

HYGINUS: FABULAE

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As significant to European literature as were the forms of writing evolved by ancient Greece is the contribution to content made by its wealth of mythology. These numerous stories did not confine their imagery to literature alone, but as is evident, provided theme and substance to art down the ages, only rivalled by the contribution of Christianity. The first to draw upon Greek myth, other than the Greeks themselves, were the Romans, who equated some of the primitive gods with those of the Greek pantheon, then adopted the rest along with all of the plethora of marchen that went with them. By the first centuries B.C., certain scholars set to work on compiling these myths according to chosen themes.

The work undertaken for translation from Latin to English by me is such a collection by Hyginus known by the title *Genealogiae*. This book seems to have been meant for use by Roman school students and to have been written in simple Latin for the purpose. They have thereafter undergone epitomising, and perhaps drastically, by later hands.

In it the stories appear in a terse and compressed form, glossing several details and explanations that any attempt at literary excellence that the original may have had would have been effaced by the epitomizers. This has succeeded in keeping the myths and other accounts that the work included briefer than Hyginus would have had them. Even so, most of the popular myths are included, and some that are noticeably absent even so may have dropped out altogether in the manuscript tradition. The myths included are often not quite what we have from the tragedians and other sources including the mythographers Apollodorus and Diodorus.

Quite apart from the myths are included some stories which belong with Greek myth story - not to mention Roman! Since Hyginus' primary interest was genealogy, he takes pains to list the children of this or that god or hero, and even names of horses and dogs involved in the myths. We also come across listings which are transverse and for convenience of essayists and like writers.

The critical edition used for translation of the *Fabulae* of Mycillus is that of H.J.Rose. I have left out discussion of textual difficulties and variant readings except for one or two which bear significantly on the translation; this book is prepared for the general reader, not the specialist. There is included an introduction to Greek mythology and a number of helpful footnotes, but little reference to variant versions of the myths.

The translations are accompanied by 50 illustrations in black and white taken from Greek vase-paintings, and a brief note on vases and vase-paintings follows the introduction to the myths themselves.