

GENDER AND EXCELLENCE IN THE MYTH OF ATALANTA

by

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Abstract

Atalanta has a complicated and contradictory mythological tradition in classical antiquity. Her excellence in masculine activities produces tension and fascination. Shunning marriage, she races and kills suitors until one tricks her. This race emphasizes her virginity, which is largely ignored in the Calydonian boar hunt narratives. Atalanta frequently contributes to this hunt, but because of her gender disagreement arises surrounding material recognition of her excellence. Other episodes, including her childhood, metamorphosis into a lion, fight against rapist centaurs, and membership in the Argonauts, contribute to her being defined by her gender and excellence outside of the traditional feminine sphere. Conversely, bearing a heroic son perpetuates her own heroic identity while also conforming to women's expected goal of motherhood. There is little outright condemnation of her behaviour, even while she challenges gender expectations. Atalanta's blurring of gender boundaries is frequently problematic, but only in conjunction with men's desire for her.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Atalanta is a mythical virgin huntress and racer in the Greco-Roman tradition. She is an unusual character because she excels at these activities, which are typically associated with a masculine sphere of excellence. She is involved in two major stories and several minor ones. She is the only woman to be included in heroic exploits alongside male heroes, such as the Calydonian boar hunt and the voyage for the golden fleece. Her presence in these adventures alone is a testament to her excellence and extraordinariness, for otherwise she would not be included or be able to make meaningful contributions to these endeavours. She is a skilled racer, frequently described as swift-footed or shown winning races against countless male suitors. The many variations of Atalanta's myth "reflect the richness of traditional concepts associated with it" (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005, 5). This project examines how ancient authors treat themes of excellence and gender in their tellings of the myths of Atalanta. Since she excels in masculine-coded activities, she challenges gender boundaries. However, even though she challenges expectations by participating in masculine activities, her femininity becomes a reason for her to be denied prizes or opportunities that she might otherwise deserve based on her skills.

The multiplicity of sources presents some difficulties. There is no single definitive text about Atalanta, although some mythographers offer thorough but concise descriptions of her life. However, these mythographers' collections have limitations, since they generally aim to be myth handbooks for the educated (Wilson 1997, 15, on Aelian; Hard 1997, xxvi, on Apollodorus). Thus, while they bring together various strands of the Atalanta myth, they are not necessarily meant to be literary treatments. While the later mythographers have the fullest narratives about Atalanta, she appears in various sources starting with a fragmented description of her race against Hippomenes in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (fragments 47-50, Most) from the sixth century BCE (West 1985, 136). She also appears in Greek and Roman art.

It seems that there are two broad versions of Atalanta: a Boeotian one, in which she is the running daughter of Schoeneus, and an Arcadian one, in which she is the hunting daughter of Iasos or Iasios (Barringer 1996, 48-49). However, this distinction breaks down several times. For instance, Diodorus Siculus says that she is the daughter of

Schoeneus from Arcadia and participated in the Calydonian boar hunt (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.34); Hyginus says that Parthenopaeus is the son of Atalanta, daughter of Iasius, and Meleager (*Fab.* 70), but the Atalanta who hunts with Meleager is the daughter of Schoeneus (*Fab.* 173-74), and the Atalanta who is beaten in the race by Hippomenes and marries him is *also* the daughter of Schoeneus (*Fab.* 185). Apollodorus says in his description of the boar hunt that she is the daughter of Arcadian Schoeneus (*Bibl.* 1.8.2) but in his description of Atalanta herself, which still includes a mention of the boar hunt, she is the daughter of Iasos from Arcadia (*Bibl.* 3.9.2). So various authors do not follow the general trend in the mythic tradition (Daughter of Schoeneus = Boeotian = racer vs. Daughter of Iasos = Arcadian = huntress) when they identify Atalanta. Moreover, some authors are inconsistent even within their own work. Since the two traditions were conflated so frequently, it is of limited use to maintain the distinction.

There have been a few scholarly works focusing on Atalanta in recent years. Thomas Scanlon includes a chapter called “Atalanta and Athletic Myths of Gender” in his book, *Eros and Greek Athletics* (2002, 175-198). In this chapter, he analyzes a few literary sources and several material sources for Atalanta’s athletic activity. He concludes that “Greek athletics was normally restricted to the male domain, and in the one myth in which a mortal female intervenes in that sphere, the legend is shaped so that the heroine not only loses the contest in the end; she is even punished with the loss of her humanity by transformation into a very unsexy beast” (Scanlon 2002, 198). Evangelia Anagnostou-Laoutides’ chapter on Atalanta discusses her myth in the context of erotic magic and rituals (2005, 1-103). She argues that Atalanta’s myth reflects Artemis’ cult rituals and that Atalanta’s character is similar to Artemis’ (2005, 5-10; 16-35; 425-26). She also discusses the connection between erotic love, magic, and madness in the myth and in particular how this is the effect of the golden apples (2005, 46-103; 427-28). Judith Barringer discusses vase paintings of Atalanta in the Calydonian boar hunt, funeral games for Pelias, and footrace, focusing on their connections with initiation rites (1996). She argues that Atalanta is “the embodiment of ambiguity and liminality, combining aspects of male and female, insider and outsider” (1996, 49). In her chapter “Hunting and Myth,” she discusses the Calydonian boar hunt as a myth that combines heroic hunting with stories about the followers of Artemis (Barringer 2001, 125; 147-161). She argues that

hunters' immoderation leads to role reversals (2001, 126). Meleager the hunter becomes hunted by love, and Atalanta takes the part of a male ephebe (2001, 147). Émilie Druilhe's book on Atalanta focuses on Atalanta's different identities as heroine (2016, 25-47), lover (71-93), and virgin (95-114). She argues that Atalanta is able to be a heroine because of her youth and the fact that she lives in the heroic age (116), but once she marries and has a child, she loses her heroic identity (100-112).

This project approaches Atalanta's stories through the themes of gender and excellence. Her character is intriguing because she blurs the boundaries between masculine and feminine behaviour by excelling in men's activities. The fact that the extant narratives about Atalanta are by male authors adds another layer of complexity. Why did male authors write about a woman who could beat men in races and match, or surpass them, in hunting? There is no definitive answer to this question, but examining the connection and tension between excellence and gender can add a new facet of understanding. Her character is fascinating not only because she blurs boundaries, but also because her presence as a female character in masculine heroic situations creates a new opportunity for conflict, and thus heightens drama. This fascination is one reason for her persistent presence in mythological writing throughout antiquity.

Chapter 2 is about the race story, in which Atalanta does not want to marry and uses her excellent running skills to enforce this wish. She races her suitors, who must die if they lose to her. She is so fast that no one is able to win against her, until one suitor (Hippomenes or Melanion) obtains the help of Aphrodite/Venus. The goddess of love gives him golden apples which he uses to delay Atalanta so that he can win the race and marry her. Many authors write that after the race Atalanta and her husband are turned into lions. While these events are often connected, I will treat them in separate chapters. The fact that she can run faster than men and kills the men whom she defeats is a testament to her excellence and cruelty, although some authors emphasize her cruelty more than others. Her characterization in many authors is affected by their exploration of Atalanta's chastity. Many authors do not state a reason for her insistence on virginity (although a connection to Artemis is often implied), but Ovid explains that it was due to an oracle. This seems to mitigate her cruelty because, rather than simply wishing to remain a virgin, she is just trying to protect herself. In this story, Atalanta relied on her excellence to

prevent herself from making the transition to marriage, a transition which is expected of her due to her gender. However, she does not succeed because she is overcome by the trickery (not skill) of a man. This suggests that no matter how skilled she is, her gender still prevents her from maintaining her desired celibate way of life.

Chapter 3 focuses on the other major story involving Atalanta, the Calydonian boar hunt. Early depictions of this story do not include Atalanta; in these versions Meleager leads several heroes against the boar, but once it is killed a fight arises over the spoils of the hunt and Meleager kills his uncles. Once Atalanta is introduced to the story, the basic plot becomes as follows. Meleager leads several heroes, including Atalanta, against the boar. Once it is killed a fight arises because Meleager gives the spoils of the hunt to Atalanta. In this fight Meleager kills his uncles. The basic plot remains fairly consistent, but Atalanta's receipt of the prize becomes cemented as the reason for the disagreement surrounding the spoils. This allows for an exploration of gender dynamics within the myth. When Meleager's uncles, the sons of Thestius, argue against Meleager giving Atalanta the prize, her gender is frequently cited as the reason for their opposition. They do not argue that she is undeserving because of a lack of skill or contribution to the hunt. Thus her myth was a story through which ancient writers explored the interplay between gender and recognition of excellence.

Chapter 4 examines other stories about Atalanta, which expand on themes similar to those of the race and the hunt. Few authors discuss Atalanta's childhood, but the mythographers who do, Apollodorus and Aelian, offer a story that serves to explain the origins of her character very well. She is exposed because her father does not want a girl, and so right from the beginning her life is defined by her gender. She is suckled by a bear and so is marked by wildness. Hunters raise her and teach her the skills that will lead to her participation in the Calydonian boar hunt. She grows up to love her virginity. This all sets the stage for the major stories for which she is known. The lion metamorphosis is closely linked with the race story, as it often follows it directly. There are some variations, but she and her husband are frequently turned into lions because of a sexual transgression. A different ending for Atalanta's story is that sometimes she has a son, Parthenopaeus. Thus she reaches the fulfillment of an important role attached to women, that of motherhood. Atalanta demonstrates her commitment to virginity and skill with the

bow when she defends herself from two centaurs who try to rape her. However, a variation on this story is that her suitor Milanion is wounded by the centaur, Hylaus. This variation allows her to be an example of a cruel woman who is persuaded to give in to a man who suffers for and helps her. This shows the versatility and contradiction in her character. An Atalanta who is persuaded to love Milanion is a very different character from an Atalanta who aggressively defends her virginity by killing suitors who lose the race against her. However, the knowledge of Atalanta's extreme devotion to chastity as demonstrated in the race is necessary to understand the weight behind using her as an example of a hard woman softened by a man's persistent hard work. Atalanta is occasionally associated with the quest for the golden fleece. This underscores her exceptional character as a mythical woman whose skills are so great that she can be included in important quests with other male heroes. Apollonius does not include her on the quest in his *Argonautica*, but he mentions that she wants to join the quest but is refused because her presence could cause strife. Thus it is the fact that she is a woman, not a lack of courage or skills, that prevents her participation. Atalanta frequently proves herself to excel in activities associated with men, but that does not necessarily mean that she can transcend the limitations placed on her because of her gender.

Ultimately, Atalanta has a complicated and sometimes contradictory character, but her stories are frequently driven by the tensions between her feminine gender and masculine excellence. This is frequently intertwined with men's desire for her and her disinterest in men. Her choice of activities and her boundary-blurring personality are rarely condemned in a straightforward manner. However, these elements, combined with men's love of her, frequently cause problems for Atalanta and the people around her.

Chapter 2: Atalanta's Race

The episode of the Atalanta myth that is earliest to appear is her race to avoid marriage. The basic structure of the myth is as follows: Atalanta does not want to marry and races suitors for her hand. Death is the consequence for the many suitors who lose the footrace. Hippomenes (or Melanion) throws golden apples during the race to distract her and slow her down. With this trick he wins the race and marries Atalanta. This story is often followed by the couple's metamorphosis into lions, but this will be addressed in detail in chapter 4. There are many literary accounts or references to the story of Atalanta's race, although there are fewer depictions in art. In the extant corpus, few authors are concerned with explaining her motivations for avoiding marriage, nor do they mention her desire to be like Artemis in conjunction with the race. Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.9.2) and Hyginus (*Fab.* 185) mention that she wants to remain a virgin but do not explain why, and Ovid tells of an oracle that warns her against marriage (*Met.* 10.564-65). In what follows, I will look closely at the narratives in different literary genres and the material sources, with a focus on gender dynamics and excellence.

In ancient Greece there were real female runners, including Spartan girls and girls taking part in the Arkteia (rites for Artemis) or the Heraia (Kyle 2014, 211-12). Thus Atalanta is taking part in an activity that real women did. However, the fact that she raced against men made her an unusual character. In nearly all versions that describe the race, there are many suitors and the race is deadly to the losers. The large number of suitors willing to run this risk serves to show how desirable Atalanta is. Even if an author does not describe her as beautiful or otherwise desirable, this aspect of her character is necessary for the plot. In this way, she conforms to the expectation of mythical women being beautiful. However, she diverges from expectations by being excellent at running, and not only that, but more excellent at it than men. Hippomenes cannot hope to win without using Aphrodite's golden apples. Thus, "only male trickery can overcome female strength, a complete reversal of the Greek norm" (Scanlon 2002, 178).

The apples are a consistent element in each literary telling, but their origin is somewhat variable. The scholia on Theocritus' *Idyll* 2.120 suggest a connection with Dionysus: scholion 2.120a reports that Callimachus says the apples which Aphrodite gave to Hippomenes were from Dionysus' wreath, and scholion 2.120b reports that

Philetas said the apples given by Aphrodite to Hippomenes were from Dionysus and that they stirred desire in Atalanta (Wendel 1966, 289-90). Faraone uses this as evidence for the aphrodisiac quality of the apples (1990, 233). Even in this rather obscure connection to Dionysus, the apples are still given to Hippomenes by Aphrodite. Apollodorus and Libanius simply say that they are from Aphrodite (*Bibl.* 3.9.2; *Progymnasmata* 33-34) and Hyginus says they are from Venus (*Fab.* 185). Theocritus' speaker does not give a mythological origin for the apples, and this may be in order to erase any differences between them and the ones that he brings to his lover (*Id.* 3.41; more on this below). Virgil connects them with the garden of the Hesperides and does not mention Venus, although it is only a brief reference to the story (*Ecl.* 6.61). Ovid's Venus says that she brought the apples herself from her sacred tree in Tamasus, on Cyprus (*Met.* 10.644-50). On the calyx crater (see figure 1) Aphrodite is handling apples along with a winged Eros. Aphrodite/Venus is the most common thread, which makes sense since the apples are a tool which leads Atalanta to marriage. There is evidence that apples were part of marriage rituals and connected with promoting sexual desire in females (Faraone 1990, 230-32). There also is a correspondence between the golden quality of the apples and golden Aphrodite, and Aphrodite is often connected with magical objects (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005, 46, 56).

2.1 Heroic Genealogy (Hesiod)

The earliest extant literary evidence for Atalanta is from the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, also known as the *Ehoiai* (from the recurring pattern of ἦ' οἴη which often marked new sections (West 1985, 1)). It is a poem of five books (West 1985, 1). The *Catalogue of Women* is thought to be written by an author later than Hesiod (West 1985, 127), and was probably composed at some point between 580 and 520 BCE (West 1985, 136). It is a genealogical text showing the families of the heroic age (West 1985, 29-30). It is a sequel to the *Theogony*, and its first lines are the last lines of the *Theogony* (Ziogas 2011, 250). West says that fragment 1 was designed to follow the *Theogony*, and that *Theogony* 1019ff was designed as a transition into the *Catalogue*, but that this does not necessarily mean that they were composed at the same time (1985, 126).

Atalanta’s story was likely at the very beginning of book 2 of the *Catalogue* (West 1985, 67). It is the fullest extant narrative in the section on the descendants of Aiolos and may have been the last in that family to be described in the *Catalogue* (West 1985, 49). It is quite fragmentary—there are lines missing, and several lines are only partially preserved. In it she is the daughter of Schoeneus (F48.12 Most/F75.12 Merkelbach-West (MW)) and races Hippomenes, whose name is missing from the narrative fragments themselves (F73, 75-75 MW; F47-48 Most, although Most supplies Hippomenes’ name in F48.15) but is attested by a scholion on Homer’s *Iliad* (F50 Most/F74 MW). The narrative is as follows: Atalanta “refused to associate with the tribe [of all human beings / hoping to escape] marriage [with men] who live on bread (Translation by Most, 2018; πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἀ]παναίνετο φῦλον ὀμιλ[εῖν / ἀνδρῶν ἀλπομένη φεύγ]ειν γάμον ἀλφηστάσν[, F. 47.4-5 Most/73.4-5 MW). There is a crowd (possibly of suitors, as Most supplies in F48.8), and they marvel at the way the breath of Zephyrus flutters her chiton around her soft breasts (F48.7-10 Most/F75.7-10 MW). This image is sexually charged (Fratantuono 2008, 345). Schoeneus announces the terms of the race, though about half of every line is missing in his speech, some lines are reconstructed, and the end of the speech is missing:

ὦδε δὲ μυθέομαι, Ζεὺς δ’ ἄμ]μ’ ἐπιμάρτυρος ἔστω
]ήσεται· εἰ δέ κεν οὔτος
 νικήσῃ καὶ οἱ δῶμ]ι Ζεὺς] κῦδος ἀρέσθαι
 ἄλλοί τ’ ἀθάνατοι, οἱ Ὀλύμ]πια δῶματ’ ἔχουσι,
φί]λην ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν·
ὠκ]υπόδων σθένος ἵππων
κε]ιμήλια· καὶ νύ κε θυμῶι
]α ἀνιηρὸν ἄεθλον.
 εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώησι πατ]ήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε (F. 48.17-25 Most/F. 75.17-25 MW)

This is what I say, and may Zeus] be [our] witness:

]; but if he
 wins and Zeus grants it to him] to bear off the glory,
 and the other immortals who] have their mansions on Olympus,
] to his dear fatherland;
] the swift-footed horses’ strength
] treasures; and in spirit
]grievous contest.

but if the father] of gods and men [does not grant (translation by Most, 2018)

The fragmentary nature of this section makes it difficult to understand what the terms of the race really are. It is clear that Schoeneus invokes Zeus, and he seems to suggest that the outcome of the race is Zeus' responsibility. This is interesting because Zeus does not appear to play a role in other versions of the race. The deity who is always connected to the race story is Aphrodite, because she is the one who gives the golden apples to Hippomenes, and moreover she is the goddess with whom Atalanta refuses to associate herself.

In the next section we are in the middle of the race, which is an unequal contest because Atalanta is refusing gifts (of golden Aphrodite, as supplied in F48.6 (31) Most and F76.6 (31) MW) but Hippomenes is running for his life:

ἤχ' ὑποχωρήσασ'· οὐ γὰρ ἴσ[ον ἀμφοτέροισιν
ἄθλον ἔκειθ'· ἦ μὲν ῥά π[οδώκης δι' Ἀταλάντη
ἔετ' ἀναινομένη δῶρα [χρυσῆς Ἀφροδίτης,
τῶι δὲ περὶ ψυχῆς πέλε[το δρόμος, ἠὲ ἀλῶναι
ἠὲ φθγαῖν· (F. 48.4-8 (29-34) Most/ 76.4-8 (29-34) MW).

she, retreating a little; for unequal [for the two of them
was the contest: for she, [swift-footed godly Atalanta,
sped refusing the gifts of [golden Aphrodite,
while for him [the race] was for his life, [either to be caught
or to escape. (Translation by Most, 2018).

Atalanta is, as later authors tell us, a faster runner than any man, although this detail is not part of the Hesiodic fragments. However, the fragments may still imply it for she is called 'swift-footed godlike Atalanta' (ποδώκης δι' Ἀταλάντη) (F47.2 and 48.20 (45) Most, F73.2 and 67.20 (45) MW). Scholars have pointed out this similarity to Achilles, who is also 'swift-footed' (Scanlon 2002, 179; Ziogas 2011, 258-59). This reference to Achilles, the best of the Greeks, may emphasize Atalanta's own excellence. Ziogas also says that Hesiod draws on the Homeric simile from book 22 of the *Iliad*, when Hector is running for his life just as horses run for a prize of a tripod or a woman (Ziogas 2011, 260; on *Il.* 22.161-63). She points out that "Hesiod synthesizes Homer's simile and narrative proper" since that Hippomenes runs both for his life and for a woman (Ziogas 2011, 261). Speaking of the inequality between the consequences of the race for Atalanta compared with Hippomenes makes this moment more dramatic. Atalanta is running only because she spurns Aphrodite's gifts, but Hippomenes stands to lose his life if he loses

the race. However, we can presume that the consequences are not the only way in which the race is unequal. The race is also unequal because of Atalanta's excellence in running, and it is only by trickery that Hippomenes can escape death.

Hippomenes speaks to her with trickery in mind and tells her to take the shining gifts of the goddess (golden Aphrodite, as supplied again by the editors):

τῶι καί ῥα δολο[φρονέων προσέειπεν·
“ὦ θύγατερ Ζχοινῆος, ἀμ[είλιχον ἦτορ ἔχουσα,
δ]έξο τάδ' ἀγλα[ὰ] δῶρα θε[ᾶς χρυσοῆς Ἀφροδίτης (F. 48.8-10 (33-35)
Most).

And so, plotting deception, he said,
“Oh daughter of Schoeneus, [you who have a relentless heart,
Accept these splendid gifts [of the goddess, golden Aphrodite (Translation by
Most, 2018).

Because their running skills are unequal, Hippomenes must use deception in order to win against Atalanta. Atalanta is racing because she spurns the gifts of Aphrodite, which only makes sense if that refers to erotic love or marriage. However, Hippomenes wins the race by throwing the gifts of Aphrodite, which here refers to the golden apples. By using the term “gifts of Aphrodite” to refer both to the sensual experiences and the apples, Hesiod creates a delicious irony in this section, as the term suggests both what Atalanta rejects and what she desires. The next several lines are very incomplete but Hippomenes throws down something golden (48.13-14 (38-39) Most/F76.13-14 (38-39) MW), presumably an apple. Then the lines are a bit clearer; Atalanta catches it like a harpy, he throws a second one and then she has two apples, near the end he throws the third and with these he escapes death and stands catching his breath (F48.18-23 (43-48) Most/F76.18-23 (43-48) MW). The harpy simile suggests both swiftness and rapaciousness (Fratantuono 2008, 345). It is clear then that Atalanta strongly desires these gifts of Aphrodite, just as she previously spurned the love-goddess' earlier gifts.

2.2 Pastoral (Theocritus and Virgil)

Atalanta and the apples appear briefly in the pastoral poems of Virgil and Theocritus. In each of these she is part of a series of mythological examples. Virgil mentions her in a highly compressed and allusive manner. The mention is only one line,

and does not include her name: “then he sang of the girl who admired the apples of the Hesperides” (*tum canit Hesperidum miratam mala puellam*, Virg. *Ecl.* 6.61).

