

# WORSHIPPING VIRTUES

PERSONIFICATION AND THE DIVINE  
IN ANCIENT GREECE



Emma Stafford

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the Divine  
in Ancient Greece

EMMA STAFFORD

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*Hymn to Nemesis (Retribution)*

Winged Nemesis, balance of life,  
dark-eyed goddess, daughter of Justice,  
you who hold in check the vain neighing  
of mortals with adamantine bit;  
hating the deadly *hybris* of mortals,  
you drive out black envy;  
beneath your wheel, ever-moving, leaving no track,  
turns the grim fortune of mortals;  
stealthily you walk close at hand,  
you make the proud neck to bend;  
ever you measure life under your cubit-rule,  
ever you frown beneath your veil,  
holding fast the scales in your hands;  
be gracious blessed judge,  
winged Nemesis, balance of life.  
We sing of goddess Nemesis the immortal,  
a long-winged mighty Victory,  
and of her coadjutor, infallible Justice;  
indignant at the pride of mortals,  
you bring them down to Tartaros.

Mesomedes  
(2nd century AD; see p. 104)



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Leeds,  
July 2000

## ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

Translations of Greek or Latin texts are my own unless otherwise specified. I have adopted the usual compromise position over transliteration of Greek, following the Greek spelling for the most part but retaining traditional Latinizations for some familiar names, such as Thucydides. Likewise, I have made a point of marking long vowels in the names of personified figures (so Peithō, Eirēnē), but not in the names of well known deities (so Athene, Aphrodite). Abbreviations of ancient authors and works follow those listed in the *OCD* with some amplifications in the interests of intelligibility. Modern works other than those below are referred to by author's surname and date of publication, full details being given in the bibliography. Abbreviations of periodical titles follow *L'Année Philologique*, but I include here a few Greek periodicals not listed there.

<i>AAA</i>	<i>Αρχαιολογικά Ανάλεκτα εξ Αθηνών</i>
<i>ABV</i>	J.D. Beazley (1956) <i>Attic Black-Figure Vase-Painters</i> , Oxford
<i>Add.</i> <sup>2</sup>	L. Burn and R. Glynn (eds. 1989) <i>Beazley Addenda</i> , 2nd edn, Oxford
<i>AE</i>	<i>Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς</i>
<i>ARV</i> <sup>2</sup>	J.D. Beazley (1963) <i>Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters</i> , 2nd edn, Oxford
<i>CEG</i>	P.A. Hansen (1983–9) <i>Carmina Epigraphica Graeca</i> I–II, Berlin and New York
<i>CVA</i>	<i>Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum</i>
<i>DAA</i>	A.E. Raubitschek (1949) <i>Dedications from the Athenian Acropolis</i> , Cambridge, Mass.
<i>EAA</i>	R. Bianchi Bandinelli and G. Beccati (eds. 1958–94) <i>Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica Classica e Orientale</i> , Rome
<i>Ergon</i>	<i>Έργον της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας</i>
<i>FGrH</i>	F. Jacoby (1957–) <i>Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker</i> , Leiden
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>
<i>IK</i> 24	G. Petzl (1987–90) <i>Die Inschriften von Smyrna</i> II, Bonn
<i>LGPN</i>	<i>A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names</i> , Oxford. Vol. I, <i>The Aegean Islands, Cyprus, Cyrenaica</i> , ed. P.M. Fraser and E. Matthews, 1987. Vol. II, <i>Attica</i> , ed. M.J. Osborne and S.G. Byrne, 1994

*Abbreviations and Conventions*

LIMC	<i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> , Zurich and Munich 1981–1999
LP	E. Lobel and D. Page (eds. 1955) <i>Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta</i> , Oxford
LSJ	Liddell, Scott and Jones (1940) <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9th edn, Oxford
ML	R. Meiggs and D.M. Lewis (1988) <i>Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century BC</i> , rev. edn, Oxford
MPG	J.-P. Migne (ed. 1875–7) <i>Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graecae</i> , Paris
PAE	<i>Πρακτικά της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας</i>
Para.	J.D. Beazley (1971) <i>Paralipomena: Additions to ABV and to ARV<sup>2</sup></i> , Oxford
PCG	R. Kassel and C. Austin (eds. 1984–9) <i>Poetae Comici Graeci</i> , Berlin
PEG	A. Bernabé (ed. 1996) <i>Poetarum Epicorum Graecorum</i> , 2nd edn, Leipzig
PMG	D.L. Page (ed. 1962) <i>Poetae Melici Graeci</i> , Oxford
PMG <sup>2</sup>	M. Davies (ed. 1991) <i>Poetarum Melicorum Graecorum Fragmenta I</i> , Oxford
Prott-Ziehen	J. de Prott, and L. Ziehen (1896) <i>Leges Graecorum Sacrae e titulis collectis</i> , Leipzig 1896
RAC	<i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> , Stuttgart 1950–
RE	<i>Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> , Stuttgart 1893–1972
Roscher	W.H. Roscher (1902–9) <i>Ausführliches Lexikon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie</i> , Leipzig
SEG	<i>Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum</i> , Leiden 1923–
SGDI	H. Collitz et al. (eds. 1884–1915) <i>Sammlung der griechischen Dialekt-Inschriften</i> , Göttingen
SIG <sup>3</sup>	W. Dittenberger (1915–24) <i>Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum</i> , 3rd edn, Leipzig

