

THESEUS. A descendant of Erechtheus and Pelops, Theseus was the greatest hero of Athens. He was the son of Aegeus, king of Athens, and Aethra, daughter of Pittheus of Troezen. According to some legends, Aethra was visited on the same night by Aegeus and by the sea-god Poseidon, making Theseus the child of both a mortal and a god. Aegeus returned to Athens before the birth but left instructions that his child should follow him when he was able to lift a rock under which Aegeus had left his sword and sandals. On reaching young manhood, Theseus accomplished the task and traveled to Athens. There, he was recognized by the sorceress Medea, who feared that he would usurp the position of her own son by Aegeus. She therefore had Theseus sent to challenge the fierce bull of Marathon, and when he returned successful, tried to poison him. Theseus was saved by Aegeus, who finally identified him by the sword he bore.

Each year, as a tribute demanded by King Minos of Crete, fourteen Athenian youths and maidens were sacrificed to the Minotaur. Determined to kill the Minotaur and end the tribute, Theseus traveled to Crete as one of the intended victims. With the help of Minos's daughter Ariadne, he was able to find his way through the labyrinth that housed the Minotaur, kill it, and emerge safely. Theseus fled Crete, taking Ariadne with him, but abandoned her on the island of Naxos.

Before leaving on this dangerous mission, Theseus had promised Aegeus that if he was successful he would return home with white sails, but that if he failed the sails would be black. However, approaching Attica, he forgot to change his black sails for white; when his father saw the ship approaching the harbor, he threw himself over a cliff. Now ruler of Athens, Theseus unified various Attic *demes* (villages and towns) and established Athens as the capital.

He took part in an expedition with Heracles against the Amazons, returning with Queen Hippolyta (or Antiope) as his bride. The Amazons invaded Athens in an attempt to rescue her but were defeated. After the death of his first wife, Theseus married Ariadne's sister, Phaedra, who became tragically enamored of Theseus's son Hippolytus.

Theseus became the friend of the Lapith king Pirithous and joined in the battle between Lapiths and centaurs that broke out at Pirithous's wedding feast. The two participated in the Calydonian Boar Hunt; in middle age, they abducted the child Helen and, in an attempt to carry off Persephone, descended into the Underworld, where they were trapped until Heracles rescued Theseus.

Returning finally to Athens, Theseus found his throne usurped and the people corrupt and hostile

to him. He fled to Scyros, where he died or was murdered.

Theseus was celebrated in Athenian drama as a compassionate and just ruler. In Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, he gave sanctuary to the exiled Oedipus; in Euripides' *The Suppliants*, he forced Creon to give up the bodies of the fallen Argive chiefs for burial; and, according to Euripides in *The Madness of Heracles*, he sheltered his old comrade after Heracles murdered his wife and children in a fit of madness.

Classical Sources. Bacchylides, *Odes*, "Theseus." Sophocles, *Oedipus at Colonus*. Euripides, *Hippolytus*; *The Suppliants*; *The Madness of Heracles*. Ovid, *Heroides* 10; *Metamorphoses* 7.404ff., 8.174ff. Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 2.6.3, 3.10.7, 3.15.1–E.1.24 passim. Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, "Theseus." Hyginus, *Fabulae* 30, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 47, 79, 241. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.2.1, 1.19.1, 1.27.7–10, 1.41.7, 1.44.8, 2.1.3ff., 2.22.6–7, 2.32.9, 2.33.1, 5.11.4, 5.11.7, 10.29.9.

Listings are arranged under the following headings:

General List
Coming of Age
Voyage of Theseus
Theseus at Athens
Theseus and the Amazons
Theseus and Achelous
Theseus and Helen

See also ARIADNE; HERACLES, Madness; HERACLES, LABORS OF, Girdle of Hippolyta, Cerberus; MELEAGER, Boar Hunt; OEDIPUS, at Colonus; PHAEDRA AND HIPPLYTUS; PIRITHOUS; SEVEN AGAINST THEBES.

General List

- Giovanni Boccaccio**, 1313–1375. (Theseus in) *Teseida* books 1–2 and passim. Poem. c.1340–42. [Branca 1964–83, vol. 2 / McCoy 1974 / Havelly 1980, p. 16]
———. "De Theseo, rege Athenarum" [About Theseus, King of the Athenians], "Adversus nimiam credulitatem" [A Warning against Credulousness]. In *De casibus virorum illustrium* [The Fates of Illustrious Men] 1.10–11. Didactic poem in Latin. 1355–73? [Branca, vol. 9 / Hall 1965]
Guillaume de Machaut, c.1300–1377. "Quant Theseus / Ne quier veoir." Ballade. [Grove 1980, 11:435]
Geoffrey Chaucer, 1340?–1400. (Story of Theseus introduces) *Anelida and Arcite*. Poem. 1372–80, unfinished. [Riverside 1987 / Bryan & Dempster 1958, p. 87]
———. (Theseus in) "The Knight's Tale." Poem, after Boccaccio's *Teseida* (c.1340–42). Early 1380s (as "Palamon and Arcite"). Revised and incorporated in *The Canterbury Tales*, 1388–95. Westminster: Caxton, 1478. [Riverside / Bryan & Dempster, p. 88 / Gaylord 1974, pp. 171–90 / Havelly 1980, pp. 108ff. / Minnis 1982, pp. 121–31]
Paolo Uccello, c.1397–1475, follower. "Episodes from the Myth of Theseus" (Theseus received in Athens by Aegeus, Theseus battling the Amazons). Painting. c.1460. Kress coll. (K490), Seattle Art Museum, no. I37/Uc22.1. [Shapley 1966–73, 1:102f.—ill. / also Berenson 1963, p. 220]
Luca Cambiaso, 1527–1585. "The Myth of Theseus." Cycle of 5 frescoes. c.1565? Palazzo della Meridiana, Genoa. [Manning & Suida 1958, pp. 92f.—ill.]

