A comparison between Classical and Norse mythologies
Myths are, in fact…neither primitive nor untrue. They are, rather a kind of poetry that helps us make sense of the world and our place in it.

Stephen H. Furrer.
# INDEX

I. Introduction ................................................................. 2  
  I. 1. Motivation ............................................................ 2  
  I. 2. Hypothesis ............................................................ 3  
  I. 3. Methods and structure ........................................... 3  

II. Comparison ................................................................. 5  
  II. 1. Civilisation .......................................................... 5  
      II. 1.1. Ancient Greece ............................................. 5  
      II. 1.2. Ancient Rome .............................................. 8  
      II. 1.3. Viking Age .................................................. 11  
      II. 1.4. Comparison ................................................ 14  
      II. 2. Origin of the universe ...................................... 15  
      II. 2.1. The creation ............................................... 15  
      II. 2.2. Worlds ...................................................... 18  
      II. 3. Gods and goddesses ........................................ 20  
      II. 4. Creatures and beings ....................................... 27  
      II. 4.1. Classical .................................................. 27  
      II. 4.2. Norse ...................................................... 32  
      II. 4.3. Comparison ................................................ 36  
      II. 5. Weapons and items ......................................... 37  
      II. 6. Common myths and topics ................................... 39  
      II. 7. Literature .................................................... 42  
      II. 7.1. Norse ....................................................... 43  
      II. 7.2. Classical ................................................... 44  
      II. 7.3. Comparison ................................................ 45  
      II. 8. Mythology nowadays ......................................... 45  

III. Conclusions ............................................................... 47  

IV. Bibliography and webography ....................................... 49  

Annex
I. INTRODUCTION

I. 1. MOTIVATION

I’ve always loved mythology. As a child I watched a show based on the Odyssey; as I grew up I read books with some myths on them; later I watched mythology-themed movies; and now I read books and I’m doing a whole research of it. It’s also important to say that for a long time I only really knew Greek/Roman mythology, though one of those myth books had some Norse myths. Once I discovered Norse mythology for real I was fascinated by it: it was rather bizarre like the Classic one, but in a different way, and it meant I was able to get to know a bunch of new gods and goddesses. One thing lead to another and one afternoon I found a book called *The Gospel of Loki* by Joanne M. Harris, which is actually Norse mythology from my favourite god’s point of view. It didn’t take long for me to buy it and as I was reading, from the very beginning, I saw similarities between Norse and Greek mythology. One day, when in Greek class we were talking about myth of the creation of the universe, I quickly compare it to its Norse version (I love comparing languages and mythologies, to be fair) and the teacher suggested that a comparison of both mythologies would be a good topic for the research work. I was actually kind of worried, because I didn’t know what to do the research project about so I agreed. Not only did I have a topic, but it was something that I loved and that I could learn more about.

Coincidentally, the idea of writing it in English was also a suggestion. I’ve always loved languages and I’m particularly fond of English, mostly because know it enough to actually enjoy it by watching shows or reading in English or having conversations. About a year ago, when I was going home with my mum from some activity, we talked about the research project and she just said: “Aina, since you love English, you should actually do the whole project in English”. And I agreed.

In conclusion, even though the ideas were suggested by someone else, my motivation for this research comes from my love for the English language and both mythologies. Therefore, my expectations are to get to know more about Greek/Roman and Norse mythologies and its civilizations and to learn new things of English as well.
II. 2. HYPOTHESIS

I have based my hypothesis on the idea that most of European cultures nowadays come from a very ancient original one. This was the culture of the Proto-Indo-Europeans, a civilization that originated in Eastern Europe, near the Caucasian mountains, and lived during the Bronze Age. Said civilization was formed by numerous populations that shared traits such as pastoralism (raising livestock), agriculture, transportation across water, the Proto-Indo-European language (reconstructed using historical linguistics due to the lack of written record), an oral heroic poetry (similar to the epic poetry of the classical period) and a polytheist religion which included the cult to a sky god. Around 4000 BC the Proto-Indo-European populations initiated a series of migrations which lead to a full expansion to Europe and parts of Asia. As time passed these populations that once shared a same culture developed cultures of their own and they shaped their languages and, our focus of work, their religion through time. Both Greek/Roman and Norse mythologies originate in the Proto-Indo-European religion and even share traits with it (such as the sky god (Classical), the goddess of love (Classical and Norse), the twins for the sun and the moon (Classical and Norse), possibly three fate goddesses (Classical and Norse)....). Is the origin of the universe according to each similar? Are there more common deities, either in power or role? Are these two mythologies more alike than we think? My hypothesis is that it’s quite likely that these traditions are akin.

My objectives are answering my questions, proving my hypothesis and learning more about these two societies and their culture.

I. 3. METHODS AND STRUCTURE

First of all I would like to establish that, as of now, when I mention classical mythology I will be talking about both Roman and Greek mythologies, and that there are several versions of most of myths that are present in this work so I chose the most famous ones or the ones that make the most sense to me. In addition, though in the gods and goddesses part I will mention both names, I will mostly use the Greek names when talking about Classical mythology.
I will achieve my objectives by looking for information on both Classical and Norse mythology and their cultures and then comparing them. Aside from the research, using books and the internet, I will also add a genealogical tree of the Norse pantheon that I will make and two interviews: one with a woman who lives in Oslo, Norway and one with a friend of mine, from Italy.

This project will be divided in three main parts: introduction, comparison and conclusion. In the introduction I have included why I chose this topic, my hypothesis and objectives and how I will structure the project and work. The comparison will have several parts. First of all, as I deem more necessary, I will introduce both mythologies by talking about their civilisations and comparing them; as Greek and Roman civilisations are quite different, they will be explained apart. Afterwards, I will tell the myths of the origin of the world (or worlds) in both mythologies, first the Classical and then the Norse, and I will also include a description of the worlds that were believed to exist in each culture. Then, I will talk about the gods and goddesses by pairing them off and comparing them according either to their role and their domain. The two following parts will deal with beings and objects of both mythologies, in which I will first deal with the Classical and then the Norse and finally compare them. Next, I will compare the common myths and then the works of literature of each civilisation, but in this case I will first talk about the Norse and then about the Greek and the Roman. The final part of the comparison will be about how these mythologies have evolved and come to us nowadays, what’s left of them, and it will include the information I got from the interviews. After the comparison, I will summarize my ideas in the conclusion, where, hopefully, I will be able to answer my questions and prove my hypothesis.
II. COMPARISON

All ancient civilisations have their corpus of deities and myths, from Europe to Asia and America, and from what we know, even people in the Palaeolithic believed in a world after death and sources dating back to the 5th millennium BC show representations of gods. Humanity has recurrent to myths and gods since men were men. The believed in a world after death so they wouldn’t be afraid of it, the existence of a superior being would make certain happenings make sense, there would be no more chance, just the will of the gods. Some characters would create mankind, some would be the reason why a certain thing existed and some stories would even mean the appearance of a certain species of flowers. Unable to find any other way, they used mythology to answer any question their surroundings would suggest. Eventually though, around the 6th century BC, in eastern part of Greece, in the city of Miletus, a series of people, who would later be called philosophers, started to ask themselves questions such as what everything is made from and answering them in a way that didn’t involve the gods. This critical line of thought would mean the transition from the myth to the logos (science or study). This doesn’t mean they abandoned their belief in their deities, most philosophers still believed in them, but, instead of using this fantasy stories to explain reality, they looked for other ways by observing and experimenting. And it’s not a coincidence that this awakening of the mind happened precisely in Greece, where intellectual abilities and activities were as well-considered as physical strength.

II. 1. CIVILIZATION

II. 1.1. ANCIENT GREECE

ORIGIN AND FALL

Although we can talk about the Minoan civilization, the Mycenaean civilization and even about the Greek Dark Ages (though there isn’t much information about this period, thus the name), Ancient Greece truly starts on the 8th century BC, in the Archaic period. This is the first period of Ancient Greece and it’s important due to the
appearance or creation of the Greek alphabet, the introduction of coinage—as before they used a system based on exchanges-, the consolidation of the poleis’ structure and the beginning of the Greek colonisations, which included most importantly the Magna Graecia—southern Italy and Sicily—(significant because it would start a connection between the Greeks and the Romans which resulted in an evident influence in all of Roman culture), northern Africa and the Black Sea, as well as the eastern and southern coast of the Iberian Peninsula. The Greek forms of government in this period were the aristocratic regimes (literally the power of the best) and the tyrannies, though in Ancient Greece they weren’t necessarily bad rulers. By the end of the 6th century BC, the Athenian Cleisthenes proposed a revolution that would lead to origins of democracy. The next period, Classical Greece, starts on the 5th century BC. It nearly immediately begins with the Greek-Persian Wars, a series of battles that would bring most of Greece together to fight against the Persian. After many years of battle, the Greek won and Athens, as leader of the Greek army, became the most important poleis. This started an era of prosperity and radiance for all of Greece and especially for Athens, now ruled by Pericles, who really started what we now know as Ancient Greece democracy. Peace didn’t last long because soon other poleis started showing their unhappiness with the importance of Athens and the fact that Pericles used the money from the Delian League (which united all the poleis to be prepared for another war) and eventually battles between cities started. This conflicts eventually lead to the Peloponnesian Wars, between Athens and its allies and Sparta and its allies, which left Greece so weak its enemies, the Macedonians, led by Philip, had no difficulties in conquering it. After Philip’s death, his son, Alexander the Great, was the one to govern and started an expansion which got to the actual India. It is said that Classical Greece ended with Alexander’s death, on the 4th century, but some believe it truly ended with the Macedonian invasion or even with the Peloponnesian Wars, which put an end to the original Greek democracy and Ancient Greece’s glory. In the last period, Hellenistic Greece, Alexander’s generals divided the territories among them, which once again made them weak and the Romans invaded them: it was the fall of Ancient Greece.
SOCIETY

Ancient Greece was basically divided in citizens, who had all the rights such as voting; metics, foreigners, who were free but had no rights; and slaves, who were neither free nor had rights.

