the size of the Megalodon epitomized the tendency of discourses on mythical animals, as noted by Ellen, to exaggeration (Fig. 5.12);[71] but that did not detract many from believing the programme.[72]

Fig. 5–25: *Megalodon: The Monster Shark That Lives*, Discovery Channel (USA 2013).
Fig. 5–26: *Mermaids: the Body Found,* Animal Planet (USA 2012).

Like the other examples that I have just discussed, *Destination Truth*'s mystery story and *Clash of the Gods* dogmatic reductionism use the register of the documentary to pursue audience engagement. The programmes both draw on a hypothetical register: *Destination*'s crew constantly reminds viewers that it may

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[69] As Vorel (2012) phrased it, "human beings walking the face of the Earth [still] believe that this planet is flat". See Hesse (1993: 13) on sceptics' blaming of irresponsible media spreading "backward and irrational stories".

[70] (*Incident at Loch Ness* (UK, 2004; dir. Z. Penn, written and produced by Z. Penn and W. Herzog) is a meta-filmic twist on sea and lake monsters that however is mostly centred around Hezog's own legendary figure as a film-maker.

[71] Ellen (2017:3, in print; manuscript provided by the Editor).

[72] Wilcox (2013) claimed some four million viewers believed that such an animal actually existed after watching the show. See Austin/De Jong (2008:5) on the assumptions behind documentaries' claims to evidentiality, and on how their delivery style impacts on perceived trustworthiness through established conventions like narrating voices conveying gravitas, experts' talking heads, and presenting elements as factual evidence. The "elevation to truth-telling discourses" separating documentaries from 'fiction' would thus consist in "discursive interventions made via marketing" and audience reception.

or not be a mystery, while *Clash of the Gods'* scientific truths are conveyed ambiguously as research questions. Such a register seems to work as a disclaimer, asking the viewer not to take the show completely seriously. Such an ambiguity seems to balance two necessities: selling a spectacular product of attractive mysteries, and maintaining a semblance of mock-scientific scepticism, to avoid slippage into a blatant promotion of crackpot science. The aim of this study is neither to provide solutions to the dynamics of credulity in audiences, nor to assess the specific impact of any programme. Through these examples, I aimed to assess the popularity of Scylla and Charybdis as marine monstrosities, and the ways in which producers and writers used them as recognizable elements around which to catalyse adventurous content.

Yet, the fact that elements of Western television viewers are inclined to believe in outlandish theories about sea monsters is both hard not to notice and interestingly related to the myth. A YouTube video viewed more than a million times discussed five mythical creatures as possibly still existing: the Kraken, the Loch Ness monster, dragons, the *chupacabras,* and mermaids.[73] Greek myths are often part of such lists: the Internet site *Unexplained Mysteries.com* shared information on monsters and legends, contributing to their persistence.[74] Inter-related mythologies are sometimes mapped out: in a list of 'Monster Hangouts', the Strait of Scylla and Charybdis is featured alongside Loch Ness in Scotland and the Transylvania of Bram Stoker's Dracula.[75]

Such cases suggest that the attractiveness of this Greco-Roman myth lies in its ability to amplify a perception of the oceans as another world, populated by creatures that might harken back to the past but also re-emerge from the deep seas, claiming their place besides those featured in more recent legends. It is suggestive to think that debates on the impact of false stories in society, stirred by products like *Mermaids* or *Megalodon*, may recall how Plato condemned Homeric myth as

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[73] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kr0lqEKMo4A (latest access: 15/05/2017).
[74] "Myths or Real Creatures????", http://www.unexplained-mysteries.com/forum/topic/35838-monsters-in-greek-mythology/, 11.03.2015 (*l.a.*: 20 06 2016)
[75] "Monster Hangouts" (2016), *HotSpots of Paranormal Phenomena,*
http://www.hotspotsz.com/Monster_hangouts_(Article-996).html, (latest access.*:* 15/05/2017).
Also see the map of *Monsters in America: A Cryptozoological Map of the United States*,
Philadelphia: Hog Island Press, at http://www.hogislandpress.com (l.a., 15/05/2017).

a dangerous fabrication, in contrast with the allegorists, for whom myth had a potentially redeeming and pedagogical value.[76]

5–6: *Contemporary legends, media, and ancient myth*

The examples illustrated so far, particularly the case of the Ayia Napa sea monster, invite an analysis of how Greco-Roman provided a basis for new legends of aquatic myth creatures, such as the Ayia Napa legend. While the Cypriot monster was definitely popularized by *Destination Truth,* the presence of the Scylla mosaic on the island had already worked as a blueprint and catalyst for the new story. Articles on the Ayia Napa creature had appeared in newspapers like *Cyprus Weekly*, and landed on a Wikipedia page established soon after in 2007, presumably by a Cypriot user. Other users ensued with more material. The initial Wikipedia stub was limited to a couple of paragraphs alleging existing "unverified short-films and pictures" of the monster, and stating that even though unproven, "the hope of spotting the Ayia Napa Sea Monster remains a highlight for many tourists on boating day-trips".[77]

A reference to Scylla was added on the following day: it stated that many liked to link the new monsters with "Skylla, which is depicted in the mosaics that remain in the House of Dionysus [in] Cyprus.[78] Given that the mosaic is presumably visited by a lot of tourists, it is possible its presence inspired some of fantasies that generated the new legend. The discussion log also reveals other users protested that the Napa monster did not exist, "neither as a fact or a legend amongst us", and that it would have been "stupid" to talk about it.[79] The original contributor replied as follows:

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[76] Lincoln (1999). See how pseudo-archaeologist R. Bauval describes academics as a "clearing-house of knowledge [that] has presented their dogma of history to the general public totally unhindered and unchallenged from the outside" (cited in Fagan 2006: 32).

[77] *Wikipedia,* "Ayia Napa sea monster: Revision history", https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ayia_Napa_sea_monster&dir=prev&action=history (*l.a.*: 08.06.2016). Original articles still not retrieved.

[78] "Ayia Napa sea monster: Revision history", *Wikipedia,* 16.08.2007, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ayia_Napa_sea_monster&dir=prev&action=history (latest access: 08.06.2016).

[79] Typos are from the original post.

Please do not delete this page. The Ayia Napa sea monster is a rumour and there exists no evidence of its existence but it is a local legend. A brief search through Google will reveal that some hotels in Ayia Napa boast of their closeness to the vicinity where the monster is reputed to live, along with car hire companies recommending a trip to Cape Grecko [in] the hope of spotting it etc.[80]

The intervention implies that the myth is an attraction, and that the Cyprus monster might be a hoax designed to draw tourists.[81] It suggests that the monster would provide the locality with a precious asset—as indeed many believe in the village Scilla (as I discuss in my Documentary Film).

However, other elements may have played a stronger role than locals' hopes for finances and fame. The Wikipedia page log reveals that its major contributors had a non-Cypriot background and a history of curating pages about urban legends, conspiracy theories, and cryptozoology. Such users ferried the monster from local hearsay to international audiences. Given the the involvement of the producers of *Destination Truth* with publications and shows about such mysteries, it is highly likely that the script writing of the US show was also informed by accessing this page. By August 2011, Wikipedia included a reference to the TV Programme: "a search for the monster was recently featured in a *Destination Truth* episode".[82] Later, an illustration appeared in the page: a creature with a dozen snake or dragon heads, conjoined at a bodiless base as if emerging from the waters.[83] The illustration (Fig. 5–27) had been featured in the mystery magazine *Cryptomundo*, in an article by a self-appointed cryptozoologist who had contributed to shows like *Monsters and Mysteries in America,* and was presumably well acquainted with *Destination Truth*.[84]

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[80] "Talk:Ayia Napa sea monster", *Wikipedia*,
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Ayia_Napa_sea_monster, *l.a.*: 08.06.2016
[81] See Costello/Coleman (2015) on the Loch Ness monster legend.
[82] "Ayia Napa sea monster", *Wikipedia*, 16 August 2011,
https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ayia_Napa_sea_monster&oldid=276516679, *l.a.*:
08.06.2016
[83] Such evidence might be incorrect or, in theory, even fabricated. Chances are that this is in fact a modern image presented as Moffat's illustration.
[84] "Cyprus Sea Monster", *Cryptomundo,* http://cryptomundo.com/bigfoot-report/cyprus-sea-monster, *l.a.*: 08/06/2016)

Fig. 5–27: Sea hydra or serpent in *Cryptomundo.com* (2013).

Such exchanges demonstrate the relentless dissemination of monster motifs already discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, and their continuous evolution and syncretism. On online social media site *deviantArt* (discussed in Ch. 4 as a platform for users' reception of Scylla and Charybdis as sexualized monsters), a user produced a pastiche of creatures from Greco-Roman myths, contemporary legends and marine fauna. The collection includes Scylla (imagined "like a sea serpent"), Charybdis (a whale monster), the Gambian Sea Elephant, and Ayia Napa monster, freshly incorporated from the emerging legend (Fig. 5–28).
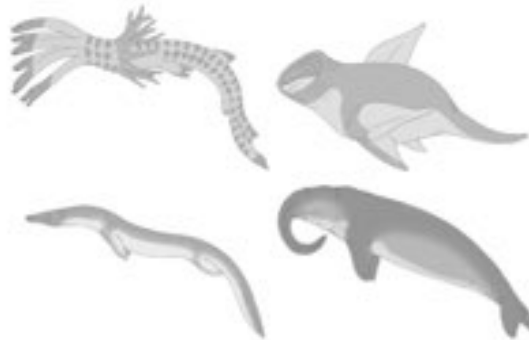
Fig. 5–28: Sea monsters by Pristichampsus (Year Unknown) on *deviantart*.

Such examples of folk nomenclature for aquatic monsters demonstrate a common reason for the interest of media and folklore studies in how audiences and producers negotiate stories via cross-fertilization of the most diverse elements.[85] Such examples also show that positivist monogenetic explanations do not explain

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[85] Bird (2006: 344).

the dynamism, variability, and mercurial discourses of fantasy. For reception studies, such intersections provide a perspective on the endurance and persistence of old tales and motifs in relation to contemporary equivalents of those tales circulating in modern media and cultures. As Bird reminds, "tabloids are full of mythical figures and phenomena that have fascinated people for generations: ancient Egyptian curses, Atlantis, Bigfoot and other monsters, mermaids", [86] as well as Scylla and Charybdis.

Contemporary legends like the one of the Napa monsters, and their reactivation of Homeric material, also suggest to scholars of myths and folklore that the stories transmitted through local groups and the ones transmitted in popular media cultures in mass societal contexts are tied "by a complex continuum".[87] In this perspective, the Ayia Napa legend is neither simply "local" nor vaguely "global", but is the result of a polyvocal genealogy of local and supra-local discourses. Myth-analysis, far from identifying a unique causation for a narrative, needs, as reminded by Smith, to "unlock a mass of material, make sense of it", and even "give it some shape" by exploring "traditional narratives and beliefs" which surround the cultural objects both synchronically and diachronically.[88] Moreover, Ayia Napa may be hard to relate sensibly to the context in which Scylla and Charybdis coalesced as a myth disseminated through the *Odyssey*, but it does remind us that oral legends flowing into the Homeric *epos* preceded its canonized literary incarnations, and consisted in turn of a synthesis of elements from folk motifs.[89]

Ultimately, however, the attractiveness of a myth like Scylla and Charybdis outside the learned circle of Homeric scholars lies in the tale's ability to re-activate a relation with the sea. Wild animals entice mankind to delve into marine abysses

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[86] Bird (2006: 349). See Bennett (1996) and Smith (1996) for an extensive debate on contemporary legends in relation to folklore, urban myths, and media and popular cultures. See Narváez/Laba (2006: 311) on the truth-value of legends.

[87] Narváez/Laba (2006: 311) suggests that stark methodological differences between folk and popular cultures can only lie in different assumptions operated by different disciplines. Smith (2006: 318)

[88] Smith (2006: 319-21) advocates a abroad, inclusive model for examining "the nature of the relationships between contemporary legends, related beliefs, and the popular, and even elite" cultures underpinning them.

[89] See Lane Fox (2008). Also Severi (2015) on the limits of a historical binary between oral and written cultures and the need for a more nuanced approach to myth and folk traditions. On pre-literary folk tales and the *Odyssey* see Page (1973).

whether in the first person or vicariously through media. Boundaries "between wild and domestic" have always been, as Oring argues, the "concern of folklore";[90] anthropologists like Stewart have researched demonic, liminal figures of otherness as dwellers in unfamiliar spaces.[91] Myth and the seas combine into an abyssal space-time: a conflation of the spatially unfathomable recesses of the aquatic element and the temporal depth associated with myth. Glancing into the abyss can mean to break through the barrier of the immediately visible and reach out to the mysterious.

5–7: *Cryptozoology – ancient myths and hidden animals*

As entities within the ranks of those Ellen described as inhabiting "different realms of phylogenetic space",[92] Scylla and Charybdis have also been appropriated by cryptozoology, and constantly feature in catalogues of ancient examples of mysterious or undiscovered animals. In contrast to *Destination of Truth* and *Clash of the Gods,* self-defined cryptozoologists more markedly sought legitimation for their fringe discipline concerned with freak sightings. Cryptozoologists' assumption that we simply may not know what lurks in unexplored areas of the planet could be related to how monster myths gave been conceived as symptomatic of reality and containing kernels of truth; "more than fable", as stated by Asma, holds monsters together.[93] Trusting in this view of myth, cryptozoologists scoured Greek texts and artefacts as sources for possible historical evidence of lost animals.

Compendia of cases often discuss Scylla as a myth concealing truths about giant squid of the species Architeutis. Eberhart defends cryptozoology from its critics by claiming that it had been the first discipline to accept the existence of the giant cephalopod: only much later would marine biologists also recognize the species after the shoring of a specimen in Denmark in 1853.[94] Eberhart lists cases of cephalopod cryptids that include the Giant Mediterranean octopus, among

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[90] Oring (2006: 330).
[91] See Stewart's analysis of the *exotika* in Naxos (1991), as well as Severi's reflection on 'chimeric' creatures as counterintuitive representations in counterintuitive situations' (2015: 7).
[92] Ellen (2017: 1, in print: manuscript provided by the Editors).
[93] Asma (2009: 28).
[94] Eberhart (2010: xxi; 308); probably the case cited in *Clash of Gods*: see *supra.*

whose "variant names" are Hydra and Scylla.[95] The creature is presented unequivocally as the one that "inspired the Greek myths of the six-necked, twelve-footed, cave-dwelling sea creature Scylla that attacked Odysseus's crew in the Strait of Messina, Italy, or the nine-headed, serpentine Hydra that Herakles killed in the marshes of Lerna south of Argos in the Peloponnesus, Greece" (Figure 5–8).

The material is entirely derivative, and part of an ongoing transmission of this motif. It was formulated decisively in one of the earliest cryptozoological studies published by Bernard Heuvelmans, the father of the discipline (to which Eberhart's book is dedicated). In 1955, the Belgian-French zoologist claimed that "there are Lost Worlds Everywhere" in the unexplored areas of the earth and that the newly founded cryptozoology (a term he inaugurated) would explain neglected cases of hidden animals.[96] His second book, *Le Kraken et le poulpe colossal*,[97] stated that "our ignorance of the marine world is even greater" faced with the enormity of Neptune's domain (4), and that even though diving suits made it possible to "touch the sea beds of abysses so far believed to be unexplorable", the "eternal night" of the oceans was far from being illuminated by science's light: undiscovered giant creatures could well be lurking under the surface. Heuvelman's book is ripe in illustrations of sea monsters taken from ancient maps and modern scientific photography. Among other "discrete giants", he thought of the octopus of antiquity as the basis for a "genealogical tree of the formidable Kraken".[98]

Scylla, he relates, must have been "inspired in Homer by some monstrous octopus: the deforming lens of imagination turned the animal into even more titanic proportions. For Heuvelmans, Scylla clings to a rock exactly as an octopus is moored to the crevices of rocks, while it reaches out for its preys. Citing Otto Koerner, "the great specialist of Homer" and the Mediterranean, as a supporter of his thesis, Heuvelmans also sees the times of the ancient Greeks, in Frazerian fashion, as "the childhood of mankind", and thinks of myth in positivistic terms

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[95] Eberhart (2010:1 98).
[96] Heuvelmans (1955:4).
[97] Heuvelmans (1958).
[98] Heuvelmans (1958: 26, 46, 117-119).

as of a disposition that survives in "some poets, artists, and men of genius" who "have managed to preserve it" through the ages.[99] Heuvelmans also concludes that Charybdis was "evidently a whirlpool".[100] In his view, the myth proves unequivocally that such cryptids existed, defying official science and claiming that attempts to ridicule cryptozoological sightings as 'fantastic tales' should now face evidence to the contrary.[101]

Heuvelmans suggests that cryptozoology is an open-minded exploration of the natural world, as opposed to a closed-minded official science. He claims that science is based on falsifiability (Popper 2002): were one to claim to have found a real mermaid ("not a hideous *lamantine*, but a creature with the upper half of Marilyn Monroe and the tail of a coelacanth") (Fig. 5.29) the scientist asking to see it would be more scientifically sound than those who would respond just by shrugging their shoulders.[102]

Fig 5–29: Siren and manatee, Heuvelmans (1958).