## PERSONIFICATION, ALLEGORY AND BELIEF

We see that intelligence, faith, hope, virtue, honour, victory, health, concord and other things of this sort have power, but not the power of gods. For they are either properties inherent in ourselves – like intelligence, hope, faith, virtue and concord – or objects of our desire – like honour, health and victory. I see the value of these things, and I see that statues are dedicated to them. But why they should be held to possess divine power I cannot understand without further investigation.

Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods* 3.24.61

Greek poetry from Homer and Hesiod onwards is thronged with personifications. They are legion in extant Greek sculpture and painted pottery, and we hear of yet more in descriptions of such lost works as the Chest of Kypselos. From these beginnings, personified figures have gone on to become a familiar feature of European art and literature, as much part of the classical tradition as the Ionic column or the epic hexameter. Literary personifications range from such figures as Milton's Sin and Bunyan's Hope, Good-will and Piety to Baudelaire's Ennui, or even the Death who features prominently in Terry Pratchett's fantasy Discworld novels.<sup>1</sup> Visual representations come in various forms, from the complex allegories of Renaissance painting – Cranach's *Charity*, Gherardo di Giovanni's *Combat of Love and Chastity*, Batoni's *Time orders Old Age to destroy Beauty* – to the host of sculptural figures which decorate the nineteenth-century monuments and public buildings of many European cities; Britannia herself has featured on British coins since the Reformation, and is still quite literally in everyday currency on the reverse of the 50p coin.<sup>2</sup> The idea that such abstract figures should actually be worshipped, however, may appear even more unlikely from a late twentieth-century standpoint than it did to Cicero. In a monotheistic culture personification is *necessarily* just a rhetorical device, or a way of giving artistic form to something intangible. As Dr Johnson says of the personifications of Fame and Victory: 'to give them any real employment or ascribe to them any material agency is to make them allegorical no longer, but to shock the mind by ascribing effects to non-entity'.<sup>3</sup>

It might come as a surprise, then, to discover that among the many personifications which people ancient Greek art and literature, a number do indeed seem to have been worshipped. That is to say they had altars, temples and cult statues, they received sacrifices and more lasting dedications, and they were invoked in hymns and prayers. Such trappings of cult are the best evidence we have to indicate that anyone ever believed in the real divine power (*vis deorum*) of personifications, of which Cicero's character Cotta speaks so sceptically. As we shall see, many figures only appear in passing, and may be explained (away) as so much artistic licence, performing all sorts of decorative or didactic functions. The desire to distinguish between such artistic personifications and real cult figures seems to have troubled most commentators on the subject, and various attempts have been made to address the question of status by outlining more or less complex scales of personification. At one end there is the fully individualized divinity, at the other the figure of speech with scarcely any personality at all. In between may come any number of steps designating stronger and weaker forms of personification.<sup>4</sup> Such a preoccupation with categorization risks obscuring the point that any one figure may have been regarded differently in different places and times,<sup>5</sup> but some sort of criteria are necessary if we are to assess the significance of any personified figure. Throughout this study I shall be taking evidence of cult as the critical factor for establishing a figure's claim to divine power. Any figure to whom sacrifices are made must be deemed capable of acknowledging the fact, since those who make the sacrifices are hoping for a response. In other words, such a figure must have a degree of consciousness, and given the anthropomorphism of the ancient Greek pantheon, such consciousness may perhaps best be described as 'personality'.