Women in most of Ancient Greece weren’t citizens, had no powers or the right property and were always under the guardianship or their fathers, husbands or male relatives. They had a very limited freedom, as they were mostly only in the gynaecium, a chamber for women and children in their early ages, and they received little education. Contrary to all the other restrictions, their divorce right was fairly liberal as they could end the marriage if they deemed it necessary, though they needed the help of their fathers or male relatives.

On the other side, Spartan women enjoyed more power, status and respect, but they were still not able to participate in politics. Spartan girls trained their bodies with the boys and even participated in some competitions along them.

An important characteristic of Greek society, or, more accurately, Greek men, was the people’s implication in politics. As the philosopher Aristotle once said: “Man is a political animal”. This statement shows us how important was politics in Ancient Greece, particularly in Classical Greece, it was another part of the routine of a Greek man and it was closely related to justice and religion. From the Hellenistic period onwards, this behaviour stopped, and men became more and more individualists.

ACTIVITIES

The Greek had a very important cult to sport and physical exercise. Children and adults trained a lot and the best participated in sports competition like the Olympic Games, which were invented in Ancient Greece. The ideal of beauty for the Greek was a naked, athletic, young man, which shows the importance of exercise, just as many of the sculptures of athletes do.

But aside from sport, the Greek found intellectual activities highly rewarding and of great importance. The first to try to find a rational explanation of nature were Greek, as were some of the most important philosophers in history.

They also enjoyed theatre, which also originates in Ancient Greece. They wrote tragedies and comedies and they were both equally well-received and loved. Tragedies were usually based on myths and sometimes on history too. Comedies were
different depending on the centuries: at first, they satirized what happened around them, but later on they started focusing on representing ridicule situations to entertain the audience. It's interesting to mention the evolution of the three most important tragedians as Aeschylus was rather conservative and Sophocles would be less conservative but still not modern, but Euripides, the youngest one, had quite a liberal view of the world and he featured women as powerful and, sometimes, even superior to men. In Ancient Greece there were theatre competitions like the Dyonisia, dedicated to Dionysus, god of the theatre, in which the writers presented their plays, which were also represented, and there were prizes for the best poets (tragedies were poetry), the best actors…

RELIGION
The Greek had a polytheistic religion that was especially focused on the cult of the twelve Olympian gods and goddesses, but that also had multiple other deities. They recurred to mythology to explain what happened around them, to get to the origin of nature and how it worked. The Greek built numerous temples all over their territories for their deities. They were not monumental, at least they weren’t created to be, and were, essentially, the house of the god, goddess or multiple deities the temple was built for so no one but the priests could enter it. Greek myths inspired tragedies greatly and that is also one of the reasons why there are so many variations of each story. With the Roman colonisation, Greek mythology wasn’t lost, but rather transformed and became the Roman religion.

II. 1.2. ANCIENT ROME

ORIGIN AND FALL
Ancient Rome as we know starts in 753 BC, according to the legend Romulus and Remus founded the city and Romulus was its first king after murdering his brother, at the centre of the Italian Peninsula, by the Tiber river. This was the start of the first period of Roman history: the Kingdom, which finished in 509 BC, after the reign of Tarquinius Superbus ended as his family was exiled because his son had raped Lucretia, the wife of a powerful noble. This lead to the second period, the Republic, when the Romans conquered the rest of the peninsula and when the Punic wars,
against Carthage, happened. It was a period without a clear ruler; the decisions were made in the Senate by the senators, who were democratically chosen. By the end of this period (27 BC), Rome controlled most of the Iberian Peninsula, part of Northern Africa, Italy, Greece, part of France and part of Western Asia. An important person in this period was Julius Caesar. The last period is the Roman Empire, which started in 27 BC with Octavian Augustus’ reign. This large period had an important number of ups and downs because, while some of the emperors were wise and good and brought great wealth and improvements to Rome, some of them were madmen who wanted to burn the city (Nero) or who were simply cruel dictators. Ancient Rome was at its greater extent during the Roman Empire; at the time of Trajan’s death (one of the good emperors) in 117 AD, the Roman Empire controlled most of the Mediterranean including the entire Iberian Peninsula, the North of Africa, what is nowadays Italy, France, the southern part of the UK, Germany, Greece, an important part the Balkans, part of Western Asia (what today would be Arabic countries) and the islands. Decline started at the end of the 2nd century AD and it went on with the divisions of the empire. First Diocletian split it in four and, years later, Theodosius divided it in two: Eastern Roman Empire and Western Roman Empire. The Eastern Roman Empire fell to the Goths in 476 AD, which meant the end of the Classical era, which finished with Ancient Rome. The Western Roman Empire went on until 1453, but the society there was no longer like in ancient times.

**SOCIETY**

Roman society could be divided in two parts: free people (patricians and plebeians) and slaves. Patricians were Roman citizens of high class, descendants of the founding families of Rome, aristocrats, the equivalent of Middle Ages nobles; they were wealthy and had the most privileges. The plebs (plebeians) were the rest of Roman citizens who weren’t patricians; descendants of people who came to Rome, they were citizens cause they were born in the territory, but they weren’t as wealthy or had as many privileges. Slaves weren’t free, so they weren’t citizens, they were property of free citizens and had no rights. A slave could be freed and thus become a freedman. The other important division of the time was if someone was or wasn’t a citizen. To be a citizens you had to be the child of Roman parents; this is important because only citizens could vote, male citizens of a certain age.
Women in Ancient Rome were considered citizens but they had little consideration, even though they had more freedom than the Greek. They weren’t allowed to vote and they were always under a man: before marriage they were in charge of their father or brothers, no matter their age, upon marriage they were under their husband and, if widowed, they were under their son or, in case of not having any, back to be under a male relative. They were in charge of the early education of children and, upon a certain age, of only the girls’ education. Women were also in charge of the administration of the house and of the finances. Divorce was uncommon and not very well-seen, though legal and remarriage was usual in high class widows. Some women were concubines and prostitution was a full working business in Ancient Rome, while if a married woman had an affair or was raped it was seen as a horrible dishonour which could easily lead to suicide (Lucretia). Though women were mostly expected to marry, due to their duties being related mostly to serve the husband and have and raise children, but they could enter the Vestals, priestesses of Vesta, who were meant to be virgins.

**ACTIVITIES**

Though Romans went to the theatre to watch plays, mostly comedies, it never had the same success than in Greece. Following Rome’s warlike tendencies that led them to great colonisations and a strong army, Roman favoured more violent spectacles like gladiator fights. Gladiators fights, fights with animals and naumachiae took place in the amphitheatre. The first is a fight between men, either slaves, people punished by law or people who chose this life over poverty; it could end up in death, but gladiators were adored by the people and led a luxurious lifestyle until their deaths. Fights with animals were between man, slaves, people who deserved punishment and, in certain eras, captured Christians, and animals like lions, for instance. Finally, naumachiae were representations of naval fights; they weren’t usual because their cost was too high. In the circus, where it was well-seen of women to go, there were the chariot races, were four people from four different teams competed in a quadriga, a chariot drawn by four horses. Sometimes there were accidents that results in falls and sometimes in lethal accidents, which only made the Romans more excited.
RELIGION

Roman religion was very similar to the Greek, after all most gods were the same with their names changed. It was a collective polytheistic religion which included the cult to major and minor gods in different aspects of their lives and in different festivals. Some of the temples were dedicated to all the gods like the Pantheon (literally all the gods) and some were dedicated to a particular deity. Gods were present in the Romans’ lives in multiple ways such as the altar for the Lares in people’s houses or the funerary inscription *diis manibus* so the Manes would take in the souls of the deceased. The most important religious festival for the Roman was Saturnalia, celebrated in December, which was useful when Roman civilisation was mixed with the Christian believes. After Christianity was allowed in the Roman Empire and took over everything, Roman religion, which was then called pagan, became strictly forbidden, but all the works of literature have preserved it until nowadays; it regained importance during the Renaissance, when the Classical style and values returned with the, now mythological, themes.

