

Family Drama



Few families had more drama than those who lived on Mount Olympus.

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Modern-day cinema and literature isn't a patch on the power-hungry, passionate escapades of the the Greek myths. Fathers ate their children, sons castrated their fathers. Life was never dull on Mount Olympus.

Relationships

The Greek myths wrote the book on complicated relationships. Things were truly wild for the years **MOUNT OLYMPUS** and its inhabitants ruled. A lax attitude towards commitment meant there was an awful lot of adultery, some even undertaken while wearing disguises like that of a swan. Consequently, Gods and Goddesses sired and bore an extraordinary number of children and, in doing so, gave room to an almost unseemly amount of family drama.

Nestled within the theatrics – the poison, the tactical transformations into serpents, the goats lending an udder to raise the odd child – was always a narrative, which Western literature and art have been drawing from for centuries. Putting romantic relationships to the side for a moment, and focusing on family, myths abound with tales of jealousy, impotence, power, and love. Parents gripped by a fear of age removing their crown, terrified by the futility



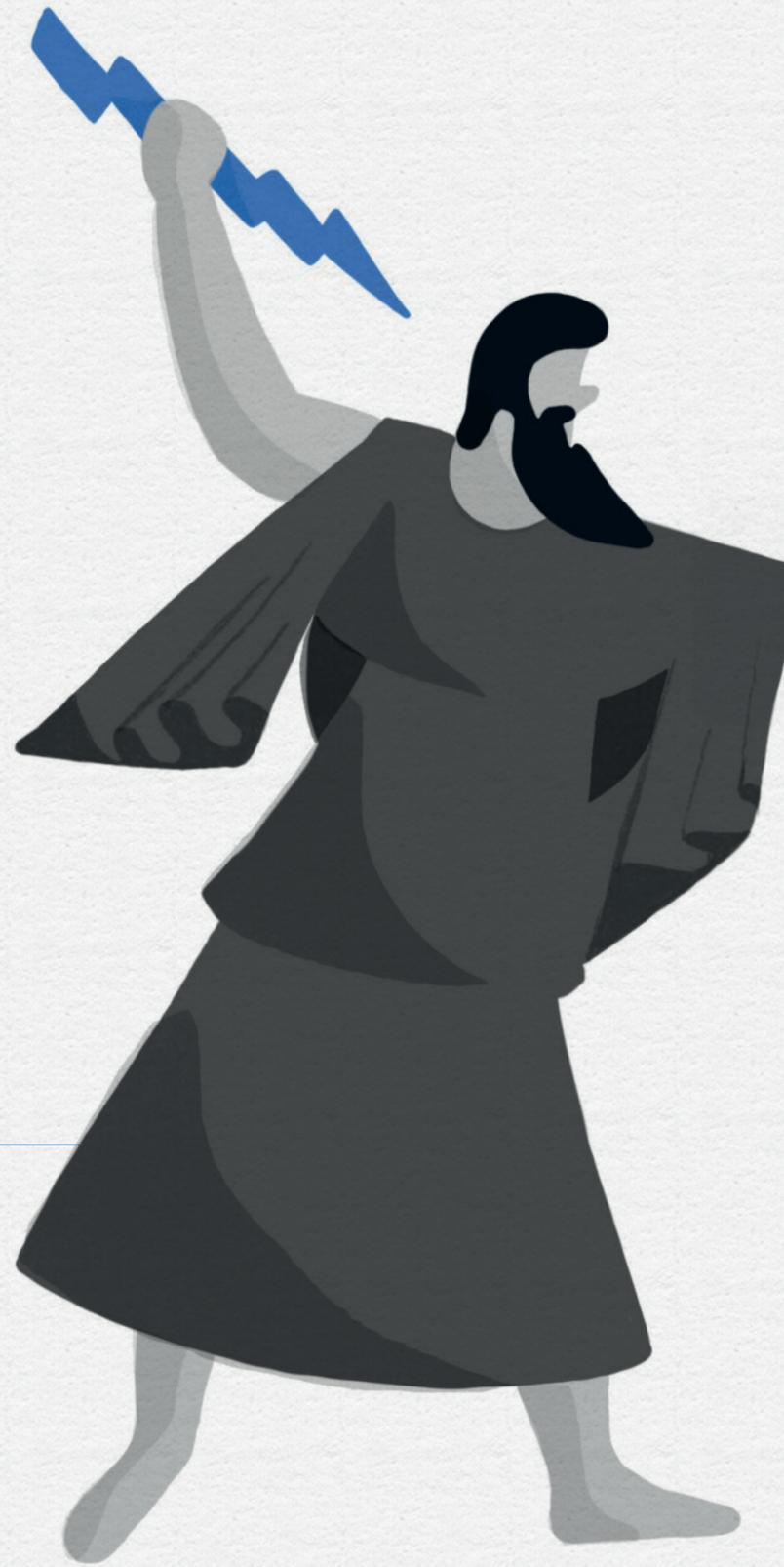
complicated

of attempting to prevent the uprising of youth. It's all there, in each story, played out by a cast of tempestuous tempers and poor decision makers.

