

Classical Mythology and European-American Culture

Presented for a teachers' workshop in Moline, Illinois

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When I was asked whether I would be willing to participate as a consultant in a two-hour program for teachers, the task sounded simple so I said yes. But I gradually found out that that my "participation" meant presenting a two-hour program for high school foreign language teachers of the district on "classical mythology, emphasizing its relationship to the legends, myths, and cultures of the world, especially to the French, German, and Spanish-speaking peoples." This, of course, is an assignment too big for even a doctoral dissertation.

Well, I have read somewhere that if you don't know what you are doing, do it neatly. So the first thing I did was to break the session into four neat little parcels: classical mythology in our everyday life; mythology in Italian and Spanish cultures; in German culture; and in French culture.

First of all, let's wander around at random and point out just a few of the interesting places in the United States where you and your students and anyone else who happens to walk the same paths will bump into Greek and Roman mythology. Those reading this paper will have to see with their imagination instead of with slides. But let's start by going down a few streets in New York City, where we find statuettes of Mercury on the traffic lights of Fifth Avenue. And over the entrance door to the Parke-Bernet Gallery is a large aluminum bust of Venus and a sleeping figure. Venus is holding her arm up and out, with her forefinger lifted in the sign of invitation. This statue represents the goddess of Beauty inviting a sleeping Manhattan to come in and enjoy the art in the gallery. One problem with this figure is that New York City has an ordinance limiting the distance that anything can project from a building over the sidewalks, and Venus' arm extends almost twice this distance. Solutions were sought without cutting off the arm (after all, one Venus de Milo is enough), and finally it was agreed that the gallery would pay the city twenty-five dollars a year rent for the extra air space occupied by this arm. Then there is the New York City Library's large mural of Prometheus. But perhaps the most familiar of the New York Prometheuses is the large statue by Paul Manship in front of Rockefeller Center. This same artist made a large statue of Europa riding the bull, which was in storage for a long time and is now in Russellville, Arkansas.

Since we have gone to Arkansas, let's stay in that general vicinity long enough to look at two other statues. The fountain in the "public square" of Kansas City features a fountain in which is a statue of Neptune. And in a residential area of Mission Hills, Kansas, a corner lot has a statue of Ceres standing there -- with a stop sign behind her!

Then how about the South? In Birmingham, Alabama, is a huge statue of Vulcan. This is the largest iron man in the world, and is the second largest statue of any material in the United States; only the Statue of Liberty is larger. And in Memphis Tennessee, stands a statue of Hebe, the classical goddess of youth. This statue is a copy of a statue in Russia. also in Nashville, Tennessee, is a scaled-down copy of the Parthenon. By the way, the United States Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C., is also patterned on the Parthenon.

Perhaps the strangest conglomerate of the Latin and Greek gods blended in with modern personalities is in our Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. The paintings in the capitol dome include the following: Vulcan with a cannon to represent mechanics; Minerva with Franklin,

Morse, and Fulton to represent the arts and sciences; Ceres with a horn of plenty and a reaper to represent agriculture; Mercury offering gold to Robert Morris to represent commerce; and Neptune and Venus, holding the Atlantic cable, to represent marine activities. These paintings were done by the artist Brumidi.

If you have a fancy for looking at statues of the winged horse Pegasus, I can tell you three places to look for beauties of this subject -- in museums of Canton, Ohio, and Des Moines, Iowa, and on the campus grounds of the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

Coming back into Illinois, let's move quickly through the University of Illinois campus, where we see the statue of Alma Mater, with Minerva standing on one side of her, representing the arts, and Vulcan on the other, representing the sciences. Then glancing at the campus of another campus, that of my own Monmouth College, we find that the SAE fraternity house features a statue of Minerva.

We will end our tour of these sculptures in Chicago, and the first thing we see as we approach the city is the statue of Ceres on top of the Board of Trade Building, dominating the skyline. And the next thing we see is the statue of Diana on top of the Montgomery-Ward Building.

If all this running around has made you hungry, we might stop at a Greek hamburger joint, where they serve not hamburgers but Zeusburgers. And naturally their fish sandwiches are Neptuneburgers.