Various categories of non-human things in ancient Greece were at one time or another worshipped in human form: geographical features, especially rivers and springs (Acheloos, Arethousa); countries, islands and cities (Hellas, Delos, Thebes); natural phenomena (Night, the Moon). What will concern me here, however, are cults of the kind of abstract ideas listed in the Cicero passage – of ethical qualities, political ideals, social goods, states of being – which I have loosely grouped under the title of 'virtues'. Such a division is very much a modern categorization, but it is obviously useful in limiting the material under discussion, and has some justification in so far as the personification of abstract concepts requires 'the additional intellectual leap of imagining the invisible and intangible in physical form'.<sup>6</sup> Much recent work on personifications has focused on individual figures and/or on iconography, but on the phenomenon of Greek personification cults as a whole no single extensive study has

been undertaken since Hamdorf's 1964 volume (see Appendix). What the current work aims to provide is a synthesis dealing with the general problems associated with cults of abstract ideas. In particular I shall be asking whether the kind of personality possessed by personified abstract ideas is equivalent to that of other gods, or whether they were recognized as somehow more intellectual or artificial. I shall also be concerned with the question of how personification cults arose, and whether the presence of a particular cult can shed light on the values which were held to be of special significance for the community at the time. This might in turn have implications for our understanding both of literary and artistic personifications and of the abstract concepts they represent. These questions will be approached via case-studies of six individual figures, so that the theoretical discussion can be tested against a thorough evaluation of the evidence. Although most of the concepts to be considered only partially overlap with English equivalents, and I shall be discussing their meanings in the individual chapters, I have adopted a one-word translation for each, for ease of working: Themis (Order), Nemesis (Retribution), Peithō (Persuasion), Hygieia (Health), Eirēnē (Peace) and Eleos (Mercy). Before turning to these case-studies, however, some theoretical preliminaries are in order, which will be the subject of the rest of this chapter.

### **Definitions ancient and modern**

In general usage today the term personification is most often applied in the sense of 'a person or thing viewed as embodying a quality, etc, or as exemplifying it in a striking manner' (*OED*) – 'he was regarded as the personification of evil', 'she is grace personified'. The more technical sense of personify – 'to figure or represent (a thing or abstraction) as a person, esp. in speech or writing; in art, to symbolize by a figure in human form' (*OED*) – is largely confined to literary criticism or art history. In the context of the present study the distinction between the two is of some importance.<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, to call Aphrodite 'love personified' is to describe a well known Olympian goddess in terms of her major sphere of influence, as exemplifying love. The name 'Aphrodite' does not of itself mean 'love', nor is love the beginning and end of Aphrodite's business. In mythological terms she has a fully-rounded character, with many stories told about her birth, her amorous adventures and the resulting children. This practice of using the names of personal gods to designate their major sphere of influence is, however, an ancient one:

We should note that all the Greeks, when they saw a thing to be powerful,

## Chapter 1

believed that its power did not operate without the authority of the gods. They called both the powerful thing and the god set over it by the one name.

This passage from Tzetzes' commentary on Hesiod's *Works and Days* (p. 1, lines 279–82) continues with an extensive list of 'things', both tangible and abstract, which are called by gods' names: Hephaistos for fire, Demeter for bread, Bakchos for wine, Athene for wisdom, Aphrodite for sex. In a Roman context, Cicero illustrates the phenomenon by quoting a line of Terence: *sine Cerere et Libero friget Venus* ('without bread and wine, love grows cold').<sup>8</sup> The practice is just part of a philosophical trend for allegorising the Olympian gods, explaining the stories of mythology in quasi-rational terms.<sup>9</sup> It is possible that, by blurring the distinction between deity and abstract, this method of allegorical interpretation facilitated the development of 'compositional allegory' – i.e. narratives involving personifications deliberately created to make a didactic point. It is certainly the case that one man, Prodikos, is credited as being among the earliest exponents of both practices. On the one hand he held the view that the gods originated simply as names for basic elements of the world necessary to human life; on the other he told the story of Herakles' choice between Virtue and Vice, 'the first true personification allegory in the West'.<sup>10</sup>

For the purposes of this study, however, I shall restrict myself to the narrower definition of personification: the anthropomorphic representation of any non-human thing. In this sense, to call Eirēnē 'peace personified' is simply to apply a technical term, since the regular Greek word for peace is *eirēnē*, an abstract idea which is sometimes represented in art or literature in human form. In English the distinction between such a personification and the abstraction it incarnates is conventionally rendered by an initial capital letter – Peace rather than peace – but no such differentiation was available in ancient Greek. I include in my definition of personifications a number of characters who have some mythological role: figures such as Themis, Erōs and Hēbē are so well established on Olympos that they might be thought hardly to count as personifications at all. The critical point, however, is that, unlike the names of Zeus, Hera and the rest of the Olympians, *themis*, *erōs* and *hēbē* are used as abstract nouns throughout antiquity.<sup>11</sup> We have become so accustomed to these words as gods' names that as often as not we leave them untranslated, making a distinction between deity and concept which would not have been perceived so sharply by a native speaker of ancient Greek.<sup>12</sup> It should also be noted that a native English speaker's understanding of personification must be affected by a fundamental difference between

English and ancient Greek, and most modern European languages too: its lack of an explicit gender structure.<sup>13</sup> The basic distinction in English is between animate and inanimate: the neuter pronoun ‘it’ is applied to anything inanimate, whether a concrete object or an abstract concept; the moment I assign a masculine or feminine pronoun to a ‘thing’, it becomes animate. ‘We will seek justice’ brings the abstract to mind, but as soon as I add the qualification ‘though she is elusive’ it becomes clear that Justice in human form is meant.

