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MASCALUCIA (CT)

Arachne myth

In Greco-Roman mythology, **Arachne** is a talented mortal weaver who challenged Athena, goddess of wisdom and crafts, into a weaving contest; this hubris resulted in her being transformed into a spider.

There are many versions of the story's weaving contest, with each saying that one or the other won.

In Ovidio's *Metamorphoses* version, Arachne was a shepherd's daughter who began weaving at an early age. She became a great weaver, boasted that her skill was greater than that of Pallas Athena, and refused to acknowledge that her skill came, in part at least, from the goddess. Pallas Athena took offense and set up a contest between them. Presenting herself as an old lady, she approached the boasting girl and warned: "You can never compare to any of the gods. Plead for forgiveness and Pallas Athena might spare your soul."

"Ha! I only speak the truth and if Pallas Athena thinks otherwise then let her come down and challenge me herself," Arachne replied. Pallas Athena removed her disguise and appeared in shimmering glory, clad in a sparkling white chiton. The two began weaving straight away. Pallas Athena's weaving represented four separate contests between mortals and the gods in which the gods punished mortals for setting themselves as equals of the gods. Arachne's weaving depicted ways that the gods had misled and abused mortals, particularly Zeus, tricking and seducing many women. When Pallas Athena saw that Arachne had not only insulted the gods, but done so with a work far more beautiful than Pallas Athena's own, she was enraged. She ripped Arachne's work into shreds, and sprinkled her with Hecate's potion, turning her into a spider and cursing



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her and her descendants to weave for all time. This showed how goddesses punished those who were mortal.

This is an extract from Ovidio's version, played by: Pier, Roberta, Giorgio and Marcello.

Pierre: Così Pallade Atena decise di rovinare Aracne della Meonia ...

Roberta: ...la quale, dicono, non intendeva considerarsi inferiore nell'arte di lavorare la lana.

Giorgio: Aracne non era famosa né per ceto né per origini, ma perché era un'artista!

Marcello: Aracne, con la sua maestria, si era fatta un gran nome per le città della Lidia, benché nata da umile famiglia.

Roberta: Per ammirare i suoi meravigliosi lavori, spesso le ninfe lasciarono i loro vigneti e le loro acque.

Marcello: E non soltanto meritava vedere i tessuti finiti, ma anche assistere a quando li faceva, poiché era un vero e proprio spettacolo!

Pierre: So Pallas Athena decided on destroying Arachne from Meonia....

Roberta:who, people say, didn't intend to consider herself lower in the art of weaving.

Giorgio: Arachne wasn't famous for social class neither for her origins, because she was an artist!

Marcello: Arachne, with her mastery, had done a great reputation in the cities of Lidia, even if she was born in a humble family.

Roberta: In order to admire her weaves, the nymphs often abandoned their vineyards and their waters.

Marcello: Not only she deserved her finished weaves to be admired, but also to attend when she did them, it was a real show!



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Giorgio: La sua bravura veniva da Pallade.

Roberta: No! Che Pallade gareggi con me! Se mi vince, potrà fare di me quello che vorrà!

Marcello: Pallade si travestì da vecchia, poi parlò così:

Giorgio: “Più si invecchia, più cresce l’esperienza”. Disse la dea, consigliandole di ambire pure ad essere la più grande tessitrice, tra tutte le donne del mondo; ma di non competere con la dea e chiederle perdono!

Roberta: “Scimunita! Vecchiaccia che non sei altro! Perché non accetti la sfida, oh Pallade?” disse Aracne.

Giorgio: La dea si spogliò del travestimento e si rivelò:

Pierre e Marcello { Insieme: Pallade!

Marcello: Aracne trasalì ed un improvviso rossore le dipinse, suo malgrado, il viso. Subito si sistemarono una da una parte ...

Pierre: ...l'altra dall'altra parte ...

Giorgio: Her mastery came from Pallas Athena.

Roberta: No! Pallas Athena competes with me! If she wins, she will do whatever she likes about me!

Marcello: Pallas Athena dressed up as an old woman, then she spoke.

Giorgio: “The more you age, the more experience grows” the Goddess said, advising her to long for being the greatest weaver among all women in the world; but not to compete with the Goddess by asking her forgiveness!

Roberta: “Idiot! Hag you! Why don't you accept the challenge?” said Arachne.

Giorgio: The Goddess took off her costume and revealed herself:

Pierre and Marcello: Pallas Athena!

Marcello: Arachne started and a sudden blushing draw her face, against her will. They immediately set, one on a side.....

Pierre:and the other on the other



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Marcello: ... e con gracile filo tessero ciascuna un ordito. Lavorarono tutte e due di fretta, con tanto impegno che non sentirono fatica.

Giorgio: Pallade dipinse, con mille colori diversi la collina di Marte. E ben dodici divinità! Giove e Nettuno e se stessa ...

Marcello: ... con lo scudo, la lancia dalla punta acuta, l'elmo in capo ed il petto protetto dall'egida.

Giorgio: Infine la scena della sua vittoria.

Marcello: Ma affinché la rivale capisse che prezzo avrebbe dovuto pagare per un così folle ardire, aggiunse ai quattro angoli quattro altre sfide, a colori vivaci. Aracne disegnò ...

Roberta: ... Europa, Asterie, Leda, Giove, Nettuno, Apollo, Bacco e

side.

Marcello: Each of them sewed a weave with a slender yarn. They both worked fast, with so much care that they didn't feel like tires.

Giorgio: Pallas Athena painted, with thousand colours, Mars's hill. And even twelve Goddesses! Jupiter and Neptune and herself.....

Marcello:with the shield, the lance with the sharp tip, with the helmet and the chest protected by the aegis.

(The **aegis** or **aigis** as stated in the *Iliad*, is carried by Athena and Zeus, but its nature is uncertain. It had been interpreted as an animal skin or a shield, sometimes bearing the head of a Gorgon).

Giorgio: Finally the scene of her victory.

Marcello: But in order that the rival understood what price she would have paid for a so fool courage, she added four other challenges in the four corners, with bright colours, Arachne drew.....

Roberta: Europe, Asterie, Leda, Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo, Bacchus and Saturn!



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Saturno!

Marcello: Neppure Pallade, neppure la Gelosia potevano trovar qualcosa da criticare in quell'opera. Ma la dea ci rimase malissimo e ...

Pierre: ... tre o quattro volte la colpì in testa.

Roberta: Aracne non lo tollerò e corse ad infilare il collo in un cappio.

Marcello: Pallade la spruzzò di succhi di erbe infernali ed i capelli scivolarono via

...

Giorgio: ... anche il naso e le orecchie. La testa diventò piccolissima e tutto il corpo si rimpicciolì.

Roberta: Ai fianchi rimasero attaccate esili dita che fecero da zampe. Tutto il resto si trasformò in pancia.

Pierre: E da questa pancia, Aracne continuò ad emettere del filo e tornò a rifare, da ragno, le sue tele.

Introduction and translation: Cinzia Claudia La Rosa.

Marcello: Neither Pallas Athena, nor Jealousy could find something to criticise in that weave. But the Goddess was very upset and

Pierre: ...three or four times she hit her in the head.

Roberta: Arachne didn't bear it and run and put the neck in a noose.

Marcello: Pallas Athena sprayed some juices of infernal herbs and her hair slipped away....

Giorgio: ...her nose and her ears too. Her head became extremely small and her whole body became smaller.

Roberta: On her hips, thin fingers remained attached which became paws. All the rest was transformed in a belly.

Pierre: And from this belly, Arachne continued living off some wire and she returned doing her canvas like a spider.

Ovidio's text version: Salvo Valentino, director.