

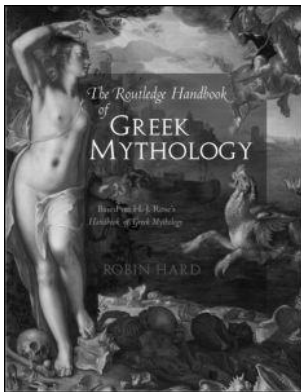
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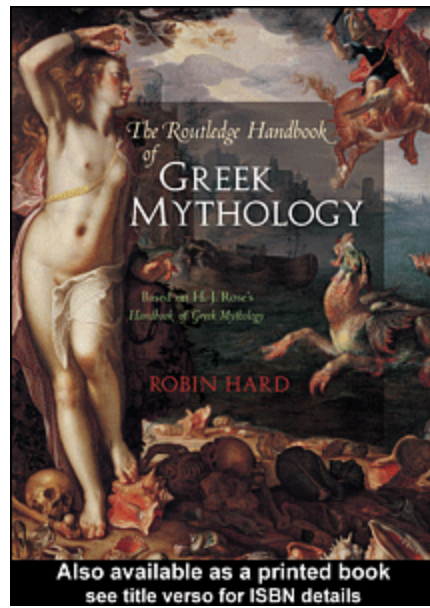
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CHAPTER THREE

THE RISE OF ZEUS AND REVOLTS AGAINST HIS RULE

Our central concern in the present chapter will be the mythology of Zeus, the great king of the gods. As we have seen, he did not always occupy that position, but rose to power in the third generation by displacing his father Kronos, who had won power for himself and his fellow Titans by displacing his own father, Ouranos (Sky). The first part of the chapter will be devoted to an examination of the 'succession myth' (see p. 33) which tells of the family conflicts that provoked the fall of the previous ruling gods. Various side-issues will also be considered in this connection, including other aspects of the mythology of Kronos and his wife Rhea. After Zeus had established himself as the new ruler of the universe with the help of his brothers and sisters and other allies, the Olympian order remained to be completed. All the younger Olympian deities were fathered by Zeus himself (with the possible exception of Hephaistos if he was born to Hera alone, see p. 79);¹ and Zeus also fathered some lesser goddesses who represented aspects of the new order. Although Hera was commonly thought to have been his only wife, the *Theogony* formalizes his principal liaisons with other goddesses by classing them as a series of early marriages that preceded his final union with Hera; we will consider these liaisons and their issue in the order in which they are described in the *Theogony*, before concluding with a general survey of the origins of the Olympian gods. As a sovereign who had established his own power by revolting against the former ruling powers, Zeus had to quell various insurrections on his own account to prevent the cycle from being repeated. The main subject of the latter part of the chapter will be the three great revolts that were launched against Zeus and the Olympian order by the fearsome monster Typhon, by the earthborn race of Giants, and finally by two gigantic brothers, the Aloadae. We will conclude by examining the conflict of a rather different kind that arose between Zeus and a cousin of his, Prometheus, who provoked his anger by championing the interests of the human race.

THE GREEK SUCCESSION MYTH

In the standard version of the succession myth, as recounted by Hesiod, the Titans were the first-born children of the primordial couple Gaia (Earth) and Ouranos (Sky),

who then generated two sets of monsters, the *Kyklopes* and the *Hekatoncheires* (Hundred-Handers).² The Titans have already been discussed in the previous chapter; although Hesiod assigns individual names to all of them (see pp. 36–7) and draws them into his genealogical scheme, two alone stand out from the collective body of the Titans in the succession myth, Kronos, the second ruler of the universe, and his wife Rhea. Before we pass on to consider how Kronos entered into conflict with his father, something must be said about the monstrous children of Ouranos and Gaia, who will have their own part to play in the succession myth.

The three *KYKLOPES* (Round-eyes), who were giants with a single eye in the middle of their forehead, would help Zeus to victory in his war against the Titans by providing him with his thunder-weapon (see p. 74). Their connection with thunder and lightning as the manufacturers of the thunderbolt is reflected in the names that Hesiod assigns to them, *Brontes* (Thunder-man), *Steropes* (Lightning-man) and *Arges* (Vividly bright, an epithet applied to Zeus's thunderbolt in early epic).³ Since they must evidently have been skilled and powerful craftsmen, it came to be imagined in the Hellenistic tradition that they assisted the smith-god *Hephaistos* in his labours, toiling at his side in a huge forge under Mt Etna or elsewhere (see p. 166).⁴ Although one would expect the *Kyklopes* to be immortal in view of their divine birth, Apollo was sometimes said to have killed them for having made the thunderbolt that killed his son *Asklepios*⁵ (see p. 151); or according to a fragment from Pindar, Zeus killed them to ensure that nobody would be able to acquire arms from them in the future.⁶

In an astral myth of Hellenistic origin, it was said that the *Kyklopes* fashioned the altar on which Zeus and his allies swore their allegiance before making war against the Titans, and that this altar was later transferred to the heavens, presumably by Zeus himself, to become the constellation of the Altar (*Ara*) in the southern sky.⁷ Pausanias reports that sacrifices were offered to the *Kyklopes* at an ancient altar at the Isthmus of Corinth,⁸ but there is no indication otherwise that they were honoured in cult.

As ancient mythographers already remark,⁹ these primordial *Kyklopes* should be distinguished from some mythical giants of two other kinds who were called by the same name, the Homeric *Kyklopes* and the master-builders of popular lore. The *Kyklopes* of the *Odyssey* lived a primitive pastoral life without government or law on a mythical island somewhere in the furthest reaches of the sea; if all were like *Polyphemos*, the ogre who captured *Odysseus* (see p. 492), they were savage sons of *Poseidon* with a single eye.¹⁰ The *Kyklopes* of the other race were giants of folklore who were supposed to have erected the walls of *Mycenae* and *Tiryns* (see pp. 237 and 243) and other Mycenaean structures whose 'Cyclopean' masonry seemed to lie beyond the capacity of ordinary human workmanship.¹¹ They may be compared with the giants of modern folklore who are credited with the erection of mega-liths or are said to have thrown down massive stones of that kind while playing at quoits.

The second group of monstrous sons of Ouranos and Gaia consisted of three gigantic beings who each had fifty heads and a hundred arms; although Hesiod refers to them by their individual names alone, *Kottos*, *Briareos* and *Gyges*, mythographers in later times devised a convenient name for them, calling them the *HEKATON-CHEIRES* or *HUNDRED-HANDERS*¹² (the corresponding adjective is already applied to *Briareos* in the *Iliad*¹³). As hundred-handed giants of irresistible strength,

they would be invaluable allies for Zeus in the struggle against the Titans. Since they were sent down to Tartaros afterwards to act as guards to the defeated Titans, they make no further appearance in myth, at least as a group.

One of the brothers, BRIAREOS (the Mighty One, also called Ombriareos), has independent stories nonetheless which are set during the period of Olympian rule. He is marked out from his brothers even in the *Theogony*, for it is stated there that Poseidon made him his son-in-law at some point after the fall of the Titans by offering him his daughter Kymopoleia (Wave-walker, otherwise unknown) as a wife.¹⁴ The *Iliad* reports that he was once summoned to Olympos by Thetis to save Zeus from a threatened revolt by Hera, Poseidon and Athena¹⁵ (see p. 82); since Thetis was a sea-nymph, this would suggest that he lived in the sea, as might also be inferred from his relationship with Poseidon in the *Theogony*. Homer also remarks that he was called Briareos by the gods but was known to mortals as Aigaion.¹⁶ In the *Titanomachy*, an early epic now lost, Aigaion was apparently described as a son of Gaia and Pontos (Sea) who lived in the sea and fought as an ally of the Titans.¹⁷ If this Aigaion can be identified with Briareos, as seems likely, this account of him clearly differed in crucial respects from that in the *Theogony*. A Corinthian tradition suggested that Briareos had acted as arbitrator when Helios and Poseidon had competed for possession of the land in early times (see p. 103).¹⁸ He was honoured in cult on Euboea under two different names, as Briareos at Karystos and as Aigaion at Chalkis.¹⁹ All in all, he is a most intriguing figure, and one would like to know more of him than can be gathered from these surviving scraps.

Trouble soon arose within the newly generated family of Ouranos because he hated his offspring and prevented them from coming to the light. Although Hesiod is vague about the cause of his hatred, it would seem that he took a dislike to them because they were terrible to behold, especially the monsters who were born first of all. He hid them deep away inside the earth as each was born, apparently blocking their emergence by engaging in ceaseless intercourse with his consort (although Hesiod is vague on this matter too); and he took delight in his wicked works. Gaia groaned under the strain and thought up a crafty plan. After first creating adamant (a mythical metal of extreme hardness), she used it to make a large jagged sickle, and then tried to persuade her children to take action against their father. All were frightened to respond except for Kronos, the youngest and most terrible of the Titans, who took the sickle from his mother and waited in ambush for his father in accordance with her instructions. As Ouranos was engaging in intercourse with his wife at nightfall, Kronos cut off his genitals with the sickle and cast them into the sea. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, sprang up from the foam that gathered around them in the waters (see p. 194); and three other groups of children, the Giants, Meliai and Erinyes, sprang up from the earth after it was fertilised by drops of blood that fell from them (see p. 38). The Titans were now able to emerge into the light, and to assume power as the lords of the universe under the sovereignty of Kronos. It would seem, however, that in Hesiod's version (unlike that of Apollodorus, see below) the Kyklopes and Hundred-Handers remained imprisoned beneath the earth until they were later rescued by Zeus.²⁰

After his rise to power, Kronos married his sister Rhea, who bore him six splendid children, Hestia, Demeter, Hera, Hades, Poseidon and Zeus; but since he was warned

by his parents that he was destined to be overpowered by his own son, he swallowed each of his children at birth, causing endless grief to his wife.²¹ When Zeus was due to be born, Rhea finally consulted Ouranos and Gaia on her own account, asking them to devise a plan to enable her to save her forthcoming child and bring retribution on Kronos. On their advice, she secretly entrusted the new-born Zeus to Gaia in Crete (see further on pp. 74–5) and gave Kronos a large stone wrapped in swaddling-clothes, which he swallowed in the usual manner in place of his child.²² Hesiod offers little detail on what happened next, merely stating that Zeus grew up quickly in his Cretan hiding-place, and then forced Kronos to vomit up his children in accordance with a plan that was suggested to his mother by Gaia. After first spewing up the stone, which Zeus installed at Delphi to be a sign and wonder to mortals (see p. 145), Kronos vomited up the five brothers and sisters of Zeus in the reverse order to that in which he had swallowed them. Zeus also released the Kyklopes, who had apparently remained imprisoned beneath the earth since they had been confined there by their father Ouranos; and they showed their gratitude by arming Zeus with his all-powerful weapon, the thunderbolt.²³