However, in the absence of a specimen of a siren (*pace* the *Mermaids* film attempt), Heuvelmans' approach falls entirely into what Popper defined as the delusion of induction, given that empirical elements are used to corroborate a thesis already set deductively. Of course, these explanations make sense as a part

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[99] Heuvelmans (1958: 123). Heuvelmans (1958: 120) also cites Victor Bérard's (1933) study locating the 'actual' Scylla between Lipari and Volcano. Bradford (discussed in Ch. 2) relates Scilla to other female monsters such as the Lamia, the Devourer, or a "bogy-woman with whom the Greeks used to frighten their children into obedience" (Bradford 1963: 155), explaining them as naturally evocative places like caves, cliffs, or animals of the various areas he explores (See Chapters 3 and 4).
[100] Heuvelmans (1958: 199-122).
[101] Heuvelmans (1958: 123).
[102] Heuvelmans (1958:5).

of the attributes of mythical creatures that might have been derived from human encounters with animals. However, a precise species-to-myth correspondence between Scylla and octopodes (or the Sirens and manatees) stretches evidence beyond recognition of the limits of such operations. Monsters do not come out of a vacuum, as if imagination worked as a black hole. Myths have a more complex relationship to the real world that any monogenetic process.

In fact, one could reverse Heuvelman's argument and argue that sailors who lived for long periods of time on the sea did not mistake animals for women: rather, they imagined being like fish, and fantasized about mating with the sea's creatures. In My Documentary Film, I discuss a poetess in Scilla who fantasizes about fishermen transforming into sharks, or falling exhausted on their boats besides their nets full of fish, and feeling like they are after all the same.[103] One could argue that Heuvelman's explanation of sirens as manatees reverses a cultural process in which femininity is ambiguously projected on sea mammals, and expresses the unconfessed desire (as Ellen words it in relation to animal myths) "to get some purchase on the cosmologically remote 'other'".[104] Relatedly, my Documentary Film shows the statues depicting sirens and Scylla in the sea village of Scilla, and briefly touches on the issue of their mildly sexualized attributes. Such statues, like Francesco Triglia's *Scilla* displayed in the central square of the town (Fig. 5–30), match folkloric stories in which marine creatures reveal a fantastic cosmology of hybrids. Scylla, as I collected from my interviewers, was an "easy nymph". Glaucus was a beautiful mariner before lust caused his transformation into an aquatic hybrid—not unlike the more recent folk hero, Cola Pesce.[105] Local stories on the hunt for swordfish in Scilla warn of the need to capture the female first where a couple is spotted, because the male would pursue her until his own death, while the female would abandon him if their roles were reversed.

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[103] Cosima Cardona (see the Documentary).
[104] Ellen (2017: 2).
[105] See Pitrè (2016).

Fig. 5–30: *Scilla,* F. Triglia (Scilla, Italy 2014).

Given that cryptozoology has dwelt for decades on the fringe of science,[106] it is also not hard to understand Heuvelman's attempt to seek legitimacy for his discipline through Greco-Roman sources. Eberhart claimed that cryptozoology is useful for historians, philosophers, political scientists, and sociologists in light of the "authority that science wields".[107] In fact, cryptozoological research seems to require "a certain training in [...] mythology, linguistics, archaeology and history,[108] in order to survive. For Mayor (2000), a proponent of the intersectional use of cryptozoology and studies of antiquity and fossils, "an extensive body of ancient textual and archaeological evidence for Mediterranean crypto-animals" could provide credible evidence for the discipline.[109] Mayor also popularized the explanation of the Cyclops myth through the retrieval of dwarf elephant skulls in Sicily,[110] and her presence in TV programmes is likely to have contributed to a rekindling of interest in scientific treatments of mythology that relate it to something "real" that is not "just fantasy", using antiquity as evidence.[111]

For this study, such causal explanations of myths fail to take their complexity

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[106] See Hurn (2017: 1, in print; manuscript provided by the Author).

[107] Eberhart (2010: xxii).

[108] See Hurn (2017: 1-2, in print; manuscript provided by the Author).

[109] Mayor (1989: 12).

[110] Mayor (2000:2-17).

[111] For Mayor, investigations of fossils in antiquity were far more complex than Aristotle's dominant ideas on the fixity of species; the vestiges of mysterious, remarkable creatures from the remote past were important features of the cultural landscape; folk narratives and sciences were common and people made sense of things outside of the canons or high cultural cathedrals. This resonates with cryptozoologist Eberhart's claim, in turn derived from Heuvelmans' original formulations (1958), that cryptozoology seeks to solving mysteries outside the established paths of dominant paradigms (Eberhart 2010: xxii).

into account, no matter how precisely a comparison is drawn between an animal and a single aspect or motif of a story.[112] One of the reasons for the popularity of sea monsters is that "the immensity of the oceans has been the place where the most staggering discoveries have occurred" over the past few decades,[113] and that the oceanic depths of the planet are still largely unknown. However, myths like the ones of Scylla or Napa's Monster are subsumed in imaginative processes that produce far more complex syntheses of elements—sightings of sea animals could be said to distorted, up to this day, by our cultural categories on *terra firma*.

In spite of Eberhart's claim that "ultimately, the job of the cryptozoologist is to strip away the myth, the misidentification, and the mystery",[114] the cases of this chapter show that such a pursuit is essentially mythical, and largely relies on external legitimation. Mysteries proliferate in the open space between demonstrability and hypothesis, and claims about their factuality reveal practical and pragmatic ends: *Clash of the* Gods' spectacularization of science; Destination *Truth*'s audience of mystery tales; the need for disciplinary legitimation of Heuvelmans' cryptozoology; or even the simple temptation for modern mythographers and believers in mysteries to relate ancient material to modern legends, as in the case of Scylla and the Cyprus monster.

5–8: *The 'actual' Scylla and Charybdis: positivist myth-reading*

In this chapter, I have discussed Scylla and Charybdis within ongoing discourses on marine monsters in relation to issues such as the spectacularisation of Greek myth, the ambiguity and function of truth-value in popular storytelling, and the cultural legitimisation that disciplines like cryptozoology garnered from referring to Greco-Roman material. In these closing remarks, I go back to my explicit intent to question and criticize the positivist tradition of myth-reading that underpinned *Clash of the God*'s and *Destination Truth*'s narratives.

My research did not aim to establish whether or not the myth of Scylla and Charybdis was actually inspired by sightings of animals in the area of the Strait, or elsewhere. Of course, it is still sensible to think that animals like whales, sharks,

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[112] See also Wilk's (2000) explanation of Medusa's "mystery".
[113] Durrell (1995: xxvii-xxviii).
[114] Eberhart (2010: xxiv).

and octopuses have impacted on the experiences of the world that people encapsulated in this myth. By criticizing monogenetic, reductionist explanations of myth in their failure to adequately explain myth as a multi-layered discourse on the human condition, my intent was not to deny the symbolic power that the sighting of massive animals like whales could have yielded (and continues to yield). Sightings like the ones documented in Figures 5–31 and 5–32 could have easily inspired stories like the one of Charybdis, transforming into tales of potentially deadly encounters, and generating the Greeks' conflations of fantastic and scientific zoology.[115]

Fig. 5–31: 'Whale almost eats diver' (2013).
Fig. 5–32: 'Whales with names' (2007).

However, I am more interested in looking at what these interpretations ultimately mean for people, providing them with a platform for their own agendas as individuals or parts of audiences and communities. For Asma, "the issue is not whether the ancients were more credulous than we are today, but what theories are available and reasonable in a given age", considering that discourses on monsters, "both ancient and modern, tends to live on the boundary lines between the credible and the incredible".[116] For scholars like Nicholaisen, legends "do not facilely aim at verisimilitude but are always true, for the one compelling reason that they are told, that they are, with all the under- and over-tones ringing through this term, narrated".[117] In this light, marine monsters remain fascinating objects of speculation not only for their imaginative potential, but also because they inhabit an asymptotically unexplorable abyss and invite spectators to traverse it.

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[115] D. Mainardi, in *Ulisse*, RAI, Italy 2001, at 09.55
[116] Asma (2009: 32, 279).
[117] Nicholaisen (1996: 99).

While discussing *Clash of the Gods* and *Destination Truth* as documentaries relying on audiences' expectations of factuality, I hinted at controversies about the gullibility of audience, reminding of Plato's condemnation of Homeric myth as a fabrication. Even though shedding light on this issue is not one of the aims of this study, the debate can be reformulated into a question on what claims to factuality mean from a social perspective. The claim to a precise identification of a legend —in Bogart's definition "the historical, monogenetic basis for all subsequently recorded versions of the narrative"[118]— relates to claims about why a certain animal is said to have been sighted and on *where* the legend is born. The value of 'truth' attached to beliefs in myths and legends can therefore be reformulated in terms of tradition and affection, rather than faith or gullibility. As Bennett notes, legends can be "told as true" regardless of an actual belief in their truthfulness.[119] A demonstrable connection between myth and place establishes or reinforces specific cultural attachments or opportunism. The case of Napa's monster shows mankind's fascination for the irruption of the unknown into known spaces, but also the emergence in a locality of an evocative and recognizable symbol that can be used as an asset for tourism or worn as a badge of identity, regardless of any actual belief in monsters.

Likewise, like I also argue in my Documentary Film, to imply or demonstrate that Scylla and Charybdis were in fact whales and whirlpools in the Mediterranean (in the tradition of thought that *Clash of the Gods* draws on and rekindles), reinforces another longstanding mythological tradition: the belief in the historical factuality behind the *Odyssey* that has generated debates on Homeric geographies. Switching from claims about mythical animals to ones about Homeric geography, while maintaining the epistemic framework introduced in these pages, my next chapter will discuss how the myth of Scylla and Charybdis has been used by different individuals and communities to "newly create"[120] myths: specifically, views of Greco-Roman myths.

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[118] Bogart (2006: 134).
[119] Bennett (1996:18).
[120] I am borrowing the expression from Nicholaisen (1996: 96).

CHAPTER 6: MAPPING THE ODYSSEY

6–1: *Myth as origins: Homer's places and the writing of history*

In this chapter, I focus on attempts by scholars and explorers to map the locations of the tales of the *Odyssey* in the Mediterranean and the Aegean, based on the features of landmarks like the Strait of Reggio and Messina, and their alleged correspondences with Homeric descriptions. The toponymical relation between the mythical Scylla and the sea village of Scilla made this place-myth a much-discussed landmark in Homeric geographies—a varied literature at the intersection of scholarship, local historiographies, and popular discourses on history. In the wake of my previous chapter's analysis on attempts to explain the origins of myth in nature, I will now focus on Homeric geographies specifically, addressing the Scylla/Scilla correspondence, and the related idea that whirlpools in the Strait explain the myth of Charybdis.

After overviewing the traditions of mapping Homer's *Odyssey*, I will focus on two case studies. The first one is the maritime navigation of Cuisenier (2003), an anthropologist who travelled in the Mediterranean and the Aegean following in the tracks of Ulysses, in a journey sponsored by French institutions, which sought geographical and ethnographic confirmation of the traditional settings of Homer's epos. As my second case study, I will look at the theses of Vinci (2005), an engineer who, in contrast to Cuisenier, believes the *Odyssey* reflects geographical and social realities of Scandinavia and the Baltic Sea. These cases will allow me to briefly touch upon a theme discussed in my documentary film: the attempts of some of the local scholars of the Strait to explain Scylla as inspired by the geomorphology of Scilla, and their related belief that Homer was a denizen of the nearby ancient Greek *polis* of Rhegion, todays' Reggio Calabria.

Showing how the mythical Strait has always represented the strongest and most consistent element of traditional mappings of the *Odyssey,* I will discuss how the landmark continued to play an important role in new interpretations that have rekindled debates on the historical origins of the *Odyssey*: Cuisenier's attempts to confirm traditional mappings, Vinci's subversive theory on the Baltic, and local

scholars' uncompromised espousal of the idea that the Strait inspired the myth and provided the purported birthplace of Homer. I began my thesis by highlighting the lack of a direct reference to the Strait in Homer's *Odyssey,* but also by explaining how such an association, hailing back to antiquity, began a part of a widespread form of historical consciousness of the Strait, attracting visitors from the Grand Tours onwards. Tracing a historical full circle, this chapter looks at modern debates on this issue and how the origins of the tale have been conceptualized.

However, as I have already underlined (see Chapter 5), my aim is not to demonstrate any historically or archaeologically truthful hypothesis. While siding with an established tradition of scholarship that identifies Homeric epos as the product of a civilization that resided across parts of the Aegean and the Mediterranean, I am more interested in the affective and cultural investments in antiquity. My aim is to discuss how individuals, communities, and audiences have used empirical explanations of myth in order to align with, and symbolically "own", the social and cultural capital they associated with Greek antiquity. Looking at Homeric geographies as the "endless pursuit of myths of myths"[1], I will also borrow Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital[2] to discuss the relentless fascination of Western communities with the Homeric epic.

I will thus define Homeric geographers as traditionalists, enquirers, and revisionists—following, again (see Chapter 5), Hesse's epistemic model of how claims to evidence are used by social groups to establish disciplinary and cultural boundaries.[3] Looking at Cuisenier's journey, I will discuss his championing of a strand of Homeric scholarship to gain academic prestige. Examining Vinci's subversive and historically revisionist theory of Homer in the Baltic, I will discuss how his catering to audiences of mysteries and alternative histories could be said to be motivated by fame. As I will argue, Cuisenier's and Vinci's Homeric mappings bring us back to the issue of how the Strait has become a literary chronotope (see my Chapter 1), locked into a conflation of myth and history that

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[1] Bettini (2011).
[2] Bourdieu saw cultural capital as the sum of an individual's education, intellect, and linguistic proficiency and their impact on her or his social success and mobility. I am extending the notion to see Greco-Roman traditions as a prestigious body of history and literature to align with professionally and individually (see my discussion on "classics" in the Introduction).
[3] Hesse (1993).

appears largely inspired and pre-formed by ancient Greece—attracting traditionalist, explorers, and revisionists alike.

Moreover, I will relate my discussion on Homeric geographies to my Documentary film's analysis of the professional and affective motivations that led scholars from the Strait to identify as the heirs of the Greeks. Based on my examination of local scholars' claim to factuality when discussing the Strait as Homer's birthplace, I will underline how selectively Greek-centric historiographical views thrive in the region on the basis of both the local historical impact of Greater Greece, and supra-local historical narratives. As I will argue, the monumentalization of the Greek past in the Strait[4] must be understood in terms of Herzfeld's "global hierarchy of value",[5] given how a larger, philhellenic, Western-centric view of ancient history has been internalized by the locals.[6]

6–2: *Homeric geographies: the Strait between history and poetry*

Homeric geographies are an enduring tradition of mapping myths.[7] The Mediterranean was often seen to lie behind real locations in the *Odyssey.*[8] As already noted (Ch. 1), the Homeric poems never directly cited any exact location for the *apologoi*—the fantastic tales told by Odysseus to the Phaeacians. The earliest Scylla/Scilla identification occurs in a letter attributed to Plato in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War.*[9] Eratosthenes was sceptical of ideas of pinpointing myths on the map.[10] On the other hand, Strabo defended Homer's geography as impeccable,[11] and Polybius championed the ideas of locating Scylla and Charybdis in the Strait, the Cyclopes in Sicily, Aeolus in the Aeolian

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[4] Nietzsche (1874).
[5] Herzfeld (2004).
[6] See Palmié/Stewart (2016: 210) on hegemonic narratives of historiography.
[7] Saïd (2008: 161); Bettini (2010).
[8] See Strabo's *Geography* b. c. 64 BCE, the *Ges periodos* or *Perigesis* of Hecataeus of Miletus (sixth–fifth century BCE), Herodotus's (fifth century BCE) *Histories*, Artemidorus (fl. 100 BCE). See Panichi/Puliga
[9] See Sch. on [Plat.], *Ep.* 345 d-e, *tr.* R. G. Bury, 1966; and Thucydides, 4.24.5, 5.53, *tr.* T. Hobbes (1843).
[10] Strabo 1.2.15.
[11] Foster (2013: 508).

islands, and the Phaeacians in Kerkira/Corfu.[12] Apollodorus thought that Ulysses' wanderings were set in an Atlantic ocean "imagined in fantasy".[13]

A general consensus of today's scholarship is that some of the places mentioned in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (such as Ithaca) may well correspond to real localities, given the abundance of historical references in the poems.[14] The Homeric epic reflects the cultures of the Euboean Greek settlements in Italy around 800-740 BCE, when "newly founded western communities" were attached to "a prestigious ancestry in the Greeks' mythical past" and its folk motifs.[15] However, locating the tales of the Phaeacians is a controversial task, due to their utterly fantastic content, consisting in encounters with fantastic creatures. Scholars such as Puliga/Panichi remark the coincidences between geography and such tales,[16] while others, such as Stanford, believe that Odysseus "leaves the sphere of Geography and enters Wonderland", reminding us that this is a work of poetry and not a travel log (unless we believe in giants and monsters).[17]

The overlapping of historical background and fantastic content in Homeric geographies has inspired relentless amendments and corrections of traditional locations, as well as novel mappings of the tales, both in academia and in popular histories.[18] Studies and travel accounts have accumulated in what Greenwood defined an "industry of retracing and relocating the steps of the original *Odyssey*".[19] Even though Greenwood also dismisses this tradition as "an obscure side-line" compared to the Ulysses theme in literature, my work has already demonstrated (see Chapters 1 and 2) how such mappings became a blueprint for a substantial amount of modern travel literature and re-enactment journeys. In this chapter, I will shift my focus specifically on how mappings presented by Cuisenier, Vinci, and others are presented as factual evidence of Homeric

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[12] See Phillips (1953: 187-188).
[13] Apollodorus, in Strabo 1.2.37; Strabo 7.3.6.
[14] Saïd (2011: 158). Odysseus can be read here as an intra- and homodiegetic narrator (Genette 1988:84); on the *Odyssey*'s relation with the tradition of oral singers, see Nagy (1993) and Bakker (1997).
[15] Lane Fox (2008:170), Saïd (2011), Braccesi (2010).
[16] Puliga/Panichi (2005: 201).
[17] Stanford (1947: 352).
[18]See Stanford (1954); Boitani (1992); and my Introduction.
[19] Greenwood (2013: 881).

localities.[20] I will consider different interpretations by looking at their proponents through the lens of three categories: traditionalists, enquirers, and revisionists.

