Contents

List of figures ix
Acknowledgements xiii

Introduction: On a forgotten myth 1

1 Resident alien: Anteros in classical Greek and Roman settings 7

2 La Récupération: Anteros in the Italian Renaissance 21

3 Anteros as Contr’amour in the French Enlightenment 39

4 Chthonic Anteros in the French Romantic cosmology 49

5 Anteros at the threshold of English Modernism 61

6 Contemporary artists of the anterotic 77

7 Psychologizing Anteros: Freud, Lacan, Girard 93

8 Psychologizing Anteros: Jung 107

9 Three anterotic moments in a consulting room 121

10 An open end: Anteros as a more visible mystery 137

Bibliography 141
Index 149
Chapter 1

Resident alien

Anteros in classical Greek and Roman settings

These instances, and others of the kind, have been collected from the old traditions of Greece, and though you, Balbus, are aware of the necessity of opposing them, in order that religious worship may not be disorganised, your school not only does not rebut, but positively confirms them by giving an explanation in each case of their meaning.


Of all the ruins of Pompeii, the suburban Villa of Mysteries is among the best preserved, the most beautiful, and the least understood. In a special room of the villa, frescoes show life-size figures painted against vivid red backgrounds. The most likely interpretation of these frescoes is that this room was a triclinium in which women were initiated into a cult of Dionysus, and the murals represent a progression of events related to such an initiation into the ‘mystery’ of the god. No extant text offers a key to interpretation. No direct antecedents of the villa pictures have come to light. But the frescoes, painted between 70 and 60 BC, testify to an influx of reformed Dionysiac mysteries that came back to the Italian peninsula after they had been ousted by the repression of the Bacchanalia a century earlier.

The ninth (and second last) scene of the Villa of Mysteries frescoes seems to depict a return to ordinary life once the ritual drama has concluded. The now initiated woman sits while her hair is being dressed by a maid. Eros, with his bow on his arm, looks on from behind the corner, while a second Eros, in front of the women, holds up a mirror (Figure 1.2). Modern commentators such as Linda Fierz-David (1988), Nor Hall (1988), and Gilles Sauron (1998) barely comment on these two ‘erotes’. What meaning might they have brought to the drama for the initiates at Pompeii? Perhaps they are Eros and Anteros, his brother.

Anteros may always have been an enigma. Almost everything now known about this god comes from only a few writers: Cicero [106–43 BC], in The Nature of the Gods; Pausanias [143–176 AD] in his guidebook to Greece; Eunapius [345–420 AD], in his Lives of the Sophists; and his contemporary, Themistius [c. 360 AD], who includes the fullest account in his Orations. No doubt this list of sources represents only what has survived. Moreover, if Anteros was
Figure 1.2 Diagram showing the various characters in the frescoes of the Villa of Mysteries, Pompeii, Italy, with Figure 1.1 located within the two sides of the lower right-hand corner.

Source: Ministero per i Beni e le Attivita Culturali, Pompeii.
indeed associated with a mystery cult, much may have been known but little recorded.

Sometimes, as in this Roman image in the Villa of Mysteries, Anteros may be present but hardly distinguishable from Eros. Elsewhere, he may be completely overlooked, so much so that he merits no mention in such comprehensive modern handbooks of ancient myths as the *Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* (1959, 1968). Yet even though very little ancient writing about Anteros has survived, the existing fragments suggest that he was a familiar presence with a defined area of influence.

In his ten-volume guidebook to Greece, Pausanias reports on two altars erected to Anteros. The first, in Athens, seems to have been located beneath the Acropolis. Pausanias does not describe it; instead, he tells a story:

The altar within the city called the altar of Anteros they say was dedicated by resident aliens, because the Athenian Meles, spurning the love of Timagoras, a resident alien, bade him ascend to the highest point of the rock and cast himself down. Now Timagoras took no account of his life, and was ready to gratify the youth in any of his requests, so he went and cast himself down. When Meles saw that Timagoras was dead, he suffered such pangs of remorse that he threw himself from the same rock and died. From this time the resident aliens worshipped as Anteros the avenging spirit of Timagoras.

(Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I, xxx, 1)

By Pausanias’s account, the presence of Anteros was implicit in the fate of Meles, just as Eros’s hand was implicit in the fate of Timagoras. The Acropolis altar was constructed as much in remembrance of both lover-victims as in awe of the brother-god (Figure 1.3 a, b, and c).

But now, add to this drama of human suffering an explicit image of the god himself. Pausanias found, in the open gymnasium at Elis, a second altar built to Anteros and, in the wrestling school of an adjoining enclosed gymnasium, a bas-relief depicting him. In this carving, a figure of Eros holds a palm branch, and his brother Anteros tries to wrest it from him (Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 6, 23, 3 & 5) (Figure ii).

Pausanias presents two seemingly contradictory images of Anteros. In the first image, Anteros is intuited as an avenger of slighted love, and thus he is in league with Eros: he strikes Meles with suicidal remorse for his offences against Timagoras and, by extension, against Eros. But in the second, Anteros appears in opposition to Eros, wrestling his brother at the gymnasium site for possession of a palm-branch.

Eros and his brother appear more gently and in a natural setting in an anecdote told by Eunapius in his *Lives of the Sophists*. The philosopher Iamblichus came with his disciples to the warm springs of Gadara, in Syria. While he bathed there, the natives told him that two of the springs were known as Eros and Anteros. Iamblichus uttered a charm and drew forth from one spring a light-haired Eros

http://www.jungarena.com/anteros-9780415572316
and from the other his dark-haired brother. The two held fast to Iamblichus ‘as to a father’ until he returned each to his watery dwelling place. Eunapius offers no explanation for the anecdote, but here, in these two bubbling springs, is a fraternal complementarity of opposites: Eros is granted the light and Anteros the dark (Eunapius, p. 368) (Figure 1.4).

Two additional details concerning Anteros’s genealogy can be attributed to the imaginations of Cicero and Themistius. Cicero wrote his study *The Nature of the Gods* at around the same time as the construction of the Villa of Mysteries; he is the first (as far as modern scholars know) to identify Anteros as the son of Ares/Mars and Aphrodite/Venus:

The first Venus was the daughter of Caelus and Dies; her shrine at Elis I have myself seen. The second was sprung from the foam; we are told that she and Mercury were parents of Cupid. . . . The third, daughter of Jupiter and Dione, was married to Vulcan, but her son Anteros is said to have been fathered by Mars.


Thus Cicero gives both Eros and Anteros a place in the gods’ family tree. Anteros is the son of the warring and conflictual Ares/Mars; his brother Eros is the son of Hermes/Mercury the bridge-maker, the connector of worlds.

But it is the philosopher Themistius who, four centuries after Cicero and contemporarily with Eunapius, tells the full story:

When Aphrodite bore Eros, the lad was fair and like his mother in every way, save that he did not grow to a stature befitting his beauty, nor did he put on
flesh; but he long remained at the size which he had had at birth. This matter perplexed his mother and the Muses who nursed him, and presenting themselves before Themis (for Apollo did not yet possess Delphi) they begged for a cure to this strange and wondrous mischance. So Themis spoke. ‘Why’, said she, ‘I will solve your difficulty, for you have not yet learned the nature of the child. Your true Eros, Aphrodite, might indeed be born by himself, but could not possibly grow by himself; if you wish Eros to grow you need Anteros. These two brothers will be of the same nature, and each will be cause of the other’s growth; for as they see each other they will alike grow, but if either is left alone they will both waste away.’ So Aphrodite gave birth to Anteros, and Eros shot up at once; his wings sprouted and he grew tall. The circumstances of his establishment being so remarkable, he often passes through incredible vicissitudes, now waxing, now waning, and again increasing. But he needs his brother always beside him; sensing him large, he strives to prove himself greater, or finding him small and slight he often wastes unwillingly away.