II. 1.3. VIKING AGE

ORIGIN AND FALL

What we understand as Viking Age are those years in which the Vikings started and completed their expansion all over the world. Viking Age started in the 8th century AD and their first raid was in England. One of the important things to understand about Vikings is that they were normal people, farmers, blacksmiths, craftsmen… who took up raiding as an additional activity. Viking expansion has several reasons though none of them is proved. Most of the theories lean towards economy: they didn’t have enough farmland to get food from or enough land for the men and they wanted new trading markets and riches. Some theories also indicate they wanted wives, since there were uncultivated forest areas in the interior of Scandinavia, and that the raids were also a counterattack against the Christian missions to expand Christianity to Scandinavia. It’s also important to say that instead of raiding the places they could access by land they decided to sail to get to their objectives, which lead to their name (Viking comes from Old Norse and it means pirate raid). During the Viking Age, Vikings expanded to the
British Isles, Western France (they were particularly aggressive due to Carlemagne’s attacks to convert them to Christianity), Northern part of the Iberian Peninsula, the Arabic world (in Southern Spain), Italy, Eastern Europe, and Northern Africa and went to even farther places like Iceland, Greenland and North America. Viking Age had a very strong impact because they traded and travelled throughout the world without forcing their culture onto others which allowed some apart cultures to meet. Viking Age end mid-11th century, though there’s not a specific time or cause. It was mostly because of Christianisation, which was mostly total in Scandinavia by the end of the Viking Era, as well as the fact that the lands they conquered started to fight back, making them retreat and get back to their native Scandinavia.

SOCIETY
At the beginning of Viking Age there were no kings and three main social classes: the nobles (jarls), who had power and wealth and a series of retainers who served them, but who were rewarded (as opposite to feudalism); the middle class (karls); and slaves (thralls), often taken up in raids. As years went on some people began to get power and they became chieftains, leaders, though it wasn’t the same concept as Kingship. The classes were flexible: slaves could buy their freedom just as a freeman could get to the point where his only solution would be sell himself and become a slave, karls could also get to be nobles and jarls could lose power and wealth and become karls. Although the Viking society was a male-dominating one, women had a lot more of power, rights and respect than in most of the European cultures of their time and of before. It was shameful of a man to harm a woman, they could divorce their husbands, have property, own lands and some of them were even allowed to fight side by side with men, as the discovery of female weapons has proved. Women were usually in charge of domestic tasks –such as preparing food, doing the laundry, milking animals, making cheeses and butters, cleaning and making the clothes for the family amongst others- and educating their daughters (sons were trained by their fathers), but when their husbands were away they also took up all of their tasks. This appreciation shows in some aspects of the literature and mythology.
ACTIVITIES

Though there were no such things as theatre competitions or brutal displays of violence, Vikings also had their own entertainments. Children would play with wooden dolls or toys (like small swords and shields) and with balls, while adults had different distractions. We know from the sagas that Vikings played board games. The most famous was Hnefatafl, a two-player strategic game in which one player had more pieces (an advantage) and had to attack the king of the other player who was defending his castle with fewer people.

Vikings also played indoor drinking games with man/woman teams. One team drank and insulted the other team, then the other team was supposed to out-drink them and out-insult them. The final objective was to see who could drink more while still being articulate and witty.

After meals, adults sometimes gambled with a dice or sang songs and tell stories. There were also outdoor activities involving animals or just men. When it came to animals, the usual thing was two make two horses fight until one was killed or ran away. For men there were competitions based on Viking skills: wrestling, archery, stone-throwing and sword fighting, as well as running and swimming. They also played a ball game with a stick and a ball, in which it wasn't unusual for someone to get hurt or even die. Women didn't participate, but they gathered to watch men.
RELIGION

Vikings had a polytheistic religion, which is known as Norse mythology nowadays. They were content with their gods and strongly fought Christianisation. When missionaries went to their lands, they fought back and went for vengeance. Even if some of the kings proclaimed them and their people were Christian, they continued worshiping their gods. They prevailed for over three centuries before fully converting. They believed in the power of statues or images, which would grant them protection, strength, fertility… There weren’t any specific priests so the person to lead religious rituals was usually a leader. Aside from worshiping the gods, Vikings also held great respect for the ancestors.

Vikings had temples, but they haven’t lasted until nowadays due to the fact that they were mostly made of wood or they were simple circles of stones, and sometimes they were just sacred places marked by a stone barrier or a fence and there were natural places like groves, streams… tied to deities were there would be offerings. The concept of ghosts existed for them, and it was tied to proper burial practices which included cremation, graves and, the most famous, ship burials.

II. 1.4. COMPARISON

As we can see, Greek and Roman civilisation are certainly more similar than Viking is to them, most likely due to their proximity and contact.

The origin of the three is very different, but, while the Viking Age happens afterwards, a great part of Greek and Roman civilisations exists simultaneously, then they are the same for a few centuries and finally part again with the division of the Roman Empire, as Rome was part of the Eastern Roman Empire and Greece part of the western. As for the periods within each, Greek and Roman have several while Viking has none. This could be due to the years (Ancient Greece lasts for more than six centuries, Ancient Rome lasts more than a thousand years and Viking Age exists for three centuries) or because for the Vikings there weren’t a lot of social and political changes, while Greece and Rome go through several political systems and very different time periods. Greek civilisation falls under the Roman in the 2nd century BC while Rome disappears due to the Germanic invasions in 476 BC and Vikings, as a civilisation, lose their glory when they are forced to fall back to Scandinavia in the 11th century.
The three civilisations have a very similar way of organising society: they all have a richer class (citizens, patricians and jarls), a poorer class (metics, plebeians and karls) and slaves (thralls for Vikings). They all went through times where they had kings to where they didn’t and the people were the ones who lead. The situation of the woman in each of them varies. Greek women had the least freedom and rights, safe for Spartan women, who were allowed to train with men as children and who were very respected for beings the mothers of strong warriors. Roman women, had more control over their house, for example, and were allowed to go out in the street, something Grecians could barely do. Finally, Vikings women were the most respected of all: they had numerous rights, they could fight alongside men and they were respected.

Greeks, Romans and Vikings trained their bodies to be stronger and also athletic and healthy. The Greek had the Olympic Games, where they showed their strengths, and Vikings competed from time to time in a friendly manner as well. Romans had physical competitions as well, but they were more violent and represented war, and they had chariot races that we could compare to the Vikings playing a game with a ball and a stick. Sure, they were just games, but it was easy for people to get hurt or even die. As for calmer activities, Romans, and especially Greeks, had theatre plays, while Vikings told each other stories.

Finally, all three religions had polytheistic religions and a cult to nature, they even worshipped their gods there. Temples were more important for the Greek and the Roman and the fact that they were built with lasting materials allows us to be able to visit them nowadays. They all had strong belief in a life after death and gave a lot of importance to burials and both Greeks and Roman and Vikings gave the stars and constellations names related to mythology (the Greek constellation Cassiopea is Ratatosk for the Norse).

What is also very important is their very opposite attitudes. While Greeks colonised because of economic reasons, at least up until Alexander the Great, Romans also wanted to show their strength and their glory and so they imposed their culture and language to their new territories. Opposite to that, Viking rarely ever build settlements, they just sailed to where they wanted to go and raided the place just to then go home with their gains. England, Ireland and Constantinople are some common points of colonisations or trading places for the Romans and the Vikings.
So in conclusion, though they are quite different, these civilisations had a similar social organisation and close religions.

II. 2. ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE

II. 2.1. THE CREATION

CLASSICAL

It is actually very interesting because in these myths, the base of the mythologies themselves, is where we find one of the most relevant similarities. In both cases, before anything was actually formed there was the chaos, and this primordial energy has a different name in each mythology, but it is translated in the same way: yawning void.

We begin with Greek mythology. First there was only Chaos, the void, but soon after (if we can actually use the word soon when we speak of uncertain time measures) other beings appeared. Out of the Chaos came Tartarus (or the Abyss), Eros (Love – in other versions the child of Aphrodite) and Gaia (the Earth) and he also birthed two other beings: Erebos (personification of Darkness) and Nyx (the Night) that together spawned the Aether (embodiment of the air) and Hemera (the Day), parents of Thalassa who is the primitive spirit of the sea.

Back to Gaia, who in a way created Ouranus (the Sky) to cover her and Pontus (the Sea) and the ourea (the hills). Gaia and Ouranus had many children: twelve titans, three Cyclopes and three Hekatonchires (beings with a hundred hands and fifty heads). Ouranus, afraid that one of his children could overthrow him, put them back inside Gaia, in the Earth. She clearly was opposed to that and ideated a plan to kill him and gave her youngest son, the titan Cronus (the Time), a scythe. Cronus killed and castrated his father (form his genitals and the sea foam came Aphrodite) and crowned himself.

