

WAR ON CULTURE L A G

Battle P2: Myth or Misses

An original radio drama by

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CAST

ANNOUNCER	Episode titles, and other important stuff.
HOST	Segment host.
GEORGE	George Costella, off-mike snide-remarker.
DEMETRI DEMOSPHOBOS	Greek scholar.
EZRA VERBICH	Etymology expert.

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INTRO

1. MUSIC: PROGRAM THEME--UP. ("THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA," PERFORMED BY MULTIPLE KAZOOS, SLIDE WHISTLE, ETC.) ESTABLISH. FADE UNDER.

2. ANNOUNCER: And now...Infinity Limited L-T-D, in conjunction with Econo-Drama Enterprises, hesitatingly presents another battle in the continuing...

3. SFX: (ECHO ON)

4. ANNOUNCER: War...on...Culture.....Lag....

5. MUSIC: THEME SWELLS, PETERS OUT AFTER ENDING CHORD. CUT TO SOMETHING MORE PASTORAL.

6. ANNOUNCER: Sociologists, theologians, fiction writers, and outpatients have noticed our society is failing to keep its mores and folkways in harmony with the exponentially increasing body of scientific and technical knowledge available to us. Once we figured out what this meant, a hardy band of us have been inspired to do something about this crisis, this "culture lag."

While few understand the menace, we all understand "war" as a means of "combating" threats. Thus, this "battle." The mission of our Cultural Corps of Engineers: to erect a bridge across the chasm between enlightenment and entertainment.

But now, on with the show--there's a big lag out there!

7. MUSIC: UP, ENDS ON TRIUMPHAL CHORD, THEN OUT.

8. ANNOUNCER: Today's battle: "Myth or Misses." We'd hardly be dealing with culture if we didn't address "myth," the founding stories human cultures came up with to explain life. As ridiculous as many of them seem now, they still influence us on

This episode is brought to you by our corporate underwriters, Allan-Hayden Enterprises. Allan-Hayden: they do stuff, and sell it for money.

9. HOST: Greetings, fellow travelers. I'm your host, Guy Clark.

HIPMYTH

10. MUSIC: GREEK STRING MUSIC (E.G., BOUZOUKIS) UP, UNDER, OUT.

11. HOST: "If we're ever to figure out where we're going, we must know where we've been."

Do you recall hearing that sentiment somewhere in the dim, dark past? Once upon a time, there were just a handful of influences on us, in our clans or hamlets; today, one could literally hear millions of voices an hour if one was so inclined.

All of this is by way of introducing the first of what we hope will be many presentations by our own Allan-Hayden Culture Club, the society dedicated to making history palpable and palatable.

Today the Culture Club's expert on mythology is here, Doctor Demetri (STUMBLES) Demosphobos. Doctor, uh, Demetri is one of the foremost obscure Greek scholars in the whole tri-county area. Welcome, Doctor.

12. DR. DEMETRI: Thank you, Mr. Guy. Yes, one of our goals at the Culture Club is to have the public become familiar with the basics of Greek and Roman mythology. Perhaps you've seen our ads for M-I-F: Mythology is Fundamental.

13. GEORGE: (OFF-MIKE: SNORTS, SAYS SOMETHING INAUDIBLE BUT DISPARAGING.)

14. HOST: Y-y-yes, I think it's on after the Flowbee....

15. DR. DEMETRI:

Well, should our listeners ever stumble upon an intelligent conversation, this stuff is gold. Now to "jumpstart" one's knowledge, I've put together some short, pithy profiles of the major characters in each pantheon.

Oops! Right there is a word everyone should know—"pantheon." No, (CHUCKLES) that's not the adjunct kitchen storage area for canned goods and infrequently used cooking implements. Rather, that's what we call the whole "family tree" of a society's gods.

Now to make this easier for folks, I've put together trading cards of each of the Greek and Roman pantheons. I've brought my prototypes with me; I used ordinary old baseball cards for now. Here's Zeus, for example—as you can see, I've just pasted a classic woodcut over the head of the baseball man, then pasted my vernacularized "bio" on the back.

16. HOST:

Zeus certainly is more relatable with the body of—*Mickey Mantle*!? Rookie card? Are you....?

17. HOST & GEORGE:

(OFF-MIKE: REMONSTRATE WITH EACH OTHER OVER THIS DESECRATION OF A PRICELESS ARTIFACT.)