Understanding the line requires prior knowledge of Atalanta’s story. It is only the knowledge that the apples from Atalanta’s race can be connected to the Hesperides that allows the reader to identify the girl as Atalanta.

In his third *Idyll*, Theocritus makes it clear that he is talking about Atalanta’s race by naming her, but he deliberately omits an origin for the apples. In Theocritus’ *Idyll* 3, the speaker is a goatherd who leaves his goats with his friend Tityrus so that he can serenade his beloved, Amaryllis, who has stopped accepting his advances. His serenade at Amaryllis’ ivy-blocked cave is a parody of the *paraklausithyron*, in which “an urban lover would sing before the locked doors of his mistress’ house” (Lawall 1967, 35). The absurdity arising from the incongruity of the urban activity and rural setting is essential to the poem (Gow 1950, 64). More comic effect comes from the goatherd’s exaggerated sentimentality and use of mythological examples (Lawall 1967, 34, 40). He brings ten apples for Amaryllis (*Id.* 3.10), presumably hoping they should have the same effect on her as they did on Atalanta (Lawall 1967, 40), although the speaker does not say that outright. This is what the goatherd says about Atalanta, the first of several mythological examples: “Hippomenes, when he wished to wed the maiden, / taking apples in his hand won the race; but Atalanta / as soon as she saw them, she was maddened and leapt into strong desire” (Ἴππομένης, ὅκα δὴ τὰν παρθένον ἤθελε γᾶμαι, / μᾶλ’ ἐν χερσὶν ἐλῶν δρόμον ἄνθεν· ἅ δ’ Ἀταλάντα / ὡς ἶδεν, ἐμάνη, ἐς βαθὺν ἄλατ’ ἔρωτα. Theocr. *Id.* 3.40-42). This is a very short version of the story, and this may be to the lover’s advantage. He does not mention the fact that Hippomenes’ apples were golden, and thus very different from the apples he brought as a token for Amaryllis. By leaving out this detail he erases the differences between the mythological golden apples from Aphrodite and the apples he brought. He says, “I fetched from where you ordered me to fetch, and I will bring more for you tomorrow” (τηνῶθε καθεῖλον / ὦ μ’ ἐκέλευ καθελεῖν τύ· καὶ αὔριον ἄλλα τοι οἰσῶ. 3.10-12). The fact that he fetched them, and can get more by the next day, makes it seem likely that they are from a nearby place and certainly not from a special, mythical tree or handed over by a goddess. The

difference between his regular apples and the golden ones from the myth could add to the comic tone of the poem.

2.3 Rhetoric/Teaching (Libanius)

Libanius was born in Antioch in 314, lived in various places (Athens, Constantinople, Nicaea, Nicomedia), and taught rhetoric until his death in 393 (Van Hoof 2014, 7-8). The studies of elite young men in the late Hellenistic period to late antiquity would include *progymnasmata*, which were preliminary exercises in prose composition (Gibson 2014, 128). Narration was the second simplest of fourteen types of exercises (Gibson 2014, 128). It is an exercise which “offers a realistic description of a real or unreal event” (Gibson 2014, 132). This collection of *progymnasmata* is attributed to Libanius, although he does not mention them in his other writings, and the authenticity of several elements including the narrations is in question (Gibson 2014, 129-30). In the collection attributed to Libanius there are two versions of Atalanta’s race:

Περὶ Ἀταλάντης.

1. Πολλοὶ μὲν ἔκειντο μνηστήρες ὑπὸ Ἀτανάντης ἡττηθέντες ποδωκεία τῆς κόρης, ἔδει γὰρ ἡττώμενον μὲν ἀποθανεῖν, νικῶντα δὲ γαμεῖν, Ἴππομένης δὲ ταύτης ἐπιθυμῶν, δεδιὼς δὲ τὸν κίνδυνον δεῖται τῆς Ἀφροδίτης συμπρᾶξαι. ἡ δὲ ἔδωκε τὰ χρυσᾶ μῆλα καὶ εἶπεν ὁ χρὴ ποιεῖν ἐν τῷ δρόμῳ. 2. ὡς οὖν ἔθεον, ὅποτε πλησίον ἡ κόρη γένοιτο, μῆλον ἠφίει, ἡ δὲ ἐθαύμαζε τε καὶ ὑπολειπομένη τὸ μῆλον ἀνηρεῖτο, ἐγγιζούσης δὲ πάλιν τὸ αὐτὸ ἔδρατο. καὶ διὰ τοιοῦδε σοφίσματος Ἀταλάντη μὲν εἶχε τὰ μῆλα, Ἴππομένης δὲ Ἀταλάντην. (Lib. *Narr.* 33).

About Atalanta.

Many suitors were lying defeated by the maiden Atalanta with her swiftness of foot, for it was necessary that the defeated die, and the victorious marry; but Hippomenes desiring her, though fearing the danger, prayed to Aphrodite for help. She gave him the golden apples and told him what he had to do in the race. As they were running, whenever the girl would be near, he threw the apple, and she marvelled and, lagging behind, picked up the apple, and as she drew near he did the same thing again. And through this clever trick Atalanta had the apples, and Hippomenes had Atalanta. (Translation by author).

Ἄλλως.

Ἀταλάντην τὴν Σχοινέως ἔχειν μὲν ἐπόθουν πολλοί, Ἴππομένης δὲ παρ’ ἐτέρους ἀπειλήφε. μνωμένων γὰρ τὴν κόρην πολλῶν ἄθλων ἑαυτὴν ἡ παῖς προὔτιθει τοῖς νικῶσιν εἰς δρόμον. καὶ πάντων ἀπολειπομένων τὸ τάχος Ἀφροδίτην Ἴππομένης εὔρατο σύμμαχον μαὶ μῆλα χρυσᾶ παρ’ ἐκείνης λαβῶν ἠφίει παρὰ τὸ στάδιον. καὶ ἡ μὲν

τὰ μῆλα συνέλεγεν, ὁ δὲ παρήει συλλέγουσαν καὶ τέχνη μᾶλλον ἢ ὄωμη τὸν Ἀταλάντης γάμον ἐκτίσατο. (Lib. *Narr.* 34).

In Another Way.

Many longed to possess Atalanta, daughter of Schoeneus, but Hippomenes received beyond the rest. For there being many men courting, the girl-child proposed the maiden, herself, as prize for the ones winning in the race. And all quickly falling behind, Hippomenes secured Aphrodite as an ally, and taking golden apples from her he threw them along the racecourse. And she [Atalanta] collected the apples, but he surpassed the one collecting and by cunning rather than strength he gained the hand of Atalanta.

Both of these are straightforward summaries. They have slightly different details but do not significantly contradict each other. The sense of danger is greater in *Narration* 33, as the death of the losing suitors is mentioned and Hippomenes is afraid, but these details are omitted in *Narration* 34. Libanius is showing two ways of telling the same story. This is presumably because it is a pedagogical tool for teaching composition, not to show different mythological variants. There are several other narrations that have two versions, such as those on Procne and Philomela (*Narr.* 18 and 19), Pasiphae (*Narr.* 21 and 22), and Heracles (*Narr.* 23 and 24). These seem to have a similar degree of difference as the two versions of the Atalanta story. Each tells the same story with slightly different but not quite contradictory details. So it seems that Libanius' treatments of the Atalanta story are in line with his double treatments of other myths.

2.4 Mythographers

There are two mythographers who tell the story of Atalanta's race: (Pseudo-) Apollodorus and Hyginus. In Hyginus' version, Atalanta does not come up with the idea of the race alone, but rather she asks her father Schoeneus to help keep her a virgin, and the race is his idea:

Schoeneus Atalantam filiam uirginem formosissimam dicitur habuisse, quae uirtute sua cursu uiros superabat. Ea petiit a patre ut se uirginem seruaret. 2. Itaque cum a pluribus in coniugium peteretur, pater eius similitatem constituit, qui eam ducere uellet prius in certamine cursu cum ea contenderet, termino constituto, ut ille inermis fugeret, haec cum telo insequeretur; quem intra finem termini consecuta fuisset, interficeret, cuius caput in stadio figeret. 3. Plerosque cum superasset et occidisset, nouissime ab Hippomene Megarei et Meropes filio uicta est. Hic enim a Venere mala tria insignis formae acceperat, edoctus quis

usus in eis esset. 4. Qui in ipso certamine iactando puellae impetum alligauit. Illa enim dum colligit et ammiratur aurum, declinauit et iuueni uictoriam tradidit. 5. Cui Schoeneus ob industriam libens filiam suam dedit uxorem. (Hyg. *Fab.* 185.1-5).

Schoeneus is said to have had a daughter, Atalanta, a most beautiful maiden, who was surpassing men with her excellence in running. She begged her father that he would keep her a virgin. 2. Therefore when she was sought in marriage by many, her father established a competition; whoever was wishing to take her should first compete with her in a running contest, with the agreed terms, that he would flee unarmed, and she would chase with a spear; when she had overtaken him within the limit of the boundary, she would kill him, and fasten his head in the racecourse. 3. And although she had surpassed and killed almost all, in the end she was defeated by Hippomenes, son of Megareus and Merope. For this man had received from Venus three apples of remarkable beauty, and he had been taught how to use them. 4. In the contest itself he hindered the motion of the girl by throwing. For while she was collecting and admiring the gold, she turned aside and surrendered the victory to the youth. 5. Schoeneus with pleasure gave his daughter to him as wife on account of his industriousness. (Translation by author).

The image of Atalanta chasing men with her spear and displaying their heads in the stadium has a violent immediacy to it. One might imagine that even while the suitors are running they can see the severed heads of Atalanta's previous conquests (and wonder that anyone would dare risk it with the consequences right in front of them!). It seems to show Atalanta's pride in being able to outrun all of these men, or to serve as a warning so that others might leave her alone (or both). However, Hyginus does not tell us Atalanta's thoughts, feelings, or expressions. Her reason for wanting virginity is not stated. While Ormand makes this observation about Hesiod's race, it seems to apply equally well here: "it appears to partake in an identity crisis: the story cannot decide if the race is a race, or alternately, a hunt ..." (Ormand 2013, 140). The race has in a sense become a hunt in which men are prey, and this seems like a stronger perversion of normal courtship than in other versions of the race. Rather than a contest between suitors for a woman's hand, the contest is against the woman; rather than the consequence being either marriage or being put to death, the death is built right in to the contest; rather than men hunting animals, women hunt men. When Hippomenes beats Atalanta, Schoeneus happily gives him his daughter because of Hippomenes' industriousness. Thus it may not be an automatic thing that Hippomenes won her just because he won the race, or perhaps he does automatically

win her by winning the race, but Schoeneus' happiness in giving his daughter in marriage comes from being impressed by Hippomenes and so seeing him as a worthy husband.

While many authors mention that the apples are golden, Hyginus uses that term alone to refer to the apples during the race. He does not say that she admires the golden apples, but that she admires the gold (*aurum*, 185.4). The emphasis on that quality of the apples could suggest that Atalanta is greedy. Hyginus also emphasizes Atalanta's pride and cruelty by having her kill the suitors as an intrinsic part of the race and display their heads along the course (185.2). He does not justify her by offering a reason for her desire to remain virgin. This creates a very unsympathetic version of Atalanta. Hyginus does, however, explicitly say that she has excellence in running (*virtute sua cursu*, 185.1). Hyginus uses the same word, *virtutem*, to describe Atalanta in the hunt (*Fab.* 174.5). In that context, the word could mean excellence or manliness (see chapter 3 below), but here that double meaning does not seem to be present.

Apollodorus' account of Atalanta's story starts with her exposure as a child and so his account of the race starts with her reuniting with her parents:

ἀνευροῦσα δὲ ὕστερον τοὺς γονέας, ὡς ὁ πατὴρ γαμεῖν αὐτὴν ἔπειθεν ἀπιοῦσα εἰς σταδιαῖον τόπον καὶ πήξασα μέσον σκόλοπα τρίπηχυν, ἐντεῦθεν τῶν μνηστευομένων τοὺς δρόμους προοίεῖσα ἐτρόχαζε καθωπλισμένη· καὶ καταληφθέντι μὲν αὐτοῦ θάνατος ὠφείλετο, μὴ καταληφθέντι δὲ γάμος. ἤδη δὲ πολλῶν ἀπολομένων Μελανίων αὐτῆς ἐρασθεὶς ἦκεν ἐπὶ τὸν δρόμον, χρύσεια μῆλα κομίζων παρ' Ἀφροδίτης, καὶ διωκόμενος ταῦτα ἔρριπτεν. ἡ δὲ ἀναιρουμένη τὰ ῥιπτόμενα τὸν δρόμον ἐνικήθη. ἔγημεν οὖν αὐτὴν Μελανίων. (*Bibl.* 3.9.2)

Afterwards she discovered her parents, but when her father would have persuaded her to wed, she went away to a place that might serve as a racecourse, and, having planted a stake three cubits high in the middle of it, she caused her wooers to race before her from there, and ran herself in arms; and if the wooer was caught up, his due was death on the spot, and if he was not caught up, his due was marriage. When many had already perished, Melanion came to run for love of her, bringing golden apples from Aphrodite, and being pursued he threw them down, and she, picking up the dropped fruit, was beaten in the race. So Melanion married her. (Translation by Frazer, 1967).

It is her father who wants her to marry (rather than protecting her virginity, like in Hyginus' account above). Perhaps if she had never met with her family, she would not

have been pressured to marry, and could have lived her life unmarried in peace. It seems that her reuniting with her father may also be the moment she rejoins society or the polis. She was raised by hunters in the wild and may not have felt the pressure to conform to the expected role of women—marriage and childbirth. It is Atalanta herself who sets up the race, and so she has an active role in the decision on how to choose her husband and simultaneously how to get rid of any suitors. Similar to Hyginus' account, the suitor starts ahead of her and she runs fully armed and kills him on the spot. Unlike Hyginus, Apollodorus does not mention the losers' heads being displayed, so at least Atalanta does not flaunt her ability and violence as much. Apollodorus seems to be using a different source for the race than all the authors previously mentioned, since all of them have Hippomenes as the successful suitor, while Apollodorus has Melanion in the same role.

2.5 Epic (Ovid)

Ovid writes a very detailed version of the tale. In his *Metamorphoses*, Venus tells the story to Adonis to explain why she hates lions (10.552). They are taking a break from hunting and she intersperses her story with kisses (10.552-58). So there are references to hunting from the framing story, and it is likely that some connection to Atalanta's hunting episode is still implied. Moreover, this is framed in an erotic context: we have Venus, the goddess of sexuality, partaking in cynegetic activities with her lover (and there are also erotic connections with hunting itself (Barringer 1996, 62)), kissing her lover as she narrates. Her lover, Adonis, is the last in a genealogical thread, which is reminiscent of the structure of the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (Ziogas 2011, 254). An even broader framing context is that it is Orpheus, singing about boys whom gods love and girls who deserve punishment for their lust (10.151-4), who sings about Venus telling Atalanta's story. There seems to be some hostility towards women not only from the introduction of Orpheus' song (since he sings of them being punished), but also because Ovid tells us that Orpheus has turned away from loving women and so because of his rejections they are hostile to him (10.79-82; at 11.6-43 he is killed by maenads who recognize the man who rejected them). So from the context there is a doubled feeling of hostility towards and from women (from Orpheus) and specifically Atalanta (from Venus), and there is an

erotic component to this hostility (coming from rejection of women from Orpheus or of Venus from Atalanta).

Moving from the context to the narrative itself, Venus tells Adonis, “Perhaps you have heard that some woman surpassed quick men in running races” (*Forsitan audieris aliquam certamine cursus / veloces superasse viros*, 10.560-61). So it seems that, at least within the mythic world of the *Metamorphoses*, Atalanta is somewhat well-known for her excellence in running. Moreover, the nestled nature of the narrative means that there could be two layers of direct address. Just as Venus addresses Adonis, Ovid may be cheekily addressing his readers, who presumably would know of Atalanta. Ziogas suggests that he is specifically referencing the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* (2011, 255-56). Atalanta’s reason for avoiding marriage seems to be unique to Ovid’s telling; it appears that she does not intrinsically desire virginity, because she asks an oracle about marriage:¹

Scitanti deus huic de coniuge “coniuge” dixit
“Nil opus est, Atalanta, tibi! fuge coniugis usum!
Nec tamen effugies teque ipsa viva carebis.” (Ov. *Met.* 10.564-66).

A god told her, inquiring about a husband,
‘There is no need of a husband for you, Atalanta! Avoid the experience of a husband!
However you will not escape and you, alive yourself, will be deprived of yourself.’ (Translation by author).

If she was already set on being a virgin for life, there would be no need for her to ask an oracle about marriage. Ovid softens Atalanta’s character with this prophecy (Anderson 1972, 523). It is the oracle that warns her against taking a husband, and so she lives deep in the forests and sets the deadly terms of the courtship race (10.564-72). In this account she has a lot of agency, for it is she, not her father, who sets the race, and it seems that she decides to live in the forest because of the oracle, rather than having lived there her entire life. However, her agency does not go as far as being able to refuse suitors

¹ While Ovid does not explicitly say that she consults the oracle because she is eager for marriage, “he implies that Atalanta would have proceeded quite naturally to matrimony except for this warning” (Anderson 1972, 522). Moreover, in Atalanta’s internal debate about Hippomenes (10.611-35), she refers to the oracle as an obstacle to a potentially happy marriage (10.633-35), but does not mention that she has any particular desire for virginity.

altogether. There seems to be a parallel with Penelope's situation in the *Odyssey*; Penelope delays the suitors with her weaving trick, and sets the bow contest, but she does not simply refuse them. Atalanta sets the race as a way to keep herself safe, and she is relying on her own excellence to prevent any man from marrying her.

When Hippomenes sees her racing other suitors, she seems to be as fast as an arrow fired by a Scythian archer, and her beauty is even more astonishing because of her running (10.588-90). While this is a way of expressing her extreme speed, it might also refer to other versions of Atalanta, in which she often hunts with a bow and is sometimes even portrayed in material sources as a Scythian archer (Barringer 1996, 56, 59 talks about some depictions of her in this garb, and Druilhe 2016, 51 also talks about such depictions). She is described as having girlish white skin:

Tergaque iactantur crines per eburnea, quaeque
Poplitibus suberant picto gentialia limbo,
Inque puellari corpus candore ruborem
Traxerat, haud aliter, quam cum super atria velum
Candida purpureum simulatas inficit umbras (10.593-96).

Her hairs were cast over her ivory back,
And knee-bindings were under her knees with a coloured fringe,
And her body was tinging girlish whiteness with redness,
Just as when a purple awning suffuses bright courtyards
With manufactured shadows.

Her white skin suggests that she spends a lot of time indoors, although that does not seem to fit with any other description of her personality. There was an expectation that women's bodies should be "pale and soft" from spending time indoors (Lee 2012, 185). There seems to be some incongruity between her white skin as a feminine marker of beauty and how her running, an outdoor activity (although not an exclusively masculine one), enhances her beauty. The simile further develops this contrast, as it suggests redness indoors, but Atalanta's redness comes from her outdoor activity. The image of awning shadows in courtyards also suggests motionlessness, and this contrasts with Atalanta's swift motion. It seems then that part of her appeal comes from her impossibly feminine and yet impossibly swift body. This is slightly different from Ovid's description of Atalanta in the Calydonian boar hunt (*Met.* 8.317-23). There, she is rather androgynous (see chapter 3 below), but in the race she seems to be very feminine. There are, however,

two lines that are very similar, but one applies to Atalanta in the hunt, whereas the other is a description of Hippomenes from Atalanta's inner thoughts. In the hunt catalogue, Atalanta's description includes "her face, which you would be able to call truly / a girlish face on a boy or a boyish face on a girl" (*facies, quam dicere vere / virgineam in puero, puerilem in virgine possis*, 8.322-23). Before her race with Hippomenes, Atalanta thinks, "Oh, how girlish a countenance is in his boyish face!" (*A! quam virgineus puerili vultus in ore est!* 10.631). Here the androgynous face has been transferred from Atalanta herself to her future husband.²

When Hippomenes challenges her, she is uncertain whether she wants to win or lose, worries within herself about Hippomenes, and seems to have fallen in love with him (10.599-637). This also seems to be unique to Ovid's account—in Hesiod's, she refuses the gifts of Aphrodite (F. 48.31, Most), and other accounts give no hint of her softening feelings for the suitor with the golden apples (Hyg. *Fab.* 185; Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.9.2). Faraone discusses the apples (not precisely within Ovid's version, but in the general tradition) as an aphrodisiac, rather than simply having monetary value (1990, 232-33) and suggests that she "publicly accepts the apples, and in so doing signals her consent to seduction and marriage" (238). Even if the apples do have a role in increasing desire (Faraone 1990, 230-33), Ovid's version seems to be the only one in which Atalanta's desire comes *before* the race and the appearance of the apples. This may be because her virginity is imposed on her as protection from the warning of the oracle, rather than being something she intrinsically desires (unique to Ovid, as mentioned above).

2.6 Material Sources

There are few depictions of the race story in ancient art. A calyx crater (figure 1) shows the moment before the race, while a white-ground lekythos (figure 2) shows Atalanta pursued by winged erotes. Later the race itself is portrayed on a glass cup (figure 3) and bowl (figure 4). In both of these depictions Atalanta is chasing Hippomenes/Hippomedon with a sword. A Gallo-Roman jug (figure 5) shows a moment

² Ovid's interest in themes of identity of a lover and beloved, paired with gender fluidity, can be found elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses* (for example, Narcissus (3.345-510), or Salmacis and Hermaphrodite (4.285-388)). An exploration of these connections is beyond the scope of this work.

after the race. Thus it seems that there was not a particular moment that became a popular one to show. It appears that there was no unified approach to depicting this story, most likely because it was depicted so rarely. Moreover, the images are from very different times and places. However, the depictions each show a different thematic focus. On the calyx crater Atalanta seems coy rather than dangerous, and the collusion of Aphrodite and Hippomenes is also a major focus. On the lekythos the focus appears to be on the erotes' pursuit of Atalanta, and is thus more abstract. There is no hint of the trickery of Aphrodite and Hippomenes which was necessary to overcome Atalanta. The glass beaker and bowl which show Atalanta pursuing her suitor with a sword emphasizes her cruelty. The jug medallions appear to show a happy moment in which Hippomedon has won and Atalanta has an apple. Here it seems that the focus is on the result of the race, rather than the struggle or danger inherent in the contest.

