

Mythology: The Planetary Powers

- 1) Sun for illumination; (Sunday)
- 2) Moon for enchantment; (Monday)
- 3) Mars for growth; (Tuesday) *Nordic god*
- 4) Mercury for wisdom; (Wednesday) ↓
- 5) Jupiter for law; (Thursday) *Thor*
- 6) Venus for love; (Friday) *Freya*
- 7) Saturn for peace; (Saturday)

Uranus meaning 'the sky'

Earth (mother earth) Gaia

Earth and sky parted in deadly strife and were reunited in love-ie clash between matriarchal and patriarchal principles-resolved ultimately in unions. (a union which, resulting in offspring, was to divide and re-divide time and again)

The Three Erinnyes (Furies)

born of the blood of Uranus, shed as a result of his castration by Cronus (his youngest son). The blood fell upon Mother Earth who conceived and bore the Three Erinnyes-furies who avenge crimes of parricide and perjury; by name they are: Alecto, Tisiphone, and Megaera. (Mother Earth was responsible for persuading the Titans to attack their father)

Cronus married his siter Rhea-but it was prophesied by Mother Earth, and by his dying father Uranus-that one of Cronus' own sons would dethrone him. Every year, therefore, he swallowed the children whom Rhea bore him: first Hestia (1) then Demeter (2) and Hera (3) then Hades (4) and Poseidon (5)

Rhea was enraged; she bore Zeus her third son at dead of night on Mount Lycaeum in Arcadia, "Where no creature casts a shadow"-she bathed him in the River Neda and then gave him to Mother Earth (symbolic act-life is to be preserved by the Earth-the giver of life.)-by whom Zeus was carried to Lyctos in Crete and hidden in a cave on the Aegean Hill. There he was to be nursed by three nymphs Adrasteia, her sister Io and by the goat-nymph Amaltheia. (again, these nymphs are symbols of earth protection, sustenance, and tenderness. Zeus later was to award one of Amaltheia's horns to Adrasteia and Io, this is the famed cornucopia, or horn of plenty; whilst Amalrheia herself was honoured by being placed among the stars of the universe, as Capricorn.)

To fool Cronus at the birth of her child, Rhea had wrapped a huge stone in swaddling clothes and this Cronus swallowed believing it to be the infant, Zeus. But Cronus was not to be fooled for long, he pursued Zeus relentlessly, who had constantly to disguise himself and his nurses with a variety of transformations, such as a serpent protected by bears-hence the constellations of the Serpent and the Bears. Never-the-less Zeus grew to manhood and finally, as a splendid youth, came to his mother Rhea requesting that she assist him in his task of vengeance upon his father. Rhea only too readily assisted her son in becoming cup-bearer to Cronus, and herself, mixed the mustard and salt into Cronus' honeyed drink which Zeus now served to him. Cronus having drunk deep, vomited up first the stone, and then Zeus' elder brother and sisters, who sprang out unhurt and in their gratitude joined Zeus in the war against the Titans.

The war lasted ten years and at last Mother Earth prophesied victory to her grandson Zeus if he would release those whom Cronus had confined in Tartarus. Thus were the Cyclopes released and in their turn expressed their gratitude by giving to Zeus the thunderbolt as a weapon of defense; to his dark brother Hades, a helmet of enveloping darkness; and to Poseidon a trident. After the three brothers had held a counsel of war, Hades entered unseen into Cronus' presence and stole all his weapons, when Poseidon took Cronus unawares threatening him with his trident, whilst the old god was thus diverted Zeus struck him down with his

thunderbolt. So Cronus was tricked by dark stealth, threatened with the three sharp prongs of agony, fear, and weakness, and finally destroyed by a power greater than his own, and all this by flesh of his flesh and blood of his blood-his sons.

Zeus himself set up at Delphi the stone which Cronus had disgorged and which was to mark a centre for prophesy that remained hallowed for centuries.

And if the story of Zeus overcoming and destroying his father Cronus, should make one doubt the filial bond, his courtship and ravishing of his sister Hera explodes all popular theories on fraternal and moral behaviour to ones own kin. 'Marriages made in heaven' are supposed to end happy ever after, but, this heavenly union was 'ever after' as turbulent and unpredictable as the combined assault of a volcanic eruption, hurricane, and raging tempest.

As in the case of her brother Zeus, Hera was secretly carried away and hidden on the island of Samos where she was brought up by the Seasons as her nurses. Zeus after destroying Cronus sought Hera on Mount Thornax, where he courted her unsuccessfully at first. She took pity on him when he adopted the disguise of a bedraggled cuckoo, which she tenderly warmed in her bosom. (Some wily fellow, this Zeus!) There, he at once resumed his true shape and ravished her, so that she was shamed into marrying him. (A tactic he was to employ with shameless regularity, and positive zeal.) Their wedding was blessed by the gods abundantly and the wedding night lasted for three hundred years, which should have exhausted them both, but it DIDN'T.

Having begun his long series of adventures in love, he fathered the Seasons and the Three Fates on the goddess Themis; the Charites on Eurynome; the Three Muses on Mnemosyne; Persephone, Queen of the Underworld he ravished, without progeny, also upon the nymph Styx. Therefore even before his marriage to Hera he lacked no power either above or below, or even within, the earth, and his wife Hera was equal to him in one thing only: that she could bestow the gift of prophecy on any man or beast, she pleased.

Zeus and Hera bickered constandy. Vexed by his infidelities, she often humiliated him by her scheming ways. He would sometimes confide secrets to her and perhaps accept her advice, but he never fully trusted her, and she knew that if offended or angered beyond a certain point he would flog her, or even fling a thunderbolt at her (he was obviously no gentleman!). Hera resorted, therefore, to ruthless intrigue, and sometimes she borrowed Aphrodite's girdle, to excite his passion and weaken his will. (naughty-but I'm sure-justified!)