Zeus now joined together with his brothers and sisters to wrest control of the universe from Kronos and the Titans, confronting them in the greatest war ever fought, the Titanomachy (*Titanomachia*). The Titans chose Mt Othrys in southern Thessaly as their stronghold, while Zeus and his allies fought from Mt Olympos on the northern borders of the province. The battle raged on for ten long years without either side gaining a clear advantage, until Gaia revealed to Zeus and the Olympians that they would be victorious if they recruited the Hundred-Handers as their allies. So Zeus released the monsters from their confinement (for they had remained imprisoned beneath the earth like the Kyklopes), and revived their strength and spirits with nectar and ambrosia. They were then quite happy to respond to Zeus's appeal for help. The struggle now reached its decisive phase as Zeus unleashed his full fury against the Titans, dazing them with his thunderbolts, while the Hundred-Handers pelted them with huge rocks in successive salvos. The entire universe resounded to the battle, from the high heavens to murky Tartaros. Kronos and the Titans were finally overpowered by the many-handed monsters, who hurled them down to Tartaros to be imprisoned there for evermore. To ensure that they would be securely detained, Zeus appointed the Hundred-Handers as their warders. After their hard-won victory, Zeus and the younger gods assumed power as the new rulers of the universe in the third generation.²⁴

Such is the standard account of the succession myth as provided by Hesiod; Apollodorus offers an account of uncertain origin (perhaps derived from the lost *Titanomachia*, or from the Orphic literature) which differs from the Hesiodic version in some important respects. The Hundred-Handers and Kyklopes are born before the Titans in this account, and are hurled down to Tartaros by their father while the Titans are apparently left unharmed. Distressed by the loss of her children who had been cast below, Gaia incited the Titans to attack their father, giving an adamant sickle to Kronos; and all of them took part in the assault with the sole exception of Okeanos (see p. 37 for the significance of this). Kronos struck the decisive blow, however, as in Hesiod's version, by severing the genitals of Ouranos. After the dethronement of Ouranos, the Titans rescued their brothers from Tartaros and entrusted the sovereignty to Kronos. But Kronos imprisoned the two sets of monsters once

again, and then swallowed his own children with the exception of Zeus, as in the usual story. When Zeus came of age, he sought the help of Metis (the personification of cunning wisdom, see p. 77), who tricked Kronos into swallowing an emetic drug to force him to disgorge his swallowed children. With the aid of his brothers and sisters, Zeus fought against Kronos and the Titans for ten years, but was unable to defeat them until Gaia prophesied that he would be able to do so if he enlisted the help of the monsters who had been banished to Tartaros by Kronos. So he killed their warder, a certain Kampe, and set them free. The Kyklopes armed him with his thunderbolt as usual, and also gave Poseidon his trident and provided Hades with a cap of invisibility. With the aid of these devices, and presumably the assistance of the Hundred-Handers too, Zeus and his allies now defeated the Titans and imprisoned them in Tartaros with the Hundred-Handers as their guards.²⁵

Fitting though it may be that Kronos and the Titans, as a race of ‘former gods’, should be banished from the upper world forever, this is not always the case in post-Hesiodic accounts. Pindar states explicitly, for instance, in one of his odes, that the Titans were eventually released by Zeus; and in the *Prometheus Unbound*, a lost Aeschylean play, they appeared on the stage as the chorus along with Prometheus after he was released from Tartaros (see p. 96), which would imply that they had been set free by Zeus.²⁶ As has already been remarked, some individuals who are named as Titans in Hesiod’s list could not have been removed from the upper world at this early stage in any case. Okeanos could not have deserted his streams (see p. 37), nor Tethys perhaps the sea; Themis and Mnemosyne are said to have engaged in liaisons with Zeus even in the *Theogony*, and they were permanent forces in the world as the personifications of memory and right order; and Kronos and Rhea were themselves thought to be active in the world in so far as they were honoured in cult.

THE FURTHER MYTHOLOGY OF KRONOS AND RHEA

Greek legend offers contrasting visions of KRONOS and his regime. If the succession myth presents him as a brutal tyrant who swallowed his own children, another tradition also to be found in Hesiod presents his reign as a time of innocent happiness when mortals lived long and virtuous lives under his benevolent rule. In this view, his mortal subjects lived lives of blissful ease, much like the inhabitants of the Isles of the Blessed (see p. 116), without toil or strife or need of law, owning all things in common and enjoying abundant fruits and crops that were brought forth by the earth of its own accord; and when they finally died, it was as though they were overcome by a gentle sleep. In short, it was the Golden Age, ὁ ἐπὶ Κρόνου βίος, *Saturnia regna*.²⁷ This peasant’s daydream of a lost age of happiness was evidently rooted in folklore; and it is by no means difficult to understand why it came to be identified with the age of Kronos. Since everything in that age was quite the opposite of what could be witnessed in the harsh present under the rule of Zeus, it could be concluded that this must be an account of the conditions that had prevailed under the rule of Kronos, not because he was presented as being in any way benevolent in myth, but simply because he had presided over the previous divine order before things came to be as they now are.

In the celebrated myth of progressive decline in Hesiod’s *Works and Days*,²⁸ these fortunate people who lived under the rule of Kronos are presented as being the first of five successive races, four of which are named after metals of decreasing value,

namely gold, silver, bronze and iron. We belong to the fifth and worst race, that of iron. The gods created a golden race of mortals first of all, who lived an ideal life under Kronos in accordance with the usual legend; and when these first people came to die, as though falling asleep, without ever having suffered the ravages of age, they became beneficent spirits (*daimones*) who roam the earth delivering mortals from harm and watching over their deeds. The gods replaced them with a silver race which was inferior in both body and mind. The people of this race took a hundred years to reach maturity, remaining all the while at their mother's side, but lived only a brief and wretched life when they finally grew up, for they were foolish beings who were unable to refrain from wrongdoing and violence and failed to honour the immortal gods. Their impiety aroused the anger of Zeus, who eventually removed them from the earth to become blessed spirits in the Underworld.²⁹ Zeus then brought a bronze race into being, consisting of people who sprang from ash-trees (*meliai*, which might also be interpreted as meaning ash-tree nymphs). Their armour, their weapons and even their houses were made of bronze. Powerful, aggressive and flinty-hearted, they devoted themselves to war and slaughter until they were all destroyed as a result of their own violence, and passed to the dank house of Hades leaving no name behind.³⁰

Before passing on to the last of his 'metallic' races, to which he himself belongs, Hesiod interposes the 'god-like race of heroes' who fought with honour in the Theban and Trojan Wars, and showed themselves to be nobler and juster than their predecessors in the bronze race; since it was agreed that the great heroes of epic lived just before the beginning of ordinary human history, the poet evidently felt obliged to include them at this point and so interrupt his scheme of decline. Hesiod's text is ambiguous on the matter of their ultimate fate, failing to make clear whether all were transferred to the Isles of the Blessed, or else only a portion of them while others were consigned to Hades.³¹ As to the present age, Hesiod regrets that he was ever born into it, for the people of the race of iron have no respite from toil and sorrow by day, or from wasting away and perishing by night. Although not wholly bad, they will grow progressively worse until Zeus destroys them in their turn.³² It should be noted that Hesiod does not refer to golden and other *ages*, even if modern authors often find it convenient to use these terms when referring to his myth; the 'golden age' is an expression of Latin origin (from *saeculum aureum*, an ambiguous phrase which can mean both golden race and golden age).

Although Kronos was not much honoured in cult, he had a most interesting festival, the Kronia, which was celebrated at Athens and other Ionian cities in particular, and also at Thebes in conjunction with a musical contest. On the day of the festival, the normal social distinctions were overturned, and slaves would be feasted by their masters and allowed to rampage through the town creating as much noise as they wished. This could be regarded as a temporary return to the life without toil or subordination that had prevailed during the reign of Kronos. Although the Kronia has often been viewed as a harvest-festival, this is now disputed. It was celebrated well after harvest-time at Athens (though not all places), in the month of Hekatombeion, which is said to have been known as Kronion in early times; and Kronos' customary attribute of the sickle does not necessarily have agricultural connotations, for it is associated with him in connection with his attack on his father

in the succession myth, and sickles are used for similar purposes by other mythical figures who have nothing to do with agriculture (e.g. by Perseus against the Gorgon, p. 240, or by Herakles against the Hydra, p. 258). The rare representations of Kronos in art show him as a majestic but sorrowful old man holding a sickle. The Greeks frequently identified him with unlovely foreign deities such as Moloch, a Semitic god who was offered human sacrifices. The Romans identified him with Saturn (Saturnus or Saeturnus), an old Italian deity whose functions are obscure; Saturn's annual festival of the Saturnalia, at which slaves were granted exceptional liberties, resembled the Kronia in some notable respects, as was recognized in ancient times.

Later authors have a fair amount to say about Kronos after his defeat. Evidently because conditions on the Isles of the Blessed (see pp. 114ff) resembled those that were supposed to have prevailed under the rule of Kronos, some authors make him the lord of those islands; Pindar already presents him in this role, with Rhadamanthys as his assistant (*paredros*).³³ Some verses that purport to come from Hesiod's *Works and Days*, but are almost certainly a later interpolation, explain that Zeus released him from his banishment to enable him to assume this function.³⁴ Plutarch records a picturesque tale in which he sleeps forever in an island beyond Britain (i.e. at the extremities of the known world) with many followers around him and Briareos as his guard.³⁵ In rationalistic accounts of a Euhemeristic nature which represent Kronos and Zeus as early kings, Kronos is often said to have sought refuge in Italy after he was deposed, hiding from Zeus in Latium, hence its name (as though it were derived from the Latin word *latere*, to hide). Vergil alludes to this tradition in the *Aeneid*, saying that Saturnus (i.e. Kronos) had ruled at the future site of Rome during his exile, where he had unified the local people and ushered in a golden age.³⁶

RHEA or RHEIA, the consort of Kronos, is a grandiose but somewhat vague figure who had little place in Greek cult (except in so far as she came to be identified with Kybele, see below). She was honoured to some extent, however, in conjunction with her husband, as at Athens, where she shared a temple with him in the precinct of Olympian Zeus, and at Olympia, where one of the six altars of the Twelve Gods (see p. 81) was dedicated to the two of them;³⁷ and she had a sacred cave on Mt Thaumasion in Arcadia which was closed to everyone except her own priestess.³⁸ Since it was commonly believed that Zeus was born in Crete, it is understandable that this should sometimes have been regarded as Rhea's home in the later tradition;³⁹ but there is no early evidence to suggest that she was actually a goddess of Cretan origin. As the mother of the gods (i.e. of the Olympian gods of the first generation), Rhea could easily be identified with that very old and widely worshipped power, the Mother, who was honoured under all manner of names in Greece, the Aegean islands and the Asian mainland, sometimes in conjunction with a male partner, sometimes alone. Although deeply rooted in the native tradition, the Greek cult of the Great Mother (Meter) came to be strongly influenced by the cult of the Phrygian mother-goddess Kybele, which entered the Greek world from Asia Minor. The Great Mother was identified with both Rhea and Demeter; and Rhea was often equated with Kybele, whose cult finally spread through much of the Roman Empire. This had implications for myth, above all because the Cretan Kouretes, who were associated with Rhea in connection with the rearing of Zeus



Figure 3.1 Rhea-Kybele. Marble statue, Roman period. Ny Carlsberg Glyptothek.

(see below), came to be confused or equated with the Korybantes, attendants of Kybele in Asia Minor (see p. 219).