With Cronus the story was repeated. His father warned him as he died that his child would overthrow him so, as his wife and sister Rhea had children (the gods), he ate them. Rhea though was able to hide her youngest son, Zeus during his childhood and as he grew he was able to rescue his siblings from his father stomach. Together, with the help of the Cyclopes and the Hekatonkheixzres, who had been thrown into Tartarus, they overthrew Cronus, tore him to pieces and imprisoned the titans who had
been by his side. The three gods (Zeus, Poseidon and Hades) drew lots to divide the world between them. Zeus got the sky, Poseidon got the sea and Hades got the Underworld. The earth was a neutral zone. It is important to know that in this moment there were only six of the later on twelve Olympian deities, because most of them came from the union of them with themselves, other deities (major and minor and including titans and nymphs) and humans.

NORSE

As we move to the Norse mythology we find, as I said before, that the beginning is strikingly similar. The translations of the Norse texts that talk about the creation of the universe show us again a “yawning void” called Ginnungagap, which laid between Muspelheim—a realm of fire ruled by Surt (or Surtr), easily compared to the Chaos—and Niflheim—a realm of ice, with strict rules, related to the order (Cosmos). The both met in Ginnungagap and from this union cam Ymir, a frost giant, who spawned the Ice Folk (giants), and Audhumla, a cow. While Ymir fed from the cow’s milk, she licked and fed of ice and eventually a man emerged from the ice block she was licking: Buri. Buri had a son, Bor, who married Bestla, whom he had three boys with: Odin, Vili and Ve. These three killed Ymir and took his body parts: from his blood, they made the ocean; from his bones, the hills: from his hair, the trees; from his skull, the sky; from his brain, the clouds; and from his eyebrows Midgard. They also took sparks from Muspelheim and made the stars. After this, they saw found two logs and made the first man and woman out of them. One gave them breath and life; the other, consciousness and movement; and the last one, faces, speech, hearing and sight.

THE WAR

Though what I wrote above is the creation myth, Norse mythology wouldn’t be complete without the consolidation of its pantheon. Above there is the story of the Aesir, gods of war, but we also have the Vanir, gods of nature, who came from the Chaos (Muspelheim) and had runes and the powers that came with them. Odin wanted the runes, but the Vanir wanted to keep them for themselves. They fought a few battles until the Vanir decided to negotiate. They sent Gullveig-Heid, a powerful sorceress who was very skilled with the runes, to do so and they asked all of the gold the Aesir possessed in exchange for the knowledge of the runes and, therefore, magic. The
Aesir were outraged by the offer and by the fact that a woman was the one to propose it and tried to kill Gullveig-Heid by burning her, but as all Vanir she came from fire and she didn’t burn either of the three times they tried to burn her. Gullveig-Heid escaped and went to the Ice Folk, the giants, who hated both the Aesir and the Vanir and who accepted her, and while the two tribes fought, she planned an attack. They realised soon enough they needed to work together and so they made an exchange: the Vanir would teach the Aesir how to use the runes and the Aesir taught the Vanir war tactics and other knowledge. In addition, they exchanged members: Njörd, god of the sea, and his twin children Frey and Freya, god of fertility, peace, wealth and summer, and goddess of fertility, love, desire and beauty, went to the Aesir; while Honir, god of indecision, avoidance and mystery, and Mimir the Wise, uncle of Odin, went with the Vanir. The exchange went well for the Aesir, who each got a rune, but the Vanir soon realised the Honir, now a war chief, could do nothing without Mimir as his adviser, and suspected Mimir was a spy. Their solution was simple: they beheaded Mimir and sent his head back to Asgard with Honir. Odin preserved his uncle’s severed head with his new runes and placed it in the Well of Knowledge from where he could give all kinds of knowledge for a prize. Odin asked for knowledge and he got the prophecy that presaged the end of the world and in exchange he gave his eye.

II. 2.2. WORLDS

While Greek mythology only knows two dimensions, the Earth as in the mortal world (and we include the Olympus in it) and the Underworld, the Norse thought there were nine worlds connected by the tree Yggdrasil. The one in the middle, as its name itself explains, is Midgard, the land of the humans, which is connected to Asgard, the world of the Aesir gods by the rainbow bridge Bifrost. There is also Vanaheim, the world of the Vanir; Alfheim, where the light elves lived; Nidavellir, home of the dwarves; Jotunheim, land of the giants; Niflheim, the icy world of fog and mist; Muspelheim, home of the fire giants and other Fire folk; and Helheim, where Hel lived and the dishonourable dead went. This proves to be a considerable difference, but it’s important to mention that both mythologies have several places for the dead. Greek mythology has the Underworld in which the good ones went to Elysium or the Isles of the Blessed, the ordinary souls stayed at the Fields of Asphodel and the ones to be
punished went to the Fields of Punishment or the Tartarus. In Norse mythology the dishonourable dead went to Helheim, the drowned souls were for Ran and the ones who died while fighting went either to Valhalla (ruled by Odin and inside Asgard where they prepared to fight in Ragnarok) or to Folkvanger (a meadow inside Vanaheim ruled by Freya).

We can so conclude that though the very origin of the universe is the same its concrete formation is certainly different, despite the common points of wars and dismembering.
II. 3. GODS AND GODDESSES

It is not necessary to look into details to get an idea of how different in terms of personality Greek and Norse gods were. Firstly, Greek gods are immortal and represent the glory of their countries. They usually visit humans and change their lives and, apart from the wars, they spend their times relaxing and enjoying themselves. Norse, on the other side, can die and this vulnerability makes them more cautious. They spend a big part of their time training or taking care of nature without meddling much into the human world. It is also important than the Norse know that they are going to die, while the Greeks think themselves invincible. What’s more, we can actually see this in the animals the “father gods” or rulers have. The Greek/Roman chief of gods, Zeus/Jupiter, has an eagle as his sacred animal. Eagles have been the symbol for great empires throughout history and it can be associated to wealth and greatness. On the other side, Odin’s companion animals are the two ravens Huginn (thought) and Muninn (memory), related to magic, one of Odin’s dominions, but also an omen of death, which makes sense since Odin knows he is going to die nearly from the beginning of the world.

RULERS AND FATHERS

Zeus (or Jupiter) and Odin are both the fathers of an important part of the latest generation of deities and rulers of their respective pantheon, but while Zeus is mostly known for his extramarital adventures, Odin is perceived as a more serious and stern person.

Zeus is the king of the Greek gods and god of lighting, the sky and air among other things. Though he married his sister Hera after defeating their father and has three children with her (Hebe, Ilithya and Ares) he is most famous for having adventures with titanesses, goddesses and humans alike and having children with them (note the big amount of gods and heroes that came from these unions). He is very powerful, but seems rather carefree and he is quite prideful, like most gods.

Odin is the ruler of the Aesir gods and god of wisdom, divination, magic… Also called the All-Father he is, amongst other things, the patron of wanderers as he himself disguises as one in order to check on humans. He married Frigg, with whom he had three children (Balder, Hoder and Hemrodd) but he had relationships with other women
which lead to the birth of Bragi and Thor. Powerful and wise, stern due to the knowledge of the end of the world, he is known for his schemes.

**WIVES AND MOTHERS**

Both Hera (or Juno) and Frigg are married to the king/ruler of their pantheon, have had godly children and are goddesses of marriage. There are a lot of similarities but we can’t forget a few differences. For a start, Hera is not only Zeus’s wife, but his sister as well, while Frigg is not related in any other close way other than marriage to Odin. Hera is the goddess of marriage, motherhood, women and family and she mostly just has the “normal” godly powers, while Frigg, goddess of marriage, motherhood and fertility, is mostly known for her power of prophecy. Finally, Frigg is perceived as a rather calm goddess and doesn’t have much significant actions in Norse mythology other than her quest to save her son from any harm, while Hera is mostly known for her revenge and anger towards her husband’s mistresses and their offspring, most likely because Zeus cheated an awful lot more than Odin.

**THE GOLDEN SON AND THE MUSICIAN**

We can easily perceive Apollo having a golden aura around him and being particularly handsome, just like the Norse god Balder was. Odin and Frigg’s golden son, Balder, god of light, purity and spring, was loved by almost anybody, to the point where Hel, ruler as well desired him, which lead to his death.

Apollo, god of light, healing, poetry, music… can also be compared to another god and that’s Bragi. With a mostly carefree attitude, much different from Bragi’s calmness and kindness and similar to Apollo’s, he is the god of poetry and is known for his songs and poems. The important difference is, once again, that Apollo is specially known for his relationships with mortals and other beings and also for being single, while the Norse brothers stayed faithful to their wives.
RULERSHIP OF THE DEAD

Though as I have stated before there are different places for the dead to go, we are going to focus on the better known ones: Hel and Hades. What do they have in common? They both have kingdoms of dead people to rule names after them and are rather apart from the rest of their pantheon out of fear or hate.