There are a couple of interesting wood items in the United States that feature the Roman god of wine, Bacchus. One is a painting on a barrel top, done by Revolutionary War prisoners. After the war, it hung for a long time in front of a bar (or saloon, as it was called then). It is now on display in Windham Center, Connecticut. Then there is a huge Bacchus caskhead, which was created for the California wine exhibit in the San Francisco World's Fair in 1939-40. It is now at the Swiss Colony winery in Asti, California. The parents of a student once sent me a postcard showing this caskhead. On the card was written: "When we saw this, we could not help thinking of you." I have wondered whether this was because of the wine or the mythological connection.

If you want to see some really gorgeous ornamental pieces, we must pause long enough to mention some Steuben glass items. They produced a beautiful paperweight which depicted Zeus and the universe. A vase shows a lyre with all the nine muses. Three ornamental pieces feature Adonis, and Orpheus grieving, and Narcissus gazing at his reflection in the water. And one item is a hexagonal piece, of crystal and gold, so expensive that their advertisements carried no price. This piece is called Carousel of the Sea, and each of the six sides of this hexagon has a picture showing some mythological personality associated with the sea, such as Neptune or Venus, who was born of the sea.

Myth is also used in jewelry a great deal. I own one such item I prize very highly. It is a rather large cameo pin, delicately carved from a seashell in the Pompeii area. It shows the head of Diana, with her quiver of arrows over her shoulder.

Medals and medallions also widely use mythological personalities. Track medals often feature Mercury. And the commemorative medallion for the Apollo mission to the moon features the god Apollo. Perhaps the most interesting and most highly valued of these medals is the Life-saving medal. It shows the Three Fates, who controlled human destiny by spinning, measuring, and cutting the thread of life. On this medal, Safety is standing in the midst of the three sisters and stopping the hand of Atropos, who was about to cut the thread.

Stamps are another area where Classical mythology is used extensively, not only in the United States, but even more so in such countries as Greece and Italy. Probably the personality used most frequently here is Mercury, the speedy messenger of the ancient gods. I am afraid that he has lost some of his agility with the passing of the years.

Many businesses and brand names have their origin in Classical mythology. I have a list of seventy-eight products with the name of Hercules in them, from Herculon carpeting to Herculite glass in cars. Some of these names seem to have been chosen with tongue in cheek, for instance, there is a Medusa Cement Company, since Medusa had the power of turning people into stone. And in Dixon, Illinois, there is a Ganymede Restaurant. Ganymede, of course, was the boy who served nectar and ambrosia to the gods; this restaurant specializes in beer and sandwiches!

Many companies use mythological personalities in their advertising. Domestica wines one time had a running series of ads using incidents from the mythological stories. The Venus figure from Botticelli's Birth of Venus has been featured in ads for hair products and for foods that will not make a woman lose her figure. The Venus de Milo has been used a great deal in advertising -- everything from "I dreamed I was Venus de Milo in my Maidenform bra" to the Meade container ad saying: "If the artist had only known what we know about safe packing." Perhaps the worst "groaner" I have found in this group is the telephone ad which showed a picture of a statuette of the Venus de Milo beside a telephone above the words: "The phone you can use hands-free."

One mythologically-based ad which I especially enjoyed was from a textbook company and showed Icarus falling from the sky when the sun melted his wings. Its caption said: "How to get a space-age student down to earth."

Janus, with his two heads facing opposite directions is the ideal figure for a company which wants to emphasize two phases of its product. It has been so used for such things as pointing out the value of a product for its beauty and utility. I think that Milk of Magnesia missed a bet here. You know -- mild enough for a child, strong enough for an adult.

But probably the place we run into classical mythology most in our daily routine is in cartoons. There are really two kinds of cartoons: those in the newspapers and magazines that are trying to make a serious statement, and those that are just for fun. In order to get the full pleasure of these, you would have to see the drawings, but I shall mention a few of the ways that some of these mythological characters are used in these cartoons.

Pandora, who opened her box and released all the evils on the world, has been shown opening a box labeled DRUG ABUSE, and in another cartoon the box was labeled NEWS MEDIA. For water pollution, Neptune (god of the sea) has been shown standing in the midst of oil spills; water has been shown pouring out of a sewer pipe and captioned "The beginning of the River Styx" (the river of the Underworld); and Hercules was shown standing near the Augean stables, with the modern litter pollution on the other side, and the words: "He was just a beginner." Atlas is often shown as the United States, trying to support the world on his shoulders; and some cartoons have shown the American middle class as trying to carry the burden of national taxes.