My categorization is inspired by American anthropologist Hesse's work on people's attitudes to established sciences and paranormal theories in the United States—from belief in UFOs to ghosts, goddess religions and holistic medicines.[21] Hesse showed how people constructed discourses about science and played 'more scientific-than-thou'[22]. He distinguished between New Agers (and their "vague goal of changing the establishment"), academic parapsychologists (working at the fringes of accepted science), and sceptics or "antiantiscientists" (who lumped all alternative theories together as "pseudo-science", and whose social mission was to debunk and demystifying them).[23] Rather than adopting a true science/pseudo-science binary, Hesse considered each approach to scientific truths as a "paraculture".[24] Extending his approach to Homeric mappings, I will not judge localizations of myths as correct or incorrect. Rather, I will show how different scholars, explorers, and historians disputed their rights to certify the real locations of the *Odyssey* in distinct but often times competing areas of culture. The object of each of Hesse's paracultures was cultural authority over scientific truths. I will look at traditionalist, enquirers, and revisionists for the way they explain the factuality of the *Odyssey* in order to lay claim to authoritativeness or fame.

Traditionalist of Homeric geographies

Some of the most influential works on Homeric geography are ones from the traditionalist side. These studies set out to validate or only slightly correct the established association between Homer and the Mediterranean. Stillman (1888) saw the *Odyssey* as the first Western geography. Victor Bérard's *Les Navigations*

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[20] Partial surveys on the subject are included in Chiarini (1991), Braccesi (2010), Bettini (2011), and Burgess (online resource: http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~jburgess/rop/od.voyage.html).
[21] Hesse (1993), discussed in Ch. 5.
[22] As noted by Thomas Gieryn, Indiana University, in a blurb on Hesse's back cover (1993).
[23] Hesse (1993: 3–5-11).
[24] Hesse's merit was to provide an alternative to a binary perspective pitting rationality and gullibility, allowing to notice elements of rational scepticism towards official truths in new agers as well as elements of "credulous scientificity" in the sceptics, offering a more nuanced view on both alternative theories and potentially dogmatic traditionalism (Hesse 1993: 3-20).

d'Ulysse (1929)[25] is perhaps the most influential work that popularized the idea of pinpointing the *Odyssey* in modern times.[26] A French historian, Bérard travelled by boat to the myth-places identified by ancient authors. Bérard drew from navigational experience. He confirmed Siren's rock were in Capri, and Scylla and Charybdis in the Strait of Messina. Most of the *apologoi* he maps out on the Tyrrhenian coasts of Italy (Figure 6–1). A later edition (Bérard 1933) features photographs by F. Boissonnas that illustrate similarities between the landscape and the Homeric passages (Fig. 6–2). This book also includes an illustration of Charybdis, set in the waters near Sicily, and Scylla, following the traditional mapping on the iconic rocky promontory of Scilla (Fig. 6–3). Not only does Bérard's book remind of the travel publications I discussed in Chapter 2, but his navigational approach directly inspired Ernle Bradford and other tourist-travellers of the Strait. Both Bérard and Bradford have been acknowledged as influential contributors to Mediterranean Homeric geographies.[27] Cuisenier, whom I will soon discuss, would go on to cite both scholars, championing similar views on the localization of myths.

Fig. 6–1 (top): Itinerary of Ulysses' wanderings in the Western Mediterranean,
V. Bérard, *Les Navigations d'Ulysse* (1929).
Fig. 6–2 (bottom): Stromboli, Scilla, and details of the sea,
V. Bérard's *Les Navigations d'Ulysse* (1933).

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[25] Luce (1974: 118).
[26] Greenwood (2013: 880),
[27] Luce (1974: 118).

Enquirers—my second category of explorers—tend to partially follow traditional locations, but also attempt substantial revisions of established landmarks. Wolf and Wolf (1983) thought that Odysseus actually walked inland at Calabria when meeting the Phaeacians. Pocock (1959) localized the *Odyssey* in western Sicily. Gatti (1975) and Senior (1978) discussed folktale motifs and scattered various myths across different places in the Mediterranean.[28] Enquirers keep alive an ongoing process of correction of and search for the correct identification of the epic on the map, bringing evidence drawn through etymology, exploration, historical research, or combinations of these approaches. Often times, corrections of the mappings seem motivated by precise agendas, such as claiming myths for one's own home towns. When Victorian writer Butler (1897) tried to demonstrate that Homer was a woman from Trapani, in Sicily, such views were largely discredited by scholars. However, the idea found endorsement in Trapani-based philologist Sugameli (1892). This case can be sensibly compared to claims that Homer hailed from Reggio, endorsed by local philologist Franco Mosino (2012) and others, about which I will relate later in this chapter and in my Documentary.

Across most of such interpretations, the Scylla/Scilla association remains strong compared to other, more shifting locales, such as those for the Cyclops or Sirens, which are subject to varied localizations. The only enquirer to question Scylla's location is French explorer Severin (1987), who thought that the *Odyssey* took place in the Adriatic Seas, and remapped Scylla's myth in Akra Skilla, in Greece's Ambracian Gulf. Severin, however, is the one exception to the otherwise unanimous localization of Scylla and Charybdis in the Strait of Messina— as one can see in Burgess's table (Figure 6–5), providing a summary of some of the most influential studies.[29] The lexical correspondence between myth and landmark sets Scylla/Scilla apart from other localizations, making it sound convincing even to those—like Consolo—who deem such attempts as idle in the first place.[30]

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[28] For a comprehensive lists of approaches, see Burgess:
http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~jburgess/rop/od.voyage.html (latest access: 15/05/2017).
[29] J. Burgess, http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~jburgess/rop/od.voyage.html (latest access: 15/05/2017).
[30] Consolo (1993: 18).

BOOKS	EPISODES							
	Lotus Eaters	Polyphemus (and 'Goat Island')	Aeolus (Aeolia)	Laestrygonians (Telepylus)	Circe (Aeaea)	Sirens	Scylla and Charybdis	Thrinacia
ancient sources	coast of Libya; Djerba	Sicily	Lipari Islands, north of Sicily	Sicily (Lentini); Formia north of Naples	Monte Circeo, north of Naples	Galli Islands, near Naples; Cape Pelorum	strait of Messina	Sicily (?)
Stillman (1888)	Djerba(?)	Sicily(?); (an Aegadian Island)	no i.d.	no i.d.	Monte Circeo(?)	no i.d.	Strait of Messina(?)	no i.d.
Halliburton (1927)	Djerba	Sicily; (Favignana)	Stromboli, Lipari Islands	Cefalu	Monte Circeo	no i.d.	Strait of Messina	Taormina
Bérard (1933)	Djerba	Posillipo, Bay of Naples; (Nisida)	Stromboli	Porto Pozzo, Sardinia	Monte Circeo	Galli Islands	Strait of Messina	Messina
Golding (1958)	Djerba	Sicily; (no i.d.)	Stromboli(?)	Sicily	Monte Circeo	Galli Islands	Strait of Messina	Sicily
Bradford (1963)	Djerba	west Sicily; (Favignana)	Ustica	Bonifacio, Corsica	Monte Circeo	Galli Islands	Strait of Messina	Taormina
Lessing (1965)	Djerba	Posillipo; (Favignana)	Stromboli	Bonifacio	Monte Circeo	Capri(?); Galli Islands(?)	Strait of Messina	no i.d.
Obregon (1971)	coast of Libya	Mallorca; (Cabrera)	Isla del Aire, Balearic Islands	Sardinia	Ischia, near Naples	Faraglioni, Capri	Strait of Messina	east Sicily
Severin (1987)	Cyrenica, Libya	near Paleochora, Crete; (Paximada)	Gramvousa island, off Crete	Mezapos, SW Peloponnesos	Paxos, Ionian Islands	Lefkas, Ionian Islands	Cape Skilla and Lefkas channel	Meganisi, Ionian Islands
Roth (1999)	Djerba	west Sicily; (Favignana)	Marettimo, Aegadian Islands	Bonifacio	Monte Circeo	Galli Islands	Strait of Messina	no i.d.
Huler (2008)	Djerba	west Sicily; (Favignana)	Vulcano, Lipari Islands	Bonifacio	Monte Circeo	Galli Islands	Strait of Messina	Taormina

Fig. 6–3: Table of Homeric myth-places (Burgess 2017).

Revisionists of Homeric geographies

One could see Severin's theses, which I have just discussed, to also align, in part, with my third category: revisionists. Revisionists, however, are more radically insurgent in their contestation of traditional Mediterranean mappings. Their localizations of Homer's foundational opus of Western literature can be richly imaginative. Italian engineer Felice Vinci, whom I will soon discuss closely, relocates the whole *Odyssey* in Scandinavia.[31] His thesis on the "hyperborean" Ulysses, however, is neither completely original, nor the most extreme in a history of apocryphal approaches to the *Odyssey* that shift it away to other areas or even other continents. Dutch economist Wilkens (1990) proposed that Troy was located in England (rather than modern-day Turkey) and that the Trojan war was fought between groups of Celts. US patent attorney Henriette Mertz (1964) pinpointed Troy in North Americas, while Scylla and Charybdis were situated in the Bay of Fundy, Scheria in the Caribbean, Circe's island in Madeira, and Calypso in the Azores. Enrico Mattievich (2010), an Italian-Brazilian physicist, located the *Odyssey*'s Underworld in South America, and identified the river Acheron as the Amazon.

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[31] Vinci (2005).

In their most extreme forms, theories even suggest that the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* might be found in the sky, and could be decoded as star maps. [32] Subversive, revisionist localizations can be wildly imaginative. Vinci's theory, as I will discuss, targets the market of mysteries and revisionist histories. Burgess refers to them as crackpot theories. However, borders between authoritative and unreliable interpretations can be porous: as I will demonstrate through my discussion of Vinci, even crackpot localizations have enjoyed endorsement by elements of academia. Again, however, I am not interested in establishing a truth in any of these claims—even though I will concede, following Burgess and Mawhinney, that a complete dismissal of the *Odyssey* into "never-never land" by "armchair Homerists" would not do justice to the historical background of the epos. [33] Rather, I am looking at how these different positions have affective, cultural, and social significance for their proponents and their audiences.

Relatedly, my classification of traditionalists, enquirers, and revisionists is not presented here as a normative or "correct" structure. Rather, I want to unlock common tendencies across different theories, which can sometimes even co-exist in the same studies. [34] The tripartite division aims to make sense of the material conceptually. It recognizes that Homeric geographies have been written with motivations like profit-seeking, desire for fame and cultural prestige, or disciplinary interests. In some cases, the boundaries between scholarship and non-specialist treatments can be porous. Still, my classification is based on the observation that all these theories provide purportedly factual elements in their support. As I will now discuss, Cuisenier and Vinci (as well as the scholars from the Strait which I discuss in my Documentary Film) operate by distancing their particular aims and methods from those of opposite factions and strands. Again following Hesse, I will take up a possible fourth approach to Homeric geography:

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[32] Even though imaginative, such exo-oceanic interpretations are somehow rooted in tradition: Strabo had voiced the opinion that Calypso's island could have been set in an imaginary Atlantic Ocean. For a summary on some of such theories see http://codexceltica.blogspot.co.uk/2009/10/homers-north-atlantic-odyssey.html (latest access: 20/08/2016). On Homer in the sky, see Wood (2011).

[33] Burgess: http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~jburgess/rop/pages/bibliography.html (latest access:15/05/2017).

[34] See Ballabriga (1998), who believes the *Odyssey* transfigures actual locations and invents others.

a self-reflexive attitude, through which I will be aligning with the methods of cultural studies, anthropology, and historiography.[35]

6–3: *Le périple d'Ulysse:* Jean Cuisenier's Mediterranean journey

Cuisenier's large format ethnographic book about his travels in the Aegean and the Mediterranean, *Le périple d'Ulysse* (2003), is the most recent and thorough re-examination and confirmation of traditional Homeric geographies. An anthropologist with experience in maritime navigation, Cuisenier travelled on boats between 1999 and 2001 along with classicists, archaeologists, botanists, and meteorologists. His aim was that of finding empirical evidence of ancient seafaring and geographical and astronomical landmarks that could relate to Homer's *epos*. The project received the patronage of the Musée National de la Marine, the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires, the Centre d'Ethnologie Française, and the Centre d'Études Méditerranéennes of the University of Tel-Aviv. Cuisenier embarked in two distinct expeditions: in 1999, around the Lipari Islands, and in 2000, along the routes of Ulysses. The book, a hefty printed volume with lots of maps and charts taken from maritime guides and juxtaposed with Homeric landmarks (Fig. 6–4), documents Cuisenier's travel from Ithaca along the itinerary of the Hero in the Aegean and in the Ionian Sea. It also features a colour photography insert (similar to Chapter 2's photo books) featuring landscape photography, archaeological iconography, and photos of Cuisenier's own team and boats. A companion web-site disseminated Cuisenier's findings. The aims of the journey was to:

> [...] rediscover the traces of the maritime routes followed by the Greek sailors in their great movement of colonization of the Mediterranean, as they are evoked in Homer's *Odyssey*. For this reason, we put ourselves in conditions similar to the ones experienced by Ulysses and his crew mates; rediscovering the places of their stop-overs and stays; also re-evoking them back as precisely as possible through the views of the sites, of the natural environment, of the fauna and flora, and of contemporary social practices; [even though] on a modern boat equipped with scientific equipment.[36]

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[35] Hesse (1993: 145).

[36] http://jean.cuisenier.online.fr/ulysse/index.html (Latest access: 2016/9/); own translation.

In his journey (documented in the book and of which excerpts are available on the web-site), Cuisenier follows a navigation diary, and presents an explanation of the various landmarks encountered during the journey.

Fig. 6–4: Maps of Homeric geography and landmarks (Cuisenier 2003).

Cuisenier explicitly raises the problem of "how to decide whether or not places are real in the *Odyssey*", using Bérard's translation for the interpretation of nautical terms.[37] Through direct observation of the landscape and textual interpretation, he identifies ancient Ithaca as Ormos Polis, a bay on the coast of the Greek Ionian island, and sees the Mediterranean as the setting of the Phaeacian tales. *Skylla et Charybde*, identified in the Strait, appear as some of the landmarks of the first map of the book. Later, *Skylla* is explained as a *pieuvre géante* (a giant octopus), and *Charybde* as a *tourbillon* (a whirlpool).

As an *ethnologue*, Cuisenier positions himself as an explorer, in the wake of both his recent predecessors, Bérard and Bradford. He also implicitly aligns with more ancient predecessors like Strabo or Pausanias and, ideally, with Herodotus' and Thucydides' readings of the *Odyssey*. Cuisenier poses as an authoritative champion of traditional views. In the early pages, he openly criticizes those who had tried in recent year to relocate the myths "up to the Strait of Gibraltar, down into the Atlantic, and even in Iceland and indeed in the Baltic".[38]

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[37] As well as his own reading of Homer. Cuisenier (2003: 10).
[38] Cuisenier (2013: 13).

By directly referencing Vinci's Baltic theory as hazardous, fanciful, and amateurish (as I discuss *infra*, Vinci enjoyed a sensationalist echo in the media), Cuisenier effectively marks his position in the debates by identifying with the social milieu of academia and high institutions.

Cuisenier also partly distances himself from explorers whom he saw as fellow adventurers: the already cited Bérard and Tim Severin. Bérard had travelled with publicly available transportation around the Mediterranean. Severin had sailed on a replica of the mythological Argo in 1987. Cuisenier uses his predecessors to correct each other. He reminds us that Severin's competence in ancient history was lacking compared to Bérard's and his own, and praises his own expedition as one supported by Hellenists and historians.[39] He also praises his fellow French scholar Bérard's academic preparation and simultaneous defiance of a "XIX century tendency to read the *Odyssey* in purely literary ways",[40] and defines Bérard's exploration as a milestone.