Amorous Zeus lay with numerous nymphs descended from the Titans or the gods, and, after the creation of man, with mortal women too. No less when four great Olympian deities were born to him our of wedlock-Hermes, Apollo, Artemis, and Phoebe, their mothers all at the time of their birth pursued by jealous Hera who wrecked terrible vengeance whenever she could.

The Royal House of Thebes is begun by such an act of rape and revenge and its whole story of tragedy climaxing in total destruction is unparalleled in the annals of drama. Many and terrible are the tragic moments in Greek drama, most awful the acts of vengeance perpetrated by men and women but nowhere else can there be found the grinding, systematic destruction meted upon The Royal House of Thebes; generation after generation, until nothing is left, no vestige of life nor a single cherishable memory.

Zeus and Io

Zeus fell in love with Io and to save her from Hera's immediate vengeance transformed her into a cow (white). Hera claimed the cow as hers and handed her over to Argus Panoptes of the hundred eyes to tether and guard her from further fits of Zeus' lust. Zeus was not to be outwitted, he despatched Hermes, the cleverest of thieves to free Io from the ever watchful eyes of Argus. Hermes charmed Argus asleep until all his eyes were closed at once, and then with lightning speed crushed him with a boulder and but off his head. So Io was released from Hera's power and the goddess placed all hundred eyes of Argus into the tail of a peacock as a constant reminder of his foul murder. Further she sent a godfly to sting Io and chase her all over the world. Io crossed the sea, presently called Ionian after her, when traversed the Danube Delta and the Black sea; she travelled through Europe, Asia Minor, to Media Bactria and India, finally passing through Ethiopia she found rest in Egypt. There Zeus restored her to human form, and

she gave birth to her son by Zeus, Epaphus. Epaphus had a daughter Libya, who in turn mothered two sons by the sea god Poseidon, Agenor and Belus Agenor was the father of Cadmus and Europa. Europa was raped by Zeus, when he craftily transformed himself into a bull. Enchanting Europa, he carried her away on his back, to the far shores of Cretan Gortyna. Agenor commanded his sons, of whom Cadmus was the eldest, to search for Europa and never to venture home again until she was found.

Agenor's sons set sail upon the search for their sister, each travelling in different directions, they all succeeded in founding new city states, but failed to rescue their sister.

Cadmus steered his course toward Thrace built there a temple and travelled to Delphi to consult the Oracle. He asked the Priestess where Europa might be found and was advised by the Oracle to give up his search and, instead, follow a cow and build a city wherever she should sink down for weariness.

Departing by the road that leads from Delphi to Phocis, (the very same place where Oedipus, offspring of the line of Cadmus, was to murder his father Laius.) Cadmus came upon a heifer. This beast he drove eastward through Boeotia, never allowing her to pause until, at last, she sank down to rest, thus marking the place where the city of Thebes now stands.

Cadmus warning his companions that the cow must be sacrificed to the goddess Athena, sent them to bring the lustral water from the great Spring of Ares, but did not know that the spring was guarded by a great serpent. The serpent (or dragon) killed most of Cadmus' men and Cadmus took vengeance by crushing its head with a rock. The cow was sacrificed and Athena herself appeared praising Cadmus and, ordering him to sow the serpents teeth in the soil. When he obeyed her, armed men, Sparti, or Sown Men, at once sprang up, clashing their weapons together. Cadmus tossed a stone among them and they began to fight furiously, only five survived, who each in turn pledged their service to Cadmus. The war-god Ares was angered by the slaying of his serpent and demanded that Cadmus and his Cadmea (followers) serve eight years of bondage to him. This Cadmus honoured, and when his bondage was completed, he married Harmonia, the daughter of Aphrodite and Ares; as the daughter of two gods Harmonia was born immortal and her wedding to Cadmus was the first mortal wedding ever attended by the Olympians. Gifts were showered upon the happy pair including Aphrodite's (goddess of love) personal gift of the golden necklace of Hephaestus which had been made originally for Zeus as a love gift to Europa. The great favour of the gods waned however and the seemingly greatly blessed pair found horror after horror in the lives of their children. Three daughters, Autonoë, Ino, and Agave knew the tragic loss of their children by murder, mischance and megalomania, whilst the fourth, Semele was singled out for Zeus' special lust. (hardly ever a course for rejoicing) Mother of Dionysus, she perished before the unveiled glory of Zeus, who plucked the child from her womb even as she died. Ino's husband was struck with madness and killed their son Melicertes. With his dead body in her arms she leaped into the sea. Agave was the most wretched of mothers, driven mad, she believed her son Pentheus was a lion and killed him with her own hands. Autonoe did not kill her child, but suffered his death in no less tragic a sense than that of her sisters Ino and Agave. Actaeon, Autonoe's son, was a brave hunter who whilst hunting one day unknowingly went to the same pool as the goddess Artemis. Actaeon wanted to quench his thirst and knelt at the pool side just as the goddess let fall her garments, standing naked at the water's edge where she was prepared to bathe. The offended goddess transformed the youth into a stag, who, frightened, turned and fled. His trained dogs hunted the animal down and mercilessly killed him.

Cadmus and Harmonia in their old age grieved from Thebes. But misfortune was to follow them and all members of their family until the last generation of Cadmeans were finally destroyed. Of all that unfortunate race no one was more strangely guilty yet innocent, than Oedipus, and no one suffered so greatly.

We shall now continue the tragic story of the House of Thebes by studying the account given by Sophocles in the play, Oedipus Rex. (Oedipus, the King.) The final moments of Oedipus' life you will find in the play Oedipus at Colonus. For the total destruction of this family, in its finality, we must turn to Sophocles' drama, Antigone.