Perhaps the three most frequently met mythological symbols in modern serious cartoons are the Trojan horse, the caduceus of Mercury, and the balanced scales of Themis, the goddess of justice, the last two, of course, being the accepted modern symbols of medicine and justice. The caduceus became quite widely used several years ago when malpractice was such a prominent part of medical problems. One cartoon of this nature showed the state of California

as the staff in the caduceus, with the snakes entwined around it. And Themis is often shown broken or distorted to indicate a miscarriage of justice, in such a thing as women's rights. One cartoon showed a judge tipping the scales as he went into the courtroom; another showed Themis rubbing her eye, with the caption "a speck in her eye" at the time Richard Speck was applying for parole. One showed the thumb of sentimental people adding weight to the side of the scales which held unqualified students, while the side of the scales which held the qualified students was out of balance. A very interesting Themis cartoon from several years ago showed The United States trying to keep the scales balanced with the Arabs in one side and the Jews in the other. This cartoon could have been drawn this week. Of course, the Trojan horse is excellent to represent anything that looks great but is really dangerous. I have seen such cartoons, with the horse's head having the face of Castro, or even the body of the horse being a map outline of Cuba.

And then there are those cartoons that are just for laughs. Almost everybody in mythology gets into the act somewhere here. We find Mercury chasing one of his winged shoes that has blown off; Jupiter throwing pies instead of thunderbolts, or relaxing in front of a TV set. We find the entrance into the Trojan horse located under the tail, with the caption: "They'll never think to look here," and another presentation of the horse, with the men forming a line from the exit to a little outhouse. And we find Ulysses being told by the IRS that his war expenses are deductible, but the ten-year cruise after the war is not. The list could go on and on, but the figure who appears most frequently in cartoons just for fun is that half-horse, half-man creature known as the centaur. Perhaps the magazines that use these most are *The New Yorker*, *Saturday Review*, and *Playboy*. Perhaps my two favorites of the centaur cartoons are these: A centaur is pictured as half-man and half-cow instead of horse, with a full udder of milk hanging down. He says to a friend, "I feel like a damned fool." And the other one (from *Playboy*) shows two male centaurs peering from behind a tree at a shapely female centaur. One says: "Wow! A perfect 36-24-185."

And now that we have had our fun session, it is time to settle down to the serious business of relating this mythological material to your disciplines, and pointing out how it permeates your areas of French, Spanish, and German. But before we do this, let's look briefly at modern Italy. Granted that Italian is not taught by any of you, but Latin is; and you cannot turn around in Italy without seeing elements of the ancient Roman civilization. Even the language is so close that Dr. Lenard said it is simply Latin in the ablative case -- just as French and Spanish are really children of Latin.

ITALY

In modern Rome, the ancient city is all around you. A bridge still in use was built by Julius Caesar. The colosseum dominates one section of the city. The baths of the Roman emperors have been turned into museums or staging areas for opera. The Forum, the Circus Maximus, Augustus' Ara Pacis are all still there. The street corners are filled with mythological water nymphs and river gods in fountains. Perhaps the best known of these is Trevi Fountain, made famous by the movie "Three Coins in the Fountain." The central figure of this elaborate fountain is a large figure of Neptune.

Throughout Italy the museums are overflowing with gorgeous art based on Classical mythology. The Naples museum holds much of the art of Pompeii. In Florence, the Uffizi Gallery and the Pitti Palace are especially rewarding. Among the treasures in the Uffizi Gallery

is Botticelli's famous painting of the Birth of Venus. Even in the gardens of the Pitti Palace are fountains with mythological figures, including a very graceful Ganymede and the eagle, and another one with a fat carefree Bacchus riding on the back of a big turtle.

Italian opera and Italian painting are steeped in Classical mythology. Just to name at random some of the Italian artists who used mythological subjects extensively in their works, there is Tintoretto, Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, Veronese -- and the list could go on indefinitely.