(Themistius, Orations, 24)

This story forms part of an argument in which Themistius tries to persuade his Nicomedian audience that Rhetoric and Philosophy are interdependent and can develop only in each other’s presence. To lend weight to the analogy, Themistius presents the myth as both ancient and famous, but he cites no sources, and none exists today.
All stories of the god Anteros from medieval to early modern times have been constructed from these five references. Anteros appears to represent a dark deity, an avenger of offences against the god of love, but he is also imagined as a counterforce without which Eros cannot mature. A crucially important question is this: how might Anteros embody these contradictory attributes simultaneously?

The etymology of the Greek word *anteros* may provide the first clue. The prefix *ant-* denotes ‘equal to’; a common mistake is to read this Greek prefix for the Latin *anti*, ‘against’ (Merrill, 1944, p. 274).

One of the earliest uses of the word *anteros* in Greek literature is in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, which predates Cicero’s genealogy of the god by more than three hundred years. Plato [427–374 BC] reinforces the reading of the prefix as ‘equal
to’ and the image of alliance with Eros. Socrates, he says, explains how a reciprocating love may rise in the heart of a person who is the beloved: ‘And when the other is beside him, he [the beloved] shares his respite from anguish; when he is absent, he likewise shares his longing and being longed for, since he possesses that counterlove (i.e., anteros) which is the image of love’ (Plato, *Phaedrus*, 255d). Whether Plato uses the word ‘anteros’ in this sentence to signify the god or the passion is not clear. Ruth Padel (1992) points out that early Greek language may not even have made such a differentiation; in the tragedies, for example, it is not always possible to discriminate between a god’s existence in the realm of the imaginal and its presence within the suffering mind and body of a human protagonist. But by the time of the writing of *Phaedrus* (and perhaps even in opposition to earlier conventions), Plato’s Socrates would most likely have intended not a deity but only a personifying of the passion aroused in the beloved.

Still, if Plato’s first recorded use of *anteros* denotes ‘love-in-return’, then the archetypal image of Anteros as a dark brother wrestling with Eros presents a puzzle. For example, what, then, to make of the detail that Cicero contributed? Anteros was conceived in a voluntary sexual union between an oppositional, war-making father and the goddess of beauty, when rape was much more characteristic of the coupling of gods. Venus and Mars come together out of mutual affection, even though they love as adulterers in the eyes of cuckolded Vulcan, who entraps them in bed under a bronze hunting-net, much to the amusement of Mercury. It is intriguing to remember that Cicero owned property at Pompeii. Was the proprietor of the Villa of Mysteries with its Dionysian frescoes his contemporary, even his neighbour (as Gilles Sauron suggests, 1998, pp. 33–34)? However it came about, Cicero intuited for Anteros a genealogy (perhaps even a precise image of his conception) that embodies the paradox, hinting at both opposition and reciprocity in loving.

As in the imaginal realm of the gods, so in ours: is it possible that, like his parents on Olympus, Anteros carried into the human realm images of compensation for the conventions of erotic love of classical Athens? We read of individuals ‘pierced by the arrows of Eros’ and suffering irrational and often terrifying experiences of the god (Thornton, 1997). And yet, at the same time, we know that Athenian lovers were required to confine the expression of their passions to conventional social behaviour. The possibilities for loving were set out on a vertical axis of social rank; the dynamic called ‘erotic love’ was enacted between a small group of adult male citizens who possessed social power within the city-state and subordinate groups who lacked civil rights to varying degrees: women, foreigners, slaves, and children. Athenians classed sexual desire as deviant when it violated the conventionally defined gender roles on this power axis. Sex as the bodily expression of erotic love between an adult male citizen and a member of any of the subordinate groups may have been acceptable as long as it respected the social structure: ‘What was approved and even celebrated by free classical Athenian males was not homosexuality per se but a certain hierarchical relation of structured inequality between a free adult
male and an adolescent youth of citizen status or a foreigner or a slave’ (Halperin, 1990a, pp. 31–35).