- Thomas Heywood**, 1573/74–1641. (Theseus in) *The Silver Age* and *The Brazen Age*. Dramas. First performed c.1610–13, London. Published London: Okes, 1611, 1613. [Heywood 1874, vol. 3 / DLB 1987, 62:101, 122ff. / also Boas 1950, pp. 83ff. / Clark 1931, pp. 62ff.]
- William Shakespeare**, 1564–1616, and **John Fletcher**, 1579–1625. *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. Drama (romance), adaptation of Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale." c.1613. No recorded performance in Shakespeare's lifetime. Published London: Waterson, 1634. [Riverside 1974 / Edwards 1986, p. 34]
- Walter Raleigh**, 1552?–1618. (Theseus's career described in) *The Historie of the World* chapter 13.7. London: Burre, 1614. [Hammond 1984]
- Giovanni Domenico Freschi**, c.1630–1690. *Teseo tra le rivali* [Theseus between the Rivals]. Opera. Libretto, G. F. Aureli. First performed 7 Feb 1685, Teatro Sant'Angelo, Venice. [Grove 1980, 6:824]
- Johann Löhner**, c.1645–1705. *Theseus*. Opera. Libretto, composer, after Aureli's *Teseo tra le rivali* (above). First performed 15 Nov 1688, Nuremberg. [Grove 1980, 11:136]
- Antoine de La Fosse**, 1653–1706. *Thésée*. Tragedy. First performed 5 Jan 1700, Comédie-Française, Paris. Published Paris: 1700. [Lancaster 1929–42, pt. 4, 2:958 / DLLF 1984, 2:1184]
- Nicolas Renier**, ?–c.1731, doubtfully attributed. *Thésée*. Opera. [Grove 1980, 15:743]
- Gerard Hoet the Elder**, 1648–1733. "Episodes from the Life of Theseus." 2 paintings. Gemeentemuseum, Arnhem, cat. 1965 no. GM6583–4. [Wright 1980, p. 176]
- Augustin Pajou**, 1730–1809. "Theseus." Wood bas-relief, part of a cycle representing children as mythological figures. 1769–70. Salle de l'Opéra, Versailles. [Stein 1912, pp. 177–81, 402]
- Charles Henri de Blainville**, c.1710–c.1777. *Thésée*. Opera. [Grove 1980, 2:774]
- Jeronimo Francisco de Lima**, 1743–1822. *Teseo*. Serenata. Text, Martinelli. First performed 21 Aug 1783, Queluz, Lisbon. [Grove 1980, 10:863]
- Friedrich Leopold von Stolberg**, 1750–1819. *Theseus*. Drama with choruses. 1787. In *Gesammelte Werke der Brüder Christian und Friedrich Leopold* (Copenhagen: Thielen, 1827). [Hunger 1959, p. 352]
- Vincenzo Monti**, 1754–1828. *Teseo*. Drama. 1799. First performed 3 June 1803, Milan. [DDLI 1977, 1:346 / Hunger 1959, p. 352]
- Frédéric Mazoyer**, B.1775–. *Thésée*. Tragedy. First performed 4 Dec 1800, Théâtre Français de la République, Paris. [Hunger 1959, p. 352]
- Teresa Bandettini-Landucci**, 1763–1837. *La Teseide*. Epic. In *Poesie varie* (Parma: 1805–06). [DELI 1966–70, 1:241]
- Felicia Dorothea Hemans**, 1793–1835. "The Shade of Theseus." Poem. In *Poetical Works* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1853). [Boswell 1982, p. 130]
- James Carnegie, Earl of Southesk**, 1827–1905. "Theseus, a Ballad." Poem. In *The Burial of Isis* (Edinburgh: Douglas, 1884). [Boswell 1982, p. 295]
- Paul Manship**, 1885–1966. "Theseus." Statue, terminal figure, for gardens of Harold McCormick, Lake Forest, Ill. 1914. Unlocated. [Murtha 1957, no. 61]
- Ivor Winters**, 1900–1968. "Theseus: A Trilogy." Trilogy of poems: "The Wrath of Artemis," "Theseus and Ariadne," "The Old Age of Theseus." In *Hound and Horn* 6 (1933); collected in *Poems* (Los Altos, Calif.: Gyroscope, 1940). [Isaacs 1981, pp. 87, 92, 102 / Powell 1980, pp. 116, 135–46, 157]
- André Masson**, 1896–1987. "The Story of Theseus." Series of surrealist paintings. 1938–39. Private colls.; elsewhere? [Rubin & Lanchner 1976, pp. 48f., 149f.—ill.]
- . "Theseus." Painting. 1943. Buchholz Gallery, New York. [Hannover 1950, no. 83]
- Ernst Bacmeister**, b. 1874. *Theseus*. Tragedy. Berlin: Langen, 1940. [Wilpert 1963, p. 29]
- Rolf Humphries**, 1894–1969. "Theseus." Poem. In *Out of the Jewel* (New York: Scribner, 1942). [Boswell 1982, p. 141]
- André Gide**, 1869–1951. *Thésée*. Novella. Paris: Gallimard, 1946. / Translated by John Russell in *Two Legends: Oedipus and Theseus* (New York: Knopf, 1950). [DLLF 1984, 2:919 / Watson-Williams 1967, pp. 129–46 / March 1961, pp. 355–62 / Fowlie 1965, pp. 111–20]
- Valéry Larbaud**, 1881–1957. *Le vaisseau de Thésée* [The Vessel of Theseus]. Novel. Neuchâtel: Ides et Calendes, 1946. [CEWL 1973, 3:15]
- Karl-Birger Blomdahl**, 1916–1968. "Theseus." Score for a radio play. 1950. [Grove 1980, 2:803]
- Ernst Jirgal**, 1905–1956. *Theseus*. Novel. Innsbruck: Österreichische Verlagsanstalt, 1950. [Wilpert 1963, p. 289]
- Nikos Kazantzakis**, 1883–1957. *Theseos (Kouros)*. Tragedy. Athens: 1953. [Trypanis 1981, p. 677 / Herbert 1960, pp. 176–78, 179, 184]
- Mary Renault**, 1905–1983. *The King Must Die*. Novel. London: Longmans, Green; New York: Pantheon, 1958. [Boswell 1982, p. 209 / CLC 1981, 17:389, 393f.]
- . *The Bull from the Sea*. Novel. New York: Pantheon, 1962. [Boswell / CLC, 17:394ff.]
- Joseph Brodsky**, 1940–. "K Likomedu, na Skiros" [On the Way to Lycomedes, on Scyros] (death of Theseus). Poem. 1967. / Translated by George Kline in *Selected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973; Baltimore: Penguin, 1974). [Ips0 / MERSL 1977–89, 3:136 / CLC 1988, 50:122]
- Leonard Baskin**, 1922–. "Theseus." Bronze sculpture. 1969. Private coll. [Jaffe 1980, p. 216—ill.]
- . "Theseus." Etching, illustration for an edition of Robert Bagg's translation of Euripides' *Hippolytus* (Northampton, Mass.: Gehenna, 1969). [Fern & O'Sullivan 1984, no. 530—ill.]
- Brewster Ghiselin**, 1903–. "In Search of Man." Poem. In *Country of the Minotaur* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1970). [Ips0]
- Jacques Lipchitz**, 1891–1973. "Theseus." Print. [Hannover 1950, no. 46]