SPAIN

First, let's move into the influence of this mythology on Spain. I really have not found much influence on the literature or music of Spain, but Classical mythology has penetrated the art. The city of Madrid has a large Neptune fountain, but this city's Prado Museum is the place to find the greatest concentration of Classical mythology. This museum is especially well stocked with Rubens paintings, many of them on mythological themes. Granted, Rubens is a Flemish, not a Spanish, painter, but I think that I have more Rubens paintings than those of any other artist in the collection of more than 1,000 slides that I show my mythology students -- and most of my Rubens pictures are from the Prado. One of these that is striking and horrifying is his painting of Saturn devouring his child.

There are also, of course, bona fide Spanish artists who have done interesting things with Classical mythology. Goya did a study of Saturn devouring his child; Ribera did a study of the dead Adonis; El Greco's Laocoon is an interesting departure from the usual presentation of this subject. Among Salvador Dali's unusual creations is a study of Leda and the swan, made of alexandrite and emeralds. If this work is turned upside down, it becomes the head of an elephant. And Velasquez' mythological paintings are remarkably delightful. I especially like his Vulcan's forge, with the contrasting figures of Vulcan and Apollo, and his "Bacchus and the Farmers," where the farmers seem to be taking a very long wine break instead of a coffee break during their labors. Then there is, of course, Picasso, who worked everywhere, but who was born in Spain. During one period of his life he was fascinated by the mythological Minotaur, and did a great many paintings which featured (often symbolically) this creature. Some of his symbolical paintings based on mythology included a series of pictures, such as the one on his relationship with Marie-Therese.

A form of Spanish that is nearer home to us than Madrid is Mexican. Classical mythology has penetrated here also. In Mexico City there is a fountain with a lovely statue of Diana at its pinnacle. And a Mexican artist by the name of Orozco did a large mural of Prometheus in the dining hall of Pomona College.

GERMANY and the NETHERLANDS

Now let's glance at the influence of Classical mythology on Germany. I shall make no attempt to keep things in chronological here; I shall simply give a few examples of this influence on German music, literature, and art.

Let's start with music. The Germans have used Classical mythology extensively in both their songs and their operas. Franz Schubert has songs on such themes as Atlas, Orestes, and Orpheus. Hugo Wolf wrote one on Prometheus and one on Ganymede, and a symphonic work entitled *Pentheselia*. Bach's Cantata 201 features the music contest between Phoebus and Pan,

and is a musical satire on a critic hostile to his works; and his Cantata 213 is on the choice of Hercules between duty and pleasure. And German opera is full of mythological reference. Just to list a few of the outstanding names of German writers of operas on mythological subjects -- there are Gounod, Gluck, Mozart, Haydn, Strauss (who collaborated on a remarkable reworking of the Electra story), and Handel, whose mythological works include that touching little opera on Acis and Galatea. Offenbach in his opera, *Orpheus in Hell*, takes the point of view that Orpheus didn't really want his wife back, and simply went through the motions of trying to get her back, under pressure from Mr. Public Opinion. He also wrote a comic opera on *La Belle Helene*.

Much more could be said on this phase of our subject, but I think that this is enough to illustrate the extent of the influence of Classical mythology on German music.

Now let's take a quick glance at the literature. Of course, in the eighteenth century Schiller's *Gods of Greece* drew a comparison between the Greek deities and modern Christianity -- not very favorable to the latter. And Lessing's *Laocoon* upholds the ideals of Classical art. Among the nineteenth century writers, Goethe's name stands out with his drama on Iphigenia, his poems (especially those on Ganymede and Prometheus), and above all, his *Faust*, where Helen is portrayed as the epitome of all that is beautiful in Classical antiquity. And the twentieth century also has many examples of the German use of these myths, among them the 1920 play *Heracles* by Frank Wedekind -- a kind of early Christian mystery play about a lonely figure torn between being a god and a man, and fully accepted by neither. Then there is Gerhart Hauptmann's *Atrides* tetralogy, based on the Agamemnon-Orestes-Electra tragedy. This work was written during World War II and is steeped in disillusionment about peace and brotherhood in the world. This same theme is carried into his work, *Bow of Ulysses*, where Ulysses returns home from the Trojan War, hoping for rehabilitation, only to find his wife surrounded by suitors. Another German work to come out of World War II was Berhold Brecht's anti-Nazi drama *Antigonemodell 1948*. Then in 1954 Friedrich Durrenmatt's *Heracles and the Augean Stables* was first produced. This is a delightful satire on modern politics, with the conclusion that the filth should not be cleaned out since people have become so accustomed to it that they would not know what to do without it. And in 1977 a new German version of the Medea story was produced, using Medea's rebellion against Jason's treatment of her to exemplify women's liberation!

