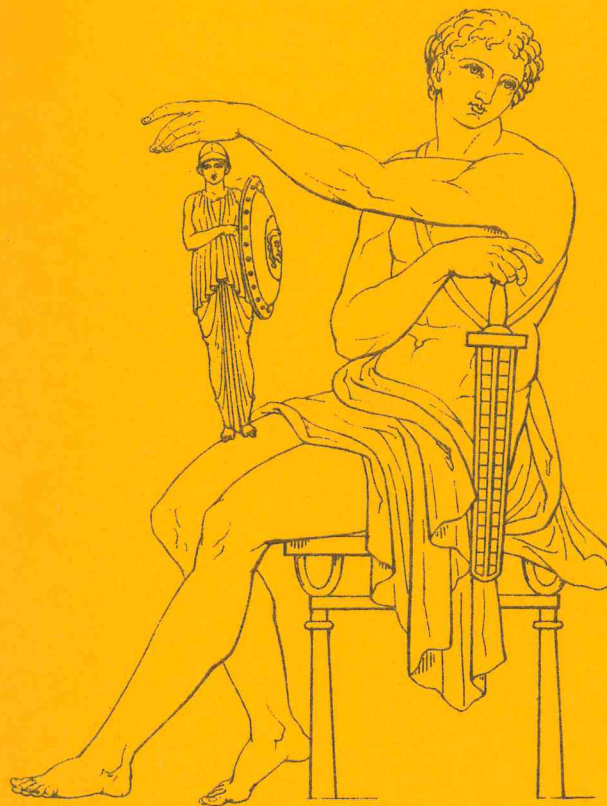


CLASSICAL



MYTHS



Diomedes
from an antique gem

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PREFACE

This little book grew out of more than twenty-five years of teaching a course in Classical mythology to undergraduate students, most of whom knew little or nothing about the subject. It is unscholarly and unorthodox, consisting mostly of brief summaries of some of the important stories of Classical mythology and my lecture notes, which stressed interpretation of the myths and explanations of some of the symbolism involved, with brief discussions of some works of literature, music, and art which are based on the myths. There are many digressions and much trivia incorporated.

At the end of the book are sketched maps of Greece and Italy; and accompanying some chapters are selective genealogical charts. In these charts, only the names important in the myths under discussion are included.

There is no general bibliography at the end of this book. It would be impossible for me to list with any degree of completeness all the hundreds of books and articles that have furnished me the information I used in my lecture notes. Therefore, I did not attempt a list of references. However, at the end of each chapter is a short list of suggested supplementary reading, a list which is important for the reader of this book because a summary of the story can in no way give the vivid details necessary for full enjoyment. For this reason, especially those works suggested from the ancient writers are of great value in getting the most out of this book.

As I have said, this book evolved out of more than twenty-five years of teaching. The material was sifted and refined as I learned from experience what worked and what didn't work. I hope that it can still serve as an introduction to mythology for students, even though I am no longer standing before a class. I also hope that people with a background in this subject may find some new material here.

Bernice L. Fox

INTRODUCTION

What is mythology? Defining it is like trying to say what the characteristics of a red-haired girl are because they are so diverse. Eliade calls it a sacred history, describing the various and sometimes dramatic breakthroughs of the sacred or supernatural into the world. He says that it always deals with realities. Rose calls mythology the working of naive imagination on the facts of experience. Freud characteristically calls it primitive man's attempt to release the repressed desires of his dream fantasies. Joseph Campbell says: "A myth is a vivid story or legend...myths taken together form a mythology that expresses a culture's attitude toward life, death, and the universe. A myth-making society uses tales to comment on every aspect of life." And Ambrose Bierce once called it the body of a primitive people's beliefs concerning its origin, early history, heroes, deities, and so forth, as distinguished from the true accounts which it invents later. Perhaps we could summarize the function of mythology as an attempt to interpret the realities of our world by analyzing their origins, the way they function, and their ultimate results. It always involves the imagination to fill in the gaps left by reason.

Mythology cannot be isolated from religion and philosophy. It is deeply concerned with man's relation to some god: where we came from and where we are going; therefore the meaning of life and death. It is equally concerned with man's relation to others, our ethical philosophy: what are the reasons for pain, frustration, injustice, and war? And it is certainly concerned with man's relation to himself: how to fill an all-too-short life with meaning.

These were the questions that the ancient Greeks and Romans were trying to solve. That is what you are still doing; and it is what your grandchildren will be doing, for you will not find the definitive answer any more than my generation did. Your grandchildren will find your ideas as outdated and inadequate for them as ours are for you. The basic beliefs of one generation become the "myths" for later generations. Each age must carve out its own image of truth and its own gods. This is always a painful task, and the finished result is never quite what we thought it would be.

Most myths can be divided into three general categories: personifications of those forces in life which we respect or fear, especially the fearful natural elements like the sea and storms; etiological myths, which are stories invented to explain the origin of existing historical customs, names, etc. after the real origin has been forgotten; and sagas or traditional tales of heroes, developed from historical events such as the Trojan War.

Many folktale motifs get blended in with the sagas, but folktales must not be confused with myths. Folktales are not concerned with large problems like the inevitability of death, or institutional matters like the justification of kingship. Their social preoccupations are restricted to the family (difficulties with step-mothers, jealous sisters, the nagging wife), not concerns over incest or the limits of permissible sexual encounters. Their supernatural elements are giants, monsters, witches, fairy godmothers, magical equipment and spells. They do not extend to gods in any full sense, to questions of how the world or society was formed, or to matters of religion. Their characters usually have generic names (the king, the prince). A typical theme is that a hero must perform some difficult task; often it is threefold, with each part more difficult than the preceding.

There are recurring themes in the mythologies of many races (including Pre-Columbian America and primitive Australia) -- a universal flood, a fire-bringer, the slaying of a dragon by a hero, a primeval paradise, the father slayer, the abandonment of a hero at birth, exploits of twins, sibling rivalry, and many more.

Greek myths are preoccupied with the contradiction between natural law and human law, between the law of the jungle as opposed to the artificial rules set up by man, the freedom of animals versus the constraints of society. This preoccupation is revived in our own day in "environmental" questions.

The Greeks saw the contradictions in the three great world elements. Fire was good for cooking, for sacrificing, and was an essential medium for metal and pottery work; but it was also a means of divine punishment and fiery destruction. Water was life-giving; but it was also associated with death through great floods. Earth was the birthplace of corn, and therefore sustenance; but it was also the receptacle of corpses.

They saw these contradictions also in other aspects of life: woman was a great glory, and a great evil; love was both divine and demonic; and old age brought both wisdom and senility.

The person seeking moral elevation or unembodied spiritualization from the deities of Greece and Rome will soon be discouraged and disappointed, for here nothing suggests asceticism or spirituality; here is only exuberant, even triumphant, life in which everything existing is deified, whether good or bad. Trees and springs were nymphs. Rivers were minor gods. The sun was a fiery chariot driven across the sky every day by the god Apollo. This concreteness extended even to abstract concepts -- justice was a goddess, as were wisdom, victory, and love. Remorse took the form of three furies, who pursued the guilty man. And their many gods were created in the image of man, having all his characteristics, both good and bad, but just on a more colossal scale.

The gods justify the life of man in that they themselves lived it. There is a strange closeness between the pagan gods and men. The gods speak to mortals directly, struggle with them, marry them, in a manner incompatible with our notions of divinity. They are fallible, far from perfect, not always even admirable, but they are vital and not remote. They represent the triumph of imagination over perception, and of life over existence.

In Greek myths three of the things especially emphasized are: moderation (the great sin of hubris was excess, especially of pride or passion), intelligence (Athena was the most powerful of the gods), and physical perfection (they were the first people to develop organized sports).

The pagans are envied and admired as shamelessly happy, when in fact they had only one great sin -- despair. From this despair, this immense intellectual dismay in the presence of hostile and elemental nature, were born the gods of Greece, the Olympians. This people distrusted the titanic powers of nature, the inexorable Moirai (Fates) hovering over all knowledge, the vulture of the great philanthropist Prometheus, the terrible fate of the wise Oedipus, the family curse of the Atridae which drove Orestes to matricide. Their perception of the horror of existence is illustrated by the story of the wise Silenus to King Midas, in which he said that the most desirable thing for man is not to be born, to be nothing. But since he has been born, the next

best thing is soon to die. On the other hand, the haunting horror of death was always present. As Achilles said, "To die early is the worst thing of all, and the second worst is -- some day to die at all." From this thearchy of terror, the Olympian thearchy of joy evolved, even as roses break out from thorny bushes. The pagan interposed his shining dream-world of Olympus between himself and hostile nature.

The Greeks loved physical life and all its pleasures. Therefore, their artists glorified the human body, considering every part of it as good and beautiful. They portrayed in naked simplicity the whole body (the face, the breast, the genitals, the arms, the legs), not suggestively, but just as a matter of fact. Although there was pornography in ancient times, perfection of the body was one of their ideals, and most of their nude art was simply intended to display a beautiful human specimen, and was depicted with the same impersonality with which a doctor examines a patient.

Many of the ancient statues now have fig leaves over the more intimate parts of the body, but these were additions put there by the Medieval churchmen, who failed to share the pagan's delight in the whole physical being. Also, of course, Renaissance artists used mythological material for very sensuous and seductive paintings. And modern cartoonists look at this material through modern eyes, and the results are sometimes "unclassical," to say the least.

With their joy in the pleasures of the senses, the ancient Greeks felt no scruples about satisfying any of the physical needs. They admittedly loved good food, good drink, and sex; and their playing around had no direct connection with gender. Usually affairs were between a man and a woman, but not necessarily. Such august personalities as Julius Caesar and Zeus himself were not above having their names linked romantically with other men. Strangely enough, this does not apply to any great extent to women.

Women's position in those days was somewhat strange anyhow. A woman's only functions in life were to satisfy a man, and to produce children. She was looked upon more as a possession than as a person. A man had only one wife at a time because a wife had certain legal rights. But Agamemnon saw nothing wrong in bringing his slave girl Cassandra home after the Trojan War. When Pyrrhus wanted to get his slave girlfriend off his hands (after she had borne him two children), he just married her off to her first husband's brother, gave them a little state to rule, and felt very noble about the whole thing. And even where a bona fide wife was concerned, Jason saw nothing wrong in trading in his wife Medea for a newer model.

This attitude toward women explains in part the number of love affairs attributed to such revered beings as Zeus himself. Another reason for these affiliations is the tremendous amount of symbolism in Classical mythology. For instance, Zeus represents divine inspiration, and as such is obviously going to be the father of other symbolical beings. As an example, Zeus and Mnemosyne (the goddess of memory) are the parents of the nine muses, who represent the arts. This means that inspiration + memory = the arts.

Another thing that brought many strange relationships to a deity is the fact Greek mythology is an amalgam of tales and concepts from many origins. As Greece expanded its power and took over other areas, its mythology absorbed some of the deities from the new districts and blended

them with their own gods. Thus the Greek gods will not only have a strange assortment of wives, but they will also have multiple functions which seem completely unrelated. Apollo, for instance, is the god of music and poetry, but he also drives the sun chariot.

Roman mythology was not much more than an adaptation of the Greek. But that adaptation was a big deal, for the Greeks and Romans were totally different kinds of people. The Greeks were creative, with sensitivity and vibrant emotions, and a tremendous imagination. The Romans were a more practical, hard-headed group, whose accomplishments were such things as codifying the laws, and building roads and aqueducts. They were less imaginative than the Greeks. Their art was not only copied from the Greeks, but much of it was actually done by Greek slaves.

Their religion, of course, was not identical to the Greek religion, not only because of the difference in their temperaments, but also because anything living is in a constant state of change, whether it is a language, a religion, a plant, or an animal. But for the most part, Roman religion is a reasonable facsimile of Greek religion, and in this book very little distinction will be made between them.

There is no ancient Bible of Classical mythology. Much of the material was handed down orally. Those who wrote it down gave different versions of varying quality. And, as we have said, it took on new features from other ethnic groups that became a part of the Greek world. The moon goddess is sometimes called Selene or Artemis, and she became blended with the goddess of the hunt. The adoption of elements from another religion can be seen even in Christianity. We celebrate Christmas in December not because that is the month of Christ's birth but because the early Christians found it simpler to celebrate their big holiday at the same time that the Romans were celebrating the biggest festival of their year -- the Saturnalia. Also, when the Christians were trying to wipe out paganism and destroy all the art depicting pagan deities, they did not have the heart to destroy the cute cupids they saw; therefore, they converted them to cherubim.

Without any ancient encyclopedia of mythology, just what are our primary sources of information on what this mythology was? Some of our basic sources are these: The Greek poet Hesiod wrote an agricultural treatise, entitled *WORKS AND DAYS*, which included a number of mythological stories; and of even more importance is his *THEOGONY*, which gives us our most consistent account of the birth of the gods and the creation of the universe. Of course, the *ILIAD* and the *ODYSSEY* of Homer, along with the Cyclic epics and the Homeric hymns, are invaluable. All of these except the Homeric hymns will be discussed in some detail later. There were thirty-four of these hymns, five of considerable length, each relating a legend about a god. They were anciently ascribed to Homer as the author. In Latin, Vergil's *AENEID* and Ovid's *METAMORPHOSES* are our richest sources. Ovid also wrote two other works of value -- the *FASTI*, a study of the religious festivals of each month, and the *HEROIDES*, a series of letters from deserted women (mostly from mythology), to their lovers. Of course, another important source is the Greek drama.

The total extant Greek drama consists of forty-seven plays by five dramatists. Fourteen of these plays are comedies, by Aristophanes and Menander. They make very little mention of the myths. But the tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are based almost entirely on

mythology. All but two of these thirty-three plays will be mentioned in this book.

In addition to the Greek dramatists, three Greek sculptors are important for their depiction of mythological personalities:

Phidias was born about 490 BC. He was famous for the repose and sublimity in his works, with no attempt to reproduce realistically the human body. Hale calls him the most majestic sculptor in all antiquity. He did the temple of Athena on the Acropolis in Athens, known as the Parthenon. He supervised the frieze work (now called the Elgin marbles), but he himself did the two huge statues of Athena. The bronze Athena, done when he was about thirty-four years old, rose thirty feet or more near the highest point of the Acropolis. It was made of spoils taken by the Athenians at the Battle of Marathon. The tip of the spear was visible far out at sea. He also did the chryselephantine statue inside the Parthenon. The Nike figure in Athena's hand was six feet tall. Then he did the Olympian Zeus, seven times human size. When he was accused of stealing gold during his work, the gold on the Parthenon Athena was taken off and weighed. The amount of gold was found to be right. Then he was thrown in prison for putting his and Pericles' likenesses among the warriors on Athena's shield. He died in prison, at about the age of fifty-eight.

Polyclitus was a younger contemporary of Phidias. He set down the rules for the correct proportions of the body, and made statues with the weight on one foot instead of two, which looked more relaxed. We know his statues only through copies.

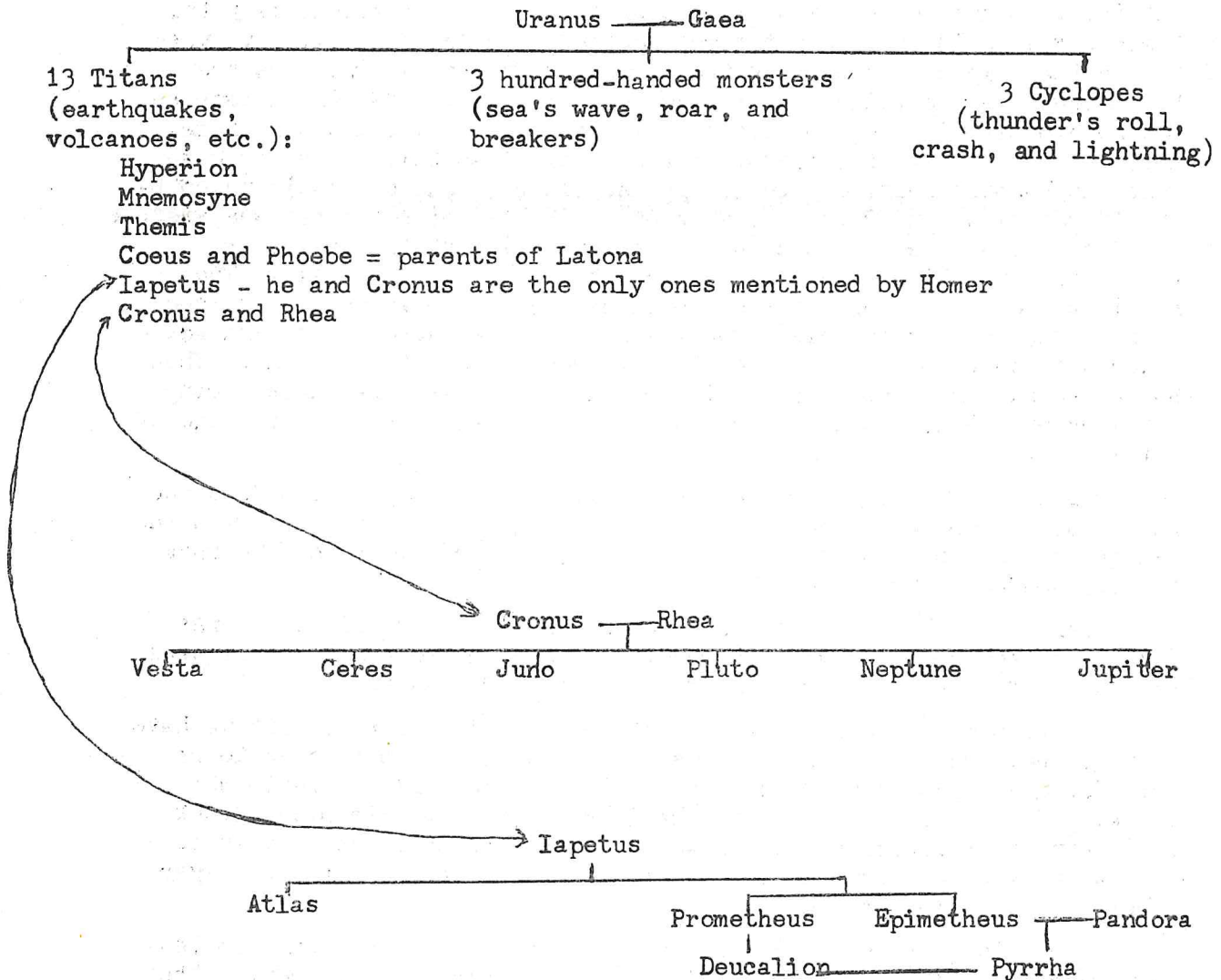
Praxiteles was born about a hundred years after Phidias. He was famous for the sensuous grace and delicate body contours of his figures, such as we find in his Hermes holding the baby Dionysus.

We are sure that there were famous Greek painters also, but we have neither their works nor their names. In 1969, some one hundred tombs were found near Paestum in Southern Italy, on the walls of which were striking frescoes, thought to be the only examples of Classical Greek wall painting thus far known. However, paint was used extensively on the statuary — for the hair, the borders of clothes, and for the eyes (where jewels were not used).

This, then, is the people whose religion is discussed in this book. They were a people of high intelligence and physical development. Their civilization was one of the most powerful in world history, and they have influenced Western civilization ever since their time. They even established the first democracy in world history — in Athens in 508 BC. Eric Berne believes that the Greek myths contain so much psychological truth that everybody can be compared to some figure in Classical myth. But our greatest heritage from them is an intangible beautifying of our world. As Roselle Montgomery once wrote:

In them immortal gods are still astir,
The towers of Ilium are lifted still;
The Parthenon sits lovely on its hill,
And Rome's magnificence is left to her.
The fleece still beckons the adventurer,
The face of Helen moves men to desire,
And desperate Dido builds a dreadful fire
To light the way of her lost voyager.
In them survive all glamorous, dream-touched things.
If these be dead, the gods indeed are dead.
Splendor, enchantment, and romance are fled,
If Pan no longer pipes, and Psyche's wings
No longer poise. This dull world is bereft,
And youth is robbed, with only drabness left.

ORIGIN OF THE MAJOR GODS



cf. Gayley, p. 514 for complete genealogical chart

EARLY DEITIES, CREATION, AND EARLY HISTORY OF MAN

As in all times, various theories existed in ancient Greece about the origin of the gods and of the universe. The primitive Greeks worshipped a female as the supreme deity because it is from the female that birth comes. Thus, Mother Earth was the great creator. But migrants from Mideastern Europe brought a belief in an Indo-European male sky god as the chief deity.

Our earliest account of the Greek idea of the beginning of things comes from Homer, some thousand years after the Greeks had brought in their Indo-European traditions. He says that Oceanus (water) was the beginning. But Hesiod, who wrote about 800 BC, was from a farming community, and he gave greater importance to Mother Earth. His THEOGONY gives us our most systematic account of creation in ancient Greek literature.

Another account of the origin of the world is found in the opening lines of Ovid's METAMORPHOSES. Here the composing force that brings order out of chaos is personified as "some god" or "kindlier nature" [melior natura]. According to both Hesiod and Ovid, Chaos first existed. But in Hesiod's cosmogony, earth is a disk, surrounded by the river Oceanus and floating on a waste of waters. He has earth and love combine to produce the vault of heaven, the mountains and the fields, the plains and the sea, and the plants and animals. Then Erebus and Night produce light and day.

Uranus (the sky god) and Gaea (Mother Earth) ruled as the first gods. Their children were all monstrous personifications of the terrifying forces of nature: the horrors of earth upheavals, of the raging seas, and of the deadly thunderbolt. When Uranus tried to thrust the hundred-handed monsters into Tartarus, Gaea asked the Titans for help, and Cronus killed Uranus. From his blood sprang the giants, the Melic nymphs, the three Furies [Allecto, Tisiphone, and Megaera], and perhaps Venus (Aphrodite), the first being in the universe who was not monstrous.

Cronus, the god of harvest, then took over the rule of the universe. He is represented with a veiled head and a sickle. He married his sister Rhea (another personification of Mother Earth) and they had six children. But Cronus had heard a prophecy he could well believe that one of his children would kill him and take over the rule. After all, that was the way he had attained power. Therefore, in order to avoid this happening, he swallowed each child when it was born — all of them, that is, except Jupiter. Rhea had hidden the baby Jupiter in a cave on Crete and had wrapped a stone in a blanket, which Cronus swallowed instead of Jupiter. Even in ancient times Cronus became confused with Chronus (Time), which gave this story the symbolical meaning that time also destroys whatever it creates. In Behren, Switzerland, stands a statue of Cronus devouring his children, whose heads lie around him. These heads are those of European political figures!

Cronus' rule was the golden age, but he evolved from the young hero to the old villain, from liberator to oppressor. Therefore, he in turn was challenged by his son Jupiter when he grew to manhood. The war between Cronus and Jupiter for supremacy lasted for ten years until Jupiter released the Cyclopes to help him. Almost all the Titans except Prometheus fought on the side of Cronus. Atlas, for his part against Jupiter, was forced to support the heavens on his shoulders to keep them

from falling on the earth. Fighting on the side of Jupiter was Rhea and the hundred-handed monsters.

When Cronus was defeated, Jupiter forced him to regurgitate the children he had swallowed, and the stone. Two eagles were sent out flying in opposite directions; where they met was considered to be the center of the world. This happened to be at Delphi, and the stone was set up there and was called the omphalos (navel). Cronus was sent to the Underworld, where he became the ruler of Elysium, the land of the blessed.

So each dynasty fell when it abused its power. The Swiss poet, Carl Spitteler, carried this destiny even into the next dynasty. His book, called OLYMPIAN SPRING, published about 1910, tells of the climb of the Olympian gods over Cronus, the decay of their power, and the final creation of Hercules as the savior of mankind.

After Jupiter's victory, he married his sister Juno, and the rule of the universe was divided by lot among the three brothers: the heavens went to Jupiter, the sea to Neptune, and the underworld to Pluto. Earth was supposed to be shared, but Jupiter gradually annexed it to his domain.

Jupiter's reign was not uncontested. One of the major revolts against him was by Typhon, an enormous dragon, with a hundred serpent heads and a hundred hands and feet, and with flames coming from both his eyes and his mouth. He was a son of Gaea and Tartarus, born because of her anger over Jupiter's treatment of the Titans. He is the personification of the fiery vapors of volcanoes or of violent hot windstorms [hence our word typhoon]. He was the father of a brood of terrible offspring: the hydra, Cerberus, the Sphinx of Thebes, the dragon that guarded the golden apples, and perhaps the Nemean lion and the eagle that gnawed at Prometheus' liver. By killing him, Jupiter became the first of many dragon-slayers in Greek mythology. The dragon, a concept of Sumarian-Babylonian origin, at first personified the constant threat to civilization by catastrophic assaults of nature. Overflowing, winding rivers were thought of as water serpents. Other mythologies also contain dragon-slayers, e.g. Siegfried [who killed Fafnir], Beowulf [who killed Grendel], and St. George and the dragon.

Another rebellion arose among the giants who had sprung from Uranus' death. Hercules was finally called in to help here because of a prophecy that the giants would not be killed by the gods.

A third revolt was by the other gods because they felt that Jupiter was becoming too presumptuous. When they realized that Jupiter was going to conquer in this struggle, they changed themselves into various forms to escape his anger. Venus and Cupid took on the form of fish, which eventually became the constellation Pisces. But even the gods are not able to escape the consequences of being wrong. The usual punishment for a god was for him to serve a mortal for a period of time. Apollo and Neptune, on this occasion, were sentenced to serve King Laomedon of Troy.

In the pagan religious hierarchy were both gods and demi-gods. The gods were immortal, but not omniscient. They were all subject to the Fates [Greek Moirai, and Roman Parcae]. They were also subject to human wants and emotions. The demi-gods were partly divine and partly human, and were worshipped by cults after their death, e.g. Hercules.

At first there were twelve major Olympian gods, that is, gods whose home was Mt. Olympus. Bacchus (Dionysus) was added later.

These twelve Olympians and their equivalent names in Greek are:

Jupiter (Zeus)	Vesta (Hestia)	Vulcan (Hephaestus)
Juno (Hera)	Minerva (Pallas Athena)	Mars (Ares)
Neptune (Poseidon)	Apollo (Phoebus)	Venus (Aphrodite)
Ceres (Demeter)	Diana (Artemis)	Mercury (Hermes)

Others, such as Hebe, Themis, and Iris, also lived on Mt. Olympus, but they were not considered in the first rank of deities. Pluto (Hades) did not dwell on Olympus. He left the Underworld only once. So the basic number stands at twelve.

It was the Babylonians who gave a mystical meaning to the number twelve. From them we get the twelve months, the concept of a dozen, the twelve-hour pattern, and the twelve signs of the zodiac in astrology.

An even more important universal mystical number is three: the beginning, the middle, the end; father, son, and holy ghost; heaven, earth, and hell. In Classical mythology this number is ubiquitous: Uranus and Gaea had three "sets" of children, and two of these were triplets. Cerberus, the guard dog of Hades, had three heads. There were three Gorgons, three Fates, three Furies, three Graces, and the Muses were three times three in number.

The most important figure in the creation and early history of man was Prometheus, whose name means foresight. His brother Epimetheus (hind-sight) was assigned the task of creating animals, and he was to create man. After Epimetheus had given animals so many of the desirable things of life, Prometheus was unsure what special gift to give to man to differentiate him from all other animals. He finally came up with the idea of making him the only creature who stands upright and looks beyond his present world. From some of the dirt of the earth he molded this new creation.

Prometheus is the one friend of man, the god who sacrifices himself for humanity. But he is instigated more by revenge than by love; he hates Jupiter more than he loves mankind. The Greeks were unable to conceive of a purely unselfish love for mankind. They glorified fortitude, not humility; and Prometheus became a symbol of endurance and resistance to oppression. It was this quality that appealed to such people as Shelley and Byron. This refusal of his to knuckle under to the establishment made him a hero to the young people of the 1970's. In 1972, Angela Davis referred to Soledad Brother George Jackson as a "black Prometheus." A modern Prometheus is one who fights for the underdog, the poor, the oppressed, and often imagines himself a savior of mankind. He suffers in the process, but endures the suffering since it is a part of his mission. In 1973, Jan Kott called him the "supreme sufferer."

His sufferings came about as a result of his activities against Jupiter. First of all, he deceived Jupiter by dividing a sacrificial animal into two portions, one of which consisted of the unsavory parts with good meat covering the top of it, while the other contained the edible meat but it was topped by scrappy pieces. He asked Jupiter which portion he wished to be used in sacrifices to him. Jupiter, knowingly or unknowingly, chose the one which looked better but was inedible. This etiological myth explains why the ancients sacrificed the inedible parts of their victims and feasted on the rest.

Jupiter in his anger said that he would not go back on his word [a man's word was a sacred vow to the ancients] but that man would have to eat his meat raw because he would withhold fire. But Prometheus stole fire for man from one of Jupiter's thunderbolts [Could this have been a forest fire from lightning?]. For this Jupiter punished both Prometheus and man.

A short Bulgarian animated cartoon, called PROMETHEUS XX, shows Prometheus as a Charlie Chaplin character with a broad smile and red hair. Trying to bring fire to man, he runs into various obstacles, including a fireman who douses the flame, a mugger, and Nero. After each defeat, he returns and tries again. His torch is peace, unity, and spirituality (the Promethean spirit). But flaws in man prevent this spirit from developing.

Prometheus' punishment for this act was being chained to a rock where every day a vulture (or an eagle) pecked at his liver, which renewed itself at night. According to Aeschylus' PROMETHEUS BOUND, Prometheus was bound by Kratos (his own stubbornness) and Bia (the force of Jupiter). He could have been released immediately by telling Jupiter the prophecy that Thetis, with whom Jupiter was having an affair, would produce a child more powerful than its father, but Prometheus would not grovel. Therefore, he was not released until thirteen generations later, by Hercules. Chiron, who had been badly wounded by one of Hercules' poisoned arrows but could not die, went to the Underworld in Prometheus' place. Prometheus was forced to wear a ring from then on, containing a piece of the stone to which he had been fastened, to remind him of his servitude.

Jupiter's punishment for man was to have a new being created — woman. A distinct difference exists between the Bible and Greek mythology on the reason for woman's creation. The Bible says that she was created to be a helpmate to man. She managed to bring man trouble, but that was not the purpose for which she was created. In Greek mythology her presence was intended to be a curse to man. Vulcan made her; Minerva taught her women's work; Venus gave her beauty; and Mercury gave her a deceitful nature. Her name, Pandora, means either gift of all the gods, or given everything, or giver of all gifts. She was entrusted with a box and told never to open it, but her curiosity was too great. When she lifted the lid, all the evils of the world flew out. Eris, the goddess of discord, was the mother of Famine, Sorrow, Murder, Lying, and Lawlessness. These children are sometimes said to have been what was in Pandora's box. Pandora did slam the lid on just in time to keep one thing from escaping — Hope. The presence of hope in such a group is hard to explain. Perhaps it meant that no matter how bad things are, hope is always present. There is also an alternate version of the origin of hope — that man gave up knowledge of the future in exchange for hope.

The early history of man went through various stages. Most writers divide these into four ages. The first age was the Golden Age, when foods grew without cultivation, and weather was always mild. However, when Jupiter became the supreme deity, one of his first acts was to divide the year into seasons. Temperature extremes made houses necessary, and crops had to be planted. This was the Silver Age, which was followed by a period when conditions and men grew harsher, the Bronze Age. Finally men became so corrupt that we had the Iron Age, at the end of which Jupiter decided to wipe out the human race with a great flood and start over again. Two people, Deucalion (descended from Prometheus) and Pyrrha (descended from Epimetheus and Pandora), survived in a boat; and, like Noah, they landed on a mountain (Mt. Parnassus).

These two were told to repopulate the earth by throwing the bones of their mother over their shoulder. Since respect for parents was sacred to the ancient Greeks, Pyrrha and Deucalion were horrified by this mandate. Finally, Deucalion figured out that the earth was the mother of us all, and that stones were her bones. Therefore, they tried throwing stones over their shoulders. Those that Deucalion threw became men, and those that Pyrrha threw became women. This method of repopulating the earth probably arose from the fact that a Greek word for people (laos) is very similar to a Greek word for stone (laas).

The story of the flood is vividly told in Ovid's *METAMORPHOSES*. The flood in Greek mythology had to come from somewhere like Mesopotamia, for Greece does not have devastating floods, but Mesopotamia had to combat the Euphrates River. The idea of a great flood with one family surviving was firmly established in Mesopotamia as early as the third millennium BC. Almost all mythologies (except those of the Japanese and African peoples) report a universal flood in the remote past, but with humanity never completely annihilated. An article in the late 1970's places the continent of Atlantis at the Azores and explains the flood by huge tidal waves from the natural catastrophe in which Atlantis disappeared. In all the flood stories, this watery cleansing produces a regenerated mankind.

Suggested supplementary readings:

Ovid - *METAMORPHOSES*, I, 177-438

Bryon - *PROMETHEUS*



The creation of man and the Silver, Bronze, and Iron Ages

Woodcut from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Venice, 1501

JUPITER AND JUNO

The supreme Olympian deity for the Greeks was Zeus, a name derived from a word meaning "bright sky." The name of his Roman counterpart, Jupiter, is a blend of Jovis + pater (god, the father). He was also sometimes called Diespiter (father of the day). This supreme god was a weather god, who was the only deity capable of controlling the thunderbolt. His sacred tree was the hard-wooded oak, and his special bird was the majestic eagle.

There was considerable difference between the personalities of the Greek Zeus and the Roman Jupiter. Zeus was the supreme, wrathful god of justice and virtue, as the ancients defined virtue. The Roman Jupiter was more genial, less formidable than Zeus. An English word derived from his name gives an idea of his disposition — jovial. But we shall use the Roman name Jupiter here to refer to this supreme deity, whether Greek or Roman.

Like mortal kings, he was born, grew to manhood, and proved his worth before he attained supremacy. As we have already mentioned, he was born to Cronus and Rhea. Rhea hid him on Crete in a cave, where nymphs took care of him as a young child. He was fed milk from the goat Amalthea, who, after her death, was rewarded by being made the constellation Capricorn.

After Jupiter defeated his father, he was worshipped as the head of the family of deities living on Mt. Olympus. This family of gods quarrelled with each other and were jealous of each other, just as if they were a human family, but in general they remained aloof from the woes suffered by mortal man, considering human beings merely as toys to be played with or discarded, as their moods led them. Tennyson's poem, *THE LOTUS EATERS*, points out with bitterness the contrast between the lot of the divine and that of the mortal:

For they lie beside their nectar, and their bolts are hurl'd
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly
curl'd

Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world;
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deep
and firey sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships and
praying hands.

Each of the gods had temples built especially for the worship of the one deity, but certain cities were deeply involved in the worship of a particular god. Two places in Greece that were important in the worship of Jupiter were Dodona and Olympia [a city, not to be confused with Mt. Olympus]. At Dodona, in Epirus in Northwestern Greece, Jupiter had an oracular shrine far earlier than the famous Delphic shrine of Apollo. The ancients regularly consulted these shrines for prophecies. The temple of Jupiter at Olympia was famous because it held the statue by Phidias, known as the Olympian Zeus. This chryselephantine statue was seven times human size, and was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. After Greece was dominated by Rome, the Roman emperor Caligula wanted this statue brought to Rome and Jupiter's head replaced by his own. But, appropriately enough, the ship going to pick up the statue was hit by a thunderbolt. The statue existed until sometime between 400 and 500 AD, when it was lost, possibly in a fire.

Jupiter's love affairs were innumerable. In 1964, Maurice Druon published a book on these, entitled *THE MEMOIRS OF ZEUS*. His romances have even managed to give names to many of our celestial bodies, e.g. the satellites of the planet Jupiter are named Io, Europa, Callisto, and Ganymede -- all names of personalities with whom Jupiter was romantically involved.

But Jupiter was not alone in having a series of such attachments. Almost all the Greek and Roman deities played around; however, Jupiter seems to have had more such episodes in his life than the others. In the early 1970's, director Divo Dimitrov started making a movie, which was advertised as the longest, most expensive movie ever made. Its cost was estimated at over fifty million dollars, and it was to run five hours. There were 150 speaking parts. Maria Callas was cast as Juno, Anthony Quinn as Vulcan, Tony Curtis as Apollo, and Peter Ustinov as Bacchus. It is too bad that the movie never was completed.

Jupiter's first love was Metis, who bore Minerva. Then he married his sister Juno. But there was also Ceres, who bore Proserpina; Mnemosyne, who bore the Muses; Maia, who bore Mercury; Eurynome, who bore the Graces; and many more deities. In addition, he had numerous love affairs with mortal women. Of these alliances, five will be given special mention here, and others will be discussed in connection with later stories.

The gods visited mortal women in disguises, partially because mere mortals could not survive seeing a deity directly in all his glory. When Jupiter came to Io, he took on the form of a cloud. Juno would have caught Jupiter with Io if Echo had not delayed Juno by chattering to her. Later, when Juno realized what Echo had been up to, she punished her by removing from her all power of speech except the ability to repeat the last words she had just heard. But by the time Juno came upon Jupiter and Io, he had changed Io into a heifer, which he was stroking. Juno was suspicious and asked for this beautiful little heifer for her herds. Since Jupiter could think of no logical excuse for refusing her, Juno took Io and put over her as a guard Argus, who had a hundred eyes so that when some of them slept, others were awake. Jupiter finally had Mercury tell Argus a long, dull story about Pan and Syrinx, which lulled all hundred eyes asleep at one time. Then Mercury killed Argus and set free the heifer, who wandered around loose. She swam through a body of water, which became known as the Ionian Sea. She finally came to Egypt where her brothers were, and she stamped out her identity to them with her hoof [the Greek iota ι and the omega ω = Ω]. Ovid has this incident take place with her father, a river god.

Meanwhile, Juno had sent that scourge of animals, the gadfly, to torment Io; and she took the eyes of Argus and put them on the tail of her special bird, the peacock.

To seduce Callisto, Jupiter assumed the ultimate in disguises. Callisto was a nymph of Diana, the goddess of chastity. Jupiter came to her disguised as Diana -- lust in the guise of chastity! Callisto was able to conceal her pregnancy from Diana for awhile, but eventually the nymphs went in bathing in the nude, and her condition became apparent. In due time she bore a son, who was named Arcas.

Juno, who was constantly trying to get even with her husband's mistresses, changed Callisto into a bear. Arcas grew to manhood and became ruler of an area that was named Arcadia from his name. One day while he was hunting, he started to kill a bear, without realizing

that it was his mother. In order to prevent this sacrilege, Jupiter changed Arcas also into a bear and placed them both in the heavens as the Big and Little Bears, better known to us as the Big and Little Dippers. Juno, who resented this honor being given to one of her husband's mistresses and her son, forbade the River Oceanus to accept these constellations. All other constellations sink into his waters and rest during certain seasons, but the Big and Little Bears must stay in the sky all the time.

Electra was one of the Pleiades, daughters of Atlas who had been placed among the stars. As a result of her affair with Jupiter, she gave birth to Dardanus, the founder of the Trojan race. This was one of the reasons for Juno's hatred of Troy.

Antiope was a descendant of the Sparti. We shall learn more about her and the Sparti when we study the saga of Cadmus. Jupiter came to her in the form of a satyr. She gave birth to the twins, Zethus and Amphion, who were prominent in the history of Thebes. Amphion was also the husband of Niobe.

After Jupiter had been with Aegina, she gave birth to Aeacus, grandfather of Achilles. Sisyphus' punishment in Hades was for seeing Jupiter as an eagle carry her away, and then telling her father.

However, not all the stories surrounding Jupiter are concerned with love affairs. One of the best stories from all Classical mythology tells about Jupiter and Mercury coming down to earth in disguise to check on the behavior of mankind. Since hospitality to strangers was one of the most sacred duties of the Greek and Roman, these two gods went from door to door, seeking hospitality. Everywhere they went doors were slammed in their face. Finally, one poor old couple, Baucis and Philemon, took them into their hut and gave them the best food and entertainment they could provide, which was not much. They finally realized that their guests were gods when the wine pitcher, which did not have much in it to begin with, kept refilling whenever they poured from it. Jupiter asked them to come to the top of a hill with him, and told them that he was going to punish the evil people of their neighborhood. When they looked back from the top of the hill, they saw that all the land around had been changed into unwholesome swamp land, but their little hut had been transformed into a beautiful temple. Then Jupiter offered them what the gods often used as a reward for mortals -- the fulfillment of any one wish they would make. The Greeks and Romans felt that men were very foolish in their desires, because this is the only time when the boon asked for and granted did not lead to disaster. But Baucis and Philemon talked the matter over and then asked for two things, both of which were granted. They asked to be priests of Jupiter in the temple their hut had become; and they asked that neither of them would have to see the other die. When they were very old, they were changed into trees, Philemon becoming an oak and Baucis a linden, with branches intertwined. This is another myth that Ovid tells vividly in his METAMORPHOSES.

Homer's most frequently used adjectives to describe Jupiter's wife Juno are ox-eyed and white-armed. She was matronly and regal. If we refer to a woman as Junoesque, we mean that she is beautiful and regal in bearing. Beside the peacock, her other special animal was the cow. She was the goddess of women, marriage, and childbirth. June as a month for weddings originated in Rome because the month was named after Juno, and it was thought that prosperity came to those married in her month.

Since Jupiter seduced Juno in the form of a cuckoo, she is sometimes represented in art with a cuckoo in her hand. The wedding was attended by all the gods. Gaea gave her a tree that bore golden apples, an adaptation of the tree of life of the Near East. The wedding night supposedly lasted for three hundred years, but it was followed by a stormy marriage; storms in the heavens were attributed to their quarrels.

Juno was never unfaithful to her husband, a rare quality in the pagan deities. But she did have a jealous disposition, which is understandable when you consider her husband's philandering.