Coming of Age. Before Theseus was born, the Athenian king Aegeus left his pregnant wife, Aethra, in Troezen and returned to Athens. He left her with the instruction that when their child reached manhood he should lift the rock under which Aegeus had left his sword and sandals. The boy was then to

travel to Athens, where he would be acknowledged as the king's rightful heir. When Theseus came of age, Aethra told him of Aegeus's request and showed him the rock his father had designated. Theseus easily lifted the weight and removed the tokens, then set out on the hazardous land route to Athens, meeting and overcoming many dangers on the way.

There is a tradition according to which Heracles, visiting in the house of Theseus's maternal grandfather, Pittheus, took off his lion-skin cloak and frightened all the playing children except seven-year-old Theseus, who fearlessly attacked the "monster."

Classical Sources. Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.15.6–7, 3.16.1. Hyginus, *Fabulae* 37.

Laurent de La Hyre, 1606–1656. "Theseus Discovering the Arms of His Father." Painting. 2 versions known. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen (1634); Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, no. 693. [Dublin 1985, p. 28 / also Budapest 1968, p. 369]

Nicolas Poussin, 1594–1665 (with Pierre Lemaire?). "Theseus Finding His Father's Shield." Painting. Early/mid 1630s. 3 versions. Musée Condé, Chantilly, no. 300; Uffizi, Florence, inv. 1004 (copy?); Wildenstein & Co., New York, in 1958. [Wright 1985, no. 73, pl. 143 / Blunt 1966, no. 182—ill. / also Thuillier 1974, no. 77—ill. / Uffizi 1979, no. P1279—ill.]

Jean Lemaire, 1598–1659. "Theseus Finds His Father's Sword." Drawing. Albertina, Vienna, inv. no. 11211. [Warburg]

Salvator Rosa, 1615–1673. "Aethra and Theseus" (Aethra showing Theseus the hiding place of his father's sandals and sword). Painting. 1666. Earl of Verulam coll., Gorchambury. [Salemo 1975, no. 205—ill.]

Gerard Hoet the Elder, 1648–1733. "Theseus Finds His Father's Sword." Painting. Gemeint Museum, Arnhem. [Warburg]

Nicolas-Guy Brenet, 1728–1792. "Theseus Discovers the Arms of His Father." Painting. 1769. École des Beaux-Arts, Paris. [Bénézit 1976, 2:297]

Angelica Kauffmann, 1741–1807. "Theseus Finding His Father's Sword." Painting. / Engraved by Thomas Fielding, 1784. [Manners & Williamson 1924, p. 228]

———. "Aethra and Theseus." Painting. Marquis of Exeter coll., Burghley House, Stamford, in 1924. [Ibid., p. 188]

Charles-Philippe-Auguste de Larivière, 1798–1876. "The Fearlessness of Theseus as a Child." Painting (sketch). 1822. École des Beaux-Arts, Paris. [Grunchec 1984, no. 23—ill.]

Jean-Baptiste-Auguste Gibert, 1803–1889. "Theseus Discovering His Father's Sword." Painting (sketch). 1825. École des Beaux-Arts, Paris. [Grunchec 1984, no. 103—ill.]