How about the impact of Classical mythology on German and Dutch art? For one thing, some of the best pieces of ancient art are to be found in German museums. For instance, in the Munich Museum one finds a 12-foot 2-inch high ancient bronze Poseidon, and a second century B.C. Etruscan bronze juvenile Jupiter. In the Berlin Museum there is a remarkable 6-inch statuette of Zeus and the thunderbolt, from c.460 B.C., and a lovely terracotta Aphrodite. But the Germans have more than ancient sculptures to show their interest in the Classical myths. The German Heschler has even done a study of Pluto and Proserpina in ivory.

German painters have made good use of this material in their own works. Schalker's *Pygmalion* is a picture full of beauty and graceful lines; Rudolf von Deutsch's *Abduction of Helen* is full of vitality and motion, in contrast to Angelica Kauffmann's *Calypso*. The two Cranachs did many studies of Classical subjects, but they seemed especially interested in depicting the judgment of Paris and Venus with her son Cupid.

As examples of the use by Dutch artists, we might mention Rembrandt's study of Danae and the shower of gold that got her into trouble, and Van Dyck's study of Daedalus and Icarus,

where the father is obviously trying to warn his son of the dangers that lie ahead for him, while the son with youthful impatience is eager to go and not listening.

There are also many woodcuts and engravings of mythological subjects done by German artists, among them Hans Wecktlin's woodcut of Pyramus and Thisbe, and Penoz' woodcut of the Muses leaving Germany because they are no longer honored there.

Another area of German or Dutch art which reflects great interest in Greek myths is what is called the "minor arts." Johannes Lencker created a striking ewer, depicting the mythological Europa. Delftware produced a plate featuring Themis, the goddess of justice, and symbolizing the struggle of Franchise against the tyranny of George III. And Dresden created a music box, focusing on the story of Orpheus and the animals. This music box is gilt bronze, and the figures are enameled gold. It contains rubies, diamonds, and five cameos in its makeup. Konrad Link did a porcelain study of the three Fates. And Knoedler porcelains contain some beautiful representations of mythological figures like Neptune and Thetis.

We cannot leave the subject of the alliance between the Germans and Greek mythology without mentioning that it was the German-born Heinrich Schliemann who discovered and unearthed both Troy and Mycenae, the ancient Greek city of gold.

FRANCE

And now we come at long last to France, perhaps the greatest treasure trove for Classical mythology outside Italy itself.

From French opera we shall name only a few writers. The first opera extant is based on the story of Eurydice and was written for the wedding of Maria de Medici to Henry IV of France. Also, Lully, who was a giant in the development of French opera, wrote a series of fifteen tragic operas, which include the Cadmus and Harmonia story, Theseus, Perseus, Proserpina, Phaethon, and other mythological themes. And his heir apparent was Rameau, who continued the mythological tradition with works on such personalities as Hippolytus and Castor and Pollux.

We shall look a bit more closely at twentieth century French literature. The early forties with the pressures of World War II brought a flood of myth-related French works. Camus' *The Myth of Siphysus* aims to point out the absurdity and meaninglessness of man's existence. Jean Anouihl wrote a play on Eurydice, which was produced in English under the title of *Point of Departure*. He also wrote a version of the Medea story, which has always been a popular theme in world literature. I remember reading an article several years ago, entitled "The Many Faces of Medea," in which Corneille's version of this story is discussed. But back to Anouihl. Another play by him is an Antigone, in which the heroine is a young idealist struggling against the establishment. Giraudeau's *Tiger at the Gates*, on the futility of war, was written shortly after the outbreak of World War II and was originally titled *The Trojan War Will Not Take Place*. And Jean Paul Sartre's *Les Mouches* (The Orestes theme, with the Furies represented as the flies) is a political attack on French collaboration with the Germans.

One of the best known of the French dramas based on mythology is Racine's *Phedre*, and Maurice O'Hana's *Syllabaire pour Phedre* was produced by the the Metropolitan's Minimet in 1973.

Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus* was made into a movie by Janus films in 1950. Cocteau also wrote a play based on the Oedipus story, called *The Infernal Machine*.