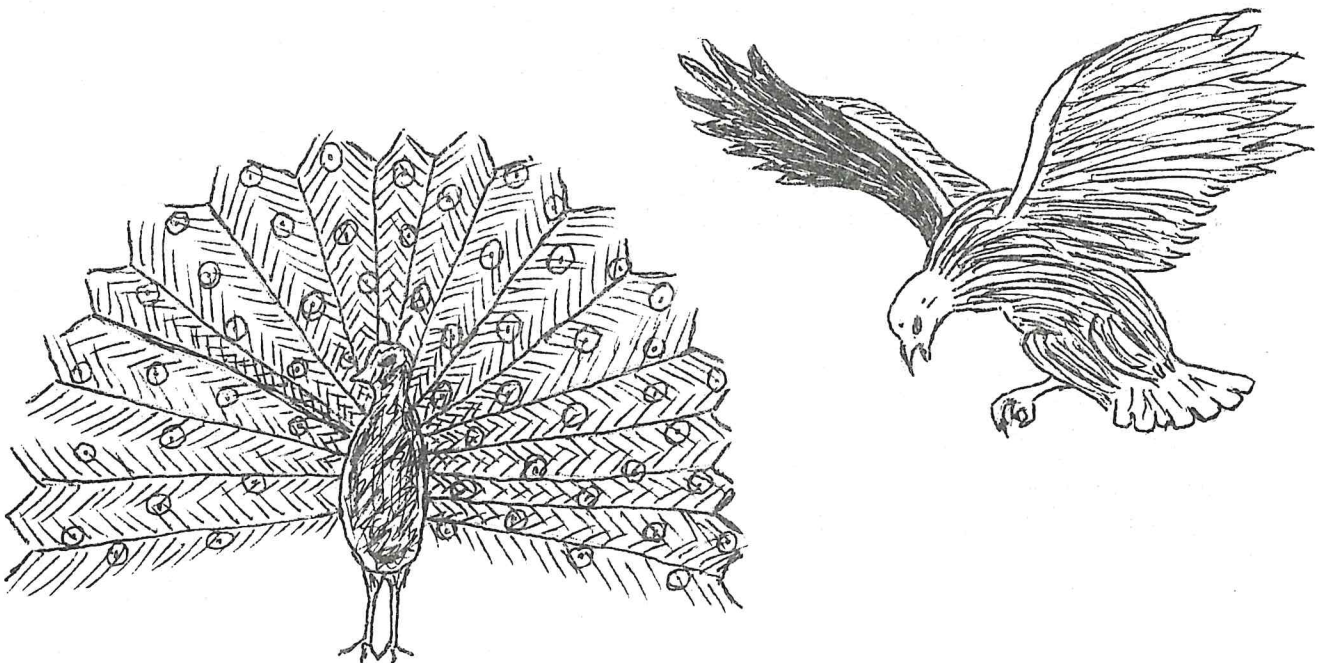
Juno's pity for the miserable lot of mankind is pointed up in such stories as that of Cleobis and Biton and their mother Cydippe, who was a priestess of Juno. It seems that one day Cydippe could not get her animals to pull her vehicle to the temple where she had to be. Her sons volunteered to take the place of the animals. In her gratitude she prayed to Juno to grant her sons the greatest gift she could give. When she felt that her prayers had been answered, she ran to tell her sons, only to find them dead. This, of course, is reminiscent of Silenus' comment on death. A Twentieth Century English poet, A. E. Housman, has a similar theme in his poem, "To an Athlete Dying Young," where he says that a person is lucky to die at the height of his glory, for he never has to face becoming a "has been."

The Cleobis and Biton story comes from Herodotus. It seems that a very wealthy king, Croesus, had tried to get the philosopher Solon to tell him that he was the most fortunate of men. Solon had said, "I will not judge a man fortunate until he has died," and he told Croesus the story of Cleobis and Biton. Later, Croesus was badly beaten in a war with Cyrus because he had misinterpreted the oracle that if he attacked Cyrus, he would destroy a great empire, never dreaming that it would be his own.

Suggested supplementary readings:

Ovid - METAMORPHOSES, VIII, 611-724

A. E. Housman - TO AN ATHLETE DYING YOUNG



CHILDREN OF JUPITER AND JUNO

Although Jupiter was the father of many mythological beings, his wife Juno was the mother of only three children:

1. Vulcan (Greek Hephaestus)

This Greek god was the amalgam of the Indo-European fire god, the Near Eastern god of metallurgy, and the magician god. His Roman counterpart was basically a fire god, and his limping represented the flickering of fire. He was especially associated with volcanic fire.

He was the only homely deity among the Olympians. It seems that homely people always get less consideration from others than attractive people, and Vulcan was no exception to this rule. Once, as a child, he was thrown from Mt. Olympus and finally landed on the island of Lemnos, where nymphs (including Thetis) took care of him for nine years. Because of Thetis' kindness to him, Vulcan would do anything she wanted. That is why, during the Trojan War, all she had to do to get a new armor for her son Achilles was to ask him.

Who had thrown him from Mt. Olympus is not clear. Homer says that Jupiter did this, but the usual version is that Juno was the guilty one and that, after his return, he designed for her a golden throne, from which she could not free herself until Vulcan's friend Bacchus, the god of wine, got him drunk and talked him into releasing her.

He also made the chains with which Prometheus was bound. Most of the time, however, he was characterized by kindness as well as skill. He was the metal worker of the gods, with his forge under Mt. Etna. He created works of extraordinary beauty and utility, perhaps as compensation for his lack of physical beauty. Among his creations were the palaces of Apollo and Neptune, and the chariots of Apollo and Diana. He designed and made many beautiful coats of armor or shields, for such people as Hercules, Achilles, and Aeneas. He also made the sword of Perseus, the scepter of Jupiter, the necklace of Harmonia, and the crown of Ariadne. He even created two living beings -- the bronze giant Talus and the first woman Pandora. The Cyclopes, who worked at his forge, made Jupiter's thunderbolts.

It seems strange that the only homely deity among the Olympians was the husband of Venus, the goddess of Beauty. There are two versions of how this came about. She may have been given to him by Jupiter in appreciation for the thunderbolt, or Jupiter may have punished Venus in this way for repulsing him. But the symbolical meaning of this marriage is obvious: it represents the union of craftsmanship and beauty.

In Birmingham, Alabama, stands a huge statue of Vulcan. It is the largest iron man in the world, and the second largest statue of any material in the United States. The thumb is three and one-half feet long on this statue.

2. Mars (Greek Ares)

One version says that Juno bore this child without Jupiter because Jupiter had produced Minerva without her. He was the god of war, and his emblems were the spear and the burning torch. His animals were the vulture and the dog. His chariot was drawn by four horses, children of the North Wind and one of the Furies. He was accompanied in war by his sons (Terror, Panic, Trembling, and Fear), his daughter Enyo (ruiner

of cities), and Eris (goddess of Discord and mother of Strife).

In Greece he was not admired, a symbol of an evil that exists, and as such had to be recognized but not loved, not even among the gods. Hades alone liked him because he increased the population of his domain. He showed no consideration of right and wrong, just what would cause the most carnage. His very name means "destruction."

In Rome, Mars was always represented as a handsome young man. Originally he had been an agricultural deity; but as the Roman civilization shifted from agriculture to conquest, he became a god of war. March was named after him, appropriate to both roles — the beginning of agricultural pursuits, and the month in which most wars began.

He was vicious also in his personal reactions. Because Cadmus killed a serpent sacred to him, he placed a curse on the royal family of Thebes, which lasted down through Oedipus and his children.

When a son of Neptune raped one of his daughters, Mars killed the young man. [Since this story is told of the Greek Ares, we shall use that name for the rest of this incident]. For this deed Ares was tried for murder in Athens. The fact that a trial was even held marks a move from blind vengeance to a concept of law and justice. The place for this trial was a little hill, which stands between the Acropolis and the Agora. The Greek word pagus means "little hill." Therefore, the place of the trial became known as the Areopagus (the little hill of Ares). This little hill became important in both later mythology and history. The mythological Daedalus and Orestes were both tried for murder here. The apostle Paul preached here. And at one time a Greek orator by the name of Isocrates delivered an address here on freedom of speech. Recalling this many centuries later, the English writer John Milton entitled his essay on freedom of speech the AREOPAGITICA.

Mars was the father of several children. As Ares, he became the father of Penthesilea, famous as a female warrior in the Trojan War; and as Mars, he was the father of the famous twins, Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome. But five of his children, including Harmonia and Cupid, were born from Venus, his greatest love. A Paul McCartney album of 1975 is entitled VENUS AND MARS.

This alliance between the god of war and the goddess of love may seem as strange as the marriage of Venus and Vulcan unless we look at the symbolism involved. The ancients were not unaware that in times of war we have a baby boom since people grab for as much sexual pleasure as they can get, fearing that tomorrow will be too late.

Vulcan naturally was displeased with this affair between his wife and Mars. Once he decided to shame them before the other gods by catching them together in an invisible net and showing them to the other gods. But the results of his trick were not what he had expected. The other gods found it hilariously funny that he was being cheated on by his wife.

3. Hebe

Hebe was the goddess of spring and youth, the original Peter Pan. Among the Olympians she is a minor deity, whose duty was to be the cupbearer for the gods. She is really the focal point of no important story.

However, one day Jupiter saw Ganymede, the young son of King Tros, on the plains near Troy, and Jupiter wanted this attractive boy on Mt. Olympus. He therefore sent his eagle down to get him. Ganymede and the eagle has been a favorite subject of later sculpture.

Jupiter gave the boy's father a beautiful pair of horses for him. These are the horses that Tros's descendant Laomedon promised Hercules for rescuing Hesione from the sea monster, and then did not give them.

After Jupiter got the boy to Mt. Olympus, he needed some excuse for keeping him there. Looking around for a duty he might assign to him, he decided to make him the cupbearer of the gods instead of Hebe. This was another reason for Juno's undying hatred of the Trojans -- a Trojan boy had displaced her daughter just because Jupiter wanted him around.

Ganymede eventually came to be regarded as the genius of water, especially the Nile, and is represented in the Zodiac by the constellation Aquarius.

A rather interesting use of Ganymede in Illinois is the existence of the Ganymede Restaurant in Oregon, Illinois. But a menu from that place would indicate that more beer and pretzels are consumed there than nectar and ambrosia.

Suggested supplementary reading:

Rushton and Norton - "Zodiac" in CLASSICAL MYTHS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE



MINERVA

The story of Minerva's birth has some unusual elements in it. Jupiter was playing around with Metis, a daughter of Oceanus and the goddess of common sense. After she became pregnant, he was warned by an oracle that their child would be more powerful than he was. Therefore, he swallowed Metis to prevent the child's arrival. But he developed a headache so severe that he asked Vulcan to take his axe and split his head open. When Vulcan did so, Minerva sprang from Jupiter's brain, completely grown and dressed in full military equipment.

The symbolism in this story concerns her role as the goddess of wisdom. She was born from Jupiter's brain since wisdom comes from the mind, not the body. [Her Roman name is related to the Latin word mens, which means mind]. She was born full-grown, for wisdom is never immature. The fact that she was looked upon as more powerful than Jupiter himself reflects the belief of the ancients in the power of wisdom. Her military equipment (helmet, spear, and shield) indicates that she was a goddess of war but, unlike Mars, she fought for righteous causes only.

The Greek Athena was originally a Cretan mother goddess (most female deities started that way). It was the Mycenaean warriors who transformed her into a warrior goddess, protector of their royal palaces. The Roman Minerva was an ancient Italic goddess, probably another fertility deity since the serpent is associated with her and is a symbol of fertility. Minerva was adopted by the Romans from the Etruscans, and eventually fused with the Greek Athena. She became one of the Big Three of the Roman gods, the other two being Jupiter and Juno.

She was greatly interested in the welfare of mankind. When Prometheus created man, it was Minerva who breathed the breath of life into him. She helped all the great heroes except Aeneas, a hated Trojan. She fought with Jupiter in defeating the giants. During this war she created the chariot, and she also flattened the giant Enceladus with a huge rock, after which he became the island of Sicily. She helped Cadmus against the dragon. She helped Perseus against Medusa, after which he gave her the Medusa head, which she wore, usually on her shield. She helped Theseus against the Minotaur and Jason with his Argonauts. She worked with Hercules and Ulysses in all their escapades. And she helped Bellerophon tame Pegasus. The meaning of all this is that wisdom is essential to the heroic character.

In addition to her role as the goddess of wisdom, she also presided over the arts of women, such as cooking and weaving, and she was the patron deity of creative people like artists, sculptors, poets, and actors.

Minerva is a prominent symbol in modern life and is used as a trademark for everything from knitting yarn (as the patron deity of women's work) to a publishing company (as the goddess of wisdom). She is on the crest of the Women's Army Corps and the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority, as well as in many other places.

Minerva was a virgin goddess, never involved in a love affair, which may say something about how the ancients felt about falling in love and wisdom! Only she, Diana, and Vesta were completely out of reach of Venus' power.

She was an imposing rather than an appealing personality, and inspired respect rather than affection, for wisdom is something that we ordinary mortals admire but in whose presence we feel awed, a bit uncomfortable. Poe's raven perches on a bust of Minerva.

Putting oneself on the level of the gods was an unpardonable sin to the Greeks and Romans. It was the worst form of hubris, and it was always punished severely. Minerva could be especially stern and vindictive when her preeminence was threatened. One illustration of this is the story of Arachne, who could weave more beautifully than any other mortal. But she had the presumption to claim that she was as good as Minerva. A contest was held, and Arachne's weaving was so beautiful that Minerva, in her fury, changed Arachne into a spider and left her to weave her web forever. This is another story that is vividly told in Ovid's *METAMORPHOSES*.

It is difficult for me to reconcile one episode with my conception of Minerva. When Paris awarded the golden apple to Venus as the most beautiful of the goddesses, Juno and Minerva were infuriated that it was not awarded to one of them. Somehow, it seems uncharacteristic to me that the goddess of wisdom would become involved in a squabble over who would win the prize in a beauty contest.

In Greece this deity was often called Pallas Athena. How she got the double name is told in this story: She had a close friend whose name was Pallas. Once when they were playing, Athena accidentally killed Pallas. She was so grief-stricken that she adopted her friend's name, and she also had a statue of her made, which was called the Palladium. This statue was later dropped to the earth as a sign to King Ilus of where to build Troy; and it had to be removed from Troy before the city could fall in the Trojan War.

She was especially worshipped in Athens, which shows the developing social and ethical principles there, for she and Apollo represent the new order of divinity, the younger generation of gods who championed progress and enlightenment. Her sacred bird, the owl, began to appear on Athenian coins from the Fifth Century B.C. to indicate her patronage. Thus she became the first female symbol of a state; later such personalities as Britannia and Columbia were developed.

It was usual for ancient city-states to have a patron deity. The following story tells how Athena became the patron of one of the great city-states of Greece.

Since both she and Poseidon wanted this city, a contest was held to see which one would create the gift most useful to man. Poseidon created the horse, which was obviously very important as a beast of burden, a worker, and a means of transportation. How much the ancients valued the horse is indicated by the number of marvelous horses referred to in mythology, and by the beautiful portrayals of the horse in Greek art. But then Athena created the olive tree, which even today is ubiquitous in Greece. In ancient times the olive was used not only as food and merchandise for trading but also its oil was used for cooking, for cosmetic purposes, and in lamps.

The judges were the twelve gods, six male and six female; and the voting went strictly along "party lines," for all the males voted for Poseidon and all the females for Athena. Since Zeus, as the presiding officer, did not vote, Athena won the contest by one vote.

The Athenians receive scant mention in Homer, and their patron deity was a virgin goddess from whom they could not claim descent. They therefore

invented this story: Hephaestus tried unsuccessfully to rape Athena, and his sperm produced Erichthonius, a creature half man and half serpent. This monstrous creature was reared by Athena and introduced her worship into Athens, building the first temple to her on the Acropolis. When he died, the Erechtheum was built in his honor near Athena's temple. His successor as king of Athens was Pandion, the father of Aegeus, the first great king of Athens. This great king was succeeded by his son Theseus.

It might be well here to say a little bit about the Acropolis in Athens. Almost all Greek and Roman city planners sought a hill to be the heart of their city for reasons of defense. This central hill of a city was called an acropolis [acro + polis = the high point of the city]. On the top of the acropolis usually stood a temple to some god. In the case of the acropolis in Athens, this temple was the Parthenon, dedicated to Athena and so called because she was a virgin goddess, for the Greek word parthenon means virgin. The present ruins of the Parthenon are from the third temple built on this site, which was constructed about 447 to 438 B.C. Its size is 228 by 101 feet. It was used by the Greeks for their pagan deities, by the Christians, for two hundred years by the Moslems. In 1645 a powder store there exploded and left the present ruins. In our day pollution is completing the destruction. But even in its dilapidated state, the Parthenon is still a thing of rare beauty.

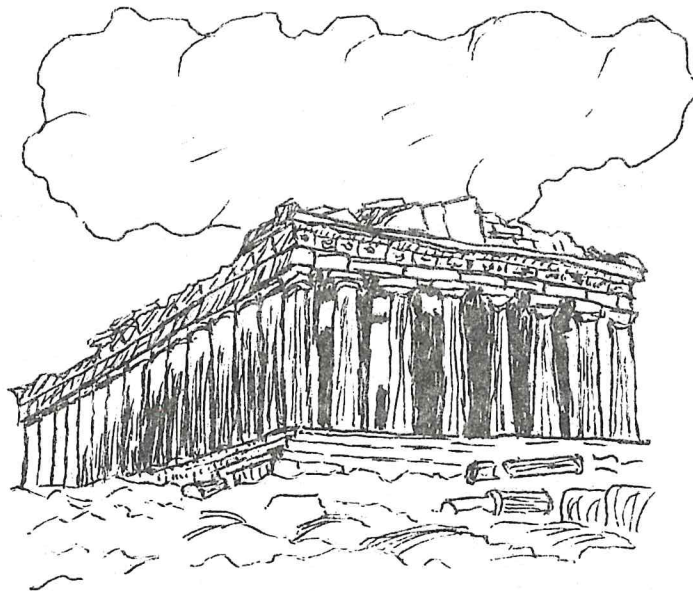
The frieze work on this building was directed and supervised by the artist Phidias. The east pediment showed the birth of Athena and Hephaestus with his axe. The west pediment depicted the contest between Athena and Poseidon. Other areas showed battle scenes — the gods against the giants, the centaurs and the Lapiths, the Amazons and the Athenians, and the fall of Troy. This frieze work was removed to the British Museum in 1801 - 1802 by Lord Elgin and is commonly called the Elgin marbles.

Inside the Parthenon stood a 38-foot chryselephantine statue of Athena, done by Phidias himself. It was later removed by the emperor Theodosius II to his capital in Byzantium, where it eventually disappeared. In this statue, the face, hands, and feet were made of ivory, the robe of gold. The pupils of the eyes were precious stones. At her left side, Athena had a shield, with battle scenes on both sides; and under the shield was a golden serpent. In her left hand she held a spear, and in her right hand a six-foot image of Victory, wearing a golden crown. On her helmet was a sphinx, on her sandals battle scenes; and the birth of Pandora was depicted on the pedestal.

Two other statues of Athena, done by Phidias, one in marble and one in bronze, also stood on the Acropolis.

Not far from the Parthenon on the Acropolis stood the Erechtheum, a strange conglomeration of different styles of architecture, sacred to various personalities and finally to the loser in the contest for the city, Poseidon. Inside this building was supposedly the original olive tree created by Athena. When this temple was destroyed by fire during the Persian War (480 B.C.), a new shoot sprang up from the burned tree, and this new tree was pointed out to visitors as late as the Second Century A.D. The most distinguishing characteristic of this building is its caryatid porch.

There is one little footnote worth mentioning in connection with the Acropolis. A story is told that once, when Athena was carrying a rock to fortify the Acropolis, she heard some disturbing news, which caused her to drop the rock. This became Lycabettus Hill, which towers up not far from the Acropolis.



Suggested supplementary reading:

Ovid - METAMORPHOSES, VI, 1-145

VENUS AND CUPID

1. Venus (Greek Aphrodite)

Both the Greek Aphrodite and the Roman Venus originated as fertility goddesses. Venus was at first an Italic goddess of gardens and growth, who was comparatively late in becoming blended with Aphrodite, who had evolved into the goddess of beauty and sexual instinct.

The rose, myrtle, and the linden tree were sacred to her; and the dove was her bird. She was attended by the Hours (originally two, but later expanded to four to correspond with the seasons since the movement of the Hours brought the change of the seasons). She was also attended by the three Graces (Euphrosyne = mirth; Aglaia = splendor; Thalia = bloom).

As in many of the mythological personalities, this deity had two sides to her character, for physical love can be either beautiful or sordid. The ethereal Aphrodite was thought of as originating from the castration of Uranus by Cronus, who threw his father's genitals into the sea; thus Aphrodite came to the earth from the sea. Her name Aphrodite means foam of the sea, and she is often portrayed in art on a sea shell. This Aphrodite represents love with its best meaning, which the ancients revered so much that it was synonymous with beauty. The basically physical Aphrodite was considered to be the child of Zeus and Dione (simply a feminine form of Zeus). It is from this element in Venus that we get the word "venereal." And it was this Aphrodite who, with Dionysus, the god of revelry, bore a son Priapus, who became the center of a cult of sophisticated pornography. Aphrodite herself was regarded as the patron deity of more than a thousand prostitutes in Corinth.

As we have said, Venus was the wife of Vulcan, but they had no children. Her great love was Mars, but she did have children from other fathers.

The Greek Aphrodite had an affair with Hermes (Mercury), and their son was named after both of them — Hermaphroditus. The nymph Salmacis, when he would not respond to her affection, clung to him so tightly that their bodies became blended into one. It is from this that we get the term "hermaphrodite."

One of Venus' great loves was Adonis, a young Near Eastern male god of fertility who, as the Semite Adon, had been the lover of Ishtar, the goddess of love; therefore, in Greek myth he became the lover of the goddess of love. As the Greek story tells it, the child Adonis was saved by Venus when his mother was changed to a tree before his birth. She entrusted him in a chest to Proserpina's care, but Proserpina found him so beautiful that she refused to return him. Finally, a compromise was worked out in which he was to spend one third of the year with Proserpina, one third with Venus, and have one third to himself. But Venus won over his third to her also. In this story Adonis is a resurrection figure, allowed to return to Venus for the summer months. Both his return and the Christian Easter are in the spring, when the things of earth come to life again.

Adonis delighted in hunting, although Venus tried to keep him from this dangerous activity. Her fears were justified, for he was killed by a wild boar. Some versions say that Mars in jealousy took on the form of a boar and killed him.

In trying to get to him after she had heard what had happened, Venus scratched her legs on her rose bushes, and her blood turned the roses red.

Christianity absorbed the representation of the grieving goddess with her lover dying in her arms and transformed it into a model for Pieta representations. Perhaps the most famous uses of the Venus-Adonis story in English literature are Shakespeare's *VENUS AND ADONIS*, and Shelley's *ADONIS*.

ADONIS (which is simply another spelling of Adonis) is Shelley's elegy about the death of his friend, John Keats. To Keats the summum bonum of life was beauty, which he always wrote with a capital letter. In his "Ode on a Grecian Urn" he writes:

"Beauty is truth, truth Beauty," -- that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

And the first words of his *ENDYMION* are: "A thing of Beauty is a joy forever." Since Adonis was a lover of the goddess of beauty, Shelley felt that Keats was comparable to Adonis.

Another similarity was the manner of their death. In reality, Keats died at the age of twenty-six from tuberculosis, but Shelley felt that Keats' spirit had been broken by the critics. Keats had published his first book of poems not long before his death. The literary critics of the day were as powerful in making or breaking the success of a new literary work as the drama critics today are when they review a new play. The critics ripped Keats' work mercilessly; and Shelley felt that just as the wild boar had killed Adonis, so the boorish critics had killed Keats.

Venus had one lover who was a mortal, the Trojan Anchises. The story of this is told in a Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite. Some say that Jupiter made her fall in love with a mortal because she was always making others do so. The dominant force in this affair was feminine. After it was over, Anchises was a cripple the rest of his life. It was said that Anchises bragged about having an affair with Venus; therefore, Jupiter struck him with a thunderbolt and crippled him. The child that was born from this union was Aeneas, so named from the Greek word *ainos*, meaning terrible, because of the pain Venus suffered in giving him birth.

In many stories Venus plays a supporting role instead of being the central figure. Here are three such stories:

Atalanta was to be given in marriage to a man who could outrun her in a footrace. When Hippomenes decided to try, Venus gave him three golden apples. Whenever Atalanta was about to pass him, he was to drop one of the apples. Since the ancients considered women as very materialistic, Venus was sure that Atalanta would stop long enough to pick up each apple. She did. Therefore, Hippomenes won the race and married Atalanta. However, because they forgot to sacrifice to Venus afterward, she caused them to offend Cybele (an earth goddess), who changed them into lions to draw her chariot. Temples to Cybele often have a lion on either side of the entrance, and she is usually represented in painting and sculpture as sitting in her chariot, drawn by two lions.

Then there is the story of the sculptor Pygmalion, who had never married because he could not find the perfect woman. Finally, he decided to create a statue of the ideal woman. When it was completed, it was so beautiful that he fell in love with it and prayed to Venus to give it life so that he could marry this perfect woman. She touched the statue and brought it to life. This woman was named Galatea, and she and Pygmalion later had a son, Paphos.

This story was a late addition to the Classical myths, but it has been very popular in literature. It was included in *TOTTEL'S MISCELLANY*,

an early English anthology; it was retold by the Elizabethan John Marston; William Morris included it in his *EARTHLY PARADISE*. Perhaps the best known modern use was George Bernard Shaw's play, *PYGMALION*, which was turned into the long-running musical, *MY FAIR LADY*.

One story, probably of Oriental origin, was told only by Ovid in Classical literature. The plot is the prototype of Shakespeare's *ROMEO AND JULIET*. Pyramus and Thisbe are lovers whose families forbade their marrying. When they decided to elope, they agreed to meet under a mulberry tree, which at that time bore white fruit. Thisbe arrived first; but before her lover got there, a lion walked by, having just finished eating an animal. Thisbe fled to a cave, but in her hurry she dropped her scarf. The lion mauled this scarf with his blood-stained mouth and left. Shortly afterward, Pyramus arrived. When he saw the lion's tracks and Thisbe's bloody scarf, he was sure that the lion had killed her. In his grief, he drew his sword and stabbed himself. When Thisbe came out of hiding and saw her dying lover, she picked up the sword and killed herself also; and the berries of the mulberry tree turned dark red from their blood. The only connection that this story has with Venus is that mortals, like these young lovers' parents, cannot compete with the power of Venus.

Another story only remotely related to Venus is the tragic love of Hero and Leander, who first saw each other at the Temple of Venus, where they had both come to worship. They immediately fell in love. Although they lived on opposite sides of a rough body of water known as the Hellespont, at night Leander swam this treacherous strait to be with his love. One night a storm wore out Leander's strength, and he drowned. When Hero heard what had happened, she threw herself into the sea. The English poet Lord Byron once swam the Hellespont to prove that it could be done.

Venus is, quite naturally, a favorite subject of painters and sculptors. She was especially popular as a subject for Renaissance artists, when the use of the nude in art became widespread. Probably the best known statue of her, however, comes from ancient times — the Venus de Milo, now in the Louvre. But such painters as Titian did numerous studies of her later, and the most widely known study of the birth of Venus was done by Botticelli and now hangs in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy.

Almost as widely used in art as Venus herself are her attendants, the three Graces. They are used a great deal in jewelry, and are often grouped to form the base of a punch bowl, a lamp, or a candelabra.

In literature, of course, both Venus as a personality and the stories associated with her have been widely used. William Morris tells the story of Pygmalion and that of Atalanta's race; Schiller wrote a version of the Hero and Leander story. Shakespeare wrote a narrative poem on Venus and Adonis, and used the Pyramus and Thisbe story for a comic skit in his *MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*.

In modern music Frankie Avalon had a gold record entitled "Venus," an appeal to her to send him a girl friend; and Jimmy Clanton recorded "Venus in Blue Jeans."

2. Cupid (Greek Eros)

Like his mother Venus, Cupid had a dual nature, the Roman god not so much as the Greek Eros. In Greek mythology Eros (or love) was first thought of as an ethereal being, the chief force in the creation process.

Later he was considered as the son of the goddess of love and the god of war. The Roman Cupid was always thought of as the son of Venus and Mars, a mischievous child, the one who starts emotional involvements or flirtations. Ovid in his *ARS AMATORIA* says to Cupid that as a child his proper function is play, not serious business. In art sometimes groups of cupids are portrayed, as on the walls of the Cupid Dining Room in Pompeii.

But this is quite different from the early Greek Eros. There is a long discussion of the nature of Eros in Plato's *SYMPOSIUM*. A lengthy quotation from this is given in Morford and Lenardon's *CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY*. Basically, it speaks of human beings as originally being spherical in shape and having four legs each, as well as containing in each both male and female principles. Zeus decided to cut them in halves, with two legs and one sex. And each must find the beloved that is his other half in order to be restored to his original nature.

Another author said: God created Adam, who had within his being both the male and female. Then came the separation, the duality, the coincidence of opposites. But the generation of new life comes from the reuniting of the two, and the recognition that everything and its opposite are only two sides of the same thing — light and dark, time and eternity, good and bad, beauty and ugliness. And what seemed ugly turns to beauty if accepted, like the old hag in the Irish folk tale who wanted a kiss for a drink of water, and turned to a beautiful princess; or the frog that turned to a prince when the girl kissed him.

References to Cupid in world literature are innumerable, but the most famous story about him concerns his love for Psyche. The story was first told by Apuleius in the *GOLDEN ASS*, about 130 A.D. It is a story filled with both folk tale motifs and symbolism.

Cupid falls in love with Psyche but forbids her to ever try to see what he looks like when he comes to her. All goes well until Psyche's jealous sisters persuade her to look at Cupid. Whereupon, he immediately disappears. Psyche, heart-broken, tries to get him to come back, but Venus, jealous of her son's affection for the girl, imposes a series of seemingly impossible tasks for her to accomplish first. Among these is the bringing of a jar of Proserpina's beauty from the Underworld for Venus. Psyche is warned not to open the jar but, like Pandora, she cannot resist. She wants some of the beauty for herself to help her get Cupid to come back. Therefore, she opens the forbidden container. Immediately she faints, and is revived only by Cupid's awakening her. Cupid eventually appeals to Jupiter to work his problem out for him; and after Cupid and Psyche are reunited, they have a daughter, who is given the name Pleasure.

You will recognize many of the folk tale elements here: there is the taboo against looking at a secret lover; Venus is a cruel mother-in-law instead of the usual stepmother; and Psyche is assigned the impossible tasks, which she accomplishes.

The symbolism is pervasive. Cupid is love, and the Greek word Psyche means soul. When love comes to the soul, one must not try to analyze it; curiosity and suspicion drive love away. In order to win back love, once lost, one must suffer, even to the point of "going through hell." But when love enters the soul, it produces pleasure.

Another story based on Cupid is told in English literature by J. G. Saxe, in a poem entitled "Death and Cupid." It seems that one day Death and Cupid bumped into each other, and their arrows fell out of the quivers.

When they picked them up, they tried to sort them out, but some of Death's arrows got into Cupid's quiver and vice versa. As Saxe says:

And that explains the reason why
Despite the gods above,
The young are often doomed to die,
The old to fall in love.

Suggested supplementary reading:

"Cupid and Psyche," *ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA* or
Walter Pater - "Cupid and Psyche," *MARIUS THE EPICUREAN*.
Elizabeth Barrett Browning - *PSYCHE GAZING AT CUPID*
George Bernard Shaw - *PYGMALION*
Shakespeare - *MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM*, Act V, Scene 1
Mark Morford and Robert Lenardon - *CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY*, pp. 109 - 116
[David McKay Company, publishers]



Cupid Statue - Piccadilly Circus, London

VI

SEA DEITIES

1. Neptune (Greek Poseidon)

Neptune was originally a rain-giver, associated with vegetation, then blended with the Greek Poseidon, who was originally a god of the depths of the earth, causing earthquakes. His Greek name means "husband of the earth," and he was regularly called the earth-shaker by the Greeks. He is identified by his trident, made for him by the Cyclopes. Bulls, especially black ones, were sacred to him and were sacrificed to him; and bull fights were held in his honor. Another animal he was closely associated with was the horse.: He created it; he was the father of the marvelous horse Arion; and he was the patron god of horse racing. In his stables he kept his white chariot horses with the bronze hoofs and golden manes. He also had a gold chariot and a robe of gold. And he had a mansion on Mt. Olympus as well as one in the Aegean Sea.

Since he was the god of the sea, his temples were usually on headlands, as at Sunion, in Greece, so that sailors could see them from far out on the waters and pray to him for protection. He was always seeking to extend his realm -- the sea always eats away at land areas. Remember that he had tried to win Athens, a seacoast city, from Minerva. And as the chief water deity, he is often represented in fountains. One of the best known and most elaborate of these is Trevi Fountain in Rome, made famous by the movie, THREE COINS IN A FOUNTAIN.

He was cruel and vindictive when crossed. He persecuted Ulysses for years after the blinding of his son Polyphemus. But his usual way of getting even with people was by sending sea monsters to plague them.

When the gods had rebelled against Jupiter, they were punished. Apollo and Neptune had to serve King Laomedon of Troy. When the king refused to pay the agreed wages for help in building the walls of Troy, Neptune sent a sea monster to devour Laomedon's daughter, Hesione.

Neptune had almost as many love affairs as Jupiter. If you wish a complete list of these, you can find it in E. E. Barthell's GODS AND GODDESSES OF ANCIENT GREECE, Chapters 9 and 10. Some of those involvements are these:

- A. Ceres: When he made a pass at her, she tried to avoid him by changing herself to a mare, but that did not daunt him. He simply changed himself into a stallion. The result of this was the birth of the horse Arion, who had the power of human speech and whose right feet were human feet.
- B. Medusa: When Perseus killed this Gorgon, she was pregnant by Neptune, and from her dying body sprang the winged horse Pegasus.
- C. Gaea (Mother Earth): She bore the wrestler Antaeus, who regained his strength every time he was thrown upon his mother, the earth. And she also bore Charybdis, who, facing Scylla (a six-headed monster with limbs of serpents and barking dogs), made the strait between Italy and Sicily impassible.
- D. Caenis: Neptune offered her the fulfillment of any one wish. Her wish was that she might become an invulnerable man, after which his/her name became Caeneus. Virginia Woolf has a novel that reverses this development. In her ORLANDO, a man during a period of illness is changed and spends the rest of life as a woman.

- E. Aethra, the mother of Theseus: Neptune gave her three wishes, which she turned over to her son.
- F. Amphitrite, a Nereid (water nymph): She had originally been a personification of the sea. Neptune saw her dancing on the island of Naxos and fell in love with her. After he married her, her whole function was to serve as a faithful wife. She was the mother of Proteus (famous for his uncanny ability to change his shape) and Triton, who was human from the waist up and fish from the waist down. As trumpeter of the sea, he carried a large shell horn. Like Cupid, he is often portrayed in groups. There is a Triton, for instance, above each wheel of the royal coach in England.

Two other famous Nereids besides Amphitrite were Thetis, whom we have already met as a mistress of Jupiter and a protector of the young Vulcan, and Galatea, who was loved by the Cyclops Polyphemus. Galatea, however, was in love with Acis; and while Polyphemus awkwardly tried to serenade his love, she and Acis would be together in a cave. Finally, one day when Polyphemus caught these lovers together, he hurled a rock and killed Acis, whose blood turned the water of the Acis River red. Actually, the water was red probably because of iron in the ground there, but the Greeks would never accept such a prosaic explanation.

This story has attracted various writers. It was first told in the IDYLLS of Theocritus, a Greek writer. In English literature, John Gay wrote a play based on it. And Handel has a little opera, entitled ACIS AND GALATEA in which Polyphemus' frustration sets the tone.

Other water deities included the river gods. The oldest and greatest of these was Achelous, whom Hercules had to defeat in a wrestling match in order to win his wife Dejanira.

There were also several "families" of minor sea deities. The Harpies had the heads of girls with the bodies, wings, and claws of birds. The three old witches called the Graeae (Dino, Pemphredo, and Enyo) shared one eye and one tooth among them, and represented old, older, and oldest. The Gorgons (Stheno, Euryale, and Medusa) had serpents for hair and were so ugly that any one who looked at them was turned to stone. Medusa was the only one of them who was mortal. There were also the Sirens, first represented as half woman and half bird. Originally they had been sweet-singing companions of Proserpina until Pluto kidnapped her. They searched far and wide for her, and asked for wings in order to search the seas. Then they lost their power to fly after a singing contest with the Muses. In Medieval times they became Mermaids, the same as the German Lorelei, luring sailors onto destructive reefs.

With the exception of Neptune, perhaps the most important individual in the sea world was Atlas, the son of Iapetus, who was punished for fighting with Cronus against Jupiter by having to hold up the heavens to keep them from crashing down on the earth. In art he is usually represented as holding the earth on his shoulders because that is much easier to portray, especially in sculpture. The way he became classified as a sea deity was that he was thought of as standing in the far West, where River Ocean encircles the outer borders of the earth.

He had four wives, and by them became the father of four families. [Don't ask me how!] By one wife, he became the father of Calypso, who detained Ulysses for seven years. By another he had the seven Pleiades, among whom were the mother of Mercury (Maia), and the mother of Dardanus, whose descendants founded Troy (Electra). Another wife gave him the

seven Hyades, who took care of the motherless infant Bacchus. And the fourth wife became the mother of the three Hesperides, who guarded the tree with the golden apples.

Atlas is used in modern business perhaps as much as any single personality from Classical mythology. Everything from kitchen cleaner to tires is named after him because of his strength. But philosophically he represents endurance of hardship.

A book by Robert Heilboner came out in the middle 1970's, entitled AN INQUIRY INTO THE HUMAN PROSPECT. It characterized Prometheus, the hero of an earlier generation, as a man of driving energy and nervous will, a problem solver. But Heilboner grimly concluded that Prometheus' gift of fire to man may burn up the world. Therefore, as a hero he says that Prometheus must go, to be replaced by Atlas, the burden-bearer rather than the problem-solver; the man who plays life not to win, but to survive.

A modern Atlas, of course, is one who feels that he must carry the whole load or assume the burdens of others.

Suggested supplementary reading:

Edgar Allen Poe - LIGEIA



MERCURY AND VESTA

These two deities may be discussed together because both are major deities who are involved in few myths as a major character.

1. Mercury (Greek Hermes)

He was a son of the Pleiad, Maia, a daughter of Atlas, and of Jupiter. He was the god of mathematics and astronomy, among other things. As messenger of the gods, he wore a winged hat and winged sandals; and he carried a unique staff known as the caduceus.

This deity shows the Greek admiration for cleverness. The Greeks considered outwitting another person the highest form of good, clean fun. Evidence of this trait in Mercury can be shown by reviewing the activities of the first twenty-four hours of his life, which are told in the Homeric Hymn to Hermes. Besides inventing sandals, he went out to the pasture and stole some of Apollo's prized cattle and drove them into a cave backward so that Apollo could not follow their tracks. He then made the first flesh sacrifices to the gods -- from some of Apollo's cattle! He needed a fire for this; therefore, he invented a method of making a fire by rubbing two sticks of wood together. Then, his lark over, he went home and crawled into his cradle, pretending complete innocence. While being questioned about the theft of the cattle, he could not resist stealing Apollo's quiver of arrows. This caused Apollo to laugh and dissipated his anger, for one cannot be amused and angry at the same time.

When Mercury promised Apollo that he would not steal from him again, Apollo gave him a golden rod which had the power to unite in love all beings divided by hate. Mercury threw it between two fighting snakes to test its effectiveness, and they immediately entwined themselves around it. This became the caduceus, which Mercury carried with him constantly, and with which he led the souls of the dead to the Underworld. This caduceus has come into modern times as the standard symbol of medicine. The rod represents power, the serpents wisdom, and the wings diligence and activity. Mercury was so pleased with this gift that, when Apollo admired a musical instrument that Mercury had just invented by stringing cat gut across a hollowed-out turtle shell, Mercury gave it to Apollo. This was the lyre, and became a standard part of Apollo's equipment as the god of music.

Also during the investigation about the cattle, Mercury had promised Jupiter that he would not lie again, but he did not promise to tell the whole truth; therefore, he became the patron deity of ambassadors. Others for whom he was the patron deity were travelers, inventors, business men (his Latin name is derived from the word merces, which means merchandise), gamblers (not as far from business men as you might think, since all business is a gamble), and thieves.

As his activities on his first day indicate, he loved to steal, just for the fun of stealing. Besides Apollo's cattle and quiver, other things that he stole at one time or another included Vulcan's tongs, Mars' sword, Neptune's trident, and Venus' belt, which had been made for her by Vulcan and which made every one fall in love with the wearer.

As we have said, few stories center on Mercury, but he would certainly be nominated for the award as the personality having the most numerous supporting roles. Only Minerva could compete with him here. Some of his many activities include these: He was sent to Deucalion after the flood; he sent the ram with the golden fleece to rescue Helle and Phrixus; he

killed the hundred-eyed Argus guarding Io; he guided Perseus to the Medusa; he led the three goddesses to Paris for his judgment; he was entrusted with the care of the infant Bacchus; he brought Proserpina back to Ceres from the Underworld; he forcibly restored Sisyphus to the Underworld after his tricky escape; he sold Hercules to Omphale, as a slave; and he gave the magic herb to Ulysses to protect him on Circe's island.

Mercury had much in common with his half-brother Apollo: Both were sons of Jupiter and a minor deity; both were interested in flocks and music; both had a variety of functions; and both were examples of masculine beauty, but Mercury is younger and more boyish, the idealization and patron of young men in their late teens. Morford says: "His statue belongs in every gymnasium."

His speed is what is emphasized in most modern usage. He is pictured on the FTD trademark, on athletic awards (especially track awards), and -- believe it or not -- on postage stamps.

2. Vesta (Greek Hestia)

She was the oldest daughter of Cronus and Rhea and about the only major god who kept aloof from all the bickering of the other gods. She had originally been an Indo-European goddess of the hearth and hearth-fire, and she is represented only by her sacred fire. There are no statues of her. This fire was kept burning by virgin priestesses, the Vestal Virgins, who were highly respected, especially in Rome. A temple to Vesta and a lovely home of the Vestal Virgins is located in the central area of the Roman Forum. Aeneas supposedly had brought her sacred fire from Troy, and it was kept burning here in the Forum.

The hearth fire was the center of the home. The Latin word for hearth is focus. Since Vesta presided over the heart of the home, she also presided over the laws of hospitality, a major concern of the Greeks and Romans. Also she was worshipped by the Romans along with the household gods, the Penates, at every meal, as Christians often give thanks to God before a meal.

As protectress of the home, she was regarded as the protectress of the state; and as protectress of the state, she presided over the central altar of the city. The first victim of every public sacrifice was dedicated to her. The story goes that Jupiter bestowed this honor on her because once when Neptune and Apollo quarrelled over her favors, she settled the argument by vowing eternal chastity; and for preventing strife on Mt. Olympus, Jupiter rewarded her in this way.



VIII

MISCELLANEOUS MINOR DEITIES

1. The Muses

These deities, originally a group of three, later expanded to nine, presided over the arts, especially those associated with poetry and music. They were the daughters of Mnemosyne (the goddess of memory) and Jupiter (divine inspiration). Symbolically, of course, this means that divine inspiration added to what you have learned and remembered produces art. And because of their role with music, they were closely associated with the god of music, Apollo.

Here is a list of the Muses, what they presided over, and some identifying characteristics:

Clio (history) - She had a laurel wreath and scroll, and sometimes the trumpet of fame.