On the calyx crater (Bologna Museo Civico Archaeologica 300; see figure 1) with Atalanta and Hippomenes by the Dinos Painter (ca. 420), Atalanta is shown nude and adjusting her cap. Hippomenes is also nude and is receiving apples from Aphrodite through a winged eros (Reeder 1995, 366; Boardman 1989, 229-30). Hippomenes is looking in Atalanta's direction and holding a strigil (scraper), which was used to clean an athlete's body after exercising (Reeder 1995, 366). Atalanta's "alluring pose and unbowed head establish unambiguously that she is enjoying the effect she is producing. This behaviour is all the more remarkable when one considers that not only was female nudity restricted to prostitutes in Classical Athens, but for a female to show herself in this open posture, even clothed, was simply unthinkable" (Reeder 1995, 366). Her showing off her body seems strange when the race happens because Atalanta does not want to marry. Perhaps the painter's intended effect is to make her seem coy and desirable rather than hostile against men. Another possibility is that Atalanta's nudity implies her indifference to sex and her unabashed contradiction of norms. Reeder also comments on her juxtaposition with Aphrodite, who is ignoring Atalanta to concentrate on the trick that will conquer the mortal, and is "the supreme victor" of this contest (1995, 367). Aphrodite is also fully clothed, and Reeder points out the irony that Aphrodite will start to be portrayed nude more often in the following decades (1995, 367). On the other side of Atalanta is a man leaning on his staff, who is presumably her father Schoeneus; there

are other male figures who may be other suitors waiting for their chance (Reeder 1995, 367; Scanlon 2002, 184, who suggests that they could also be spectators). “She is literally between her father at the basin and her future husband at the *terma*, the two male forces in the lives of Greek women, and her transition from one to the other, contrary to her will, is ensured by the divine powers of Eros and Aphrodite which conspire against her in the race” (Scanlon 2002, 184). Thus, the vase painting seems to explore the anxieties that come from the transition into married life. Her sandals and cap are not normal apparel for runners, but the cap may be an allusion to scenes of her wrestling Peleus, and her nudity may be imitating male athletic nudity (Scanlon 2002, 184). The post (*terma*), washbasin (*louterion*), and vegetation suggest that the scene is an outdoor race track (Scanlon 2002, 184; Reeder 1995, 366). This is the only clear depiction of the footrace in Greek art (Barringer 1996, 71; Boardman 1983, 12; Druilhe 2016, 61). After this one, there is no extant depiction in art for at least 500 years (Boardman 1983, 12). However, there is another Greek vase that shows Atalanta running, though not against Hippomenes. I will turn to this one next.

The white-figure lekythos, attributed to the Douris Painter, shows Atalanta in elaborate dress being pursued by three erotes. Attic, ca. 500-490 BCE—final stage of Archaic period (Cooney 1966, 319). Lekythoi were made as containers for oil or perfume and as offerings for tombs (Cooney 1966, 319). This one is in remarkable condition, owing to its placement in a tomb (Cooney 1966, 319). The figures are identified as Atalanta and several Eros figures, and “even with the convenient labels the precise interpretation of the scene remains doubtful though, seemingly, it centers around Atalanta’s prowess as a runner.” (Cooney 1966, 320). Although Cooney does interpret that “Eros is crowning her with the wreath of victory” and argues that that means it cannot refer to her race with Hippomenes in which she, in fact, loses; but he also comments that it is strange for her to be crowned by Eros if she is winning against another suitor since that is in fact a rejection of love (Cooney 1966, 320). Cooney says that the painting seems most likely to show an abstract “Triumph of Love” (1966, 320-21). He also interprets Atalanta’s expression as “delight in the outcome” (Cooney 1966, 321) but it seems to me that she has a fairly neutral expression, and in fact Boardman says that “she is clearly anxious to avoid” the wreath (1983, 4). Boardman argues that in

the Eros' left hand is a whip, not a flower, which was what the restorer thought it was, although that does not refer to the wreath itself (1983, 4). Boardman also suggests that the wreath "in Eros' hands implies the consummation of at least love, if not marriage" (1983, 4). Marriage may be implied, however, by her clothing, which Boardman calls "bridal finery" (1983, 18).

On this lekythos she is dressed in a chiton which is transparent at her legs but not at her upper body, with patterned borders and overall dotted pattern, and a himation (cloak) with a coloured border. Many red-figure vases from the Classical period show a bride wearing diaphanous clothing that shows her contours and emphasizes "her sexual desirability as well as her fertility" (Lee 2012, 187). By contrast, black-figure vases from the Archaic period show the bride in elaborate dress that emphasizes her family's wealth (Lee 2012, 187). It seems to me that both of these elements are in play in the lekythos, for Atalanta's legs are drawn under her chiton, while the clothing itself is elaborately decorated. This might suggest an emphasis on two aspects of her desirability: sexual and financial. One might wonder how she has such fine clothing—presumably this is not a conception of her living out in the wild, but rather at her parents' oikos. She wears a crown and kerchief according to Boardman (1983, 3) although it looks to me like a headband rather than a crown. Atalanta's finery and the fact that the other characters from the story (Aphrodite, Hippomenes, and Schoeneus) are absent narrows the focus to be on her. The erotes have dynamic poses, but they are facing her and drawing the viewer's attention to her. Moreover, they are personified versions of abstract desire. Thus it seems that the focus here is the moment in which Atalanta's reluctance to marry and be involved with erotic love is about to be overcome by the abstract power of love.

As far as depictions of her race with Hippomenes, there are a few later sources. There is a glass beaker from Tuscany, from the second or third century CE (Boardman *LIMC* 1981, no. 84; Corning Museum of Glass 66.1.238., <https://www.cmog.org/artwork/beaker-atalanta-and-hippomenes>; see figure 3). The names are inscribed, and Atalanta, wearing a tunic and bearing a sword, pursues Hippomenes, who is nude (Boardman 1983, 12). There is also a glass bowl which is probably from Egypt in the second century CE (Boardman *LIMC* 1983, no. 83; Reims Musée 2281; see figure 4). The names are inscribed although it is Hippomedon rather

than Hippomenes (Boardman *LIMC* no. 83 and 1983, 12). Atalanta has a sword, and there are what might be apples (Boardman 1983, 12). It is interesting that in both of these depictions she has a sword, for when the literary accounts say that she has a weapon, it is usually a spear rather than a sword. Since she is running with a weapon in these images, it appears that the artists were interested in depicting the danger that Hippomenes/Hippomedon was in by racing Atalanta. Another later depiction is a three-handled jug with three molded medallions, two of which show Atalanta and Hippomedon and are from the same mold (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 17.194.870. Museum website, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/250096>; see figure 5). A third medallion on the jug shows a procession with the Egyptian goddess Isis (*ibid.*) This jug is Gallo-Roman from the late second to third century CE (Boardman *LIMC* no. 82). It depicts a moment shortly after the race, rather than the race itself. The figures are standing at rest, and a clothed Atalanta is holding an apple while Hippomedon, naked, holds a victory palm (Boardman *LIMC* no. 82). There does not appear to be any hint of Atalanta's cruelty or the danger that Hippomedon has escaped. Instead the focus is on Hippomedon's victory and perhaps, symbolized by the apple in her hand, Atalanta's impending shift to married life. She is standing between Schoeneus and Hippomedon and gazing in Hippomedon's direction. This could suggest how she will be moving from her father's sphere to her husband's.

Boardman says that the scarcity of depictions shows there was "remarkably little interest" in this episode, and suggests that "possibly the male of antiquity was not overanxious to be reminded of a heroine who could beat all men at their own sport, and could eventually be defeated only by cheating" (1983, 12). But this explanation seems rather weak to me, for male authors did write about this episode and so it clearly did hold some interest for ancient men. Scanlon suggests that it might be because it is difficult to portray what the literature does, to "develop details of the tension between the realms of Artemis and Aphrodite, between wildness and civilization, between girlhood and maturity, between a free maiden and a subordinate woman." (Scanlon 2002, 182). While it is true that it could be difficult to visually portray these tensions unambiguously, it is not impossible to explore them. The white-ground lekythos, for example, is difficult to interpret but seems to show Atalanta's reluctance to give in to Eros and love's victory

over her. The calyx crater is effective in showing the preparation for the race, and while Atalanta looks confident, presumably that she can win like she always has, she may not realize that Aphrodite is preparing for her own victory.

2.7 Conclusions

Most of the tellings of Atalanta's race focus on the race itself and Hippomenes' trick with the help of Aphrodite. There are varying degrees of her hostility towards men and marriage. Libanius and Theocritus, for example, do not talk about her motivations or mention her carrying weapons, while Hyginus and Apollodorus say that she wants to remain a virgin and that she bears arms while racing. The glass beaker and bowl both show Atalanta with a sword, which also suggests great hostility. This hostility may show the male authors' concerns with a female character who can run faster than men and rejects them. Ovid, however, tells us of her softening feelings for Hippomenes, and gives the oracle as a solid reason for her avoiding marriage. Atalanta thus becomes a much more sympathetic character. Ovid also emphasizes how her running increases her attractiveness, thus exploring the fascination that comes from such a boundary-blurring character.

While there are some variations between the different versions of the story, such as the name of the winning suitor or the origin of the apples, the basic plot has more consistency than the different versions of the Calydonian boar hunt story (more on that in chapter 3). I have not found any lists of Atalanta's suitors. In the hunt, catalogues of hunters become popular, even if most of the hunters do not play an individually-named role in the story itself. This could be to show what a heroic task it is to get rid of the fearsome boar. However, none of the suitors who race to their deaths are named. Mention of them is still important to show the risks that Hippomenes/Melanion is taking and emphasize Atalanta's cruelty, excellence, and desirability. However, keeping them anonymous helps focus on the actions of Hippomenes, Aphrodite, and Atalanta.

This story seems to be motivated by the contradiction between Atalanta's personal wishes and others' expectations about her and mythical women in general. If mythical maidens could simply choose whether or not to marry, there would be nothing to propel the story—Atalanta would choose virginity and there would be no conflict. It is only

because there is an expectation—whether it is coming from her family or general society, or has no clear origin—that she should marry that the contest becomes necessary. The race is a way for her to try to live up to her choices, but ultimately it does not work because of the deception of Hippomenes and Aphrodite. Even though Atalanta's excellence in running does not wane, she does not succeed in her plan to remain a virgin forever.

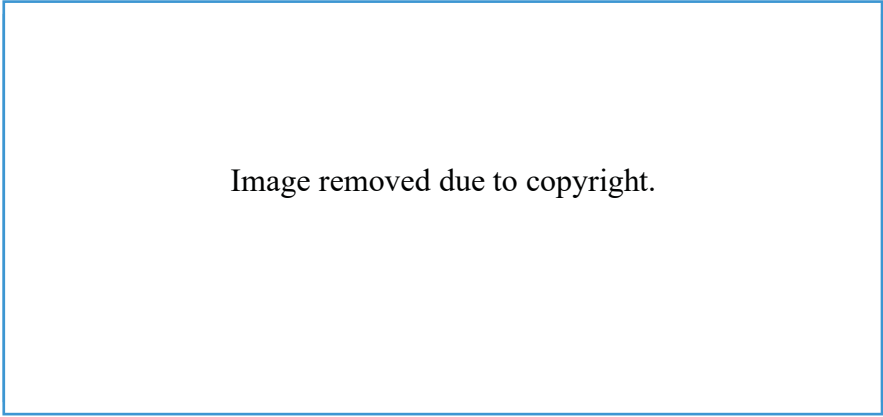


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Figure 1. Calyx Crater. Image from Barringer (1996, figure 28a-c—no page number).



Figure 2. White-ground Lekythos. Image from Cleveland Museum website, <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1966.114#> (Public domain).

Image removed due to copyright.

Figure 3. Beaker with Atalanta and Hippomenes. Corning Museum of Glass no. 66.1.238.
https://library.artstor.org/asset/AWSS35953_35953_39621193.

Figure 4. Glass bowl, Reims museum no. 2281. Image from Boardman (1983, 14).

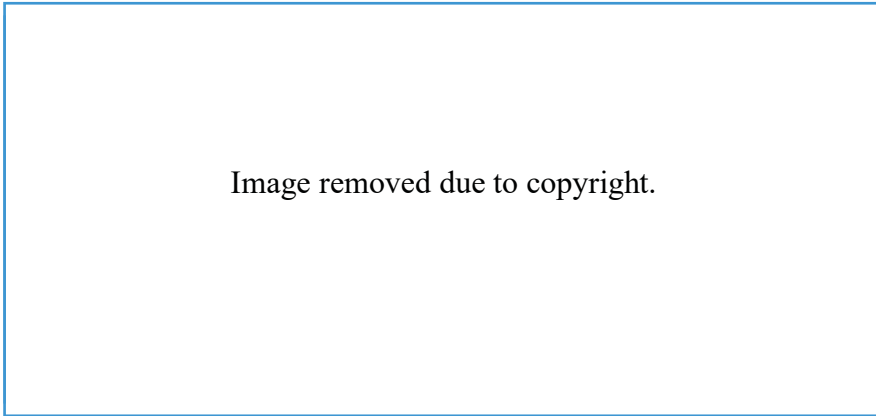
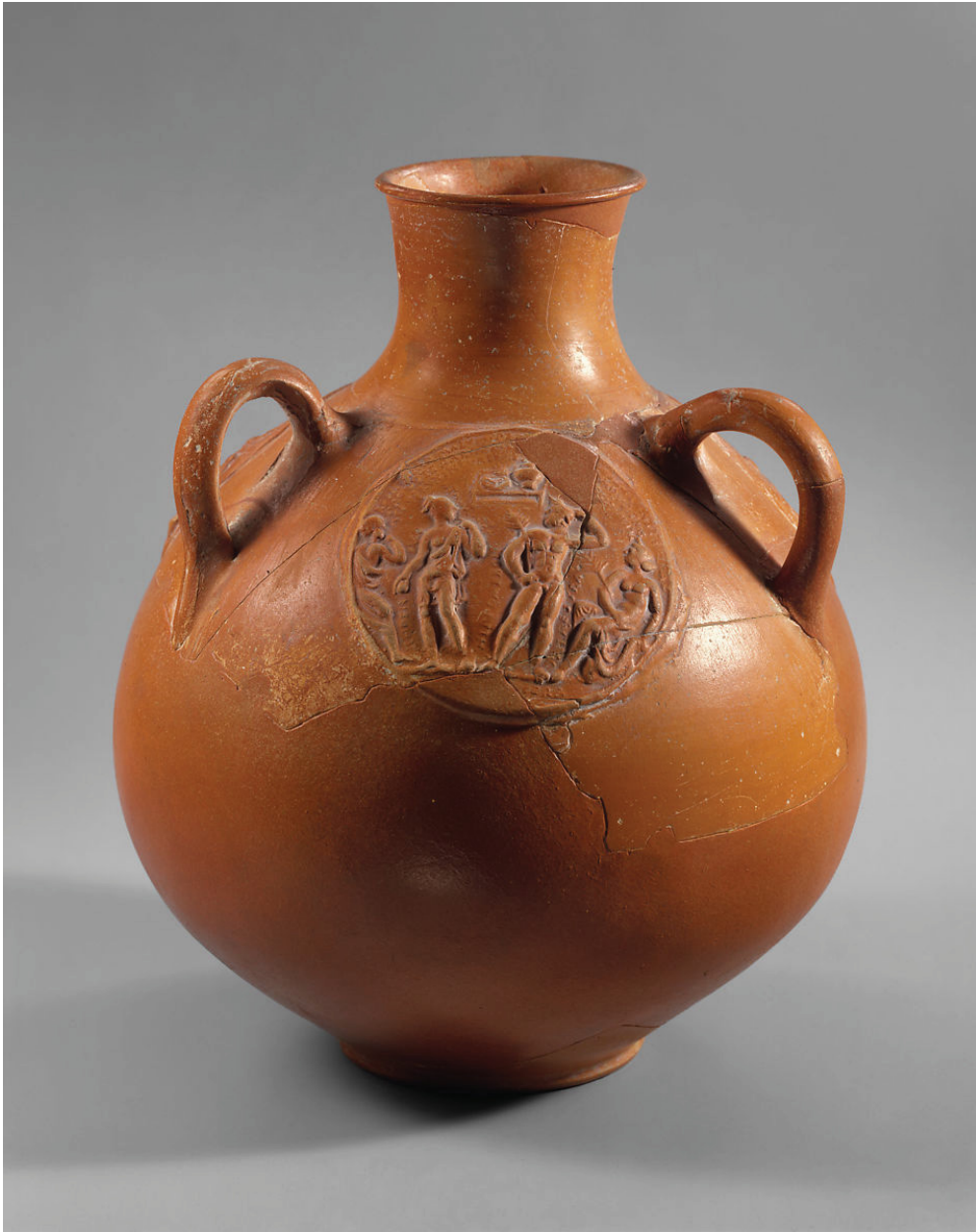


Figure 5. Three-handled jug, image from Metropolitan Museum of Art website, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/250096> (public domain).



Chapter 3: Atalanta and the Calydonian Boar Hunt

The Calydonian boar hunt is a myth about several heroes, led by Meleager, who hunt a destructive boar sent by Artemis. In most versions, Atalanta is one of the participants, and once the boar is dead Meleager presents her with its hide. However, his uncles object and so Meleager kills them. The earliest versions, those of Homer (*Il.* 9.529-98) and Bacchylides (*Ode V.56-175*), do not include Atalanta, but the disagreement about the hide is still part of the story. Stesichorus wrote a poem about the boarhunters, but it only survives in fragments. From these fragments it does not appear that Atalanta took part in the hunt (Garner 1994, 29). The earliest appearance of Atalanta in connection with the Calydonian boar hunt is on the François vase (*ca.* 570 BCE). This myth was popular for vase painters in the late archaic and early classical periods.³ It had enduring and changing appeal as it also became a popular subject for Roman mythological sarcophagi in the middle of the second century CE (Newby 2011, 309-10).⁴ The earliest literary source that shows Atalanta in connection with the hunt is Euripides' fragmentary *Meleager*. After Euripides' *Meleager*, Atalanta appears in the boar hunt narratives of the mythographers Diodorus Siculus, Hyginus, and Apollodorus, and in Ovid's epic *Metamorphoses*.

These various treatments of Atalanta and the hunt explore themes of gender and spheres of excellence. However, genre affects the extent to which these themes are explored, as the aims of the mythographers tend to be to collect story summaries while tragedians exploit the stories' themes in order to create irresolvable conflict. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* treats the story as a mock-epic followed by the more tragic story of Althaea and Meleager. I will examine each of these versions separately. To keep some thematic unity, these are the questions I will keep in mind: What actions, traits, or feelings are attributed to Atalanta? How does this affect her characterization? What are the reasons for which Meleager gives Atalanta the prize, and why do his uncles take it away from her? How does this affect our understanding of her character and the gender dynamics at play in the story? Are there any further events in each version that can shed

³ Information on a great variety of depictions can be found in the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* 2 (Boardman and Arrigoni 1981, 940-50) as well as Barringer (1996) and Boardman (1983).

⁴ For interpretations of the Meleager sarcophagi, see Borg (2018, 189-92) and Lorenz (2011).

light on gender issues in this myth? Many of these versions give Atalanta few characteristics, but she is sometimes the first person to hit the boar. This provides a plausible reason for Meleager to give her the boar's hide, a symbol of excellence. However, Meleager's love for her can make this gift more problematic. Atalanta's gender is frequently one of his uncles' reasons for denying her the spoils of the hunt. Therefore, Atalanta's womanhood becomes an obstacle to receiving the recognition that she might deserve. The fact that Atalanta is a woman hunting with men and gaining praise from a man who loves her makes her character uniquely suited to an exploration of gender conflict, because she tests the boundaries of acceptable gender expectations.

3.1 Early Versions of the Calydonian Boar Hunt Story

The earliest extant telling of the Calydonian boar hunt is from Homer's *Iliad* and does not include Atalanta. Phoenix tells the story as part of his plea to Achilles to accept Agamemnon's gifts and give up his anger (Hom. *Il.* 9.529-98). March says that the first part (lines 529-49) gives the background story of the Calydonian boar hunt in a compressed way which means that Homer expects his audience to recognize the story (1987, 29). Other scholars agree that this is not the earliest account of the hunt (Barringer 1996, 51; Willcock 1964, 148-53), but there is disagreement about what was part of the story before Homer. For instance, March suggests that Homer's "primary innovation was clearly the anger of Meleagros" (1987, 34) and that he made two further innovations to account for Meleager's anger: his mother's curse and the killing of his uncle (1987, 34-35). Willcock argues that the killing of the uncle (or uncles) "was always part of the legend" (1964, 150). He also says that the folktale version of the myth, with the firebrand, is part of the oldest version, before Homer (1964, 151-52). Rubin and Sale also include the firebrand as part of the pre-Homeric tradition, and argue that Atalanta was already Meleager's love interest in the earlier tradition (1983, 153ff.). They also argue that the hunt was an initiation (1983, 138ff).

Most, however, doubts Rubin and Sale's reconstruction of the pre-Homeric tale, calling it "entirely a scholarly fiction" (1983, 203). He agrees that there are initiatory elements to the story (1983, 206; 208) but does not think that Atalanta was part of the early tradition (203-10). He thinks, rather, that Atalanta had traditionally been part of the

Calydonian boar hunt, but since she was already romantically involved with Hippomenes or Melanion, no one connected her with Meleager until Euripides did so (Most 1983, 205). Euripides invented Meleager's desire for her "so as to provide both a more interesting motivation for Meleager's killing of his uncles than tradition had supplied and a dramatically effective stage confrontation between the two women in Meleager's life, Althaea and Atalanta" (Most 1983, 205).

Most's explanation makes sense but still raises questions for which there are no ready answers. How likely is it that the only female character in a group of heroic hunters, in a myth from a society which does not commonly have female hunters, is just simply one among many in the group? Konstantinou's observation about huntress myths seems relevant here: "If female hunting was practically inconceivable in real life, huntresses in myth cannot merely be considered as hunters in the feminine" (2018, 131). Moreover, Atalanta's association with Hippomenes or Melanion comes from the race story, in which she is Boeotian. The huntress Atalanta, on the other hand, is typically Arcadian. Would she have been taken from the tradition of the Boeotian racer and given a different origin, or was she an entirely different character who was conflated by later authors, like Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.9.2)? And if she was imported from the race story, why choose her specifically, especially if it is only to make her part of the group without affecting the plot? Most's assessment seems more plausible but is still unsatisfactory, because it seems to ignore the contexts of the mythic tradition of Atalanta.