However, Cuisenier also reminds his readers that Bérard did not actually sail on an exploration journey on his own boat, unlike Severin, who attempted Bronze Age navigation in a replica of an ancient *curragh* boat. And yet, unlike Severin, Cuisenier declares he has no interest in recreating the Argo. Moreover, he deems Severin's attempt to recreate Bronze Age conditions as contradictory, given its reliance on modern compasses and nautical maps. Cuisenier effectively enacts an exercise of authority, bringing what he sees as the best of the two into an idea of ultimate authority in Homeric geography: one that merges seafaring exploration, philology, and ethnography to confirm the epic as a source of geographical knowledge, while also not denying the poetic nature of the *Odyssey* (and thus the legitimacy of its academic readers).

In Cuisenier's journey, Scylla and Charybdis are explained traditionally as *tourbillons* or *pieuvres,* thus confirming the narrative established ever since antiquity.[41] Cuisenier sees the *Odyssey'*s tales as the encoding of the experiences of sailors, fishermen, and peoples of the sea. The epic contains poetic truths that needed interpretation. The poem neither hid nor did it deform the marine

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[39] Cuisenier (2013: 21).
[40] Cuisenier (2013: 15-18).
[41] See Ch. 1, 2, 5).

landscape—rather, it offered symbols requiring interpretation.[42] Actual currents and whirlpools, maritime areas, storms and natural phenomena in the *Odyssey* are disguised as poetic readings of the sea, closely tied to myth-places. Skylla, the *skulax* (the young dog, or 'bitch') is "a creature of pure fiction, an assemblage that defies interpretation*", even though she does resemble sharks and *chiens de mar*.[43] Her three rows of teeth, six heads and twelve feet show that "the audience of Homer knew the fish, the sharks and the cetaceans of the Mediterranean", disguised in a monster that was "outside of norms".[44]

For Cuisenier, the creature is neither gratuitously invented, nor is its localization arbitrary. Cuisenier cites Thucydides' knowledge derived from sailors of centuries earlier in order to confirm the town of Scilla's age-old mapping in the Strait.[45] Cuisenier corroborates his belief that harsh tides gave origin to the myth by stating he also found a reference to the whirlpools in the Strait in the *Instructions nautiques*.[46] Severin had also advanced a similar claim, stating that no scholars had before him left their desks to take into their hands a copy of the International Hydrographic Organization's Sailing Direction, and thus find Akra Skylla.[47] Cuisenier, in contrast to Severin's relocation of the myth-place, maps Charybdis' whirlpool and Scylla's rocks traditionally, at the opposite ends of the Strait. Looking at modern sailing navigations and offering his own seafaring expertise, he also details the positions of the currents purported to have inspired one of the monsters, synthesizing all of them into a neat map (Figure 6.5).

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[42] Cuisenier (2014: 19-20). One could say Cuisenier falls between an allegorist and euhemerist interpretation. See Hawes (2014).

[43] The Mediterranean's Canesca, Canuso, and Muzzolu fish. Cuisenier (2013: 375).

[44] Cuisenier (2013: 312-313). On Scylla as dog and shark see Hopman (2012: 159) and Aguirre-Castro (2012).

[45] Cuisenier (2013: 316).

[46] Nautical instructions issued by the French Marine's hydrographic institute. See http://www.shom.fr/les-produits/produits-nautiques/information-sur-les-ouvrages-nautiques/instructions-nautiques/ (latest access: 15/05/2017).

[47] Severin (1987). On the Sailing Directions, see Reidy (2008: 140).

Fig. 6–5: Map of Charybdis, Scylla, and currents and whirlpools (Cuisenier 2003).

In fact, Cuisenier does concede that the Strait hardly features a true whirlpool— in it, he only finds minor turbulences, small *gouffres,* that today's sailors call *garofali,* and their descending and ascending currents, *refoli* and *bastardi*.[48] Reporting from his ethnographic diary, Cuisenier is disappointed by the thought of never meeting the Charybdis he knew from the books. He thus establishes the hypothesis that the currents were probably stronger in antiquity than today. Cuisenier, indeed, does not explore hypotheses or offer new empirical elements to traditional elements but, rather, sets out in search of a confirmation for his preformed, traditionalist belief in the presence of the mythical *Charybde des Ancients* (Figure 6-5).[49] For Cuisenier, Homeric geography is far from being fiction: just like Ithaca, the Strait of myth has a very real position on a map.[50] Cuisenier believes that the presence of a reference to the whirlpools in the nautical guide corroborated the idea that the *Odyssey* communicates an understanding of maritime culture and its mythical transfigurations, contradicting what he sees as the misleading assumption that Homer was not well versed in the skills of navigations. In fact, one could argue that his theory effectively entraps the Strait in the *chrono-topical* characterization it has received through history.[51]

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[48] See the Documentary Part with interviews with local fishermen in Scilla.
[49] Cuisenier (2003: 318-320).
[50] Cuisenier (2013: 323).
[51] See Donnan/Clewlow (1974) on ethnoarchaeology. See Fabian (1983) on the denial of coevalness.

6–4: Homer in the Baltic: *Felice Vinci's Scandinavian Odyssey*

While Jean Cuisenier's *périple* (2003) can be seen as a restatement of traditional Homeric localizations, Felice Vinci's *The Baltic Origins of Homer's Odyssey* (1995) can be regarded as an example of a revisionist approach. His alternative theory falls within narratives and publications about historical mysteries, revisionist histories, and pseudo-archaeology—interpretation of history from outside the science community, which reject the analytical methods of the established disciplines.[52] Vinci believes that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* describe events and locations that took place originally in the Baltic and North Sea areas, where the epic poems originated.

For Vinci, Achaean Greeks originally lived around the second millennium BCE in the Baltic region, and emigrated due to climatic changes that made the area uninhabitable. At this point, they made their new homeland in the Aegean, conquered the Minoan Cretans, and seized control of mainland Greece. The "blond seafarers" thus "founded the Mycenaean civilization […] in the sixteenth century B.C.E.".[53] In the process, Vinci continues, the Achaeans brought from Scandinavia the oral tales later to be written down as the heroic poems. The Achaeans, or Danaans, were actually the Danes: while settling in the Aegean, they attached to the newly found localities the mythical place-names of their saga, such as Scylla (which, for Vinci, was the Norse Kraken), or Troy and Ithaca, so that they would mirror the position of the places that had inspired them in the Baltic.

Vinci's book attacked established historical narratives on the Mediterranean by seeing them as a truth of the establishment, that his new discoveries would compel to be re-written.[54] As a revisionist Homeric geographer (or even a heretic), Vinci works by alleging the existence of inconsistencies in the

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[52] See Stieber (1987). Relatedly, some of Vinci' theories even seem to present a darker sub-text, given his insistence on the "fair-headed", "blonde", "noble" Northern Europeans, dubiously resonating with northern supremacy tropes and beliefs in "pure" Aryan populations in antiquity. The Preface to Vinci's English edition (2005) is signed by a specialist in conspiracy theories involving Nazis (Godwin 2005: loc. 157-248). His book's success seems contingent on factors like nationalism: a review by Spera (2012) was published on a pro-European Polish magazine and worked as if to remind the reader of the nation's proximity to the origins of Greek civilization.

[53] Vinci (2011: loc. 180); in this note, and the following ones, "loc" stands for the location in the consulted Kindle e–book edition.

[54] On historical revisionism see Lipstadt (1993).

traditional interpretations, and suggesting alternative places in the Baltic. He thus amasses an interminable wealth of correspondences between geographical Scandinavian locations, archaeological sites, and climatic and meteorological phenomena, matching them with the *Odyssey*. Ogygia, he suggests, matches well with one of the Faeroe Islands—Høgoyggj. The ships from the *Iliad'*s catalogue present more striking similarities with Viking ones. Homeric places have a distinctively northern setting: Ulysses' sea is never as bright as that of the Greek islands, but instead is always "gray" and "misty" as if in a Northern context. The two-day nonstop battle between the Achaeans and the Trojans could be explained "only by the twilight nights of the high latitudes during the summer solstice".[55]

Vinci does not overlook Scylla and Charybdis. Rather, he approaches a cornerstone of tradition mappings by approaching traditional explanations with a bold geographical twist: Charybdis is explained no longer as an effect of tides in the Strait, but as the Maelstrom or Moskenstraumen, a large whirlpool still active at the southernmost point of Moskenesøya, off Cape Lofotodden, where a tide "periodically produces an infamous whirlpool" (Fig. 6.8).[56] The poet, for Vinci, meant to give "a rough idea of the position of Ogygia by a geographical reference to the great whirlpool, which even at that time must have been well know", and which the British Admiralty guide —again summoned as evidence— still highlights as a dangerous landmark. For Vinci, "no such 'sea navel' exists in the Mediterranean.[57] Likewise, in order to locate Scylla in Scandinavia, Vinci sees it as an octopus (see Ch. 5). The monster embodies "a sailor's legend re-examined from a literary viewpoint", such as the octopus from *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*.[58] As an alternative to the traditional views of the Strait (Fig. 6–8), Vinci also identifies the rock as an oblong islet called Rödöya, separated by a narrow strait 160 feet wide, matching Homer's indications as at "a bowshot" distance from one end to the other.[59]

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[55] Vinci (2011: loc. 6778).
[56] Vinci (2011: loc. 1379).
[57] Vinci (2011: loc. 1410).
[58] The novel by Jules Verne (1954).
[59] Vinci (2011: loc. 13860).

Fig. 6–6: Scylla and Charybdis in the Baltic (Vinci 2002).

Overall, these landmarks suggest, in Vinci's view, that the Ithacan world must be set on the Danish islands, the wanderings of Ulysses took place in the North Atlantic Ocean, Troy was actually in southern Finland, and the Achaean settlements were situated on the Baltic coast.[60] Likewise, the Greek word *seirênes* would echo Sjernarøy, a Norwegian island, as well as certain shoals called *Sire-grunnen*; and a characteristic bright "eye", a large hole through a mountain visible during navigation, would explain the myth of Cyclops (the monsters, he says, were also found both in medieval Norse literature and Norwegian folklore).[61] In Vinci's view, the infinite quarrels of Homeric geographers about the exact pinpointing of each locality can be finally resolved. His thesis, he declares, makes sense of how the Achaeans "preserved the memory of the heroic age and the feats performed by their ancestors in a lost homeland", but lost knowledge of the origins of the tales over generations. In his view, the Baltic settings overturn centuries of wrong localizations in the Mediterranean (Figure 6–7).

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[60] Vinci (2011: loc. 6771).
[61] Vinci (2011: loc. 6790).

Fig. 6–7: Homer's Baltic route (Vinci 2002).

For Vinci, the new theory "opens a great door, shut tight until now, to a new view of the Indo-European diaspora", and "the origin and prehistory of the whole of European civilization";[62] he claims to contribute "to the birth of a new humanism in Western culture", which, in this third millennium, awaits humanity beyond "the fearful immense abyss" of history. In so framing his "discovery", he caters to the appetites of an audience enticed by allegedly revolutionary, anti-establishment, or conspiracy-driven narratives of history. This finds confirmation in how his research claims to shake "the dogmas of conformist, established roots and received beliefs".[63] Even though he concedes that further archaeological corroboration is still needed, Vinci still supports what he sees as the "striking geographic, morphologic, and climatic consistency of this new scenario.[64] In fact, his work, as I am about to discuss, displays exaggerations of evidence, romanticized conclusions, and fabricated evidence, consistency with typical claims of pseudo-sciences.[65]

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[62] Vinci (2011: loc. 6793–6810).
[63] Vinci (2011: loc. 6).
[64] Vinci (2011: loc. 6762).
[65] Fagan (2006).

6–5: *Myths of myths: traditions of claiming Homer*

Once could say that the common reason behind the disciplinary, professional, and affective interests of different scholars is the prestige of Greco-Roman antiquity in Western historiographical discourses. Relatedly, the importance of the mapping of Scylla and Charybdis for all of these theories can be explained as a consequence of the fact that the Scylla/Scilla myth-place is an unavoidable cornerstone of Homeric geographies—one explorers would have to consider whether to confirm or disprove any broad mapping. To this end, in spite of the striking diversity of approaches and methods, and of the opposite conclusions reached by Cuisenier's research and Vinci's speculation, both their theories combine etymological, historical, and explorative evidence.

Such claims of scientific evidence could be seen, first and foremost, as a narrative that enshrines efforts to appropriate myth, rather than as a means to establish historical factuality. Both Cuisenier and Vinci could be said to be motivated by fame, in different ways. They both address broader audiences than Homeric specialists. Cuisenier was supported by prestigious institutions in France, and aimed at broad public engagement through a web-site and televised dissemination.[66] Vinci's book became popular among audiences of mystery and conspiracy theories: it was translated into several languages—more than for Cuisenier's book. Vinci's invitation to a mystery programme on public television channel RAI2 was met with controversy, also in light of the interest it attracted from both some elements of Italian academia.[67]

Moreover, both scholars have an affective investment in their claims and seem to take their research as a very personal endeavour. Both Cuisenier and Vinci take part, even though in extremely different ways, in a multifaceted debate that goes back to historical discoveries like Schliemann's unearthing of Troy (1874) and, ideally, the likes of Greek explorer Pausanias, or even Ulysses himself. Thus, Cuisenier's incipit, as I have discussed, reads like a response to Vinci's theories,

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[66] See http://jean.cuisenier.online.fr/odysseus/index.html (lates access: 15/05/2017).
[67] Vinci's Italian edition included a Preface by renowned scholar Rosa Calzecchi Onesti, who supported the hypothesis while asking "for more archaeological evidence". See Vinci (2011: loc. 6). Vinci was also invited to notoriously pseudo-scientific Italian television mystery programme *Voyager*. See http://www.raiplay.it/programmi/voyager/ (latest access: 15/05/2016).

in which he stands as the defender of authoritative, traditional history. Cuisenier's book could be seen as attempting to pre-empt the effects of Vinci's impact on French audiences, at a time when the book was not yet available in France.[68] Vinci had likened himself to Ulysses, strolling around the new Ithaca in the Baltic regions on the tracks of the Norse Homer: "I particularly thank my son Vincenzo, the new Telemachus, who has cycled with me around Lyø (Ithaca)".[69] While engaging with the cultural prestige associated with ancient Greece in the West, Cuisenier and Vinci occupy opposite factions. Cuisenier champions traditional views as much as the latter rejects established ancient history. In so doing, they both employ a circular epistemic model to support their views and provide explanations for their theses. Cuisenier's break from purely textualist and literary approaches is presented as ethnography, but Cuisenier denies his field of research coevalness, erasing any social realities that are not related to the Greeks. He cherry-picks elements of social practice that might relate back to the *Odyssey*, such as the swordfish hunt, and confirms them at face value, under the preformed lens of the tradition he seeks to confirm.

Vinci, in contrast, presents himself as an underdog facing the official establishment, dismissing academics as unadventurous and motivated by selfish conservative interests.[70] His unsubstantiated claims and false correspondences remind of the search for revolutionary truths, most often associated with mystery and crackpot theories, and often discussed as motivated by a desire for profit, fame, nationalism, or a mix of these elements.[71] While presented as a scientific, positively evidence-seeking approach, Vinci's theses are backed up by an unmethodical accumulation of apparently plausible elements: even Edgar Allan Poe's fiction story on the Maelström of 1841, inspired by the Scandinavian

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[68] The first edition (1995) was followed by a second (1998), third (2002), fourth (2004) and fifth (2008). The book has been translated into English (2005) as well as Russian, German, Swedish, Estonian, Danish, Lithuanian, and French. See
http://www.palombieditori.it/detail.php?book=54&vetrina=venduti.
[69] Vinci (2011: loc. 17).
[70] Cole (1980: 2). See See Stiebing (1987: 2) on the three commonalities of pseudo-archaeological theories: unscientific method and evidence, simplification of complex issues, and tendency to present themselves as being persecuted by the establishment.
[71] Feder (2004: 27, 34, 146, 239), also on the "unwillingness on the part of promoters of pseudoscientific claims […] to look carefully at the evidence".

whirlpools,[72] is "press-ganged" (to borrow Fagan and Feder's terminology) to fit a favoured conclusion.[73]

While it would be impossible to address each and every claim (a task that also falls beyond my interest in this research), I will discuss some of Vinci's logical faults because their critique represents a further platform to understand the appeal of his theses among certain audiences. Among his critics, Bettini questions why the Baltic migrants who allegedly wrote the *Odyssey* were able to maintain faithful information about the Northern Seas and apply it onto a new geographical reality, only to then forget about the migration process.[74] Bettini also notes that relating a Tojia in Finland to Troy or a Tåsinge to Zacinto (Zakynthos) involves the decontextualization of evidence and the production of false etymological equivalents.[75] Vinci's reception ranges from those who went to great lengths and detail in criticizing his lack of method[76] to the enthusiastic reviews of casual readers.[77] While receiving a very lukewarm or derisive response among academic circles, Vinci had become a popular seller in Italy among non-specialist audiences of mysteries, and was later translated into several languages.