Much of the mythology of Rhea, orthodox and unorthodox alike, has to do with her relationship with Kronos and her rescue of the new-born Zeus. Since there were legends that claimed that Zeus was born and reared in other places apart from Crete, local versions of the latter story take Rhea to many corners of the Greek world (especially in the Peloponnese, see p. 76 for examples) and of Asia Minor. For an Arcadian legend of a comparable nature in which she is said to have hidden the new-born Poseidon in Arcadia, giving Kronos a foal to swallow in place of him, see

p. 102. In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*, Zeus sends Rhea as his envoy when he wants to inform Demeter of his decision with regard to the fate of Persephone;⁴⁰ and in one quite early version of the story of the slaughter and revival of Pelops (see p. 503), it is Rhea who restores him to life again after he has been served as a meal to the gods.⁴¹

Rhea was not the only mate of Kronos, even if she alone is regarded as his wife, for an old tradition claimed that he fathered the Centaur Cheiron by an Okeanid nymph called PHILYRA. To account for the semi-equine nature of their offspring, it is explained in one version of the story that Kronos turned himself into a stallion to mate with her after she tried to escape from him by turning into a mare.⁴² Or in the version recorded by Apollonius, he was caught *in flagrante* by Rhea as he was having intercourse with Philyra on an island of the same name in the Black Sea, and leapt up in the form of a horse (presumably by way of disguise), while Philyra fled the area in shame to settle in Thessaly, the traditional homeland of Cheiron.⁴³ Or according to Hyginus, Kronos had intercourse with Philyra in the form of a stallion while he was roaming the world in search of the infant Zeus, and Philyra was so shocked by the hybrid appearance of her child that she prayed to Zeus to be transformed, and was turned into a lime-tree (*philyra* in Greek).⁴⁴ This extra transformation was evidently a late fancy inspired by the etymology. Though already called Philyrides at the end of the *Theogony*, Cheiron is first described as a son of Kronos and Philyra in Pindar's odes.⁴⁵ In accordance with his divine origin, he was a wise and noble being, in marked contrast to most of the Centaurs (who were of very different birth, see p. 554).

ZEUS AND HIS EARLIER LIFE

To attempt anything more than the briefest of sketches of Zeus is obviously impossible. Many Indo-European peoples have a divine figure who more or less corresponds to him, such as Dyaus in India, Iuppiter (i.e. Dyaus pita, the addition meaning 'father') in Italy, or Tiwaz among the Germanic peoples. The root meaning of his name is apparently 'bright', and he is the god of the sky, or rather of the phenomena of the sky or, more accurately, those of the atmosphere. His primary functions appear to be connected with rain and the return of fine weather, and also, very characteristically, with thunder and lightning. Hence he is associated also with what depends so largely upon the weather, the fertility of the soil, although this is never a very prominent aspect of his cult or nature. To all this a long string of titles bear witness, such as Ombrios and Hyettios (Rainer), Ourios (Sender of favourable winds), Astrapaios (Sender of lightning), Bronton (Thunderer), Epikarpios (Producer of fruits), Georgos (Farmer), and so forth. But he is so widely worshipped that there is hardly a department of nature or of human activity with which he is not connected in some way. He is the protector of the household and social order, and all sovereignty and law proceeds from him; he is represented as having moral concerns from an early period, particularly as a guardian of suppliants and strangers and an overseer of oaths and justice. From the time of Homer onwards, he was so firmly established as the supreme god that we feel no surprise at finding his name

used by thinkers of a monotheistic tendency as practically equivalent to 'God'. Although his myths include many that are early and grotesque, or late and frivolous, he never quite loses his majesty, and is consistently represented in art as a stately figure, a vigorous man in the prime of life, standing or sitting in a dignified attitude, usually draped from the waist down, bearing a sceptre or thunderbolt, or both, and attended by his familiar, the eagle.

Zeus is often represented, in art and literature alike, as associated with the oak, a tree marked out as appropriate not only by its beauty and majesty and its long life, but also by two conspicuous facts, namely that it grew very widely in ancient Greece and is struck very frequently by lightning (as the ancients noticed and modern forestry has proved statistically).

Two important attributes of Zeus are the thunderbolt and aegis. Of the former it need only be said that before the true character of electrical phenomena came to be understood, the destructive power of lightning encouraged the thought that some heavy and pointed missile came down from the sky with the lightning-flash; and what could be more natural than to assume that it was the special weapon of the sky-god? In Greek art, Zeus' thunderbolt was shown as a biconical object, often having conventionalized lightning-flashes attached, and sometimes wings also. It was fashioned for him, as we have seen, by the *Kyklopes*.

The aegis (or aegis in Latin form) is described, by various authors from Homer onwards, as a fringed garment or piece of armour that could be worn as a corselet or serve as a sort of shield; as worn or held by a god, it was not only a potent defence, but a magically powerful weapon that would inspire terror in an enemy if it were held out in the hand and shaken. *Aigiochos*, the Aegis-bearer, is a regular title of Zeus. According to the *Iliad*, Hephaistos gave it to him as a fearsome object that would cause terror in men, and it was bright to behold and shaggy-fringed, with a hundred golden tassels,⁴⁶ although Zeus shakes it at one point to induce panic in the Greeks, and it is suggested that he will shake it over Troy on the day that the city falls,⁴⁷ it is used more often by his favourite daughter Athena (and also by Apollo on two occasions).⁴⁸ In the subsequent tradition it is primarily an attribute of Athena, who can often be seen wearing it in vase-paintings. It is frequently fringed with snake-heads in such images. According to a Hesiodic fragment, it was fashioned by Metis for Athena.⁴⁹ As something that was worn or wielded by the god of thunder, it was once argued that it can be interpreted as a thunder-cloud, but the plain meaning of the word puts this out of court; *aigis* simply means a goat-skin, just as *nebris* means a fawn-skin. In its origin, this mysterious object is nothing more than a goat's hide with the hair on, forming a fringe. Just such a garment has been worn into modern times by Greek peasants, and it doubtless clothed many ancient wooden or stone cult-objects representing Zeus, for the clothing of statues was quite common in Greece. As it was of rough hide, it would serve its wearer as a defence, not only against the weather but also against an enemy's blow; and a divine aegis as worn or brandished by an immensely powerful deity might be imagined as a formidable protection and awe-inspiring object.

Something has already been said about the circumstances of Zeus' birth in connection with the succession myth (see p. 68), in which Rhea hid him away in Crete to save him from being swallowed by Kronos and tricked her husband by giving him a stone to swallow instead. According to Hesiod, she went to the Cretan town of Lyktos (to the west of Knossos) when she was due to give birth to Zeus, and entrusted him to her mother Gaia to nourish and rear: so Gaia hid him away deen

inside herself in a remote cave on Mt Aigaion (otherwise unknown, but presumably to be identified with one of the various mountains near Lyktos that contain Minoan

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holy caves).⁵⁰ This account is peculiar to the *Theogony*, for in the subsequent tradition the cave is either located in Mt Ida in the centre of Crete or, less commonly, on Mt Dikte to the east.⁵¹

Zeus was reared during his infancy by a local nymph or nymphs. In what was perhaps the most favoured tradition, he was tended by the nymph Amaltheia, who fed him on milk from a she-goat that she owned;⁵² or in another version which first appears in Callimachus, Amaltheia was the name of the goat itself, and the nymph Adrasteia fed Zeus on its milk along with sweet honeycomb; or else his nurses were Adrasteia and Ida, or the Idaian nymphs Helike and Kynosura, or others of their kind.⁵³ There were also various picturesque tales in which he was said to have been fed by bees or suckled by a sow or the like.⁵⁴ To prevent Kronos from being able to hear the infant's cries, some minor Cretan divinities, the Kouretes (see p. 219), danced a noisy war-dance near the entrance to the cave, clashing their spears against their shields.⁵⁵ Or in a slightly different account, Amaltheia hung the infant in a cradle from a tree so that he could be found neither in heaven nor on earth nor in the sea, and the Kouretes danced around the tree.⁵⁶ Much of this is connected with ritual, and Cretan ritual at that; excavations have shown that a fair number of cave-sanctuaries in Crete were very ancient holy places dating back to the Minoan period; the dances of the Kouretes can be related to similar dances performed by Cretan youths in initiation rituals and the like (see p. 219); and it seems that a divine child who was born (and probably died) every year was a prominent object of Cretan worship.

A curious tale about Zeus' cave in Crete is recorded by Antoninus Liberalis in his anthology of transformation myths. The cave (of unspecified location) was inhabited by sacred bees that had tended the infant Zeus, but was otherwise forbidden ground to gods and mortals alike. At one time four thieves had entered the cave nonetheless to steal some of the honey, wearing full armour (to protect themselves against the bees, and probably on account of its apotropaic value also). When they saw the swaddling-clothes of Zeus, however, and the blood that had been shed at his birth, their armour fractured and fell from their bodies; and Zeus would have killed them with a thunderbolt as punishment for their sacrilege if the Moirai (Fates) and Themis (as guardian of divine law) had not restrained him by reminding him that no one could be allowed to die in a place of such sanctity. So he transformed them into various birds that bore the same names as themselves (Laios, Kerkeos, Kerberos and Aigolios). The author remarks that the blood inside the cave used to boil up at a particular time every year, presumably on the anniversary of Zeus' birth, causing a mass of flame to issue from the cave.⁵⁷

The astronomical literature also provides some odd tales about Zeus's childhood. In one such story, the nanny-goat that nursed the infant Zeus is said to have been a wondrous child of the sun-god Helios that so alarmed the Titans, apparently because of its radiant brightness, that they asked Earth to conceal it from their view in one of her caves in Crete. When Zeus came of age and was preparing for his war against the Titans, he learned that he would be victorious if he used the hide of the goat as a shield (i.e. as his aegis); and after he duly won his victory, he covered the bones of the goat with another skin, revived it and made it immortal, and placed it in the heavens as Capella (the Goat), a bright star in the constellation of the Charioteer (Auriga).⁵⁸ Or in another tale of the kind, Kronos set off in search of Zeus and arrived in Crete, but was deceived by his son, who concealed his presence by transforming himself into a snake and his two

nurses into bears. Zeus later commemorated

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the incident by placing images of the three animals in the sky as the constellations of the Dragon and the Greater and Lesser Bear (Draco and Ursa Major and Minor).⁵⁹ Some said that he was removed to the island of Naxos when his father came in search of him, and was raised there from that time onwards.⁶⁰

There were also numerous local traditions in which Zeus was said to have been reared in mainland Greece (especially the Peloponnese) or Asia Minor. According to Arcadian tradition, for instance, Rhea brought him to birth on Mt Lykaion (an important centre for his cult, see p. 538), and three local nymphs, Neda, Theisoa and Hagno, reared him on an area of the mountain that was known as Kretea. Neda was the nymph of the river Neda that rose on Lykaion and flowed westwards into Messenia; it was claimed that Earth had caused it to spring forth at the request of Rhea to enable her to wash the new-born Zeus. And the other two nymphs were eponyms of springs on the mountain.⁶¹ The Messenians claim for their part that the Kouretes had conveyed the infant Zeus to their own territory, where he had been reared by Neda and Ithome (the eponym of the Messenian mountain of that name). In reporting this Messenian tale, Pausanias remarks that it would be impossible, even if one should wish it, to number all the peoples who insisted that Zeus had been born and reared in their land.⁶²

When Zeus came of age, he returned to confront Kronos and the Titans as recounted above. After the defeat of the Titans, he had two important affairs to settle, to divide the conquered universe between himself and his brothers, and to provide himself with a consort; and he was subsequently obliged to quell various revolts against the new divine order.