Artemidorus of Daldis, a contemporary of Pausanias, travelled extensively in Greece, Italy, and Asia Minor during the second century, but instead of describing what he saw, his *Oneirocritica* (1975/1992) describes dreams and outlines, without necessarily endorsing, other people’s rules for interpreting them. Artemidorus records how positive or negative portents might be derived from erotic dreams according to who was penetrating whom. There were two Greek words for dreams: *enhypnion*, meaning literally ‘something in one’s sleep’, which Artemidorus uses to refer to a dream that merely expresses present physical states or emotions; and *oneiros*, a dream that contains information about the future (1.1, pp. 14–15). The portent of an *oneiros* could be determined by considering the dream ego’s relative social position as reflected in the sexual act portrayed in the dream. Thus, in a conventional or ‘natural’ erotic dream, a man might penetrate a social inferior (his wife or mistress, prostitute, female or male slave, or another man’s wife) or he might be penetrated by another man. As penetrator, the dreamer would expect to enjoy future good (or ill) depending on whether he was (or was not) gaining pleasure. As the penetrated person, he might also expect future good or ill, depending on whether he was receiving something good (or bad) from the penetrator. For a man to be penetrated by his household slave was inauspicious, not because of the slave’s gender or the sexual act itself, but because a social inferior was being represented as a sexual superior (1.78, pp. 58–61). On the other hand, dreaming of being penetrated by a social superior would be a good omen. What I find telling is that none of the ‘normal’ erotic relations catalogued by Artemidorus in his *Dream Analysis* includes the possibility of reciprocation. Anteros is missing.

In this sense, John Winkler argued that the erotic realm that Artemidorus defined is exclusively phallocentric and invasive. The terms used to describe the sexual act are restricted to two: *perainein*, ‘to penetrate’, and *perainesthai*, ‘to be penetrated’. In his opening chapters Artemidorus includes a list of activities that concern only the agent and no one else, and – curiously for us – he includes sexual penetration: ‘speaking, singing, dancing, and also boxing, competing for a prize, hanging oneself, dying, impalement, diving, finding a treasure, making love, vomiting, defecating, sleeping, laughing, crying, speaking with the gods’ (1.2, p. 17). It goes without saying that other people are present at some of these events, but it would seem that successful achievement of the activity does not depend on the cooperation, much less the benefit, of a second party. For this reason, Winkler concludes:

This invasive protocol restates the principle that sex, like competition, makes reference chiefly to the self by treating it as a way of expressing hierarchical movement up or down the ladder whose rungs are marked by levels of wealth and prestige. To penetrate may not have been all of sex, but it would appear to have been that aspect of sex which expresses social relations of honour and shame, aggrandizement and loss, command and obedience, and so it is that
It would be wrong to read Artemidorus’s interpretative system as a phenomenology of actual desire and behaviour, but it would seem to be an excellent description of the public meanings attached to sexual relationships.

Artemidorus’s dream catalogue suggests that, in order for the chaotic extremes imposed by Eros not to contradict the culture’s hierarchical foundations, in order for sexual contact to remain normative and respectable within the bounds of convention, the Athenian erotic relationship was neither socially symmetrical nor reciprocal. Instead, its dynamic entailed a superior role and an inferior one: only the partner enacting the superior role was expected to initiate the sexual act, penetrating the body of the other partner and obtaining sexual pleasure. If love was experienced as a power play in which lovers were overcome by the god Eros, then they often sought relief by gaining power themselves over their beloved (Winkler, 1990a, pp. 71–98). In this regard, according to Christopher Faraone (1999), on the one hand, Athenian male citizens employed love magic in attempts to transfer their erotic suffering from the affliction of Eros onto the love-objects to whom they felt so vulnerably attracted. On the other hand, with the exception of courtesans, Athenian women and male slaves employed erotic magic not in order to project and thereby displace erotic suffering but in the hope of calming and controlling their angry and passionate male superiors.