T. Sturge Moore, 1870–1944. "Theseus" (finding his father's sword). Idyllic monologue. In *Theseus, Medea, and Lyrics* (London: Duckworth, 1904). [DLB 1983, 19:333, 347 / Gwynn 1951, p. 31]

Inez Wiesinger-Maggi, 1914–. *Theseus der Jüngling* [Theseus the Youth]. Poem. Zurich: Origo, 1953. [Hunger 1959, p. 127]

Richard Selig, 1929–1957. "Boyhood of Theseus." Poem. In *Poems* (Dublin: Dolmen, 1962). [Ips0]

Voyage of Theseus. Traveling to Athens, Theseus chose the longer and more dangerous land route rather than the faster journey by sea. Some sources suggest that this was because he had heard that the land route was beset by dangerous brigands whom he wished, in emulation of Heracles, to challenge and defeat.

Theseus's thirst for adventure was satisfied when he met and bested several bandits by using their own weapons and stratagems against them. These included Periphetes, whom he killed with his own club; Sinis, whom he hurled into the air by bending down the tops of pine trees; and Sciron, whom he compelled to wash his feet, and then kicked over the cliff to be eaten by a giant turtle below.

The most celebrated of Theseus's challengers was Procrustes, who would invite his guests to lie in a long bed if they were short or in a short bed if they were tall. He then either stretched them on a rack or cut off their limbs to make them fit. Theseus dealt with Procrustes in a like manner: he laid the tall bandit in a short bed and cut off his head. The phrase "Procrustean bed" has come to mean using a rigid pattern to secure conformity at any cost.

Having dealt with all the villains on his route, Theseus continued to Athens.

Classical Sources. Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca* 4.59. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.433–52. Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.15.6–7, 3.16.1–E1.4. Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, "Theseus" 6ff. Hyginus, *Fabulae* 38.

John Gibson, 1790–1866. "Theseus and the Robber." Sculpture. Clay model, Royal Academy, London. Bronze cast(s), posthumous. [Read 1982, p. 34]

Sir Reed Gooch Baggorre (George Shoobridge Carr), 1837–1912. "Theseus." Poem. In *Mythological Rhymes*. London: Hodgson, 1912. [Boswell 1982, p. 29]

Camil Petrescu, 1894–1957. *Patul lui Procrust* [Procrustean Bed]. Novel. Bucharest: 1933; 1946. [Seymour-Smith 1985, p. 1039 / McGraw-Hill 1984, 4:93 / EWL 1981–84, 3:515]

Robert Lowell, 1917–1977. (Procrustes' bed evoked in) "Death from Cancer," part 1 of "In Memory of Arthur Winslow." Poem. In *Land of Unlikeness* (Cummington, Mass.: Cummington Press, 1944). / Revised and enlarged version in *Lord Weary's Castle* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946). [Ips0 / Bell 1983, pp. 12–15 / Mazzaro 1965, pp. 4–6]

William Rose Benét, 1886–1950. "Brigand of Eleusis" (Procrustes). Poem. In *The Stairway of Surprise* (New York: Knopf, 1947). [Boswell 1982, p. 36]

Rolf Humphries, 1894–1969. "Theseus." Poem. In *Collected Poems* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966). [Boswell 1982, p. 141]

Kurt Klinger, 1928–. “Madame Prokrustes.” Short story. In *Die vierte Wand* (Vienna & Hamburg: Zsolnay, 1967). [NUC]

Zbigniew Herbert, 1924–. “Damastes z przydomkien Prokrustes mówi” [Damastes (also known as Procrustes) Speaks] [Procrustes defends himself as a modern “statesman”]. Poem. 1974. Translated in *Selected Poems*. Translated by John and Bogdana Carpenter (London & New York: Oxford University Press, 1977). [Ips0]

Theseus at Athens. When Theseus reached Athens, he was not immediately recognized by his father, but his identity was known to the sorceress Medea. The former wife of Jason, after fleeing Corinth, had sought refuge with Aegeus and had borne him a son, Medus; Theseus’s arrival threatened Medus’s position in Aegeus’s court. Medea therefore persuaded Aegeus to send the young stranger to fight the wild bull that was ravaging the plain of Marathon. (According to some legends, this was the Cretan bull that had fathered the Minotaur on Pasiphaë.) Theseus fought the bull and killed it, returning to Athens a hero. At the banquet in his honor, Medea tried again to murder him, this time by offering him a cup of poisoned wine. Just as he was about to drink the potion, Aegeus recognized his own sword at Theseus’s side and struck the cup from his son’s hand. Father and son were reunited, and Medea was banished from Athens.

Classical Sources. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.404–24. Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, “Theseus” 6ff. Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* E1.5–6. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.19.1, 1.27.9–10.

Anonymous French. (Story of Theseus and Medea in) *Ovide moralisé* 7.2070–2170. Poem, allegorized translation/elaboration of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. c.1316–28. [de Boer 1915–86, vol. 3]

Paolo Uccello, c.1397–1475, follower. “Episodes from the Myth of Theseus” (Theseus received in Athens by Aegeus, Theseus battling the Amazons). Painting. c.1460. Kress coll. (K490), Seattle Art Museum, no. It37/Uc22.1. [Shapley 1966–73, 1:102f.—ill.]

Caliginoso Gelato, 1544–1634. *La Medea esule* [Medea in Exile]. Tragedy in verse. Bologna: Rossi, 1602. [Herrick 1966, p. 68 / Taylor 1893, p. 348]

Jean Puget de La Serre, 1594–1665. *Thésée, ou, Le prince reconnu* [Theseus, or, The Prince Recognized]. Tragicomedy. Paris: Sommaville, 1644. [Hunger 1959, p. 352 / Frenzel 1962, p. 423]

Philippe Quinault, 1635–1688. *Thésée*. Tragedy. Used as a libretto for operas by Lully, 1675, (below) and at least 6 further composers to 1782.