According to a familiar tale which is recounted by Homer but not by Hesiod, the first of these matters was briefly and amicably arranged: Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades, the three male children of Kronos, cast lots for the three main divisions of the ancestral estate, the sky, the sea and the Underworld, agreeing to hold the earth and high Olympos in common. As the outcome of the lot, Zeus won the broad sky, and Poseidon the grey sea to be his home forever, and Hades the murky nether regions.⁶³ After descending to his infernal realm, Hades lived a life apart and had little contact with the Olympian gods.

THE BRIDES OF ZEUS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE OLYMPIAN GODS

In Hesiod's account at least, the marital affairs of Zeus were a much more complicated matter; for although Hera is the only goddess with whom Zeus could be said to have had a marital relationship in any proper sense, Hesiod presents his main liaisons with other goddesses as a series of previous marriages. As everyone knows, Zeus was a prodigiously amorous god who was associated with a great many other women, mortal and divine, and was credited with a multitude of children. In a richly humorous passage in the *Iliad*,⁶⁴ he recites a list of his conquests to his wife as he is about to make love with her, saying that he never felt such desire for any of them as he feels for her at present, not even for the wife of Ixion, or for Danae, Europa, Semele or Alkmene, or – among goddesses – Demeter or Leto (and he could have cited many more). There were of course good reasons, religious and mythological, why he should have come to be credited with many mistresses and children. With regard to his

divine children, for instance, he was thought to be the only suitable father for great Olympian deities who were not his brothers or sisters; and lesser deities too who contributed to the divine order in some way could be fittingly regarded as his children. Or with regard to his love affairs with goddesses, he evidently came to be linked to some at least for cultic and religious reasons. Since he was the male sky-god, for example, it is understandable that he should have been paired with earth-goddesses like Demeter and Semele (who was originally a Thracian goddess of this kind, even if she was later classed as a mortal heroine, see p. 170). But once he was paired with several such goddesses in the legends of different areas, or linked to a variety of goddesses as the father of different children, problems arose as soon as attempts were made to correlate all the various legends (and such attempts were clearly made very early). He must either be represented as polygynous, or be supposed to have been gravely unfaithful to his legitimate queen. The former solution was impossible, for the Greeks themselves were always monogamous and naturally represented their gods as following the same practice; the latter was more in accordance with their own ideas, which tolerated such irregularities and gave children arising from them a recognized though subordinate place in the family. It was thus accepted that Zeus had a single wife, Hera, but fathered many illegitimate children, who, with certain exceptions, would acquire divine status if their mothers were goddesses, or be mortal if they were born to mortal mothers. In the *Theogony*, however, his main divine mistresses are presented as six wives whom he had taken before his final and definitive marriage to Hera; and even though this scheme seems to have left little mark on the subsequent tradition, it will be convenient to consider the various unions in the order in which they are presented in that poem.

Zeus took the Okeanid **Metis**, the personification of cunning wisdom, as his first wife, but this was a dangerous union because she was fated to bear two exceptional children, first a daughter, Athena, who would be almost as wise and strong as her father, and then a son who would displace him as ruler of gods and mortals. On being alerted of this peril by Gaia and Ouranos, he swallowed Metis in accordance with their advice while she was pregnant with the first child. So Athena was born in due time from his own body, emerging from his head (see further on p. 181), and the threatening son was never conceived.⁶⁵ Or in a rather different version from another poem in the Hesiodic corpus (possibly the *Melampodeia*), Zeus was so angry when Hera brought Hephaistos to birth as a fatherless child (see p. 79) that he set out to perform an equivalent action, and succeeded in some sense at least by having intercourse with Metis and then swallowing her so as to bring their child to birth from within himself.⁶⁶

The various elements in this myth can be disentangled without any great difficulty. The savage motif of the swallowing was evidently recycled from the succession myth. Knowing that he was in danger of being displaced by one of his children (just as he had displaced his own father), Kronos swallowed his children at birth, but was foiled because Zeus was saved from being swallowed; since the cycle of displacement came to an end with Zeus, what could be more natural than to imagine a story in which Zeus came to know likewise that a son of his would displace him, but removed the danger by a similar ruse to that attempted by his father? In this case, of course, he swallows the prospective mother of the child rather than the child itself. In the second place, the swallowing of Metis can be seen

as a sort of allegory; for by ingesting her, Zeus takes possession of the cunning wisdom that she represents, as is fitting for the chief god. In all probability, the story of the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus originated in very ancient times as an independent myth; but it could be drawn into the present story with good effect. For Athena bears an obvious affinity to Metis as a goddess who is noted for her practical wisdom (*metis*) and presides over all manner of crafts; and if it is assumed that Metis was pregnant with this appropriate child at the time when she was swallowed, it can be explained how Zeus himself came to be ‘pregnant’ with Athena.

After swallowing his first wife, Zeus married the Titan **Themis**, who represents another aspect of his rule as the personification of law and right order. She bore him two sets of children who contributed in their different ways to the ordering of the world, the Horai (Seasons, see further on p. 208), and the Moirai or Fates, whom we have encountered already as daughters of Night along with other sinister powers (see p. 27), but are now reclassified in so far as they apportion good and ill to mortals in accordance with the authority of Zeus.⁶⁷

A fragment from Pindar describes Themis as the first wife of Zeus, saying that she was brought up to Olympos by the Moirai to become his bride and bore the Horai to him; the Moirai are clearly not children of hers in this account.⁶⁸ She is usually presented as an associate of Zeus rather than a consort, an adviser who warns him not to court Thetis (see p. 52) and helps him to plot the outbreak of the Trojan War in an early epic account; in one of the later Homeric Hymns, she sits beside him as his confidante, leaning toward him to listen to his words of wisdom.⁶⁹ She is gifted with prophetic powers like her mother Gaia, whom she is sometimes said to have succeeded as presiding deity at Delphi before the arrival of Apollo.⁷⁰ The Homeric epics credit her with a special role as a goddess who presides over the gatherings of gods and mortals.⁷¹

Zeus’ third wife, **Eurynome**, was an Okeanid like his first; she bore him a single set of daughters, the Charites or Graces (see further on p. 208).⁷² Rather more important was his next union with the corn-goddess **Demeter**, which led to the birth of Kore (the Maiden), otherwise known as Persephone (see pp. 125ff).⁷³ His next consort after Demeter was the Titan **Mnemosyne**, the personification of Memory, who bore him a set of nine daughters, the Muses, who will be considered in Chapter 6 (see pp. 204ff).⁷⁴ Since the Muses were originally goddesses of music and poetry above all, Mnemosyne was an obvious mother for them, not only because poetry preserves the memory of the past but also because the poet himself had to place special reliance on memory before the invention of writing. The sixth and last of these preliminary wives of Zeus was his cousin **Leto**, a daughter of the Titans Koios and Phoibe. She bore two great Olympian gods to him, Artemis and Apollo.⁷⁵ Since most subsequent accounts of their birth present their mother as a victim of the jealousy of Hera (see p. 188), it was more commonly assumed that Zeus was already married to Hera at the time of their conception. The divine twins were born on the holy island of Delos.

As his seventh and last wife in Hesiod’s account, or as his only wife in the usual tradition, Zeus married his sister **Hera**.⁷⁶ It is indicated plainly enough in the *Iliad* that she was his first choice rather than his last, and it is even implied in one passage that the pair first made love before the banishment of Kronos.⁷⁷ As the

great goddess of Argos since time immemorial, Hera was perhaps the most august of all the Greek goddesses, and it is thus understandable that she should have come to be linked to Zeus as his legitimate spouse, even though she would originally have had no connection with him. In matters of cult, indeed, she remained largely independent of him. She was primarily the goddess of marriage and married women; her nature, functions and myths will be examined in Chapter 5.

Hera bore three children to Zeus as the offspring of their marriage, namely **Hebe**, **Ares** and **Eileithuia**; and as a counter-miracle to the birth of Athena from the head of Zeus, she brought forth **Hephaistos** as a son of her very own without prior intercourse with her husband.⁷⁸ Such is the account in the *Theogony* at least; but in other sources, including the Homeric epics, Hephaistos is often regarded as an ordinary child of Zeus and Hera.⁷⁹ The character and myths of this god of fire and metal-working will be considered in Chapter 6, as will those of his murderous brother or half-brother, Ares, the god of war. Hebe and Eileithuia, two deities of relatively minor significance, are very appropriate children for a goddess who was intimately connected with the life of women, being respectively the goddess who personified the bloom of youth and the goddess of childbirth. Both goddesses appear in cult, though only to a very limited extent in the case of Hebe; neither of them makes much appearance in myth. Only a single story of any note is recorded for HEBE, namely that she married Herakles after he was raised to Olympos as a god and so came to share in the eternal youth of the immortals (see p. 286). She was otherwise available to perform minor services for her fellow Olympians, for instance as a cupbearer;⁸⁰ and according to a tale from Euripides, she once rejuvenated Iolaos, a nephew of Herakles, to enable him to kill a hated enemy of his family (see p. 288). Although EILEITHUIA is mentioned quite often in connection with her positive function in easing childbirth, she makes her most significant appearances in myth in two stories in which Hera sets out to hinder the birth of illegitimate children of Zeus; for Hera was said to have detained Eileithuia on Olympos when Leto was due to give birth to Apollo and Artemis (see pp. 188–9), and to have instructed her or the Eileithuiai to retard the birth of Herakles (see p. 248).

At Olympia in the province of Elis, Eileithuia was honoured in conjunction with a divine child called Sosipolis. The origin of this cult was explained by the following legend. On a certain occasion long ago, as the Eleians were expecting a counter-attack from an invading army of Arcadians, a local woman approached the Eleian commanders with a baby, and told them that he was her own son and that a dream had ordered her to hand him over to fight for Elis. Taking her at her word, the authorities laid him naked in front of the army; and when the Arcadians advanced, he changed into a snake, causing them such alarm that they turned and fled. After their victory, the Eleians raised a temple to the child at the spot where they thought that the snake had disappeared into the ground. They called the new god-child Sosipolis (Saviour of the State), and decided to worship Eileithuia in conjunction with him because ‘she had brought him into the world’ (a lame explanation by any standards).⁸¹ There seems little doubt that Eileithuia, with her non-Greek name and Cretan origin, appears here as the divine mother of a divine child, quite on the Cretan model.

Homer and subsequent authors sometimes refer to Eileithuiai in the plural.⁸² The name Eileithuia also appears as a title of Hera and Artemis, two major goddesses who concerned themselves with childbirth. The Romans equated Eileithuia with Lucina or Iuno Lucina, their goddess of childbirth.