The English term ‘personification’ is derived from the Latin *persona* + *facere*, but no Latin term exactly corresponds to the concept defined above. What does appear is the term *prosopopoeia*, a transliteration of the Greek rhetorical term προσωποποιία, of which *personae factio* would be the literal translation. The word seems to be of fairly late coinage and, while including what I understand by personification, it has a much wider range of meanings. The absence of a more specific term to designate personification, in the modern technical sense, is reflected in the near absence of discussion of the phenomenon, despite its wide occurrence in ancient art and literature. Such a lack of specificity would suggest that there was no distinct concept in classical thought, as a brief survey will show.

What may be the first appearance of the word *prosōpopoiia* comes in Demetrios’ *On Speaking (De Elocutione)* 265, a work variously dated between the third century BC and the first century AD.<sup>14</sup> Here it is used in the sense of ‘putting speeches into characters’ mouths’, as opposed to maintaining authorial narrative. This is the basic meaning which it retains throughout antiquity in analyses of literary and rhetorical style. Both pagan and Christian commentators employ *prosōpopoiia* in this way to designate ‘dramatization’, whether it be Dionysios of Halikarnassos and Marcellinus comparing Thucydides’ and Herodotus’ style, or Athanasius and John Chrysostom writing exegeses of the *Septuagint*.<sup>15</sup> A further shade of meaning is added by Clement of Alexandria, whose application of the term to a parable in the gospel of Luke implies ‘characterization’.<sup>16</sup> This meaning is emphasized by Origen in his refutation of Celsus, where he uses *prosōpopoiia* of both the process of characterization and of the resulting speeches given to a character (*Contra Celsum* 7.36.19–21):<sup>17</sup>

The skill of an author in *prosōpopoiia* is to observe carefully the intent and character of the person represented; his failing is when he attributes to the speaker expressions which do not accord with his character.

In rhetorical treatises, however, *prosōpopoiia* has a broader definition, with the general idea of speaking in the voice of a character not actually present,

## Chapter 1

whether real or imaginary. The most extensive analysis of the term is given by the first-century AD rhetor Aelius Theon (*Progymnasmata*, ed. Spengel, *Rhetores Graeci* II, 115.11–28):

*Prosōpopoiia* is the representation of a character speaking words appropriate both to itself and to the known circumstances, e.g. a man about to leave home would say certain words to his wife, or a general to his soldiers about their dangers. Also in the case of characters already known, e.g. Cyrus would say certain words as he marched against the Massagetai, or Datis after the battle of Marathon on meeting the King. Into this category of exercise fall also the figures of panegyric, persuasion (*protreptic*) and commission (*epistolic*). So, first of all one has to consider carefully what kind of character the speaker has, and the place and circumstances, and the subject matter proposed about which his words will speak; then one should try out the prepared speech, for different words are appropriate for different people, according to their age... This exercise is especially good for displaying character and feeling.

Theon's definition, like that of the literary critics, concentrates on the importance of characterization, but surprisingly he recommends *prosōpopoiia* not just as being a good exercise for historians, rhetoricians, writers of dialogues and poets, but also as useful 'for everyday life, and most advantageous for conversations with one another' (Spengel II, 60.22–6). The second-century AD Alexander Rhetor distinguishes between imaginary, generic characters and real people, specifying that any real person represented should not be living at the time (*De Figuris*, ed. Spengel III, 19.14–20). The third-century AD Apsines of Gadara (*Ars Rhetorica*, ed. Spengel I<sup>2</sup>, 299.6–12) explains that suitable subjects include dead ancestors and countries as well as abstract concepts, like Demosthenes' Opportunity (Kairos, *Olynthiac* I.2), and adds that *prosōpopoiia* is useful for making a point memorable.<sup>18</sup> The earliest Latin rhetorician refers to the figure as *conformatio*, including 'people not present' as well as 'mute things' as characters to be represented (*Rhetorica ad Herennium* 4.53.66). Cicero describes the figure, under devices for amplification, as *personarum ficta inductio* ('the fictitious introduction of characters'), but seems to have no proper term for it (*On the Orator* 3.5.204–5). It is Quintilian who coins the transliteration *prosopopoeia*. He uses it in the broadest sense of the Greek word, of 'representation of characters', but his examples do include such well known personifications as Vergil's Rumour (Fama), his longest treatment of the device coming in a list of figures for intensifying emotion (9.2.29 ff.).<sup>19</sup>