Schnapp also casts some doubts on Rubin and Sale's idea that the hunt in the *Iliad* is an initiatory hunt, because the hunt involves fully grown heroes and Meleager is already married, and he also argues that there is no clear evidence that Atalanta was part of the pre-Homeric tradition (1997, 274). I agree. The fact that Meleager is already married makes it implausible that he still needs to be initiated into manhood. Rubin and Sale argue that the maternal uncles' presence is important for the initiation ritual, both in the *Odyssey* and in the Meleager story (1983, 146). This does make sense, but it does not necessarily mean that their presence automatically makes the hunt an initiation, although that is how Rubin and Sale interpret it: "Clearly this must be an initiatory hunt: nothing else will explain the presence of these shadows [i.e. the sons of Thestius] among the rest of the boar-hunters, the most famous Greeks of the pre-Trojan War generation, most of

them also Argonauts. The matrikin take part in the hunt in order to certify Meleager's manhood and readiness to enter the family" (1983, 153). To say that there is no other explanation for the presence of the uncles seems overly forceful and unimaginative. While Rubin and Sale mention the fact that Odysseus has to travel far to be with his maternal family for the hunt (1983, 146), the sons of Thestius are from Pleuron, which was a neighbouring city to Calydon. Moreover, at least one son of Thestius, Iphiclus, is mentioned as one of the Argonauts in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica* (1.201) as well as in Hyginus (*Fab.* 14.17). It is possible that Iphiclus was added to the story of the Argonauts because of his association with the band of heroes in the Calydonian boar hunt, but even if that were the case, there is no reason to assume that the sons of Thestius are complete non-entities who have no business associating with other heroes. One more aspect of the story that does not support the notion that the hunt is initiatory is the boar itself. Rubin and Sale say about Odysseus' hunt that "this particular boar is no menace to the countryside; there is no reason to hunt him, except to expose Odysseus to danger and to see whether he can meet it" (1983, 147). This contrasts with Meleager's story, in which the boar *was* a danger to the countryside, and so there was a reason to hunt it besides initiation.

Rubin and Sale do offer an interesting interpretation of the uncles' anger about Meleager giving the prize to Atalanta: "The spoils are the proof of Meleager's passage into manhood, the passage whereby he is fully taken into the maternal side of the family; the family needs this proof and cannot let it go abroad" (1983, 154). This could explain why the uncles think that the hide should belong to them if Meleager does not want it. However, that is still dependent on the idea that the hunt is an initiation, which seems unlikely to me overall even if there are some similar elements. However, even if Meleager is a full adult man, his family could still want to hold onto proof of his valour. This is somewhat compelling but ignores the possibility that Atalanta's gender is the reason for her to be denied the spoils. The Atalanta hunt myth explores themes of gender conflict and recognition of excellence.

3.2 Euripides

The earliest surviving literary evidence of Meleager's love and Atalanta's involvement in the hunt is from the fragmentary tragedy *Meleager*, by Euripides (fragments 515-37, Collard and Cropp). It was probably written later than 418 BCE (Collard and Cropp 2008, 616). Most scholars believe this to be the first use of "the motif of the love of Meleager for Atalanta" (Barringer 1996, 53; cf. Collard and Cropp 2008, 614, who say that he either popularized or invented this part of the story). However, Atalanta is portrayed in Attic vase paintings of the boar hunt from 600-550 BCE, earlier than Euripides' play, and so her connection with the hunt is certainly already part of the tradition before Euripides' *Meleager* (Druilhe 2016, 54).

The extant fragments of Euripides' *Meleager* are tantalizing because they make certain issues of the Atalanta story explicit. Several of the later tellings of the Calydonian boar hunt, such as Diodorus', Hyginus', and Apollodorus', give either little or no characterization to Atalanta. In these mythographers' versions, her gender and the fact that she is outside the family are factors in Meleager's uncles' seizure of the hide, but little is said of her attitude, motives, or capabilities. I was originally drawn to study Atalanta because her presence in this heroic hunt implied that she was excellent in hunting. This is intriguing because her character was created in the context of a society in which women did not hunt, and even other mythical huntresses are not depicted taking part in hunts alongside male heroes. However, in many versions of the story this judgment of her value is not explicit, or is only given from Meleager's point of view. The extent to which the themes of gender conflict and excellence are explored in each version seems to be at least partly dependent on genre. The mythographers write collections of story summaries, and so their aims are very different from tragedians' aims. Tragedians develop a single story to create tension and explore conflict and contradiction. Thus the fragments of the *Meleager* tragedy show an exploration of the themes of gender conflict and excellence, but these themes are not as explicit in the mythographers' accounts. Ovid plays with these themes as well, as will be seen below.

The Euripidean fragments seem to show an exploration of the idea of women excelling while doing things outside their typical activities:

<ΑΛΘΑΙΑ?>

εἰ κερκίδων μὲν ἀνδράσιν μέλοι πόνος,
γυναιξὶ δ' ὀπλων ἐμπέσοιεν ἡδοναί·
ἐκ τῆς ἐπιστήμης γὰρ ἐκπεπτωκότες
κεῖνοί τ' ἂν οὐδὲν εἶεν οὐθ' ἡμεῖς ἔτι. (F.522).

<Althaea?>

If the work of the shuttles (i.e. weaving) were a care for men,
And the pleasures of arms fell upon women;
Driven out from their field of knowledge,
Men would be nothing, and we would also be nothing. (Translation by author).

Here Althaea (if it is indeed she speaking, as Collard and Cropp suggest, 2008, 623) comments on men and women having an interest in the activities of the other gender. It seems most likely that she is commenting on Atalanta taking an interest in hunting. She talks about being involved in the activities of the opposite gender as something interesting or pleasurable. The contrast between the πόνος (work or toil) of women and the ἡδοναί (enjoyments or pleasures) of men suggests that the traditional activities of men are more enjoyable than the labours of women. However, the contrast seems to be not only between the activities of women and men, but also between the enjoyment of doing the other gender's activity and the skill or knowledge that comes from an activity which is associated with one's own gender. The implication seems to be that interest in an activity does not make someone good at it, but rather that women are good at weaving because they are women, and men are good at fighting because they are men. Since it is likely that Althaea is talking about and to Atalanta, she seems to be arguing that Atalanta is outside her proper field of knowledge and should not be hunting.

<ΜΕΛΕΑΓΡΟΣ?>

τό τοι κράτιστον, †κἂν γυνὴ κράτιστον ἦ, †
τοῦτ' ἔστ<ιν> ἀρετή· τὸ δ' ὄνομ' τοῦ διαφέρει. † (F. 526).

<Meleager?>

The best thing, †even if a woman is the best thing, †
Is excellence; the name †does not make a difference. †

It is difficult to make much sense of this fragment, but I do think it is important because it mentions ἀρετή—excellence. This suggests that excellence is among the themes of the play. The sections between the daggers (†) are corrupt, and so while this fragment may be talking about excellence and women, that is not certain.

<ΑΤΑΛΑΝΤΗ>

εἰ δ' εἰς γάμους ἔλθοιμι—ὄ μὴ τύχοι ποτέ—
τῶν ἐν δόμοισιν ἡμερευουσῶν ἀεὶ
βελτίον' ἂν τέκοιμι σώμασιν τέκνα·
ἐκ γὰρ πατρὸς καὶ μητρὸς ὅστις ἐκπονεῖ
σκληρὰς διαίτας οἱ γόνοι βελτίονες. (F. 525).

<Atalanta>

If I were to come into marriage—may it never happen—I would bear children with better bodies than those always spending their days in the house; For better children come from a father and mother who labour at harsh ways of life.

Here Atalanta expresses her desire to avoid marriage. In several versions of the Calydonian boar hunt story, Atalanta's attitude to marriage or to Meleager's desire for her is not expressed, and in Ovid's version she seems pleased with Meleager's attention (see below). It is interesting then to see that in Euripides' narrative she does want to remain unmarried. It makes her character more similar to that of the Boeotian Atalanta who races men in order to remain unmarried. However, it seems likely that she is not simply the same character transplanted into this story, as she is called Arcadian in fragment 530. Nevertheless, the fact that she clearly does not want to marry does give Euripides' Atalanta more thematic similarity to the runner Atalanta. Euripides could be blending the traditions to create a more complex Atalanta.

Not only does Atalanta express her desire not to marry, but she also offers an interesting justification for her way of life. She says that if she were to marry, she would have stronger children than women who remain indoors. This seems like a strange way to justify spending time outdoors, because her argument here is based on something that she does not want to happen. However, this is only a fragment, and so perhaps she had further arguments that are now lost. Moreover, if this is somehow an answer to Althaea's argument, talking about children could still be an effective way to defend herself. Althaea uses weaving as the example of women's sphere of knowledge, but bearing children was also an important role for women. So it seems that Atalanta is saying that she would be able to fulfill that childbearing role better than women who remain indoors. Ultimately then, the fact that she spends time hunting outside, the opposite of what women were expected to do, could make her perform other feminine roles better than women who do what they should. In the play Atalanta challenges traditional gender roles by pointing out

the contradictions inherent in the expectation that women should work inside but also bear strong children.

When Euripides mentions Atalanta in a catalogue of hunters, her identity is tied to her negative relationship with the goddess Aphrodite:

<ΑΓΓΕΛΟΣ>

Κύπριδος δὲ μίσημ', Ἀρκὰς Ἀταλάντη, κύνας
καὶ τόξ' ἔχουσα· (F. 530.4-5).

<Messenger>

And Cypris' object of hate, Arcadian Atalanta,
Who has dogs and a bow;

This is part of a fragment of nine lines which describes some of the hunters. This establishes Aphrodite's enmity towards Atalanta. In other versions of the tale Aphrodite is not mentioned, and it is not always clear what Atalanta's feelings are towards sex or marriage. However, in fragment 525 Atalanta says that she does not want to marry, and from line 4 of fragment 530 it is clear that Aphrodite bears resentment towards her. So from both of these fragments, we can see Atalanta's negative relationship with the goddess of love. This is a similarity with the racer Atalanta, and even if they are thought of as two separate characters, it is clear that this aspect of Atalanta's personality is consistent between the race story and Euripides' version of her in the hunt story.

The other goddess with whom Atalanta is thematically connected is Artemis. It is regrettable that the play is not better preserved, because Artemis is not mentioned in the extant fragments and it is difficult to know to what extent she is present in the tragedy. Thus it is not possible to know exactly what Atalanta's relationship with Artemis was in Euripides' *Meleager*. Artemis plays an important role in the Calydonian boar hunt story because she is the offended deity who sends the boar to ravage the countryside.

In the race story, Atalanta's desire to avoid marriage, whether or not it is framed explicitly as rejecting Aphrodite, leads to the death of many suitors who do not win their race against her. In the hunt story, Atalanta's presence and Meleager's desire for her bring intrafamilial strife and murder. It seems then that on some level, Atalanta and her choices bring death in both stories. Or, more precisely, men's desire for Atalanta, combined with her rejection of them and traditional femininity, brings death. However, there seems to be some difference in the reasons behind this connection between

Atalanta's character and men's deaths. In the different versions of the race story, the fact that she does not want to marry is consistent and necessary for the plot. It could be interpreted as a story about girls' anxieties surrounding marriage or men's anxieties about women refusing marriage. In the hunt story, however, her desires are irrelevant to the major plot points. Exploring her desires and motives can make the story more dramatic by introducing further irresolvable conflicts and contradictions. This fits well with the genre of tragedy.

Ultimately though, the myth of the Calydonian boar hunt is not a story about Atalanta's desires or women's anxieties. In most tellings the central theme is intrafamilial conflict regarding distribution of honour. This element of the story is consistent throughout the different versions, even the early versions of the story that do not include Atalanta. There is variation in the way it comes about, but it is always there. Scholars believe that Euripides invented or popularized Meleager's desire for Atalanta (Collard and Cropp 2008, 614). It seems this idea stuck in most, if not all, the versions of the story after Euripides. Atalanta's rejection of Aphrodite heightens the hopelessness of Meleager's situation, because he kills his uncles for a woman who is practically untouchable. Thus, while Meleager's conflict with his family is at the core of the *Meleager*, Atalanta's desire to remain unmarried adds depth to his tragedy. Her characterization as someone who rejects Aphrodite also creates a stronger thematic connection between the story of Atalanta's race and Euripides' version of the hunt.

3.3 Mythographers

Three mythographers give an account of the Calydonian boar hunt: Diodorus Siculus, Hyginus, and Apollodorus. The accounts are similar in plot, although there are differences in detail. Since these details lead to different interpretations, I will examine each version separately, using the questions introduced at the start of the chapter. How is Atalanta characterized? Why does Meleager give her the prize, and why do his uncles take it away? What can this tell us about the gender issues at play in the story, and are there further details that are relevant to these issues? Since the mythographers are only writing summaries, rather than full literary treatments, of the myths, they do not develop themes with the same level of detail that appears to be present in the Euripidean

fragments. However, it is still clear that Atalanta's gender propels much of the conflict in these mythographers' accounts.

The earliest extant non-fragmented literary account of the Calydonian boar hunt that includes Atalanta seems to be by Diodorus Siculus (first century BCE):

4.34.2: Οἶνεὺς γάρ, γενομένης εὐκαρπίας αὐτῷ τοῦ σίτου, τοῖς μὲν ἄλλοις θεοῖς ἐτέλεσε θυσίας, μόνῃ δὲ τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ὀλιγόρησεν· δι' ἣν αἰτίαν ἢ θεὸς αὐτῷ μηνίσασα τὸν διαβεβημένον Καλυδώνιον ὕν ἀνῆκεν, ὑπερφυῆ τὸ μέγεθος. οὗτος δὲ τὴν σύνεγγυς χώραν καταφθείρων τὰς κτήσεις ἐλυμαίνετο· διόπερ Μελέαγρος ὁ Οἶνεως, τὴν μὲν ἡλικίαν μάλιστα ἀκμάζων, ῥώμῃ δὲ καὶ ἀνδρεία διαφέρων, παρέλαβε πολλοὺς τῶν ἀρίστων ἐπὶ τὴν τούτου κυνηγίαν. πρῶτου δὲ Μελεάγρου τὸ θηρίον ἀκοντίσαντος, ὁμολογούμενον αὐτῷ τὸ πρωτεῖον συνεχωρήθη· τοῦτο δ' ἦν ἡ δορὰ τοῦ ζώου. μετεχούσης δὲ τῆς κυνηγίας Ἀταλάντης τῆς Σχοινέως, ἐρασθεὶς αὐτῆς ὁ Μελέαγρος παρεχώρησε τῆς δορᾶς καὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἀριστείαν ἐπαίνου. ἐπὶ δὲ τοῖς πραχθεῖσιν οἱ Θεστίου παῖδες συγκυνηγοῦτες ἠγανάκτησαν, ὅτι ξένην γυναῖκα προετίμησεν αὐτῶν, παραπέμψας τὴν οἰκειότητα. διόπερ ἀκυροῦντες τοῦ Μελεάγρου τὴν δωρεὰν ἐνήδρευσαν Ἀταλάντην, καὶ κατὰ τὴν εἰς Ἀρκαδίαν ἐπάνοδον ἐπιθέμενοι τὴν δορὰν ἀφείλοντο. Μελέαγρος δὲ διὰ τε τὸν πρὸς τὴν Ἀταλάντην ἔρωτα καὶ διὰ τὴν ἀτιμίαν παροξυνθεὶς, ἐβοήθησε τῇ Ἀταλάντη. καὶ τὸ μὲν πρῶτον παρεκάλει τοὺς ἠρπακότας ἀποδοῦναι τῇ γυναικὶ τὸ δοθὲν ἀριστεῖον· ὡς δ' οὐ προσεῖχον, ἀπέκτεινεν αὐτούς, ὄντας τῆς Ἀλθαίας ἀδελφούς. (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.34.2-5).

For Oeneus, when his crops ripened, performed sacrifices to the other gods, but he neglected only Artemis. For which reason the goddess, being angry against him, sent the proclaimed Calydonian boar, of monstrous size. This [boar], destroying the nearby land, damaged the property; wherefore Meleager, son of Oeneus, being at the height of greatest prime of life, and excelling in strength and manliness, undertook with many of the best men upon the hunt of this [boar]. Since Meleager first struck the beast with a javelin, it was generally agreed to grant the first prize to him; this was the skin of the animal. Atalanta, daughter of Schoeneus, participated in the hunt; Meleager lusting after her handed over the hide and the praise for excellence. But the sons of Thestius, having joined the hunt were angry at these proceedings, that he honoured an outsider woman before themselves, dismissing his family relationships. Therefore, denying the validity of the gift of Meleager, they ambushed Atalanta and, having set upon the return to Arcadia, they took away the skin. But Meleager, provoked because of the dishonour and his love for Atalanta, came to the aid of Atalanta. And first he demanded those who had seized to return to the woman the given prize for excellence; but because they did not heed him, he killed them, although they were the brothers of Althaea. (Translation by author.)

In later versions Atalanta is usually the first to draw blood, but Diodorus gives Meleager that honour. He says that Meleager is the first to strike, but he does not say anything about what the other hunters contribute. None of the other hunters are named, although listing the hunters becomes a popular endeavour later. This makes it seem like the emphasis is on his individual prowess, rather than the collective effort. However, the skin is awarded by collective agreement. Even once the prize has been given to Meleager, it does not then simply become an object for him to do with as he pleases, but the aura of praise follows the object. In giving away the skin it seems that he is also giving away the praise of excellence which was awarded to him by the collective. Diodorus does not say that Atalanta (or any of the other hunters, for that matter) contributed to killing the boar, so there is certainly no implication that she deserves this praise. Instead, Meleager gives it (skin and praise) to her because he loves her. Her presence is a disruption to the common agreement that the prize should go to the one who merits it, and the one who merits it does so because everyone agrees that he does. It seems that Meleager's uncles are more justified (than they are in later versions) in their anger about Meleager giving Atalanta the skin, because she did not merit it. Meleager's desire for her led him to hand over the prize that was awarded to him by collective agreement.

Atalanta's characterization is minimal here. She is the daughter of Schoeneus, and the only action that she takes in the story is participating in the hunt (μετεχούσης, 4.34.4—from μετέχω, to share in, partake of—the verb involves taking part in a collective action and does not distinguish her from any other hunter in the group). Diodorus does not give her motivations for joining the hunt nor her response to Meleager's affection, the gift, or even the theft of the gift. Diodorus does not say that she calls for Meleager's help or tries to defend herself. Instead, it is Meleager who is provoked and takes it upon himself to help her. Diodorus does not portray her in a very active or capable light, although he seems to be the only author who shows her taking part in the action of the search for the golden fleece (4.48.5). That is not necessarily more positive than in the hunt though, because she does not accomplish much but rather is wounded in a fight (see chapter 4 below). Diodorus does not mention anything about her being good at hunting or beautiful or anything—she seems to be mainly a plot device. For the anger of Meleager's uncles, Atalanta's important characteristics are that she is a

stranger and a woman (ξένην γυναῖκα, 4.34.4). This sets up an implied contrast between women and men. The fact that Diodorus uses the word for woman, rather than simply a feminine adjective which would still communicate the fact that they are talking about a woman, emphasizes her gender. The fact that she is a woman contributes to the inappropriateness of Meleager giving the prize to her. These words also set up an explicit contrast between an outsider (ξένην) and family (οἰκειότητα, 4.34.4). Therefore, Atalanta's gender is not the only reason they are angry. These contrasts come up again in later versions of the story. It is clear that the uncles think Atalanta does not deserve the prize because of her status as woman and outsider, and that they should have it instead. The reason for their anger seems to be based on these things rather than her lack of (explicit) contribution, for two reasons: one, that it is not mentioned as a reason, and two, that they are also not said to have contributed to the hunt.

In Hyginus' account, Meleager gives the skin to Atalanta on account of her *virtutem* (*Fab* 174.5), which could be courage or excellence but also has a connotation of manliness, which fits with Atalanta's general blurring of gender boundaries.

Althaea Thestii filia ex Oeneo peperit Meleagrum. Ibi in regia dicitur tizio ardens apparuisse. 2. Huc Parcae uenerunt et Meleagro fata cecinerunt, eum tandiu uicturum quamdiu is tizio esset incolumis. 3. Hunc Althaea in arca clausum diligenter seruauit. 4. Interim ira Dianae, quia Oeneus sacra annua ei non fecerat, aprum mira magnitudine qui agrum Calydonium uastaret misit. 5. Quem Meleager cum delectis iuuenibus Graeciae interfecit, pellemque eius ob virtutem Atalante uirgini donauit, quam [Ideus] Plexippus [Lynceus] <...> Althaeae fratres eripere uoluerunt. 6. Illa cum Meleagri fidem implorasset, ille interuenit et amorem cognationi anteposuit, auunculosque suos occidit. Id Althaea mater audiuit filium suum tantum facinus esse ausum, memorque Parcarum praecepti titionem ex arca prolatum in ignem coniecit. Ita dum fratrum poenas uult exequi, filium interfecit. 7. At sorores eius praeter Gorgen et Deianiram flendo deorum uoluntate in aues sunt transfiguratae, quae Meleagrides uocantur; at coniunx eius Alcyone moerens in luctu decessit (*Fab.* 174).

Althaea, daughter of Thestius, bore Meleager from Oeneus. Then a burning firebrand is said to have appeared in the palace. 2. The Parcae came to this place and foretold his fate. He would live as long as the firebrand is unharmed. 3. Althaea diligently preserved it sealed in a chest. 4. Meanwhile the anger of Diana, because Oeneus had not made the annual sacrifice to her, sent a boar of astonishing size to ravage the Calydonian land. 5. [The boar] which Meleager, with the select youths of Greece, killed, and whose pelt he gave to the virgin Atalanta on account of her courage (*virtus*, excellence/virility), which [Ideus,] Plexippus [and Lynceus] <...> the brothers of Althaea wanted to snatch away. 6.

Because she had implored for Meleager's help, he intervened and put love before his kindred, and he killed his uncles. His mother Althaea heard that her own son had dared such great wickedness and, remembering the command of the Parcae, threw the firebrand brought forth from the chest into the fire. Thus while she wished to enforce the penalty for her brothers, she killed her son. 7. But by the will of the gods, his sisters, except Gorge and Deianeira, because of their weeping were transfigured into birds, which are called Meleagrides (guineafowl); but his grieving wife Alcyone died in sorrow.