Myths

Peeling back the layers of mythology is to have each layer slip through your fingers and leave you with a multitude of threads. There are several different creation myths, most matriarchal with fatherhood rendered unimportant. In his key tome '**THE GREEK MYTHS**' the inimitable **ROBERT GRAVES** describes fatherhood as not "honoured, conception being attributed to the wind, the eating of beans, or the accidental swallowing of an insect." The Olympian creation myth, however, veers into the

patriarchal, and recognises **URANUS** as the 'first father'. And what a father he was. He took up with **GAIA** (mother earth) and produced the 12 Titans as well as six other children, three of whom were **THE CYCLOPES**, a trio of rebellious sons. Heavy-handed with punishment, **URANUS** banished the **CYCLOPES** to the underworld and, in doing so,





incurred the wrath of his wife (their mother). She enlisted the help of the other children, the Titans, to exact revenge on **URANUS**, charging the youngest, **CRONUS**, with the main job.

The main job involved castrating his father, which he did rather sneakily, while **URANUS** was sleeping. This was no simple act of son usurping father. It was no Simba nobly replacing dead Mustafa as king of the pride, thrust into leadership before he was ready. No, it was a calculated murder, one carried out in the name of a mother's revenge, and one that meant **CRONUS** was now in supreme command. He didn't free his **CYCLOPES** brethren, leaving

them instead in the underworld – he knew when to let sleeping dogs lie – and promptly married his sister, **RHEA**, and began having children.

But **CRONUS** was haunted by the dying words of his father. **URANUS**, as he bled out, his blood splashing onto Mother Earth and creating The Furies who would forever avenge parricide and perjury, prophesised **CRONUS** would, himself, be dethroned by one of his own children.

Terrified, **CRONUS** solved this



problem by eating each child his long-suffering wife, **RHEA**, bore him. As each child was born, **RHEA** presented the swaddled bundle to Cronus and Cronus simply swallowed them; **HESTIA**, **DEMETER**, **HERA**, **HADES** and **POSEIDON** all went

straight down the hatch. **RHEA** was furious and by the time her third son was due to come along, took herself off to give birth somewhere away from Cronus's mouth.

Zeus

This son was **ZEUS**, who needs no introduction. Zeus grew into both an all-powerful, thunderbolt-wielding **KING OF GODS** and an extremely lusty reproducer who sired countless children with countless women. Prior to settling down to create his patchwork family, however, **ZEUS** was first tasked with bringing down his father and his father's mighty siblings, the Titans. **RHEA** was more than happy to help, having watched Cronus eat her children over the years. (You may by now

have noticed another popular narrative, in which a grieving and vengeful mother assists her son in murdering her husband). Her job was to encourage Cronus to drink a poison which made him vomit his children up, and the regurgitated children formed an army led by their brother, **ZEUS**. This army went to war with the Titans, and after 10 years Zeus finally succeeded in stabbing Cronus with his thunderbolt, thus fulfilling the castrated Uranus' prophecy.





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and Hera

Zeus married his twin sister, **HERA** – whom he shamed into marriage after disguising himself as a wounded cuckoo and ravishing her when she took pity on him – and set about running **MOUNT OLYMPUS**. (His bird-disguise trick was one he'd later reprise when ravishing **SPARTAN QUEEN LEDA**, who then gave birth to **HELEN OF TROY**.) His escapades were varied and occurred with mortals and immortals alike and his two most significant children were



both products of affairs. His favourite child was allegedly **ATHENA**, Goddess of Wisdom, a daughter who sprung from his own head. His favourite son however, was also his most famous: **APOLLO**. **APOLLO** and **ZEUS** managed to rub along together without the problems

of previous generations until **ZEUS** went and killed Apollo's son. He did this because Apollo's son, a physician, used his skills to bring a man back from the dead and, in doing so, got on the wrong side of **HADES** (king of the underworld, from whence the dead man came).

And so we have come to the point at which we must look for a moral in these early stories of power-hungry fathers, vengeful wives and murderous sons. We're spoiled for choice. Don't castrate your father? Don't eat your children? Don't bring people back from the dead?

Hades

King of the underworld

HADES doxxed on Apollo's son, Zeus killed him with a thunderbolt, and **APOLLO** sought revenge by killing **THE CYCLOPES** (who you may recall were banished to the underworld before Zeus was even born. **ZEUS** released them in the war against the Titans and they provided him with his thunderbolt). **APOLLO** was saved from Zeus's wrath and banishment to the underworld, by his mother, Leto, who begged for his life. **ZEUS** relented and, in a moment of paternal softness, sentenced his son to a year's hard labour. And so we have come to the point at which we must look for

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- Perhaps there is no moral at all, but rather the comforting reassurance that every family has its share of drama – some a little more than others.