Jean-Baptiste Lully, 1632–1687. *Thésée*. Opera (tragédie lyrique). Libretto, Philippe Quinault. First performed 11 Jan 1675, Versailles; choreography for ballets, François d’Olivet (Dolivet), with Pierre Beauchamps, 1636–c.1705.

[Keates 1985, p. 61 / Girdlestone 1972, p. 70ff. / also Winter 1974, p. 15 / Grove 1980, 11:321, 323, 326]

Antonio Giannettini, 1648–1721. *Medea in Atene*. Opera. Libretto, Aurelio Aureli. First performed 14 Aug 1675, Teatro San Moisè, Venice. [Grove 1980, 7:348 / Worsthorne 1954, pp. 73, 75, 106]

Nicolaus Adam Strungk, 1640–1700. *Theseus*. Singpiel. Libretto, Ludwig von Bostel, after Quinault (1675). First performed 1683, Hamburg. [Grove 1980, 18:298]

Bernardo Sabadini, ?–1718, *Teseo in Atene*. Opera. Libretto, Aureli’s *Medea in Atene* (1675). First performed 1688, Parma. [Grove 1980, 16:363]

Pietro Antonio Fiocco, c.1650–1714. Prologue to Lully’s *Thésée* (1675). Shortly after 1694? [Grove 1980, 6:597]

Louis Fuzelier, 1674–1752. *Thésée, ou, La défaite des Amazones* [Theseus, or, The Defeat of the Amazons]. Operatic parody of Lully/Quinault’s (1675) *Thésée*. First performed 11 Aug 1701, by the Bertrand marionettes, Théâtre de la Foire St. Germain, Paris. [Grove 1980, 7:47]

George Frideric Handel, 1685–1759. *Teseo*. Opera. Libretto, Nicola Haym, after Quinault (1675). First performed 10 Jan 1713, Queen’s Theatre, Haymarket, London. [Keates 1985, pp. 61–63 / Hogwood 1984, pp. 67f., 70, 279 / Grove 1980, 8:114 / Tovey 1934, p. 85 / Dean & Knapp 1987, pp. 236–259]

Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville, 1711–1772. *Thésée*. Opera. Libretto, Quinault (1675). First performed 1765, Fontainebleau. [Grove 1980, 12:481 / Girdlestone 1972, p. 70]

Michel-Jean de Laval, c.1725–1777, choreography. *Thésée*. Ballet. Scenario, Quinault (1675). Music, Mondonville. First performed 7 Nov 1765, L’Opéra, Paris. [EDS 1954–66, 6:1288]

François-Joseph Gossec, 1734–1829. *Thésée*. Opera (tragédie lyrique). Libretto, E. Morel de Chefdeville, after Quinault (1675). First performed 1 Mar 1782, L’Opéra, Paris. [Grove 1980, 7:562]

Gasparo Luigi Spontini, 1774–1851. *Il Teseo riconosciuto* [Theseus Recognized]. Opera (dramma per musica). Libretto, C. Giotti. First performed Spring 1798, Teatro Intrepidi, Florence. [Grove 1980, 18:23]

Carlo Coccia, 1782–1873. *Teseo e Medea*. Opera. First performed Carnival, 1815–16, Turin. [Grove 1980, 4:310]

The Prix de Rome painting competition subject for 1832 was “Theseus Recognized by His Father.” First prize, Hippolyte Flandrin; École des Beaux-Arts, Paris. Second prize, A. P. Gibert. Third prize: H. D. Holfeld. [Grunchec 1984, no. 70—ill. / Harding 1979, pp. 44, 94—ill. / Boime 1971, p. 110, pl. 85]

Donald Finkel, 1929–. (Theseus and the bull of Marathon evoked in) “Danger Is the Pivot,” “Poem as Seen from a Balcony.” Poems. In *The Clothing’s New Emperor and Other Poems* (New York: Scribner, 1959). [Howard 1969, pp. 132f.]

Mary Renault, 1905–1983. *The Bull from the Sea*. Novel. New York: Pantheon, 1962. [Boswell 1982, p. 209 / CLC 1981, 17:394ff.]

Theseus and the Amazons. Theseus joined his friend Heracles (Hercules) in a battle in the land of

the Amazons, in which he captured the Amazon Antiope and took her as his wife. The Amazons later invaded Athens in an attempt to free her but were defeated. Many variants of this myth existed in antiquity, and versions have become conflated over time. According to some mythographers, Theseus married not Antiope but her sister, Queen Hippolyta. Either Hippolyta fell in love with him or, when the Amazons sent him gifts of friendship, Theseus invited their queen aboard his ship and simply set sail with her.

When the Amazons came to Athens to retake Theseus's hostage, a battle was fought in the area between the Pnyx and the Acropolis. Theseus and his forces were victorious, and Hippolyta (or Antiope) withdrew to Megara, where she died. His wife (either Hippolyta or Antiope) later bore him a son, Hippolytus, and then died. Another version of the myth maintains that Theseus captured his wife in the battle on the Pnyx. According to another tale, Hippolytus was born before the Amazons stormed the Pnyx and fought valiantly by his mother's side.

In some myths, in a version often repeated in postclassical treatments, Theseus's battle with the Amazons was linked with Heracles' ninth Labor, his quest for the girdle (belt) of Hippolyta.

Classical Sources. Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca* 2.5.9, 4.16.1–4. Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* E1.16–17. Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, “Theseus” 26–27. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 1.2.1, 1.4.1.7, 2.32.9, 5.11.4, 5.11.7. Hyginus, *Fabulae* 30, 241. Justinus, *Historiae Philippae* 1.5.18–24.