Hades (or Pluto) was the oldest of Cronus (Saturn) and Rhea’s (Cybele) children, but he got the worst deal when the three brothers divided the world: he got the Underworld. He is the god of the Underworld (or Hades), of the dead and of riches and one of the most notable myths about him is the one in which he kidnapped and married Persephone, his niece. All is well that ends well, though, because they had a healthy marriage and he had significantly less affairs than the other gods.

Hel is the daughter of the jotunn Loki and the giantess Angerboda, sister to Fenrir and Jormungard and half-sister to Sleipnir, Vali and Narvi. Ruler of Helheim, the Norse place for the dishonourable dead and loyal to her father, half of her body was one of a corpse.

GODDESSES OF LOVE

Both Aphrodite (or Venus) and Freya are goddesses of love and desire and known for being vain.

Aphrodite, born from Uranus’ genitals and sea foam (in another version she is the child of Zeus and Dione), is married to Hephaestus, but is most known for her relationship with Ares and other mortals or beings. She participates in mythology mostly for making people fall in love and is considered the most beautiful goddess.

Freya, daughter of Njörd and Frey’s twin sister, is also known to be the most beautiful goddess but her participation in mythology is mostly as an exchangeable item while making deals. It is relevant, though, that she also ruled in Folkvanger on of the places for the dead.

LORDS OF THE SEA

Though both mythologies have several gods of the sea there are a few who stand out. For the Greeks it’s definitely Poseidon (or Neptune), second son of Cronus and Rhea and brother to Zeus and Hades. When they divided the worlds he got the sea, so he’s
the god of oceans, hurricanes, storms and earthquakes among other things. He married the nereid Amphitrite and is quite famous for the myth of Athens’ patronage, which he lost.

For the Norse we got Aegir, god of the sea, alcohol and banquets, and his wife Ran, associated with the sea, who got the dead by drowning. They are famous for having nine daughters, the nine waves, who simultaneously birthed Heimdall. They are perceived as neutral gods and, in fact, they aren’t really gods, but jotunns.

The Norse have yet another god of the sea, Njörd, who is believed to have had the twins Freya and Frey with his own sister. He is the Vanir god of the seas, wealth, wind and fishing.

**DARING WAR GODS**

The Greeks were more intellectual than bellicose so it is normal that they only had a couple of gods of war. The Vikings were known for their eagerness to fight and because of that most of the gods of the Aesir are actually war gods.

Ares (or Mars), son of Zeus and Hera, is the Greek god of war. Eager for bloodshed, he is quite famous for his relationship with Aphrodite, with whom he had children like Phobos, Deimos and, in some versions, Eros (Cupid). His twin sister, significantly less famous is Enyo, goddess of war.

For the Norse, though war is one of Odin’s fields, the gods more associated with it are Thor and Tyr. Thor, god of thunder and son of Odin and Fjörgyn, is famous for his brawn and his hammer Mjolnir, made by the dwarves, which when stolen one time forced him to dress as a lady in order to get it back. Tyr, god of courage, law and trial by combat, is also associated with war and his courage led him to lose his hand when Fenrir ate it.

**OTHERS DEITIES**

**HUNTRESSES**

While not absolutely similar there is a goddess for each mythology associated with the hunt. In Greek mythology this is Artemis (or Diana), known goddess of the hunt and in Norse, it’s Skadi, nicknamed the Huntress, but they are different because Artemis is
one of the three maiden goddesses and Skadi was in love with Balder and married Njörd.

THE SUN AND THE MOON
In Norse mythology there are two minor deities, Sol (goddess of the Sun) and Mani (god of the Moon), who are twins. They can be easily compared to Helios and Selene or Apollo and Artemis, also twins and personifications or associated to the Sun and the Moon, but while for the Greek the Sun is a boy and the Moon a girl, for the Norse it’s the other way around.

SORCERESSSES
Though magic is a common field for most of the Norse gods, there is one Sorceress that specially stands out: Gullveig-Heid and her counterpart in Greek mythology would be Hecate, goddess of magic, sorcery, witchcraft and crossroads.

PERSONIFICATIONS OF THE EARTH
In Greek mythology the personification of the Earth is the primordial goddess Gaia (or Terra), mother of the titans, the giants and several other beings. For the Norse, it’s Fjörgyn, mother of Thor.

YOUTH
The Greek goddess for youth is Hebe, daughter of Zeus and Hera, and the Norse one is Idun, keeper of the tree with golden apples and wife of Balder.
Greek Gods

Chaos

Gaea
Tartarus
Eros
Erebus

Uranus + Gaea
Mountains
Pontus

Cyclopes
Hecatonchires
Cronus + Rhea
Coeus + Phoebe
Oceanus + Tethys

Hestia
Zeus + Hera
Poseiden
Hades
Demeter + Zeus
Leto + Zeus

Athena
Ares
Hebe
Hephaestus
Persephone
Apollo
Artemis
Iapetus

Atlas
Prometheus
Epimetheus

Maia + Zeus
Dione + Zeus

Hermes
Aphrodite

Titans
Olympians
Other Gods

Olympian Family Tree. Source: classroom-olympus.blogspot.com
II. 4. CREATURES AND BEINGS

II. 4.1. CLASSICAL

Not every being or creature in Classical mythology is here because, due to the gods’ promiscuity, there are copious. I'll just talk about either the most influent, the most present or the ones that can be compared to Norse mythology beings.

TITANS

In Classical mythology, titans were deities, children and descendants of the primordial god Ouranus and Gaia. They ruled the world during the mythical Golden Age, before being overthrown by the gods and goddesses. There are two generations of titans. The first are the sons and daughters of Gaia and Ouranus and there were twelve of them: the six titanesses were: Mnemosyne (titaness of memory), Thetys, Theia, Phoebe (titaness of prophecy), Rhea (mother of the gods), Themis (titaness of law), Oceanus (personification of the sea), Hyperion (titan of the east), Coeus (titan of the north), Crius (titan of the south), Cronus (titan of time) and Iapetus (titan of the west). As for the second generation of titans, they were: the children of Hyperion and Theia, Helios (the Sun), Selene (the Moon) and Eos (the Dawn); Coeus and Phoebe’s children, Asteria, Lelantos and Leto (mother of Apollo and Artemis); Iapetus’ sons, Atlas, Prometheus, Epimetheus and Menoetius; Crius’s sons Perseus, Pallas and Astraeus; and Oceanus’s daughter Metis (titaness of thought and mother of Athena).

Their role in mythology is only in the Titanomachy, as many of them were thrown to Tartarus or severely punished for being on Cronus side. The ones who didn’t side with him were free and kept their domains. Prometheus is relevant in the creation of mankind and titanesses who weren’t married were either Zeus’ wives or his mistresses. Oceanus and Thetys raised Hera for many years.
GIANTS

In Classical mythology, giants are these violent but not necessarily enormous (from a godly point of view) creatures who were born when Ouranus’ blood came in contact with Gaia (the Earth). In fact, the name in Ancient Greek isn’t supposed to mean big, but rather earthborn. There were many giants and they fought against the gods in the Gigantomachy, where each god had an anti-themselves giant to fight against, giants were complementary to gods so it would be easier for giants to win. In the end, gods and humans allied and they were able to beat the giants.

Cyclops and Hekatonkheires

There are two types of these big, one-eyed creatures called Cyclops. The first type were children of Gaia and Ouranus, imprisoned by their father and then by their
brother, Cronus. There were three of them: Brontes, Steropes and Arges, and they were thrown into Tartarus, guarded by the monster Campe, until Zeus and the other gods freed them. To help them in the Titanomachy they built the three brothers magical weapons. Another type of Cyclops appear in Homer's *Odyssey*, where they are children of Poseidon. The most famous of this second kind is Polyphemus, who Odysseus blinded.

Hekatonkheires were also the three children of Gaia and Ouranus and were imprisoned with their brothers, the Cyclops. Briareos, Kottos and Gyges had a hundred hands and fifty heads each and were freed by Zeus and the gods so they would help them in the Titanomachy.

**SATYRS**

Satyrs, called fauns by the Roman, are the half-men, half-goat companions of Dionysus. They are famous for having a strong sexual hunger and chasing nymphs. Their leader was Silenus. They aren't particularly important in Classical mythology, but they appear constantly in minor roles.
NYMPHS

Nymphs were female nature spirits that lived in different places: nereids lived in the sea, oreads lived in mountains, aurae were celestial nymphs, dryads were trees, naiads lived in clear water… They were very beautiful and usually gods’ objective of marriage or simply sexual encounters that ended up with godly children. Some famous nymphs were Echo, who fell in love with Narcissus, and Daphne, who after being persistently chased by Apollo begged her father to be turned into a tree, and he complied.