There is one consort of Zeus, possibly the oldest of all, who is not to be found in Hesiod's list, namely DIONE. Although she is mentioned twice in the *Theogony*, first among the deities who are praised in the processional songs of the Muses (which would imply that she was a goddess of some eminence), and then among the daughters of Okeanos,⁸³ it is nowhere suggested that she has any special connection with Zeus. But Homer refers to her as the mother of Aphrodite, who is indubitably a daughter of Zeus in his poems, and he must therefore have known of the union between Zeus and Dione; she comforts and consoles Aphrodite in the *Iliad* when she arrives on Olympos after being wounded in battle by Diomedes (see p. 461).⁸⁴ There are various indications that suggest that she was once of greater importance than might be inferred from the scant mention of her in the works of the main poets. The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* includes her, for instance, among the foremost goddesses who attended Leto's childbearing,⁸⁵ and it is itself significant that her name seems to be no more than a feminine equivalent of that of Zeus (which takes the form of Dios in the genitive). In classical times, she was a major goddess only at Dodona in Epirus, the site of an ancient oracle of Zeus, where she was honoured as the consort of Zeus Naios (of the running water).⁸⁶ Pherecydes describes Dione as a nymph of Dodona for understandable reasons, while Apollodorus makes her a far grander figure by numbering her among the Titans.⁸⁷ Hesiod's account of the origin of Aphrodite (see p. 67) largely supplanted the account in the *Iliad* that made her a daughter of Dione; this latter relationship is never reflected in cult, although poets in the later tradition sometimes refer to Aphrodite as Dionaie (i.e. daughter of Dione) or even call her Dione.

At this point, it may be useful to take stock of the origins of the main Olympian gods. As was remarked above, these were either brothers and sisters of Zeus or else children of his, with the possible exception of Aphrodite, if she was born from the sea-foam that surrounded the severed genitals of Ouranos (as in Hesiod's account, see p. 67), and Hephaistos, if he was a child of Hera alone. If Aphrodite is left aside for the present, the major Olympians can be divided into three groups. Those who belonged to the first generation as children of Kronos and Rhea were **Zeus**, **Hera**, **Poseidon**, and **Hestia**. Although Hades also belonged to this generation, he lived far away from Olympos in his underground realm. Four major gods were born as children of Zeus in the next generation, namely **Athena**, who was born from his head, and **Apollo** and **Artemis**, his twin children by Leto, and **Ares**, who was born to him as one of his children by Hera. **Hephaistos** also belongs to this generation, whether he was a son of Zeus and Hera or a son of Hera alone. And finally, during the heroic era, Zeus fathered **Dionysos** and **Hermes** by two mortal women, Semele, daughter of Kadmos, and Maia, daughter of Atlas, respectively. As for **Aphrodite**, she was the first-born of the Olympians if she was born in the manner described above, as was commonly assumed; or she belonged to the second generation if she was the daughter of Zeus and Dione as in the Homeric account. The genealogies of the Olympian gods are summarized in Table 1.

From the classical period onwards, it was commonly believed that there were twelve principal gods, an idea that was derived from cultic rather than strictly mythological considerations. The cult of the Twelve Gods originated in Asia Minor during the archaic period and was firmly established on the Greek mainland by the

fifth century BC; Pindar refers to the cult of the Twelve Gods at Olympia, where they were honoured at six altars, and Herodotus and Thucydides both mention an altar that was raised to them in the Athenian agora by the younger Peisistratos.⁸⁸ The canonic list of the Twelve, as established at Athens and later transferred to Rome, ran as follows: Zeus, Hera, Poseidon, Demeter, Apollo, Artemis, Ares, Aphrodite, Hermes, Athena, Hephaistos and Hestia.⁸⁹ It will be noted that Hestia, who enjoyed a certain precedence in cult but was of no importance in myth (see p. 139), is included in the list while Dionysos is absent; but those who are named in it are otherwise the deities who would be regarded as the principal Olympians from a mythological point of view. A variety of other gods were listed among the Twelve in connection with the cult of the Twelve Gods in other localities. The following gods were honoured, for instance, at the six altars at Olympia: Zeus Olympios, Poseidon, Hera, Athena, Hermes, Apollo, the Charites (Graces), Dionysos, Athena, Alpheios (a river-god of the area, see p. 42), Kronos and Rhea.⁹⁰

The great gods of the Greeks were fully anthropomorphic, even if some lesser divinities and nature-spirits had animal features (and some thoroughgoing monsters are included in the divine genealogies, mostly as descendants of Pontos). Like their counterparts in the Near East, making due exception for Egypt, they were imagined as glorious beings who were human in their outward appearance and broadly comparable to human beings in their emotions and desires and their family and social life. They differed from mortals, however, in two respects above all, that their bodies were immortal and unageing (though not immune to temporary harm), and that they enjoyed a form of bodily existence that imposed lesser restraints by far on their capacities than does our own. They were born as a result of sexual activity and had to grow up (even if they were sometimes wonderfully precocious, see for instance pp. 144 and 162), but they developed and grew no further after reaching their proper maturity; some were imagined as being youthful in appearance, others as more mature and majestic. The image of a god was not always fixed; Dionysos became more youthful as the tradition evolved, and a lesser god, Eros, even regressed into infancy. Although they needed food and drink to sustain their bodies, they were nourished by special divine food, nectar and ambrosia, which can be pictured as bearing some resemblance to honey and a honey-drink respectively; and a divine fluid, ichor, therefore ran through their veins rather than ordinary human blood, and they were immune to age and decay. This aspect of their physiology is summed up by Homer in connection with a wound suffered by Aphrodite, which caused the 'divine blood of the goddess' to flow out, 'ichor, such as runs through the veins of the blessed gods, for they eat no bread nor do they drink shining wine, and are therefore bloodless and are called immortals'.⁹¹ Since they were immortal, there could be no question of their dying if they should be deprived of their proper nourishment; according to Hesiod, a god would sink into a coma if he should be deprived of it for a year for breaking his solemn oath (see p. 49), and so lose his vitality and power of speech. Nor could they die from wounds suffered in fights or battles, but they could suffer pain and benefit from the attention of a healer (as does Ares on one occasion in the *Iliad*), and they could be rendered insensible. And more broadly, their powers, though finite and corporeal, were much less limited than those of mortals; they could go immense distances in very little time, transform

themselves at will and alter the appearance of persons or objects, see things from very far off, hear in heaven prayers made on earth, or even help or harm without actually being present.

THE REVOLT OF TYPHON

After winning power by revolting against Kronos, Zeus had to suppress a few revolts against his own rule. Since he was so much stronger than the other Olympian gods, threats would usually suffice to deter them from opposing his will, let alone from rebelling against his rule. In a striking passage in the *Iliad*, he boasts that if all the other gods and goddesses grasped one end of a golden cord and he the other, they would be unable to drag him down from Olympos, whereas he, if he set his mind to it, could haul them all up along with the earth and sea besides; and he could then tie the cord around a peak of Olympos, leaving everything dangling in mid-air.⁹² Homer does report, however, that Hera, Athena and Poseidon had once planned to overpower Zeus and tie him up, but were foiled by the prompt action of Thetis, who summoned the hundred-handed Briareos (see p. 67) up from the sea to intimidate them.⁹³ There is no way of telling whether the poet drew this story from the prior tradition or simply invented it. Since the deities in question were ardent supporters of the Greek cause in the Trojan War, and often clash with Zeus on that account within the *Iliad* itself, it is certainly possible that there may have been an ancient tale in which they attempted to force their will on Zeus at some stage in the conflict. It was commonly agreed, however, that all the serious revolts against Zeus came from outside the Olympian circle, and were directed against the Olympian order as a whole. In the first place, Gaia brought forth beings of enormous size and power on two successive occasions, the monstrous Typhon and the race of the Giants, to make war against Zeus and the new ruling gods; and a further



Figure 3.2 Typhoeus. Bronze relief: shield band panel from Olympia.

revolt was mounted thereafter by the Aloadai, two gigantic sons of Poseidon who attempted to storm Olympos.

The myth of Typhon was almost certainly of earlier origin than that of the war between the gods and the Giants, which is not mentioned in Hesiod's *Theogony*. TYPHON (Typhaon in epic) or TYPHOEUS was the most terrible of these adversaries of Zeus, for he was so immensely strong that he could threaten the divine order single-handedly. According to Hesiod (who uses both forms of his name), Gaia bore him to Tartaros as the last of her primordial children, and he was such a formidable monster that he might well have succeeded in his revolt if Zeus had not been quick to respond to the threat.

Strength lay in his hands, and the feet of the mighty god were untiring; and from his shoulders sprang a hundred serpent's heads, terrible dragon's heads with dark flickering tongues, and the eyes beneath the brows of these wondrous heads flashed fire, and fire blazed from every head as he glared around. In all his dreadful heads there were voices that sent forth every kind of unspeakable sound, for at one time they uttered words that would be comprehensible to the gods, and at other times sounds like those of a bellowing bull, proud in its untamed fury, and sometimes like those of a lion, relentless in its valour, and sometimes like those of yelping puppies, a wonder to hear, and sometimes he would hiss like a snake until the high mountains echoed.⁹⁴

Although eloquent in its clumsy fashion, this earliest description of Typhon is neither complete nor precise. In the next literary portrait of him, from a prose summary of a poem by Nicander (second century BC), he has a great many arms in addition to his many heads, and he is also equipped with wings and has enormous dragon's coils springing from his thighs.⁹⁵ The wings can be found at an earlier period in vase-paintings, which generally depict Typhon as a composite being with a human head and torso and a lower body formed from two or more serpent's tails. Since snakes are chthonic beings that emerge from crevices in earth, earth-born men or monsters are quite often imagined as being serpent-tailed (as in the case of Kekrops, see p. 364, or the Giants in later portrayals). In Apollodorus' description of Typhon, which is full and memorable if muddled in places, there seems to be some confusion between these serpent's tails, as found in artistic images, and the serpent's heads that spring from Typhon's shoulders in the *Theogony*; for we are told that a hundred dragon's heads sprang from his arms, and that the serpent's coils from beneath his thighs reached up to his head when fully extended and emitted violent hisses. He was of such monstrous size (so the mythographer states) that he rose higher than any mountain, and could reach out to the east and the west with his outstretched arms; and he had wings all over his body, and foul hair sprang from his head and cheeks, and fire flashed from his eyes.⁹⁶

In the early account by Hesiod, the issue is settled by single combat between Zeus and Typhon. Rising up against the monster in all his strength, Zeus thundered mightily as Typhon poured forth flame, until the earth, sea and sky began to boil, and the world to shake, causing even Hades to tremble in the subterranean land of the dead, and the Titans far below in Tartaros. Zeus leapt down from Olympos after these initial exchanges, and struck at Typhon and lashed him and burned his many

heads, forcing him down to the ground as a maimed and helpless wreck; and he then completed his victory by hurling him down to Tartaros.⁹⁷ Nothing was left of him in the world above apart from his progeny, namely his offspring by Echidna (see p. 62) and all the fierce and harmful winds that bring danger to sailors and damage the crops.⁹⁸ These noxious winds of Typhoean origin are distinguished from the divine and beneficial winds that were brought forth by Eos (see p. 48). Hesiod does not explain why Gaia, who was otherwise well-disposed toward Zeus, should have wished to give birth to this threatening monster, nor does he state that she did so with hostile intent. According to Apollodorus, Gaia brought forth the Giants first of all in anger at the fate of the Titans, and brought forth Typhon as a further danger to the gods after the Giants were defeated by them (see further on p. 90).⁹⁹