See also AMAZONS; HERACLES, LABORS OF, Girdle of Hippolyta; THESEUS, at Athens.

Giovanni Boccaccio, 1313–1375. (Theseus's defeat of the Amazons and capture of Hippolyta in) *Teseida* 1. Poem. c.1340–42. [Branca 1964–83, vol. 2 / McCoy 1974 / Havely 1980, pp. 120ff. / Newman 1986, p. 342]

Geoffrey Chaucer, 1340?–1400. (Theseus's conquest of the Amazons and Hippolyta related in) “The Knight's Tale” introduction, lines 860–974. Poem, after Boccaccio's *Teseida*. Early 1380s (as “Palamon and Arcite”); revised and incorporated in *The Canterbury Tales*, 1388–95. Westminster: Caxton, 1478. [Riverside 1987 / Newman 1986, pp. 342f. / Minnis 1982, pp. 121ff.]

Christine de Pizan, c.1364–c.1431. (Hippolyta and Menalippe defeat Hercules and Theseus in) *Le livre de la Cité des Dames* [The Book of the City of Ladies] part 1 no. 18. Didactic compendium in prose, reworking of Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*. 1405. [Hicks & Moreau 1986] Translated by Brian Anslay (London: Pepwell, 1521). [Richards 1982]

Paolo Uccello, c.1397–1475, follower. “Episodes from the Myth of Theseus” (Theseus received in Athens by Aegeus, Theseus battling the Amazons). Painting. c.1460. Kress coll. (K490), Seattle Art Museum, no. I37/Uc22.1. [Shapley 1966–73, 1:102f.—ill.]

Italian School (Ferrara?). “Theseus and Antiope” (“Alle-

gory of Concord”). Painting. 1475/1500. Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts (Musée d'Art Ancien), Brussels, inv. 8763. [Brussels 1984a, p. 372—ill.]

Vittore Carpaccio, c.1465–1525/26. “The Embassy of Hippolyta to Theseus.” Painting. Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris, no. 1029. [Berenson 1957, p. 58]

William Shakespeare, 1564–1616. (Theseus and Hippolyta in) *A Midsummer Night's Dream* 1.1, 4.1, 5.1. Comedy. c.1595–96? Published London: 1600; collected in First Folio, London: Jaggard, 1623. [Riverside 1974]

— and **John Fletcher**, 1579–1625. (Theseus and Hippolyta in) *The Two Noble Kinsmen* 1.1 (this passage attributed to Shakespeare). Drama (romance), adaptation of Chaucer's “The Knight's Tale” (1380s). c.1613. No recorded performance in Shakespeare's lifetime. Published London: Waterson, 1634. [Ibid.]

Peter Paul Rubens, 1577–1640. “Battle of the Amazons” (Theseus and “Talestri,” queen of the Amazons, at the bridge over the Thermodon river?). Painting. c.1615. Alte Pinakothek, Munich, inv. 324. [Jaffé 1989, no. 295—ill. / also Munich 1983, p. 459f.—ill. / White 1987, pl. 96 / Huyghe 1963, pl. 246 / Baudouin 1977, pl. 78]

Nicolas Poussin, 1594–1665. “Hercules and Theseus Fighting the Amazons.” Drawing, for part of a cycle (largely unexecuted, destroyed) depicting scenes from the life of Hercules, for Long Gallery, Louvre, Paris. 1640–42. Royal Library, Windsor Castle, no. 11920. [Friedlaender & Blunt 1953, p. 11, no. 243—ill.]

Pietro Andrea Ziani, 1616–1684, with **Lodovico Busca**, fl. 1670–88, and **Pietro Simone Agostini**, c.1635–1680. *L'Ippolita, reina delle Amazzoni* [Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons]. Opera. Libretto, Carlo Maria Maggi. First performed 1670, Teatro Ducale, Milan. [Grove 1980, 20:676]

Johann Georg Conradi, ?–1699. *Die Gefangene und Wieder-Erlösete Amazonische Fürsten-Braut* [The Captive and Then Rescued Princess Bride of the Amazons]. Opera. First performed Oettingen. [Grove 1980, 4:665]

Louis Fuzelier, 1674–1752. *Thésée, ou, La défaite des Amazones* [Theseus, or, The Defeat of the Amazons]. Operatic parody of Lully and Quinault's *Thésée* [at Athens] (1675). First performed 11 Aug 1701, by the Bertrand marionettes, Théâtre de la Foire St. Germain, Paris. [Grove 1980, 7:47]

Nicola Conti, fl. 1733–1754. *L'Ippolita* [Hippolyta]. Comic opera. Libretto, Gennaro Antonio Federico. First performed Spring 1733, Fiorentini, Naples. [Grove 1980, 4:684]

Marie Anne Fiquet Du Boccage, 1710–1802. (Theseus defeated by the Amazons, prisoner of Antiope in) *Tragédie des Amazones*. Verse drama. First performed July 1749, by Comédiens Ordinaires du Roi, Paris. [Kleinbaum 1983, pp. 158–64]

Francesco Bianchi, 1752–1810. *Le triomphe d'Alcide à Athènes* [The Triumph of Alcides (Heracles) at Athens]. Opera (dramma eroico). Libretto, Pierre Louis Moline and Anne-Adrien Firmin Pillon. First performed Sep 1806, Paris. [Grove 1980, 2:674]

Walter Savage Landor, 1775–1864. “Theseus and Hippolyta.” Poem. In *Heroic Idylls* (London: Newby, 1863). [Wheeler 1937, vol. 2 / Boswell 1982, p. 158]