Melpomene (tragedy) - She wore the buskin (a high laced boot) and carried the tragic mask and sometimes the club of Hercules. She also wore a crown of ivy leaves, sacred to Bacchus, since he was so closely associated with drama.

Thalia (comedy) - She wore the sock (a flat-heeled, casual sandal) and carried the comic mask and a shepherd's staff, since comedy often involved simple people.

Urania (astronomy) - She carried a globe and a pair of compasses.

Calliope (epic poetry) - She carried a stylus and a tablet. She was the chief Muse and the mother of Orpheus.

Euterpe (music) - She carried a flute and wore a crown of flowers. She was especially associated with primitive music.

Erato (love poetry) - She carried a lyre.

Polyhymnia (sacred song) - She wore a veil.

Terpsichore (dance) - She wore a wreath and carried cymbals and a lyre which was somewhat larger than Erato's lyre. She was perhaps the mother of the Sirens.

The activities of the Muses were varied, but music was invariably involved in them. They entertained at weddings, such as that of Peleus and Thetis; they judged music contests like the one between Apollo and Marsyas; and they were sometimes challenged to music contests themselves. When the Sirens lost a music contest with them, they lost their power to fly. An interesting modern relationship between the Muses and music is the fact that nine streets in the French Quarter of New Orleans are named after them.

2. Themis

She was the daughter of Uranus and the goddess of justice. She sat beside Jupiter, and she bore him the Hours and the Fates.

Themis in modern life represents justice and is very widely used. Her symbols are a blindfold (justice is blind), the balanced scales, and a sharp sword. You will find her likeness on diplomas from law schools, and in front of the Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C. She is used extensively by cartoonists, often in a flawed form to indicate a miscarriage of justice.

3. The Fates

These three children of Themis and Jupiter were known as the Moirai in Greece and as the Parcae in Rome. They had absolute power over the individual human being's lifespan. The gods themselves could not alter

the decree of the Fates. Clotho spun the thread of a man's life; Lachesis measured it; and Atropos, who is a kind of synonym for death, cut it. Apollo once tried to talk the Fates out of destroying the life of the mortal Admetus, and won a concession from them that he could live if some one else would give his life instead. But this is the only case I know where their decree was not final and inexorable.

There have been some interesting modern uses of the Three Fates. Emerson, Lake, and Palmer in the 1970's put out a record album with one section devoted to each Fate. And the Life-Saving Medal of the National Safety Council shows the three Fates and Safety stopping the hand of Atropos, who is just about to cut the thread of life.

4. Aeolus

He was the king of the winds, which were kept confined on his island unless he released them. The four major winds were: Boreas (the North wind), Notus (the South wind), Eurus (the East wind), and Zephyrus (the West wind). Zephyrus was married to Flora, the goddess of flowers, because the warm west breezes bring the flowers to life. He was also the father of Achilles' remarkable horses, Balius and Xanthus, who had the power of human speech and who could cry.

5. Aurora (Greek Eos)

Homer regularly describes her as "the rosy-fingered goddess of the dawn." She was forced to love mortals only after Venus once found her with Mars.

She loved the mortal Cephalus, and by him became the mother of Phosphor, the morning star. Cephalus, however, pined constantly for his mortal wife Procris. Finally, Aurora let Cephalus go back to his wife but warned him that he would be sorry. Cephalus loved hunting. For this sport Procris gave him a javelin which she had received from Diana. Cephalus and Procris were very happy for awhile until a rumor reached Procris that her husband was playing around again. To reassure herself, she followed him one day when he went hunting. After a time he sat down behind a tree where she could not see him, but she heard him talking. She hid in a bush and listened, not knowing that it was the breeze to whom he was speaking. "That feels so good," he said. "Run your fingers through my hair again...Your touch on my cheek is so soothing." The words sounded so incriminating that Procris sobbed. Cephalus, hearing a sound in the bush, assumed that it was a wild beast and threw his javelin, killing Procris.

This couple had owned a dog who was a mythological personality in its own right. Its name was Laelaps, and it was destined to always catch its quarry. But one day it chased a deer that was destined never to get caught. The gods solved this dilemma by changing them into a statue of a dog on the verge of catching a deer.

Another love of Aurora was Tithonus. By him she became the mother of Memnon, who was killed in the Trojan War. Aurora weeps for her son, and her tears are the morning dew. She had given Tithonus immortality at his request, but she forgot to add eternal youth. Therefore, he kept growing older and older, and getting more and more decrepit, but he could not die. At last, in his agony he begged to be released. But as

Tennyson says in TITHONUS, "the gods themselves cannot recall their gifts." However, in pity, Aurora changed his skeletonlike body into a grasshopper.

6. Echo

We have already met this woodland nymph, whom Juno deprived of the power of speech because her chattering had kept Juno from catching Jupiter with Io. When Echo fell in love with the handsome Narcissus, she followed him around but could not talk to him except to repeat his last words. Once, conscious of being followed, he called out, "Let us join one another," to whoever it was. Echo gladly repeated his words and threw her arms around his neck. But Narcissus would have nothing to do with her. Echo pined away for her love until nothing was left of her except the remnants of her voice.

Narcissus was pursued by many other nymphs, but was not interested in any of them. Finally, in frustration one of them prayed that some day he might suffer from a love that was not returned. The gods answered her prayer by having him fall in love with his own reflection in a pool. The reflection could not return his love, and he sat beside it and stared at it until he was changed into a flower that bears his name.

The modern world is filled with both Echoes and Narcissuses. An Echo is one who has no thoughts of her own. All she can do is repeat what others have said. These people are all around us, especially in classrooms. As for Narcissus, he is met so frequently that his name has become a standard term in psychology -- Narcissism. A Narcissist is one who is so absorbed in himself that he is blind to the rest of the world.

Suggested supplementary reading:

Browning - APOLLO AND THE FATES

Tennyson - TITHONUS



CHILDREN OF JUPITER AND LATONA

Latona (Greek Leto), pregnant by Jupiter was persecuted relentlessly by Juno. She could not find a place in which to give birth to her twin children because Juno had forbidden any solid piece of earth to accept her. She tried various islands in the Aegean Sea, but they all refused her. Finally, the floating island of Delos, the smallest of the Cyclades, with an area of only two square miles, accepted her after she had promised that her son would build his first temple there. Jupiter then anchored this island, and Latona bore Diana and Apollo there.

1. Diana (Greek Artemis)

This deity was both the protector of wild animals and the goddess of hunting. As such she carried a bow and arrows and had her hunting dogs with her. These two apparently contradictory roles were not really in conflict. Modern conservation practices permit hunting seasons to avoid overpopulation and starvation of animals. She especially loved the hind, and her special tree was the cypress.

She was perhaps the most schizophrenic of the Classical deities. She had started, like most of the female deities, as a pre-Hellenic fertility goddess, who evolved into the symbol of absolute chastity. In Euripides' play, HIPPOLYTUS, the conflict arises as much from Venus, the goddess of love, and Diana, the goddess of chastity, as it does from Phaedra and Hippolytus.

This deity in Greek mythology had a triple identity. In addition to her role as huntress on earth, she was elevated to goddess of the moon when her twin brother became driver of the sun chariot. In this role, she was sometimes known by the name of an earlier moon goddess, Selene. Her chariot was drawn by white cows whose horns were the crescent moon, which was also her bow. And she had a third identity in the Underworld as Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft, which grew from her association with the moon and its influence. [Note that the word "lunatic" comes from the Latin word for moon]. These three Greek personalities all blended into the Roman Diana, a name often applied by Elizabethan poets to their virgin queen.

Sudden death, especially for the young, was often attributed to the arrows of Diana and her brother. In the ODYSSEY, Ulysses asks his mother in the Underworld whether she had died of a lingering illness, or whether Diana's arrows had taken her life. This phase of Diana's nature is illustrated in the story of Niobe, very effectively told by Ovid.

Niobe, a queen of Thebes, was guilty of hubris. When she saw the women of Thebes worshipping Latona, she ordered them to stop, saying that Latona was less great than she was, since Latona had only two children while she had fourteen, seven boys and seven girls. (Homer says twelve children, but the usual number given is fourteen). As punishment for this excessive pride, Diana and Apollo killed all Niobe's sons. When Niobe angrily said that she still had more than Latona even after all her loss, they killed the girls also. Niobe's husband, Amphion, committed suicide; and Niobe, in her grief, turned to stone. This story explains the existence of a natural rock formation on Mt. Sipylus in Asia Minor, which looks like a seated woman. This rock continually drips water from the eye area, like tears.

In a nursery catalog I have seen a weeping willow tree called Niobe. She has become the symbol of utter sorrow. Lord Byron once called Rome the Niobe of nations. Some museums have what they call

Niobid rooms in which statues of the dying children of Niobe are shown in various poses.

Another myth that shows Diana's vindictiveness is the story of Actaeon who, while hunting, accidentally saw Diana and her nymphs bathing when he came through some bushes near a lake. Lake Nemi, near Praeneste in Italy, has been called Diana's lake and is supposedly the site of this incident. Since mortals were not allowed to look upon goddesses unclothed, Diana threw water into Actaeon's face, which turned him into a stag. After that, he was torn apart by his own dogs, who did not know him. Pictures and statues often show him as a human being with a stag's head.

The symbolism here is that when a man sees or learns something that he should not know about, he can bring destruction on himself. Perhaps we should never have learned how to split the atom and make nuclear weapons.

Another interesting aspect of this story is what it tells us about the ancient conception of guilt. Although Actaeon's wrongdoing was entirely unintentional, it was punished as severely as if it had been done deliberately. As the Romans saw it, if you killed a man unintentionally, he was just as dead as if you had planned his murder; and your punishment was just as severe.

There is one love affair in the files of this goddess of chastity. It really belongs to Selene, the early moon goddess who was blended in with the Greek Artemis. Diana was attracted to a handsome young man by the name of Endymion. They spent many hours together. Then Endymion was given a choice of living to old age and gradually losing his beauty or of falling into an everlasting sleep while he was young and preserving his youthful beauty forever. He chose the eternal sleep. Keats' poem ENDYMION opens with the line: "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

Many beautiful paintings and statues of Diana are in existence. She is almost as lovely as Venus herself. She often wears a crescent moon in her hair and has her bow and arrows and hunting dogs with her. A statue of her stands on either side of the entrance to the Tuilleries Gardens in Paris; she is displayed on top of the Montgomery-Ward Building in Chicago; and the statue of her that was originally displayed on the Time-Life Building is now on the campus of the University of Illinois.

As her twin brother Apollo represents the masculine principle of reason in his role of sun god, the moon goddess represents the feminine principle of instinct. A Dr. Harding was quoted by the SATURDAY REVIEW in 1972 as saying: "The feminine principle in both men and women must be liberated if the world is to survive...We have given our allegiance too exclusively to the masculine forces. Supposed reason has produced wars and done almost irretrievable damage to our environment. Our destiny depends on the power of feelings to balance reason, and upon letting instinctive sensibility subdue expediency."

2. Apollo

Diana's twin brother was the god of music and poetry, and driver of the sun chariot. He is the most perfectly beautiful of the Greek gods, according to Hale, because he embodied the concepts of symmetry (an inner order of things) and intellect. Because of his physical perfection, he became the patron god of athletes. He summed up in his person those aspects of Greek culture which marked the Greeks off from

the rest of the world: music, poetry, athletics, moderation, restraint, respect for the individual. He was a complex god. He carried his lyre with its beautiful music, but he also carried his bow and arrows. In August, the hot "dog days," widespread epidemics were attributed to his anger, the cause of illness being the hot sun rays, his arrows. Therefore, although he was the god of healing and father of Asclepius, he was also the god of pestilence. Plato reduces his offices to four: musician, prophet, physician, archer.

As the god of music, Apollo carried the lyre, which he had acquired from Mercury. The seven-stringed lyre, an invention of the Near East, became the Greeks' most venerated musical instrument. Apollo's lyre was entwined with laurel, in commemoration of Daphne, whose story is told later in this chapter.

Apollo was challenged to several music contests. One of these was with Marsyas, the goatherd. It seems that Minerva had made a flute. The music was beautiful, but Juno and Venus could not stop laughing at how Minerva looked while she played it. When Minerva saw her puffed cheeks reflected in a pool, she threw away the flute. Marsyas found it, and it kept playing Minerva's music. He bragged that Apollo himself could not play so well. In their contest, the Muses were the judges. They could not reach a decision until Apollo turned his lyre upside down and played; Marsyas could not do the same thing with the flute. Therefore, Apollo was declared the winner, and Marsyas was flayed for his presumption. In the early 1970's the Rolling Stones put out an album entitled THE TRIUMPH OF MARSYAS. As they saw it, in modern times the primitive goatherd would win over the rational Apollo.

Another of Apollo's challenges came from Pan. The judge for this contest was Midas, who voted for Pan and was given ass's ears for his inability to hear well and his poor judgment. Midas was a historical king of Phrygia in the Eighth Century B.C., who must have been notorious for his poor judgment for he became a symbol of this, not only in this case but also in his wish for the "golden touch" when Bacchus offered him anything he wanted.

Like the other gods, Apollo had numerous love affairs, but at least he was not unfaithful to a wife, since he never married.

The mortal Clymene had a son, Phaethon, by him. Since the boy was doubtful about whether Apollo really was his father, he went to Apollo's mansion and asked him. Apollo reassured him and, as proof, offered to give him anything he asked for. Immediately the boy begged for permission to drive the sun chariot for a day. Horrified, Apollo tried to talk him out of his request, but failed. So Phaethon started out with the sun chariot. Of course, he could not handle it; the horses ran wild. Some areas of earth were parched and became deserts; some people were scorched and became black. Finally, to save the whole earth and the heavens from being destroyed, Jupiter struck him with a thunderbolt and knocked him from the sky. The boy became the symbol of youthful rashness.

Some mortals did not return Apollo's love. He loved Cassandra, the most beautiful daughter of Priam, king of Troy. He gave her the power of prophecy. When she did not return his affection, he could not take back his gift, but he did turn it into a curse: she would always prophesy the truth, but nobody would ever believe her. Also, Marpessa, fearing that she would be inadequate for a god and that he would soon grow tired of her, chose the love of another mortal rather than that of Apollo.

Clytie, on the other hand, was a mortal who pined futilely for Apollo. She watched him all day, from sunrise to sunset, until she was finally changed to a sunflower. There is an old song in which the singer tries to reassure his loved one that he will love her as much in old age as he does in youth. It ends with the lines: "As the sunflower turns on her god when he sets/ the same look that she turned when he rose."

Apollo was also attracted to the boy Hyacinthus, said to be the first male to attract other males. Zephyrus was Apollo's rival for Hyacinthus' attentions. Therefore, one day when Apollo was throwing a discus, Zephyrus blew it off course and it killed Hyacinthus, whom Apollo turned into a flower. Historically, there had been a religious cult of Hyacinthus which was replaced by the worship of Apollo -- thus Apollo "killed" Hyacinthus. Symbolically, this story carries the meaning that anything in excess is destructive, even a good thing. The sun is necessary for plants to grow, but too much sun will kill them.

Then there is the story of Daphne, whose name can be traced back to the Sanskrit ahana, which means "the redness of dawn." It is logical that the sun god is close on the heels of this personality.

Classical mythology tells the story this way: One day Apollo made fun of Cupid with his bow and arrows, referring to him as a child with a toy. In revenge, Cupid shot him with an arrow which would cause him to fall in love with the next girl he saw; and he shot the nymph Daphne with an arrow which would prevent her from responding. Apollo pursued Daphne until she prayed to the gods to rescue her, and they changed her into a laurel tree. But Apollo had fallen so much in love with the nymph that he would not give her up even then. He entwined his bow and his lyre with the laurel.

The first opera, written in 1594, was DAFNE. And in the 1930's Strauss, at the age of seventy-two, wrote an opera, DAPHNE, in which the harsh music of Apollo's pursuit of Daphne is deliberately intended to echo the aggressiveness of the Nazis in Germany at that time.

In art, my favorite statue in the entire world is Bernini's Apollo and Daphne, created by him when he was seventeen years old and now standing in the Borghese Gallery in Rome. At the base of this statue is an inscription in Latin, put there by Maffeo Barberini, later Pope Urban VIII, to add a "Christian" moral to this pagan statue. It says: "The man who tries to grasp fleeting beauty ends with only bitter leaves in his hand." I think that the pagans would have wholeheartedly approved of this inscription.

One affair of Apollo has several interesting spin-offs. Apollo loved Coronis (or Arsinoe, according to which source you read). After she became pregnant, the crow, a beautiful white song bird, told Apollo that Coronis was cheating on him. In his jealousy, Apollo killed Coronis, but saved the child. When he found that the crow had been lying, he changed the crow into an ugly black bird with no song but a caw.

As for the child, he was named Asclepius and was entrusted to the care of the greatest teacher of mythology, Chiron the centaur. Asclepius grew up to be a great healer. In fact, when Hippolytus had been unjustly killed, Diana asked Asclepius to bring him back to life, and Asclepius did so. But Pluto complained to Jupiter about his citizens being taken

away from him and Jupiter killed Asclepius with a thunderbolt. The angry father of Asclepius then killed the Cyclops who had made the thunderbolt and was punished by having to serve a mortal, this time King Admetus. It was during this period of servitude that Apollo talked the Fates into allowing Admetus not to die if somebody else would take his place. When no one else would do this, his wife Alcestis did it. But this story has a happy ending because Hercules went to the Underworld and brought her back.

This story is discussed in Plato's SYMPOSIUM, but the best known version of it is Euripides' ALCESTIS. Robert Browning tells about Apollo's begging for Admetus' life in APOLLO AND THE FATES; and T. S. Eliot's THE COCKTAIL PARTY centers on what happened after Alcestis' return to life.

A little more needs to be said about Apollo's child, Asclepius. Not only was he a great healer, but all of his sons were famous physicians, including Machaon, who cured the wound of Philoctetes at Troy. Asclepius himself was so revered that there was never any scandal told of him. The temple of Asclepius at Epidaurus in Greece was one of the origins of philanthropy in the Western world; and the earliest forerunner of the hospital, with a policy of service for all people, with no fees or minimal ones. As a healer, Asclepius won people's hearts and he remained the most vigorous competitor with Christ for for people's love. As late as the Sixth Century A.D., his shrines were maintained. His temple on the Tiber Island in Rome is still a hospital; and the scientific name for milkweed is asclepius because it was once used for medication.

As the god of prophecy, Apollo had twenty-three oracles, but the two most famous were those at Delos and at Delphi.

Delos, of course, was the place of his birth and the place where Latona had promised that his first temple would be built. It is said that she clung to a palm tree to relieve the pain while he was being born; thus the palm became sacred to him. The tree to which Latona clung was still pointed out to visitors as late as the days of Pliny, in the early Second Century A.D. Since Apollo was the patron deity of athletes and of music (the areas of competition), the palm and the laurel crown became symbols of victory.

Because of its importance in Classical history and mythology, Delphi deserves more than a passing mention.

Four days after his birth, Apollo stated that he would announce the will of Jupiter to men. Vulcan gave him a bow and arrows, and he started out to find a suitable place for his oracle. Mt. Parnassus stands some miles north of Thebes near the Gulf of Corinth. Part way up Mt. Parnassus, Apollo came to Crissa, where Gaea was worshipped, along with her snake son Python, who lived between two rocks towering eight hundred feet above Gaea's temple. Between these rocks was the fresh water spring Castalia. Apollo killed the Python, instituted the Pythian games in celebration of this victory, and took over the temple of Gaea. Next to Jupiter's combat with Typhon, this is the most momentous dragon combat in Greek mythology. In the Sixth and Fifth Centuries, B.C. the allegorical interpretation of this myth personified Python as a force of darkness, so it was at his time that his conqueror was elevated to being the god of the sun.

After he had a temple, he needed priests. Seeing a ship of Cretan sailors on the Gulf of Corinth, he changed himself into a dolphin (the Greek word is delphinus), nudged the ship to shore and made the sailors his priests. Thus ties were established for his worship coming from

Crete; and the place took on the name of Delphi from delphinus. Another explanation for the origin of this name is that it comes from the Greek word adelphoi, meaning "brother," since Apollo shared Delphi with his brother Bacchus.

Delphi became a center for purification and prophecy in the ancient world. Purification ceremonies were substituted for primitive revenge for such crimes as murder. These ceremonies involved a physical as well as a spiritual cleansing: there was holy water at the entrance for sprinkling; the guilty man washed in the blood of a pig; and a final elaborate ceremony took place every nine years.

The importance of this oracle for prophecies made it the religious center of the ancient world (somewhat like the Vatican in modern times). Priests gathered much information from the pilgrims, who came from the entire known world. It was the first international center of this kind in the world. Local people made their money off tourists, the same as they do today. Since Apollo was born on the seventh of the month, the number seven became sacred to him, and Delphic oracles were delivered on the seventh of the month.

These prophecies were always ambiguous; therefore, if a prophecy did not work out, it was because you had misinterpreted it. An example of this is Croesus, who consulted the oracle at Delphi before attacking Cyrus. He was told that if he attacked, he would destroy a great nation. When he was badly defeated, he complained, only to be told that it was his own nation that he had destroyed.

What kind of religious ideas emanated from this powerful temple? It did not usually advocate innovations, and it did sanction human sacrifice, such as that of Menoeceus II in the Theban War and Iphigenia in the Trojan War. Also, the deification of heroes depended on the sanction of Delphi.

The temple had two quotations at the entrance: Know thyself (which was Socrates' favorite phrase) and Nothing in excess. Inside were three rooms. The first room was where the priests served. The second and most important room was where the Pythia or priestess sat. Prophetic implications had been associated with Delphi from the volcanic vapors emanating from the ground under the temple. They had first been found by goats, who began to act strangely. Then the goatherd sniffed them and became prophetic. The Pythia sat over these vapors in order to get inspiration from Gaea. The prophet of Delphi was always a woman, perhaps a hangover from the worship of Gaea. The third room was where the Omphalos was set to mark the center of the world.

Around the main temple were many treasury buildings to hold the offerings of various places. In the treasury of Athens, a wall is inscribed with a hymn to Apollo and furnishes two of the twenty-one fragments of extant classical Greek music.

As we have said, Apollo shared Delphi with his brother Bacchus, who was worshipped during the three winter months. He was excluded only from prophetic power. His theater stands above the temple of Apollo on Mt. Parnassus. Between this theater and the temple was found the famous charioteer statue. Bacchus' grave was supposed to be at Delphi, but modern Greeks know nothing of this story.

Delphi was at its height in the Sixth Century B.C. The temple burned and was replaced in 548 B.C., and it was destroyed by an earthquake in 371 B.C., but this time it was not replaced for fifty years. There is

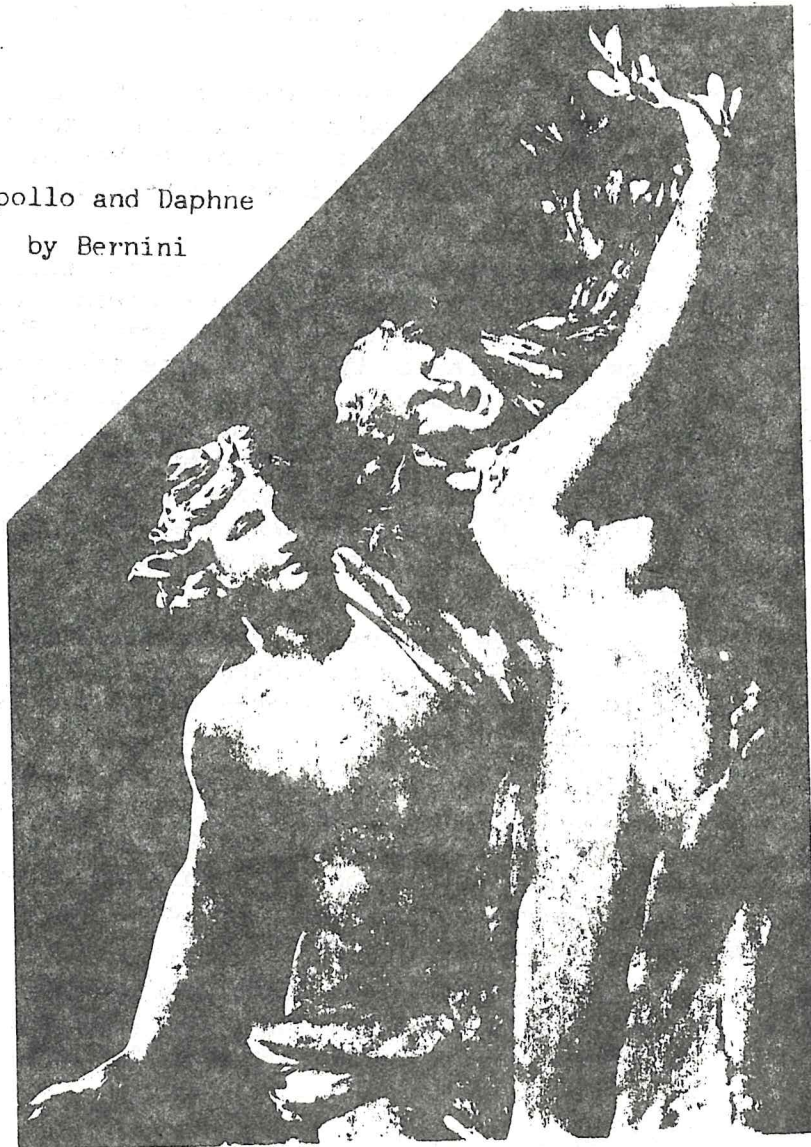
little mention of it after the beginning of the First Century B.C. We do know that it was destroyed by fire in 83 B.C.; that Mark Anthony intended to repair it in 42 B.C., but never did; that the Roman empress Livia replaced a lost wooden E with a gold one (the meaning of the E is not known). Nero is said to have built a new temple there in 66 A.D.; but angered because a peasant got a response and he did not, he destroyed it. However, this story is not authenticated. Domitian repaired it to revive paganism against Christianity in 84 A.D.. Finally, the Christian emperor Theodosius closed it, and his successor demolished it about 400 A.D. as a symbol of the anti-Christ. Through earthquakes and other forms of erosion, ancient Delphi eventually became buried. But in the 1890's the whole town of Castri was moved so that the ancient ruins could be excavated. Today there is an estimated two million olive trees in the valleys below the temple. The only discordant note in the entire scene is a scattering of necessary modern hotels. Otherwise, as you look down on the Gulf of Corinth and listen to the goat-bells in the distance at dusk, the sense of majesty and quiet overwhelms you and makes it easy to see why this was the most sacrosanct spot in Classical mythology.

Suggested supplementary reading:

Euripides - HIPPOLYTUS and ALCESTIS

Ovid - METAMORPHOSES, VI, 146-312 [for Niobe story]
II, 1-328 [for Phaethon story]

Apollo and Daphne
by Bernini



BACCHUS, SILENUS, AND PAN

Bacchus (Greek Dionysus), the child of Jupiter and Semele, became the thirteenth Olympian, how late in the development of Greek mythology is an unresolved question. He is the only god with a mortal parent. Hercules was deified, but Bacchus was born a god. Actually, he was born twice, and at his birth he had within him an element from another divine being. This element was the heart of Zagreus, who had been born to Jupiter and Proserpina. Juno had caused the Titans to dismember and eat Zagreus; but Minerva saved his heart and Jupiter ate it. It was this heart that was in the child born to Jupiter and Semele.

Before Bacchus' birth Juno, in disguise, had influenced Semele to ask Jupiter to let her see him in all his glory to prove his identity. So, one day when Jupiter offered her "anything she wanted," she asked for this. Of course, mortal eyes cannot endure looking on the eternal, and Semele was disintegrated by the sight and by Jupiter's lightning. Jupiter wrapped the child in the cool ivy vine to keep it from being consumed in flames. He took the child and carried it in a pocket he made in his hip until the proper time for its birth. Bacchus thus became the first "incubator" baby.

The explanation for the origin of his Greek name is interesting. It seems that at first the motherless child was given to Semele's sister Ino to rear, but Ino's life came to a tragic end. Then nymphs on the island of Nysos took care of him. One theory is that his nurse's name was Nysa, and her name was given to the place where the young god was reared. At any rate, his name became Dio + Nysos (son of Zeus, reared on Nysos). The nymphs who took care of him were the daughters of Atlas and became the Hyades in the stars for this service.

Bacchus became the god of vegetation, particularly the grapevine. Since the product of the grapevine is wine, he became the god of revelry. The way he developed into this position was this: Once he had wandered for a year when Juno struck him with madness. It was Rhea who cured him and taught him the cultivation of vineyards. As the god of revelry, he had no temples; his place of worship was the theater.

There is much that is paradoxical about Bacchus. His special animals were the tiger, the panther, and the lynx -- animals of glorious beauty but also fatal danger. The plants sacred to him were the grapevine and the ivy -- the sun-loving plant and the cool plant loving the dark. He always wore a headband of ivy or grapevine, some say to prevent headaches from overindulgence. And then the wine, with which he was so closely associated has both good and bad effects. It brings forgetfulness of troubles and sweet comfort. Two stanzas from Richard le Gallienne's RUBAIAT OF OMAR KHAYYAM will express this:

Within the tavern each man is a king,
Wine is the slave that brings him -- anything!
Oh friend, be wise in time and join our band,
Drink and forget, and laugh and dance and sing.

and

The sixtieth cup makes me so wise with wine,
A thousand riddles clear as crystal shine,
And much I wonder what it can have been
That used to puzzle this poor head of mine.

But wine also transports man to madness.

Bacchus is a major figure in several myths, one of which is told in a HOMERIC HYMN TO DIONYSUS. He was captured by pirates and held for ransom. Finally, asserting his divine powers, he changed the mast of the ship into a grapevine. The frightened sailors jumped overboard and were changed to dolphins, all of them except Acetes, whom Bacchus saved because he was the only one of them who had treated him kindly.

A sister of Semele had a son Pentheus, who became the second king of Thebes. Pentheus forbade the worship of his cousin Bacchus, but even the women in his own household refused to obey his order. Pentheus hid to watch them in their religious rites. When they heard him move, they thought he was an animal and they tore him limb from limb. This story of what can happen to a mortal who rebels against the worship of a god is told in Euripides' play, THE BACCHAE.

Once in a fit of anger, Bacchus decreed that the first human being to cross his path would be eaten by tigers. It happened to be a pretty girl Amethyst on her way to worship Diana, who changed her into a colorless quartz to save her. Bacchus, feeling sorry, poured wine over the stone and it took on the wine color. Because of its connection with Bacchus, this stone was supposedly endowed with the power to cure intoxication.

The island of Naxos was sacred to Bacchus. As Theseus was returning home from killing the Minotaur, he deserted Ariadne on this island and Bacchus found her there. He adored Ariadne there and gave her everything good he could think of, including a crown set with stars. This crown eventually was placed in the heavens as a constellation. Bacchus and Ariadne lived happily together and had six children.

Many great artists have left us statues and paintings of Bacchus, among them such people as Michaelangelo, Caravaggio, and Reni. Perhaps one of the best paintings is that of Velasquez, called BACCHUS AND THE FARMERS, which is now in the Prado Museum. Also, in modern times Bacchus is an important personality in such festive parades as those at the Mardi Gras.

Silenus was the son of Pan and a nymph and the oldest of the Satyrs. He was noted for his wisdom and his drunkenness. In the Sixth Century, B.C. he became associated with Bacchus as his teacher. Socrates has been compared with him in his wisdom, his irony, and his homely appearance. Once, when Silenus was dead drunk, King Midas returned him safely to Bacchus. In appreciation, Bacchus offered him "anything he wanted." Midas wished that everything he touched would turn to gold. It did, including Midas' food and his daughter. Finally in desperation he begged to be relieved of this curse and was told to bathe himself in the Pactolus River, which cleansed him of the golden touch. This story explains the golden sands in the Pactolus River bed. It also gives another evidence of Midas's poor judgment.

Pan, the father of Silenus, was a god of fields, flocks, and shepherds. He was good-natured but unprepossessing. In fact, he was so ugly that he frightened people; thus the word "panic" is derived from his name. He had horns, and the lower part of his body was a goat.

Like Pan, the Satyrs were goat from the waist down. They were woodland creatures, who spent most of their time chasing nymphs. They appear frequently in PLAYBOY cartoons. Another woodland creature who

indulged in the same pastime was the Faun. These beings differed from the Satyrs in that they looked totally human except that they had a short tail at the base of their spine, and they had horselike rather than goatlike characteristics. A statue of a dancing Faun is in the house of Sulla's nephew in Pompeii; and Hawthorne's novel, *THE MARBLE FAUN*, is about a statue from Hadrian's villa.

Pan also had an eye for the nymphs, who understandably often fled from him. When Pitys prayed to be saved from him, she was changed into a pine tree; and Syrinx was changed into reeds, from which Pan fashioned his pipes of Pan.

THE DIONYSIAN MYSTERIES

The worship of Bacchus constituted one of the Mystery religions of Greece. These religions were called Mystery religions because their rites were known only to the initiated. Thus we know very little about the Dionysian Mysteries because the ceremonies were kept absolutely secret and died with the last member of the cult. The best evidence of what went on is to be found in a series of wall paintings in a house known as the House of Mysteries, located just outside of Pompeii. The most scholarly study of this subject is the book, *DIONYSUS, MYTH AND CULT*, by Otto; and Mary Renault has an especially good section on Ariadne in the cult of Dionysus in her book, *THE KING MUST DIE*.

The cult of Dionysus was actually a spinoff from the cult of Demeter, when people in the Eleusinian procession called upon a god Iacchus, whose name is very close to Bacchus and who became identified with Dionysus. Eventually this cult became a respectable Mystery cult of its own.

The theme of this cult emphasizes the irrational animal elements in human nature, the ferocious singlemindedness of the possessed, and escape from worldly reality. In the ceremonies, it was declared that the initiate himself "becomes a Bacchus."

Bacchus was considered the "liberator." For his followers the old world lost its reality. Old bonds were broken. The traditional order, which was imposed on social relations and individual behavior, was shattered. The followers of Bacchus were free.

But he was also the mad god who drove men mad. The release from restraint is followed by the destructive instinct, and finally the giver of destruction is himself destroyed. This duality boils down to Life and Death -- the fullness of life and the violence of death are both here.

He was the god of ecstasy and terror. As the god of joy and freedom, he was worshipped everywhere with merry revels; but he was also a god of the earth, which ultimately ends in death. The death of the vine and its rebirth in spring are symbolic of resurrection.

He was represented at his rituals by a large, heavy mask, supposed to be the god's presence itself.

The Greater Dionysia, held in Athens in March and April when the vine begins to sprout, lasted five days and was most magnificent. All ordinary business stopped; prisoners were freed to take part; and no one was imprisoned. This celebration was marked by performances of plays in competition for prizes, and this became the foundation of the whole magnificent structure of Greek drama. Even to observe these plays was an act of worship.

In honor of Dionysus, musicians were freed from paying taxes for eight hundred years from the Fourth Century B.C., and members of the guild of Dionysus were freed from military service.

His worshippers were mostly women, since his was a religion of emotionalism, and women have traditionally been considered more emotional and less logical than men. These women were called Bacchantes or Maenads. In a state of self-hypnosis they tore their sacrificial victims apart with their hands and ate the flesh raw in commemoration of the dismemberment of Zagreus. This is somewhat similar, in a more primitive way, to the Christian communion service where symbolically one eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Christ.

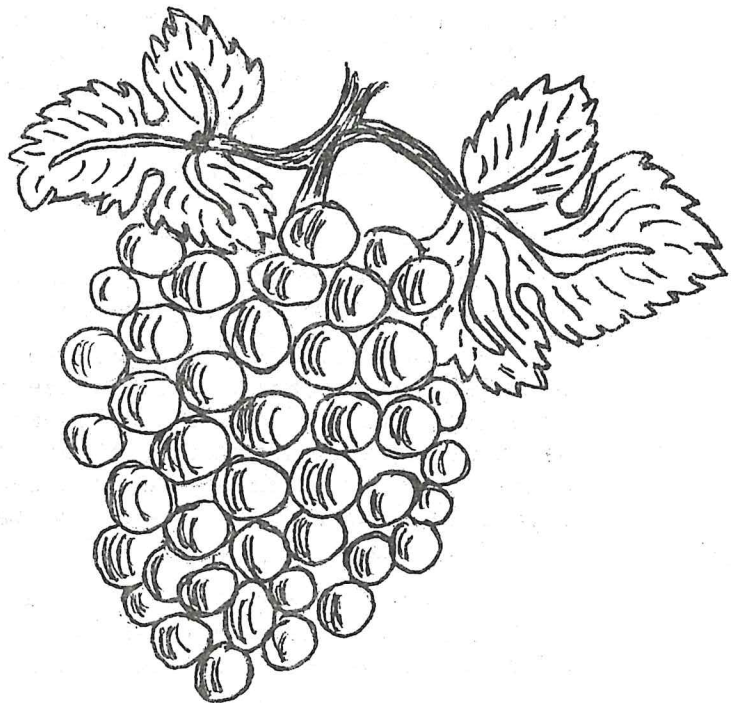
Cumant says that Dionysus, identified with Osiris in Egypt, taught that the afterlife for the initiate was an eternal banquet, a state of sacred drunkenness, a divine intoxication.

Apollo and Bacchus are representative of fundamental and diametrically opposed impulses of the Greek spirit. Aristotle had a doctrine of the golden mean between Dionysian extremes and Apollonian restraints.

Apollo stands for the rational, the logical, the scientific, for self-possession. Bacchus stands for the irrational, the instinctive, **the magical, for being possessed. The Apollonian concept leads to symmetry, order, recognition of limits, restraints, whereas the Dionysian concept brings diversity, abandonment, pursuit of the limitless, vaulting ambition.** The Greek arts reflect these two elements. The Apollonian concept is seen in the plastic arts (architecture, sculpture, ceramics), where harmony, perfection, and permanence are the ideals. Dionysus and his drama are concerned with the ever-changing and problematic condition of man. However, the two do meet: the temples had Gorgons, and the vases show Satyrs and Maenads; and the drama had a sense of an underlying moral order.

The Acropolis complex of Athens is an effective combination of these different standards. The buildings are arranged on no central axis. The mathematical perfection of the Parthenon, correct and pure in every proportion, is counterbalanced by the highly irregular Erechtheum, which has several levels with porches of differing heights, two of them gabled, and one flat roof supported by the Caryatids -- all impulse and diversity, in contrast to the Parthenon, which is all unity. And at the bottom of a cliff near the Parthenon is the theater of Dionysus.

Suggested supplementary reading:
HOMERIC HYMN TO DIONYSUS
Euripides - THE BACCHAE



Ceres

Ceres (Greek Demeter), although her Greek name means Mother Earth, became specialized as the golden-haired goddess of grain, and she is identifiable by her sheaf of grain, and sometimes a sickle. From her Roman name we get the word "cereal," and she used to be pictured on the Wheaties box. She was a gentle and benevolent deity, who took no part in wars and strife. She was also an important deity, for wheat had taken on the role of the staff of life, comparable to rice in the Far East. Because of her association with grain, the periodical of the Food and Agriculture Organization in the U.N. is called CERES. Also, there was a thirty-one-foot mural of her in the sixty-foot high trading pit of the Board of Trade Building in Chicago. When this room was doubled-decked to provide space for Chicago Board Options Exchange, this painting was removed to keep her from being cut off at the navel. It was stored in 1974 to be donated to some institution. But the statue of her on top the Board of Trade Building is still there. An attempt to put a life-sized statue of her on top the capitol building in Topeka, Kansas, caused considerable controversy in the 1970's.

She was the mother of the marvellous horse Arion, whom we have mentioned in our discussion of his father, Neptune. Also, by Jupiter she became the mother of Proserpina (Greek Persephone or Kore).

The only time that Pluto ever left the Underworld and came up to earth was when he decided to find a wife. When he saw Proserpina and her friends, he immediately fell in love with her. He created the daffodil to entice her away from her friends. Then he kidnapped her and carried her back to the Underworld with him. The interpretation of this is easy. As god of the Underworld, Pluto was also the god of wealth since wealth comes from the things underground (gems, minerals, etc.) So Pluto, the god of wealth, abducts the daughter of Ceres, since rich storage vats for grain were underground. Only Arethusa, who had been changed to a fountain, saw what had happened and eventually told Ceres. But meanwhile Ceres had wandered over the earth, searching for her lost child. This long search of the sorrowing mother for the lost child is one of the most famous themes in world literature.

When Ceres learned where Proserpina was, she demanded her return, and was promised that she would return if she had eaten nothing since her capture. However, Proserpina had munched on a few pomegranate seeds. Finally, a compromise was worked out whereby Proserpina would spend six months a year with her husband in the Underworld, and six months with her mother on earth.

THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES

In her search for Proserpina, Ceres had come to the city of Eleusis in Greece. Children from the royal household found her sitting down to rest and, feeling sorry for her, they invited her to the palace as a guest, where she was treated with great kindness. In appreciation, she decided to make the king's baby son Triptolemus immortal. She was about to put the child on the ashes of the fireplace to accomplish this when the horrified parents saw her and stopped her. Therefore, Triptolemus did not get immortality, but Ceres did give him skill in teaching men how to use the plow.

Ceres revealed her identity to the parents and told them that she wanted the seat of her worship to be in their city. She told them

the exact details of the temple she wanted, and they built it as she had instructed. I regret to say that today a cement factory stands on the spot where this temple had been built.

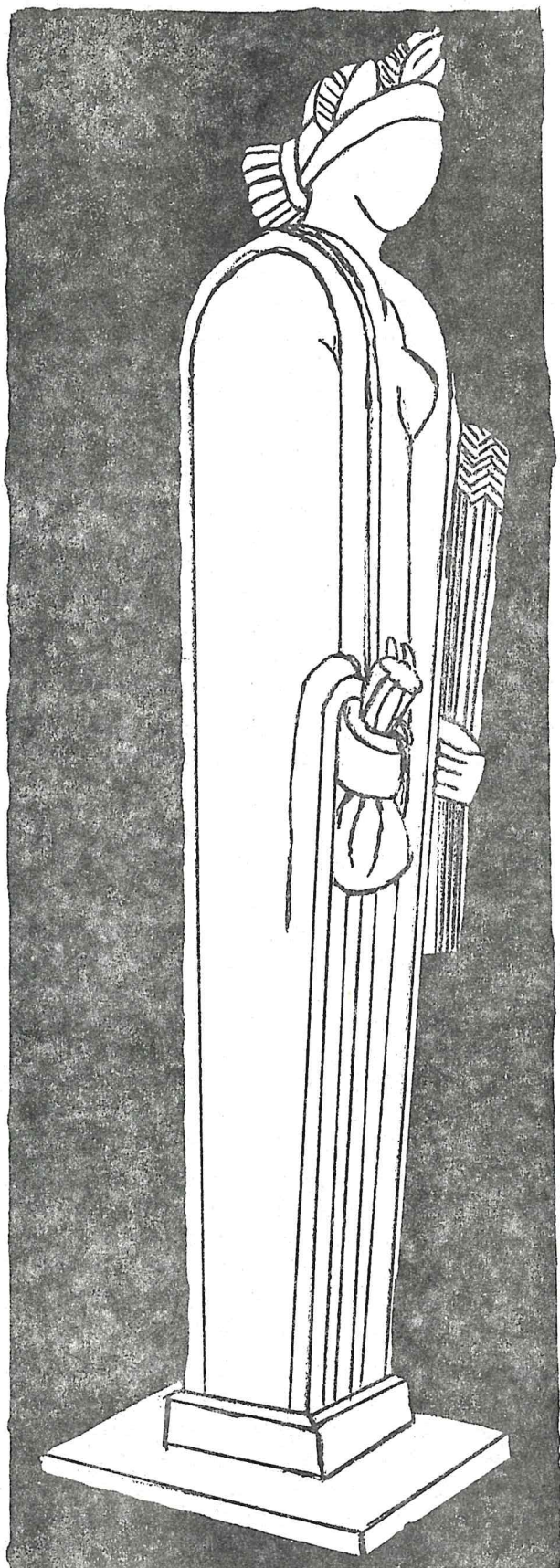
A thorough study of the cult of Ceres was made by George Mylonas in his work, *ELEUSIS AND THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES*. Here is a short description, taken mostly from this work.