The *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* offers a different account of Typhon's origin in which Hera is said to have brought him to birth as a fatherless child because she was furious that her husband should have brought Athena to birth without her involvement (i.e. from his head). In her anger, she struck the ground with her hand and prayed to Earth, Sky and the Titans that she should bear a child on her own that would be as much stronger than Zeus as Zeus was stronger than Kronos. She gave birth in due time to Typhon, a being who resembled neither the gods nor mortal men, and she entrusted him to the Delphian she-dragon to be reared. The poet tells us very little about the subsequent life of the monster, merely observing twice that it was a danger to mortals.¹⁰⁰ According to a strange account from the Homeric scholia, Gaia complained to Hera after the slaughter of the Giants, prompting her to approach Kronos, who gave her two eggs smeared with his own semen and told her to bury them in the ground, saying that they would generate a being who would deprive Zeus of his power. Hera buried them as instructed, in Cilicia in Asia Minor, and the monstrous Typhon was born from them; but she then had second thoughts and informed Zeus, who struck Typhon down with a thunderbolt.¹⁰¹

In post-Hesiodic accounts of Typhon's career, many new features are introduced into his story, mainly from the east. Since Apollodorus provides a composite account that includes most of these new elements, it will be convenient to summarize his narrative before considering certain elements in further detail. When Typhon launched an attack against heaven itself, hurling flaming rocks and emitting fearsome hisses and screams, the gods were so terrified that they fled to Egypt, where they concealed themselves by transforming themselves into animals of various kinds. So Zeus was obliged to confront Typhon on his own, first pelting him with thunderbolts from a distance, and then striking at him with an adamantine sickle (*harpe*). After pursuing the wounded monster to Mt Kasion in Syria, he grappled with him face to face; but Typhon enveloped Zeus in his coils, wrested the sickle from him, and used it to cut the tendons from his hands and feet. He then carried him through the sea to Cilicia and deposited him in a cave there (the Corycian cave), hiding the severed tendons inside in a bear's skin; and he appointed a fellow-monster as guard, the she-dragon Delphyne, who was formed half like a snake and half like a beautiful maiden. Hermes and Aigipan (Goat-Pan) managed to steal tendons, however, and fitted them back into Zeus, who soon recovered his vigour and returned to the fray. Descending from heaven in a chariot, he hurled thunderbolts at Typhon and pursued

him to Mt Nysa (of uncertain location, see p. 172), where the Moirai (Fates) deceived him into eating the 'ephemeral fruits' (otherwise unknown), which robbed him of some of his strength. When pursued onward to Haimon, a mountain-range in Thrace (or now Bulgaria), he was still strong enough to hurl entire mountains at Zeus; but Zeus hurled them back at him by means of a thunderbolt, causing him to shed so much blood (*haima*) that the range below was known as Haimon from that time forth. He then fled overseas to Sicily, where Zeus completed his victory by burying him under Mt Etna.¹⁰²

The ignominious tale of the flight and transformation of the gods was of earlier origin than one might suppose if Pindar did indeed recount it in one of his processional odes, as is reported.¹⁰³ It was inspired by an Egyptian myth in which the god Seth and his followers were said to have transformed themselves into animals when pursued by Horus. Since the Greeks identified Typhon with Seth rather than the pursuer Horus and had no interest in the original significance of the transformations, the myth was naturally much altered when they adapted it for their own purposes, to provide a mythical explanation for the theriomorphic nature of the Egyptian gods. In the earliest version to have survived, as ascribed to Nicander, all the gods fled in a panic apart from Zeus, and they turned themselves into animals on their arrival in Egypt, Apollo into a hawk, Hermes into an ibis, Artemis into a cat, Hephaistos into an ox, and so forth.¹⁰⁴ The basic pattern is obvious enough: the Greek gods are identified with specific Egyptian gods in accordance with accepted tradition, and are said to have transformed themselves into the animal form associated with that Egyptian god. If the animal in question has some connection with the respective Greek god in native myth or cult, so much the better, but that is not the essential point. So Apollo, for instance, who happens to be compared to a hawk in the *Iliad* and elsewhere,¹⁰⁵ turns himself into a falcon in the present myth because he was identified with the Egyptian god Horus,¹⁰⁶ who was represented as a falcon or with a falcon's head. Ovid neglects the point in his later version by saying that Apollo turned himself into a crow, the bird that was most closely associated with him in Greek myth.¹⁰⁷

A further detail is added to the story in astral mythology to provide a mythical explanation for the origin of Capricorn, a constellation representing a 'goat-fish', a Mesopotamian monster that had no counterpart in Greek myth. After fleeing to Egypt along with the other god, goat-footed Pan threw himself into the Nile, turning his hindquarters into those of a fish and his forequarters into those of a goat; and Zeus was so impressed by his ingenious disguise that he placed an image of the resulting goat-fish among the stars.¹⁰⁸

Although Apollodorus' narrative takes Typhon into other areas besides, he was most closely associated with Asia Minor, especially the south-eastern province of Cilicia, which may well have been his original homeland. In a passing reference in the *Iliad*, Homer states that he lay in the land of the Arimoi (*ein Arimois*, a phrase that was also interpreted as referring to some mountains called the Arima);¹⁰⁹ and Hesiod states correspondingly that Echidna, a monster who bore children to Typhon in his account (see p. 62), lived in a cave beneath the earth *ein Arimoisin*.¹¹⁰ Most scholars

of Hellenistic and later times believed that the Arimoi were a people who lived somewhere in Asia Minor;¹¹¹ but even if they were right, as is likely enough, their ideas were apparently based on conjecture rather than direct evidence from the early tradition. It seems to have been well-established by Pindar's time in any case that Cilicia was Typhon's homeland, for the poet refers to him as 'Cilician Typhoeus', and remarks that he was reared in the 'renowned Cilician cave' that plays such an important part in Apollodorus' narrative.¹¹² Apollodorus' story of the stolen sinews was surely taken over from Near Eastern mythology; it has been observed that there is a parallel in the Hittite tale of the struggle between the Storm-god and the dragon Illuyanka. In that myth, the Storm-god was initially defeated by Illuyanka, who robbed him of his heart and eyes; but he went on to father a son who married the dragon's daughter and recovered the stolen heart and eyes with his wife's aid. When the Storm-god was then restored to his original condition, he set out against the dragon for a second time and killed him.¹¹³

Typhon's connection with Etna was fairly old even if it could not have been a very ancient feature of his legend. Pindar and the *Prometheus Bound* already mention that he is buried under the volcano and causes its eruptions by breathing forth streams of fire.¹¹⁴ Apollodorus seems to be exceptional in ascribing the eruptions to the after-effects of the thunderbolts that were hurled against him by Zeus. According to an alternative tradition first recorded by Pherecydes, Zeus buried Typhon under the island of Pythekousai (i.e. Ischia, off Naples, which contains hot springs and a volcano which was still active in antiquity).¹¹⁵ Other mythical explanations were also offered for the flame and smoke of Etna, for some claimed that the Giant Enkelados was buried under it (see p. 86), or that the forge of Hephaistos was located in it (see p. 166).

THE REVOLT OF THE GIANTS

The other major revolt against Zeus and the Olympian order was launched by the GIANTS (Gigantes), who were defeated by the gods with the aid of Herakles in the mighty conflict known as Gigantomachy (*Gigantomachia*). The Giants were earth-born as their Greek name implies; according to the *Theogony*, they were conceived by Gaia in the very earliest times from drops of blood that fell to the ground from the severed genitals of Ouranos.¹¹⁶ Hesiod describes them as powerful warriors who wore gleaming armour and carried long spears in their hands, an account that conforms with the usual portrayal of them in archaic works of art. It is not clear whether the poet meant to suggest that they sprang up from the ground fully armed (like the Spartoi at Thebes, see p. 296); Claudian, a Roman poet of the fourth century AD, is the first author to state this explicitly.¹¹⁷ Even though the Giants are presented as martial beings, there is no indication in the *Theogony* that they ever revolted against the gods (except perhaps in a late section of the poem probably added after Hesiod's time, which seems to refer to the contribution that Herakles was supposed to have made in helping to defeat the Giants).¹¹⁸ There is indeed no proper evidence at all for the revolt until the first artistic representations appear in the second half of the sixth century BC.



Figure 3.3 The Battle of the Gods and Giants. A detail of the Great Altar of Pergamon. Pergamon-Museum, Berlin.

Homer alludes to Gigantes on three occasions in the *Odyssey*. The Laistrygonians, some adversaries of Odysseus in the remote seas who seem to have been very large and were certainly very violent (see p. 494), are described as being ‘not like men, but like Giants’; in another passage, ‘the wild tribes of the Giants’ are bracketed with the Phaeacians and *Kyklopes* as beings who are akin to the gods; and third, we are told that a certain Eurymedon once ruled the overbearing Giants but brought destruction on himself and his people (in unstated circumstances).¹¹⁹ There is no reason to suppose that the latter story has anything to do with a revolt against the gods; nor can we assume that these Giants, who seem to have lived far away over the sea, were necessarily the same as Hesiod’s (any more than in the case of the *Kyklopes*, see p. 66). According to a tale ascribed to the Hellenistic poet Euphorion, Hera was raped by the Giant Eurymedon while she was still living at home with her parents, and bore Prometheus to him as a son. When Zeus came to learn of this after marrying her, he hurled Eurymedon down to Tartaros and ordered that Prometheus should be thrown into chains, using his theft of fire as a pretext.¹²⁰ The obscure reference to Eurymedon in the *Odyssey* must have inspired the invention of this revisionist myth.

It seems likely that the main features of the story of the Giants’ revolt was established in an early epic account which was widely familiar by the early sixth century BC and came to be accepted as canonic. The richness and consistency of the artistic record from the sixth and fifth centuries would otherwise be hard to explain; and the popularity of the story in this period is also indicated in a disapproving remark by Xenophanes (born c.570), who mentions the Gigantomachy along with the Titanomachy as a violent subject best avoided in after-dinner recitations.¹²¹ The earliest literary allusions reveal nothing about the content of the legend apart from the location of the battle and its most surprising feature, namely that the gods had to call on the assistance of Herakles (during the period of his earthly life when he was no more than a mortal hero). Pindar mentions that he brought the Giants to the ground with his arrows, including their king, Porphyryon, as they were confronting the gods on the plain of Phlegrai; and the Hesiodic *Catalogue* reports likewise that he brought destruction to the Giants at Phlegrai as he was returning from his campaign against Troy.¹²² On maps of the Aegean, the most striking feature of its northern shoreline is the Chalkidike with its three ‘prongs’, the peninsulas of Pallene, Sithonia and Athos. Phlegra or Phlegrai, the traditional home of the Giants, was usually identified with the westernmost peninsula, Pallene (although the adjoining peninsula of Sithonia and some of the hinterland of the Chalkidike were sometimes also reckoned to be part of it). Although the Giants seem to have confronted the gods on their home ground of Phlegrai in the original story, accounts were developed in which they took the battle to the enemy by trying to storm Olympos; and specific duels were said to have ranged further abroad, as we will see, to the southern Aegean and as far away as Sicily. Some Hellenistic and later accounts transfer the entire conflict to other regions, such as Arcadia or the Phlegraeon (Fiery) plain in the neighbourhood of Mt Vesuvius in Italy.¹²³

Apollodorus is the first author to provide a full surviving account of the progress of the conflict. If the individual motifs from his narrative are checked against the earliest artistic and literary record, it soon becomes evident that this is a composite version which was constructed mainly from early material but also contains a few stories (or variants) from the later tradition. An element that was certainly old is

the involvement of Herakles. The gods knew from an oracle that none of the Giants could be killed by them unless a mortal ally was present to finish them off; so Athena summoned the aid of the greatest of mortal heroes, Herakles, who was on the island of Cos at the time, having been driven there by storm-winds as he was sailing back from Troy (see p. 276). Now Gaia too was aware of this oracle, and tried to circumvent it by searching for a herb that would prevent her sons from being killed even by this mortal helper; but Zeus spoiled her plan by ordering Dawn and the Sun and Moon not to shine until he had plucked the herb himself. From that moment, the fate of the Giants was sealed.¹²⁴ This motif of the essential helper in which gods (or kings) have to depend on an inferior to achieve their victories can be found in the myths and folklore of many lands; we have already seen that Zeus had to rely on the Hundred-Handers to defeat the Titans. In an alternative account which was probably of Hellenistic origin, the gods had to seek the help of two 'demi-gods' and summoned Herakles and Dionysos,¹²⁵ who had both been fathered by Zeus on mortal mothers (and could thus be said to have earned their divine status by their services to the gods on this occasion).