José-Maria de Heredia, 1842–1905. “L'enlèvement

- d'Antiope." Sonnet. Oct 1904. In *Revue des deux mondes* 1 Dec 1905; added to 1914 edition of *Les trophées* (Paris: Ferroud). [Delaty 1984, vol. 2]
- Frederic Manning**, 1887–1935. "Theseus and Hippolyta." Poem. In *Poems* (London: Murray, 1910). [Boswell 1982, p. 272]
- Jaroslav Křička**, 1882–1969. *Hypolita*. Opera. 1910–16. Libretto, J. Munk. First performed 10 Oct 1917, Prague. [Baker 1984, p. 1259 / Hunger 1959, p. 25]
- H. D. (Hilda Doolittle)**, 1886–1961. "She [Phaedra] Contrasts Herself with Hippolyta," "She Rebukes Hippolyta." Poems. In *Collected Poems* (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1925). [Martz 1983 / Boswell 1982, p. 93]
- Julian F. Thompson**, d. 1939. (Theseus and Hippolyta in) *The Warrior's Husband*. Comedy. First performed 11 Mar 1932, Morosco Theatre, New York. [Kleinbaum 1983, pp. 202–05]
- Yvor Winters**, 1900–1968. "The Wrath of Artemis" (Artemis vows vengeance for Theseus's rape of Hippolyta). Poem, part 1 of "Theseus, a Trilogy." 1932. In *Hound and Horn* 6 (1933); collected in *Poems* (Los Altos, Calif.: Gyroscope, 1940). [Powell 1980, pp. 135–46]
- Richard Rodgers**, 1902–1979. (Theseus and Hippolyta in) *By Jupiter!* Musical comedy. Lyrics, Lorenz Hart. Libretto, Rodgers and Hart, after Thompson's *The Warrior's Husband* (1932). First performed 11 May 1942, Shubert Theater, Boston. [Oxford 1984, p. 116]
- George Balanchine**, 1904–1983, choreography. (Theseus and Hippolyta in) *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Ballet, after Shakespeare (c.1595–96?). Music, Mendelssohn's incidental music to Shakespeare. First performed 17 Jan 1962, New York City Ballet, City Center, New York; décor, David Hays; costumes, Karinska. [Taper 1984, pp. 250f., 412]
- Mary Renault**, 1905–1983. (Theseus's battle with the Amazons in) *The Bull from the Sea*. Novel. New York: Pantheon, 1962. [Boswell 1982, p. 209 / CLC 1981, 17:394ff.]
- Frederick Ashton**, 1904–1988, choreography. (Theseus and Hippolyta in) *The Dream*. Ballet, after Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Music, Mendelssohn, arranged by John Lanchbery. First performed 2 Apr 1964, Royal Ballet, Royal Opera House, London; scenery, Henry Bardon; costumes, David Walker. [Vaughan 1977, pp. 339–43, 488f.]
- Stefan Schütz**, 1944–. *Die Amazonen* (later called *Antiope und Theseus*.) Drama. Published privately, Frankfurt: 1976. First performed 1977, Basel. [Buddecke & Fuhrmann 1981, p. 318]
- Anonymous French**. (Banquet of Achelous in) *Ovide moralisé* 8.2737–2914. Poem, allegorized translation/elaboration of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. c.1316–28. [de Boer 1915–86, vol. 3]
- Luca Penni**, 1500/04–1556, attributed. "The Banquet of Achelous" (?). Drawing. List coll., Munich. [Paris 1972, no. 138—ill.]
- Peter Paul Rubens**, 1577–1640 (and studio?), figures, and **Jan Brueghel the Younger**, 1601–1678, or **Jan Brueghel the Elder**, 1568–1625, landscape. "The Feast of Achelous." Painting. 1614–15. Metropolitan Museum, New York, no. 45.141. [Jaffé 1989, no. 286—ill. / also Ertz 1984, no. 252 (as replica after lost original)—ill. / Ertz 1979, no. 335—ill. / Metropolitan 1980, p. 160—ill.]
- Jan Brueghel the Younger**, 1601–1678, landscape, and **Hendrik van Balen**, 1575–1632, figures. "The Banquet of Achelous." Painting. 1625–32. Private coll. [Ertz 1984, no. 250—ill.] Replica (or copy?). Dayton Art Institute, Ohio, no. 57.137. [Ibid., no. 251—ill.]
- Frans Francken II**, 1581–1642, and **Joos de Momper**, 1564–1635, questionably attributed (or Jan van Balen and Lucas van Uden?). "Feast of the Gods" ("The Banquet of Achelous"?). Painting. Mauritshuis, The Hague, inv. 235 (as Flemish School, previously attributed to de Momper and Hendrick van Balen). [Mauritshuis 1985, p. 476—ill. / also Härting 1983, no. B222 / de Bosque 1985, pp. 216, 220—ill.]
- Moyses van Uytenbroeck**, c.1590–1648. "Cave with Mythological Aspect" (previously called "Theseus in the Cave of Achelous," "Baucis and Philemon"). Painting. Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig, no. 217. [Braunschweig 1969, p. 137 / Braunschweig 1976, p. 58]
- Theodoor van Thulden**, 1606–1669. "Theseus Visiting Achelous." Drawing. Staatliche Museen, Berlin, no. 14022. [Warburg]

Theseus and Achelous. According to Ovid, Theseus stopped at the banks of the stream Achelous on his way home after hunting the Calydonian boar. There the river-god entertained him with feasting and storytelling. A son of Oceanus and Tethys, Achelous was said to be the oldest of the three thousand river-gods.