In assessing the possible motivations behind the continuous appropriation of Homer in culture, Bettini frames some of the general audience's interest in Vinci's Baltic *Odyssey* within a media culture perennially seeking scandals and extraordinary claims, and in which the *Odyssey* is only interesting inasmuch as it promises to beget unknown truths, or once Ulysses is spectacularly purported as a Viking.[78] Bettini also notes, ironically, that many other engineers had already claimed to have found Troy: Iman Wilkens, translating the *Odyssey,* interpreted the endless rain in the poem as evidence that Northern Europe was the place where Troy once stood. Engineer Vucetic had located the Homeric localities in the

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[72] E. A. Poe, 'A descent into the Maelström', 1841. See Séstito (1995: 15) on Poe's own ispiration from the *Odyssey*.

[73] Fagan/Feder (2006: 721).

[74] Bettini (2011:13).

75 Bettini (2011:13).

[76] Fiorilli (2004); Colella (2008).

[77] The book's Amazon page features comments ranging from "fits like a glove", "I am in awe!", "All Roads Lead to Scandinavia", "Fascinating solution to the Homeric enigmas", to "initially convincing but proves to be nothing but a net of unsubstantiated coincidences".

[78] Bettini (2011: 26). See Cole (1980: 2) on how pseudo-scientific approaches rely on sensationalism, and on the dangers of how their impact on the public's understanding of the past.

Adriatic, claiming that the bones of Ulysses' companions had been found in a grotto.[79] Inspired by Vinci, Majrani's theses (2008) suggested that Ulysses died in Troy, and the Suitors were actually killed by Philoctetes. Retired engineer Fowler's claim of a localization in Canada (Kidd 2010), and Mattievich's (2010) theories on the Amazonian *Odyssey,* may be added to the list.

In different ways, both Cuisenier's and Vinci's pursuits encapsulate their authors' and their audiences' fascination for the *Odyssey* as, once again, a journey of discovery, akin to the ones I have discussed in my earlier chapters. Writing on the reception of Homeric geography, Bettini (2011) joins scholars like Braccesi (2010) in regarding the *Odyssey* as an inexhaustible source of geographical interpretations and a terrain where all sorts of identity claims have been conducted. Questions about who wrote the *Odyssey* and what routes Odysseus followed have been made "infinite times, from the beginning of our history": Homeric geography represents a continuously enduring mix of reality and fantasy turned into "myths of myths*".*

Bettini seems to regard all attempts to have a final word on the actual locales of Homeric epic as delusional.[80] He discusses Jean Cuisenier, as well as Victor Bérard and Tim Severin, as passionate sailors who —not unlike their predecessors– believed that a 'faithful' re-enactment of the *Odyssey*'s travels could be achieved.[81] However, he sides with Ballabriga (1998), in noting that the geography of the poem was neither only mythical invention nor exclusively an actual geography, and that the Greeks had neither the nautical cartography nor the satellites available today. The very premises of such attempts have, notes Bettini, been decided in advance. Ultimately, Vinci's and Cuisenier's attempts contributed to the on-going mythical history of the Mediterranean (or revision of such a history) as "one of the main mnestic places of Western culture"—a landmark whose historical memory is irremediably tied to that of Homer.[82]

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[79] Bettini (2011:11).

[80] Bettini (2011: 1). Also see, again, Gieryn's (1983) and Hesse's (1993) workings of the concept of boundary-work discussed earlier.

[81] Wolf/Wolf (1983).

[82] Murillo Perdomo (2004: 178). One could argue that the immaterial presence of Scylla and Charybdis is perennial reminded by the Pylons, two free-standing steel towers formerly used to carry electricity, situated on both sides of the Strait's narrowest point; cultural association Horcynus Orca (discussed earlier) is also on both sides of the Strait (see my Documentary Film).

6–6: *Writing history: hard data, evidence, and the pursuit of the truth*

Cuisenier's traditional mapping of Homeric geographies in the Aegean and Mediterranean and Vinci's revisionist theory situated Homer in the Baltic also reveal that historical truths can be fabrications and that science and factuality can be elements of storytelling. In the previous chapter, I have already discussed the limits of monogenetic myth explanations of myth in their delusion to match Scylla and Charybdis with several animal species. In the last two sections of this chapter, I will continue my critique of Cuisenier's and Vinci's myth-mapping, while looking more closely at the historical plausibility of the idea that the Strait actually inspired the Homeric myth. Once again, I do not wish to claim authority on the "truth" of Homer in the Strait– a matter that pertains to the specialists of ancient history, and falls beyond the remit of this thesis. Nevertheless, this is an important issue that deserves treatment to approach my analysis' final focus in this chapter, which I will connect to my Documentary Film: the appropriation of Scylla and Charybdis and of Homer by scholars in the Strait, and how their "ownership" of myth impinge on claims to objective historical factuality.

In spite of the "complex web of historical, literary, and archaeological pieces of evidence in which lie the relations between Italy and the Western Allusions in the *Odyssey*",[83] a precise, unique explanation of Scilla as the place that inspired Homeric myth is ultimately unobtainable. There is a lack of evidence from the times preceding the Greek's Western Mediterranean expansion. While the earliest accounts about the town of Scilla suggest its correlation with myth, evidence that the place directly inspired Homer is simply missing. Other localities in the Mediterranean and the Aegean could have been related to the myth, before the latter became irrevocably attached to Scilla. The Strait was certainly a suitable landmark to become the myth's signifier in cartographic form.[84] Yet, in the absence of ultimate truths, one would be hard pressed to demonstrate cause and effect explanations for any given myth and locality. Such considerations can be extended to all mappings of Homeric geographies—traditionalist, enquiring, and

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[83] Phillips (1954: 53).
[84] See my considerations in Chapter 1, and in my Documentary Film.

revisionist alike. Vinci's alternative explanation of Charybdis as the Norwegian Maelstrom is plausible in theory. The myth could sensibly have to do with nautical experience of such phenomena at the time, incorporated in Greek myth via contacts between seafarers. However, evidence is missing. Similar whirlpools are also found in Scotland (the Corryvreckan) or, for that matter, could actually have existed in the Strait in antiquity due to a potentially different geomorphology.[85]

Truths should give way to hypotheses. Cuisenier could not find the entrance to the mythical sea grotto hideout of Scylla (which Bérard had already searched for in vain in 1912).[86] He thus speculated that the grotto must have fallen into ruin after an earthquake struck the area.[87] A grotto that could recall the myth does exist in Scilla: it is an underground cave, which I show in my Documentary Film.[88] However, all around the Mediterranean, countless other natural grottos might have served as similar material for myths. One would then only need to match her or his places and myths of choice. Tim Severin, in his quest for the true Scylla, found a Mount Lamia close to his locations, and took this as further evidence supporting his mapping of the myths. However, a mount Lamia can also be found near the town of Scilla in Calabria– it is the nearby Tremusa cave. Grottos have always called up associations with monstrosities as well as myth and ritual—Lamia is a "speaking name" or lexeme (Bettini/Spina 2007: 100) that correlates the female monster and caves with digestive or vaginal metaphors of engulfment of those who venture in.[89]

Monogenetic explanations thus conceal the most interesting questions about the migration patterns and symbolic uses of mythical motifs, filling in the space of missing historical information with more storytelling. Of course, in saying so, I do not aim to deny that myth is related to and captures people's interest

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[85] See also theories about a lost archipelago of small islets, which could have existed in ancient times in the Strait: De Grazia (1930).

[86] Bérard (1929).

[87] Cuisenier (2003: 321).

[88] See the Sibyl's grottos in Cuma; Malta's Blue Grotto, Corfu's Grotta Verde in the Ionian, Praia a Mare's and Capri's Grotta Azzurra in Calabria and Campania, Alghero's Grotto of Neptune in Sardinia, the Blue Grotto in Taormina, just to name a few.

[89] On female monsters, see Bril (1998); Lamia's name would work in much the same way as Scylla did as an intersection of rock, dog and female. On grottos, see Carratelli (1988). On the intersections of rock, dog, and female in Scylla see Hopman (2012, *passim*); Roman emperor Tiberius used the cave of Sperlonga to display his collection of mythical statues (Conticello 2012).

in natural phenomena: from whirlpools 'sucking in boats' to volcanic eruptions, abyssal fish or encounters with whales (see my Chapter 5, Figures 5–31, 5–32) to hydrogeological features like whirlpools and caves. Remarkable landscapes hold an unquestionably powerful fascination, a power to attract stories. Yet, in the case of the Strait, as I have already discussed in my early chapters, nature is also pre-loaded with mythical fame and cultural expectation: a list on a popular web-site features a top ten of the world's whirlpools, including the one in the Strait (referred to as Charybdis), which, 'while not the most dramatic', still makes it alongside the far more visually striking ones from Norway. Such lists suggest that mythical narratives do anticipate what people can expect from certain places, effectively reconstructing the landmarks as they disseminated ideas about them. (Fig. 6–10).

Figures 6–8 (a-d, clockwise from top left): Saltstraumen, Norway; Corryvreckan, Scotland; Naruto, Japan; Charybdis, Italy.

The fault-line of monogenetic myth-interpretations lies in the fact that they reduce complex cultural constructions into one-directional statements of causality. When transposed to the physical world to social constructions, such views transform history into myth. Science can be flawed by virtue of working as a narrative device in itself. In Popper's terms, science can be as a metaphysical system that only believes in facts "out there", even though those "facts" are already pre-formed by the subjective beliefs of their proponents. Discussing this *problem of induction*, Popper highlighted how science fails at demarcating critically its own *faith* in what is purportedly 'derived from experience.[90]

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[90] Popper (2002a: 10-12).

Positivists constantly try to separate their position from metaphysics by opposing "discoveries of facts", while in fact, "in their anxiety to annihilate metaphysics, [they] annihilate natural science along with it. This is what Popper defines as an "occult effect": that is, the way in which subjective experiences effectively shape the purported scientific discovery".[91] Using Popper's theory as a platform, I am setting out for my closing remarks on the interpretations of Homeric geographies produced by scholars in the Strait as metaphysical statements designed to stake a claim over the historical descent from Homer and the Greeks.

6–7: *Denizens of the Odyssey: appropriating Homer in the Strait*

In this final section, I will conclude my investigation on the relevance of Scylla and Charybdis for Homeric geographies by introducing a discussion that I will continue in my Documentary Film: a relation on my ethnographic work in the Strait, where I investigated how local historiographies and public discourses selectively heighten this place's connection with the ancient Greeks. In towns like Scilla, identifications with Homer underpin, contribute to, and reinforce a broader sense of collective identity, drawn from identifying as the descendants of the people who resided in the area at the time when the *Odyssey* was established as a pan-Hellenic epic. My work in Scilla and other localities, such as Reggio, Messina, and Ganzirri,[92] revealed a widespread narrative heightening Sicilian and Calabrese localities' historical relations with Greater Greece. Such relations could be conceptualized as generic claims of affiliation with the ancient Greeks, as well as more specific forms of affection and disciplinary interests.

Some of the individuals I interviewed aimed to demonstrate scientifically how the myth of Scylla and Charybdis was inspired by the geographical and marine morphology and fauna of Scilla, and that Homer was a denizen of the area, whose memorable poetry could thus be explained mainly through the unmatched inspiration he gained from the Strait. Such theses can be exemplified by the cases of biologist Angelo Vazzana and the late Greek philologist Franco Mosino, both

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[91] (Popper 2002a: 13,22). See Popper (2012a: 3-40) for a full discussion on the epistemological problem of science as a system of statements.
[92] As I discussed in my Introduction, I spent time doing participant observation in Scilla, but broadened my field of research to areas of Calabria and Sicily.

based in Reggio Calabria, the province capital of the marine town of Scilla, and both of which I interview for my Documentary Film. The marine biologist disseminated his views through an illustrated book,[93] in which he claims that the *Odyssey* should be seen as "a paraphrase of human existence" in the territory of the Strait, one "of the most universally important areas" of the world.[94] Vazzana brings as evidence a survey of the Strait's natural features. Firstly, a rock that used to protrude in front of Scilla's promontory, and that sank into the waters after a series of earthquakes. The former presence of the rocky formation would be evidence that the mythical Strait was actually in Scilla, in the space of an arrow's shot as described by Homer.[95] Vazzana thus believes that the myth should be pinpointed exclusively in Calabria, stripping the Sicilian coast of its share of Homeric geography.[96]

The second main element presented by Vazzana is the periodic upwelling in the area of Cannitello, close to Scilla's coast, of viper fish, whose distinctive appearance, he claims, also inspired the myth.[97] Vazzana explains how the Strait's unique hydrodynamics, that generates tides, causes the upwelling of abyssal and bioluminescent creatures during certain times of the year (Figures 6–11, 6–12).[98] For Vazzana, the six heads of Scylla could be explained both as the rock that sank under the sea, and as the teeth of the viper fish, transformed by poetic imagination into dogs.[99] Vazzana also discusses the phenomenon of extensive fog over the Strait (which could be used as a counter-argument to Vinci's explanation of the *Odyssey*'s seas as Northern and foggy); and the mirages of the *fata morgana*, an optical phenomenon that occasionally reflects and mirrors the view of the Strait

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[93] Vazzana (2016). The short pamphlet has a double title: in Italian, and in misspelled English: "Skylla and Charybdis in the Authors by Reggio of Odyssey".

[94] Vazzana (2016: 92). The Author's translation here and below.

[95] Vazzana (2016: 65-67). Such interpretation is discussed by Sole (2000: 17), an Italian text that would be easily available to Vazzana in Reggio's municipal library. For an exhaustive iconography on the now sunken rocks in previous engravings, see Séstito (1995: 147-173).

[96] Vazzana draws on documents such as Antonio Minasi's 1776 illustrations (Figure 6–9; a similar view is in Fortuyn's views of the Strait, discussed in my Chapter 1). For Minasi's tables, see Séstito (1995: 97-104).

[97] See my Introduction, Chapter 5, and Documentary Film. The fish is discussed in Sole (2000: 22).

[98] Vazzana (2016: 32).

[99] Through the notorious explanation of the wind howling through the rocks—see my Chapters 1, 2, and 5.

over the sea (again, *pace* Vinci's Northern Lights, if one would want to pit one's evidence against the other).[100]

Fig. 6–9 (top left): Antonio Minasi, *Northern View of the town of Scilla,* 1776.
Fig. 6–10 (top right): G. Fortuyn, *Southern view of the town of Scilla,*
Fig. 6–11 (bottom left): Massive shoring of *velella velella* in Cannitello (Vazzana 2016).
Fig. 6–12 (bottom right): The Skylla fish of the Strait (Vazzana 2016).

Far from original, Vazzana's elements are the result of a tradition —as in the case of Cuisenier— of established ways of explaining myth. As Consolo notes, all possible aspects of the Strait's relation with Homeric myth have been considered through the ages: historical, geographical, seismological, biological, and so on.[101] Vazzana writes as if discovering truths, whereas scientists, local or otherwise, have long been keen on drawing from ancient sources to provide explanations of the peculiar hydrogeological features of the Strait.[102] Such elements are, indeed, suggestive, and definitely played a part in the association of the myth with the Strait over the centuries. The hypothesis of the sunken rock has been corroborated by visual evidence; the viper fish is definitely consistent with a mythical image like Scylla; and the currents of the Strait work very well as a possible inspiration for Charybdis. All such established relations between the *Odyssey* and the

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[100] A view popularized by Minasi (1773), now included in Consolo (1993: pp. 157-173). Also see *Nature* (1903).
[101] Consolo (1993: 41).
[102] See references to the whirlpools in Berdar/Riccobono (1986: 17-22) and Fenicia (1857: 19).

Mediterranean are historically undeniable. As Séstito argued, the geomorphology of the Strait created the necessary conditions for its fantastic geographies.[103]

And yet, the idea of precisely matching each and every natural phenomenon as a co-cause of the same myth displays the elements of circularity already discussed with regard to Cuisenier. Vazzana's way of claiming historical truth distorts a more nuanced view of myth, myth-places, history, and scholarship, transforming the social process of mythology into a self-evident, transparent truth. Most probably, the myth of Scylla was attached to the Strait by the ancient Greeks, rather than inspiring the Scylla tale, as if emerging from a vacuum or from a metaphysical unique property of the area.[104] Once again, I do not aim to offer any conclusion on the ancient myth's putative origins from the perspectives of ancient history, biology, or palaeontology. Instead, I wish to underline how Vazzana's absolute claims, while presented as science, suffer deeply from the metaphysical problem of induction as discussed in Popper's critique.

Vazzana's views on a complete isomorphism between myth and nature in the Strait are preformed and rooted in a double form of exceptionalism of both the Strait and Greek myth. His "discoveries", while erasing previous research by other scholars, are motivated *a priori* by a desire to demonstrate that Homer lived there and was inspired by the viper fish. In the heat of his explanations, the species is rechristened as the Skylla fish (Fig. 6–15).[105] Vazzana also maps the Sirens onto the Strait, and identifies them firstly as cormorants (if bird-like), then as seals (in their fish-like variants). In Vazzana's assertive and boastful appropriation of every single element that may support his theories,[106] cause and effect of cultural and natural phenomena are conflated, and everything goes back to the Strait. Vazzana also believes that Homer was a poet from his home town, subscribing to an emerging narrative. Late philologist Franco Mosino claimed (and does so in my Documentary Film) that Homer was in fact Appa from Reggio, reading the initials of the first lines of the *Odyssey* as if they composed, from top to bottom,

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[103] Séstito (1995: 8).