There is little detail about the hunt here, and it is not clear that Atalanta made a great contribution. The focus is still on Meleager, who is the singular subject of the verb *interfecit* (killed), though he is accompanied in his action by the chosen youths of Greece. Even if Atalanta does not explicitly contribute to killing the boar, she is still characterized as having excellence (at least, in the eyes of Meleager). This gives her a fuller characterization than in Diodorus' account. She also responds to the sons of Thestius wanting to take her prize: she begs for Meleager's help (174.6). This suggests a few things. She has a positive attitude towards the boar's skin since she wants to keep it. This could be because it is a testament to her excellence, or because she does like Meleager and it came from him, or perhaps both of these reasons. It is not specified. She is either unwilling or incapable of defending herself and her prize—so she may be capable of hunting, but not necessarily fighting. Alternatively, perhaps she thinks it is most appropriate for Meleager to defend her possession of the prize because he is the one who bestowed it.

Meleager's love for Atalanta is still a factor here, and her attitude towards his love is not clear. Hyginus does not say that she desires virginity, although she is the daughter of Schoeneus in Hyginus' catalogue of hunters (*Fab.* 173) and in his race story (*Fab.* 185). This would suggest that he intends her to be the exact same virgin character. Perhaps the fact that she accepts the prize and asks for Meleager's help in keeping it suggests that she is at least somewhat receptive to his advances. However, the boar's pelt is not explicitly given to her because of Meleager's love, but because of her excellence. It is only when Meleager defends her that his feelings for her are mentioned: he puts love before kinship when he kills his uncles. While Diodorus makes a contrast between female outsider and (male) family, Hyginus contrasts romantic love and family. The family aspect is consistent, but in Diodorus' account it is contrasted with Atalanta's gender,

whereas Hyginus contrasts it with Meleager's feelings. Atalanta's status does not seem to be as strongly emphasized in Hyginus. Also, the contrast is made at different points in the narrative: Diodorus gives it as a reason for the uncles' anger—it is their perception of Meleager's priorities when he gives the boar's skin away—but Hyginus gives it as an explanation of Meleager's priorities when he kills his uncles. The reason for which his uncles want to take away the prize from Atalanta is not specified, though there is a lacuna at that section, so perhaps Hyginus did write the reason and it is no longer extant.

In Apollodorus' telling, the strife on account of Atalanta's gender and participation starts early in the story, before the hunt even begins:

ἐγέννησε δὲ Ἀλθαία παῖδα ἐξ Οἰνέως Μελέαγρον, ὃν ἐξ Ἄρεος γεγεννησθαι φασί. τούτου δ' ὄντος ἡμερῶν ἑπτὰ παραγενομένης τὰς μοίρας φασὶν εἰπεῖν, <ὅτι> τότε τελευτήσῃ Μελέαγρος, ὅταν ὁ καιόμενος ἐπὶ τῆς ἐσχάρας δαλὸς κατακαῖῃ. τοῦτο ἀκούσασα τὸν δαλὸν ἀνείλετο Ἀλθαία καὶ κατέθετο εἰς λάρνακα. Μελέαγρος δὲ ἀνὴρ ἄτρωτος καὶ γενναῖος γενόμενος τόνδε τὸν τρόπον ἐτελεύτησεν. ἐτησίων καρπῶν ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ γενομένων τὰς ἀπαρχὰς Οἰνεὺς θεοῖς πᾶσι θύων μόνης Ἀρτέμιδος ἐξελάθετο. ἡ δὲ μηνίσασα κάπρον ἐφῆκεν ἔξοχον μεγέθει τε καὶ ῥώμῃ, ὃς τὴν τε γῆν ἄσπορον ἐτίθει καὶ τὰ βοσκήματα καὶ τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας διέφθειρεν. ἐπὶ τοῦτον τὸν κάπρον τοὺς ἀρίστους ἐκ τῆς Ἑλλάδος πάντας συνεκάλεσε, καὶ τῷ κτείναντι τὸν θῆρα τὴν δορὰν δώσειν ἀριστεῖον ἐπηγγείλατο. [...] συνελθόντας δὲ αὐτοὺς Οἰνεὺς ἐπὶ ἑννέα ἡμέρας ἐξένισε · τῇ δεκάτῃ δὲ Κηφέως καὶ Ἀγκαίου καὶ τινῶν ἄλλων ἀπαξιούντων μετὰ γυναικὸς ἐπὶ τὴν θῆραν ἐξιέναι, Μελέαγρος ἔχων γυναῖκα Κλεοπάτραν τὴν Ἰδα καὶ Μαρπήσης θυγατέρα, βουλόμενος δὲ καὶ ἐξ Ἀταλάντης τεκνοποιήσασθαι, συνηνάγκασεν αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τὴν θῆραν μετὰ ταύτης ἐξιέναι. περιστάντων δὲ αὐτῶν τὸν κάπρον, Ὑλεὺς μὲν καὶ Ἀγκαῖος ὑπὸ τοῦ θηρὸς διεφθάρησαν, Εὐρυτίωνα δὲ Πηλεὺς ἄκων κατηκόντισε. τὸν δὲ κάπρον πρώτη μὲν Ἀταλάντη εἰς τὰ νῶτα ἐτόξευσε, δεύτερος δὲ Ἀμφιάραος εἰς τὸν ὀφθαλμόν · Μελέαγρος δὲ αὐτὸν εἰς τὸν κενεῶνα πλήξας ἀπέκτεινε, καὶ λαβὼν τὸ δέρας ἔδωκεν Ἀταλάντῃ. οἱ δὲ Θεστίου παῖδες, ἀδοξοῦντες εἰ παρόντων ἀνδρῶν γυνὴ τὰ ἀριστεία λήψεται, τὸ δέρας αὐτῆς ἀφείλοντο, κατὰ γένος αὐτοῖς προσήκειν λέγοντες, εἰ Μελέαγρος λαμβάνειν μὴ προαιροῖτο. 1.8.3: ὀργισθεὶς δὲ Μελέαγρος τοὺς μὲν Θεστίου παῖδας ἀπέκτεινε, τὸ δὲ δέρας ἔδωκε τῇ Ἀταλάντῃ (*Bibl.* 1.8.2-3).

Althaea bore a son from Oeneus, Meleager, whom they say to be begotten from Ares. When he was seven days old they say the attending fates spoke, that Meleager would die at the time when the firebrand burning upon the hearth should be completely burnt. Hearing this Althaea picked up the firebrand and placed it in a chest. Although Meleager became an invulnerable and noble man, he died in this way. When the annual fruits were produced in the land, Oeneus

sacrificing the first fruits to all the gods utterly forgot only Artemis. She, being angry, sent a boar eminent in size and strength, who made the ground barren and destroyed the cattle and those who happened upon it. He convened all the best men in Greece against this boar, and he proclaimed that he would give the hide as prize of valour to the one who would kill the beast. [Then there is a long list of hunters, which I am not including.] For nine days Oeneus entertained those who had come together; but when on the tenth Cepheus and Ancaeus and some others deemed it unworthy to go out upon the hunt with a woman, Meleager, although he had Cleopatra, the daughter of Ida and Marpessa, as wife, also wishing to make a child from Atalanta, pressed them to go out upon the hunt with her. When they surrounded the boar, Hyleus and Ancaeus were killed by the beast, and Peleus shot down Eurytion involuntarily. But Atalanta first shot the boar on the back with an arrow, and Amphiaraus next on its eye; but Meleager striking in its flank killed it, and taking the skin he gave it to Atalanta. But the sons of Thestius, thinking it dishonourable that a woman should take the prize if there were men present, took the skin away from her, saying it belonged to them by inheritance (*genos*), if Meleager should choose not to take it. (1.8.3): But Meleager being angry killed the sons of Thestius and gave the skin to Atalanta. (Translation by author).

Here, some men do not want to go on the hunt with a woman, but Meleager compels them to go nonetheless. Meleager's desire for Atalanta is specifically that he wants a child by her (presumably because she is strong, although the reason is not actually specified). Apollodorus emphasizes the fact that Meleager is already married, which brings the problematic aspects of his love for Atalanta to the forefront. It is because of his desire for Atalanta that he compels the others to hunt with her. It is not because of her excellence or the fact that he thinks she will be an important contributor to the hunt. However, she does contribute, since she is the first to hit the boar. Killing the boar is more clearly a collective effort than it was in the versions of Diodorus or Hyginus: three people strike the boar, and there are named casualties. Meleager's heroism is only part of the action.

While Meleager's desire for Atalanta is the reason he wants her to participate in the hunt, Apollodorus does not mention it when Meleager gives her the boar's hide. Since she is the first to hit the boar, it seems more justifiable that Meleager should award her the prize (although Oeneus promised the boar's skin to the person who kills the boar, not the first person to strike). The sons of Thestius take the hide from her because she is a woman, not because she did not contribute. In fact, Apollodorus does not say that they made contact with the boar at all, but that does not stop them from feeling entitled to the

prize. They still feel justified in taking the skin because it is dishonourable for it to be in the hands of a woman and because of their family connection to the man who killed the boar and originally won the prize. As the uncles see it, there seems to be a complex system governing who can appropriately possess the prize: first, the hero who kills the boar, next, someone he chooses to give it to, but only if that person is a man; if that condition is not met, the hero's choice is invalid and the prize defaults to his kin. That seems to describe the complex relationship between merit, gender, choice, and inheritance when it comes to prize distribution.

Ultimately, of the three mythographers' accounts, Apollodorus' Atalanta appears the most capable, because she is the first hunter to hit the boar. In Diodorus' version, the only action she does is participate in the hunt, and there is no hint that she is a distinguished hunter nor any suggestion as to her feelings or motivations. Hyginus' Atalanta does not distinguish herself as a capable hunter either, but she does exercise a small amount of agency when she asks Meleager to defend her possession of the skin. She is also described as having *virtutem* (Hyg. *Fab.* 174.5), but the word is used by Meleager himself, who is certainly biased toward her because of his desire. Apollodorus does not describe her as excellent, but the fact that she contributes meaningfully to the boar hunt suggests that she is a competent hunter in his version.

Gender conflict is a theme in each of these versions, although it is not developed as thoroughly as it appears to be in Euripides' *Meleager*. In Apollodorus, Atalanta's presence as a woman among male heroes creates conflict even before the start of the hunt. Atalanta's gender is the explicit reason for Meleager's uncles' anger at her receiving the prize in Apollodorus, and this is heavily implied in Diodorus as well. This is less certain in Hyginus because the uncles' reason for anger is missing. However, Atalanta is described as having *virtutem*. Since this is a characteristic generally associated with men, this could still suggest that Hyginus is hinting at Atalanta's subversion of traditional gendered behaviour. Once Atalanta becomes part of the myth, gender conflict becomes an important theme. This is clear because this theme is present not only in fully developed treatments of the myth such as Euripides' or Ovid's, but even in the mythographers' summaries of the story.

3.4 Ovid

Ovid's account of the Calydonian boar hunt in the *Metamorphoses* (8.260-444) is the most detailed by far and spans 184 lines (not including Meleager's death). Since it is so long, I will give a summary and then examine key sections. Oeneus slights Diana by sacrificing the first fruits to the other gods but ignoring Diana. She is angry and sends a boar to ravage the countryside. Ovid gives a vividly detailed description of the boar and the destruction it causes. This is followed by a highly allusive list of hunters. The last of them is Atalanta, who is the only one given several lines of description. Meleager sees Atalanta and immediately desires her, although an unspecified god forbids it. Then Ovid describes the forest where the hunters meet with the boar. Several men try to strike it without success, some of them perish, and Nestor ascends a tree to escape the boar. Atalanta is the first to draw blood from the boar, and Meleager praises her. This causes the other hunters to be embarrassed. Ancaeus irreverently boasts about his own weapons, prepares to strike the boar with his double ax, and is struck in the groin by the boar. Others fail to hit the boar, and then Meleager hits and kills the boar. He claims the boar's hide and offers it to Atalanta. She is happy with the gift and with Meleager, but the other hunters are angry and jealous. Meleager's uncles take the boar's skin from her, and Meleager kills them.

The catalogues of hunters in Hyginus (*Fab.* 173) and Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 1.8.2) are both fairly straightforward, giving the name and patronymic of each hero, but Ovid's is much more allusive. Some heroes are directly named, but others are named only by their relations or place of origin. For example, Laertes is "Penelope's father-in law" (*Penelopaeque socer*, 315), Mopsus the seer is "the shrewd son of Ampyx" (*Ampycidesque sagax*, 316), and Atalanta is "the Tegean [i.e. Arcadian] glory of the Lycaean pasture" (*nemorisque decus Tegeaea Lycaei*, 317).

Even before the mention of Atalanta, there are some other interesting gender dynamics in this list. Caeneus is mentioned as someone who is "now not a woman" (*et iam non femina Caeneus*, 8.305). Ovid tells the story in a later book of how Caenis is raped by Neptune and asks to be a man (named Caeneus) so that she could not be raped again (12.189-209). Since Ovid hints at Caeneus' backstory, he seems to invite us to see this experience of trauma and transformation in conjunction with the story of the hunt. In

the list of hunters there is also mention of the future betrayal of Amphiaraus by his wife: “[Amphiaraus,] the son of Oecleus, still safe from his wife” (*adhuc a coniuge tutus / Oeclides*, 8.316-17). This ties in with the story of the seven attackers of Thebes, to which Atalanta is also connected through her son Parthenopaeus, who fights along with Amphiaraus. Thus, near the start of the hunt, we have a hint of a man who is sent to Hades because of his wife, which may foreshadow Meleager’s death on account of a woman (not his wife, but one whom he would like to marry) that happens at the end of the hunt. Atalanta is the very last of the list and has the longest description. Both of these factors serve to emphasize her importance. Horsfall says that she is “the climax of the Catalogue” and also points out that there is a literary precedent in Camilla, in the catalogue of Italian leaders in *Aeneid* 7.803-17 (Horsfall 1979, 322). Ending the list with Atalanta also offers a smooth transition from the catalogue to Meleager’s lovestruck feelings.

Atalanta has an androgynous face, and Meleager desires her as soon as he sees her.

...nemorisque decus Tegeaea Lycaei:
 rasilis huic summam mordebat fibula vestem,
 crinis erat simplex, nodum conlectus in unum;
 ex umero pendens resonabat eburnea laevo
 telorum custos, arcum quoque laeva tenebat;
 talis erat cultu, facies, quam dicere vere
 virgineam in puero, puerilem in virgine possis.
 hanc pariter vidit, pariter Calydonius heros
 optavit, renuente deo, flammisque latentes
 hausit et 'o felix, siquem dignabitur' inquit
 'ista virum!' nec plura sinit tempusque pudorque
 dicere: maius opus magni certaminis urget (*Met.* 8.317-28).⁵

And the Tegean glory of the Lycaean pasture, [Atalanta,]
 A smooth brooch was pricking the top of her garment,
 Her hair was simple,⁶ gathered in one knot;
 Hanging from her left shoulder an ivory quiver was resounding,
 And her left hand was holding her bow;
 Such was she in dress, her face, which you would be able to call truly
 A girlish face on a boy or a boyish face on a girl.
 At the same time that he saw her, the Calydonian hero [Meleager]

⁵ I am using Hollis’ edition of the text (1970).

⁶ This likely refers to “simplex munditiis” from Horace’s *Odes* 1.5.

Desired, although the god disapproved, and he drank up the hidden flames,
And said, "Oh happy, the man whom she deems worthy!"
But neither time nor decency allows him to say more:
The greater task of great battle urges him.

Ovid focuses first on her dress, which seems fairly simple. Anderson notes that it is close to the description of the huntress Callisto's dress at 2.412 (1972, 363). Hollis describes Atalanta's hair as a "Diana hair-style" (1970, 76). Both of these observations suggest to me that Atalanta is described in a typical huntress fashion, which invites us to see her as similar to, rather than distinguished from, other huntresses (including the goddess of the hunt). Atalanta is unique among mythical huntresses in her participation in the heroic hunt with men, but her appearance is still in keeping with other female hunters. Segal points out that "such attention to hairstyle in the poem is usually the mark of erotic rather than epic coloring" (1999, 313).⁷ Ovid moves then to her weapons, which seems appropriate, especially since later on, when Ancaeus boasts, he specifically compares manly and womanly weapons. Horsfall says that "Ancaeus is not alone in regarding [the bow] as not a real man's weapon" (1979, 328). Her face is androgynous, and the description really seems to play with this idea of her having some sort of blend of boyish and girlish appearance. This fits with the ambiguity of her character as a woman who excels in an activity mainly done by men. It seems that it is precisely her appearance that makes her so attractive to Meleager, since his desire comes at the same time that he sees her. This suggests a couple things. First, it seems that Meleager and Atalanta had never met before. This makes his actions seem more impetuous when he kills his uncles for her honour, as they did not have a relationship before. Secondly, it suggests that it is not her excellence in hunting that makes her attractive, but simply her appearance.

Horsfall comments on Meleager's reaction to Atalanta that "the instant passion (324-5), the envy of a future husband (326-7) and the *pudor* (327) which inhibits speech are all, observe the commentators, conventional in descriptions of the situation" (1979, 323). He does not specify what "the situation" is, but it seems likely that he is referring to other situations of instant infatuation rather than other versions of the boar hunt story.

⁷ There may be an exception to this in Virgil's *Aeneid*, as Venus disguises herself as a huntress and her hair is described as flowing in the wind (1.319). However, Venus is so intrinsically connected to eroticism that the difference between epic and erotic may not be very distinct in this case.

Other extant descriptions of Meleager meeting Atalanta are not as detailed. As Segal points out, when Meleager mentions Atalanta's future husband he "reverses the usual primacy of male choice in such matters" (1999, 314). This seems to give Atalanta more potential agency, as perhaps befits a woman who can join men in hunting a dangerous boar.

By the time that Atalanta shoots the boar, several men have tried and failed to hit it. Meleager is pleased with her shot, but the other hunters are embarrassed.

dum levat hunc Peleus, celerem Tegeaea sagittam
imposuit nervo sinuatoque expulit arcu:
fixa sub aure feri summum destrinxit harundo
corpus, et exiguo rubefecit sanguine saetas;
nec tamen illa sui successu laetior ictus
quam Meleagros erat: primus vidisse putatur
et primus sociis visum ostendisse cruorem
et 'meritum' dixisse 'feres virtutis honorem.'
erubere viri seque exhortantur et addunt
cum clamore animos iaciuntque sine ordine tela;
turba nocet iactis, et, quos petit, impedit ictus (*Met.* 8.380-90).

While Peleus lifted him (Telamon), the Tegaeian woman placed her quick arrow
On the cord and expelled it from the bent bow:
Fixed under the ear the arrow shaft grazed the back of the beast,
And reddened the bristles with a bit of blood.
Nor was she happier with the success of her own shot
Than was Meleager; he is considered to have seen it first
And first to have shown the sight of blood to his comrades,
And to have said, "You will bear the deserved honour of excellence."
The men blushed and encouraged themselves and augmented
Spirits with shouting and threw their weapons without order;
The crowding impedes the thrown weapons and hinders the shots which it seeks.

Atalanta is the first hunter to hit the boar, though she only wounds it lightly. Anderson says: "with *destrinxit*, *summum*, and *exiguo*, Ovid makes it clear how slight the wound is; thus the beast is still quite as dangerous as before and Meleager, when he does spear it, deserves full credit" (1972, 367). Horsfall comments that "the hunters' reactions are deliberately disproportionate to Atalanta's limited achievement" (1979, 327). However, even if the wound is slight, by the fact that she hits it at all she still performs better in the hunt than all of the male heroes up to this point. There is purposeful ambiguity in the

incongruity of Atalanta's efficiency, the rather insignificant effect of her shot, and Meleager's enthusiastic praise.

Presumably Meleager is so pleased with her success because of his infatuation with her. If the wound is so insignificant that it does not slow down the boar, Atalanta has not made the task of killing it any easier. Meleager says that she "will bear the deserved honour of excellence" (8.387). These words seem rather ambiguous. In comparison with the other heroes until this point, she does seem deserving. She is the only one to hit the boar, and the others are comically incompetent. However, this may also be ironic. These words are spoken by the man who lusts after Atalanta. He is biased towards her and has a personal reason to heap praise and gifts upon her. Moreover, the word he uses is *virtutis*, which can have several meanings. It can mean excellence, but also manliness. Anderson says that "this short speech inserts the key ironic term of the whole episode: *virtutis*. The girl is to be honored for ability befitting a man: *vir-tus*" (1972, 368). Horsfall comments that "Anderson rightly insists upon the irony of *vir-tus* in Atalanta; it is her 'manliness' that demands reward and the men themselves have failed" (1979, 327). The appearance of *vir* in the following line continues the emphasis on manhood. This contrast between the expected virility of the men, their incompetence, and Atalanta's success continues in the next lines.

Meleager's praise of Atalanta's success causes the men to blush in shame and continue their attempts to get at the boar. Horsfall points out that "to heighten the paradox, the men now react in a conventionally feminine way, by blushing; *erubere viri* is an evident oxymoron." (1979, 327). The word *erubere* also picks up on *rubefecit* (on the boar's wound, 8.383). This underscores the injury the men feel and, perhaps, their perception that Atalanta has done them violence. However, their excitement causes them to throw their spears without any order and so gets in the way of success. It seems that they do not control their violence, as if they are trying too much to show off that they have *virtus* but it has the effect of showing off no *virtus* whatsoever. Segal says that "not only does this scene of comic ineffectiveness contrast with the swift, single-minded efficiency of Atalanta; it also establishes her as both the cause and the visible symbol of their loss of *virtus*. She confuses masculinity in every sense" (1999, 315). However, even before Atalanta's success, the heroes are incompetent, and so it seems that she is not quite

the *cause* of their loss of *virtus*. Rather, because none of them had hit the boar, they collectively created an absurdly low standard. They were not embarrassed by this until Atalanta hit the boar and Meleager praised her. So it seems that Atalanta did not cause their loss of *virtus* but rather caused them to *notice* their loss in comparison with a woman.