These examples are enough to show the pervasiveness of Classical in French literature. Let's now look at this influence in French art.

A good starting point for this part of the discussion is Versailles, that elaborate estate planned by and for Louis XIV, who considered himself "the sun god," and who therefore featured Apollo among the Classical deities. There is an Apollo room in the palace, and on the grounds is an elaborate statue of Apollo. In fact, the paths in the gardens are lined with mythological statues, from Ceres to Diana. The so-called Diana of Versailles statue is a copy of a Diana by the ancient Greek artist Praxiteles. And besides the paintings and statues, mythology found its way into other art forms also. A vault of Versailles put a beautiful decoration on the forestock of a gun, featuring Apollo.

But let's move from Versailles to Paris. As we head toward the Louvre from the Eiffel Tower, we can walk through the Tuilleries Gardens. Here, as in Versailles, the walks are lined with mythological statues, most of them copies of famous Classical statues -- and many of them defaced during the student riots of the early seventies. Here are impressive statues of Ceres, Prometheus, Theseus and the Minotaur. And as we leave the gardens to walk the last short distance to the Louvre, the exit is flanked by two statues of Diana.

Once inside the Louvre, we find that the work of art which has been given the place of greatest prominence in this entire enormous museum is the Winged Victory of Samothrace. As the visitor enters the museum, he finds himself facing a long stairway, far down at the other end of the huge room. About halfway up, this stairway divides into two stairways, leading to the left and the right. In the niche of this division, beautifully lighted and dominating the whole area, the Winged Victory gleams above you in isolated glory.

Of course, one of the best known works of ancient statuary also makes her home in the Louvre. This is the famous Venus de Milo. In addition to missing sections from both arms, this statue shows other signs of the many years at the bottom of the sea, such as pockmarks. But she is still a very impressive work of art -- and most photogenic!

Many rooms here are filled with other art objects from ancient Greece and Rome, as well as with the productions of later artists who used the Classical myths as their inspiration. The Louvre itself is so immense that when I once told Dr. Lenard that I intended to spend a whole day there, he remarked that I couldn't go through the Louvre in one day on a motorcycle. Therefore, I shall mention only a very small sampling of the smaller items of great interest. There is a vase, showing Hercules and Cerberus, which was found intact at Caere. It is most rare that ancient pottery is not found in fragments. There is an elaborate clock, featuring the Three Graces, which once belonged to Mme. du Barry. And there is a Venus and Cupid clock which was designed by Falconet for Marie Antoinette. A similar object, which is not in the Louvre, [as a matter of fact, it is in the Walters' Gallery in Baltimore] is a French gilt box, decorated with twelve little panels of inlay, depicting the twelve labors of Hercules.

And now I am going to tackle the impossible -- to talk in a few short paragraphs about a subject that could not be covered even superficially in a thousand-page book. This is, of course, the use of Classical mythology by the French painters. In my mythology class I use slides from more than thirty of the great French artists. But what I shall do here is simply mention eight pictures by six artists.

For pictures to convey a sense of horror, we could not do better than to choose Delacroix' study of Medea in the act of murdering her children, or his depiction of Vergil guiding Dante through the Inferno, among the punishments of the damned. And no more repulsive monster was ever created than Redon's Polyphemus.

If we move from the hideous to the beautiful, we would have to search wide to find a lovelier figure than Boucher's Diana, or Rodin's study of Orpheus and Eurydice. Two paintings by Poussin are especially effective in portraying both grace and motion -- his Rape of the Sabines, and his Apollo and Daphne.

Perhaps one of the most impressive of French paintings, is David's study of the Horatii and Curiatii triplets, getting ready to settle a war by hand-to-hand combat. They are the center of a canvas otherwise crowded with figures of the two armies. A clock has been designed with the two sets of triplets from this painting made into statuettes on top of the clock. Incidentally, a German play of 1934 used this story to illustrate Marxist tactics.

We might as well end this presentation with a truly international figure, Jean Arp -- Alsatian born, and influential in France, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States. His Three Graces, made of blue glass, were created for the Peggy Guggenheim estate in Venice, Italy.

This has certainly been a superficial view of our subject. I have completely omitted many important names, and I have ignored innumerable important works. But I believe that what I have said is convincing evidence that Classical mythology is one of the great unifying forces in European and American cultures.