In contemporary culture even outside the narrow circle of scholarship, initiation has become, over the last century, a household word. Two citations express our culture’s orthodoxy about initiation. When, in Robert Heinlein’s *Time Enough for Love*, the sometimes unruly (and almost immortal) narrator has to introduce some of his sons into sexuality, he makes a short remark: “Sure, there are rites of passage for males as well as females; every culture has them, even those that aren’t aware of it.”\(^1\) A much earlier voice has told us why this should be so: “Initiation may be traced to a period of the most remote antiquity”. Thus the Reverend George Oliver, Doctor of Divinity and Bishop of Shropshire, in the first of twelve lectures he gave on *The History of Initiation . . ., Comprising a Detailed Account of the Rites and Ceremonies, Doctrines and Disciplines of All the Secret and Mysterious Institutions of the Ancient World*, published in 1840. Initiation rites, then, are part and parcel of human history, they are an anthropological constant going back to our earliest times, and (not the least) they are “secret and mysterious”. Of course, the learned bishop and freemason had to say no less, since he set out to give the most impressive pedigree possible to his own Masonic ritual predilections. In doing so, he made ample use of the works of earlier scholars – not the least of someone whom the Anglican bishop, I assume, would rather not publicly acknowledge as his spiritual father: initiation both primitive and Greek is already present in the two volumes in which the Jesuit Father Joséph François Lafitau, in 1724, compared the customs of the American savages with those of the first humans altogether.\(^2\) The initiation rites – *les rites initiatiques* – of the Iroquois and the Hurons which he personally witnessed (the rites so impressively captured, some two centuries later, though in another tribe, in *A Man Called Horse*) immediately evoked in Father Lafitau the memory of the initiations at Eleusis and sent him unto the slippery path of a diffusionist theory that made them into an important part of early man’s religious legacy.\(^3\) A glimpse into any of the volumes that record a major
congress on the topic, organized at the university of Montpellier in 1990, can show how much these assumptions are still alive in the studies of Greek and Roman culture and literature.4

A glorious past

Initiation, thus, was thought of as a human universal of extremely great age. In the prevailing historicizing and evolutionist model of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these two characteristics meant about the same thing: any human universal should go back before the primeval Age of the Scattering (whatever time span that implies for a modern palaeoanthropologist). Second, the term was oscillating between two meanings that we keep apart. The first is the initiation into the secrecy of mysteries, especially those of Eleusis, according to Father Lafitau, whereas the Reverend Oliver dwelt at length on the much more spectacular mysteries of Bacchus, mainly by embellishing the already rather novelistic story of Livy on the scandal which shocked Rome in 186 BC.5 The second is initiation as a life crisis ritual, the transformation of children (or adolescents) into full adults—the rites Lafitau had observed among his savages. The first meaning leads back to the very roots of our terminology: Latin initia is Cicero’s and Varro’s rendering of Greek mustèria, applied to Eleusis and Samothrace, while initiare as a translation of Greek mneisthai (“to initiate into a mystery cult”) and initiatum as the Latin equivalent of Greek memmemémos (“initiate of a mystery cult”) are at least a century older.6 Via the derivative noun initiatio, first used by Suetonius for the ritual introduction into the Eleusinian mysteries,7 the term arrived in Father Lafitau’s French and in the Reverend Oliver’s English anthropological terminology, and from there started to make its career in twentieth-century anthropology.

Lafitau’s use, thus, carried the day; he applied it both to the mystery cults of Greece and Rome and to the puberty rites—as we would say—of his Huron and Iroquois: in a literal sense to the former, as a metaphor to the latter—since, strictly speaking, the use of the term outside ancient mystery cults is metaphor, and a rather bold one, based on some phenomenological similarities. The term in its metaphorical meaning became current in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ethnographical reports and, in the later nineteenth century, in the theorizing of the armchair ethnographers—not the least, of course, Frazer: his two volumes on Balder the Beautiful contain a long chapter on “The Ritual of Death and Resurrection” in “certain initiatory rites” that “lads at puberty” had to undergo.8

Frazer, though, was interested only in the imagery of death and rebirth found in many initiatory cults; he had no interest in initiation as such. Nor had Arnold Van Gennep, the Belgian folklorist, who taught in Switzerland until he left it somewhat abruptly, and who in 1909 described the conceptual and structural framework to better formalize these rites of transition and put
them into a wider context. He included what he called “les rites d’initiation” in
the wider framework of his tripartite rites of passage, and he subdivided them
(assuming, but not really insisting on an evolutionary development) into
puberty rites, rites introducing new members into secret societies,
introduction into mystery cults, Christianity (“religions universalistes”,
especially baptism), religious fraternities and orders, professional societies
and specific functions like priests and sorcerers, kings and sacred prostitutes
– a valid classification that is all too often overlooked by less neat followers.9
It was ethnographers with an outspoken interest in society and sociology
who, at the turn of the century, focused on these rituals, Hans Schuratz in
Germany with his *Altersklassen und Männerbünde* of 1902, Hutton Webster in
the United States with *Primitive Secret Societies* of 1908, the tandem Marcel
Mauss and Henri Hubert in France in an article from 1909.10 These works,
combined with Durkheim’s theory of the social origin of religion, inspired
Jane Ellen Harrison to look for traces of similar rites in ancient Greece.11
The result of this research was *Themis: A Study of the Social Origin of Greek
Religion*, published for the first time in 1911. The book – which would have
been revolutionary, had it had an immediate impact – opens with a long
interpretation of the Palaikastro hymn, an epigraphical hymn to Zeus of early
Hellenistic date, excavated in Western Crete in 1905 and published by Gilbert
Murray in 1908.12
The hymn praises Zeus as the *megistos kouros*, “greatest young man”, and it
describes his entourage of leaping and dancing Kouretes, “male adolescents”,
Zeus’ own dancing and the power this has over human life, both social and
agricultural. Strangely enough for a modern reader, it reminded Harrison
immediately of the Orphic myth of Dionysus, his entourage of Titans and
his dismemberment. She read this myth as the etiological story for the Cretan
dances of the young Kouretes, and she used it to elegantly break away both
from Frazer and from her earlier work: asking herself what the myth of killing
and resurrecting the baby Dionysus could mean, she answered:

The orthodox explanation is that the child is a sort of vegetation
spirit or corn-baby, torn to pieces in winter, revived in spring . . . I
offer a simpler and I think more complete explanation. Every single
element, however seemingly preposterous, in both the ritual and
myth of Zagreus can be explained I believe by the analogy of
primitive rites of tribal initiation.13