From these examples it would seem that incarnations of abstractions and inanimate things were not generally recognized as distinct from any other

kind of imaginary people, or from people who were real but intangible because dead and buried. However, Quintilian (9.2.31) comments that ‘there are some’ who apply the term *prosōpopoīia* only to cases where a body as well as words has to be imagined (what we might call personification proper), whereas they call imaginary human conversations *dialogoi*, *ēthopoīia* or *sermocinatio*.<sup>20</sup> Only two extant writers actually draw such a distinction explicitly, but their discussions suggest a definition of *prosōpopoīia* that comes very close to our ‘personification’. Hermogenes of Tarsus (second century AD) differentiates *prosōpopoīia* from *ēthopoīia* (*Progymnasmata* 9.1–7, ed. Rabe):

*Ēthopoīia* is the representation of a person’s underlying character, e.g. what words would Andromachē say to Hektor? *Prosōpopoīia*, on the other hand, is whenever we bestow a character on a thing, like Proof (Elenchos) in Menander, or as the Sea in Aristeides makes a speech to the Athenians. This is clearly different: with *ēthopoīia* we are creating words for a real character, whereas with *prosōpopoīia* we are creating a character who does not exist.

Much of Hermogenes’ treatise closely follows earlier works on rhetoric, but the more precise terminology defined in this passage seems to be an innovation. The same distinction is later drawn by the early sixth-century Priscian, in a passage on *allocutio* which is almost a translation of Hermogenes’ *On Ēthopoīia*, even using the same general mythical examples, though substituting examples from Latin writers for Greek ones:

*Allocutio* is the representation of speech appropriate to the character and the supposed *personae*, so Andromache would have said certain words to the dead Hector. *Conformatio*, however, which the Greeks call *prosōpopoīia*, is when a thing is given a *persona* in which to speak, contrary to its nature, so Cicero gives words to the Fatherland (*patria*) and the Republic (*res publica*) in reproach. There is, moreover, *simulacri factio*, which the Greeks call *eidōlopoīia*, when words are given to the dead, as Cicero did in his *Pro Caelio*, giving words against Clodia to Appius Caecus.<sup>21</sup>

Though highly derivative, the passage is interesting for its translation of the Greek terms, rendering a fairly narrow definition of *prosōpopoīia* as *conformatio*. Elsewhere Priscian mentions the figure in a chapter on the gender of pronouns:

We can even, moreover, apply first and second persons to things which do not have the faculties of speech or hearing, by means of *conformatio*, i.e. *prosōpopoīia*, even if they are neuter in gender, like forum, sea, sky.<sup>22</sup>

This raises the point that, while the third person can apply equally well to both animate and inanimate, the first and second imply some degree of personality, so application of the latter to an inanimate subject

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automatically personifies it. Similarly, Quintilian (9.2.31) makes the point that it is impossible to conceive of speech without conceiving it to be spoken by a person, so the figure of *prosōpopoiia* is necessary to make acceptable the attribution of words to inanimate things.

For most ancient writers, then, personification was just one facet of a more general rhetorical figure. The extant texts may not be entirely representative, but the more specific definition of *prosōpopoiia* found in Hermogenes does not seem to have been common currency. It has to be noted, too, that theoretical discussion of personification confines its material to rhetorical and literary style. All occurrences of the term *prosōpopoiia* refer to speech put into a character's mouth, usually in the context of dialogue within a historical narrative or in that of adopting various *personae* within a public speech. Personification in visual media does not come under discussion, though one rhetorician, Dio Chrysostom (*Oratio* 4.85), does comment on the phenomenon in passing. The skill of artists is an example to be followed by the speaker who wishes to depict different types of character:

Come, then, let us imitate accomplished craftsmen... They represent not only the various gods in human forms, but everything else as well, sometimes painting rivers as men and springs in certain feminine forms, and islands and cities, and practically everything else, just as Homer dared to represent the Skamandros speaking beneath the flood, and though they cannot give voices to their figures, they do give them forms and symbols appropriate to their nature...