There were both public and private ceremonies. Such events as the rape of Proserpina and the role of Triptolemus were not secret rites. Vase painters used them, and Aristophanes mentions these rites in his play, *THE FROGS*. But the private ceremonies were kept in absolute secrecy. The uninitiated were severely punished for even accidentally seeing them. It is said that Ceres bore a son to Neptune, whose name was revealed only to those admitted to the secrets of the mysteries of Eleusis, but this we do not know.

There were three stages of initiation:

1. The Lesser Mysteries were held in the spring, and consisted of purification and cleansing, carried out by such acts as fasting, sacrificing, sprinkling, and baptism. Singing and playing, and probably dancing were involved. Possibly the last part was drinking a special potion.
2. The Greater Mysteries were held in the fall. The public ceremonies included parades, one a procession from Eleusis to Athens, a goodly distance. After reaching Athens and washing their hands, they were allowed inside the temple there, known as the Eleusinion, to see the statue of the goddess. The next day was spent in cleansing oneself and a sacrificial pig by baptism in the sea. This was followed by sacrificing and fasting, since Ceres had fasted during her search for Proserpina. Then, after entering the Eleusinion, the secret rites began. These consisted of three things:
 - A. dromena (acted parts) - a sacred pageant of Demeter and Persephone - the abduction, the wanderings, and the reunion.
 - B. legomena (spoken parts) - not sermons, but short statements or invocations in connection with the dromena. These were considered very important; therefore, no one could participate who could not understand Greek.
 - C. deiknymena (objects to be shown) - We do not know what they were,
3. The Eopteia, the highest degree, which was not attained by all. We do not know what this entailed. Probably the whole thing ended with libations and rites for the dead, followed by singing and dancing.

These annual ceremonies were held for two thousand years, every fourth year being especially big. Even Cicero was interested in these Mysteries. The chief priests and priestesses were chosen from two families for generations. Any one could participate but, as we said, one could not take part in the Greater Mysteries unless he understood Greek, and also unless he had no blood guilt. The initiation was individual, not group, and was paid for by the individual. Nor did the initiates return to worship. They were not obligated to follow a certain pattern of life or rules of conduct. They were not banded together into a "church" group.



Suggested supplementary
reading:

Ovid - METAMORPHOSES,
V, 345 - 661

Tennyson - DEMETER AND
PERSEPHONE

Statue of Ceres
atop
Chicago Board of Trade Building

THE UNDERWORLD

Two descriptions of the Underworld come from Homer's ODYSSEY and Vergil's AENEID. Homer's description is much more vague than Vergil's because Ulysses goes just to the entrance, while Aeneas actually goes inside the Underworld.

In Greece, an entrance to the Underworld was located at Pylos, the city of Nestor. In Italy the entrance was at Lake Avernus, near Naples. Lake Avernus was of volcanic origin, and sulphuric fumes above it were so deadly that birds flying over it would drop lifeless. The name itself means "birdless."

The three major rivers of the Underworld were the Styx, the Acheron, and the Lethe. The Styx was so revered that the gods swore their most solemn oaths by it. It is still an underground river that flows through the cave of the Cumaean Sibyl. The Acheron was the river of woe (our word "ache" is derived from it), and it had several tributaries. Charon ferried the souls of the dead over either the Acheron or the Styx, but usually the Styx is considered Charon's river. The English statement that two things are separated by a Stygian gulf means that they are as far apart as the world of the living and that of the dead. And Charon would not accept people who had not received proper burial rites; hence the great importance attached to proper burial. If a soul was not accepted by Charon, it had to wander around homeless for a hundred years before it tried again to cross this river. The idea of a ferryman for the dead goes back to time immemorial. Incidentally, a moon around the planet Pluto, discovered about 1977, was named Charon.

The entrance to the Underworld was guarded by the three-headed dog Cerberus, because living mortals were not allowed to enter, with rare exceptions.

Inside, of course, Pluto and his wife Proserpina reigned. Although they had no children, Pluto was the only one of the VIP gods to be eternally faithful to one woman.

This realm was the permanent residence of several other mythological personalities. The Fates, whose power represents the supreme order of the universe, superior to all the gods, lived here, as did the Furies (or Eumenides), who personify remorse, and who relentlessly pursued a man guilty of killing his mother. The Furies were three in number: Allecto (unresting), Megaera (jealous or grim), and Tisiphone (avenger of murder). Others who called this place home were Hecate, goddess of witchcraft, and the brothers Somnus (sleep) and Thanatos (death).

Newly arrived souls had to pass by three judges (Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanthus), who brought justice to those whose crimes had gone undetected in life. Rhadamanthus was a son of Europa and Jupiter. He had been a very wise ruler on earth, and it was thought that he had obtained his laws directly from Jupiter in a cave every ninth year, something like Moses and the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai.

The chief areas of the Underworld were Elysium and Tartarus or Erebus. The Elysian Fields were the abode of the blessed, those who were characterized by what the Romans called pietas. This implied devotion to mankind, country, and family, as well as to the gods. Those who attained this were heroes of war, priests, poets, and inventors in the arts and sciences. Elysium was separated from the rest of the Underworld by the River Lethe, the river of forgetfulness, because

it was felt that a person had to cross this river to become happy. He could not be so while he remembered his life on earth and felt concern about what was happening there. Others who had to drink from the River Lethe were souls that were to be reincarnated, so that they would forget their previous existence.

In Tartarus sinners were punished. Although there were many offences to be dealt with, three of the most serious were: lack of respect for parents, violation of the host-guest relationship, and hubris (often involving competition with gods).

The three predominating forms of punishment were by fire (for these people had seen volcanoes spouting horrible molten rocks); by retaliation, where the guilty man was given the kind of torture he had planned for some one else; and frustration, which the Greeks and Romans must have considered the most agonizing feeling a person could experience. Special mention should be made of six notorious sinners and their punishment:

1. Tantalus

Tantalus was a powerful king of Lydia, as proverbial for his wealth as Croesus. Among his children was the ill-fated Niobe. When he was invited to dine with the gods, he stole some nectar and ambrosia for his friends. Then he stole a dog sacred to Jupiter and perjured himself by swearing that he had never seen it. Then, in order to prove that the gods were not omniscient, he fed his son Pelops to them, saying that they would not know that they were eating human flesh. Ceres, worrying about her daughter, ate a piece of shoulder, but no one else touched the meat. Pelops was restored to life and his missing shoulder was replaced by an ivory one -- the first instance of plastic surgery. Since Tantalus' crime had to do with food and drink, he was punished by having to starve through eternity for these, while standing in water which reached to his chin but which he could not get into his mouth, and having a fruit tree above him, close enough that he could touch the fruit but not get hold of it. His inability to drink is reflected in the name of the chemical element tantalum, so named because it will not absorb water. Incidentally, another element found with tantalum is called niobium because Niobe was the daughter of Tantalus. And, of course, the word "tantalize" is derived from his name and indicates teasing a person by almost letting him get something.

2. Sisyphus

Another sinner was Sisyphus, the founder of Corinth. He was a symbol of craftiness and deceit, notorious for his thievery, duplicity, and crass opportunism. During the Watergate scandal in the 1970's, President Nixon was referred to in TIME MAGAZINE as "Sisyphus in Washington."

An example of his trickery was what he did at the time of his death. He asked his wife not to dress him properly for burial. Then in the Underworld he begged for time to go back to earth to be dressed properly. He was granted three days, and then he tricked Thanatos into putting on handcuffs so that no one could die until Thanatos was freed. There is a story that during his three-day reprieve he may have raped Ulysses' mother, an act which would explain Ulysses' craftiness.

The crime for which he was punished seems pale in comparison to his other black crimes. He saw Jupiter carry away the girl Aegina to make love to her, and he told the girl's father.

His punishment was the ultimate in frustration. Through eternity he had to roll a huge rock up a steep hill, trying to get it over the top. Each time, just as he reached the very top of the hill, the rock slipped and fell to the bottom again so that he had to start all over.

This punishment has been used a great deal in modern times. In 1969 Pink Floyd recorded a four-part album on SISYPHUS. You hear him rolling the stone uphill, then the sound of the falling stone reverberating throughout Tartarus. In 1942 Camus entitled a book of his essays THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS. The theme of these essays is that modern man is absurd, his whole being exerted toward accomplishing nothing, for the workman works every day at the same tasks, and his fate is no less absurd than that of Sisyphus. An animated film, SISYPHUS, makes him a lumberman. Following instructions, he cuts down a huge tree, saws it, planes it, works all day. The finished product? a finely crafted single toothpick. He tries it, and it breaks. So he starts all over again.

3. Ixion

Ixion tried to rape Juno, but a cloud woman, Nephele, was created to look exactly like Juno, and it was with this woman that Ixion slept. The result was the birth of the Centaurs. Barthell names sixty-six of them from this birth! Ixion's punishment for this attempted rape of the queen of heaven was to be fastened to a revolving firey wheel.

4. The Danaids

These fifty sisters married fifty brothers, and forty-nine of them killed their husbands on their wedding night because of an old feud between the two families. As their punishment, these forty-nine Danaids were forced to try to fill a water container, carrying their water in a sieve.

5. Tityus

He insulted Latona. His huge body, which covered nine acres, was fastened down while vultures picked at his liver. This is much like the punishment of Prometheus, but Tityus was never released.

6. Phlegeas

Phlegeas was the father of Coronis. After Apollo's affair with his daughter, Phlegeas burned Apollo's temple at Delphi. As punishment for this sacrilege, he had a large rock suspended by a small string above his head. It never fell but was always just on the point of doing so. This is reminiscent of the story of Damocles, who envied the happiness of a certain powerful king. The king offered to show him what his happiness was like and seated him at a sumptuous banquet -- with a sharp sword suspended above his head by a single horse hair.

Suggested supplementary reading:

Swinburne - GARDEN OF PROSERPINA



ORPHEUS AND ORPHISM

Orpheus came into Greek mythology from Thrace. He has much in common with the Norse and Siberian shaman, such as the effect of his music on birds and animals, and his visit to the Underworld to recover a stolen soul. He was not mentioned by Homer or Hesiod; the first mention of him was made by Ibycus, a poet of the Sixth Century B.C.

He was the son of Apollo and the Muse, Calliope, and the greatest mortal musician. Wild animals would sit quietly together and listen to his music; and rocks and trees moved from their place to hear him play. It was his music that caused so many theaters built in the early 1930's to be named Orpheum theaters, for at that time, between showings of a film, an organ was played while on the screen a bouncing ball moved above the lines of pop songs for the audience to "sing along."

The most important single event in Orpheus' life concerned his beloved wife, Eurydice. One day, while she was trying to run away from Orpheus' half-brother, Aristaeus, she stepped on a poisonous snake, which bit her. After her death, Orpheus determined to go to the Underworld and use the power of his music to entice Pluto and Proserpina into releasing her. They were so enchanted by his music that they agreed to let her return to earth with him, but only if he did not look back at her until they were entirely outside the Underworld. Some conditions always had to be met when the gods made concessions to mortals. Such was the case with Admetus, and Proserpina, and now Eurydice. All went well until just at the entrance, when Orpheus could no longer resist looking at her. Then she faded back into the Underworld, and he had to return to earth alone.

On this mission, Orpheus became one of the very few mortals to go to the Underworld alive and return. Among others who accomplished this were Hercules, Ulysses, Aeneas, Psyche, and Theseus.

The Eurydice story is hardly mentioned in Greek literature. In Latin literature it is told at length only by Vergil in his Fourth GEORGIC. But it has been used extensively in later literature. At least twenty-seven operas have been written on the subject, including the first opera still extant, EURIDICE, written for the wedding of Maria de Medici and Henry IV of France. In the Twentieth Century the Austrian Oskar Kokoschka wrote a tragedy on Orpheus and Eurydice, between the years 1915 and 1918. This was turned into an opera, which depicts a pessimistic reaction to the horrors of World War I.

Many Twentieth Century literary works put this story into a modern setting. In 1941, Jean Anouilh produced his EURYDICE, with an underlying theme of the insecurity of life and the corrupting influence of society and the family on the individual. This play was produced in English under the title, POINT OF DEPARTURE. In it the central characters are a cafe violinist and the daughter of an actress. She is hit by a bus and killed. He is offered a chance to get her back if he will not look at her till dawn. But he must know by looking into her eyes whether she has been faithful to him. (This compulsion to know the truth even if it destroys him reminds us of Oedipus). When he looks, he discovers that she has been lying, so he loses her again. He finally commits suicide to join her.

Jean Cocteau's first original drama, written in 1926, was turned into a movie by Janus Films in 1950. The theme here is that the poet (Orpheus) must die several times in order to be born. In the movie,

Proserpina is a sophisticated siren in black, and the poet is half in love with her (the poet's death wish). Throughout the play, the coming of death is signalled by the approach of a motorcycle gang. The corridor of memory has to be traversed before Orpheus can face the judges; and as he goes down it, there is the repeated cry: "Go back in time. What has been must not be." The movie is very effective; but, as movies often do, it has a disappointing ending. Eurydice wakes up -- the whole thing has been a bad nightmare!

Tennessee Williams' ORPHEUS DESCENDING came out in 1957. In it, Val Xavier, a disillusioned poet-musician, falls in love with a married woman in a small Southern town, Twin Rivers. Her husband, Jabe Torrence, kills her after she becomes pregnant, and a mob kills Val.

Two works that came out in the late 1960's and early 1970's are Luigi Santucci's ORPHEO IN PARADISE and the movie BLACK ORPHEUS. In Santucci's work, Orpheus finds a suicide note, written by his beloved mother. He is allowed to go back twenty years to see what led up to the suicide, but he is not allowed to try to alter these lives from the past. BLACK ORPHEUS, like CARMEN JONES and THE WIZ, takes an already existing story and converts it to a black setting. The lyre here, of course, becomes a guitar.

As for Orpheus' life after his complete loss of Eurydice, he lived for three grief-filled years. Finally, he was torn apart by nymphs, who (according to Aeschylus) were followers of Bacchus, and they resented his resistance to the worship of Bacchus. His crime and punishment were the same as those of Pentheus. His head and lyre were thrown into the Hebrus River and floated to the island of Lesbos. The lyre eventually became a constellation, and his body was buried by the Muses at the foot of Mt. Olympus, where the nightingales are still said to sing the sweetest in the world. The gentle singer who becomes the victim of human prejudice and savagery can be credible to those familiar with the story of Christ. In modern eyes he is the symbol of loneliness and suffering, a personality who transforms men by persuasion and charm, not by violence and rebellion.

ORPHISM

Some modern authors suggest that at one time this cult might have been exclusively for males, as the worship of Bacchus was basically for women.

They had their own special cosmogony. To them the starting point of the universe was Chronos (Time), not Chaos nor Oceanus. Chronos produced a cosmic egg, from which emerged Phanes (the shining one), the first king of the gods, a bi-sexual figure who created from himself all that followed. From that point on, their idea was pretty much like that of Hesiod, with Uranus, Cronus, and Jupiter ruling in turn. However, they added that Jupiter swallowed Phanes, assuming all his powers and making a fresh creative start. Their beliefs also included the story of Zagreus, and they thought that man was created from the ashes of the Titans; therefore, man is both good and evil by nature since he has within him the evil of the Titans and the good of Zagreus.

The duality of the body and the soul was one of their basic beliefs. They thought that the body was bad and transitory, the soul good and enduring. They also believed in reward and punishment after death, and they were the first cult to separate the region of Tartarus from Elysium, and introduce the idea of judgment. The Pythagoreans

inherited from the Orphics the idea of reward and punishment. As the Orphics saw it, one of three things happened to souls after death: Incurrigibles were immured forever in an underground prison; some souls were purified through successive reincarnations; and those who had freed themselves from the domination of the body, and those who had participated in the Mysteries and thus cleansed themselves, rose at once to the celestial sphere. In addition to reincarnation, they believed in the transmigration of souls; therefore, they avoided the use of meat. And personal redemption or purification came through participation in secret rites and the following of strict codes of abstinence.

There was no Orphic "church"; but Orpheus supposedly taught his principles in his songs. They also had a written literature available through the early Christian era.

Suggested supplementary reading:

Browning - EURYDICE TO ORPHEUS

For material on Orphism, see Moses Hadas, HEROES AND GODS



ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN IDEAS ON LIFE AFTER DEATH

The two major philosophies of Greece and Rome were Epicureanism and Stoicism. Both laid emphasis on this life. The Epicureans did not believe in any existence after death and so their aim was to fill the short span of this life with as much pleasure as could be crowded into it. A cup found near Pompeii has a representation of Epicurus on it, with the Greek words, to telos hedone (the supreme end is pleasure). But to Epicurus pleasure meant intellectual fulfillment, which degenerated in time to mean physical pleasure. Thus the philosophy became: es bibe lude veni (eat, drink, play, come here). Paul, in a letter to the Corinthians, refers to those who say, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." And the Roman poet Horace, who loved the carnal pleasures, refers to himself as "a porker in the sty of Epicurus."

The Stoics also were concerned basically with this life, and felt that happiness was attained only by accepting the inevitable and not letting anything mean too much. They differed among themselves in their belief of any kind of immortality, having a vague idea that we are absorbed in the great ALL from which we came. So earthly immortality (being remembered) became important.

Untimely death was of special concern to the Greeks and Romans. They felt that our days are numbered at birth, and on the day of birth we start dying. But how about those who do not live out their allotted time? The old Pythagoreans believed that souls of children who die young wandered around for the number of years they had been allotted. Some believed that until about the age of sixteen children were neither good nor bad. Others, like the Orphics, believed that, since man was created from the ashes of the Titans, we all have a hereditary sin which has to be effaced by purification.

Those who met a violent death posed another problem. Soldiers were thought of as becoming stars, criminals as becoming demons. But there was considerable disagreement on the subject of suicide. The Pythagoreans and Platonists felt that a man should not desert his post under any circumstances; but the Stoics felt that sometimes suicide was commendable. It was the wise man's freedom of choice.

We do not like to think that our existence ends when we die. Almost all cultures develop some kind of belief in life after death. Plato felt that our earthly life is merely a brief interlude in our total existence. This idea is well expressed in Wordsworth's ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY. Cicero even believed in personal immortality. He said in his DE SENECTUTE that he would see his loved ones and talk with the great men of the past after he died. He did not want this faith taken away from him as long as he lived. If he was right, it was a great consolation; if he was wrong, those who sneered at his hope would not be there to say, "I told you so."

There were various stages of belief in the survival of the soul. One theory was that the soul lived in the tomb. Therefore, burial was very important because the grave was the "home" of the spirit of the deceased. Without it he had no home. Also, food and drink were put there for him.

Probably the most widely accepted belief was that life was continued in one big underworld, located "somewhere." The cults of Bacchus, Ceres, Cybele, and Isis all have this idea.

Another theory taught astral immortality, where the good go up and the bad go down. This kind of belief involved solar, lunar, or stellar immortality. In solar immortality, the soul went to a solar planet. Tangent to this, the worship of Apollo and the nine Muses involved the sweet harmony of the cosmic symphony produced by the rotation of the spheres, the celestial concert which mortal ears cannot hear, just as their eyes are incapable of looking on the brilliance of the sun. Or souls might have a lunar immortality, which was represented on tombs by Selene and her crescent moon. Or there was stellar immortality, where souls, like those of young children who died, became stars. There was great awe because a comet appeared when Julius Caesar died. But the most elaborate theory of astral immortality was that of the worshippers of Mithras, who believed that bad souls sank to the underworld, and the good attained immortality by passing from one planet to another, losing some part of their earthly character on each one until finally, as a sublime essence, the soul enjoyed bliss without end. This process is discussed in detail in Michael Grant's *THE WORLD OF ROME*, p. 176, ff.

What form of happiness was granted to the blessed? There seems to have been three different views of this, according to what a given religion considered to be the summum bonum: The soul would have complete freedom from worry, be securus; they referred to the home of the gods as sedes quietae (the quiet places). Or the dead man's soul would spend its time in eternal feasting. Serapis, from the hot, dry country of the Nile was the great master of the feast. Or maybe the dead man would attain the ultimate by being allowed the sight of god almighty. For these people the zone of the moon was the boundary between troubled earth and quiet heaven.

But how did man win immortality? Well, all that was outstanding in a man was a part of divinity. Therefore, when a man such as a hero or a king died, he was automatically given immortality. But that left out the ordinary man, the bulk of the population. He attained immortality by participating in the rites of the mystery cults, which explains the widespread popularity of these cults. He often fasted or tortured himself into an "acceptive" frame of mind. Three of the Mystery cults we have already discussed in some detail (the cult of Bacchus, Ceres, and Orpheus). There was also a cult of Cybele (Mother Earth) and her associate Attis, which contained the longest and most complex pageantry of the ancient world. It was celebrated in spring, apparently a symbolical representation of the resurrection, just as the return of Adonis and Proserpina were. The cult of Isis and Serapis (a form of Osiris) from Egypt had the same general ideas as the cult of Cybele. The underlying theme here was: "I conquer Fate." Then there was the cult of Mithras, a Persian and Syrian deity, and the cult of Asclepius, which was especially strong in Rome. Hale says that all Mystery religions seem to have instilled ideas of abstinence, purification, mystical revelation, and redemption.

Books of special value in this area:

- Cumant - AFTERLIFE IN ROMAN PAGANISM
- Grant - THE WORLD OF ROME
- Hale - ANCIENT GREECE

THE HEROIC IMAGE

The inherent predilection for hero-worship in mankind explains the popularity of hero stories in world literature. In the next few chapters we will examine the sagas of the "older" heroes of Greek and Roman mythology, so called because they lived a generation or more earlier than the heroes of the Trojan War period. Of these, the most important in literature are Perseus, Hercules, Jason, and Theseus. They all have a god somewhere in their ancestry, but only Hercules was deified after death. They are demi-gods, next in rank below the minor deities, and they represent a close approach between divinity and mortality. The gods live the life of mortals; these demi-gods are mortals. Hercules is recognizable as a man aspiring through labor for mankind to final immortality. The exploits of Jason, Perseus, and Theseus are more limited. Often they accomplish their mighty deeds with supernatural aid. They are examples of deity working through men, but Hercules is the epitome of self-reliant strength.

Hero-worship, however, did not die with Hercules. It is a part of our dream world, an escape from our own limitations, for we can identify with the hero, for, although he has a touch of superhuman power, he is still a human being like us.

The heroic pattern in all mythologies (including our own) is that the hero sets out into the land of evil to battle the enemy -- dragon, beasts, or magical creatures. He is threatened and tested severely and faces seemingly impossible tasks. But he struggles and wins, often gaining some valuable possession with which he makes the ordinary world a better place. This pattern fits not only Hercules and Perseus but also Superman and the hero of almost any TV series like MISSION IMPOSSIBLE. The hero battles the evil ones, survives an assortment of improbable narrow escapes, and is invariably victorious and seemingly indestructible. However, one great problem for the hero, as Campbell says in his HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES, is the difficulty of re-entry into the everyday world after his adventures. One of the most challenging problems of our space program was re-entry into our atmosphere. John Barth in 1972 published a book entitled CHIMAERA, which tells of the lives of the heroes after their adventures and pictures such things as a very bored Perseus twenty years later. Also, it should be noted that, although the hero fights against tyranny, just like Cronus, who deposed Uranus, the hero of today becomes the tyrant of tomorrow.

Before we get into the Classical heroes, let us summarize an article by Jeffrey Schrank, called "Mythology Today," from MEDIA AND METHODS, April 1973. Hero endorsement of products is an accepted technique in modern advertising, whether the hero is a sports figure like Joe Namath or one of the "stars of stage and screen." The idea is not that you will become a Joe Namath if you use the product; these ads merely intend to say that the product endorsed belongs to a super-human world. The force of such endorsements is something like the ancient belief that whatever is touched by a god receives some power from that contact. People still believe that whatever is touched by a "great one" is itself elevated to a new level. The teenager cherishes a piece of shirt she tore from the back of her favorite pop singer, and I cherish a small piece of marble floor that may have been in one of Cicero's villas.

Another mythological world in commercial advertising follows

this pattern: presentation of a problem, and a quasi-magical solution. The problem usually involves a damsel in distress, battling the presence of evil in one of its many guises -- odors, pain, a dissatisfied husband, spotted dishes. Then the mythic hero pops out of the air and solves the problem. The hero may be a real character, like the Man from Glad, or the product itself may come to life. In either case he immediately transforms the distressed damsel into a princess and implies that she herself becomes a hero of sorts, turning dirty floors, dishes, and clothes into shiny new ones with the use of her magical potions.

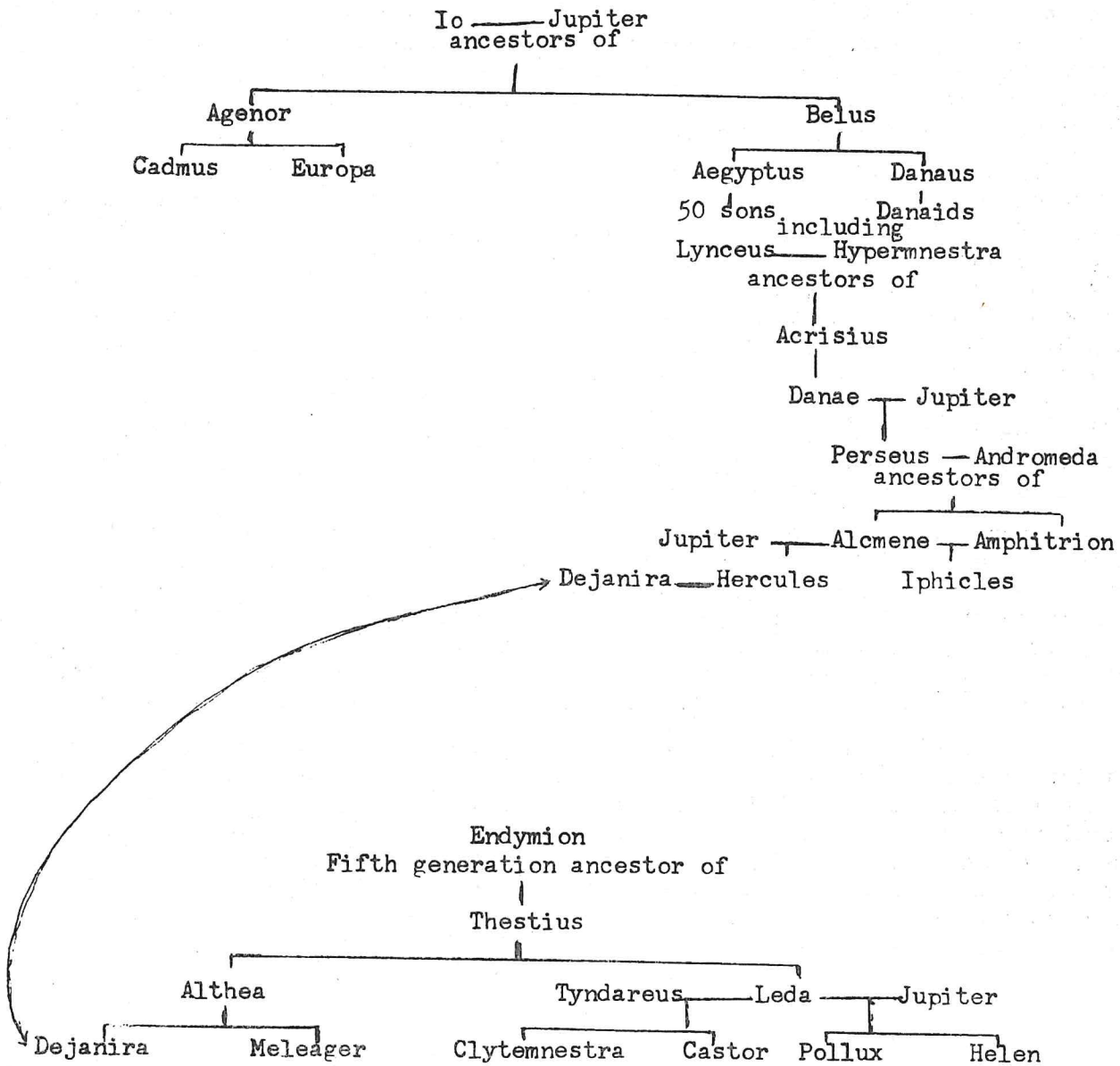
This instant metamorphosis is particularly useful for products in the area of personal hygiene. Here the ordinary mortal is presented as a menace to society, exuding noxious odors from various parts of the body, trailing flaky dandruff, possessing bulges in the wrong places or not enough in the right places. Girls ignore him, or guys never look twice. But a new deodorant, soap, toothpaste, or hair spray will turn the ugly duckling into a ravishing beauty.

We have few political heroes in our modern world. But Marshall Fishwick in *THE HERO: AMERICAN STYLE* fits John Kennedy into the traditional heroic framework: His father was called to a royal court (ambassador in England) and the son was educated by wise men (Harvard). He went off to fight an evil dragon (Japanese navy) and after a bloody fracas (PT 109) triumphed and returned to marry the beautiful princess (Jackie), Inheriting his father's kingdom (politics) he defeated a second contender (Nixon) before becoming ruler (President). After a time of smooth rule, he suddenly lost favor (Bay of Pigs), and died a sudden and mysterious death (Did Oswald shoot him?) Amid great mourning (first world-wide TV funeral) he was buried on a sacred hillside (Arlington). Now he has many shrines (a cultural center, airport, library, and highway).

Perhaps the most completely mythical modern world is that of sports. Carefully marked boundaries separate us ordinary mortals from the play area, which belongs to another world than ours. Ordinary time is suspended; and in sports like football and basketball, time moves forward only when play is in progress, much unlike the non-play world where time never stops. The temporal boundaries provided by the umpire's call, the starting buzzer, or the ending gun strictly define the creation and demise of the play world.

Inside this play world, order rules supreme. Players agree to follow strict ritualistic rules, even though in the real world they may not respect law and order. Referees, umpires, and judges constitute a tribunal here from which there is rarely an appeal. These are small unarmed men, and yet they rule those nearly twice their size, and can even eject them from the draam world without fear of reprisal. There are no criminals nor constant rule-breakers here. Those who break the rules are punished swiftly, and justice rules supreme.

PERSEUS AND HERCULES



PERSEUS AND PEGASUS

The story of Perseus (whose name means "destroyer") begins with the Danaids, forty-nine of whom killed their husbands. The other one, Hypermnestra, became the grandmother of King Acrisius. He heard a prophecy that a male descendant of his would kill him. His only child was a daughter, Danae. Acrisius himself could avoid having a son by simply abstaining from sex, but in order to prevent his daughter from producing a son, he confined her in an underground chamber or, according to Horace, in a tower. However, such barriers were no deterrent to Jupiter, who came to her in the form of a shower of gold (a sunbeam in a darkened chamber? In folklore, sunlight, moonlight, or rain could bring on a magical conception). The result of this visitation was the birth of Perseus. Danae was able to keep his existence a secret until he was about four years old, when the noise of his playing attracted attention. Then Acrisius put the mother and child out to sea in a box, hoping that they would drown. But they were rescued and lived in the kingdom of Polydectes.

When Perseus grew up, Polydectes sent him on an adventure to prove his manhood. His task was to kill the Medusa, the only mortal among the three Gorgons, whose beautiful hair had been changed to writhing snakes and whose appearance was so horrible that any living thing that looked at them was turned to stone. It is quite appropriate that a modern cement company is called Medusa Cement.

In order to equip himself for this mission, Perseus needed Pluto's helmet of invisibility so that Medusa could not know where he was and force him to see her. When the Graeae refused to tell him where to find this helmet, he stole their eye and refused to return it until they had given him the information he needed. He also took with him Minerva's shield, Mercury's sandals and knife, and a pouch in which to bring back Medusa's head to prove the success of his mission.

When he came to the Gorgons' home, he looked only at Medusa's reflection in Minerva's shield. The symbolism here is that man cannot overcome ugliness by simply jumping in and attacking it head-on; he must look at it as it is reflected by wisdom. Probably the world's best known statue of the death of Medusa is the one done by Cellini, which stands near the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Cellini worked on this statue for nine years and never got paid for it.

When Perseus killed Medusa, she was pregnant by Neptune, and from her dying body arose the winged horse Pegasus. Thus Neptune becomes the parent of another marvellous horse, and we have another example of the birth of the new from the death of the old. In modern life, Pegasus is symbolic of flights of imagination and creativity. By extension, the birth of Pegasus also indicates that great creative works (art, music, literature) are born out of the agony of the artist.

After Perseus had killed Medusa, he put her head in the pouch and started home. Drops of blood from the bag engendered poisonous snakes in one area; and once Perseus set the bag down on some seaweed, which became coral. Atlas refused Perseus hospitality because he had heard that a son of Jupiter would take the apples of the Hesperides, and he thought Perseus was the one. Therefore, Perseus showed him the Medusa head and turned him to a mountain.

On the way home Perseus had an adventure which was not in the

original saga. He saw Andromeda, chained to a rock and about to be devoured by a sea monster, a punishment sent on her because her mother, Cassiopea, a queen of Ethiopia, had bragged of her daughter's beauty. Perseus offered to kill the monster if he could marry Andromeda. He did kill it with the Medusa head, and it became a reef. But Andromeda had been engaged to Phineus before her sacrifice, and Phineus and his friends decided to break up the wedding of Perseus and Andromeda. Again, Perseus used the Medusa head and turned these rowdies into stone.

After the wedding he took his bride back to the kingdom of Polydectes who, as he found, was trying to seduce his mother, Danae. Therefore, once again he used the Medusa head and changed Polydectes into stone.

This Medusa head was too powerful a weapon to be left in mortal hands. He gave it to Minerva, who removed its fatal power and wore it on her shield or breastplate.

As for Perseus and Andromeda, they were very happy together. In fact, Perseus is the only one of these "older" heroes who was faithful to one wife for life. They had six sons and one daughter.

By this time King Acrisius was very old, and the prophecy of a male descendant killing him had not come true. He became reconciled with his daughter and grandson. One day when he was watching Perseus throwing the discus, the discus slipped from Perseus' hand, struck the old man on the temple, and killed him. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled. Perseus felt so grieved that he left this area and founded a new city, which became Mycenae. It was so named because, while Perseus and his men were building the city, one day they became very thirsty and had no water. A huge mushroom (Greek *mykos*) suddenly grew and furnished them liquid when it was crushed.

While these things were happening to Perseus, that beautiful and spirited horse Pegasus was having a life of his own. This majestic horse still exists today in business and art. He is the trademark for many literary productions, such as the READERS' DIGEST; and there is even a company that manufactures Pegasus horse feeds. He is also the subject of many majestic and graceful statues, including what has been called the largest statue ever made, by Lipchitz, depicting Bellerophon taming him. Perhaps my favorite is the one standing on the campus of the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

This personification of creative imagination was too free-spirited a creature to be allowed to run rampant, for imagination is like fire, a great blessing when kept under control, but a curse if allowed to run uncontrolled. Therefore, Minerva (wisdom) furnished a golden bridle with which to control Pegasus; and Bellerophon, a grandson of Sisyphus of Corinth, was chosen to be his trainer.

Bellerophon had lived an undistinguished life before this time. Once he had been caught in a web of circumstances much as Hippolytus had been when his stepmother Phaedra tried to seduce him and, having failed, told her husband that Hippolytus had tried to rape her. In Bellerophon's case, Sthenoboea pulled the same stunt, and her husband sent Bellerophon to his father-in-law, Iobates, with letters which were supposed to be letters of introduction but which were really a request for Bellerophon's death. This incident gave us the phrase "Bellerophonic letters," which means letters which you think are recommendations when they are actually prejudicial against you.

What Bellerophon is mostly remembered for, however, is his life as the trainer and driver of Pegasus. The two of them accomplished several great tasks. Perhaps the greatest of these was the killing of the Chimaera, a monster that was part lion, part goat, and part dragon. After this outstanding achievement, Bellerophon was guilty of hubris when he tried to ride to Mt. Olympus. The gods would not tolerate this, and they had a gadfly sting Pegasus, who threw Bellerophon. From then on Bellerophon wandered the earth as a cripple. Pegasus joined Jupiter's horses on Mt. Olympus, and eventually became a constellation.

Many works of art show Perseus riding Pegasus, but Classical mythology has no evidence that this ever happened. After all, Perseus did not need Pegasus for transportation on his one big adventure for he had the winged sandals of Mercury.

Suggested supplementary reading:

William Morris - "The Doom of King Acrisius," THE EARTHLY PARADISE



HERCULES

Hercules (Greek Heracles) is perhaps the best known name worldwide in Classical mythology. He attracted folktales like a magnet, and his story spread throughout the world. As early as 500 B.C. he was mentioned in China. Diodorus mentions an Egyptian, a Cretan, and a Greek, all called Hercules. Cicero counts six almost identical heroes with this name, and Varro is said to have enumerated forty-four.

Homer was the first author to mention him, very briefly in the *ILIAD*, Book v, and a little more extensively in the *ODYSSEY*, Book xxi. In Homer, he is a figure of great strength for both good and evil, carrying everything to excess -- as mankind does. Euripides wrote two dramas based on his life: *HERACLES*, about his killing of his wife Megara and his children; and *HERACLEIDAE*, about the escape of Hercules' children from Eurystheus after Hercules' death. Sophocles also wrote *THE WOMEN OF TRACHIS*, about Hercules' death. In 1954 Ezra Pound wrote a "creative translation" of Sophocles' play, in which, at the end of his life Hercules finds that his seemingly disjointed life has formed an unbelievably coherent pattern.

More often, in Greek literature, he was the subject of comedy, where his gluttony, his wine guzzling, and his sex exploits were emphasized. But this laughing did not destroy the people's affection and respect for him. As a poet once said: "There is a laughter that has honor in it." And modern impressionists create caricatures of such highly respected personalities as our Presidents. Hercules, with all the ridicule, still exemplified to the Greeks such desirable characteristics as philanthropy and ambition; and he was the world's greatest athlete, something greatly admired by them.

The Romans took him very seriously. He stood for virtus (courage) and pietas (goodness). A Roman oath was mehercule (by Hercules). The emperors admired him greatly. Titus took a gilded statue of Hercules and had Hercules' head replaced with his own likeness. This statue now stands in the Vatican Museum. In literature, one of Ovid's *HEROIDES* is "Dejanira to Hercules," and two of Seneca's plays are about Hercules.

In Medieval romance he became a kind of knight. Later Milton "Christianized" him. After all, both Hercules and Christ were the sons of god and a mortal woman; both refused to yield to temptations; and both went through hell to attain heaven. The court of Louis XIV concentrated on his love affairs. The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries delved into seeking allegorical meanings in his adventures. Several writers and artists of this period emphasized that when Hercules killed the Nemean lion, he started wearing the lion skin, indicating that the beastly could be overcome only by becoming a beast oneself. Perhaps this is the thinking of our modern rioters.

I shall mention only three of the many Twentieth Century works of literature based on Hercules:

1. Archibald MacLeish's *HERACLES*, written in 1967, has a modern setting. In it a Nobel-prize winning professor goes to Delphi in search of Hercules, whom he admires as a defiant fighter against the universe, against the horrors of suffering, against the terrible that is God. He is the hero who daringly overcomes Death itself. Such a world the professor wants to create with modern technology. In the play, however, Hercules

returns to Delphi from his labors, brags about his accomplishments, and consults the oracle about "what next?" He refuses to give up his will to power. The theme of this play dramatizes the uses and abuses of modern technology and science, and their destructive and dehumanizing potential.

2. In the same era, Frederick Durrenmatt wrote *HERCULES AND THE AUGEAN STABLES*. This is a satire on modern American life. Commissions are appointed to do things; therefore, nothing ever gets done. And the people are so accustomed to "dung" (the most frequently used word in the play) that they do not know how to live without it. They are afraid that the treasures they have always believed buried under the manure of the stables may not be there. This discovery would be demoralizing on people's morale and on the economy. Also, with such a drastic change, they would have to abandon their traditional ways of life. The point made is that boars and monsters can be conquered; attitudes and prejudices and entrenched ways of thinking and living cannot.

3. When the Indiana University Arts Center was dedicated on April 15, 1972, the first staged performance of John Eaton's opera *HERACLES* was presented for the dedication.

Let us look at the life of this mythological personality who inspired all this literature.

Both his mother Alcmena and his father Amphytrion could trace their ancestry back to Perseus. Almost immediately after their wedding, Amphytrion was drafted into military service and was gone for some time. On the day on which he was to return from the war, Jupiter decided to sleep with Alcmena, and he came to her in the form of Amphytrion. She welcomed the man she thought was her husband and they spent some hours together. Later that night the real Amphytrion came home, and the confused Alcmena had a second "homecoming." This double identity has been the subject of many comedies, from ancient times to the present. The Roman dramatist Plautus wrote a play on Amphytrion's return, and in the Twentieth Century we have a play entitled *AMPHYTRION* 38, which means the thirty-eighth play based on this theme. There is even an Amphytrion Hotel in Nauplia, Greece. I have stayed there, but nothing unusual happened.

The result of this double lovemaking was that Alcmena conceived twins, one the son of Jupiter and the other the son of her mortal husband. A primitive belief held that each of twins had its own father, and that the father of one of them was divine.

Juno, as usual, tried to destroy the illegitimate child of her husband. Before the twins were born, she one day suggested to Jupiter that a child born on a given day would become absolute master of the Peloponnesus. Jupiter, with some quick calculation, realized that this was the day Hercules was supposed to be born, and he quickly agreed. Then Juno went to work. She delayed the birth of Alcmena's twins and caused another baby in the royal family to be born prematurely on that day. This baby was Eurystheus, who was a weakling and a coward all his life. This story is necessary to explain why the mighty Hercules would submit to the orders of a weakling like Eurystheus, who imposed the labors on Hercules.