Initiation – or puberty rite – thus enters the Greek world as the challenge to the
Usener-Frazer fertility paradigm, termed by Jane Ellen Harrison as “orthodox”:
initiation offered a new, unorthodox paradigm for the understanding of Greek
religion and myth. To be fair, Harrison was not the first to look at initiation rites
in order to understand Greek rites. Lafitau had already done so, and (as far as I
know, independently) so did Andrew Lang, that learned scholar whose fame has
been eclipsed by the Cambridge group, when he connected “certain features in
the mysteries” with “the mysteries of savage races”. But these occasional
remarks stayed on the level of learned observations and never turned into a
theory, unlike Harrison’s. Her insight, however, did not immediately turn
into the new orthodoxy, although Gilbert Murray, the Oxford Regius Professor
of Greek and her close friend of many years, took it immediately up in some
memorable pages of his *Four Stages of Greek Religion* of 1912, urging that “this
whole subject of Greek initiation ceremonies calls pressingly for more
investigation”. But the call went unheard, and the fertility paradigm dominated
the study of Greek religion up to the death of Martin Nilsson in 1964. During all
this time, initiation was marginal and not even provocative; its proponents
lived at the margins of the European scholarly community. Henri
Jeanmaire, whose *Courois et Courètes* of 1939 followed the insights of Jane Ellen
Harrison and built them into a much wider panorama, taught and published in
Lille, not in Paris – nor did Louis Gernet, whose splendid “Dolon le loup” of
1936 is another early example of an initiatory explanation; and Angelo
Brelich’s very learned and theoretically sophisticated *Paides e Parthenoi* of 1969
never made the impact it deserved – otherwise his intriguing and challenging
statement that higher societies (“le cosi dette civilta superiori”) did not have
puberty rites would not have been so constantly overlooked. It was only when
one of the centers of scholarship finally became involved that the paradigm
began to become highly visible: Pierre Vidal-Naquet and the “Black Hunter”,
published simultaneously in 1968 in Cambridge and in Paris and reiterated in
several variants, reinstated the topic, and in that very same year, Jean-Pierre
Vernant’s collection of Gernet’s papers opened our eyes to the elegance of
“Dolon le loup”. The new orthodoxy grew during the 1970s and expanded in
the 1980s and 1990s, from history of religion to the study of Greek and Roman
literature; for literature, it was especially Claude Calame’s *Les choeurs des jeunes
filles* of 1977 that built the bridge, though it was only the English translation
of 1997 that really confirmed it as the new orthodoxy. It is no coincidence that
Arnold van Gennep’s book, although never neglected, gained new luster during
this period, not least because of what one could call its “protostructuralist”
approach.

Thus, I would argue strongly that part of the fascination with the topic stems
from its originally subversive character: it is no coincidence that the relevant
dates all crowd around 1968 and that the most visible propagators of the
paradigm – Christiane Sourvinou Inwood, Jan Bremmer, Claude Calame, Bruce
Lincoln, James Redfield, myself – are in about the same age-group. The
changing world of those years was helpful in overcoming the Nilssonian
paradigm, and the new awareness of society as a powerful entity with a high
tendency to impose its normative tradition upon reluctant individuals, and to
perpetuate itself by pressuring the young into a mould from which they had no
chance to escape, made the institution of initiation suddenly highly topical and
relevant. This description of the institution makes it look rather specious
today, to say the least, but it highlights one of the problems of ethnological initiation rites, namely how to cope not only with a changing society but with a society that expected active and deliberate changes from its members during their lifetime.

There is more. Writing about the consequences of her theory, Jane Ellen Harrison was well aware that one might perceive her as overstepping a boundary: “Anthropologists have been sometimes blamed, and perhaps with justice, for the fiendish glee with which, as though they were Christian Fathers, they seize on barbarous survivals in Greek religion or literature”.\(^{24}\)

Highlighting those rites in Greece – rites found in “primitive” cultures around the globe – contradicted the prevailing classicism and humanism of Greek studies during much of the last century. This is very visible with Henri Jeanmaire. A firm believer in historical continuity, he had to construct a bridge between Africa, where he found his anthropological models, and Greece, where he perceived initiation rites. Thus, well before Martin Bernal (and without the latter’s notice) he squeezed the early Greeks into the same “cultural sphere” (“Kulturkreis”) as the sub-Saharan West African societies whose initiation rites he found relevant for Greece; in doing so, he made use of the by-now-discarded theoretical model that the German ‘ethnologist’ Leo Frobenius and his followers developed between the two Wars.\(^{25}\) Thus, initiation rituals exhibited another form of subversiveness: they nicely undercut the humanist and classicist paradigm, as did other theories whose success began to be visible in the later 1960s, like Parry’s oral Homer or Burkert’s neolithic roots of Greek animal sacrifice:\(^{26}\) it was another welcome weapon for modernizing classics and, of course, for father-killing after 1968.\(^{27}\)

Somewhat earlier than this, initiation had moved from social anthropology into the wide field of history and religion, and into cultural studies in general. It was very much Mircea Eliade who opened it up in this way, by taking up a clue from Frazer and using this as a key to read initiation rites as a worldwide phenomenon in nearly all civilizations in his *Birth and Rebirth* of 1958, for whose paperback edition of 1965 he changed the title into *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*.\(^{28}\) This parallels the globalization of shamanism also largely due to Eliade (and convincingly refuted long ago):\(^{29}\) in those years, Eliade’s global approach seemed to break down the Frazerian wall between Them (tribal societies) and Us and thus resonated deeply in Western culture. The same Eliade introduced a conference on the topic, held in 1964, with a paper on initiation and the modern world;\(^{30}\) the topics covered in this conference ranged from Black Africa to Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, and one participant goes as far as reading religion (theoretically any religion, practically a romanticized version of Protestantism) as initiation.\(^{31}\) The irony in all this is that here (at least in Eliade’s reading), the atmosphere was decidedly one of nostalgia and not of modernization:

The nostalgia for the trials and initiation scenarios, a nostalgia seen in so many works of literature and art, reveals a desire in modern man
for a final and total renewal, for a renovation that would transform the entire existence.32

This is not only a typical Eliade movement but characterized the study of religion in the middle of the twentieth century, as Steven Wasserstrom has pointed out; it has its root in the anti-historicism and cosmic mysticism of the late 1920s and 1930s, but surfaced again, at least in large parts of Europe, in the ideological vacuum after the defeat of Germany. Neither Vidal-Naquet nor anyone among his younger followers had, at that time, seen this other agenda; our paradigms came from social anthropology, not from history of religion.

