

an epic subject and because of his sexual orientation. Employing a kind of musical structure as a unifying element, *The Bridge* (1930) took the arc of the Brooklyn Bridge, which the poet could see from his room in Brooklyn Heights, as a symbol of the dynamism of America. The successive sections of the poem recount major elements of the American experience, including Columbus, Pocahontas, Rip Van Winkle, Melville, Poe, Whitman, and even the subway.

Crane was granted only about eight years of full maturity as a poet. Troubled by alcoholism and difficulty in achieving self-esteem, he traveled restlessly. Returning from Mexico, where he had gone to write a poem on Montezuma, Crane threw himself overboard from a ship and was drowned.

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## CRETE

Lying almost halfway between Greece and Egypt, Crete like Cyprus, the other large island in the Eastern Mediterranean, received writing, urban culture, and other elements of civilization from Egypt, Syria, and Palestine.

### *Minoan and Mycenaean Society.*

Minoan civilization takes its name from the legendary Minos, king of the city of Cnossus, in whose labyrinth the Minotaur, son of a bull and Minos' wife Pasiphae, lurked to devour human sacrificial victims sent as tribute from Greece until it was killed by the legendary Athenian hero Theseus. On his return trip to Athens Theseus abandoned Ariadne, Minos' daughter who had helped him find his way through the labyrinth to the Minotaur, and took a boy as his *eromenos*. Modern archeologists divide Minoan civilization into three stages: early (ca. 3000–2200 B. C.), middle (ca. 2200–1500), and late (ca.

1500–1000), decline setting in about 1200 B.C. owing to earthquakes, fires, and invasions by sea peoples including Greeks. Artistic depictions suggest that Minoan religion included the worship of snakes, leaping bulls, and other sensual symbols and practices. Nudity was the exception in their art, and no unusual evidence of pederastic activity occurs in it. Because of the bare-breasted female figurines, including the so-called "snake goddesses," some feminists have hailed Minoan civilization as matriarchic, but this claim has no real support.

Although the tablets written in Minoan script (Linear A) remain undeciphered, in 1956 Michael Ventris published his decipherment of those in Linear B (an early form of Greek), many of which were also found on the mainland, particularly the Peloponnesus, to which their script had been imported by Achaean Greek invaders from there who conquered the island ca. 1400 B.C. Linear B tablets also show no evidence of pederasty, although they mention almost all the major Greek gods and goddesses, with the gods dominating the goddesses, being mainly tribute lists, inventories, and other financial records. Mycenaean art was less sensuous than Minoan, perhaps because unprotected by the sea, Mycenaeans, having unlike Minoans to wall their cities and stand on the alert, could less enjoy leisure and sensuality.

*The Question of Pederastic Origins.* The absence of any indication of pederasty in Minoan and Mycenaean records and remains indicates that pederasty had not yet been institutionalized in Greece, despite myths written later assigning pederasty to Minos and to Zeus. Beginning in the Archaic period (800–500 B.C.), when the first evidence becomes available (just before 600) with the introduction of writing among Greeks, this time in an adaptation of the Phoenician script after a 400-year illiterate "dark age" from 1200 to 800, during which barbarous Dorian Greeks seized the island, most

Greeks and Romans associated the institutionalization of pederasty with Crete. Born in the cave of Harpagos in Crete, Zeus supposedly stole *Ganymede*, son of Tros, king of Troy, to replace the lame girl Hebe as his cupbearer (and bedmate) on Olympus. Minos and his brother Rhadamanthus, heroes in *Homer's Iliad*, had had, according to later mythmakers, squires who acted as their charioteers, to be described in later times as their beloveds. By the end of the classical period (500–323 B.C.) almost every god had his boy or boys, Apollo more than twenty.

Did these pederastic myths form an older core written down and depicted only after 600, or did the Greeks thereafter project back relationships among the gods in order to explain their institutionalization of them? Certainly in the fifth century *Pindar* took great pride in ascribing pederasty to Zeus' brother Poseidon.

Although other locales were sometimes said to be the birthplace of pederasty (Thebes, with *Laius*, and Thrace, with *Orpheus*, being the commonest), Crete generally held pride of place, with such figures as Zeus, Minos, and Rhadamanthus.

From the destruction of Mycenaean civilization on Crete and on the mainland by catastrophes about 1200, a dark age ensued until the rebirth of writing in Greece with the importation of a new alphabetical script from Phoenicia ca. 725. This invention came, along with other Semitic influences by way of Cyprus, a source which may have led the Cretans first among the Greeks to seclude women. While the Homeric epics took shape, art remained primitive, often geometric, with the result that it gives no clue to sexual practices. In such times of insecurity, warriors banded together in the closest bonds of intimacy, and many hold that pederasty became institutionalized then, but the writings and art of the period 800–600 B.C. do not document pederasty.