But the battle of wits was not over between Jupiter and Juno. He had lost the battle, but not the war. Therefore, after Hercules was born, Jupiter enticed Juno into nursing this "poor, helpless infant,"

without her knowing who he was. It was from her milk that Hercules drew his great strength. His Greek name, Heracles, means strength or glory of Hera (Juno). He acquired his strength very rapidly and bit her nipple so hard that she recoiled from him, and milk from her breast spread across the heavens, forming the Milky Way!

Juno was still determined to destroy Hercules and his twin brother Iphicles. For this purpose, she sent two serpents to the crib where the babies were sleeping. But with Hercules' newly acquired strength, he easily strangled the serpents, an act which qualified him for membership in the "dragon slayers' club."

Hercules grew up then with only a few noteworthy incidents. The adult Hercules was reputedly more than seven feet tall, with an impetuous and violent nature. He was a mixture of paradoxical qualities. He had great strength, but from time to time was placed in a position of inferiority, as with Eurystheus and Omphale. His quality of excess spills over into lethal forms as well as the vitality of life. He completely lacked inhibition in matters of love, food, and drink; normal restraints were not for him. But as a man, he was faced with the decision that every hero has to make -- whether to live a life of ease and obscurity or one of struggle and glory. The two life-styles appeared to him as two women, each telling him what she had to offer.

Shortly afterward, having killed his wife Megara and their three children in a fit of anger, he consulted the oracle at Delphi about how to compensate for his deed. The Delphic Pythia called him Heracles for the first time. Previously he had been called Alcides (a descendant of Alceus, Amphytrion's father). The oracle also told him that if he would perform the labors imposed by Eurystheus, he would obtain immortality as his reward. Thus the stage is set for the Labors of Hercules.

His saga really includes expeditions with other heroes and incidental adventures, in addition to the labors. The expeditions, however, were comparatively few. He did start out with the Argonauts; but when the boy Hylas was kidnapped by nymphs at a rest stop, Hercules refused to leave until Hylas was found, so the Argonauts went on without him. As for the incidental adventures, they were mostly episodes associated with the labors and will be discussed along with them.

The labors were at first few in number. Many were added, and finally a cycle of twelve were canonized. Six of these labors involve the capture or killing of wild animals. The first six are local in nature; and the last six move from local to world problems. The last three have often been considered as conquests over death. In 1970, Jan Shoo, a geologist from Holland, interpreted all the labors as personifications of natural forces like rivers and volcanoes.

The twelve labors, with their incidental adventures were these:

1. To kill the Nemean lion - Nemea is about halfway between Corinth and Mycenae. Since the lion was invulnerable to iron, bronze, and stone, Hercules made a club with which to fight it. He eventually strangled the lion and made a coat of its hide. This and the club he had made became his symbols.
2. To destroy the Lernean hydra - This was a water serpent with nine heads. As early as 3000 B.C. a multi-headed serpent had been used to symbolize the rampaging rivers in Mesopotamia. Hercules' achievement here may have been the Greek way of describing the work of some man who had made an area healthier by draining disease-producing swamps. As Hercules would cut off a head, two would grow in its place. This gave

us the modern phrase, "hydra-headed evils" for the solution of a problem which leads to even more serious problems. One of the hydra's heads was immortal, but Hercules buried this in the sand and dipped his arrows into its blood, which made them poisonous. While he fought the hydra, Juno sent a large crab to bite him. He killed it, and it became the constellation Cancer. This labor was not accepted by Eurystheus because he had been helped by Iolaus, the son of Iphicles; and one of the stipulations for his labors was that he must accomplish them alone.

3. To capture the Erymanthian boar - This beast symbolizes the dangers of the mountains, as the hydra symbolized the dangers of the swamps. This adventure involved an incident that appealed to the Greeks' sense of humor. When Hercules brought the boar home, Eurystheus in terror hid in a big jar and pulled the lid on over him. Hercules, looking for a safe place to store the boar, saw this jar and dumped the boar in with Eurystheus. This is depicted on many Greek vases.

As Hercules was going on this labor, he had stopped to rest with his friend, the centaur Pholus. Pholus decided to share some of the centaurs' wine with his guest. The other centaurs were infuriated when they smelled their wine being used, and a fight ensued. During the altercation, Hercules accidentally killed his friend Chiron. Pholus also died during this fight when he dropped one of Hercules' poisoned arrows and wounded himself. Diodorus names seven other centaurs killed.

4. To capture the Cerynian hind - This was one of five belonging to Diana. They had golden antlers and bronze hoofs. Hercules had to pursue it one full year before he caught it.

5. To drive away the Stymphalian birds - These creatures had iron talons and feathers like arrows. They also appear in the story of the Argonauts.

6. To clean the Augean stables in one day - These stables, which had not been cleaned in thirty years, housed three thousand oxen. Hercules accomplished this task by diverting the River Alpheus (the River Alph in Coleridge's KUBLA KHAN) to flow through the stables. The phrase, "to clean out the Augean stables," means to clean up a mess that has been accumulating over a period of years. Eisenhower used this slogan when he ran for the Presidency, which for many years had been held by Democrats. This labor of Hercules was another one that Eurystheus would not accept because Augeas had offered Hercules a reward, and he was supposed to have no compensation for his labors.

7. To capture the Cretan bull - This was the beautiful but awful gift that had been given to King Minos of Crete. After Hercules took it back to Greece, it roamed the fields of Marathon and became known as the Marathonian bull. Theseus eventually killed and sacrificed it.

8. To catch the man-eating horses of Diomedes - As Hercules was on his way to this labor, he stopped by the home of Admetus and learned that Alcestis had just died in her husband's place. So Hercules went to the Underworld and brought her back to life. After this labor, he took time out for the Argonaut expedition.

9. To get the belt of the Amazon queen Hippolyta for Eurystheus' daughter - Theseus went with him on this trip and brought back Hippolyta's sister Antiope as his wife. On his way home, Hercules rescued Hesione. She was the daughter of King Laomedon of Troy, who was being sacrificed to a sea monster, sent by Neptune because the king had not paid the wage promised for Neptune's help in building the walls of Troy. In rescuing

Hesione, Hercules was inside the monster for three days (like Jonah). The symbolism here is that heroism is a form of self-annihilation. Laomedon had promised to give Hercules the two horses his father Tros had been given for Ganymede, if he would rescue his daughter. But, as usual, Laomedon went back on his word. In anger Hercules killed Laomedon and most of his family. Hesione offered Hercules a beautiful veil to give his wife or girl-friend if he would spare the life of her brother Podarces. From that time on, the boy was called Priam, which means "ransomed," and he became the king of Troy in his father's place.

10. To obtain the apples of the Hesperides - These golden apples grew on a tree which had been given by Gaea to Juno as a wedding gift. They were guarded by the dragon Ladon and by Atlas' daughters, the Hesperides. Euripides says that Hercules killed Ladon and took the apples, but the usual version is that he persuaded Atlas to get them from his daughters by offering to hold up the heavens for him while he was gone. In 1973, excavations at Oplonti, ten miles north of Pompeii, revealed a villa with colorful wall paintings, including an excellent Hercules in the garden of the Hesperides. Atlas liked being relieved of his burden so much that he decided to take the apples to Eurystheus himself, leaving Hercules with the heavens on his shoulders. But Hercules outwitted him. He asked Atlas to hold the heavens just long enough for him to adjust his shoulder pads a little more comfortably. As soon as Atlas took over the task, Hercules grabbed the apples and left. The fact that Atlas had been changed to a mountain several generations before did not seem to bother the Greeks and Romans.

Hercules had several incidental adventures on his way to and from this labor. He got involved in a wrestling match with Antaeus, a son of Gaea (Mother Earth). No one could defeat Antaeus because he regained strength every time he touched his mother. Finally, Hercules defeated him by lifting him from the ground and holding him until he conceded defeat. He was also attacked by Pygmies. They were about thirteen and a half inches tall, so named because their height was one pygmy (that is the distance from the elbow to the knuckles). Herodotus mentions a race of African Pygmies. Besides the Pygmies in Africa, he came upon King Busiris in Egypt, who had a custom of sacrificing one stranger a year to stave off a famine. When he tried to sacrifice Hercules, Hercules sacrificed him. Also during this labor, Hercules freed Prometheus, who had been chained to his rock for thirteen generations.

11. To capture the oxen of Geryon - To accomplish this feat, Hercules had to go beyond the limits of the known world, and he set up the Pillars of Hercules (one of which is the Rock of Gibraltar) to mark his progress. As he was driving the cattle back along the west coast of Italy, he stopped overnight at the place where Rome would later be built. During the night, Cacus tried to steal some of his cattle by dragging them into a cave backward. As Hercules was driving the rest of the cattle away, those in the cave lowed, and Hercules found them. Of course, he killed Cacus for his deed, and he set up the first altar to himself at what, appropriately enough, later became the Forum Boarium (cattle market) in Rome. He also stopped overnight farther down the coast near Vesuvius at a place where later the city of Herculaneum was built, with him as the patron deity.

12. To bring Cerberus from the Underworld - This is the only labor mentioned by Homer. While there, Hercules freed Theseus, who was fastened

to the chair of forgetfulness. When Hercules pulled Theseus loose, he left some of his "seat" on the chair; that explains why Athenians have thin hips! Also in the Underworld Hercules promised Meleager he would marry his sister Dejanira. Meleager had come to the Underworld in this way: When he was seven days old, his mother Althea had asked the Fates how long he would live. She was told that his life would last as long as a certain piece of wood remained intact. Althea guarded this piece of wood carefully until the Calydonian boar hunt. All the neighboring heroes, including the Amazon Atalanta, came to hunt down this wild animal. It was agreed that a prize would be given to the one who killed it. Atalanta drew first blood by giving it its first serious wound; then others gathered around and killed it. Meleager insisted that Atalanta deserved the prize. But the men would not accept the humiliation of its going to a woman. In the altercation which followed, Meleager killed two of his uncles, Althea's brothers. In anger, Althea burned the piece of wood, and Meleager died.

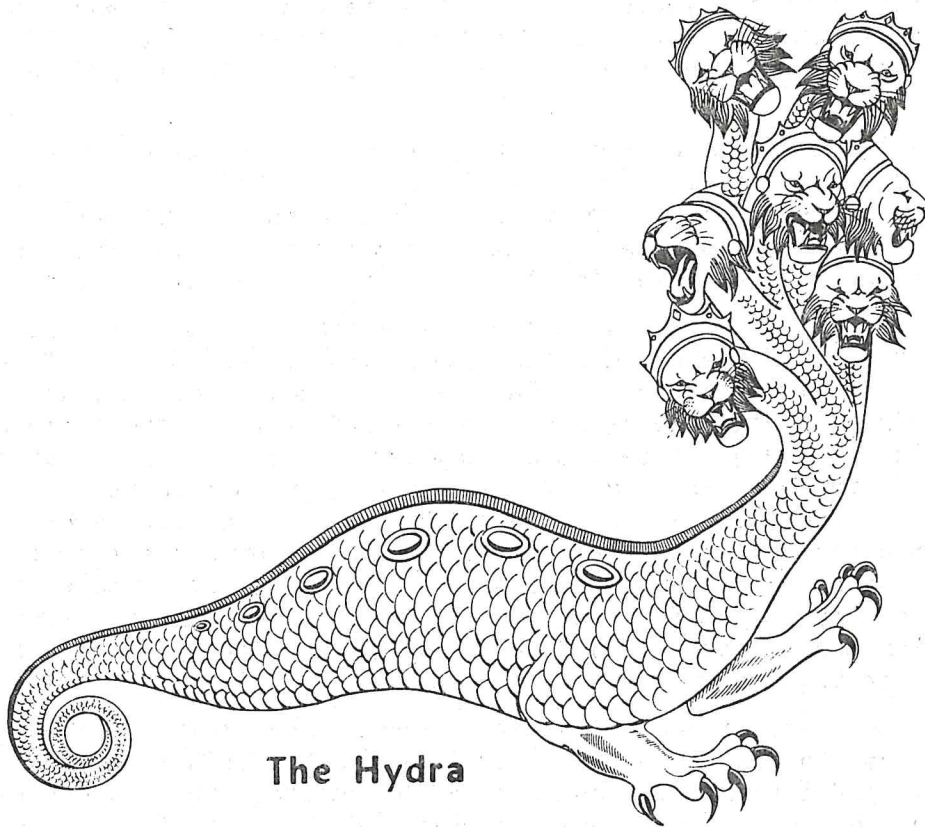
This was the last of the Labors of Hercules, imposed by Eurystheus. But what became of Eurystheus after that? He was killed when the children of Hercules came to claim the throne of Mycenae. One year later, a plague caused them to retreat to the plain of Marathon, and the Delphic oracle told them to wait for the "third crop" before they returned. They mistook this for three years instead of three generations, and were defeated. So Atreus, a brother of Eurystheus' mother, now ruled in Mycenae. The third generation did return, rout the house of Atreus, and take over the rule.

A few things need to be said about Hercules' relationship with women. His sexual appetite was unrestrained. He had at least seventy children by at least sixty-two women. All were boys. But this hero who was unconquerable by man, was finally destroyed by a woman, as was Samson by Delilah. Three women in his life deserve special mention.

Iole was his great love. She was a daughter of Eurytus, who owned a bow given him by Apollo and later given to Ulysses. Eurytus forbade his daughter to marry Hercules. Once in an argument Hercules killed Iole's brother. Penitent, he punished himself as gods were punished, by going into a period of servitude to a mortal, this time to Queen Omphale. During his servitude, he helped her with her spinning and did other women's work. Strangely enough, several of the great Greek heroes had a "feminine" period in their lives. Achilles even spent some time in a girls' school, disguised as a woman. Hercules and Omphale sometimes exchanged clothes, just for fun. Once when Hercules was dressed as Omphale, Pan made a pass at what he thought was Omphale. Needless to say, he never tried that again.

Hercules' last wife was Dejanira, whom he had promised Meleager to marry. He had to fight the river god Achelous to get her. Achelous changed himself into a bull, and during the ensuing struggle Hercules tore one of the horns from Achelous' head, which became the cornucopia. As he was taking Dejanira home, he came to a broad, swift river. The centaur Nessus offered to carry Dejanira across for Hercules. But when he got Dejanira on his back, he decided to kidnap her. Hercules killed him with one of his poisoned arrows. Before he died, however, he gave Dejanira a little bottle of his blood, poisoned by Hercules' arrow, and told her that if she used it on Hercules, he would never love another woman. Thinking that it was a love potion, she guarded it carefully for three years. Then Hercules went to the country of Iole and stayed longer than seemed necessary. So Dejanira soaked a coat in this potion for

Hercules to wear. When he put the coat on, the poison ate into his body, causing excruciating pain, but the immortal part of him could not die. If we refer to somebody as wearing the shirt of Nessus, we mean that he is suffering unbearable but inescapable pain, either physical or mental. Finally, Hercules climbed on a funeral pyre and offered his poisoned arrows to whoever would set fire to it to burn away his mortal parts. Philoctetes (or his father) did so, and received the arrows. Thus Hercules became a minor god and married Hebe. The remnants of a temple to Hercules stands on one of the main streets of Ostia, Rome's seaport city. He is the only hero of Greece to have no grave because he was elevated to divinity, as the others were not. We know that he was a man before he was a god, rather than a god who degenerated into a hero, because his Greek name was Heracles, and gods did not take names derived from other gods.



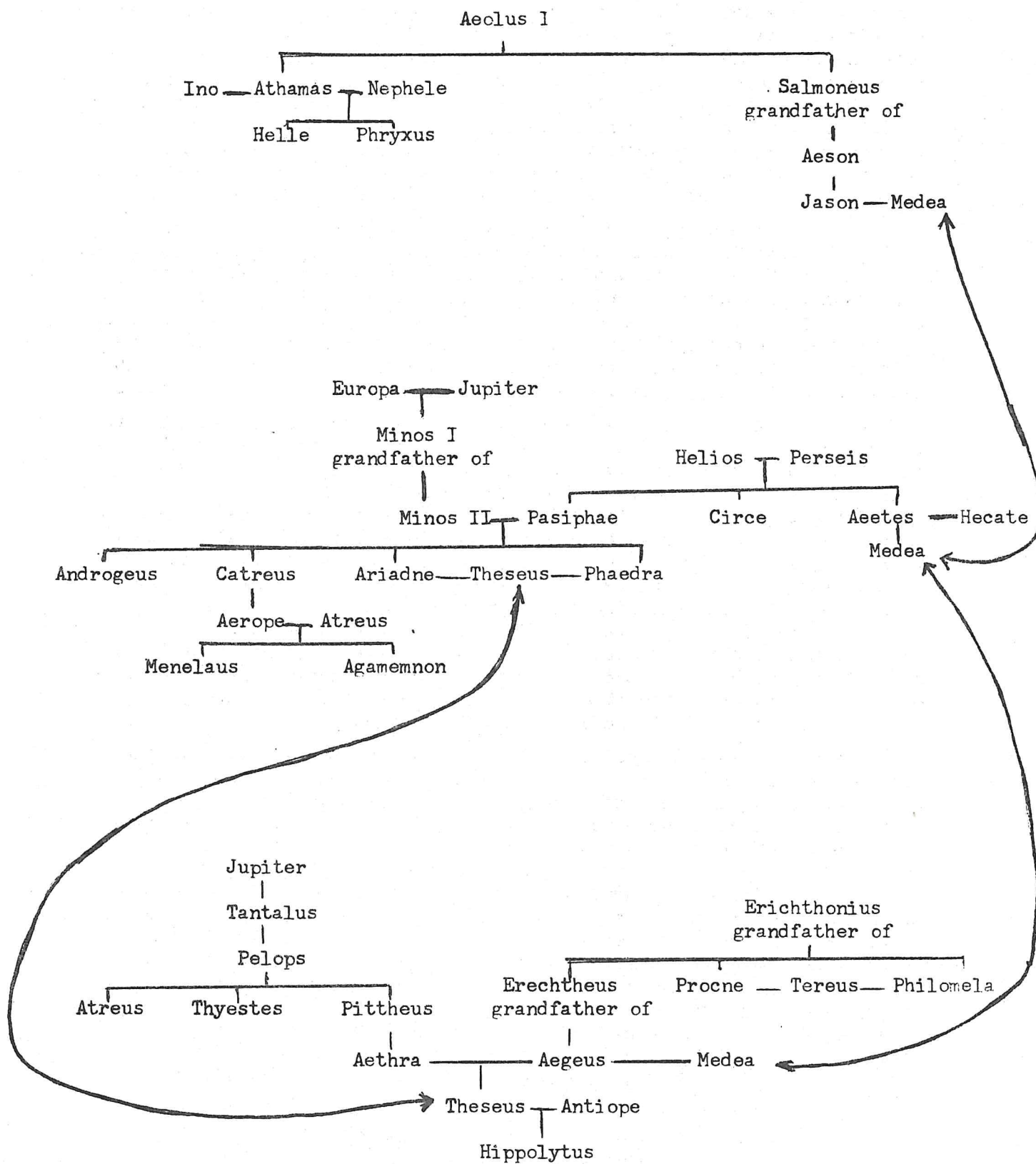
The Hydra

Suggested supplementary reading:

Ovid - "Dejanira to Hercules," HEROIDES

Durrenmatt - HERCULES AND THE AUGEAN STABLES

JASON AND THESEUS



JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

Athamas was married three times. By his first wife Nephele, he became the father of a girl Helle and a boy Phrixus. When Nephele disappeared, Athamas married Ino, a daughter of Cadmus and sister of Semele. Nephele was worried about the welfare of her children in the hands of a stepmother, and Mercury sent to them a ram with golden fleece which could sail through the air. Helle and Phrixus were told to hold onto the fleece and be carried to safety. But Helle's hands were not as strong as her brother's. She lost her grip and fell into a body of water which became known as the Hellespont [pontus = a body of water; therefore, Helle's body of water]. Phrixus went on, sacrificed the ram when he reached safety, but he saved the fleece and hid it in Colchis, an area at the Eastern end of the Black Sea, now known as Georgia, in Southern Russia. Phrixus' four sons became minor characters among the Argonauts.

As for Athamas, he became the father of two sons, Learchus and Melicertes, by his second wife Ino. She also disappeared and he married again, this time to Themisto, by whom he had twin sons. She planned to kill Ino's sons, but Ino came back and substituted Themisto's sons for her own, and Themisto killed her own children. Athamas was so angry that he tried to kill Ino and her children, but Ino grabbed her younger son and jumped into the sea, where under another name she became a minor sea deity, who was visited by Keats' Endymion when he was searching for his moon goddess.

Jason's father Aeson was pressured into turning over the kingdom to Pelias, a stepson of Athamas' brother. But he did this with the stipulation that the kingdom be given to Jason when he came of age. Jason was reared by Chiron, the Centaur who taught many of the great heroes. At the age of twenty, Jason went to claim the throne. Pelias had been warned to beware of a person wearing one sandal. Jason lost a sandal on his way to Pelias, while helping Juno in disguise as an old woman to cross a river. When he could not retrieve the sandal, he went on without it. Pelias, seeing this, was afraid and decided to send Jason to get the golden fleece of Phrixus' ram -- in order to prove his manhood. He sent Jason to get the fleece on one of two excuses: the ghost of Phrixus had told him to bring it back to Greece; or he asked him what he would do to somebody who was a threat to him, and Jason carelessly answered that he would send him to get the golden fleece. So Pelias did so.

Jason entered this project with youthful enthusiasm. This is the earliest record in history of such a long sea voyage. Perhaps it was an actual voyage in the Mycenaean Age, an accomplishment involving technical feats comparable to the space voyages of the first astronauts. Argus (a son of Phrixus, not the hundred-eyed Argus) built a ship that would hold fifty men. Until that time people had traveled only in small boats. Those who participated in this expedition were called the Argonauts (sailors on the ship built by Argus). It ties together the people of other myths. The list of names varies in ancient writers because they tried to insert the names of their ancestors. Among the important names usually included were: Admetus, Hercules, Castor and Pollux, Peleus (father of Achilles), Tydeus (father of Diomedes), Meleager, Amphiaraus, Orpheus, Nestor, Mopsus and Idmon (prophets), Amphion, Augeas, Theseus and his friend Pirithous (although Theseus could not have been there, since he came to his father only after Medea had fled from Jason).

On their way to Colchis they had several side adventures. Mighty Hercules broke an oar. When they landed on an island for repairs, Hylas

was kidnapped, and Hercules left the expedition. His part in this excursion is the subject of *HERCULES, MY SHIPMATE*, by Robert Graves. Later, Pollux beat King Amycus of Bythia in a boxing match. Then, in the land of King Phineus, they drove away the Harpies, that kept defiling Phineus' food till he could not eat. In appreciation, he told the Argonauts how to get through the Symplegades, a name which means "striking together." These clashing islands would come together, crushing anything that passed between them. Phineus told the Argonauts to release a dove, which would cause the islands to come together. Then as the islands were parting, the Argonauts were to move swiftly through. This they did; the dove lost only a few tail feathers, and the Argonauts got through safely. These Symplegades symbolize any pair of opposites that crush the traveler through life -- hope and fear, life and death, beauty and ugliness, good and evil. Also on their trip, with the help of Orpheus' music, they passed the Sirens without hearing their song, and thus being lured to destruction.

When they reached Colchis, King Aeetes agreed to give Jason the golden fleece if he could yoke a pair of fire-breathing oxen to a plow, plow a field with them, and sow some of the dragon's teeth, which Minerva had given him from the dragon that Cadmus had killed. The crop that these teeth would produce was fierce armed warriors. After that, he had to put to sleep the dragon that guarded the fleece before he could get it.

Medea, the daughter of the king and a sorceress, fell in love with Jason and made it possible for him to accomplish these tasks. She gave him a charm that would make him invulnerable for one day so that he could handle the oxen. Then, when the warriors sprang from the ground and attacked Jason, she told him to throw a stone in their midst. After he did this, they began attacking each other and killed themselves off. [What foolish things turn us against our fellow men!] She had also given him a potion with which to anaesthetize the dragon. So they grabbed the fleece, and Jason and the Argonauts and Medea fled.

Medea took her little brother with her. When her father pursued them, she cut up her brother and threw parts of his body overboard, one piece at a time. She knew that her father would stop to retrieve his son's body because proper burial was so important. In this way, she and Jason could get away.

The trip back to Greece, which took four months, involved one adventure worth noting. They had stopped at an island, which was the home of Talus, a bronze giant who would grow redhot and throw huge boulders at people (the personification of a volcano?) His blood was kept in his body by a cork in the top of his head. One night, when he was sleeping, Medea pulled the cork and destroyed this monster.

The exploits of the Argonauts have been the subject of considerable literature. William Morris's *THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON* is the longest single mythological tale in the English language. In the 1960's an English movie based on the Argonaut expedition was filmed, with Todd Armstrong and Nancy Kovack in the roles of Jason and Medea. The movie follows the Apollonius Rhodius version of the story, plus many modern additions. The Argonauts are selected through athletic contests. Hylas gets to go because he beats Hercules in discus throwing, by skipping his discus on the surface of the water. Hercules is unflatteringly portrayed as a Tarzan character. In this movie it is Jason, not Medea, who kills Talus by pulling the cork from a heel; and Talus falls on

Hylas, killing him. Perhaps the most effective part of the movie is the portrayal of the warriors from the dragon's teeth. They are skeletons who move about like human beings.

The most important person in Jason's life was Medea, whose personality was molded by both her heredity and her environment. She came from the primitive area of Colchis, and a look at the genealogical chart will show the caliber of her family. Two of her father's sisters were Circe and Pasiphae: Circe was the goddess of sensual pleasure and turned those who came under her power into animals; Pasiphae had an unnatural affair with the Cretan bull and became the mother of the Minotaur. Medea's father himself was once the husband of Hecate, the goddess of witchcraft. From this background came Medea, herself a sorceress, who fell intensely in love with Jason, the cultured Greek. She was an uncomplicated kind of person, intense and single-minded. Her great obsession was her love for Jason.

When they got back to his home, Medea mixed a magic boiling brew, into which she dipped Jason's father Aeson (after she had tested its effectiveness by dipping into it an old goat, which came out as a young kid). Aeson came out forty years younger. Pelias' daughters asked her whether she would do the same thing for their father. Medea cleverly said that he would appreciate it more if they mixed the brew under her directions. She deliberately gave the wrong ingredients, and when Pelias was dipped into the brew, it killed him. She, of course, claimed that she had not done it, but the people were not satisfied.

After this incident, Jason and Medea were driven from Ioclus and went to Corinth, where they lived happily for ten years and had two sons. But then the king's daughter Creusa wanted to marry Jason, and the ambitious Jason decided to desert Medea and marry Creusa. This turned Medea's intense love into an equally intense hatred, and she was determined to inflict on Jason the cruelest revenge she could think of. First, she sent to the new bride a beautiful but deadly robe. When Creusa put it on and was dying in agony, her father Creon tried to take it off her, and he also died. But Medea's big problem was to figure out what would bring her husband the worst suffering. Aegeus, king of Athens, happened to come by Corinth on his way home from consulting an oracle about why he could have no children. As he told Medea, there is nothing sadder than for a man to have no children, for we all like to know that when we die a part of ourselves survives in the world of the living. This caused Medea to determine to kill her two sons by Jason in order to hurt him most deeply. After these murders, she fled to Aegeus in Athens for asylum.

This is the story as told by the Greek playwright Euripides. In ancient literature, the story was also told by the Roman Seneca, and Ovid has a letter from Medea to Jason in his *HEROIDES*.

There have been many modern versions of the Medea theme in world literature. The children are regularly treated in these as victims of adult passions and hatred. The horror of the totally unjust sacrifice of the innocent is emphasized. In Corneille's *MEDEE*, she kills her children to protect them from their stepmother; in Maxwell Anderson's *WINGLESS VICTORY*, Oparre (the Medea figure) kills herself as well as the children. Anouilh has written a version in which the struggle of Medea is between compromise and being true to herself. Robinson Jeffers' *MEDEA* had the good fortune of having the leading role played by a great actress, Judith Anderson. In this play Medea is presented as

a sexually frustrated female, and the closeness of the sex impulse and the urge to kill is indicated. Not so effectively, one professional company presented Jeffers' play with all the female parts taken by males, as was done with all plays in the Shakespearean era. The fiery Maria Callas played Medea in a movie and also in Cherubini's opera on this theme. In 1970, A. R. Gurney's play, *THE GOLDEN FLEECE*, revolves around Jason and a blonde in a motel room. The main characters are never seen, just talked about. A German version in 1977 uses the Medea theme to exemplify women's liberation. The La Mama Repertory Company, under the direction of the Roumanian Andrei Serban, presented a version with many unusual lighting and sound effects, where the lines were partially in Classical Greek and partially in Senecan Latin. These are only a few of the many versions of the Medea theme on the modern stage. In 1968 the *CLASSICAL BULLETIN* contained an article entitled "The Many Faces of Medea." The New York City Ballet even gave a ballet version of the story.

Suggested supplementary reading:

Ovid - "Medea to Jason," *HEROIDES*

Euripides - *MEDEA*



MEDEA AND PELIAS

Black-figured Attic vase, 6th century B.C. Pelias sits at the left while Medea, next to him, works her magic on the ram; the daughters of Pelias are on the right. *British Museum*

DAEDALUS AND ICARUS, AND CRETE

Daedalus was the most creative inventor of Classical mythology. His scientific skills explain why the journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences is called DAEDALUS. It is said that among the things he created were animated statues, our first robots. He was an Athenian but he fled to Crete with his son Icarus after he was tried on the Areopagus and condemned to death for the murder of his nephew and apprentice, Perdix. Perdix was so skilled that Daedalus was jealous. Perdix even invented the saw by imitating in iron the spine of a fish. So Daedalus threw him from a tower. The gods changed the boy into a partridge, which to this day is afraid of heights.

Daedalus was given sanctuary, but he was also forbidden to leave Crete by King Minos II, who was pleased to get such a talented man on his island. Minos was a descendant of Europa and Jupiter. Jupiter had come to Europa and a group of her friends in the form of a white bull. He was so gentle with the girls that they started climbing on his back and he would take them for short rides. When Europa climbed on his back, he disappeared with her. Two of their three sons were Minos I and Rhadamanthus, who became judges in the Underworld after their death. And tradition says that the continent of Europe was named after their mother. The bull carrying away Europa is the subject of innumerable paintings, possibly because it gives the artist a chance to depict the masculine virility of the bull and the contrasting delicacy of the girl.

Minos II had married Pasiphae, an aunt of Medea, and they had several children, among them a boy who later became the grandfather of Menelaus and Agamemnon. Once when Minos wanted to sacrifice a bull to Neptune, he found none in his herds that he thought was good enough. So he prayed to Neptune to send him a suitable animal. Neptune did send a magnificent bull, which Minos found so beautiful that he substituted another sacrificial animal and kept this bull, which became known as the Cretan bull. Of course, Minos was punished for this. What happened was that Pasiphae became physically attracted to this animal. The difficulty of consummating an affair between a woman and a bull was solved by Daedalus, who designed a hollow bronze cow into which Pasiphae could climb. The result of this unnatural union was the birth of the Minotaur (Minos + taurus, which means bull; therefore, the offspring of the bull of Minos). This creature had the body of a man and the head of a bull. It also has been used a great deal in art, especially by the modern artists Michael Ayrton and Pablo Picasso, usually to emphasize the futile struggle of man to free himself from the animal part of his nature. After the birth of the Minotaur, the Cretan bull was turned loose to roam wild, and capturing it was one of the labors of Hercules. You will remember that after it was taken back to Greece by Hercules, it roamed the area of Marathon.

The Minotaur had to be confined somewhere, and Daedalus again came to the rescue by designing the labyrinth from which nobody, including the monster, could find his way out.

After the Cretan bull was taken to Greece, there were periodic excursions from Athens to try to kill it. It just so happened that when one of these hunts was being organized, Androgeus, a son of Minos, was visiting King Aegeus of Athens, and he begged the king to allow him to go along. The boy was killed during this expedition and, as penance for the harm that had come to his guest, Aegeus had to supply the food for the Minotaur, which consisted solely of seven boys and

seven girls, fed to it periodically every few years. Napoleon was called the "imperial Minotaur" because, just as the Minotaur devoured Athens' finest young men, he sacrificed France's youth to his personal ambitions. Finally, Aegeus' son Theseus went as one of the seven boys and killed the Minotaur, thus ending this terrible human sacrifice.

After his son's death, Minos had also taken revenge on Nisus, the petty king of Marathon. He attacked Nisus' country. But Nisus' daughter Scylla fell in love with her father's enemy Minos and betrayed her father to him. Nisus' strength came from a lock of purple hair on his head. Scylla cut this lock and gave it to Minos. But traitors are not liked, even by the people they help, so Minos bound her to the rudder of his ship and dragged her to Crete. Eventually, she was transformed into a monster.

Meanwhile, back in Crete Daedalus was still busy. He laid an elaborate mosaic floor for Minos' daughter Ariadne to dance on. But he was getting restless. Since he saw no way of escape from Crete by land or by sea, he took wax and feathers and, studying the structure of the wings of birds, he designed wings to fit his own arms and those of his son Icarus. He warned the boy that if he flew too near the sun, the wax would melt and destroy the wings. At first, their flight went well; but the boy eventually grew tired of flying low and decided to fly higher. The wax did melt, and he fell to his death in a body of water that became known as the Icarian Sea. His father continued his flight and landed on the West coast of Italy near the town of Cumae. Today there is a bronze plaque there which says: "Here first Daedalus set his foot after escaping from Crete." Eventually, he went to Sicily to live.

Minos, determined to find Daedalus, knew that he could not resist a contest of technical skill. He therefore offered a prize to whoever could put a thread through the full length of a spiral shell. Daedalus cut a hole in the small end of a shell, tied a thread to an ant's leg, put the ant and plenty of string into this little hole, and then plugged the hole. The ant, hunting light, eventually emerged from the wide end of the shell, the string still attached to its leg. When Minos came to Sicily to get Daedalus extradited, the daughters of the Sicilian king, having been asked to prepare Minos a hot bath, made it so hot that he was scalded to death. There is no explanation of why they were not punished for this violation of the host-guest relationship.

Daedalus and Icarus have their place in modern life. In James Joyce's *Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, the main character is Stephen Dedalus. Ray Bradbury's *Icarus Montfolier* is based on man's desire to fly, and links the myth of Icarus to modern technology. Eastern Airlines for a time used an ad picturing Daedalus, with the theme, "the wings of man." The asteroid Icarus, discovered in 1949, was so named because of all the known celestial bodies in our solar system, its orbital path came closest to the sun. While traveling in Greece, I even saw an Icarus Travel Agency. I don't think I would want them to plan my trip; I would like to reach my destination.

The civilization over which Minos ruled deserves some special analysis because Crete, like Mycenae and Athens, was the center of one of the great powers of ancient times. An excellent article on this subject was published in the *National Geographic*, about February, 1978. No ancient civilization is more enigmatic because, unlike its Babylonian and Egyptian contemporaries, the Cretans left little written history,

and the writing they did leave is largely undecipherable.

Crete dominated the Aegean world from 2000 B.C. to about 1450 B.C. Minos, the ruler of a commercial state, is said to have established the first great sea power in world history. Then, suddenly and mysteriously, at the peak of its power, this civilization collapsed in flames about 1450 B.C. Was it plundered by invaders? Or, more likely, was there some great natural upheaval?

In 1967 a Greek archaeologist unearthed from volcanic ash the remains of an ancient city of twenty thousand inhabitants on the island of Thera, some seventy miles north of Crete, a kind of Bronze Age Pompeii. This island had been demolished by one of the most violent volcanic eruptions in history. The eruption of Krakatoa near Java in 1883 took thirty-six thousand lives and spread a cloud of ash around the entire earth. The explosion at Thera, about 1500 B.C., has been estimated to have been four times greater than the Krakatoa eruption. Perhaps a fate somewhat similar to that of Thera also erased the Minoan civilization.

Schliemann, who unearthed Troy and Mycenae, had attempted to buy a site just south of the city of Herakleion on Crete, but the price was exorbitant. But in 1900 a wealthy Briton, Arthur Evans, bought Kephala and began unearthing the splendors of the palace at Knossos, the most affluent spot in ancient Crete. Among his finds were eighteen enormous storage places containing more than four hundred giant pithoi or jars, a hundred and fifty of which survive. They had been capable of holding seventeen thousand gallons of wine. He also discovered a gypsum chair with a regal back, flanked by painted wingless griffins, which may be Europe's oldest throne.

Also at Knossos in the late 1950's, a John Evans uncovered the deepest Neolithic layer ever found in Europe. It was twenty-three feet down. The oldest houses were made of mud bricks, hardened by fire — a Middle Eastern technique, never again used in ancient Crete.

Incidentally, some of the most famous Greek places (Corinth, Olympus, Knossos) bear names that are not Greek. No one is certain what language they represent, maybe that of a people who inhabited the hills of what is now Turkey, where Troy stood. Another thing that was probably from the East was the cult of the bull. In Asia Minor and Syria the weather god, with his brute strength, sudden rage, and fertilizing power, was depicted as a bull. Also in Egypt, the pharaoh was identified with the bull. The cult of the bull, a symbol of strength and fertility, pervaded the ancient Cretan culture. Remember that Jupiter had taken the form of a bull to kidnap Europa, and Minos' wife had had an affair with the Cretan bull. Also, watching bull-dancing was the favorite spectator sport of Crete. In bull-dancing, people danced on the backs of rampaging bulls. Most of the "actors" did not have a long life expectancy. But people considered them fun to watch. Wall paintings in the palace at Knossos show some of these "games."

But excavations were made at other places besides Knossos. In 1962, in far Southeastern Crete, a previously unknown palace was found, intact and un plundered for thirty-four hundred years. It was a two-acre complex of four hundred rooms, full of evidence of prosperity and foreign trade. Among the items found were elephant tusks from Syria, copper ingots from Cyprus, diorite from the Nile area, and fifty-five artifacts and ritual vessels of unsurpassed beauty and workmanship, besides tablets in the unknown Minoan language.

In 1967-1968, on the southeast coast of Crete, a Briton excavated a single stone and mud-brick building of more than ninety small living and working cells -- a veritable human hive, which was active about 2600 to 2000 B.C.

Meanwhile, in about 1964, a few miles south of Knossos two Greek professors had found a necropolis with two hundred skulls in a common grave, and a temple for the dead. In 1965 they found another tomb with the main chamber robbed; but a side room contained a woman adorned with more than 150 pieces of jewelry. Then in 1975 another tomb was found in the area, containing a woman wearing a necklace of astonishing beauty, each of its gold parts shaped like a paper-nautilus shell.

Suggested supplementary reading:

Ovid - *Metamorphoses*, VIII, 157 - 235 [for Daedalus-Icarus story]



THESEUS

Some versions of the Theseus story say that his father was Neptune because Neptune gave his mother three wishes which she turned over to her son. Theseus used these wishes for these things: his escape from the labyrinth, his safe return from the Underworld, and the death of his son Hippolytus. But the usual version of Theseus' birth is that Aegeus, on his way back to Athens from consulting the oracle about his inability to have children, stopped overnight in Troezen. Pittheus, the king there, was told by the gods to let his daughter sleep with Aegeus. When Aegeus left the next day, he told this girl Aethra that, if a son was born as a result of that night, she was to send the boy to him in Athens when he was strong enough to move a large stone and get from under it a sword and a pair of sandals which Aegeus had put there. A red-haired son was born, and was named Theseus.

When Theseus was able to get the sword, he went to his father. On the way he had six adventures, somewhat comparable to the labors of Hercules except that his adversaries were mostly human instead of animal. These six incidents are discussed in some detail in Rushton and Norton's book, *CLASSICAL MYTHS IN ENGLISH LITERATURE*. The most interesting of these adventures was his contact with Procrustes, known as "the stretcher." He had a bed which he made everybody fit. If a person was too long, he chopped him off; if he was too short, he stretched him. A modern Procrustes is an opinionated bigot, who makes everybody conform to his ideas. Another modern use of this character is the term, "a Procrustian statistic," which means a figure that is an average, not fitting any specific situation exactly. A good example of this was in the *CHICAGO TRIBUNE* on September 1, 1980, where it was stated that "ten years ago the average Chicago family consisted of 3.1 persons. Today the average size is 2.82."

When Theseus got to his father, Medea was there, and they had one son, Medus, from whom the Medes took their name. Medea recognized Theseus as Aegeus' son and tried to get Aegeus to poison him because she wanted Medus to succeed Aegeus on the throne of Athens. However, Aegeus himself finally knew Theseus because of the sword he carried. Medea, fearing Aegeus' anger, fled back to her native Colchis, where she lived a long and unhappy life.

Theseus did many things to help his father. He got rid of Pallas and his family, who were a threat to Aegeus' power. He caught the bull of Marathon and sacrificed it to Apollo. And, of course, he killed the Minotaur. He either volunteered or was chosen by lot for this expedition. He was helped in this undertaking by Minos' daughter Ariadne, who asked as a reward that he take her with him when he left. Among the aids she gave him was a thread made by Vulcan, one end of which could be fastened at the entrance to the labyrinth so that he could find his way out.

After the Minotaur was dead, Theseus and the other young Athenians and Ariadne set sail for Athens. In his excitement Theseus forgot a promise to his father that, if he succeeded in his mission, he would put up white sails instead of the black ones always used on the ship that carried the victims. They sailed to Naxos, where they made a rest stop. While Ariadne was sleeping there, the others sailed away, deserting her. Bacchus found her there and fell in love with her. He showered her with gifts, including a crown with seven stars in it, which eventually became a constellation.

Meanwhile, Theseus and his group were approaching Athens. Aegeus stood on the cliffs and looked out to sea, hoping that his son was returning safely. When he saw the black sails, in despair he threw himself into the sea and drowned, and the sea was named after him — the Aegean Sea. Thus, when Theseus got to Athens, he found himself the king.

The life of Theseus to this point is effectively told in Mary Renault's novel, *THE KING MUST DIE*. She makes his saga credible by using the historical facts which may have been the basis of the myths. For instance, the victims from Athens to feed the Minotaur were perhaps young people to participate in the dangerous sport of bull-dancing, none of whom would survive long. She also wrote a sequel to this book, entitled *THE BULL FROM THE SEA*, which continues the story of Theseus' life to its end.

While king, he participated in various expeditions, such as the Calydonian boar hunt. He went with Hercules to the land of the Amazons, and brought back as his wife Antiope, the sister of Hippolyta, the Amazon queen whose belt Hercules was seeking. The Amazons declared war on the Athenians for this bride-theft. But by this time Antiope and Theseus had a son, whom they named Hippolytus after his aunt, and Antiope fought for Theseus against her people until she was killed in the war.