The most dangerous of the Giants were Porphyryon (who is already singled out by Pindar and Aristophanes¹²⁶), and Alkyoneus, who was immortal as long as he fought on his native soil. In Apollodorus' narrative, Alkyoneus is the first victim of Herakles, who kills him without any immediate divine assistance at the beginning of the battle. Although the Giant began to recover his strength when he was brought to the god by the hero's arrows in his native Pallene, Herakles dragged him beyond the frontiers of the land on the advice of Athena, and was then able to put him to death.¹²⁷

There was a tradition that claimed that Alkyoneus provoked the entire conflict by rustling the cattle of the sun-god Helios.¹²⁸ Herakles' encounter with him was sometimes presented as a separate incident which had nothing to do with the Gigantomachy. According to Pindar, Alkyoneus confronted Herakles at Phlegrai as the hero was returning from his Trojan campaign with Telamon and other allies. Herakles shot him down, though not before he had destroyed twelve chariots by hurling a huge rock at them. Since the episode is placed in the homeland of the Giants and is associated with Herakles' Trojan expedition as usual, this was presumably a secondary version in which the incident was detached from the general conflict. Pindar describes Alkyoneus as a herdsman who was as huge as a mountain without specifying that he was a *Gigas*.¹²⁹ The scholia to the passage record another version in which Alkyoneus attacked Herakles and his companions at the Isthmus of Corinth as the hero was driving the cattle of Geryoneus to Argos.¹³⁰ In a version that is known only from vase-paintings, Herakles catches Alkyoneus by surprise while he is lying asleep on the ground, creeping up on him with his club or sword in his hand.

We must now trace the story to its conclusion as recounted in Apollodorus' version. After the death of Alkyoneus, Porphyryon launched an attack against Herakles and Hera, but Zeus distracted him by inspiring him with a lust for Hera and then struck him with a thunderbolt as he was tearing at the goddess's robes. Although this would surely have sufficed to kill the Giant in ordinary circumstances, Herakles in his role as special helper of the gods was obliged to finish him off with one of his arrows; and likewise in every succeeding case, gods would bring Giants to the ground

in their various ways, leaving it for Herakles to deal the death-blow with his arrows. Since Apollo was a consummate archer like Herakles, the two of them attacked the Giant Ephialtes in conjunction, Apollo shooting him in the left eye and Herakles in the right; Dionysos and Hekate used their cultic emblems, the thyrsos and flaming torches respectively, against two other Giants, Eurytos and Klytios; Hephaistos, the divine blacksmith, pelted Mimas with missiles of red-hot iron; Athena killed the fleeing Enkelados by hurling the island of Sicily on top of him, and flayed another Giant, Pallas, to use his skin as a shield; while pursuing the Giant Polybotes through the Aegean, Poseidon broke a corner off the island of Cos and hurled it down on him, so creating the little island of Nisyros not far to the south; Hades, who wore the cap of invisibility (see p. 240) to hide himself from sight, felled another Giant, as did Artemis; the Moirai (Fates) brought two opponents down with bronze cudgels; and Zeus attacked others with thunderbolts, while Herakles shot every one of them as they lay close to death on the ground.¹³¹ Although Ares is omitted from this narrative, he appears as an adversary of the Giants, especially Mimas, in vase-paintings and literary sources.¹³² Of the two stories in which Giants have islands deposited on them, that in which Polybotes is buried under Nisyros probably originated in epic since it can be found in sixth-century vase-paintings, while the story of Enkelados with its more distant setting in the west was apparently of Hellenistic origin.¹³³

The Giants were pictured in different ways at different periods. In the earliest images from the sixth century BC, they are generally portrayed as handsome hoplite warriors who wear armour and a helmet and fight with a lance or sword (or occasionally wield rocks when necessity demands, as do Homeric warriors). Although they must obviously have been very large and powerful if they were to match themselves against the gods, they were not originally imagined as giants in the full modern sense of the word. It is significant in this respect that when an ordinary mortal is called a *gigas* in early Greek literature, as is the brutal Kapaneus (see p. 320) in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, the word is suggestive of reckless or impious violence rather than exceptional size.¹³⁴ In the fifth century, an alternative representation appears in which the Giants are depicted as wild and primitive beings who dress in animal skins or simple tunics (or are even naked) and use rocks and boulders as their usual weapons. And finally, from the Hellenistic period onwards, the Giants are often depicted with serpent's coils for legs, as would be appropriate for earth-born beings, and as wholly gigantic in stature.¹³⁵

In Apollodorus' account of the earliest history of the world, Earth is said to have brought the Giants to birth because she was angered by the fate of the Titans (who were children of hers); and when the Giants were defeated by Zeus and the Olympian gods just as the Titans had been before them, Earth's rage grew all the greater and she brought Typhon to birth to provide a further threat to the Olympian order.¹³⁶ Although this narrative orders the various conflicts into a tidy pattern, it presents certain difficulties because, in the first place, Earth had previously assisted Zeus against Kronos and the Titans (in Apollodorus' account as in Hesiod's, through her advice on more than one occasion), and, in the second place, Herakles' presence at the Gigantomachy would imply that it took place in the heroic era soon before the Trojan War rather than in the earliest times soon after the Titanomachy.

The *Theogony*, which makes no reference of course to a revolt of the Giants, dates the revolt of Typhon to the period immediately following the Titanomachy, after the Titans have been banished from the upper world but before the gods have formally invited Zeus to become the new ruler. Although one might infer from Hesiod's narrative that Gaia brought Typhon to birth in anger at the fate of the Titans (as Apollodorus says of the Giants), nothing is actually stated on the matter.¹³⁷

THE ALOADAI AND THEIR REVOLT

Two gigantic sons of Poseidon called the ALOADAI (or Aloads in Anglicized form) were the last beings to mount a major revolt against the Olympian order, or at least threaten to do so. Although they were named after their putative father Aloeus, a Thessalian hero of Aiolid descent (see p. 410), they were really the product of an extramarital liaison between his wife Iphimedeia and the great god of the seas.¹³⁸ According to Apollodorus, whose account may well have been drawn from the early tradition, Iphimedeia fell in love with Poseidon and used to make repeated visits to the sea-shore, where she would scoop water from the sea with her hands and pour it into her lap, until the sea-god emerged from his realm one day and had intercourse with her.¹³⁹ She would presumably have become pregnant through contact with the seawater alone in the original story. There is also an alternative account of Hellenistic origin in which the Aloadai are described as earth-born, like the Giants and Typhon before them.¹⁴⁰ Their individual names were Otos and Ephialtes.

Their legend may best be approached through the earliest account in the *Odyssey*, which tells how Odysseus met the shade of Iphimedeia in the Underworld and learned from her that she had

slept with Poseidon and so given birth to two sons, who were but short-lived, god-like Otos and far-famed Ephialtes, the tallest men who were ever nurtured by the grain-giving earth, and the most handsome by far after famous Orion. At nine years of age they were nine cubits [i.e. about fourteen feet] across, and nine fathoms [over fifty feet] in height; and the two of them threatened to raise the din of furious battle against the very gods on Olympos. They desired to pile Ossa on to Olympos and Pelion with its waving forests on to Ossa to enable them to scale the heavens; and they would have accomplished it if they had reached the full measure of their growth; but the son of Zeus whom Leto of the beautiful tresses brought forth [i.e. Apollo] destroyed them both before the down blossomed beneath their temples and their cheeks were clothed with the bloom of a young beard.¹⁴¹

Pelion and Ossa were the two greatest mountains of Magnesia, the coastal district of northern Thessaly, and Olympos was the next great mountain to the north. It is suggested in later accounts that the Aloadai actually piled up the mountains before they were stopped.¹⁴²

Homer's narrative tells us less than we might want to know. How did Apollo kill the Aloadai, for instance, and did he take that action specifically to prevent

them from storming heaven? Later authors link their death to misguided actions of theirs in the amatory sphere. According to the usual story, Ephialtes made unwelcome advances to Hera, and Otos to Artemis, provoking Artemis to cause their death on Naxos by means of a deception. For she turned herself into a deer and ran between them while they were out hunting, causing them to kill one another with their hunting-spears as they tried to hit the deer.¹⁴³ In some form at least, this story may well have been quite ancient, since Pindar already mentions that they met their death on Naxos.¹⁴⁴ Hyginus offers a rather different version, stating that Apollo sent a deer between them, with the same consequence, to divert them while they were attempting to rape Artemis. An interesting detail is added here, namely that they were punished for their misbehaviour in Hades, by being tied back-to-back by snakes to a column on which a screech-owl was seated.¹⁴⁵ It may be relevant to this latter tale that Otos shares his name with a species of owl in Greek; perhaps the brothers were tormented forever by the screeching of the owl.

Another fragment of the legend of the Aloadai can be traced back as far as the *Iliad*, which tells how they once tied up Ares, the god of war, and imprisoned him in a bronze jar for thirteen months; 'and there Ares, insatiate of war, would even have perished, if their stepmother, the all-beautiful Eereboia, had not brought news of the matter to Hermes; he then stole Ares away when he was already greatly weakened, for his cruel imprisonment was wearing him down'.¹⁴⁶ It would be interesting to know whether the Aloadai took this action to remove the war-god from the scene before launching their attack on heaven, or whether this was a wholly separate incident. For what it is worth, Homer's ancient commentators explain that Ares had angered the Aloadai by killing the young Adonis (see p. 199) after Aphrodite had asked them to watch over him;¹⁴⁷ but it seems most unlikely that this would have had anything to do with the original story of Ares' imprisonment.