Thus, the success of the initiation paradigm, as I see it, has much to do with wider societal changes in the later twentieth century and was fed from two sides, social anthropology and history of religion, as the success of the fertility paradigm had much to do with the political and social changes in later nineteenth-century Europe, with its urbanization and industrialization and the concomitant nostalgia and idealization of the primeval rural life. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that the new paradigms were wrong – after a generation of polemics against the fertility paradigm, one begins to see some of its relevance. Although we now run immediately into the problem of what truth in our studies is. On the one hand, I certainly am no advocate of an objective and transcendental truth in history which just waits around the corner to be found – or, in Lessing’s famous image, is seductively presented to us by a god who, in the end, never reveals it. On the other hand, the radical definition of truth as the one explanatory model which a given society embraces and transmits because it neatly dovetails into its own needs and preoccupations, is not all too helpful either. It is a circular view, nearly as naive as the one of a transcendental truth. Thus, truth rather results from the interplay between our own needs and demands, as a society and as individuals, and the resilience of historical facts and data – a definition that forces us to struggle with those data, as we all do. Given the data of Greek society, religion and mythology, what explanatory value does the initiatory paradigm have in present day science of antiquity?

A problematic present

If the vast number of publications in the field has some indicative value, the paradigm should have considerable explanatory power for ancient societies as well. The large international conference, however, that the University of Montpellier in France dedicated to the topic of initiation in 1991 – the first of such a magnitude – was somewhat disillusioning; because of its very broad approaches and its not infrequent lack of clear differentiations (despite the model of Van Gennep’s work) it demonstrated more clearly the pitfalls and problems of the contemporary use of the paradigm than its interpretative
Let me, in this second part of this chapter, look at some of them. They concern first the rituals, then the myths.

The rituals

The history of research has already underlined a very basic fact: initiation in its application to Greece wavers between two widely different meanings – between what Lafitau and the Reverend Oliver found in Greece, initiation rites as secret introductory rites into the different mystery cults, and what late nineteenth-century scholarship called tribal initiation or puberty rites, on which Jane Ellen Harrison and their followers focused. However, Jane Ellen Harrison, when associating the Orphic myth of Dionysus with this ritual complex, somehow did not really dissociate the two, nor do some more recent scholars, like the author of an initiatory interpretation of the *Odyssey*. The dichotomy is vital, though. It is by now rather hackneyed to point out that the Greek words for “initiation” are all connected with mystery cults, be it the more general *teletê*, “rite, especially mystery initiation rite”, or the more specific *mêsis*, “individual initiation into a mystery cult, esp. Eleusis”, and that, in ancient Greek, no term for initiation in the sense of “puberty rites” or “tribal initiations” exists. This absence is generally pointed out by scholars who are skeptical towards the concept anyway, and they take it to mean that the institution in a form that would be recognizable for a social anthropologist did not exist in Greece, that is, to put it in a nutshell, as a ritual of some duration, conforming to the general pattern of the rites of passage, and having as its central theme, as Gilbert Lewis put it, “that of successful growth and development of the individual”, introducing all and sundry adolescent members of the tribe into the world of the adults, into their gender roles, their tasks, obligations and privileges as adults and at the same into the religious, spiritual and political traditions of their society. Ordinarily, the members of the initiating generation were the model of the successful individual to the next generation. In reality, as especially Angelo Brelich showed, the institution looks somewhat less uniform than this, with rites held together rather because of family resemblance than because of one common phenomenology.

Both the absence of the terminology and the consequences of its absence need some more thought, though. It is certainly true that there is no general Greek term for the ritual in question. But there are many local terms for rites that concern the introduction of the pubescent young men or women into the adult world – the Spartan *krupteia*, the Athenian *ephêbeia* and *arkteia*, or the *mallokouria* in Roman Egypt; there are the verbs *kourizein* in Homer and Hesiod or the Macedonian verb *nebrizein* which Michael Hatzopoulos elucidated; there are the Spartan and Cretan *agela* to designate an age class of young men, and there are the many Cretan terms for young men, *dromeus*, *apodromos*, *azostos* and *ekduomenos*, known from local inscriptions especially from Dreros and Knossos. The detailed analysis of all these terms

value.
showed a wide variety of ritual forms, durations and ages, but an overall phenomenology that in many cases can be understood from ethnological puberty rites. What then follows from these facts is not so much the absence of such rites in Greece, but their very high level of local variation: this is what one would expect from rites so closely tied to single communities and their identity. There could, by definition, be no pan-Hellenic initiation rites, only Cnossian or Drerian or Spartan or Athenian ones.

This variation, though, is not without its problems. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that there is not only a phenomenological but also a historical connection between all those Greek rites, in the sense that the assumed forbearers of the historical Greeks – those Indo-Europeans who trickled or immigrated into the Greek peninsula – shared a common institution dealing with the initiation of their young men and women.  

The attestation of many widely different local forms – some in rather marginal regions of the Greek world – could underpin such an assumption: we would be confronted with the broken up traces of something that in former times had been much more widespread but has been transformed or altogether abolished by more recent developments that did, however, not affect more marginal areas, Eastern Crete, Arcadia, Thessaly, Northwestern mainland Greece. An analogy from the history of language might come in useful: the pattern somehow resembles the medieval and modern distribution of the Romance languages, split up between Southwestern Europe and Romania by the expansion of the Germanic and the Slavonic languages, or the one of the Celtic languages split up by the expansion of French, Spanish, and English into remnants in Northern Spain, Brittany, Wales, and Ireland. The main difference in the linguistic analogy would be that the distribution did not result from immigration or conquest, for example by German-speaking tribes (if anything, the immigrant Dorians of Sparta and Crete seem to be more initiation prone than the autochthonous Athenians), but from a somewhat different pace in societal development that did not affect the margins as strongly as it did the center.

The analogy, however, needs further development. The two language groups used, Celtic and Romance languages, do not exactly parallel each other. Celtic languages are the languages spoken by the Celts: this is a static model, in which the extant languages more or less reproduce, in their distribution, the language that has been split up by the immigrations in early medieval times. For the Romance languages, however, we adopted a dynamic model: they are the languages that diachronically developed, out of the Latin spoken by the conquerors, into several languages, each very different from all the others: the extant Romance languages thus do not adequately reproduce the one split up language (to the extent that Dante Alighieri, not a mean thinker, assumed that Latin was virtual language, never spoken by any living being). And of course no linguist worth his money would underwrite to a static model for the Celtic languages either; they too have developed from each other after the split.
Once we conceptualize these two models in this way, it becomes clear that we are dealing with a dynamic model for initiation as well: the rites of the Cretan towns look different from each other and even more so from those in Thessaly or Acrania. But since, as we tentatively agreed, in the case of initiation we cannot assume an intrusion of foreign cultures but have to reckon with Greek societal developments at widely varying paces and into widely varying directions, another problem arises: where do we cut, if we cut at all? Don’t we rather deal with a continuum, ranging from rites that any ethnographer could still recognize to rites that are far beyond that point? In other words: would the complex Spartan system that helped to militarize all young Spartiates (but not the helots) still qualify as initiation rite \textit{stricto sensu}, and would that be true as well for the very different \textit{ephebeia} in Hellenistic or imperial Athens that concerned the upper class boys only and introduced them as much into Athenian religion and culture as into the art of warfare? Or would we have to restrict the use to those rites that still conform to a phenomenology constructed from the ethnographical material, along the findings in the first chapter of Brelich’s book? This quandary shows that the problem does not change if we give up an evolutionist approach and focus on phenomenology instead, given the fluidity of any such reconstruction outside Greece. Since we deal with rites whose outstanding characteristic is a family resemblance, the template is a spectrum rather than a firmly outlined set of phenomena: would we then have to break up the Greek facts at a point where we feel they would no more conform to the ethnographical template – but where does family resemblance stop? Are we not rather incurring the danger of becoming circular, since the characteristics of family resemblance are derived as much from what we know about who is family and who is not as from observing the individual features of family members: we exclude Uncle Herbert’s aquiline nose from the set of family resemblance as much because we know that he really married into the family, as because really no known member of the family has such a nose.