Once the boar has been killed, Meleager follows through on his promise that Atalanta will bear the honour. However, the others, and especially his uncles, object:

ipse pede imposito caput exitiabile pressit
atque ita 'sume mei spolium, Nonacria, iuris,'
dixit 'et in partem veniat mea gloria tecum!'
protinus exuvias, rigidis horrentia saetis
terga dat et magnis insignia dentibus ora.
illi laetitiae est cum munere muneris auctor;
invidere alii, totoque erat agmine murmur.
e quibus ingenti tendentes bracchia voce
'pone age nec titulos intercipe, femina, nostros,'
Thestiadae clamant, 'nec te fiducia formae
decipiat, ne sit longe tibi captus amore
auctor!' et huic adimunt munus, ius muneris illi (*Met.* 8.425-36).

He himself pressed the deadly head with his foot placed on
And thus said, "Take the hide, Nonacrian [Atalanta], mine by right,
And may my glory be shared with you!"
He immediately gives the skin bristling with stiff hairs
And the head distinguished by great tusks.
The giver of the gift was, along with the gift, a joy to her;
The others were envious, and there was grumbling through the whole crowd,
From which extending their arms with a huge voice
"Come, put down and do not rob our titles, woman,"
The sons of Thestius shout, "Lest reliance of your beauty misleads you,
Lest the giver, seized by love for you, be far away!"
And they snatch away the gift from her, from him the right of giving.

Meleager gives the hide to Atalanta and seems to suggest that they will share the glory together. This shows a separation between the hide itself and the honour which it symbolizes. This has not been the case throughout all the other versions. In Diodorus it seems that the hide and the praise of excellence are inseparable, as Meleager gives both to her (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.34.4). In Hyginus the distinction is not clear, as Meleager gives the hide to her because of her excellence (*Fab.* 174.5). The distinction is also not clear in Apollodorus' telling, in which Meleager gives her the hide but this is not explicitly tied to

honour (*Bibl.* 1.8.2). Hollis observes that Ovid's Meleager "is more chivalrous than in Accius (438-9)" (1970, 87). Accius' Latin play *Meleager* was likely modelled on Euripides', though many playwrights dramatized the story (Warmington 1936, 470). It only survives in fragments. The relevant fragment is this: *Remanet gloria / apud me; exuvias dignavi Atalantae dare*: "The glory remains / with me; I considered it worthy to give the hide to Atalanta" (438-39). So it seems that Accius and Ovid both conceived of the prize as separate from the honour it symbolizes, but Ovid's Meleager is more generous in sharing glory. Segal comments that "replacing epic seriousness with this humorous incongruity between the gift and its function, Ovid simultaneously converts this hunting trophy, traditional symbol of masculine honor and prowess, into a token of love and a means of seduction" (1999, 312-13). This is a helpful distinction, but I suggest that even though the trophy now has a seductive function, it has not been "converted" but rather *still* retains its original function as a symbol of masculine honour. The reader has already been alerted to the fact that Atalanta does not fit neatly into a feminine category, so to speak. Simply by virtue of the fact that she is participating in the hunt with other heroes, she is an unusual woman. Moreover, her appearance is androgynous (8.322-23), Meleager praises her and says that she will bear the honour for manliness/excellence (8.387), and she is more competent than the male heroes aside from Meleager. Because of these things, it is plausible that part of the function of the trophy is to symbolize her masculine excellence. The symbolism of the boar's hide and head is flexible, depending on the context in which it is taken or given. When the uncles claim the trophy, they want it as a symbol of honour, not, of course, because of its function as an erotic gift. In the context of Meleager giving Atalanta the boar's hide, it functions as a symbol of honour and of love. If it were only the gift that pleased Atalanta, this would be more ambiguous, as it would be unclear whether she was pleased with it because of its symbolism of her honour or because of its function as a love-token, or both. However, since Ovid specifies that both the gift *and* the giver are pleasing to Atalanta (8.431), this suggests that it is pleasing for both reasons.

The sons of Thestius urge Atalanta to give up the spoils. Their threat is imprecise, for they do not specify what would happen if she relies on her beauty or if Meleager is not around to protect her. However they do not wait until Meleager is far away before

acting, as they seize the hide right away. This makes their threat rather confusing. If they threaten that Meleager may not be near, or that relying on her beauty will deceive her, why would they steal the hide immediately in Meleager's presence? It is difficult to make sense of this. Segal sees humour in the situation, "as the mighty warriors of the epic tradition warn a pretty girl devoted to hunting and other masculine pursuits not to rely too much on her good looks" (1999, 313). This is a good point, but it does not explain the inconsistency between their threat and action.

Regarding the uncles' words, Anderson says that "in other versions the uncles claim the prize by default; that is, if Meleager rejects it, it devolves upon them as closest relatives. Ovid, however, may be implying here that the uncles claim it merely as males in opposition to this woman" (1972, 370). He does not specify which "other versions," but is presumably referring to those of Apollodorus and Diodorus; I have written earlier in this chapter about the apparent logic regarding prize distribution in each version. Ovid did not independently invent the male-female opposition with regards to the trophy. While in Apollodorus the sons of Thestius claim that the prize belongs to them through family ties, they also think that it is dishonourable for a woman to have the prize if there are men present (*Bibl.* 1.8.2). In Diodorus, the uncles are angry that an outsider woman was honoured before family (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.34.4). In both these versions, Atalanta's gender as well as the uncles' family relationship to Meleager are both relevant for their claim to the prize. Ovid has kept this theme of Atalanta's femininity as a reason for being denied the prize, but removed the family connection. This intensifies the theme of gender conflict within his telling.

3.5 Conclusion

The earliest Calydonian boar hunt narratives do not include Atalanta, and scholars disagree about when she became involved in the story. Her presence and Meleager's desire for her provide a compelling reason for the disagreement with and killing of Meleager's uncles. This gives the story more thematic complexity. To a story about collective heroism, distribution of honour, and intrafamilial strife and murder are added themes of erotic love and gender conflict. Whether or not Atalanta is characterized as excellent at hunting appears to make no difference to the plot. In all of the versions I have

analyzed in this chapter, the sons of Thestius take away the trophy either because she is a woman or outside the family or for both of these reasons. Her contribution, or lack thereof, is not a factor in their anger. However, Meleager mentions her excellence in Hyginus' and Ovid's versions, and possibly Euripides'. In Apollodorus' and Ovid's versions she is the first hunter to hit the boar, which is also some proof of her skill. Her characterization as a virgin huntress is not a salient part of these stories. It is only in Euripides' *Meleager* that she clearly wants to remain a virgin. In Apollodorus' section about Atalanta herself (*Bibl.* 3.9.2), which I will look at in more detail in a later chapter, he mentions her virginity and her participation in the hunt. So presumably her virginity should be understood as part of her character in Apollodorus' hunt story (1.8.2), although since it does not seem to affect that story, he does not mention it there. In Ovid's telling she appears to reciprocate Meleager's interest (8.430), which suggests that her character's feelings about virginity are the opposite of what one would expect. Related to the idea of Atalanta's virginity is her connection with Artemis, the virgin goddess of the hunt and the offended deity who sends the boar to Calydon. In these versions of the hunt story Atalanta's relationship with Artemis is surprisingly not mentioned. Perhaps this is because, like Atalanta's skills or motives, her relation to the goddess does not affect the storyline and is therefore ignored. The genres of these stories, and the state in which they have survived to the present, makes a difference here as well. The aims of the mythographers are focused on plot information than drawing out themes, as they wrote summaries for collections of mythical stories, rather than literary treatments. The *Meleager* tragedies of Euripides and Accius only survive in fragments but the Euripidean fragments suggest the exploration of gender and spheres of excellence. In his epic Ovid subverts expectations about Atalanta but still plays with the same themes that we see hints of in Euripides' *Meleager*.

Chapter 4: Atalanta's Other Episodes

While the race for Atalanta's hand and the Calydonian boar hunt are the most well-known stories about Atalanta, there are several other episodes attached to her by various authors. Aelian and Apollodorus describe Atalanta's childhood, in which she is exposed, suckled by a bear, and raised by hunters. This is an apt beginning for Atalanta's character, as it sets her apart as wild from the start. After the race for her hand, she and her husband are turned into lions. This story is told by many authors who typically relate it to their inappropriate sexual behaviour. Thus, it is a fitting end for a character who starts her life in the wild and attempts to abstain from normal sexuality. However, this does not seem to be the only end to Atalanta's story, as some authors describe her as still alive while her son is attacking Thebes. Even in these versions in which she is not transformed into a wild animal, she is still mentioned in conjunction with her heroic exploits, and in Statius' *Thebaid* she seems to live in the wild. An episode in which centaurs try to rape Atalanta is used by some authors to characterize her as a capable defender of her virginity. However, other authors have Milanion wounded while defending her, and so the story becomes part of an example of how a man can win a woman by persistently helping and suffering for her. She is occasionally shown in association with the search for the golden fleece. This is an undertaking by many heroes, and thus parallels the Calydonian boar hunt. Her participation in a second heroic exploit underscores her excellence. These wildly differing interpretations of the same story demonstrate how versatile myths about Atalanta were. All of these stories, though they are sometimes contradictory, continue themes which are present in the boar hunt and race stories, namely gender dynamics, sexuality, and excellence.

4.1 Childhood

Atalanta's childhood is only told by later authors, Aelian and Apollodorus. Druilhe says that the description of Atalanta's childhood is unique, since there is no textual or iconographical evidence for the childhood of any other heroine (Druilhe 2016, 39). So the narrative of her childhood in and of itself underscores how extraordinary she is, although it is important to remember that this episode of her life only survives in later texts and not to indiscriminately read it into earlier texts. Not only is the existence of her

childhood important, but the descriptions of her childhood are also quite interesting. In both accounts she is exposed by her father who wants a male child. So even from the very start of her life her experience is defined by her gender. She is suckled by a she-bear, a wild animal connected with Artemis, who hunts for food, like Atalanta will later learn to do from the hunters who raise her. There is a logical connection between Atalanta's infancy and her life in the wilderness, and there is also a sense of circularity if she starts her life as a pseudo-bear cub and ends it as another wild animal, the lioness. In both Apollodorus' and Aelian's accounts, Atalanta is raised by hunters, which serves to explain why she has the exceptional hunting skill that allows her to participate in the boar hunt. Since the versions are similar, I will treat them together.

Apollodorus' description is quite short, but includes her exposure, the bear who feeds her, and the hunters who raise her. Once she is grown she wants to stay virgin, and so it is early in Apollodorus' story that Atalanta acquires this important characteristic:

ταύτης ὁ πατήρ ἀρρένων παίδων ἐπιθυμῶν ἐξέθηκεν αὐτήν, ἄρκτος δὲ φοιτῶσα πολλάκις θηλὴν ἐδίδου, μέχρις οὗ εὐρόντες κυνηγοὶ παρ' ἑαυτοῖς ἀνέτρεφον. τελεία δὲ Ἀταλάντη γενομένη παρθένον ἑαυτὴν ἐφύλαττε, καὶ θηρεύουσα ἐν ἐρημίᾳ καθωπλισμένη διετέλει. (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.9.2)

Her father, desiring male children, exposed her, but a bear roaming about often gave her the nipple, until hunters, finding her, brought her up among themselves. Once Atalanta was fully grown she guarded herself as virgin, and hunting in the wilderness fully armed she was passing her time. (Translation by author).

Aelian's story is similar but far more detailed:

Λόγος οὗτος Ἀρκαδικὸς ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἰασίωνος Ἀταλάντης. ταύτην ὁ πατήρ γενομένην ἐξέθηκεν · ἔλεγε γὰρ οὐ θυγατέρων ἀλλ' ἀρρένων δεῖσθαι. ὁ δὲ ἐκθεῖναι λαβῶν οὐκ ἀπέκτεινεν, ἐλθὼν δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ Παρθένιον ὄρος ἔθηκε πηγῆς πλησίον · καὶ ἦν ἐνταῦθα ὑπαντρος πέτρα καὶ ἐπέκειτο συνηρεφῆς δρυμῶν. καὶ τοῦ μὲν Βρέφους κατεψήφιστο θάνατος, οὐ μὴν ὑπὸ τῆς τύχης προϋδόθη · ὀλίγῳ γὰρ ὕστερον ὑπὸ κυνηγετῶν ἀφηρημένη τὰ ἑαυτῆς Βρέφη ἄρκτος ἦκε, σφριγόντων αὐτῇ τῶν μαζῶν καὶ Βαρυνομένων ὑπὸ τοῦ γάλακτος. εἶτα κατὰ τινα θεῖαν πομπὴν ἦσθεισα τῷ βρέφει ἐθήλασεν αὐτό, καὶ ἅμα τὸ θηρίον ἐκουφίσθη τῆς ὀδύνης καὶ ὠρεξε τροφὴν τῷ βρέφει. καὶ οὖν καὶ αὐθις ἐπαντλοῦσα τοῦ γάλακτος καὶ ἐποχετεύουσα ἐπεὶ τῶν ἑαυτῆς μήτηρ οὐκ ἔμεινε, τῆς μηδὲν οἱ προσηκούσης τροφὸς ἐγίνετο. ταύτην οἱ κυνηγέται παρεφύλαττον οἱ καὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐπιβουλεύσαντες τῷ θηρίῳ εἰς τὰ ἔγγονα αὐτῆς, καὶ αὐτὰ ἕκαστα τῶν δρωμένων κατασκεψάμενοι, ἀπελθούσης κατὰ συνήθειαν κατὰ τε ἄγραν καὶ

νομήν τῆς ἄρκτου, τὴν Ἀταλάντην ὑφείλοντο, καλουμένην τοῦτο οὐδέπω · αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἔθεντο αὐτῇ τὸ ὄνομα. καὶ ἐτρέφετο ἐν αὐτοῖς [ἐν] ὄρειῳ τῇ τροφῇ, κατὰ μικρὸν δὲ αὐτῇ τὰ τοῦ σώματος μετὰ τῆς ἡλικίας ἀνέτρεχε · καὶ ἦρα παρθενίας καὶ τὰς τῶν ἀνδρῶν ὁμιλίας ἔφευγε καὶ ἐρημίαν ἐπόθει, καταλαβοῦσα τῶν ὄρων τῶν Ἀρκαδικῶν τὸ ὑψηλότατον, ἔνθα ἦν καὶ αὐλῶν κατάρρυστος καὶ μεγάλαι δρυς, ἔτι δὲ καὶ πεῦκαι καὶ βαθεῖα ἢ ἐκ τούτων σκιά. (Ael. *Var. Hist.* 13.1).

This is an Arcadian story about Atalanta, daughter of Iasion. When she was born her father exposed her; for he said that he did not need daughters but sons. But taking her to expose her, he did not kill her, but coming to mount Parthenion he placed her near a stream. And here there was a cavernous rock laid upon a densely shaded thicket. Death had been pronounced against the newborn, but she was not betrayed by fortune; for a little bit later a bear came whose cubs were taken from her by hunters, her breasts swollen and weighed down by milk. Then in accordance with some divine mission she took pleasure in the baby and suckled it herself, and at the same time the animal relieved her pain and gave nourishment to the newborn. And so again overflowing with milk and carrying water though she did not remain a mother of her own, she became a nurse to one not at all related to her. The hunters were watching her closely, the ones who from the beginning plotted against the animal's children, and spying each of her doings, when the bear went away according to her habit for hunting and feeding, they took Atalanta away, who was not yet called this; for they themselves gave her the name. And she was raised among them in a mountainous way of life. Little by little her body grew with age. And she loved her virginity and fled the company of men and longed for solitude, taking the highest of the Arcadian mountains, where there was a hollow with streams and large oaks, and besides pines and deep shadows from them. (Translation by author).

The versions of Apollodorus and Aelian agree in the basic details. There does not seem to be any other extant ancient author who talks about Atalanta's childhood. Both of these authors are relatively late. (Pseudo-)Apollodorus' *Bibliotheca* is tentatively dated to the first century CE (Higbie 2007, 245). Aelian's *Varia Historia* was written in the early third century CE (Wilson 1997, 1). Anagnostou-Laoutides suggests that "Apollodorus tried to combine the traditional Hesiodic material with a Hellenistic innovation regarding the exposure of Atalanta by her father when she was an infant" (2005, 15). She suggests that the motif was initially attached to the myth by Hellenistic writers, but does not specify who that might be (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005, 16). Atalanta's childhood narrative differentiates her from other mythical women. Lyons says that "heroines, as women, are so consistently associated with the maternal function that the mythic material never shows them as infants in need of sustenance. The one exception, the suckling of

Atalanta by a bear, suggests that she is unnatural and serves to show how much she is like a male hero" (1997, 65). So the narrative of her childhood in and of itself underscores how extraordinary she is.

While the presence of Atalanta's childhood makes her exceptional among heroines and more akin to male heroes, her exposure is directly tied to her gender. The unknown author who added this infant exposure motif to Atalanta's story chose a thematically fitting beginning to Atalanta's myth. Atalanta's gender plays an important role in the Calydonian boar hunt story, because her womanhood is a major part of the reason that there is strife about the distribution of the spoils of the hunt. Her gender is also important in the race story, in which she is both competitor and prize in a courtship contest. If one were to extrapolate and imagine the childhood of such a character, exposure in the wilderness because of her gender seems a fitting thing to imagine. The rest of her childhood also fits with her adult character. She is suckled by a she-bear, which has interesting connotations. The bear is a wild animal connected with Artemis, and this points to Atalanta's relationship with Artemis (Anagnostou-Laoutides 2005, 16, 18). Bears are also connected with the story of Callisto, another follower of Artemis. Callisto's story has several parallels with Atalanta's. They are both huntresses who intend to keep their virginity but do not succeed in doing so. Callisto is transformed into a bear because of an illicit sexual encounter (see Forbes Irving 1992, 63-74 and 202-5 for more details). There was also a ritual for Artemis at Brauron in which girls would act like bears for an initiation rite (see Dowden 1989, 25-32, for information about the site and rites, and Konstantinou 2018, 133-37, who discusses the uncertainties of the connection of the Brauronian rituals to the myths of Callisto and Iphigenia). Aside from the connections with Artemis, the bear also evokes the idea of wilderness. Forbes Irving argues that Atalanta's exposure and the bear feeding her means that her wildness goes back further than Callisto's (1992, 74). Atalanta begins her life as a pseudo-bear cub and ends it as another wild animal, the lioness.

4.2 Lion Metamorphosis

Several authors say that after Atalanta's marriage to the winner of the courtship race, she and her husband were turned into lions for having sexual intercourse in a holy

place. However, the earliest indirect source for Atalanta’s transformation deviates from this reason and instead suggests that she had seen something that was forbidden: “Hesiod [says] that, due to Zeus’ [vengeance], Schoeneus’ [daughter Atalanta], who [contrary to sacred law] had seen [what it is not lawful to see], was turned into a lioness” (Translation by Most, 2018; τοῦ Διὸς [τῆι τίσ]ει καὶ Ἀτα[λάντη]ν Σχοινέως [φησὶν] Ἡσίοδος λέ[αιναν π]οιῆσαι πα[ρ’] ἱερὸν νό]μον ἰδοῦ[σαν ἃ οὐ θ]έμις {τ} ἐσ[τὶν ἰδεῖν.] Fr. 51 Most/72 MW, from Philodemus’ *De Pietate*). Most notes that while the verb (ποιῆσαι) is active, the subject is not stated, and so he translated it as passive in order to keep that ambiguity (2018, 125). He suggests that the subject could have been Zeus, or possibly Aphrodite and/or Cybele or some other deity (2018, 125). I am inclined to think that it was Zeus because it is his vengeance; in other versions it is Aphrodite’s vengeance, but another god performs the metamorphosis. Moreover, Cybele does not feature greatly in myths until the Hellenistic period and so her role in the story is likely a later addition (Forbes Irving 1992, 202). Zeus also features in Hesiod’s race story, as Schoeneus calls upon him while giving the terms of the race and suggests that Zeus affects the outcome (see chapter 2). Since Zeus is part of Hesiod’s race story, it is plausible that he is also the deity who transforms Atalanta due to his own vengeance.

The reason behind Atalanta’s metamorphosis is different in Hesiod’s version than in later ones. In later versions, the reason is often twofold: Aphrodite’s anger is the first driving force, followed by the anger of another deity. The second deity is angry towards Atalanta and her husband for having intercourse in a sacred space. As Philodemus reports, though, Hesiod says that she was transformed because of the vengeance (though this word is partially reconstructed) of Zeus. There do not appear to be two deities desiring vengeance upon Atalanta. Moreover the offence for which Zeus wants vengeance is the act of seeing something forbidden, rather than defiling a sacred space with sexual acts. Thus, this offence does not seem to be as closely linked with the themes of the race story, concerned as it is with Atalanta’s inappropriate sexuality. However, whether the offence is due to forbidden sex or witnessing, both of these are clear violations of sacred law. Thus even though the character of Atalanta changes throughout the centuries, there was an enduring idea that her story ends with a beastly transformation

due to a grave offence. The nature of the offence changes and seems to come into line with the themes of her story later than in Hesiod.

Palaephatus gives a rationalized explanation of Atalanta's metamorphosis, and so, he does not dwell on the supposed reasons for this transformation. However, he does still connect the story with sexual intercourse in a dangerous (though not forbidden) place:

[Περὶ Ἀταλάντης καὶ Μειλανίωνος.]
Λέγεται περὶ Ἀταλάντης καὶ Μειλανίωνος ὡς ὁ μὲν ἐγένετο λέων, ἡ δὲ λέαινα. ἦν δὲ τὸ ἀληθὲς τοιοῦτον. Ἀταλάντη καὶ Μειλανίων ἐκνηξέτουν. ἀναπεῖθει δὲ τὴν κόρην ὁ Μειλανίων μιγῆναι αὐτῷ. εἰσέρχονται δὲ εἰς τι σπήλαιον μιχθησόμενοι. ἦν δὲ ἐν τῷ ἄντρῳ εὐνὴ λέοντος καὶ λεαίνης, οἱ δὲ, ἀκούσαντες φωνῆς, ἐξελθόντες ἐμπίπτουσι τοῖς περὶ Ἀταλάντην καὶ ἀναιροῦσιν αὐτούς. μετὰ δὲ χρόνον τοῦ λέοντος καὶ τῆς λεαίνης ἐξελθόντων, ἰδόντες τούτους οἱ συγκυνηγετοῦντες τῷ Μειλανίωνι, ἔδοξαν αὐτούς εἰς ταῦτα τὰ ζῶα μεταβληθῆναι. εἰσβάλλοντες οὖν εἰς τὴν πόλιν διεφήμιζον ὡς οἱ περὶ Ἀταλάντην [καὶ Μειλανίωνα] εἰς λέοντας μετεβλήθησαν. (Palaeph. *Peri ap.* 13).