In this context, Cicero’s suggestion that Venus and Mars are the parents of Anteros is intriguing. Altars to Anteros may be seen as Athenian society’s psychic compensation for the view that love must be enacted exclusively on the vertical social axis. Perhaps the psychic images of Anteros as opposer of Eros, Anteros as the godling engendered in a shared passion by the goddess of love and the god of war, spoke to a human need for love to be re-imagined on a horizontal axis of equality and reciprocation, as an exchange of powers rather than an exercise of power.

Athenian collective consciousness may have relegated Anteros to the province of women because women were considered capable of simultaneously receiving and giving pleasure in the sexual act. The sexual desire of Athenian women was portrayed as undifferentiated sexual appetite, reactive, receptive, and entirely somatic. Women enjoyed sex far more intensely than their male partners, as the blind seer Tiresias, who had lived as both a man and a woman, let slip:

Called upon to settle the question of which one of the royal couple had more pleasure in love, Tiresias provoked the wrath of Hera by revealing that the woman’s body experiences nine times as much pleasure as that of the man during intercourse. In Hera, the Greeks conceived an image of marriage as a refusal of what is called aphrodisia – desire and pleasure – in the name of a contract and commitments that assure woman the status of legitimate wife.

(Winkler, 1990, p. 40)
In other words, by their nature, women longed to enter the wrestling arena of love, and yet, at the same time, they were assumed to be somatically predisposed to submit in the tussle. In this way, perhaps, Athenian social convention could more readily imagine women as capable of sexually experiencing something akin to the image of shadowy ‘anteros’.

Young Athenian men, on the other hand, were forbidden to express any sexual desire at all towards adult men. In Xenophon’s *Symposium*, Socrates states ‘The boy does not share in the man’s pleasure in intercourse, as a woman does; cold sober, he looks upon the other drunk with sexual desire’ (Xenophon, *Symposium*, 8, 21, quoted in Dover, 1989, p. 52). Xenophon, like Plato’s other male contemporaries, did not wish to acknowledge the possibility of mutual erotic love. To reinforce the convention, they taunted one another with the scare-figure of the *kinaidos*, the man who will do anything for pleasure and who enjoys actively submitting himself to sexual domination by other men. This social convention may have been created in response to the problematic position of the younger male citizen in a pæderastic relationship (so well defined by K. J. Dover, 1989, and Michel Foucault, 1990). Imagining the future rulers of Athens exhibiting a desire to submit themselves to anyone, especially to their peers, was taboo.

As well as being an early user of the word ‘anteros’, Plato also intuited a shadowy Anteros in the nature of Eros. In *Symposium*, he quotes a speech by Aristophanes describing love. Aristophanes presents the image of lovers – male/male, female/female, and male/female – as whole, four-legged beings. Because of their hubris, Zeus commanded Apollo to sunder them. Henceforth, each half would long erotically for symbolic reunion with the other (Plato, *Symposium*, 189e–193d). Every lover is like a *symbolon* (the Greek word for ‘symbol’), one half of a knucklebone carried, as a token of identity, with someone who has the other half. Should the two halves come together, they will form one meaning, one self: ‘Each one of us is but the *symbolon* of a human being – sliced in half like a flatfish, two instead of one – and each pursues a never-ending search for the *symbolon* of himself’ (191d, trans. Carson, 1986, p. 75).