The problem is exacerbated because there is no indigenous overarching term to help us; if there were, we could just use the Greek word and pretend that this Greek phenomenon would have (or not have, according to one’s taste) a connection with similar ethnological facts. This would save us from the well-known problem in the study of Greek religion that there are many scholars who shun any use of non-Greek terms and side with no lesser scholar than Wilamowitz and his grumbling dismissal of contemporary terminology like “totem and taboo, mana and orenda”: “I do not understand the languages these terms come from, and I think it legitimate to think Greek about things Greek”. \textsuperscript{44}

We all agree that this view is much too narrow, and that we often have to rely on terminology developed outside our own discipline to deal with our material. And scholarship has its rules on how to deal with such a problem. The proposal that a given culture lacks a term for a specific phenomenon is

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after all very current in anthropological research, and often there are compelling reasons for the use of a scholarly non-native term for certain phenomena even where there would be a native term as well, be it to maintain comparability with other cultures, or more simply just to understand what is going on. In these cases, thoughtful scholars define the term before they use it for their own culture – this is the recipe that Henk Versnel formulated for the use of the complex term “magic” in discussing ritual phenomena in Greece and Rome.

Compared to the use of “initiation”, the use of “magic” is somewhat easier since it is an ancient term for which we can find ancient definitions. But even there, these definitions gain full significance and value only when confronted with contemporary scholarly ones: all the more useful and necessary to be circumspect, one should think, when using “initiation”. But the use of a contemporary term has its limitations; we either define the term according to the ethnographical common usage, or according to our own phenomena. The former way might force us to reject an important set of our own data as no longer pertinent, the latter might lead to a definition that cannot be shared with other disciplines any more.

The problem becomes clearer when we look at a case that recently inspired some scholarly debate. There is a sort of orthodoxy that says that the Athenian arrhephoria has to do with initiation rites, even a rite of initiation. From Henri Jeanmaire to Angelo Brelich to Pierre Brulé, there is unanimity in calling the ritual an initiation rite; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, only slightly more cautious, sometimes uses the term “rite of transition” instead. Walter Burkert, in his seminal article of 1966, was less given to this jargon, but both his title and his interpretation make it clear that he saw the rite against a backdrop of female initiation rites as well. There was dissent, however, most recently in 1997 when Guy Donnay explicitly opposed to the initiatory reading what he termed as “a civic rite”, “un rite civique”. His paper is vastly superior to Noel Robertson’s earlier and rather blunt opposition insofar as Donnay very clearly recognizes the methodological problems, and he even terms his case “un cas d’école”. In the last chapter of his thoughtful paper, he addresses all the characteristics that in the orthodox reading pointed to initiation. Let me, for argument’s sake, pick them up.

(i) Initiation rites confine the initiands for a given time in a closed space well away from the community. The arrhephoroi, Donnay says, were not excluded from the community during their service: they participated in other rituals, and they might have been visited by their relatives. The latter point, of course, is specious; we lack any evidence. The former is correct.

(ii) Initiation rites introduce initiands into gender-specific tasks, hunting for males, cooking and weaving for females; the arrhephoroi were introduced into the latter. Donnay objects to this: they certainly did not do all the weaving; they just assisted the priestess of Athena in setting up the
weaving. This is a specious argument again: they were at least concerned with weaving – but it is certainly no introduction into the craft.

(iii) Initiation rites confront the young with and introduce them into sexuality – not so the arrhephoria. This is Donnay’s most interesting argument. It rests on a specific understanding of the key text in Pausanias’ description of the Acropolis. When talking about the arrhephoroi, Pausanias begins the description of how the two girls ended their service with a topographical remark: “There is in the city (en têi poleï) a sanctuary, not far from the so-called Aphrodite in the Gardens, and through to it a natural subterranean descent”. The girls, that is, descend not to the sanctuary of Aphrodite in the Gardens, they descend to a sanctuary whose name Pausanias does not reveal and which some scholars understood as being a sanctuary of Herse. It is unclear what Herse’s role in this rite is – there is no necessary connection with Aphrodite, not even “by allusion” (Pierre Brulé), or because of the proximity of the sanctuary of Aphrodite (V. Pierenne-Delforge). The argument, furthermore, relies heavily on the age of the girls. Ancient sources give it as between seven and eleven years – is this too early for an introduction into sexuality? If this is determined by the date of menarche, one would think so; but the evidence is not very reliable. There is finally the etiological myth of how the Cecropids jumped off the acropolis after having opened the forbidden casket that contained the baby Erichthonios in the guise of a snake: since Erichthonios was the result of a rather strange sexual act – Hephaestus’ premature ejaculation – it was tempting to use it in this context. But on the surface at least, the myth does not talk about sexuality, it talks about curiosity towards Athena. If nothing else points to sexuality, it is somewhat specious to adduce the myth as the main testimony.

(iv) Initiation concerns an entire age group. They were only two arrhephoroi. This has been tackled already by earlier scholars: Brelich and Burkert pointed out that there are a few other Greek cases, where initiation is done by proxy only, like the two girls dedicated to Coan Athena or the two Locrian maidens. But both parallel cases are Greek: this again is either specious or circular.

Thus, one of the four points Donnay makes (iii) is correct, (iv) is doubtful; in one case the evidence is ambiguous (ii), the fourth is specious argumentation (i): Donnay thus seems quite right to consider the Athenian arrhephoria rite as not fitting into any anthropological template for initiation.

Donnay’s alternative, “a civic rite”, is plausible enough at first glance: the girls selected come from the leading families, their duties addressed the goddess central to Athenian civic cult, Athena Polias, and their families were proud enough to put up honorary statues of the girls after termination of the office. But it is no real alternative, not even in its utter vagueness: every superficial reading of anthropological reports shows the importance initiation
cults had for a community: we deal not with a private change of status only but with much more. Still, the term “civic rite” even in its clumsiness points to a further problem.