The story about Atalanta and Melanion is that he turned into a lion, and she a lioness. But the truth is as follows. While Atalanta and Melanion were out hunting, Melanion convinced the girl to sleep with him: they went into a cave for their lovemaking. But the cave was the lair of a lion and lioness, who, hearing human voices, fell on Atalanta and Melanion and killed them. Later, when the lion and lioness emerged, Melanion's hunting companions saw them and imagined that Atalanta and Melanion had been transformed into the animals in front of them. They hastened back to town and spread the word that the two of them had been turned into lions. (Translation by Stern 1996).

If Palaephatus is trying to rationalize this episode, it surely must have been an established story by his time, probably the late fourth century BCE (Forbes-Irving 1992, 201). Some scholars say that this is the first source for this episode (Forbes-Irving 1992, 201; Stern 1996, 45), but Philodemus in his *De Pietate* says that Hesiod talks about her being transformed because she saw something (Hesiod fr. 72 MW/51 Most; see above). While we do not have Hesiod's words directly, it seems that the story of her metamorphosis dates at least from Hesiod's time.

Palaephatus does not mention the race or the Calydonian boar hunt, although in other versions, the metamorphosis follows the story of the race. He does not rationalize stories about the gods, therefore he does not give a divine agent in the summary of the metamorphosis (Stern 1996, 45). It appears that Palaephatus is conflating the main

Atalanta stories, since she is accompanied by Meleager in the Calydonian boar hunt, and either Hippomenes or Melanion becomes her husband in the race story. Here, however, Melanion is her hunting companion, and there is nothing to suggest that they are married. Atalanta is called τὴν κόρην, which suggests that she is still a young maiden. Her character here seems quite different from other versions of Atalanta, for Melanion simply persuades her to sleep with him, rather than wins her in the race. This suggests that she does not have a strong conviction to remain a virgin, which is so often part of her character. In this version, Melanion and Atalanta were killed because they entered the lair of a lion and lioness and these animals heard their voices. There is no moral judgement or vengeance behind the supposed transformation that Palaephatus says was just slaughter by animals. Even though Palaephatus does not seem to be interested in telling the whole story before refuting it, certain elements of the story are kept. The usual reason for their metamorphosis is sexual intercourse in a forbidden place. Palaephatus ignores the “forbidden” aspect but keeps the sexual intercourse part of the story, perhaps in order to explain why Atalanta and Melanion had separated themselves from their hunting companions.

Apollodorus gives a straightforward summary, in keeping with the level of detail in the rest of his description of Atalanta. The metamorphosis directly follows the description of the race in which Melanion wins Atalanta: “And it is said that once while hunting they entered the domain of Zeus, and having intercourse there they were transformed into lions.” (Translation by author; καί ποτε λέγεται θηρεύοντας αὐτοὺς εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὸ τέμενος Διός, κάκει συνουσιάζοντας εἰς λέοντας ἀλλαγῆναι, *Bibl.* 3.9.2). This is short but contains three important bits of information: 1) They were hunting, which suggests that even though Melanion married Atalanta she did not become tame and remain indoors, but instead kept doing the activity which is associated with mythical virgin huntresses rather than wives.⁸ 2) This happened because they committed an offence in Zeus’ sacred space. While Apollodorus does not explicitly state that Zeus was offended and turned them into lions, that is certainly the implication. Thus, similarly to the Hesiodic fragment above Zeus is implied to be the sole offended

⁸ Procris, wife of Cephalus, seems to be an exception, as she is one of Artemis’ hunting companions (*Call. Hymn. Art.* 209-10; *Ov. Met.* 7.694-755).

deity behind the transformation; Aphrodite does not feature here, nor is there any suggestion that she is angry. 3) The nature of the offence was sexual. Thus, the transgression is different than in the Hesiodic fragment and seems more closely related to the theme of deviant attitudes to sexuality seen in the race story. However, Apollodorus does not say that Aphrodite caused the couple's excessive lust. This puts more blame on the human lovers who behave inappropriately and like animals. They are treated together, rather than it simply being Melanion who is frenzied by lust (as Hippomenes is in Hyginus and in Ovid, which I discuss below). This suggests that they are equally to blame for the transgression, but removes Melanion/Hippomenes' offence of ungratefulness towards Aphrodite.

Hyginus and Ovid both include the detail that Venus' anger at Hippomenes' lack of thanks causes the couple's inappropriate behaviour, although it is another deity who transforms them. Hyginus writes:

Hanc cum in patriam duceret, oblitus beneficio Veneris se uicisse, grates ei non egit. Irata Venere in monte Parnasso cum sacrificaret Ioui Victori, cupiditate incensus cum ea in fano concubuit, quos Iupiter ob id factum in leonem et leam conuertit, quibus dii concubitum Veneris denegant. (Hyg. *Fab.* 185.5-6).

When he led her into his country, having forgotten that he had won by the favour of Venus, he did not give her thanks. Because Venus was angry, when he was sacrificing to Victor Jupiter, excited with lust he had intercourse with her in the sanctuary; because of this deed Jupiter turned them into a lion and lioness, to whom the gods deny the intercourse of love. (Translation by author)

Hippomenes forgets to thank Venus for her help, which is enough to cause her anger, but he also sacrifices to Jupiter as the god of victory. Offering a sacrifice to Jupiter might compound the insult to Venus, as it suggests that Hippomenes is pious but still neglectful of Venus. Moreover, Venus helped Hippomenes directly but there is no hint that Jupiter played a role in Hippomenes' victory. However, Hyginus does not say that Venus becomes more angry because Hippomenes sacrifices to Jupiter. It seems rather that this action allows Venus the opportunity to punish the couple. Hippomenes should know full well that he is in a sacred space since he is sacrificing to Jupiter; this makes his offence more reprehensible. Hippomenes is responsible for both of these offences—the one to Venus and the other to Jupiter. He is the one whom Venus helped and who neglected her. He is the one whom Venus excites with lust, and he is the only subject of the singular

verb *concubuit*. However, since Atalanta is a participant in the inappropriate sexual intercourse she is also transformed.

Hyginus gives curious information about the sexual behaviour of lions, since he says that lions and lionesses do not sleep together. Frazer notes that the mythographers' explanation for the transformation was that "lions do not mate with each other, but with leopards, so that after their transformation the lovers could never repeat the sin of which they had been guilty" (1967, 401). He suggests that they are referring to Pliny's *Natural History* (8.43) although Pliny only suggests that lions punish lionesses for mating with leopards (Frazer 1967, 401). However, Hyginus was writing earlier than Pliny, so the idea that lions mate with other feline species cannot have originated with Pliny. Regardless of the fact that in reality lions do mate with each other, the idea that they do not offers an interesting twist to Atalanta's myth. The reason for the courtship race was to prevent anyone from marrying Atalanta as she wanted to remain a virgin. She does not succeed in maintaining her virginity because Hippomenes tricks her with the golden apples and wins the race. However, after the transformation she can live out the rest of her life as a lioness without having sex with the man (now lion) who tricked her. She can also continue hunting as a lioness; Atalanta is the daughter of Schoeneus in Hyginus' race story (*Fab.* 185) as well as in his catalogue of hunters (*Fab.* 173) which suggests that he conceives of her as the same character in both stories. Thus, as a lioness she can hunt and avoid sex with Hippomenes, fulfilling two important traits of her human character.

Ovid does not suggest that lions and lionesses do not mate. Even though his version also includes the anger of Venus, his and Hyginus' endings diverge. Venus tells Adonis the story of Atalanta's race in order to explain why she (Venus) hates lions (*Met.* 10.551-4). She gives the race a long description (560-680; 120 lines) and does not mention the lion metamorphosis until the very end. Venus describes her own turn to anger once Hippomenes neglects her:

“ ‘Dignane, cui grates ageret, cui turis honorem
ferret, Adoni, fui? nec grates inmemor egit,
nec mihi tura dedit. subitam convertor in iram,
contemptuque dolens, ne sim spernenda futuris,
exemplo caveo meque ipsa exhortor in ambos. (10.681-5)

Was I deserving as one to whom he gives thanks, to whom he bears honour with incense,
Adonis? Forgetful, he neither gave thanks
nor gave incense to me. I am turned into sudden anger,
And suffering because of the scorn, lest I be spurned by future people,
I guard by example, and exhort myself against both. (Translation by author)

Venus' description of her feelings is much more detailed and personal than in Hyginus' version, which is simply a summary of the story. It seems that this is not merely a punishment but also a warning to others. Thus Venus justifies her actions by saying that she is guarding herself. Even though it is only Hippomenes who does not give thanks or incense to Venus, she says that she will make an example out of both him and Atalanta (*ambos*, 10.685). Thus it seems that it is not an accident or coincidence that Atalanta is punished as well, but rather it was Venus' intention.

Anagnostou-Laoutides suggests that "the fact that Ovid included Atalanta's story among the myths of lascivious women and presented her as responsible for ingratitude towards Aphrodite could be indicative of his innovative perception of the heroine" (2005, 42, n. 125). She is referring to the context in which this story is nestled, since the story of Atalanta's race and transformation is told by Venus, who is herself a character in the song of Orpheus. Orpheus announces his erotic themes thus:

Nunc opus est levio re lyra, pueros canamus
Dilectos superis, inconcessisque puellas
Ignibus attonitas meruisse libidine poenam (10.152-54).

Now the task is a lighter song, may I sing of boys
Beloved by gods, and girls struck
By forbidden fires who by passion have deserved punishment. (Translation by author).

Keeping these themes in mind adds another layer of meaning to Atalanta's story, and Anagnostou-Laoutides is right in giving importance to this wider context. However, I am not convinced that Ovid presents Atalanta as responsible for the ingratitude towards Venus. It is true that Ovid's Atalanta is presented in an innovative way, as he gives no indication that she intrinsically desires virginity and, in fact, she approaches an oracle to inquire about marriage (10.564; see chapter 2 for more detail). Thus she is not characterized as a girl with either an unnatural passion or abnormal aversion to passion.

When introducing Atalanta, Venus gives no sign of hostility towards her, even though Atalanta attempts to avoid marriage. It is only Hippomenes whom Venus helped, and he is the one who should have given her thanks and incense but neglected to do so. Moreover, when Venus prepares her punishment for the couple, it is only Hippomenes who is ignited by untimely passion. It seems that the distinction between Orpheus' two themes (boys loved by gods/girls punished for forbidden desire) is blurred in this story. Now we have a boy and a girl punished for the boy's forbidden desire.

Venus describes how she fills Hippomenes with this lust while he and his wife are traveling through a forest:

Templa, deum Matri quae quondam clarus Echion
fecerat ex voto, nemorosis abdita silvis,
transibant, et iter longum requiescere suasit.
illic concubitus intempesta cupido
occupat Hippomenen a numine concita nostro. (10.686-90).

They were passing by a temple for the mother of the gods, which once famous
Echion
Had made because of a vow, concealed by the shady forests,
And the long journey urged them to rest.
There an untimely desire of lying together
Filled Hippomenes, roused by my divine power. (Translation by author)

Thus even though Venus wants to make an example of both of them, she only uses her divine power directly on Hippomenes. This is the end of Venus' interference; the rest of the action is done by Hippomenes and Cybele. Hippomenes does not, however, sleep with Atalanta in a temple, but in a secluded spot nearby:

luminis exigui fuerat prope templa recessus
speluncae similis, nativo pumice tectus,
religione sacer prisca, quo multa sacerdos
lignea contulerat veterum simulacra deorum:
hunc init et vetito temerat sacraria probro. (691-95)

There had been a recess of meagre light near the temple,
Similar to a cave, covered with natural pumice,
Consecrated by ancient piety, where a priest had collected
Many wooden statues of old gods:
He enters it and defiles the shrines with a forbidden disgrace.

Since the cavellike area is dark, they do not notice the religious associations (Anderson 1972, 531). Furthermore, it seems possible that they thought that they had avoided sex in a sacred space by going into this recess instead of a temple. Thus, not only are they unaware of the offence they are committing, but they think that they have avoided it. The actions here are done by a singular subject (*init* and *temerat*) which presumably is Hippomenes, since he is the one filled with lust. Ovid does not simply say that the couple defiles a sacred space, but by giving so much detail about it and suggesting the antiquity of the worship there he makes the offence seem worse, even though the dimness suggests that they could not see the statues.

The statues avert their eyes, driving the point of the couple's impiety even further, and Cybele considers killing Hippomenes and Atalanta before deciding to transform them into lions:

sacra retors'erunt oculos, turritaque Mater
an Stygia sontes dubitavit mergeret unda;
poena levis visa est. ergo modo levia fulvae
colla iubae velant, digiti curvantur in ungues,
ex umeris armi fiunt, in pectora totum
pondus abit, summae cauda verruntur harenae.
iram vultus habet, pro verbis murmura reddunt,
pro thalamis celebrant silvas aliisque timendi
dente premunt domito Cybeleia frena leones. (*Met.* 10.696-704).

The statues averted their eyes, and the turret-crowned Mother
Considered whether she would submerge the criminals in the Stygian wave;
The punishment seemed light. Therefore tawny manes
Cover their smooth necks, their fingers are bent into claws,
Forequarters develop from their shoulders, into their chests
Their whole weight shifts, the surface of the sand is swept by a tail.
The face has anger, growls represent words,
They frequent the woods instead of the bedchamber, and since the tooth which
terrifies others
has been tamed, the Cybelean harnesses subdue lions. (Translation by author).

Not only do Atalanta and Hippomenes become lions, but they are made to pull Cybele's chariot. Forbes Irving aptly says that this "gives a final twist to the antitheses of freedom and servitude, marriage and the wilds, which are particularly emphasized in this story [...] She is now permanently wild, and yet paradoxically not free but yoked and tamed as if she were married" (1992, 76). He also suggests that "this perhaps reinforces the

sexlessness of the animals; Cybele's other mythical servant, Attis, and her historical servants, the Galloi, are also sexless (maddened lion and maddened Attis are brought together by Catullus in Poem 63)" (Forbes Irving 1992, 76).⁹ While this association with Cybele's other servants could suggest a lack of sexuality, this is complicated by line 703, which suggests that Atalanta and Hippomenes will still sleep together in the woods rather than the bedchamber or marriage bed (*pro thalamis celebrant silvas*). Thus they will continue the same behaviour that they did as humans, but in wild places instead. This is in direct opposition to Hyginus' conception of lions' sexual behaviour. The ambiguity between this assertion of the new lions' behaviour and their association with Attis and the Galloi is likely purposeful and complicates our understanding of Atalanta and Hippomenes' end.

4.3 Motherhood

The existence of Atalanta's son Parthenopaeus seems to belong to an alternate ending of the Atalanta myth. He is one of the seven attackers of Thebes allied with Polyneices. It is usually in the context of this story that this mother-son relationship is discussed.¹⁰ While most heroes are identified as the sons of their fathers, Parthenopaeus is frequently named the son of Atalanta (Diod. Sic. *Bibl.* 4.65.4; Eur. *Phoen.* 150), and it is often unclear who his father is.¹¹ Aeschylus does not name Atalanta directly but clearly refers to her, which suggests again that her story is well-known enough that she can be identified without her name (*Sept.* 532-3). While Druilhe says that Atalanta's heroic identity ends with her motherhood (2016, 20, 46, 100), I think her previous identity as huntress is still present in various ways even when she is shown or mentioned as a

⁹ Attis is a character who crosses gender boundaries in a more physical way than Atalanta does, and Catullus' poem describes Attis' self-castration and ensuing ecstasy and horror at the action. A more in-depth comparison of Attis and Atalanta is out of the scope of this project, but a curious reader could see Harrison 2004, 523-27 for a comparison of Attis and two women from tragedy (Agave and Medea).

¹⁰ There are also some versions of the story, however, in which Atalanta is not Parthenopaeus' mother (Gantz 1993, 336-37).

¹¹ According to Apollodorus, the father is Melanion or Ares (*Bibl.* 3.9.2), but according to Hyginus the father is Meleager (*Fab.* 99, 270). I have not found any other source that connects Atalanta with Ares, and so it seems that we have a hint of another variant of the Atalanta myth that does not survive.

mother. Parthenopaeus' identity as a hero seems to be tied with being the son of Atalanta; it is his heroic pedigree. In Euripides' account, Atalanta's heroic exploit, killing the boar with her arrows, is on Parthenopaeus' shield (*Phoen.* 1106-9). It may be that, by this time within the story's chronology, Atalanta is no longer performing heroic exploits, but her son is displaying her heroic past as he himself is partaking in heroic battle, and so there is still some hint of her heroic identity. In Statius' *Thebaid*, Parthenopaeus also has the Calydonian boar hunt on his shield (4.267-68), and he has inherited his mother's swiftness in racing (6.563-65). While Statius does not mention Atalanta's race against her suitors, an activity in which she excelled, he seems to be indirectly referencing it. It is also clear in the *Thebaid* that Atalanta has not been taken into the folds of a civilized household and marriage just because she is a mother, for she runs from the woods (not a city or house) when she hears that her son is going to fight (4.312-13), and she does not weave and still hunts (9.614-16).

4.4 Centaurs

In one minor story, two centaurs, Hylaus and Rhoecus, attempt to rape Atalanta. Some authors' tellings of this story show Atalanta's excellence in shooting and her commitment to virginity. Callimachus mentions it in his *Hymn to Artemis*, in which Atalanta is one of Artemis' companions. Apollodorus mentions the story swiftly, and Aelian gives a longer description which shows Atalanta in a very capable light. Propertius and Ovid, on the other hand, use the story of the centaurs' attempted rape in a completely different way. In their poems, Milanion protects Atalanta from Hylaus as part of his attempts to woo her. Thus, Atalanta stands as an example of an unyielding woman who can be persuaded to give in to a lover who helps her.

In Callimachus' *Hymn to Artemis*, Atalanta is one of several favourite companions of Artemis who are named and described. Callimachus says that Artemis taught Atalanta her skills in hunting with dogs and a bow. Thus by praising Atalanta's performance of those skills in the boar hunt and slaying of the centaurs, he is also indirectly praising Artemis, Atalanta's teacher:

ἤνησας δ' ἔτι πάγχυ ποδορρώρην Ἀταλάντην
 κούρην Ἰασίοιο συοκτόνον Ἀρκασίδαο,
 καὶ ἔκυνηλασίην τε καὶ εὐστοχίην ἐδίδαξας.

οὐ μιν ἐπὶ κλητοὶ Καλυδωνίου ἀγρευτῆρες
μέμφονται κάπροιο· τὰ γὰρ σημήϊα νίκης
Ἀρκαδίην εἰσηλθεν, ἔχει δ' ἔτι θηρὸς ὀδόντας·
οὐδὲ μὲν Ὑλαῖόν τε καὶ ἄφρονα Ῥοῖκον ἔολπα
οὐδέ περ ἐχθαίροντας ἐν Ἄϊδι μωμήσασθαι
τοξότιν· οὐ γὰρ σφιν λαγόνες συνεπιψεύσσονται,
τάων Μαιναλίη νᾶεν φόνω ἀκρώρεια. (Call. *Hymn. Art.* 215-24).

You utterly praised swift-footed Atalanta,
Boar-slaying daughter of Arkadian Iasios,
And you taught her hunting with dogs and shooting well with a bow.
The summoned hunters of the Calydonian boar
Are not dissatisfied with her; for the signs of victory
Came into Arcadia, which still have the beast's tusks;
And I do not expect that Hylaios and senseless Rhoikos,
Who hate her very much in Hades, criticize the archeress;
For their flanks will not join in lying,
With whose gore the Maenalian mountain ridge flowed. (Translation by author).

Callimachus does not directly tell the story, and so from reading this alone one would not know that Hylaios and Rhoikos were centaurs or that they tried to rape Atalanta.

However, it is clear that it was Atalanta's skill in archery, taught by Artemis, that allowed her to send these two to Hades. While this is a story of Atalanta defending her virginity, perhaps the attempted rape is glossed over in order to not offend the virgin Artemis.

Apollodorus quickly tells the story right after saying that Atalanta grew up to be a virgin living in arms in the woods: "The centaurs Rhoikos and Hylaios, attempting to force themselves on her, were slain by her, struck down by arrows" (Translation by author; βιάζεσθαι δὲ αὐτὴν ἐπιχειροῦντες Κένταυροι Ῥοϊκός τε καὶ Ὑλαῖος κατατοξευθέντες ὑπ' αὐτῆς ἀπέθανον, *Bibl.* 3.9.2). Apollodorus makes it clear that they are centaurs. They are not trying to marry Atalanta, and their attempted rape is a wild perversion of marriage. Centaurs are often a symbol of uncivilized and hyper-sexualized male behaviour (duBois 1979, 37-38). Thus, it is not surprising that the males who try to have intercourse with Atalanta without going through the ordeal of the race are centaurs, not men.

Aelian's telling is very detailed and emphasizes Atalanta's bravery in fending off the overbearing centaurs:

καὶ οἱ ποτέ οἱ τὴν ὄμορον οἰκοῦντες, μεσοῦσης τῆς νυκτός, ἐρασταὶ
θηρασεῖς καὶ κωμασταὶ βαρῦτατοι, ἐκώμασαν δύο τῶν Κενταύρων,

Ἕλαϊός τε καὶ Ῥοῖκος. ἦν δὲ ἄρα ὁ κῶμος αὐτῶν οὔτε ἀγλήτριδες οὔτε αὐτὰ δήπου τὰ τῶν μειρακίων τῶν κατὰ πόλιν, ἀλλὰ πεῦκαι μὲν ἦσαν, καὶ ταύτας ἐξάψαντες καὶ ἀναφλέξαντες ἐκ τῆς πρώτης τοῦ πυρὸς φαντασίας ἐξέπληξαν ἄν καὶ δῆμον, μήτι γοῦν μίαν παρθένον. κλάδους δὲ πιτύων νεοδρεπεῖς ἀποκλάσαντες, εἶτα τούτοις ἑαυτοῖς διαπλέξαντες εἰργάζοντο στεφάνους. συνεχῶς δὲ καὶ θαμινὰ ἐπικροτοῦντες ταῖς ὄπλαις διὰ τῶν ὀρῶν, συνεκκαίοντες καὶ τὰ δένδρα ἐπὶ τὴν παιίδα ἔσπευδον, κακοὶ μνηστῆρες, σὺν ὕβρει καὶ οἴστρω τὰ ἔδνα τῶν γάμων προεκτελοῦντες. τὴν δὲ οὐκ ἔλαθεν ἢ ἐπιβουλή· ἰδοῦσα δὲ ἐκ τοῦ ἄντρου τὸ πῦρ καὶ γνωρίσασα οἴτινές ποτε ἄρα ἦσαν οἱ κωμασταί, μηδὲν διατραπεῖσα μηδὲ ὑπὸ τῆς ὄψεως καταπτήξασα τὸ μὲν τόξον ἐκύκλωσεν, ἀφῆκε δὲ τὸ βέλος καὶ ἔτυχε τοῦ πρώτου μάλα εὐκαίρως. καὶ ὁ μὲν ἔκειτο, ἐπήει δὲ ὁ δεῦτερος οὐκέτι κωμαστικῶς ἀλλ' ἤδη πολεμικῶς, ἐκείνῳ μὲν ἐπαμῦναι θέλων, ἑαυτοῦ δὲ ἐμπλήσαι τὴν ὀργήν. ἀπῆντησε δὲ ἄρα καὶ τούτῳ τιμωρὸς ὁ τῆς κόρης οἰστός ὁ ἔτερος. καὶ ὑπὲρ μὲν τῆς Ἰασίωνος Ἀταλάντης τοσαῦτα.