18. DR. DEMETRI:

I don't know what is this hubbub over pasteboard, but the point is I'm trying to convey ancient mythology in modern—"hip," if you will—language.

Now today I'd actually like to talk about a *mortal* who holds a unique place in Greek

mythology. This presentation, for those who don't have programs, is entitled, "Orpheus-- the Grecian Lot?" or "The Tragedy of a Nympholeptic." I begin now.

(CLEARS HIS THROAT.) Orpheus was Greek. He lived a long, long time ago. He was a famous teen music sensation. He played the lyre (that's a musical instrument, sort of like a portable harp). He also sang, and the girls really seemed to dig it.

Orpheus' father was rumored to be the god Apollo. His mother was named Calliope, herself a minor goddess. She didn't care much for the rumors. Calliope was in a sorority called "The Muses" which supervised the arts and sciences of mere mortals.

Anyway, Orpheus was a hot ticket, and he played gigs all over the country. His lyre (portable harp) was said to have been a gift from Apollo himself, although scholars believe this was just media hype.

The music Orpheus played was spellbinding. Supposedly he sang so sweetly rivers changed their courses, and trees and critters (not to mention teeny-boppers) would follow him, enraptured. Keep in mind your oft-mentioned "Pie-eyed piper" had his best success with mere rats. Of course, fame has its downside; it's tough to maintain a mood when the sum total of the neighborhood's flora and fauna tag along on your moonlight serenades.

19. DR. DEMETRI:

Meanwhile, Jason and the gang aboard the Argo were going off to find the Golden Fleece. Knowing a good crooner when they heard one, they invited the kid along. (This was way before ship stereos.) Well, Orpheus went, and came in quite handy. Once, when the Argo was beached, it re-launched itself after an Orphic tune. When domestic squabbles broke out, his music made everyone forget--except the ship psychologist, who didn't like losing customers.

But his biggest contribution was when the ship was threatened by the Symplegades. These were huge magic boulders, which moved across the sea--once, on a collision course with the Argo. Closer and closer they came, despite the men rowing at water-skiing pace. They tried everything, including the harpoons; eventually, the crew resigned themselves to their fate, and asked Orpheus to play something in a funeral dirge--all the while wishing they'd brought an opera singer instead, who might shatter the menace with a high C. Well, the plucky lad had a go; he struck up the Largo from Simvakakis' stirring Ionian Symphony. The sound was so sweet those nasty ol' Symplegades sank harmlessly to the bottom of the sea. We get from this incident the colloquial expression (loosely translated) "Be wary of floating rocks."

Orpheus had plenty of other exciting adventures on that trip, but another time. We must jump ahead to after he returned home.

You see, no biography of Orpheus would be complete without the mention of Eurydice, his one true love. In the annals of mythology, these two crazy kids go together like popcorn and dental floss.

20. DR. DEMETRI:

For the record, Orpheus should have been taken seriously by any woman he wanted. I mean, if you can sink ocean-going rocks...of course, women have always been hard to impress. Anyway, despite the groupies, the only gal Orphy ever went ga-ga over was a wood nymph named Eurydice. He met her one day when he was strolling through the woods, charming the moss off the rocks. She was there, nymphing about, having just finished modeling for a shampoo commercial. Orpheus struck up a conversation, and one thing led to another—like a song. She initially wasn't hip to his jive, but eventually got into his state-and-eastern music. Soon they were engaged.

Well, even with the ring on her finger, Eurydice still found herself pursued by would-be suitors--literally. On her wedding day, Eurydice was chased by one especially bad sport, a guy named Aristaeus. Over Hill and Dale (two other ex-boyfriends) she ran, eluding his lusty clutches.

21. DR. DEMETRI:

Then, tragedy struck—more precisely, a snake struck. A viper sank his fangs into Eurydice's passing tootsie. Injury was multiplied by insult, as Aristaeus did not have a snake-bite kit in his toga pocket, let

alone paid-up road service. Thus, Eurydice's next stop was Hades, not the chapel.

Naturally, this incident made all the papers and moved all the people of the land. "Let's move away from these snakes," they said. Politicians sprung into action, initiating a program similar to our modern Boy Scouts; an open season on vipers was declared. The program was short-lived, however: they soon found that one cannot hike modestly in a toga.