While it is indeed usually the case that artists 'cannot give voices to their figures', just occasionally vase-painters added an inscription which serves the same purpose as a cartoon character's speech-bubble. One example is the much-discussed red-figure oinochoe usually associated with the Greek victory over the Persians at the river Eurymedon in the mid-460s. On side A, a bearded Greek hunter, clutching his phallos, runs to the right, apparently towards an Oriental archer on side B, who is bent at the hips; filling the space between the two figures is the inscription 'I am Eurymedon. I stand bent forward'. Smith has recently made an interesting case for interpreting the figure in Greek dress as personifying the battle itself, and speaking the first half of the inscription ('I am Eurymedon'), to which the barbarian, representing the Persians, responds ('I stand bent over'). Such an attribution of words to the visual personification would, as Smith points out, correspond to the rhetorical trope of *prosōpopoiia*, or the practice of representing personifications on the stage, which is first attested at around this time (see below).<sup>23</sup> 'Speech-bubble' inscriptions are in any case rare, and this is the only one so far identified as belonging to

a personification, but the Eurymedon oinochoe does at least demonstrate a way in which *prosōpopoiia* could be applied to the visual arts. Likewise, Quintilian's and Priscian's points (above) about first-person speech and inanimate things suggest that they might have been happy to include in their definitions of *prosōpopoiia* the standard signature formulas inscribed on pots and statue bases, 'X made/painted me', and the self-announcing boundary stones of the Athenian Agora.<sup>24</sup>

### **Interpretations**

What is meant by personification will also vary depending on the medium under consideration. A wide range of material will come under discussion in the chapters which follow, so it is perhaps particularly important to be aware from the start of how personifications feature in various categories of evidence. Epic and lyric poetry, drama and the visual arts are the most prolific sources, but also present the most difficult problems of interpretation if we are trying to establish the divine status of the figures represented. More direct evidence for cult comes from material remains, especially inscriptions recording dedications or regulations concerning the worship of personified figures, and from the testimony of various ancient antiquarians, geographers and lexicographers.

#### *Poetry and drama*

The first problem with literary personification is that of definition. In a language which makes no formal distinction between animate and inanimate, and which has no such convention as the initial capital for a proper name, where can the line be drawn between an abstract noun and its personification? At the least explicit end of the scale, a noun can be described as personified if it is qualified by a verb or adjective denoting human action, feeling or status, a use of personifying language which might be termed 'light personification'.<sup>25</sup> Some authors are more prone to it than others, but it can be found in a diversity of genres (some prose as well as poetry), indicating how deeply embedded in Greek thought is the tendency to conceive of things in human terms. The topic deserves fuller treatment, but a handful of examples will illustrate the principle. The adverb *dikaiōs* implies that the subject is acting according to human ethics – 'vengeance does not succeed fairly' (Thucydides 4.62.4)<sup>26</sup> – while the application of the qualification *sophos* to a plant is clearly humorous: 'the wood of the vine is clever' (Euripides, *Cyclops* 572). The verb *homilein* usually denotes human social intercourse, but can relate abstract ideas to the concrete world: 'battle against the stronger is hard company for men' (Pindar, *N.* 10.72–3), 'you consort with good fortune' (Euripides, *Orestes*

354). Similarly the verb *hepomai*, used primarily of people, ‘to follow’ or ‘to attend (as a servant)’, is striking when applied to abstracts: ‘may daring and wide-spreading power attend me’ (Pindar, *O.* 9.82–3), ‘let persuasion follow, and success in action’ (Aischylos, *Suppliants* 523). One can be ‘captured’ (*haliskomai*) by death, madness, weariness or love (*Iliad* 21.281, Sophokles, *Ajax* 216, Thucydides 7.40.4, Plato, *Phaedo* 252c); ‘words are the healers of the disease of anger’, ‘ageing time teaches everything’ (*Prometheus Bound* 377 and 981). Within this category of light personification I would also place the figure of apostrophe. As Priscian comments (above), use of the second person applied to an inanimate thing implies personification by putting its object in the place of the human audience, and imbuing it with sufficient personality to be addressed: ‘O golden lyre, shared possession of Apollo and the violet-haired Muses...’ (Pindar, *P.* 1.1–2).<sup>27</sup>