The Aloadai were also credited with more constructive achievements. They were said to have founded Askra, the home-town of Hesiod in Boeotia, and to have inaugurated the cult of the Muses on Mt Helikon.¹⁴⁸ After their mother and sister Pankratis (or Pankrato) were abducted to Naxos, they sailed in search of them at the bidding of their father, and seized control of the island; they eventually quarrelled, however, and killed one another in battle in their island-kingdom.¹⁴⁹ It was stated in this connection that they were buried on Naxos, where they were honoured in hero-cult in historical times; but their graves could also be seen at Anthedon on the Boeotian coast, and Otos had yet another grave on Crete.¹⁵⁰ Iphimedeia for her part was worshipped at Mylasa in Caria.¹⁵¹

ZEUS AND PROMETHEUS

PROMETHEUS, a son of the Titan Iapetos (see p. 49), revolted against the authority of his cousin Zeus not in the hope of gaining power on his own account, after the manner of Typhon and the Giants, but to bring benefits and justice to the human race; and by resorting to subterfuge rather than the use of force, he achieved a considerable measure of success, even if he had to pay a heavy penalty afterwards. The myth of Prometheus was altered and developed significantly as time progressed. In the Hesiodic poems, he advanced the interests of mortals in two specific

respects alone and suffered for his actions ever afterwards, while in the later tradition from Aeschylus onwards, he was the general benefactor (and sometimes even the creator and saviour) of the human race, and was eventually freed from his punishment and reconciled with Zeus. We will start with Hesiod's account of his story in the *Theogony*.

When gods and mortals ceased to meet directly and eat together, a new relationship was established in which mortals would sacrifice animals to the gods and share the victim with them without meeting face to face. According to Greek custom, the flesh and offal of the victims would be eaten after the sacrifice while their bones would be wrapped in fat and burned on the altar for the gods. To explain this arrangement, which seems to work to the disadvantage of the gods, Hesiod offers the following story. When the gods and mortals had quarrelled over the matter in the earliest times at Mekone (later Sicyon), Prometheus, for some unexplained reason, settled the dispute to the advantage of mortals by working a deception on Zeus. He killed an ox, cut it up, and separated the flesh and entrails from the bones; and he then covered the flesh and entrails with the ox's stomach to make that portion look unappetizing, and concealed the bones under a layer of shining fat. Although the poet tries to safeguard the wisdom of Zeus by saying that he was not really fooled, we are told that Zeus reached for the more appealing portion in any case, condemning the gods to receive the worse share at animal sacrifices ever afterwards.¹⁵²

Zeus was so angered by the deception that he withheld the gift of fire from the race of mortals. But Prometheus came to their aid once again by stealing some fire from heaven in the dry, pithy stalk of a fennel-plant (*narthex*, i.e. *ferula communis*, a relative of the British cow-parsley whose stems contain a slow-burning white pith). Zeus responded to this second provocation by imposing a second punishment on mortal men (for there were no women as yet) and by consigning Prometheus to everlasting torment. As man's price for the stolen fire, Zeus arranged for the creation of a 'beautiful evil' (*kalon kakon*), the first woman. Hephaistos fashioned her from moistened earth at Zeus' order, and Athena clothed her in silvery robes and an embroidered veil, and adorned her with garlands and a golden crown of Hephaistos' workmanship. She was then brought before an assembly of men and gods, who wondered at the sight of her, realizing that she would be an irresistible snare for men. In the present account from the *Theogony*, in which the first woman is left unnamed, Hesiod says nothing about her subsequent life, but simply expatiates with some ardour on the miseries that women and marriage have brought to men ever since. To avoid marriage brings no benefit either, since Zeus has also ensured that men who do so will face a miserable old age.¹⁵³ As for Prometheus, Zeus had him bound to a pillar with unbreakable bonds, and sent an eagle against him each day to gnaw at his liver, which grew afresh each night. Although he was eventually released from this specific torment when Herakles shot the eagle (see p. 271), an exploit that was permitted by Zeus because it would bring glory to his son, there is no suggestion that Prometheus was freed from his bonds as in most later accounts.¹⁵⁴

Hesiod offers a more detailed account of the myth of the first woman in his *Works and Days*. The centre of interest in this version is rather different, since the poet is



Figure 3.4 *Pandora*, by Harry Bates (1891). Marble, ivory and bronze.

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primarily concerned to explain why men live a life of toil after the life of ease that they were supposed to have enjoyed in the earliest times (see p. 69), when a day's work would have been sufficient to provide for a whole year. Prometheus and his benefactions were to blame as in the *Theogony*, for he angered Zeus by deceiving him (presumably over the sacrifices, although this is not stated), provoking him to hide away fire; and when he then stole some fire for the benefit of mortals, Zeus sent the first woman to bring trouble to men.¹⁵⁵ At the bidding of Zeus, Hephaistos mixed some earth and water together to fashion a young woman who was as beautiful

as the immortal goddesses. Athena dressed and adorned her, and taught her needle-work and weaving; Aphrodite bestowed grace and allure on her; the Charites (Graces) and Peitho (as the personification of amorous persuasion) decked her with jewellery; the Horai (Seasons) crowned her with spring flowers; and Hermes finally taught her all manner of guile and deceit, and granted her the gift of speech. He named her PANDORA (*pan*, all, *dora*, gifts) because all the Olympians were presenting her to men as a gift and affliction.¹⁵⁶ Zeus now ordered Hermes to take her to Epimetheus (Afterthought), the foolish brother of Prometheus, who accepted her as a wife even though he had been warned by Prometheus never to accept a gift from Zeus lest it should bring harm to men. Only afterwards, when it was too late, did he understand what he had done.¹⁵⁷ Rather strangely in view of the divine status of Epimetheus, this marriage is the means by which Pandora is introduced into the human race. The *Theogony* states likewise that Epimetheus brought harm to men by accepting the woman from Zeus.¹⁵⁸ It is stated in the later tradition that Pandora bore him a daughter, Pyrrha, the first woman to be born by natural process, who married her cousin Deukalion (see p. 402).

After arriving among mortals, Pandora opened the lid of a great jar that she had with her, causing a host of evils and diseases to be released among mortals for the first time; for until that moment, men had lived on the earth free from toil and sickness and other ills. Hesiod says nothing about the origin of the jar; presumably she had brought it with her from the gods. Through the will of Zeus, she replaced the lid of the jar before Elpis (Hope) could fly out. Even if the narrative is not entirely logical at this point (for Hope should properly have been allowed out with all the evils if she was to live among mortals), this surely means that hope is to be reserved for mortals as a palliative.¹⁵⁹ This motif of the jar of evils was presumably borrowed from fable or folklore; a related notion can be found in the *Iliad*, which states that Zeus possesses two urns from which he can dispense ills or blessings to mortals.¹⁶⁰

For significant developments in the mythology of Prometheus, we have to wait until the *Prometheus Bound*, a tragedy of the fifth century BC that is ascribed to Aeschylus (but may have been wholly or partially of different authorship). The drama begins as Kratos and Bia (Might and Force), two ruthless agents of Zeus, bring Prometheus forward to be chained to a rock at some unspecified place in the far north (apparently not the Caucasus). Hephaistos has accompanied them to provide his services as a blacksmith, although he is far from enthusiastic about the task or about Zeus's manner of rule.¹⁶¹ The immediate cause of Prometheus' punishment is his theft of fire as in Hesiod's version,¹⁶² but we learn in the course of the play (which contains very little action) that he has brought many other benefits to mortals, and that at one time he has even saved them from being destroyed by a tyrannical Zeus who grudges their very existence. For although Prometheus (who is here described as a son of Gaia) had helped Zeus to power by advising him on how to defeat the Titans, he later fell out with him when Zeus not only ignored the interests of human beings after his rise to power, but wanted to eliminate them to replace them with a new race.¹⁶³ By daring to oppose his intent and champion the interests of mortals, Prometheus won the enduring hostility of Zeus, and subsequently compounded the offence by conferring all kinds of benefits on human beings.

He taught them how to make houses from bricks and wood, to submit animals to the yoke and bridle, to cross the seas on sailing ships, and to read the heavens so as to be able to reap and sow at the right seasons; he invented the art of number for them, moreover, and writing and medicine, and the interpretation of dreams and omens, and the mining of the treasures of the earth; in short, he introduced or invented all the arts that raise human beings from a state of nature.¹⁶⁴ Hesiod's story of his deception over the sacrifices is conspicuously absent. Although Zeus had the power to exact a cruel revenge, Prometheus had the advantage over Zeus in one crucial respect, that his mother had told him that if Zeus fathered a child by a certain mother (i.e. Thetis, see p. 52), she would bear him a son who would be more powerful than his father.¹⁶⁵ Knowing that Prometheus was in possession of such a secret, Zeus sent Hermes to him after he was enchained to force him to reveal it; but he remained defiant in the face of every threat, and the *Prometheus Bound* ends with him being hurled down to Tartaros.¹⁶⁶

This play was apparently the first in a trilogy of which the second and third plays were the *Prometheus Unbound* and *Prometheus the Fire-bringer* (unless the latter was the first in the series). The action of the *Prometheus Unbound* was set in the mountains of the Caucasus, where Prometheus was now tied down and was suffering the painful attentions of the above-mentioned eagle; and since the chorus was formed from his fellow Titans (who are mentioned in the *Prometheus Bound* as being in Tartaros), it would seem that they had been released from Tartaros along with Prometheus himself. Herakles arrived at some stage and shot the eagle, as in the old account by Hesiod; and he then proceeded to release Prometheus from his chains, as is indicated in the title of the play. Prometheus must have appeased Zeus in the course of the play by revealing that Thetis was the goddess who was fated to bear a son who would surpass his father; but since he had been so stubborn in refusing to reveal the secret in the previous play, his change of heart was presumably motivated by something more than self-interest alone. It could well be that Zeus, who is a brutal tyrant in the *Prometheus Bound*, agreed to change his ways.¹⁶⁷ It was commonly accepted in the subsequent tradition that Prometheus was set free by Herakles, and also that the Caucasus was the site of his punishment.¹⁶⁸

It was often said that Prometheus was not merely the benefactor of the human race, but the ancestor of part or all of it, or even its creator. According to a genealogy which first appears in the Hesiodic *Catalogue*, he and his brother Epimetheus fathered Deukalion and Pyrrha respectively, who formed the first couple in the Central Greek tradition (see p. 403).¹⁶⁹ Since both of the relevant sources are corrupt, we cannot tell who was named as Deukalion's mother in the *Catalogue*. The *Prometheus Bound* and Acusilaus agree that Prometheus was married to an Okeanid called Hesione (although Herodotus identifies his wife as Asia, who is his mother in the *Theogony*, and various other names are suggested in later sources).¹⁷⁰ The idea that Prometheus created the first human beings by moulding them from clay first appears in the Hellenistic period;¹⁷¹ this would at least explain why he should have wished to act as their champion. According to a local tradition at Panopeus in Phocis, two clay-coloured rocks that could be seen there were formed from the clay that was left over when Prometheus had created the human race, hence their remarkable smell, which resembled that of human flesh.¹⁷²

It has been plausibly suggested that Prometheus originated as a trickster figure of non-moral character who liked to pit his wits against those of Zeus, and that because he was sometimes represented as tricking Zeus to the advantage of human beings, he came to acquire a new and distinctive moral role as their benefactor and defender.

Prometheus was honoured in cult at Athens in particular, as a patron of the arts of fire that were so important to that city; he was thought to preside over pottery above all, while Hephaistos (another god who was especially honoured at Athens, see p. 165) presided over metal-work. Torch races were held in his honour at his Athenian festival of the Prometheia, and there was an altar to him as Fire-bringer (Pyrphoros) at the Academy.¹⁷³