PEGASUS

Son of Poseidon and the gorgon Medusa, he was born when Perseus beheaded Medusa. He was a pure white winged-horse.
MOIRAI

Children of Zeus and Themis, the Moirai were female deities of fate, described as old and ugly. Since life was thought to be like a thread that could be cut (which meant death), their names and roles were set around threading. Clotho (spinner) was the one who spun the thread of life, Lachesis (drawer of lots) was the one who measured the thread of life for each person (which was random, hence the name) and Atropos (inevitable) was the one who decided when and how was everyone to die and cut the thread of their life. What they decided couldn't be changed, not even by the gods. Romans called them Parcae.
II. 4.2. NORSE

JÖTUNN

Jötnuns were anthropomorphic giants who came from Ymir and were even the parents or grandparents of some of the Aesir gods. After they were banished from Asgard, they went to live permanently at Jötunnheim. They are the gods’ enemies throughout Norse mythology, trying to steal some of their vital objects (the tree of golden apples), attacking Asgard, kidnapping some of the gods… In most of these conflicts, the gods won. Skadi, wife of Njord, is a jötunn who got married to one of the gods as compensation for the death of her father, Thiassi. She initially wanted to marry Balder, who was the best good-looking god, but when it came to choosing she could only see the feet of the gods they offered her and she chose Njord’s feet. Once Loki is chained to the rock she completes her father’s revenge by putting a snake over him that continuously spits venom. Another important Jötunn is Utgard-Loki who in one of the myths fights against Loki and other gods and even bests him with intelligence.

One of the most significant people in Norse mythology is Loki, who I’ve kept mentioning, but didn’t truly explain until now because he can’t be compared to any of the Classical gods or beings. Loki, son of Laufey and Fárbauti, is the god of wildfire and mischief and perhaps the cleverest person in Norse mythology. Whether it is to create chaos or achieve his objectives or to do the gods a favour, Loki uses his mind and powers, notably shape shifting, to get what he wants. A jötunn and initially akin to Chaos, which he never truly abandoned, he joined Odin through an oath of kinship and, though technically a member of the Aesir, he never truly fit there as he didn’t fit with the jötnuns. According to mythology he was a coward and his intelligence helped him out of several situations, to the point of evading beheading. Eventually, his disregard for other gods and his desire for vengeance lead him to be eternally punished. In the end he is freed and fully accomplishes his vengeance in Ragnarok.
DWARVES

Dwarves in Norse mythology are the four creatures who hold the sky (skull of Ymir) on the four cardinal points, but they are specially known for their skill in crafting. When Loki got Sif new hair made of gold, as compensation for cutting her hair in the first place, they sons of Ivaldi also made a boat that could shrink when not used and a spear for Odin. Loki liked the idea of getting things for free, so he challenged the dwarves Brokk and Eiti to try to make even greater gifts than those of the sons of Ivaldi. If the new objects Brokk and Eiti crafted were worse than the first three, Loki would get them for free, but if they were better, they would could behead Loki. Brokk and Eiti crafted a ring of gold that created more rings of gold, a golden boar that could fly and Mjolnir, the hammer of Thor. The gods all agreed that Brokk and Eiti’s gifts were better than the sons of Ivaldi’s, and so the dwarves decided they would behead Loki, but Loki reminded them that he said that they could have his head, but not his neck. As they couldn’t behead him because that would mean severing the neck, they sewed his lips with a magical thread, which gave Loki never-fading scars.
ELFS

Elves were supernatural beings who live in Alfheim (literally land of the elves). They were associated with the sun and light and they had magic and mastered runes. They could also engage in relationships with humans and have half-elf, half-human children.

SLEIPNIR

Sleipnir was the eight-legged horse Loki had when he was transformed into a mare. He was extremely fast and belonged to Odin.
Norns

The Norns were female beings who controlled the destiny of both the gods and men. According to Snorri, the three most important Norns were Urdr, Verdandi and Skuld, and aside from their destiny-related duties, they also took care of Yggdrasil, by watering it. Other Norns visited newborns to determine their future.

Valkyries

A Valkyrie (literally “chooser of the slain” in Old Norse) is a female figure who chose who would die and who would live. After death, their chosen would either be delivered to Valhalla or to Folkvagner, where they would become einherjar and train to be able to fight in Ragnarok.
II. 4.3. COMPARISON

First of all, titans and giants would be the jötunns counterparts, they’re all described as big and anthropomorphic and they are the enemies of the gods, but at the same time they are they ancestors and have allied themselves with them. The main difference is that while titans and giants were beaten when fighting against the gods, the jötunn prevail all through Norse mythology.

Next we have the gods’ allies: Cyclops and Hekatonkheires and Dwarves. Their appearance is definitely different: Cyclops and Hekatonkheires are enormous and with bizarre looks, while Dwarves are rather short and anthropomorphic. Cyclops and Dwarves are both craftsmen, as they both build important objects for the gods.

Nature spirits such as satyrs or nymphs and elves have little influence in their respective mythologies, but even so they are ever-present in them. Satyrs could also be associated to dwarves due to their sexual appetite and nymphs and elves share a series of traits such as beauty, magic and relationships with human. As we can see in the pictures, they are even portrayed in similar ways.

The common characteristics in Pegasus and Sleipnir are the uncommon births (Pegasus is born when his mother is decapitated and Sleipnir is born of a male god transformed into a mare) and they peculiarities (wings and eight legs, respectively). Aside from that we can see that they are an animal important and present in both cultures.

Finally we can compare the Fates of both mythologies. Moirai and Norns are very similar: they deal with the thread of life and are usually portrayed as old ladies. The
difference lays in the division of tasks with the Moirai, non-existent with the Norns, and in the fact that the Norns are also in charge of taking care of Yggdrasil. The Valkyries could also be associated with them as they also work with the destiny of humans as they feel, as well as death.

II. 5. WEAPONS AND ITEMS

CLASSICAL

The most significant weapons in Classical mythology are Zeus’ thunderbolt, Poseidon’s trident and Hades’ helm of darkness. They were all built by the Cyclops and are related to each deity’s powers. Zeus’ thunderbolt is ties to his power over the sky and was his symbol. He could cast lightning with it. Poseidon’s trident is also his symbol and goes with his domain over the sea. He uses it in fights and when he uses his powers, like a magic wand is used to cast spells, though he doesn’t need it explicitly. Hades’ Helm of Darkness, also called the Cap of invisibility, allowed him to be invisible, as if there was a mist around him.

NORSE

FROM THE SONE OF IVALDI
The gifts the sons of Ivaldi (four dwarves) made for the gods were: a wig made of gold that would grow like normal hair for Sif (and Thor), a boat that could be reduced in size when not being used called Skidbladnir for Frey and an invincible spear called Gungnir for Odin.

FROM BROKK AND EITI
Brokk and Eiti had a bet against Loki as he challenged them to make better gifts than the sons of Ivaldi. Loki cheated to try to win, turning into a fly and stinging Eiti as he was building each of the objects, but ultimately the dwarves won. They gave Frey a golden boar, Gullinbursti; they made Draupnir, the Ring of Power, that made more rings of gold, for Odin; and, most importantly, they made Mjölnir, Thor’s powerful hammer.
THE NECKLACE

The Brisings were four dwarf brothers who made a beautiful necklace. Freya, goddess of beauty and love, wanted it for herself and went to purchase it. As payment, the Brisings asked Freya to sleep with each of them for an entire day and she agreed. What she didn’t know is that Loki had followed her and, after watching, he told Odin of what had happened. Odin was enraged and he commanded Loki to steal the necklace. Loki did as told and brought the necklace to Odin and Freya, as she soon realised the loss of her precious necklace, went to talk to Odin. Odin received her and severely accused her of having slept with the four dwarves. Freya, though very ashamed, admitted it and she asked for her necklace. Odin told her he would return it if she started a war between two kings, which she did.

Though all these objects are very different, we can see that the most appreciated gifts were the weapons that would be the gods’ trademark: the thunderbolt for Zeus, the trident for Poseidon, the Helm of Darkness for Hades and Mjölnir for Thor.
II. 6. COMMON MYTHS AND TOPICS

Aside from the similarities between gods and the origin myths, such as the common void and the murder or imprisonment of the first generation of gods or beings, there’s a number of myths that are also quite similar.

CREATION OF MANKIND

We can easily start with the creation of mankind. For the Norse, the three brothers (Odin, Vili and Ve) made a man and a woman from two logs and gave them breath, life, consciousness, movement, faces, speech, hearing and sight. For the Greek, the titan Prometheus created men from mud and Athena gave them life. Women came later as a curse to men because Prometheus had stolen the fire of the gods to give it to them as a symbol of civilization. In both cases men were made from materials their creators had around them and were given life and knowledge, among other things. The difference is that, according to the Norse, men and women were created at the same time as equals, and, according to the Greek, first came men and then women as punishment. This can be easily related to the fact that Viking women, though still inferior, had more freedom and rights than Greek or Roman women.