In the widespread Greek case of rites like the *arrhephoria*, already Brelich proposed to talk not about “initiation rites”, but about “rites with an initiatory background” or “rites developed out of an initiatory context”. This sounds fine – but if we use this language, we have to be conscious that we adopt a historical and evolutionary explanation for those rites. This means two things. First, we are implying a historical hypothesis: the family resemblance has its reason in a historical origin and development, as was true in the linguistic analogy: there must have been, in the past of Greece, tribal initiation rites out of which the rituals of archaic and classical Greece evolved. This leads, if one does not simply prefer to keep away altogether, into the rather murky business of reconstructing such a ritual past. Rites, though, rarely do leave material traces: the reconstruction relies on narratives and, in rare cases, images, with all the dangers inherent. Second, when such a diachronical claim becomes the main characteristic of the rite, the synchronic function of the rite in its society is neglected. And here, Donnay’s term “civic rite” becomes interesting, since it at least has the merit of trying to describe a synchronic function, albeit in the vaguest terms. In the case of the two *arrhephoroi*, it would be ludicrous to pretend that they were undergoing an initiation rite on behalf of all Athenian girls: the function of an initiation rite is to construct gendered adult beings, and every young individual has to be constructed in this way. There are no proxies in initiation rites: she or he who is not initiated will remain in the social marginality of a child or an animal.

This seems the crucial difference, where family resemblance ends. The one central function Gilbert Lewis, among others, ascribed to the rite, is entirely given up; the rite is no longer concerned with “successful growth and development of the individual” group members. Being an *arrhephoros* made two upper-class girls every year more successful in the race for status, to judge from the inscriptions of their parents, and the same might hold true for the two Locrian girls, if they survived the travel. Even the long drawn out process of the Spartan *agôgê* might stretch the concept, as does the Athenian *epîbeia* with its combination of religious duties and military service, that does not mean that these institutions are related, phenomenologically or historically, to initiation rites.

One conclusion thus seems unavoidable. The term “initiation rite” or its synonyms “puberty rite” and the even much vaguer “rite of transition” have to be used very sparingly indeed when dealing with Greece. I prefer a terminology that allows a discussion with social anthropology, and I am very much in favor of a subtle and a differentiated analysis of functions. Thus, I would be willing to accept the Cretan rites under this stricter definition: here, it looks as if any son of a free-born citizen had to undergo the famous stay in
the wilderness, although social stratification makes itself felt in the fact that some sons of prominent fathers were accorded the lead position; the same holds true for the scanty evidence we have for Arcadian rites, and for Peloponnesian girls’ dances. But then, I would stop. The Spartan _agôgê_, I am confident with Jeanmaire and others, developed out of the background we still sense in Crete, but then moved away into a terribly efficient military training. It is an “initiation rite” only when we adopt a rather loose terminology. For the rest of the Greek world, the term is a guess about an evolution, at its best, and a stance in debate about the prehistory of the Athenian _ephêbeia_ before Lycurgus.

Is there, then, another term that we could use to designate those collective rites of adolescents of both genders that are unmistakably attested in most Greek states? A term employed sometimes is “rituals of coming of age”. It has the advantage of being nicely descriptive, and the disadvantage of being somewhat passive: rituals like the _ephêbeia_ involve the young men in many activities and intend to transform them actively by exposing them to the religious traditions and training them in athletics. Still, it moves away from initiation and might therefore be preferable.

The myths

What about initiation myths? Their existence is even less debated than that of initiation rites; they formed some part of Breligh’s investigation, and the myths of girls’ initiations were treated by Ken Dowden in his _Death and the Maiden_. But “initiation myths” are a rather loose category that can be subdivided into three subgroups. The first subgroup contains myths that are etiologies for still existing rites that we, too, would call initiatory. The second subgroup concerns myths that are still paired with a ritual whose initiatory character, however, has been transformed into something else. In the third subgroup are myths that, in the ancient documentation, are not connected with rituals at all but that are being read by modern scholars as having an initiatory background. This background, then, belongs to the prehistory of these myths. Most of the myths discussed by Dowden belong in this group from which he reconstructs Mycenaean girls’ initiations.

The first subgroup seems rather straightforward since the rite that goes together with the myth has a clear initiatory function in the society that tells the myth. But there are not many myths that can make this claim; they mostly belong to Sparta or Crete. A case in point is the myth of the girl Leukippe whom Leto transformed into the young man Leukippos. It is the etiological story for a festival in the cult of Leto at Phaistos on Crete, the Ekdysia, and a ritual performed during the wedding night in this same sanctuary. Our knowledge of the festival is limited to the name. Its etymology — “Festival of Undressing” — connects it with the ritual nudity and change of dress typical for initiation rites, general knowledge of Cretan society argues for the
existence of such rites among the island communities, and Ephorus reports that marriage – to which the one ritual we know of belongs – was celebrated in Crete at the end of the ritualized period that marked the transition from adolescent to man. The mythic theme of gender change, furthermore, belongs to adolescent male ideology connected with such rites. Thus, there is enough circumstantial evidence to allow the conclusion that in the story of Leukippos we deal with an initiatory myth. But there are problems even here, and they concern the rite: not every ritual that has an unequivocal initiatory function goes back to a distant past. A well-known case concerns Sparta. There is wide agreement with Robertson Smith’s thesis that the ritual fustigation of adolescent boys in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia is part of an initiatory scenario; the rite even has the cruel character that tribal initiations led one to expect.64 But it also has become clear that the flagellation rite is the result of a transformation that happened during the Hellenistic age: late classical authors describe it differently, as a mock battle between two age groups, one of which tried to steal cheese from the altar of the goddess, the other defended the altar.65 The myth that insists on bloodshed explains this late ritual and cannot be seen together with the earlier rite; fittingly enough, it is Pausanias who reports it. We have to accept that initiatory myths can be quite late, and that initiatory rituals can look “genuine” and “archaic” only after a late reform.

The second subgroup is trickier to deal with: methodologically, we could come close to a circular reading when explaining a non-initiatory ritual as a later transformation of an initiation rite by using its etiological myth. A good example is the case of the Locrian maidens.66 In historical times, the Locrians sent annually two maidens from the leading families to the sanctuary of Athena Ilias at Troy. The myth explains it as atonement for the rape of Cassandra by the Locrian Ajax in the temple of Athena. Angered by this transgression of her sanctuary, Athena not only drowned Ajax, she also sent a plague to his descendants, the Locrians. In order to avert the plague, the Delphic oracle made the Locrians send every year two adolescent girls to the sanctuary of Athena at Troy; there, they served in a very low position. In its actual function, the rite certainly is no initiation rite; the task of these two girls has nothing to do with the general coming of age of Locrian girls, nor presumably with their own. Neither does the myth talk about initiation rites and the coming of age of Locrian girls. It talks about a purification or atonement rite and focuses on the fears of the girls (and of their parents) about a perilous voyage far away from home. At the same time, it gave the Locrians a ritual means of counteracting the infamous image their ancestor Ajax had in Homeric mythology. I still think that the cluster of motifs in both the myth and the ritual point to an initiatory prehistory; but this tells us virtually nothing about the function of the ritual in Hellenistic times.