These Amazons deserve some special mention. For the ancients they were legendary symbols of barbarism, always fighting against civilized areas. They were a completely female warrior society of about 200,000. Their name may mean "breastless," because they removed their right breast since it interfered with their use of the bow. Once a year they went on raping raids, killing the men after mating with them. They reared only the girl babies. As the Greeks' geographical knowledge expanded, their location kept moving farther east, always on the borders of the known world. In the Middle Ages, Marco Polo knew the story of a "female island." And the expanse of water where Columbus believed there was an island of women was given the name the Atlantic Ocean. In about 1541, the Spanish explorer Orellana heard of a tribe of women in South America, living near a great river. Thinking they were the Amazons, he so named the river. These Amazons are depicted in much ancient art, such as in the Parthenon friezes, on the shield of the Parthenon Athena, and on the pedestal of the Olympian Zeus.

In addition to his joining many expeditions, Theseus had adventures with his inseparable friend Pirithous, king of the Lapiths. This friendship had begun with a fight. Pirithous had heard of the great valor of Theseus and decided to test him. He challenged him to a fight, during which each admired the strength and fairness of the other so much that they swore undying friendship.

When Pirithous married Hippodamia, he invited all the Centaurs to the wedding because his father Ixion was also their father. The Centaurs were gentle monsters, who were usually well behaved. But they could not "hold their liquor." At the wedding reception, wine was flowing freely, and one Centaur made a pass at the bride. This started a fierce fight between the Lapiths and the Centaurs, which is the subject of 525 feet of frieze work on the Parthenon.

Later, after Hippodamia was dead and Theseus was about fifty years old, he and Pirithous decided to steal brides who had a god as a father. Theseus got a twelve-year-old girl named Helen (later known as Helen of Troy) and then he and Pirithous went to get Pirithous' choice, Proserpina. When Pluto caught them, he fastened them in the Chair of Forgetfulness. Meanwhile, Helen's brothers Castor and Pollux rescued Helen and also took with them Aethra, Theseus' mother, who was later with Helen in Troy.

Eventually, Hercules freed Theseus but left Pirithous in the Underworld where he was later fastened on the fiery wheel with his father Ixion.

Late in life, Theseus decided to marry, and the wife he chose was Phaedra, the younger sister of Ariadne. But after he brought Phaedra home, she fell desperately in love with her stepson Hippolytus, who was about her age. Once when Theseus was away from home, Phaedra confessed her love to Hippolytus, and he recoiled in horror. Repulsed and shamed, Phaedra committed suicide, leaving a note which said that she had done so because Hippolytus had tried to rape her. When Theseus read this note, he was so infuriated that he threw his son out of the house and used his last wish to bring death to him. Neptune answered his wish by sending up a sea monster as Hippolytus was driving his chariot along the coast. The frightened horses bolted and killed Hippolytus. But Diana, the goddess of chastity, felt so bad about this undeserved punishment that she had Asclepius bring him back to life, and he lived in faraway Italy under the new name of Virbius (vir = man, bi = twice; therefore, a man for a second time). It was this deed that caused Pluto to complain and Jupiter to kill Asclepius with a thunderbolt. Then, you will remember, Apollo killed the Cyclops who had made the thunderbolt and had to serve King Admetus as punishment.

The story of Phaedra and Hippolytus has been the material for many dramas. Ancient versions include Euripides' HIPPOLYTUS and Seneca's PHAEDRA. Some of the better modern versions are Racine's PHEDRE and Robinson Jeffers' THE CRETAN WOMAN. Frank Gilroy's THAT SUMMER — THAT FALL, which came out in 1967, got very bad reviews and did not run long.

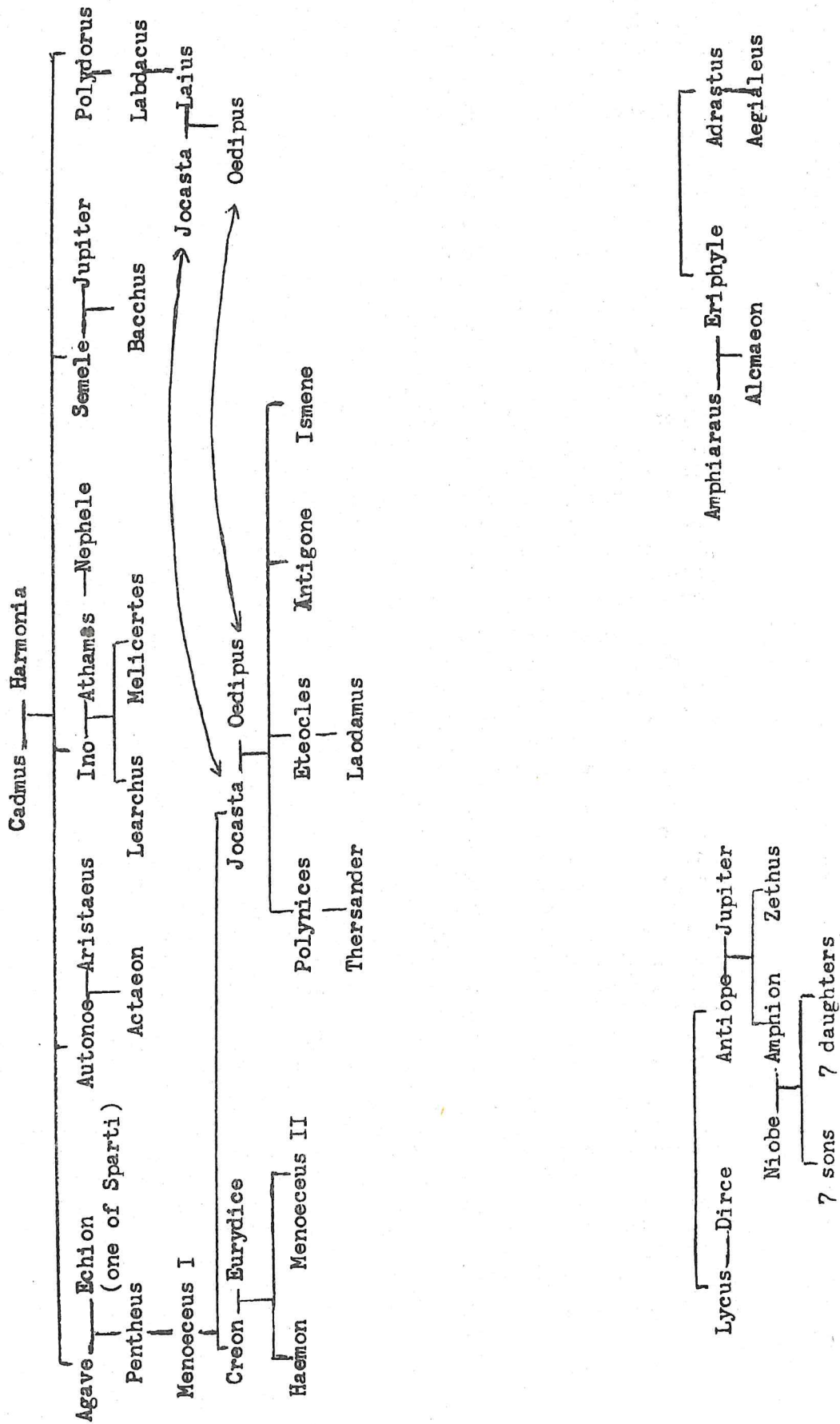
Theseus died rather ingloriously by being pushed off a cliff by King Lycomedes of Scyros, who claimed that Theseus was drunk and fell off the cliff. His bones were later brought back to Athens. He was respected as "the father of his country," but he was never deified. When Hadrian was the emperor of Rome, he had an arch built in Athens, with an inscription which read: "This city once belonged to Theseus; now it belongs to me."

Theseus was the Athenian counterpart of the Peloponnesian Hercules, but he is in general a more sophisticated, less elemental hero. They are alike in that each had a series of adventures instead of a single big one; they were caused serious problems by women; and they both died rather ingloriously. Their differences are more subtle and involve their personality. Hercules was more impetuous and volatile than Theseus. He was also more self-reliant; Theseus used the help of the gods. Of course, one big difference is that Hercules was deified and Theseus was not.

Suggested supplementary reading:

- Renault — THE KING MUST DIE and THE BULL FROM THE SEA
- Ovid — "Ariadne to Theseus" and "Phaedra to Hippolytus," HEROIDES
- Euripides — HIPPOLYTUS
- Racine — PHEDRE

FAMILIES INVOLVED IN THE HISTORY OF THEBES



HISTORY OF THEBES THROUGH OEDIPUS

The Medieval romances of Europe centered around four basic story sources: Charlemagne, King Arthur, events surrounding the Trojan War, and the history of Thebes. The next two chapters will deal with this last story.

When Europa was kidnapped by Jupiter, her father sent her two brothers, Cadmus and Phoenix, out with instructions not to come home until they had found her. When they could not find her, Cadmus founded a new city and named it Cadmaea.

Cadmus, a Phoenician whose name is Semitic in origin and means "East" or "rising sun," was an important personality to the Greeks. He brought the alphabet to the Greek world. Before his time, writing had been in Linear B, a script first deciphered in 1952.

Shortly before he founded his new city, he sent two of his companions to find water. They found a spring, but it was guarded by a dragon, who killed them. When they did not return, Cadmus went looking for them. After he saw what had happened, he killed the dragon, which happened to be sacred to Mars. Therefore, Mars put a curse on his house. He was also told to plant the dragon's teeth. These were the teeth that produced armed warriors. When they arose from the ground, they began killing each other until only five were left. At this point, Cadmus put a stop to the fighting, and these five warriors (called Sparti, which means "sown") helped Cadmus build his city. Historically, these were the founders of the five aristocratic military families of Thebes.

Cadmus married Harmonia, a daughter of Venus. This was the first wedding in which one of the principals was a mortal that the gods attended. Among the gifts for the bride was a beautiful but fatal necklace, made by Vulcan. Nonnos says that it was a two-headed serpent, clasping an eagle between its double tongue. Vulcan also made Harmonia's wedding dress, elaborate with gold thread and precious gems.

Cadmus and Harmonia ruled happily for awhile, and had five children. One daughter, Agave, married one of the Sparti; another daughter was the second wife of Athamas; and Semele became the mother of Bacchus by Jupiter. But trouble started falling on the household from the curse of Mars. The sons of both Agave and her sister Autonoe (mother of Actaeon) died violent deaths; Ino jumped into the sea to escape Athamas' wrath; Semele disintegrated in the presence of Jupiter; and their one son, Polydorus, grew to manhood and had a son, but died shortly thereafter. Finally, Cadmus in despair said to Harmonia that, if serpents were that dear to the gods, he wished Harmonia and he were serpents. That was the wrong thing to say -- they immediately became serpents.

Cadmaea now needed a king. Cadmus had no living son, and the succession was not passed down to women. Thus his eldest daughter's son, Pentheus, became king. He ruled for awhile but eventually got into trouble by forbidding the worship of his cousin Bacchus. His orders did not stop the worship, even in his own family. He hid in the woods to watch their rituals; and the women of his family, mistaking him for a wild beast in their state of self-hypnotic frenzy, tore him limb from limb. His fate indicated to the ancients what happens to a man who resists the gods.

After Pentheus, the only living mortal grandson of Cadmus was Labdacus, who ruled next but suffered a fate similar to that of Pentheus. When he died, he left a one-year-old son, Laius, who was sent to the country of Pelops until he grew up, and Lycus, a descendant of the Sparti, served as regent. Jupiter had an affair with Lycus' sister Antiope and she bore him twin sons, Amphion and Zethus. Lycus' wife Dirce sent Antiope's sons away to grow up without their mother, and treated Antiope with great cruelty. After some years Antiope ran away and just happened to go where her sons were. Dirce followed and tried to convince the young men to have some fun by tying this strange woman to the horns of a bull to be dragged to death. But Amphion and Zethus somehow found out that this was their mother; therefore, they tied Dirce to the horns of the bull instead of Antiope. This, of course, is an example of a person's getting the suffering he had planned to inflict on another.

Amphion, who married Niobe, was second only to Orpheus as a mortal musician. He built the walls of Thebes by playing on his lyre, and the stones went into place of their own accord. We have the reverse of this in the Biblical story where Joshua used his music to make the walls of Jericho come tumbling down. Zethus was an athlete rather than a musician. It was he who renamed the city Thebes instead of Cadmaea, in honor of his wife Thebe.

By now Laius was a man, and he returned to take over the rule. But when he left Pelops' country, he kidnapped Pelops' illegitimate son Chrysippus, which was a violation of the host-guest relationship, and added to the doom of the royal house of Thebes.

Laius married his distant cousin Jocasta. When they had a son, a prophecy said that the child would kill his father and marry his mother. The horrified parents had the baby "exposed," that is, he was put out in the woods to die. Thus this child, Oedipus, becomes one of the exposed heroes, like Moses, Abraham, Romulus and Remus, and Perseus. Survival of the exposed child indicated divine protection. There are over one hundred such myths in the world. The "dangerous child" who threatens the status quo is often associated with the coming to power of a new royal dynasty. In order to prevent Oedipus' crawling to safety, his parents drove a metal bar through his heels, fastening them together. From this he was partially crippled all his life, and was given the name Oedipus, which means "swollen foot." He was found by a shepherd and given to the childless King Polybus of Corinth, who reared him as his own son without telling him that he was adopted.

After Oedipus became a man, he went to Delphi to consult the oracle about his future. He was given the same prophecy that his parents had heard — that he would kill his father and marry his mother. He was determined to forestall this infamy by never seeing Polybus and his wife Merope again. Therefore, he did not go back to Corinth, but headed for Thebes.

Meanwhile, Thebes was having a serious problem with the sphinx (a name which means "strangler"). She was besieging the city either because of Laius' kidnapping of Chrysippus or because Juno hated the city as Bacchus' birthplace. In origin the sphinx was an Egyptian symbol; a lion's body with wings and a male head portrayed the pharaoh. It was borrowed by other Near Eastern peoples and transformed into a protecting demon with a winged lion body and the head of a female. In this form it diffused into the Aegean area, acquired a human voice and human reason, and in Thebes she became a destructive force. The only

way she could be destroyed was for some one to answer her riddle of what has four legs in the morning, two at noon, and three in the evening. The riddle is a folk tale motif that crept into this story. King Laius, in desperation, finally decided to consult the oracle at Delphi about this situation. Not far from Delphi his chariot became involved in a serious accident with the chariot of Oedipus, who was on his way to Thebes. This happened in a place described as "where three roads meet." It actually was a spot where one road diverged in two directions, forming a kind of Y. A memorial stone marks the spot today, because in the argument about the right-of-way which followed the accident, Oedipus killed his father, whom, of course, he did not know. Thus the first part of the prophecy was fulfilled. The one attendant of the king who got back to Thebes reported that they had been attacked by a band of robbers because it would have been too shameful to admit that they had not been able to overpower one man.

When Oedipus finally arrived at Thebes, he easily answered the riddle of the sphinx; it is man who crawls on all fours as a baby, stands upright as a man, and walks with a cane when he is old. He found the city in mourning and searching for a new king. The people were greatly impressed by this handsome and intelligent young stranger who had released them from the sphinx. They wanted him for their king. The simplest way to accomplish this was for him to marry their widowed queen. Oedipus was about twenty and the queen not more than thirty-five, for girls were married young in those days. And now the second part of the prophecy was fulfilled.

A psychological term has been coined from this relationship, the Oedipus complex. It means an excessive attachment between a mother and a son, a tie so strong that it interferes with a man's normal relationships with other women. Freud first used this term in his *STRUCTURAL STUDY OF MYTH* in 1910. This extreme closeness between mother and son is more prevalent than is sometimes realized. A woman rarely refers to our son, only to my son, and few mothers feel that any girl is good enough for "her" son. Somebody once said, "Of all animals, man remains the longest at the mother's breast." Campbell, in his *HERO OF A THOUSAND FACES*, said, "The father is the first ogre in the child's competition for the mother's attentions in the child-mother paradise. Therefore, all later enemies are father images to be destroyed." The term, the Oedipus complex, has also been twisted in strange ways in modern times; Nelson Rockefeller was said to have an "edifice complex," because he thought only in terms of bigness.

Oedipus and Jocasta lived happily and had four children -- two girls, Antigone and Ismene; and twin sons, Eteocles and Polynices. Oedipus was a good and effective king. But eventually the city was devastated by a plague, which would not let up. So Oedipus sent Creon, Jocasta's brother, to Delphi to find out the reason. He was told that the city was harboring the slayer of Laius and that the plague would continue until this culprit was punished. Oedipus vowed to find him and see that he went into permanent exile.

Gradually, his research revealed that he himself was the killer and that Jocasta was both his mother and his wife. Jocasta hanged herself, and Oedipus took a brooch from her dress and stabbed out his eyesight to deprive himself of what the ancients considered the most precious of the senses. If a lover wanted to tell a girl that he loved her more than his most prized possession, he always said that he loved her more than he loved his eyes. Then the blind Oedipus carried out

his decree, even though he was the victim. He went into exile at Colonus, a region under the rule of Theseus. His two daughters went with him, his sons did not; and Oedipus put a curse on his sons that they would destroy each other. Other ancient versions are different and say that Oedipus remained shut up in the palace, and one day when his sons mistreated him, he put a curse on them that they might fight to divide the kingdom.

A great deal of literature has been written on the Oedipus or the Oedipus complex themes. Two powerful Greek tragedies were written about Oedipus by Sophocles. In his OEDIPUS REX, Oedipus is the supreme example of a man in desperate search of self-identity. He must know who and what he is, even if the knowledge annihilates him. In contrast, Jocasta wants him to stop his search for the truth. She feels that what you don't know won't hurt you. So long as they do not know that Oedipus is the guilty man, they can always hold onto the hope that maybe he is not. This, of course, illustrates the universal difference in people. Some people want the truth, however painful it is; others prefer to be shielded from the truth if it hurts too much. Sophocles' other play, OEDIPUS AT COLONUS, tells the story of Oedipus' death. It is not as well known as OEDIPUS REX but in some ways is even more powerful. It contains passages of rare poetic beauty, as when Oedipus speaks to his daughters for the last time: "My children, today your father ceases to be. All that is mine has come to an end; no more need you labor to support me. Hard was that task, I know, my daughters; yet one word alone relieves all that toil -- for of love you never will have more from any man than me." And a little later a messenger reports Oedipus' death with this statement: "Without grief he passed from us, without the agony of sickness; his going was more than mortal, a miracle."

Modern works based on the Oedipus story include Jean Cocteau's THE INFERNAL MACHINE in 1934, which shows Oedipus struggling against a satanic universe; Isabel Colgate's ORLANDO KING in 1969, which is a modernized version with the setting in England and the time the twenty years between the first and second World Wars; and Jean Perreault's OEDIPUS, A NEW WORK, which was first performed at New York University on May 2, 1971. This play makes a unique use of such stage props as incense sticks, full-length mirrors, and nylon stockings. The stage is black except for the use of spotlights. Sound effects include Balinese music, gongs, and whistles. It is an unusual performance, to say the least. In John Lewin's translation of Sophocles, James Earl Jones plays the role of Oedipus, with the emphasis on Oedipus' fury when he learns that his mother and father had fastened his feet together and left him to die. It is a cry of anger against parental betrayal. George C. Scott's 1974 movie, entitled THE SAVAGE IS LOOSE, has a modernized setting. A man, his wife, and a two-year-old son are wrecked on a deserted island. When the boy reaches twenty, he needs sex. Since his mother is the only woman, a struggle ensues between the father and son for the mother. A 1977 TV serial, FLESH AND BLOOD, was based on a novel by Pete Hamill. In it an ex-convict was involved with his mother when he thought his father was dead.

At least two excellent Twentieth Century literary works deal with the Oedipus complex in its more frequently found form. Sidney Howard's play THE SILVER CORD deals with a mother and two sons, and how she manages to wreck their relationship with their fiancées; and D. H. Lawrence's novel, SONS AND LOVERS, is perhaps the most penetrating analysis of the Oedipus complex that we have so far. Lawrence was writing from personal experience.

GREEK DRAMA

Since we are dealing so much with Greek plays in this section, it might be well to talk just a little bit about the technique of Greek drama. Greek plays generally followed what is known as the three unities -- of time, of place, and of action. The unity of time meant that the action in the play covered a period of not more than twenty-four hours. The unity of place meant that there was no change of scene throughout the play. The standard setting for a tragedy was the street area just outside the entrance to a palace. The unity of action was two-fold. First, since the time span was so short, there was no growth nor deterioration of the characters. The play simply focused on the tragic hero during a critical day of his life, and showed how he reacted. Also, the unity of action means that comedy and tragedy were not mixed. The Greeks believed about drama what Poe believed about the short story, that it should create "a single effect." Therefore, everything in a tragedy simply added one more step to the final culmination of the tragedy. OEDIPUS REX is a perfect example of this buildup.

The tragic hero in Greek drama was regularly a person with great potential, destroyed by one serious personality trait, called the "tragic flaw." Shakespeare also had this concept: Macbeth was destroyed by ambition, Othello by jealousy. And rarely was the Greek tragedy culminated by the death of the hero. Death is an escape; it is much more devastating to live to face the consequences of what you have wrought.

Two elements were more or less peculiar to the Greek drama. One was the fact that all characters wore masks. The audience was not close enough to detect subtle changes in facial expression anyhow, and inside the mask was a tiny megaphone which helped the actors project their voices. The other basically Greek characteristic was the use of the chorus, a fundamental part of their drama. It served two functions: It filled in gaps in the action and thus added coherence to the play. But more important was its use in molding the audience's emotional response. The chorus's lines are always highly poetic, and dancing was a part of their performance. They were to stimulate and direct the emotional reaction desired, as the chorus in MEDEA blends pity and horror toward the heroine.

Although changes in stage construction and modern technology have caused many changes in technique, the Greek plays became the foundation of our whole Western drama.

OEDIPUS REX



HISTORY OF THEBES AFTER OEDIPUS

After Oedipus went into exile, Jocasta's brother Creon became regent until Oedipus' twin sons would be old enough to rule. Nothing of great importance happened during his regency. But when it was time for Oedipus' successor to take over, the fact that the boys were twins posed a serious problem because the elder son should rule. They worked out a compromise in which they would share the rule, taking over in alternate years. The first year Eteocles ruled, but at the end of his year he refused to hand over the rule to Polynices. The playwrights disagree on the reason for this refusal. In Aeschylus' *SEVEN AGAINST THEBES*, Eteocles is a devoted king and does not want to see Thebes damaged by the rule of his scatter-brained brother; but in Euripides' *THE PHOENICIAN WOMEN*, Eteocles is consumed with ambition and is unwilling to relinquish his newly attained power. Whichever was true, Eteocles unquestionably broke the sanctity of a promise; and Polynices determined to get his rights, even if he had to use force. Trouble between brothers is a frequent motif in literature. In the Bible we have Cain and Abel, and other examples in Classical mythology include Romulus and Remus, Atreus and Thyestes, as well as Eteocles and Polynices.

Polynices decided to enlist the help of allies and attack Thebes. He needed seven leaders, one to attack each gate of Thebes. Thebes had seven gates because that number corresponded with the number of strings on the lyre, and Amphion had built the walls of Thebes by playing on his lyre. Polynices was clever in his method of getting his six helpers. He did not go directly to them but, remembering the powerful influence of a woman, he went to Eriphyle, the wife of Amphiaraus, and asked her to persuade her husband and her brother Adrastus to help him. Since the ancients thought that greed for material possessions was an integral part of a woman's nature, Polynices sweetened his request by offering Eriphyle Harmonia's necklace as a bribe, and she could not resist even though her husband, a minor prophet, knew that he would not return alive from this war. He became the symbol of the good man destroyed by an ambitious wife. Among other leaders that joined Polynices were: Tydeus, father of Diomedes; and Capaneus, whose wife Evadne threw herself on his funeral pyre when he was killed.

Eteocles consulted Tiresias about the outcome of the war. Tiresias, a descendant of the Sparti, was the official prophet of Thebes. His daughter Manto became the prophetess of Apollo at Delphi, and by Apollo had a son Mopsus, who was considered the greatest seer in Classical mythology. Tiresias himself was blind, having lost his eyesight either because he happened to see Minerva bathing, or he settled an argument between Juno and Jupiter about whether a man or a woman gets more pleasure from sex and angered Juno by his decision. When Eteocles consulted him, he said that Thebes would not fall if a direct descendant of the Sparti would voluntarily sacrifice his life. The younger son of Creon, Menoeceus II, was chosen as the most expendable; and with a little arm-twisting by Tiresias, he volunteered to die so that his city could live. This sacrifice of the "one for many" is another perennial theme in literature.

All the leaders who had come to help Polynices in this struggle lost their lives except Adrastus, who had been made the commander of the entire army. He was saved by escaping on his horse Arion, the offspring of Ceres and Neptune.

The brothers decided to resolve the issue by single combat: the one who killed the other would rule. But they killed each other, and Creon

now took over the rule again, this time as king instead of regent. He buried Eteocles with full honors, but he considered Polynices a traitor because he had used armed force against his own people. He therefore forbade his burial, and decreed that any one who attempted to bury him would be buried alive. Polynices' sister Antigone felt that her duty to her brother was more sacred than her duty to the state. She therefore defied Creon's decree and sprinkled dust on the body of Polynices, which was tantamount to burial rites. Creon was now in an impossible situation. Antigone was his niece and the fiancée of his son Haemon, who begged his father not to be so harsh, as did Tiresias and the Theban people. But the decree had been made; and Creon knew that even though the people's sympathy was now with Antigone, if he did not carry out his decree, two ideas would develop — either they would respect none of his future decrees since he relented on this one, or they would grumble that he ruled by a double standard, applying one to the members of his family and the other to the rest of the people. He tried to get Antigone to say that she was sorry so that he would have some excuse for commuting her sentence, but she remained defiant. Therefore, he had her entombed alive, and Haemon committed suicide. His death led Creon's wife Eurydice to commit suicide also.

There is an alternate ending to this story which says that Creon handed Antigone over to Haemon for punishment. Haemon took her away and they had children. Later, Creon recognized one of the children by a birthmark, and Haemon killed himself and Antigone to escape punishment. There is no story of what became of Creon.

Sophocles wrote a play, *ANTIGONE*, with the time setting of the day after the death of Eteocles and Polynices. The basic conflict is between Antigone and Creon, both of whom think they are doing the right thing. So often bitter conflict is not between right and wrong, but between two different conceptions of right. Antigone's sister Ismene is presented in this play as a scared weakling, a foil for Antigone's strength. One scene also shows Haemon arguing with his father, making Creon's steadfastness more difficult. In this play, as in the *MEDEA*, the really tragic figure is not the main character. The women are strong and triumphant. It is Jason and Creon who are left desolate at the end of the plays.

On November 9, 1980, a "Sophoclon" was held in New York City, where the Paul Roche translations of all three of the plays of Sophocles on the Theban story (*OEDIPUS REX*, *OEDIPUS AT COLONUS*, and *ANTIGONE*) were presented in one day. Beginning at 3:00 P.M., with an hour between shows, the cycle ended at 10:00 P.M.

Among modern plays based on the Antigone story is Anouilh's *ANTIGONE*, which came out in 1943. In this play, Antigone is a rebel against the establishment, a youthful idealist. Creon represents reason and practical experience, urging Antigone to accept life as it is, with its need for compromises. She, of course, will not. And in 1948, Bertold Brecht published his *ANTIGONEMODELL*, a modernized story with an anti-Nazi theme.

Ten years after the death of Eteocles and Polynices, the sons of the original seven against Thebes returned to attack the city again. They were known as the epigoni (those born afterward). Thersander, the son of Polynices, like his father bribed Eriphyle to help him collect an army. This time the bribe was Harmonia's wedding dress. Among those who came this time were Diomedes (son of Tydeus), Aegialaus (son of Adrastus), and Alcmaeon (son of Amphiaraus). Tiresias prophesied that Thebes

would fall when the only survivor of the original seven against Thebes died. Aegialeus, Adrastus' son, was the only one of the epigoni to be killed. When his father heard of his son's death, he died of grief. (The news probably caused him to have a heart attack). Thersander killed Eteocles' son Laodamas and became king of Thebes. Later, with Diomedes, he took forty ships and set out to take part in the Trojan War, but he never reached Troy. Diomedes went on to become second only to Achilles as a warrior in that war.

After the Theban war, Alcmaeon, in accordance with a promise made to his father, killed his mother for being instrumental in two wars. Later he married Arsinoe, to whom he gave the necklace and wedding dress. Then he took the gifts from her and gave them to a girl friend, Callirhoe. When Arsinoe's father heard about this, he had Alcmaeon killed. The dress and necklace were finally placed in the temple of Diana at Delphi to prevent their bringing further curses on people.

Tiresias, after the fall of Thebes, died on his way to a new city after drinking contaminated water. Later, Ulysses consulted him in the Underworld.

At the end of this war, Thersander and Ismene were the only survivors of the house of Cadmus. Ismene died childless, and Thersander's grandson was the last of the family of Labdacus to rule in Thebes.

Suggested supplementary reading on the Theban story:

Sophocles - OEDIPUS REX, OEDIPUS AT COLONUS, and ANTIGONE

Sidney Howard - THE SILVER CORD

D. H. Lawrence - SONS AND LOVERS

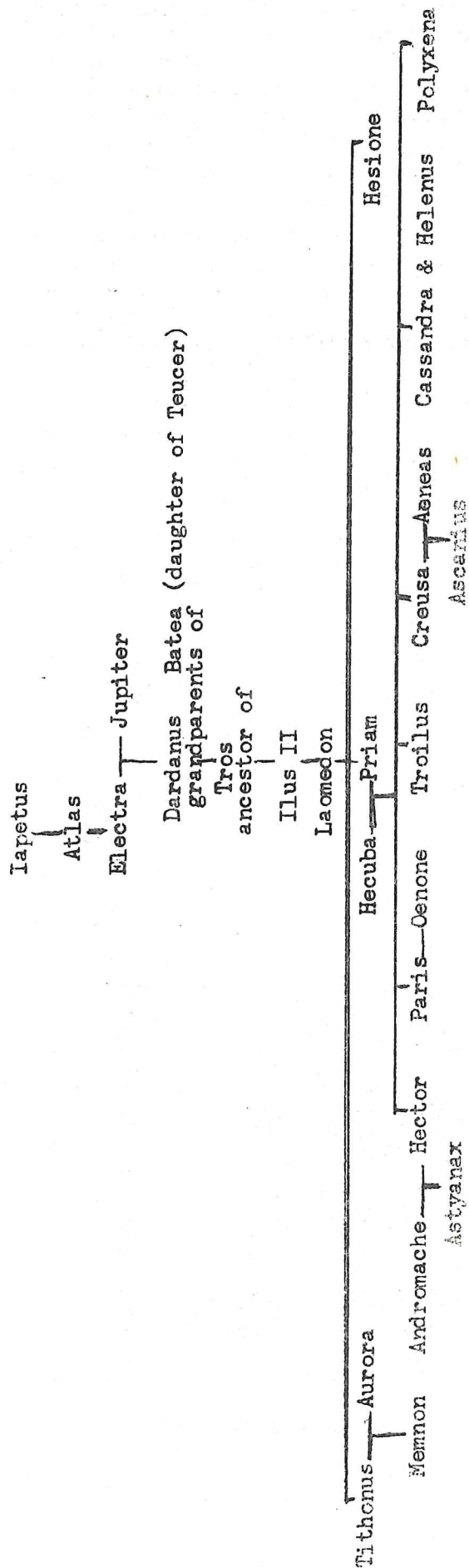
Tennyson - TIRESIAS

Swinburne - TIRESIAS

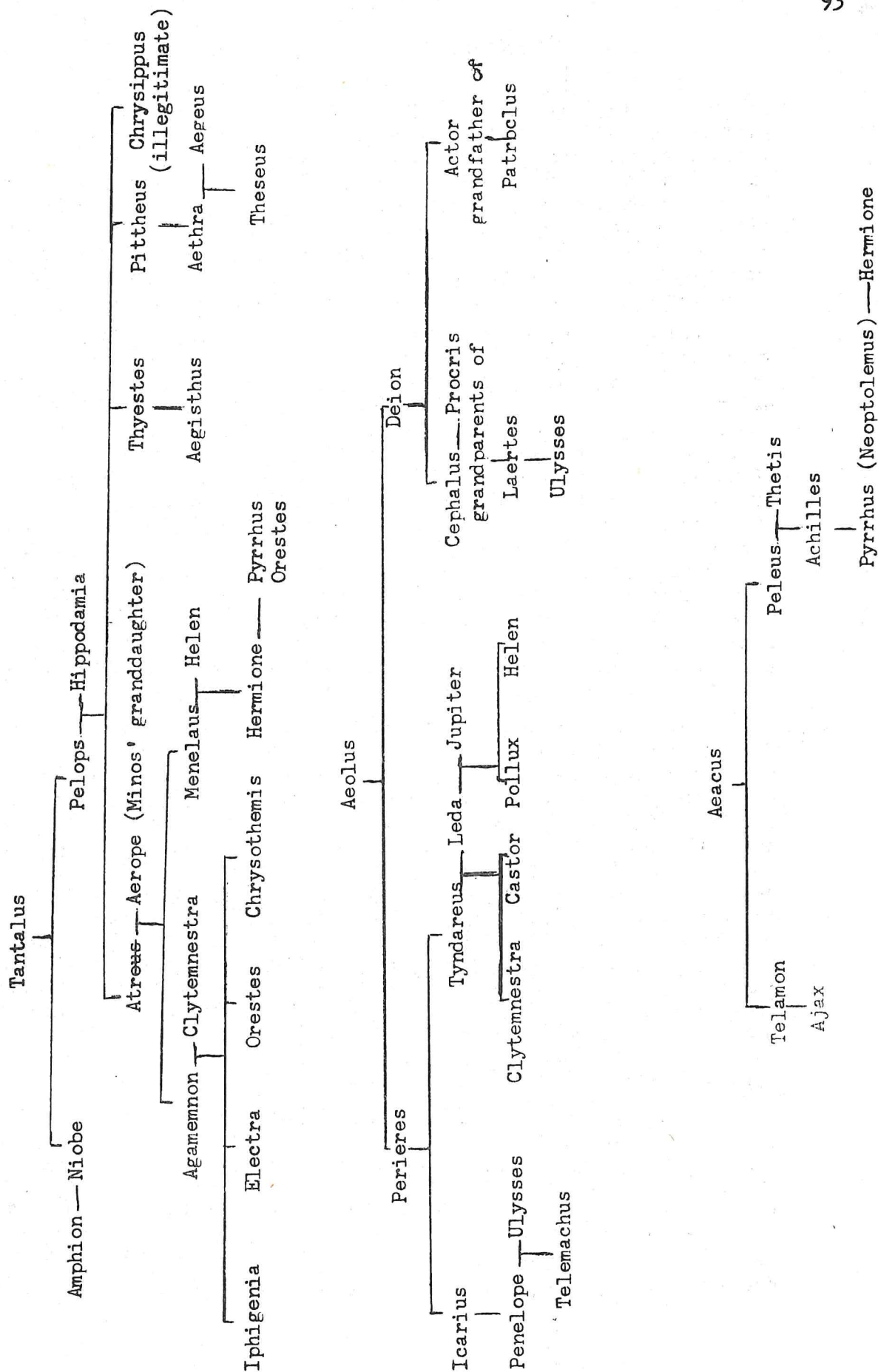


GREEK SPHINX

ROYAL HOUSE OF TROY



GREEK FAMILIES INVOLVED IN THE TROJAN WAR



BACKGROUND OF THE TROJAN WAR

Just as the Theban story started with Europa, the events of the Trojan War started with another of Jupiter's mistresses, Leda. She was married to Tyndareus and she conceived quadruplets, two of whom were the children of her husband, and two the children of Jupiter. The ones with the mortal father were a daughter Clytemnestra and a son Castor; those with Jupiter as a father were a son Pollux and a daughter Helen, who grew up to be the most beautiful woman in the world. You will remember that Theseus tried to kidnap her when she was twelve. Since Jupiter had come to Leda in the disguise of a swan, artists have sometimes portrayed Pollux and Helen as emerging from eggs at birth.

Although really only half-brothers, Castor and Pollux were both known as the dioscouri (dios + kouri = sons of Jupiter), and they are among the most famous twin combinations in Classical mythology. Each had his individual personality: Castor was a horse-tamer, and Pollux was a boxer. But they were inseparable companions. They participated in the Argonaut expedition and the Calydonian boar hunt. Another set of twins, Idas and Lynceus, were their friends, but there was serious trouble between these two pairs on several occasions. Once when Idas and Lynceus were being married to the daughters of Leucippus, Castor and Pollux stole the brides. And at another time an argument arose over dividing the spoils after the four of them had been on a cattle raid. Eventually, their differences led to violence, in which all of them except Pollux were killed. Pollux, lonely for his brother, prayed for permission to give his own life for Castor's. Jupiter allowed them life in the heavens on alternate days. Another version says that Jupiter turned them into the constellation Gemini (the twins).

Since all of this had happened before the Trojan War, Castor and Pollux were not involved in the war, but they were worshipped as deified helpers in war, especially by the Spartans and the Romans. The Spartans dedicated two gold stars to them at Delphi. One time these stars fell, and the Spartans were defeated shortly afterward. As for the Romans, their reverence was firmly established after the battle of Lake Regillus in 496 B.C. The Romans had driven King Tarquin from their land and had established a republic. Tarquin was trying to retake the city by force. The decisive battle was being fought at Lake Regillus, and the Romans were losing when two pale horsemen appeared and encouraged them on to victory. Believing that these horsemen were Castor and Pollux, the Romans vowed to build a temple to them in the Roman Forum. Today three columns of that temple are still standing, and they are one of the best known landmarks in Rome. The Romans even used the twins' names in oaths; Edepol (by Pollux) and Ecastor (by Castor) were as common as the English "by George."

Meanwhile, the sisters of Castor and Pollux grew up. Clytemnestra married Agamemnon, and the beautiful Helen had so many suitors that Tyndareus was afraid that choosing one would anger the others. Finally, Ulysses suggested that all the suitors swear a solemn oath to defend to the death the rights of the husband Tyndareus would choose. This is necessary to the story in order to explain why a whole nation would go to war just because a man's wife was seduced and carried away. Tyndareus chose Menelaus, the brother of Agamemnon and king of Sparta.

Helen and he had been married for about ten years and had a daughter, Hermione, before the Trojan Paris arrived on the scene and carried Helen away.

The reason Paris got involved was a quarrel among the gods. After Jupiter heard the prophecy that his mistress Thetis would produce a son more powerful than his father, he quickly married her off to the mortal Peleus. Thetis was not eager for this marriage, and she fought like Kate in Shakespeare's *THE TAMING OF THE SHREW*, but the wedding finally took place in the cave of the Centaur, Chiron. All the gods were invited to the wedding except Eris, the goddess of discord. At this wedding, the gods gave Peleus some beautiful gifts, including an ashen spear, a golden armor, and the immortal horses Balius and Xanthus (who later wept when Patroclus died, and foretold the death of Achilles). All of these gifts Peleus later gave to his son Achilles for the Trojan War. Eris, in order to get even for being snubbed, threw into the midst of the gods at the wedding feast a golden apple with the inscription *PULCHERRIMAE* (for the most beautiful woman). Juno, Minerva, and Venus each claimed that it should be given to her. Juno's claim was based on the fact that she was the queen of the gods; Minerva asserted that she was the most important of the gods, more powerful than Jupiter himself; and Venus, the goddess of beauty, felt that there was no question about the prize belonging to her. They asked Jupiter to make the decision, but he did not want to become involved in a squabble between his wife and two of his daughters. He therefore suggested that the judge be an unbiased person like Paris, whom he saw tending sheep outside Troy. Mercury led the three goddesses down to Paris for this beauty pageant. None of the goddesses trusted her own powers to win; each offered Paris a bribe. Juno offered him power and riches, Minerva glory in war, and Venus the most beautiful woman in the world as his wife. In this famous "judgment of Paris," he awarded the apple to Venus, either because he thought she deserved it or because he wanted the bribe she had offered. Since the gods could not go back on their promises, Venus had to find a way to give Helen to Paris, even though she was already married. Homer pictures Helen as the helpless tool of the gods, not responsible for her beauty or the trouble it causes, but other writers portray her as a woman who is conscious of the power of her beauty and who uses it for evil.

Meanwhile, in due time after the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, Thetis gave birth to Achilles, but she never really accepted her husband. Shortly after the baby's birth, she deserted her husband. For the child's education, Peleus handed Achilles over to Chiron, the most famous teacher in Classical mythology.

The nation against which the Greeks waged this war was, of course, Troy, located in what we now call Turkey. The foundation of our knowledge of historical Troy is from Heinrich Schliemann, born in 1822. At the age of forty-six, he asked the archbishop of Athens to find him a bride. His one requirement was that she must love Homer. She (Sophia) was eighteen when they married. They named their children Agamemnon and Andromache, and they spent their lives digging out the ruins of such sites as Troy and Mycenae. Schliemann rejected what every one had thought was the site of Troy; it was too far from the sea. He started digging nearer the sea, and within an hour he found stone walls. He claimed a Greek spirit had told him in a dream where to dig. This site revealed nine different cities which had existed on this spot, dated by carbon 14 and other methods to show that this site had been inhabited (but not continuously) from 3000 B.C. to 400 A.D., after which it was abandoned. Schliemann mistakenly took Layer II as the Troy of

the Trojan War. This layer is now known to represent a civilization of about 2500 to 2000 B.C. Now the city called Troy VII^a is considered the Troy we are interested in. It shows signs of seige, burning, has plumbing, heating, theaters, and gymnasias.

The legendary account of the founding of Troy went back to Dardanus, the child of Jupiter and the Pleiad, Electra, who is not visible among the Pleiades because she hid when Troy was destroyed. Dardanus married the daughter of Teucer of Crete. Thus the Trojans are sometimes called Dardanians or Teucrians (descendants of these founders). Then Teucer's grandson Tros named the city Troy; and a descendant of his, Ilus, built a new city where the Palladium fell from the heavens to indicate where the site should be. He named this new city Ilium, and it lasted for only three generations before its destruction in this war. Ilus' son Laomedon built the walls, with the help of Neptune and Apollo, while they were in service to him. When Hercules killed Laomedon for breaking his promise to him, he set on the throne Priam, who was ruling at the time of the Trojan War.

Just before Paris was born to her, Priam's wife Hecuba dreamed that she had given birth to a firebrand and that Troy was ablaze. Therefore, when he was born, Paris was exposed, but he was found and reared by a shepherd. He married the nymph Oenone. When he was discovered to be Priam's son, he was returned home, in spite of Cassandra's warnings. Then came the fatal "judgment of Paris" in the beauty contest. This is another one of the scenes which have become the subject of innumerable works of art, especially paintings.