[104] Despairing on the issue of ultimate evidence, Sole (2000: 12) reminds that Scylla's polyvalence and its association with the Strait may ultimately be due to fortuity in nature.

[105] The viper fish has been observed in bathypelagic habitats throughout the globe (Sepkoski 2004); Vazzana's argument seems to be that they are only visible in the whole Mediterranean in this area.

[106] See previous studies like Longo (1882), Defant (1940), Baguet (1995), Bruni (2006).

an acrostic revealing the name of the real author.[107] Vazzana actively references such theories in his book, using them as an element to corroborate his own theses.

Read through the tripartite division that has been adopted in this chapter to make sense of Homeric geographers, Vazzana's theses can be seen as both traditionalist and revisionist in different respects. On the one hand, they rely on the Mediterranean tradition spearheaded by the likes of Cuisenier, aligning with its prestige. On the other, Vazzana is regionally subversive for the way he hyper-localizes the myths' origins in his home town, going to such lengths as to removing Sicily from the traditional setting. Likewise, Mosino's views could be seen as both traditional and revisionist. In one way, they stem from traditional Mediterranean history. In another way, they are centred around Mosino's own origins in Reggio and, like Vinci's, dismiss the idea that Sicily "owns" Charybdis.

Vazzana's and Mosino's approaches also reveal a "most common characteristic of a pseudoscience", that is, "the non-falsifiable or irrefutable hypothesis".[108] They demonstrate how the reception of Greek myth works as a grand historical canon solidifying a local-centred world view that aligns the region with Greater Greece. Such discourses could be said to originate in the need for symbolic affirmation of an area of Italy that has been historically relegated to a peripheral political and cultural role. A much broader investigation of these social processes and the varied communities which they involve falls beyond the scope of my research.[109] However, my study shows how both Vazzana and Mosino understand their relation with the Greeks as individuals for whom (as studied by Herzfeld in the context of Crete) history works "not simply *within* the framework of nationalist discourse and official procedures but at least as much "*against* it".[110]

In a marginalized region like Calabria (and, therefore, in local scholarship), the act of localizing Homer in the Strait works as the "discovery or

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[107] Mosino (2007).
[108] Hines (2003: 13).
[109] On this issue, see Pipyrou (2012).
[110] Herzfeld (1991: xiii). The perspective thus highlighted takes into account the historical marginalization of this area from national politics in the post-unity Italian nation, and the rise of the so-called Questione Meridionale as a response to an alleged political bias favouring the Northern regions (see Pescosolido (2017; also discussed in Ch. 2). While this issue does not pertain to the research focus of this thesis, the perceived subaltern position in politics and cultural industries of many Southern intellectuals does underpin regional-centred discourses that seek revisionist approaches to Italian history, and legitimization of the Southern region's value.

rediscovery of foundational authors or canons", as well as "religious myths and stories", that occur "at times of political crisis".[111] The absolute cultural record of the ancient Greeks among local historians can be assessed by the almost exclusive attention and emphatic praise they receive from local publishers and academics, largely at the detriment of a broader contextualization of the region's history both in ancient and modern times. Popular textbook, as I have discussed in my first Chapter, rely on a preconceived selective and glorifying view of Hellenism.[112]

A relevant case in this respect, in addition to the ones discussed so far, is the popular reception of the ancient Bronze Warrior statues retrieved from the sea in the 70s, and now displayed at the Museum in Reggio. The Bronzes were quickly turned into popular icons of masculinity and an ancient foundational example of the place's civilization (Fig. 6–14).[113] As symbols of Greek myth and archaeological artefacts, they were mobilised first and foremost as representative of regional identity, which could thus be heightened in the name of the "classics". The quasi-religious zeal with which such figures have been received, and their metonymical power in representing the city (in spite of neither originating in it, nor having been found in it), remind us of how the snakes-wielding Cretan Goddess has been "enshrined and perpetuated" popularly as Cretan history.[114]

During my ethnographic research, I was able to relate to such issues on site, corroborating historical investigation and archival research with an understanding of everyday life situation that revealed people's affection with heritage. Ethnography did not simply reveal how statues and architectural designs display or evoke affiliation with Greek history in Scilla (Fig. 6–13), Messina (Fig. 6–16), or Reggio (Fig. 6–15). On-site research also allowed to capture emotional responses by a polyvocal ensemble of individuals who responded to my general

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[111] See Mali (2012: 7) on contended appropriation of traditions. Also Pipyrou (2012) in relation to the Strait and Hellenism.

[112] See Violi (2006: 22), discussed in my Chapter 1. While I do not argue that claims of Greek nativism are necessarily a pervasive ideology, they do represent a widespread narrative in this area. See, again, Pipyrou (2012) on how cultural associations in Reggio and its Province pursue ideas of affiliation with Greece, based on different views of surviving linguistic minorities in the area of the Bovesia; and how such claims operate according to logics of competition between visions of history or even familial affiliation, based on individual and community ties with the now fast-depopulating region (reflected in such names as 'Mother Greece').

[113] See Carbone (2014), and Lombardi Satriani (1986).

[114] Boze (2016: 2).

inquiries about the place. As I show in my Documentary, such responses ranged between the candour of the unwary tourist seeking the seaside, the zeal of the activist striving to transform Scilla into a UNESCO site, the disappointment of migrants finding the town underdeveloped and poor, and the heartfelt relation with the sea of a restaurant owner turned poetess (and slightly obsessed with Glaucus and mermen).

Fig. 6–13: Architectural vault in Scilla with the inscription 'Scyllae Civitas' (2014).
Fig. 6–14: The Bronze Warriors displayed in Reggio Calabria in *CorriereLocride.it* (2012).
Fig. 6–15: Replica of Phidias' Athena Promachos, Reggio Calabria (2014).
Fig. 6–16: Replica of G. Montorsoli's Neptune, Scylla, and Charybdis, Messina (2014).

People's understanding of Greek myth emerges in existential, cultural, and sometimes poetic responses to anxieties about origins and destiny. A passionate naturalist who manages a museum of marine biology and divulges myth to cohorts of young students, Vazzana produced vibrant, original photographs of the sea that display his affection for these places. Vazzana's relation to place is exemplified by his view of the sunken rock in Scilla as the Scylla monster's teeth, giving new life to corals under the seas, or by the image of Charybdis as a myth embodying the generative natural force of the whole Strait—the currents to which the area owes its very biodiversity. Vazzana's defence of the "uniqueness of the marine territory and the environment between Calabria and Sicily", and his attempts to "raise awareness of the rich biodiversity that exists today among the submerged rocks of Scylla" are certainly a part of his aims.[115]

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[115] Vazzana (2016: 15).

Naturalistic passion and an exceptional view of the Mediterranean and Greek history reinforce each other. The Preface to Vazzana's book was endorsed by a local cultural association owing its name to Anassilaos, the ancient ruler who dominated ancient Rhégion and Zancle (today's Messina). His views, like Mosino's, could be seen above all as "manifestations of cultural, linguistic and social heritage" through geo-cultural inscription.[116] A philhellene, philologist Mosino recited Greek poetry in front of my camera, constantly evoking the ties between the ancient Greeks and Bovesia—a rural area of Calabria where small enclaves can still speak a surviving variant of ancient Greek.[117]

In historical perspective, however, Vazzana's explanations of the myth of Scylla and Mosino's Homeric appropriation are far from new or exceptional—as I have already discussed in relation to the theories on the Trapanese Homer. From a broader perspective, as Bettini notes, such claims can and have generated parochial squabbles over ownership of Homer, given how many appropriations of myth-names one can find along the coasts of Southern Italy.[118] Such hyper-local, naturalized historical narratives could be read, on Bourdieu's terms, as the effects of a community's desire to find symbols for cultural consensus and *distinguish* itself from others.[119]

Broadly speaking, Homeric geographies — and the monsters of the Strait as some of their most iconic identifiers — have always, first and foremost, served this purpose, providing one of the West's original mysteries and playgrounds, as well as a dominant and prestigious history to align with. This process can be a burden because, as observed by Kalantzis, such selective representations may lock people into inescapable histories.[120] I believe that Herzfeld's idea of a "global hierarchy of value",[121] which I discussed earlier in relation to the Strait, is very

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[116] Puzey/Kostanski (2016: xiii).

[117] See my Documentary Film for Mosino's heartfelt recitation of a poem by modern Greek poet Giorgos Seferis (1995), who had used the *Odyssey* as a vehicle for Greek cultural identity, on the landscape of the Greater Greece and Hellas. See Stamuli (2008) on the linguistic minorities in Calabria; on similar surviving variants in the Puglia region, see Pellegrino (2013). See Pipyrou on the state of theory on the relations between surviving Grecanico language and its purported derivation from Doric or Attic ancient Greek.

[118] Bettini (2011: 13).

[119] Bourdieu (1991: xxi).

[120] Kalantzis (2014: 57).

[121] Herzfeld (2004: 156).

useful to explain how philhellenes seem lured by Homeric geographies into taking part in their enticing mythologies, and almost compelled to subscribe to them, lest they miss the opportunity to take a purchase on Western history.

Umberto Eco, while noting that the *Odyssey* is a beautiful legend, and that attempts to reconstruct it have created just as many legends, argued that people choose to believe in legends, which makes them real in their minds.[122] Ultimately, there is nothing inherently wrong in believing the viper fish inspired Scylla or that Homer hailed from Reggio, especially given the fact that such an important cultural asset as Homeric geography could benefit a region whose recent history is punctuated by misfortunes—lest people are not actually compelled by delusion into so believing, for the sake of a tradition that is ultimately as metaphysical as it is factual.

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[122] Eco (2013).

CONCLUSIONS

C–1: *Ancient Greek myth in historical perspective*

My thesis has considered the methodological, theoretical, and empirical issues that arise from approaching the transmission and dissemination of the ancient Greek myth of Scylla and Charybdis into the present. I approached the polyvocal and often ambiguous reactivations of Greek mythology by delving into a varied series of contexts where Scylla and Charybdis have resurfaced. Adopting methods and concepts from various disciplines, I have analysed media texts as parts of broader cultural constructs, incorporating findings from my ethnographic practice in the Strait. Rather than looking at Greek myth as a source of archetypes and prototypes (thus entailing a metaphysical or elitist frame of value) I have deconstructed notions like "classics" and "myth", and explained how new audiences and communities have variously received, understood, and re-activated notions of antiquity. On the one hand, people have understood Scylla and Charybdis as gnawing and castrating "speaking names" and marine creatures. Encapsulated in fictive and imaginative forms as a series of projections into distant spaces and times, the monsters embodied deep seated anxieties revolving around fascinating and yet unsettling encounters with Otherness—whether geographical, gendered, or relating to the notion of species. On the other hand, the monsters' notoriety can often be explained not only with the popularity of the larger narratives of Hellas and Greater Greece within which they have been transmitted, but also with the prestige associated with them. Scylla and Charybdis, as place-names of the Strait of Messina, metonymically represent a cornerstone of Mediterranean Homeric geographies and, as a consequence, are signifiers of Greco-Roman traditions and culture for those who wished to align with them.

Throughout the thesis, I have maintained my focus on following the international dissemination of Greek myth. People could relate to Scylla and Charybdis in ways that ranged from holding Greco-Roman traditions in exceptionally high regard, or consuming their repertoires in purely contingent forms. I followed the myth's main strands of reception among philhellenic communities, popular and media audiences, and academic discourses, adopting

perspectives such as historiography, psychoanalysis and gender studies, and epistemology to see how people used myth to project adventure, exoticism, sexual anxieties, and fascinations for the unknown. In the process, I highlighted the myth's diffusion diachronically, discussing how globalization amplified existing historical traditions, projecting Greco-Roman themes outside of the cultural frames of references of European philhellenism and Mediterranean historical traditions where they had been received and formulated in modernity.

My analysis began with European Grand Tours (Ch. 1), showing the decisive role of this era's travelogues in defining the Strait as a chronotope of Hellas.[1] I continued by showing how travel literature and tourism later projected the Homeric fame of the Strait's place-myth beyond philhellenism and into cultural industries (Ch. 2). I discussed how globalization further disseminated the myths worldwide, making them available for an extraordinarily varied array of media and contexts, often in transnational, cross-cultural, and meta-canonical forms. Tracking the resurfacing of Scylla and Charybdis, I have discussed how their uses ranged from their meta-psychoanalytic representations in fantasy and horror media (Ch. 3) and *myth-scegenating* treatments in horror, erotica, and monster pornography (Ch. 4) to their exploitation in narratives of science and mystery of sea creatures (Ch. 5) and in professional or affective claims to knowledge about the mythical geographies of the Mediterranean (Ch. 6). I have discussed how the global popularization of Scylla and Charybdis meant an expansion of the contexts where they have been used and liberally transformed, and a multiplication and fragmentation of people's response to their being understood as Greek myths.

On the one hand, Scylla and Charybdis signified a prestigious Greco-Roman tradition. Such frame of value underpins many reasons of academic and popular interest in the ancient myth. Scylla and Charybdis were extremely important to explorers, travellers and enthusiasts like Bérard, Severin, Bradford, and Quilici because they allowed them to "play Ulysses" in the Mediterranean (Ch. 1 and 2). People tried to map and remap Scylla either to claim professional authority in traditional Homeric geography, like Cuisenier did, or they did so as

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[1] Bakhtin (1981).

part of a sensationalist, revisionist literary history of the Mediterranean that catered to non-specialists, like Vinci did (Chapter 6). Whether confirmed, revised, or contested, the Scylla/Scilla association rests on a historically strong toponymical relation. For people who live in the Strait, the importance of such an association is paramount. The reception of the myth can be conceptualized as an attempt of some individuals and communities to strenuously defend a one-to-one relation between the myth and their home towns. This operation allowed some to rediscover Homer as their ancestor and to identify as heirs of the Greeks, through a selective, monumental, at times nativist conception of Hellenic heritage.[2]

Yet, as I have discussed, seeing Greek myth as a specific historical narrative cannot lead one to exclude that symbols and figures travel relentlessly around and outside their frames of references. Attempts to fix myth in place or to appropriate it as a community (whether based on disciplinary affiliation, or on nativist claims) are destined to be partly defied by the inherently creole, hybrid, and syncretic character of myth-figures.[3] Scylla and Charybdis have offered people monstrous bodies on which to project and to consume biological otherness in the fictive space-time of ancient myth. Their imaginative *mises-en-scène* took place in unfathomable recesses imagined to conceal elusive creatures. Scylla and Charybdis encapsulated and conflated monstrosity, femininity, and animality. Leisure and entertainment turned Greekness into a repertoire of identifiable signifiers, but people also relentlessy re-activated, transformed, or crossed over Greek myths with other literatures or visual canons. Geographic relations with the Homeric landmarks were maintained as fictionalized settings, but their historical significance largely lost relevance or receded into the background.

Part of the audiences exposed to Greek myth have largely emptied them of an actual reference to history or cultural sense of prestige, reworking them alongside other imaginative canons from various histories and cultures. Scylla and Charybdis often kept their loose geographical reference to the Mediterranean in many cases, like in horror and fantasy media like *God of War* or *Monster Girls* (Chapters 3 and 4); and disciplines like cryptozoologists could still exploit it to

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[2] See Nietzsche (1874) on monumental history, discussed in Ch. 6. See Mali (2012: 6) on selective history and the canonization of authors.
[3] On hybridity, see Stewart (2011), discussed earlier in this work.

gain support for their thesis on the cryptids of the seas (Ch. 5). However, the post-classical afterlives of Scylla and Charybdis are inevitably ambiguous and diffracted. In my thesis, I have scrutinized the idea that Greek myth is necessarily associated with a cultural prestige, showing, through the lens of cultural and postcolonial studies, that audience perceptions of the Greco-Roman world do not reflect a "classical" perspective, and that reception in global cultures and audiences is multifaceted and nuanced. The monsters resurface in different social contexts for people to use them to various ends according to different values. As I have shown through my case studies, such appropriations included literary enjoyment, contemplative retreat and travel, the pursuit of adventure and exo/eroticism, the projection of sexual fantasies and anxieties, professional aggrandisement, the aim of disciplinary legitimation, and claims to cultural and historical origins.

In the upcoming sections of this chapter, I summarize the most salient findings of my study as follows. Firstly, the post-classical lives of Scylla and Charybdis and of Greek myth in the present suggest that reception studies embrace an inclusive and multidisciplinary method to reconnect at large with cultural studies and the humanities. Secondly, definitions of 'myth' should consider such a loaded term reflexively, in pragmatic and historical terms, assessing what Scylla and Charybdis meant for people in specific contexts, while also considering how ideas of Greek myth may be variously ingrained in different disciplines. Thirdly, representations of Greco-Roman antiquity and history work ambiguously across today's media: images of the past are often turned into commonplace repertoires and stripped of a nuanced relation with antiquity, and are the product of a series of layers and histories, both specialist and popular. Finally, even though the cultural impact of Greco-Roman myth in the Western world is undeniable, both antiquity studies and all self-proclaimed heirs of Homer should embrace the world 'outside classics', escaping conservative claims of cultural exceptionalism or elitist and nativist claims, lest they lose an opportunity to maintain their sensible relevance in today's world and in the field of the humanities.