SUPERNATURAL BIRTHS

In the Greek myths it’s quite common for the gods, after an unorthodox mating, to give birth, even in their human form, to uncommon creatures in rare births. A clear example of this is the birth of Athena, who after her mother Metis had been swallowed by her father Zeus, using her power, which was thought, travelled to her father’s head and came out from there. After Zeus mated with Leda in a swan form she “gave birth” to two eggs from which came her children. In Norse myths, Loki is basically the sole “god” to go through these situations. The first time is during the building of Asgard; Odin had made a deal with the builder of the fortress: if he could finish it in a season, he could marry Freya, but if he took more time, he wouldn’t be paid. The builder had a giant horse and thanks to his help he progressed quickly. Odin, seeing he would finish the fortress in time and that not only he would have to pay him, but he would also have to give up Freya, charged Loki with the task of slowing him down. To do so, Loki turned
into a mare and seduced the giant horse causing him to stop his work and so the builder wasn’t able to finish at the assigned time. Some months after leaving, Loki came back in his human form with an eight-legged horse (Sleipnir) he had given birth to as a mare. The myth can be compared to the Greek one in which Demeter, after being forced by Poseidon in a horse form gave birth to a girl and a horse. Aside from Sleipnir and his godly children with Sigyn, Loki had, from his relationship with the jotunn Angrboda, a huge wolf (Fenrir), a giant snake (Jormungandr) and the goddess of death (Hel).

**GOLDEN APPLES**

The figure of golden apples that grant immortality is present in both mythologies, albeit in very different circumstances. For the Greek, the apple tree was a gift from Gaia to Hera to commemorate her marriage to Zeus and Hera decided to keep in away, protected in the Garden of the Hesperides. In Norse mythology, the keeper of the tree was the goddess Idun and the apples were what granted the gods immortality. In both cases someone tries to steal the apples. For the Greek, it’s Hercules for his 11th labor and for the Norse, it’s Thiassi, who succeeds with Loki’s help, but is then defeated.

**DESCENDING TO HELL**

Although in very different circumstances, going to the land of dead is another common point between the two mythologies. For the Greek and Roman it’s a common topic in literature, which includes Odysseus descending into the Hades to meet the prophet Tiresias and seeing his mother, Aeneas also descending to meet his father and Orpheus going to retrieve Eurydice. For the Norse, visits to hell are less about consulting the dead for wisdom and more of an asking for favours. For instance, Frigg goes to Hel after Balder’s death to ask Hel to give him back and she agrees to do it if every single object in the world wept for him. Balder didn’t come back to life because Loki, dressed as a giantess, didn’t weep for him arguing he didn’t know Balder and so he had no reason to weep for him.

**ETERNAL PUNISHMENTS**

It’s not unusual in Greek myths to find that a man has been cast to Tartarus set to suffer an eternal punishment. We have Tantalus, bound to always be hungry or thirsty
but never able to reach water or food, punished for killing and cooking his son to mock the gods; Ixion bound to an always spinning wheel because he tried to seduce Hera; and Sisyphus who had to roll a big rock to the top of a hill under blazing sun that fell back down so he had to repeat his task, due to several offenses. Their common cause for punishment is hubris, pride, which has brought shorter but usually more violent punishments to mortals like the death of Niobe’s children or Arachne’s transformation. The one that has more in common with Norse mythology is, however Prometheus’s. Punished for stealing the fire of the gods to give it to mankind he was chained to a rock and condemned to have an eagle eat a piece of his liver, which would regenerate, every day. Similar to this situation is Loki’s punishment. Correctly framed and blamed for Balder’s death, Loki was chained to a rock in a cavern with a snake above him which would spit venom to his eyes.

**WEAKNESSES THAT LEAD TO DEATH**

One of the most known stories of Greek mythology is Aquiles’ death. Bathed in the river Styx by his mother as a baby as she was holding his heels made him almost invulnerable, except for his heels. Paris’s arrow, led by Apollo was what killed him as it struck one of his heels. In Norse mythology the weakness lays on the weapon instead of the body part. Frigg, after his son Balder told her he was being haunted by dreams of his death, started a quest all over the world to make every object and being swear that they wouldn’t hurt Balder, but she didn’t make mistletoe swear as she deemed it too young. Loki, who had followed her, turned the little branch of mistletoe into a dart and, while the gods were having a contest, throwing all kinds of weapons to Balder, who didn’t get hurt thanks to the oaths, he gave the dart to Balder’s blind brother, Hoder, who accepted, thankful of being able to participate in the game and not knowing the damage he would cause, threw the dart guided by Loki and killed his brother.

**DIVINE ANCESTRY**

Another similarity between mythologies is that the founders of the cities or countries descend from the gods (according to mythology). Aeneas, son of the Roman goddess Venus, was the ancestor of Romulus, legendary founder of Troy. In Greek mythology, Deucalion’s descendant Aelous, Ion and Dorus are the founders of the three most
important lines of modern Greek. For the Norse, it is explained in Snorri’s saga Heimskringla that the royal line of Norway descends from Odin.

THE END OF THE WORLD

When Zeus couldn’t stand the pride of humans he caused a flood that erased all of mankind but Deucalion and his wife Pirra, who then repopulate the Earth. Unlike in Greek mythology, the myth explaining the end of the world (Ragnarok) is very significant in Norse mythology. Ragnarok was the last part of the prophecy delivered to Odin. It’s introduced by Balder’s death, after which the gods can’t escape their destiny, and truly starts with the freeing of Loki and Fenrir. As the legions of Muspellheim burn down Bifrost and Loki arrives leading the giants through the sea, several battles happen: Fenrir devours Odin, who kills him; Thor kills Jormungard, but is killed by its venom; Heimdall and Loki kill each other... Surt, ruler of fire, burns down the Earth, the sky falls down and the sea covers all land. But just like in the Greek flood myth this isn’t definite, the world resurfaces and a human couple that hid themselves in Yggdrasil repopulate it. Eventually, even the gods come back. Aside from the relevance, the main difference is that for the Greek the gods bring out the end of the world by destroying humans but they stay unharmed and for the Norse gods and other powerful beings fight to the point of destroying themselves and humans.

OTHER COMMON THINGS

Other similarities between the two mythologies are feasts, where important events happen; magical weapons are built by different beings (cyclops and hekatonkheires for Greek and Roman and dwarves for the Norse) and the fact that prophecies greatly influence the lives of mortals (gods in Norse mythology).

II. 7. LITERATURE

There are much more Greek and Roman works of literature preserved than there are Norse, at least when it comes to famous ones.
II. 7.1. NORSE

The prime author of Norse mythology is Snorri Sturluson, an Icelandic historian, poet and politician who lived during the 12th and 13th centuries. The Prose Edda, Heimskringla and Egil’s Saga are thought to have been written by him. Egil’s saga tells the story of Egil, a farmer, Viking and skald (poet), who actually existed at the time. It starts with Egil’s grandfather and father and eventually finishes with the end of Egil’s life, as he wanders alone trying to reach Althing (Icelandic Parliament). The similarities between Egil’s saga and Heimskringla are what have lead people to believe that it was written by Snorri as well. Heimskringla is a collection of sagas about the Norwegian kings that starts with the beginning of the Norwegian royal dynasty, which comes from Odin, and then follows with several sagas mostly focused on a single individual, one of the kings. It’s epic in prose and, even though it starts with Norse mythology, it ends up talking about factual history. The Prose Edda consists of a euhemerized prologue that describes the origin of Norse gods (in this case, according to Snorri, the Norse gods have their origin in Troy, where one of Priam’s children, was the mother of Thor, who had a child who would be the father of Odin…) and three other parts. The first one is the Gylfaginning, which deals with the creation and destruction of Norse gods and other aspects of mythology; it tells the story of Gylfi, a king who, as he journeys to Asgard, comes upon a palace where he is asked his name, and, after he pretends he is named Gangleri, is challenged to show his wisdom through questions (which is customary in Norse sagas) to three men: High, Just-As-High and Third. He asks questions about aspects of Norse mythology and the men answer him. In the end everything disappears and Gylfi returns to his nation where he retells what he has been told. The second part is Skáldskaparmál, a dialogue between Aegir, god of the sea, and Bragi, god of poetry, where they talk about Norse mythology and poetry; and the third part is Háttatal, where he exemplifies the types of verses used in Old Norse poetry with his own compositions.

Other important Norse works include the Poetic Edda, a collection of anonymous poems that’s probably the most important source of Norse mythology, that includes poems like Völuspa (The prophecy of the seeress), which is the prophecy that was delivered to Odin talking about the end of the world, and the Völsunga saga, a composition in prose that explains the origin and fall of the Völsung clan, with the
stories of Sigurd, a hero who killed a dragon, and Brynhildr, a shieldmaiden and valkyrie.