More obviously personifying is the presence of a genealogy, used to convey close relationships between concepts. The whole of Hesiod’s *Theogony* is based upon more or less significant genealogical relationships, from Memory as mother of the Muses to Strife, mother of Toil, Famine, Sorrows, Slaughter, Lawlessness and the rest.<sup>28</sup> Hesiod’s partiality for personifications may be explained at least in part as a result of his project to present a unified picture, in honour of Zeus, out of very diverse source material, with personifications used to create links between disparate elements.<sup>29</sup> The lyric poets likewise use genealogies to express relationships, or to exalt an abstract concept by association with divine parentage. Alkman makes Lawfulness (Eunomia) sister of Persuasion (Peithō) and daughter of Forethought (Promatheia, fr. 64 *PMG*<sup>2</sup>).<sup>30</sup> Bakchylides even invents a special genealogy for the last day of the Olympic festival (the four-year Olympic cycle comprised alternately 49 and 50 lunar months): ‘O radiant daughter of Time and Night, you, the sixteenth day of the fiftieth month at Olympia...’ (*Epinician* 7.1–3). Herakleitos develops the device as a central principle for his cosmology – ‘War is father of all and king of all’ – as well as using personifications in a number of striking phrases to express his view of cosmic order – ‘The Sun will not transgress his measures. If he does, the Furies, ministers of Justice, will find him out’, ‘Lifetime is a child at play, moving pieces in a game. Kingship belongs to the child.’<sup>31</sup>

A further stage is represented by statements which explicitly attribute deity to an abstract idea. Hesiod’s Phēmē (Rumour or Report) is an early example: ‘No rumour wholly dies which many people rumour; she too is somehow a goddess (*theos nu tis esti kai autē*)’ (*Works and Days* 763–4). The circumlocution suggests this is a poetic way of emphasizing

rumour's power rather than a reference to a deity already recognized by Hesiod's audience. By the mid-fourth century, however, Aischines is able to introduce Rumour as a law-court witness, using the figure of *prosōpopoiia* as discussed above: 'The city and our ancestors founded an altar of Rumour, as being a great goddess... If I had presented witnesses about an individual, you would have believed me. Will you then disbelieve me, if I cite the goddess as witness...?' (*Against Timarchos* 1.128–30). This may simply be a rhetorical elaboration on Hesiod's descriptive metaphor, but the mention of an altar adds verisimilitude, since an altar is the one item required for the practice of any cult, essential to the central ritual of blood sacrifice. Aischines is our only source for the existence of such an altar in fourth-century Athens, but some credibility is lent to his claim by later citations. Pausanias (1.17.1) mentions an Athenian altar of Rumour, along with those of Respect (*Aidōs*) and Impulse (*Hormē*), as a parallel to the altar of Mercy he is describing, though he gives no details of their whereabouts or antiquity. The scholiast on this passage of Aischines (ad 128) records that an altar of Rumour was established in honour of the speed with which news of Kimon's victory at the Eurymedon reached Athens in the 460s; Procopius of Gaza tells the same story, but in connection with the battle of Mykale (479 BC).<sup>32</sup> These late sources may not be reliable as to the battle concerned, but rumour is certainly associated with the divine in Herodotos' account of Mykale (9.100), where encouraging news of the victory at Plataia reached the Greeks at Mykale with supernatural speed.<sup>33</sup> Such stories provide at least a plausible explanation for the foundation of an altar of Rumour, and a glorious fifth-century victory against the Persians would be the most likely occasion. Aischines is almost certainly exaggerating the significance of the goddess concerned, however, in order to add weight to his rather dubious justification for using widespread gossip as reliable evidence against Timarchos.<sup>34</sup>

In a similarly rhetorical vein, Euripides provides some of the most startling uses of the trope. In the *Alkestis* (962–80) the chorus lament the power of the goddess (*thea*) Necessity (*Anankē*). She 'has no altar nor image for men to approach, nor does she heed sacrifice', but such is her power that even Zeus must look to her for help. In the *Phoenician Women* (531–6), Iokasta exhorts Eteokles to shun the 'most evil of goddesses (*daimones*)' Ambition (*Philotimia*) and rather to 'honour Equality (*Isotēta*)'. Neither Ambition nor Equality is otherwise known as a goddess, and the rhetorical ploy is pushed even further by another Euripidean character (Helen) when she exclaims that 'recognising one's friends is a god (*theos*)' (*Helen* 560).<sup>35</sup> Even more extreme is the Cyclops' assertion that 'Wealth (*Ploutos*) is the only god for the wise; the others are boasts

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and fine forms of words' (*Cyclops* 316–17).<sup>36</sup> This is a neat inversion of the conventional order of things, setting up an abstract idea as the only true god, demoting the Olympians to the status of words in fair forms – i.e. personifications. On one level such a theological inversion is just part of the upside-down world of the Cyclopes, who drink milk instead of wine and eat their guests. On another, it characterizes Polyphemos as a conventionally impious sophist, much as Aristophanes caricatures Sokrates in the *Clouds* (423 ff.). In any case, the idea of worshipping Wealth is being presented as a laughing matter, although, as we shall see, there is some evidence to suggest that Ploutos was taken more seriously in some quarters.