This image of erotic desire, set out on a horizontal axis, portrays each human being as equal in worth or status to every other human being. Such reciprocity utterly contradicts the vertical view of lovers as ‘lover’ and ‘beloved’, ‘penetrator’ and ‘penetrated’, substituting a dynamic of Eros as a primordial longing for wholeness. An additional nuance of ‘anterotic’ space is implied when Aristophanes depicts Hephaestus standing over a pair of fused lovers (as he once stood over the entangled Ares and Aphrodite) and asking them what, precisely, they want. Of course, what they want is to remain in their blissfully nostalgic fusion-state forever, even if they should starve to death. Aristophanes’s comically subversive and deeply political speech in *Symposium* ironically levels the hierarchical assumptions of masculinist Athenian society; it even mocks that hierarchy when it implies that politicians reach the Athenian social pinnacle by having submitted sexually more than any other citizens (Ludwig, 2002). At the same time, the speech emphasizes the implications of *eros* for *polis*: Athenians should take

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seriously Pericles’s famous injunction that they should be *erastai*, passionate lovers, of their city (Pericles’s Funeral Oration, Thucydides 2, 43, 1).

Plato faced the challenge of acknowledging Anteros and, at the same time, preserving respect for the taboo preventing the younger male, the ‘beloved’, from the stigma of somatic submissiveness, of being perceived as a woman. On the one hand, in *Phaedrus*, Plato imagines both participants as active lovers connecting on an ‘anterotic’ horizontal axis of relationship:

By granting the beloved access to a direct, if reflected, erotic stimulus and thereby including him in the community of lovers, Plato clears the erotic relation between men and boys from the charge of exploitativeness and allows the beloved to grow philosophically in the contemplation of the Forms. Thus the way is cleared for a greater degree of reciprocity in the expression of desire and in the exchange of affection. The younger man is now free to return his older lover’s passion without shame or impropriety.

(Halperin, 1990b, p. 132)

On the other hand, if they are both male citizens, Plato quotes Socrates’s view that both should refrain from the sexual act:

So when they lie side by side, the wanton horse of the lover’s soul would have a word with the charioteer, claiming a little guerdon for all his trouble. The like steed in the soul of the beloved has no word to say, but swelling with desire for he knows not what, embraces and kisses the lover, in grateful acknowledgement of all his kindness. And then they lie by one another, he is minded not to refuse to do his part in gratifying his lover’s entreaties; yet *his yokefellow in turn, being moved by reverence and heedfulness, joins with the driver in resisting*.

(Plato, *Phaedrus*, 256; italics added)

Likewise, in *Symposium*, society advances because heterosexuality produces new citizens, and pæderastic homoeroticism produces works, such as philosophy: both contribute to the collective good (Ludwig, 2002, p. 353).

Ancient sexual typologies could not conceive of ‘anterotic’ sex between members of the superordinate male group. As a result, Athenian culture had great difficulty with the couplings of the heroes – Heracles and Iolaus, Theseus and Pirithous, Achilles and Patroclus, Orestes and Pylades – because conventional wisdom could not determine who played which role. In his lost trilogy *The Achilleis*, Aeschylus identified Achilles as the lover and Patroclus as the beloved perhaps simply because of the play’s title. But, as Phaedrus says in Plato’s *Symposium*, ‘Aeschylus has reversed the relation between them by referring to Patroclus as Achilles’ darling, whereas Achilles, we know, was much handsomer than Patroclus or any of the heroes, and was besides still beardless, and as Homer
says, by far the younger of the two’ (Plato, *Symposium*, 180a). Between Orestes and Pylades, observed Roberto Calasso, ‘it would have been difficult to say which of the two was the lover, since the lover’s tenderness found its reflection in the other’s face as in a mirror.’ As Calasso noted, only the heroes – and precisely because they were heroes – could have been imagined as overcoming the taboo:

The heroes swept all these rules aside. Their relationships were long lasting – only death could end them – and their love didn’t fade merely because the beloved grew hair on his legs or because his skin, hardened by a life of adventure, lost its youthful smoothness. Thus the heroes achieved that most yearned for of states, in which the distinction between lover and beloved begins to blur.

(Calasso, 1993, p. 71)

In descriptions such as these, in which tenderness is reciprocated and the lover and the beloved blur, we find Anteros most clearly incarnated. How curious, then, that Athenians found these images of heroic love residing simultaneously in ‘the contemplation of Forms’ and in ‘the sacred communion of thighs’ (Aeschylus, *Myrmidones*, fr. 136, in Calasso, p. 70) so troublesome.