II. 7.2. CLASSICAL

For Classical literature I’ll talk about five writers: Homer, Virgil, Hesiod, Ovid and Titus Livius. Homer is by far the most well-known Greek author. He probably lived around 850BC and there are several works attributed to him (it isn’t certain that he wrote them). The most famous are the epic poems Iliad, which tells the mythical story of the Trojan War, and Odyssey, which is somewhat its sequel and explains Odysseus’s (hero from the Trojan War) journey home. Homer’s Roman counterpart is Virgil, who lived during the 1st century BC and worked for the emperor Augustus. His main work is the Aeneid, which narrates the journey of the Trojan Aeneas after fleeing Troy and his arrival to the land of the Latins which lead eventually to the foundation of Rome. Hesiod was a Greek poet who lived around the same time as Homer (850 BC). His most important works are the Theogony, which talks about the origin of the world and the gods, and the Works and days, which explains the five ages of men and the story of Prometheus and Pandora, but it’s ultimately a farmer’s almanac. Ovid was a Roman poet who lived during the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, during the reign of Augustus. He is specially famous for the Metamorphoses, a series of fifteen books with over 250 myths which include the creation myth, love stories, the story of the War of Troy..., and The art of love (Ars amatoria), which gives advice for relationships between men and women and got him exiled. Finally we have Titus Livius was a Roman historian who lived between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD and is most famous for writing Ab Urbe Condita Libri (Books from the Foundation of the city) which talks about the myth of the foundation of Rome (through Aeneas and Romulus), the end of the monarchy in 509 BC and other events up to 9 BC.

Other important authors of the Classical period include the tragedians (for the Greek because for the Roman violence in plays was of poor taste) Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides and the playwrights Aristophanes (for the Greek) and Plautus (for the Roman.
II. 7.3. COMPARISON

When comparing the works of literature of the two we can find several similarities. Snorri’s *Heimskringla* could be matched with Tituts Livius’ *Ab Urbe Condita Libri*, as they both deal with history starting from a myth but ending with real facts. *Egil’s saga* and *Völundaga saga* both tell the story of heroes just like Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Virgil’s *Aeneid*. In addition, there’s also the doubt of who has written the story since it isn’t certain that *Egil’s saga* was Snorri’s or that the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* were written by Homer (Homeric question). Finally we can also associate the *Prose Edda* and the *Poetic Edda* to Hesiod’s work and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, as they are great sources of myths, though they are explained quite differently.

II. 8. MYTHOLOGY NOWADAYS

If we focus on Europe, we will say that Classical mythology is the one that has reached or present days: it returned during the Renaissance, it was constantly used in paintings and sculptures, scientists named the planets after gods, the names of the constellations are based in their myths… It would seem that our heritage is only of Classical culture, and not only in Europe, but all over the world. But if we get closer, and check how Italy and Greece go on nowadays, the knowledge of mythology or the use and love of it isn’t particularly strong, just as in any part of Europe. When we go to Scandinavia, this changes. Yes, nobody believes in the Norse gods anymore, but they’ve used them and their Viking ancestry to form a unique identity. Viking runes and places related to traditional stories are essential to the tourism in the North of Europe, artists there represent the Norse myths, products like chocolate or liquors and named after the gods and some streets or even towns as well, there are plenty of books regarding mythology for all ages and even the citizens use this legacy in their everyday lives; many men (from Norway, at the very least) style themselves following the Viking aesthetic: long hair, beards, tattoos of mythological symbols… We can say that universally, Classical mythology may have had more impact in artistic disciplines or other features of our lives, but if we reach to the original places of both mythology, the Scandinavians use, and even live, their tradition much more.
Another interesting thing to compare are the days of the week. In most of the countries that had a lasting Roman colonisation and that nowadays speak Romance languages, the five working days are named after the Roman way so Monday is the day of the Moon (dilluns, lundi…), Tuesday is the day of Mars, god of war (dimarts, mardi), Wednesday is named after Mercury, thought to guide souls to the Hades (dimecres, mercredi), Thursday is named after Jupiter, god of thunder, lovi in Latin, (dijous, jeudi…) and Friday was named after Venus, goddess of love (divendres, vendredi…). The days of the weekend are named after the Jew resting day Sabbath (dissable, samedi…) and after the Christian god, dominicus in Latin (diumenge, dimanche…). For Germanic and Scandinavian countries this is different. Each has their own variation, but they are mostly named after Norse and Germanic deities (the Norwegian fredag (Friday) is named after Freya, just like the German Freitag). English presents a combination of both: Sunday and Monday are named after the Sun and the Moon; Tuesday is named after the Norse deity Tyr, god of war; Wednesday is named after Wodan, Odin in Norse, who guided the souls to the land of the dead; Thursday is the day of Thor, god of war; and Friday is the day of Freya, goddess of love. So as we can see they have used the same gods for the days of the week, quite the similarity.

Finally, when it comes to books and movies inspired in myths or gods, Classical mythology was the most used for many years, but, nowadays, there are more and more books that include the Norse gods.
III. CONCLUSIONS

In this project I’ve looked for information of Ancient Greek, Roman and Viking cultures, of their myths, their gods, their beings… and compared what I found so to reach a conclusion.

Throughout this time I’ve investigated both mythologies in order to be able to answer the questions I had asked myself and to prove my hypothesis and I’ve succeeded. Although I accomplished my objectives, I’ve had some setbacks too. I wanted to deal with things than in the end had so little similarity that weren’t even worth mentioning, I’ve had to balance the information I wanted to write so that it wouldn’t be too much or too little, I had originally planned an interview with someone from Greece that wasn’t possible in the end… But overall everything went good and I learnt how to properly organise myself for the next project I’ll have to do.

When it comes to the origin of the universe, the very beginning is exactly the same but for the rest they aren’t that similar. On the other hand, when it comes to deities, they have a lot in common: the role of the father and king, the role of the wife, the goddess of love, the gods of war, the twins for the Sun and the Moon, the goddess of youth, of magic… Their roles and powers are very similar, but their attitude is quite different. I’ve also found beings that resembled each other and that have the same objective (build weapons, control human’s lives…) and a slight likeness when it came to weapons and how the gods are identified with them. Comparing the myths I discovered a lot of parallels and as for literature there were both similar works and close stories, though they diverged when it came to the narration. Lastly, I studied how these mythologies were nowadays and saw that the Norse is lived and used more than the Classical, despite the more universal knowledge of the last. While Greek and Roman don’t really pay any mind to their ancient cultures, Vikings treat it, and wear it (the Viking aesthetic is trending in Scandinavia), with pride.

This study has allowed me to prove my hypothesis: these two mythologies are indeed akin, and bear more resemblances that I originally imagined, but they also have differences due to the divergences of each civilisation, the place where they lived… The resemblance is their common heritage, what they both got from the ancient Proto-Indo-European religion, that stayed with them and with other cultures such as the Egyptian and the Indian; the cult to nature, the figure of the father and his wife, the
thought of the Sun and the Moon as twins, the three fates, the goddess of love and the
gods of war…
My last objective was to learn more about these mythologies and their respective
cultures and I’ve achieved it as well. I’ve found especially interesting learning about
the Viking civilisations, so unknown to us, and about how mythology is treated in the
countries nowadays. Personally, I think it would be interesting to have more books
based on mythology. They are stories full of magic and fantastic beings and children
love that. I feel that in this part of Europe, Classical myths are told, and they are great,
but having more books about Norse traditions would be awesome; some of them have
interesting morals and they value cleverness a lot, even more than physical strength.
Another good thing to interest people in mythology (especially children, but also adults)
would be to have board games about mythology or cartoons and TV shows, because
for me they were my first contact with mythology.
Finally, this has allowed me to improve my English, as I had never done a project this
long in it and it has made me look for words and expressions that I didn’t know before.
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INTERVIEWS

FROM ITALY

1. Do you and people around you know about mythology? Do they know the myths or the gods? Yes, we know about the gods and some of the myths.

2. Are there representations of the gods, myths, mythological creatures… in the streets or in buildings? Is mythology used as a “tourist attraction”? There are no representation in the streets or buildings in my town, but we have museums where you can see them. Mythology is used as a “tourist attraction”.

3. Do you know if mythology is taught in schools? Do the children know of the gods and myths through books? Yes, mythology is taught in school, especially in primary education when the children learn about ancient civilisations and they learn the myths. In high school we have a subject called “mythology and analysis” which helps you understand the history of ancient times. Children start knowing about the myths through books and tales and from books specialized in the topic.

4. Do you know any other mythologies than the one in your country? Aside from Roman and Greek mythologies, I know stories from Spain and South America.
FROM NORWAY

1. **Do you and people around you know about mythology? Do they know the myths or the gods?** I know about mythology because of my personal interests and because it's one of the first things you see when you read about Scandinavia and people there know as well, it's quite present.

2. **Are there representations of the gods, myths, mythological creatures... in the streets or in buildings? Is mythology used as a “tourist attraction”?** Yes, some streets have names of gods, you can find pictures in some buildings like the town hall of Oslo and in museums. Mythology and Viking history are used as “tourist attractions” in both museums or in situ, such as Viking runes or St. Olav’s Path. Even some products have names related to mythology such as a chocolate named “Freya”.

3. **Do you know if mythology is taught in schools? Do the children know of the gods and myths through books?** I don’t really know if it’s taught in schools, but kids know about it and there are lots of children’s tales about the gods or creatures like trolls, and there is a very important book, quite famous, that tells traditional stories and myths.

4. **Do you know any other mythologies than the one in your country?** Yes, of course. I know about Classical mythology, Incan, Aztec, some stories from Spain about witches...
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