The real challenge is the third subgroup, myths that are assumed to be initiatory but are without existing initiation rituals. What are the distinctive characteristics of these narrations that make them look like derivations from
an initiatory background? Let us look at two examples to better understand the mechanisms at work.

The narration of Theseus’ Cretan adventure is an initiation myth.\(^67\) It talks about the exploits of an adolescent prince who is sent out with a band of pubescent girls and boys; he is confronted with his real father, Poseidon, that is his identity (the story of his plunge into the sea) and with a deadly danger, rescued by a princess who at the same time initiates him into sexuality, and after his return he becomes the new king. The crucial items are first the tripartite structure that leads from departure via an experience of a marginality to the return; second the essential experience that takes place outside and far from the hero’s home; third, the adolescent age of the hero and his introduction into sexuality and identity. The same structure and details apply for the myth of Jason and the Argonauts; the same background has been claimed here.\(^68\)

The myth of Iphigeneia in Aulis is an initiation myth.\(^69\) It talks about the death of a nubile girl, which, in the end, transforms her into the patroness of mothers in childbirth. The death or transformation of a girl is found in several other stories (Callisto, Io, the daughters of Proetus), which have been labeled initiation myths by Dowden.\(^70\)

But both cases are more intricate than this. The story pattern of the Theseus myth is basically the pattern that Vladimir Propp isolated for his quest stories – in Walter Burkert’s short summary: “the tale starts with some damage, lack, or desire (motifem 8)”, the ransom asked by Minos for killing his son; “the hero is told to go somewhere (9) and agrees to do so (10); he leaves home (11); he meets some being that puts him to a test (12); reacting to it (13), he receives some gift or magical aid (14)” – this would be Ariadne’s gift; “he gets to the place required (15) and meets an adversary with whom he has to interact (16)” – the Minotaur in the labyrinth; “he is harmed in some way (17) but is victorious in the end (18)” – here, only the victory counts; “thus the initial damage is put right (19)” – the twice seven youths are released. “The hero begins his homeward journey (20), is pursued (21) but saved (22)”. Here the Theseus story takes parts from the pattern until (31) “the hero becomes king”; this is not unusual with Propp’s sequence – not all the motifemes have to be present.\(^71\)

Burkert drew attention to another story type which he sequenced into five motifemes – (1) leaving home, (2) seclusion, (3) rape, (4) tribulation, (5) rescue and birth of a boy; he called it “the girl’s tragedy”.\(^72\) It is the pattern behind some of Dowden’s myths, Callisto for example or Io, while the Iphigeneia myth is more complex than that, but shares its structure with many other Greek girls’ myths.\(^73\) Scholars assumed initiation rituals behind both the quest sequence and the girl’s tragedy – Dowden made an underlying Bronze Age ritual the unifying factor behind the stories and their patterning; Propp thought of prehistoric male initiation rites as the source for the quest pattern.\(^74\)
But in both cases the existence of the story pattern has a crucial consequence: once the pattern is established, we do not need any historical rites anymore. Any story can make use of the preexisting pattern, up to and including recent and contemporary narrations. The girl’s tragedy looks decidedly like the plot of a Victorian novel, and most James Bond scripts conform easily to the quest pattern as well; no one would argue for an underlying initiation ritual there.

This leads to one more consequence (besides the obvious question, why these story patterns are so persistent, a question answered by Walter Burkert with an ethological explanation) – a consequence that concerns both the myths connected in our body of texts with initiation and those understood by scholarship as deriving from initiation rituals. First the latter: given the independent existence of the mythical pattern, the statement that a given myth derives from initiation does not speak so much about a hypothetical origin of a given myth, but about its function at a given time in the past. This function must leave clear traces: the myth cannot just concern an adolescent or young adult hero. The fact that Jason was described as a wearing one sandal only (*monosandalos*) is such an additional detail, as already Brelich pointed out; the fact that Medea was first perceived as a divinity, which makes her resonant with the theme of the divine initiator, is another one.

But there is also a consequence for those myths that, in our sources, go together with what can be understood as an initiatory ritual. We cannot ever assume that this connection reflects a genetic link; the story might have been attached later in the history of the rite. Nor does a myth that we could call an initiatory myth define a later ritual as initiatory just because it accompanies it – the tie might be looser than that. Again the myth of Theseus is a case in point. In a fragmentary second century BC inscription, Theseus’ exploits during the Cretan expedition as well as those during his return from Troezen were compared to the ephebic education: as an ephebe, Theseus is the paradigm of the ephebes who imitate him. It would be rash to take this as an indication that the Athenian *ephebeia* derives from or is an initiation rite. First, the entire career of Theseus seems to be compared: thus, we rather should say that the life of Theseus before his ascension to the throne of Athens is a role model for the young Athenian before his adoption of a fully adult position. Secondly, we know that the *ephebeia* was reformed, perhaps radically, in the early fourth century by Lycurgus, and it is this later and reformed institution that is at play here, not a hypothetical initiatory institution. During the two years of the *ephebeia*, the ephebes “first go round the sanctuaries, then to the Piraeus where one group watches over Munychia, the other over Acte”, as Aristotle has it; the ephebic inscriptions of the third and second centuries give much more detail on their ritual duties. “At the end of the first year”, Aristotle continues, “they participate in an assembly in the theatre and demonstrate to the people their dexterity in military movements, then they get a shield and a spear and serve on the border posts”. Thus, it is not these details that are compared to
Theseus’ career: it is their dedication to the service, and it is their social position between the status of a boy and that of an adult: like boys, “they are exempt from all taxes, and they cannot be called into court or begin a lawsuit themselves”, as again Aristotle insists. It is this much vaguer parallelism that any Athenian in Hellenistic times could still feel and that explains the connection between myth and ritual.

An additional remark. Both story patterns, the quest and the girl’s tragedy, easily fit the dynamic tripartition of a rite of passage – separation, liminality, and integration. Already Van Gennep, read carefully, had shown that the tripartition does apply to many more rites that just those of initiation and that the pattern is much wider than even the life-crisis rituals. The same tripartite sequence is present in the overall structure of traditional sacrifice, and Victor Turner found it in Christian pilgrimages. I would go further: stories that contain this sequence need not derive or belong to any rite at all, as an example can demonstrate. The myth with which Plutarch ends his essay on “God’s Slowness to Punish” (De sera numinis vindicta) is modeled on Plato’s myth of Er. But Plutarch departs from this model not only in many details, but also in the overall structure: he features a hero who undergoes a real rite of passage, that moves from separation via marginality to reintegration into a new status. The hero falls from a window and severely injures his neck which results in apparent death (Eliade would have adored this); during the time he doesn’t seem alive, he is traveling to a faraway place, where he braves the dangers of the beyond, is introduced to traditional wisdom and given a new name (name-change is another feature of a rite of passage, to express a new status); and when he comes back, he takes up this new name and changes his entire life. Everybody agrees that this is Plutarch’s invention, not the description of an initiatory rite. Thus, the tripartite sequence turns out to be a very basic narrative structure. Indeed, in the last resort, it reflects the intellectual dynamic of any process of cognition. We begin cognition by separating ourselves from the familiar and known, concentrate on the new and explore it, and finally come back filled with new insight. This fits the stories, because they all seem to talk about the gaining of identity, which in itself is an elementary cognitive process.