Re-activation of myths never occurs in a linear fashion. Both ancient and modern versions of myth –from the ancient intersectional Scylla to the femme fatales and she-monster of games or the Cthylla hybrid– result from interwoven histories and genealogies where different audiences have activated meanings based on various interests and competences. Following Hardwick and Harrison (2013), I saw ancient Greek myth as a complex network of intersecting lines across which history has been disseminated, in turn influencing subsequent interpretations. My approach had to avoid "classical" exceptionalism because that would have made it impossible for me to follow mythic figures as perpetually hybrid and mobile cultural constructs appropriated in the most diverse contexts. My analysis of the *present* uses of mythic symbols and their Greekness was performed by diving, in Butler's words, into the "shifting deep sea" of antiquity and its reception,[4] as much as into the symbolic depths of the marine element that accompanies the myth's representations.

The conceptual basis of reception should, like in Wyke's formulation of it, act as an interpretative process in which representations of the past reflect the contingent interests and contexts of those who produce them.[5] Adopting this conceptualization, I have followed one of its possible corollaries: a powerful understanding of antiquity is inseparable from the questions that are being asked by the researcher. I was thus able to criticize Greco-Roman exceptionalism, whether explicit or internalized by elements of scholarship, as an approach that obfuscates rather than highlights the complexities of Greco-Roman traditions on contemporary cultures. I have found this exceptionalism to also work among scholars in the Strait, who have internalized West-centric narratives of descent from classical antiquity, drawing on local and supra-local historical narratives.

Whether the philhellenes of the Strait selectively appropriate Homer in much the same way as conservative classicists believe in the ahistorical timelessness of their canons is an issue open for debate. However, by questioning

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[4] Butler (2016: 7).
[5] Wyke (1997).

the explicit elitism of a branch of studies in which the Greco-Roman world is canonized as having an intrinsically superior value,[6] I have acknowledged that such a model of reception is fraught with the dangers of being "pretty obviously limited by the interest, expertise, and knowledge of its authors".[7] What Hardwick and Stray have defined as an almost feudal approach to history[8] might secure a sense of aesthetic privilege, but also secludes Greco-Roman studies in a compartmentalized box where the development of fresh interrogations of antiquity that might be stimulated by evolving scholarship can never take place. I have been wary of the dangers of the cultural decontextualization that could have taken place by comparing ancient and modern symbols as if they were not separated by different historical eras and contexts.[9] However, I have also suggested that modern media reception can represent a fruitful area for Greco-Roman studies.

One of the most important findings was that the apparent truism of decentring Greco-Roman culture is underestimated even in areas of classical reception that one would believe to be explorative and progressive. I have discussed on various occasions approaches to Greek myth like Miller (2012) and Nisbet (2013), where Scylla became an archetype of all *vagina dentata* monsters, and Japanese audiences 'learned' the basics of 'classics' through adaptations of myth in manga comics. Underlining that reception can retain a form of soft exceptionalism in which Greek myth is part of a superior culture, I have discussed how a high/low culture binary seems to be retained in many of such approaches, largely pre-empting the possibilities of sound and contextualized cultural analysis.[10]

Yet, I have also shown that one should be wary to think of a rigid binary, with specialists of antiquity on the side of cultural conservatism, and modern reception scholars on the progressive side. A study of Scylla in antiquity like Hopman (2012) was more useful for my analysis of modern reception than some of the works focusing on modern renditions of myths. Hopman's engagement with poststructuralism and feminism allows her to see Scylla as an intersectional figure

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[6] See Silk/Gildenhard/Barrow (2014: 4,120), discussed in the Introduction.
[7] Holmes (2016: 279).
[8] Hardwick/Stray (2008:1).
[9] See Wyke (1997), discussed in the Introduction.
[10] As discussed in relation to Miller (2012).

in a critical discourse on femininity.[11] And yet, as I have discussed, Hopman's analysis could not have existed in its form without the percolation and application of cultural studies and feminism in the study of antiquity. Contrarily to Hopman, elements of closet conservatism have made it hard for the *disciplinary habitus* of the *classicus* as a purported class of its own[12] to be rejected, and has thus prevented some studies in reception from developing multifaceted analytic approaches.

C–3: *Deconstructing mythologies as myth-traditions*

The reception of Scylla and Charybdis impinged on various explicit or implicitly held ideas on such distinctions as the ones between antiquity and modernity, history and fiction, tradition and fantasy. Analysing how the monsters reappeared in contemporary cultures, I showed how traditional approaches to myth such as comparative mythology, psychoanalysis, or positivism have become one with the myths they sought to explain. Greco-Roman exceptionalism was implied in evolutionary Frazerian analyses of myth. Freudian analyses have become common currency attached to new *vagina dentata* formulations. Positivist explanations of Scylla and Charybdis as animals and whirlpools inevitably come packaged with a narrative in which myth is a form of pre-science. Even scholarship and myth-theories have been reworked in media—from *God of War*'s Freudian mother-complex innuendos in a comic-book stereotyped version of Greek antiquity (Ch. 3) to how Frazer's *Golden Bough* is cited in *Eternal Darkness,* a horror video game involving Lovecraftian tentacle monsters and a diachronic storyline that stretches back to ancient Rome (Ch. 4).[13]

In this work, I have discussed how the critical perspectives of content and discourse analysis, historiography, and gender and cultural studies can be used to shed light on discourses where different audiences have different perceptions of what Greek myth means. I have discussed how Greek antiquity was appropriated by readers, travellers, scholars, and locals of the Strait because of how it offered a sense of retreat into adventure, remoteness, and ahistorical timelessness—in

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[11] Hopman (2012).
[12] See the Introduction, and Wyke on this issue (1997: 5).
[13] Silicon Knights/Nintendo, USA 2000.

some cases, through an additional layer of cultural elitism.[14] I have traced ideas of cultural prestige of Greek antiquity to the kind of West-centric evolutionary positivism spearheaded by J. Frazer, and offered a corrective to such views through post-structuralism.[15] Drawing on Lévi-Strauss' reflections on the contingent relations between history and ideology, and on Barthes' view of ideology as a naturalization of history, I have discussed Greco-Roman exceptionalism as a mystical sense of connection with an idealized past. Drawing on Eliade's understanding of myth as a return to a pre-historical, foundational time, I explained in such terms some of the ways modern tourists re-enact the crossing of the Strait, as well as the inhabitants of the Strait's claims of being the heirs of Homer.[16] In some respects, conservative classicism also displays a metaphysical, Eliadesque foundation.

In different contexts, myth means different things to different people. Looking at Freudian psychoanalytic concepts, I have shown that they have also become part of the myths they sought to explain—not as universal Freudian models of sexuality or as metaphysical Jungian archetypes, but as a diachronically resilient, male-centred naturalized ideologies the likes of which one can find n meta-textual mode in *God of War* (Ch. 3). Considering positivist explanations of myth, I have explained how such readings have also become part of the myths they sought to explain. I have argued that myths like the one of Scylla and Charybdis result from more complex cultural processes than the poetic misreading of natural phenomena, and that ideas of the ancient Greeks as pre-scientific simpletons are mostly used today to sell adventurous narratives of science and mystery.[17]

Overall, I have drawn on historiography and post-structuralism to explain the trajectories of mythical figures as a messy, Foucaldian entanglement of intersecting planes of discourses[18] or, after Deleuze and Guattari, as a decentred rhizome rather than a central root narrative of origins. Scholarship should maintain a clear sense of direction, but also delve into such processes to

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[14] Lévi-Strauss (1978), Barthes (1987).
[15] Frazer (1922), discussed in Introduction, Chapter 5.
[16] As discussed in relation to Eliade (1991: 32-6), in the Introduction.
[17] See Hawes (2014).
[18] Foucault (1984a).

understand what people make of myths. I thus argued that fencing Greco-Roman studies within a classics-based elitist assumption would produce a damaging form of disciplinary insularity and not allow researchers to investigate myth's presence today. Moreover, I have discussed "classicity" as mythical history founded in aestheticizing literature and art rather than discussing it critically. I have sided with post-classical approaches in resisting "reinstatement of classicism at its most conservative",[19] suggesting that disciplines devoted to antiquity should strengthen their ties with the evolving intellectual paradigms of the humanities. No scientific understanding of the social and cultural relevance of monstrous figures like Scylla and Charybdis today (as well as in the past), is possible through an elitist, art-based, or exceptionalist approach to myth.

As I have argued in my Introduction, and *passim,* to de-mythologize myth and history is to acknowledge that cultural traditions are intimately hybrid constructs—as Stewart notes, cultural purity is a delusion founded on the moment a given historical discourse is severed from its origins and seen as if outside-of-history.[20] In a progressively planetary conception of scholarship, an inward perspective of a Greco-Roman canon would become less and less authoritative. Conservative classicism is itself, a myth–a supreme canon invented by a certain class of people, based on criteria of selection that rescinded themselves from history and made a claim to timelessness. As I have discussed, classical elites, by transforming the varied, imaginative, complexly demotic genealogies, *theogonies*, and *mythoi* (stories) of Greek memory into a literary canon, have exposed themselves to the danger of not being able to understand the transformative and creative power of myth and the cultural relevance for people of monstrous-feminine figures like Scylla and Charybdis.[21]

C–4: *Representing antiquity: the past and a shadow and projection*

Contemporary artists, audiences, and cultural industries may often perceive Greek myth as a distinguished set of resources, or a goldmine of imaginative

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[19] Holmes (2016: 272).
[20] See Stewart (2011).
[21] See Detienne (1986). Also see Page (1973) for a discussion of the *Odyssey* as a thought-out literary work that does not merely reflect oral traditions.

creatures, sexualized monsters, and adventurous journeys. These processes of typifying, transmission, and transformation are enmeshed with, but ultimately independent from any official or scholarly canon. Nevertheless, these processes have an important role in disseminating forms of popular understanding of history.

There is a life to Scylla and Charybdis, the Strait, the Mediterranean, and Greek myth at large, in which such elements and settings are employed contingently and prosaically as entertainment products tailored to certain audiences (Ch. 3 and 4) or as markers of a tourist place-myth (Ch. 2, Documentary). Any mapping of real places or historical elements may have, in these cases, taken the role of a tired symbol or media simulacrum. One could see this process as a consequence of the modern, post-industrial, simulacra-driven societies of the spectacle,[22] even though this process began much earlier, back in the literary consumption of the Strait during the Grand Tours, which I have discussed through Bakhtin's notion of literary *chronotopes*.[23] Commodification and symbolic consumption pre-date the inception of a society based on mass media. The Strait's *topos*—at once historical and fictive— has been a recreational, commonplace myth ever since antiquity. Throughout my study, I have discussed Scylla and Charybdis as they signalled a Greater Greece where one could plunge into spatial and temporal remoteness, and how his representations seemed to freeze the place into a myth (Ch. 1, 2).

However, I have also considered how more recent decades have seen an intensification of the mediated representations and symbolic and touristic consumptions of the Strait. On the basis of the concept of place-myths,[24] I have discussed how locals construct and defend Scilla as an iconic Homeric landmark. Drawing on interviews with locals and tourists, and on socio-economic studies of the region (Mazza 2012), my documentary film shows that plans for economic and cultural development in Scilla, based on the idea of exploiting its literary fame, have taken the form of a polyvocal discourse between different actors, where claims of Hellenic nativism and forms of historical consciousness intersect with issues of local and supra-local economics, politics, and institutional policies.

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[22] Debord (1967). Also Baudrillard (1988).
[23] Bakhtin (1981), Ch. 1 and 2.
[24] Shields (1991).

The fact that people in Scilla recently erected statues that look like the creatures of fantasy, or devised boat tours with models playing sirens and an inflatable Scylla monster (see my documentary), show that supra-local narratives impact on local formulations of identity.

While acknowledging that media representations of Greek antiquity may be highly stereotypical, I have also discussed how artists and media audiences should not be dismissed as passive or unimaginative. Through cases of *myth-scegenation* like Cthylla (Ch. 4) I have shown how treatments of Greekness in the multiverses of fiction can be meta-textual, meta-theoretical, and *epistemaphiliac.* Creative and laborious transformations do not necessarily equate to a lack of affective connection with Greek antiquity. Greco-Roman traditions may be held in high regard, and in no way culturally diminished, even in the most liberal reformulations. Audiences experience varied pleasures in relation to the aesthetic value of Greco-Roman antiquity: from those who praise the motifs of a video game without recognizing those are Greek themes (Ch. 3) to writers who elaborately pay homage to the *Odyssey* in their canons of horror fiction (Ch. 4).

To decentre Greco-Roman myth in a planetary context of intersecting literatures and visual cultures does not entail the erasure of its aesthetic and imaginative power. The ancient Scylla and Charybdis have been working as catalysing figures for ongoing discourses about femininity and otherness for centuries, their popularity also based on their ability to transform.

C–5: *From owning the classics to situating antiquity*

All of these considerations are conducive to the issue of who can stake a claim to speak about Greco-Roman myth. Should modern reception be considered as a thoroughly different enterprise to the study of myths in antiquity? What category of scholars is supposed to be able to discuss myth's relevance in the present? In my research, I have supported an idea in which multidisciplinary reception becomes a mainstay and crucial element of Greco-Roman studies. I have also discussed the limits of conservative classicism, as well as art-based approach such as the inscription of "classics" in world literature,[25] arguing that such selective

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[25] McConnell (2016: 8; see the Introduction).

biases may appear to be cosmopolitan–sounding ways to pursue cultural elitism and separate art from the vulgar and the demotic. My analysis individuated that forms of disregard for the popular adaptation of the "classics" co-existed with pedagogical-missionary mode of reception studies, where popular renditions of Greek myth only make sense to the extent that they offer an opportunity to instruct profane or foreign audiences about proper classics.[26]

As a social studies and cultural theory scholar, I have followed a very different route, looking at the "differing ways in which myths are articulated, both within a particular writer's aesthetic and in the *wider context* of their (re)generation and circulation".[27] I have, therefore, argued in favour of a post-classical decentring and parochialisation of Greco-Roman material, meant in such a way that the very definition of a study community can be rethought and conceived as more timely and authoritative in a planetary context. [28] In agreeing with Lianeri on how the classical tradition was constructed and acquired cultural currency in the Western world only in the nineteenth century,[29] I have argued that understanding why Greek myth matters for different people and for different reasons is a more powerful intellectual stance than 'owning' antiquity.

Rather than relying on an antiquarian or aesthetic interest in ancient Greek myth as a corpus bearing a preconceived quality as art or heritage, I ventured into the circulations of Greco-Roman myth to assess its persistence and impact on today's world, shedding light on under-researched and non-conventional areas. In doing so, I rejected a high vs low cultural divide still implicitly at work in the field[30]. I would like to argue that Greco-Roman reception should be developed into an ongoing and authoritative platform from which to understand antiquity's reiterations in the present, whether in the form of longstanding historical narratives, commoditized themes, dimensions onto which to project fantasies and anxieties, or traditions through which to lay claims to aesthetic, cultural, or identity values. These opportunities are available to the whole field of Greco-Roman through a closer relation with historical and cultural studies. They only

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[26] Nisbet (2016).
[27] Hardwick's (2016:3)
[28] Butler (2016: 2).
[29] Lianeri (2011: 5).
[30] Colburn (2016: 3); see Introduction.

require that scholars renounce forms of epistemic insiderism that shelter ancient material from being accessed or discussed by media and cultural scholars, or prevent Greco-Roman scholars to pursue parallel expertise in such fields.[31]

Given that myth and antiquity work, in Wyke's formulation (1997), as a projection, reception studies should embrace this issue openly and self-reflexively. Through myth, people dismiss and project, explore and repel the other-than-now and other-than-self, revealing themselves in the present, whether consciously or not. In this light, classical conservatism has mythologized its historical roots in West-centric narratives, and elided the narrow view of civilization and art that such perspective enforces. Like the Homeric nativists of the Straits, some classicists, too, have confounded history and myth.

C–6: *Life of the symbols*

In this study, I have demonstrated the malleability of myth-figures, and how Scylla and Charybdis have traversed many areas of imagination, from sexualized femme fatales to marine monsters and signposts of Homeric geography, through largely related but often distinct narratives. I could not overlook that the popularity of Greco-Roman tradition worked as the very vehicle of Scylla and Charybdis' enduring popularity, beyond and besides their many transformations. Even though inhabiting often distinct and distant areas of culture, Greco-Roman tradition still provided a bedrock for figures' historical persistence under stable lexical and visual signifiers. Siding against formalist or archetypal formulations of myth, I looked at monsters as intersections of elements activated in history by different artists and audiences,[32] acknowledging that imagination provides people with the power to formulate new images and stories, even though traditions of what they have already heard and seen impact on their ideas.