*Cretan Pederasty in Reality.* After 600 B.C., however, it became customary

for Greek hoplites, the upper-class warriors who fought in the phalanx, each to take a twelve-year-old boy as a beloved to train until he could hunt and fight, i.e., until at about the age of eighteen he sprouted a beard. In Crete the relationship had a distinctive feature: a ritual kidnapping (*harpagmos*) consecrated the pairing. After two months of living together in the wild, the mentor returned his protégé to his family laden with rich gifts, symbolizing his coming of age: armor, a drinking cup, and a bull.

The overwhelming majority of later Greeks believed that the Cretans had institutionalized pederasty in order to curb the population explosion which had begun in the tenth century, leading to the colonization of southern Italy, Sicily, and other western outposts as far as the Iberian peninsula, and in the east of most of Anatolia, the southern shores of the Aegean, and much of the Black Sea coast with emporia in Syria and Egypt between the eighth and the sixth centuries. By 550 most desirable colonial sites had been occupied, and Persians and Carthaginians began pushing the Greeks back from east and west. Another means of controlling population growth (for Plato the usual one) was female infanticide, which caused an imbalance in the sex ratio that effectively denied wives or even women to slaves and many lower-class free males.

Crete was the first Greek area to stop sending out colonists. According to such late sources such as Plato, Aristotle, Herodotus, Thucydides, Strabo, Diogenes Laertius, and Athenaeus, the Cretan "musicians" or statesmen *Onomacritus* and *Thaletas*, after about 650 developed a system to limit the expansion of the upper classes by postponing the marriage of males until thirty, giving the young warrior in his early twenties a boy of twelve to train and love. The males after the age of seven lived and messed together, the boys roaming in "herds" until they entered the barracks (*andreia*) at about 18. Men in this society began to exercise nude, in sharp

contrast to Homeric practice. High-born women were segregated. Thus the estates of the nobles would not be overly subdivided, resulting in their impoverishment. When Sparta entered a crisis, "Lycurgus" visited Crete and imported along with the adviser Thaletas most of its institutions: a concatenation of interlocking institutions—segregation of women, institutional pederasty, athletic nudity, messes for males, late marriages, and herd membership for boys. Thereafter the Spartans became invincible in battle and athletics. Soon other lawgivers imitated the system in a less rigorous fashion. Solon imported a modified version of it to Athens with the aid of the Cretan Epimenides. Then, it seems, poets and artists began to ascribe pederasty to the gods and heroes. Perhaps under Solon's beloved and successor Peisistratus and his pederastic sons the *Iliad* was emended to include its two brief references to Ganymede, for those tyrants certainly had the text altered to stress the early importance of Athens, since they had Homer recited at the annual Panathenaic festival. Plato set his last major dialogue *The Laws* on Crete, where ironically an Athenian instructed a Cretan and a Spartan on how to make a good constitution which would bar pederasty as unnatural.

The brief revival that Crete enjoyed in the archaic period ended before the beginning of the classical era, perhaps in part because the Persian Empire's seizure of the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, cutting off Greek trade with Egypt and the Levant, which had made Crete central, rendered it instead peripheral.

No Cretan works are extant before the third century B.C., so that the scholar must rely on mainlanders for information, but they are virtually unanimous that pederasty was first institutionalized in Crete, either in the Minoan period by gods and legendary heroes, or in the archaic period as a device against overpopulation. A nineteenth-century German hypothesis that Dorian warriors on the steppes of Central Asia institutionalized

pederasty and introduced it, iron, cremation, and other institutions when they overran and settled the peninsula ca. 1200, a theory now discredited, rests on the observation that most Greeks thought that their ancestors borrowed the institution from Crete and Sparta, but proponents of the "Dorian" origin cannot show that it also existed from the time of their first settlements in other Dorian areas. Early Spartan poets such as Tyrtaeus (b. ca. 650 B.C.) show no trace of it; rather Tyrtaeus ridicules "an effeminate." In fact all the earliest pederastic writing that survives is non-Dorian.

After being under Rome, the Byzantine Empire, Venice and Ottoman Turkey, Crete gained independence and joined Greece as a consequence of the First Balkan War in 1912. The strong survival of pederasty and other forms of homosexuality in modern Crete, subject of novels such as Nikos Kazantzakis', may perhaps best be traced to the long Turkish occupation.

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### ✓ CREVEL, RENÉ (1900–1935)

French novelist and essayist. His mother encouraged him in his education after his father's suicide in 1914. While writing a Sorbonne doctoral dissertation on Diderot, Crevel rejected the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and embraced Paris of the twenties.

In 1921, Crevel founded the short-lived literary review, *L'Aventure* (chance, surprise, adventure, or love affair), which was followed by *Dés* (Dice). In 1924 he joined the surrealists after they disrupted a Dada play in which he was acting. Crevel introduced automatic writing, interpretation of dreams, hypnotism, and other novelties into the surrealist circle. He pursued chance, spontaneity, luck, the unconscious, dreams, sex, revolution, love, unintended consequences, and other ruses in order to transcend common sense and definition.