Conclusion

The concept of initiation arrived in the terminology of scholars of Greek religion from social anthropology and sociology. Despite its origin in Latin and the initial confusion between “rites of puberty” and “secret introduction rites” into a mystery cult that has to do with this origin, it was the former meaning that won the day and became one of the leading paradigms for understanding a large number of Greek rituals and myths, and it came to be used even for the interpretation of literary texts. The expansion was largely the result of a paradigm shift in the studies of antiquity that went together
with the general shift in Western societies in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The new paradigm replaced the fertility paradigm and moved from a focus on nature to a focus on society, and it brought classical scholars into new contacts with social anthropology, then a major player in the humanities. The result of this expansion was a watering down of the concept, comparable to the watering down of the concept of shamanism. In reality, there is no institution in any Greek city that would fully conform to the anthropological definition of initiation, with the exception of Crete and, in some respects, the Spartan agôgê. But compared to the function and form of initiation rituals in ethnological cultures, already the Cretan rituals changed, and even more so the Spartan ritual; still, the main function of these rites is to help the “successful growth and development of the individual”, individual being, in both cases, the male member of the free ruling class. In most other Greek cities – and more so in the course of time – such a function was taken over by other institutions and rituals, foremost among them public schools, while the critical transitions were marked by the interfamilial rites, like the dedication of the first beard or of a lock of hair to a specific, often kourotrophic deity. Former rituals of initiation were replaced by a civic festival cycle and lost any initiatory function they might have had in the past; thus, initiation is in most cases the result of an evolutionary hypothesis that cannot give any insight into synchronic functions. The same is true for mythology where the label “initiatory” indicates a hypothetical prehistoric function, at best, except in the few cases where a ritual that has an initiatory function is combined with an etiological myth. In dealing with mythic narratives, but also with rituals, interpretation often focused in the tripartite structure that was seen as common for “rites of passage” as an indication of an initiatory background. But not every passage rite is initiatory, and the tripartite structure is much too basic to be helpful.

Given all this, the usefulness of initiation as an explanatory paradigm for a large area of ancient religion and culture is questionable. The paradigm should be used only for rituals (and myths) that do correspond both in form and in function to the function and the form that initiation rites have in archaic societies. As in many other cases, the study of ancient religion imported a paradigm that is based on actual social institutions in a small number of societies; and as always in such a case, the gain from this import is counterbalanced by a dimming of the focus and a concomitant loss of explanatory strength. The more eyes use the same glasses, the fuzzier their focus has to become.

Notes
2 Lafitau (1724) 281–349.
3 His diffusionism relied, of course, on the Bible, esp. Genesis 11, as were all the
diffusionist theories of language before Franz Bopp, for which see *inter alia* Olender (1989).

4 The acts: Moreau (1992). See also the even vaster congress reported in Ries (1986) whose papers cover the topic on a global scale, from Africa to ancient Mesopotamia and Greece and to contemporary Islam and Christianity, in the wake of Mircea Eliade to whose work the first contribution (Julien Ries, “L’homme, le rite e l’initiation selon Mircea Eliade”, pp. 13–26) was dedicated.

5 Livy 39.8–19.

6 Varro, *Deling. Lat.* 5.59 (Samothrace) and *Rust.* 3.1.5 (Eleusis); Cic. *Legg.* 2.36. The verb *initiare* is as old as Terence, *Phormio* 49 (presumably Eleusis); the participle *initiatei* translates the Greek *memuemenoi* in a Samothracian inscription of the mid-second century BC (?), *SEG* 29.799. Since the verb presupposes the noun, these two passages show that *initia* as the Latin term for Greek *mystèria* predates Varro and Cicero by at least a century.

7 Suetonius *Nero* 34.4 (the prohibition of *initiatio* of murderers, see Isocrates *Or.* 4.157 who uses *telete*). Seneca uses *initamentum* in the same sense albeit metaphorically (*Epist.* 90.28).

8 Frazer (1911–1915), Part VII 2.225–278. The same insistence on the theme of death and rebirth in puberty initiations is noted by others, e.g. Preuss (1933) and, of course, Eliade (1958), who transfers it to the mystery rites as well; for a protest, see Burkert (1987) 99–101.

9 Van Gennep (1909), 93–163 (“on examinera les rites d’initiation de toute ordre, c’est-à-dire non seulement celles qui donnent accès aux classes d’âge et aux sociétés secrètes, mais celles aussi qui accompagnent l’ordination du prêtre et du magicien, l’intronisation du roi, la consécration des moines et des nonnes, celle des prostituées sacrées, etc.” p. 94).

10 Mauss and Hubert (1909) 144. Schurtz, Webster and Hubert-Mauss are cited by Harrison (1927), 19 n. 1, together with Van Gennep, L. Lévy-Bruhl “and especially” Frazer’s chapter in *Balder the Beautiful*, see note 8.

11 She herself feels obliged to W. R. Halliday for partial inspiration, see Harrison (1927) 22 n. 3; Halliday in turn followed Frazer, see Allen *et al.* (1936) 158.

12 West (1965) provides a thorough rendition with commentary; it is still the best text.

13 Harrison (1927) 16; the emphasis is Harrison’s, I have to insist.

14 Lang (1913) vol. 1, 270–8.

15 Lang seems a mere antiquarian compared to Harrison; perceptions like these must have helped to spread her fame, certainly aided by her genius of self-propagation, which Beard (2000) admirably works out.

16 Murray (1912), see (1925) 46–8.


18 Brelich (1969) 46. Burkert (1977) 391 arrives at a similar conclusion (“In den alten Hochkulturen . . . bleiben Stammesinitiationen nur in Relikten erhalten”); see also Brelich (1961b). One reason for the neglect of this seminal book must be what its author described as: “Il volume appertiene indubbiamente alla categoria dei libri di non facile lettura, ai limiti dell’illegibilita.” This might help explain why nobody ever translated it. But Brelich, who had Raffelle Pettazoni’s prestigious chair in *History of Religion* in Rome but focused his research on Greece and Rome, is still underrated outside Italy – as an introduction to this splendid scholar and complex personality, one should read his *Storia delle religioni: perché?* (Naples: Luguori 1979).