In the image of face-to-face wrestling for the palm branch, Anteros represents an erotic energy of loving-in-return that may have challenged conventional experiences of Eros. Embedded in the history of the democratic city named for Athena was the patriarchal act of stripping more than half of its citizens of their power and their names. In the story told by the Roman poet Ovid [43 BC–17/18 AD] in his *Metamorphoses* and cited by St Augustine in his *City of God* (18, 9, p. 771), the women of Athens suffered a threefold punishment for voting to name the city in honour of Athena/Minerva and not Poseidon/Neptune: they were never to have the vote again; their children were never to take their mother’s name; and no one was ever to call them ‘Athenian women’. Is it so surprising, then, to find in classical iconography that a compensatingly powerful Anteros comes in the guise of the inferior, darker brother?

According to Pausanias, the history of the altar to Anteros at the base of the Acropolis in Athens associated the cult not with Athenian male citizens but with lower-status resident male foreigners, non-voting men carrying the projection of the Outsider, the shadowy Other. The foreigners’ devotions, and their cautionary tale of Timagoras and Meles, countered the dangerous Athenian notion of Eros with the myth of Anteros, his equally dangerous brother, thus pushing back against their own imposed inferiority with images of reciprocation in loving. In this regard, it is interesting to note that Athens had suffered an immigration crisis and passed a new law restricting the benefits of citizenship to only pure-bred Athenians and denigrating any union between Athenians and foreigners: ‘No-one should share in the city who was not born of native Athenians on both sides’ (Stewart, 1997, pp. 78–79, 196; see also Cartledge, 2009, p. 106).
Why did the myth of Anteros all but disappear? Was Anteros conciliated sufficiently by Plato, who granted him the apotropaic status of a psychologized ‘anteros’ in the Dialogues? And was Themis appeased, she whose initiative engendered Anteros in the first place when, at Delphi, she told Aphrodite how to remedy the immaturity of Eros? As a Titan, Themis belonged to a hidden race of gods older than the twelve Olympians (Harrison, 1912/1962). She personified a divine and natural energy of ‘right order’ which applied equally to gods and humans (Singer, 2011). Themis’s energies pointed to a feminine-based, ‘powerful and inherent psychological capacity to bring together and contain disparate energies in a work of healing or making more whole’ (Donleavy and Shearer, 2008, p. 2). Did Athenians incorporate enough of Anteros to render desire and community more whole, propitiating Eros, his brother, and Themis sufficiently? After all, according to Aeschylus [524–455 BC] in his Oresteia, Athena and her court of justice propitiated the Furies and in this way rendered them ‘kindly’. Some fifty years later, in his lost play Sthenoboea, Euripides [484–406 BC] doubled the god of love into twins, one guiding the lover into a life of virtue, the other leading the lover straight to the house of death. And in Euripides’s Iphigenia at Aulis, Eros wields a bow that is ‘double’ in its effect, bringing either a lovely life or complete collapse (Carson, 1986, p. 9).

Or could the Athenian sexual norms and political imagination simply not accommodate a change of discourse that included Anteros? Had the images of his cult been integrated, would they have incited too subversive a reflection about the nature of love (Eros) and the natural and social ordering principle of wholeness (Themis)? There are no answers to these questions.

Almost one hundred years after the Romans conquer Greece, one of the few places to find Anteros may have been in the Roman Villa of Mysteries at Pompeii, easily overlooked but present nevertheless on the wall of a feminine mystery initiation site. He is acknowledged in the genealogical citation by Cicero, who lived nearby. A little further off, in Stabiae, another city buried by Etna in 79 AD, a stone tablet about 1.5 metres wide on an otium villa names, in large red letters, ‘Anteros Heraclio Summar Mag’ – not the Greek god Anteros and the immortalized hero Hercules, but two Roman judiciaries who collected taxes and kept the town records.