Orpheus was bereft. After all, now he was stuck with the tab for a wedding *and* a funeral. Not one to take death lying down, Orpheus went to the Underworld in person to talk to the management about this shoddy business. Normally no uninvited guests were allowed there, but it is thought Orpheus picked the lock on the gate with one of his magic lyre's strings.

Orphie proceeded to swing himself an audience with the Underworld King and Queen, Hades and Persephone. To break the ice, he played a few of his best tunes. The music put even those gloomy Gusses in good spirits; I assume they relaxed and had a few pops. They agreed to return Eurydice (alive) to Orpheus, but on the whimsical condition he not look at her before they left the premises. Perhaps the Underworld big-wigs felt the inconsolable Eurydice was too big a strain on their Kleenex supply; she must have

been bumming out her fellow inmates with her poor attitude.

22. DR. DEMETRI:

As you might expect, the condition to her release was too severe for the snake-crossed lovers. Like Lot's wife of Sodom and Gomorrah fame, Orpheus blew it: he turned to check his beloved was all there a bit too early. The Underworld management zipped through the readmittance paperwork in record time, and visiting privileges were revoked.

Orpheus' spirit was broken. While it was in the shop being repaired, he wandered aimlessly about the wilds of Thrace, never to tap-dance again. Witnesses who encountered the meandering minstrel each recorded that he would mutter, "Those girls," over and over again. He could not be consoled; he still picked a little, but the old magic had left the golden fingers.

Orpheus met his end in a freak accident. A gaggle of female groupies, upset that he would not reciprocate their amorous advances, literally tore him apart.

23. HOST:

Ouch! Talk about your rabid fans...maybe they were after a souvenir patch of his clothing, and got a little over-zealous.

24. DR. DEMETRI:

We may never know. Still, there was no need to go all Donner Party on his ass.... Another interesting thing about Orpheus....

25. HOST:

Another time, perhaps, Doctor. I think I see--yes, George's lunch is ready, so we'll have to bring this segment to a close.

Thanks to all at the Allan-Hayden Culture Club; be sure to be with us next time when Professor Nigel Bluster tells us all about how to sex a dragon.

26. MUSIC: GREEK MUSIC BACK UP, OUT.

COMMERCIAL: ALLAN-HAYDEN BIRTHDAY CLUB

27. MUSIC: STAB IN BEATLES' "YER BIRTHDAY", FADE UNDER.

28. ANNOUNCER: Say, upwardly-mobile friends, is life just too busy to plan for the birthdays of those special to you? Well, now there's an app for that! Specifically, Allan-Hayden Enterprises has updated their party-in-a-box for the internet age.

Just supply a few pertinent details about the honoree, and you'll get the best of personalized mass marketing. The options are wider than ever! The Allan-Hayden Birthday Club will deliver everything you need for the party itself (paper hats, streamers, piñatas, inflatable clowns, and more—alcohol and professional seat fillers available in limited areas). Plus, we can create a simulated personalized gift, available in formats from betamax to Blu-ray, 8-track to mp3. This tribute can range in tone from a roast to a beatification. Unique to our service--the overall mood of the party can be tailored all the way from professional to sappy.

Hey—if it's been a tough year, order one for yourself; "if you want it done right," am I right?

Check our site (culturelag.com) for the latest links and specials, but by all means minimize your time and effort and order your party today!

29. MUSIC: UP, THEN OUT.

ETYMOLOGY EXPERT

30. HOST: Well, look who just wandered into the studio, Culture Lagers--Ezra Verbich, our resident etymology expert. Welcome, Ezra.
31. VERBICH: How-de-doo.
32. HOST: Let's see, "etymology"--that's the study of bugs, isn't it?
33. VERBICH: (INCENSED) No, silly Billy; *words*--the study of words!
34. HOST: (LAUGHS.) Of course, of course. Just having a bit of fun.... I take it you have a bit of language history to share with us today?
35. VERBICH: Yes, I was just listening to Doctor Demis-...Demost-...Doctor *Demetri's* talk--which certainly filled a few minutes--and I was suddenly struck with the phrase "Liar, liar, pants on fire."
36. HOST: (CHUCKLES.) I hope you weren't hurt.
37. VERBICH: Hmmm? Oh--droll, droll. No, it was the mention of Orpheus' *instrument*, you see.
38. HOST: But that was L-Y-R-E, not L-I-A-R.
39. VERBICH: Yes, of course. But that's just the point I'd like to make, you see.
40. HOST: Then perhaps you'd better go ahead and...
- 41. SOUND: BOOK PAGES RUSTLTNG.**
42. HOST: "enucleate."
43. VERBICH: "Reader's Digest?" Really, one could do better. Anyway, after a bit of quick research, you see, I confirmed that