A literary form which presents similar problems to the explicit attribution of deity is the hymnic invocation. Pindar's address to Quiet (Hēsychia), for example, has several formal features of the hymn genre (*Pythian* 8.1–7):

Kindly Quiet, daughter of Justice who makes cities very great, you who hold the sovereign keys of councils and of wars, receive from Aristomenes the honour of a Pythian victory. For you know how to give gentleness to others as well as receiving it, at exactly the right time.

The initial address, followed by reference to Hēsychia's parentage, descriptive relative clauses and a statement of power, are all standard ingredients which can be seen in hymns addressed to gods whose divine status is not in question.<sup>37</sup> As it is only in Pindar's odes that Quiet appears thus personified, however, it is quite reasonable to suppose that the implied attribution of deity is a product of poetic licence.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, the invocation certainly presents Hēsychia in a divine light, suggesting that she is a being *capable* of receiving worship, whether or not her cult is actually observed anywhere.<sup>39</sup> The question of the status implied by hymns will arise later in the cases of Nemesis, Hygieia and Eirēnē.<sup>40</sup> The generic context in which an invocation appears is obviously important in assessing the status of its addressee. As with the *Cyclops*' attribution of deity to Wealth, hymn form can be put to comic effect. At the opening of Lucian's drama *Podagra* (1–2), the eponymous disease is invoked: 'O hateful name, o you who are hated by the gods, Gout, much-groan-causing child of the River of Wailing (Kōkytos)...'

In addition to the personifications merely talked about in tragedy and comedy, a number appear as *dramatis personae*, presenting something of a challenge of representation for the producer, ancient and modern. In extant tragedy the phenomenon is limited to the *Prometheus Bound*'s Might and Force (Kratos and Bia, see below) and Madness (Lyssa), who

probably first appeared in Aischylos' *Xantriai* (fr. 368 Mette) but is better known to us from Euripides' *Madness of Herakles* (843–74), and Death (Thanatos), who plays an important part in Euripides' *Alkestis*.<sup>41</sup> A number of personifications, including Lyssa, however, appear in Pollux's list of characters requiring 'special masks', at the end of a section describing the masks of various stock tragic characters (4.141–2, personifications in italics):

Special masks: Aktaion is horned, Phineus blind, Thamyris having one eye grey the other black, Argos many-eyed, Euiippe daughter of Cheiron being changed into a horse in Euripides, Tyro with livid cheeks in Sophokles – [this because she has suffered her step-mother Sidērō's blows] – Achilles with hair shorn because of Patroklos, Amymonē, *a river, a mountain*, Gorgō, *Justice, Death*, Erinys, *Madness, Frenzy, Arrogance*, a Centaur, a Titan, a Giant, *Indos*, Triton, and briefly *City*, Priam, *Persuasion, Muses, Seasons*, [Mithakos'] Nymphs, Pleiades, [*Deceit, Drunkenness, Sloth, Envy*].<sup>42</sup>

Apart from *Madness* and *Death*, *Frenzy* (Oistros) may have appeared in Euripides' *Antiope*, but which plays the others are from is a matter of speculation. Nonetheless, the passage is a reminder of how much tragedy is lost to us, and that personifications may have appeared on the tragic stage more often than our few surviving examples would suggest.<sup>43</sup> Webster argues that Pollux's list may derive from Aristophanes of Byzantium's *On Masks*, and iconographic evidence relates many of his masks to the late fourth or early third century, giving some idea of what early hellenistic revivals of classical tragedies might have looked like.<sup>44</sup> A great variety of personified characters likewise appears in extant comedy, Old and New. Aristophanes has *Just and Unjust Arguments* debating at length in the *Clouds*, while *The People* (Dēmos) is a principal character in the *Knights*, as is *Wealth* in the *Ploutos*, which also features *Poverty* (Penia), while the *Eirēnē* of the *Peace* is attended by *Vintage* and *Festival*.<sup>45</sup> In Menander's more everyday world, the personifications *Ignorance*, *Fortune* and *Proof* still find a place speaking the prologues of, respectively, the *Perikeiromenē* (121–71), the *Aspis* (97–148) and a play of unknown title (fr. 717 Körte).<sup>46</sup> Once again, such characters may be purely inventions of the playwright to suit the dramatic circumstances of the moment, but the fact that personifications were presented in physical form must have helped, alongside representations in the visual arts, to give them substance in the popular imagination.<sup>47</sup>

### *The visual arts*

...the ancients, wishing to make Fortune's wickedness manifest, were not satisfied with painting and sculpting her merely in the form of a woman