Scylla and Charybdis' relations with fundamental concerns about liminal spaces of existence made them powerful operators and allowed them to be

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[31] The definition of "epistemic insiderism" was recently introduced by Rogers Brubaker in his study on gender and race (2016), in response to the idea that certain issues must be covered only by particular categories of scholars.
[32] Hopman (2012: 1–8).

constantly transformed in different experiences, ranging from travel to readership, from tourism to spectatorship, from play to artistic expression. Of course, I became exposed to the risk of constructing the object of my research while pursuing the symbols' tumultuous submersions and resurfacings. In unravelling some of the most recognizable and popular areas where Scylla and Charybdis have been received, this study has become in itself, inevitably, a part of the myth. In spite of my deconstructive method, and of my care in choosing case studies for how they related to popular areas of reception, I inevitably unlocked particular materials and gave them shape myself. Yet, in my research, I have strenuously avoided any claim of producing an all-encompassing study of an intimately polymorphous object like myth. No arrangement of a myth-study can be absolutely objective, including mine.

My method alerted me away from the sirens of entelechy—a process in which the potential of some material is moulded into final form by an agent that has already prefigured the final shape of his or her work.[33] Not only did I navigate between the transformations and the stability of the symbols, but I also listened to political scientist Bottici's warning that "in avoiding the Scylla of neglecting myth, we must not fall into the Charybdis of mythologizing everything".[34] For a study in myth-figures, ignoring such sirens would have been dangerous: threads of cultural transmission may entice the mythologist, transforming her or him into a mythographer.

I do not refrain from conceding this work's ultimate encapsulation within the histories of these symbols. It is mostly outside a canonized, anodyne appreciation of mythical figures, and through a more polyvocal embrace of unconventional perspectives, that researchers can delve into the labyrinthine and resonant depth of the life of symbols, where the persistence and resonance of old themes goes along with undisclosed or novel connections. However, the organization of my work highlighted some of the most common and historically significant areas of reactivation of the myth in modern media. By delving into a variety of mythographies, I have made sense of the most important received

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[33] See Burke (1966: 16).
[34] Bottici (2007: 116).

histories of Greekness that Scylla and Charybdis have provided to those who have re-imagined them.

Cultural transmission is complex and sometimes complicated and ambiguous, but not utterly gratuitous: the Greek monsters resurfaced consistently, not only as signifiers of an iconic and prestigious tradition, but also as accretions of the destructive and seductive forces of the sea, of fantasies of hybridization between the human and the animal, and of explorations of the unfathomableness of the marine element. The Scyllae and Charybdes of different times, and other female and monstrous equivalents, symbolise encounters with seductive and uncanny others, and fantasies of pleasures, loss, and annihilation within an eroticized imagination. Foucault saw the boat as "a floating piece of space" that gives itself to the infinity of the sea, going "from port to port", "from brothel to brothel".[35] Reception of myth works like travelling on an imaginative boat. Both phallic and vaginal symbols, and yet related to the dimension of abysses of oceans and depths real and imagined, Scylla and Charybdis inhabit an ambiguous space of exploration, at the boundaries between wild and domestic that have always been the concern of anthropology.[36]

As a study of the modern manifestation of these symbols, this thesis contributes to several intersecting issues. The many transformations of Scylla and Charybdis analysed through *Castlevania, God of War,* Cthylla, and the octopus-girls of pornography suggest that the monstrous body can be used as a gateway for both normative and misogynistic ideologies and escapist, non-normative fantasies. Further research in this field may highlight the diachronic persistence of *femme fatales* and suggest gender-oriented approaches to ancient mythology and the demotic. To other areas of reception, my work suggests that more research could be conducted on the iconographies of the Strait in modern cartography and in more recent and ephemeral media such as tourist guides, in order to reveal trends in the representation of Southern Italy in relation to philhellenic histories. From an anthropological perspective, further research could focus on the broader impact of narratives of Homeric geography on the geo-cultural representations of

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[35] Foucault (1984b: 9).
[36] Stewart (2012: 19).

the coastal areas of Italy through combinations of popular editions of Greco-Roman works, formal education, institutional toponymical practices, and folk traditions. More extensive studies could also look at myth in relation to history and heritage, discussing how people try to make them visible in material forms, or rely on them to make sense of their own present.

Adopting monstrosity as a motif, I have ventured to the farthest disciplinary boundaries of reception studies, reaching out extensively into the territories of cultural studies. In so doing, I did not attempt to challenge the disciplinary relevance of specialist Greco-Roman scholars and their focus of specialization. On the contrary, I aimed to contribute to Greco-Roman scholars' conceptualization of post-classical reception, while reminding cultural scholars that narratives of Greco-Roman antiquity pervade modern media and historical consciousness and may require collaborative research efforts. An interdisciplinary approach could mean that different specialists may mutually benefit from each other, through a confrontation over theoretical and methodological resources. Given the undeniable impact of popular ideas of antiquity in social contexts and mass media representations, where the past provides a projection strategy for the most varied claims and fantasies, multidisciplinary perspectives offer a chance to combine multiple sets of expertise on the uses and abuses of myth and history.

Ultimately, Scylla and Charybdis, as dual figures facing each other in a dangerous strait, have worked for me as a useful metaphor for the ambivalences of both myth-transmission, and the study of myth. In culture and history, mythical figures constantly face the threat of the Charybdis of annihilation, either through oblivion, or dissolution in the indistinct *mare magnum* of ever-transforming symbols. Figures may survive through absorption into other canons and reformulation, and remain recognizable by undergoing sacrifice in the form of transformation—a tribute to be paid to the exacting Scylla of change. I have also used Scylla and Charybdis, and the metaphor of a Strait as a space where one is confronted with two dangers, as a final methodological warning. Charybdis represented the risk of a self-serving method that would have made my research more mythical than scientific. Overlooking this risk would have dragged me into the delusional whirlpool of Greco-Roman exceptionalism. The six-headed Scylla

embodied the lesser of two evils: the burdensome but profitable endeavour of venturing out to make sense of the transformation of Greco-Roman myth.

The latter route came at the price of acknowledging Greek myth's parochialisation and the decentring of a tradition that I had, in my past, been led into believing to be ahistorical. I would like to suggest that Greco-Roman studies also follow a route that will lead such disciplines to reject exceptionalism and retain, precisely through decentrement, increased authority and relevance. This consideration was partly inspired by my ethnographic work in the Strait. Discussing myth, heritage, and the meaning of history with people from Scilla, I was able to decentre my own expectations and assumptions against an empirical confrontation with multiple voices and perspectives. To traverse and interpret different worlds and perspectives entailed several changes of directions, a constant need to reformulate issues, and a refutation of cultural exceptionalism.

Exposure to such a variety of voices also allowed me to work under the warning, as formulated by Holmes, that "the presumption of a single, unified body of material" may obscure the creative work scholars do "in selectively writing about their objects, and effectively constructing them".[37] My work in the field of the Strait suggested that I also look at disciplines in ethnographic mode, as particular expressions of cultures. As a critical mythography as much as a study in cultural transmission, I placed my route firmly in a precise direction: how Scylla and Charybdis have traversed the historical spaces of imagination from modern philhellenism to current cultural industries, remained inextricably tied both to the cultural presence of Greco-Roman antiquity, and to the Strait of Reggio and Messina. Perhaps the genius of those who wrote under the name of Homer lies in understanding that, as Fernando Pessoa noted, "it is only within us that landscapes become landscape within us; that's why if I imagine them, I create them; if I create them, they exist".[38] While inevitably selective, my study has demonstrated some of the many vistas that await scholars who might be willing to navigate, even though as cautiously and reflexively as possible, beyond the spaces prescribed by disciplinary fences, into the manifold ways people have looked at Greek myth.

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[37] Holmes (2016: 275).
[38] Pessoa (2010: 75).

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APPENDIX – A
DOCUMENTARY FILM LINK

The accompanying Documentary Film,
In the Strait, can be viewed at:

https://vimeo.com/238236625/f5d6db415d

APPENDIX – B
DOCUMENTARY FILM SCRIPT
In the Strait[1]

INTRODUCTION

We are here, in the Strait.
Between Calabria and Sicily.
Between the Ionian and the Tyrrhenian Seas.
Around these places, the ancient Greeks
founded prosperous cities.
Along with their history and material remains,
they have left another tradition: myths.

For centuries, people have associated
the Italian Strait with Homer's Odyssey.
In the myth, Ulysses had to sail
between Scylla, the render,
and Charybdis, the swallower.
The monsters were seen as metaphors
for the dangers of the seas.
Mysterious creatures from the depths,
unescapable whirlpools,
and deadly tsunamis.

Today, one facing the other, are two landmarks:
the village of Scilla, in Calabria, and
Cape Pelorus (Cape Monstrous) in Sicily.
The town of Scilla has become
a destination for summer holidays.
The myths have become common symbols, or brands.
But for others, they are much more:
some believe Homer was actually born here.

In this research, I have looked at some people's belief
That these are the true places of myth,
and that they descend from the ancient Greeks.
In a vast world of so many histories and peoples,
this view may seem parochial—
but here, the Greek past has become a beacon.
In 2014, I spent time with locals and visitors—
in the places where I was raised.
I came back as an expat, researching heritage.
I was returning home, but I had to avoid
ending up stuck in the Strait.

I – A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

To go to Italy, I didn't have
to sail, like Ulysses.
But the hero was still travelling with me.

Regions like Lazio, Campania, Calabria and Sicily
all boast Homeric place-myths:
the Cyclops in Aci Trezza, close to Aetna.
Circe's abode, close to Latina.
And Scylla and Charybdis, in the Strait.

The sea village of Scilla still bears the same name
as one of the creatures of myth.
Ever since the XIX century, European travellers
escaped urban life to flee to the remains of Greece.
Armed with classical texts, they saw the Odyssey
as a map of mythical landmarks.
Playing Ulysses, they re-lived
the journey of the Hero.

This small town's relation with ancient Greece
has profoundly shaped its identity.
I arrived in August, before Bank holiday
planning to see the tourism as a platform
to research identity.

It turned out most tourists
ended up here by chance—
in spite of the ambitions of many locals.

It soon became clear to me
that tourism was the tip of the iceberg.
For some, myth is, above all,
an entitlement to identity—
as well as one of the assets
through which to escape a present
of isolation and neglect.

Meanwhile, the rest of the world
mostly understood Greek myth
through the media.

Rocco believes the whole world
should be Scilla's audience—
and he has devised a spectacular boat tour.
And so, I was about to re-live
the experience of Ulysses.
The monsters are meant to materialize.
The Sirens do.
But Scylla's inflatable simulacrum
is kept at bay by unexpected troubles.

Scylla's absence was anti-climactic
The passengers, however, still appreciated the tour—
and the beautiful settings of Scilla.
No matter how inconclusive,
Rocco's tour reminded me
of some people's strenuous belief
in the redemptive nature of Greek heritage.

II – EXCEPTIONALISM

Those who were born or live in Scilla
seem to agree on its exceptional qualities.
Combine the scenery and the Homeric landmark,
and you have the ultimate badge of aggrandisement.

Porcaro believes Scilla should be nominated
as a UNESCO world heritage site.
For those who seek artistic inspiration
the Sea is the most powerful symbolic force.
Cosima Cardona runs a restaurant.
She also writes poetry.

Cosima's poetry is not unrelated to how
fantasy imagery has re-read Greek myth,
seeing in it gender bending, sexualized
monstrosity, and fantasies of miscegenation.

These myths may have become
international commonplaces,
pictured in fantasy and tourist guides—
but locally, they are jealously held traditions.
Different towns have often competed
as the true setting of the mythical tales.
And even in the lack of an overall vision for tourism,
communities are still deeply attached to their symbols.
Works of art like Reggio's Bronze Warriors
provided people with discourses
on glorious historical origins-–
in defiance of a disappointing present.

In quite a different museum,
biologist Angelo Vazzana
displays specimens and documentation
on the Strait's environment.
Vazzana sees in nature the ultimate evidence
that the Odyssey took place right here.
Such explanations are, in fact, ancient.
Their novelty would lie in dispelling
any chance for Sicilians
to claim their share of the myth.

As a biologist, Vazzana has
further evidence up his sleeve.
There's a particular specimen
he is quite proud to show: the 'Skilla fish'.

There's something else Vazzana believes—
that Homer was born in the ancient Reggio
This line of thought has been spearheaded in recent years
by late philologist Franco Mosino.

Today, most scholars believe the Odyssey
does not have a single author
But fame has often inspired alternative theories.
And in recent times, an Italian engineer
outlandishly believed Homer was
a Norse bard from the Baltic.

The Odyssey is undoubtedly related to this area.
However, it's hard not to see
that people try to align myths and geography
primarily to align themselves
with a prestigious tradition.
Whereas the Strait is seen as a Homeric landmark,
the Bovesia region is home to a surviving
Greek-speaking enclave.
This linguistic minority prides itself
with its affiliation with Greece.

Cultural connections with Greece
seem to heal the ailments
of a marginalized and peripheral region,
reconnecting it to past glory.

And yet, this region is constellated
by failed attempts to value its heritage.
Nearby is the site of the ancient Kaulòn.
The local museum is closed.
The town is extremely disconnected.
Not far from here is the village where
where the Bronze Warriors displayed in Reggio
were retrieved from the sea, Riace—
and its stillborn plans for tourism.

The mythical past alleviates a dysfunctional present.
It counters it with an idea of an original essence.
The past and the present are conflated.
Antiquity is continuously rehearsed into the present.

Believing in this connection will make people come together
and hail Homer as their own citizen.

III – COLD WATERS

After several weeks of shooting, I felt the risk
of not seeing the forest for the trees.
And so, I lifted off.

Did Homer really write the Odyssey here?
Was the tale of Scylla inspired by these places?
And are we the Greek the bedrock of civilization?

The answer is: no.

In each of these questions is a morsel of truth.
But together, they don't form a higher truth—
they are, themselves, a story. A myth.

To begin with, Homer never mentioned the Strait.
Ancient Greek historians
relate the village of Scilla to Homer.
However, it makes little sense
to claim that a folk motif of sea monsters
originated in a single place from a vacuum in history.
The Strait was certainly a suitable place
to claim these stories — a large, remarkable passage
that looks striking on a map:
perfect to become a symbol of Homeric geographies.

But myths hardly have single origin.
Rather, they are up for grabs.
Understanding the reasons why people claim myth
is more interesting that trying to pinpoint their origins.
All around the Mediterranean, and the Aegean,
one could find plenty of equally suitable
landmarks for the myth.
Explorer Tim Severin said the Homeric monsters
should have been located in Greece,
in Cape Skylla, rather than in Italy.
But one needs not leave Calabria:
Italian film maker Folco Quilici
illustrated the Strait of Scylla
using this rock from Palmi.
The locals call it the cliff of Orestes.

This doesn't mean that none
of the Strait's features resonates with Homer.
It is perfectly possible that such elements
have to do with a series of tales
that became part of the Odyssey and were,
later on, associated with the Strait.

Whatever the case, I did not
care much about such evidence.

To me, what mattered was not the truth
of Homer in the Strait-–it was
people's need for such truths:
the faith in a historical
exceptionalism of ancient Greece.

Here, Homer mattered because he made
this peripheral region once again central.
And the very identity of the Strait
is ambiguously disputed.

It can be easy, for someone
who was raised here, to accept
vicarious historical glory
through the Greeks at face value.
But the past is a distant country:
antiquarian fetish reveals a delusional
longing for redemption from the present.

Whether the myths were inspired by the Strait,
or the place claimed an earlier myth,
might be irrelevant.

Scilla's cave is great inspirational material:
it can only be reached by going underwater.
But is Scilla absolutely exceptional?
The Mediterranean and the Aegean sport
many, similarly sublime locations.
Some of them recall female monsters,
like the many caves names after Lamia—
the devourer mother.

These myths' relations with the sea are deep,
and so are the uterine and
feminine metaphors of their figures.
In the Strait's folklore,
the Scylla monster has become an easy nymph.
Her opposite is the Holy Mary—
the mother, the delivering womb,
the safe land.

These grandiosely disquieting symbolisms
started to appear to me as vastly superior
to any small-town dispute
over the ownership of any given myth.

CODA

For me, it was time to go.
I had come back to the places where I was raised,
to try and see why the Greek past
still matters here.

What I have managed to remember is that
we are not the descendants of the ancient Greeks.
This view puts us, and them, in a tiny,
secluded island of the mind.

Our true ancestry has no centre
—it is the many peoples and cultures
that have crossed these places.

Greek origins are also a local myth.
And one character of myth
can be to call itself a truth–
to simplify plurality.

But the vast sea and human imagination
still inspired these myths.
And I feel sympathy for those who believe
Homer hailed from Reggio, and
for those who enthuse over the Skilla fish.

By saying we are not the Greeks
I am not trying to wipe out
their importance in history.
All I ask is for people to realize
that the Greek presence in this area
is one of its many histories—
to question the delusion that we can go
back to an imaginary Golden Age.

For some, ancient Greece has become a blinding light
that obfuscates efforts to gauge its real history.

To claim myths as reality,
and Homer as one's own citizen,
is the ultimate resource of the inward-looking.
The past is, itself, a product of the present.
Releasing ourselves from the burden of an imagined past
can allow us to use it for a better future.

As for myself, I feel no longer caught in between.
My share of travelling may be far from over,
but I made it through.
I am no longer in the Strait.