originally the "liar" in the phrase "Liar, liar, pants on fire" actually contained the word *lyre*, as in—to use Doctor Demetri's quaint description—"portable harp."

44. HOST: Well, what could the expression "Portable harp, portable harp, breeches ablaze" possibly mean?

45. VERBICH: It's all wonderfully interesting if you understand the context—which I'll go into, if you don't mind.

46. HOST: The mike's all yours.

47. VERBICH: Well, we must go back to a time approximately two hundred years after the death of Orpheus. At that time a young man surfaced who claimed to be all Orpheus ever was and more, a wandering troubadour named Klotz. Now Klotz had some talent, but his biggest fan was his mother.

Well, to make a long story short, Klotz' limited and undisciplined magic finally backfired on him one day. He was playing a gig before the unruly mob at Macedonia High School (nestled along the shore of Lake Eros). The performance was going along nicely, until the big finish. Suddenly, the Klotz hot licks got out of control. The strings of his lyre started to smolder, then they broke out in flame. The fire quickly spread to his clothing; everyone screamed at Klotz to alert him, but with his eyes closed he just assumed he was killing.

Well, the smell of burning cotton and sequins eventually brought Klootz to his senses, whereupon he began a mad dash to find some water. He was not the most coordinated of chaps, so in his frenzied scramble he managed to set fire to several Macedonia High landmarks before he could extinguish himself. Needless to say, Klootz ruined whatever goodwill he had in the community, and he spent the remainder of his life as town's worst handyman.

This incident became immortal, however. The crowd's warnings to the musician that first his instrument, then his clothing was on fire gave rise to the phrase I mentioned earlier.

To wit: "Your lyre's on fire! Your lyre's on fire! Your *pants* are afire!" became condensed, over time, into "Lyre, lyre, pants on fire!" (That's L-Y-R-E.) Eventually this became our modern expression "Liar, liar, pants on fire!" Which seems to be so much nonsense—and rightfully so.

Incidentally, another school of thought holds the phrase's origins have to do with "lair" (L-A-I-R), but I think that's really reaching.

48. HOST:

That's the story, eh?

49. VERBICH:

I have it on the best authority—including Wikipedia. That deluded young man has served as a cautionary example: whenever young people did something in a bumbling, self-

destructive manner, parents rebuked them by saying, "You Klootz!" The phrase lives on, elided into "You Klutz."

50. HOST: An expression indelibly imprinted on our collective unconscious, then.
51. VERBICH: Very good!
52. HOST: One doesn't get to be host of the "War on Culture Lag" by being a shallowpated troglokite.
53. VERBICH: Hmmm. Say, as long as I'm here, the mention of Lake Eros reminds me...you know that famous passage of Hamlet's, where he talks about "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune?" Well, he *really* meant "slings and eros," E-R-O-S. You see.... Oops, maybe next time. The bus leaves in a couple of minutes. TTFN.
- 54. SOUND: SOMEONE LEAVING STUDIO IN A HURRY.**
55. HOST: There he goes, ladies and gents, God's gift to gab, Ezra Verbich. As it says on his T-shirt, "Think Words!"
- 56. MUSIC: INTERLUDE.**

OUTRO

57. HOST: Well, fellow grunts, we'd best retreat from another War on Culture Lag donnybrook.

Thanks to Allan-Hayden Enterprises for coughing up a bit more from the discretionary fund. And we certainly appreciate all the kind words you fellow soldiers have sent us. Here's one from a Mr. E.C.: "meretricious." And from Miss C.M.: "sesquipedalian."

Very nice; please keep those cards and letters.

We leave you with this thought: if charity begins at home, why isn't there a Salvation Army box in the living room?

58. MUSIC: THEME UP AND OUT.

THE END.

Writer/Director's notes for Battle P1: Myth or Misses