What really caused the Trojan War, which historically was the biggest event of the Mycenaean Age and occurred shortly before 1000 B.C.? One version says that Jupiter ordered a war because the world was becoming overpopulated. Herodotus says that the Persian view is this: Phoenician traders stole Io, daughter of the king of Argos. In retaliation, the Greeks stole Europa, daughter of the king of Tyre, and also abducted Medea, daughter of the king of Colchis. Thus, Paris thought he could steal himself a wife from Sparta — Helen. As Herodotus says, "Thus far nothing more serious than woman-stealing on both sides... Abducting young women, in their opinion, is not indeed a lawful act; but it is stupid after the fact to make a fuss about it. The only sensible thing is to take no notice; for it is obvious that no young woman allows herself to be abducted if she does not wish to be. The Asiatics took the seizure of the women lightly enough, but not so the Greeks. They, merely on account of a girl from Sparta, raised a big army, invaded Asia, and destroyed the empire of Priam...Such then is the Persian story. In their view, it was the capture of Troy that first made the Persians the enemies of the Greeks."

Modern scholars give much more logical reasons for the Trojan War. Perhaps it was a raid for iron or other valuable minerals; and others (with whom I concur) feel that it was probably for control of the commerce on the Aegean Sea. But the Greeks would never think in terms as prosaic as this; thus, the fight became a struggle over possession of the most beautiful woman in the world.

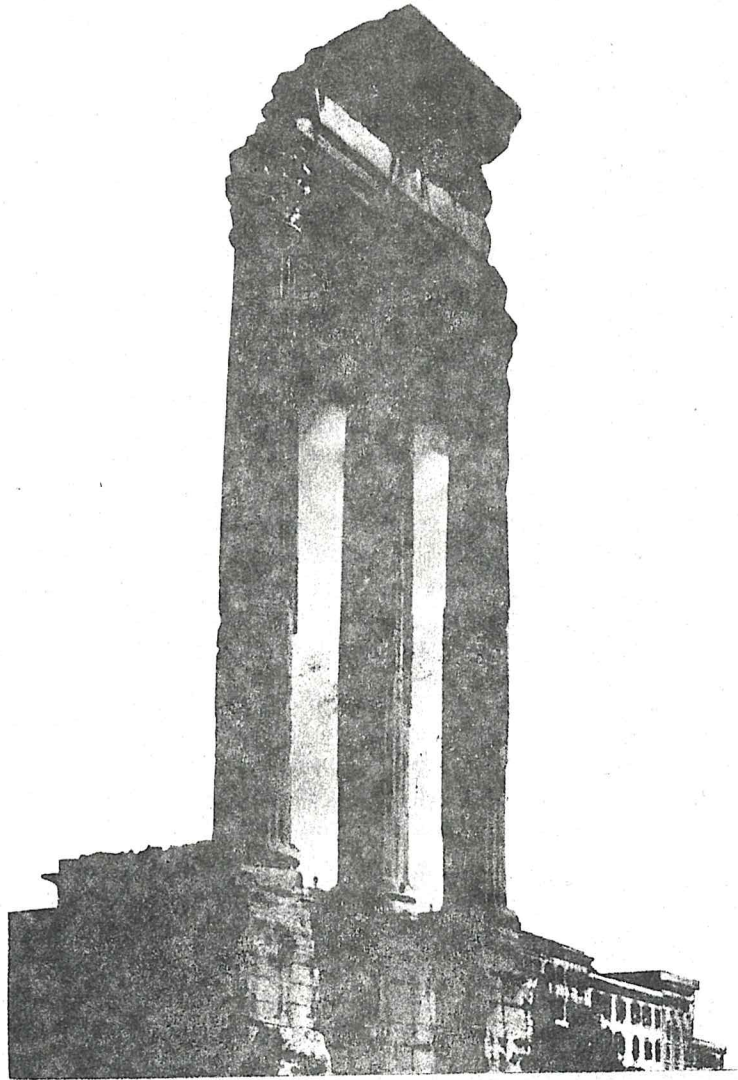
Suggested supplementary reading:

John Masefield - THE TAKING OF HELEN

Ovid - "Paris to Helen" and "Helen to Paris," HEROIDES

Irving Stone - THE GREEK TREASURE [about the work of Schliemann]

Carl Schuchhardt - SCHLIEMANN'S DISCOVERIES OF THE ANCIENT WORLD



Temple of Castor and Pollux

Rome

THE TROJAN WAR TO THE END OF THE NINTH YEAR

After the elopement of Helen and Paris, the Greeks began assembling to attack Troy, in accordance with their promise to defend to the death Menelaus' right to her. In this process, there were two important draft dodgers. Ulysses did not want to go and pretended to be crazy by plowing a field and planting it with salt. But Palamedes thought of a way to find out whether Ulysses was pretending. He laid Ulysses' infant son Telemachus in the path of the plow. When Ulysses got to the child, he plowed around him, and those watching knew that he was not really insane. Ulysses, however, got even with Palamedes during the war. Ulysses planted incriminating evidence in Palamedes' tent, and Palamedes was put to death as a traitor. He became a symbol of unjust punishment, and he was the subject of many lost Greek plays. The other draft dodger was Achilles. His mother Thetis dressed him as a girl and hid him on the island of Scyros because of a prophecy that he would live obscurely to old age or live gloriously but die young. Achilles was found in his hideout by Ulysses and Diomedes, who pretended to be peddlers. Among the perfumes, jewelry, and embroidered veils, they put a dagger. When one husky "girl" balanced it in her hands, they called her aside and forced her to reveal her identity.

About two years after Helen was kidnapped, the Greeks were ready to sail to Troy from the seaport of Aulis. Barthell has conjectured that the force numbered about 102,000. Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, was named commander-in-chief. Other important warriors included: Menelaus, Agamemnon's brother and the wronged husband; Achilles, the greatest of the Greek heroes; Diomedes, second only to Achilles as a warrior; Ulysses, famous for his cleverness; Ajax, a dedicated soldier, strong but stupid; Nestor, who had no physical prowess but was the oldest and wisest of the Greeks (He was a grandson of Niobe and had been given all the years of life that had been taken from his uncles); and Calchas, the prophet.

The Greek army set sail from Aulis, but by navigational miscalculation they attacked the wrong city, thinking it was Troy. Thersander of Thebes was killed here. Discovering their mistake, they set sail again but were hit by a bad storm at sea and had to return to Aulis to repair the damage and reassemble their forces. This took another eight years.

When they were finally ready again, they could not get favorable winds. Calchas said that Agamemnon had killed an animal sacred to Diana, and they would not get sailing winds until Agamemnon sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to Diana. Agamemnon sent for his daughter on the pretext that Achilles wanted to marry her. The girl and her mother Clytemnestra arrived for the wedding. When they learned the real reason for their summons, Iphigenia tearfully agreed, but Clytemnestra vowed that she would never forgive her husband for this. Euripides tells this story in his *IPHIGENIA IN AULIS*. But Diana relented and, without the mortals knowing anything about it, she substituted an animal on the sacrificial fire and carried Iphigenia off to Tauris to be her priestess there. A translation of the Euripides play on this theme (without this final scene) was made into a movie in the 1970's, with Irene Papas as Clytemnestra — the strongest personality in the play.

And so the Greeks set sail. On the journey Philoctetes, who had the arrows of Hercules, dropped one which skinned his leg slightly. It was not enough to kill him, but the wound would not heal. The smell of the rotten flesh was so repulsive to the Greeks that they put him on shore at the island of Lemnos and left him there, a symbol of lonely suffering.

When they reached Troy, Protesilaus was so eager for the battle that he jumped overboard and swam toward the shore. Of course, he was an easy target for the Trojans, and he became the first man killed during the war. There was a prophecy that the side which lost the first man would win the war. After his death, the gods permitted Protesilaus to return to his wife Laodamia for three hours. When the time was over, she went to death with him.

The first nine years of the war were indecisive. In the *ILIAD*, Helen's elopement was the dynamic force that set off the struggle, but once the struggle was in progress, she played a minor role. The fighting was the thing; the reason was forgotten. Helen bore Paris several children during these years, but they all died in infancy. The great hero on the Trojan side was Hector, Paris's brother, whom I consider one of the most admirable heroes in literature. Hector loathed the act of Paris which had triggered the war, but he was willing to defend to his death his country when it was attacked. Also, he knew that Troy would be defeated, but he fought as valiantly as if he hoped for victory. It is hard to give one's life for a cause, but doubly hard to sacrifice oneself for a lost cause.

Near the end of the ninth year of the war, the events of the *ILIAD* (story of Ilium) took place. The action in this work covers a period of fifty days, about four of which involve battles. Even the gods are involved in the battles. Both Venus and Mars are wounded while fighting for Troy, and Juno and Minerva are on the battle field, working for the Greeks. The organization of this poem is beautifully structured, as shown in the outline at the end of this chapter.

The poem opens with a quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon in the Greek camp. An epidemic has weakened the Greek soldiers, and Calchas says that it is caused by Agamemnon's having a captured slave girl, Chryseis, who is the daughter of a priest of Apollo. Achilles urges that Agamemnon send her home and end the epidemic, but Agamemnon feels that he would lose face as the commander, if he were the only Greek to have to give up his girl. Finally, he agrees to do so but says that he will take Achilles' girl Briseis in her stead. Achilles angrily draws his sword, but Minerva (wisdom) stops him. However, Achilles has other means of revenge. He simply goes to his tent and refuses to fight. His mother Thetis also gets in on the act. She asks Jupiter to avenge this insult to her son; and with Jupiter's approval and without the help of their best warrior, the Greeks fare badly in the fighting.

Several hand-to-hand combats take place. Paris and Menelaus fight while Helen and Priam watch from the top of the city walls. Paris fares badly in this struggle, but Venus saves him. Then Glaucus and Diomedes fight to a draw. In admiration for each other, they exchange armor. Diomedes gets a better deal here, receiving a gold armor in exchange for a bronze one. Hector and Ajax also fight to a draw and exchange gifts, Ajax getting a silver studded sword out of the deal.

Although the Greeks are having serious trouble, Achilles still refuses to help them. Eventually his best friend Patroclus begs for permission to put on Achilles' armor and go to the front. Thinking that Achilles had returned would raise the morale of the Greeks and demoralize the Trojans. Hector, seeing Patroclus and thinking that it is Achilles, attacks him. He is no match for the mighty Hector and is killed. Then fierce fighting takes place around his body. Menelaus rescues the body,

but Hector takes the beautiful armor of Achilles. He puts on the armor and struts around proudly. Jupiter, seeing this, declares that for this act of hubris (excessive pride) Hector must die.

When Achilles hears of the death of his friend, he is deeply grieved and angered. He vows to re-enter the fighting, and to "get" Hector. He is reconciled with Agamemnon, who returns Briseis. Meanwhile, Thetis has gone to Vulcan to get Achilles a new armor, which she brings to him.

Hector, coming out of Troy, bids his wife Andromache farewell. This is a touching scene because it is the last time these two see each other. Also, their small child Astyanax cries, frightened by Hector's fierce armor, which is the armor he took from Patroclus. Achilles does kill Hector and, tying his body to the back of his chariot, he drags him triumphantly back and forth before Troy, to show the Trojans their fallen hero. Then he takes the body back to his tent and dumps it, so that he can drag it around Patroclus' tomb three times every morning.

King Priam, with the help of the gods, makes his way unnoticed through the Greek lines and begs Achilles to return his son's body for burial. The king prostrates himself before the slayer of his son and offers great ransom. The gods soften the heart of Achilles by having him think of his own father when he sees the old king. Therefore, the body is returned, and a truce of a few days is declared while the body of Hector is buried. Helen, when she heard that Hector was dead, grieves, saying that in the nineteen years she has been in Troy, no one else has treated her with so much consideration.

This is a summary of the major events of the ILIAD, with the colorful details and interesting digressions (such as the funeral games for Patroclus) omitted. This also brings the war down to the final year.

Suggested supplementary reading:

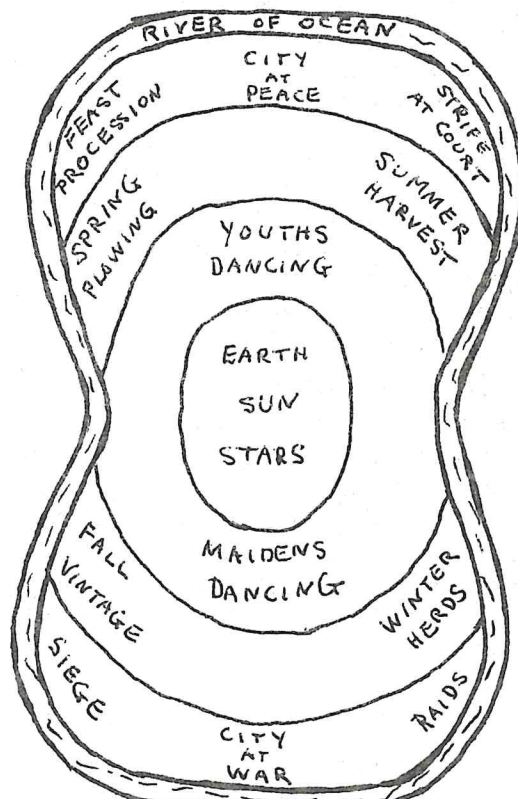
Euripides - IPHIGENIA IN AULIS

Homer - ILIAD

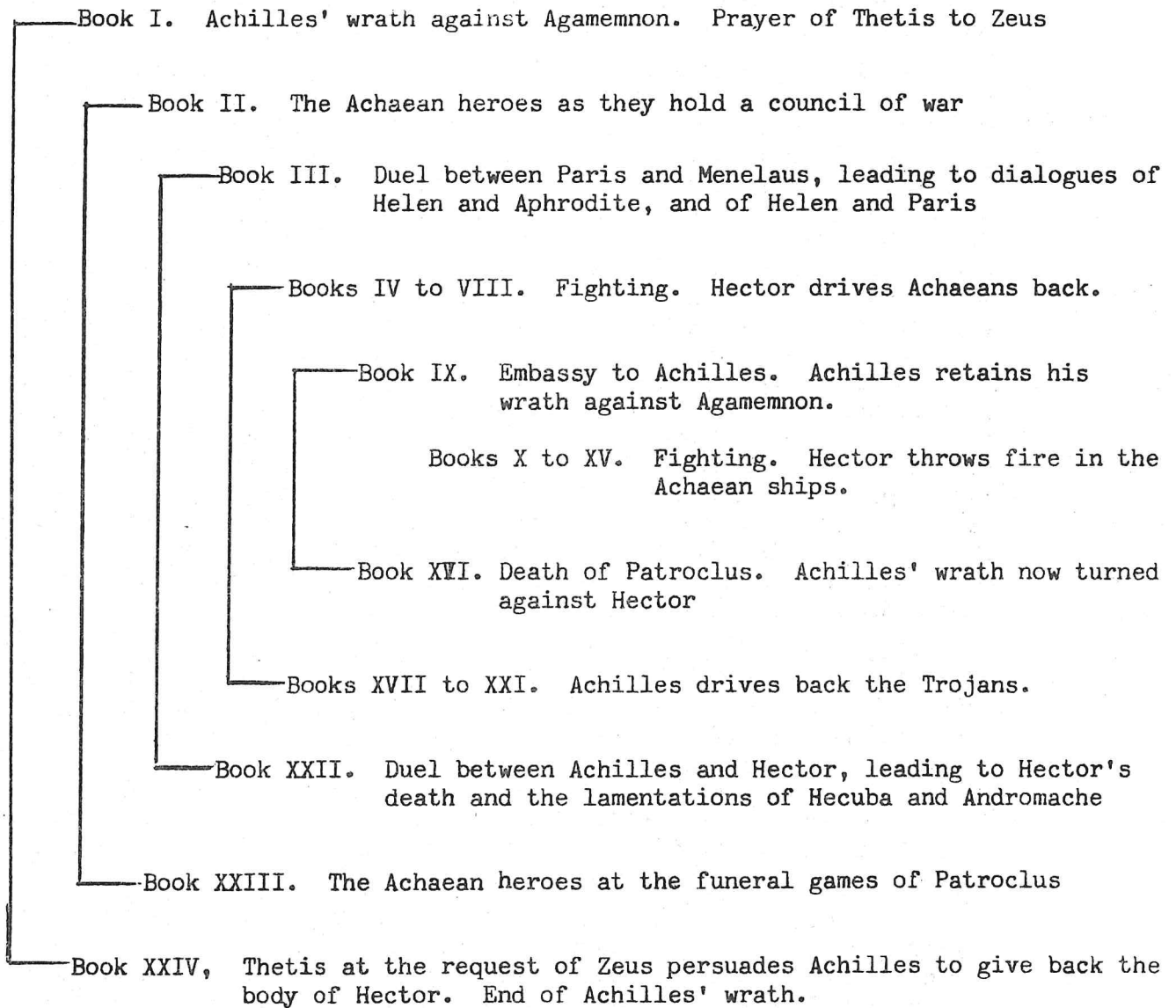
Ovid - "Briseis to Achilles," HEROIDES

Elizabeth Barrett Browning - HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE

One conception of
the design on the
shield of Achilles



OUTLINE OF ILIAD



THE END OF THE TROJAN WAR

Several significant events occurred during the year following the death of Hector. Achilles killed Penthesilia, an Amazon leader fighting for the Trojans. After he had killed her, he grieved because he had had to destroy anything so beautiful. When Thersites the trouble-maker saw his grief and sneered at him for weakness, he killed Thersites. No one on either side was sorry to see him gone.

Achilles himself lost his life during this year. One version is that he was killed in battle, and his body was rescued by Ajax while Ulysses held back the Trojans. But who was strong enough to kill the glorious Achilles in battle? Besides, when he was a baby, his mother had dipped him in the River Styx to make him invulnerable. He could be wounded only in the heel by which she had held him when she dipped him. Thus, the modern reference to a person's Achilles heel means his weak spot or the place in which he can be hurt most deeply. The usual version of his death is that he saw Hector's sister Polyxena at Hector's tomb and immediately fell deeply in love with her. He did not want to just grab her like an ordinary slave girl. So under truce he came into Troy to arrange a legal marriage with her. While he was in Troy, Paris, who was out target practicing, accidentally hit Achilles in the heel with one of his arrows. Some say that Achilles, on the way to Troy, had killed a son of Apollo, and Apollo guided the arrow to Achilles' heel. His ashes, along with those of Patroclus, were placed in a golden urn made by Vulcan, and they were buried on the headland of Sigeum. Alexander the Great visited this tomb, and Ulysses saw him in the Underworld where Achilles made the statement that he would rather be a live slave than a dead hero.

After Achilles' death, there was a question about what would be done with his armor. Ajax, his only blood relative in the war at that time, and Ulysses, who considered himself most useful to the Greeks after Achilles, both claimed a right to it. A decision was made in favor of Ulysses, and the frustrated Ajax committed suicide with the sword which he had received from Hector. Sophocles' AJAX tells this story. Ulysses eventually gave the armor to Achilles' son Pyrrhus after he came to the war. On the way home from Troy, the armor was washed overboard in a storm and was washed ashore on the grave of Ajax.

We mentioned that Achilles' son Pyrrhus had come to the war from Scyros. He was known by two names. Barthell says that he was named Pyrrhus because, while Achilles was in hiding on Scyros, he went under the name of Pyrrha. But the boy was also known among the Greek soldiers as Neoptolemus (a newcomer to the war) because he did not arrive until near the end of the war, when he was about nineteen years old. But after he got there, he showed all the daring of his father.

A prophecy said that the Greeks could not win the war until the arrows of Hercules were brought. Therefore, the clever Ulysses and Pyrrhus were sent to the island of Lemnos to convince Philoctetes to come and help the friends who had deserted him. Paris was the first Trojan killed with these arrows. His wife Oenone knew how to cure him of his wound but she was so bitter about his leaving her for Helen that she did not do it. After Paris was killed, Helen was given to another son of Priam, Deiphobus. This angered Cassandra's twin, Helenus, who

wanted her. Philoctetes meanwhile was cured of his long-lasting wound by the physician Machaon, who put him into a deep sleep first -- the first reported instance of an operation under some kind of anaesthesia.

Another thing necessary before Troy could be taken was the removal of the Palladium. Ulysses and Diomedes sneaked into Troy one night, killed the guards of the temple in which the statue stood, and stole it.

It finally became obvious that Troy could not be taken by force alone. Therefore, Ulysses suggested the stratagem of a huge hollow horse in which armed men could be hidden. If the Trojans could be convinced to take this horse inside the city, they could be attacked from within. Epeus built this impressive horse in three days. According to the Fifth Century A.D. writer Tryphiodorus, it was white with a purple mane fringed with gold, and it had eyes of green beryl and red amethyst. Its teeth were ivory, and the harness was inlaid with ivory and bronze. Pyrrhus was the first man to volunteer to go inside it.

After the horse was finished, the Greeks hid on the island of Tenedos, just far enough away for them to be out of sight but near enough that they could return in a matter of hours. They left Sinon behind to be "captured" and to convince the Trojans to drag the horse into the city. Sinon did a masterful job, convincing the Trojans that the horse was an offering to Minerva, which the Greeks had made so large so that the Trojans could not take it into their city. As Aeneas says, the city which could not be overthrown by warriors sent in a thousand ships was destroyed by one lying Greek. The Trojan horse as a symbol of deceit is used a great deal in modern life, especially in such things as political cartoons, to indicate something that superficially looks all right but that has a vicious trick hidden inside it. In November, 1981, David Stockman, budget director for the Reagan administration, got into serious trouble because he had described the Reagan tax-cut plan as a "Trojan horse," which seemed as if it was to help everybody while it really was a method of helping the rich.

While the Trojans were still divided on whether to bring the horse into the city, the Trojan priest Laocoon came rushing from the temple, struck the horse with his spear, and spoke the famous words: "Do not trust the Greeks, even bearing gifts." Shortly thereafter, two water serpents came to shore from the direction of Tenedos and went straight toward Laocoon and his two sons, strangling them. This completely convinced the Trojans that the horse was a sacred object, and that Laocoon had been justly punished for molesting it. Therefore, they dragged it into Troy, and that night the Greeks attacked and destroyed the city.

The fullest account that has come down to us of the final agony of Troy is given from the Trojan point of view. A brief passage in Homer, the song of Demodokos sung before the wandering Ulysses, still far from his home after many years -- this gives only a bare outline. The lost epics of the cyclic poets [to be found at the end of this chapter] give more detail and, following them, Vergil vividly describes the collapse of Troy:

venit summa dies et ineluctabile tempus
Dardaniae. Fuimus Troes, fuit Ilium et ingens
gloria Teucrorum.

[The last day and inescapable time has come to the city of Dardanus. We were, but are no more, Trojans. Ilium and the great glory of the descendants of Teucer were, but are no more].

Pyrrhus killed and beheaded Priam, leaving the body of this king of a great empire as merely an unknown corpse on the beach. Pyrrhus also killed Astyanax, the small son of Hector, so that another Hector could

not rise.

Few male Trojans survived the conflict. This often happened to the men on the losing side of a war, for the Greeks and Romans had little respect for a man who allowed himself to be captured alive. A good warrior fought to the death. The only two Trojans of significance to survive were Helenus and Aeneas. Helenus, still chafing because he had been deprived of Helen, had some of the prophetic powers of his twin sister Cassandra, and he told the Greeks not to start home on a certain beautiful day because a bad storm would arise and cause much damage. Menelaus and Agamemnon quarrelled about whether to take this Trojan's advice, and this quarrel was the last contact that the brothers ever had because Agamemnon was dead by the time Menelaus got back to Greece. The storm did come and, in gratitude for his warning, Pyrrhus took Helenus home with him. He also took Andromache, the wife of Hector, as his slave. The women of a conquered nation were normally divided among the conquerors as slaves -- the older ones for menial work, the younger ones as mistresses. For Pyrrhus to take Andromache was the supreme humiliation since he was the son of the man who had killed her father and seven brothers some years before at Thebes, and her husband in this war.

The other Trojan hero who survived this war was Aeneas. His escape from death is freed from the taint of cowardice by the explanation that the gods had destined him to take the remnants of the Trojans and "found a new Troy." It was his descendants who established the city of Rome. Although he and his son Ascanius escaped, his wife Creusa was killed when the family separated on the last night of Troy in order to elude the Greeks. They were all to meet at a designated spot.

Cassandra, the prophetess and the most beautiful of Priam's daughters, was taken home by Agamemnon. She is a classic example of innocence, beauty, and gentleness, destined to a lifetime of suffering. In the spring of 1979 Ursula Molinaro published a touching novel, entitled *THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF CASSANDRA, PRINCESS AND PROPHETESS OF TROY*.

Hecuba, Priam's wife and the mother of nineteen of his fifty sons, was taken by Ulysses, but she never reached Greece. Already grief-stricken, she had to face two incidents at the close of the war that broke her completely. The first was the sacrifice of her daughter Polyxena on the tomb of Achilles because she was considered by the Greeks as being the indirect cause of Achilles' death. The sacrifice of Polyxena gives symmetry to the story: At the beginning of the war, the Greek king Agamemnon's daughter had to be sacrificed; at the end the Trojan king's daughter was sacrificed. But this incident and a piece of news completely destroyed Hecuba's reasoning. Word came that her youngest son Polydorus had been killed by the king of Thrace to whose care the boy had been entrusted during the war. When it was obvious that Troy was doomed, the king killed the boy in order to appropriate the money with which he was supposed to take care of the boy. After this, Hecuba became like a wild animal and snarled at the Greeks until she was finally changed into a snarling dog. Euripides' *HECUBA* tells this story.

Several of the Greeks died on their way home. Ajax the Lesser (not the famous Ajax) was killed by Minerva because he had tried to rape Cassandra at Minerva's altar. Also the prophet Calchas, who went

home overland because he foresaw storms, did not get back to Greece. He had said that he would die if he ever met a prophet greater than he was. In Colophon he met Mopsus, who prophesied more accurately than he did, so he committed suicide.

Nestor got home safely and was later consulted by Ulysses' son Telemachus. His palace has been found by archaeologists from the University of Cincinnati. It contained many clay tablets inscribed in Linear B from Nestor's ancestors. Carl Blegen and Marion Rawson in 1966 published a two-volume work on the finds in this palace.

Pyrrhus, as we have said, took Helenus and Andromache with him, and Andromache bore him two children. But, during the war, Menelaus had promised his daughter Hermione to Pyrrhus for his help in the fighting. So, when he got home, he married Hermione, and the hard life of Andromache in this household is portrayed in Euripides' *ANDROMACHE*. Eventually, Pyrrhus married Andromache off to Helenus, gave them a little area to rule on the west coast of Greece, and felt very noble about the whole thing. Later, Aeneas visited Helenus there and got prophecies from him. As for the fate of Pyrrhus, Agamemnon's son Orestes wanted Hermione, so he killed Pyrrhus and took her. Pyrrhus' shade was borne off to the Elysian Fields by the horses Balius and Xanthus, which had belonged to Pyrrhus' father.

Diomedes returned to Argos to find that his wife Aegiale had been unfaithful to him because of false rumors spread by Nauplius (father of Palamedes) that the Greek heroes were having a ball at Troy with the women. Disillusioned, Diomedes left home with the golden armor of Glaucus and the Palladium, and he founded the town of Brundisium in Italy. Aeneas visited him here and was given the Palladium.

Except for Ulysses, Menelaus and Helen were the last survivors to arrive home. They wandered for seven years and spent some time in Egypt. According to some versions, such as Euripides' *HELEN*, she was in Egypt during the whole war, and a cloud phantom of her went to Troy. This version is given by Hermione in John Erskine's novel, *THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HELEN OF TROY*, because Hermione was ashamed to admit that her mother had committed adultery; therefore, she lied. Helen, on the other hand, asserts that lying is a worse sin than adultery and says that she was in Troy. What finally became of Helen? There are many vague versions. The *NEW CENTURY CLASSICAL HANDBOOK* gives some of these, beginning on page 528. The best known story is that the women whose husbands had been lost in the war drove Helen from Sparta after the death of Menelaus. She sought asylum on Rhodes, but a war widow there dressed some slaves as the Furies and turned them on Helen while she was in her bath. She became so terrified that she went insane and committed suicide. This version was used by Robinson Jeffers in *AT THE FALL OF AN AGE*, in 1933.

It might be worthwhile to compare the Trojan War with the wars at Thebes. They have many similarities. Women played an important role in instigating the wars [Eriphyle and Helen]. Human sacrifice was involved in both [Menoeceus and Iphigenia]. Both aggressors fought for what rightfully belonged to him [Polynices = the rule; Menelaus = Helen]. Valuable material items were involved in both [Harmonia's necklace and the golden apple]. Both had great prophets [Tiresias and Calchas]. Both included prophecies and omens [Adrastus' death and the arrows of Hercules]. Hand-to-hand combats occurred in both [Eteocles and Polynices, and Paris and Menelaus]. Both Amphiaraus and Hector knew that the cause of their war

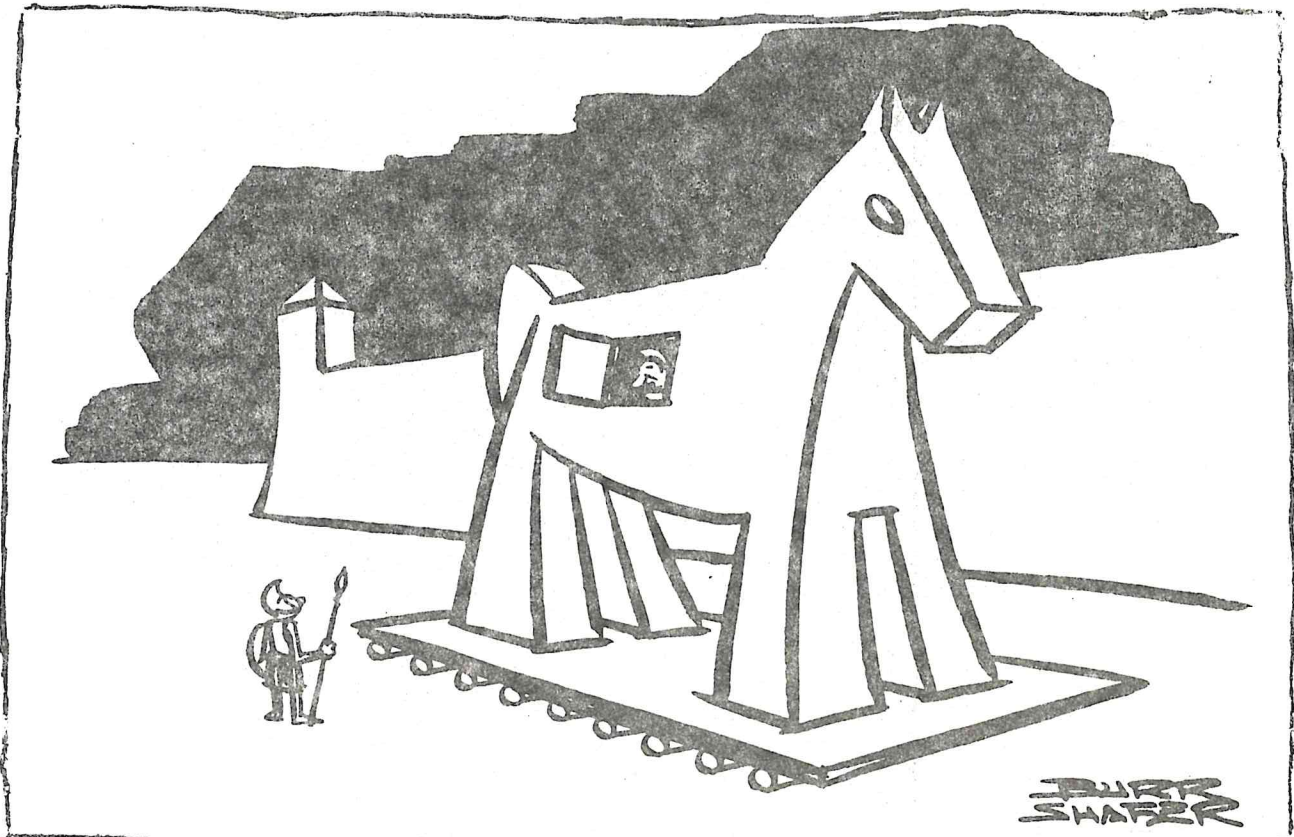
was bad, and that they would die; but they went anyhow. Both continued after the reason for the war lost significance [after Polynices' death and after Helen was offered back to the Greeks]. And Diomedes fought in both wars.

These conflicts also had some definite differences. The Theban war was a civil war; the Trojan War was a struggle between two great powers. Thebes had two wars; Troy was destroyed after one long war. There are no great individual heroes in the Theban wars; there are many in the Trojan War. And the gods had little part in the Theban wars; they played an important role in the Trojan War.

The literary uses of the Trojan War are impossible to count. We shall mention only a very few. The first printed book in the English language, Caxton's *RECUYELL*, published in 1474, was a version of the Trojan story. Two modern dramas underscore the futility and waste of war — Franz Werfel's *THE TROJAN WOMEN*, and Giraudoux's *TIGER AT THE GATES*. This last play was written shortly before the outbreak of World War II, and it was originally entitled *THE TROJAN WAR WILL NOT TAKE PLACE*. A modern movie called *HELEN OF TROY* is based on the romanticized version of Dares, not Homer, and it adds some Hollywood gimmicks. Paris and Helen are glamorized and Menelaus is turned into a villain. The Greeks have been planning a war against Troy and looking for an excuse when Paris arrives in Sparta. Helen is the one who says: "Fear the Greeks, even bearing gifts." Achilles and Agamemnon have a real Hollywood free-for-all over Briseis. Paris is the one who kills Patroclus, and he also kills Achilles as he is dragging Hector before the walls. And Paris is killed on the last day of the war. The ancient Greeks and Romans would hardly recognize this story.

Suggested supplementary reading:

Tennyson — *OENONE*
 Ovid — "Oenone to Paris," *HEROIDES*
 Vergil — *AENEID*, Book II
 Euripides — *THE TROJAN WOMEN*
 Giraudoux — *TIGER AT THE GATES*
 John Erskine — *THE PRIVATE LIFE OF HELEN OF TROY*



CYCLIC EPICS - lost, but Photius has preserved a summary of prose paraphrases, made by Proclus

CYPRIA (11 books)

1. wedding of Peleus and Thetis
2. judgment of Paris, and Paris entertained in Sparta
3. deaths of Castor and Pollux and Idas and Lynceus
4. Menelaus stops to see Nestor who tells stories, among them
 - A. Oedipus
 - B. Theseus and Ariadne
5. Palamedes detects Ulysses' trick to avoid the draft
6. Greeks set out from Aulis and attack Teuthrania, thinking it is Troy.
Thersander is killed here. They are driven back to Greece by a storm.
7. They set out again from Aulis, where Iphigenia is sacrificed but saved by Diana
8. Philoctetes is bitten by a snake on Tenedos
9. Protesilaus is killed
10. Troilus is killed
11. Achilles gets Briseis and Agamemnon Chryseis

ILIAD

AETHIOPIS (5 books) - by Arctinus of Miletus

1. death of Penthesilea and Thersites
2. death of Memnon
3. Achilles is killed by Paris while rushing the city. Ajax carries the body to the ships while Ulysses keeps the Trojans back
4. dispute arises between Ajax and Ulysses over Achilles' armor

THE LITTLE ILIAD - by Lesches of Mitylene

1. Ajax goes mad and commits suicide after the arms are awarded to Ulysses
2. Philoctetes is brought from Lemnos
3. Deiphobus marries Helen
4. Ulysses brings Neoptolemus from Scyros
5. Epeus builds the Trojan horse
6. Ulysses and Diomedes steal the Palladium
7. The Greeks hide on Tenedos while Troy rejoices

THE SACK OF ILIUM (2 books) - by Arctinus of Miletus

1. the Trojans are uncertain about the horse
2. Laocoon is killed by serpents
3. Greeks return after Sinon gives signal. He is not very prominent, and had entered the city through pretense
4. Neoptolemus kills Priam
5. Menelaus kills Deiphobus and takes Helen
6. Ajax attacks Cassandra by the image of Minerva and angers the goddess
7. Polyxena is sacrificed
8. Ulysses murders Astyanax
9. Neoptolemus takes Andromache
10. Acamas and Demophon take Aethra, their grandmother
11. Minerva plans to destroy the Greeks on the high seas

THE RETURNS (5 books) - by Agias of Troezen

1. quarrel between Menelaus and Agamemnon about sailing
2. Diomedes and Nestor get home safely
3. Menelaus reaches Egypt with five ships
4. Calchas goes by land to bury Tiresias at Colophon
5. Ajax is killed by Minerva as he is sailing away with Agamemnon
6. Neoptolemus goes overland
7. Agamemnon is murdered by Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, and is
 avenged by Orestes and Pylades
8. Menelaus returns home

ODYSSEY

THE TELEGONY (2 books) -- by Eugammon of Cyrene

1. the suitors of Penelope are buried
2. Ulysses goes to Elis and then to Thesprotis, where he marries Callidice
3. after her death, Ulysses returns to Ithaca, where his son Telegonus
 kills him, not knowing who he is
4. Telegonus takes his father's body, with Penelope and Telemachus,
 to his mother's land, where Circe makes them immortal
5. Telegonus marries Penelope, and Telemachus marries Circe

MYCENAE AND THE HOUSE OF ATREUS

Besides Troy, Schliemann unearthed other ancient cities, among them Mycenae, often called "the city of gold," located some eighty-one miles southwest of Athens on the Peloponnesian peninsula. This city, founded by Perseus, was the most powerful of the Greek cities from about 1550 to 1150 B.C. Schliemann's excavations brought to light the Cyclopean walls, so called because the neatly fitted stones are so huge that it is difficult to conceive that any one less powerful than a giant Cyclops could handle them. The gate through this wall is called the "lion gate," because the pinnacle above it is formed by the figures of two sitting female lions, facing each other. This was the city where Agamemnon was king at the time of the Trojan War. In 1876, Schliemann dug a shaft down into the burial area outside the city walls and located finds now dated to the Sixteenth and Fifteenth Centuries B.C. The crypts were undisturbed, and he found nineteen bodies, even a baby in a complete suit of gold foil. There were forty-four pounds of gold in this area, and a silver stag. After finding a certain gold death mask, he telegraphed the king of Greece: "I have gazed upon the face of Agamemnon," but we know now that this death-mask was from three hundred years before Agamemnon.

The ancestry of Agamemnon goes back to Tantalus. [See the genealogical chart of Greek families involved in the Trojan War]. Tantalus' son Pelops, from whom the Peloponnesian Peninsula is named, had won his wife Hippodamia by defeating her father in a chariot race. But he had not done this by fair means. He had induced Myrtilus, a son of Mercury, to sabotage the chariot of Hippodamia's father. After Pelops had won the race, he killed Myrtilus, fearing that he would tell what had happened. Pelops became the father of Atreus and Thyestes, and a favorite illegitimate son Chrysippus, who was once kidnapped by Laius of Thebes. Hippodamia, afraid that Chrysippus would succeed his father in power, got Atreus and Thyestes to kill him. Pelops banished his sons and cursed them, and Hippodamia committed suicide.

Atreus eventually became the king of Mycenae and, as penance for his father's sin against the gods in killing Myrtilus, he promised to sacrifice to Diana the best of his flocks. Pan and Mercury put among the flock a lamb with golden fleece. He sacrificed the lamb, but kept the skin and hid it. This angered Diana, who put another curse on his house. Thus the net starts closing in on this family. Atreus' wife Aerope fell in love with his brother Thyestes. They stole the golden fleece and took over the rule of Mycenae. When Atreus demanded that his kingdom be restored to him, Thyestes said that he could have it back "when the sun moved from west to east," thinking that this would never happen. But, with Jupiter's help, this did happen one day. So Atreus now ruled again and Thyestes went into exile. But from this time on, the quarrel between the brothers became more and more bitter and vicious. The angry Thyestes killed the son of Atreus by his first wife. In retaliation, Atreus then killed two of Thyestes' sons and served them to their father as food, telling him what he had eaten only after the fact. Therefore, Thyestes called down yet another curse on the house of Atreus.

Atreus threw his unfaithful wife Aerope (who, incidentally, was a granddaughter of King Minos of Crete) into the sea, and he married Pelopia, who was pregnant at the time from somebody's having raped her. Pelopia was a daughter of Thyestes, but she had grown up away from home and neither father nor daughter knew of their relationship. On a spree,

Thyestes had raped a girl one night. In the darkness they did not see each other, so neither could recognize the other if they ever met again. The girl was Pelopia, and she was now pregnant by her own father. A son was born to her after her marriage to Atreus, who adopted the boy and reared him as his own child. The boy was given the name Aegisthus. Later the sordid details of the whole story were revealed, and Aegisthus and his father Thyestes killed Atreus, and Thyestes took over the rule of Mycenae. Pelopia committed suicide.

Eventually, Atreus' son Agamemnon ran Thyestes out of the kingdom and took over the rule, which he had at the time of the Trojan War. When Agamemnon wanted to marry, he killed Clytemnestra's first husband and their son, and took Clytemnestra -- hardly the perfect beginning for a happy marriage. But they had four children, a son and three daughters, one of whom (Iphigenia) was sacrificed at Aulis.

While Agamemnon was at Troy, Aegisthus began to seduce Clytemnestra, probably more as revenge on Agamemnon than because of any love for Clytemnestra. Agamemnon's son Orestes had been sent to another area, to be out of the way; but Agamemnon's daughter Electra sat and watched her mother's unfaithfulness with ever-increasing resentment. Electra adored her father so much that an excessive attachment between a father and a daughter has become known as an Electra complex. Chrysothemis, the other daughter in the family, plays a role in this story similar to that of Ismene in the Theban story: she is the weak sister whose chief function is to point up the strength of Electra.

When Agamemnon came home from the war, Aegisthus and Clytemnestra plotted his murder. Ancient writers differ on which one did the actual killing. Aeschylus attributes it to Clytemnestra; in the ODYSSEY Agamemnon tells Ulysses that Aegisthus did it. At any rate, both Agamemnon and his slave girl Cassandra were murdered; and Clytemnestra and Aegisthus ruled for seven more years, and had two children.

Electra became obsessed with revenge against her mother for what she had done to her father. When Orestes came home, Electra goaded him into killing their mother and Aegisthus, convincing him that Apollo had ordered this punishment. Of course, after Orestes had killed his mother, he was pursued by the Furies. At last Minerva, feeling that Orestes had suffered long enough, called for him to be tried on the Areopagus. Minerva served as judge, Apollo as defense attorney, and the Furies as the prosecution. The jury consisted of twelve Athenian citizens. The question was whether Orestes should be released from the torment of the Furies. It was a tied jury -- six for, and six against. So Minerva broke the tie by voting yes. From that time on, the Furies, who had been called the Erinyes, were renamed the Eumenides (the good ones) for releasing Orestes. But he did have to go to the temple of Diana at Tauris for purification by the priestess there. His sister Iphigenia was the priestess. After the purification Orestes married Hermione.