Classical Source. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 8.546–610, 9.1–134.

Theseus and Helen. At the age of fifty, Theseus made a pact with his best friend Pirithous, king of the Lapiths, in which they vowed to help each other marry women suited to their positions—Theseus's as a son of Poseidon, Pirithous's as a son of Zeus. Theseus selected Helen, daughter of Leda and Zeus, although she was only twelve years old. The two men kidnapped her and brought her to Aphidnae in Attica, where she was placed in the care of Theseus's mother, Aethra, until she should be mature enough to marry. Then, Theseus went with Pirithous into the Underworld in an abortive attempt to abduct Persephone, wife of Hades, and was trapped there until Heracles released him. In Theseus's absence Helen's brothers, Castor and Polydeuces (Pollux), invaded Attica and retrieved their sister. They also kidnapped Aethra and carried her off with them.

According to Pausanias, after Theseus raped Helen she gave birth to Iphigenia, then gave the infant to her sister, Clytemnestra, to rear as her own.

Classical Sources. Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca* 4.63. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 15.232–4. Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.10.7, E1.21–24. Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, “Theseus” 30ff. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 2.22.6–7, 10.29.9. Hyginus, *Fabulae* 79. Colluthus, *The Rape of Helen*.

Giovanni Boccaccio, 1313–1375. (Theseus’s abduction of Helen in) “De Helene, Menelai regis coniuge” [Helen, Wife of King Menelaus]. In *De mulieribus claris* [Concerning Famous Women]. Latin verse compendium of myth and legend. 1361–75. Ulm: Zainer, 1473. [Branca 1964–83, vol. 10 / Guarino 1963]

Christopher Marlowe, 1564–1593. *The Rape of Helen*. Tragedy, translation of Colluthus. 1587? Lost. [Bush 1963, pp. 50f., 319]

John Trussel, 1595–1642. *Raptus I. Helenae: The First Rape of Faire Helen*. Poem, after Colluthus. London: Richard Jones, 1595. In modern edition by M. A. Shaaber, *Shakespeare Quarterly* 8 (1957): 407–48. [Bush 1963, p. 323 / Smith 1952, p. 125]

Edward Sherburne, 1618–1702. “The Rape of Helen.” Poem, translation of Colluthus. In *Salmacis* . . . (London: Dring, 1651). [Praz 1925, p. 290]

Pier Francesco Cavalli, 1602–1676, formerly attributed (possibly by Jacopo Melani, 1623–1676). *Helena rapita da Theseo* [Helen Abducted by Theseus]. Opera. Libretto, Giacomo Badoaro. First performed 1652–53, Teatro SS Giovanni e Paolo, Venice. [Grove 1980, 4:32, 12:96 / Glover 1978, p. 160]

Giovanni Francesco Romanelli, 1610–1662. “Helen Carried off by Theseus.” Painting. City Museum and Art Gallery, Plymouth. [Wright 1976, p. 174]

Johann Augustin Kobelius, 1674–1731. *Theseus und Helene*. Opera. First performed 1729, Palace, Weissenfels. [Grove 1980, 10:130]

John Durant Breval, 1680?–1738, attributed. *The Rape of Helen*. Burlesque opera. First performed May 1733, Covent Garden, London. [Nicoll 1959–66, 2:266]

Jean-Georges Noverre, 1727–1810, choreography. *Thésée, ou, La noce précoce* [Theseus, or, The Premature Wedding]. Ballet. First performed 1773, Paris. [EDS 1954–66, 7:1243]

Antonio Canova, 1757–1822. “The Abduction of Helen” (Theseus and Pirithous see Helen dancing before the statue of Diana Orthia). Painting. 1798–99. Gipsoteca Canoviana, Possagno, no. 97. [Pavanello 1976, no. D67–ill.]

The Prix de Rome painting competition subject for 1817 was “Castor and Pollux Rescuing Helen.” First prize, Léon Cogniet; École des Beaux-Arts, Paris. Second prize, F. Dubois. [Grunchec 1984, no. 54–ill. / Harding 1979, p. 92]

Walter Savage Landor, 1775–1864. “Pudoris Ara” [The Altar of Modesty] (Helen tells Leda of Theseus’s abduction and her rescue). Latin idyll. In *Simonidea* (1806); collected in *Idyllia Heroica* (Pisa: 1820). / Translated by the author in *Hellenics* (London: Moxon, 1847); expanded in 1859 edition (Edinburgh: Nichol). [Wheeler 1937, vol. 2 / Pinsky 1968, p. 63]

Francis Cowley Burnand, 1836–1917. (Abduction of Helen in) *Pirithous, the Son of Ixion*. Burlesque. First performed

13 Apr 1865, Royalty Theatre, Soho, London. [Nicoll 1959–66, 5:288]

Stephen Vincent Benét, 1898–1943. “The First Vision of Helen.” Poem. In *Heavens and Earth* (New York: Holt, 1920). [Bush 1937, p. 588 / Boswell 1982, p. 34]

H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), 1886–1961. (Helen recalls her abduction by Theseus in) “Leuké” 4.6. Part 2 of *Helen in Egypt*. Epic. 1952–56. New York: New Directions, 1961. [Ips0 / Ostriker 1986, p. 225 / Robinson 1982, p. 394 / Friedman 1981, pp. 61, 65f., 154, 268, 295 / Peck 1975, p. 65]

John Manifold, 1915–. “Helen and Theseus.” Poem. In *Collected Verse* (Santa Lucia, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 1978). [Boswell 1982, p. 272]

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