21 His book was reprinted in 1969, after being translated into English in 1960 (University of Chicago Press); see also the contemporary scholarly interest in his work, as manifested by Belmont (1974), Centlivres and Hainard (1981), Anttonen (1992) and Belier (1994).


23 See the way Lincoln (1991) talks about the way initiation functions: “In human initiation, it is nothing else than social pressure that effects the transformation” (p. 111); “the community at large is authorized to pound and coax the flesh of another woman . . . into a desirable shape” (ibid.); “initiators can persuade initiands not only that the established, hegemonic ideas and values of their society are valid, proper, noble, and worthy, but further that one ought shape one’s life and one’s self in accordance with them” (ibid.).

24 Harrison (1927) 22.

25 Frobenius looms large in Jeanmaire (1939) 147–223 (“Rites d’éphébie et classes d’âge dans l’Afrique contemporain”).

26 While Parry had already published his main findings in the 1930s, his oral Homer made a popular impact much later, esp. with Lord (1960) and Kirk (1962). Homo Necans (= Burkert [1972]), was rather ignored in Germany, and it was the excellent English translation by Peter Bing (= Burkert [1983]), with the somewhat more ambitious subtitle The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth that really started its career.

27 This subversive value is still very much to the fore in Dacosta (1991), who somewhat naively insists on the centrality of “l’enseignement initiatiqute”, initiatiory teaching in Greek religion before the take-over by the Christians. By doing so, he explicitly reacts to the paradigms current in the contemporary history of Greek religion.

28 Eliade (1958); the title of the paperback edition, Rites and Symbols of Initiation (1965) clarifies the aim further. It is interesting to note that the ideology of death and rebirth defined initiation rites even for Brelich (1969), to the extent that he erroneously ascribes (136 n. 65) to Nilsson the observation that the Spartans did not have initiation rites because he could not find this ideology; Nilsson (1912) 324 only states that he could not find the initiatory hardship (“die schmerzvolle Probe . . . krasse Brüche und rohe Verstümmelungen”) in historical Sparta.


30 M. Eliade, “L’initiation et le monde moderne”, in Bleeker (1965), 1–14. This pathos resonates also in the general papers in Ries (1986).


32 Eliade, in Bleeker (1965) 14 “La nostalgie pour les épreuves et les scénarios initiatiques, nostalgie déchiffnée dans tant d’oeuvres littéraires et plastiques, révèle le désir de
l’homme moderne d’un renouvellement délimitatif et total, d’une renovatio qui puisse transmuer l’existence”. On Eliade’s ideological positions, see esp. Wasserstrom (1999).

33 Wasserstrom (1999).
36 There are some inscriptions that use telein in order to talk about a priest’s initiation; they all come from Cos, and give us no further hint about the ritual, see Sokolowski (1969) nos. 160, 166, 167. In late Bronze Age Pylos, the term mujomeno (Greek muomenos), might refer to the king’s initiation; see Gérard-Rousseau (1968) 146–7.
37 The one exception is Bremmer (1994) 44.
38 Lewis (1980) 205.
39 Brelich (1969) ch. 1. The scholarly illusion of uniformity again is very much a consequence of Eliade’s theories.
40 For the mallokouria see Montserrat (1991) and Legras (1993).
41 Hatzopoulos (1994).
42 M. Bile, in Moreau (1992), 11–18.
43 The arguments are conveniently assembled in Bremmer and Horsfall (1987) 38–43.
44 Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1931) vol. 1.10 “Ich verstehe die Sprachen nicht, aus denen die zur Zeit beliebten Wörter, Tabu und Totem, Mana und Orenda, entlehnt sind, halte es aber auch für einen zulässigen Weg, mich an die Griechen zu halten und über Griechisches griechisch zu denken.” I suspect that this attitude was another reason that the initiation paradigm did not make its impact in classical studies before the late 1960s when the field generally became open again for outside paradigms; Harrison’s Themis had come too late to make an impact, since with the end of World War I classical studies firmly shut down its former openness for many decades to come. Harrison’s move away from Greece to Russian studies is symptomatic.
45 Versnel (1993a).
48 Donny (1997).
49 Robertson (1983).
51 The words εντείπολις more likely refer to the city, not the acropolis: in 1.26.6 he explicitly remarks that “what is now called acropolis, was formerly called polis”; and this after having used the term polis for the entire city.
52 Thus inter alia Pirenne-Delforge (1994) 56.
54 Cos: Hesych. s.v. agretai; Greek Inscriptions of the British Museum 4.2 no. 968.8; Locrian maidens Graf (1978).
56 Brelich (1969) is very clear about this, esp. in his reflections about Athens at pp. 290–8; see also Bremmer (1994) 44.
57 Bader (1980) relies on narratives for reconstructing an initiatory background to the stories about Nestor’s youth, while Marinatos (1984) ingeniously reads pictorial evidence.
58 Lewis (1980) 205.
59 It is interesting to note that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Nilsson (1912) – reprinted as (1952) 826 – noted, after others, the closeness of many Spartan institutions (including the *agôgoi*) to ethnological material, but insisted on the transformation the primitive institutions underwent in order to become “cornerstones of the Spartan political organization” (“Ecksteine des spartanischen Staatsorganismus”; the citation is from p. 340/868), not the least because he could not find a specific initiation ritual (“das bei den primitiven Völkern der Kernpunkt ist ..., die Männer- oder Jünglingsweihe”), and he theorized that “Die Spartaner haben also die Jünglingsweihe fallen lassen,” not the least because the *agôgoi* took such a long time (p. 324/847).

60 See the description in Aristotle *Constitution of the Athenians* 42.2–5 with Pelekidis (1962) and, for the epigraphical evidence, Reinmuth (1971).
61 Dowden (1989).
65 Xenophon, *Constitution of the Spartans* 2.9; Plato, *Laws* 633b; the flagellation is mentioned for the first time in Cicero *Tusc.* 2.34. For the correct evaluation of this situation see Herbert J. Rose, in Dawkins *et al.* (1929) 405.
66 Testimonies and scholarly literature in Graf (1978).
68 Brelich (1959) and Graf (1997a); but see Johnston (1997) 50–2.
70 See Dowden (1989) 71–95 (for the Proitids), 117–45 (for Io) and 182–91 (for Kallisto).
71 Propp (1928); Burkert (1979) 5–6.
74 Dowden (1989) and Propp (1949).
75 Brelich (1955/57).
76 Graf (1997a).
77 *IG* II² no. 2291 a 41.
78 See Aristotle *Constitution of the Athenians* 42.4, with Pelekidis (1962) 113ff.
81 To a much lesser degree, this is true for the scholarship on Roman religion; see esp. Torelli (1984).
82 Brelich (1969) follows a series of festivals back to their initiatory background; Burkert (1972) 108–19 does so for the Olympic games.