When Orestes had gone to Tauris, he had taken with him his dear friend Pylades. Thus the importance of a close friend in one's life is emphasized again, as it had been in the Achilles-Patroclus and the Theseus-Pirithous relationships. Such ties are found also in the Christian Bible in the stories of Ruth and Naomi, and of David and Jonathan.

All three of the Greek writers of tragedy from whom we have surviving plays wrote on the Agamemnon-Clytemnestra theme. Sophocles'

ELECTRA is a psychological study, with Electra as the focal point. Euripides' ORESTES is simply an action story. Perhaps the strongest presentation is Aeschylus' ORESTEIA, a trilogy which emphasizes the causes and results of evil. The three plays are: AGAMEMNON, in which Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon and Cassandra; CHOEPHORI (The Libation Bearers), in which Electra goads Orestes into killing Clytemnestra and Aegisthus; and the EUMENIDES, where the Furies finally release Orestes.

There have been many modern presentations and adaptations of the Aeschylus trilogy. The only one I know of that is given in the original Greek is a film made by Miss Mabel Whiteside of Randolph-Macon, in which all the parts are taken by women students. David Rabe presented a trilogy on this theme, the last of which was entitled THE ORPHAN. This trilogy retells the Oresteia legend with implications about the Vietnam War. Another version with modern war overtones is Gerhart Hauptmann's ATRIDAE TETRALOGY [Agamemnon's death, Electra, Iphigenia at Aulis, and Iphigenia at Delphi]. This work was written during World War II, and expresses the author's disillusionment about hopes for peace and the brotherhood of man. And during this same war, Jean Paul Sartre wrote LES MOUCHES (the flies). The flies are the Furies. Sartre's view is that life is absurd, but man is free. Orestes becomes involved only after his realization that true freedom lies not in avoiding involvement but in asserting and accepting full responsibility for one's deeds. Another play which deals with general human frailties is Jack Richardson's THE PRODIGAL. Here Orestes is the younger generation rejecting the false standards of the older generation. At the end he realizes that his own standards are permeated with much falseness that he had not been conscious of before, and he sees that much of what he is establishing has a frightening resemblance to what he has been trying to destroy. The Guthrie version of THE HOUSE OF ATREUS was produced by the Minnesota Theatre Company. About Serban's AGAMEMNON a critic has said that Serban takes liberties that amount to license. This list of modern uses could go on and on, but I will mention only four more, two of which came out in 1981. In that year the Williamstown (Massachusetts) Theatre Festival presented THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF ATREUS, consisting of ten plays given on two successive evenings, with the moral question: "Who is to blame?" Also, Joyce Carol Oates wrote a novel in 1981, entitled ANGEL OF LIGHT, with its setting in Washington, D.C., a modernized grappling with the basic moral questions found in the ORESTEIA. An earlier modernized retelling of the theme is T. S. Eliot's THE FAMILY REUNION, where Harry is haunted by the Furies for wishing the death of his wife rather than for murdering his mother, as is the case with Orestes. But some of Harry's words are verbatim quotes from Aeschylus. And in my estimation, by far the most effective use of this story in a modernized form is not one of the most recent. It is Eugene O'Neill's MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA, a trilogy with a Civil War setting. The emotional tensions here are very close to the original ORESTEIA, but modified to make it comprehensible to a modern audience. Even the names of the characters have a close resemblance to the original: Clytemnestra becomes Christine; Orestes is Orin; Electra is Lavinia. This work was produced as an opera in 1967; and in 1979 the Public Broadcasting Service presented O'Neill's plays in five segments.

Suggested supplementary reading:

George E. Mylonas - MYCENAE AND THE MYCENAEAN AGE

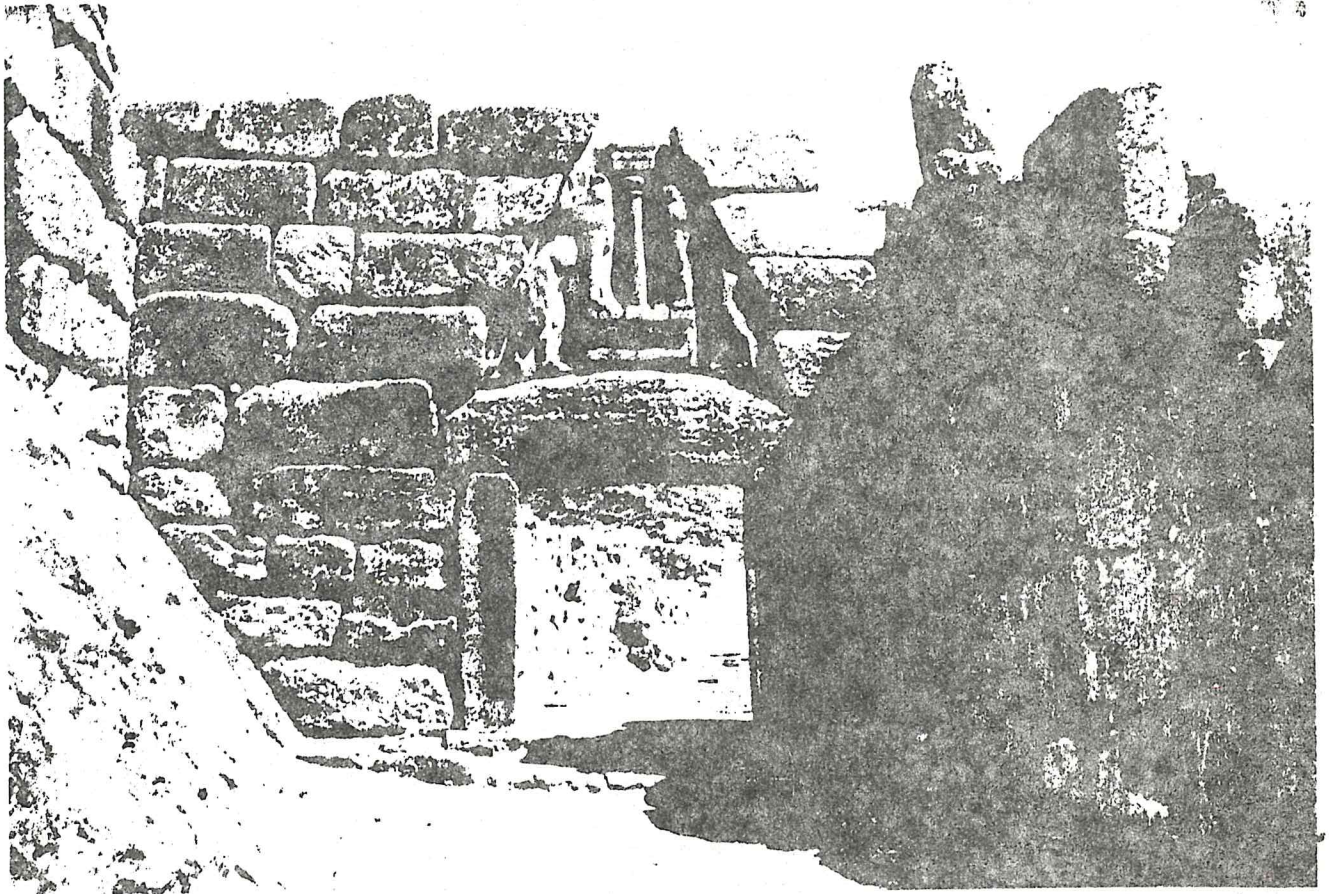
Irving Stone - THE GREEK TREASURE

Aeschylus - ORESTEIA

Richardson - THE PRODIGAL

T. S. Eliot - THE FAMILY REUNION

O'Neill - MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA



Mycenae. Lion Gate

ULYSSES AND THE EPIC

Before we bring our final Greek survivor home from the Trojan War, we should take a few minutes to analyze that form of literature known as the epic, which is in general a long narrative poem whose purpose is to exemplify the qualities of a group of people, usually a nation, although perhaps one of the greatest epics in world literature is Milton's *PARADISE LOST*, which is the epic of the Christian world. It was written in English, but it could have been written in any language. It is the story of man's loss of the garden of Eden because of his yielding to temptation. The conflict is between God and Satan, who, along with his cronies, has been kicked out of Heaven for rebelling against God. After a long council, Satan and his followers decide that the most effective means of getting even with God is to contaminate something he loves very much. Therefore, they successfully tempt Adam and Eve to eat forbidden fruit. At the end of the poem they are walking hand-in-hand out of the garden of Eden to face a more difficult world because of their disobedience. Milton also wrote a companion piece to this poem, *PARADISE REGAINED*, which is not as long and intricate as *PARADISE LOST*, but which makes a very effective epilogue to this story. In it, Christ redeems man from his sin, not by his crucifixion, as is the usual version, but by reversing man's sin in not yielding to Satan's temptations.

The *ILLIAD*, the *ODYSSEY*, the *ARNEID*, the *SONG OF ROLAND*, the *NIBELUNGENLIED*, *BEOWULF* — these are all national epics. So far the United States of America has none, although several attempts have been made to write one. Perhaps the nearest thing we have is Stephen Vincent Benet's *JOHN BROWN'S BODY*, based on the Civil War. Many epics focus on a period of war because in a time of such stress the best qualities of a people are brought out. But Frank Norris felt that Americans were not a poetic people, and an epic reflecting them should be in prose. Therefore, he started writing a trilogy of novels, based on the agriculture of the Midwest. The first novel has a setting in the wheat fields of Kansas and Nebraska; the second one takes place at the grain market in Chicago. We cannot be sure about the third one, because he died before he got very far into it. But indications are that it would have dealt with the United States staving off a famine in a third-world country by shipping it grain — certainly a typical American act. But the fact remains that the American epic is still waiting for somebody to write it.

Homer started this literary form in his *ILLIAD* and *ODYSSEY*. Both of these poems are epics, but they have decided differences. The *ODYSSEY* differs from most epics in that it is an epic of wandering, not of fighting. The conflict is not with men, but with nature or the gods. It is a much more personal account — though an epic embodying the ideals of a race — than the *ILLIAD*, and so is more in accord with the modern taste for literature of the individual. It also differs from the *ILLIAD* in its technique. The *ILLIAD* is a straightforward story; the *ODYSSEY* is a flashback type of story, a series of episodes, somewhat loosely strung together, incorporating deep sea tales, folk tales, and the saga of Ulysses. These tales had been handed down orally, because writing had disappeared in Greece with the destruction of Mycenae, and was reintroduced about the time of Homer, that is, about 700 B.C. The theme of the *ODYSSEY* is one of the most popular in folklore: the husband returning after many years to find his wife and property in the hands of another person. A struggle ensues. Sometimes the husband is killed, as was the case for Agamemnon; Sometimes he leaves and settles elsewhere,

as Diomedes did; sometimes he regains his wife and home, as Ulysses did.

Although this work was written about 700 B.C., the oldest piece of manuscript of the ODYSSEY that has been found so far is a two-by-three inch piece of papyrus, containing parts of lines 382-390 of Book 12. This manuscript dates only from the Third Century B.C.

Who was this man Homer, anyhow? Several Greek cities claim to be his birthplace, and he is universally described as "the blind poet"; but we really know nothing about him. There is even a difference of opinion about whether the ILLIAD and the ODYSSEY were written by the same person. In 1969 a computer said they were, but they differ in so many ways. In trying to identify this elusive personality, Robert Graves even argues that Homer was a woman. But whoever Homer was, these two works ascribed to him set the pattern for all later epics. Among the characteristics which they established are these: The theme is stated in the first word or phrase of the poem [the ILLIAD = anger; the ODYSSEY = a man; the AENEID = deeds of arms and a man; PARADISE LOST = man's first disobedience]. Also, the action starts in medias res, in the middle of the events, not at the beginning. And the author makes use of a deus ex machina, some divine power which intervenes in the activities of human characters. Also, since the purpose of such a poem is serious and of great magnitude, it is always majestic in tone.

Ulysses, whose Greek name Odysseus means "the angry one," is to modern readers a somewhat less appealing hero than Achilles. He is bold, but his predominant quality is craftiness rather than valor. (He was said by some to be a son of Sisyphus because of his cunning). Yet the Greeks decided, not unjustly, that after Achilles he was the most important personality among the Greek warriors; and he was given Achilles' armor in preference to Ajax, who represented headstrong valor. After all, it had been prophesied from the very beginning that the Trojan War would not be won by force, but by craft -- and it was Ulysses who thought of the wooden horse. This resourcefulness which brought Ulysses through more than twenty years of wanderings and perils may not compare with high valor in our estimation, but it was a heroic virtue, perhaps the highest, to the Hellenic temperament, as is made evident by their admiration for the trickiness of Mercury.

In addition to his resourcefulness, Ulysses also had intelligence, a capacity for endurance and suffering, and endless curiosity and love of adventure.

In Sophocles' PHILOCTETES, Ulysses is represented in contrast to Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles. He persuades the young man to deceive Philoctetes: "I know well, my son, that by nature you are not apt to utter or contrive such guile; yet seeing that victory is a sweet prize to gain, bend your will thereto...Lend yourself to me for one knavish day, and then through all your days to come, be called the most righteous of mankind." Later, in the same play he says: "Such a man as the time needs, such am I. Victory is my aim in every field."

Another side of the man is shown in Sophocles' AJAX, when Minerva bids Ulysses to exult over the madness and doom of his foe Ajax. But Ulysses says: "I pity him in his misery, for all that he is my foe, because he is bound fast to a dread doom: I think of my own lot no less than his. For I see that we are but phantoms, all we who live are fleeting shadows." And he persuades the angry Greeks to give Ajax a proper burial.

This then is the man who started home from the Trojan war with a fleet of twelve ships, carrying six hundred men. Where did they travel?

Much analysis of this subject has been made and several people, with their copy of the ODYSSEY open, have tried to retrace his wanderings. But there is still not complete agreement, although most people place all the adventures somewhere in the area of the Mediterranean Sea. However, Henrietta Mertz of Chicago, in a book entitled THE WINE DARK SEA, argues that Ulysses discovered America. Her evidence includes the Greek-like designs on pottery in Latin America; a sophisticated Mayan calendar, with no civilization near who was capable of it; a 1517 copy of an old map in Istanbul, which vaguely shows the outline of North and South America; and descriptions of natural phenomena which seem peculiar to our part of the world — a tornado, gulf currents, and Scylla. She claims that the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia is the only place in the world with fifty-foot tides to match Homer's description here. Her interpretation is interesting, but not convincing.

The ODYSSEY opens (in medias res) with Ulysses' son Telemachus leaving Ithaca to see what he can find out about his father, for his mother Penelope is about to complete a piece of weaving she had started six years after the fall of Troy. Many suitors, thinking Ulysses dead, have been gathering at her home and waiting for her to choose one of them to marry her and "take over" Ulysses' kingdom. She has promised that she will make her decision as soon as she completes this weaving. So she weaves all day, and at night ravel out as much as she dares. Thus the completion is delayed but cannot be prevented, eventually. And now it is almost finished. If a person describes his task as "a Penelope's web," he means a job he never seems to get finished, no matter how hard he works on it. Telemachus goes to Nestor and Menelaus for information. Meanwhile, after spending seven years as a captive of Calypso (whose name means "concealer" and who may be symbolically a goddess of death), Ulysses convinces her to release him on a raft. He is wrecked at sea by a storm, but he manages to get to Phaeacia, where King Alcinous' daughter Nausicaa finds him on the beach and takes him to the palace. It is at a dinner in this palace that Ulysses relates his adventures, some of which are these:

Several of his men had fallen in with a group of people who ate the flower of the lotus. The results of their eating this plant were that they forgot their past and were unconcerned about the future. One scholar claims that the effects of the lotus have all the characteristics of hashish. Incidentally, there is a Lotus-eaters restaurant and bar in New York City. I do not know the results of dining there.

In another adventure, Ulysses and his men had been shut up in a cave by the one-eyed Cyclops, Polyphemus, who was a son of Neptune. He ate a few of Ulysses' men as the main course of each meal until Ulysses made him drunk on wine; then he and his men stuck a redhot pole into Polyphemus' eye, blinding him. Before this, Ulysses had told Polyphemus that his name was Noman. Therefore, when the other Cyclopes gathered around the entrance to the closed cave and asked Polyphemus who was hurting him, Polyphemus screamed "Noman!" So the others left. In order to escape from this cave, which Polyphemus opened only to let his flocks out and in, Ulysses' men fastened themselves underneath these huge sheep. This way, Polyphemus, feeling their backs, would not find them. After they had got away from shore, Ulysses could not resist calling back and taunting him. When Polyphemus heard Ulysses' voice, he threw huge boulders in the direction of the ship and called down the curse of his father on Ulysses. This is why Neptune caused Ulysses' troubles in getting home. The ancients recognized Polyphemus as the personification

of a volcano, but there was a difference of opinion as to which volcano. Some thirty caves in Italy, Corsica, and Sardinia have been called the cave of Polyphemus.

These wanderers visited the island of Aeolus, king of the winds. He tied all unfavorable winds in a big bag and gave them to Ulysses, who guarded them day and night until they were within sight of their homeland. Then he fell asleep and his men opened the bag, thinking it contained treasure. The released winds blew them far out to sea again.

By the time they reached Circe's island, the twelve ships had been reduced to one. Almost every adventure had involved the loss of some men. Circe had the unpleasant habit of changing men into animals, usually pigs, when they came under her power. The symbolism here is clear. Circe is the goddess of physical pleasures, such as eating, drinking, and especially sex. When any one is controlled by these appetites, he becomes nothing but an animal. Mercury gave Ulysses a magical herb to keep him from being changed by Circe. Ulysses and his men spent a year with this goddess, and she bore him a son. Homer himself must have found her rather fascinating, for he devotes more lines to her than to any one else in the ODYSSEY.

Ulysses was told to go to the Underworld to consult Tiresias. He did not go inside, but called the shades of the dead to the entrance, which was probably Lake Avernus. While there he saw, among others, the spirits of his mother, Agamemnon, Tantalus, and Sisyphus.

Ulysses and his men got safely past the Sirens by Ulysses daubing wax in the ears of the men so that they could not hear the song of the Sirens. He had himself tied to the mast so that he could listen without being able to get loose. Thus he could have been entered in an ancient Guinness book of records as the only human being to have heard the Sirens' song without being lured to destruction.

Their ship passed between the terrible whirlpool Charybdis and Scylla, the monster who lived in the opposite rocks, but not without Scylla's grabbing and devouring some of Ulysses' men. This narrow passageway with fatal dangers on both sides has given us the phrase "to be between Scylla and Charybdis," which means, as a student of mine once put it: "whichever way you go, you're gonna get got." It is generally agreed that geographically Scylla and Charybdis were the Strait of Messina between Italy and Sicily.

Thrinacia (the island with three points) is supposedly Sicily, which has three pointed capes. Here Ulysses' men killed and ate some of Apollo's beautiful cattle, a deed which angered him so much that he caused all the men except Ulysses to die in a storm at sea after they left the island. Ulysses himself was washed ashore on the island of Calypso. And thus the complete circle of the adventures has been completed.

Although Nausicaa had fallen in love with Ulysses, the king prepares a ship and sends Ulysses back to his home country of Ithaca. No trace of Ulysses' palace at Ithaca has been found. In fact, of all the Greek heroes, so far only the palaces of Agamemnon at Mycenae and of Nestor at Pylos have been found. When Ulysses got to Ithaca, he disguised himself as a beggar in order to study the situation at home. His old dog Argus recognized him and died from the excitement of seeing his master again. Also his old nurse Eurycleia recognized him by a scar on his leg. He eventually told Telemachus who he was; and with Minerva's help they plan vengeance on the suitors. It is decided that Penelope's new husband will be chosen through a shooting contest with Ulysses' bow. This bow

had been given to Ulysses by Eurytus (Iole's father), who had been taught to use it by Apollo, and who in turn had taught Ulysses. No one else could handle it. After Ulysses has removed all the weapons of the suitors, Ulysses kills them with his bow. Then he makes himself known to Penelope who, not trusting this stranger, makes him prove his identity by telling her certain personal things that only she and Ulysses would know. The whole story ends with the relatives of the suitors seeking revenge and being defeated.

The adventures of Ulysses after the ODYSSEY are told in the "Telegony," one of the CYCLIC EPICS, but the truth is that he is not involved in any really important mythological events outside the range of the stories surrounding the Trojan War.

There are many uses of Ulysses in modern literature. Tennyson's poem ULYSSES tells of a Ulysses who, back home, still longs for adventure. James Joyce's novel ULYSSES tells about a day in the life of the commonplace Stephen Bloom in Dublin. Helen MacInnis's HOME IS THE HUNTER is a light play, set on the day of Ulysses' return home. There is no contest with the bow. But Homer is a character who wanders aimlessly in and out, worrying about details not in keeping with his poem, and quoting Shakespeare. Gerhart Hauptmann's THE BOW OF ULYSSES has Ulysses return home after the long war, hoping for peace and rehabilitation. He finds his wife enjoying the attentions of the suitors, and he becomes embittered. Ninos Kazantzakis' THE ODYSSEY, A MODERN SEQUEL is three times the length of the original ODYSSEY. In it, after killing the suitors, Ulysses leaves Ithaca and wanders around without definite goals. He abandons religion, contemplates suicide, and finally turns to Buddhism. At the end everything crumbles around him, but he retains his intense love of life. The movie ULYSSES changes many events, of course. In it Ulysses has amnesia and marries Nausicaa. When he remembers who he is, he returns home. And at least four times during the 1970's, different opera companies presented Claudio Monteverdi's Seventeenth Century opera THE RETURN OF ULYSSES TO HIS NATIVE LAND, one of the earliest music dramas to survive. Perhaps the strangest version of the Ulysses story was presented in Chicago as a play, with scantily clad men cavorting around as Penelope's suitors. A drama critic began his review with: "Can beefcake do as well as cheesecake in the American theater?"

Suggested supplementary reading:

Homer - ODYSSEY
 Sophocles - AJAX
 Ovid - "Penelope to Ulysses," HEROIDES
 Tennyson - THE LOTUS EATERS and ULYSSES
 MacInnis - HOME IS THE HUNTER



AENEAS AND THE AENEID

Homer had made Aeneas second only to Hector as a Trojan hero, but he was a vague personality in the *ILIAD*. He had been rescued for a destiny of "founding a new Troy." It was the Etruscans who first made Aeneas important for Italy. His exploits were one of the popular themes in the art of this people who inhabited an area north of where Rome would some day stand. By Vergil's time, the importance of Aeneas and his descendants Romulus and Remus was an established tradition in Roman literature. And even as late as the Middle Ages, European royal families tried to trace their ancestry to Aeneas and the Trojans.

The emperor Augustus had asked Vergil to write an epic for Rome. The times were troubled times: Julius Caesar had recently been assassinated; Augustus had waged a war against another Roman, Mark Anthony, in order to establish his power; people were restless and disillusioned. Augustus' advisor Maecenas had suggested that an epic might be good to raise public morale. Therefore, Vergil was asked to write this epic, with three aims in mind: to revive the religious instincts of the people; to instill patriotism and pride in their heritage (By setting his story in the days of the Trojan War, Vergil could "predict" great accomplishments which by his own day were a part of Roman history); and to glorify the house of Augustus so that the people would accept him as their chosen leader.

Vergil wrote with these aims in mind. The gods participate in the action as much as do the mortals. Jupiter tells Venus that a nation will arise (Rome, of course) to which he will give "power without end." Dido predicts the Punic wars, which by Vergil's time had brought glory to Rome. As far as the house of Augustus was concerned, Aeneas' father Anchises speaks of the heroes of this household in glowing terms when Aeneas consults him in the Underworld.

The twelve books of the *AENEID* break down into two distinct sections. The first six books deal with the fall of Troy and the wanderings of Aeneas. The last six books are set in Italy and deal with Aeneas' struggle to settle there.

The *AENEID* opens with a storm sent by Juno which wrecks Aeneas' ships on the north coast of Africa after seven years of wandering. He and his men are given help by Dido, a Phoenician queen who had fled her native land after her brother had killed her husband. She had established a new city in Africa, which she named Carthage. At a banquet which she gives to entertain Aeneas, he tells about the fall of Troy, including the stories of Sinon and Laocoon, the wooden horse, and the death of Priam and Aeneas' wife Creusa. He then continues the story by telling of his wanderings after the destruction of the city. He had gone from site to site, trying to locate the place destined for his new city, but he had been driven to leave each place by bad omens, such as breaking a twig from a bush and seeing it bleed human blood, while a voice said that the bush was growing from the body of Polydorus, Priam's son whom the king of Thrace had killed after the war. He had also stopped on the west coast of Greece, where he visited with Helenus and Andromache. Helenus gave him some advice, including the fact that he should not try to pass between Scylla and Charybdis. He also told Aeneas to visit the Underworld. Many of Aeneas' adventures closely parallel those of Ulysses. In fact, he even found one of Ulysses' men who had got left behind on the island of Polyphemus.

Book iv of the AENEID is devoted to the love affair between Queen Dido and Aeneas. At the end of this, he realizes that he must go on to fulfill his destiny, and she commits suicide. Over sixty operas have been written on the Aeneas-Dido theme. Two of them will be discussed briefly at the end of this chapter.

Before Aeneas had been driven to the African coast, he had been visiting with friends he had found in Sicily. He had left in Sicily those people who were too tired to continue the search for a new homeland, including his father. After Aeneas left Carthage, he returned to Sicily, where he learned that Anchises had died, and Book v is given over to the funeral games in honor of Anchises.

Finally in Book vi Aeneas lands at Cumae in Italy, and the Cumaean Sibyl guides him into the Underworld. This sibyl, whose name was Deiphobe, had been loved by Apollo, who offered her "anything she wished." She filled her hand with sand and said that she would like as many years of life as she had grains of sand in her hand. Her wish brought her a thousand years; she was seven hundred years old when Aeneas saw her. Her cave can still be visited at Cumae, with the River Styx flowing through it. She and the Delphic sibyl are two of those painted by Michaelangelo on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. While she and Aeneas were in the Underworld, he saw Dido among other spirits, and he consulted his father, just as Ulysses had consulted Tiresias.

The last six books of the AENEID have much in common with the ILLIAD. They concern the wars which Aeneas had to fight after he got to Italy. Because of an omen and a prophecy, Latinus, an Italian king from whom we get the word Latin, wanted his daughter Lavinia to marry Aeneas; but she was already engaged to a local king, Turnus. The reason for so many kings is that the country was made up of city states, and each city had its own king. Turnus refused to give up Lavinia and led the war against Aeneas. First one side and then the other had the upper hand in the fighting, and it was finally decided in a council of the gods that Aeneas would be the eventual winner. Meanwhile, Aeneas had sought help from King Evander, whose only son Pallas joined Aeneas' forces, and was killed by Turnus. Pallas wore a beautiful belt, which Turnus took off him and wore from then on. Finally, Turnus and Aeneas had a hand-to-hand combat to decide the war. When Aeneas was about to kill Turnus, Turnus begged for his life. Aeneas was about to spare Turnus when he saw Pallas's belt, and he killed Turnus, just as it had been decreed that Hector's life would be lost because he wore Patroclus' armor.

Besides the fact that the ILLIAD ends with the death of Hector and the AENEID with the death of Turnus, many other obvious similarities exist between the works of Homer and Vergil. They both start in medias res. In both writers the gods manipulate human actions, even making decisions in a council of the gods. As for similarities in characters, Aeneas is the counterpart of Achilles, Turnus of Hector, Pallas of Patroclus. In both the ODYSSEY and the AENEID, adventures are told at a banquet. There are funeral games in both the ILLIAD and the AENEID. Some of the games, like the shooting contest with a bird as the target, are identical in the two poems. Both Ulysses and Aeneas visit the Underworld to consult someone. Achilles and Aeneas both have elaborate gold armor made by Vulcan. There is a hand-to-hand combat between the main characters in both the ILLIAD and the AENEID. And Turnus has a serious quarrel with Draces (one of his men) as Agamemnon and Achilles

had quarrelled in the ILIAD. Both the Trojan War and Aeneas' wars were started over a woman. It is even possible that Vergil's tragic Dido was patterned after Homer's Nausicaa. Close ties can be seen in the two poets even in the phraseology. Some similes and phrases of Vergil are verbatim translations of Homer's Greek into Latin. Obviously, Vergil had Homer's books on his desk as he wrote.

One of the most spectacular operas of all time was based on the AENEID. It was written by Hector Berlioz, and was entitled LES TROYENS. It deals mostly with the fall of Troy, as told in Book ii of the AENEID and the Dido tragedy, as told in Book iv. The music takes four hours to sing. There are thirteen major scene changes. A cast of hundreds is required, including two choruses, a corp de ballet, and three stage bands. Although Berlioz died in 1869, proper staging of his opera was impossible until the Metropolitan Opera Company, with its four enormous stages on two levels, its fifty-seven-foot turntable, and the most intricate theatrical lighting system in the United States, presented it in 1973.

But this was not the last opera on the subject presented in our country. In 1979, the New York City Opera presented a less ambitious DIDO AND AENEAS, written by Henry Purcell, which one critic called "a stunning jewel."

Suggested supplementary reading:

Vergil -- AENEID

Ovid -- "Dido to Aeneas," HEROIDES

Marlowe -- TRAGEDY OF DIDO, QUEEN OF CARTHAGE



ROMAN MYTHS

Since the Gauls had burned Rome in 390 B.C. and destroyed most of the historical records there, imagination had to fill in the gaps left by absence of facts in the city's early history; thus a great deal of mythology and legend became intertwined with historical events. As the Roman historian Livy tells the story, this is how it all started:

After Aeneas won his war against Turnus, he founded a city not far north of Naples and he named it Lavinium after Lavinia, whom he married. He was killed in battle only three years later, and Lavinia took over the rule of the city until Ascanius would reach the age to rule. But she did such a good job that Ascanius, when he grew to manhood, left her in charge and, taking a group of young friends with him, he founded a new city a little farther north along the coast of Italy. He called this city Alba Longa; and a series of his descendants ruled here for nearly three hundred years until Amulius took the rule from his brother Numitor and had Numitor's daughter Rhea Silvia made a Vestal Virgin so that she could have no sons to take the power from him. The Vestal Virgins were bound by strict laws of chastity, and any Vestal Virgin found guilty of a relationship with a man was buried alive. When Rhea Silvia became pregnant, she claimed that Mars was responsible and that she was powerless against a god. She bore twins, who were named Romulus and Remus. The fact that their father was a god did not prevent Rhea Silvia from suffering the usual punishment, and the twins were exposed. However, a wolf, hearing their crying, came to them and suckled them. This figure of the wolf and two babes is ubiquitous in Rome today. There are statues, it is on manhole covers, it is everywhere, because these twins are traditionally considered the founders of Rome. But a quarrel between the brothers ended with Romulus killing Remus, and thus Romulus became the first king of Rome, founded presumably about 753 B.C.

After Romulus and his men had established this new city, their great problem was a complete absence of women. They requested the right of intermarriage with neighboring peoples. When refused, they put on some spectacular games and invited neighboring peoples to attend these games and to see their new city. During the games, at a given signal, each Roman grabbed himself a woman and carried her home. Apparently the Sabines had the most attractive women, because this incident became known as "the rape of the Sabines." And when they were able to pull forces together, the Sabines attacked the Romans for this outrage. But by then the women, who had been treated extremely well by their new husbands, were happy. These women finally stopped the war by going en masse between the two battle lines, begging their husbands and fathers not to kill each other.

There followed a period of seven successive legendary kings. Many interesting things happened during these years, such as the establishment of the senate, and the building of the Circus Maximus. The events of these years are told in vivid detail by Livy in the first book of his history, called *AB URBE CONDITA* (from the founding of the city). One of the more memorable incidents concerned two sets of triplets. As you know, many wars were settled by hand-to-hand combats. This time an agreement was made that Roman triplets, the Horatii, would fight it out with enemy triplets, the Curiatii. When they first clashed, two of the Romans were killed but the third one was not hurt; none of the enemy triplets was killed, but all three were wounded in varying degrees

of seriousness. Therefore, the surviving Horatius ran away, and the three Curiatii pursued him, but at different speeds because of the difference in the severity of their wounds. As soon as Horatius had them separated from each other, he turned and took them on, one at a time, easily killing all three.

The rule of the kings ended rather abruptly. The government had grown corrupt, as governments tend to do in time. The last king, Tarquin the Proud, was vicious and untrustworthy. The people disliked him intensely. Then his son Sextus raped Lucretia, one of the most highly respected women in the empire. That was the last straw. The people, under the leadership of Brutus (an ancestor of the Brutus who participated in the assassination of Julius Caesar), drove the kings from Rome and established a republic.

In the early years of the republic, a couple of legendary incidents worth noting here occurred. One was that a man by the name of Horatius stood on a bridge alone when the city was being invaded, holding back the enemy until the Romans could destroy the bridge. Then he jumped into the Tiber River and swam to safety. The other incident was also about a war hero. A young Roman soldier decided to disguise himself and make his way into the enemy camp to kill their king. Not knowing the king, he killed the wrong man and was captured. The king threatened to torture him in order to extract military information from him. But to show his disdain of torture, the captive stuck his right hand into a fire and held it there unflinchingly until it was burned off. He was released for such courage, and from then on he was known as Scaevola ("Lefty").

Moving from Roman history to Roman religion, we have already noted that much of the Roman religious hierarchy was derived from the Greek deities, with native Italian deities blended in. The three major gods for the Romans were Jupiter (who started as an Italian sky god, like Uranus in Greece), Juno (who was the chief Italian goddess of women), and Minerva (whose name is related to the Latin words mens, meaning mind, and meminisse, meaning to remember). Vesta and Vulcan were the Romans' chief fire deities; and Ceres and Bacchus, representing bread and wine, were the chief agricultural deities. Also, Venus and Mars were especially involved in the Roman heritage. Venus was the grandmother of Ascanius, also known as Iulus, from whom the Julian family claimed descent. This was the family of Julius Caesar and the first five emperors of Rome after Julius Caesar's death. In the Forum area, the emperor Hadrian dedicated a temple which faced two ways. One side was dedicated to Roma (the city of Rome) and the other to Amor (Venus, the goddess of love). You will note that Amor is Roma spelled backward. As for Mars, he was, after all, the father of Romulus, the founder of the city.

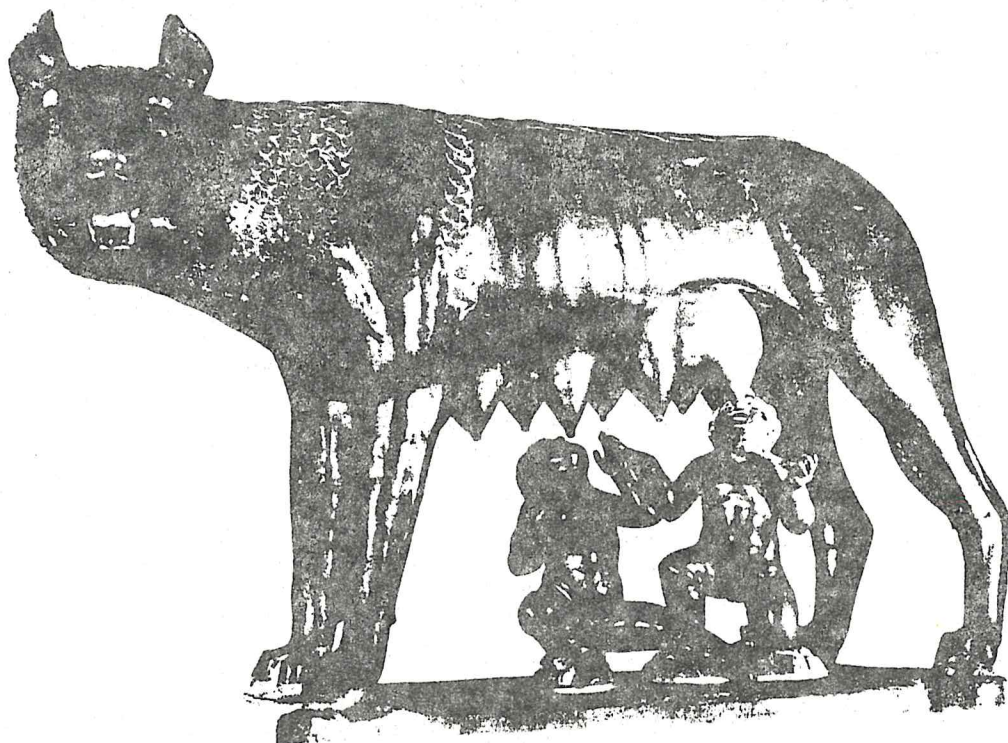
Several minor deities were adopted by the Romans and given some prominence, among them Castor and Pollux, Asclepius, and Hercules, who was unknown to the early Latins but was introduced by the Etruscans. You may remember that Hercules set up the first altar to himself in the Forum Boarium at Rome.

The Mystery religions, like the Eleusinian Mysteries and the religion of Mithras and Cybele, were also influential in Rome.

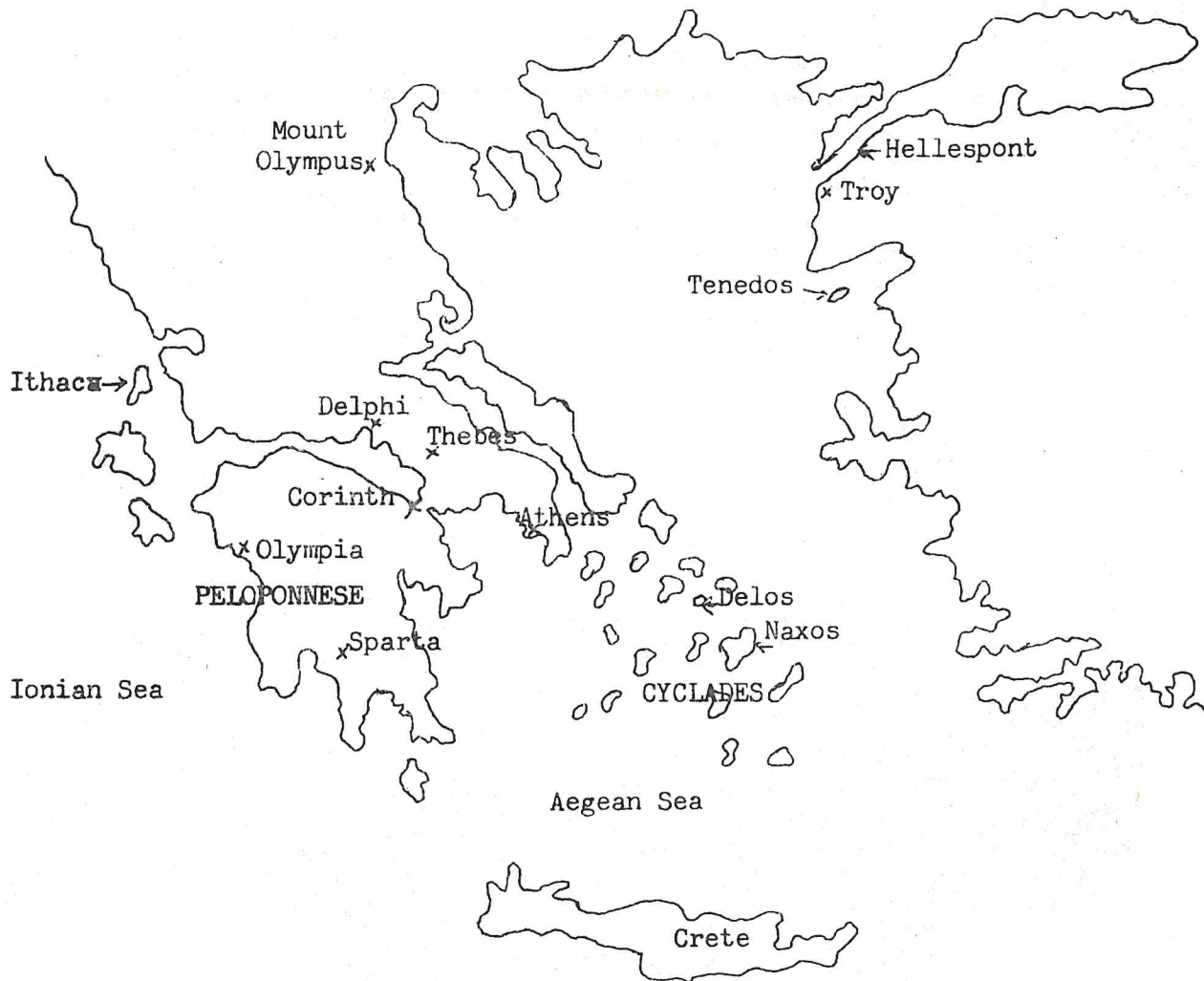
The Romans also added a few deities who did not exist in Greek mythology. Janus was a two-faced god of doors, of beginnings and endings. Our words "January" and "janitor" are both derived from his name; and he is used a great deal in modern advertising to indicate two phases of a product or service. Janus had five shrines in Rome, one of which had its doors open in times of war and closed in times of peace. It is a sad comment that they were open most of the time. In addition to Janus, the Romans also worshipped Saturn, an agricultural deity. The biggest Roman holiday, the Saturnalia, was held in his honor in winter, a kind of three-week Thanksgiving celebration, which also included much of the revelry of our Mardi Gras. Finally, the Romans had some very personal gods, known as the household gods. The Penates were minor deities who saw to it that the family had penus (food provisions), and the Lares were souls of ancestors who looked after the welfare of their descendants. Every household had a little recessed altar, called a Lararium, on which sacrifices were made to the Penates and Lares at mealtime. And not just the household had its deities, but every man had his genius and every woman her Juno, which were a kind of guardian angels.

Suggested supplementary reading:

Livy - AB URBE CONDITA, Books i and ii



GREECE



ITALY



EPILOGUE

The gains you get from reading the stories of Classical mythology are great. The most obvious value, of course, is the pure entertainment you get from reading these delightful stories. No civilization has ever had a more vivid and creative imagination than the ancient Greeks. But if you ask for more than recreation to make them worth your time, you have the fact that they give you a better understanding and therefore a deeper appreciation of many of the world's great works of literature, music, and art.

Perhaps the greatest value of such a study is more subtle, for in this reading you have been exposed to thoughts and beliefs from the past which could very well make your life in the present richer and more rewarding, if you incorporate them in the rest of your philosophy of life. The emphasis that these ancient peoples put on such things as the inevitable destruction that follows excessive pride, the sacred nature of a promise, the tendency of human beings to wish for harmful things, the power and importance of wisdom in our lives -- all of these and many more of their ideas are as timely today as they were in ancient Greece. And these precepts are presented to us in such a palatable form!

I know of no other one subject that has a bearing on more areas of our lives than this one has. Nor is there any other subject which presents its materials in a more enjoyable format.