One day her neighbours, audacious lovers and very tiresome revellers, burst in upon her noisily at midnight; they were two of the Centaurs, Hylaus and Rhoecus. Their noisy interruption was not done with flute players or in the style of young men from the city; there were pine torches, which they lit and made to burn fiercely; the first sight of fire would have terrified even the population of a city, let alone a solitary young woman. Breaking fresh branches off the pines they wove them together and made garlands for themselves. The incessant, continuous sound of hooves was heard in the mountains; they burned trees and made towards the young woman, evil suitors who in a violent and over-excited state brought gifts for the wedding in advance. But she saw through their plan. From the cave she caught sight of fire and realised who the revellers were; not flinching or cowed by what she saw she bent her bow, shot her weapon, and hit the first of them directly. He lay there, and the other advanced, no longer in the mood of a reveller but with hostile intent, wishing to defend his companion and vent his anger. But he too was punished, by the young woman's other arrow. (Translation by Wilson, 1997).

Aelian tells neither the boar hunt nor the race story, but in his description of Atalanta defending herself from the centaurs, we see similar themes to these major stories. Aelian has already said that Atalanta desires virginity (see above on her childhood). Here she guards herself and takes her desire for virginity in her own hands. Aelian puts great effort into describing how wild and frightening the centaurs are and says that they would have terrified a whole city. However, Atalanta is brave and collected in the face of this uncivilized violence. She does not need to shoot many times, but uses only two arrows to

dispatch the two would-be rapists. Similarly, Atalanta is focused and capable in the boar hunt, and she defends herself from human suitors in the race story until she is tricked.

Ovid and Propertius, on the other hand, do not use the centaur story to characterize Atalanta as a capable young woman. Propertius uses the story of Atalanta and Milanion as an example contrary to his own situation with Cynthia, as “[Atalanta’s] example shows that even the most chaste of girls can give in to love—except Cynthia” (Stahl 1985, 41).

Milanion nullos fugiendo, Tulle, labores
saevitiam durae contudit Iasidos.
nam modo Partheniis amens errabat in antris
< >
< et modo. >
ibat et hirsutas ille ferire feras.
ille etiam Hylaei percussus vulnere rami
saucius Arcadiis rupibus ingemuit.
ergo velocem potuit domuisse puellam:
tantum in amore preces et benefacta valent. (Prop. *El.* 1.1.9-16)

Tullus, Milanion, by fleeing no labours,
Demolished the savagery of the hard daughter of Iasos,
For at one time, senseless he was wandering in the Parthenian caverns
< >
< and at another time. >
And he was moving to strike shaggy wild beasts.
That man even, struck by the wound of Hylaeus’ branch,
wounded, groaned over the Arcadian cliffs.
Thus he was able to tame the swift girl:
So much do entreaties and favours prevail in love (Translation by author).

Here Milanion was able to subdue Atalanta by working hard and suffering. There seems to be great emphasis on Milanion’s suffering. He is wounded and does not suffer stoically but groans by the cliffs. While in Aelian’s telling Atalanta is efficient in killing the centaurs, Propertius’ Milanion is not characterized as efficient or particularly skilled as he is wounded by the centaur Hylaeus. The fact that he is wounded magnifies his suffering and so makes him an example of a man who can conquer a woman by suffering many things for her. Conversely though, the poem makes Atalanta an example of a hard woman who can be persuaded to love a man.

Ovid uses Atalanta similarly in his *Ars Amatoria* 2:

Quid fuit asperius Nonacrina Atalanta?
Succubuit meritis trux tamen illa viri.
Saepe suos casus nec mitia facta puellae
Flesse sub arboribus Milaniona ferunt;
Saepe tulit iusso fallacia retia collo,
Saepe fera torvos cuspide fixit apros.
Sensit et Hylaei contentum saucius arcum,
Sed tamen hoc arcu notior alter erat. (Ov. *Ars. Am.* 2.185-192).

What was harsher than Nonacrian Atalanta?
However that fierce woman succumbed to the merits of a man.
Often for his own misfortunes and the not-gentle deeds of the girl
They say that Milanion wept under the trees;
Often, being ordered, he carried deceitful nets with his neck,
Often he pierced savage boars with his wild spear.
And wounded, he felt the taut bow of Hylaeus,
But however there was another one more familiar than this bow. (Translation
by author).

Here Atalanta is again used as an example of a harsh woman who succumbs to a man because of his persistent hard work and suffering. While Propertius is lamenting in *Elegy* 1.1, Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* is a cheeky didactic poem teaching men how they can pursue women and keep them interested. Even though the tone of each poem is different, they include similar details in describing Atalanta and Milanion. In Propertius' poem Milanion is introduced first, as a man who conquered the hard daughter of Iasos. Ovid introduces Atalanta first, as a harsh woman who was conquered by a man. The same idea is in each, but Propertius emphasizes Milanion (and does not directly name Atalanta), whereas Ovid begins by emphasizing Atalanta, before then turning to Milanion's sufferings. In each poem Milanion is striking beasts for Atalanta and is wounded by Hylaeus. Neither poet mentions that Hylaeus is a centaur, and they describe his weapon differently. Propertius' Milanion is wounded by a club and Ovid's by a bow. Cairns suggests of Ovid's version that "the main purpose of the substitution is to introduce the off-colour joke of line 192" (2014, 195). This seems likely, although it seems overly severe to characterize the joke (presumably about Cupid's bow) as "off-colour." This joke seems rather to fit with the off-colour comic tone of the whole poem.

4.5 Quest for the Golden Fleece

While Atalanta is known for her role in the Calydonian boar hunt, she is also sometimes included in another collective heroic exploit: the search for the golden fleece. She is part of the catalogue of Argonauts in Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 1.9.16) and Diodorus Siculus (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.41.2). She is also mentioned in Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, but Jason refuses her participation, worried about strife on account of love (1.768-73). While she is not on the quest in Apollonius' version, it seems that he feels the need to explain or justify her absence from the expedition. Since his *Argonautica* is earlier than either Diodorus' or Apollodorus' account, this suggests that there was an earlier tradition that connected Atalanta with the Argonauts. It also seems that Diodorus and Apollodorus drew on different sources than Apollonius, since their accounts contradict his.

Apollodorus' catalogue of Argonauts includes Atalanta as the daughter of Schoeneus along with Meleager and Iphiclus, a son of Thestius (*Bibl.* 1.9.16). Since Meleager and his uncle are alive it is clear that this story happens earlier in the mythological chronology than the Calydonian boar hunt.¹² She does not appear again in Apollodorus' account of the quest for the golden fleece. She is also part of Diodorus' relatively short list of the most famous of the Argonauts, again as the daughter of Schoeneus (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.41.2). This list does not include Meleager, but he is mentioned as the one who kills Aeëtes, the king of Colchis (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.48.4). There is one strange inclusion: Diodorus' list does not include the sons of Thestius, but rather the sons of Thespius (4.41.2). At first I thought that this might be a mistake or simply an alternate spelling of Thestius, but it appears rather that Diodorus is referring to the fifty grandsons of Thespius, who are in fact the sons of Heracles, begotten on the fifty daughters of Thespius (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.29.3). Diodorus explains that these sons of Heracles took the same name from the daughters of Thespius (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.29.3), and in the action of battle Diodorus mentions them as "those who are called the Thespiadae" (τοὺς Θεσπιάδας προσαγορευομένους, *Bibl. Hist.* 4.48.5). This suggests that their name is not quite straightforward, which is true, since they are not the sons, but rather the grandsons of

¹² The fact that they take part in this expedition together could explain why Meleager wants to have a child with her (*Bibl.* 1.8.2). In his hunt story Apollodorus does not suggest that Meleager was seeing Atalanta for the first time, whereas Ovid uses the love-at-first-sight trope in his hunt story (*Met.* 8.324-6).

Thespius. Moreover their father, Heracles, is far more famous than their grandfather. Presumably they are called the Thespiadae to connect their group identity with the story of Heracles bedding their mothers and distinguish them as separate from any other sons of Heracles. This slight digression affirms the fact that Meleager's uncles, essential characters to the hunt story, are not part of Diodorus' list of Argonauts and, therefore, appear not to have had any interactions with Atalanta during this expedition.

Diodorus' account is the only one in which Atalanta is not only part of the catalogue, but part of the action— she is wounded in the fight with the Colchi after their king is slain (*Bibl. Hist.* 4.48.5). This appears to be the only depiction of her fighting. While the hunt narratives of Diodorus, Apollodorus, Hyginus, and Ovid all include Meleager's uncles' theft of the boar skin and the subsequent fight, Atalanta herself does not fight for her prize or honour in any of these versions (see chapter 3). However, there was a real-life connection between hunting and fighting; for example, hunting was part of military training in Sparta and Crete, and possibly Athens as well (Barringer 1996, 57). Moreover, some ancient authors mentioned the Amazons hunting, though they were better known for their fighting skills (Barringer 1996, 60). Atalanta, conversely, is better known for hunting, but here Diodorus shows her in a military context. In light of the connection between hunting and military skill, both in real life and in the context of mythical women, it is fitting that Diodorus includes Atalanta in the fighting on the quest for the golden fleece. It is even more fitting since it underscores the similarity of Atalanta and the Amazons; they are all devotees of Artemis and ambiguous women who behave like both women and men (Barringer 1996, 60-1). Moreover, Atalanta is often depicted as an Amazon on vases (Barringer 1996, 59). While Amazons are portrayed as fierce fighters, they are typically bested by male Greek heroes (Barringer 1996, 60). Here, however, even though Atalanta is wounded, Diodorus does not suggest that it is because she is a woman. Jason, Laertes, and the sons of Thespius are all wounded as well. Thus, Atalanta is not singled out because of her gender. In Apollonius' account though, she is treated differently than other heroes because she is a woman.

In Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, Atalanta wants to go on the quest, but Jason prevents it, because he fears that strife will happen on account of love:

δεξιτερῇ δ' ἔλεν ἔγχος ἐκηβόλον, ὃ ῥ' Ἀταλάντη
Μαινάλῳ ἔν ποτέ οἱ ξεινήμιον ἐγγυάλισεν,

πρόφρων ἀντομένη· περὶ γὰρ μενέαινεν ἔπεσθαι
τὴν ὁδόν· ἀλλὰ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἐκὼν ἀπερήτυε κούρην,
δεῖσεν δ' ἀργαλέας ἔριδας φιλότητος ἔκητι. (1.769-73).

And in his right hand Jason held a far-darting spear, which Atalanta gave him once as a gift of hospitality in Maenalus as she met him gladly; for she eagerly desired to follow on that quest; but he himself of his own accord prevented the maid, for he feared bitter strife on account of her love. (Translation by Seaton, 1967).

While Seaton translates “δεῖσεν δ' ἀργαλέας ἔριδας φιλότητος ἔκητι” as “for he feared bitter strife on account of *her* love” (emphasis mine), the Greek seems open to wider interpretation. It is ambiguous as to whether it refers to Atalanta’s love for someone, or love for Atalanta. However if, as seems likely, this alludes to the strife at the Calydonian boar hunt, the parallel idea would be that love for Atalanta causes strife. In the boar hunt, Atalanta’s feelings do not drive the story as significantly as Meleager’s feelings. There could be a similar idea here, where Jason may worry that love for Atalanta could cause disagreement. Alternatively, if this were to refer to Atalanta’s love for another character, this could suggest a parallel with Medea’s love for Jason. It seems more likely, however, that this is an allusion to the strife caused by Meleager’s love for Atalanta, since that would be more in line with the virginal temperament typical of Atalanta.

Howell and Howell note that “thus, according to Apollonius, Atalanta was rejected because of her femininity, and not on account of her lack of skills or bravery” (1989, 129). This adds to Atalanta’s characterization as a woman who excels in activities typically associated with men. Because of her skills and interests she earnestly wants (μενέαινεν) to join the expedition. She also has a guest-friendship with Jason, and the token of this friendship is the spear—a weapon which might point to their common interests. This underscores again that she is not an ordinary woman. However, it is her womanhood that makes her a potential object of desire and prevents her from being allowed on the quest. There is a parallel here with the hunt story. There, her gender is part of the reason for which the Thestidae deny her right to the spoils of the hunt (see chapter 3). In both cases, her femininity is cause for her to be denied something (an opportunity or a prize). However, it is because Meleager desires Atalanta that he defends her right to the boar’s head, whereas it is the possibility of her being an object of desire that causes

Jason to reject her participation on the quest. Thus even though in both stories she is denied things because she is a woman, her desirability leads to different outcomes for her.

Atalanta's association with the quest of the Argonauts furthers her characterization as a mythical woman who blurs gender boundaries by joining heroic expeditions. Apollonius builds up the thematic connections with the other heroic expedition she partakes in, the Calydonian boar hunt, even though in the *Argonautica* she does not participate in the quest. In the Calydonian boar hunt Meleager defends Atalanta's honour and her right to the prize, and thus it seems that the story ends happily for her.¹³ However, the bitter strife which Jason fears in the *Argonautica* does materialize at the end of the hunt story (Howell and Howell 1989, 131). Apollonius likely had this story in mind and could expect his readers to make this connection. Apollodorus and Diodorus, on the other hand, do not appear to use Atalanta's presence to explore gender dynamics. She is in both authors' catalogues of Argonauts, and Diodorus says that she is wounded along with other heroes. However, even if these authors do not emphasize the theme of gender dynamics, her participation in the expedition is itself another reason for which she is an exceptional mythical woman.

4.6 Conclusion

These various episodes extend the themes of gender dynamics, abnormal sexuality, and excellence which are also present in Atalanta's courtship race and the Calydonian boar hunt myth. Her childhood with the bear and her end as a lioness both serve to show how wild she is and different from other mythical women. Other women are, of course, described as wild or changed into various animals, but the fact that she is suckled by a bear as an infant makes her exceptional since other heroines are not shown as children. However, she is sometimes shown in a maternal role with the existence of her son Parthenopaeus. Even in this role, though, she is still attached to her heroic identity. The diverging interpretations of the attempted rape by the centaurs attest to the versatility of her myth, as she is both someone trying to protect her virginity but also an object of

¹³ It is difficult to tell what she thinks of the events of the story because most authors do not discuss her feelings. However, Ovid and Hyginus both suggest that she wants the prize (see chapter 3).

desire who eventually gives in to persuasion. Her occasional participation in the search for the golden fleece continues her role as a character who can be called upon for a heroic exploit and whose femininity can be problematic. However, different authors deal with this in various ways, as Apollonius portrays her as wishing to participate but denied because of her gender, while Apollodorus and Diodorus do not suggest that her femininity would be a reason for her to not be allowed to join. Thus Atalanta is a character who excels in heroic exploits, but opportunities for her to exercise her skills are occasionally denied or made complicated because she is a woman.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The many stories attached to Atalanta demonstrate the tension between feminine identity and excellence in a masculine sphere. Atalanta participates in activities which men typically excel at, such as hunting and running. While real Greek women (usually girls) did run races, they typically did so separate from men (Dillon 2000, 460). However, Atalanta runs and wins against men consistently. She contributes to heroic expeditions, as is the case in the Calydonian boar hunt and the quest for the golden fleece. She refuses the role traditionally ascribed to women not only by participating in the aforesaid activities, but also by desiring to stay chaste. However, that part of her character is not consistent, and she is occasionally shown reciprocating erotic interest (e.g. *Ov. Met.* 8.430, 10.609-37).

When Atalanta races her suitors in order to remain unmarried, she consistently wins and demonstrates that she is highly skilled in running. It is only once trickery is used that she is beaten in the race. In this story, it is necessary for the plot that Atalanta wants to stay a virgin. Therefore, by necessity there is at least some characterization of Atalanta—she is a woman who runs faster than men and wants to remain unmarried but cannot simply remain so by her own choice. Thus she is not an empty character like she sometimes is in the hunt narratives, in which her motives or feelings enhance the story but are not necessary for the plot. However, after the race her feelings are somewhat irrelevant, and they are typically less emphasized in the physical intimacy which leads to the lion metamorphosis. The race happens because of Atalanta's abnormal aversion to sexuality, and the offence is inappropriate sexual behaviour. Thus, within the race-lion metamorphosis story arc, Atalanta goes from one extreme to the other regarding sexual behaviour. This is complicated by the fact that it is typically her husband who initiates the physical intimacy in a sacred space. However, that does not stop Atalanta from being implicated in the crime and punished accordingly.

In the Calydonian boar hunt, Meleager offers Atalanta the boar's hide but his uncles object, frequently because she is a woman. None of the extant authors offer a certain judgement on whether or not she deserves the prize. There also seems to be ambiguity about the uncles' objection, as no author states that they were right or wrong for objecting. However, certain authors do explicitly say that Atalanta contributes to

killing the boar; in Apollodorus and Ovid she is the first hunter to draw blood. This demonstrates her excellence and so is a conceivable reason for her to deserve the boar's head. However, a consistent element of the story is that Meleager lusts after Atalanta; this could suggest that she is undeserving, since Meleager's desire may be the reason for which he gives her the spoils. The tension and ambiguity between these different interpretations make the story very compelling. Atalanta's motivations are frequently ignored, and few authors state that she wants to remain a virgin.

The minor stories involving Atalanta also show a tension between her gender and the activities which she enjoys and excels in. She is exposed as a baby because she is a girl, but her childhood stemming from this abandonment leads to her excelling in hunting and desiring to remain virgin. Since a bear feeds her as a baby, there is an explanation for the wild character she exhibits later in life. Sometimes this wild character is made literal by her transformation into a lioness due to a sexual transgression. However, sometimes instead of being turned into a lion she becomes a mother. Even once she becomes a mother, there are still hints of her heroic identity. Thus, even though she has fulfilled the usual obligation of women, she does not clearly move away from her partly-masculine nature. She protects herself from centaurs who try to rape her without relying on a man, demonstrating her efficient shooting skills. However, some authors adjust this story so that she is in fact protected by a man. In these versions the emphasis is not on her excellence at archery, but rather on the possibility that she can give in to love if a man proves his devotion by protecting and helping her. She sometimes participates in the quest for the golden fleece, and when she does she is the only female Argonaut. This is another example of her skill, which allows her to join male heroes on expeditions that no other women join. In one instance, she wants to join the quest but is denied on account of her gender. Even in this case, it is clear that her interests lie in masculine pursuits, and thus she is an unusual character.

Therefore, Atalanta myths are about the tension between feminine identity and masculine excellence. Atalanta frequently rejects Aphrodite and normal sexuality and marriage. However, that aspect of her character is not emphasized as consistently as the fact that she excels and is interested in activities that are typically part of a male sphere of excellence. One might expect that the characters interacting with Atalanta would

condemn her choice of activities, since she does not conform to expectations about women's behaviour. However, in the extant narratives there is little explicit condemnation of Atalanta's unfeminine behaviour. Certain men do not want to hunt with a woman in Apollodorus' version of the hunt (*Bibl.* 1.8.2), but they do not go so far as to suggest that Atalanta should not hunt at all. Their grievance seems instead to be about her accompanying them as part of the group of heroic hunters. The strongest judgement against her activities is found in the fragments of Euripides' *Meleager*, in which Althaea appears to be arguing with Atalanta about the latter's lifestyle (F. 522). In this case, it is a female character who objects to Atalanta's masculine behaviour. Meleager's uncles disapprove of Atalanta receiving the recognition of hunting excellence symbolized by the boar's head. This might suggest that they think she should not be hunting, but that is certainly not explicit in the extant tellings. In the extant race narratives there are no characters who argue that Atalanta is behaving wrongly by desiring virginity and challenging her suitors. By the end of the story she has been defeated, which could be thought of as a punishment for her behaviour. However, no authors say that her defeat in the race is a punishment. There is a much clearer moral condemnation for the act of physical intimacy in a sacred space. In this case she typically shares the offence and punishment with her husband. Thus, she is punished for inappropriate sexual behaviour, but not for transgressing gender boundaries. It seems that there is little direct moral condemnation of Atalanta's blurring of gender boundaries.

The fact that she is a woman who excels in masculine pursuits does cause problems, but mostly indirectly. It is Meleager's bestowal of the boar's head on her as a prize of excellence that incites violence. Thus, her presence and masculine behaviour only indirectly cause the problems at the boar hunt; Meleager's choice and his uncles' reaction are the direct causes of the strife. The transformation into a lioness is a punishment for improper sexual behaviour. This could potentially be seen as a reaction to her previous asexual and unfeminine behaviour. However, even if one were to interpret it that way, her unfeminine behaviour is only indirectly the cause of the metamorphosis. The fact that she excels and participates in men's pursuits does cause problems indirectly, but these problems usually stem from men's desire for her. Their desire can sometimes be linked directly to her activities. For instance, Atalanta's running enhances her beauty in

Hippomenes' eyes (*Ov. Met.* 10.590). Moreover, in none of these tellings does Hippomenes/Melanion or Meleager say that Atalanta would be more attractive if she stopped running. Thus, Atalanta's masculine activities either add to, or at the very least do not detract from, men's desire for her. It seems then that Atalanta's excellence in men's activities is problematic when combined with men's passion for her. It is difficult to separate these, though, because most narratives include both of these elements, and it seems that they work in tandem to create dramatic conflict. Ultimately, the tension between Atalanta's femininity and her masculine excellence is important in driving the stories about her, but this tension is not the only element that contributes to her myths.

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